A New and Native Beauty
THE ART AND CRAFT OF GREENE & GREENE

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

MaryLou and George Boone Gallery
The work of architects Charles Sumner Greene (1868–1957) and Henry Mather Greene (1870–1954) is widely recognized as having established a new and enduring paradigm for the art of architecture in the United States. Like their contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright, the fraternal team of Greene and Greene considered architecture to be no less than a design language for life, imbuing their houses and furnishings with an expressive sensitivity for geography, climate, landscape, and lifestyle. The brothers’ unique aesthetic, shaped by European, Asian, and Native American influences, is lauded today as internationally significant. Known particularly for their designs in wood, the Greenes’ genius also extended to progressive designs and meticulous craft in stained glass, metal, textiles, and architectural ceramics. The firm’s rare architectural drawings, too, are themselves works of art. Echoing William Morris, founding father of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, Charles Greene wrote: “I seek till I find what is truly useful, and then I try to make it beautiful.”

While the greatest works of Greene and Greene typically benefited a discriminating and wealthy clientele, their influence on other architects and designers also helped to spread the same kind of beauty and usefulness into the homes of many middle-class Americans. The Greenes’ relatively modest designs from 1903 through 1905 began to define a fresh approach to ways Southern Californians could live more harmoniously with nature in such a salubrious climate. Their more elaborate houses and fully furnished interior environments, executed between 1906 and 1914, secured their reputations as domestic architects of the highest order. Decades of professional indifference followed their successes, however, owing perhaps to the unaffordable nature of their work and the evolution of popular styles. After World War II, a resurgence of interest in the Greenes’ innovative concepts of 45 years earlier brought the brothers once more to national prominence.
I had a feeling of keen disappointment. I wanted to be an artist.

CHARLES SUMNER GREENE, recalling his father’s plan in 1887 to apprentice him to a St. Louis architect, from his personal papers, ca. 1943

As teenagers in St. Louis, Charles and Henry Greene attended the Manual Training School of Washington University, whose founder, Calvin Milton Woodward, had pioneered the blending of polytechnic courses—such as machine-tool making and technical drawing—with traditional academics. Beginning in the fall of 1888 the brothers began formal training in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Henry excelled academically, but Charles resisted the training, preferring to dream of becoming an artist. After receiving their MIT certificates in 1891, the Greenes apprenticesed in several prominent Boston firms, whose principals had been associates of the late Henry Hobson Richardson (1838–1886). Richardson’s inventive use of rough stones, unpainted shingles, and other natural materials significantly influenced the nation’s pioneering interest in Arts and Crafts design and production.

A CALIFORNIA HOUSE

I am in thorough sympathy with the Wm. Morris movement.

CHARLES SUMNER GREENE, in a letter to client James A. Culbertson, 1902

When the Greenes arrived in Pasadena in 1893, they found a bustling town of 10,000—a popular winter resort for wealthy midwesterners seeking a warmer climate and exotic surroundings. A promotional brochure described Pasadena’s “Spanish Breezes, Italian Sky and sunsets, Alpine mountains, [and] tropical luxuriance of vegetation,” while the variety of its architectural styles—from Moorish to Mission to “Swiss chalet”—offered further validation for those who sought the palpable “elsewhere” of California. During most of the first decade of their practice, the Greenes echoed the prevailing historical styles in such designs as the Winthrop B. Fay house (1898), but after Charles married an Englishwoman and traveled to Britain and Europe in 1901, the firm’s designs began to reference the increasingly popular Arts and Crafts idiom, which had originated in England. James A. Culbertson was one of the firm’s most important clients of this period. His own interest in English designer William...
Morris, and his attachment to the broader Arts and Crafts movement, meant for the Greenes an opportunity to fully explore the new style with a supportive and wealthy patron.

The Greenes would soon move beyond “Englishness” to a uniquely Californian blend of romantic influences—ranging from Spanish to Japonesque—particularly in the 1903 house for Arturo Bandini, son of the late Don Juan Bandini, a significant political force during Mexican rule in California. The Bandini house marked the Greenes’ attempt to define a relevant architecture for California, one that not only derived inspiration from the state’s colonial history in its U-shaped, hacienda-style, courtyard plan, but also in Charles Greene’s new appreciation for the details of Japanese building, shown particularly in the pergola structure and the structural posts resting on natural, undressed stones. A portion of the Bandini house has been re-created expressly for this exhibition from the Greenes’ original designs, with meticulous attention to correct wood characteristics and authentic milling practices of the era. From 1903 to 1906, the Greenes continued to explore fresh and appropriate ways to represent California—its climate, topography, and lifestyle—in architecture and the decorative arts. A leaded-glass panel for the Jennie Reeve house (Long Beach, 1904) is a particularly striking example of the Greenes’ representation of nature in glass.

In 1906 the Greenes had begun to collaborate actively with two brothers from Sweden, Peter and John Hall, master stair builder and cabinetmaker, respectively. The famously tactile, even sensuous, quality of wood craftsmanship by which we know the Greenes’ work today can be largely attributed to the consummate skill of the Hall brothers and their associated craftsmen. Peter Hall acted as general contractor for the

THE SIGNATURE STYLE:
ARCHITECTURE AS A FINE ART

The whole construction was carefully thought out, and there was a reason for every detail.

HENRY MATHER GREENE,
The Craftsman, August 1912

Jennie A. Reeve house, Long Beach, 1903–04.

Entry-hall window, Jennie A. Reeve house, Long Beach, 1903-04. (Private collection, New York. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby’s, New York.)

THE HEIGHT OF GREENE AND GREENE

Between 1903 and 1911, the Greenes created designs for interior and exterior furnishings for over 20 houses, several of which are represented in this exhibition.
Blacker house and the Gamble house (both Pasadena, 1907–09) and other Greene and Greene masterworks, and John oversaw the creation of the furniture. Some of the most exquisite work produced by the Halls is represented in this exhibition. The spare and elegant hall chair, designed in 1907 for the William Bolton house, compares with modernist designs of a later period. The iconic Blacker entry-hall bench beautifully illustrates the Greenes’ restrained approach to design, with a subtle nod to Asian influence and the organic forms of the English movement. The virtuoso inlay of the dining-room furniture shows the Greenes’ interest in surface decoration that courageously engages the boundaries of traditional Arts-and-Crafts simplicity. Furniture designs for the Thorsen, Pratt, and Cordelia Culbertson houses constitute some of the finest later examples of the Greenes’ designs and Halls’ craftsmanship, and accordingly some of the finest of 20th-century American furniture. From 1912 through 1914, the Greenes’ turned their attention to custom metalwork—wrought, cast, and inlaid—bringing to a thrilling climax a decorative-arts partnership that would soon end.

**SEPARATION AND INDEPENDENT WORK**

*I told them I was giving up my work. They couldn’t believe it.*

**CHARLES SUMNER GREENE,**
from his personal papers, ca. 1943

The Greene and Greene firm effectively ended its active partnership in 1916 when Charles and his family moved north to the artists’ colony of Carmel-by-the-Sea. He vowed to abandon architecture in order to write and paint, but he was unable to resist the temptation to design and supervise the building of his greatest late-career work, a cliff-top dwelling in stone for the wealthy Kansas City china merchant D. L. James (Carmel Highlands, 1918–22). From time to time, other work came to the increasingly spiritual Charles...
Greene, both from new and former clients. The Fleishhacker family of San Francisco commissioned the addition of a paneled game room, with hand-carved furniture (1924–25), to enhance the country estate that the Greenes had designed for them in 1911 in Woodside, Calif. This was followed in 1927–29 by a dairy house and an Italian-inspired water garden. Meanwhile, Henry Greene had the opportunity to design some of his finest work after his brother had departed the firm. The lyrical flight of birds seen in the Whitworth leaded-glass windows (1918) shows a supremely artistic sensitivity. Henry’s straightforward use of natural adobe and rough-sawn redwood in the design for a ranch house for Walter Richardson (Porterville, 1929) is further testament to Henry Greene’s independent creative strength.

THE LEGACY OF GREENE AND GREENE

You have made the name of California synonymous with simpler, freer, and more abundant living. You have helped shape our distinctively national architecture, and in giving tangible form to the ideals of our people, your names will be forever remembered among the great creative Americans.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, Special Citation, 1952

1908

Charles M. Pratt house, Ojai, 1908–11.

North and west elevation drawings (detail), 1909, Charles M. Pratt house, Ojai, 1908–11. (Courtesy of Greene and Greene Archives, The Gamble House, USC.)
In 1952 the American Institute of Architects recognized Greene and Greene for their role in shaping American architecture. In the post–World War II years, the Greenes would be referred to as forerunners of American modernism, particularly by House Beautiful magazine. The magazine’s editor, Elizabeth Gordon, presented the legacy of the Greenes and Frank Lloyd Wright as a front line of defense against what she perceived to be the encroaching European influence of modernist architects and designers such as Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. Although the magazine had a political agenda, the cultural benefit that accrued to history was clear. Hired by House Beautiful, the architectural photographer Maynard Parker documented the Greenes’ work during a period when many of the Greenes’ original furnishings and interior appointments remained fortuitously intact. The Maynard Parker collection, now housed at The Huntington, helps scholars to better assess how the Greenes’ legacy, and that of scores of other architects, was appreciated at a critical time in the development of modern architecture. Architects as diverse as William Wurster, Harwell Harris, and Frank Gehry have cited the influence of Greene and Greene, and interest in their work remains strong today.

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RELATED EVENTS AT THE HUNTINGTON

**Arts and Crafts Marketplace**
Oct. 18–19, noon–4:30 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | A variety of vendors presents a selection of glass, pottery, prints, textiles, jewelry, and metalwork related to the Arts and Crafts movement. Free.

**Arts & Crafts Printing Workshop**
Oct. 25, Nov. 1 and 8, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. | The botanical motifs found in the Arts and Crafts designs of William Morris and Charles and Henry Greene will lend inspiration to students in this printing workshop with artist Melissa Manfull. Supplies included. Huntington Members: $140. Non-Members: $155. Registration: 626-405-2128.

**Film Screening: “Greene & Greene: The Art of Architecture”**
Nov. 7, 1 & 3 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | The creative evolution of Charles and Henry Greene and their intensely artistic approach to architectural design are chronicled in this documentary by filmmaker Paul Bockhorst, with commentary by noted authorities Edward R. Bosley, Randell L. Makinson, Robert Judson Clark, and others. Free.

**From Britain to Russia: An International View of the Arts and Crafts Movement**
Nov. 7, 7 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | The Arts and Crafts movement encompassed everything from menus in Moscow to chic domestic architecture in the United States. Rosalind P. Blakesley, of the University of Cambridge, charts the movement’s evolution from the brainchild of some quirky British individuals to an artistic development of international renown. Free.

**Conference: A “New and Native” Beauty: The Art and Craft of Greene & Greene**
Nov. 8, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | In conjunction with the exhibition, this conference brings together internationally noted historians and curators to explore context for, and influences on, the architecture and decorative arts of Greene and Greene. $10. Registration: skrasnno@huntington.org or 626-405-3432.

**“Greene & Greene: An Arts and Crafts Conundrum”**
Nov. 19, 6:30 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | As part of its Robert R. Wark lecture series, The Huntington presents a lecture by Edward R. Bosley, James N. Gamble Director of The Gamble House and a co-curator of the exhibition. Free.

**Merrymakers of Whoopee, Janet Klein & Her Parlor Boys**
Nov. 20, 8 p.m. | Friends’ Hall | Effervescent chanteuse Janet Klein performs rare tunes from the 1910s, ’20s, and ’30s with inspired renditions of Tin Pan Alley, vaudeville, ragtime, and other gems. Registration includes admission to the exhibition before the performance. Huntington Members: $35. Non-Members: $45. Reservations: 626-405-2128.

**Children’s Tile Making Workshop**

Curator Tour
Dec. 11, 4:30–5:30 p.m. | Join exhibition curators for a private tour and learn about the art and architecture of Greene and Greene and why their work is recognized internationally as among the finest of the American Arts and Crafts movement. Huntington Members: $15. Non-Members: $20. Registration: 626-405-2128.

RELATED EXHIBITIONS

**Living Beautifully: Greene & Greene in Pasadena**
An exhibition of objects, materials, and photographs exploring the lives of Charles and Henry Greene and their families, as well as drafting tools, carving tools, and other artifacts of the partnership. The exhibition also features information about the Greenes’ premier craftsmen, John and Peter Hall.

**Seeing Greene & Greene: Architecture in Photographs**
An exhibition of photographs by 20th-century architectural and fine-art photographers of the work of Greene and Greene. On Nov. 15, a panel discussion, “Chasing Greene & Greene,” will highlight the role of photographers in reviving interest in the Greenes’ work.

**The Dorothy Collins Brown Wing of the Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art**
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
A wing of The Huntington’s American art galleries is devoted to a permanent installation of the work of Charles and Henry Greene that highlights the evolution of the Greenes’ artistic genius with examples of their designs for furniture and decorative arts, including an entire dining room and staircase.

**The Gamble House**
4 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, Calif. | 626-793-3334
A National Historic Landmark, The Gamble House was designed by Charles and Henry Greene in 1908 for David and Mary Gamble of the Procter and Gamble Co. and serves as an outstanding example of American Arts and Crafts architecture and furnishings. Open for public tours. For information on The Gamble House, special tours, and a Web-based catalog of the exhibition, please visit www.gamblehouse.org.

RELATED PUBLICATION

_A “New and Native” Beauty: The Art and Craft of Greene & Greene_ (Merrell Publishers Ltd.) accompanies the exhibition with a foreword by architect Frank Gehry and essays addressing the Greenes’ architecture and designs. Available at The Huntington’s Bookstore & More and at major booksellers. $75.