

Artists Almanac -July 2020

Where courage is not, no other virtue can exist, except by accident

Samuel Johnson

We are, as my mother would have said it, in a *predicament* – a worldwide predicament.

First, a totally unexpected epidemic, a so-called *black swan* event sweeps over us. On the heels of a worldwide crisis of desperate immigrants fleeing war, persecution, or poverty we have vast destructive mobs of home-grown demonstrators filling our streets, burning buildings, smashing and destroying mom-and-pop operations built up with a lifetime of sacrificial toil. The mob tries to pull down the statues of the very people who have earned them the right of freedom, Washington, Jefferson, and even Lincoln. Our college professors teach entire generations of vulnerable young minds the evils and tyranny of the very nation that shelters everyone who flees tyranny.

Worse, the officials of some of these cities failed in their fundamental obligation: to safeguard life, liberty, and property. Police are told to stand down and



abandon entire sections of their city to mobs carrying semiautomatic rifles. The mobs call for the deactivation of the police, the one agency responsible for the maintenance of order in the most crime-ridden areas of our cities.



Economic chaos ensues, with fathers out of work, hard- earned family businesses closing, or rental obligations defaulted. Congress adds \$600 per week to unemployment benefits, making it more profitable for workers not to work. Unemployment soars and businesses now find it hard, if not impossible, to hire workers to complete jobs abandoned by those who leave them to make more by not working, causing a further reduction to gross domestic product.

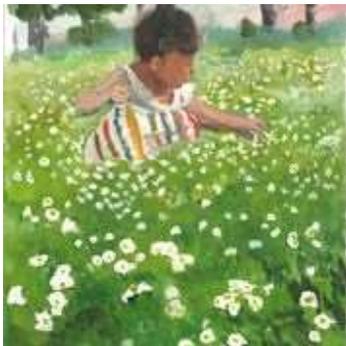
Medical science, with no other way to combat the pandemic, except isolation. passes the problem on to state and local officials, most of whom are innocent of any understanding of business or economics. Elected officials, public health experts, and media pundits, who lecture us about the need to stay in indefinite lockdown, hold secure jobs. Not one of them has to fear his employer going out of business. Anyone who warns that the effects of the lockdowns will be more devastating than anything the coronavirus can inflict is accused of being a heartless capitalist who only cares about profits.

Our U.S. Constitution reserves to the states the power to regulate the health and welfare of its citizens. Now, as the effects of the lockdowns became apparent to even the governors of the various states, they begin granting exemptions to *essential* businesses. A crazy patchwork results, for while supermarkets, beauty shops, liquor stores, (and in California, Pot Shops), are deemed essential, churches are not. But to its employees, *every* business is essential, and to many of its customers as well.

At the same time, a double standard prevails. Officials who ban funerals, church services, and visiting dying relatives in hospitals become avid cheerleaders for screaming crowds numbering in the thousands. Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York orders law enforcement officers to stand down, or to use at most a "light touch". The Massachusetts Attorney General says that burning "is how forests grow"

The failure to quell the riots means that more are inevitable. Civilization is at all times vulnerable to the darkest human impulses and only the rule of law exists to rein in these feral impulses so that individual initiative can flourish. ¹

What recourse has the artist in these times? He can read, of course, or watch old movies on Netflix. Yet for the artist, nothing takes him outside of the times like painting, especially outside, which the medicos tell us



Looking for a four-leaf clover

is a healthier place to be this summer. Here are a few of my recent diversions.

Nature is always there for us, if we make time for her in these times, and we should never fear death so much that we give up living.



Naked Lady

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The High Barn



Summer's First Bloom