



the

Framework

&

fluidity

of the mystical







Title page

I was born in a small town called Welkom, in the Free State. Our family moved around a lot, and I ended up spending most of my younger years in Kimberley. This is where my artistic journey started and began to flourish under the caring support of my parents. After the hard life of a creative in a school focused on the hyper-masculine, I made the decision to apply to Michaelis as my main and only choice. This was the beginning of an arduous, yet enlightening, experience.

During my second and third year at Michaelis, my work started forming a motif of sorts. My studies and artistic practice started to focus more around the theological and mystical worlds which I had found myself in throughout my life. Drawing from these ideas and experiences, I started exploring my own understanding and relationship with these topics. The sudden death of my grandfather sparked these thoughts as he had been a strong influence in my religious and spiritual understanding of life.


Drawing from what I've learned in my life, and my career as an artist, I will try to bring to light some of the misconceptions that might be had in regard to how our relationship with the mystical, and the experiences it might evoke, is structured and perceived around us.

My very first interaction with anything to do with the spiritual, was to be born into a very Christian household. My father played the guitar in the church band (singing from time to time), my grandfather was a pastor and the patriarch of our family and community. This pre-established relationship with the church meant that my values were put in place, and firmly attached to my beliefs. Everything seemed to have been worked out for me, and no questioning of my beliefs were necessary. The church was a sanctuary to our family, and many like us. A place where we could go to escape whatever hardships we were facing at the time. Religion provided us with community, answers, solutions and above all, a connection to something which seemed bigger than ourselves. In all fairness, it could be said that the church was a place of escape in which this search for something bigger, which would make all of this worth it, took place. It is only when I eventually started questioning these beliefs that I realised the dependency on right action. The realisation that I might not be enough if I didn't do enough. I felt, as I do now, that I do not wish to have my relationship with anything spiritual to be dictated by expectations.

The closest my research has come to acknowledging the value of “right action”, is when the book “the common experience” quotes a Hindu scripture, the “Bhagavad Gita”, in which it notes: “Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work.”- page 34 (Cohen and Phipps, 1992). This acknowledges the value of the belief structures, yet comments on its need to supply incentive for the work it asks of its followers. The human condition involves these same principles, a need for reward, a need to race towards an accomplishment, and seldomly ever giving acknowledgement to the value of the work that got them there.

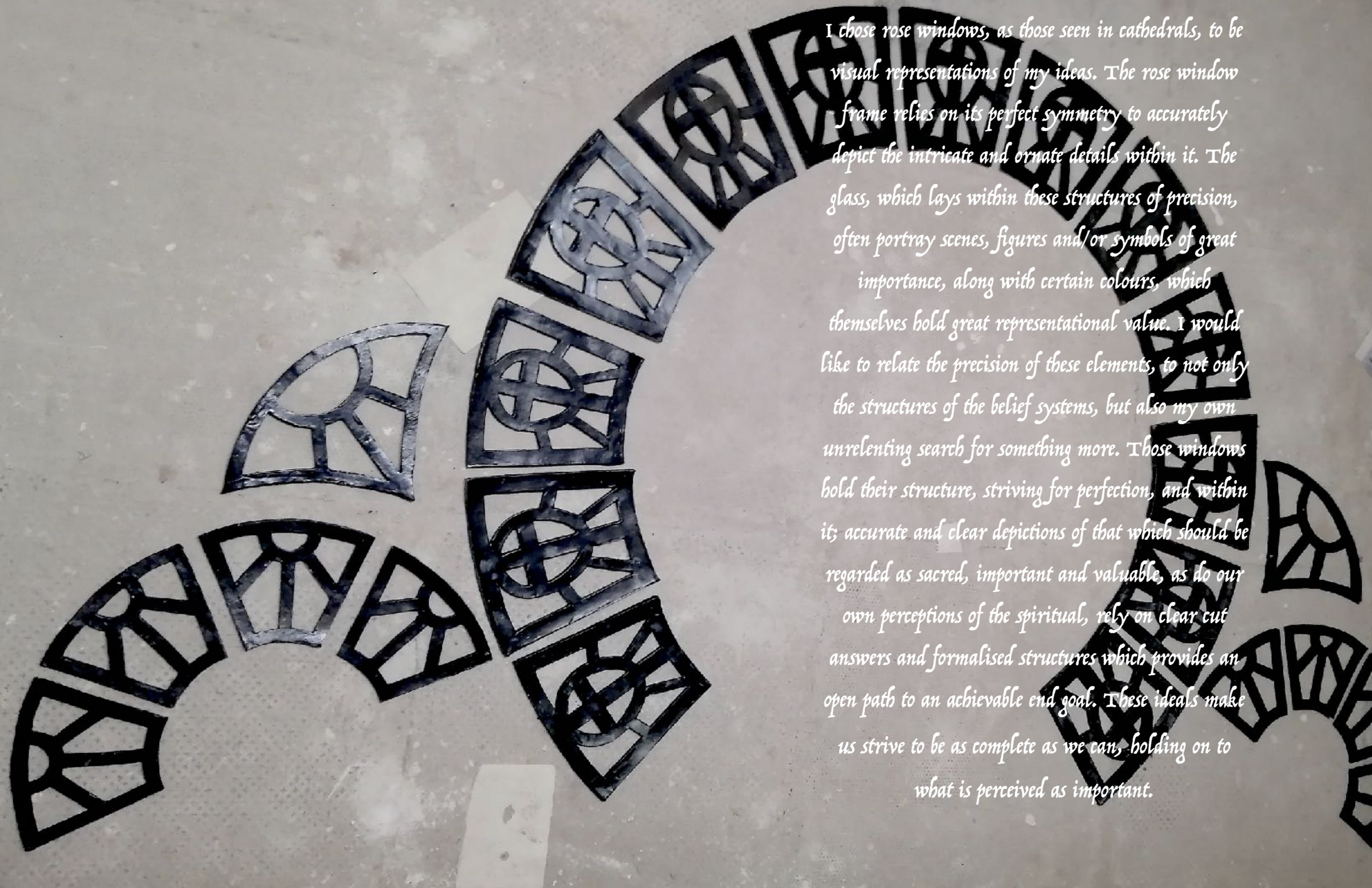
After questioning and disassociating from the church, meditation arose in my life due to a need for understanding and self-exploration in the absence of a spiritual community. This exploration into myself provided me with a self-determined space and time in which I could continue my search. Meditation provided solace from the hardships that were coming over my life at the time. through meditating, I had obtained a state in which my body was no longer a factor. I was without any intentions or desire, I had left the physical and entered a realm within my own mind, a safe and understanding place. The escape I wanted came with a lonely price. I lost the community and the support I once had, leaving me to fend for myself as I was the only one willing to question what I believed in.

I finally found a community, a batch of outcasts you could call friends. These friends provided me with my new method of escape and a way of obtaining the, long searched for, transcendent moment. I got introduced to the world of substances. Sensations and experiences the likes of which I could never have imagined. Meditation and religion seemed so far off in the distance by comparison. It would appear as if I had found my people. My own sense of transcendence, and the mystical, had been blown up, and looking at the fragments made it all seem clear. The instantaneousness of inducing transcendence through substances, made the concept of an actual search superfluous. Many research programs regarding LSD and other psychedelics, which were held between the 1950's and early 1960's, produced multiple data points regarding the influence of these substances on the individual perceptions regarding the spiritual. To quote an account by one of the test subjects: “he felt it helped him eliminate many barriers erected by the self, or ego, that stand in the way of one's direct experience of the cosmos and of God.” (kurtz, 2020). Substances such as KAT, marijuana, alcohol,



As motivation for my work, I studied the writings of J.M Cohen and J-f Phipps, in the book "the common experience". The book provides extracts from multiple sources of first-hand accounts of the mystical experience. It uses these accounts to expand on the idea that the mystical itself is not limited by our beliefs or position in life, but rather that there is a potential in all of us to experience the transcendence of the mystical.

In the intro to the book, it says: "All men record and pass through the same stages on the slowly mounting path, whatever their creed, epoch or station in life. The landmarks are unchanging, although they may be variously named and described. We set out to plot them in the words of those who have passed before us."



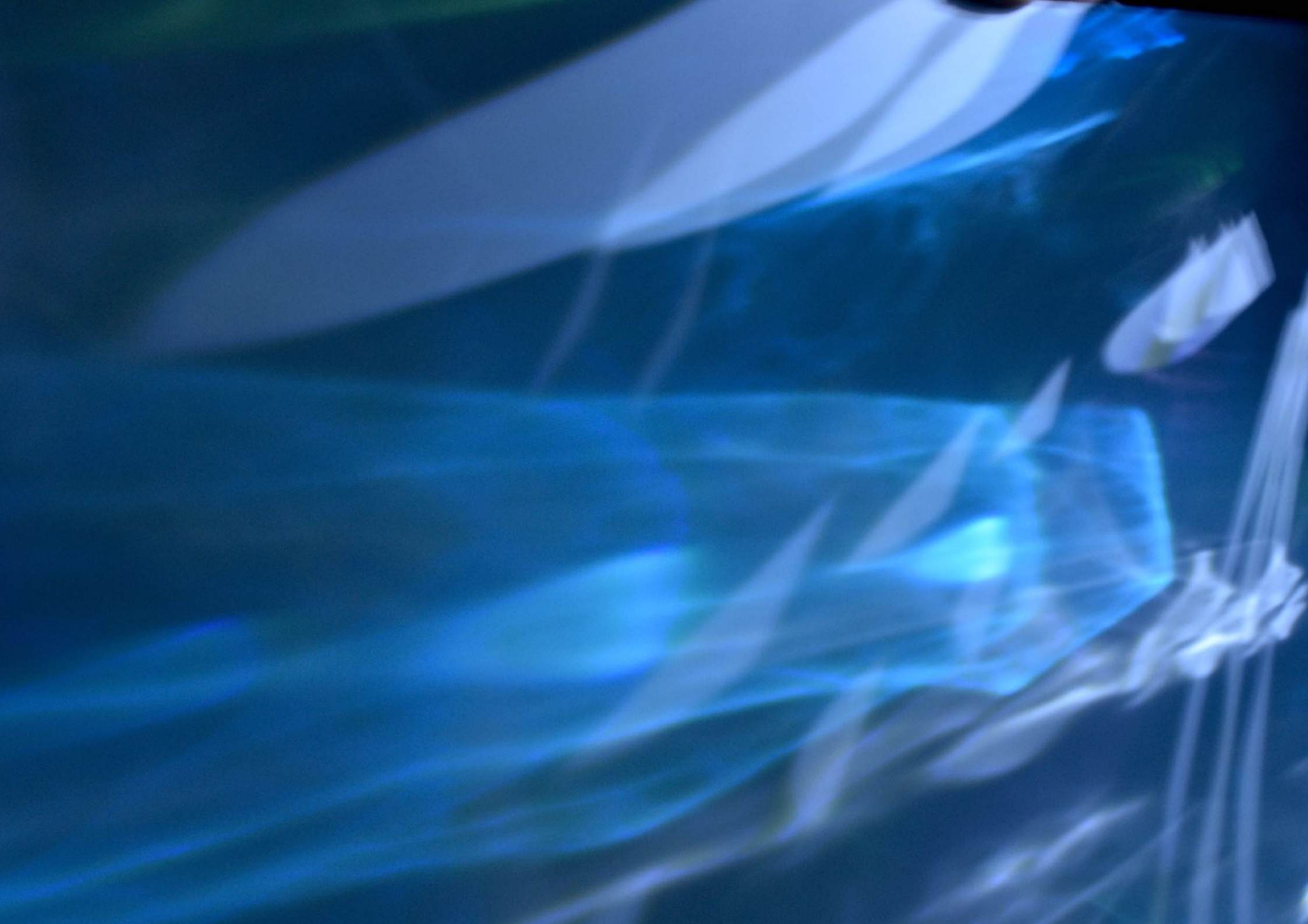
I chose rose windows, as those seen in cathedrals, to be visual representations of my ideas. The rose window frame relies on its perfect symmetry to accurately depict the intricate and ornate details within it. The glass, which lays within these structures of precision, often portray scenes, figures and/or symbols of great importance, along with certain colours, which themselves hold great representational value. I would like to relate the precision of these elements, to not only the structures of the belief systems, but also my own unrelenting search for something more. Those windows hold their structure, striving for perfection, and within it; accurate and clear depictions of that which should be regarded as sacred, important and valuable, as do our own perceptions of the spiritual, rely on clear cut answers and formalised structures which provides an open path to an achievable end goal. These ideals make us strive to be as complete as we can, holding on to what is perceived as important.

Just as the frames of the rose windows, I decided to create fragile ceramic frames. Trying my best to hold to the dynamic, and intricate symmetry. I strive to depict the perfect symmetrical patterns, which would represent the three different structures which I used to try and obtain those transcendent mystical moments



The frames depict restrictions/obstacles in the way of the free-flowing essence of spirituality. These restrictions are seen here as the need for "right action".

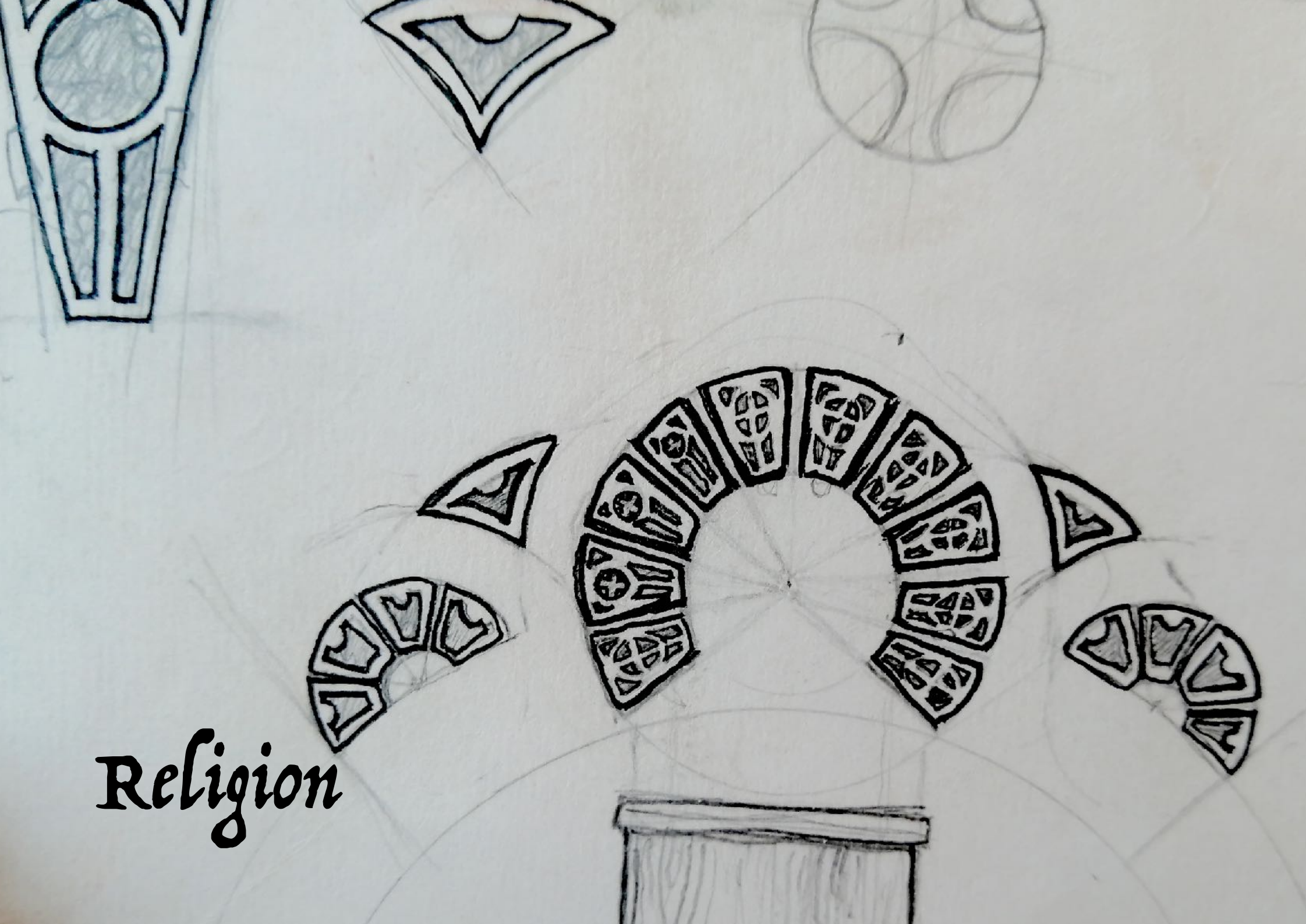




Referring to the rose windows, I used the glass to represent that which is important and transcendent. In contrast to the actual rose windows, I decided on letting go of the formalised depictions, letting go and allowing the glass and colours to mix and flow through each other, relinquishing all control I might have tried to hold over it in the past. I decided to place the glass at the back of the ceramic frames, baking them till they heated enough to slump through the negative spaces. I was faced with many disasters and failed on many occasions. The successes along with the irregularities, cracks, failed and broken pieces, they all represent the actual state in which the mystical exists. By placing lights underneath every piece, it allowed the fluidity of the glass to escape even further than just the limitations of the frames or its own physicality, separating itself and illuminating the ceiling as the pieces radiate outwards.

The mystical is fluid, it evolves and shifts, sometimes it is imperfect, and sometimes it holds you in the comfort of its mesmerising light.

Religion





Meditation

Fidanc 8 Pieces

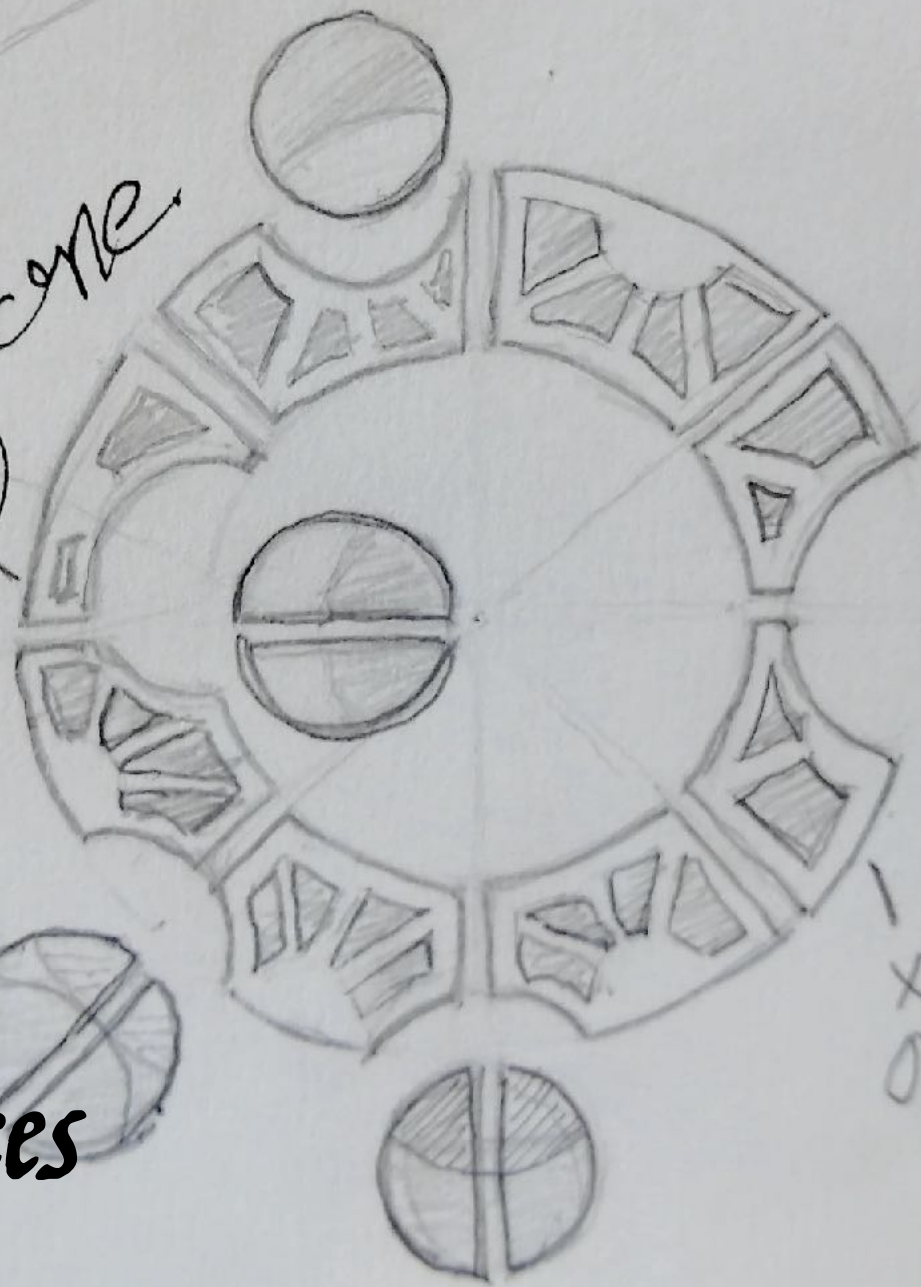
Different
Colors
but continue
the design

Done

x5

x6

Substances



The image shows three distinct geometric sculptures arranged on a light-colored wooden floor against a white wall. The sculptures are constructed from dark, possibly black, material with intricate cutouts and internal structures. The one on the left is a long, narrow, and somewhat irregular shape. The one in the center is a large, symmetrical, star-like or floral shape with multiple points and internal cutouts. The one on the right is a smaller, more compact shape with a similar internal structure. The sculptures appear to be made of a dark material, possibly wood or metal, with some internal components visible through the cutouts. The lighting is soft, casting gentle shadows on the floor.

Design

All three designs carry with them intricate representational imagery, which ties them all to their individual relations with the mystical. The geometric shapes often break free of their precision and constrictions. The glass moves and shifts outwards, expressing its fluidity as it tries to escape from its restrictive framework.

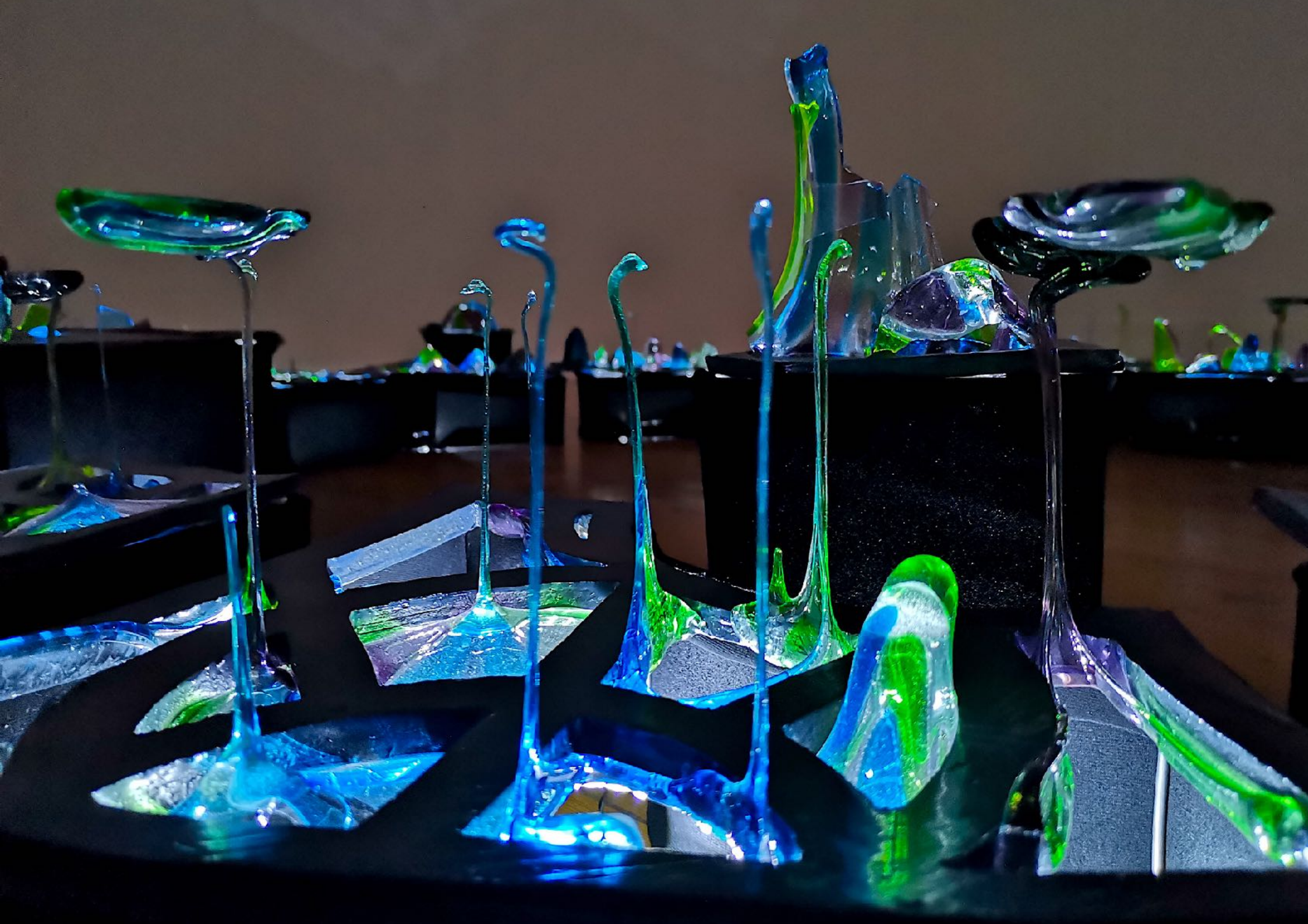
























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