

WEEK 24, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES
**ARTS &
CULTURE**

COURTESY OF HENRY WINGATE



Painter Henry Wingate in his Banco, Va., studio on June 1, 2020.

In the Footsteps of the Masters
The Art of Henry Wingate...4

What Our Readers Say:

“It’s the only sane newspaper amidst all this insanity.”
STAN K., PASTOR

“It’s bringing morality back to newspapers.”
LISSA T., BUSINESS OWNER

“It’s the only paper that I know of right now that actually gives you the honest, old fashioned journalism.”
DRUE L., BUSINESS OWNER

“You’re presenting the facts and letting the reader decide.”
TERRI B., BUSINESS OWNER

“Everything I read in it is fair and balanced, compared to other newspapers.”
JUNE V., RETIRED BANKER



THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Celebrating Harmony and Virtue: The Dragon Boat Festival

ELITE MAGAZINE

Wrapped in bamboo leaves, the pyramid-shaped sticky rice dumpling, or the so-called Zongzi in Chinese, opens people’s imagination to Duanwu, commonly referred to as the Dragon Boat Festival, a traditional Chinese holiday marked as the fifth day of the fifth lunar month.

Having an intangible cultural heritage, Duanwu can chase some of its traditions back as far as the Xia Dynasty circa 2000 B.C. With every emerging new dynasty, the culture of Duanwu incorporated more depth and virtue, in the forms of historical records and folktales.

Inside the Palace

Duanwu arrives before the intense wave of summer heat. On this day, emperors from dynasties past would bestow new suits on the courtiers to accommodate the changing weather. Captured in a poem by the poet Du Fu, the custom-made suit carried a “delightful fragrance”; its fabric was “as soft as a breeze, and as light as a snowflake.” He expresses sheer joy for the impeccable quality and the consideration put into his gift, as it bears the benevolence of the emperor.

During the Tang Dynasty, emperors altered the tradition and proceeded to gift the officials black-jewelry-adorned belts. As the belts were tough and durable, the emperor expected his courtiers to be faithful, courageous, and able to withstand the test of time.

On one Duanwu during his rule, Taizong, the emperor of the Tang, gifted his two advisers paper fans painted with his own calligraphy. He told them to “fan in clear breeze that brings forth virtuous practices.” This story soon became a widely praised tale both inside and outside of the palace, as more commoners adopted fan-gifting, which led to the popular tradition of buying fans around the month of Duanwu ever since. As people carried around their fans, they also delivered Emperor Taizong’s aspiration to bring forth good virtues.

Besides fan-gifting, other customs that started in the royal courts have also come to entertain the entire country, often taking different forms than in the palace.

Among the Common People

Throughout much of Chinese history, celebrations for the Duanwu festival outside of the palace formed another captivating scene.

As the sun broke at dawn, families would start to prepare for the day. The warming weather acted as a breeding ground for diseases, so the adults in the household hung up mugwort and tied together calamus as ways to expel evilness. Children often wore sachets made of traditional Chinese herbs for the same reason. On this day, households and villages overflowed with the fresh smells of herbs.

Outside, the sun gradually arrived overhead. The river seemed especially inviting, as the dragon boats prepared weeks in advance finally greeted the crowd. The newly decorated boats were iridescent under the sun; each “dragon head” held firm up above the water, with its “eyes” vibrant as crystals and its “eyebrows” bold as brush. Amidst each “dragon torso” would sit 20 young rowers, holding the paddles at hand, all nervously waiting to start.

On the waterfront, an excited sea of people chatted and laughed, looking forward to the race. Restaurants would serve signature seafood, or prepared drinks for viewers wanting to enjoy a feast along with the visual sensations. All of a sudden, signal flags waved, and the race started. Conversations ceased, drinks were put down, and breaths were held. Eyes followed every paddle, as hearts pounded with each splash of water from the paddles.

The five-colored streamers fluttered in the wind as the dragon boats engaged in a fierce competition. Once a boat came into the lead, cheers and screams took over the waterfront; when a boat fell behind the others, the onlookers held their breath, clenching their teeth, hoping to contribute that effort toward the boats lagging behind. At times when each boat was at par with the others, the viewers’ eyes were wide open, hoping not to miss a single instant. Alongside the blinkless audience were the sounds of deafening gongs and drums, livening up the game further. On the water, rowers paddled tirelessly, and each “dragon” proceeded with no hesitation.

Accompanied by cheering screams and percussion beats, a winner crossed the finish line, perhaps merely by seconds ahead of the others. Many in the audience would shout in delight while others looked away in grief, stumbling to leave. On the horizon, the sky donned a stunning cloak of colors it borrowed from the dragon boats, while the sun slowly faded from sight along the sky-water edge. The river was once again as peaceful as ever.

Origins of Duanwu

Qu Yuan is the most well-known figure associated with the Dragon Boat Festival. As stated in the “Records of the Grand Historian,” Qu was a patriotic scholar and top official in the state of Chu during the Warring-States Period (475–221 B.C.). As a faithful official, Qu made numerous attempts to advise the king that meritocracy was a necessary measure to take toward strengthening the state. This angered the disloyal nobility; they accused Qu of treason and soon had him banished.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Many defining elements of the Duanwu traditions trace back to the tragic death of Qu Yuan, who was a faithful adviser to the king of Chu during the Warring-States Period. After Zhao Mengfu’s paintings for “Nine Songs.”

Not long after, the state of Chu was conquered. Qu, who couldn’t bear to witness his beloved country being sabotaged, tied himself to a rock and drowned in a river on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, the present-day Duanwu festival.

According to folklore, as soon as the Chu people learned about the incident, they rushed into their boats and paddled fiercely, hurrying to find Qu in time to save him, only to come back with no results. Heartbroken, people sailed back and forth to chase away fish, preventing them from consuming Qu’s body. In the meantime, people also threw clumps of rice wrapped together with eggs into the river to distract fish, for the same reason. Zongzi, or sticky rice dumplings, soon evolved from this practice. To commemorate this righteous scholar, the people of Chu established the traditions of dragon boat racing and making Zongzi every year on this day, and it is still practiced in many parts of

NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM



As the fifth lunar month arrives before the harvest season, people around the country enjoy some rare leisure time, as portrayed by a painter in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). “Activities of the 12 Months: The Fifth Lunar Month.”

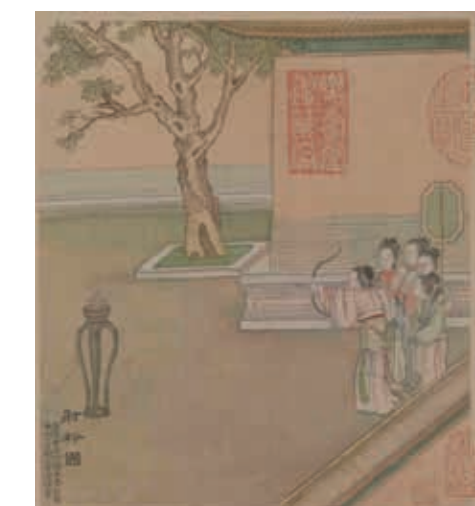
China today.

Not only is the Duanwu festival symbolic for its folktales regarding virtuous figures, but it is also representative of ancient science and its perspectives. Up until the mid-20th century, the time of the Chinese Communist Revolution, the people of China have always believed in and respected the harmony between heaven and earth. According to the “Compendium of Materia Medica,” the monumental volume of Chinese herbology written by Li Shizhen, medicines decocted on the day of Duanwu show miraculous efficacy, and it is especially so of those herbs gathered under the midday sun. This is attributable to the distribution of yin and yang at different times of the year. On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Duanwu leans overwhelmingly toward the “yang” side, which is often symbolized by energy, light, and strength. Families thus take advantage of this ideal timing to detoxify and cast out evil spirits.

The name “Duanwu” breaks down into “duan,” meaning the beginning, and “wu,” which indicates midday and is a homonym of the Chinese character for “five.” Thus Duanwu literally refers to the “first day-five of the fifth month,” embodying a new beginning, where the change of seasons leads to a burst of exuberance among all living things.

Though commonly known as the “Dragon Boat Festival,” Duanwu is representative of much more. Traditional practices probe into our relationship with heaven and earth, while stirring tales conveying righteousness prompt our self-reflection. As a holiday symbolic of the civilization it bears, Duanwu is the start not only of a new season but also of a fresh, new perspective.

Janet Ma and translated by Minghui Wang into English, this article is republished with permission from Elite Magazine.



“Duanyang Gushi Tu,” by Xu Yang, is a series depicting the traditions of the Duanwu festival. The opening scene is a painting of “shooting the rice dough.” Another tradition is the “five colored silk threads,” symbolizing the Five Elements; it was believed that this tradition brought wellness and harmony. Last, on the morning of Duanwu, families hung up mugwort to bring forth harmony and cast out evil spirits.

On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Duanwu leans overwhelmingly toward the ‘yang’ side, which is often symbolized by energy, light, and strength.

How to Share The Epoch Times With Your Friends and Family



As an Epoch VIP, you’re passionate about the traditional journalism and in-depth reporting you get in The Epoch Times. You’ve even sent us ideas on how to spread the word. Here are some of the best suggestions from readers like you!

Request FREE Newspapers to Be Sent to Your Friends*
Submit the names and shipping addresses of your friends. You can request FREE newspapers for as many friends as you want. The Epoch Times will send the newspapers on your behalf for free.

Newspaper Sharing
Simply pass your copy of The Epoch Times, or a section of it, to someone

else after you’ve read it. Consider neighbors, friends, family, relatives, co-workers, teachers, golf buddies, and your boss.

Newspaper Placement
Place a copy of The Epoch Times at places where people typically wait such as doctors’ offices, dentists’ offices, hotel lobbies, airline terminals, barbershops, and beauty salons. Also consider placing copies at community centers, company cafeterias, break rooms, coffee shops, gyms, churches, automobile dealerships, or in your car. Visit EpochShop.com.

Bumper Stickers
Put a bumper sticker on your car plus ask friends and family to put stickers on their cars as well. Visit EpochShop.com.

Getting the Word Out
Word-of-mouth is always a great way

to spread the news about The Epoch Times. Talk it up at your local library, meetings, birthday parties, special events, and with friends and family over the holidays.

Using Email and Social Media
Use technology to share stories from The Epoch Times. Forward our daily email MORNING BRIEF to friends and family. Share postings from our Facebook site and YouTube channel. Simply copy the URL and then send it with a brief note such as: “Here’s a story I thought you’d like to read.”

Displaying Your Poster
The Epoch Times SPYGATE poster has become legendary—so consider posting it on a wall at your home or office. When friends or business associates ask, explain what the poster is about and how they can get their own copy.

Not a subscriber yet? Visit ReadEpoch.com to learn more

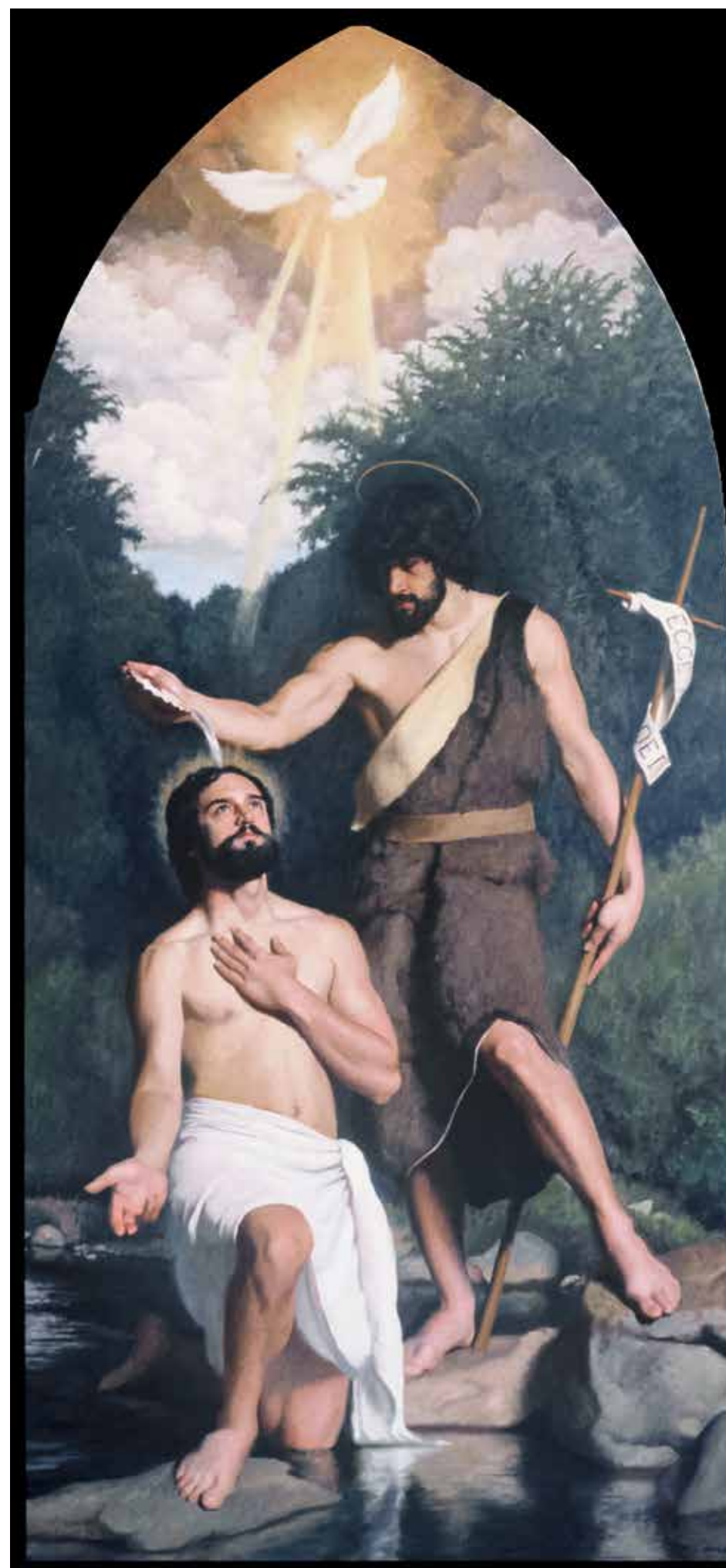
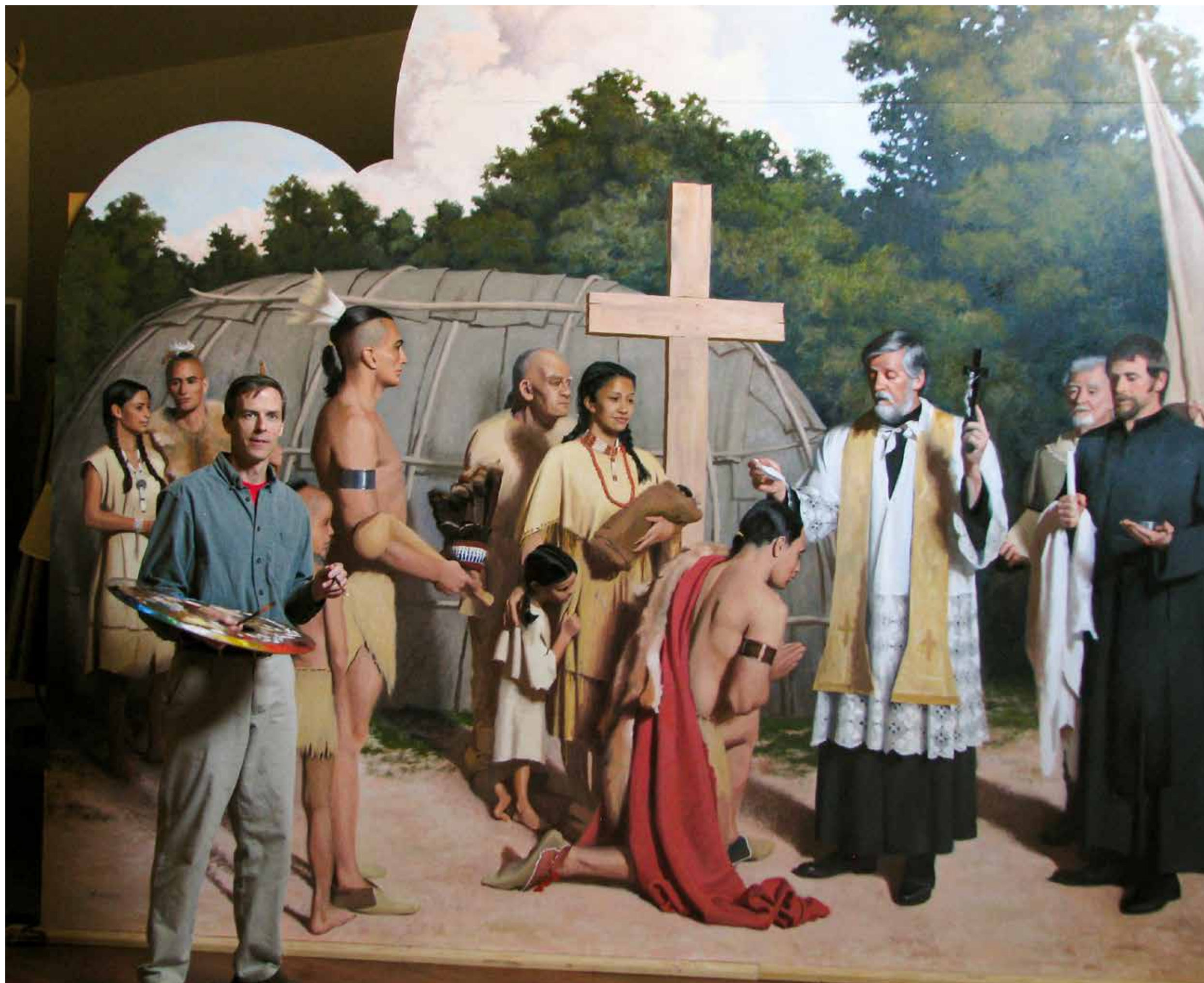
THE EPOCH TIMES

* (1) Please log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com (2) Click your name to manage your account (3) Click “Request Free Papers” on the left menu bar and follow steps

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

To advertise, call 212-292-8359 or email advertise@epochtimes.nyc



FINE ARTS

In the Footsteps of the Masters

The Art of Henry Wingate

1. Henry Wingate and his work "Father Andrew White Baptizing the Chief of the Piscataway," which is now at St. Mary's Catholic Church of Piscataway, in Maryland.

JEFF MINICK

BANCO, Virginia—The magic begins as you approach Banco, Virginia, the blink-of-an-eye town five miles north of Madison. The narrow two-lane rolls through dark forests and lush-green fields, the air is damp and soft, and the skies overcast—"Good light for painting," you'll learn later in the day. You pull into a small parking lot and study the building at the top of a short inclined yard. With its high-pitched roofs, timbered sides, and enormous window, the structure resembles one of those Baptist churches that dot the countryside in this part of the state.

Once inside, you fall even more deeply under the spell of this place. Here are shelves crammed with hundreds of books (mostly about art), paintings on every wall or stacked against a wall, drawings piled on desks and tables or strewn across a carpet, easels, Mason jars filled with paintbrushes, drawing pencils, and somewhat incongruously, bird feathers. In one corner stands an open press filled with clothing and costumes, and on a shelf beneath the enormous window, which today is partly shrouded



Still Life by Henry Wingate.

in black drapes, are seashells, bits of wood, bottles, and more drawings.

Classical music plays quietly in the background. You slowly make your way around the room, studying the paintings, admiring the eyes of a girl in a work in progress, soaking in the beauty of a woman's portrait beside the front door, and pausing to absorb the religious meaning of three huge panels intended for a church in Australia. Welcome to the enchanting world of artist Henry Wingate.

Childhood and Frustration
Born in Washington, D.C., in 1965 to Susan and Henry Wingate—his father worked at the Library of Congress—Wingate, for his first two years was wheeled in

a stroller by his parents nearly every Sunday afternoon through the National Gallery of Art. Both his mother and father loved painting and sculpture, and Wingate believes this exposure at so tender an age may have profoundly influenced his lifelong love of art.

After a stint in North Carolina, the Wingate family—Henry is the second oldest of nine children—settled for a time in Charlottesville, Virginia. At Albemarle High School, Wingate's favorite class was art, taught by a Mr. Johnson, "who let us pursue our own way." In his senior year, Wingate searched for universities where he might study art, but found their programs stressed abstraction. "I thought art was a dead end because of modernism," he says today.

A Different Path

So he selected a radical alternative: the U.S. Naval Academy.

He endured the rugged application process, was accepted, played 158-pound football, and after graduation went to Pensacola, Florida, for flight school. Once he had finished training, Wingate served on an aircraft carrier flying F-14s.

He enjoyed his time in the Navy, especially the flying and the travel. His most harrowing mo-

ment came while serving in the Mediterranean aboard the USS John F. Kennedy, when during a stormy night he had to make six landing attempts before finally touching down safely on the carrier's deck.

After completing his obligation to the Navy in 1994, Wingate's passion remained drawing and painting. Still discouraged by the arts programs he investigated, he was considering different professions—medicine, architecture, and teaching—when his father showed him an article he had read on ateliers, studios where working artists take younger artists under their wings and teach them the craft of painting. With his enthusiasm renewed, Wingate visited several ateliers across the country.

A Heritage of Learning to See

From the moment he entered Paul Ingretson's studio in Framingham, Massachusetts, Wingate knew he had found a home. The studio and the quiet intensity with which the students worked were the main draw. Ingretson sealed the deal by telling Wingate that he wanted to inspire in his students a respect for "the good, the true, and the beautiful."

For the next four years, Wingate studied with Ingretson, moving

from drawing casts with charcoal and pencil to the human form to still life. When he left the atelier, Wingate returned to Virginia and founded his own studio, but he realized after struggling for a short time that he still had much to learn. He trained for several months with Charles Cecil, an American who operated an atelier in Florence, Italy, and reentered Ingretson's atelier for a fifth year of work.

Though in their mid-70s, these teachers continue today to operate their ateliers, Ingretson in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Cecil in Florence.

Interestingly, both Cecil and Ingretson had received similar instruction from R.H. Ives Gammell, an artist of the "Boston School" who trained with such painters as Edmund Tarbell and William Paxton. When modernist movements like fauvism, cubism, and futurism arose early in the 20th century, Gammell rejected these trends as ruinous to realism and counterattacked by writing books about art and technique, and by teaching young artists the classical methods of painting and drawing.

Henry Wingate, then, is an heir to the talents and techniques of generations of artists, and remains as determined as these mentors to pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful in his work.

Other Teachers

In addition to these living masters of the brush, other painters inspire Wingate in his work, artists like van Dyck, and Raphael, Chardin for his masterpieces of still life, and Titian, particularly his work "The Assumption of the Virgin."

But it is Velázquez who most deeply attracts him. Opening a book of the Spaniard's paintings, Wingate gives me a short art lesson from the painter he claims was one of the first to try "to paint in the way our eyes and minds work, with some things 'found' and some things 'lost' when we look at an object or a person." The "finds," Wingate tells me, are those things to which the eye is drawn, either in life or in a painting; the "lost" are those things present but little remarked, hidden by shadows or darkness.

Henry Wingate anticipates more and more young artists turning to representational art.

Taking as his examples Velázquez's "Christ on the Cross" and "Pope Innocent X," Wingate explains the artist's extraordinary skill in using light and shadow to give his paintings what artists call breadth. "His paintings are true to life, and he recognized the way our minds and eyes see things. If we can get that sense of light and life into a painting, we create atmosphere, which makes you feel as if you can reach into the canvas."

Wingate recounts a story from 1650, when Velázquez's "Pope Innocent X" appeared in Rome along with works by other painters. "Look at all these nice pictures we Italians painted,"

said one artist guiding some visitors through the exhibition. He then pointed to the painting of the pope. "But Velázquez painted life."

And that is Wingate's aim as well: to paint life.

Portraits

Husbands and wives, judges, government officials, and university deans make up just some of the clients who have commissioned Wingate to paint their portraits.

For other paintings, Wingate uses models who pose on a raised stage facing the enormous window in his studio while he breathes life into their portraits with brush and canvas.

Churches

Churches from as far away as Australia have also sought him out. Four of his paintings, for example, depicting the life of St. John the Baptist hang in the Catholic church in Front Royal, Virginia. And St. Mary's Catholic Church of Piscataway, Maryland, proudly displays "Father Andrew White Baptizing the Chief of the Piscataway." This enormous painting, 16 feet long and 13 feet tall at its peak, contains 14 life-sized figures, including some descendants of the Piscataway.

Today

In 2001, Wingate married Mary Rohan. Today the couple has seven children: Agnes, 18; Henry, 15; Cecilia, 13; Evelyn, 11; Esther, 7; Julia, 3; and Anna, 4 months. They have sent some of the children to Montessori school, home-schooled them, and enrolled the older ones in Front Royal's Chelsea Academy, where Wingate also teaches a course in drawing to the high school students. To perpetuate the tradition set by his own teachers, Wingate also

occasionally offers instruction to private students, young men and women who come to his atelier seeking to improve their skills.

Wingate anticipates more and more young artists turning to representational art. "I'm very optimistic about the future of it and think it's only going to grow," he said. "And we need more competition so the best of the best can rise to the top."

For the last half hour of my visit to Wingate's studio, he works on a still life while I stroll around the place, taking in the details, listening to the soft music, and making notes on my laptop. Wingate works quietly at this canvas, oblivious to me, an angular handsome man totally absorbed by his work and his calling, trying to transform a bit of canvas into a living reality of color and form. Watching him work, I think of his teachers and those who taught them, and the legacy created by that long line of artists.

When Wingate first entered Ingretson's studio, the older painter said to him, "We'll try to train your eye to see well. To teach you to see form, shape, and proportion. To teach you to see as an artist."

Henry Wingate brings those eyes to every canvas touched by his brush.

To learn more about Henry Wingate's art, visit HenryWingate.com

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin in seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

2. Henry Wingate's painting depicting St. John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, in the Catholic church in Front Royal, Va.

3. "Portrait of Pope Innocent X," circa 1650, by Diego Velázquez. Doria Pamphilj Gallery, Rome.

4. Portrait of Teresa with a harp.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Every Day Is God's

An exhibition that showcases the Russian adoration of eggs

J.H. WHITE

Lent, the 40-day period before Easter where Christians pray, fast, and abstain from common pleasures, sounds somewhat like what society has gone through as a whole during this two-month quarantine. It's been a spell of hardship and reflection, a distancing of ourselves from our friends and peers, and a chance to reassess whether the direction we're heading in is our true north.

We're on the brink of our figurative Easter—our rebirth—as we get freed from lockdown and public life resumes. The spring sun is smiling; we've been renewed in our hibernation; we're ready to experience real culture, community, and beauty in the flesh again.

For the arts and culture enthusiast, one activity to celebrate your newfound freedom could be a visit to the Museum of Russian Icons (MoRI) in Clinton, Massachusetts, to see "Tradition & Opulence: Easter in Imperial Russia." The exhibition has been extended through Aug. 7.

Eggs for Everyday Life

The exhibition gathers an unprecedented collection of over 200 objects celebrating Easter from the last days of the czars in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Jeweled eggs from Fabergé and other icons crafted by the nation's greatest artists and artisans paint a beautiful picture of the significance of the holiday in the Russian Orthodox faith.

Nicholas B.A. Nicholson, who co-curated the exhibition with Dr. Karen Kettering and Dmitry Gurevich, spoke with me by phone. Nicholson explains that the exhibition gathered a group of egg-shaped objects that seem to have no connection with Easter, such as clocks, hand seals, match cases, and photograph frames. The use of this shape shows how the Russian people appreciated the daily reminder of Easter, the Resurrection, and more broadly, their spiritual faith.

An egg-shaped picture frame, for example, not only would bring you joy as you look fondly upon a family member's portrait; you're also subtly reminded of Christ's sacrifice, resurrection, and your own salvation.

Conjuring a similar connection to divinity is Fabergé's "wonderful desk clock in the shape of an egg, which is just charming," Nicholson says. This "everyday" object adapted to an egg shape is crafted in the style of the Louis XV revival mounts. It recalls nécessaires and bonbonnières of the mid-18th century, though it flaunts a 20th-century Swiss watch face.

With the aesthetic heavenliness of the exhibition's eggs and egg-shaped objects, it leaves no doubt why these artisanal pieces were effective reminders to believers of their much-needed spiritual devotion during this tumultuous epoch before World War I.

"The Romanov monarchy and the Orthodox Church were the anchors that held Russian society together," says MoRI Director Kent Russell in the exhibition material.

"Religion



Egg-shaped desk clock, before 1903, by the firm of Fabergé, workmaster Mikhail Perkhin. St. Petersburg, Russia. Bowenite, gilded silver, enamel. Private collection, New York, N.Y.



Easter egg with the Resurrection, Guardian Angel, and St. Alexander Nevsky, 1867, by the Lukutin Workshop, Fedoskino, Russia. Lacquer, papier mâché. Collection of Nicholas Silao, New York, N.Y.



Icon of the Resurrection, before 1899, by the firm of Mikhail Ivanov, Moscow. Oil on zinc, gilded silver, enamel. Private collection, New York, N.Y.

and state were inextricably intertwined. This social, religious, and political milieu is the backdrop for the unique objects in this exhibition."

Mary Magdalene and a Miracle

Russia's adoration of the egg as a spiritual symbol predates Christianity, however. It's an ancient symbol of fertility, renewal, and resurrection.

"It's not uncommon in other religions," Nicholson says. "The Jews use it in their Passover ceremonies, and there are other Eastern religions in which the egg is considered an important symbol."

The Russian Orthodox tradition adopted the egg as a potent symbol after a miracle occurred with Mary Magdalene. After Christ's resurrection, Mary Magdalene visited the Roman emperor to proclaim to him the truth of the resurrection. She then offered him an egg as a gift.

"The emperor said, '[The resurrection] is as likely to be true as that egg is to turn red,'" Nicholson recalls. "The egg turned red in her hand and she gave it to him."

Ever since this miracle, the egg—especially a red one—has become a central motif of Christian symbolism in Russia. "By the 19th century, the egg's mystical symbolism and decorative potential was fully exploited by Russian artists and artisans," the exhibition literature states.

Artisanal Worship

One of the quickest paths for connecting with the divine can be through artisanal beauty. The Lukutin workshop located near Moscow took that sentiment to heart, producing "finely painted and lacquered papier-mâché Easter eggs decorated in the iconographic tradition. The eggs were made from two halves that could be opened to reveal a surprise present. Such eggs were especially popular among the Old Believers," the museum's Instagram page says. The Old Believers or Old Ritualists are Eastern Orthodox Christians who do not follow the 17th-century liturgical reforms made by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow meant to unify the Russian and Greek Orthodox churches.

One of the Lukutin workshop's red eggs, for example, illustrates Christ's Resurrection with the Guardian Angel holding the tomb's stone door. St. Alexander Nevsky, who was

later canonized as a saint of the Russian Orthodox Church, looks up in amazement and awe. Since St. Alexander Nevsky appears on the egg's widest part, closest to the viewer, you are drawn in to his humble wonder. Likewise, Christ's feet are close to the saint's eye level, also at the widest point of the egg. Since Christ's body is painted on the upper portion of the egg that recedes from the viewer, it creates an optical illusion whereby he appears to be hovering in midair.

Honoring Those Who Sacrifice

The Easter egg tradition also parallels the personal, one-to-one nature of the Christian faith, that intimate relationship between believer and Christ.

"I think the important thing to remember is that the exchange of eggs is a personal moment between two people. There's a giver and there's a recipient," Nicholson says. Each egg in the exhibition was a gift from one person to another, such as an emperor of Russia giving a gift to a courtier or a Russian merchant giving an Easter gift to his wife. "So each of these eggs, in addition to being part of the great story of Easter, also represents a very specific personal interaction where two people came together and said, 'Christ is risen.'"

The symbolic eggs have also encapsulated gratitude. Like the gratefulness we feel toward the first responders and frontline workers today helping us through this pandemic, as well as the fallen American soldiers just honored during Memorial Day, the Russian imperial family shared a similar appreciation for their servicemen during World War I.

The last empress of Russia, Alexandra Feodorovna, and her two oldest daughters, who were trained as nurses, gave white porcelain eggs to the soldiers. One side features the monogram of the empress; the other side displays a simple red cross.

"That egg is one of the most touching [objects]," says Nicholson. "It went to wounded, dying soldiers and to people who were close to the imperial family. It was a moment, somewhat like this one today, when we were all relying on the helpers—the people who go out into the middle of everything to make sure that people are OK."

J.H. White is an arts, culture, and men's fashion journalist living in New York.



Imperial presentation Easter egg with monogram of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, 1894–1917, Imperial Porcelain Factory, St. Petersburg, Russia. Porcelain, gilded silver, silver-wrapped silk ribbon. Collection of Nicholas Silao, New York, N.Y.

Imperial presentation Easter egg with monogram of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and Red Cross, 1917, from the Imperial Porcelain Factory, St. Petersburg, Russia. Collection of the Russian History Museum, Jordanville, N.Y.



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

Moving Beyond the Church of Baseball

MARK JACKSON

The hugely quotable, American-lexicon-pervading "Bull Durham" of 1988, a warm rom-com about an A-level minor league squad in the Carolina League, is widely considered to be the best, most accurate baseball movie ever made. Sports Illustrated magazine even ranked it as the No. 1 greatest sports movie of all time. Writer-director Ron Shelton, who spent five years as a second baseman in the minors, knows baseball, so it all rings true. And truly American.

Because only in America could you find this scenario: a canon-armed but inexperienced hurler nicknamed Nuke (Tim Robbins) on the pitcher's mound, going into his windup, eyes rolled up in the back of his head because he's trying to breathe through his eyelids like the lizards of the Galapagos.

And that would all be thanks to the advice of Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon), a local school teacher-cum-self-styled baseball coach who's also convinced Nuke to wear a garter belt under his uniform so he can stay all nice and loosey-goosey.

You would also never get this scene anywhere else but in America: half the team congregating out at the mound, mid-game, seriously discussing 1) the fact that Nuke is nervous because his dad is sitting behind home plate (and now his eyelids are jammed), 2) how to get hold of a live rooster to take the curse off José's glove, and 3) what to buy the first baseman for his wedding. And the manager (Robert Wuhl), who trots out to see what the heck is the matter, advising, "Well, uh ... candlesticks always make a nice gift, and uh, maybe you could find out where she's registered and maybe a place setting or maybe a silverware pattern. OK, let's get two! Go get 'em."

You can't get such scenes in Europe, and not because they don't have our national pastime; they're just far too sensible. You simply have to love America to be able to revel in our extensive, delightful, deep state of cultural silliness.

Crash, Nuke, and Annie

After 12 tough years as a catcher in the minor leagues, "Crash" Davis (Kevin Costner) gets shunted to this single-A, Durham, North Carolina, farm team to tune up rookie pitcher Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh, who's got "a million-dollar arm and a five-cent head." Nuke's got focus issues; his scorching 96 mph fastball is more likely to bean the umpire or the Bull mascot than sizzle over home plate.

Annie Savoy is the team's self-appointed, unofficial trainer. To label her what she re-



(Left) Annie (Susan Sarandon, L) and Millie (Jenny Robertson) as two glorified baseball groupies in "Bull Durham."

(Below) Nuke (Tim Robbins, L) and Crash (Kevin Costner) compete for Annie's attention in "Bull Durham."



(Below) Nuke (Tim Robbins, L) and Crash (Kevin Costner) vehemently discuss why Nuke should not "announce his presence with authority" by throwing a predictable fastball in "Bull Durham."

(Right) "Nuke" LaLoosh (Tim Robbins) is a talented but not particularly bright pitcher in "Bull Durham."



Crash (Kevin Costner) and Annie (Susan Sarandon) play soul mates in "Bull Durham."

ally is (a glorified baseball groupie) would be to oversimplify things and also be so devoid of imagination, romance, and fun, that it would be un-American.

Annie, a self-styled serial monogamist, picks herself a summer baseball boyfriend to mentor each spring, giving him the wisdom of her life experience, tweaking his field-of-dreams skill set, and sending him on his merry way at season's end—hopefully to "The Show" (lingo for the major leagues). As she says, "I know things."

After Crash and Nuke have an alpha barfight for Annie's attention (actually, Crash is just using the dust-up as a teaching piece to let Nuke know he's a dimwit in need of mentoring), Annie has both of them over to her place for a boyfriend interview.

However, after 12 years of ball playing, Crash is not about to audition for anything (including Annie's attention), furthermore stating that he's not interested in anyone who's "interested in that boy."

Crash is dealing with the fast-encroaching reality that his own dreams of being in "The Show" have been usurped by gigs like his current one.

And while this job of being responsible for transforming a cocky pitching prospect (whom he delights in calling "Meat") rangles, Crash takes it because of his profound love of every aspect of the lifestyle: obviously, the magic crack of a wooden bat on horsehide, the smell of cut grass, and the glowing dusk bathed in stadium lights.

But also the road-tripping bus ennui, small-town squalor, half-empty ballparks, rundown motels, and the low-rent Americana of mascots, hotdogs, Cracker Jacks, and ball-park gimmickry. Gimmickry? Yeah, like if the ball hits the plywood bull at the park's edge, the player gets a free steak. All of which is presided over by that 1940s spirit of American baseball, skating rinks, and church—the Hammond B3 organ.

The Good Stuff

The real fun of "Bull Durham" is the unique artifice of using nonstop inner and outer monologues that put us directly inside Crash and Nuke's heads when they're facing down enemy pitchers: "You're not gettin' that cheese by me, Meat" (Crash calls everybody who annoys him "Meat") or running their private self-pep-talks and hilarious, snarky putdowns of opposing team members, or trying to outguess each other from the strike zone and the mound, respectively.

Ultimately, it's these hysterical on-field scenes of the ongoing education of Nuke, by Crash, that constitute the brilliance of "Bull Durham."

When arrogant goofball Nuke shakes off

Crash's signals, Crash (knowing Nuke better than Nuke knows himself) blithely tells the opposing team's batter exactly what Nuke will throw next, which of course causes an instantaneous home run. Thus, Nuke is slowly brought to heel and enlightened to the understanding that it's always the catcher who calls the shots.

Most people think 'Bull Durham' is about Crash's baseball journey, but what it's really about is belief systems.

The Heart of the Matter

Men love this film, but the ladies do too: the reason for that being that Costner's Crash is the classic, cocky (but sensitive) alpha; and a well-read, very funny, mysterious, hard-to-get, soulful, experienced-in-the-game-of-love, wise, dedicated, manly beard-stubbed baseball jock. Very swoon-causing. He also carries that enticing, thoughtful sadness (because he knows he is not destined for greatness). Very irresistible.

Most people think "Bull Durham" is about Crash's baseball journey, but what it's really about is belief systems. All of the characters in the movie are driven by their various beliefs, sometimes religious and sometimes superstitious (mostly having to do with the desire to maintain or correct the state of their skills and equipment). Annie's monologue at the movie's outset puts the topic of belief front and center:

"I tried all the major religions and most of the minor ones. I've worshiped Buddha, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, trees, mushrooms, and Isadora Duncan. I know things. For instance, there are 108 beads in a Catholic rosary, and 108 stitches in a baseball. When I learned that, I gave Jesus a chance. But, it just didn't work out between us; the Lord laid too much guilt on me—I prefer metaphysics to theology. See, there's no guilt in baseball. ... I've tried 'em all, I really have, and the only church that truly feeds the soul, day in and day out—is the church of baseball."

Crash also has a classic, epic rant about his beliefs which, though highly quotable, is, er, a bit too inappropriate to repeat here. But what's really at the heart of "Bull Durham," beyond all the baseball and rom-com silliness, is the promise of these two soul mates.

They both know their time is up (his fading athleticism and her fading beauty). As they cozily (and with a shared sense of the ridiculous) discuss why people always think they were famous people in their past incarnations, one gets the feeling that by the conjoining of their intellects, curiosity, and quest for excellence, these two seekers, sooner than later, will discover things like why 108 is a sacred number in Buddhism too.

And why the guilt that Annie fears and avoids is essential to belief. Without it, people won't learn the laws that govern human existence, and so they must return ad infinitum to painful, meh, Joe-schmo incarnations. They'll have to move beyond the Church of Baseball to figure that out. One gets the sense they eventually will.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Hope for the Impossible

ALL PHOTOS IN PUBLIC DOMAIN



ERIC BESS

During the 19th century, at the height of the Enlightenment, neoclassicists and romanticists debated the purpose of art.

The neoclassicists looked back to ancient Greece and Rome for guidance. They were concerned with reestablishing order and structure in their artistic creations. Often, neoclassical paintings, like Jacques-Louis David's "Oath of the Horatii," looked to accurately illustrate historical stories down to the dress and architecture.

The romanticists, however, felt that the neoclassicists were missing out on the emotional component of art. For instance, the romanticists believed that contemporary stories had a great ability to emotionally stir the souls who witnessed them. Romanticists wanted their artistic creations to have heightened emotional impact.

As a romanticist, Théodore Géricault, a French painter of the 19th century, wanted to create emotionally charged works of art based on contemporary events. He was still greatly influenced by traditional art, however, and studied the works of Peter Paul Rubens and Michelangelo so that he could cultivate the skills necessary to exceptionally represent the contemporary events he wanted to portray.

Rebuilding the Raft of Medusa

Géricault had an opportunity to put his artistic skills to the test when, in 1816, the captain of the Medusa, a French Royal Navy frigate, ran the ship aground. There weren't enough lifeboats to save everyone, and 150 people were left behind. Those abandoned built a raft that carried them out to sea for 13 days. Only 10 would survive.

In preparation for painting "The Raft of the Medusa," Géricault did a lot of research. According to the Louvre Museum website:

"Géricault spent a long time preparing the composition of this painting. ... He began by amassing documentation and questioning the survivors, whom he sketched; he then worked with a model and wax figurines, studied severed cadavers in his studio, [and] used friends as models..."

Organizing the Sublime

Géricault wanted to depict the hope of

the human spirit when it's made to confront horrific circumstances, a circumstance akin to the sublime. According to the Tate galleries' website, "Edmund Burke's 'Philosophical Enquiry' (1757) connected the sublime with experiences of awe, terror, and danger. Burke saw nature as the most sublime object, capable of generating the strongest sensations in its beholders."

Géricault depicted the powerless survivors suspended between the horizon of sky and water. He organized the composition according to two diagonals: one using the rope that attaches the raft to the mast from bottom right to upper left, and one using the bodies from bottom left to upper right, given emphasis by a similar rope leading from the mast to the raft. The use of diagonal compositional elements, as opposed to vertical or horizontal elements, increases the sense of energy in a composition.

The figures in the composition increase in energy as they move from bottom left to top right. The figures at the bottom left are dying or dead. One figure sits with a body slumped over his lap, rests his hand on his head, and has a look of resignation on his face.

The figure immediately behind him, however, turns to look at the mass of figures toward the front of the raft. The energy increases toward the front of the raft as several figures lunge forward and reach, grab, and point.

Two figures at the front of the raft wave flags as if they are calling something in the distance. And what are they calling? They are hoping that a faraway ship will see and rescue them.

Hope for the Impossible

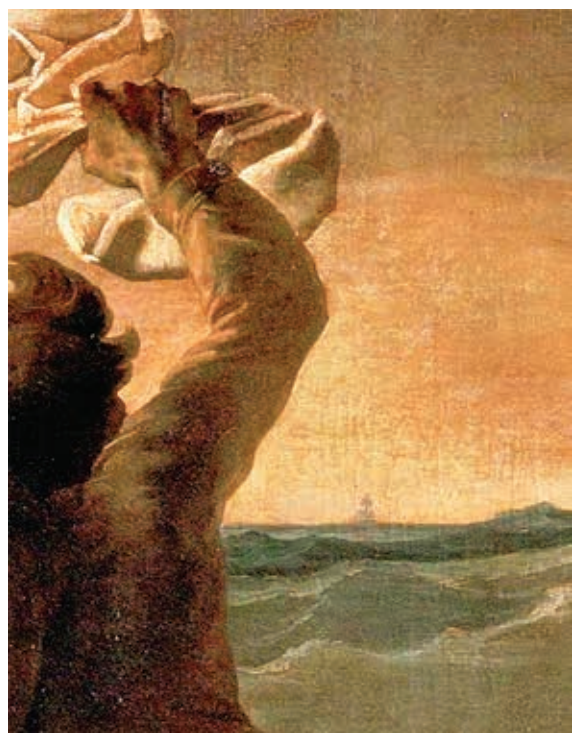
So what is Géricault saying to us? To me, he is suggesting that beauty does not correspond only to how things look, but there's also a beauty within our spirit. This beauty has the potential to present itself when we are made to confront the horrific things that life sometimes throws our way; this beauty of spirit gives us hope in the presence of the seemingly impossible.

It is true that necessity breeds invention, but why do we invent if we don't also hope? I can't help but think that this raft was crafted by these men because their lives depended on it. Men of all different colors and backgrounds had to work together to survive, because they hoped to survive.

This painting speaks to me as a black man in America. I know many people of

"The Raft of the Medusa," 1818–1819, by Théodore Géricault. Oil on Canvas, 16.1 feet by 23.4 feet. Louvre Museum, Paris.

Detail of "The Raft of the Medusa."



different races, genders, backgrounds, and we all hope to survive. I understand how it is sometimes difficult to be hopeful. The media often presents information that exacerbates our sense of hopelessness, and we are left to resign ourselves, our heads in our hands, our backs to our futures.

I, however, see the ship in the distance as we drift aimlessly on this raft we call life. I see those who share the raft with me—some who have given up hope and some who place their hope in the impossible—and I wonder how necessity will shape our hope toward the impossible.

And what constitutes my impossible? What constitutes my ship in the distance? My hope is for a cultivated authenticity among us all, a compassion for all, including those who would cause us harm. I hope for patience during the horrific. Despite the horrors we confront, I'm left hopeful for us all in the face of the impossible.

Art has an incredible ability to point to what can't be seen so that we may ask "What does this mean for me and for everyone who sees it?" "How has it influenced the past and how might it influence the future?" "What does it suggest about the human experience?" These are some of the questions I explore in my series *Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart*.

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

Author David Ricciardi has just released his third novel.



MARY ALICE FISHER

THE AMBASSADOR OF GOOD FICTION

Adventurer Brings Authenticity to 3rd Thriller

An interview with author David Ricciardi

FRED J. ECKERT

David Ricciardi is not one of the best-known writers in the thriller genre—but he is one of the best. So it's without fear or hesitation that I repeat a prediction I made in reviewing his second novel: He will before long join the ranks of the giants of the thriller genre.

His recently released third novel, "Black Flag," zeros in on a threat we have come to think has faded away—piracy. A few years back, small-time thugs armed with AK-47s operating small vessels caused considerable havoc attacking ships off the coast of the Horn of Africa, looting them and taking prisoners for ransom. But it wasn't long before the world's navies brought to bear vastly superior force, and the bush-league pirates were crushed.

Novelist David Ricciardi wondered what if, instead of being conducted by unsophisticated small-time thugs using vessels that cannot venture very far out into ocean waters, piracy was performed like a serious military operation: superfast vessels, including submersibles; the best jamming capabilities; the latest weaponry—all directed and staffed by some of the smartest intelligence and special operations officers lured by assurance of fantastic riches from their share in the looting?

Most of the world's commerce moves by sea, and it is impossible to protect every ship in such a vast area from true military-force piracy. The entire world could suffer greatly.

So in "Black Flag," protagonist Jake Keller is in Somalia to track down the warlords and arms merchants behind this threat and put them out of business. Like every Ricciardi novel, it's an unusually imaginative, exceptionally well-plotted, highly plausible, riveting tale that moves at an exciting pace and keeps you fast flipping pages, anxious to learn what surprise next awaits you. And this one also comes with a surprise ending you'll never see coming.

What makes David Ricciardi especially interesting is that rather than focusing on the same basic topic in one book after another—terrorism, Russian belligerence, whatever—he picks those that are not receiving much focus in other thrillers.

His 2018 debut thriller, "Warning Light," centers on a bold plan for U.S. intelligence to get an up-close look and obtain images at Iran's most secret nuclear weapons facility. It's a great cat-and-mouse chase adventure, a lesson in enemy disinformation, and a warning about just how scary the Iranian nuclear deal truly is.

"Rogue Strike," released last year, centers on the possibility that bad actors could hack into and take control of U.S. drones. A drone in position to take out a leading radical Islamic terrorist in Yemen is hacked into by the Chinese and suddenly pivots to Mecca in neighboring Saudi Arabia, where its missiles are unleashed and virtually

vaporize a few thousand innocent Muslim pilgrims, creating a horrendous nightmare for America and a dream opportunity for our enemies.

It's an exciting tale—and a warning that the Saudis are an untrustworthy ally and the Chinese Communists a deadly enemy bent on surpassing us in influence and military might.

David Ricciardi is a new star, well worth your checking out. Expect to be hearing a lot more from him—and a lot more about him—in the years ahead.

I interviewed him from his home in Connecticut.

AMBASSADOR ECKERT: You burst upon the scene in a way few others have. Talk about it. **DAVID RICCIARDI:** Writing was something I'd always wanted to do, but I'd never made it a priority in my life until "Warning Light." Variations of the plot had bounced around in my head for years until I finally decided that it was time to get started. I wrote the manuscript and self-published it, more to see if I could do it to my own satisfaction than anything else. But someone brought it to the attention of the retired CEO of a major publisher, who contacted me, gave me great advice, and put me in touch with my future agent. The agent agreed to represent me, and we soon landed a contract with an imprint of Penguin Random House to publish "Warning Light."

AMB. ECKERT: "Warning Light" was very well received. Critics and readers alike expressed surprise that a novice writer produced such a polished work. You've said that before you set out to write a novel, you read up on how to write one. What's the best advice you took away from such how-to-books?

MR. RICCIARDI: I've always loved to read, but I never studied literature, so I had some work to do. Even if no one else ever read it, I wanted to be able to look back at the manuscript I created and say that I did the best that I could. Part of my research included buying a book titled "The Essential Guide to Writing a Novel" by James Thayer. By the time I finished it, I had sticky notes and highlights on every page. The best single piece of advice in the whole book is, "Your goal is to make the reader want to turn the page"; then he spends 300 pages telling you how to do it.

AMB. ECKERT: Your publisher bills you as a keen outdoorsman, an avid sailor, a certified scuba-rescue diver, and a former ski instructor. How does this impact your novels? **MR. RICCIARDI:** When I was a kid, I spent every free minute in the mountains or on the water. It's a pattern I've continued as an adult, often using additional training or competition to sharpen my skills. I constantly use those experiences to inform my writing, to bring the reader along with me when a character is fighting to survive in a high mountain desert or against a storm at sea.

“I find thrillers so immersive—they're like trips to exotic places with fascinating people—and there's always some conflict at the heart of it that needs to be resolved.”

David Ricciardi

'Black Flag'

David Ricciardi
Berkley Books
384 pages, hardcover



▲ What if piracy was performed like a serious military operation? That's the starting point for David Ricciardi's latest novel.

His recently released third novel, 'Black Flag,' zeros in on a threat we have come to think has faded away—piracy.

AMB. ECKERT: Your book jacket author bio says you "received extensive training from law enforcement and U.S. special operations personnel." Again, how does this impact your novels?

MR. RICCIARDI: Shooting sports are one of my hobbies. I've taken dozens of classes, as an individual and as part of a team, to sharpen my skills. Those experiences keep my stories realistic and exciting. It can be challenging to accurately convey the human emotion that happens in a tactical situation, but the training I took helps me keep it real for the reader.

AMB. ECKERT: Why did you pick the thriller genre?

MR. RICCIARDI: It was always my favorite genre to read. I find thrillers so immersive—they're like trips to exotic places with fascinating people—and there's always some conflict at the heart of it that needs to be resolved.

AMB. ECKERT: What writers have had the most influence on you—and why?

MR. RICCIARDI: Tom Clancy, Nelson DeMille, and Ken Follett. The detail, the human interaction, and the plotlines were exhausting in the best sense of the word. One of Clancy's many gifts was that even though you may have rooted against his villains, you often respected them because he put you inside their heads and we're all products of our experiences.

AMB. ECKERT: When your protagonist is introduced to us, he's CIA but a geeky analyst without any experience or training in in-field espionage, and it's unexpected circumstances that force him to become a warrior. Why this choice?

MR. RICCIARDI: I wanted the reader to identify with Jake. Most of us have relatively normal lives, but we'd all like to think that we could rise to the occasion if a desperate situation called for it. I'd like for a reader to look at the hero and say, "That could be me."

AMB. ECKERT: Tell me how you see Jake Keller.

MR. RICCIARDI: Jake is tenacious. He loves his country and does everything he can to protect it, but he's guided by a strong moral compass, so even when he's laying down some hurt, he's doing it for a cause greater than himself.

AMB. ECKERT: Is there any—much?—of you in Jake? Is he based upon anyone you know? A composite?

MR. RICCIARDI: There is a lot of me in Jake, but he's better at everything!

AMB. ECKERT: Where do you get your plot ideas?

MR. RICCIARDI: I'm a current-affairs junkie and always thinking about "what-if" scenarios.

AMB. ECKERT: How big a role does research play in giving you ideas for books and in giving you the confidence to cover the variety of subject matter in your books?

MR. RICCIARDI: Of all the time spent creating a novel, probably a third of it I spend on research. I visit the setting when possible, I talk to people who've done what I'm writing about, and I read about what I can't cover through first- or second-hand research. I want the reader's experience to be authentic.

AMB. ECKERT: Of current writers, whom do you most enjoy reading—and why?

MR. RICCIARDI: I've read a lot of Gregg Hurwitz's work lately. Normally, I'm a fan of plot-driven novels, but Hurwitz's wit and excellent writing have made his Orphan X series one of my favorites.

AMB. ECKERT: What advice would you give an aspiring novelist?

MR. RICCIARDI: 1) Get started 2) Finish what you start. Once you have a finished manuscript, you're ahead of 99 percent of aspiring novelists.

AMB. ECKERT: What is coming next from David Ricciardi?

MR. RICCIARDI: Someone is trying to kill Jake Keller. He doesn't know who or why, but the deeper he digs, the more evidence he finds of something rotten inside the CIA. Jake makes it his personal mission to locate the source of the trouble and wipe it out. We don't have a title yet, but it will be out in the spring of 2021.

The "Ambassador of Good Fiction" series will be recommending to our readers a work of fiction, giving information not just about the novel but also what makes its author worth checking out—and, when possible, interviewing that author.

A writer and favorably reviewed novelist himself, Fred J. Eckert has been a member of Congress and twice served under President Ronald Reagan as a United States ambassador.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION:

A Harrowing Tale of Humanism in the Face of Catastrophe

IAN KANE

On Dec. 26, 2004, a fissure occurred between the Burma and India plates that caused a 9-plus magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, in the Indian Ocean. This resulted in massive tsunamis that branched outward to devastate the surrounding coastal areas. One of the worst-hit places was a region of Thailand called Khao Lak, which is dotted with both charming villages and seaside resorts. In all, an estimated 230,000–285,000 people died in the catastrophe.

The film shows the absolute selflessness (and often poise) of the local Thai people.

Needless to say, making a film about this tragic event—one of the worst natural disasters in recorded history—required a careful approach, so horrible was the loss of life. Director J.A. Bayona and screenwriter Sergio G. Sánchez seemed acutely aware of this when they produced the “The Impossible” in 2012. It was released the following year in the United States.

Rather than show multiple tragic events happening to random characters, the filmmakers did something different.

They told the story through the more intimate lens of a single family—the Bennetts, based on the real-life experiences of the Belón-Álvarez family—consisting of husband Henry (Ewan McGregor), wife Maria (Naomi Watts), and their three young boys, Lucas (Tom Holland), Thomas (Samuel Joslin), and Simon (Oaklee Pendergast).

From Family Warmth to Devastating Separation

The film begins with the family traveling to Thailand. Henry is taking a break from his job so that he can spend Christmas vacation with his family in Khao Lak. The opening scenes show the touching interplay between the family members as they relax and experience their beachside resort to the fullest. These sentimental scenes (complete with cello and piano) are interspersed with dollops of existential dread as if something ominous is looming just over the horizon.

They awake the next day (Boxing Day, the day after Christmas) and are enjoying a sunny day at the resort’s pool when signs emerge to show that something’s not quite right: A phone suddenly cuts out, a paper blows away in a rapidly growing sea-wind, and sounds rumble in the distance. The tsunami hits the resort so swiftly, all that the vacationers and locals can do is stare in awe at the first giant wave as it crashes toward them.

The Bennetts get swept away and apart in the hail of brown water. However, Maria and oldest son Lucas manage to find

each other in the powerful torrents. But just when you think things couldn’t get worse, Maria gets horribly wounded, and it’s up to Lucas to help her survive when the waters finally recede. The two are soon discovered by local Thai villagers who risk their own lives to help them to relative safety.

Meanwhile, Henry finds himself closer to the shore among mountains of debris and bodies. It is here that the immense scale of the carnage wrought by the tsunami becomes evident. Henry, still in a state of shock, finds sons Thomas and Simon. However, believing he is doing the right thing at that time, he sends them off with a band of rescuers in a truck; he is determined to search for his wife, whom he still believes is amid the wreckage.

The family is now split up into three parties—Henry, Maria and Lucas, and young boys Thomas and Simon. The film skillfully weaves a thread through the storylines of these three parties as they desperately try to locate one another in the chaos. It also shows the absolute selflessness (and often poise) of the local Thai people, as they struggle to help strangers in the wake of the cataclysmic event.

Why This Movie Works

Instead of fixating on the special effects (CGI) aspect of the disaster, as so many movies do these days, we get to watch a rousing human drama unfold. Will Henry overcome his feelings of guilt for sending his youngest sons off with rescuers? Will Maria’s



A happy family before disaster hits, played by (center, L–R) Oaklee Pendergast, Tom Holland, Ewan McGregor, Samuel Joslin, and Naomi Watts, in “The Impossible.”

severe wounds soon leave Lucas all alone? What will become of Thomas and Simon, too young to fully comprehend the tragedy unfolding around them?

Watts stands out as a courageous yet selfless person who is determined to help others around her, even in her dire condition. In one incredibly touching scene, as Maria lay on a hospital bed in the middle of an open medical bay, she encourages Lucas to go and help others in need, since he’s “good at it.” Even as her lifeblood is ebbing out of her, she intends to impart a final message of altruism to him.

Holland is also outstanding as the oldest son, who displays a maturity beyond his age. His facial expressions convey a wide range of emotions without having to say a word.

In my opinion, “The Impossible” is definitely the best film of 2012, and many other years for that matter. It’s also timely; it shows us that even in times of great chaos and peril, everyone can still reach out to each other with kindness and compassion.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlight-Ent.com

‘The Impossible’

Director
J.A. Bayona

Starring
Naomi Watts, Ewan McGregor, Tom Holland

Running Time
1 hour, 54 mins

Not Rated
PG-13

Release Date
Jan. 4, 2013 (USA)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Send **FREE** Newspapers to Your Friends

Are you looking for a way to introduce The Epoch Times to your friends?

Thousands of subscribers asked us to send free copies of the paper to their friends and family. Now we can!



Let’s spread the news!

If you’re currently a subscriber to The Epoch Times, simply follow these steps:



1. Log In

Log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com.

Welcome, Jenny

2. Click

Click your name to manage your account.



3. Request FREE Papers

Click “Request Free Papers” on the left menu bar.



4. Enter the Name

Enter the name and shipping address of your first friend.



5. Add More Friends

If you want to submit info for more friends, click “Add More Friends”.



6. Submit

Click “Submit” after you finish entering info for all friends.

Request as many as you’d like—there’s no limit!

For any questions, please call (917) 905-2080 or email: subscribe@EpochTimes.com

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION