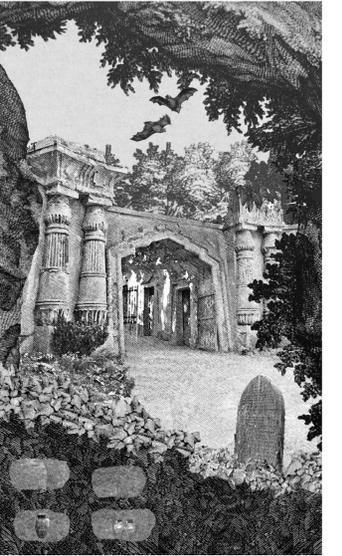
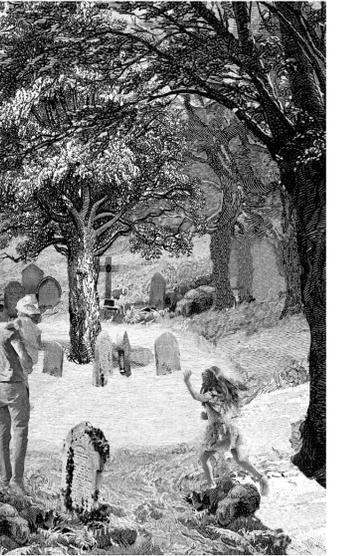
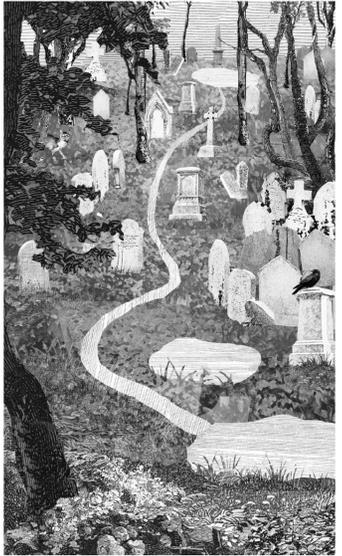
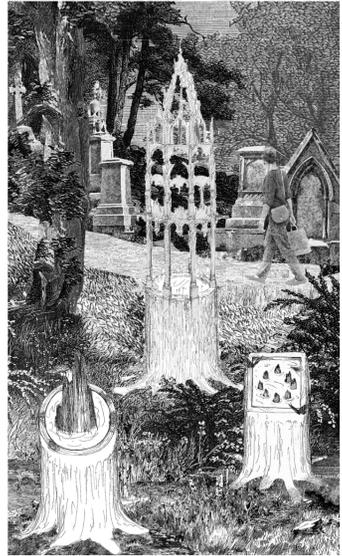
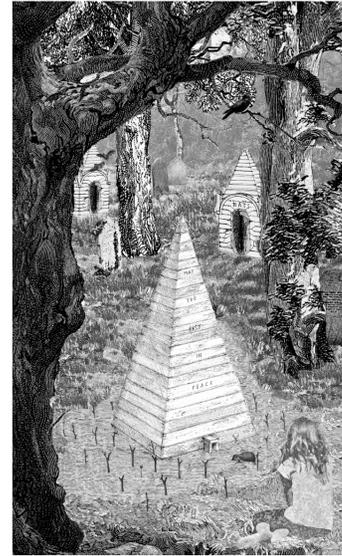
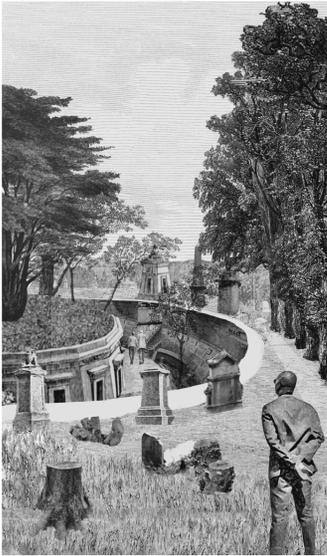
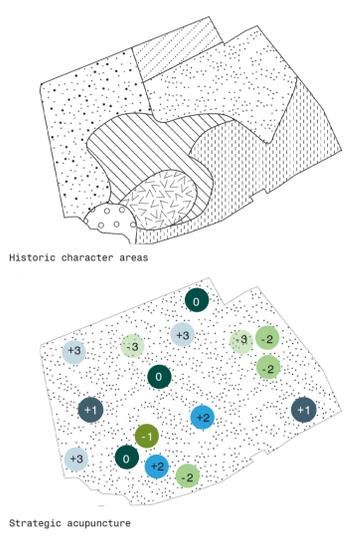


Highgate West Cemetery



The west cemetery has a strikingly romantic historic character, which should be retained and restored to as great an extent as possible.

A grave-by-grave and tree-by-tree assessment will inform strategic acupuncture interventions that sit atop the existing character areas, creating moments of intrigue that delicately underline rather than dominate the sensitive historic landscape.

These interventions translate seven themes, for the seven generations. Each move will be carefully carried out to stabilise subsidence, increase biodiversity and restore lost views and monuments with as minimal disruption to the original character as possible.

Loss

Key views from the original picturesque design will be restored, and new sight-lines towards the city will frame London's developing contemporary skyline. These moments will be managed with a deliberate 'hard' edge, emphasising a sense of enclosure and opening - moving from the old to the even older.

Careful 'surgical' dissection and take down of trees will avoid damaging valuable graves and monuments. All removed wood matter will be reused on site - larger logs for tree props and smaller lumber and poles for community woodworking workshops. Undergrowth will be removed in phases to preserve the sense of romantic ruin, avoiding sterilisation or a feeling of 'newness'.

Remembrance

The existing monuments will be retained and restored as far as possible, these will be joined by new ecological monuments to non-human species. Designed and made from pieces of the Cemetery forest by local artists, community groups and children, they create unexpected moments of discovery, storytelling and fairy-tale magic within the woodland, including miniature tombs for bats, worms and the Western European hedgehog. An interactive map will encourage children to adventure through the woodlands and learn about the local creatures who once dwelled there, and who still lives there now. These monuments will be small and temporary, unobtrusive of the sensitive historic character, and will gradually decompose into the undergrowth.

Reflection

The selective removal of trees will be required to allow space for other trees to grow, and to repair damaged graves. The stumps of removed trees will be left in the undergrowth as standing deadwood, in memory of the last century's woodland history as an important part of its historic and ecological development.

Tree stumps will be carved as commemorative ecological alternatives to burials and gravestones. Simple chiselled bowl shapes will collect rainwater, creating 'sky ponds' or non-religious 'font's' that contribute to the woodland biodiversity as bird-baths, encouraging mosses, lichens and insects such as hoverflies. More elaborate tree carvings can create moments of magnificence that hark to the ancient extravagant cemetery monuments.

Cradle

Water underlines the passage of time - encompassing a sense of both memory and rebirth. The existing pond to the south of the cemetery will be expanded to form a series of small seasonal and flood-collection ponds. Minor earthworks interventions around the site will be combined with micro-drainage to aid the formation of these water bodies. These new habitats will increase biodiversity by encouraging wetland flora and fauna. Springs across the site provide opportunities for new small ponds, and to connect these habitats across and beyond the cemetery.

Rebirth

Old and significant trees have a magnificent presence and should be celebrated. Many of the older trees in the west cemetery are in poor health, yet even in their death have a very high ecological value as micro-habitats. These will be girdled and honoured as great living corpses, underlining the atmosphere of romantic ruin and continuing to feed the birds, invertebrates, mosses, lichens and fungi. Timber tree props similar to the Japanese yukitsuri will be constructed to support them and prolong their decay as standing deadwood. These posts can be inscribed with messages for lost trees removed and destroyed across London.

Longevity

Priority and historic trees will be identified within the woodland management scheme, halo-thinning will be used to remove trees close-by, improving access to light and soil and thus nurture their long-term health. The undergrowth around these trees will be cut and managed in articulated circles, visually emphasising the trees' importance and exposing their currently overlooked sculptural qualities. During the summer months, management of the undergrowth will allow the areas beneath the trees to be used for sitting and enjoying a moment of tranquility, or for activities such as wood-carving. The clipped circles will fade back into the undergrowth during the winter.

Endurance

Minor localised earthworks may be required in some areas to negate subsidence. This may include localised grave removal, infilling, retaining walls and the underpinning of slopes. All earthwork interventions provide opportunity for new graves and burials, such as columbarium niches in rammed earth walls. Any removal of remains should be carefully managed and integrated in the cultural and academic knowledge dividend.

Interventions will be undertaken in slow succession - allowing time for the earth to settle and the woodland to adapt, and avoiding any radical or sudden change in aesthetic.

