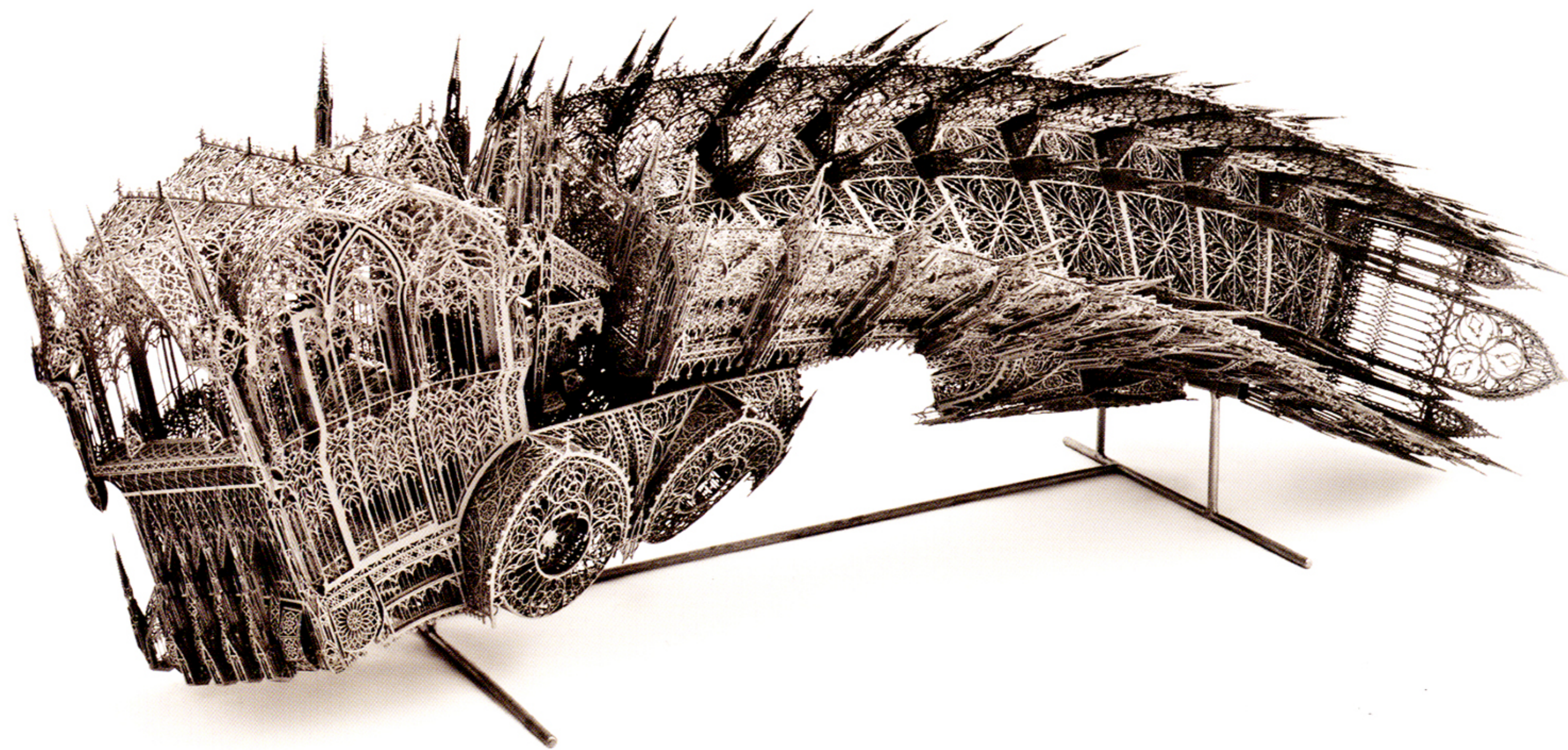


# WIM DELVOYE



Gothic has been called many things: the epitome of grotesque, the essence of spirituality, the embodiment of liturgy, the abandonment of classical, the clarification of a structural problem, and the French style subsequent to the Romanesque, which rose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Starting in 2001, a contemporary Belgian artist, Wim Delvoye, began to call Gothic his own. With works ranging from small-scale cathedrals, painted ironing boards, and uncanny stained-glass windows to imposing freestanding metal towers, Delvoye has added his own definition to a style that has eluded and entranced scholars for centuries.

Prominent within Delvoye's Gothic oeuvre are his life-size construction machines adorned in Gothic decoration made out of laser-cut steel. In these works, he marries small and large-scale pieces to create monuments of everyday objects.

Gothic is employed as the raw material, the substance from which the sculptures are made. Thus, unlike the "decorated" machines where it is the truck that is first evident, in these steel machines, one perceives the historicizing decoration along with the object itself. "Functional, industrial machines that are not supposed to be ornamented, 'become spiritual' and dissolve into highly detailed replicas, but ones in which only the outlines, the articulation of the parts and the silhouette of the machine are true to reality, while inside it is not the machine that is presented,

but the logic of the graphical system itself, unfolding freely and completely." In these objects, it is not the truck, or model that dominates the senses, it is the "Gothic." The object has evolved from a utilitarian object into shimmering lattice in space.

In Delvoye's metal machines, "materiality dissolves into structure, decoration dissolved into the substance: the structure becomes geometry—a regular play of lines, and the substance becomes intangible—glass, light." Delvoye is parodying the Gothic in a more profound way with these sculptures than with the earlier set. He is perverting the style in a complex way, instead of simply decorating the surface of the object. It is also evident in these machines that he is looking directly at Gothic examples.

With its mathematical symmetry and skeletal tracery, Delvoye's stainless steel *Twisted Dump Truck* is a hybrid vehicle combining the architectural and mechanical, the divine and secular, the feminine and masculine. Deriving its composite parts from cathedrals, the work evokes the representation of divine harmony and cosmological order in Gothic architecture and conveys both lightness and density. At the same time the work suggests a struggle between the greater glory and power of God and the unrelenting (and destructive) potential of mortal ingenuity, might, and godly ambition.

Courtesy Patricia Low Contemporary

*Twisted Dump Truck* (Counterclockwise,

Scale Model 1:5), 2011

Nickel-plated steel; laser-cutting

27 9/16 x 78 3/4 x 31 1/2 inches (27 x 200 x 80 cm)

Courtesy Patricia Low Contemporary, Gstaad/St. Moritz

Photography Studio Wim Delvoye