

May 2020

## Homeward Bound

kyle Peruch

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), and the [Mormon Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Peruch, kyle, "Homeward Bound" (2020). *LSU Master's Theses*. 5150.  
[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/5150](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/5150)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

# **HOMEWARD BOUND**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by

Kyle Peruch

B.A., Brigham Young University - Idaho, 2013

M.F.A., Louisiana State University, 2020

August 2020

Dedicated to my eternal companion Melanie.

She deserves this degree more than I do.

## **Acknowledgments**

I want to thank my children, Zelaya, Emilia and Alessio for somewhat listening to their mother when I was working in the studio.

I would also like to thank my parents for always setting an example for me. They taught me how to work with my hands and allowed me to be creative. They also taught me how to pray, which is one of the most important tools I have.

I am also grateful for both of my late grandfathers, Oscar Brosi and Samuel Peruch, who helped support my creative endeavors from the beginning. Grandpa Brosi gave me a love for woodworking and helped me understand the fundamentals of craft. Grandpa Peruch, an artist in his own right, never pursued a career in art because of the lack of external support. He tried his darndest to give me all the emotional and material support I needed to peruse my dreams.

Finally, I want to acknowledge all those individuals who helped get me to this point in my career. My five siblings, Pieter, Nathan, Jared, Katelyn and Melanie. The best two professors in the world, Mathew Geddes and Loren Schwerd, who together, taught me the fundamentals of three-dimensional design. Lastly, my dear graduate committee members Denyce Celentano, James Beaman and Jeremiah Ariaz. Individually, they taught me how to see.



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Artworks.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Agency and Opposition .....	1
Vita.....	13

## List of Artworks

Albedrío (figure 1) .....	2
Albedrío (figure 2) .....	3
Albedrío (figure 3) .....	4
Albedrío (figure 4) .....	4
Chapapote Spire (figure 5) .....	5
Chapapote Spire (figure 6) .....	7
Chapapote Spire (figure 7) .....	7
The Antithesis (figure 8) .....	8
The Antithesis (figure 9) .....	8
The Antithesis (figure 10) .....	9
Without Beginning, Without End (figure 11) .....	10
Without Beginning, Without End (figure 12) .....	12

## **Abstract**

This paper explores agency and opposition as the underlining themes in the artworks of Homeward Bound. Both doctrines are important religious teachings that I have used to explore artistic ideas such as tension, balance and perspective. Each artwork displays a point of view on how I have confronted opposition in my lifetime. The sculptures are also meant to offer a sense of encouragement and hope to the viewer as they analyze each piece of art.

## Agency and Opposition

The teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are important to me as a visual artist. As one of its practicing members, I am constantly implementing the doctrines I study and learn into my artwork. For instance, the teachings of agency and opposition have become an integral part of the pieces I have created for my thesis show, *Homeward Bound*. Agency and opposition, for members The Church of Jesus Christ, are seen as gifts from God, given to His children, to navigate this life and ultimately return home to Him. We see this life as a test. However, “to be tested, we must have the agency to choose between alternatives. To provide alternatives on which to exercise our agency, we must have opposition.”<sup>1</sup> By choosing between oppositions, we develop into who we are and who we will become. The prophet Lehi, in the Book of Mormon explained it best when he said:

It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad...’ The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.<sup>2</sup>

When I design my art pieces, there is always an underlining question in the back of my mind. For this specific body of work, I wanted to know if it was possible to implement the ideas of agency and opposition into three-dimensional artworks? This began by designing “*Albedrio*” (fig. 1- 4), a large wooden pyramidal sculpture that almost expands across the entire length of the gallery floor. In this piece, I butted together two symmetrical spire forms which create a teeter-

---

<sup>1</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, *Opposition in All Things*, 2016

<sup>2</sup> 2 Nephi 2: 11-16

totter effect and forces the viewer's eyes to go up or down when viewing the sculpture from its profile. The implied upward and downward movements are gradual and slow. Each side of the sculpture offers the viewer a direction to follow. This vacillation between the apexes reflects the oppositions and choices we face on a daily basis. Very few of our decisions keep us at the top or bottom. We always seem to be moving gradually in one direction or the other. This feeling of constant motion is what I want the viewer to have when interacting with this sculpture.



Figure 1. *Albedrio*, Kyle Peruch, 2019, Wood, 22'x 5'x 5'

The word *Albedrio* is translated to mean, “free will.” To enhance the idea of freedom within the sculpture, I designed the linear structure with a great amount of negative space. I didn't want the viewers to only focus on the upward and downward movements of the piece. I wanted them to visually travel through and around the form. If I would have added a shell to *Albedrio*, it would have felt visually heavy. Everything contrary to what free will is. The

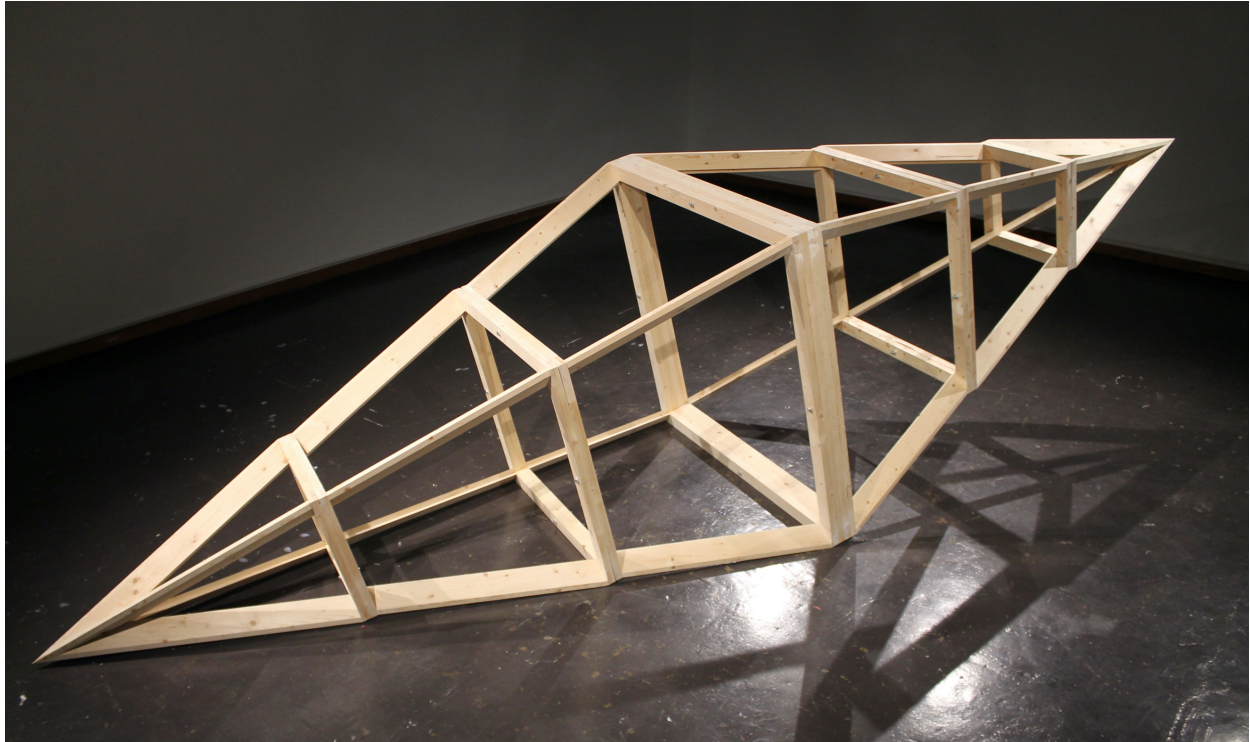


Figure 2. *Albedrío*, Kyle Peruch, 2019, Wood, 22'x 5'x 5'

sculpture needed to have a sense of visual and physical freedom in order for it to really encompass the idea of agency.

With no outer shell visible, *Albedrío* has a representation of structural framing with no completed facade. This idea comes from the personal incompleteness we feel we may have. Through continued labor, we can strive to build and complete ourselves by making positive and worthwhile choices.

When viewing *Albedrío* from its profile, the viewer can see the complete form and experience the upward and downward movements effortlessly. However, as one moves around the sculpture and stands at the base of the point touching the floor, the eyes naturally follow the ascending lines that converge on the opposite side from which you are standing. When the viewer stands at the elevated point of the sculpture, the spire is level with the observers face. This causes the eyes to focus on that tapered end rather than follow the linear path downwards



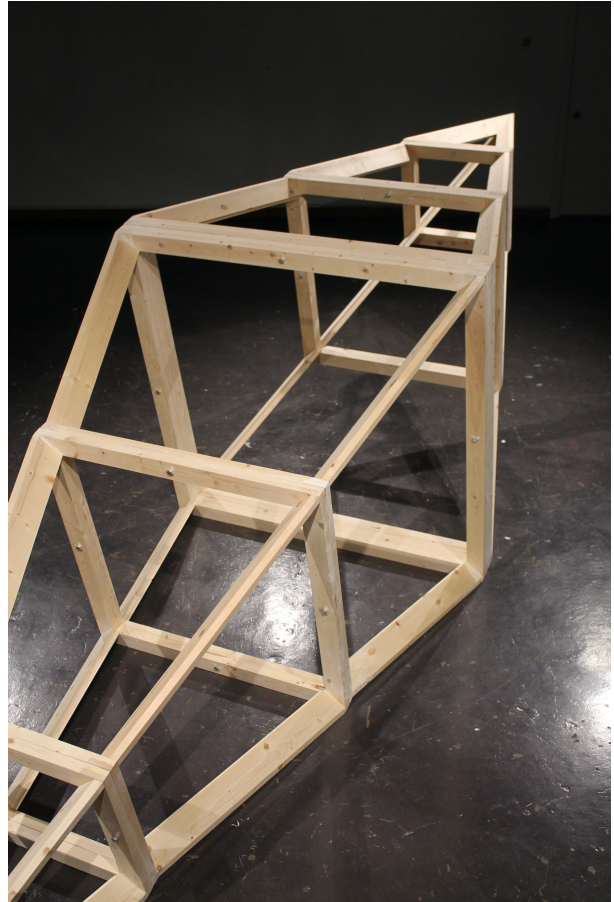


Figure 3 and 4. *Albedrio*, Kyle Peruch, 2019, Wood, 22'x 5'x 5'

to the point touching the ground. Being confronted by this ascending point makes me feel like I am fixed on a positive direction. When we make correct decisions in this life, our perspectives and focusses will eventually evolve. We will follow an upward path and focus on the pinnacle point to we strive to reach.

Over the last two years, I have used the spire shape in my work to be a reminder of the direction I am trying to go, which is hopefully back home, to my creator. *Albedrio* uses the spire to give the viewer an upward and positive perspective one can have when using agency wisely. However, the spire form was also used to reinforce the ideas of a downward movement, which can occur when we make poor choices. In the sculpture *Chapapote* (fig. 5-7), I wanted to



Figure 5. *Chapapote Spire*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Wood, Cast Iron, 10.5'x 2'x 2'



focus specifically on the ascending movement of the spire, rather than downward, in order to continue with the idea of having an upward perspective.

The base of the sculpture is roughly textured and made of thick cast iron. The texture gives off the feeling of stone which creates a visually solid foundation. The crown of the piece was built using hundreds of small pieces of wood cut to size and layered one on top of the other until the proper height was achieved. For me, each individual piece is representative of the choices we make in this life. Our good decisions can add up over time and get us closer to our goal. However, we as humans are always susceptible to falling. If you look closely at the sculpture, there is an ominous tilt to the spire which causes it to look as if it could tip over at any moment. This leaning motion can be directly related to our vulnerability as humans.

I tried to emphasize the presence of the sculptures sloping motion by painting a thick layer of tar over the exterior of the crown. This dark color created a strong contrast to the surrounding environment. Adding the tar to *Chapapote* also ensured that the surface would always be protected from the outward elements. Tar is typically considered as a ruthlessly sticky substance, almost impossible to remove. However, it is often forgotten that tar is a useful tool because of those sticky qualities it possesses. It is used to protect and cover materials which tend to rot over time and lose their structural integrity.

I truly believe that agency and opposition allow us to grow. However, because we are human, we run the risk to making bad choices at all times. Yes, recognizing our poor decisions can make us stronger, but sometimes they can overwhelm us and make us feel weak and frail, ready to tip over at any moment. I want the viewer to consider what it is that they use for their tar? Where do they receive protection and strength in moments of weakness? Do they even have

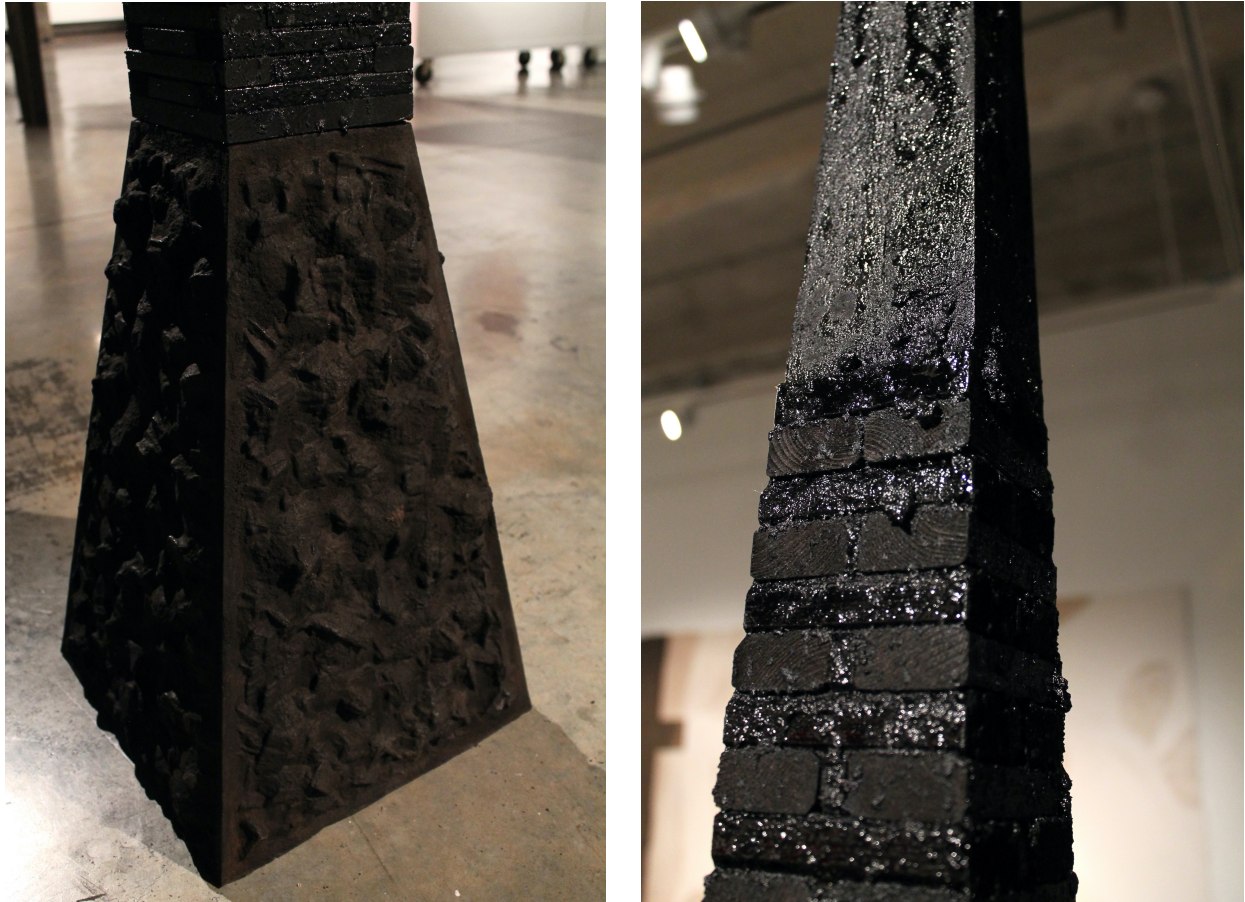


Figure 6 and 7. *Chapapote Spire*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Wood, Tar and Cast Iron, 10.5'x 2'x 2'

a protection? Moving upward and using our agency is important, but having a little help along the way isn't a bad idea.

God understood that we would need help and protection during our mortal journey. He knew we would face opposition on a daily basis. One of ways I have seen His protection in my own life is through living His commandments. By following God's divine principles and taking the necessary steps forward, not only do I feel His love, but I constantly see personal growth within myself.

In the sculpture *Antithesis* (fig. 8 -10), I wanted there to be a visual representation of the growth we gain through our missteps. A path which signifies upward progression and advancement. However, in contrast, I also wanted to portray a path of opposition. A path that we

must all face when searching for personal progress. The vertical path is meant to lead the eye upward and forward, while the lower horizontal path, which is coming towards the viewer, is meant to keep the eyes low and grounded. This contrast of each direction was strengthened when I cast the light downward on the sculpture. By positioning the lights in strategic locations, powerful shadows were created on *Antithesis* which helps to distinguish the differing textures of each of the two paths. The top portion of the sculpture, which is made of precise cuts of wood, has a sense of stability, unlike the base which is made of various sizes of coke stone, it comes across as unstable.

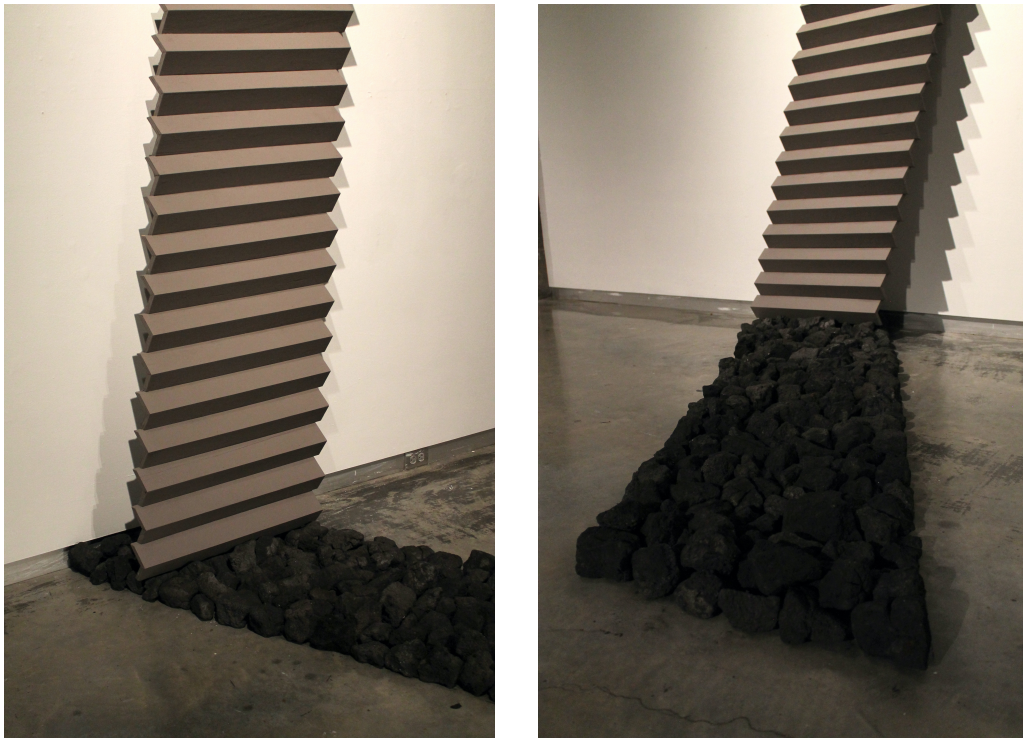


Figure 8 and 9. *The Antithesis*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Wood, Paint and Coke, 7' x 7' x 2.5'

Still, both paths do have their similarities. They both have discernable organization and direction which gives them a sense of purpose and meaning. I liken these distinctions to God and Satan. They are both organized and powerful, but yet, they still have different intentions. God desires that man would grow and become more like Him. While Satan, would have mankind





Figure 10. *The Antithesis*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Wood, Paint and Coke, 7' x 7' x 2.5'

pulled down to a pit of sorrow and sin. These distinctions may never be seen as I recognize them, but if the viewer can discover the contrasts between each path, they have the potential of gaining their own personal interpretation which could benefit them greatly.

This moment of connection, or personal interpretation each individual has with one of my pieces, is something I constantly think about when creating my artwork. I want the viewer to be caught up in a moment of reverence, where they feel part of the piece itself. Having these feelings of reverence and adoration are necessary elements to connecting with my pieces because they were created with those same sentiments. I want the pieces to provide a presence that represents my beliefs. Typically, when individuals walk into sacred buildings or locations they naturally speak in whispers and show respect. I want the art to elicit this response so that the



Figure 11. *Without Beginning, Without End*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Coke, Sand and Iron, 7'x 7'



viewer instinctively treats the space and pieces with solemnity. When this feeling is created, I believe each viewer can experience the work in unique way.

When designing *Without Beginning, Without End* (fig 11-12), I wanted to continue to illustrate the ideas of tension and balance that had previously been aforementioned in the works above. To achieve this, I placed a thin and large circular form on a roughly texture stone. By presenting the form on such a precarious base, the circle felt that it might roll off at any moment. The circle itself has always been a representation of life for me. Life is always moving and never ceasing. However, just like in life, sometimes we feel like we are standing on a narrow path trying to keep balance.

Although the sculpture's form seems to be the predominant focal point of the piece, the textures and colors equally draw the eye's attention. The surface, made from a mixture of sand and gesso, is rough and gritty. While the coloring, an assortment of reds, oranges and browns, is made from using a variety of patina mixtures on acrylic iron. These visual elements are further identified by the downward lighting which seems to saturate the colors and pronounce the shadows. The texture and natural colors within the format give the piece a lively quality which personifies the trials and adversities we experience in this life. All the while, it is being perched on a narrow stone, balancing and leaning against a wall for support.

Stability is something we all desire in one way or another, but it is hard to come by. We are constantly faced with opposition, having to make choices. These choices allow us to either stay stable, to slightly lean, or just fall all together. However, because life is one eternal round, we have the ability to roll right back up and reclaim our equilibrium. By placing the circular form on top of the irregular surface of the stone, a sense of tension was created. Regardless of

that tension we may see and feel, there is still a sense of optimistic hope and strength found within the sculpture's composition.



Figure 12. *Without Beginning, Without End*, Kyle Peruch, 2020, Sand and Iron on Lauan, 7'x 7'

The art displayed in Homeward Bound expresses the doctrines of agency and opposition in visual form. Doctrines of which are fundamental to the teachings of my religion. Each artwork attempted to display a unique perspective on how we might face opposition in this lifetime. Equally, the sculptures try to offer the onlooker a sense of encouragement and hope as they traverse the landscapes of this life. I believe that agency and opposition are part of God's plan. A plan which He created for the benefit of His children. As we make good choices and find balance in our life, we can draw closer to Him and become elevated and secure.

## **Vita**

Kyle Peruch was born and raised in the small agricultural town of Madera, Calif. His father was a local mortician and almond farmer. His parents also owned a monument business where he began his art career as a headstone designer. This passion for design and drawing took him to art school in Idaho to study figurative painting and sculpture. After ten years of working in Idaho, Peruch moved with his young family to Baton Rouge to study sculpture at Louisiana State University.