

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2.0

Volume 1 Issue 1

March 25, 2018

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Welcome to Vol 1, Issue 1 of the *Alumni Newsletter 2.0*. Our purpose is to provide more timely and extensive information than we can provide with our Annual Newsletter (to be renamed *The Alumni Journal*) and to keep in touch with our membership more frequently.

In this issue, we bring you information on the Recruitment Events that were recently held around the country with the financial support in part of the Alumni Association. Thanks to all those who contributed in many, many ways to make the events this year very successful.

Articles on Alumni in the news, and items and events of interest are included.

The most recent financial report of the Alumni Association is included. Thanks to all who have contributed so generously with your membership dues and your special donations. In 2018, the Alumni Association can provide \$24,250 in funds for Scholarships to the 2018 VSA Summer Schools.

If you have items of interest to our Alumni to be included in the next issue of *Alumni Newsletter 2.0*, please send them to the editor, David Lamdin at [dalamdin@aol.com](mailto:dalamdin@aol.com)

## Chicago Recruitment Event

Tina Strauss

The VSA Summer Schools recruiting event in Chicago took place at the local office of the AIA on Monday, January 22. Co-hosted by the VSA, the Chicago AIA and the local chapter of the SAH, the event drew 60 people.



The main event was a presentation by John Waters (co-director of the Chicago Summer School and the preservation programs manager of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy) and Justin Miller (architectural historian from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

The presentation was called "Looking at H.H.Richardson's "Other" Chicago House", the Franklin MacVeagh house. Built on Lake Shore Drive across from the Potter Palmer Castle, HHR was working on the design at the same time as Glessner House. However, the MacVeagh house was demolished in 1922. Justin Miller reviewed the background and history of the house and family. John Waters recreated the house with floor plans, photos, illustrations and a virtual tour of the interior and exterior.

Before the presentation began, 2017 Newport alum Andrew Elders spoke to the group about his experience at the summer school program. Andrew spoke convincingly about his class and the adventures in Newport. When he asked if there were other alumni present, several people responded, including 2017 London alum Keith Letsche and 2017 Chicago alum Jeff Zurlinden. Both spoke briefly about their experiences. The spontaneity, enthusiasm and positive outlook of these summer schools alum was infectious.

We would like to thank the Chicago office of the AIA, Zurich Esposito (Executive Vice President) and Joan Pomaranc (Program Director), in particular. We would also like to thank the Chicago chapter of the SAH and Judith Freeman.



## **Norfolk Recruitment Event**

E Courtney Bullaboy

The Eloise Hunter Chapter of the Victorian Society in America recently held a recruitment event for the Summer Schools program on Friday, February 9th at 6 PM. The event was held at the Hunter House Victorian Museum, located in downtown Norfolk, Virginia.



Attendees included interested parties from the local chapter's membership, local undergraduate and graduate students, and members of the community. Guests were welcomed into the front parlor of the museum and treated to wine and snacks provided by the local chapter.

The program concluded with discussion of the logistics of applying to the programs, obtaining scholarships, and offering details of the itineraries and pricing for the programs in Newport, Chicago, and London. Attendees were given time to ask questions and Ms. Spainhour entertained these questions and answered them during an informal reception following the program.



The event was deemed a success as multiple individuals expressed interest in applying for the programs, most notable the Chicago program, and in joining the society's local chapter. A great time was had by all and the society looks forward to hosting other recruitment events in the future.



## New York City Recruitment Event

The VSA sponsored a recruitment event on February 14 in NYC at the Jefferson Market Library. An SRO crowd of over 60 people heard Professor Richard Guy Wilson present a lecture on “The Greatest Victorian Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright and Newport, Rhode Island”.



Speakers at the event included Moira Gallagher who spoke about her experiences at the Newport Summer School, Alexis Barr who spoke on Chicago, and Amon White for London.



## **San Francisco Recruitment Event**

Christopher Pollock

Although the West Coast has no organized alumni chapter, each year an event is given by Bay Area individuals who have benefited from the VSA's unique schools.

The exuberant 1885 Victorian-era residence of Cher Zillman was the venue for this year's VSA Schools' student recruitment event.



The home was built in 1889 for William Westerfield, who was a successful German immigrant in the catering and bakery business. The towered residence which is situated on corner across from Alamo Square was designed by German born Architect Henry Geilfuss and constructed for \$9,985. Over the years the home has served as a residence for prominent families, a private Russian club, a jazz musician haven, a hippie pad, and home for dedicated preservationists.

The residence with carriage house was built by prolific developer Charles L. Hinkel on an oversize lot; he and his family ended up occupying the home for a period due to non-payment by the client who commissioned the project.

The building is a transitional Second French Empire style in the city's Western Addition District, an area where many Victorians were demolished in favor of well-meaning redevelopment in the 1970s. The double parlor features hand painted decorative ceilings. The site was made City and County of San Francisco Landmark 190 in 1988.

Jim Siegel and the Alumni Association sponsored the event which was organized by Hank Dunlop and Stephen Haigh with assistance from Ian Burke and Christopher Pollock for prospective students to learn of opportunities for study at the Newport, Chicago or London Summer Schools.

Slide presentations were given by alumni from the three schools showing highlights of each curriculum. VSA Board Member Cindy Casey discussed the newer Chicago School, which includes not only 19<sup>th</sup> century, but those important regional architectural contributions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Adam Klafter reviewed the myriad places visited in the London School. Kyle McGuire talked about Newport and how the school goes beyond that important harbor town to see a wide variety of the best examples of the Colonial Period through the Gilded Age. Additionally, he showed the riches of the 2016 Vienna and Budapest alumni tour.

The evening included information on admission and scholarships to the Summer Schools program as well as refreshments.

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2017 marked the first year of the UVA Richard Guy Wilson Prize for Excellence in the Study of Buildings, Landscapes and Places, an annual \$5,000 prize, open to undergraduate and graduate students across the University of Virginia.

The prize is named in honor of Richard Guy Wilson, a noted architectural historian and the Commonwealth Professor in Architectural History at UVA's School of Architecture.

Wilson left a lasting impression on Mallory Walker, an alumnus of the College of Arts and Sciences, when he was a student in Wilson's class. As Walker described, "Professor Wilson is an extraordinary teacher at ease in demonstrating how political, economic, technological and artistic elements influence what we see and vice versa. He asks students to think about objects and places and the forces that were at work when a building or space was conceived. Were there political considerations? Was there a new artistic style created at the time? Did the building or place utilize a new technology?"

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## **From the Grounds Up: Thomas Jefferson's Architecture & Design**

**01/26/2018 TO 04/29/2018**

*Curated by Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor of Architectural History at the University of Virginia*

One of Thomas Jefferson's most important legacies was his role as a designer and advocate for the creation of an iconic architectural identity for our fledgling country that still endures today.

Jefferson's architectural vision for the United States will be explored in a special exhibition, curated by Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor of Architectural History. From the Grounds Up: Thomas Jefferson's Architecture & Design will investigate and illuminate Jefferson's many architectural accomplishments, as well as the classical tradition to which his architecture was aligned.

The exhibition will consist of drawings, prints, paintings, photographs and building and construction artifacts, among other archival materials.



Image: Thomas Jefferson, American, 1743-1826. *University of Virginia, Library, (South Elevation of Rotunda)*, 1819 (N-328). Pricking, scoring, iron-gall ink, pencil on laid paper engraved with coordinate lines, 8 3/4 x 8 3/4 in. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia.

As a designer, Jefferson is primarily known for his home, Monticello, and the University of Virginia, established by Jefferson 200 years ago—both UNESCO World Heritage sites—but his architectural career encompasses much more. He designed other houses and major public buildings that helped define American architecture, including extensive city plans for Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Capitol.

Jefferson traveled throughout Europe during his tenure as American minister to the French court. As a result, European architecture and garden design deeply informed his design ethos, and can be seen in several of his iconic buildings. Jefferson understood that as the U.S. grew, its built environment would need to be designed and that quality architecture would be of primary importance to the future of the country.

***From the Grounds Up: Thomas Jefferson's Architecture & Design* will focus on many key aspects of Jefferson's career as an architect.** His early influences and interests, including American landscapes he admired and architecture he encountered abroad that enlarged his view of design will be discussed. Construction techniques and the tools employed in the construction of his iconic buildings will be highlighted, while also addressing some of the issues surrounding the construction by both free and enslaved men. The exhibition will move on to sections devoted to his design of private homes and public buildings. Of note will be an examination of Jefferson's establishment and design of the University of Virginia.

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There's a warehouse in Long Island City that houses a quarter of a million pieces of Tiffany glass, sorted by color, in rough wooden cubbies.

Understandably, people who hear about it want to come take a look. Pilgrims regularly show up at the door and ring an unmarked buzzer for the Neustadt Collection. **Lindsay Parrott** (Newport, 2001) the collection's executive director and curator, turns them away. "My heart kind of breaks," she said.

The Neustadt Collection is a nonprofit decorative-arts archive comprising hundreds of Tiffany lamps and windows, and the world's largest trove of glass fragments from Tiffany Studios. The outfit lends objects to travelling exhibitions and has a dedicated gallery in the Queens Museum, but the warehouse isn't open to the public. On a recent Saturday, though, the Neustadt welcomed visitors for a rare tour, in conjunction with Open House New York. At 2:30 *p.m.*, a dozen or so people were lined up outside the warehouse, in the shadow of several shiny new residential high-rises.

Inside, ceiling fans whirred above rows of cubbies packed with jagged glass bits. One row was labelled "Brown with brown streaks"; another, "Dichroic turquoise."

Parrott, who is a petite forty-one-year-old, had her eyeglasses tucked into the neck of her sweater and wore leopard-print ballet flats. "We don't have a lot of reds," she told the visitors, once they were inside. "Is that because Tiffany made so many lampshades and windows with, you know, juicy peonies in them? I mean, maybe."

She explained that the warehouse held the remnants that were left when Louis Comfort Tiffany's studios, in nearby Corona, closed, in the mid-thirties.

(Tiffany was the son of the jeweler Charles Lewis Tiffany.) Around that time, she said, Dr. Egon Neustadt, a Jewish orthodontist from Austria who settled in Flushing, began collecting Tiffany lamps, after his wife admired one in a Greenwich Village junk shop. Stained-glass lamps had fallen out of fashion, and the market was flooded with them. Neustadt went on to purchase more than two hundred Tiffany lamps, along with some windows and, later, the archive of fragments. He established his own museum, from which the Neustadt is descended.

One of Parrott's pet peeves is people telling her that Tiffany lamps remind them of the fixtures in a T.G.I. Friday's or a Ruby Tuesday. "The design is lousy," she said of the chain knockoffs. "The glass is offensive."

She picked up a cream-colored fragment with a rippled texture, about the size of an iPhone. (Part of preparing the warehouse for visitors, she said, was stashing away fragments small enough to be pocketed.) "I'm going to pass this around. Two hands, please. Some of the edges are sharp—it's glass."

She explained how the artists had pressed wooden paddles against the molten glass to create an undulating effect— "ideal for suggesting, say, the hem of a saint's robe in a church window."

Neustadt purchased a Tiffany window depicting a woman in classical garb. The woman's face had been smashed out. "He probably got a deal on it, right? It was damaged," she said. "His wife, Hildegard, was deceased by then, and he missed her deeply. So he had somebody paint her visage and inset it into this Tiffany window. People snicker about that now."

"You have to remember," Tomlin said, that, at a time when no one else cared, "Dr. Neustadt amassed this treasure trove of Tiffany lamps and kept them safe."

Parrott agreed: "I don't feel like we have anything to apologize for." ♦

*This article appears in the print edition of the January 29, 2018 NYT issue with the headline "Shards."*

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**By Corey Kilgannon**

Dec. 14, 2017

[Sibyl McCormac Groff](#) can barely walk a half-block in Midtown Manhattan this time of year without being approached by friends and strangers alike. “Part of it is my manner — I smile and talk to people — and part of it is my red coat,” said Ms. McCormac Groff, who leads idiosyncratic Christmas tours around [Rockefeller Center](#).

She strikes a small but noticeable figure in her red coat and a nearly matching beret bearing flashing lights and the words “Let’s Get Lit.” It is all part of her holiday get-up. On a recent tour, she was trimmed like a Christmas tree, a motley mix of reds and greens that included Christmas-themed eyeglasses and jewelry, a red reindeer shirt, a pair of slacks bearing Santa insignia and a “Ho, Ho, Ho” handbag.

“People send me these things because they all know I’m a Christmas freak,” she said, adding that the outfit helps keep her safe while giving tours. “I wear red so people don’t trample me, because I’m so short,” said Ms. McCormac Groff, who stands 4 feet, 9 inches tall.



Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

“You take your life into your hands crossing the street in this city,” she said. “If you wear red, they see you better, since everybody in New York wears black.” With her

low center of gravity, Ms. McCormac Groff can weave through the crowds so deftly that her tour takers have trouble keeping up with her. Last week, she held a marker aloft: a large plastic candy cane above the crowds around the Rockefeller Center tree, whose arrival each December she never misses.

The tours led by Ms. McCormac Groff, who is known alternately as the Spirited New Yorker and the Christmas elf of Midtown, are whimsical and informative, part personality, part history. She began a recent one in the bustling lobby of 30 Rockefeller Plaza and led the group into a small alcove that serves as a broom closet, but was soon cleared out of the space by a security guard who recognized her and said, “You should know the procedure.”



Ms. McCormac Groff's secular take on Christmas nonetheless includes a visit to the crèche at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Jeenah Moon for The New York Times

Ms. McCormac Groff told the group that the tradition of erecting a tree at Rockefeller Center dated back to its construction during the Great Depression when workers chipped in for a tree and decorated it with homemade ornaments.

The legend of Sinterklaas was brought over by Dutch settlers, she said. Santa's image was developed in popular paintings by artists like Thomas Nast and Norman Rockwell. Washington Irving and Clement Clarke Moore helped establish Santa as a chubby man with the jolly salutation that Ms. McCormac Groff often employs herself.

"If you're tense, just try saying 'Ho, ho, ho,'" she told her tour. "It's a destresser." Ms. McCormac Groff, who is divorced and lives on the Upper East Side, grew up in Syracuse, N.Y., and adored Christmas as a child, decorating a tree and wrapping presents for her dolls. In her youth, she visited the Plaza hotel and the '21' Club in Manhattan and was infused with the lore of the city, especially at Christmastime. She eventually moved here and for years sent out Christmas newsletters to friends and followers, offering things to do, reviews of the Rockefeller Center tree and ratings of the decorated shop windows along Fifth Avenue.

After being encouraged by a friend, Ms. McCormac Groff recently self-published a book, "A New York Christmas: Ho-ho-ho at Gothamtide!" which is part guidebook and part historical vignettes. She coined the word "Gothamtide" to describe the holiday traditions that began in the city out of the commonality of the diverse cultures here.

"Since New York is full of so many different people, Christmas here is about learning how different cultures observe the holidays," she said, and then recounted the story of a Sikh cabdriver who told her he keeps Santa Claus on his religious shrine all year long "because Santa Claus is for everybody."

She led her group into St. Patrick's Cathedral to view the Christmas crèche, which included among the biblical statues a golden retriever, a modern [tribute](#) to the current rector's pet. "I think that's hysterical," said Ms. McCormac Groff, who then led the



group past the windows of the Cartier store on Fifth Avenue and past the ‘21’ Club, where she said she has traditionally enjoyed dinner on Christmas Eve.

On the crowded sidewalk, she dodged a vendor pushing his peanut cart, and then a scruffy man yelling obscenities. “Welcome to New York, folks,” she told her group, and steered them into the Peninsula Hotel to finish up by pointing out the decorations, including snowmen wearing bellhop caps. Then she arrived at the hotel’s rooftop bar, where a manager took a selfie with her and then, charmed by the little lady in red, offered her a free drink.

“In that case, I’ll take a glass of Champagne,” she said and promptly debriefed him on Christmas traditions in his native Romania. He had to return to work, he said, and she held up her glass of bubbly Christmas cheer. “O.K.,” she said. “Ho, ho, ho.”

A version of this article appears in print on December 17, 2017, on Page MB4 of the New York edition with the headline: Looking a Lot Like Christmas. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today’s Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)



**VSA ALUMNI ASSOC Main & Pitts Acts Inc/Exp 12/31/2017**

**1/1/2017  
BALANCE**

**\$61,173.46**

	<u>Main Account</u>	<u>Pittsburgh Account</u>		
<b>INCOME</b>				
Membership Dues	\$11,991.41	\$0.00	\$11,991.41	
Donations to our AA Scholarship Funds	\$11,971.47	\$0.00	\$11,971.47	
Events:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Investment	\$0.01	\$0.00	\$0.01	
Advertisements	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Merchandise sales	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$23,962.89</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$23,962.89</b>	<b>\$23,962.89</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>				
Membership solicitation	\$727.28	\$0.00	\$727.28	
Scholarship donations to VSA National	\$1,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$26,000.00	
Events (London and Newport Receptions)	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	
Member communications	\$6,201.97	\$0.00	\$6,201.97	
Donations: VSA Annual Chapter Dues	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	
Advertising	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
SS Recruitment meetings	\$181.10	\$0.00	\$181.10	
Miscellaneous	\$14.00	\$0.00	\$14.00	
Insurance	\$458.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Refunds	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$9,682.35</b>	<b>\$25,000.00</b>	<b>\$34,682.35</b>	<b>\$34,682.35</b>
<b>NET INCOME (Loss)</b>	<b>\$14,280.54</b>	<b>-\$25,000.00</b>	<b>\$10,719.46</b>	<b>-</b>

(BOTH BANK BALANCES)

End of 2012				\$35,273.00
End of 2013		\$20,507.00	\$39,250.00	
End of 2014		\$38,352.00	\$58,952.00	
End of year 2015			\$42,481.00	
End of year 2016	\$18,809.60	\$42,363.86	\$61,173.46	
End of year 2017	\$33,090.14	\$17,363.86	<b>\$50,454.00</b>	
		<b>12/31/2017</b>		
		<b>BALANCE</b>		<b>\$50,454.00</b>

Please Check off, if this Chapter has NO  
tangible assets: None: NO Tangible Assets  
OR Describe tangible assets as instructed.

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