

# Testimony

My Personal Journey in Faith

Janine Dumont

# Contents

Artist statement – Janine Dumont	2
Exhibition Maquette	3
<b>Stain</b>	<b>4 – 9</b>
○ Image	5
○ Artist Statement	6
○ Process images	7 – 10
○ Exhibition Maquette	11
<b>Armor of God</b>	<b>12 - 17</b>
○ Images	13
○ Artist Statement	14
○ Process images	15 - 16
○ Exhibition Maquette	17
<b>Rebirth</b>	<b>18 - 29</b>
○ Images	19 - 26
○ Artist Statement	27
○ Process images	28
○ Exhibition Maquette	29
<b>Perseverance</b>	<b>30 - 38</b>
○ Images	31 - 35
○ Artist Statement	36
○ Process images	37
○ Exhibition Maquette	38
Fasting in preparation	39
Acknowledgments	40
Bibliography	41

## Artist Statement

This body of work functions as a visual testimony of my personal journey in faith. For the past year I have been consciously seeking God and becoming closer to Him, strengthening my faith as well as my relationship with Him. This series of artworks depicts the stages of letting go of my past self while becoming a whole new self.

I have blindly followed my religion for my whole life and am only now in the process of realizing the true meaning of faith. I believe that faith is not religion but rather faith is trusting in God with all your heart. I believe that faith in God comes with having a relationship with Him. I have only come to this realization in the past year.

My works are grounded in religious art, the kind of art one would see in cathedrals such as; stained glass windows, relief sculptures of Jesus and Mary as well as the Stations of the Cross. Since the beginning of this art making process, my focus has been on the accessibility of religious art and how it translates the Word of God into a visual format so that even the illiterate have access to it. In a similar way, I want my art to be accessible to all people.

Religious art is beautiful and powerful in its own right, however I would not regard my art as such but rather art that reveals an interesting relationship between religion and spirituality. Instead of making art that conforms to the visual traditions of catholic and Christian religious art, I have used parts of traditional Christian religious symbols in an atypical manner so that they no longer speak as strongly to religion but rather to the spiritual motivation behind the religion. My focus is on the spiritual experience rather than the religious experience because I believe that the relationship one has with God is worth more than following religious doctrine.

I believe that God has called me to share my experience, to show others how my life has been transformed by Christ after I turned to Him. My hope is that my artworks will resonate with everyone on a spiritual level and that my message, God's message, will be received by those with open hearts.

# Exhibition Maquette



# Stain



“Stain”, 2021, black fabric dye on fabric, sewn with cotton

Video link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GnIn74NbcELUaHrV-Et1-EsSgKqynQap/view?usp=sharing>

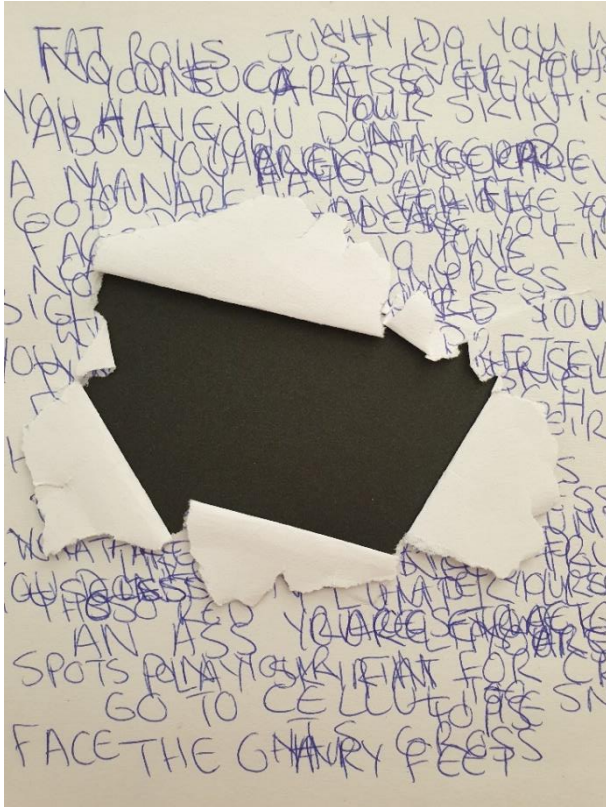
## Artist Statement

The first artwork I produced is an installation piece I call “Stain.” The production of this piece involved tearing up one piece of fabric into smaller pieces and hand sewing them back together to make one whole again. After this process I dyed the fabric with black dye. The process of dying the fabric was repeated numerous times and I added new pieces of fabric in between. This piece is a reflection of my brokenness before I turned to God, i.e. my past self. The torn fabric, hand sewn back together (but not quite fixed) is a sort of documentation of my once broken soul and my inability to fix my own brokenness without Christ. The repetition of the dying process is a representation of my tendency to fall back into sin, over and over again. I named this work “Stained” because I believe that each sin is like a stain on one’s soul which can only be cleansed by Jesus Christ and I believe He has done this for me many times already. This is the most amazing gift of grace that God could give and it is only through Christ that we are able to have this.

Projected onto this piece is a video of black dye continuously seeping into white fabric. This represents the process of dying the fabric over and over again, as well as the habit of falling back into sin.

Accompanying these is a handmade clay chalice filled with the same black dye used throughout this process. The dye impregnates the unglazed clay as it stands in the space and seeps into the form of the chalice, leaving a permanent black mark. This signifies the potency of sin and how it easily stains the soul.

## Process photos



This artwork started with a reflection on my past. For most of my life I struggled with insecurities; feeling as if I was not good enough, pretty enough, smart enough or talented enough to be anything in this world. For a long time I questioned my life choices and who I am as a person. Since turning to Christ I have been distant from that person. I believe that God has helped me find my path.

This is an experiment I did at the beginning of the year to express the feeling of breaking out of the person I was. Being free from the crushing insecurities that have held me back my whole life. This simple little torn piece of paper started process of the artwork now known as *Stain*.



This image shows the next step in the process of this artwork. I used acrylic ink to make black spots instead of writing because I felt that words would speak for the artwork instead of the artwork speaking for itself. It was suggested that I rather dyed the whole thing black because there were too many white spaces.





This is a photo I took of the material soaking in the black dye. The material would be dyed and left to dry multiple times. Eventually the material could not absorb anymore pigment.



This I after I added the final pieces of material to the cloth. This is also after I used it in the performance piece *Rebirth* (a series of photographs).

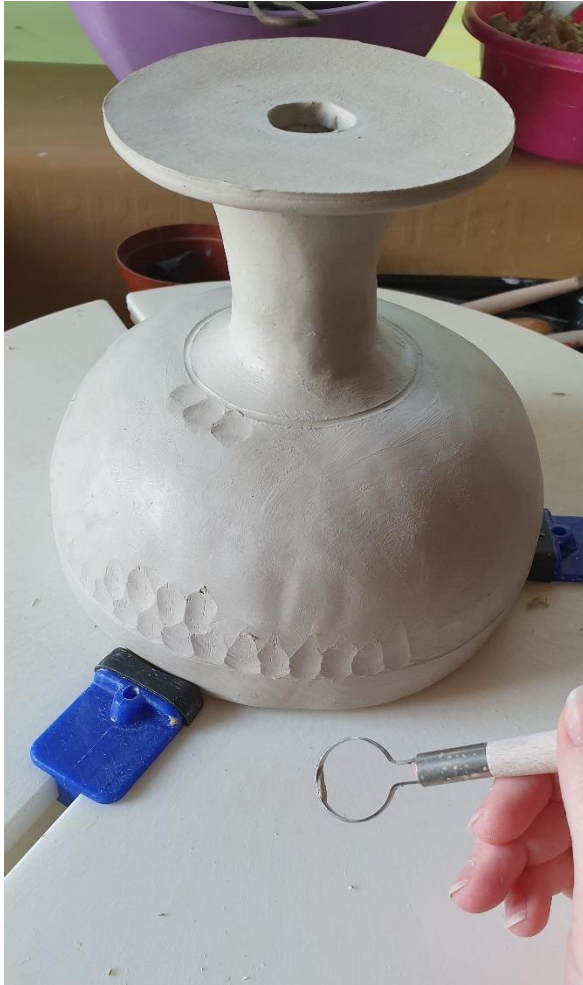


This is how I shot the videos for the projection. I used the same dye and the same material and recorded the dye seeping through the fabric from underneath.

I then edited the videos and added them together to make a sequence.



Still shot from video projection.



This is a photo of the clay chalice before the decoration was complete and the before bisque firing.

Since then the base has broken twice and so I had to fix it.



This is a photo of the completed chalice.

The chalice is not glazed. I chose not to glaze it so that the dye would seep into the porous clay – indicating the intensity of the dye (sin).

## Exhibition Maquette



# Armor of God



“Armor of God”, 2021, white fabric

## Artist Statement

After this reflection on sin and my past self I created what I call my “Armor of God.” This is a reference to Ephesians 6:10-20, a letter from the Apostle Paul, teaching the Ephesians how to defend themselves from the enemy (Satan) (Eph. 6:10-20, NLT). This Garment is a white sheet, which I altered and hand sewed so that I could wear it. It is inspired by a vision I had as a child and looks somewhat like the vestment catholic priests wear during mass.

When I was young, God sent me a message in the form of a dream and as I have grown in my relationship with Him I have come to understand the message better. In this dream I had a choice between the world and the Kingdom of God and this garment is what I wore when I chose God. This humble, white cloth reminded me that God loved me and was protecting me. The “Armor of God” is a loose interpretation of the Armor of God that is referred to in the Bible but for me is a reminder that I am protected and loved by Jesus Christ.

## Process photos



I first started sewing the hem on the edges of the fabric by hand.



I then cut out a hole for the head and sewed the edges to prevent fraying.





I then embroidered three crosses into the fabric to resemble what I saw in my dream.

I was, however, advised to take out the crosses because the cross is a very strong religious symbol.



The garment now has no crosses on it

## Exhibition Maquette



# Rebirth



“Rebirth”, 2021, photographic series

















## Artist Statement

I then went on to use both of the artworks, “Stain” and “Armor of God” in the performance piece “Rebirth,” a series of photographs where the “Armor of God” emerges from the “Stain.” When a person turns away from their sin and turns toward Christ, and becomes a follower of Christ, they are spiritually reborn. In other words, one’s soul is made new. “Rebirth” is a representation of my journey in seeking Christ and giving everything to Him. This includes my insecurities, my brokenness, my sins and my life.

In this series of photographs we see an invisible figure who tears through the dark, fragmented fabric and emerges from it wearing a white cloth, picks up the dark fabric and holds it up, and it disappears. The white cloth is the “Armor of God” and is what gives the figure the strength to break through the sin and brokenness and then offer it to God. The evidence of presence yet obvious absence of the figure in these images speaks to the notion of the Spirit which makes it clear that this series focusses on the spiritual experience of becoming new. I decided on having seven photographs in this series as the number seven is a Holy number in the Bible and of course in Christianity.

## Process photos



This is a sample photo from my first shoot. I found that I rather needed to work in the photo studio so that I could get full-body shots for this series.



This is one of the final photos before post production.

## Exhibition Maquette



# Perseverance



“Perseverance”, 2021, video

Video link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/19u8yokdMwvOkLCHB65LJHYkjEnmVdK10/view?usp=sharing>











## Artist Statement

Now that I have gone through the process of being ‘reborn’ I have to stay true to my faith and stay faithful to God. This is more challenging than it seems, with all of the distractions and temptations in the world it is very difficult to stay constantly focused on Christ. I suppose one could say that being a Christian takes a lot of discipline, perseverance and prayer. This artwork is inspired by this.

“Perseverance” is a video of a series of photographs merging into one another. These are long exposé photographs of myself kneeling and praying the rosary in almost complete darkness. There is one photograph for each of the four decades of the rosary and each one took approximately 20 minutes to pray. As the video progresses it is clear that I, the subject, am struggling to stay on my knees while I pray and eventually I am sitting cross-legged on the floor, but still praying. The movement seen in the video is as a result of the pain I endured while kneeling on the floor for a long period of time. The idea is that we all get tired after some time and we often lose focus. When it comes to having faith we need to do our best to stay focused on what matters and to not allow temptations to distract us. I think that this reflects on the experience of being guided by the Holy Spirit to stay focused on God and to listen to His conviction and correction. This experience can sometimes be daunting or painful and it therefore takes a lot to be disciplined and persevere.

Although this piece was made using the rosary, which is known to be connected to Catholicism, the video does not clearly show this. I have used the religious symbol of the rosary in such a way that it does not speak to the idea of religion but rather to the idea of prayer and spirit. I feel that this makes the work more accessible as it speaks to the broader spiritual experience of prayer.

## Process photos



This was my first attempt at a long exposure photograph while praying the rosary.

Since then, I adjusted the settings as well as my distance from the camera.

# Exhibition Maquette

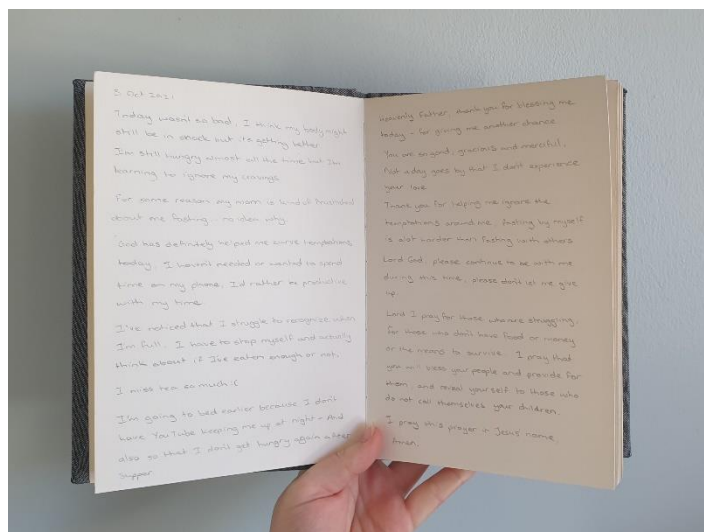


# Fasting in preparation

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# Acknowledgments

I could not have produced this body of work without the help of my community, and so I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have helped me this year.

Firstly, I would like to thank God for getting me through this year and for encouraging me to keep going. He has supported me and provided for me every step of the way and I would not have had the strength and the will power to keep creating without His guidance.

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I would like to thank my family for always loving me and supporting me in my passion for art and for encouraging me to keep doing what I love.

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# Bibliography

*The Holy Bible: New Living Translation* 2018, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois