

WEEK 30, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES
**ARTS &
CULTURE**

PUBLIC DOMAIN



The winner as the president who was the most voracious reader: Theodore Roosevelt. Painted in 1903 by John Singer Sargent. White House Collection.

Reading Their Way to Greatness

Three presidents and their books...4

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THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Asses' Ears of Modernism and Post-Modernism

JAMES SALE

In my previous article on King Midas, we found that the Midas Touch proved to be a curse—the automatic consequence of the hubris of Midas. King Midas (if you remember the myth) recognizes a prisoner brought before him as Silenus, the stepfather of the disrupter god Dionysus, and Midas not only releases the prisoner, but he also honors him with feasting and drinking. Dionysus, extremely grateful, offers Midas an incredible gift, namely, anything he would like to have. This open-ended offer is immediately abused by Midas, who thus reveals his hubris. Without hesitation, Midas asks for the golden touch.

Everything he touches does indeed become gold—everything. The folly of hubris in the case of Midas is that his request is out of all proportion to the benefit he had delivered to Dionysus. And it's also hubristic in its essential nature, since we now have a man with godlike power. Furthermore, the gift itself destabilizes the order of the cosmos, and so life itself. How could it not—his touch turning everything to gold?

We remember that hubris in Greek thinking was the worst “sin” of all, the equivalent of the Christian notion of the sin of pride. Hubris is when human beings either ignore or deliberately disobey the gods. And when they do, a terrible retribution is as bound to follow as night follows day.

In one sense, Midas's hubris is shown in his violation of the god Apollo's two maxims: first, “not too much,” clearly Midas requesting this much gold violates that injunction. And his second is “know thyself.” This latter injunction is often taken by the contemporary personal development movement as meaning: Discover yourself, become more self-aware, and so grow as a person.

The Greeks—and Apollo, the god of music and poetry, truth, healing, the sun and light, and more, however—didn't see it that way. For them, knowing yourself meant knowing your place in the scheme of the cosmos: that you were mortal, not a god, and that, therefore, you submitted to their higher powers in all aspects of your life.

This idea is not unique to Greek classical thinking. The ancient Egyptians expressed it thus in their “Book of the Dead”: “All the world which lies below has been set in order and filled in contents by the things which are placed above; for the things below have not the power to set in order the world above.” And the Old and New Testaments testify to the same thing, as does the Chinese “I-Ching”: “They [the ancient peoples] put themselves in accord with the Tao and its power and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right. By thinking through the order of the outer world to the end, and by exploring the law of their nature to the deepest core, they arrived at an understanding of fate.” Here, fate is what the gods ordain.

A Universal Witness

There is, then, a virtual universal witness to the concept of walking humbly with God, and to deviate from this path is to bring down punishment. Now in the case of Midas, we saw that Dionysus was pretty lenient in terms of his treatment of him. Midas simply had to wash himself in a particular river and the gift—curse—was removed. Probably why the treatment was so lenient had to do with the fact that Midas was a true worshiper of Dionysus and his cohorts. It was perhaps mildly amusing to Dionysus that Midas behaved as he did.

But the thing is, Midas clearly learned nothing from this experience, for the

hubris and the folly accompany him to his next, and disastrous, exploit, which is almost as famous as his golden touch.

Here, Midas is to learn that hubris before the god Apollo has much graver consequences.

The Hubris of Midas

That Midas was a devout follower of Dionysus is shown by the fact that when he succeeded to the throne of Phrygia, he promoted the worship of Dionysus. It was onward from this point that Midas witnessed the musical contest between Apollo and, some say Marsyas while others say Pan, but the identity here is not significant. Marsyas was a satyr—a male attendant of the god Dionysus, often naked, and known to be bestial and boisterous. Pan was the god of shepherds, flocks, and fertility, or the “goat-god.” Like Dionysus, then, both stand as antagonists in their antinomian and bestial aspects against all that Apollo represents.

Both challenged Apollo's musical supremacy, and a contest was arranged in which Tmolus, a river god (sometimes called a mountain god), would be the umpire. Apollo would play his lyre, and Pan (and Marsyas too) would play the pipes. Interestingly, we see that we are talking about the contrast between the carefully controlled plucking of musical notes with mathematical precision versus the coarser charm of an instrument that one roughly blows into.

Taking the Pan version of the event, all who heard both musicians unanimously gave the verdict to Apollo: His music mesmerized them all. All, that is, except Midas, who loudly and “dissonantly” (a good word in this context) declared his preference for Pan's playing, claiming the verdict was unfair!

This act of incivility, this aesthetic lapse in taste, this predilection for the grosser—this act of hubris before the god—could not be allowed to go unpunished.

As Ovid put it, “Apollo couldn't allow such insensitive ears to preserve their human appearance,” and so Midas's ears are transformed into asses' ears to manifest his stupidity.

This is the beginning of the end for Midas, for it is a direct result of this punishment and his attempts to conceal it that he ends up ordering the death of his own barber—a form of judicial murder—and subsequently, miserably killing himself by drinking bull's blood (thought to be arsenic). Note the bestial aspect yet again.

Midas and Modern Art

But I think what is important about the story is its relevance for today. It can be summed up in Plato's dictum: “To love rightly is to love what is orderly and beautiful in an educated and disciplined way.” And that is what art (in its widest sense) was and is, at least until the 20th century. But now—alongside the political bestialities of communism and fascism—we have developed a taste for the brutish and the bestial in art too. More exactly, art reflects the falseness of the prevalent ideologies. For, put politely, as Tom Stoppard said, “Imagination without skill gives us modern art.”

Everywhere we look we find just such art, and nowhere better summed up than by Andy Warhol's candid comment: “Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.” Wow! Who'd have thought that? We are almost back here to Midas's golden touch—that surely was art too!

We think of the recent “shredding” of Banksy's “Girl with Balloon,” which, incredibly, according to art “experts,” added 50 percent to its value, meaning it was now worth in excess of \$2.4 million.



Banksy's “Girl With Balloon,” version in South Bank, London.



(L-R) Apollo is crowned by Tmolus in a contest with Pan, while Midas sports new ears as punishment for poor taste. “Apollo as Victor Over Pan,” 1637, by Jacob Jordaens. Prado Museum.

To think like this is entirely Dionysian and represents the gathering forces of chaos and disorder that undermine society and all right order. The opposite of this might be something like what the English artist Stanley Spencer noted: “One might never be able to conceive what Heaven is like, but nevertheless the contemplation of it is, I think, the greatest thing of all for the creative artist.”

Imagine that! Our contemporary artists, musicians, and poets “contemplating

heaven” as the source for their inspiration? What we are talking about here is the transcendent: some “thing” bigger than humanity, or mankind, or humanist and secular utopias, something whereby we approach the deep truths of human nature and the human predicament.

French philosopher Luc Ferry said, “Worth noting especially is that it is through music—the cosmic art above all others since it relies entirely upon a structure of sounds that must, so to speak,

‘rhyme’ or accord with one another—that the cosmos is saved.” This is the high view, the high position, that is represented by Apollo and his art.

Midas represents the corruption of taste, and so of values, which if the myth is to be believed—and I believe it—suggests that for all those mini-Midas of today, it won't end well; there are dark consequences for all those abandoning themselves to the Dionysian god. As Midas discovered for himself.

James Sale is an English businessman whose company, Motivational Maps Ltd., operates in 14 countries. He is the author of over 40 books on management and education from major international publishers including Macmillan, Pearson, and Routledge. As a poet, he won the first prize in The Society of Classical Poets' 2017 competition and spoke in June 2019 at the group's first symposium held at New York's Princeton Club.

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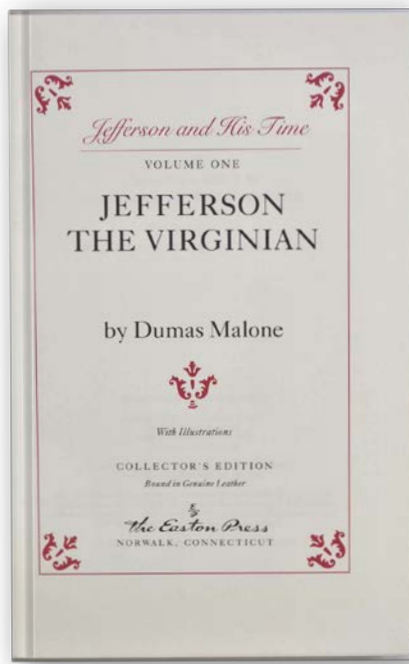
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TRUTH and TRADITION

Returning to Tradition

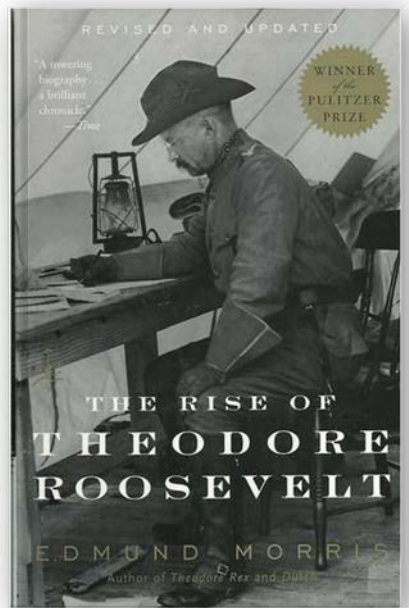
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(Above) Dumas Malone wrote a six-volume biography of Thomas Jefferson.

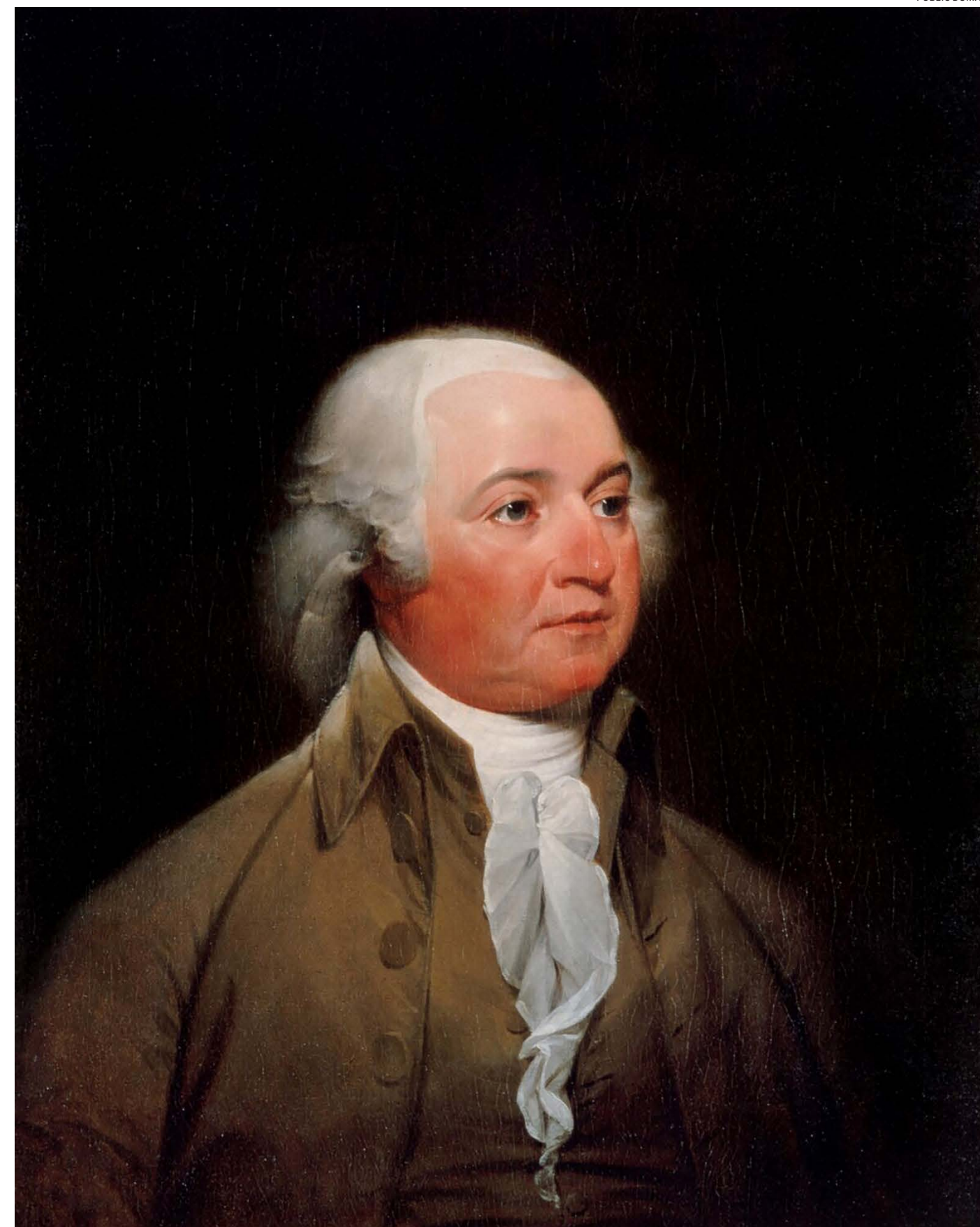
(Right) Runners up for the president who was the most voracious reader are Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Portrait of Thomas Jefferson, 1786, by Mather Brown. National Portrait Gallery.



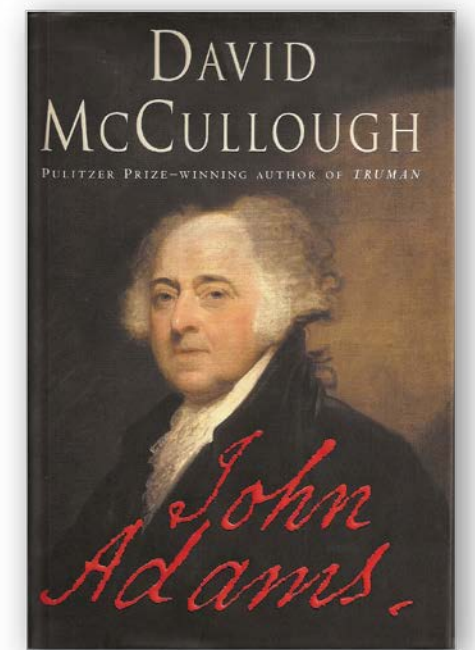
Edmund Morris's first book of a three-volume biography of Theodore Roosevelt.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

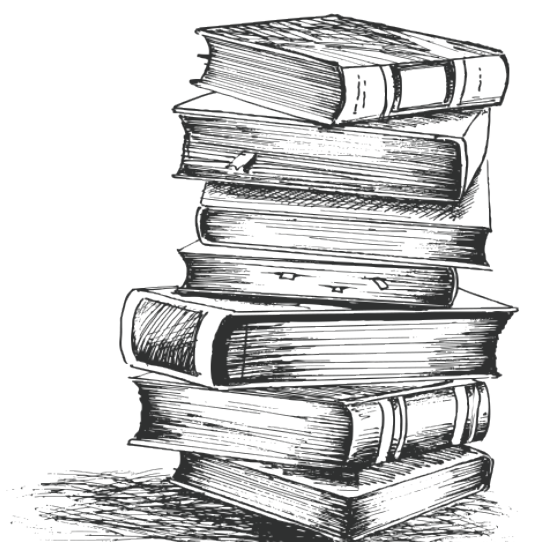


PUBLIC DOMAIN



(Above) David McCullough's biography of John Adams.

(Left) Portrait of John Adams, circa 1793, by John Trumbull. White House Collection.



REDHINESTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Reading Their Way to Greatness

Three presidents and their books



PUBLIC DOMAIN

President Grant loved reading novels while he was at West Point. Portrait of President Ulysses S. Grant, 1880, by Thomas Le Clear. White House Collection.

JEFF MINICK

In my kitchen is a coffee mug given to me by some students and inscribed with words once written by Thomas Jefferson to John Adams: "I cannot live without books."

Like Jefferson, many of our presidents were lovers of literature and reading. The largely self-educated Abraham Lincoln, for example, knew Scripture well—his speeches convey the rhythms of the King James Bible—and he was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare and his plays, particularly "Macbeth." At West Point, Ulysses S. Grant neglected his studies while reading novels in the academy's library, a practice that helps explain his academic mediocrity. Franklin Roosevelt owned a personal library of 22,000 volumes, read a good deal of political and military history, and was especially keen on the poetry of Rudyard Kipling.

The reading habits of at least two presidents turned obscure novels into bestsellers. When John F. Kennedy mentioned to a reporter how much he enjoyed the James Bond stories by Ian Fleming, sales of those books skyrocketed, and the 007 films were born. Ronald Reagan's praise of Tom Clancy's "The Hunt for Red October" as "my kind of yarn" boosted sales tremendously and launched Clancy's writing career, a fact which the author, who became a friend of Reagan's, never forgot.

But of all the presidents who have loved reading and shared their literary finds with the public, surely John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt qualify as the most passionate bibliophiles ever to inhabit the White House.

An Ongoing Dialogue

Though John Adams (1735–1826) disliked reading in his younger years, his lifelong love for the written word blossomed at Harvard University. There, he immersed himself in the classics of the ancient world—he read both Greek and Latin—and later in books of law.

To relieve his anxiety during the preparation of his first case as an attorney—he ended up losing in the courtroom and felt deeply humiliated by his defeat—Adams read aloud to himself from Cicero's "Orations." As noted by biographer David McCullough, Adams described this read-aloud as if he was in a gymnasium: "It exercises my lungs, raises my spirits, opens my pores, quickens the circulation, and so contributes much to health."

Now there's a reader.

As McCullough also tells us, Adams "loved to add his comments to the margins. It was part of the joy of reading for him, to have something to say himself, to talk back...." When Adams acquired Mary Wollstonecraft's "French Revolution," he did so "with delight, since he disagreed with everything she said." The notes and comments made by Adams for this book alone ran to 12,000 words.

An Ample Assortment of Books

Once he became enamored with the printed word, Adams began building a private library that by the time of his death included nearly 3,500 volumes, an astonishing private collection for his time. In 1768, he wrote in his diary: "I am mostly intent at present, on collecting a Library, and I find, that a great deal of Thought, and Care, as well as Money, are necessary to assemble an ample and

well chosen Assortment of Books."

Today, part of that collection is housed in the Boston Public Library while the rest remain in the Adams home in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Near the end of his biography, McCullough neatly fits together our second president's insatiable thirst for reading and book collecting by relating this incident: "Your father's zeal for books will be one of the last desires which will quit him," Abigail observed to John Quincy in the spring of 1816, as Adams eagerly embarked on a sixteen-volume French history.

Abigail knew her husband well. He treasured books and reading until the end of his life.

Book Rich, Cash Poor

"I envy you that immortal honor," Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) as the War of 1812 came to a close.

The honor to which Adams referred was the sale of Jefferson's library—6,487 books carried away from Monticello in ten wagons—to replace the volumes of the Library of Congress burned by the British during their occupation of Washington. For his library, the cash-strapped Jefferson received \$23,950, which reduced his debts by about half. Some of the money he received from Congress went, of course, toward the purchase of more books. Because of this transaction, biographer Dumas Malone wrote that Jefferson "might well be termed the Father of American Librarianship."

A Genius in His Library

In April 1962, at a reception honoring Nobel Prize winners, John F. Kennedy told the assembled guests: "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

Some truth lies in this tribute. Jefferson knew several languages, including, like John Adams, Latin and Greek. He collected and read mathematical and scientific works, political treatises, books on architecture and botany, and especially before becoming president, novels and poetry. Even at the age of 75, he wrote to John Adams of his books that he had a "canine appetite for reading" and thought of his paper-and-ink companions as a "lamp to light my path through the dreary wilderness of time before me, whose bourne I see not."

Dumas Malone wrote that Jefferson 'might well be termed the Father of American Librarianship.'

The library of his later years was heavily freighted with books from classical antiquity. He cared little for philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, but read many of the works by Greek and Roman moralists. Long familiar with the histories of the ancient world—these influenced many of our Founding Fathers, warning as they do of the dangers of both democracy and dictatorship—Jefferson remained an avid student of the past his entire life.

In an essay unpublished in his lifetime, "Thoughts on English Prosody," Jefferson, Malone tells us, "quoted, often at length, from Milton, Pope, Shenstone, Gray, Collins, Swift, Young, Cunningham, Addison, and Hopkins, as well as from Homer, Theocritus, and Horace." Given the turmoil of the American Revolution, his political life, and his projects such as building Monticello and founding the University of Virginia, the number of writers read and remembered by Thomas Jefferson is truly stunning.

A Book Before Breakfast

Of all our presidents, however, Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) was hands-down the most omnivorous reader of all. He often consumed a book a day, sometimes two or three—he was a speed-reader—and claimed to have read tens of thousands of books in his lifetime.

In his online article "The Libraries of Great Men: Theodore Roosevelt's Reading List," Jeremy Anderberg points out that in addition to a talent for speed-reading, Roosevelt brought enormous powers of concentration to his reading. "Whenever he was reading," Anderberg tells us, "he gave off the impression to observers that he was in a completely other world, 'as if alone by a camp fire in some deep forest.'"

Unlike John Adams, Roosevelt fell in love with books as a toddler. In the family's library, he discovered David Livingstone's "Missionary Travels and Researches in Southern Africa," became spellbound by its pictures, and as biographer Edmund Morris writes: "For weeks Teedie (his childhood nickname) dragged the volume, which was almost as big as he was, around the library, and begged his elders to fit stories to the pictures."

Perhaps because he was in ill health as a boy—his father eventually installed a gymnasium in the home and saw to it that his son learned to box—Roosevelt became infatuated with stories about heroes, later stating: "I felt a great admira-

tion for men who were fearless and could hold their own in the world, and I had a great desire to be like them."

Libraries and Lists

Like Adams and Jefferson, Roosevelt took pride in his library, which can still be seen in the family home, Long Island's Sagamore Hill, now a national historic site. The Theodore Roosevelt Center also features a 1919 inventory of Roosevelt's books, a staggering list of the thousands of titles procured by this energetic man.

After serving as president, Roosevelt set out on a year of travel, primarily in Africa. Before his departure, his sister Corinne gave him 60 volumes to take with him, including some of his favorite novels and histories, a set now known as the "pigskin library" for their bindings.

If we want to examine a shorter list of books admired by Roosevelt, we can rejoin Jeremy Anderberg and look at the titles and authors of over a hundred books Roosevelt sent to a friend who had written to him asking for recommendations. These include not only such classics as plays by Euripides or histories by Polybius, but novels by Sir Walter Scott, Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer," poets like John Keats and Edgar Allan Poe, and a number of authors little remembered today. Westerners by writers like Owen Wister and Stewart Edward White reflect Roosevelt's keen interest in places like the Dakotas and Montana.

With amazement that the rest of us might feel as well, Anderberg writes of this list: "And those were only the ones he could remember reading from the previous two years!"

Read to Lead

In "The Leader's Bookshelf," co-authors Retired Admiral James Stavridis and R. Manning Ancell believe that "Leadership is certainly not learned solely from reading books, but a personal bookshelf—or even a library of thousands of volumes—can be critical to developing the ability to inspire others in the pursuit of worthy goals, which lies at the heart of what all leaders seek to accomplish in the challenging but rewarding tasks they take up."

Absent their beloved books, it's hard to imagine John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt contributing to our nation as they did. They digested the writings of others, absorbed their thoughts, and made that wisdom their own.

In doing so, they gave us a country of liberty, justice, and opportunity.



The Art Renewal Center: Art Communicating Humanity

The '14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition (2019–2020)' at Sotheby's New York

LORRAINE FERRIER

On July 13, nearly 100 contemporary representational paintings from around the world will be exhibited in the "14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition (2019–2020)."

The exhibition was due to be held at Sotheby's New York, but because of COVID-19 the exhibition will now be held online on Sotheby's website.

The exhibition is the culmination of the annual Art Renewal Center Salon (ARC) competition, which had over 4,300 entries from across 73 countries. The exhibition opened at the European Museum of Modern Art (MEAM) in Barcelona, Spain, this past winter.

Kara Lysandra Ross, chief operating officer and co-chair of the New York-based ARC, tells us more. Ross shares about representational art: how the movement has developed, and how representational artists use a universal visual language to connect us all to our humanity.

THE EPOCH TIMES: How would you define realism?

KARA LYSANDRA ROSS: I would define realism in the 21st century as images that can be recognized and identified such as people and objects, and even fantastical subjects like dragons or unicorns.

Realism is a visual iconography to some extent. If you think back to some of the earliest writings such as hieroglyphics, the Egyptians used images of actual things to represent a language. And so realism is really a visual language. It's using identifiable things from our world that we live in to communicate across all language barriers. Because no matter where you're from or what language you speak, if you're viewing an image of a mountain, we all have a reaction to that. We all know what that is, and so there's a level of communication that can occur through representational imagery that makes it a universal language.

And being able to render a painting or drawing in a way that looks as close to what you would actually see as possible enhances that visual power by increasing the viewer's intrinsic emotional response to it.

THE EPOCH TIMES: What can realist artwork teach us as opposed to modernist art?

MS. ROSS: Well, it's basically the power of communication and connection. So much communication occurs in-person that when you feel that you are actually looking at a real person in a painting or drawing, the subtlest of communication can occur.

One of the artists in the exhibition, Duffy Sheridan, was actually talking about that in his video and how he sets out to paint a painting. He's always been fascinated with the idea that a person's look, just a look, could have so much communication within it. And so, when he sets out to paint a painting, really he's just trying to capture the emotion of that

look or that subtlety of gesture that is being communicated. Everything else in the painting is filtered around it to emphasize that look, or that feeling that comes from the look.

If you have a modern painting like a Jackson Pollock, which has lots of splatters and colors, people can read different things into it: Maybe those colors feel angry, or he was obviously angry when he painted it. That's a very base type of emotion and communication.

Whereas if you have a fully worked-out scene like a mother crying over the death of her child, there's so much more complexity that goes into that kind of communication than can be just communicated through colors, splatters, or shapes because representational images are identifiable. For example, if you have a painting of children, people will often think of their own children or maybe what it was like when they were a child. Realism provides relatable pieces that communicate our shared humanity.

THE EPOCH TIMES: On the ARC website it states that your mission is "to promote a return of skill-based training, standards, and excellence in the visual arts." What do you mean by skill-based?

MS. ROSS: Skill-based is the term used in the educational field that means that one skill builds upon another skill to reach an overall level of mastery.

Most college and university art education programs teach art based on an idea that I think is completely inaccurate. These institutions seem to believe that creativity is inhibited by any atelier-type training, which is required to make representational art at the level of the work in our salon, which I think is kind of crazy. Because if you're learning to write, first you have to learn the alphabet, then you have to learn how to spell words, then you learn how to compose sentences, and then you learn to express yourself. No other field of education works in this way, teaching by withholding knowledge.

Skill-based training in the visual arts is basically learning the skills that are taught in our ARC-approved atelier schools, where you learn all the building blocks and in the end you're doing your own creative expression. But in order to be able to get to that point, you have to first acquire the skills.

In a lot of atelier schools, you do nothing but drawing for the first year or two. Then you can move on to oil paints, taking everything you've learned as far as being able to actually render objects and people. You start working in grayscale first, not with color, because color adds a level of complexity. Then you'll do your first limited cast palette, where you might copy a plaster cast which is white, so you're still dealing with just the shadow, just to be able to get that accuracy of form in three-dimensional rendering. Then you might add in a green scarf or something with limited color before you move on to working in full color. Every step of the way, you're learning skills,



Kara Lysandra Ross, the Art Renewal Center's chief operating officer and co-chair.

COURTESY OF KARA LYSANDRA ROSS

Realism provides relatable pieces that communicate our shared humanity.

and you're training your eye in how to be able to do it, so it's a long process.

It's not that someone can sit down and paint a representational masterpiece on their first try. There are a lot of skills that have to be acquired to be able to do that, and a lot of training and hard work. So skill-based training in the visual arts is the idea that you have to learn the technique and that each technique builds upon itself to attain a level of mastery over the medium versus the "anything goes" mentality.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Artists who submit works to the salon don't have to be enrolled at an atelier or have previously studied at an atelier. Why did the ARC make that decision?

MS. ROSS: When the ARC was founded in 1999, we wanted to present historical works as well as emphasizing 19th-century realism since it had almost been completely forgotten. It was the last period in fine art, the climax of representational art, really, right before the onset of modernism.

In 2000, when we published our list of atelier schools on the website, we became more aware of contemporary artists who were painting in the representational tradition. And those schools began to grow very quickly because there were so many people who really wanted to learn this type of training but who had no idea of where to even find it, or that it existed anymore. We had so many emails starting the same way, saying, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

In 2004, we decided to have our first competition, and we wanted to open it up to everybody. We wanted to allow as many representational artists as possible to have an opportunity to be noticed, no matter where they study. Everything is purely based on the works. We don't show the jurors the artist's name or anything about them, just to keep it as fair as possible.

THE EPOCH TIMES: As part of the virtual exhibition, 70 artists submitted interview videos and you edited each one. Can you tell us a bit about them?

MS. ROSS: Even though these videos literally come from all over the world, there's a common thread. Many of the artists mentioned things like "I wanted to tell a story" or "I paint representational art because I feel it is the best way I can communicate and express myself." Even though the competition spans different countries, nationalities, and subjects, there's this idea of expressing oneself through representational art.

In my introductory video that I made for the exhibition, I mention that our entire lives are composed of stories. If someone asks you how your day was today, you usually tell a story: "Oh, I went to the supermarket and this happened." You're telling a story as you communicate, and so this idea that representational art tells a story is very primal to our species. It's how we communicate and how we best express ourselves.

THE EPOCH TIMES: This year, the "14th International ARC Salon Exhibition" will be held online at Sothebys.com; please tell us more.

MS. ROSS: We are very excited to be working with a venue like Sotheby's. Representational art was so out-of-fashion throughout the 20th century that to be able to have a venue like Sotheby's New York holding this exhibition and promoting representational art gives it legitimacy in the larger art world. It says: This is something that attains a certain level of accomplishment, and it's grown to a certain point where it should be recognized. So I think that says a lot.

ARC is currently accepting entries to the 15th ARC Salon through Aug. 14.

To access the "14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition," visit the ARC website between July 13 and 31, and click on the exhibition banner at ArtRenewal.org



"Katrina," 2018, by Jonathan Hodge. Oil on panel; 48 inches by 72 inches. Recipient of the Haynes Gallery Award at the "14th International ARC Salon Exhibition (2019–2020)."



A Heartwarming Tale to Fill the Canceled 2020 Tokyo-Olympics Void

MARK JACKSON

I'm happy to report that the very fine documentary "Runner," while it won't entirely fill the upcoming two-week canceled-Tokyo-Olympics void, can definitely provide an excellent Olympics substitute that'll affect you for at least three days.

Running for His Life Eight-year-old Sudanese Guor Mading Maker had to constantly run from soldiers in war-torn Sudan.

The historical stage-setting of Guor's world is that the abrupt exit of the British Empire from Sudan in the 1950s kicked off a vicious clash of civilizations between the very traditionally African South Sudan and the culturally Arabic-Islamic North Sudan. The South eventually seceded, but it wasn't long before a bloody civil war broke out.

In what could be described as the ultimate Hero's Journey, in 1993, Guor's parents placed their little boy at the village outskirts and told him to march and never come back. It was an act of love. He ended for himself in harsh survival mode for years, enduring slavery and imprisonment. Guor was lucky; eight of his nine siblings were killed in the war.

Then, in 2003, while surviving in a refugee camp, he, his aunt, and his uncle were allowed to resettle in Concord, New Hampshire. Guor started running again, but this time for his high school track team.

Like all true heroes, he had abilities bordering on the supernatural. Not even knowing what a track was for, he immediately left his very competitive coach in the dust. Guor went on to run for Iowa State

'Runner'

Director Bill Gallagher

Starring Guor Mading Maker, family, countrymen, and friends

Rated Not Rated

Running Time 1 hour, 28 minutes

Release Date May 2, 2019

★★★★★

Guor went on to compete in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics.



Guor Mading Maker, world-renowned Olympic marathoner, in "Runner."

University, and qualified for the 2012 London Olympics. As the university coach's wife relates, "Guor called me up and said, 'Mrs. Coach ... I'm going.'"

Running for His Country However, because the brand-new South Sudanese government had no official Olympics committee of its own yet, it wasn't recognized by the International Committee. So Guor campaigned to compete independently.

He refused to run for Sudan, the country that had forced him to run all his life and become a refugee, feeling that this would dishonor the memory of his fallen friends and relatives. In taking this stand against oppression, he won the hearts of his people.

Just days prior to the opening of the XXX Olympic Games, Guor was granted permission to compete under the Olympic flag. As his manager humorously notes, "We're officially the smallest Olympic team in history."

Guor went on to compete in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, this time proudly representing the youngest nation in the world—South Sudan. Watching him run, one Sudanese child said, "Mother, I have a strange feeling. I do not know, what is this feeling." His mother replied, "You are feeling pride, my son."

Bringing the Gold Back to the Village Compound

The classic archetype of the Hero's Journey (a particular sequence of human life choices discovered by Joseph Campbell, a professor of literature at Sarah Lawrence College) is as follows: You leave the village compound to fetch water. There's a strange call to adventure. Following it, you enter a dark, dangerous forest. You fall off a cliff. You discover a cave, where

GQ-garbed, cagey Tetsuro, who, after very little coaxing, starts up many Mr. Miyagi-like, "wax-on, wax-off" type training methods.

Such as the (extremely boxing-related) ability to catch brook trout by hand in a freezing stream.

Tetsuro demonstrates this: wade in, splash-splashing loudly (while spooking no fish whatsoever) and spear-hand the water. Don't use Masahiro-San's claw-like attempt—too unstreamlined. As James Bond said to Bond-girl Kissy Suzuki, "Ah so desu ka!" ("So that's how it is"). To be fair, Rocky chased chickens. This is maybe the Japanese version?

Tetsuro also plays the local mountain harlot Asami (Hazuki Kato) to share a bed with Masahiro-San for 21 days. Can Masahiro restrain himself? He can. But in the end, he's not sure that he does not love her. Clearly, his body withstood temptation, but she melted his mind. Masahiro-San certainly did a whole lot better than Muhammad Ali, who claimed he was abstaining during fight camp, too, but was discovered later to have been exceedingly disingenuous.

I won't get into Tetsuro's many fortune-cookie-like proclamations. OK, here's one: "From now on your enemy is your ego." Here's another, delivered after slapping Masahiro silly: "The best way to kill a fighter's ego is a good (expletive omitted) slap." The problem with the film's faux Zen is that it violates the first rule of showbiz: "Never be boring." Zzzzzzen.

World Politics, Boxing Politics Japanese resentment toward the occupying Americans is still rampant. Hiroshima happened. And Clint's boxing manager Silas (S. Scott McCracken), like a 1940s Caucasian Don King, cuts a deal with the notorious Yakuza gang (looking like a Japanese version of Guy

Ritchie goons) that his fighter will throw the fight.

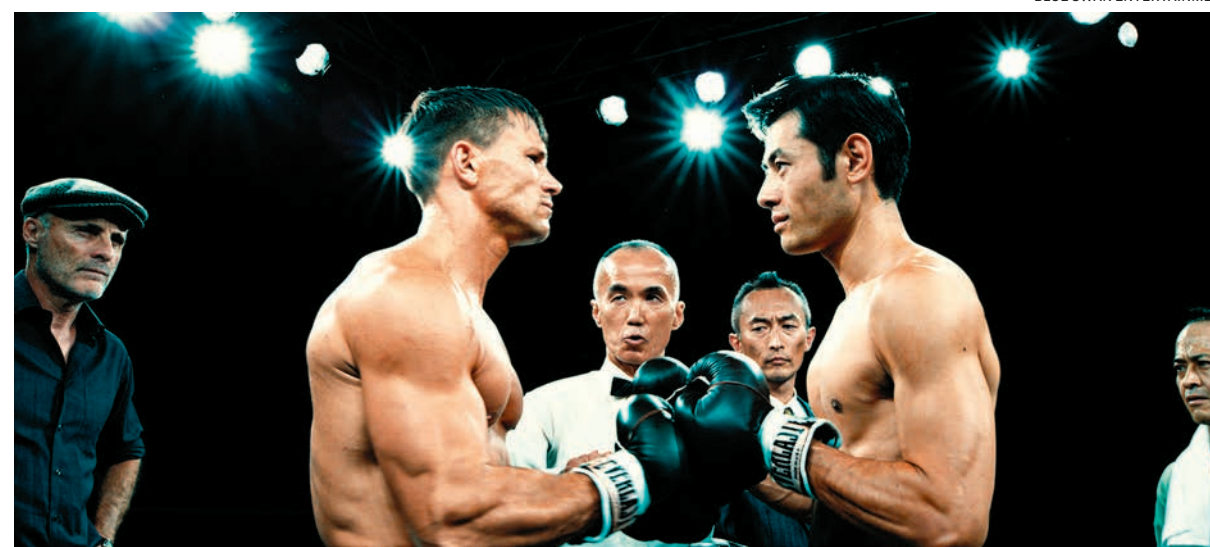
But honorable Clint's not having any of that; he'd rather die than cheat. His distraught, pregnant wife is not particularly in agreement with this all-or-none warrior take on things. There are mouths to feed, and sacrifices to be made. Clint might not have the neck for those kinds of beta-male sacrifices.

It's Gorgeous, I'll Give It That

"In Full Bloom" is a visually beautiful movie. Very arty. The landscapes and people are all good-looking. The good-looking cherry blossoms look like they smell very good. There's the homage to Tyler Wood's physique. Give it an A+ for packaging.

But all that can't fully compensate for a threadbare script, plot, clichéd Zen-ish dialogue, and nary an award-winning acting performance, although "In Full Bloom" won two prizes at the Oldenburg International Film Festival.

The actual fight is hyper-stylized, deleting the crowd completely, which functions as a sort of Verfremdungseffekt (Bertolt Brecht's use of innovative theatrical techniques to "make the familiar strange"). This simply renders it useless as an exciting sporting event. Which is exacerbated by having no emotional connection with either fighter at any time during the film.



Some Careers Are Shorter Than Others

MARK JACKSON

In "In Full Bloom," undefeated Japanese light-heavyweight boxing champ Masahiro (Yusuke Ogasawara) is going up against the chiseled American challenger Clint Sullivan (Tyler Wood) in a title fight, in post-World War II Japan.

Chiseled or not, Clint Sullivan is fading fast in the rankings. He's a loser for sure, but he sure doesn't look like one. In fact, the entire movie might simply be the paying of loving homage to Tyler Wood's ripped physicality—especially his neck. It's like the cinematic version of Tom Wolfe describing Ken Kesey in "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test": "He has a big neck with a pair of sternocleidomastoid muscles that rise up out of the prison work shirt like a couple of dock ropes."

Clint does loser-ish things, though; at one point, he gets so mad at his manager that he punches a metal locker with bone-breaking vehemence. No pro boxer in his right

mind would damage his money-makers like that. Clint also shadow-boxes and smokes at the same time.

Zzzzen

Champ Masahiro's training, on the other hand, is very Zen. Or Zen wannabe. He's out in a Japanese winter wonderland trying to see if he can scare up the legendary former boxing champ Tetsuro (Hiroyuki Watanabe) and have him play Mr. Miyagi to his Daniel-San ("The Karate Kid").

Masahiro-San appears to have done some Green Beret survival training: starting fires and catching beasts in the deep, wintry woods and eating them. But then you start to wonder, because there he is, wandering in an icy stream in the middle of nowhere, when there's a perfectly good bank to walk on, like, two feet away. There are many such "that makes no sense, but it looks kinda good" moments.

Masahiro-San does manage to smoke out the \$60-haircut-coiffed,

Tyler Wood (L) and Yusuke Ogasawara play American and Japanese boxers in "In Full Bloom."

'In Full Bloom'

Director Adam VillaSenor, Reza Ghassemi

Starring Tyler Wood, Yusuke Ogasawara, Hiroyuki Watanabe, S. Scott McCracken, Hazuki Kato, Stefanie Estes, Timothy V. Murphy

Rated Not Rated

Running Time 1 hour, 30 minutes

Release Date June 19, 2019 (Italy)

★★★★★



"The Roses of Heliogabalus," 1888, by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. Oil on canvas, 52 inches by 84.2 inches. The Pérez Simón Collection, Mexico.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

Overwhelmed by Outer Beauty

ERIC BESS

It's easy to be overwhelmed by beauty. A beautiful moment, person, or object can inspire a certain emotional response in so many of us. "The Roses of Heliogabalus" is a painting by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema that, at first glance, possesses the kind of beauty that stirs something deep within us.

I've shared this painting with some of the people close to me, and they all have similar responses: "Wow, that's beautiful." I then share with them the story behind the painting, and we come to question our relationship with our sensuous perception of beauty.

The Cruelty of Heliogabalus

What is the story behind this painting? At 14 years old, Heliogabalus (also spelled Elagabalus) became Roman emperor in the year A.D. 218. He did not consider himself an emperor but an empress, once stating, "Call me not Lord, for I am a Lady." His rule was cruel, and he was known for indulging in extreme forms of pleasure and entertainment.

According to Edward Gibbon, author of "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Heliogabalus, "corrupted by his youth, his country, and his fortune, abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury ... To confound the order of seasons and climates, to sport with the passions and prejudices of his subjects, and to subvert every law of nature and decency, were in the number of his most delicious amusements."

What is possibly one of Heliogabalus's crueler moments was reimagined by Alma-Tadema in "The Roses of Heliogabalus."

His amusements included extreme lust, desecration of Roman history, murder, and the sacrifice of human children.

Alma-Tadema's Composition

Alma-Tadema was a Dutch painter who painted scenes of Greek and Roman antiquity. He later moved to England, became an elected member of the Royal Academy in 1879, and was knighted in 1899.

What is possibly one of Heliogabalus's crueler moments was reimagined by Alma-Tadema in "The Roses of Heliogabalus." According to the "Augustan History":

"In a banqueting-room with a reversible ceiling [Heliogabalus] once overwhelmed his [underlings] with violets and other flowers, so that some were actually smothered to death, being unable to crawl out to the top."

Alma-Tadema attempted to recapture Heliogabalus's cruelty. Heliogabalus can be seen reclining on his stomach in the upper center of the composition, watching the event with calm satisfaction. His guests sit to the right of him, while a woman dressed as a Dionysian Maenad plays music to the upper left. A statue of Dionysus, Olympic god of wine and ecstasy, can be seen in the distance.

In the lower half of the composition, hundreds, if not thousands, of roses are seen falling from the reversible ceiling. The ceiling is not shown in the painting, but it seems that it would've been composed of doors that opened on Heliogabalus's command.

Alma-Tadema had these roses shipped from France and painted them individually. These roses fall on the figures strewn throughout the lower half of the composition. None of the figures seem startled or concerned. It's as if the roses fell immediately and the figures below didn't have enough time to react and save themselves.

Layers of Beauty

"The Roses of Heliogabalus" is a stunningly beautiful scene. Years ago, when I first saw it, I thought it was a painting of wind blowing flowers through a gathering of friends. It was pleasant and relaxing. It wasn't until I read the name of the painting and did some research that I became aware of the story behind it.

We are often taken in by the immediate beauty of something. Time can stop when a person with otherworldly beauty crosses our path; beautiful items like clothing, jewelry, or cars can stimulate in us a possessive desire; even utopian ideologies, beautiful on the surface, can inspire in us a drive to accomplish what is seemingly impossible, irrespective of how we might affect others in the process.

"The Roses of Heliogabalus," however, brings to my attention that beauty is layered. The pleasure provided by the immediacy of outer beauty does not get to the core of beauty's nature. This does not mean that we should ignore or condemn outer beauty, however. Outer beauty has the ability to pull us in and stimulate our curiosity.

If we are not careful, however, aligning ourselves with people, things, and even ideologies that seem beautiful on the surface but turn out to be deeply ugly on the inside may result in our being overwhelmed, imprisoned, and suffocated by what we perceive to be beautiful.

Everything has consequences, even the seemingly beautiful. This is why outer beauty must be considered in relation to inner beauty; sensuous perception must be balanced with rational thought and a kind heart. Outer beauty is given to us by our senses, but inner beauty unfolds by way of reflective questions to which there might not be answers.

In a changing epoch, what questions will we have the courage to ask about our relationship to outer beauty, and how might this affect the development of our own beauty within?

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).

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

A Painting to Uplift Us

LORRAINE FERRIER

As a new dawn breaks in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, we walk, almost enveloped in darkness, down to the New River's edge to take in the

fresh morning air. Fresh mist moves across the dark water, dancing alongside the reflections made by the magical golden light of an awakening sun. The silence of these early hours is shattered as our presence



"Daybreak at Rivers Edge," 2019, by Jason Drake. Oil on linen; 27 inches by 48 inches. Recipient of the Animal Award (second place) at the "14th International ARC Salon (2019-2020)."

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION: FILMS THAT UPLIFT THE SOUL

Lighthearted 1949 Film Endorses Higher Education

TIFFANY BRANNAN

During trying times, escaping into films of the less-troubled past can be a relief—especially if the movies are lighthearted, and even more so if the Old Hollywood films are in color. However, in the 1930s through the '50s, expensive Technicolor was usually reserved for musicals, costume pieces, or dramas, so very few nonmusical romantic comedies were made in color. A rare exception is "Mother Is a Freshman" from 1949, starring Loretta Young, Van Johnson, and Rudy Vallee.

Widow Abigail Abbott (Young) learns that she doesn't have enough money to send her daughter, Susan (Betty Lynn), to her second year at Pointer College. Her lawyer, John Heaslip (Vallee), suggests marrying him to solve her financial problems, but Abigail has another plan. Her grandmother created a scholarship at Pointer that can only be used by her descendants named Abigail Fortitude. Since Fortitude is Abby's maiden name, she enrolls at Pointer as a freshman to collect the \$3,000 scholarship, which will sustain her and Susan until funds are available in February.

Abby adapts to college life while studying, wearing youthful clothing and treating fellow students like peers instead of children. With her motherhood secret, the beautiful 35-year-old is popular at Pointer. She decides to major in English literature because Susan claims to love Professor Richard Michaels (Johnson). She quickly realizes that her daughter's romantic feelings are unrequited by the handsome 35-year-old professor, whom every female student idolizes.

Complications ensue when Professor Michaels falls for the mature freshman and she for him. While Abby worries about breaking Susan's heart, she grows to appreciate education.

Peace and Decency

Although considered a simpler time, Hollywood's Golden Era (1930s–50s) contained many turbulent events for America, including the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl

in the 1930s, World War II (1941–45), and the Korean War (1950–1953). Despite these trials, this era was a golden age because of America's morality and decency.

After World War II, the United States enjoyed a peaceful period during the late 1940s, which produced many lighthearted romantic comedies, including "Mother Is a Freshman." It depicts a very wholesome college campus. There are normal conflicts, such as love triangles and students' infatuations with a professor, but all the main characters behave decently.

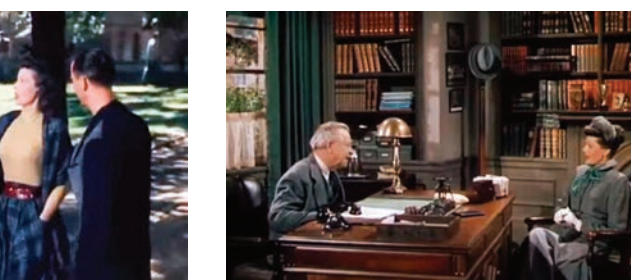
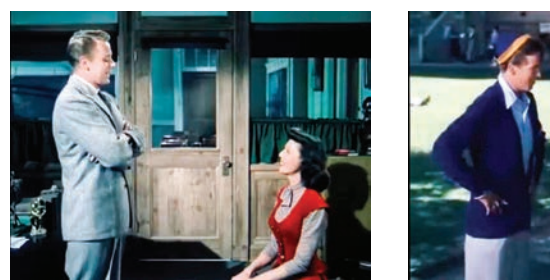
The wholesomeness of this and other classic movies was not accidental but the result of careful self-regulation, which American films received from the Production Code Administration (PCA) from 1934 to 1954 under Joseph I. Breen's leadership. The PCA reviewed films throughout production to ensure their compliance with the Motion Picture Production Code, Hollywood's moral guidelines. Since films were made decently in the first place, post-production censorship was unnecessary. By 1949, wholesome content was ingrained in Hollywood.

Some refer to Code films' depiction of society as romanticized. Instead, I consider their depiction an ideal we should aspire to. Especially now, it is so uplifting to see a world full of decent, polite, and fashionable people. Although I'm sure the 1940s were not quite as glamorous and glorious as classic movies suggest, films of the time were meant to be escapes into a better world. Instead of depicting humanity's worst, Code films often depicted the best, inspiring people to attain this standard themselves.

Education at Any Age

One would imagine that in 1949, most college students were 18 to 22. However, many students in this film are different ages. Numerous older-looking male students are more than a Hollywood oversight. They are supposed to represent former GIs getting college degrees after serving in World War II. The dialogue mentions GI education.

When Abby first enrolls, she tells Dean Gillingham (Griff Barnett) that her moth-



Loretta Young and Van Johnson star in this light comedy.

'Mother Is a Freshman'

Director

Lloyd Bacon

Starring

Loretta Young, Van Johnson, Rudy Vallee, Betty Lynn, Robert Arthur

Rated

Not Rated

Running Time

1 hour, 21 minutes

Release Date

March 12, 1949 (USA)

★★★★★

(Top left) Van Johnson with a bust of himself in 1946.

(Top right) A 1940s publicity portrait of actress Loretta Young.

(Bottom left) Van Johnson plays a professor and Loretta Young a student on scholarship.

(Bottom middle) The widow Abigail Fortitude Abbott (Loretta Young) finds herself the center of attention by John Heaslip (Rudy Vallee) and Professor Richard Michaels (Van Johnson), in "Mother Is a Freshman."

(Bottom right) Dean Gillingham (Griff Barnett) talks to a prospective college freshman (Loretta Young), in "Mother Is a Freshman."

er, who was also named Abigail Fortitude, didn't use the family scholarship because she married at 17 and soon had her daughter instead of going to college. The dean replies, "Having a baby would scarcely have kept her from matriculating today ... With all our GI families, we all but have a maternity ward in the students' hospital and a nursery in the gym." Add Abby, a freshman at 35, and Susan, a sophomore at 17, and you really have a diverse age group.

Although this film's heroine doesn't go to college for an education, it shows the importance of learning. Dean Gillingham tells Abby that the focus of college has shifted away from sports:

"College has changed much since my days as a student, and, I must say, for the better. It seems our students want an education today more than a good football team. And that is the primary purpose of any school."

Having guessed her secret of being Susan's mother, he adds that he is thus glad to see a parent like Mrs. Abbott at Pointer. "What's the good of educating the children, I've always said, if we don't educate the parents, too?" This presents the wise idea that education should not be limited by age and school years. Learning should continue throughout one's life.

A Glimpse of the Past

If you are a romantic comedy fan who wants to explore Hollywood's Golden Era, I suggest "Mother Is a Freshman." Although some films are recommendable as introductory old movies to watch because they don't seem too "vintage," I recommend this film precisely because it is so old-fashioned. It is a filmographic tour of 1949. The clothing is so classic, flattering, and fashionable that Kay Nelson's designs were nominated for Best Color Costume Design at the Academy Awards. The students use charming 1940s slang, which you will learn to understand throughout the film just as Abby does. The swing background music will delight any big band fan.

In our era of mostly R-rated entertainment, rejuvenate yourself by escaping to the Code years, when every Hollywood movie was more wholesome than modern G-rated films. Rather than catering to children, Code movies were appropriate for all ages yet serious and mature. Enjoy this Code film and thousands of others as wonderful entertainment for the present and, perhaps, an example of the hope for Hollywood's future.

Tiffany Brannan is an 18-year-old opera singer, Hollywood historian, travel writer, film blogger, vintage fashion expert, and ballet writer. In 2016, she and her sister founded the Pure Entertainment Preservation Society, an organization dedicated to reforming the arts by reinstating the Motion Picture Production Code.

The painting won second place Animal Award at the Art Renewal Center's 14th international salon exhibition, 2019-2020.

startles an egret-like bird; the sound of its wings beating for takeoff disturbs our peace for just a moment as our attention goes skyward to watch the grace that comes with flight.

This is the moment captured in "Daybreak at River's Edge," by American realist painter Jason Drake. The painting won him the second-place Animal Award at the Art Renewal Center's 14th international salon exhibition, 2019–2020. In the virtual salon exhibi-

tion catalog, Drake takes us right down to the New River's edge in his artist's video statement, as he recounts how that river inspired him. He painted the piece to bring attention not just to that moment, but also to the importance of preserving the natural habitat of the birds "not only for our future, but for theirs."

According to his website, Drake aims to "reflect the glory of God and the dignity of Man" in his paintings. Through his art, Drake hopes to encourage us to be uplifted, hold a higher viewpoint, and "hold onto things that have meaning."

To see Jason Drake's award-winning painting alongside the work of 98 other international realist artists, visit the "14th International Virtual ARC Salon Exhibition" on the ARC website through July 31, and click on the exhibition banner at ArtRenewal.org



'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre'

Director
John Huston
Starring
Humphrey Bogart,
Walter Huston, Tim Holt
Running Time
2 hours, 6 minutes
Not Rated
Release Date
Jan. 24, 1948 (USA)
★★★★☆

A poster for the Warner Bros. film.

Bob Curtin (Tim Holt), and the two men manage to score a construction job. Upon completion of backbreaking labor, the sleazy contractor who hired them, Pat McCormick (Barton MacLane) disappears, leaving the two men with nothing but the lint in their pockets, once again.

When they catch up with McCormick in a bar, a slugfest ensues. Although McCormick is the better pugilist, the grimy duo manages, barely, to prevail through sheer grit and desperation. They take their hard-earned cash from the wallet of the prone, bloodied swindler and depart.

The Lure of Gold

These dire straits set the stage for director John Huston's 1948 adventure "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," which was set in the 1920s. It was based on a 1927 novel of the same name by B. Traven.

While languishing in a grubby flophouse, Dobbs and Curtin bump into old-time gold prospector Howard (Walter Huston, the father of the director), a good-natured motormouth with banter aplenty. Dobbs cleverly dissects Howard's ramblings about gold prospecting and comes up with a plan to seek gold in the Mexican high country.

Dobbs convinces both Curtin and Howard to partner up with him, and they pool their meager funds to purchase supplies, which include tools and a small pack of mangy burros. Howard thinks that their best chance of finding gold lies far off, in a mountain range called the Sierra Madre—an area plagued by all kinds of dangers, including hostile wildlife, crooked Federales, and bushwhacking bandits. It is at this point that we first get an inkling as to Dobbs's avarice—his beady eyes suddenly light up and his face twists at the mention of striking it rich.

The traveling trio begins their voyage by train, which gets ambushed by an especially persistent gang of bandits led by the paunchy Gold Hat (Alfonso Bedoya). After driving off the bandits, the men traverse through swampy jungles and desiccated landscapes alike, until they finally reach the Sierra Madre mountains.

The men scour the foothills of the mountains, but the only thing that they come across is fool's gold. As a result, the two tenderfoots consider giving up their fortune-hunting trip. In a tense scene, Howard mocks them, laughing loudly. Dobbs, exhausted and spiteful, threatens to kill the old-timer. But a sudden sighting of real

gold interrupts the potential outbreak of violence. The men promptly set up a clandestine campsite near several gold veins.

One night, while gathered around a campfire, the men reveal what they'll do with all of their cashed-in gold. Howard doesn't want much: He just wants to live out his final days enjoying life's simple pleasures. Curtin, likewise, has the modest aspirations of owning a ranch surrounded by peach orchards, since that reminds him of his childhood. But Dobbs seeks immediate gratifications, such as ordering extravagant meals and wearing only the finest of suits; there's no long-range plan in sight for him.

The prospectors try to keep their illegal mining operation (since they have no rights to the land) hidden from bandits, Federales, and even a fellow prospector who seems to know a little more than he lets on.

As time goes on, Dobbs begins to unravel—a bad case of gold fever. As Dobbs's mental condition deteriorates, the other two men wonder what they should do about their burgeoning problem. Will Howard and Curtin part ways with their troubled partner, or will Dobbs become so deranged that he actualizes his increasingly sadistic thoughts?

In the End

The film's runtime is jam-packed with stories; it could have easily been a three-hour epic or a TV miniseries. There are also a few unexpected yet believable plot twists, especially in the capable hands of director John Huston, and of course the incredible acting abilities of Bogie (who is cast against type as an antagonist), as well as commendable displays of acting prowess by both Walter Huston and Tim Holt.

In the end, this film shows us that the biggest enemy that the men face is themselves. Greed, lust, envy, and paranoia are increasingly brought to the fore, but the film does an excellent job of gradually revealing them with subtlety. It's a film that shows us what even the most well-meaning people will do under stressful conditions.

"The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" is an adventure film that doubles as a character study—an incisive exploration of the human condition.

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

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

The Consequences of Unchecked Greed

IAN KANE

Fred C. Dobbs has a lot on his mind, but not much to do. Dobbs has landed in the bawdy, bustling port town of Tampico, in northeastern Mexico. He spends his days either begging for handouts or working odd jobs that earn him enough pesos to support his lifestyle, which consists of drifting aimlessly like an unmoored dinghy.

One day, Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart) meets up with a younger drifter named

This film shows us that the biggest enemy that the men face is themselves.

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