



# Celebrating Jesuits in the Arts

**J**esuit artists came together in June at Fordham University in the Bronx to celebrate the contributions of Jesuits today to the arts.

Thirty-eight participants from across the U.S. gathered for the every-other-year ongoing education conference sponsored by the National Jesuit Brothers Committee.

Since the meeting was being held amidst the cultural richness and diversity of New York, the group decided that focusing on the arts would be appropriate, noted Brother Lou Mauro, SJ, a planner for the event.

**P**articipants were treated to a wide-range of presentations by their fellow Jesuit artists, as well as to New York's museums and plays and a Power Point display of artwork from Jesuits around the country.



Br. Gebhard Frohlich, SJ,  
*St. John LaLande, SJ*



Br. Charles Onorato, SJ, *Flower Impressions*



Mr. Hanh Duc Pham, SJ, *Grandmother's Hands*

Speakers at the conference explored how Jesuit art contributes to the life of the Church and the wider culture. They included: Br. Rick Curry, SJ [Maryland Province], famous for his pioneering work among actors with disabilities; Fr. Mark McGregor, SJ [Oregon Province], producer of “Posada” and a professor of film at Fairfield University; and from the New York Province, Fr. Peter O’Brien, SJ, executive director of the Mary Lou Williams Foundation and an expert on jazz; Fr. Michael Tunney, SJ, a professor of fine arts at Canisius College, Buffalo; Br. Edward Sheehy, SJ, a professional puppeteer; and Fr. Thomas Slon, SJ, an architect.

The speakers write of their presentations:

My talk on Jesuit Theatre was divided into two sessions. The first session was on Jesuit theater springing from the use of the imagination and



the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius. Today St. Ignatius would be urging Jesuits to be engaged in film and filmmaking, just as Jesuits were engaged in theatre hundreds of years ago. The Society needs to be engaged in film media not just in its critique, but in our understanding of film language, our educating others in it and our use of film and new media.

The second session was about our theater school for the disabled [National Theatre Workshop



Fr. James Hasse, SJ, *Pieta*

for the Handicapped – [www.ntwh.com](http://www.ntwh.com)] and how the Jesuit quest for eloquentia perfecta can embolden the poor and make them their own masters through self-confidence.

*Br. Rick Curry, SJ*

Director, National Theatre Workshop for the Handicapped, New York

The first part of my presentation was a screening of the recently released documentary POSADA, directed by myself. The second part was an illustrating of the stylistic trends in film by showing clips from immigrant-related films.



The story-telling power of film displays an Ignatian characteristic, in that St. Ignatius asked people to use their imaginations in prayer to visualize and listen to people in events. The use of immigrants was an example of telling the story of people important to our faith, to the Church and, historically, to America.

POSADA is a 57 minute documentary about unaccompanied immigrant children. Loyola Productions and Fairfield University Media Center assisted me in its production. POSADA and the Posadas Project are grass-roots responses to the Society of Jesus' call to support the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform. In June of this year, the Telly Awards announced that POSADA received a bronze award.

I used clips from "West Side Story," "In America," and "Big Night" to illustrate stylistic trends in film.

*Fr. Mark McGregor, SJ*  
Professor of Visual and Performing Arts,  
Fairfield University

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To begin, each participant took a single fruit, vegetable or portion of bread from the center of the table. Following my demo, each drew his first, single object noting exterior and interior contours, edges, and defining marks. The goal was an accurate perceptual rendering of the object. As this process went along for four or five single objects, I also called their attention to the planes that constructed the three-dimensional volumes of the given objects.

Next came pairs of objects drawn together. Here the issue of the relation between the pair of objects was introduced. I also encouraged them to draw the two objects together rather than one after the other, recalling the way we



see objects in the world: together rather than one isolated from the next.

In the second and final short hour, the objects were arranged in a randomly ordered manner on each of the five round tables where groups of eight gathered. The participants brought the earlier points together into a single composition of the still life objects. I also pointed out the lighting and shadows on the objects and table space as a further consideration to making a natural, perceptually rendered, completed drawing.

*Fr. Michael Tunney, SJ*  
Professor of Fine Art, Canisius College, Buffalo

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The presentation was in two parts. The first briefly explored how over the course of history the church building in the Catholic west changed in response to the theology of the times, liturgical practice, popular piety and even historical happenstance. Throughout history, there have



been various paradigms for the building, from shrine and temple to museum and meeting hall. To emphasize any one over the others alters the shape and the aesthetic of the building. In addition, the church building has been shaped according to its variously perceived purpose. The names often given to the church building (eg., House of God, House for the Church, House of Prayer, House for the Liturgy) are evidence of the differing understandings of the building's purpose.

The second part of the presentation looked at how the documents on the liturgy since the Second Vatican Council have shaped more recently built and renovated churches. Examples were taken from my own work as an architect and work which I've done as project architect at Arthur John Sikula Associates. The presentation considered and tried to demonstrate the difficulty in renovating churches that were designed for a radically different liturgical experience, as well as the difficulty in building a church on a limited budget with multiple foci and uses.

*Fr. Thomas Slon, SJ*  
Architect, AJSA, New York

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The show was in four parts: Stations of the Cross, Show and Tell, Ukrainian Troop and Marionettes. The figures for the Stations are cut from black cardboard placed against a white plastic screen, moved with rods, string and wire. The most complex station is "taking down from the cross." Two men are on the top of ladders that are leading against the cross. The men lower the Christ figure with ropes to the group below.



Puppetry is the art of illusion. Nothing is real. Unlike a painting or sculpture, which will be placed for all to see, a puppet is not a puppet unless it is performing. A puppeteer must practice to make it look real.

The marionettes [photo] are the last part of the program. Each one is an act in itself and has



its own music. We always begin with the oldest member, the fiddler on the roof. He is followed by a Hopi Indian wearing a bird mask and feathers on his arms, which become wings. Then there's a piano player, a tap dancer from "42<sup>nd</sup> Street," a juggler, scarecrow, weightlifter, and a patriotic trapeze act for our finale.

*Br. Edward Sheehy, SJ*  
St. Peter's Prep Jesuit Community