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NOTCHING ANOTHER UNESCO SITE

By Dennis Barrett

UNESCO gathered eight Frank Lloyd Wright buildings together as a World Heritage site in 2019 (1). I visited my sixth of them, Taliesin West, late last year (The Arts and Crafts Messenger v. 25, no.3), and was considering my seventh, the Hollyhock House in Los Angeles, when an invitation to participate in a memorial service in the L. A. area provided the opportunity.

The Hollyhock House (Fig. 2) was built in 1921, on a hill looking down on Hollywood Boulevard, for Aline Barnsdall, when she inherited a fortune from her father, an oil magnate. Because her favorite flower was the hollyhock, Wright abstracted the hollyhock, and renditions of it are everywhere, in cast stonework, art glass, furniture and textiles; and it gives its name to the house. The hollyhock is a tall plant (Fig. 3), with flowers sprouting from the single stem, often in pairs. Thus the Wright version of the hollyhock, as seen in the dining room chairs (Fig. 4) can also be seen as a spinal column with vertebrae, probably a frequent



*Fig. 1.
Front door lock.
The keyhole, at
the top, can be
hidden by the
brass fixture,
here half-way
drawn.*



Fig. 2. Hollyhock House in Hollywood, from the West. Note the sloping walls, and cast-concrete Mayan-like ornamentation.

UNESCO (cont.)



Fig. 3. Hollyhock flowers growing in the garden complement the stylized hollyhocks of the architecture.

rueful interpretation by those constrained to sit in the chairs, which appear elegant, beautiful ... and supremely uncomfortable.

After planning my trip, I moved my departure flight forward a day to escape a snow storm threatening Denver, and encountered only sunny weather in Southern California. Wright likewise seized the opportunity of a commission in sunny California to escape the harsh winter, in Wisconsin. He would develop contacts in the Phoenix area later in the 1920's, and move the whole Taliesin Fellowship annually to Arizona for the winter starting in 1937. Whether he was feeling the cold more keenly, in his early 50's, or whether he merely resented the heating bills in the Wisconsin winter, he was certainly seeking warmer climes.

A first look at the Hollyhock House certainly engenders a "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore" moment! The Southern California surroundings had a really major influence on Frank Lloyd Wright. He had always incorporated nature into his designs - one of the

three attributes cited in the UNESCO inscription is, "The design of the buildings in this series is fundamentally rooted in nature's forms and principles." But now in California he moved away from the Prairie Style, so popular in the Midwest, to reflect both the milder weather and the cultural heritage of his new surroundings. Whereas he had used nature in his designs, now he could also create contiguous indoor and outdoor living areas, to make a "half house, half garden, as a California house should be."

Culturally, as Wright looked at the history of the Southwest, and the pervasive Spanish influences, he rejected the Spanish in favor of indigenous cultures that pre-dated the colonial era. Echoing Mayan slanted walls, Wright's upper walls in the Hollyhock House slope slightly backward, at 85° rather than 90°. And repeated indigenous motifs (Fig. 5) decorate walls both external and internal. The cast-concrete ornamentation relates to the dense patterning of Mayan façades of the 7th century. Wright had been a fan of the Mayan civilization since boyhood, and had no doubt seen the cast of a Mayan temple entrance that figured in the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.



Fig. 4. Dining room, with Frank Lloyd Wright chairs in foreground. Wright intended to design everything for the house, but Barnsdall used her own furnishings everywhere except in the dining room and living room. Living room furniture was stolen when the house was unoccupied, and has been replaced by good copies, so this dining room furniture is the only original Wright stuff left.

UNESCO (cont.)

Wright believed that the flat roofs of the Pueblos rather than the sloping Spanish roofs were functional in dry Southern California. He made extensive use of roof terraces, again blurring the difference between indoor and outdoor living.

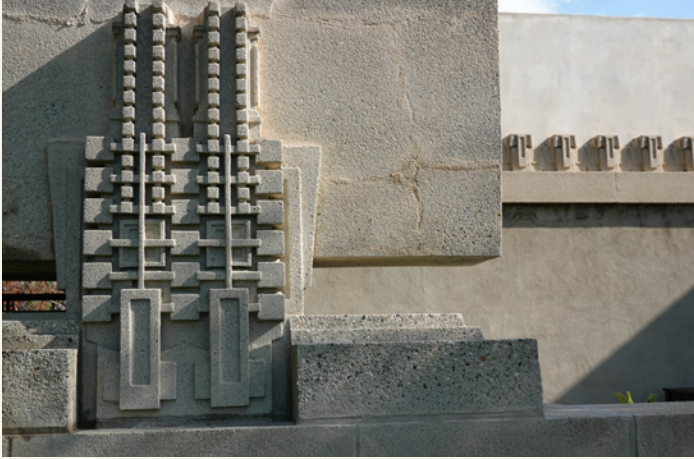


Fig. 5. Mayan motifs. The house has been described as 'Mayan Revival.'

Aline Barnsdall quarreled with Wright often, as the Hollyhock House was under construction; communication was sparse, as Wright was spending most of his time on the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, and Barnsdall too was often travelling. Eventually she dismissed him from the project! We don't know whether she was happy with the structure, but she spent very little time there. It is indeed sunny most of the time in L.A. -- but when it rains, it pours! Then flat roofs may be less appropriate than sloped ones. The Hollyhock House quickly developed leaks, and maintenance costs were high. Only six years after its completion, the City of Los Angeles accepted the House as a gift (and Barnsdall had been trying to hand it off for a while before it was accepted.) But she chose to live in one of the two smaller residences on the property until she died there in 1946.

Through much of the 20th Century Hollyhock House was rented to unworthy tenants, or even boarded up. After the Northridge earthquake did serious structural damage in 1994 it underwent major repairs, and subsequent restoration, completed only in 2015... four years before it was designated a World Heritage Site.

When you visit most Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, you can tour only in a group, with a tour guide – and

the tour guides are often excellent, but sometimes not. The Hollyhock House is noteworthy because there are no tours; you are on your own, to move at your own speed and take the rooms in any order. There are plenty of docents in attendance, both knowledgeable and engaging, but they don't disturb you; you have to approach them. In other sites it is often forbidden to take photographs; here it was allowed when I visited, on an experimental basis. From what I can see on the website, that policy is still in effect. I tried to be very careful not to bother other visitors with my clicking; maybe others have done similarly.

After their relationship had improved, Wright told Aline Barnsdall of the Hollyhock House, "The building stands. It is yours for what it has cost you. It is mine for what it has cost me... and it is for all mankind." Amen to that (though these days we would say 'humankind.')

Because I had an engagement in Pasadena, a suburb of Los Angeles, I stopped by Frank Lloyd Wright's Millard House, which he built in Pasadena in 1923. The house is inhabited and cannot be toured, but the bit that's visible from the street (Fig. 6) is fascinating enough. The Millard House was the first of Wright's "textile block" houses. They are constructed of concrete blocks, not textile at all, but with an external surface so richly worked as to resemble a brocade. Again the idea of a Mayan temple is evoked, as in the Hollyhock House built two years earlier. The Millard House was completely rejected by critics when it was built, and has steadily increased in estimation since. It is now considered one of the 10 best structures in the L.A. area, comparable to the Greene & Greene masterpieces in Pasadena.



Fig. 6. The Millard House in Pasadena.

Footnote: 1. The eight buildings, described as "places of profound influence, inspiration, and connection." are: Unity Temple (1908), the Frederick C. Robie House (1910), Taliesin (1911-1925), Hollyhock House (1921), Fallingwater (1939), the Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House (1937), Taliesin West (1937-1959), and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959).

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA'S SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

By Tina Strauss, CACS Board member and
Director of the VSA Chicago Summer School program

The Victorian Society in America offers three outstanding Summer School programs. All three programs include an emphasis on the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The London Summer School, the oldest and longest running VSA Summer School program, is going into its 48th year. The program examines the history of British architecture, design and interiors from 1837-1914. The dates are June 29-July 14, 2024. The program begins in London and travels to Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester. The participants will also explore William Morris's Kelmscott Manor. Day trips include visits to Oxford and Surrey. Other sites will be visited, as well. The program director is Kit Wedd, with assistant director Anne Mallek.

The 42nd annual Newport Summer School program, directed by Richard Guy Wilson and assistant director Edward Bosley, runs from May 31 to June 9. Students are housed in a dorm on the campus of Salve Regina University, among the cottages of Newport, steps from the famous Cliff Walk. The classroom is on the Salve Regina campus, as well. The students will visit many of the notable cottages in Newport and other public sites and private homes. Field trips include visits to Providence, RI and North Easton, MA.

The 8th annual Chicago Summer School program runs from June 12 to June 19. This program explores the American roots of Modernism, beginning after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 through the period of early 20th century architecture by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. The students will see the Auditorium Theatre, the Art Institute of Chicago, The Rookery, the site of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Glessner House and the town of Pullman, among other sites. Also included are visits to private homes. In 2024, the program will devote a day to touring the iconic examples of Modernism designed by Mies van der Rohe,

including the Farnsworth House. Guest lecturer Richard Guy Wilson will accompany the class to many of the sites.

Included below is an essay written by a participant in the 2023 Chicago Summer School program, Megan Carleton. Megan is an interior designer with Strada, an architecture firm in Pittsburgh. Megan was eager to participate in the Chicago program and was concerned about how the program could possibly cover so much information in 6 days. Please read her comments for a unique perspective on the Chicago program.

For more information on all three Victorian Society Summer School programs:

victoriansociety.org/summer-schools

Anne Mallek, Summer Schools Administrator
508.205.9873

Admin@VSASummerSchools.org

Applications are due March 1, 2024

Scholarships available to qualified applicants



VICTORIAN SOCIETY OF AMERICA CHICAGO SUMMER SCHOOL 2023

By Megan Carleton

In June of 2023, I had the privilege of attending the VSA's Summer School program in Chicago, where we delved deep into the city's rich history and architecture. Through a variety of insightful lectures, fascinating tours and memorable site visits, the program immersed me in world of Victorian Chicago.

As someone new to the city, I appreciated beginning the course with a brief history and overview of how Chicago was formed, and how this impacted the growth of architecture in the city and beyond. Understanding the growth of industry (meat, lumber and grain), access to transit and the railroad, the advent of the city grid, as well as the topography gave me a greater understanding of how the loop and waterfront of Chicago was developed.

I appreciate the range and breadth of knowledge of the lecturers that taught throughout the program. Topics ranging from the World's Columbian Exhibition and building technology, to Impressionist art and department stores provided variety and depth to the lecture series. I learned a lot from these lectures and found it particularly interesting to learn about Marshall Fields and how the development of department stores (and the wealth it created) influenced architecture and design in the city. Through some of the lectures there was an attempt made to include women's roles at the time, but I would have like to have seen more of a focus on historically significant women and their contributions to the Victorian era in Chicago.

In addition to the lectures, there was a nice variety of types of spaces and sites that we toured. One of my favorite stops was Crab Tree Farm, a dairy farm turned museum and artist collective in Lake Bluff. Crab Tree Farm was both an unexpected and amazing addition to the summer school. Seemingly out of place, it felt like we had traveled to a both a different time and country. The impeccably maintained grounds (along with some errant peacocks!) served as a bucolic backdrop

to the amazing American and English Arts and Crafts furniture and decorative objects, tucked away in each of the different buildings designed by Solon Beman. We also had the opportunity to visit the impressive workshop of contemporary woodworker, Mike Jarvi, whose masterful steam bent wood furniture seemed right at home in the old dairy farm.

I also especially enjoyed the visits to the private homes we toured during the summer school. An interesting juxtaposition of historic Victorian architecture mixed with modern day living proves how timeless these types of buildings can be. Exploring the many Frank Lloyd Wright homes in Oak Park, including a tour the Laura Gale house (which seems to be a precursor to Fallingwater) provided an interesting contrast to the homes we visited that were museums, un-lived-in and untouched.

This was my first trip to Chicago, and it was a memorable one. I joined the summer school program to learn more about the city itself, its rich history and architectural significance, and of course, historic preservation. In my current role as an interior designer at a firm that does a fair amount of historic preservation work in the city of Pittsburgh, this enriching experience renewed my passion for preserving my city's historically significant buildings.

The program also provided me the opportunity to network with a diverse group of other like minded individuals who share a common love of architecture and history. Engaging with the other students was an important part of the program for me, as these new contacts will serve as valuable resources in the future.

This transformative experience allowed me to see more of Chicago that I thought possible in a week's time. I will value this time spent experiencing Chicago through the lens of the Victorian era, and I would highly recommend this program to others with a love of preservation and interest in architectural history.

THE VICTORIAN HOUSE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS

By Beth Bradford

This is the final installation of this 4 part series.

Week three sees Abby as the project leader for the transformation of the dining room. Rod is assigned the design of a set of firedogs (andirons) inspired by a set from Ernest Jimson with a carnation motif. Bryony and Niamh are teamed up to design and assemble the curtains inspired by a Walter Crane curtain. Stephen and Ilsa are to create a set of William de Morgan inspired

decides to make nine plates to increase the chances of success. Stephen gets advice from Keith, the pottery expert and judge. Unfortunately, after



One of Stephen and Ilsa's torinos



Rod's firedogs

tondinos (small ceramic plates in an Italian style). Rod has the assistance and advice of a blacksmithing expert to create the wrought iron firedogs' structure. He designs the decorative brass front panels but is frustrated with breaking the light saw blades in numerous attempts to cut the intricate design. Ilsa and Bryony are called in to help cut the front panel designs.

Stephen and Ilsa's collaboration on the set of three tondinos has Stephen creating the pottery using the kick-wheel and mixing the glazes. Ilsa provides the plate decoration. Since Stephen has never created a plate in his limited pottery experience, he has a sharp learning curve. He

throwing many samples and choosing his three best plates, he leaves the rest outdoors during a rainstorm, destroying the soft clay forms. Additional problems ensue with the glazes of the remaining three.

Neither Bryony nor Niamh have any experience with textile design but they collaborate smoothly on the design of the curtain motif. Niamh suggests that since Walter Crane was an influential socialist,



Hanging Bryony and Niamh's Bread and Roses inspired curtains

HOUSE (cont.)

the curtain design should reflect that. The poem Bread and Roses, written by James Oppenheim and published in 1911, was inspired by an American suffrage activist, Helen Todd. The line in the poem "Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses." is in keeping with the Arts and Crafts ethos. The design is painted on a full-scale graph paper for transfer to the traditional mill and weaving of the textile. Once the material is complete and returned to the house, the fabric is cut, seamed, lined, headered, and hemmed to form the curtains.

During the week, Stephen leads an early-morning yoga session. Abby writes a song using his harmonica and guitar to go along with the planned post-judging crafter's theatrical performance of Edward Lear's The



Stephen's gesso panel of a rat, wheat, and an angel

Owl and the Pussycat. After providing their design to the mill, Bryony and Niamh assist in the collection of honey from the beehives for the crafters to enjoy with their afternoon tea. After the reveal, the week ends with the crafters' theatrical performance of the Owl and the Pussycat.



Detail of Abby and Naimh's lithographed and embroidered magazine cover

Week four is an amalgamation of projects for the communal indoor and outdoor spaces. There is no project manager and the team is split into three working teams. Rod and Stephen are assigned a mirror inspired by one designed by Edward Barnsley, the son of Sydney Barnsley. Bryony and Ilsa are tasked with creating a weathervane similar to one designed by C.F.A. Voysey. Abby and Naimh are to publish an Arts and Crafts



Bryony and Ilsa's wrought iron, steel and copper weathervane

HOUSE (cont.)

magazine comparable to *The Studio* magazine. Finally, the entire group is tasked with creating a pergola for the entrance of the house.

Rod and Stephen need Abby's help to cut the dove-tail joints of the mirror's wood frame. Rod designs a frame topper of marquetry inlay of wood, bone, and ceramic cabochon with an iris bouquet motif. Stephen works on creating a hand-washing jug and bowl to display beneath the mirror. Stephen is overwhelmed and Keith provides him with a pottery master class to educate and encourage him in his efforts. Stephen creates a bowl and two glasses.

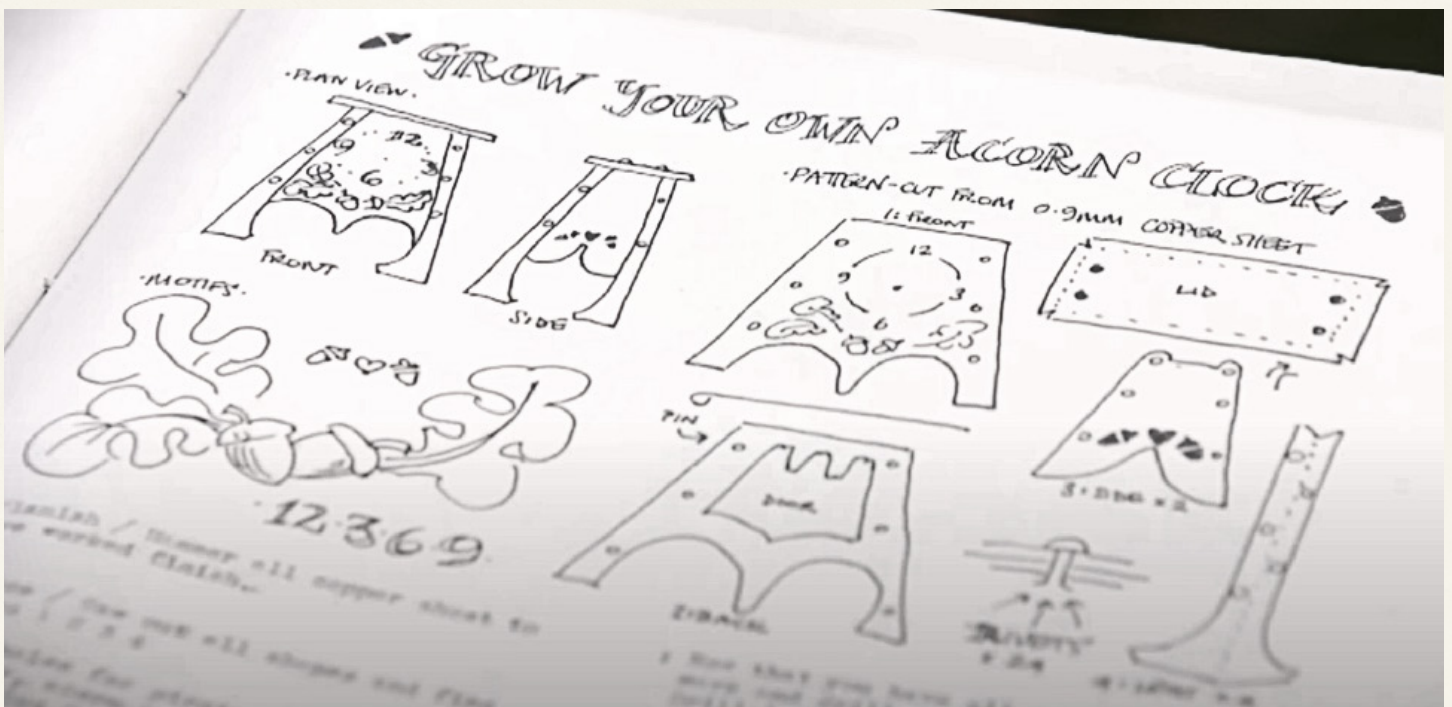
Bryony and Ilsa collaborate on an eagle's nest design for the weathervane, each linking the eagle with memories their mothers' strength and support. They work with the blacksmithing expert to create the wrought iron structural base with a three-dimensional curlicue design to invoke the swirling wind. The arrow, designed by Ilsa, is based on a Welch lovespoon. A lovespoon is a decoratively carved wooden spoon traditionally presented as a gift of romantic intent. The winged

copper eagle is the three-dimensional topper to the weathervane.

Naimh takes the writer's role in developing the magazine contents while Abby designs the cover art and provides sketched portraits of each of the crafters to go with their interviews.



Detail of Bryony's hammered copper clock



Detail of magazine page showing construction drawings of Bryony's hammered copper clock

HOUSE (cont.)

All the crafters discuss the magazine's editorial outlook at breakfast and come to agreement. The lithography expert helps Naimh and Abby in printing the magazine. The preparation of the cover's lithography stone takes approximately five hours. Naimh assembles the magazine pages using a saddle stitch. As a finishing touch, Naimh embroiders bits of the leaves and flowers on the magazine's cover.

Abby takes the lead on the pergola design and with the group's approval proceeds with cutting the wood frame structure. Every crafter helps in



Detail of Niamh's bedspread embroidery



Detail of Rod and Stephen's marquetry inlay mirror frame topper



Ilsa's motto mural surround tile



The formal reception following the completion of the month-long creative commune

creating copper leaves for decoration of the pergola. Ilsa enlists Keith to help with the pergola assembly.

The last day at the creative commune ends with a formal reception, dancing, and fireworks.

I think this series is worth your time if you are interested in the Arts and Crafts movement. Its format has some obvious problems: the one-week time constraints, the expectation that a craftsman proficient in one art form will be exceptional in an unrelated and unknown form, and most egregiously, the naming of a winner picked from the week's three assigned creations. There were many beautiful pieces of art created but there were also a few outright failures. The successes were wonderful to see, especially when they were the result of the crafters' collaborations. Most, but not all successes, came when the crafter was familiar with the object's material and the processes used to create. Surprisingly, some of the greatest successes came from when the crafters were assigned an object that required them to use materials and processes which were totally new to them. The amount of thought that went into the design of each object varied but in the best cases the crafter made intentional ties to the Arts and Crafts ethos and in addition to the crafter's personal story.

Niamh's introduction to the magazine she and Abby created provides a fitting summary to the month-long crafters' experience. "What a strange thing to put six strangers in a house with strange tools and strange materials and hope that they thrive. Through rain and sun we've come together, in such unexpected ways, and here, together created such beautiful works of art. I hope that you, dear reader, will find this publication not only useful in a practical

sense, but also in a way to understand how artists brains work, how to think, what drives them to create. I hope that some of their passion inspires you to seek out a more creative life"



Kirkland Museum is starting two new monthly events, running through December of this year:

First Thursdays:

GALLERY GLIMPSES: CURATORIAL INSIGHTS

Starting February 1st and continuing every first Thursday of the month from 11am to 4pm, visitors will have the opportunity to engage directly with Kirkland Museum's curatorial staff in an intimate and immersive experience focused on the paintings by Colorado artists on display in a single gallery.

There is no extra cost or registration required.

The first Gallery Glimpse, on February 1st, will be of particular interest to CACS, when visitors will learn about Colorado Realism in the Arts and Crafts Gallery.

Third Fridays:

ART AFTER HOURS

Starting February 16th and continuing every third Friday of the month, the Museum's doors will remain open until 7pm with a cash bar and delectable nibbles! An opportunity to revel in the beauty of fine art and design, Kirkland Museum is the perfect spot to start a weekend.

Regular admission provides access; members are free.



The Arts & Crafts Messenger, the newsletter of the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society, is published quarterly for the society's members as part of their membership contribution.

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Annual membership fees are below.

You can make your membership payment through PayPal to:
[Paypal.me/CACSmembership](https://paypal.me/CACSmembership).

Checks can also be made out to the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society and mailed to: Beth Bradford at 413 S. Humboldt St. Denver, CO 80209.

Please contact our membership chair, Helene Arendt at CACSmembership@gmail.com with any questions.

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- \$25 Artisan/Guild membership
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