



# ART AND CHRISTIANITY

Living Grace Seminar (2024 May 2)

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# WHY ART?

- Cultivating artistic taste through activities like visiting museums and reading literature can help develop spirituality in the Christian faith in several ways:
  - Restore the sense of wonder and appreciate the world
  - Reach the transcendental reality through symbolism
  - Explore Biblical themes and reflect upon them
  - Evoke emotion and stimulate thought, becoming more compassionate
  - Inspire creativity and see things through a new perspective

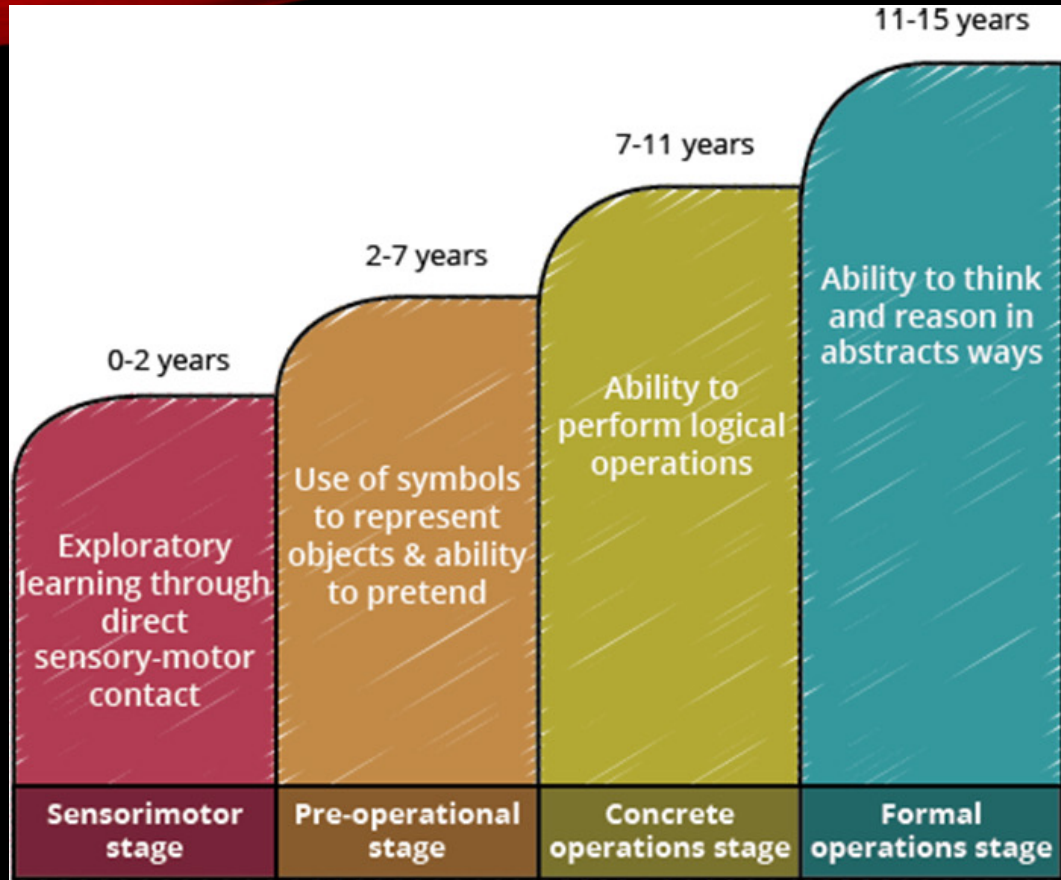


Image source: Roar media

# SENSE OF WONDER

- Exploring art and literature can enrich your grasp and admiration of the wonders of God's creation. Appreciating the beauty, complexity, and creativity expressed through various art forms can foster a **sense of wonder** and awe towards the divine.
- Jean Piaget: Children are natural explorers.
- [Cognitive development](#)

# SENSE OF WONDER



the petals are  
soft



the leaves are  
picky

I see red and  
green

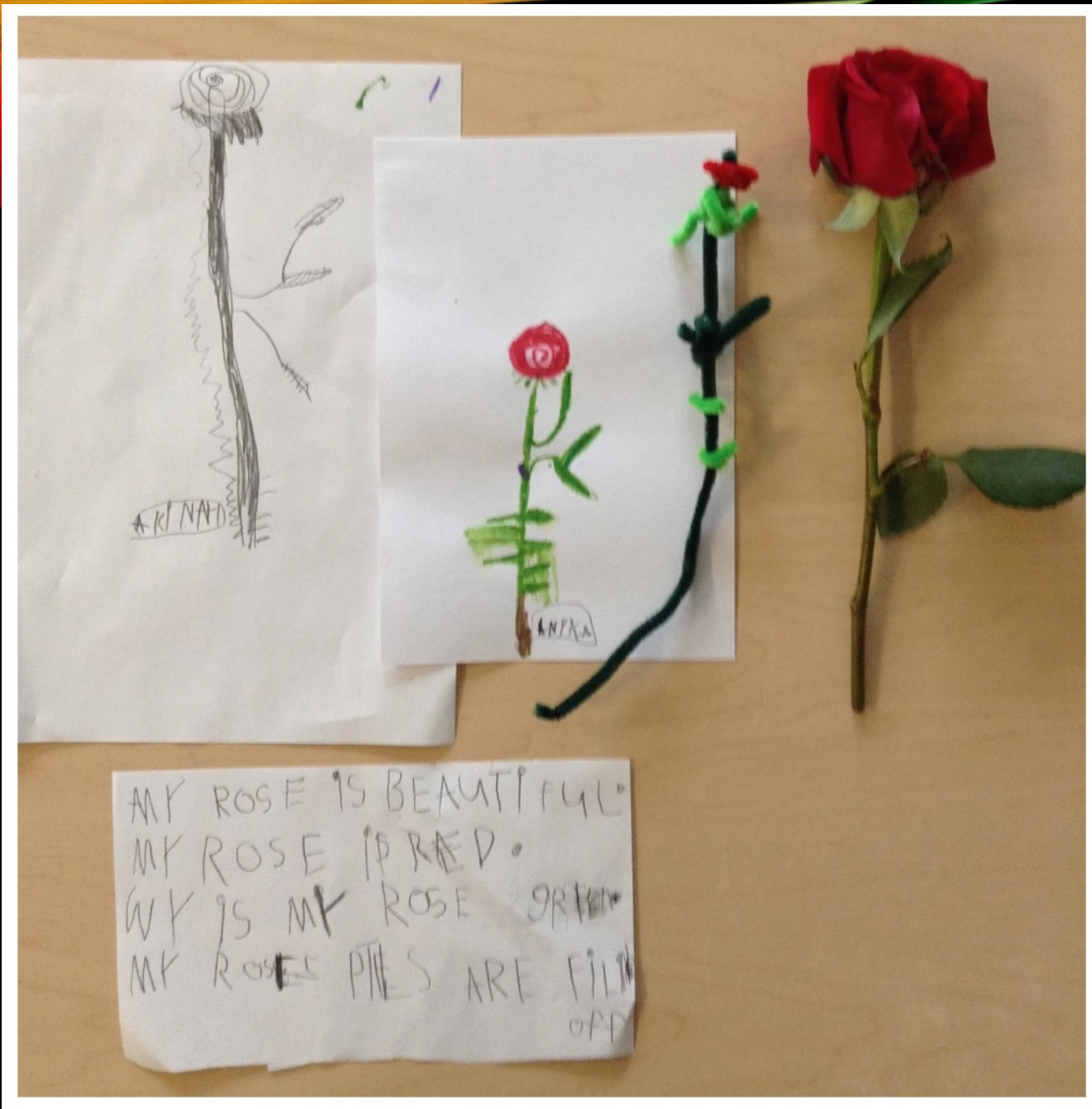


there are spikes  
on the green  
stem



my dad told me  
there is  
important stuff  
in the stem

- Tara Thall: “When children are invited to step into a relationship with an object, they begin to see, think and wonder.”



- Children are natural artists.
- They have a strong sense of wonder.
- It fades as we get older.

# SENSE OF WONDER

- Aristotle: Philosophy begins in wonder.
- In ancient Greece, philosophy encompass almost all disciplines.
- Math starts with wonder.
- Science starts with wonder.
- Art starts with wonder.
- 莊子：「天地有大美而不言，四時有明法而不議，萬物有成理而不說。」



# 2024 TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

- Art and astronomy are integrated.



# GLACIERS

- Art and geology are integrated.







# NATURE REVEALS ITSELF

- Nature reveals itself to science
- Louis Ernest Barrias (1905)
- The beautiful female body is a symbol of natural wonder.
- She exposes her face and body as a gesture of exploring Truth and science.
- Art appreciation revives our sense of wonder to the world that is fading in our adulthood.

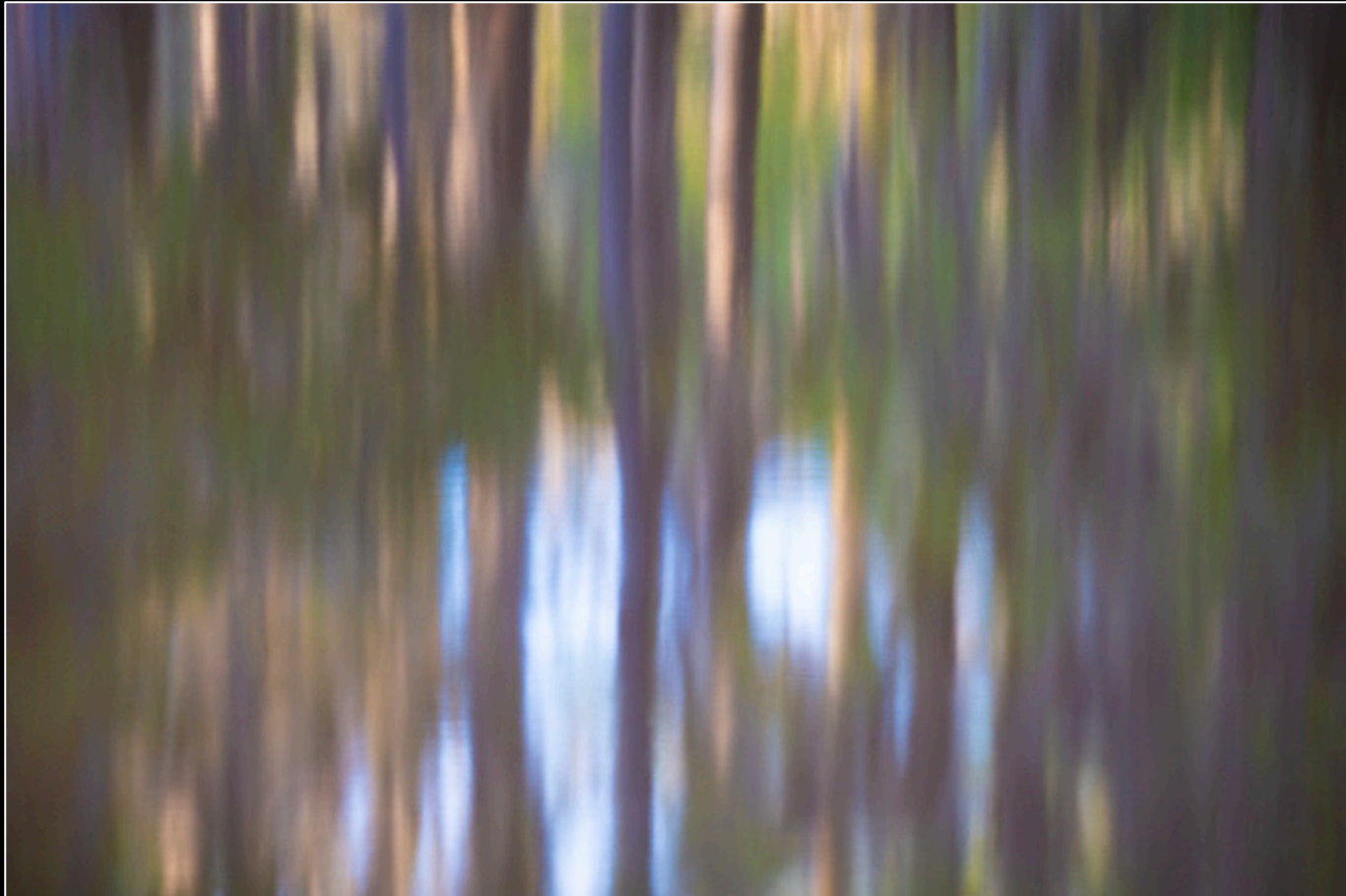
# HAYDN: THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING

- The Heavens are telling the glory of God,
- The wonder of his work displays the firmament.
- Today that is coming speaks it the day,
- The night that is gone to following night.
- The Heavens are telling the glory of God,
- The wonder of his work displays the firmament.
- In all the lands resounds the word,
- Never unperceived, ever understood.
- The Heavens are telling the glory of God,
- The wonder of his work displays the firmament.



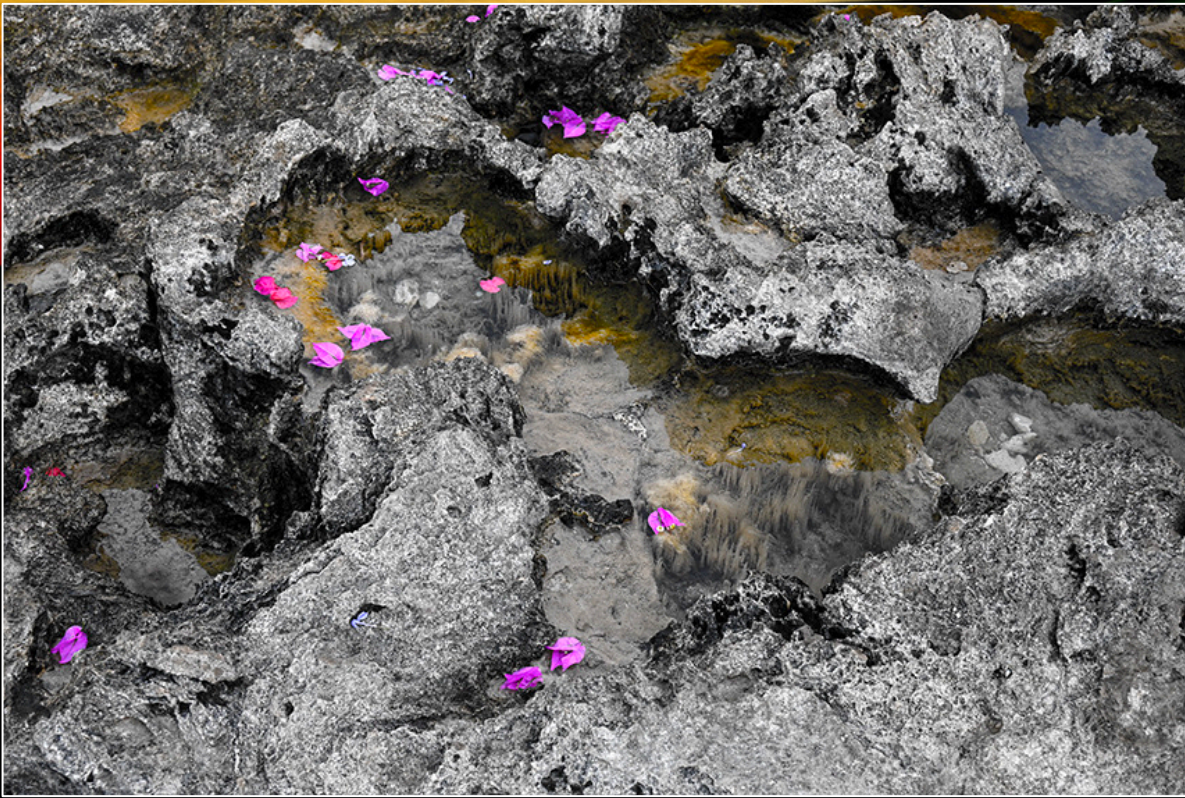
[YouTube](#)

# ORGANIZED CHAOS



- We can see order out of randomness; we can get a sense of wonder from trivial matters or objects in every day's life.
- Caddo Lake

# ORGANIZED CHAOS



- In spite of seemingly chaos, there is a hidden order; there is a hope.





# ORGANIZED CHAOS

- Richard Martin
- Contemporary American photographer

# SYMBOLISM AND TRANSCENDENT REALITY

- Art often communicates through **symbolism and metaphor**. Biblical narratives are rich with symbols, parables, and allegories. Similarly, art can convey deeper spiritual truths beyond the literal.
- Art often points beyond the material world. It invites us to consider **transcendent realities**—the eternal, the divine, and the mysterious.
- Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834): **a sense and taste for the infinite**.
- 只可以意會，不可以言傳。
- 千言萬語，盡在不言中。





# FAITH

- Hiram Powers (1873)
- He made three busts to symbolize the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love.
- Faith wears a tiara bearing the Greek cross on the head. And she looks up to Heaven.
- Marble is a symbol of clarity, self-control and stability.
- 林子祥《石像》



# CHRIST BLESSING

- Giovanni Bellini (1500)
- Christ: Fully human, fully divine
- Golden rays from his head: Divinity
- The withered tree with the solitary bird: The New Covenant grows out of the Old Covenant.
- Rabbits: Resurrection
- Staff: Good shepherd
- Three robed persons: Witnesses
- Bell tower: Salvation through the church
- Dawn light: Victory over death and darkness.



# EXPLORATION OF BIBLICAL THEMES

- Many works of art and pieces of literature are inspired by biblical stories and themes. By engaging with these works or relating Biblical themes to **current situations**, we can gain **new insights into familiar narratives and teachings**, leading to a deeper understanding of their faith.
- By exploring art, we learn to discern layers of meaning and connect them to our faith. For instance, a painting may depict the sacrifice of Christ, inviting us to reflect on redemption and grace.

# THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM

- Edward Hicks (1846-1847)
- Quaker: Pacifist
- Isaiah
- On the left-hand side, the painting portrays that William Penn signed a peace treaty with Native Americans living in the Delaware Valley.
- A hope of peaceful coexistence.





## CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

- Henry Ossawa Tanner (1908)
- Unlike traditional religious paintings that portray Christ as a “superhuman”, Jesus in the painting looks like an ordinary child.
- Jesus Christ is fully divine yet fully human.

# EMOTIONAL AND REFLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- Literature, poetry, and visual art **evoke emotions and thoughts**. They invite us to reflect on our own lives, struggles, and faith journey, thus **cultivating our empathy and compassion**.
- When we read a profound novel or stand before a moving painting or sculpture, we engage in a **spiritual dialogue**. These moments of reflection can lead to prayer, meditation, and spiritual growth.

# RETURN OF THE MISSING CREW

- Frederick Bacon Barwell (1860)
- The young girl thought her lover is gone.
- Reversal of fortune may be around the corner.
- But, what if her lover was really dead?
- What would I do if I were her?



# WOMAN IN A HAREM COURTYARD

- Luis Ricardo Falero (1875)
- A concubine in a courtyard is looking at a bird.
- Both are prisoners in spite of luxury.



# PRODIGAL SON

- Thomas Hart Benton (1939-1941)
- The NT story has a happy ending: the son is forgiven by the father when returning home (unlimited chances).
- Alternate ending.
- 一失足成千古恨，回頭已是百年身。
- 桃花依舊，人面全非。



# INSPIRATION FOR WORSHIP AND CREATIVITY

- Artistic expressions can serve as **sources of inspiration for worship and creative expression** within Christian communities. For example, architecture, hymns, visual arts, and performance.
- Engaging with art and literature can **stimulate one's own creativity** and inspire new ways of expressing one's faith, whether through writing, visual arts, music, or other forms of artistic expression.
- You may start to look at the world through **a new perspective or a new lens**, thus enriching your life.



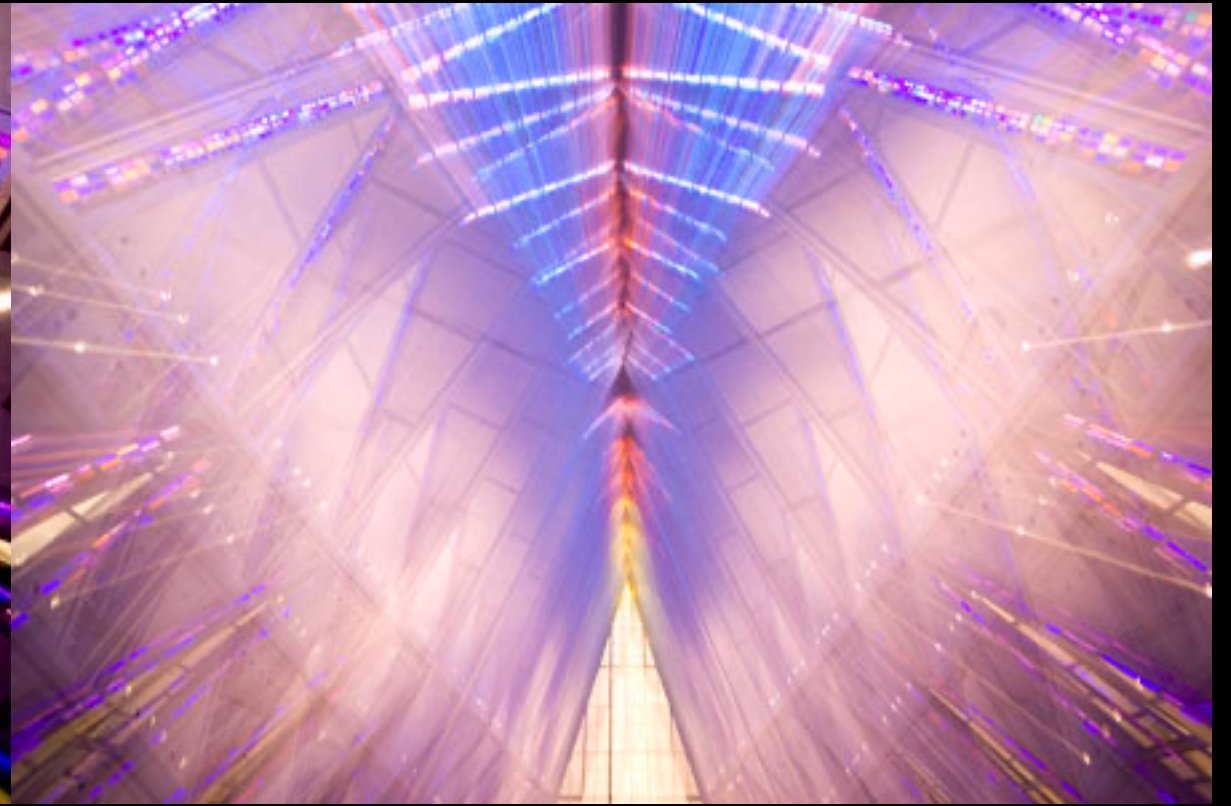


# CHRIST CATHEDRAL

- Formerly Crystal Cathedral
- Established in 1980 by Rev. Robert Schuller
- Sold to the Catholic Church in 2011

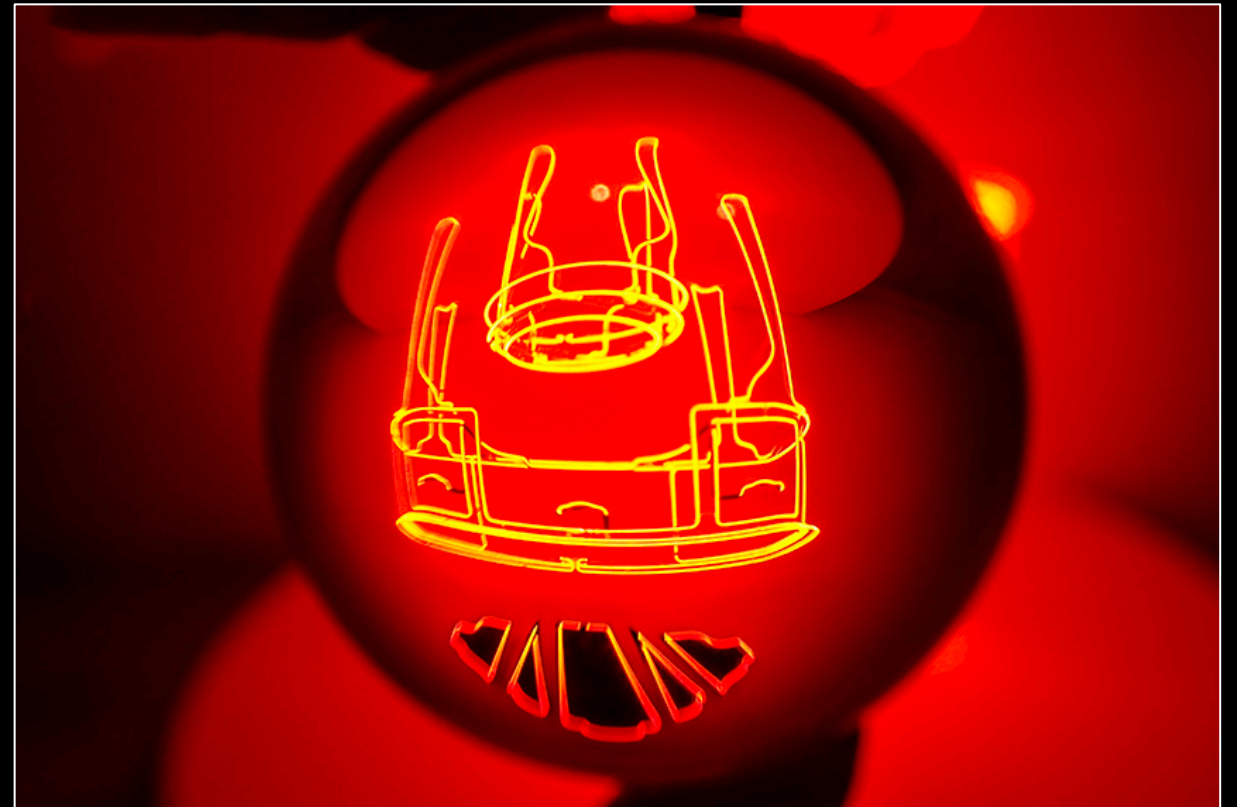


# US AIRFORCE ACADEMY CHAPEL

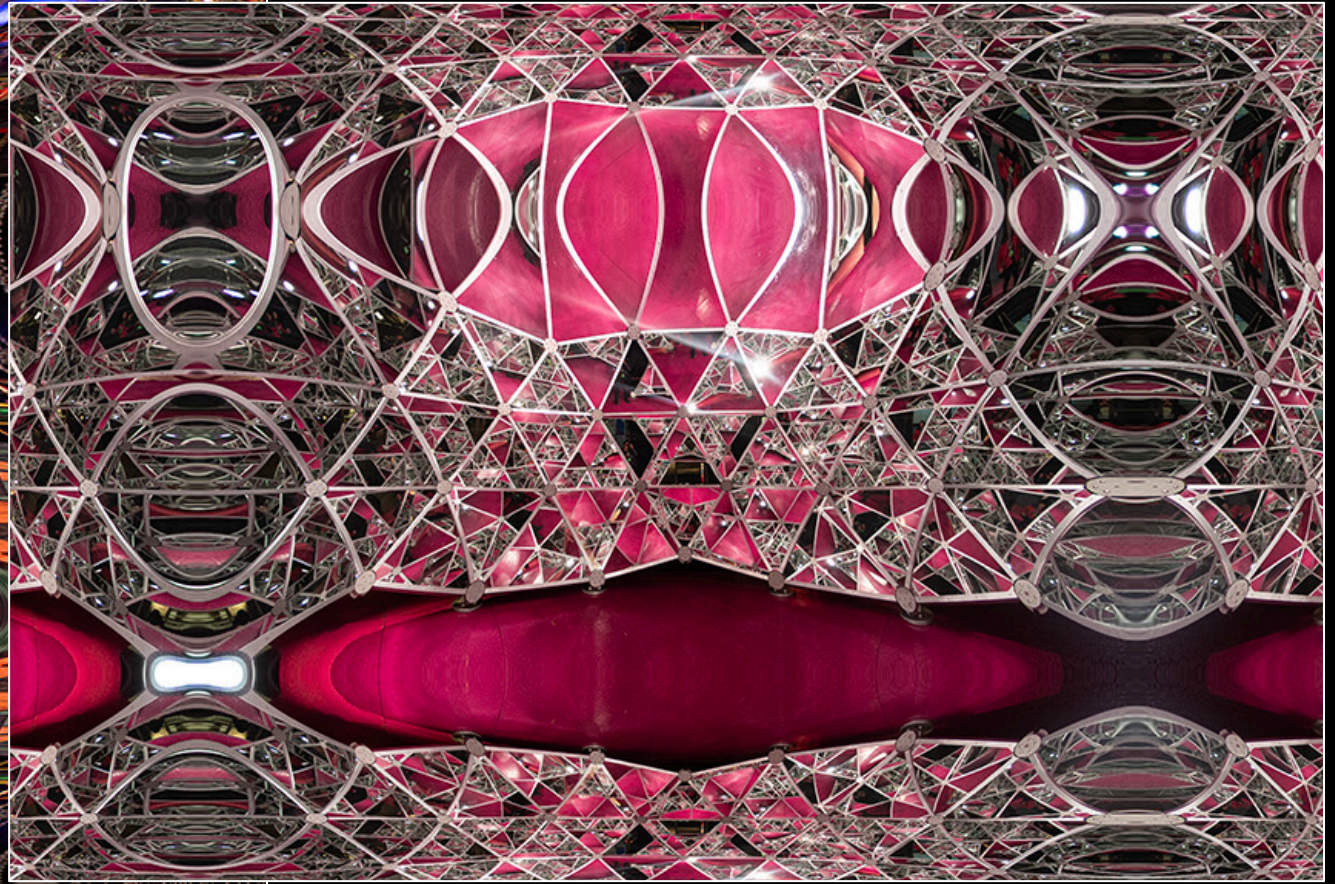
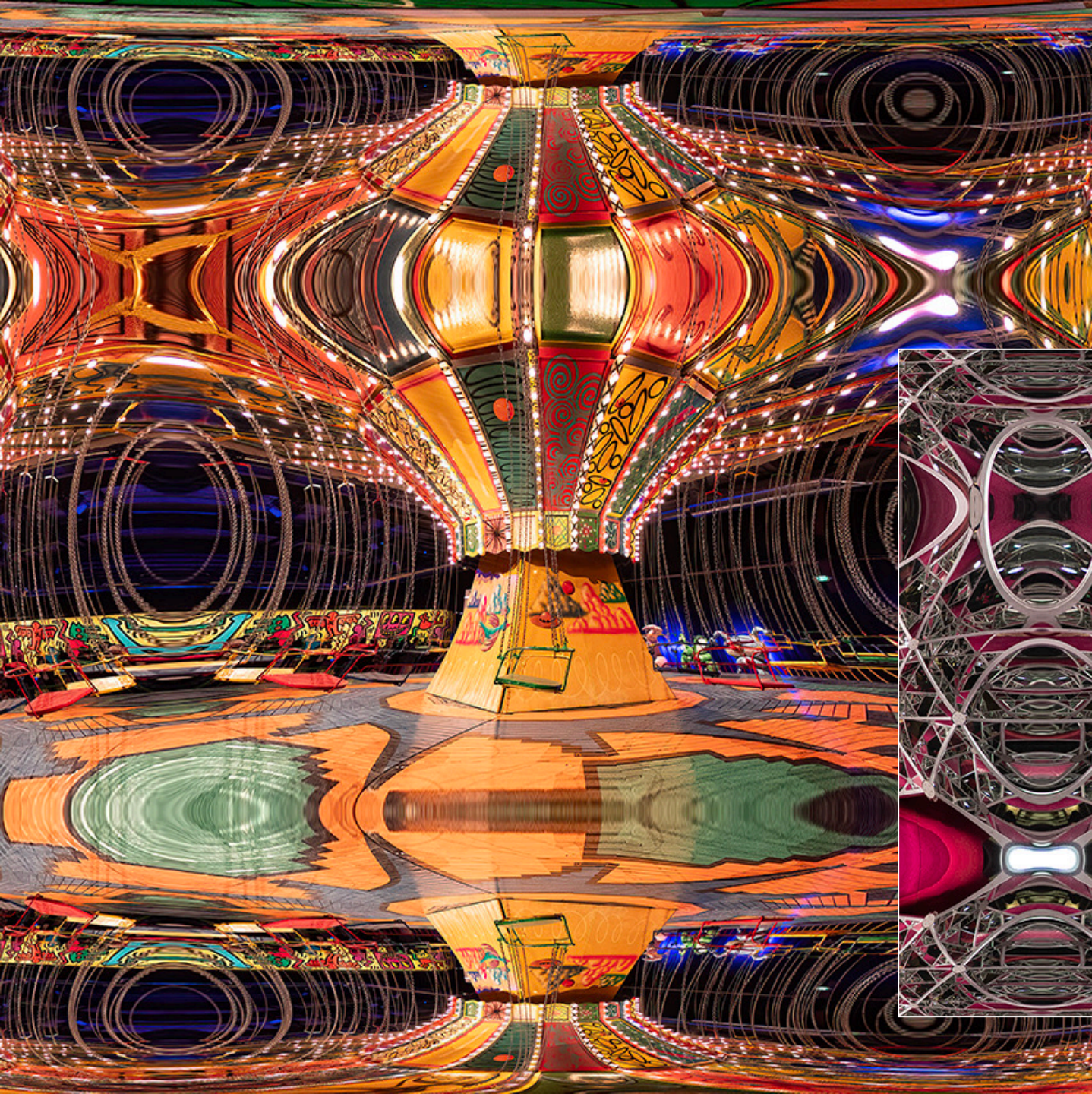




BOOST CREATIVITY



BOOST  
CREATIVITY





# SUMMARY

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