

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

BEAUX-ARTS OF PARIS, RMN-GRAND PALAIS/ART RESOURCE, NY



ARCHITECTURE

Where Elegance and Beauty Meet Functional Design

The art of architecture training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris

LORRAINE FERRIER

Seldom do we see architectural designs that never made it off the drawing board. Often such drawings were stored away in dark archives or lost forever. Architectural drawings completed at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris seemed destined for similar fates. But one American collector's ardor for Beaux-Arts drawings has meant that we can catch a rare glimpse of architectural treasures that beautifully document professional architect training in France.

Until June 13, visitors to the New-York Historical Society can see French architectural drawings from the private collection of investor and philanthropist Peter May, in the exhibition "The Art of Architecture: Beaux-Arts Drawings From the Peter May Collection."

In the exhibition, over 50 drawings by students and graduates of the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) in Paris illustrate the history of French architectural training in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

▲ The central courtyard of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where architecture students would study classical plaster casts as part of their professional training.

Continued on Page 4

What People Are Saying



I read The Epoch Times daily. I still like hard papers [...] and I still like to grab that paper in my hand, but I get more printed versions of stories than ever before. You guys have done an amazing job, and really—I think there's such a void in media, especially newspapers. They slant so solidly one way that **there are very few papers that I can really feel that I can rely on, and The Epoch Times is one.**

SEAN HANNITY
Talk show host



I congratulate you and The Epoch Times for the work you are doing, especially with regard to keeping the menace of the communist threat in front of us.

DR. SEBASTIAN GORKA
Military and intelligence analyst and former deputy assistant to the president



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LARRY ELDER
Best-selling author, attorney, and talk show host



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LITERATURE

3 Cheers for the Maker of the Modern Essay Michel de Montaigne

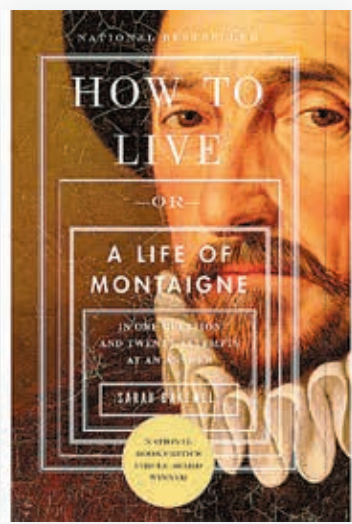
JEFF MINICK

I am a lover of essays. Every morning, shortly after dawn, I sit at my laptop, coffee at hand, and explore the internet looking for pieces to read for enjoyment or as a kickoff for an article of my own.

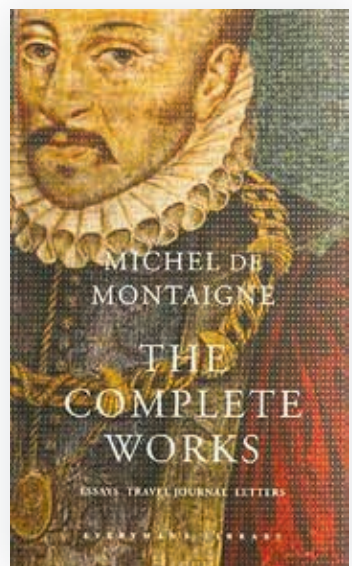
On my bookshelves are scores of novels, once also a favorite genre, but over the years I have amassed equal numbers of volumes of essays, collections by such diverse writers as Joseph Epstein, Richard Mitchell, Alice Thomas Ellis, Hilaire Belloc, and Florence King. Here too are anthologies like Phillip Lopate's "The Art of the Personal Essay" and Epstein's "The Norton Book of Personal Essays."

Nearly all these writers share some common characteristics. They often interject humor into their work—some of it biting, some gentle, some self-deprecatory. They point out hypocrisy, they praise sincerity, and they reference facts, historical figures and events, and literature while at the same time inserting themselves into their explorations.

This blend of personality and observation in nonfiction writing is a relatively new form of expression, a product of the French Renaissance, and generally credited as the invention of one man.



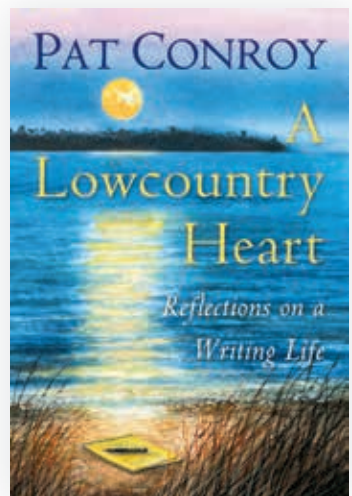
Sarah Bakewell's national best seller.



Everyman's Library edition of "The Complete Works" of Montaigne.



Montaigne enjoyed for entertainment value Boccaccio's "Decameron."



Modern essayists like Pat Conroy owe a debt to Montaigne.

Michel de Montaigne wrote personal essays, thereby creating a new form of literary expression.

The Great Granddaddy of the Essay Michel de Montaigne was born in 1533 near Bordeaux. His wealthy father, whom Montaigne once called "the best father that ever was," oversaw his son's education, instituting such unusual measures as having his son waken to music every morning and teaching him Latin before he learned French.

As an adult, Montaigne held several political offices. He also found himself caught up in the turmoil of France's religious unrest. Several times he served as a diplomat, was admired by both Catholics and Protestants for his tact and his tolerant attitudes, and was twice elected mayor of Bordeaux. He married Françoise de la Cassaigne, a union that produced six children though only a daughter survived past infancy. He died in 1592 in the family home, Château de Montaigne.

And he wrote personal essays, thereby creating a new form of literary expression.

The Pioneer

The word "essais," which Montaigne used to describe his generally short and subjective pieces of writing, comes from the French verb "essayer," meaning "to test," "to attempt," "to exercise," and "to experiment."

This verb describes perfectly Montaigne's writings. His essays are haphazardly arranged in his books, and the subjects range from friendship to cannibalism, from prognostications to smells, from the education of children to drunkenness. Like modern essayists, Montaigne puts himself in the middle of these pieces, happily making arguments and tossing off opinions, and marshaling other writers, many of them Greek and Roman, into his ruminations.

His casual style and discourse were innovative for his time. As he writes in a brief introduction in 1580:

"I have dedicated it (the book) to the private convenience of my relatives and friends, so that when they have lost me (as soon they must), they may recover here some features of my habits and temperament, and by this means keep the knowledge they have had of me more complete and alive."

In the next paragraph he adds:

"I want to be seen here in my simple, natural, ordinary fashion, without straining or artifice; for it is myself I portray."

An Amateur Looks at Montaigne Montaigne and I are only recently acquainted.

Our budding friendship happened in this way. Several months ago, in some now forgotten online article, I stumbled across a favorable mention of Sarah Bakewell's "How to Live, or A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer." After bringing the book home from the library, I ambled through "How to Live," stopping here and there to read a certain passage, and then went in search of the essays themselves.

These I again found in the library: the Everyman's Library edition of "The Complete Works." It is a daunting compilation consisting of 1,336 pages translated by Donald Frame, who surely suffered from eyestrain and writer's cramp by the time he completed his climb up "Mount Montaigne."

Classical Influences

Montaigne, as I found in reading some of these essays, was a man of erudition. In addition to being well-educated and a lifelong reader to boot, he holed up in his chateau with a private library of 1,500 works when he first began writing these "attempts."

To read Montaigne is to become aware not only of his extraordinary classical education, but also of his ability to remember passages from various texts and bring them into his writing. In his brief essay—it's less than two pages—"On Idleness," for example, he quotes Virgil, Horace, Martial, and Lucan. In "Of the Education of Children," a much longer piece, Montaigne intro-



A portrait of Michel de Montaigne, circa 1570s.

duces several dozen classical writers to his readers, dropping their names as casually as a modern essayist might mention the names of Einstein, John Wayne, and Donald Trump.

Anyone who doubts the influence of the Greeks and Romans on the Renaissance has only to read Montaigne, who after all was writing not just for himself but also for "relatives and friends." This audience would have recognized the philosophers, historians, and poets he mentions.

Contemporaries

In his "On Books," which I read because of my own love affair with the printed word, Montaigne reassures

"I want to be seen here in my simple, natural, ordinary fashion, without straining or artifice; for it is myself I portray."

Michel de Montaigne, essayist

his readers that contemporary literature has a place in our libraries and in our affections. He writes: "Among the books that are simply entertaining, I find, of the moderns, the 'Decameron' of Boccaccio, Rabelais, and 'The Kisses' of Johannes Secundus, if they may be placed under this heading, worth reading for amusement."

Montaigne also blends the tales and anecdotes of his own age into his writing. In "On Drunkenness," for example, he recounts the story of a chaste widow who discovers herself pregnant. After a long personal struggle to understand her pregnancy, she "brought herself to have it announced at the service in her church that if anyone would admit the deed, she promised to pardon him and if he saw fit, to marry him." A farmhand in her employ confessed that he had "found her, one holiday when she had taken her wine very freely," and was the father. "They are still alive and married to each other."

Merci Beaucoup, Monsieur Montaigne

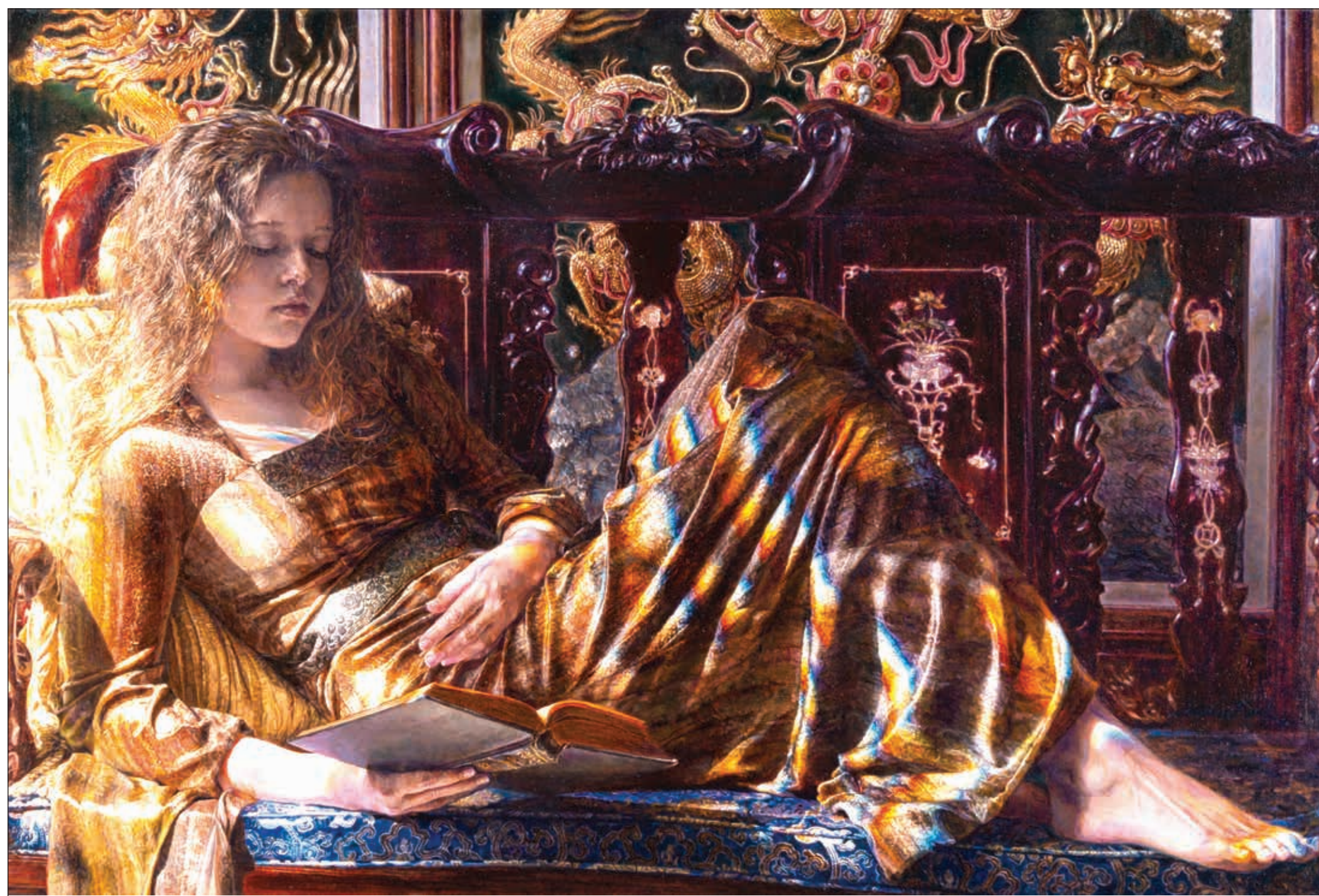
From this point on, when I reread pieces from books like Alice Thomas Ellis's "Home Life One," Pat Conroy's "A Lowcountry Heart," or Richard Mitchell's "The Leaning Tower of Babel," I will think of Michel de Montaigne standing behind them and all the other essayists I admire. We stand forever in his debt.

In his introductory remarks to his essays, Montaigne writes:

"Thus, reader, I am myself the matter of my book; you would be unreasonable to spend your leisure on so frivolous and vain a subject."

Ah, Monsieur Montaigne, how wrong you were.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooled students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of non-fiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.



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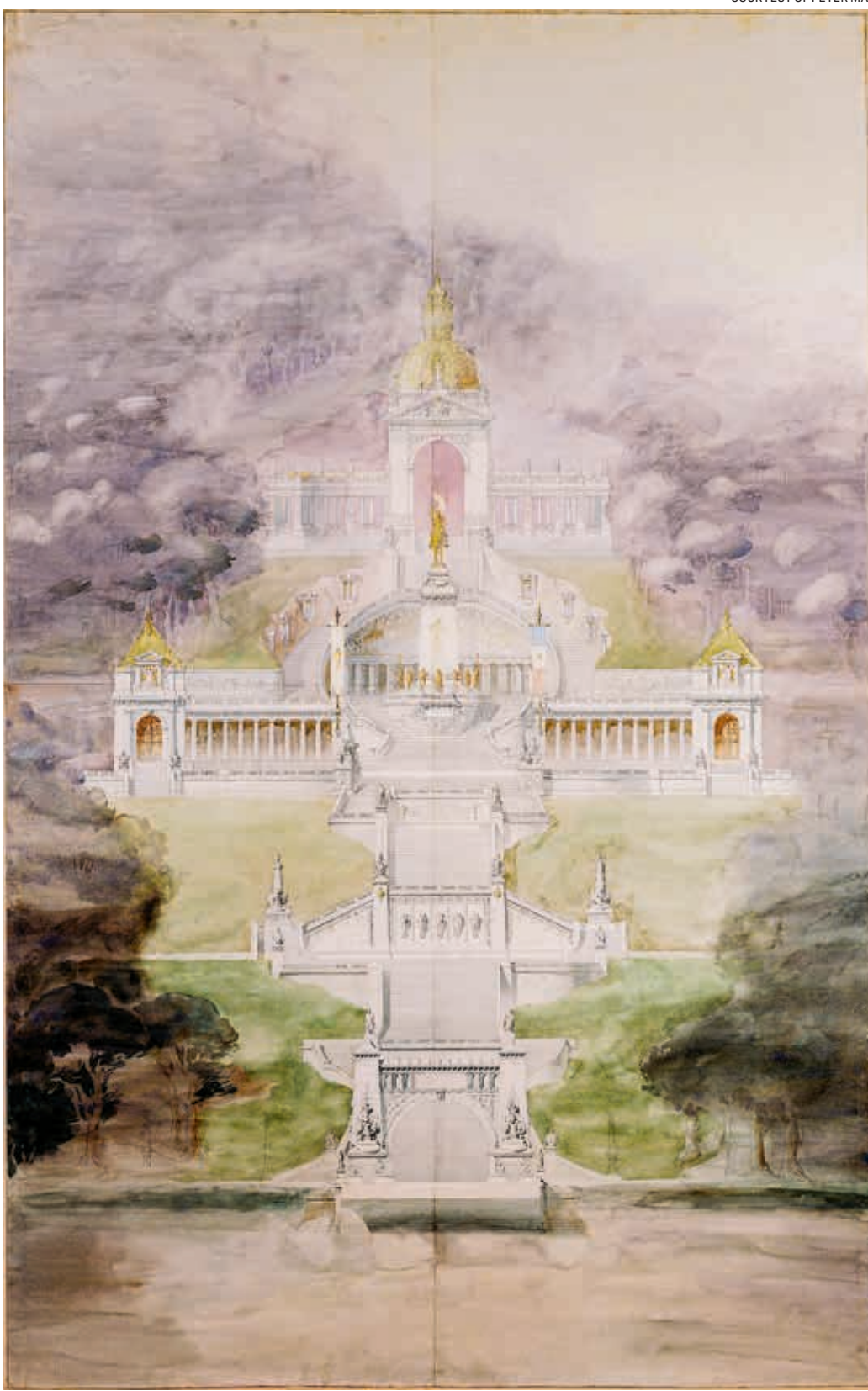
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NEW YORK Oct. 2021



Rome Prize competition drawing for a monument to Joan of Arc: elevation, 1890, by Amet Georges Alexandre Pradelle. Pencil, ink, watercolor, metallic tape; 79 inches by 64 inches.

ARCHITECTURE

Where Elegance and Beauty Meet Functional Design

The art of architecture training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris

Continued from Page 1

Also included are two drawings by New York architectural firm McKim, Mead & White from the historical society's collection. Beaux-Arts architect Charles Follen McKim was a graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts.

"The idea of the show is to illustrate the steps along the path toward becoming a professional architect," exhibition curator Maureen Cassidy-Geiger said in a telephone interview. Scholar Cassidy-Geiger is the Peter May collection curator. Her specialty is 17th- and 18th-century European court culture and the history of decorative arts and collecting, but her range extends to architecture and design from the Renaissance to the 20th century.

Each drawing demonstrates the Beaux-Arts style, the classical architectural style that European and American architects

“The ability to live on a daily basis with so many beautiful pieces has significantly enriched my life and love of architecture.”

Peter May, investor and philanthropist



Competition drawing for an expansion to the Sorbonne: cross-section, 1882, by Prosper-Etienne Bobin. Pencil, ink, watercolor; 34 inches by 108 inches.



THE ART OF ARCHITECTURE
Beaux-Arts Drawings from the Peter May Collection

practiced until World War II. Cassidy-Geiger stressed that many of the drawings tend toward the artistic, even if they originated as admission drawings for the École des Beaux-Arts, or assignment and competition drawings to express the progress and mastery of the student.

What makes this exhibition particularly remarkable is that most of the surviving architectural drawings of this caliber are kept in the archives of institutes and libraries. "Private collectors of this material are few and far between," Cassidy-Geiger said. And May's collection of some 700 architectural drawings is one of the largest of its kind.

Board members of the Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation in America who visited the exhibition, many of whom are architects and designers producing architectural drawings similar to those in the exhibition, found it astonishing that this private collection existed, Cassidy-Geiger explained.

Architectural Masterpieces
Cassidy-Geiger has hung the drawings in what is called the "salon style," with the pictures tightly packed and placed high on the wall in a two-story space—a style that's rarely seen in museums and art galleries today. Displaying the drawings en masse makes quite an impact, and it demonstrates their variety and scale. Detailed drawings are hung at eye level so visitors can enjoy the exquisite works in their minutiae. And hung up high are monumental pieces effectively showing these grandiose drawings' large scale.

"Having them framed as if they were old master drawings or paintings is highly unusual," she said. For May, these framed works in his homes and offices constantly inspire him. "The ability to live on a daily basis with so many beautiful pieces has significantly enriched my life and love of architecture," Peter May said in the foreword of "Living With Architecture as Art: The Peter W. May Collection of Architectural Drawings, Models, and Artefacts, Volume I."

It seems the exhibition team shared May's sentiment as they were in awe of the framed drawings, and one was particularly impactful. "It was just a jaw-dropping moment when they saw the frames, and realized that the 'Joan of

Arc' should be the centerpiece," Cassidy-Geiger said.

Collectively, the drawings illustrate the different stages of training at the École des Beaux-Arts, starting with admission drawings hung on the left side of the wall, and presentation drawings rendered by graduates are displayed on the right side.

The School

The School of Fine Arts in Paris dates back to 1648. Practicing architects ("patrons") recommended students to the school until 1823, after which students took an entrance exam.

Some students already worked with an architect in private practice in studios ("ateliers"), where the patron trained them in design and drawing skills and helped them gain admission to the School of Fine Arts or advanced their education.

At the ateliers, which were often affiliated with the school, students learned the architectural skills necessary for their admission drawings. And once they were admitted, it was in these ateliers that the students would learn how best to advance through the school system.

For example, students learned orthographic drawing, a technique whereby



Composite study of St. Genevieve Abbey, in Paris, circa 1900, by an unidentified architect.

buildings are rendered completely flat with no perspective, usually with three different views: a plan, a front elevation, and a side elevation. But students enlivened their drawings by adding watercolor shadows and staffage, the addition of figures to give some dimensionality to the drawing, Cassidy-Geiger explained. "For Peter May, this made them ... more artistic. They weren't simply flat architectural drawings; they actually had some life and vitality," she added.

Of all the works on display, she particularly enjoys a composite study of St. Genevieve Abbey in Paris. In this piece, the student reconstructed part of an alcove window and balcony in which he added details of architectural ornamentation such as urns and a wrought iron balustrade made three-dimensional by shadows.

"This to me is also a signifier of the artist, the artistry of these drawings, that this person not only had to accurately render architectural substance, but actually created this really breathtaking composition," she said.

Traditional Study

Study at the School of Fine Arts in Paris was different from what we recognize today. "It really took a lot of personal initiative, one would have to say. ... You really had to commit, because a lot of it was self-guided," Cassidy-Geiger said.

In the school's atrium, the students studied a collection of plaster casts of classical masterpieces. By the 19th century, many European museums had similar cast halls. And a library full of architectural renderings and printed books were also available for the students to study, she said.

Students were tested on their skills in mathematics and perspective drawing, and they advanced through the school by entering "concours" (competitions), with each one centered on a particular theme. They entered at least two concours per year, and the types of projects varied, including even posters and stamp designs, Cassidy-Geiger wrote in "Living With Architecture as Art." A few of the original assignments are on display in one of the exhibition cases. Students would've been given a printed assignment specifying the building type, the dimensions of the paper, and the dif-



Rome Prize competition drawing for an observatory: plan, 1907, by an unidentified architect student. Pencil, ink, and watercolor; 54 inches by 48 inches. Peter May Collection.

“The idea of the show is to illustrate the steps along the path toward becoming a professional architect.”

Maureen Cassidy-Geiger, exhibition curator

ferent renderings required. For each competition, they needed to submit four drawings: a plan, an elevation, a perspective, and a cross-section. If a student omitted a required element, his competition entry was rejected.

Once submitted, the competition drawings were tacked to the wall for judging. They weren't framed, but students were taught to render frames within their compositions. Students included a faint watercolor frame or even gilt-metal tape that acted as a framing device, Cassidy-Geiger said. Each submission was judged blindly; all identifying marks were omitted from the entry, but the student and his associated atelier were annotated on the work when the judging was over.

"Whoever won first, second, or third accrued a certain number of points, and they they reached a certain threshold, they could advance to the next class. It could take three, four, or five years to actually get through the system, and

they were all aiming for the Rome Prize," she explained.

The Rome Prize

Some of the largest drawings in the exhibition are Rome Prize competition entries. Cassidy-Geiger highlights a rather delightful plan for an observatory with a series of whimsical driveways winding through mountainous terrain. The exhibition's centerpiece is a vertical rendering of a grand monument to Joan of Arc that was awarded fourth place in the competition. All first-, second-, and third-prize winning entries are kept in the archives of the School of Fine Arts.

Winning the Rome Prize allowed students to spend three to five years studying at the French Academy in the Villa Medici in Rome. Studying in Rome, the heart of classical art at the time, meant that students could completely immerse themselves in the ruins of antiquity.

Drawings created abroad by the Rome Prize winners are also included in the exhibition: from reconstructed ruins of a Roman theater delicately rendered in watercolor to splendid polychrome paintings of Heracles and Pompeii. "These were the kinds of renderings that were produced by the winners of the Rome Prize and by the architects that went to Rome to study antiquity," Cassidy-Geiger said.

On returning to France, the students would begin working as architects. But whereas British architects would enter into private practice in independent studios to compete for public and private commissions, many graduates of the School of Fine Arts in Paris went to work for the French government.

At the end of the exhibition, on the right, are a few examples of graduate presentation drawings, which would have been seen by private funders or government officials. The drawings are beautifully rendered, not just for the aesthetic but for practical purposes, to communicate the design to someone who might not necessarily read an architectural drawing.

To find out more about the exhibition "The Art of Architecture: Beaux-Arts Drawings From the Peter May Collection," which runs until June 13 at the New-York Historical Society, visit NYHistory.org

(Above) The architectural drawings in the exhibition "The Art of Architecture: Beaux-Arts Drawings From the Peter May Collection," at the New-York Historical Society, are hung in the salon style.

SACRED ART

The Marriage of Mathematics and Sacred Art

Piero della Francesca's 'The Baptism of Christ'

JANI ALLAN

"We don't go to art for information. Rather it's the experience."
—Roger Scruton, philosopher

Piero della Francesca's "The Baptism of Christ," which hangs in the National Gallery in London's Trafalgar Square, was rather like a personal shrine to me. I visited it frequently "for the experience."

When the newsroom became too much of a gallimaufry, I would jump on the Tube to the National Gallery. Ten minutes later I would stand and stare at the painting. A soothing quiet would course through my veins. The painting was reminder, like that hymn by the Quaker John Greenleaf Whittier:

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Piero provided that still, small voice of calm.

A Man of Genius

Piero della Francesca, originally named Piero di Benedetto, was an Italian painter of the Early Renaissance. Although his towering talent was immediately obvious, his peers thought he was as gifted in mathematics and geometry. Why, without Piero they wouldn't have even heard of Euclid.

Born in 1415 in Sansepolcro, Piero died in his birth town in 1492. He was the son of a merchant and tanner. His life was one of wealth and prestige.

Piero was a revolutionary painter, but a quiet revolutionary. He was the first artist to use mathematically accurate perspective in the way he portrayed his subjects. Indeed, he was the first artist to write a treatise on perspective—that is, creating the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface.

He wrote three treatises that have survived to the present day: "Trattato d'Abaco" (Abacus Treatise), "Libellus de Quinque Corporibus Regularibus" ("Short Book on the Five Regular Solids"), and "De Prospectiva Pingendi" ("On Perspective in Paint-

ing"). The subjects covered in these writings include arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and innovative work in perspective.

'The Baptism of Christ'

"The Baptism of Christ" was commissioned for a small church in Piero's hometown of Sansepolcro in Tuscany, Italy. The tempera on panel, which measures 66 by 46 inches, is the earliest surviving work of the 15th-century painter.

In tempera, egg was used, which had been diluted with water. Dry pigments were ground into the viscous medium. The speed at which the egg dried caused unexpected changes in tonality. More than one layer of retouching was required to obtain the desired effect. Unlike painting with oils, egg tempera is extremely unforgiving.

That Piero started this profoundly cerebral painting when he was only 20 years old speaks to his genius.

Uniting Viewers With the Scene

The painting depicts the moment when Christ is baptized by his cousin, John. John is gently pouring water from a bowl on Christ's head while angels watch.

Christ's baptism seems to be not in the Holy Land but in the moment. With Piero, every allusion matters; the image is a distillation of the thing depicted. His world and Christ's world are not separate.

Piero was a revolutionary painter, but a quiet revolutionary.

The River Jordan is a local stream in which the reflection of a patchwork of Tuscan hills is seen. The blond tree echoing Christ's body is an Italian walnut tree. There are seven plants that are painstakingly rendered. All are indigenous to the area. It is a landscape that is particularly Sansepolcro. In fact, one is even the indigo plant, which Piero used for his paintings.

Piero used the local landscape to unite the viewers to this moment in history.



"The Baptism of Christ," after 1437, by Piero della Francesca. National Gallery, London.

Symmetry and Perspective

Piero's painting is characterized by its serene humanism, its use of geometric forms, and perspective.

The trio of angels seems to relate to each other in a human way. One angel puts his arm on his companion's shoulders so that he can see better. Another looks a tad perturbed.

Christ's body forms a vertical in the center of the painting. Above his head is a bowl and a dove. This line of symmetry leads our eye to heaven.

Balancing the emphasis on the vertical, a horizontal line divides the painting: from the belts of the angels and John the Baptist to the man in the middle distance, who is taking his shirt off in readiness to be baptized.

Behind the man taking off his shirt, and adding perspective, are smaller, stranger figures wearing hats that would have

identified them as being Greek. Scholars remain puzzled as to their identity. Some think they could be the Magi.

The continuing arch of the top of the painting, around through the curved top of Christ's loincloth, forms part of a perfect circle.

Thus, Piero used mathematical principles to order his design and create a visually harmonious image.

Moreover, the cool, clear light unites everything. Piero's palette is milky blond, but each color is as clear as notes that are perfectly played.

His spacious, monumental, and impossibly rational painting is undoubtedly one of the highest achievements of the artistic ideals of the Early Renaissance, an age in which art and science were bound together very deeply.

Jani Allan is a journalist, columnist, writer, and broadcaster.

VIRTUAL THEATER

Do We Prefer Security or Something New?

JUDD HOLLANDER

The inevitability of change and how that's perceived by different generations is the central theme of N.C. Hunter's 1951 play "A Picture of Autumn." The Mint Theater Company is now streaming a live recording of its 2013 production of this work.

The story takes place at Wilton Manor, a secluded English country estate. Home to the Denham family since 1762, the lack of the proper funds has caused the house and surrounding grounds and outbuildings to fall into disrepair. In fact, the driveway of the manor house has become so overgrown that it will soon be impassable to cars.

The estate is currently home to 70-something Sir Charles Denham (Jonathan Hogan), his wife Lady Margaret (Jill Tanner), and Charles's older brother Harry (George Morfogen). Their only constant companion is Nurse (Barbara Eda-Young), the family's sole full-time servant.

Returning to the family home is Charles and Margaret's eldest son Robert (Paul Niebanck). An officious and take-charge sort, he has just finished a lengthy posting abroad. Accompanying Robert are his wife Elizabeth (Katie Firth) and Felicity (Helen Cespedes), her daughter from a previous marriage. Felicity bears a strong resemblance to Harry's long-dead wife.

Also arriving is Robert's younger



RICHARD TERMINO

brother, Frank (Christian Coulson). Somewhat of a ne'er-do-well, Frank is perennially broke, always running from one adventure to another, and may have his own history with Elizabeth.

Concerned about his family living in a home that may soon become too much for them to manage, Robert has contacted a group interested in buying the estate and turning it into a technical college. The proceeds from the sale would allow his parents and uncle to live comfortably for the rest of their lives, albeit in much smaller surroundings. However, it quickly becomes obvious that Charles, Margaret, and Harry don't want to leave the place they have called home for so long, despite all the practical reasons for doing so. Each of the three defers the decision to the others, with

no one willing to take the first step.

Containing more than a few echoes of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya"—with someone coming into a home and upending everyone's life—"A Picture of Autumn" explores how the concepts of home, comfort, and happiness can change as one grows older and options become limited. This point is made clear when a defiant Felicity, who has become quite close to Harry, loudly proclaims that she would never leave Wilton Manor if it were her home. To which Elizabeth quietly replies, "You're not 70." Elizabeth herself begins to appreciate the security that can come with settling down and accepting things Felicity has yet to experience.

Firth strikes a quietly poignant note as the content, yet perhaps unfilled Elizabeth; while Coulson is good as Frank, a man whose continual moving about may be a way to keep regret from catching up with him. Director Gus Kaikonen allows the action to proceed at a leisurely pace, thus letting the audience be slowly drawn into the story. He also permits frequent flashes of dry humor in the script to burst through, which help things from becoming maudlin.

The set by Charles Morgan nicely projects a worn and tired look. William Armstrong's subdued lighting helps set that mood, as do the costumes by Sam Fleming. These range from Robert's immaculate attire to Frank's causal appearance, to the worn-out clothes for Charles, Margaret, and Harry.

"A Picture of Autumn" is a touching story in which generations look at life with tired resignation, a touch of defiance, or the occasional hopefulness of something better to come.

Judd Hollander is a reviewer for stagebuzz.com and a member of the Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle.

(Foreground L-R) Katie Firth, George Morfogen, Barbara Eda-Young, and Jonathan Hogan star in "A Picture of Autumn."

'A Picture of Autumn'

Presented by the Mint Theater Company
Streaming free through June 13 at [MintTheater.org/streaming-series/](https://www.minttheater.org/streaming-series/)
Approximate running time: 2 hours, 5 minutes

Eddie (Taron Egerton) faces down death on the 90-meter ramp in "Eddie the Eagle."



Top 10 Overlooked Family-Friendly Movies

MICHAEL CLARK

Most households with children still living at home probably have a video library stocked to the gills with dozens of high-profile animated, fantasy, adventure, and young adult features. It's also a good bet that many of these productions have been viewed dozens of times each and perhaps have grown a tad too overfamiliar.

The following list includes some movies that might have flown underneath your radar and, in some cases, are better than their higher-profile competition. Hopefully, you and yours will discover (or maybe rediscover) these off-the-beaten-path gems. All titles are available on assorted streaming services.

'The Iron Giant' (1999)

Based on the 1968 novel of the same name by Ted Hughes, this was the first animated feature from writer-director Brad Bird ("Ratatouille" and the "Incredibles" flicks). Set in New England during the Cold War, it centers on Hogarth (voiced by Eli Marienthal), a boy who befriends the title character (voiced by Vin Diesel). With equal parts comedy, drama, adventure, and period thriller, it's a heartwarming classic for the ages and is the only non-live-action production on this list.



"The Iron Giant."

'Gifted' (2017)

"Good Will Hunting" meets "Kramer vs. Kramer" is the best way to describe this little-seen winner about Mary (Mckenna Grace, "I, Tonya," "The Handmaid's Tale"), an orphaned math prodigy, and her enduring relationship with her guardian uncle Frank (Chris Evans). Offering superb support are Octavia Spencer, Jenny Slate, and British stage legend Lindsay Duncan as the mother and grandmother who is trying to come between Mary and Frank.

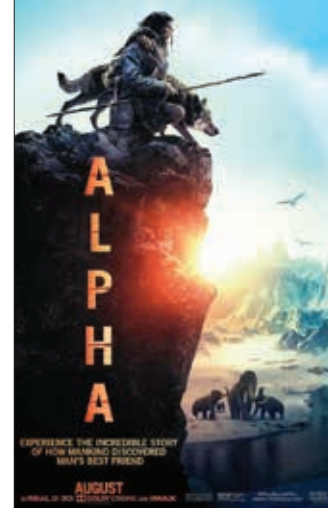
'MicroCosmos' (1996)

Notable for its use of diminutive cameras specifically made for this project, this mostly dialogue-free, gorgeously shot documentary from filmmakers Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou takes place over the course of a single day in the French countryside. The stars are the insects, birds, and mollusks that go about their daily business foraging for food and building dwellings, all while avoiding becoming their neighbor's next meal.

'Alpha' (2018)

Set 20,000 years ago in what is now Europe, the subtitled "Alpha" is an intense adventure that refuses to dull or soften its edges for the sake of commercial viability, yet is eminently watchable. By almost anyone's definition, it's an art film, but also one com-

SONY PICTURES RELEASING



"Alpha" is, ultimately, a heart-tugging "boy and his dog" flick.

20TH CENTURY FOX



These movies may have flown underneath your radar.

"The Art of Racing in the Rain" is told from the perspective of a Golden Retriever.

'The Art of Racing in the Rain' (2019)

Based on the book by Garth Stein, the most intense title on this list might not be suitable for easily upset youngsters, but for all others it will be a deeply bittersweet, life-affirming experience. Told from the perspective of the Golden Retriever Enzo (voiced with unaffected wry humor by Kevin Costner), the story delivers a plethora of unexpected plot twists which, if even only hinted at here, would likely ruin your initial viewing experience.

20TH CENTURY FOX



Insects, birds, and mollusks go about their daily business foraging for food in the documentary "MicroCosmos."

pletely lacking in the kind of pretense that often turns off mainstream audiences. In the end, it's a heart-tugging "boy and his dog" flick, with a wolf instead of a dog. The PG-13 rating is spot on, and parents might want to preview the trailer before allowing younger family members to watch it.

'Hugo' (2011)

The sole G-rated title from director Martin Scorsese is also his only movie shot in 3D. Asa Butterfield ("The Space Between Us," "A Brilliant Young Mind") plays the title character, an orphan living above a Paris train station. While befriendng a shop owner (Ben Kingsley) and starting a puppy-love romance with Isabelle (Chloë Grace Moretz, "Diary of a Wimpy Kid"), Hugo sets out to discover his late father's connection to a silent movie made by French auteur Marie-Georges-Jean Méliès.

'Eddie the Eagle' (2016)

This sleeper sports drama occasionally relies on nonfictional embellishment but never to the point of making it impossible to believe. Born with poor vision and needing leg braces for most of his childhood, Michael "Eddie" Edwards (Taron Egerton, "Rocketman") wanted nothing more than to be an Olympic skier. In 1988, he became a national hero to his native British countrymen and to anyone who has ever been told "you can't do it."

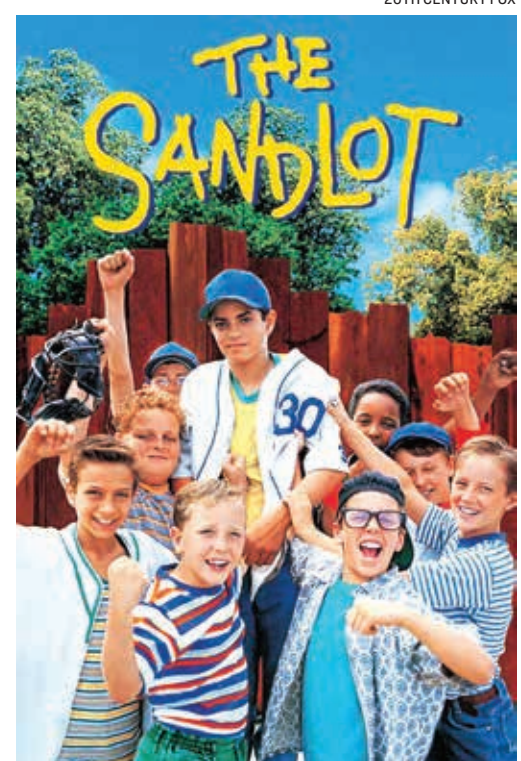
'The Parent Trap' (1998)

One of two dozen screen adaptations of the German book "Lottie and Lisa" by Erich Kästner, this version (not to be confused with the 1961 movie of the same name), also marks the acting debut of Lindsay Lohan. In what many consider the best role of her tumultuous career, Lohan plays twins who were separated at birth and eventually team up together in an effort to reunite their divorced parents (Natasha Richardson and Dennis Quaid).

'Bridge to Terabithia' (2007)

Based on the immensely popular young adult novel by Katherine Paterson, this movie is the textbook example of how good Hollywood can be when setting out to produce the ideal family film. AnnaSophia Robb ("Because of Winn-Dixie," "Soul Surfer") and Josh Hutcherson ("The Hunger Games" franchise, "The Kids Are All Right") star as young nature explorers who cross the titular bridge and discover a fantasy world beyond their wildest dreams.

20TH CENTURY FOX



"The Sandlot" could easily be included on any top 10 best baseball movies list.

LARRY HERRICKS/TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION

'The Sandlot' (1993)

The oldest title of the bunch has aged incredibly well and could easily be included on any top 10 best baseball movies list. With Denis Leary, Karen Allen, and James Earl Jones in brief but key supporting roles, the nearly dozen unknown juvenile actors rise to the occasion and deliver winning performances without ever appearing to try too hard.

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Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has written for over 30 local and national film industry media outlets and is based in the Atlanta Top 10 media marketplace. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a regular contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on [floridamanradio.com](https://www.floridamanradio.com). Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles.

REACHING WITHIN:
WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Building on Tradition: 'Winding the Skein'



"Winding the Skein," circa 1878, by Frederic Leighton. Oil on canvas, 39.4 inches by 63.5 inches. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

ERIC BESS

There's always a place for the beauty, care, and respect found in traditional culture. We can search for it and find a way to bring it into the future so that the generations after us have a foundation on which they can build.

The 19th-century British painter Frederic Leighton inspired me to deeply think about tradition with his painting "Winding the Skein."

'Winding the Skein'

In Leighton's "Winding the Skein," we see two figures winding yarn into a ball. The figure on the left is older than the figure on the right and gives off a motherly impression. We will call the figure on the left the mother and the figure on the right her daughter.

The mother is dressed in simple, white, classical clothing, and she sits on a small bench. To her right is a basket of different colored yarns. She looks at the reddish yarn between her two hands, which she holds for her daughter.

Her daughter, dressed in a white top and a reddish skirt, pulls the yarn from her mother's hands and winds it into the ball she holds. By her feet are other finished balls of yarn, which reveals that these two have been working for awhile.

The mother and daughter are working as a team on a balcony. There are steps that begin to the right of the daughter. The two work in front of a mountainous seascape, under a cloudy but bright sky.

So what exactly might this mean? What meaning may we interpret for our lives today?

Building on Tradition With Care and Respect

As an artist, one of the first things that stands out to me is the care with which the mother looks at the yarn she holds. The look on her face denotes a certain level of respect for her craft, which translates into expertise, for I presume this craft is something that she has taught or is teaching her daughter.

This makes me think that expertise cannot happen without deep care and respect for the craft, whatever

that craft may be. We can take this attitude into our homes and our workplaces so that we too may approach life and work with the care and respect that it deserves.

With that said, this painting also makes me think that not only are traditional crafts passed on from generation to generation, but this type of attitude or way of thinking can also be transmitted, and the relationship between craft and mindset can constitute what we call culture. Thus, it is culture that can be passed from generation to generation.

Does the yarn potentially represent the transmission of traditional culture? The mother, representing tradition in her classical dress, passes the yarn to her daughter. The daughter winds the yarn into a ball, which will be used later to create textiles.

Textiles are a form of creation: They are used to create clothes, tablecloths, bedding, and so on. If the daughter represents the younger generation, is it the case that the source of the daughter's creativity is the mother, that is, tradition?

Interestingly enough, the daughter's skirt is the color of the yarn she winds, as if that yarn was used at some point to create the skirt she now wears. Does this suggest that the younger generations can adorn themselves and the culture they inherit with the beautiful crafts and attitudes found in tradition?

If so, how does this transfer of beauty, care, and respect occur? How does the younger generation bring forth the beauty, care, and respect of old?

The mother looks with care and respect at the yarn, which represents culture, but the daughter looks intently at her mother. The mother, no longer a child and now an expert in her craft, fulfills the role of caring for culture. In a way, caring for culture is caring for her daughter.

But the daughter, looking at her mother, must recognize her mother's efforts. The daughter must be willing to learn from her mother, to take in the wisdom and experience garnered by her. The younger generations must be willing to learn from the successes and failures of the prior generations; the younger generation must be willing to learn from tradition.

The two generations must work to-

gether. They must work in harmony. The two figures are harmonized not only with each other but also with the mountainous seascape behind them. Even the yarn that hangs between them flows in tandem with the ledge of the balcony, the body of land behind them, and the horizon line.

The beauty, care, and respect brought forth by tradition harmonizes the generations with each other and with nature. Thus, the landscape might also represent the space upon which the younger generation will integrate its inherited culture.

This does not mean that the daughter will only do what the mother teaches; this does not mean that the younger generation will have its creativity stifled by the rules of tradition. If anything, the foundation of tradition allows for different forms of expression, hence the different color and design of the daughter's skirt.

Tradition can be used to elevate the younger generation into something more beautiful, more caring, and more respectful than the previous generation. Is this why the steps are behind the daughter? It's as if the daughter can take the information she's learned from her mother, turn around at any moment, and walk up the steps behind her.

But walking up the steps behind her suggests that the daughter may have to turn away from her mother, that is, turn away from tradition.

This doesn't mean that the daughter denies tradition as a whole, but maybe it suggests that it is also the younger generation's responsibility to leave behind anything that is destructive. Just because something has been done for a long time doesn't mean there isn't a better way of doing it.

So, I can imagine the daughter learning all there is to learn about winding the skein until she masters it herself. She too comes to approach her craft with the care and respect it deserves, and through care and respect, she builds on the tradition passed to her, helping to create in its stead a culture even more beautiful.

She turns around and walks up those steps to another platform where she, as an adult in her white top and reddish skirt, sits on a bench to teach her children a tradition they can hopefully build on.

How does the younger generation bring forth the beauty, care, and respect of old?

The traditional arts often contain spiritual representations and symbols the meanings of which can be lost to our modern minds. In our series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart," we interpret visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We do not assume to provide absolute answers to questions generations have wrestled with, but hope that our questions will inspire a reflective journey toward our becoming more authentic, compassionate, and courageous human beings.

Eric Bess is a practicing representational artist and is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA).

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Recurrents: The Story of Faust Through History

STEPHEN OLES

In the rich tapestry of Western civilization, certain themes and stories keep recurring. They mark our culture's continuity as each generation finds new meaning in them. From the Middle Ages to the present, the legend of Faust has never gone away. It speaks to people in every time and place. Why? Perhaps because each of us faces the same choice: to live for worldly rewards like money, pleasure, or fame, or to dedicate ourselves to higher, more selfless goals.

The Faust story, echoing Christ's temptation in the desert and the ancient cautionary tales of Prometheus and Icarus, symbolizes this eternal human struggle.

There actually was a Doctor Faustus, a 16th-century German astrologer whose dabbling in magic got him banished from towns and accused of selling his soul to the devil. Over the years, so many legends grew up around his name that it's impossible now to separate fact from fiction. His story became one of the fundamental myths of the West.

Two Masterpieces

In 1587, an anonymous "Faust Book" was published in Frankfurt Am Main, supposedly stories from the doctor's life but mainly rumors and folk tales. Somehow this got into the hands of Christopher Marlowe, a brilliant young playwright born the same year as Shakespeare, who turned the stories into his masterpiece "The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus." Marlowe was an enigma: He was accused of being a spy, a ruffian, and an atheist before dying in a knife fight at age 29.

From the Middle Ages to the present, the legend of Faust has never gone away. It speaks to people in every time and place.



"Faust," circa 1652, by Rembrandt. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

denies his Faustus any hope of forgiveness or redemption.

In 1808, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published his own "Faust, Part One," a poetic drama that many consider the crown jewel of German literature. Goethe adds a crucial new subplot: Faust's pursuit of Gretchen, an innocent village girl he seduces and abandons.

This version begins, like the Book of Job does, with Satan betting God that he can lead his faithful servant astray. Goethe's Mephistopheles tempts Faust by giving him worldly wealth and power, unlike Job, whom Satan tempts by taking them away.

As Goethe completed his "Faust" ("Part Two" appeared in 1832), he changed his mind about Faust and Gretchen's ultimate fates. Both are damned in an early draft, but in Part Two, Faust is rescued by, of all people, the girl he victimized. Pregnant and alone, shunned by the people of her village, Gretchen desperately drowns her newborn. When Faust learns of her arrest for murder, he tries to magically spring her from prison, but she refuses, accepting the punishment for her sin.

But that's not the end. God, seeing Gretchen's initial innocence and contrition, saves her soul and she, in turn, intercedes on behalf of Faust. Like Dante's Beatrice, she leads him, now redeemed by God's mercy, to paradise.

Quite a change from Marlowe, where the wages of sin are death, period. For Goethe, as for Dante, romantic love points us in the direction of God's love, but must be transcended finally to get there.

After Goethe, authors as disparate as Louisa May Alcott ("A Modern Mephistopheles"), Oscar Wilde ("The Picture of

Dorian Gray"), and Thomas Mann ("Doctor Faustus") produced their own variations while Stephen Vincent Benét's story "The Devil and Daniel Webster," memorably filmed in 1941, transported the story to America.

Face the Music

As the 19th century progressed, Faust learned to sing. Goethe's poem inspired composers all across Europe. Franz Schubert's 1814 song "Gretchen am Spinnrade" ("Gretchen at Her Spinning Wheel") is famous, but Beethoven wrote a Faust song even earlier.

Richard Wagner's turbulent "Faust Overture" (1840) was one-upped by his father-in-law, Franz Liszt, whose marvelous "Faust Symphony" (1854) has three movements, one for each of the main characters: Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles.

The opera world really went crazy for Faust. About 20 Faust-inspired operas have appeared to date. The best-known are Charles Gounod's "Faust" (1859), for decades the world's most popular opera, and Arrigo Boito's "Mefistofele" (1868). Hector Berlioz's "La Damnation de Faust" was poorly received on its debut in 1846, but the reputation of this hybrid operatorio has risen since.

Faust inspired the classic American musical "Damn Yankees," where a middle-aged baseball fan sells his soul to the devil to be transformed into a major league slugger. A sultry female demon lures him to the dark side with the hit song "Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets." But rest assured, the devil (played on Broadway and in film by Ray Walston of "My Favorite Martian" fame) is foiled in the end.



In the Movies

The Faust story's visual potential made it a natural for the 20th century's new art form, motion pictures. As early as 1900, Thomas Edison's company released "Faust and Marguerite," a vignette only 57 seconds long! In France, in 1904, Georges Méliès ("A Trip to the Moon") made his own 15-minute "Faust and Marguerite." It was his fourth crack at the story—the first was in 1897.

The definitive cinematic Faust appeared in 1926. Germany's biggest film studio, UFA, decided to celebrate its 10-year anniversary by letting its two leading directors make spectacular, no-expense-spared epics. Fritz Lang made "Metropolis" and F.W. Murnau made "Faust."

Murnau's "Faust" isn't as well-known today as his earlier, iconic "Nosferatu." Contemporary critics found it too slow and too stylized, but some called it the most beautiful film ever made. Seen for decades only in blurry dupes, the film was finally restored to its former glory in 2015.

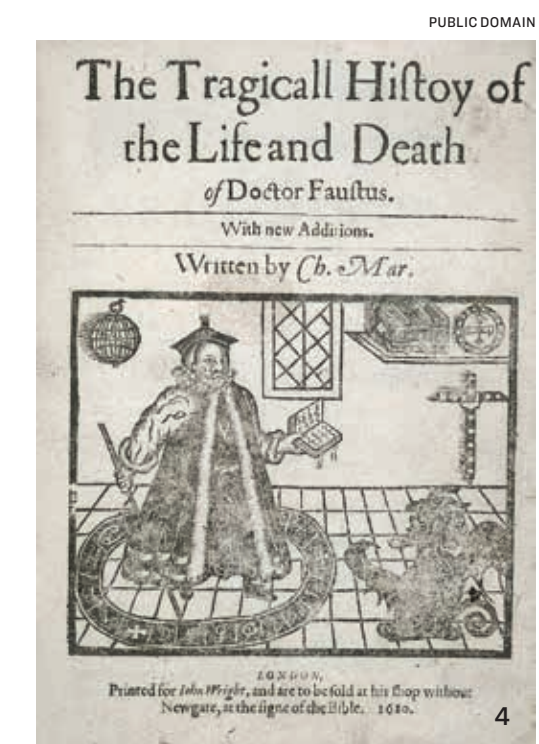
Throughout the 20th century, Faust adaptations came thick and fast. New movie versions, more or less faithful, issued from France, Russia, Spain, Italy, Germany—even, in 2019, from South Korea.

Updates like "Bedazzled" (1967, remade in 2000) and "Phantom of the Paradise" (1974) found comedy in the story. Faust references kept popping up in poetry, prose, and popular music. Animated films, TV shows, graphic novels, comics, and a seminal Japanese manga retold the story for new generations.

Faust even entered the language. Trading one's moral integrity for short-term gain is a "Faustian bargain." Oswald Spengler used "Faustian man" and "Faustian culture" to describe a West he felt was selling its soul to technology in return for unlimited knowledge. And "Mephistophelian" is defined as "showing the cunning, ingenuity, or wickedness typical of a devil."

It's been said that we are all Hamlet. We are all Faust, too, constantly tempted to violate our higher principles for the immediate gratification of approval, success, and all the other glittering prizes the world has to offer. Goethe's Faust had Gretchen to put in a good word for him in heaven. We may not be so lucky, so it's up to us, every day, to make the right choice.

Stephen Oles has worked as an inner-city school teacher, writer, actor, singer, and playwright. His plays have been performed in London, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, Calif. He lives in Seattle and is currently working on his second novel.



1. Duel scene from Act IV of Charles Gounod's opera "Faust," from the 1917 "The Victrola Book of the Opera.
2. A shot from F.W. Murnau's "Faust."
3. Faust comes to America: Edward Arnold (L) as Daniel Webster and Walter Huston as Mr. Scratch (the devil) in the 1941 film "The Devil and Daniel Webster," also titled "All That Money Can Buy."
4. Title page of a 1620 edition of Christopher Marlowe's "The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus," with a woodcut illustration of Doctor Faustus and a devil coming up through a trapdoor.

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POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

A Moving Film About a Brilliant but Socially Impaired Boy

IAN KANE

It's not uncommon to see many outstanding books adapted into movies. However, the same can't be said for documentaries being turned into narrative cinema, let alone by the same director. But British director Morgan Matthews has done just that. Teaming up with screenwriter James Graham, he has turned his 2011 documentary "X+Y" (titled "Brilliant Young Minds" in the United States) into the fascinating 2014 narrative film "A Brilliant Young Mind."

The film follows the trials and tribulations of Nathan (Edward Baker-Close as a child and later Asa Butterfield), an autistic child who is unusually gifted in mathematics. Unfortunately, he struggles when it comes to communicating with others. Of his parents, Julie and Michael (Sally Hawkins and Martin McCann), only his father seems to be able to break through Nathan's shell by using his goofy sense of humor.

Michael and Nathan are out driving one day when they get into an auto accident. While Nathan survives, his father doesn't. This tragic event causes Nathan to withdraw further into himself, much to Julie's dismay and distress.

As math seems to be the only thing that Nathan can relate to, his mother brings some of the boy's complex math equations that he's jotted down to his school. He is immediately acknowledged as unusually gifted and referred to a math teacher named Martin Humphreys (Rafe Spall), who has multiple sclerosis.

At first, it seems that Martin's sarcastic and snide sense of humor might not jive with Nathan, but soon we see that the former's acidic wit couples well with Nathan's much more reserved nature. It's the way that the teacher breaks through to the boy.

A former math prodigy himself, Martin teaches Nathan for years, and they form a bond, despite Nathan's now teenage social awkwardness.



A brilliant boy (Edward Baker-Close) and his mentor (Rafe Spall), in "A Brilliant Young Mind."



Sally Hawkins and Asa Butterfield play mother and son in "A Brilliant Young Mind."

Whereas Martin's physical handicap has sidelined his own dreams, he fully believes that Nathan has a shot at making the British team for the International Mathematics Olympiad competition. Although Julie sees the competition as a ray of hope in her son's life, she's also fearful of his failing at the only thing he has glommed on to. But when Nathan qualifies for the team, she is overcome with joy, as is Martin.

The next step in Nathan's quest has him journeying to a math camp in Taiwan, which takes him away from the familiar patterns and living accommodations

that have been built to make his life more manageable. Once in the company of other mathematically gifted teens, Nathan realizes that they are also perceived by others as "geeks" and "nerds" and finds solace in knowing that he's not alone.

He soon meets Zhang Mei (Jo Yang), a gifted math prodigy in her own right, and he is paired with her in a cultural exchange program. She will visit his home in England after the math camp concludes.

The two seem to have a budding teenage attraction, but Nathan's autism prevents much from moving forward in a romantic sense. There's also the fact that she's a

This film is not the typical underdog story.

'A Brilliant Young Mind'

Director
Morgan Matthews

Starring
Asa Butterfield, Rafe Spall, Sally Hawkins

Running Time
1 hour, 51 minutes

Rated
PG-13

Release Date
Sept. 11, 2015 (USA)

★★★★★

member of the rival Chinese math team, and her family would look down on her if they knew she was romantically linked to a rival.

Matthews and Graham paint the character of Nathan with gentle strokes of compassion. Indeed, it always seems like he's just about to make some sort of emotional or social breakthrough, and these incipient moments really get us rooting for him as the film progresses.

This film is not the typical underdog story. Although it does contain aspects of overcoming the odds, it is more focused on how some things are more important than scholastic achievements. It shows how both compassionate persistence and patience can sometimes win the day.

"A Brilliant Young Mind" is an uplifting film, bolstered by strong performances by Butterfield, Hawkins, and McCann, and shows that the world isn't as scary a place as we might think, once people reach out and treat each other with kindness. And I'd say that message is very timely.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To learn more, visit DreamFlightEnt.com



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