## THE EPOCH TIMES

# 

STEFANO POLITI MARKOVINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

High Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio designed Villa La Rotonda (Villa Rotunda) in Vicenza, in northeast Italy. Palladio's work had a lasting impact on Western architecture.

ARCHITECTURE

## The High Renaissance Italian at the Heart of Western Architecture

Introducing Andrea Palladio, who brought ancient harmony and beauty to the West

#### **LORRAINE FERRIER**

ndrea Palladio. You may not know his name, but you have definitely seen the High Renaissance architect's influence on the traditional architecture of Western Europe and indeed America. Palladio built with beauty and honored

his ancient peers.

"As one of the last great architects of the High Renaissance, Palladio translated the language of classical antiquity into a flexible and distinctive vocabulary that was

Palladio built with beauty and honored his ancient peers.

used internationally by architects well into the nineteenth century," according to The Metropolitan Museum of Art website.

#### **Ancient Architecture**

Before "meeting" Palladio properly, it's good to note the general development and characteristics of ancient Greek and Roman architecture, as often the two styles are merged as "classical architecture."

The ancient Greeks cut large blocks of marble into beams that echoed their traditional timber beam-and-pillar buildings. They used three different regional styles of columns:

"Doric" from mainland and western Greece, "Ionic" from eastern Greece, and "Corinthian" from Corinth. Each column had a specific proportion and decorative scheme, consisting of a base, a capital (marble block at the top), and an entablature (a horizontal beam that sits atop the capital). Together these elements form an "order."

"Through centuries of trial and error the Greeks had evolved proportions for the various parts of their buildings designed exactly to satisfy their very highly developed aesthetic sensibilities.

Continued on Page 4



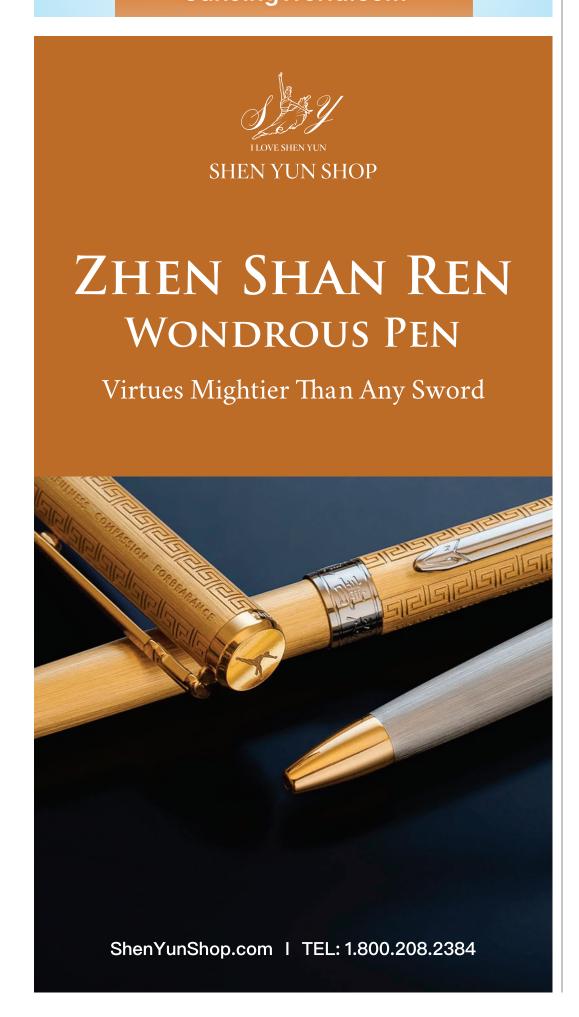


### Showcase Your Creativity

A platform free from violent, erotic, criminal, and harmful content



GanJingWorld.com





"Poetry, from the Stanza della Segnatura," 1509–1511, by Raphael.

**POETRY** 

## Ways to Join Poetry Month Festivities

**JEFF MINICK** 

pril has arrived, that season when in many places the growl of a lawnmower replaces the roar of a snow blower. It's the first full month of spring, when melted ice and snow perform their usual magic, giving birth to daffodils and grass as green as the hills of Ireland. Sunlight falls soft as down on the uplifted face, and as Lord Tennyson tells us, "a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

Meanwhile, the Academy of Ameri-Month, dispatching posters, books, and creative ideas for reading and composing verse to schools across the country. Many libraries will put up displays of the likes of Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and Mary Oliver, and some bookstores will hold special readings featuring poetry as old as the ancient Greeks and as new as a sonnet written vesterday by a high school sophomore.

Contrary to what we may think, adult Americans—at last count, some 28 million of them—still read poetry. That figure is small compared to the population at large, but it's also an indicator that poetry, which at its best is a compound of wisdom, revelation, and beauty, still strikes a chord with the public.

So if we wish to join these enthusiasts of verse, what are some ways we can ease our way into their ranks?

#### Finding a Good Fit

First, we should shop for poems and poets just as we do for shoes that afford comfort and suit our personalities. One woman likes Allbirds Tree Runners in white while her friend prefers Rockport Prowalkers in black. Likewise, they may exhibit different tastes in poetry.

Some people, for example, may enjoy poetry for the same reasons that toddlers are smitten with nursery rhymes. Kids

relish the bounce, beat, and rhyme of "Jack and Jill," "Star Light, Star Bright," and "Hickory Dickory Dock," and their adult counterparts want this same rollicking fun. They'll find the pleasures of that word-dance in poems like Rudyard Kipling's "Gunga Din," Robert Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

Some see this dance as a formal affair.

They want verse dressed up, for example, as sonnets, blank verse, or villanelles, with such accoutrements as iambic pentameter and rhyme. Robert Frost once can Poets is hoping that April will turn compared free verse, which is poetry our thoughts to poetry. Once again, the without meter or rhyme, to "playing tenacademy has launched National Poetry nis with the net down." If you're inclined to agree, if you too want your poetry decked out in the black tie and evening wear of a ballroom, you'll find plenty of writers on that dance card. Granted, most of them belong to an earlier age, but even today you'll find poets of the formal school, like Dana Gioia and William Baer, who play tennis with the net up. In this four-line piece, "The History of Western Poetry," Baer gives readers a sampling of his style while taking a shot at free verse:

> Meter, of course, is classicist; Rhyme is Catholic-medieval; Blank verse is lapsed and Anglicist; Vers libre is French (and evil).

On the other hand, if you prefer free verse, a library's worth of poetry from the last 100 years is at hand.

#### Nature, War, Art, and More

Here's another tip: Start with poems that match your interests. If you like digging your fingers into the dirt and planting tomatoes or roses, search online for "poems about gardening," and voilà, there they are. If you prefer sewing, you'll again find verse to match your pleasure. Cooking, reading, building, and housekeeping all yield up related poetry.

The same holds true for history. War-



nature may draw some to poetry. "The Oxbow, View From Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm," 1836, by Thomas Cole. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

fare, for example, has roused the attention of poets for three millennia. From "The Iliad" and "The Aeneid" to the poets of World War I, you'll find some of the

best verse in Western civilization.

Likewise, poets have written about paintings, sculpture, architecture, and the theater. One example of many is John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," a classic of English literature. Meanwhile, The Society of Classical Poets gives us "Ballerina," in which Michael Pietrack salutes ballet while also critiquing the modern arts.

And if nature and the outdoors are your passions—hiking, camping, strolling in the park, birdwatching—no other literary genre offers the interest and impact of poetry. It is, in fact, difficult to think of a poet who has never employed nature in imagery, subject, or theme

Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Pied Beauty," for instance, is a stunning celebration of Mother Nature's glories, as is Emily Dickinson's quieter "'Nature' Is What We See." Poet Mary Oliver was an "indefatigable guide to the natural world," and William Wordsworth with his pieces like "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is informally known as "the father of nature poetry."

In addition to nature, two other subjects—love and death—reign as monarchs in the realm of poetry.

The attention paid by poets to love should come as no surprise, for just like the rest of us, these word-spinners have experienced the joys, regrets, and griefs of deep, intense affection.

And here, one could argue, is a profound reason for reading poetry. In our life's journey, we are always on the lookout for companions of the spirit, for others who understand and share our happiness and sorrow; we are looking for a spouse, a friend, a spiritual adviser. We treasure those who can help explain ourselves to ourselves.

In poetry, we can find such counselors. The college student who just had his world shattered by rejection may discover a friend in A.E. Housman's "When I Was One-and-Twenty" with its advice about protecting the heart. The shy high school girl can feel at one with Shakespeare's "Shall I Compare Thee to a Sum-



ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Many enjoy the charging rhythm of Tennyson's poem as seen here in "Charge of the Light Brigade," 1894, by Richard Caton Woodville Jr. Commissioned by the Illustrated London News. The Library of Congress.



Some prefer the more formal structure of poetry as related by the formal dance of ballet. "Don Quixote" at the Teresa Carreño Theater in Caracas, Venezuela, on Oct. 18, 2013.

poems that

match your

interests.

**Start with** 

mer's Day?" while dreamily gazing at the boy who doesn't recognize her existence. The elderly man who long ago knew love may find solace in "When You Are Old" by William Yeats:

How many loved your moments of glad

And loved your beauty with love false But one man loved the pilgrim soul in

And loved the sorrows of your chang-And as with love, the poets bear witness

#### Graveside

to dying and death

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,—

They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled

Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom.

I know. But I do not approve. More precious was the light in your

eyes than all the roses in the world. That stanza from Edna St. Vincent Millay's heartbreaking elegy "Dirge Without Music" tolls like a funeral church bell in the hearts of the grieving. The poem as a whole, with its signature line "I am not resigned," may or may not offer comfort, but it definitely gives a voice to ineffable sadness.

On the other hand, Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" acts as a vent for the anger we feel with the wasted lives of loved ones or, for that matter, our own. Clare Harner's "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep," Christina Rossetti's "Remember" and "When I Am Dead, My Dearest," and many other poems attempt a reconciliation between the living and the dead, an easing of the mind desired by so many who, having lost loved ones, wish they could express their regrets or say just one more time to the departed, "I love you."

If nothing else, poetry may allow us to better comprehend our tangled emotions.

#### **April and Beyond**

National Poetry Month is a noble effort to encourage more Americans to read poetry, and we should applaud this initiative. Yet we should also regard these festivities as a beginning rather than an end. Poetry can become a part of our daily lives, knitted into our work, chores, and leisure.

"A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life," Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote, "in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful implanted in the human soul."

In our digital age, music, poetry, and art lie at our fingertips. Let's open these gifts to keep alive our own sense of beauty.

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 nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va

**TRUTH and TRADITION** In Our Own Words



With diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities.

**Petr Svab** Reporter

## The World Through a Journalist's Eyes

Dear Epoch VIP,

Thank you for your continuing support—we are at your service. My name is Petr Svab and I've been covering politics, courts, police, immigration, economy, and other topics during my 16 years at The Epoch Times.

#### It is my pleasure to work for a newspaper that stands for values I can wholeheartedly endorse and fittingly summed up in our motto of Truth and Tradition.

I believe that truth is the living world, and an infinite journey of exploration. The more topics I tackle, the more issues I delve into, the more I realize how complex, multifaceted, and enormous the world truly is. We can never dream of grasping it all, but, with diligent effort, a journalist can map a part of the journey and present it to readers, hoping to help them navigate their own realities. Moreover, I've found, a journalist can open doors closed to others, give readers the facts of the story, the context that enlightens them, as well as the insights of the participants.

I remember walking the streets of West Baltimore a few years ago. My plan was just to interview some local business owners to see what the city was doing about some of its issues—from piles of trash and abandoned houses to homelessness and crime.

Within five minutes of my arrival, a man on the street noticed me and started to shout: "Guy with a camera! There's a guy with a camera here!"

A group of young men further up the street took notice as I approached. "Are you a cop?" asked one of them. He was a young

man with wide eyes that looked like they'd already seen

more than their share. I introduced myself and my business of the day, handing the gentleman my card. The young man's

expression softened as he realized I was here to report on a story—the story of his home. As it turned out, the young man was not only ready to

share with me his insights on the local issues, but also to offer advice on where to find what I was looking for. We parted ways with a handshake.

In all my experience talking directly to the people

involved in various events, the truth seldom (if ever) favors partisan narratives—it's much more colorful: sometimes humorous, other times tragic.

Consider the story, for example, of Trayvon Martin. According to some, an innocent child killed by a racist man. According to others, a thug killed in self-defense. But after filmmaker Joel Gilbert retraced Martin's last moments, weeks, and months, it turned out neither narrative was quite true. Gilbert told a story of a young man whose life was falling apart and ultimately plunged into a tragedy that nobody wanted.

So if that's truth, what is tradition, then? For me, it is the lessons of history. It's the distilled universal wisdom collected by our ancestors over millennia—the timeless lessons of the enlightened, the sages, and the saints. This treasure chest of the past is where we can turn to help us better understand the truth at present.

My work is to safeguard this treasure, let it live through

the pages of The Epoch Times and the hearts of our readers. While it may seem the foundations of the civilization itself are now under attack, I truly believe our readers will be best equipped to withstand the storm—through clarity and peace of heart. For whatever the future holds, I believe the path will be less treacherous for those who walk it steadily, making choices informed both by truth

What I pledge to you is yet more meticulous research, analysis, and fact-finding. I'll do the digging for you, while letting you make up your own mind. Furthermore, I'll also hone my wit to give you an ever-better read along the way.

Yes, we strive to be an influential media in the world, but I believe that our true success is measured in minds

sharpened, hearts uplifted, and lives improved. Once again, thank you for

joining us on this journey. We do live in truly epochal times, wouldn't you say?

In Truth and Tradition,

Petr Svab The Epoch Times



Learn more at EpochSubscription.com

**ARCHITECTURE** 

## The High Renaissance Italian at the Heart of Western Architecture

Continued from Page 1

They made all their straight lines delicately curved to allow for optical illusions, and built their temples—their principal building type—to within an accuracy of a minute fraction of an inch," and reviving the classical arts was at its wrote John Penoyre and Michael Ryan in height, aided by an influx of scholars "The Observer's Book of Architecture."

When Rome conquered and then colonized Greece, Roman architects adopted and adapted the country's beam-andpillar building motifs. The most notable additions that they made were the dome and arch. Romans required larger, roofed buildings, so their architects added semicircular arches for structural support instead of columns.

The ancient Romans also added two orders, the "Tuscan" and "Composite," increasing the classical orders to five. These columns mostly took on a decorative function, sometimes almost disappearing into the fabric of the building as pilasters (flattened columns).

Experts universally agree that the Parthenon in Athens stands as the finest surviving example of ancient Greek architecture, and that the Pantheon in Rome stands as a perfect reflection of ancient Roman architecture.

Palladio's Ode to His Ancient Peers Palladio, perhaps more than any other tise on architecture, Marcus Vitruvius's architect before him, made ancient ar-

chitecture available in an easily understood format. Born Andrea di Pietro in Padua, then part of the Republic of Venice, he lived (1508-1580) at a defining moment for classical architecture. The Italians' interest in classical teachings taking refuge from the Turks' recent (1453) sack of Constantinople. Those scholars brought ancient manuscripts and classical knowledge with them to Western Europe and Italy in particular.

Having trained as a builder and then as a stonecutter, apprenticing with noted sculptor Bartolomeo Cavazza da Sossano in Padua, Andrea then moved to Vicenza and worked for the renowned stonecutter and stonemason Giovanni di Giacomo da Porlezza. It was here that he met the humanist Giangiorgio Trissino, a nobleman and amateur architect who forever changed Palladio's life course and his name.

Trissino gave Andrea the name "Palladio" after the Greek goddess of wisdom,

In Palladio, Trissino saw brilliant promise: "a very spirited young man with an inclination to mathematics." He took him under his wing, educating him in the classics and introducing him to the only surviving ancient trea-"De architectura," written around 30-20 Palladio, perhaps more than any other architect before him, made ancient architecture available in an easily understood format.

B.C. Vitruvius believed that nature held the blueprint for beauty. He cited that scholars had found similarities in the proportions and symmetry of "wellshaped men" and that this mathematical formula for natural harmony and beauty could be applied to architecture. In 1556, Palladio illustrated classical

scholar Daniele Barbaro's translation of Vitruvius's work. Trissino first took Palladio to Rome in the 1540s, where he learned directly from drawing the ancient ruins of Rome.

Of ancient Rome's architecture, Palladio wrote: "As grandiose ruins, the ancient buildings still give a clear and fine indication of the virtue and grandeur of the Roman nation, to such an extent that the study of these qualities of virtue have repeatedly fascinated and enthused me; I directed all my thoughts to them with the greatest of expectations."

He shared these thoughts in his 1570 treatise "I quattro libri dell'architettura" ("The Four Books of Architecture"). It's a treatise that spoke to Palladio's contemporaries—artisans and his architect peers—and guided their practical work. He included woodcut illustrations of plans, elevations, and cross-sections, along with architectural details.

In the first book, Palladio describes building materials, techniques, and the five classical orders. In the second book, he covers mostly his own designs for private houses, villas, and mansions, something unique from treatises before his. In the third, he mainly focuses on ancient Roman streets, buildings, and basilicas, and in book four he details ancient Roman temples, including sketches of the Pantheon.

"Among all the temples that are to be seen in Rome, none is more celebrated than the Pantheon, now called the Ritonda, nor that remains more entire; since it is to be seen almost in its first state as to the fabric, but stript [sic] of the statues, and other ornaments," wrote Palladio in Chapter XX of "The Four Books of Architecture."

#### **Ancient Architecture and Contemporary Design**

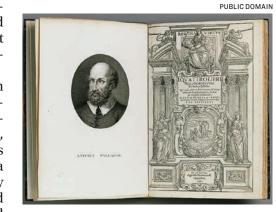
Along with his treatise, Palladio's renown came from his private and public buildings in Italy. We only have to the Veneto region where Palladio lived, to see just how his architecture spread across the Italian landscape.

In Palladio's day, the Republic of Venice was in constant conflict. Rather than relying on imported produce, noblemen moved to the surrounding countryside where they bought and developed agricultural land. These noblemen needed countryside homes. Palladio met that demand, defining the Italian villa there-

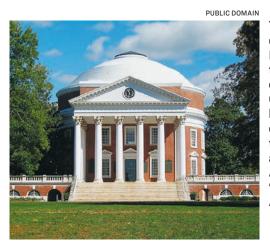
Palladio saw the villa as a small town under one roof, where Veneto's nobility could reflect their humanistic sensibilities for rest, study of the classics, and surveying their agricultural lands without leaving the building. Each villa had central living quarters flanked by outbuildings, such as stables, concealed behind a series of classically inspired arcades (a row of columns, called a colonnade, supporting a series of arches) creating one harmonious whole.

Palladio put the sacred temple structure of elegant orders on the central

"Villa Almerico" ("Villa La Rotonda") from "I quattro libri dell'architettura" ("The Four Books of Architecture"), 1570, by Andrea Palladio. Woodcut illustrations by Christoph Krieger and Johann Chrieger. Sheet: 11 5/16 inches by 7 11/16 inches. Bequest of W. Gedney Beatty, 1941, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



"I Quattro Libri dell'architettura" ("The Four Books of Architecture"), 1570, by Andrea Palladio. Title page and frontispiece with an engraved portrait of Palladio. An illustrated book, four parts in one volume. Library Purchase; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Thomas Jefferson designed The Rotunda at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He based the design on a sketch of the Pantheon in a 1720 edition of Andrea Palladio's "Four Books of



Andrea Palladio's first villa Godi in Lonedo, in northeast Italy.

building block of his villa designs. He mistakenly believed, as most of his peers did at the time, that ancient Roman villas echoed the temple design.

In 1540, Palladio completed his first villa, Villa Godi, at Lonedo. His Villa Godi design contains elements that defined his later works. The villa consists of a central block flanked by two symmetrical side blocks. The central block is set back from the side blocks so that one façade projects forward while the other recedes an equal distance.

Scholars, however, agree that the best example of Palladio's villa designs is Villa Emo in Vedelago, in northeast Italy, designed in the 1550s. With its raised portico and agricultural buildings set behind arcades, its grandeur extends even to the humble farm buildings.

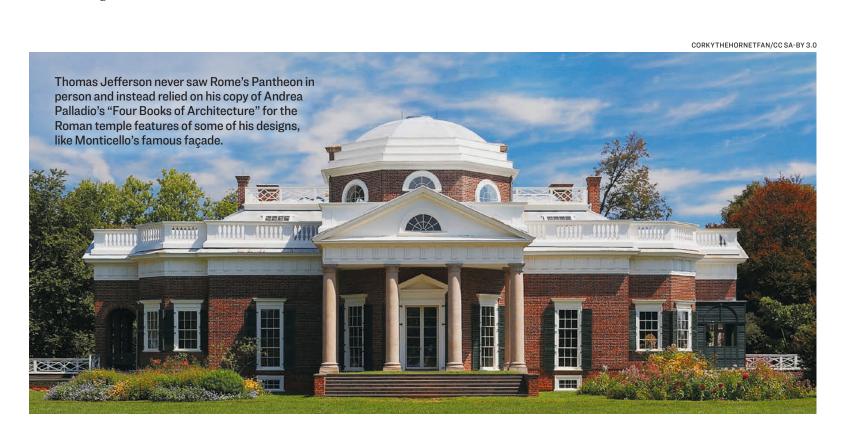
In Villa Emo, Palladio put into practice what Vitruvius wrote in his treatise: that architects should design buildings of "firmitas" (strength), "utilitas" (functionality), and "venustas" (beauty).

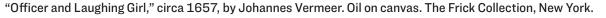
Of Villa Emo, Palladio wrote: "The cellars, granaries, and stables, and other farm buildings are on either side of the owner's house, and at the ends there are dovecots [dove houses] that are useful for the owner and add beauty to the place; one can move under cover throughout it."

According to The Metropolitan Museum of Art website, "Villa Rotunda [Villa La Rotonda] demonstrates Palladio's nastery in crystallizing classical ideals of geometric form, absolute symmetry, and harmonic proportion in plain, dignified designs." Palladio built the villa on a hillock in Vicenza, in northeast Italy, and noted that the site was "one of the most agreeable and delightful that may be found, on a hillock with gentle approaches and surrounded by other charming hills, all cultivated, that give the effect of a huge theater."

Vitruvius and Palladio died centuries ago, but the heart of their classical works lives on. Their direct influence can be seen in architect Inigo Jones's works in England, such as the Queen's House in Greenwich (the country's first classical building), and in Thomas Jefferson's works in America, such as Monticello and the academic village he created in Charlottesville, Virginia, especially The Rotunda, to name a few. But their influence can also be seen in the fabric of American life, in traditional church architecture, and even in the cornices, baseboards, and ceiling moldings of









Week 15, 2023 THE EPOCH TIMES

"Woman Holding a Balance," circa 1664, by Johannes Vermeer. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington.



"Girl Interrupted at Her Music," circa 1658-1659, by Johannes Vermeer. Oil on canvas. The Frick Collection, New York.

## American Vermeers Amsterdam

American works from many collections now at the Rijksmuseum

At the time

of Vermeer's

**United States** 

was not even a

"Mistress and Maid,"

circa 1666-1667, by

Johannes Vermeer. Oil on

canvas. The Frick Collec-

tion, New York.

death, the

country.

#### **MICHELLE PLASTRIK**

Fermeer hysteria has been stoked by the current blockbuster exhibition "Vermeer" on view at the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, until June 4, 2023. This show is a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition showcasing the majority of the artist's oeuvre. The show, which is the first Vermeer exhibition ever held at the Rijksmuseum, congregates an astonishing 28 of the Baroque painter's approximately 37 known paintings. (The exact number of total works is disputed.)

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675) lived his whole life in the Dutch city of Delft. He painted exquisite works: light rendered naturalistically; intimate interiors of quiet domestic moments, captured and made timeless; and compositions that masterfully draw the viewer's gaze. Vermeer was respected in his lifetime but died heavily in debt. Subsequently, his work was overlooked for centuries, rediscovered to great acclaim by the art world only in the mid-19th century. Today, his paintings are iconic images that have inspired numerous novels and films.

Interestingly, at the time of Vermeer's death, the United States was not even a country, yet over a third of the works in "Vermeer" (10 paintings in total) are now on loan from American collections, both public and private. Four of the exhibition's works are part of the collection in Washington's National Gallery of Art. The Frick Collection in New York contributed all three of its Vermeer works, while The Metropolitan Museum of Art sent two from its collection.

#### **National Gallery's Vermeers**

The National Gallery of Art's "A Lady Writing" is a classic example of Vermeer's style and composition. As is typical of the artist, soft light coming from the left side of the painting illuminates an intimate interior scene. Luminous paint accents deployed on the tabletop's pearls, the woman's earrings, and her satin hair ribbons accentuate her luxurious accessories. Many of Vermeer's other paintings showcase the same furnishings, motifs, and even one of two rooms in his home.

The lush yellow jacket in "A Lady Writing" is composed of the pigment lead-tin yellow, which Kassia St. Clair in her book "The Secret Lives of Color" explains was the yellow of choice for old-master painters such as Vermeer. For unknown reasons, the use of this color sharply declined around 1750, and knowledge of lead-tin yellow was completely lost until its existence and long history of artistic use was rediscovered in 1941. Indeed, scientific analysis of paintings that reveals this pigment's presence can help date and authenticate works of art.

the use of lead-tin yellow. The work also painting was formerly in the collection of the ultramarine, a pigment that comes from the rock lapis lazuli and was the most expensive pigment in its day, in the woman's iacket. "Woman Holding a Balance" is a superb example of Vermeer's use of diffused light, shimmering paint accents, and balanced compositions that lead to an almost otherworldly sense of equilibrium.

#### The Frick's Paired Figures

The Frick Collection, housed in the private home turned museum of the Gilded Age industrialist Henry Clay Frick, is prohibited from lending works of art in its collection that were acquired by its founder, as stipulated in Mr. Frick's will. Serendipitously, however, the Frick is currently undergoing a multiyear renovation of its building and has transported much of its collection to an off-site display. These special circumstances resulted in the impossible being possible, and the Frick's Vermeers have been allowed to join their siblings at the Rijksmuseum.

All three of the Frick's paintings feature a pair of figures. "Mistress and Maid" depicts two women, but it hints at a third person with the delivery of a letter. The motif of mistresses and maids, along with letter correspondence, was popular in contemporaneous art and literature. The Frick's website commentary heralds this painting as an example of Vermeer's great technical skill, with bravura brushstrokes employed to show the pleating of the lady's yellow mantle along with shorter brushstrokes used to capture flickering light on glassware and shimmering pearls.

As in other Vermeer works, "Girl Interrupted at Her Music" utilizes music to imply a scene of courtship between the male and female figures. "Officer and Laughing Girl," illustrating the theme of love, transcends the popular Dutch art subject of a young woman entertaining a suitor by its dazzling display of pictorial light. The Frick notes: "The dark foil of the officer's silhouette dramatizes both the illusion of depth and the brilliant play of light over the woman and the furnishings of the chamber."

Nine Vermeer paintings feature wall maps and other cartographic items, and the map of Holland in "Officer and Laughing Girl" was probably the first time the artist depicted

such an object. In the fall of 2022, the Frick published a book titled "Vermeer's Maps," which is an in-depth exploration of Vermeer's unparalleled ability to render maps with great detailed accuracy and artistic flair. Amazingly, all the maps and globes that he depicts can be identified. In the 17th century, the Dutch led the world in mapmaking. At the crossroads of art and science, maps became popular objects for interior decoration.

#### The Met's Gilded Age Collection

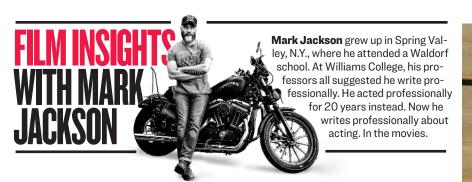
The Met owns five Vermeers, more than any other museum, and has sent both "Allegory of the Catholic Faith" and "Young Woman "Woman Holding a Balance" features With a Lute" to the Rijksmuseum. The latter tington. Met curator Adam Eaker explains in the work's catalog entry that the painting displays classic Vermeer characteristics: a composition with a "half-length figure, anchored in space by a table that juts out of the lower left-hand corner," diffused light entering the interior through a left-hand side window, and highlighted luminous pearls. The tabletop laden with open songbooks and an instrument on the floor indicate that the young woman is preparing for a duet and allows the viewer to imagine an array of nar-

The American businessman and philanthropist Thomas Kaplan and his wife, Daphne Recanati Kaplan, are collectors in the style of those Gilded Age titans, such as Henry Clay Frick, with a focus on collecting old masters and putting them on public display. The couple call their holdings "The Leiden Collection" in homage to the Dutch city of Leiden, and have created a free online scholarly catalog detailing their works. The collection includes the only mature Vermeer painting, "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal," which is on view in the Rijksmuseum's exhibition. The painting features a young woman at her music, a subject comparable with other Vermeers, and showcases Vermeer's sensitivity and skill in depicting luminous light. Yet again, music-making in the scene implies courtship as the woman gazes out from the canvas, situating the viewer as a potential suitor.

The 17th century in the Dutch Republic was one of the greatest periods of artistic achievement in Western art. Connective threads can be found among many of Vermeer's paintings, yet each one is individualistic, richly evocative, restrained, but immediate, mesmerizing, and timeless.

Many visitors to the "Vermeer" exhibition, whether in-person or as armchair travelers, will agree with the claim of Taco Dibbits, the Rijksmuseum general director, that Vermeer is "the most mysterious and beloved artist

Michelle Plastrik is an art adviser living in New York City. She writes on a range of topics, including art history, the art market, museums, art fairs, and special exhibitions.



## Florence Pugh Shines in a Story of America's Opioid Epidemic

#### **MARK JACKSON**

"A Good Person" was written and directed by Zach Braff, who's still fondly remembered for his 2004 hit "Garden State" in which he starred with Natalie Portman. After an immensely annoying and cloying beginning, "A Good Person" eventually hits its stride and turns into a movie you definitely should not miss. It's a deeply felt meditation on the ravages of opioid addiction, featuring dramatic heavy hitters Florence Pugh and Morgan Freeman.

The aforementioned cloying opening scene is the engagement party of Allison (Florence Pugh) and Nathan (Chinaza Uche). It drips with sentimentality, but it's a necessary setup for the gut punch of what

Namely, while driving the New Jersey Turnpike to look at wedding dresses (all Zach Braff's movies are set in New Jersey; it's his niche), Allison glances too long at her phone traffic app and neglects to hit the brakes in time to avoid a constructionzone backhoe. The resulting crash puts her in the hospital, and puts her passengers (her fiancé's sister and brother-in-law) in the grave. She wakes up in the hospital to hear the horrific news.

#### Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire

A year later, Allison's life is, naturally, a mess. She's fled the engagement with Nathan, lives with her mother, Diane (a rarely seen and excellent dramatic-mode Molly Shannon), and swiftly succumbs to grief self-medication via her pain-management OxyContin. When Allison's prescription runs out and she spirals into addict be-

#### 'A Good Person'

Director: Zach Braff

Starring: Florence Pugh, Morgan Freeman, Celeste O'Connor, Molly Shannon, Alex Wolff, Chinaza Uche MPAA Rating:

Running Time: 2 hours, 9 minutes Release Date:

In this dark time, 'A Good Person' offers hope.

March 24, 2023

\*\*\*\*



havior of the theft and blackmail variety, Diane attempts to intervene and flushes the last of her daughter's little blue pills down the toilet. Allison then goes full-on addict, chugging whatever alcohol-containing liquid she can find in the medicine cabinet, and mashing and snorting any pill in there, too, that might proffer a high.

In one of the movie's most powerful scenes, she stops in a local bar in the early afternoon to pound a couple of tequila shots and has a chance encounter with two local drug dealers. They quickly figure out that they were all classmates back in her haughty, high school mean-girl days and that she, considering them losers, wouldn't give them the time of day. It all starts off politely, but when they realize that she still looks down on them as lowlifes, one of them (Alex Wolff), taking a vicious delight in her fall from grace, smirkingly turns the tables on her. He makes her verbalize the fact that she's a junkie and tearfully beg him for a fix.

#### **Collateral Damage**

Meanwhile, Ryan (Celeste O'Connor), who is Nathan's orphaned, soccer-playing niece, is obviously having trouble adjusting to high school with no parents. She's had to start living with her grandfather, Daniel (Morgan Freeman in extreme avuncular mode), an ex-cop.

Daniel's a recovering alcoholic with 10 years of sobriety. A formerly mean drunk, he was abusive to his son Nathan, which is why they don't speak. All of this compounded stress eventually sends Daniel back to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, where he bumps into Allison, who has just commenced her recovery and redemption journey through the 12 steps. Daniel makes a massive effort to put anger and resentment behind him and be of service to her descriptions attached.

in her rocky entry into the program.

#### Planes, Trains, and Automobiles

Freeman, per his general standard of excellence, brings quiet dignity and desperation to a role more nuanced than it first appears. One captivating aspect is Daniel's form of personal therapy: an elaborate basement electric train set, which allows him to stage scenes from earlier in his life. As he explains: "For the model train enthusiast, we lord over a world where the neighbors are always kind, the lovers always end up together, and the trains always take you to the far-off places you always swore you'd go. In life, of course, nothing is nearly as neat and tidy."

This type of miniature world-building hobby along with other such 1930s, '40s, and '50s hobbies like plane and automobile model building, and coin and stamp collecting, are from a wistfully bygone era of Americana, but it's fascinating to step back in time with Daniel and see how time-consuming and sophisticated such setups were.

In this dark time of rampant opioid addiction in America, "A Good Person" offers hope as Daniel and Allison set out on their healing journey, comforted by not having to be alone in their grief. This is thankfully not a New Jersey rendition of the powerful and excruciating, no-happyending "Requiem for a Dream." It also underlines the fact that underlying, unresolved grief and depression are always at the root of virulent addiction.

Pugh is wrenching as Allison, whose future is eclipsed by a tragedy resulting from a few seconds of texting-and-driving. And had the movie been released in, say, October, her performance (as well as Freeman's and possibly Celeste O'Connor's) might have come with "Oscar-worthy"

**FILM REVIEW** 

### PBS Artist Bob Ross Portrayed in This Bone-Dry Satire

**MICHAEL CLARK** 

Recalling the works of Christopher Guest, Alexander Payne, and Wes Anderson, "Paint" is a bone-dry satire from sophomore feature director Brit McAdams ("Kat Williams: American Hustle," 2007). Also written by McAdams, the movie draws inspiration from real-life nature painter Bob Ross who, from 1983 through 1994, was one of the most-watched and beloved PBS on-air personalities.

With an over-the-top blond Afro hairdo and a voice that rarely rose above a whisper, Ross was to painting what Fred Rogers was to children's TV: innocuous, unthreatening, and thoroughly predictable (in a comfort food sort of way). His audience was as fervently loyal and devoted to him as any pop star or sports figure of the time and, for many female viewers, an unlikely sex symbol.

#### Nargle Via Ross McAdams thrusts all of the above Ross

traits upon Carl Nargle (frequent Anderson collaborator Owen Wilson) and sets the story in present-day Burlington, Vermont. Like many rural PBS stations, the one depicted here operates on a shoestring budget, with Carl receiving a relatively small, mid-five-figure salary which still dwarfs that of all his fellow workers.

The movie opens with Carl entering his third decade on the air. And after each show, a handful of female employees fawn over him and see to his every need, however minute, fleeting, or incidental.

As we are soon to find out, all of these ladies have been, will, or wants to be romantically involved with Carl, whose surface

aloof, aw-shucks demeanor only makes him all the more desirable in their eyes. The only one not throwing herself at

Carl's feet is his longtime producer Katherine (stage veteran Michaela Watkins) who, for multiple reasons carefully doled out along the way, considers Nargle to be an impossible-to-commit narcissist. It is initially unclear whether it is Kath-

erine or station manager Tony (Stephen Root) who brings in the younger, equally talented painter Ambrosia (Ciara Renée, best known as Kendra Saunders/Hawkgirl in multiple DC comic book adaptations). She will follow Carl's show with one of her own having the exact same title ("Paint").

Ostensibly, Tony tells the immediately paranoid and rightfully leery Carl that Ambrosia was brought in to boost younger demographic viewership, which makes sense as Carl's core audience comprises mostly those eligible for AARP membership.

#### Ross was unthreatening and thoroughly predictable.

Sharp as a tack, with the barely cloaked mindset of a personal injury attorney, Ambrosia makes it a point to compliment Carl every chance she gets but without the extraneous sexual overtones or come-hither innuendo he's come to expect.

#### **Poking Pointed Fun**

Doing to public television what Guestpenned flicks did to rock music ("This Is Spinal Tap"), community theater ("Waiting for Guffman"), dog competitions ("Best in Show"), and folk music ("A Mighty Wind"), "Paint" takes a not-so-low-hanging-fruit subject and lovingly pokes pointed fun at it without being overtly sarcastic or mean-

McAdams is also able to work in elements of Payne's "Sideways" by comparing the self-important tone of wine snobs to that of the frequently stuffy, elitist, above-it-allairs of the PBS business model minus any politics. McAdams also gives attention to



Wilson) showing people how to paint nature, in "Paint."

(Owen

props often associated with PBS pledge drives. Among these pieces of bric-à-brac are cheaply produced ceramic coffee mugs and equally pedestrian canvas book bags. There is another inanimate object that

serves as an unofficial character: Carl's nearly antique orange van. A relic from the 1970s, it also sports two of Carl's interchangeable generically painted versions of Mount Mansfield (Vermont's highest peak) on the exterior, and inside is a foldout couch lined with "four-times-brushed imported Portuguese flannel bed sheets."

The crowning achievement as far as the van goes is the presence of a CB radio that doubles as a PA system, which Carl uses to amplify his whisper for fans within earshot when he speaks in public.

#### **Double-Duty Period Songs**

Sprinkled throughout is a handful of '70s songs that pull double duty by also propelling the narrative. Among these are "Barracuda" (Heart), "Annie's Song" (John Denver), "If You Could Read My Mind" (Gordon Lightfoot), "Coat of Many Colors" (Dolly Parton), and the obscure pop tune "Romeo's Tune" (Steve Forbert).

The final act is arguably the best of the three as it cleverly portrays a man who can no longer rest on his (already iffy) laurels while also realizing, perhaps too late, that his best days might be behind him. Just exactly how McAdams achieves this is at once surprising, thoroughly

original, and eventually uplifting. Also worth checking out is the 2021 documentary "Bob Ross: Happy Accidents, Betrayal & Greed," available on Netflix. It is a thorough biography that doesn't sugarcoat the often-contentious events taking place behind the scenes of "The Joy of Painting" show and what happened to the Ross image and estate after his death in 1995.

Originally from Washington, D.C., Michael Clark has provided film content to over 30 print and online media outlets. He co-founded the Atlanta Film Critics Circle in 2017 and is a weekly contributor to the Shannon Burke Show on FloridaManRadio.com. Since 1995, Mr. Clark has written over 4,000 movie reviews and film-related articles. He favors dark comedy, thrillers, and documentaries

Director: **Brit McAdams** 

Starring: Owen Wilson, Michaela Watkins, Stephen Root, Ciara Renée **Running Time:** 

1 hour, 36 minutes **MPAA** Rating: PG-13

Release Date: April 7, 2023

**ARTS & CULTURE** Week 15, 2023 THE EPOCH TIMES



"Sounder" is about an impoverished black family, the Morgans: (L–R) Nathan (Paul Winfield), Earl (Eric Hooks), Josie (Yvonne Jarell), Rebecca (Cicely Tyson), and their eldest son David (Kevin Hooks), and composer-musician Taj Mahal.

## Hope Amid Despair

#### **RUDOLPH LAMBERT FERNANDEZ**

Set in Depression-hit Louisiana, director Martin Ritt's film is about an impoverished black family, the Morgans: Nathan (Paul Winfield); Rebecca (Cicely Tyson); their eldest son who goes to school, David (Kevin Hooks in his debut); their younger children, Earl and Josie; and their beloved dog, Sounder.

To the Morgans, poverty isn't some distant social phenomenon; it's a lived reality. They feel it in their hunger pangs, they see it in each other's parched lips, and they feel it in their aching bones, as they spend years sharecropping on a farm. Punishing exhaustion lulls them to sleep at night, and a grim reminder of a day's labor still ahead rouses them each morning.

For all his lack of learning, Nathan is convinced that missed opportunities matter. He laments those he's missed growing up, but instead of turning dismal, he stays hopeful for David. It's why he and Rebecca place David's education above anything else. They're thrilled that he can read and write, however haltingly, but they want him to do and be so much more.

#### 'Sounder'

**Director:** Martin Ritt

Starring:

Kevin Hooks

MPAA Rating: G

1 hour, 45 minutes

**Release Date:** Sept. 24, 1972

Cicely Tyson, Paul Winfield.

**Running Time:** 

Ritt, who brilliantly directed Jon Voight in "Conrack," delivers a similar message of yearning here, not just through David's awe of the man, Nathan, who's central to his life, but also through three women.

In his mother, David sees a life of drudgery he'd like to spare her. Through a sympathetic white woman for whom Rebecca does laundry, he stumbles upon the magical realm of books, where sheer wonders are hidden between their exquisite hardcovers. Finally, Camille (Janet MacLachlan), who is a teacher at a faraway school, kindles in him a desire to understand and face life on his terms, through intense learning.

#### To the Morgans, poverty is a lived reality.

Composer-musician Taj Mahal's bluesy soundtrack bursts with raw energy and pathos. He plays the guitar and sings as one of the supporting characters on screen, and plays other instruments, including the banjo, off screen.

"Sounder" catapulted Tyson from relative obscurity as a fashion model to stardom, winning her Oscar and Golden Globe nominations for Best Actress. Producers first refused to cast her as Rebecca because of her glamorous image, offering her the role of Camille instead, but her stubbornness prevailed.

Tyson brings a lived-in feel to her every move as a wife and mother whose gutwrenching sacrifice and tenacity beats grueling odds. Her face is forlorn, her walk is weary, her smile is spent. But her eyes? They sparkle with a quiet fire that gives her children hope, even amid despair.

Rudolph Lambert Fernandez is an independent writer who writes on pop culture.



(L-R) Josie (Yvonne Jarrell), Rebecca (Cicely Tyson), David (Kevin Hooks), and Earl (Eric Hooks) gather around to hear David read.

Your Event Platform, Without Censorship!



#### As a Gather member, you can:







**FIND** an event

JOIN an event

**HOST** an event

Tutorial and FAQ are available.

## **ATTENTION: CANCEL CULTURE** HAS BEEN CANCELED

From convention centers to college campuses, people are being sidelined from events and conversations, simply because they hold a different opinion.

Welcome to the reawakening of freedom of assembly!

GreatGather.com is a platform created by The Epoch Times for events that spark real conversation without censorship!

We're all about building a place where we can all get together and exchange ideas freely, the same way our forefathers did in town squares and agoras long ago.

Join the conversation now at

**GreatGather.com**