

Finding Hope | BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER

In September, 2015 *Spectrum* held its first Ultraviolet Arts Festival at the Glendale City Church, Glendale, California. Musicians, dancers, rappers, painters, and filmmakers talked about making art. The following three articles are presentations from the Festival.

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The central question we asked presenters at the *Spectrum* Ultraviolet Arts Festival to address was: Where do you find hope? I'll answer that right now: Process and Tension. I like to look at the process marks in a Van Gogh or Pollock painting, or think through the process of editing film into something meaningful. The process of art-making gives me hope through a sense of altered consciousness with beauty and aleatory connection, not literal truth or studied logos driving the ultimate outcome. Process. The *means* to the end. Process art proceeds to process theology. I believe that the divine changes. I don't believe in absolutes including morality and truth. And that strangely perhaps, gives me hope.

My wife Doris and I went to check out the opening of an installation in the late afternoon. Big rectangular box. Hot. Weak music. People trying to be into it, but mostly just self-conscious and awkward. We walked around but decided it was lame and left. We went out with a friend and had a great evening. About midnight we almost stumbled across the same installation. It was quiet; except the artist was present doing some final tweaks to his "portal" and a small crowd had gathered. Some homeless guy asked the artist if he needed help and, to the artist's credit, he said yes. Then he invited a bunch of other

people and soon we were ripping masking tape off and revealing the actual work. Apparently the artist had procrastinated and it hadn't been done in time for the earlier opening at the hyped event. And now, close to midnight, in the dark, observed only by the homeless, the artist's friends, probably some drunks and random merriment makers, the actual work was revealed.

Perhaps you've had an experience like that? Unplanned and interesting—even beautiful, and still in process.

There is tension there, and that is the second part of what gives me hope. I don't believe in balance. Whenever someone says sweetly to just live a balanced life I want to tell them: that's illogical. Perhaps it's me that's unbalanced; but I believe that balance is an illusion, like a horizon. A line. An end that does not exist.

The statement, "Just because you evolve doesn't mean that you have to rewrite your history," means a lot to me because I've chosen to identify as Adventist despite its shortcomings.

Those realities don't obviate the good—families and friends, life experiences and spiritual connections—that Adventism defined in me. I won't let others' lack of moral conscience make me give up my history.

My sense of the religious, the moral and the aesthetic (and the reading of Kiekegaard) has evolved in ways that just don't conform to Adventist dogma. But Adventism is larger than seventy-five percent of the countries in the world. There are more Adventists in the world than people in the Netherlands. Our educational

and health care institutions do make the world better, and actually need unafraid, even creative, contributions from some of you.

The process and tension in art gives me hope beyond the phobias and terrors of this moment and place in infinite time and space. I think the poet Mary Oliver gets to this simple but profound reality of how tension and process create community.

Song of the Builders

On a summer morning
I sat down
on a hillside
to think about God -
a worthy pastime.
Near me, I saw
a single cricket;
it was moving the grains of the hillside
this way and that way.
How great was its energy,
how humble its effort.

Let us hope
it will always be like this,
each of us going on
in our inexplicable ways
building the universe.

Oliver expresses where I find hope. Going on in process and tension—we build this universe. Not only to bring a vision of justice and peace into reality, but also to create something beautiful that transcends. Yes, there's tension in making something for the here and the hereafter; but the way forward is also only clear to me when I'm in process. ■

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