

WEEK 5, 2021

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Making America's Civic Architecture Great Again

An interview with National Civic Art Society President Justin Shubow

LORRAINE FERRIER

"Whenever it is proposed to prepare plans for the Capitol, I should prefer the adoption of some one of the models of antiquity which have had the approbation of thousands of years," Thomas Jefferson wrote to French engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant on April 10, 1791.

But why did Jefferson and America's Founding Fathers admire classical architecture so much as to emulate it in federal buildings and U.S. courthouses? And why is classical and traditional architecture still relevant to Americans today?

National Civic Art Society (NCAS) President Justin Shubow helps answer these questions, and more. Shubow is also the chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, an independent federal agency of seven presidential appointees who are the aesthetic guardians of Washington. Shubow's architectural critical essays have been published widely in top national publications, and he's a noted speaker at academic institutions and the U.S. State Department.

Shubow explained by phone the importance of honoring America's historic architecture, and the significance of President Trump's recently signed executive order "Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture," which the NCAS (a nonprofit organization promoting public art and architecture worthy of the American Republic) championed.

Continued on Page 4

America's Founding Fathers favored classical architecture for the Republic.





Behind the Subscription

Your subscription will not only provide you with accurate news and features, but also contribute to the revival of American journalism and help safeguard our freedoms for future generations.

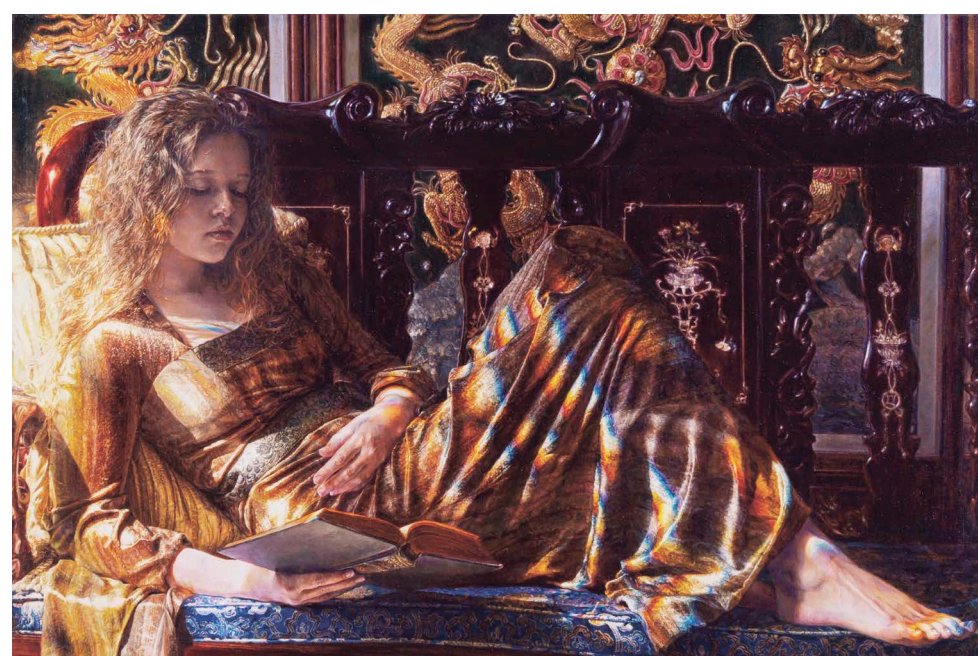
We aim to tell you what we see, not how to think; we strive to deliver you a factual picture of reality that lets you form your own opinions.

We believe that we live in truly epochal times, where the faithful representation of our current events won't just be important for the people of today, but also for the generations to come. The records we keep now will directly inform the foundations of the history they'll learn and the values they'll cherish—and this knowledge is what drives us.

Learn more at

EpochSubscription.com

THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION



Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

Original artworks, canvas wraps, and prints of Award-winning oil paintings now available at

InspiredOriginal.Org/Store

INSPIRED ORIGINAL

FILM

'The Sun's Still Shining': The Courage of Sophie Scholl

JEFF MINICK

Right now, millions of patriotic Americans are apprehensive about the sea change in our federal government. Many regard with dismay the proposals to open borders, to include more indoctrination in our schools, for higher taxes, for continued closures and restrictions to fight the pandemic, and for more politically correct measures, to name a few. Many of us fear greater restrictions on our constitutional liberties, like free speech, religious freedom, and gun ownership.

We're facing some tough times. And those times mean that we have to be tough as well. The "summer soldiers and the sunshine patriots," described long ago by Thomas Paine, will retreat into their homes, muttering complaints but otherwise unwilling to stand up and defend their principles. Others want to resist oppression and to celebrate liberty with joy, but are looking for the inspiration to do so.

Which brings us to "Sophie Scholl: The Final Days."

The White Rose

In this award-winning 2005 German film, directed by Marc Rothemund and written by Fred Breinersdorfer, Sophie Scholl (Julia Jentsch), her brother Hans (Fabian Hinrichs), and friend Christoph Probst (Florian Stetter) are members of the White Rose, a nonviolent group of students opposed to the Nazis.

When Sophie and Hans distribute anti-Hitler leaflets at their university, they are caught, and along with Christoph are arrested for treason. Throughout the rest of the film, we follow Sophie as she meets with a Nazi interrogator, faces trial in a kangaroo court, and is then summarily executed by the guillotine.

Based on a true story, this movie offers inspiration to all who value their natural rights, their liberty, and their religious faith. From it, we can learn the importance of protest against injustice, the courage needed to make that protest, and the faith that can sustain us in our quest for truth and justice.

Woke

"Woke," meaning to become more socially and politically aware, is a popular word with the left these past couple of years.

But that definition is broad. In "Sophie Scholl: The Final Days," woke readily applies to her resistance to the Nazis. Once a member of a Nazi girls' organization, Sophie and the others now see and understand that they live in a country of lies and oppression.

Today, many Americans are similarly awakened, having opened their eyes to the fact that Big Tech and many of our political elites are corrupt. That act of awakening is the necessary first step in tackling this mess.

Law, Conscience, Morality

Shortly after Sophie's arrest, her interrogator Robert Mohr (Alexander Held) points to a book and explains that it contains the laws of the Reich regarding treason. Later, when Sophie tells him that decency, morality, conscience, and God are her compass in life, Mohr reacts with scorn, denying the existence of any higher power.



German students Hans Scholl (1918–1943) and his sister Sophie (1921–1943), circa 1940. Both were members of the nonviolent White Rose resistance group against the Nazis. After their arrest for distributing anti-war leaflets at the University of Munich, they were convicted of high treason and executed by guillotine.

When Mohr tells Sophie that her parents and perhaps even the schools have failed to educate her properly, she answers him in this way:

"Do you realize how shocked I felt that the Nazis used gas and poison to dispose of mentally ill children? My mother's friends told us. Trucks came to pick up children at the mental hospital. The other children asked where they were going. 'They're going to heaven,' said the nurses. So the children got on the truck singing.

"You think I wasn't raised right, because I feel pity for them?"

To which Mohr responds: "These are unworthy lives."

A few lines later, Sophie tells him, "Every life is precious."

For decades, we have seen manmade law in conflict with natural law. Given the possibility that this conflict may grow even more intense, we must, like Sophie, hold to our principles and remember that, as Sophie's father says in the movie, "There is a higher justice!"

The Evils of Bureaucracy

From the moment of her arrest, Sophie finds herself caught up in a machine run by petty officials. The man with the Adolph Hitler copycat haircut, who marches Sophie from room to room, is the worst of this lot: a fanatic delighted that the state has arrested students who dared to write and issue literature denouncing the regime.

Other bureaucrats may show a more human face—the stenographer who gives Sophie a fleeting glance of pity, the female guard who slips her a cigarette and allows her to say goodbye to her brother and Christoph, and even Mohr, who attempts to convince Sophie to save herself by betraying her friends. If accused of abetting evil, however, all of these people would likely reply, "I was just doing my job."

Here, the film should raise questions among its viewers. Can we ourselves risk speaking truth to power? Are we willing to be canceled on social media, be shunned by family and friends, or even lose our jobs for standing up for what we believe? As many know by now, some through firsthand experience, the powers that be no longer need concentration



The White Rose memorial in Room 253 of the Munich Court of Justice, where the first of the White Rose trials, which convicted Sophie and her brother Hans, was held.

This movie offers inspiration to all who value their natural rights, their liberty, and their religious faith.

camp to erase their opponents from public dialogue. They simply "cancel" them, removing unwanted voices from the public forum.

These are tough questions with no real easy answers.

Education as Indoctrination

At one point, Mohr faults the education system as having failed to teach Sophie that "a new age" has dawned. When he asks why as a teenager she had joined a Nazi girls' organization, she says: "I heard that Hitler would lead our country to greatness and prosperity and ensure everyone had work and food and was free and happy."

For a century, tyrants have made these same promises in Russia, China, Cuba, and dozens of other countries around the world. And power-hungry politicians are now making them in the United States of America.

We must teach our young people the truth.

Beauty

Several times during the movie, Sophie subtly reminds viewers of her love and appreciation for the beautiful. At one point, writing a letter to a friend, she remarks of Schubert's "Trout" Quintet: "In Schubert's piece, you can feel and smell the breezes, hear the birds crying out for joy. The piano repeats the motif like cold, sparkling water."

Later, when her female cellmate asks about her fiancé, Sophie describes a vacation with him on the shores of the North Sea: "Take a fishing boat out at dawn—just the sea, the sky, and our dreams."

Throughout the movie, Sophie gathers strength and solace from the sun, turning her head to the sky when being marched from place to place or basking in the sunlight by the window in her cell.

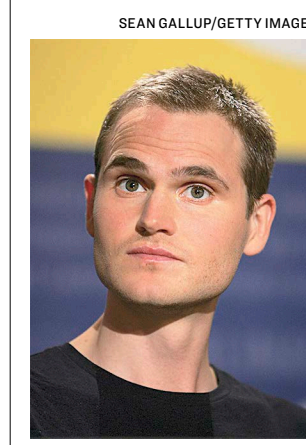
As it does for Sophie, beauty can sustain us when we feel battered by horrible events.

Faith

Like her parents, Sophie is a devout Christian. A Lutheran pastor visits her before her execution and prays with her. Several times, Sophie offers her own prayers, seeking con-



Actress Julia Jentsch during the 55th annual Berlin International Film Festival on Feb. 13, 2005.



Actor Fabian Hinrichs on Feb. 13, 2005, in Berlin.



A bust of Sophie Scholl by Wolfgang Eckert. Wallhalla Temple, in Donaustauf, Germany.

solution in the presence of God.

At one point in her despair, she whispers these tender words: "Dear God, all I can do is stammer to you. I can do nothing but hold out my heart to you. You created us in your likeness. Our hearts are uneasy until they find peace in you. Amen."

Amen.

Time to Stand Up

In the coming months, we may face a storm of legislation the likes of which we've never seen. We'll need to gather our strength and our wits, find comrades as did Sophie and Hans, and push back against those who would "reset" our country. We must love our country and our freedoms more fiercely than ever, and speak up when others try to take them away from us.

And we must always hold on to hope. As her executioners escort her through the door to the guillotine, Sophie turns to Hans and Christoph, and says, "The sun's still shining."

Let's keep those words in mind this winter.

"Sophie Scholl: The Final Days" is available free of charge on YouTube.

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

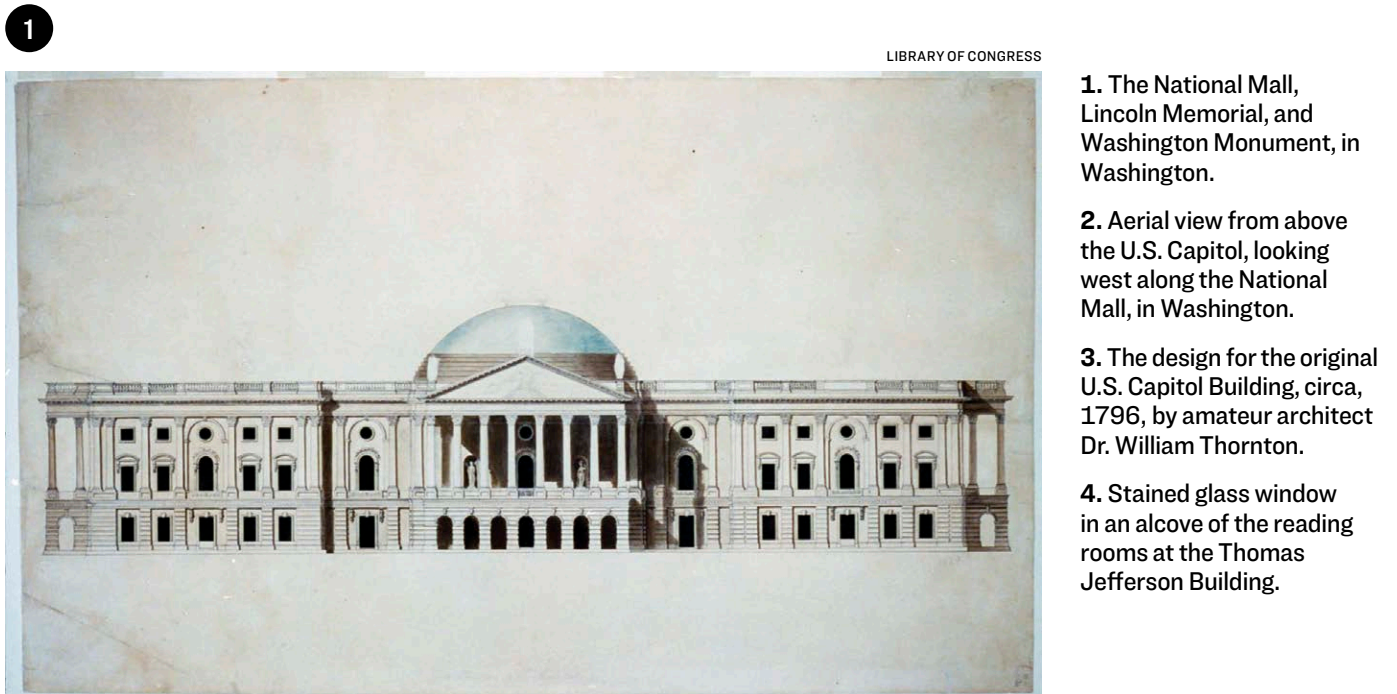
I LOVE SHEN YUN
SHEN YUN SHOP

A Symbol of Hope:
Shen Yun's Mystical Phoenix

Enjoy **15% off**
selected jewelry

ShenYunShop.com | TEL: 1.800.208.2384

CAROL M. HIGHSMITH ARCHIVE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

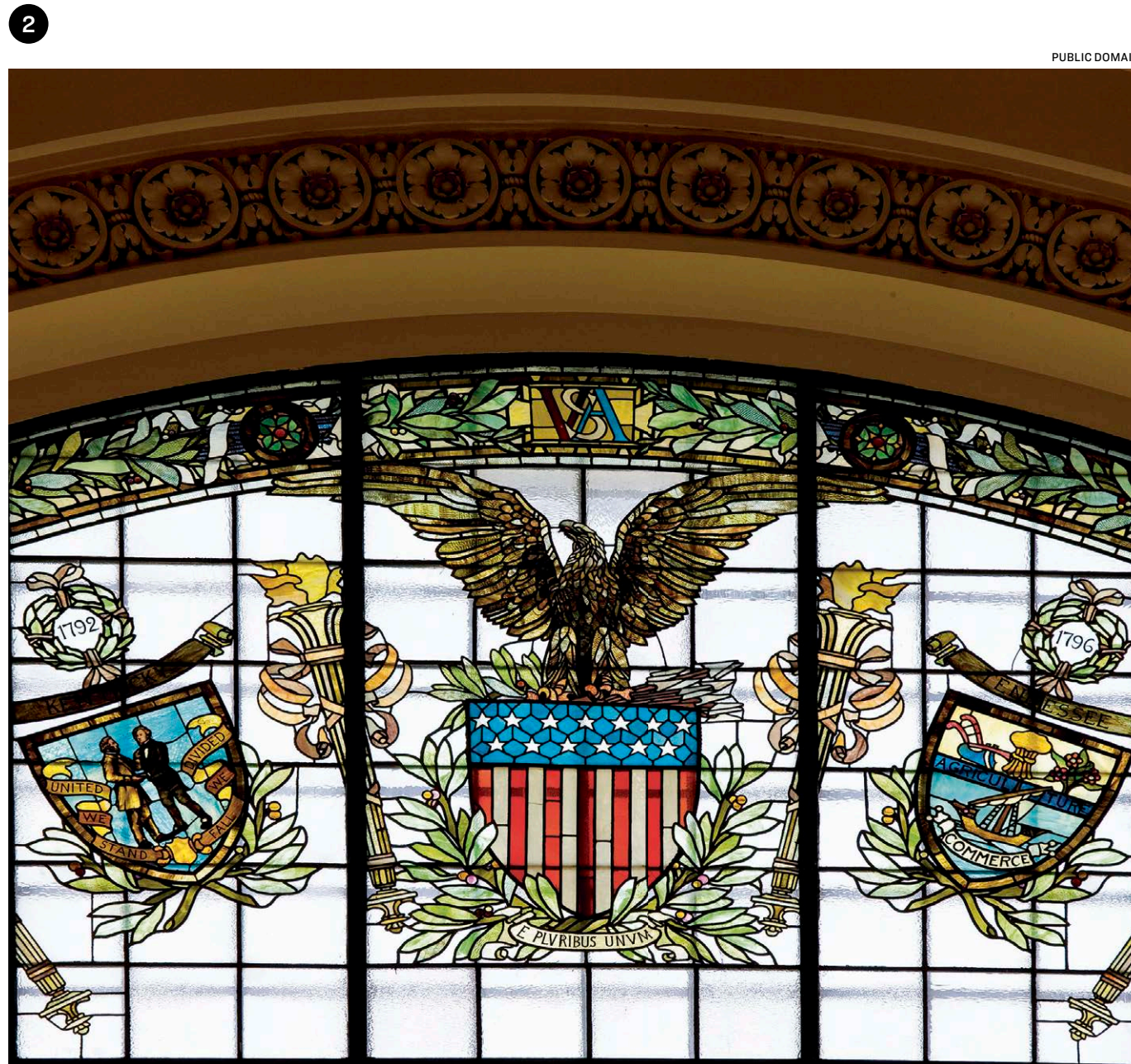


LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1. The National Mall, Lincoln Memorial, and Washington Monument, in Washington.
2. Aerial view from above the U.S. Capitol, looking west along the National Mall, in Washington.
3. The design for the original U.S. Capitol Building, circa, 1796, by amateur architect Dr. William Thornton.
4. Stained glass window in an alcove of the reading rooms at the Thomas Jefferson Building.



CAROL M. HIGHSMITH ARCHIVE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION



PUBLIC DOMAIN

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

ARCHITECTURE

Making America's Civic Architecture Great Again



PUBLIC DOMAIN
The west facade of the Thomas Jefferson Building faces the Capitol Building.

Continued from Page 1

The Epoch Times: How do people recognize good architecture?

Justin Shubow: I believe there is some kind of human nature underlying our evaluation of architecture. This is one reason why there are masterpieces around the world that are universally recognized across cultures, whether it's the U.S. Capitol Building or the Taj Mahal. There is a human nature involved in our appreciation.

At the same time in the U.S., certain building types are often associated with democracy in the minds of ordinary people. You don't have to have attended architecture school to have a sense of what a courthouse looks like or what a church looks like. There are particular building forms that have come down to us from history, and it makes sense to keep building in a way that is legible to ordinary people.

Recently, the National Civic Art Society hired The Harris Poll to conduct a survey of Americans' preferences in federal architecture, and the survey found that 72 percent of Americans favored traditional architecture for federal office buildings and U.S. courthouses. These were wide majorities over all demographic groups, including socio-economic status, political party, race, and ethnicity. This is not a partisan issue. It's clear what the American people want, and that's also why the executive order is so important:

It's fundamentally democratic by giving Americans the sorts of federal buildings that they want.

The Epoch Times: Why did America's forefathers favor classical designs?

Mr. Shubow: Thomas Jefferson and George Washington consciously chose the classical style of the core buildings for the American government and the design of Washington, D.C. They wished to harken back to republican Rome and democratic Greece, those great political traditions. They, particularly Jefferson, also saw the classical tradition as being time-honored and timeless.

Jefferson sought classic architecture to improve the respect for America around the world. And the classical tradition largely set the pattern for American federal architecture up until World War II.

The Epoch Times: How did American architecture move away from the forefather's ideals?

Mr. Shubow: In 1949, a new federal agency called the General Services Administration (GSA) was created to oversee all federal buildings. Although there had been official classicism for federal architecture, the GSA started to build in a modernist style, in a style imported from Europe, based on ideas of functionalism, the metaphor of the machine, and a stripped-down aesthetic.

And in 1962, there was a report on federal office space, and in that report there

was a single page called the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture." And those principles rejected official classicism and implicitly favored modernism in federal design. At the same time, those principles said that architectural "design must flow from the architectural profession to the Government and not vice versa." And who did this abdicate control? The modernists who had come to dominate architecture. And from that time on, federal architecture has almost entirely been modernist and post-modernist.

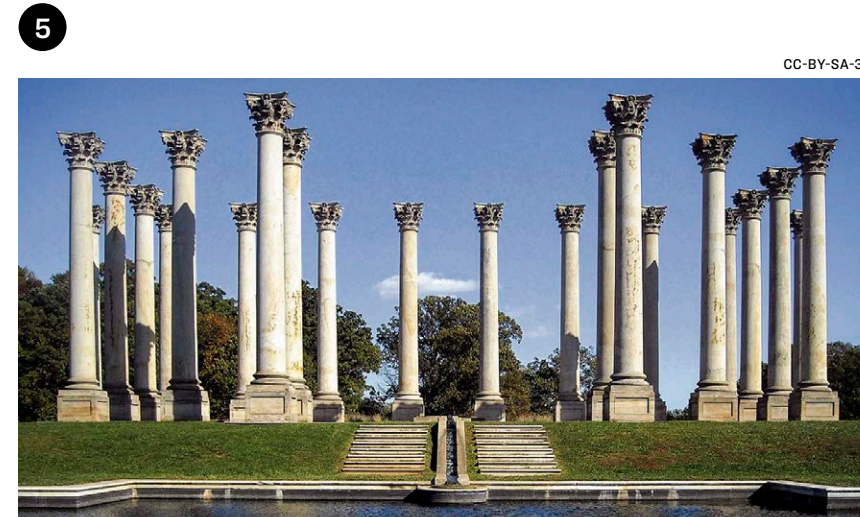
Empirical academic studies have repeatedly found that architects' evaluation of buildings diverges greatly from that of ordinary people. I would say that there's something about architectural education that corrupts or deforms architecture preferences away from human nature towards some kind of artificial good that only the indoctrinated can support. Not only are there differences in aesthetic interpretation, you will even find some architects saying you should admire certain buildings because they are ugly. They're not even denying that such buildings are ugly. They have a different value system.

The Epoch Times: Is modernism the same for architecture as it is for modern art?

Mr. Shubow: Modernism means different things in art and architecture. But very much in architecture, modernism completely rejected the prior tradition of



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION



CC-BY-SA-3.0

PUBLIC DOMAIN

architecture. Modernists wanted to start anew, and in its early phases, modernism had this utopian ethos seeking to build a new man in a new era, in a technologically and economically charged society. I would note there is one key difference between modern art and architecture in that architecture is public. It's forced on us in a way that art is not. If you don't like a painting, you don't have to go to a museum. If you don't like a novel, you don't have to read it. But architecture builds the world in which we live, and so it necessarily has a small political component.

The Epoch Times: In December 2020, President Trump signed an executive order "Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture" that favors classical and traditional design for federal buildings. What does this actually mean for civic architecture?

Mr. Shubow: The executive order reorients federal architecture in a classical and traditional direction. It requires that new federal buildings and U.S. courthouses be beautiful and command the admiration of the general public. The order states that the general public's preferences should matter most—not those of the architectural establishment—because what ordinary people want diverges greatly from what architectural elites want. I say architectural elites because we're talking about some of the largest and most powerful architecture firms in the country, which are largely modernist in orientation.

At the same time, the order, although not mandating classical or traditional architecture for the country, does state that there should be a particular regard for classical or traditional architecture. It defines traditional architecture to include various styles that are not classical, such as Gothic, Romanesque, and Pueblo Revival, and shows that there are regional styles in America that are appropriate for federal buildings that are not strictly speaking classical.

However, for new federal buildings in Washington, D.C., the executive order does require that those buildings be classical in part because Washington, D.C., was intended to be a stately classical city by the Founding Fathers. That tradition, and its iconic symbolism, was continued through the 1901-1902 Senate Park Commission Plan, commonly known as the McMillan Plan, which created the National Mall and monumental core as we know them. And classical architecture is what Americans think of when they think of our government at its best. They don't think of Washington as being a Brutalist or modernist city. It's the classical architecture that gives it its particular beloved character.

The Epoch Times: Why is this executive order so important?

Mr. Shubow: As Thomas Jefferson said, public architecture cannot be separated from political activity. These federal buildings speak to who we are as Americans. They should have legible symbols; they should inspire civic virtue. They should not demoralize. They should be beautiful and uplift our world, and should

5. The Capitol Building of Washington, around 1800, which housed the U.S. Senate.

6. The original columns that supported the old East Portico of the U.S. Capitol are now at the National Arboretum.

remind us of the ideals of our democracy.

The Epoch Times: Please give an example of a federal building that aspires to the virtuous characteristics that you just mentioned, and another that doesn't.

Mr. Shubow: The most famous case is that of the U.S. Capitol, which is built in a design inspired by a Roman temple. And as a result, it has a sense of sacredness, which can be seen from the fact that after the recent attacks on the Capitol, numerous legislators—both Republicans and Democrats—talked about the desecration of the temple to democracy. And I think that language is telling. If the U.S. Capitol had been a Brutalist building or a steel and glass box, no one would describe it as a temple, and no one would've said it was desecrated because there is nothing sacred about that kind of modernist design.

The Capitol building became the model for many state capitol buildings across the country. It created a recognizable building type in the United States.

Now, as for a building that totally fails, there is the San Francisco federal building that looks like an alien spacecraft, which is about to kill you with laser beams. It's deconstructivist. It's ugly. It's widely hated by people in San Francisco, and it's unrecognizable as a civic building. It's not identifiably American, or regional in any way.

The Epoch Times: How do these contrasting architectural designs affect us?

Mr. Shubow: I know that one federal judge, the late Jeffrey Gallet, wrote an essay in which he claimed that he has overseen trials in both a modernist courthouse and a classical courthouse and that the people in the courtroom were better behaved in the classical building.

The Epoch Times: There have been some comments from architects and architectural bodies that say the executive order goes too far and stifles creativity. What is your response to that?

Mr. Shubow: First, I would note that many of the criticisms were from the leaked draft of the executive order as opposed to the final version. The version that was signed by President Trump does not mandate classical architecture for federal buildings across the country. Modernist buildings are completely allowed so long as they are beautiful and command the respect of the general public. So there is room for creativity and innovation. And of course there is room for creativity and innovation within the classical tradition itself. The executive order defines classical architecture quite broadly to include everything from neoclassical designs to Beaux Arts to Art Deco.



SHUBOW/OUTLINE THE EPOCH TIMES

A survey found that 72 percent of Americans favored traditional architecture for federal office buildings and U.S. courthouses.

Justin Shubow, president, National Civic Art Society

The Epoch Times: What would you say to people who would love to see more classical and traditional federal buildings built in America? What can they do?

Mr. Shubow: They can reach out to their political leaders and tell their preferences as to what they would like to see. Ultimately, the client for federal buildings is the American people, and their tax dollars have been used in the billions to construct these buildings. And yet for too long, architects have been forcing their preferences on the people, when it should be the people's preferences that matter most.

I want to make clear that throughout American history, people of all political orientations have seen the greatness of the classical tradition. That includes Franklin Delano Roosevelt who, as president, promoted classical architecture for Washington, D.C., and fought the modernists who sought to build in a different style. It was F.D.R. who fought for the building of the Jefferson Memorial, which is in the form of the Roman temple, even though the entire modernist architectural establishment opposed it for supposedly being out-of-date.

Likewise, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer has talked about how classical forms help convey a sense of fairness and dignity.

What he had in mind is the association Americans have, that certain building types are associated with democracy. Now, there is a sense, maybe you might say an inherent sense, of harmony and order and stability that comes from the architecture so that you don't even need any association to appreciate it. It gets to our human nature, about the sorts of architecture that are universally admired. And I think when you just see well-designed classical buildings, you get a sense of eternity and of timelessness and even of the metaphysical level. You sense the existence of the good, the beautiful, and the true.

To find out more about the National Civic Art Society, visit CivicArt.org

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.



"Hercules and the Hydra," 1634, by Francisco de Zurbarán.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The Hydra of Modern Times

Hercules reminds us that science alone can't solve all problems

JAMES SALE

The myths of the ancient worlds, as we have discussed before, have profound truths and insights to tell us now, if we would but listen to them. One that I find particularly relevant at this present juncture of history is the story of the Lernaean Hydra, or just the Hydra.

To recall, the Hydra was a snake-like monster who in the most authoritative sources had nine heads, one of which was immortal. On top of that, the creature's breath was a lethal poison and it spat a venom so deadly that there was no cure for it.

The Hydra was the offspring of the loathsome monster Echidna, who mated with the even more ferocious Typhon. It was Typhon who almost defeated the king of the gods himself, Zeus, and in doing so would have destroyed the whole created order if it had been successful. The Hydra lived beside Lake Lerna, guarding an ominous gate leading to the underworld.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that just as the king of heaven had fought and defeated the Typhon monster in the upper world, so here below on earth, it fell to his son, the human hero Hercules, to defeat Typhon's offspring, the Hydra. This came about as a result of Hercules's second Labor.

Hercules was ordered by the treacherous and weak king Eurystheus to destroy the

Hydra, although Eurystheus's real objective in setting all 12 of the famous Labors of Hercules was for Hercules himself to be destroyed, for each of the Labors became increasingly difficult, if not impossible to achieve. But, of course, Hercules was half human and half divine; his father was Zeus. This was no ordinary man!

But even being half divine proved not quite enough for Hercules to overcome the Hydra, at least on his own, for as he cut off or clubbed each head to death, another two would sprout in its place. The Hydra thus became more powerful, and Hercules had to retire.

Fortunately, however, Hercules was accompanied by Iolaus, his nephew, and together they resumed the fight. As Hercules destroyed one head, and before it could regenerate into two, Iolaus would sear the neck stump with a red-hot brand and thus prevent its growing again. Eventually, as one head after another died, the creature also died, leaving only the immortal head. This Hercules chopped off and buried by the roadside. The Hydra, then, was defeated and dead.

So what is the relevance of this story for us?

The Many-Headed Serpent of Science
The Hydra, I think, is symbolic of mankind's efforts (often monstrous!) to solve its problems. We might call this our philosophy of

"progress," and in particular this problem-solving via science and technology.

Reading a key story in today's (Jan. 18, 2021) The Epoch Times, I find a perfect illustration of what I mean: The paragraph reads: "Officials in Norway said they are investigating the deaths of about two dozen elderly patients who received the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and are looking into the prospect that adverse reactions to the vaccine may have contributed to a fatal outcome in some frail patients." We create a vaccine to save lives, but immediately the opposite occurs—another head of the Hydra pops up, just when we thought we'd nailed the problem.

The particulars of the above case are not significant here—it may be on investigation that they all died of food-poisoning! But this result is typical of the Hydra's manifestation: a law of unintended consequences, in fact. And not only unintended, but unforeseen too. As G.K. Chesterton observed, "Science invents conveniences by design and inconveniences by accident."

Even, apparently, the creation of self-evidently brilliant new technology, on reflection, seems to carry a sting in its tail, or to continue our metaphor, generate a new Hydra's head that attacks us somehow. For example, who could argue that the invention of the alphabet and writing was a great new technology? Have we not been the beneficia-

ries of its power ever since? Indeed, without it, it is difficult to conceive of how any learning, much less science, could ever have evolved. Yet it was Socrates, in Plato's "Phaedrus" (circa 370 B.C.), who said: "The discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learner's soul, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves."

Of course, it may be thought now that the weakening of the memory is a small price to pay for the ability to be able to write, record, and transmit information to posterity in the way that writing has enabled. But the trouble is, whereas there are very small Hydras, there are also very large ones.

Especially since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, we have become so dependent on technologies that we are scarcely aware of our dependencies... until something goes wrong—like, for example, with COVID-19. Then suddenly we become all too aware that globalization, which in the 1990s we were told was unstoppable, inevitable, and more or less wholly beneficial, has some serious downsides: Mass traveling spreads the virus, and supply chains are vulnerable, with a particularly negative effect on the poorest in society.

And, if we consider the Norwegian officials' investigation, we may discover that the so-called safe vaccines have not really been tested sufficiently. As Carl Sagan said: "We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology." Unlike Hercules, we are all disempowered consumers who have to take what we are given.

Considering all this, plus the Hydras of nuclear power, biological experimentation (of which COVID itself may well be a consequence), pollution, and so on, we have to ask: What can be done about it? Does the myth give us a clue? The answer is yes; it does.

Tempering Science With the Divine

We have to set a hero (or heroine) up to fight against these Hydras. But the essence of the hero is that he is semi-divine. That is, solving human problems is at least half a spiritual matter, for that is what "divine" means. Science and technology on their own are not going to solve our problems; they cannot solve our problems!

As Robert Pirsig in his famous book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" commented: "What's wrong with technology is that it's not connected in any real way with matters of the spirit and the heart. And so it does blind, ugly things quite by accident and gets hated for that."

By its very nature, technology is spiritless. But Hercules is not; he is semi-divine and semi-human. And notice, too, that Hercules works with another human being, and they work as a team to overcome the Hydra.

In his fascinating book "Future Hype: The Myths of Technology Change," Bob Seidensticker talks about "wicked problems," and these are what I call the Hydra. "Wicked problems have complex cause-and-effect relationships, human interaction, and inherently incomplete information. They require compromises... The difference between something that works in the lab, on paper, or in one's head versus something that works in the real world and is practical to real people is characteristic only of wicked problems."

It is, therefore, the reintroduction of what is human and spiritual into combatting the problems of our time that is of the essence; only in this way can further Hydras be prevented.

But sadly, there is yet another Hydra to confront in the myth. Even for Hercules there was a Hydra that he did not foresee.

You will remember that Hercules lopped off the Hydra's immortal head as well, and buried it. Before doing so, however, he took an ample supply of its poisoned venom with which to tip his arrows—making them fatal. The merest graze would kill any living being. He killed many enemies this way.

But finally, Hercules was caught by the technology himself. The poison was infused into a shirt that his wife inadvertently supplied him with, and he died in agony. Even the great Hercules could not escape the Hydra. Far better for him, perhaps, would have been to have buried the technology rather than to think he could actually use it for his own ends. It rather reminds one of "The Lord of the Rings" and the ring of power, which always betrayed those who sought to wield it (excepting its maker, the Dark Lord).

We need more heroes, human and divine, if we are to overcome the problems the world is currently facing.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "Hellward." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit TheWiderCircle.webs.com



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



(Left) Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), in "Wonder Woman 1984." (Middle) Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) in full Amazon armor. (Right) Barbara Minerva (Kristen Wiig) becomes Cheetah, in "Wonder Woman 1984."

A Sequel Less Wonderful

MARK JACKSON

"Wonder Woman" (2017) was one of the best superhero films ever made. It was idealistic, classy, aesthetically pleasing, and romantic, and should have kicked off a fabulous franchise. Unfortunately, "Wonder Woman 1984," also directed by Patty Jenkins, is a major letdown. Hollywood should have immediately expunged it from the record and gone back to the drawing board.

Why the year 1984? In a quote from Cinemablend, director Jenkins explains: "Why 1984? We wanted to bring Diana into the modern world, but the '80s is a period that Wonder Woman is quite synonymous with. So it was great to see her there, but most importantly, it's sort of the height of Western civilization and the success of the world that we all live in, in the aftermath of now. So I was curious to collide our Wonder Woman into the height of our current modern belief system, and what kind of villains come out of that, and see what happens. So it all came quite naturally."

What Goes On
This time around, Diana Prince, the Am-



Gal Gadot again just looks and acts so perfectly Wonder Woman-y, one can almost forgive the rest of the nonsense.

azon princess, aka Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), deals exclusively (well, aside from a few anonymous good deeds like drop kicking a would-be park rapist) with two villains.

Mainly she goes up against the greedy, megalomaniacal tycoon Maxwell Lord (Pedro Pascal), who gets hold of a magical museum rock that's just like Aladdin's lamp and grants wishes.

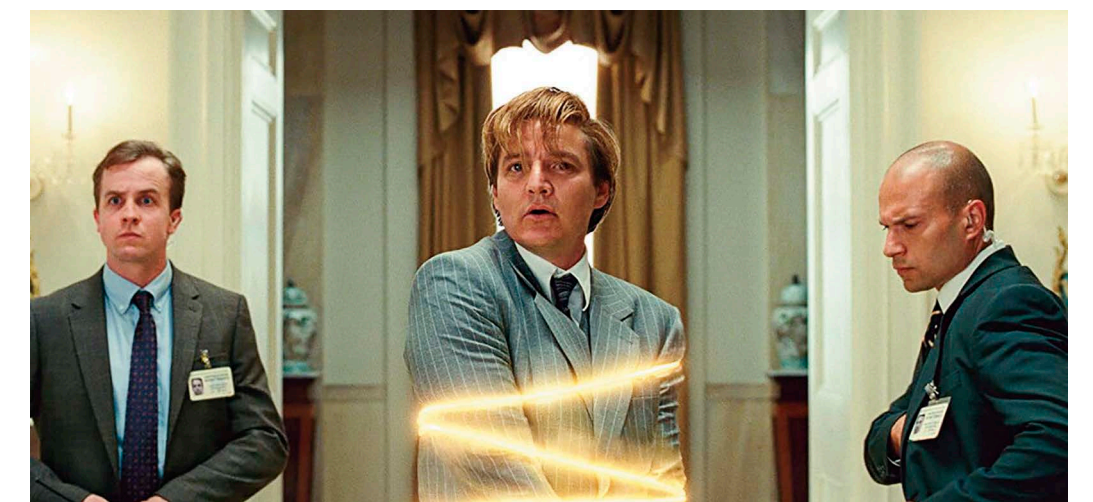
Lord wishes to become the rock! It happens! He is The Rock! No, not that Rock. But he's now a wish-granting geode in human form! Then, he sneakily gets people to wish for things that he wishes for, and in so doing, eventually creates a giant, global mess of granted instant gratification neediness, calling to mind the Bob Dylan verse, "Just then, the whole kitchen, exploded from boiling fat, food was flying everywhere, I left without my hat."

Wonder Woman's other nemesis is the museum's archaeologist and geologist Barbara Minerva, a nerd turned apex predator called Cheetah (Kristen Wiig) who, suffering from low self-esteem, allows aforesaid Mr. Lord to seduce her into giving him that special museum rock. But she has a wish too! She'd rather be less nerdy! And so she turns into a seriously bad CGI human cheetah with tufts of cheetah hair and bad makeup who, to steal a popular sentiment that was going around, looks like somebody from the dreadful movie "Cats" got confused and wandered onto the wrong movie set.

Diana the Amazon multitasks dealing with all that while also suddenly having her old boyfriend, World War I pilot Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) return from the dead. He incarnates into the body of another man. How's that work anyway, like, "Hey guy, mind if I take that bod for a spin? I need to talk to my ex."

Whatever. It's not the film's weakest point, but the fact that Steve and his superhero girlfriend are OK with this setup is mildly disturbing throughout the film. It does allow Chris Pine to switch roles with Gadot, giving him a chance to play fish out of water and be amazed at modern-day jets, elevators, and parachute pants. Also, having it explained to him that everything in a modern art gallery is art, he hilariously mistakes an actual trash can as art.

The Decent Stuff
The film opens with a sort of Amazon



(Above) Maxwell Lord (Pedro Pascal, C) is restrained by Wonder Woman's whip, in Washington. (Left) Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) chases down bad guys in Washington. (Above left) Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) is not sure what to make of a 1980s mall.

'Wonder Woman 1984'

Director
Patty Jenkins

Starring
Gal Gadot, Chris Pine, Kristen Wiig, Pedro Pascal, Robin Wright, Connie Nielsen, Lilly Aspell

Rated

PG-13

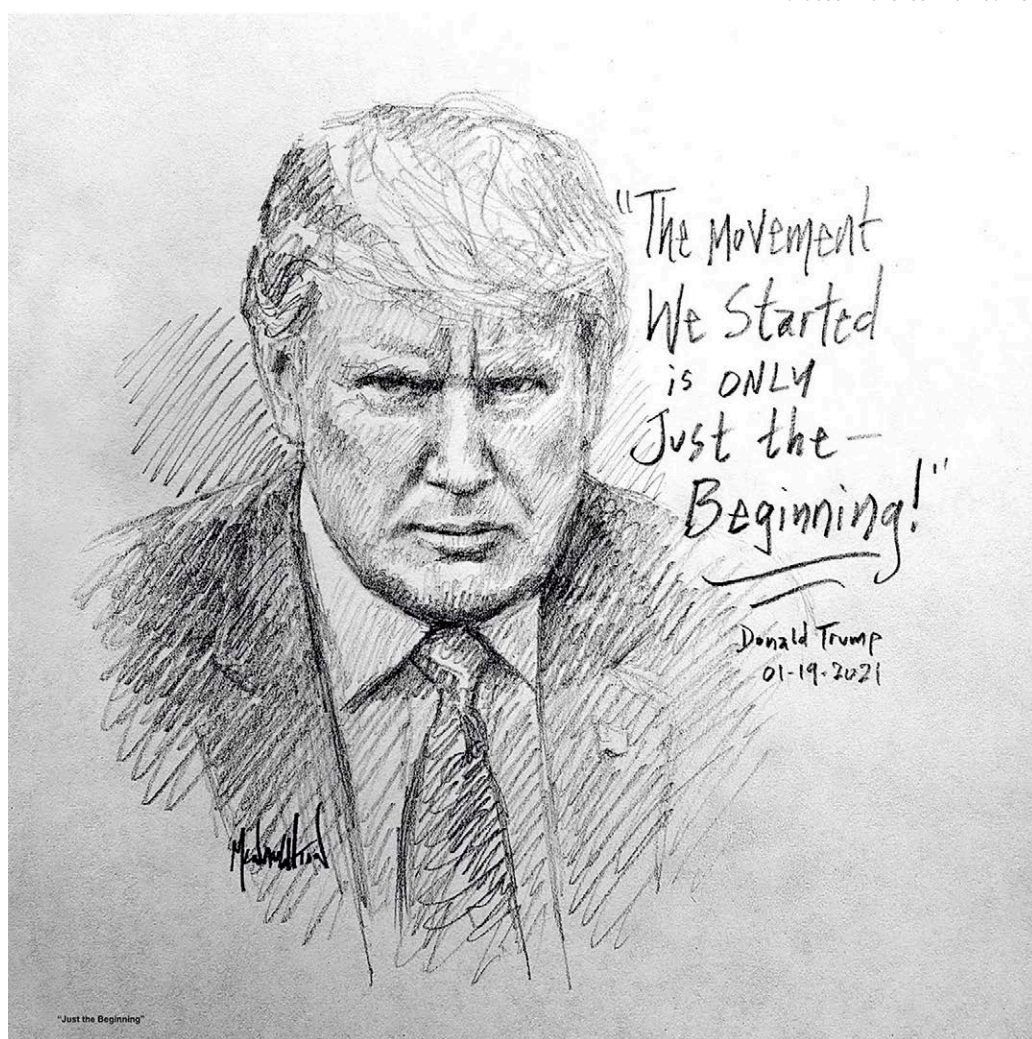
Running Time
2 hours, 31 minutes

Release Date
Dec. 25, 2020

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS.

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF JON MCNAUGHTON



◀ "Just the Beginning."

'Just the Beginning': Trump Painter Jon McNaughton Shares Message of Hope

MICHAEL WING

Traditional art lovers started hearing the name Jon McNaughton a lot more often in 2019, after his cheeky painting of President Trump "Crossing the Swamp" went viral on Twitter. It portrays Trump in a boat, navigating an allegorical swamp (Washington, D.C.) in a tongue-in-cheek homage to the painting of "George Washington Crossing the Delaware," which hangs in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"That one really hit a nerve," McNaughton jokingly told The Epoch Times in a Zoom call, adding that those kinds of paintings get him noticed the most. Since Trump's inauguration in 2017, McNaughton has given voice to a pro-American movement—although he's been painting professionally since high school, and making political art for nearly a decade.

Now, bidding farewell to a turbulent 2020, the artist is set to face 2021 with optimism, hoping his work will "shine a light" on uncertain times ahead. With Trump gone from the White House, McNaughton shares what might come next.

"Regardless of whether he's in the White House or not, he's going to be speaking out against the swamp," said McNaughton, who recently completed a pencil sketch of the president with a dated quote, "The movement we started is only just the beginning!"

McNaughton said that "2020 was the year for Trump to really show how much inner strength he has."

"I've just been amazed that that guy's been through, from impeachment to coronavirus. ... He's had the whole world against him."

"And the guy just does not give up, and that's what I appreciate about him. And I

The artist is set to face 2021 with optimism, hoping his work will 'shine a light' on uncertain times ahead.



JonMcNaughton.com

believe that a lot of Americans are the same way; we're not giving up."

Turning to other recent artistic endeavors, the artist has released a number of paintings in 2020, each taking from a few weeks to two months to complete. Meanwhile, some are still waiting in the wings, yet to be unveiled.

Last year, he was inspired to paint "Legacy of Hope," portraying Trump surrounded by famous figures from history—George Washington, Harriet Tubman, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy, and Frederick Douglass—laying their hands on him and praying for him. Inspiration for that work came when a group of black conservatives visited the White House while riots raged throughout the country. A photo was taken while they prayed for Donald Trump around his desk. The artist was stirred.

"President Trump did give a lot of hope to those who voted for him," McNaughton said about "Legacy of Hope," which he says was a very popular painting. "And I believe there's still hope for the future."

Another recent popular painting included "You Are Fake News," humorously titled after Trump's now-famous pronouncement on live television. It depicts Trump meeting with the press, portrayed as clowns, on the White House lawn with Marine One in the background.

"What I try to do with my paintings is create something that I think might become an iconic image in the future, when history looks at our time, and they ask what it was

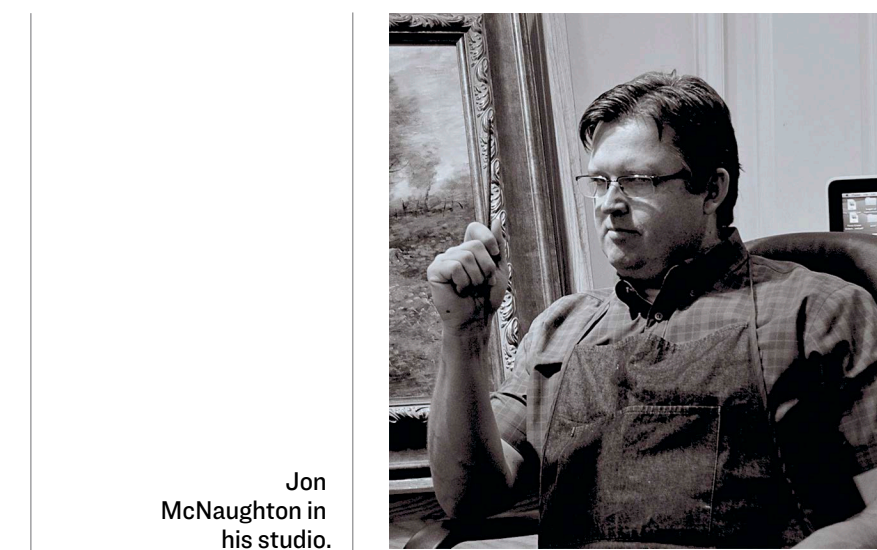
like to be conservative," he said.

During our Zoom call, the artist was even coaxed into admitting that he has an unreleased painting still under wraps, pending copywrite approval, although no sneak peek was given. "It's one of those paintings that is going to be hidden in my vault until about 50 years from now, when it's released, and it's a doozy," he said mischievously.

As for future prospects, McNaughton tries to stay fluid and open to ideas. He's been considering the subject of the Second Amendment for a painting, a subject he touched

on in prior paintings "Stand Your Ground" and "Take a Stand." He chooses subjects that he finds important to him, such as liberty, freedom, and the Constitution.

Probably, McNaughton's most famous work is "The Forgotten Man," an allegory painted after the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010. The picture was purchased by news host Sean Hannity and was even featured on his show. It portrays presidents, past and present, some venerating the Constitution and others desecrating it, while a man, representing the American people,



Jon McNaughton in his studio.

is rendered despondent and forgotten in their midst.

The artist says that masters of art from the past who have made an impression on him include Francisco de Goya, who also painted politically. McNaughton even painted a parody of Goya's "The Third of May." Instead of depicting Spanish soldiers executing a mob of rebels, he portrayed Antifa threatening a group of conservatives while burning an American flag.

The artist also admires Leonardo da Vinci and fellow American realist Norman Rockwell. McNaughton is steadily becoming a household name like that prolific painter of Americana.

"I think maybe 50 years from now, 100 years from now, people will look at [my work] and say: 'Well, that's what was going on in the country,'" the artist said.

Looking ahead, McNaughton predicts the country is in for a "crazy whirlwind" in 2021, with the new administration in place. He hopes his art will express how people feel during this time. "[For] people who buy my paintings, ... it expresses how they feel about what's going on with the country. And so, I just focus on that, just hope for the best, and will just keep fighting the fight."

To see more of Jon McNaughton's work, sign up for his free e-book at McNaughtonFreebook.com/2020

For more arts and culture articles, visit TheEpochTimes.com



REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

The Eternal Beauty of Divine Truth and Love: 'Aurora Taking Leave of Tithonus'

ERIC BESS

Aurora was the personification of the dawn in Greco-Roman mythology. She was a child of the Titans, who were the 12 primordial gods born to heaven and earth. She was sister to the sun and moon deities and mother to the winds and stars.

According to the "Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite," Aurora, also called Eos, fell in love with the mortal Tithonus, whom she found beautiful. She used her chariot to abduct and keep him to herself. Loving him dearly, she asked Zeus to make Tithonus immortal, and the god granted her request.

After years, however, Tithonus aged. At first, he manifested graying hair, but this was enough to push Aurora away. She realized that she had asked Zeus only for his immortality and not for eternal youth. Tithonus would live forever but would still be affected by time.

Tithonus got older, and Aurora no lon-

In the story, Aurora falls in love with Tithonus because of his beauty and leaves him when he loses it to old age.

ger loved him like she did when he was young. Yet she still wanted to take care of him, so she put him away in her palace, where he would be comfortable.

Old age ate away at Tithonus until he was unable to move. In pity, Aurora put him in her illuminated chamber, where he continued to call out. Some accounts suggest that she changed him into a grasshopper to be reminded of him whenever she heard its song.

'Aurora Taking Leave of Tithonus'

The Italian artist Francesco Solimena (1657-1747) painted the moment Aurora leaves Tithonus in his old age.

In the upper-right quadrant, Solimena idealized our focal point, Aurora. She sits on a cloud, which suggests her divinity. Angelic attendants crown the goddess of the dawn with a wreath of flowers and bring a torch with which she'll illuminate the dark background.

Tithonus is in the lower-left quadrant. His old age contrasts with Aurora's idealized youth. He reclines on a bed, and

sheets cover his body. He uses his left hand to shield his eyes from the brightness of Aurora's torch.

The Eternal Beauty of Divine Truth and Love

To me, the story of Aurora and Tithonus is more than a simple story about the woes of love or of aging. What wisdom might this painting and this story have for us today?

It's interesting to me that Aurora is the goddess of the dawn. What is the dawn, and what does it do? Dawn is the time when night turns into day, and the sun's light illuminates the otherwise darkened earth.

Solimena depicted Aurora as she sits on a cloud with a torch in her hand. The background is a dark blue, and Aurora is about to begin her divine duty of illuminating the darkness.

Is it possible that this is symbolic of our relationship to the divine? Does deepening our understanding of divine truth and love expose the darkness of our

spirit to a light that would otherwise be absent?

Aurora is being crowned with a wreath of flowers. Another small angel carries a dish of flowers, symbolic of beauty, and Aurora holds some in her left hand. The angels provide Aurora with beauty, which suggests that as a goddess, she has access to divine beauty.

In the story, Aurora falls in love with Tithonus because of his beauty and leaves him when he loses it to old age. Then if Aurora had access to divine beauty, why would she ever be enamored with a mere mortal's beauty?

Her torch may give us a clue. Beauty, at least visual beauty, is only experienced when illuminated. I presume that our spirits are beautiful when illuminated by divine truth and love; such illumination will fill our souls' shadows with divine light, and the resulting beauty will shine forth.

Then was Tithonus's beauty a combination of physical beauty and the beauty that comes with the pursuit of understanding divine truth and love? If it was, perhaps his old age resulted from his losing this desire for the divine that he once possessed.

Solimena depicted Tithonus shielding his old face from Aurora's light. He uses his hand to create shadows where divine light would otherwise illuminate.

If Aurora's light is symbolic of divine truth and love, then is Tithonus's hand symbolic of rejecting divine truth and love? Interestingly enough, Tithonus's

hand, symbolic for one of his five senses, casts a shadow across his other four senses—eyes, ears, mouth, and nose—the very things through which he experiences the world.

Is Tithonus rejecting faith in divine truth and love by having his five senses participate in darkness? Maybe he gets older and becomes unattractive to Aurora because he focuses less on pursuing a deep understanding of divine truth and love and more on earthly things that darken his spirit.

Is it possible for us to renew our sincere desire for divine truth and love so that we may possess beauty worthy of the divine?

Many journeys begin with a question. What question might initiate our journey toward an illuminated spirit, eternally beautified by divine truth and love?

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

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



PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Aurora Taking Leave of Tithonus," 1704, by Francesco Solimena. Oil on canvas; 79.5 inches by 59.75 inches. J. Paul Getty Museum, California.

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

Down-and-Out Lawyer Fights for Justice in a Riveting Drama

IAN KANE

When a director slows the action down and focuses on the actor, we see a nervous twitch here, a tremble of the chin there—a multitude of subtle cues that give insights into a character's emotional state. If done right, these long, unbroken shots can help viewers immerse themselves in the world that the filmmaker is trying to bring to life. This technique is used to near-perfection in the 1982 legal drama "The Verdict," starring Paul Newman in perhaps his finest performance.

The film's slow-building tension gradually ratchets up every time Frank is met with a new challenge.

Helmed by Sidney Lumet ("12 Angry Men," "Serpico," "Network"), a director who is known for bringing the best out of his actors, the film begins with an intimate look at Newman's character, Frank Galvin. Frank's a down-on-his-luck Boston attorney, who has had very few cases in recent years.

He's playing a game of pinball in a run-down bar, and much like his life, he keeps losing game after game. The large window in the background paints a dreary, gray scene, and that, along with a crooked Christmas ornament dangling nearby, signals that it's winter. This long, unbroken shot immediately gives you an insight into

Frank. Each time he loses a pinball game, he pauses and takes a sip from his semi-flat beer or a drag from a cigarette.

Later, we see Frank at several funeral services. As bereaved attendees shuffle around, Frank hands out his business cards to family members, hoping to drum up some business. These dismal scenes culminate in Frank getting tossed out of a funeral home, after being a little too pushy and insensitive with his card-dispensing.

That evening, Frank holds court at a local bar, telling lewd jokes to a rapt circle of buddies, guffawing at every punchline. He staggers back to his office where—in a drunken rage—he smashes some of his framed law certificates, resulting in a glass shard cutting his brow.

Later, his only friend, Mickey Morrissey (Jack Warden), shows up and finds him in a near-comatose state. Mickey revives Frank and reveals a surprise: He's got a case tailor-made for Frank that could not only restore the man's reputation as a lawyer but also make him rich.

The case involves a couple of well-respected doctors who practice at an esteemed Catholic hospital in the city. The doctors stand accused of malpractice: of improperly administering anesthetic to a young woman during an operation. The woman has not only lost her unborn baby but has also lapsed into a vegetative state.

The case seems open-and-shut, just begging for an out-of-court settlement. As the alcoholic cobwebs begin to clear from Frank's head, his still-intelligent eyes dart about at the prospect of an easy fortune. But when Frank shows up to take Polaroid snapshots of the victim's withered body, lying in a hospital bed, he has a cathartic moment. As he stares at her, any sense of greed he had is replaced with something else.

Frank is summoned to the church to meet with Bishop Brophy (Edward Binns), who

represents the interests of the diocese. In the opulent church office, the bishop offers Frank a generous settlement that will set him up for life.

However, Frank has been transformed: He's now seeking justice for the victim, at all costs. He turns down the offer, saying that if he accepts the money, he'd "just be a rich ... ambulance chaser." In other words, accepting the settlement would forever cost him his integrity and perhaps his soul.

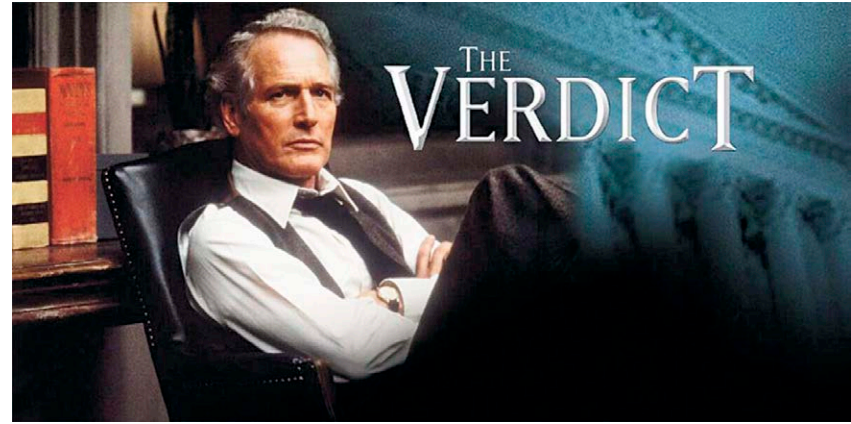
For Frank, the case represents not only justice for the victim but also a validation of his skill and talent as an attorney. He'd no longer be viewed as a has-been if he fights it out.

As the legal storm looms on the horizon, Frank realizes that the odds are stacked against him. The church has hired a top-flight law firm, which is headed by ruthless legal guru Ed Concannon (James Mason).

During this time, Frank falls for Laura Fischer (Charlotte Rampling), and the two begin an intense relationship. Although Laura seems supportive and nurturing, we wonder if she truly has Frank's interest at heart.

And as Frank begins to experience setback after setback, we wonder: Does he really have what it takes to go up against such a high-powered legal team, especially when the presiding judge dislikes him?

Simply put, "The Verdict" is a riveting legal drama with not only a compelling story but also stellar acting and direction. The film's slow-building tension gradually ratchets up every time Frank is met with a new challenge (or falters in the face of one) and our sympathy for him deepens. The film's an authentic-feeling character study about a man whose passion for truth and justice outweighs his capabilities ... or does it? Find out for yourself in this outstanding cinematic tour de force.



Paul Newman in the opening film credits for the drama "The Verdict."

'The Verdict'

Director
Sidney Lumet

Starring
Paul Newman, Charlotte Rampling, Jack Warden, James Mason

Running Time
2 hours, 9 minutes

Rated
R

Release Date
Dec. 17, 1982 (USA)

★★★★★

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

Virtue of the Brush in a Time of Chaos

"When things are chaotic to the extreme, order must be restored."
- "The four books" by Zhu Xi



The original calligraphy is now available for purchase at
InspiredOriginal.Org

INSPIRED
ORIGINAL