



Renewing the Flame

By Richard Seth Hayden and Thierry W. Despont

At the view of the harbor of New York, the definite plan was first clear to my eyes . . . in the pearly radiance of a beautiful morning is revealed the magnificent spectacle of those immense cities, of those rivers extending as far as the eye can reach. . . . In this very place shall be raised the Statue of Liberty, grand as the idea which it embodies, radiant upon the two worlds.

Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, 1885

Bartholdi's true genius resides in his vision upon first entering New York harbor: his selection of Bedloe's Island as the site for the statue was and remains flawless.

As Bartholdi saw the harbor, so it is today. The mornings still have the same pearly radiance, the immense cities offer an even more magnificent spectacle, and the rivers are still endless to the eye. Going to and from the statue, one is struck by the beauty of the harbor and exhilarated by the Manhattan skyline, whether it is basking in the early-morning sun, reflecting the glory of the sunset, or aglitter in the night. The majesty of the bridges, the grace of the ships still move us. The tantalizing power of the elements, whether one is shrouded in fog, sprayed by mist, or blown by the winds, is a welcome greeting when departing the everyday world and heading for the statue.

It is a wonder that the creators of the Statue of Liberty could have accomplished their dream, exacting in its design, execution, and assembly even by today's standards. Their achievement is our inheritance.

As the latter-day colleagues of Bartholdi, Eiffel, and Richard Morris Hunt, the American architect for the pedestal, our job was merely to finish the work they began more than 100 years ago. To restore the statue properly, we had to be thoroughly familiar with the thoughts of her creators.

Our reaction to the harbor helped us. We still feel as Bartholdi felt, see as he saw, and sense what he sensed about the ultimate significance of his work enhanced by its setting. The harbor is part of our common experience—an experience that transcends time.

Reigning over America's most lavish Independence Day celebration since the bicentennial was the newly refurbished Statue of Liberty. Alumnus Richard Hayden, who directed the restoration, shares the events and emotions of the project in a new book, *Restoring the Statue of Liberty*.

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Dedicated to an ideal, not to the memory of battles or conquests, the statue has grown over the years to represent our most cherished values. She now symbolizes our nation, the land of liberty.

For the 17 million immigrants who passed her as they made their way through Ellis Island, she was and remains most special. The statue was their first vision at the end of a long and often grueling journey, and she held the promises of their dreams. This vision was passed to their children and their children's children. The statue's spirit has gone beyond the harbor.

The wonder of the statue is that while she represents America, she has become a universal symbol, transcending national boundaries, an image common to all people. Bartholdi used his mother's strong and stern facial features as the model for the statue. But the statue represents more than just a female image. The artist has imprinted the icon with a meaning that reaches deeply into the human unconscious: a comforting mother figure, demanding yet protective, a symbol of human aspiration. More than any other monument, the statue will remain as a testimony of our civilization for future generations.

The same dedication and hard work that guided all those who labored 100 years ago to build the statue and to give reality to their dream caught the nation again. From all corners, people volunteered their time or gave donations for the restoration of Liberty.

This great and generous nation as conceived by the founding fathers is as strong today as it has ever been. We are fortunate to witness a time when Americans are reveling in a renewed patriotic mood.

Throughout the project we were guided by a force that we couldn't see or touch. When the task at hand seemed almost impossible and the problems insurmountable, somehow the spirit of the statue always carried us along. Often enough at the end of a



There was no better place for Richard Hayden to contemplate the scope of his assignment than from the scaffolding that surrounded the statue for nearly two years (far left). The most visible aspect of his work was removal of Liberty's original flame (middle) and its replacement with a modern successor, shown with restoration workers moments before it was lifted into place (near left).

long day a child's query, "What did you do today?" and the answer, "I worked on the Statue of Liberty," were enough to renew our determination.

The statue's symbolism influenced many decisions. The helical staircase stays as part of the collective experience of millions. The upraised arm was repaired in place to avoid lowering it, even if temporarily. Whenever we climbed the scaffold, we felt her presence.

Our work would not have been complete without reflection. While reminiscing, we savored the friendships made and the camaraderie. The restoration was the epitome of a team effort. Very rarely does one feel like sharing the evening after spending a whole day working together on a project, but we often ended up around a dining table. We shared each other's cares and worries and bolstered each other's determination.

We will miss the morning boat rides, the late-night suppers, the good times and the bad. But we will remember. The flame alight in the harbor burns brightly within each of us. We see it in our dreams.

We did not have the usual feeling of creation on this project as when designing a building. We also did not have the usual feeling of loss at its end. The statue will always be ours because she belongs to everyone. And, hopefully, she always will.

Some structures are mute, some talk, some sing. We took one bursting with song and made it sing out even more. We have restored the statue's health without tampering with her dignity. And we are grateful, proud, and privileged to have contributed to her immortality.

Her torch is raised; her scaffold is down. Our work is done; we have handed back the keys. As the doors open on her second century, the Statue of Liberty is as strong in body as in spirit.

She is alive and well, gracing New York harbor. She welcomes as never before all those who want to share in her dream.