



Figures of *Justice*

INFORMATION SHEET



Detail of the blindfolded Justice (above) from Contemplation of Justice by James Earle Fraser (right)

To the left of the steps leading to the main entrance is *Contemplation of Justice* by James Earle Fraser. In this sculpture, a seated female figure reflects on a small figure of *Justice* that she holds in her right hand (*right and detail above*). The figure of *Justice* is blindfolded and cradles a set of scales in her arms.

One of the most recognized legal symbols visible in the architecture of the Supreme Court Building is the female figure representing *Justice*, who is depicted in three sculptural groups. Portraying *Justice* as a female figure dates back to depictions of *Themis* and *Justicia* in ancient mythology. *Themis*, known for her clear-sightedness, was the Greek Goddess of Justice and Law. In Roman mythology, *Justicia* (*Justice*) was one of the four Virtues along with *Prudence*, *Fortitude* and *Temperance*.

Over time, *Justice* became associated with scales to represent impartiality and a sword to symbolize power. During the 16th century, *Justice* was often portrayed with a blindfold. The origin of the blindfold is unclear, but it seems to have been added to indicate the tolerance of, or ignorance to, abuse of the law by the judicial system. Today, the blindfold is generally accepted as a symbol of impartiality, but may be used to signify these other traits in political cartoons.



Another depiction of *Justice* is on the base of the lampposts located at the front of the building's plaza facing First Street (*right*). In these examples, a bas-relief of *Justice* depicts her with a blindfold. She holds scales in her left hand and a sword in her right. The John Donnelly studio of New York designed the lamppost bases.



Justice without a blindfold appears in one of the Courtroom friezes sculpted by Adolph Weinman. This frieze is located at the top of the west wall, at the back of the Courtroom. In this work, a robed *Justice* (*left*) is the focus of the allegorical story of the battle of ***Good Versus Evil***. Her unencumbered gaze is set determinedly in the direction of the forces of Evil, to the viewer's right. Her posture is defiant, as if ready to do battle to protect the forces of Good with her great sword. The sword remains sheathed, but her hand rests atop the hilt, ready to act should the need arise.

Above: Blindfolded Justice on the base of the lamppost of the front plaza

Left: Figure of Justice in the West Wall Frieze