



Newsletter

Review

Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo Legacy Study Tour

by Bill Bowen

On the morning of Saturday, June 10, 2006, a group of twenty-one Frank Lloyd Wright enthusiasts departed Syracuse and journeyed west, in order to experience and study in-depth two of the architect's major works in the Buffalo area currently undergoing extensive restoration. Our bus set out under typically overcast and drizzly Syracuse conditions, which might have prompted some participants to prepare themselves for a soggy day. But somewhere in our progress west of Rochester, enormous columns of sunlight burst through the clouds—greeting us—a harbinger of picture perfect weather to come.

Graycliff

To say that Graycliff is a surprise to the Frank Lloyd Wright fan seeing it for the first time is likely an understatement. Perhaps one of the Master's least known and visited works, Graycliff is in reality a thoroughly conceived composition that unfolds bit by bit, in glimpses here and there, in increasingly powerful stages, and ultimately draws one into the overwhelming totality of Wright's organic architecture.

The main house that is Graycliff is a tour de force of organic architecture. Admittedly, photographs of Graycliff published in books had appeared to these eyes less than thrilling. In reality, the house in three dimensions completely refutes any presuppositions. In Graycliff, Wright placed the Martins on a spiritual plane, overlooking a rim of the earth that abruptly and dramatically plunges to the shores of Lake Erie, some seventy-five feet below. On the day we visited, the gradation of blue color in the water, from shore to horizon line, was segmented like a triple layer cake—seafoam, cerulean, and cobalt. Mrs. Isabelle Martin, sometimes Wright's adversary during construction of the Darwin



D. Martin House twenty-two years earlier, worked successfully with the architect here to bring forth something exhilaratingly beautiful and unique under the sun.

Our docent at Graycliff took us from top to bottom, even the very bottom: those of us who wanted to explore the basement were invited to do so. She was friendly, energetic, informative, and patient with our many questions. The Graycliff Conservancy, a non-profit volunteer organization, acquired the estate from the Piarist Fathers in 1999. Restoration proceeds apace on a shoestring budget. The site was recently placed on New York State's register of historic landmarks.

Following our tour, the group enjoyed a picnic lunch in front of the Visitors' Center. The spread consisted of a vast array of goodies. Custom-made sliced wrap sandwiches from Wegman's were a particular hit with participants. Mr. Wright himself, one may imagine, would have approved of our repast al fresco, as he was well known to call for a picnic at the drop of his porkpie hat.

continued on next page

THE ARTS & CRAFTS SOCIETY OF CENTRAL NEW YORK, founded in 1994, is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to the study of the Arts and Crafts Movement through a schedule of lectures, symposia, tours, and other educational programs. Its mission is to help increase public awareness and to promote preservation of the rich cultural heritage in Upstate New York. This legacy includes the work of important architects and craftspersons and holdings in historical collections and libraries.

Review Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo Legacy Study Tour continued...

The Darwin D. Martin House Complex

We arrived at the Martin Complex at 1:30 p.m. and pulled up in front of the George and Delta Barton House of 1903. Built near the northeast edge of his large site by Larkin Company executive Darwin D. Martin for his sister and her husband, essentially as a test case so that the client could observe Wright's working methods, the Barton House stands perpendicular to and around the corner from the grander Martin mansion. The Barton House currently serves as temporary Visitors' Center while restoration/reconstruction projects on the site move forward, and also contains the Wisteria Gift Shop, consigned to the former dining room.

Just as we disembarked from the bus, our guide, the star of the show, met and welcomed us to the Darwin D. Martin House Complex. Jack Quinan, internationally recognized expert on Frank Lloyd Wright, is Martin House curator as well as author and professor of art history at the University at Buffalo. Following his introductory remarks, Quinan led us into the Barton House's former living room where we gathered around an intricately detailed tabletop model of the entire complex. Then we were treated to a rare opportunity; Jack took us upstairs to explore the second level of the Barton House, a feature not included on any of the regular tours offered. Next, Professor Quinan led us from the Barton House on a leisurely stroll past the construction site, where the pergola, conservatory, and barn have taken form and clearly move toward completion, around the corner to the famous Darwin D. Martin House.

It is not difficult to understand why the Martin House stands out as one of the finest and most famous of the architect's prairie houses, and one of Wright's own favorites. Upon entering the low, unassuming front door, one is struck by a vision of dizzying spatial dynamics—the view from the foyer through the opposite glass rear door and down the reconstructed pergola to a vanishing point that one may imagine leads to infinity. Any Wright aficionado familiar with the 1907 Clarence Fuermann photograph taken from that very spot can easily visualize the distant, ethereal outline of the nine foot high winged Nike of Samothrace sculpture that once stood, monumental and all-powerful, at the terminal of the original pergola.

On the second floor, our group was afforded access to rooms which, again, aren't ever shown to the general public. A Martin House docent who assisted Dr. Quinan with our group actually commented that she had never been in a particular space we entered. It seemed we had the run of the house. The final stop on our tour of the complex was the Gardener's Cottage located at the upper northwest corner of the original Martin lot. We



couldn't get inside, however, as Professor Quinan explained that a relative of the previous owner still resides in the house as specified by the sale agreement.

When its thirty-eight million dollar restoration / reconstruction is complete, The Darwin D. Martin Complex will stand as a source of pride not only for architecture buffs, but also for the City of Buffalo, the State of New York, the United States, and, yes, even the world. The unprecedented reconstruction of lost elements on this grand a scale symbolizes the widespread resurgence of interest in the work of America's greatest artist-architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Undoubtedly, pilgrims will come from all over the world to experience this prairie composition.

We had enough time on our way home to briefly drive by and pay homage to the two other prairie houses Wright built in Buffalo. The Davidson House is a wood frame stucco prairie gem based on Wright's design for his secretary, Isabel Roberts. The Heath House, in contrast, is a single-axis brick prairie house for the city that somehow manages to feel both forbidding and spiritual at the same time.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo Legacy Study Tour was organized by Professor Frank Morigi, longtime ACSCNY board member and treasurer, with a little help from this writer. Our Birnie bus arrived back in Syracuse just in time for dinner, and a splendid time seemed to be had by all. We look forward to discussing ideas for our next trip.

—Bill Bowen



The Rookwood Sage:

Kitaro Shirayamadani and Rookwood Pottery, 1885 -1912

Date: Thursday, 26 October
Time: 7:30PM
Location: Syracuse University
Warehouse Building
Downtown Armory Square
Speaker: Elizabeth Fowler

Kitaro Shirayamadani is best known as the Japanese decorator who worked at Rookwood. While this is true, he was also one of Rookwood's most talented and prolific artists. Coming to the U.S. in 1880s as part of a "traveling Japanese village," he came to work at Rookwood in 1887 and remained here until his death in 1948, except for a 9-year return to Japan beginning in 1911.

This lecture will look at Shirayamadani' life and career, highlighting key pieces and discussing his impact on the American Art Pottery Movement.

Elizabeth Fowler is an assistant professor of Art and Design history at Syracuse University. She recently completed her Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. Her dissertation examines the life and ceramic career of Kitaro Shirayamdani, and this research will be the basis for an international exhibition of his work that will open at the Cincinnati Art Museum in 2010. Her most recent publication is an essay titled "Le Grand Feu: Adelaide Robineau and American Art Porcelain," published in the Everson Catalogue *Only an Artist: Adelaide Alsop Robineau, American Studio Potter*.



Judy Gray

We are sad to announce that our friend and fellow member Judy Gray lost her long and courageous battle with cancer on July 25. Judy and her husband Gordon joined ACSCNY in 1999. In spite of her illness, Judy pitched right in, volunteering her professional skills as a librarian to update and maintain our membership database. Before her retirement, Judy served at the Nottingham High School Library for many years creating its catalogue and maintaining data. She also volunteered her expertise to create and maintain the school's alumni mailing list and worked on the alumni newsletter. We will miss her gentle spirit, her generous heart, and her ready smile. A memorial service is planned for 2PM on Sat. Aug 12th at First English Lutheran Church, 501 James St., Syracuse NY 13203. In lieu of flowers we are reminding people to give blood and platelets and/or send donations to The ROC Cancer Research Fund #251, 750 East Adams St., Syracuse NY 13210.



"Building with Nature:

Inspiration for the Arts & Crafts Home"

-A Book and a Talk by Leslie Freudenheim-



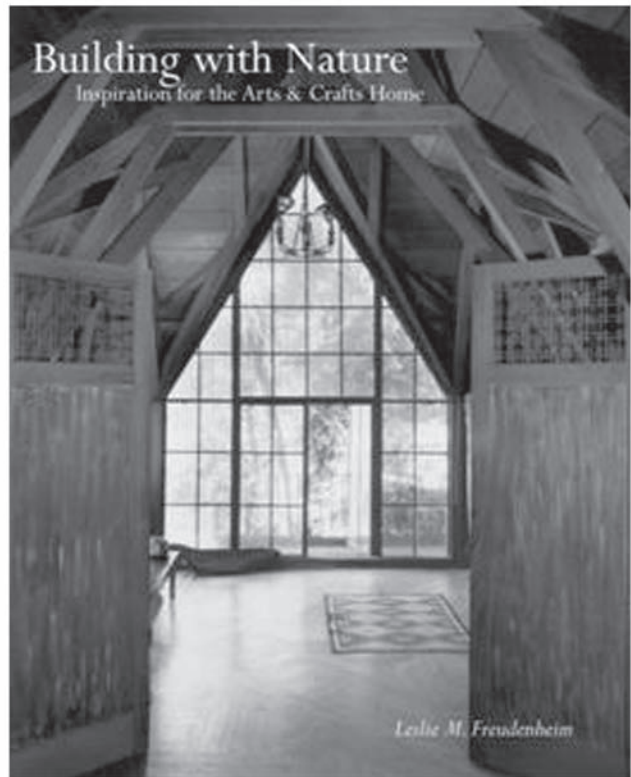
In May 17, 2006, Leslie Freudenheim came to The Warehouse, Syracuse University's new building for its School of Architecture to give a talk based on her new book "Building with Nature: Inspiration for the Arts & Crafts Home" which was published in 2005. In both her book and her talk she continued the work she and Elisabeth Sussman began in the 1970s in Berkeley, California.

These women co-authored the book "Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition" which was published in 1974. A brief comparison of the two books can be instructive. There are differences besides the subtitles.

The first book was 112 pages long with 102 illustrations and 161 notes. Its "Conclusion" section, only one page long, shows its emphasis on Bay Area domestic architecture inspired "by the land itself" partly to "separate themselves from the East" with the "will to be Californian". The architects "produced an original architecture uniquely suited to its environment". (All quotes are from page 106 of the first book.)

The new book, written by Leslie Freudenheim alone, has 229 pages with 181 illustrations and 594 notes. There is a full chapter, not just a page, of conclusions. It is called "Conclusions and Speculations: The Golden State Inspires America". In it she summarizes her thesis and its arguments on page 183: "...the initial widespread development of 'the humble cottage', advocated by John Ruskin and William Morris before 1850, was translated into 'the simple home' in northern California in 1876-8...and helped launch what became known as the Craftsman Style across America...the first society for the Arts & Crafts in the United States was established in San Francisco in 1894...and...the first Mission Style furniture was designed and made in San Francisco that same year."

The meticulous attention to detail with which she documents her arguments is very impressive. It would be hard to imagine any work more thorough. The illustrations, some of which she shared with the audience during her talk, added concrete evidence for some of her thesis. She took her audience -- and takes her readers -- on a journey from anonymous miners' cabins to houses and public buildings designed by many different architects, both amateur, like Joseph Worcester who made that first, prototypical house in 1876-8, and professional, like Bernard Maybeck, Willis Polk, Ernest Coxhead, and A. C. Schweinfurth. These architects influenced -- and still influence -- styles and movements,



known by a variety of names such as Arts & Crafts, Craftsman, Mission, Brown Shingle, and, of course, Bungalow with its own subsets.

She has indicated that she wishes to continue her research and writing which she believes will further justify her thesis about the movement of certain Arts & Crafts ideas, designs, and details of construction from West to East. With her usual detailed and well-documented work, any new book -- and talk -- should be very interesting indeed.

-Ann K.U. Tussing

was born and raised in Berkeley, California where she lived in an Arts & Crafts home designed by her mother, Katharine Gibbs Underhill, a graduate of the California College of Arts & Crafts and a neighbor and protégé of Bernard Maybeck. Ann has an A.A. from "CAL" (UC Berkeley) and a B.A., M.A., M. Phil. from Syracuse University. She lives in Syracuse in a Federal Period stone house built circa 1810-12.



AAPA in SYRACUSE

The American Art Pottery Association's 26th annual convention, held in Syracuse in late April, was a celebration of central New York's rich and varied contributions to American studio and commercial ceramic production in the 20th century. Included were tours, exhibits, seminars, a marathon auction and dealers' show and sale.

CNY POTTERS

Ezra Shales of Alfred University discussed the transformation of Charles Fergus Binns from engineer and salesman at the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works in England and Lennox in the United States to artist, innovator, teacher and "father of American studio ceramics". The School of Clay Working and Ceramics, founded by Binns in 1900 at Alfred, was the second such in the United States.

Thomas Piché jr. curated the Everson's centerpiece exhibition "Adelaide Alsop Robineau: Only an Artist". Ninety of Robineau's pieces were displayed, with almost thirty from the last three years of her life. Piché talked about Robineau's career as china painter, magazine editor and grand feu porcelain designer – the one American studio potter ranked with Europe's great early 20th century masters. Richard Zakin, research ceramist, shared important information on Robineau's technical development, ceramic materials, glaze and slip recipes, crystal and flowing matt glazes and unique approach to carved relief imagery in clay.

Maria Pascucci, Everson curator, delivered the keynote address on the Everson's one hundred year contribution to the American ceramic art movement. In 1916 the museum purchased 31 Robineau porcelains, shortly thereafter acquiring an additional 44 pieces. (At the dealers' show, a simple four-inch Robineau vase with crystalline glaze was offered at \$9600.00.) In 1932 the groundbreaking Ceramic Nationals exhibitions were established in Robineau's memory.

The history of Syracuse China and early china painters working there was presented by William Calnan, staff engineer. Richard Hirsh, a ceramist at RIT's School of American Crafts, brought us into mid-century by outlining the contributions to ceramic education made at this school inspired by the philosophies of the Bauhaus.

An exhibit of Glidden Pottery, founded by Glidden Parker in 1941 and located in Alfred Station, New York until 1956, was shown at the OnCenter. The firm specialized in commercial production for home use. Glidden potters also participated in the Ceramic Nationals and are represented in the Everson's permanent collection.

Tours included the New York State Fairgrounds architectural tile installations on buildings begun in 1908, and the Shenfeld Studio, Syracuse which has produced custom and production tile since 1998. A visit to Margie Hughto's studio gave us insight into contemporary ceramic paintings, wall reliefs and tile murals, often of architectural scale.



www.AmArtPot.org

Arts & Crafts Society of Central New York
PO Box 6035
Syracuse, NY 13217-6035

May 22, 2006

Dear Board of Directors:

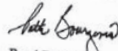
I am writing on behalf of the AAPA Board, and myself to express our sincere gratitude and thanks for your contribution to our 26th Annual Convention in Syracuse, April 26-30, 2006. The convention was a tremendous success! Our success is due in large part to your generous contributions, and those of others who volunteer their time to the AAPA. We do appreciate your efforts!

We are so grateful for the Arts & Crafts Society's monetary gift to the AAPA. Your gift covered the expenses related to the keynote presentation. The keynote is our anchor presentation, our 'kick-off' topic, which opens the convention. Marisa Pascucci delivered a wonderful talk about the Everson Museum of Art and the Ceramic National Exhibits.

The AAPA cannot adequately express its appreciation for the contributions of ACSCNY's President, Dave Rudd. His tireless efforts in the planning and execution of our event was nothing short of miraculous! He is a true professional in all of his interactions and he is the ultimate diplomat. It was my absolute pleasure to work with him over the past year. I trust you are proud to serve with him.

ACSCNY's Treasurer, Frank Morigi was also helpful to the AAPA, in serving as a volunteer at our registration desk. Thank you all for your support and your generosity during our 26th Annual Convention. We are indebted to you and hope to see work with you at some point in the future.

Regards,


Patti Bourgeois
AAPA President
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Westport, MA 02790
508-679-5910
patspots1997@aol.com

ROOKWOOD

A last minute speaker cancellation was filled by our own Elizabeth Fowler. She gave a wonderful presentation on the legendary Kataro Shirayamadani, Rookwood decorator from 1887 until his death in 1948. He brought a sensitivity to nature, detail, form and technique from his native Japan to that pottery. The AAPA president commented on what a special treat this was for their members. An exhibit of Sara Sax's painted pottery for Rookwood from 1896 to 1931, on loan from a private collector, was also at the Everson.

CELEBRATIONS

Viktor Schreckengost and Eva Zeisel, both ceramic artists and industrial designers born in 1906, are alive, well and celebrating their 100th birthdays this year with exhibits throughout the United States and new editions of their work. A slide presentation of Schreckengost's accomplishments was presented at the Eastwood Palace.

The AAPA attracted about 150 art pottery enthusiasts and an additional 50 SU art and design students. Your society sponsored the keynote address and other seminars and volunteered lots of hours.

Frank Morigi – Design, Syracuse University



From Our President

The summer of 2006 is winding down and although wet, we charted new achievements! We have 10 new members in our organization and I would like to welcome them all. Although the overall membership is down from past years, participation and interest from our entire organization is as strong as ever.

Since our inception in December of 1993 we have not increased our membership dues. I am sure everyone has felt the cost of living go up and so has the cost of program venues and speakers. At the annual meeting on October 1st we will be discussing this and voting on possible solutions. The annual meeting's speaker this year is the internationally known Gabriel Weisberg who will speak on the Bing Empire. This should not be missed and I hope to see everyone there.

I would like to thank Dale and Ann Tussing for hosting our last speaker Leslie Freudenhien. They rose to the occasion and picked her up at the airport, gave her a tour of the area, fed her, gave her a room for the night and delivered her back to the airport the next day. Beside all this they also wrote an excellent review of her presentation and new book included in this newsletter. Thanks Ann and Dale.

Marcia McGill, a board member and membership and publicity chair's husband Steven Muscarella has graciously stepped forward as our new archivist. We are still looking for additional volunteers. Marcia would love to have someone to work with for publicity. She has done a great job but someone with some background in PR and promotion could take us to a new level. My phone number is 463-1568 and email is rudd@daltons.com if you would like to discuss this.

Frank Morigi and Bill Bowen put together an incredible trip to Buffalo to visit several Frank Lloyd Wright sites. Bill wrote a very informative review and took many photos we have all enjoyed. This was a sell out and has been getting rave reviews since. If there are any suggestions for another location just let us know and we will try and make it happen. Thanks Frank and Bill.

The last thing I would like to mention is the American Art Pottery Association convention that was held in Syracuse this past spring. The ACSCNY sponsored the key note speaker at the opening banquet at The Marx. Nearly the entire board got involved in the conference. Board members sat at a ACSCNY table recruiting new members. Frank Morigi rolled up his sleeves and helped in the set up and tear down of the AAPA's auction and anywhere else he was needed the entire weekend. Frank also wrote a great review of this 3 day event. I would also like to give a special thanks to Liz Fowler. Liz was able to step in the last minute for a speaker that cancelled the day before. This convention brought many people to Syracuse for the first time. The weather was perfect, flowers were in full bloom and using The Marx, The Everson and The Convention Center worked perfectly. I believe our guests were impressed.

In closing I want to ask one more time for members to come on the board or a committee. After reading how much fun we are having and the camaraderie amongst our group, who wouldn't want to get involved?

Sincerely,



Dave Rudd

The ACSCNY would like to begin sending out announcements to our membership by email. This will not replace the few mailings that we currently send or the news letter but would be used for updates and enhancements of the information we do mail. I understand that everyone does not have or use an email account regularly and we will try and keep track of those we can not reach through email. Members please email Marcia McGill at mcgill315@aol.com and don't forget to put ACSCNY in the subject line and in your address book.

Thanks.

Annual Meeting & Luncheon



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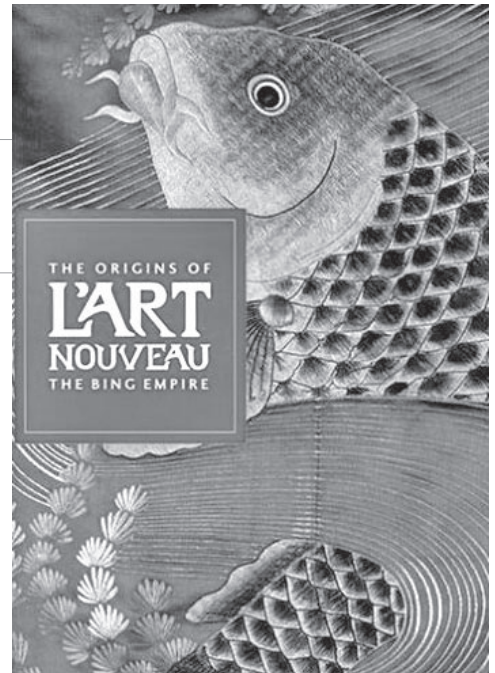


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Remember to Renew



Your support of the Arts and Craft Society of Central New York is vital to our success. Please renew your membership for another year and help us celebrate Central New York as the cradle of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States.

www.acscny.org

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