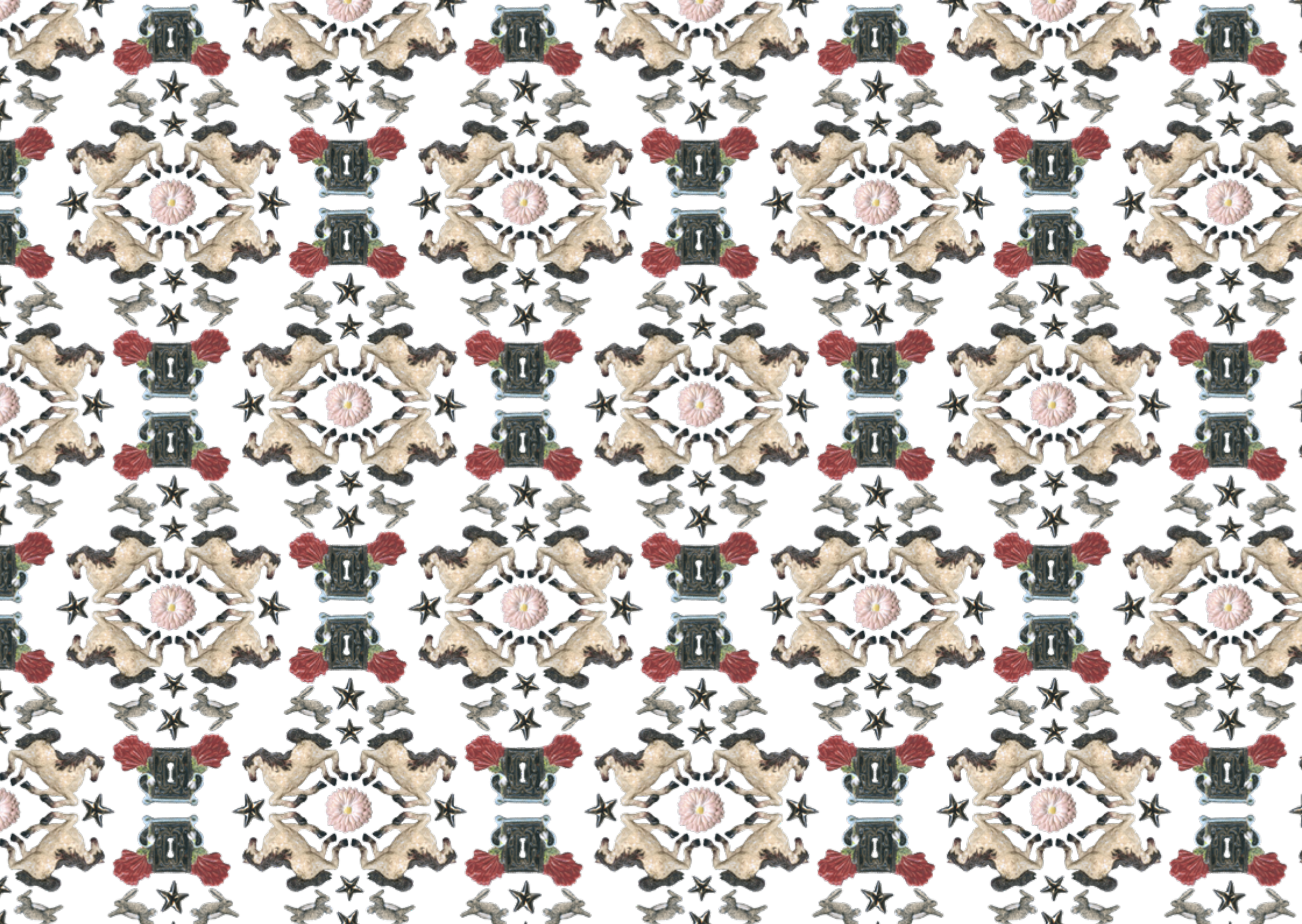




Katabasis

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<https://karolinarusak.com/project/katabasis/>



Katabasis (Ancient Greek: κατάβασις, romanized: katábasis, lit. 'descent'; from κατὰ (katà) 'down' and βαίνω (baínō) 'go') is a journey to the underworld and back.

URGENCY

Where I come from, urns cannot be legally kept at home.

Traditional cemetery burials can be seen as mandatory. While not ideal for many, such system has its pros, as the graves have to be tended to. Cemeteries are places of retrospection, while the mourners clean the monuments, bring fresh flowers and light candles.

They present an opportunity for a conversation with the one you have lost and reminiscing. In the Netherlands, where almost 70% of Dutch people opt for cremation, and keeping the urn at home is perfectly legal, there is little to no interaction with the departed loved one past the funeral.

The urn at home is a static object, not meant to be touched, held, or changed. It is easy to become stagnant in the interactions with your loved one's remains when the urn sits conveniently on the mantle, collecting dust. And this interaction is crucial, as it is the fundament of understanding and coming to terms with not only your loss, but the grief itself.

I propose an alternative: An urn as an active part of the home - something customisable, modular. One that you can change the appearance of depending on your grief

transforming with time, your aesthetic taste, or to honour the one who has passed away. I believe that to actively choose something beautiful means to care.

In a series of regular correspondence you can share particular memories of your loved one, and I, the maker, in consultation with you translate them into singular ornaments which hold the essence of such a memory.



An interval correspondence structure of creating the ornaments is supposed to imitate a ritual - not in a sense of worship but a regular custom of contemplation. It results in getting used to the presence - of the person you have lost - in your mind and their absence in the physical world. By carefully picking, sharing and curating memories with me, a stranger, you inevitably make yourself grieve actively. By writing you relive the past and allow yourself to feel the loss.

Grief is not something that can be procrastinated forever, it will find its way into your life eventually. It will always take an unavoidable amount of time, which you can take control of by working with your emotions instead of against them. The correspondence has the function of a journal, a catalyst for all feelings of pain and love which are looking for an outlet.

By being such a part of the design process you have an agency in not only what the last resting place of your loved one looks like, but what it is and what stories it tells. It becomes an evolving part of your home and your daily life. It evokes fond memories which physical representations of were crafted with care, in the form of minute and dainty reliefs.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

After picking out a home for your loved one's remains - the urn - a plan of ornament creation, maximum 1 memory per month, can be set up.

This allows for contemplation and revisiting the past in a comfortable, not rushed manner. One step at a time and consistently, grief does not have to feel foreign and strange, but structured in care, and the urn can grow and slowly bloom like a garden.

- Each month, one of a poll of questions is shared with you, as an inspiration for revisiting a memory regarding your departed loved one. It may be something from their past, something you two shared, or simply something that reminds you of them.

What story of your loved one always makes you laugh?

What is the oldest memory of your loved one you possess?

What is something which your loved one would like to have?

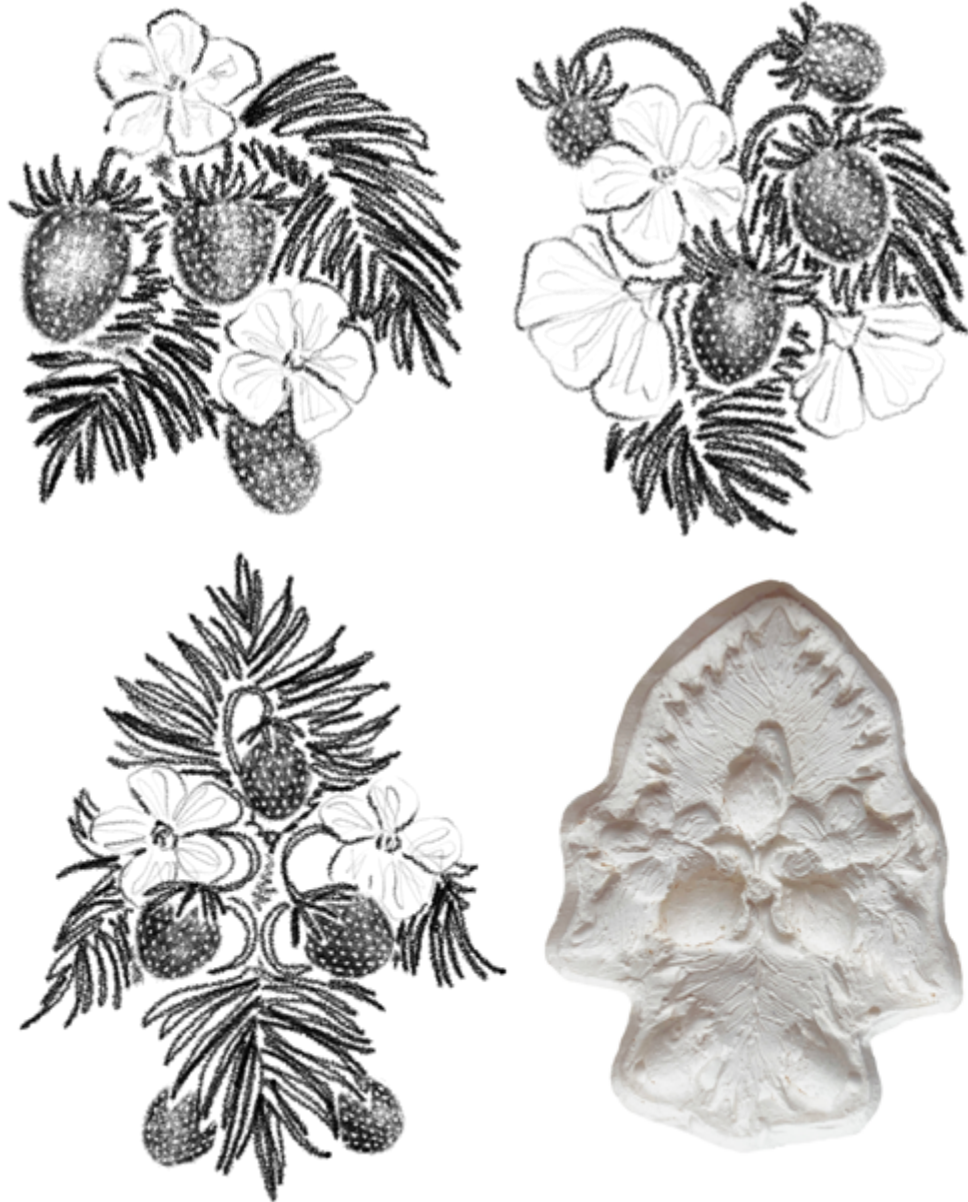
- Then you can send such memory to me, the the maker, in the preferred form: written or recorded. The more

detailed the description is, the better. Other aids like photographs can (but do not have to) be added as well to help me better understand your loved one and you.

What is one thing, which always reminds you of your loved one?

Wild strawberries, ripe and sweet, have always grown where my maternal grandparents were. Around their summer woods cabin, guarded by a ceramic gnome who brought me candy till the day he was stolen. Later I picked them from grandmother's garden, washed them and brought inside the house. She could not go out in the sun after chemotherapy. And at last I remember her cat rolling around in the wild strawberry bushes, intoxicated by their smell and falling asleep in their midst. All those strawberry lovers are gone now, but the fruits remain. I shall pick them again this summer.

- After a week you can expect proposal sketches, from which you can choose the one which feels the closest to the representation of your memory. After another few days the design will be finalised and presented to you for approval.



- Then comes the making process, in which I craft your memory into a physical ceramic ornament with a magnetic attachment. The process can take up to a month, in which you can begin to find another cherished memory if you wish to.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

Whatever you deem the right price:

As the project is in the stage of customer research, the first clients to sign up will be treated as collaborators.

This means that during the span of one year, together we will gradually create an urn and ornaments for your departed or living loved one, perhaps even for you in a price that you name.

The project may evolve based on the preferences of clients to which I, the maker, respond with an improved course of action. Mourning is a deeply personal and unique process varying between all people and their situations, and there is no one fully replicable way to treat it.



New memory ornaments are only limited by our imagination. Together we can create a collection which then you can freely arrange as you wish on the provided urn.

It will slowly become like a photo album, or a diary - telling stories from the past. It can change with your interior, the passing of seasons or simply your whim so the urn, and the precious remains of your loved one are a present part of your life, not a heavy burden. It does not have to be hidden away, but appreciated instead.

You can see more at:

<https://karolinarusak.com/project/katabasis/>

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