

On February 27th, 2024 - musician Reverend Kristen Michael Hayter performed at the Aladdin Theater here in Portland. She told us as she got on stage that she was incredibly ill, riddled with a fever, and was going to play for as long as she could but the show would get cut short. It really feels like a miracle that she decided to perform - for without that show I would not have had my first divine encounter with which this project came from. Towards the end of the concert - she performed her rendition of the evangelical hymn, *Give Me Jesus*. During this song, a vision came to me. I witnessed Christ's disembodied hand, extended out towards me. It was huge, the only thing I could see. His open palm bore the stigmata, but his gesture was still relaxed and warm and welcoming. But who I was, sitting in the seats of the Aladdin Theater, could not reach out to it. Instead I was on the very tip of his middle finger. As small as a grain of sand, curled up as tightly as I could be. I was not sleeping but instead seemed to be tense and in distress. Of course, tears came to my eyes and the vision slowly began to fade. The next thing I remember is the lights going up and *We Like To Party* by Vengaboys starts blasting over the speakers.

On October 21st, 2024 - I was walking through the Grotto, filming for the first iteration of CRT and the Search for God - which was for the BFA Symposium. The installation was supposed to be put up in just a couple of days, I didn't really have anything filmed for what would be put on the TV's, in fact I didn't really have much of a

plan in the first place. I was at a very stuck point in my life. I was getting lots of opportunities, but feeling spiritually lost and unfulfilled. I had just proposed my thesis, but I wasn't happy with what I initially dreamed on. I was working myself very thin so I wasn't creating anything that I felt was quality, and there were aspects of myself that I was deeply unhappy with, I wasn't being the highest form of myself. I desperately needed guidance and I desperately needed to get this piece done. I went into the church, sat in a pew in the back and prayed. I prayed for forgiveness - I prayed for strength - and I prayed for divine guidance. I made my way to the upper garden level of the Grotto. It was misty and rainy - and so cold that my fingers were getting numb holding my camcorder and my nose was runny and bright pink. There is a small chapel in the garden, no bigger than 10x15 feet, that is dedicated to St. Anne, Mary's mother. There are paintings and photographs of depictions of Mary from all over the world - the lighting is fluorescent, there are four very small pews and a prayer bench in front of an altar that is adorned with fake flowers surrounding a plaster statue. It's my favorite place in the whole Grotto. As I start to walk up, I see a small group of people walk into the chapel, two of them being Capuchin Friars. ----- I thought Ah! Perfect... and B-lined towards them. Right as I walk up, a woman and the two Friars are stepping out of the chapel. I stand to the side waiting for them to leave and politely smile while they walk past me. The last friar catches my eye. He walks up to me and says "Here, take this." and placed in my hand a Miraculous Medal - a small pendant with the image

of Mary, and inscribed is the prayer “O, Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee”. The Friar was French, so with his thick accent he told me to pray to Mary and to pray the prayer on the medal. Wide eyed I looked at him, looked around at the other people who were all staring at me, and looked back at him. He then tells me “I have a gift for you” and pulls out of his cloak, a white plastic rosary in a little plastic bag. He continues and tells me to pray the rosary and it will help me... The Friar finally said that I needed to pray to Padre Pio and that Padre Pio would give me guidance. The woman who was with them told me that they were all on their way out to get on a plane back to France - if I had gotten there too early or too late I would have missed this experience. We parted ways - “Thank you goodbye God Bless you”. I entered the chapel and fell to my knees, tears warming my face, and I did as the Friar had told me. I prayed.

After this, I completely changed everything that I had originally planned for this project. For the better. Coming into thesis I was spiritually all over the place. I was struggling deeply with a lack of sense of who I was as an artist and what I had to say. I felt a disconnect between my spirituality and community. I had so many emotions, opinions and I was feeling a significant amount of doubt. Doubt within myself and spiritual doubt. I felt as if God was not with me for months - like he had forgotten about me when I needed him most. This manifested in proposing an incredibly challenging and unfocused project that was such a clear representation of my spiritual brain at the

time. Sets, projections, complicated software, candles, sound... I didn't know it at the time but I was trying to overcompensate for my own spiritual insecurities and it was showing in my art. I had a realization one night that my project wasn't what I wanted it to be anymore - that I had moved on from that place in my life, and that it needed to only have a couple of elements and to be about something so specific to me and my experiences. Water, light, hands, and my beloved CRT TV's were going to be all that was there.

CRT TV's are my favorite objects to work with. I love the physicality of them, they are huge, heavy and provide a real presence. They're incredibly nostalgic. People my age, maybe a bit older, maybe a bit younger, have fond memories of watching TV, movies, and playing video games on these accompanied by VCR's, VHS tapes and big plastic gaming consoles. There is ritual and memory embedded in analog objects like this and a real energy around them - not just emotionally but also physically. When you touch the screen when it's on you can feel the static through your fingertips. When you get close to them you can smell the electricity and the coils heating up and you can see every little dot of light that makes up the entire image. They can emit a high frequency sound that some can hear and others cannot. When you open them up they show you everything that's going on inside. There is no mystery about them. Video artist Bill Viola called video "electronic water". Electricity has a flow just like water. The most miraculous example of this might be within our own bodies. I move my hand, I move

my mouth, and that all comes from electrical impulses within my brain, travelling through my body by the pumping of my heart and allowing me to move them. On an elemental level, there is very little difference between us - and this. Technology is natural. We use natural elements - metals, crystals, silicon, to build machines. But technology is also very imperfect. I like to work with analog forms of technology because of this.

Medieval Catholic Mystic Meister Eckhardt would preach “The eye with which I see God is the same with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye is one eye, and one sight, and one knowledge, and one love.” My camera has revealed incredible divine secrets to me by bringing me into experiences that I never thought I would have. If it wasn't for my need to gather footage for my first iteration, I would not have met the Friars that completely changed the trajectory of my work. The camera is not a passive observer, but it is an active creator. You have to get into a specific mindset when filming and you can be very surprised at what catches your eye. I typically work with older camcorders - these being either hi8, miniDV, or small digital cameras that all operate in their own way. The analog cameras are sensitive, and are incredibly prone to breakage. I usually have to unscrew everything to even get a little dust out of the tapehead, and even then there's a huge chance that won't work. But this is something I find incredibly beautiful about working with these technologies. You think you're controlling what you are seeing - as a human we tend to believe that we have complete control over nature

and technology. But when I go back and review the footage - as you can see - it's glitched out, it pauses every couple of seconds, whenever I would stop recording and start again the tape glitches more — but I love that. It reminds me that when things go wrong it can make it very interesting and even romantic.

There is also something very romantic to me about exposed cords and cables. It shows that these technologies are tangible and that a human being worked among them to make them operate. I'm not interested in hiding anything from the audience. I'm not interested in maintaining a certain mystique when it comes to my process because - as St. Genesis P-Orridge would always say “the process is the piece.”

The process - was something that was far beyond my skill set. But I am incredibly ambitious - for better or for worse. I have never built anything before. I wanted to do something for this project I had very little experience with - which was woodworking and creating tools and sets from scratch. The video part was easy. I have done all of this many times before and knew exactly what to do. But as an installation artist I wanted to be able to work with physical materials so I could understand them better. I wanted to understand the planning that went along with building something of this scale, and I wanted to learn how to better communicate with those around me as well as build connections by asking for help. Which I am bad at doing. But as it turns out - asking for help is really good. And what's crazy is that people will help you. I pestered everyone at PICA, GLASS woodshop, friends, family and Mr. Plywood - but because of this

community I gained the confidence to construct things I had no experience with. Like a pond.

The pond went through many iterations with different materials in mind - starting with wood and pond liner - which looked so bad, to just wood and sealing it somehow - which also looked bad and didn't work, and finally acrylic. I spent days prototyping and constructing the pond in the back corner of PICA's warehouse - snagging materials from their storage closet and poking my head into the kitchen to ask various people questions. Andrew and Isabel in the woodshop had to deal with me plenty. When I was completely lost on how to build the mounts for the TV's - they both helped me conceptualize and construct them, as well as demystify tools and table saws. One day I was talking to my friend Mikko about needing to buy acrylic - which is very expensive, yet he miraculously dug out an acrylic slab from the back of the woodshop that perfectly fit the dimensions I was looking for - which felt like divine intervention. Putting it all together was a huge challenge. I had never worked with these materials before - let alone at this size. It felt very awkward and nothing came naturally. And I gave myself a huge undertaking of trying to control water. Water - a lot of the time, is not something that humans can completely control. Water is wild and unruly. But it is also a tool for spiritual pathways and growth. It is birth and destruction. Cleansing, baptism, salvation, meditation and the representation of the Holy Spirit. Water is greater than me and it is me. Just like God. This pond is meant to be a place of spiritual

reflection. It is an opportunity for you, the audience, to commune with the images on the screen and ground yourself. What do you think about when you peer into the reflection? Who do you see? What do the TV's see? Do they see themselves? Do they see you? Do you see yourself?

Since I first started making installation art, I fell in love with C-Stands. C-Stands are typically used in film production and photography to position lights. But I have never once used them for that purpose - instead I have used them to hang dresses, mount projectors, and now my hold TV's. Their design is not made to be displayed in an art space, but rather to serve a function behind the scenes. They are a beautiful, hard, cold chrome. Their shape almost looks alien with their three legs, clamps, rods and knobs. Here, they are not being used for their intended function, but instead are being used for their beauty and aesthetic pleasure. The TV's placed on top of them resemble heads, looking down into the water, while their legs stand close and firm against the acrylic. In this context they become a being. Where pure metal is given a soul that can reflect on its function in the water below it.

Where water speaks to transformation, light speaks to clarity, truth, and the divine presence that overcomes darkness. In Christian mysticism the soul is often likened to water - it is deep, fluid and reflective. When divine light enters the soul, it

doesn't just bounce off—it shimmers, it refracts, it illuminates from within. When light passes into water, it bends. It's refracted. Straight lines become curved, clear images become dreamlike. That's not distortion—it's mystery. Divine light, when filtered through human experience, takes on layers and can feel impossible to fully grasp. Light and water aren't just elements; they are conditions for creation. Where there is light and water, life can begin Spiritually. You can't see light unless it's hitting something. Water—mist, fog, rain, river—makes light visible. Think of light shafts through fog, or sun through rain making a rainbow. In that way, water gives light form. Just like our humanity gives form to the divine. The divine is not always direct - it shows itself in glimpses, like light dancing on water.

Padre Pio - was the saint that the friar told me to pray to - has been a unique guiding presence in my life. Originally, this piece was going to be more centered around him. Padre Pio, was an Italian Capuchin friar, Catholic priest, and mystic. He became world-renowned for his spiritual gifts, his sufferings, and especially for bearing the stigmata—the wounds of Christ— on his hands. He was believed to possess numerous mystical abilities like reading souls, bilocation, healing and has prophetic visions. He was born in 1887 and died in 1968 - so there is video and photographic evidence of his sermons - as well as his stigmata. Since the grotto - he has come into my life in strange ways. Whether that be seeing portraits at thrift stores or coincidentally reading something pertaining to him - so this felt incredibly important - especially with hands

being such a central part of my work. I wanted to include him and his hands, as well as other saints and priests' hands during sermons. Though the more I tried to go into that creative direction - the less interested I became. I felt in my body that I was not connected to these figures in the way that I would have liked to be. I had doubts. And I think I was having those doubts because I wasn't feeling fully united with the masculine and rigid of certain parts of religion. What I was confident in was my own practice and what I had learned and gathered throughout the years of my spiritual journey. For years now I have cultivated my own rituals and practices in my own room and in solitude - without a community. This felt comfortable for me - I didn't want to be constrained by strict rules - but instead do my own research and find my own ways of connecting with God. These practices and rituals came from Catholicism, mysticism, tarot, paganism. But one thing that I knew worked - for me - was prayer.

My hands are my favorite part of my body. I love what they can do, I love how they move, I'm very expressive with them. They can tell you entire stories, you can have conversations with other people with them. What I was fascinated with was the symbolism of hands in religious imagery like paintings, but also the ritualistic motions of gesture. Hands in both art and ritual remind us that Christianity is not a purely intellectual or abstract faith—it's incarnational. Flesh and embodiment. God works through the body, through touch, through gesture. It's about the seen and the unseen moving together. These gestures become a bridge between the physical and the

spiritual, the earthly and the divine, and the self and the other. By sitting down in my room in front of the camera and replicating these holy hand symbols - I wanted to meditate on the bridging of the divide. With open hands - I invite an openness to God, with the sign of the cross - my mind, my heart and my strength are offered to God - I cross my hands over my chest to accept a blessing - I fold my hands together in devotion.

Last night - I was met with every challenge you could think of when it came to a project like this. The pond was leaking, lights stopped working, one of the TV mounts broke, one tv wasn't turning on and another fell on its screen twice and broke. I wanted to tear everything apart. I hated it so much. I felt like I had completely failed and that this was absolutely not what I had envisioned. This pond could have been filled with my tears last night. I had felt forsaken! Again! What did this all mean! As my girlfriend Emily and I cleaned up last night, after working together to build this piece back up again - I felt another great sense of divine intervention. The lights were going to be all sorts of colors - but the simplicity of the two, metal clamp lights bouncing off the water were more stunning than something more grand. The broken TV made it look like light and color were pouring into me during this intense religious experience I caught on camera. The mount breaking made it so that the image would be facing you, and not peering down like the others. This was the divine's way of telling me not to be afraid. Everything that happened forced the image of me praying during this groundbreaking

moment in my life to the very center - confronting you and not looking away. This was the plan all along. The Process is the Piece. I trusted the process, I trusted Emily, I trusted myself and I trusted God. The process is God.

The CRT and the Search for God series, along with the rest of my works, past and future, are created for one purpose, which is to aid in the expansion of my own spiritual practice. This is an open invitation to be with me and to engage with my personal journey through faith. This is not something that can be explained in a speech - it just is. It's all right there. I do not ask anything of you. Everything you need to know is here. It is a shallow pool of water made of acrylic, mylar, caulk and wood. It's lights, c-stands, aquarium pumps, adapters and cables. The TV's are just displaying videos I took of statues, camelias, my hands and prayer. I'm completely uninterested in making things seem intangible. For most of my life I believed that the art I wanted to make was not tangible, or was not good enough, and that people would not believe in my work. I now know this all to be very very untrue.

This would not have happened without my loved ones. My dear friends, old and new, who have been there for me for my creative and spiritual growth throughout the years and who's connections I hold very close to my heart. My mentors - Erin Doughton, Roland Dahwen, Megan Mckissack and Emily Guinsberg who have kept me so grounded throughout my time at PNCA and have provided me with opportunities that I couldn't have even imagined possible for me and really made me believe in myself

when I thought I couldn't at the time. The life and the love I have now would not be possible without my beautiful girlfriend Emily, who is a true gift and saved me from breakdown after breakdown over this piece. My brother, has provided so much play and joy in my life when I was feeling uninspired or hopeless. Most importantly, I would not be standing here today without my parents. I could not be more grateful to come from two great people and great artists in their own right. You have shown me what unconditional love looks like. You have given me unimaginable amounts of support. And I am very proud to be your daughter.

I realized much later on what my vision was trying to tell me. God wanted me to grow. I was just a speck of sand on Christ's finger, and he was telling me that I needed to get to a place in my life where I am no longer small - but where I am walking hand in hand with something greater than me - guiding me towards my highest self. I don't know if I will ever fully get there - but because of art, and community, and love - I know that I am growing with God.

I am grateful to God for every moment of my life, and I am grateful that all of you are here with me today. Thank you