

MAGISTRATES AND MONUMENTS

Juliet Ehrlich

"all endeavor raised to the level of excellence becomes...art"

A sculptor's reflections on monument creation, and a tribute to judges and lawyers.



For every edifice monumentalized, there was a sculptor engaged to bring it into being. An idea conceived in one mind was seeded within another, and if its concept was timely, its subject matter apropos, its message stirring, then funds were secured and the thing begun. A lengthy design phase ensued, and when a final sketch was thoughtfully reviewed and perhaps revised, its lines formed a blueprint.

For an extended period before modelling tools met clay, or chisel and hammer were grasped for first strikes upon stone, numerous meetings transpired. Foundation stones for monuments are not laid within the space of weeks. Rather months, perhaps even years could elapse in preparations. New intelligence could inform revisions in scale, proportion, breadth, depth or other aspects of the endeavor. If the sculpture's height was towering, scaffolding rose. Ladders would inevitably fall short. A team was assembled, a principal appointed, and apprentices positioned. With preparations complete and tools taken up, the moment would almost certainly have been met with shared grins among artisan team members. A buoyant mood announced...this is our element, let sculpting begin!

When the original was complete and its beautifully carved tons duplicated, it was dissembled and into molds was poured glowing, molten bronze. Its red-orange, viscous body advancing slowly, lava-like, from the charred lip of a massive crucible. Foundry artisans, often sculptors themselves, guided this phase, and their refined eyes made fraught calibrations. Most often their mastery was proven, but sometimes a small error would later be more aptly termed a sweeping miscalculation. The welding of cooled bronze components accomplished resurrection. The monument stood, texture restored, with the lovely, burnished patina sought.

The engineered erection of architectural structures are heady moments, but not the penultimate one. A veiled figure, berobed within voluminous folds of traditional black cloth, sits above eye level, designedly placed at elevation to inspire awe, to convey feelings of something grand...something above, beyond and greater than ourselves individually. When the veil is lifted, we experience something monumental indeed. A thing moving, stately. Though its scale may be soaring, its message, imbued with power and meaning, is intended to soar yet beyond. That intangible has its own height, breadth and depth.

Work of this nature is apt to consume the life of the sculptor for the life of the project. Arduous physically, complex mentally, and joyous emotionally, these are magnificent chapters all. Artists are typically born to their work. Time falls away as they create and for most, the urge will endure. They will be found, "playing with crayons," under the cope of heaven.

(Continued on next page)

Top left: Veritas (Truth). Copyright Supreme Court of Canada. Photographed by Philippe Landreville. Bottom left: Authority of Law. Steve Petteway, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States. Center: Lady Justice. Original clay bas relief sculpture mounted upon marble by Juliet Ehrlich. julietehrlich.artspan.com. Top right: Iustitia (Justice). Copyright Supreme Court of Canada. Photographed by Philippe Landreville. Bottom right: Contemplation of Justice. Steve Petteway, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.

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(Continued from previous page)

Art compels to the degree it involves us beyond the intellectual realm. It is our visceral, emotional responses that engage us most deeply. Intellectual observation a conduit to the brain's feeling realms, where senses stir. The observer is transformed, involved, no longer simply observer. At its best, art wields the power to transport us, becoming a wordless expression that nevertheless speaks to the viewer and creator profoundly. Art that compels enlivens, lifting the spirit. Through exposure our eyes are trained to see more, and our hearts inspired to feel more, enriching all life experience.

While the realms of law and art are disparate, there are shared aspects between these unusually paired realms. Both are dimensional. A leisurely walk about a sculpture or law, and shifting vantage points offer new perspectives. We discern layered meaning, adding depth to understanding. Moreover, listen for the surprising descriptive language that is found so aptly to apply to either realm.

Magistrate. There is the feel of something grand in this word. At seminal moments our eyes turn to the courts; and then perhaps to those Supreme. These handsome figures, berobed within voluminous folds of traditional black cloth appear a singular, majestic body. Individually they are statuesque. Purposefully seated at elevation to inspire, their august presence purports feelings of something above, beyond and greater than ourselves. While this company of nine possess legionary judicial force,

it is the potency of their monumental, intellectual prowess I want to tribute.

They have mastered the art of speaking, the art of writing and the art of adjudication. These talents are then overlaid with remarkable memory and penetrating understanding of law. As writers, their capacity for concise, beautifully crafted opinion is formidable. In speech they are clear, methodical, riveting. Their perception for nuance appears fathomless, and contemplation of their towering collective knowledge stuns the sensibilities. In the age of the Sophists, it was said, "those who can write, rule the world of men." And so they do.

All judges, in addition to those magistrates who sit highest on the arm of our judiciary, are master distillers in the end. Because of their manifold skills, both the path they trod to arrive, and their offerings, elixir for some, bitter issue for another, if held AD LUCEM, are always clear.

And what of the lawyers who raise advocacy to excellence? Unlike our justices who are not permitted the latitude to enter the fray, we rely upon our advocates to walk into it directly. When trying chapters arise, when we haven't enough personal agency to negotiate fraught terrain, our lawyers can offer flooding relief. We feel them our allies and permit ourselves hope.

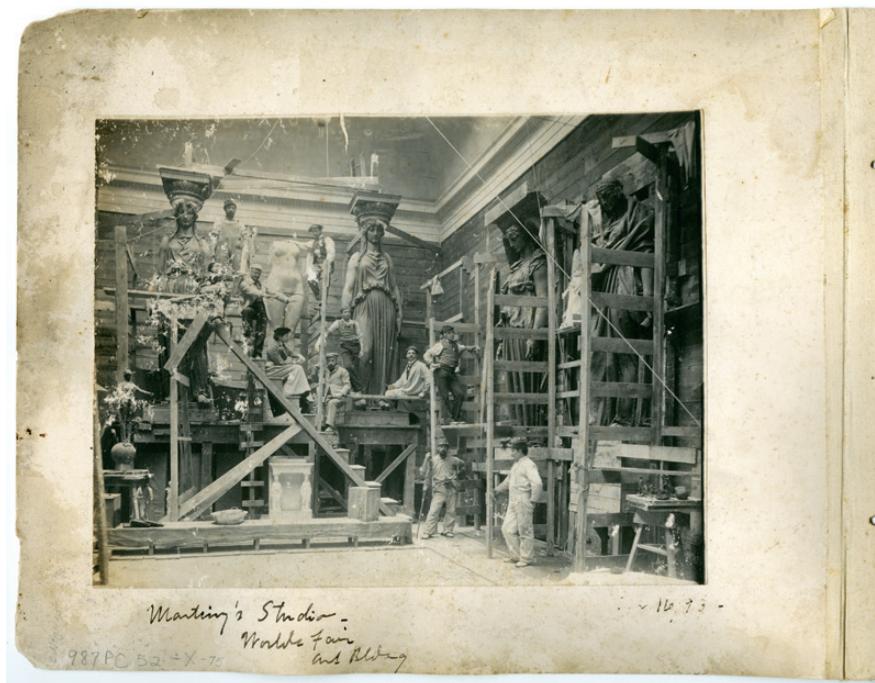
Advocates listen as we unburden ourselves, they shoulder weight and give voice to what we feel, what we believe. That is no small thing. These sentinel guards perceive what we cannot, and do what we cannot do without them. Foot, calf, and knee, we tandem pace across the arc of difficulty. When their utterances and actions on our behalf rise to the level of excellence, their work too, becomes art. ©

Juliet Ehrlich is a sculptor and writer residing in Louisville, Kentucky. Her corporate, public and private commissions have been placed both in the United States and internationally. Seventeen pieces commissioned by the U.S. State Department for foreign embassies were lauded "the highlight of the Art in Embassy program." "I thrill in debuting my sculpture, Lady Justice. Like the truth, she is bare, unvarnished, unadorned."

Acquisition for Lady Justice art prints: julietehrlich.artspan.com
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Rough stone block became National Archive's statue.



Enid Bland Yandell photograph collection. Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Ky.



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A big thank you to those who participated in the LBA's Back to School Drive and helped to provide essential school supplies to Jefferson County Public Schools and the West End School. JCPS will distribute the money collected to the schools with the highest at risk population. Thanks to the generosity of our members more than \$4,000 was raised! THANK YOU to members of the following firms and individuals:

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