

# How to Glen<sup>ONLINE</sup> | JUL 27–31, 2020

 *This policy document sets forth the spirit of community and respect we seek to cultivate at the Glen. It is a living document subject to ongoing refinement and expansion. It was last updated on Monday, May 4, 2020.*

## COMMUNITY

The Glen Workshop is an experiment in creativity and community. It only lasts a week, but for many it's also a source of friendships that continue for years. The Glen means a lot to people who feel split between two worlds—an art or literary world that seems baffled by, indifferent to, or suspicious of their interest in God, and a church world that feels similarly about their identity as artists. If your life feels that way, the Glen is where you might find your people. If you're lucky enough not to feel this divide at home, well, savor it—and bring your friends along!

The Glen community is made up of artists, faculty, volunteers, and *Image* staff. But the Glen is first of all for the artists: people who, month to month, give their time and energy to trying to develop a craft, and who want to get better at that craft—from beginners to masters. We also welcome people who simply love the arts and want to hear artists and writers talk about their work, but it's really the artists who are the heart of the Glen community.

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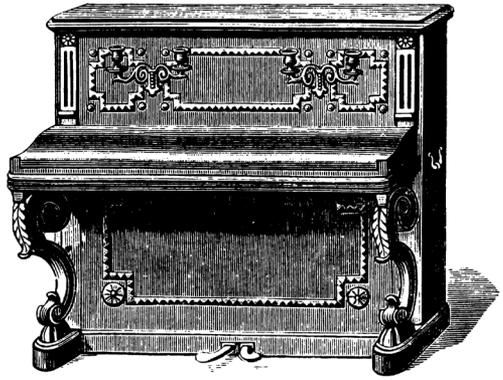
## VULNERABILITY

This community is rich because people make themselves vulnerable here, just by showing up. Please be welcoming even in our shared online spaces. We realize you're mostly introverts, but this is a space where you're so very likely to meet kindred spirits. Get out there and mingle, even just a little.

The workshop can be an especially vulnerable spot. Maybe you're trying a form you haven't worked in much before and you feel like an idiot. Maybe the piece you're working on just won't gel, and you're near tears with it and thinking of giving up. Maybe you've written an essay about a difficult personal subject and you're worried readers will think you're an unlikeable monster. Maybe your fiction is deeply rooted in your own experiences. Maybe you've never published a poem and are worried everyone else in your class already has a book out.

We could just say "be nice in workshop," but we don't think that's actually quite right. We all want to reach a high bar with our work, and we want honesty. Your classmates have come a long way for real conversations about whether and how their work is succeeding, for ideas about where it might go next, for fresh eyes. You have seen examples of how to tell the truth without tearing people down. Make a practice of engaging with your fellow artists in this way. Try to encounter each piece where it is. Try to see what the artist is trying to do. Pull out the one or two things you think the artist is most ready to hear. Keep things concrete. Focus the work, not the person.

While spiritual wayfarers of all stripes are warmly welcomed at the Glen, the week is framed by the Christian tradition. And there are all kinds of Christians here, from all over the country and all over the political and theological map. Keep that in mind: we come from traditions that interpret the Bible differently and this ecumenism is beautiful. We want the Glen to be a place where people can have serious, forthright conversations about the things that matter most, but that works best when we recognize first our shared humanity; that we are each unique expressions of the same creator. Having art as our common subject matter often makes these engagements easier: works of art can invite conversations



that are open to complexity, and to exploring disagreement without rancor.

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## VALUES

At *Image* we hold this openness to complexity and difference as an expression of our core values:

### INCARNATIONAL HUMANISM

We believe that human creatures, made in the image of our divine creator, live most fully into their nature when they are creative. Just as God formed Adam from muddy clay and breathed life into him, so do artists find ways of locating spiritual things in earthy materials. By its nature, art moves us from the general and abstract and into the particular and concrete. Each art form does this in ways unique to its medium; and in each age, this must happen in new ways. As such, art is constantly incarnational: the transcendent given flesh.

### ARCHAIC AVANT-GARDE

The mystery at the heart of the Christian faith is the invisible made visible; the Word become flesh. Our artistic endeavors echo this mystery: painters plunge their imagination into the invisible and bring up something we've never seen before; writers conjure souls onto the page for us to see and contemplate in

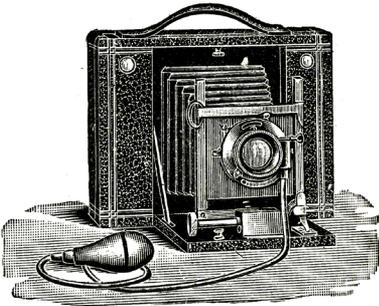
ourselves. The enduring history of the Christian tradition gives us the boldness and courage to be innovative, venturesome, unapologetically contemporary, and even avant-garde. We understand our Christian tradition as a deep wellspring to drink from, a source of truth and mystery that continues to edify and illuminate.

#### ANCHORED HOSPITALITY

Our strong foundation of incarnational Christianity enables and motivates a hospitality that is open and capacious rather than defensive or threatened. Rather than a straightjacket that constrains, our traditions are a scaffolding from which we can reach new heights and explore new ground. As such, *Image* is an organization deeply moored to the Christian tradition that is hospitable to all faiths. We do not judge art by whether it reflects right belief, or can be used to make an argument for right belief. Rather, we believe that art that grapples honestly with transcendent questions finds its way toward truth. Any art that grapples honestly with a religious question—which is to say, a human question—is ours.

#### CREATIVE PLURALISM

We believe that the God who created our world—a cosmos that includes 200 billion galaxies and 2,700 different sorts of earthworms and unimaginably more already lost in the mysteries of time—takes a special delight in creative diversity. *Image* does not identify religious art with any particular era



or privilege any specific style. We endeavor to reflect a wide array of styles, voices, and genres that speak to different people in different ways.

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## EXPECTATIONS

Our values provide guidelines for creating and cultivating the workshop environments of the Glen, and for encountering one another in all the diversity of our differences. We welcome attendees and participants of all ages, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, abilities, physical appearances, body sizes, and belief systems. Everyone at the Glen has the right to be safe from unwanted behavior or discrimination on the basis of identity. At the Glen, we welcome the full spectrum of humanity because we believe our community will be richer for it.

We invite you to embrace this welcoming stance, and help cultivate a place where our differences become a source of perspective and appreciation and joy; a place where as artists and as a community, we are stronger for our diversity.

With this in mind, we encourage you to engage with your fellow Glen participants in a positive and proactive manner:

*Be welcoming and supportive*—offer help as you are able, and remember how lonely unfamiliar environments can be.

*Be collaborative*—the creative life is full of challenges; facing them together is better, and everyone here has a valuable perspective.

*Be kind when you offer critique*—good critiques are thoughtful, respectful, clear, and above all constructive. Good critiques focus on the goal that is aimed for, rather than the problems standing in the way.

In our experience, most Glennies would be chagrined to hear they'd disparaged anyone, contributed to a hostile environment, or even just made someone uncomfortable. That said, it's possible to disparage without meaning to. If you

encounter this or see it happen to someone else, and you feel able to do so, we hope you'll draw the person aside and talk to them about it. If someone talks to you about something you've done or said, try not to feel defensive, but see it as a favor and a chance to grow. In our experience, the Glen community has a lot of love and grace, and we hope that when these conversations happen, they'll become the basis for more closeness and trust. None of us is perfect, and when we're in community we have the chance to learn from each other.

In more serious cases, if this doesn't work, or if you just don't feel you can talk to the person, please talk with our staff:

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### A FINAL NOTE

Like the church, the Glen is in process, journeying. It's not perfect. We're going to screw up, and for our community to succeed, we need to be willing to see it, to own up, and to repair. We hope you'll have grace for each other and for the institution that is the Glen as we do our best to make it look a little more like the kingdom of God. We need each of you to help.

We hope you'll find real community this week. We hope you'll find new friends who can journey with you, and that you'll deepen existing friendships. We hope you'll learn practical things you can use in your work, and that you'll come away with a deeper sense of your calling as an artist. We hope you'll feel a sense of blessing on your work this week, and that you'll take that home with you at the end.



Welcome  
to the Glen.

ART • FAITH • MYSTERY  
**Image**

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