

Greetings from the Executive Director



As I reflect on this past season, I can't get one image out of my mind: Daniel Chester French's Studio filled with a circle of young sculptors, intently studying a live model sitting in the center of the workroom, their hands working quickly and confidently to craft portrait busts in clay, each finished in a dazzling array of styles within just four hours. The sculptors were selected by application to participate in the Richard McDermott Miller Modeling Competition, a highlight of the National Sculpture Society's annual conference, which was held at Chesterwood this past June. One participant reflected on working in French's Studio: "I felt a certain gravity pulling me to every corner, demanding that I give it my attention, to the marble, plaster, and clay." A theme emerged as I spoke to the competitors afterwards, they all felt like they were in a dream the entire time and they all shared a sense of purpose in honoring the art of sculpture in their own way. The energy generated from the creativity in the room was palpable, and I am quite certain Daniel Chester French was with us the whole time.



Richard McDermott Miller Modeling Competition, National Sculpture Society Annual Conference, June 2022

For those of you who couldn't join us for the premiere of the documentary, *Daniel Chester French: American Sculptor* at the majestic Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington this past May, the film is now available worldwide through academic and public libraries. Just ask your local librarian how to access the Alexander Street streaming platform. I caught up with the film's creator Eduardo Montes-Bradley recently and he is currently working on a film about the Piccirilli Brothers – the famed Italian immigrant family that carved French's seated *Abraham Lincoln* for the Lincoln Memorial as well as hundreds of additional monuments for French and other artists. We are thrilled that the Piccirilli are being recognized for their important and invaluable role in bringing French's plaster models to marble.

It's hard to believe that it has now been over three years since the publication of Harold Holzer's full-length biography, *Monument Man: The Life and Art of Daniel Chester French*. The hard cover edition has gone through two print runs and is becoming a scarce find, so I am happy to report that plans to publish the book in paperback are underway. We look forward to continuing to share French's story with the world.

As the season closes, it is with enormous gratitude that I acknowledge all of you - members, Arts Alive! program sponsors, documentary film underwriters, and artists who fill the site with creativity and beauty, be it in sculpture, dance, poetry, music, or theatre – for bringing your passion and supporting the preservation of French's home and Studio. I look forward to seeing you all next season!

With all best wishes,


Margaret Cherin

Interim Executive Director | mcherin@chesterwood.org

Curatorial News: *The Lincoln Memorial Illustrated* goes to the Concord Museum

If you missed *The Lincoln Memorial Illustrated* at the Norman Rockwell Museum this past summer, there is another chance to see it at the Concord Museum, in Concord, Massachusetts. On view until February 26, 2023, the exhibition explores the planning and construction of the Lincoln Memorial through illustrations, archival material, and sculptural elements from Chesterwood's collection. Also included are illustrations, paintings, and political cartoons that incorporate Lincoln and the Memorial as symbolic elements. The Concord Museum has many works by French on view in the recently renovated galleries, including the plaster maquette of the Melvin Memorial, on loan from Chesterwood. Concord is also home to French's *Minute Man* at the Old North Bridge, the monumental, seated *Ralph Waldo Emerson* at the Concord Free Public Library, and the marble *Melvin Memorial* in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. While there you can also visit Daniel Chester French's grave. Daughter Margaret French Cresson designed the grave marker, which features a laurel wreath festooned with carving tools and the words "A Heritage of Beauty." It's tradition to leave a pre-2010 penny on the marker, with the side showing the Lincoln Memorial face up.

– Dana Pilson, Curatorial Researcher and Collections Coordinator



The Melvin Memorial, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, MA



A tableau vivant of Sandro Botticelli's Cestello Annunciation

In Memoriam



Longtime supporter and Chesterwood Advisory Council member, Helga S. Orthofer Kaiser, passed away after a brief illness in September 2022. Helga was very active in the art and cultural community of the Berkshires. She designed her own modern studio adjacent to her Stockbridge Federal-style home, where she painted for over thirty years, specializing in still-life work. A volunteer and supporter of many cultural organizations, Helga delighted in bringing people together for lively discussions about art, culture, and a range of other topics. The Helga S. Orthofer Memorial Fund has been established by Chesterwood with donations from family and friends to honor Helga's creative spirit and passion for life. The Fund will annually award an honorarium to a painter-in-residence at Chesterwood to create art in the same place that inspired Daniel Chester French's public sculpture and portrait paintings. The Fund will be endowed so that its support can continue to grow over time. A tax-deductible contribution payable to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation/ Helga S. Orthofer Memorial Fund can be sent directly to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, 800 North Main Street, Sheffield, MA 01257-9503 or donate online at www.berkshiretaconic.org.

The Lillian Heller Sculpture Endowment



Lillian Heller working in Italy, c. 1990

Soon after Donna Hassler began her tenure at Chesterwood she realized that the annual contemporary art show needed more support to grow. My family suggested that we create an endowment in the name of my mother-in-law, Lillian Heller, who was a sculptor and loved Chesterwood. Working with Chesterwood's parent organization, the National Trust, we established the "Lillian

Heller Sculpture Award" which provides an honorarium to one participating artist each year. My family is proud to underwrite this fund to encourage and support contemporary artists working at Chesterwood. We are grateful to Donna for helping us make this happen.

– Anita Heller, Chesterwood Advisory Council Emerita

Donna Hassler named Director Emerita

Donna Hassler, who retired from her position as Executive Director of Chesterwood in June, has been named Director Emerita by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in honor of her fourteen years of tirelessly championing Daniel Chester French out into the world through her support of a new biography, a ground-breaking documentary, scholarly publications, and many exhibitions. Congratulations Donna!

Mastering the Art of "French Family" Cooking

As the weather turns cooler and nights grow longer, try Mary Adams French's family recipe for French Peasant Soup. It's hearty and warming, and perfect with a thick slice of sourdough bread and a green salad. "Take four large potatoes, cut in small cubes, put in small saucepan of water with four rather short leeks or two small onions. Let them cook on back of stove until the potatoes are thoroughly cooked. Take out leeks and press the potatoes through a large meshed sieve. Season with salt, pepper, and paprika and put in a lump of butter as large as a walnut and serve." According to Mary Adams French, "this is a very economical soup."

Watch Chesterwood's Curatorial Researcher and Collections Coordinator, Dana Pilson, make this soup with Berkshire Magazine writer Ellen Spear at www.berkshiremag.com/food-features



Daniel Chester French, William Penn Cresson, Margaret French Cresson, and Mary Adams French outside the Studio at Chesterwood. Chesterwood Archives, Chapin Library, Williams College