

Jeff Meadows's *The Peaceable Kingdom*

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [October 2022](#) issue



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The Peaceable Kingdom of Edward Hicks is an icon of American folk art, much admired and copied since the Pennsylvania Quaker painter finished his first version around 1820. Hicks made multiple studies of the scene based on the biblical prophecy of a future in which “the wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isa. 11:6). Hicks portrayed the first Quaker settlers making peace with the Indigenous people while harmony reigned in the animal realm.

Jeff Meadows created this mixed-media interpretation of an 1834 version of *The Peaceable Kingdom* at the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery in Columbus, Ohio, where artists with disabilities are encouraged to develop their talents. Meadows says he was intrigued by this strange group of animals that do not belong together. He depicts them with pained expressions, from the sad-sack lion at the center to the forlorn lamb kneeling on all fours. Dark clouds on the horizon suggest all is not well in this earthly paradise—as does the image of a weary Native American who appears to have withdrawn from the treaty talks.

Meadows expresses here what was behind Hicks's preoccupation with the subject. By the time the Quaker artist took up his idyllic theme in variations, the Lenape people had been cheated out of their lands by Penn's descendants and the Pennsylvania Society of Friends was torn by schism. Hicks was both looking back in sorrow at what might have been and longing for the true peaceable kingdom to come.