art in architecture
Acknowledgments

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Thank you also to the numerous archives, museums, historical societies and libraries throughout the state and the country who granted permission for the museum to use their photographs in the exhibition. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Flickr photographers who generously allowed the museum to include their photographs in the exhibition. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you.

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Melissa M. Ford, CA  
Archivist
Art in Architecture: The Collaborative Spirit of the Interwar Period in Detroit

February 5, 2011 – May 28, 2011
Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

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Foreword

“There are several things concerning Sculpture that I believe are extremely important. It must be wholly consistent and in harmony with the Architecture involved, as well as being a beautiful entity within itself,” words from Marshall Fredericks’s *Credo* (1956). The exhibition *Art in Architecture: The Collaborative Spirit of the Interwar Period in Detroit* embodies many illustrations of the philosophy expressed by Marshall Fredericks.

The symbiotic relationships that evolved between Marshall Fredericks and the architects with whom he was associated on many of his major public art projects (Harley, Ellington and Day; Odell, Hewlett and Luckenbach; Graham, Anderson, Probst and White; and Alden B. Dow) provided the impetus for creating *Art in Architecture: The Collaborative Spirit of the Interwar Period in Detroit*.

Originally museum staff envisioned an exhibition that would examine the collaborations between architect Alden B. Dow and sculptor Marshall Fredericks, who admired each other’s work and who became friends. Their most significant collaborative project was the Henry J. McMorran Auditorium in Port Huron, Michigan, where Fredericks’s twenty-foot diameter decorative clock and the *Night and Day Fountain* are installed.

Once the research commenced, however, it became clear that the wealth of material available allowed for a much broader scope that would include collaborations between other artists and architects, particularly in the Detroit area during the interwar years of 1919 to 1941.

Museum Archivist Melissa Ford conducted research in the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum Archives, the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library, Cranbrook Archives, Michigan State University Archives, Midland County Historical Society, and the State of Michigan Library. All of these incredible Michigan resources and a generous grant from the Michigan Humanities Council made it possible to assemble this *Art in Architecture* exhibition.

The exhibition includes noteworthy examples of artists’ works that were designed and fabricated for the interior and exterior spaces of several significant historical buildings, from a china souvenir plate designed for Detroit’s Union Trust Building to a theater seat designed for the Fisher Theatre. Pewabic Pottery tiles and the H. J. Caulkins Company’s electric dental kiln give testament to Mary Chase Stratton’s importance as an artist whose work is installed in numerous edifices. Plaster molds and wood models of sculptures designed by Corrado Parducci for several stunning churches pay homage to his importance as a 20th-century American sculptor. A side table for the master bedroom at Meadow Brook Hall and a decorative oil painting and gilded copper bathroom door handle from the master bathroom at Rose Terrace bring to life the elegant homes of wealthy auto barons. Eero Saarinen’s dorm-room chair and bench, designed for Kingswood School, remind us of George Booth’s attention to excellent design in every element of the buildings at the Cranbrook Educational Community. Two plaster models of marble reliefs that adorn the Horace H. Rackham Educational Memorial Building in Detroit represent Marshall Fredericks’s first architectural commission.

Together, this collection of objects and documents tells a fascinating story of early 20th-century architects who understood the need and the desire for decoration and ornamentation in the buildings wealthy industrial pioneers and church leaders commissioned them to design.

Marilyn L. Wheaton
Museum Director
Art in Architecture: The Collaborative Spirit of the Interwar Period in Detroit, 1919-1941

It is human nature to create ornament and beauty in the built environment. The world has seen the fusion of architecture and arts and crafts in the Caves of Lascaux, the tombs of Tutankhamun, the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis, the myriad Baroque cathedrals of Europe, and the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. Most of these structures, along with thousands of others, required significant collaboration between artists, craftsmen and architects as well as clients during the design and construction. It is a delicate balance between the sometimes conflicting ideas of the client, architect, and artist, the time and funding available, and the limitations of materials. The best work is achieved when the artists, craftsmen and architects come together early in the process to solve the problems posed by the building program.

Detroit’s golden era from 1919-1929 offers inspiring examples of such collaboration. In the late 19th century, Detroit had a staggering array of buildings influenced by a cacophony of architectural styles and their accompanying sculpture and ornament. But there was a new wave ahead that would promote even closer connections between art and architecture, evidenced by Detroit’s formation of the Arts and Crafts Society in 1906 and the Hopkins Club (later the Scarab Club) in 1907. Both these groups brought together painters, sculptors, ceramists, businessmen and architects to socialize and discuss art. This created a particularly fertile ground for collaboration.

Even as the Arts and Crafts movement waned in the twenties, close collaboration between artists and architects was encouraged anew by the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in 1925 in Paris, and it left its mark on the City of Detroit. The primary design style from the exhibition, Arts Décoratifs (Art Deco), showcased modernism in the sense of something new and different with abundant ornament, color, and texture. In fact, Art Deco was all about the ornament, which needed artists and craftsmen.

By the early 20th century Detroit had become the fourth largest city in the nation. The auto industry was booming after recovering from the Depression of 1920-1921, and the growth in post-World War I housing and industrial center construction drew workers, artisans, and architects to the city. Detroit was ready to take a leading role in art and architecture with its impressive history of collaboration. Skyscrapers, civic and religious structures, and private residences all benefited from the happy confluence of nurturing institutions, the arts and architectural workforce, available money, and supportive patrons and clients.

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The exhibition on display at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum focuses on several examples of close collaboration between a veritable “Who’s Who” of American architects of that time: Albert Kahn, Wirt C. Rowland, Eliel Saarinen, Henry A. Walsh, Cass Gilbert, C. Howard Crane, Paul Philippe Cret, William Kapp of Smith Hinchman and Grylls, and Bertram Goodhue worked with artists, sculptors, and craftsmen such as Corrado Parducci, Mary Chase Stratton, Oscar Bruno Bach, Arthur Nevill Kirk, John Kirchmayer, Eero Saarinen, and Diego Rivera, among others.

A pre-eminent example of this collaboration is the Union Trust Building, now known as the Guardian Building. Situated at 500 Griswold Street, the building was part of the nucleus of the city’s financial district. The Union Trust Company wanted a building that would be “energetic and original, conveying a sense of warmth, accessibility, and personal care” and yet convey stability as befitting its banking role. Wirt C. Rowland of Smith, Hinchman, and Grylls was hired to design the structure. Rowland had been a member of the aforementioned Scarab Club and brought together craftsmen and artists at the beginning of the project.

The art was not just in the building, it was of the building. The ornament was integral to the design. Mosaics were provided by Rookwood Pottery, Flint Faience and Tile Company, Atlantic Terra Cotta Company, and Pewabic Pottery of Detroit. The nickel alloy metal work was crafted by the Gorham Company. Interior murals were designed and executed by Ezra Winter with bas-relief sculptures by Corrado Parducci. Thomas DiLorenzo did decorative painting and the woodwork was created by Moline Furniture Works.

Sculptor Corrado Parducci commented of his work with Rowland, “I used to see a lot of him, and he drew his dreams on the tablecloth. We used to have lunch together. . . . I made clay sketches, which met Wirt Roland’s approval. But in making them . . . I [tried] to immerse myself in the character of the building.” He commented further about collaborating with designers and architects, “their ideas rubbed off on me, as well as my ideas rubbed off on them, because they would consult me as I would consult them. We worked together as a team.” Here the decorative arts and sculpture both unified the building composition and offered visual focal points. As a result of collaboration of artists and architects, the building was a “Symphony of Color” and “represents the height of architectural design and innovative use of materials.” The Union Trust Building was dedicated on April 4, 1929.

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4 Tottis, 23.
7 Tottis, 3, 25.
8 Tottis, 23, 25.
On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. Included in the fall-out was the decline of the auto industry, which resulted in a subsequent loss of confidence, drastically reduced national auto sales, and widespread unemployment. Bank failures hit Detroit hard with twenty-one banks failing in the city between 1929 and 1933.9 Nationally, craft houses, also, were affected by the Depression. Many that had been pivotal in providing artistic crafts for architecture across the country, such as Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company (Favrile Glass), Rookwood Pottery, and Atlantic Terra Cotta Company filed for bankruptcy or were so weakened they closed soon after the Crash. Flint Faience moved from mosaics into production of other materials.

In addition to financial changes, Detroit and the nation were affected by a huge upheaval in the approach to architectural design. After World War I, the Bauhaus architecture school in Germany and French architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, known universally as Le Corbusier, had called for a new modern aesthetic—an interdiction against anything historical or ornamental in favor of creating a building that was in and of itself art. Architecture took the lead and sculpture and painting became subservient.10 This modernist philosophy soon affected architecture schools in the United States as they replaced Beaux Arts training of the previous 70 years with so-called “International” style or “Modern” architecture. The architects’ training impacted post-war construction styles everywhere, including the City of Detroit. By the time the United States recovered financially after World War II, the clean lines of the International style that began in Europe had swept the nation.

Artists, too, were affected by the modern movement and turned toward radical individuality, disregarding what had been common ground between art and architecture.11 As modernism spread, what were seen by some as the decorative excesses of the Beaux Arts and Art Deco caused a pendulum swing away from ornamentation of any kind. With “less is more” as the new mantra, the collaboration of artists and architects diminished in favor of box-like buildings with clean but often austere geometric lines. Eventually buildings became sculptural in their own right with the push and pull of walls creating an art of shadows and acres of glass walls with “liquid reflections” changing with the hours of the day, with the weather, and with different passers-by.12

9 Tottis, 9.
12 Brolin, 213.
Collaboration among architects and artists largely disappeared from the mid 1940s to the mid 1960s. During that period its absence was so obvious that architect Alden Dow, Marshall Fredericks, and many other artists, architects, sculptors, and philosophers jointly participated in a symposium at the University of Michigan College of Architecture and Design in 1948 to bemoan the sad state of the relationship of art and architecture.\footnote{“Esthetic Evaluation,” Papers Presented at the Ann Arbor Conference, College of Architecture and Design, University of Michigan, April 2-3, 1948, Marshall Fredericks, Personal Papers Series, Alden Dow Archives.} Perhaps as an apologist for the loss of major collaborations between artists and architects in modern architecture, Columbia University philosophy professor, Dr. Irwin Edman, commented at the Symposium, “Architecture has never been isolated from the other arts any more than it has been isolated from life. It borrows from painting, it is suggestive of the rhythms of music...it has used the resources of sculpture, of stained glass to fortify and punctuate and italicize its intentions.... [Architecture] has the quality of poetry itself....But an architect is not as free as a poet, and he has to move even more strictly than a poet within the limits of his time, his materials, the needs of his clients and the prejudices and temporary requirements of his public.”\footnote{Dr. Irwin Edman, “Architecture and Other Forms of Esthetic Expression,” Papers Presented at the Ann Arbor Conference, College of Architecture and Design, University of Michigan, April 2-3, 1948, Marshall Fredericks, Personal Papers Series, Alden Dow Archives.}

When the two-decade period of unadorned boxes had finally run its course, artists and architects began to work together again, but it was no longer a real collaborative relationship. Rather, it was one of what architectural critic Paul Goldberger calls “juxtaposition.” With rare exceptions, the art was largely “placed in buildings, not art made of and from and about particular works of architecture....”\footnote{Goldberger, 56.} Sculpture especially was placed in public places to soften the lines of a building or to offer a counterpoint to the structure’s design, but it was not integral to the building.

Architecture today is returning to a more conscious collaboration between artist and architect, and Marshall Fredericks himself would encourage such interaction. During work on his \textit{Christ on the Cross} figure for the Indian River (Michigan) Catholic Shrine, he wrote, “the really great lasting monuments of this country are not bought...they are created. They are designed and created for a particular place and a particular purpose. Their greatness is never an accident....it is the result of the work and skill of professional people of the highest talent, coming and uniting their efforts into a harmonious whole....striving for a specific ideal.”\footnote{Marshall M. Fredericks to Rev. Charles Brophy, Letter, c. 1955, \textit{Christ on the Cross}, Project Files, Marshall M. Fredericks Archive, Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, MI.}

Tawny Ryan Nelb
Archivist and Historian

\footnotesize{14 Dr. Irwin Edman, “Architecture and Other Forms of Esthetic Expression,” Papers Presented at the Ann Arbor Conference, College of Architecture and Design, University of Michigan, April 2-3, 1948, Marshall Fredericks, Personal Papers Series, Alden Dow Archives.}
\footnotesize{15 Goldberger, 56.}
Arthur Nevill Kirk (English, 1881-1958)
Zodiac Bowl, 1937
Silver, gold
5⅜”h x 9”w
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community
Photograph courtesy of Cranbrook Archives and Cultural Properties

The American-Hispano Pocket Guide of the World’s Fair, 1893
Book
6 ½”h x 4 ¾”w
Private Collection

World’s Fair Souvenir Plate, 1893
Cast and stamped metal
3 ½”h x 5”w
Private Collection
Skyscrapers

Penobscot Building Model, c. 1928
Masonite and cardboard
51”h x 18”w
Courtesy of the Friedman Real Estate Group, Inc.
Union Trust Building Souvenir Plate, 1928
China
10 ½” diameter
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Union Trust Building Plate, 1928
China
3” diameter
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Brass Rubbing of Fisher Building Elevator Door, c. 1981
Gold crayon on paper
18”h x 18”w matted
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Fisher Theatre Chair, 1928
Wood and fabric
36”h x 23 ½”w x 20”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Civic

Triangle Tile in the Shape of a Bird, gold glaze, 2000
Pewabic Pottery
2 ½”h x 5”w x ½”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Rectangle Tile, green-brown iridescent glaze, 2000
Pewabic Pottery
1”h x 6”w x ½”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

H.J. Caulkins Co. Electric Dental Kiln, 1907
Metal
11”h x 10”w x 8½”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Square Tile, green and brown iridescent glaze, 2000
Pewabic Pottery
7 ½”h x 8”w x ¾”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Model of Pegasus for the Horace H. Rackham Educational Memorial Building, 1939
Plaster
25”h x 18”w
Collection of the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

Model of Education for the Horace H. Rackham Educational Memorial Building, 1939
Plaster
19”h x 22”w
Collection of the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum
Religious

Corrado Parducci
(American, born Italy, 1900-1981)
Model of Dome for Gothic-style Reredos, c. 1950s
Plaster and wood
43”h x 60”w x 7”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Corrado Parducci
(American, born Italy, 1900-1981)
Model of St. Cyril of Alexandria for Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, c. 1950s
Plaster and wood
43”h x 60”w x 7”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Corrado Parducci
(American, born Italy, 1900-1981)
Model of Christ the Good Shepherd for Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, c. 1950s
Plaster and wood
43”h x 60”w x 7”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Corrado Parducci
(American, born Italy, 1900-1981)
Model of St. Thomas Aquinas for Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, c. 1950s
Plaster and wood
43”h x 60”w x 7”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Residential

Presentation Drawing for Side Table, c. 1927-1928
Hampton Shops, NY
Pencil on paper
17 ½”w x 13 ½”h
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall

Small Side Table from Meadow Brook Hall Master Bedroom, c. 1928-1929
Hampton Shops, NY
Wood with inlay
20”h x 34 ½”w x 11 ¾”d
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall

Bound Contractors Log Book, c. 1928
Metal, paper, hardboard
9 ¾”h x 12 ¾”w x 1”d
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall
Sconce, c. 1928-1929
Sterling Bronze Company, NY
Bronze and glass
12”h x 10”w x 3”d
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall
Francis Geck (American, 1900-2005)
Presentation Drawing for Ballroom Mirror, 1927
Black and yellow pencil on paper
14 ½”h x 20”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Rose Terrace Master Bathroom Decorative Painting, c. 1926
Oil painting on canvas
12 ¾”h x 32 ½”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Rose Terrace Master Bathroom Door Handle, c. 1926
Gilded copper
3 ½”h x 4 ¼”w x 1”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Rose Terrace Master Bathroom Door, c. 1926
Painted wood
94 ½”h x 39 ½”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
John Kirchmayer (German, 1860-1930)
Self Portrait, c. 1924
Oak
19”h x 4 ½”w x 4”d
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Arthur Nevill Kirk (English, 1881-1958)
Altar Cross, c. 1937
Sterling silver, enamel, semi-precious stones
13 ¾” diameter
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community
Photography courtesy of Cranbrook Archives and Cultural Properties
Eero Saarinen (American, born Finland, 1910-1961)
Infirmary Gate #3, 1929
Iron and bronze
78 ½”h x 44 ¾”w x ¾”d
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community
Photograph courtesy of Cranbrook Archives and Cultural Properties
Eero Saarinen (American, born Finland, 1910-1961)
Kingswood School Cranbrook, Dorm Room Chair and Bench, c. 1929-1931
Painted wood with replacement upholstery
Chair: 31 ½”h x 25 ¾”w x 23 ¾”d
Bench: 17 ½”h x 20 ¾”w x 13 ¾”d
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Eero Saarinen (American, Born Finland, 1910-1961)
Saarinen Crane Chair Insert, 1928
Bronze
2 ¾”h x 2 ¾”w
Collection of Cranbrook Educational Community
Loja Saarinen (Finnish, 1879-1968)
Rugs for the Built-in-Seat, c. 1931
Wool pile, wool weft, linen warp, plain weave with ryijy-knotted pile
65”h x 43 ½”w
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community
**Addition Works in Exhibition Not Illustrated in Catalog**

Checklist does not include documents or photographs which appear in the exhibition

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**Skyscrapers**

*Color Scheme and Jointing for Union Trust Building, 1929*

- *Paper*
  - 10 ¾”h x 12”w

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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**Civic**

*Lion Tile, iridescent glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 8”h x 9 ½”w x 1”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Square Tile, light blue glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 4”h x 4”w x 2”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Curved Tile, light brown glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 3 ½”h x 6 ½”w x 1 ¾”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Rectangle Tile, green and brown glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 1”h x 6”w x ½”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Unglazed Square Tile, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 1 ¾”h x 1 ¾”w x ½”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Square Tile, blue-green glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 1 ¾”h x 1 ¾”w x ½”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Square Tile, blue glaze, 2000*

- *Pewabic Pottery*
  - 1 ¾”h x 1 ¾”w x ½”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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**Religious**

*Corrado Parducci (American, born in Italy, 1900-1981)*

- *Eagle Plaque with Halo, c. 1950s*
  - *Plaster*
    - 12 ½”h x 10 ½”w x 3 ½”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Flower with Twelve Petals, c. 1960s*

- *Plaster mold*
  - 4”h x 4 ½”w x 1 ¼”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Capital, c. 1940s*

- *Plaster*
  - 9”h x 24”w x 24”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Owl in a Pine Tree, c. 1960s*

- *Plaster mold and shellac*
  - 10”h x 10”w x ¾”d

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Coping saw, c. 1970s*

- *Metal and wood*
  - 7”h x 10 ½”w

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Spatula, c. 1970s*

- *Metal and wood*
  - ¾”h x 6 ½”w

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

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*Tongs, c. 1970s*

- *Metal*
  - ½”h x 9”w

Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum
Slide Rule with Case, c. 1970s
Wood
1 ¼”h x 10 ¾”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Formula Sheet for Glazes, 1979
Paper
11”h x 8 ½”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Work Stand, c. 1970s
Painted wood
44”h x 28”w
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Plastilina Block, c. 1970s
Clay
12 ¾”h x 4”w x 1 ½”d
Collection of the Detroit Historical Museum

Residential
Molds from Dining Room Ceiling Restoration, 2003
Plaster
16”w x 7 ½”h x 4”d
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall

Hand-painted Door Knob, c. 1928-1929
Ostrander and Eshelman, NY
Ceramic
2”w x 2 ½”d
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall

Presentation Drawing for Door Hardware, c. 1927-1928
Ostrander and Eshelman, NY
Black print
22 ¾”h x 17 ½”w
Collection of Meadow Brook Hall

Cranbrook
Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Kingswood School Dinner Plate, 1931
China
9” diameter
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Kingswood School Grapefruit Bowl, 1931
China
6 ½” diameter
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Kingswood School Tea Cup, 1931
China
2 ½”h x 3 ½”w
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Kingswood School Saucer, 1931
China
6” diameter
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Tea Urn, 1934 (designed), 1938 (manufactured)
Silverplate
14 ¾”h x 10 ¾”d
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Bas Relief: Center Panel Reredos, 1927
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Associates
Blueprint
19 ¾”h x 10 ½”w
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community

Geza Maroti (Hungarian, 1875-1941)
Study for Poster: Dedication of St. Dunstan Chapel, Christ Church Cranbrook, 1928
Silkscreen
20 ¾”h x 17 ½”w
Collection of the Cranbrook Educational Community
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