

WEEK 36, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES
**ARTS &
CULTURE**

THE FREER GALLERY OF ART AND THE ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY



"Breaking Waves," 1847, by Katsushika Hokusai. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art.

More Than a Wave
Katsushika Hokusai's Tsunami of Paintings...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

HISTORY

LOVE IS THE ANSWER MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

JEFF MINICK

For many years, history as taught in our public schools has served as a political and ideological punching bag, with most of the pugilists coming from the left side of the ring. Several years ago, for example, the Advanced Placement Test for U.S. History came under fire from some teachers and parents because it turned its focus away from politics and the men and women whose deeds and words made our country great, and instead delivered much more social history, focusing in particular on minorities, women’s rights, and the mistakes and wrongs committed in the course of our history.

Recently, Illinois state Rep. LaShawn K. Ford proposed that public schools lock away their history books permanently or at least until they can be replaced with those focusing more on minorities, women, the LGBT crew, and other groups. Ford contends that the current textbooks teach racism and white privilege, which is somewhat hard to imagine given the changes in publishing companies in the last 40 years.

Many schools, for instance, already serve up as a part of their curriculum Howard Zinn’s “A People’s History of the United States,” a text assailed for both its radical politics and its misinformation. The New York Times “1619 Project,” which claims that our Founding Fathers broke from Britain because Americans wished to keep their slaves, has also entered thousands of classrooms. Is it possible that Rep. Ford wants to veer off even deeper into left field?

A Brief History of History
The ancients gave us the standards we employ in writing history today: the importance of recording past events, objectivity, and the value of using historical figures as role models.

Herodotus, the “Father of History,” not only wrote of the war between the Greeks and Persians but also recorded many stories told to him by others. Frequently accused by other ancient historians of making up some of these tales for the entertainment of his readers, Herodotus was labeled by some as the “Father of Lies.” Modern investigation has revealed the reality behind many of this early historian’s reports.

Thucydides was one of these critics of Herodotus. To his own history of the war between Sparta and Athens, Thucydides applied a much more stringent method of research, crosschecking sources when he could and writing in a more removed and formal style. His

lofty standards remain in place today.

Other historians wished to use their subjects as figures worthy of emulation or as villains whose character flaws should be shunned. Plutarch is the most famous of these biographers, and in his “Lives” he compares and contrasts 48 famous Greeks and Romans, such as Alexander the Great with Julius Caesar.

Until the 20th century, most of our American histories focused on politics and on individuals, mostly male, mostly white. Since then, historians have broadened the scope of history, with some of them becoming famous in the bargain for their views.



Will and Ariel Durant in the 1950s. Will Durant Foundation.

Frederick Jackson Turner, for example, became known for his “Frontier thesis,” which proclaimed an end to the Westward movement and the idea of an American frontier. Will Durant, joined later in his research by his wife, Ariel, produced “The Story of Civilization,” an 11-volume history of the world for which they received a Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The last 80 years has, in turn, brought us excellent histories of slavery, the Civil Rights movement, and the accomplishments of African Americans. Biographers have dug deep into the lives of American luminaries like Thomas Jefferson, Lyndon Johnson, Abigail Adams, and Booker T. Washington, shining light on their virtues and their flaws.

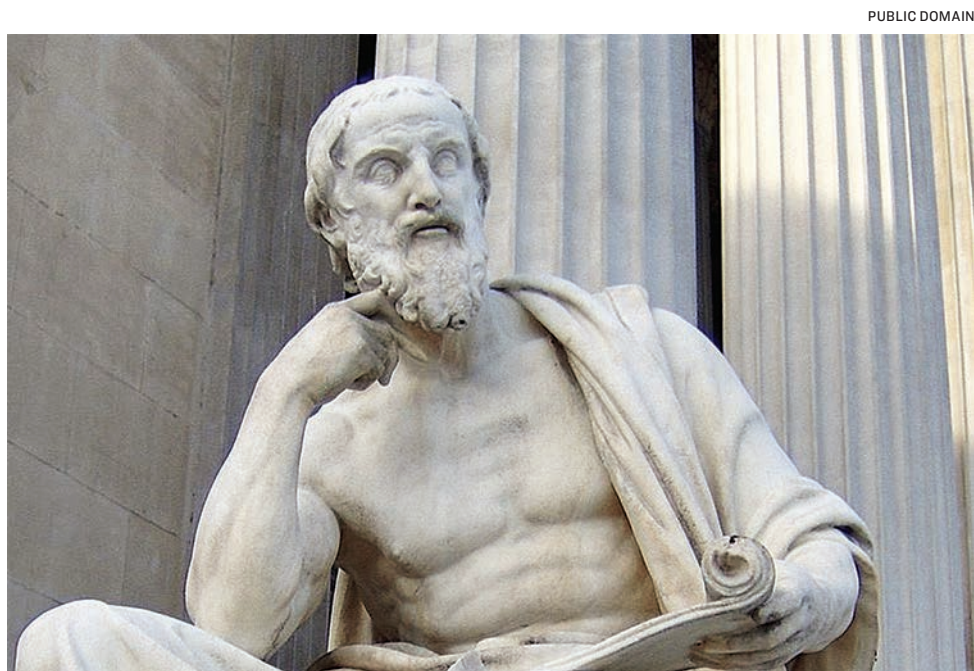
The Dangers of Propaganda

These investigations have, of course, trickled down into our textbooks. The U.S. history book I studied in the 11th grade in 1968 focused, I am sure, much more on politics and wars than on minorities and social movements. Since then, our textbooks offer a much larger stage to those figures of our past—black, white, and brown, men and women—social change, and even conflicting interpretations of past events. We should celebrate many of these changes.

“Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.”

G.K. Chesterton, writer

But the danger comes when history becomes propaganda, when we ignore some past heroes because of their sex or their skin color, when we interpret events in the worst possible light, when we forget



The title “Father of History” usually goes to the Greek writer Herodotus.



JUAN CUI/SHUTTERSTOCK

A history text that offers a nuanced examination of America’s past.



Learning history is more important today than ever.

to consider the actions and ideas of our ancestors by the standards of their time and judge them instead by our modern values of morality and behavior.

Adding to this danger of deceptive history is the abysmal ignorance of young Americans about the past. In her online article “Abolishing History From the Classroom Is What Got Us Into This Mess,” Annie Holmquist asks of young people: “If they don’t know what came before their lifetimes, or the consequences resulting from these previous historical events, then how can we expect them to do anything but run with the crowd toward a multitude of evils? And if their minds cannot understand these things, then how can we expect them to elect or lead a government that is anything but degenerate?”

History matters. An understanding and appreciation of the past is vital to the health of our country and our views of reality and current events. Without that understanding and appreciation, we become, as we are today, a nation adrift on the stormy seas of radicalism and anti-American schemes.

So what can we do? How can we impart to our young people a balanced history of our past?

Land of Hope

A year ago, I reviewed Wilfred McClay’s “Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story” for The Epoch Times. In my evaluation of this excellent history, I wrote:

“Because of this even-handed approach, ‘bad guys’ and ‘good guys’ are a rarity in ‘Land of Hope.’ McClay brings to his analysis of historical figures not only his craft and knowledge of his subject, but also the realization that the people of the past were not stick figures but living, breathing human beings, people of their time who had no crystal ball for seeing into the future, whose motives, like ours, were a mixed bag of the personal and the visionary.”

I also offered readers this quotation from McClay:

“One of the worst sins of the present—not just ours but any present—is its tendency

to condescend toward the past, which is much easier to do when one doesn’t trouble to know the full context of that past or try to grasp the nature of its challenges.”

“Land of Hope,” I firmly believe, should find a place in every classroom and every home in our land.

And now a second treasure from Wilfred McClay has appeared. Written in partnership with master teacher John McBride, “A Teacher’s Guide to Land of Hope” recently arrived in the mail and now sits at my elbow as I write these words. Here is one of the finest teacher guides I’ve ever seen, with its inclusion of hundreds of speeches, songs, comments, summations, questions to ask students, and suggested writing activities. Coupled with McClay’s textbook, “A Teacher’s Guide to Land of Hope” offers high school students and the rest of us a wonderfully nuanced means for exploring the past.

Remembering Who We Were and Are

In the “Epilogue” of this guide, the authors explain that Americans have always engaged in an ongoing conver-

sation about their history. “That conversation, to be a real and honest one, must include the good, the bad, and the ugly, the ways we have failed and fallen short, not merely what is pleasing to our national self-esteem. But by the same token, the great story, the thread that we share, should not be lost in a blizzard of details or a hailstorm of rebukes. American is, and remains, a land of hope, a land to which much of the rest of the world longs to come.”

Included in the Questions and Answers part of the “Epilogue” is this quote from G.K. Chesterton: “Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.”

If we remove love of our country from our history books, our culture, and our conversation, we leave our young people bitter and in despair. If we fail to teach them their history—the bad, the ugly, and the good—we will eventually find ourselves with a degenerate government and culture.

Whatever its faults and failings, America is still the country of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” It’s past time, long past time, to instill the full meaning of those words in our children.

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.

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

Returning to Tradition

Advertise in the Arts & Culture Section

call 212-292-8359 or email advertise@epochtimes.ny

ALL PHOTOS BY THE FREER GALLERY OF ART AND THE ARTHUR M. SACKLER GALLERY



Detail of "Suikoden," circa 1829, by Katsushika Hokusai. Handscroll; ink, color, and gold on silk. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art.

FINE ARTS

More Than a Wave

Katsushika Hokusai's Tsunami of Paintings

LORRAINE FERRIER

Many know Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai from his famous "Great Wave off Kanagawa" print. Yet Hokusai was "a man mad about painting," as he proclaimed in one of his signatures, the Japan Foundation assistant curator of Japanese art, Frank Feltens, said in a phone interview.

Hokusai was very compulsive in his urge to paint, Feltens explained. Hokusai's paintings over six decades are one part of the year-long exhibition Feltens curated: "Hokusai: Mad About Painting" at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art (the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery). The exhibition shows Hokusai's immense love for painting.

The exhibition opened in November 2019, commemorating the centenary of the Freer Gallery's founder Charles Lang Freer's death. And it will be one of the first shows that visitors will be able to see when the museum reopens, the date of which is yet to be announced.

The exhibition focuses on 120 of Hokusai's works from the Freer collection, the world's largest collection of Hokusai's sketches, paintings, and drawings. Freer stipulated in his will that his collection should never leave the gallery.

Hokusai (1760-1849) lived in Japan's Edo period (1603-1867), when the country was largely closed to the outside world and Japanese traditional culture flourished.

Feltens shares information about traditional Japanese art and how Hokusai became a painter. He also gives a few examples of Hokusai's remarkably varied and delightful paintings.

“

There is a lot of overlap in Renaissance and Japanese works without them being directly influenced by each other.

Frank Feltens, curator

THE EPOCH TIMES: Hokusai was such a prolific artist right up until he died. Please tell us how Hokusai became an artist.

FRANK FELTENS: Hokusai was born in Edo, today's Tokyo. As a young boy, he apprenticed in the workshop of a printmaker. So rather than learning to be a painter, he apprenticed in how to carve the woodblock plates, how to print, and then later he eventually segued into being a print designer. In the beginning, in his teens and 20s, those illustrations were mainly for kibyoshi, which are called "yellow covers"; these are basically cheap novels.

Then he moved up the ladder, displaying extraordinary talent from the beginning, so he was in touch with making more complex prints. Eventually, in his 30s, he decided to diversify his output and also work as a painter.

In his late 60s or early 70s, Hokusai decided to become a painter exclusively, which to him was a nobler profession and a more direct manifestation of his artistic skill than the labor-intensive and somewhat commercial aspect of printmaking.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Why do you think Hokusai waited so long to become a painter when he believed it was such a noble tradition?

MR. FELTENS: Simply because of his humble upbringing. In the traditional Japanese apprentice system, the most important thing is to learn and learn to observe, rather than to produce or be creative on your own. Thirty is a relatively late start for a painter, but it's not unheard of in Japan.

Lots of painters who segued from another profession usually did so in their 30s.

Directly apprenticing as a painter from early childhood and adolescence generally happened if you were born or adopted into one of the big painting ateliers such as the Kano or the Tosa, the hereditary ateliers that operated throughout Japan. Hokusai was not part of such an atelier, but rather in the woodblock painting industry, so he first and foremost focused on that path as his training.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Please tell us about Hokusai's artistic influences. For example, was he inspired by the different cultures coming to Edo, present-day Tokyo?

MR. FELTENS: Yes he was. Japan was extensively cut off from the outside world in the Edo period. The Tokugawa shogunate, the feudal military rulers, allowed only very limited imports and had directives for strictly curated items from the outside world, but that is just in theory. The borders of the island nation of Japan were much more porous than one would think. A lot of objects from the outside world came in: for example, Western science books, Western pictures, and pictures from China and similar places.

China at the time had much more exposure to Western painting and absorbed those aspects of Western painting that were from the Renaissance, like one-point perspective, and chiaroscuro (dramatic contrasts between light and shade).

I always think of Hokusai as somebody who was one of the best of his time, if not of the entire Edo period. He unites the best of all those different worlds. And that is one of the reasons, I think, that his work is still so popular today, because it looks Japanese but it also appeals to the preconceived notions that people in the West usually have when it comes to what art is supposed to be: objects' recession in space, perspective, and then also naturalism, attention to physiognomy, attention to representation, and correct proportions. All those kinds of aspects do not play that role in traditional Japanese painting, actually, because aesthetics worked in a different way then. But Hokusai fused all of this into his artworks and created something that, for his time, was very striking and still does look incredibly striking today.

Generally speaking, the measure of excellence in traditional Japanese painting (that's written by commentators from the late 17th up until the 19th century) is always to learn from the past and channel that knowledge into something new.

THE EPOCH TIMES: One of Hokusai's striking images is "Suikoden." Please tell us about that painting.

MR. FELTENS: That's one of my favorites. "Suikoden" is essentially a moral tale in which good deeds will be rewarded. It depicts a famous Chinese tale about a band of 100 bandits. The tale is traditionally known as "The Water Margin" in China. Outlaws of course lived on the fringes of society, but eventually these bandits helped the emperor win a battle, so he pardoned them and welcomed them back into proper society.

It's a rather complex Chinese story, very popular in Japanese theater, especially Kabuki theater, and so there are multiple plays that focus on the tale. Hokusai created several works in print using "Suikoden" as a subject. Clearly, he did not read the actual tale but watched the theater instead, which was a common way of consuming literature in certain times.

The painting is an unfinished work; we don't know if it was intentionally unfinished or if Hokusai didn't get around to finishing it. If it was purposely left unfinished, it could have been a guide for students on how to paint. For example, in traditional Japanese painting, this kind of polychromatic work required quite a bit of labor, so usually they were not painted by a single artist but by a master and his pupils, so very much in the spirit of the Renaissance workshop. There is a lot of overlap in Renaissance and Japanese works, without them being directly influenced by each other.

In traditional Japanese painting, the master painter would paint the outline,

create the compositions, and everything that you see here that is black-and-white. Then the pupils would be asked to fill in the clothing and the patterns on the garments, all the accoutrements that these figures have. The master painter would then return to paint the figures' faces at the very last.

But Hokusai kind of reversed that process here, because you can see that some of the unfinished figures' faces are already painted, and so Hokusai moved away from the traditional process. And to me, this shows Hokusai in a nutshell, because he pays such incredible attention to the physiognomy and the character of things, the individuality of his subject—and that's not just human beings but also divine figures, or even just waves of the sea.

If you think of "The Great Wave," he's looking at the essence of what the wave is. And so Hokusai's "Suikoden" is a manifesto to me, an unintentional manifesto, telling the viewers that Hokusai put the character (the essence of something) first and foremost and then moved to its physical characteristics.

Just a word of clarification about those black bars that you see here. Those are cartouches that would carry a gold inscription of each bandit's name. If the painting had been finished, it would've been an incredibly lavish handscroll.

A lavish painting such as this, painted in sumptuous colors on silk, would've been quite pricey at the time, and so this would've been a commission by somebody with quite a bit of means. When he made the handscroll, and pretty much throughout his career as a painter, he was an incredibly sought-after artist, one of the most sought-after painters of his time.

THE EPOCH TIMES: Please tell us about the pair of hanging scrolls of the woodcutter and the fisherman.

MR. FELTENS: Those were produced in the last six months of his life. If you look closely at the paintings, and if you have a chance you can do so on our website, you will notice that the lines in the signature and the outlines in the painting, in particular, are not the steady lines that you would find in Hokusai's earlier paintings, even those made just a year or two prior. You can see the trembling hand of an ailing, elderly man not entirely in command of his physical capabilities anymore.

The fisherman and the woodcutter are subjects that carry a lot of cultural meaning in Japan. They are subjects in the Noh theater, which is the medieval form of Japanese theater that still continues to be practiced. But they are also embodiments of Hokusai in later life. Both characters' faces are satisfied, and they have their bounty at their feet. The woodcutter and the fisherman are shown at the end of a day of hard labor, and they are displaying the fruits of that labor. And in a way, it's a little bit of a metaphor for Hokusai's own life coming to a close.

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

To find out more about the "Hokusai: Mad about Painting" exhibition at the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, in Washington, including the reopening date, visit Asia.si.edu



"Woodcutter," 1849, by Katsushika Hokusai. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art.



JOSEPH COSCIA



JOSEPH COSCIA

(Left) The ornate Cassiobury staircase is part of the new permanent collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Above) The Metropolitan Museum of Art collection of British teapots.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Britain's Entrepreneurial Spirit and Taste for Beauty

The Met showcases 400 years of exquisite British artisanship

J.H. WHITE

The pine and elm staircase winds upward as solid and grand as it is ornate. Under the handrail, carved acanthus leaves and seedpods swirl together. Double-headed birds peek from the foliage, looking at you from either side of the rail. Oak motifs honor the tree where Charles II hid from enemies during the English Civil War in the mid-17th century.

But the staircase is just a prelude to the artisanship and beauty to be seen in the other rooms. In the dining room, for example, statues of mythical Greek and Roman figures stand in alcoves. For centuries, these paragons of classical culture have kept watch over discourse from the likes of poet Thomas Moore and novelist Charles Dickens.

This feast of artisanship, classical values, and culture isn't part of an estate home or castle, however. This staircase from Cassiobury Park and dining room from the Lansdowne House are among the 700 objects in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's newly renovated British Galleries.

The galleries showcase British decorative arts, design, and sculpture crafted between 1500 and 1900. They include a wide array of furniture, ceramics, silver, tapestries, and other textiles from the Tudor, Stuart, Georgian, and Victorian eras, ranging in styles from

Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo to neoclassical and neo-Gothic. "The reimagined suite of ten galleries provides a fresh perspective on the period, focusing on its bold, entrepreneurial spirit and complex history," the material online reads.

As we exit quarantine and look to jump-start our economy, this exhibition can inspire us to pioneer new business opportunities and be patrons of beauty and traditional artisanship again.

A Tapestry of Opportunity

Tapestry weaving was the pinnacle of luxury and craftsmanship during the late Middle Ages in the 16th century, according to the online audio guide. Since Flemish weavers monopolized the craft, the kings of both France and England wanted their own in-house productions. At the beginning of the 17th century, the kings founded the Royal Gobelins Manufactory in Paris and the Mortlake Tapestry Manufactory outside London.

Artisans from Brussels then immigrated to these ateliers, either to weave or to train British craftsmen. But England offered something unique that even some of the French desired: religious freedom. Protestants persecuted by the Catholic Church in Brussels and France fled to Britain.

London also lured Flemish tapestry weavers, as well as German and Italian artists, with economic opportunity and other forms



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

"The Destruction of the Children of Niobe" from a set of tapestries called "The Horses," circa 1650-70, designed by Frans Cleyn. The tapestry was probably made at Mortlake Tapestry Manufactory. Gift of Christian A. Zabriskie, 1936.

of freedom.

"London was a great international hub. ... It was a rich city [with] many rich patrons," the lead curator of the British Galleries, Wolf Burchard, told me in a phone interview. He's also an associate curator in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. "It was the largest city in Europe, but it was also an immensely liberal city. It is there that the freedom of the press really originated."

With London's cornucopia of golden opportunities, the Mortlake Tapestry Manufactory attracted world-class talent. Charles I also understood the symbolic power of these luxurious works of art and bankrolled projects, sparing

nothing. The exhibition showcases one such work, "The Destruction of the Children of Niobe" from a set of tapestries called "The Horses."

The tapestry depicts the gods Apollo and Diana shooting arrows from the clouds, slaying the children of Niobe. Niobe, in her pride, had insulted Latona, Apollo and Diana's mother. In fear for their lives, two of Niobe's children on horseback appear to almost jump out of the tapestry, trying to escape their doom. The horses' dynamic three-dimensional movement, each figure's distraught facial expressions, and the slain figures in the background tell the drama so vividly that the tapestry is like an ancient form of cinema.

Tea Time

Three centuries ago, commerce and entrepreneurialism inspired a tea craze in Britain. Firstly, the East India Trade company established routes to import tea leaves from Japan and China. Secondly, when tea duties fell from 119 percent to 12.5 percent, the new obsession became affordable for everyone to enjoy.

Consequently, people from all levels of society wanted teapots to show their enjoyment of this sophisticated ritual. Manufactories popped up across Britain, crafting teapots of different styles, such as chinoiserie (Chinese imitation).

The new galleries showcase hundreds of these charming objects. "Dainty, funny, silly, coarse, [there's] something for everyone. Fancy a humorous design of monkeys and corn... or something more sophisticated, perhaps a luxurious silver vessel or complex agate-wear set?" inquires the galleries' audio guide.

The teapots on display also once provided relevant social commentary. The Stamp Act, for example, was the first direct tax on the American colonies and provoked a violent response from them. When Britain repealed it in 1766, ateliers began crafting teapots for the American market, inscribed with "No Stamp Act" on one side and "America, Liberty Restored" on the other. In this case, it seemed that Britain's entrepreneurial hunger overshadowed even its own nationalism.

As teapots spread across the British Empire, they also took on the meaning that if you partook in the ritual of teatime, you were no longer a savage, but a sophisticated member of society. "There's so much emotion and history connected to these objects that they take on a life of their own," says contemporary mixed media artist and ceramicist Mirel Doucet in the audio guide.

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

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY

A Daughter's Love and the Jolly Bluebird

REBECCA KORTH



"Bluebird, Barletts & Cara Caras," 2019, by Rebecca Korth. Oil on panel; 30 inches by 24 inches. Finalist in the "14th International ARC Salon (2019-2020)" and an honorable mention in the "Southwest Art Artistic Excellence Competition (2019)."

Artist Rebecca Korth's painting 'Bluebird, Barletts & Cara Caras'

LORRAINE FERRIER

Wisconsin artist Rebecca Korth hopes to bring "levity and happiness into people's lives" through her brightly colored paintings, she wrote in an email.

In her still-life painting "Bluebird, Barletts & Cara Caras," Korth features the quintessential harbinger of happiness, an Eastern bluebird. The picture is full of uplifting color: vibrant oranges and blues that seem to sing together with the chartreuse of the pears. Korth's bluebird perches tentatively on a pile of Cara Cara navel oranges along with a Bartlett pear in her mother's crystal cut-glass bowl.

Not only does the bluebird's presence bring happiness to the picture but its colors harmonize the whole painting. Korth chose the bluebird because its orange chest feathers reflect the Cara Cara fruit's skin.

The bird's striking blue feathers make the blue pattern of the Chinese vase pop. Additionally, the bird's touch of white feathers highlights the lightness of the whole painting, as light dances and reflects throughout the scene set out on Korth's quartz kitchen bench.

Korth was inspired to recreate the scene in her newly remodeled kitchen after she saw the way sunlight illuminated her mother's

crystal cut-glass bowl that was full of fruit.

Each painting Korth creates with a bird evokes a memory of her mother. The birds, she explains, "consistently started fluttering into my still-life paintings after my mother passed away. Many of my final memories with her involved watching the birds outside her bedroom window. The addition of the birds started as a way to cope with the loss of my mother and has now become a way for me to honor and keep her memory alive."

Korth's sincere wish is that her art evokes a smile or a positive memory for anyone touched by it. After all, she says, "There's enough sadness in this world."

To find out more about Rebecca Korth's paintings, visit RebeccaKorth.com.



REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Rural-American Harlequin Romance

MARK JACKSON

The Romance Writers of America say the main plot of a romance novel must revolve around two people as they develop love for each other and work to build a relationship. Sounds incredibly simplistic, right? But you know what? If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Romance novels generate yearly sales of over a billion dollars!

I'll now rewind, review, and re-rate 2014's "Labor Day" (in case you were looking for a movie to watch on Labor Day)—a movie that's about as romance novel-y as you can get.

Picture, If You Will ...

A handsome devil. Dangerous. He's runnin' from the law. Picture also, if you will, a lovelorn, lonely lady. A single mom, she is.

This man! Do you know what this man can do? Well, he can change a tire. He can clean gutters. He can teach her nonathletic early-teen son to throw a baseball.

He's got a manly demeanor, yeoman limbs, a full head of sleek hair, and a dashing 'stache (well, prison-inmate goatee, but, really, why split [facial] hairs?).

What else? He fixes her squeaky floorboard and oils her door. And makes tasty, tasty chili. He can be taught to cha-cha in the living room and tango in the kitchen. He moves well.

He can also stand behind the woman like Patrick Swayze behind Demi Moore in "Ghost," with his manly lantern jaw on her shoulder, and mush her hands around in a bowl of sugary peaches, with intent (and great skill) to produce a perfect peach pie. Inhale, if you will ... the peachy aroma.

Josh Brolin is Frank, an ex-convict, and Kate Winslet is his unwitting love interest in "Labor Day," written for the screen and directed by Jason Reitman.

'Labor Day'

Director
Jason Reitman

Starring
Kate Winslet, Josh Brolin, Tobey Maquire, J.K. Simmons, James Van Der Beek, Clark Gregg, Lucas Hedges

Rated
PG-13

Running Time
1 hour, 51 minutes

Release Date
Jan. 31, 2014

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



SUZANNE HANOVER/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

All in all, to be fair, it's not a movie meant for believability.

Jennifer Lopez and Ryan Guzman in "The Boy Next Door."

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

Not to Be Confused With 'The Girl Next Door'

MARK JACKSON

There's a movie category unofficially known as "So bad it's good." "Showgirls" (1995) would be a good example of that. Such movies tend to become cult classics. "Showgirls" was an instant cult classic. The reason for that is probably because, while one of the lead actresses Cannot. Act. To. Save. Her. Life—she's in, er, very good shape.

There's also the unofficial category of "So bad it's amazing." And there's "funny-haha," and there's "funny-strange," but the complete waste of two hours that is "The Boy Next Door" would probably fall into the category of "funny-just-shoot-me-now."

The Plot!

So there's this lady, Claire (Jennifer Lopez), and she's an upscale housewife. She's got a McMansion in the San Fernando burbs, very leafy,

very cozy. And the wardrobe—very sexy. Svetle! She wears chic-studious glasses at the computer, looking like a fabulous CEO working from home, except that she's unhappy, so it's quite possible she's just shopping on eBay.

What could she be unhappy about? Her cheating husband (John Corbett)! Why would this man cheat? The fool is married to J., er, Claire-Lo. Every man (and boy) wants to be married to Claire-Lo. It's tedious to suffer this level of fool ingrate hubby, with his purple tricked-out Dodge Challenger.

One day, a nice boy named Noah (Ryan Guzman) moves next door to take care of his aging uncle. That's so nice. Noah's nice!

No he's not. We know this. We saw the trailer. That's why we rent this nonsense on Netflix—to see Noah be bad. So how bad can Noah be? There are not enough bad words in the dictionary to describe how bad

'The Boy Next Door'

Director
Rob Cohen

Starring
Jennifer Lopez, Ryan Guzman, Ian Nelson, John Corbett, Kristin Chenoweth, Lexi Atkins, Hill Harper, Jack Wallace, Adam Hicks

Rated
R

Running Time
1 hour, 31 minutes

Release Date
Jan. 23, 2015

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION AND FRANK'S PIE COMPANY LLC

Take a Wild Guess

Do you think there's a remote chance this woman will maybe fall in love with this man? Like, to the point that her hands shake constantly? What are the odds?

Do you think it matters one whit to her that he's a jail-break ex-con? An ex-con who, with sly menacing charm, coerces her and her son to take him home from the Walmart janitor closet he suddenly pops out of? Or that she's therefore harboring a fugitive?

Do you think it's interesting that the baseball cap he's wearing at Walmart is different than the one he's wearing in the car?

Close Calls

There's some business with friends stopping by, cops stopping by, and other mild nail-biters. There are flashbacks as to how this man got where he got.

How long will he stay? Will he board a train when his stitches heal (he's wounded, of course) and disappear forever?

A Romance Novel ...

And so, furthermore, according to the Romance Writers of America, a romance novel ... must have an "emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending."

Does "Labor Day" meet this requirement? Well, I can't possibly tell you that. That would be a big Labor Day spoiler of fun.

Let's just say this movie is an example of why, when the world self-destructs, all that will be left is cockroaches and romance novels. And Keith Richards. OK, never mind that last one.

Don't let the fact that "Labor Day" is a brazen cinematic-Harlequin-Romance stop you. Josh Brolin is a hunk-a-hunk-a-burnin'-love, and Kate Winslet is a sweet bird with a broken wing.

The cinematography is cozy; the shots are rural-America nostalgic. The music is sometimes slightly overbearing.

Romance has been around since the dawn of human beings. What's not to like? Go like it. Go like it on Facebook.

The cinematography is cozy; the shots are rural-America nostalgic.

But then, "like" is too weak a word when describing what this movie will do for the type of woman (and, you know, also some men) who secretly harbor a penchant for fatalistic romance. Woody Allen summed it up best in "Annie Hall": They will lurve it. They will love it. They will luff it.

And if you're not too particular about movies needing to be art and all that, and if you want to curry favor with your girlfriend—you could do worse. If you, the man, are preferring grittier fare, but she's not having it, suggest a double feature: "Labor Day" followed by "No Country for Old Men" (also starring Josh Brolin for the full yin-yang, Josh Brolin experience. Everyone wins.

this bad Noah can be.

Anyway, Claire goes around her house, doing a lot of posing. She poses on the couch, she poses with the chic-studious glasses on, and she poses in lingerie. If these were still shots, it would be a Penthouse magazine shoot. Posing is what former dancers like J.Lo will automatically do if you don't direct them properly.

So, while posing in the lingerie, she semi-hides behind a curtain and peeps across the garden fence to watch Noah next door taking off his shirt in his bedroom, flashing stud-muffin abs. Noah peeps back. What do we call this? We call this soft-core pornography.

The Plot Thickens!

But don't be mistaken! Claire-Lo's really falling for the kid's mind, don'tcha know. And we know this because he dropped by earlier in the day, quoting the "Iliad" and telling Claire's geeky son that Homer is cool.

This puts Claire over the moon. Why? Because Claire is actually a high school English teacher, who studied ... wait for it ... the classics, in college. And just like that—the mystery of why she wears glasses is revealed.

And as if that wasn't enough, Noah brings her a "first edition" of the "Iliad" as a present. Wow. Wow!! Can you blame Claire for being all hot and bothered? Can you imagine if you were an English teacher and the cute person next door bought you a first-edition book from ... 762 B.C.? Would you not treasure it? Or would you maybe sell it? Me, oh, I'd definitely sell it. But I digress.

So, as bad Noah hangs around some more, fixing things, in various manly states of sweaty, half-undress (manly looking, but he is in fact a minor), Claire peeps herself into a state of can't-take-it-anymore. And so when hubby and son (Ian Nelson) go camping one weekend—very bad things go on!

And Noah wants more bad things to go on, but—Claire's come to her senses! Whereupon Noah becomes seriously unhinged, just like we knew he would. Let the stalking begin. Also hacking. And the rapid destruction of Claire-Lo's life. And the not-so-subtle undermining of J.Lo's acting reputation.

Every sabotage-y, undermine-y, sneaky thing imaginable, the now seriously deranged Noah does. But Claire's best friends with Vicky, the school's assistant principal, played by the perennially perky Kristin Chenoweth, of Broadway and "Glee" fame. I know what you're thinking. Does she sing? She does not sing. Nor, thankfully, does J.Lo.

So when Noah feasts Claire-Lo's classroom with printouts of sneaky spy-cam footage of teacher trysts—well! Something's clearly got to be done about this psycho-brat, and principal Vicky tries to help out.

But it's not that easy! Noah's quite fiendish. He's always a step ahead! How will they thwart him?

Sigh

All in all, to be fair, it's not a movie meant for believability—it gets way too stupid way too fast, and just stays there. One could attempt to pose serious questions, like why Barbara Curry's script never addresses how Noah got so nutty. But why? "The Boy Next Door" is a hoot-fest (or a snooze-fest) for adults, and if it was still the 1970s, it'd classify as a gateway drug for teenagers to start watching hardcore. In 2020, they already do.

Instead of "The Boy Next Door," watch 2004's "The Girl Next Door," starring Elisha Cuthbert, Emile Hirsch, and Timothy Olyphant, that had some softcore too, but it was ultimately a strangely innocent, touching, haunting (and hilarious) film. Compared to "The Girl Next Door," "The Boy Next Door" was a good indicator of how far Hollywood quality slid down in 10 short years.

THE AMBASSADOR OF GOOD FICTION

The Man Behind the 'New James Bond'

Ambassador Fred Eckert interviews author Ted Bell

FRED J. ECKERT

It takes a great deal of writing and storytelling talent to author a novel that can keep the reader enthralled when the novel alternates between two very different stories. Few can pull it off well. Ted Bell is one of those very few.

In his latest release—"Dragonfire"—Bell vividly demonstrates this rare skill. You find yourself equally immersed in one tale that is occurring right now and another that happened eight decades ago. The earlier tale happens when China was an ardent U.S. ally, and the current one occurs with China an increasingly more brazen enemy of the United States.

As "Dragonfire" opens, protagonist Lord Alexander Hawke, a top British intelligence officer, is tricked into rushing into a surprise attack by Vladimir Putin's top assassin that leaves him clinging to life. While still recovering at a Bermuda hospital, he receives word that he must find ASAP and return safely home Prince Henry, the Queen of England's favorite grandchild, who has mysteriously gone missing.

The prince, who also happens to be Lord Hawke's godson, was last seen at a super-luxurious, by-invitation-only resort in the Bahamas called the Dragon Fire Club. The queen insists that the only one she trusts to head this mission is Lord Hawke, who had once saved royal family lives.

The link that connects the two alternating stories in this highly entertaining novel is that, in the days following Pearl Harbor, Alex's grandfather, Churchill's nephew, became best friends with the newly arrived Chinese ambassador to the United States, a young, exceptionally gifted scion of a centuries-old Chinese crime family. And now Alex and that Chinese ambassador's grandchildren are pitted against one another in his search to find and rescue the prince.

This two-tier, fast-paced adventure novel is a fun read that keeps you flipping pages anxious to discover what awaits next, while, along the trail, you encounter one fascinating character after another. That Bell enjoys including historic figures and giving us a good feel for them is a nice plus.

There's good reason that Ted Bell's Alex Hawke is called "the new James Bond." And plenty of reasons why Bell has had 12 consecutive mega-bestsellers. This man can really write and has a remarkable imagination.

Before retiring in 2001 to pursue writing, he was a giant in the advertising world. Beginning as a junior copywriter at Doyle Dane Bernbach, at age 25 he became its youngest-ever vice president and sold his first Hollywood screenplay. Later joining Leo Burnett Co., Inc. as a creative director, he, at age 40, was named president and chief creative officer. Next, he joined Young & Rubicam, London, where he became vice chairman and worldwide creative director. He has won every award the advertising industry offers.

I interviewed Ted Bell from his home in Greenwich, Connecticut.

AMBASSADOR ECKERT: What are some of the advertising campaigns you created or played a major role in?

TED BELL: A brief list would include McDonald's, United Airlines ("Friendly Skies"), Miller Lite, The Marlboro Man, Volkswagen, AT&T, Benson & Hedges, Sony Worldwide Entertainment, Porsche ("Nothing even comes close"), Procter & Gamble, Ford Motor Company, GM, Hallmark, Chivas Regal, Jamaica Tourist Board, Wrigley's, Kellogg's, 20th Century Fox, Levy's bread, and Australia tourism.

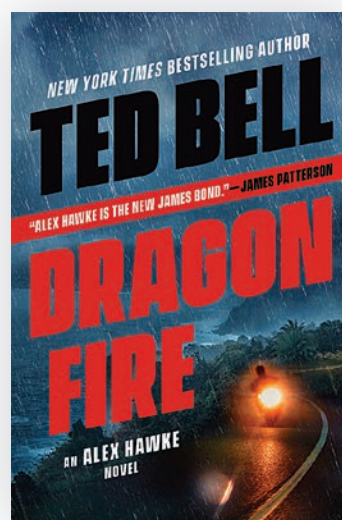
AMB. ECKERT: Did you always want to be a novelist?

MR. BELL: I started writing short stories at age 8, in the third grade, and never stopped. Wrote my first novel starting in college and spent a year in Europe completing it. Never published. Whilst living in London, I got the idea to write a 20th-century version of "Treasure Island" in terms of its scope and adventure. My first published novel was "Nick of Time," followed by "Time Pirates."

AMB. ECKERT: You're so very American: graduate of a Virginia college, selected by the Department of Defense to be a civilian member of a standing group that supports the U.S. military, adviser to the U.S. State Department, member of the advisory

Create heroes and heroines who surmount impossible odds. They engage, they grow, they never fail to entertain and inform.

Ted Bell's latest Alex Hawke novel.



'Dragonfire'

Ted Bell
Berkley Books
416 pages, hardcover

Author Ted Bell.

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.

board of George Washington's Mount Vernon. How is it that, for your protagonist Lord Alexander Hawke, you created a character who is so very British?

MR. BELL: I've always been inspired by Ian Fleming's world. I simply thought my spy character would be more romantic or charismatic as an English lord than, say, a Chevy dealer from Weehawken. That's it.

AMB. ECKERT: What do you try to accomplish in your novels, and what do you think explains why you've been so successful as a novelist?

MR. BELL: Create heroes and heroines who surmount impossible odds. They engage, they grow, they never fail to entertain and inform. My editor at Random House Penguin Berkeley told me he was signing me because he thought that I was "a natural storyteller." That's high praise, and I think a good explanation for my success as a novelist.

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

MR. BELL: F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Updike, Dickens, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, P.G. Wodehouse, Robert Louis Stevenson, John D. MacDonald, Mark Twain, Cormac McCarthy, Philip Roth, Harper Lee, J.D. Salinger, Melville, Nabokov, Edith Wharton, Graham Greene, Jack London, Norman Mailer, Elmore Leonard, Raymond Chandler, E.L. Doctorow, Robert Frost, Kipling, William Butler Yeats, Dylan Thomas, Ford Madox Ford, Wallace Stegner, William Styron, John Cheever, Ring Lardner, O. Henry, Thomas Wolfe, Hemingway (short stories), Tennessee Williams, Jane Austen, Orwell, Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro ("The Remains of the Day"), Arthur Conan Doyle, etc., etc. ...

AMB. ECKERT: So you're a zealous reader?

MR. BELL: Sure am. I'd advise anyone who aspires to be a novelist to spend every spare moment of every single day reading good works.

AMB. ECKERT: Which current writers do you enjoy reading?

MR. BELL: Currently, Ian McEwan is by far my favorite novelist. I was blown away by "Atonement." I very much admire Mark Greaney. I adore anything written by Ann Patchett. Her "Bel Canto" is one of my all-time favorite novels.

AMB. ECKERT: How did you come up with the idea for "Dragonfire"?

MR. BELL: One day my agent and I were heading to lunch; he asked what I had in mind for my next novel. Sort of automatically what popped out was the idea of a novel along the lines of "The Godfather"—but what if I used an ancient Chinese crime family (Triad) instead of an Italian mob family? He loved it.

AMB. ECKERT: Among your many diverse experiences, you served on the advisory board for George Washington's Mount Vernon. How did that come about?

MR. BELL: A friend who headed the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association mentioned they were producing to screen at the new Washington museum a film about George Washington's Christmas crossing of the Delaware in his brilliant surprise attack that defeated the Hessian mercenaries in the Battle of Trenton. They had footage but no idea how to put it together effectively and asked if I would edit it for them. They loved it.

She proposed me for the Advisory Board, and I was elected. I'm a great admirer of "The Father of Our Country."



COURTESY OF TED BELL

AMB. ECKERT: You became a visiting scholar at the UK's Cambridge University sponsored by Sir Richard Dearlove, former chief of MI6, British Intelligence. How did that come about? What was it like?

MR. BELL: Sir Richard happened to come to one of my book signings at Barnes & Noble in New York with another Cambridge professor, and they invited me to join them for dinner. Richard was fascinated with my take on Vladimir Putin and said, "Wouldn't it be fun to have someone who thinks like Ted to be at Cambridge?" So I went for a year. It was heaven. Like living in a "Harry Potter" movie surrounded by some of the smartest people in the world—and a ton of spies to boot!

AMB. ECKERT: You were also writer-in-residence at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

MR. BELL: One requirement was that I write a novel that showed the college and Cambridge University in a positive light. That's when I wrote "Warlord."

AMB. ECKERT: You also studied at Cambridge University's department of political science and international studies under the tutelage of Sir Dearlove who was master of Pembroke College. What was that like?

MR. BELL: Lots of lectures, mostly about the rise of China being the biggest problem on the horizon, trips into London for briefings from the Royal Navy.

Once, in the middle of a lecture from Sir Richard on Libya, an aide walked in with a big square box and handed it to Richard. He withdrew four of five solid gold plates which had been removed from the palace of Muammar Gaddafi and passed them around. I got a lot of ideas during my days at Cambridge, some of which are key factors in "Dragonfire."

AMB. ECKERT: It must be fun to see the protagonist you created in Lord Alex Hawke so often compared with Ian Fleming's James Bond. In "Dragonfire," Alex's grandfather and Ian Fleming team up in a great adventure deep inside Nazi Germany. What made you decide to do this?

MR. BELL: I cannot tell you what a fascinating part of my imagination that Ian Fleming has always played. I have always wanted to use him as a real character in one of my books.

AMB. ECKERT: Very few 007 fans have any idea that Ian Fleming was actually a much more impressive agent than his fictional James Bond is. Have you ever considered writing a biography of Ian Fleming?

MR. BELL: Absolutely—a book—but not a bio. I would like to write a spy novel starring Ian Fleming that could possibly be turned into a feature film or streaming TV.

AMB. ECKERT: If you had to advise someone who hasn't read any of your novels, which two or three would you recommend?

MR. BELL: I love the whole family, but I'd have to say "Warlord," "Tsar," and "Dragonfire."

AMB. ECKERT: What's coming next from Ted Bell?

MR. BELL: I'm halfway into my next Hawke book. It involves an epic sea voyage. And that's all I can say now. Someday I'd like to use Ian Fleming's life as a bio cum novel, and possibly a feature film. I now have a film production company, El Dorado Entertainment; and my partner, John Adler, and I already have a deal for the Hawke books. We're working on developing screenplays of other projects of mine for features or streaming content, including my time-travel books.



Raffaella Stroik dancing in "Giselle."

To find out more about this project, visit Stroik.com

Developing a New Ballet, Honoring a Young Talent

MICHAEL KUREK

As a composer of music for the classical concert hall, I have been surprised from time to time by a wonderful phone call about some opportunity for my work.

Some of these calls were even from famous people. "This is Marvin Hamlisch," said a voice on the line, on one occasion. It was in the spring of 2012. He wanted to program one of my compositions with five orchestras on his conducting tour that fall, but his sudden and tragic death in August that year prevented it from ever happening.

About a year ago, the phone rang, and this time the voice belonged to someone I had never heard of, but whom I later learned was far more distinguished than I imagined. It was one of America's most esteemed architects, Duncan Stroik. This call was also about my music, but as it turned out, not having to do with architecture. It also involved a personal tragedy and was deeply moving, and I believe far more important than most things I have been asked to do.

A week before Thanksgiving in 2018, Duncan and his wife, Ruth, had received the unthinkable news that the body of their beloved, 23-year-old daughter, Raffaella, had been found in a lake at Mark Twain State Park about two hours' drive to the north of St. Louis. Raffaella was not only a lovely and devout young woman, but she was also a featured professional ballerina with the St. Louis Ballet and a treasure to all who knew her.

The autopsy shed little light on the mystery of her death. She had been very happy, and there were no indications of suicide or drugs in her system. There were some minor bruises and scrapes but nothing concrete enough to rule it as foul play. The cause of death remains unknown. Duncan and Ruth had just visited her in St. Louis the weekend before to see her perform, beautifully, they said, in "Romeo and Juliet."

The day Duncan rang my phone, I sat, having not heard about the tragedy, speechless and open-mouthed, listening to him relate all of this. I could still hear the overwhelming grief in his voice, punctuated by silences, and I could palpably feel the courage it had taken for

One of Duncan Stroik's designs: Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel at Thomas Aquinas College.



STROIK.COM

him just to call and tell one more person, a stranger, the story all over again.

A New Ballet

Duncan told me that he and Ruth had determined that if Raffaella could not continue dancing herself, her dancing should live on, in a way, through a new ballet that would be created in her honor. It would have a new story that contained an allegory of events in her life. Since her passion had been dancing the great traditional ballets, they were determined to find a composer and a choreographer who could pay homage to that genre with a work that a mainstream audience could truly love.

I found out during the call that I had been recommended as a candidate to compose the music, and after they listened to a good amount of my orchestral work, I was honored to be asked to do it and accepted. I actually have had experience composing for ballet before and know what it entails, and I compose in the neo-Romantic style Raffaella would have liked to dance.

The search for a choreographer continues, with a view toward, perhaps, a 2022 premiere. Having just completed another big project, I expect soon to begin work on the large amount of orchestral music that will be needed. One ballet company has already shown an interest. Funds are still being raised, and once all the funding is in place, others should become able to consider it.

Duncan and Ruth aspire not only to honor their daughter with one production but to be the catalysts for the creation of a work of enough beauty to find, perhaps, a place in the repertoire. Their dream has easily become my dream, too, and surely will become a choreographer's dream.

Beyond all of this, though, my thoughts have naturally turned to the wondrous intersection of architecture, music, choreography, dance, and costume and set design that such a project represents. Duncan Stroik is one of the nation's

foremost advocates for the preservation of beauty and classical tradition in sacred architecture. In a sense, his buildings have already stood the test of time. His award-winning work includes Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel in California, the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Tampa, Florida, and Christ Chapel at Hillsdale College in Michigan—all massive edifices of great worth and importance that can be expected to stand for hundreds of years.

Duncan and Ruth aspire not only to honor their daughter with one production but to be the catalysts for the creation of a work of enough beauty to find, perhaps, a place in the repertoire.

Can any of the rest of us hope to create a work of art that could stand the test of time? I hope to be able to report here on our progress. We can only do our very best and see.

American composer Michael Kurek is the author of the recently released book "The Sound of Beauty: A Composer on Music in the Spiritual Life" and the composer of the recent *Billboard* No. 1 classical album "The Sea Knows." The winner of numerous composition awards, including the prestigious Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, he has served on the Nominations Committee of the Recording Academy for the classical Grammy Awards. He is a professor emeritus of composition at Vanderbilt University. For more information and music, visit MichaelKurek.com

IAN KANE

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

ONE OF HITCHCOCK'S BEST THRILLERS

Highly regarded director Alfred Hitchcock's "Rear Window" has to be one of my all-time favorite Hitchcock films (as it is for many people). What makes this film so ingenious is not only the unique cinematography employed but also how Hitchcock utilized a single set to tell nine smaller stories within one film, some in more detail than others.

The inimitable James Stewart sinks deep into his role as L.B. "Jeff" Jefferies, a well-respected photojournalist who is on the mend from a broken leg. Relegated to his cramped Greenwich Village apartment during a sweltering New York summer, Jeff has become afflicted with a bad case of boredom.

His boredom is somewhat eased by spying on the various urban denizens—their windows open because of the stifling heat—who occupy the various funky tenements across from his own, through his rear window.

One of the tenants (whom Jeff refers to as "Miss Torso") is a well-built dancer, as well as an exhibitionist, who sashays around in her underwear; Jeff watches her with fascination. Another apartment is occupied by "Miss Lonelyhearts," a single woman who sets her dining table for romantic dinners and goes through the motions as if she's entertaining a date—except for the fact that no one is there. And then there's the gifted pianist-songwriter who has a drinking problem, evidenced by his staggering into his apartment late at night, barely managing to pour himself into a cushy chair before passing out.

Each of the tenants has their own interesting idiosyncrasies, which are highlighted even further once Jeff decides to break out a pair of binoculars in order to get a closer view of these quirky folks.

Jeff's only guests are his dotting, uptown girlfriend, Lisa Carol Fremont (Grace Kelly), and his nurse,



Lisa Carol Fremont (Grace Kelly) wants to marry photojournalist "Jeff" Jefferies (James Stewart), in "Rear Window."

Stella (Thelma Ritter). Stella knows about Jeff's relationship with Lisa and routinely implores him to go ahead and marry her. But although Jeff is in love with Lisa, he considers her to be too upper-crust for his more roguish lifestyle. He routinely travels throughout the world to cover assignments in dangerous regions. He even tells Stella that he'd rather Lisa find someone else who is more accustomed to her lofty station in life.

Both Lisa and Stella consider Jeff's peeping-Tom ways an unhealthy preoccupation. So, when he points out that a particular tenant is acting strangely, they write him off as imagining things that aren't there. The tenant in question is a traveling salesman (Raymond Burr) who lives with

his bedridden wife. His wife constantly nags and belittles him, and Jeff sees the man storm off angrily on more than one occasion.

Hitchcock, of course, is at the top of his game here.

One night, Jeff watches as the salesman leaves and returns to his apartment several times, and he is always carrying his large work case that is big enough to pass for a suitcase. Later, he witnesses the man wrapping up long knives and saws, as well as

handling some frayed rope. From these ominous details, Jeff gathers that the salesman has killed, and probably disposed of in brutal fashion, his wife.

Eventually, he not only convinces both Lisa and Stella that something foul is afoot but also intrigues his good friend, Thomas J. Doyle (Wendell Corey), who happens to be a detective lieutenant with the New York Police Department.

As the investigation into this murder mystery commences, we also get to see how everyday life progresses for the characters that Jeff enjoys spying on. For instance, at a certain point, "Miss Lonelyhearts" manages to bring a man back to her apartment, and what unfolds isn't exactly what she had

planned (no spoilers here).

But there are big questions to be answered: Will Jeff and his cohorts get to the bottom of what happened to the salesman's wife? When one of the ladies is put in grave danger, will Jeff—still immobilized in his wheelchair—be able to save her life, let alone his own?

Hitchcock at His Best

Hitchcock, of course, is at the top of his game here. The film showcases some of the director's unusual shooting techniques and also delivers some extremely tense scenes, mainly toward the end of the film's one hour, fifty-two-minute runtime.

Stewart and Kelly turn in some versatile acting performances—emoting everything from high drama to witty mirth, and everything in-between.

But I'd have to say that Ritter, already a seasoned character actress, is truly magnetic. Her zany wit and charm allowed her to steal every scene she's in, and we want to see more of her hilarious character.

"Rear Window" is a fascinating look at the nature of invasive surveillance and the all-too-timely issues surrounding personal privacies—and the limits thereof. It's also packed with extremely tense scenes that will stay with you long after the film's ending credits roll.

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

'Rear Window'

Director
Alfred Hitchcock

Starring
James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Wendell Corey, Thelma Ritter

Running Time
1 hour, 52 minutes

Rated
PG

Release Date
Sept. 1, 1954 (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.
- 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 visit ReadEpoch.com/Help or call (917) 905-2080.

THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION