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Holy Frit

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Holy Frit

Abstract

This is a film review of *Holy Frit* (2021), directed by Justin Monroe.

Keywords

Stained Glass, Art

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Holy Frit (2021), dir. Justin Monroe

Holy Frit, a feature-length documentary by director Justin S. Monroe, is about the creation of the world's largest fused stained-glass window. It is also about leaps of faith, the importance of mentors, the demands of creativity, and most of all the power of art to reach, console, transform and inspire.

The first leap of faith occurs when Tim Carey, a relatively unknown Los Angeles oil painter, takes a tour of, then joins the Judson Studios. Judson Studios, founded in 1897, is an L.A. family-run studio specializing in stained-glass. Carey and the Studio bid for the commission to create and build a 100-foot by 40-foot stained-glass window for the new church building of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas. A successful bid places the studio, and Carey as project designer and artist, in the position of designing, creating and building one of the world's largest stained-glass windows on a tight deadline. The problem: there is

seemingly no way to replicate the colors of Carey's oil-painting inspired design in stained-glass. Enter the world-renowned maestro of glass art, Narcissus Quagliata, who teaches Carey and those at Judson Studios the techniques to fuse glass and create colors and shades otherwise impossible in stained-glass.

Pastor Adam Hamilton and the congregation of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection perform their own leaps of faith, first through the decision to commission an enormous stained-glass window for their new church, and then the decision to work with a family-owned U.S. company rather than one of the larger international stained-glass companies. Raising the funds needed for the project, as well as the hope that the window, in the words of the Pastor, would act "as a visible means of grace," necessitated further leaps.

With light breaking and colors painting across glass, this is a visually stunning film that invites the viewer to wonder at beauty even as we consider the costs to the artists, the studios and the Church's congregation. An almost unreachable deadline competes with the demands to, as Quagliata insists, "make a masterpiece." Early in the film, Tim Carey says about this creation, "It's not a referendum on my life." "It *is*," Quagliata replies. Over the years, the mentorship of Quagliata becomes also a deep friendship and the opportunity, the push, for Carey to not only design and create this incredible work of art, but to also develop and find his way as an individual artist. Quagliata, in turn, knows that his techniques and artistry live on in this younger artist and in the stained-glass window they create together.

Despite stresses, deadlines, costs, exhaustion and worries, what emerges in the end is an incredibly beautiful and profound work of art—the Resurrection Window—that does bring people together, that consoles them, inspires them and moves them to tears. One of the strengths of this documentary is that it profiles not only the process and the primary artists, but also other people at

the studio, in transportation and at the church who, in their own ways, dedicate themselves to this remarkable creation.

Frit is a composition of ground glass and ink. Holy Frit is a film that paints a beautiful portrayal of artists, friendships, teaching, sacrifice, creativity and faith. Full of light, and sometimes darkness, it is a riveting meditation on the transformative power of art.