

*Examen*, by Joan Benefiel and Jeremy Leichman

Art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [March 13, 2019](#) issue



Brooklyn-based artists Joan Benefiel and Jeremy Leichman, principals at Figuration Studio, create a wide range of sculptures for an impressive range of clients, including cities, universities, churches, and the National Football League. Some of their most intriguing works are on spiritual themes, as in *Examen*, a sculpture of St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits. The artists note that Ignatius developed a set of spiritual exercises, including the Examen, as a means to assess oneself—both “the positive aspects of deeds done and those darker areas that could be improved.” This sculpture on the campus of Fairfield University reflects an understanding of the Examen practice in which the light from within Ignatius meets his shortcomings. Though Benefiel and Leichman are not religious themselves, many of their commissions come from Catholic institutions. Their practice in such cases, they say, is to “dig down to the universal heart” of the subject. “The idea of introspection, self-assessment, and the drive to improve by one’s own reckoning are familiar ideas to non-Jesuits, non-Catholics, and indeed pretty much anybody who has ever tried to

assess their own thoughts and deeds.”