

Spark: UAL Creative Teaching and Learning Journal

On the Book Funeral

Kenn Lam, graduate of BA (Hons) Graphic Communication Design, Central Saint Martins (class of 2018)

The Book Funeral sought to humanise the books of the CSM library by giving them the proper send-off commonly reserved for our loved ones. The goal was to allow us to re-evaluate our treatment of books in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

This student project started with a desire to improve the general quality of life amongst the books at the CSM library. Through several conversations with the librarians, it was made clear that a notable minority of students have been mistreating the books they borrow, often to the point where they have to be taken out of circulation. In other words, they die. What I found most interesting about these book “deaths” was the element of humour and creativity which surrounded them. For example, *Skin* by Heidi Hatry was returned in a damp state with garlic skin stuck onto its back cover. As darkly twisted as this murder was, one cannot deny the poetic nature of the book’s demise. In light of this, it is not difficult to see that death comes to all things, book-like or otherwise. A change of perspective might allow for some sympathy to be directed towards our resident books, and possibly some giggles as well.

With the cooperation of the CSM library staff, several staff members of the university, and a couple of my peers, a funeral service was organised. Slow marches, eulogies, librarian priests, organ music, roses, candles, memorial cards, headstones and more, took place at the event. This video was produced in the hope that it might encourage students to reflect on their treatment of the library’s beloved books.

Video link

<https://vimeo.com/318151728>

Biography

Kenn Lam is an illustrator and designer who recently graduated from BA (Hons) Graphic Communication Design, Central Saint Martins (2018). Kenn had the privilege of being exposed to a wide array of cultures during his formative years, which played a huge role in developing his curiosity, and allows him to see narratives as a common denominator across civilisation. The essence of his work lies in framing and curating narrative structures. Kenn is currently on a year-long cultural adventure; where he’ll reside in China, Japan and Germany to work in art residencies and learn new languages.