

# The gift and grace of true beauty

*“To behold beauty dignifies your life; it heals you and calls you out beyond the smallness of your own self-limitation to experience new horizons. To experience beauty is to have your life enlarged.”*

– John O’Donohue, *“Beauty: The Invisible Embrace”*

**T** rue beauty catches us off-guard. True beauty offers a powerful argument for art – not just the things we create – but also the art of living itself. Its lessons are subtle, but real and immutable. We all know the lessons beauty teaches us – but they are often invisible, imbedded beneath the surface – and we sometimes forget what we know.

As an arts and cultural news journalist, I have always carried within me an inner argument for art, for creativity in a world that seems at times increasingly hostile to anything except the next day’s crisis. While sitting in weekly meetings of the Boston Globe New Hampshire Weekly at its offices at 1650 Elm St. in Manchester for 14 years, I dwelt on the periphery because my beat was back page “fluff” news

in a “real” news front page culture.

In my weekly ruminations, I realized that the very intangibles of art and culture – the books we read, the poems we write, paintings we love, the hand-crafted



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object that is so dear to us, the play that transforms our understanding, the pure movement of dance – represent the trail of creativity that speaks to a different part of our psyche.

While the timely story of yesterday’s fire might line the litter box, my article might end up on the refrigerator. One was timely, the other, timeless.

No one has ever put the argument better to me than poet, author and Celtic priest John O’Donohue, who is Da Vinci-like in his scholarship on the topic of beauty – eloquent in his exploration about why beauty matters terribly, and how it shapes nearly every aspect of culture, character and society.

WHITNEY | PAGE 4



This 6-foot bronze statue, Notre Renaissance Francaise, off the Nashua River near the Main Street bridge and Water Street in Nashua, pay homage to the French Canadian community and female millworkers who toiled in the textile mills along the river.

Photo by D. QUINCY WHITNEY