



ART AS A SPIRITUAL RESOURCE

Welcome to *Behold Together!* As you begin this process, think of yourself as a wilderness guide. Some of those with whom you will be a companion will never have explored art, scripture, and meditation quite this way. Conversely, you may have several people whose vocation or avocation is some form of art (painting, design, sculpture, building, collage, etching, quilting, and others), or who have studied art or art history, or who spend a lot of time in galleries or museums.

Some may not be sure about their skill to meet this challenge and others may think there is no challenge to meet. Some may assume they know nothing and others that they know everything. Patience and curiosity (your own curiosity!) will go a long way toward helping your companions let go of their expectations of and assumptions about themselves. And that is the first step in spiritual discovery.

It can be helpful to remember a few practical things.

1. Many people don't have a wide experience of art. It may take a few weeks or even a few months for them to be able to relate to some styles or forms of art. They may doubt their own competence, thinking that they can't "understand" certain pieces. As long as they want to keep going and keep trying, you can safely trust in the Spirit. Often things happen deep within that we cannot begin to imagine until, quite suddenly, something blossoms.

However, there are people for whom art is not accessible or practical for their own spiritual practice at this moment in their lives. They may like art but they may not be able to get past the surface. Please don't take it personally if it isn't working for them. Help them to find the inner permission to move on to another practice without feeling guilty or as if they have failed.

2. Not every piece of art will work for every person. Meeting a piece of art is like meeting a new acquaintance. You hit it off immediately with some people. Others may baffle you, surprise you, or even make you a little uncomfortable, but over time they grow on you and become good friends. You may maintain a nodding acquaintance with some for years – and that's enough. And some just never click. If people understand this they tend to be less judgmental about their own response.
3. There is never a single "right" way to view any piece of art – any more than there is a single "right" way to interpret a scripture text. If you remain curious and open, the groups with which you work will constantly surprise you with what they see and how they are touched, challenged, comforted, delighted, threatened, amazed, and transformed by the gift of art.