

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

Feature > Return to Splendor: Restoration brings Frank Lloyd Wright's long-suffering Hollyhock House back to its original form.

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The Architects Newspaper says:



THE RESTORED EXTERIOR.

The lengthy renovation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House—his first residence in Los Angeles—is finally over. On February 13, Mayor Eric Garcetti and other local luminaries cut the ribbon on the landmark's re-opening. Built between 1919 and 1921, the house takes its name from the favorite flower of Wright's client, feisty oil heiress Aline Barnsdall. Its eclectic style combines elements of Mayan Revival, early modernism, Japanese forms, and Wright's own Prairie Style, featuring tilted concrete walls, narrow leaded art glass windows, bas-reliefs, and an expansive central courtyard. The centerpiece is the living room, with its theatrical fireplace, which was once fronted by a large, water-filled moat. The Hollyhock motif is repeated in details throughout.



LIVING ROOM DETAIL (LEFT). THE LIBRARY (RIGHT).

The house, which Wright worked on with his son Lloyd and his protégé Rudolph Schindler, had already undergone renovations in 1944, 1974, and 2001 (due to earthquake damage.) But over time the property had further deteriorated. The \$4.35 million renovation began in 2011, led by curator Jeffrey Herr, non-profit Project Restore, Griswold Conservation Associates, and the city's departments of Engineering and Cultural Affairs, among others. The bulk of funding for the restoration came from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment, the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures program, and the City of Los Angeles.



“We were able to dig deeper into this than has ever been done before,” said Herr, who noted the team brought the house as close as possible to its original form through “archaeological” explorations, investigating everything from paint and plaster layers to original drawings and blueprints. For instance, to bring plaster finishes from their “muddy” form back to their original glistening gold state, the team devised a formula of mica suspended in alcohol.



“When you walk in, it’s pretty amazing the difference. I still haven’t gotten used to it, which is a good thing,” said Herr. Among other things, the team restored many of the home’s moldings, walls, floors, fixtures, doors, and fenestration. Heavy lifting included waterproofing the house, fixing drainage systems, restoring the roof, and performing crack repairs. The most rigorously restored rooms were the dining room, library, enclosed porch, garage, kitchen, and chauffeur’s quarters. Outside, the courtyard has been returned to its original grandeur. “This house has never looked better,” said Herr. “It’s become more lush, more romantic than I ever dreamed.”

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