2021

Restoration: Exploring the semiotics of faith, materials, and their relationship surrounding the human body

Paige Elizabeth Holzbauer

Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Restoration: Exploring the semiotics of faith, materials, and their relationship surrounding the human body

by

Paige Holzbauer

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Integrated Visual Arts

Program of Study Committee:
Austin Stewart, Major Professor
Seda McKilligan
Olivia Valentine
Firat Erdim
Raluca Iancu

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2021

Copyright © Paige Holzbauer, 2021. All rights reserved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2. MATERIALS/MATERIALITY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3. TRACES AND TEXTURES: THE GROUND AND THE PAGE</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4. BODY SYMBOLISM IN CHRISTIANITY</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5. SEMIOTICS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6. I LOST MY GRANDPA, I LOST MY CHILD, I LOST MY RELIGION</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7. BAPSTISM</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 8. MOVING FORWARD</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Biddle St. &amp; N. 15th St., St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1428 Biddle St., St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>Bricks Post-Ferguson</em>, 2018, Brick and Glass, installed dimensions: 12 in. x 3 ft. x 16 in., installation at Design on Main Gallery, Ames, IA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>Untitled</em> (detail), 2019, Aluminum Plate, Water, Salt, Vinegar, 24 in. x 18 in</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>The Way</em>, Digital collage, plate lithography, watercolor, 30 in. x 22 in</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>Dancing with What People Can See and Know</em>, 2018, Monoprint, collage, photography, lithography, drawing, relief, 30 in. x 22 in</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>Baptism</em>, Floor installation, sand, linen, solar print, installation dimensions: 10 ft. x 10 ft. x 10 ft. Nighttime installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Corita Kent, <em>love at the end</em>, 1969. Photo by Dawn Blackman, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Los Angeles and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Ron Muek, <em>Youth</em>, 2009, Mixed media, 25.5 in. x 11 in. x 6.25 in. Photo courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion</em> (detail), 2020, Installation, 8 ft. x 12 ft. x 8 ft</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer (collaboration with Robert Jinkins), <em>Starry Nights</em>, MDF board, paint, buckshot, bullet holes, ashes, caulk, 16 in. x 16 in. x 2 in</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion</em>, 2020, Installation, 8 ft. x 12 ft. x 8 ft. Installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Paige Holzbauer, <em>I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion</em> (interior)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.3. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (detail of previous interior setup). .......................................................... 22

Figure 6.4. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion*, (final installation detail). ............................................................................. 24

Figure 6.5. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (detail). ........................................................................................................................................ 24

Figure 6.6. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (interior detail). .................................................................................................................. 25

Figure 6.7. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (object detail). ........................................................................................................................................ 25

Figure 7.1. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism*, Floor installation, sand, linen, solar print, installation dimensions: 10 ft. x 10 ft. x 10 ft., 2020. Installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA............................................................................................................................................... 27

Figure 7.2. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism* (detail). ................................................................................................................................................................................................. 27

Figure 7.3. Detail from original video used in final installation. Photo courtesy of Jordyn Harrison........................................................................................................................................... 28

Figure 7.4. Paige Holzbauer, *Shroud of Turin*, Performance art, linen, 2017................................. 29

Figure 7.5. Paige Holzbauer, *New Beginnings*, Gum transfer, lithography, 2020, 15 in. x 10 in. .................................................................................................................................................................................. 30

Figure 7.6. Paige Holzbauer, *Untitled (Baptism)*, Gum transfer, 2020, 10 in. x 15 in. .................. 30

Figure 7.7. *Baptism*, Video detail (3:19), 2020................................................................................. 31

Figure 7.8. *Baptism*, Video detail (9:00), 2020................................................................................ 32

Figure 7.9. *Baptism*, Video detail (9:05), 2020................................................................................ 32

Figure 7.10. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism*, 2020. Installation at The Octagon Arts Gallery, Ames, IA........................................................................................................................................... 33
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Austin Stewart, and my committee members, Olivia Valentine, Firat Erdim, Raluca Iancu, and Seda McKilligan, for their support throughout the course of this research. It was through your critiques and conversations that shifted my perspectives and challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and ultimately lead me to create a meaningful body of work and walk into this new stage of life with confidence. I also want to thank my committee for all of your support through the trials the last year had brought me. Your encouragement and reassurance that you lent me as a student and as a person brought me peace of mind throughout this whole process.

In addition, I want to thank my friends, the department faculty and staff from the Department of Arts and Visual Culture and the Department of Sustainable Environments. I am fortunate to have had an interdisciplinary education that enabled me to forge strong friendships from the community here and it made my time here enjoyable and memorable.

I want to thank my family, both in St. Louis and the family I made here in Ames. You have all supported me every step of the way and your continued wisdom and inspiration have sown seeds in me that continue to bear fruit and I am grateful to each one of you that has walked with me on this journey.

Lastly, I want to specifically thank Pastors Drew and Tony Meyer of Lifepointe Church. You know my story; you nurtured the light and gifts you saw in me and encouraged me and rallied a strong body of believers around me that has witnessed me grow and flourish. I could not have done this without you and your families' unwavering love and support every step of the way. You will always be my family and I am thankful to have you both by my side.
ABSTRACT

Practices and rituals have always been a way for humans to discern and regard the world and their experiences. Taking the same paths to and from leaves imprints, traces and threads to places and environments. Collecting seemingly inconsequential, everyday objects turn benign artifacts of life into sacred relics. Repetitious prayer practices reveal new languages, motions, and open inner rooms that otherwise have been shut for decades.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the relationship between semiotics and faith in relation to language surrounding the human body to develop a narrative about restoration in contemporary Christian art between the artist and the public, using the artist's personal narrative as the foundation. It documents the various objects and materials the artist has encountered, how the solidifying lens of faith has impacted their meanings and usage, to examining the changing narratives and identities laid upon the artist and how that has impacted the meanings surrounding personal restoration.

Yielding from different media (installation, printmaking, and performance), the artwork in the accompanying thesis exhibition displays a real-time demonstration of the healing and restoration process utilizing faith as its primary lens. The work progresses in clarity and foundation without the process being resolved, but accepted, submitting itself to the process of change and stepping into the roles set before them.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I walk along these streets often to catch some air. I always walk on the streets; I was taught that early on, it is safer. And I remember the lessons to walk against oncoming traffic. There are not many cars that come by most days, but I remember how to run if anyone slows up. When the weather is good, I will carry my shoes and walk barefoot, I never minded calluses on my feet. The pavement is almost always warm, blacktop usually is. The surface is uneven, but my feet have adjusted to the gravel pieces getting caught up when I walk that I barely feel it anymore. Sometimes I spend the whole walk looking at the pavement noting every time the color changes, the potholes, broken spots from old pipes underneath, and take care to avoid the broken glass. The surface texture I have always found soothing, I cannot explain why, but I feel calmer and more connected on top of streets than when walking on the natural ground.

On walks I am more confident, I can lift my head and look around, but I have learned not too much. There is a way about things. Looking around too much and accidentally catching someone's eye can cause confrontation. Looking straight ahead is okay, but if anyone is driving or walking towards you, you learn to harden yourself and look through them. But you are aware of them all the same. Even after they pass, you are on alert. Those days I would need to walk a little longer to detach and calm down before returning. I could never tell you the landscape directly around me beyond what my survival instincts marked and recorded as I walked, but I could honestly take what was ahead of me, far off enough in distance, no threat was posed so I could try seeing it. Old manufacturing buildings, textiles, faded company names painted on the sides. Abandoned for the most part, except the ground and maybe first floor levels. The bricks were always the right kind of color, not to red or orange to be obnoxious, but not brown enough that you would glaze over them. Taking in the bricks around me gave me an unimaginable
appreciation for the Mississippi River and the clay it produced, the source material of these beautiful buildings, to some looking beyond their prime, but I saw sustainable. Still standing. Even empty, only the windows gave away its age, but never the bricks. I once got lucky and got close enough to this old textile building, now an extension building for a larger company used for transporting. It is closed off, surrounded by a tall fence with barbed wire, just to remind me of where I was. I had run my hands along the chain link fence, hoping to run my hands along the building instead; I still have not to this day. But bricks are plenty here. The buildings almost blend that you long for some fresh green grass, rather than small patches of the dead dried out ground that was normally there. Rain could fix that. Storms faster. But I find that the fresh green did not make me want to walk through it, sit on it, be near it. I just wanted to know nature still existed, checking in on it from time to time, walking and passing alongside it as I inevitably had to make my way back. My nature was built by men long since passed and was made up of bricks, tar, and concrete, with hints and moments of nature, still manmade. Raw materials not unlike walking through a Home Depot.

This place has documentation, but it has been found in the archives. Photos taken of these places happen if there has been a shooting, which are frequent. Tourists visit this city, but they have been warned to avoid this part. I do not blame them. And then I do. This place is suffocating and constraining, it is hard to leave, and it is cut off. But within it, there are the people who make it real, a home, a place to walk again. If artists represent it, they use the degradation. It makes sense, people love to run down, broken, old, rusted, etc. They just want to drive by it, not live near or in it or have to see it every day; it can be maddening and disheartening. I do not blame them. And then I do. To me, it is unique, but I know there is more places like it. In every city, in every state. There is a place you have seen through photos that you
admire the beauty it once had but fail to see the beauty it still possesses. We love its degradation but do not want to restore it. We just want to document its destruction, then at some point tear it all down and build something new, that looks different from where it is at but is the same as somewhere else that we cannot pinpoint, but that new structure will remind us of safety. This is a place that is a hard reflection of the reality of our cities, of how we treat the least of us. It is somewhere you would want to drive through, but not stay, and provided it was during the day. It is somewhere that contains the people you do not see and maybe are afraid to. It is hard to get out of there, and those who do never go back. It would be weird to; why would you willingly walk into a warzone? I do not blame them. And then I do. I miss that place. But I do not miss the memories attached. I go back, but not often. I miss my walks there. But then I do not. But to me there is no place like it.

Some memories are good. Once I made friends and they recognized what I would do, they would walk with me. Because they were curious what I saw. But it was a way to watch out for me and I could speak freely; I was not in as much survival mode. And it gave me a chance to put into words how the ground felt. The colors of the bricks as I put them into words. And through this, my friends - who had lived there longer than me - would suggest other places to walk and see. Get me out of my routine and they would take me to places they grew up around and thought I would like. We had also began collecting; well, I did. They just did not stop me, and even facilitated some of it. We would grab loose bricks from abandoned building, ones that still had the original brick maker logo imprinted. I still have three of them to this day. They are my greatest treasures. We would find shell casing from different guns; I still have them in the original Ziploc bag from almost 10 years ago. I have a piece of thick broken glass embedded with security wire from an old elementary school that had shut down when I graduated high
school but had fallen apart rather quickly within five years after. I would take fleck of old paint and wallpaper. I still have strips of fabric dried with blood that was sitting by a dumpster. The cushions were gone. The murder is unsolved. But I remember. And that is why I would take pieces and carry them with me instead of just take a photo and walk away. These things remind me of the people who touched them too. For me, it is a way of connecting through the past and for a moment we stand in the same space and can see what once was and what it has become. But neither of us knows where it is going. I am too emotionally attached to see myself as an archeologist. But I see myself as someone who has recorded their presence, their proof that they walked here too, touched the same things I do, breathed the same air.¹

This is the way I would see and interact with the world. On the surface, it appears as only through materials and collecting, but looking closely, the objects are extensions of myself, a conduit in which I can relate to what I am taking in around me. The act of collecting is like a diary entry, marking the moment and time I encountered these pieces and keeping an element of it with me as move forward, a physical way to recall a memory.² In my work, these pieces became recontextualized in various aspects, highlighting specific qualities, to use as extensions of myself, be it physically or emotionally. But as time progress and my rapidly changing health became more pronounced, these things I collected had become less about what I saw in them that I could work with and more about the memories they held. Materials that I normally would use and change without thought sat in piles as they turned to relics for me, the last markers I had of memories that I could not recall and grasp to the point I wondered if they even had happened. Soon, even these things became foreign to me. My spirit was fully intact, looking for ways to

---
¹ An exert from a previous paper about the aspect of walking.
² Memory recall through objects became more important as my neurological activity began to decline and memories became harder to access on my own.
connect to the world again when I realized the most obvious channel was in front of me: my own body.

Figure 1.1. Biddle St. & N. 15th St., St. Louis, MO

Figure 1.2. 1428 Biddle St., St. Louis, MO
CHAPTER 2. MATERIALS/MATERIALITY

When thinking about the arguments of material versus materiality, I go back to the original meaning of 'material': 'mater' meaning mother. This is where I find my identity. Everything I have brought to life is a combination of materials that have degraded, evolved, morphed, formed and brought together to create a whole new singular thing. What these materials and objects say together cannot be said without each other. And what has been created will not be spoken again. Plaster cracks and ink fades. But that is a part of the human condition, memories, thoughts, and feelings. Change, evolution, stepping into the fire and coming out different is the process of restoration. I make my work keeping my mind on the process and I let the piece take care of itself.

In materiality culture, we rarely see objects past what they are. When it comes to the life of materials, the emphasis and focus is on their properties. These are aspects that are objective and measurable. However, another subset of Material Studies believes that instead of only looking at materials as just solid matter with no further meaning, we change to see them organisms, never stripped of its meaning, but ever changing based on context and usage.3

While properties are understandable and can be quantified, qualities are altogether different. Like semiotics, there is an aspect that is subjective, they are in our heads. This viewpoint comes from a specific lens upon which we see the world, shaped by our experiences, memories, and perceptions.4

---

Figure 2.1. Paige Holzbauer, *Bricks Post-Ferguson*, 2018, Brick and Glass, installed dimensions: 12 in. x 3ft. x 16 in., installation at Design on Main Gallery, Ames, IA.

Figure 2.2. Paige Holzbauer, *Untitled* (detail), 2019, Aluminum Plate, Water, Salt, Vinegar, 24 in. x 18 in.
CHAPTER 3. TRACES AND TEXTURES: THE GROUND AND THE PAGE

Encountering materials and surfaces daily, there recently has been a distinct interest in them, wishing to quantify and understand how they work together. This interest varies from anthropologists to architecture and design and in the studies of literature and material studies. Another aspect that has spurred on this type of interest especially to the deeper levels like social anthropologists and psychologists is the exploration of or the abandonment of modernist assumption that “the true essence of things and persons is to be found deep inside them, in an inner core that can be reached only by breaking open the external appearance behind which it hides.” This is the assumption that leads most of us to search past the surface, believing it to be superficial, distrusting them and focusing on peeling them aside, believing that is the only way in which we can arrive at its true meaning. Both in psychology and archaeology, the focus is to dig deeper, removing the exterior surfaces in hopes of finding hidden rooms, inner sanctums of the mind, almost disregarding layers that had been covered. But what if the surface is where we can find generations of meaning? That our continuous interactions of the surfaces around us creates new layers that add to the story of a space without altogether covering up its past; what if the traces of a space were still present? Drawing from Tim Ingold’s studies of human movements and interactions with the world around us, we can derive two specific surfaces that we encounter everyday: the ground and the page.

---


7 Ingold, Tim., pg. 137.

8 Ingold, Tim. “Surface Textures: The Ground and the Page.”
In Ingold’s writings, he challenges contemporary views of how the past and present interact with each other on surfaces, presenting that each has analogous properties today, comingling with each area becoming a zone of habitation, much like how he described his views on materials. While he uses the definitions of the ground and the page in their most basic sense, he shows that both surfaces have been transformed overtime to mean very different things than those of the past, resulting in both spaces being used for experience and imagination, showing that it’s the past that shows up from below through a semi-translucent surface present, “but rather that the present penetrates the depths even as the past rises to the surface. Present and past, in short, are upside down”. This unison of surfaces leads to a palimpsest, blending of earth and atmosphere, creating the veil which enables us not to be forced to choose between a world draped in meaning or one stripped down to its bare materiality – “between culture and nature”. The veil is seen as a cover, but not a cover up. Instead, it is a revelation, not hiding “the depth behind the surface but allowing us to feel the depth in the surface.” In this, the veil is not an interference, but shows us how the earth and atmosphere are folded into one another.

Ingold’s and Gibson’s contemporary views are ones I have adopted when looking and creating my work. I am at constant play between the ground and the page no matter the medium, seeking to explore, hid, reveal, and see all the different ways they interact with each other with no specific resolution in sight. This often leads me to unfinished works, becoming too lost in

---

9 Ingold, Tim., pg. 138. Ingold, Tim. “Materials and Materiality.”
10 Ingold, Tim., pg. 142. Pg. 138: “The page is not what it was for the scribes of medieval times who wrote with quill on parchment...nor is the ground, for modern people, what it once was for medieval husbandmen who drew their living from the earth.”
11 Ingold, Tim., pg. 144.
Pg. 145, referring to the Bible and Christianity: “Its text, welling to the surface, would reveal the words of God much as the textures of the ground – its rocks, vegetation, and trees – would reveal His works.”
what was past and is present mingling together so much it creates a new surface layer, one that either draws me in or I can get lost in and find no resting point. In practice, I use my prints to work through these issues to find the veil, the in-between, where the past and present are evident, but there is a hierarchy of elements to sift through and transfer to the 3D realm through installation and performance art.

Figure 3.1. Paige Holzbauer, The Way, Digital collage, plate lithography, watercolor, 30 in. x 22 in.
Figure 3.2. Paige Holzbauer, *Dancing with What People Can See and Know*, 2018, Monoprint, collage, photography, lithography, drawing, relief, 30 in. x 22 in.
I am drawn to the veil, in its literal and spiritual sense, how it has been a descriptor that separates the realms, earth and matter, and its role as an interceptor the truth, blinding our eyes as a separation of the soul from God’s will while its existence as something to see through is a tool to expose spiritual gaps and mental errors to bring towards resolution. At the same time, the veil creates a fluidity of time within the work. What is behind the veil is deemed as past and what is seen through is the present. The veil here touches on the constant flow of what is past, present, and continuous.

Figure 3.3. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism*, Floor installation, sand, linen, solar print, installation dimensions: 10 ft. x 10 ft. x 10 ft. Nighttime installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA.

---

13 See Davies, “The removal of the covering”, sermon, 2004. In the existence of a spiritual veil: Isaiah 25:7 ESV “And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.”
In the removal of a veil: Isaiah 60:3 ESV “And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”
As exposing the veil: 2 Corinthians 3:16 ESV “But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.”
CHAPTER 4. BODY SYMBOLISM IN CHRISTIANITY

In early Christianity, body-symbolism had a double sense: it is a social product in how we develop, shape, and adorn it, both in the physical and emotional sense; however, in its depictions, the body-symbol was nothing more than “condensed statements” about its relationship to society. Only the mind or spirit would represent the individual. In this vein of thinking, any symbol or ritual that emphasized spirit over body is decrying a “detachment from or revolt against the established social norms”; conversely, anything that “declared that spirit works through matter…implies that the individual is by nature subordinate to society and finds his freedom within its forms.”

This accepted practice of early Christian art was an extension into belief systems that still reigns into sects of contemporary thought, pushing along a narrative of depictions of oneself in visual arts was not a declaration of faith, but a spectacle meaning to take our eyes away from the Father and place them on ourselves instead. As a result, this created a long precedent of accepted Christian practices when it came to art with the implications largely being didactic, teaching the stories of greatest importance from the Old and New Testaments or those of great significance to the Church and its development. This pushed depictions of other entities within the Christian narrative to either symbols (think fire, burning bush, rays of light) or to the three accepted expressions of body-symbolism: resurrection, incarnation, and asceticism. However, by and large Christian art began to be challenged in the 60s and 70s by artists who recognized Christians

16 By the Church, I am referring primarily to the Catholic Church, however the meaning can also apply to any sect of Christian faith and its organization and doctrine (laws and ethics, not belief system).
17 Gager, John G., pg. 348. “While each symbol is separate, it is possible to track the prominence of each symbol in reference to major trends in cultural, political, and social development of the Christian movement as a whole.”
should confront society and the church using art’s powerful impact.\textsuperscript{18} Whereas before, contemporaries saw that art can faithfully chronicle the lives of ordinary people and express the transcendence of God through it.\textsuperscript{19} In this change came how to confront and change the views of the human body.

Figure 4.1. Corita Kent, \textit{love at the end}, 1969. Photo by Dawn Blackman, courtesy of the Corita Art Center, Los Angeles and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.

\textsuperscript{19} Pentecostal faith shows us how God is not just there for the big moments, but He is there in the day to day. See Turner, Steve. \textit{Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts}. Illinois: IVP Books, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2017.
Figure 4.2. Ron Muek, *Youth*, 2009, Mixed media, 25.5 in. x 11 in. x 6.25 in. Photo courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
Body and soul are no longer separate entities; while they are not identical, there is a joined unity between them. The human body and soul are intimately related but not by means of simply “body with soul or of soul with body.”\(^{20}\) The human body is the way in which we as believers navigate the world, our souls attached yet free, tied to the Holy Spirit and by extension, God and His calling and will over our lives. Before there was no distinction, however, under Pauline theology, the word body became separated into two entities body and flesh, body representing our outer physical selves, personality, individuality from others and the flesh referring to our ties to sin and earthly desires. It is here where the body becomes a tool for art. No longer is depiction of the human body, self, others seen as heresy, but an expression of the gift and life of the Creator who made it. The focus becomes in how the human body is used, moving, and explored that leads the viewer into understanding its ties to faith of today.\(^{21}\)


\(^{21}\) This is not a contemporary take on the body in just Christianity; this modern thought has been adopted and explored in the big three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) along with other prominent religions and theologies today (Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Wiccan, etc.).
CHAPTER 5. SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is a term that was coined by two major scholars/philosophers, originally as two separate schools of thought, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Semiotics, or semiology, in its most basic definition, is the study of signs and symbols. However, semiotics does not study just the signs used, but the way they are perceived, in this case, throughout history to the artist and to the wide culture. Even though both Pierce and Saussure’s views do not contradict the other, I am going to heavily rely on Pierce’s “semiotic philosophy” for this paper.22

Peirce’s theory for semiotics, while complicated, can be broken down and characterized into a trichotomistic structure to account for how the signs function: the representation (the sign, the physical object itself, a perceptible or virtually perceptible item), the interpretant (the mental image that the recipient form of the object), and the object or referent (the thing for which the sign stands). Art is, among other things, a sign or representation of something else (representamen). When the viewer approaches the work, they shape in their mind “an image of that something” that they associate with said image (the image, not the person shaping it, is the interpretant). The mental image points to the object (or referent); however, the object varies from person to person (in Peirce’s theory, the interpretant is the central concept (the image formed, not to be confused with the person forming the image)).23

With this basic trichotomy, I begin as an artist to create and play with multiple

---

23 Bal, Mieke and Norman Bryson. “Semiotics and Art History.” The Art Bulletin: 188. In Peirce’s “Logic as Semiotics: The Theory of Signs”, he says the following definition of the sign: “A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object, it stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen.” This is also similar to Barthes’s “signifier/signified/sign” system.
typologies, elaborating on and playing with the relationships that are constantly changing and calling to question topics of semantics, faith, rhetoric, and constant shift in meanings. One of Peirce’s more famous typologies of signs I frequently refer to is icon, index, symbol. An icon is a type of sign that would still maintain its character even if its object were not there. However, an important thing to remember here is that icon is a type of sign in relation to its object; “it is best seen as a sign capable of evoking nonexistent objects because it proposes to imagine an object similar to the sign itself.” This means that even without the object, the sign is still there, whether or not the interpretant plays a part; you don’t need verification of the object’s existence. An index, however, is a sign that would lose its character if its object were removed but would not lose that character if there is no interpretant. This means that even if the cause, or meaning behind the object, is missing, the character that we are looking at can still have meaning, depending on the interpretant. And symbol is a sign that loses its meaning that makes it a sign if there is no interpretant. The symbol directly relies on the images we see when looking at it or the meaning is lost.

24 Bal, Mieke and Norman Bryson. “Semiotics and Art History.” The Art Bulletin: 188. In Peirce’s “Logic as Semiotics: The Theory of Signs”, he says the following definition of the sign: “A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to as sort of idea, which I have sometimes call the ground of the representamen.” This is also similar to Barthes’s “signifier/signified/sign” system.


26 Pierce defines icon, index, symbol as: “An icon is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence, such as a lead pencil streak as representing a geometric line. An index is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for example, a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as a sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not. A symbol is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant. Such is any utterance of speech which signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification.”
Figure 5.1. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (detail), 2020, Installation, 8 ft. x 12 ft. x 8 ft.

Figure 5.2. Paige Holzbauer (collaboration with Robert Jinkins), *Starry Nights*, MDF board, paint, buckshot, bullet holes, ashes, caulk, 16 in. x 16 in. x 2 in.
CHAPTER 6. I LOST MY GRANDPA, I LOST MY CHILD, I LOST MY RELIGION

This installation is a broad sense a "mind palace", in another sense it is a "safe space." This installation holds information that tells a personal narrative about faith, abuse, broken relationships, ongoing health, grief, faith, death, healing, and restoration. This is a space that needs to be experienced by the viewer as well as seen.

The scene is set in a space that is nostalgic, referencing the interior of a 1970s house along with fabrics and comfort items that hold nostalgia for the 90s. My grandfather passed away suddenly when I was 10 and before I knew it, my first experience with death intertwined itself with my other first experiences of pain, shame, guilt, and grief. I locked this inner room up and refused to go near, fearing I could not handle what was inside. As a byproduct of this, I found I could not handle loss of any kind and circumvented the feelings of abandonment by collecting objects that I imposed with sentimentality: a brick found from a demolished house buried in the ground, a dead sunflower my friend gave me on one of his walks, a christening dress for a child that I will never hold. Each of these seemingly inconsequential objects have a story and a memory attached, a way for me to both hold onto a person, a place, a time that is not there and a way to circumvent the grieving process and focus all my emotions onto physical objects. I created personal relics to avoid addressing the roots that grew beneath.

This installation is a snapshot of a space of safety in my mind when the present becomes too much, and I need a moment to hide and reset, a more structurally sound blanket fort. Slowly, my attachments and landscapes change, objects that once held so much value no longer bring about an emotional response. But it is an ongoing, everchanging process. And that is what I intend to show, a changing space for a changing mind and heart.
Figure 6.1. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion*, 2020, Installation, 8ft. x 12 ft. x 8ft. Installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA.

Figure 6.2. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (interior).
The culmination of this space was already known to me but making it a reality took one and a half years of constant changing, back and forth, internal struggles for it to come to fruition. The exterior dimensions were relatively known to me, it had to be life-size. Something I could walk into and relax and decompress in. However, what the interior looked like was constantly changing by the day. I had images of spaces in my mind from my past and present that brought me comfort and solace but trying to land on one or even three spaces was difficult, especially as time went on and my memories began to lapse. Significant holes were starting to take place in my mind, I was losing the specificities of rooms and places I sought safety. But in many ways, this became a blessing. While I have lost memories that I will not conceivably ever recover, the most significant memories and places that had profound impacts on me stayed. While the details became hazy, their essence remained intact. It was amongst this chaos I could choose my foundation of the “outer” shell of the room: the house my paternal grandparents lived in until their deaths, a space I grew up in during the summers and holidays and the houses of north St. Louis that I explored and sometimes escaped to, abandoned but still holding their original interiors, sometimes painted over and hidden, but carrying added textures and colors and imprints of the people who lived there.

Figure 6.3. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (detail of previous interior setup).
While the walls screamed of the 1970s and older with its dark wood-paneled walls and trim juxtaposed with yellowed and cream wallpaper and a mixture of textures distinguished on each one, along with the foundational furniture of the chairs, the actual objects in the space themselves dated it to the 90s and to the present. Using the wallpaper as my anchor point, I chose the design of a comforter my sister had for her bed, the very same one we used to make blanket forts with. I let this be the natural light for the space, cloaking the room as a space to hide in and adorned the ground and lower spaces with toys and dolls while I reserved the spaces at eye-level and higher for the objects that became relics to my memories, the pieces that at this point were frozen in time and could not be altered or moved.

This room perceives itself as inviting once your inside it; the blockade of a screen door and wall fastened out of bed sheets and pins intended to make the viewer stop and think about whether you should be in there. But a key aspect of this space is its perception of whether it has been lived in or is frozen. I, myself, did inhabit the space literally when it was first created, that is only known through the documentation of the moments and placements of furniture and things. And the lighting I chose was yellow and low, meant to bring the viewer into a more intimate understanding of what is before them. However, it does not take away the fact that many points of this installation are frozen, unmoving. The beanie babies and soft toys are packed away, the typewriter has no paper, the blankets are folded up and set aside. This is the vulnerable side of the installation that can be lost on the viewer if they do not know what to look for. While what the space holds serves as a place I can seek comfort in, it is also a place where time had frozen still for me, locked in by grief and loss. The objects inside have a double meaning attached, and while I know what they are, I leave it to the viewer to understand what that could be, giving only the title as my starting guide. While I recognize the difficulty that could bring about my work
being taken in at its full meaning, I rest on the bridge of Peirce’s take of the index when it comes to imagery: the meaning is still there, the mark is still there, however, what left that mark is up for interpretation.

Figure 6.4. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion*, (final installation detail).

Figure 6.5. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (detail).
Figure 6.6. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (interior detail).

Figure 6.7. Paige Holzbauer, *I Lost My Grandpa, I Lost My Child, I Lost My Religion* (object detail).
CHAPTER 7. BAPSTISM

This multimedia piece was born out of the creation of the work above. While I largely dealt with the interior, using that as was way to process my mind, this work explores and documents its effects on the outside, namely on my own body.

This installation began as a print, turned into a performance video, that ending in a life-size installation with its distinction of being set on the floor and shrouded by a veil, closing off and opening to the viewer a private moment between myself and Holy Spirit. It recreates the moment of separation of body and spirit in an original 10 minute video of myself floating in water dressed in a white kaftan tunic made dirty from ashes and sand that I covered over myself before entering the water. The image was solar printed onto the same cut of fabric and buried in sand, swept away by myself every day for a week as a meditative practice like my prayer ritual, hiding and revealing this moment. After my time brushing the sand, I would douse the fabric in water, pooling the image, the sand, the area with it, as an attempt to muddy the area and bring out the sediments of the sand and purify the space as if it were Holy Water. The image itself is a close shot of myself, my body right when I began to feel comfortable in the performance, lifting my hands above my head in surrender and praise, lowering them with my hands turned inward as a sign of receiving, and softly hummed to myself words and sounds of worship, looking to the sky marking time passing.  

“Todah – an extension of the hand in adoration, with palms cupped inward as to receive…means to serve notice on your body that you are going to praise God; it includes an attitude of gratefulness for God’s promised help even while we are still in need. Todah refers to inviting God’s help with faith and assurance breakthrough is coming”
Psalms 50:23 ESV “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright. I will show the salvation of God”
“Yadah – throwing out of hands in strength with palms turned outwards…signifies the surrendering of oneself, speaks of covenant relationship, throwing off anything of the old life.”
Psalms 47:17 ESV““I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore, the people shall praise You forever and ever.”
“Tehillah – to sing in the Spirit, a residual overflow of the heart…the only type of worship God promises to inhabit
Figure 7.1. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism*, Floor installation, sand, linen, solar print, installation dimensions: 10 ft. x 10 ft. x 10 ft., 2020. Installation at Reliable Street Gallery, Ames, IA.

Figure 7.2. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism* (detail).

---

refers to singing our praise or worship.”

Psalms 34:1 ESV “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth”
This work takes a well-known ritual and turns it into a continuous moment of vulnerability. I give the viewer a close and intimate view of the moment when the spirit separates from the body and mind, leaving the moment of just being present. This piece is meant to disrupt the movements of the day to day, forcing you to sit and look. I let the viewer in on a moment of grief, pain, loss, and just being. Here I am showing myself in at my most exposed and strongest, knowing that that there is no resolution, just acceptance and submission to the process of change and healing, choosing to step out in faith that a breakthrough is coming.

Figure 7.3. Detail from original video used in final installation. Photo courtesy of Jordyn Harrison.
Using my body as the focal point is not altogether new but the level of vulnerability, I was stepping into was. Previously, I had either used my body as a placeholder for another subject altogether or used symbols and objects as a placeholder for my body. Using my body to represent both my body and my soul was new and something I did not want to use haphazardly. I turned to female artists who used the body to depict aspects of faith, be it the struggle or successes to see to the precedents set before me. I began to make prints—lithographs, and gum transfers—to focus in on the imagery that had been given to me to give myself a foundation of what I wanted to achieve.

Figure 7.4. Paige Holzbauer, *Shroud of Turin*, Performance art, linen, 2017.

---


29 I believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the many voices of God, two that I am most connected to are images and dreams. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 ESV: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”
Figure 7.5. Paige Holzbauer, *New Beginnings*, Gum transfer, lithography, 2020, 15 in. x 10 in.

Figure 7.6. Paige Holzbauer, *Untitled (Baptism)*, Gum transfer, 2020, 10 in. x 15 in.
Picking location and time came easier, the significance of the time of season more important than the location. I desired for season of fall because of its double meaning, things grow colder and begin to die, however, death is an aspect that I was embracing in the spiritual sense in this performance. While I had already been baptized twice, as an infant in the Catholic Church and two years prior to declare my faith, baptism itself to me is not a ritual that once you have done it, it is finished. The concept of baptism is a constant surrender to the faith, to die into yourself and let the One who made you take over. It is a daily struggle that myself and every believer fails to meet, but the grace is in the mercy given as we proceed to continue to take up our cross each day and follow. The video performance captures this best. While the installation focuses into a specific moment in time that shows the submission, the video shows the reality of the struggle to surrender it all. Its duration is 15 minutes long and shows constant movement, changing directions, breaking focus, starting over again; the reality is only the last 5 minutes of the video have the images best captured for the installation, when I began to let it go and give over my mind, my emotions, my everything over and just float and be.

Figure 7.7. Baptism, Video detail (3:19), 2020.
Figure 7.8. *Baptism*, Video detail (9:00), 2020.

Figure 7.9. *Baptism*, Video detail (9:05), 2020.
The choice to make this be an installation was borne out of accessibility in the tactile and physical sense. Yes, the visuals and sounds were documented to cut into clips and movements to display edited or as it, but as I watched the video and looked at the images that my friend and videographer, Jordyn Harrison, had captured, it was the close up images that best captured the environment, the murky water, the cold that was shown through my shaking body and rosy cheeks, the grittiness of the sand that constantly being captured in the my tunic, my hair, my hands being deposited back onto the ground only to be kicked up again when I shifted or changed my position. While there ended up being a small audience at the beach that day to sit and watch me, devoid of being there, there was not any real way other than an installation to be able to bring the viewer as close as possible to what was experienced physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Figure 7.10. Paige Holzbauer, *Baptism*, 2020. Installation at The Octagon Arts Gallery, Ames, IA.
CHAPTER 8. MOVING FORWARD

There are two aspects about my work I did not touch on above that are prevalent to my continuing work: catharsis and sustainability. My work touches on aspects of human life and spirituality that many can connect with, but there is still a very intimate process to bringing these aspects to life. Because of this, once the work is finished or explored as far as it can go, a release happens. The weight the images had on me are lifted both mentally and physically and a cathartic response happens. I sit with it, I rest in it, the I let go. As I lean into more on relying on the images and scenes I see in prayers and dreams, the more important the aspect of rest and meditation has become a part of my practice. Once I have shed the weight of my previous work, I dive back into the next, however, while the subject matter may shift, I do not subscribe to the idea of “shedding skin” and starting with a blank slate; I build upon the foundation that my previous piece created. How this comes about is through the deconstruction and the recycling and reuse of materials, images, and objects in new ways. In this way, I keep the constant flow of what is past and present fluid. While this practice has been with me for years, a seismic shift in the reuse has begun. The objects and symbols that I normally would have be front in center, fighting for the viewer’s attention, have been moved to the background, painted over, ripped up, changed from telling stories to setting the scenes and it is now my body and its marks, movements, and sounds that have become the subject and is the primary vehicle to tell the story.
REFERENCES


