

## Portraits of loss...

The Graveyard Project video art series delineates the grief and loss felt when close relatives or friends pass away and the taboos surrounding death. However, it is also an illustration of how life goes on and people learn to live with their bereavement. The project is carried out by visual artist Martin Thaulow.

The purpose of the project is to create a space for the viewer where memory, yearning, grief and death are central issues. The viewer can wander from video to video and contemplate the many facets of death but also the widely different cultural and religious aspects portrayed. The installation lets the viewer experience the different ways in which we handle death and discover new angles on life. Life is fragile, and loss always leaves a scar, becoming part of our history regardless of our social status, cultural background, faith or beliefs. Just as our family background is essential to the formation of our identity and sense of self, death affects our identity, particularly when we lose someone dear to us.

Death is very often regarded as taboo, particularly if the deceased committed suicide or died under other tragic circumstances. The Graveyard Project wants to address the subject of death and legitimize dialogue about death and loss – something we all need to deal with and will eventually experience ourselves.

The installation creates a space for us that engages our experiences and memories and allows us to feel and reflect on our own losses based on.

As the exhibition grows adding footage from different parts of the world, the diversity of cultural codes will become part of the project as well: appearance, clothing, buildings, landscapes etc. will start to interrelate.

Another aim of the videos is to break the media influence that we are exposed to every day: all the pictures of perfect people living carefree lives and presenting unattainable beauty ideals. These videos show ordinary people: complex, composite beings, mortal, ephemeral, fragile, in all shapes and sizes.

## Practical information for participants

The filming always takes place at the site where the deceased is buried – all kinds of sites apply. The camera is then centered on the bereaved person or persons standing in the centre of the scene facing the camera.

Participants are not instructed beforehand and decide for themselves where to position themselves in relation to the grave. The camera is turned on, and the camera operator walks off leaving the participant(s) in peace. Participants stand by the grave for 3-6

minutes and then leave the site. The camera operator returns about a minute later and turns off the camera.

1. It takes about 45 minutes to make a video from start to finish.
2. Participants are not given any instructions. They decide for themselves how and where to stand.
3. Participants must face the camera.
4. The camera operator starts recording then leaves.
5. Participants stand by the grave for 3-6 minutes and then leave the site.
6. The soundtrack is the original background noise from the site.
7. The video will not be edited afterwards, but it may be necessary to record a new one because of external influences during the filming.
8. The following information about the deceased is given in the beginning of each video:  
First name, Last name.  
Date of birth, Birth place.  
Date of death, Cause of death, Age.
9. Participants are anonymous.

The project will run over the next four years, and the videos will be exhibited around the world during and after the course of the project. A selection of the videos will be available on the Internet at [www.thegraveyardproject.net](http://www.thegraveyardproject.net).

## Presenting the project: a video graveyard

A number of videos are played simultaneously on a range of old television sets in an exhibition room or public space. The videos show participants standing by the site where their loved ones are buried. The old television sets showing the videos are placed on the floor constituting a “video graveyard”.



Still from the film The Graveyard Project - “Miki”  
HD - Video loop, 07:18 min, 2010.

Mike (Miki)  
Lyberth Jørgensen  
Born: 26.06.1974  
Birth place: Arnager  
Died 09.08.2000  
Suicide  
Aged 26