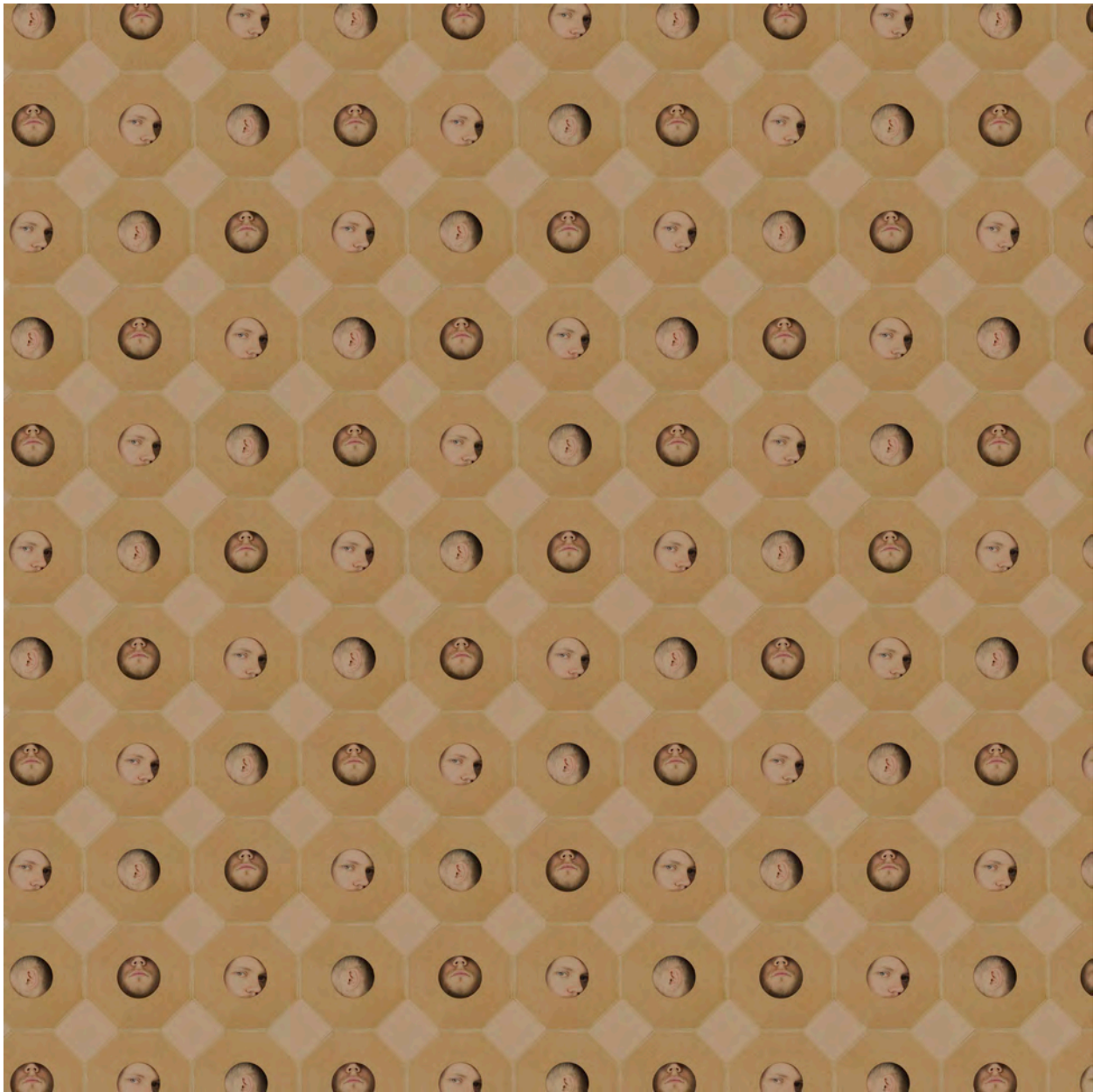


The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday



A Travelling Exhibition
with Artworks by Joel Matthew Warkentin



Contents

About	05
Exhibition Statement	07
Artist Biography.....	07
Interview with the Artist.....	09
List of Artworks	16
Education Guide	23
Discussion Questions.....	24
Group Engagement Activities.....	25
Beginner Lesson	26
Intermediate Lesson	29
Advanced Lesson	33
Vocabulary	37
Vocabulary Sources.....	40
Resources	41
Credits	42

Cover image

Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
name to Sunday - Interaction #10*
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Image left

Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
name to Sunday - Interaction #15*
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

About

Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE – Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO – Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE – Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR – Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibitions, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts.

The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the TREX exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established in 1991 with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.

Exposure Photography Festival

The annual Exposure Photography Festival plays a pivotal role in arts programming in photography in the City of Calgary and throughout Alberta. The festival is inclusive and participatory, a collaboration amongst members of the photographic community and the public. By presenting exhibitions and events that showcase photographic work by internationally renowned practitioners alongside emerging and established talent from Alberta, Exposure draws attention to the province as the site of an active, growing, creative community in the field of photography. The 2021 festival received 878,355 visits and provided an exciting, innovative meeting place (both online and offline) for photographers and art lovers to connect with one another, along with curators and photography professionals from around the world.

This year's Emerging Photographers Showcase was juried by Ryan Doherty, Chief Curator at Contemporary Calgary. The exhibition, presented at Contemporary Calgary, celebrated the rich talent of Alberta's emerging photographers. We introduced fourteen early-career photographers, including Joel Matthew Warkentin, winner of Exposure's Emerging Photographer of the Year award. Our partnership with TREX allows Exposure to further support and offer new opportunities to our exhibiting photographers, while also providing accessible, inclusive, and relatable programming to Alberta audiences.

Exposure congratulates Joel Matthew Warkentin, recipient of the TREX Award, and we thank Calgary Arts Development, Contemporary Calgary, ABL Imaging Group, TREX, GRAIN, and Shutter Hub for supporting the Exposure 2021 Emerging Photographers Showcase.

For more information about the festival and its programming, visit its website, www.exposurephotofestival.com, and its Instagram account: @exposurephotofestival.

Exhibition Statement

"The untrodden land is where things grow; we find substance in the space between paths." – Joel Matthew Warkentin

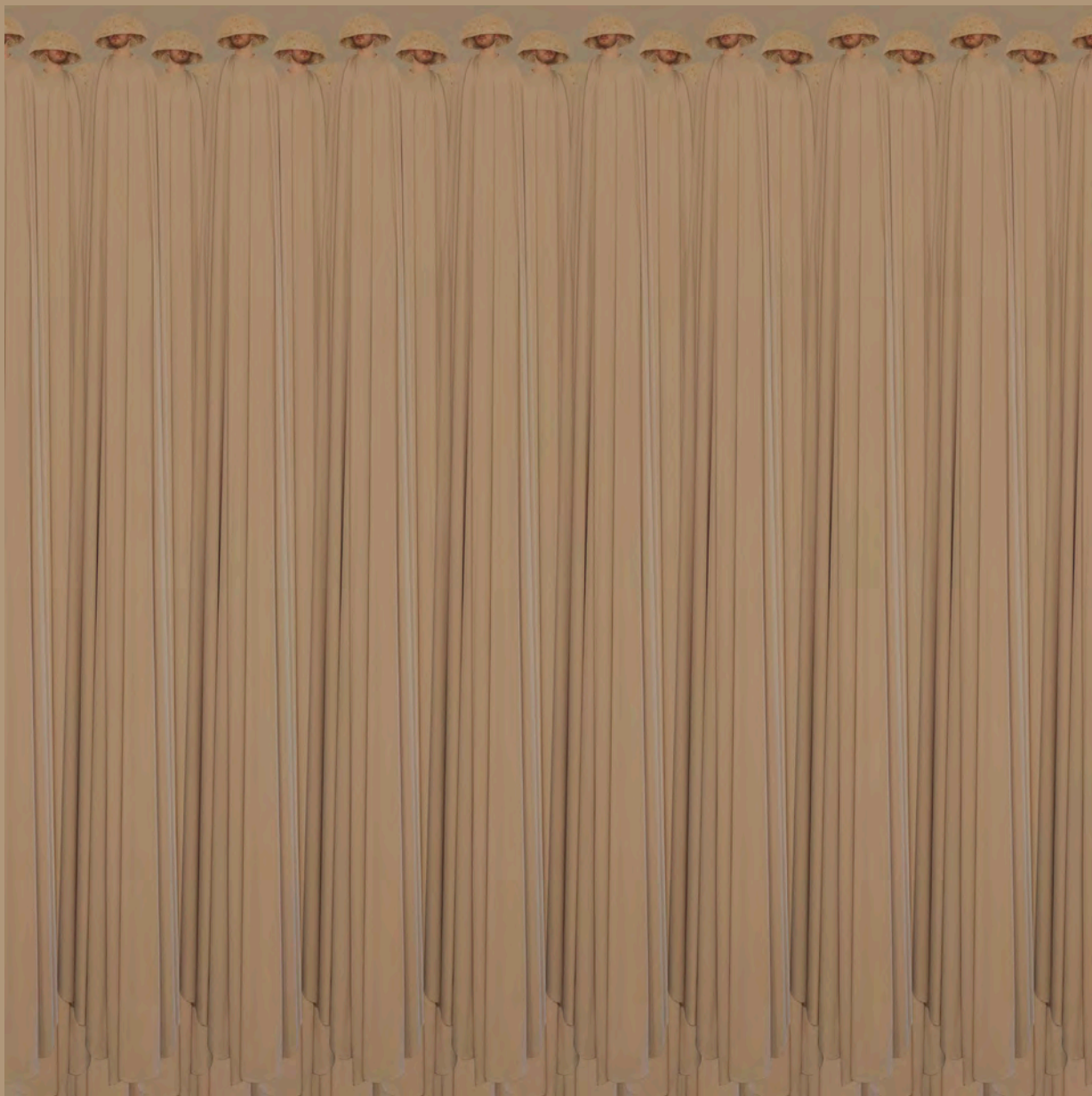
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday is a collection of photographs and sculptures by multidisciplinary artist Joel Matthew Warkentin. Each of the photographs in the series focuses on a single figure interacting with abstract sculptural objects – representing sensory observations as they relate to experiences of sanctity, or spirituality. This exhibition prompts investigation into concepts that have traversed human history: ritual, spirituality, and symbolism.

In both his photographs and his sculptures, Warkentin makes use of a monochromatic colour palette and various types of natural wood to portray his concepts in a non-hierarchical, neutral way. This neutral colour field serves as a metaphor for common human experiences. His sculptures are made from wood sourced both locally and internationally. Wood is his chosen sculptural material because, the artists states, "It shows scars just like people do, it shows its age just like people do, and it comes in all shapes, sizes, and colours, just like people do." In this way, Warkentin's artworks abstractly explore concepts of sensory perception, symbolism, and universal spirituality but in a playful way that is accessible to any audience with some curiosity, imagination, and a willingness to discover new perspectives.

Artist Biography

Joel Matthew Warkentin is a Canadian artist who was raised in his father's workshop with the smell of sawdust in his nostrils. He returned to the workshop and found his inspiration as an artist. Warkentin graduated with Honours from the Alberta University of the Arts, formerly the Alberta College of Art + Design. During his time there, he directed the Ivan Gallery, assisted the Illingworth Kerr Gallery in the creation of Rodney LaTourelle's installation *The Stepped Form*, and studied performance under Rebecca Belmore. Warkentin obtained a graduate degree in Fine Art from the University of Calgary.

Joel Matthew Warkentin's practice investigates intrinsic senses within the human experience and the conceptual understanding of spirituality. Joel received a Queen Elizabeth II scholarship to continue his research into religious symbols, including the halo. This research was presented at the Universities Art Association of Canada Conference in 2018. Since then, he has continued researching other symbols and their importance relevant to understanding a universal spiritual experience.



Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
name to Sunday - Interaction #21*
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Interview with the Artist

The following interview with artist Joel Matthew Warkentin, conducted by curator Ashley Slemming, is intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of the series *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday*. Key concepts and words are emphasized, and their definitions can be found in the Vocabulary section.

Ashley (A): For someone who is just learning about what *symbolism* and *iconography* mean, how would you encourage them to engage with your artwork? What might you get viewers to look at specifically to better understand the meanings in each artwork?

Joel (J): *Symbolism* and *iconography* are elaborate words that explain why shapes have meaning. When it comes to engaging with my artwork, I would encourage everyone looking at it to find shapes within the images and think about where they have seen those same shapes elsewhere. Often one can find meaning in an artwork by first finding things we understand immediately or that we find familiar and then moving outwardly towards the *abstract*. Each image will show its meaning the more questions are asked of it, and with more exploration. In *Interaction #20* [see Artwork Listing pg. 16], there is a single figure with a suspended ring above their heads. Typically, a *halo* is flat, but this ring is on its end, meaning the *symbol* of the halo here is different than we usually see it. When we think of the symbol for when we get an idea, or how an advertisement might represent the iconography of an idea, it is usually a light bulb, particularly above someone's head. Combining these two concepts, this ring is an idea regarding the symbolism of spirituality and our identities.

A: How can interacting with an object in a new or unfamiliar way change your *perspective*?

J: We are all comfortable with how things are. A chair is a chair, a cup is a cup. In my *performance art* practice, I began by looking at objects with new perspectives. For example, what does a chair become when you turn it upside down? Can it still function as a chair? What else can this object do? It is a challenge to view things from multiple perspectives; however, once you're able to do so, everything from a chair to a hat to a light bulb can become much more, which opens up an entire universe of ideas. A good example of this is in *Interaction #11* [see Artwork Listing pg. 16]. A hat is a hat and usually, we wear one to keep the sun out of our eyes, or the snow off our face, but what if the hat is what gives us light? Suddenly, the purpose of the hat is the opposite, and it is no longer a hat but something different. Our perspective and how we look at this object has changed.

A: How is *spatial awareness* important in your series?

J: Some of the images include *architectural* elements and spaces that the person or subject in the photograph inhabits, and some have no reference at all. Spatial awareness is integral in the artwork because within the photographs, the subject is somewhere between the real and the imaginary. Therefore, the space the photograph inhabits must be in the space between a physical place and a fictional place. The artwork presented here is meant to challenge how we see things, objects, or environments and to change our perspectives. For example, *Interaction #5* [see Artwork Listing pg. 19] shows the bottom portion of someone reaching out to touch a sculpture, and this image is mirrored and repeated over and over, giving the illusion that the space and the people go on into the distance forever.

A: Today's world is host to many cultures with varying spiritual beliefs and values. How do you think art can highlight the ways in which we are not so different from one another? How do you feel your series *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday* highlights the *universal* ways we navigate spiritual beliefs?

J: Art is language. It communicates *mood, emotion, and concept*. The beauty of art is it uses a universal language that, when given time, explains itself to whomever is experiencing the artwork. In regard to *spiritual* beliefs, I think it is very important to look outwards, as much as it is to look inwards. Human beings have *intuition*, which provides instincts around certain experiences, feelings, and beliefs. This instinct or gut feeling is a sense, just like sight and touch, that when trusted can lead us down paths we would not expect.

Interaction #15 [see Artwork Listing pg. 19] creates a pattern from some of our most used senses: sight, smell, and sound. However, the entire photograph is made of many of each of these senses, and they are framed by a strong shape: metaphorically, intuition. Together, senses and intuition connect everything and everyone in a way that is beyond the physical and into the emotional. I think it is important to remember that spirituality and religion are not always synonymous; that spirituality exists outside of religious beliefs, and sometimes those who claim to be supremely religious may, indeed, lack spirituality. We are all given the task of finding and navigating our own spiritual selves, and whether that leads you to or from religion is irrelevant. Ultimately, it is of utmost importance to remember that we all have a spiritual self that is just as important as another's spiritual self, even if that person's is different from our own.

"Wood is my chosen material because it shows scars just like people do, it shows its age just like people do, and it comes in all shapes, sizes, and colours, just like people do."

A: How do you choose what materials you use to create your sculptures? Is there significance to the type of wood you use to make each object? And the colour of stain you use, if any?

J: Everything is made from globally sourced wood, both local and international. Wood is my chosen material because it shows scars just like people do, it shows its age just like people do, and it comes in all shapes, sizes, and colours, just like people do. There is no significance to the type of wood I use; however, there is significance to wood itself, and as such, I never modify the colours in any way. On its own, wood is beautiful and does not need anything extra in regard to how it is finished. I keep everything natural, from my skin to my clothes to the wood I use for my sculptures. A great example of how different wood can be is found in *Interaction #2* [see Artwork Listing pg. 16]. The sculpture has six different types of wood, all different colours and textures, and together, they make something completely new.

A: How are different shapes important when deciding on a sculptural *form*? Giving an example from the series, how do you decide on what each final sculptural form will look like and what shapes are prominent in it?

J: Everything begins with shapes. Earlier in my practice, I spent much of my time researching shapes and how people respond to them. Starting simple, I began with squares, rectangles, and circles, and then moved towards more complicated abstract forms and blobs. Shapes can tell stories just like anything else. Circles are wheels, planets, eyes; squares are buildings, boxes, doorways, and the list goes on. When deciding on the final shape, I first determine what I want people to feel, and the story I intend to tell with the shapes, then I work backwards. If I know the story and the feeling, I can decide what kinds of shapes to add and what shapes would not tell that story. I can build a new shape that expresses a full dialogue. For example, in *Interaction #13* [see Artwork Listing pg. 21], I imagined the energy around me was messy and tangled, so I needed to make a rake or a comb to untangle it. Then I needed to find a way to attach this comb to my body, and our fingers can sometimes do the same things. The shape was easy after that: I needed a long prong that attached to each of my fingers to make an energy comb. The prong is also helpful to pick things out of the air, like chopsticks, and with enough imagination, these finger prongs together are like wings that help me fly. All the stories are in the shapes – the only thing they require from you is a little imagination.

"Everything begins with shapes... Shapes can tell stories just like anything else. Circles are wheels, planets, eyes; squares are buildings, boxes, doorways, and the list goes on."

A: In your artist bio, you indicate an interest in exploring universal spirituality by researching various religious symbolism and iconography. Can you write briefly about where this interest began for you?

J: Before I answer, I think it is relevant to explain some of the context of the research I am currently doing. Within my artistic research, I am drawn to the in-between-ness of things. I investigate this phenomenon by identifying opposing forces, and I explore their properties in order to locate, then analyze, commonalities that exist in contrasting materials.

Immersed in the study of *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, I was struck by a faint golden ring suspended above the head of Christ: the halo [see figure 1; Christ is depicted on the far right]. The halo is not exclusive to specific religions or ideologies, and its definition is recognized by many. I needed to know more, and I began to research this symbol, as well as how and why it is common in most contemporary religious symbolism.



"... I was struck by a faint golden ring suspended above the head of Christ: the halo... I needed to know more, and I began to research this symbol, as well as how and why it is common in most contemporary religious symbolism."

Fig. 1. *The Calling of Saint Matthew*
Caravaggio, 1599 - 1600
Oil on canvas
San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome
Public domain

Having grown up in a religious home, I was familiar with much of the terminology and structure of religions, which translated well into researching other *ideological* systems. After learning what I could of the halo, I branched into learning of the architecture of religious spaces, colours, movement, etc. Personally, I noticed that people who were raised in entirely different religions/environments had nearly identical moral standings and beliefs as I did. I reflected on these commonalities, and it confirmed my belief that the untrodden land is where things grow; we find substance in the space between paths.

A: You presented your research on religious symbolism at the Universities Art Association of Canada Conference in 2018. What were a couple of key findings that you were able to discuss at this conference?

J: My research began uphill. A symbol used as widely as the halo is written about as sparsely as the research on it. In fact, the first key finding was a quote outlining how few agree to the halo's origins. Critically, my path shifted, and I focused on religious texts, which also came up dry. The word halo, or available translations of the word, did not appear in the texts. The lack of evidence, however, did provide one answer: the halo is an artistic invention. I broke the symbol down and began to research circles, rings, and disks in regard to religious ideologies: its common definition is often used to describe infinity or perfection. Light, also associated with the symbol, is a visual representation of *divinity*, or *holiness*.

I began to follow the symbol through history. Beginning with the present day, I found artists using this symbol in political contexts. Then I looked back in time. I had signposts on my timeline with the dates of the beginning of contemporary religions, so I could know how and when this symbol was adopted. My timeline came to a comfortable rest at a cave painting some 35,000 years old. Animals had lines emanating from their bodies, first assumed to be weapons for hunting; however, with further research, it was determined that these lines represented the animal's *aura*, or *spirit*, not unlike ray halos consisting of light emanating from the heads of *holy* figures.

All I have to offer is the speculation that this symbol has been around for approximately 40 millennia, and possibly longer. This simple ring is a sign of divinity and has been engrained within humanity as a symbol of *ritual* and the *spiritual*.

A: Within such a broad topic of research as universal spirituality, have you come to any personal conclusions about what this means to you? How has this influenced your art?

J: Discussing anything universally is always a challenge. With my practice, I do not provide any new belief system, or work to dismantle ideological systems; my work creates a viewpoint that looks deeper into all of them, as well as deeper into a personal journey of my own spiritual self. My practice looks at origins of symbolism and

plays in the spaces between things, between religion and beliefs to showcase everything that makes human spirituality unique, yet common among humankind. Personally, this has taught me ways to view the world beyond prescribed beliefs, and to consider intuition as a tool for understanding things of an emotional or spiritual nature. Research-based creation such as this has brought me an understanding of my own spirituality and how my spiritual-self interacts with those around me, people or otherwise. My art requires this of me because in order to discuss topics such as this, I must continually explore, learn, research, and expand my personal spiritual practice in order to grow my artistic practice. They are siblings and support each other outright.

A: This particular series of works, *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday*, features a distinctly neutral colour palette. For you, what is the interplay between the colour palette and the objects in relation to spirituality?

J: Colour is often used to express hierarchies, spiritual or otherwise. Take *ultramarine* in the Scrovegni Chapel, and *gold leaf* cascading across the Sistine Chapel, for instance. Both of these colours are meant to exemplify the extravagance and status of the Catholic Church, and these particular sites of worship. The colours used in *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday* were chosen to find commonalities to lessen the hierarchal balance between skin, garment, environment, and sculpture. The *monotone* aesthetic encourages a mingling of the characters in the photographs (characters being the figure, the sculpture, and the environment). This is integral as it compacts the hierarchies built into object, subject, and environment and pushes them together to exist on the same *plane*. In relation to the subject matter of spirituality, flattening the colour creates a deeper connection between subject and object, which provides a further example of the connection of one thing to another.

"The objects I create are not grand gestures of token spirituality – they are simple objects, tools, and guides. They can become activated, like any object, spiritual or otherwise, in order to accomplish a goal or task."

A: Looking at this series, some may be curious as to how inanimate, sculptural objects could convey or embody spirituality. Can you talk a little bit about how these objects (and your interactions with them) relate to the concept of spirituality?

J: Objects are often used in ritual practices. For example, thuribles are used for burning incense in Catholic and other Christian services. There are also objects such as prayer beads, eagle-bone whistles, menorahs, and more. What all these objects

have in common is their use: to communicate and clarify a spiritual practice or space. The objects I create come from an intuitive desire to further my communication, within my own spirituality, to a broader space. Documenting the performances provides access to my practice. Further disorienting the work through digital manipulations pushes the objects, performances, and space into a nonexistent physical plane, mirroring a parallel world in order to interact with a spiritual space. The objects I create are not grand gestures of token spirituality - they are simple objects, tools, and guides. They can become activated, like any object, spiritual or otherwise, in order to accomplish a goal or task.

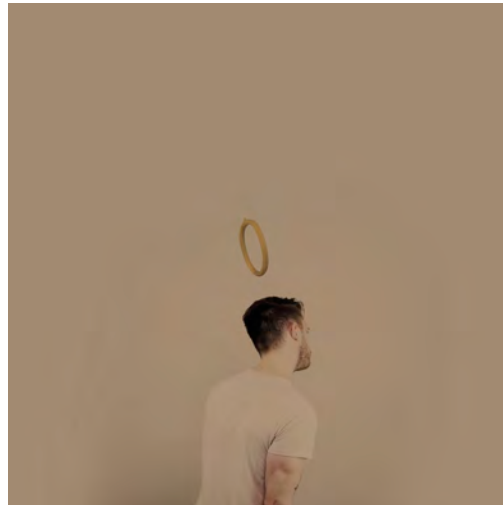
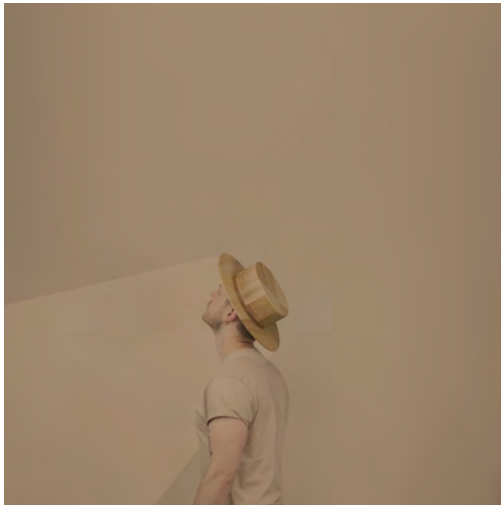
A: Do you consider each of your sculptural objects to be an icon or symbol? If yes, how? If no, do you categorize each of your sculptures in some other way?

J: I categorize the sculptures as tools that can dictate or inspire movements to help enact a space or engage with an environment. The sculptures in the series are activated when used or worn, which assists the subject in the access of a spiritual space. The objects are often inspired by spiritual or religious objects, architecture, and garments in order to provide familiarity for my viewers and, within the resulting image, create depictions that are reminiscent of recognizable religious iconography. Using objects inspired by religious forms and placing them in compositions and image structures that are also reminiscent of religious images places the artwork I create in a preexisting context. My end goal, whether in the creation of objects or in the composing of images, is to create something that is new but something that is also familiar.

A: In this series, your photographic compositions portray bodily interactions with inanimate, sculptural objects in a variety of ways. Can you describe how movement and sensory participation with objects is related to understandings of spirituality?

J: I have a personal belief that physical movement is integral to understanding anything fully. When learning to draw, one must learn to draw with their entire body. When children learn to walk, they walk with their arms as much as their legs. The entire body is focused and utilized during the learning processes. I believe knowledge comes from movement as much as anything else. Physical actions are an intellectual tool that can help us understand things beyond the mental, or purely *cognitive* (I am using the term cognitive to mean static learning, from sources such as books or lectures). It is important to define these different kinds of learning tools because movement is also intellectual, scientific, and psychological. In most cases, we learn better by doing than by observing. This is how I approach movement in my practice - I work with the object, space, and movement simultaneously to fully understand how a particular object relates to my work and fine-tune the message from there.

List of Artworks



Images clockwise from top left

Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #2
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

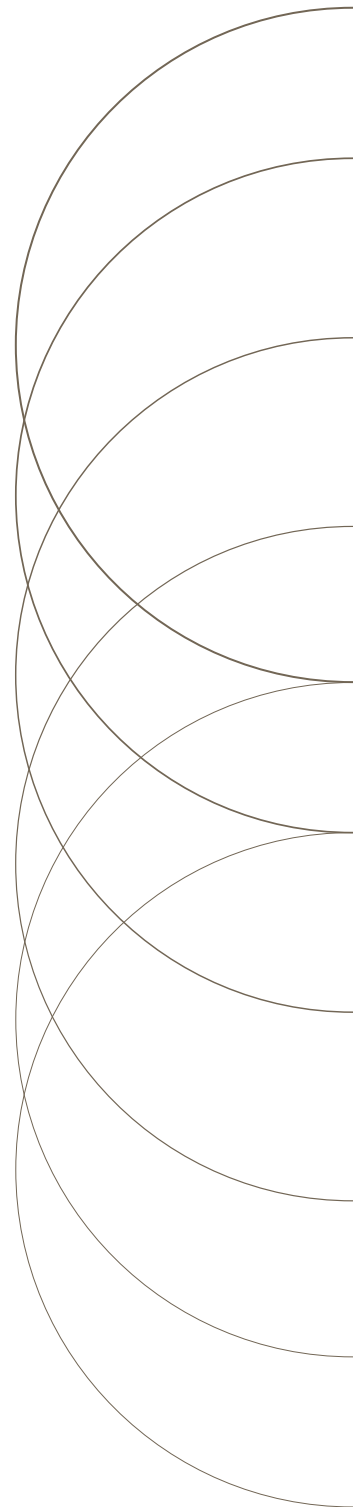
Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #11
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

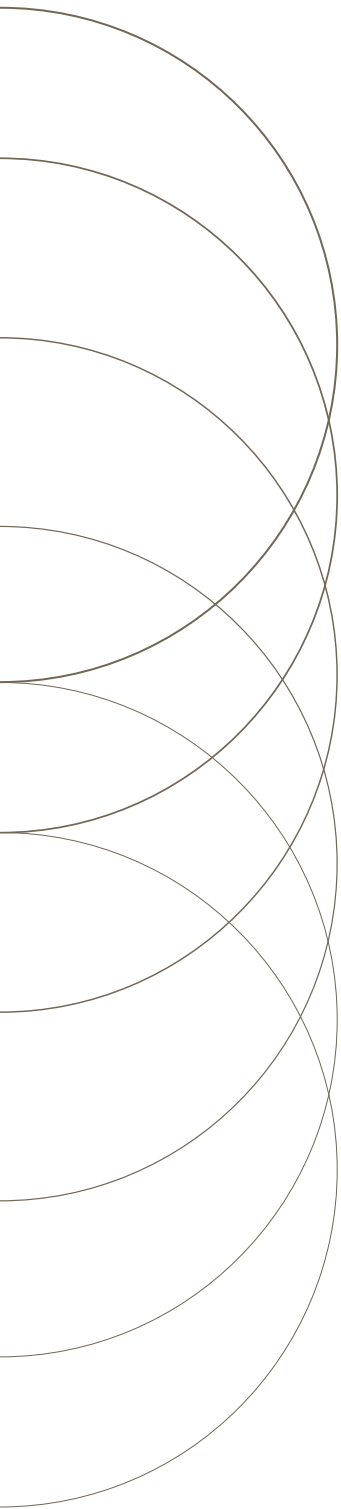
Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #9
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #20
2020
Photograph on aluminum
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist

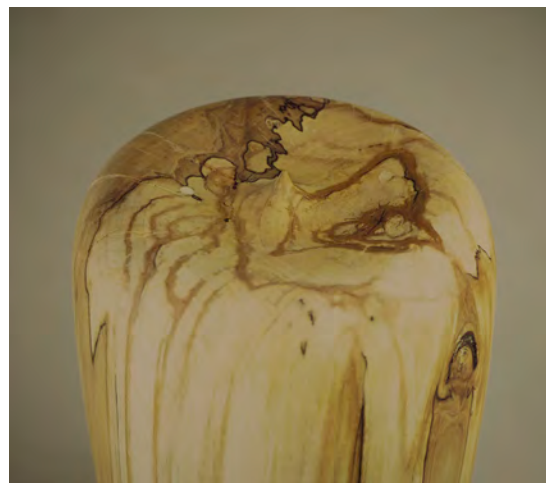


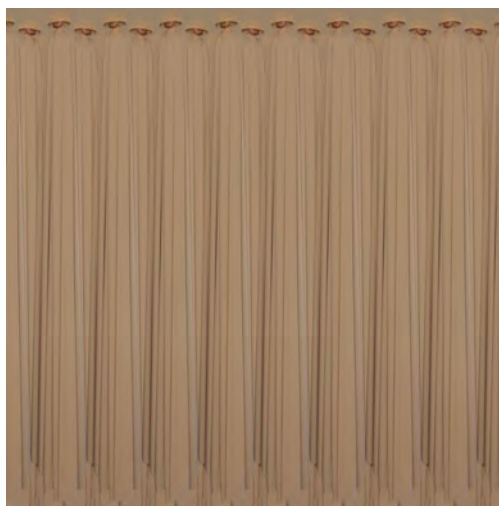
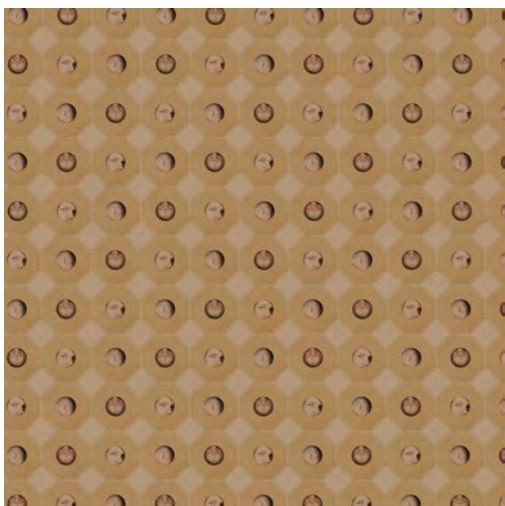
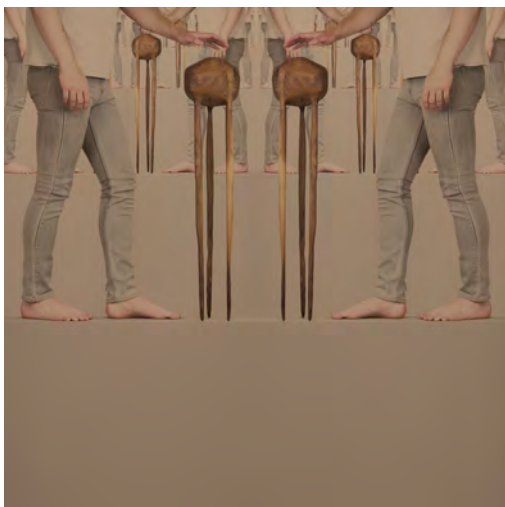
Joel Matthew Warkentin
Grounded
2017
Walnut
1.91 x 17.78 x 17.78 cm
Courtesy of the artist





Joel Matthew Warkentin
Drip Drop
2017
Maple
20.32 x 12.07 x 12.07 cm
Courtesy of the artist





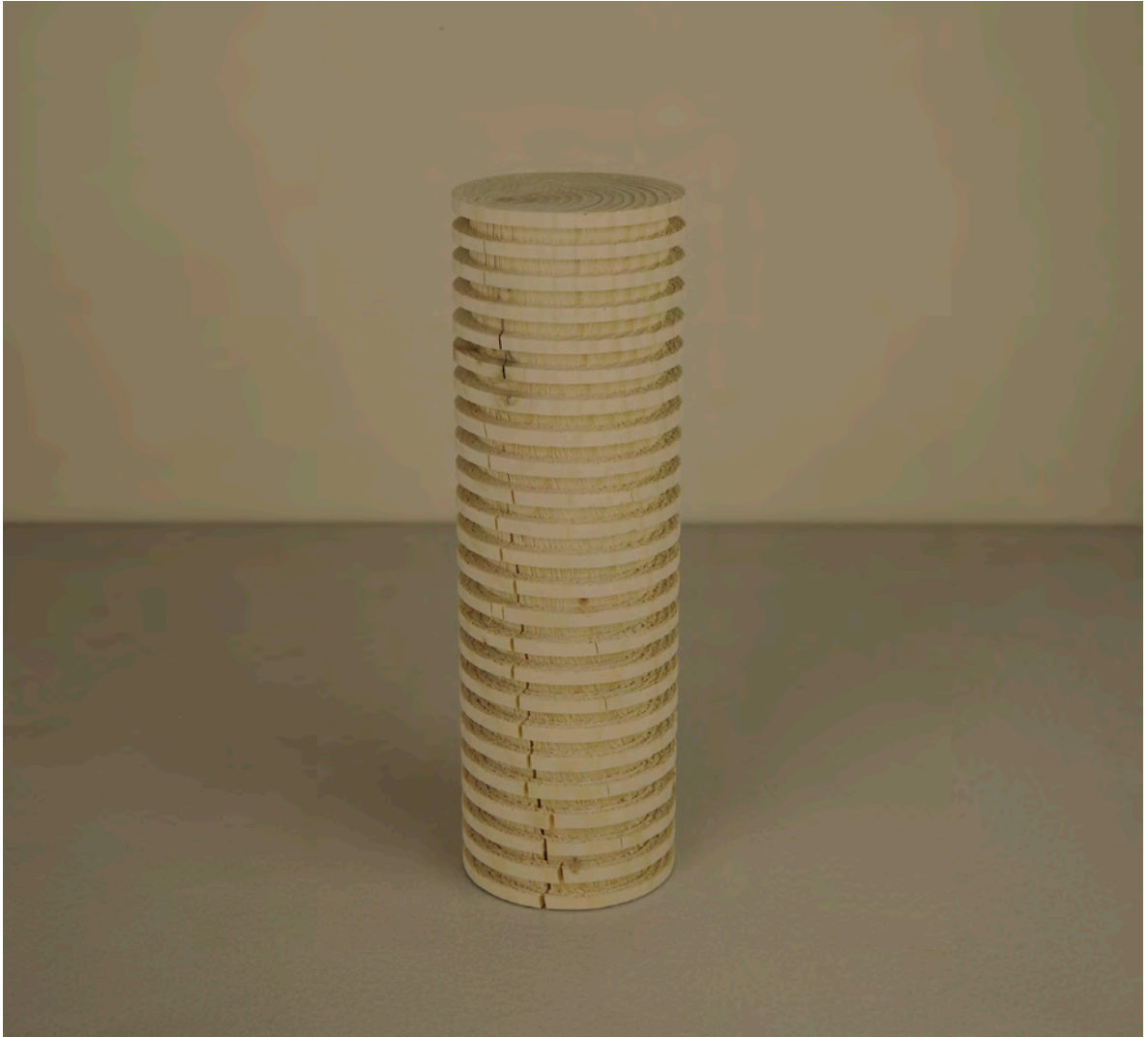
Images clockwise from top left

Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #5,
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

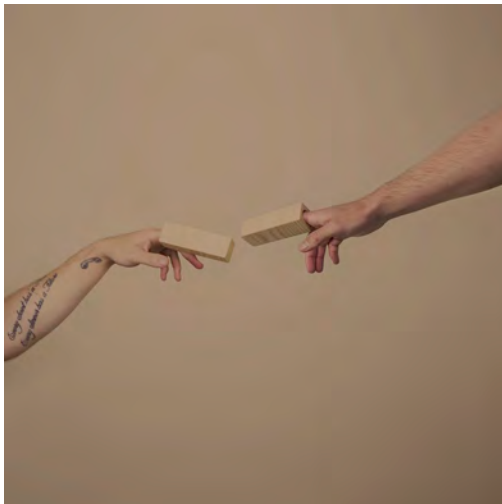
Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #15
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #6
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Joel Matthew Warkentin
The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday - Interaction #21
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Joel Matthew Warkentin
Inside
2017
Walnut
23.50 x 7.62 x 7.62 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
 name to Sunday - Interaction #10*
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
 name to Sunday - Interaction #12*
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Joel Matthew Warkentin
*The Nameless Boy who gave his
 name to Sunday - Interaction #13*
 2020
 Photograph on aluminum
 76.2 x 76.2 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Joel Matthew Warkentin
Skin
2018
Rosewood
2.54 x 17.15 x 17.15 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Education Guide

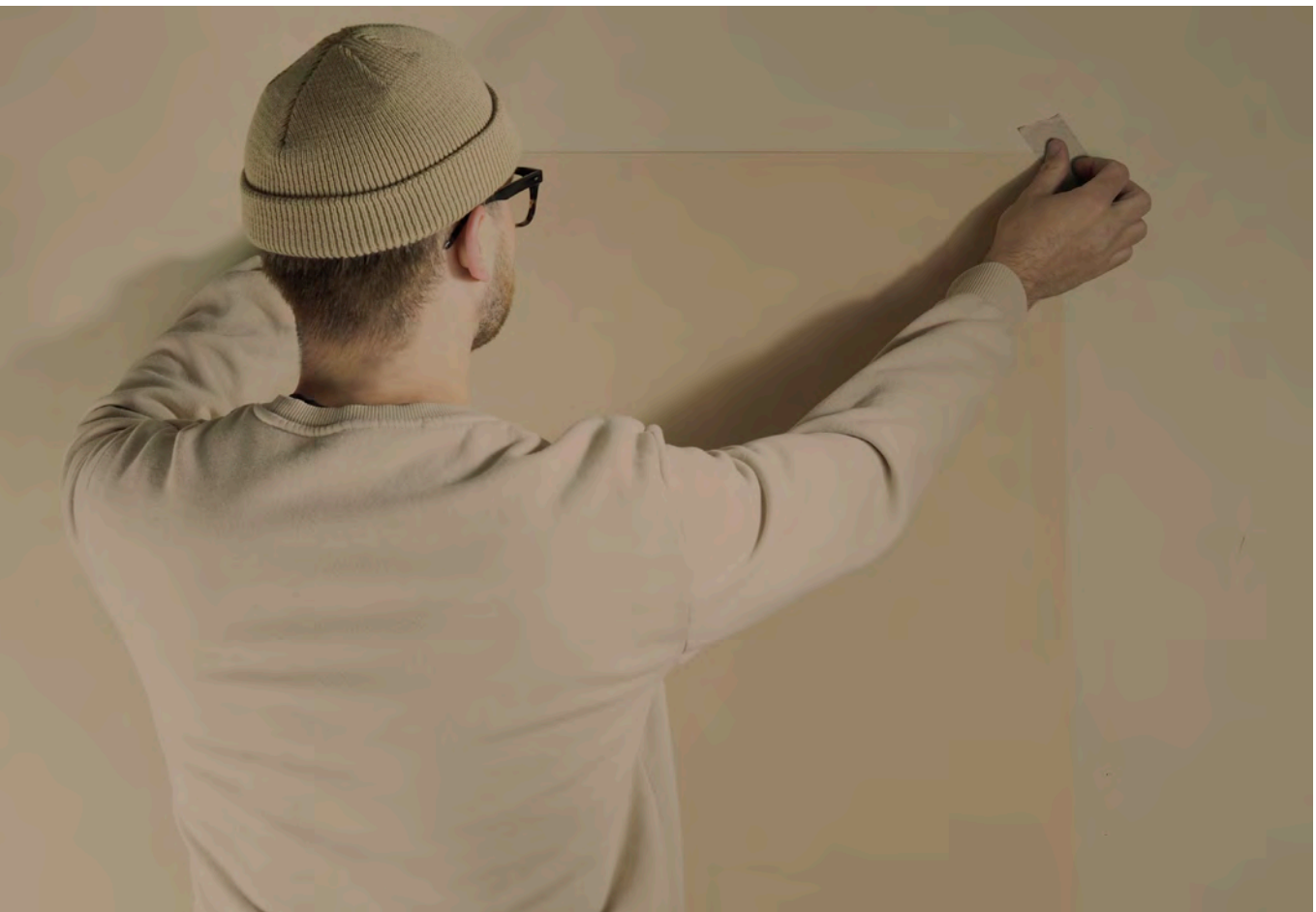
This Education Guide consists of activities to move audiences through the various themes presented in *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, activities, and vocabulary designed for the level of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – participants who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – participants who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – participants who have much experience looking at and creating art.

Throughout the Education Guide, you will find key concepts, words, and terms emphasized that can be found in the Vocabulary section.



Discussion Questions

Below are questions intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

What shapes can you locate in each of these artworks? Try to draw some of the shapes in sketchbooks and write about how different shapes might have different emotions or feelings attached to them.

Notice how the artist, Joel Matthew Warkentin, interacts with his various sculptural objects in each photo. What do you think he might be trying to do? What functions can you imagine for each of the sculptural "tools" or objects that he has created?

Investigate every photograph closely. Each one highlights at least one of the five human senses - sight, touch, smell, sound, and taste. Can you identify what senses are being used in the interactions with his sculptural objects?

Pick an object nearby - what is that object normally used for? Can you imagine another use for it? For example, could a chair turned upside down be a rocket ship? Could a pen be a magical wand? What objects can you imaginatively find other uses for?

Pick another object nearby - think about how you could interact with that object using all five of your senses (maybe leave out taste if it isn't edible!). What does the object sound like? What does the object feel like? What does the object look like? What does the object smell like? How do we use our senses to understand the world around us?

Group Engagement Activities

Tracing Movement, From A to B

You may have heard the phrase “getting from A to B.” This activity asks participants to get from Point A to Point B, but with an imaginative twist. Mark one spot in a room as “Point A” and another spot in the same room as “Point B.” Clear a pathway and let participants decide if they want to use an object prop for this activity or just their bodies. Have them find a way to get from Point A to Point B without simply walking. They could pretend they are an animal by crawling on all fours or slithering across the ground; they could pretend they are riding a broomstick; they could “drive” a chair as if it is a vehicle – but they must be creative about their movement. Afterward, ask participants: *How does the way we move through a space impact what we sense or comprehend? Does movement impact our perspective or change the way we think?*

Imagination Comes in All Shapes and Sizes

Artist Joel Matthew Warkentin says, “Shapes can tell stories just like anything else. Circles are wheels, planets, eyes; squares are buildings, boxes, doorways, and the list goes on.” With this concept in mind, have participants pick a shape. Challenge them to think of as many objects as they can (natural or manufactured) that take that form and then write about or draw them in their notebooks. Optionally, they could make group shape collages or draw out a group brainstorm on a large board. Afterward, encourage them to consider the following: *When you walk around in a new or unfamiliar space, see if you can spot all the different shapes. Can shapes help us simplify or become familiar with things that might at first seem complex?*

Beginner Lesson: Simple Circle Structures

Before artist Joel Matthew Warkentin begins developing any of his photographic *compositions*, he starts with an idea and uses three-dimensional shapes to start building up his concept through sculpture. In the interview included in this catalogue, the artist states, “All the stories are in the shapes – the only thing they require from you is a little imagination” (pg. 11).

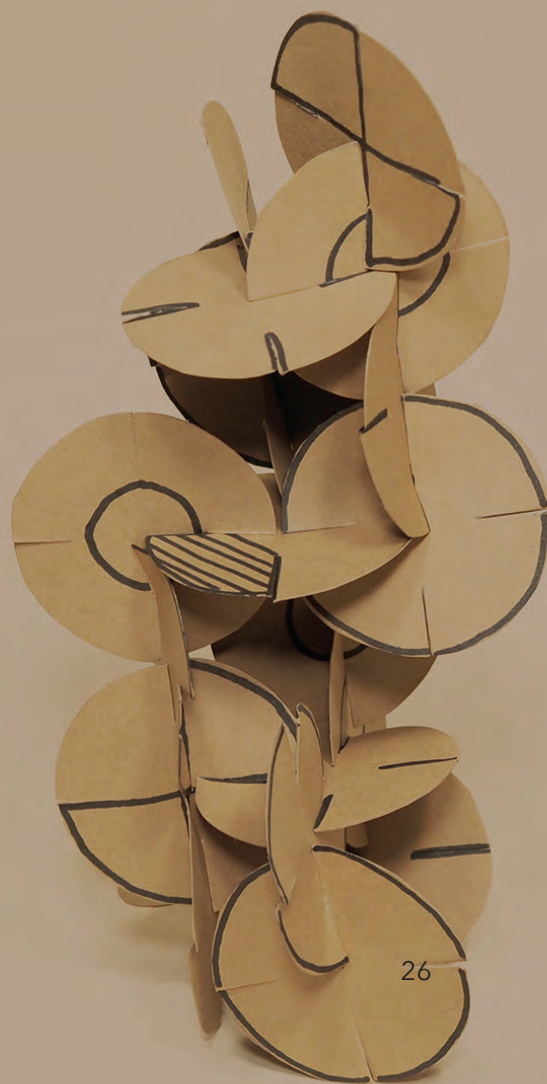
In this lesson, participants will learn how to build simple sculptures using a universally used shape and symbol: the circle. This sculptural activity can be straightforward or it can be more conceptual, as desired.

Materials

Pencil, circular object to trace or a drawing compass (with a 2-inch, or 5-centimetre, diameter), sheet of thin cardboard (cereal box/granola box cardboard will work well), ruler, scissors, permanent markers (optional)

Preparation

If preparing this activity for young participants who shouldn't be using scissors by themselves, complete Steps 1 to 3 in advance and allow participants to continue the activity from Step 4 onward.



Instructions

- Step 1** With a pencil, trace multiple copies of a circular object with a 2-inch, or 5-centimetre, diameter onto a sheet of thin cardboard, being careful not to overlap circles. Alternatively, you can use a drawing compass set to a 1-inch (or 2.5-centimetre) radius to draw out multiple circles, making all the circles 2 inches (or 5 centimetres) in diameter. Trace approximately 16 to 20 circles.
- Step 2** With a pencil, mark four 0.5-inch (or 1.27-centimetre) notches at equal intervals along the circle's circumference. To clarify, imagine the notches are appearing on a clockface at precisely 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00. Mark from the edge toward the centre.
- Step 3** Cut out all the circles and cut each notch from the edges of the circles.
- Step 4** Decorate the circles with permanent markers. You might choose to leave the circles plain, or you might want to colour in the circles with solid colours or draw geometric patterns on them.
- Step 5** Build simple sculptures by pushing a notched segment of one circle into a notched segment of a different circle. Continue to add circles onto one another until they build a free-standing object.
- Step 6** Experiment with adding or subtracting circles from the simple sculptures to see how the form evolves.

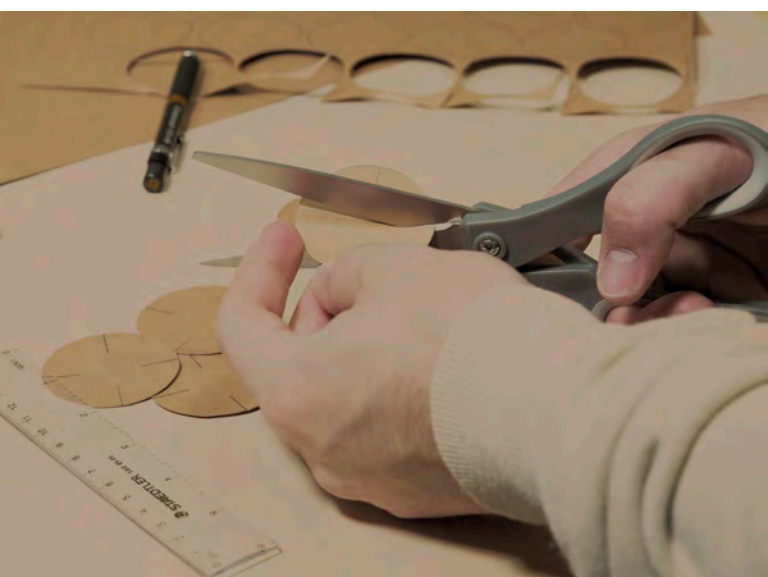
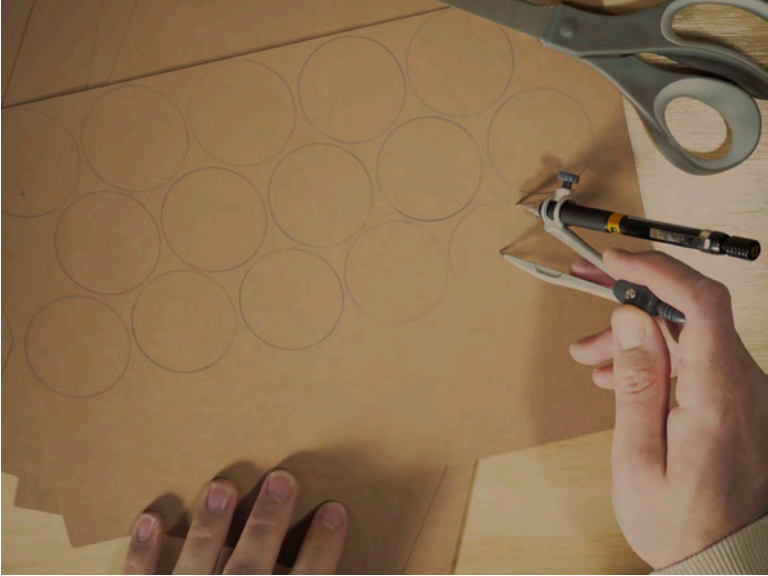
Discussion Questions

What did you learn about simple shapes in this exercise? How can shapes tell a story or evoke a feeling?

Look at all the sculptures that were made by your peers in the group. How are the sculptures similar? How are they different?

The same building blocks were used to create different forms and sculptures - what does this help us understand about human creativity?

In this lesson, you were able to build a larger shape out of many smaller shapes. Where else do larger forms or objects made up of smaller similar shapes exist? (Provide examples if participants struggle - windows made of smaller rectangles, chairs made of squares and rectangles, bridges made of triangles, etc.).



Variation

Challenge more advanced participants to come up with a concept prior to building their sculptures and have them try to represent that concept with their sculptural forms.

Encourage them to complicate the forms using other basic shapes, such as triangles and squares, instead of just circles.

Intermediate Lesson Plan: Performative Paper Sculptures

In the series *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday*, artist Joel Matthew Warkentin incorporates himself within the composition of his artworks through photographic manipulation or sometimes simply by photographing himself interacting with his sculptural objects. In this lesson, participants will develop a geometric sculptural form that they will then photograph themselves interacting with. This lesson investigates the concept of sensory perception and how our interactions with objects can influence our perceptions of them.

Materials

Sheet of cardstock or poster paper (at least letter-sized, though larger sizes will work as well), cutting mat, pencil, craft knife, plain-coloured bedsheet or large solid-coloured poster paper

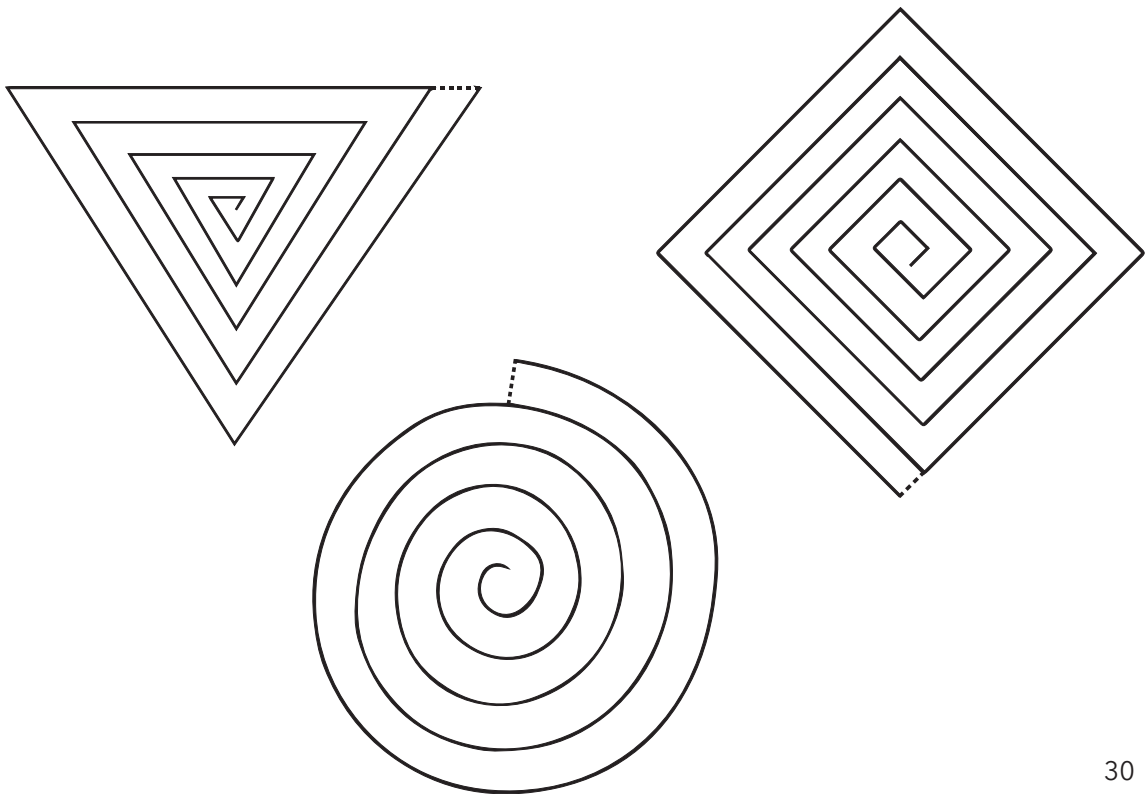
Preparation

Review the term *performance art*. Have participants closely examine the artworks in the exhibition where Joel Matthew Warkentin is actively “performing” with his sculptural objects. Ask them to think about familiar objects or tools that look similar to some of the sculptural forms that exist in the artworks (for example, the sculptural components included in *Interaction #13* might look similar to a rake). Encourage them to be imaginative about their sculpture’s shape and form in this way while they complete this activity.



Geometric Sculpture Instructions

- Step 1** Place a sheet of paper on a cutting mat. In the middle of the page, draw one small shape – either a circle, a square, or a triangle. Make it approximately the size of the end of a pencil.
- Step 2** Moving outward from the edge of that original shape, draw a continuous line in a geometric spiral matching the original shape's form until the spiral's edge is about 0.5 inches (or 1.27 centimetres) away from the paper's edge. For visual reference, see the spiral examples below.
- Step 3** Once the geometric spiral shape has been drawn, use a craft knife to cut along the outward spiral lines until you reach the centre shape, then stop.
- Step 4** The geometric spiral will now take sculptural form when interacted with – pulled, pushed, twisted, etc. Choose how you want to interact with the geometric form in a photographic composition. Then consider these questions: *What does the sculptural form remind you of? Does it draw you in visually in any particular way? How might you interact with this object if it were something you could wear, or something that could give you special powers?* Use your imagination!



Photographic Composition Instructions

- Step 1** The size of the geometric spiral form will depend on the size of the sheet of paper, and this will dictate how you choose to photograph yourself interacting with your sculpture. For example, if you started with a letter-sized sheet of paper, you'll have a smaller spiral sculpture and may wish to photograph only your hand interacting with it, or to perhaps capture a photo of just your face and the sculpture. If you used a sheet of poster paper, you'll have quite a large spiral sculpture to work with and may want to photograph a full-body interaction.
- Step 2** Set up a *backdrop* using a plain bedsheet for full-body photographs or a large sheet of poster paper for close-up camera shots. Then pose with your geometric paper sculpture. Take a few photos of your interactions and then select the photo that you think is best compositionally.
- Step 3** Download the photo into a collective image folder and look at the other participants' photos. Notice all the individual ways that the paper sculptures became performative.

Discussion Questions

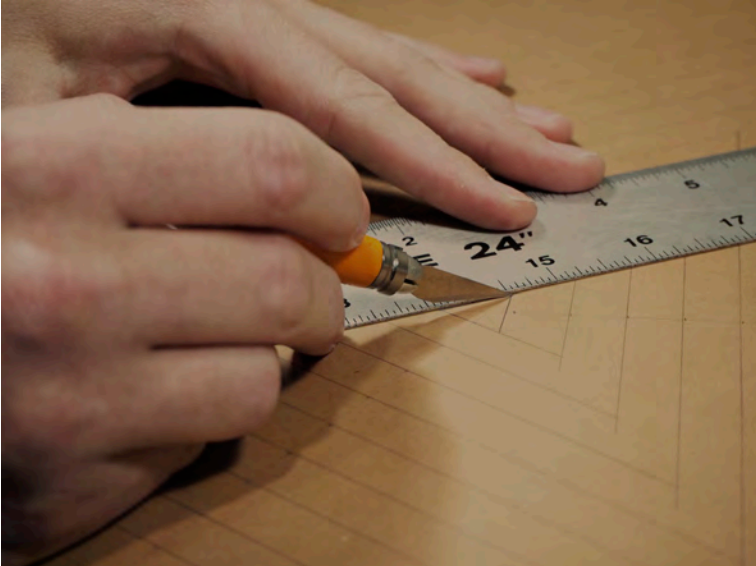
Was it easy or difficult to think about ways to interact with your paper sculpture? Why or why not?

Once you were able to get creative about "performing" with your paper sculpture, did your perception of the object change? Did your perception of the space or environment you were occupying change?

Can you think of other circumstances where humans interact with inanimate objects and this interaction influences our perception of space – or even our perception of spirituality? Can you think of any bodily movements that are performed during spiritual practices?

Variations

If a simpler activity is desired, the performative photograph aspect of this activity can be skipped and participants can simply experiment with interactive geometric sculptural forms using the spirals. This activity can also be translated into making pop-up cards: 1) Fold a piece of letter-sized cardstock in half horizontally to make a card. 2) Inside the folded card, draw a spiral in the centre of the right side of the cardstock, then score along the spiral with a craft knife. 3) Glue the centre part of the spiral to the left side of the folded page. When the card opens, it will pull the spiral; when the card closes, the spiral will lie flat.



Advanced Lesson Plan: Spiritual Self-Portrait

The artworks in *The Nameless Boy who gave his name to Sunday* abstractly endeavour to untangle some of the sensory experiences of being a spiritual being. When individuals enter *sacred* spaces, common sensory experiences can arise – feelings of awe, serenity, and gratitude, or sometimes feelings of *otherworldliness* and *mysticism*.

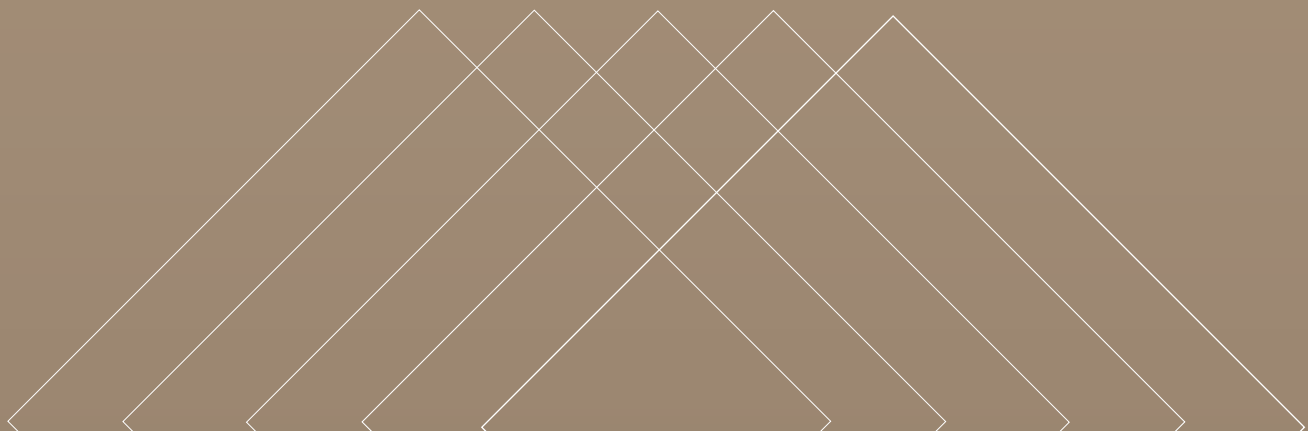
In this lesson, participants will craft physical scenes or backdrops that evoke a sense of the spiritual or a sense of mysticism. They will photograph themselves interacting with their individual creations, composing a spiritual *self-portrait*.

Materials

Participants should equip themselves with a sketchbook and a camera. Additional materials will be unique for each individual but could include any range of craft supplies, such as hardboard, cardboard, pom-poms, pipe cleaners, foraged natural materials, aluminum foil, hot glue, craft glue, construction paper, markers, toothpicks, chopsticks, popsicle sticks, wooden skewers, Bubble Wrap, scrap fabric, paint, pencils, etc.

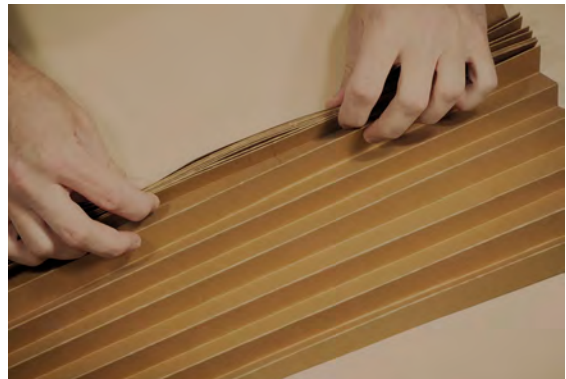
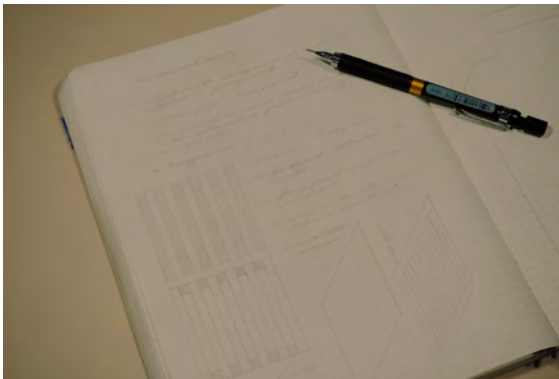
Preparation

Begin with a discussion about what it means to be spiritual or sacred. This discussion can begin with questions such as *What does it mean to be a spiritual being? What does it mean for a space to be sacred?* Remind participants that there are a vast range of beliefs and value systems around spirituality, and that it is okay if there are multiple perspectives and responses – dialogue of any kind should be centred around respect, empathy, and understanding. Encourage participants to think about environments that provoke a sense of spirituality or mysticism; this could include (but is not limited to) places of worship, natural environments, or perhaps secluded and quiet spaces. This group dialogue will form the basis for the following activity, meant to be completed individually.



Instructions

- Step 1** Jot down notes based on the Preparation portion of the activity. Reflect on what it might mean to be spiritual. You can also reflect on what kinds of environments are considered sacred, or what types of environments provoke sensational, otherworldly feelings.
- Step 2** Imagine an environment that represents feelings of spirituality, mysticism, or sacredness for you personally. Then draw some ideas in your sketchbook to plan out a photo backdrop of an imagined environment that reflects your concept of spirituality. You'll use this to *compose* a self-portrait.
- Step 3** Construct the photo backdrop. It can be drawn, painted, collaged, or sculpted. Imagination is the limit here!
- Step 4** When your project is complete, photograph yourself "dwelling in" or interacting with your imagined environment to compose a spiritual self-portrait.
- Step 5** Optionally, you can share your photographs with your peers and explain why you chose certain materials, symbols, or colours.





Discussion Questions

How did you approach planning and constructing your backdrop for your spiritual self-portrait? What went into your choices?

If you looked at your peers' photos, did you see environments/backdrops that you identified with or related to?

Now that you've completed the activity, do you notice other aspects of the compositions in Joel Matthew Warkentin's photographs? Think of architectural features within spiritual buildings that you are familiar with – do you notice references to any specific architectural elements in his artworks?

"Reflecting on what it means to be spiritual to complete this project, I contemplated the interconnectedness of spiritual thinking and how multilayered it is. When I was deciding on materials, I chose paper as it can be easily folded to create different planes or facets, which would catch the light and change accordingly, appearing lighter or darker depending on the light source. These attributes of paper relate to the way that an understanding or interpretation of spirituality can change based on one's perspective.

Compositionally, I made the decision to add a screen in the foreground to break up the scene. I used the same type of paper folded in a consistent manner for both the background and foreground, and the arrangement blends as a result. Because I've placed the subject (myself) between these planes, the image creates a blurred interplay between foreground, background, and midground, while the lighting and shadows highlight the importance of perspective. Spirituality, to me, has many different layers and perspectives. My image and imagined spiritual environment is an abstract representation of the multilayered approach to spirituality that I follow on a personal level."

– Joel Matthew Warkentin

Variations

Participants can develop environments that represent their personal identity rather than their spiritual identity. Participants can also develop wearable garments instead of creating imagined environments.

Vocabulary

Some definitions have been simplified, paraphrased, and/or slightly modified for clarity (spelling Canadianized for print purposes).

Abstract – *Abstract* is from a Latin word meaning “pulled away, detached,” and the basic idea is of something detached from physical, or concrete, reality. Abstract ideas are those that don’t have a clear applicability to real life, and abstract art doesn’t pictorially represent reality.

Architectural – Relating to the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings.

Aura – A supposed emanation surrounding the body of a living creature and regarded as an essential part of the individual.

Backdrop – Something used as a background, especially a taut cloth suspended in a frame and used as a background against which to take a photograph.

Compose – To write or create (a work of art, especially music or poetry).

Composition – The arrangement or placement of visual elements in a piece of artwork.

Concept – An idea or a principle that is connected with something abstract.

Divine – Addressed, appropriated, or devoted to God or a god; religious; sacred.

Divinity – The quality of being divine; divine nature. See definition of *divine*.

Emotion – A conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as a strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body.

Form – The shape and structure of something as distinguished from its material.

Gold leaf – An extremely thin sheet of gold that is used especially for gilding.

Halo – A geometric shape, usually in the form of a disk, circle, ring, or rayed structure, traditionally representing a radiant light around or above the head of a divine or sacred personage, an ancient or medieval monarch, etc.

Holiness – The quality or state of being holy; sanctity. See definition of *holy*.

Holy – Belonging to or derived from or associated with a divine power.

Iconography – The traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject and especially a religious or legendary subject.

Ideological – An adjective that describes political, cultural, or religious beliefs.

Intuition – The ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for conscious reasoning.

Monotone – Consisting of or characterized by a uniform tone of one colour.

Mood – The atmosphere or pervading tone of something.

Mysticism – The belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (such as intuition or insight).

Otherworldliness – The quality of being connected with spiritual thoughts and ideas rather than with ordinary life.

Performance art – A collaborative art form originating in the 1970s as a fusion of several artistic media, such as painting, film, video, music, drama, and dance, and deriving in part from the 1960s performance happenings.

Perspective – A particular attitude towards or way of regarding something; a point of view.

Plane – A level of existence, thought, or development.

Ritual – As an adjective, ritual means “conforming to religious rites,” which are the sacred, customary ways of celebrating a religion or culture. Different communities have different ritual practices, such as meditation in Buddhism, or baptism in Christianity. We also call the ceremony itself a ritual. Although it comes from religious ceremonies, a ritual can be used for any time-honoured traditions, such as the Super Bowl, Mardi Gras, or Sunday-morning pancake breakfast.

Sacred – Holy, devoted to a religious ceremony, or simply worthy of awe and respect.

Self-portrait – A portrait of you created by you.

Spatial awareness – The ability to visually perceive two or more objects in relation to each other and to yourself. Spatial reasoning is how we understand how things (including ourselves) move and interact in relation to the physical space around them. It also involves understanding the relationships of objects as they change position.

Spirit – The vital principle or animating force within living things.

Spiritual – Relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.

Symbol – A thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.

Symbolism – The use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. See definition of *symbol*.

Ultramarine – A brilliant deep-blue colour.

Universal – Relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group; applicable to all cases.

Vocabulary Sources

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition, s.v. "backdrop," accessed July 6, 2021, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/backdrop>.

Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "otherworldly," Cambridge University Press, accessed June 29, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/otherworldly>.

"Developing Spatial Awareness ['spatial awareness']," Numeracy for All, accessed June 29, 2021, <http://numeracyforall.ca/what-we-learned/developing-spatial-awareness>.

Dictionary.com, s.v. "divine," "divinity," "halo," "holiness," "monotone," "performance art," accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com>.

Lexico.com, s.v. "architectural," "aura," "compose," "intuition," "mood," "perspective," "plane," "spiritual," "symbol," "symbolism," "ultramarine," "universal," accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.lexico.com>.

McKella Sawyer, "What Is Composition in Art?" Concept Art Empire, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://conceptartempire.com/what-is-composition>.

Merriam-Webster, s.v. "emotion," "form," "gold leaf," "iconography," "mysticism," accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com>.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, s.v. "concept," "otherworldliness," accessed July 6, 2021, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>.

Vocabulary.com, s.v. "abstract," "holy," "ideological," "ritual," "sacred," "self-portrait," "spirit," accessed June 29, 2021, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary>.

Resources

Below is a list of resources, some of which were referenced within this exhibition catalogue. Others, not explicitly referenced in this catalogue, may be useful for venue facilitators to share with their audiences in order to help educate or to develop dialogue about the exhibition's themes.

"10 Simple Spiritual Activities for Self-Care That You Can Begin Today." *Spiritual Fit Club* (blog). September 5, 2017. <https://spiritualfitclub.com/spiritual-activities-self-care-begin-today>.

Art Terms. "Iconography." Tate. Accessed June 29, 2021. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/iconography>.

Dewar, Gwen. "12 Tips for Improving Spatial Skills in Children and Teens." Parenting Science. Accessed June 29, 2021. <https://www.parentingscience.com/spatial-skills.html>.

"Halo." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. March 1, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/art/halo-art>.

Myers, Nicole. "Symbolism." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. August 2007. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symb/hd_symb.htm.

"Spirituality." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. September 25, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/spirituality>.

Credits

TREX Southwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their ongoing support, as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Artist – Joel Matthew Warkentin

Curator – Ashley Slemming

Editor – Rachel Small

Education – Ashley Slemming

Catalogue Design – Ashley Slemming

Crating – Doug Haslam

Photographic Printing – ABL Imaging

Special thanks to Beth Kane and Exposure Photography Festival for coordinating the 2021 Emerging Photographers exhibition, and for partnering with TREX SW to offer emerging artist Joel Matthew Warkentin the 2021 TREX SW Travelling Exhibition Award.



Alberta



EXPOSURE

ALBERTA'S PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL