

KIRKLAND MUSEUM OF FINE & DECORATIVE ART: UNIQUE MUSEUM OF A UNIQUE COLORADO-BASED ARTIST

Do you think that a building has to remain in its original location to be effective?

Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art features a brand new building, designed in 2018 by Jim Olson, FAIA, of Seattle-based Olson Kundig, a historic studio and a celebrated international decorative art collection, including fabulous examples of furniture by over 100 architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Gio Ponti. The museum is located in the heart of the Golden Triangle neighborhood. Located steps from the gold-domed State Capitol, it is home to the Denver Art Museum, Clyfford Still Museum, History Colorado Center, Byers-Evans House Museum, the ART, a hotel, Denver's Central Public Library and numerous galleries.

Old & New

Kirkland Museum is partially housed in a 1910–1911 Arts & Crafts structure built by Maurice Biscoe and Henry Hewitt, first used for Henry Read's Students' School of Art. Colorado painter Vance Kirkland rented the building from Read in 1932, later acquired it, and left it as part of his estate to Hugh Grant (now Founding Director & Curator of Kirkland Museum) when Kirkland died in 1981 (Kirkland Museum Fact Sheet).

In 2016, the entire three-room brick structure was meticulously moved from its original location at 13th & Pearl to Kirkland Museum's new home at 1201 Bannock Street, placed on the north side of the new building in the same orientation as it originally sat on Pearl Street. Kirkland Museum is a member of Historic Artists' Homes and Studios, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The new building is clad in golden terra cotta and glass bars (About Us).

Architect

Olson Kundig is a Seattle-based design practice founded on the ideas that buildings can serve as a bridge between nature, culture and people, and that inspiring surroundings have a positive effect on people's lives. Led by five owners, the firm's work can be found across the globe, with projects as wide-ranging as huts to high rises, homes—often for art collectors—to academic, cultural and civic projects, museums and exhibition design, places of worship, creative production, urban design and interior design (Olson Kundig).

The Collection

Kirkland Museum has three principal collections: an internationally important collection of decorative art from about 1875 to about 1990, with examples of every major design period from Arts & Crafts to Postmodern; a retrospective of Colorado painter Vance Kirkland (1904–1981); and the work of other Colorado and regional artists, all shown together in salon style. Kirkland Museum's evolving collections contain over 30,000 works by more than 1,500 artists and designers (Kirkland Museum Fact Sheet).

Vance Kirkland

Vance Kirkland (1904–1981) was among the most important Colorado and regional painters of the 20th century. He was born November 3rd in Convoy, Ohio, a small country town west of Cleveland, near

the Indiana border. Kirkland studied at the Cleveland School of Art, receiving a Diploma Degree of Painting (1927) and a Bachelor of Education in Art (BEA, 1928), continuing a second year of studies in art history and art education at the Cleveland School of Education and Western Reserve University (1926–1928). Kirkland married Anne Fox Oliphant in 1941 and enjoyed traveling and entertaining with her.

In addition to his 55-year career as an innovative and successful painter, he was a remarkable educator and collector. Kirkland came to Denver in January 1929 as the Founding Director of the current School of Art at the University of Denver (DU) at Chappell House. Aside from his influence as a professor, Kirkland was active in the local art community and worked to establish the Modern Art movement in Denver, where he lived for the rest of his life. He left DU in 1932 to establish the Kirkland School of Art (1932–1946) at 1311 Pearl Street. The Kirkland School of Art was highly successful, and in 1946 DU enticed Kirkland to return as director of its school of art until his retirement in 1969. He continued to paint in his Pearl Street studio until his death in 1981 (About Vance Kirkland).

References

Kirkland Museum Fact Sheet.

Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art. About Us. Retrieved from <http://www.kirklandmuseum.org/about-us/our-story/>

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Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art. About Vance Kirkland. Retrieved from <http://www.kirklandmuseum.org/collections/vance-kirkland/about-vance-kirkland/biography/>.