

---

## Wharton Esherick Museum Co-Founder Mansfield Bascom Dies at 96

*Bascom helped preserve and steward the home and studio of artist Wharton Esherick for nearly 50 years*

**Malvern, PA** – Mansfield Bascom, Co-Founder of the Wharton Esherick Museum passed away peacefully on Monday, October 26 at the age of 96.

Mansfield “Bob” Bascom, was an unwavering pillar of dedication to the Wharton Esherick Museum and the preservation of Esherick’s legacy for nearly fifty years. Alongside his wife, Ruth Esherick Bascom, and Wharton’s companion Miriam Phillips, Mansfield helped found his father-in-law’s home and studio as a museum in 1972. He served as Director of the Museum, with Ruth serving as President, until 1990, and served as Curator until 2007.

Under his leadership the Wharton Esherick Museum received numerous awards and accolades including the Museum’s recognition as a National Historic Landmark for Architecture in 1993.

As a trained architect and structural engineer, Bob had a deep appreciation for what Esherick accomplished in the Studio and in his designs. From his very first visit in 1960, Wharton and Bob hit it off, and Bob’s reaction was instant - that Wharton’s home and studio must be preserved and shared with the world.

“Though I overlapped only five of the almost fifty years that Bob dedicated to preserving his father-in-law’s legacy, that time was invaluable,” says Executive Director of the Wharton Esherick Museum Julie Siglin. “I learned so much from him about Wharton, about caring for the buildings and artwork he created, and about the kinship they shared. Bob was fiercely protective of the museum and never stopped thinking about its future. He didn’t bother with plans for the coming year, he planned for the next 100 years. Even our last conversation in his final days started with his thoughts on a museum facilities project. It is a privilege every day to



*Mansfield "Bob" Bascom (1923-2020)*

lead the museum he founded and I will always be grateful to him for that, and for his friendship.”

After his official retirement in 2007, Bob committed himself to the completion of the biography, *Wharton Esherick: The Journey of a Creative Mind*, which was published in 2010. He continued to be a guiding force in the Museum’s future and served on the Board and until the end of his life. He mentored the museum staff and community that followed him, as a conduit of connection to the father-in-law he so deeply admired, and a strong willed advocate for the place to which he had devoted his life. Mansfield “Bob” Bascom has left an enormous and lasting legacy at the Museum and his presence and guidance will be deeply missed.

“When I began as Director of the Museum in January 1990, Bob Bascom had been the volunteer Director since 1972. Bob had a close personal relationship with Esherick and I learned much about the personality of the man from Bob,” shared Robert Leonard, Former Executive Director of the Wharton Esherick Museum and one of the Museum’s first employees outside the Esherick family. “The Museum was a labor of love for Bob – in the truest and deepest sense.”

**About the Wharton Esherick Museum:**

The Wharton Esherick Museum, located just outside of Valley Forge Park in Malvern, PA is the handcrafted home and studio of Wharton Esherick (1887-1970), an internationally significant artist and leader of the Studio Furniture Movement. Esherick worked primarily in wood and extended his unique forms to furniture, furnishings, interiors, buildings, and more. His motto, “If it isn’t fun, it isn’t worth doing,” is evident in the joyful expression of his work. A National Historic Landmark for Architecture, his hilltop studio/residence, with more than 300 of his works on exhibition, has been preserved much as it was when the artist lived and worked there.



The Wharton Esherick Museum is experienced through guided tours that must be reserved in advance. Advanced tickets are required, and can be purchased at [whartonesherickmuseum.org](http://whartonesherickmuseum.org). For more information call 610-644-5822 or email [info@whartonesherickmuseum.org](mailto:info@whartonesherickmuseum.org).

---

Wharton Esherick Museum  
P.O. Box 595  
Paoli, PA 19301

**Media Contact:** Katie Wynne  
[katie@whartonesherickmuseum.org](mailto:katie@whartonesherickmuseum.org)  
610-644-5822