

Gargoyles

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Streisinger's wife, Lotte, was the visual arts coordinator for the 1991 science complex project and the Knight Library project that was completed in 1995. She was responsible for some of the earlier art acquisitions.

Lotte said the gargoyles are the work of Wayne Chabre, the artist who constructed the figures initially for the Natural History Museum and later designed the Trees of Knowledge on the south side of the Knight Library.

"He poured an extra amount of work into them," Lotte said. "I think there is a tradition of copper gargoyles. I'm not for sure — it's just a feeling."

There are two components to the art program.

Integrative art is incorporated into the architectural structure of a building and includes tiling and stained-glass windows.

"It's best when they're thought

of before the building actually commences," said John Rose, an artist and an art selection committee member for the William W. Knight Law School. "The idea of integrating is that you integrate early rather than later."

Removable art is pieces that can be hung or placed after the building is completed.

"It's an aspect of the removable collection — that a collection can be ongoing," Rose said. "So the art doesn't — boom — go in, and that's it."

Jane Gordon, law school associate dean, said this year will be the first year that the University will try to set aside a "seed" fund so that art can continue to be purchased and added to the collection.

"I am really grateful and appreciative that we have the 1 percent for art program," Gordon said. "It's adding a more beautiful building to the campus."

Artists

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percent of a new building's budget should be used for public art.

Art can either be integrated into the structure of the building or consist of freestanding pieces such as statues or paintings.

"I'm a real advocate for art as architecture," Thompson said. "The reason I do this public art thing is I like to do nice work in prominent places."

Thompson has been manipulating metal for the past 28 years. In the campus area, he designed the metal work outside the Excelsior Inn on 13th Avenue and an internal panel of a man in a riverboat for Rennie's Landing.

He said steel is his favorite metal to work with.

"It's forgiving," he said. "It's cheap. Very available. There's a lot of industrial scrap."

Thompson said he felt limited by fabrication, the modern method of metalsmithing, after making ornamental iron such as gates and fences for 10 years.

Now he combines modern tools with the old-fashioned practice of heating metal, bending it and pummeling it with a power hammer.

"If I were to revert back to the ancient methods, I could get any shape I wanted," he said. "It's like total freedom with your material — like a clay artist. The possibilities are really endless if you want to train yourself in the ancient methods."

Thompson's original idea for 12-foot pillar-style lamps was tossed out in favor of the box lanterns from preliminary drawings by Yost Grube Hall Architects. The firm felt they would fit better beneath the concrete-cast laurel leaf archway above the main entrance.

"The bottom line is you're working for the architect and the client," in this case, the University, Thompson said. "Once they're drawn on paper, that's it — the fun's over and it's just work from then on. It's more fun to forge and let the shape come out. You're not fighting the material you're working with, and it always comes out better."

Thompson said now that a lamp design has been agreed

upon, it's just more drilling and screwing.

"I have no interest in wood-working, like if you cut it too short you have to throw it away," he said. "It's not like metal where you could weld some on or taper it, bend it ... but it's cold and dirty."

Alec Holser, the projector designer and a University graduate, said the art adds life and interest into a building.

"It's really more artist-directed than architect-directed," Holser said. "You're going to like some artwork and not going to like others, but that's the beauty of art."

Anne Storrs, a Portland cast-concrete artist, said artists could propose anything from creating something new or making improvements to an aspect of the building already in the plans.

"I pulled something out and said, 'I can make this more interesting,'" she said.

Storrs' moldwork can be seen in the laurel-leaf pattern found on the archway above the main entrance.

Holser said the Oregon public art program is well-run with the help of the Oregon Arts Commission.

"I think it's a great program," Holser said. "It's really a model for other programs across the nation."

Jane Gordon, law school associate dean, said the goal was to avoid the starkness in form and for the law building to be warm and welcoming.

The artists "had a strong architectural sense of the building before they got involved," Gordon said.

"Oregon has a reputation for being very good at giving out commissions to all different types of artists," said Peter Mollica, a stained glass artist from Berkeley, Calif. "The art can give a little bit of detail that most modern buildings don't have."

Mollica said sometimes art can greatly improve structures.

"I think there should be art in everything, like highway guard rails," Thompson said. "Little bits of artsy things make life interesting. That's what life's all about."



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