

# The Arts and Crafts Movement The Brandywine River Valley

26th ANNUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS CONFERENCE

SUNDAY – THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13 – 17, 2024



Milton B. Medary, Nicola D'Ascenzo, Samuel Yellin, Edward Maene, *Washington Memorial Chapel* (interior, completed 1928; exterior by architect Milton B. Medary, 1917). Photo: Acroterion via Wikipedia.



*A Young George Nakashima Holding Chair Aloft*. Photo: George Nakashima Woodworkers.



*The Hedgerow Theatre at Rose Valley*. Photo: Smallbones via Wikipedia.



Wharton Esherick, *Spiral Stair in His Home*, completed in 1930, red oak. Photo: James Mario.



*N.C. Wyeth (right) and His Son Andrew Wyeth in N.C. Wyeth's Studio*, c. 1942. Photo: Edward J. S. Seal, courtesy, the Brandywine River Museum of Art, Chadds Ford, PA.

# The Arts and Crafts Movement

## The Brandywine River Valley

IAC's 26th annual Arts & Crafts Conference will visit the Brandywine River Valley to consider the centrality of the region in the American Arts & Crafts Movement. Tracing the history of the Movement from its origins in Britain to its manifestations in the Philadelphia area and its ongoing expressions in planned communities such as Rose Valley and in the Studio Craft Movement (and here, the work and legacy of Wharton Esherick [1887 – 1970] and George Nakashima [1905 – 1990] in particular), and coinciding with the opening of a major Esherick exhibition at Brandywine Conservancy and Museum of Art.

As has been our practice since the beginning, we will explore the artistic and philosophical underpinnings of the Movement and how it informed the art and architecture that followed. Key to this consideration are the commonalities in ethos and approach among different practitioners and how the Movement continues, reflected in contemporary culture in ways both original and nonmimetic. Influences of the Movement on subsequent schools, styles, or artistic approaches—the Rural Modern, for example—will also be considered. The Conference will underscore the importance of preservation and of the continuing influence of historic architecture in the contemporary urban and suburban landscapes.



Henry Chapman Mercer, Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, *Aries Tile* (From the Zodiac Series). Photo: Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York.

IAC thanks the Conference sponsors (as of September 26, 2024): Barbara Nitchie Fuldner, Bulova, Heritage Auctions, Rago Auctions, The Felicia Fund, The Marie + John Zimmermann Foundation, *American Fine Art Magazine*, *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, Rose Valley Museum and Historical Society, Wharton Esherick Museum, Washington Memorial Chapel, Dan Macey and Paul Savidge, David Lockard, Brandywine Conservancy and Museum of Art, Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, Beth Sholom Synagogue, George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop, Michener Art Museum, The Arden Craft Shop Museum, and The Harold Weston Foundation.

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### Registration

To register on-line, scan the QR code or go to [artinitiatives.com](http://artinitiatives.com):

**By phone:** Using American Express®, Visa® Card, Discover®, or MasterCard® call (646) 485-1952.



**Fee:** The conference fee is \$975 with single-day registration options available. The rate for full-time students is \$250 (with ID).

**Withdrawal and refunds:** We will apply a partial credit towards registration in a future conference if you need to cancel prior to 30 days before the start of the Conference.

**Conference hotel:** The preferred conference hotel is the Crown Plaza – Philadelphia, 260 Mall Blvd., King of Prussia, PA.

# Sunday, October 13

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11:30 a.m. **Bus departs the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia**, 260 Mall Blvd., King of Prussia, PA for Rose Valley.

12:00 p.m. **Arrive at The Rose Valley Museum at Thunderbird Lodge**, 41 Rose Valley Rd., Rose Valley, PA.

12:00 – 1:30 p.m. **Lunch and introductory lecture on the Rose Valley Arts & Crafts community** by **Ryan Berley**, Curator, Rose Valley Museum at Thunderbird Lodge. (For luncheon, advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration.)

Between 1901 and 1906, architect William Lightfoot Price and colleagues purchased 80 acres in the abandoned mill hollow of Rose Valley to establish a community based philosophically on principles set forth by William Morris in his utopian novel *News From Nowhere*. It was intended to be based financially on the production of art and craft by artists and artisans working side by side under the aegis of the Rose Valley Association. Although the commercial aspect of the Rose Valley project would unfortunately fail, the social and artistic aspects of the project thrived. Rose Valley proved attractive to those wishing to apply their creative talents within their living environment. The Rose Valley Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

1:30 – 3:00 p.m. **Tour The Rose Valley Museum at Thunderbird Lodge.**

In 1904, Price created the home and studio of artists Alice Barber Stephens, student of Thomas Eakins, and Charles Stephens, Native American ethnologist, expanding upon and converting a c.1790 stone barn, appending a fieldstone and stucco house to it. Opening in October 2017, Thunderbird Lodge is now home to The Rose Valley Museum and Historical Society, and its collection of Rose Valley furniture, pottery, art, and printing.

3:00 – 5:00 p.m. **Tour Rose Valley.**

In a walking tour of Rose Valley with its 140 properties and no sidewalks, we will see that suburbanization and industrialization could have taken a different path. We will visit The Old Mill (the site of the furniture workshops), the Hedgerow Theatre, The School in Rose Valley, Price's own home, the adjacent "House of the Democrat," and the manor house Philadelphia architect Howell Lewis Shay designed for his own family. We will see as well as the cluster of houses created by Price in 1911 – 1912 that define his Rose Valley style.



Elenore Abbott, *Rose Valley* (folding screen in four parts), c. 1903, oil on panel, 60 x 79 in.

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. **Cocktail reception and talk** by **Richard Guy Wilson**, architectural historian and Commonwealth Professor Emeritus of Architectural History, University of Virginia, entitled **Innovative and Historical: Pennsylvania Architecture and Design 1850 – 1970**.

**Remarks.** Peter Howell, Vice Chairperson, Rose Valley Museum.

6:30 p.m. **Bus returns to the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia.**

# Monday, October 14

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9:00 a.m. **Bus departs the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia for the Wharton Esherick Museum.**

9:50 a.m. **Arrive at the Wharton Esherick Museum**, 1520 Horseshoe Trail, Malvern, PA.

10:00 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. **Tour the Esherick Home and Studio.**

Recognized as the father of the Studio Furniture Movement, Wharton Esherick (1887 – 1970) was a significant figure in American modern design who saw himself as an artist, whose principal concern was form, not technique. His furniture was complemented by the paintings, prints, drawings, poetry, and sculpture that he also created.

Attendees will explore archival materials, learn about the significant recent restoration of the site and ongoing preservation challenges, become familiar with the tools and techniques Esherick employed, and see collections not normally on view, led by **Emily Zilber**, Director of Curatorial Affairs & Strategic Partnerships; **Holly Gore**, Director of Interpretation & Associate Curator of Special Collections; and **Ethan Snyder**, Public Programs & Collections Manager.

The campus of the Wharton Esherick Museum is set on 12 wooded acres and consists of multiple buildings with Esherick's exceptional, hand-built Studio as its centerpiece. The Studio was constructed over a 40-year period beginning in 1926, incorporating Arts & Crafts, German Expressionist, and organic designs. In 1928, Esherick began his 1928 Expressionist Garage, now the Visitor Center.

The 1956 Workshop was designed in collaboration with architect Louis Kahn. The Museum reacquired *Sunekrest*, the 19th-century farmhouse where the Eshericks first lived on Valley Forge Mountain, in 2014 and is exploring how it can be incorporated into the visitor experience. The most recent addition to the campus is the octagonal one-room Diamond Rock Schoolhouse, a Chester County landmark and an early painting studio for Esherick.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**Lunch at Valley Forge Trattoria and Lounge**, 1130 Valley Forge Rd., Phoenixville, PA. (Advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration.)

2:30 p.m.

**Bus departs the Valley Forge Trattoria for the Washington Memorial Chapel**, 2000 Valley Forge Park Rd, King of Prussia, PA.

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**Tour the Washington Memorial Chapel** with a welcome from **Mark Thompson**, Executive Director and remarks by glass conservator **Joe Beyer** of Beyer Studios which restored 11 of the Chapel's 13 stained-glass windows. Tour led by architect and docent **John Wallace**.

Both a national memorial dedicated to General George Washington and an active Episcopal parish, the chapel was inspired by a sermon preached by The Reverend Dr. W. Herbert Burk, the parish's founding vicar. Its cornerstone was laid on June 19, 1903, the 125th anniversary of the evacuation by the Continental Army of Valley Forge, near a small wood-framed building that preceded the present structure (demolished, 1904).

Architect Milton B. Medary designed the building (exterior, 1917). The interior, completed in 1928, features stained-glass windows by Nicola D'Ascenzo; wrought iron gates, hardware, and locks by Samuel Yellin; and woodwork by Belgian-American cabinetmaker Edward Maene.

4:00 p.m.

**Bus departs the Washington Memorial Chapel for the Margaret Esherick House**, 204 Sunrise Lane, Chestnut Hill, PA **and the Vanna Venturi House**, 8330 Millman St., Chestnut Hill, PA.

4:45 – 6:30 p.m.

**Tour the Margaret Esherick House and Vanna Venturi House** led by **William Whitaker**, architect and curator of the Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

The **Margaret Esherick House** (Louis I. Kahn, 1959 – 1962), one of nine houses designed by Kahn, is one of two collaborations between Kahn and Esherick (the



Louis I. Kahn, *Margaret Esherick House*, Rear Facade, 1959 – 1962; restored 2014 – 2016, k YODER design. Photo: © Jeffrey Totaro Photography.

other being the 1956 Workshop on the Wharton Esherick Museum campus). It was commissioned by Esherick's niece, Margaret. Built primarily of concrete block with stucco facing, the house is notable in particular for its spatial organization and for the ventilation and natural lighting provided by the configuration of its windows and shutters. It features a sunken bathtub which doubled as a seat and a wood and copper kitchen by Esherick.

The current owners, Paul Savidge and Dan Macey, purchased the house in February 2014. Soon thereafter, they commissioned

k YODER design to lead an award-winning restoration project. In 2023, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The **Vanna Venturi House** (Robert Venturi, 1962 – 1964), one of the first prominent works of the postmodern architecture movement, was designed by architect Robert Venturi for his mother. The five-room house is only about 30 feet tall but has a monumental front facade. The non-structural appliqué arch and “hole in the wall” windows overtly challenged Modernist orthodoxy.

After receiving his MFA from Princeton in 1950, Venturi would work under Eero Saarinen in Bloomfield Hills, MI, and Louis Kahn in Philadelphia. In 1959, he joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania where he worked as Kahn’s teaching assistant and would meet fellow lecturer and future life and professional partner Denise Scott Brown.

6:30 p.m.

**Bus returns to the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia.**

## Tuesday, October 15

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7:45 a.m.

**Bus departs the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia for the Brandywine Conservancy & Museum of Art.**

8:30 – 11:00 a.m.

**Breakfast and talks in the Waterview Room**

9:00 – 9:15 a.m.

**Introduction.** Lisa Koenigsberg, Founder / President, Initiatives in Art and Culture

9:15 – 10:00 a.m.

**Pennsylvania’s Rural Modern Moment.** Amanda C. Burdan, Senior Curator, Brandywine Museum of Art.

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

**Thinking Through Wharton Esherick and the World He Crafted.** Emily Zilber.

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Visit “The Crafted World of Wharton Esherick”** led by exhibition curators and catalog contributors, **Emily Zilber, Amanda Burdan, Holly Gore, and Julie Siglin**, Executive Director, Wharton Esherick Museum.

12:00 – 1:15 p.m.

**Lunch at the Millstone Cafe.** (Advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration.)

1:30 – 5:30 p.m.

**Visit the N.C. Wyeth House and Studio and the Andrew Wyeth Studio, the Brandywine Museum collections, and the exhibition “Up East: Andrew Wyeth in Maine.”**

N.C. and Andrew Wyeth were two of 20th-century America’s most influential representational artists, each leaving a significant mark with a distinct style and shared heritage. **N.C. Wyeth** (1882 – 1945), a celebrated illustrator and muralist whose vivid depictions helped define early 20th-century American illustration, is best known for his work in adventure novels such as *Treasure Island* and *The Last of the Mohicans*. He produced many of his iconic works in his Chadds Ford studio which has been preserved to reflect his working environment, complete with original sketches, paintings, and props such as a birch-bark canoe and firearms, while the house, with its country furnishings, reveals a more intimate picture of family life. The N.C. Wyeth House and Studio is a National Historic Landmark and a member of the Historic Artists’ Homes and Studios program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

His son, **Andrew Wyeth** (1917 – 2009) would become one of the most famous American representational painters of the 20th century. He was deeply influenced by the landscapes and people of Chadds Ford, as well as those in Cushing, Maine where he spent his summers. His Chadds Ford studio offers insight into both his process and the environment that inspired his work.

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

**Reception sponsored by Heritage Auctions**

**Remarks.** Aviva Lehman, Senior Vice President, American Art, Heritage Auctions, Lisa Koenigsberg, and Amanda Burdan.

6:30 p.m.

**Bus returns to the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia.**



Robert Venturi, *Vanna Venturi House*, Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania. 1959 – 1964. Photo: Rollin R. La France, The Architecture and Design Photo Archive, MoMA. Gift of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, Inc.

## Wednesday, October 16

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8:45 a.m.

**Buses depart the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia for Beth Sholom Synagogue, 8231 Old York Rd., Elkins Park, PA.**

9:30 – 10:50 a.m.

**Tour Beth Sholom Synagogue.**

**David Brownlee**, Shapiro–Weitzenhoffer Professor Emeritus of the History of Art, University of Pennsylvania will accompany the group. The tour is complemented by a film exploring the collaboration between Wright and then-Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen in defining the building's design. The only synagogue designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Beth Sholom Synagogue was commissioned in 1953 and completed in 1959, 5 months following Wright's death. The building's design was the product of a lengthy collaboration between Wright and then-Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen. It was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 2007.

Beth Sholom was conceived as a truly "American" synagogue, one departing in its design from new-world synagogues that emulated European or near-Eastern precursors. Architecturally evoking Mt. Sinai, the Mayan Revival building's decorative plan reflects a variety of other influences, from 17 – 19th century wooden Polish synagogues to Native American ornament. The building was to be, as Wright put it in a letter to Cohen accompanying the initial set of plans, a "coherent statement of worship."

The synagogue's hexagonal plan is intended to suggest two joined hands, because, again in Wright's words, "when one enters a place of worship, he should feel as if he were resting in the very hands of God." This hexagon circumscribes a tripod steel frame that supports the structure, obviating the need for supporting pillars in the interior. The building is solid yet airy, its translucent walls allowing natural light to enter during the day. At night, the building glows from within.



Frank Lloyd Wright, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, Elkins Park, PA, 1954 – 1959. Photo: Carol M. Highsmith, the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

In 1960, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) listed Beth Sholom synagogue as one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most important commissions, one of his 17 contributions "to the nation...which ought to be preserved in their original form."

10:50 – 11:30 a.m.

*Morning talk*

**Marking Time: Wright's Design and Influence.** Lana V. Aledort, Director of Merchandising, Bulova with **Clarissa Ng**, Senior Manager of Product Development, Bulova Brand.

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

**Lunch and watch handling session.** (Advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration.)

12:15 p.m.

**Buses depart for the George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop**, 1847 Aquetong Rd, New Hope, PA, **Moravian Pottery & Tile Works**, 130 Swamp Rd., Doylestown, PA, and **The Michener Art Museum**, 138 S. Pine St. Doylestown, PA.

1:15 p.m.

**Arrive at George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop.**

1:30 – 5:40 p.m.

**Tour the George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop, Moravian Pottery & Tile Works, and The Michener Art Museum.** Attendees will rotate among the three sites.

**The George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop.** Tour led by **Mira Nakashima**, President and Creative Director for George Nakashima, Woodworker.

George Nakashima (1905 – 1990) trained in architecture at the University of Washington and at MIT. After receiving his master's degree and working briefly for the Long Island State Park Commission, he traveled to Paris and then, in 1934, to Japan, there joining the office of American architect Antonin Raymond, Frank Lloyd Wright's project architect on the Imperial Hotel. Nakashima made his first furniture in 1937 while primary construction consultant for a Raymond-designed project in Pondicherry, India where he would engage deeply with the sect's spiritual teachings. Returning to Seattle in 1940 to teach woodworking and make furniture, in early 1942, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he would find himself imprisoned at the Minidoka War Relocation Center in Hunt, Idaho along with 13,000 other Americans of Japanese ancestry. At Minidoka he would meet Gentaro Kenneth Hikogawa, a master *daiku* who taught him traditional Japanese methods of joinery and how to use traditional Japanese hand tools.

Promising a job for Nakashima in New Hope, PA, Antonin Raymond secured his release in 1943. In 1945, Nakashima opened his first workshop in New Hope and began to design furniture for Knoll, reacting against the "20th-century modern," and reclaiming the philosophy in which the maker's eye and hand determined his world in relation to the universe. In 1946, he acquired the current property on Aquetong Rd. and began construction of his shop and furniture business, with his wife Marion as his business partner; new buildings were constructed as his business and family grew. In 2014, the compound was designated a National Historic Landmark and included on the World Monument Fund's 2014 Endangered Sites Watchlist. The craftspeople at the George Nakashima Woodworkers continue to be guided by George Nakashima's philosophy, celebrating the wood's purity and natural character.

Led by architect and furniture maker, **Mira Nakashima**, George Nakashima's daughter, and President and Creative Director for George Nakashima, Woodworker, attendees will see the following:

- **Show-room** (1954); stone, wood, corrugated transite roof
- **Finishing Room** (1956); concrete block, corrugated transite
- **Chair Department** (1958); plywood Conoid Shell roof
- **Conoid Studio** (1959); concrete Conoid Shell roof
- **Arts Building** (1967); plywood Hyperbolic Paraboloid
- **Pool House and Pool** (1960); plywood canted Conoid
- **"Pole Barn" lumber storage** (1990); steel structure
- **Lumber Storage Sheds** (1957); plywood HP shells
- **Reception House** (1975); stone and wood
- **Family House** (1947); stone and wood

**Henry Chapman Mercer's Moravian Pottery & Tile Works.** Welcoming remarks by **Katia McGuirk**, Executive Director.

Henry Chapman Mercer (1856 – 1930) was an American archaeologist, architect, potter, and tile maker, best known for his contributions to the American Arts & Crafts movement. Born into a wealthy family in Doylestown, Mercer pursued deep interests in history, anthropology, and craftsmanship. Perhaps his most significant achievement was his founding of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works in 1898. A National Historic Landmark, the current TileWorks was built between 1911 and 1912.

Mercer sought to create art that was both functional and beautiful. Inspired by medieval European tile designs and the traditions of the Moravian Church, he

revived traditional tile-making techniques, producing handcrafted tiles with intricate designs. The work of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works continues, with artisans using locally sourced Bucks County wild clay to make heritage Moravian tiles from Mercer's original design.

**The Michener Art Museum.** Welcoming remarks by **Laura Turner Igoe**, Gerry and Marguerite Lenfest Chief Curator, Michener Art Museum.

The visit focuses on the collections of studio craft, The George Nakashima Reading Room, and the frames of Bucks County frame maker Bernard Badura. The Museum is surrounded by the massive stone walls of the Bucks County prison (1884). As abandoned and antiquated buildings were being torn down in Bucks County, the County Commissioners agreed to preserve this historic landmark, leasing the land and buildings to house the museum which, after extensive renovation, opened to the public on September 15, 1988. A landscaped courtyard, an outdoor sculpture garden and terrace were built in the original prison yard.

5:45 p.m. **Buses depart for Rago Auctions**, 243 North Main St., Lambertville, NJ.

6:00 p.m. **Private viewing of contemporary ceramics sale and cocktail reception**

**Welcoming remarks.** David Rago, President, Rago Auctions.

7:15 p.m. **Buses return to the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia.**

## Thursday, October 17

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8:30 a.m. **Bus departs the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia – King of Prussia for The Arden Craft Shop Museum**, 1807 Millers Rd., Arden, DE.

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Visit the Arden Craft Shop Museum and tour the Villages—Arden, Ardentown, and Ardencroft.**

The Arden Craft Shop Museum's mission is to collect and exhibit materials and artifacts related to the Villages, and attendees will view the exhibition "Treasures of Childhood: Growing up in the Ardens." The Museum seeks to educate the community on the Ardens' history as Georgist, single-tax communities and how theater, craftsmanship, art, and other aspects of life have affected their development.

Arden, the first of the Villages, was founded in 1900 by sculptor Frank Stephens and architect William Lightfoot Price with funding by soap manufacturer Joseph Fels while Ardentown was founded in 1922 and Ardencroft in 1950. Each village operates as its own municipality but all three continue to use the Single Tax. With many examples of American Arts & Crafts architecture, these communities still attract artists and craftspeople.

During the tour, attendees will see the second of William Lightfoot Price's Fels Cottages.

11:30 a.m. **Bus departs for the Harold Weston Foundation**, housed at 7 Coniston Dr., Westchester, PA.

12:15 – 2:00 p.m. **Explore the holdings of The Harold Weston Foundation.**

Harold Weston (1894 – 1972), a modernist painter whose outsized zest for life powered his art, painted in Persia, the Adirondacks, the French Pyrenees, Greenwich Village, and the Isle of Rhodes. His prodigious output arcs from the expressionist Adirondack landscapes first shown at the Montross Gallery (1922), to the New Deal murals with graphic depictions of Federal construction (1936 – 1938), and to the gouache abstracts known as the Stone Series (1968 – 1972). The Harold Weston Foundation, a repository of Harold Weston's artwork and archival material, is open to collaboration with institutions and scholars to promote a greater understanding of the artist's art and life.

**Rebecca Foster**, the scholar of record on Howard Weston's work, will frame the group's discussion with **Nina Foster**, President, Harold Weston Foundation. **Lisa Koenigsberg** and **Amanda Burdan** will also participate.

2:15 – 3:30 p.m. **Closing lunch at The Naked Olive**, 759 W. Cypress St., Kennett Square, PA. (Advanced purchase required and recommended; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration.)