

ARTISTS WHO WORKED WITH WRIGHT

Ernest Albert (dates unknown)

According to architectural historian, Don Kolec, Ernest Albert may have been in the Oak Park studio. Albert worked with Wright in the early 1890s. Five out of the six watercolors Wright displayed at the 1894 Chicago Architectural Club exhibition were credited to Albert.

Richard Walter Bock (1865–1949)

Bock moved to Chicago from Germany at an early age. He was trained as a cabinetmaker by his father. In the 1880s Bock worked as a woodcarver while taking life drawing and modeling lessons. He worked as a carver and modeler for Chicago's Northwestern Terra Cotta Company and later for several decorating firms in New York.

In 1888, Bock traveled to Europe and studied both in Berlin and then at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Bock returned in 1891 and set up his studio in Chicago. He was commissioned to execute the exterior sculpture for the Mining and Electricity Exposition Halls at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. He also created the interior sculpture for Sullivan's Schiller Theatre. It was while working on this project that Bock was introduced to Wright.

Bock's first commission from Wright was the maiden frieze for the Heller Residence in 1896. He created The Boulders figures and stork capitals for Wright's studio entrance in 1898. Bock worked up on the studio balcony, where he created sculpture for Wright's Dana-Thomas Residence (1903), the Larkin Building (1904), the Scoville Park Fountain (commonly known as the Horse Show fountain [1909]) and Midway Gardens (1914).

After 1913, Bock worked for several other Chicago architects including Robert C. Spencer, Charles E. White, Jr., William Drummond, and William Gray Purcell. He designed funerary monuments in Graceland Cemetery and window displays for Marshall Field on State Street; he painted several portraits, including a governor of Illinois. Bock became head of the sculpture department at the University of Oregon in 1929. His last major design was for a colossus at Chicago's 1933 Century of Progress Exposition that was never built. Bock moved to California in the 1940s where, with the help of his son and William Gray Purcell, he wrote his autobiography before succumbing to Parkinson's disease in 1949.

Orlando Giannini (1891–1928)

Giannini began his artistic career around 1878, working for the Cincinnati Art Pottery Company. In 1885, he became a member of Xentric X, a group of artists in New York. Giannini moved to Chicago by 1891 and joined Adams & Westlake, a brass and bronze foundry. He worked as a foreman and designer for the firm until 1898. It was probably during this period that Giannini was introduced to Wright, possibly by his client Ward Willits, Vice President of Adams and Westlake.

In 1895 and later, Giannini produced three murals for Wright: two murals in Wright's own home (the two Indian-inspired murals in the master bedroom). The third mural was located at the Williams Residence in River Forest. Giannini began an art glass firm with Fritz Hilgart in 1899. They carried out at least five commissions for Wright including the Joseph and Helen Husser Residence (1899) and the Thomas (1901), Willits (1902), McArthur (1892, art glass 1902), and Cheney (1904) Residences.

During his career, Giannini worked in many media including ceramics, paint, art glass, glass mosaics, and print. His designs illustrate a strong influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. Giannini left Chicago sometime after 1906. He moved to La Jolla, California, where he continued working until his death in

1928.

Alfonzo Iannelli (1888–1965)

Born in Italy, Iannelli arrived in Newark, New Jersey with his family in 1898. At the age of thirteen, he left school and became an apprentice in a jewelry factory—soon after, he received a scholarship to study at the Newark Technical School at night where he worked primarily with the decoration of objects. Iannelli continued his art training at the Art Students' League in New York and, at the age of 17, began to work in the studio of his teacher, Gutzon Borglum who later created Mt. Rushmore. Iannelli then established his own studio where he produced designs for magazines including *Harper's Weekly* and *Ladies Home Journal*.

Iannelli arrived in Los Angeles in 1910 and began designing weekly vaudeville posters for the Orpheum Theater. John Lloyd Wright was attracted to the posters and introduced himself to Iannelli. In 1913, John Lloyd Wright recommended Iannelli to his father to design sculptural decoration for Midway Gardens, which he worked on with Richard Bock. Although he turned down working with Wright on the Imperial Hotel, Iannelli completed commissions with other Prairie architects including Purcell & Elmslie (Woodbury County Courthouse, 1915), and Barry Byrne (J. B. Franke House and St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 1924).

George Mann Niedecken (1878–1945)

Niedecken received his art training at the Wisconsin Art Center and then at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1897–1898. He traveled to Europe between 1898 and 1901, spending 1900 studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Like Wright, Niedecken was interested in Japanese prints, which he collected while in Europe.

Niedecken's presence in the Oak Park studio is documented in a May 20, 1904, letter from Charles E. White, Jr., to Walter Willcox. "Niedecken, the artist, has returned [to Wright's studio] for a few days a week". During his visit, he created a frieze for the Dana-Thomas residence dining room.

In October 1907, Niedecken joined his brother-in-law, John Walbridge to form the Niedecken & Walbridge Company. According to an advertisement in *Western Architect*, they were "specialists in design and execution of interior decorations and mural paintings, makers of special furniture—art glass—electric fixtures". The firm worked on many interiors for Wright, including the Coonley (1907), Robie (1909) and Tomek (1907) residences. In addition, they worked on the furnishings and other interior decorative elements for the Amberg and Irving houses, both commissions left to von Holst and Mahony by Wright on his 1909 departure for Europe. Niedecken and Walbridge worked for other Prairie architects including the interior decoration of the Edison Shop (Chicago, 1913) and the furniture of the Mrs. Edna S. Purcell house (Minneapolis, 1913) for Purcell & Elmslie.

[RETURN TO SYLLABUS]

