

Louis Sullivan: Unison With Nature

This coming spring's exhibition at the Gardner Museum concerns the achievements of architect Louis Sullivan, (1856-1924) well-known as one of the key generators of skyscraper development in this country, small town banks and famous phrases.

In the prime of his career Sullivan initiated early attempts at tall buildings. The Wainwright Building (1890-92), recently renovated, in St. Louis, stands as a first such attempt. While indeed the Wainwright is impressive, the Guaranty Building in Buffalo, New York, employs many of the design techniques of the St. Louis building, but better defines its purpose of being a skyscraper. The Wainwright kneels, the Guaranty stands on two legs as a testament to its architect.

If you happen to travel through Iowa or Minnesota you may spot some unusual cubical banks. Designed by Sullivan later in his career, having fallen out of the mainstream architectural vogue, he utilized the rich floral ornamentation developed for the first skyscrapers. I would suggest visiting one of these structures. The experience is worth getting out of the car.

Most everyone has heard or said the phrase, "Form follows function." According to tale, Louis Sullivan uttered it first. When the exhibition arrives this spring, recall that phrase. You will surely understand how the meaning came about.

—Kevin Woodward

The exhibition, entitled, "Louis H. Sullivan: Unison with Nature," will open April 9, 1988, in our first floor galleries. Prepared by the University Museums at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, the exhibit has toured Illinois, Washington, D.C. and other parts of the country. It includes original works in tin, wood and iron and reproductions cast from plaster, limestone and terra cotta ornamentation. Illustrations and text accompany the objects. Dr. David Van Zanten, Associate Professor of Art History at Northwestern University sums up the exhibition: "it is as important as any other body of architectural artifacts in the country."

THANK YOU!

The Exhibition Committee: Mrs. Eileen Dezotell, Mrs. Pat Geraci, Mrs. Beverly Karp, Guest Curator, Mrs. Jean Shelor Lyle, Mrs. Judy Milfs, Mrs. Pauline Wessels, Mrs. Rolla Wike, and museum officials would like to thank the following lenders who made possible our Fall 1987 Exhibit, "Quilts and Quilters."

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Louis H. Sullivan, 1891. Courtesy of Sullivaniana Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago. Photography by Alexander Hesler

NEWSLETTER

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