

WHY I DRAW AND PAINT ON GROCERY BAG PAPER

by Daniel Bonnell

In 2012, I obtained my MFA in Painting from Savannah College of Art and Design. I was 56 years old at the time. I chose to further my education by seeking to discover a new way of painting and creating. I sought to push my present methods and techniques of painting to an unknown level.

After studying the writings of the Desert Fathers, and others such as St. John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart, I came to realize that God is revealed through love, which becomes the highest dynamic of beauty. My further studies revealed how God uses the golden ratio of 1.618 or the law of thirds, to reveal beauty directly to the human eye.

I also found that the highest beauty always is built upon a stage of humility. Such examples are Jesus being born in a stable, the cross showing all power through weakness, etc.

After seeking new surfaces to work on, the answer seemed to be obvious, grocery bag paper. This paper is durable and strong and serves people the world over. It carries groceries just as a donkey carries a workload. When wrinkled, it acts and appears like skin. Its texture takes on a life of its own. I then found that when I completed a painting, if I was willing to ball the piece up as if to throw it away, when unraveled, it revealed a texture and color shift that nearly always brought life to it.

Then after balling it up I discovered that soaking it, unraveling it, and ironing it, transformed each piece into a greater form of beauty. The semiotics are evident; cleansing, death, new life and the heat of transformation. Lastly, I was able to raise the level of beauty even further by applying olive oil and frankincense to each piece as I saw fit. Many of these pieces actually retain the smell of the oils.

Thus, I seek to prove the thesis of high art being produced on a stage of humility. There is no artist signature, only a small out-of-the-way stamp of the artist.