

Young Masters – Week 13 class ‘Medieval Gargoyles In Clay’ – Tutor Tony Bullock

- This lesson provides opportunities for students to create a gargoyle in clay while learning techniques for pinch/slab construction
- Learn the functions of gargoyles from an Art History perspective
- Learn about the significance and symbolism of gargoyles in Gothic architecture
- Materials: sketching paper, pencils, clay, clay tools

A gargoyle is a sculpture of imaginary beasts created during the Middle Ages as a part of Gothic architecture. The word “Gargoyle” comes from the French word “Gargouille” that means ‘Throat’ and describes a grotesque carved human or animal face. Gargoyles were located along the roof and downspouts on cathedral buildings. Their function was to drain the water away from the stone carvings on the buildings. Gargoyles have been used as architectural rain spouts since they adorned Temples in Greek and Roman times. However, as architecture progressed, these rainspouts became more and more ornate. They reached such a point that they were no longer functional and were called Grotesques. More familiar are the carved limestone fantasy creatures that topped European Medieval cathedrals in the 11th - 13th centuries, such as Notre Dame in Paris, France. They were created fierce and fantastic looking to serve a purpose of protecting and guarding role to scare away evil spirits. Medieval artists created their gargoyles based on animals they had observed, combining human and animal features, exaggerated characteristics like eyebrows, lips, and wrinkles, and used their imaginations to create creatures, which would inspire fear and obedience.

