

Initiatives

in Art and Culture

The Arts and Crafts Movement

Reckoning With Reform: Rochester, Buffalo & East Aurora

28th ANNUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 – 27, 2026



Portrait of Elbert Hubbard. Photo: photographer unknown.



Wendell Castle, "Victory" Desk and Chair, 1980, walnut, walnut plywood, 28½ x 69 x 31½ in. Photo: courtesy of Christie's.



Frank Lloyd Wright, *Darwin D. Martin House, Interior*. Photo: courtesy of Darwin D. Martin House.



Charles Rohlf, *Tall Back Chair*, 1888
– 1889, oak, 53½ x 17½ x 16¼ in.
Photo: courtesy of Princeton University
Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.



Roycroft Inn, Interior. Photo: courtesy of the Elbert Hubbard
Roycroft Museum.

The Arts and Crafts Movement

Rochester, Buffalo & East Aurora

In IAC's 28th Annual Arts and Crafts Conference, we delve into Western New York including Rochester, Buffalo, and East Aurora, exploring their rich expressions of the Movement, the region's receptivity to social, political, economic and aesthetic reform, and the Movement's ongoing manifestations. We look at buildings and objects alongside the creative communities, artisan guilds, and enterprising firms that produced them, while striving to uncover the ethical and social dimensions of the Movement and their salience for today's culture.

Founded in 1817 along the Genesee River, the city of Rochester quickly became a hub in Western New York for trade, commerce, and industry. In 1897, critically acclaimed artists such as M. Louise Stowell and Harvey Ellis co-founded the Rochester Arts and Crafts Society and contributed significantly to the Movement's growth and educational legacy. Stowell, an instructor at the Mechanics Institute (the forerunner of the Rochester Institute of Technology [RIT]), wrote in 1892 in an article for the *Educational Gazette*, that "nothing should be careless in ornament or design, but should be faithfully thought out and patiently evolved," arguably an unsurpassed articulation of the Movement's ethos.

In 1832 the city of Buffalo was founded on the Eastern edge of Lake Erie, along the Erie Canal. Buffalo's prime geographical location supported the local economy through grain import and export and steel production. As businesses flourished and the city expanded, the architecture of the region began to reflect these shifts towards reform, notably in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, a pioneer of the Prairie Style and Louis Sullivan, the "father of skyscrapers."

A host of social movements and economic growth had already flourished in Western New York. The women's suffrage movement was active in the region as was the abolition movement. New technologies pioneered by Eastman Kodak democratized photography. The second industrial revolution spurred urban growth and mass-production of consumer goods. In response to these changes, communities such as the Roycroft Campus, founded by Elbert Hubbard in 1895, promoted a Utopian vision with craft at its heart.

As we further IAC's engagement in Western New York to explore key artistic, stylistic, philosophical, and sociocultural manifestations of the Movement in Rochester, Buffalo and East Aurora the conference will advance awareness of the region's vital role in shaping and informing the Arts & Crafts Movement and its ongoing expressions in the United States.

IAC is grateful for the generous support of the Marie + John Zimmermann Fund, Barbara Nitchie Fuldner, BULOVA, *American Fine Arts Magazine*, and The Magazine *ANTIQUES*.

Our thanks as well to The George Eastman Museum, The Genesee Country Village and Museum, Roycroft Campus, Grace Episcopal Church, The Wendell Castle Studio, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), Darwin D. Martin House and Graycliff Estate, and Visit Rochester (as of September 13, 2026).

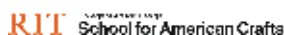
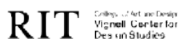


Charles Fergus Binns, *Bottle Vase*, 1915, stoneware and glaze, 9 1/8 x 4 in. Photo: courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Wednesday, September 23

8:45 – 9:30 a.m.	Arrival (on your own) at the George Eastman Museum (900 East Ave, Rochester, NY), registration, coffee and pastries (7 Crest Financial Partners Hall). The George Eastman Museum in Rochester, opened to the public in 1949, is the world's first museum dedicated to photography and houses one of the world's oldest film archives. The museum is located on the estate of entrepreneur and philanthropist George Eastman, the founder of Eastman Kodak Company. Kodak was most notably acclaimed for marking a shift in photography from large glass plates to small, 32 mm rolls of film, allowing for a cheaper, more widely accessible method of photography. The Museum is anchored by a Colonial Revival house (1902 – 1905), commissioned by Eastman, designed by J. Foster Warner, with interiors designed by McKim, Mead & White. The house features a grape arbor, as well as gardens designed by Alling Stephen DeForest and Claude Bragdon.	
9:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Welcome and Introduction. Lisa Koenigsberg (President / Founder, Initiatives in Art and Culture).	J. Foster Warner, <i>George Eastman House, Exterior</i>, 1905. Photo: courtesy of ILoveNY.
10:00 – 10:50 a.m.	Roots of Design and Political and Social Reform in the Arts & Crafts Movement. Richard Guy Wilson (Commonwealth Professor Emeritus Architectural History, University of Virginia).	
10:55 – 11:45 a.m.	To be announced	
11:50 – 12:35 p.m.	Samuel Yellin: George Eastman House, Western New York & Beyond! Joseph Cunningham (Curatorial Director, Leeds Art Foundation, and author, <i>The Artistic Furniture of Charles Rohlf</i>s and <i>The Metalwork of Samuel Yellin</i>, and co-author, <i>The Jewelry and Metalwork of Marie Zimmermann</i>).	
	12:35 – 1:35 p.m. 1:35 – 4:30 p.m. 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Box luncheon (advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration) House and garden tours led by Allen Buell (Senior Director of Special Events, George Eastman Museum). High Styles & Western New York: Chasing Modernism in Alfred, Rochester and Buffalo. Joseph Cunningham. Private reception in The Palm Court (also referred to as the Palm House or Conservatory) Return (on your own) to the Strathallan Hotel (550 East Avenue, Rochester, NY).

McKim, Mead & White, *Palm Court in the George Eastman House*. Photo: courtesy of Film Photography Project.



Building Exterior in the Genesee Country Village & Museum. Photo: courtesy of ILoveNY.

Thursday, September 24

8:00 a.m.

Bus departs from the Strathallan Hotel.

8:45 – 9:45 a.m.

Visit Grace Episcopal Church (9 Browns Ave, Scottsville, NY).

Built in 1885, the church was designed by noted Rochester architect **Harvey Ellis** in the Latin cross form with Richardsonian Romanesque elements including rounded apsidal and transept ends topped by conical roofs. The native fieldstone lower level is capped by an upper section of frame construction with a non-structural wall of stained glass. The attached school wing was constructed in 1956 and the square, shingled bell tower was added in 1976.

9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Bus departs for Genesee Country Village & Museum (1410 Flint Hill Rd, Mumford, NY).

The **Genesee Country Village and Museum** (GCV&M) is a living museum of artisanal crafts and early Genesee architecture, conceived and founded in 1966 by art collector and businessman John (Jack) L. Wehle. Wehle established the “village that might have been” to showcase selected examples of 19th-century Genesee Country architecture while aiming to preserve declining crafts such as cabinetry, weaving, pottery, and other arts. The grounds also house the **John L. Wehle Art Gallery**, which exhibits Wehle's robust collection of sporting art, as well as an abundant nature center and garden.

Under the new leadership of **Becky Wehle**, John Wehle's granddaughter, GCV&M has launched the Seeking Freedom Initiative to reveal and reckon with the regional history and impacts of enslavement by exploring the lives and legacy of the enslaved individuals that built, lived in, and sustained the region. This approach challenges audiences to consider whose stories are remembered, which traditions are deemed worth preserving, and who decides what is celebrated as cultural heritage.

The **Wendell Castle Workshop** (18 Maple St, Scottsville, NY) is a living institution that celebrates innovation, education, and appreciation for art, craft, and design. For over 50 years, this studio was the creative home of **Wendell Castle** (1932 – 2018), one of America's most influential artists and widely recognized as the father of the American Studio Furniture movement. Here, Castle conceived and created virtually all of his masterworks, pioneering an approach to furniture that merged sculpture, craftsmanship, and design.

The studio is also the home of the **Wendell Castle Project**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and advancing Castle's legacy through residencies and educational programs, and the **Wendell Castle Archives**, which house materials chronicling Castle's creative process and includes a

gallery featuring select iconic works alongside ceramic sculptures by his widow, acclaimed artist Nancy Jurs, illuminating the creative dialogue between two distinguished artists.

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Welcome and Introduction (meeting center dining room), **Becky Wehle** (President, GCV&M) and **Peter Wisbey** (Philip K. Wehrheim Curator of Collections, GCV&M).

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Breakout sessions begin. Throughout the morning and afternoon, attendees will rotate among the sites in groups (with participants able to attend all sessions), coming together for lunch and a lecture

Tour the Susan Greene Costume Collection led by **Cassidy Percoco** (Curator, GCV&M).

Guided walking tour of the historic village (begins at Tollhouse)

Tour Wendell Castle Studio (tour begins at bus in front of admissions tunnel), led by **Ken Page** (Director, Wendell Castle Workshop) and **Kathrine Page** (Secretary, Wendell Castle Project Board).

11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Boxed luncheon (Freight House Pub)

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Breakout sessions continue (groups switch at 2:30).

4:00 – 4:45 p.m.

“Organized as a Corporation, but Work Together as a Community”: **Elbert Hubbard’s Roycroft and the Commercialization of the Arts and Crafts Utopia**, **Tom Guiler** (Director of Museum Affairs, Oneida Community Museum House and author, *The Handcrafted Utopia: Arts and Crafts Communities in America’s Progressive Era* [2025]).

5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Dinner at GCV&M (to take place in multiple historic buildings)

5:00 – 5:45 p.m.

Appetizers at the Hosmer and Livingston houses

5:45 – 7:30 p.m.

Dinner at the Town Hall

7:30 p.m.

Bus returns to the Strathallan Hotel.

Friday, September 25

8:00 a.m.

Bus departs from the Strathallan Hotel for Graycliff Estate (6472 Old Lake Shore Rd, Derby, NY).

9:30 – 11:15 a.m.

Arrive, organize into groups, and tour the Graycliff Estate gardens, grounds, and the main house.

The Graycliff Estate (1931) was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Darwin D. Martin, the company secretary of the Buffalo based Larkin Soap Company, and his wife, Isabelle R. Martin, as their summer home on the coast of Lake Erie. The home boasts grand views of the lake and utilizes limestone cut from the very cliffs it sits upon.



Frank Lloyd Wright, *Graycliff, Exterior*, 1931. Photo: courtesy of getoutnabout.

11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Lecture, luncheon, and shop in the Visitor Center** (advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration)

Frank Lloyd Wright in Buffalo. Patrick Mahoney (Architect, author of publications on Frank Lloyd Wright, among them *Frank Lloyd Wright's Walter V. Davidson House: An Examination of a Buffalo Home and Its Cousins from Coast to Coast* (2011) and *Frank Lloyd Wright's Scholarly Clients: William and Mary Heath* (2015); board member, Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy, and Founding Member Graycliff Conservancy).

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. **Bus departs for the Guaranty Building** (140 Pearl St, Buffalo, NY 14202).
Tour the Guaranty Building.

Unveiled in 1896 and designed by Adler & Sullivan, this early skyscraper boasts intricate terracotta facades and strong vertical lines. Louis Sullivan famously pioneered the phrase “form follows function,” arguing that the structure of a building should express its intended purpose. He was inspired by this motto to design steel-framed skyscrapers that emphasized verticality and might be seen as expressions of the modern.



Dankmar Adler & Louis Sullivan, *Guaranty Building, Exterior*, 1896. Photo courtesy of Buffalo Architecture and History.

2:00 – 2:30 p.m. **Bus travels to the Darwin D. Martin House** (125 Jewett Pkwy, Buffalo, NY).

2:30 – 5:00 p.m. **Tour both floors of the Darwin D. Martin House, the caretaker cottage, Barton House, the Pergola, and carriage house.**

With its horizontal lines, rows of windows, open floor plan, and structural connection to the natural landscape, the Darwin D. Martin House (1905) was often considered by Wright to be his “opus.” He viewed it, with the furniture and art glass windows that were also of his design, as an expression of “domestic harmony.” In 2009, a new visitor center was added, designed by renowned contemporary architect Toshiko Mori, whose work emphasizes visual cohesiveness with the surrounding environment.

5:00 – 7:00 p.m. **Shop, restroom, and return via bus to the Strathallan Hotel.**

Saturday, September 26

8:00 – 9:30 a.m. **Bus departs from the Strathallan Hotel for The Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, NY.**

9:30 – 9:55 a.m. **Coffee, pastries, refreshments** (The Roycroft Power House, 39 South Grove St., East Aurora, NY).

Welcome and Introduction. Alan Nowicki (Director of Programming, The Roycroft Campus).

10:00 a.m.– 12:30 p.m. **Tour the Roycroft Campus** (tour begins at The Roycroft Power House, 39 South Grove St., East Aurora, NY).

The Roycroft Campus was founded in 1895 in East Aurora, NY by Elbert Hubbard, an early champion of the Arts & Crafts ethos in the United States

(and a former salesman for the Larkin Soap Company). Inspired by the philosophies of John Ruskin and William Morris, Hubbard aimed to create an artisan community which, as articulated by Ruskin himself, aimed to promote "a belief in working with the head, hand and heart and mixing enough play with the work so that every task is pleasurable and makes for health and happiness." The Roycroft Campus includes 14 original buildings, many of which still serve as cultural institutions, educational centers and art galleries.

12:30 – 1:15 p.m.

Luncheon in the Roycroft Powerhouse (advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration)

1:15 – 2:00 p.m.

Visit the The Copper Shop Gallery and the Antique Shop (31 South Grove St., East Aurora, NY).

2:15 – 4:15 p.m.

Tour the Elbert Hubbard Museum and Baker Memorial Church (attendees to be split into two groups).

The **Elbert Hubbard Museum** is housed in one of the original Roycrofter homes and contains some of the rarest Roycroft artifacts.

Baker Memorial Church

(Baker Memorial United Methodist Church), 345 Main Street in East Aurora, New York. Built between 1927 and 1928 and designed in the Collegiate Gothic style, the church is constructed of limestone with cat stone trim and features a three-story entrance tower. Notably, the sanctuary houses 17 opalescent glass windows produced by Louis Comfort Tiffany, six of which are signed. The church complex also includes a one-story chapel, an attached parish hall, a rectory, a garage, and a frame caretaker's house.



Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, Exterior, 1928. Photo: photographer unknown.

4:15 – 5:15 p.m.

Refreshments and lecture

Availing Toward Life: The Evolution and Reception of John Ruskin's Revolutionary Social Thought James Spates (Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Hobart and William Smith).

5:30 p.m.

Bus departs for the Strathallan Hotel.

Sunday, September 27

9:30 a.m.

Bus departs from the Strathallan Hotel for the Rochester Institute of Technology.

RIT owes its 1847 founding to the merger of two smaller institutions – the Rochester Athenaeum, an association aimed at "cultivating and promoting literature, science, and the arts," and the Mechanics Literary Association. In 1903 Gustav Stickley and Harvey Ellis worked together to install Stickley's exhibition of his signature furniture at RIT. Knowingly or not, they had initiated among the first traveling art exhibitions in the U.S. In 1950 the institution became home to what is now the School for American Crafts. The university has gone on to build a renowned art and design program, home to many distinguished practitioners, among them esteemed woodworker and furniture designer Wendell Castle who taught and served as an artist-

in-residence throughout the latter half of the 20th century. An attestation to the school's stature and a result of faculty relationships, acclaimed designers Massimo and Lella Vignelli donated their archive to the University in 2010.

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Refreshments and opening remarks

Elizabeth Kronfield (Director, School for American Crafts and School of Art) and **Josh Owen** (Vignelli Distinguished Professor of Design and Director of the Vignelli Center for Design Studies, Rochester Institute of Technology) (University Art Gallery at RIT, James E. Booth Hall, Room 2700, 166 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY).

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Tour the RIT School for American Crafts and the Vignelli Archives (attendees to be joined by RIT students and faculty throughout the day).

Visit the jewelry, furniture design, ceramics, print and sculpture studios (while in use!) at the RIT School for American Crafts.

Tour the Harris, Bevier, and University galleries at the RIT School for American Crafts hosting the Faculty Exhibition and “Tarrant Clements – The Shape of Space.”

Tour the Vignelli Archives led by Josh Owen.

12:30 – 2:00 pm

Celebratory closing luncheon with roundtable discussion of “Tarrant Clements – The Shape of Space” (advanced purchase required and recommended since there are no practical alternatives in the vicinity; attendees to be sent instructions upon registration)

2:00 p.m.

Conference concludes. Return (on your own) to the Strathallan Hotel.

Optional visit to the Student Hall for Exploration and Development (SHED).



RIT School of American Crafts, Man Blacksmithing. Photo: courtesy of Clay Patrick McBride.

Registration

To register on-line, scan the QR code or go to 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 Strathallan Rochester Hotel and Spa, 550 East Avenue, Rochester, NY.

Program as of September 13, 2026.