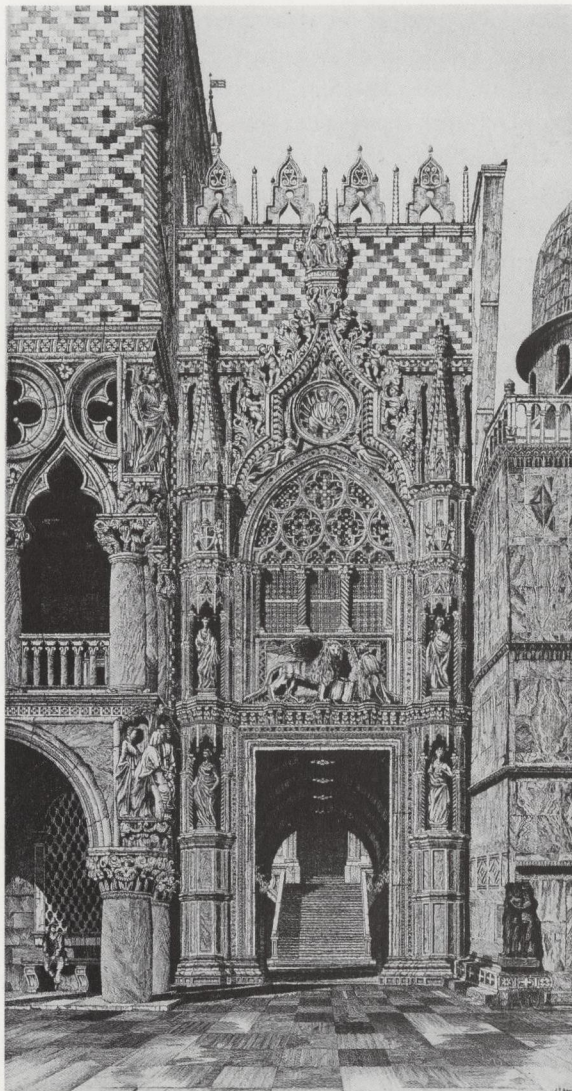


*La Bella Venezia*, 1930 (F.232, fig. 43), stands in dramatic opposition to *The Enchanted Doorway*. Instead of the visual excitement of nonstop patterning and geometric games, *La Bella Venezia* presents from across the San Marco Canal a subdued yet unerringly detailed panorama of Venice around the Piazza San Marco. A careful examination of the print reveals not only the towering Campanile, but to its right the two stone columns dedicated to St. Mark and St. Theodore, the gateway and enormous clock of the Torre dell'Orologio, the intricately arcaded Doges' Palace, and the domes of the Basilica of San Marco beyond. Arms recognized the abstract potential of buildings along the shoreline and turned the sequence of structures into a horizontal pattern activated by the variations in roofline and facade treatment. Western convention would have led Arms to situate this horizontal band low in the picture plane and allow the sky to fill the remainder of the composition. Arms ignored convention and, as in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, tipped the scene's perspective, flattened the sense of space, and daringly placed the line of buildings across the upper third of the plate. As the line of buildings crosses the side edges of the plate, it locks itself into position, allowing the top of the Campanile to approach the top margin with tantalizing closeness. Unlike *Venetian Mirror* and *Reflections at Finchingfield, England*, in which the precise

**Figure 41**  
*Le Puy*, 1928  
 Etching  
 9¾ x 13⅛ in.  
 (24.8 x 33.2 cm)  
 Gift of Richard H.  
 and Helen T.  
 Hagemeyer, 1991  
 (21,163)







**Figure 42**  
*The Enchanted Doorway, Venezia*, 1930  
 Etching  
 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.  
 (32.1 x 16.8 cm)  
 Gift of Richard H. and Helen T. Hagemeyer, 1990  
 (20,850)

delineation of reflections is an important component in the careful depiction of the sites, Arms allowed the mirroring effect of summarily suggested faint reflections to reiterate the abstract horizontal patterning of the buildings. He also played the flat expanse of toned and relatively unmarked paper against the visual weight of the buildings. In this image of elegant understatement, Arms cleverly manipulated space, design, and perception.

*Venetian Filigree*, 1931 (F.235, fig. 44) represents a continuation of Arms' experimentation with design, abstraction, and perception. The print depicts the Ca' d'Oro, one of the most frequently depicted and photographed palazzi in Venice.<sup>33</sup> The "Golden House" is famous for the intricate and delicate tracery which, now bare of ornamentation, was originally gilded. Arms expressed the richness of the facade with masterful precision, creating an extraordinary breadth of tone through linework alone. In this luminous image of shuttered doors, darkened balconies, and silent reflection, Arms emphasized the palazzo's rich repetition of pattern and cursive design.

He pressed the facade against the picture plane and allowed it to fill the plate to the exclusion of its surrounding context. In this way, Arms all but eliminated from the print the third dimension and emphasized the flat abstract patterning of the facade. The reflections in the water connect seamlessly with the design of the facade, reinforcing the abstract two-dimensionality of the print. The design is so bold, so flat, and so abstract that the image starts to become disturbingly disorienting. Which way is up? What is real and what is reflection? What is real and what is illusion? The composition calls into question the fundamental premises of the image and the viewer's perception of it.

From 1920, the year in which Arms published the first print in the *Gargoyle Series*, to 1952, when he completed the last works in the *English Series* and *French Church Series*, Arms created 126 major plates celebrating the heart and soul of Gothic architecture. Throughout his life, he responded with reverence and awe to the physical beauty of the structures, their "grandeur of scale, beauty of proportion and abundant wealth of detail."<sup>34</sup> He also was moved by the power of their mystical essence. To Arms, Gothic architecture represented "the most spiritual and significant expression of his aspirations

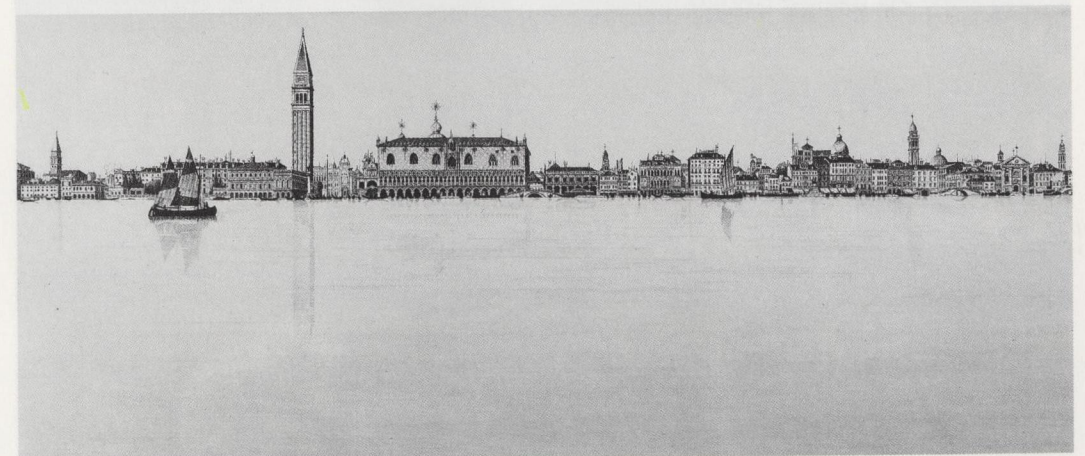
that man has yet created in terms of stone and glass and metal."<sup>35</sup> His deeply felt identification with the truth, beauty, and spirituality of medieval times led Arms to create a large body of work characterized by extraordinary technical merit, sincerity of effort, and emotional depth. In an autobiographical statement composed in 1930, at a time when his printmaking was first reaching its greatest power, Arms paid tribute to the source of his creativity and summarized his printmaking hopes. Although he wrote only in terms of his work in France, the meaning of his words hold true for his other European architectural subjects:

*I have followed [Gothic structures] from one end of France to the other; I have worked in the shadow of their magnificent portals and climbing apses; and always they have given me fresh inspiration and renewed resolution to interpret, in so far as my limited power will permit, the imagery of their beauty.*<sup>36</sup>

As a printmaker, Arms worked for his own personal satisfaction and as an act of reverence, a means of expressing his faith in the divine. Arms also felt what he considered a larger purpose, an obligation to his fellow human beings. He wished to share with them the joy, the sense of peace and continuity, the spiritual refreshment that he experienced on the contemplation of his subjects. In an essay titled "Credo," Arms commented that works of art are:

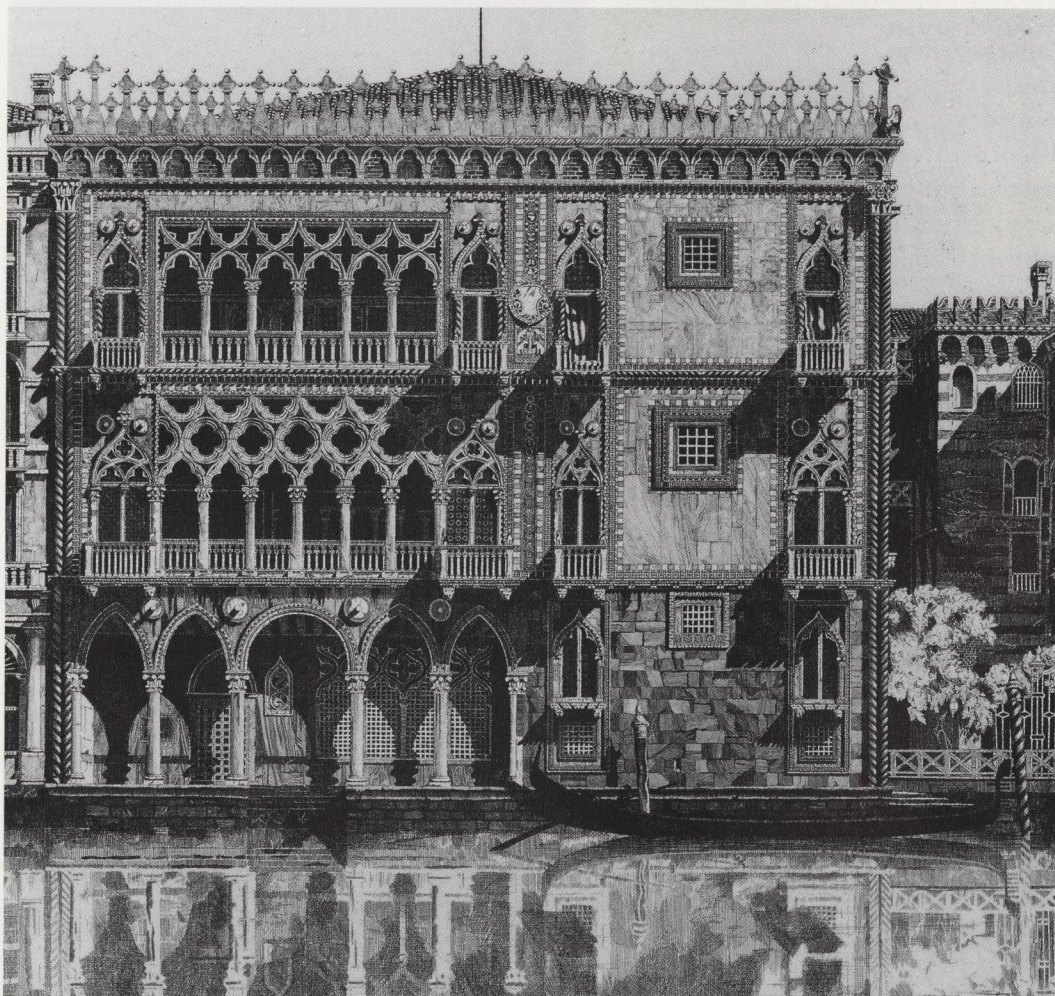
*not mere representations, or even interpretations, of places, people, and things, but, in the last analysis, the innermost thoughts, the most poignant feelings, of their creators, expressed in terms of line and tone and color.... [My works] are the concrete expression of my emotional and intellectual being, of heart and mind, and of the creative force which transforms the concept into tangible form. Each is a message from me to you, the effort not only to tell you of the architectural beauty of some great church...or the natural loveliness of a bit of countryside, but, more important to me at least, the feelings I have experienced in the contemplation of these things. They will possess meaning, interest, and merit, in your eyes just to the degree to which I have been able to convey, and you to receive, this message.*<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 43**  
*La Bella Venezia*, 1930  
 Etching printed in brown ink  
 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
 (18.4 x 41.9 cm)  
 Gift of Richard H. and Helen T. Hagemeyer, 1990  
 (20,853)





1. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [pp. 4–5].
2. John Taylor Arms, *Gothic Memories, Etchings and Drawings* (New York: Wm. C. Popper & Co., [1938]), [p. 3].
3. *Ibid.*, [p. 4].
4. *Ibid.*, [p. 6].
5. *Ibid.*, [p. 5].
6. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, "Dictionary of Architects, Artisans, Artists, and Manufacturers," in *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1986), p. 423.
7. See New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *In Pursuit of Beauty, Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*.
8. Bassham, *John Taylor Arms*, pp. 5–6.
9. Arms etched the thirteenth plate in the *Gargoyle Series* in 1929 and the fourteenth in 1947.
10. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 4].
11. As an ironic twist to the history of Notre Dame and Arms' depiction of it, it is interesting to note that its gargoyles were a nineteenth century addition by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. A French architect, engineer, and archaeologist, Viollet-le-Duc led the restoration of numerous Gothic structures, including the Cluniac abbey at Vézelay and Paris' Notre Dame. As an architect himself and fully steeped in the history of Western styles, Arms was no doubt familiar with the work of this proponent of medieval architecture. Perhaps Arms approached his representation of Le Stryge with a smile, recognizing a nineteenth-century act of Gothic Revivalism much in sympathy with his own interests.
12. For a detailed discussion of Arms' *Gargoyle Series* and gargoyle imagery by Cameron, Meryon, and Pennell see S. William Pelletier, "The Gargoyle Images of John Taylor Arms," *Print Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Sept. 1990), pp. 292–303.



**Figure 44**  
*Venetian Filigree*,  
 1931  
 Etching  
 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11 in.  
 (27.3 x 27.9 cm)  
 Gift of James Jensen  
 and Jennifer Saville  
 in honor of Richard  
 H. and Helen T.  
 Hagemeyer, 1993  
 (24,081)

13. Bassham, *John Taylor Arms*, p. 7. In addition to introducing dots to create tonal effects, Arms also began to rely on patterns of repeating dotted lines to lend inflection to areas of texture, pattern, and tone.
14. Arms, *Exhibition of Drawings, Including Work in Yucatan and Mexico*, [pp. 2–3].
15. Dorothy Noyes Arms and John Taylor Arms, *Churches of France* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929); Dorothy Noyes Arms and John Taylor Arms, *Hill Towns and Cities of Northern Italy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932).
16. Arms described how he created an etching in a series of three articles published in late 1940 and early 1941: "John Taylor Arms Tells How He Makes an Etching, Part 1—Preparation of Plate," *American Artist* 4, no. 12 (Dec. 1940), pp. 14–16; "John Taylor Arms Tells How He Makes an Etching, Part 2—Drawing On and Etching the Plate," *American Artist* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1941), pp. 10–12; "John Taylor Arms Tells How He Makes an Etching, Part 3—Printing," *American Artist* 5, no. 2 (Feb. 1941), pp. 13–15.
17. Journal of John Taylor Arms, dated Seville, Sept. 10, [year not recorded] (John Taylor Arms Papers, 65:19–20, AAA).
18. *Ibid.*, dated Seville, Sept. 11, 65:20.
19. *Ibid.*, dated Seville, Sept. 12, 65:21.
20. *Ibid.*, dated Palencia, Oct. 27, 1932, 65:385.
21. Arms and Arms, *Churches of France*, pp. 50–51.
22. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 4].
23. Arms, "Self Estimate," p. 10.
24. The title of the work reflects Arms' dedication of the print to his mother-in-law on its publication in 1939 after her death the preceding year.
25. Warren Wheelock, "John Taylor Arms: Modern Mediaevalist," *Art Instruction* 3, no. 2 (Feb. 1939), p. 18.
26. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 2]. See also Arms, "Self Estimate," p. 7; John Taylor Arms, "Credo," in *Selected Examples from Thirty Years of Etching, John Taylor Arms*, exh. cat. (New York: Kennedy & Company, 1945), pp. 7–8.
27. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 5].
28. *Ibid.*, [p. 2].
29. Arms, "Self Estimate," p. 9.
30. "New Exhibitions of the Week, J.T. Arms: Twenty-One Years of Drawing," p. 16. See also Watrous, *A Century of American Printmaking*, pp. 80–81.
31. Arms, "Self Estimate," pp. 8–9.
32. Letter from John Taylor Arms to Carl Zigrosser, dated Fairfield, CT, Sept. 12, 1941 (Carl Zigrosser Papers, 4613:743, AAA).
33. For instance, Ernest Roth etched *Ca' d'Oro* in 1913 and Donald Shaw MacLaughlan created his version, also known as *Ca' d'Oro*, in 1922. Even Arthur Wesley Dow diagramed the facade of the palazzo in his discussion of rectangular designs in his art instruction book. See Arthur Wesley Dow, *Composition*, p. 41.
34. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 4].
35. Arms, "Self Estimate," p. 10.
36. Arms, "John Taylor Arms," [p. 5].
37. Arms, "Credo," pp. 6–7.

