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# THE UNSPOKEN CONVERSATION

an exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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## ABSTRACT

Prayer is a common practice for devotional purposes, and each person could find their own individual reason to do it including expressing their wishes, asking for blessing, and sharing their hopes and fears. As a practice that requires faith, because it is invisible and difficult to explain logically, it is understandable that this practice is often neglected.

I was raised in a Catholic family and my parents taught me about the practice of prayer since I can remember. Guided by my parents, I prayed with them every night before bed. As I grew older and became more mature, I found my own reason for continuing this practice. Because I believe this practice has shaped my personality in a positive way and make my life better, I would like to share my perspectives on prayer through this master's research as I think that this subject is still relevant in modern society.

Based on my previous experience as a sculptor and reflecting on my personal faith and prayer, I intend to visualize the meaning of prayer for me. I have explored several approaches to making, beginning with detailed figurative works and experimenting with video works, until I ended up with the simpler visual expression for the final installation. Aluminium foil and charcoal were explored and selected as the primary materials for the final artworks because of their appearance and the metaphorical and symbolic meanings associated with each material.

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# - P A R T 1 -

## P A S T

### **What Prayer Means to Me**

I have always believed in prayer. Prayer is something that has been taught to me since I can remember. Raised in a Catholic family, prayer became a common activity at home. When I was a child, every night before I went to sleep, my family and I gathered in bed together and prayed. My family believed that when we gathered in a circle, God would be present to hear our prayers. Christians believe that during the prayer, we pray to God as the creator/perfect being. The prayer serves communication between me, my family, and God. I even visualize God with the common representation that often appears in many books and images as a white man with long hair and beard. During the prayers, my parents guided me to express whatever happened in the day, and to learn to find gratitude for the day even if bad things happen. Aside from gratitude, they also taught me to beg forgiveness for our mistakes. At the end of the prayers, we also shared our wishes for tomorrow and the future, such as asking for guidance and protection. These activities happened for years until I started to live on my own in another city. Even though I live separated from my parents, they always remind me not to forget to pray. I never questioned my parents about the reason for praying, yet in recent years, I have begun to find my own personal meaning for the reason why I must pray.

While growing up, I began to understand a deeper meaning about prayer. This was also learned from bitter experiences such as unanswered prayer. In the beginning, I thought that everything that I prayed for would always be granted. Through my experiences, I began to realize that not every wish is good for me; I learned about gratefulness. These experiences led me to find a personal reason to continue to pray, and not just because my parents asked me to. My perception about prayer developed as moments of reflection and a self-examination process that extended beyond just a communication with God. I no longer see prayer as the way to speak with

God in front of me; I see prayer as the way to speak to myself. While the idea and concept of prayer is still like what I did as a child, I feel like prayer has become my attempt to understand myself better. I have become more self-conscious by learning to be grateful from re-winding activities that happen each day. Through prayer, I also learn to regret my bad behaviour and manifest my dream while focusing on my purpose of life.

Although my prayers seem to dwell on gratefulness and good hopes and wishes, I also notice how my prayers evoke negative thoughts on things such as pain, fear, and anxiety. When I pray about my health, I am afraid of being sick. When I ask for success, I am afraid of failure. Through my prayer, even though I always wish for the best outcome in any situation, I learned that everything in life is always balanced. For example, no one can be happy if they have never experienced a sad moment. Through joy and sadness, hope and fear, faith and doubt, I learned about acceptance and became more mature in my outlook on life.

Beside using prayer as a self-examination process, my prayer also expands into a method to evaluate my relationship with others such as my partner, friends, and family. Through my prayer, I evaluate my mistakes and bad behaviour towards others and try to become a better human. I also learn about forgiving others who have hurt me. I use prayer as an effort to remember others, to send love and blessing to others as an alternative to direct conversation. Prayers to others reflect a sense of empathy, caring and building emotional bonds between each person. To this day, I always mention my family in my prayers and wish them protection. While sending a blessing through prayer is something that is difficult to explain using logic, I firmly believe in this practice. Prayers can serve as a means of expressing love, and reinforcing the idea that we are all interconnected in the larger tapestry of human existence. These personal experiences are the main reason why I want to visualize the nature of prayer through my artworks.

## **What is Prayer?**

Prayer is a form of religious practice which is difficult to separate from religion and belief. Prayer may be either individual or communal and take place in public or in private. It may involve the use of audible words, song, or complete silence. According to Kaelin (2016), prayer can be traced back through written records or visual forms such as hieroglyphics to ancient civilizations such as Egypt in around 3000 BCE in which prayer was a form of ritual and sacrifice. The research shows that Ancient Egyptians used prayers and ritual worship to assist the soul of the deceased with their journey to the underworld (Kaelin, 2016).

This concept of afterlife is continued with the emergence of monotheistic religions such as Christianity that also believe in afterlife and often include prayers for the deceased (Kaelin, 2016). Prayers in monotheistic religions take the form of personal supplications, communal worship, and recitations. Those in the Catholic faith found in religious texts or the Bible are called *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina* calls for a slow, careful interaction with scripture through meditation and prayer, allowing a word or phrase to rise in one's consciousness, a holy word to be savoured and examined (Richardson, 2020). One of several common prayers in Christianity, The Lord's Prayer was written in the New Testament, one in the Gospel of Matthew, and in the Gospel of Luke. This prayer has been taught and passed down from generation to generation to the present day. Catholics may pray to God, or to the Father/Son/Holy Spirit as the Trinity, or to the Virgin Mary during the Rosary. Asking for blessing from a patron saint is also a common activity.

## **Prayer In the Visual Arts**

Prayer can also be found in the visual or symbolic forms that are used as a part of a non-verbal communication. In the past, visual and symbolic forms of prayer allowed people to connect with their spirituality in ways that transcend spoken words (Kovacevic, 2021). In this exegesis, I focus on Christian symbolism and visual arts in relation to my personal background and experience.

Catholicism uses visual arts such as saints and martyrs as figures, with which people can feel more comfortable to show their faith and hope through them. Beside *Lectio Devina*, there is another method of the prayer called *Visio Divina* that prays through visual art, symbolism, and images (Puryear, 2023). Not only useful for people that practice the prayer itself, *Visio Divina* also plays an important role for the artist that made the artwork.

This *Visio Divina* approach is often found in works by artists that use Christian iconography. One example from the Renaissance period is *Pietà* (1499) by Michelangelo. In *Pietà*, the face of Mary was depicted younger as a way for Michelangelo to visualize her purity. In contemporary twenty-first century art, Andy Warhol also created artworks with Christian iconography. He began to engage with the subject of religion in the last decade of his career and created artworks such as *Cross* (1982) and *The Last Supper* (1986). “Imposing in scale, *Cross* is an interpretation of ancient tradition in a contemporary context, bringing disparate visual languages from the twentieth century into conversation with much older religious and cultural concepts” (Dillenberger, 2001). Damien Hirst, with his artwork *Mother and Child (Divided)* (1993) depicted and visioned religious iconography, which often confronted and sometimes offended the viewer because of the controversial way Christ is presented (King, 2024). Damien Hirst admitted that while he was raised as Catholic, he is not a believing Catholic; he has credited the Church as an inspiration for his images of pain, death, and life (Howie, 2023).

Over time, artists that used Christian iconography and symbols became more varied and the lines between the sacred and the profane became blurred. Each artist has their own interpretation about their thoughts regarding religion iconography ranging from artists that carefully use the icon as a worshiping journey and to those that use the icon with an offensive concept such as Andres Serrano’s *Immersion* (1987) by using the artist’s urine as part of the visual (Rosen, 2017). On the other hand, there are artists that take the idea of faith and prayer and visualize it into an artwork without using a distinct religious iconography such as *Youth* (2009) by Ron Mueck (Mueck, 2023).



Figure 1. Ron Mueck, *Youth*, 2009. Retrieved from: <https://flic.kr/p/8mdnzm>

## - P A R T 2 -

# P R E S E N T

### **The MFA Journey**

The journey towards the final artwork builds upon explorations undertaken during the two-year MFA study period. Each artwork presented was my attempt to visualize prayer. This exegesis, organized chronologically, will discuss each artwork, the materials and processes and its relation to prayer. It will also include discussion on several artworks by artists about how they use each material to create the artwork, by using the similar material that I am going to use and inspired me for the final artwork.

As a sculptor, materials play an important role in my artwork including the expression of meaning. In recent years, I have had an interest in shiny materials. During the first year, I explored the possibilities of using shiny and reflective materials to visualize my thoughts in relation to prayer. During my prayer, I tried to focus my mind and relax. When I try to focus my mind, everything around me seems clearer and brighter. Shiny material could visualize the concept about divinity, and the solemn situation that surrounds me (Diepeveen, 2021). Shiny material such as gold and silver has been often used throughout cultural history to create precious and sacred items because of these metals' scarcity and perceived value (Fisher, 2013). An example is the gold chalice that became an integral part of Catholic iconography, a symbol of the containment of divinity.

Silver is often associated with purity, clarity, and innocence (Diepeveen, 2021). According to Rivera (n.d.), the colour of silver symbolizes a clear mind, fresh start, and drive towards higher truth and enlightenment. She indicates that the cool, soothing tones of silver are believed to have a calming and meditative effect on the mind and soul. It can help facilitate the state of inner peace, balance, and emotional stability; the silver colour has a psychological meaning that has a cooling effect on the mind, which helps to alleviate stress and anxiety. It promotes a sense of

balance and harmony, creating an environment conducive to introspection and reflection (Rivera, n.d.).

## YEAR 1

In the early period of this MFA study, the focus of my artwork was digitally sculpted figures made using a 3D software because of its flexibility and relative fast processing time. Digital sculpting also made it easier for me to convert sketches into finished artwork. The gestures of the human and animal figures represented my ideas. However, the 3D-printed material did not always align with the concept of my sculpture, so I tried to use another material to support the figures that I think complement the concept that I want to visualize. The figures were then arranged with the addition of other material (aluminium foil in year 1 and charcoal in year 2) for the finished artwork. For the first studio visit in the second semester, I presented three artworks: *Mind Game*, *Treasure of the Soul* and *The Protector*. For the *Mind Game*, I tried to visualize the power of the prayer to help me embrace or accept the unknown future. The different height of the cube becomes a metaphor of different stages in life, and the figure sitting on the top of the

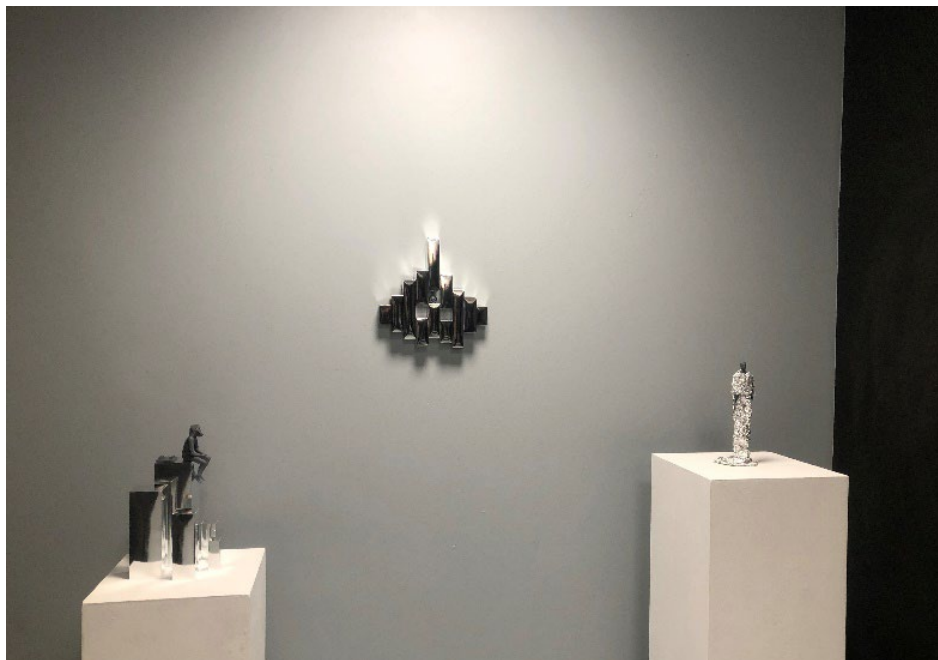


Figure 2. Studio visit, September 2023, image by author.

cube is contemplating and waiting about his next stage in life. I often question my future during my prayer and through my prayer I can reduce my anxiety and remain calm. The figure gesture is slightly inspired by The Thinker sculpture that is in contemplative state.



Figure 3. *Treasure of the Soul*, 2023, image by author.



Figure 4. *Mind Game*, 2023, image by author.

The exploration went further by using aluminium foil as the main material for *The Protector*. I decided to create less detail for the figure with a purpose to visualize a silhouette of a human, rather than making the figure as the main object. In this artwork, I want the viewer to focus on the aluminium foil. The aluminium foil is already textured, and I want to avoid the figure looking too detailed in terms to balance the composition. The aluminium foil that wrapped around the figure is a symbol of prayer as a protection for my daily life. The choice of this material was inspired by the emergency blanket.



Figure 5. *The Protector*, 2023, image by author.

### **Emergency Blanket**

Emergency blankets, commonly known as space blankets, are included in first aid kits as an item to maintain body heat during the extreme weather conditions. It is uncommon to use them in Indonesia because the weather is quite stable in comparison to New Zealand. The blanket

keeps the body warm by design; as an impermeable metalized plastic sheet, it will trap up to 90 percent of the radiated body heat that would normally be dispersed into the environment (MCR Medical, 2016).

SpY, a Spanish artist, has made a monumental artwork using emergency blankets as a material. In SpY's work titled *Blanket* (2023), hundreds of emergency blankets were hung in the gallery space. Each blanket moved subtly as the viewer walked under the installation (Mothes, 2024). With the use of an emergency blanket as a metaphor for protection, I thought this installation really emphasizes the meaning of feeling safe and calm.

Though I played with the qualities of the emergency blanket, the character of this material made it difficult for me to express my idea. The emergency blanket feels more like plastic and can't hold the shape very well unless I present it as it is. The creases in the emergency blanket that I bought from the store also proved difficult to remove. The blanket material, made mostly of plastic and not recyclable, seems unaligned with repetitive nature of prayer that I want to visualize. When looking for an alternative material, I learned about using an aluminium foil.

## **Aluminium Foil**

For a few years I have known about aluminium foil as an art material with malleable qualities. I became interested in the crumpled surfaces and texture of the aluminium foil that could be achieved within seconds just by kneading the foil. Even so, the foil could also be polished to become shiny, and it has a wide range of material possibilities. During year 1, I created several artworks using the aluminium foil.

The foil is a pliable yet fragile material that comes in thin metal leaves. It is made from molten alloy that is rolled thin and solidified between large, water-cooled chill rollers (Roberston, 2011). Aluminium foil is commonly used, especially in the food industries, because of its formability, strength, and ability to preserve food freshness. According to United States Department of Agriculture, aluminium foil provides a complete barrier to light, oxygen, moisture,

and bacteria (Kitchen Dance, 2023). It is an efficient insulator and reflector of energy, and like the emergency blanket, it can prevent loss in energy.

*Ghost* (2007) by Kader Attia was a sculptural installation using aluminium foil as the material. According to an article by Chan (2022), based on his Muslim background Attia created a series of life-size figures that mimicked the gesture of a person in a praying position. The article said that the aluminium foil became the representation of the veil and chadors that Muslim women often use. When the viewer sees the installation from the front, they will see that it looks like an empty shell (Chan, 2022). Using aluminium foil also emphasizes an idea about fragility as a metaphor of the human condition. People often use prayer during difficult times to regain their strength and confidence. I think that this installation has a strong message about emptying our body and surrendering our life to God.



Figure 6. Kader Attia, *Ghost*, 2007. Retrieved from: <https://flic.kr/p/9bjLU3>

In connection with my topic about prayer, I chose aluminium foil material as a metaphor to express my interpretation about the practice of prayer. During the act of praying, I often pray and wish for protection in every path that I take especially in a difficult situation when I have to make an important decision, I pray asking for guidance so I can choose my path wisely and with more confidence. When I take a deep breath after praying, I feel like I am wrapping myself with

the aluminium foil to keep me protected. Whenever I pray, I feel that I am more confident. Using this material, I tried to share the importance of prayer for myself.

At the end of the first year, I embraced the utilization of aluminium foil even more for my artworks to replace the plinth that I had often depended on. This decision opened new possibilities around the conceptual meaning of my artworks that had been limited by the presence of the plinth. The boxy shape of the plinth also made it difficult to create a composition to display the artwork and tended to distract from the visual apprehension of the artwork. I created two artworks: *The Uncertainty* and *The Wanderer* for the critique. Both artworks were related to my understanding and acceptance of my life path that feels different to other people; I could embrace that different path with the help of prayer. The crab visual that I used for this artwork was a metaphor of my different life path. Unlike other animals, crabs are quite extraordinary because they move sideways to reach their destination. I feel that sometimes I am going to a different life path, yet I could accept it through my prayer. The meditative gesture in *The Uncertainty* was intended to show a calm and peaceful mind while the stand-up figure in *The Wanderer* has a meaning of being ready to embrace the unprecedented journey in my life. The curved aluminium foil sheet that became the 'plinth' for the figure was made as a metaphor of a dynamic life.



Figure 7. Studio Visit October 2023, image by author.



Figure 8. *The Uncertainty*, 2023, image by author.



Figure 9. *The Wanderer*, 2023, image by author.

## YEAR 2

At the start of the second year, I was still using human figures as the primary element in my artwork. However, *The Sinner* introduced a new material and conceptual exploration along with the human figure. With the use of charcoal, I attempted to visualize prayer as a method to cleansing the soul. The underwear outfit was inspired by the depiction of Jesus Christ during the crucifixion, as I tried to create a symbolism of modern-life Jesus Christ to emphasize the idea about suffering and sadness. The display of the figure standing on top of the charcoal was intended to represent a new beginning, rising again after suffering. Through the artwork, I want to create an artwork with a meaning of using prayer as a healing process from negative conditions.



Figure 10. *The Sinner*, 2024, image by author.

## Charcoal

Charcoal is an organic carbon compound that can be found in various forms including wood charcoal, activated charcoal, and barbecue charcoal. Physically, charcoal appears as a black, porous solid. It is a low-density compound, absorbent and has little mechanical strength (Helmenstine, 2019). According to the *Encyclopedia of Materials: Science and Technology*, activated charcoal can absorb odours and coloured substances from gases or liquids (Rodriguez-Reinozo, 2001). Thanks to this attribute, it is used in the purification of drinking water and sugar, the recovery of solvents, and in gas masks for the removal of toxic compounds from the air. It also has a variety of medical uses for the same purification reason (Rodriguez-Reinozo, 2001).

I often take a few tablets of activated charcoal whenever I have indigestion. Activated charcoal/carbon is a medication that is commonly used to treat poisonings that occurred via the mouth (The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, 2016). It helps prevent the poison from being absorbed from the stomach into the body. It is an effective and gentle intestinal cleanser. Until recently, I always used charcoal as my emergency medicine whenever I got a stomach issue.

I chose this material to become part of my artwork because I feel that during my prayer, I get many negative thoughts, and while praying, I try to become calmer to manage difficult situations. I want to visualize prayer as a cleansing method for myself, and some kind of purification of bad things in my body.

I also examined works by Lisa Munnely, a New Zealand artist and lecturer at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University. Her practice varies between drawing and installations. She is known for her use of charcoal. During one of her shows called *Slow Burner*, she presented three large, charcoal wall drawings executed in-situ (Cunnane, 2010). The works, *Traverse*, *Descent*, and *Motherboard* visualize the strength of the material. Without trying to resist gravity, she embraced the character of the material, letting the charcoal dust fall onto the ground around the artworks, thus capturing the process during the making of the artwork.

Her works inspired me to work with the material without forcing or transforming it to follow my visual requirements. My previous experiences of making sculpture out of clay or metal, urged me to consider transforming the material from its original shape into a new shape. Through Munnelly's artwork, I learn to become more flexible and go with the flow, rather than forcefully controlling how the materials transformed. The process of letting the charcoal fall to the floor is also related to my theme of prayer associated with surrender and trust about the future. The pile of charcoal becomes evidence of the passage of time and the result of repetitive acts, without needing to directly show that repetition to the viewer. The viewer could appreciate the long hours Munnelly worked based on the amount of charcoal on the floor. I want to express the repetitive and invisible qualities of the act of prayer through my installation. In connection with her works, my installation also displayed the pile of charcoal on the ground and kept the process in the viewer's imagination to generate a similarity with faith in the act of praying.



Figure 11. Lisa Munnelly, *Motherboard*, 2010, Retrieved from: <https://citygallery.org.nz/exhibitions/lisa-munnelly-slow-burner/>

## **Final Visual Output – *The Unspoken Conversation***

The previous explorations with aluminium foil and charcoal helped me to learn how these materials operate metaphorically and representationally, more than focusing on the visual appearance. Both materials are easily obtained and are common in most homes. In relation to my topic about prayer, I saw that these materials could be associated with prayer, an activity that could be done easily at home. Making a sculpture from common materials, become one way to appreciate the presence of these ordinary materials. Similarly, prayer is an activity that teaches one to be grateful for simple and daily things that are often forgotten or taken for granted.

Through self-reflection and the feedback during my studio critiques, I realized that sometimes the details and figures on my artwork distract the viewer from feeling the artwork. My previous artwork, *The Sinner*, depicted a figure in underwear as I make a reference to Jesus stripped down during crucifixion. In critique, the discussion about Christ's clothing in the sculpture took on much greater significance than I intended. Then I sat back and read again what I want to express through each artwork. This led me to compress all the important messages that I want to show and remove all things that I feel are unnecessary. Even though the plan of my upcoming artwork looks simplified, I think this artwork summarizes my concept about prayer that I want to share. Using a simplified shape was related to the personal background that I have mentioned earlier. During my prayer, I no longer imagine the appearance of Christianity icons or figures in front of me; I concentrate on what is inside of me. The dialogue that happens during the prayer is shifting and no longer feels like I am talking to a 'figure' in front of me, but rather talking to my inner self.



Figure 12. Final visual concept, 2024, image by author.

The first drawing of this artwork was done in my sketchbook after the first studio critique in year 2. The sketch was then developed and refined further using computer software. The rendered model with the desired material applied made it easier to imagine the presence of the artwork in real life. In the first plan of the artwork the diameter of the funnel is around 3 metres. That scale was intended to build a majestic and glorious presence through the installation, as my idea about prayer related to its divinity. I traced the original size in the wall during the critique, along with the quarter scale of the installation. I received feedback related to the scale and could understand that the initial plan is too large in this physical context. Even the smaller installation could deliver the message that I want to express.

Anish Kapoor's (1954) artworks are also often related with spirituality or perspectives about faith and belief. According to Baume (2008), throughout his career, Kapoor has produced many works with diverse materials such as raw pigment, chalk, fibreglass, stone, aluminium,

stainless steel, and many more. Kapoor said his pigment material exploration began in the early 1980s and challenged the viewer to question the material, whether it is an actual pigment or something else. He continued by saying that the shape exploration of the pigment is also guided by the natural result based on the physics and gravity that has a similar shape to a cone. The inspiration for the pigment came from the red pigment that is commonly used in India, his hometown (Baume, 2008).

*White Sand, Red Millet, Many Flowers* (1982) by Anish Kapoor was a work that highlighted powder materials. By arranging the piles unnaturally and exaggerating their shapes, the artist built a sense of vulnerability, and the viewer could question the truth of the materials. Without touching the sculptures, the viewer would find it difficult to discern if the artworks were sturdy or brittle. I was inspired by the fact that the powder that seems light could be arranged and become something solid – a powerful meaning. The configuration of the pile seems dynamic like a soundwave and looks as though they emerged from the ground. I was inspired by Anish

Figure 13. Anish Kapoor, *White Sand, Red Millet Many Flowers*, 1982. Retrieved from: <https://artuk.org>

Kapoor's use of materials to explore more about the potential of each material that I am going to present in my artworks.

I set up the installation by grinding the charcoal into a finer grain. I used a hammer to break the charcoal into smaller pieces and repeated the process until I achieved a powder-like substance. I separated the material into several sizes of particles by using a strainer because I wanted to test for video purposes separately. The fine grain of charcoal tends to become sticky, and it flows poorly when poured or dropped due to humidity and cold weather. Heating the fine-grained charcoal in a stove further dried the material, resulting in greater flow.

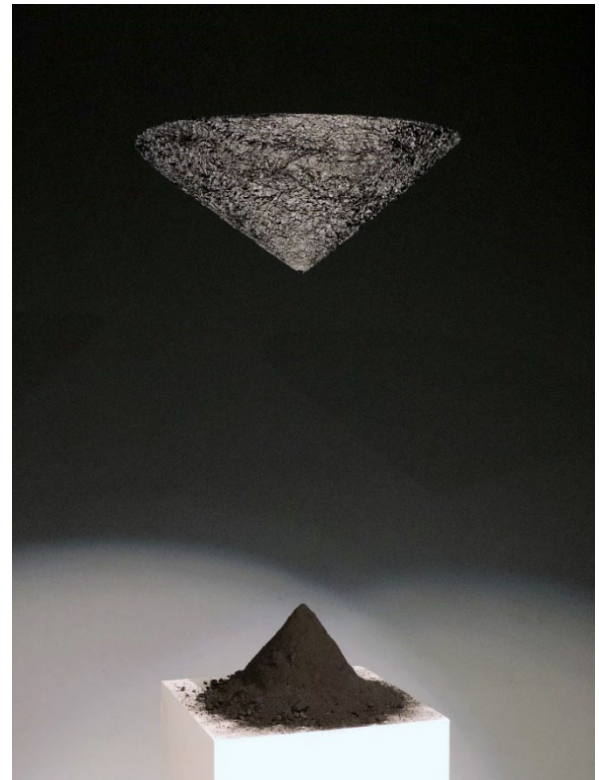


Figure 14. quarter scale test installation, 2024, image by author.

After grinding and grading, I put all the charcoal grain inside the funnel. I drilled a small hole in the bottom of the funnel to let the charcoal grain flow to the ground and flowing naturally due to gravity until all the charcoal in the funnel is empty. The charcoal on the ground will slowly accumulate until it becomes a large, cone-shaped pile. The size of the funnel hole and the amount of charcoal on the floor will indicate the duration of the whole process. The process is not rushed

by making the funnel hole wide because I would like to visualize the idea that prayer is meditative and repetitive rather than seeking for a direct and immediate answer. The practice of prayer teaches me to become more patient because the result of my prayer will be visible after a period

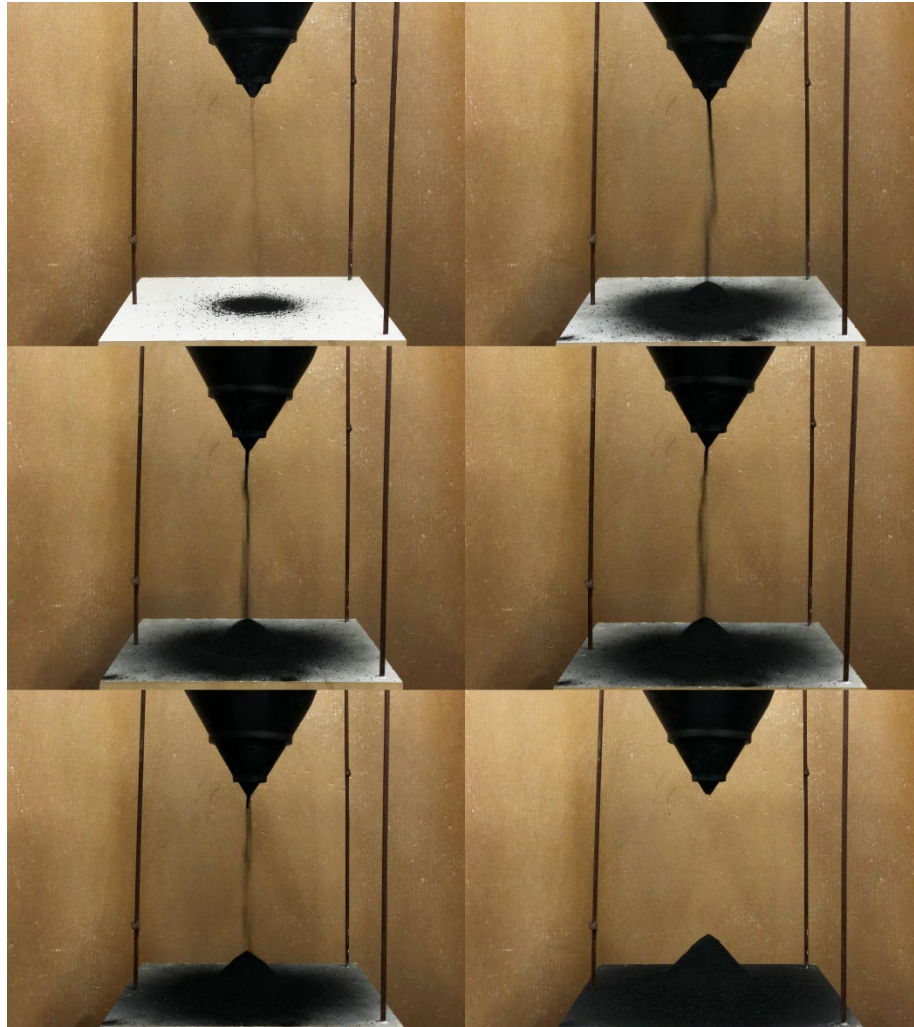


Figure 15. Early test to check the flow of the charcoal, 2024, image by author.

of time instead of suddenly.

While the process of the flow continues and is completed after a period, eventually the pile of charcoal will begin to build up and become similar in shape and size to the funnel. This balancing of the two elements symbolizes that my intention of my prayer and the outcome will be equal in the future. The symmetry and the mirror shape between the funnel and the charcoal, is also related to my perspective about prayer that I mentioned in the beginning. Through my

prayer, I feel like I am looking at the mirror and trying to understand myself spiritually, in a similar way to viewing my body features physically.

## **Video Display**

The initial plan for this installation was to physically present the falling charcoal directly during the exhibition period. This plan was intended to show the viewer various forms of the charcoal pile over time. I want to visualize notions of growth and persistence in relation to believing in prayer. This is something that needs to be done and repeated. Unfortunately, this idea is not possible due to safety reasons. The dust of the fine, falling charcoal is uncontrollable and harmful if inhaled by the viewer. I tested the charcoal grain flow during the studio critique in May this year, and even after a short period the charcoal grain quickly filled the room with dust. I decided to record the process of the falling charcoal with a video camera. Using the video footage addressed the safety concern without having to sacrifice my idea.

To prepare for the video recording, I created a frame that could hold the funnel and accommodate the falling charcoal. I made the funnel with a hole diameter of 13 centimetres, while keeping in mind the duration of time needed for the complete process. The first test was based on the different finish qualities of the grain. After comparing the record of fine grain and medium grain, I ended up choosing the finer grain because of the smoother flows for the video display. The second test was related to the duration of the video. I tried several tests with the video speed, from recording in actual time, slow motion and fast motion. I chose the actual time video that was around 15 minutes long, the same speed that was displayed during the studio critique in August. The actual recording time was chosen to let the viewer see the change in the charcoal pile in real time. The fast motion video seems rushed and less meditative, while the slow-motion video seems too dramatic and dishonest because it is not what happens during the process.

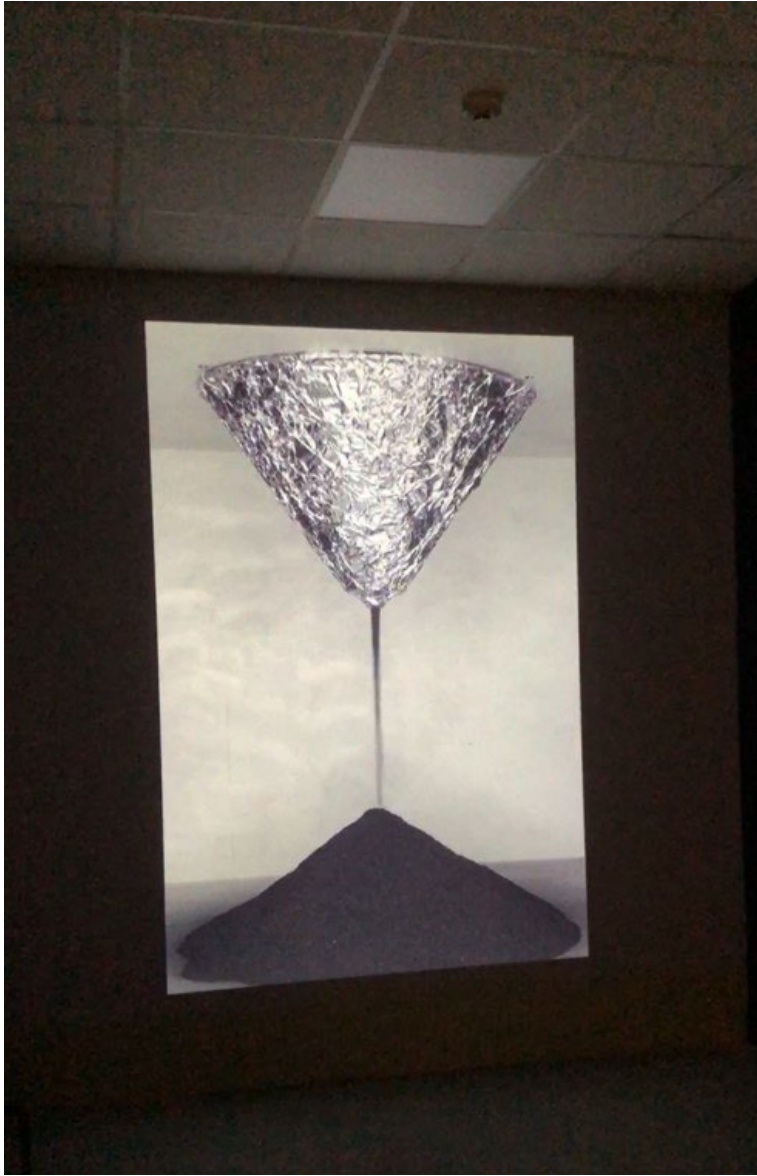


Figure 16. Video test, 2024, image by author.

## **Final Exhibition - Both Video and Installation**

From the previous studio critiques in May and August in which I the installation and the video works separately, I realized that each mode of display had its own advantages that could not be replaced by one another. The installation enables the viewer to get close. In addition, the lighting setup enhances the atmosphere I want to present. The video footage shows the charcoal falling process from the beginning until the charcoal in the funnel is depleted. The video provides a meditative and calming effect enabling the viewer to appreciate the subtle growth in scale of the charcoal pile.

I decided to display both the installation and the video in a different room. Initially, I planned to display them in the same room. However, since I can use two rooms side by side, I want to display each work separately so the viewer can have different experiences. After viewing the room chosen for the installation, I started making a mock-up to check the scale. I made a funnel 180 centimetres in diameter; a size that I feel is sufficient for the viewer to walk around in the room comfortably. As I believe that prayer is an activity that brings comfort, I want to avoid the viewer feel cramped when they enter the room which they might if I made the scale too large.

The video highlights the concept of prayers as a repetitive and cumulative process rather than focusing on a result. As I usually repeat my prayer daily, I never expect that the result will appear instantly or even if the request of my prayer will be granted, yet I still insist on doing it. On the other hand, the installation wants to highlight the power of the prayer, and the faith in believing the process that is not visible. Even though the process of the falling charcoal is not visible, the viewer is able to use their imagination to capture the process in between.

## - P A R T 3 -

### FUTURE

#### **Plan After Study**

Upon completing this MFA programme, I want to continue creating artworks based on the concepts discussed in this exegesis. Even though the topic of prayer and faith is personal and subjective, I believe it will still be relevant in the future. Rapid change in society has led people to become anxious, worried, and depressed (Hidaka, 2012). Through simple activities such as prayer, I wish that people could stop for a while to restore their minds and spirits and reflect on themselves. For myself, in particular, this exegesis has become my notes and diary based on my current understanding and perspectives about prayer. The environment and society that I lived in, the relationship with family and loved ones, how I respond to joy and grief, are a few reasons that could impact my perspective about faith and prayer in the future.

In connection with the scale and visual output, there are several things that I could explore further. The scale of the installation plays an important role from a psychological perspective. Creating the installation bigger than human-scale could have a sense of 'divinity' and the 'power' of prayer, while the small-size installation feels more 'precious' and 'meaningful'. Through both options, this installation could bring a different experience for the viewer. The current limitation regarding the safety reason is also one of the concerns that I wish to find a better solution or alternative to display the installation. There are also possibilities to find alternative materials to replace those I have used, such as ashes to replace the charcoal, or using another metal material to replace the aluminium foil. These approaches could variously represent my concepts about prayer and faith in the future.

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