Sabbatical, Spring 2011
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This presentation highlights research into the history of the decorative arts and architecture from the region of the lower Mississippi River valley.

Focusing on wall coverings and other textiles in domestic settings, these objects are more fragile compared to most furniture and art works, and potentially might have been replaced over time when tastes changed.

Following my Sabbatical, in January 2012 I exhibited work partially based on this research at Post Gallery in downtown Los Angeles.

The following pages include a portion of the documentation that culminated with that exhibit.

In addition, I used some imagery to illustrate design concepts taught in my Foundation design courses at Otis.
Faculty Development Grant:

Canon EOS 7D
Epson Film Scanner

95% of the images included in this presentation are my original photographs.
Factors that Influenced the Direction of my Research

1. The Changing Rural Landscape

2. The Effects of Natural & Man-made Disaster

3. Architecture & Interior Decoration:
   A Resource for Social and Individual Narratives, and the belief that
   Historic Preservation is about Community as much as it is about
   History and Material Culture.
My research included attending
The New Orleans Antiques Forum from 2009–12

Sponsored by The Historic New Orleans Collection and Williams Research Center
Presenters at The New Orleans Antiques Forum

*Damn Yankees: John Wesley Jarvis, Henry Inman, and the Broadway Boys in New Orleans.*

Dana E. Byrd, PhD Candidate, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.  
*Motive Power: Punkahs, Fans and Fly Brushes in the Antebellum South.*

William Seale, Author, historian.  
*Burned and Rebuilt: The White House in the War of 1812.*

Eugene D. Cizek, Professor of Architecture and Latin American Studies, Tulane School of Architecture.  
*The Federalization of Vernacular Design.*

Lynne Dakin Hastings, Museum Consultant, a leading authority on late 18th century and 19th century interiors, her curatorial work includes re-envisioning color, pattern, and wall covering in Colonial Williamsburg, Montpelier, and other historic houses.  
*Only Superficial?: The Importance of Wall and Floor Coverings during the Early National Period.*

Marsha Mullin, Chief Curator, The Hermitage (Home of President Andrew Jackson).  
*Andrew Jackson, Consumer*
Advisors for my project:

**Eugene Cizek**, Professor of Architecture and Latin American Studies, Tulane School of Architecture

**Jeff Mansell**, Historian for the National Park Service, Natchez

**Peter Patout**, Historian, Scholar, Antique Dealer, and Bon Vivant

**Clinton Bagley**, Historian, Mississippi Department of Archives & History

**Barbara Adkins**, Past President of Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation

**Daniel Brooks**, Historian and Author, *The Faces of William R. King*, the relationship of William Rufus DeVane King and President James Buchanan

**Edward Polk Douglas**, Architectural Historian

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**Josef Dufour**: Scenic or Cynic

**Klimos & Campeche**: Chairs for the Home and White House

**Damn Yankees**: John Wesley Jarvis, Henry Inman, & the Broadway Boys in New Orleans

**The Truth about True Blood**

**Excess & Success**: Great Designs that Do More with MORE

**Punkahs, Fans, and Fly Brushes in the Antebellum South**
The Back Story
The Changing Rural Landscape
After the Civil War and into the 20th century

Between 1850 and 1920, most of the Old Growth Forests in the Mississippi River Valley were cut down, ultimately resulting in wide-spread erosion and flooding.

Family photographs from the collection of Ronald R. Harrell
Historic Preservation is about Community. Like thousands of places across the country, Kentwood, Louisiana was a thriving town fifty years ago.

Postcard from the collection of Ronald R. Harrell
Clearing land for Interstate 55
Kentwood circa 1962

Family photographs from the collection of Ronald R. Harrell
Cleared for Interstate 55
Kentwood circa 1962

Family photograph from the collection of Ronald R. Harrell
With the expansion of the Interstate Highway System throughout the country, many other factors contributed to radical changes in rural America. Some towns (and even cities) across the United States shared the fate of Kentwood.

Home movies from the late 1950s and early 1960s show a once-prosperous community of farmers and merchants celebrating an abundant lifestyle. Today’s picture is very different.
In 1968, I helped restore this 1895 house located 1/2 block from the beach, 25 feet above sea level, and 35 miles east of New Orleans.
It survived Hurricane Camille 1969

It survived Hurricane Katrina 2005
However, Katrina caused 70 miles of destruction along the Gulf Coast; these images were taken a few blocks away.

Photographs from http://www.mississippiheritage.com/HurricaneKatrina.html
A cousin’s house in a nearby neighborhood
After Katrina, New Orleans
Where the levees failed

The McCurnin House, Old Metarie
Levees collapsed two days after the storm because they were improperly built.

Fats Domino’s House, Lower Ninth Ward
The Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet Canal (MRGO, MR-GO) is a 76 mile channel constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers at the direction of Congress in the mid-20th century; it funneled the storm surge from Katrina into the Lower Ninth Ward resulting in significant damage to the city.
Why Wallpaper?

1. It is a Metaphor for Fragility

2. A Theatrical Backdrop in Social Settings

3. And Literally Implies Layering, Peeling, and the Passage of Time

Architecture & Interior Decoration are resources for Social and Individual Narratives
My interest in wallpaper began several years ago. In 2003 I recreated a wall decoration from an Irish Manor House, part of an exhibition at The Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, California.
When the initial challenge of locating historic wallpaper proved daunting, I investigated Architectural History.
Vernacular Architecture
Characterized by Functionality, Climate, Local Materials

These houses were insulated with Bousillage
Bousillage

Made from cured Spanish Moss and Mud, Bousillage is an inexpensive and readily-available building and insulation material similar to Adobe.

It was used in a variety of structures from simple farm houses to mansions.

Photograph by Jason Church

Maison Chenal, Acadian Cottage, early 19th century
The enclosed central hallway was adapted from an earlier regional style (also known as a “Dog Trot”) that featured an open passage way running the length of the house. It provided a work space protected from inclement weather, and year-round ventilation to the enclosed adjacent rooms.
Chancellor House, circa 1840
National Register of Historic Places
Home of Barbara and Sonny Adkins
Harpersville, Alabama

Barn at Wakefield Plantation, circa 1830
National Register of Historic Places
St. Francisville, Louisiana
Barn at Rosedown Plantation, circa 1834
St. Francisville, Louisiana

Rosedown Plantation is known for its formal gardens and original wall coverings, including scenic wallpaper designed by Josef Dufour.
The Dupree House, Raymond, grew from a modest three-room structure circa 1850 to this Greek Revival/Italianate house. Like smaller regional houses, it is organized around a central hallway and features double galleries that completely surround the rooms.
Oakley Plantation, 1806, Chicken Houses
John James Audubon painted 32 of his celebrated bird images at Oakley

Pigeonnier (Dovecote), early 19th century
LSU Rural Life Museum, Baton Rouge
General Store, early 19th century
LSU Rural Life Museum, Baton Rouge
African American Catholic Church, early 19th century
LSU Rural Life Museum, Baton Rouge
Jail, early 19th century
LSU Rural Life Museum, Baton Rouge

Barn, early 19th century
Melrose, Natchez
Maison Chenal
Acadian Cottage, early 19th century
Home of Jack and Pat Holden
Pointe Coupee, Louisiana
Parterre Gardens were both functional and decorative; they provided herbs and vegetables for the dining table, and simultaneously reflected a formal French tradition.

Maison Chenal
Acadian Cottage, early 19th century
Home of Jack and Pat Holden
Pointe Coupee, Louisiana
Maison Chenal
Main house, early 19th century
Home of Jack and Pat Holden
Pointe Coupee, Louisiana
Maison Chenal
Early 19th century
Home of Jack and Pat Holden
Pointe Coupee, Louisiana
Lacour House, pre 1765 (possibly as early as 1730), Home of Jack and Pat Holden, Pointe Coupee, Louisiana
The Pontalba, circa 1840

Matching block long, four-story buildings built by the Baroness Micaela Almonester Pontalba, Jackson Square, New Orleans
Patout House, 1887, Shotgun style
Located behind the Victorian facade is a two-story guest house, 1824, New Orleans French Quarter
This style of architecture is characterized by narrow front yards aligned with other houses that promoted interaction with neighbors.
Queen Anne House and guest house, circa 1895
Kentwood, Louisiana

Innovative Passive Ventilation
Lawyers Row and Court House, Clinton, Louisiana, left to right: circa 1803, 1830 & 1840
Centenary College, Jackson, Louisiana, founded 1825
Benjamin H. Labrobe, Louisiana State Bank, posthumously completed in 1822
Latobe also designed the White House and United States Capitol.
St. Mary Basilica, circa 1842
Natchez
Grace Episcopal Church of West Feliciana Parish, 1859
St. Francisville
Painted and Stained Glass Windows, Grace Episcopal Church of West Feliciana Parish, 1859
St. Francisville
Wrought Iron, St. Francisville
Old State Capitol of Louisiana, circa 1847

Gothic revival
Larger Houses

Chêne Vert (Live Oak), French Creole Cottage, circa 1830 and restored Parterre Garden
Home of Wayne and Cheryl Stromeyer
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Chene Vert (Live Oak), French Creole Cottage, circa 1830
Home of Wayne and Cheryl Stromeyer
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Laura Plantation, 1805, River Road, between New Orleans and Baton Rouge; sugar cane plantation entirely run by free women of color.
Laura Plantation, 1805, Faux-finish mantle piece
Magnolia Mound, 1791
Baton Rouge

The first house where I received permission to photograph wall coverings—the gallery porch originally extended around the entire house.
Magnolia Mound, 1791.
Magnolia Mound, 1791.
Magnolia Mound, 1791. The wallpaper pattern titled *Les Sylphides* dates from 1795.
Magnolia Mound, 1791. The decorated floor cloth is typical of floor coverings from the period. The wallpaper pattern was inspired by discoveries at Pompei and Herculaneum.
Magnolia Mound, 1791. The cove ceiling and decorative color scheme were added later (circa 1820)
Magnolia Mound, 1791.
Butler Greenwood, circa 1790, St. Francisville
Butler Greenwood, circa 1790, St. Francisville
With original furnishings and carpet from the early 19th century
Butler Greenwood, circa 1790, St. Francisville
Butler Greenwood, circa 1790, St. Francisville

Quilted textile is early 20th century and not original to half-tester Millard bed
Butler Greenwood, circa 1790, St. Francisville
Early 20th century reproduction of Victorian wall covering originally found in Natchez
Live Oak Plantation, circa 1803, St. Francisville
Live Oak Plantation, circa 1803, St. Francisville
The Roman numerals on the beams are carpenters’ notations from 1803
Destrehan, 1787
An enlarged French Creole Cottage Design, later remodelled in the neoclassical style

Indigo and sugar cane plantation
River Road, 25 miles north of New Orleans
Destrehan began as an indigo plantation; this exhibit shows Cotton fiber dyed with indigo
Grained or Painted Woodwork, simulating more precious woods
Melrose, circa 1841

Melrose, by Moonlight, Natchez, Miss., Buffalo Society, Pritchatt (Howard Jr) Lantern Slide collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
El Dorado
Zuber et Cie.
1848

Handprinted with 1554 blocks and 210 different colors, *Eldorado* depicts the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.
Melrose, circa 1841
Natchez

El Dorado, Zuber et Cie., 1848
Roses Pompon pattern, 1850-65

Period wall covering with printed illusion of folds and shadows, circa 1850
Melrose, circa 1841
Natchez
Intricately crafted woodwork

Brussels carpet woven in strips, then sewn together to fit individual dimensions of each room
Painted floor cloth and Brussels carpet woven in the same pattern

Melrose, circa 1841
Natchez
Melrose, circa 1841
Natchez
Original and reproduction floor cloth
Centenary College, founded 1825
Examples of early and late original Floor Cloths
The dining room at Melrose, with an eight-foot wooden punkah (ceiling fan) — Dana Byrd discovered oral and written histories that illuminated the complex social structure of plantation society where dining activities and conversations observed and overheard by slaves potentially provided opportunities for empowerment.
Gazebo, Rosedown
St. Francisville, Louisiana

Gazebo, Butler Greenwood House
St. Francisville, Louisiana
Longwood, 1859  
Natchez  
The largest octagon house in North America, designed in 1859 by Samuel Sloan, Philadelphia.
Lansdowne, 1853
Natchez
Lansdowne, 1853
Natchez
Lansdowne, 1853
Natchez

Hand-blocked Zuber et Cie. wallpaper,
rococo revival pattern
Lansdowne, 1853
Natchez
Hand-blocked Zuber et Cie. wallpaper,
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Lansdowne, 1853
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Natchez

Hand-blocked Zuber et Cie. wallpaper,
rococo revival pattern
Lansdowne, 1853
Natchez
Lansdowne, 1853, Natchez
Original wallpaper in the central hallway was a hunting scene

According to Jeff Mansell, historian for the National Parks Service, many of the prosperous planters in Natchez were born in the Northeast. Despite owning slaves, they opposed the Civil War and sympathized with the Union. They had relocated to the rich lower Mississippi River region to make money, and at mid-century realized that war would jeopardize their fortunes. Consequently, their grand houses and the town of Natchez were spared the desperate fate of other Southern cities.
Monmouth, 1818, Natchez, *Melrose, by Moonlight, Natchez, Miss.*, Buffalo Society, Pritchett (Howard Jr)

Lantern Slide collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History

An owner, Gen. John Quitman, died in 1858 from poisoning at a banquet for President Buchanan in Washington, DC.
Views of North America, designed by Josef Dufour and printed in 1834 by Jean Zuber et Cie., with 32 scenes including Niagara Falls and Boston Harbor. Founded in 1797, Zuber et Cie. created over 100,000 woodblocks with which to print elaborate murals and wall coverings.
Monmouth, 1818, Natchez

Niagra Falls, New York
Monmouth, 1818, Natchez

Boston Harbor
Monmouth, 1818, Natchez

Natural Bridge, Virginia
Located southwest of Washington DC, and west of Richmond
By chance I had discovered the same wallpaper pattern in a derelict building in Pasadena, California.

That red brick, Georgian-style building once housed the Cheesewright showrooms, offices, and workshop, a design firm noted for the manufacture of Tudor and Regency-style antique facsimiles. In the 1920s E. J. Cheesewright was the foremost designer of residential interiors in Los Angeles, and his numerous projects included the Doheny Mansion.

Designed by prominent architect Louis du Puget Millar, the Cheesewright Building (1929) once housed a U.S. Navy office where Einstein worked in the 1940s.

According to Robert Winter, the dramatic reception hall boasted French scenic wallpaper with scenes of early American history and landscapes. Although vacant, the building and extensive Zuber wall covering survive to this day.

The E J. Cheesewright Showrooms, 1929, Pasadena, California
These images present an idealized view of society where Americans from diverse ethnic backgrounds socialize and enjoy the abundance and optimism of a young United States circa 1820.
Boston Harbor
Intriguing figures merging into the landscape