

# Cover Artist's Statement

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L I L Y   D E A R D O R F F \*

## I. JUSTICE

This work is inspired by many of the public displays of Justice in Manitoba including Augustus Vincent Tack's mural in the Manitoba Legislative Building<sup>1</sup> and Gordon Reeve's kinetic display *Justice*<sup>2</sup> outside the Manitoba Law Courts at 408 York Avenue embodying the scales of justice. Within the Canadian legal tradition *Lady Justice* has been an enduring symbol. She is often depicted as a blindfolded, sword-wielding, toga-wearing, balance-scale aficionado.

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<sup>1</sup> See "Inside the Assembly: Manitoba Legislative Building" (2021) at 19, citing Augustus Vincent Tack, Mural: *The Tack Allegory*, (Winnipeg, MB: Legislative Building, 1920), [online: <gov.mb.ca/legislature/visiting/docs/insidetheassembly.pdf>](https://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/visiting/docs/insidetheassembly.pdf) [perma.cc/5N3M-HQW6].

<sup>2</sup> See Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, "Buildings" (2024) citing Gordon Reeve, Sculpture: *Justice*, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: 405 York, 1985) online: [winnipegarchitecture.ca/justice](https://winnipegarchitecture.ca/justice) [perma.cc/4YCV-384W].

Her blindfold was a later (satirical) addition which is conventionally interpreted to signify her impartiality.<sup>3</sup> Many recent interpretations challenge this aspect of her character.<sup>4</sup>

In many of the depictions I encountered while working on this piece her sword is usually a straight double-edged European longsword, drawn and presumably ready to administrate justice swiftly. Her attire, or lack thereof, has also changed through the years but is conventionally a clean and well-folded toga.<sup>5</sup> It should speak volumes of her meticulousness.<sup>6</sup>

Her scales were an established symbol long before she was conceptualized. They easily trace back to the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*.<sup>7</sup> They are still the single essential element of “justice” as a visual concept.

As a personification, she is often *Justicia* in Rome and *Dikē* in Greece. Her portfolio is often in the laws and morality of human civilizations. She is usually depicted as being youthful and slender (like her sometimes sisters *Pax/Eirene* and *Eunomia*) in contrast

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<sup>3</sup> Desmond Manderson, “Blind Justice” (2020) 66:1 McGill LJ 5 online: <canlii.ca/t/7hxtn> [perma.cc/HF2C-84RY] (identifies that the symbol of blindfolded Justice gained popularity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, after publication within Sebastian Brant’s *Ship of Fools*); Albrecht Dürer, “Image 186 of Ship of Fools: The Blinding of Justice” in Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools* (Germany: 1494) online (illustration): <loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl\_08973/?sp=186&r=0.685,-0.022,2.371,1.497,0> [perma.cc/K5YH-5NFK].

<sup>4</sup> The Lady Justice Initiative, “About” (last visited 3 July 2024) online: <ladyjusticeinitiative.org/> [perma.cc/2NN7-CYCW] (depicts justice reaching up to hold a dove of peace); Maypole of Wisdom, “Must Justice be Blind?” (2023) online: <maypoleofwisdom.com/2023/06/21/must-justice-be-blind/> [perma.cc/53]7-7HMQ].

<sup>5</sup> Lucas Cranach the Elder, “Allegory of Justice” (1537), online (oil panel, 72 x 49.6 cm): <wikiart.org/en/lucas-cranach-the-elder/allegory-of-justice-1537> [perma.cc/A4R2-DGHH].

<sup>6</sup> History Skills, “In ancient Rome, the toga was more than clothing” (last visited 3 July 2024) online: <historyskills.com/classroom/ancient-history/roman-toga> [perma.cc/3H4M-E4KW].

<sup>7</sup> P Le Page Renouf & E Naville, eds, *The Project Gutenberg eBook of Egyptian Book of the Dead*, (2023) at c CXXV, Plate XXXII, Papyrus, Musée?] du Louvre, III, 89, online (e-book): <gutenberg.org/files/69566/69566-h/69566-h.htm> [perma.cc/R3Y7-PBR7].

from her sometimes-mother Themis (who holds the divine laws as her own portfolio). If Aratus is to be believed, Justice grew tired of human greed and left to become the Virgo constellation.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this, she still seen presiding outside many courthouses in statues and façades. She still stands upon the desks of law professors, sometimes brandishing a pen. In Robson Hall, she is easily spotted in the third floor stairwell in the two large stained-glass panels that once illuminated the old law courts building.<sup>9</sup> This piece asks the question, “what would it look like if Lady Justice lived through the COVID-19 pandemic?”

Would she still be holding those old scales, or would she embrace something more modern?

Would her sword still be unsheathed, or would it be collecting dust in a closet?

Perhaps, she would mask-up with the rest of us.



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<sup>8</sup> Theoi Project, “Aratus, *Phaenomena*” (last visited 3 July 2024) at para 96, GM Mair, transl, online: <[theoi.com/Text/AratusPhaenomena.html](http://theoi.com/Text/AratusPhaenomena.html)> [perma.cc/J6PL-ZYSF].

<sup>9</sup> See “Public Art at the University of Manitoba” (last visited 3 July 2024) citing Robert Bell & Robert McCausland, *Stained Glass: Blind Justice* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Robson Hall Faculty of Law 3rd floor, 1893), online: <[valmesta.wordpress.com/art1/](http://valmesta.wordpress.com/art1/)> [perma.cc/9MVC-63ZW].