

The Atacama Desert

Like a great outstretched canvass,
the Atacama Desert summoned us to make something
the world has never seen.

Armed with the ideas and methods
from far-flung fields and places
the Artist went to work.

Isolation fed inspiration.
Free of the everyday distractions
that so easily brush away
the wisps of creativity,
the Artist became immersed.

First, with trepidation, come the early dabs and awkward lines
that mark self-conscious art-making;
followed by more forceful strokes and sweeps filling open spaces,
lending initial form and depth,
though leaving, still, the image mainly within the Artist;
when, in a manner that slips past discernment,
the process becomes more dance than march,
and boundaries fade
between palette and canvass,
hand and brush,
imagination and painting;
as the art not the Artist leads;
and the process, once deliberate,
is alive, fluid, unpredictable, even frenzied,
operating now with its own internal logic and aesthetic;
until – pausing to breathe, reaching for stability,
only then noticing the dizziness that comes from stillness –
the process comes to its end.

In the stark light stands the work, complete in its incompleteness,
and facing it stands the Artist, now in judgment.
Is it a masterpiece
that may inspire others to act and see the world in new ways?
An abomination?
Worse yet, bland?
The Artist confronts the essential question:
Will this creation be stashed away,
hidden from view,
from brutal ridicule and flattering praise,
or courageously placed for all to see
in the Great Public Hall?