

Thomas Anshutz, *The Ironworker's Noontime*, 1884



****First Question First****

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

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Excerpt from my journal:

Muscular, yet vulnerable. Societal pressures internalized. Somehow this work is speaking to me this morning in a soft and repulsive way. I feel compassion for this lot, just trying to get on with it, to survive. Surrounded by modern soullessness, harshness, dirt, and grime. Where's their beauty? The resistant me, wanting to get on with it but unable to feel much of a muscle behind that impulse these days. Forcing doesn't seem to be in my toolkit anymore. I hear myself using "nudging" often now. The kind of vulnerability these figures depict is guarded, perhaps based in their bravado, trying to be or feel who they are not. And I sense myself letting go of this place in me more and more; sensing how to recognize this feeling rising in me too. Sleepless nights, food compulsions, tightening. This is a slow, wet train I am on, this long winter's journey grieving Daddy. The machismo and immaturity of our culture's collective emotional state feels exposed here. I feel caught in it once in a while. Not often. I cannot posture.

Q.) Have cultural messages, either internalized or said to your face, undermined your trust in your grief process? (Messages in the realm of: "Pull yourself together!", "It's time you've gotten over it!", "Stop crying!", "Rub some dirt on it and get back in the game!"). Write about this internal tug-of-war. Who do you believe most, these sentiments or what your heart is saying?