



# The Art of Hope

Imagining another world in a  
world that breaks our hearts

James K.A. Smith



























[O]ne of the functions of Revelation was to purge and to refurbish the Christian imagination. It tackles people's imaginative response to the world, which is at least as deep and influential as their intellectual convictions. It recognizes the way a dominant culture, with its images and ideals, constructs the world for us, so that we perceive and respond to the world in its terms. Moreover, it unmaskes this dominant construction of the world as an ideology of the powerful which serves to maintain their power. In its place, Revelation offers a different way of perceiving the world which leads people to resist and to challenge the effects of the dominant ideology. Moreover, since this different way of perceiving the world is fundamentally to open it to transcendence it resists any absolutizing power or structures or ideals within this world.

—Richard Bauckham











Letitia Huckaby.  
Suffrage Project:  
Sugar and Spice, 2018.  
Pigment print on vintage  
cotton-picking sack.  
72 x 24 inches.



## We Used to Grade God's Sunsets from the Lost Valley Beach

By Rod Jellema

Why we really watched we never said.

The play of spectral light, but maybe also  
the coming dark, and the need to trust  
that the fire dying down before us  
into Lake Michigan's cold waves  
would rise again behind us.

Our arch and witty critiques  
covered our failures to say what we saw.

The madcap mockery of grading God as though  
He were a struggling student artist  
(*Cut loose, strip it down, study Matisse  
and risk something, something unseen—  
C-plus, keep trying—that sort of thing*)

only hid our fear of His weather  
howling through the galaxies. We humored  
a terrible truth: that nature gives us hope  
only in flashes, split second, one  
at a time, fired in a blaze of beauty.

Picking apart those merely actual sunsets,  
we stumbled into knowing the artist's job:  
to sort out, then to seize and work an insight  
until it's transformed into permanence.

And God, brushing in for us the business  
of clouds and sky, really is a hawker  
of clichés, a sentimental hack as a painter.

He means to be. He leaves it to us  
to catch and revise, to find the forms  
of how and who in this world we really are  
and would be, to see how much promise there is  
on a hurtling planet, swung from a thread  
of light and saved by nothing but grace.

