



Undergraduate Honors Theses

2023-03-16

A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź

Candace Brown

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub_uht

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Brown, Candace, "A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź" (2023).
Undergraduate Honors Theses. 289.
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studentpub_uht/289

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Honors Thesis

*A CATHOLIC READS THE BOOK OF MORMON: FOLK CARVINGS OF ROMAN
ŚLEDŹ*

by

Candace Brown

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements
for University Honors

Art History Department
Brigham Young University
April 2023

Advisor: James Swensen

Honors Coordinator: Heather Belnap

ABSTRACT

A CATHOLIC READS THE BOOK OF MORMON: FOLK CARVINGS OF ROMAN ŚLEDŹ

Candace Brown

Art History Department

Bachelor of Arts

A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź presents thirteen never-before-shown wooden sculptures from the private collection of Dr. Walter Whipple to expand Book of Mormon visual culture and foster an interfaith appreciation for its universal story of faith. Śledź, a renowned Polish folk artist, and Whipple, a former associate professor of Polish at Brigham Young University, were first introduced in the 1990s when Whipple served as the first mission president for the Poland Warsaw Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For years, Whipple commissioned carvings from this faithful sculptor. Eventually, Śledź proposed a series of sculptures from the Book of Mormon based on his personal reading of a copy of the book given to him by Whipple. With no additional exposure to either Latter-day Saint art or theology beyond what he obtained from his own reading and his friendship with Whipple, Śledź's sincere interpretations of this unique work of scripture in the primitive Polish folk art style demonstrate the power of story and art to foster interfaith dialogue and indicate opportunities for connection within an inclusive global faith community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition would not be possible without the foundational work of Ashlee Whitaker and Jennifer Champoux. I am indebted to Ashlee for seeing the value of Polish folk art and repeatedly incorporating it into religious exhibitions at the BYU Museum of Art, and to Jenny for the essential work she has done in expanding Latter-day Saint visual culture by curating the Book of Mormon Art Catalog.

I am grateful for the intellectual and financial support provided by the College of the Humanities. Drs. James Swensen and Elliott Wise provided vital feedback throughout the research and writing of this thesis. The Humanities Undergraduate Mentoring Grant made documentation and secure transportation of the sculptures possible.

In many ways, this exhibition was a group effort: Brenna Cooper's extraordinary photographs captured the vibrant colors and character of Śledź's Book of Mormon sculptures. Amy Ottinger and Eric Howard's innovative designs enabled an engaging exhibition. Cala Taylor and Zac Shakespear's careful editing allowed for readable labels and material.

Throughout this process, I have received invaluable support from friends and family. I would neither have pursued nor completed this project without the encouragement of Louisa Eastley. I am grateful to my parents for their endless love and support.

Lastly, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for Walter Whipple. His enthusiasm has been the driving force behind this exhibition, and I have been humbled by the trust he has placed in me. I am honored to be a part of his legacy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
 I. Introduction	 1
II. Historical Context	3
III. Curatorial Methodology	5
IV. Project Process & Presentation	6
V. Analysis	13
VI. Conclusion	18
Images	19
Appendix A	21
Appendix B	70
Appendix C	76
Appendix D	78
Bibliography	82

Introduction

Too small to be called a real village, Malinówka is more of a settlement on the side of the road, difficult to find on even the most detailed map of Poland.¹ Yet, it is home to the internationally acclaimed folk artist, Roman Śledź. Born to a rural peasant family in 1948, at the age of 16 Śledź was forced to leave school by the death of his father. At 20, in between helping his mother to manage their family's farm, caring for his siblings, driving tractors for a local union, and working construction jobs in the nearby town of Lublin, Śledź came across a newspaper article about Polish folk sculptors.² He decided to try his own hand at sculpting, and within a year, the self-taught artist's work earned him a diploma from a museum in Lublin.³

Soon, Śledź's work was collected by foreigners, and his work was shown in several exhibitions in Poland and Germany over the following decades, culminating with an invitation to attend the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2004.⁴ Before the fall of Poland's Communist regime in 1991, Śledź's frequent interaction with foreigners made him a person of interest for the country's Ministry of Public Security, and he had to participate in multiple audits to justify these interactions and reiterate that they posed no threat to national security.⁵

One foreign friendship of Śledź's is of special significance: in the early 1990s, Śledź was introduced to Walter Whipple, a musician and professor from the United States

¹ Walter Whipple, email message to author, February 21, 2023.

² "Roman Śledź." Wikipedia. Accessed 21 February 2023.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_%C5%9Aled%C5%BA.

³ Wikipedia, "Roman Śledź."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Walter Whipple, personal interview with author, May 31, 2022. Wikipedia, "Roman Śledź."

living in Warsaw while serving as a mission president for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1990 to 1993. Halfway through Whipple's time in Poland, he had begun collecting Polish folk carvings.⁶ An amateur woodworker, Whipple had previously served an apprenticeship with Franciszek Marduła, a Polish violinmaker, in the Zakopane region of Poland.⁷ Given his background in Polish woodworking, Whipple soon became interested in meeting and befriending many notable Polish sculptors, such as Konstanty Marcinkowski, Jan Krajewski, Stanisław Dużyński, and Wacław Suska.⁸ Whipple was soon introduced to Śledź at the latter's home, and the two formed a lasting friendship. After returning to the United States and accepting a teaching position as an associate professor in the Germanic and Slavic Languages department at Brigham Young University, Whipple continued to visit Poland annually when he took groups of students to study abroad in the summer.⁹

Over the years, Śledź completed many carvings for Whipple from his personal "wish list" of Old and New Testament scenes.¹⁰ In the early 2000's, Śledź surprised Whipple with a suggestion for a new series.¹¹ Some time before, Whipple had given Śledź a copy of the Book of Mormon. Unbeknownst to him, his friend had read the book from cover to cover. While remaining deeply committed to his lifelong Catholic faith, Śledź was moved by the scriptures and their stories of faith and eagerly seized the

⁶ Walter Whipple, "The Fruits of Their Labors: Professor Collects Polish Art," *BYU Humanities* (Spring 2009): 13, <https://issuu.com/byuhumanities/docs/spring2009>. In this article, Whipple writes about his nine-year-old daughter, who asked if they could find a nativity to put in the mission home for Christmastime. She selected a nativity in the Polish folk style and Whipple, fascinated by the style, began to collect additional pieces.

⁷ Ibid, 13-14.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 15.

¹⁰ Ibid. Whipple writes that there were many stories from the Old and New Testament he wished to own carvings of, and when he could not find them within an artist's inventory, Śledź carved them.

¹¹ Interview with Walter Whipple, May 31, 2022.

opportunity to depict them. He proposed several works based on his favorite stories, such as the brother of Jared seeing the finger of God (Ether 3:1-16), and began to carve.¹²

The thirteen sculptures Śledź completed between 2006 and 2013 are the subject of my Honors Thesis Creative Project, *A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź*. This is the first time these works have been presented to the public. In conjunction with their exhibition, these works have also been shared on the Book of Mormon Art Catalog, a public, easily searchable database, making them available for future use and research.¹³ The sculptures show how Śledź, a Catholic with no additional exposure to Latter-day Saint art or theology than what was allowed by his reading of the Book of Mormon and his friendship with Whipple, was emotionally moved by another religious tradition. The exhibit demonstrates the power of story, art, and faith to foster connection among believing peoples across different religious backgrounds.

Historical Context

Polish folk art began to flourish in the late 18th century among the rural peasant population as they were allowed greater expression by their feudal lords.¹⁴ As the nation industrialized in the 19th century, the state further acted as patron for many folk artists, recognizing the important role folk art played in cultivating a strong national identity.¹⁵ For the same reason, Polish folk art would be targeted for destruction during occupations by Czarist Russia, Bismarck's Prussian empire, and the Third Reich.¹⁶

¹² Whipple, "The Fruits of Their Labors," 15.

¹³ Book of Mormon Art Catalog. <https://bookofmormonartcatalog.org/>.

¹⁴ Ewa Fryś-Pietraszkowa, Anna Kuncyńska-Iracka, and Marian Pokropek, *Folk Art in Poland*, trans. Jerzy A. Bałdyga (Warsaw: Arkady, 1988), 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 182.

A unique aspect of Polish folk art is its homogeneity across diverse regions of the country.¹⁷ Polish folk sculpture tends to be exclusively religious and illustrative, influenced by the interpretation of the scriptures provided to artists by their local Catholic priests.¹⁸ As a rule, Polish folk sculptors carve similar figures in pre-established ways, such as the *Man of Sorrows (Frasobliwy)* sitting with his head held in one hand.¹⁹ The carvings are painted with vivid colors and are often squat, physically grounded in human emotion.²⁰ The sculptors see it as their responsibility to bring “God down to earth” through their carving.²¹

For a time, folk art was looked down upon as “primitive” by urban art collectors, who believed that the rough, exaggerated quality of the art indicated a society lacking in civilization, education, and evolution.²² However, as popular modern artists such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, and Henri Rousseau began to embrace elements of the uncivilized “primitive” art in their own work, the style was embraced.²³ Primitivism came to be celebrated for its “essential purity and goodness” and the “innate creativity” of the artists, as opposed to the often indigestible “intellectual manifestos of the professionals.”²⁴

Even Whipple described his first reaction to the Polish sculptures as being one of shock. To his eyes, they were “primitively simple, painted with unattractive colors, too

¹⁷ Ibid, 9 and 212. The authors quote a significant essay on the topic: “It is truly astonishing how little differentiation there is in Polish folk culture and art, despite the very different histories of particular regions of Poland...in contrast to our neighbors, the Polish nation is uniform culturally, and, accordingly, also in its artistic culture.”

¹⁸ Ibid, 179 and 214.

¹⁹ Ibid, 210.

²⁰ Ibid, 179 and 183.

²¹ Ibid, 210 and 279.

²² Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5-6.

²³ Harrison, et. al., 5-6.

²⁴ Harrison, et. al., 5-6. Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Modern Primitives: Naive Paintings from the Late Seventeenth Century Until the Present Day* (New York: Gallery Books, 1985), 8-9.

bright, too garish, not finished off around the edges, fraught with lack of perspective, the proportions out of sync.”²⁵ But as Whipple spent more time around Polish folk sculpture, he came to admire the instinctual, sincere aspect of Polish folk art: “They’re not concerned about pleasing the critics...They don’t know the terminology of art. They don’t know how to articulate the elements of style. They do it intuitively, and yet, they are very talented.”²⁶

Curatorial Methodology

In the past, curators have felt a responsibility as caretakers of community artifacts to present only works that are known and accepted by the community.²⁷ However, in the 1960s, curators began to feel their role shifting as they became taste-makers of the community.²⁸ Curators began to present art that did not fit within society’s typical worldview, and while they were necessarily limited in the scope of their exhibitions, their work was meant to encourage inclusivity and visibility of the artists and artistic practices that had been “subordinated, submerged, or lack[ed] in visibility,” such as Polish folk art.²⁹

This is evidently the role that Whipple understands curators to have. While still serving as mission president in Poland, he kept many sculptures in his home and office,

²⁵ Doris R. Dant, “Polish Religious Folk Art: Gospel Echoes from a Disparate Clime,” *BYU Studies* 37, no. 2 (1997-1998): 89, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/polish-religious-folk-art-gospel-echoes-from-a-disparate-clime/>.

²⁶ “How rare an obsession: BYU professor has nearly 400 Polish wood carvings,” NewNet Staff Writer, Dec. 10, 2003, <https://universe.byu.edu/2003/12/10/how-rare-an-obsession-byu-professor-has-nearly-400-polish-wood-carvings/>.

²⁷ Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 87.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 5-6, 84-85.

using them to supplement his religious teaching.³⁰ After returning from Poland and beginning a new career as a BYU professor, he assisted in putting on an exhibit at the BYU Museum of Art, “From Heart and Hand: Polish Religious Folk Art” between 1997 and 1998, loaning many of his works for the duration. The then-director of the museum, Campbell Gray, said, “The more I look at the works, the more I realize they contain deeply felt and sensitive interpretations of religious events.”³¹ His statement reflects typical reactions to primitive folk art and demonstrates the necessity of a curator presenting works in a context audiences understand as reflecting value, leading them to look at the piece until they understand the source of the value the curator originally saw.³² A decade later, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exhibited a selection of Whipple’s Polish nativities at the Church History Museum and received a similar reaction.³³ From time to time, Walter would also loan works to exhibitions at the BYU MOA at the request of religious art curators such as Dawn Phasey and Ashlee Whitaker.

Project Process & Presentation

In May 2022, I was introduced to Walter Whipple while interning with the BYU MOA’s religious art department. Walter had generously loaned three works from his collection—one by Stanisław Dużyński and two by Śledź—to the museum for an upcoming religious exhibit, *Of Souls and Sacraments: Symbol and Context in Christian Art*.³⁴ As an

³⁰ Walter Whipple, personal interview with author, May 31, 2022. James Swensen, personal interview with author, March 7, 2023.

³¹ “Polish art show at Y shows interpretations of religious events,” Deseret News, Nov. 9, 1997. <https://www.deseret.com/1997/11/9/19344809/polish-art-show-at-y-shows-interpretations-of-religious-events>.

³² O’Neill, 28.

³³ “Polish Nativities at LDS Museum,” Deseret News, Jan. 3, 2009, <https://www.deseret.com/2009/1/3/20294339/polish-nativities-at-lds-museum>.

³⁴ “Of Souls and Sacraments,” BYU Museum of Art, <https://moa.byu.edu/of-souls-and-sacraments>. This long-term religious exhibit explores the dynamic use of symbolism in Christian art by presenting artworks made between the 14th century and today.

intern, one of my responsibilities was to write the label to accompany the Dużyński carving. Interviewing Whipple about this unique work was one aspect of my research process.

Whipple suggested that I come to his home so that he could thoroughly introduce me to his collection and the world of Polish folk art. Using his collection, he taught me to identify different artists by their distinct carving styles—such as Dużyński’s flat, polished faces and Śledź’s rough, fluid forms—and showed me how these simple works demonstrate incredible skill, talent, and faith. He also told me about how he began his collection while living in Poland and how he has maintained many of his friendships with the artists he met there.³⁵

While studying the different works on display in his home, I noticed several sporadically placed works in Śledź’s recognizable style that seemed to depict unique scenes from the *Book of Mormon*, such as the brother of Jared kneeling on mount Shelem as the Lord put light into sixteen stones by touching them with His finger (Ether 3:1-16). Whipple had previously explained that Poland is a deeply Catholic nation and that the sculptors he worked with were remarkably devoted to their faith. I asked him where he had been able to find a Mormon carver in Poland, and Whipple explained his relationship with Śledź and how it had, in fact, been Śledź’s idea to carve from the Book of Mormon.³⁶

Prior to interning at the MOA, I was a research assistant for the Maxwell Institute’s Book of Mormon Art Catalog.³⁷ I had spent the last several months researching

³⁵ Walter Whipple, personal interview with author, May 31, 2022.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “Explore Book of Mormon Art From Around the World,” Book of Mormon Art Catalog. <https://bookofmormonartcatalog.org/>.

and entering data for hundreds of diverse works of Book of Mormon-related art from artists of different backgrounds around the world. While I had encountered many distinct artistic styles and interpretations, I had encountered few recent works made by artists who were not members of the Church.³⁸ Based on this previous experience, I was able to identify unique scenes and symbolism in the thirteen unique carvings Whipple showed me from Śledź's series. For example, Śledź had carved Lehi's dream recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, in addition to the more frequently cited Tree of Life vision from 1 Nephi 8.³⁹

At this point, I briefly explained the Book of Mormon Art Catalog to Whipple, and he agreed to share the works with the catalog. I then acted as an intermediary between the two, taking preliminary photos of the carvings that could be used on the catalog, and providing additional information on the sculpture measurements and transcriptions of their Polish titles.

Though I was happy that Śledź's sculptures would now be available online, I kept mentally returning to the works and thinking that it was important for them to be physically exhibited to attract the attention that they deserved. In September 2022, I reached out to Whipple and asked if he would trust me to curate an exhibition of Śledź's Book of Mormon Series, to which he responded enthusiastically.

³⁸ American illustrator Tom Lovell, who was not a member of the church, was commissioned by Church leadership in the 1950s and 1960s to create several illustrations of the Book of Mormon. These are frequently printed in copies of the Book of Mormon. While his works helped to shape Latter-day Saint visual culture, today most artists who work with the Book of Mormon are members of the church. Robert T. Barrett and Susan Easton Black, "Setting a Standard in LDS Art: Four Illustrators of the Mid-Twentieth Century," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2005): 57-63. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol44/iss2/3>.

³⁹ Book of Mormon Art Catalog, "1 Nephi 08." Book of Mormon Art Catalog, "1 Nephi 01." There are 235 unique entries in the Book of Mormon Art Catalog for Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life, as opposed to only four which show Lehi's dream described in 1 Nephi 1:7-15.

Initially, I believed that the exhibit's primary audience would be Christians who, like Śledź, were not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and hoped that the exhibit would provide them with an introduction to the Book of Mormon and the common ground they share with Latter-day Saints. The secondary audience, I thought, would be members of the Church who were not used to seeing the Book of Mormon taken seriously by other faiths.⁴⁰ However, considering that the exhibit would realistically take place on BYU campus, where most students are members of the Church, I decided that it may be more appropriate to adjust the expectations for the primary audience. Ultimately, I defined the primary audience as young members of the Church who are not used to seeing the Book of Mormon being appreciated by someone not of their faith.⁴¹

As one of the central locations on BYU's campus, the Harold B. Lee Library seemed to be the ideal place for the exhibition to reach as much of the primary audience as possible. The HBLL's established "Art in the Library" program would also allow me access to skilled conservators and designers who would help me put together a high-quality exhibition. After filling out an online application and providing the preliminary photos of the Śledź sculptures, the exhibit was accepted for the Winter 2023 semester.

After some discussion with Christina Thomas, the head of the Art in the Library program, we decided the best place in the library for the exhibit was the first-floor atrium.

⁴⁰ Given the popularity of The Book of Mormon Musical, it is more common for Latter-day Saints to expect negative or sarcastic reactions to their scriptures.

⁴¹ This conclusion is based on the assumption that few young Latter-day Saints are aware of the work of Tom Lovell and Kenneth Riley, nonmember American illustrators who painted several scenes from Restoration scripture in the 1950s and 60s.

With its natural light and access to the main library staircase, the atrium is constantly filled with students who made up the primary audience.

An initial challenge of organizing the exhibition was available podium space. As sculptures, Śledź's works had to be elevated on podiums, of which the library had a limited quantity. To keep the library from committing all their podiums to a single exhibit, I revised the object checklist. I had hoped to include not only Śledź's thirteen Book of Mormon pieces, but also his sculpture of the prophet Isaiah receiving his calling and another sculpture of the prophet Joseph Smith. While *Isaiah in the Temple* was created for Whipple's Old Testament collection, the same prophecy is recorded in the Book of Mormon, technically allowing it to fall under that umbrella. Śledź's double-sided carving of Joseph Smith shows two key scenes in the advent of the Book of Mormon—the First Vision and Visit of the Angel Moroni—and so I felt it was appropriate to include as well. To accommodate the limited podium space, however, I reluctantly cut these two works from the object list.

However, Whipple was not satisfied with this decision and strongly recommended that we find a way to display all 15 works. As a compromise, I suggested that we use the wall space behind the podiums to display high-quality photographs of any sculptures we could not include for lack of podium space. This suggestion satisfied both the library and Whipple.

Hoping to find a BYU student to work with, I contacted Daniel Everett, a photography professor in the College of Fine Arts, describing the project and requesting he refer me to any potential candidates. A week later, one of his students, Brenna Cooper, contacted me about the project and we were able to set up a time with Whipple to

photograph the sculptures. To minimize the number of times the carvings were transported, we rented lighting equipment from the library, and found a backdrop to use for the shoot at Whipple's house. Once there, we set up a makeshift studio in a crowded guest room, draping the backdrop over a mirror and dresser and anchoring it with the folk carvings in that room.

We photographed each of the 15 works I had originally hoped to exhibit, including specific detail shots of several of the images, which I planned to use for advertising, a gallery guide to encourage viewers looking closely at the works, and future research projects which may require closer examination of the sculptures. Additionally, we took photos of the back of several double-sided sculptures in Śledź's "Book of Mormon Series." Per library regulations, we would not be able to exhibit the sculptures in such a way that students would be able to walk around them to view the sculptures from all sides. Once again, we would instead put up a photograph of the back side so that the audience would at least have a sense of the complete work. After completing and editing the photographs, I shared these with Eric Howard, the "Art in the Library" designer, to print and mount on foam core, and shared the images with the Book of Mormon Art Catalog to update their database.⁴²

Next, I turned my attention to the labels that would accompany each carving or photograph in the exhibit. In addition to the Polish and English titles of each work, I also made QR codes that would take viewers to the corresponding Book of Mormon text for each carving. Each label included brief scriptural context as well as information on the

⁴² See Appendix A for final photographs.

significance of a few formal details in each piece. An introductory panel also explained the relationship between Whipple and Śledź and how the series was created.⁴³

Once the labels and photographs were complete, I began working with Eric and his intern, Amy Ottinger, to create a welcoming environment for the exhibit. Earlier, Whipple had offered to also loan several classic Polish weavings for the sculptures to rest on and create a Polish atmosphere. Unfortunately, we could not use the weavings as the sculptures had to be secured to the podiums with museum wax. When I explained this to the designers, they suggested that we instead create a Polish folk design sticker to decorate the podiums with. Amy came up with several options and after discussing them together, we selected a red floral pattern to be placed on the front of each podium and as a border on each label, creating a comprehensive theme for the exhibit (Appendix A, Figures 1-3).

On Wednesday, February 15, we transported Śledź's thirteen Book of Mormon carvings from Whipple's home to the library, and after a preliminary inspection of the works, we installed them in chronological order on the HBLL first-floor atrium on Thursday, February 16 (Appendix A, Figures 4-8). We also hung the photographs, mounted on foam core, of the reverses of the double-sided Book of Mormon carvings and of the Isaiah and Joseph Smith sculptures (Appendix A, Fig 9-12). After installing the exhibit, we put up posters on the main floor of the library, posted exhibit information on the "Art in the Library" website, and shared the exhibit on social media, where it was picked up by the Book of Mormon Art Catalog and Maxwell Institute pages.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Appendix B for the label text.

⁴⁴ "A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon, Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź," Art in the Library. <https://art.lib.byu.edu/exhibition/folkcarvingsromansledz/>.

To complete the exhibition and encourage students to not only glance at Śledź's sculptures in passing but to engage with them meaningfully, I created a gallery guide (Appendix D). The gallery guide includes three sections, each with several prompts for discussion, meant to help visitors make meaningful connections to the exhibit. One section presents comparable artworks of Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life and asks viewers to consider how each artist's experiences and background contributed to unique interpretations of identical text (Appendix D, Figure 2). The next section highlights Śledź's skill at portraying human emotion and drama. This scavenger hunt activity gives viewers close-up shots of a few of the many individuals Śledź chooses to carve and invites them to consider their postures, expressions, and the impact of the sacred event on them (Appendix D, Figure 3). Finally, to draw attention to the special, interfaith quality of this series, the last portion of the guide invites viewers to consider their own interfaith relationships and how people of faith can support one another (Appendix D, Figure 4).

Analysis

When The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was established in 1830, the strong Protestant backgrounds of the early leadership resulted in early Church art leaning towards portraiture, landscapes, and other subjects which were not prone to become "graven images," and there were few depictions of Christ or the Book of Mormon.⁴⁵ However, as the Church grew, some saw that art could be a powerful tool for sharing gospel messages within and without the Church. In the late 19th century, Danish immigrant and Mormon convert C.C.A. Christensen made large-scale panoramic paintings of early Church history, which he used to share the story of the restoration of

⁴⁵ Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, *Images of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1995), 2.

the gospel in lecture settings.⁴⁶ In the 1950s, a portion of the estate of former general Primary president Adele Cannon Howells was used to commission popular American illustrator Arnold Friberg to paint twelve scenes from the Book of Mormon that could be used to teach children the stories of the Book of Mormon.⁴⁷ Friberg's works, which drew even the attention of Hollywood producer and director Cecil B. DeMille, showed the Church the potential attention-grabbing power of Book of Mormon art.⁴⁸

Over the next several decades, the Church commissioned illustrations of the Old Testament, New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Restoration topics from Arnold Friberg, and non-member illustrators such as Harry Anderson, Tom Lovell, and Kenneth Riley. These illustrations came to have a massive influence on the direction of Latter-day Saint visual culture.⁴⁹ For example, when creating a comprehensive illustrated Book of Mormon for children, artist Robert T. Barrett clearly took direct inspiration from the work of Arnold Friberg (Figures 1-2).⁵⁰ These compositionally and stylistically similar works are frequently and easily reproduced and distributed by the Church in copies of the Book of Mormon and in meetinghouses around the world. While they are powerful images and have helped many to learn the stories of the Book of Mormon, there is also value in expanding the Church's visual language.

Artists from diverse backgrounds—especially from different faiths—naturally bring their own frame of reference to their work. Their unique visual vocabulary can

⁴⁶ Oman and Davis, *Images of Faith*, 25.

⁴⁷ "Setting a Standard in LDS Art," 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

⁴⁹ Jenny Champoux, "'That We May Have Light': Brother of Jared Artwork in the Book of Mormon Art Catalog," *Wayfare*. Unpublished.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2. Champoux further describes the nearly identical compositions of Barrett's frequently reproduced image, *Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of the Lord*, and Friberg's earlier painting of the same topic: "On the left, a man clad in a fur tunic, turban, sandals, and forearm bands raises his hand in surprise and, on the right, the finger of God (carefully concealing the full figure of deity) touches the glowing stones."

challenge previously unquestioned assumptions and ignite powerful dialogues around core doctrines and beliefs. For example, when Seventh-Day Adventist Harry Anderson was commissioned by the Church to create Old and New Testament imagery, he often debated the nature of angels (specifically, angels' wings) with future President of the Church, Gordon B. Hinckley.⁵¹

Throughout Śledź's Book of Mormon Series, we see how he brings his unique visual framework, shaped by his life in the Catholic Church with its rich visual tradition, to his art. His angels, which he carves even in some scenes where the text does not record angelic visitors, always have wings (Appendix A, Figures 20, 25, 29, 37-38, 41, 53, 57, 61, 71). Also, in centuries-long Catholic tradition, he imagines the inspired Captain Moroni as an elderly man with gray hair, comparable to the prophet-generals Moses and Joshua (Appendix A, Figure 33). And, except for his sculptures of Isaiah's calling in the temple and Joseph Smith's vision in the Sacred Grove (Appendix A, Figures 20 and 70), Śledź always paints God the Father's body in white, capturing the Catholic belief that "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24) (Appendix A, Figures 13, 50, 57). By bringing his own visual vocabulary to his series, Śledź helps to create new patterns of thought and understanding surrounding the Book of Mormon.

By way of a more thorough example, we can analyze how Śledź's brother of Jared sculpture enriches the previous understanding of the Jaredite story, as visualized in the frequently reproduced works by Arnold Friberg and Robert Barrett (Figures 1-2). While Friberg and Barrett's works follow a nearly identical compositional and stylistic

⁵¹ Barrett, 49.

mold, Śledź, who has not been exposed to their works, comes up with an entirely different interpretation.

The story of the brother of Jared and God's finger was one of Śledź's favorite Book of Mormon stories, and he was eager to carve it.⁵² In his double-sided sculpture (Appendix A, Figures 65-66), Śledź envisions two turning points in the account: first, when the spiritual leader of the Jaredites, the brother of Jared, kneels in prayer upon completing the Lord's command to build eight boats that will carry his people across the sea to the Promised Land (Appendix A, Figures 65). At this point, the brother of Jared asks the Lord how his people will have light while in the ships. The Lord's open arms reflect His open response: "What will ye that I should do...?" (Ether 2:23). It is interesting to note that while Latter-day Saint artists typically imagine the Jaredite barges as smooth, almond-shaped vessels (Figure 3), Śledź, working within his visual frame of reference, imagines multi-leveled barges similar to traditional depictions of Noah's ark.

On the carving's opposite side, Śledź shows what happens next: The brother of Jared constructs sixteen clear stones and takes them to the top of Mount Shelem (Appendix A, Figure 66). There, he prays that the Lord will put heavenly light into the stones by reaching out to touch them with His finger. Śledź imagines the miraculous moment when the Lord reaches out a finger to fulfill the request. Though Śledź is prone to solid jewel tones, each of the sixteen stones he carves are topped with a dab of silver glitter to capture their special divine power. On both sides of the sculpture, the Lord's body is drenched in white paint to evoke Christ's unembodied premortal status. However,

⁵² "Fruits of Their Labors," 15.

on the side where the Lord is shown stepping forward to touch the stones, a single finger is painted in flesh tones (Appendix A, Figure 67).

What sets Śledź's carving apart from the paintings of Friberg and Barrett is that he does not stop with portraying the great faith of the brother of Jared. At the base of the sculpture, two Jaredite families can be seen emerging from the forest (Appendix A, Figures 68-69). Their delicately carved faces betray some trepidation as well as curiosity as they peer around the edge of the carving toward the barges waiting to carry them to the Promised Land. While none look up to see the Lord hovering over them, they seem confident in taking the next step forward. None look back. Instead, they shoulder their bags and guide their lambs forward. The three lambs are covered in the same white paint as God, perhaps a nod to the classic Christian iconography with which Śledź would be familiar, implying that the lamb that will accompany the Jaredites is the Lamb of God. Perhaps Śledź had felt this same company in his own life, recognized it in the Book of Mormon, and finally envisioned it here.

Throughout his Book of Mormon Series, Śledź brings a new perspective to Book of Mormon art by imagining not only how powerful moments shaped prophets and kings but also how they impacted entire covenant communities. His art opens viewers' eyes with unique compositions and symbols. For those familiar with the Book of Mormon, Śledź refreshes familiar scripture stories and promotes a reinvigorated examination of faith. For those of other faiths encountering the Book of Mormon for the first time—like Śledź himself—his works capture the universal experience of faith and wonder.

Conclusion

Within the rich tradition of Polish folk sculpture, Roman Śledź's deliberate carving, fluid figures, and powerful faith combine to create masterful works of religious art. *A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carvings of Roman Śledź* celebrates this artist and his incredible contribution to the world of Book of Mormon art in the series' first public exhibition. While long enjoyed by the many visitors to Whipple's home, the opportunity to present the sculptures in a dedicated exhibition space has allowed for a fuller appreciation of their beauty. Even Whipple remarked, after visiting the exhibition and seeing the sculptures brightly lit and carefully placed, "I had no idea how stunningly beautiful these pieces are."⁵³ This should not be the last time Śledź's carvings—from the Book of Mormon Series or any other—will be displayed and enjoyed by the public. Hopefully, this exhibition will be the start of a long, enriching exploration of Whipple's collection of Śledź's work, and of the art of all the other Polish folk artists who have for centuries brought "God down to earth."⁵⁴

⁵³ Walter Whipple, email to author, February 27, 2023.

⁵⁴ Fryś-Pietraszkowa et. al, 210 and 279.

Images

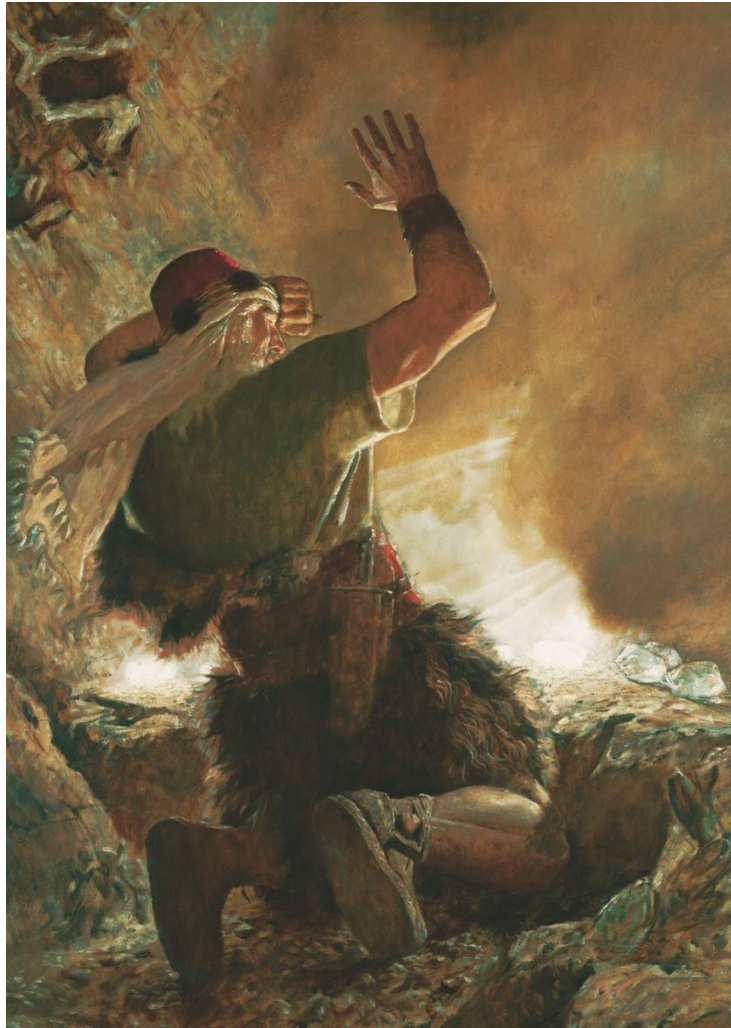


Figure 1, Arnold Friberg, *The Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of the Lord*, 1952-1955.



Figure 2, Robert T. Barrett, *Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of the Lord*, 1985.



Figure 3, Robert T. Barrett, *Jaredite Barges*, 1984.

Appendix A

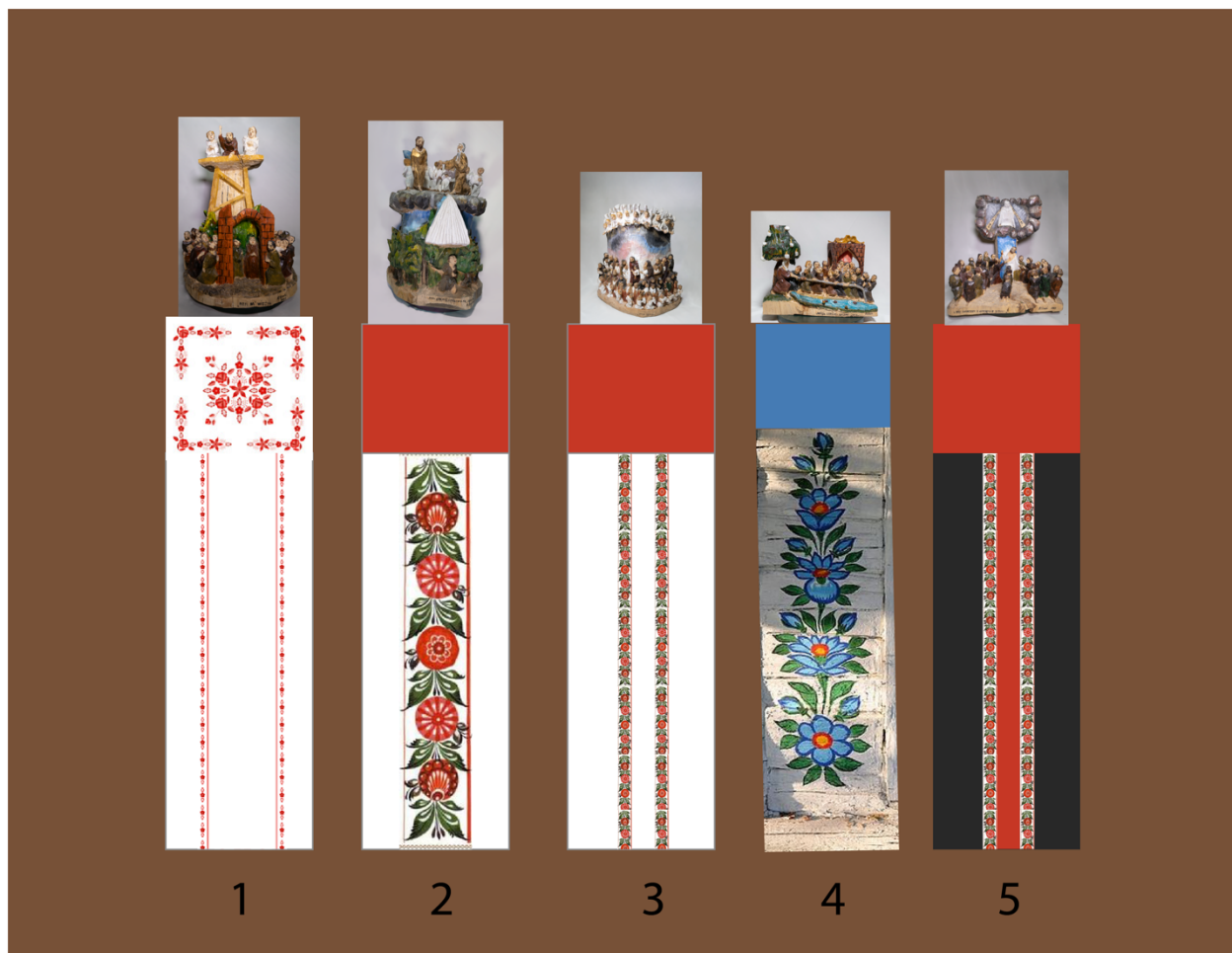


Figure 1, Early concepts for a Polish decorative pattern.



Figure 2, The final decorative pattern.



Figure 3, Early concepts for incorporating the decorative pattern in labels.



Figure 4, Transporting *Jesus and the Children*.



Figure 5, Securing sculptures with museum wax.



Figure 6, Hanging labels.



Figure 7, Hanging labels with Christina Thomas.



Figure 8, Installation in progress.



Figure 9, Panoramic view of entire exhibition.



Figure 10, Photographs of *Isaiah in the Temple* and *Behold, My Beloved Son, Hear Him* hung in gallery.



Figure 10, Introduction panel with double-sided sculptures.



Figure 11, Title panel with sculptures.

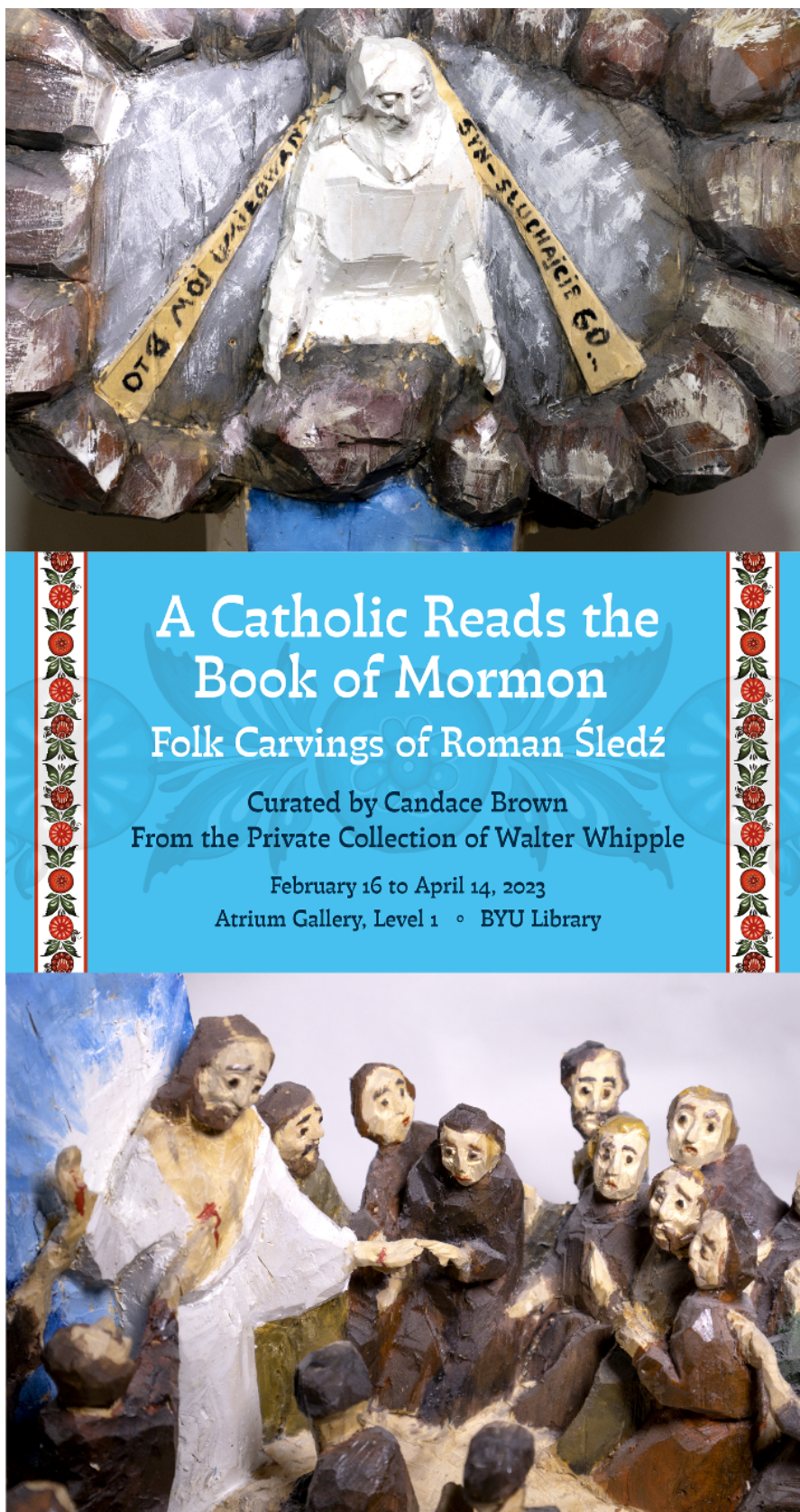


Figure 12, Exhibition poster.



Figure 13, Roman Śledź, *Pierwsza wizja Lehi* [Lehi's First Vision], 2013.

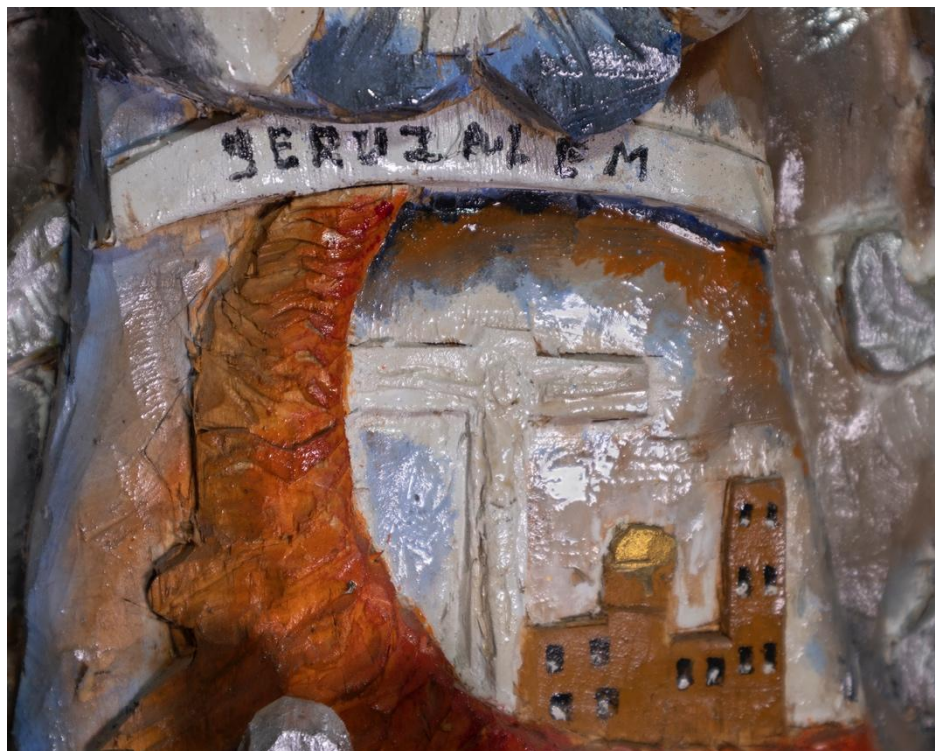


Figure 14, Roman Śledź [Lehi's First Vision], detail, 2013.



Figure 15, Roman Śledź [Lehi's First Vision], detail, 2013.



Figure 16, Roman Śledź [Lehi's First Vision], detail, 2013.



Figure 17, Roman Śledź, *Wizja Lehięgo: drzewo życia* [Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life], c. 2006-2013.



Figure 18, Roman Śledź [Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 19, Roman Śledź [Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 20, Roman Śledź, *Izajasz w świątyni* [Isaiah in the Temple], 2006.



Figure 21, Roman Śledź [Isaiah in the Temple], detail, 2006.



Figure 22, Roman Śledź, *Uwolnienie Almy i Amuleka* [Release of Alma and Amulek], c. 2006-2013.



Figure 23, Roman Śledź [Release of Alma and Amulek], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 24, Roman Śledź [Release of Alma and Amulek], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 26, Roman Śledź, *Przebudzenie Króla Lamoniego* [The Awakening of King Lamoni], c. 2013.



Figure 26, Roman Śledź [The Awakening of King Lamoni], detail, c. 2013.



Figure 27, Roman Śledź [The Awakening of King Lamoni], detail, c. 2013.



Figure 28, Roman Śledź [The Awakening of King Lamoni], detail, c. 2013.



Figure 29, Roman Śledź, *Niemowa Korihor* [Korihor is Speechless], 2012.



Figure 30, Roman Śledź [Korihor is Speechless], detail, 2012.



Figure 31, Roman Śledź [Korihor is Speechless], detail, 2012.



Figure 32, Roman Śledź [Korihor is Speechless], detail, 2012.



Figure 33, Roman Śledź, *Nieugiętość Zerahemnasia* [The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah], 2006.



Figure 34, Roman Śledź, [The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah], detail, 2006.



Figure 35, Roman Śledź, [The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah], detail, 2006.



Figure 36, Roman Śledź, [The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah], detail, 2006.



Figure 37, Roman Śledź, [Side A] *Nefi i Lehi w więzieniu* [Nephi and Lehi in Prison], 2006.



Figure 38, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [Angels Descend and Lamanites are Converted], 2006.



Figure 39, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [Angels Descend and Lamanites are Converted], detail, 2006.



Figure 40, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [Angels Descend and Lamanites are Converted], detail, 2006.



Figure 41, Roman Śledź, *Nefi na wieży* [Nephi on the Tower], 2008.



Figure 42, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 43, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 44, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 45, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 46, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 47, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 48, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 49, Roman Śledź, [Nephi on the Tower], detail, 2008.



Figure 50, Roman Śledź, *Bog świadczy o synostwie Jezusa* [God Testifies to the Sonship of Jesus], 2007.



Figure 51, Roman Śledź [God Testifies to the Sonship of Jesus], detail, 2007.



Figure 52, Roman Śledź [God Testifies to the Sonship of Jesus], detail, 2007.



Figure 53, Roman Śledź, *Jezus i dzieci* [Jesus and the Children], 2011.



Figure 54, Roman Śledź [Jesus and the Children], detail, 2011.



Figure 55, Roman Śledź [Jesus and the Children], detail, 2011.



Figure 56, Roman Śledź [Jesus and the Children], detail, 2011.



Figure 57, Roman Śledź, *Nefi chrzci dwunastu wybranych* [Nephi Baptizes the Chosen Twelve], c. 2006-2013.



Figure 58, Roman Śledź [Nephi Baptizes the Chosen Twelve], detail, c. 2006-2013.

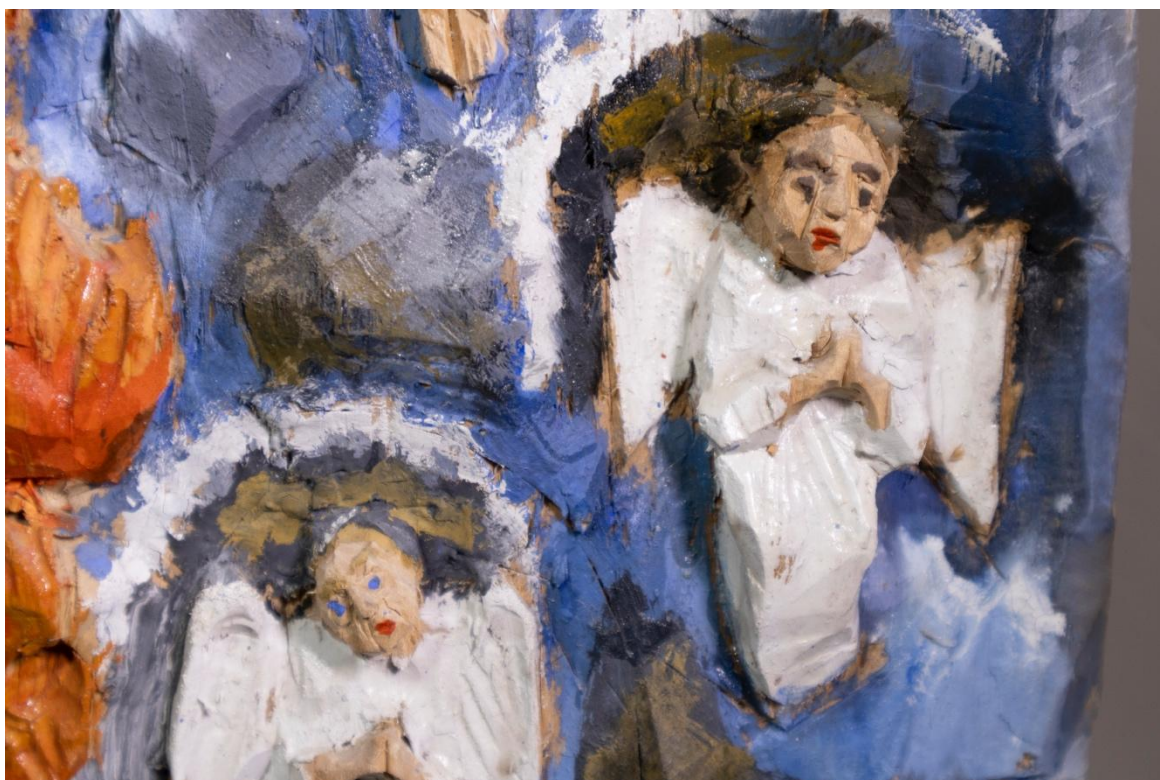


Figure 59, Roman Śledź [Nephi Baptizes the Chosen Twelve], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 60, Roman Śledź [Nephi Baptizes the Chosen Twelve], detail, c. 2006-2013.



Figure 61, Roman Śledź, [Side A] *Jezus spełnia pragnienia uczniów* [Jesus Fulfills the Desires of the Disciples], 2007.



Figure 62, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [The Three Nephites], detail, 2007.



Figure 63, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [The Three Nephites], detail, 2007.



Figure 64, Roman Śledź, [Side B] [The Three Nephites], detail, 2007.



Figure 65, Roman Śledź, [Side A] [Brother of Jared Seeks Counsel from the Lord], 2007.



Figure 66, Roman Šledz, [Side B] *Palec Boží* [God's Finger], 2007.



Figure 67, Roman Śledź [Side B] [God's Finger], detail, 2007.



Figure 68, Roman Śledź [Side B] [God's Finger], detail, 2007.



Figure 69, Roman Śledź [Side B] [God's Finger], detail, 2007.



Figure 70, Roman Śledź, [Side A] [Brother of Jared Seeks Counsel from the Lord], detail, 2007.



Figure 71, Roman Śledź, [Side A] *Oto Syn moj umiłowany słuchaj Go* [Behold, My Beloved Son, Hear Him]. 2008.



Figure 72, Roman Śledź, [Side B] *Wizyta Moroniego* [Visit of Moroni], 2008.



Figure 73, Roman Śledź, [Side A], [Behold, My Beloved Son, Hear Him], detail, 2008.



Figure 74, Roman Śledź, [Side A], [Behold, My Beloved Son, Hear Him], detail, 2008.

Appendix B

Introduction

In 1990, Walter Whipple was called as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' first mission president in the Warsaw Poland Mission. While serving, Whipple was introduced to Polish folk sculpture, a distinct style characterized by simply carved, brightly painted figures. Whipple initially found the rough, unpolished form jarring but soon became its passionate advocate, curating the largest, most comprehensive private collection of Polish religious folk art in the United States. He found that Polish folk art, free from commercial influence, is a genuine reflection of an artist's faith and can inspire sincere reflection in viewers.

Roman Śledź is a renowned Polish folk carver. He has received many national awards and shared his work in international exhibitions and folk art markets. After leaving school at age 16, Śledź taught himself to carve and developed a light, kinetic style unique among Polish folk artists. Though he does not make preliminary sketches or studies before carving the stumps of *linden* wood he harvests, he seeks heavenly inspiration before lifting his chisel. A faithful, life-long participant in his Catholic parish, his carvings encapsulate his faith. Spiritual, humble, and reserved, Śledź's personality—his insightful nature, sense of humor, and fascination with human emotions—shine through in his carvings.

Śledź and Whipple were introduced during the latter's mission in Poland and soon developed a productive working relationship. After years of creating commissioned Old and New Testament scenes, Śledź surprised Whipple by proposing a new series based on the Book of Mormon. Whipple had given Śledź a copy of the book years before, and Śledź had been deeply moved by its stories of faith. Though he remains devoted to Catholicism, Śledź eagerly took this opportunity to carve stories from the Book of Mormon.

With no additional exposure to Latter-day Saint art or theology, Śledź selected a dozen scenes striking him as particularly significant and began to carve. His unique artistic interpretations, combined with the special friendship between Śledź and Whipple, demonstrate the power of story, art, and faith to foster connection among believing peoples from different religious backgrounds.

Lehi's First Vision (Pierwsza wizja Lehiego), 2013

1 Nephi 1:4-15

Śledź begins his Book of Mormon series with a scene rarely found in Latter-day Saint visual culture: In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Lehi's son, Nephi, writes that his father "cast himself upon his bed" (1 Nephi 1:7) after a powerful spiritual encounter with the Lord. While in this exhausted state, the Book of Mormon's primary patriarch was once again "overcome with the Spirit," and saw "God sitting upon his throne..." (1 Nephi 1:8), the throne, painted in vivid gold, contrasting with the silver robes of adoring angels.

Nephi also writes that an angel showed his father a book, which described the fate of Jerusalem and caused Lehi to praise God for His mercy and goodness, which Śledź embodies in the form of the crucified Christ. Though the Holy Spirit is absent from the text, Śledź includes the dove, a common symbol of the Spirit, to emphasize the combined power of the Godhead present in this moment.

Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life (Wizja Lehiogo: drzewo zycia), 2006-2013

1 Nephi 8

Śledź continues to draw on the Book of Mormon with a commonly depicted scene: Lehi's dream of the Tree of Life. Śledź captures the crowded sensation of "numberless concourses" (1 Nephi 8:21) pressing towards the tree and its brilliant white fruit, which is "desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10). While some individuals break away, turning to fill the "great and spacious building" (1 Nephi 8:26) with its worldly golden ornamentation, others cling to the "rod of iron" (1 Nephi 8:20) with both hands. Lehi, firmly stationed beneath the tree, also continues to hold fast to the iron rod—perhaps consciously anchoring himself so he does not fall into the waters directly at his feet.

Isaiah in the Temple (Izajasz w swiatyni), 2006

2 Nephi 16

Though not created for his Book of Mormon series specifically, the calling of Isaiah is described in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. Here, Śledź interprets Isaiah's visionary dream literally: the train of the Lord's robe expands to fill the temple space; six-winged seraphim flank the throne of God; and an angel brings a coal—still glowing red from the fire—to Isaiah's mouth, cleansing his "unclean lips" (2 Nephi 16:5) and preparing him to receive his prophetic calling.

Release of Alma and Amulek (Uwolnienie Almy i Amuleka), 2006-2013

Alma 14

Here, Śledź depicts the miraculous liberation of near-martyrs Alma and Amulek after many days of starvation and abuse in prison at Ammonihah. Held captive for sharing the word of God, Alma and Amulek called upon the power of God for strength "according to [their] faith which is in Christ" (Alma 14:26) to break their chains. Śledź shows the divinely empowered Alma and Amulek with arms raised to display their broken bonds as the prison walls around them are torn apart until "every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain" (Alma 14:27). The heads of several of these unfortunate captors are grotesquely visible beneath a pile of dark rubble. Other observers of the miraculous event fall to their knees, awed by the power of God in saving Alma and Amulek.

The Awakening of King Lamoni (Przebudzenie Króla Lamoniego), c. 2013

Alma 18-19:1-15

Following his miraculous conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Nephite missionary Ammon, the Lamanite king Lamoni wakes from a days-long visionary slumber. Lamoni shares his vision with his wife, who kneels at his side to clasp his hand; his new spiritual adviser Ammon, who stands above the king and lifts a hand of thanks; and his people, who peer curiously at their changed ruler. Raising his hand to a spiritual

sight few can see, Lamoni witnesses his Redeemer in the form of the Christ Child who is swaddled and held by His mother, Mary. The Virgin wears red symbolic of the blood her Son, the King of Heaven, will shed for the people of this earthly king. Angels bear witness to the moment, and a white dove references the presence of the Spirit.

Korihor is Speechless (Niemowa Korihor), 2012

Alma 30

In telling the story of Korihor, the cunning Anti-Christ who led many Nephites to abandon their faith, Śledź chooses to depict several moments in one, using hand-lettered signs to replicate dialogue between the sculpted figures. Confronted by the prophet Alma and the Nephite chief judge, Korihor demands that God give him a sign if He is real, leading Alma to proclaim, “In the name of God, ye shall be struck dumb” (Alma 30:49). An angel covers Korihor’s mouth and points heavenward, indicating that God has given Korihor his sign, and the wily man is mute. From his judgment seat, the chief judge asks a pointed question: “Art thou convinced of the power of God?” (Alma 30:51) and Korihor can express his regret only by writing, “I always knew that there was a God,” claiming that he was deceived by the devil, who had “appeared unto me in the form of an angel” (Alma 30:52). At the outermost edge of the sculpture, this devil, disguised as an angel in dark robes, is chased away from a crowd of Nephites—perhaps those Korihor attempted to persuade to abandon their faith—by a powerful heavenly messenger dressed in white.

The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah (Nieugiętość Zerahemnasia), 2006

Alma 43-44

In the tradition of biblical battle scenes, Śledź imagines the righteous Nephites rallying behind Captain Moroni. The Captain’s gray hair and staff are reminiscent of Moses and Joshua—the prophets who led the Israelites to victory in battles to reclaim the Promised Land. The Nephites in their protective armor confront the combined Lamanite and Zoramite army led by Zerahemnah, who has refused an offer of peace. Śledź shows the aftermath of Zerahemnah’s attempted attack on Moroni, where an unnamed Nephite soldier has stepped forward, broken Zerahemnah’s sword at the hilt, and cut off his scalp. With the help of a few of his soldiers, Zerahemnah retreats to tend to his bloody wounds, while a portion of his army raise its arms in surrender and peacefully marches towards the Nephites.

Nephi and Lehi in Prison (Nefi i Lehi w więzieniu) and Angels Descend and Lamanites are Converted, 2006

Helaman 5:20-52

This double-sided work portrays two key moments in the story of the prophet Helaman’s missionary sons, Nephi and Lehi, and the Lamanites’ subsequent conversion.

Imprisoned and sentenced to death, the brothers are surrounded by heavenly fire. Drenched in white paint to emphasize their total spiritual transformation and protection within the walls of vibrantly colored, sacred flames, Nephi and Lehi look towards heaven to speak with God. Their hands are meekly crossed in front of their chests, a stance with

which Śledź evokes the symbolism of the crucifixion and conveys Christ-like acceptance of God's will.

Overwhelmed by what they have seen, the Lamanites who meant to slay Nephi and Lehi instead pray sincerely until they are converted. Angels descend to minister to the new believers. The first angel to reach them extends hands and wings in a gesture of welcome, only a moment away from stepping off the wooden pedestal and into the physical world.

Nephi on the Tower (Nefi na wieży), 2008

Helaman 7

While most depictions by Latter-day Saint artists of Nephi and his garden tower depict the prophet's solitary prayer, Śledź incorporates a varied audience of men, women, and children attending this event. From those who continue on to the "chief market" (Helaman 7:10), to those who appear to have entered Nephi's gated garden to listen better, Śledź imagines a range of possible responses to the prophet's chastisement. Between Nephi's furrowed brow and a concerned mother holding her child close, the scene is imbued with emotional power, and though the text makes no mention of angels, Śledź also includes two heavenly visitors witnessing this powerful moment in Nephite history.

God Testifies to the Sonship of Jesus (Bog świadczy o synostwie Jezusa), 2007

3 Nephi 11:1-17

Śledź discovers the heart of the Book of Mormon in its record of the resurrected Christ's visit to the ancient Americans. With bright red paint marking Christ's side and hands, Śledź depicts the Savior amidst a crowd of faithful believers who reverently kneel before their Lord. They approach Him one by one to thrust their hands into His raw, open wounds, bringing to mind the eternal immediacy of His sacrifice.

Presiding over the scene is God the Father, painted white in contrast to Christ's flesh tones, to align with Śledź's belief in God as an unchangeable, immaterial spirit. The Father stretches out His hands to His children below Him, offering these instructions: *Oto mój usjrowany syn-słuchajcie go*. "Behold my Beloved Son...hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7).

Jesus and the Children (Jezus i ozieci), 2011

3 Nephi 17:11-25

Once again, Śledź looks beyond the text to envision a tender group of mothers and children gathering around the Savior. With swaddled infants wrapped in loving arms, the mothers orient themselves—and, as a result, their children—toward the Savior. In a red robe, representative of His spilled blood, Christ lovingly holds a child in His arms. The group is thoroughly protected by rings of angels, wearing the same pure white as the children themselves.

Nephi Baptizes the Elect Twelve (Nefi chrzci dwunastu wybranych), 2006-2013

3 Nephi 19:7-15

Closely attuned to the nature of religious authority, Śledź clearly delineates the source of Nephite priesthood in this sculpture of the Nephite disciples' spiritual baptism. After full immersion in water, the disciples emerge with wet clothes clinging to their bodies to humbly receive spiritual cleansing from Nephi. Christ's red robe brings to mind His earlier crucifixion and links this event to the heavenly power now shared with Nephi. Pillars of heavenly fire visually link the Son, Father, and Holy Spirit—in the form of a dove—to indicate their unified will. Individual rays of golden light spring from Jesus' hands and touch each disciple's brow to show that they too have received power from God.

Jesus Fulfills the Desires of the Disciples (Jezus spełnia pragnienia uczniów) and The Three Nephites, 2007

3 Nephi 28

Before departing from the Nephite disciples, the Savior grants their most sincere desires. On one side of the carving, Śledź sculpts the nine who request to join Christ in heaven after completing their service on earth. In keeping with the text, Christ reaches out a hand to touch their brows and grant them their desires. Each humbly crosses their hands over his heart as he gratefully accepts the Savior's gift. On the other side, Śledź carves the Three Nephites who, like John the Beloved, wish to remain on earth sharing the gospel until the Savior's return. Forming a pillar connecting the men, women, and children on earth to the angels above, the disciples open the scriptures and one raises a hand to draw attention as they preach the gospel. Members of the crowd pay rapt attention and a mother lifts her swaddled baby so that the child may see the sacred messengers.

Brother of Jared Seeks Counsel from the Lord and God's Finger (Palec Boży), 2007

Ether 2:16-25 and 3:1-16

As the Book of Mormon draws to a close, the saga of the Jaredite people is briefly recorded. Led away from their wicked homeland, the Jaredites are instructed to build boats and cross an ocean to the Americas. Śledź imagines the Jaredites' eight barges as similar to typical depictions of Noah's multi-level ark. Upon creating these conspicuously dark vessels, the Jaredites' spiritual leader, the Brother of Jared, asks the Lord how they will see while crossing the ocean. The Lord's open arms reflect His open response: "What will ye that I should do...?" (Ether 2:23). Answering, the Brother of Jared gathers sixteen stones, which he carries to the top of the mountain and asks the Lord to fill with light. Śledź captures the dramatic moment in which the Lord is moved by the Brother of Jared's faith and grants his request. The Brother of Jared's faith proves to be so great that though Christ is not yet in possession of a resurrected body, the Brother of Jared has the spiritual foresight to anticipate the Savior's exalted form. At the carving's sides, Jaredite families wait with packed bags and flocks to board the barges that will carry them to their new home.








Here is my Beloved Son, Listen to Him (Oto Syn moj umiłowany, słuchaj Go) and Moroni's Visit (Wizyta Moroniego), c. 2008

Joseph Smith—History 1:12-20, 29-47

Though not contained within the Book of Mormon, Śledź recognizes that Joseph Smith's vision of Father and Son, as well as his visit from the Angel Moroni, are critical to the

discovery of that work of scripture. On one side of the carving, Śledź depicts Joseph, dressed in humble clothes, kneeling in a grove of trees. Over Joseph is a pyramidal ray of light, above which God and Christ are dressed in glorious golden robes, surrounded by angels. On the other side of the carving, one angel slips through a conduit into Joseph's bedroom, waking the boy from sleep to testify that Joseph will bring forth a sacred work of scripture containing stories of faith and miracles with the power to change the world.

Appendix C

	Thumbnail Image	Thumbnail Image (B side)	Artist	Name: Polish	Name: English	Date	Medium	Rearview Image?	Height	Width	Depth	Unit
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Pierwga wizja Leiego	Lehi's First Vision	2013	Sculpture	N	20	14.5		Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Wizja Leiego: drzewo życia	Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life	c. 2006-2013	Sculpture	N	11	15	8	Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Izajasz w świątyni	Isaiah in the Temple	2006	PHOTO	N	17	14.5		Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Uwolnienie Almy i Amuleka	Release of Alma and Amulek	c. 2006-2013	Sculpture	N	18	14		Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Przebudzenie Króla lamoniiego	The Awakening of King Lamoni	c. 2013	Sculpture	N	20	14.5		Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Niemowa Korihor	Korihor is Speechless	2012	Sculpture	N	14	16.5		Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Nieugiętość Zerahemnasia	The Stubbornness of Zerahemnah	2006	Sculpture	N				Inches

<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Side A: Nephi and Lehi in Prison Side B: Angels Descend and Lamanites are Converted	2006	Sculpture	Y	21	15	16 inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Nephi on the Tower	2008	Sculpture	N	21	15	Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Bog świadczy o synostwie Jezusa God Testifies to the Sonship of Jesus	2007	Sculpture	N	16.5	14	inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Jezus i dzieci Jesus and the Children	2011	Sculpture	N	21	21	inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Nefi chrzci dwunastu wybranych Nephi Baptizes the Chosen Twelve		Sculpture	N	21	24	8 Inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Side A: Jezus spełnia pragnienia uczniów Side A: Jesus Desires of the Disciples Side B: The Three Nephites	2007	Sculpture	Y	18	17	inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Side A: Brother of Jared Seeks Counsel from the Lord Side B: God's Finger	2007	Sculpture	Y	20	13	inches
<input type="checkbox"/>			Roman Śledź	Side A: Oto Syn mój umiłowany Side B: Wzzyła Moroniego Side A: Behold, My Beloved Son, Hear Him Side B: Visit of Moroni	c. 2008	PHOTO	Y-TWO PHOTOS	21	16	

Appendix D

A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon: Folk Carving of Roman Śledź



February 16—April 14, 2023
Curated by Candace Brown
From the Private Collection of Walter Whipple



Figure 1, Cover of gallery guide.

From Different Angles: The Tree of Life



Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life is one of the most frequent Book of Mormon scenes depicted by Latter-day Saint artists. Living and working as a Catholic in Poland, Śledź has had little exposure to these images or the LDS community. This allows him to develop his own interpretation of Lehi's vision, rooted in the scripture text and independent from typical Latter-day Saint interpretations.

Look at Śledź's sculpture and compare it to these Latter-day Saint depictions of Lehi's dream.

Ask yourself:

- How are these works similar? How are they different?
- What moment in the vision do they show?
- Why did the artist choose to focus on this moment?

If you were to make your own piece of art of Lehi's dream of the Tree of Life, how would you do it?

- What materials would you use?
- What symbols would you include?
- How would your depiction reflect your unique personality and life experiences?



Kamron Coleman, *Steampunk Tree of Life Orchestra*, 2019



Jerry Thompson, *Lehi's Dream*, 1978



James C. Christensen, *Hold to the Rod, the Iron Rod*, 2007

To see more diverse Book of Mormon art, scan the QR code to visit the Book of Mormon Art Catalog:



Figure 2

Roman Śledź Scavenger Hunt



Śledź's collection envisions a few of the most powerful spiritual moments in the Book of Mormon shared by covenant communities of men, women, and children. Taken together, the individual reactions to the power of God give a sense of how this shared moment will shape the community's future.

Look closely at the sculptures. Can you find the following figures witnessing these miraculous events?

Look at their facial expressions and posture.

- What is this individual seeing? Feeling? Thinking?
- How might they share the story of this experience with their friends and family?
- How might their experience change them?



Look at other figures included in the sculpture.

- How will this event change the way this community interacts with each other?
- How is this event a turning point in their history?



Figure 3



Śledź, a faithful Catholic, was inspired to create this series after reading a copy of the Book of Mormon given to him by his friend Walter Whipple, who is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Śledź and Whipple each remain committed to their life-long faiths.



- Have you ever been given a gift by a friend of a different faith background? What did that gift mean to you? To them?
- How can friends from different faith backgrounds find beauty in one another's traditions?
- What is something you can agree on with those who have a different faith than you? What is some common ground that members of different religions—or no religion—stand on together?
- How can people of different faiths support one another?



Scan the QR
code to visit
Roman Śledź's
Google Arts and
Culture profile



Figure 4

Bibliography

- Badger, William. "Twilight of the Gods: Polish Folk Sculpture Since the Fall of Communism." Honors thesis, Brigham Young University, 2005.
- Barrett, Robert T. and Susan Easton Black. "Setting a Standard in LDS Art: Four Illustrators of the Mid-Twentieth Century." *BYU Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2005): 25-72. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol44/iss2/3>.
- Bihalji-Merin, Oto. *Modern Primitives: Naive painting from the Late Seventeenth Century Until the Present Day*. New York: Gallery Books, 1985.
- Book of Mormon Art Catalog. "Search the Book of Mormon Art Catalog." Accessed 1 November 2022. <https://bookofmormonartcatalog.org/catalog-search/>.
- Cannon, Hal. *Utah Folk Art: A Catalog of Material Culture*. Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980.
- Champoux, Jenny. "'That We May Have Light': Brother of Jared Artwork in the Book of Mormon Art Catalog." *Wayfare* (2023). Unpublished.
- Dant, Doris R. "Polish Religious Folk Art: Gospel Echoes from a Disparate Clime." *BYU Studies* 37, no. 2 (1997-1998): 89-114. <https://byustudies.byu.edu/article/polish-religious-folk-art-gospel-echoes-from-a-disparate-clime/>.
- Deseret News. "Polish art show at Y shows interpretations of religious events." Accessed 24 February 2023. <https://www.deseret.com/1997/11/9/19344809/polish-art-show-at-y-shows-interpretations-of-religious-events>.
- Deseret News. "Polish Nativities at LDS Museum." Accessed 24 February 2023. <https://www.deseret.com/2009/1/3/20294339/polish-nativities-at-lds-museum>.
- Fryś-Pietraszkowa, Ewa, Anna Kunczyńska-Iracka, and Marian Pokropek. *Folk Art in Poland*. Translated by Jerzy A. Bałdyga. Warsaw: Arkady, 1988.
- Harrison, Charles, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry. *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Indiana University Bloomington, Polish Studies Center. "1977–Present: A Timeline of Events." Accessed 24 February 2023. <https://polish.indiana.edu/about/psc-history/index.html>.
- Karp, Ivan and Steven D. Laving, ed. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

- “Moving On.” *BYU Humanities* (Provo), Fall 2009.
<https://issuu.com/byuhumanities/docs/fall2009>.
- NewNet Staff Writer, “How rare an obsession: BYU professor has nearly 400 Polish wood carvings.” Dec. 10, 2003. <https://universe.byu.edu/2003/12/10/how-rare-an-obsession-byu-professor-has-nearly-400-polish-wood-carvings/>.
- Oman, Richard G., and Robert O. Davis. *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1995.
- O’Neill, Paul. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012.
- Sweat, Anthony. *Repicturing the Restoration: New Art to Expand Our Understanding*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company. 2020.
- Wikipedia. “Roman Śledź.” Accessed 21 February 2023.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_%C5%9Aled%C5%BA.
- Whipple, Walter. “The Fruits of Their Labors: Professor Collects Polish Art.” *BYU Humanities* (Provo), Spring 2009, 13-15.
<https://issuu.com/byuhumanities/docs/spring2009>.