

Let it go!

ABOUT THIS PAINTING

This is an acrylic painting done in 1985 in a studio on the lower level of Mary Berry Hall at Simpson College. Its title is "Let it Go!" The artist was Janet Hart Heinicke, then chair of the Art Department and professor of art.

The painting reflects two enduring interests of Heinicke, the artist, color, and space.

In mid-century (the 1960s) and the decades following two artists from New York City, Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis, began to experiment with non-objective paintings in which the subject was actually "color." Often, they applied color by pouring liquified color on canvas in what became known as "color field" work. The artists met with success and subsequent fame, not only on the East Coast but nationally and ultimately around the world.

Nearly twenty years later, as Heinicke struggled with finding her own artistic direction, a mentor suggested that the work of Louis and Frankenthaler might provide a useful direction.

Heinicke says "I was always interested in the broad sweeps of land and sky. Whenever I drove from Illinois to Iowa, traveling from "where I was" to "where I was going," I rejoiced then (and still do) in the way gentle hillsides give way to timbered areas, or in the patterns of stubbled land; I rejoiced then and now in the clean white of snowy spots against the deepening shadows of blue nestled in the snow. To pour liquified color on the canvas, laid, stretched, and horizontal of a table or on sawhorses, allows me to translate these seen images into broad swaths of pure color. When the flood of color begins a "journey" down the canvas I can tilt the direction of the canvas and "let it go!" In effect I manipulate color and direction to make it suggest what I want the viewer to see and, perhaps, remember."

The snow outside my studio window, piled up against the window provided the initial impetus for this early painting done here in Iowa.

Janet Hart Heinicke
2017

Dry Bones of Ezekiel

ABOUT THIS PAINTING

In a time frame which now seems "not so long ago," I continued my own work, based on the work which Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis had pioneered. (Their focus had been on poured and stained pigments spread across stretched canvas). When this canvas was painted, I was a new faculty member, teaching in a new place, in a new state, in a new job! Changes brought me to Simpson College!

The words, found in the Old Testament, describing the experience of Ezekiel seemed especially dramatic. Often Old Testament scripture describes marvelous, incredible scenes...the words often, to me, suggest dramatic imagery. The 37th chapter of Ezekiel resonated with me in those first months, those first days, those first years in Iowa. Hearing, reading, imagining what it "might have been" for this man, Ezekiel, standing in a valley of dry bones triggered my imagination.

I could imagine what it was like in such a valley, a place of dry bones, a desert-like place, colorless (like the ground in the painting). I imagined a place that was dry, parched, littered with colorless bones.

I could imagine where the bones came from and ask myself where they came from. I could ask myself, for a few brief moments, were these the remnants of a lost people, the carcass of the dead, the last remnants of a ferocious battle fought long ago? What would it look like if I were there standing beside Ezekiel?

I could imagine, as the scripture says, that the bones come alive when the man speaks as God commands him to do, and the bones are covered with sinew and skin; I could imagine that the bones are suddenly alive and are, instead, able to move freely in space and time...no longer grey colorless, but full of color, as the top areas of the canvas suggests via abstract marks and shapes.

This painting then is tangible evidence of an individual's response to a scripture passage and is an analogy, to some degree, of an attempt to follow God's command.

Janet Hart Heinicke
2017