WABASH CENTER
For Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion

Abstracting Grace - further adventures in Art Theology: Part Two

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Blog Series: Re/Kindling Creativity and Imagination
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It begins with a question, a question about grace. Wondering what it is.
Do we really understand what we are talking about when we talk about grace?
People talk about it all the time like they know what they are saying.
I talk about it like I know what I am talking about
but I don't.

Not really.

While working on a series of paintings and poems exploring who or what God is,
if God is… (God - another word we throw around without knowing what we mean.)
Each painting went deeper and deeper in I ended up swimming in love.
Seeing it all around me.

Each stroke brought me into who and how love is and more questions surfaced,
one in particular kept bringing me up, gasping for air

wondering...

what is grace?

Is it God's love?

Somewhere along the way I was taught it was a gift from God. The way I was taught about this gift caused me to move through life as though it's external to me, something that's earned or worse, arbitrary.

Why do people talk about it like it is something we can embody? What do you mean when you say, "She moved so gracefully." Can we embody it? Can we carry grace in our bodies? Does it then become us? Do we become grace? If so, does it change? If it does change, what is it then?

Do we become it or do we become full of it? Grace**ful**… how,
how do we become full of grace?

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Grace might be like air:
so essential, constantly surrounding us,

when we inhale, it becomes a part of us.
Gives us life...

we forget about it all the time
but it's there, moving in our cells.

Some people, like Buddhists,
so mindful,

delight in deep breathes,

aware they are intimately touching
our life source

with each inhale.

Others, forget all day,
shallowly breathing on the surface,

forgetting how essential it is.
Not thinking about it at all.

So many care,
deeply,
about pollutants in the air.

Others smoke,
tainting,
yet delighting
in breathing
a different way.

Do you think grace is like air?

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Like Air

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It began as a question, a question leading into other questions.
A question about grace.

I was thinking about you,

I'm always thinking about you.

Wondering if you are,
what you are.
Trying to know you,
attempting to paint your essence.

Working out ideas on canvas,
into the paint, back and forth,
moving through understanding with acrylics,
abstracting color and line.

If you exist, you are Love.
Love that is greater than any one person
or institution
can contain or articulate.

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They all tend to focus on who has you, and who doesn't have you...
all *have* some "rightness"
as well as some "wrongness"
none of us can possess you.

When we hold Love, really hold you,
we are clutching reality beyond comprehension.

Holding and being held by all of you, not grasping a fraction of you.

Weaving in and out of so many facets of Love
the question emerged: what then is grace?

If this is how vast Love is...

what is grace?

This will not be an interrogation. This will not be an argument. That's been done

enough.

If anything, we will interrogate those arguments and definitions that have seeped into us since before we were born. but not quite yet.

First,
what is it?

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