

Stories from the Archives: New Discoveries at the Wharton Esherick Museum
September 23, 2021 – December 30, 2021

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Malvern, PA – The Wharton Esherick Museum (WEM) is pleased to announce the opening of *Stories from the Archives: New Discoveries at the Wharton Esherick Museum*, on view beginning September 23, 2021.

In spring 2021, WEM staff discovered a cache of archival materials tucked away in Esherick’s 1956 Workshop building. Amongst the materials were Esherick client files, correspondence, photographs, ephemera, and personal objects. While WEM is still in the midst of processing and learning about what these archives contain, *Stories from the Archives: New Discoveries at the Wharton Esherick Museum* highlights a selection of these materials in the museum’s Visitor Center.

In a 2003 speech titled *Literature and Freedom*, the writer and critic Susan Sontag emphasized that “to tell a story is to say: *this* is the important story. It is to reduce the spread and simultaneity of everything to something linear, a path.” *Stories from the Archives: New Discoveries at the Wharton Esherick Museum* invites visitors down some new and very important paths, with three stories about Wharton Esherick told in greater depth *because* of these archival finds.

The first story centers around the man himself. On display are objects like Esherick’s passport and his worn huarache sandals, painting a picture of Esherick’s own self-presentation and priorities as well as travels abroad that changed the course of his career. The second story centers on the intimacy of Esherick’s personal connections with other artists. The depth of Esherick’s friendship with celebrated ceramicist, sculptor, and educator Frans Wildenhain is revealed through personal letters, holiday cards, and artworks. The third story enhances our ability to understand Esherick’s involvement in some of the most significant moments in art, craft, and design history, including the American Craft Council’s first national conference at



Wharton Esherick’s passport, valid 1929-1931. Wharton Esherick Museum Collection. Photo by Eoin O’Neill, courtesy of the Wharton Esherick Museum.

Asilomar. Esherick's understanding of his own place in the larger craft ecosystem is demonstrated through his own words and what he saved.

"We've only scratched the surface of what these new archives mean and the stories they can tell us," reflects Emily Zilber, WEM Director of Curatorial Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. "Our uncovering of this material allows for a richer understanding of the processes, relationships, and influences that shaped Esherick's artistic path, and adds significantly to the already rich WEM archival collections. We are excited for the possibilities for new scholarship that this material invites."

From Esherick's personal connections with other artists and his involvement in significant moments in art, craft, and design history, to a fuller understanding of the man himself, *Stories from the Archives* celebrates these newly discovered archives and offers visitors the chance to explore new insights into Esherick's world and his singular designs.

Stories from the Archives: New Discoveries at the Wharton Esherick Museum is an onsite exhibition open September 23, 2021 - December 30, 2021. The exhibition will be on view in the Visitor Center, which is open during the Museum's current tour hours.

Please note, to enter the Museum you must make advance reservations for a tour. Details about visiting, open hours, and COVID-19 safety guidelines can be found at whartonesherickmuseum.org.

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.



Wharton Esherick's Studio. Photo by Charles Uniatowski, courtesy of the Wharton Esherick Museum.

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