

## Confessional

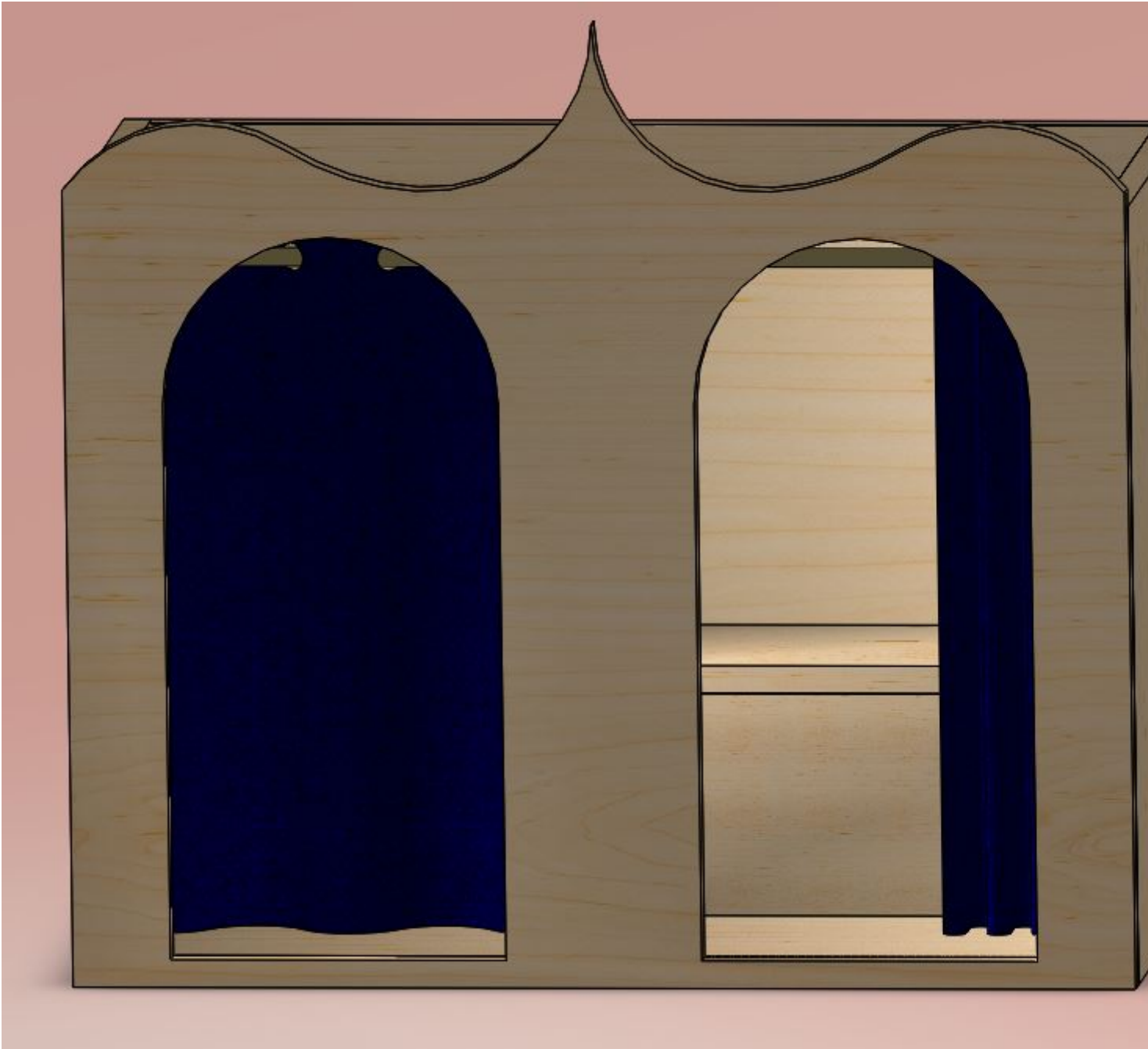
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Confessional Poetry began as one of many artistic movements in post-war twentieth-century America. Its most fundamental aspect is blatant autobiographical content, which often manifests as self-deprecation. It frequently deals with taboo topics such as sex, addiction, mental health and familial relationships. A Confessional Poet's emotional authenticity draws on personal experiences and real situations, giving "negative" emotions—fear, anger, sadness, impotence—the attention and artistic relevance traditionally reserved for "positive" emotions. Where sonnets are often associated with love, and epics ultimately celebrate strength, Confessional Poetry exposes and intimately handles private, human pains.

Critic M. L. Rosenthal coined the term "Confessional Poetry" in reviewing Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, published in 1959. The term has since been applied to the works of several poets, primarily Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and W. D. Snodgrass. In these four cases, the poets knew each other personally, and some critics argue that their works had common characteristics. However, the Confessional Poetry movement has never formed a cohesive group. Critical debate continues over who can and cannot be considered a "Confessional Poet." Some argue that Plath does not fit in this category, and Snodgrass rejected the label outright. Though the designation of "Confessional Poet" is rare, the writing of Confessional Poetry continues today.

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