THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS© CULTURE

FINE ARTS

Did Michelangelo Destroy His Sculpture 'The Deposition'?

A major restoration reveals a bit more about the myth of the 'Bandini Pietà'

ALL PHOTOS BY ALENA FIALOVA/COURTESY OF OPERA DI SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE

In his old age, Michelangelo started sculpting 'The Deposition.'



Before restoration: "The Deposition," also known as the "Bandini Pietà," by Michelangelo. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy.



LORRAINE FERRIER

t's the middle of the 16th century. Sparks fly every which way as Michelangelo, at around 75 years old, furiously carves Christ, Nicodemus, the Virgin Mary, and St. Mary Magdalene into a piece of marble over 7 feet tall.

Michelangelo rendered Christ as he had just fallen from the cross. There's a palpable dynamic energy to the piece titled "The Deposition" that makes one almost hold one's breath as the three surrounding figures all attempt to steady Christ's lifeless body. Nicodemus towers compassionately over the composition, trying to prop up Christ while seemingly allowing the Virgin Mary to bid her son farewell. Christ's right arm wraps around a rather diminutive St. Mary Magdalene.

Christ's head slumps toward his mother, or perhaps she pulls him close as he sits on one of her knees. One can imagine her whispering farewell in his ear.

The piece is one of Michelangelo's last sculptures, a farewell sculpture

of sorts, and was intended to be part of Michelangelo's tomb. Poignantly, Nicodemus, who purportedly carried Christ to his tomb, is Michelangelo's self-portrait.

Perhaps this is how Michelangelo wanted us to remember him. Nicodemus looks down at Christ with such tenderness and devotion, maybe reflecting Michelangelo's faith as a devout Catholic, and also the realization that he will soon join him.

Michelangelo never finished "The Deposition," and the sculpture never made it to his tomb. For years, many

experts believed that Michelangelo, in a fit of rage and frustration, partially destroyed the sculpture with his hammer; Christ's left arm is broken and his left leg is missing. A recently completed restoration of the sculpture has revealed more of what might have actually happened.

Michelangelo's Three Pietà Sculptures

Michelangelo created three Pietà sculptures in his life.

Continued on Page 4

After restoration: "The Deposition."

Ying and Yang by Sandra Kuck

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FINE ARTS

A 500-Year Debate: Giorgione's 'The Tempest'

JEFF MINICK

n Mark Helprin's novel "A Soldier of the Great War," we meet Alessandro Giuliani, a young Italian studying philosophy and aesthetics. The Great War—World War I—upends his plans for a career as a professor contemplating art and beauty, and we follow him through battles, imprisonment and near execution by his own army, and capture by enemy forces. During these ordeals he meets Ariane, the nurse he quickly comes to love. Thinking she has died in a bombing of the dispensary, he spends the years immediately after the war working odd jobs and trying to mend his psychological wounds.

Oddly enough, a major character in this book is the Italian artist Giorgione's "La Tempesta," or "The Tempest," a painting from the early 16th century. Alessandro is enamored of this mysterious canvas, spends parts of the novel either pondering its meaning or discussing it with others, and eventually, when a museum guard remembers a woman weeping in the gallery in front of "The Tempest," is reunited with the love of his life.

Because of "A Soldier of the Great War," I too became fascinated by this painting.

The Artist

Though popularly known as Giorgione, which means "Big George" or "Tall George," we know little about Giorgio da Castelfranco's life. The online site The Art Story gives us the basics of his history. He was born around 1477 in Castelfranco Veneto, about 25 miles from the Republic of Venice. The legend surrounding him proclaims him a handsome man who grew up in modest circumstances and whose mother died while he was still a child. We know too that he succumbed to the plague in 1510 in a Venetian hospital.

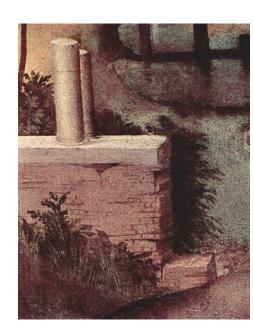
Despite his family's circumstances, he was clearly a painter of singular talent from a young age. He was 13 when he found a place as an apprentice in the studio of master artist Giovanni Bellini. Art historians, including Giorgio Vasari, credit him with changing Venetian artistic techniques, pointing other artists toward the classics and mythology for their subjects, and encouraging an interest in painting landscapes.

Others have also showered him with praise. In 1528, Castiglione, who wrote the classic "Book of the Courtier," judged him the equal of artists like Raphael and Michelangelo. The 20th-century poet Gabriele D'Annunzio reckoned him "more a myth than a man" and added "no poet on earth has a destiny to compare with his."

And as critic Ernst Gombrich pointed out, what is most remarkable about these accolades is that only five paintings have been recognized as creations of Giorgione.



A detail of the soldier, shepherd, or actor, depending on the interpretation.



What is this strange object near the center of the painting?

One of these is "The Tempest."

Its Mysterious Meaning

The meaning of "The Tempest" has perplexed critics then and now. Unlike our modernist abstract schools of art, where the viewer must form his own opinions of the meaning of geometric shapes, dripped paint, or minimalist images, "The Tempest" offers realistic human figures—a man with a staff in his hand and a nearly naked mother breast-feeding her baby—occupying a green space beneath two windswept trees, while in the background a river leads our eyes into a city beset with lightning bolts and turbulent clouds.

But who are they? Why are they there? And what is the meaning of the storm over the town?

Every time I look at this painting, different interpretations occur to me.

Why does the woman wear only a light shawl? Why is she looking directly at us? And who is the man studying her? Is he a husband, a lover, or a passer-by who has stumbled across a scene of beauty and motherhood? We're not even sure of his profession. In his online article, art historian James R. Jewitt explains that some believe him to be a shepherd, some a soldier, and some an actor as "his multicolored hosiery and fancy jacket correspond to theatrical costumes of Venetian 'Compaignie della Calza' (Confraternities of the Sock), who often staged plays with rustic countryside settings resembling Giorgione's landscape."

A Few Interpretations

Some contend that the man and woman represent Adam and Eve, cast out from Paradise, which in symbolized by the storm-torn city. Other students of art and history believe that "The Tempest" is Giorgione's comments on the politics of his day, when the region was under siege during the War of the League of Cambrai.

Still others hold that the artist had no specific meaning in mind at all, that he painted with the intention of allowing viewers to formulate their own interpretations, or that he offered us a fantasy without a clearly defined subject. Jewett writes: "In this line of reasoning, with 'The Tempest' Giorgione invents the Renaissance genre of 'poesia' (pl. 'poesie'). This mode of painting aspires to the highly lyrical and musical qualities of verse, and resembles visual poetry meant to generate multi-layered responses."

The romantic in me likes Mark Helprin's interpretation in "A Soldier of the Great War," where Alessandro tells Ariane: "They say, what could it mean, a woman with a child, disrobed, and the soldier, standing apart from her, disconnected. But I know exactly what to make of it. ... He intended to praise elemental things, and to show a soldier on the verge of return. I'm

not surprised that scholars and critics don't understand it. Giorgione lived in the time of the plague, and the scholars and critics, for the most part, have had to do without plague or war, which make the simple things one takes for granted shine like gold. What does the painting mean? It means love. It means coming home."

Entranced by a Conundrum

Unlike some people I know, I like mysteries. Whether being mystified by a woman's thoughts and actions or by the miracle of this globe spinning through space, I don't need answers to every question confronting me.

"The Tempest" stays in my head precisely because of its mysteries. Every time I look at this painting, different interpretations occur to me. What does that expression on the woman's face mean? Does she consider those of us looking at her as intruders? Is that man a soldier or a pilgrim or a member of some Venetian acting guild? What is that contraption in the center of the painting that to my eye, as a guy raised in North Carolina, looks like the barbeque grills I saw all over town as a kid? Why is a naked woman breastfeeding her baby on a rock? Why does the man pause to look at her? Is he entranced with her beauty or are they family?

Here's the thing, at least for an amateur like me: Art doesn't always have to provide answers. It doesn't always need to be explicit in its intentions.

Instead, a painting, a sculpture, or a poem can raise questions and fire up the imagination. Like the day at sunrise, the laughter of my grandchildren, or a woman's face by candlelight, great art can create a sense of wonder and curiosity.

Which is why, three or four times a year, I revisit Giorgione's "The Tempest."

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 Jeff-Minick.com to follow his blog.

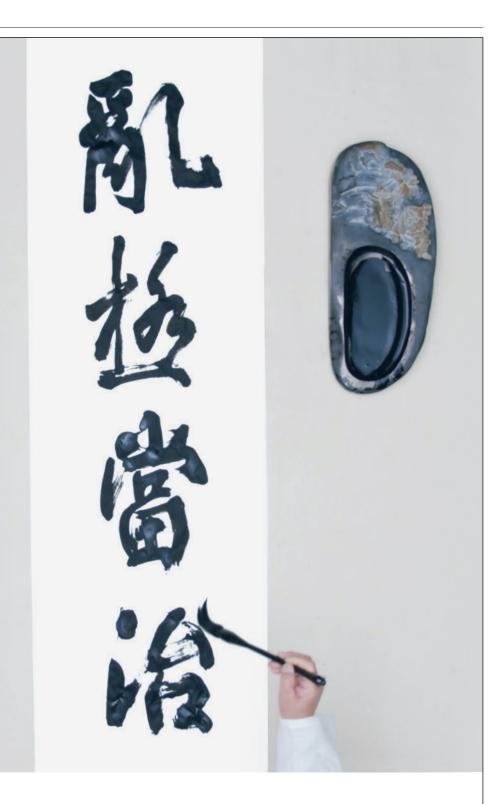


"The Tempest," circa 1505, by Giorgione. Oil on canvas; 32.2 inches by 28.7 inches. Gallerie dell'Accademia.

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



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TRADITIONAL CULTURE

'The Evil CCP Will Crumble': Polish-Born Artist Depicts Children Persecuted in China

PETA EVANS

or one Polish-born artist who grew up under communist rule in the '50s and '60s, learning of the persecution endured by families and children of faith in modern-day China was shocking,

Having lived through oppression herself as a child during Poland's post-Stalinist era lends credence to one of her paintings in which she portrays the "often overlooked" suffering of the children whose parents have been persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

"Children are an easy target after they take the parents away," Australian artist Barbara Schafer told The Epoch Times. "Chinese children are being bullied for their faith, many are excluded from school, punished for attending church and religious activities outside of school, forced into reciting anti-religion and pro-atheism slogans, and coerced into signing documents renouncing their faith."

Schafer, now 68, was only 12 glassblower, died in communistcontrolled Poland in 1965 after having been incarcerated in a concentration camp during World War II. He survived the camp, but not the afterward.

Soviet gulags and from starvation," Schafer said. "At the same time, double-size trains were going 24 hours a day to the Soviet Union, stealing everything from Poland they desired."

Growing Up

in Communist Poland

Born in Skawina near Krakow in 1953, just eight years after the end of World War II, Schafer said that it was "another dark page in our history" and "a day the Polish people will never forget" when the allies handed over the territories of Poland and other Eastern European countries to the Soviet regime at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. "The traitors and the party mem-

years old when her own father, a poor health he suffered for years

over the war's end was overshadowed by the reality of living under their Schafer would grow up learning what it meant to suffer from oppression.

"Many of my family members have been persecuted by the ruthless, tyrannical communist regime," said Schafer. She's lived in Melbourne since 1987 after first having migrated from Poland to New Zealand 10 years prior with her husband, an aircraft engineer, when she was 24.

bers lived in extreme wealth and

opulence," she said. "As for the rest

of the people, some were still happy

because the war had ended; they

shared their joys and drowned their

For the Polish people, happiness

sorrows in vodka."

As a child, believing that the Polish media was working for the people, young Schafer had once written letters to the newspaper and radio expressing her concerns—and suffered the bitter consequences. "My mother was punished for it,"



Barbara Schafer with her oil painting "Gratitude" on exhibit at the 2019 NTD International Figure Painting Competition in New York.



"The Sea of Suffering" by Barbara Schafer. Oil on canvas; 47 1/4 inches by 47 1/4 inches.

(Above) A detail of "The Sea of Suffering" oil painting: An 8-month-old baby boy, Meng Hao, who was persecuted to death along with his mother.

The evil Chinese **Communist** Party will

crumble for torturing to death millions of good, innocent people.

Barbara Schafer, artist

Freedom of information, she discovered, was nonexistent. "Every letter that we got from the West was opened, and some information in it was painted over with black ink."

Schafer recalled how, from an early age, she used to stand guard at the window while her father listened to Radio Free Europe or Voice of America, telling him who was passing by, because there was a prison sentence for it.

'Some people could not be trusted," she said.

"As the communist rules were infiltrating every aspect of our society, people became more demoralized, arrogant, lazy, and selfcentered. Shops were getting more and more empty. Corruption and bribes were widespread, and the ration cards for food were introduced."

Referring to communist indoctrination in schools, Schafer, now a mother and grandmother, said that the Polish children all knew that some teachers were "lying to keep their jobs," but in truth, they really wished to hold on to their

It was determined faith that gave the Polish people hope, she said.

"What the Soviets could not do in Poland was to destroy the faith in God that kept the Polish people going," she said. "The government knew that destroying churches would lead to their demise. Unfortunately, they had spies among the clergy as well."

She said that many of the good clergymen were persecuted and killed for standing against com-

By 1960, the Soviets had built a huge steel refinery named after Vladimir Lenin (the Lenin Steelworks) on the outskirts of Krakow, as well as an aluminum smelter on the other side. However, Schafer said that the refineries' chimneys didn't have filters, and the industrial constructions were in stark contrast to the rest of the historic city.

"My beloved city of Krakow, the city of Polish kings and culture, was being eroded. The intricate architectural details were affected as well as people's health," said Schafer, who has worked in the restoration and conservation of historical



Barbara Schafer as a child with her parents in Poland.

'The Sea of Suffering' in Communist China

Poland became free from communist rule with the overthrow and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Schafer believes that the same fate will be faced by China's communist regime today.

"Just like with the persecution of Christians during the Roman Empire, the evil CCP will crumble for torturing to death millions of good, innocent people," she said.

The ongoing abuses against children in communist China are of immense concern to Schafer, who studied fine arts for seven years in Poland. Her oil painting "The Sea of Suffering" was produced in honor of the silent suffering of Falun Gong children who have died or lost parents as a result of the CCP's now-22-year persecution of the faith.

"Many became orphans or lost family members they loved. A beautiful rainbow takes some of them to heaven," Schafer said, referring to the children in her painting, whom she has depicted sitting on white lotus flowers-representing "purity and innocence" reaching as far as the horizon.

Each child depicted in the painting is a real child with a true story of persecution.

One child is an 8-month-old baby boy, Meng Hao, who was persecuted to death along with his mother on Nov. 7, 2000, because she practiced Falun Gong. According to the coroner's exam, the mother's neck her skull was sunken, and there was a needle stuck in her waist. There were two black-and-blue spots on her baby son's head, and there was blood in his nose. There were two deep bruises around his little ankles, which were likely caused when he was handcuffed by his feet and hung upside down.

In Schafer's painting, baby Meng Hao is seen clutching a closed lotus flower, which represents his deceased mother. He's also in the rainbow, which is taking him to

Another child, Huang Ying, who is depicted in the painting lost her mother to the persecution when she was 18 months old. When Ying



Schafer. Oil on canvas: 45.7 inches by 33 inches. saw her alive; her mother was persecuted to death on Dec. 5, 2002. Her father, also a Falun Gong practitioner, was detained in a labor camp at the time and didn't even know his wife had died. Ying was then raised by her grandparents,

who couldn't afford to send her to

"Children suffer in silence," Schafer said. "Often, they are born into a suffering world. They accept it because they don't know anything else, but deep inside, the damage is horrendous."

and good values will prevail," hopes her paintings will spark curiosity in some viewers. She says that even if for a moment they ponder about the meaning of life, her work is not

Schafer especially likes to depict the "purity and good nature" of children from different countries in her artworks. "They have so much in common before they grow up and become influenced by their society,"

A couple of her paintings of children have been displayed at various traditional costume of their family's Korean heritage—which was displayed at the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition in New York in 2019; and her portraits of children dressed in traditional Polish costume, displayed at a Polish community art exhibition titled "Roots" in Melbourne, Australia, in

"I truly believe that the only way out for mankind is if people correct their own mistakes and improve their kindness and compassion for each other," she said.

never

Michelangelo

finished 'The

Deposition,

and the

sculpture

FINE ARTS

Did Michelangelo Destroy His Sculpture 'The Deposition'?

A major restoration reveals a bit more about the myth of the 'Bandini Pietà'

Continued from Page 1

The most well-known is the Vatican Pietà that he created as a young artist. For that work, many thought he rendered Mary too young to have an adult child. On hearing this, Michelangelo simply said she appeared youthful because sin ages

In his old age, Michelangelo

started sculpting "The Deposition" along with the Rondanini Pietà (now in Milan). During that time, he was also the architect of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, one of his most challenging projects. He likely spent countless hours carving the pieces, snatching small pockets of time while overseeing the works at St. Peter's.

It's important to note that "The

Deposition" is not Michelangelo's alone. He gave the unfinished work to his servant Antonio da Casteldurante, who entrusted it to the sculptor Tiberio Calcagni to repair. Calcagni died before he finished his repairs. Art historian and friend of Michelangelo, Giorgio Vasari commented that the sculpture was better off for Calcagni's death: Calcagni finished St. Mary Magdalene, making her smaller, and he badly repaired Christ's broken arm, as well as adding additional marble pieces to the work.

Antonio sold the work to the banker Francesco Bandini, hence the reason "The Deposition" is commonly called the "Bandini Pietà." After some changes of hands, Cosimo III de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, bought the work in 1671. The sculpture was moved to Florence, where it spent nearly 50 years in the crypt of San Lorenzo Church (St. Lawrence Church), and then over 250 years in Florence Cathedral. In 1981, it was moved

to the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Museum of Works at the Duomo), where it's been ever since.

A Revealing Conservation

Despite its being one of Michelangelo's famous works, and other than Calcagni's repairs some 470 years ago, "The Deposition" has had only routine conservation treatments, such as cleaning and general main-

The major restoration efforts have made a striking difference. The American-based nonprofit Friends of Florence Foundation funded the restoration work, and the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore (Work of St. Mary of the Flower) commissioned and directed the restoration, which began in 2019.

All the signs of an aging monument have been removed, thanks to the conservation efforts led by Paola Rosa and Emanuela Peiretti, alongside in-house and outside experts. Conservators used cotton wool soaked in deionized water, which was sometimes heated, to remove the grime. Scalpels were carefully applied to areas that had stubborn dirt. Now, the sculpture has lost its

amber tint to reveal splendid white marble. Gone is the plaster residue left from a cast taken in 1882. Gone is the wax coating that conservators had hoped would protect the work from drying out after the cast had been taken. Gone are the centuriesold deposits of dust and wax. The grime marred exquisitely carved details such as the drapery folds and sculptural reliefs.

As part of the conservation effort, experts tested the marble and discovered that it was mined in Seravezza in Tuscany, from a quarry once owned by the preeminent Medici family. Experts previously believed that it was made of Carrara marble, the Tuscan quarry Michelangelo is famously associated with.

Michelangelo had concerns about the quality of marble mined at Seravezza. He had used Seravezza marble for the façade of St. Lawrence Church in Florence, as directed by Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici (who later became Pope Leo X). The artist found that it appeared pure on the surface but was prone to minute cracks and sudden veining, which were difficult to detect.

Did Michelangelo Destroy 'The Deposition'?

Conservators detected none of Michelangelo's destructive hammer blows on the piece, but those could have been erased by someone later. That part of the story is

Analysis of "The Deposition" marble, however, confirmed that the block was flawed. The marble was riddled with inclusions of pyrite, commonly known as fool's gold, which caused dramatic sparks to fly when struck with a chisel. Numerous minute cracks were found on the back and front of the sculpture's base, leading experts to conclude that Michelangelo may have had to



A conservator carefully cleans the "Bandini Pietà," one of Michelangelo's unfinished

stop working on "The Deposition." Michelangelo may not have destroyed his work after all, but it makes for a good story.

Visitors to the Museum of Works

never made it to his tomb.

at the Duomo (Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) have until March 30, 2022, to view "The Deposition" up close, in the same workshop space where it was restored. To find out more, visit Duomo.Firenze.it

A Most Influential, Yet Nearly Forgotten Figure

A new biography on Sarah Josepha Hale

DUSTIN BASS

It's a name that many, if not most, people are unfamiliar with—unless they remember the name of the author who wrote the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb." I was unfamiliar with Sarah Josepha Hale until reading this book, but upon completing it, I feel a sense of regret knowing that she has been all but forgotten. Melanie Kirkpatrick's new book "Lady Editor: Sarah Josepha Hale and the Making of the Modern American Woman" looks to change that, at least to some degree.

The story of Hale is one of perseverance, courage, and talent, girded by wisdom. Kirkpatrick takes the reader through Hale's young life that begins in 1788 (died, 1879), the year that the Constitution was ratified. The following year, President George Washington made his Thanksgiving proclamation. This holiday would play a pivotal role in Hale's life.

Kirkpatrick has delivered a well-written. well-researched, and inspirational story.

Hale: A Woman of Perseverance

As a woman in the early 19th century, Hale did not receive a formal college education, but her brother, who attended Dartmouth, education that would greatly improve her Beecher Stowe. life after her marriage ended in tragedy.

Kirkpatrick only briefly describes the marriage, but gives just enough detail to tell the reader that Sarah was unquestionably in love and happy with David Hale. But one fateful night—fateful for numerous

reasons-he would contract pneumonia and die, leaving her with four children

and another on the way.

and editor Sarah

Buell, circa 1830

Kirkpatrick highlights the virtues in Hale that give any character—real or imagined—the ability to succeed. Her perseverance is ever-present in the book, from her time as a seamstress struggling to make ends meet to her time as editor of one of the most influential magazines in America.

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The author takes the reader on a long journey of how perseverance guided Hale toward her North Star: literature. While a seamstress, she made time to write and submit her writings. She had talent, and this talent was discovered. Once discovered, she was offered an opportunity to become a magazine editor, and this opportunity would require several difficult sacrifices: She had to move to another town and to settle her children, save one, with

Hale: The Editor

The decision to take the job came with some criticism, but Hale's decision would prove worthwhile, not only for herself and her children but also for the nation. She would eventually go on to become editor of Godey's Lady's Book. Under her leadership, the magazine would experience a boon, growing from 10,000 subscribers in her first year to 150,000 subscribers 23 years later. At the time, the average number of magazine subscribers was 7,000.

As an editor, she had an eye for talent, publishing some of America's greatest writterms. But one would err in doing so. Hale ers in their early years, including Nathaniel gave her "a rough equivalent." It was this Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, and Harriet

> Her work was not restricted to the editorship of the magazine. She wrote plenty from books and poetry to letters to the most powerful people in the world, including President Abraham Lincoln and Queen Victoria. Her writings, whether public or

private, had powerful sway. This sway, however, did not stem from manipulation or the power of her personal influence. No, as Kirkpatrick demsway stemmed dom. It was steeped in

and ideals that she felt One of lish Thanksgiving as a national holiday. Over the years that has been all but lost to history. as editor, she petitioned a long string of presidents on the

Thanksgiving cause,

requesting they do what

Washington did. She viewed

the holiday as a possible moment

Ultimately, at Hale's behest, Lincoln fi-

nally made that Washington-esque proc-

lamation in 1864, shortly after the Battle

of Gettysburg. Since that year, the country

has continued to celebrate the holiday in

unity, though it wasn't until 1941 that it

Hale was undoubtedly a pioneer for

women. Kirkpatrick demonstrates how

she became a guiding figure for many

of America's women, regardless of age,

socioeconomic level, or location (rural

or urban). "Lady's Book" proved a near

be-all and end-all for American soci-

ety by providing influential works of

literature, tips on etiquette, and even

Hale's magazine and her monthly

editor's column helped pave the way

for women to enter into other areas of

the workforce. It often celebrated pio-

neering women, like author Frances

Hodgson Burnett, nursing innovator

Florence Nightingale, and astronomer

Maria Mitchell. Certainly, her own suc-

cess was an influence and a convincing

From the book's cover, one might

view Hale's "making of the modern

American woman" in strictly modern

aspect of the argument as well.

'Modern' as a Misnomer

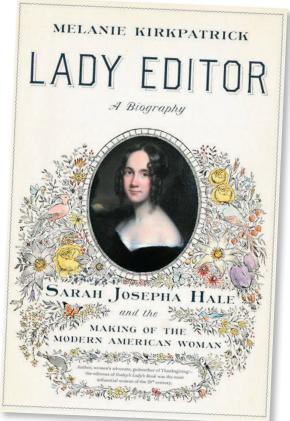
recipes—the first magazine to do so.

was adopted as a national holiday.

Hale: A Pioneer for Women

of unity for the country.

Dustin Bass is the co-host of "The Sons of History" podcast and an author.



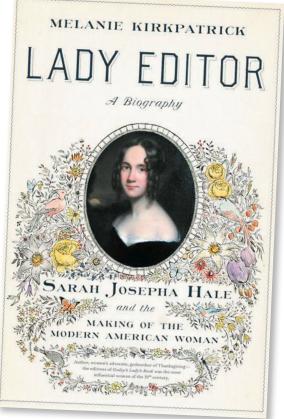
'Lady Editor: Sarah would be appalled at some major aspects of the modern feminist movement that have American Woman'

a littleinfluential woman of

appall the modern feminist in return. Kirkpatrick openly presents Hale's views that were controversial then and are controversial now, though for very different reasons. In some instances, Hale may appear self-contradicting, but her opinions were always well thought-out. She wanted women to be able to enter the workforce, but didn't believe they should be in every industry. She wanted women to be an influence on society, but defended the temperance movement far more than the suffrage movement. She felt women shouldn't demean their moral standing by involving themselves in politics, even at the foundational level of voting. She wanted unity for the country, but never wrote or allowed stories directly discussing the Civil War.

Hale was more than the author of one of our most famous nursery rhymes and godmother of the Thanksgiving holiday. Her ability to thrive at a time when widows with numerous children were typically destined to a life of struggle, even poverty, makes for an inspiring story. Kirkpatrick has delivered a well-written, well-researched, and inspirational story about a historical figure

In a twist of irony at the end of the book, Kirkpatrick notes that Hale has yet to be inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York. Perhaps this book will inspire modern American women to do so. Regardless, Kirkpatrick has done a service for Hale by placing her where she belongs: in the modern Ameri-



ushered in the sexual revolution, abortion rights, and an abandonment of traditional Melanie Kirkpatrick American values. Kirkpatrick's chapter "The Dignity of Housekeeping" might well Encounter Books Hardcover

book about known yet the 19th century.

FINE ARTS

Divine Art and the Heritage of Beauty to Be Discussed at Chicago Conference

An invitation to 'Return to Beauty,' the Catholic Art Institute's annual conference

LORRAINE FERRIER

The late philosopher and writer Sir Roger Scruton famously said: "I want to persuade you that beauty matters; that it is not just a subjective thing, but a universal need of human beings. If we ignore this need we find ourselves in a spiritual desert."

The award-winning classically trained painter Kathleen Carr founded the Chicagobased nonprofit Catholic Art Institute (CAI) because she felt that we had already drifted into that desert, she wrote in an email.

"Today our cultural heritage of beauty is threatened. Within academia, in major art institutions, in our culture at large, and regrettably, within the church itself, traditional standards of beauty are often seen as irrelevant or are directly attacked," she said.

The CAI exists to quench our inherent thirst for beauty. It ardently focuses on "restoring a culture of beauty, truth, and goodness," according to the institute's website. To achieve such noble goals, the CAI supports artists who offer their gifts for the greater glory of God, through prayers, networking, and educational events.

After missing two years, on Oct. 24 the CAI will resume its largest and most prestigious event: its annual conference and gala. The conference will bring together leading artists and scholars to focus on the "Return to Beauty."

Following a choral High Mass in Chicago's historic St. John Cantius Church, speakers will present in The Drake Hotel's Grand Ballroom, followed by an elegant banquet. The event will conclude with a question and answer panel discussion moderated by The Federalist's art critic William Newton.

Scruton gave the keynote address at the CAI's inaugural conference in 2017, when the institute was known as the Catholic Art Guild. This year, the keynote speaker will be Rome-based art historian, author, and tour guide Elizabeth Lev. In her talk, titled "Returning to Wonder: Lessons From the Giants of Italian Art," Lev will discuss why Christians initially became involved with art and how they employed human creativity to underscore key Christian beliefs. She will demonstrate her talk by looking at masterpieces from the Renaissance, the Counter-Reformation period, and the Baroque era, by reminding us of our purpose.



covering "giants of Italian art" such as Mi-

chelangelo, Caravaggio, and Bernini. Other speakers include New York Post op-editor, columnist, and author Sohrab Ahmari, who will talk about "liminality, communitas, and beauty" in reference to cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's defense of the Tridentine Mass, the traditional

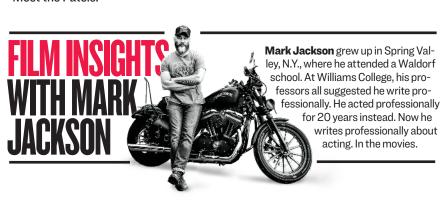
Latin Mass In his talk, "Beauty Will Save the World," producer and director Cameron O'Hearn will discuss how art changed the course of his life, and how artists can change the world

As Scruton reminded us: "The great artists of the past were aware that human life is full of chaos and suffering. But they had a remedy for this. And the name of that remedy was beauty." The CAI's conference "Return to Beauty," could be just the antidote for these tumultuous times.

All are welcome to attend the Catholic Art Institute's "Return to Beauty Conference & Gala"; attendees need not be Catholics or institute members to attend. To find out more and to purchase tickets, visit CatholicArtInstitute.org



Brother and sister filmmakers chart the journey to matrimony—Indian style, in



POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

A Traditional Quest to Find an Indian Wife (in America)

Parents

Champa and

Vasant pretty

much steal

Meet the Patels'

Geeta Patel, Ravi Patel

Ravi Patel, Geeta Patel,

Running Time

MPAA Rating

Release Date

Sept. 11, 2015

1 hour, 28 minutes

Champa V. Patel, Vasant K.

the show.

MARK JACKSON

Is the dating scene in America so different from that of India? Indian and American cultures couldn't be more dissimilar; theirs is roughly 11,000 years old—ours is 245 years young. The very heartwarming (an LA Film Festival win in the Audience Award category for Best Feature Documentary) "Meet the Patels" explores the often sidesplittingly funny differences.

Here's a cultural-difference example: When Bollywood finds a Hollywood script with Indian crossover potential, there are still many rewrites that have to take place before Indians are able to understand what's going on. Take, for example, a Western like as a high plains drifter in India. Clint Eastwood riding through the desert all by himself ... What is that? Indians can't culturally contextualize Clint.

Clint must be enhanced with aunts, uncles, cousins, and nieces—a large, extended family. Then they can understand Clint in Mumbai. It's fun to imagine a paterfamilias Clint Eastwood in cowboy hat, beard stubble, and poncho leading a large family through the desert, with babies in diapers, uncles wearing Achkans and Bandhgalas, the family Bengal cat, the kitchen sink, and a couple of pairs of those boxy, wraparound sunglasses for both maternal and paternal grandmothers. Suffice it to say, when it comes to India, it's all about the family. Us? Not so much. So how do they date?

'Thank You India'

Alanis Morissette sang that. I myself never understood what she was talking about, but after seeing "Meet the Patels," I'm pretty sure Alanis was thanking India for its Patels, because there's an insane number of them and they're all very nice.

"Meet the Patels" is about one Ravi Patel (that's roughly Indian for John Smith), whose time for finding a good wife is running out. Ravi is filmmaker Geeta Patel's brother. He's a 29-year-old actor who lives in LA, with sister Geeta.

His mom and dad (Champa and Vasant) would like Ravi to marry a nice Indian girl. If it's another Patel, so much the better. There are a variety of Patels, as we come to learn. Ravi's definitely down for all of that. He's all for upholding the traditions and cultural richness of his heritage. Problem is, unbeknownst to his parents, he previously had a ginger-haired, freckle-faced white girlfriend—Audrey from Connecticut (the love of his life, he'd never had a girlfriend before her)—for a couple of years. All the pressure that Vasant and Champa put on him to marry an Indian girl tragically caused him to break up with Audrey.

'Hey, We Could Make a Film About ...'

So with parental pressure to marry, neither sibling getting lucky, both in showbiz, in America, the Indian subculture of matriAmericans ... what's that spell? A prepackaged documentary filmmaking opportunity! Ravi goes on a parent-sanctioned, nationwide dating spree, which makes extensive

monial matchmaking not being known by

Ravi and Geeta Patel in a promotional shot.

use of "biodata." That's basically a marriagecandidacy résumé that came into existence in India to facilitate a more rapid, universal assimilation of the yottabytes of Patel data. This biodata makes the rounds, rapidly covering enormous ground and shrinking the time-space continuum of the Patel eligiblespouse universe. Add to that, Indian internet dating websites and, lastly, a speed-dating Patel Matrimonial Convention.

Turns out that "Patel" is not only a widespread name, it's almost a caste unto itself. And there are two different types of Patels. No wait! Three! There are so many, Vasant almost forgot how many.

Cultural Insights

This Patel dating-ritual display is sort of wonderfully Discovery Channel-like, sprinkled here and there with storyboard-type animated sequences, and Geeta's contributions in the time-honored "hidden man" comedy motel run by a different Patel family, there's

Using Hot Chocolate's lyric "I believe in miracles! Where ya from, you sexy thing?" as background music to Ravi's first date, Geeta captures many of Ravi's amusing pre-date hair-mousse fiddlings and post-date, slightly traumatized "What just happened to me?" thousand-yard stares.

There are some hilarious, fellow Indian marriage-seeker discussions about inter-Indian racial prejudices and resultant practices, such as the widespread slathering of a skinlightening lotion called "Fair and Lovely" (male version: "Fair and Handsome") as well as the labels of the various gradients of skin tone, such as "wheat-ish-brown."

Ravi is a wheat-ish-brown man himself. It would have been interesting to see the Indian version of gradients-of-brown labels compared and contrasted with their African-American counterparts, such as "cinnamon" and "chocolate." Ravi Indian-accent mocks his mother: "If my mom saw me in the sun right now, she'd be like, 'Yourrr merrrit valyooo eez plummetinggg!""

Progress?

Ravi's dates keep coming up short. Is he too picky? His parents vehemently think so, especially Champa, who's a known, skilled matchmaker of excellent repute. According to her, if you can get the education

and religion to match up, it's pretty much a slam-dunk. Ravi's just gotta go for it. Her son should just stop this American noncommittal foolishness. "You will be 60 years old, and still you will be saying, 'I think I am making

Scene Stealers

Champa and Vasant pretty much steal the show. They're quick with one-liners and playful matrimonial trash talk. It's heartwarming to experience what feels like a professional level of marriage, as opposed to the endless, amateur, two-years-anda-divorce situation that mostly goes on in America these days.

All in all, these Patels are such nice people. You get involved in Ravi's search, ride the emotional rollercoaster of laughs and disappointments, and root for both brother and sister to find their soulmates.

Also, you may experience a bit of envy. There's a wonderful sequence describing how all the various Patel factions add up to one gigantic family, and how if one Patel family on vacation happens by chance to stay at a an immediate "family reunion." The worr en cook, the children play, the men discuss manly things like politics while sitting naked in the bathtub together, and when it's time to leave, everyone cries. They may never see each other again. But they are family. This is priceless.

This is also very good cultural diplomacy, because so far probably the only impression Americans have of Patels comes from the movie "Glengarry Glen Ross," in an Al Pacino rant about trying to sell real estate to a Patel. Roughly: "Patel? Patel?! If the gods Shiva and Vishnu handed this guy a million dollars, told him, 'Sign the deal!' he wouldn't sign!"

Which gave us the impression that Indians named Patel are indecisive. But maybe that's just Americanized Patels, since Ravi can't seem to sign off on any spousal deal either, and as we're shown throughout "Meet the Patels," Indian men get married in a heartbeat and stay married until their hearts stop beating.

However, Ravi can't sign on the dotted marriage line because of another reason altogether. To find out what that might be, you'll just have to see the movie. Meanwhile, Ravi's cast-ability in Hollywood skyrocketed post "Meet the Patels." Will success in showbiz enhance his résumé? I'm wondering if there will be a "Meet the Patels II." Personally, I'm liking "Ravi Went A-Courtin' and He Did Find" as a title.



(L-R) Meet the family: Champa, Geeta, Vasant, and Ravi Patel.



Ravi and Audrey, his American sweetheart with whom he broke up before hunting for an Indian wife

Week 42, 2021 THE EPOCH TIMES

PERFORMING ARTS

ARTIST PROFILE

Beauty Through Tradition: Shen Yun

What 'beauty' means to Evangeline Zhu whose mission is to revive 5,000 years of civilization

CATHERINE YANG

vangeline Zhu was at Lincoln Center in New York, hours away from stepping on stage, when she got the news: The show would not go on. In the 14 years that Shen Yun Performing Arts had been performing, seldom had there been a canceled show—though the Chinese Communist Party has certainly tried to have Shen Yun canceled. Zhu thought it was a joke; it turned out to be anything but. A pandemic was sweeping across the world, shuttering gathering places and venues for art and entertainment.

It was a year and a half before Zhu could come face-to-face with the audience once more. In September, she took to the stage in Stamford, Connecticut, with a heart of

"It's pretty exciting," she said ahead of the show. "It's been a year since I've seen

In that interim period, Zhu and her dancer colleagues in Shen Yun have kept busy. In recent years, the New York-based dance company has been perfecting and reviving a dance method that has been lost to modern-day China.

Body Language

Zhu says that dance is a body language. "You have to use your body to express what you're feeling, to communicate your message to the audience," she said.

As such, the ancient method of "shen dai shou," or the body leading the arms and hands, has completely changed the way Shen Yun's classical Chinese dance looks on stage. In essence, the technique does exactly what its name says: The body leads the arms and hands into movement, and the body is alive with movement in dance.

"When you can communicate from the heart, that's the strongest expression," Zhu said. "And then, you can communicate even without words."

A requirement of this method is that the force driving upper body movement begins at the center of the body, over the heart. So essentially, you are dancing from the heart, and the dance is even more expressive, Zhu explained. "After learning this method, our classical Chinese dance is grander, clearer, and gives people this sense of brightness."

This is a method that appears only in name in old dance and pedagogy books, but the instructions for how to do it and how to teach it have otherwise been completely lost. Yet, those who are familiar with Shen Yun's mission seem to grasp why Shen Yun is the only dance company that has recovered this sought-after method: Shen Yun seeks to revive the true traditional Chinese culture, Zhu said.

She explained that from careful research and restoration of traditional dance techniques to living out traditional values, like the Confucian virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity, all of Shen Yun's artists have pursued this path of tradition in order to bring audiences something truly bright and positive.

"Dance expresses what is in your heart,





Shen Yun's Upcoming Performances

Modesto	California	until Oct. 27
Escondido	California	Oct. 23-24
Cedar Rapi	ds Iowa	Oct. 23-24
Detroit	Michigan	Oct. 27-31
Phoenix	Arizona	Oct. 27-28
Thousand Oaks California Oct. 30-31		
Fresno		Oct. 30-31
Albuquerque New Mexico Nov. 1-2		
Boise		Nov. 2-3
Denver	Colorado	Nov. 4-7
Norfolk	Virginia	Nov. 5-6

Florida Nov. 8-9

New Brunswick
New Jersey Nov. 20-21 For additional performance dates,

please check ShenYun.com/tickets

cultivating their character, working on their hearts," she said. "We strive to do everything to the standard of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance."

and Shen Yun's dancers are, step by step,

A Bright Feeling

Zhu's mother had an unrealized dream of being a dancer, so before she had Zhu, she had the thought that if her child ever showed an interest in dance, she would support it. As a young girl, Zhu took dance classes, but she had no concept of dance as a career. And then she heard of Shen Yun.

"I think it was fated," she said. She saw what looked like ethereal beings gliding across the stage, and remembers the physical sensation of what felt like a winged horse-drawn chariot soaring above her during the show's opening. Becoming part NTD contributed to this report. of Shen Yun became her dream.

This is another thing that Zhu thinks Shen Yun does differently: From the moment the curtains open, the audience is *please visit ShenYunPerformingArts.org*

invited into a world that is bright, beautiful, and wonderful.

"There's actually a lot of hopelessness and listlessness in the world, but then suddenly you see this scene of wonder, and it kind of washes away the negative. ... You see something bright and positive—and grand. You experience something greater than yourself, and somehow the day-to-day troubles feel lesser."

"It's a scene of heaven," she said.

"Dance and music transcends culture: this is why any audience understands Shen Yun," Zhu said. "Things like truth, goodness, and beauty are universal."

"And I think art that can inspire and elevate people is what is truly beautiful," she said. "Art can elevate us—and I think art is something we all need in our lives."

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts. For more information

A Gentle Reminder to Think Righteously: 'Temptation of Sir Percival'

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

ERIC BESS

Achieving great things often means passing great tests. Our tests frequently deal with overcoming some type of hardship, and some of our greatest hardships are those in which our characters are tempted. The "Temptation of Sir Percival," a painting by English painter Arthur Hacker, depicts a moment of temptation from the

book "Le Morte d'Arthur (The Death of Arthur)" by the 15th-century English author Thomas Malory.

A Knight's Story

"The Death of Arthur" retells the story of King Arthur, his Knights of the Round Table, and the quest for Holy Grail. As the story goes, Sir Percival, one of the Knights of the Round Table, attempts to find another of the knights, Sir Galahad.

There is a point in the story where Sir Percival loses his horse and is given another by a mysterious woman. Sir Percival mounts his new horse and rides it until, after praying to God for safety while crossing a river, the horse reveals itself to be a fiend, which dies in the water. Realizing how close he was to being led to destruction, Sir Percival prays to God to protect him from temptation.

Back on foot, Sir Percival walks into a valley where he sees a snake fighting a lion. The knight, believing that the lion is the more righteous of the two animals, slays the snake. The lion shows its appreciation before leaving Sir Percival alone again.

The knight falls asleep and dreams that two women approach him. The younger woman sits upon a lion and, before she disappears, tells him to prepare for the greatest battle of his life.

The older woman sits upon a snake and

asks why he killed her snake. He apologizes and offers to make it up to her. She requests that he lay with her, which he refuses. She then tells him she will wait for him to let down his guard, and then she disappears. Sir Percival awakens and later sees sailing toward him a ship covered, within and without, in black silk. In the vessel is a beieweled woman of great beauty. She tells him that she saw Sir Galahad, and that she will show him where Sir Galahad is if he

will return a favor. Sir Percival agrees. She then offers him food and drink, and since he had not eaten in three days, he

Hacker depicted the moment in the story when Sir **Percival overcomes** temptation.



A bust of Arthur Hacker in bronze, 1884, by Edward Onslow Ford, from the Royal Academy Illustrated.

Eric Bess is a practicing

representational artist

and is a doctoral candi-

date at the Institute for

Doctoral Studies in the

accepts. He eats, and then drinks a most potent wine. In his drunkenness, he thinks the woman is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. Stirred by lust, Sir Pervical asks her to lay with him. They both undress. Before Sir Percival falls to temptation, he sees his sword—a reminder of his oath to be a righteous knight—and he prays. His prayer turns everything around them into black smoke, and the woman leaves with her ship. Sir Percival is ashamed and

punishes himself. He then meets with an older man who arrives on a ship covered in white silk. The older man tells him that the beautiful woman was the same one as in his dream, the one who rode in on a serpent, and that both were manifestations of the Devil.

Sir Percival would continue his journey, resist temptation, and become one of the three knights who sought the grail.

Hacker's 'The Temptation of Sir Percival' Hacker depicted the moment in the story when Sir Percival overcomes temptation. The focal point is Sir Percival, who is shown fully dressed in knight's armor. He sits upon the earth and holds a chalice in his hands. A halo representing his holiness surrounds his head, and he looks sternly at his sword. His sword stands upright,

plunged into the ground next to his helmet. To the left is the beautiful woman. She has flowers in her hair and wears a beautiful, flowing gossamer dress. However, her body is positioned as if she is a snake slithering toward her prey. She looks intently at Sir Percival as if she is waiting for him to take another drink of his wine and lay with her.

The environment also helps to tell the story. It is dusk, and the last rays of light fall upon Sir Percival's helmet and sword. Dying leaves surround them except around Sir Percival's helmet and sword—they sit amid greenery. In the background to the right, a shadowy childlike figure appears to snicker, revealing the event's deceptive

A Gentle Reminder to Resist Temptation To me, Sir Percival is such a relatable hero here. We all have fallen victim to temptation; we all have made decisions that we later regret. Sir Percival does things wrong until he is reminded to do right, and it is his sword that reminds him of his sacred oath—as a knight who strove to be pure of heart—to keep his mind on God.

There's another nugget of wisdom here: it is the gentleness of the sun's rays that directs Sir Percival's attention toward his sword—a weapon of force that he does not need to use here. Despite the temptation around him, he is calm and stoic. The gentle green growth around the items that remind him of his righteous oath suggests that true life does not come from giving in to temptation but comes from our ability to resist it.

We don't have to be angry, hateful, or even forceful in resisting temptations or in being reminded of our righteous potential. So often, we want to force our beliefs on others because we believe these beliefs are right. We want, by any means necessary, to be correct.

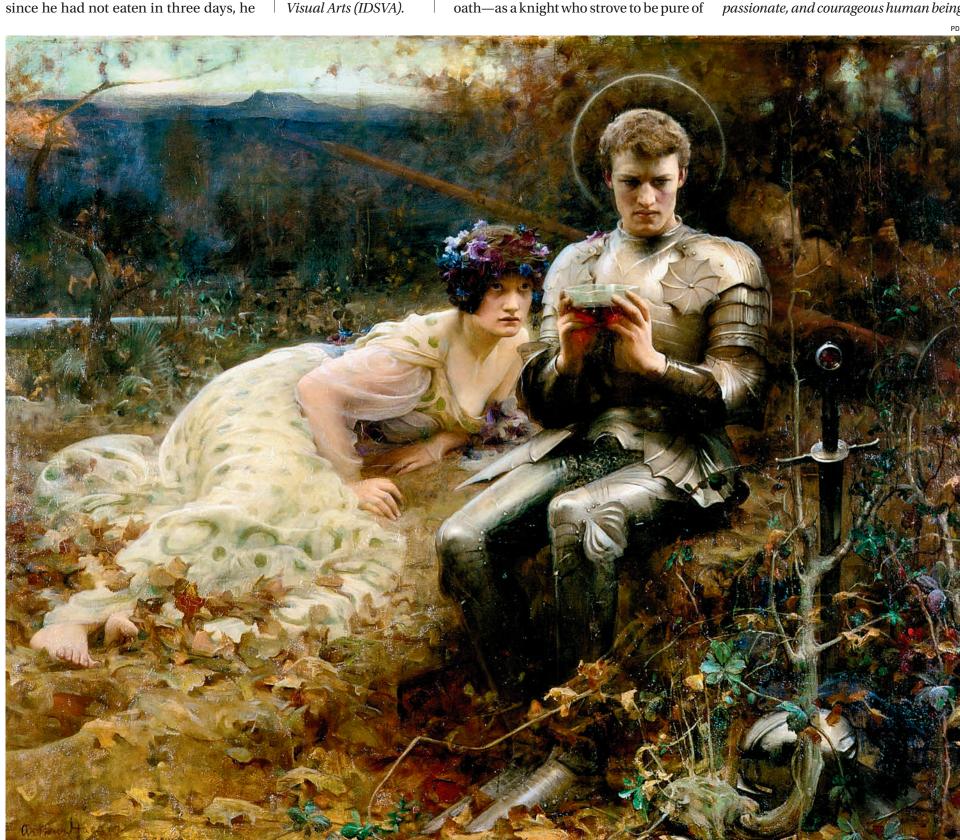
The combination of feeling right and forcing our beliefs on others can give us a sense of power, which can easily become a temptation in itself. In fact, when we force our beliefs on others, we often legitimize succumbing to this temptation in the confidence that we are doing good.

And how does Sir Percival resist temptation? He puts his mind on God. His focus is no longer on the woman, the source of his temptation (though she focuses on him). His righteous thoughts—represented by the halo around his head—reveals to us that his mind is on God.

The tempting illusion around him is no match for even the thought of God.

I often think that we are heroes on our own journeys. Today, our journeys are bombarded with temptations. They seem to be sewn into the fabric of our society. Temptation is so prevalent that it can sometimes be difficult to even identify them as such. But it's never too late to gently resist with righteous thoughts and with our minds on God.

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.



"Temptation of Sir Percival," 1894, by Arthur Hacker. Oil on Canvas, 52 inches by 62 inches. Leeds Art Gallery, England.

GOLDEN AGE FILMS

A Brilliant Mix of Drama, Comedy, and Memorable Characters

IAN KANE

A mysterious drifter rides his horse through a harsh yet beautiful desert land-scape. We see cracked earth and scrub brush in the foreground and a rugged range of mountains that sprouts up in the hazy background. Soon we see text scroll up that begins with: "After the Civil War, America, in the throes of rebirth, set its face West where the land was free. First came the cattlemen and with them 'Judge' Roy Bean ..."

Although William Wyler's hidden gem of a Western film, 1940's "The Westerner," starts off like many others, I soon discovered that this was a different cinematic animal altogether. With its drama, a bit of romance, and lots of side-splitting humor, I knew halfway into watching it that I'd add it to my Top 10 list—it's just that great.

As the film begins, a group of cattle herders are peeved that their stock keep getting caught on homesteaders' fences. The homesteaders have recently arrived and plopped down near the small town of Vinegaroon, Texas. When the cowboys spot the homesteaders responsible for putting up the fences, the two groups become involved in a running gunfight that results



Judge Roy Bean (Walter Brennan, L) and Cole Harden (Gary Cooper) match wits.



"The Westerner" is a refreshing take on the Western-film genre.

This film is one of the funniest Westerns I've ever seen (probably the funniest).

'The Westerner'

Director William Wyler

Starring Gary Cooper, Walter

Brennan, Doris

Davenport

Running Time

1 hour, 40 minutes

Not Rated

Release Date Sept. 20, 1940



in one of the homesteaders being captured for killing a cow.

ALL PHOTOS BY UNITED ARTISTS

The homesteader is brought into town, where he is quickly convicted of killing the cow, a crime for which the area's ultimate arbiter of law—Judge Roy Bean (Walter Brennan)—sentences the man to death. Since Bean is a "hangin' judge" who dispenses his highly dubious sentences from his saloon's long bar table—his court—the accused man is hastily hanged for his supposed offense. It's clear that Bean sides with the cattlemen.

Soon, the mysterious drifter, Cole Harden (Gary Cooper), arrives in town escorted in handcuffs by local lawmen. He's been accused of stealing a horse belonging to Bean's good drinking buddy Chickenfoot (Paul Hurst). Bean holds the trial at his saloon and not only convicts the drifter but also sentences him to hang. Harden, however, tells Bean that he has a lock of hair belonging to an English actress whom Bean is obsessed with, and that he'll send for it via mail back in El Paso. This buys Harden just enough time to kill the supposed real horse thief, who suddenly rides into town.

From there, Harden and Bean fall into a precarious friendship with each other. Harden reminds Bean of himself when he was a tricky and manipulative youngster, while Harden sees a somewhat charming, well-meaning man underneath his ruthless exterior.

Things become complicated when Harden meets some of the homesteaders, consisting of Wade Harper (Forrest Tucker), old-timer Caliphet Mathews (Fred Stone), and his daughter Jane Ellen (Doris Davenport). Jane Ellen charms Harden into staying a little longer before leaving for California, his ultimate destination.

But the next day, Harden discovers a plot that entails Wade leading a group of men into Vinegaroon in order to mete out their own justice. They're determined to lynch Judge Bean as revenge for killing their homesteader friend the previous day.

The stage is set for a showdown between the two groups: the local cattlemen, who believe that they should be able to herd their cattle across the open range, and the homesteaders who prefer to fence things off as boundaries of their property.

A Golden-Age Western With Laughs

This film is one of the funniest Westerns I've ever seen (probably the funniest), despite the literal gallows humor about the homesteader who is hanged at the start of the film. The back and forth between Bean and Harden as the two try to outwit one another is hilarious and reveals how versatile both Brennan (who won and Oscar for the role) and Cooper were as actors. You have to see their subtle eye movements and gestures to know what I'm talking about.

There are oddball characters aplenty. These include the town's boozer and gambler Chickenfoot, and its matter-of-fact undertaker Mort Borrow (Charles Halton), who takes body measurements of suspects before they've even been convicted and hanged.

After watching many serious Westerns by directors such as the great John Ford and Sam Peckinpah, I found this film to be a breath of fresh laughter mixed in with the unfolding drama that its unique characters engage in—all of whom seem believable.

Indeed, Vinegaroon is based on the real town of Langtry, Texas—a place that the real-life Judge Roy Bean bought and was later appointed as judge for the entire surrounding territory. "The Westerner" is likewise smack-dab in must-watch territory.

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

