

THE EPOCH TIMES

# ARTS & CULTURE

COURTESY OF PAULA WILSON



British artist Paula Wilson models for finalists of the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition in New York in 2019.

## FINE ART

## PAINTING THE TRUTH

On the road to mastery at the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition

## LORRAINE FERRIER

An international painting competition is more than a place for storied artists to win prizes; it's one where artists can gain valuable insight from their peers, in an atelier-like setting, just like the old masters once did.

For artists Haiyan Kong and Paula Wilson, the NTD International Figure Painting Competition was also a place to present the truth. For Kong, joining the competition was the culmination of a five-year-long process of de-

picting a monumental event in her life and for her home country. For Wilson, learning from artists that came before, like Kong, gave her the insight to further hone her craft so that one day she can similarly paint the truth.

In 2019, Kong won first place at the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition with her monumental 14-foot painting titled "April 25, 1999." That was the day 24 years ago when around 10,000 Falun Gong practitioners made a peaceful protest calling for the release of 45 practitioners who had been arrested in

Tianjin, a city near Beijing.

The spiritual practice Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, was introduced to the public in China in 1992, and taught people to follow the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. Amid the repressive environment under the Chinese communist regime, these simple but powerful principles flourished, and an estimated 70 million people took up the practice by 1999.

*Continued on Page 4*



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### HISTORY

# Red Flags, Bright Hopes

JEFF MINICK

In his article “Presidential Farewell Addresses,” Gleaves Whitney notes that before Harry Truman only three presidents had composed formal farewell addresses to the nation.

As Whitney tells us, three factors likely account for this circumstance. First, some of the early chief executives held George Washington and his farewell address in such esteem that they deemed it improper to deliver one of their own. Then, too, eight of our 45 presidents have died in office. Finally, a president’s last Annual Message to Congress, today called the State of the Union Address, falls near his final days in office, causing some chief executives to combine a farewell with that report.

Of those presidents who have used this occasion to reflect on their time in office and what the future may hold, four of them in particular—George Washington, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan—have given us some warnings that even today we ignore at our peril.

#### Some Fatherly Advice

Of the four, Washington’s formal farewell to the nation was by far the longest and was delivered in print rather than from a podium. Moreover, the two men who helped him prepare his remarks—James Madison and Alexander Hamilton—were undoubtedly better speechwriters than any of the men and women available to other presidents.

In his address, Washington celebrated American successes and praised the cause of liberty. In his conclusion, he accepted as well responsibility for any wrongs or mistakes he had committed during his eight years in office.

But he also warned the young country of present and future dangers. Best known of these are his cautions about “entangling alliances” with foreign powers, fearing that our country might be sucked into foreign wars or otherwise abused by treaties favoring one nation over another. Even today, some politicians and commentators wave this cautionary flag whenever our commitments to other nations might bring harm to our country.

We hear less often of some of Washington’s other caveats. The diminishment of religion and morality, he wrote, would destroy the republic. Some people, he feared, might seek to assail the Constitution through change, “alterations which will impair the energy of the system and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overturned.” He also roundly condemned political parties and partisanship, urging all to work together for the common good of the nation.

The eloquent language of this “Father of His Country,” his clear love for the republic, and his concerns for its preservation are why we still consider his advice important today.

#### Our Ideals Will Prevail

Harry Truman bade goodbye to the American people via a broadcast from the Oval Office. His remarks are typical of the man—candid and clear—and convey his great affection for his country.

Truman begins by relating in some detail his ascension to the presidency. Later in the speech, he mirrors the modesty of George Washington when he notes: “When Franklin Roosevelt died, I felt there must be a million men better qualified than I, to take up the Presidential task. But the work was mine to do, and I had to do it. And I have tried to give it everything that was in me.”

Concerned with troubles around the globe—the tensions with the Soviet Union, the war in Korea—Truman then devotes considerable time to foreign affairs. Of the Soviet Union, he exudes a confidence that America will eventually triumph in its confrontations with communism, concluding that “in the long run the strength of our free society, and our ideals, will prevail over a system that has respect for neither God nor man.”

Immediately before that remark, he comments on a question asked him by some of his fellow citizens: “Why don’t we issue an ultimatum, make all-out war, drop the atomic bomb?” Truman responds that this course of action is not the American way, adding words that some of our present-day leaders might take to heart: “Starting an atomic war is totally unthinkable for rational men.”

Near the end, Truman says “I can’t help but dream out loud just a little here,” and shares with his listeners a vision of a world at peace with abundant food for all. He speaks of this dream in simple, unselfish language, characteristics of the man himself.

#### The General’s Last Salute

In a recent interview with Jan Jekielek of The Epoch Times, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. says, “President Eisenhower made what I look at today as the most important speech in American history. It was his farewell speech to the nation.” While some may quarrel with Kennedy’s claim, certainly Eisenhower’s departing remarks in a speech lasting less than 10 minutes contain some excellent advice, warnings even more pertinent to our day than they were 60 years ago.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his televised farewell address, warned against the “military-industrial complex.”

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Like his predecessor, Harry Truman, Eisenhower spends a significant part of his address commenting on foreign affairs. Of communism, he says: “We face a hostile ideology—global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration.” He then reminds fellow Americans “to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle—with liberty at stake.” Today, such plain language regarding communist ideology and its assaults on American values is rarely heard from our politicians.

One phrase, “the military-industrial complex,” is perhaps the best remembered part of this speech and is still commonly employed today. Here is Eisenhower’s famous warning: “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

Less well remembered, but of tremendous importance, is another admonition. Speaking of the enormous changes underway in technology, the words of the outgoing president are prophetic:



In his farewell address, George Washington celebrated American successes and praised the cause of liberty. “George Washington,” 1769, by Gilbert Stuart.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

“The prospect of domination of the nation’s scholars by Federal employment, project-alocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded.”

“Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.”

In these few words, Eisenhower capsulizes our government’s recent response to the COVID pandemic, when Americans found themselves “captive of a scientific-technological elite.”

#### The Great Communicator

Like the other three presidents mentioned here, Ronald Reagan speaks of his administration’s accomplishments both domestically and overseas, items like the changes in the Soviet Union, which would lead to its collapse shortly after Reagan’s departure from the White House, and the revival of the American economy. Like George Washington, he also owns up to failure, particularly regarding the deficit.

In this address, Reagan’s sunny disposition and his knack for storytelling come off loud and strong, yet like his predecessor



President Ronald Reagan, at his desk in the Oval Office, delivers his televised farewell address to the nation in 1989.

RONALD REAGAN LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES

sors he voices concerns about the future. “Finally,” he says, “there is a great tradition of warnings in Presidential farewells, and I’ve got one that’s been on my mind for some time.”

He then shares his deep concern about the loss of “well-grounded patriotism,” pointing out that Americans lack the culturally built-in love of country of his youth. He takes pride in the “resurgence of national pride” that has occurred during his administration, but fears that “it won’t last unless it’s grounded in thoughtfulness and knowledge. ... I’m warning of an eradication of the American memory that could result, ultimately, in an erosion of the American spirit.”

To thwart that erosion, the president urges our schools and teachers to “teach history based not on what’s in fashion but what’s important” and to place “a greater emphasis on civic ritual.” Here is where

**These presidents shared a deep and abiding affection for liberty and their country.**

we find his frequently cited remark that “all great change in America begins at the dinner table” as he encourages parents and children to discuss politics, history, and culture in their homes.

#### Listen and Learn

These four presidents differed in their backgrounds, but they all shared one thing in common: a deep and abiding affection for liberty and their country. With wisdom gained from experience, they warned present and future generations of possible pitfalls: foreign alliances, partisan politics, the threat of communism, the dangers presented by the alliance of industry and technology with government, and the dire consequences stemming from ignorance about our past and our civic duties.

The dangers they described have not disappeared. To the contrary, they have in-

tensified and even now plague our nation.

Yet here is some good news. When we revisit the advice left to us by these presidents, we note that each of them offered encouragement and hope. “I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men,” President Truman said, and the others expressed that same sentiment in their own way.

To remain free: That is the greatest task they set before us.

*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 and tradition.

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

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"April 25, 1999" by Haiyan Kong. Oil on canvas; 13 feet, 11 1/2 inches by 2 feet, 10 inches. Kong won the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition in 2019.

ALL PHOTOS BY PAULA WILSON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

## FINE ART

# PAINTING THE TRUTH

Continued from Page 1

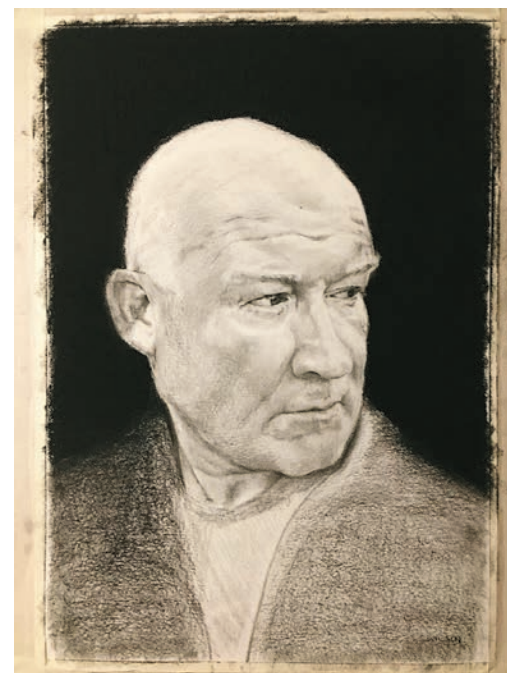
The 45 Tianjin practitioners had been arrested while appealing to a magazine publisher who had published an article slandering their faith.

Kong was one of the 10,000 practitioners at the protest that day. She'd agonized about making the trip to Beijing. "It would be safe if I stayed home. But if everybody thought this way, then who would take a stand and set things right? If everyone thought only about themselves, what would the world become?" she told NTD, a sister media outlet of The Epoch Times.

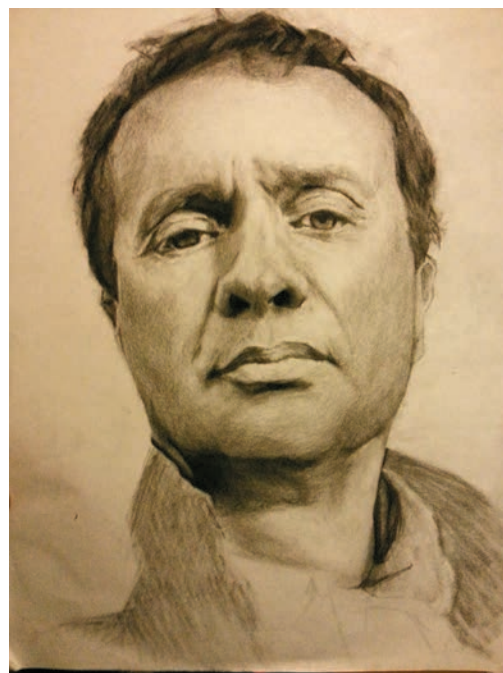
A few of the petitioners were called on to meet with Chinese premier Zhu Rongji and his staff, and the peaceful protest ended with the release of the detained practitioners.

Just a few months later, on July 20, 1999, Chinese Communist Party leader Jiang Zemin ordered police to arrest practitioners across China. Some were beaten and tortured. On July 22, Jiang officially banned Falun Gong and later started a systematic campaign of persecution against practitioners, including the heinous act of state-sanctioned organ harvesting.

Kong decided to let her art tell the world the truth: that the practice was peaceful and the persecution was wrong. "Information is censored in mainland China," she said, "but a picture needs no words. The power of art can reach everyone, regardless of your nationality."



"Ethan Gutmann," 2019, by Paula Wilson. Conté on hot pressed paper.



"Louis Smith," 2016, by Paula Wilson. Conté on newsprint paper. Wilson drew a classical portrait of her teacher Louis Smith as part of her study with him.

## Painting the Truth

In Kong's award-winning painting, hundreds of practitioners form an orderly line outside the central appeals office in Beijing, waiting to be heard. Kong had wanted to paint the people who were there that day, but the available photographs were of a low resolution.

Instead, she met practitioners outside of mainland China and painted each person as an individual portrait. "I tried to bring

to life their actual personalities, facial expressions, and inner spirit," she said. She made a complex composition with multiple perspectives so that any part of the painting could be viewed as if you were looking straight at it.

She took more than five years to complete the painting, often spending 16 hours a day at her easel.

Kong's horizontal composition mirrors a traditional Chinese handscroll, a format

she's familiar with, having been taught traditional Chinese art from the age of 10.

## Painting Like the Old Masters

Wilson first met Kong in New York during the NTD competition. As a Falun Gong practitioner, Wilson felt deeply moved by Kong's painting and her personal story. Their shared faith and spiritual understanding transcended their language barrier. Both sought to paint the truth.

Wilson's art training happened later in life than Kong's. When Wilson's twin boys started school, she joined a local art class that her mother attended. At one of the classes, they explored chiaroscuro, the technique that 17th-century Italian artist Caravaggio loved, whereby dramatic light and shade define a composition. Wilson copied an old family photograph by drawing a grid on a photocopy of the scene to recreate the light and shadow. The teacher and her classmates were impressed with her drawing. The class chatted about how the old masters painted, using red chalk or charcoal preparatory drawings and then underpainting their work, for instance. Wilson knew from then on that that's what she wanted to do: paint like the old masters once had, using the same methods, techniques, and recipes for making paints, mediums, and glues.

A series of serendipitous events propelled Wilson on her path to learn those age-old traditions. Around the time that she learned chiaroscuro, her mother's copy of Artists & Illustrators magazine featured traditional artists from Manchester, not far from where she lives. That's how she first heard of Louis Smith, who taught part-time classes in classical portraiture. Wilson was a full-time caretaker for her partner who had just had a stroke, so she wasn't in a position to learn with Smith at the time.

Two years later, Wilson contacted Smith

to do paid modeling. Smith had now established a two-year course on the traditional methods of painting he had learned at the Angel Academy of Art in Florence, Italy. Smith needed administrative help, and Wilson wanted to learn from him but couldn't afford the tuition. It seemed like a perfect arrangement, so they exchanged skills for six months.

## The Value of Traditional Art

Knowing artistic traditions gives the artist a framework to work within. Wilson recalls reading that Leonardo da Vinci taught his students and then encouraged them to develop their own style. She likes that process to be taught handwriting. We are all taught how to form letters and words, and then we develop our personal handwriting style.

Wilson finds the classical painting process beautiful and rewarding. It's a very technical process, using centuries-old recipes and methods passed down from master to apprentice, generation after generation.

She enjoys the expressive nature of the classical art tradition. "It allows for movement, feeling, and emotion," Wilson told The Epoch Times. She explained that when painting in the classical style, the artist achieves movement in the painting by choosing what part to focus on and what to slightly blur. A hyperrealist artist, however, concentrates on giving clarity to the whole composition, often resulting in a lack of depth in a work.

She likens applying the paint to sculpting. "You're actually sculpting and molding [oil paint] with a fine brush, with no brush marks in it whatsoever," she said.

## Painting With Purpose

Every artist has an Achilles' heel. At the moment, Wilson struggles with the initial construction phase, when she has to

draft the composition using straight lines and apexes. It's the foundation of a whole painting. If the elements of the construction drawing—the measurements, proportion, and perspective—aren't right, then the composition collapses later in the process. The more you practice, the better your brain becomes at recognizing the right angles to draw, she explained.

When Wilson puts her paintbrush to canvas, she often feels a divine presence guiding her. She once read it described as "having the stroke of gods."

"Personal thoughts come out that you can't even conceive with your conscious mind," she said.

## Wilson wants her art to help people know the truth and to guide people to goodness.

Smith taught Wilson the classical drawing method using conté, a crayon made from compressed charcoal or graphite and clay that is slightly oilier than charcoal. She enjoys the dramatic lighting effects that conté allows, like in her portrait of human rights investigator Ethan Gutmann. She's happy with the effect. "It feels like he's coming out of the darkness," she said.

## The Importance of Peer Support

Wilson took months to complete Gutmann's portrait because of her family commitments. A competition deadline and a gentle nudge from a fellow artist helped her focus on completing the drawing and letting go of perfection.

After completing the portrait, Wilson gained the confidence to enter the com-

petition for the prestigious BP Portrait Award, held at the National Portrait Gallery in London. She entered a self-portrait that she'd completed in an intense six days of painting in front of the mirror. The painting hangs on her wall. She sees it as a record of her artistic progress, and now views it as more of an underpainting needing refinement. Every piece she creates is a stepping stone to mastery.

Wilson entered the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition with a composition she'd seen while meditating. She worked alone creating the piece, using figures from her imagination rather than drawing from models. At this point, she wanted to stay true to her vision. "I wanted to prove myself," she said. "I didn't want any interference from anyone telling me it should be like this or that."

Although Wilson's competition entry wasn't accepted, she won valuable insights from the process and an invitation to New York to accompany the competition finalists on expert talks and tours to museums.

Staying at the same hotel as Kong gave Wilson the opportunity to learn about Kong's life and her painting technique. She took onboard this guidance, and that of other painters, soaking everything up like a sponge; in her view, accepting peer help and constructive criticism is an important part of artistic development.

She soon realized where she'd gone wrong with her competition entry—she had been trying to make the perfect painting without having the right tools or skills. Great artists such as 19th-century painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau used models, using the same model in different positions for a painting. She also realized that the finalists' works weren't perfect, but they accepted imperfections as part of their painting process.

Since the last NTD competition in 2019,

Wilson is approaching her painting differently. While Wilson had previously worked alone, the competition environment gave her almost an atelier experience, where peers bounced their creative ideas off one another. She learned from observing other artists to keep her painting process simple, following a definite tradition. For the 6th NTD International Figure Painting Competition, she's creating her composition using the golden ratio—an ancient geometric calculation that replicates nature and results in the most harmonious compositions—just like Leonardo da Vinci once did. She's also using a model, preparing her canvas using rabbit skin, making a proper underdrawing, and asking for advice along the way.

Just like Kong, Wilson wants her art to help people know the truth and to guide people to goodness. "What I'm doing is definitely about awakening from this world," she said. For Wilson, that means not only showing the goodness of humanity, but also reminding people that we have to face divine consequences if our thinking isn't upright.

Wilson hopes that her story helps aspiring artists who may be afraid to try, or think that they can't create representational art. "It is very difficult. But try and see what happens—put your heart into it," she said.

*Professional representational artists, fine art teachers, and students can register for the 6th NTD International Figure Painting Competition through June 15. The exhibition and award ceremony will be held in New York in November. (The date and venue will be announced on the competition website.) To find out more, visit OilPainting.NTDTV.com*

*To learn more about artist Paula Wilson, visit WilsonPaula.com*

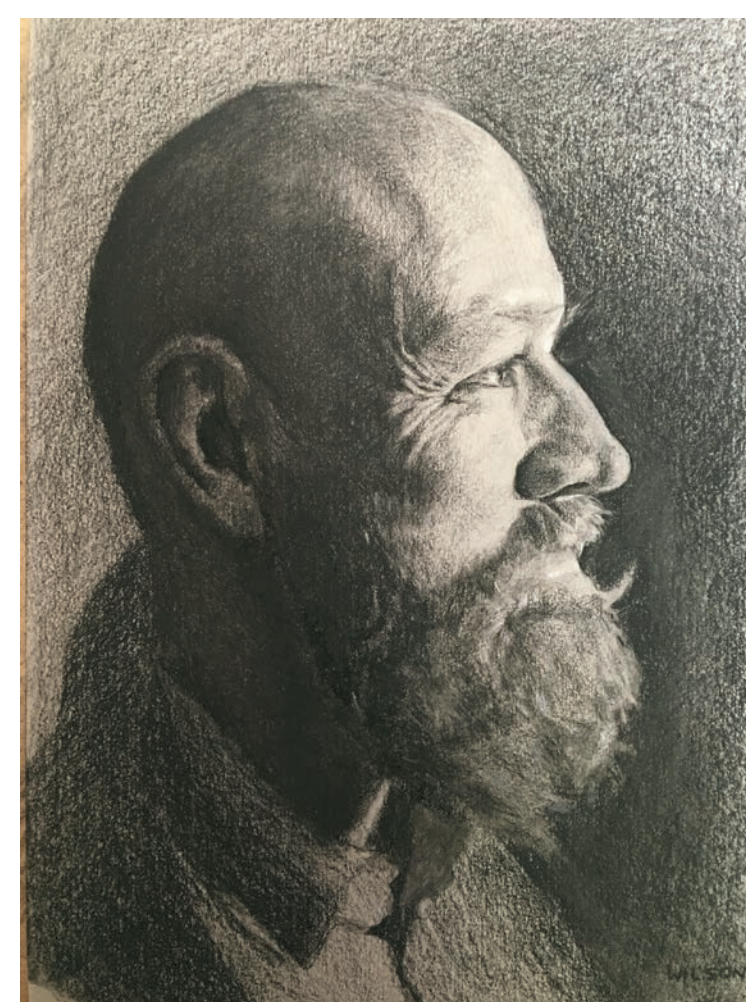


(Above) Haiyan Kong (L) with Paula Wilson at the Salmagundi Club in New York in 2019.

(Left) Haiyan Kong won the Gold Award at the 5th NTD International Figure Painting Competition with her work "April 25, 1999" at the Salmagundi Club in New York on Nov. 26, 2019.



British artist Paula Wilson with her portrait sketch by New York-based artist Ken Goshen.



"The Beard," 2018, by Paula Wilson. Conté and charcoal on toned paper.



Artist Paula Wilson paints in the classical tradition, laboriously building her work up layer by layer. Pictured on her easel here is an underpainting of her brother.



As this painting takes shape, we can see how artist Paula Wilson builds up the different layers and expression of her subject.



## POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

# A Subtle but Powerful Film About Faith and Redemption

IAN KANE

The world of moving pictures is a vast one, but not always that deep. When you've watched thousands of films, even some of the very good to great ones can get lost in the eddies of time and fading memories.

However, there are some gems out there that I can easily count on in terms of being so memorable that they stay with me. "Rear Window," "12 Angry Men," "It's a Wonderful Life": These movies will forever stay etched into my gray matter. But there is another film that draws from both the stories of angst and redemption of older country music (mainly from the 1990s and before), and actual biblical trials, tribulations, and eventual redemption.

Produced in 1983 and helmed by Aussie director Bruce Beresford, "Tender Mercies" is one of those films so understated that it slips under many a radar. And yet it's a movie that I'll always refer to when people ask me about my favorites: simply told yet gracefully nuanced, with powerful scenes between superb actors so realistic that incidents like the scenes could happen right next door. Well, maybe not next door in this case.

## 'Tender Mercies' is a simple yet nuanced story.

You see, the tale begins at a shabby Texas roadside motel with an attached gas station, or is it the other way around? Anyway, it's located smack-dab in the middle of nowhere, with nothing but dusty winds blowing tumbleweeds across parched prairies, under wide blue skies.

A fight is going down in one of the run-down rooms over the last swig of liquor.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

One of the men, has-been country star Mac Sledge (Robert Duvall), ends up on the losing side of the battle for the bottle and is tossed to the floor. (Talk about falling on hard times!)

All of this hullabaloo has woken up the proprietor of the establishment, widower Rosa Lee (Tess Harper), and her young son Sonny (Allan Hubbard). Not wanting to get involved, mother and son let the tattered screen door shut behind them as they disappear back into the darkness of the motel's environs.

Mac wakes up just where he was put down, face down in the middle of the ransacked motel room, complete with empty beer cans, liquor bottles, and stains of who-knows-what on the carpet. He stumbles outside and meets Rosa, who informs him that he's been in the room (basically unconscious) for two days.

"Lady, I'm broke. I'd be glad to work off what I owe you," Mac says to Rosa. Thus, he starts a slow, inward drifting orbit, first around the motel (having the integrity to work off his past due rent), then gradually descending into Rosa's titular tender mercies.

Soon, Rosa invites Mac in to eat with

A struggle of shared humanity. (L-R) Rosa Lee (Tess Harper), Mac Sledge (Robert Duvall), and Sonny (Allan Hubbard), in 1983's "Tender Mercies."

### 'Tender Mercies'

**Director**  
Bruce Beresford

**Starring**  
Robert Duvall, Tess Harper, Betty Buckley

**Running Time**  
1 hour, 32 minutes

**MPAA Rating**  
PG

**Release Date**  
March 4, 1983

★★★★★

her and her son at the kitchen table. A few days later, she invites him to her local church, where she sings in the choir. As Mac sings the beautiful Christian hymn "Jesus Saves" with little Sonny at his side, everything looks to be going in the right direction, and romance may be on the horizon. But this is all within the first act of the movie; there's plenty of time for things to go askew.

After watching this film for the umpteenth time, I once again realize that I never tire of watching its subtle, brilliant cinematography. Whether it be long shots of the natural world captured in a way that lingers as if not wanting to end our view of such simple splendors, or patiently capturing the moments of human emotion exchanged between the principal characters, this is truly filmmaking at its finest.

Although it also has many faith-based elements, it's relatable to anyone who has struggled in his or her life. As Rosa gradually begins to help Mac heal his broken spirit in the safe, almost convalescent-like environs of the motel, their journey is a very universal one of shared humanity.

Another thing I enjoy about this film is that it doesn't rely on gushing torrents of dialogue to move its simple-yet-nuanced story along. Rather, everything is edged ever gently forward through low-key acting performances that say more with people's posturing and expressions than with words. This sort of minimalist approach has aged even better when compared to modern cinema filled with empty sound and fury.

If you're looking for an inspiring movie that has an unusual sense of authenticity, heartfelt drama, and a good splash of romance, you can do no better than "Tender Mercies."

As one of the Psalms goes: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

"Tender Mercies" can be seen on *VuDu*, *AppleTV*, and *Prime Video*.

*Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality.*

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