

Invisible Worlds

The Interplay of Photography, Death, and Commemoration

By Laura Blight



Residue, Laura
Blight, 2018.



Residue Studies, Laura Blight, 2019.

‘Dust is the perceptual waste material formed by the historical-cultural repression of sensory experience and memory’.

The Senses are Still: Perception and Memory as Material

Culture in Modernity, Nadia Seremetakis, 1996.



House Clearances, Laura Blight,
2010.



*Panteón Guadalajara,
Jalisco, Mexico, Dane
Strom, 2017.*

‘Social visibility and social recognition are central to the memory-making processes and practices mourners adopt to negotiate their grief and bridge the gap between the visible and invisible worlds of the dead’.

Maintaining the Dead in the Lives of the Living: Material Culture and Photography in the Cemeteries of Mexico City, in
Envisaging Death : Visual Culture & Dying, Marcel
Reyes-Cortez, 2013.



Love & Death,
Mexico, Marcel
Reyes-Cotrez,
2007.



House Clearances, Laura Blight, 2010.



House Clearances, Laura Blight, 2010.



House Clearances, Laura Blight,
2010.



House Clearances, Laura Blight, 2010.



House Clearances,
Laura Blight, 2010.



Riverbank, India,
Laura Blight
2012.



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12.



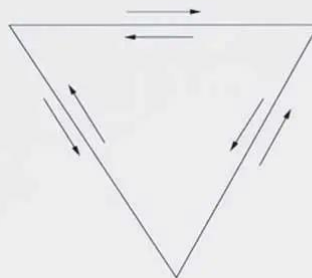
13.

[Click image to enlarge](#)

Rice/Tree/Burial, Agnes Denes, 1968.

Rice Planting
(thesis)

life
causation
semination
creation
cultivation
growth
development
transition
impermanence
mortality
death



Tree Chaining
(antithesis)

death-interference
with life & development
inhibition
restraint
modification
variation
mutation
transition
endurance
adaptation
change
survival
life

Haiku-Burial
(synthesis)

induction
semination
idea/reason
succession
development
transmittal
preservation of concepts
survival
growth/evolution
continuum
transcendence

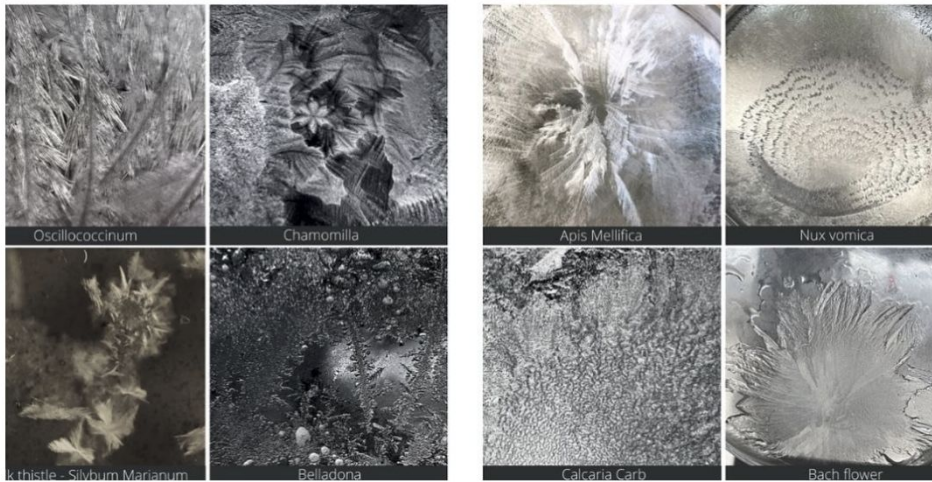
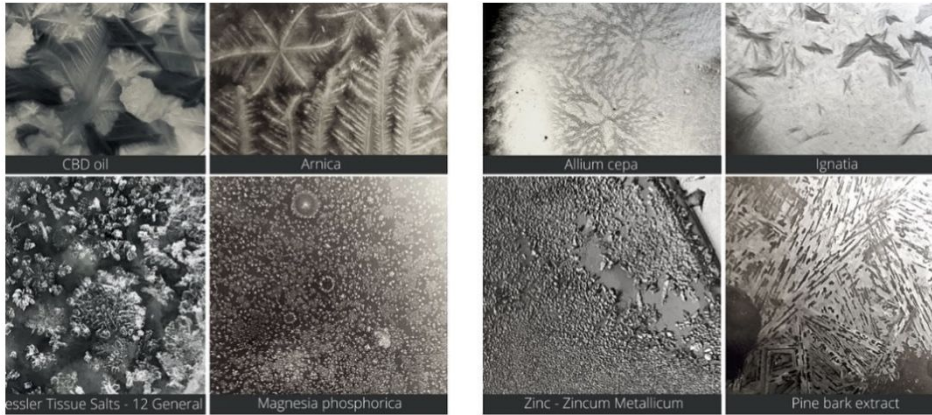
Rice/Tree/Burial,
Agnes Denes,
1968.

‘On one hand indicates time passing, returning to the soil,
disintegration and transformation but also acts as a metaphor for
human intelligence and transcendence through the communication
of ideas
to our future descendants’.

Absolutes and intermediates, Agnes Denes, 2020.



Dust Cave, Laura Blight, 2018.



Crystallography, Veda Austin, n/d.



Body Farm, Sally Mann, 2003.



*In the beginning
and without end,*
Laura Blight, 2018.

‘Do we need a final farewell?’

The Moral Maze, BBC Radio 4 Podcast, 2024.

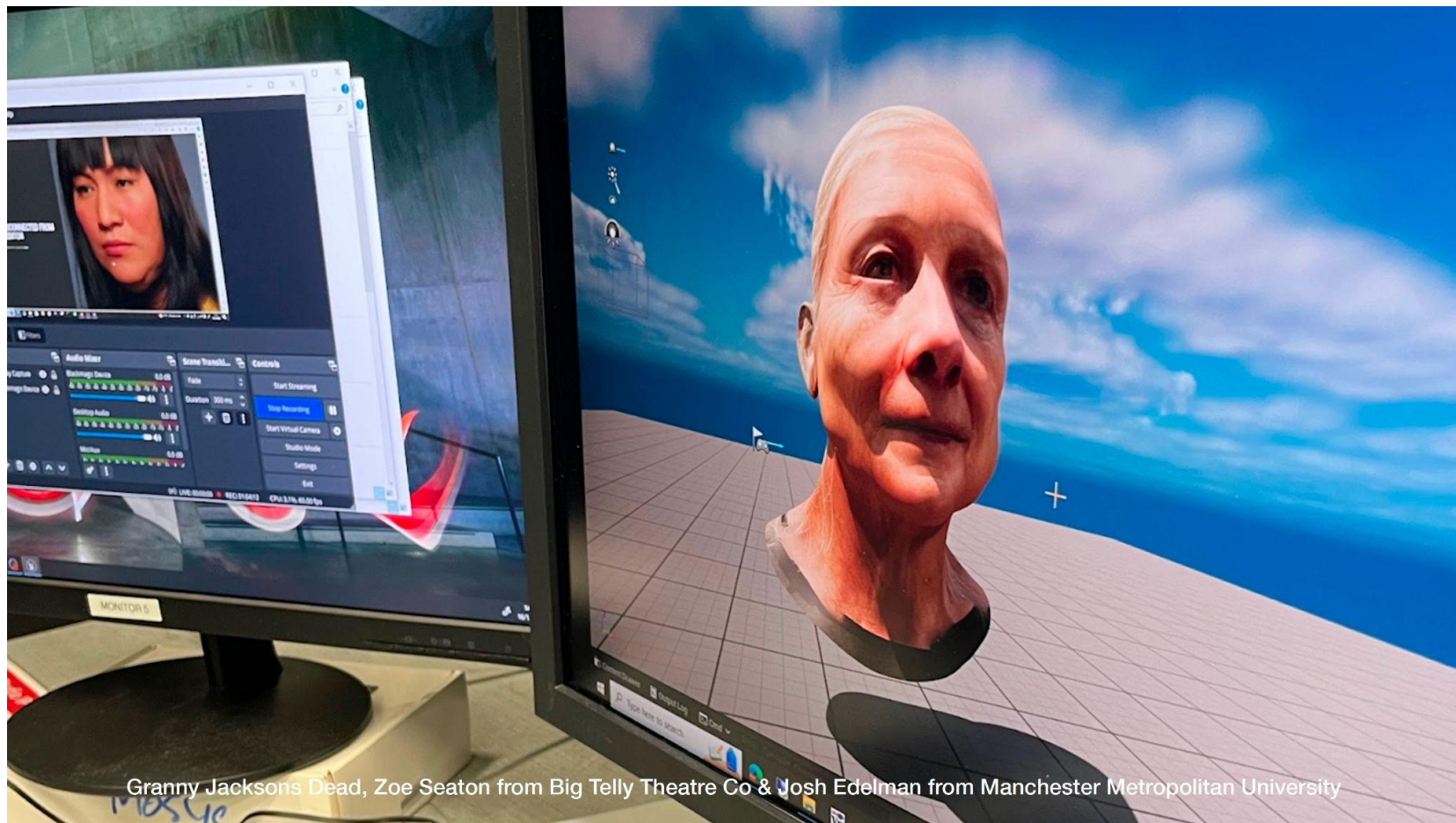
How will this disconnection from the materiality of death impact the way we grieve and remember?

‘The interplay of what is made visible and what is buried, that which is retained and that which is lost in the material cultures of death, has an impact in terms of possibilities of memory and forgetting’.

Death, Memory and Material Culture, Elizabeth Hallam, 2001.

What impact will AI driven grief tech have in our ability to recall and process our experiences of death?

How will AI shift our attitudes to the changing culture of death?



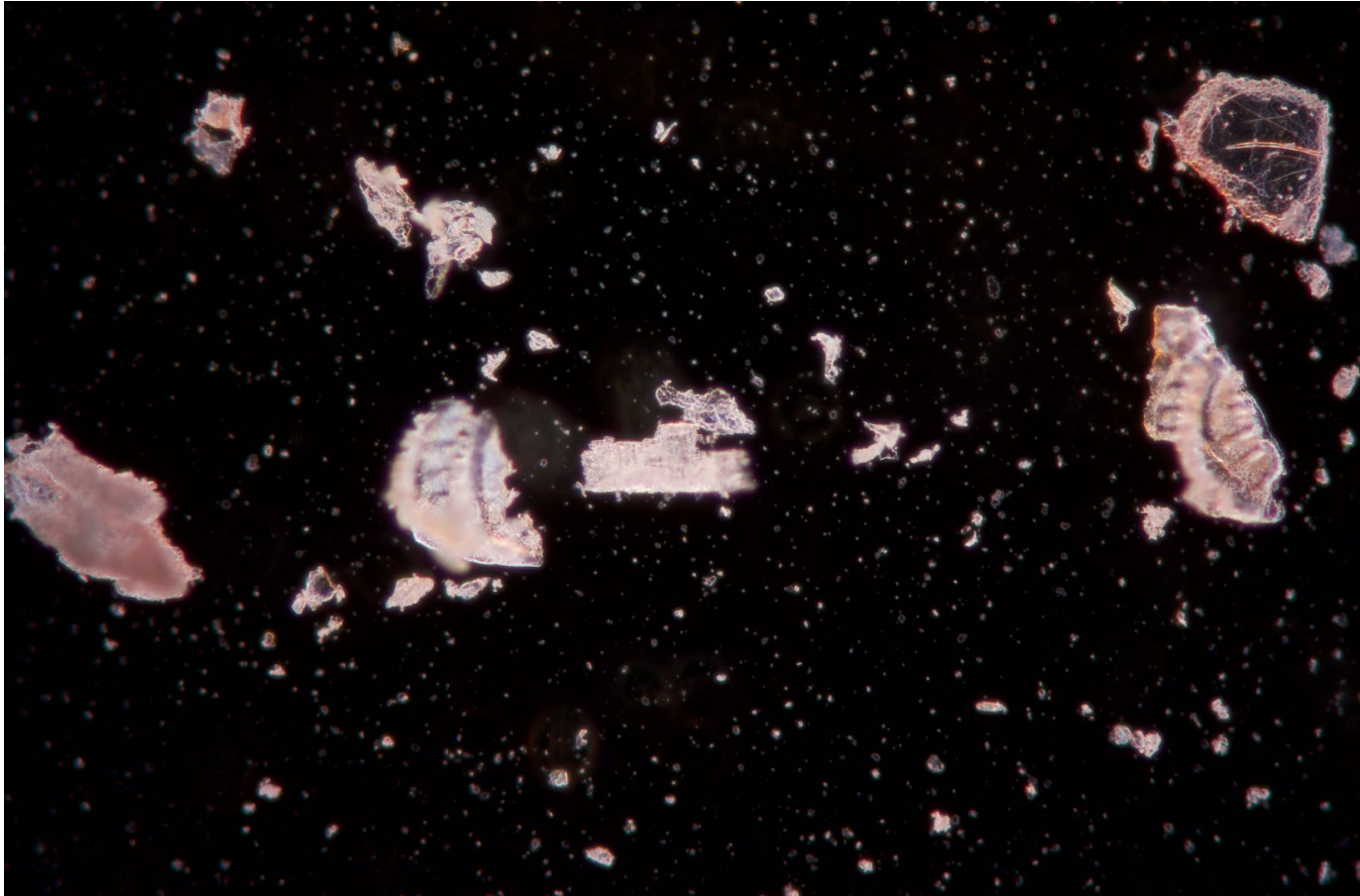
Granny Jacksons Dead, Zoe Seaton from Big Telly Theatre Co & Josh Edelman from Manchester Metropolitan University

Photography by Neil Harrison

‘We aimed to explore what grief technology might do if we let it into our lives. It questioned if we can or should use technology in a healthy way to help us mourn and remember’.

Granny Jackson's Dead, Manchester Metropolitan University

& Big Telly Theatre Production, n/d.



Domestic dust under the microscope, Laura Blight, 2024.



The Hereafter Institute,
Gabriel Barcia-Colombo,
2016.

‘What if dust could be sentient, like the animated soot particles in the film *Spirited Away* by Studio Ghibli’.

On Grief and Studio Ghibli, Karl Thomas Smith, 2022.

‘Each person, human or no,
is bound to every other in a
reciprocal relationship’.

Braiding Sweetgrass, Robin Wall
Kimmerer, 2020.



Mossy jumper, Laura Blight, 2023.

How will the material absence of the body in death rituals reshape our relationship and connection with death and commemoration?

Can photographic images in death rituals serve as a bridge between the material and the digital, and how does this intersection shape our understanding of presence and absence in mourning?

‘Dust crosses the boundaries between the living and the dead, plant and animal matter, the earth and the sky, the inside and the outside, you and the world - *for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Dust, Michael Marder, 2016.

Thank you!

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