

Contested Futures: Research into the Material Culture of Cemeteries

Date : November 29, 2009

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This research is focused on the material culture of cemeteries, from architectural structures and monuments, to tombs, coffins and funeral paraphernalia. The main fieldwork site was West Norwood Cemetery, which is located in South London. This Victorian cemetery has the largest number of individually listed monuments of any cemetery in the UK and thus represents a unique opportunity to study the role of heritage and conservation practices in the context of cemeteryscapes.

Working together with professionals from the funeral industry, cemetery staff, volunteers, mourners and members of the general public my research explores the meaning of Victorian cemeteries in contemporary society and questions the way in which they may develop in future. This led me to research new and emerging cemetery architecture, disposal methods and burial cultures.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the project is the way in which people and their practices are connected to the cemetery via means of production and consumption, ownership, professional and personal practices or by social relationships. Thus a single cemetery can have material and social connections throughout a network of communities all over the country.

Bringing together those individuals who have contributed so much to the project and providing a platform for some of the information and insights which could not be included in my thesis, a new collaborative blog called Cemeteryscapes allows information about funeral museums, coffin exhibitions and heritage practices as well as many other topics to be made available as an online resource.



For more information or to contribute a post, visit
<http://cemeteryscapes.blogspot.com>

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