



# *The Friend*

CREATED by JOHN SANBORN

PRODUCED by  
TELEMATIC MEDIA ARTS  
AND VIDEOFORMES



MARCH 18 – April 4 2021

FESTIVAL VIDEOFORMES

CLERMONT-FERRAND, FRANCE

# *THE FRIEND*

## CREATED by JOHN SANBORN

Everyone wants to believe in something.

We spend our lives searching for ideas, structures and people to invest our faith in, because we think they will provide us with answers to questions we KNOW cannot be answered.

This is why we love American Messiahs.

But we have questions. Like: what causes us to follow claims of personal divinity, off-kilter pseudoscience, and communication with the dead or prophecies of worldly glory from spiritual entrepreneurs? This work exploits our fixation with a modern representation of the most zealous exponents of America's unofficial national faith: a spiritual smorgasbord of hucksterism, and confused but positive thinking, seasoned through an invented spiritual movement known as New Thought.

This 17 channel installed work presents the leader of New Thought as a mysterious but charismatic figure, who calls himself "The Friend", delivering seven sermons filled with instruction, divination, personal confession and a sticky hot mess of ambiguity.

The Friend is accompanied by 8 Saints, of dubious distinction, and animations of their relics, who testify to the divination of this new religion and celebrate their freedom to build a utopia, consisting of damaged souls.

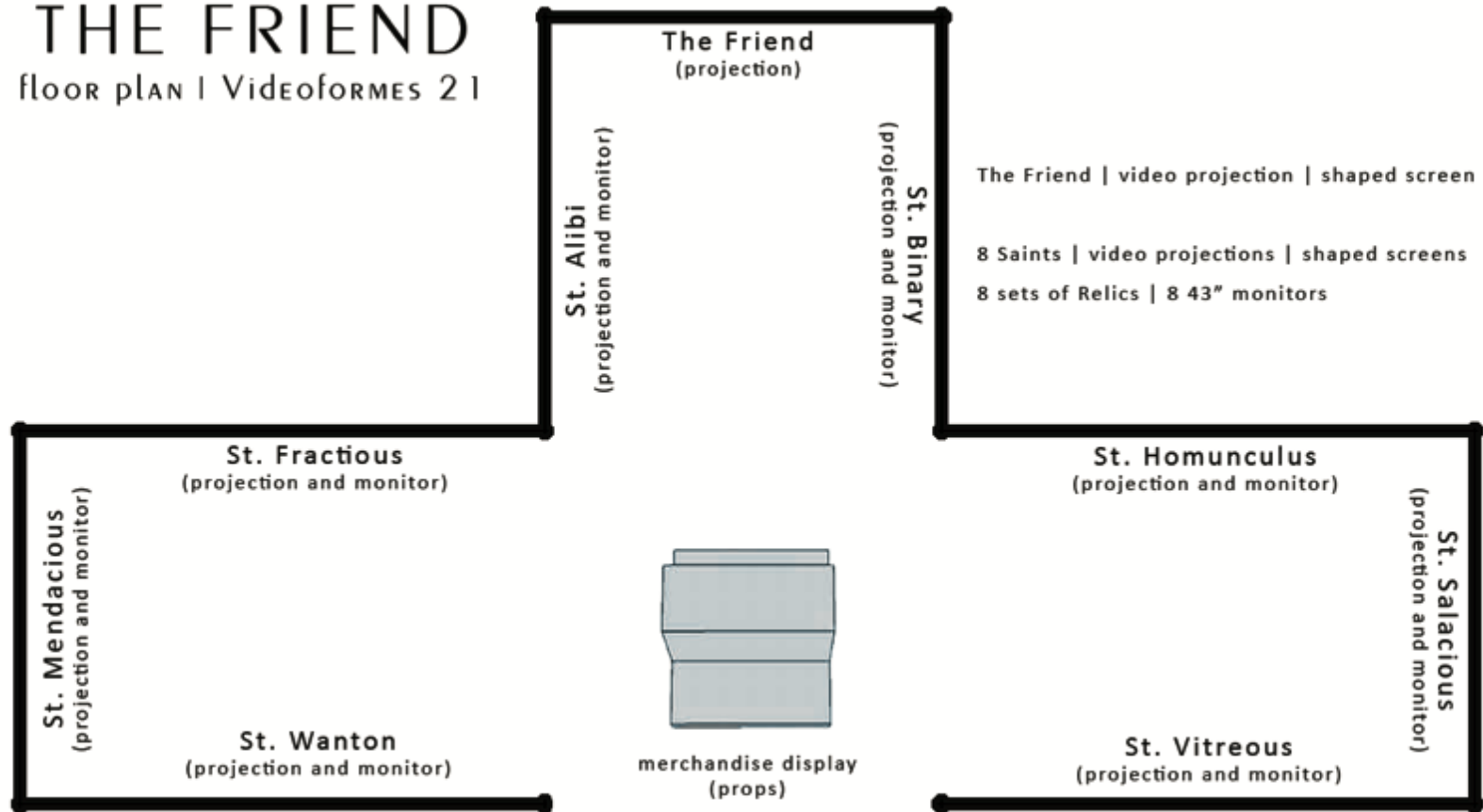
The Friend premiered in March 2021 at the Festival Videoformes in Clermont-Ferrand, France, installed in the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général. The work is scheduled to be exhibited at Festival Access in October 2021, ZKM March-August 2022, and Transcultures, fall of 2022.



[Watch video of \*THE FRIEND\* at Videoformes](#)

# THE FRIEND

floor plan | Videoformes 21

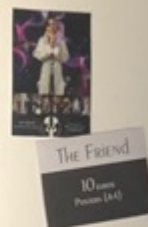


Overhead view of the installation plan of *The Friend* in the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général.





Entry view of *The Friend*.



The Gift Shop of New Thought – buy a t-shirt to show you've been doing your spiritual homework.

*The Friend* is played by writer and actor John Cameron Mitchell; seen here under the rose window at the top of the cross in the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général. The mix of colors from the stained glass and the video projection was expected in the planning.







*The Friend* delivers seven Sermons exposing the philosophies of his new religion, which he calls New Thought.

The Friend is one of a long line of American Messiahs, reaching back to the origins of the country and continuing to today.



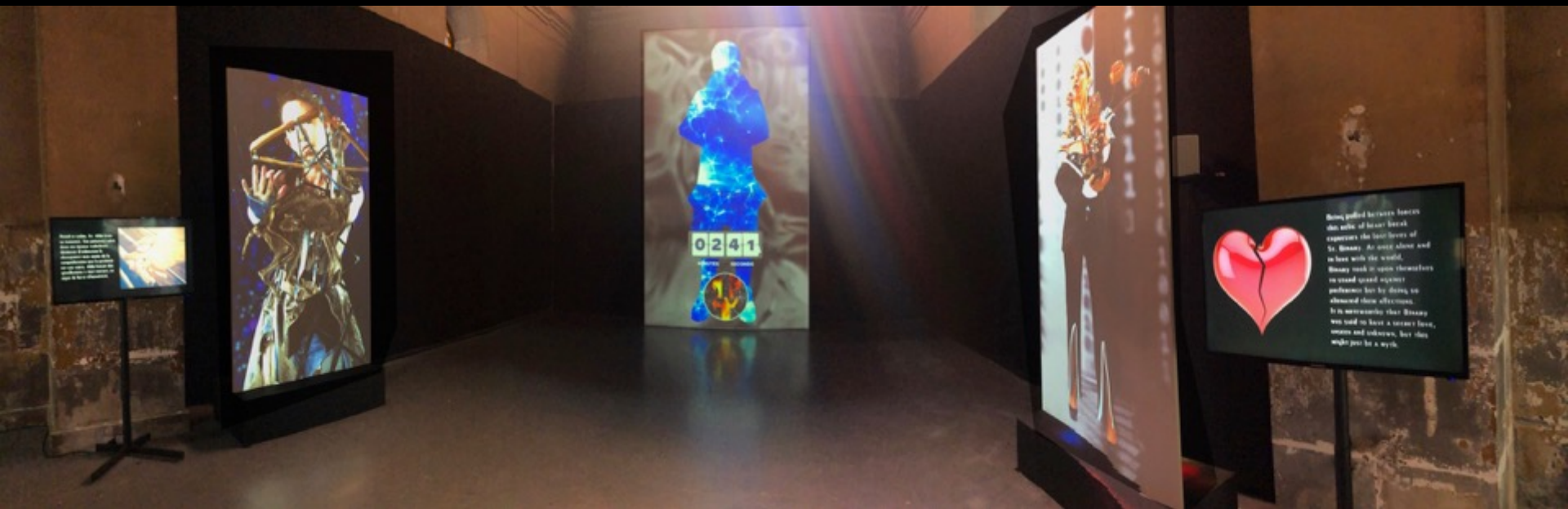
*The Friend* pauses between sermons to allow one of his Saints to speak. A countdown clock tells viewers when he will speak again

The image of *The Friend* is projected on a shaped screen, 5 meters tall.





Panorama view of all three arms of the cross of the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général. The left and right arms each contain three Saints, and the top of the cross contains two Saints and The Friend.



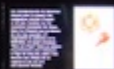
Installed at the top of the cross of the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général are St. Alibi (left) The Friend (center) and St. Binary (right).





Installed in the left arm of the cross of the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général are St. Wanton (left) St. Mendacious (center) and St. Fractious (right).





Installed in the right arm of the cross of the Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général are St. Homunculus (left) St. Salacious (center) and St. Vitreous (right).



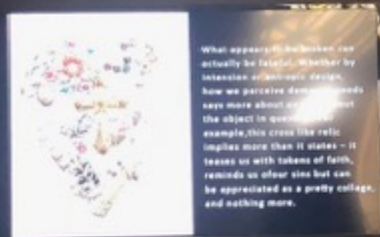
View from the right arm of the cross of Chapelle de l'Ancien Hôpital Général are (from left to right) St. Binyamin, St. Friend, St. Homunculus, St. Salacious and St. Vitreous.



Clashes of race of sex,  
summer passions,  
and dog and dog  
completely are the main  
subjects of the  
historical of the  
The discovery of human  
passions attracted the  
eyes of the world and  
the art of representation  
of human passions  
was being created as time  
before the past brought  
the past and the  
present are more  
memorable to man.



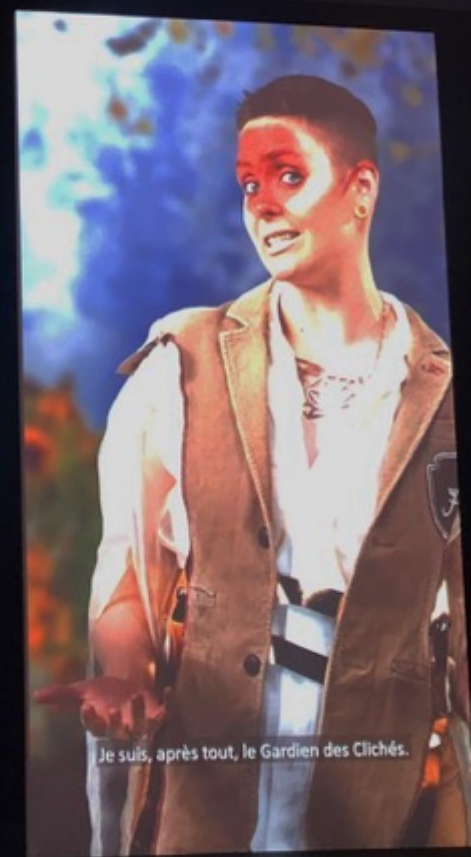




What appears to be broken can actually be useful. Whether by intention or accident, design, how we perceive design reminds says more about us than about the object in question. For example, this cross like relic implies more than it states – it teaches us with tokens of faith, reminds us of our sins but can be appreciated as a pretty collage, and nothing more.













Après un temps d'absence, cette œuvre a été réexposée comme l'œuvre d'Alain. On pensait au départ qu'il s'agissait des mêmes œuvres d'Alain, mais des recherches ont montré qu'il s'agissait d'un masque de son frère aîné, ce qui a scandalisé ses fans et ses académies. Mais Alain avait édité le document de ses films « avant que le film soit véritablement achevé, en le film à son plus ».



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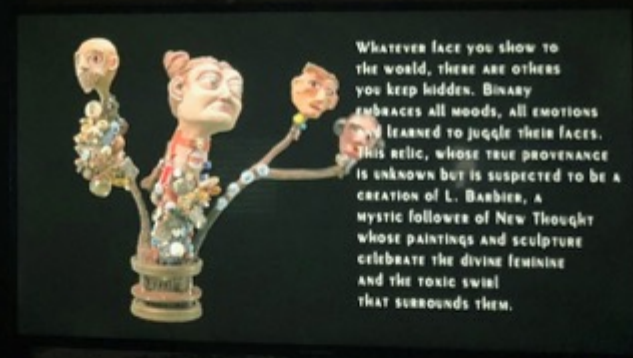


Alibi's stigmata and steel rings  
are entwined on hands,  
as extensions as well as useful  
tools. Alibi was a worker, a  
transformation artist whose  
problem-solving skills were  
beyond imagination.  
It is said that this is their  
right hand, the one that  
held the hammer.



**St. Alibi** | Patron Saint of Adjustment  
performed by **Erin Yen**





Whatever face you show to the world, there are others you keep hidden. Binary embraces all moods, all emotions and learned to juggle their faces. This relic, whose true provenance is unknown but is suspected to be a creation of L. Barbier, a mystic follower of New Thought whose paintings and sculpture celebrate the divine feminine and the toxic swirl that surrounds them.

St. Binary | the Balanced  
performed by **Comika Hartford**



Les disciples de Saint Fractious  
 chérissent ce vase relique car  
 il exprime ses philosophies sous  
 une forme physique. Le romancier  
 veut que les étudiants des  
 enseignements de Fractious  
 aient cherché à créer des  
 manifestations de l'idée de  
 "wabi-sabi" pour créer des objets  
 utiles que chacun puisse posséder.  
 Ce vase asymétrique semble  
 déséquilibré et maladroît, et il l'est,  
 mais le mouvement asymétrique  
 suggéré par le dessin  
 irrégulier l'emporte.



St. Fractious | Goddess of Broken Things  
 performed by **Juba Kalamka**



Homunculus infrequently addresses cultural clichés, preferring to dig into those "significant by repetition" symbols that speak to our personal methods of assembling our identities. This relic loses its significance when transported to English, where it becomes "the red windmill". This stripping of consequence by virtue of a need to execute culturalism, is in itself a cliché.



**St. Homunculus** | Keeper of Clichés  
performed by **KJ Dahlaw**



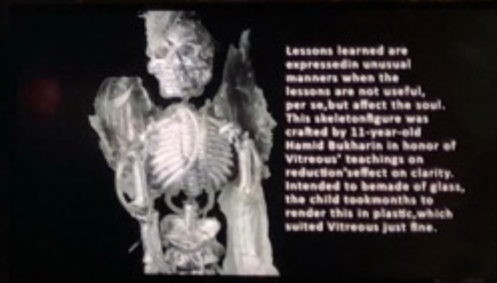


**St. Mendacious** | the Low  
performed by **Landes Dixon**





**St. Salacious | Cleric of Juxtaposition**  
performed by **Jamielyn Duggan**



Lessons learned are expressed in unusual manners when the lessons are not useful, per se, but affect the soul. This skeleton figure was crafted by 11-year-old Hamid Bakharin in honor of Vitreous' teachings on reduction's effect on clarity. Intended to be made of glass, the child took months to render this in plastic, which suited Vitreous just fine.

**St. Vitreous** | Saint of Clarity  
performed by **Carlos Venturo**

Les reliques de Wanton sont généralement des objets de désir, conçus pour la réalisation d'objectifs agréables. "L'amour est un objet", a-t-il/elle écrit : "un objet à désirer, à polir et à respecter" car, alors que Wanton vivait en liberté, dans leur cœur, il/elle était désespérément romantique. Grâce à d'innombrables partenaires et à des dizaines de rencontres, Wanton est resté amoureux de l'amour.



St. Wanton | the Promiscuous  
performed by Jiz Lee





**Telematic Media Arts**  
Presents

***The Friend***

Created by **John Sanborn**

Produced by **Clark Buckner**  
and **Videoformes**

Co-Produced

**ZKM**

**Transculutres**  
**Access Festival**

Costumes by  
**Christian Squires**

Hair and Makeup by  
**Samuel Richard works**

Relics Created by  
**Leigh Barbier**  
**Jamielyn Duggan**

Director of Photography  
**Roger Jones**

On Set Assist  
**Wes Middleton**

Music by  
**Danny Clay**

Technical Supervisor  
**Roger Jones**

Cast

The Friend  
**John Cameron Mitchell**

St. Alibi  
**Erin Yen**

St. Binary  
**Comika Hartford**

St. Fractious  
**Juba Kalamka**

St. Homunculus  
**KJ Dahlaw**

St. Mendacious  
**Landes Dixon**

St. Salacious  
**Jamielyn Duggan**

St. Vitreous  
**Carlos Venturo**

St. Wanton  
**Jiz Lee**

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**Peter Weibel**  
**The Videoformes Team**  
**ZKM**