Summary

Featuring the works of mixed-media and portraiture artist Patrick Dougher, “God Body” is a call-to-action, a rallying cry to understanding that the ultimate source is within. Made of flesh and soulfulness that is beyond measure, Dougher’s work captures this iconic beauty — our richness, our fragility, and our bold audacity to inspire all. This exhibition is part one of a three-part series that explores spirituality in the African diaspora.

Featured Artist

Born and raised in Brooklyn New York, Patrick Dougher is a self-taught fine artist, musician, poet and actor. Patrick worked as an art therapist with HIV positive children at Kings County Hospital, a co-curatorial at the Museum of African Art, a youth counselor and teaching artist at Project Reach and Studio in a School and most recently as the Program Director of Groundswell, NYC’s premier community mural arts organization where he oversaw and directed over 300 public mural projects throughout the city. He is currently working as the Interim Director of Education for BRIC Arts Media and as a freelance consultant with The Center for Court Innovations. For over 20 years Patrick has used the arts to empower and support the socio-emotional growth of at-risk and disenfranchised youth of the city. Patrick’s art reflects his life’s mission to inspire and empower by honestly and fearlessly holding up a mirror to society’s inequity and injustices. Through his art he seeks to celebrate the noble beauty and divine spiritual nature of people of African descent and to connect urban African-American culture to its roots in sacred African art and ceremony.
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF GOD BODY?

According to artist Patrick Dougher, the title of the show, God Body, refers to “the philosophy of the 5 Percent Nation of Gods and Earths. God Body being someone who has knowledge of self and recognizes their true Divine and God nature. In my belief God is within and without. Nature and sentient beings are pieces of the God force and even in an urban environment ‘pieces of God’ can be found in the discarded. This is the reasoning behind the found metal series ‘Brooklyn Talisman’ as well as ‘Art Cans’.”

Right image is titled GOD ABOVE IV by Patrick Dougher, acrylic and silver leaf on canvas, 30” x 40”.

KEY TERMS

SPIRITUALITY: an individual’s relationship with the concept of being, either involving God or not involving God

RELIGION: a shared set of texts, beliefs, and traditions revolving around one’s relationship with God

FIVE PERCENT NATION: also referred to as the “Nation of Gods and Earths” or “the Five Percenters”, this movement operates on the belief that Black were the first beings on planet earth. The fathers are the “Gods” and the mothers are the “Earths.” The main belief within the Five Percent Nation states that ten percent of the Earth’s population knows the “truth of existence” but seeks to keep the world ignorant. Eighty-five percent of the population is ignorant to the world’s truths. The remaining five percent know the truth and set out to educate the ignorant eighty-five percent.1

GOD: God is often defined as the “supreme being” who creates all and controls all. In some religions, there are multiple Gods instead of just one.

SELF ACTUALIZATION: to attain the highest form of self

DIVINITY: Divinity has two meanings - the state of being divine or the study of theology

AFRICAN DIASPORA: a term used to describe the dispersion of people of African descent across various communities

NAMASTE: “the Divine in me honors the Divine in you” or “I bow to the divine in you”

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QUESTIONS

1. What does “spirituality” mean in the context of the black community and/or African diaspora? How has the meaning changed throughout history?
2. What is the definition of “divinity”?
3. How can individuals go about finding divinity within?
4. What are the differences between interpretations of God throughout different religions?
5. What are the similarities between interpretations of God throughout different religions?
6. What is self-actualization and how is this concept attained?
7. In which ways in spirituality used to reach self-actualization?
8. How have Black people used spirituality as a healing practice throughout history?
9. What are the connections between slavery and black spirituality? How was spirituality used and expressed during this time?
10. What are the main principles within the ideology of the Five Percent Nation?
11. How did the Five Percent Nation come to be?
12. How did the Nations of Gods and Earth become such a force? What era? What's up with it now?
13. What does “spirituality” in the context of the black community and/or African diaspora? How has the meaning changed throughout history?
14. What is the definition of “divinity”?
15. How can individuals go about finding divinity within?
16. What are the differences between interpretations of God throughout different religions?
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19. In which ways in spirituality used to reach self-actualization?
20. How have Black people used spirituality as a healing practice throughout history?
21. What are the connections between slavery and black spirituality? How was spirituality used and expressed during this time?
22. What are the main principles within the ideology of the Five Percent Nation?
23. How did the Five Percent Nation come to be?
24. How did the Nations of Gods and Earth become such a force? What era? What's up with it now?
EXHIBITION THEMES

1. FIVE PERCENT NATION - also known as "Nation of Gods and Earths" or "Five Percenters"

Overview

The basic ideology behind the Five Percent Nation is that 85 percent of the global population is unaware of the world’s truths, 10 percent of the global population knows the truth, but is unwilling to share it in order to keep the masses ignorant, and the remaining 5 percent of the population knows the truth and seeks to share it to educate others. The Five Percent Nation is comprised of the five percent who are willing to share the truth.

History

Clarence 13 X founded the Five Percent Nation, also referred to as Nation of Gods and Earths or Five Percenters, in 1963 after splitting from the Nation of Islam due to a disagreement regarding the identity and nature of God. According to Nation of Islam, W.D. Farad Muhammad was god, however, Clarence 13 X felt that Farad Muhammad as not “purely” black enough to be labeled as God. Clarence 13 X believed that each Black man has the potential to grow and develop his godliness through honorable lifestyle choices such as education, spiritual fitness, physical fitness, and meditation. Clarence 13 X eventually changed his name to Allah the Father and began spreading his message and promoting the fight for Black people’s rights.²

Key Concepts

The term Poor Righteous Teachers is used within texts of the Five Percent Nation to describe "the poor, righteous Teachers, who do not believe in the teachings of the 10%, and are all-wise; and know who the Living God is; and Teach that the Living God is the Son of man, the supreme being, the (Black man) of Asia; and Teach Freedom, Justice and Equality to all the human family of the planet Earth."³ The “Poor Righteous Teachers” have achieved a level of self-actualization in which they are able to think for themselves and thus understand how the 10% attempts to trick the mislead 85%.

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“Supreme Mathematics” is a system of numbers used within the Five Percent Nation ideology in which a specific number correlates with a specific word. It provides numbers with quantitative and qualitative value. See number meanings below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Culture or Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Power or Refinement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Build or Destroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cipher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Supreme Alphabet” assigns meanings to letters from Latin script. For example:

A = Allah
L = Love, Hell, or Right
M = Master

**Principles and Beliefs**

1.) That black people are the original people of the planet Earth.
2.) That black people are the fathers and mothers of civilization.
3.) That the science of Supreme Mathematics is the key to understanding man’s relationship to the universe.
4.) Islam is a natural way of life, not a religion.
5.) That education should be fashioned to enable us to be self-sufficient as a people.
6.) That each one should teach one according to their knowledge.
7.) That the black man is God and his proper name is ALLAH — Arm, Leg, Leg, Arm, Head.
8.) That our children are our link to the future and they must be nurtured, respected, loved, protected and educated.
9.) That the unified black family is the vital building block of the nation.”

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Symbolism

The Five Percent Emblem, also known as the Universal Flag of Islam is symbolic of “I,” the Self Lord and Master. In recent years, Jay-Z was seen wearing this emblem at performances and public appearances. Rapper Rakim also sported the symbol on his album, *Follow the Leader*, with Eric B.

Presence in Rap Music & Culture

The Five Percent Nation became increasingly popular amongst rappers and rap groups in the 1980’s and 1990’s such as Poor Righteous Teachers, Busta Rhymes, Wu Tang Clan, Lord Jamar of Brand Nubian, Nas, Jay-Z, Jay Electronica, Erykah Badu, and many more. Rap experts also claim that some of the original founders of hip-hop music such as Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa studied the key concepts of the Five Percent Nation such as the Supreme Alphabet and Supreme Mathematics. Not only did these rappers discuss the Five Percent Nation ideology within their music, but they followed the ideology in their day-to-day lives through engaging in educational endeavors and attempting to attain divinity. *So what’s up with the Five Percent Nation now?* From the late 1990’s to the present day, the influences of the Five Percent Nation became overshadowed by the rise of materialism and consumerism in hip-hop. However, it’s powerful stance in hip-hop history and Black history will always stand strong. The ideology still influences artists today, whether blatant or subtle.

2. SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Spirituality vs. Religion: What’s the Difference?

*Spirituality* is often defined as an individualistic endeavor in which one finds their inner purpose and discovers the meaning of life. There are no strict rules or beliefs when it comes to spirituality. *Religion*, on the other hand, is an organized set of beliefs or practices followed by a
group of people. Although different in definition, people can be both religious and spiritual, or just one or the other, or neither at all.

**Spirituality Across the African Diaspora**

The **Yoruba** religion is a system of religious and spiritual beliefs of the Yoruba people. The geographic area is known as modern day Southwestern Nigeria and some parts of Benin and Togo. Yoruba is the basis for many spiritual systems such as “Cuban Santería, Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomble, and Trinidad & Tobago Shango.”⁷ When discussing the Yoruba religious system, there are specific key terms that must be defined⁸:

**ASE:** so let it be/may it be so

**AYANMO:** destiny or fate which all humans must pass through

**OLODUMARE:** The divine creator or the energy source. This term can also refer to the state in which an individual becomes one with the divine creator/energy source⁹

**ORISHA:** deities or emissaries of the Yoruba faith who carry out communication between the people and Oludumare (God). The Orishas are as follows¹⁰.

**Gods and Divine Figures of Yoruba**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orisha</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elegba (Èlegbara, Elegguá, or Òsú/eshu)</td>
<td>The messenger between the human and the divine, the owner of all roads and doors. He gives permission for anything to occur between the two worlds. He is represented by the numbers 3 and 21 and the colors red and black or white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogún</td>
<td>God of war, labor, and iron. Represented by number 7 and colors green and black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshosi</td>
<td>Hunter, scout, and translator for Obatalá. Represented by colors are blue and yellow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obatalá</td>
<td>Father of humanity and all orishas. Creator of humanity. Represents peace and compassion. Represented by the color white with accents of various colors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orisha</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oyá</strong></td>
<td>Ruler of winds and gates of cemetery. Represented by the number 9, maroon, flowery patterns and nine different colors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oshún</strong></td>
<td>Ruler of streams, rivers, love, money, and fertility. Represented by colors yellow and gold, imagery such as vultures and peacocks, and the number 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yemayá</strong></td>
<td>Ruler of seas, lakes, and maternity. The &quot;Mother of All&quot; or &quot;Mother Whose Children are the Fish.&quot; She wears seven skirts of blue and white. Her little sister is Oshún.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shangó</strong></td>
<td>Ruler of lightning, fire, thunder, drums and dance. He enjoys the pleasures of the world. He is represented by red and white, 4 and 6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orunmila</strong></td>
<td>The orisha of wisdom and divination. Bears witness to creation and destiny. Represented by colors green and yellow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Santeria** is a religion of Yoruba origin developed by West African people during the Slave Trade in Cuba. Santeria, meaning “the worship of saints” also incorporates elements of Roman Catholicism. Santeria is a monotheistic religion, meaning there is one God, however, there are multiple deities or “Orishas” similar to the Yoruba system described above. During slavery in the 17th century, slaves were not allowed to follow their religion so they disguised their orishas as Catholic saints. Approximately 80 percent of the Cuban population practices this religion. Babalawos, or Santeria priests, interpret God through “divination,” a ceremony involving music, rum, cigars, and sometimes animal sacrifice. These ceremonies are often performed at home or in public places.

![Santeria Ritual](image)

West African **Vodun** is the basis for a variety of spiritual systems such as Haitian Vodou, Dominican Vudú, Cuban Vodú, Brazilian Vodum, Puerto Rican Vudú, and Louisiana Voodoo. West African Vodun is a belief system based on Vodun spirits and divine beings who control the planet. Those who follow Vodun also believe that the deceased live side-by-side with the living, therefore ancestor worship is very important within this religion. Each family has a line of priesthood, based on matriarchs and daughters.

**Mawu**, also referred to as Mahu, is an elder female being who is the divine creator. She created seven children: Sakpata who is Vodun of the Earth, Xêvioso, or Xêbioso who is Vodun of Thunder and Divine Justice, Agbe who is Vodun of the Sea, Gû who is Vodun of Iron and War, Agê who is Vodun of Agriculture and Forests, Jo who is Vodun of Air, and Lègba who is Vodun of...  

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of the Unpredictable. In many Vodun religious rituals, herbal medicines and healing objects are used, often made into shrines to call specific Voduns.¹²

**Nation of Islam**

The Nation of Islam is a branch of Islam which combines the principles of black Nationalism with the Islamic faith. Founded in 1930, the Nation of Islam follows several traditional Muslim practices such as refusal to consume pork, alcohol, drugs and tobacco and an emphasis on family values. Perhaps the most well known early leader of the Nation of Islam is Elijah Muhammad who believed that White people were created by a Black scientist and their power was to run out by the year 1914. Muhammad advocated for the separation of Black people from White people in order to support Black business and develop generational wealth within the black community.¹³ The creator the Five Percent Nation started as a follower of the Nation of Islam, but later created his own belief system based on what he felt the Nation of Islam was lacking.

**Christianity and The Black Church**

During the enslavement of Black people in the United States, black people often congregated in churches in order to develop a greater sense of community and hope. The church served as a place for celebration, prayer, and community building.¹⁴ Whether you view Christian and Catholic black churches as beneficial or detrimental to the black community as a whole, they were unarguably influential to the development of religion and spirituality within the black community, even still to this day. Moving into the civil rights era, churches played a significant role in the organization of protests and the fight for equal rights. Many civil rights leaders held community meetings within places of prayer as they were accessible to many black people at the time, as opposed to public predominantly white spaces which could be dangerous. To this day, churchgoers of every denomination use church to build community and morally guide them through life.¹⁵


In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus says, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” Jesus responds with this quote when the Kingdom of God will come. In relation to this exhibition, the quote is a testament to the presence of divinity or spirituality within oneself. One cannot wait for God to find them, rather, they should find Godliness within themselves.

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4. SELF ACTUALIZATION

Self actualization is the recognition and fulfilment of one’s full potential. It is the highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which was developed by psychologist Abraham Maslow (see image on right). One can reach self-actualization through embodying healthy practices such as focusing on individual talents, receiving an education, remaining physically active, and engaging in positive endeavors. Self-actualization is a common topic when discussing spirituality as many use spirituality to guide them to self-actualization.

![Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Diagram](image)
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & INFLUENCES

MUSIC

- **Songs in the Key of Life** - Stevie Wonder

Released in 1976, Wonder’s *Songs in the Key of Life* came to be after Wonder considered quitting the music industry due to his frustration with the U.S. government. Instead, he signed a contract giving him full artistic control over his next seven LP’s. Wonder was in complete power over his sound and his message. This directly relates to the idea of self actualization - Wonder chose to put his career in his own hands instead of allowing a third party to control his money and image. This way, he could have a better hold of his legacy for future generations to come.

- **Vodou Adjae** - Boukman Eksperyans

Eksperyans’ *Vodu Adjae* is a 1991 Haitian album, bridging traditional Afro-Caribbean folk with modern pop sounds. The album incorporates religious drumming sounds of the Vodou faith. The inside of the album states: “BOUKMAN was the slave leader who helped to launch the revolution that led to the overthrow of French colonialism and the birth of the first black republic in the world in 1804. BOUKMAN was also a priest of the new Afro-Haitian religion called Vodou that helped to unify the Haitian slave to carry out the revolution. BOUKMAN EKSPERYANS captures the experience embodied in the image of BOUKMAN: a blend of African and Christian spirituality, stubborn resistance to oppression, and a fierce pride in the people, history and culture of Haiti.” This dedication to Boukman speaks to the topics of Black spirituality and the divine nature of the self within the exhibition. Boukman found power within himself to free his people.

- **I Against I** - Bad Brains

*I Against I* is a 1986 album combining hardcore punk, soul, reggae, funk, and heavy metal. The title of the album is based on Rastafarian phrase "I and I" which unifies the speaker with the audience and Jah peacefully. Statements involving “I” are often present in Dougher’s paintings and sculptures. The combination of various genres also relates to the way in which Dougher combines materials.

- **To Pimp a Butterfly** - Kendrick Lamar

Lamar’s third studio album released in 2015 combines soul, spoken word, jazz, and avant-garde music with rap while exploring topics such as black culture, inequality, institutionalized racism, and mental health. Lamar encourages listeners to fight against adversity and reach their highest form of self despite the constant war against Black people.

- **Hail H.I.M.** - Burning Spear
1980 reggae album incorporating philosophical elements and a push for militancy. The album also features nods to Marcus Garvey, a revolutionary figure in Black politics and activism who believed that all Black people should start their own nation, similar to the ideas of the Five Percent Nation which came years later.

**BOOKS**

- **The Famished Road by Ben Okri**

  The Famished Road is a novel by Ben Okri which follows the story of a spirit-child named Azaro. The novel bridges together the spiritual world with the “real” world. The author argues that the intertwining of these two worlds is crucial to African traditional life.

- **Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu**

  A traditional Chinese text from 6th century sage Laozi and is a guide to Chinese Taosim. Dougher uses this book to inform the spiritual elements of his work. Taoism advocates for religious piety and humility. “Tao” is the substance of all existing beings. Once an individual becomes one with Tao, they can live an enlightened existence.

- **Warrior of the Light by Paulo Coelho**

  This book is a companion to the book The Alchemist which encourages readers to embrace their dreams, welcome uncertainty, and become our best selves. This directly relates to Dougher’s concept that Godliness exists within all of us, we just have to find it.

- **Olodumare by God in the Yoruba Belief by E. Bolaji Idowu**

  The Yoruba religion is a system of spiritual concepts of the Yoruba people. Within this religion it is believed that all humans hold “Ayanmo,” or destiny and over time should become one with Olodumare, the divine creator.

- **Siddhartha by Herman Hesse**

  Siddhartha is a novel about the spiritual journey of Siddhartha who is alive during the existence of Gautama Buddha. The character goes on a journey of self-actualization and divinity in order to discover the meaning of life.

**MOVIES**

- **The Last Black Man in San Francisco**
Last Black Man in San Francisco follows Jimmie and Mont who attempt to reclaim a home that Jimmie’s grandfather built. The film deals with topics of home, friendship, and discovering one’s purpose.

- **Beasts of the Southern Wild**

Beasts of the Southern Wild shows the life of 6-year-old Hushpuppy and her father Wink who must navigate rising waters in their remote Delta community. She goes about this journey on her own, discovering new worlds and new things about herself.

- **The Fall**

The Fall is a 2006 drama that follows two characters, one bedridden and one hospitalized, and a fantastical story set on a desert island. The film deals with the various ways that humans imagine and recount stories. Each character uses their own experience to envision the story that is being told.

**Questions? Comments? Concerns?**
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