

Daniel Chester French's Summer Home, Studio and Gardens: *A Site for Creativity* | *The Pedestal Summer 2023*

Message from the Executive Director



On May 22nd I joined Chesterwood as Interim Executive Director while the National Trust for Historic Preservation continues its nationwide search for a permanent director. Although new to this role, I am not new to Chesterwood. I started visiting in the late 1970s for the antique car shows and one year the contemporary sculpture show was up at the same time. I've come back year after year.

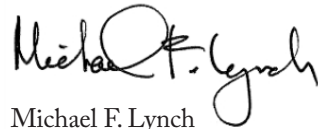
In 2014 I joined the Chesterwood Advisory Council, excited by the prospect of transforming Chesterwood into an artists-in-residence program at an operating historic site. When asked if I would join the staff here as interim director to help out during the 2023 season, I said "I love Chesterwood and I will do whatever you need."

My brief bio is as follows: I've had a fifty-year career as a restoration architect, preservation engineer, and an architectural historian. I worked for 27 years at the New York State Historic Preservation Office, most recently as Director overseeing New York's 37 state historic sites and serving a stint as Deputy State Historic Preserva-

tion Officer. Along the way I also was Vice President for Properties and Preservation at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England) and ran a private practice in New York City for ten years.

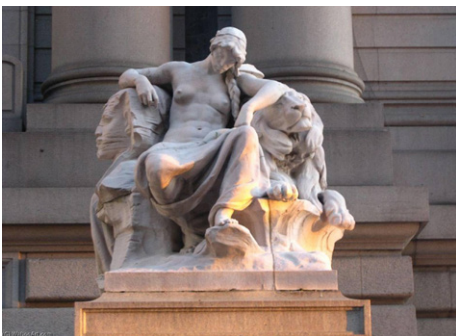
I would like to thank Margaret Cherin for her long service as interim director after Donna Hassler's retirement while also carrying on with her Senior Site Manager responsibilities. I worked with Margaret on a regular basis while serving on the Advisory Council and I know how challenging that double role has been.

We are off to a great start this season. COME SEE US. I look forward to meeting you.



Michael F. Lynch
Interim Executive Director

Casting Identities: Race, American Sculpture and Daniel Chester French



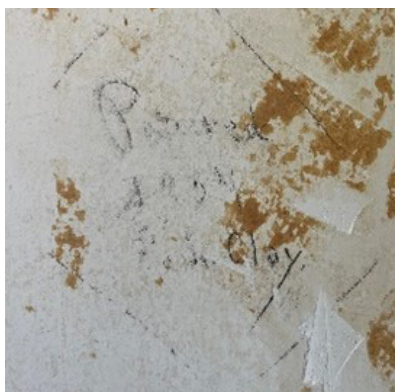
Daniel Chester French, "Africa" from the Four Continents, 1909, US Customs House, NYC



Funded by a "For the People by the People: Transforming National Trust Historic Sites through the Humanities" grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy Demands Wisdom, Dr. Emily C. Burns, Director, Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West and Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Oklahoma, worked with several of her PhD students, a national advisory committee, and a local focus group to explore the contemporaneous reaction to several sculptures by Daniel Chester French that represented period stereotypes of Black and Native American people.

The results of this study will soon appear on the Chesterwood website, which Dr. Burns previewed at a public presentation at Chesterwood on June 1st. Among the surprises revealed by this study were strong negative reactions at the time from Black and Native American critics, stories that were buried at the time by the majority-white press and art world. The study does not criticize French's aesthetic practice and creativity, but it encourages critical thinking about what the sculptures communicated then and communicate now about racial and social identities.

To the Manor Borne



Paperhanger's signature discovered on the second floor of the residence

For many visitors, the fact that the French family residence has been closed for several seasons has been a disappointment. But like a chrysalis transforming to a butterfly, what is going on inside the four walls is no less transformative. With funds from the Cultural Facilities Fund of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, matched by the National Trust, Phase IV of the Residence Renovation is well underway with a completion date scheduled for this autumn. This phase allows us to reopen the main rooms with the original furnishings, paintings and objects to tour groups next season and create three bedrooms with studios for an expanded artist-in-residence program – with one of the units fully ADA-compliant. One unexpected discovery was a pencil signature on the plaster of one of the second-floor rooms documenting the wallpaper installation by Stockbridge-based painter and paperhanger Albert L. Clay in 1954 – an interior design upgrade by French's daughter Margaret French Cresson who lived in the residence until 1973.



Sculptor Ron Mehlman with *Translucent Hours*

Special Exhibition: "Create to Free Yourself" July 29 – September 4, 2023



Georges Adéagbo *Brian Rimm Photography*

Chesterwood has invited West African sculptor and found-object virtuoso of site-specific installation, Georges Adéagbo (born in 1942 in Cotonou, Benin) to be in residence at the end of July when he will bring his transformational art to the site through a special exhibition titled *Create to Free Yourself: Abraham Lincoln and the History of Freeing Slaves in America*.

Adéagbo has long been personally intrigued by President Lincoln as an icon of emancipation, and this project explores Lincoln's legacy of liberation and creativity. The exhibition stemmed from a research fellowship about Abraham Lincoln that Adéagbo held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art (NMAA), which gave him access to the collections and the archives. The fellowship soon developed into a collaboration between the NMAA and President Lincoln's Cottage, both located in Washington, DC.

Create to Free Yourself will be recreated using the original items, along with new items specific to Chesterwood, from July 29 through September 4. The exhibition will have its third iteration at the National Museum of African Art in September 2023, after which the entire exhibition will be accessioned into the NMAA's permanent collection.

The exhibition opens with an Artist's Talk on Saturday, July 29 at 4:30 p.m., followed by a reception and live music by popular world jazz ensemble Heard. General Admission is \$25 and includes opening festivities; free for Chesterwood members and all children under 18. Reservations recommended at www.chesterwood.org/calendar

Programming: *Arts Alive!*

Arts Alive! keeps the creativity coming...

Tickets at www.chesterwood.org/artsalive

Thursday, July 27 @ 4:00pm & 6:00pm
Berkshire Pulse presents "*Spirits of Chesterwood*"

Saturday, July 29 @ 4:30pm
"Create to Free Yourself" artist's talk with Georges Adéagbo followed by world jazz collective *Heard*

Thursday, August 3 & 4 @ 5:00pm
Tableaux Vivants

Thursday, August 10 @ 5:00pm
Harold Holzer, Lincoln scholar, presents *Walt Whitman and Abraham Lincoln*

Saturday, August 19 @ 5:00pm
Amity Brass Quintet

Thursday, September 14 @ 5:00pm
Dance performance with *Garet & Company*



World jazz ensemble *Heard* performs July 29 @ 5:30pm



Kindergartners looking at the sculpture of Ron Mehlman this past June.

On view all season:

Finding the Center: Ron Mehlman at Chesterwood

21 stone and glass sculptures throughout the landscape & Woodland Gallery

Artist's Talk with Ron Mehlman
September 24th at 2:00 pm

Finding the Center is supported by the Lillian Heller Sculpture Endowment

Renew your Membership | Make a donation |
Buy an Artist's Pass (\$45) | www.chesterwood.org