

Smithsonian Democracy

Washington's full of monuments,
But one appalls the residents;
A hall of horrors – yet it's still
Located on that famous Hill

Where statesmanship once made a home—
Now, beneath that spacious dome
The Wax Museum of Congress stands,
A ghastly warning to other lands,

Where frightening figures by the score
Appear, pacing the marble floor,
Raising their bloodless hands once more,
Waving papers and voting—war!

Where legislators once held events,
An artificial intelligence
Now guides these robots of wax and clay,
With the gravitas of papier mâché,
And *war* is all that they can say.

The bold exhibits bring to life
Wild statues twisted in furious strife,
Or scanning the world with great annoy,
Conjuring monsters to destroy,

Conquering nations in their minds,
Ruining enemies of all kinds,
Sending legions to many lands,
Raging and shouting and voting war
'Til their Republic is no more.

In this mausoleum of government,
With many trillions of dollars spent,
You see Representatives hawking debts
For billion-dollar fighter jets,

Pale figures threatening fell rebukes
To all the world, and shaking nukes;
They're spending a trillion dollars planned
For weapons none of them understand
And some that long ago were banned.

And there are many enactors, too,
Who play the parts that Senators do;
They roar like lions on foreign affairs,
Their funding provided by billionaires.

While these actors are acting their part,
Whatever wars they want, they start,
Sanctions and killings with a flair,
They spit their words at the empty air;

They declare the Constitution a bother,
And declare war only on each other;
They act the mental dissolution
Of lunatics running the institution.

Now, visitors from overseas
Have fled the spectators' galleries,
Fearing a bellowing beast may sneeze
And war can be a catching disease—
They see it spread on America's streets
Where piles of victims are covered in sheets—

But what has caused the most dismay
Among the people, was the day
The robots came to life, in wrath
Against the students and the youth,

Whose calls for a simple ceasefire
Aroused a black medieval ire,
Whose protest against a genocide,
The waxen furies would not abide.

The mannequins so wound up for war
They burst right out of their House of horror;
One group of artificial Reps
Was found on a college campus steps,

Trying to commandeer higher ed,
Arrest the students for what they said
And lock them up 'til they understood
That love is bad and war is good.

Those robots are marauding still—
But around the world the plazas fill
With crowds, with the students' signs rehearsed
And the Wax Museum of Congress cursed.

Its curators are too smug to see
How empty is every balcony;
How the fans of republican government
Have fled, and now a discontent
Has riven all of the nation's youth,
Who see the lies, and want the truth.

But the Congress Wax Museum still stands,
A ghastly warning to other lands;
And though it may seem to be very plain
To the world, that these robots are insane,

They're not the only puppet show
Exhibited in the capital now;
There's another, very nearby, to see,
The Wax Museum of the Presidency.

Then human beings, with humanity's cause,
Must rise and see to humanity's laws
Themselves, and cure the mental sore
Psychiatry could call *obsessive war*.

—Paul Gallagher, May 15, 2024