

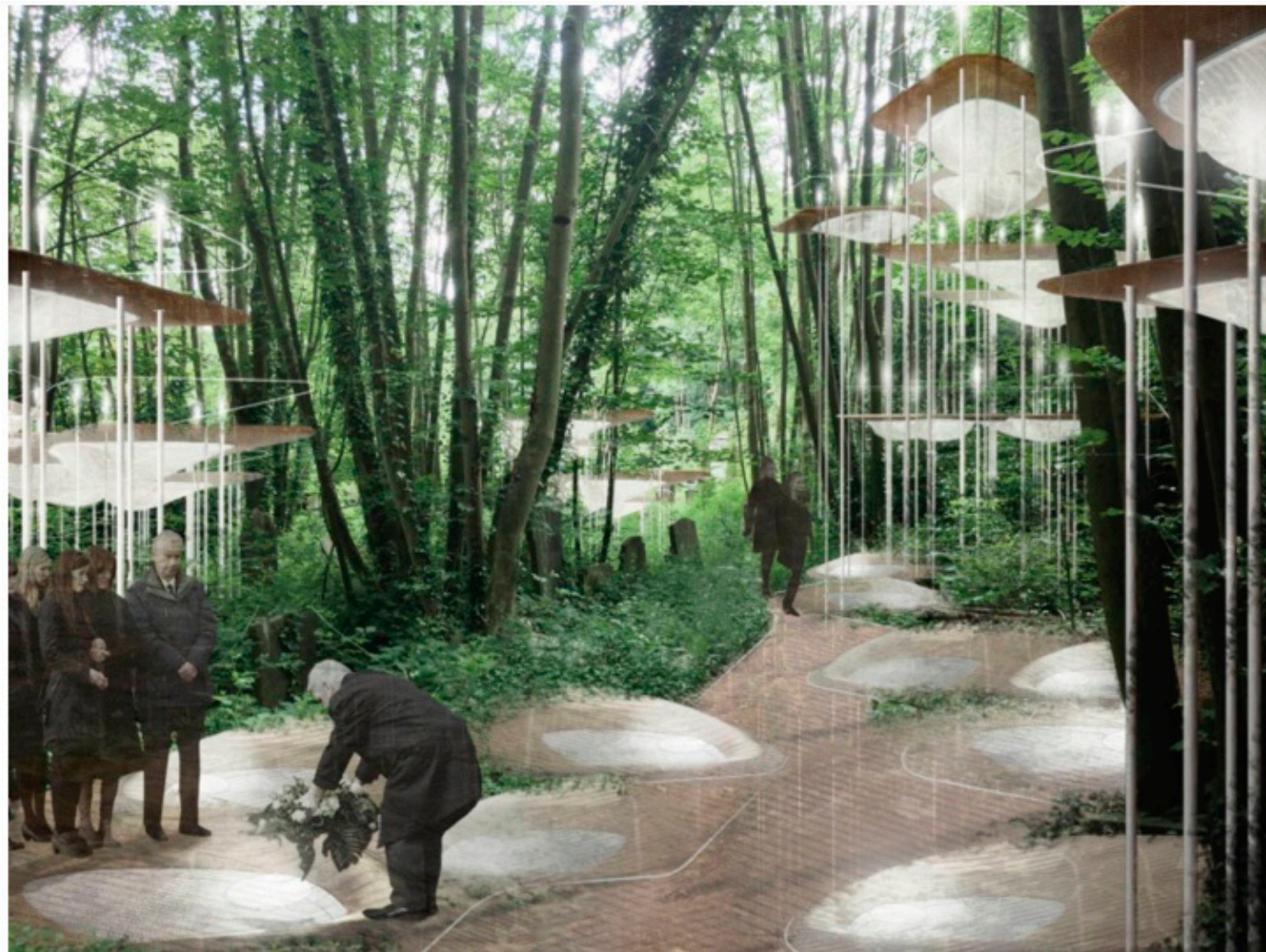
"Here's what the environmentally-friendly cemetery of the future could look like." Inhabitat, March 10, 2016.



Here's what the environmentally-friendly cemetery of the future could look like

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Did you know there is a **DeathLab** at **Columbia University**? Operating under the **Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation**, DeathLab pursues sustainable designs for futuristic cemeteries, and they just unveiled plans for a beautiful memorial forest lit by a constellation of biomass-powered "stars." The project offers a beautiful way to memorialize loved ones, and it's also much more environmentally friendly than today's cemeteries.



Put on by the **University of Bath's Centre for Death and Society**, the competition encouraged architects to design a more environmentally friendly means of burial for **Arnos Vale**, a historic site in Bristol that continues to function as a working cemetery. DeathLab's winning design, 'Sylvan Constellation,' blends memorial vessels with a wooded landscape, creating a multilevel space filled with light that's powered by **biomass**.

Related: These biodegradable burial pods can turn cemeteries into forests

"DeathLab was founded to produce environmentally responsible projects that reweave the ubiquity of death into the fabric of our cities, reminding us of our moral finitude and the responsibility the living share to fortify our collective future," **said Karla Rothstein**, founder and director of DeathLab. "Our goal is to offer elegant options at death that are commensurate with the social and environmental values we respect while alive."

Traditional **burial** practices such as embalming or even cremating can be harmful to the environment, and DeathLab is pioneering new visions of honoring the dead, blending design with science. Sylvan Constellation would accelerate decomposition in the memorial vessels, creating cyclical lighting to evoke nighttime constellations in the forest.

"Harnessing science while respecting spirituality, our proposal transforms biomass into an elegant and truly perpetual constellation of light, illuminating new woodland pathways and sanctuary space within the historic cemetery," the DeathLab team said in their press release. The space would welcome people of all faith traditions, and includes peaceful areas for friends and family members to reflect on a loved one's life.

As part of the prize, the Columbia team won a month-long residency at Arnos Vale this summer to explore implementing the plans. Dr. John Troyer, Director of Bath's Centre for Death and Society, **said** "This is an exciting time to be working on design projects that fully embrace topics like death, dying, and dead bodies and I very much look forward to seeing collaborations like this develop."

Through this design and others, DeathLab aims to shift cultural thought around death through elegant, sustainable **architecture**. More of DeathLab's futuristic concepts can be viewed **here**.