Gargoyles for Computer Science

Two twentieth-century mathematicians have
been immortalized as gargoyles on the campus of
the University of Oregon.

In keeping with the state of Oregon’s “One
Percent for Art Initiative,” planners of a new sci-
ce complex at the University sponsored a na-
tional competition for architecturally integrated
art. Winning artists included Wayne Chabre, of
Milton-Freewater, Oregon, whose specialties in-
clude copper gargoyles. Chabre’s proposal al-
lowed building users to choose the subjects of
the gargoyles.

For Deschutes Hall, the new home of the De-
partment of Computer and Information Science,
the faculty requested images of two of the prin-
cipal contributors to the foundation of the dis-
cipline, John von Neumann and Alan Turing.

Chabre spent some months researching the
subjects, reading biographies and materials ac-
cessible to a layman and, with the help of faculty,
gathering photographs from public and private
sources.

Gargoyles representing Alan Turing and John von
Neumann adorn the southern facade of Deschutes
Hall, new home of the University of Oregon Depart-
ment of Computer and Information Science. Gargoyle
artist is Wayne Chabre of Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

Readers of the Mathematical Intelligencer may be
interested in some of the artist’s remarks on the
subjects:

Von Neumann gave me trouble as far as portraits
are concerned. I was looking at pictures of him as
an older man. His face is not distinguished but
radiates a mischievousness. I wanted that but
don’t think I quite got it. I probably spent an extra
week hammering his head this way and that. But,
if you thought too much about what’s involved in
a portrait, you wouldn’t even attempt it.

I saw Turing as kind of opposite of Von Neu-
mann. Not social, not wealthy, not as influential
in his lifetime; in fact, he had a hard time making
himself understood. But, though I am certainly
not a computer scientist, Turing seemed to have
had much more of a vision to communicate. As a
result, I identified closely with Turing. He went
easily.

The gargoyles are made of hammered copper
sheet and are each about three feet high. The
University of Oregon is located in Eugene, Or-
egon.

Eugene Luks
Department of Computer and Information Science
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403 USA