

# Awe

## Faculty-led Trips Yield a New Body of Work

Rick Love

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### **A word from the editor**

As quoted by William Blake in this article, *"I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's; I will not reason and compare: my business is to create"*, we, as editors of *Beyond*, decided to apply this idea to the following submission by Rick Love by breaking our standard style guides and allowing the article to be published how the author envisioned it. In other words, we also went out of our comfort zone and beyond – that is, beyond the rigid standards of an academic publication as well as beyond the layout grids, fonts, and styles set for each page of this journal.

Personally, I've always had a keen fondness for editorial design. As a graphic designer myself, I treat the blank page as a canvas on which to communicate words and images. In fact, as designers, we establish the grids, baselines, margins, typefaces, and line spacings before we start to fill the page with its content. All this becomes a sort of graphic "enslavement" against which Blake rebelled. This is exactly how art evolves; rules are broken to make room for expression, often leaving the beholder in awe.

With this decision, we hope the reader can visually appreciate the very AWE Rick Love has portrayed, not only with his words, but also through his artistic vision.

**Nina Peci**, co-editor, *Beyond*

# AWE





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The Temple of Venus and Roma was built by Emperor Hadrian in 135-138 ce. It is one of the largest temples built in Rome, located just steps from the Colosseum. Photo Credit Rick Love. ©RAWWAR, LLC 2023.

The dome of Santa Maria del Fiore has 4 million bricks. Filippo Brunelleschi, the architect of the dome, designed special shapes of bricks that create a herring bone pattern increasing their strength and reducing weight. Photo Credit Rick Love. ©RAWWAR, LLC 2023.





Every year about 1,252,508 people visit the Accademia, in Florence, Italy, to see Michelangelo's 'David'. Photo Credit Rick Love. ©RAWWAR, LLC 2023.

# AWE

**noun:**

a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder.

**“Art can never exist without naked beauty displayed.”** William Blake

**FACULTY-LED TRIPS YIELD A NEW BODY OF WORK.**

**WHY**

I went to Italy to capture awe. Why Italy? Because Italy offers up awe on a platter, over and over again. Why capture awe? Because the joy that exudes from someone's face when they have seen Venice, the Colosseum or the David for the first time is priceless. But it is fleeting! I went to Italy to see if I could capture it!

I first glimpsed this awe on a series of faculty led trips to Italy. I witnessed it year after year, trip after trip; the emotions that bubbled up out of my students' bodies when they experienced Europe for the first time. It was especially apparent in Venice. As first-time visitors, arriving in Venice by train and having Venice thrust in front of them, a first glimpse of joy exudes from their faces, a look that is forever etched in my memory.

I remember my first visit to Venice, exiting Venezia Santa Lucia and seeing Venice before me, as if transported by a time machine back a thousand years. I distinctly remember thinking “Wait! What?”. My brain and body were in shock, and it took a hot minute to get my bearings. I was forced to face the Grand Canal and the myriad of watercraft going in all directions and ‘palazzos’ thrusting up out of the water. I was experiencing the physicality of awe. This cannot be explained in words, it can only be experienced. I immediately understood why artists over the ages were drawn to Venice. I thought of Turner and his Grand Canal painting and Canaletto's voracious output, not to mention Thomas Mann's Death in Venice. I realized Venice is not a cliché, it is Venice and its allure is infectious.

It turns out that there are eight types of awe:

- **moral beauty**
- **collective effervescence**
- **nature**
- **music**



- **visual design, art, architecture**
- **spirituality, mysticism, religion**
- **life and death**
- **epiphany**

When my son was a senior in high school, I brought him on one of these faculty led trips and took the opportunity to try and get a picture of his first moments in Venice. Alas, my reflexes were too slow, my iPhone let me down, and I missed the moment. That was four and half years ago, but the idea stuck with me. I decided to make the pursuit of awe a formal project. I put it on the calendar. I booked the flight. I secured accommodations. I started voraciously practicing photographing fleeting moments.

## HOW

I knew from previous artistic endeavors that I should do two things:

1. Practice, practice, practice! This took the form of me buying lenses and testing them out on daily walks with my wife and dog and the occasional neighbor. I had to acquire a new skill. I needed to nail focus and capture the moment with large telephoto lenses (some of them being manual focus), all without a tripod. I figured if I can do this at home it will translate in Italy.
2. Be open to something happening that I hadn't prepared for. Allow a mystery to show up once I am in Italy. Or as Chris Voss says in his book *Never Split the Difference*, and I am paraphrasing "don't be so sure you know what you want that you wouldn't take something better." This usually comes in a form and time frame you don't see coming. You cannot anticipate or predict this inspiration. It's in the throes of the work that this mystery unfolds. I purposefully allowed some space for this to happen.

I was eager to get to Venezia Santa Lucia and take my first frames. With two camera bodies and six lenses stuffed in my carry on, I landed in Venice. It was late October, rain had unleashed on the Veneto, and I had forgotten my umbrella. I gladly slunk below deck on the water taxi and headed for the Rialto. I dodged gusts of wind and rain, found my monastery, dropped off my gear, grabbed the Olympus and the 50-200mm and headed out to buy an umbrella. It was Ognissanti and it seemed like all of Europe was in Venice for a fall break. The fates were on my side, I knew I wouldn't be lacking in opportunities to photograph AWE.

I turned my last corner, gazed at the dome San Simeone and headed to the Grand Canal. I found a seemingly endless flow of multicolored umbrellas stretching from the Scalzi bridge to the train station. With my new red umbrella perched above my baseball cap (my attempt to hide in plain sight as a tourist), I dove into the pulsing river of people.

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# VENICE ROME FLORENCE

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“I must create a system or be enslaved by another man’s; I will not reason and compare: my business is to create.” William Blake

I enacted my plan.

#### WHAT

In preparing for this project, I was hyper focused on Venice and Rome. I knew from past experiences with my students that Venezia Santa Lucia and the Colosseum Metro would serve up many opportunities. The sheer number of people passing through these locations increased my odds of capturing the moments.

I was prepared to fail. I was prepared to regroup and do it again. I figured I might need different camera gear. I might need a new strategy. What if I missed the moments? What if three weeks wasn't enough time? What if I got rained out? I was prepared to do whatever it took to pull it off. I braced myself for this trip to be just a practice run, a scouting mission of sorts. To my surprise this mild question mark of possible success dissolved after that first session at Venezia Santa Lucia. The pouring rain seemed to add a spark to each newcomer flowing out of the station.

Rome and Florence were next, and the AWE just kept coming. Before I knew it, I had filled a 1TB drive. I settled down in Florence, my last stop on the AWE journey. I had time to reflect on what had just unfolded. I also had some time to try some locations not on the pre-planned shot list. Surrounded by books at my extremely homey Airbnb, I reflected on how almost two decades of faculty-led trips had led to this moment, this project and its almost immediate successes, tied up in 20 years of haunting Italy. I had so many good pics I couldn't quite believe my good fortune. Looking back two decades I saw how gradually the fates were leading me to this moment; this project. I found myself grateful to all the students and colleagues who had signed up for adventure in Europe with me! Without them these pics you see here would not have happened!

#### HOME

AWE is a big project...now back in my studio I am on the precipice of launching AWE into the world. Frames are being designed and need to be made. Potential books are being laid out. Studio visits need to be lined up. Life size images hang on the walls, calling out to live in the world.

#### About the Author

**Rick Love works as a full-time artist; his studio (RAWWAR, LLC) is in Saint Paul, MN ([www.ricklove.com](http://www.ricklove.com)). He is currently the Collaborative Dean of Arts and Humanities at [www.campusedu.com](http://www.campusedu.com). Before that he was an associate professor of Art & Design at the University of Northwestern in Saint Paul, MN, where he served as both a faculty member, chair of the Art & Design department and faculty president.**



There are eight different types of AWE:

**MORAL BEAUTY**

**COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCE**

**NATURE**

**MUSIC**

**ART, ARCHITECTURE**

**SPIRITUALITY, MYSTICISM**

**RELIGION**

**LIFE AND DEATH**

**EPIPHANY**



CASH WATER CO

Exit stairs are on the left side of the platform, a two minutes walk,  
go to the subway down to the left down the stairs with the ticket.





Each day 819,421 people use the Rome Metro, many of them exiting at the Colosseo Metro stop. Photo Credit Rick Love. ©RAWWAR, LLC 2023.





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