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LOVE SEX GOD

A Thesis

by

MAGDIEL G. ALFONSO

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

December 2016

Major Subject: Art

LOVE SEX GOD

A Thesis
by
MAGDIEL G. ALFONSO

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December 2016

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ABSTRACT

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As a result of the absence of a father-figure and the repulsion of machismo, a love for that masculinity and a void within grew from the missing father-son/male-male interaction; this is the drive to codify my work with homoerotic imagery bathed with guilty religiosity through a torturous sadomasochist context to display a life-mirrored desire to punish and love the male simultaneously while feeling guilty doing it. The work is inspired by homo-erotic and religious art history and at times the blending of the two.

The purpose of this work is not only to show the love for the celebration of the male but also the desire to punish him while opening the dialogue about the identification of homoerotic religious art.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my mother, Amelia Gonzalez Alfonso, in heaven for her tireless efforts in getting me where I am today. For her tenacity and insistence in the completion of my studies beyond her life, and for her code of ethics passed on to me.

I also dedicate this to my Fiancé, Cecil Castle, for all his support. For your endless nights of work, for your days alone, for the times you were left waiting, for believing in me and for always cheering me on.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I will always be grateful to Dr. Roberto de Souza, chair of my committee, for all his memorable advice and all the knowledge and time he shared with me. I would also like to thank my committee members, Paul Valadez and Marcus Farris, for always pushing me forward, for questioning everything that helped me grow.

To Mark Cloet of Belgium, thank you for allowing me to learn from you, our interchange of knowledge and collaboration was a once in a hundred year opportunity...gaining your friendship was a once in a million chance. Many thanks to Brian and Aleida Wedgworth for all your help and support in my success both academically and professionally.

My greatest help, Mario Diaz, for helping me in the most important stages of bronze casting. I'm also thankful to Douglas Clark for teaching me all the essentials of bronze sculpture and more; beyond that, I am grateful for opening up my mind as to what I can accomplish and pushing me with his phrases: "work faster" and "just 'cause you haven't done it, don't mean you can do it". Douglas, you are the reason I do bronze.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of art as I interpret it is to communicate an emotion or feeling experienced by the artist to others where words do not suffice. Via two-dimensional representation, there are many effects that can be accomplished to express and transmit to others emotions that must be communicated by the artist. However, not all art is two-dimensional and there are limits to the reality and physicality that only sculpture can accomplish. The material of the sculptures in the exhibition necessarily becomes rope and bronze in order to properly transmit the correct feeling onto others.

Bronze has been used for many sculptures through the centuries...it gives a sense of timelessness and a sense of desire to communicate something beyond the date of creation. Far more stone and ceramic pieces of art have survived through the centuries than bronze pieces, even if just in fragments but they have survived. Bronzes, although more difficult to destroy than a ceramic or a stone sculpture may still be melted down but with more effort than the later options.

In contemporary times, we communicate through telephone calls and emails...non-tangible forms of communication that only exist in the “cloud” and without much effort to accomplish the communication line. Bronze sculpture demands a strong will to continue despite all of its obstacles; it is a battle between artist and material that forces the material to become something or the artist to fail.

It seems everyone has an opinion, the desire to express themselves in one way or another. People communicate through poetry, dance, music, painting, letters to the editor, or just verbose exaggerations of their dissatisfaction. I communicate through sculpture, the visual appeal of transformed metal highlights the importance of what is being communicated. Skill is needed in all forms of art but highly specialized skills are needed to transform bronze.

In a contemporary world where anything and everything can be given the title of art; to communicate visually with the kitchen spoon or a store bought sandal. We use the telephone without effort, we write an email to communicate in writing, we send a hand-written letter to denote the higher importance of written communication, and we appear in person for more serious and formal communication. The more effort it takes on our part to express something, the higher the importance of the subject...all these are meant to be short-term forms of communications. The Egyptian Pharos built the pyramids to not just communicate to their subjects short term, but to communicate to them of their greatness throughout the centuries...beyond the lives of the Pharos and their subjects. The highly specialized skills required to wield bronze means these sculptures were created to stand the test of time; unless we as a civilization revert back to the Bronze or Iron Age, the melting of these pieces is not anticipated.

Often works of art are religious, nature-based, depicting of myths and homoerotic; the first and the latter category are usually not placed together in its own category of study. The work presented in this exhibition is religious and homoerotic at the same time; the exhibit depicts saints, apostles, abstract representations of religious occurrences and even the Christ himself. They do not appear as in the traditional sense of the Christ of the Cross but rather a juxtaposition of eroticized poses of men with religious innuendoes. There are various works of art throughout

the centuries, since before Christ, that depict homosexuality and are also religious at the same time. Religious must also not be taken as to mean Christianity alone for some religious art was created in before Christianity and outside of Christendom. This thesis does not touch on religious homoerotic art outside of Europe or the Americas touching on some works in ancient times and placing some relevant content to refer back to.

The idea of religious homoerotic art came from the struggle of identity, of having being raised under Christian doctrine and traditional Mexican upbringings. The combination of the two made identifying myself as an individual challenging; this is an exploration of supporting and justifying sources for the gay liberation movement and its relation to my body of work as a whole and the archetypal identification of my work as religious homoerotic art to open the frontier through the support of previous works of art and my current body of work.

CHAPTER II

PROCESS, MATERIALS, AND METHODS

There are other materials used in this exhibition like steel, wood, and synthetic and natural rope. The artwork itself is homoerotic in nature, it represents the desire and the celebration of the nude male by placing him in erotic poses inspired by sensual Shibari Japanese Bondage. At the same time, they are also represented in poses inspired by BDSM and the pain/punishment associated with it. Both representations are intertwined with sacrosanct poses inspired by Christianity and Mesoamerican religious iconography. The figures depicted in the exhibit are all in bronze to again, reaffirm the importance of the effort taken, to show how far out of the way one has gone in order to communicate beyond my years. The bronze was treated with patinas and stains reminiscent of golden halos of Byzantine Christ or Saints as well as *Zeus from the Cape of Artemision* in color. The figures are in bondage referencing both Shibari and BDSM. Shibari bondage is a sensual bondage built on trust and knowing that your partner will take care of you just like a husband takes care of his family or the Holy Father takes care of us.

We place complete blind trust of our lives to the Holy Father, similarly, a wife places complete trust in the husband of providing shelter and protection to the family; in Shibari bondage, the passive partner places trust in the active partner that they will be bound and eventually the bondage will end with nurture. There is a blind trust that they will be taken care of and loved. In BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, Masochism) the focus is the pleasure and/or a sexual pleasure derived from discipline, punishment and sadism of the subject.

All figures are in bondage that references and is inspired by both Shibari and BDSM bondage. They are all bound in synthetic blue rope for their strength and color. The color was chosen for its simple cliché representation of blue for boy/pink for a girl that popular culture so often references. There is a yellow synthetic rope piece as well in the center of the exhibition, yellow was chosen for its naïve representation of gold/golden in my childhood drawings; yellow was also used for my baby clothes and blankets prior to my birth, yellow was a neutral color being neither for boys nor for girls but versatile for both genders.

Steel is representative of strength and the advancement of man into the modern world, all the bases are either all steel or steel and wood. The steel and wood bases were used to show modernity while at the same time the wood represents the Cross of Christ. Although the wood is not a cross, the wood element was inspired by the many Jehovah's Witness visits and their belief that Jesus was crucified on a stake rather than a cross. The Pieces with a complete steel base/support start with a square base with an empty square in the middle only for aesthetics. From the edge of one side rises up the strong support five feet up and another support extends from it across the base to encompass the length of the base. This is a phallic symbol of strength, it becomes more so at the end of the traversing extension where a steel ring is placed; the ring appears to be self-standing but is securely welded on. The ring is about 4 to 5 inches from the end of the extension, the ring is purposely reminiscent of a penis ring, from this ring hangs the ropes that suspend the bronzes in mid-air like weightless feathers.

There are some bronze figures that do not have a base but only felt to prevent their weight from leaving a mark on where they sit. The rope bronzes are solid, they are made from real rope that's been prepared for casting but also protected in the preparation process to prevent absorption of colloidal silica. They appear as if a knot of real rope was magically converted to

bronze. The bronze studies are cast in this similar way from the real rope and displayed on a pine wood background, the pine was chosen for its yellow tone...the yellow neutral color of gender. The background of the rope studies as well as the blocks that cap the orifice of the all-steel base extensions are made from wood; wood was selected versus plastic, bronze, or any other material for its double-meaning name, wood.

Naturally, revolving around the subject of bondage, the rope was used for several wall pieces. There is a two-piece piece inspired by Jewish prayer tassels and the visual representation of sperm. Although I'm not Jewish, my questioning of God and his existence led me on a path of religious exploration that landed me in the origins of my faith, thus the Jewish prayer tassels. The tassels are made from white synthetic rope, the synthetic rope has a smooth and fresh texture that appeals to me. The remaining wall-hanging sculptures are made from natural 1-inch rope, its ruggedness, toughness, stiffness and strength mirrors and reminds me of masculinity.

Works of art and what they're made of are equally important. The natural rope pieces may be interpreted differently if they were instead an oil painting of them rather than the thing itself. If the bronze figures were represented through lithography, the effect would not be the same, the emotion and feeling would not be the same as in bronze. It is one thing to read an article from a Mexican newspaper of the violence juxtaposed with pictures of the dead left behind, versus seeing the dead in front of you and learning about the violence from a first-hand witness. The reality is not the same, the effect is not the same, there is a loss in emotional translation when the object observed is on a two-dimensional surface versus a three-dimensional object. The sculptures in the exhibition were made through the lost-wax method of casting in which the wax pattern is melted/burned away and lost leaving a void where the molten metal will take its place. The lost wax method is a methodical long-term process taking months to

complete, the process starts by creating an armature, the inner structure of the sculpture, and sculpting the clay over it. Once the sculpture has been creating, a mold is made to capture the form of the sculpture; the mold can be made out of silicone, plaster, latex, urethane, fiberglass or other materials. I have found for water-based clays, natural clays, plaster works best because the clay doesn't need additional preparation other than the standard treatment needed for any other mold materials. Once a complete mold is cast, in this particular case, the plaster mold was soaked in water in order for the plaster to not have any more room to absorb any other liquid (liquid melted wax). Wax is melted to a 212 degrees Fahrenheit and the mold is put together in as many complete section pieces as possible. At times, due to the size of a sculpture, the mold will be made in multiple parts and in multiple sections...each section having multiple parts to complete a full section. Once the melted wax is poured into the mold sections, it is washed around in the mold until a thin layer, roughly one-eighth of an inch, is created as evenly throughout the section. This section is brought out of the mold by taking the mold apart and cleaning up the wax to look like the original clay. When all wax sections are completed these are sometimes attached to one another to form a more complete replica of the sculpture and prepared for casting.

Preparing a wax (pattern) for casting requires that a delivery system is created around the wax. This delivery system is created out of wax rods of various sizes, always keeping in mind the rules of gravity, taking into account the pressure created by the bronze like self-leveling water inside a transparent water hose held up at both ends. The delivery system must always deliver from the bottom of the wax piece up to prevent blockage from the top trapping air and causing miss-castings. Having a complete wax pattern prepared for casting can take between several hours to various days depending on the size of the original sculpture. The finished wax

pattern on the delivery system can be referred as a “tree” to differentiate between a wax pattern and a completely prepared wax pattern for casting. The “tree” is then submerged in colloidal silica, a liquid suspension of silica that is heat-resistant and captures all details in the wax. The process of dipping the tree in colloidal silica is repeated between 8 to 15 times, each time taking between 30 minutes at the beginning of the dipping process to 6 hours or more towards the mid to end of the dipping process depending on the complexity of the tree. Each dip in colloidal silica is followed by a dip into fused silica. Fused silica is silica in a solid form similar to sand; fused silica varies in grit size like sand paper, the smaller the number the larger the grain. The finer grains are utilized at the beginning process to assist in capturing detail, the larger grains are utilized to build up the thickness of each additional layer faster.

At the completion of the dipping process, an opening on the main delivery system is made where molten bronze is to be poured. The finished trees are placed in a furnace with the opening downwards and the furnace lit to melt and burn away the wax, thus the lost-wax part comes in; the silica processes have created a high detail mold of the wax on the inside and outside of the wax pattern. In essence, once the wax is burned away, the space left behind is an exact hollow replica of the void. While the wax is being burned and the silica mold being fired, the bronze is also melted at 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit and once both are ready the hollow silica molds are placed with the opening towards the top and the molten liquid metal poured into the red-hot mold until completely filled. As the metal cools, it shrinks and pulls and at times cracks; avoiding the fissures comes with experience in casting the liquid bronze and coordinating that experience with the delivery system so the metal can have liquid metal to pull from as it cools and shrinks. The final piece will be cut away from the delivery system which is now also made

of bronze...the sections welded together, polished and a patina added. Patinas can be applied through various chemical reactions or stains to achieve the proper coloration of the metal.

The goal of the exhibition is to demonstrate the mastering of my focus, to demonstrate the ability to diversify the use of materials and to effectively communicate internal feelings and emotions of which not just a targeted audience could identify but also the general populous could see themselves in the struggle of the straight and narrow path with God, self-identification and personal fulfillment. All the efforts taken to accomplish the exhibition are geared towards the advancement of queer culture, gay art, mutual understanding and support to conflicting individuals. I've been inspired by various artists, my art heroes, Tom of Finland, Paul Cadmus, Pierre et Gilles, Robert Mapplethorpe, Thomas Eakins, Pierre Molinier, and Ian MacKinnon...some of their work is reflected in my work while the work of others have encouraged and reaffirmed my pursue of constant art production.

CHAPTER III

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCES

The misogyny associated with machismo generated a feeling of resistance with the identification of the male gender. The void for the missing male interaction from the lack of a male figure in my life created a dislike, disgust, and resistance to Machismo culture. At the same time, the attraction for that romanticized machista masculinity grew in me as a young child. At a certain age, I became “conscience” of everything I was learning, realizing that not only did I want a father, but another boy to play “house” with; this while also realizing and absorbing everything at the local Pentecostal Church was tremendous to understand at the age of seven. On the one hand, there is a hate for the male, while on the other the attraction for it, and in front of my dilemma were the religious teachings of my Family’s church.

After years of suppression and attempts at fooling oneself, years later I learned of the then-recent conversion of my family from native indigenous religious beliefs to Christianity and the push my family was attempting at erasing anything to do with the old religion. Initially, one naturally comes to the questions of how can you turn your back on your God/s? As if a present day Christian would, over the next month, decide to become Muslim after hundreds of years of Christianity in the Family. This began my question of God, of his existence, and his mandate. If the old Gods were answering prayers for the last few hundred years, who was answering prayers now under Christian domain? If the real God was now answering prayers, who had been answering prayers for the last few hundred years?

Christianity mandates monotheism, as such and at an impressionable age I continued with the Christian teachings and feelings of sin. At a much older age, I came to the acceptance that my condition was not one of sin or impurity but a natural phenomenon that had left its mark on my young mind. The older I've become the more I've accepted the notion that all those prayers answered were most likely good fortune coincidences interpreted as answers to prayers.

Shame built on years of religious restraint have eased over the years as I've discovered the foundation and influences of my exhibition. The justification and precursors of the liberation of this shame that have existed for thousands of years from the birthplace of our democracy, in Athens. The Athenians were liberated from their tyrant by a homosexual couple over twenty-five hundred years ago and sculpture erected to their name as mentioned in *The Art and Culture of Early Greece*. Twenty-five hundred years ago, society was celebrating their gay heroes and here I am facing shame because of religion. Shame for wanting the love and protection of a father like in Plato's Symposium, the pederasty is a romantic way of seeking out that father figure or playing out that search for the masculinity in a man. This written text from over two thousand years ago was normalizing male-male encounters in Greek society, until we reached a point where God demonized it in the laws of Leviticus but later said his Son was the end of the Law in Romans; in Hebrews God says the old law was obsolete and aging which is possibly why Christians now eat pork and charge interests on loans, both of which were on equal ground with the abomination of laying with another man as if with a woman. The relief of this sin was quickly taken by Romans again referring to men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving their due punishment; giving and taking like a game.

The history of homosexuality is there in the old world, it is prevalent in the ancient gods like in the myth of Zeus and Ganymede where Zeus comes down in the form of an eagle to take Ganymede to be his cup bearer. As mentioned in *The Hunt in Ancient Greece*, the cup bearing position was already taken by Zeus' daughter, and Ganymede was for his lover as one can visually see in the terracotta where Ganymede is holding a rooster, as a metaphor for pederasty at the time, as Zeus carries him. In the new world, the concept of two-spirit individuals was widespread in North America while in Mesoamerican same-sex practice was culturally acceptable for various cultural reason. Just like in Plato's Symposium picture of Greek culture, not exactly "homosexuality" as we know it today, but still same-sex relationships.

With the advent of Christianity, the socially and culturally accepted practice of same-sex sexual encounters became unacceptable. Notions of homosexuality had to be codified and denied; the beautiful poems of Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" and the Calamus group of poems are a great example of codifying same-sex sexual desire in a work of art. His work can be summarized as the longing for man manly love of comrades. In the short poem, *The Multitude*, he speaks about hoping the man he spotted can recognize his "secret and divine signs"...he refers to the individual as his perfect equal and words it in a way to infer that both are there to seek each other out. During his time, an equal to a man was another man, not a woman; to call him his love and perfect equal, is clearly interpreted as a homosexual encounter. In *The Moment Yearning and Thoughtful* he speaks of other men in other lands that he wishes to know as men as he knows in his own lands, he wishes to be lovers with these other men, and that he know he would be happy with them. Whitman shows great admiration for the male physique in a way that can seem lustful:

” His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his
hip-band,
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat
away from his forehead,
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his
polish’d and perfect limbs.” (Whitman, 1965)

Other portions of *A Song to Myself* can be interpreted as descriptions of the plethora of encounters Whitman had when he goes line by line describing the trade of the men and loves them. As an individual poem they can be dismissed, as a collection, they tell a story or self-negation while at the same time shouting to the world his love for manly love.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take
me with him all day,
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound
of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and
seamen and love them. (Whitman, 1965)

Whitman’s beautiful ode to comradeship love is a testament to the codification of homosexuality; his screams are loud in the ears of those who understand and can interpret his code. One this is to love thy neighbors, one thing is to honor the sailors off to war, one this is to be a comrade, another this is to love, be lovers and kiss your comrades on his lips. His proclamation on man manly love since the late 1850s should not just make me proud but put me to shame for having shame for he has broken through that barrier, others should have followed him and testified of their own love of manly love and progress would have happened sooner.

This especially after Karl Heinrich Ulrich's first writings surfaced, writing about homosexuality before the world homosexual existed, the father of modern gay rights. In the 1860s Ulrichs published *Riddles on the Studies of Male-Male Love* in which he coined various

terms and identifying the third sex, what in contemporary times can equate to transgendered individuals, stating that female souls in male bodies were normal. An activist in his own right, in 1867 he became the first homosexual to publicly speak against anti-homosexual laws by pleading at the Congress of German Jurists in Munich; he failed and was exiled, but the first step was there. Ulrich not only spoke up on the legal front but on the medical front as well with his writings, making a dent on the wall for gay rights in our modern times. Although his writings were later revived by Magnus Hirschfeld but were taken into a damaging connotation that homosexuals were effeminate males bringing the connotation that homosexuals were “sissies”.

Edward Carpenter may have read the work of Ulrich as he used the same term that Ulrich used to describe homosexuality, Uraniums, thirty some years before. Carpenter’s work most associated with the gay liberation movement is a *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, a collection of his papers where he discusses gender fluidity of those in between traditional male and female roles. A known man to his contemporaries, he writes in *George Merill: A True History and Study in Psychology* that he has been living with George for twenty years, George being 22 years his Junior. Carpenter describes George as feminine with a...”personal affection and sense of romance went out towards strong and mature men. Towards such he experienced a genuine devotion; and curiously enough this was the case not only as a boy but in later years also, when he himself was of mature age.” (Carpenter, 1912) and of having a maternal side. The *Intermediate Sex* spoke about the homogenic love to reference homosexual love, this is a reference to Plato’s *Symposium* and Greek platonic love. In his writing, he mentions that people who practice homogenic love are pointing the way, through sex, to a new level of society. A prophet in a sense as we now see with the gay liberation movement. These references o gay history are not to justify homosexuality but

to establish a history of natural existence and demonstrate the relationship that ancient cultures had with God(s) and homosexuality versus Christianity and homosexuality and the effects on society.

The ancient Greeks established pederasty to justify homosexual tendencies even in the myth of Zeus and Ganymede and the tale of the Harmodius and Aristogeiton. The ancient Americans embraced homosexuals as two-spirit beings and Muxes placing them as shamans and higher positions in social life. The Mesoamericans, though some had strict penal codes prohibiting homosexuality, had rituals to pass on their strength and masculinity to other males through intercourse. Priests worship goddesses of homosexuality and male prostitution by performing homosexual intercourse as part of their rituals. Brothels were prevalent where pederasty and homosexual prostitution was the norm. As Christianity expanded we see the “normal” culture of the regions become labeled as “sin against nature”; turning same-sex sexual relations into something unnatural and against God. Having a lineage that remembers, from just a couple of years before my birth, when the patriarch had converted to Christianity and the stories from tales of family members that remembered the altars to the Gods, regular and high rituals to various Gods and the melancholy from the traditions lost. This is where my question of God begins, of who is answering prayers now versus who was answering prayers then. Who should receive my worship, should I convert back or should I merely observe the traditions for cultural preservation purposes?

In 1962 in *Manual Enterprises Vs. Day*, a United States Supreme Court Case ruled in favor of magazines publishing images and photographs of nude or nearly nude male models as not obscene. This particular case liberated the private commissions of Tom of Finland and opened the opportunity for magazines to begin mailing out gay pornographic material to their

gay clientele. Tom of Finland's artwork had previously been published under the “beefcake” genre of athletic muscular attractive men in poses demonstrating exercise. After the case decision Tom’s work demonstrated more frontal nudity including gay sex in his artwork. Tom’s work influenced mine by liberating and “granting” me permission to depict nude males with a sexual connotation. Of course, we can look at the ancient Greek sculpture such as *Barberini Faun* and *Pan and Daphnis* and see the eroticism oh homosexuality in them. When placing the work of Tom of Finland next to that of the Greeks and my sculpture, one could say my influence comes from that of the Greeks. Although the attractiveness of greek sculpture was very influential in my work and can remind the viewer of European sculpture, my work is inspired by the drawings of Tom of Finland. Tom represented his ideal of male beauty with muscular bodies and overly endowment of his figures. My figures display my ideal of male beauty, muscular arms & thighs and with a “gut”. Greek sculpture represented stories of victory and myth, Tom’s images don’t have a hidden agenda. What we see with tom is what he wants to say, what you see in my work is the exact feeling I want to communicate.

Tom’s beautiful drawings portray a utopian gay society where men are well endowed and within an arms reach. There are no negative connotations with my work, he has no restrictions like I do pertaining to religion. He seems to have been freed from such guilt and focused on a humanist aspect instead with an appreciation of men in uniform.

Another artist that has influenced my work is Andre Serrano, his most controversial piece “Piss Christ” is a representation of his own religious needs to get closer to God. I don’t know if I am any closer as a result of the production of these works. In an interview with the Huffington Post he explains that Jesus was left to die for several hours on the cross; as a horrible way to die through pain and suffering but also as to his experience before death. Already Jesus asks God

why he has forsaken him but to also experience, as Serrano states, possibly seeing not just his own blood but also his bodily functions and fluids come out of him. He states the crucifix has lost its meaning as it once was, representing the death and horror of a crucified man for the sake of everyone else. It did go from being a sacrosanct object in the church to being used on everyone's neck like any other piece of jewelry and nowadays made out of any material possible. The shock value was no longer there, the shock effect of a person crucified alive wasn't there anymore. To see it in religious sculpture and painting, to see it in film...it doesn't have its horror value anymore. To imagine oneself, beaten, spit on, flogged to the point of breaking the skin and bleeding.

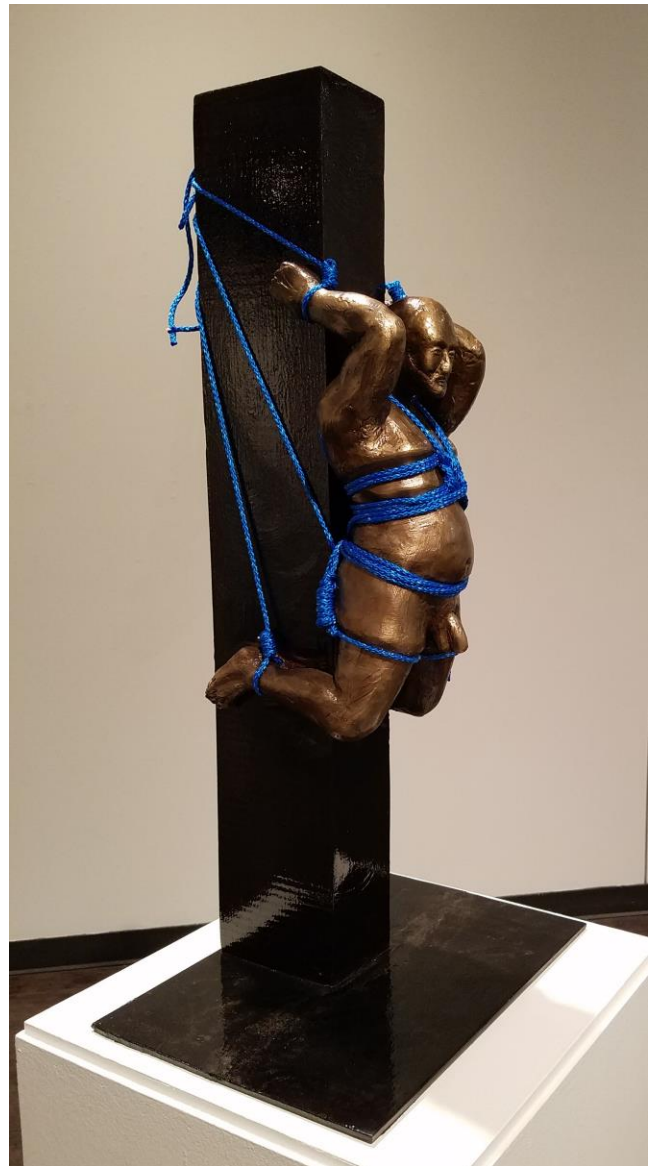


Fig 1. On a Stake

To get a wreath of thorns placed on your head and stripped of all clothes...to be paraded on the streets and carrying your own instrument of death and then being nailed to it and left for hours to hang there. To be pierced by a blade and struggle to breathe and hang on while your own weight is pulling and ripping you off that cross...that horror was no longer there on the crucifix. The crucifix was a romantic depiction of what happened and to get that horror back you have to bring

the horror back on to it. His influence was not in the use of bodily fluids, but in the crucifix itself and the shock value in it. In the piece titled "On a Stake", a nude male is not crucified but displayed; the juxtaposition of the title with the religious connotations of the exhibit infers that the figure sculpted is Jesus himself. This is Andre Serranos influence on me, to have my own crucifix but instead of a Cross, it is a stake and instead of Jesus I hung a man ready to receive pleasure but juxtaposed it with the pain and suffering associated with a crucifixion at a stake. The pleasure is derived from the type of bondage displayed which has influence in Japanese Shibari Bondage.

Pierre et Giles' *Le garçon attaché* is also a partial influence in the association of pleasure derived from the bondage and the facial expressions on my sculptures. Their beautifully bandaged boy fully erect to display pleasure has a facial expression of lust and suffering; these are the exact feelings I attempt to convey in my message. The lust for other men, but the pain from going against religious dogma. *Crazy Love's* striking representation, to me, of a Sacred Heart paintings in contemporary Catholicism, a blending of the Jesus of Christianity with contemporary artistic expressions as I did in my "On a Stake". A third reference taken from Pierre Et Giles is their Sebastian. Saint Sebastian has for about 400 years has come to come to represent a foil for homosexuality. According to Catholic doctrine, he was a captain in the army and was martyred for converting Romans into Christians. In religious paintings he is depicted as a slim bound youth, I theorize this is where the romanticism of St. Sebastian begins. Visual depictions from the Renaissance painter, Guido Reni, depict a young slim toned body with feminine qualities in his posture. Not only Reni's paintings but various paintings throughout the centuries have depicted the Saint as an effeminate slim, twink, boy almost in a sensual manner as in the 18th-century painting, *The Martyrdom, Of Saint Sebastian* by François Ménageot. Here

there isn't an arrow on him nor anywhere on the picture plane of the painting but rather the focus is on a more humanistic aspect defining the figure quite healthy in regards to the physique. In *The Martyrdom Of Saint Sebastian*, this saint seems to not be dying of arrows but rather of the suffering of great athleticism and sensual beauty. The image of the Saint, because of his association with beauty, youth and the rope binding to the tree, has become a symbol of sadomasochist martyrdom iconography deriving pleasure from pain between sexual and spiritual ecstasy. As far back as the 1505 *Saint Sebastian* by Amico Aspertini whose Saint is more representative of a female figure the foil for Saint Sebastian has been to codify homosexuality in Christian art.

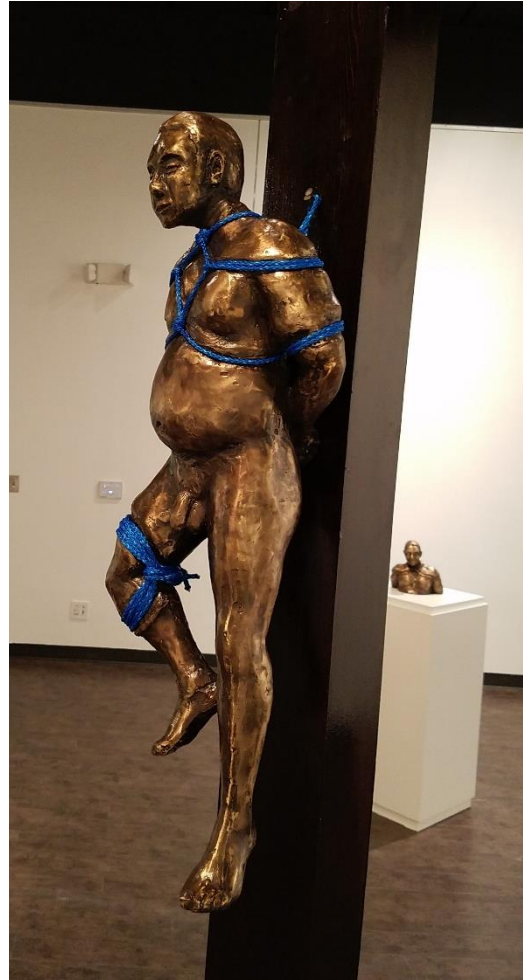


Fig 2. Saint Sebastian

As with my version of Saint Sebastian, he is bound and hangs from a nail in the stake. Again I reference the crucifixion of Jesus on a stake; the Saint has no arrows in him, he is only there hanging ready for both pleasure and pain like Saint Teresa in the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* where she is just there laying waiting for the piercing arrow of the angel to enter her and an ethereal expression on her face of the ecstasy derived from sexual and spiritual pleasure. My Saint was inspired by the work of William Mortensen in his work "A Pictorial Compendium of Witchcraft" in which a woman is tied to a stake in a similar pose as my Saint who is also in a repeater, almost iconographic, the pose of the Saint having one leg bent at the knee. What my

Saint lacks in femininity associated with him, he makes up in the attractive masculinity and defiance on his face of what may or may not come.

Robert Mapplethorpe is another artist whose influence affected me, both in style but in courage. If Mapplethorpe was willing to endure all the chaos that came from his exhibition and break through barriers, I could do it to with an easier path to his work. His photographs inspired me just as the Copulating Couple did, in showing works of art that may seem deviant but to me are a form of religious art due to the work's religious connotations. Mapplethorpe's imagery forces the viewer to see the work as fine art photography and compositional pieces and not as "obscene" as in the famous court case. His courage begat my courage, courage that should have been there since the *Leaves of Grass* or at least since Thomas Eakins painted *The Swimming Hole* and *Arcadia*. Similar to *The Swimming Hole* where several naked youths are evidently just resting and swimming in front of one another, so is *Land of Fire* by Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden as well as many other photographs of male nudes alone or with other men all under the foil of being just photographs of the classic male nude.

Other more contemporary influences that my work references are that of Mexican artist Nahum Zenil, a gay artist who has consistently utilizes his own image as the subject in his works to define his artistic personality. He can be placed on the same level as Frida Kahlo when pertaining to subject matter using himself as the focus of his work in the same fashion as Frida. His art references religious themes like the *Del Paraiso 4* clearly referencing the Eden in the title of the work and visually by representing an apple that instead of seed has male genitalia on both ends as if left for the interpretation of two males in the garden of Eden and the apple is the taste of the sin. The same feeling is felt by me through my work in *Race to the Top* which is made from rope made into my interpretation of what the soul may look like. I would describe the soul

to be like a comet, a ball of energy with a trail as it speeds across the cosmos to heaven. In *Race to the Top* I have two upward comet shapes, one larger than the other; at the same time, the shape coincides with the form of sperm and the title then begins to take on a different meaning. The simultaneous meanings are one, interpreted as the souls racing to get to heaven; as a people of various religions we interpret our own scriptures to determine for ourselves that we are worshiping the right God...everyone else is also coming to the same conclusion. Two, the origin of the soul as sperm race to the egg and become a sentient being. Three, *Race to the Top* also taps the connotation of the gay and bondage subculture where the passive partner is a “bottom” and the active partner is the “top”; this work sees both partners like Whitman’s “perfect equal” and only one will be the top in the end. *Race to the Top* turns a sexual encounter into Eakins’ *The Wrestlers*. Nahum references the Christ in *Nahum Zenil With Thornes* in a similar way as the Serrano used the Crucifix or the way I use On a Stake.

These references of religious homoerotic art are reaffirmations to my own works of art, religious homoerotic work. The feminized machistas of Julio Galan dominating the masculinity that oppressed his femininity is like my work taking the masculinity and preserving it in sculpture. His *Capital Amour* is a depiction of the Christs with vast amounts of blood to cleanse his unnatural sin. Similar to my upbringing of Mexican religious doctrine, no amount of Jesus blood could wash away my unnatural sin. This work was part of his Resurrection retrospective exhibition where in which his demons were recreated and resurrected. A strong statement when speaking of a representation of Christ, a just one when the Christ was synonymous with the everlasting lake of fire for sin created by God.

Closing with the last homoerotic religious artwork is the eroticized paintings of Javier de La Garza’s *Soñando en La Venida* depicting a well-built model with the cactus in the

background and in the sky, the faint makings of a Spaniard ship. The title is reminiscent to what Christians are also waiting for “la venida” or the coming. The Aztecs were expecting the arrival of their God but instead the Spaniards arrive; a lesson into a blind faith that we ourselves are also waiting for the coming of Christ but we don’t know who will actually show up. The work in the exhibition deals with religious homoerotic art with hints of Jesus and apostles replaced by men ready for pleasure and pain and the ecstasy derived from sexual and religious pleasure.

CHAPTER IV

EXHIBITION

The LOVE SEX GOD exhibition was held at the School of Visual Art Gallery, in it is the intimidating space that became large as I stepped in it and realized it had to be full. Fortunately for sculpture, they [the sculptures] need breathing room to be appreciated properly from a distance. Distance became my friend as the more evenly spaced out the pieces became, the more full the gallery felt. In my opinion and that of everyone else who gave it to me, the display arrangement was professional, stunning, and beautiful. I felt my placement of the lighting was just perfect and the evenly spacing of the works made the gallery feel full, a total of twenty-three sculptures were created for the exhibition. The complete series of this exhibition is comprised of thirty-five total pieces, twelve of which did not enter the show.

The gallery space is rectangle shaped and sixteen feet high; knowing that the works of art would be nude males suspended from their own bondage ropes, the initial thought was to hang the works from the ceiling itself. After realizing that the ceiling was a suspended ceiling, and to hang the art pieces from the ceiling really meant from the beams of the roof, I was faced with the choice of getting through the false ceiling or coming up with a different display solution. Other pieces that were not suspended in bondage were displayed on the wall or on pedestals; none of the pedestal pieces had bases to sit on other than the pedestals itself. Four of the pedestal pieces did not have a definite up or down; these pieces can be displayed by setting them on various sides of the sculpture and are able to fit in the hand or at least be held by one hand only.

The artwork that did not make it into the exhibit are 12 sculptures of 13 male nudes in bondage. The exhibit has been intended to be produced in phases, phase one is everything in LOVE SEX GOD, phase two is only mentioned here because it is mostly completed and is the growth in the exploration of the topic of homoerotic religious art to describe homosexual experiences. Phase two delves deeper into the exploration of the use of saint, apostle, and the Christ imagery exclusively whereas phase one explored both material and subject matter.

Beginning with the first piece produced for LOVE SEX GOD, the four sculptures which I call “the studies” is composed of *Diamond*, *Sailor*, *Cross*, and *Slipknot*. These four pieces are the start of the exploration of bondage, homoerotic art, and bronze; as the study and development of the work grew, God became a strong focus in the work that in the end became a central focus of my art. The “studies” began as an exploration of the subject of bondage as a way of restraint and subjugation. The initial study of subjugation was to express my discontent with the way the Mexican macho treats the Mexican female; the inspiration was my own mother and her experience as a woman and a Macho world. The disadvantages of being a woman surrounded by men who though their masculinity granted them the right to education, property, and rights themselves. The remorse I felt from being part of that masculine gender group and the anger I felt for them on her behalf slowly evolved to be on my own behalf.

Being abandoned by my own father seems to have turned me into the plague; the son of a single mother that’s surrounded by men who believed women were only good for breeding and cooking in the kitchen, that believed that an education for women should be only enough to count how many eggs or tortillas a man wants. This form of thought made me not only an outcast within my own family but placed me on equal footing to my own mother’s gender and social status. This is when my feelings towards man on her behalf started also coming on my behalf.

Having the men of my family tell their sons and daughters to not play with me, their cousin, because I did not have a father alienated me on all levels within my own clan.

This subjugation was the inspiration of the four studies. These four pieces were created by studying varying knots and eventually settling on the four of which they are named after. The diamond knot was chosen for its connotation to the diamond ring, not only is it a beautiful gift but it is also a bondage to a man through marriage. A bondage that is liked, enjoyed, and willingly signed up for. The sailor knot was selected for its connotation to the notion that sailors are homosexuals particularly in the navy and all its innuendoes and references that go back to Whitman's poems of a sailor kissing another sailor on the lips goodbye. The slip knot was selected for its use as a penis ring in gay subculture; finally, the cross knot was chosen for its obvious reference to the Cross and the bondage that infers to the Church. The *Studies* were given a dark patina and mounted on yellow pine blocks, yellow to reference the neutrality of gender.

As you entered the exhibition not only did you immediately see the *Studies* but also saw *Double Trouble* which speaks of a homosexual relationship where both men (penises) are equal. *Double Trouble* is not Shibari in style nor is it a specific type of knot, this is only the play of the material to accomplish the illusion of the phallus. The rope around it represents its own bondage to itself, as in not being

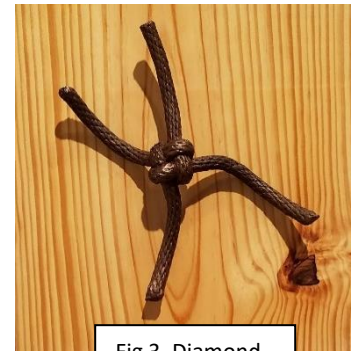


Fig 3. Diamond

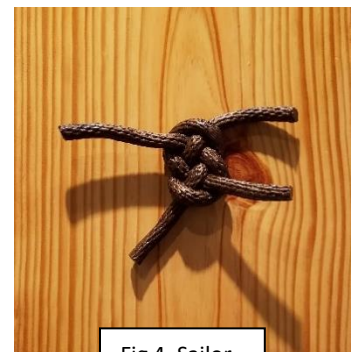


Fig 4. Sailor

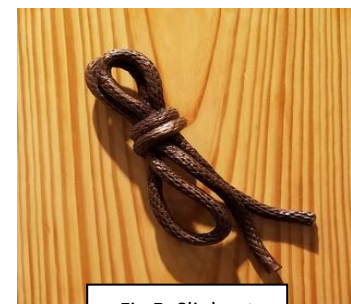


Fig 5. Slipknot



Fig 6. Cross

able to change my gender, not that I would want to, but growing to embrace it with another who has also embraced it as well. *Double Trouble* and the *Studies* are within another family of sculptures I refer to as the “real ropes”. The real rope sculptures are made originally from a real rope; the material (rope) is explored until a satisfactory form is conceived and then cast into bronze. They are not sculpted from clay they are formed out of rope and then the rope is cast making for a beautiful realistic texture. The same technique can be used to cast from still life to make a sculptural still life.

The real ropes include *Pig*, *Tripple Dipper*, and *Bulge* along, of course,



Fig 7. Pig

with *Double Trouble* and the *studies*. *Bulge* refers to the often reference to the engorging groin region, *Triple Dipper* speaks on the multiplicity of God being the son, the father and the spirit all at the same time. It is confusing to think of someone as the father and the son at the same time unless we are on a Jerry Springer Show or through some sort of cloning technology. Finally, *Pig* has two meanings, visually it may look like a pigs penis; secondly, a pig in the gay subculture is a gay man who likes it dirty and messy both interpretations of the work are correct. The real rope sculptures were a continuation of the original studies in an attempt to stay away from figurative work for its rawness that I originally thought the final pieces would end up looking like.



Fig 8. Triple Dipper



Fig 9. Bulge



Fig 10. Double Trouble

Once the buildup of the repulsion of the masculinity and machismo had begun, I didn't know it at the time, but the same characteristics of masculinity and machismo that I was against were the same characteristics that attracted me to them. The power of the male to take control

and decide effectively, the physical strength which he represented, the machismo expressed in the subjugation were things that I found desirable. Desirable in two-way, I wanted to express them against another man and to dominate him as a form of revenge but also I wanted that same domination towards me. Subjugation is an interesting concept, to accept it means giving up something of yourself but it also means that oppressor takes on the responsibility. In a relationship, male and female for example, one will be more dominant and the other more docile. In general, the female is the more docile individual who gives up her independence in some regard to “serve” her husband but her husband takes on the responsibility of a provider. In an old world, she wouldn’t work, the husband would be the sole breadwinner. In a modern world, she also works but the man is still primarily the one that must ensure continual income and when economics fail, he is still the one looked at for protection and leadership in his patriarchal role. That romantic view of being taken care of, of being protected, supported, and someone to look to for direction became a want and desire; a desire to possess it and a want of being imposed on me. The masculinity and its associations, muscularity, muskiness, strength, virility, manliness, and vigor aside from the physical aspects of the male associated with masculinity. I began to desire the strokes of facial hair against my cheek and neck, the sensation of strong arms around me, the tactility of body hair in my hands, and the curiosity for the male phallus began.

Figurative pieces didn’t come into play until my exploration of Tom of Finland and discovering the straight forward approach of Tom. His directness made me feel I shouldn’t have to extremely codify my work and that I needed to put my message in front of people. The codification present is easy, I think, to figure out. Moving forward into the exhibition, after seeing the *Studies* and the *Real Rope Sculptures* you would be able to see *Literal Ropes*, a group of sculptures made out of literally real ropes unlike the “real rope” pieces, these really were

made out of natural rope, not cast. Eight pieces made up this group, five of which were made from manila rope and the other three were made from synthetic rope. *Race to the Top* as mentioned before, plays on the imagery of sperm, it references the concept of the soul, and it explores the power play in homosexuality of the bottom or the top.

The sculpture forms made from the manila rope are *Aceldama 1*, *Aceldama 2*, *After the Fact*, *Low Hangers*, and *The Long Run*. Both of the *Aceldama* sculpture are made of seemingly jumbled rope, it is a mess of a knot and entanglement of everything that eats away at me. To follow god, to follow Christianity or native religion, to stay an agnostic or accept

atheism as a way of life. To follow social culture or live a life only once and make a stance on sexuality. Not only is it a jumbled compilation of frustrations, it is also a representation of the place that Judas purchased with the money for which he betrayed Jesus and committed suicide according to the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible where he fell from a high place head first and broke in half splitting his intestines. Picturing the jumbled intestines as *Aceldama 1* and *Aceldama 2* as spilled out intestines. *Low Hangers* by far is a personal favorite of mine of the manila rope sculpture forms as it is, in my opinion, a result of many hours of manipulation and

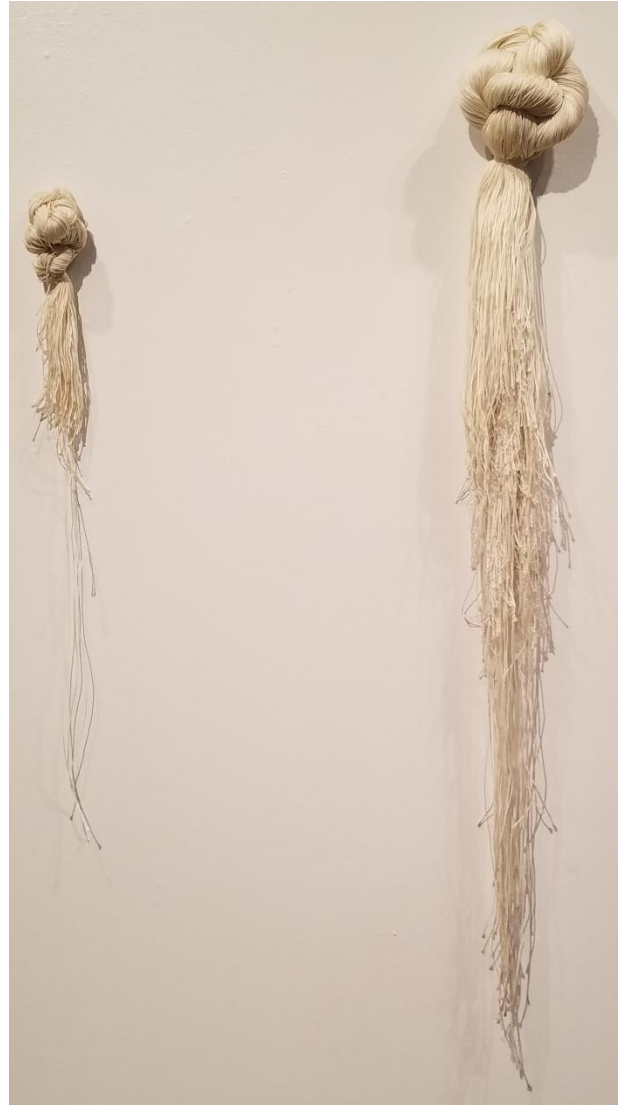


Fig 11. Race to the Top

days of sketching a representation of male virility. *Low Hangers* hangs from its loop at the top representing the glans and stretching down the urethral delivery system down to the testicular objects tied in the form of a noose on itself for both objects. They feel heavy, they feel rough, they feel strong and with a dramatic light upon them that gives it a holy glow to it. The last two, both phallic representations, *The Long Run* and *After the Fact*. *After the Fact* is taken from a strictly sexual and religious point of view; it is a limp penis in shape informed by then guilt associated “after the fact” because God was watching EVERYTHING. What is not seen in the sculpture shape is seen in its shadow, a limp penis with scrotum at one end as a drip of discharge comes out of the other end. *After the fact* is meant to represent their first masturbation, their first sexual encounter, their first affair, or their first impure thought all while believing that the all mighty and watching in judgment and disapproval. For me, this comes not just from my first anything but from my every time everything. The work is aimed at reflecting the celebration of sexuality but at showcasing the shame associated with modern day religion.



Fig 12. After the Fact

The final piece as you stroll the walls of the gallery is *The Long Run* as it is the first sculpture form created in manila rope in the beginning stages with the *Studies*. It refers to the journey from beginning to an exhibition where not only were friends and mentors lost but also family lost to the will of God. *The Long Run* also embodies the bumps that lead to the questioning of the existence of God through the loss of life. This sculpture form is also the larger version of *Oh How Fun*, the last of the synthetic rope pieces; this piece is yellow in color again referencing gender neutrality. *Oh How Fun* is a piece that has been tried and tested for satisfaction for either gender. It is a very fun piece as it is not just decorative but utilitarian as well. It is phallic shaped and ribbed through the knotting used in as *The Long Run*.



Fig 13. Oh How Fun

The Long Run is in the center of the gallery and from it all the figurative pieces expand outward. The figures are displayed in two ways, they're either sitting on a pedestal or they're suspended the way a real person would be suspended in BDSM or Shibari bondage. Keeping in mind that the work is not just supposed to Christian in reference, it is also supposed to represent a desire to punish and a desire to pleasure. Looking at it from a sexual point of view, the poses are in sexual poses that place the male in a bondage position of readiness to receive satisfaction and pleasure. From a discipline or torturous point of view, the figures are simultaneously positioned for subjugation and punishment. Their pose places them in a vulnerable position; finding oneself in the same bondage as the sculptures in a dark warehouse would be terrifying. To be bound like the sculptures are under the control and mercy of a stranger or someone you know is about to hurt you raises the adrenaline while you mind imagines all sorts of horrible

things happening to you. It is not true that I wish to cause this sort of infliction on someone, it is a physical representation of the feeling of impotence at not being able to do it to misogynistic and bigot men. At the same time that I am punishing the male in my mind, or in reality distancing and



Fig 14. No Choice Volunteer

disassociating myself from such men, I'm also imagining the much pleasure that can be given to him. His maleness and masculinity, his ability to rule and demand, the framework of his facial bones that define masculinity and the strength in his voice surrender me to his command. To tie him, render him unable to stop the pleasure gifted to him, a gift for being masculine, a gift I don't want to willingly gift but cannot resist.

The idea, I think, comes across as torturous; some may be able to interpret the juxtaposition of the religious iconography. Some sculptures are a bit more challenging to digest but the title helps in leading the viewer into what it is all about. The first figure from the entrance of the gallery is *No Choice Volunteer*. His hands are tied at the wrists and so are the ankles....there is nothing preventing him from lowering his legs; he is willingly exposing his anus or will lower his legs and willingly expose his penis. He will either see it as punishment or pleasure and will without a choice willingly give one up to protect the other. He lays flat on his back as a reference to the misogynistic comments of women advancement in the workforce.

The piece that follows is *Just a Body*, named for the experience of not needing love but just a body, of not being loved but being just a body, of the only thing that mattered being anonymity...no face and no name. The underground subculture demands complete discretion,

doctors, lawyers, grade school teachers, firemen, police, and yes...even religious leaders. The underground world doesn't want to know who you are or what you look like. One doesn't want the underground world to know your own name, your face, or who you are. In the underworld, letting everyone know who you are can cost your career, can destroy families, and have drastic effects. This is the

inspiration for *Just a Body*.

The piece does not have a head; it literally is just a body. The pose of the form is and inspiration taken from the *Creation of*

Adam, the first man.



Fig 15. Just a Body

Just a Body was located behind *No Choice Volunteer*, you need to go past *Oh How Fun*. Further back and across is *Mars* who is not named for the Roman God, it is named after a man's username. The figures in the exhibition are all made in the image of men whom I've enjoyed coitus with. The purpose of *Mars* is to be a sexual symbol only. Near *Mars* is *Simon*. St Simon, according to what I was taught was an apostle that was crucified upside down/split in half with a saw. *Simon* is hung upside down from one leg while another one is split to the side; It is not cut in half but rather it is as if its own weight is making it fall to the side. His hands are tied behind him and is blindfolded. This one is representative of St. Simon, it is representative of the wish to



Fig 16. Simon

punish the male, and it is representative of wanting to please the male. With his hands tied behind him with his legs not being able to do anything, his penis becomes available for pleasuring as much as his anus. His facial expression is calm; it's at the moment of readiness for satisfaction, it's at the moment of resignation when he realizes there is no choice but pain coming. Models were used to sculpt from life; some figurative sculpture was sculpted from memory.

The Descend is my interpretation of the second coming of Christ, of his descend back to earth. It is a depiction of a painful and tiring pose, as explained by a model, but could not be achieved through collaging pictures. He is tied at the arms to a cross beam to reflect his crucifixion; it is also a reference to the Ramus and Romulus sculpture, of the suckling on the tit of the wolf in contrast to the availability to suckle on *The Descends* Penis. It speaks on the male and God idea of their suffering equaling to their service and satisfaction, of stopping everything to tend to him.



Fig 17. The Descend

The final piece is Bound Gods which is inspired by an underground movement where men, and women, can attend and fulfill the wildest BDSM fantasies. Where if the fantasy is to be sodomized in a public space by complete strangers, for a certain price, this can become a reality. The setting is arranged, the client participates willingly and everything is acted out to the extreme; slapping, public humiliation...whatever the client hinted at is on the table. Bound Gods in this scenario are Greek-God-Sculpted real men that perform these fantasies for the clientele that can afford it. My Bound Gods are my interpretation of male beauty, masculinity, and desires.

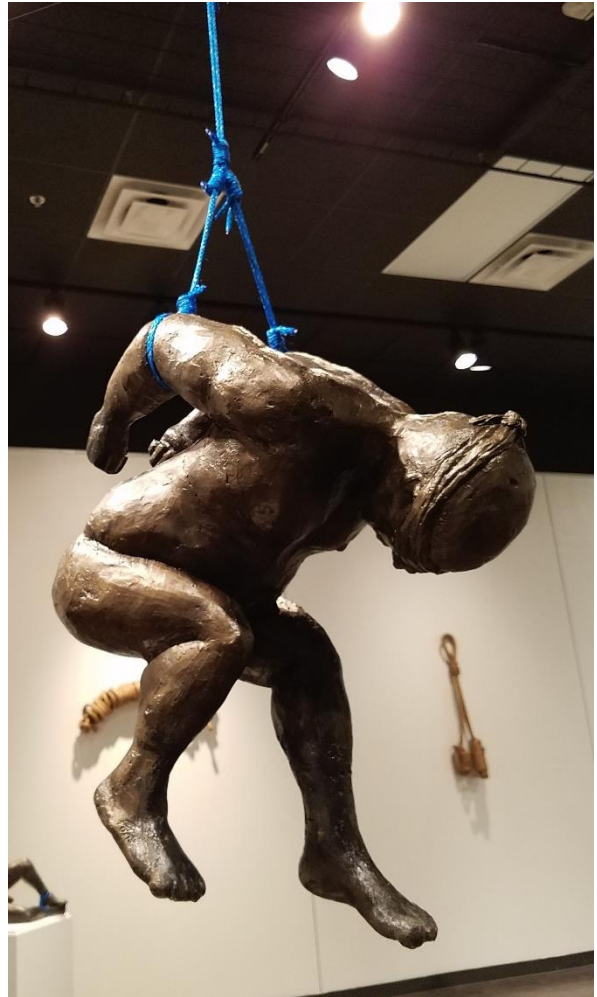


Fig 18. Bound Gods

CHAPTER V

REFLECTION

It has been quite a journey experiencing the graduate program; there have been challenges and there have been successes. The hardest challenges came from the loss of my mother, the woman who inspired me to begin this journey, not only the educational journey but this specific artistic journey. The most important thing learned has not come from academics, class, subject or book; the most important thing is learning I can do anything. This is the central idea pushed by my instructors and colleagues, this is the fraternal spirit at the college of arts. The constant repetition that just because you haven't done it before, does not mean you cannot do it. This constant phrase places a lot of faith in you from a lot of people, a feeling shared by my colleagues.

My way of expressing myself has been challenged by my committee several times in ways that have only made me grow as an artist and individual. The journey has not only been in time but in growth. The means of expression, the mediums available have dramatically influenced me. I used to think I would be an artist and by default a painter that made unique one of a kind piece of art until I was introduced to printmaking. Then I thought I would be a printmaking artist making one piece of art that could be originally replicated and sold and resold several times over versus the one time as a painter. Finally, I was introduced to bronze sculpture which blew my mind away. It allowed me to change my view of sculpture as just statues but as a

means to express yourself in a way I could not with paint or the printing press. If this program didn't have a sculpture program I would not have been expressing myself in sculpture, nor would I have decided to continue the program. Bronze has its own masochist attraction to me; all of its hard work, the extreme heat, the danger, and the fatigue it can cause were all attractive to me because of the beautiful results I could get.

Through the program, I engaged in a private enterprise that allowed me to work on some amazing pieces some being small sculptures, others life size and some being larger than life. The largest of the large pieces worked on were over fifteen feet tall. That experience was more than what the program offers but were possibilities because of the program that currently exists. Another group of sculpture pieces I had experience in was a group that was part of an international exhibit, to have my name on those local and statewide pieces and the international pieces are significantly more than I expected. Although my experience is very extensive due to the private enterprise relationships created during the program, the vast field of knowledge still has some areas to explore. My focus in art was focused even more into sculpture, and within this field, it is more focused into bronze sculpture; not only sculpture but foundry studies as well. Both fields combined have turned me into a highly specialized artist, and even at that, there is still room to grow. The world of bronze patinas is large, with my experience I can produce several tonalities on the surface of the metal; there are chemicals and techniques still not tested and still not tried. My continued growth is in patinas, a field related more with chemistry than art, a field that blends science and art.

Moving forward, a new business is on the horizon of an unknown location. Having lost family, and roots not yet grown, a new venture can go where ever the strongest wind blows. Professionally, I'm an arts administrator; by trade, I'm a handcrafter. I create and produce with

my hands, I envision and continue the growth of arts professionally with my mind. An office job is great but my artistic inner side urges for a welding torch and a furnace. It would be a shame to be highly specialized in a field where my skills are not used. I intend to create a business, a cultural center of sorts on a smaller scale and let it grow. In my profession as an arts administrator, the skill I take with me from the program is the idea of being able to do anything. The program allowed me to see the problem and allowed me to explore all the several ways I could solve it or walk me through a way I had never gone through to solve it. Professionally, there is no door I cannot open; this is the frame of thought I got out of the program.

I don't plan to teach academically anytime soon. My career may take it in directions I never anticipated and allow me to create programs and initiatives that can make a difference in my region, artistically. Initiatives I can accomplish while still young, I would like to teach in the academic field after retirement, once I've accumulated much more experience of the real art world, an art world in which I will make a difference in. In the next three to five years I expect to be making strides in the growth of our artistic and cultural community, in ten years I expect to be reaping the fruits of a hard labor, and in twenty I hope to have accomplished everything I've set out to do.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Magdiel Gonzalez Alfonso entered the University of Texas Pan-American in 2005 and went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2011. In 2012 he came back to academia to begin his Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and graduated in 2016. He has participated in various art exhibitions and has several collaborative public works of art in the Rio Grande Valley, a few of which are in various parts of Texas and Belgium.

His focus for the Bachelor of Fine Arts was in Printmaking while his focus in the Master's degree is in bronze sculpture. He is the Cultural Arts Manager for the City of Edinburg, home base of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley managing the Cultural and Artistic events & activities for the City of Edinburg.

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