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CITY BEAT

At Hollyhock House, a rare peek at a restored treasure

BY NITA LELYVELD

Something happened on a Hollywood hilltop as Friday the 13th turned into Valentine's Day.

In the middle of the night, as many as a thousand people at a time stood patiently in a line that snaked up and down pathways and under tall trees,

inching along in fits and starts and sometimes barely moving at all.

It wasn't for a concert or to get into some ultra-exclusive celebrity club.

They had come out to see and celebrate one of Los Angeles' architectural treasures, which was reopening to the public after five long years and an extensive, nearly \$4.4-million restora-

tion.

Starting Friday at 4 p.m. at the Hollyhock House, a residence designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for free-thinking oil heiress Aline Barnsdall, the two 250-pound cast concrete front doors were flung open for 24 hours straight.

Anyone was welcome to visit at any time during that [See *City Beat*, B5]



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TOD MESIROW and other members of the Barnsdall Art Park Foundation take a selfie at the house.

He wasn't as lucky after returning to the states. An unstable employee at Raytheon, where they both worked, shot Jones in the back.

"They thought I was dead," said Jones, 29 at the time.

He survived that experience, too. But he is having trouble surviving this economy.

Jones is a sharp, well-spoken guy with a strong resume and an even stronger desire to work, but his job drought is now entering its seventh year and his prospects are dimming.

Next month, he turns 66. Dan's wife, Suzanne, told [See *Lopez*, B8]

Hollyhock House draws big crowds

[City Beat, from B1] period. Self-guided tours were free until 11 a.m. Saturday.

People of all ages started lining up about 2 p.m. Friday. They lined up — in even greater numbers — at 2 a.m. Saturday too.

Before entering, they donned paper booties over flip-flops and high heels and boots. Once inside the home, commissioned in 1919, they were free to wander and ask questions of docents and, for this one time only, take photos — as many as they pleased.

In this day of cellphones, selfies and Instagram, that freedom had a special appeal. So did the idea of being in the house at an intimate, private hour.

"It's like, when are you ever going to see it at night? You get to see it as if you lived there," said Jennifer Wong, 31, an architectural designer, who drove up after work from Laguna Beach and commemorated the night with Polaroid shots of herself and her boyfriend standing next to examples of the home's central hollyhock flower motif.

Word of the opening spread far and wide. There were, of course, those in the line who knew Wright's work inside out and had crisscrossed the country to see it. But many were first-timers.

Sarah Dixon of Silver Lake hand-drew images of the house on invitations she gave to eight of her friends.

Dixon, 31, who works in postproduction at Lions-

gate and helps run Co-lab, a Highland Park art gallery, said she'd been to wine tastings outside the home in Barnsdall Art Park. But she'd been pining to go inside for years.

When she finally made it after 2 a.m., she was so happy, she glowed. "You guys, I'm dying!" she kept saying to her friends.

Some of those who made the trek up the hill wisely packed picnics. Others passed around flasks. A couple of families arrived with Girl Scout cookies, which they sold to those who grew hungry as the wait stretched on. Three food trucks served up hot dogs, ice cream and deli food until around midnight.

The night was not glitch-free. Mayor Eric Garcetti came late to the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which stretched on. Then he posed for media photos and had a private family tour. The first members of the public got in after 6 p.m. Some people gave up before their turns came.

One quick-thinking volunteer told those who complained and said they were leaving that she would text them when it looked like they could come back and walk right in. Such a moment never arrived.

Late at night, one visitor wound up with a cut hand after trying to jump a fence into a closed-off section of the grounds. Inside the house, which is owned and operated by the city, more than a few people had to be



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VISITORS get a rare glimpse of the living room area as the sun sets at Hollyhock House. "You get to see it as if you lived there," one woman marveled.

reminded by docents to look but not touch.

Still, the jammed reopening mostly felt joyous.

Organizers of the 24-hour event initially planned to count the visitors. They soon realized they wouldn't be able to keep up.

"We did try and then it was just overwhelming," Alison Rowe, director of the Barnsdall Art Park Foundation, said as she sat at an information table about 3 a.m. "But it is a beautiful sort of overwhelming because everyone seems in just good spirits. They're delighted to be here. The atmosphere in the line is just really warm and generous."

The house, which is a National Historic Landmark, has had quite a few tough breaks over time, starting when Barnsdall fired Wright in 1921 after he'd far exceeded the budget.

The recent work initially was meant to address press-

ing problems, including a leaking roof and clogged drains. But one thing led to another and experts took the occasion to try to bring the home — which over the years had suffered some bad fixes — much closer to its original state. Stripped details and original wall colors were brought back. Dining room windows that had lost height along the way were enlarged, bringing in more light.

Some who had visited the house before said it now felt richer and more alive.

"It used to feel like an abandoned house. Now it's move-in ready," said Jerome Robinson of Los Feliz, a graduate student in heritage conservation at USC.

Jeffrey Herr, Hollyhock House's curator, said he really fell for the house emotionally during the restoration he helmed. He arrived on site at 10 a.m. Friday and assumed he'd leave at some

point that night. But he couldn't pull himself away. He still was there in suit and tie, cheerfully greeting new arrivals and answering their questions, well after 7 a.m. on Saturday. He said he was amazed and excited by the visitors' level of inquiry and the small details they zoomed in on.

Many couples were in the crowd, especially after midnight. Some snuggled together under big blankets as they stood in line. Organizers wondered whether, given the date, someone would choose the visit to propose.

That didn't seem to have happened, though something else did.

People left full of love for a city that defies easy cliches.

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