

A New Art Centre For The Pacific Coast

The California Art Club and the City of Los Angeles Share in the Magnificent Gift of a Beautiful House Surrounded by Picturesque Gardens and Olive Groves

By FRANCIS WILLIAM VREELAND

Photographs courtesy of Los Angeles Times

Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect

THE city of Los Angeles, in conjunction with the California Art Club, has received recently what may be considered its first large gift in the name of art—the presentation of a city recreation centre comprising a large house and eight surrounding acres of beautiful gardens—the gift of Miss Aline Barnsdall. “A city recreation centre” may not sound like a gift in the name of art; but in this case, Miss Barnsdall, feeling that “recreation” need not be confined exclusively to athletics and sports, desired to provide a centre where recreation of another sort might be found. In the magnificent building itself, in the beautiful surrounding grounds and the opportunities which the centre affords for cultural development, she has succeeded in her purpose admirably. The gift was made as a memorial to her father, Theodore Barnsdall, the American oil pioneer.

The house will be the new home of the California Art Club. Set on the top of “Olive Hill” which rises some hundreds of feet above the level of the city, the house, a low, rambling picturesque structure, dominates its landscape gardens. It overlooks, on one side, vast areas that stretch to the rugged foothills of the Sierra Nevadas; over the Pacific on another side; and on a third, one can see the skyscrapers of this modern coast city—a panorama which caused Irvin Cobb to liken it to the enchanted creations of Maxfield Parrish.

From the city, broad driveways wind up through olive groves that entirely encircle the base of the hill giving it its name. The shadowy slopes are heavily carpeted with trailing plants and small blue flowers. Groups of great flowering acacias flank the upper drives and these shrubs border some of the lower approaches, heaping their quantities of bright yellow blossoms and golden green leaves against the dark gray-green foliage of the olive trees.

For the conversion of the building to its present status, the removal of but one partition twelve feet in length, the cutting of a single door opening, the installation of concealed lights that have transformed bedrooms

The gardens offer splendid backgrounds against which to display exhibitions of sculpture



From the clubhouse, one looks out over the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas, with the city in the immediate foreground

into fitting exhibition rooms and the moving out of personal household effects, fitted it completely to the Art Club's every requirement.

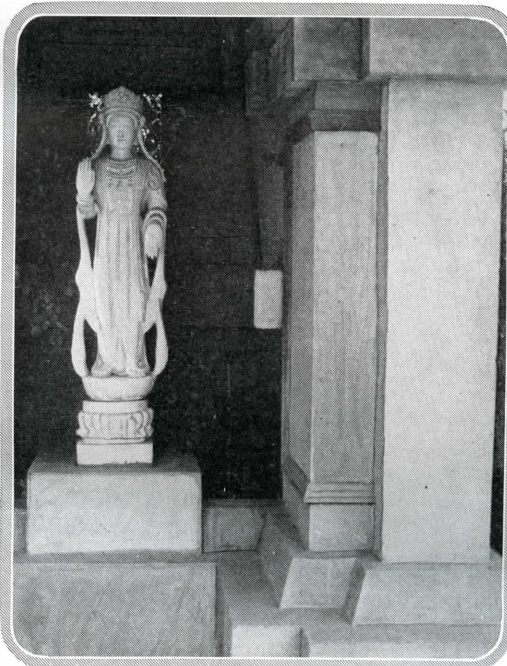
In the embrasure of a semi-enclosed patio, large enough to allow the arrival and departure of a dozen automobiles at one time, there is a porte-cochère and colonnaded approach to the main entrance of the house. Here two slabs of concrete, each with a small leaded glass panel relief, and swinging upon metal pivots form a striking door arrangement.

From an irregular foyer and broad corridor with a low ceiling there opens on the one side a tea room of a distinctive oriental atmosphere, raised to a level four steps above the foyer; an out-of-door patio theater, which offers beautiful opportunities for exhibits of garden sculpture as well as the pageants and dramatic performances of its original intention; a long corridor with a glassed roof and side, fitted for exhibitions of sculpture, etchings, water colors or prints, and a gallery, 47 feet long for exhibiting paintings.

From the main corridor there also opens, on the opposite side, a music room suitable for intimate chamber concerts; a comfortable lounge, which is the dominating note of the interior scheme; a charming library and a small directors' room.

The interior decorations, furniture, draperies and rugs were especially designed for this building by the architect. Each important item of furniture is especially placed, “built in” so to speak. Generous seats face the massive masonry of the fireplace that is a feature of the lounge. To the back of these great divans, and at their outer ends, are attached desks (or tables, if you will), from which arise standards for concealed indirect night lighting of the room, and suitable desk chairs accompany these.

Four remarkable and extremely valuable Japanese screens are let into walls of unevenly tarnished gold, encased in fine, vertical grained oak that is hand-polished in its warm natural color. This oak is the wood used for the trim and furniture thruout, and the latter includes numerous uphol-



A rare Siamese figure, carved in stone, stands at the main entrance to the clubhouse



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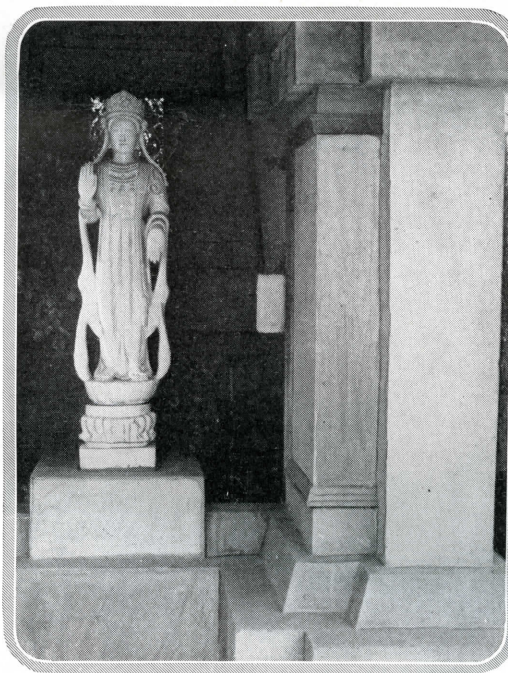
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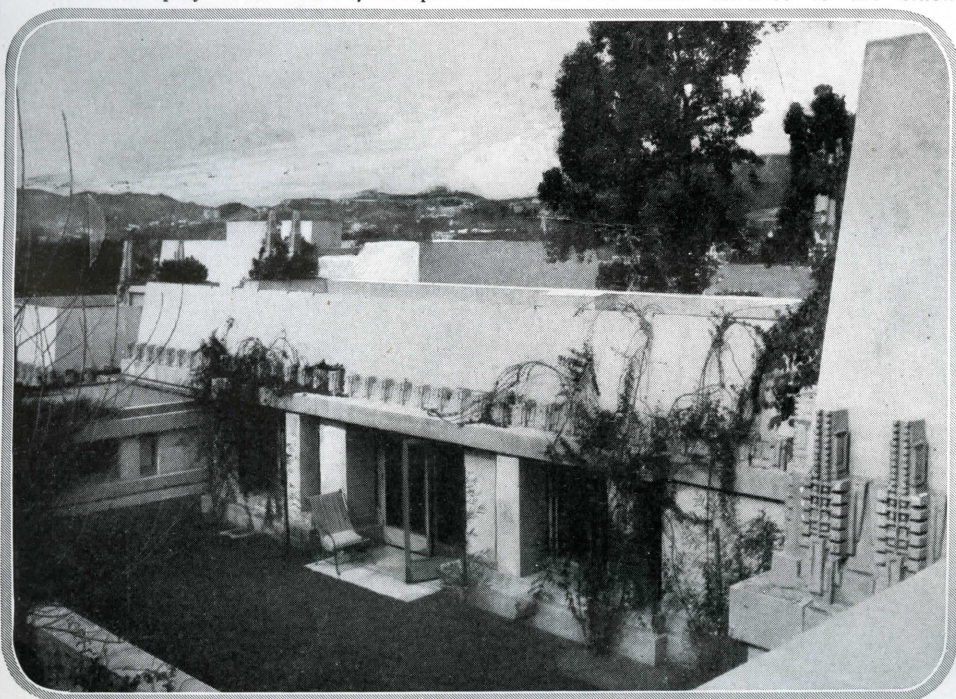
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Four remarkable and extremely valuable Japanese screens are let into walls of unevenly tarnished gold, encased in fine, vertical grained oak that is hand-polished in its warm natural color. This oak is the wood used for the trim and furniture thruout, and the latter includes numerous upholstered chairs and stools, together with tables and cabinets of distinctive line and detail. The upholstery is of golden brown in heavy velours.

The rugs are especially woven in a peculiar



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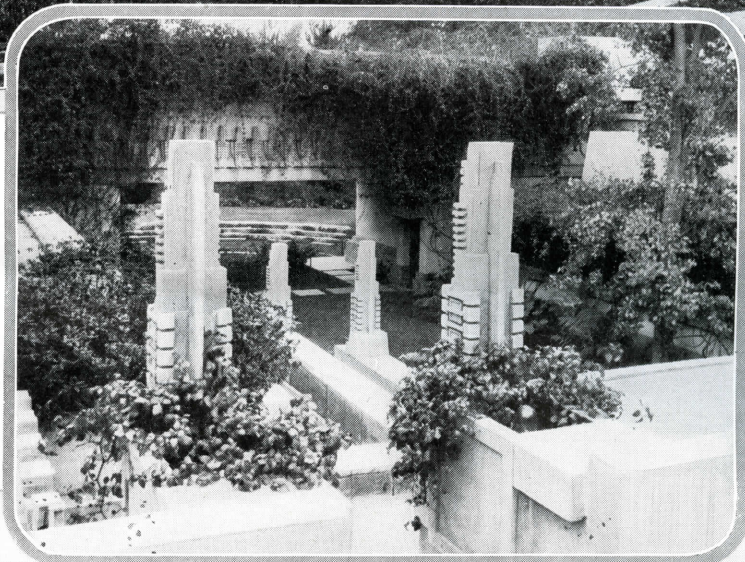


mauve ground, jeweled here and there near the outer edges with small, clustered geometric patterns of emphatic, harmonious color combinations. Window and door draperies are of dark tan velours used in conjunction with gold and wisteria silks.

Pastel tones, rather than distinct colors are introduced into the panels of the ceiling of the lounge. Lineal and geometric ornament and relief decoration of abstract meaning occurs in the masonry (if one may speak of massed blocks of concrete as such), and conventionalizations of the hollyhock form the motif for much of the carving in wood and the carving and casting in concrete.

The patio theatre, is a gem of architectural, engineering and landscaping invention, ingenuity and charm. Its patio-embraced "auditorium" is a sunken, grass-rugged garden, flanked on the sides by planted perennials and shrubbery, with a small clump of trees towering above walls of the building that form backgrounds for two low colonnades. The sturdy, rectangular columns of these colonnades

From the balcony of the theatre, one looks down through the vine-draped proscenium arch to a section of the stage



Looking across the "apron" of the stage of the out-of-door patio theatre to the pine grove which serves as a backdrop

the house for the actors and a complete equipment for hidden flood and spot lights for spectacular illumination of the stage area.

Three rising steps in concrete form the rear boundary to a grass border that lies at the back of the lily pool, and make an inverted or receding semicircular "apron" for the elevated stage. These steps are provided with earth-filled openings in which are planted small shrubs of the "box" variety, the steps mounting to and establishing the stage level.

A broad stretch of lawn with banked shrubs nicely distributed forms the stage floor and a lovely natural stage setting, while a grove of tall pines penetrated by enchanting avenues is the "backdrop". In this patio theatre pageants, classical, interpretive and costume dances and out-of-doors dramatic performances will be given.

Miss Barnsdall is busy now with the development of an entirely new type of art theatre which is soon to become an architecturally consistent part of the clubhouse. This theatre and its accompaniments will give still another outlet to the talents of those who will be attracted to this great new Pacific

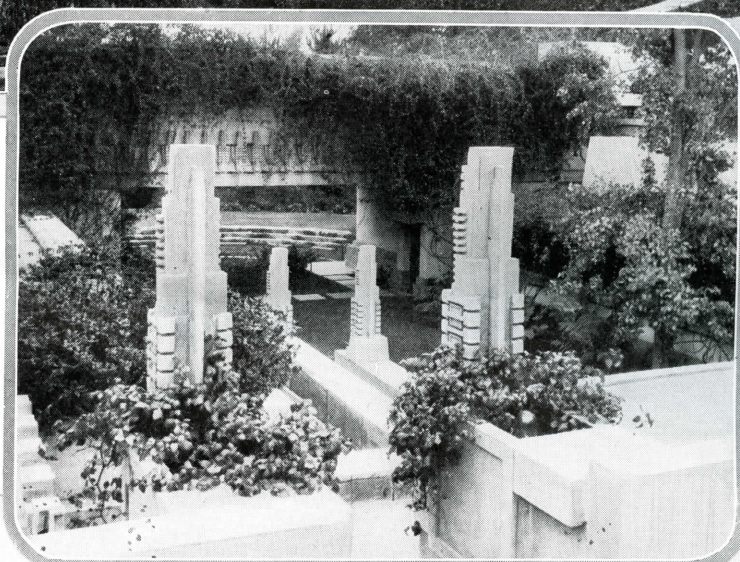


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Coast centre of cultural development. It is planned to have the building occupy a slope of the hillside immediately adjacent to the present boundaries of the estate. It will fulfill and complete the project which Miss Barnsdall has begun for the people of Los Angeles.

are enriched at their tops with the conventionalized hollyhock cast in high relief. Situated immediately beneath a massive, vine-draped proscenium, lies a circular lily pool, from the centre of which there rises a small dancing figure in bronze—this pool

The auditorium of the patio theatre as seen from one side of the stage, showing the stairway leading to the balcony and the roof promenade

being the basin of an electric fountain. The proscenium span and supporting piers provide visible and concealed exits to and from

