



GREENWICH *Decorative Arts* SOCIETY

April 2019

Dear Members,

Spring has arrived in Greenwich and as we celebrate Easter and Passover I know our thoughts have turned to the fire at Notre Dame where for the first time in nine hundred years Easter service will not be celebrated.

In the days since the fire, friends have been sending me photos and memories of their visits to Notre Dame. I know that our GDAS friends, particularly with your love of art and history, were profoundly affected by this loss.



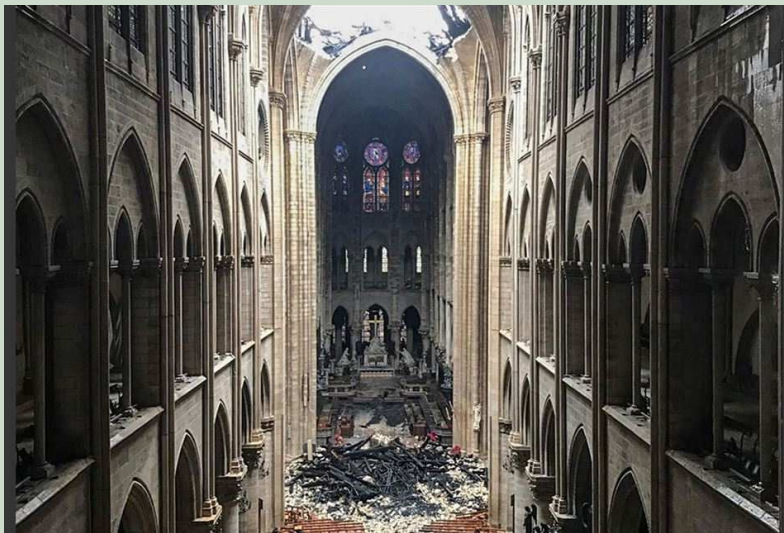
I was hopeful and amazed to hear of the work of renowned architectural historian, the late Vassar College professor Andrew Tallon. Tallon, who died of cancer on November 18, 2018, pioneered the use of laser technology and advanced imaging techniques and built a digital model of Notre Dame. His work with images captured by the drone-borne, 360-degree spherical cameras he deployed at the 800-year-old cathedral continued until his death.



The late Associate Professor of Art Andrew Tallon, pictured at work scanning the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. *Photo: Craig W. Stapert*

In a publication following his death, the Society of Architectural Historians said Tallon “was esteemed worldwide as an innovative scholar of French Gothic art and architecture, one who introduced new digital techniques to the analysis and re-creation of the spatial archaeology of medieval buildings. In all his work, he was an inspired and generous educator who brought the past to life in vivid and meaningful ways.”

As news of the tragic fire spread throughout the world, engineers and architects alluded to Tallon’s unique, inch-by-inch analysis of Notre Dame as they discussed the daunting rebuilding project in the media



A picture taken on April 16, 2019 shows an interior view of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in the aftermath of a fire that devastated the cathedral.

Professor Tallon exemplifies the wonderful scholars we honor at GDAS, whose works inspire and uplift us.

If Tallon's "scholarly work can somehow inform those who will be taking on the daunting task of restoring a cathedral to its former glory, it will be a fitting memorial for a very wonderful scholar who devoted so much to Notre Dame," said Vassar dean Jon Chenette.

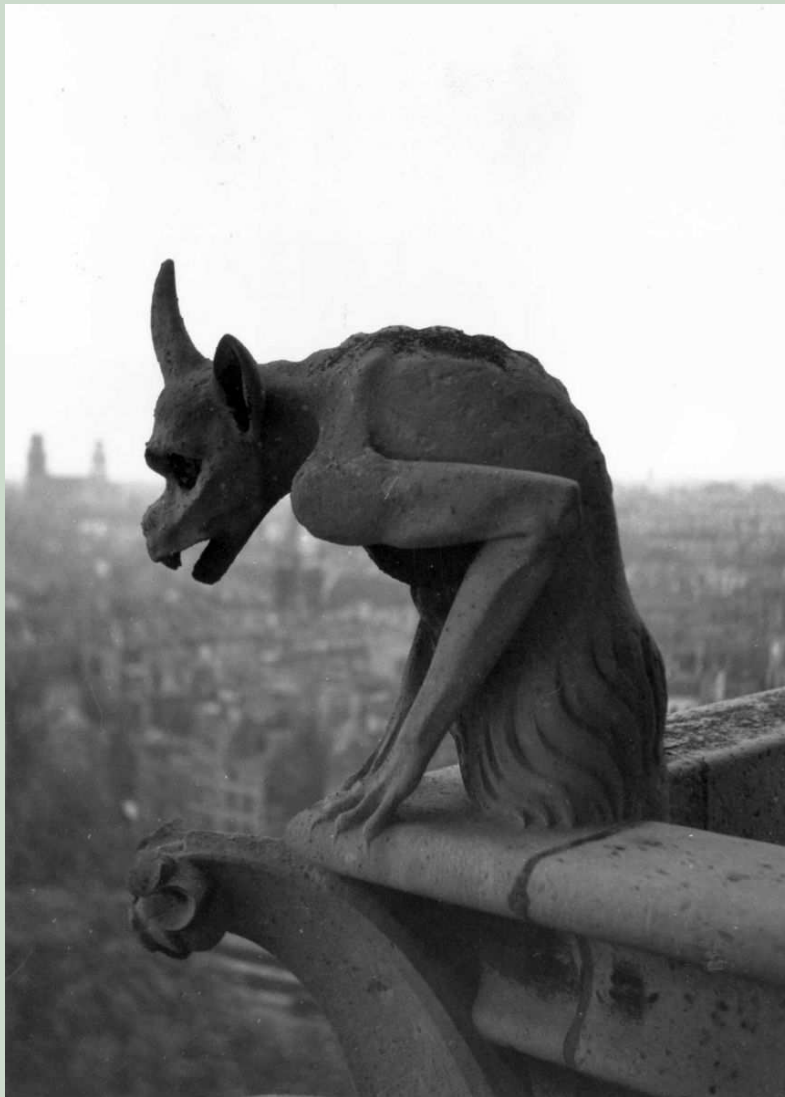
goes beyond the status as house of worship—it symbolizes the Judeo-Christian enlightenment of the West and the long wrought values of liberty, tolerance and rational enquiry.



I have always had a fascination for the gargoyles of Notre Dame. Think of the history these mesmerizing, mythological, half-human, stone figures on its roofs have witnessed: these gargoyles gazing outward.



The Vampire, a salt print by Charles Negre of a man with a gargoyle on Notre Dame cathedral, 1853.



Originally they served as drainpipes but their purpose was to scare away anything that might imperil those inside. These fantastic bestiaries kept demons and evil forces away from the sacred walls.



They witnessed and survived the French Revolution, two World Wars with 20th century bombing and warfare, a Victorian restoration and now a heart-breaking fire.



I read that on the Pont au Change bridge, which connects the Ile de la Cite with the Right Bank, the atmosphere changed from shock to one of a vigil as hundreds of people watched in hushed silence and then many began quietly singing "Ave Maria" in Latin.



The famous spire collapsed dramatically around 7:15 GMT

Tolkien: Maker of Middle-earth

The Morgan Library & Museum

Through May 12, 2019

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." With these words the Oxford professor J.R.R. Tolkien ignited a fervid spark in generations of readers. From the children's classic *The Hobbit* to the epic *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien's adventurous tales of hobbits and elves, dwarves and wizards have introduced millions to the rich history of Middle-earth. The exhibition will be the most extensive public display of original Tolkien material for several generations.

An exhibition organized by the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford in collaboration with the Morgan Library & Museum, New York with the support of The Tolkien Trust."

Right before the fire, Don and I visited the Morgan Library and saw the Tolkien exhibit. J.R.R. Tolkien's values of love, fellowship and friendship and grasp of the conflict between the forces of light and darkness always compel. This scene of the spire burning and toppling, whole, its skeleton framed against the sky, both modern and medieval, could have been right out of his novels.





I'm connecting the thought of these trees with Notre Dame because the framework of the cathedral (known as "the forest") was mythical, it was a legend for several reasons. It was so complex that it astounded the Middle Ages.

First of all, it took 50 years to prepare the timber. They began cutting the trees, around 1,500, sometime around the year 1200.

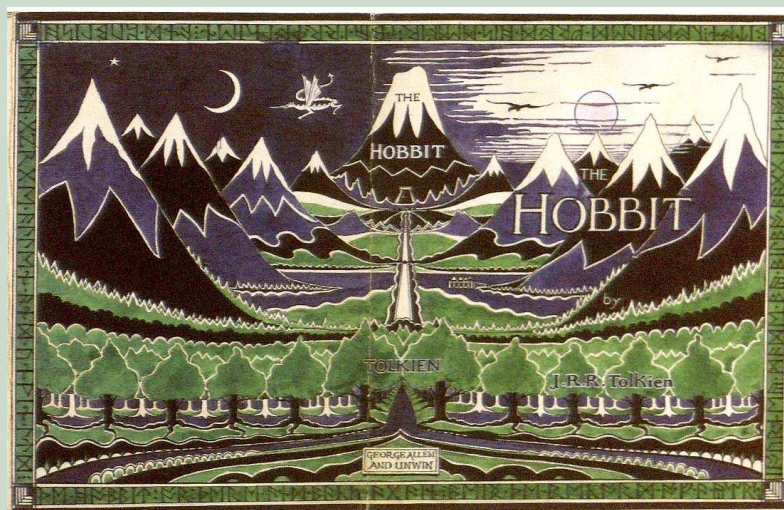
These were laid for a year with the top turned to the North to align them with the energy of the earth.

The bark was then removed and they were immersed in a swamp for 25 years to preserve the wood from fungus and insects.

Around 1225, the wood was removed from the water and the trunks were sawed into beams and allowed to dry for another 25 years.

Given average lifespans at the time, it meant that most of those who cut down the trees never saw the roof structure.

Thanks to an interview with Master Carpenter Thomas Buechi of the Charpente Concept group.



He was familiar with their use in the great cathedrals.

Both history and fantasy can tell us truths from which we can take inspiration and hope and we look to the positive.

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring



Chippendale: The Man and the Myth





Our May 6 lecture on "Chippendale: the Man and the Myth," will be an entirely different lecture than the fall one. Brock Jobe has returned from England where he lead a prestigious tour for Chippendale's 300th anniversary.

Join us with Brock Jobe, Winterthur's Professor Emeritus of American Decorative Arts, as he recounts the remarkable story of Chippendale's career and takes us on an armchair tour of grand country houses in England and Scotland that feature the master craftsman's greatest creations. Along the way, we will confront the truth as well as the fiction associated with this most fascinating fellow, Thomas Chippendale.



Brock Jobe having a moment with Chippendale in Otley.

Folly or Fantastic: Garden Art and Architecture from the Sublime to the Absurd



Our June 3 lecture will take place at the
First Congregational Church of Greenwich
108 Sound Beach Avenue
Old Greenwich CT



Lucinda Brockway, Program Director for Cultural Resources at the Trustees of Reservations, Massachusetts

I look forward to finishing up a wonderful year with the appreciative GDAS members. You make me think of two Henry James' quotes, one which I shared with you in the fall.

" It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance...and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."

And on a more personal level,

"Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."

Thank you for your kindness and support during a year of transition and changes.

Happy Spring,
Karen Handal, President
Greenwich Decorative Arts Society

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