

# Readers' Forum

## Support

Please excuse this belated expression of enthusiasm and thanks for your excellent issue on contemporary Mormon art [Volume Two, Number One]. It is an important contribution to an understanding of the arts in Mormon culture. You are to be congratulated on the excellent way in which the material is presented and displayed.

While I enjoyed the art immensely, I found myself disagreeing with a good deal of the commentary, especially that which sees art as a missionary tool. It seems to me that it can only be so in the most subtle and indirect way and cannot succeed if it is done so consciously. True art and fine art is something which is communicated ultimately on a spiritual or esthetic plane. Not only must it be expressed artistically, it must be received artistically. For example, to talk about Bart Morse's "Green Valley, Arizona" in terms of the scriptural allusion to being taken up on a high place is silly. I doubt that one person in a million would respond emotionally or intellectually to the work in that way. Rather, I think we respond to Morse's use of color and his marvelous planes, and are impressed not so much with the particular perspective of the painting (although that's important) but with its beauty. It is that beauty which touches us at our deepest spiritual point.

I feel that art should exist not as a missionary tool but as a form of praise, a form of spiritual expression which hopefully will evoke spiritual response in the viewer. The point I'm making is that there's nothing that does a greater disservice to art than to

make it didactic. If art has any hope in the Church it must rise above the level of the Sunday School lesson. Art must exist as all created works exist, as praise exists in all of its marvelous forms—as an expression to be experienced.

Another example of what I am talking about is Craig Koll's statement, "Unless a building can be seen to contribute to the Church's central objectives, that is, as an adequate meeting house and missionary tool, tithing funds will not be wisely used in maintaining it." The central use of a church building is not a missionary tool, but as a place where one can go to express praise to God and to experience communion with his fellow Saints. Until our architecture reflects this idea it will not, in my opinion, truly express the Gospel.

Again, I congratulate you on doing such an excellent job and providing such a valuable service to those of us who believe that art has a very significant place in the Kingdom of God.

Cordially,  
Robert A. Rees, Ph.D. Director  
Department of The Arts  
University of California,  
Los Angeles

## Editor empathy

By now you've certainly discovered that anyone going into periodical publishing is a masochist. The detail work is endless and if you still have your sanity you have my empathy, admiration, and blessings.

I was glad to see the merger with *New Messenger and Advocate* because

*Sunstone* seemed to me to be no different from any of the other journals around—only my wife kept me subscribing out of loyalty to its potential. *NMA* was less formal, had features and printed views not found elsewhere. You've adopted its good points. It is discouraging for an editor to receive criticism of items he or she thinks good—and confusing to get, often in the same day's mail, high praise for the same items someone else castigates. I, for one, like the new issues very much. I like reading other LDS reactions to movies and books. I like the news and would otherwise be unaware of most of it. I even like the ads—not only do they help you and worthy companies survive but it is next to impossible for non-Utah members to hear about products or services and such of interest to members. Those too pure to be contaminated by such worldly features can pass them over. It is in reader interest and important for the publication to have these things and unfortunately some readers of any publication can't seem to adjust to seeing anything printed that doesn't align with their taste.

Lastly, since you are a non-profit corporation you ought to remind people to donate. And if you printed up some fliers, readers could pass them around and mail them to friends.

Scott S. Smith, Editor  
Vegetarian World  
Los Angeles, California

## Sunstone Response

*Yes, Sunstone is non-profit. Donations are tax-deductible and right now, sorely needed. The last issue was delayed three weeks at the printer, making it virtually impossible to sell ads for this issue. That may please some subscribers, but it is a tremendous financial strain. In addition, six hundred subscriptions are now up for renewal. If those subscribers who wish Sunstone to continue could include a modest donation with a prompt renewal, our prospects for a bleak spring would be much brighter. Editorially, the next issue may be the best issue we have yet produced, particularly if we can afford color for a projected article on Mormon art, past and present.*

*Yes, it is difficult, at times, particularly when an occasional issue falls short of the*

mark. But there is compensation in knowing that we have also published some excellent works that otherwise might never have seen the light of day. It will be enough if subscriber support indicates this forum should continue.

We'll get to work on the flier. In the meantime, we will send sample copies to those that subscribers suggest.

Ed.

#### Editor

It was only after Scott Calder brought them to my attention that I noticed the ads for high protein diets, food distributorships, religious cassettes, etc. Though I regret their presence because they represent commercialization, as Calder so subtly hinted, I don't believe *Sunstone* needs chiding. Besides, the best ways to improve an infant publication like *Sunstone* are: 1) to buy it, 2) to get others to buy it or, 3) contribute something worthwhile to its content. We don't need to train its publisher or editor as Calder, Argetsinger, and Irving would do. I'm not down on criticism when the possibility exists

that it become constructive. Can *Sunstone* be what the above three propose? Should it?

*Sunstone* needn't confine itself to any particular format but if financial want limits its packaging possibilities or even the tone or direction of its content I won't "move on again" or insist on reading it in a library.

*Sunstone's* most valuable characteristic is in the providing of a forum wherein individuals of varying backgrounds can develop spiritual and intellectual sensitivity. Thus they are strengthened in their diversity rather than led to feel like forfeiture of growth within the church is a necessary ramification of their uniqueness. It is significant that the inclination towards surrendering individual intellectual and spiritual responsibility is often felt to be an alternative to forfeiture of church membership and that this occurs so often among the most sensitive and promising. *Sunstone* set out to provide this forum and, with the expected highs and lows, is continuing to do so. In its present form *Sunstone* appeals in ways not possible under a

more rigidly academic format. The new format assumes a less formal style which in my opinion encourages the proposition and exchange of ideas. The excellent interview with Jan Tyler may never have found its way into a "journal." Certainly she has found, in her rather unique mode of Mormonism, a spirit of love nurturing unconquerability that merits sharing.

K. J. Stewart  
Salt Lake City, Utah

#### Art issue

When I received your November-December issue I was a little worried. As others did, I felt that this was not the *Sunstone* I subscribed to. But your new issue (Jan.-Feb.) is better, and I feel better about your format. You are on the right track. Keep improving. I'll get some more of my friends to subscribe.

A prayerful supporter,  
Michael Hicks  
Los Altos, California

## Is this your last issue of *Sunstone*?

Check the expiration code in the upper right corner of the mailing label. Subscriptions marked 3:3 (Volume Three, Number Three) expire with this issue. Renew now. \$12 per year or \$21 for two years (twelve issues). P.O. Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110

Please send my subscription to: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send gift subscriptions in my name ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) to: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose \$12 for each subscription.  
P.O. Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110

# SUNSTONE

