

UNCOVERED: Artists and Community Members Respond to the Museums

In this series, a visiting artist or community member contributes an original artwork or narrative offering a new perspective on the physical space, permanent collection, or visitors of the de Young or Legion of Honor. In this installment, Jonathan Dimmock, principal organist at the Legion of Honor, reflects on the magnificent pipe organ built in 1924 by the Ernest M. Skinner Company and given to the Legion of Honor upon its opening on November 11, 1924.



THE SPRECKELS ORGAN

Jonathan Dimmock

“A gift to the people of San Francisco.” With those words, John D. Spreckels gave the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco a unique gift, a 4,526-pipe organ that resounds throughout the entire Legion of Honor museum. John D. Spreckels was the brother-in-law of Alma Spreckels, whose vision and dedication are the reason the Legion of Honor exists. To this day, it is the only pipe organ in a museum—anywhere in the world—we know of that is played every week of the year. The idea: to enhance the experience of viewing art. Artworks are two- or three-dimensional; music takes place in a fourth dimension, the dimension of time. The two work together to bring an experience of joy and a deep immersion into the beauty of the art. As we begin to celebrate the Legion of Honor’s hundredth anniversary from November 2024 through 2025 and mark the building’s inspiration in the Palais de la Légion d’Honneur in Paris, my weekly programs will focus on the music from Paris between the wars. That era marked one of the most fertile confluences of art, literature, and philosophy in recorded history. It was also the time when the Legion of Honor and its organ were being built. I hope you will join us as we move into the Legion of Honor’s centennial year and continue our current organ concerts every Saturday at 4 pm.

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For more information, visit www.famsf.org/events/organ-concert.

Photograph by Gary Sexton