



ARTS & CULTURE, HISTORY

Frank Lloyd Wright: Rebel Architect

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The story goes that Frank Lloyd Wright was once summoned to testify in a lawsuit. When he took the witness stand, a lawyer asked what his occupation was. He answered, “I am the world’s greatest architect.” Afterwards, his embarrassed wife told him he should be more modest. “You forget,” he replied. “I was under oath.”¹

The remark was characteristic of Wright’s sly sense of humor, but he wasn’t really joking. He knew that in a career lasting some seventy years, he had transformed the practice of architecture. But he did something else, too: He established an aesthetic style so distinctively American that he may be not just the country’s greatest architect but its greatest visual artist of all time. Like the paintings of George Caleb Bingham, Thomas Moran, or Norman Rockwell, the buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright are not just strikingly successful artworks but successful in a specifically American way. They resonate because they ineffably express a sense of life steeped in the country’s most characteristic values: individuality, privacy, ambition, and tranquility.

Part of that resonance is attributable to Wright’s personality, which had both positive and negative elements. He blended the spiritual individualism of Walt Whitman or Ralph Waldo Emerson with the showbiz phoniness of a Mark Twain con man.² If Wright’s virtues reflected his nation’s culture, so did his vices.

In fact, Whitman, Emerson, and Twain were all living when Wright was born in 1867. The America of his childhood was a hustling, youthful country in the process of metamorphosing from a slave-based, agricultural, frontier society into an industrial, manufacturing, capitalist dynamo. That transition accompanied a change in the national character: Whereas an earlier generation had envisioned the ideal citizen as a stalwart Jeffersonian farmer, post-Civil War Americans began celebrating the self-made, go-getting entrepreneur, the industrial titan who didn’t take no for an answer. The first installment of Horatio Alger’s novel *Ragged Dick* appeared in the year of Wright’s birth, and radical technological innovations—including improvements in trains, steamships, and harvesting and mining equipment—began propelling America toward unprecedented bounties.

Wright was two when the transcontinental railroad was completed, three when the first passenger elevator was installed in an office building, and eighteen when the first skyscraper was completed. In his youth, factories in Boston, New York, and Chicago became automated and unleashed a stream of steel and rubber, consumer goods and foodstuffs, in numbers never seen before. Floods of immigrants made American cities into megalopolises and brought a sense of hope and abundance no previous generation had ever experienced.

The Machine versus Humanity?

At the time, however, some feared that the technological revolution might threaten humanity as much as it helped. If “The Machine” was taking over so many tasks and transforming society so drastically, would human beings eventually become machines, too? Five years before Wright’s birth, Henry Adams predicted that technology would someday “have the existence of mankind in its power, and the human race [will] commit suicide by blowing up the world.”³ Mark Twain’s 1889 novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* climaxed in a nightmare vision of technology making warfare into a devouring holocaust.

Some thought the solution was to abolish technology: In 1890, the English writer William Morris published a novel called *News from Nowhere*, which envisioned an agricultural utopia with no machines or factories, in which craftsmen built everything by hand. Morris’s ideas would eventually flower into the arts and crafts movement. But other people welcomed the idea that machinery might revolutionize human nature. They embraced technology, not just because it relieved human drudgery but because they envisioned a future in which people would throw off such “bourgeois” concerns as individuality, beauty, or pleasure and merge into a collective governed by scientific experts empowered to organize society in the service of progress.

More than any other artist, Frank Lloyd Wright would find a way to reconcile humanity with the machine—a way that would preserve and cherish the individual rather than obliterating him. In the more than five hundred buildings he constructed during a career spanning more than seven decades, he would offer a distinctive vision of modernity built, as he put it, to “human scale”—a vision that sought the romance and drama in “bourgeois” values and expressed them in an idiom rooted in American cultural tenets of simplicity, hard work, and personal independence.⁴

Appreciating Wright’s artistic accomplishment can be difficult, in part because although he expressed himself ingeniously in stone and wood, his writing is not so clear: His books and essays are an elusive mix of pseudo-poetry and provocative aphorisms that, like a magician’s abracadabra, often conceal more than they expose. Putting aside the factually misleading passages of his *Autobiography*, his philosophical ruminations are a maddening chimera of vivid individualism and mushy, Emersonian theology.⁵ To pick a passage at random from one of his books:

“Would you be modern? Then it is the nature of the thing, which you now must intelligently approach and to which you must reverently appeal. Out of communion with nature, no less now than ever, you will perceive the order that is new and learn to understand that it is old because it was new in the old. Again, I say, be sure as sure may be that a clearer perception of principle has to be “on straight” in your mind today before any architectural ways or any technical means can accomplish anything for you at all.”⁶

What this means is almost anybody’s guess. But the fact that Wright’s ideas were a mixture of good and bad does not detract from the scale of his artistic accomplishment, particularly his success at fashioning an *individualistic* modern architecture. Perhaps the closest he ever got to clearly explaining the essence of his art was a 1931 lecture in which he declared that

“mankind is only now waking to visions of the machine as the true emancipator of the individual . . . Therefore we may yet see the Machine Age as the age of a true democracy, wherein human life is based squarely on and in the beauty and fruitfulness of the ground: life lived in the full enjoyment of the earthline of human life—the line of freedom for man, whereby man’s horizon may be immeasurably extended by the machine, the creature of his brain in service of his heart and mind.”⁷

The word “earthline” alluded to his belief that buildings should be oriented horizontally to express an ennobling unity with nature as well as a democratic principle of equality. Wright thought homes, offices, and even gas stations should combine beauty and technology to propel the human spirit forward with the same grace manifested in the processes that drive trees to rise and flourish. He summed up this life-affirming quality in his art with its name: “Organic Architecture.”

The Lessons of ‘Lieber Meister’

Biographers think Wright began experimenting with buildings as a teenager, on his family’s farm in Wisconsin, but it was in 1886 that he entered the state’s university in Madison to study the subject formally. He never graduated, though; in fact, he lasted only about a year, never earning a degree or obtaining an architecture license. In 1887, he moved to Chicago to work for architect Joseph Silsbee, a family friend. But months later, he acquired the most important treasure an ambitious young genius can have: a mentor. In about 1888, he left Silsbee’s firm to become a draftsman for Adler and Sullivan, Chicago’s most important builders.

The firm’s cofounder, [Louis H. Sullivan](#), was only nine years older than Wright, but he became a father figure to the young draftsman, whose relationship with his own father was strained. Sullivan was then working on one of his great masterpieces, the Chicago Auditorium, which would be the largest building in America when it was completed in 1890. Along with structures such as the Wainwright Building in St. Louis (1890) and the Guaranty Building in Buffalo (1894), and his influential essay “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered” (1896), the auditorium would give Sullivan another paternal title: father of the skyscraper. He did not *invent* skyscrapers—that was his friend William Le Baron Jenney—but he established the aesthetics of tall-building architecture, famously declaring that “the force and power of altitude must be in it, the glory and pride of exaltation must be in it. It must be every inch a proud and soaring thing.”⁸

Brilliant, impassioned, and confrontational, Sullivan embodied some of the best qualities of 19th-century America: boldness, innovation, and intense individualism, which he thought should be expressed through structures that spoke of dynamism and enterprise. One can get a sense of his philosophy from his memoir, *The Autobiography of an Idea*. “The [only] sound social fabric,” he wrote,

“is Ego—the ‘I am’—the unique—the most precious of man’s powers, with their source and summation in diversity. Without Ego, which is Life, man vanishes. Ego signifies Identity. It is the free spirit. . . . It is the sign and symbol of man’s immense Integrity. . . . Our dream shall be a civilization founded upon ideas thrillingly sane . . . [a] civilization that shall be the living voice, the spring song, the sage of the power of [man’s] Ego to banish fear and hate, and in the courage of adventure and mastership to shape his destiny.”⁹

Like his artistic hero, Walt Whitman—who wrote long free-verse poems celebrating selfhood and democracy—Sullivan used the word “democracy” to mean not government by the majority, or the lowest common denominator, but the liberation of the individuality of all mankind. “Democracy,” wrote Sullivan, means “lifting . . . the eyelids of the world.”¹⁰ And he hoped Americans would use their buildings to express the nation’s “inventiveness, its resourcefulness, its unique daring, enterprise, and progress.”¹¹ His two most important artistic principles would become treasured bequests to his disciple Wright, who afterwards called him “Lieber Meister” (beloved master).

The first was the idea that architectural elements could express abstract values. For Sullivan, the most significant structural representation of values was the arch. In his book *Kindergarten Chats*—which consists of a series of philosophical dialogues with an unnamed student, partly inspired by his conversations with Wright—Sullivan explained

that architecture in the past had been based on horizontal and vertical structural members called the pier and the lintel (or post and lintel): columns and rafters that met at right angles to form cube-shaped structures. As a matter of engineering, pier-and-lintel architecture limited the height and strength of buildings, and Sullivan argued that as an aesthetic matter, they expressed static authoritarianism. The heavy, square buildings produced by post-and-lintel architecture expressed the values of hierarchical and theocratic societies in which individualism was suffocated and kings and priests enjoyed absolute power. The graceful curve of the arch, Sullivan argued, offered a new alternative for a new world. “Of all constructive forms,” he declared, it is “the most emotional,” because “under man’s hand it becomes what he will.”¹²

True, Romans had used the arch, but Sullivan thought they “held it in bondage,” using it only for engineering works such as viaducts, instead of featuring it as a central architectural theme.¹³ Chinese and Hindu architects had also dimly grasped its spiritual significance. But Sullivan thought only free, democratic America could use the arch to full advantage, because it symbolizes life itself—it expresses “triumph over an abyss,” leaping over the chasm of uncertainty to land just where the builder plans.¹⁴ It held the seeds of a humanistic architecture for a society that valued freedom and human efficacy.



Fig. 1: V. C. Morris Gift Shop by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Although Wright was later to use arches prominently in some of his work—for instance, the Frank Thomas House (1904) and the V. C. Morris Gift Shop (1948, fig. 1)—he had a slightly different take on Sullivan’s idea of expressing values through architectural designs: He thought the true individualistic and futuristic architectural form was the *cantilever*. A cantilever is formed when a vertical post bears the load of a horizontal extension, thus enabling that extension to reach out horizontally, seeming to float in thin air. This can convey a sense of weightlessness and flight—but laterally, rather than vertically; it soars but remains within reach of the Earth. It’s “natural” in an important sense: The most obvious example of a cantilever is a leaf, which is held by a stem at one end and sticks out over space at the far edge. Wings, too, are cantilevers.

Wright’s embrace of the cantilever instead of the arch paralleled another subtle but intriguing division between the two men. Where Sullivan’s designs tended to emphasize long, flowing curves—like “passion vine[s] in full bloom,” in Wright’s description—Wright’s style typically employed straight lines and sharp angles.¹⁵ (Only in the last years of his life did Wright begin using circular forms.) The ornamentation on Sullivan’s buildings, modeled on the art nouveau he had studied at the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris, were elaborate, sinuous curlicues; Wright preferred linear and triangular patterns that reflected what he called the “supergeometry” of the universe that “brood[s] just behind all aspect.”¹⁶ This

linear quality reflected a delight in the accuracy with which new machines could produce building components, and it gave Wright's work a feeling of precision and purposefulness. "Standardization was either the enemy or a friend to the architect," he later recalled. "The straight line, the flat plane were limitations until proved benefits by the Machine."¹⁷

But although Wright preferred straight cantilevers to curved arches, he shared with Sullivan the idea that structural forms could express abstractions—that the engineering of a building could articulate a sense of life and, specifically, the spirit of freedom and independence.¹⁸

Sullivan's second great lesson for Wright was that architecture is a form of poetry. Himself a free-verse poet who studded his books with verses about nature and democracy, Sullivan saw the two art forms as related because they both use formal structures, particularly rhythm, to heighten the significance of an artistic statement. "In man's rhythmical adjustment with nature . . . lies happiness," he wrote. "It is the function of the poet" to examine the "myriad progeny" of nature and "make them his own."¹⁹

Wright later modified this analogy. He thought architecture is more like music than poetry, because, as Wright scholar Jonathan Adams put it, "music and architecture both work with anticipation and realization."²⁰ A building's framework can create a sense of repetition and variation—of rhythmic background and melodic foreground—that gives the final work life and unity. In an effective musical composition (e.g., in Beethoven, who was Wright's favorite composer), the creator uses patterns and motifs, melodies or themes, repeating and altering these to effectuate surprise while still expressing a single unified conception. "The symphony," Wright declared, "is an *edifice, of sound* . . . Architecture not only might be but ought to be as symphonic in character."²¹

Is Architecture Even Art?



Fig. 2: Montgomery Ward Tower by Schmidt, Garden, and Martin.

Implicit in this analogy to poetry or music is the principle of *integration*. The prevailing architecture of the 1880s was an eclectic style that compiled preselected components, like parts chosen from a catalog, resulting in what Sullivan considered fundamentally dishonest agglomerations of clichés. He cited Chicago’s Montgomery Ward Tower (1898, fig. 2) as an example: It seemed to combine four different towers, copied from traditional forms and stacked sequentially. This was anathema to Sullivan, who thought buildings should have a central integrating principle and grow naturally from one design theme. “The mere setting together of ready-made fragments,” he wrote,

“ is a mechanical, not an organic process. It may tax the mind; for it is, essentially a species of unwholesome compromise; but it finds no place for the exercise of the higher faculties of thought and feeling. . . . [A] great work is, always, a great individual expression; the expression of a single thought or a single mood born of a contemplative, active, clear-sighted, creative mind.²²



Fig. 3: Marshall Field Wholesale Store by Henry Hobson Richardson.

He much preferred Henry Hobson Richardson’s Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1887, fig. 3), a simple, seven-story rectangular stone warehouse devoid of ornament except for the natural ruggedness of the granite out of which it was made. Its plain dignity and understated elegance seemed a perfect representation of Sullivan’s artistic ideal: that

“ a great [art]work must be an organism—that is, possessed of a life of its own; an individual life that functionates [*sic*] in all its parts; and which finds its variations in expression in the variations of its main function; and in the consequent, continuous, systematic variations in form, as the organic complexity of expression unfolds: all proceeding from one single impulse of desire to express our day and our needs: to seek earnestly and faithfully to satisfy those needs. To make our world a pleasant place.

His label for this ideal was “organic” architecture—the term Wright would adopt as his own.

It’s worth pausing to observe that Sullivan’s and Wright’s shared belief that architecture is like poetry or music offers a key to why architecture qualifies as an art form at all. Art is a “selective recreation of reality in accordance with an artist’s metaphysical value judgments”—that is, a selective representation (*re-presentation*) of the world as organized by the

artist's basic notions about what's important in life.²³ It's obvious how a movie, a novel, or a narrative poem re-creates reality: They create stylized facsimiles of it. But what about music, or a nonnarrative poem such as Rudyard Kipling's "If"?

The answer is that these art forms select and present sound, or metaphors and connotations, in ways that trigger emotional effects, possibly because the mind associates them with physical movements that have emotional significance. That's why music is so closely associated with dance, or even with tapping our toes. And that enables music to represent to us physical movement (or stillness) and the personal emotional atmospheres or—so to speak—flavors associated with such motion (or stillness).

Just as music can convey sentiments of militant pride, as with Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, or nonchalant self-control, as with Miles Davis's "It Never Entered My Mind," architecture can convey moods of regimentation, freedom, simplicity, or awe through the placement of structure and ornament. Instead of musical notes or poetic words, it uses three-dimensional elements to re-create a sense of emotionally charged movement or stillness. Thus, it's no coincidence that we speak of "sweeping" curves, "flying" buttresses, or "leaping" arches. Like music, stationary structures can convey dynamic properties that are as charged with emotion as human gestures.

What *reality* does architecture re-create? It re-presents a selectively stylized version of the environment, using techniques that render a sense of a world in physical shape, space, and the implication of motion. We respond to it according to whether it is modern or antique, bright or gloomy, streamlined or full of curious nooks and crannies. And we evaluate the significance of that re-presented environment just as we evaluate the significance of the mental effects that music and nonnarrative lyric poetry accomplish.²⁴

In short, music and poetry employ sounds, metaphors, and similar devices to exploit our built-in capacity for pattern recognition in ways that convey emotion. Architecture's visual rhythms and harmonies—its repetitions in the form of beams, pillars, or windows; its smoothness or abruptness in tones of steel, stone, glass, or wood—do the same. Whereas music uses our sense of hearing, architecture uses our sense of proprioception and our visuospatial capacity—that is, our sense of space. And in all these art forms, the key to a clear expression is coherent integration: with melodic motifs in the case of music, and shaped design themes in the case of architecture.



Fig. 4: Carson-Pirie-Scott Building by Louis Sullivan. Credit: Ken Lund, [Creative Commons 2.0](#).

That principle of integration gave rise to Sullivan’s famous, and often misunderstood, slogan: “form follows function.” Later generations of architects would interpret this phrase as an attack on ornamentation, arguing that buildings should be shorn of nonutilitarian components. But that was almost the opposite of what Sullivan meant. In fact, he was probably the greatest of all practitioners of architectural ornament. The elaborate ironwork on his Carson Pirie Scott Building in Chicago (1899, fig. 4)—resembling a cross between a science fiction lightning storm and the wild vines of an Edenic garden—or the bold sculpted angels atop his Bayard-Condict Building in Manhattan (1899)—which seem to be trying to shield the city and help it rise—are proof of that. What Sullivan meant was not that buildings should be stripped to their basic functional parts but that a building’s purpose should inspire the organizing idea of its form; that the shape should highlight and accentuate the building’s reason for being. The simplest way to put it is that for Sullivan, the form *expressed* the structure but did not *expose* the structure. Neither Sullivan nor Wright would adhere to the misunderstanding of “form follows function” embraced by the so-called International School of the 1930s, which reduced buildings to their simplest and least individualistic elements. Sullivan thought architecture was poetry. The International Style would try to make it prose.

Sullivan’s Battle and Wright’s Breakthrough

Sullivan’s two main ideas—the importance of the arch and the idea of architecture as poetry—helped trigger the greatest controversy of his life: his fight against neoclassicism at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893.

Intended to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America, the fair was held in a temporary "city" built for the occasion in what is now Jackson Park. The fair's structures were designed by a committee led by Sullivan's nemesis, Daniel Burnham, whose notable later works include New York's Flatiron Building (1902) and Washington D.C.'s Union Station (1907). Burnham decreed that the fair would be built in neoclassical style, based on Greek and Roman architecture, and the other committee members agreed, erecting the famous "white city" of fourteen primary buildings and about two hundred smaller structures designed with columns, pediments, and the rest of the classical repertoire.



Fig. 5: Transportation Building by Louis Sullivan. Credit: The Field Museum Library.

Sullivan, however, refused to cooperate. He considered neoclassicism "snobbish and alien to the land"; an authoritarian architecture that "turns its back on man," and was "lost in ghostly mesalliance with abstractions, when what the world needs is courage, common sense, and human sympathy, and a moral standard that is plain, valid, and livable."²⁵ His defiant answer was the fair's Transportation Building (fig. 5), which he built not in neoclassical style but in a long, horizontal form with gargantuan arched entrances—the so-called Golden Doorway—covered in spectacular yellows and reds like a blinding sunrise.

Fairgoers loved the Transportation Building. But even before the fair had ended, it was clear that Sullivan had lost the war. Architects and their patrons embraced neoclassicism, and at the very moment when technology was making it possible to erect genuine skyscrapers, articulating a single idea, they chose instead to imitate Greek temples, medieval castles, and French chateaus. In the years that followed, American architects turned away from the soaring and triumphant designs Sullivan favored, adhering instead to the neoclassical and Beaux-Arts styles that Sullivan bitterly denounced as "artificial, unreal, and therefore not only negatively useless but positively pernicious."²⁶ "The remedy" for what he considered an artistic dead end was "self-evident," he said: namely, "a liberation of the creative impulse."²⁷ But the president of the American Institute of Architects, Robert Peabody, responded: "most of us shudder to think what our land would be if subjected to 'a liberation of the creative impulse.'"²⁸ In the years that followed, Sullivan's partners—engineer Dankmar Adler and designer George Elmslie—left the firm, and business deteriorated. By the time he died in 1924, Sullivan had been forgotten; reduced to poverty, he lived at times on handouts from Wright and became an alcoholic, sleeping in a janitor's closet in a Chicago hotel.

Wright left Sullivan's office in 1893 to start his own practice, focusing primarily on building homes—something Sullivan had little interest in. Although Wright later designed important public projects, such as the Johnson Wax Building (1936) and the Guggenheim Museum (1959), his finest works were residences. It's noteworthy that America's greatest architect was, first and foremost, a builder of private houses. Other civilizations had great builders—but they invariably made their reputations with palaces and temples: Ictinus and Callicrates in ancient Greece, who built the Parthenon;

James of St. George, the greatest medieval architect, who built castles for kings; Jean de Chelles, who built Notre-Dame de Paris. Only in 19th-century America did the private residences of businessmen and industrialists become works of art.

Once on his own, Wright began developing a distinct style, which would break with the Victorian eclecticism and neoclassicism that were dominating architecture despite his mentor's efforts. But in so doing, he was influenced not only by Sullivan but also by another artistic trend that was gaining momentum at the time, called the arts and crafts (or "craftsman") movement.



Fig. 6: Gamble House by Charles and Henry Greene. Credit: Jim Heaphy, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

Arts and crafts was, in a sense, the opposite of everything Sullivan stood for. Inaugurated in the 1880s, it was intended as a reaction against the rise of machinery and mass production, which the craftsmen considered soulless and inauthentic. They wanted to make everything by hand, from vases and books to furniture and entire homes, to reassert the autonomy and significance of human beings. By employing traditional techniques, using unadorned, natural materials—brick and stone instead of steel, finished wood instead of paint—and building in a way that revealed structural elements such as beams and joists, they hoped to position themselves against mechanization as such. The results were often quite beautiful—as, for example, in the Gamble House (1909, fig. 6) and the Blacker House (1907), by the greatest of craftsmen architects, Charles and Henry Greene. Instead of concealing the rafters holding up the roofs and porches, Greene and Greene exposed them to the eye, drawing attention to the technique and ingenuity of the builders. Instead of using monotonous brick for fireplaces and chimneys, they used river stones of different shapes and sizes, which helped tie the buildings to their sites and to convey a sense of naturalness, as though the houses were emerging from the ground. And instead of rising upward, their homes were built low to the ground, with a deep emphasis on horizontal lines, which conveyed a connection between the structure and the Earth.

Wright biographer Meryle Secrest notes that the craftsmen, by rejecting the ornate forms being imported from Europe—such as the neoclassical—were effectively calling for “a quintessentially American architecture,” one that highlighted native materials and techniques and expressed an unpretentious lifestyle free of old-world baggage.²⁹ And Wright embraced that idea. Nobody can visit his houses and not be struck by the degree to which he learned from the craftsman style. This is most obvious in his preoccupation with the horizontal, which would become one of his chief hallmarks. But it is also clear in smaller details, such as his insistence on the hearth as the centerpiece of a house. The craftsmen, seeking

to encourage conversation and family togetherness, used central fireplaces to draw a home's inhabitants together—often building seating areas called inglenooks around their fireplaces. Wright, drawing on this idea, would employ hearths as focal points in his houses for the rest of his life. In his 1952 Clinton Walker House, he would even design the ceiling so that the seams between the wooden members converged above the fireplace.

The Art and Craft of the Machine

Yet at the same time, Wright rejected the central premise of the arts and crafts movement: its hostility to mechanization. In 1901, he delivered what would prove to be the most important lecture about his artistic goals. Under the revealing title “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” Wright insisted that the competing values of “human” authenticity and mass-producing mechanization could be harmonized through a third alternative, which he called the organic style. It would employ machinery to elevate the individual's integrity. “The Machine is Intellect mastering the drudgery of earth that the plastic art might live,” he declared. “Its function [is] ultimately to emancipate human expression. . . . The machine is capable of carrying to fruition high ideals in art—higher than the world has yet seen!”³⁰

Wright argued that although he shared the craftsmen's desire to emphasize human dignity, he thought their methods were counterproductive. They were essentially aristocratic in spirit, because few people could afford the time and expense of artisanal craftsmanship. Machinery would not destroy individuality but would instead make it possible for everyone, including the poor, to express their own individuality. He illustrated his point by reference to a famous passage in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, in which a medieval deacon points first at a book printed on Gutenberg's newly invented printing press and then at a Gothic cathedral. “Alas,” he says. “This will kill that.”³¹ What Hugo meant, said Wright, was that whereas cathedral architecture had formerly been the way in which ideas were transmitted to an illiterate populace, the creation of the press gave a boost to literacy and enabled “human thought” to “perpetuat[e] itself. . . more simple and easy” than architecture. The downside was that architecture was no longer the primary channel of intellectual expression—and architects gradually lost their originality and genius.

During the Renaissance, Wright thought, builders had taken to imitating the past rather than creating new forms: they erected “pseudo-classic” copies of Greek and Roman temples, just as Daniel Burnham was now “pil[ing] up a mammoth aggregation of Roman monuments.” Not only were these imitations of ancient forms aesthetically boring—they were also spiritually reactionary: throwbacks to an age of aristocracy and ignorance rather than an architecture that gave voice to the future. Instead, Wright thought, architects would do what great writers such as Hugo himself had done: take advantage of the possibilities of new technology to express new ideas that would turn away from the dogmas of the past toward liberating all of humanity. Hugo had believed that “the machine was the great forerunner of democracy,” Wright thought—and he was right. Mechanization would take self-expression out of “the possession of kings and classes” and make it a possibility in “the every-day lives of all.”

It was not just that machinery would empower people to express themselves: It would also improve the quality of art. The craftsmen's main aesthetic mistake, Wright argued, was in thinking that handmade objects were more truly human because of their imperfection. “The elaborate and fussy joinery of posts, spindles, jig sawed beams and braces” were not more truly human—let alone prettier—than the straight lines and precise fits that machines made possible. On the contrary, “the beauty of wood lies first in its qualities as wood,” and “the machine teaches us . . . that certain simple forms and handling are suitable to bring out the beauty of wood.” Modern technology “by its wonderful cutting, shaping, smoothing, and repetitive capacity, has made it possible to so use [wood] . . . that the poor as well as the rich may enjoy to-day beautiful surface treatments of clean, strong forms.”

Thus, Wright concluded, the machine was not the enemy but the liberator of human imagination. Once artists abandoned their sentimental and reactionary preoccupations, they would use the machine to “weave for the necessities of mankind . . . a robe of ideality no less truthful, but more poetical . . . beside which the art of old will be as the sweet, plaintive wail of the pipe to the outpouring of full orchestra.”

In the half century that followed, Wright's architecture would evolve through several phases. Yet he would always welcome the possibilities of modern technology in service of humanity. "[The] machine is [man's] best friend," he predicted. "If the art of the Greek, produced at such cost of human life, was so noble and enduring, what limit dare we now imagine?"

'A House in a Prairie Town'

"The Art and Craft of the Machine" came at the end of an experimental period during which Wright built several houses in his own neighborhood of Oak Park, Illinois, each one closer to what would become his first great artistic triumph: the Prairie style.

Prairie style was a distinctive new architectural form that emphasized the simplicity, dignity, and low horizontality that the Craftsmen championed but with the sharp geometry—and affordability—that spoke of modernization and mechanization. Wright perfected it in February 1901, when he published an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* titled "A Home in a Prairie Town," complete with blueprints and elevations for a house he claimed would cost less than \$7,000 (a significant, but not overwhelming price tag at the time). Shorn of the turrets and wooden "gingerbread" common in homes of the time, it was all straight lines and rectangles. Its most striking feature was a long first-story roof stretching almost the entire length of the lot, giving it a boldly horizontal appearance.

Architecture scholar Donald Hoffman explained the Prairie style by the presence of three characteristics: the cantilever, the rift, and the pier. These elements, when properly assembled, "propel the spirit into the landscape," giving the Prairie house a distinctive sense of life.³² The cantilever, as noted earlier, is like a bridge with one leg: It hovers, projecting the horizontal line into space. It connects to the Earth, but with a sense of lightness, defying gravity. By "rift," Hoffman meant the separation of a wall (whether vertically or horizontally) in ways that make its structural load seem to disappear. This can be done in subtle ways—as when Wright recessed the base of a brick column about an inch behind the next layer, which makes the column as a whole appear to hover over the floor. But rifts can also be dramatic—as with Wright's "friezes of glass" (horizontal windows wrapping around the length of a wall so the roof seems to float unsupported above a transparent band) or corner windows where one would expect columns to be. These tricks make the weight of the roof seem to vanish, giving the building an airy, nonchalant quality.



Fig. 7: Darwin Martin House by Frank Lloyd Wright.

“Pier” refers to Wright’s trick of breaking a wall into vertical sections placed at different distances, so that a wall, instead of looking like a single, load-bearing monolith, becomes a series of rectangles. Wright would often add piers that bore no load at all, just to give a building a sense of solidity and depth, and, when strategically placed around the structure, make it seem to emerge from the ground, rather than being plopped down on it. “A building should appear to grow easily from its site and be shaped to harmonize with its surroundings,” he explained.³³ Piers help create a sense of rhythm, too, and integrate the parts into the whole. Wright’s most successful use of this technique during his Prairie phase came with the luxurious Darwin Martin House in Buffalo (1905, fig. 7), where the exterior piers transform the rectangular building into a series of shapes and setbacks alternately dominating and delicate. If a sculptor sought to construct a physical analogue of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, it would probably look like this.



Fig. 8: Robie House by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Or take what is probably the greatest Prairie house, the Robie House in Chicago (1909, fig. 8). Its immense cantilevered roofs, with their low angles, give it a powerful horizontal design theme. The exterior walls are broken into sections—that is, piers—that cast striking vertical shadows, like a mountain range vanishing over the horizon. And the strip of windows sheltered under the house’s most striking feature—its looming, west-facing roof—helps the ceiling’s weight seem to disappear.

Inside, Wright developed the “open plan,” so that the home is not a collection of box-shaped rooms but flows from section to section. (Indeed, Wright was so adept at using piers and rifts to eliminate the confining, boxy quality of a room that in his houses one virtually *never* encounters a flat plane wall blocking one’s line of sight. Instead, there is nearly always a doorway, a window, a corner, or some other feature that gives the impression that the house just keeps going, elegantly moving back toward the horizon, where the building will seem to blend with nature.) Most striking of all is the integration. Every part belongs to the whole and draws on the horizontal design theme. Even the armrests of the couches and shelves of the dining room buffet are fashioned to harmonize with the cantilevered roofs. And the whole structure is composed of bricks made unusually long, in order to subtly draw out the building’s length.

Wright would go through several phases in his career, but these elements—the cantilever, the rift, and the pier—would always be key to his architectural vocabulary, giving his buildings their unmistakably “humane” character. “I have referred to a more ‘humane’ architecture,” he wrote in his distinctive style:

“ I will try to explain what *humane* means to me. . . . As the solar system is reckoned in terms of light-years, so may the inner light be what we are calling humanity. This element, Man as light, is beyond all reckoning. . . . There is nothing higher in human consciousness than beams of this interior light. We call them beauty.³⁴

The Scandal and the Horror

Wright’s Prairie houses were immediately popular. During the 1900s, he built them at the rate of almost one a month. In 1903, he was hired to build one for an electrical engineer named Edwin Cheney and his wife, Mamah, an attractive, intellectual woman devoted to the philosophy of the Swiss feminist writer Ellen Key. In a series of books published between the 1870s and the 1920s, Key argued for radical changes in the traditional relationship between men and women, especially the liberalization of divorce laws to enable people to escape unhappy marriages. Mamah was moved enough by her writing to befriend Key and to publish translations of three of her books.

“The modern young woman desires above all else the elevation of her own personality,” Key wrote in one.

“ She stands ready to choose *her* work and follow *her* fate. . . . She loves her view of life and the work to which she has dedicated herself, often as devotedly as man loves his. . . . The new woman is also deeply convinced that only when she feels happy—and happiness signifies the development of the powers inherent in her personality—can she properly fulfil her duties as daughter, wife, and mother.³⁵

Mamah seems to have felt stifled in her life with Edwin, and at the same time, Wright was growing restless in his own marriage. He had married eighteen-year-old Catherine Lee “Kitty” Tobin in 1889, and by the time construction began on the Cheney house, he and Kitty had six children. But he never felt comfortable with the responsibilities of fatherhood —“Is it a quality? Fatherhood? If so, I seemed born without it,” he confessed—and his reckless spending sometimes forced Kitty to borrow money to feed the family.³⁶ Wright, now in his mid-forties, also seems to have felt that Kitty’s interests were growing increasingly trivial and divergent from his own. Whatever the reasons, he found himself falling in love with Mamah while construction of the Cheney House was underway.³⁷ They began an affair, which they were unable to conceal, and when Kitty confronted her husband, he told her he wanted a divorce.

Kitty made a counterproposal: They would wait a year, and if he still refused to return home, she would agree to end the marriage. But within a few months, Wright and Mamah abruptly boarded a ship for London, then traveled to Germany before settling in at a villa in Feisole, Italy. The *Chicago Tribune* soon learned of their elopement and boosted it into a national scandal. Kitty insisted to reporters that her husband was innocent; Mamah must have seduced him, she claimed, and he would eventually return to his senses. “He has fought the most tremendous battles,” she said. “He is fighting one now. I know he will win.”³⁸ She was ready to welcome and forgive him if he would return home. She would persist in this vein for thirteen years, refusing Wright the divorce he insisted upon until 1922. When Wright and Mamah returned to the United States in 1910, they moved into Wright’s mother’s home in rural Wisconsin. Borrowing money from a wealthy patron, Wright bought about thirty acres and began constructing a house he would name Taliesin, a Welsh word meaning “shining brow,” after the way the structure was set into the hillside like the brow on a head. There, free to practice architecture in seclusion, his life with Mamah seems to have been idyllic, despite the bad publicity. Mamah worked on translations of Key’s writings, and Wright began work on one of his biggest architectural achievements, an entertainment venue called Midway Gardens in Chicago (demolished in 1929).

It was while working on the site in 1914 that he received a horrifying phone call from Taliesin. Around lunch time on August 15, one of Wright’s servants, thirty-year old Julian Carlton, poured gasoline around the outside of the dining room and lit a match. As flames consumed the building, Carlton used an ax to hack to death those who fled, killing

Mamah, her children—John (aged twelve) and Martha (nine)—and six other people. He then attempted suicide by swallowing acid. The poison did not kill him, but it destroyed his stomach, and he died of starvation two months later, never having explained his motive.³⁹

Wreck, Ruin, and Return



Fig. 9: Imperial Hotel by Frank Lloyd Wright.

It was partly to escape these shattering horrors that Wright traveled to Japan to build the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (1923, fig. 9), which would occupy him for nearly eight years.⁴⁰ He had visited Japan before, as early as 1905, and, like the craftsman architects before him, had fallen in love with Japanese design. He particularly admired its simplicity and connection to the environment. Japanese style was effectively the opposite of the Victorian styles popular in the America of his youth. Where Victorian was vertically oriented, cluttered, ornate, boxy, artificial, and fantastical, Japanese architecture was horizontal, plain, even stark—low to the ground, with the separation between inside and outside sometimes hard to discern. It downplayed the importance of personal possessions and highlighted the individual's relationship to nature. Wright loved how its minimalism accentuated every detail. If architecture was poetry, Japanese architecture was haiku.



Fig. 10: Taiyūin Byō.

Wright explained his admiration for Japanese art in a book he published on the subject in 1912: “A Japanese artist grasps form always by reaching underneath for its geometry,” he wrote. “An essential geometry he sees in everything.”⁴¹ Many of his buildings, including the Robie House and his own home in Oak Park, reveal his debt to Japanese design. But the influence could be remarkably subtle. Compare, for instance, the Taiyūin-byō in Nikkō, Japan (1653, fig. 10), with the Unity Temple in Chicago, which Wright completed in 1908 (fig. 11). Unity Temple looks nothing like Taiyūin-byō from outside—it’s tall, cubical, with cement piers that give it a fortresslike look. But the floor plans of the two buildings are almost identical. Also, this church has no steeple, no traditional sculpture or stained glass, not even a cross; it’s about life on Earth, not the hereafter. Inside, Wright employed visual tricks to downplay the significance of the walls—rifts, a “clerestory” of windows high against the ceiling, and dramatic balconies at the bottom—which make it easy to forget the walls entirely (fig. 12). One enters through the side, not through a single massive door, and walks around the main room before rising into the cube’s center, where one gets the feeling of being in a gazebo rather than a square building. Worshippers look at each other, not at an altar; their gaze is horizontal, not vertical. Simply put, Unity Temple rejects the authoritarian and mystical qualities of traditional Christian architecture and substitutes humanist qualities borrowed from Japanese buildings.



Fig. 11: Unity Temple by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Another important Wright device featured prominently in Unity Temple is what architects call “compression and release.” By diminishing the size of entrances and hallways and stretching the height of main rooms, Wright could control people’s sensations when moving through a building—leading them down a narrow corridor, then rewarding them with openness when they reach their destination. Wright loved this trick. He was only five feet seven and was often teased for making doorways and hallways too short for average people, to which he would reply jokingly that a six-foot tall man was a waste of material. But the real reason was that restriction and expansion served his goal of using contrast within a structure to evoke certain sensations, just as a musical composer might follow a quiet passage with a loud crescendo—or change keys—to create a feeling of surprise.

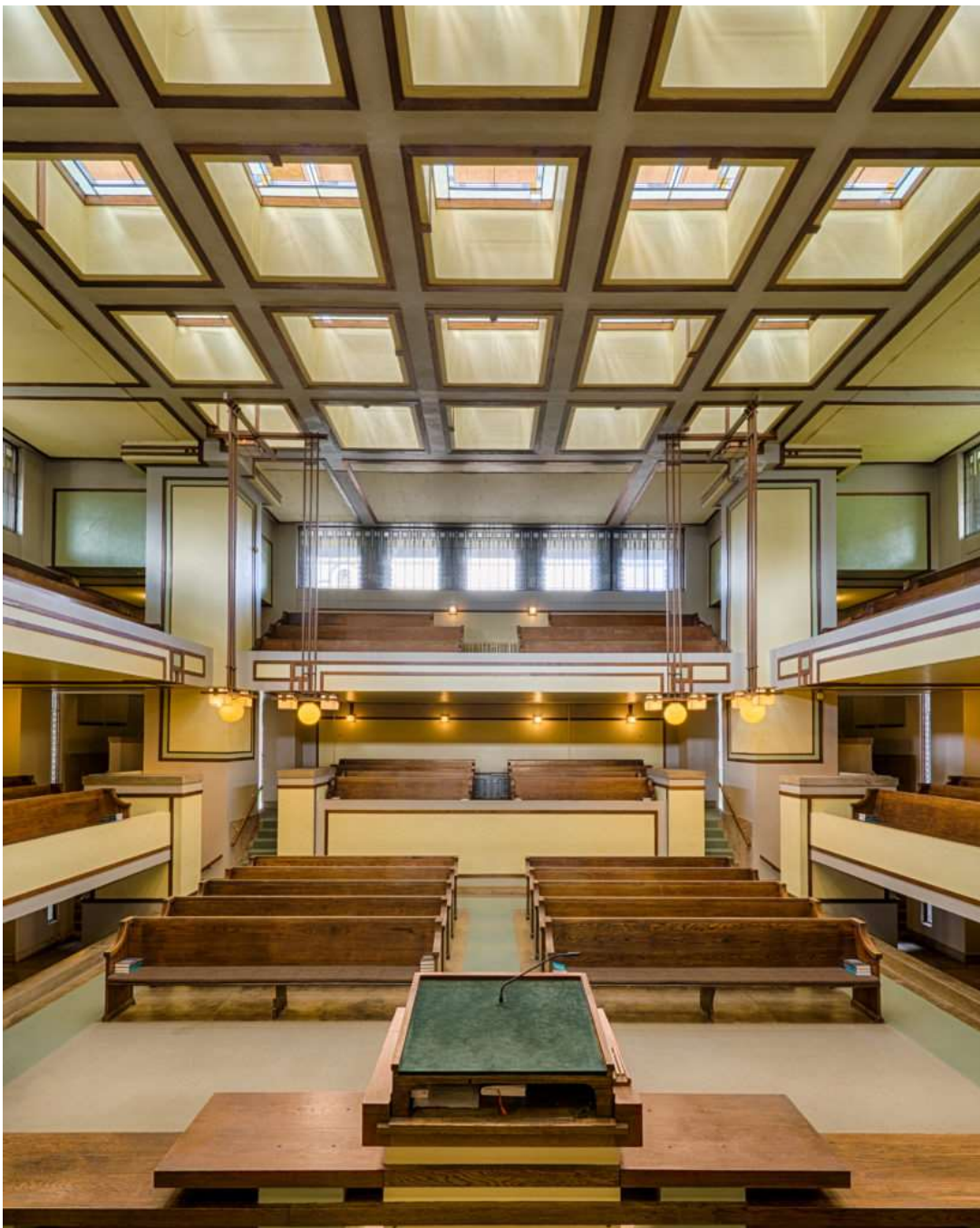


Fig. 12: Unity Temple by Frank Lloyd Wright.

But Wright had a broader reason for choosing low ceilings: an artistic value he called “human scale.” Wright thought architecture’s artistic effects required a person to have a relationship with a building—a psychological effect easily lost if a structure is too large to comprehend or so overly simple that one takes it for granted. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle observed that an object cannot be beautiful if it is either too small or too large, because beauty is a matter of proportion and order, and if something is too big, “the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder.”⁴² Wright, too, sought to ensure that people *noticed* their surroundings, that a building’s proportions and geometry would never be effaced, and that a structure would frame the inhabitant’s perspective. Low ceilings ensure that some part of a building remains in view when one looks out horizontally—and this, along with tricks such as shelflike projections from a wall just before a ceiling begins or orienting the seams of the ceiling or wall paneling to direct the eye one way or another—manipulate the beholder’s orientation, with effects on his mood. “Human scale” meant shaping the experience of a building’s inhabitants just as the conventions of attending a concert ensure that the audience receives the whole effect at which the composer aims.

Whereas Unity Temple had a solemn, dignified air, the Imperial Hotel had a bold and outlandish look; like Midway Gardens, it seemed to prefigure Art Deco with its massive cubical structures, angular statues, and beguilingly dark nooks and crannies. The Japanese loved it, and it became known as the “Jewel of the Orient.” Americans were impressed, too. Louis Sullivan, in one of the last articles he published before his death, praised it as “the high water mark thus far attained by any modern architect.”⁴³ It did not copy Japanese style but drew upon it in ways that were simultaneously original and traditional—with elegant ornament and detailed planning that gave it an elevated serenity. But what really ensured the building’s fame was that almost immediately after completion, it survived a 7.9 magnitude earthquake that demolished most of Tokyo—and remains the worst in the city’s history. Wright attributed the hotel’s survival to the unusual “floating” foundation he had designed in anticipation of earthquakes; although engineers still debate whether this made the difference, the hotel’s endurance earned him a reputation for safety as well as imagination. (In fact, to date, no Frank Lloyd Wright building has ever collapsed, and Wright is said to have chuckled at the difficulty demolition crews encountered when tearing down Midway Gardens in 1929 and his Larkin Administration building in 1950.) The Imperial Hotel became a landmark. Among other things, it held one of the first Shinto shrines outside a temple—and one of the few to survive the quake—so couples soon began holding weddings there, inaugurating what has become a tradition of hotel weddings in Japan.⁴⁴

Shortly after returning to America in the 1920s, Wright became involved with a new woman, a schizophrenic drug addict named Miriam Noel. After Kitty finally agreed to a divorce in 1922, he married Miriam—only to have that relationship deteriorate into abuse. Miriam became increasingly erratic, and Wright sought ways to avoid her. In 1924, while sitting alone in the audience at a Chicago ballet, he met the woman who would become his third and final wife, Olgivanna Hinzenberg, a Montenegrin immigrant who was also already married.

Olgivanna was a devotee of the Armenian-born mystic philosopher George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, a sort of proto-hippie whose spiritual disciplines involved a heavy emphasis on dancing or “movements,” and who preached a doctrine of self-improvement he called the “Fourth Way.” Olgivanna was considered a skilled practitioner of these movements, and her powerful personality, her defiance of convention, and her striking beauty captivated Wright.

Olgivanna swiftly divorced her husband and in early 1925 moved with Wright into the newly rebuilt Taliesin. When Miriam—then living in Los Angeles—learned of this, she had her husband arrested for transporting a woman across state lines for immoral purposes (a violation of federal law). Once again, Wright was a figure of nationwide scandal—and Olgivanna narrowly escaped being deported for her part in the “crime.” Months later, a fault in the electrical wiring at Taliesin started another fire, and the house burned down a second time. Two years later, Wright finally got a divorce from Miriam and married Olgivanna, but by now his finances were ruined. He had paid no alimony and was thousands of dollars in debt to the contractors he hired to build Taliesin a third time. Subject to multiple lawsuits, and with creditors planning to evict him and Olgivanna, Wright tried raising funds by selling his collection of rare Japanese art, but that generated only a fraction of what he needed.

Another man might have quit. Wright was in his sixties. He had revolutionized architecture and become world famous with the Prairie Style and the Imperial Hotel. Now he was penniless, his reputation tainted by multiple scandals. But rather than surrendering, he decided to remake himself. First, he devised a financial scheme: He would incorporate *himself* and sell “shares” in his future productivity. This was merely a new strategy for borrowing hundreds of thousands of dollars from patrons—money he never expected to repay. (“He was a confidence man of infinite charm,” wrote biographer Brendan Gill with bemusement, “and nobody could refuse him anything for long.”)⁴⁵ Next, he would transform his art. The 1920s had witnessed unprecedented changes in technology and culture—radio, air travel, the widespread adoption of the automobile—and Wright would do what was necessary to accomplish his own renaissance.



Fig. 13: La Miniatura (aka Millard House) by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: Kyle Magnuson, [Creative Commons 2.0](#).

California Romanza and the Land of the Dotted Line

In 1927, Wright was invited to build a luxury hotel in Phoenix, Arizona. When he arrived to examine the site, he met a real estate developer named Alexander Chandler who wanted him to build a second resort in the nearby town named after him. Wright settled in Chandler, living for six months in a campsite he called Camp Ocatilla.⁴⁶ Chandler's hotel never came to fruition, but Wright's initial project became one of Arizona's great architectural treasures, the Biltmore Hotel.



Fig. 14: Tribune Tower by John Mead Howells and Raymond Hood.
Credit: Ken Lund, [Creative Commons 2.0](#).

Wright was not officially the architect of the Biltmore; apparently in hopes of avoiding some kind of legal trouble, he served as “consulting architect” for Albert Chase McArthur, a former apprentice.⁴⁷ But his hand is evident in every detail, particularly its striking textile blocks, a technique he had inaugurated with a group of houses in Southern California that he called his “Romanza” homes. The Romanza phase of Wright’s career includes the famous Ennis House in Los Angeles (1924)—often remembered from its appearance in the film *Blade Runner*—and La Miniatura (1923, fig. 13) in Pasadena, which was among Wright’s own favorite works.



Fig. 15: Gulf Building by Alfred C. Finn, Kenneth Franzheim, and J. E. R. Carpenter. Credit: James Evans, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

The Romanza style is best understood by an analogy; it was to California what the Prairie style was to the Midwest: a new architecture meant to embody California's climate, geography, and history—in the latter case, a combination of Mayan and Aztec temples and the newfangled Hollywood movie industry. In creating this style, Wright was influenced by one of the most important incidents in modern architectural history, the 1922 competition to design a new headquarters building for the *Chicago Tribune*. That contest was won by John Mead Howells and Raymond Hood, whose neo-Gothic Tribune Tower (1923, fig. 14) is famous, or infamous, for its absurd crown of churchlike flying buttresses. Wright hated skyscrapers—he thought buildings should hug the ground—and refused to participate in competitions. But along with almost every other American architect, he was captivated by the contest's runner-up: Eliel Saarinen's Art Deco Mayan temple, one of the most influential buildings never built. Louis Sullivan hailed it as a "priceless pearl" and a testament to "the universal genius of man," and it influenced everything from New York's Radiator Building (1924) to the Gulf Building in Houston (1929, fig. 15).⁴⁸ Wright thought that Los Angeles, with its connection on one hand to old Mexico, and on the other to the fantasy world of Hollywood, needed an exotic architecture that combined the mystery of ancient temples with the glamor of movie castles, and he thought Saarinen's design offered the key.



Fig 16: Arizona Biltmore by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The first glimmer of what would become Wright's Romanza style appeared with his Los Angeles Hollyhock House, finished in 1921. Built for an eccentric heiress who asked Wright to base the design on her favorite flower, Hollyhock House employed the horizontal lines and open plan of the Prairie Style but added Art Deco versions of flower motifs throughout a house so castle-like that it even features a sort of drawbridge and a water-filled moat around the living room fireplace. With the Ennis House and La Miniatura, Wright combined this fairy-tale castle look with his new textile blocks, producing homes that manage to combine a haunting, antique look with a futuristic alienness. It's little wonder that director Ridley Scott thought the Ennis House the perfect setting for a dark science fiction film.

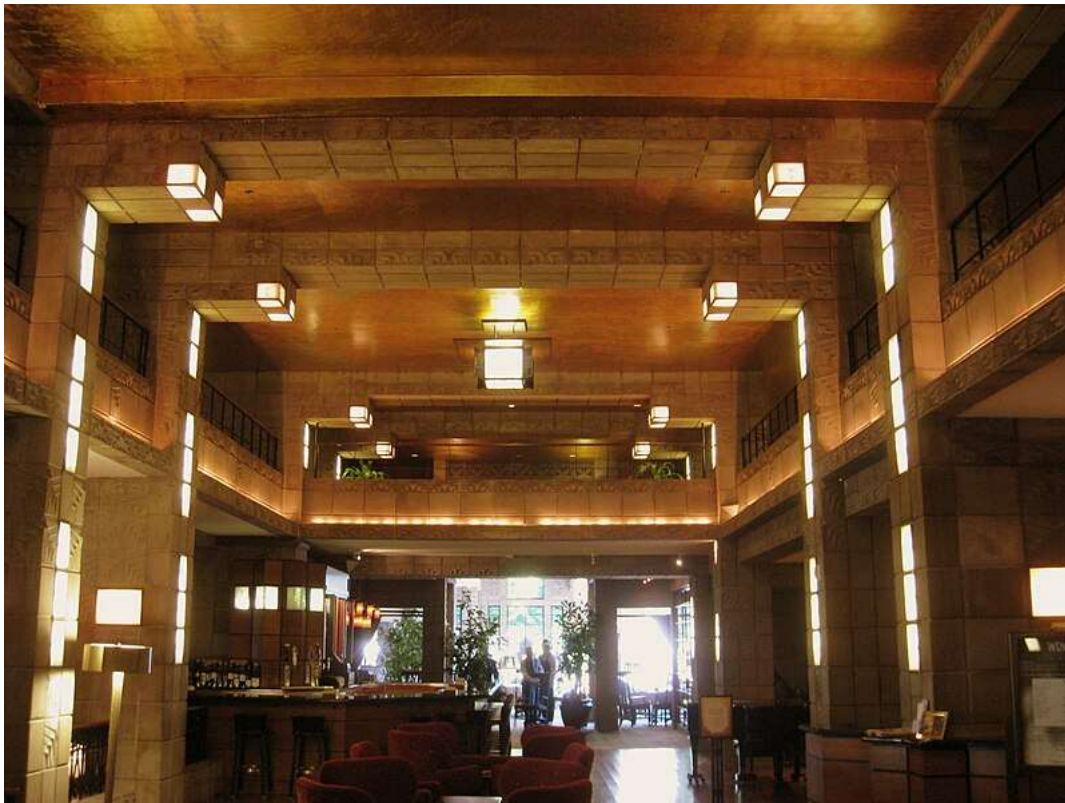


Fig. 17: Arizona Biltmore by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Wright showed more restraint with the Arizona Biltmore in 1929 (fig. 16). Here, too, he used textile blocks and the open plan; the lobby (fig. 17)—with its overhanging second story, lowered ceilings, compression-and-release techniques, and integrated light fixtures—combines exoticism with a relaxed and open air. But there was something new also. While working on the project, Wright fell in love with the desert. He called Arizona the “land of the dotted line,” meaning that its architecture must employ “dotted outlines and wall surfaces that eagerly take the light and play with it, break it up and render it harmless, or drink it until sunlight blends the building into place with the creation around it.”⁴⁹ For the rest of his career, he would design parts of his structures solely for the purpose of casting shadows, helping create interesting linear effects that would echo the crags of boulders and the points of cactuses, just as his Prairie Style had echoed the flatness of the plains, and his Romanza style had expressed the fantasy and nostalgia of Hollywood.

The Rise of the International Style

The Biltmore was a great success. But within a year of its completion, Wright’s career would collapse, partly because of his personal troubles and partly because the Great Depression wrecked his patrons’ fortunes, and commissions vanished. Between 1925 and 1930, he finished only two structures. Between 1930 and 1935, he finished only two more. But it was not just that construction declined in the economic crisis; it was also the fact that the architectural profession was starting to turn away from his style and embrace ideas wholly contrary to his own. Wright now found himself confronted by a new rival, one that would become his greatest enemy: the International style.



Fig. 18: Barcelona Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Credit: Ashley Pomeroy, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

Its practitioners, such as Le Corbusier, Philip Johnson, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, rejected the individualism and humanism of Wright's organic architecture. They prioritized uniformity over uniqueness, standardization over individuality. Their motto was that a house is a "machine for living," and their aesthetic was a top-down authoritarianism that elevated society over the individual.⁵⁰ It was cubical and almost ostentatious in its lack of decoration. This minimalist quality did give some International style buildings a certain simple grace—Mies's 1929 Barcelona Pavilion (fig. 18), for example, conveys a sense of lightness, with large windows and walls so thin that it looks like a house of cards. But more often, International style buildings were featureless boxes, such as Corbusier's 1931 Villa Savoye (fig. 19) and Johnson's Miller Company Addition (1965).



Fig. 19: Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier. Credit Wikipedia user Valueyou, [Creative Commons Deed 3.0](#).

Some Internationalists viewed their work as part of an effort to transform *people* in the service of politics. Corbusier adopted the slogan “architecture or revolution”—the idea being that architecture could change people, including by making them more peaceful.⁵¹ Naturally, he thought one way to do that was to eliminate their individual differences, which are the cause of so much conflict. That called for a hygienic, even sterile form of building. As he put it in his manifesto *Toward a New Architecture*, “the sound economic management of building sites requires the exclusive use of straight lines. The straight line is the grand acquisition of modern architecture. . . . We must clear our minds of *romantic cobwebs*.”⁵²

That seemed to imply precisely the dehumanizing mechanization that the craftsmen had feared: Buildings were just glass and steel boxes; the people inside were merely animals to be controlled, not individuals to be respected. In fact, the Internationalists appealed to a culture of collectivism. “Architecture which produces effects introduced by the artist has no right to exist,” declared the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, a guru to many Internationalists. “Building is only organization: social, technical, economic, mental.”⁵³ The socialist art critic Lewis Mumford agreed. The International style’s goals, he wrote, were “disciplined thinking, coherent organization, collective enterprise, and . . . happy impersonality.”⁵⁴ As another Internationalist, Adolf Loos, declared, “the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects.”⁵⁵

Given the International style’s hostility to individualism and “bourgeois” pleasure, its appeal to communists was obvious. Two years after pronouncing that artists have no right to exist, Meyer moved to the Soviet Union, where, he said, “a truly proletarian culture is being forged.”⁵⁶ But not all Internationalists were communists. In fact, Johnson was a fascist who attended Nazi rallies and predicted that Hitler’s party would be “the salvation of Germany.”⁵⁷ Whether its acolytes were socialists or National Socialists, however, the International style plainly appealed to those who despised individualism and viewed decoration or a concern with beauty or the human spirit as decadent distractions from the task of mass-producing uniform “machines for living.”

Nothing could have been more alien to Frank Lloyd Wright. He shared the Internationalists’ rejection of obsolete artistic traditions and even praised Corbusier’s book, agreeing that modern architecture should emphasize “the clean lines and surfaces of the aeroplane, the ocean greyhounds [ships], and . . . certain machinery.”⁵⁸ But he could not abide their ascetic functionalism. He believed that humanity and The Machine could coexist, but the kind of mechanization the

Internationalists endorsed struck him as fundamentally antihuman. In fact, architecture critic Henry Russell Hitchcock—who began as one of Wright’s harshest detractors but became an admirer—expressed the difference between the two camps precisely when he said the former had “bowed to the material side of the machine,” whereas the latter “rejoice[d] in its spirit.” He meant that the Internationalists sought to make people into a kind of machine—and he did not mean this as a reproach. The Internationalists “are not humanists,” Hitchcock observed. “They seek to express and to take part in the possible reintegration toward which after the decadence of the nineteenth century our life seems to be moving.”⁵⁹

Nobody represented that “decadence” more than Frank Lloyd Wright. “Poetic tranquility instead of a more deadly ‘efficiency,’ should be the [goal] in the art of Building,” he wrote.⁶⁰ In his view, the Internationalists’ hostility to beauty—or, in his words, their “sterility of ornophobia”—had no stopping point.⁶¹ If followed to its logical conclusion, it would make every building a featureless cube, so anonymous and depersonalized that it might be plunked down anywhere in the world with no relationship to its surroundings and no sympathy for its inhabitants. One might as well “trim up the trees, too, shape them into boxes,” he wrote, “cut them to cubes and triangles. . . . We are eventually going to have as citizens machine-made men, corollary to machines, if we don’t look out[.]”⁶² He thought it was right for modern architecture to aspire to dignified simplicity, but Internationalism embraced simplicity without the dignity, effacing architecture itself. That was why International style buildings “utterly fail to make [their] virtues honorably or humanly effective.”⁶³

Wright’s emphasis on individualism was far from consistent, however. On the contrary, he sometimes publicly praised Soviet communism, and in June 1937, he traveled to Russia, where he addressed the Union of Soviet Architects. Calling the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics “a country of great hope for the world,” he told his listeners that capitalism “is a gambling game,” and that “America is far behind [in] correct town planning” because “private property ownership makes correct planning impossible.”⁶⁴ When Americans learned of his speech, public outrage impelled him to issue statements insisting that he was not a communist—and that was true; he was more naive than anything else and was seduced into participating in a Soviet propaganda exercise during some of the worst days of Stalin’s Terror.

Still, it was not *just* ignorance. Wright later remarked in his *Autobiography* that “a kind of new heroism, one integral with all humankind, is surely growing up in the Soviet Union,” and in a 1957 television interview, told Mike Wallace that he stood by those words.⁶⁵ On the other hand, when asked what he thought of capitalism, he replied, “I believe in a capitalist system. I only wish I could see it tried some time.”⁶⁶

The bottom line with Wright’s politics was that he tended to associate economic freedom not with individual liberty but with the sacrifice of integrity for commercial appeal, and he was attracted to the Soviet rhetoric of utopian planning without understanding its true nature. His ideal was a vaguely understood pseudo-Jeffersonian agrarianism—a notion he embodied in a 1932 town planning scheme he called “Broadacre City.” The inhabitants of Broadacre City, he declared, would enjoy “Capitalism consistent with Democracy: that is to say Capitalism consistent with the freedom, individuality, and personal initiative of a grand Nation such as ours of essentially intelligent, emotional, free individuals.”⁶⁷ At the same time, he proposed that this utopia would be governed by a board of architects empowered to control and regulate every use of land to ensure its beauty and harmony. As one scholar put it, Wright’s political views were a combination of “irreconcilable contrasts. . . . He was an anarchist, intransigent in his opposition to the claims of governmental authority, and simultaneously a pan-archist, capable of conceiving a society in which virtually every aspect of life would be brought under the supervision of the state.”⁶⁸

Although his grasp of individualism was often poor, Wright always remained committed, at least in spirit, to the principle of individual dignity and potential. The Internationalists’ constant invocation of “the common man” or “the mass” as a rationale for their ascetic, mass-produced “machines for living” disgusted him. “Culture is not for the herd,” he declared three years before his death.

“ Culture is an individual thing. . . . The sovereignty of the individual . . . means . . . a certain rejection of the common man *as common*, but insisting on his privilege to be *uncommon*. . . . This is the country that we live in, that declares it—the only one that has made it official—the only one that has made it constitutional—to be yourself.⁶⁹

With such attitudes, it was almost inevitable that Wright found himself an outcast in the collectivist 1930s. *Vanity Fair* ran an article in 1931 dismissing him as an “aging individualist.”⁷⁰ Raymond Hood told him in 1933 that his individualism disqualified him from helping plan the World’s Fair.⁷¹ One of the nastiest comments came from architect Harvey Wiley Corbett, who told reporters that he preferred vertical buildings because “the vertical is always more attractive than the horizontal. . . . [W]e have vertical stripes on our clothes because we think they add to our appearance. . . . [T]he uniforms of *convicts* . . . have broad, horizontal stripes.”⁷²

Indeed, many intellectuals viewed romanticism and individualism as *passé* in the modern, proletarian vogue; they embraced the communist murals of Diego Rivera, the geometrical paintings of Wassily Kandinsky, the atonal music of Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg, and the naturalism and realism of novels by Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser. In their eyes, the coherence and elegance of Wright’s architecture were inherently suspicious. As Henry Russell Hitchcock put it, Wright was “pandering to the bourgeois taste for representational prettiness.”⁷³

In 1931, Hitchcock and Philip Johnson published *The International Style*, a manifesto that listed their principles as:

“ emphasis upon volume—space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass or solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament.”⁷⁴

The pair sneered that “commercially successful” architects would reject these ideas because they were “contrary to the American cult of individualism, whether genuinely romantic, as in the case of Frank Lloyd Wright, or merely the result of the advertising value of [the] latest [consumer product].”⁷⁵ Although Hitchcock and Johnson claimed to respect Wright’s achievements, they thought “his work belongs definitely to the past,” because he insisted on “remain[ing] an individualist” instead of submitting to “the shackles of a fixed style.” Other architects were “work[ing] successfully within the disciplines,” they said—that is, obeying the new rules—but nobody built like Frank Lloyd Wright. That alone, they claimed, proved “the case against individualism.”⁷⁶

A year later, Hitchcock and Johnson curated an exhibit on modern architecture at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). The show featured works by Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Raymond Hood, and others—and it included Wright, too. But the photos of his work that Hitchcock and Johnson chose to display were primarily of decades-old buildings, such as the Robie House, and the photos were in black and white, which concealed the dramatic color effects of which Wright was proud. Worst of all, the exhibition program subtly characterized Wright as an admirable but outdated figure. Its foreword, by MOMA director Alfred Barr, called him “one of the [International] Style’s most important sources,” and an “ancestor” of his “best younger contemporaries.” Hitchcock’s essay in the program concluded that Wright was “the greatest American architect of the first quarter of the twentieth century.” Infuriated, Wright replied by letter:

“ This Hitchcock concession of twenty-five years—a quarter of a century—bores me. . . . Not only do I fully intend to be the greatest architect who has yet lived but fully intend to be the greatest architect who will ever live. Yes, I intend to be the greatest architect of all time.”⁷⁷

The Comeback

Most of the Internationalists' critiques of Wright were off base. Their own blocky, featureless buildings did not represent a new breakthrough for the art form but a throwback—a kind of collectivist Puritanism. Behind their scorn for Wright's "commercial" appeal lay a contempt for his clients' "bourgeois" desire for beauty—for pleasure, comfort, and distinctiveness—which the perverse dogma of Internationalism taught them to view as faults. Americans generally disapproved of the International Style, recognizing that it was, as art historian Russell Lynes put it, "not just an architecture of simple style" but "an architecture of do-goodism, and the public was damned if it wanted to be done-good-by."⁷⁸ Some communities even went so far as to outlaw it.⁷⁹

But one of the Internationalists' criticisms did hit home with Wright: He built lovely homes for wealthy clients, but most people could never afford a tailor-made house by a world-famous architect. In an age of mass production, an art that aimed to be useful as well as beautiful risked irrelevancy if most people couldn't afford it. What good was it to write a gorgeous symphony if nobody heard it? And how "humane" could organic architecture really be if it lay beyond most people's reach? Given his frequent invocations of democracy and of modern technology's capacity to make self-expression more affordable, Wright saw merit in these challenges.



Fig. 20: Herbert Jacobs House by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: James Steakley, [Creative Commons 4.0](#).

Wright's private struggles and the challenge of the Internationalists set the stage for what would become the greatest comeback in art history.



Fig. 21: Herbert Jacobs House by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: James Steakley, [Creative Commons 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

An initial step came in 1936, when a young couple named Herbert and Katherine Jacobs asked Wright if he could build them a home for a mere \$5,000—little more than five years’ pay for the average worker. That was, indeed, a challenge—and Wright decided to try. The result was the Herbert Jacobs House (1937, fig. 20) a modest one-story L-shaped home of about sixteen hundred square feet, stocked with innovations to reduce cost and make its smallness livable. Using the “open plan,” it featured a minimum of internal walls, combining the dining room, living room, and kitchen into one room, and using ceiling height instead of walls to convey a sense of separation. Wright used built-in furniture (fig. 21) to reduce the need for storage space and installed a steam-heating device in the floor to warm the house. Instead of a garage, he created the carport—one of his most influential inventions. Instead of the bland steel and concrete the Internationalists favored, he built the house of wood and brick, giving it a human, natural feeling. Its low, horizontal profile and large windows tied it to the site in the elegant fashion that was already a Wright signature.

The Jacobs House offered Wright’s reply to the Internationalists’ allegation that theirs was an architecture of equality. Where the Internationalists thought the age of The Machine required buildings to be stark, unadorned boxes, he was asserting the dignity of the individual homeowner. The contrast between the two seemed to perfectly parallel the distinction Alexis de Tocqueville drew almost exactly a century earlier between two senses of the word “equality.” On one hand, Tocqueville wrote, there is a “debased taste for equality, which leads the weak to want to drag the strong down to their level and which induces men to prefer equality in servitude to inequality in freedom.” On the other, there is a “manly and legitimate passion for equality which rouses in all men a desire to be strong and respected . . . [and] tends to elevate the little man to the rank of the great.”⁸⁰ Now, in this new phase of his career, Wright was proffering this “legitimate” equality as an answer to the “debased” version that Internationalism offered. He even fashioned a name for his new phase. In contrast to “International,” he considered this an *American* style. So, he called it “Usonian,” a word he devised from the words “United States of North America.”



Fig. 22: S. C. Johnson Wax Company by Frank Lloyd Wright.

While he was building the Jacobs House, Wright was also preparing the second step in his comeback: [a headquarters for the S. C. Johnson Wax Company](#) in Racine, Wisconsin. Here, he created a futuristic, streamlined structure with radical innovations such as windows made of translucent glass tubes to let in light without admitting what he considered an unsightly view of the city. (This was a failure; the tubes leaked in the rain and could not be properly waterproofed until a new sealant was invented decades later.) To support the ceiling of the main workroom, he planned a forest of twenty-one-foot-tall lily pad-shaped columns of reinforced concrete, nine inches in circumference at the base and eighteen feet around at the top (fig. 22).



Fig. 23: Public demonstration of a Frank Lloyd Wright column.

City building officials doubted that the columns could bear the structural load, so they refused to give Wright a building permit. He therefore insisted on a public demonstration (fig. 23). On June 4, 1937, he had a test column erected and ordered sandbags piled on top. Soon the weight was equivalent to what the plans called for, and the column showed no strain. Unsatisfied, he ordered his apprentices to keep piling on the weight while he stomped around the shaft, whacking it with a walking stick for reporters' amusement. Only when the weight reached six times the required load did the concrete begin to crack. The humbled bureaucrats conceded Wright's victory, and construction proceeded.⁸¹



Fig. 24: Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The third and final step in Wright's triumphant return came months later, when he unveiled his greatest masterpiece: a country retreat for department store magnate Edgar Kaufmann on a stream in a forest near Pittsburgh. This house, known as Fallingwater (fig. 24), offered Wright's final rebuttal of the International School. It features the straight, modern simplicity the Internationalists prized but in the service of the individual, not in contradiction to him. Fallingwater is not a utilitarian structure, or an anonymous, uniform "machine for living." It's a vacation home situated in a remote forest, which features pieces whose sole function is to cast shadows. It positively revels in what Henry Russell Hitchcock had dismissed as the "bourgeois taste for representational prettiness."⁸² There are more balconies than one needs (does one ever *need* a balcony?), and its stone verticals and pale concrete horizontals tie it to the site so that it seems to grow from the rock (fig. 25). One of its finest touches is a section near the northwest terrace that appears to grip the stone and hold the house to the hillside; in fact, it's not a structural support and carries no load—it's pure ornament.



Fig. 25: Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright.. Credit: Wikimedia user Ruhrfisch, [Creative Commons 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).

Fallingwater is situated so that it reveals itself slowly to the visitor who approaches from the forest—yet it makes no effort to disappear. It stands atop the Bear Creek waterfall, not beside it, so that from its most dramatic angle, it seems to be the source of the flow. Wright broke the walls into piers that act like screens; as Hoffman observed, “Fallingwater [is] a house without four walls. It [has] nine.”⁸³ Doors open to stairs leading down to the stream, and on the inside, the rock on which the building is perched forms the living room floor and part of the hearth, making the room seem like some luxurious cave (fig. 26). The corner windows let light flood into the surrounding forest, laying claim to the Earth, while the sound of the water and the wind in the trees permeate the building, thus tying the house to its surroundings. This is the final word in organic architecture—structure as ornament, in rhythm with the Earth.



Fig. 26: Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: Jeffrey Neal, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

The Triumph of Romanticism

One can best grasp Fallingwater’s triumph by comparing it with a true International style house: Richard Neutra’s Lovell “Health House” (fig. 27) in Los Angeles, built in 1929, which probably helped inspire Fallingwater. Like Fallingwater, the Health House is perched on a slope—in this case, a hill in Griffith Park—and it features a strikingly similar balcony. But it’s boxy, rigid, harsh, unconnected to the land. It lacks the flying quality of Fallingwater, and that’s particularly due to one of Wright’s most astonishing artistic choices.



Fig. 27: Lovell “Health House” by Richard Neutra. Credit: Wikimedia user Los Angeles, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

The most prominent balcony on Neutra’s Health House is supported by a group of vertical supports, which are structurally necessary but give the building a square, two-dimensional effect. With Fallingwater, Wright decided to break the rules. His plan originally called for four vertical supports, called bolsters, under the primary balcony overlooking the waterfall. He likened these to the fingers of a waiter holding up a drink tray. But while construction was starting, Wright revised his plans—eliminating one of the bolsters and redesigning the other three in a triangular, stepped-back shape. This effectively hides the bolsters in the shadows beneath the terrace, which makes it seem to hover over the water, supported by nothing.

It was a stroke of aesthetic genius. There was a cost, however: The cantilever immediately began to sag. To the Internationalists, this was proof of Wright’s unconscionable decadence; a complete surrender of function to “bourgeois prettiness.” But Fallingwater is not an architecture of functionalism. It’s an architecture of romanticism. This was, so to speak, not a house as it is but what it might be and ought to be.⁸⁴ (In the end, a series of repairs helped stabilize the house, and it recently celebrated its eighty-fifth anniversary.)

Fallingwater was an immediate success with both ordinary Americans and the leaders of the architectural profession. *Architectural Forum* devoted an entire issue to Wright’s work, highlighting the house. *Life* and *Time* magazines featured it prominently, too, with *Time* placing it on the front cover—the first time any building or architect had been so honored.⁸⁵ In the months that followed, the Johnson Wax Building, too, was featured in *Scientific American*, *Science*, *Business Week*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*.⁸⁶ Lewis Mumford, the nation’s most prominent critic, cited Fallingwater as proof that Wright was America’s greatest architect, and MOMA soon held a new exhibit, this time featuring only photos of the house. Wright had built the most beautiful residence in America—an audacious monument of modern design that defied every prescription and even seemed to defy gravity. If he had not vanquished the International style, he had at least defied it with a gesture that almost a century later remains an inspiration to millions. Wright was victorious, and he had done it not by trying to please everybody but by offering his own vision and letting the public judge for themselves.

After Fallingwater

Wright's romanticism could be fantastically expensive and impractical, however. Fallingwater was budgeted at \$35,000, about five times the average home price in 1937. It ended up costing \$166,000.⁸⁷ And because his buildings were custom designed and fully integrated, maintenance cost far more than if they had been built from off-the-shelf components. Stories abound, too, of his houses leaking in rainstorms or lacking adequate storage. (He despised closets, basements, and attics.) Westhope (1929), which he built for his cousin Richard Lloyd Jones in Tulsa, leaked so badly that Jones's wife famously remarked, "This is what we get for leaving a work of art out in the rain."⁸⁸

Many of these flaws resulted from the fact that Wright's architecture was ahead of its time: Subsequent innovations would create the roof sealants and window treatments necessary to make his visions livable. Moreover, Wright—a child of the 19th century—was simply more comfortable with leaking roofs, or insects entering a building, than the rising generation. Even Olgivanna grew exasperated at his refusal to install windows at his Arizona retreat and wasted no time after his death having glass put in.

But other complications with his houses were the inevitable consequences of his effort to use his art to elevate—or in the words of some critics, *control*—his clients' lives. The immense degree of integration in his work—which included custom-designed furniture built in such a way that it could not be moved—often came at the expense of owners' personal idiosyncrasies. Contrary to popular mythology, Wright was willing to alter his plans to satisfy clients' needs, yet his dislike for closets, basements, and wide hallways, and his exceptionally high standards for aesthetic precision, made him, in the words of architect Maya Lin, "very overbearing" as a designer. "When you walk into one of his houses, you have to live in his head."⁸⁹



Fig. 28: Pope-Leighey House by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Marjorie Leighey, who lived in his twelve-hundred-square-foot Pope-Leighey House (1941, fig. 28), later described how it felt to live in such a modest Usonian home. "The need for more storage space [was] felt almost to the point of desperation," she recalled. The first experience was one of alienation: She and her husband had to discard many of their possessions, which led them to feel "anger at any dwelling place that presume[d] to dictate how its occupants live." Gradually, however, they found that this lack of clutter led them to focus more on people than on objects. "As one had fewer things, one perforce turned more concentratedly to people. . . . One learned to listen more keenly, to try to hear

what the other person really meant and be ready to share one's own thoughts." In short, the home brought with it a sense of greater simplicity and focus. "Liberation from things releases deeper imaginative, intellectual and creative processes," she thought, "and there comes to be unity among the many compartments of life."⁹⁰

That was a trade-off many were unwilling to make. But in the decades to come, new architects would find ways to combine Wright's aesthetic insights with greater practical accommodations. Architects developing the midcentury modern style would expand on Wright's insights and employ features such as the open plan, corner windows, carports, and tricks of light and shadow, in ways that everyone can enjoy. And technological innovations would help put a stop to leaky roofs. Much of Wright's influence on future generations would begin in the wake of Fallingwater and Johnson Wax, when he began to gather a retinue of idealistic young followers and grew into an icon of American popular culture.

Wright and the Next Generation



Fig. 29: Taliesin West by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: Greg O'Beirne, [Creative Commons 3.0](#).

The end of World War II brought a construction boom, and with it, Wright embarked on the most productive period of his life. In this he was aided by dozens of assistants, thanks to the apprenticeship program he started in 1932, known as the Taliesin Fellowship. The fellowship—a version of which still exists—was an odd arrangement.⁹¹ It was not an architecture school; there were no classes or instruction. Apprentices were employees whose role was to help Wright's practice, yet they were required to pay for the privilege and to live on the grounds of Taliesin in Wisconsin and Taliesin West (fig. 29) in Arizona, in shelters they had to build themselves. In theory, they would learn by doing—but in exchange for time aiding the master, they were expected to complete chores that included heavy labor on his farm. Their lives were also subject to intrusive oversight by Wright and Olgivanna, and many visitors likened the arrangement to that of a feudal lord with his serfs.

Worse, Wright had a violent temper and was often paranoid about his apprentices' independent thinking. Instead of fostering their talents, he sometimes treated their uniqueness as deviationism. "If your designs were too much like those of Wright's, they were considered imitative," remarked one former student, "but if too different, people said, 'He didn't get it.'"⁹² Any apprentice who even spoke of leaving Taliesin to pursue his own career was subject to banishment and a lifetime of resentment from Wright. He was particularly cruel to Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler, former colleagues who he felt had exaggerated their contributions to his works; he denounced them in private letters and avoided any professional associations with them. Neutra went to his deathbed mourning the loss of Wright's friendship.

Apprentices who remained sufficiently loyal, however, contributed to what became a boom time in Wright's work. Almost a third of Wright's 532 completed projects were erected after he turned eighty. About sixty were variations on the Usonian style—made of brick, stone, and wood, featuring flat rooflines, high clerestory windows, carports, and unusual angles. They ranged from the luxurious five-thousand-square-foot Keland House (1954), built for an heiress of the

Johnson Wax fortune, to the unpretentious seventeen-hundred-square-foot residence he designed for Robert and Gloria Berger in California (1957). The Bergers could not afford a contractor and asked Wright to sell them plans and instructions for constructing the house themselves. He did, and the Bergers spent nearly a decade building the entire thing by hand, from its masonry to its electrical wiring. When their son James got a dog named Eddie, he realized that the dog needed a house of his own and wrote to Wright to request plans for a doghouse that would coordinate with the main house. Wright complied, and Eddie's House (1963) became the smallest structure Wright ever designed.⁹³

Wright became a pop-culture figure, thanks to his tireless efforts at advertising himself. The 1938 *Time* magazine cover about Fallingwater had been the fruit of a brilliant publicity campaign he and his patron, Edgar Kaufmann, arranged; and although Wright was fond of claiming that he had “never turned over my hand to get a client during my life” and “never sought publicity of any kind,” he was actually zealous about wooing reporters and critics.⁹⁴ In 1956, he held a press conference to unveil plans for a mile-high building whose inhabitants would reach their apartments by helicopter. Months later, he designed the city of Phoenix's Rose Parade float. In the meantime, he offered Arizona a new capitol building (never built) and experimented with plans for inflatable buildings—nylon domes he called Fiberthin Airhouses, which could be folded up and carried in suitcases. His witty conversation and avuncular tone made him a fine subject for interviews, and he often appeared on television or in newspapers, denouncing International style architecture or proposing fantastic new ideas, such as his Plan for Greater Baghdad, which would have included an opera house, a university, and a cultural center built on an island in the Tigris River.



Fig. 30: Guggenheim Museum by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Wright's final artistic phase involved a transition to circular architecture. In 1948, he built a small store in San Francisco, called the Morris Gift Shop, which is dominated by a single two-story round room, the floors connected by a ramp. The windows are circular, as are the light fixtures in the ceiling. Wright was inspired by a glass of champagne—the design theme is bubbles rising to the surface above. Until now, his work had always been angular and sharply horizontal, but for the final decade of his life, he incorporated round motifs—in, for example, the home he built for his son David Wright (1952), his Marin County Civic Center (completed posthumously in 1962), and the last building completed in his lifetime, Manhattan's Guggenheim Museum (1959, fig. 30). The idea behind the Guggenheim was that visitors would enter through a cramped doorway into a vast, single room—compression and release—and then ride an elevator to the top before slowly descending a spiral ramp cantilevered from the walls. Wright was forced to compromise many of his

plans, and the finished work is not quite what he intended, yet its splendid central lobby (fig. 31) remains a landmark of modern architecture. Painters, however, often complain that their art is overshadowed by the architecture—something Wright would probably have enjoyed.



Fig. 31: Guggenheim Museum by Frank Lloyd Wright.

By the time he died in Phoenix on April 9, 1959, Frank Lloyd Wright had become a cultural monument. Today, his claim to the title “America’s Greatest Architect” seems undisputable. But was he also, as architecture critic Martin Filler once called him, “America’s greatest artist ever in any medium”?⁹⁵ Comparing painters, sculptors, composers, directors, and architects is a dubious undertaking, but if there is such a thing as a nation’s greatest visual artist, it must be that artist whose work evokes the nation’s most essential characteristics—its basic sense of life—and has the greatest impact among his people. Wright’s work easily meets these standards. The American spirit is a sense of shared uniqueness—the “manly and legitimate” form of equality Tocqueville described—that prizes the dignity of the individual as possessing infinite potential for value and having the right to pursue happiness. It’s a sense that there’s no reason one cannot rise to life’s challenges and enjoy a life of distinction, even if that distinction is relatively modest. It’s a sense expressed by the old saying that a man’s home is his castle. As Wright put it in his unique way:

“

Every true home should be actually bound to grow from within to dignity and spiritual significance . . . *grow* out of one’s own good ground and better self into everybody’s light, not in everybody’s nor anybody’s way. Every man’s home his “castle”! No, every man’s home his sphere in space—his appropriate place to live in spaciousness. On his own sunlit sward or in wood or strand enhancing all other homes. No less but more than ever this manly home a refuge for the expanding spirit of man the individual.⁹⁶



Fig. 32: Seth Peterson Cottage by Frank Lloyd Wright. Credit: Seth Peterson Cottage Conservancy.

America's greatest architect, it seems, would *have* to be a home builder. Wright's houses appealed to Americans because their simplicity, their connection to the landscape, and their emphasis on privacy and dignity enabled people to pronounce their uncommonness—to elevate their sense of themselves and their connections to the land and each other. The detail and precision of his designs highlight every element of life, giving them weight and significance. In 2015, *Curbed* magazine interviewed people living in Wright homes. "You just walk in, and it feels right," said one. "It's like living in a piece of changeable art every day." "This is a machine that promotes being in the present moment," said another. "You don't need a house to do that, but it does help."⁹⁷ In March 2023, Wright scholar Kristine Hansen felt the same after spending a week in the tiny Seth Peterson Cottage (1958, fig. 32) and the large Still Bend (1938, fig. 33). Wright's houses "evoke a feeling of slowness and contemplation," she wrote. "Studying the way light bounces on the honey-stained walls and flagstone flooring, I never felt truly alone."⁹⁸ In their balance of light and gravity, of uniqueness and simplicity, Wright's buildings are, at best, like symphonies in which every note fits, to elevate the occupant and convey a sense of solemn aspiration. "There should be as many types of homes as there are types of people," Wright declared in 1896, "for it is the individuality of the occupants that should give character and color to the building."⁹⁹



Fig. 33: Still Bend by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Wright's legacy is so pervasive that it is sometimes hard to appreciate; it surrounds us like the atmosphere. He taught and inspired many important builders, notably Neutra, Schindler, and John Lautner, and some of his students are still alive and practicing architecture, such as Vernon Swaback of Swaback Architects in Phoenix. Other architects today, including Michael Rust, the team at Drewett Works, and Organic House Hakata in Japan, keep Wright's ideas alive in their own designs. Wright's influence can also be felt in even subtler ways. For example, the concept of the "atrium hotel"—such as John Portman's famous lobbies in the Atlanta Hyatt (1972), the Atlanta Marriott Marquis (1985), or the Los Angeles Bonaventure (1976)—owes its origin to Wright, who in 1946 designed the Lacy Hotel, intended for Dallas, Texas.¹⁰⁰ It would have encompassed an entire block and featured a vast lobby of balconies rising to the sky—something like the Guggenheim. It was never built, but like many of Wright's unrealized designs, it inspired the next generation. Still, his greatest legacy will always be in residential architecture. The generation of home builders that followed, including Bruce Goff, Ralph Haver, Al Beadle, and David Hovey Sr., and his son, David Hovey Jr., combined Wright's ideas with those of the International style and other influences to create the midcentury modern style now commonplace in American suburbs—a style at once contemporary and dignified, modern and comfortable.

It would be hard to name an artist whose influence has been as ubiquitous as Wright's; countless people live every day surrounded by structures based at least partly on his ideas: carports, corner windows, aesthetic integration, the use of structure as ornament, expressive horizontality. Yet he achieved his status not by lowering his standards but through a devoted pursuit of his ideals—ideals that gave voice to the principles of individuality and aspiration at the center of the American consciousness. His work spoke for itself—and in the end, the nation heard. "Architecture is the triumph of Human Imagination over materials, methods, and men, to put man into possession of his own Earth," Wright declared. "Architecture is man's great sense of himself embodied in a world of his own making."¹⁰¹ His work made good on Louis Sullivan's promise of a new, American architecture—and transformed how people could express their uniqueness and pursue their uncommon lives.

It would be hard to name an artist whose influence has been as ubiquitous as Frank Lloyd Wright's. Yet he achieved his status not by lowering his standards but through a devoted pursuit of his ideals.

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Letter to the Editor

1. Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), xiv.
2. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and his admirer, the poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892), are typically identified with the religious movement known as Transcendentalism—a vaguely defined theological school rooted in an uneasy combination of mysticism and individualism. It is difficult to characterize Transcendentalism, given the vagueness of its doctrines, but it rejected church hierarchies and theological dogmas and emphasized the virtues of personal independence, self-assertion, and worldly experience—particularly the individual's embrace of nature—as opposed to the self-effacement and obedience preached by many other 19th-century churches. Precisely defining Transcendentalism is made more difficult by the fact that its practitioners often differed from one another—Whitman's buoyant poems, for example, celebrated the dynamism and diversity of capitalistic cities, whereas another prominent Transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), scorned capitalism and argued that spiritual insight could only be gained by retreating from the world—and by the fact that during the 19th century, Transcendentalism was largely absorbed by the Unitarian Church. Frank Lloyd Wright, whose father was a Unitarian preacher, was himself a lifelong Unitarian, and Wright even built the First Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin, which he considered his own congregation. Throughout his life, he expressed admiration for the ideas of Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, and other Transcendentalist and Unitarian thinkers, and often painted their words on the walls of his buildings. One notable indication of their influence on him is found in the marginalia Wright scribbled in his personal copy of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Where Whitman had written, "Give me the pay I have served for! / Give me to speak beautiful words! take all the rest; I have loved the earth, sun, animals—I have despised riches," Wright added in the margin, "Build beautiful buildings." "Frank Lloyd Wright's Personal Notes on *Leaves of Grass*," *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly*, February 2017, <https://franklloydwright.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Beautiful-Buildings-Note.jpg>. For more on the Transcendentalist and Unitarian influence on Wright, see Naomi Tanabe Uechi, "For You O Democracy: How American Transcendentalism Helped Define Organic Architecture," *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly*, January 2017, <https://franklloydwright.org/for-you-o-democracy/>. For more on Transcendentalism and its influence, see Robert D. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
3. Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1989), 61.
4. Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Testament," in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867–1959: Building for Democracy* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2004), 427.
5. A healthy corrective to Wright's self-mythology is Brendan Gill's book *Many Masks* (New York: Putnam, 1987). Gill's skepticism toward Wright is sometimes excessive, however—for example, in his suggestion that the famous telegram congratulating Wright on the survival of the Imperial Hotel was manufactured. In fact, it was genuine. See Robert McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 211, n. 7. In short, Gill's book is an important contribution to Wright scholarship but should be read with at least as much skepticism as Wright's own.
6. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture*, in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 227.
7. Wright, *Future of Architecture*, 224–25.
8. Louis H. Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered" (1896), in Robert Twombly, ed., *Louis Sullivan: The Public Papers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 108.
9. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: Dover, 1956), 273.
10. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, 318.
11. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, 325.
12. Louis H. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats* (New York: Dover, 1979), 124.
13. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 124.
14. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 124.
15. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York: Horizon, rev. ed. 1977), 114.
16. Wright, *An Autobiography*, 181.
17. Wright, *An Autobiography*, 173.
18. Sullivan disliked the cantilever, considering it artistically "primitive." Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 124–25.
19. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 160.
20. Jonathan Adams, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Defiance* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2023), 103. At times, however, Wright did still employ Sullivan's poetry metaphor. "True architecture," he declared in 1939, "is poetry. A good building is the greatest of poems when it is organic architecture." Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Bramhall House, 1953), 242.
21. Wright, *An Autobiography*, 249.
22. Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 161.
23. Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto* (New York: Signet, rev. ed., 1975), 8.
24. In their book *What Art Is: The Esthetic Theory of Ayn Rand* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000), Louis Torres and Michelle Marder Kamhi argue that architecture is not properly classified as art, because it does not "re-create" or "represent" anything. This led to a heated debate between the authors and some critics in the *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2001) and 5, no. 1, (2003), 105–51. What seems to have been overlooked in the whole exchange is the fact that Torres and Kamhi's own theory about how music re-creates reality should have resolved their doubts about whether architecture re-creates reality. They contend that architecture "does not concretize values through the representation of reality . . . [or] through the imitation of the expressive qualities of the human voice and movement" and consequently is not art. Yet in their discussion of music, they admit that music does not re-create reality in a narrative or facsimile sense, either. They nevertheless hold music to be art on the grounds that the composer "presents auditory concretes—particular combinations of sounds—that have emotive and existential significance" (80). This significance, they contend, arises from a subconscious association of music with the body's physical motions. Thus, they conclude that the reality that music selectively re-creates is the "vocal expression and the sonic effects of emotionally

charged movement. . . . [It represents] the 'dynamic properties' of feeling [which we hear] . . . because we naturally perceive pitched sounds in terms of vocal expression and we are innately attuned to its varieties of meaning in our human context" (89). This enables music to almost "re-creat[e] the personally *felt* experience of life" (87). But if Wright's analogy of architecture to music holds, then the argument they find persuasive with respect to music should also resolve their doubts respecting architecture. A building's form evokes the same kind of emotionally charged movement that, in the case of music, establishes the aesthetic link between the act and the listener's experience. Thus, both arts *are* re-creative—and consequently, artistic—in the same way. This seems to have been precisely Wright's point in analogizing architecture to music.

[25.](#) Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, 325.

[26.](#) Louis H. Sullivan, "Reality in the Architectural Art" (1900), in Twombly, *Sullivan Public Papers*, 147.

[27.](#) Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 132.

[28.](#) Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 248.

[29.](#) Meryle Secrest, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 129. Ironically, the arts and crafts movement was itself an import from Europe, particularly England.

[30.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Art and Craft of the Machine," in Pfeiffer, *Essential Frank Lloyd Wright*, 23.

[31.](#) Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris*, vol. 1 (New York: Century, 1908), 189–90.

[32.](#) Donald Hoffman, *Understanding Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1995), 35. Hoffman's book is the best short introduction to Wright's artistry.

[33.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," in Robert Twombly, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Essential Texts* (New York: Norton, 2009), 86.

[34.](#) Wright, "A Testament," 438.

[35.](#) Ellen Key and Mamah Bouton Borthwick, *The Woman Movement* (New York: Putnam, 1912), 210, 214.

[36.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York: Horizon, rev. ed., 1977), 135.

[37.](#) Mark Borthwick, *A Brave and Lovely Woman: Mamah Borthwick and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2023). This remarkable book—written by a distant relative of Mamah—is the first serious effort by any scholar to delve into her life.

[38.](#) Gill, *Many Masks*, 205.

[39.](#) It appears that Carlton had been planning some kind of crime for days; the acid he swallowed—which he bought more than a week earlier—may have been originally intended as poison for someone on the site. Three days before the murders, he and a Wright employee named Emile Brodelle got into an argument during which Brodelle called Carlton a racial epithet. Brodelle was among those killed, but it remains unclear if this was really the cause of Carlton's act. Borthwick, *Brave and Lovely Woman*, 254–66.

[40.](#) The hotel was largely demolished in 1967, but its entrance hall and courtyard were saved and moved to the Meiji-Mura Museum in Nagoya.

[41.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Japanese Print: An Interpretation," in Pfeiffer, *Essential Frank Lloyd Wright*, 67.

[42.](#) Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450b, Richard McKeon, ed., *Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 1462.

[43.](#) Louis H. Sullivan, "Concerning the Imperial Hotel," in Twombly, *Sullivan Public Papers*, 244.

[44.](#) Julie Wolfson, "Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan," *Cool Hunting*, October 16, 2017, <https://coolhunting.com/design/frank-lloyd-wright-in-japan/>.

[45.](#) Gill, *Many Masks*, 219. Wright's financial shenanigans became so complicated that an entire book was recently published trying to decipher how he paid his bills. Peter C. Alexander, *Insufficient Funds: The Financial Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance, 2021).

[46.](#) The name is derived from the ocotillo plant native to the Arizona desert.

[47.](#) It is not exactly clear why Wright chose not to be identified as the project's architect. Biographer Meryle Secrest believes it was meant to avoid legal trouble arising from his use of his "textile block" building technique, which involved connecting molded concrete blocks on a wire framework. Secrest, *A Biography*, 354.

[48.](#) Louis Sullivan, "The *Chicago Tribune* Competition," in Twombly, *Sullivan Public Papers*, 228–29.

[49.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "To Arizona," in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings 1939–1949*, vol. 4 (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 36.

[50.](#) Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1986), 95.

[51.](#) Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 165.

[52.](#) Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 238 (emphasis added).

[53.](#) Quoted in J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London: J. Murray, 1987), 241.

[54.](#) Quoted in Russell Lynes, *The Tastemakers: The Shaping of American Popular Taste* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 247–48.

[55.](#) Adolph Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in Ulrich Conrads, ed., *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, trans. Michael Bullock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 19.

[56.](#) Quoted in Frank Whitford, ed., *The Bauhaus: Masters and Students by Themselves* (London: Conran Octopus, 1992), 202.

[57.](#) Hugh Howard, *Architecture's Odd Couple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Philip Johnson* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 142–47. Johnson was in Poland when Germany attacked the country in September 1939, and he volunteered as a reporter for the American fascist newsletter *Social Justice*, where he rejoiced at the beauty of Nazi uniforms and the "stirring spectacle" of Warsaw being bombed.

[58.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Logic of Contemporary Architecture as an Expression of This Age," in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 1 (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 340.

[59.](#) Henry Russell Hitchcock, "Modern Architecture II: The New Pioneers," *Architectural Record* 63, no. 5 (May 1928): 453–60. Hitchcock's article distinguished between what he called the "New Traditionalists," which included Wright; and the "New Pioneers," which included the Internationalists, and which he characterized as essentially religious Puritans. The latter, Hitchcock wrote, were "Olympian, rather than democratic"; they viewed the "spiritual problem" of architecture as "so high and so pure a matter, . . . that they are unwilling to obscure the matter by trifling and incidental pandering to the bourgeois taste for representational prettiness, and for reminiscent trophies of culture"—as, presumably, Wright was.

[60.](#) Wright, "A Testament," 429.

[61.](#) Wright, "Logic of Contemporary Architecture," 341.

[62.](#) Wright, "Modern Architecture," in Pfeiffer, *Essential Frank Lloyd Wright*, 192.

- [63.](#) Wright, "Modern Architecture," 191.
- [64.](#) Donald Leslie Johnson, "Frank Lloyd Wright in Moscow: June 1937," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 46, no. 1 (March 1987): 65–79.
- [65.](#) Wright, *Autobiography*, 584; Mike Wallace Interview, "Last Message to 21st Century—Frank Lloyd Wright (1957)" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEaVRRQH00c> (accessed November 16, 2023).
- [66.](#) Wright, *Autobiography*, 589.
- [67.](#) Wright, *Autobiography*, 614.
- [68.](#) Norris Kelly Smith, "The Domestic Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright," in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Writings on Wright* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 191–92.
- [69.](#) "Frank Lloyd Wright on Record, Side 2," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3dRBiTw0> (accessed November 16, 2023).
- [70.](#) Howard, *Architecture's Odd Couple*, 79.
- [71.](#) Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Robert Wojtowicz, eds., *Frank Lloyd Wright & Louis Mumford: Thirty Years of Correspondence* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 102.
- [72.](#) Harvey Wiley Corbett, "New Heights in American Architecture," in Kendall B. Taft, John Francis McDermott, Dana O. Jensen eds., *Contemporary Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), 450 (emphasis added).
- [73.](#) Hitchcock, "Modern Architecture II," 456.
- [74.](#) Henry Russell Hitchcock and Paul Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: Norton, 1995), 29.
- [75.](#) Hitchcock and Johnson, *International Style*, 30–31.
- [76.](#) Hitchcock and Johnson, *International Style*, 43.
- [77.](#) Kathryn Smith, *Wright on Exhibit: Frank Lloyd Wright's Architectural Exhibitions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 79–80.
- [78.](#) Lynes, *The Tastemakers*, 245. International Style would come to dominate American public architecture in the 1950s and 1960s because it was cheaper, not because Americans liked it, and few chose it for their homes. The most insightful critique of the style is still Tom Wolfe's combative pamphlet *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Pocket Books, 1981).
- [79.](#) The most famous such incident came in 1934, when residents of Mt. Kisko, New York, were so repulsed by Edward Durrell Stone's International style Ulrich Kowalski House (1934) that the city leaders passed a zoning law banning modern architecture. Richard Guy Wilson, Shaun Eyring, and Kenny Marotta, eds., *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 15.
- [80.](#) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. G. P. Lawrence, trans. J. P. Mayer (New York: Harper Perennial, 1966), 57.
- [81.](#) The Johnson Wax Building was completed in 1936. Today, however, its most striking feature is the gleaming fifteen-story Research Tower, which Wright added in 1950. He designed the tower as a series of cantilevers, with the weight of each floor supported entirely by the building's central shaft, which also contains the elevators, plumbing, and air ducts.
- [82.](#) Hitchcock, "Modern Architecture II," 456.
- [83.](#) Hoffman, *Understanding Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture*, 88.
- [84.](#) Wright, in fact, embraced the term "romantic." "Architecture is truly romantic," he wrote. "There should lie in the very science and poetry of structure the inspired love of Nature. This is what we should and we do now call Romantic." Wright, "A Testament," 410.
- [85.](#) Franklin Toker, *Fallingwater Rising: Frank Lloyd Wright, E. J. Kaufmann, and America's Most Extraordinary House* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 267.
- [86.](#) Toker, *Fallingwater*, 268.
- [87.](#) Toker, *Fallingwater*, 283.
- [88.](#) Secrest, *Biography*, 372.
- [89.](#) Quoted in Ken Burns, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (Florentine Films, 1998).
- [90.](#) Marjorie Leighy, "A Testament to Beauty," in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Writings on Wright: Selected Comment on Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press:1983), 65–68.
- [91.](#) After Wright's death, the Fellowship evolved into Taliesin Associated Architects, which operated until 2003, and the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, which recently moved from Taliesin to two Arizona campuses called Cosanti and Arcosanti (the facilities were created by architect Paoli Soleri, himself a Wright apprentice).
- [92.](#) Secrest, *Biography*, 413.
- [93.](#) Exterior structure, that is. Wright also designed a house for cats, but it was intended for indoor use. "Vintage Cat House Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright Finds New Home at Feline History Museum in Alliance, Ohio," Hauspanther, August 1, 2014, <https://www.hauspanther.com/2014/08/01/vintage-cat-house-designed-by-frank-lloyd-wright-finds-new-home-at-feline-history-museum-in-alliance-ohio/>.
- [94.](#) Mike Wallace interview.
- [95.](#) Martin Filler, "Writing on Wright," *Art in America*, October 1979, 77.
- [96.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Living City* (New York: New American Library, 1963), 233.
- [97.](#) Patrick Sisson, "What It's Like to Live in a Frank Lloyd Wright Home," *Curbed*, November 24, 2015, <https://archive.curbed.com/2015/11/24/9897156/frank-lloyd-wright-owner-homes>.
- [98.](#) Kristine Hansen, "How Staying in a Frank Lloyd Wright House Taught Me the Art of Doing Nothing," *Vogue*, March 22, 2023, <https://www.vogue.com/article/frank-lloyd-wright-taught-me-to-do-nothing>.
- [99.](#) Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Architect and the Machine," in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, 23.
- [100.](#) Mark Athitakis, "Organicism, Inside-Out," *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2022): 19–25.
- [101.](#) Wright, "Logic of Contemporary Architecture," 340.