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The multifaceted perspectives of this book embody the potential for multilayered conversations concerning the intersection of the arts and religious traditions. The central concern of the author articulates art as a “fundamental dimension of human existence and religion a fundamental dimension of arts” (163). In many ways, the method of interlacing—as proposed in the book—is concretely exemplified by the ways in which the author, Cecilia González-Andrieu, braids together analyses of multiple aspects of the arts and artworks in her attempt at demonstrating-reclaiming the interconnection between the religious dimension and art. Art, she claims, can be an effective-useful means to convey and produce theological knowledge. Taking her Catholic Christian tradition as point of reference, she insists that art, when connected to the Christian tradition can convey deep theological knowledge. One could say that this book is an apology for the renewed relation between the arts and the religious; art as theological knowledge.

Using San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge as an analogy, the writer goes to great lengths in discussing the multiple intersections between art and religion, emphasizing the unique capacity of the arts for communicating a deep sense of amazement-asombro of the divine mystery and exploring the revelatory role of art, opening spaces within which the divine is disclosed (18).

In reading this work, the reader is made privy to the author's intimate and very personal sense of beauty and her lens into the world of artistic creativity. Gonález-Andrieu also invites the reader into a unique view of art-as-wonderment, holding the keys to the ineffable and yet articulating via images that which is irreducible to the discursive fields; to make perceptible the work of the Spirit (99). In doing so, González-Andrieu helps the reader imagine the possibilities for disclosure of the divine in the mystical intersection of inspired works of arts, the communities to which they belong, and inspired artists, as they are recognized by their communities (108-109).

The author inhabits and skillfully navigates these negotiated and contested spaces between the predominant “secularizing” attempts at dislodging religious content from the arts. Her poignant (and sometimes even romanticized) portrayal of the arts as wonderment, the invitation to identify the prophetic dimension in the arts, and everything in between bolster her claim of the arts as embodying inspiring moments of the divine disclosure.

González-Andrieu problematizes our understanding of the arts and beauty being critical of the present challenges concerning their commodification and commercialization, and the production of art as materials for consumption. Such commercialization of the arts, she insists does not have anything to do with beauty, the captivation of
the soul by wonderment, or with opening our eyes to see the divine in a new light (33). González-Andrieu also does not shy from controversy stating that sometimes works of art can be coopted and become a lie (116). She adds that, key criteria for the truth of a work of art are the community before and community after the work of art. Yet, to my surprise, she does not problematize more intentionally the historical location-situation within which artworks are produced and, especially Western European Christian art, have functioned as mechanisms to justify war, conquest, and violence, and to disseminate the cultural and racialized prejudices of artists. Moreover, the lack of examples undermines such an important critical issue.

In an important shift, González-Andrieu acknowledges that art are not only “classic works” but also folk, tribal, liturgical, and popular pieces (84). She does draw on some Latino artists. Ironically, the lack of women artists and the fact that she does not engages the larger world of Christian art and beauty outside of the North Atlantic, European, Anglo North American canon, raises questions as to the specific canon of the arts from which the author is drawing, and what she considers Christian art outside of this context. An engagement of works from other ethnic groups-regions of the world could have brought a needed balance. Nevertheless, I agree with González-Andrieu’s invitation to see art potentially serving a sacramental and prophetic function, so much so as to elicit ethical action (78, 97). This is certainly true for me when considering works of art such as the sculpture Christa and the Cristo Negro de Esquipulas, which are part of the growing underside of art.