

KEYWORDS: abstraction, disorder, architecture, conflict, collapses, faith, hope, beauty



All art courtesy of Donald Keefe

Mythos. Oil on Canvas over Panel. 40" x 32" 2020.

THE PERSISTENCE OF HOPE *in the Art of Donald Keefe*

An out of work horse, a man sitting alone waiting in a house of shambles, collapsed buildings, shipwrecked boats, the subjects of many of the paintings by Donald Keefe seem to

capture the displacement of 2020, the way the world has turned upside down again and again. Yet the work was done over a period of years.

Inspired by the biblical story of the tower of Babel,

Keefe says, “I am drawn to structures that are collapsed, abandoned, or under construction as symbols for hubris, failure, and the persistence to ‘try again’ in life. Sometimes I compare or contrast these structures to forms I associate with my personal search for spiritual faith, hope and purpose.”

Keefe is associate professor of art at Southern Adventist University where he has been on the faculty since 2015. He earned an BFA from the University of Kentucky in 2009, and then an MFA from the University of Florida in 2013. His artwork was recently featured in the Huntsville Museum of Art’s “Red Clay Survey Exhibition of Contemporary Southern Art,” in Alabama. He has also exhibited in New York, Florida, Kentucky, and Ohio, completed private commissions, received a federal grant for a public arts project, and has been published in several books and magazines.

Professor Keefe comes from a secular Jewish background and became convinced of Jesus’s messiahship from the study of Scripture, particularly from the prophecies of Daniel 9, Zechariah 11 and 12, Isaiah 53, and Psalm 22. He started attending a Seventh-day Adventist church in 2004 and became immersed into the faith in 2005. He continues to explore the relationship between

Judaism and Adventism and was one of the first recipients of a Certificate in Jewish-Christian Relations from the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

On his website, he says, “The use of hard edged angular forms in my paintings reflects a desire for order, control, and certainty in life. However, their entangled and precarious condition suggests disorder, fragility, tentativeness, confusion and doubt.

“To communicate the epochal tensions present in the vacillation between order and disorder, these forms are cast in grey subdued colors as if in a fog, dramatic chiaroscuro or unnatural colored light. As in many of romanticism’s great history and landscape paintings, light becomes the vehicle to direct the viewer toward the transcendent, the sublime and the presence of Divinity: ‘The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.’”

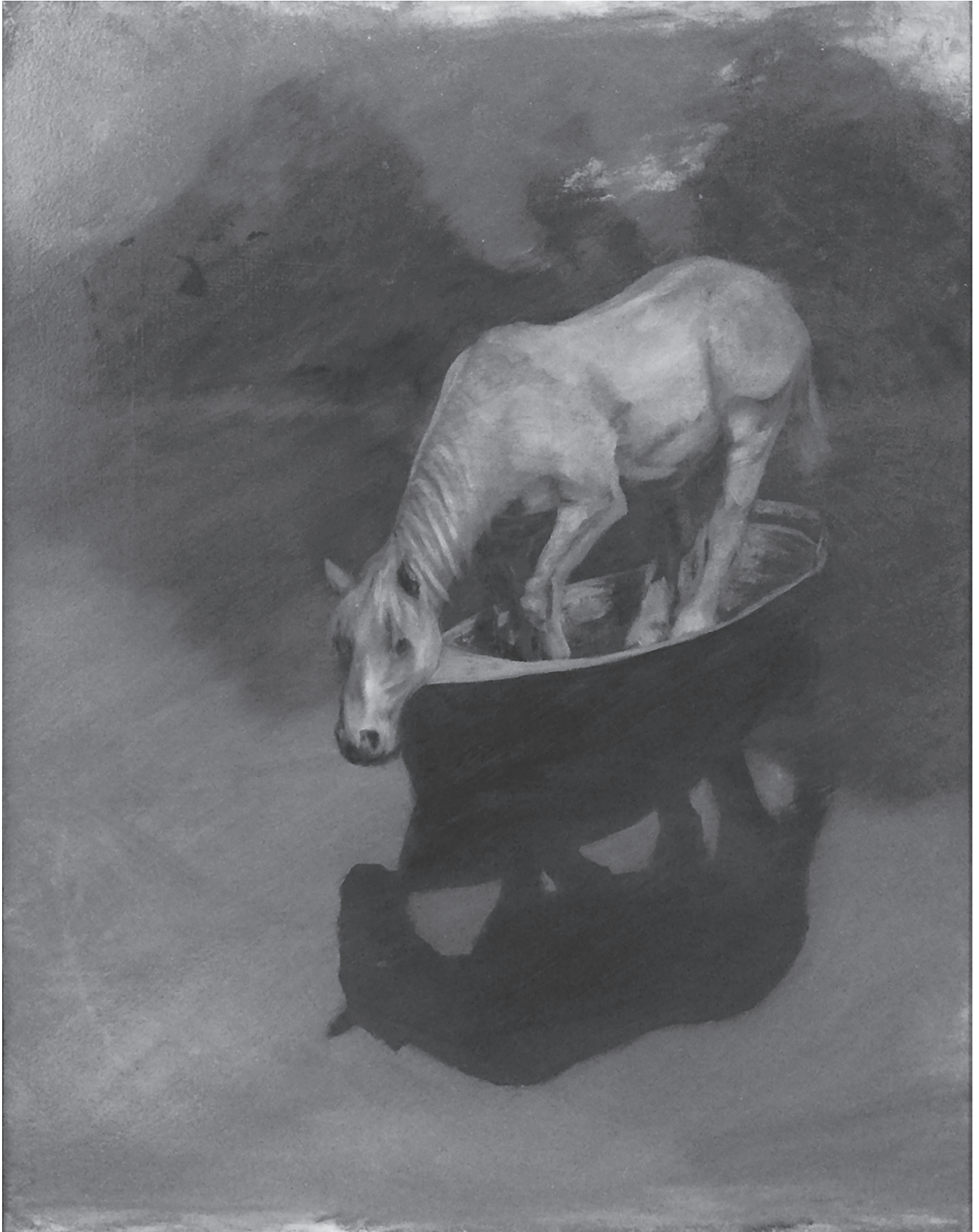
He says that making art is part of a “born again” experience. “Through my artwork, I hope to communicate to viewers that beauty, faith, hope and contentment can persist through the uncertainties of life, even when one’s support structures are weakened, confused, collapsing, being rebuilt—or being built up for the very first time.”



Waiting. Acrylic on Canvas. 68.5" X 66" 2014



Consolation. Acrylic on Paper. 32" X 42" 2012.



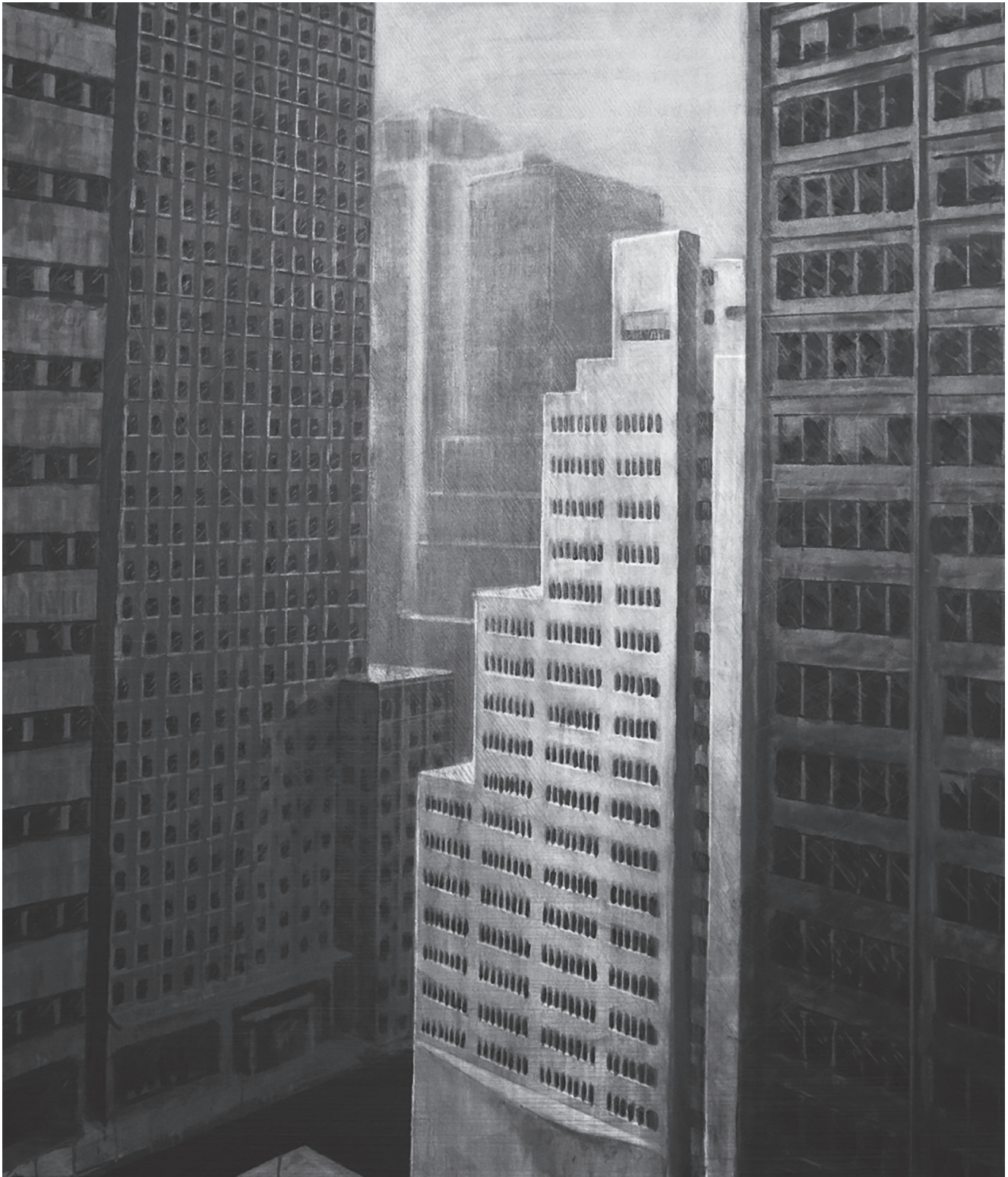
Out-of-work Horse. Oil on Panel. 26" x 21", 2015.



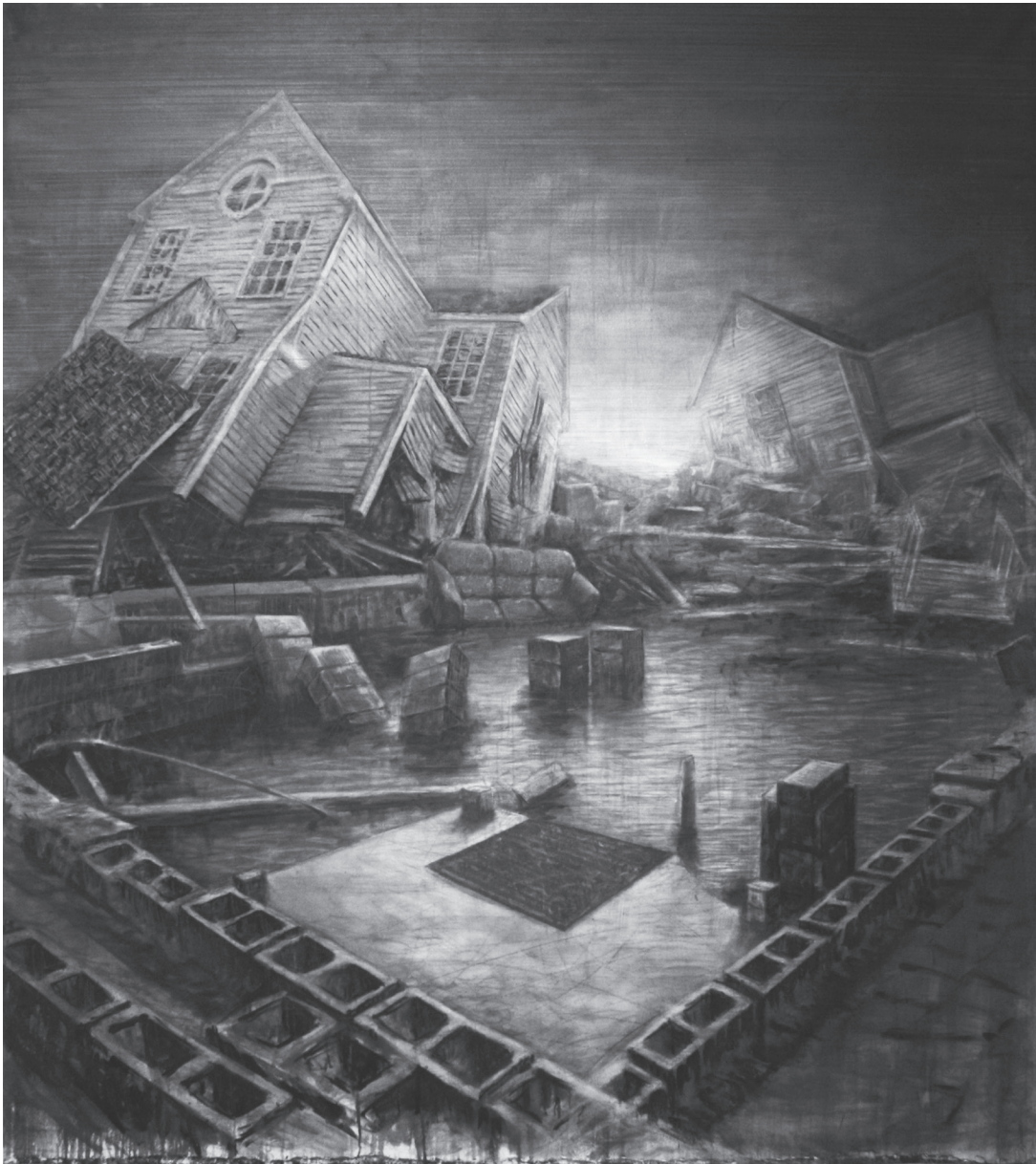
Revival. Acrylic and Collage on Paper. 22" X 18" 2012.



Autumn 2. Graphite and White Charcoal on Paper. 16"X22" 2017



Alone (Not Alone). Acrylic, Charcoal and Graphite on Canvas. 63" X 53" 2014.



The Inauspicious Present #2. Acrylic, Charcoal, and Graphite on Canvas.
92" X 82" 2013.



The Inauspicious Present, Installation photo.