

Graduate Research Symposium Proposal

Graduate Student: Hannah Lynch
Contact Information: hklynch@liberty.edu

Faculty Mentor: Todd A. Smith, MFA
Contact Information: tasmith2@liberty.edu

Evolving Views of Eden: A study of Renaissance and Contemporary arts' portrayal of the Garden, and its application to Christian artists

The student proposes to present the following thesis statement: comparison of the glorified Eden seen in Renaissance art with the manipulated Eden of Contemporary art confirms a rising distaste for biblical truths, and emphasizes the need for Christian artists to pursue increased excellence as they communicate their ultimate passion.

To establish the relevancy of the presentation, the student proposes to use critical reviews and commentaries to identify the manner in which visual arts once celebrated scripture through beautifully portrayed narratives of Eden, as seen in the work of Renaissance artists. Depicting the contrast, the student will reveal how Contemporary works distort scripture to serve societal agendas, primarily analyzing works featured in the Museum of Biblical Art's 2014 exhibit *Back to Eden*. Art communicates the culture of its time, and the message of recent works reveals a worldview distrustful of Biblical theology.

To affirm the study's application, the student proposes to urge developing artists to diligently hone their craft in order to glorify Christ through a work ethic of excellence. Aware of the secularism of the field, Christian artists should seek to overcome criticism of their faith by presenting truly exceptional pieces, which may open doors to discuss the ultimate source of their work. The student proposes to remind artists that they do not need to limit themselves to literal representations of Biblical sequences or quaint little chapels on the hillside. Christ may not be obvious in every piece, but Christian artists possess the ability to make Him evident in their commentary and in their work ethic.

To provide an example of the thesis's application, the student proposes to present a personal sculpture inspired by early Eden. The student will provide an explanation of the design, which includes scriptural accounts and Biblical commentaries. The work does not reveal a literal account of the garden, but rather, it presents a figure inspired by the excitement, joy, and beauty of creation. The piece invites conversation with secular individuals captivated by the sculpture's quality, allowing the artist to confidently share its Biblical inspiration with an audience already interested in its story.

With the recent addition of Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts programs, the proposed presentation acts as a notable candidate for the Graduate Research Symposium, with relevancy not only within the field of art, but also to the campus of Liberty University.

