

Eye of the Storm
By Willamarie Moore

"I just want / to walk through the world where others / want to sit in silence with a painting"
-Kelli Russell Agodon

I sit *seiza* on the *tatami* mat floor for the first time in years. Minutes ago a hush descended upon us as the shoes came off and we stepped into the naturally cool, darker space. We are immersed in a Japanese Zen Buddhist Sutra Hall in the mountains of Northern New Mexico. Cushions are lined up as you would find in Japan but here upright chairs are interspersed among them. Three older women pad pad pad in their white-socked feet behind me. I stay put for many minutes, sinking contentedly into a familiar groundedness while they snap snap snap pics with cell phone cameras, suddenly now with a sense of reverence more than the "Look, I was here!" urgency otherwise the norm. There are days when stillness is okay, is accepted, is in fact — finally — respected. There are days when the rush for "More-better-faster!" still tries to run the world and you feel like a yellowed aspen leaf blown in the autumn gales. I just want to live in a world where others join me in seeing every day as a painting, when we know we are the artists of our own lives, and it is understood in our bones that great art is born of a certain discipline, and is best beheld through the lens of calm contemplation. And when I laugh because those ancient Japanese monks might never understand how the sacred spaces they created would turn into the eye of a storm in the middle of the Jemez Mountains, in the middle of a whirlwind family visit in the middle of a chaotic mass of humanity trying its damndest to return to "how things used to be" pre-pandemic, in that go-go-go M.O. no longer quite as governing as before. And maybe if I whisper, "There's a pink lotus flower in the pond," we will all look for it but find only a white one and then remember that the most exquisite beauty emerges from the mud.

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