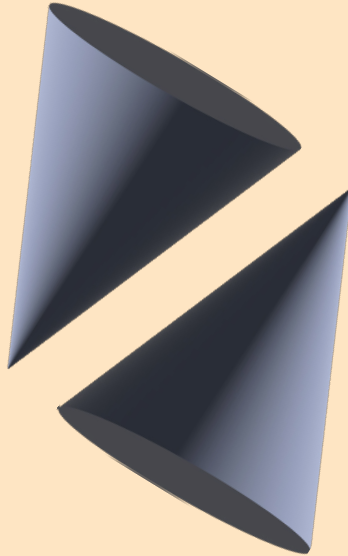


on death



Each one of us will die. It is one of the only major life events we are all guaranteed to experience, yet we can only describe it as witnesses or speculators. We see the death of others, and we consider our own mortality, but we do not get the opportunity to describe our own death, at least as far as we know.

With this in mind, we propose to facilitate a series of conversations about death and dying, to collectively share in our feelings, our fears, and our losses. What are our own experiences with death? What are our beliefs, our rituals, or our superstitions? How do we want to die? What do we want to happen with our bodies and the objects we leave behind? How do we support ourselves and each other as it relates to dying?

We know these conversations may be challenging. By acknowledging that tension, both collective and personal, we will achieve greater connections with ourselves and each other.

We will decorate Curiouser & Curiouser, inside and out, to promote supported, safe vulnerability. This means making the space comfortable through furniture, lighting, and decorations (plants, art, etc.). This also means finding the proper balance between private and public, encouraging people to share while respecting their boundaries.

In addition to these conversations, we will invite participants to submit writing in the form of an epitaph. The combination of brevity and intensity inherent to this form will spark new modes of thought while activating different parts of the brain than those that are used for talking. We will share these epitaphs both online and in a booklet.

In the end, we hope that by making space for these conversations we will be able to expand our capacity for our feelings around death. In turn, we may be able to gain a better awareness of the kinds of relationships we want to have with death, ourselves, and each other.

Who We Are

This is a new collaboration between QeeQee Gao and David Alpert. QeeQee and David have known each other for several years, meeting during *Arts + Medicine*, a series that QeeQee initiated for students and faculty at the University of Kansas Medical Center. QeeQee and David believe in the multifaceted nature of people and our world, and they are excited to approach their mutual interests through a non-delineated, cross-disciplinary lens.



QeeQee Gao

QeeQee Gao is a fourth year medical student at the University of Kansas School of Medicine in pursuit of becoming a psychiatrist. She seeks deep understanding and connection with the human mind and heart — which are the motivating factors for her pursuit of art and medicine. From living and dying to neurons and networks, she is captivated by all things human. She created *Med Intima*, an online creative magazine, as a space for medical students to create, express, and reflect. She graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in biology.

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David Alpert

David Alpert is an artist and curator based in Kansas City, Missouri. He likes interactions, compassion, and exploring feelings. He researches and promotes his interests through a visual dialogue. Past projects include an annual writing competition about love, a series of rare book tours, and an experimental documentary about the death of his grandfather.

He is a core member of Stray Cat Film Center and an MFA candidate in the Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute College of Art. He holds a BA in economics from Occidental College.

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Potential Partners

Arts + Medicine: The purpose of the Arts + Medicine project is to bring together learners from different perspectives to explore the intersection of art and medicine. Through the exploration of the humanities in medicine and vice versa, we hope to enrich both disciplines through interaction and reflection.

Med Intima: Med Intima is an online magazine that features content created by and for medical students. Its purpose is to connect the community with the fundamental humanistic aspect of medicine through art, literature, and storytelling.

www.kumcquarterly.wordpress.com

Stray Cat Film Center: Stray Cat Film Center is an artist-run, non-profit microcinema. Organized by volunteer programmers, Stray Cat screens everything from documentaries to video art to cult films and is open to the entire range of moving image expressions—-independent, activist, underground and bizarre. They are a space that supports all of KC's cinematic communities and celebrates diversity of expression, fun & radical art. (David is a member of their working board)

www.straycatfilmcenter.com

Reality Club: Reality Club works together with open minds and compassion to explore reality through the arts. They organize unique artistic events and programming dispersed throughout the Kansas City area and online. Reality Club is a pseudo-organization that David uses for curating.

www.realityclub.art

Sources

- *Gratitude*, Oliver Sacks
- *Being Mortal*, Atul Gawande
- *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life*, Louise Aronson
- *The Five Invitations*, Frank Ostaseski
- *A Matter of Death and Life*, Irvin D. Yalom
- *When Dinosaurs Die, A Guide to Understanding Death*, Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown (illustrated by)
- *Thanatology, Death and Dying with Cole Imperi*, part of *Ologies* by Alie Ward. <https://www.alieward.com/ologies/thanatology>