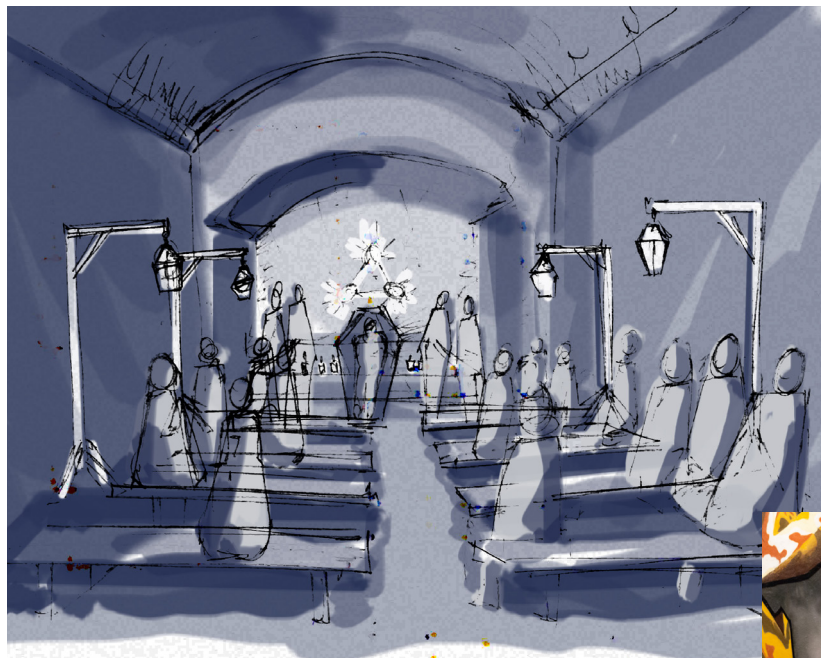


CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

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

Pre-show on Leake Street



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

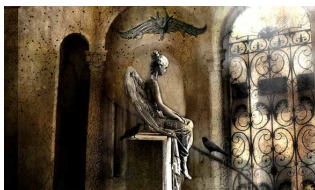
Gravedigger 2: Andy Broadhurst

Morticians: Fourth Monkey students
(changed for each performance)

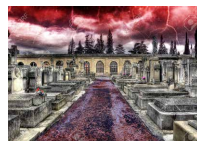
Surreal - feeling



Mirror Image by HR Geiger



Angels w/ Gargoyles & Ravens by Kathy Fornal



Surreal Graveyard



Dioniso Punk by Akya Kageichi



Golden Grave by Akya Kageichi

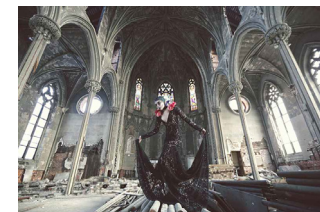
Church, but not



by Zdzisław Beksiński



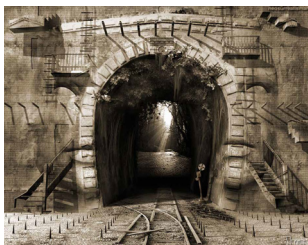
Coffins by Zdzisław Beksiński



Black Queen by Karen Jerzyk

Initial Visual Research

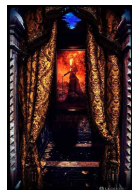
Gothic - Feeling



by George Grief



Skull



Stills from Crimson Peak by Guillermo Del Toro



by George Grief

Site Visit

Unit 9, Waterloo Vaults



CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN
VAULT Festival, London | 2019

Basic Form of any ritual takes a person from an old position via an interval to a new status. Gennep spotted a universal 3 part structure:

Basic Form of any ritual takes a person from an old position via an interval to a new status. Gennep spotted a universal 3 part structure:

SEPARATION

→ Transition

→ RE-INTEGRATION

For DECEASED it is the passage to land of the dead.
For CONGREGATION it is the passage through grief.

The basic structure of the funeral is simple and binds our temporary community within shared symbols and conventions. (Commonality of symbols).

The 'journey' can be as rich and artistically complex as dreaming itself is.

The pitch/pacing not transform significantly throughout, a high-point as catharsis/outpouring must be reached, and concluded for ritual to be complete.

The Over-Ritual (Orthodox funeral) → brings form/safety to chaos. (reify)

The Under-Rituals (heterodox paganism) → obfuscates form, shifts to world of ineffability (early)

"Rituals are the lifeblood of culture... a public celebration is a rope bridge of

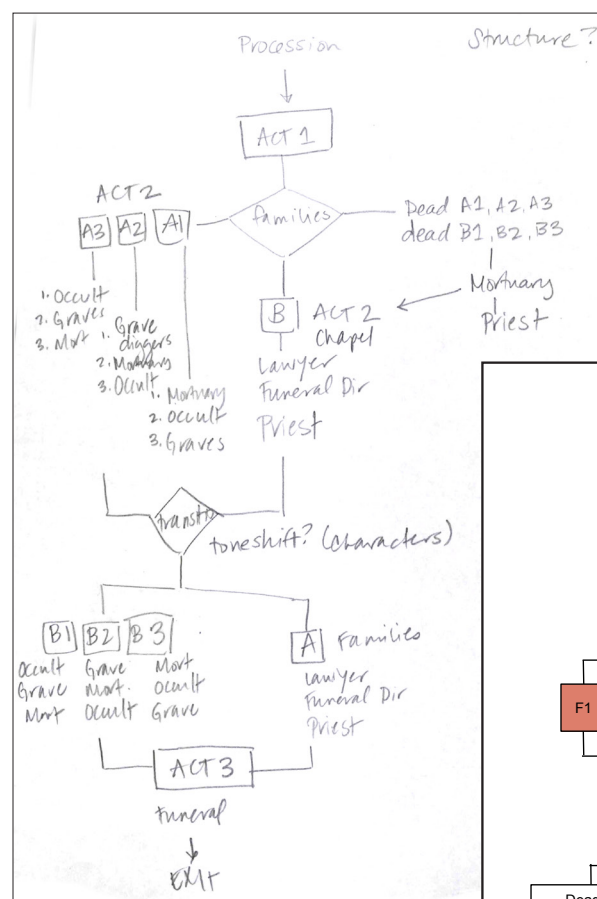
Knighted symbols strung across an abyss We make our crossings, hoping the chasm will echo our festive sounds for a moment, as the bridge begins to sway from the rhythms of our dance" (Ron Grimes, prof. of religion)

- don't be too prescriptive - this could produce guilt if instructions aren't exactly met.
- have meetings with loved ones before
- have a box to place important artefacts - make in case of death.
- sleep in your coffin before death

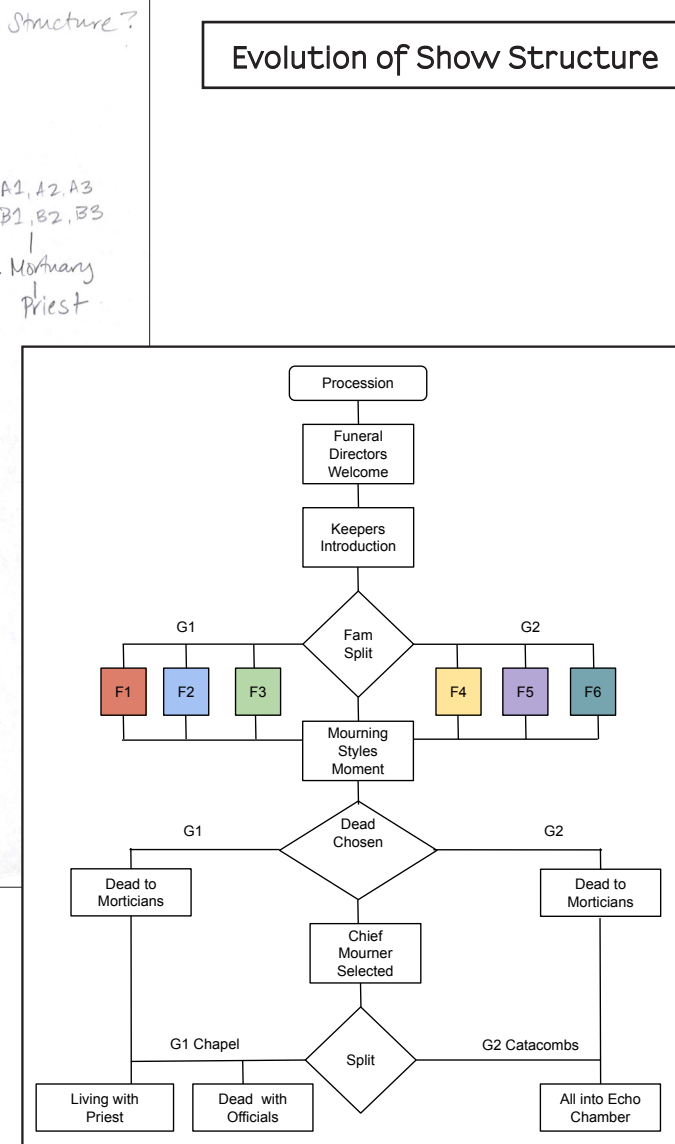
by Director [December]

Minutes	Priest	FD	lawyer
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			

by Director [January]



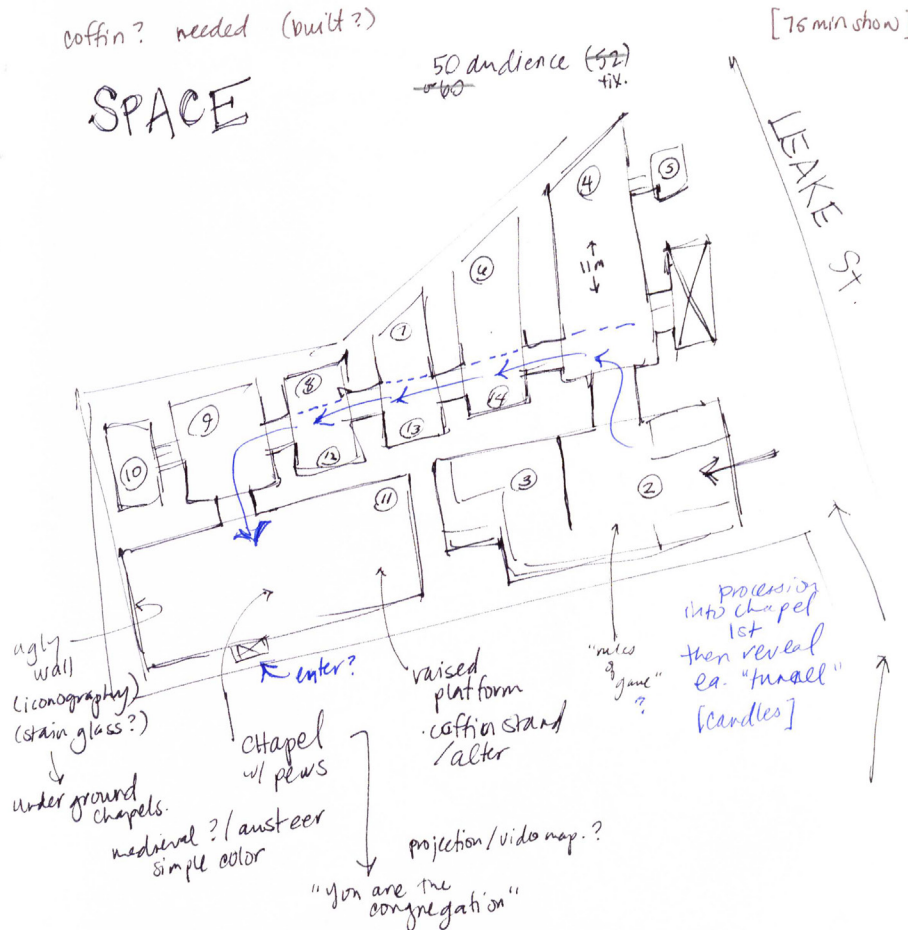
by Designer (me) [early February]



by Producer/Production Manager [late February]

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

Legend for Plan



Evolution of Plan

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

- ① Chapel - "churchy"
- gathering space - change / transform?
- interaction. [focus point] congregation / "church" oriented.
↓
sacrosanct projection - "manifestation" of Virgin?
- (church of sturdy virgin - outside of time.)
facilitate most talking - bearman
- confession booth?
- front / front

- ② curiosity room: explore-able / handle-able
(museum of objects) letters / law / books / jars
objects / odities [strange furniture] (un-manned)?
time: text of virgin - add to it. museum
ch 1 = 1st show, ch 2 = 2nd show, etc...
feels objective
↳ "look @ things" room.

- ③ "waiting wall" (unmanned)
- tags? cubbies? graffiti? blank to be added on to.
receding / writing remembrance. hanging?
tree? roots?

- ④ medium room - private (x1) - hanging table (crystal wall, hologram)
"seance room" "charlatan"
"fortune teller"

- ⑤ "Mortuary" Vibe: "contemporary" clinical: x1 clean.
Victorian hospital (Alienist)
sheets / tables etc. sink? contrast

- ⑥ Grave digger - dirt. (x2)
Memorials (rubber cream - ovens?)
varieties of monuments / headstones / statues? bones
sagas / legends
Burial ground.

crypt?
rotting / decay?
cubbies of bones?

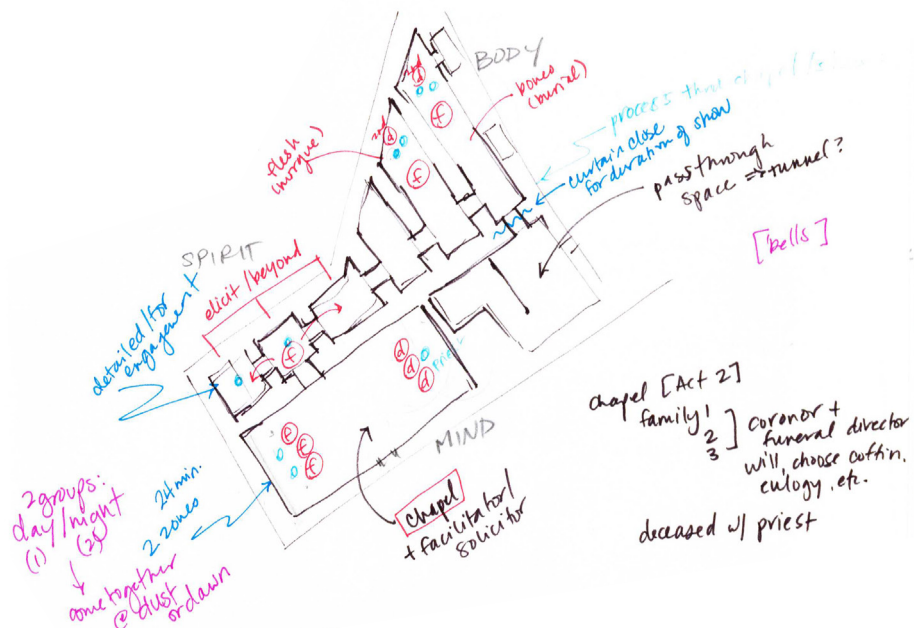


- ⑦ illicit room - (for elite)
wall up? sacrifice naughty child? channel house?
organised by bone or body.
copper's funeral
forgotten souls

- ⑧ office / funeral procession room. (x1)
- ⑨ mythos of virgin (V.O.?)
universal / mythos / constellation room / galaxy room

- ⑩ shrine spaces - iterations of similar ideas.
- rep of "virgin"? worshipping "virgin"

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

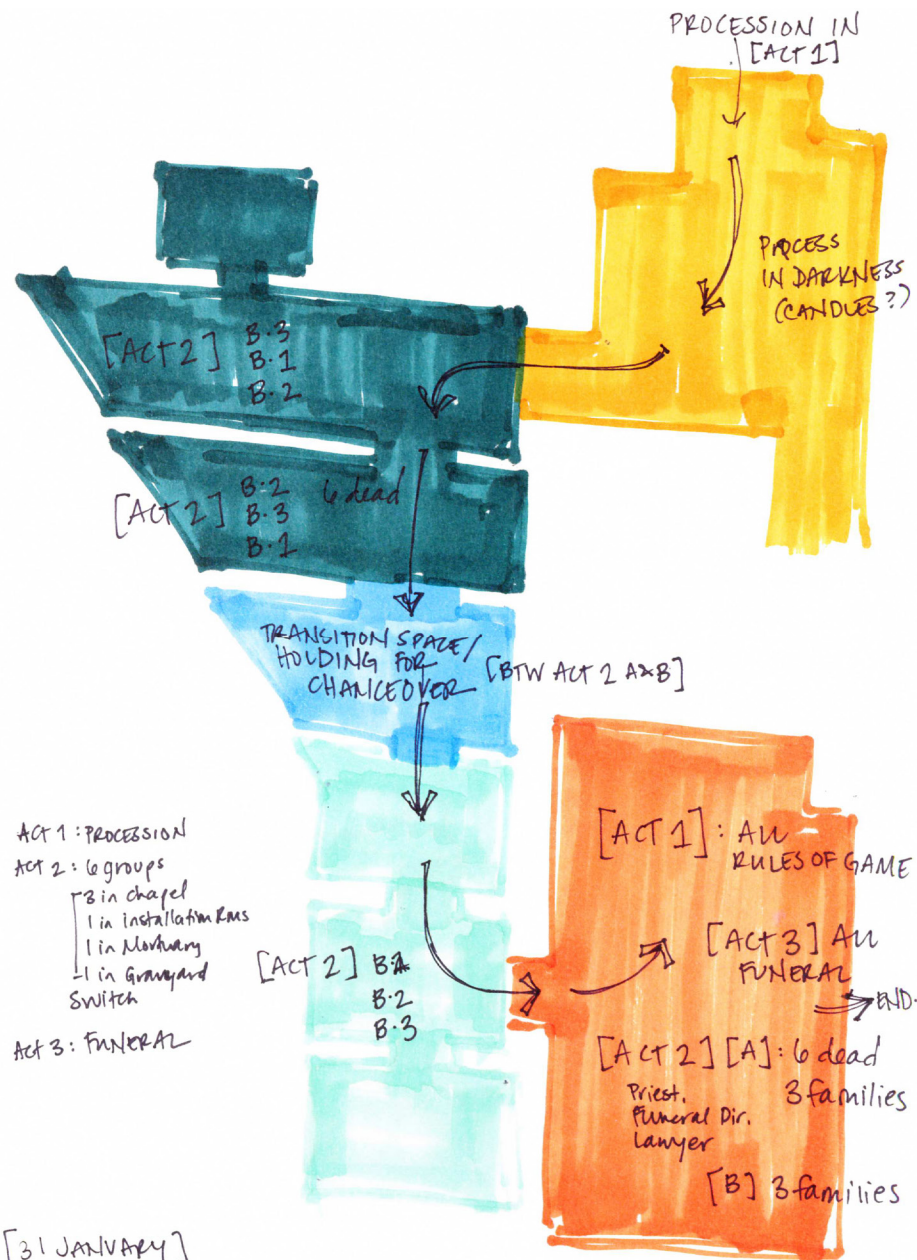


Diagrammatic Plan [31 January],
tracking show structure and
dramaturgy in development

Evolution of Plan

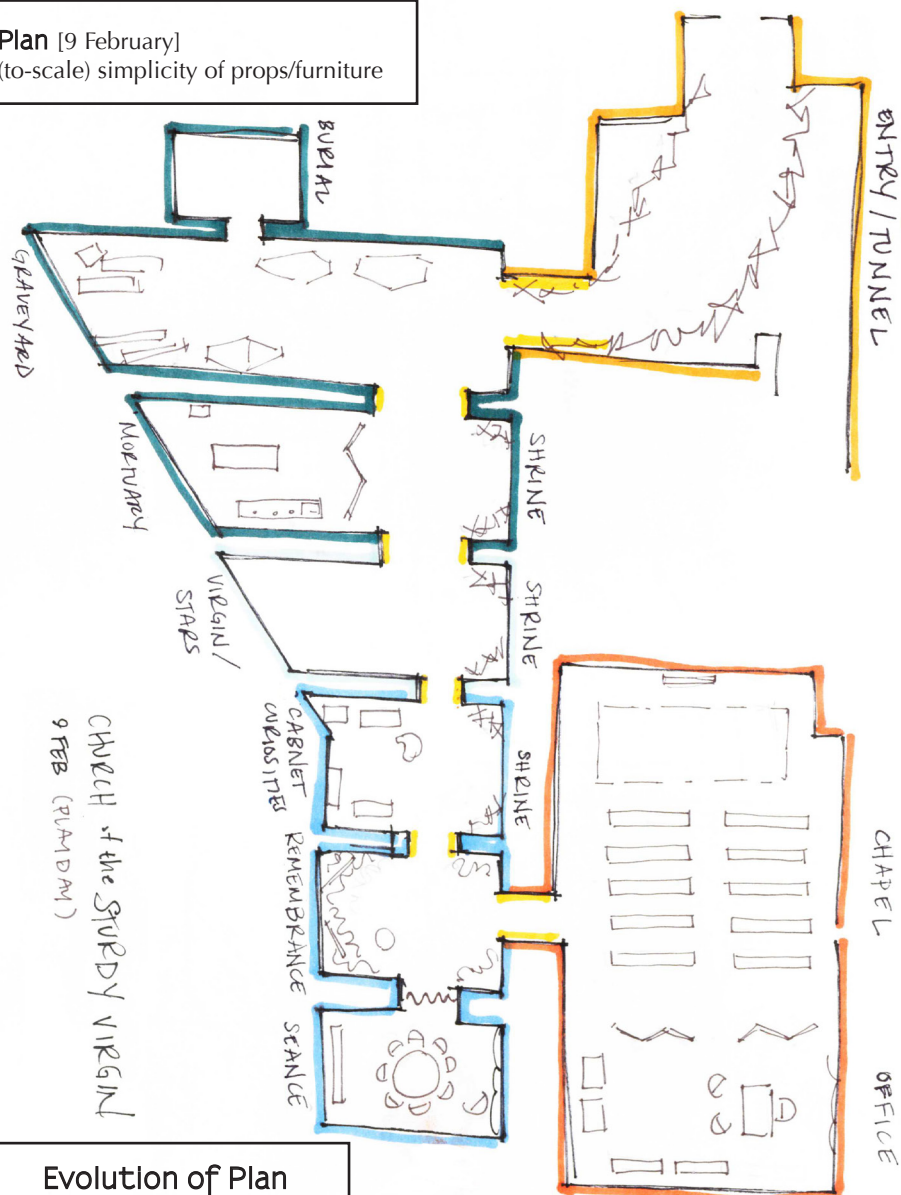
CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019



[31 JANUARY]

Plan [9 February]
(to-scale) simplicity of props/furniture

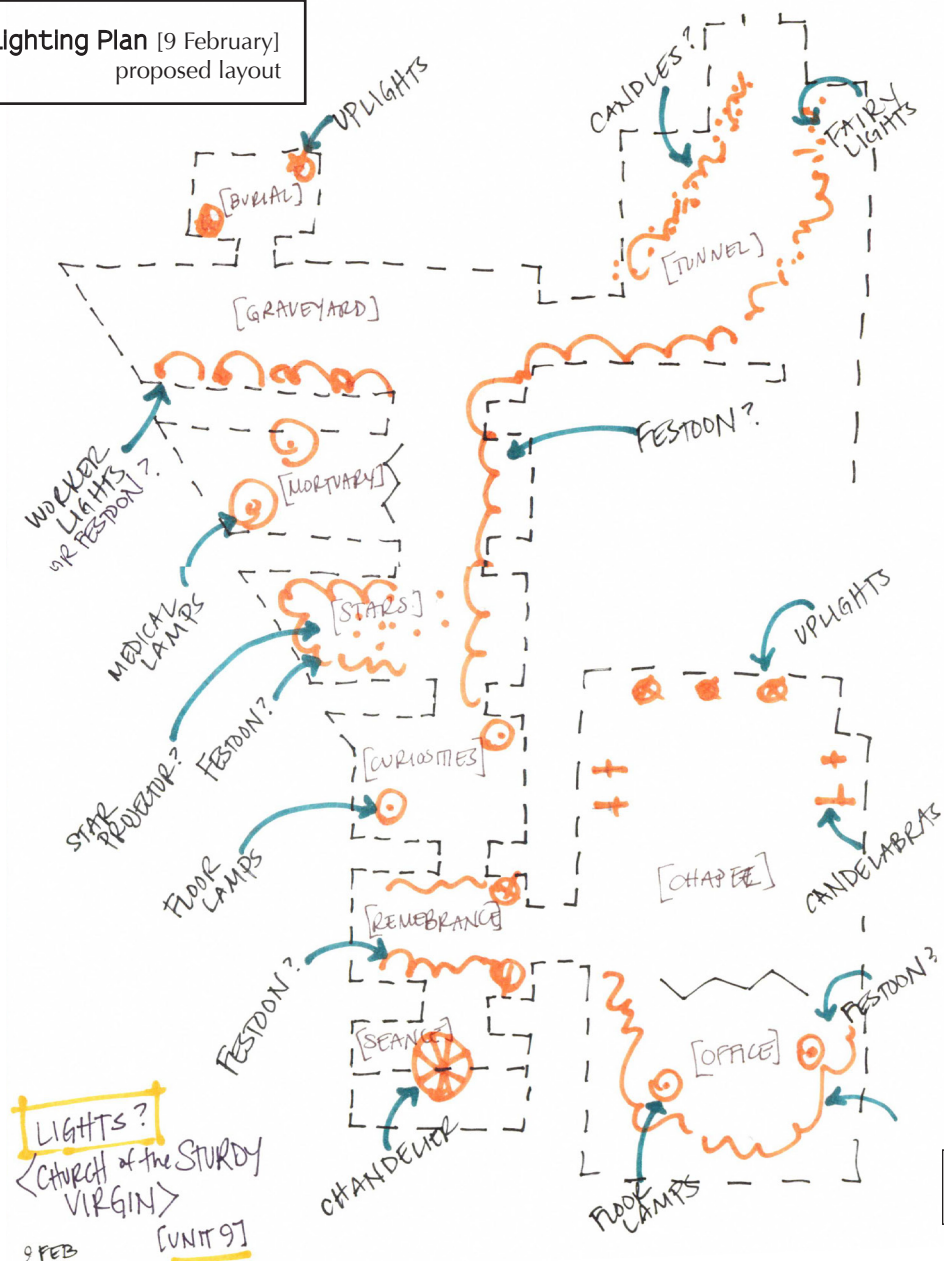


Evolution of Plan

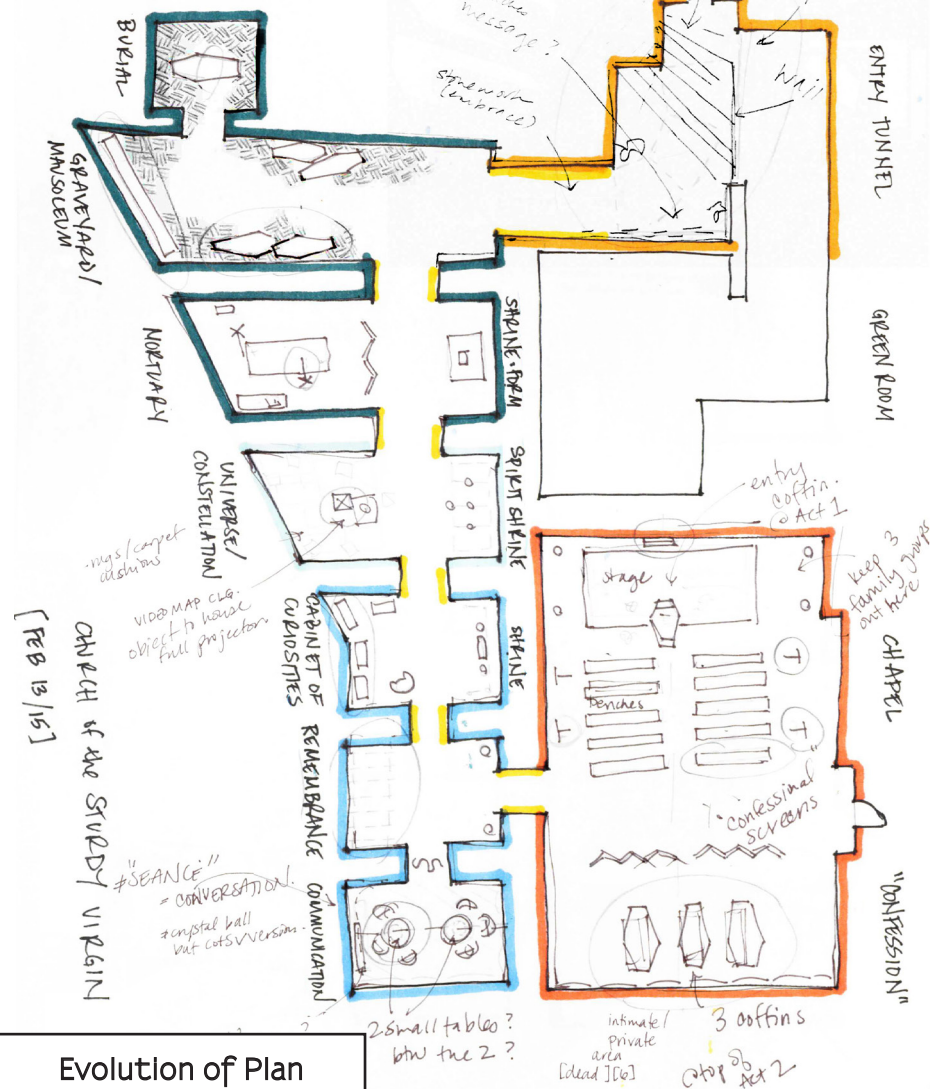
CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

Lighting Plan [9 February]
proposed layout



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

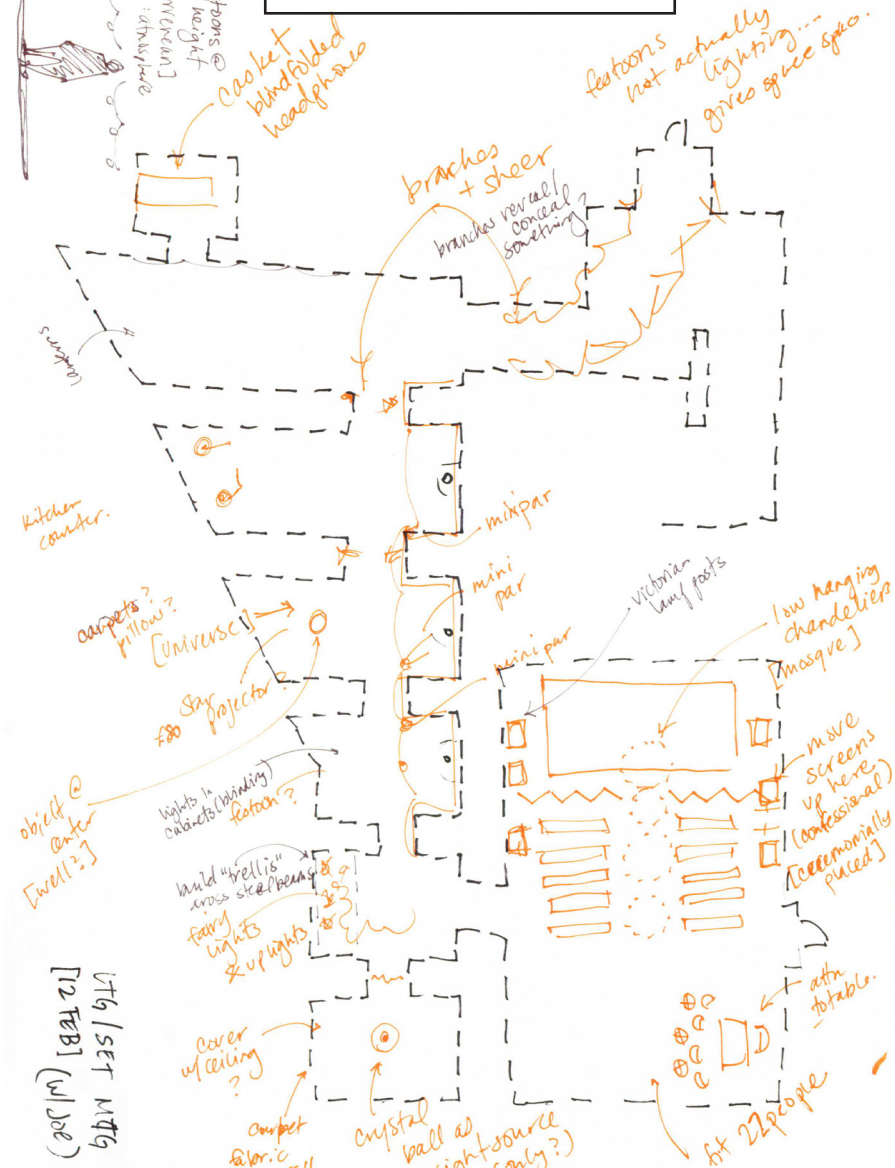


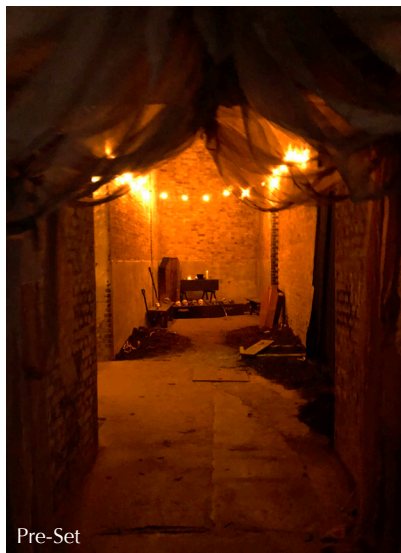
Evolution of Plan

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

Lighting Plan [12 February] layout done with Lighting Designer





Pre-Set



The Cartographer welcome

photo: Ali Wright



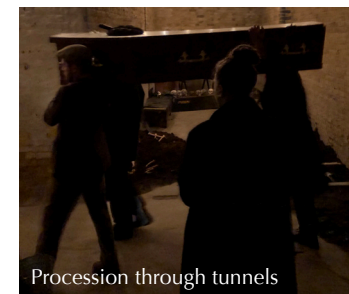
Look-back

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

This entry had a single moment to set an atmosphere, as the audience entered Unit 9.

Task: hide backstage area and funnel audience in the correct direction.

Task: make space-in-between that signals the transition into an otherworldly world.

Task: cast shadows in branches to cause audience pause to adjust eyes and expectations.



Install



Install



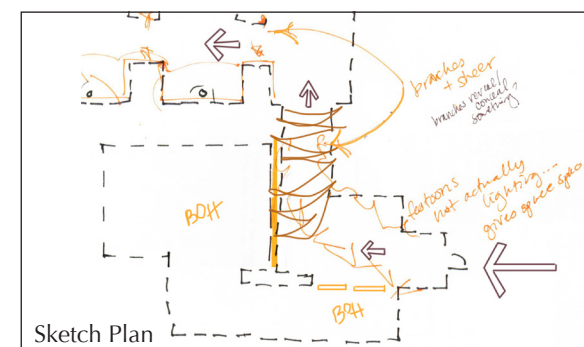
Install



Install



Procession down Leake St.



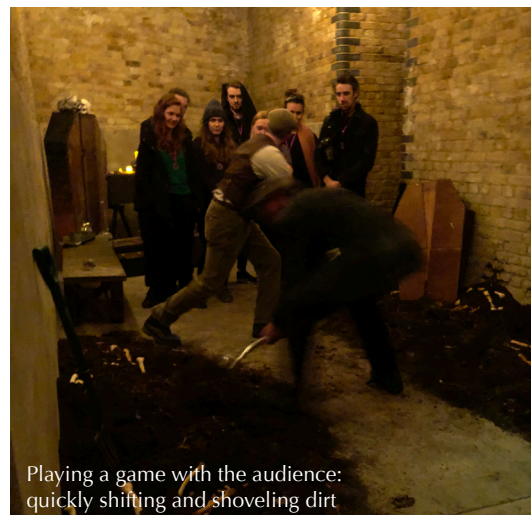
Entry Sequence

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019



photo: Ali Wright

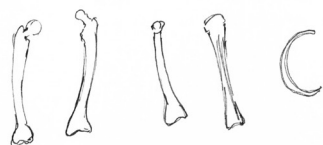
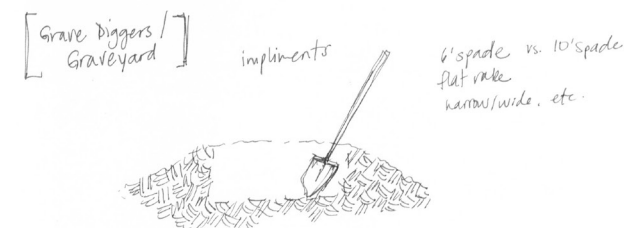


Burial
View from inside coffin



photo: Ali Wright

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.



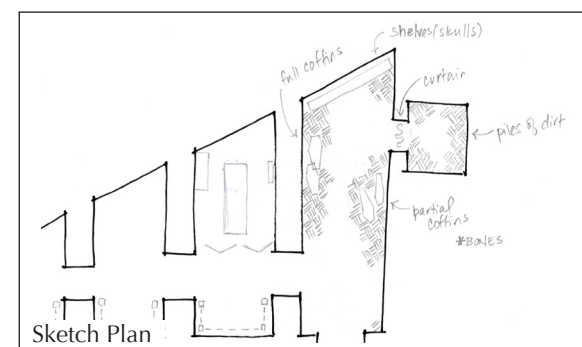
Making bones from salt-dough

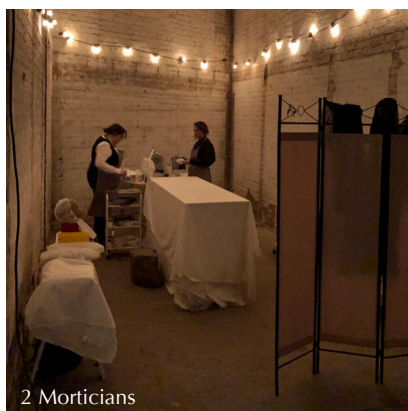


Burial Ground & Chamber

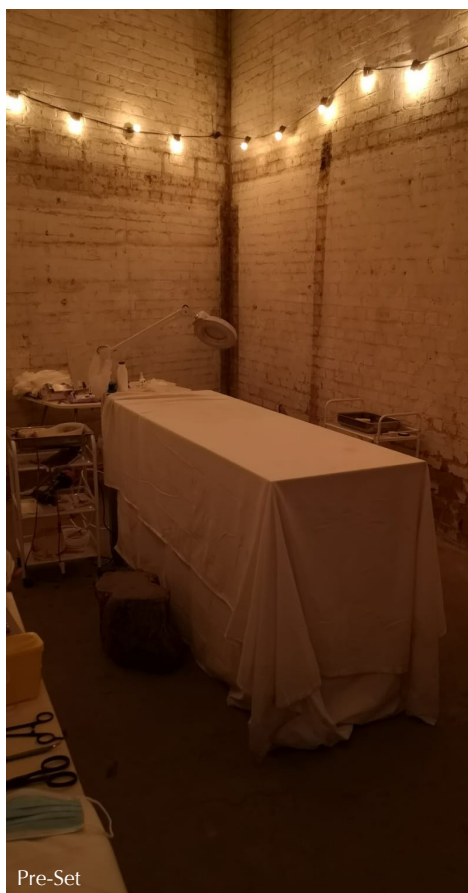
CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019





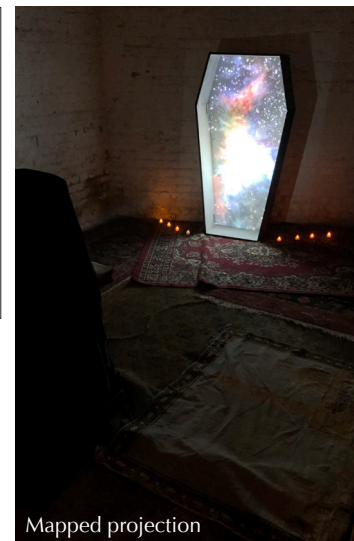
2 Morticians

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.



Mortuary

Interaction: Morticians and The Families (groups of audience) prepare The Deceased (audience member) for burial.

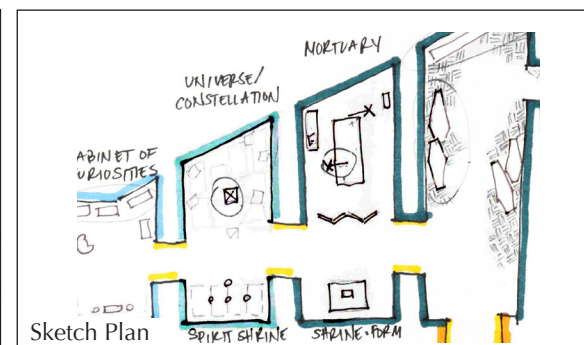
Mortuary & Constellation Room

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

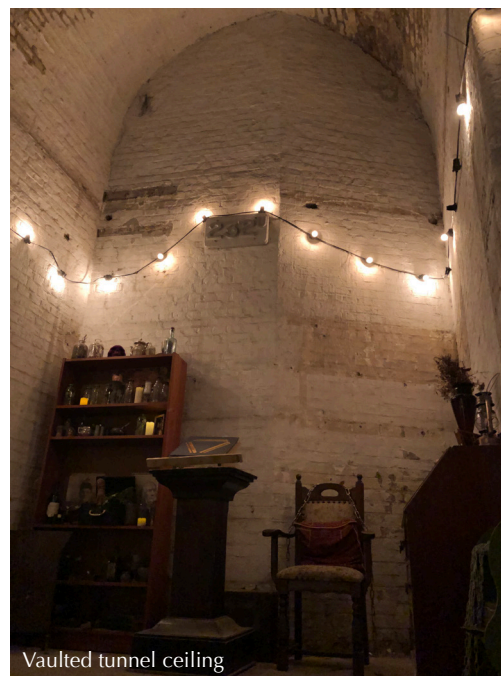


Misc. medical props and dressing

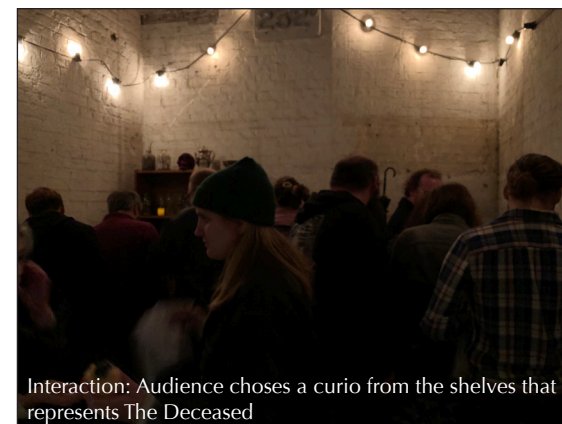




Pre-Set



Vaulted tunnel ceiling



Interaction: Audience choses 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.

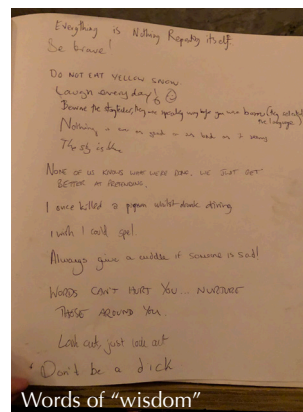
To One & All
...
Stay Sturdy



Pre-set on pedestal



Priest reading The Almanac

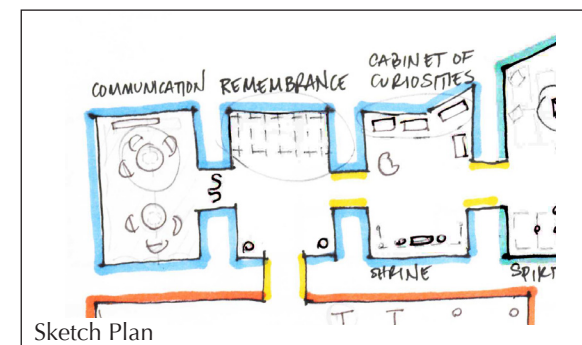


Words of "wisdom"

Cabinet of Curiosities

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019





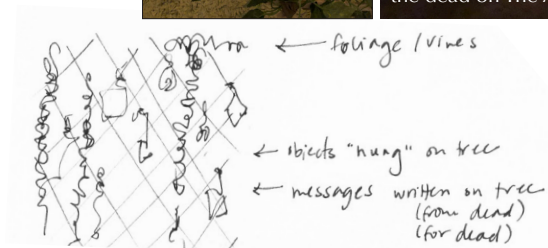
Communication/Seance

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

Remembrance & Communication

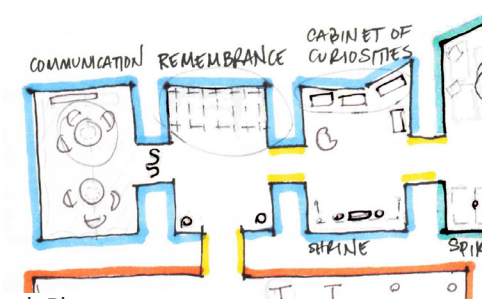
CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

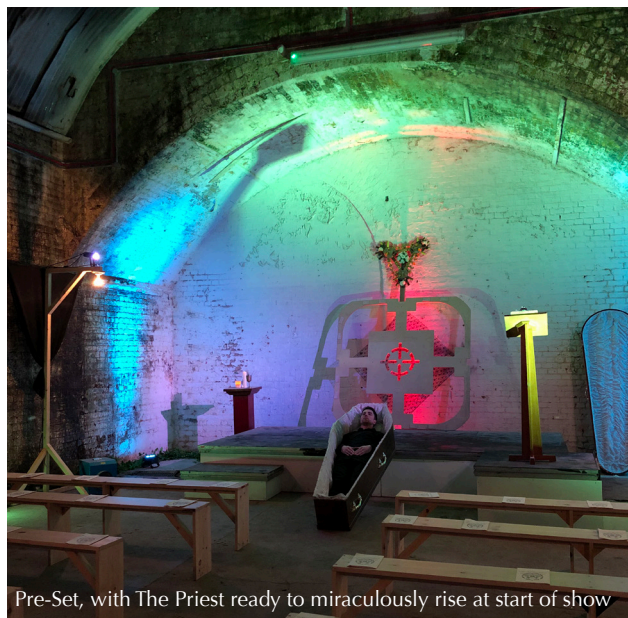


The Ancestral Creeper (a tree of remembrance)

This area was featured in an interactive task set by The Wise Woman



Sketch Plan

Chapel of *The Church*

Pre-Set, with The Priest ready to miraculously rise at start of show

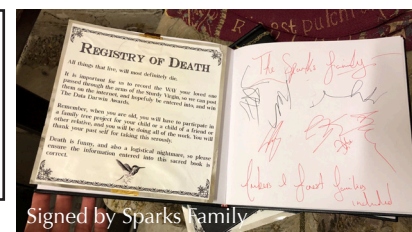


Office

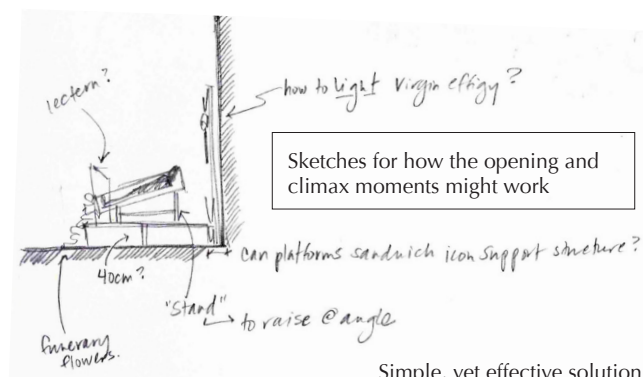


Confessional

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

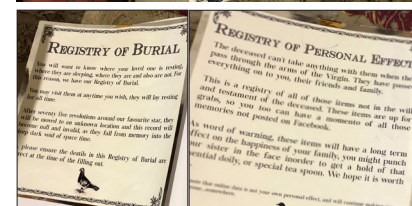


Signed by Sparks Family

Act 1: Introduction to *The Church*

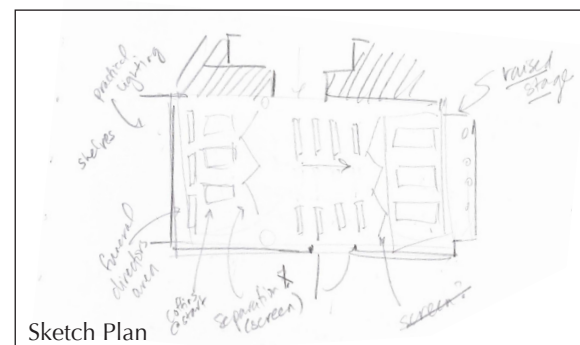
Sketches for how the opening and
climax moments might work

Simple, yet effective solution

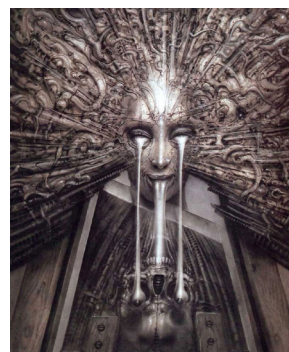
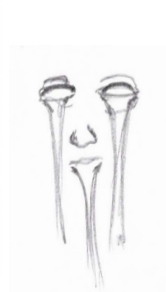
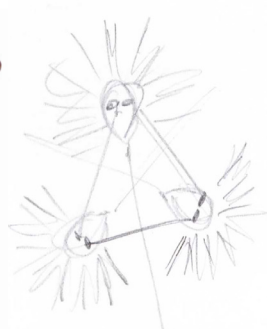
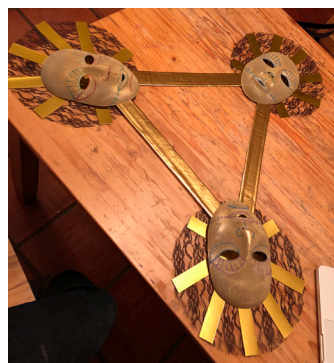


Chapel

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN
VAULT Festival, London | 2019



Sketch Plan

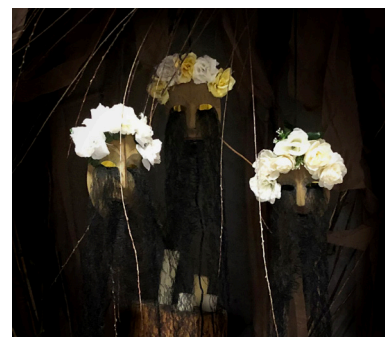


H.R.Giger Mirror Image (1977)

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.

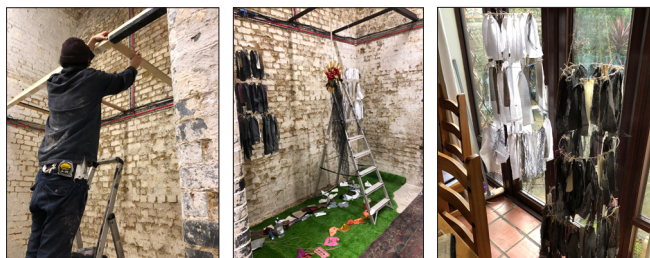
Triads of effigies installed on site



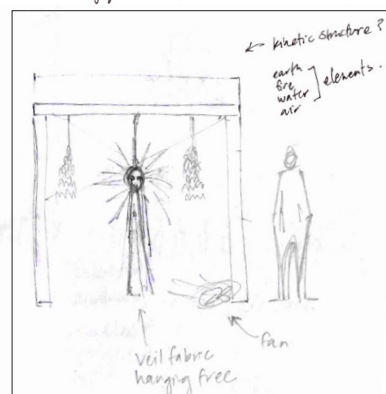
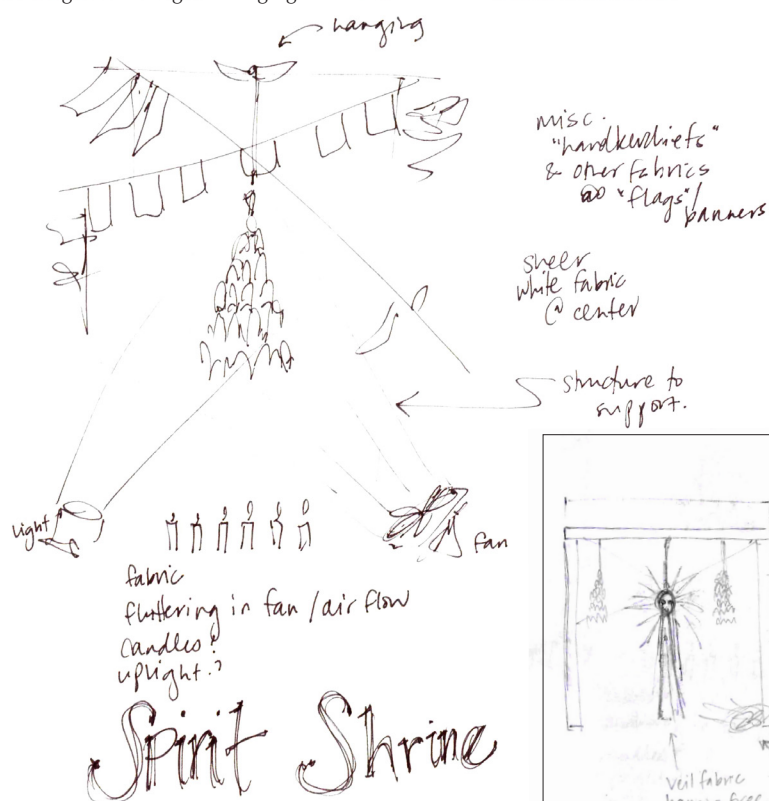
Aesthetic of The Virgin

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019



Making & installing the hanging elements for this shrine



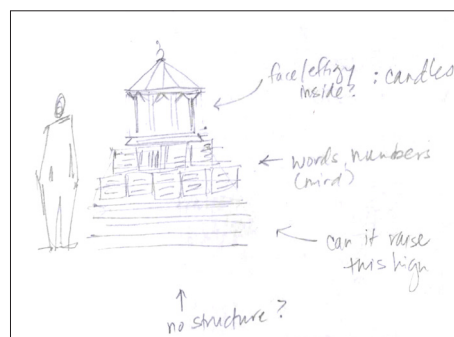
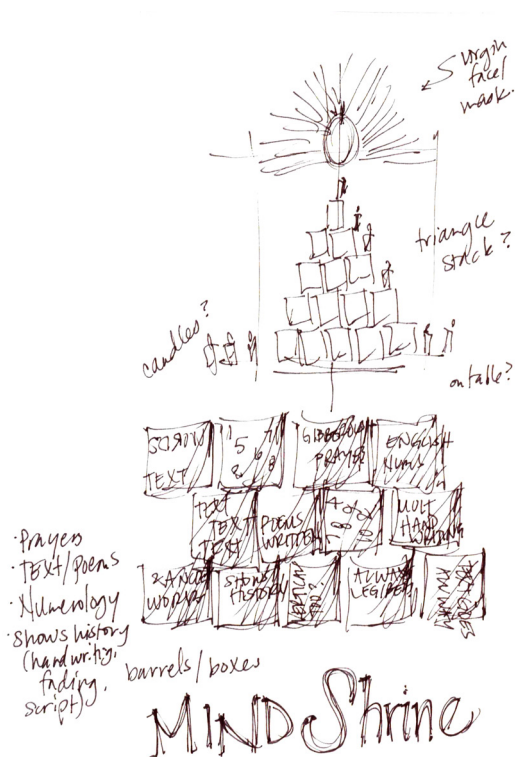
Shrine : Virgin-as-Spirit

Kinetic sculpture
hangs at head height

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN
VAULT Festival, London | 2019



Making & installing the pedestal of the shrine

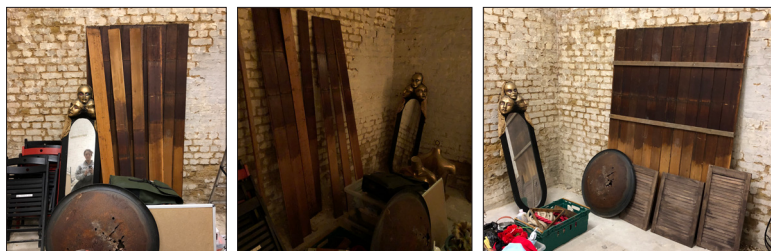


Shrine : Virgin-as-Mind

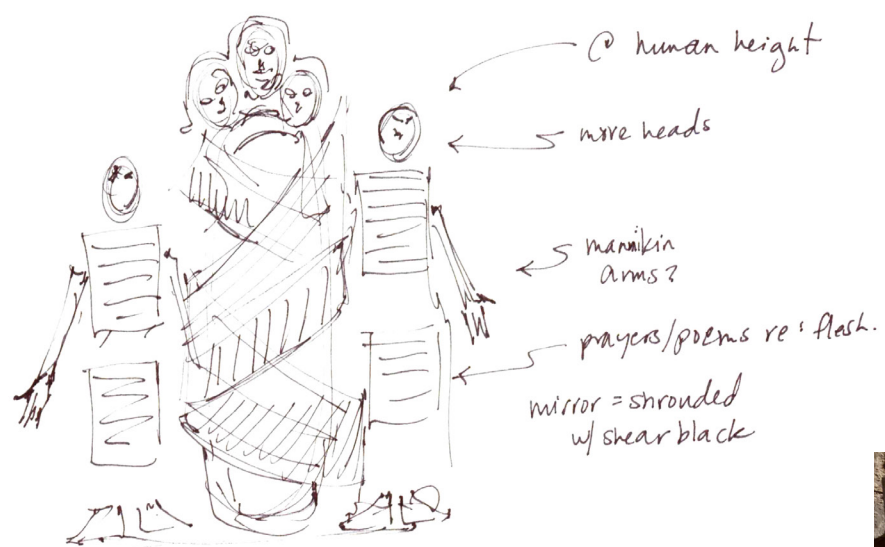
Plinth for effigy, candles
and remembrances

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019



Making & installing the wall-braced shrine from wood planks



↑ mirror @ height of body (not head)

BODY Shrine

Gold + black

Shrine : Virgin-as-Body

CHURCH OF THE STURDY VIRGIN

VAULT Festival, London | 2019

