

Famed Designer Describes Pieta Setting

By JO MINER

Jo Minner, a world famous designer of theater stage settings, in this article describes the setting he has arranged for the famed Pieta of Michelangelo when it comes to the New York World Fair next year. The Pieta, which will be the highlight of the Vatican Pavilion at the Fair.



It is a great responsibility to create a lighting plan and a setting for one of the world's greatest pieces of sculpture.

This would be a challenge to anyone, but when you add to this the fact that Michelangelo's youthful masterpiece is not only a secular work, but a liturgically designed piece of sculpture destined to serve as an altarpiece, it compounds the responsibility and the challenge.

One of the first decisions that came to my mind was the conviction that even the most beautifully executed Baroque background would invite criticism from the hundreds of thousands of people who have been awed by the magnificence of the interior of St. Peter's.

My answer was to create a background of the utmost simplicity, complementing the sculpture as a great work of art, but also preserving the atmosphere of spiritual dedication. This chamber where the Pieta will be seen is not a chapel, but it must be devotional in feeling to the non-believer as well as to the faithful.

Very demanding and exciting requirements of safety and

efficiency had to be met before a basic design could be achieved.

For efficiency, the anticipated crowds of 6,000 people per hour during peak attendance made it necessary to create a "traffic control." Ideally, every viewer should enter this room as though entering a sanctuary and with a sense of peace, quiet, untroubled by the push and jam inevitably experienced in a fair ground, and be given a chance to contemplate Michelangelo's Pieta.

Since huge eager crowds make this virtually impossible, the next best thing was a series of four well disciplined and controlled guide lines of single

A television program filled with "Art Treasures from the Vatican" showing the Pieta statue and plans for the Vatican exhibit at the New York Fair, will be telecast by WHEATV, Channel 19, Friday, May 24, at 7:45 a.m.

Thousands of people who will enter the anteroom in this room they will become accustomed to a different atmosphere, shutting out the light and noise of the fair and being conditioned by the sound of liturgical music.

This interior chamber will have a comparatively low ceiling and will gradually get the viewers used to a low level of lighting.

As they enter the main chamber, each also has been gradually raised in height as they stop to a comfortably moving walk.

The speed of this walk will be as slow as the Directors of the Vatican Pavilion will allow, depending on the number of people lined up awaiting entrance, but at no time will the viewers be subjected to the kind of rushing line usually experienced when great works of art are exposed to the public view. Only the first three of these walks are automated.

Each walk will be elevated sufficiently above the one in front to give a clear and unobstructed view of the Pieta. The chamber in which the statue is to be observed is some sixty feet wide, allowing good time to observe the masterpiece, even when peak loads demand

constant, but not too hurried movement across the room.

The fourth and highest viewing level is not automated and may be chosen by those people who may wish to be more fully in their observation, even if they are a few feet further away.

The safety precautions have taken unusual forms, besides uniforms as well as private guards — sheets of transparent and bulletproof protection.

For many years there has been a controversy about the viewing angle of this magnificent Pieta. No actual records are in existence of the sculptor's original base of setting, and because the statue has always been part of an altar in four or five locations within the walls of the Vatican, the perfect viewing angle from a visitor's point of view was not always the prime objective.

We have chosen a height and angle of viewing solely for the visitor, within the limitations of the four levels of observation. In the design of the background, I chose blue, not only for its centuries old association with the Madonna, but because I wanted a color that would most compliment the rare beauty of the white Carrara marble in which Michelangelo carved the masterpiece. I avoided the range of warm colors because I wanted a background that would recede and give maximum attention to the sculpture group.

Because the room is so wide for a piece of sculpture which is not much over six feet in

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JO MINNER
'safety and efficiency'

length, I felt the need for framing the room to give space and area around the Pieta without dwarfing it. Solid walls would have been too heavy in feeling. I chose slender open-spaced vertical rails, which support a screen of votive candles.

This slightly flickering candlelight is again masked with blue glass to keep the sense of votive atmosphere quiet and subservient to the subject matter.

Since this Pieta is in essence part of the drama of the Descent from the Cross, I felt the need for a shadowy Cross, including draped shrouds, (unlike the Vatican setting, which has a very rich design in colored and ornate marble, as well as a brightly lit Cross) and that the background should be barely discernible, important surely, but at this moment secondary to the Pieta itself.



Prize for the Pope



Vatican City — (RNS) — The Balzan Peace Prize, established two years ago by a Swiss foundation, was presented to one of the world's most devoted proponents of peace — Pope John XXIII. The pontiff received the award from Italian President Antonio Segni in Ceremonies at the Vatican's Sala Regia. The Balzan award carries with it a \$230,000 prize, which the Pope announced will be given to charity. Besides the Peace prize to the Pope, Balzan prizes were conferred this year on Harvard's historian Samuel Eliot Morison, German-born composer Paul Hindemith, Austrian biologist Karl von Frisch, and Soviet mathematician Andrew N. Golosov.



Rome — (RNS) — Pope John XXIII makes history as he becomes the first pontiff to pay a courtesy call on an Italian President. In the courtyard of Rome's Quirinal Palace, the Pope is shown shaking hands with President Antonio Segni. The visit followed by a day Vatican ceremonies in which President Segni conferred the Balzan Peace Prize on the pontiff. Pope John is the first Pope ever to call on an Italian President and the second ever to call on a head of the Italian state. Pope Pius XI called on King Vittorio Emanuele III in 1929 to celebrate the signing of the Lateran Pacts. The two-mile route to the Quirinal Palace was lined by thousands who gave the Pope a rousing reception. Later, at the palace, Pope John, accompanied by the President, appeared on a balcony and blessed a huge crowd.

Loan Made To Meet School Costs

To meet final construction and equipment costs on the new Cardinal Mooney High School in the Town of Greece, pending payment of campaign pledges still outstanding, the Rochester Catholic Diocese and the Brothers of the Holy Cross who staff the school are jointly obtaining a \$1,400,000 mortgage from the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank of New York, the Chancery announced today.

The new high school is located at 125 Maiden Lane near Mt. Read Blvd.

The Holy Cross Brothers also have made application to the New York State Board of Regents for a charter for Cardinal Mooney High School. When the charter is granted, the Diocese will convey title to the school to the Holy Cross Brothers. Necessary papers for the mortgage will be recorded in the Monroe County Clerk's office next week, the Chancery statement read.

Divorce Rise Perils Children

Jounieh, Lebanon — (RNS) — A recommendation that legislative, social and economic measures be adopted in all countries — particularly in highly developed nations — to halt the "multiplication of divorces and separations" was made in a report adopted here by the World Congress on the Rights of the Child.

Another report approved by the congress — sponsored by the International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB) and the Catholic International Education Office (CIEO) and attended by 1,000 delegates of 26 countries — called for creating in society "a more strict and authentic Christian mentality" in face of the increasing prevalence of abortion and contraception.

These recommendations were among advanced by special commissions which spent five days examining the rights of the child on juridical, moral, socio-psychological, economic, social and religious planes. Regarded as of far-reaching world significance, the congress was attended not only by Catholic representatives

No Threat to Public Schools

Syracuse — (RNS) — Political scientists, economists and educators agreed here that the existence of a parochial system in no way affects the politics of financing public schools at the local and state levels.

The findings were presented by speakers before a professional development seminar of the University Council for Educational Administration, a body made up largely of professors of school administration. Sponsoring the seminar was Syracuse University.

"In general, we have found that the parochial school does not affect school financing," said Dr. Jesse Barkhead, Syracuse University economics professor who was seminar co-chairman.

Among the speakers were two Syracuse sociologists, Prof. Warner Bloomberg Jr. and Morris Susskind, who described a study they will publish soon of four suburban communities having varied religious and ethnic compositions.

Their study found, they said, that it would not be true to charge that a large percentage of Catholics in a community weakens support of the public schools.

Prof. Bloomberg and Mr. Susskind said they found parochial schools had "no effect" on the support of public schools. Even the construction of a parochial school in one of the areas surveyed did not adversely affect the financing of the public school system, they reported.

While emphasizing that they did not want to prove "too much" from a study of four communities, they pointed out that the four communities had supported public education at the same level, whether or not the churches also operated schools.

Jerry Miner, associate professor of economics at Syracuse, described a statistical study

made of more than 1,100 school districts. When he looked at the proportion of children in parochial schools, he said, he found that changes in this did not result in changes in expenditure per pupil in public schools.

He discovered through his statistical compilation, that communities spend just as much per public school child whether or not they are also supporting large numbers of Catholic schools.

During a panel discussion, Dean Stephen H. Bailey of Syracuse's Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs explained the role of the Catholic hierarchy in the education programs of eight northeastern states.

In these states, he said, parochial schools did not have an adverse effect on state aid to education. In fact, Dean Bailey added, the state of Rhode Island which has a high Catholic population, has a "good" state aid program.

Permanent Contact Urged

Vatican — (RNS) — A permanent exchange of representatives between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches was urged here at a meeting of Protestant and Roman Catholic journalists and theologians.

The exchange proposal was made by Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Walter Kamp of Limburg, a prominent ecumenist. West German church papers and heads of the German press office for the Second Vatican Council.

Bishop Kamp, noting the keen interest of non-Catholic Christians in the council's activities, told the meeting that the Christian unity movement would be enhanced after the Council ends by permanent "contact centers" in Rome and in Geneva, headquarters for the World Council of Churches.

Military Pilgrimage

Paris — (RNS) — Some 40,000 armed forces members from 17 countries are expected to participate in a military pilgrimage to Lourdes led by Maurice Cardinal Reitin, Archbishop of Limburg.

About 1,000 tents will be erected near the famed Marian shrine to accommodate the military in late May. A Solemn Pontifical Mass May 26 will be televised for transmission throughout Europe.

Many of the military will be accompanied by their families and it is expected that nearly 70,000 persons will make the pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Latin Americans Attend U.S. College Classes

Milwaukee — (NC) — Nearly 10,000 Latin American youths were studying in the United States in the 1961-62 academic year, it was reported here at a conference on Latin students.

1,985 attended Catholic colleges. Jaime Fonseca, editor of Noticias Catolicas, Spanish and Portuguese language edition of the NCWC News Service, said the total number of Latin American students at U.S. schools in 1961-62 was 9,915. (At least 100 such students are enrolled in colleges in the area of the Rochester Diocese).

Fonseca reported at the annual meeting of the Catholic Conference on Inter-American Student Problems, held at Cardinal Stritch College. He is chairman of the conference's academic planning committee which was set up last year to consider changes and expansion in the policy and curriculum of U.S. Catholic colleges to meet the needs of Latin American students coming to this country.

Fonseca said the nearly 10,000 Latin American students in the U.S. in 1961-62 represented 17 per cent of all foreign students in this country. They were the second largest group, surpassed only by students from the Far East.

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