

LATTER-DAY SAINT ART: A CRITICAL
READER WITH EDITORS
MASON KAMANA ALLRED AND
AMANDA K. BEARDSLEY

Glen Nelson

September 18, 2024

Latter-day Saint Art: A Critical Reader is the first comprehensive critical examination of Latter-day Saint art. In this interview, transcribed and edited for length from a podcast conducted upon publication, Glen Nelson interviews coeditors Mason Kamana Allred and Amanda Beardsley about the volume.

GLEN NELSON: With a book that's so big, twenty-two chapters, there's so much content that we could talk about. I think we need some kind of organizing structure in our chat today. So here's my strategy. I'd love you to give an overview of what the book is, who's involved, and how it came to be. Then I have something fun. I've asked the two dozen authors involved to send me a question to ask you for this interview. A few weren't able to send a question, but most did, and some asked multiple questions. As people ask you about the book, or you're talking about it, how are you describing this to people?

MASON KAMANA ALLRED: I'm often letting them know up front that it does have a scope to it. We did have to sit down and decide, what can we cover? It's huge, but what do we have to cut out? It is focused on visual art from Latter-day Saints, but it has a pretty long history; it's that whole long history since the Restoration of the Church in 1830.

It covers quite a bit, but you're not going to find much on poetry or dance in here. It really is visual art, but it is, to my mind, really the first moment where we've gathered so many experts, scholars from different disciplines, different backgrounds, to look into this with such depth, from tons of different angles, and across that longish history I'm talking about. You just haven't quite seen it like this before. It is monumental. I think it is a groundbreaking book in that sense: who it brought together, what they were able to accomplish in that. That's how I'm describing it to others.

AMANDA BEARDSLEY: Yeah, I'm doing similar. I think for me, I describe it more as an anthology, a more traditionally academic anthology, but it is also something that anyone could read because there are so many different approaches, as Mason said, that tell a very diverse array of stories. These stories are kind of like case studies in Mormon history that are tied to some works of art that I don't think have ever previously been in print before. What's really exciting is that it's going to show two-hundred-plus images. We had a lot of them digitized for this book. And it explores some new topics through the lens of art history that I haven't seen very much in Mormon scholarship. I know there are a few chapters on race as it relates to image, as well as feminism and film. We take on a lot of different topics, and that was intentional because we want to put at the forefront that it's impossible to get one comprehensive history, especially when it comes to art history when we're interpreting images.

NELSON: We're doing this interview over Zoom, and both of you are book lovers, I can tell, because behind you are bookcases ceiling to floor. So I have to tell you a funny story. About an hour ago, I'm in Salt Lake doing some work here, and I was at the Church History Museum's library. It's mostly a conference table with bookshelves all around it, and it contains probably the largest collection of books about art by Latter-day Saint people that I've ever encountered or heard about. That said,

you could put all of those books on a few bookshelves. There just isn't stuff out there. Does that sound right to the two of you?

BEARDSLEY: It does. I would say there are a handful of books. Those are more monographs, usually, that we find in Mormon art history and in the arts, generally a book about a single artist who is already well known, like Minerva Teichert or something like that. But in terms of an art historical approach to a history of art, we really only have a few books that have been written, and a lot of those are devotional books written by curators in the Church. [Lorin] Wheelwright, for instance, is one of them. In terms of bias, it's very front and center that these are devotional books and less scholarship, though there is some rigorous scholarship in there. So they gave us a little bit of an entry point, but I would say there's maybe two or three of those books. One of them that came from a conference in the '70s, and then—

ALLRED: We cover a few of these in the introduction if you're interested in that kind of background, historiography, what's been done. But you're right. I would say Mormon studies is actually booming right now. But as far as art history analysis appreciation within Mormon studies, that's just not happening. This book is like, "Hey over here, let's turn your attention to this." This is really important. If you want to understand the full picture of the Latter-day Saint or Mormon experience, you've got to include this artwork, and these chapters speak to that. These chapters show just how integral the creativity, the creative process, and that final product has been to the development of Latter-day Saint culture and religion.

NELSON: Now let's turn our time to the questions of authors. We talked a little bit about what the book is like just generally, but it's so interesting because their interests are really varied. I have questions here from most of the authors from the book. First up, Richard Lyman Bushman. Richard cowrote the foreword of the book. It won't surprise you to know

that he's a big picture thinker, and his question is a big picture question. He says—it's kind of a compound question—what comes next? What do you think is the next step in scholarship about LDS art? Your volume has gone a long way. What would you like others to do now?

BEARDSLEY: I have so many answers to this because, as an art historian and one of the few art historians working in Mormon art history, I just get really excited. The next thing is to take every single one of our chapters and make them book-length projects, because every chapter is. It was so frustrating to the authors. They're like, I only get so many words to talk about Mormon cinema. Randy Astle wrote a huge book on that too. So having to condense this huge topic into a single chapter was very frustrating for a lot of us, and also a really great challenge because scholars should be more succinct and less long-winded. I think every single one of those topics in there would be great. I would love to see, for example, Jenny Reeder's chapter as a book on hair art and on quilt making. Hair art could be its own book. Quilt making could be its own book. Relief Society buildings could be its own book. I think even within the chapters, there are topics that can be pulled that are really exciting for book-length or dissertation-length projects. I would love to see a more global orientation than even what we had, as much as we tried. I think that Laura Howe's chapter on global art as it related to some of the art competitions within Mormonism was a case study, a brilliant case study, in that. Also, even just topics. Cultural migration, which we saw happening in different chapters. Rebecca Janzen's chapter was about a cultural migration, but so was Laura's, so I think that we have a lot there. Mason mentioned this a little bit earlier. This is mainly a visually oriented book. I think in terms of materiality, we could expand. As a sound studies person, that excites me to think of a sound art history of Mormonism. I think we have people who've touched on that. I think Jeremy Grimshaw, for instance, is someone who has, in the past, touched on sound and Mormonism, but I would

love to see something more oriented toward the arts. Then the last for me, just as a selfish thing, would be, how do art and technology work together within Mormonism? Because I think there's something really cool and really specific there that I'd love to see untangled by other scholars as well. That's my wish list.

ALLRED: I totally agree with Amanda. There are just so many ways that this hopefully will spread out. I think that you can almost take it now as this really solid at least skeleton to Mormon art where you can start fitting in some more muscle tissue where you're like, oh, there's something between those two chapters that hasn't been done. I'm just saying, let alone the book-length versions of these, between the chapters there's new little things that can happen. I think it will inspire ideas that way. And then, as Amanda was starting to say with the sound studies, I want to see the comparable book on dance and on poetry and on music and so forth. I would love to see that happening where it has inspired those as well, because people will love it. But hey, we're missing this part too. That's my hope. We've talked about this before and in the intro we mentioned this, that a lot of Mormon studies has been very heavy straight-up history. What we saw here, too, is more historians taking the artwork seriously. I'd love to see that happen too, where people stop and realize, I want to take account of what's happening here with the artwork in this situation or moment in time I'm looking at. I would love to see that happening too.

NELSON: I was aware, with both of you as editors, that you are prodding the authors to do more interpreting of the works they were writing about, and I think that's something generally that's lacking that the community could really use.

BEARDSLEY: I agree, and I think that's one of the biggest things that art history brings to this is not just interpretive but taking the images seriously and taking the time to actually describe what we are looking

at here. That doesn't happen historically. Image analysis is such an important skill, but such an understated skill in a lot of work. That was something that as editors we wanted to really put front and center as a methodology. Really tell us what this looks like as art historians or people who are not art historians who have to write an art history chapter. This is really important.

ALLRED: Yeah. And by doing that, we wanted to model as well that if you want a more robust artistic culture to analyze, we're also modeling that appreciation. We didn't want any authors to write their chapter in a way where you could write about these movies or these paintings having never seen them. That would be ridiculous for this book. So you're right that we did push and encourage our authors to do more close analysis and interpretation of these artworks. For me that was a real thrill because I've read some of these authors who haven't done much of that, then here they did it. It just blew my mind. It was so exciting to see both of those happening.

NELSON: I'm also thinking about it from the artists' standpoint. You get somebody in your head and you create stuff with them in mind, if artists were aware that somebody was going to take them really seriously and put them into a different context and maybe even hold them to a standard, I think their work might shift, don't you?

ALLRED: That's what I'm saying. It's by doing what Amanda said, take the artwork seriously, we're signaling to these artists, we love you, and we appreciate your work, and we take it seriously, and we think it's worth time and blood and sweat and tears writing about it. So please keep creating and create better and better and better. Let's do more. I think the book does that. It encourages that.

NELSON: Randy Astle has a question for you: While this book is incredibly comprehensive, what areas of study did you notice that are still missing or at least merit further study?

ALLRED: I'm at BYU-Hawaii. My first thought is, how do we not have a chapter in any kind of Polynesian art? Something from the Pacific. The marae with the Maori culture or tattoo or tapa cloth or something.

BEARDSLEY: For me, we mentioned this actually in the introduction, but I would have loved for someone to have taken on the art of Jon McNaughton because it's just the moment that we're in right now. Jon McNaughton does these political images, and this highly propagandistic imagery. I think I would have loved to have someone talk about that in the moment right now with the upcoming election. The other thing I would have loved to have seen, and maybe this wasn't something we could have included as early on, but I was just starting, in 2020, to see AI come into play and AI in relationship to Mormonism and specifically creating Mormon imagery. There are some artists I know who have been playing around with it. I would have loved to see someone write on that.

NELSON: Those are topics for the future. It's not a knock on what you accomplished. It's like a road map for what could happen next.

ALLRED: I would mention one more before you move on. I'm going to keep these really quick. But just to mention. It makes me think that one of the most popular Mormon artists, of course, was Arnold Friberg because he worked on *The Ten Commandments* and he did that Valley Forge prayer thing. But because he did the previsualization, the paintings for *The Ten Commandments*, it makes me think that today you have these Latter-day Saint VFX artists, these animators working with Marvel or Pixar or DreamWorks. Some of them are amazing, and they're doing the previs work today for these CGI movies. I would love to see a chapter on their work too. So animation as well.

NELSON: Heather Belnap asked, what new avenues of inquiry in the history of LDS art and visual art and material culture do you anticipate? Maybe I'll shift it a little bit. What would feminist scholars want to do

now regarding art and visual art and material culture? What do you think the next steps of scholarship might be?

BEARDSLEY: This is an exciting question because I've been in conversation recently with Joanna Brooks who [edited] the book called *Mormon Feminism*, alongside Rachel Hunt Steenblik and Hannah Wheelwright. We've been talking about this a little bit. I think we've seen a few really exciting strides especially since 2010—and I talk about this in my chapter a little bit—of shows that have showcased women artists or Utah artists and things like that. But really I think—this is something Joanna is thinking through right now is, how do we relate our own stories and our own identities as people who grew up in Mormonism, maybe left the Church or who are still in the Church, how do we reconcile that with our past? And especially with, as Nathan talks about, as well as Mary talks about, in their chapters, some of the exoticization of Mormon women historically. I think there's a lot to be reconciled there and grappled with. But I think the next step is to rethink—and I mention this in my chapter a little bit—beyond the biological essentialism or being relegated to the realm of our biology as women, period. Thinking of other genders that have emerged and how scientifically that isn't something that can easily actually be argued. For me, I'd love to see more in the realm of queer art in Mormonism. I know there are artists who have touched on this historically. I would love to see more that really shirks off that second-wave feminism. We are women, and that's what makes us different. It's our experiences that make us different, but it's not our biology, per se, as much if we think of it scientifically. I think, for me, that would be the next step. Not just recuperating and recovering this history of women artists, but to think through what it means to be a woman in our contemporary landscape.

NELSON: Rebecca Janzen has two questions which I think are really great. I want to know what the most challenging part of the process was and how you successfully sorted things out. And then she asks, I also

want to know what you thought the volume would be like and how that compares with how it turned out.

ALLRED: What was the most difficult part of the process? It's a great question. I think maybe, for me, it was probably—because Glen took the lion's share of dealing with a lot of the images and stuff like that. He really helped out on that front. And Amanda was so organized in getting all the images together on spreadsheets and so forth. I feel like personally, for me to respond, I would say probably somewhere in the editing. It was very enjoyable and very satisfying, but it was also just very time-consuming. We cared so much about helping but not overstepping and trying to encourage artists and never push them too much in certain directions. It was hard to balance that and to give them as much as we could. That's where most of my energy went. So that was the most difficult in that sense. Editing other people's chapters.

BEARDSLEY: I would agree. We were working with a lot of entities. We had twenty-two authors, and then we had an editorial board with the Center for Latter-day [Saint] Arts, and then we were working with Oxford as well. Remediating all of those different expectations and needs and ensuring that all those who have a stake in the project leave feeling happy can be really difficult. I found that very challenging because I wanted to also maintain academic integrity as I worked through this book. So what, to me, was the definition of that shifted in those different environments. Figuring out how to work together was hard. I think, as Mason talked about with the authors—and it wasn't that it was hard—it's a challenge that comes with any collaboration, this way of working with people and figuring out their different styles. Working with the authors and ensuring that we were true to what they were saying, and interpreting that, and figuring out ways to either improve content in whatever way that we could in a tone that was kind I think was complicated. I think the second thing that was hard for me was working with making an art history book that wasn't written by

all art historians. That wasn't a bad challenge, because working with an incredible array of scholars who were not art historians allowed us to center visual analysis and their methods while also learning from their disciplinary approaches to writing about Mormonism. As an art historian, I am moving forward with a very different perspective having learned from them as well.

NELSON: The foundation of James Swenson's question is something that I get quite a lot working for the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts about just the definition of this thing entirely. So he says, after editing this volume featuring a wide variety of scholars with a wide variety of ideas, did you come to a more concrete view of what "Latter-day Saint" art is and isn't? Is there truly such a thing as Latter-day Saint art?

BEARDSLEY: I'll start. No and yes. The back of our book, the blurb that you read, Glen, talks about how we define Latter-day Saint art. It's really anything that's adjacent to Mormonism. It doesn't matter about the identity of the artists themselves too much unless the artist integrates that into the work. I think this question made me and Mason horribly self-conscious because when we first sat down with the authors, all of the authors tried to answer this question. It's a little daunting and maybe even not really as interesting of a question to me anymore, but it's a question that needs to be answered. Because if we're making a book about Mormon art, what is it, right? But what seems more important than this question of what Latter-day Saint art is, and what's far more interesting than defining Mormon art is taking seriously what creators put in the world, whether that art is known or not, and asking what their work means. Again, starting with that image and then working outward from there to see if there are some defining characteristics that loosely connect them together. This is really why I like the multiplicity of voices and authors choosing the works for each chapter. This is how all the works were chosen for this book. [To] all of the authors, we were like, you have free rein. Choose what you need as long as it's within ten

to twelve images. So it highlights the—I don't know if subjectivity is the right word—but the power, I guess is a better word, inherent to defining a canon of something, while also demonstrating that anything within or adjacent to the religion is worthwhile so long as someone chooses and places it on that pedestal. For me that's what the definition is: what we say it is.

NELSON: Menachem Wecker gave us a few questions to ask you, so let me ask two questions. Here's his first one. With so much going on in the world, why a book on LDS art now? What does it have to say that speaks uniquely to what's going on now?

BEARDSLEY: My answer to that is short and sweet. If not now, when? This has been a long time coming, as you talked about—I think it was you, Mason—Richard Bushman was saying it's been a long time coming. That's one way I could answer it. The other way I would answer is to say that this is a book that has a lot of engagement with a lot of the sociopolitical conversations that are going on in the world right now. With Paul Reeve and Carlyle Constantino, we have chapters that really delve into some of the larger conversations going on around colonization and land distribution and representation. In Mason's chapter, in my chapter, as well as in a lot of other chapters we are thinking about feminist topics, we're talking about larger conversations surrounding what it means to represent controversial things. Like embodiment, even, in cinema, I think is a new topic, or not specifically new but a really cool topic to think about with regard to cinema. If you're sitting in a theater and are in this disembodied-seeming state, where your body's not moving. I think we have conversations that are really important to a lot of what is being talked about, both in scholarship as well as what's being talked about in the media right now. It's a really interesting historical document, I think, in that way, because our authors are very concerned with doing that kind of labor too.

NELSON: In the beginning of this conversation, we were talking about [how] this fills a gap in scholarship. This book could very well have been written a year, five years, ten years, twenty years ago, and should have been written, but it would be a very different book. I think this book ten years from now will be a very different book when there are one, five, ten, fifty more books that take it and run with the ideas of it. Let's see, Mason, let me ask this question to you that Menachem posed. What are some of the things that surprised you most in this project, whether penning your essays or editing others?

ALLRED: I wanted to point to a couple of artworks that surprised me, because I was unfamiliar with them, that also showcase a lot of the often more recent, but not always, artwork done by Latter-day Saints outside of what we might have expected. Some readers might expect a more Utah-centric idea of Latter-day Saint art history. So I'm going to pull from Laura Howe's chapter because she looks at the international art competition. In fact, one strategy to read this book, honestly, you've got to read that intro, but maybe start with Laura Howe's chapter that has all the international, more recent stuff, and then go back and read others to see the history that got us there. Two artworks I'll mention from there that speak to Menachem's question. One is by Aoba Taichi, a Japanese artist who creates these earthenware dishes for traditional Japanese tea ceremonies. He learned this from his father, who's one of the best in Japan. He learns this process, in fact, the same year that he converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and learns about what's called the Word of Wisdom, which would prohibit the consumption of tea, which is so deeply important culturally for him in Japan and the artistic practice he's now joined in as an apprentice. What he ends up doing is creating these new types of earthenware dishes that have engravings from the Book of Mormon on them and stuff like that. I mean, you've got to check these out and think about how he's wrestling with that in his mind and then working it out with

his hands, literally, as he creates these earthenware dishes. The last one I'll mention is Joseph Banda's, an artist from Malawi, who has this one image I want to speak of, this painting on wood I believe, of Lehi and Lehi's dream or vision of the tree of life. He has Lehi on a baobab tree where he's up in the top of it and getting this, I think it fills up with moisture over the course of the year, and he's getting the fruit. But unlike a lot of the visualizations I've seen of this where it's this problematic thing of once you get to the tree, maybe hang out and offer fruit to people, Banda has it where Lehi's working. He's climbing in the tree and grabbing the fruit and actively giving it out to people, which seems to really resolve some of that issue of, am I done? Are there yet things to do? This enduring to the end is playing out in his artwork, looks totally different than other visualizations of that dream coming from this artist in Malawi that I just think is really fantastic and will surprise some readers who aren't familiar with these artworks coming from around the world.

NELSON: Carlyle Constantino asks, how do you envision this book being used as a conduit to initiate conversations about spirituality and Mormonism, particularly regarding sensitive or tough topics within Latter-day Saint histories? How does art play a role in that dialogue?

ALLRED: I think we can see throughout the book that—I just think we probably need to get better collectively, those interested in Latter-day Saint culture and history, at recognizing how powerful art can be and has been in providing a space for people somehow orbiting this faith tradition or directly within it to wrestle with ideas and to express their experience in ways that are very individualistic, subjective, but also have these shared moments that feel like they resonate with other people. If you think about what makes it sort of unique or interesting, I do feel like in other traditions, whether it's Jewish art or Catholic art, you may see more things of stories and saints, and I think with

Latter-day Saints you have a lot more direct grappling or wrestling with modern revelation or prophetic utterance or cultural norms in ways that I think show up in the art. The art is providing the space, it's connective tissue, but also space to push and pull. That's really important and needs more support and appreciation in its role in doing that.

NELSON: Haven't the two of you found, generally speaking, that art is a really great way to start a conversation about difficult things? And if that is the case, maybe an example or some thought about that.

BEARDSLEY: Yes. When I teach, for instance, we always start with an image to open up the conversation. I think part of that is allowing students to make observations on their own about maybe a theme, if I designate the theme as such, or just say what themes could be drawn from this based on what you see. Again, that close looking and observation can start with what we know about the world in ourselves, what we see, and then take it to this really, for me, a magical space, which is talking about it or transforming the image or the piece or the work, the sculpture, what have you, in front of our eyes because we may have thought of it in one way for all of our own history. I think that's what is beautiful about art as this space for conversation is that it's a communicative medium, but we have to interpret that communication together as art historians. In that interpretation, I think it gives us a degree of separation to some extent. With Mormon art in particular, I think where Terryl Givens's chapter really comes in, in his paradox of personal revelation and institutional telling you what to do institutionally, and that seeming to be at odds with each other, but within Mormonism, it acts as a paradox. I think that's where you're talking about, Mason, in a really interesting way is artists' subjectivity in Mormonism might have that valence or that inflection of personal revelation that allows them to state, "This is my experience within this Church," and opens up some of those conversations of individual expression. Though I don't

want to always say that it's only about individual expression because it's an artifact still of a collective experience in a lot of ways when we interpret it. That's what is exciting, I think, about it. That's what allows us, a lot of the time, to really talk about these difficult topics such as this fraught history of race within Mormonism that a lot of people have had a really hard time talking about for a very long time, as well as polygamy and queerness within the religion too. Specifically in my chapter, I bring in the artist Marlena Wilding's images about her experience of being Black within a Mormon culture. Being able to talk about her experiences through that medium in our conversations was really both liberating for her as well as communicative in a way that I think she hoped would reach Mormon audiences to understand how those more banal forms of racism enter into those community experiences.

NELSON: I think a lot of the artists that I know are interested in eliciting a response. That's part of the communication that you were referring to. I wouldn't say the same is true for the illustrators I know. I think they're trying to tell a story. It's just a different kind of thing that they're working toward. So I love the idea that you have an artwork and people are gathering around it and just talking about it. Then one thing leads to another and you're getting insight into why that means something to them. Maybe their interpretation or their response to it is completely different from yours because of their individual experience, and then that connects you to them and gives you insights and all of that stuff.

Chase Westfall posed a question about the future: Having assembled and accounted for this history, what does it suggest to you about what might, could, should come next? How do you see the next two hundred years of LDS art and material culture?

ALLRED: I have no idea how to answer the two-hundred-year question. We've talked quite a bit about the scholarly hope of inspiring new

iterations of this type of a project or ways of expanding it, but since we're talking about the artwork as a community, too, I would love to see more of a sense of that appreciation, support, criticism, just care and love for Latter-day Saint art. Where you're at, Glen, with the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts, this is what you're all about. If you had that same sense of your Center all over the world, at least ingrained in people's minds to take very seriously and to get more familiar with stuff that's already out there in the Latter-day Saint tradition and to help push and create for more, that artists coming up would feel like, "I connect to a very deep, rich history of creators, and I want to do this now, something new and push it new directions." I feel like there's been too much of a disconnection with creating a public that loves and supports and critiques this to help artists want to create more and be a little more radical and push it in new directions. My hope would be that in two hundred years it would almost be some of these familiar contours we've seen, but maybe almost unrecognizable in some senses as far as the new directions it's gone and new creations we would see. But I have no idea. I'm not a prophet.

BEARDSLEY: I think this also gets at Nathan's question about why aren't there any contemporary artists featured in *Deseret Book*? Maybe in two hundred years, *Deseret Book* will be more open to exhibiting these artists and to having those kinds of conversations that really do allow for a little bit more critique of the Church itself, because I think that a lot of the contemporary artists do give some really interesting critiques based on their individual experiences. I think in two hundred years, my prediction is that *Deseret Book* will have more art books of contemporary artists.

NELSON: Laura Allred Hurtado has a question for the two of you. I think we've covered the first part of the question, which is about what you might have learned and new stories and new ideas through the process. But this second part of it that deals a little bit more with identity

might be novel enough to tackle to end our discussion today. How do you see this publication influencing culture, conversation, and identity in coming years?

ALLRED: The question that would keep coming up and has come up in this conversation is sort of, what is Mormon art? This is going to be important for cultural production because we tried to set this up in the intro as almost an agreement. We promise we'll keep asking that question, but we're more interested in provoking new questions. We think it's actually going to be more helpful to ask new questions. I'm hoping that will be the cultural ripple effect, that it's not so much to be obsessive about what is or isn't Mormon art and what those delineations are exactly. It's more like, what's the new questions we can ask about these? I think these chapters help showcase that in new ways. So I'm hoping the more, like you said, the curiosity, new questions about the scholarly endeavor of appreciating this artwork, but then on the other side, new questions about creation and artwork and new things that can be done that still connect with Mormonism somehow but push it in new directions is what I'm hoping to see.

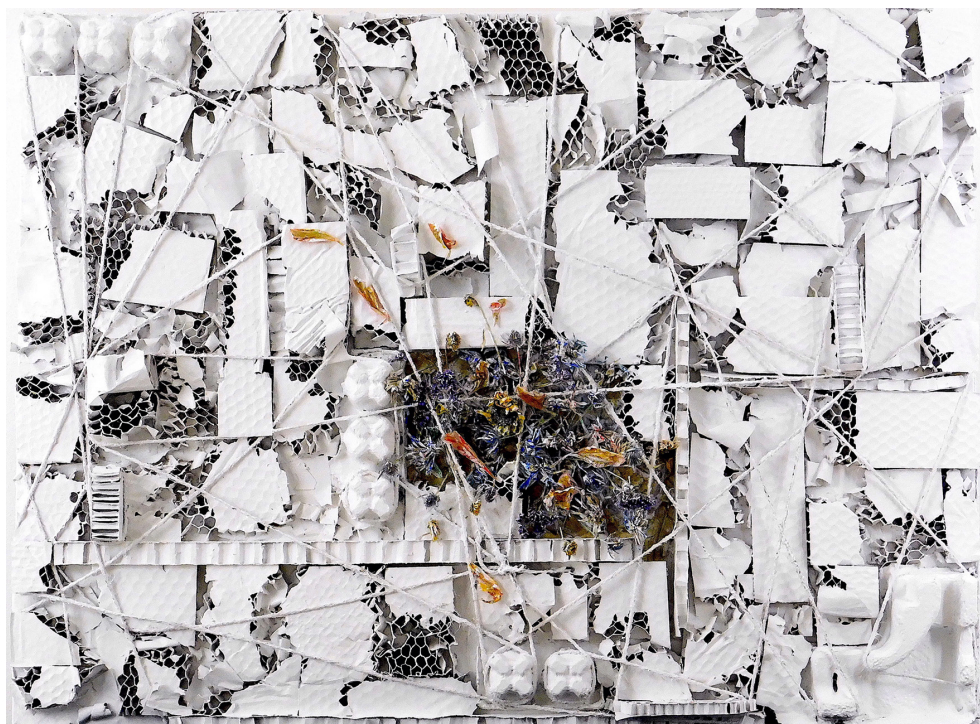
BEARDSLEY: My hope is that, I mean, of course—It's funny because you hope that your book is going to change the world, right? This is a book about Mormon art history, and I find it to be one of the most important projects I've ever worked on in my life, and I'm very, very proud of it. But for those who read it and are open to it, I do hope that it continues, like Mason said, to provoke and incite curiosity. Whether the ideas rub you the wrong way, I would hope that that creates a conversation in and of itself. My hope culturally is that it creates more discourse, that it continues to make us sit down and have conversations about what these things mean and what are the stakes of how we represent ourselves and how we represent people outside of ourselves. If we can learn from those instances historically, like we learn from Paul and Carlyle's chapters, then how can we make ourselves better as a people? What are

the case studies that allow us to not repeat history? Culturally, I would hope that—as a historian and as someone who loves art as much as I do—I would hope that people can use that as a case study.

GLEN NELSON {glen@centerforlatterdaysaintarts.org} is an author, arts executive, exhibition curator, librettist, and scholar. He is the author of books, essays, articles, works of fiction, theater, and poetry, and the librettist of operas, choral works, art songs, and hymns. As a ghostwriter, three of his books have become nonfiction New York Times bestsellers. He was given the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Mormon Letters.

AMANDA K. BEARDSLEY {amandakbeardsley@gmail.com} is the Cayleff and Sakai Faculty Scholar at San Diego State University and received her PhD in art history from Binghamton University. Her research and publications have ranged from sound studies and feminism in Mormon culture to science and technology studies, gender, and faith. She is the coeditor of *Latter-day Saint Art: A Critical Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2024) and has published in *Technology and Culture* and *Nineteenth Century Studies*.

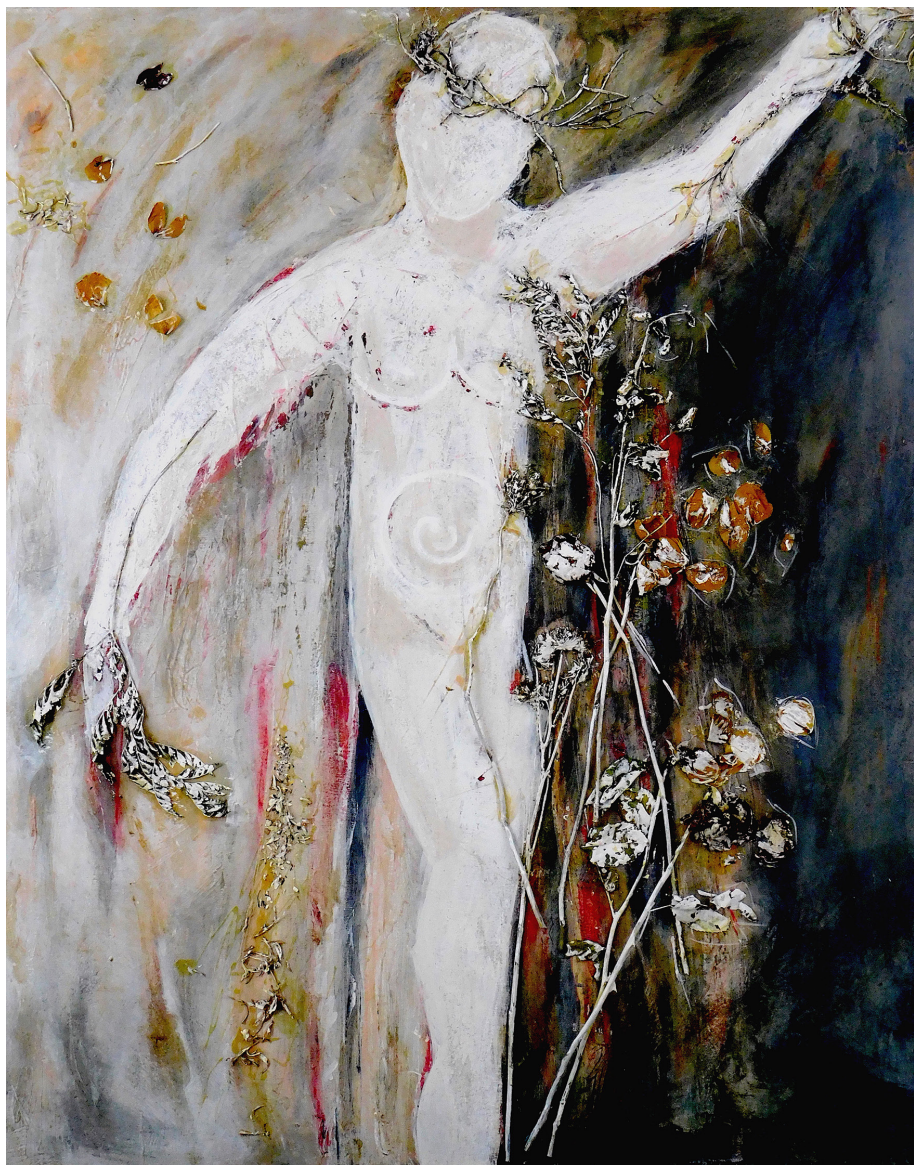
MASON KAMANA ALLRED {Mason.Allred@byuh.edu} is an associate professor of communication, media, and culture at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. He earned his MA and PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Weimar Cinema, Embodiment, and Historicity* (Routledge, 2017) and *Seeing Things: Technologies of Vision and the Making of Mormonism* (University of North Carolina, 2023). His interdisciplinary work has also appeared in venues such as *JAAR*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, *Material Religion*, and *Film History*.



Paola Bidinelli, *Lockdown*, 2020,
mixed media on canvas,
36" x 48" x 4"



Paola Bidinelli, *Tree of Life*, 2020,
mixed media on wood panel,
10" x 18" x 5"



Paola Bidinelli, *Mother's Seasons*, 2020,
mixed media on canvas,
47" x 39.5"



Paola Bidinelli, *Mute*, 2020,
mixed media on wood panel, 48" x 24"



Paola Bidinelli, *Searching for a Lost Time*, 2020,
mixed media on wood box, 15" x 12" x 3"



Paola Bidinelli, *Seeds of Joy*, 2021,
media on canvas, 26" x 18"

ARTIST

PAOLA BIDINELLI was born in Italy, in the ancient town of Teate degli Abruzzi, a wild and archaic territory known as “Land of Shepherds.” Over the years, Bidinelli has used the unique nature and dynamics of a multitude of raw materials, transforming them into a new imagery and identity. “Materials speak aloud to me,” she says. “Despite their imperfections, they unleash forces beyond our control, in an endless, fascinating fluctuation between ephemerality and resilience.”