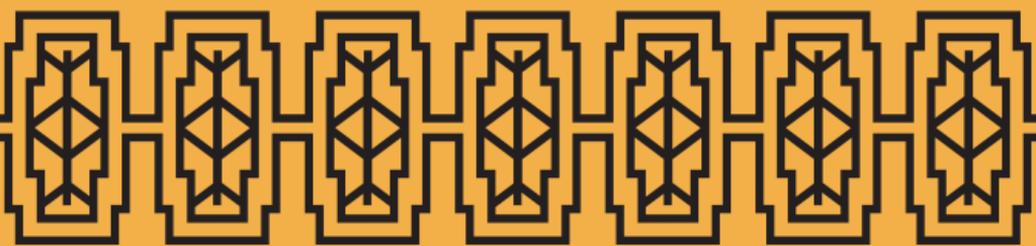


Barnsdall

ART PARK FOUNDATION

HOLLYHOCK HOUSE
TOUR GUIDE



Hollyhock House is owned by the City of Los Angeles and administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Parks, and General Services Departments. It is supported by the Barnsdall Art Park Foundation.

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Barnsdall Art Park

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ART PARK FOUNDATION



FOYER (entry)

DOORWAY TO THE FUTURE

In a device Wright often employed, the home's entryway steers visitors down a progressively narrower path which opens up after entering the house, creating a sense of compression and then release. The doors to Hollyhock House are made of cast concrete and inset into the surrounding masonry, weighing some 250 pounds each. The mass and unusual structural material create a monumental impression, as if entering a sacred space or ancient temple.

The handles and locks—which are cleverly disguised behind sliding brass covers—were most likely designed by Rudolph Schindler, Wright's assistant who oversaw much of the building's completion.

WHICH WAY DO YOU GO?

Unlike most traditional architecture of the time which would guide visitors toward explicitly defined public rooms, Wright's design for the entry of Hollyhock House presents a series of inviting options to someone first coming through the door.

To the left is the Dining Room, with its signature Wright-designed furniture echoing the “hollyhock” elements of the house. Straight ahead, indirect views glimpse the spacious Living Room, the home's most dramatic interior space. To the right, filtered by a wood grille reminiscent of Spanish and Moorish architecture, is the adjoining Music Room.

Subtle structural cues balance and define these options, such as the short stairway which elevates the Dining Room, and ceiling ornamentation, which creates “invisible” partitions and pathways.

All of these design elements are aspects of Wright's influential evolution toward freer, more open floor plans rather than a series of enclosed “boxes” or rooms.

In 1926 I gave this park to the city; the recreation center and the playgrounds for the use of children, the house for the uses of art, and the grounds for the pleasure of all. Will these artists and art loving people, also the fathers and the mothers of the children who play here, and those old “HOLLYWOODIANS” who have loved the hill for many years, JOIN ME IN FORMING A COMMITTEE TO INSURE IT FUNCTIONING PERMANENTLY UNDER THESE CONDITIONS OF THE DEED?

ALINE BARNSDALL, Box 9622 Los Feliz Station, Los Angeles 27, California

HOLLYHOCK HOUSE (built 1919–1921), a work of extraordinary poetic force, was Frank Lloyd Wright's first Los Angeles commission and the first residence after his Prairie style period.

It introduced Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra to Los Angeles and became a gateway to the development of California Modernism, including celebrated homes by all three that impacted the direction of residential design throughout the 20th century and into the present.

The house was commissioned by Aline Barnsdall, a wealthy oil heiress, and intended as part of a cultural arts complex on Olive Hill including a major theater, cinema, artist residences, and commercial shops. Hollyhock House was to be her personal residence on the site. She asked him to incorporate her favorite flower, the hollyhock, into the home's design.



Frank Lloyd Wright and granddaughter, actress Anne Baxter attend the opening party at the completion of the 1914-76 restoration.
Courtesy of Hollyhock House

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (1867–1959), one of the most influential architects of the 20th century, was already famous by the time Aline Barnsdall approached him to design a theater to showcase experimental dramatic productions. At the time, his career was stalled as a result of personal scandals and tragedies, and his only significant commissions were Hollyhock House and a hotel project in Tokyo, Japan.

Wright and Barnsdall only partly completed her visionary plan for a thriving arts center in east Hollywood, which was then little more than a patchwork of citrus farms and the nascent film industry.

DINING ROOM and KITCHEN

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Hollyhock House was Wright's first Los Angeles home and represents a departure from the older, Prairie style houses that helped make him famous. The Dining Room — with its warm wood surfaces, hipped ceiling, and leaded glass windows — possesses many familiar features carried over from his older style. However, also note how the changing ceiling heights and moldings help define the dining area and walkways.

The chairs and table are original Wright designs exclusive to the house. They were built locally of Philippine mahogany and reflect variations on the hollyhock motif used throughout the home.

Wright often designed custom furniture for his commissions, even specifying details such as location and upholstery, as part of his desire to create a complete and harmonious environment. In Hollyhock House, Barnsdall and Wright differed over the interior design and compromised by building only the Dining

Room and Living Room. Not all of Wright's designs for Hollyhock House were executed. Some features of the room such as the chandelier were altered over time and have been restored from existing photos of the 1920s interior.

KITCHEN

The original 1921 kitchen is known only through a single incomplete plan. The existing kitchen was remodeled in 1946 by Wright's son, Lloyd Wright, with features including a custom Thermador cooking unit and solid mahogany countertops.

Some 130 leaded glass windows were designed by Wright for the house, of which approximately 100 survive in the original. Others have been painstakingly recreated from photographs and drawings.



Aline Barnsdall circa 1914.
Courtesy of Michael Devine

ALINE BARNSDALL (1882–1946) was an American heiress to one of the largest oil fortunes of the time and a fiercely independent supporter of the arts as well as radical political and social causes. She was an unapologetically single mother who raised a daughter Aline Elizabeth (nicknamed ‘Sugartop’ for her light-colored hair), born in 1917. A friend later described her as “one hundred percent rebel” and Wright considered her a fellow unconventional spirit as well as one of his most difficult clients.

She had a passion for avant-garde theater and approached Wright in Chicago to design a theater for her ambitious productions. After settling on Los Angeles as the location, she purchased Olive Hill in 1919, ultimately expanding her vision to encompass not just a theater but a main residence for herself, homes for a director and actors, a movie theater, and commercial shops—an arts colony for the dawning entertainment capital of the country. Conflicts resulting from delays, mutual travel and the larger-than-life personalities of Barnsdall and Wright eventually shifted the focus to the main residence, Hollyhock House, as a home for herself and Sugartop.

LIVING ROOM (south view)

MUSIC ROOM

Music and architecture were linked in Wright's mind through early family experiences and he included music rooms in many of his houses. Few details survive of the intended use and furnishings for the one in Hollyhock House. It likely would have contained a piano, as well as a cabinet for the latest playback technology of the day—a gramophone. The Victrola on display is from the period but not original to the house.

The cabinets on the west wall and some on the north wall were added by Wright's son Lloyd as part of later renovations.

A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME

The home's largest space, its expansive Living Room, showcases many of Wright's design innovations.

The monumental fireplace with its spectacular mantle boasting an abstract geometric sculpture anchors the space. He believed the hearth was a home's symbolic center and his Prairie style houses reflected its importance. However, in Hollyhock House he also experimented with a new element—water—that he would continue to refine until it found expression in his most famous home, Fallingwater (1935).

The fireplace was originally surrounded in front by a pool fed underground from waterways outside the house. This marked a radical

evolution of Wright's concept of "organic" architecture, which sought to unite houses and their owners with the natural landscape. With the addition of the screened skylight above and the masonry structure, it brought together the elemental forces of nature—earth, fire, water, and light—at the focal point of the house.

The feature didn't work properly and was disconnected early in the house's history. While not fully realized here, Wright continued to explore water as an integrating feature of his architecture, including a planned guesthouse on Olive Hill ("Director's House," not built) whose flowing water course and falls anticipate Fallingwater.

"The symphony, as my father first taught me, is an edifice of sound. I now felt Architecture not only might be but ought to be symphonic in character."

—Frank Lloyd Wright describing the origins of Hollyhock House in his *Autobiography*

MUSIC ROOM

The Music Room's spectacular views of the Hollywood sign and Griffith Observatory are accidental—neither existed when Aline Barnsdall conceived of a theater, residence and arts complex for Olive Hill in 1919, a time when Los Angeles was smaller than Providence, Rhode Island, and the movie industry was still taking shape. The sign, which originally read "Hollywoodland" in incandescent bulbs, was built in 1923 to advertise a real estate development. Griffith Observatory was built in 1935.

LOGGIA and INNER COURTYARD

LOGGIA

Some of Wright's most important contributions to architecture revolve around his desire to create buildings that are connected to their natural environment, dissolving the boundary between interior and exterior. Southern California's mild Mediterranean climate allowed him to explore these ideas more freely than ever before and he appropriated a musical term, *romanza*—used to describe an impressionistic or personal interpretation—to describe his architectural program.

Hollyhock House is designed to be half house, half garden. Every major interior room has an exterior counterpart or direct access to the outdoors. In addition, the rooftop terraces were designed as outdoor living spaces. The Porch or Loggia is a key transitional space that bridges the home's Living Room with its exterior equivalent, the Inner Courtyard.

Two large planters and a gallery of folding wood doors open the space to the outside. Note how stucco and decorative moldings flow continuously between interior and exterior as if there were no windows.

INNER COURTYARD

The Inner Courtyard, provides a “theatrical” space at the home's center. The central pool originally fed a stream that connected to the fireplace pool via an underground pipe and then continued on to another pool on the west side of the house. The statue of a faun is a replica of a famous original excavated in Pompeii.

The most recognizable feature of Hollyhock House is easily visible here—the stylized floral decorations that give the house its name. Hollyhocks were owner Aline Barnsdall's favorite flower and she asked Wright to incorporate them into the home's design.

They appear on the interior and exterior, most visibly as the masonry banding just below the home's roofline. The deeply incised, geometric forms were made of cast concrete in molds. Their abstract design appears both futuristic and primitive, echoing elements of Mayan carving that mirror the structure's pre-Columbian temple form.

The design recurs throughout the house in wood, stone, and even carpeting.

TIMELINE

1919 Aline Barnsdall purchases 36 acres of Olive Hill for \$300,000

1919–1921 Hollyhock House constructed; planned cost \$50,000 (per building permit)
Actual cost \$125,000 — \$150,000 estimated

1927 Hollyhock House and 11 acres donated by Aline Barnsdall to City of Los Angeles a art park honoring her late father, Theodore Barnsdall

1927–1942 The California Art Club occupies Hollyhock House as its headquarters, altering some spaces

1946–1948 Major renovation financed by Dorothy Clune Murray rehabilitated the structure which served as the headquarters of the Olive Hill Foundation and as a memorial to her son, James William Clune, Jr. who was killed in World War II

1954 ‘Residence B’ razed

1954–1974 A temporary art gallery designed by Frank Lloyd Wright was constructed parallel to the structure connecting the garage and the house to accommodate the installation of the Museum of Modern Art’s *Frank Lloyd Wright: Sixty Years of Living Architecture* retrospective

1956 Olive Hill Foundation’s lease expires

1967 Junior Art Center constructed (architects Hunt, Kahn and Farrell)

1971 Municipal Art Gallery constructed (architects Wehmuller and Stephens)

1974–1976 Hollyhock House undergoes a major restoration by the City of Los Angeles

1976 Hollyhock House becomes a house museum open for public viewing

2010–2014 \$4.36 million restoration project funded by City of Los Angeles, the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, and the National Park Service

LIVING ROOM (north view)

The large, flanking sofas and other furnishings in the room are made of quartersawn oak, a signature of Wright's earlier style as well as the Arts and Crafts movement. The originals were lost or removed at some point in the home's history and the ones on display were recreated by a Pasadena woodworking firm utilizing photos of the 1920s interior and original drawings.

The room's original color scheme, described in newspapers of the day as "soft gold" or "light Nile green and bronze," was restored in 2014 through microscopic analysis of paint layers.

Other features lost or damaged over time such as the upholstery fabric have also been recreated as part of ongoing restoration work by the City of Los Angeles.

The Japanese screens in the room do not match early photos but are similar to descriptions of screens listed in the inventory of Aline Barnsdall's art collection. These have been in place since before 1945 but their provenance prior to that is unknown.

The carpet, with its two-dimensional Hollyhock designs, is a reproduction of the original designed by Wright.

Frank Lloyd Wright created over 1,000 designs in his lifetime, some 500 of which were realized. Nearly 20% of his completed works have been lost over time to demolition, fire, weather and other causes.

PERGOLA

The Pergola or enclosed hallway was an important access and buffer leading to the home's private wing. Wright increasingly experimented with dividing spaces into separate zones for public, private, and service functions, notably at Taliesin (1911), and brought it to a new level of execution in Hollyhock House.

The Pergola is one of the most drastically altered original spaces, having its roof removed and later replaced and double doors broken out in the middle. In its original form as a simple long hallway with multiple windows accessing the sights and sounds of the garden, it would have served as a pleasant,

semi-outdoor space filtering the home's bedrooms from noise and activity in the public areas.

The marble Chinese welcoming goddess at the far end of the Pergola originally greeted guests upon their arrival from a niche at the head of the home's entry walkway. It has been moved indoors for reasons of security and preservation. Wright and Barnsdall both had interests in Asian art and Wright sometimes collected pieces for his clients (although it is not known if this sculpture was similarly acquired). Funds are being sought to replicate the sculpture so a duplicate can once again be placed at the entry portal.

From 1917 to its completion in 1923, Wright was preoccupied with the design and construction of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Japan. His long absences from the United States made work on Hollyhock House difficult at times, especially given the expanding creative vision of owner Aline Barnsdall. Wright sometimes dismissed those who saw the influence of Japanese architecture on his designs, but he admired its artistic traditions and especially its synthesis of natural and aesthetic forms—something he was actively exploring in Hollyhock House. The Imperial Hotel, in turn, was influenced by the Mayan or Mesoamerican temple form that Wright was simultaneously developing at Hollyhock House. The Imperial Hotel survived a major earthquake in 1923 but was damaged during World War II and demolished in 1967. Portions of the original structure were preserved and reconstructed at the Meiji Mura Museum in Japan.

LIBRARY

Aline Barnsdall was a cultured, educated woman who was reportedly very fond of books. The library was designed as a sanctuary for her reading and interests in art, particularly French Impressionism and Japanese wood block prints.

There is little documentation of the original furnishings for the room, although anecdotal evidence suggests it had two chairs and a Chinese rug similar to the one

on display. The books and artworks are not original but are representative of the period. The nesting tables were designed by Wright's son Lloyd Wright for the Olive Hill Foundation (c. 1947) and the chairs are believed to be of the same vintage.

In the home's symmetrical floor plan, the Library and Music Room balance each other on either side of the Living Room, although the Library is separated by a partition for privacy.

GALLERY (guest bedrooms)

The first rooms in the home's private wing were originally two en suite Guest Bedrooms (self-contained bedrooms with adjoining bathrooms). Beyond them lay the bedroom of Barnsdall's daughter Sugartop, with its own bath, nursemaid's quarters and sun porch that led outside.

The bedrooms were remodeled to create an exhibition gallery in 1927 by the California Art Club, and the doors to the Pergola were opened up at this time. Today the Gallery serves as an exhibition space for models, drawings and photographs relating to Olive Hill.

Dissatisfied with the house and disappointed over the lack of construction plans for the theatre, Barnsdall fired Wright in 1921 and set about making plans to give the house to the City of Los Angeles. The gift was accepted in 1927 and "dedicated to and forever remain a public park" in memory of her father, Theodore Barnsdall. The California Art Club was the first tenant (1927–1942), although the house eventually fell into neglect. Major renovations supervised by Wright's son Lloyd occurred in 1946–48 and in 1974–76. The City of Los Angeles continues to develop and restore portions of the park as part of its ongoing stewardship of this unique architectural treasure.

CONSERVATORY

CONSERVATORY

The Conservatory, traditionally a sun room for plants, faces south and receives natural light throughout the day. Intended partly as a breakfast room, it is scaled for people who are seated and has garden views on three sides.

The room exemplifies Wright's ideas about blurring the distinction between outside and inside spaces. Beyond the French doors is an exterior space that is as much a room as its interior counterpart, lacking only a roof and upper walls. Recently uncovered masonry details emphasize the flowing horizontal lines and continuity between interior and exterior.

EXCAVATED WALL (PARTIAL)

The layers of time and ownership of the house have resulted in ongoing efforts by the City of Los Angeles to restore Olive Hill to its original vision. The partially excavated plaster wall seen here is an example of the careful historic reconstruction efforts that have yielded many clues about the home's original construction and details. Other research takes place in the documents and correspondence of the far-flung lives of its principal creators, Barnsdall and Wright. Much work remains to be done, and the Barnsdall Art Park Foundation remains dedicated to bringing to life a vision that was in many ways ahead of its time and only partially realized in 1921.

Frank Lloyd Wright, widely regarded as the most important American architect and one of the most influential, achieved new directions with the design for Hollyhock House that he would continue to pursue in a life that spanned the decades from the end of the Civil War to the Eisenhower presidency and revolutionary buildings such as the Johnson Wax Building, Fallingwater, and the

Guggenheim Museum. Hollyhock House introduced Wright along with Rudolph Schindler, Richard Neutra, and son Lloyd Wright to Southern California and sparked a design movement geared toward outdoor living and greater connection to the environment that continues to find new expressions in the 21st century.

Hollyhock House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2007.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination is pending, recognizing the house as an international cultural treasure. Its inscription on the World Heritage List would place it alongside other cultural sites in the United States like Independence Hall and the Statue of Liberty.