



Figures of *Justice*

INFORMATION SHEET



Detail of blindfolded Justice from Contemplation of Justice.

To the left of the steps leading to the building's main entrance is *Contemplation of Justice* by James Earle Fraser. In this sculpture, a seated female figure holds a small figure of blindfolded *Justice* in her right hand. *Justice* cradles a set of scales in her arms.

Justice is one of the most recognized legal symbols visible in the architecture of the Supreme Court Building. 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* 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 ignorance to, or perhaps tolerance of, abuse of the law by the judicial system. Today, the blindfold is generally accepted as a symbol of impartiality.



Fraser's Contemplation of Justice.

Another depiction of *Justice* is found on the bases of the lampposts located on the front plaza of the building (*right*). Designed by the John Donnelly studio of New York, each base shows bas-reliefs of blindfolded *Justice* holding scales in her left hand and a sword in her right.



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.