

This series of newsletters on theology and film is created by Fuller's Brehm Film Initiative and FULLER studio. We hope you will find these focused emails both informative and inspiring.

Sight & Sound Magazine, a publication of the British Film Institute, recently unveiled their new list of the top 100 greatest films of all time. *Sight & Sound* has been creating this list every decade since 1952 by polling film scholars from all over the world. In 1952, they polled 63 people, and Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* came out on top. Since then, they've polled more people every year. *Citizen Kane* led the pack for 50 years. It was supplanted by *Vertigo* in 2012.

This year, *Sight & Sound* polled 1,639 film critics, programmers, curators, archivists, and academics. Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* ended up on top. I'll let others speculate about why so many people included the film on their ballots and bicker about whether or not the film deserves the honor. I will say that I have my own private, ranked list of the 250 films I consider cinema's most important works. I would happily call any of the top 25 films on that list "the greatest film ever made." *Jeanne Dielman* is among those top 25 films.

Honestly, I am suspicious of ranking works of art as if they are in a competition. Art doesn't work that way. Great works of art in any medium do their own thing. I've seen 91 of the films on *Sight & Sound's* new list, and every one is great in its own way. They are all beautiful films—in the most expansive understanding of what beauty is.

I do love a good list though. When we are at our best, we look past the rankings and receive a list as an invitation to explore a group of films a discerning community has deemed especially worth our time. In

addition to aesthetic and historical merit, we believe that there is theological worth in films, that they can help us know God and better love the world God so loves. As these are the films that film lovers have identified as the richest in the history of the art form, they should provide exceptional Christian import as well, right?

Well, I recently completed a comprehensive study of “the greatest films of all time.” It is that list of 250 films I mentioned before. I came to my list by cross-referencing past *Sight & Sound* lists, among others, to find the 250 films movie lovers consider the greatest. (Eighty-five of the films on *Sight & Sound*’s list are in my collection; I did not include documentaries.) I learned that the story of cinema is the story of artists endeavoring to see and show the world authentically—François Truffaut, perhaps cinema’s most eloquent critic, called this an act of love—and to inspire audiences to love the world, their neighbors, and themselves enough to work to create a more just society. That is beautiful indeed.

As Emerson wrote, “Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue,” and so when *Sight & Sound* says these are the films that are the most beautiful, I think this also means they are the most virtuous. I believe God’s Spirit was there alongside these filmmakers helping them to create these works, that the flowering of cinema is part of God’s redemption of all things. So we can walk amongst the greatest films of all time and say “Praise God for that!” with every step. *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* is a terrific place to start.

For the love of God and movies,
Elijah Davidson
Co-Director, Brehm Film



*Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080
Bruxelles*

In honor of this great film being honored by the global film community, we wanted to make the following reflection on the film available for everyone.

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The Spirit in Cinema History

On *Conversing*, Elijah Davidson explores the movement of God's Spirit throughout cinematic history—in and through the world's greatest films and the work of filmmaking itself.

[+ LISTEN NOW](#)



New Reviews

It's a good time of year to go to the movies, and we have lots of new reviews for you to read, including writing on *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *The Fabelmans*, and *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*.

[+ READ NOW](#)

IF YOU WANT TO GO DEEPER



How Artists Help Us Find a Home

Shannon Sigler, executive director of Fuller's Brehm Center, reflects on how seeing like an artist helps us cultivate a sense of home.

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The Vocation of an Artist

In this FULLER Equip course, you'll learn about your place in the long history of art and artists through time biblically, theologically, and aesthetically.

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