

Research Week Abstract

Title: The House of Our Gods

Program of Study: Strategic Communication

Presentation Type: Juried Arts

Subtype: Creative and Artistic

Mentor and Mentor Email: David Wayne Meyer (dwmeyer@liberty.edu)

Student name and email: Reyna Collazo (rcollazo4@liberty.edu)

Abstract: This sculpture is a physical representation of research conducted on the vandalism epidemic that currently plagues London, England, and its relation to the decreased church population. Through both formal academic research and immersion via LU Send, the artist demonstrates that the vandalism and graffiti throughout the city are indicative of the spiritual need of the people in London. The artist's findings showed that the primary psychological reason for property defacement is a desire for control. Though London is a city of luxury where inhabitants are encouraged to pursue every vice in the pursuit of happiness, the citizens are statistically becoming more unsatisfied. This lack of contentment directly parallels the drop in regular church attendance over the past decade. *The House of Our Gods* stands as a visual marker of the statistics and personal experiences the artist noted about London churches: stunning neo-Gothic architecture maintained by the government for tourist visits but lacking in regular attendees. The outer walls make the sculpture appear like a church, but the back wall is torn away to reveal the artist's photos of graffiti taken during her time in London. The piece's design symbolizes both the barrenness of the church buildings and the spiritual hollowness of the people. The photos show the British outcry for social change and the fulfillment of sinful desires. Finally, the artist concluded her research with a Biblical integration: the satisfaction Londoners seek cannot come from vandalism, social remodeling, or indulging fantasies. Perfect contentment is only found in a relationship with Christ.

Christian worldview integration: The central theme of my research is that uptakes in vandalism can be directly correlated to spiritual deficiency. Art has been used as a means of communication for thousands of years; illegal art communicates on an even deeper level because of the spiritual and psychological implications that come with committing vandalism. People who feel unseen attempt to force fellow humans to notice them instead of turning to the "God who sees" (Genesis 16:13, NIV). In London, England, this phenomenon is especially noteworthy because of the culture of the city. During my time with LU Send, I saw extreme examples of wealth and pleasure; luxury cars, social drunkenness, and a gay pride event with over 1.5 million people in attendance were just a few of my firsthand experiences. One would assume that the residents would feel fulfilled in a city where pursuing desire above all else is the primary focus. Through my personal relationship with Jesus and my research, I have learned that "the heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9); seeking the sinful desires of the heart will never bring contentment. Even in their privilege, the London population is still experiencing the need for social control. The primary benefit of my research on the culture should be demonstrating the importance of spiritual development alongside social growth. Even in areas that appear successful or affluent, the people will still experience brokenness if they are not rooted in the Lord. Evangelistic efforts should look different in cities where physical need is not a top priority. Missionaries and church planters must focus on demonstrating that materialism and sensuality does not result in fulfillment. In order for Londoners and other residents of wealthy cities to experience the joy they crave, they must repent and follow Christ. Otherwise, they risk becoming like the church landmarks throughout London: stunning and well-groomed externally, but internally empty and void of genuine belief.