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Stars in Their Own Wright:
An Architectural Legacy

Tom LaBonge

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STARS IN THEIR OWN WRIGHT

A HOLLYWOOD ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY

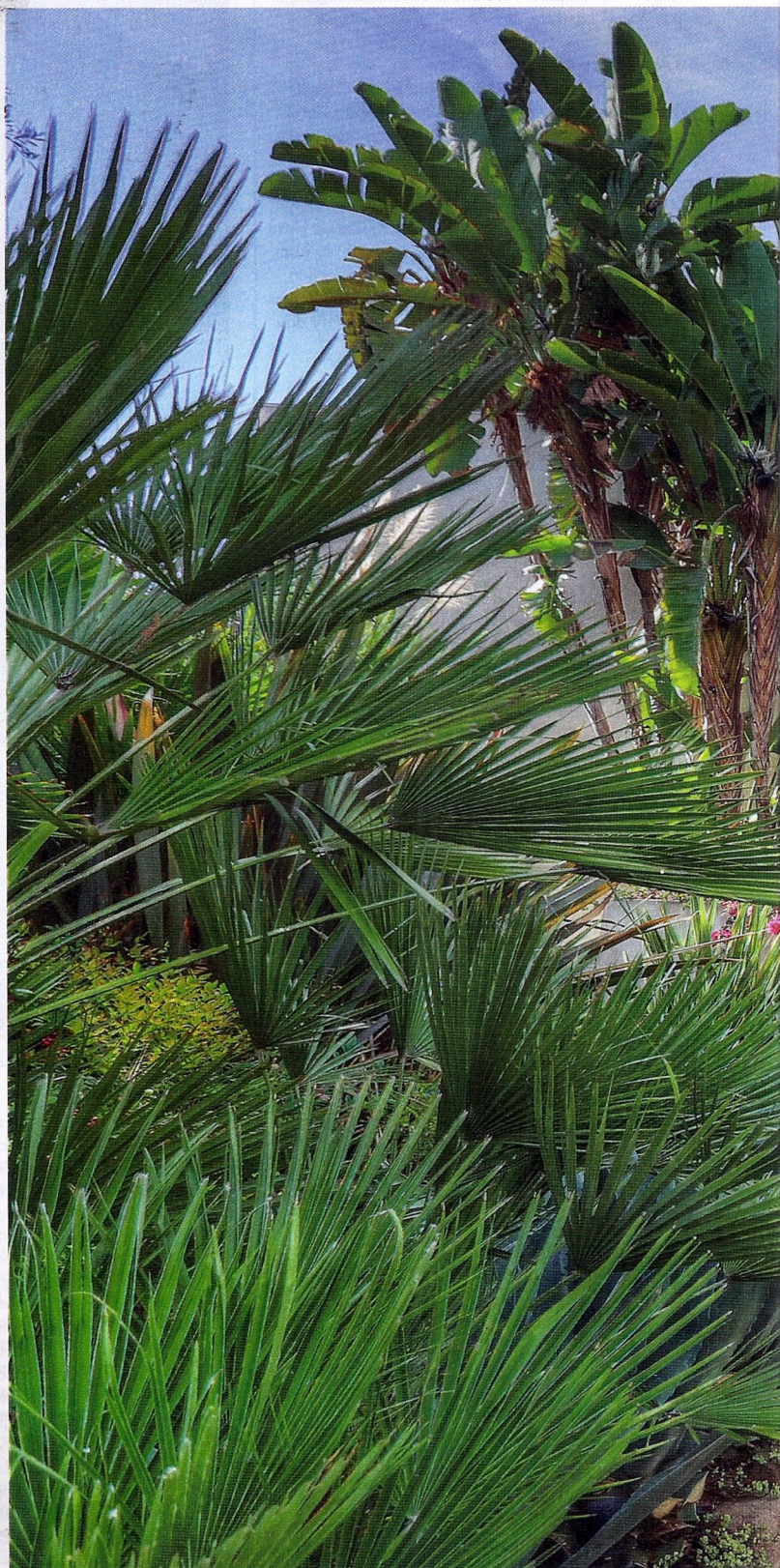
The reopening of Hollyhock House, Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece, commissioned by Aline Barnsdall as the center of her utopian vision for center of artistic creativity on the heiress' Olive Hill property recently caused quite a stir. The house was open for 24 hours at no cost and much to the surprise of everyone drew crowds through the night for the free walk through tours. For those who may have been under the impression that it might be the only chance to get a glimpse of this landmark recently nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the good news is that the house is now open for self-guided tours for a nominal \$7 charge Thursdays-Sundays 11am-4pm.

Hollyhock is one of three Frank Lloyd Wright dwellings in the greater Hollywood area, the other two being the Storer House and the Ennis House. However, FLW was not the only Wright who made a significant impact on the architectural landscape. His son, Lloyd Wright, who came to Los Angeles to help with the building of Hollyhock House, also made his mark here. Three of his homes have been painstakingly restored and are nearby: Samuels-Navarro House, the Taggart House and the infamous Sowden Home, the dramatic and theatrical Mayan-inspired is his most iconic structure and is usually regarded as his best work.

A visit to the Sowden House will dispel any thoughts of a connection to the notorious Black Dahlia mystery. The house even with its somewhat foreboding exterior exudes romance and warmth in the interior. It was designed for photographer Jon Sowden in 1926 and reflects Wright's philosophies as a landscape architect emphasizing the elements of nature in an open floor plan where every room enjoys the light and air flowing from the courtyard.

The Sowden House has appeared in movies such as *The Aviator*, commercials and served as a backdrop for photographic spreads in *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Instyle* magazines.

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Photos: Charmaine David

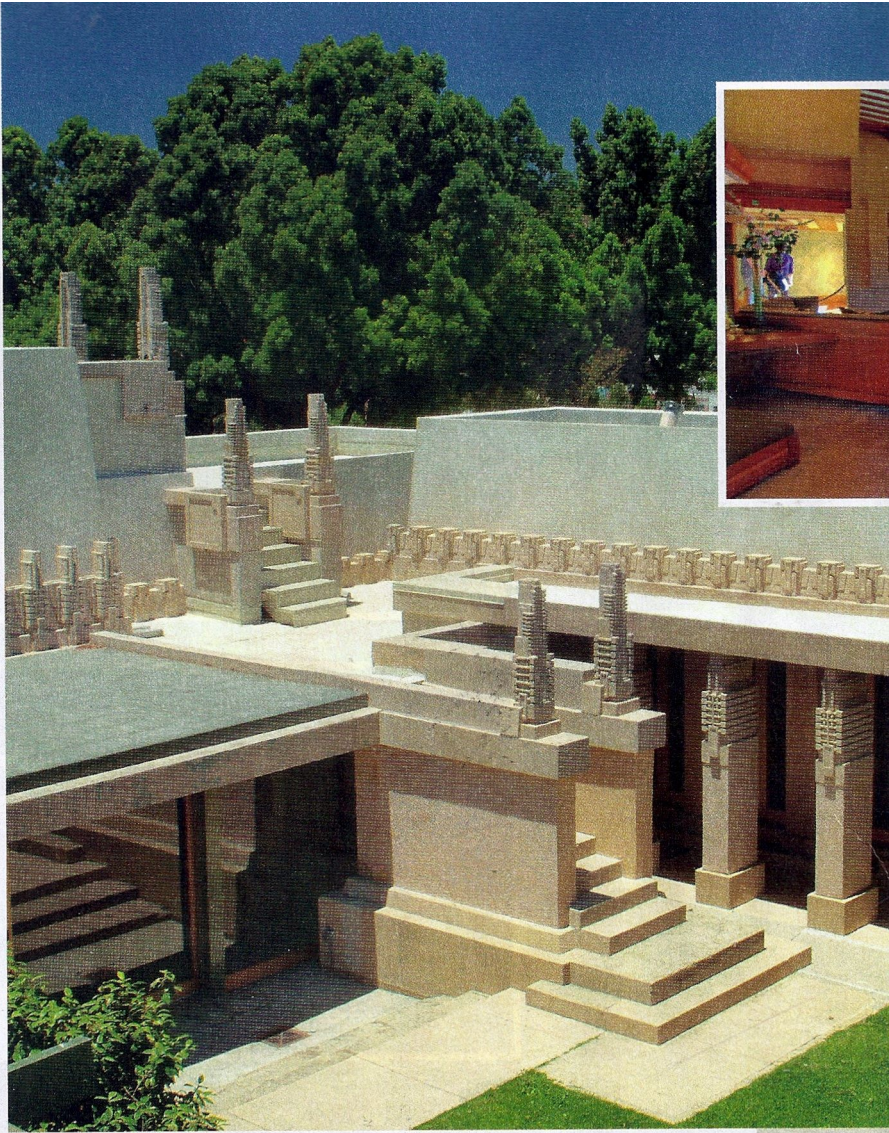
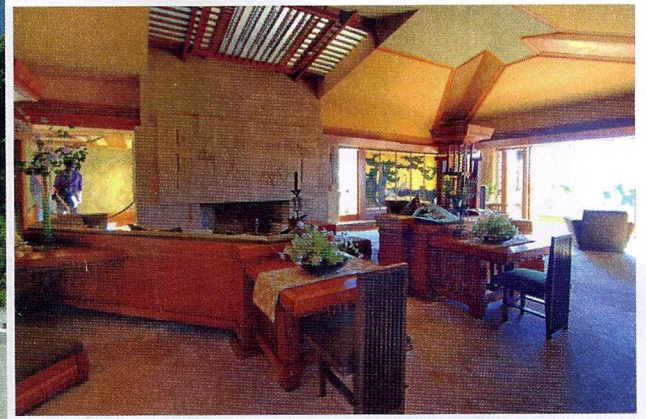


Photo left: Anthony Nelson
Photo below: Michael J. Locke



Hollyhock House, left and above

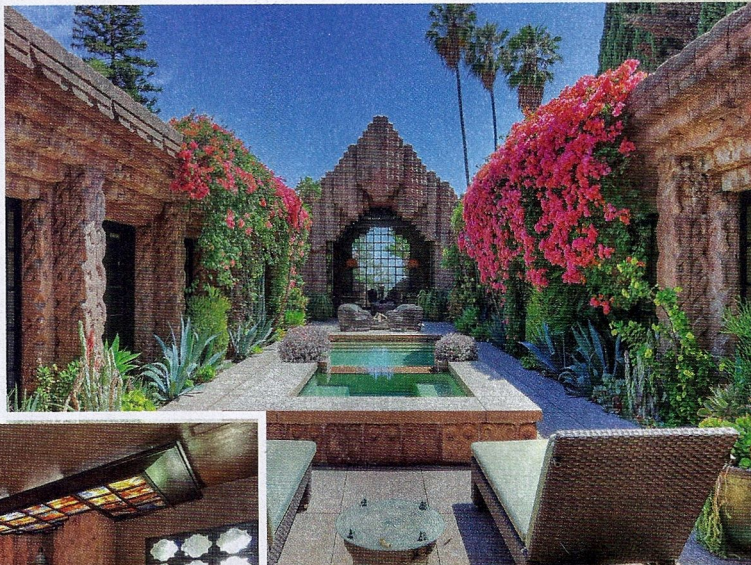
Laid out in the classic hacienda style with all rooms opening onto an inner courtyard, it has been painstakingly restored and embellished to modern day standards. While it is reminiscent of Mayan influence, also favored by his father, Lloyd Wright's uses cloud imagery and earth, water and plants depicted in concrete.

Abundant skylights and large windows bring bright daylight into many rooms so there is a feeling of airiness and space throughout. The dramatic interior is a star in its own right and has been used for films and commercial use. Because a visit to such a property is indeed a special occasion, the house has also been used for charity and corporate events.

In their new breathtaking incarnations, both the Hollyhock House restored to its close-to-original state and the Sowden House re-configured for today's standards exist to be appreciated and lived in for generations to come.

Editors note: At the time of writing, the Sowden House was listed with Troy Gregory of Sotheby's International Realty Los Feliz troy.gregory@sothebyshomes.com. **DH**

Sowden House Courtyard, right and Media Room, below



Photos: Charmaine David

