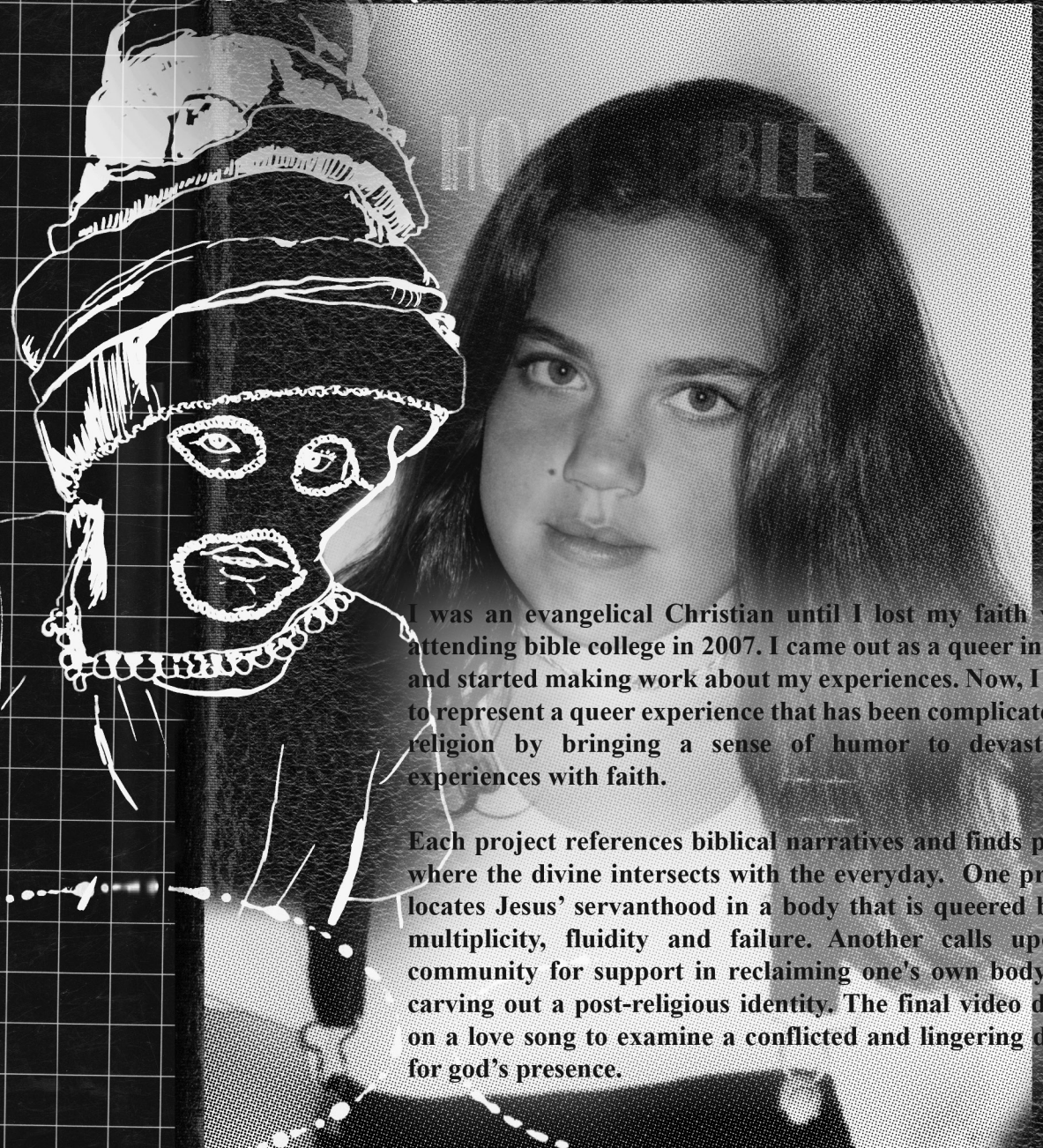


J.R. URETSKY

I live my life in widening circles
that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one
but I give myself to it.
I circle around God, around the primordial tower.
I've been circling for thousands of years
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,
a storm, or a great song? -- Rainer Maria Rilke

COME AS YOU ARE



I was an evangelical Christian until I lost my faith while attending bible college in 2007. I came out as a queer in 2011 and started making work about my experiences. Now, I hope to represent a queer experience that has been complicated by religion by bringing a sense of humor to devastating experiences with faith.

Each project references biblical narratives and finds places where the divine intersects with the everyday. One project locates Jesus' servanthood in a body that is queered by its multiplicity, fluidity and failure. Another calls upon a community for support in reclaiming one's own body and carving out a post-religious identity. The final video draws on a love song to examine a conflicted and lingering desire for god's presence.

The moon goes around the earth.

... THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY. MATTHEW 20:28 NIV

Last year I experienced some major burn out. Like my faith, I never expected my desire to make art to run dry, but it did. Or maybe I was just tired of being broke. Either way, I didn't leave my bed for a few days. My cat found ways to feed herself. This was five years after my fallout with god but there I was again, still waiting for him. What would I want from Jesus if he actually showed up? I would want him to come over and clean my house the way my mom did when I had a broken heart. I would want him to force soup upon me like Sara Bernstein does when I'm sick. I would want his help. His humanity. Eventually it became evident that he wasn't coming, though, so instead I did a thing that I always aspired to do as a Christian: I embodied Christ and did something nice for someone else, because that's what Jesus would do. And for a moment I saw the queer and the divine dwelling together in a body--in my body. And for a moment I believed.

The moon goes around

~~DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES ARE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO IS IN YOU, WHOM YOU HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD? YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN.~~

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20 NIV

I have always struggled with the concept of god's presence and so have clung to this idea that where two or three gather in his name, he is there. What an interesting look at the power of community, intimacy, and interpersonal relationships! Does this verse imply that we could conjure up the ol' holy ghost just by hanging out with each other? If so, what happens when one (me) leaves a community but still longs for god's presence? And what do I have to say to the spirit when he arrives? -- our love was real and it hurts.

FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE HAVE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, I AM THERE IN THEIR MIDST. MATTHEW 18:20

I love sculpture for its expanded (and expanding) definition. It's a form that isn't always fighting its history--though there is plenty of history to push up against. Sculpture, to me, runs analogous to postmodern feminist practices: It's communal. It's plural. It's of the body, or at least in conversation with the body.

My Temple is trying on all of these things. It's rejecting classical sculpture or a master form and replacing it with actual bodies. Bodies that reject an ideal. Bodies that are bow legged, scrawny, chubby, queer, and colorful. Most of all, because they are bodies, they are temporary. My Temple--or rather the lump of humanity I placed next to the Temple To Music at Roger Williams Park, RI--is a dying thing and in its impermanence, there is a quality that is more relatable than a classical sculpture or even a monument.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reigned over my formative years and left me, well, kind of terrified of my own body. I had to reclaim my body as a site of personhood rather than a dwelling place for the holy spirit. Undoing the belief that my body was a weird little house for god and that it was my job to keep the house tidy also undid my understanding of gender. And as it turned out, my house was not small, or pleasureless, or silent.