

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & CULTURE

SACRED ART

Made for the Devout: The Gloriously Colorful World of Hispanic Sacred Sculptures

The Hispanic Society's exhibition 'Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh'

LORRAINE FERRIER

Unpainted stone, marble, or bronze sculptures dominate Western sacred art, largely thanks to Renaissance giants such as Donatello and Michelangelo, Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova. Therefore, when we think of sacred art, polychrome sculptures may not be at the forefront of our minds—unless we've spent time in Latin America or the Iberian Peninsula, that is, Spain or Portugal.

In the Hispanic world, sacred sculptures are polychromatic—colorfully painted. Each piece is purposefully infused with intense emotions, gestures, and vitality—all explicitly designed to teach Scripture and to inspire contemplation and devotion to God. Believers developed intimate relationships with these sublime, functional pieces.

The sacred sculptures of the Hispanic world acted as instruments of faith: to inspire devotion.

For many of us, the passion and sometimes graphic emotionality conveyed in Hispanic sacred art may feel foreign. Indeed, it's only relatively recently that scholars have taken more of an interest in the art form. That interest was piqued by the 2009 exhibition "The Sacred Made Real," which was organized by The National Gallery in London and The National Gallery of Art in Washington. Patrick Lenaghan told me in a telephone interview. Lenaghan is the head curator of prints, photographs, and sculpture at The Hispanic Society Museum & Library (HSM&L) in New York.

Hispanic polychrome sculpture between 1500 and 1800 is the focus of the society's recently opened exhibition "Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh." Curated by Lenaghan and his colleague H el ene Fontoira-Marzin, the HSM&L's head of conservation, the exhibition brings together over 20 wood and clay sculptures—nearly all of which are from HSM&L's own holdings.

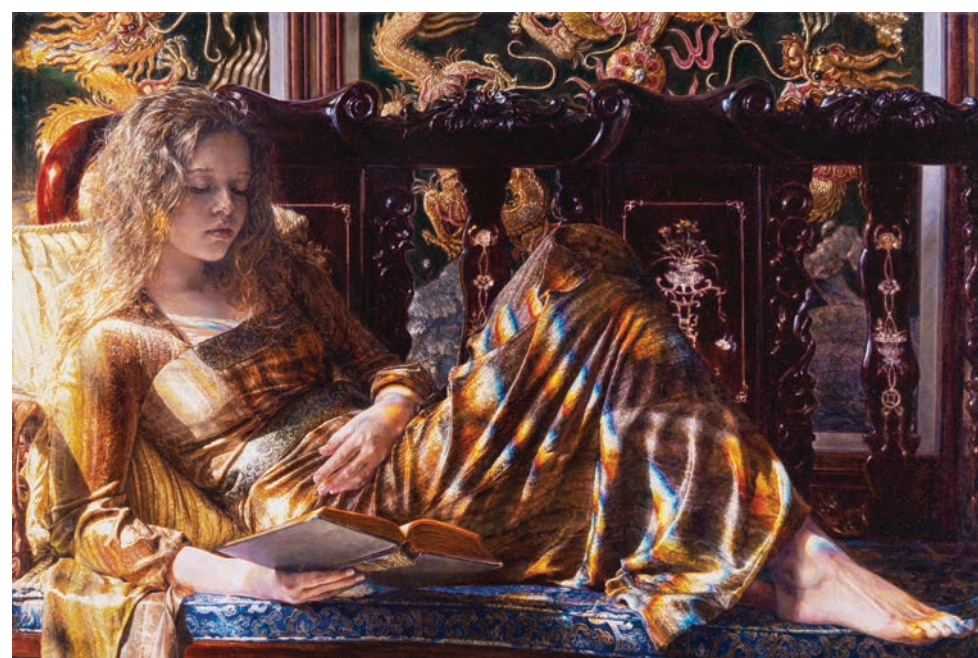
Through these works, the exhibition explores the different types of public and private sacred art in Spain and how this Spanish art tradition influenced Latin American sculpture.

Continued on Page 4



"The Resurrection," circa 1480–1500, attributed to Gil de Silo . Wooden altarpiece (pine), polychrome; 83 1/8 inches by 47 5/8 inches by 14 5/8 inches.

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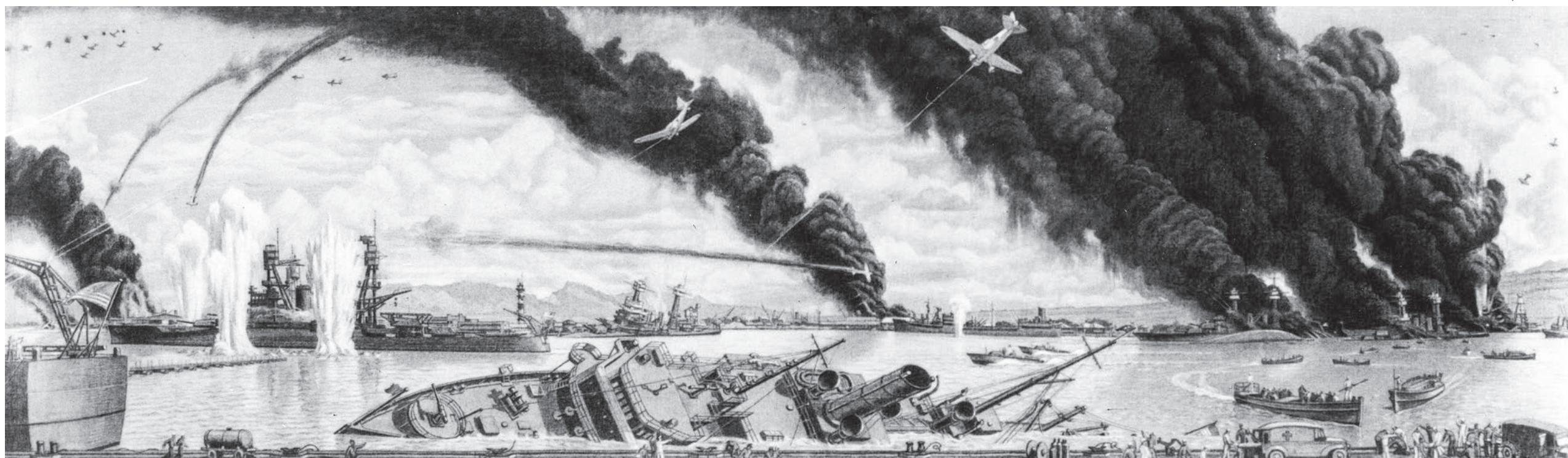
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The damage inflicted at Pearl Harbor roused the sleeping giant. Drawing by Cmdr. Griffith Bailey Coale, Official U.S. Navy Combat Artist, 1944.

HISTORY

An Event to Remember: The Consequences of Pearl Harbor

JEFF MINICK

Many of the planes came in low over the harbor that Sunday morning, unleashing their torpedoes on the moored ships and dropping their bombs on other vessels or on aircraft parked wing to wing on airfields. As Navy Admiral William Furlong said of the first plane that passed over his ship, the pilot was so close that "I could have hit him with a spud."

In less than two hours, hundreds of attacking airplanes marked with Japan's Rising Sun had inflicted a disastrous defeat on American military forces. Every battleship in the harbor was damaged, two of them beyond all repair, including the USS Arizona, which to this day rests beneath the waters. Overall, 19 ships and over 300 aircraft were crippled or destroyed, and over 2,400 sailors, soldiers, and civilians lost their lives.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of that surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by the forces of imperial Japan.

And that attack would change the face of the world forever.

The Sleeping Giant

There is no evidence that Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the mastermind behind the attack on Pearl Harbor, said that he feared this act of war would awaken a sleeping giant. Yet he spent the rest of Dec. 7 in what appeared to be a deep depression while his staff celebrated. He understood that a protracted war with America would end in Japan's defeat.

And that giant began rolling out of bed on the very day of the attack. In the Preface to Gordon Prange's "December 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor," edited by Katherine Dillon and Donald Goldstein, we read of a few military officers who failed to do their duty on that auspicious day. Then in the editor's introduction, they add:

"But for everyone who failed, hundreds rose to the occasion, performing under fire the tasks for which they had been trained. One admiral and two battleship captains died at their posts. Junior officers and enlisted men such as Ens. Francis C. Flaherty and Chief Water Tender Peter Tomich gave their lives to save the men in their charge. Two lieutenants of the Hawaiian Air Force got their planes up and shot down seven Japanese aircraft between them. Mess Attendant Doris Miller seized a machine gun and performed so valiantly that he became the first black man to receive the Navy Cross. Untold numbers worked without panic and without vainglory, simply because that was their job."

On Dec. 8, President Franklin Roosevelt appeared before Congress and opened his address with these famous words:

"Yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan."

He closed his short speech by asking Congress to declare that a state of war existed between Japan and the United States.

Three days later, Adolph Hitler declared war on the United States, in part because he believed that the Japanese empire was unbeatable.

Less than four years later, both Hitler's Third Reich and the islands of Japan lay prostrate, defeated and ruined.

America Goes to War

Historians continue to debate why our military was so poorly prepared to meet this attack, whether that circumstance stemmed from negligence or was deliberate, but that question is beyond the scope of this article. What did happen was that the sleeping giant awoke and was transformed into a tiger.

By the war's end, as many as 16 million American men and women had served in uniform. Soldiers, sailors, and airmen fought and died in faraway places that most Americans had never heard of, in battles like Guadalcanal and Midway, Tarawa and Iwo Jima, the Kasserine Pass and the Po River Valley.

Meanwhile, on the home front, American manufacturers pumped out engines of war—ships, tanks, aircraft, equipment—at an unbelievable rate. By the end of the war, for example, the Navy had grown from 700 commissioned ships to over 6,000. With few exceptions, civilians got behind their troops, planted Victory Gardens on their property for extra food, tolerated gas rationing cards, and closely followed accounts of the fighting in their newspapers and on the radio.

Aftermath at Home

America emerged from the war as the world's economic powerhouse.

Within just a few years, the nation went on a spending spree, buying everything from new cars to refrigerators, from televisions to homes. The G.I. Bill helped millions of ex-military men and women build homes, receive vocational training, or go off to universities, with the result that universities and colleges expanded or were built at an incredible rate. The subsequent "baby boom" of those years also meant the construction of vast numbers of elementary and secondary schools.

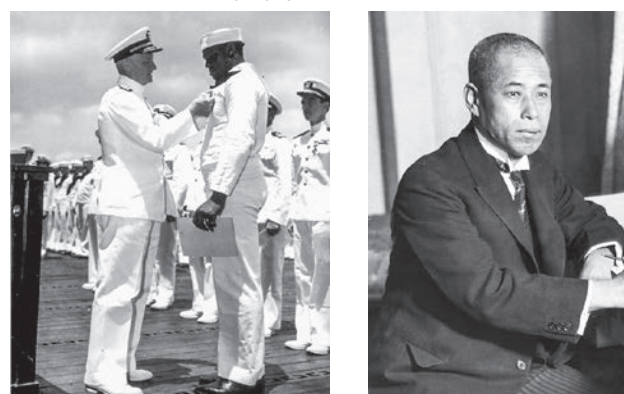
Victory in 1945 brought other sweeping cultural changes. Though many of the women who had worked in factories and offices married following the war and raised families at home, a large number remained in the workplace. And blacks who had fought against the Germans and the Japanese came home and fought for civil rights, eventually bringing an end to the Jim Crow laws of the South and winning equality in the public square.

RUSSELL LEE/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/GETTY IMAGES



(Left) The news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor brought a swift reaction from President Roosevelt, who delivered a speech to Congress. (Below) A portrait of Japan's Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto in 1934. Yamamoto planned and directed the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

PUBLIC DOMAIN



MULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

(Above left) Recognition of the brave enlisted blacks helped pave the way for the Civil Rights movement in the following decades. Adm. Chester W. Nimitz pins a Navy Cross on Mess Attendant 2nd Class Doris Miller aboard the USS Enterprise at Pearl Harbor. Official U.S. Navy photograph.

Meanwhile, technology and science brought enormous changes to American culture and society. Space travel, early computers, major advances in medical care, and all their ancillary advancements grew out of World War II and transformed American lives.

Global Generosity

In addition to the boom of prosperity at home, by war's end that seemingly catastrophic battle at Pearl Harbor had left the United States as the world's greatest international power alongside the Soviet Union.

And unlike communist Russia, which for over 40 years would oppress Eastern Europe and part of Germany, Americans sought to repair the war-broken world. This time, there was no repeat of the isolationist response that had followed the World War I. America sent vast sums of money to help rebuild Europe. It gave aid to its arch-foes, Germany and Japan, so much so that within 25 years both those former enemies had become economic powerhouses.

The United States also dispatched funds and expertise to the new nations in Africa and Asia. Through various organizations, the best-known of which is the Peace Corps, Americans themselves traveled to these distant lands to help build schools and hospitals, to dig wells, and to improve agrarian

practices. These financial packages often came with strings attached or with the hopes of blocking the expansion of communism, but they nonetheless bestowed on America its deserved reputation as the most generous country in the history of the world. Even today, America continues to send its money and its people to improve the lives of people around the globe.

Commemoration and a Question

Even today, when time has blurred past events, when so many Americans once again have never heard of Leyte or the Kasserine Pass, and when some in our culture work to eradicate as much of our history as they are able, most of us possess at least some minimal awareness of Pearl Harbor and what happened on Dec. 7. Though the names of many of the battles fought in the Pacific might today bring blank looks from those who hear them, Pearl Harbor stands as a representative for all of them. When we remember that event, we remember that far-flung war.

We might also recollect that this horrific war, fought around the world, led for better or for worse to the emergence of our country as the greatest power and proponent of liberty that the world had ever seen. The blood of that Midwestern farm boy who died on the sands of Okinawa was just one of hundreds of thousands of such sacrifices on the altar of freedom.

And finally, we might pause to consider our present situation. Eighty years ago, the Japanese prodded a sleeping giant. Americans rose to the occasion to defend their way of life and their liberties. But what about us today? Are we still capable of performing the deeds done by those men and women who roused themselves to go off to war, who devoted themselves to the cause of liberty? Do we still possess their love of country and their determination to fight for freedom?

Let us hope this is the case.

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.

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"The Ecstasy of St. Mary Magdalene," 1692–1706, by Luisa Roldán. Polychromed terracotta; 12 inches by 17 1/2 inches by 9 7/8 inches.

SACRED ART

Made for the Devout: The Gloriously Colorful World of Hispanic Sacred Sculptures

Continued from Page 1

Believers Depicted in the Sculptures
The sacred sculptures of the Hispanic world acted as instruments of faith: to inspire devotion. Lenaghan said that the sculptures were made for believers to engage with. They're "part of a living culture."

One of the ways the faithful engaged with the art was to appear in the artwork itself. In the "Resurrection," a jubilant golden narrative sculptural relief by celebrated Spanish sculptor Gil de Siloé, Christ has risen and stands in the center atop his tomb. To the right, he's seen meeting disciples on the road to Emmaus. To the left, the three Marys come looking for the resurrected Christ. Surrounding Christ's tomb, soldiers are collapsed in a deep slumber. Only one of these men bears witness to Christ's miracle. He kneels in reverence—looking up at Christ in pious adoration. Lenaghan believes that de Siloé added the patron's likeness to the reverent man, depicting him as the captain of the soldiers, to recognize the patron's strong faith.

Believers developed intimate relationships with these sublime, functional pieces.

"Gil de Siloé was a very sophisticated sculptor in how he organized the scenes across the compositional picture plane to bring out the theological nuances and details that were appropriate to the context and the subject," Lenaghan said. He added that the piece points to a very strong understanding of theology, but to be able to translate that into something that works visually is another thing.

Piously Decorating the Statues
Oftentimes, sculptures by the same sculptor could ultimately appear very different, due to the involvement of different artisans. Patrons often received their commissioned statues unpainted. It was up to them to arrange for a painter to embellish the works and make the pieces as lifelike as possible. For naturalistic appeal, they often embellished the sculptures with glass eyes, ivory teeth, and real eyelashes. In some cases, the works were dressed in costumes.

A few sculptors did oversee the painting of their pieces. For instance, royal sculptor Luisa Roldán's brother-in-law painted her sculptures, resulting in a

consistent aesthetic to her works. But once a piece left her workshop, its color and appearance could, and often did, change.

Repainting pieces to align with popular sensibilities was a common practice. In the exhibition, a couple of Roldán's terracotta sculptures demonstrate this practice well. Lenaghan explained that these pieces of Roldán's acquired a totally different look once they left the workshop, and were transformed from their original bright, high-keyed color palette to more sober hues.

The Hispanic Society's conservator Fontoira-Marzin spent the past 20 years patiently bringing the pieces back to their original state. Thanks to Fontoira-Marzin, visitors to the exhibition can now enjoy the colors of Roldán's terracottas close to her original intention.

Suffering of the Martyrs, Suffering of the Statues

Look closely at some of the sculptures in the exhibition and you can literally see "the scars of their use," Lenaghan said. The piece "Blessing Christ Child" by Alonso Martínez has abrasions on its neck and arms. Over the years, the statue of the naked Christ has been dressed in different costumes, causing the paint to wear away in those areas where the clothing was pulled on and off.

The way the owners of the sculptures often altered them is fascinating. In the exhibition, Pedro de Mena's beautiful bust of a man is sensitively rendered with glass eyes, a trim mustache, and a slightly opened mouth. On closer inspection, one notices that his throat has been slit and he is aghast. His facial expression is full of shock and despair. The bust is of St. Aciscus, a former Roman soldier martyred in the fourth century for staying true to his faith.

The bust was originally a fuller, more evocative figure. An old photograph shows the statue complete with forearms and a torso. Glass tears once fell down the man's face, and much more blood seeped from his neck. "Its original look made the point more emphati-

"The Four Fates of Man," circa 1775, attributed to Manuel Chili, known as Caspicara.



"Death," 7 inches by 4 5/8 inches by 3 1/4 inches



"Soul in Hell," 7 inches by 5 3/4 inches by 3 1/8 inches



"Soul in Purgatory," 6 5/8 inches by 4 3/8 inches by 4 7/8 inches



"Soul in Heaven," 6 7/8 inches by 4 3/8 inches by 4 7/8 inches.



"Imagen de Vestir," circa 1800, by an anonymous sculptor. Polychromed wood armature with embroidered mantle including sequins, foil, and metal thread; 21 1/4 inches tall.



"The Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine," 1692–1706, by Luisa Roldán. Polychromed terracotta; 14 3/8 inches by 17 3/4 inches by 11 5/8 inches by 32 1/4 inches.

The Hispanic Society's exhibition 'Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh'

cally about persevering in your faith in the face of such suffering," Lenaghan said. He believes the figure was toned down and reduced to a bust, perhaps in a nod to the busts of antiquity, to make the sculpture more desirable to buyers.

Another case where the sculpture has been altered is that of a crucifixion. It's a piece that completely puzzled Lenaghan as to who the sculptor was. In it, Christ is on the cross and the Virgin Mary at his foot. The Hispanic Society bought it at an auction, with no time to make an attribution. He soon realized that the Virgin was by 19th-century Spanish sculptor Manuel González Santos, but the crucifixion didn't reflect the sculptor's style at all. Lenaghan was stunned when a friend strongly suggested that the work was by Pablo de Rojas, a major 17th-century Spanish sculptor. "I was stunned because it's quite a coup to have a statue by Pablo de Rojas," he said. Lenaghan now believes that the Virgin was added by an owner some 200 years later.

Influence on the New World

When the Spanish came to the New World, religious sculptures were important in converting the indigenous population to Catholicism. Wherever possible, Spanish sculptors passed on their Western techniques to local sculptors, resulting in Latin American devotional works acquiring a Spanish style. For instance, two pieces in the exhibition—"St. Francis" and the "Mater Dolorosa"—were believed to be Spanish works up until recently, when they were reattributed to Mexican artists.

Sometimes Latin American artists adapted the Spanish style, and the sculptures took on a distinctly local flair. For instance, in Spain gold was commonly used as a ground, a base layer on the sculptures to which paint was applied. Artists would then scratch designs through parts of the painted surface to reveal the gold beneath. Some of the gold remained concealed under the paint, which further enhanced the paint pigments. Lenaghan explained that artists in Quito, Ecuador, used gold

and silver grounds in their statues. This practice had existed in Spain, but the Ecuadorian sculptors used it to more dramatic effect, frequently juxtaposing it with gold.

Lenaghan explained that Quito was the fourth largest city in the New World—only Lima, Havana, and Mexico City outstripped it. Part of Quito's wealth came from its numerous silver mines. The "Virgin of Quito" and "St. Michael Archangel" are a couple of examples of Quito workmanship in the exhibition, where both gold and silver grounds were used. The use of the silver ground in those pieces produced a heightened intensity of the reds and blues, giving the works an electric quality.

One of the exhibition highlights is also from Quito: "The Four Fates of Man," attributed to Manuel Chili, better known as Caspicara. It's a particularly moving piece, explicitly taking the viewer through the various consequences of leading an immoral life versus a virtuous one following holy precepts. Little is known about the work; there are no known sculptural forms like it.

Caspicara may have had an approximate guide for the iconography and the theological concept from Neapolitan wax figures showing souls in hell, Lenaghan explained. He's impressed by the details on such a small set of figurines that speak to an incredibly talented and deft touch.

Lenaghan said: "As the 18th century develops, and neoclassic canon and aesthetic begins to make inroads in Spain, there is more restraint and perhaps less overt emotion in some statues. ... But the emotional importance of the subjects being depicted ... never leaves the stage because in this pre-modern world, I think sanctity comes through suffering. And so you measure holiness by how much you've suffered, and your commitment to your faith."

The exhibition "Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh" at The Hispanic Society Museum & Library in New York runs through Jan. 9, 2022. To find out more, visit HispanicSociety.org



1. "St. Aciscus," circa 1680, by Pedro de Mena. Polychromed and gilded wood; 19 3/4 inches by 16 5/8 inches by 8 1/2 inches.
2. "St. Michael Archangel," 1700–25, by an anonymous Ecuadorian sculptor. Polychromed and gilded wood; 51 inches tall.
3. "Blessing Christ Child," circa 1645, by Alonso Martínez (1612–1668) formerly attributed to Francisco de Ribas (1616–1679). Polychromed wood; 31 1/2 inches by 10 7/8 inches (figure and pedestal).
4. "Our Lady of the Apocalypse" or "Virgin of Quito," 1700–25, by an anonymous Ecuadorian sculptor. Polychromed and gilded wood; 31 1/4 inches by 11 1/2 inches by 16 3/8 inches (with wings).



(Left) "Mater Dolorosa," or "Our Lady of Sorrows," 17th century, by an anonymous Mexican sculptor. Polychromed wood; 65 3/4 inches by 26 inches, in the "Gilded Figures: Wood and Clay Made Flesh" exhibition at The Hispanic Society Museum & Library in New York.



(Right) "St. Louis of France," circa 1620, by Juan de Mesa. Carved, gilded, and polychromed wood; 70 inches by 35 3/8 inches by 29 1/2 inches. Gallery of Nicolás Cortés.

REACHING WITHIN: WHAT TRADITIONAL ART OFFERS THE HEART

The Gold Mine Within: 'The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone'

ERIC BESS

Sometimes, when we find ourselves in a difficult situation, we don't know our way out. I was talking to a friend about some of my difficulties several weeks ago. She told me to remain positive and said, "Any situation can be turned to gold." My friend's words rang in my head and later made me think of a painting by Joseph Wright of Derby called "The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone."

The Traditional Alchemist

Before we can talk about my friend's words and Wright's painting, it is first necessary to provide a brief understanding of the traditional alchemist.

In the West, the alchemist is often associated with a mystic-like hermit who attempted to turn base metals into gold by way of complex chemical processes.

Alchemy, however, was much more than just turning base metals into gold. The spiritual alchemist, for instance, generally believed that the way the world and the universe worked revealed the will of the Creator and thus the deeper purpose of human life. All occurrences, even the seemingly difficult ones, could, like base metals, be turned into the supernatural beauty of gold if all events were understood as the will of the Creator.

For the alchemist, understanding the will of the Creator could reveal the philosopher's stone, a mysterious substance that could reverse aging, lengthen life, and even grant immortality. It could also lead to a passage from the human realm to a supernatural one.

The philosopher's stone caused alchemists great difficulties since it was nearly impossible to acquire. It was up to the alchemist to remain positive and keep moving forward despite the impossible task of obtaining the substance.

During the Age of Enlightenment, traditional alchemy was considered superstitious and was ultimately replaced by what we now know as chemistry.

'The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone'

The full title of Wright's painting is "The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of his Operation, as Was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical Astrologers."

Wright depicted the alchemist kneeling at the bottom of the composition in front of a flask of phosphorus. The phosphorus glows and illuminates the alchemist and the items in the immediate environment, which include books with astrological symbols and a celestial globe on a table. The phosphorus also illuminates a clock on a column

Joseph Wright's 'The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone' reminds scientists of the root of their success: the ancient belief in the divine.

The clock and globe both catch some of the phosphorescent light.

toward the back of the room.

The alchemist, however, doesn't look at the phosphorus in front of him. Instead, he looks out toward and beyond the celestial globe and the moon in the sky. His lifted brow seems to push his gaze even further, reaching outside of the composition's boundary.

Behind the alchemist are two apprentices situated in the composition as secondary focal points. One sits at a table, lights a candle, and looks intently at the alchemist, who appears to be in a transported state. Yet the full title of the painting explains that he's praying. The other apprentice looks at the first apprentice and points to the alchemist as if to reiterate the significance of the event.

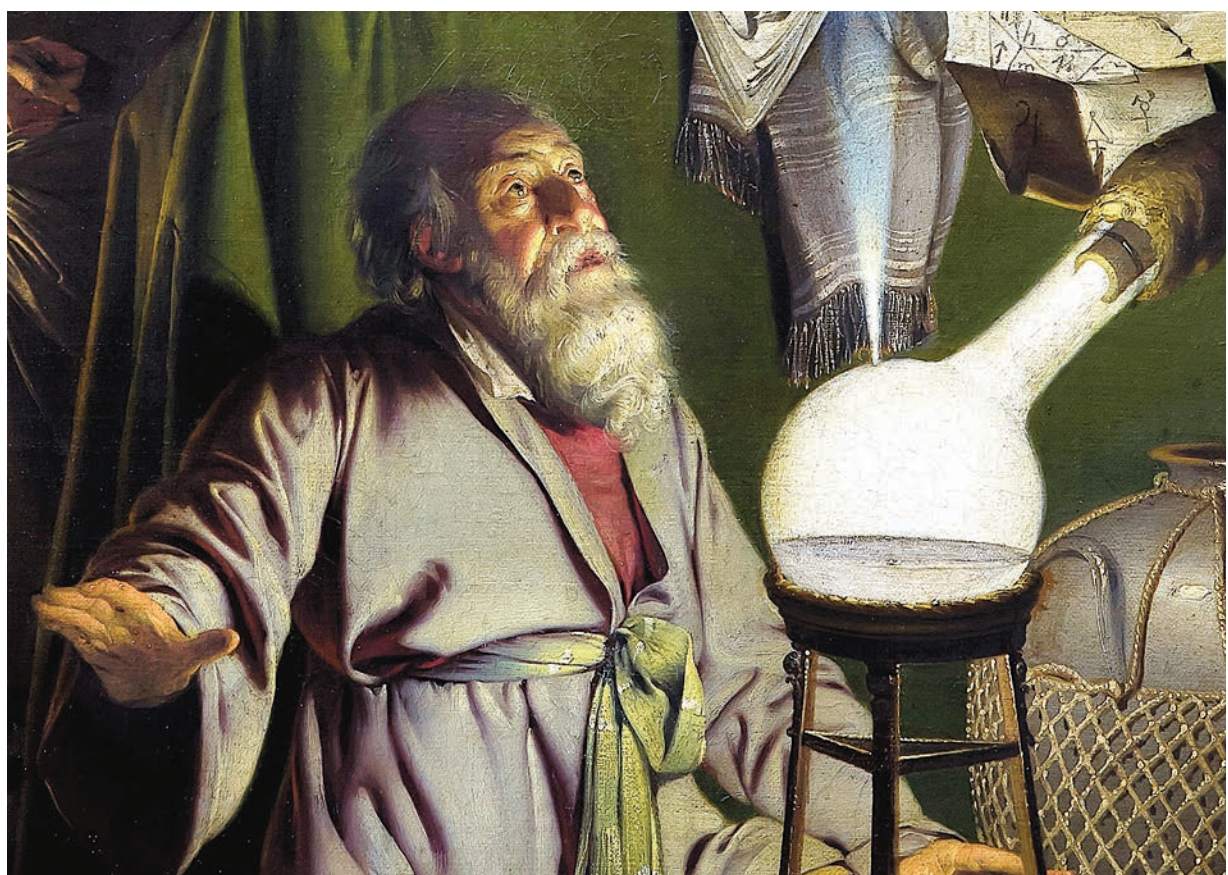
The vaulted ceiling and window, architectural elements from medieval churches, also tell us that this is a religious event instead of simply a scientific one.

The Gold Mine Within

Painted during the Age of Enlightenment, when science and rationality were becoming extremely popular, Wright's "The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone" reminds scientists of the root of their success: the ancient belief in the divine.

The alchemist kneels in front of the phosphorus, but his gaze extends beyond the confines of the composi-

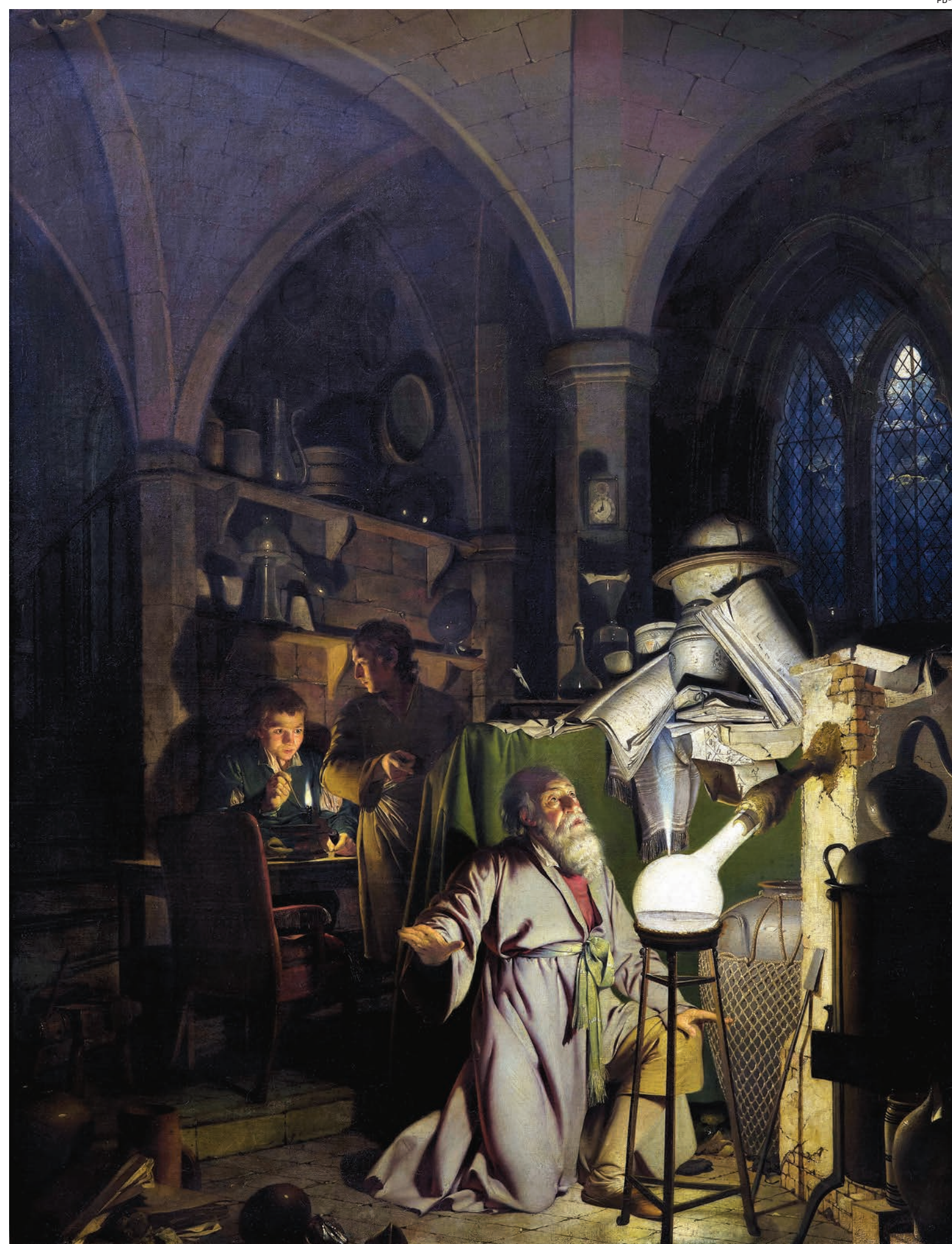
The alchemist appears in a nearly rapturous state, a state of prayer according to the full title of the painting. A detail from "The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone."



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The apprentices are struck by the state of the alchemist.

It's not clear if the apprentices can see the phosphorus because the alchemist and table with the green cloth might obstruct their view, and this would also explain why the light from the phosphorus does not reach the faces of the two apprentices despite reaching the clock on the column in the back.

If the apprentices cannot see the phosphorus, they must be seeing the alchemist in an ecstatic moment. If this is the case, the apprentice who points at the event is reiterating the significance of the alchemist's divine beliefs.

Let's now return to my friend who reminded me to remain positive and told me, "Any situation can be turned to gold." Maybe she's onto something. And maybe, if my thoughts reflect the will of the Creator, every situation, even the ones that seem difficult, can be seen as part of their divine and golden source.

Maybe our difficult circumstances are simply what the Creator wills, and they constitute the necessary process for forging our spirits into gold. Maybe if we stay positive, look for harmony between heaven and earth, and align ourselves with the Creator's will, we will discover something new about ourselves. And maybe, just maybe, we will find a gold mine within.

Have you ever seen a work of art that you thought was beautiful but had no idea what it meant? In our series "Reaching Within: What Traditional Art Offers the Heart," we interpret the classical visual arts in ways that may be morally insightful for us today. We try to approach each work of art to see how our historical creations might inspire within us our own innate goodness.

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

MUSIC

Music Is More Than Sound: A Look at 'He's Gone Away'

KENNETH LAFAVE

Music, we are told by academics, consists of sounds that we have decided to call "music." Tufts University professor Aniruddh Patel has declared that "there are no sonic universals in music, other than the trivial one that it must involve sound in some way."

This view is easily defended, as long as the concept of "meaning" is kept out of the way. Once the mere "presence" of sound is replaced by "meaningful presence" of sound, that definition falls to pieces.

The sound of a flute and that of an engine racing have meanings beyond our decision to label one as music and the other noise. This distinction—mere presence versus meaningful presence—is the line that divides the warring sides of current Western thought. It's sometimes

hard to see where the line is drawn, but with music the picture is clear.

Examples are as diverse as the repertoire itself, and it might be stacking the deck to use a Beethoven sonata or a Bach fugue. Let's take a single, simple example from Appalachian folk music: the song "He's Gone Away."

There are many versions of lyric to this 19th-century ballad, but they all evoke loneliness. Here's the most common:

He's gone away, for to stay a little while.
But he's coming back, though he goes ten thousand miles.
O who will tie my shoe?
And who will glove my hand?
And who will kiss my ruby lips when he is gone?
Look away, look away over Yandro.

This is followed by a second verse that starts the same, and then takes an optimistic turn after "ten thousand miles": "O it's papa will tie my shoe, and it's mama will glove my hand. But it's you will kiss my ruby lips when you return. Look away," and so on.

The Musical Shape of a Feeling

"Yandro" may be a place, or it may be an older term for "yonder." The person gone away seems to be a love interest, off to war or to journey west. The verbal meaning is swathed in obscurity, but the musical meaning is undeniable. Listen to a recording of the song. (Look

for solo performances, as choral versions sometimes cloud the melody.) Then listen a second time while considering the description below.

The melody consists of three musical groupings. The first starts by climbing up so far that it takes the ear by surprise. The four syllables of the title rise, sit briefly on a note, then rise again much higher. From its already-high perch, the melody then plaintively reaches a single note higher to begin the heartbreaking phrase "for to stay a little while," before settling into the middle of its range. The words "but he's coming back" surge upward once more, but not as far. And with the words "though he goes ten thousand miles," the line plunges down to a flattened note that drags the emotions unmistakably in the direction of sorrow.

The second grouping (beginning "O who will tie my shoe?") rises like the previous one, but more tentatively at first, until the third item in the list, "who will kiss," bursts upward like a skyrocket. On "kiss," the melody reaches its highest peak, both in the first verse as an expression of sorrow at the loved one's absence, and in the second as plaintive hope. The concluding musical grouping levels the melody into a melancholy optimism on "Look away."

The Treasures of Folk Music

The origin of the music for "He's Gone Away" lies buried in unrecorded history. The melody may be a "floater"—a tune from another, earlier song to

which the writer attached new words. In any case, the writer, whoever she was (context suggests a young woman), matched the verbal meaning of the words perfectly to the musical meaning of the melody.

"He's Gone Away" is only one gem in the treasure chest of songs from the Appalachians, which in turn is but one treasure chest in the house of American folk music. Others include gospel, bluegrass, and Cajun. As of late, they've been largely ignored in a world where commercial music reigns supreme.

And yet, because music exhibits meaningful presence, long ago someone I will never know left a trace of herself so profound in its emotion that it touches me and others at the remove of centuries. This was no sophisticated composer, but someone equipped only with the natural ability to attach meaning to her world through music.

That ability is at ebb today, and it would be a shame beyond description to lose it. When we stop listening to academics and start to acknowledge the meaning that surrounds us, like the lover ten thousand miles away, it will return.

Former music critic for the Arizona Republic and The Kansas City Star, Kenneth LaFave recently earned a doctorate in philosophy, art, and critical thought from the European Graduate School. He's the author of three books, including "Experiencing Film Music" (2017, Rowman & Littlefield).



JAKKADUL JARU-AMPORNPIUN/SHUTTERSTOCK

FALUN DAFU INFORMATION CENTER

FILM REVIEW

A Mini-Look at a Major Horror

IAN KANE

As censorship, both state-sponsored and within the private sphere, ratchets up to levels unimaginable in the past, many are seeking out alternative voices when it comes to cinema. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has in recent times steadily amped up both its purging of foreign influences and the muffling of its massive citizenry. Fortunately, in this age of decentralized digital media, it's becoming harder and harder for totalitarian regimes to stifle important information about the human rights atrocities they commit.

Directed by Mathias Magnason (and co-written by Levi Browde, Jan Lokos, and Magnason), the 10-minute mini-documentary "Defiance in the Kingdom of Fake News" is one of many films benefiting from this free flow of information about human rights abuses.

The film opens with quite an impact as we see a young Chinese man, Lei Ming, awkwardly pacing back and forth in a room at an "undisclosed location" in Changchun, China, in 2003. As he holds on to the walls to keep himself from falling down, the narrator talks about how Ming received terrible injuries as a result of torture he sustained while incarcerated at a Chinese labor camp.

Ming, along with five other everyday Chinese citizens—Hou Mingkai, Liu Chengjun, Liang Zhenxing, Zhou Runjun, and Liu Haibo—formed a small group that performed a successful broadcast interruption that sought to rectify the reputation of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a peaceful spiritual discipline that's twofold: It has calm, flowing exercises and meditation, and it teaches the building of its practitioners' character.

Indeed, Falun Gong is a practice based on Buddhism that harkens back to the days of

'Defiance in the Kingdom of Fake News' is a short and powerful documentary that punches above its weight.

'Defiance in the Kingdom of Fake News'

Documentary

Director:
Mathias Magnason

Running Time:
10 minutes

Release Date:
2021

★★★★★



▲ In a reenactment, three actors portray half of the "Airwave Six" in the process of scouting for cable relays

ancient China. As mentioned in my previous review of the docudrama "Unsilenced," the practice's core tenets are truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, hardly any of which its practitioners received at the hands of the CCP.

The film reveals that since the CCP took power in 1949, it has systematically demonized and wiped out traditional forms of Chinese culture and thought. As the leaders of the CCP took over nearly every aspect of life in China, its message becomes clear—to replace China's ancient traditions with communism. We see many clips of Chinese state officials humiliating citizens and destroying ancient relics, such as statues of Buddha.

Back in the early 1990s, a man named Li Hongzhi founded Falun Gong. The practice became well-known, not only for its philosophical and spiritual principles but also for its health benefits. As it grew in popularity and swept throughout China, it reportedly had 100 million practitioners by the late '90s. Jiang Zemin, the leader of the CCP at the time (and later the head of state), considered Falun Gong to be dangerous to the CCP since it had gained so many adherents.

Massive oppression of Falun Gong began in earnest, which resulted in huge numbers of arrests. So many incarcerations were happening that criminals were being released to make room for Falun Gong practitioners. But this demonization by the state was largely ineffective on the general public since people considered Falun Gong

practitioners to be virtuous and principled. The state would need another method.

In 2001, five Chinese citizens who were later purported by the state to be Falun Gong practitioners, self-immolated in Tiananmen Square. This horrific public event was recorded and made the rounds on Chinese national TV. As the film describes it, the state smeared Falun Gong by stating that the self-burnings were some type of bizarre religious suicide pact. Since the state's media manipulation was so relentless and pervasive, many people began to shun Falun Gong.

In 2002, the aforementioned six ordinary Chinese citizens who had been training themselves to pull off their audacious broadcast interruption did just that. For a full 50 minutes, they hijacked the cable TV airwaves and revealed details about how the self-immolation event was one big lie to defame and vilify Falun Gong.

As a result, the authorities came down even harder on Falun Gong practitioners and eventually captured the brave souls, all Falun Gong practitioners, who later became known as the "Airwave Six."

"Defiance in the Kingdom of Fake News" is a short and powerful documentary that punches above its weight. It's also a timely exposé on the horrors of unbridled totalitarianism.

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

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