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## A Study of Wicca and Art

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A Study of Wicca and Art

By

Shannon Hillyer

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of **Master of Arts in**  
**Studio Art**

At

Lindenwood University

May 2023, Shannon Elizabeth Hillyer

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Author's: Shannon Hillyer

Author's Signature: Shannon Hillyer Date: 4/20/2023

Committee Chair Kelly Scheffer

Committee Chair Signature:  Date: 4/24/2023

Committee Member Erica Blum

Committee Member Signature: Erica Blum Date: 4/24/23

Committee Member Melissa Elmes

Committee Member Signature:  Date: 4/24/2023

## **Abstract**

### A Study of Wicca and Art

Shannon Hillyer, Master of Studio Art, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Kelly Scheffer, M.A.

#### **Abstract**

Art can be interpreted from a religious perspective given knowledge of the artist's present or past religious affiliations. The photo series presented in this paper was part of a survey that asked participants to consider their own religious backgrounds and to determine the inspiration for the photo series. This project utilized introspection, autoethnographic research, and formalist analysis to determine if viewers could pinpoint the artist's religious affiliation based on the themes present in the photo series. Most participants identified mythological themes were present in the series but didn't connect those to Wicca unanimously. Art can be interpreted from a religious perspective, but it is not the only methodology to be considerate of.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgements _____	2
List of Figures _____	4
Background and Introduction _____	5
Literature Review _____	10
Research Methodology _____	13
Production and Analysis _____	16
Conclusions _____	23
List of Works in MFA Exhibition _____	24
References _____	28

## Background and Introduction

Art can be interpreted from a religious perspective based on the artist's religious affiliation. However, determining how and why an artist creates is no easy feat. Peering into someone's life and looking for correlations between their upbringing, style, personality, subject matter, and class can help determine some trends and generalities, but there is often a determining factor that has sway over any artist and that is their religious background. Religion does not just shape communities, it shapes people. Religious upbringing changes the way people perceive their world. Religion has the power to develop morals and values and in turn create laws and rules that society abides by. "If art is inseparable from culture, and culture is inseparable from religion, then it seems likely that art is also linked to religion."<sup>1</sup> So, it would stand to reason that something as influential as religion could cause artists to create artwork with ties to their religious beliefs. So, why is art created any one way? By using religion as a lens to interpret artwork through, there are answers to be found in my own artwork.

Art, like religion, began when civilization began. "It emerged in ancient times from myth, magic, and religion, and it has long sustained its compelling power and cultural image as an essentially sanctified domain of higher spiritual values, beyond the realm of material life and praxis."<sup>2</sup> Historically, art emerged to document life, tell stories, and reflect the culture it was a part of. "Art is an emergent product of culture that cannot be meaningfully separated from it in the full-blown concrete sense of culture including superstitions, sillies, prejudices, evils, and all then one could make the following argument for art being essentially inseparable from religion."<sup>3</sup> Religion and art can work together to create a visual for the unknown, the unseen

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Shusterman, "Art and Religion," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no. 3 (2008): 1-18, accessed September 6, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25160287>.

<sup>2</sup> Shusterman, "Art and Religion," 1.

<sup>3</sup> Shusterman, 7.

portions of religion. “Artists create symbols that represent a level of human experience that cannot be reached any other way. There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot, but there are others who can transform a yellow spot into the sun.”<sup>4</sup> Individual intentions and perceptions are what make one art piece carry a different meaning from person to person. Art has been used to represent the defining question: what is life? Religion and spirituality, which represent the same thing, seek to answer that question by giving purpose in life and then in death.<sup>5</sup> Art has been able to produce visualization for those imaginative figureheads and stories of creation, life, and death. Art in that way has given religion the ability to create a unified following where religious iconography and stories can conform more and more people.

In this project, I focus on my religious background and present spiritual affiliation, to determine if viewers can recognize the religious influence in my artwork. At a young age, Methodist Christianity was a comfort and captivating, with its magical stories of Moses, Jonah, and Jesus, but as time progressed and child-like imagination gave way to the real world, it became less a comfort. When my sister became pregnant out of wedlock and my best friend came out to her as homosexual, everything I believed became foreign. My beliefs at the time meant that two of my most beloved companions were going to Hell and I noticed the change in my church congregation’s attitude toward these individuals. As my political views changed and values and morals shifted, I stopped attending the Christian church for spiritual fulfillment. Once at college, I entered the art program where it was rare to find conservative ideas. In life drawing

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<sup>4</sup> Frances R. Westley, and Carl Folke, “Iconic Images, Symbols, and Archetypes: Their Function in Art and Science,” *Ecology and Society* 23, no. 4 (2018), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26796894>.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen R. Warner, "In Defense of Religion: The 2013 H. Paul Douglass Lecture," *Review of Religious Research* 56, no. 4 (2014): 495-512, accessed September 6, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43186285>.

there were nude models, something I was not accustomed to, and I explored themes of sexuality in my work, much to the dismay of my family who chastised me, wondering if Jesus would be okay with me seeing naked people. I knew I wasn't Christian any longer but wanted to find a new spiritual practice so as to feel a connection with something of higher power. I began researching nature-based Pagan practices and settled into Wicca. Christianity places a lot of value in sex and the human body, in that the body represents sacredness and chastity, especially for women. Wicca, on the other hand, reveres the human body and sex. It is an open practice that worships the human body, especially a woman's, and all that it is capable of. The Wiccan goddess is represented one of three ways: the maiden, the mother, and the crone. Wiccans revere pregnancy and women as the givers of life and are not ashamed of the physical act of sex that creates life. Wicca's celebratory approach to the female form and Christianity's attempts to hide it are at odds with each other.

Wicca is a modern Pagan practice that is nature-based and very secretive. Paganism itself is connected to ancient, pre-Abrahamic religions and is often misconstrued as witchcraft or Satanism. Wicca can be a solo practice but also a congregation of sorts, normally called a coven. This tight knit community is one of the fastest growing alternative spiritual practices in the world, but why? Internet accessibility and ever-growing feminism and liberal ideals are a part of this expansion, as is individualism. Wiccan practices are rarely the same for any two people and focus on personal goals and spiritual aspirations.<sup>6</sup>

When creating artwork, I wondered if my previous conservative Christian ideals were holding me back. Did Christianity influence some of my artistic decisions? This project will use

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<sup>6</sup> Gary F Jensen, and Ashley Thompson, "'Out of the Broom Closet': The Social Ecology of American Wicca," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 4 (2008): 753-66, accessed August 31, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20486967>.



autoethnographic research, the use of personal experiences by the researcher, to systematically analyze my personal experiences with religion to better understand my artwork and artistic decision-making process.<sup>7</sup> To do this, I created a photo series with Wiccan themes and asked viewers to analyze my artwork for religious or other influences.

### **Wiccan Influence**

Wicca is a female-focused practice, and the female deity takes precedence. The triple goddess, as she is best known, is associated with nature goddesses such as Demeter and Persephone. She represents the three phases of womanhood being the maiden, the mother, and the crone. She is a life cycle goddess. Although female-centered, there is a masculine representation in the practice as well, normally identified as the horned god. Unfortunately, the horns are often mistaken for Christianity's archangel Lucifer and Satanism, which is where many common misconceptions begin. The horned god is associated with Greek nature god Pan and sometimes Zeus. These two entities form the balance of feminine and masculine power in the universe for Wiccans. Because of these ties to Greek mythology, the photo series will use traditional Greek sculpture as a reference to evoke the ties between the two.

Wiccan practices are rarely the same for any two people and focus on personal goals and spiritual aspirations.<sup>8</sup> Some commonalities however include ties to nature and the five elements: air, earth, water, fire, and spirit. The practice, although personalized, is focused on rituals and evoking a sense of worship and individualization. These rituals are often full of dance-like movements. Because of this, I will use sculptural poses that will be full of movement to evoke

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<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 36, no. 4 (138) (2011): 273–90, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23032294>.

<sup>8</sup> Jensen and Thompson, "Out of the Broom Closet," 754.

dance. The photos and poses themselves need to feel in tune with the spiritual practice.

Ultimately, I am aiming to create a Pagan/Wiccan photo series, but should my argument stand on religious influences in artwork, others should be able to identify Christian themes or symbolism in my photo series.

. What this project seeks to understand is the influence religion has over art and artists, by conducting a survey over a photos series that was created with Wicca as the main influence. Will the viewers see Pagan practices and Wicca as the main sources of influence, or will another religion or influence shine through? This project was designed to discover just how much power religion holds over my personal art using the ideas of referential art and syncretism. Ultimately, I wanted to know if viewers could uncover religious themes in my artwork and if my chosen religious affiliation is reflected in the work. To remain as unbiased as possible, I am relying on outside interpretation to understand how my artwork is perceived.

## Literature Review

This project considered art and its relevancy to the spiritual practice of Wicca. With that in mind, it is important to identify the main characteristics of Wiccan religion. Anne Ross, the author of *Chain Symbolism in Pagan Celtic Religion*, discusses the foundation of the Wiccan spiritual practice. Wiccans are typically polytheistic with focus being on the three faced goddess, who correlates to the natural life cycle. This practice is closely affiliated with ancient Greece in that their two deities, a male and female figure, are closely associated with several Greek Gods and Goddesses including Demeter, Persephone, Hecate, Pan, and Zeus.<sup>9</sup> In addition, there is a connection to that natural cycle and its ties to nature as well as the importance of the natural elements that make up our world: earth, fire, air, water, and spirit. When thinking about this practice in terms of society and political religious expectations, it is important to consider some of their values and how those values could be presented in the form of art. In *Out of the Broom Closet*, Gary F Jensen and Ashley Thompson discuss those values. Wiccans are typically feminist, environmentally conscious, and against violent culture tendencies involving guns and hunting violence.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Shusterman's research looks at art and its connections to the culture it is derived from and the religious environment. Shusterman argues that art emerged in ancient times from myth, magic, and religion. Art sustains its cultural image as an essentially sanctified domain of high spiritual values. Because art isn't restrictive and is inherently very expressive, it is productive toward representing wisdom and spiritual meaning.<sup>11</sup> Where art succeeds the most is its ability to evoke feeling. Art gives not only the creator but the viewer a chance to experience

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Ross, "Chain Symbolism in Pagan Celtic Religion," *Speculum* 34, no. 1 (1959): 40, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2847977>.

<sup>10</sup> Jensen and Thompson, 755.

<sup>11</sup> Shusterman, 5.

reality in a non-photo representational way. When art first emerged, there were paintings on cave walls, showing the stories of everyday life, but also of practices, and representations that sought to give meaning to the unknown. In ancient Egypt, there are murals that depict the journey of the afterlife as the people imagined death to occur. Art allows us to depict the unknown and bring to life the undisclosed. At its earliest, art was meant to bring to life religion and that which people could not comprehend.

Although Wicca is not an old practice, per say, key aspects and ideas can be found in Pagan practices dating back thousands of years. The ideas of syncretism and the psychological studies of Carl Jung are to be considered as well. Syncretism attempts to make religion an amalgamation, meaning they are all a single unit that derive from each other.<sup>12</sup> Jacob Pandian, in “Syncretism in Religion,” addresses why religious traditions, that are borrowed from others, are rarely identified.

From an anthropological perspective, all cultural realities, including religion, are products of multiple combinations, and most anthropologists would agree that we distort the scholarly understanding of phenomena if we confuse scholarly models of cultural reality. Believers of particular religious traditions may use typologies and taxonomies to justify or extol their interpretations and may seek to protect their traditions against what they perceive and believe to be dangerous blending of their pure doctrinal belief.<sup>13</sup>

Because many religions seek to be independent of each other the denial of similarities in traditions and symbolism causes isolation and prejudices. Psychologists such as Carl Jung would argue the importance of symbols tied to religion humans are exposed to. Symbols are a means of self-organization that lead to psychological development and individuation.<sup>14</sup> This meaning that

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<sup>12</sup> Jacob Pandian, “Syncretism in Religion,” *Anthropos* 101, no. 1 (2006): 2, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40466631>.

<sup>13</sup> Pandian, “Syncretism in Religion,” 2.

<sup>14</sup> Westley, and Carl Folke, “Iconic Images, Symbols, and Archetypes: Their Function in Art and Science,” 4.

the symbol exposure in religion is imbedded into the unconscious mind. Without the understanding of from where the symbols derive, practitioners miss an opportunity to see the interconnectedness of religious practices that provides an outlet for acceptance.

At the root of civilization, there is art and there is religion. Both are intertwined in a never-ending cycle of representation and communication of the societal values, morals, politics, and culture of civilization. When looking at the past and how the role of art and religion are intertwined, we can see those same tendencies in art today. Religion is a seemingly inescapable aspect of everyday life whether we believe in something or nothing at all. Culture is shaped by religion and in turn shapes its people. It only makes sense that an artist shaped by the religion they practice could consciously or unconsciously include religious themes in their work. In that way, art and religion are linked.

## **Methodology**

This project seeks to understand the relationship between an artist's decision-making process and their religious affiliation by relying on how the viewer perceives the work the artist created. For the purposes of this project, it will be the decisions I made in the photo series and my previous practice as a Christian and current practice as a Wiccan. Wicca is the religious focus of this project, and with Wicca comes a plethora of emotional, psychological, and intentional research. One must understand the basics of this religious practice before artwork should be analyzed and created with that religious theme in mind. Aspects to be considerate of with the Wiccan spiritual practice is the individuality and history that comes with it. Even though Wicca is personally interpreted there are still some core beliefs that separate it from other practices. Without understanding what makes it stand apart historically and technically, the project would have unintentionally went in another direction.

There is most prominently the focus on syncretism and how it applies to the project as a whole. There are historical connections between religions and how they have evolved over time. Bits and pieces that are derivatives of ones that came before and after. Christianity adopting pagan holiday traditions is an example of the melting pot of religions. One is not singularly its own, they are reflections of each other. For the purposes of this project the connection between Wicca and Christianity is on display. It was up to the viewers which, if either, was the dominant subject. I also considered the limitations of the participants because of their religious backgrounds and how it altered their perceptions of the photo series. The average person does not understand the complexities of a singular religion much less other affiliations. Syncretism would argue that identifying any one religion could, by default, mean identifying several other

religions but the viewers most likely are not aware that that is occurring. Because of this viewer's knowledge of religions and religious history is a limitation in the results.

In addition to syncretism and qualitative research, this project considers iconography which involves visual imagery and symbols. Wicca contains much iconography including ties to ancient Greek culture and the five elements: air, fire, earth, water, and spirit. To be the most considerate of this religion, this project aims to pinpoint precise intentions in every detail and how it could be perceived by non-Pagans and Pagans alike. Will iconography such as horns, dark, colors, natural elements, and draped clothing be perceived as tied to Wicca or will non-Wiccans perceive ties to Satanism? The technicalities in a project like this is that not every observer will have the deep understanding of Wicca that this project is aiming to cultivate. Perceptions will be skewed based on the observer's own knowledge of spiritual practice which is an interesting part of this whole process. This project aims to showcase an artist's religious affiliation, but the observer has the power to completely alter the meaning and perception given their own personal background and feelings on Pagan practices.

The research and documentation that led up to this project are rooted in symbolism and iconography and how they can be tied to religion. I have carefully considered the elements and principles of design as well, elements being: shape, color, space, form, line, value, and texture, principles being: contrast, balance, hierarchy, proportion, repetition, unity, etc. How can a color tie to a religious affiliation? What can texture and subject say about a piece and its ties to an artist's intentions or meaning? Using myself as a test subject this project is Wiccan focused but given my research on religious influence and artists, there is the potential for there to be Christian themes. I will be relying on my viewers to determine what influence shines through the most in the photo series. The questions in the survey are meant to introduce religion as a topic in

the photo series but not sway them. The first three questions ask the viewers to identify the religion they were raised with, if they still affiliate with that religion, and then what religion they believe I affiliate with. After seeing the photo series, the viewers are asked questions about the series. What do they see an inspiration? If they had to associate a religious practice with the series, what would they pick? Do they see the photo series as religious in nature? Those three specifically helped me draw conclusions about what the inspiration was in the photo series and what religions, if any, could be identified.

Overall, the research leading up to this final project has been qualitative, although there have been a few quantitative aspects to be considerate of. This research stemmed from personal observation and considerations and led to cultural, historical, and theological conclusions. When art cannot be separated from culture nor from religion, then there are technical and symbolic ties that can be concluded between the two. Quantitative research came later in the process of this project wherein it needed to be determined monetarily and materialistically how this project could unfold. Research then took a new turn where quantities of materials and pricing needed to be determined. This led the research in a completely new direction and back into formalist research as the materials play a huge part in the perception of a project.



## **Production and Analysis**

For my project I wanted to have a chance to learn more about myself and my artwork. Because my research stems from understanding the relationship between an artist's religious background and their artwork, I too wanted to see if I could determine if there was a relationship between my religious history and my artwork. After researching artists like Vincent Van Gogh and his artistic connections to Christianity and Sonam Dolma's artistic connections to Tibetan Buddhism, I determined that religious iconography could be identified in artwork. To analyze artwork for specific iconography though is not simplistic. To better understand the artists and their compositions, I researched the history of their religious practices and extensively studied traditional religious art to find correlations between the artist's pieces and their religion. I grew up in a Christian household and attended church consistently until the age of 16, when I no longer identified as a Christian. I became personally affiliated with the spiritual practice Wicca at the age of 21. As I am newer to the practice, I wondered if Christian symbolism would dominate that of Wicca.

Initially I wanted to create a piece that felt more permanent and could interact with nature. Wicca's main spiritual figure is the goddess, often associated with Greek mythological goddesses including Demeter and Persephone. Because the goddess figure is tied to Greek mythology and ancient Greek religious practices, I wanted to cast an entire body mold and create a statue, in a religious pose, that could then be placed outside in nature where it could interact and pay homage to the worship of the Earth. Giving back and worshipping the Earth are key aspects of Wicca. However, due to budgeting issues, I had to pivot. I decided that with body paint I could make myself a "live statue" and capture images using photography. There were about 82 images total taken in a studio space, which I narrowed down to ten (Figure 4) and then

the final three. I ended up editing the ten chosen raw files in Photoshop, which involved removing imperfections in the setup, making sure my body had a full range of value, and establishing the tone of the shoot. The final ten images varied in composition and the use of props, which made some combinations of images disjointed and lacking flow, as demonstrated by the figure list. The final three images I chose were the most balanced and evoked the statuesque forms I had hoped to capture.

I was also grateful to have the help of photographer Traci Shadden, who allowed me to not only use her studio but also helped me through every step of the process, whether that be with confidence or getting the perfect shot. I was set up in front of a black painted wall in a small square room with a black tarp on the ground. The room had two large windows that provided a natural light source. Because Wicca is so closely aligned with nature, I requested only natural lighting for the images, which led me to choose the images with the best golden hour tones after editing. I created a mood board of poses that I wanted to recreate or that could at least serve as inspiration. The inspiration images varied from traditional Greek statue poses to worshipful stances I had learned from my practice, mostly meditative or dance-like. She had a beautiful piece of fabric on hand that we used for draping. After using the white fabric I brought for a while, I realized hers had a natural silk quality and also matched tones in my hair and in the lighting. It made the compositions feel more complete. I also created a headpiece for this photo series to pay tribute to the masculine half of Wicca. In addition to the goddess, there is the horned god, the secondary deity of the duology of Wicca. He is closely associated with the Greek god Pan, the protector of nature and animals. I decided to pay homage to him by creating branching horns and adorning them with flowers and leaves, which evokes a laurel wreath, or the feminine floral crowns often associated with nymphs and goddesses.

The final photo series, titled *Statuesque Spirituality*, seeks to capture worshipful stances that show the humanity and divinity in each follower of Wicca. The Goddess is a female figure who represents the life cycle, birth, life, and death. She is also known as the maiden, the mother, and the crone. With the photo series, I sought to develop an evolution of sorts in the images. The final three I chose flow together and tell a dynamic story. To turn myself into the living embodiment of a Greek statue, a Persephone type figure, I used white body paint. What I loved the most about the body paint is that it chipped, smeared, and rubbed off in ways I didn't expect. I felt aged and raw. The paint interacted with me and up close the imperfections humanized the piece. My own flesh peeking through aligns with the values of Wicca. Although I am not painted to goddess perfection, this humanization makes for a piece more closely connected to Wicca beliefs. We are one with the goddess and individually mold and develop our own relationship with her.

For me Wicca is a connection to nature yes, but it is also a way to meditate, find my confidence, embrace my sexuality, and find peace. The three images I chose for this final series represent these feelings for me. Posing was difficult for me, but I knew that to feel truly connected to the process I needed to be the model as Wicca is very individualistic. The photos are quite intimate as I am exposed and bare. The first image, titled *Statue 1* (Figure 1), is the most closed off. I am not looking at the camera, and this one feels the most withdrawn and alludes to the secretive nature of Wiccan practices. This image was from the beginning of the shoot, when I was also feeling the most exposed and vulnerable. There was shame in this process initially, and it led me to wonder if some of the conservative Christian ideals I was raised on about modesty and chastity were impacting me. The second image, titled *Statue 2* (Figure 2), is different. My eyes are open and I am blatantly making eye contact with the viewer, like Manet's *Olympia*.

There is a confidence in this image, a regality. I have a soft smirk. This image felt the most personal for me. It felt like a coming out image, where I am not afraid to show who I am. Finally, the last image, titled *Statue 3* (Figure 3), is the most dynamic of the three. The fluidity of movement captures the spirit of freedom and the serenity on my face, I believe, captures how I feel internally about my spiritual practice: safe and free. The process was not perfect, which gave the photo series some authenticity. It was a raw and exposing experience for me. It opened me up more to myself and really made me look inward for inspiration.

In terms of analyzing my artwork and looking for religious iconography and influence I was not able to do this on my own. As the creator, I understand my intentions and the message I was seeking to represent, but I also am the most heavily biased person to analyze my own artwork. Because of this, I created a survey to see how others perceived my artwork (Appendix 1). I needed to attempt to understand the many ways this photo series could be interpreted. I wanted the viewers to feel they could answer questions the way they saw fit so each question contained a text box. The nudity, although not any more obscene than a traditional Greek statue, created a need to only allow those eighteen years or older to participate. By using my social media to advertise the survey, I was able to reach family, friends, and colleagues, of various ages and religious backgrounds.

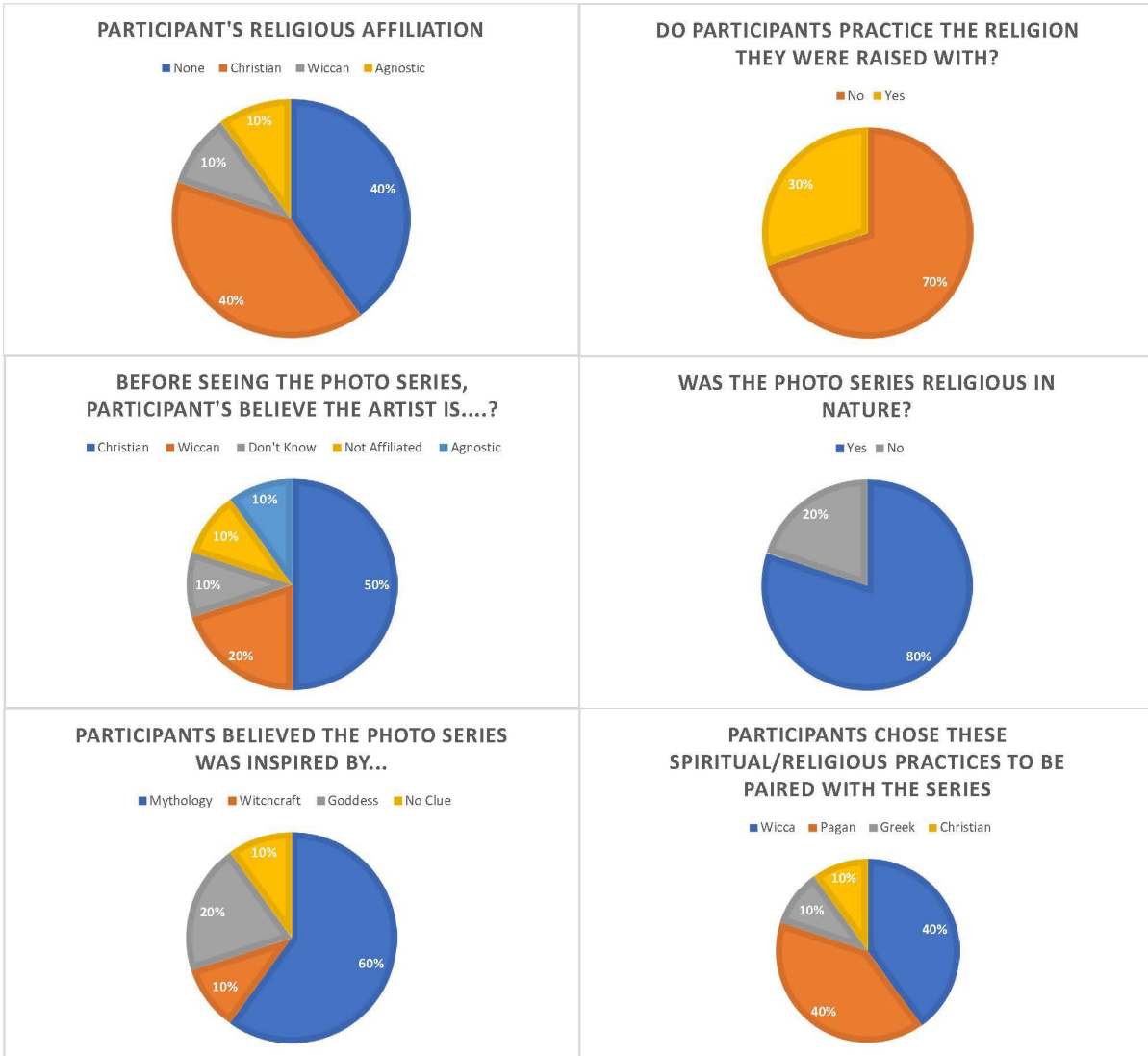
The first three questions of the series are so that I can better understand where the survey participants perceptions could be coming from. Before they see the series, I ask what religious practice they affiliate with, if it is the same practice they were raised with, and what practice they believe I am apart of. I needed to understand if there was a relationship between a person's religious background and how they might perceive art and me as a person initially. Because the survey was made available through social media my followers undoubtedly had already formed

some opinions about my religious affiliation and artwork. Because of this, they are not a completely unbiased test group. Next, I show the photo series and allow the series to be revisited after moving forward with the questions with the use of a back arrow. Finally, I ask questions that direct the viewer to perceive the photo series as religious in nature and then ask them to pair a religion to the images. Religions have a diverse array of values and morals, and the perception of the series could be easily misinterpreted by lack of knowledge of other practices or biases against other practices. The results of the survey are compiled in pie charts seen below.

With the results I was hoping my participants would see the inspiration as being clearly Wiccan. Although most participants paired those two with the photo series when asked to choose a religion as inspiration for the series, they did not see it as the main source of inspiration with the majority leaning towards the idea of mythology or a goddess as inspiration. Because Wicca is closely affiliated with Greek mythological deities such as mythological goddess such as Persephone and Demeter, I am not disappointed in this result as both served as heavy inspiration for the photo series. Most participants also saw the series as religious in nature, but then were torn between the religion being Wicca or paganism. This could be due to how much the participants know about other religions and Wicca as a whole. I was also not surprised most of my participants do not affiliate with the religion they were raised with. Organized religion has lost interest over the years with many turning to alternative practices or none at all, especially amongst the younger demographics.

My participants' assumption that I am a Christian before seeing the photo series was interesting to me. Because the survey was distributed through social media, I can assume that my survey takers already had certain perceptions of me. I tend to be reserved in announcing my affiliations with religion, but I am vocal about sex health, women's rights, and my political

stances. From my perspective my values do not traditionally align me with conservative Christian ideas and are the fundamentals to Wicca. It led me to wonder how my participants' perceptions of me changed after the survey and how their answers were affected by their previous knowledge. Overall, given the results of the survey, my series was perceived as pagan or Wiccan religiously, but that was not perceived as the main source of inspiration. Through my research of other artists, I had thought my religious background would have influence as well. Perhaps I should have been more considerate of the power in present beliefs and how they are currently shaping me as a person and an artist in this study.



Survey Results

## Conclusions

Art is a complex entity that has been around for thousands of years, since humankind developed settlements, cultures, and religions. Art and religion continue to serve as inspiration for each other to this day. This project is inspired by not only an interest in religion but the influence that religion psychologically holds over humankind. It seeks to see and understand religion as an influence in artwork and whether it can be identified or not. This project was one of introspection and relied on others to help draw results. I sought to determine if art can be interpreted from a religious perspective based on the artist's religious affiliation. The short answer is yes it can, but the answer is more complex than that.

Although the results were not entirely as expected, there are inevitably ties to an artist's religious affiliation and their artwork, including my own. I sought to determine if religious inspiration could be identified in my own artwork by others if given the chance. Overall, most of my survey takers were able to pair a religion with the photo series when prompted to. However, when asked to identify the main source of inspiration in the series, they did not identify religion as the main source but instead chose Greek mythology. Although Greek mythology has ties to Wicca in terms of symbolism, I cannot determine whether the viewers chose Greek mythology as it connects to Wicca or as a standalone. Keeping other methodologies in mind, and other's research, religion is not the singular interpretation of all artworks. Although religion can shape cultures and the environment an artist is raised in I cannot identify religion as the only subconscious or conscious factor in why an artist creates, but I would like to consider it as one of the many factors that can and do affect an artist. For the sake of the argument and this research, yes, art can be interpreted from a religious perspective based on the artist's religious affiliation but there are other methods to consider.





*Statuesque  
Spirituality*

*Statue 1*  
2023  
Digital Photography  
Print

Figure 1



*Statuesque  
Spirituality*

*Statue 2*  
2023  
Digital Photography  
Print

Figure 2



*Statuesque  
Spirituality*

*Statue 3*  
2023  
Digital Photography  
Print

Figure 3



Semi-Final Image 1



Semi-Final Image 2



Semi-Final Image 3

*Statuesque  
Spirituality*

Semi-Final Images  
2023  
Digital Photography  
Print



Semi-Final Image 4



Semi-Final Image 5



Semi-Final Image 6



Semi-Final Image 7



Semi-Final Image 8



Semi-Final Image 9



Semi-Final Image 10

Figure 4

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