

## HYPERALLERGIC

# Contemporary Takes on the Self in a Manhattan Church



by Allison Meier  
September 14, 2015

Artistic interpretations of self are inhabiting the nave of Manhattan's Church of St. Paul the Apostle, with contemporary sculpture, painting, collage, and other media installed alongside the candlelit chapels and religious icons. *On the Inner and Outer Self*, presented by the collective Openings, is their ninth annual group exhibition in the 19th-century church.

The 28 artists include a range of responses, and like any large group show the strengths vary. However, for each piece, the surrounding architecture is stunning and the Roman Catholic religious statuary and contemplative space is an unconventional contrast to the art.

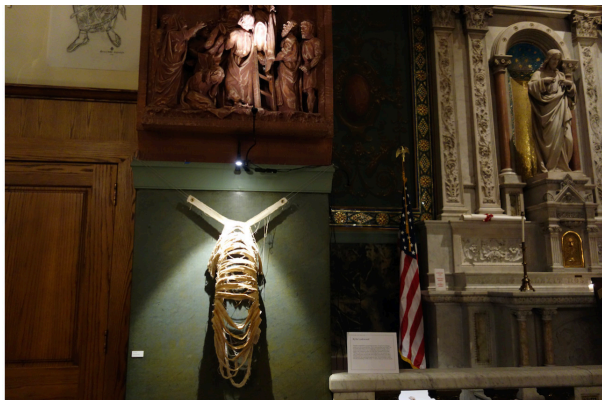
Near the entrance, Lori Merhige has a dynamic sculpture of a length of fabric twisted into a knot, considering our chaotic lifelines, and nearby Kylie Lockwood's tiny "Hand Fragment" made of pigmented porcelain is broken in front of an old war memorial. Joy Curtis has two haunting fabric works illuminated below Stations of the Cross, one formed with indigo dye and gravity, the other molded like a disembodied ribcage with frayed edges. And in one of the simplest pieces,



Joy Curtis, "Spirit Frequency"

McIntyre Parker has just a small redwood box quietly resting on the stairs leading to the altar, like an offering.

St. Paul the Apostle already has some unconventional permanent art, like Lumen Martin Winter's massive "Angel of the Resurrection," and a sculpture of Jesus incorporating a real T-rex fossil by Alan Detrich. Like St. John the Divine further uptown, which in 2013 hosted South African artist Jane Alexander's anthropomorphic sculptures, and Chinese artist Xu Bing's huge *Phoenix* sculptures last year, the setting contributes a lot to the experience of exploring the art embedded in the spiritual space. Below are some photographs from *On the Inner and Outer Self*.



Joy Curtis, "Rust Never Sleeps"