

*Radical Craft:
Arts Education at Hull-House, 1899-1935*
Field Trip Guide

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In the exhibit you will:

- Explore the history of the arts at Hull-House through visual and touch collections
- Experience a historic house museum built prior to the 1871 Great Chicago Fire

Themes you will explore:

- The history of the Hull-House settlement from its founding in 1889 through its demolition in 1963
- The neighborhood surrounding Hull-House and demographic changes over time
- The practice of arts education at Hull-House

During a guided tour you will:

- Engage with history through questions and discussion
- Handle examples of Hull-House artifacts created by neighborhood artisans

Overview of Hull-House

In 1889, thousands of recently arrived immigrants lived and worked on the Near West Side of Chicago, which was then the fastest growing city in the world. Czech, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Polish, and Russian families shaped the life and culture of this densely populated neighborhood, which over the next decades would also be defined by Mexican and African American communities. Here, three women moved into a residence owned by local businesswoman Helen Culver, who would be the settlement's first supporter.

Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr were college friends, who were inspired by a new idea of public service, to live "with" not "for" other people. Mary Keyser, who handled domestic housework for the Addams family, joined Addams and Starr at Hull-House and became an important liaison with the neighborhood. These three women embarked on "the scheme," in Starr's words, to live in solidarity with immigrant communities neglected by the city and exploited by capitalism, who lived in crowded tenements and worked long hours in nearby factories. The ambitious social experiment of Hull-House would transform the lives of both reformers and neighbors as the settlement grew in response to the concerns and aspirations of those it served.

Hull-House became the country's most influential social settlement, expanding to include thirteen buildings, where Addams and her circle of social reformers provided kindergarten and day care facilities; an employment bureau; an art gallery; libraries; English and citizenship courses; and theater, music, and art classes. They championed immigrant rights and improvements to public health. They worked to end child labor, instituted juvenile justice, supported unions, built playgrounds, and advocated for public housing. Over many decades, Hull-House upheld free speech, dissent, and civil rights.

Key Concepts

Settlement House

- An organization often based in a home which provides various community services to people in a working-class neighborhood or section of a large city. Hull-House was one of the most influential settlement houses in the United States.

Social Reform

- The work of creating changes to an existing system to improve circumstances for people living within it. The process of making efforts to better people's experiences in areas like public health, education, and labor.

Reformers and Neighbors

- Reformers were individuals who worked with the Hull-House settlement to do the work of social reform. Neighbors were the people of the community who went to Hull-House programs. Reformers often lived at Hull-House; neighbors did not.

Conditions of the Neighborhood

- In 1889, Hull-House first opened on the Near West Side of Chicago, a neighborhood where many people were working 12-14 hours a day in factories, sweatshops, and on the railroad. Working conditions were dangerous and demanding, and workers made very little money. Most people lived in tenements, which were poorly-kept buildings that were overcrowded and often unsafe. The city's poor sanitation led to widespread illness and hardship. People spent most of their time at work, with few opportunities for leisure and recreation.

Arts and Crafts Movement

- The Arts and Crafts movement began in England during the late Victorian period and positioned craftsmanship as an alternative to mass production. Proponents of the movement believed that traditional craft methods should be cultivated in order to resist the spread of industrialization, which removed the human element from the process of production. One of the earliest Arts and Crafts societies in the United States was the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society, founded at the Hull-House settlement in 1897.

Overview of Radical Craft



The Hull-House settlement was dedicated to building civic engagement and self-expression through the arts. Very soon after it opened, reformers began offering programs and classes meant to give the neighborhood access to the arts and to many types of craft work. At Hull-House, neighbors could take classes in bookbinding, ceramics, metalwork, textiles, and many other arts. These classes served as opportunities to experience the “restorative power in the exercise of a genuine craft,” in the words of Jane Addams. The elevation of arts and crafts was part of a larger vision for a new society that would prioritize the creativity and humanity of workers.

Most of the tens of thousands of individuals who participated in arts programs at Hull-House did not leave a record. *Radical Craft* pays homage to the significance of unnamed artisans by displaying unattributed work alongside work by the settlement’s better-known figures.

Pre-Visit Questions



- How do we define leisure time/free time? What is the importance of leisure time/free time? What does your free time look like?
- Have you ever participated in an arts class or arts program? (Ex. painting, drawing, dance, theatre, ceramics, jewelry making.) How did it make you feel? Did you connect with anyone? What made it memorable?
- Are there any (other) artists in your family? What do they make?
- What are types of collective art-making (murals, quilts, etc.)? How might making art together help build community?
- Do you make things just for the fun of it? What is your favorite thing to make?
- What do you love about your neighborhood? What do you wish it had more of?

Key Moments from the Exhibition

Alice Kellogg Tyler and the Butler Art Gallery



The first building that Hull-House constructed to expand the settlement was the Butler Art Gallery. This was Chicago's first free public art gallery, and featured work of established, well-known artists as well as work from the neighborhood.

The artist most associated with Hull-House during its first decade, Alice Kellogg Tyler, taught art classes, contributed to exhibitions at the Butler Art Gallery, and painted key portraits of Hull-House women. She was also close friends with Jane Addams. Several of Tyler's works, including *The Mother* (on display in the exhibition), were displayed at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Ellen Gates Starr

Ellen Gates Starr was one of the co-founders of the Hull-House settlement. She was a labor activist, Hull-House's first arts educator, and a bookbinder. She ran a bookbindery out of Hull-House, participated in the Chicago labor reform movement, and created the Chicago Public School Art Society. While not as widely-known as Jane Addams, she was instrumental to the creation and growth of the Hull-House settlement.



Unnamed Hull-House Artists



Hull-House promoted the work of many immigrant artisans, including the Irish weaver Honora Brosnahan, the Danish weaver Susanna Sorensen, the Russian coppersmith Falick Novick, and Mexican ceramicists Miguel Juárez, José Ruíz, Hilarion Tinoco and Jesús Torres. But most of the individuals who participated in arts programs at Hull-House did not leave a record.

The Hull-House Kilns and Demographic Changes

By the 1920s, in the wake of the Mexican Revolution, the Near West Side became home to a growing population of Mexican migrants recruited to work as industrial laborers. Hull-House's ceramics classes were popular with the Mexican community, which was steeped in the traditions of ceramic art. This work was then sold at the Hull-House Shop, located on North Michigan Avenue, which also sold paintings, textiles, and other craftwork produced at the Hull-House Art School and the Kilns.



Knowledge Review

- What was the Arts and Crafts movement? What did it look like in the United States? In Chicago? How do Hull-House stories connect to broader narratives in art history and social history?
- Who were the people who enjoyed services and classes that Hull-House provided? What were their lives like?
- How did industrialization influence immigration?
- What kinds of issues/ problems did Hull-House address?
- Why did Jane Addams and other Hull-House residents choose to live and work in a settlement house?

Post-Visit Discussion

- If you were a reformer at Hull-House, what kind of programs and initiatives would you suggest? Are there any parallels between the period when Jane Addams was active and your life today?
- Why do you personally think it is so important for people to have access to art? What do you consider the difference between creating art and crafting?
- Where are places in your community that you have seen art? If you could create art to be displayed anywhere in your community, where would that be?

Exhibition Highlights



HH teacher Susanna
Sorensen's loom in the
Textile Gallery

Ellen Gates Starr exhibit,
featuring a collection of
her hand-bound books



The Hull-House Kilns
ceramics collection

Textile collection created
by unnamed Hull-House
artists

