



A New Woman

Clara Barck Welles, Inspiration &
Influence in Arts & Crafts Silver

JORDAN SCHNITZER **MUSEUM OF ART**

University of Oregon

Image: Fowler Studio, 1906, Evanston, Illinois



The Kalo Shop, Centerpiece Monogrammed Bowl

A New Woman

Clara Barck Welles, Inspiration & Influence in Arts & Crafts Silver

Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon
On view October 9, 2021 – October 2, 2022

In the fall of 2021, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) at the University of Oregon will open *A New Woman — Clara Barck Welles, Influence and Inspiration in Arts & Crafts Silver*, focusing on the artistic work, career, and feminist social activism of one of the nation's most noteworthy early 20th century artisans and entrepreneurs. Showcasing works in the collections of the JSMA and the Portland Art Museum, together with rarely exhibited pieces from select private collections, the show will be on view at the JSMA through October 2, 2022. It will be accompanied by a publication including essays by noted scholars of American Arts & Crafts metalwork, Sharon S. Darling and Darcy L. Evon.

Clara Barck Welles has long been recognized as the founder and owner of the Kalo Shop of Chicago, famous for its elegant Arts & Craft silver hollowware, flatware, and jewelry. Under her tutelage, the Kalo Shop trained and supported generations of designers, jewelers and silversmiths from its heyday from the early 1900s through the depression, until it finally closed in 1970. Originally formed in 1900 by Clara Barck (still unmarried at the time) and five other women graduates of the School of Art Institute of Chicago, the Kalo Shop was incorporated by Barck in 1905. Owned and directed by her, it was, as Darling noted in *Chicago Metalsmiths*, “the city’s most influential concern producing handwrought silver.” She served as its proprietor, manager, and guiding light until her retirement in 1939, when she moved to San Diego. In 1959, at the age of 91 years old, she gave the business to its remaining four employees.

Clara Barck was born in Ellenville, New York, in 1868. When she was ten, her family moved west to a farm in Oregon City, near Portland. After a stint as a weaver, business classes, and work in department stores in Portland and San Francisco, she moved to Chicago to study design at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. From 1905 to 1916 she was married to George S. Welles, eventually filing for divorce. In 1916 she shocked the divorce court by asking for no alimony, offering the explanation that she was a business woman with a good income, while her husband had none.

A New Woman will be the first museum exhibition centered on the Kalo Shop, Clara Barck Welles, and her influence. In conjunction with the exhibition, a commissioned essay by Darcy L. Evon, author *Hand Wrought Arts & Crafts Metalwork and Jewelry, 1890 – 1940*, will outline Welles's role as an artisan-entrepreneur and pioneering businesswoman, making a case for the Kalo Shop as the most important and influential center of American hand wrought silver.

Throughout the half-century of Welles's tenure there, the Kalo Shop established a reputation for design and craft of the highest order, and for furthering the Arts & Crafts ethos in America. As the works in *A New Woman* demonstrate, Kalo Shop silver embodied the company's motto, "beautiful, useful, and enduring." Welles directed all operations, established a school to teach aspiring women artisans and designers, interviewed customers about their commissions, designed many Kalo Shop pieces, and always oversaw the exquisite quality of Kalo Shop production. She supported the individual creativity of her artisans, but insisted on "Kalo Shop" as the sole brand marking.

The shop served intentionally as a haven, mentorship and training facility for women artisans and recent immigrants seeking to establish themselves in the United States. Welles supported employees who wanted to start their own studios and businesses, which created a plethora of new jobs in design and craftsmanship industries. A number of her most skilled craftsmen and women did so, spreading the Kalo Shop's influence from coast-to-coast. Reflecting this and the Kalo Shop's stylistic impact on other silversmiths, *A New Woman* will include works from the Kalo Shop



The Kalo Shop, Fluted Compote



Clara Barck Welles with the Illinois Suffragettes in Washington D.C., 1913. DN-0060283, Chicago Daily News negatives collection, Chicago Historical Society

itself along with pieces by artisans such as David and Walter Mulholland, Julius Randahl, and Lebolt & Company, all whom either worked for Welles, or hired artisans who trained at the Kalo Shop. Together, the works on view will encompass a range of hollowware, flatware, and other pieces, demonstrating the remarkable and distinctive work of American Arts & Crafts silversmiths in the Chicago area during the first half of the 20th century.

At the center of the Kalo Shop was Clara Barck Welles herself, and her activities as an exemplar of the New Woman movement extended well beyond her role and noteworthy success as a woman entrepreneur and business executive. Recent research by silver scholar and curator Sharon S. Darling has documented Welles's long record of activism on behalf of woman and immigrants and will be incorporated into the exhibition's didactic texts and publication. As Darling has noted, Welles was a moving force in the progressive social movements of early 20th century Chicago, a highly active leader of the Women's Suffrage Movement, and a colleague of other noted social reformers such as Jane Addams of Hull House, a center of immigrant support. Based on her activities as the chair of the publicity committee of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, Welles was selected to lead the Illinois

delegation to the 1913 national march for Women's Suffrage in Washington D.C. on the eve of Woodrow Wilson's inauguration as president. The following June, Illinois became the first state east of the Mississippi to ratify women's right to vote. Darling's essay for *A New Woman* will recount this and other aspects of Welles's life, linking them to her artistic and business success as head of the Kalo Shop.

Focusing on a select number of stellar works from the Kalo Shop and silversmiths in its orbit, and complementing the exhibition with scholarship on Clara Barck Welles's larger career and social concerns, *A New Woman – Clara Barck Welles, Inspiration and Influence in Arts & Crafts Silver* will document an important chapter in the history of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. The well-illustrated exhibition publication will demonstrate the intrinsic quality of the works on view, and offer a fascinating window into the life of the uniquely gifted woman who was at their center.

A New Woman – Clara Barck Welles, Inspiration and Influence in Arts & Crafts Silver is made possible at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art through generous donations supporting the museum. The exhibition and its installation design are being planned in collaboration with Marilyn Archer, Curatorial and Design Consultant, and Margo Grant Walsh, Consultant.

A New Woman — Clara Barck Welles, Influence and Inspiration in Arts & Crafts Silver will be available to tour after it closes at the JSMA in October, 2022.

For press information please contact:

Debbie Williamson-Smith
Communications Manager
Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
debbiews@uoregon.edu
Phone: 541-346-0942

Selected Highlights from the Exhibition Checklist



Lebolt & Company
American, ca. 1910-18
Tea Service
Silver

A: 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; B: 4 x 6 x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; C: 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; D: $\frac{3}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches



The Randahl Shop
American, ca. 1911-39
Pitcher
Silver
overall: H. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ x W. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in; H. 22.225 x W. 11.43 cm



The Kalo Shop
American, ca. 1925
Silver Box
Silver
1 ½ x 5 ⅝ x 3 ⅛ inches



The Kalo Shop
American, 1920
Coffeepot
Silver
8 ½ x 5 ½ x 8 ⅛ inches



The Kalo Shop
American, ca. 1916
Pitcher
Silver
8 x 5 1/2 x 6 1/4 inches



The Kalo Shop
American, 1911
Teapot
Silver
4 ¼ x 4 7/16 x 7 7/8 inches



Lebolt & Company
American, 1916
Tea Service
Silver with ivory
A: 4 x 5 ½ x 3 ½ inches;
B: 4 x 6 x 4 ¾ inches;
C: 6 ½ x 11 ¼ x 4 ½ inches;
D: 7 ½ x 11 ¼ x 4 ¼ inches



The Kalo Shop
American
Candlesticks
Silver
H. 12 inches



The Kalo Shop
American
Salad Serving Set
Silver
L. 9 ¾ inches



The Randahl Shop

American

Silver

Pair of Candelabras

Base: 4 inches (dia.); H. to tallest base: 8 ½ inches; H. to middle base:

7 ½ inches; H. to shortest base: 6 ½ inches; 8 ½ inches from shortest to tallest



The Kalo Shop
American
Centerpiece Monogrammed Bowl
Silver
5 1/4 x 13 3/4 inches (dia.)



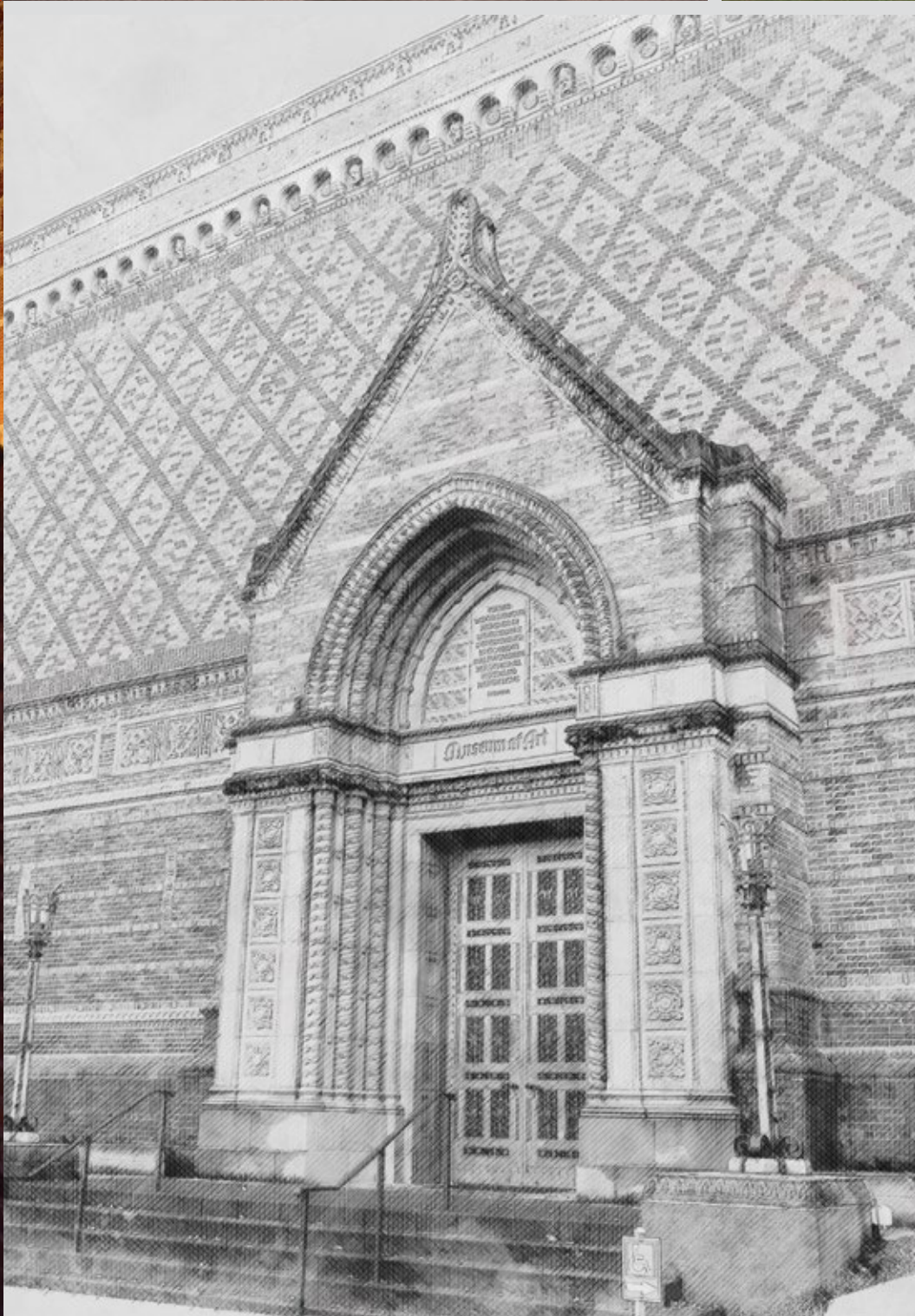
The Kalo Shop
American
"GPS" Monogrammed Bowl
Silver
3 3/4 x 9 3/4 inches (dia.)



The Kalo Shop
American
Fluted Compote
Silver
8 7/8 x 7 inches (dia.)

About the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art





The only academic art museum in Oregon accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the University of Oregon's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) features engaging exhibitions, significant collections of historic and contemporary art, and exciting educational programs that support the university's academic mission and the diverse interests of its off-campus communities. The JSMA's collections galleries present selections from its extensive holdings of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and American art. Special exhibitions galleries display works from the collection and on loan, representing many cultures of the world, past and present. The JSMA continues a long tradition of bridging international cultures and offers a welcoming destination for discovery and education centered on artistic expression that deepens the appreciation and understanding of the human condition.

JORDAN SCHNITZER **MUSEUM OF ART**

University of Oregon

Mailing address: 1223 University of Oregon | Eugene, OR 97403-1223 | **Street address:** 1430 Johnson Lane | Eugene, OR 97403

Phone: 541-346-3027 | **Fax:** 541-346-0976

jsma.uoregon.edu