

Urn to help women who have lost babies wins design prize

Yong Li Xuan

Design student Loo Zi Ling wants women who have suffered a stillbirth or neonatal loss to be able to celebrate Mother's Day too.

Her entry ReinCarnation – a sculpture of a carnation which cradles a gemstone made from breast milk – in a design competition reimagines how an urn could give these women, who had a late-term pregnancy loss or experienced a baby's death within four weeks of birth, another way to remember their loss.

The design concept also lets the woman who lost her baby donate her breast milk to another who cannot produce enough for her child.

With the donor's consent, she will receive a letter about how the child is doing every Mother's Day.

Ms Loo, 24, who spoke to four

women who suffered stillbirths or miscarriages, said: "Mother's Day will become very painful for them. So I want to redefine it for women who went through this loss, to remind them of their initial kindness so there's something to celebrate, even on Mother's Day."

Her urn design won first place in the general public category of the competition called Reinterpreting the Urn: A Symbol of Celebration.

The event is a part of Happy Urns, an initiative to encourage open conversations with loved ones about end-of-life topics to reduce stigma surrounding death.

It was organised by the Singapore University of Technology and Design's design centre DesignZ and commissioned by philanthropic organisation Lien Foundation and Ang Chin Moh Foundation.

Ms Loo, a final-year industrial design student at the National Univer-



sity of Singapore, said some of the women she spoke to regretted throwing away things that reminded them of the loss such as the first ultrasound scan.

"I wanted to turn that bitterness into a bittersweet remembrance."

She chose to focus on the loss of a baby as she finds it very emotional.

"I love working on projects that serve the underserved," she said,

adding that much of design now revolves around advertising or new technology. "They're new, flashy and almost capitalistic. But topics like this, it's really designing with empathy, for underserved people. So I think there's beauty in that."

The competition drew 101 entries from 15 countries including Malaysia, France and Colombia.

Entries were judged on whether



Left: Ms Loo Zi Ling (right) presenting her project called ReinCarnation during a critique for her class at the National University of Singapore about designing for death.

Above: Ms Loo's design concept of an urn – a sculpture of a carnation which cradles a gemstone made from breast milk.

PHOTOS: WONG ENG GENG, LOO ZI LING

they introduce ways of remembering a loved one after death, spark conversations about life and death, and create opportunities for people to process their emotions and attitudes about death.

The jury of eight said Ms Loo's idea might resonate "significantly, creating deep impact" with women who had experienced stillbirths or neonatal loss.

"While the idea focuses on the mother, it can become a powerful tool to foster conversations between mothers and even women without children," added the jury.

Ms Loo, who won \$5,000, said she is still studying and does not intend to start a company or produce the urn for now.

yonglx@sph.com.sg