

with English as well as Chinese subtitles for Morgan's benefit. Learning Chinese helps Morgan move on. Usually Morgan's dialogue is conveyed indirectly. In one of the few times she speaks "out loud", it is loudly and in Chinese. In the end of the book, Morgan starts a new life as an English instructor in China. Perhaps English was so loaded with old thought patterns and memories that Morgan had to start thinking in a different language to start anew. Away from the sphere of influence of Tricia's murder, she can be "positively" identified as Morgan.



Envisioning Mormon Art

Laura Allred Hurtado. *Immediate Present*. New York: Mormon Arts Center, 2017. 132 pp. Paper, \$24.95. ISBN: 9780692890196.

Reviewed by Sarah C. Reed

Last summer, the Church History Museum was busy preparing to send art from Salt Lake City to New York City. The backstory of this move was the foundation of the Mormon Arts Center. This nonprofit is the brainchild of historian Richard Bushman and author Glen Nelson, trying to fill a gap in what they saw in Mormon arts and arts scholarship. Nelson, in a post on *By Common Consent*, bemoans that Mormons don't know their own art and that Mormon artists and "the individual components of Mormon culture are in place, but they are like islands needing some serious bridge-building."¹ The Mormon Arts Center seeks to bring Mormon art to new

1. Glen Nelson, "Mormon Art in New York," *By Common Consent* (blog), May 2, 2017, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2017/05/02/mormon-art-in-new-york>.

audiences and to bring Mormon artists together. On their website they explain their threefold mission: “to display and perform Mormon art in New York City and elsewhere; to publish scholarship and criticism about Mormon art to reach a wider public; and to establish a comprehensive archive of Mormon Arts, 1830 to the present.”²

One result of these efforts was the first of a projected annual Mormon Arts Center Festival June 29–July 1, 2017 in the Riverside Church in New York City. In addition to music and spoken word, a significant portion of the festival was an art exhibition of Mormon artists curated by Laura Allred Hurtado, the Global Acquisitions Curator of the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. The exhibition, titled *Immediate Present*, featured artwork from the 2010s by Mormon artists, many of those pieces loaned by the Church History Museum. The artists included in this exhibition were: Pam Bowman, Whitney Bushman, Stephanie Kelly Clark, Caitlin Connolly, Jeff Decker, Daniel Everett, Rachel Farmer, Jeff Hein, Ben Howell, Levi Jackson, Brian Kershnik, David Chapman Lindsay, Jason Metcalf, Annie Poon, Walter Rane, J. Kirk Richards, Jean Richardson, Ron Richmond, Jorge Cocco Santángelo, Mary Sauer, Casey Jex Smith, Page Turner, and Chase Westfall.

To accompany these works of art, the festival commissioned written responses from a variety of Mormon thinkers—“a lawyer, a doctor, a game warden, a poet, a children’s book author, a composer, a musician, and a women’s rights advocate,” as the website states. Each writer was paired with an artist and wrote a piece that interacted with that art, from criticism to lyrics, from personal memoir to poetry, from an interview to a theological treatise. The authors were: Claire Åkebrand, English Brooks, Joanna Brooks, Sam Brown, Claudia Bushman, Alex Caldiero, Tyler Chadwick, Steve Evans, Fiona Givens, James Goldberg, Ryan Habermeyer, Julie de Azevedo Hanks, Ashley Mae Hoiland, Garrick Infanger, McArthur Krishna, Igor Coelho Arantes Santana Marques,

2. “About,” *Mormon Arts Center*, <https://www.mormonartscenter.org/about-main>.

Neylan McBaine, Carol Lynn Pearson, Jennifer Reeder, Analisa Coats Sato, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, Paul Washburn, and Chrysula Winegar.

The work under review here is the exhibition catalog put together by Laura Allred Hurtado and also titled *Immediate Present*. The coffee-table, soft-covered volume features color reproductions of the art alongside their accompanying written responses. The art underscores the great variety of styles and media that Mormon artists employ and the responses offer us models of how to engage with this art: sometimes direct interpretations, sometimes parallel musings, sometimes with another piece of art. The result is a wonderful synergy of art and audience and a treasury of performance and pedagogy. The Mormon Arts Center seeks to bring together artists and to bring them to an audience; this catalog shows exactly how this is accomplished by putting these Mormon artworks together in one exhibition and one volume and then instructing us with the ways we could react to this art through the diversity of thoughtful reflections. I found the poetry particularly fruitful in showing the creative and productive potential of the enterprise.

Laura Allred Hurtado's essay "The Immediate Present" introduces the volume and provides the necessary historical and critical context for the exhibition and the Mormon Arts Center Festival in general. Hurtado begins with President Spencer W. Kimball's speeches "Education for Eternity" and its adaptation in "The Gospel Vision of the Arts." The latter was given in 1967, so the 2017 festival marks the fiftieth anniversary and, as the promotional material says, "will explore the legacy of President Kimball's groundbreaking message" (2). Kimball muses on the relationship of the gospel to the arts. He encourages "Mormon artists, writers, thinkers, and musicians to aim for greatness," while also speculating on how a full knowledge of Mormon beliefs could have added to the greatness of artists like Rembrandt, Raphael, Paganini, Handel, Goethe, and Shakespeare. He also bemoans that the full drama and majesty of the Mormon story had not yet been "written nor painted nor sculpted nor spoken" (2). But Hurtado wonders what the aims and ideological underpinnings are of Kimball's

“call for greater cultural development and pursuit among Mormon artists” (4). Would it bring the LDS church out of obscurity? Would it legitimize the Church by proving that great people produce great art? Does a single great work of art serve as a metonym for the larger community? Drawing on the work of Benedict Anderson, Hurtado asks what single artist could represent the “imagined community” of Mormonism, concluding that “a call for multiplicity” must be necessary (4).

Hurtado then turns to the history of Mormon arts festivals, beginning with the Art and Belief Movement at BYU in 1964. The artists involved began to display their art and by the late 1960s the Festival of Mormon Arts (later changed to Mormon Arts Festival) was born. The festival was conceived of broadly with “no restriction on style” but sought a unity of message, asking that artists express their “sincere convictions” and that their works exert a “positive influence in the building of the kingdom of God on earth” (5). The details of the kinds of artists and art displayed at these festivals that continued until 1987 are a fascinating look at what counts as Mormon and the elastic definition of “Mormon” and “belief.”

Hurtado takes up the perennial question “what is Mormon art.” For the most part, her analysis here is descriptive rather than prescriptive, that is, she surveys what others have claimed as Mormon art and sketches out the implications for those definitions. In doing so, she provides a useful critical summary of various viewpoints. I wished in the context of the exhibition she could have expounded more on Amanda Beardsley’s stance that Mormon art is that “produced or commissioned by LDS church headquarters.” Hurtado, and perhaps Beardsley, sees this as art found in free copies of the Book of Mormon, the art from the gospel art kit, and the ubiquitous prints of Del Parson’s *Christ in the Red Robe*. I wondered how Hurtado would see art owned by the Church for the Church History Museum as a part of this, not just the mass-produced reproductions. Glen Nelson’s definition of Mormon art for the Center and festival is much more expansive: “If you self-identify as a Mormon, and you’re making art, then the art you are making is Mormon art” (9). M. Ephraim Hatch, from a

1969 proposal for a Mormon Arts Center, gave the definition of Mormon art as made by, for, or about Mormons. Hurtado asserts that she blended Nelson's and Hatch's definitions in curating the exhibition.

The last part of the essay is dedicated to using Jewish and American art as patterns for a Mormon arts movement. In particular, the Center was consciously modeled on the Jewish Museum in New York City. Hurtado offers the journeys of Jewish and American art as a road guide to recognition for Mormon art. However, Mormon art, for the moment, occupies a null space. It's not even a "minor" art yet; we're still trying to convince people it exists. The process that legitimizes a Mormon arts movement is still creating an audience for this art and raising the capital that could bring this art to that audience. Hurtado is hopeful, though, that "this festival and the others that follow will influence definitions, cultivate great artistic productions, and expand the notion of Mormon art out of its perceived colloquial status." Lofty goals, but even as this catalog shows, the grand talent and artistic interchange made possible may be the reward in itself.



Not Alone

Stephen Carter, ed. *Moth and Rust: Mormon Encounters with Death*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2017. 257 pp. Paper: \$23.95. ISBN: 9781560852650.

Reviewed by Cristina Rosetti

Death is one of the great anxieties and mysteries that permeate human existence. Through various art forms, and across different contexts,