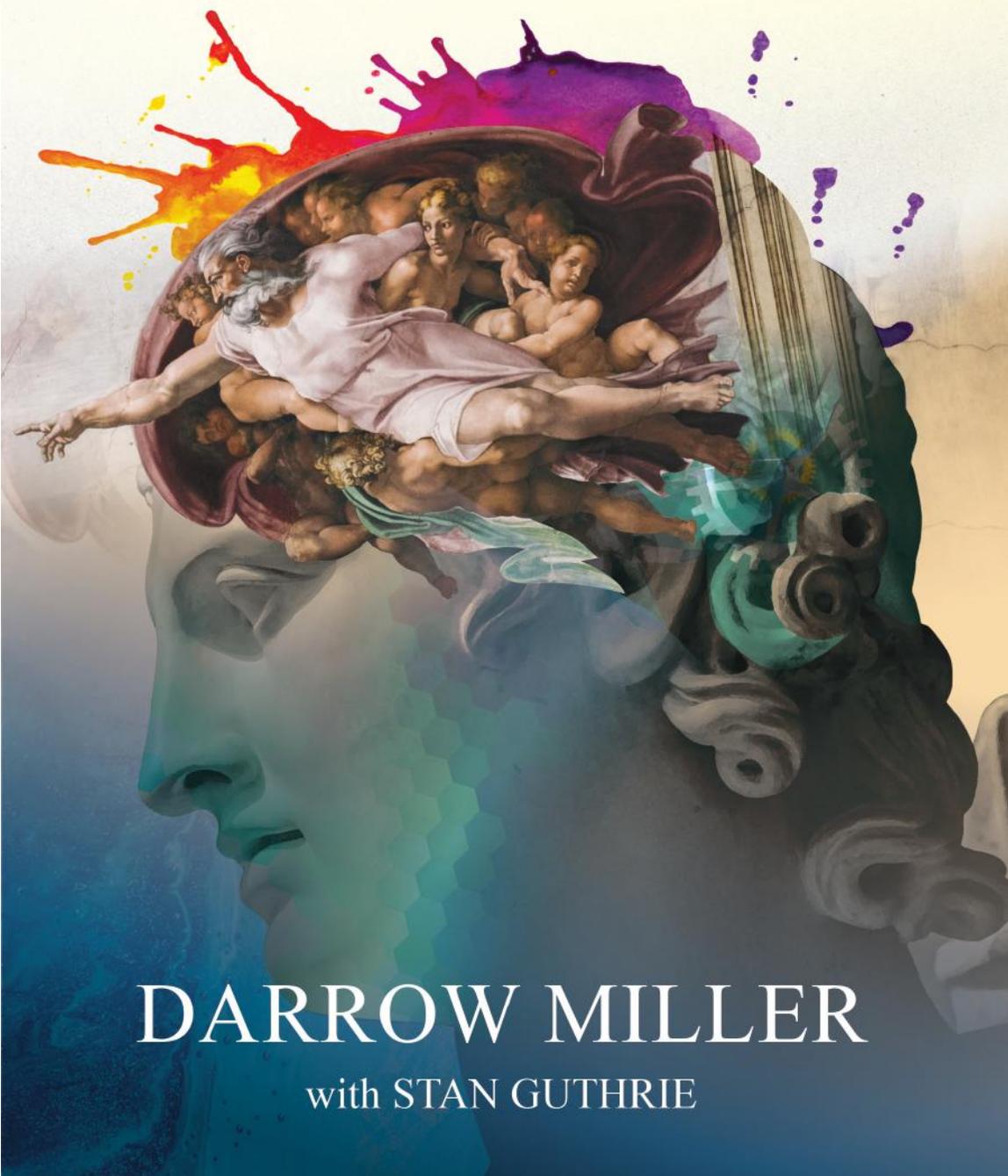


# A CALL FOR BALLADEERS

*Pursuing Art and Beauty for the Discipling of Nations*



DARROW MILLER

with STAN GUTHRIE

Darrow Miller's scholarly, yet accessible new book, *A Call for Balladeers: Pursuing Art and Beauty for the Discipling of Nations*, is both an extended letter of encouragement and a practical guide for artists of all ages, skills, and occupations. Divided into three sections, Darrow discusses the vital need for excellence in Christian art; the biblical necessity for Christian artists; and the trinity of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, which is rooted in the character of the Triune God. I highly recommend my friend Darrow's book with utter certainty that it will engage and transform your worldview and your passion for the creativity God has instilled in each of us.

Dr. Byron Spradlin, President  
Artists in Christian Testimony International & Canada

"Pastors, liberate your artists to fulfill their calling in this fallen world!" These words, spoken by Darrow Miller at a conference for Christian educators in Brazil, had a great impact on my life. In 2008, I found myself at a time of many difficulties in the development of a para-church ministry involving artists. Darrow's words reached my heart like a fresh new breath, a real encouragement in the midst of gray days.

I am very grateful to God for Darrow's life as an instrument in His hands, for his contagious enthusiasm, for his encouragement and pastoral care for the balladeers scattered across many continents.

This book is the result of the perception of someone who, for decades, has been walking with artists, helping them to position themselves in a graceful way as well as to produce cultural artifacts that point to the Great Artist. This is a must read book for anyone interested in reflecting on the call of the balladeers and the interrelationships between art, faith and social transformation.

Paulo Ritzel  
Founder, L'Abrarte—Rookmaaker Association for Studies in Art and Worldview

In the year 2000, Darrow Miller introduced me to the concept of *mental infrastructure* through his seminal work, *Discipling Nations* (2000): building biblical mental infrastructure is the foundation for true prosperity. I also learned from Darrow that artistic expression in the service of God is a true and worthy prophetic vocation, a subject he has developed fully in *A Call for Balladeers*. In this great book, Darrow shows that the inconsistency of modernism and postmodernist disjuncture produce decadent art as opposed to the transcendent beauty of Divinely inspired art, and he challenges us to embrace art as an instrument for displaying God's iridescence in a dark world. This book reclaims and recenters art in its rightful place at the feet of Jesus the Supreme Balladeer!

Dr. Okaka Opio Dokotum  
Poet, Playwright, Film Critic, Associate Professor of Literature and Film and  
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs), Lira University, Uganda

Darrow Miller has been teaching in our mission for over thirty years. Over those years, young artists in YWAM have engaged with him and challenged him to write his latest book, *A Call for Balladeers*. In this book, he has captured some of the valuable lessons he has learned from these conversations. Not only is he close friend, he is also a great writer. Be blessed as you read it.

Loren Cunningham  
Founder, YWAM

As a classically-trained pianist, I struggled all my life to find an all-encompassing definition of the term “Christian music.” This powerful book reclaims the realm of beauty under the Kingdom of God, breaking through the four walls of the visible church into the whole Creation under Christ. Hungrily and joyfully, I read every page. As a musician, I felt validated, whole, and inspired.

In simple, yet profound language, beauty has regained its rightful place in the Kingdom of God and those called for the “Creative Commission” will be better equipped to restore the Cult (Worship) and redeem the Culture with this one book.

Jenny Jee-El Park  
Artist in Residence, Wilberforce International Institute  
Assistant Director, Music Across Borders

We are living through one of the most delicate moments in history, where the healthy biblical worldview is being replaced by others that bring distortions to the ethical and moral values of society. In this book, Darrow Miller, whom I have had the privilege of knowing for more than two decades, expresses magnificently what we can call the redemption of art in all its forms for building a healthy society. I read *A Call for Balladeers* with delight and highly recommend it.

Dr. Luis Alexandre Ribeiro Branco  
Poet, Pastor; Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Universidade Lusófona de  
Humanidades e Tecnologias, Lisbon, Portugal

Although most evangelicals are aware of the importance of goodness, truth, and beauty to the Christian faith, many who argue for absolute goodness and truth downplay beauty as just a matter of subjective taste. Darrow Miller has done the body of Christ a great service by reminding us that art is upstream from culture and that defenders of the Christian worldview must therefore develop a robust, biblical view of the arts: one that champions God’s pre-Fall Cultural Mandate, embraces the impact that encounters with transcendent beauty have upon the community and the individual soul, and mobilizes the power of the arts to incarnate the gospel for world evangelism.

Dr. Louis Markos  
Professor in English and Scholar in Residence, Houston Baptist University, Author of  
*The Myth Made Fact: Reading Greek and Roman Mythology through Christian Eyes*

This thought-provoking book calls artists to discern the complexity of our days and to view art beyond simply expressing beauty, with a mandate of bearing a redemptive message. Miller challenges us to use imagination and creativity to touch the most vulnerable in our society, bringing truth, goodness, dignity and God-given value to each individual. He calls out the artist’s power and responsibility to bring transformative impact through bringing the beauty of heaven to earth, and compels artists to use art to shape, redeem, and ultimately transform culture, perception and values. This book will challenge you to rise up in courage to paint realities that transcend the broken world we live in. A must-read for the “balladeers” of today!

Faby Ruesga  
Dean, College of Arts International, YWAM’s University of the Nations, Hong Kong

As theatre artistic director and playwright, it has been a blessing and encouragement to be able to read Darrow’s book. He certainly has the heart of an artist, and his artistic sensitivity is a pleasant surprise to me. As a Christian living in a postmodern, post-

Christian world of confusion, unreason, and insanity; I'm convinced that the time has come for the Christian artists. God has always used prophets to awaken his people, but at these crucial times in which we live, I believe God is looking for prophets that can also shake the conscience of a postmodern irrational mind, and contribute to prepare hearts for the actual spiritual encounter. And that is something that can only be done by committed Christian artists, who love God with all their hearts, imagination and minds. Darrow's book will be a great contribution in helping Christian artists to take up the challenge and rise up.

Hector Ramirez  
Artistic Director, Playwright, The Ars Vitalis Foundation Madrid, Spain

With his latest book, *A Call for Balladeers: Pursuing Art and Beauty for the Discipling of Nations*, Darrow Miller has set the arts firmly within God's creational and redemptive purposes.

Drawing on his extensive international experiences, Darrow masterfully weaves together personal, historical, and biblical narratives, while giving space for other informed voices to join the conversation.

The result is a profound contribution to our understanding of the arts and imagination as an expression of the image of God in human experience. It is a clarification of the call for artists to be balladeers who proclaim truth, goodness, and beauty, through their diverse art forms.

This book is a rare gift that will bless and encourage artists and emerging artists of faith. It will also be a blessing to the Church, with its comprehensive and multi-layered understanding of the arts, life, and faith.

Colin Harbinson  
International Director, StoneWorks Global Arts Initiative

Not only does Darrow provide a clear clarion call to all Christian balladeers to fulfill our God-given destiny, but he also offers us golden nuggets throughout the book that underpin and illuminate our role as world changers. I endorse this book wholeheartedly!

A balladeer from an undisclosed Media Company in South Asia

I am very proud of an amazing legacy of seven generations of pastors and missionaries who gave their lives to the great commission. As a filmmaker, my pulpit looks quite a bit different from those who have gone before me. However, I believe as Darrow Miller does, my calling is as essential as theirs to seeing the great commission fulfilled.

*A Call for Balladeers* engages with the critical conversation of the role of people of faith with a calling to engage with popular culture through their art. I encourage not only creatives to read this book, but all of those who are called to disciple the nations—we need champions and partners in what we are called to do. Thank you, Darrow, for being our champion!

David L. Cunningham  
Filmmaker, *To End All Wars* and Emmy-award winning *Path to 9/11*  
Pray for Rain Pictures, Kona, Hawaii

Miller gives a theological framework for why art and beauty matter to the Christian, the church, and the world. A theologically grounded balladeer's call is to view the human

condition and gift it back to us, enlightened and enlivened by the gospel. This book articulates that the church needs the artist, and the artist needs the church.

Sarah Stonestreet  
Co-host, “Strong Women” podcast, The Colson Center

The artist has always played an important role in society, but perhaps never more so than today. During periods of shifting identity and hegemony, such as ours, it is vital that those fluent in the language of symbolism and beauty remind us of the eternal truths of our human identity and divine image. In this book, Darrow helps the thinking artist to grasp the meaning and responsibilities of their sacred vocation.

Jeremy John Wells  
Actor, Filmmaker, Fine Artist, Vertéro Films

In a world hungry for meaning and divine purpose, Darrow reminds us of the great privilege as Christians to be balladeers, artists in everything we do, pointing to Christ and His Kingdom through beauty, goodness, and truth. Darrow takes us on a fascinating journey through scripture and history of Christians living into Dostoevsky’s prophetic words of “beauty will save the world”—illuminating how lives of beauty can cultivate a life-giving culture that draws people to the goodness and truth of Christ himself.

Peter Howard  
Senior Fellow of Transformation, Accord Network

Exceptionally written, profound, thought provoking and inspiring. *A Call for Balladeers* gives a compelling insight on God’s Truth, Beauty and Goodness and its life changing power when applied in today’s world of arts and science. A true call for balladeers to take their rightful place in restoring God’s original design in regards to influencing culture and forging God’s kingdom on earth. A definite must read!

Christine Oile  
Blogger, Editor, Former fashion Model and Realtor, Nairobi, Kenya

Darrow Miller has watered these seeds in me since the day I first read *LifeWork*, then had the joy of being with him at his home, and also hearing him speak—in DC at Colson Center’s Wilberforce Weekend; in Dakar; and at our church. I have sought to implement these ideas here at Sienna Ranch, realizing that our greatest effect hopefully will be from the seeds of discipleship we plant that will be seen forty years from now. As a church that was void of creativity and art, we have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. As I read each page, I was excitedly reminded of the ways we have tried to disciple through the arts here; and I was revived and recommitted to continuing to do so all the more.

Mark Dean  
Pastor, Sienna Baptist Church

It is easy for any worker to get discouraged, and as a church musician and songwriter I am often tempted to wonder if ‘it does any good.’ *A Call for Balladeers* has lifted up my eyes and reminded me of all the things I knew and had forgotten, as well as weaving a big picture of how the arts, discipleship, and a love for God and his world fit together. And not only fit together, but belong together as they reflect God’s nature and purposes for us.

Ami Andersen  
Singer-songwriter, Church Musician and Pastor’s Wife

An insightful read that starts at the heart of creativity and incites believers and artists to rediscover the calling of the balladeer. This book empowers artists to understand their crucial role in shaping the culture and preaches a full gospel that includes the arts as one of our primary roles in society. Artists will be compelled to delve further into their craft knowing the unique way art can express both the ordinary and the divine. The arts communicate in a role like no other and are crucial in our role of redemption and transformation.

Katherine Gallagher  
Executive Director of GoStrategic, Dancer and Founder of Le Studio Danse



## OTHER BOOKS BY DARROW L. MILLER

*Servanthood: The Vocation of All Christians*

*Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures*, with Stan Guthrie

*God's Remarkable Plan for the Nations*, with Scott Allen and Bob Moffitt

*God's Unshakable Kingdom*, with Scott Allen and Bob Moffitt

*The Worldview of the Kingdom of God*, with Scott Allen and Bob Moffitt

*Against All Hope: Hope for Africa*, with Scott Allen and the African Working Group of Samaritan Strategy Africa

*On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Making It Happen*, with Bob Moffitt

*The Forest in the Seed*, with Scott Allen

*Nurturing the Nations: Reclaiming the Dignity of Women in Building Healthy Cultures*, with Stan Guthrie

*LifeWork: A Biblical Theology for What You Do Every Day*, with Marit Newton

*My Place in HIStory: Discover Your Calling*

*LifeWork: Developing a Biblical Theology of Vocation*

*Emancipating the World: A Christian Response to Radical Islam and Fundamentalist Atheism*

*Recovering Our Mission: Making the Invisible Kingdom Visible*

*Wisdom: The Way to Human Flourishing*, with Gary Brumbelow

*A Toxic New Religion: Understanding the Postmodern, Neo-Marxist Faith that Seeks to Destroy the Judeo-Christian Culture of the West*, with Scott Allen

*The Development Ethic: Hope for a Culture of Poverty—A Bible Study*

*Don't Let Schooling Stand in the Way of Education: A Biblical Response to the Crisis in Public Education*, With contributions by Scott and Kimberly Allen, Thomas A. Bloomer, Vishal Mangalwadi, Darrow L. Miller, Christian Overman, and Elizabeth L. Youmans

*A Call for Balladeers: Pursuing Art and Beauty for the Discipling of Nations*

Copyright ©2022 by Darrow L. Miller

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

Published by the Disciple Nations Alliance  
1110 E. Missouri Avenue, Suite 393  
Phoenix, Arizona 85014

[www.disciplenations.org](http://www.disciplenations.org)

Book and Cover design: Joshua Hernández  
Layout: Dan Velie

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. [www.lockman.org](http://www.lockman.org)

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All Scripture marked with the designation “GW” is taken from GOD’S WORD®. © 1995, 2003, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020 by God’s Word to the Nations Mission Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations taken from Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, and 1971 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations from the Disciples’ Literal New Testament, Copyright © 2011 Michael J. Magill. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses labeled KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Verses labeled NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188, USA. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-63154-009-7

Printed in Colombia

# CONTENTS



**11**  
EPIGRAPH

**13**  
DEDICATION

**15**  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**17**  
FOREWORD

**21**  
INTRODUCTION

**25**  
**PART ONE**  
THE NEED FOR  
BALLADEERS

**27**  
CHAPTER 1  
ART IS UPSTREAM  
FROM CULTURE

**37**  
CHAPTER 2  
THE DEFORMATION  
OF ART

**49**  
CHAPTER 3  
THE NEED FOR  
BALLADEERS

**59**  
CHAPTER 4  
BALLADEERS IN  
HISTORY

**67**  
CHAPTER 5  
BALLADEERS  
TODAY

**75**  
CHAPTER 6  
BALLADEERS IN  
A POSTMODERN  
WORLD

**85**  
CHAPTER 7  
A CALL FOR  
COURAGE

**93**  
**PART TWO**  
THE BIBLE AND  
THE BALLADEERS

**95**  
CHAPTER 8  
SEEKING THE  
ORIGIN OF ART

**105**  
CHAPTER 9  
CREATION

**113**  
CHAPTER 10  
THE IMAGO DEI

**121**  
CHAPTER 11  
EVANGELICAL  
GNOSTICISM

**129**  
CHAPTER 12  
THE CULTURAL  
MANDATE

**137**  
CHAPTER 13  
THE FALL

**149**  
CHAPTER 14  
REDEMPTION

**159**  
CHAPTER 15  
CONSUMMATION

**171**

**PART THREE**  
BEAUTY AND  
THE BALLADEERS

**173**

**CHAPTER 16**  
BEAUTY AS GOD'S  
MESSENGER

**183**

**CHAPTER 17**  
BEAUTY: THE  
NEGLECTED  
DIMENSION OF  
THE GREAT  
COMMISSION

**191**

**CHAPTER 18**  
BEAUTY AS A  
MORAL NECESSITY

**199**

**CHAPTER 19**  
THE TRANSCENDENT  
HARMONY

**209**

**CHAPTER 20**  
THE UNIVERSE IS  
ULTIMATELY  
BEAUTIFUL

**217**

**CHAPTER 21**  
BEAUTY WILL SAVE  
THE WORLD

**227**

**APPENDIX**

**229**

**GLOSSARY  
OF TERMS**

**239**

**ENDNOTES**

## EPIGRAPH



*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth!*  
Genesis 1:1

Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it. If he indeed achieves a quality that can fairly be described by the dictionary definition: “inner consistency of reality,” it is difficult to conceive how this can be, if the work does not on some way partake of reality. The peculiar quality of the “joy” in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a “consolation” for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question, “Is it true?”<sup>1</sup>

J.R.R. Tolkien

*On Fairy Stories*





## DEDICATION



*T*his book is dedicated to all those Christian artists or aspiring artists who are looking for a way to connect their creative expression to the coming of the Kingdom of God. Through this book, may you find a new avenue to explore, one of speaking prophetically to culture and to creating culture that is reflective of the nature and character of the First Artist.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



*T*his book would never have been written if it were not for the young Christian artists whom I have met over the years, longing to find their place as artists in the church and in society. When you heard me speak on the call of the balladeers, it seemed to resonate with your soul. Without your enthusiastic resonance with this theme, the concept of this book would never have been born. Thank you!

Stan Guthrie, who has engaged with me for over twenty years in many writing projects, took the concepts and raw materials for this book and used his gifts to turn this into a beautiful narrative and readable book. Thank you, Stan, for your hard work and creative reflection to make this book possible.

Gary Brumbelow, a gifted writer, editor, and the manager of the Darrow Miller and Friends blog, has worked with me for years to develop the ideas in this book into a blog format. Thank you, Gary, for your friendship and writing partnership over these many years.

Angela Becaty, a friend from Tanzania, gave her time and energy to do research for this book. Angela, thank you for your contribution.

Yarley Niño, for years the leader of the YWAM Puerto Rico base, is a good friend and someone who understands the relationship between worldview and the arts. Yarley encouraged young artists to pursue their dreams and provided them a place where they could practice excellence in their art. Yarley and her staff and students provided a place where I could work on these ideas. It was Yarley who shared my vision for raising up a new generation of Christian Artists to disciple nations and organized the first Call of the Balladeer conference in Medellin, Colombia.

Luke Allen, a friend and young artist, was gripped with the ideas in this book and wanted to help design the interior of the book so that it would be something special and more attractive to folks who would read it. Thank you, Luke, for your inspiration. I hope the readers enjoy the beauty and thoughtfulness you brought to this project.

Viviana Velie, the Director of our Spanish Publishing House—JUCUM Publishing—always encourages me to write more and to contribute ideas that can transform the Latin American Continent. Viviana is not simply a publisher, she is a visionary who is “selling ideas” that will help to develop the nations of the Spanish-speaking world. She is a friend and has been a major encourager to get this book written.

Dwight Vogt, a colleague for over 40 years. Dwight has been a project director at the Disciple Nations Alliance and has been behind the scenes contributing to the publishing of this book. Dwight, this book would never have been finished without your skill and hard work.

Scott Allen, the President of Disciple Nations Alliance and a friend of forty years. Scott has backed this project and gives constant encouragement to my writing endeavors.

Joshua Hernandez, a friend and gifted young Peruvian artist and graphic designer, who has developed the interior graphics and cover for this book.

Miles Meyer, who has engaged with research, editing, and the creation of the Glossary of Terms and the Study Guide for this book.

Danny Velie, for his work in typesetting for the English and Spanish hard copies of this book.

Byron Spradlin and Matt Price from Artists in Christian Testimony and uSeminary for their partnership in publishing this book in an electronic format.

Thank you to the many artists and balladeers whom you will meet in this book, who have demonstrated to me the calling of the balladeer and have allowed their stories to be told here.

To all the others too numerous to list here, whose lives have inspired me, whose questions have prompted me to think and to think deeper about this subject: thank you all!

If I have forgotten anyone else who contributed to this book, please forgive me. Any errors in the book are mine alone.

Finally, to the bride of my youth, Marilyn Miller, who has created a beautiful and tranquil place for me to write, and who has been my best friend and life companion for over fifty-six years: my special thanks and great love!



## FOREWORD

### IMITATING THE FIRST ARTIST: THE PLACE OF BEAUTY AND CREATIVITY IN GOD'S DESIGN

*The following essay is written by my friend Thomas (a pseudonym), who helped found a wonderful ministry called The Create Commission. Thomas is passionate about the interface between faith, art, and social issues, and the powerful and necessary role that art plays in speaking truth and shaping society.*

**H**ave you ever walked into a movie late? What was that experience like?

After shuffling through the theater's darkness, you sit down with a sigh of relief, and dive into the action on the screen.

If you're not too late, you get most of the story but can't shake the feeling of being robbed of something good. But if the traffic really held you up, the storyline may not fully make sense. In fact, chances are, without seeing the beginning of the movie, there are crucial things about the film that you may never realize you have completely missed out on.

For many of us who have grown up in the evangelical church, it's as if we have walked into the movie late. Our story, as we experience or narrate it to others, often starts in the middle of a bunch of action up there on the screen. The way we tell it, our story begins with John 3:16, or Romans 3:23—in short, with the Fall. And as a result, although there is much we understand about God, ourselves, and the task at hand, the storyline doesn't always add up. At its worst, we may not even realize we are missing some of the most central plot lines of the movie.

Our story, of course, doesn't start with the Fall but with Creation. Let's explore what the opening chapters of Genesis

reveal about God, ourselves, the task at hand, and in particular, the place of beauty and art in it all.

### THE FIRST ARTIST

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 tells us our story starts with God, the source of all reality, the beginning of history, and the fact that He is an Artist. God creates, and as He constructs the world, He doesn’t do so just for utility. Genesis 2:9 tells us: “Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food” (NASB). God could have made the tree functional, in monotonous, a gray shed to provide us shade with a box of fruit in the corner. Instead, He chose to make the trees both good for food and pleasing to the eye in all their fractal detail and myriad diversity. Beauty is no accident. Beauty is intentional, core to the way God did things and planned life to unfold from the very start.

Reconciled World’s The Create Commission project makes art with some of the poorest, neediest people in the world, destitute men and children living in slums. Should we not be using our resources better? Instead of art, should we not be giving the children food, or providing medical care to the destitute? The truth is, we spend our resources on making art with these precious friends, because our story doesn’t start with hunger and disease. It starts with creation and beauty.

### THE ORIGINAL TASK

God creates Adam and Eve, in His image, and places them in the Garden. He gives Adam a task, to name the animals. Here’s a question: Why didn’t God name the animals? He could have, couldn’t he, because He created them, and they belonged to Him? But the Bible says, “He brought them to the man to see what he would call them.” God is curious, fascinated by Adam’s creativity. Scripture says, “Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (Gen. 2:19). God respects Adam’s creativity. In fact, He not only respects it, He expects it. Why? Because that was what Adam was created to do. That was Adam’s job description.

Before any talk about saving the world, helping the poor, liberating the captives, fulfilling the Great Commission—all the things that we concern ourselves with because of the Fall—Genesis tells us that human beings were created for a specific task. In Genesis 1:28, God blesses Adam and Eve and then gives them this mandate:



*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. (NIV)*

---

These activities constitute what theologians call the Cultural or Creation Mandate, a social, developmental, scientific, and artistic mandate to take a world that was created perfect, yet not finished, and make something of it. In effect, it is a mandate to create culture. Ken Myers defines culture as “what we make of the world”—in both senses of the word, the stuff we make of the world, and, as Andy Crouch puts it, the sense we make of it.

When we add the Fall to our story, the place for beauty and creativity does not disappear, the Cultural Mandate does not expire; these things only get augmented with a redemptive quality. The Great Commission, to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20, NIV) is in many ways a recasting of the Cultural Mandate, bringing a normative, prophetic, redeeming function to our original task.

In the work of our ministry Reconciled World’s Create Commission, we believe that by giving people the chance to be creative, they become more human, more of what God intended them to be from the start. In our work with the marginalized and dispossessed, we see beauty and creativity play a role in healing. In discovering their God-given identity, men, women and children start exercising a part of themselves they have rarely had the chance to before.

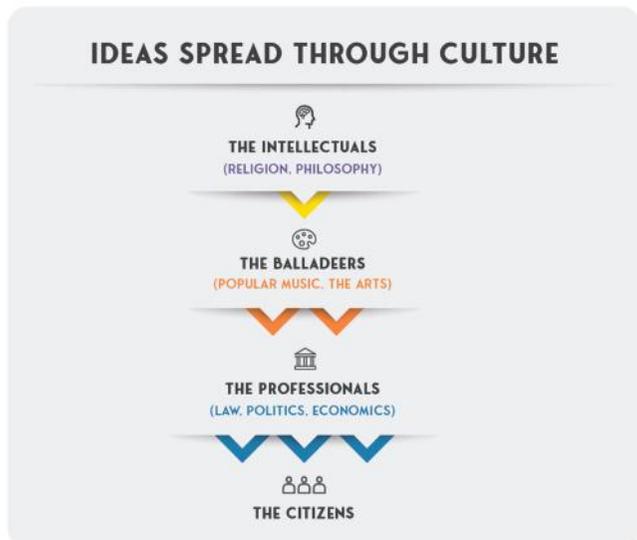
But we also recognize the central, God-intended responsibility human beings have to create culture. And we are excited about working with professional artists, those with a powerful “engine” for creating culture, exploring the redemptive role that art plays in bringing truth to bear on society and speaking out on behalf of the poor and vulnerable.



## INTRODUCTION

It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The truth of this adage is especially clear to me whenever I travel globally and teach young Christian artists about the connection between worldview and poverty. Their eyes just light up.

In these sessions, held under the auspices of my organization, the Disciple Nations Alliance, we discuss how intellectual ideas spread from the academy through the arts to establish the language and culture of a nation. Once entrenched there, these ideas are transferred to the professionals, who create the laws and build the institutions and structures of society. These cultural building blocks then provide the context for the daily lives of the masses.



When we begin to talk about the arts and the artist's role in discipling a nation, my audiences usually become very focused. Few generally have thought much about what is involved in actually *discipling nations*, nor about the role of the artist in this vital process.

Often young Christian artists get the strong impression that their art must be “religious” in some way to be useful in the church. Most who have sought to engage in the public square with their art have felt ostracized by their churches. This is a tragedy. My heart aches for these struggling young artists, who have a hard time being accepted in either the church or in the “world.”

Inevitably in our workshops, people want to know more. I developed a series of lectures on worldview and the arts, which have been received like cool water offered to a parched man in a desert, but ultimately the question is raised: “Have you written a *book*?”

The answer now is *yes*, and you are now holding it in your hands. The title, *A Call for Balladeers: Pursuing Art and Beauty for the Discipling of Nations*, encompasses the heart of the message. This volume is a call for young artists to speak prophetically to the culture and to thus make their contribution to discipling nations.

I write, not as an artist, but as someone who appreciates beauty and the arts and who has a heart for artists, particularly those who are followers of Christ. Often artists who are Christians do not know where they fit in the church nor outside in the larger society. They long to know where their gifting fit in the world and how they can employ their calling as an artist for the glory of God and His kingdom.

### THREE SECTIONS

The book is divided into three sections.

The first is *The Need for Balladeers*. In this section we learn that culture is upstream from the social, economic, and political institutions of society, and it is downstream from worship. The artist is called not only to *critique* existing culture, but, through his or her messaging and artistry, to *contribute* to the creation of a culture bound by beauty, goodness, and truth. The artist, or *balladeer*, thus profoundly shapes the direction and the future of a nation.

The second section is *The Bible and the Balladeers*. Here we answer the question, from where does the impulse for art come? While there have been artists throughout history and in every culture, not every philosophy or religion provides an impulse for the arts and the artist. The opening lines of the biblical narrative, however, provide the answer: In the beginning, God *created!* God is the First Artist, and human beings are made *imago Dei* to be creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial. In this section, we will examine

---

the arts through the lens of the four major eras of history: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation.

The third and final section is *Beauty and the Balladeers*, in which we explore the cultural trinity of beauty, goodness, and truth, rooted in the character of the Triune God. His character establishes a culture of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, the culture of the Kingdom of God. Too often, like the world, the church has neglected beauty for utility and pragmatism. Beauty is a moral necessity, because it glorifies the Good and illuminates the Truth. Beauty will save the world.

### STUDY GUIDE

At the end of each chapter, you will find a series of questions that will help with your personal or group's reflections on the content of the chapter. The purpose of the Study Guide is to aid you in deeper reflection and discussions on the material. Take a moment to get a sense of the Study Guide by looking at and reflecting on the Study Guide at the end of the Introduction.

### A CALL FOR BALLADEERS

As we witness the coarsening of our societies and the growth of tyranny, this book is written with the hope that we will raise up a new generation of Christian artists who “understand the times” and who have heard the call of the balladeer.

We greatly need the artists among us to be the balladeers of a new reformation. I hope that this new era is right around the corner. I believe these creators of a new culture are already drawing nations out of ugly and dehumanizing poverty and into beautiful human flourishing, out of corruption into justice, out of chaos into order, and out of the hideous and into the beautiful—and you will encounter some of their stories here. But the glorious picture of a world finally redeemed for Christ is not fully drawn. You still have a role to play.

This book is a hearty invitation to pick up your pen, brush, or guitar, and join the adventure.



## STUDY GUIDE

1. Why did you choose to read *A Call for Balladeers*?
2. What is the basic thesis of this book?
3. Consider and discuss your church's perspective on art. Do you feel your church expects Christian art to be "religious?"
4. As a Christian artist, can you think of a time you felt pressure to craft your art to be "religious?" Describe this experience.
5. What questions do you have regarding the ideas presented in this Introduction?

## PART ONE

# THE NEED FOR BALLADEERS

“ We should simply focus on our craft, on making the best art we can. We should understand that people will and should resonate with our work not because it is Christian but because it is good. Above all, Christians should make good art, true art; art unafraid of exploring mystery, portraying evil, and looking for truth wherever it appears. ”

**Brett McCracken**

*Author, [Hipster Christianity](#)*



Albert Bierstadt - *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains*

# ART IS UPSTREAM FROM CULTURE



1



*If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation ...*

Andrew Fletcher



About six years ago, I was speaking in Brazil at a conference for educators. My topic was art, worldview, and Christian vocation. Providentially, a young conductor, Paulo Ritzel, heard me. At the time, Paulo was getting little support from the church for the things God had put on his heart. Over and over, Paulo was given the soul-crushing message that art has no value in God's kingdom. But my words gave him a powerful spiritual and moral jump start. Paulo went on to found a center for the study of art and worldview called L'Abrarte.

Later I traveled to Natal, Brazil, and had the privilege of seeing Paulo, meeting his wife, Adda, and enjoying an evening with some of the leaders of L'Abrarte. This small community of thoughtful, activist Brazilian artists was inspired by the late Francis Schaeffer and Schaeffer's good friend, the famous Dutch art historian, Dr. Hans Rookmaaker, two giants in the area of Christian worldview.

Schaeffer, with his wife, Edith, founded the L'Abri study center in Switzerland in 1955. (I studied and worked with Francis and Edith Schaeffer at L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland from 1969 to 1971.) Rookmaaker founded the art history department at the Free University of Amsterdam and was author of the groundbreaking book, *Art Needs No Justification*. He also became part of the L'Abri community.

The word L'Abrarte combines L'Abri (the Shelter) and the Portuguese word for art, arte. In Portuguese, the term is also an acronym for The Rookmaaker Association for Studies in Art and Worldview.