



# Explorative Memory

research & design  
by connor bade

# Extended Legacy

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Over time the public's perception, technology and our treatment of death have changed how we handle the memory of a loved one

These changes provide an opportunity to redesign forms of personal memorialization



# Cemeteries

130

square miles needed to bury those expected to die between 2024 & 2042, approximately the size of Las Vegas

## U.S Burials Annually

30m

Feet of wood

104,000

Tons of steel

1.6m

Tons of concrete

800,000

Gallons of embalming fluid

# Photography

**25,000**

Average number of selfies taken in a millennial's lifetime

**1.8 bn**

Number of images uploaded to social media everyday

**79%**

Of photos are taken by phone, up from 40% in 2010

“

Every 2 minutes humans take more photos than ever existed 150 years ago

# Design Question

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How might we provide a way of memorializing deceased loved ones in a way that is contemporary, affirming and relevant to younger generations?





# Target User

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Young adults from 18-25 years old in the United States who have experienced the loss of a loved one and experienced the process of coping with it

# Pain Points

## Stuck

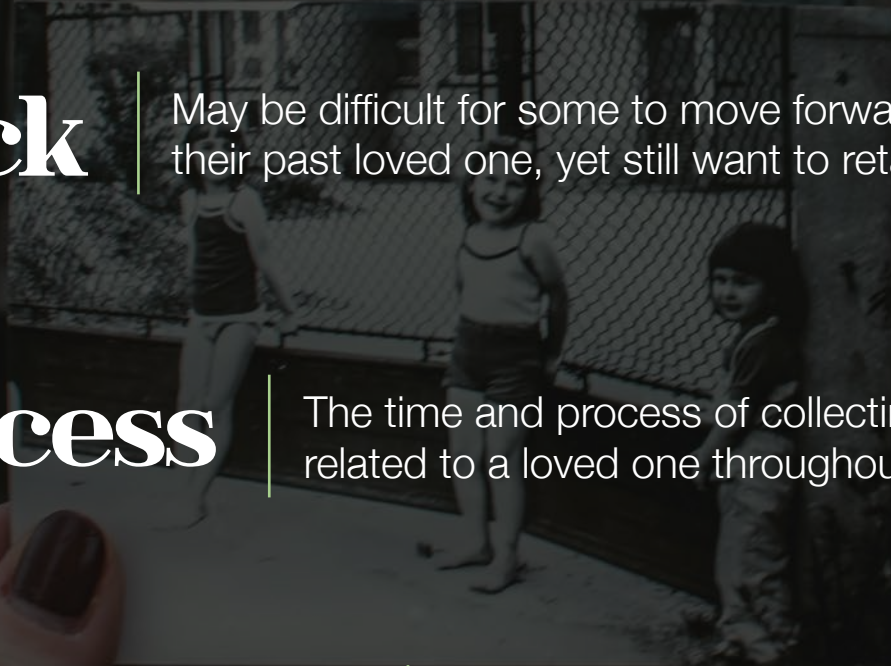
May be difficult for some to move forward with constant reminders of their past loved one, yet still want to retain memories

## Process

The time and process of collecting and organizing all memorabilia related to a loved one throughout their entire lives

## Tangibility

Difficult part about losing someone is the feeling their memory is fading including one's sense related to them, tangible things help alleviate this





Time



# Memorialization Takes Time

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The approach, handling, and perception of death has undergone change over time in such cases as the treatment of remains, funerals, and memories of a loved one



# Memorial



## Photos

Capturing the look, location, and time of a loved one in their life



## Creations

Expresses the craft and touch of a loved one, an alternative intimate look



## Possessions

Particular objects representative or personally relevant



## Digital

Information and content exhibited and organized online in their presence



**Background**  
secondary research



**Survey**  
qualitative data



**Target Users**  
respondent groups



**Face to Face**  
interviews with users



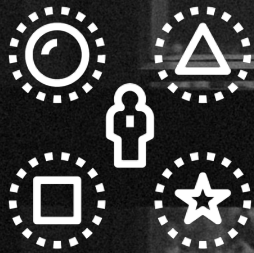
**Observe**  
assess context



**Analysis**  
formulate insights

# Funeral Home

Visiting a funeral home and conducting primary research with its owners/workers bringing insight to the context, activity and treatment of death in a formal, social setting



## Memorabilia

Wide variety of custom memorabilia forms related and adapted to each person



## Well-being

Common emotional themes handled by homes are grief, denial, and loneliness



## Family Way

family culture and tradition is a prime influence on an individual's experience with death.

# Hospice

Work with hospice professionals for insight into their approach to handling patients and the well being of their family and friends via physical and emotional needs



## Extension

Services go beyond just their own building and even their own patients



## Misunderstood

Confusion & distress in deciding on hospice rather than curative treatment



## Timing

Care extends a year for those who have had one in hospice care

# Survey

a wide-ranging investigation with those who have dealt with grief and loss, to gather quantitative insights on positive and negative approaches to the topic





80%

Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in most important form of memorabilia



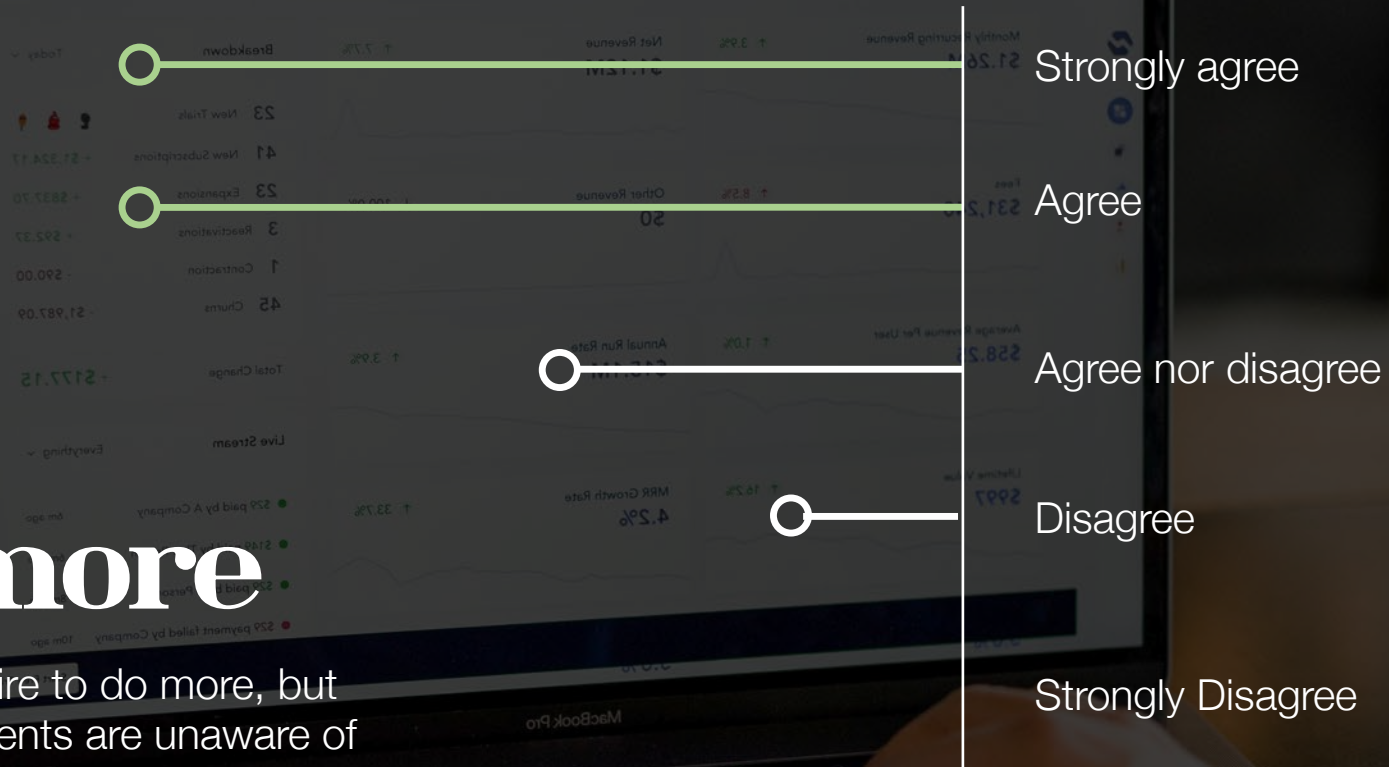
65%

Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in most important form of memorabilia

# Remnants

Photos & possessions the most important and common things to remember by

I wish I could do more to memorialize or honor my deceased loved one since their death



# Do more

There is a desire to do more, but most respondents are unaware of alternatives to existing solutions



82%

People who have looked back on their own life & mortality more than a moderate amount since the death

## Reminiscent

Self reflective when dealing with the death of a loved one

# Coping

Memorabilia's influence and timing on coping

multiple years      1 year      months

Time needed for memorabilia to evoke positive rather than negative feelings

Slowed coping

Positive coping tool

Perspective of memorabilia in coping with death

A photograph of a man and a woman embracing in a hallway. The man is on the left, wearing a blue and white patterned sweater. The woman is on the right, with long reddish-brown hair, wearing a dark jacket and carrying a red bag. The hallway has white walls and a dark floor. The image is dimly lit, with the text overlaid on the left side.

# Interviews

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One on one interviews with relevant users who have experienced the death of a loved one. Respondents have worked or are working through the implications of their memorialization along with their own well-being



# Brianna

 Lives: Ann Arbor, MI

 Occupation: barista

 Age: 23 years old

“

I spent a lot of time with my other sister after the death...my car was a kind of refuge for us to get away from things when we couldn't handle it

My sister would have hated the funeral...it was so boujee, me and my siblings ended up playing poker in the back for chips and pretzels like she used to do with us


**Proximity**


**Social links**


**Distribution**



# Austin

 Lives: Ann Arbor, MI

 Occupation: dental student

 Age: 26 years old

“

When I pass certain places, listen to music, taste certain food there can be a flashbulb memory of her presence

The most important things left behind aren't things but the memories from shared experiences... I won't be able to lose those


**Shared Experience**


**Flashbulb**


**Fear of Losing**

A portrait of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a colorful striped sweater. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text on the left side of the page.

# Tessa

 Lives: Ann Arbor, MI

 Occupation: athletics manager

 Age: 27 years old

“

Every birthday we go through his old photos as a family

He was in the military... I saw that side of him when they did the flag thing at the gunshots at the funeral

The memorabilia kind of unlocked once he died...they were things to remember him as the grandpa I had, rather than at the end

**Memory Events**

**Loss Before Death**

**Different Side of Life**

# Design Concept





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In collecting memories through the photographs of a loved one, a period of nurturing these memories can be had through the growing process of each moss square





# Memory to Cultivate



Photos collected as remnants of shared experience and memory



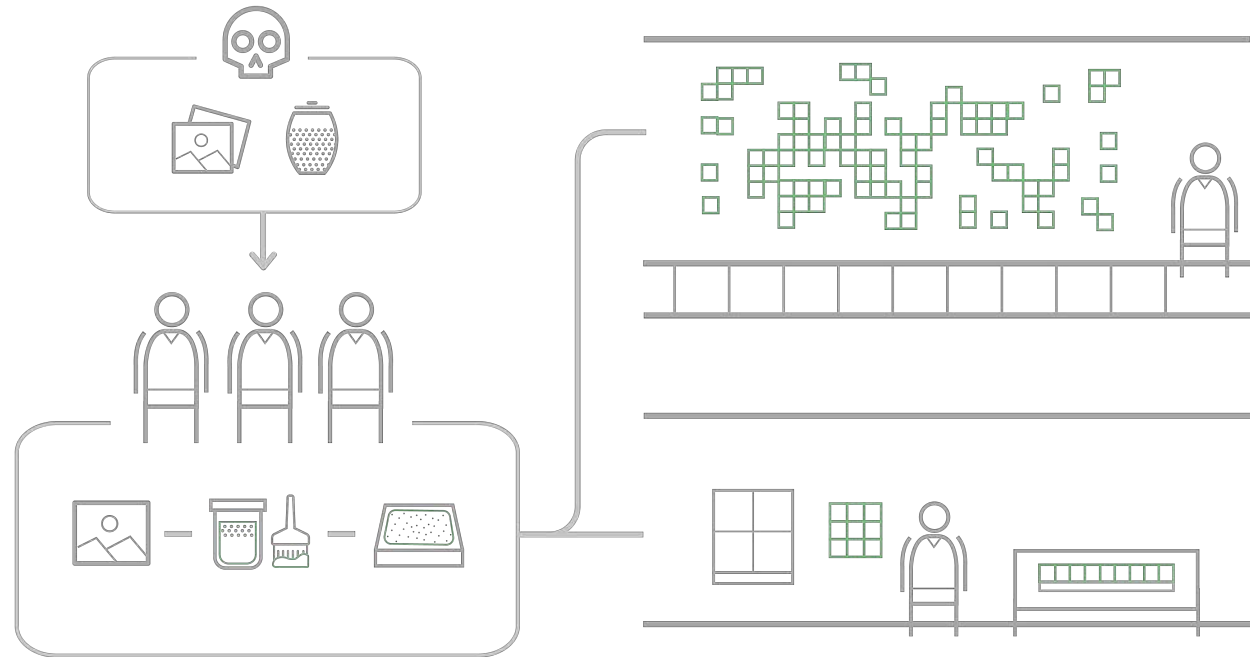
Combining symbols of memories with physical evidence of ashes



Cultivate memories and enable continued growth through moss



# Design Snapshot



Collecting and organizing photo memories  
and remains to be cultivated as living moss  
squares for personal and public installation

# Design Snapshot

Public installation & Private Collection



# Feasibility

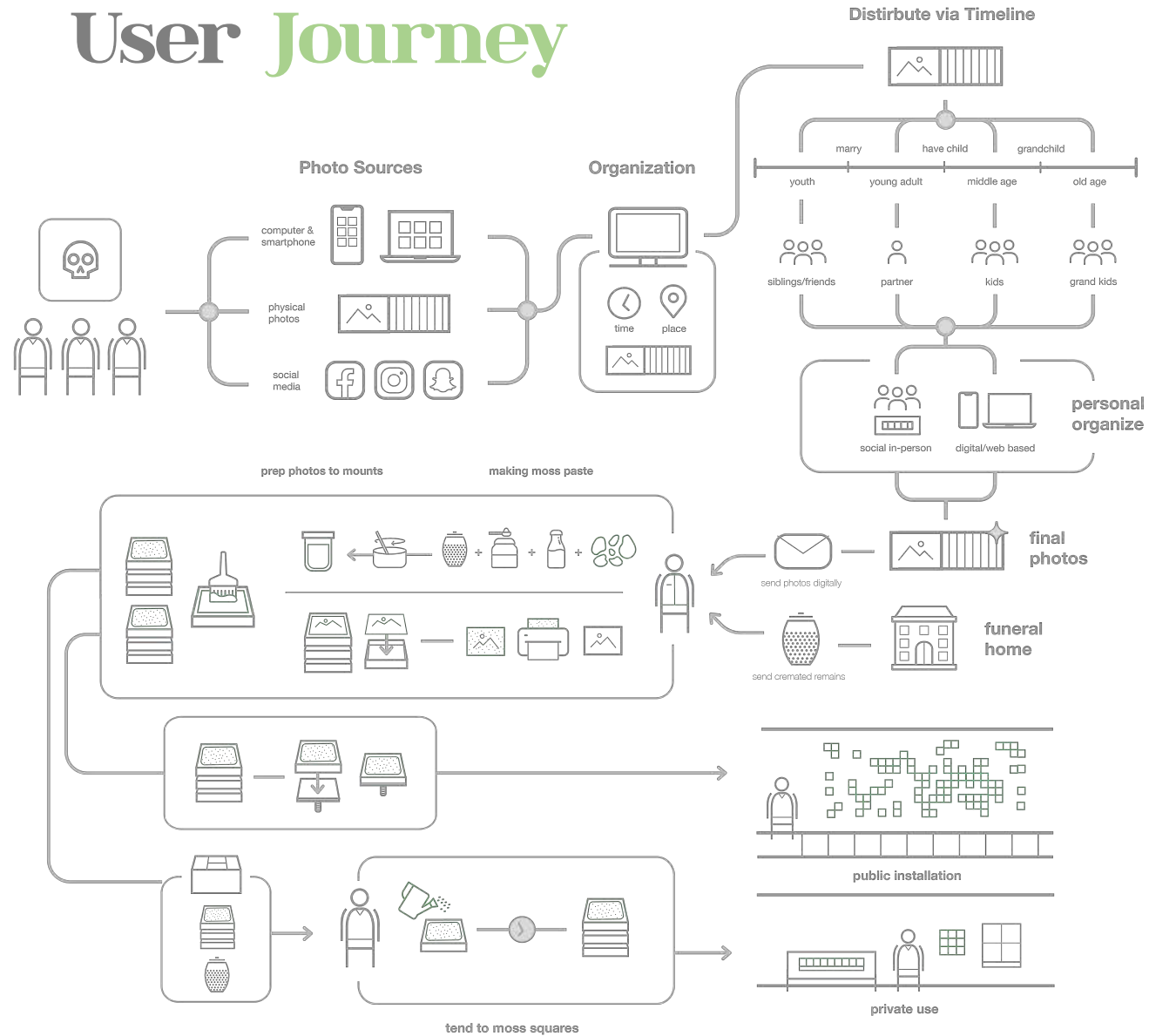
Moss mix and seed paper

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Applying and growing moss from a mixture is feasible through a simple recipe and procedure. Seed paper options are available and flexible enough to be printed upon, host different seed types, and are biodegradable

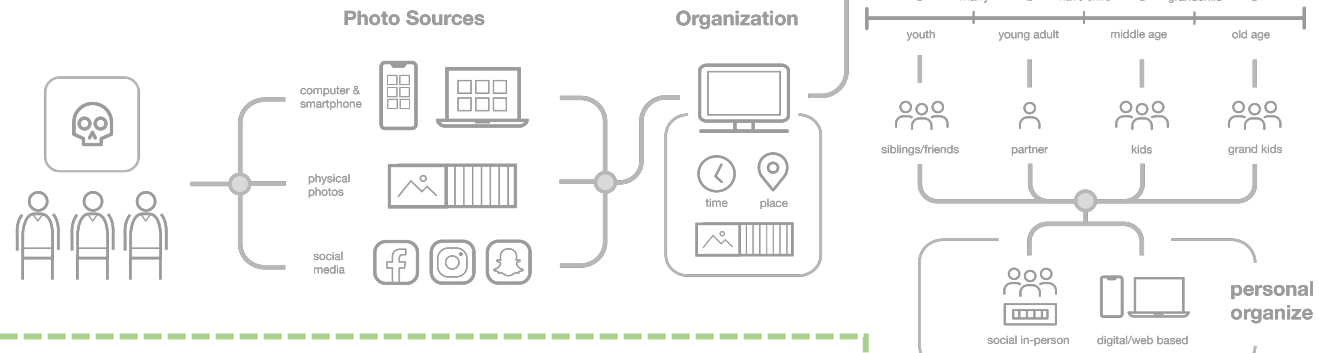


# User Journey

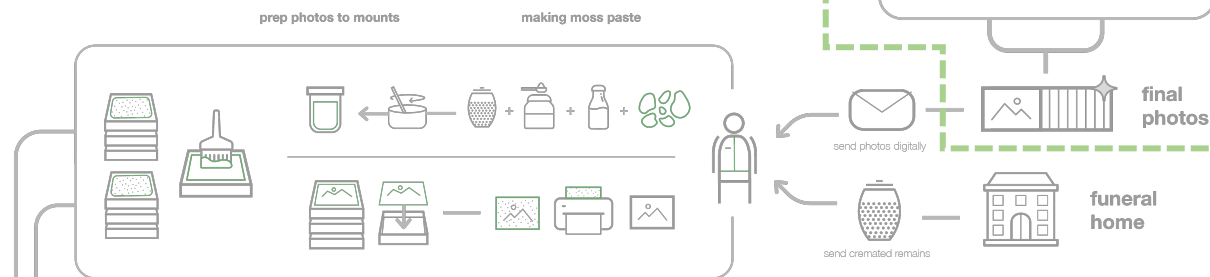


# User Journey

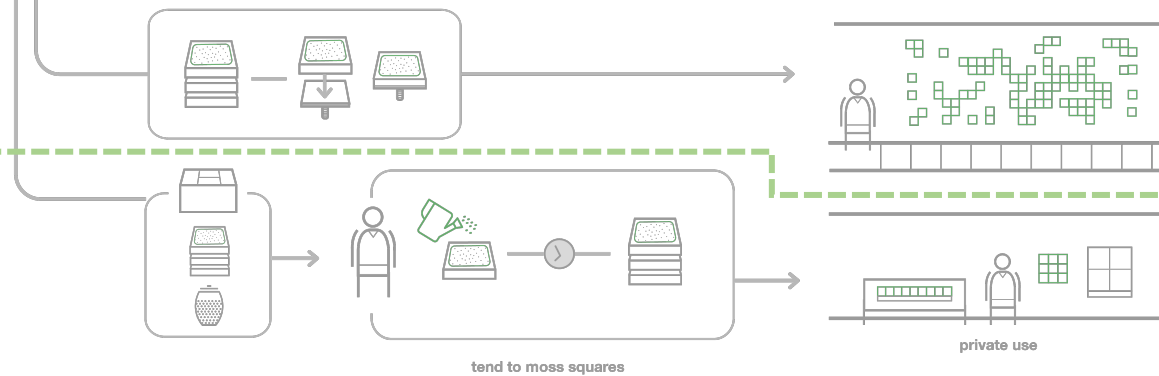
a



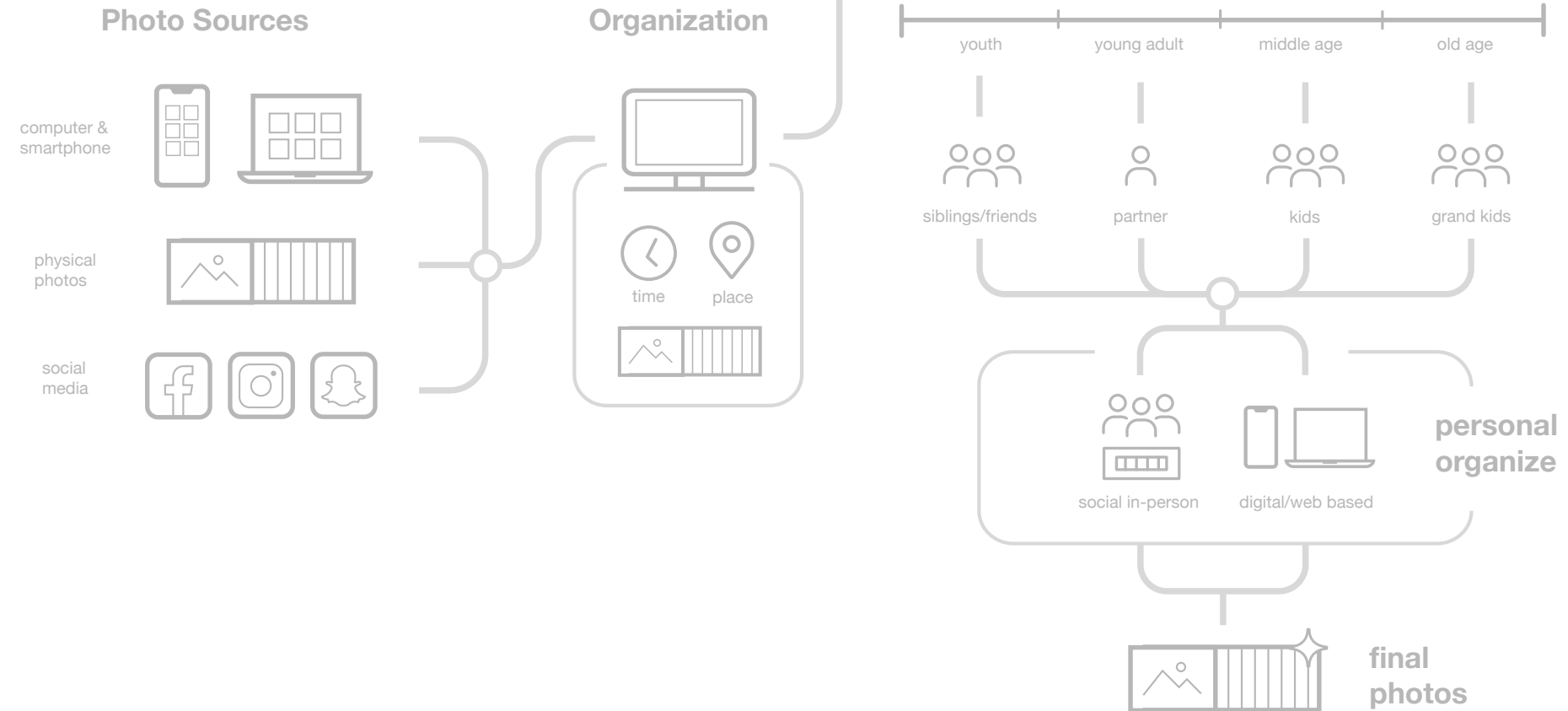
b



c



a **Act of Collecting**  
organizing shared experience



b

# Prepping Process

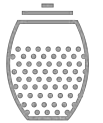
making memories opportunities to grow

final photos

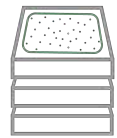
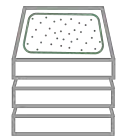
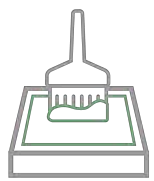
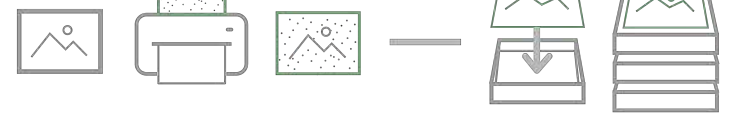
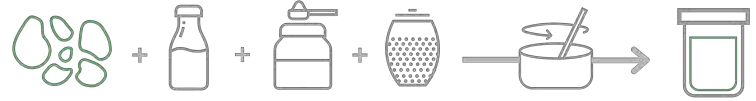


send photos digitally

funeral home



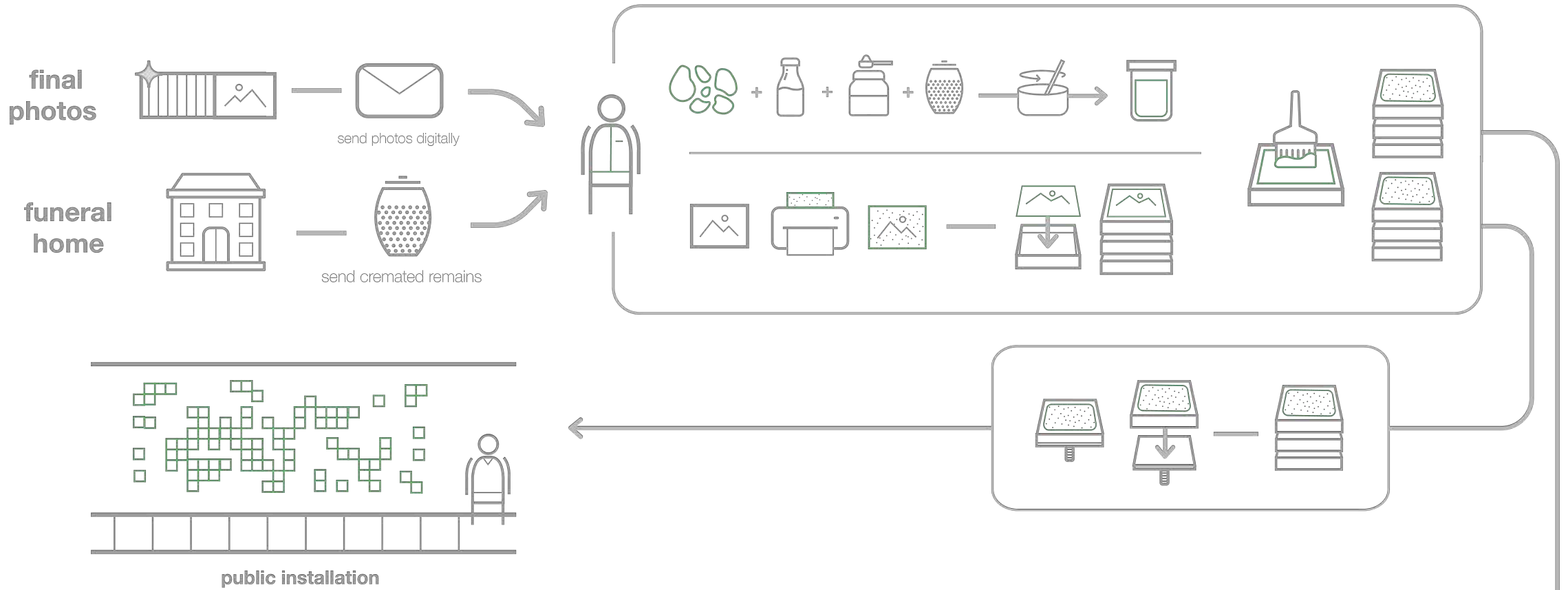
send cremated remains





b **Prepping Process**

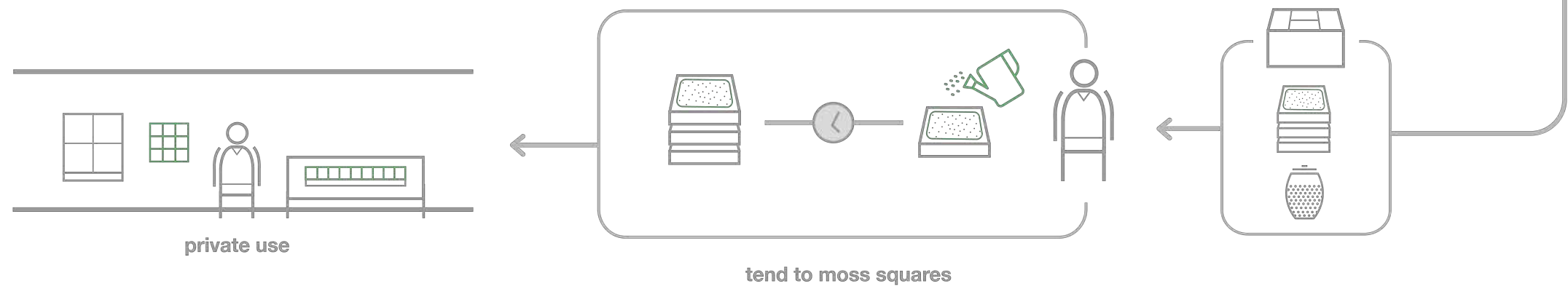
making memories opportunities to grow



C

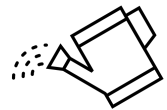
# Own Collection

personally tend to memory growth



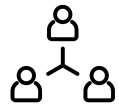
# Key Elements

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## Personal

Cultivate memories through the nurturing of own moss collection



## Public

Connect the public with community's past and space to contrast routine



## Connect

Maintains link to loved one through memories in coordination with photo time & location data



## Space

Provide a sustainable alternative to the treatment and use of space for remains

# Private & Public

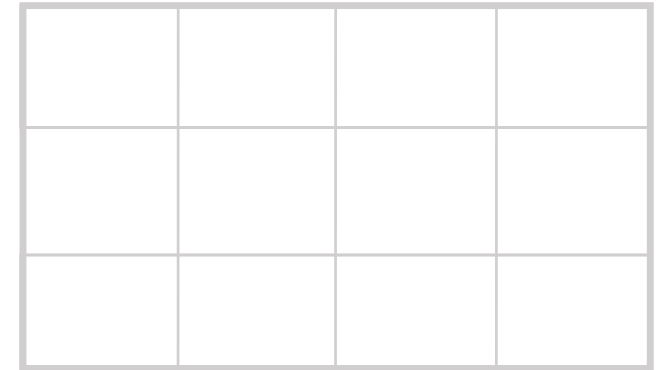
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With their own collection of moss memories users can take personal attention in caring for the moss's growth while cultivating the memory





# Nurturing Own Memories

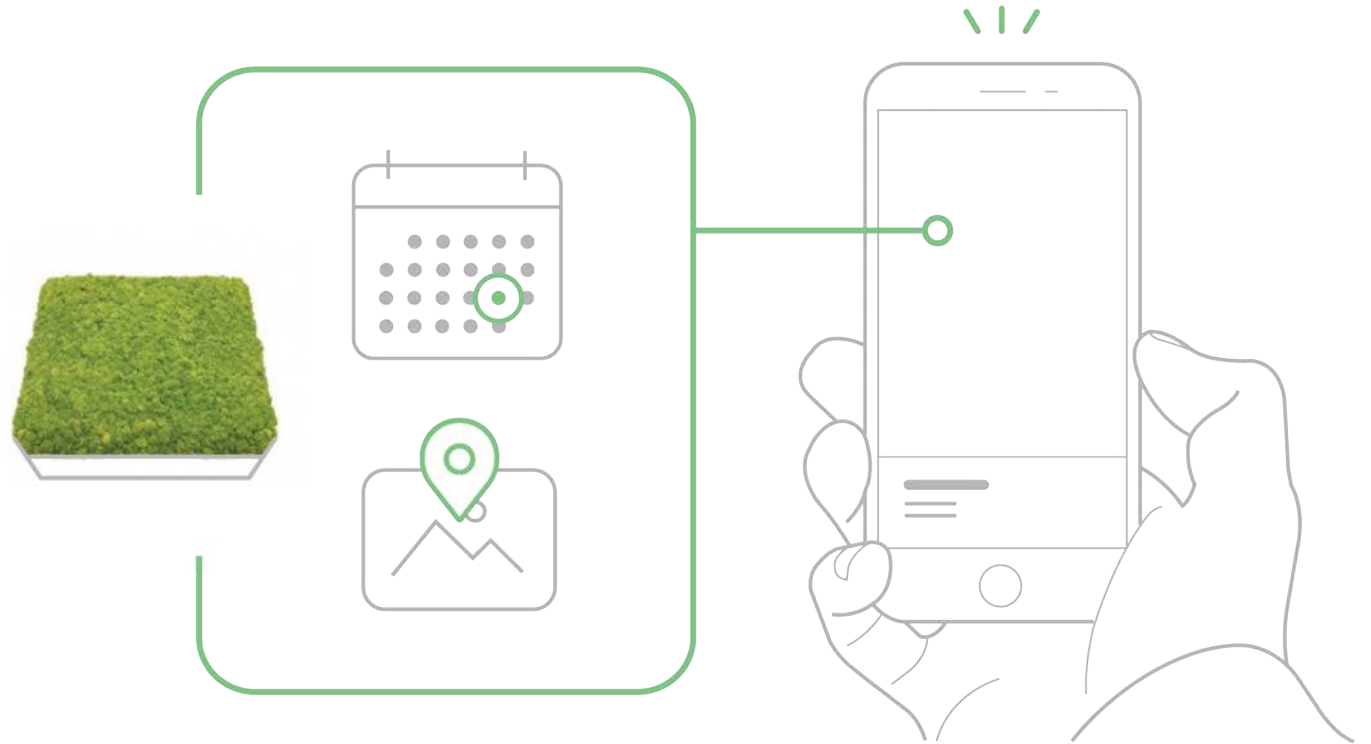


The personal collection is comprised of photos that span a year, a square for each month

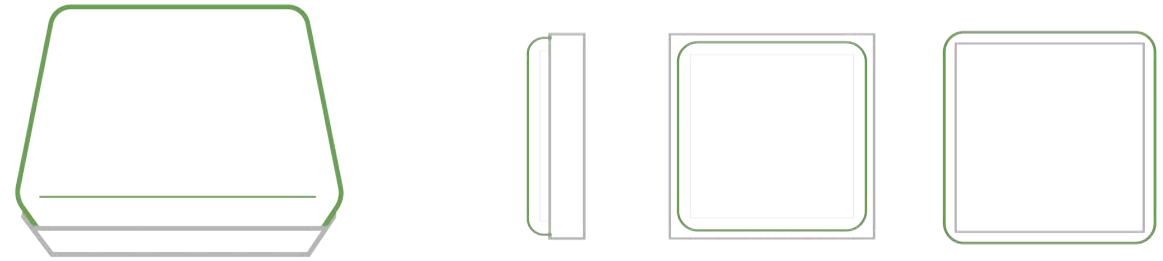
# Keeping Memories Fresh

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To maintain connection with the memory of each moss square, location and time data linked to photos will serve as micro flashbacks via smartphone

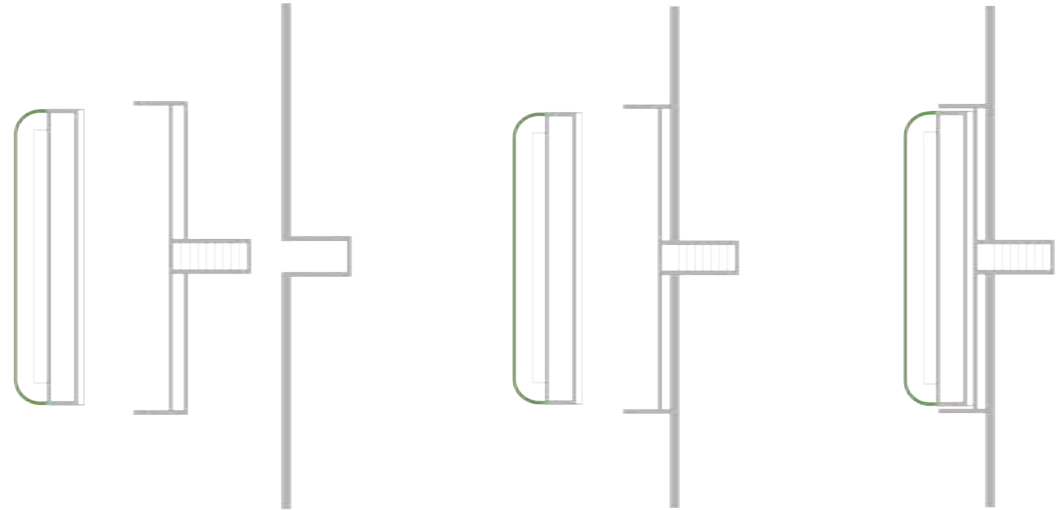


# Moss Mechanics



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Implementing pieces in a public installation calls for a robust system to provide durability, organization, permanence, and security. A mount to house the squares and screw into the foundation was designed to accomplish this





# Private & Public

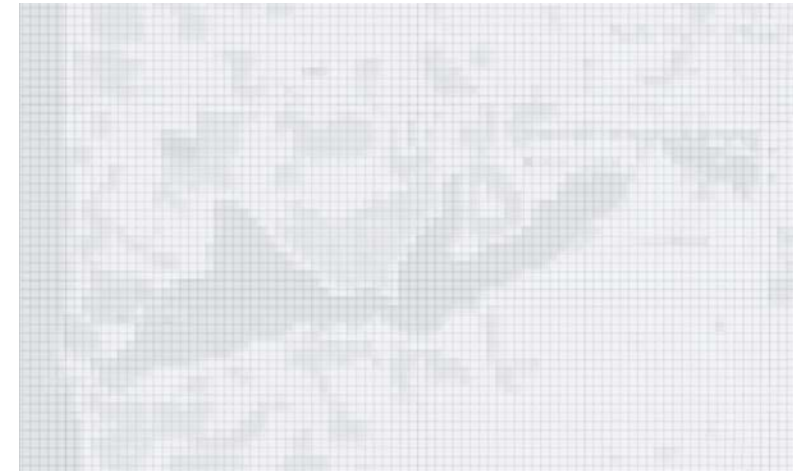
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A shared culmination of loved ones' memories and shared experiences serves to spark a positive sense of mortality in an accessible setting. This encourages social inclusion and offers a notable contrast of nature in a manmade/urban context.





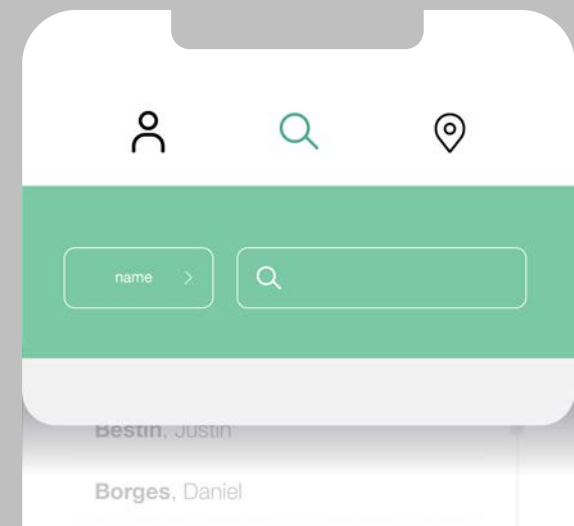
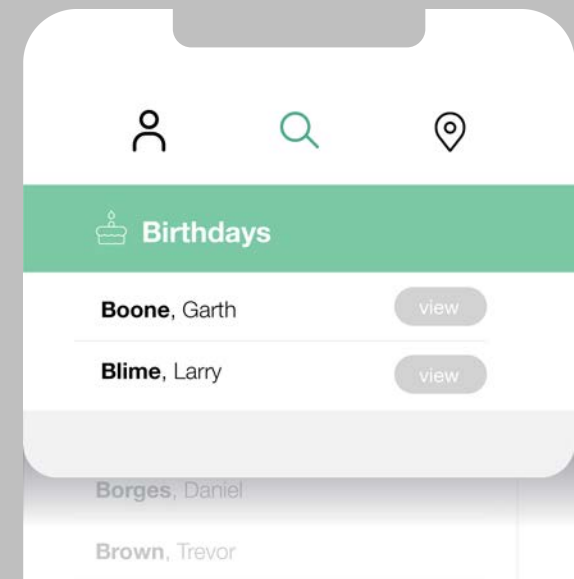
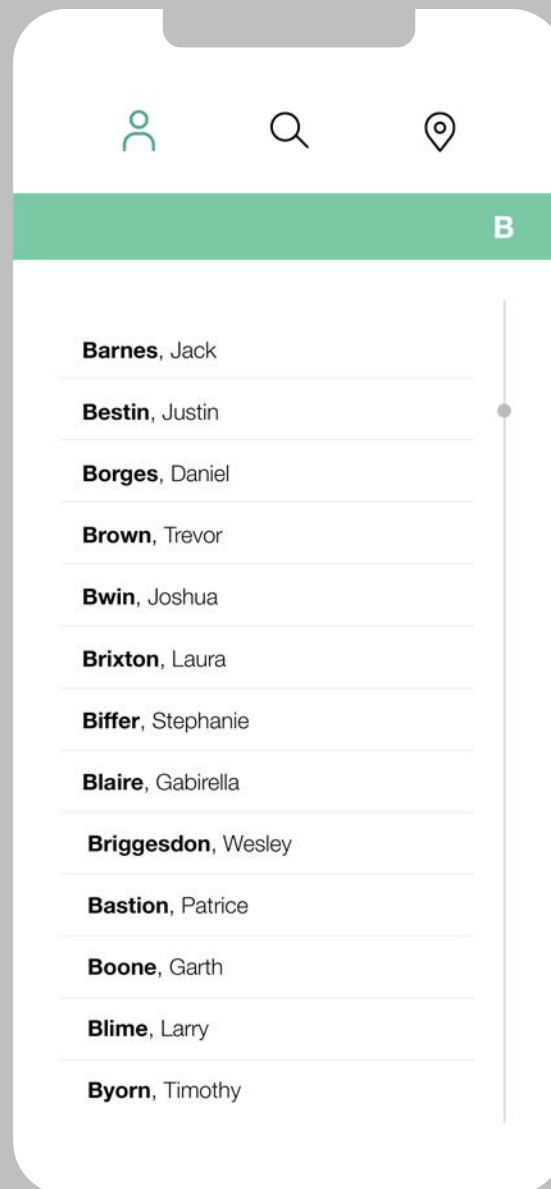
# Unifying Place & People

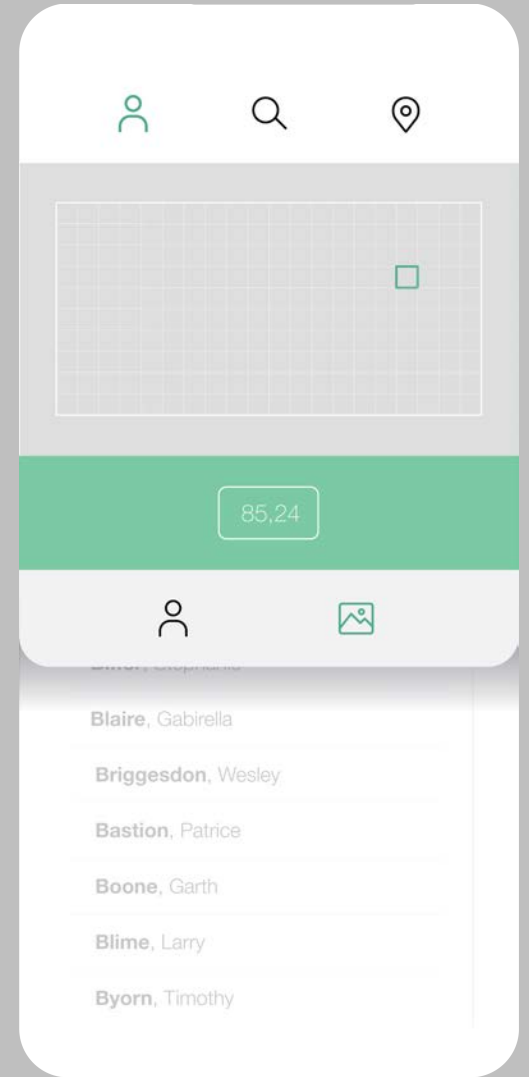
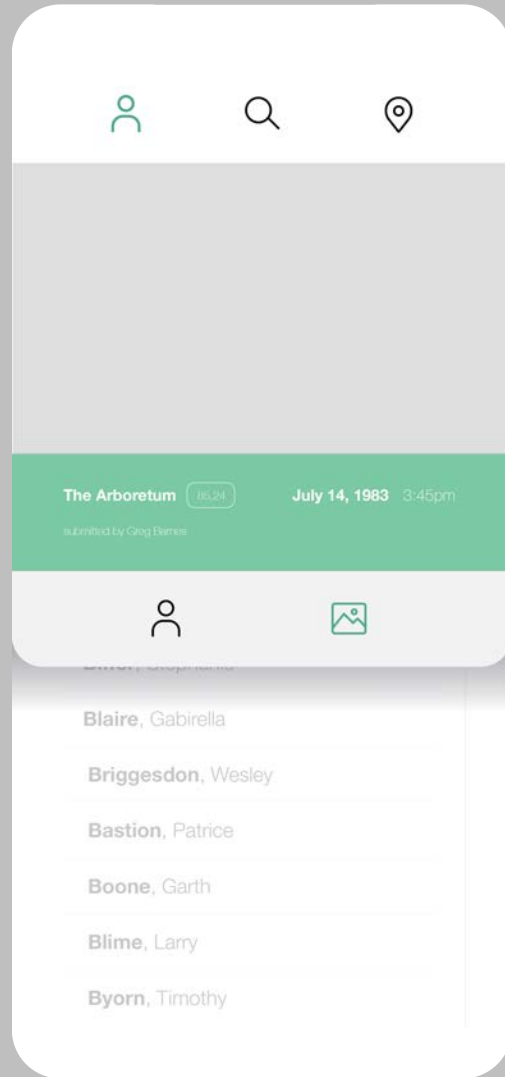
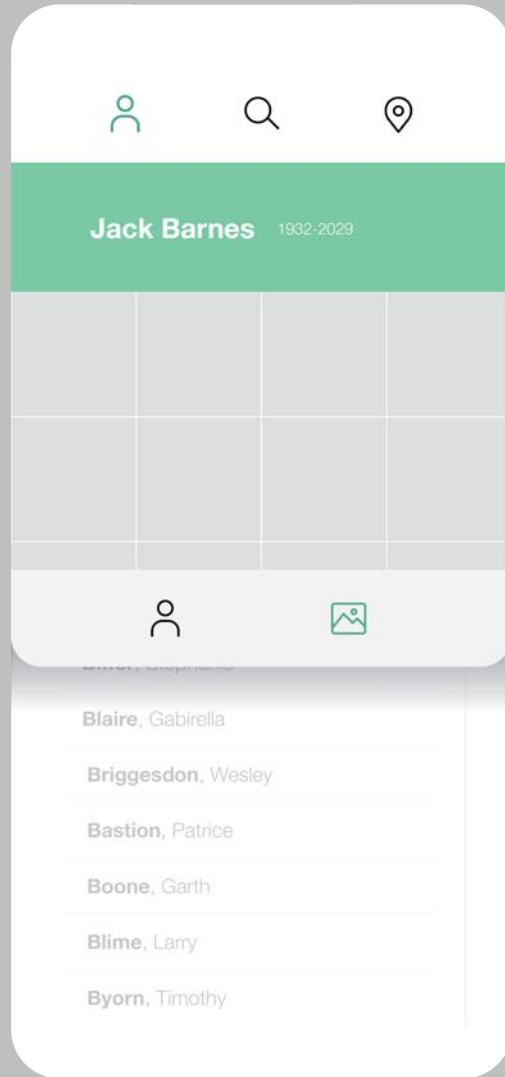
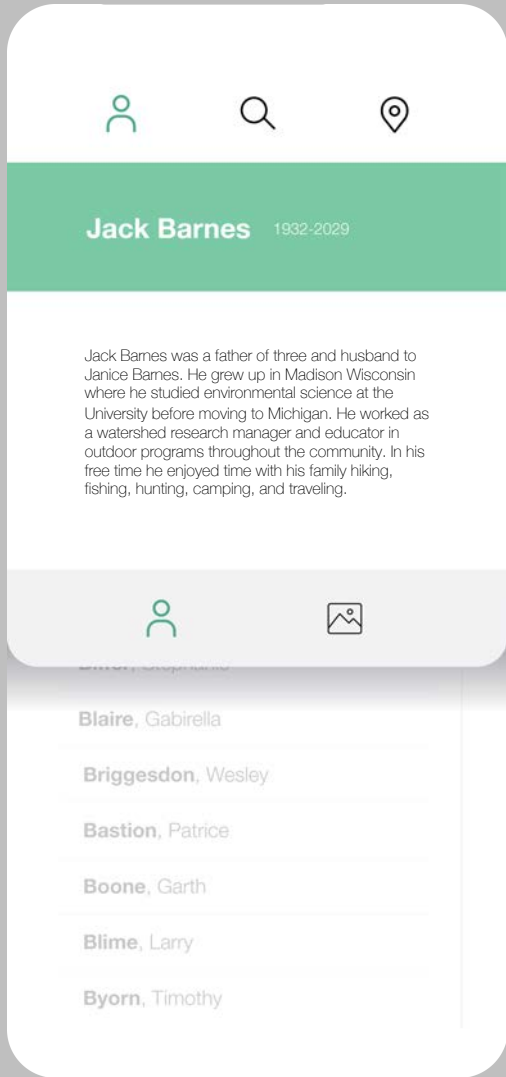


Moss squares serve as pixels in a grid to fill out coordinates within a map of the the local city/region

# Connecting To Memories

To connect and gain information of the memories of the public installation's moss squares, a QR code can be scanned to access the archive. This helps you identify the people, places, and times that comprise the memories of the installation.







85,24

**Jack Barnes**

1932-2029



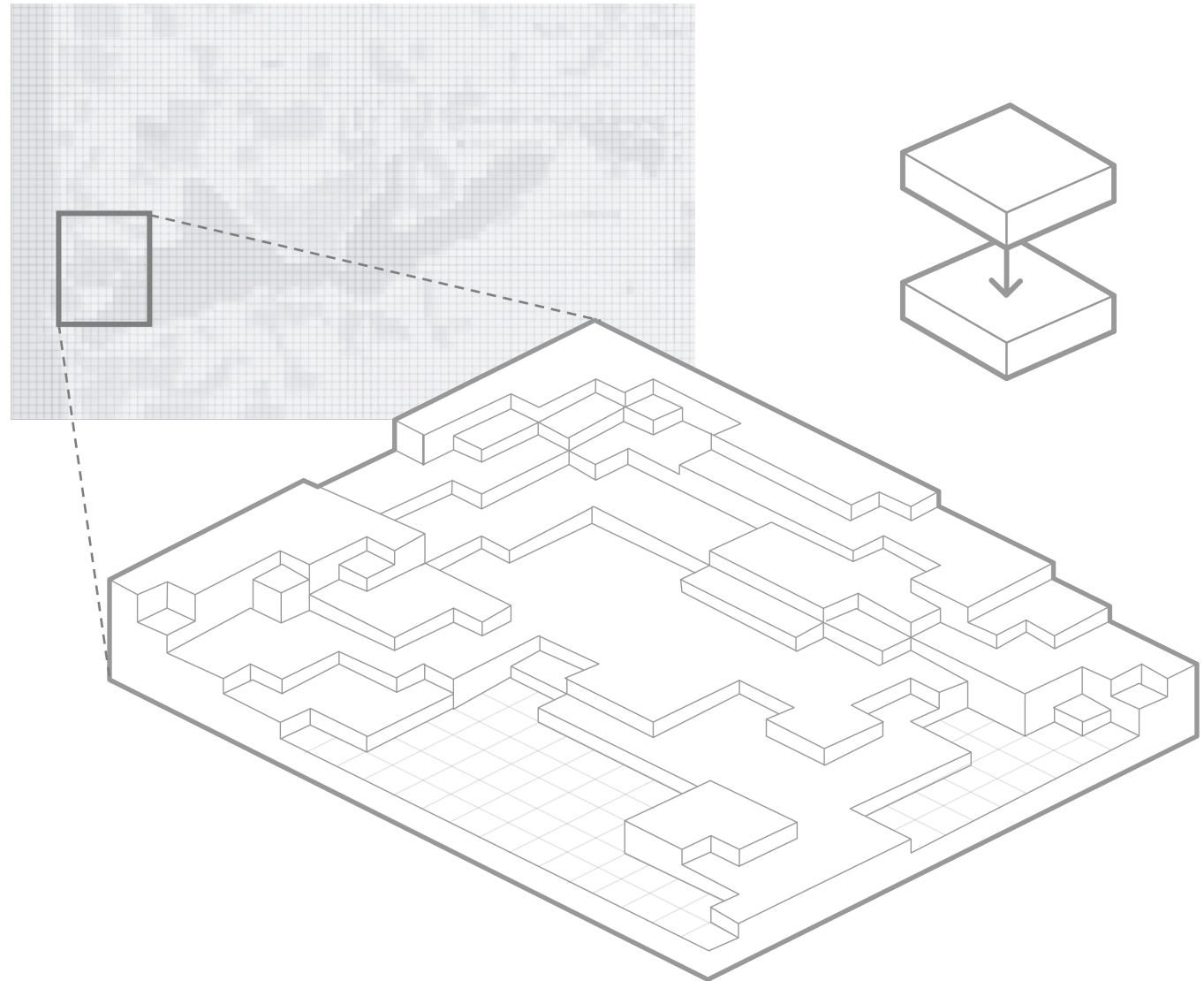
The Arboretum 85,24

July 14, 1983 3:45pm

# Longevity

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Over time more squares will be added and overlap with old ones, the layering revealing a sense of memory density in the map installation





## Public Art Commission

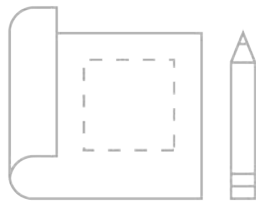
gain approval for installation

## City Planning

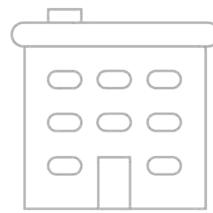
establish a legal community location

## Forestry Department

urban vegetation maintenance



installation  
plan



city arts  
commission



city planning  
department

Thank You

