



## Gargoyles, 'Creepy and Cute'

"The Monsters of Wall Street" is not an exposé of predatory capitalism. Rather, it's part of a Web site about Amelia Wilson's fascination with New York City gargoyles, those decorative, often grotesque human and animal figures on buildings.

Ms. Wilson, 30, a Web site developer in Manhattan, has taken pictures of them with a home video camera and put the images on the site, with commentary. "I like that gargoyles are creepy and cute at the same time," she said.

Ms. Wilson first became interested in gargoyles as a girl, during visits to the American Museum of Natural History on

Central Park West near 81st Street. She started noticing the gargoyles on the museum and on nearby buildings.

The word gargoyle comes from the French *gargouille*, meaning throat, a reference to gargoyles' early function as spouts projecting from gutters to carry rainwater away from the roofs of cathedrals. Why gargoyles took on their distinctive shapes is unclear, but one theory is that the figures were an attempt by the early church to incorporate elements of pagan animist religions to win converts.

**WHAT YOU SEE** Monster tours of Wall Street as well as Gramercy Park and the Upper West Side. But Ms. Wilson especially likes Wall Street. "The streets of lower Manhattan are insane and amusing," she writes. "I find it rather funny that these oh-so-serious financial folks are racing about on former cow paths with silly ornamental owls and jaguars perched over their heads. And they don't even know it."

Ms. Wilson's favorite Wall Street monsters are at 55 Liberty Street, where there are more than a dozen near the top of the building. She is especially fond of one gargoyle who looks like a demonic Santa's elf.

"He's up very high, I like his expression, and I like that he wears a hat," she said. Recently, she said, she received E-mail from another gargoyle fan who said this particular gargoyle had put a curse on his stocks.

Another favorite spot is 56-58 Pine Street. "When it comes to architectural details, my two favorite things in the world are suns and green men. Well, I was practically jumping up

and down (O.K., small confession, I actually was jumping up and down) when I saw these two little connected buildings on Pine Street."

But Gramercy Park also has particular charm. "If I had the money," she writes, "I would live at 81 Irving Place just on principle. Whoever designed this building was my kind of person. A monster kind of person."

These "smirking little devils" wrap around the corner of Irving Place at eye level, "like a gang of New York street urchins watching and waiting for mischief to happen their way," Ms. Wilson writes.

**LINKS** A score or more, including one for the Gargoyles of Princeton University (<http://www.princeton.edu/Mapfiles/gargoyles>) and a link to a Chicago gargoyle sculptor, Walter S. Arnold (<http://www.stonecarver.com>).

**WHAT YOU GET** The next best thing to clambering the roof of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris to ponder the gargoyles.

ANTHONY RAMIREZ

### The Monsters of Wall Street

THE TOUR COVERS SOUTH STREET TO CITY HALL

20 William Street



This building was originally spited from Broadway. I don't know whether these ironing, brooding heads remind the score of the figures on Easter Island, or the American Express centurion, but they certainly were winging enough to make me take the detour down William Street to investigate.

The streets of lower Manhattan are insane and amusing. They're really just impossible little alleyways that one suspects started out as cowpaths, and now they're lined head to toe with huge, self-important buildings that block out the sun. And during the business week there's the shuffle of suits and the rush of money and everything is so terribly serious. I find it rather funny that these oh-so-serious financial folks are racing about on former cow paths with silly ornamental owls and jaguars perched over their heads. And they don't even know it. But I walked down William Street on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, and the sidewalks were empty, and all that were left were the buildings themselves, standing still and patient for me to examine them at leisure.



### THE MONSTERS OF WALL STREET

<http://www.aardvarkelectric.com/gargoyle/wallst.html>