

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

Dank Parish

VAULT Festival, London

27 February - 14 March 2019



Initial sketch for The Chapel

Creators: The Dank Parish company

Director: Chris Gunter

Producer: Natalie Scott

Designer: Meg Cunningham

Project Manager: Joe Iredale

Lighting Designer: Joe Thorpe

Costumes: Orla Jackson (and cast)

Stage Manager: Charlie Letchford-Swann



Cast/Creators

The Priest: Nigel Munson / Rob Thompson

The Funeral Director: Becky Bone

The Lawyer: Rosaleen Burton

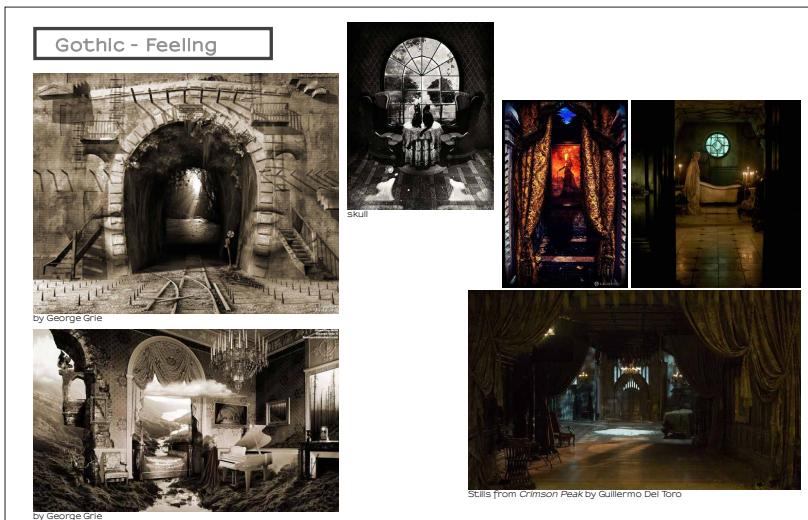
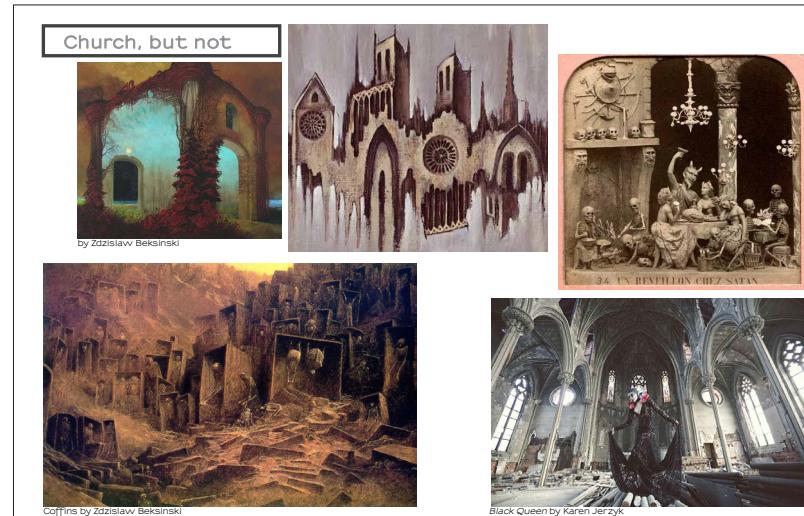
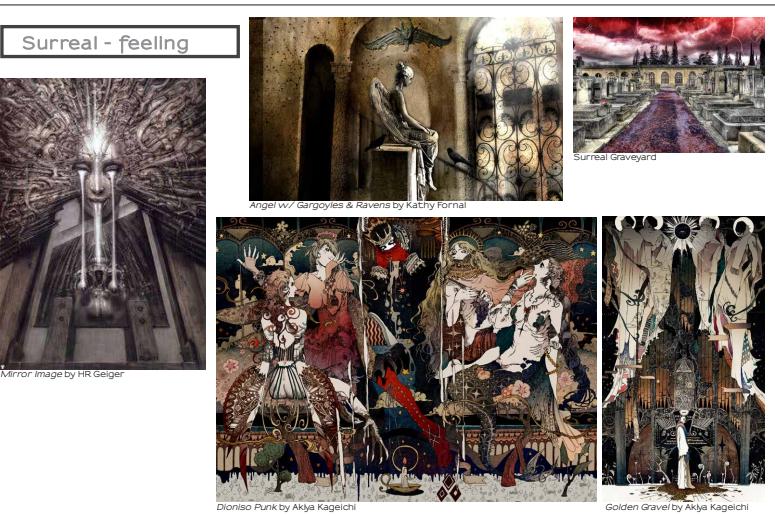
Cartographer: Chris Gunter

Wise Woman: Orla Jackson

Gravedigger 1: George Mills

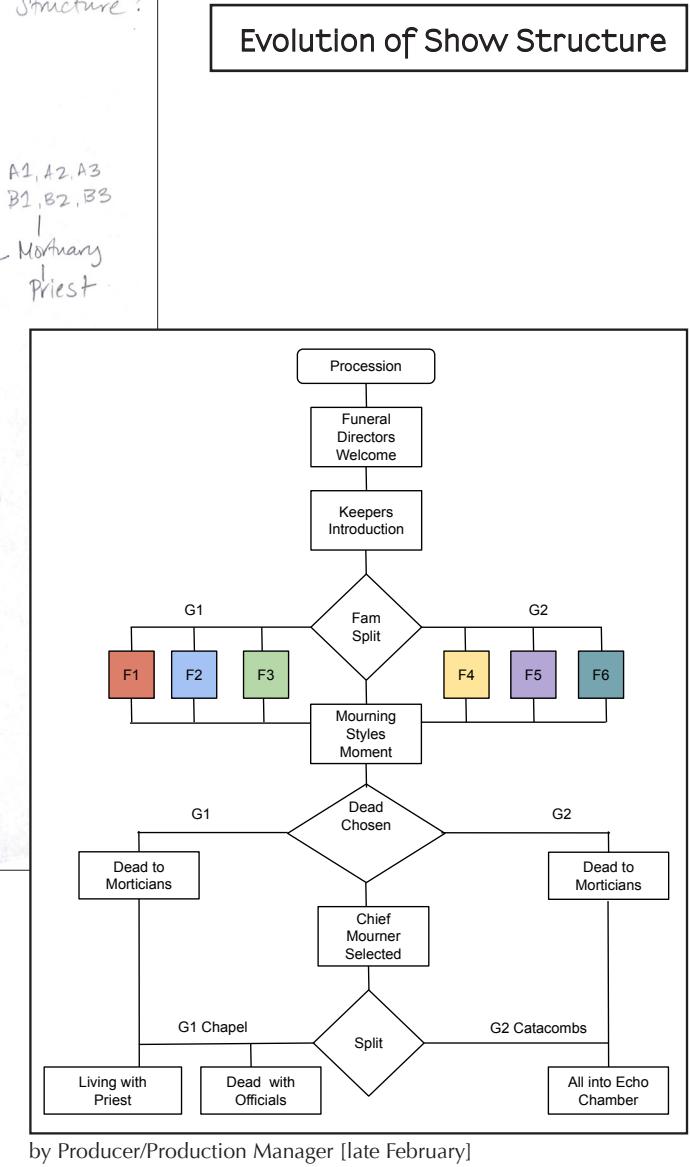
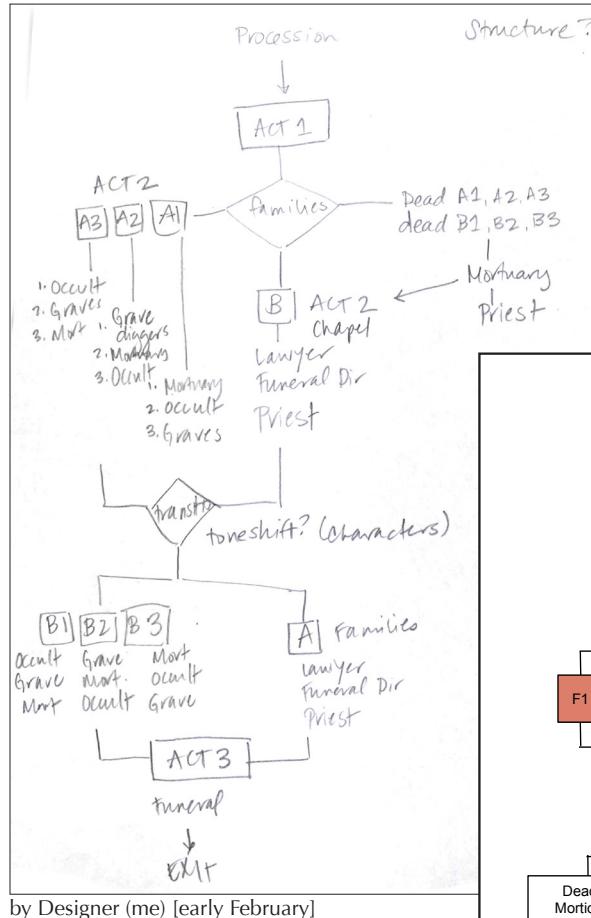
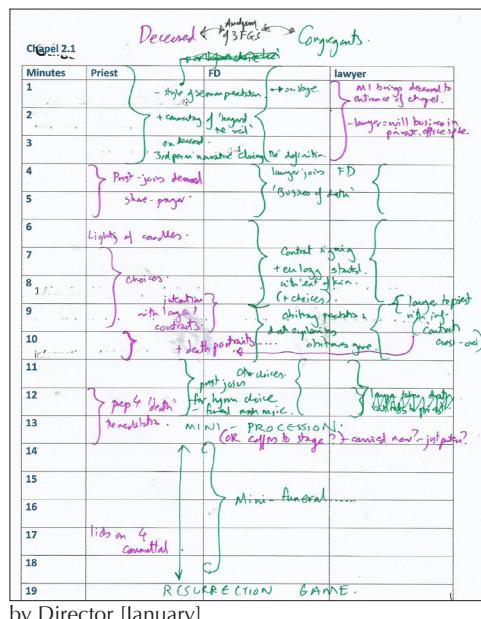
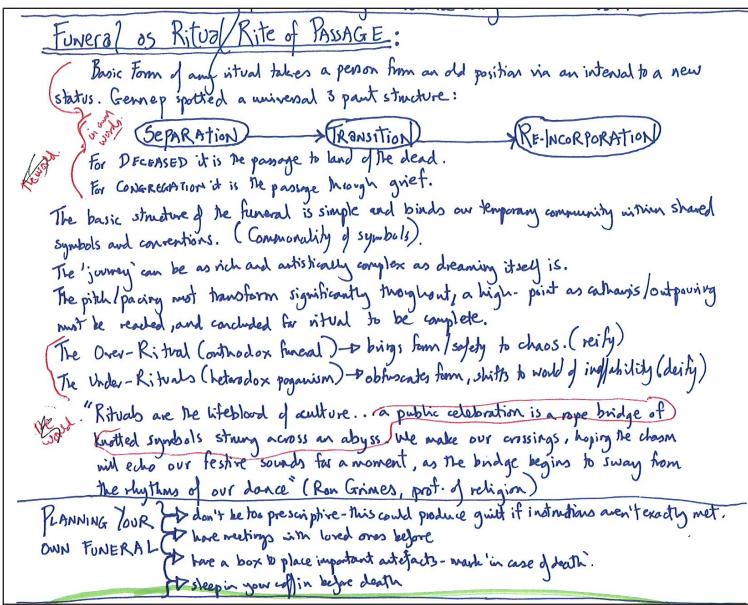
Gravedigger 2: Andy Broadhurst

Morticians: Fourth Monkey students
(changed for each performance)

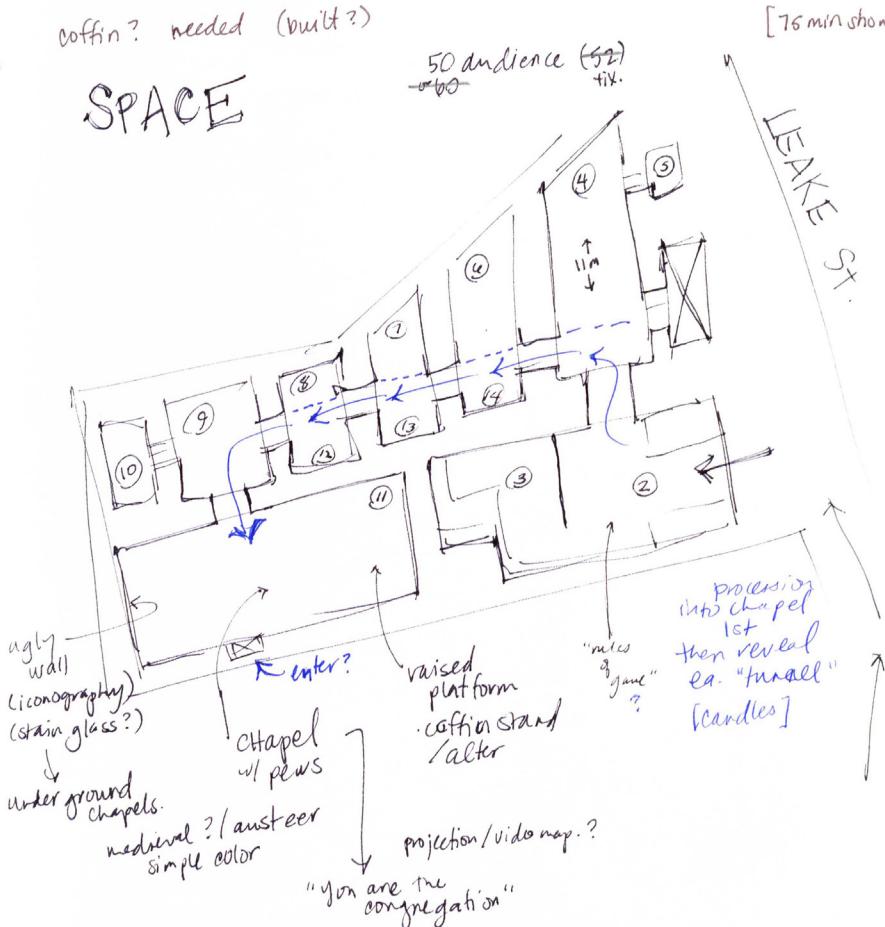


Initial Visual Research





First Sketch Plan (in sketchbook),
drawn during a meeting with Director
and team



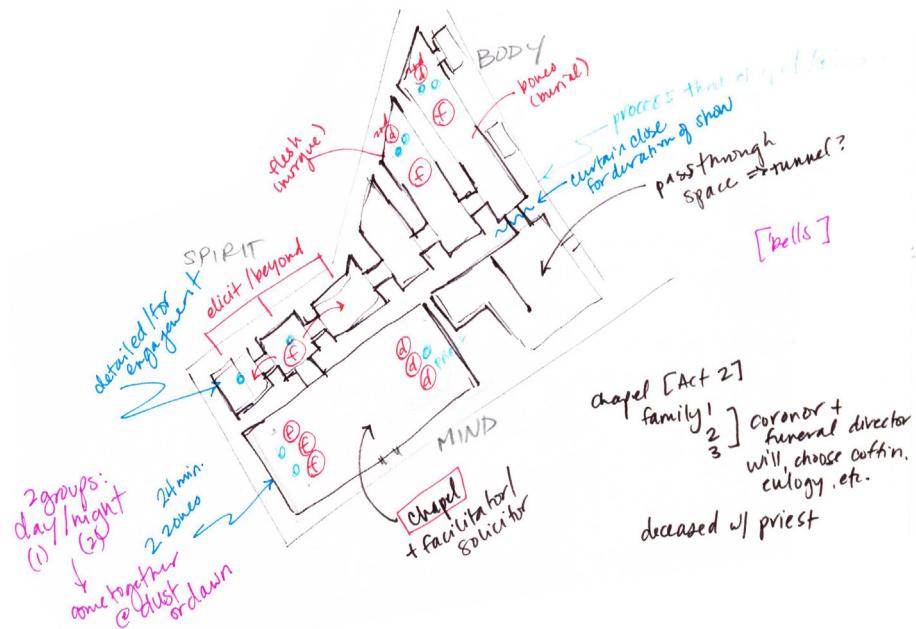
Evolution of Plan

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Legend for Plan

- ① Chapel. - "churchy"
↓ - gathering space
- interaction.
sacrosanct [focus point] - change / transform?
[church & sturdy Virgin - outside of time.) congregation / "church" oriental.
facilitate protest taking - be aware
· confession booth?
· font / font
- ② curiosity room: explore-able / handle-able
(museum of objects) letters / law / books / jars
objects / oddities [storage furniture] (un-manned)?
tone: text of Virgin ← add to it.
ch 1 = 1st show, ch 2 = 2nd show, etc... museum
feels objective
↳ look @ things "room".
- ③ "wailing wall" (unmanned)
& tags? cubbies? graffiti? blank to be added on to.
recording / living remembrance. warning?
tree? roots?
- ④ medium room - private (x1) - tiny table (crystal wall
"seance room" "charlatan"
"fortune teller")
- ⑤ "Mortuary" Vibe: "contemporary" / "clinical" - bedlam - clean.
Victorian hospital (nurse)
sheets / tables etc. sink?
↳ contrast
- ⑥ Grave digger - dirt. (x2)
(rubber crawl b - covarts?)
Memorials
↳ varieties of monuments / headstones / statues?
sagas / legends
Burial Ground.
- ⑦ crypt?
rotting decay?
earth?
buried bones?
- ⑧ illicit room - for elite)
wall up? sacrifice naughty child?
channel house?
↳ organized by bone or body.
popper's funeral
- ⑨ office / funeral processing room. (x1)
forgotten souls
- ⑩ green room.
- ⑪ mythos of virgin (v.o.?)
universal / mythos / constellation room / galaxy room
- ⑫ (13) (14) (15) shrine spaces - 3 iterations of similar idea.
- rep of "Virgin"? worshipping "virgin"

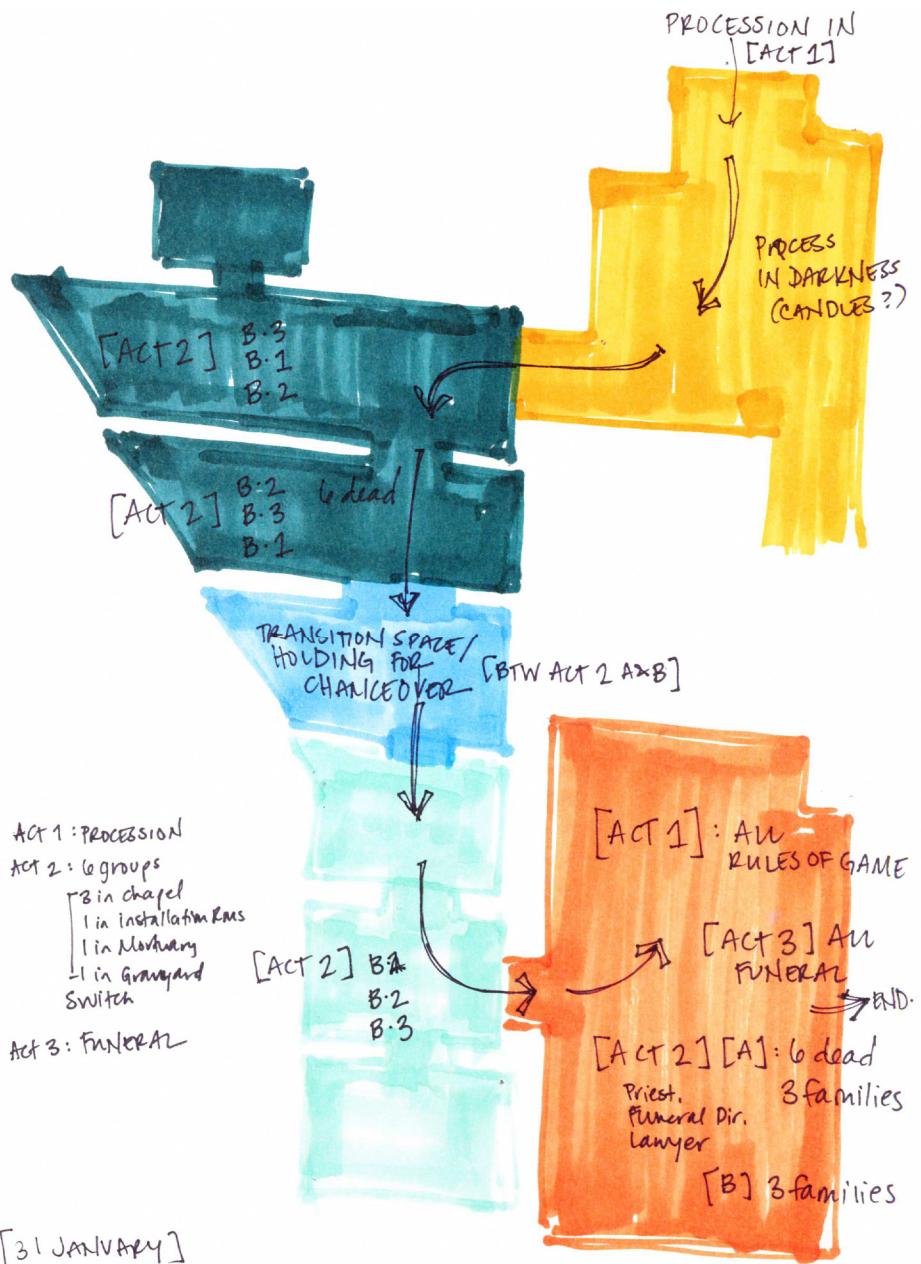
Second Sketch Plan (in sketchbook), drawn during a meeting with Director and team

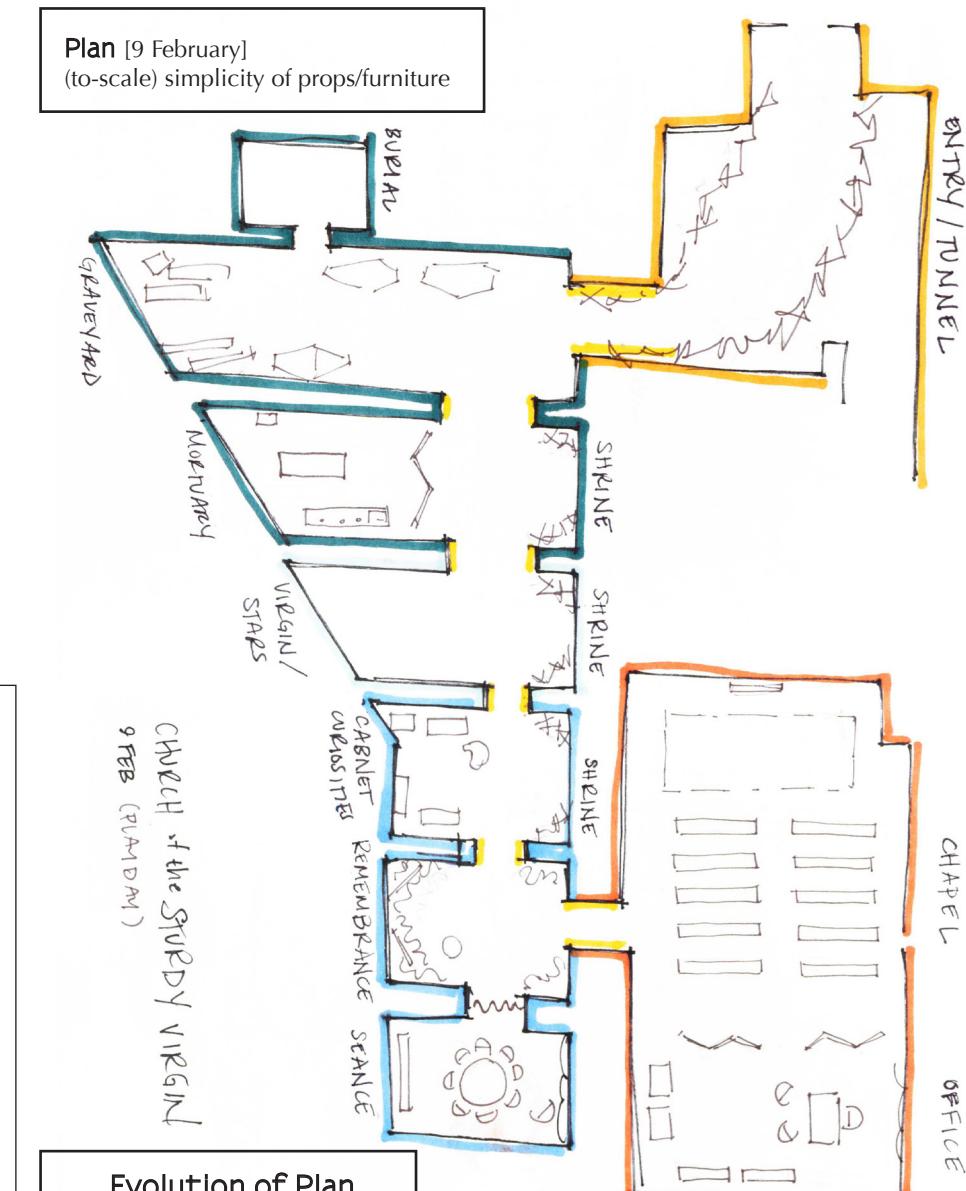


Diagrammatic Plan [31 January], tracking show structure and dramaturgy in development

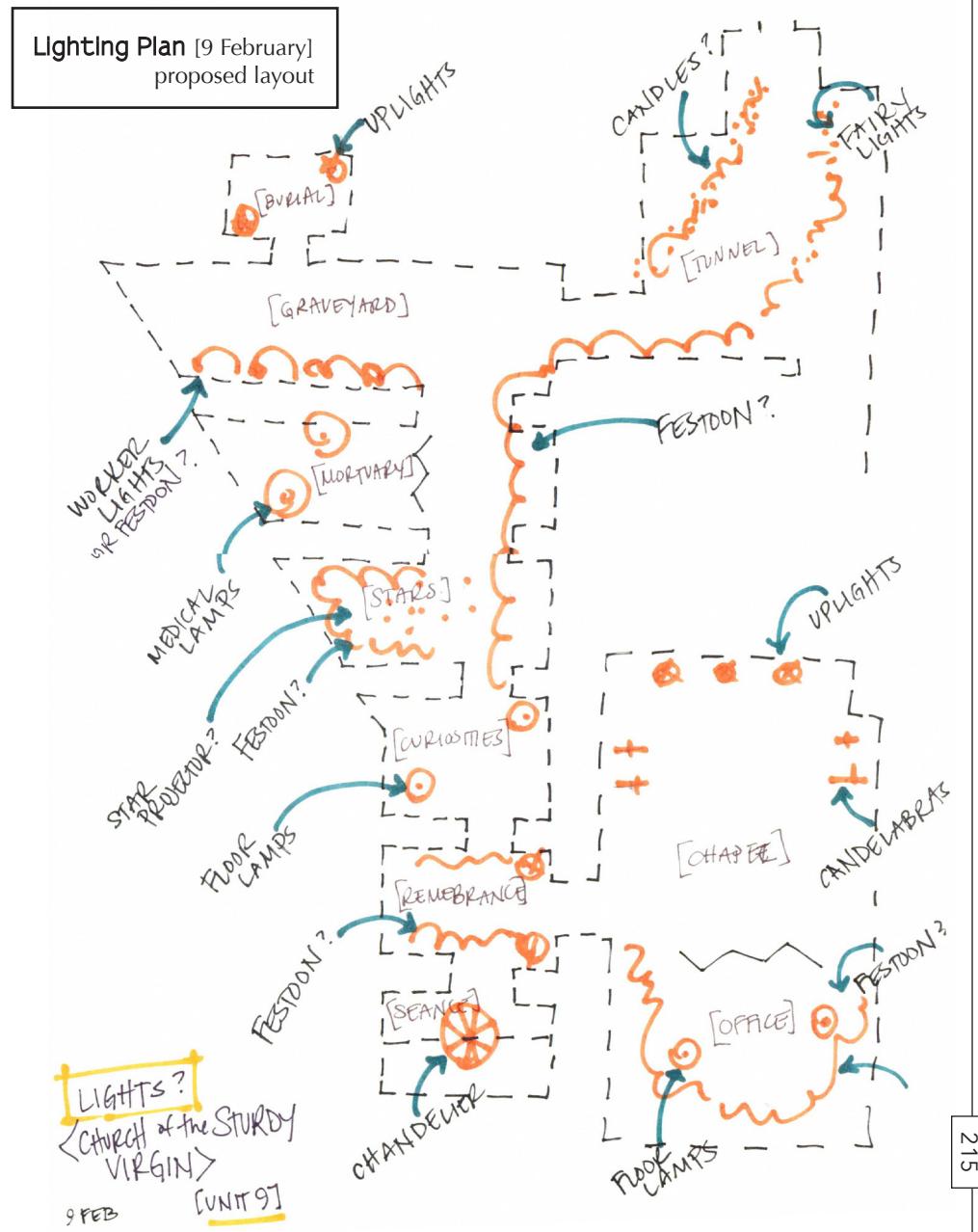
Evolution of Plan

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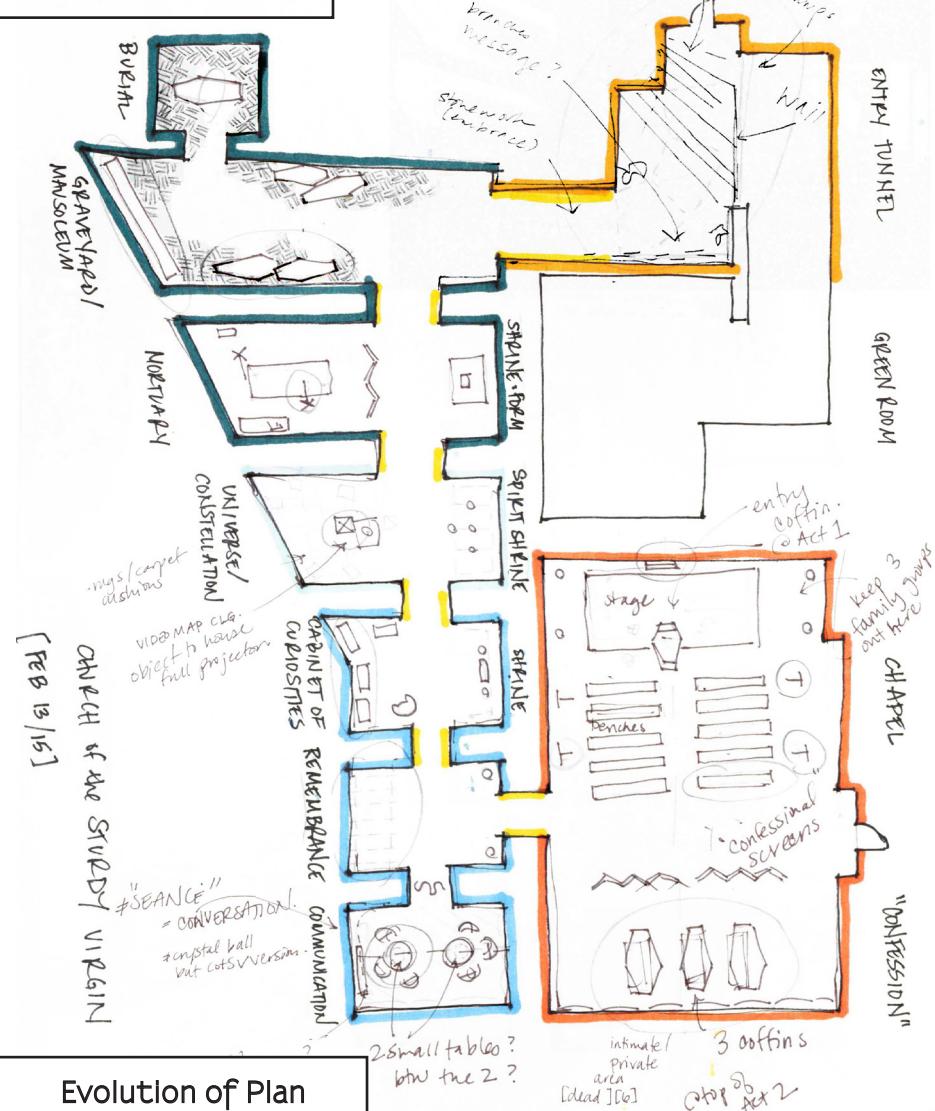




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Set Plan [15 February] (to-scale) notes from meeting

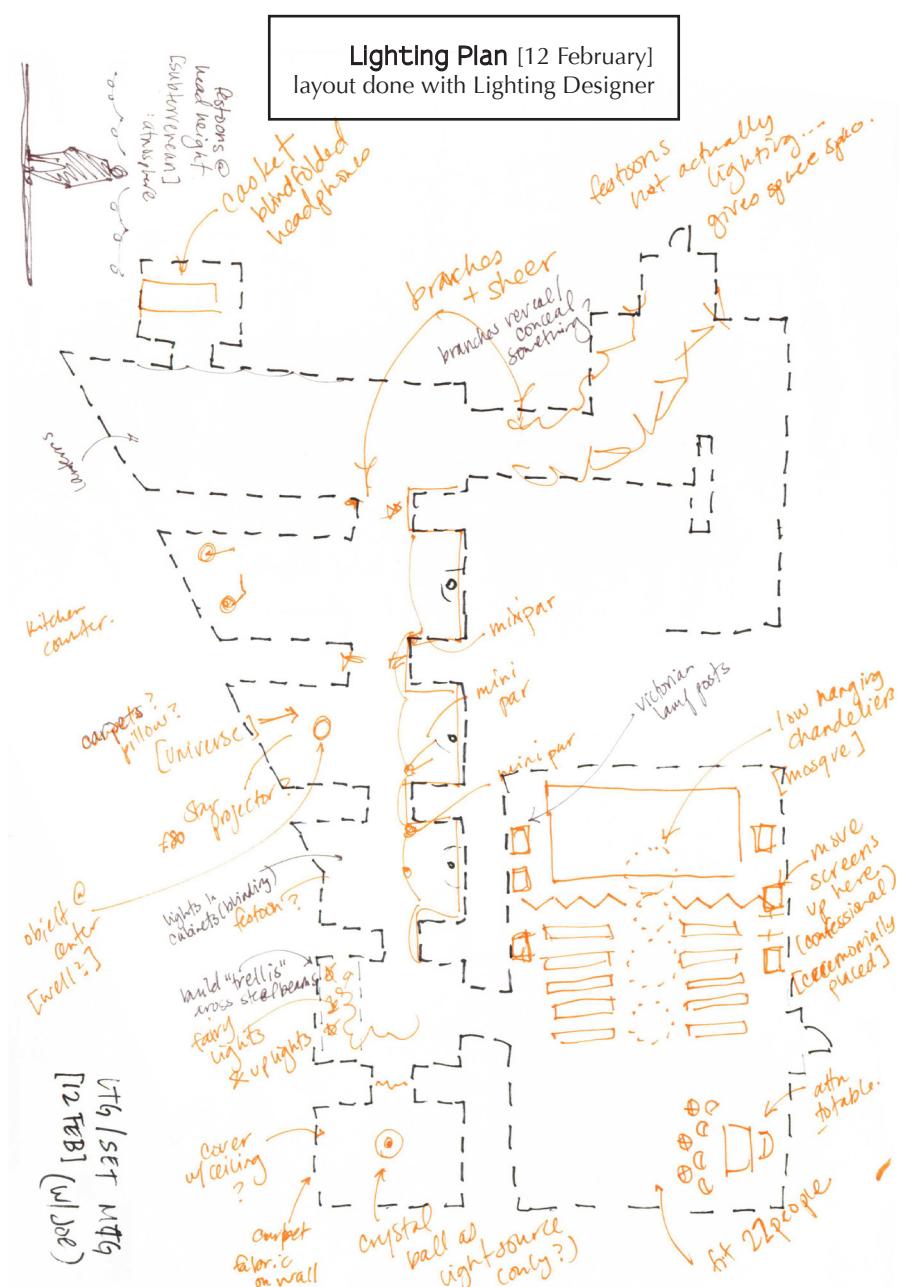


Evolution of Plan

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Lighting Plan [12 February] layout done with Lighting Designer





Pre-Set



The Cartographer welcome

photo: Ali Wright



Look-back

Procession

"Follow us to the Church of the Sturdy Virgin."

"As we move forward, keep pace. Maintain a somber and respectful attitude. Proceed."

"Don't be distracted by the shadows."



Procession through tunnels



Procession down Leake St.



Install



Install



Install

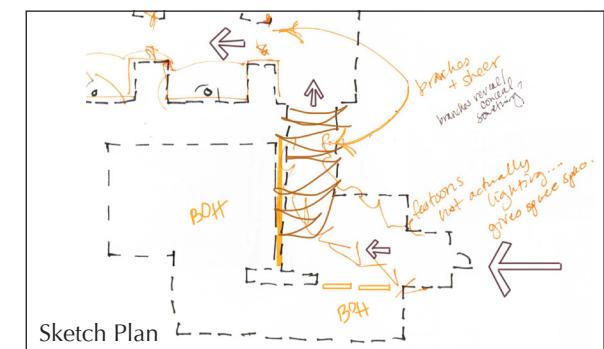


Install

Entry Sequence

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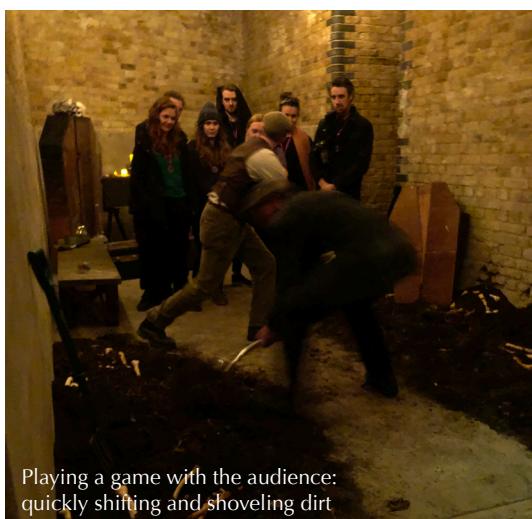
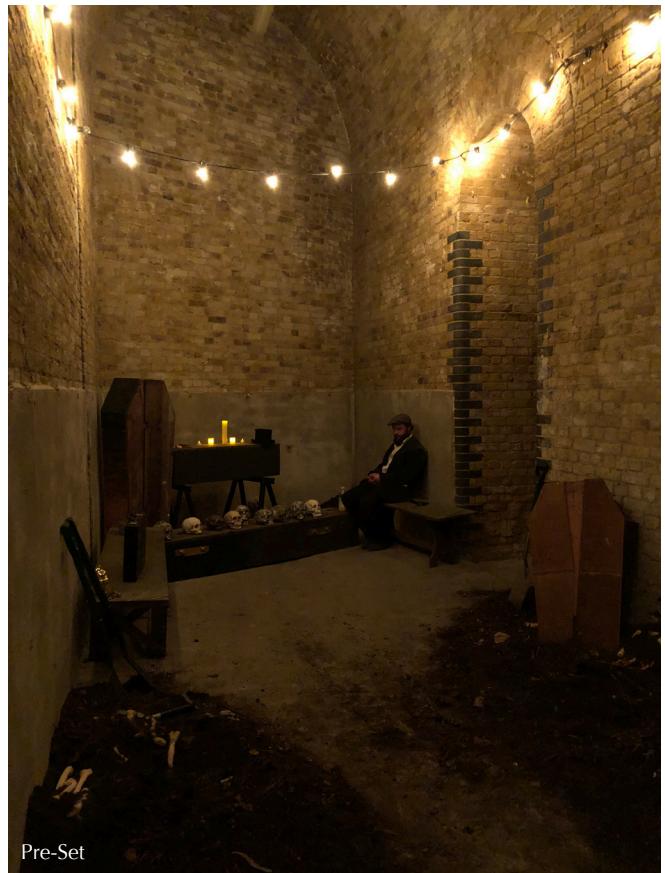
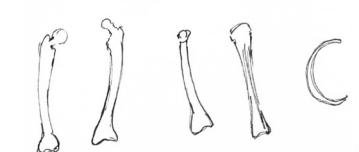
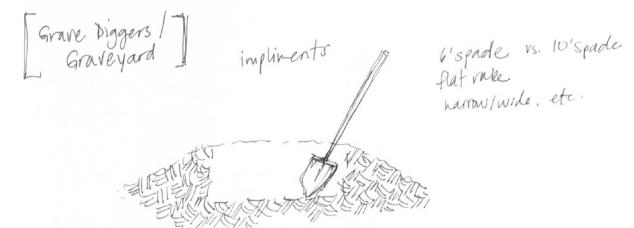


photo: Ali Wright

Burial
View from inside coffin

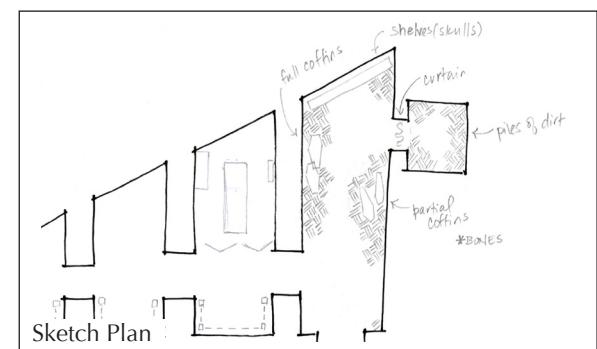


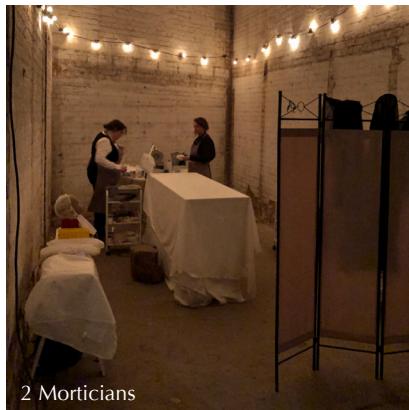
One-on-one experience:
what it is like to be buried
in a coffin? Lie down in
coffin, the lid closes, and
Gravedigger 1 shovels dirt
onto hollow wood lid.
Terrifying.



Burial Ground & Chamber

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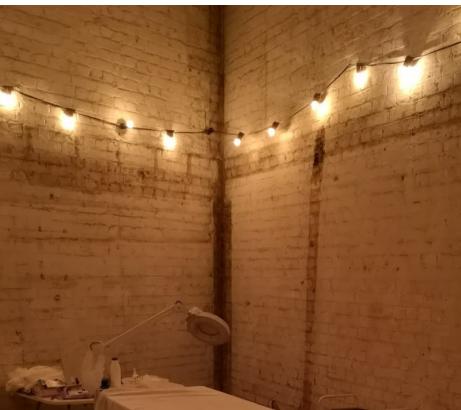




2 Morticians



Interacting with the audience: "making up" The Deceased



Pre-Set

"We have called her *The Sturdy Virgin*, but she is older than names. [...] Sturdiness is not denial, it is cosmic grace; the strength in the depth of your feeling and the courage to love through pain."

- V.O. for projection



Mapped projection

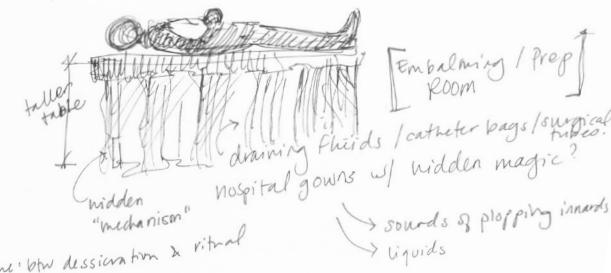


Praying

Constellation Room

A place of contemplation that also gave the mythos of The Sturdy Virgin through voice over.

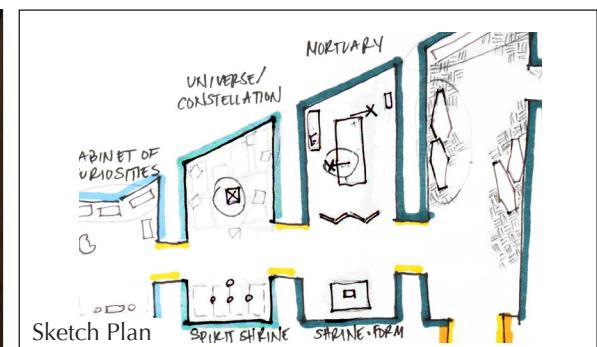
A looping video was mapped into small coffin, sitting on layers of carpets.



Sketch of proper Victorian embalming table.



Misc. medical props and dressing



Mortuary & Constellation Room

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Pre-Set



Vaulted tunnel ceiling



Interaction: Audience chooses a curio from the shelves that represents The Deceased



Wide variety of curios on shelves

The Almanac

Audience Families are encouraged to write words of wisdom in the book. During the funeral, some words are read aloud.

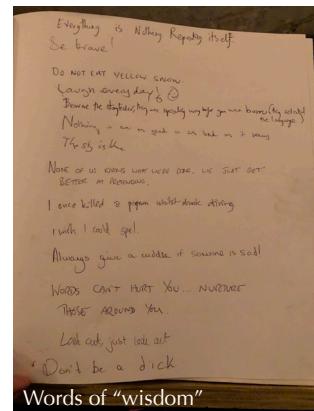
To One & All
...
Stay Sturdy



Pre-set on pedestal



Priest reading The Almanac

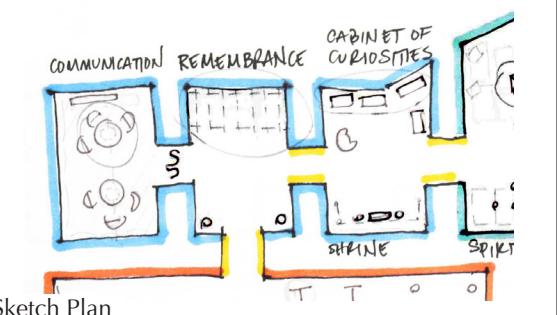


Words of "wisdom"

Cabinet of Curiosities

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Sketch Plan



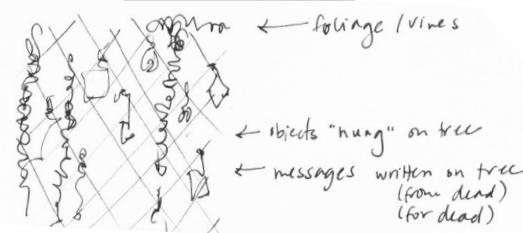
Communication/Seance

Interaction: The Wise Woman introduces mysteries/spiritualities of death through theatricalized scrying, possession and messages from beyond.

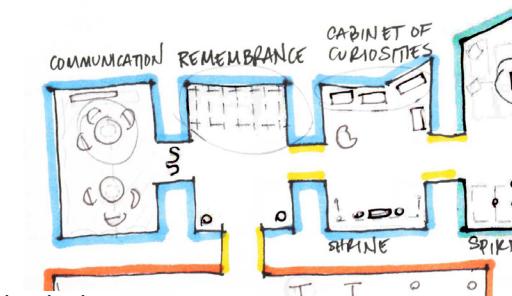
Remembrance & Communication

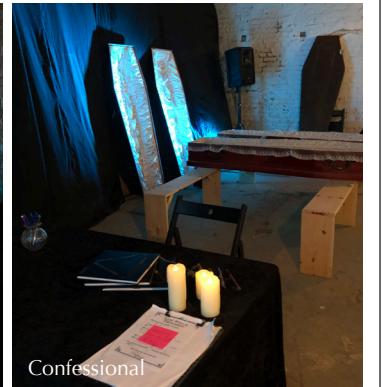
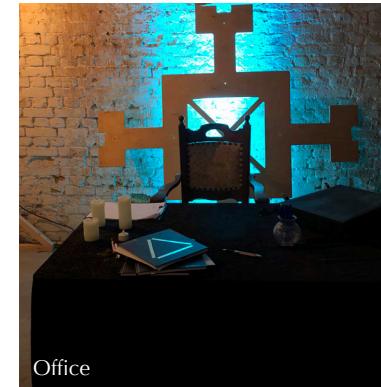
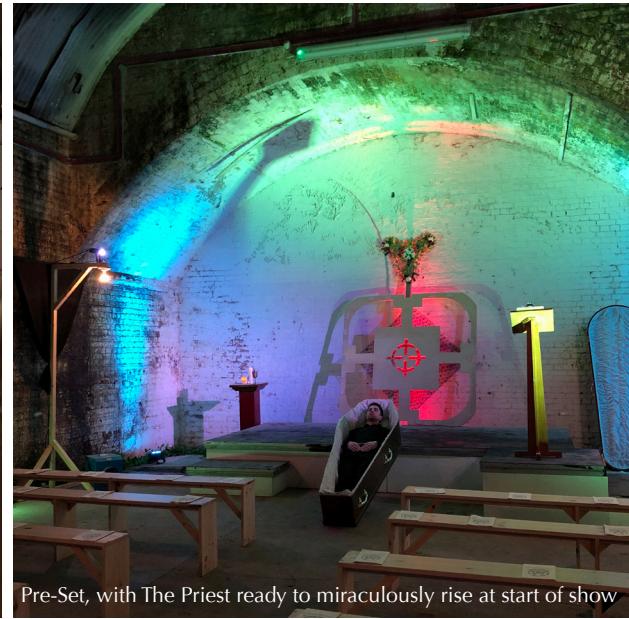
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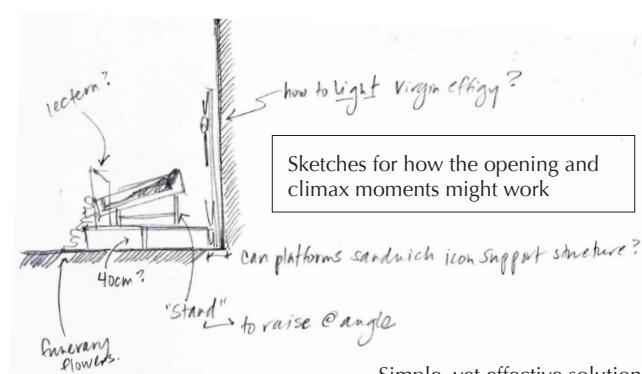


The Ancestral Creeper
(a tree of remembrance)
This area was featured in an interactive task set by The Wise Woman

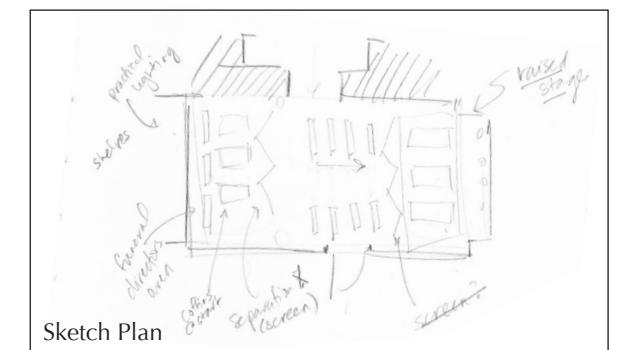
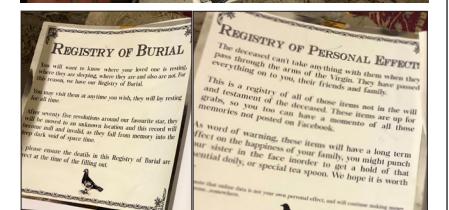




Office: Business of Death
Where The Lawyer (character),
The Deceased (audience) and
Family (audience) sign all
documents for the funeral.



Simple, yet effective solution



Chapel

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H.R. Giger Mirror Image (1977)

Aesthetic of The Virgin

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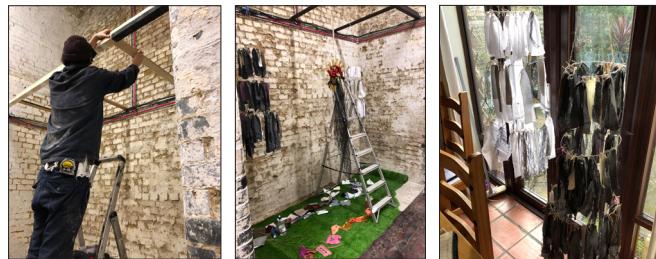
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Effigies for *The Sturdy Virgin*

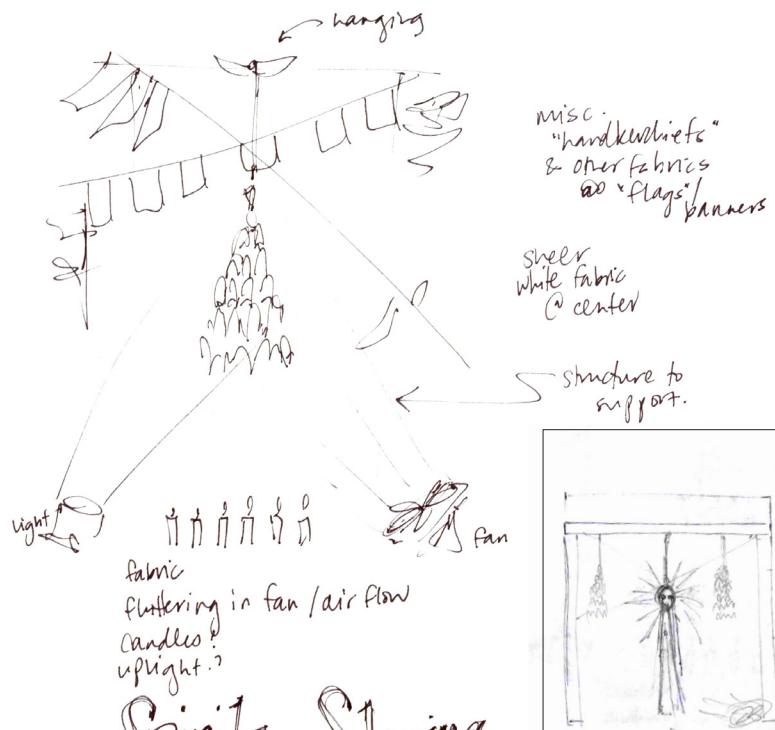
All 12 effigies were design iterations of the same idea: lace, flowers and reflective/mirror plus gold, black and red.

Triads of effigies installed on site



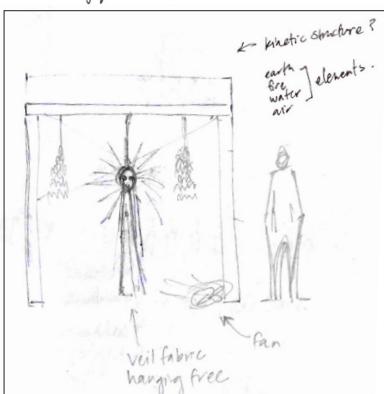


Making & installing the hanging elements for this shrine



Shrine : Virgin-as-Spirit

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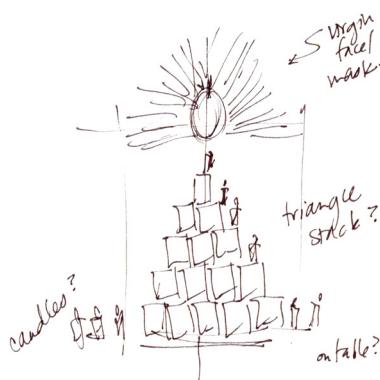


Kinetic sculpture hangs at head height



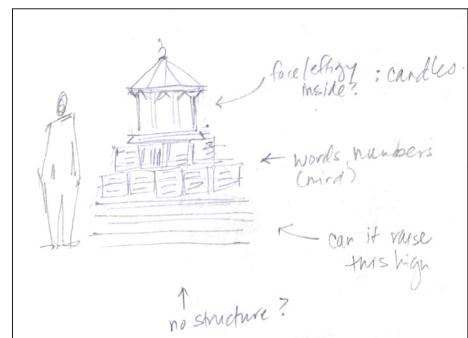
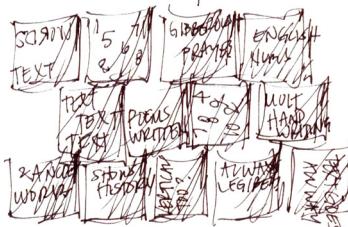


Making & installing the pedestal of the shrine



- Prayers
- Text/poems
- Numerology
- Shows history (handwriting, fading, barrels/boxes, script)

MIND Shrine



Shrine : Virgin-as-Mind

Plinth for effigy, candles and remembrances



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Making & installing the wall-braced shrine from wood planks



Shrine : Virgin-as-Body

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