A Sacred Nature:
Frank Lloyd Wright's Exploration of Hierotopy in Residential, Commercial, and Civic Architecture

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ABSTRACT:

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Mark Gerard Dieter

Frank Lloyd Wright's spiritual formation influenced by Welsh Unitarianism and his lifelong interest in spirituality were far more dynamic than has been previously appreciated. This dissertation examines how Wright's spirituality caused him to interpret not only religious architecture, such as churches and synagogues, but also the genres of residential, commercial, and civic architecture as holding the potential for becoming sacred spaces. Sacrality, in the context of creating of sacred spaces, depended on a proper understanding of the relationship between God, nature, and organic architecture for Wright. Wright's spirituality provided a framework for exploring hierotopy, or the creation of sacred space, across divergent genres of architecture and stylistic changes throughout his architectural career.

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PREFACE

Despite the enormous amount of written material and realized architectural works by Frank Lloyd Wright there has been a tendency by scholars to overlook the influence of his spirituality on his architecture, writings, and concepts of urban planning. My dissertation addresses the impact Welsh Unitarianism had in shaping Wright's spirituality which, in turn, provided conceptualizations for the creation of sacred spaces across a variety of genres of architecture.

The trajectory of twentieth century American architecture was indelibly altered by a Wisconsin native with scant formal education in architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright was, however, uniquely gifted with an enormous amount of talent, ideas, and interest in the world around him. He could deftly handle the details of exceptionally beautiful draftsmanship and architectural planning while at the same time wrestle with broad concepts of American culture. Controversy was never far from Wright's doorstep, yet he seemed unfazed by even the most stinging criticisms and personal hardships. He was self-promoting, seemingly immune to criticism, loved and loathed by countless individuals, capable of generating great wealth and bankruptcy, and, ultimately, remarkably successful in multiple endeavors in life.

History has been kind to Wright. His star reemerged due not only to his extensive portfolio of completed projects, but also because of his large body of written work. My own interest in Wright grew from first-hand experiences with Prairie School architecture. During my childhood years I lived in Mason City, Iowa, just a few blocks away from Marion Mahoney Griffin and Walter Burley Griffin's wonderful grouping of Prairie

School homes called Rock Crest/Rock Glen. I walked by this neighborhood countless times on the way to and from elementary school and had the great fortune of a best friend, Andy McCoy, who lived in the Blythe House, one of Walter Burley Griffin's designs (Fig. 1). I absolutely loved visiting Andy's house which was, even to a young child, extraordinarily different from the houses in my neighborhood. Andy's house was filled with surprises! Even as a kid I experienced something different there. It was a unique, beautiful place with an interior labyrinth of twists and turns, strangely low ceilings, lots of natural woodwork, and beautiful views of the surrounding yard and nearby woods. I never tired of the adventure of visiting Andy's house.

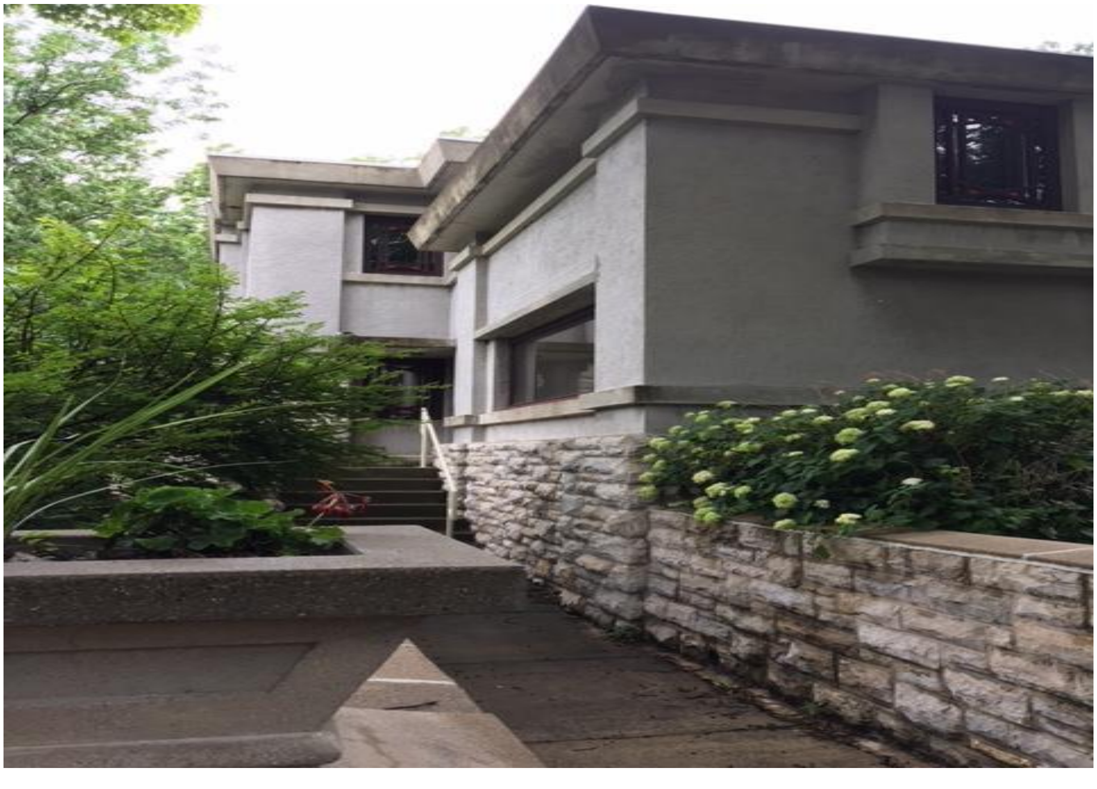

Figure 1. The Blythe House, designed by Walter Burley Griffin, is a prominent member of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen collection of Prairie School homes in Mason City, Iowa (Mark Dieter, 2018)

I also had the fortune of being taken to an optometrist whose office was in the second story of Wright's National Bank and Park Inn. The building had, at the time, been badly altered for storefront spaces at the ground level. Yet, thankfully, the second floor had remained relatively untouched. Here, too, I recognized spaces that were unique but had no idea the eye doctor's office and Andy's house were connected to an architect named Frank Lloyd Wright. I did sense, however, something wonderfully special about being in each of them.

My educational introduction to Wright occurred during a college architectural history class in 1986. It was then that I began to put some of the pieces together about my childhood experiences in Mason City. My interest in Wright's architecture and writings continued over the years but was brought to an entirely new level through the lectures of Narciso Menocal at the University of Wisconsin-Madison some 20 years later. Professor Menocal's lectures were filled with remarkable insights and wit about both Wright and his mentor, Louis Sullivan. It was one of my great life fortunes to attend his lectures and eventually find myself studying Wright under his mentorship. Countless meetings in Narciso's office produced many thought-provoking conversations and ideas.

This project is connected to my childhood experiences in Mason City and my reading of Wright's vast collection of writings over the years. What began to unfold for me, particularly in hashing over Wright for a number of years with Professor Menocal, was that Wright's numerous references to religious ideas and spirituality had been remarkably overlooked by historians. Perhaps it was my background in theology which made Wright's surprising interest in spiritual ideas stand out. Even more, I began to detect in Wright a significant interest in the creation of sacred spaces beyond architecture that would be considered religious, such as a church or synagogue. This was a surprising discovery for me as I hadn't expected to find any spiritual themes in his materials.

Numerous of books examining Wright's architecture have been written, yet there has been no authoritative study of the religious ideas and spirituality found in his writings. Interpreting Wright's spirituality is no easy task as he was a terribly unconventional and complicated individual. Yet, there is 'something there' that needs definition. Part of the challenge lay in sorting through Wright's unconventional ideas which, at best, bear relationship to his Welsh family's brand of Unitarianism with which he was most familiar. Wright's spirituality might be best considered a kind of 'mystic-Unitarianism' due to its esoteric qualities, belief in the freedom of conscience, and interconnectedness between nature and the divine which informed his architectural ideas about shaping sacred spaces. When using the term "religion" or "religious" I am not, however, specifically concerned with defining how Wright's unconventional spirituality adhered to a particular form of organized religion.

Many of Wright's spiritual ideas do relate to age-old questions about the existence of "otherness" which religions uniquely address. Ultimately, I am most concerned with how Wright relied on theological ideas, such as the correlation between nature and God, to shape his concept of architecture, American culture, and the creation of sacred space. My interpretation of Wright will focus far more on the definition of sacrality in his writing than on his relationship to the conventional religious practices of his day. In doing so it will be necessary to examine the surprisingly divergent influences on his thinking about what constituted sacrality. To this end I found architectural historian Anthony Alofsin's methodology quite helpful. Alofsin created a remarkably original study in his work, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Lost Years, 1910-1922: A Study of Influence*. His work, published in 1993, challenged the mythic notions about Wright's life and architecture in both academic and popular writing. Alofsin's ability to rethink Wright resulted from unprecedented access to original archival materials and his ability to discover overlooked influences on the architect. He was wary of searching for influences on Wright's career found in narratives about the architect that had been rehashed for years. He was, instead, open to exploring unconventional, or nonlinear, influences which allowed a fresh perspective of Wright to emerge.

In his search for nonlinear influences, Alofsin engaged two methodological concepts he called diffusion and parallelism. Diffusion suggested an identifiable strain of influence however fragmented and diluted it may become over space and time. Parallelism, as the name implied, was the uncovering of aesthetically similar ideas and forms between cultures that had no contact to explain the similarities. In essence, two comparable expressions of form developed in parallel to each other without any 'bleed-over.' Alofsin justifiably noted that his ideas about Wright provided a correction to "an elaborate misunderstanding by historians and architects" concerning the time frame of 1910-1922 and the significant influence of the architect's travels and experiences in Europe.[1] Alofsin argued that such European streams of influence for Wright were far more complex than historians had previously appreciated.

Alofsin's clarity regarding underappreciated influences on Wright provided inspiration for my own area of interest as to why there has been no exhaustive historical examination of Wright, his spiritual formation and lifelong interest in spirituality. Many biographical works include comments on his Unitarian upbringing and family connections to ministry including the fact that both his father, William Cary Wright (1825-1904) and uncle, Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones (1843-1918) were clergy. However, there is an omission of interest in Wright's spirituality which brings to light some important questions about the investigation of influence. Greater interest in Wright's spiritual formation and its role in shaping his architectural and moral ideas as they related to art, society, and individual expressions of freedom is needed.

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[1] Anthony Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Lost Years, 1910-1922: A Study of Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Welsh Unitarianism was a primary shaping force for Wright's worldview which fostered a lifelong interest in the relationship between a spirituality rooted in nature and architecture. My point is that Wright's spiritual formation was far more dynamic than has been previously appreciated.[2] The novelty in my argument resides in examining how Wright's spirituality caused him to interpret not only religious architecture, such as churches and synagogues, but also the genres of residential, commercial, and civic architecture as holding the potential for becoming sacred spaces. Sacrality, in the context of creating sacred spaces, depended on a proper understanding of the connection between God, nature, and organic architecture for Wright. While the categories of residential, commercial, and civic architecture are rarely associated with ideas of the sacred, it is my intention to capture how much Wright thought about his secular buildings in spiritual terms. My assessment of Wright is that hierotopy, or the creation of sacred spaces, was a major stream of influence for his architectural work throughout his entire life.[3] This influence was especially pronounced in the final third of his career as he explored bolder designs and challenged conventional uses of materials to convey his ideas of the sacred.

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[3] Hierotopy is a relatively new concept involving the creation of sacred space which will be defined and explored in detail in Chapter One. It is an important thread in my assessment of Wright as hierotopy is a call for a far more engaged and comprehensive approach to the study of sacred space.

My work, therefore, is equally as much about Wright's spiritual ideas as his architecture. I will emphasize that my intent is not to present architectural history but an interpretation of how Wright's spirituality impacted his concept of architecture and expressions of sacred space. This interpretation is based on a close reading of Wright's own words regarding his spiritual worldview and their application to the conceptualization of selected building projects. Nature, it will be seen, played a pivotal role in Wright's spiritual formation, concepts of architectural design, symbolism materials and ideas about American culture.

Figure 2. Frank Lloyd Wright. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Berenice Abbott, 1950)

This examination is meant to demonstrate that Wright viewed divergent architectural genres as holding the possibility of becoming sacred spaces. The pathway for making this case involves an examination of one prominent Wright building from each of three typically non-religious architectural genres. These are residential, commercial, and civic commissions which spanned the final five decades of his life. This strategy allows the investigation of not only his architecture over time but his writings which were also theological reflections about the connectedness between architecture, nature, and the sacred. I found it useful to provide ample references to Wright's own words, as they are often concerned with the details of architectural design and a persistent spirituality. The residential example for this study is his iconic Wisconsin home of Taliesin. Wright had much to say about his beloved rural home that was a continual architectural essay concerning the sacrality of nature and symbolism of materials. The commercial genre is represented by two Wisconsin commissions involving the Johnson Wax Company in Racine. The final example will explore a civic commission through the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

These examples provide an additional element of comparison involving rural, small community, and large urban environments as divergent settings for design. Each unique location helped shape Wright's architectural solution without subtracting from his belief in the potential for creating sacred space. Before addressing these architectural examples it will be helpful to provide foundational definitions and background information to help explain why Wright developed a concept of the sacred grounded in both a cosmic sense of unity and the goodness of the land. The first chapter, therefore, explores influences that shaped Wright's spiritual and architectural perspective. These influences help set a foundation for a better understanding of the cultural context of Wright's life and how he was shaped by his era. Though certainly an architectural visionary, as we shall see, he was also very much a product of his time.

Along with exploring definitions of the sacred, the first chapter lays the groundwork for understanding how the American landscape, Transcendentalism, and concepts of the American home provided streams of influence on Wright and his architectural responses. These ideas come together in a useful construct labeled an ‘imaginal place’ which feeds into an assessment of Wright’s sacred symbols and his idealistic vision for American life he called Broadacre City. The first chapter, therefore, is not given to a discussion of Wright’s architecture but instead intended to capture examples of diffused influences which shaped his thinking about religion, nature, and architecture. The exploration of spiritual meaning in Wright’s architecture then follows in the final three chapters with the exploration of Taliesin, the Johnson Wax buildings, and the Guggenheim Museum. Each building will be examined in the context of how Wright interpreted the meaning of organic architecture, sacred space, and the geometric form he believed was best suited for the genre.

Taliesin, in Chapter Two, will be examined in the context of Wright’s original plan (Taliesin I) and his concept of architecture’s symbiotic relationship with nature as an expression of the divine. Wright, through his Wisconsin home named Taliesin, explored how organic design, local materials, and a building’s placement in nature could lead to spiritual enlightenment. I will suggest that even as residential architecture the design of Taliesin I intentionally involved concepts such as processional pathways, fragrances, and harmony with nature as reflections of Wright’s own spirituality and desire to create sacred space. The Johnson Wax buildings, in Chapter Three, will provide examples of how Wright designed commercial buildings using cathedral-like analogies involving light, enlightenment and inspiration as a reflection of his own spiritual framework and creation of sacred spaces. Wright, for example, intentionally mimicked certain expressions of nature, like the forest and sky, in order to create a sense of awe and inspiration in the Johnson Wax Administration Building. The Guggenheim Museum will provide the final example of Wright's interest in creating sacred space through the genre of civic architecture in Chapter Four. This private museum commission in New York City provided Wright a unique opportunity to explore the relationship between spiritual associations of geometric form, in this case the spiral, and the public's interaction with art. The concept of the spiritual pathway and sacred space provide a key theme for understanding Wright's intentions for the Guggenheim Museum.

What I hope to bring to light is how Wright, throughout his life, was highly interested in the hierotopic possibilities of architecture despite individual projects being so thematically different. Each building, through Wright's principles of organic architecture, provided the opportunity for experiencing that 'something other' which can be so challenging to define.

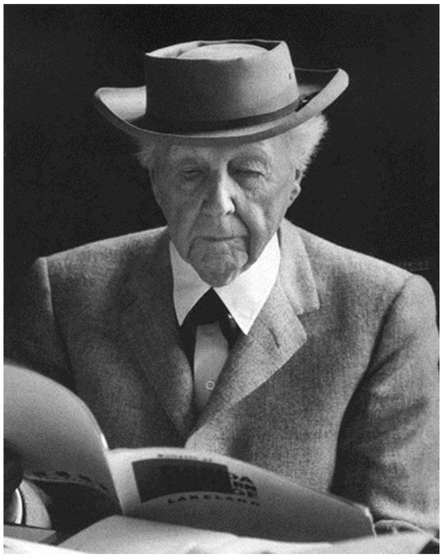

Figure 3. Frank Lloyd Wright portrait. (Getty Images, Alfred Eisenstaedt, 1956).

CHAPTER ONE

Foundational Concepts: Frank Lloyd Wright, Hierotopy, and the Landscape of American Sacred Space

Frank Lloyd Wright's spirituality has been essentially overlooked as a primary source for his architectural vision. The architect, however, was a substantially spiritual individual whose architecture was governed by a worldview that flowed out of a transcendental, cosmic sense of God and nature being the same substance. Historian Merfyn Davies noted, "To Wright, as to Sullivan, architecture had come to mean more than a day-to-day vocation- architecture had become a religion."[1]

Wright intended his architecture to be more than simply artistic space. He understood his architecture- not just his "religious" buildings- to be infused with the sacred. Wright's architecture, at least in his mind, held the potential to represent the divine through form, material, geometry, and nature. In order to more fully appreciate the correlation between Wright and architectural expression of the sacred, it is necessary to first explore the idea of sacred space itself.

Russian scholar Alexei Lidov's concept of *hierotopy* (*hieros*=sacred, *topos*=space/place) provides a methodology for exploring sacred space. Hierotopy offers a framework by which one can examine spatial images, human creativity, and the environment connected to communication with the transcendental. The theory, first proposed by Lidov in 2001, states that the making of sacred space is a unique form of creativity to be studied on its own merit, equal to the visual arts, literature, or music.

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[1] See Merfyn Davies, "The Embodiment of the Concept of Organic Expression: Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural History*, vol. 25 (1982): 127.

Hierotopy provides a methodological focus in which sacred space is considered a typology (including both a genre of representation and its perception) which concerns itself with the organization of spatial imagery and sacrality. Hierotopy presents a multi-faceted and flexible platform to explore interdisciplinary relationships between the concept of *hierophany* (a manifestation of the sacred or the divine as Eliade described it) and the concrete articulation and fashioning of *hierotopy* (an actual sacred place or space).[2] It brings together, as a new branch of cultural history, the disciplines of art, anthropology, archeology, and religion into one collective discussion about the dynamics of spatial imagery and the sacred.[3] Wright never used the term hierotopy. Yet, this does not detract from its value as a methodological approach to reveal correlations between his concepts of the sacred and architectural expression.

Wright certainly created specifically religious architecture as exemplified in Unity Temple (1905-1908), Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church (1956-1962), and Beth Shalom Synagogue (1953-1959). However, a detailed examination of his ideas of sacrality will also lead to consideration of his commercial, civic, and residential architecture as forms of hierotopy. Sacred imagery, for Wright, emerged in a transcendental organicism grounded in nature, spirituality, and archetypal geometric forms. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1943-1959), though a private museum, is as much a hierotopic space mediating earthly and spiritual realms as any specifically religious building in Wright's repertoire. Contemporary spatial theologian John Inge concurs with the idea that *any constructed space* is open to the possibility of sacralization. This sacred association, however, is dependent upon the spiritual beliefs and practices of both its designers and community of users.[4]

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[2] See Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality: Religious Traditions of the World*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). Eliade is credited with popularizing the term hierophany in the 20th century.

[3] Alexei Lidov, "The Comparative Hierotopy," *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009). See also *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009).

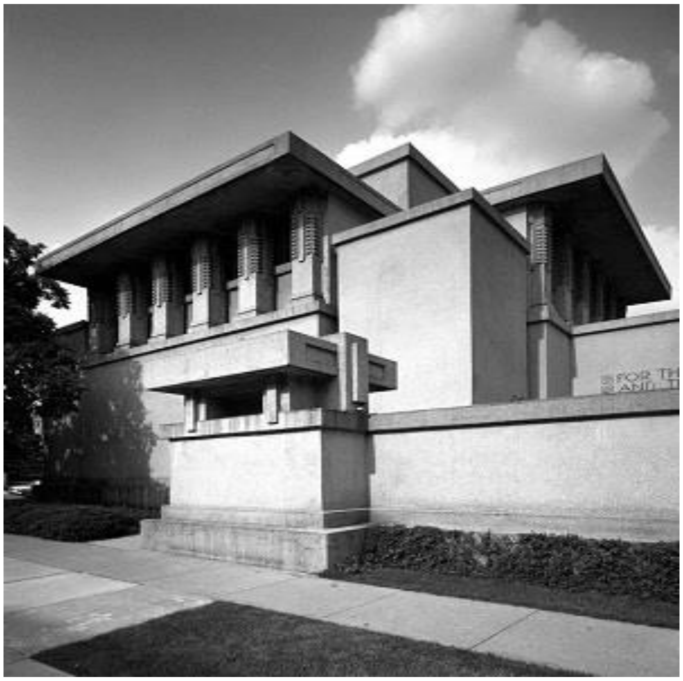

Figure 4. Wright's Unity Temple was a radical departure from conventional concepts of sacred space at the turn of the twentieth century (Hedrich Blessing Collection, 1956).

Lidov has suggested that the absence of a theory of hierotopy has hindered scholars from apprehending a significant layer of phenomena associated with creativity involving space, images, and the context of artistic apprehension of the sacred.[5] What is particularly relevant to a discussion of Wright is Lidov's argument that creators of sacred spaces are consciously mindful of prepared perception or their deliberate effort to offer "image-paradigms" to participants which bind intellectual, emotional, and spiritual concepts into a unified whole. These image-paradigms do not necessitate a mystic's perception but rather a consciousness through which separate categories of art, ritual, visual, sensory, and spatial elements become a cohesive whole. Lidov argued that too frequently the apprehension of sacred space is mistakenly reduced by scholars to aesthetic descriptions of visual artifacts or instead becomes the investigation of theological ideas. The value of hierotopy is its scholarly approach to sacred space not as visual artifact but through the notion of image-paradigms in which distinct categories are deliberately contemplated as a unified whole for both the artist and the viewer.

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[4] John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
[5] Lidov, "The Comparative Hierotopy," *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies,* 13.

The hierotopic concept of image-paradigm is missing from contemporary scholarship. Hierotopy challenges methodological approaches which would, as an example, view medieval religious images as merely flat pictures. With this mindset a historical analysis of iconography or style of a medieval image would essentially be missing the medieval hierotopic intention. This would, in turn, lead to incomplete scholarship influenced by the prioritization of visual culture over a deeper reading of religious intention. The image-paradigm of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Byzantine world, for example, was understood by creators of sacred space and participants to involve not only architecture and images, but liturgical prayer, ritual, lighting, and fragrance. While the overall sophistication of the enterprise might vary between a small village and large urban church, the principle of the image-paradigm, or in this case the multi-faceted notion of Heavenly Jerusalem, remained constant for creators of sacred space and participants alike.[6]

Hierotopy, Lidov argued, merits study as its own branch of cultural history on par with music or the visual arts. The implications of such an academic approach would bring far-reaching changes to the limited but growing body of literature concerned with sacred space. Studies of sacred space have historically suffered for lack of a cohesive academic umbrella under which to gather and guide scholarship. A helpful parallel in understanding this proposition is found in the emergence in the twentieth century of the concept of 'material culture' from the fields of anthropology and archeology. The 1980's saw a significant growth in universities offering some form of material culture studies based upon acceptance of 'material culture' as a valid object of inquiry. Historian Dan Hicks traced the emergence and academic acceptance of material culture studies and pinpointed the reasoning behind the growth of such programs over the past thirty years. The idea of 'material culture studies' gained momentum because it solved a number of archeological and anthropological problems concerning relationships between the social, cultural and the material.[7] It is evident that the idea of 'material culture' emerged in response to the need for greater clarity and focus in addressing issues pertaining to social culture and its material expressions. Scholars recognized that anthropology, art history, and archeology were failing to fully explore or systematically tackle important questions pertaining to what now has become a distinct category of cultural history. This is a worthwhile analogy in understanding Lidov's proposal that hierotopy should emerge as its own branch of cultural history. Taken down the same path as material studies, Lidov would suggest that 'hierotopy studies' should have a home within the university setting as a distinct, recognized program for more fully exploring a body of material and questions pertaining to sacred space. Until then, studies of sacred space will be scattered between disciplines and may lack the benefit of collaboration within a recognized field called hierotopy.

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[6] Lidov, “Spatial Icons as a Performative Phenomenon,” *Spatial Icons,* 16-20.

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[7] Dan Hicks, "The Material Culture Turn: Event and Effect," *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 25-98.

Hierotopy and Interpretation of Wright's Architecture

The use of shape and color as motifs representing a larger idea ties in with Lidov's concept of the image-paradigm as an essential element of hierotopy. An image-paradigm is a conscious effort to assemble visual, intellectual, sensory, emotional, and spiritual concepts into a cohesive whole. The value of hierotopy is to move beyond a particular element, such as a primarily aesthetic or theological description of sacred space, to the broader idea of the image-paradigm and its unified meaning. Distinct categories of meaning are allowed not only to stand on their own but but also come together into a cohesive whole for the viewer and artist.

A relevant example is Jelena Trkulja's argument that both the interior and exterior of Byzantine churches functioned in a complementary unison. The sacred experience within the three-dimensional form of the church was related not only to the dichotomy of interior-exterior but also the passage of time. The exterior of the church was iconographically designed as part of the ritualistic experience of the church itself. A participant would begin the encounter by seeing the church from far off to and the sacred experience would continue as one approached and entered into the building. Following the sacred experience of the interior decorative program, fragrances, and liturgy the viewer would reverse course to exit the church and leave the sacred site. Backward glances would provide reminders or memory of the sacrality of the site and experience. A hierotopic emphasis on the unified whole of the sacred space provided direction for Trkulja to explore the exterior of the church not solely as an artistic artifact but also as a performative element in the totality of a sacred experience. Trkulja examined the iconography and communicative power of the church exterior in relationship to a unified hierotopic theme: the holistic encounter with sacred space. This is consistent with Lidov’s argument that theories of sacred space have greater potential to reveal phenomena previously overlooked due to hierotopic emphasis on investigating the unified whole of the art, architecture, ritual, sensory, and performative elements of sacred space and its encounter. This hierotopic theme will provide a significant theme for investigating how both interiority and exteriority functioned holistically in Wright’s architecture.

Jacquelyn Tuerk has provided further clarification on the significance of hierotopy as an epistemological structure in her work on magical amulets. Tuerk points out that hierotopy not only includes places, objects, images, words, and performances but also manifests itself by creating a psychological experience of identity between the viewer and sacred narratives. A full understanding of hierotopy acknowledges the creation of sacred or miraculous experiences of the participant through epistemological structures. The hierotopic experience is a process of identification of personal, lived narrative with sacred narrative which becomes actuality in the life of the viewer or a sacred reality. Through her exploration of Byzantine concepts of sacred and demonic spaces revealed through magical amulets, she offers a summary of hierotopy as the “psychological space and emotional state of uniting with one’s god, encouraged and focused through place, [t]ime, [a]nd sensory perception of material.”

Historians have yet to use hierotopy as the discourse with which to examine Wright‘s ideas and architecture. Simultaneously, the growing body of literature within hierotopy has yet to discuss the work of Wright. My objective is to show that, throughout his life, Wright valued his spirituality and held significant interest in architecture as hierotopy. It will be important, therefore, to determine what experiences and symbols had spiritual and sacred significance. Equally important will be the correlation between his worldview and the ways he considered his architecture sacralized as the role of spiritual formation has typically been overlooked in shaping Wright's repertoire of ideas and forms. Discussions of spiritual ideas are typically limited to Wright's work on religious buildings. Joseph Siry, for example, provided an excellent summary of Wright's Unitarian background in *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion*.[8] However, his research is concerned with Wright's Unitarian family and personal history as it bore relationship to a religious building in Unity Temple. Siry's work falls within a predictable pattern of correlating Wright's spiritual ideas primarily to religious architecture. In a later text on the design and construction of the Annie M. Pfeiffer Chapel (1939-1941) Siry again connected Wright's Unitarian philosophy to a modernist theological movement led by the president of Florida Southern College.[9]

Historian Meredith L. Clausen, in contrast, examined the sources of inspiration for Wright's lifelong interest in light through the form of either skylights or clerestory windows in both his religious, residential, and commercial architecture. Clausen provided quotes from Wright revealing his ideas on the spiritual nature of architecture and light: "[A]rchitecture must become spiritual satisfactions wherein the soul insures a more subtle use…" and; "We thus reach for the light, spiritually in some innate spirit-pattern as the plant does physically."[10] Though Clausen presented quotations expressing Wright's thoughts about architecture and spirituality she did not attempt to draw any correlation between Wright's spirituality and the dynamics of light but attributed his ideas on lighting solely to the influence of Chicago School skyscrapers. Wright himself, as Clausen indirectly pointed out, also comprehended light using spiritual concepts. Clausen also considered the lighting of Unity Temple, an obviously sacred space, but made no connection to the significance of light and hierotopy. Wright himself understood light through both natural and religious sources as he wrote, "Buddha was known as the light of Asia; Jesus as the light of the world. Sunlight is to nature as this interior light is to man's spirit: Manlight."[11] Historians have consistently not taken great interest in exploring Wright's spiritual ideas about specific architectural themes even when he stated them in his own writings.

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[8] See Joseph M. Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[9] See Joseph M. Siry, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Annie M. Pfeiffer Chapel for Florida Southern College: Modernist Theology and Regional Architecture," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, vol. 63, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 498-539

Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman, in another example, briefly referenced the concept that Wright's had a spiritual interest in how architectural ideas were expressed, "Architecture was a way not just to build buildings, but to gain spiritual knowledge- a kind of Gnostic exercise."[12] Their focus, however, was not in Wright's own spirituality but in the relationship between mystic Georgi Gurdjieff (1866-1949) and Wright's third wife Olgivanna (1898-1985), and the resulting esoteric influences on the Taliesin Fellowship.[13]

Narciso Menocal and Jack Quinan recognized the influence of transcendentalism on Wright which was beyond the confines of his religious architecture. Menocal understood the gravity of transcendentalist thought and spirituality which colored Wright's broader ideas on nature and architectural space. An example is his characterization of Wright through the metaphor of the jeremiad.[14] Menocal examined the transcendental and moralistic underpinnings of Wright's worldview which caused him to persistently denounce the condition of American society and architecture. Quinan noted a correlation between the design of the Guggenheim Museum and the spiral form in Emerson's thought.[15] Though the Guggenheim is a civic space, Quinan perceived a strong relationship between architecture and Unitarian themes in Wright's design.

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[10] See Meredith L. Clausen, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Vertical Space, and the Chicago School's Quest for Light," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 44, no. 1 (Mar., 1985): 66-74.

[11] See Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Testament," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings* (vol. 5: 1949-1959), ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 224-225.

[12] Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman. *The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship* (Harper: New York, 2006), 240.

[13] Ibid., 239-249.

A review of the literature concerning Wright, however, does not offer works which are entirely dedicated to investigating the relationship between his spiritual ideas, architectural design and urban planning. Foundational definitions and hierotopic concepts have been explored to provide a context for appreciating Wright's expressions of the sacred in his architecture.

Definitions of the Sacred

Before considering a more detailed discussion of hierotopy it is useful to ask what is meant by the term 'sacred' especially as it relates to Wright and architectural definitions of space. Two fundamental definitions of the sacred have been offered through the study of religion: substantial and situational.[16] A substantial definition is an attempt to explain the experiential qualities associated with a 'sacred' experience. The essential motifs of the sacred have made themselves known in time and space and involve a manifestation of reality and ultimate meaning.

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[14] Narciso G. Menocal, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Concept of Democracy: An American Jeremiah," Frank Lloyd Wright: In the Realm of Ideas, eds. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Nordlands (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

[15] See Jack Quinan, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: A Historian's Report," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Dec., 1993): 466-482.

[16] *American Sacred Space*, eds. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 5-9.

Religious historian William James argued that religion was to be understood as an individual reality.[17] He did not attempt to define that reality but noted that an individual may respond to that reality with solemn feelings and emotions. In turn, the essence of religious experience, for James, was a quality that couldn't be duplicated in other modes of living. Otto looked specifically at the sacred in his notion of the *numinous*, which was an idea of the holy irreducible to any other factor. It was the primal essence of holiness of which religions are concerned.[18] Otto argued that the *numinous* was a category of value not individually generated but evoked or awakened in the experiences of people. The *numen*, therefore, created an affective dependency in the minds of those who experienced it.

Mircea Eliade, following Rudolf Otto's lead, defined the sacred as an experiential differentiation from natural phenomena. The sacred had to be described in the language of natural order due to human limitations in expressing its mystery, an entirely different order from the natural or profane world. The sacred, for Eliade, was a reality existing outside the believer's mind that interjected itself into the physical world. It clearly manifested itself apart from the non-sacred (the profane). Eliade noted, "We are confronted by… a wholly different order, a reality, which does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world."[19] Otto, too, identified a polar differentiation between two existential realities. The sacred, for Otto, was identified as the 'holy,' which is a reality experienced through an encounter with the *numen*. Holy, therefore, was a category diametrically opposed to the profane.[20]

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[17] See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1902).
[18] See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, Trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

A second key idea for Eliade was the expression of the sacred through symbols and myth.[21] In particular, he believed that nature provides a universal source for religious symbols and myth. Eliade's reliance upon nature as a primary source of mythic and symbolic imagery is relevant for examining Wright's religious experiences and his ideas regarding architectural representation of a transcendental, organic natural world. Eliade's dichotomy of sacred and profane is also foundational in examining how sacred space is demarcated. The oppositional motif creates a contrast between the religious meaning of sacred space and the lack of religious content in profane space.

Situational explanations of the sacred view the concept of sacrality as an indeterminate designator which is assigned meaning only through culture. It is through the human effort of consecration and sacralization that the notion of the sacred is identified and known. This cultural process occurs through relationships and the collective ideals of a society. Emile Durkheim, like Otto and Eliade, explored the classification of sacred versus profane as the work of religious beliefs. He suggested that the world was divided into these two domains by religion with the caveat that anything could be sacralized, or moved into the category of "sacred," through culture. Durkheim offered this duality as the first criterion of religious beliefs and a basis for his definition of religion itself. Existence of the sacred also necessitates rules of conduct, known as rites, which govern interaction with the sacred. Durkheim next connected religion to the need for community for existence. His defined religion as a collective enterprise in relationship to that which is sacred, "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[22]

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[19] See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), 11-23. Eliade recognized the possibility of two affective modes of existence: the religious and the non-religious. But he found even the non-religious person to be influenced by religious belief, "A profane existence is never found in the pure state. [E]ven the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world."

[20] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928).

[21] Douglas Allen, "Eliade's Phenomenological Analysis of Religious Experience," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Apr., 1972): 170-186.

Clifford Geertz provided an anthropological model for examining religion which relied on a 'thick description' or detailed observation of human behaviors. His situational explanation of the sacred focused on religion as a set of cultural symbols which established long term 'moods' and 'motivations' within a cultural group. Geertz understood his work as a cultural analysis and description of the social codes of a society in relationship to the general order of existence created by religious beliefs.[23]

Parallel to the ideas of substantial and situational definitions of the sacred are two other contrasting modes in the study of experiences which could be labeled as religious. The contrasting approaches are termed reductionism and nonreductionism. In nonreductionist thought a religious-like phenomenon can be understood only through religious terms. Eliade, for example, offered a proposition of irreducibility in which a religious experience necessitated study as something religious. The use of psychology, sociology, anthropology, or any other discipline to apprehend the essence of the phenomenon bypassed the irreducible component which is unique to religion. This component is the sacred. The sacred to Eliade was not reducible to any other construct outside of religion and religious experience. It was the essence of religion.[24]

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[22] Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: The Free Press, 1915): 63.

[23] Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): 6-20.

In reductionism, other academic disciplines are engaged to explain religious-like phenomenon. For example, Freudian psychology could be employed to offer an explanation of why certain human experiences feel religious. It would in no way argue for the existence of a divine reality which generated the response. The experience would have a rational, naturalistic explanation even though it was comprehended as supernatural to a given individual. The sacred can be rationally explained by reducing it to natural explanations. Reductionist theory presents an explanation of ‘sacred’ experiences consistent with the discourse and research of a given discipline outside of religion.

Studies of sacred space employ the same divergent paradigms of either the substantial (nonreductionist) or situational (reductionist) analysis of the sacred. These contrasting ideas not only provide a point of reference in exploring the history of studies of sacred space but are also beneficial in examining Wright’s belief about the sacred, his own model for interpreting the sacred, and his expression of the sacred in architecture.

Wright, throughout his life, held a substantial definition of the sacred. This is the foundation for understanding why spirituality was a lifelong interest for him. Although sacrality was cloaked in nature he clearly believed in the ultimate reality of a divine presence called God in the universe. His upbringing in a strong, patriarchal family of Unitarians exposed him to a worldview that believed not only in the reality of the divine but also held nature as a book for comprehending God, "the great book of books- creation itself."[25] Nature and God were interwoven entities to Wright as he noted in remarks to the Taliesin Fellowship in 1956, "I am fond of saying, and I feel when I use the word 'Nature,' that nature is all the body of God has by which we become aware of Him, understand His processes, and justify the capital we put on the word God."[26] Wright offered this worldview in a more public context during a 1957 interview with television broadcaster Mike Wallace who asked him if he attended any specific church. Wright replied, "Yes. I go occasionally to this one and sometimes that one, but my church- I put a capital N on nature and go there… You spell God with a G, don't you? [I] spell nature with an N, a capital."[27]

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[24] Robert A. Segal, “In Defense of Reductionism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 51 (1983), 97-124. Segal viewed Eliade as a nonreductionist because of his attachment to irreducibility, “[Eliade] must therefore be saying, despite his profession of modesty, is that the conscious, irreducibly religious meaning of religion for believers is its true one, which means at once its true one for them and its true one in itself.”

Nature, Wright believed, made it possible for humanity to comprehend the existence of God and divine, cosmic principles which governed the universe. In his work, *An Autobiography*, Wright detailed this intertwining of the divine and natural worlds, "What did they mean when 'they' used the word nature? Just some sentimental feeling about animals, grass and trees, the out-of-doors? But how about the nature of wood, glass and iron- internal nature? The nature of boys and girls? The nature of law? Wasn't that Nature? Wasn't nature in this sense the very nature of God?"[28] It was the architect's primary duty to turn to nature as the guidebook for translating cosmic principles into architecture. Wright entitled the first chapter of his autobiography, "The

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[25] Frank Lloyd Wright, "Our Work," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 4: 1939-1949 (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 68.

[26] Wright shared this remark in a talk presented to the Taliesin Fellowship on December 30, 1956. See *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 1:1894-1930 (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 39

[27] See the preface in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 1:1894-1930 (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 9.

[28] Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (Petaluma: Pomegranate Communications, 1985): 89.

Unawakened Disciple" and wrote, "He [the architect] is always active and effective in the investigation of Nature. He sees that all forms of Nature are interdependent and arise out of each other, according to the laws of Creation."[29] Wright's 1949 essay, "We Want the Truth" also noted his belief in an existence beyond physical matter and earth itself, "To see things in their eternal significance is all that can ever really matter to us as true individuals."[30]

In his discussion of his grand scheme for urban planning he called Broadacre City, Wright documented his belief in God as a universal creator. He also provided evidence of his worldview which was sympathetic with Eliade's differentiation of the sacred versus profane. In such a contrast, the sacred is the holy while the profane is the opposite or the non-sacralized and ordinary. In Wright's Broadacre City the profane was a pollutant which resulted primarily from offensive architecture, poor planning, and the dehumanizing qualities of urban life. "Broadacres," he wrote, "is free-Form, but it is not free-form as might be supposed at first glance. It clings to what is left of liveliness in a world made ugly by ruthless exploitation- a world where the man-made outrages the God-made."[31] There is much more to be said about Wright's understanding between the relationship of God and the created world and the structures for humanity to comprehend the divine. His substantial definition of the divine as representing an ultimate reality provides the beginning point for creating a more complete picture of Wright's spirituality and understanding of architecture and hierotopy.

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[29] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1971):16-17.

[30] Frank Lloyd Wright, "We Want the Truth," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 4: 1939-1949 (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 334.

[31] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The New Frontier: Broadacre City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 4: 1939-1949 (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 57.

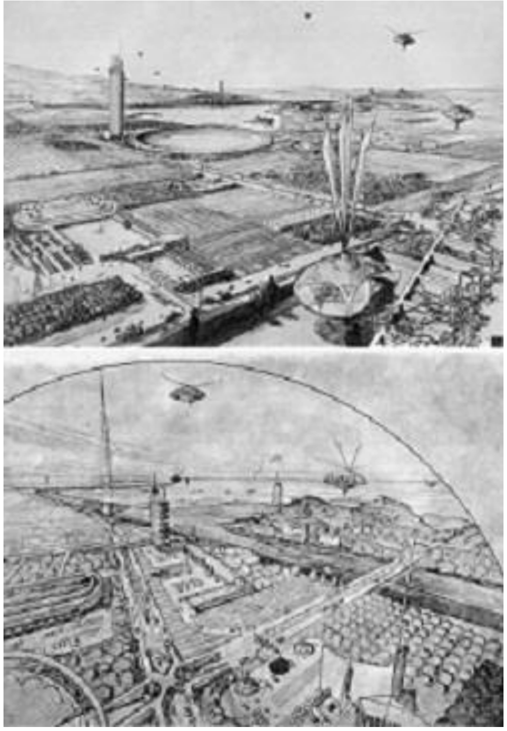

Figure 5. Wright offered his futuristic plan of Broadacre City as a solution to the profane, dehumanizing qualities he felt were obvious in American metropolitan environments (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1958).

An overview of the history and tensions of sacred space in America will provide a valuable context for appreciating how Wright's religious experiences and ideas were channeled into his architecture. Hierotopy provides a frame of reference as an umbrella under which to focus studies of American sacred space. My intention here is not to provide an exhaustive investigation of the history of sacred space in America but an overview of key themes that are essential in interpreting Wright's ideas of the sacred. Each theme will find its way into a more detailed discussion of Wright's notions of the sacred in the chapters to follow. My selected themes pertaining to a history of American sacred space and a correlation to Wright are: sacrality and the American landscape; American Transcendentalism and the experience of nature; sacrality and the American home; sacred symbols and intellectual property; and the symbolism of imaginal places.

Sacrality and the American Landscape

An overview of American sacred space necessarily begins with the land. The tensions of private and government ownership of land created conflict between American Indian tribes and European settlers. A significant point of conflict was the contested approach to the sacred as found in the environmental paradigm of the sacred by American Indians versus the military, legal, and architectural-ritual practices of European settlers. The resulting tensions between paradigms, power, and ownership of the land recognized the history of American sacred space as involving contested space. Historians Dave Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal argue that sacred space will always involve some measure of entanglement with political power or profane elements.[32] The contested nature of American sacred space highlights the tensions between ritual, interpretive, social, and political power in the shaping of hierotopy. Relational categories such as inclusion and exclusion or appropriation and dispossession emphasize hierarchical power in the formation of sacred space in American history.

Frederick Jackson Turner's seminal essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," published in 1893, addressed the implications of westward expansion as a fluid boundary and exchange between American Indian and European cultures. Turner identified the notion of the frontier as the "outer edge of the wave- the meeting point between savagery and civilization."[33] This meeting point, however, was also a place of 'rebirth' and the essence of Americanization as pioneers necessarily encountered and adapted to the culture and values of American Indians, "The wilderness masters the colonist. [I]t takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin." The frontier began in the seventeenth century on the Atlantic coast and, as it moved westward, it shaped progressively American characteristics increasingly removed from European influences. The frontier, Turner suggested, was the most influential force in creating a uniquely American culture. The most significant outcome of westward expansion was 'frontier individualism,' which significantly shaped the ideals of democracy. Turner proposed that the promulgation of democracy was the greatest outcome of the frontier experience. Alongside this shaping of democratic ideals was also the influence of religion on the frontier. Denominations rushed to fill the religious void of the frontier with missionaries and churches in the small villages and towns that sprang up with westward expansion. Not only did missionary zeal provide footholds for denominations to establish a presence in the frontier, it also created "an intellectual stream from New England sources [which] fertilized the West." Turner never developed a more detailed thesis of the influence of Christianity in the frontier, but he did recognize religion as a conduit for introducing intellectual ideas from the east coast westward.

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[32] *American Sacred Space*, eds. Chidester and Linenthal, 16-31.

[33] *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 31-60.

A significant convergence of the frontier, religious concepts, and art also emerged in the mid-nineteenth century through the landscape painters of the Hudson River School. The movement, founded by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), significantly shaped American ideas of the sublime transcendence of the wilderness. The landscape, in this mid-nineteenth century movement, presented the wilderness as a romanticized, pastoral setting which was also a manifestation of God. Cole's 1836, "Essay on American Scenery," captured his correlation between the landscape and experiences of God, "[Nature will] affect the mind with a more deep toned emotion than aught which the hand of man has touched. Amid them the consequent associations are of God the creator--they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things."[34]

Wright had similar, affective experiences with nature in late nineteenth century rural Wisconsin and appreciated the symbolic imagery of the frontier. He used the concept to describe his urban planning scheme of Broadacre City as "The New Frontier" and tied his ideals of frontier individualism to the land, the autonomy of the individual, and democratic values. He made a direct connection between the land and democracy in his summary of Broadacre City, "By the simple exercise of several inherently just rights of man- freedom to decentralize, redistribute, and correlate the properties of the work of man on earth to his birthright, which is the ground itself, Broadacre City becomes reality."[35] Wright considered his decentralized, environmentally sensitive urban scheme grounded in frontier individualism to provide America with its truest opportunity for genuine democracy. Interestingly, Wright ultimately grounded Broadacre City in philosophy and spirituality. He insisted that this city of the future was actually rooted in the ancient teachings of Jesus and the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu and proposed that the citizens of Broadacre City would be enlightened individuals who would be drawn to the teachings of both, "Philosophy he [the citizen of Broadacre City] has come to see as organic. The simplicities of Lao-tzu and Jesus dawn afresh for him as he sees them, tangible, at work as modern art and religion."[36]

Though Broadacre City offered environmental sensitivity to the land it was still rooted in the European model of private ownership, commercial, and agricultural use.

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[34] Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *American Monthly Magazine* 1, (January, 1836): 1-12.

[35] Wright, "The New Frontier: Broadacre City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 4: 45-66

[36] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Disappearing City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 1: 1931-1939 (New York: Rizzoli, 1993): 109-110.

Wilbur Zelinsky, in his 2001 overview of the American religious landscape, suggested that much of Native American sacrality was destroyed by 'Neo-Europeans' due to the forced relocation of many tribes to reservations. This separation of Indians from their sacred geographies was intentional and fostered a loss of meaning in the world. Land and religion in the Native American context were, and still are, bound together with specific geographic locations holding greater religious meaning. The ultimate function of life for the Navajo, for example, is still to create a harmonious relationship with the earth which means that landscapes are a sacred geography. A mountain, for example, can be a deity which is harmed by man-made events that disrupt the power of the mountain.

American sacred architecture, however, is rarely connected to a sacred site. Unlike pilgrimage locales and other holy locations more familiar in Europe and the Middle East, religious architecture in America seldom converges on a locale sacralized by an event or pious individual. Instead, sacred space is understood to occur within the confines of the building regardless of where the structure is located. Whether situated in a residential neighborhood or city center, American religious structures are not inherently tied to a holy site. Zelinsky also pointed out the unique presence in the American sacred landscape of thousands of cemeteries not associated with any church but instead maintained by families or community groups. This is consistent with Unity Chapel Cemetery, the Lloyd Jones family cemetery in Wisconsin in which Wright was buried following his death in 1959.

John D. Loftin, in his investigation of Hopi spirituality and prayer rites noted that the Hopi cosmogony sacralizes both the earth and that which is related to the earth. Corn, a staple of their diet, and the earth are both given the name of 'mother' and embody the cosmos. Breath and the moisture associated with breathing is considered to the source of all cosmic life, therefore, moisture is also considered sacred. Prayers for rain, accordingly, constitute sacred offerings for the creation of the world itself. The Hopi seek to create a "unity with the sacred essence of the world" in which materiality and spirituality are inherently interrelated.[37] Wright was sympathetic to the relationship between spirituality and the landscape, and he said of himself, "[I] am a native product from the tall grass of our midwestern prairies."[38] More than any architect of his era, he was sensitized to the ideas of sacred geographies even though he recognized the realities of private ownership and urban life. His solutions for urban living, understandably, were nature-centered as he set out to ultimately create a new "nature culture" in America.[39] In his 1949 essay, "We Want the Truth", Wright touched upon the tensions he saw between commercial land development and its effects on the landscape, "[W]e are essentially an agrarian nation enormously gifted with land, but the commercial industrialism we have assumed now is, and in its very nature has proved to be destructive of enthusiasm for the beauty of our land itself."[40]

Wright's sensitivity to spirituality and the land propelled him to integrate architecture harmoniously with the landscape. Fallingwater (1936-1939) the residence built for Edgar Kaufman (1885-1955) in Pennsylvania, may be the most recognized house in the world due, in part, to Wright's passion for creating a symbiotic relationship between architecture and the land. In this case Wright radically planted the house directly into Bear Run, the stream which held such significance for Kaufman and his family and integrated the natural bedrock into the house itself.

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[37] John D. Loftin, "Supplication and Participation: The Distance and Relation of the Sacred in Hopi Prayer Rites," *Anthropos,* 81 (1986): 177-201.

[38] Frank Lloyd Wright, "Good Afternoon, Editor Evjue," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 4: 1939-1949 (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 79.

[39] Wright, "The New Frontier: Broadacre City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 4: 56.

[40] Wright, "We Want the Truth," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings*, ed. Pfeiffer, 4: 332-334

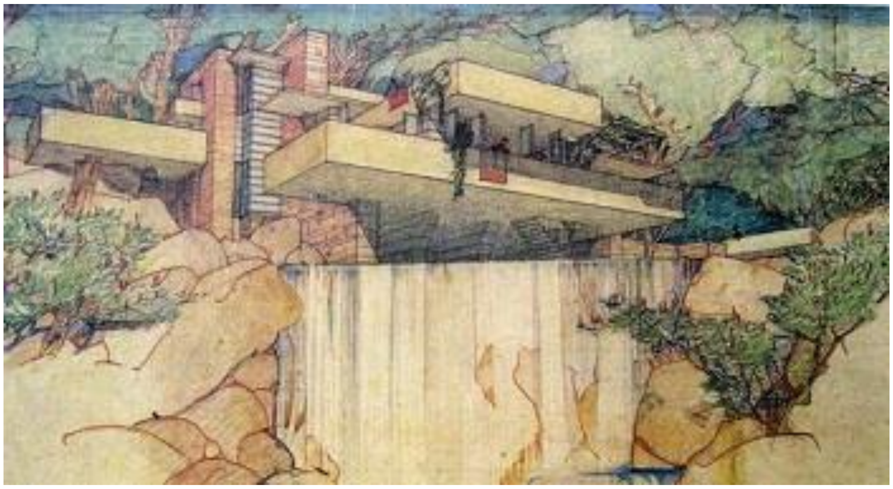

Figure 6. Fallingwater was a bold design made possible by Wright's belief that architecture should strive to achieve oneness with the natural environment (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1934).

Wright would spend a good portion of his life offering his vision of how organic architecture could lead America to a more inspired existence. Organic architecture, it must be noted, had a significant spiritual component based upon the divine revelation of nature. In his contemplation of the value of glass in construction Wright pointed to this blueprint of nature for architecture and ultimately life itself, "[Glass is] competent to actually awaken in us desires for such far-reaching simplicities of form in life as we may see in the clear countenance of Nature. [A] higher development of this 'seeing' will be construction seen as nature-pattern. That seeing, only, is inspired architecture. Organic architecture."[41]

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[41] Ibid., 364-365.

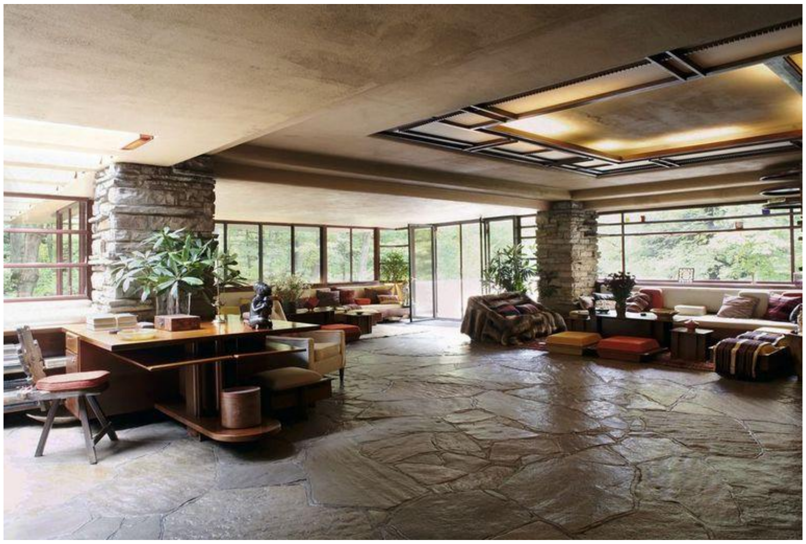

Figure 7. Wright exploited glass to provide expansive views of nature (Ngog Minh Ngo, 2019).

Transcendentalism and the Experience of Nature

The 1830's New England Transcendentalist movement shaped concepts of perceiving the divine in nature for generations of Americans to follow. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), viewed as the most influential of Transcendentalist writers, remains one of the most widely read American authors. Transcendentalism was considered by many a radical movement in its day with its roots in New England Unitarianism and writings of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It was a humanistic philosophy, was a form of American Romanticism which emphasized spirituality, emotion, and subjectivity in contrast to the formal structures of classicism. It developed in some measure as a reaction to the dehumanizing elements of industrialization and its effects on the dignity of the individual at the turn of nineteenth century America. It also developed in criticism to the harshness of Congregationalist Calvinism and a growing dissatisfaction with established religion. Transcendentalism offered, instead, a more compassionate and intuitive spirituality which placed a heavy emphasis on the unity of the divine, humanity, and nature. Emerson offered this explanation, "The Transcendentalist adopts the whole connection of spiritual doctrine. He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy."[42]

Transcendentalism provided a significant spiritual and aesthetic influence for Wright throughout his entire life. It played such a key role in his spiritual and educational development, due to the influence of the Lloyd Jones family through his mother Anna, that he became quite versed in the movement. Wright noted the influence of transcendentalism on the Lloyd Jones clan in his comments on his family's return in 1878 to Wisconsin following his father's rather unsuccessful efforts to eke out a living as a Unitarian pastor near Boston when he wrote, "[We] came back to the ancestral Valley from the East, by way of Sister Anna and her 'preacher,' the 'Unitarianism' worked out in the transcendentalism of the sentimental group at Concord: Whittier, Lowell, Longfellow, yes, and Emerson too. Thoreau? Well, Thoreau seemed to them too smart. He made them uncomfortable. This poetic transcendentalism was to unite with their own richer, sterner sentimentality."[43] Unitarianism was a family staple, particularly in his maternal history with the Lloyd Joneses and Wright recognized it as being heavily influenced by their Welsh ancestry as he continued, "The Unitarianism of the Lloyd-Joneses, a far richer thing, was an attempt to amplify, in the confusion of the creeds of their day, the idea as life as a gift from the Divine Source, one GOD omnipotent, all things at one with HIM. UNITY was their watchword, the sign and symbol that thrilled them, the UNITY of all things."

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[42] *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 2000): 84.

[43] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 16-17.

Emerson, as the leading thinker among the loosely knit New England Transcendentalists, elevated humanity as an expression of the divine and sought oneness of the cosmos, individuals, and God. In Chapter VII of his essay, *Nature*, Emerson noted, "Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to seem the end for which it was made."[44] Sacred landscape, therefore, played a critical role in Emerson's ideas on knowing the divine. Nature conspired with the spiritual life to provide the essential understanding that God transcendent and available to all. Nature, Emerson believed, was a manifestation of the spiritual world, or the Creator's mind, and provided a one-to-one correspondence between natural and spiritual laws. Nature, therefore, allowed humanity to comprehend God and divine laws. Human constructs, such as architecture and language, were designed to also reflect the laws of nature and God. Key to understanding Emerson's view of the relationship of nature, the spirit, and the divine was the concept of the 'Oversoul' which emphasized the essential oneness of humanity and the divine. He wrote, "And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, divine himself."[45] Wright expressed harmony with Emerson's ideas on the possibility of oneness with the divine. In this case, it pertained to construction in the desert environment of Arizona and how architecture could lead to this spiritual unity, "Human habitation here [the desert] comes decently in where God is. Man is come in as himself something of a God. And just that is what Architecture can do for him-not only show appreciation of Arizona's character but qualify him in a human habitation to become a godlike native part of Arizona for so long as any building ever endured."[46] Wright viewed himself, in some sense, as an agent of the divine using architecture and sacred nature as the pathway for entering into divine oneness.

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[44] *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* ed. Atkinson, 21.

[45] Ibid., 29.

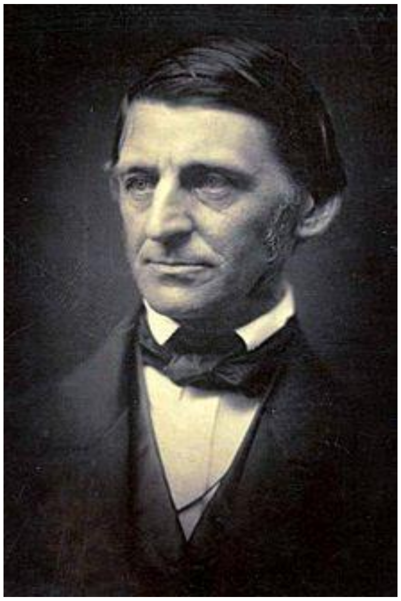

Figure 8. Emerson's writings on the divine and nature were extremely influential on Wright and the Lloyd Jones clan (George Eastman House, 1870).

Emerson mentored the younger Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) as another important member of the Concord Transcendentalists. Thoreau, too, understood nature as a source of revelation of higher spiritual truth as noted in his experiences at Walden Pond from 1845-1847. He developed into more of an immersed naturalist than Emerson's example of an intellectual participant with nature. His views were sympathetic to the Transcendental belief that an intuitive understanding, guided by nature, held the potential to reveal divine, universal laws. His writings propose an inference from the smallest detail of nature, such as moth cocoons, that reveal the cosmic mind or unity between nature, humans, and God. Throughout his life Thoreau maintained an admiration for the simplicity and the culture of Native Americans, consistent with a similar theme in Romantic literature. He maintained personal journals from 1837 through 1861 which recorded life experiences, observations of the natural world, and reflections on readings. He also compiled volumes of research on Native Americans in anticipation of a book that never materialized. This fascination led him to also collect Native American artifacts, and he became an expert in Native American culture. Thoreau romanticized the very notion of America itself as holding the greatest potential for divine revelation through nature. The pureness of the American landscape, with all its unspoiled forms of plains, mountains, forests, and rivers, became metaphoric for the possibility of knowing the divine in a purer form. The American landscape was a sacred landscape for Thoreau.

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[46] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 314-315.

While Thoreau engaged nature in a more experiential manner than his mentor, Emerson, it was John Muir (1838-1914) who created an even more radical form of Transcendental relationship with the wilderness. New England Transcendentalism found an eager adherent in this mountaineering naturalist who learned of the movement while a student at the University of Wisconsin. Muir mimicked Emersonian thought most closely regarding the experience of the sacred in nature. His life and writings in California transported Transcendentalism to the west coast of North America and have provided inspiration to generations of Americans. Muir frequently used Transcendental motifs to describe the natural world and frequently employed biblical language in his analogies. He paralleled the Sierra Nevada mountains to the holiness of Mount Sinai and expanses of wilderness with the Garden of Eden. In architectonic language, he referred to certain natural locations such as mountains or rivers as ‘cathedrals’ and ‘temples.’ Muir’s notion of sacred landscape was much more connective to the experiences of the Hudson River School painters who viewed the wilderness as a sacred geography capable of providing epiphanies. Muir, for example, romanticized the rain he encountered in the Sierra landscapes: “Some [rain] descends through the spires of the woods, sift spray through the shining needles, whispering peace and good cheer to each one of them.” Each droplet of rain was “God’s messenger, an angel of love.” Muir could write of “every crystal, every flower a window opening into heaven, a mirror reflecting the Creator.”[47]

Muir used transcendental language to describe this wilderness sacrality as he wrote of streams being singers and nature whispering messages to humans. Historian Bron Taylor has proposed that Muir’s worldview was rooted in animism, for he believed in sacred voices emerging from nature.[48] Muir alluded to both animism and sacred landscapes in his work *My First Summer in the Sierra* as he experienced the divine in nature, “The great sun-gold noons, the alabaster cloud-mountains, the landscape beaming with consciousness like the face of a god. The sunsets, when the trees stood hushed awaiting their good-night blessings. Divine, enduring, unwastable wealth.”[49] His ascent to the summit of Mount Hoffman caused him to reflect on the sacred meaning of the land, “And what glorious landscapes are about me, new plants, new animals, new crystals… [W]hat questions I asked, and how little I know of the vast show, and how eagerly, tremulously hopeful of some day knowing more, learning the meaning of these divine symbols.”[50] He used religious language in describing Yosemite as a temple where “God himself is preaching his sublimest water and stone sermons!”[51]

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[47] John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra,* ed. Gretel Ehrlich (New York: Penguin Books, 1987):125-127.

[48] Bron Taylor, “Resacralizing Earth” *American Sacred Space*, eds. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 100-104.

[49] Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, ed. Ehrlich, 85, 153.

[50] Ibid., 149.

Muir, however, also interjected a literary biblicism into his contemplation of sacred geographies. He correlated the experience of seeing American Dippers emerging from the spray of waterfall and rugged streams to the wedding riddle that Samson offered his Philistine opponents, “Out of the strong cometh forth sweetness.” He correlated the natural joints in the granite and slate of Mount Hoffman to the idea of biblical creation, “suggesting the Scripture, ‘He hath builded the mountains.’ ”[52] While Muir was significantly influenced by Transcendentalism and Emerson, in particular, he elevated the direct and rugged experience of nature far above any of the New England writers. While Emerson’s motif of experiencing nature was primarily ocular, Muir was a strong advocate of a grittier and more holistic immersion.[53]

Wright’s Biblical References

One of the most overlooked aspects of Wright’s spirituality, akin to Muir, was a recurrent biblical referencing throughout his writings which was consistent with Transcendentalist authors. Wright had a solid knowledge of the Bible and repeatedly used its characters and sayings as metaphors and references in his writings. Wright, for example, used a reference to the New Testament writings of Paul as an analogy for why he was compelled to leave home, the University of Wisconsin, and his first job in Chicago under the architect Joseph Silsbee, “I see that I left Silsbee as I left college, and as later, with anguish, I left home- for the same reason, with the same suffering, the same hope, obedient to a principle at work in me taking its toll to this hour as I write. Old as man's moral life is this urge to grow. Listen to the Apostle Paul: 'Brethren, I count myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before."[54]

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[51] Ibid., 190.

[52] Ibid., 107, 150.

[53] Muir arrived in the Sierra Nevada mountains in 1869 and immersed himself in the landscape. He correlated such divine encounters in nature as a form of baptism. Emerson was an intellectual who experienced nature primarily in his thoughts while Muir was a fearless mountaineer who experienced nature through the rigors of physical involvement in the wilderness.

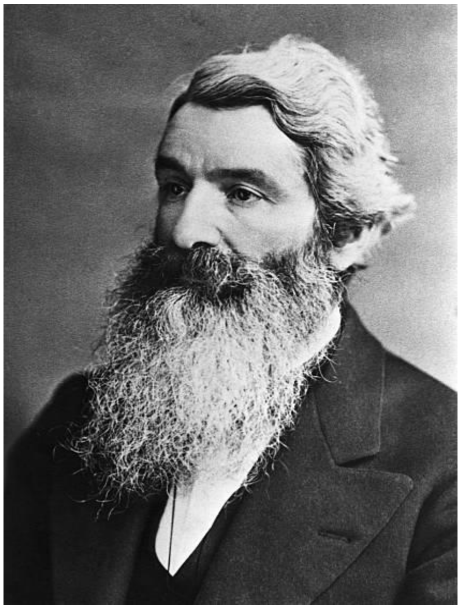

Figure 9. John Muir (above) and Wright were attracted to Transcendentalism and incorporated biblical references in their own writings (Getty Images, Bettmann, 1900).

Wright leaned on biblical ideas in his description of the need for simplicity in architectural design and life itself. He chose Jesus as the ultimate model of simplicity and used a biblical reference on how nature points to simplicity: "Clarity of design and perfect significance both are first essentials of the spontaneous born simplicity of the lilies of the field. 'They toil not, neither do they spin.' Jesus wrote the supreme essay on simplicity in this, ‘Consider the lilies of the field.’ ”[55] Wright maintained respect for the person of Christ, but consistent with Unitarian teaching viewed him primarily as a moral model for the world. He was quite willing to insert Christ into his writings as a model for democratic and harmonious living without discussing any sort of theology concerning his divinity and connected his departure from Silsbee’s office to the teaching of Christ, “*Let the dead bury their dead*” was said by the gentlest, wisest and most awful of men.”[56] Also consistent with Unitarian teaching, Wright believed that Christ’s teachings had been corrupted by both his earliest disciples and the church as an institution. Wright recalled his conversation with his best friend in Chicago, Cecil Corwin, concerning the corruption of the church, “And look here, Cecil, what’s more- I see it now- that’s just what’s the matter, too, with the Gospel as preached today in churches: Jesus was doing the best He knew how. The truth was in Him. He preached it. But He, the Nazarene Carpenter (I wonder if the carpenter wasn’t the architect in those days), was modified by his disciples in the next place. The disciples were sincere enough and did the best they could but they ‘modified’ Him.”[57]

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[54] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 93-94.

However, Wright still considered himself a member of the Unitarian Church and held up its theology as a predominant shaping force in the Lloyd Jones family culture. In the early 1950’s Wright would continue to identify himself as a Unitarian. During the construction of his design for the Society’s new meeting house in Madison, for example, a revealing exchange took place between Wright and the new pastor of the congregation.

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[55] Ibid, 144.
[56] Ibid., 94.
[57] Wright was adamant about the loss of Christ’s original intentions, “Again the preaching was modified by the disciples of those disciples. Again ‘modified’ to suit the ‘needs of mankind.’ And not as Jesus or His Father saw those needs. No. Only as your father and my father saw them. Hasn’t the sentiment of Jesus become sentimentalized sentimentality in the mouths of His disciples?” See Wright, *An Autobiography,* 84-85.

By October of 1951 construction expenses on the church had far exceeded estimates, forcing contractor Marshall Erdman to terminate his work with a burden of over $30,000 in debt.[58]

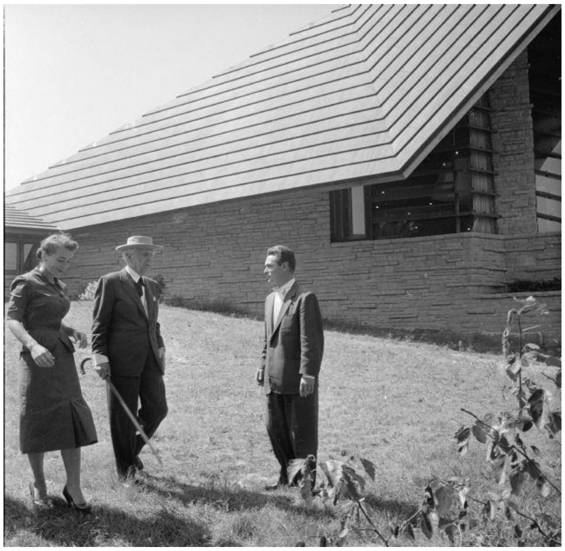

Figure 10. Wright took special interest in the First Unitarian Society Meeting House project due to his membership and family's Welsh Unitarian heritage (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1955).

In the summer of 1952 Wright decided to use the Taliesin Fellowship apprentices as labor to complete the church. Apprentice Brooks Bruce Pfeiffer recalled,

> One day Mr. Wright returned from Madison with an old bible of gigantic proportions filled with color illustrations. He had it set up on a stone pulpit, and while we were hammering and sawing Mr. Wright would call out to us, ‘Here is Samson pulling apart the columns of the Temple,’ or ‘The Queen of Sheba, there she is in all her glory. What a splendid old volume this is!’ The new pastor came up at that point- he frequently watched our work

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[58] Frank Lloyd Wright, Letters to Clients, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (Fresno: The Press at California State University, 1986): 242-245.

> with a look of indifference on his face, ‘Mr. Wright,’ he said, ‘we don’t use the bible in this congregation.’ Mr. Wright looked at him straight in the eye and said, ‘I am a Unitarian, descended from Unitarian ministers on both my father’s and mother’s side of the family. The bible has always been part of our background, and I went out and bought this bible myself for this church.’[59]

This recollection by Pfeiffer not only pointed to Wright’s self-identification as a Unitarian but also his affection for the Bible and familiarity with its stories. Historian Joseph Siry characterized Wright as having “sensitivity to religious values, and with a mind filled from boyhood with a rich Biblical heritage.”[60] This knowledge allowed him to pepper his writings with biblical quotes and references which have typically been overlooked by scholars. Surprising to many, Wright also inscribed biblical quotations in some of his buildings. For example, the Larkin Administration Building, (1904-1906) was a commercial structure designed for the Larkin Soap Company located in Buffalo, New York. Wright received the commission to design an administrative center for the company’s growing soap manufacturing and mail order business. The building, though a commercial space, was filled with inscriptions of words in all capital letters dealing with the value of hard work, upright character, and positive moral values. A sample of words included GENEROSITY, LOYALTY, IMAGINATION, and SACRIFICE. Interestingly, Wright also inscribed two biblical quotations from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount at the highest reaches of the building’s central, interior court. This space was an open atrium over 75 feet high with an overhead skylight which filled the court with natural lighting. Larkin

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[59] Ibid., 244-245.

[60] Joseph Siry, *Beth Shalom Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright and Modern Religious Architecture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012): 370.

Company employees worked at desks on the first level of this open court. Looking up, just below the skylight were these quotations in gilded capital letters on opposite ends of the atrium. One read, "ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND KNOCK AND THE DOOR SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU." The second inscription was, "ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM." Few, if any, of Wright's contemporaries incorporated such script into their architecture, certainly not quotations from Christ.

Why would Wright include biblical quotations in a commercial building? The lofty location of the verses, at the highest reaches of the atrium just below the skylight, certainly had metaphoric, spiritual connotations. The verses would have been flooded with natural lighting from above, hovering over the daily activities of the Larkin Company workers. Architectural historian Jack Quinan has suggested that Wright and the Larkin clients were perfectly comfortable creating a transcendental experience in this privately owned, commercial space. Transcendentalism was a familiar theme among Larkin Company executives and quotations from Emerson were included in staff publications.[61] Wright's own familiarity with Emerson resulting from his Unitarian upbringing and his affinity for biblical sayings and stories would have been an ideal fit for the Larkin executives.

Not only were the inscriptions in the Larkin Building meant to provide transcendental overtones, they also promoted the value of a strong work ethic. An

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[61] Jack Quinan, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building: Myth and Fact* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006): 85-110. Unfortunately, the Larkin Building was demolished in 1950 to make way for a proposed truck stop which never materialized. Its destruction was a wake-up call to the architectural community as to the need for proactive historic preservation. A lone pier of the building remains standing today. Oddly, insignificant Larkin Company buildings survived and have been converted into contemporary housing and retail spaces.

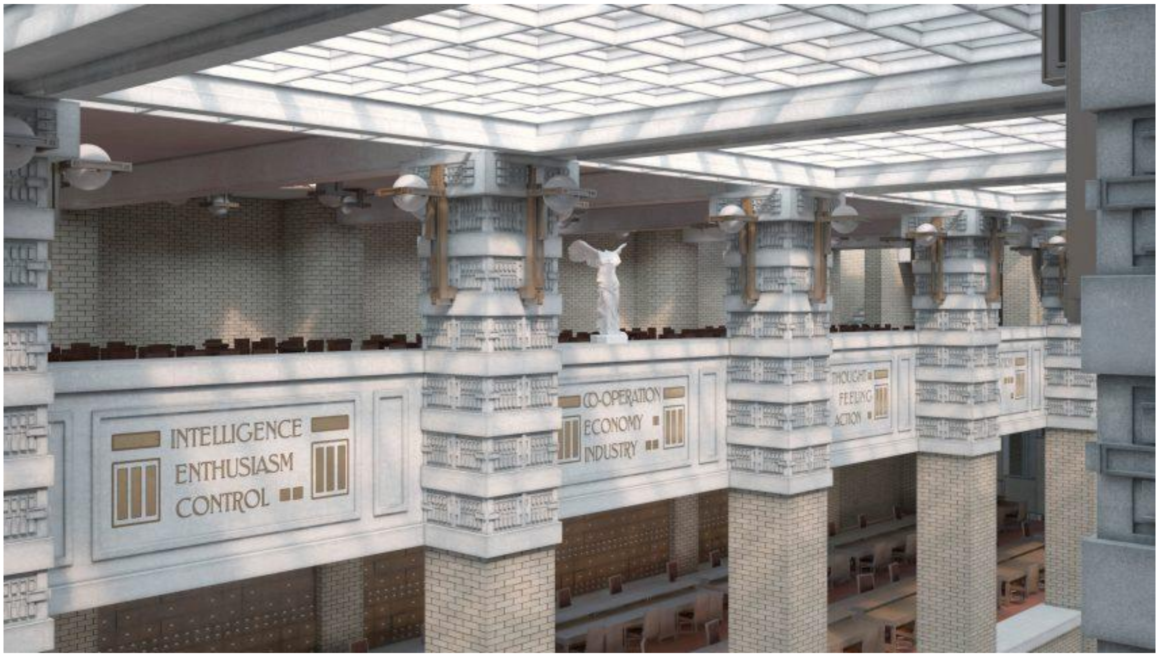

Figure 11. Wright embedded inspirational words throughout the Larkin Building (David Romero, 2016).

exterior inscription which greeted most of the Larkin employees as they entered the building read, "HONEST LABOR NEED NO MASTER SIMPLE JUSTICE NEED NO SLAVES." An interior inscription continued this theme, "TO ENCOURAGE AND REWARD PURPOSE EFFORT ACHIEVEMENT." Wright would certainly have concurred in the moral benefit of hard work as he personally adapted the transcendental call for experiencing nature not as Muir or Emerson did, but instead as an ethic of physical labor in nature. His childhood experiences with his uncles, who farmed in the 'Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses' (as his sister Maginel came to describe it) led him to promote the spiritual value of manual labor while in nature. Wright wrote not only about the ultimate significance of nature itself, but also correlated farming to experiencing nature. He upheld the value of his farm experiences and shared thoughts about the lessons learned from farm animals such as horses, pigs, and chickens. Wright happily shared his discovery that milking a cow could become music to a creative mind, "Milking was the perfect opportunity to turn monotony into music. The sound of the streams at first, soon to be modified by the foaming of the milk in the pail- a kind of music! And usually, the boy sang to this rhythm while he milked."[62] Emerson also wrote whimsically about animals. His poem, "The Humble-Bee" lauded the tiny bee in heroic fashion, "Wiser far than human seer, Yellow-breeched philosopher! Seeing only what is fair, Sipping only what is sweet."[63]

Wright was not alone in his elevation of the farm as a place for positive moral and physical development. Emerson's essay "Farming" summarized this transcendental correlation between moral values, nature, and working the land. The closeness of the farmer to nature and the earth created health, character development, and closeness to God, "And the profession has in all eyes its ancient charm, as standing nearest to God, the first cause. [T]he farmer times himself to Nature, and acquires that livelong patience which belongs to her."[64] Both Emerson and Wright viewed the farm as a laboratory for the exploration of Nature and physical work. Emerson noted in the same essay, "This hard work will always be done by one kind of man; [m]en of endurance- deep-chested, long-winded, tough, slow and sure, and timely. [T]he earth works for him; the earth is a machine which yields almost gratuitous service to every application of intellect."

Wright would call the moral significance of manual labor in nature his gospel of work as exemplified the integration of residence and farm life in his rural Wisconsin home of Taliesin: "Taliesin is preaching an unpopular gospel. I admit: preaching, by practice, the gospel of Work, and Work has been pretty well knocked out of American youth by way of inflated 'Education.' "[65] Apprentice Edgar Tafel's brother was once questioned by Wright about his goals in life. Tafel's brother offered that happiness was his ultimate goal. Wright informed him, "Happiness is a by-product of work."[66] This gospel of work would significantly inform and shape Wright's formation of the Taliesin Fellowship and his unorthodox educational methodology. The young adults, both men and women, who found their way to Taliesin in hopes of gaining an architectural education would find Wright's emphasis on physical labor and the value of the farm to be both exhilarating and exacerbating.

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[62] Wright, *An Autobiography,* 41.
[63] Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Atkinson, 690-692.
[64] Ibid., 673-681.
[65] Wright, *An Autobiography,* 400.

The Home as Sacred Space

While Transcendentalism promoted the revelation of God through nature, another form of sacred space developed in the American experience which was centered in the home. As a majority of Wright's commissions were residential, he gave a great deal of thought to the aesthetic, spiritual, and social meaning of the single-family home and its relationship to domestic life. The Victorian era, Colleen McDannell noted, offered a view of American sacred space which centered on the home and spiritual benefit of domestic life on the family.[67] Sisters Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe summarized the relationship between the sacred and domesticity in their work published in 1869, *The American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science*. The value of the family and the home were elevated as a significant spiritual enterprise, "The family state, then, is the aptest earthly illustration of the heavenly kingdom, and in it woman is its chief minister."[68] The role of the mother was exalted in this sacred space as servant and reflection of divine love in the raising of godly children.

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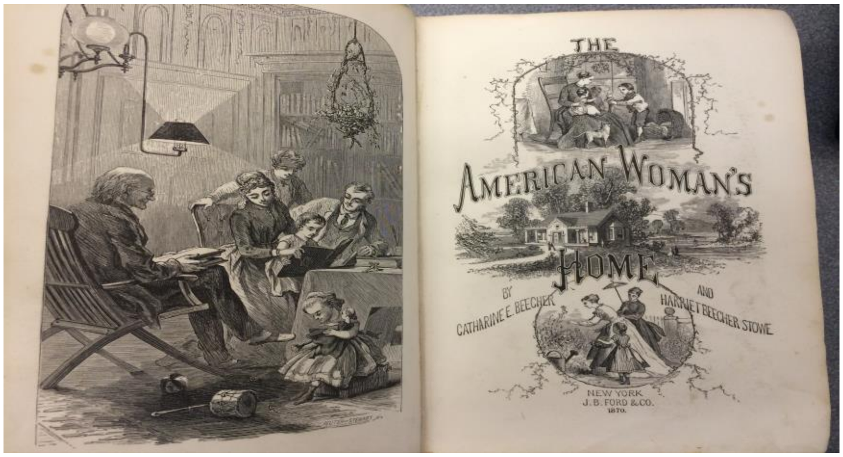
[66] Quinan, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building,* 180.

[67] See Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994).

[68] Catharine Esther Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of*

Their book was a working manual which not only extolled the sacred nature of the home but also provided details of how a godly home would function. They were particularly concerned about the concept of boarding schools which took children out of the home and away from the godly influence and education of parents and domesticity.



THE
AMERICAN WOMAN'S
HOME
BY
CATHARINE E. BEECHER
AND
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE
NEW YORK
J. B. FORD & CO.
1870.

Figure 12. While Harriet Beecher Stowe gained notoriety for her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she also had great interest in the relationship between Christianity and domestic life. Wright, too, understood the home as being foundational to a democratic society. He enthusiastically engaged residential design as a significant component of his architectural practice (WordPress.com, *The American Woman's Home* title page, 2015).

The intrinsic value of manual labor was brought to light in arguments that increasing affluence in America should not be equated with aversion to working with one's hands for the benefit of the home. Families, the sisters argued, would be happier and healthier by engaging collectively in physical labor both in and outside of the house. Outdoor labor, whether vegetable gardening, animal husbandry, or raising flowers, would not only benefit the home but allow each member of the family to physically exercise in

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Domestic Science (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2008): 19-21. The presence of a mother in the home was essential to the Victorian idea of family life, "And such is the blessedness of aiding to sustain a truly Christian home, that no one comes so near the pattern of the All-perfect One as those who… humble themselves to the lowest order to aid in the training of the young."

the sun and fresh air.

In their chapter titled, “A Christian House” the sisters provided detailed aspects of establishing a home as the spiritual haven for the family and included notes on everything from the floor plan to furniture, bedding and sinks. The logic underlying the ideal organization of the home was to benefit not only the family but the community as well. The sisters mapped out their hope that the example of healthy patterns of spiritual households would help train less fortunate or knowledgeable families in the art of leading a Christian life. Their book goes on to discuss all aspects of family life from the material considerations in creating a healthy home, such as ventilation and furnaces, to the art of cooking, family health, and manners. The role of the mother was primary in the sacrality of the domestic enterprise and the well-being of the family, “As saith in the Scripture, ‘The people do perish for lack of knowledge.” And it is this lack of knowledge which it is woman’s special business to supply, in first training her household to intelligence as the indispensable road to virtue and happiness.”[69] Wright concurred with the Beechers’ philosophy on the primacy of the home and considered it the most significant place in his urban planning for Broadacre City, “[T]he most important unity in the city, really the center and the only centralization allowable. The individual home. [T]he home has grown in dignity and spiritual significance by this concept of the free city of Democracy. [E]very man’s home his sunlit strand and no less, but more than ever, a refuge for the expanding spirit that is still his.”[70]

The Beecher sisters also correlated patterns within the home to American democratic ideals. Their chapter “Early Rising” argued that waking early in the morning was a virtue not only for the family but for the nation as well. They made a direct link between principles of American democracy and patriotism to Christian values. In this scheme families had a responsibility to rise early to take advantage of daylight and create a well-ordered household that reflected spiritual goodness. The sacrality of home life included respecting the rhythms of natural order as being divine law: "The laws of health are the laws of God."[71] The sacredness of domesticity, therefore, was all-encompassing and involved the organization of space, material objects, family relationships, physical labor, the industrious use of time, education of children, and respect for the natural rhythms of nature.

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[69] Beecher and Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home,* 43.

[70] Wright, “The Disappearing City,” *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 3:108.

Wright agreed with the correlation that the Beecher sisters made between democracy and the home. He even spelled out his ideas using the same sort of reference to the importance of motherhood to the home and nation, "More and more the factory is destroying the home. The prideful refuge for the unit of Democracy is- primarily the Family. The home, our vital refuge itself is in danger of 'housing' and it is in good family homes that the breakaway from out-moded city-life must first be made. The war inevitable to capitalist-industrialism such as ours makes motherhood despicable- a mere provision of gun-fodder however we may patriotize and rationalize concerning Motherhood."[72]

McDannell proposed that the Victorian model of sacred domesticity provided a cohesive unifying force for Protestant Americans until the 1930's. However, the Victorian notion of the home as sacred space did not simply vanish with the cultural changes in America over time but is yet reflected in the home-schooling movement in the

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[71] Beecher and Stowe, *The American Woman's Home,* 104.

[72] Wright, "We Want the Truth," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 4:332-334.

United States. It is not uncommon for home-schooling to occur for religious reasons consistent with the Beecher sisters' emphasis on the spiritual training of children in the home as part of the sacredness of domestic life. Wright's ideas on education in Broadacre City are sympathetic to the goals of America's home-schooling movement, particularly the benefit of small class sizes and the freedom to foster spiritual growth. Proximity in nature, understandably, was also a key idea for Wright, "But any school in Broadacre City would be, first, a park in the choicest part of the countryside, preferably by a stream or by a body of water. It is not only small as a whole, but that small could divide again into smaller so far as possible."[73] Wright wanted all children to experience the earth and the value of manual labor, "Each pupil would learn of the soil by working on it and in it." He envisioned sunlit school buildings with garden courts which would allow children to grow both physically and spiritually, "Boys and girls here would become true co-efficient of a spiritually portent, therefore naturally creative humanity."[74]

Wright was no stranger to the ideas of education in rural settings, as his two unmarried aunts, Ellen and Jane Lloyd Jones, founded Hillside Home School in 1887. The school was built where the Lloyd Jones family farmhouse once stood in the valley of the 'God-Almighty Joneses.' The aunts called upon their nineteen-year-old nephew Frank to design the main building of the school while he was beginning his career in Chicago with J.L. Silsbee. Years later Wright himself would eventually return to this location to restart his personal life and career following the highly publicized abandonment of his family for Mamah Borthwick Cheney in late 1909. Hillside Home

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[73] Wright, "The Disappearing City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 3:107-108.

[74] Drawing would be included as a mandatory subject in order to foster a relationship between what the eye saw and its representation by the mind. See Wright, "The Disappearing City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Pfeiffer, 3:107-108.

School was founded by Aunts Nell and Jane primarily to educate over thirty nephews and nieces in the growing Lloyd Jones clan. However, the school grew in popularity and attracted children, many of whom came from the Chicago area, between the ages of five and eighteen. It was one of the first coeducational schools in the country and was simultaneously a farm, boarding school, and home. Florence Fifer Bohrer attended Hillside Home School and her brief memoir published in 1955 provided insight as to the progressive nature of the educational philosophy which might best be correlated to the Montessori educational methodology. However, Hillside Home School predated the arrival of Montessori ideas in the United States by over two decades. While Montessori education emerged in the United States in 1911 it was initially a short-lived experiment, lasting roughly only three years. It did not reemerge as a recommended system of education in America until it gained popularity again in the 1960's.

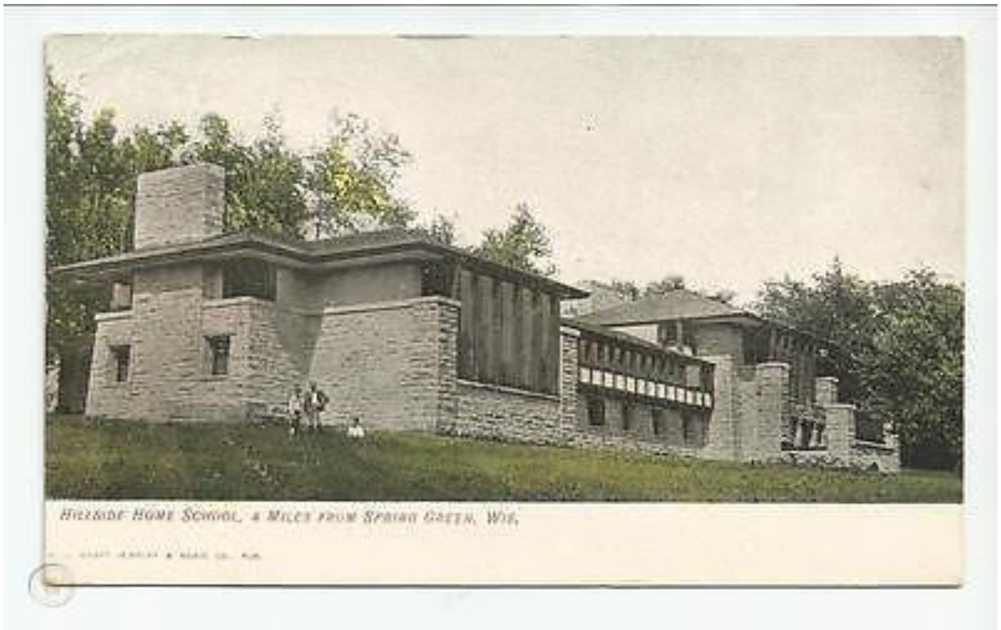

Figure 13. Hillside Home School was a remarkably progressive institution, especially given its remote location in rural Wisconsin. Wright was influenced by his aunts' educational methodology and applied it in development of the Taliesin Fellowship (Courtesy WorthPoint, 2017).

Aunts Nell and Jane developed their system of education well ahead of Montessori but the two methodologies paralleled one another in ideas of independence in learning and respect for the developmental stages in a child's life. Bohrer recalled Aunt Nell informing her on her initial visit, "We have no rules here at Hillside, but I'm sure you will soon learn our way of living together. If you are not happy, we will send for your mother to take you home."[75] Bohrer was allowed the freedom to skip classes entirely during her first month at Hillside. Instead of punishment, Aunt Nell simply encouraged her to explore the surrounding countryside or ride one of the ponies. After a month of such freedom Bohrer decided it was time to join the classes and relished her time at Hillside which she called The Unitarian Hillside Home School. She noted that some forty students were at the school at the time with small class sizes and a large group of teachers. Wright would continue to design structures for Hillside including a unique windmill entitled Romeo and Juliet, built in 1896, which still stands today as the oldest existing Wright structure in Wisconsin.[76]

Wright would fully explore a host of issues relating to the Victorian notion of education and sacrality of the home. It is of interest that an individual who experienced such deep personal fragmentation in his own home life would spend a majority of his career developing theories and designing spaces for residential living. His childhood was admittedly shaped by the divorce of his own parents, an unusual event in late nineteenth century culture. Wright reflected on the social and personal effects of his parents' divorce, "So this boy himself, supersensitive, soon became aware of 'disgrace.' His mother was a ‘divorced woman.’ His faith in her goodness and rightness did not waver. Therefore seemed injustice to her. [T]he wondering grew in him resentment. Became a subconscious sense of false judgment entered against himself, his sisters, Jennie and Maginel, all innocent of wrong-doing.’”[77] Once his parents divorced, Wright remained close to his mother but never saw his father again. Like his parents, however, he would walk through the moral issues of abandonment of his own marriages, deep fragmentation of family relationships, and separation from his children. Wright would also experience the tragic loss of life in the sphere of the home, and he admittedly struggled with his role as a father. He candidly noted that his more affectionate feeling of fatherhood came not from his children but from his architecture, “Is it a quality? Fatherhood? If so, I seemed born without it. And yet a building was a child. I have had the father-feeling, I am sure, when coming back after a long time to one of my buildings. That must be the true feeling of fatherhood. But I never had it for my children.”[78]

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[75] Florence Fifer Bohrer, "The Unitarian Hillside Home School," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Spring, 1955): 151-155.

[76] Wright changed Romeo and Juliet's exterior from wood shingles to horizontal board and batten cypress siding in 1938. After almost 100 years of use the windmill was completely restored between 1990 -1992 due to extreme deterioration.

Between 1896 and 1898 that Wright was involved in the production of a book with friend William H. Winslow which encapsulated Victorian ideas of domestic sacrality. Wright served as graphic designer and co-editor for book entitled, *The House Beautiful,* which featured an essay by Reverend William C. Gannett along with several poems selected by Wright and Winslow including Shakespeare’s fifth and sixth sonnets along with Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “Flower in the Crannied Wall.”[79] The timbre of *The House Beautiful*, much like the Beecher sisters’ work, addressed the spiritual, aesthetic, and social significance of an orderly and beautiful home. Wright designed and executed intricate geometrical frames which surrounded each block of text in the book. He also served as photographer in providing twelve images of weeds and flowers printed in an elongated format reminiscent of Japanese prints. Wright's involvement in *The House Beautiful* clearly indicated his interest and support for promoting the home as both an artistic and spiritual place with small chapters such as 'House Furnishing" and "The Ideal of Beauty." The chapter entitled, "The Dear Togetherness" promoted the creation of a godly home, or the 'home-nest' and the duties of father, mother, and children. Much like the construction of a sermon, Gannett's essay understandably offered religious themes related to home life along with numerous biblical quotations to help buttress concepts ranging from the building of the home to good taste and harmony. *The House Beautiful was* not intended as a major commercial enterprise, as the back plate of the book indicated; only ninety books were printed, which were eventually distributed as gifts to friends and family. What *The House Beautiful* did accomplish was to provide a record of Wright's early connection to religious and aesthetic themes concerning the home and family life. As will be seen, Wright would spend the rest of his life shaping both ideas and designs for domestic life which encompassed artistic and spiritual priorities. These concepts, however, were grounded in Wright's childhood experiences with the Midwest prairie and mythic, imaginal ideas about architecture and nature.

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[77] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 51

[78] Ibid., 112-113.

[79] Frank Lloyd Wright and William Herman Winslow, *The House Beautiful* (Rohnert Park: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1996).

Imaginal Place and the Red Square

In her treatment of the American frontier, Lynda H. Schneekloth has discussed not only the need to recognize physical and material elements of space but also the role of *imaginal place*. An imaginal place, as defined by Schneekloth, generates mythic qualities which help frame our understanding of the personal, political, economic, and religious significance of the landscape or place. Schneekloth argued that the American frontier, in actuality, was invented as an imaginal place in the mind of immigrants over the course of four centuries. She surmised that the harsh realities of actually living in the frontier did not necessarily detract from its mythic representations. A significant element of the mythic frontier was created by individuals not living there. A parallel is made by Schneekloth between the imaginal place of the historic frontier and the imaginal place of the contemporary city. The mythic urban landscape, she argued, is to a large extent an imagined entity created by media representations. This imaginal place is by and large a violent, wild space portrayed in a similar manner as the fearful wilderness of the frontier. She also correlated the landscape, whether frontier or modern urban, as a place of speculation for profit or a ‘gentrification’ of space. Whether the Homestead Act of 1862 or the modern real estate market, the forces of gentrification are actually a challenge for cultural domination and the mythic ideas of space.[80]

Historian Narciso Menocal keenly addressed Wright’s mythic ideas of architecture and nature which are, I believe, sympathetic to Schneekloth‘s concept of imaginal place. Menocal proposed that Wright understood his architectural iconography to be a synthesis of two defining, mythic moments in architecture. The first moment was found in the origin of the universe as Menocal summarized: “…the pristine instant of creation. Nature- in a flash- had determined that architecture was to be based on a geometry homologous with that of most entities of the universe.”[81] The second mythic event for Wright was the ‘moment’ when humans developed an awareness of the cosmos which formed the basis for religion. Architecture, as imaginal place, thus became a means of recreating the transcendent, “Buildings became ways to reach out to the divine, a fact that would become very important in Wright’s architecture.” Menocal summarized this convergence of these two moments as guiding Wright’s architectural iconography. They served as mythological, guiding motifs for both the creative (moment of creation) and transcendent (cosmic awareness) functions of architecture. Mythic ideas and an agrarian idealism based in nature, it will be seen, played significant roles in shaping Wright’s sense of space and the sacred.

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[80] Lynda H. Schneekloth, “The Frontier Is Our Home,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996): 210-225.

[81] Narciso Menocal, “Observations on Frank Lloyd Wright’s Uses of Myth,” (unpublished paper): 9-10.

While Schneekloth explored the mythic representations of both the frontier and urban landscape, she did not discuss who ultimately controls such symbols and ideas, or the ties between intellectual property and imaginal place. Intellectual property rights involve the legal right to precisely defined kinds of knowledge or “intangible personal property in creations of the mind.”[82] George P. Nicholas and Kelly P. Bannister have delved into the relationship between intellectual property rights and the protection of cultural knowledge especially as it relates to artifacts and sites which are the ‘tangible embodiment of the sacred.’ They note that historic sites of sacrality for aboriginal people may be utilized and reinterpreted to meet their contemporary needs to provide cultural continuity through time. The authors question whether the information that emerges from sacred sites should be protected as intellectual property. This might include the symbols of a sacred site, pictographs and petroglyphs, as well as the ecological knowledge that a site might produce through archeology. There are currently few legal protections granted for the intellectual elements associated with sacred spaces in the

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[82] George P. Nicholas and Kelly P. Bannister, “Copyrighting the Past? Emerging Intellectual Property Rights Issues in Archaeology,” *Current Anthropology*, vol. 45, no. 3 (June, 2004) 327-350.

United States. However, Nicholas and Bannister argue that such an omission does not eliminate the potential for recognizing the need to protect against exploitation of the intellectual information of sacred sites: “It can be argued that whoever owns (or controls records of) the past also owns or otherwise shapes the future of that past.”[83]

Broadacre City, I will suggest, was not only a symbolic urban plan but, more importantly, an imaginal place for Wright. It was an idealized scheme on a grand scale meant to remedy the ills of twentieth century American culture through decentralized urban planning and organic architecture. Broadacres, as we shall see, was idealistic in the sense of it being both an egalitarian and ecological utopia: a place where people could live in harmony and equality with one another due to Wright’s architecture and planning. It was a mythic urban landscape based upon one-acre plots for each private residence grounded in agrarian answers for the complexities of urban American life. Wright wanted to eliminate what he perceived as the architectural chaos and social problems of large cities and create a more harmonious existence by reconnecting people to the land. Broadacre City, for Wright, generated mythic ideas that pointed to the sacred, redemptive power of the landscape. He noted that Broadacre City would bring about “a new and higher Spiritual Order of all things and living persons.”[84] As such, Wright worked on the ideas of Broadacre City for three decades. Wright recognized its utopian roots in his 1932 book, *The Disappearing City,* which provided the reasoning and arguments in favor of Broadacre City: “These outlines of the appearing city- the disappearing city much really become the appearing city- may seem to the patient reader… another Utopia to join the many come and gone."[85]

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[83] Ibid, 331. Examples of intellectual property rights being asserted over sacred images and sites are emerging. The Snunuymuxw Nation, located in British Columbia, Canada, registered ancient petroglyphs as ‘official marks’ in order to keep them from being copied and reproduced. Their argument centered on the images being sacred and reproduction of them would be sacrilegious.

[84] Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship,* 379.

Broadacre City, as an imaginal place, was an assembly of social theories, architectural symbols, educational, and spiritual ideas. The question of who maintains control over such symbols and ideas, along with their sacred, commercial, and intellectual value, is of artistic interest. The increasingly detailed ideas of legal protection of intellectual property are far more defined today than in Wright's time. Wright, for example, never attempted to acquire a federal trademark for the 'red square' as a symbol of his architectural practice and in a theoretical sense a symbol of himself. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, however, is keenly aware of the intellectual property value of the red square and all elements of Wright's work. A 2005 reprint of *An Autobiography* clearly pointed out, "The solid red square, and red square with lines, as they appear in this book, are federally registered trademarks belonging to the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona."[86] The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation aggressively protects its intellectual property rights, owning federally registered trademarks not only for Wright's name but even his signature, voice, and almost all conceivable artistic and representational associations with him in any manner.[87] Wright lived in an era in which intellectual property rights were not as defined as today, yet he still recognized the associative power and value of symbols and color.

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[85] Wright, "The Disappearing City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* 3:110.

[86] Wright, *An Autobiography.*

[87] From the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation: "The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation ('FLLWF') owns federally registered trademarks for the name Frank Lloyd Wright and Taliesin; numerous other registered and unregistered trademarks; numerous copyrighted materials, including but not limited to original designs of Frank Lloyd Wright; and all rights of publicity associated with the name, likeness, voice, signature and visual representation of Frank Lloyd Wright ('FLLWF Property'). FLLWF reserves all rights in FLLWF Property."

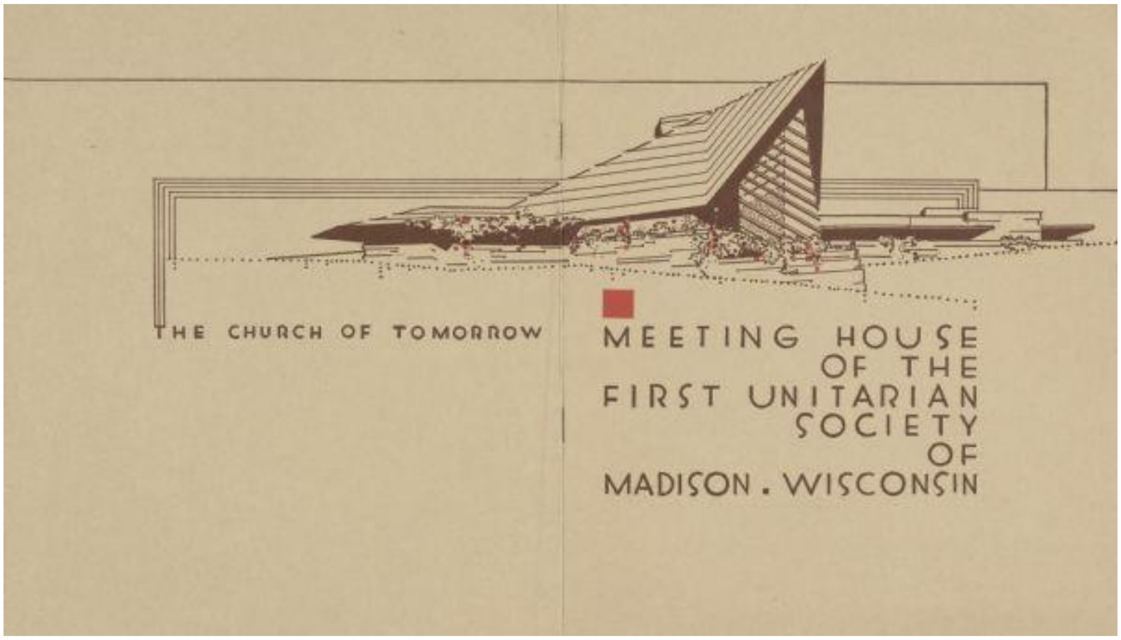
THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW
MEETING HOUSE OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF MADISON . WISCONSIN

Figure 14. Wright used the red square on architectural plans and, in this case, a dedicatory brochure. He also 'signed' completed houses by installing an initialed, ceramic red square (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1951).

The first symbol Wright used to sign his architectural drawings when he was forced to leave his job with the prestigious architectural firm Adler and Sullivan in 1893 was a red square containing both a circle and a cross. Wright, as is widely recounted in biographies, was dismissed by his mentor Louis Sullivan for 'bootlegging' residential designs on his own time. Strapped for cash, Wright had been moonlighting by creating residential designs for his own Oak Park, Illinois clients. Moonlighting was prohibited by Adler and Sullivan, so once discovered Sullivan promptly fired Wright, and their relationship was severed until 1919.[88] By the time the two men renewed their friendship, Sullivan was in a rapid state of mental and physical decline and was living in the shadow of his former life. Wright noted, "But by now the lieber-meister (Sullivan) was actually far gone- finally impaired, yet- much by himself. He had increasingly sought refuge from loneliness, frustration, and the petty betrayals of the professional life he detested."[89]

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[88] See Brendan Gill, *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 97-101.

Eugena Victoria Ellis investigated the possible connection between Wright's use of the red square and the spiritualist movement of Theosophy. Ellis noted that Theosophical beliefs gained influence in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America due to advances in science. For example, the discovery and rise in the use of electricity, as an invisible yet real force, encouraged the investigation of spiritual energy forces among occultists. Theosophy as an esoteric philosophy, or 'Ancient Wisdom,' blends spiritual and scientific ideas in an effort to reveal universal principles of the divine. It seeks to unlock the mysteries of the origins of humanity and the cosmos through spirituality and individual enlightenment.

Ellis has offered parallels between Wright's ideas and Theosophy. She insists that Wright was prepared "consciously or not" to accept Theosophic ideas due to his exposure of Transcendentalism and Eastern spirituality from his own parents.[90] Wright's father studied Sanskrit and was familiar with Vedic chants. Ellis suggested that Wright's first use of the red square in 1898 was actually a symbol for divine creation. He also used this same form of the red square in the final six photogravure images presented in *The House Beautiful*. A red rectangular outline surrounds each image which leads to the red square in the bottom left corner. Ellis correlated Wright's use of this central cross and circle within the square to the 'circle of orientation' used by ancient cultures in the alignment of temples with the cardinal directions. Ellis also connected Wright's red square with the writings of Theosophical philosopher Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) who understood the cross inscribed in a perfect square as an important geometric representation involving the divine. Blavatsky believed that the universe was guided by a principle of interiority in which every exterior motion, whether cosmic or human, was guided first by an interior event or feeling. This metaphysical principle of interiority, Ellis concluded, along with the Theosophical emphasis of spirit over matter, were the same principles that guided Wright in his understanding of the interior and spiritual forces of architecture.[91]

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[89] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy,* 84-94.
[90] Eugene Victoria Ellis, "The Red Square: Frank Lloyd Wright, Theosophy, and Modern Conception of Space," *Theosophical History,* 15:2 (April, 2011): 5-24.

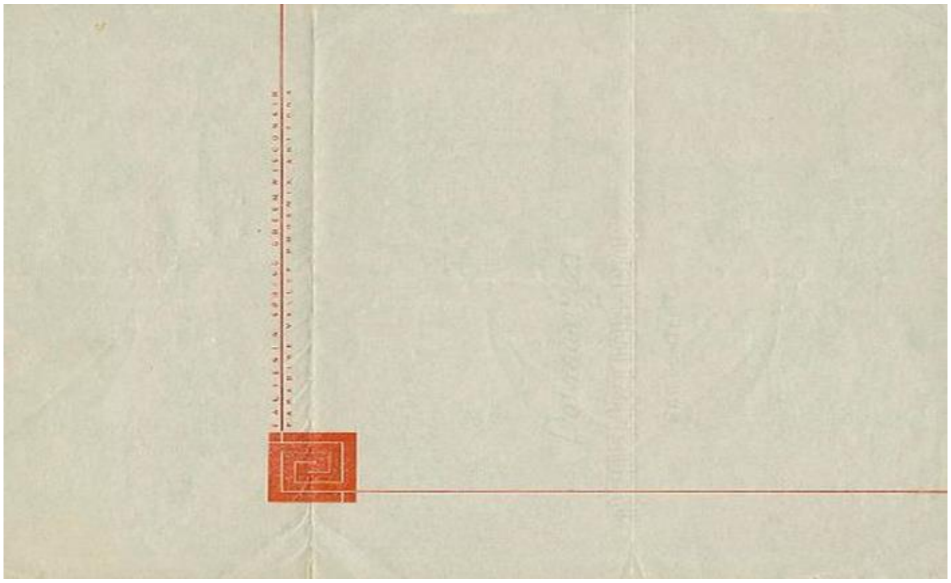
TALIESIN SPRING GREEN WISCONSIN
PARADISE VALLEY PHOENIX ARIZONA

Figure 15. Taliesin stationery featuring the red square with inscribed lines. It reads, "Taliesin Spring Green Wisconsin - Paradise Valley Phoenix Arizona (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1953).

Ellis, along with Friedland and Zellman, noted that Wright was exposed to Theosophical philosophy throughout his architectural career which provided a diffused influence on his own worldview. Blavatsky's writings, Friedland and Zellman pointed out, were extremely popular when Wright was a young architect in Chicago and, years later, small group discussions at Taliesin frequently centered on her ideas.[92] Ellis did not produce evidence that Wright incorporated much Theosophy into his writings. I would suggest, instead, that any Theosophic influence was a background note to his stronger inclination toward Unitarian and Transcendental philosophies which emphasized a relationship between the divine and nature such as this brief point made in his discussion of Broadacre City, "True Wisdom is no earthly thing. Wisdom is a spiritual state attained by refraining from selfish competition, imitation, or moralizing. And, most of all, by living in love and harmony with Nature."[93] Wright most closely and consistently identified himself with Unitarian ideas rather than Theosophy. However, the esoteric qualities of Wright's belief system were primarily focused on how Unitarianism informed an enlightened understanding of the role of architecture as a guide to experiencing the divine. Such an emphasis created what is best considered a unique form of mystic-Unitarianism and Wright understood himself as being the authoritative guide in interpreting its intertwining of spiritual and architectural principles.

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[91] Ibid., 20-24.

[92] Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 378-383.

Throughout his career, however, Wright would work with dedicated Theosophists including client Susan Lawrence Dana (1862-1946) and Dutch architect Hendricus Theodorous Wijdeveld (1885-1987). Perhaps the most famous relationship with a Theosophist came through Wright's design and construction of the Guggenheim Museum. A member of the Theosophical Society since her youth, Baroness Hilla von Rebay (1890-1967) was an accomplished abstract artist who guided purchases of avant-garde art for Solomon R. Guggenheim. Rebay was Guggenheim's confidant and played a key role in shaping concepts for a museum to house his collection in New York City. It was Rebay who selected Wright to design the museum and worked closely with him, not always happily, to influence the project during Guggenheim's life. Rebay, as a Theosophist, believed that art held the potential to connect viewers to God. While Wright never discussed the red square using such Theosophic language, he did recognize its naturalistic, symbolic significance: "Always he [Wright] was the one who knew where the tall, red lilies could be found afloat on tall meadow grass. [T]he spot of red made by a lily on the green always gave him an emotion. Later, the red square as spot of flame-red became the crest with which he signed his drawings and marked his buildings."[94]

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[93] Frank Lloyd Wright, "An Autobiography, Book Six: Broadacre City," *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, vol. 4: 1939-1949 (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 245.

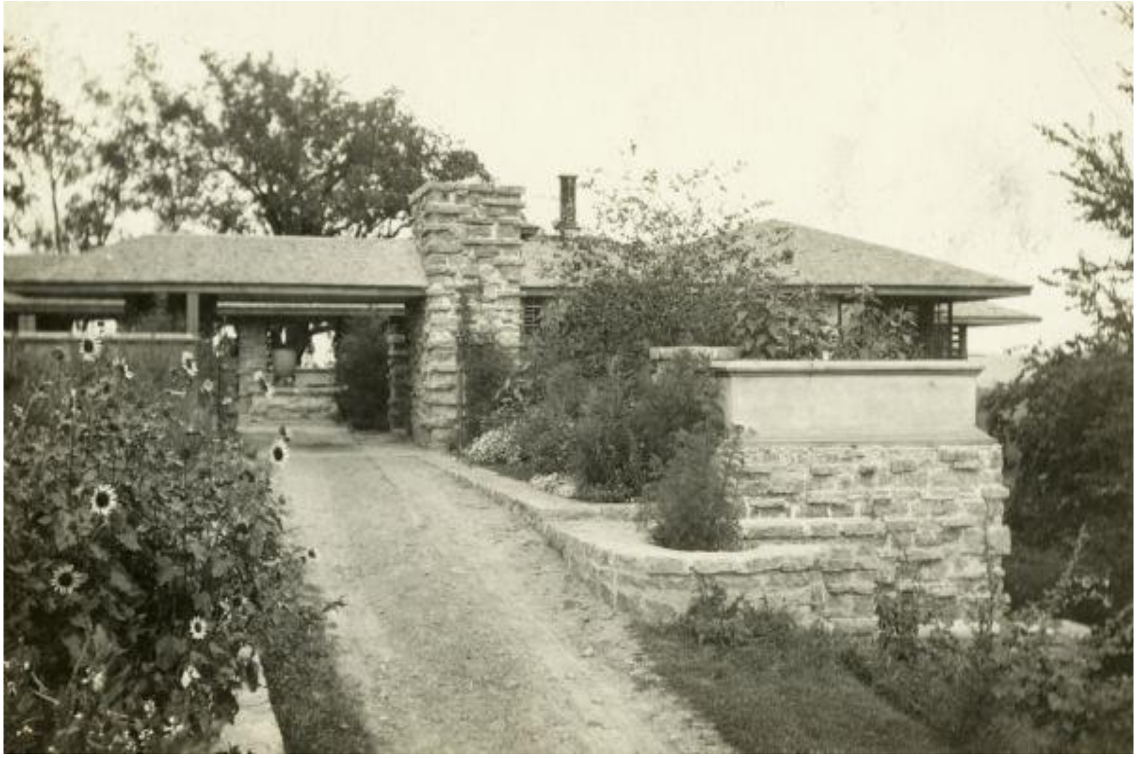

Figure 16. Wright's Taliesin I design was a radical departure from conventions in American residential architecture at the beginning of the twentieth century (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1912).

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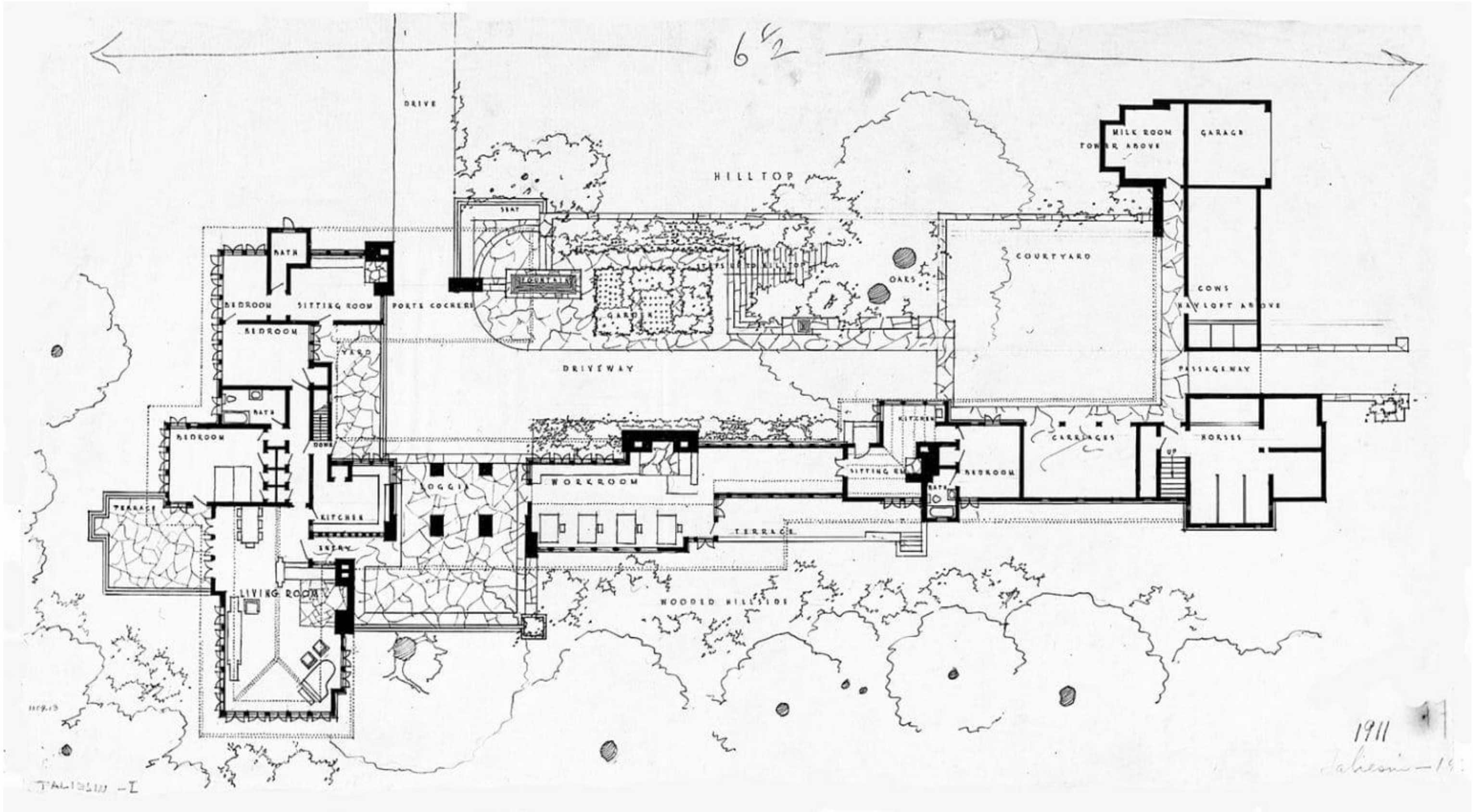
[94] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 42.

CHAPTER TWO

Hierotopic Residential Architecture:

Sacred Landscapes, the Valley, and Taliesin I

Only two architectural drawings exist in the Taliesin archives to document Frank Lloyd Wright's earliest design for the home he planned to build in his ancestral valley in Wisconsin. The original blueprint was covertly disguised as a home for his mother, Anna. However, it was in fact a needed retreat for Wright and his mistress, Mamah Borthwick Cheney (1869-1914), following their return from Europe to the United States in the autumn of 1910.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DRIVE
HILLTOP
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GARAGE
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PASSAGEWAY
BATH
BEDROOM
SITTING ROOM
PORTE COCHERE
BEDROOM
YARD
DRIVEWAY
BATH
BEDROOM
DOWN
LOGGIA
WORKROOM
KITCHEN
SITTING RM
BEDROOM
BATH
CARRIAGES
UP
HORSES
TERRACE
KITCHEN
SERRY
TERRACE
LIVING ROOM
WOODED HILLSIDE
TALIESIN – I
1911
Taliesin – 1

Figure 17. Floor plan of Taliesin I dated 1911. The residential wing is at the far left and the agricultural spaces (hayloft, stables, and milk house) are to the far right. The long, central axis which connected the two was given to a loggia, Wright's studio, and workshop spaces (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1911).

The earliest drawing, dated April, 1911, was a floor plan labeled, "Cottage for Mrs. Anna Lloyd Wright Wisconsin." The second existing drawing was a cross-section which detailed components such as the floor joist, windows, and rafter design. By June, 1911, however, Wright's revised plans omitted his mother's name and were expressive of the symbiotic relationship with the land envisioned for the home he named Taliesin. While details of the first Taliesin are limited due to a devastating fire in 1914, the few extant architectural plans and photographs provide clues as to Wright's vision for his hope of restarting both his personal life and architectural practice following his scandalous affair with Borthwick.[1]

Wright carried over many themes from his earlier Prairie School concepts and integrated them into a personal expression of unity between the land, design, and building materials. A discussion of Taliesin is complicated by the pattern of construction and destruction due to major fires in both 1914 and 1925. Each loss resulted in a reshaping of Taliesin using the remnant of what remained. Thankfully, a general description of the first version of Taliesin, begun in 1911, was documented by Wright in *An Autobiography*. It was also captured on film by Wright's draftsman, Taylor Woolley, who preserved some of the earliest images of the structure.[2]

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[1] It is quite surprising that no scholar has yet undertaken a detailed chronology of the architectural evolution of Taliesin from its beginning in April, 1911 to the present. Such a history would need to account for each alteration of the structure following major fires in 1911 and 1925 along with Wright's penchant for continual change during his lifetime. Success and failures in restoration efforts following Wright's death would also have to be taken into consideration.

[2] Taylor Woolley (1884-1965) was a draftsman for Wright who not only worked in his Oak Park studio, but traveled to Italy in 1909 to assist in the preparation of drawings for the *Wasmouth Portfolio*. His close association with Wright at this time also included work on Taliesin which he documented though film.

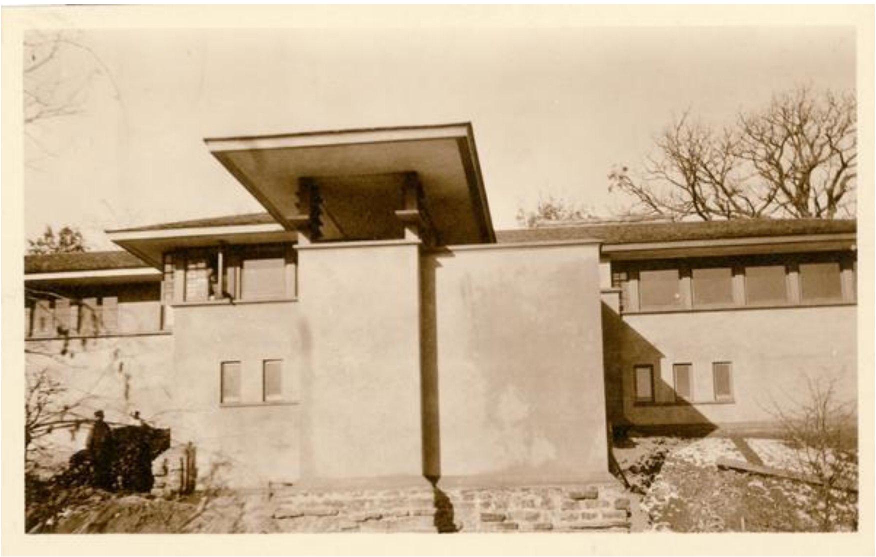

Figure 18. A Taylor Woolley photograph of Taliesin I. Woolley, a draftsman for Wright, created an important photographic record of Taliesin I (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Taylor Wooley, ca. 1911).

This chapter will explore how Wright interpreted Taliesin I as sacred space through the influences of his maternal family's fervent Welsh Unitarianism and their associations of nature as the embodiment of the divine. The Wisconsin valley which Wright's family inhabited will be examined as a source of narrative identity for his concept of organic architecture which included his ideas of the sacred and methodology of design. Taliesin I will then be shown to hold hierotopic meaning through Wright's interpretation of spirituality and design, use of materials, integration with nature, and memorialization.

Wright, from the beginning, envisioned Taliesin as a multi-faceted project rather than simply a single-family dwelling. It was a laboratory that incorporated his architectural practice, a constant collection of working carpenters and craftsmen, farm animals and tools, and his family in whatever form that might take, "Taliesin was to be a complete living unit genuine in point of comfort and beauty, yes, from pig to proprietor."[3] The meaning of family was complex for Wright given his shattered marriage and six children who lived with their mother in Oak Park, Illinois; his live-in mistress and her two children who resided in Chicago with their father; and the moral conventions of the day. The residential wing, therefore, included three bedrooms, a dominant living with dining area, kitchen, two bathrooms, a sitting room, and two walk-out terraces. Taliesin, however, was far from a fixed, static image which could never be reworked. Indeed, Wright continually introduced changes to the structure throughout his entire life as his personal circumstances and thinking evolved.

At the base of the original 1911 design was rough-hewn, yellow limestone which was quarried only a mile away. Wright wanted local materials that would provide the imagery of Taliesin growing naturally from the prominent hill he selected among the 200 hundred acre parcel that was purchased, "Taliesin was to be an abstract combination of stone and wood as they naturally met in the aspect of the hills around about."[4] Limestone provided not only the foundation for wall construction but was also a repeated motif in the massive chimneys which formidably pierced the low rooflines. Wright was intentional that the limestone be laid in long, thin lines to echo the pattern of the rock as it was found in its natural state. He used sand from the nearby Wisconsin River to help create the plastered surface of the exterior walls which were colored a rich, natural tan. The long stretches of roof surface were covered in handmade shake shingles that weathered in a natural silver-grey to resemble the bark in surrounding trees.

Wright referred to the term 'strata' in his description of the materials of Taliesin.[5] However, strata is also a useful motif for interpreting his work as the structure not only had visual layers of varied materials, but also multiple layers of meaning which built upon one another over time. This multi-dimensional meaning, which involved sacred space and landscape as the metaphoric Garden of Eden, will be explored to provide a comprehensive understanding of what the concept "Taliesin" actually meant to Wright as he noted, "There must be some kind of house that would belong to that hill, as tree and the ledges of rock did; as Grandfather and Mother had belonged to it in their sense of it all."[6] My interest is in how Wright conceived Taliesin I to be a radical statement on creating a seamless harmony between architecture and the sacrality of nature. Along with the floorplan the photographic images from Taliesin I which allow examination of his belief system expressed through its materials, design, and surrounding landscape.

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[3] Wright, *Autobiograph*y, 171.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 170-171.

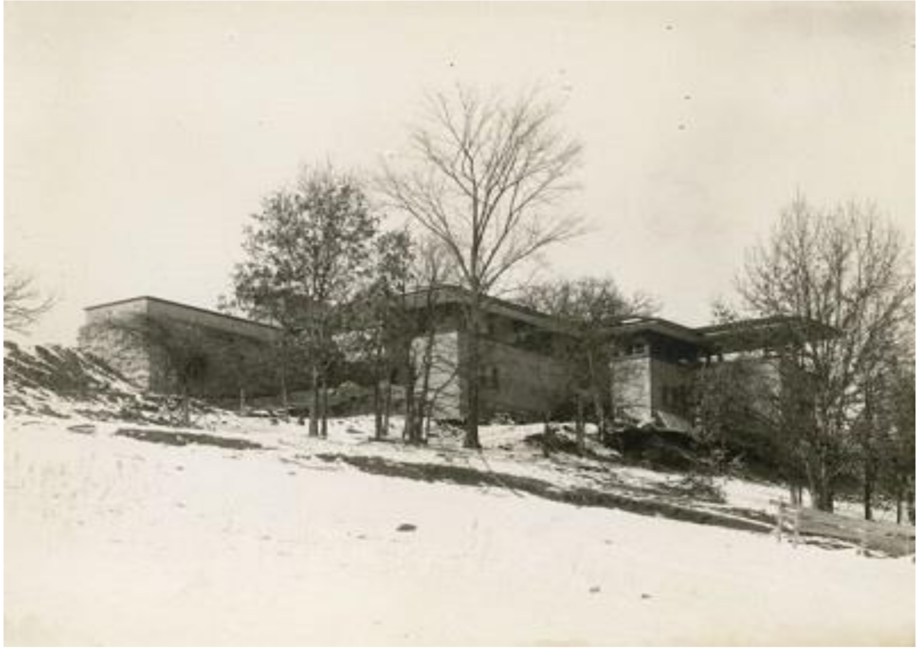

Figure 19. Wright understood Taliesin as naturally belonging in the Valley in the same manner as an outcropping of limestone or grove of trees. He also interpreted this in a familial sense as his own ancestors had "belonged" in the Valley (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Henry Fuermann and Sons, ca. 1911).

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[6] Ibid., 168.

The Ancestral Valley

Frank Lloyd Wright's younger sister, Maginel Wright Barney (1881-1966), recorded not only Lloyd Jones family history and the influence of the land in her 1965 book, *The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses*.[7] Barney began her work with a recollection of a visit with her brother and Olgivanna in the 1950's at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Wright, at the time, kept an apartment at the Plaza Hotel as part of his ongoing responsibilities for design and construction of the Guggenheim Museum. Discussion after dinner first centered on architecture but eventually shifted to a fond recollection of childhood memories between brother and sister. Their conversation centered on the importance of the Wisconsin valley where their maternal grandparents settled in the 1840's. Wright, in reflecting on the significance of their childhood experiences summarized succinctly, "the Valley taught me everything."

The "Valley" for Wright was a blend of the nineteenth century, rural American experience and mythic legend rooted in the bardic tradition which his ancestors brought with them from Wales. Wright drew substantially from his experiences in the Valley as a wellspring for his transcendental vision of architecture. All architecture, in a Wrightian sense, emerged from the Valley. It was a sacred landscape for Wright and a symbol of the genesis or beginning of all things.

It is necessary to appreciate the Valley as forming the foundation for Wright's concept of architecture. Menocal, in his work "Frank Lloyd Wright's Concept of Democracy: An American Architectural Jeremiad" defined the difference between a metaphysical, "perpetually stable" concept of architecture and the ongoing physical manifestations of a particular conception of architecture. He proposed that a concept is an elemental idea which provides the cognitive framework for the tangible, physical expressions which eventually result from the influences of the idea.[8] In this case, the Valley provided a sacred geography for Wright and the primary concept for his interpretation of the ultimate aims of architecture and expressions of form. Wright summarized his feeling of having an existential oneness with the Valley, "I still feel myself as much a part of it as the trees and birds and bees are."[9] In order to appreciate how the Valley would gain such prominence in Wright's worldview one must understand the history of the Lloyd Jones clan.

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[7] Maginel Wright Barney, *The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1965).

Wright's Welsh family heritage provided a lifelong reference point which significantly influenced his interpretation of the world, writings, and architecture. He synthesized his Welsh grandfather's motto of "Truth Against the World" as his own declaration for leading a life independent of conventional norms. Scott Gartner, in his 1992 article, "The Shining Brow: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Welsh Bardic Tradition," noted that the family motto and its visual symbol, /|\, had sacred associations. The symbol, Gartner pointed out, was the most sacred image in the Welsh bardic tradition portrayed by Edward Williams (1746-1826) as it represented the secret name of God and divine guidance.[10] Richard Lloyd Jones, Wright's grandfather, believed it to be an ancient druid symbol and had it carved on the door frames and mantels in their home.

Williams was a Welsh antiquarian, stone mason, and poet who was influential in correlating Welsh history with mythic ideas of the ancient druids. More widely known by his bardic name lolo Morganwg, Williams was a prominent founder of Unitarianism in Wales and a contemporary of Jones. Unfortunately, Williams was also a literary forger who created manuscripts to support his claims of the historic lineage of Welsh culture from the mystic traditions of the ancient druids. He evidently fabricated a mythological history and "contrived to have [it] accepted as authentic Welsh tradition. [l]olo called his druidic doctrines 'bardism' and insisted that the secret beliefs of the true bardic order of Wales were identical with what had been known in antiquity as druidism."[11] The motto and symbol of 'Truth Against the World' was selected by Williams to represent this bardic Welsh culture and he named his son Taliesin after the early medieval bard.[12]

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[8] Narciso Menocal, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Concept of Democracy: An American Architectural Jeremiad," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: In The Realm of Ideas*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Norland (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988): 149-164.

[9] See Jonathan Lipman and Neil Levine, *The Wright State: Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin*, Milwaukee Art Museum (1992): 11.

[10] Scott Gartner, "The Shining Brow: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Welsh Bardic Tradition," in *Wright Studies Volume One: Taliesin 1911-1914*, ed. Narciso Menocal (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992): 28-43.

A romantic mythology emerged in Wales that medieval Welsh bards carried forward which addressed both the religious and cultural role of the druids. This folklore evolved to interpret the druid cosmogony as highly compatible with Christianity. Also significant for the Lloyd Jones clan, and Wright, was the deification of nature. Gartner summarized the nature-based religion of the druids which "was asserted to have been an enlightened pantheism: all nature was the embodiment of the Deity and, therefore, sacred."[13]

This druidic association between nature and the divine is essential for understanding the worldview of the Lloyd Jones family as nineteenth century immigrants to America. Richard and Mary Lloyd Jones carried with them a deep reverence for this bardic culture and found in Wisconsin a landscape that mimicked the land they considered sacred in Wales. The rolling Wisconsin hills surrounding the “Valley of the Clan,” as they called it, were appropriately given Welsh names. Barney recalled that her grandparents were faithful to attend the Eisteddfod Festival each year while they lived in Wales. She recorded the deep social and emotive ties her family had to druidic themes, “The eisteddfod, a ritual of oratory music, had its origin in the time of the Druids. Music, clan ritual, the chants that echoed of the common ancient past, were of deep emotional value to all of them. They sang their songs and intoned their chants with passion. And they wept.”[14] The mystic past was also preserved through storytelling, “She [Mary] filled their ears with the fairy tales and lore of Wales, and they were spellbound. More and more their solidarity grew; their clannishness.”

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[11] Ibid., 30-31. Gartner proposed that Williams and Richard Lloyd Jones likely knew one another given their Unitarian affiliations in Wales.

[12] In medieval Gaelic culture a bard, such as Taliesin, preserved oral history and created both eulogies and satiric compositions on behalf of their patrons. The *Book of Taliesin*, written by a single individual in the first half of the fourteenth century, is a collection of fifty-six poems which preserved some of the oldest known Welsh poems, many of which are credibly attributed to Taliesin from the late sixth century.

[13] Gartner, "The Shining Brow," 30. In one of the few historical references to the druids, Pliny the Elder made note of their veneration of oak trees and mistletoes and their mystic rituals in sacred oak groves.

Wright hinted at his familiarity with such mystic themes in his discussion of how rhythms of manual labor, combined with music, were the foundations for sacred dance, “The body in performing heavy labors for hour after hour can get into a swinging rhythm with music to accompany it, rhythm to be whistled or sung aloud or kept in the mind. Folk dances originate in this way, no doubt. Sacred dances no less.”[15] Thus, a correlation for Wright between the land and the sacred flowed from such Lloyd Jones themes that emerged from their belief in a mythic Welsh past. In turn, according to Menocal, Wright created archetypal ideas about his maternal ancestry which coalesced into a living “canonical myth” which portrayed the men in a patriarchal, quasi-biblical fashion as giants who “shaped the valley into their own image” while the women “spread to the young a gospel of symbiosis with the land.”[16]

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[14] Barney, *Valley*, 25-26, 51.

[15] Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2005): 40.

[16] Menocal, “An American Jeremiad,” 155-156. Wright would remember, “His grandson [Wright] would see the stalwart figure, legs straight up in stirrups, of this spiritual brother of Isaiah, his dreaded, beloved

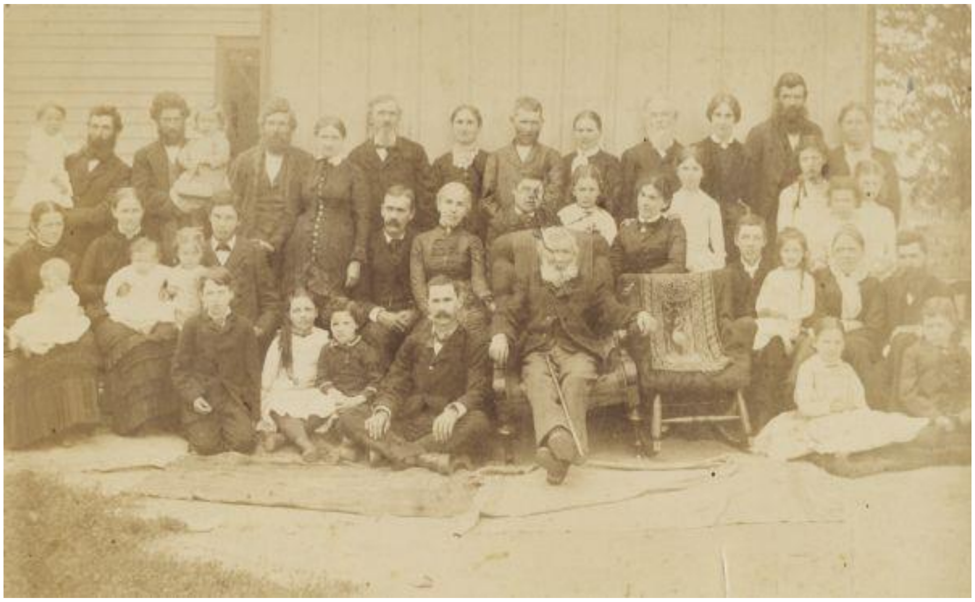

Figure 20. The "God-Almighty Joneses" as noted by Wright's sister, Maginel, in an 1883 picture. The patriarchal, Welsh clan shaped Wright's sense of individuality, theology, and deep affection for nature. The white bearded man sitting next to the empty rocking chair was Wright's grandfather, Richard Lloyd Jones. A vacant chair was in memory of his wife, Mary. Wright is located next to the empty chair holding his younger sister, Maginel (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1883).

It was this Welsh cultural milieu which permeated the entire Lloyd Jones clan and ultimately shaped successive generations, including Wright. Barney captured this worldview, "The Valley was everything to [Uncle James], and it was he who indoctrinated Frank with the same passion, which lasted all his life."[17] Their worldview was open to a mystic reverence of nature which transformed the rolling, wooded hills of southern Wisconsin into a sacred geography. This interpretation of the land was influenced by their own associations with the Welsh bardic tradition and mythic ideas of sacrality. The supposed nature-based worship of the ancient druids celebrated by Williams and the annual Welsh eisteddfods provided the cultural impetus which, when brought to America, allowed the clan to cleave to the Valley as a sacred entity. It

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Welsh Grandfather, white-bearded and hoary-headed, sitting up straight upon his horse, Timothy, like a Patriarch; stick with shepherd's-crook hung over the left forearm, the Bible of his faith firm against his side." See Wright, *An Autobiography*, 7.

[17] Barney, *Valley*, 108.

symbolized both the divine and a concept of ‘homeland’ as Wright pointed out that the Welsh definition of a genius was “a man who can see nature; a man who has a heart for nature (that is, who loves nature), and a man who had the courage to follow nature.”[18] The Valley, therefore, became simultaneously a mythic symbol of the ethical goodness of the land (spiritual) and the power of the Welsh clan (archetypal) as Barney reflected on these two elements which fostered a sacred geography. She noted that the landscape of the Valley had an eternal quality which captured her imagination along with the archetypal images of the clan, “Tall, wise, protective, they seemed almost as immortal and invincible as the gods.”[19]

Wright alluded to this interwoven circle of the land, sacrality, and archetypal family images in his reflections on Sunday chapel services with the Lloyd Jones clan who constructed their own chapel in the Valley. The brown, shingle style structure called Unity Chapel was designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee (1848-1913) with a young Wright assisting with details of the interior. The Lloyd-Jones chapel was completed in 1886 and became a Sunday meeting place for the clan, hired hands, and neighbors with many fond memories as Wright insightfully pointed out, “This family chapel was the simple, shingled wooden temple in which the valley-clan worshipped images it had lovingly created. In turn the images reacted upon the family in their own image.”[20] I suggest this circle of ‘worshiped images’ included the notion of the sacred landscape of the Valley as a representation of the Garden of Eden. Wright noted that as a boy it was frequently his responsibility to decorate the pulpit for Sunday worship at Unity Chapel. Reflecting the spiritual meaning the Lloyd Jones clan placed upon nature he would pile a wagon full of flowers and tree branches which would metaphorically bring the Valley *into* worship. Toward the end of his life, Wright addressed the ways in which nature worship provided enlightenment and a call for individual authenticity. Wright, throughout his life, was not hesitant to connect spiritual ideas and nature as he tied his reflection to the teaching of Christ as "the prophecy by the ideal Man, 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' By Nature-worship, by way of revelation of your own nature alone, can your God be reached."[21]

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[18] Transcript of voice recordings made of Wright in 1956, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 173,4 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture, Nature, and the Human Spirit: A Collection of Quotations*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2011): 30.

[19] Barney, *Valley*, 107. Barney reminisced, “The Valley is a landscape in my memory forever, various, changing with the weather and seasons, magnificently peopled with the grownups in our family: the Lloyd-Joneses.”

[20] Wright, *Autobiography*, 29.

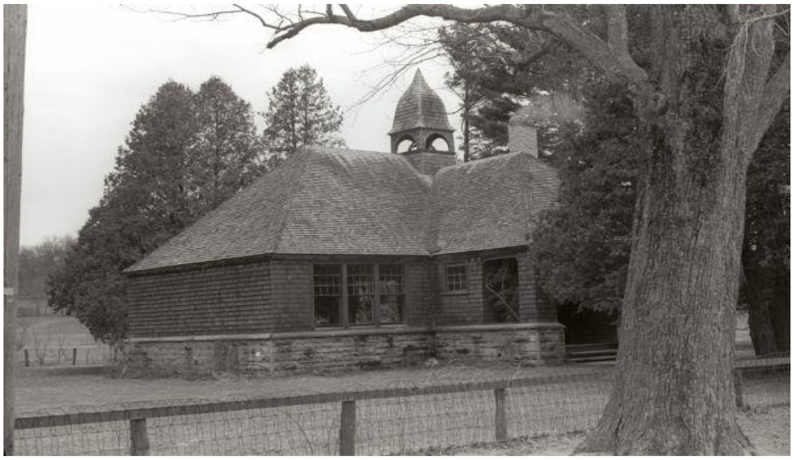

Figure 21. Unity Chapel was designed by Joseph Silsbee as the private chapel for the Lloyd Jones clan. It was built in 1886 and included a family cemetery (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, John Prindle, 1959).

This Lloyd Jones worldview was consistent with Lidov's concept of the 'image-paradigm.' As Lidov noted, an image-paradigm binds intellectual, emotional, and spiritual concepts into a cohesive symbol of a more significant and dominant concept. In this case, the image of the Valley provided a physical and mystical symbol representing the paradigm of physical and spiritual harmony (perfection) in the Garden of Eden. Religious historian David Jasper noted that a sacred landscape is both a physical place and a spiritual condition capable of deconstructing categories of history and place which creates a sense of place that has meaning beyond its physical attributes. Danica Popovic concurred that landscapes which are invested with sacred attributes are "charged with energy and pervaded with an aura of spirituality, [e]nabling human beings to establish the essential vertical: ascent towards the transcendent and descent into the depths of their souls."[22] Similar to the emotive aspects of monastic deserts, the Valley was a representation of the harmony and unlimited potential in the Garden of Eden for the Lloyd Jones clan and Wright who noted this mythic understanding of the land, "From sunrise to sunset there can be nothing so surpassingly beautiful in any cultivated garden as in these wild Wisconsin pastures."[23] Raw, untouched nature held the truest form of beauty and harmony. Writing in the third person about himself, Wright continued this theme of nature as divine creation which he equated as interaction with a text, "his spirit was now becoming familiar with this marvelous book-of-books, Experience, the only true reading, the book of Creation." The capital 'C' Wright placed on creation bound it to the mythic origin of time, place, and perfection in the Garden of Eden.

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[21] Frank Lloyd Wright, *A Testament* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957): 177.

An imaginal place, as Schneekloth noted, generates the necessary and even archetypal representations that help frame our understanding of certain personal, mythic, and religious ideas. Schneekloth argued that the American frontier was an imaginal place in the minds of immigrants over the course of four centuries. The harshness of the frontier often had little in common with the romantic notions captured by those not actually living there. The imaginal place of the frontier was created through idyllic and romanticized portrayals in both art and literature.[24] In a similar fashion, the Lloyd Jones interpretation of the Valley as an imaginal place was deeply informed by the Transcendentalist movement. Wright noted the influence of transcendentalism on the Lloyd Jones clan in his comments on his family's return to Wisconsin in 1878 following his father's rather unsuccessful efforts to eke out a living as a Unitarian pastor near Boston, "Now came back to the ancestral Valley from the East, by way of Sister Anna and her 'preacher,' the 'Unitarianism' worked out in the transcendentalism of the sentimental group at Concord."[25] Unitarianism was a family staple, particularly in his maternal history with the Lloyd Joneses and Wright recognized it as being heavily influenced by their Welsh ancestry as he continued, "The Unitarianism of the Lloyd-Joneses [w]as an attempt to amplify [t]he idea of life as a gift from the Divine Source, one GOD omnipotent, all things at one with HIM." This unity, of course, involved the intermingled relationships between nature, humans, and the divine.

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[22] Danica Popovic, "Iconic and Performative in Sacred Landscape: The Cave Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Ras and its Imagery" in *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 30-37. Also See David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Literature, Art, and* Culture (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): 47.

[23] Wright, *Autobiography*, 25-26. An image helpful in understanding the symbolism of the Valley may be found in Edward Hicks' (1780-1849) circa 1833 painting *Peaceable Kingdom* which symbolized perfect harmony between nature, animals, and human relationships promised in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah. The image represented in this early American work is of an eschatological new age that restored what was lost in the Garden of Eden.

Emerson, as the leading thinker among the loosely knit New England Transcendentalists, elevated nature as an expression of the divine. In Chapter VII of his essay "Nature" he noted the intimate relationship between the created world and religion, "Therefore is Nature ever the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source."[26] The landscape, therefore, played a critical role in Emerson's ideas on knowing the divine. Nature conspired with the spiritual life to provide the essential understanding that God is both cosmic and available to all. Nature, Emerson believed, was a manifestation of the spiritual world, or the creator's mind, and provided a one-to-one correspondence between natural and spiritual laws. Nature, therefore, allowed humanity to comprehend both God and the divine laws of the universe. Human constructs, such as architecture and language, were designed to also reflect the laws of nature and God. Key to understanding Emerson's view of the relationship of nature, the spirit, and divine was the concept of the 'Oversoul' which emphasized the essential oneness of humanity and the divine. Emerson continued, "And no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, divine himself."

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[24] Lynda H. Schneekloth, "The Frontier Is Our Home," *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996): 210-225. A parallel is also made by Schneekloth between the imaginal place of the historic frontier and the contemporary city. The mythic urban landscape, she argued, is to a large extent an imagined entity created by media representations.

[25] Wright, *Autobiography*, 16-17.

Wright expressed harmony with Emerson's ideas on the possibility of oneness with the divine and echoed the idea of the Oversoul in a discussion from 1952, "Your soul is you and that soul produces what is called your spirit. [T]he soul is the essence of you, the essential you."[27] By 1958 Wright had tied his metaphysical concept of the soul to conscience, "A man's conscience is really the mainspring of what he, with some reason, might call his soul."[28] Emerson was held in the highest esteem by Wright who believed he was the 'finest mind' America had ever produced. He also encouraged a devoted, daily reading of Emerson's work. Most importantly, Wright followed a natural morality espoused by Emerson and expressed harmony with his ideas on the possibility of oneness with the divine through nature. It is necessary to appreciate that Wright understood himself not simply as an architect but as a spiritual guide who understood nature as the pathway for entering into divine oneness.[29]

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[26] *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 2000): 21-29.

[27] Transcript of voice recordings made of Wright in 1952, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 47, 20 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 35.

[28] Transcript of voice recordings made of Wright in 1958, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 25,5 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,* 37.

Transcendentalism provided a foundational spiritual and aesthetic influence for Wright throughout his entire life. Nature and God were interwoven entities to Wright, "I feel when I use the word 'Nature,' that nature is all the body of God has by which we become aware of Him, understand His processes, and justify the capital we put on the word God."[30] The critical importance of the sacred landscape of his family's Wisconsin farmland for Wright lay in his transmission of the image-paradigm of the Valley as the idyllic Garden of Eden to architecture. The co-mingling of ideas led him to understand the Valley as the very beginning point of all architecture. It became his 'awakening' and therefore, the genesis of how architecture, and not just religious architecture, could play a sacred role in the world. Wright noted this revelation, "And the trees stood in it all [the Valley] like various beautiful buildings, of more different kinds than *all the architectures of the world*. Some day this boy was to learn that the secret of *all styles of architecture* was the same secret that gave character to the trees [italics mine]."[31]

What Wright Learned from the Valley

The Valley, as a sacred geography, first had a profound influence on the development of Wright's personal theology. The Valley prompted Wright to fully explore the relationships he perceived between nature and the divine as he noted in his 1949 book, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, "The laws of God are to be read in the laws of Nature."[32] This relationship was brought to life through Wright's personal experiences within nature and the image-paradigm of the Valley. He discussed these revelations in his autobiographical reflections through which he grappled with the presence of the divine on earth, "Might it not be then before all, that this very grass and these flowers, too, are in truth themselves the very word of God."[33] The Valley ultimately helped shape a theology for Wright which saturated his architectural vision. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer noted that while Wright did not have especially fond views of organized religion he was, "was basically a deeply religious person."[34] A significant element of this theological worldview was a belief in the intimate relationship between the land and the human soul, a term he used frequently in his writings. Wright, as an architect, contemplated the meaning of theological terms as noted in his definition of spirit, "Your spirit is the temper, color, and expressiveness of your soul."[35] His desire to connect the spiritual life of people with the earth was evident in his claim that the first call of humanity was to have an intimate relationship with the land. Wright was deeply committed to interpreting the relationship between spirituality and the landscape and he characterized himself in a naturalistic manner as a native product of the tall prairie grass. He ultimately wanted to create a new 'nature culture' in America through which society would remedy the ills of urbanization and industrialization through a spiritual understanding of architecture. This transformation could be accomplished through a cultural reawakening and reconnection to the motif of the Garden of Eden Wright discovered in the Valley.

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[29] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Collected Writings, Volume 4, 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 382. Wright summarized the power he ascribed to the architect, "The complete architect… is master of the elements: earth, air, fire, light, and water. Space, motion, and gravitation are his palette; the sun his brush."

[30] Wright, "A Philosophy of Fine Art," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 1: 1894-1930*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 39.

[31] Wright, *Autobiography*, 27.

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[32] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1971): 164.
[33] Wright, *Autobiography*, 7.
[34] *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture, Nature, and the Human Spirit: A Collection of* Quotations, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2011): 11.
[35] Transcript of voice recordings made of Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 47, 20 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture, Nature,* 10.

A second key role the Valley played was to create useful metaphoric relationships between literary themes and the forces of nature. These literary bridges allowed Wright to contemplate and express moral and ethical issues throughout his life. For example, Wright adhered to the Old Testament theme of Isaiah as a prophet of natural and divine judgment. The Valley became the place where the clash of moral ideas played out in both a symbolic sense and through the very real element of personal tragedies. Not only would the Lloyd Jones clan suffer physical and financial calamities but Wright himself would experience overwhelming tragedies in the Valley ranging from murder to near financial collapse. The Valley became a sacred stage in which cycles of prosperity and despair would play themselves out. No other geography in Wright's life would contain the depth of meaning due to all he and loved ones had experienced there. Accordingly, it became a fundamental reference point and literary tool, **"**When storms swept the Valley from bank to bank of its ranges of hills, then black against a livid sky- lashing the trees, drowning the helpless small things, in the destruction that was wrought, and the wreck that followed, the boy would see Isaiah's 'Judgment.'"[36] Wright intermingled the Valley and Isaiah as literary tools for his expressing his own moral struggles as he was at times an outcast within American culture for his nonconventional view of marriage and family. The Valley, accordingly, provided a refuge which allowed Wright to grapple with the boundaries of his own morality, "And yet, according to Isaiah, were you willing to argue the matter, to reason with "Him" [y]our sins would be white as snow. Why?"

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[36] Wright, *Autobiography*, 7. Wright pointed out, "Isaiah's awful Lord smote the poor multitudes with a mighty continuous smite, never taking away the gory, dreadful hand outstretched to smite more; never satisfied with the smiting already done."

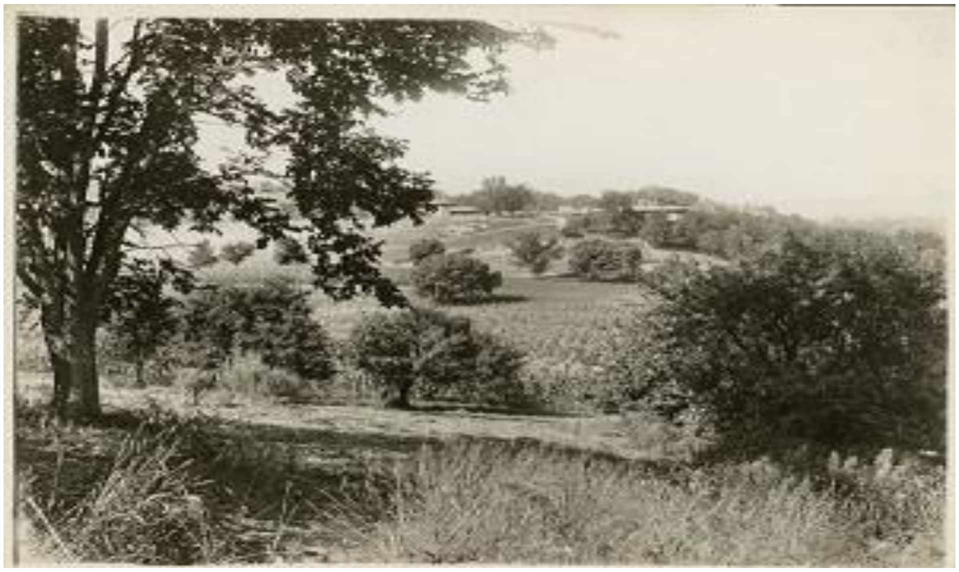

Figure 22. An early photograph of Taliesin I and the surrounding Valley. Wright's theology of nature was deeply affected by his childhood and adult experiences in his ancestral Valley (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Henry Fuermann and Sons, ca. 1912).

A third significant lesson Wright learned in the Valley was an idea that universal 'truth' was encapsulated in nature and which provided an ethic for interpreting architecture and society. Wright was careful to distinguish ethics from morality especially in examining his own life. His concept of ethics, as he saw evidenced in nature, held to the idea of an organic sense of right and wrong which were also universal truths.[37] This idea was grounded in Wright's belief that varying elements of nature held an intrinsic truth which was not transferable to other objects. This truth provided a genuineness that made a specific item in nature true only unto itself, and this honesty provided an architectural and social principle to anyone that might comprehend it, "Architecture, after all, I have learned- or before all, I should say- is no less a weaving and fabric than the trees are. And as anyone might see, a beech tree is a beech tree. It isn't trying to be an oak."[38] On a more universal scale Wright noted that this organic sense of authenticity was valid at any location in the universe, "If there is architecture in Mars or Venus, and there is, at least there is the architecture of Mars and Venus themselves- the same principles are at work there, too. Principles are universal."[39] This reference is telling in that Wright truly was attempting to uncover a cosmic ethic. He held to the transcendentalist view that divine nature was rational and therefore, the laws of nature could be analyzed for their ethical functions as Emerson stated, "This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to seem the end for which it was made."[40] True education, as a result, should be designed to open the human mind to the ethical laws of nature above an 'academic education' which disconnected humanity from nature. Architecture and art played a primary role in exposing 'the soul of the thing' in order to comprehend the ethical principles of the universe. The quest for the 'soul of the thing' would also lead to a needed simplification to locate the essential qualities of any given idea or design as Wright noted, "There resides a certain 'spell power' in any geometric form which seems more or less a mystery, and is, as we say, the soul of the thing."[41] Wright often claimed to be on a search for the spiritual qualities of form and clarified the relationship he understood between nature and ethical truth in his 1957 work, *A Testament*, "when I began to write and speak upon the subject of architecture I used the word [nature] to mean 'the interior essence of all cause and effect.' [T]ruth, this was, of any object of condition: this was to me the innate sense of origin."

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[37] Wright, Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1952, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 46, 9 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,* 69.

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[38] Wright, *Autobiography*, 168.

[39] Wright, *Two Lectures on Architecture* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1933) in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 21.

[40] *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Atkinson, 21-29.

[41] Anthony Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright The Lost Years, 1910-1922: A Study of Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): 90-91, 122.

Wright connected this sense of origin to the very essence of being.[42]

Wright connected a fourth lesson from the Valley to a call that architectural design should mimic the simplicity, or what he would eventually call 'organic simplicity,' that he found accessible in the laws of the natural world.[43] Consistent with his lifelong inclination to mix biblical references into his discussion of architecture he linked a goal of simplicity to the teaching of Christ as presented in the New Testament. He was fascinated by Christ's understanding of the simplicity of nature as a spiritual motif, "Clarity of design and perfect significance both are first essentials of the spontaneous born simplicity of the lilies of the field. 'They toil not, neither do they spin.' Jesus wrote the supreme essay on simplicity in this."[44] Not only was the principle of simplicity meant for architectural design but it was also a gateway for apprehending the creative spark in the development of an idea. It was in the moment of initial revelation that an idea held its purest form. Wright correlated this to a search for origins which was consistent with the mythic idea that the Valley provided a source for comprehending the origins of life and architecture. This search for origins provided a methodology for Wright throughout his architectural career. It would lead him to explore mythic notions of origins in both culture and geometric forms as he noted, "When you are on the track of an origin [y]ou will get back to the fact that the earlier the thing occurred, in the first simplicity of the burst forth of the idea, that was when it was most effective, most beautiful."[45] The continual search for origins led Wright to explore everything from the Midwestern prairie to Mayan architectural forms to provide solutions of simplicity in design which he defined as the abstraction of nature using geometry for expression. The Valley provided this motif for simplicity which Wright would use to provide architectural solutions for very divergent climates (ranging from the desert to woodlands) and locations (Baghdad to New York City). Finally, the idea of simplicity would provide a guide for understanding the meaning of beauty as Wright envisioned himself on a quest to discover the beautiful as inherent in a meaningful life.[46] It must be remembered, however, that Wright did not detach his architectural ideas of design and beauty from spirituality but understood them as co-mingled. Therefore, spiritual ideas could be valid sources for architectural inspiration and he warned that attempting to separate 'spirit from matter' would destroy them both. He offered this advice to his son, John, "If you seek simplicity in the spirit, you shall never fail to find beauty, though all the gods- but One- be against you."[47]

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[42] Wright, Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1959, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 231,17 as referenced *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,* 31. Wright stated, "When I say nature I do not mean the wind and the bees and the trees and the animals. I mean the nature with a capital 'N' that is the essence of life everywhere, the essence of life itself."

[43] Wright, *Autobiography*, 139.

[44] Wright, *Autobiography*, 144, 168. Wright noted, "Architecture was something in league with the stones of the field, in sympathy with 'the flower that fadeth and the grass that withered.' It had something of the prayerful consideration for the lilies of the field that was my gentle grandmother's: something natural to the great change that was America herself."

Finally, nature provided the insights into engineering principles that could be transferred to architecture. He credited the root system of trees as offering an engineering principle that would sustain everything from a windmill to skyscraper, "It was all simple enough. You see, the wooden tower was rooted as the trees are. Unless uprooted it could not fall for it would not break."[48] His observation that trees with a tap root system could withstood fierce winds was translated into engineering tall structures with a comparatively deep, vertical foundation. Appropriately, Wright referred to his designs for high-rise construction using metaphors gleaned from nature. Even though the Price Tower (1952-1956) was located in downtown Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Wright called it the "The tree that escaped the crowded forest."[49] His design for the interior columns of the Johnson Wax Building (1936-1939) mimicked the canopy of a forest with disproportionately large, circular tops supported by slender vertical trunks.[50]

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[45] Wright, Transcript of a voice recording made of Wright in 1958, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 44,14 as referenced *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,* 63.

[46] Wright, Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1952, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 241,14 as referenced *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 62. Wright pointed out, "Nothing is worth a man's time- and that means a woman's- except a search for the beautiful, and an attempt to establish it in human life."

[47] John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is On Earth* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1946): 70. Wright's writings take on a far more spiritual tone following his 1928 marriage to Olgivanna who likely encouraged the continued exploration of spirituality and architecture due to her exposure to Theosophy and the eclectic mysticism of G.I. Gurdjieff.

Wright stressed the role of the architect as an investigator of the cosmic laws presented by nature, "He [the architect] sees that all forms of Nature are interdependent and arise out of each other, according to the laws of Creation."[51] However, Wright distinguished between architecture as a form of art and engineering as science meant to master facts and materials. He attempted to observe the science of nature as a reference book for continual learning. Not only did he find engineering principles in the Valley, he also discovered new revelations in the desert. Desert cacti, in particular, inspired Wright to seek engineering ideas which would provide maximum strength with minimal materials. The saguaro inspired Wright with its vertical ribbing and the cholla cactus revealed a tubal structure with enormous strength. These natural design features were translated into the steel mesh reinforcing which provided remarkable strength in the concrete columns in the Johnson Wax Building.[52] Wright was continually looking for systems of structure contained in the design principles of nature. However, culling these principles required an intentional search beyond a simple appreciation for the beauty of nature. He described this investigation through an anecdotal illustration of passing a flower and being drawn to its color and beauty. The flower, he noted, offered many deeper structural secrets such as relationships of texture and a system of arrangement on its stalk. A keen observation of the flower would reveal patterns of structure which were contained even in the root system, "Structure- as now we may observe- proceeds from generals to particulars arriving at the blossoms, to attract us, proclaiming in its lines and form the Nature of the structure that bore it."[53]

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[48] Wright, *Autobiography*, 137.
[49] Wright, *A Testament*, 196.
[50] See Figure 36.
[51] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 17.
[52] E.T. Casey, "Structure in Organic Architecture," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: In The Realm of* Ideas, eds. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Nordland, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998): 143-147. The engineering design of the columns was so structurally sound the initial load tests held five times

The Valley and Sacred Space of Taliesin

It was Taliesin, Wright's residence begun in 1911, which provided a defining moment in Wright's career in the synthesis of the landscape of the Valley and sacred space as Menocal noted, "Frank Lloyd Wright defined a landscape through architecture for the first time in the design of Taliesin."[54] Taliesin was constructed by Wright following a tumultuous separation from his wife, Catherine (1871-1959), and their six children in 1909 due to his extra-marital relationship with Borthwick. The pair met in 1903 as Wright was viewing Japanese prints at a Chicago gallery and he was soon working on a residential design for Borthwick and her husband, Edward Cheney, who was an electrical engineer. John Lloyd Wright characterized their affair in gracious terms

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the weight needed by code.

[53] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Buildings, Plans, and Designs* (New York: Horizon Press, 1963): 2. See also Aaron Green, "Organic Architecture: The Principles of Frank Lloyd Wright," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: In The Realm of Ideas,* eds. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Nordland, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998): 133-142.

[54] Narciso Menocal, "Taliesin, the Gilmore House, and the 'Flower in the Crannied Wall,'" in *Wright Studies Volume One: Taliesin 1911-1914,* ed. Narciso G. Menocal (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992): 66.

given the scandal that unfolded, “Mamah… was a cultured, respected, and sensitive woman. Her laugh had the same quality as Dad’s, so did her love and her interest in his work. The many contacts in the designing and building of the Cheney house brought about an understanding between their hearts that made them one.”[55] Wright and Borthwick, who assumed her maiden name after divorcing, abandoned their families in September, 1909 and quickly left the United States for life in Europe where they remained for about one year. Both left behind spouses and children as they explored Europe, developed their professional lives, and challenged their own concepts of morality and marriage. Their return to America in the autumn of 1910 provided a need for a new beginning which was complicated by the fact that while Borthwick had received a divorce from her husband, Wright was still legally married to Catherine. Wright, not wanting to remain in Chicago, returned to his ‘ancestral homeland’ to construct a residence for himself and Borthwick. The name he gave to this endeavor, Taliesin, was homage to the sacred landscape of the Valley and his Welsh heritage.[56]

Wright noted the intermingled role that faith and the Valley played in his effort to recreate a new life in Wisconsin with Borthwick, “It was the same faith that characterized my forefathers from generation to generation. I suppose that faith carried them as it now carried me through the vortex of reaction, the anguish and waste of breaking up home and the loss of prestige and my work at Oak Park. Work, life, and love I transferred to the beloved ancestral Valley.”[57] Taliesin would become for Wright not only a needed residence but, more importantly, a mythic symbol representing the clash between his ideas of self and society as well as the boundaries of individual freedoms versus moral norms in early twentieth century America. Wright felt it necessary to distinguish between the time-bound conventions of morality and the universal truth of ethics which he gleaned from nature, "Morals are the customs which are conceded to be, at that time, the good ones as against the bad ones. When we say a moral man we mean a man who, according to the tenor and judgment of his time, does the right thing. But it may not be, in any ethical analysis, the true thing."[58] Wright also looked to his Welsh heritage for comfort and direction. His return to the Valley following a successful career in Chicago presented a great number of unknowns. Not only would Wright be living with Borthwick while yet legally married to Catherine he would also need to restart his architectural practice, "I turned to this hill in the Valley as my Grandfather before me had turned to America- as a hope and a haven."[59] Wright would necessarily need to rely upon the Lloyd Jones clan for acceptance as he attempted to begin a new life with Borthwick in the Valley. Now that Wright was back in the mythic setting of the Valley it was the iconic symbolism of the Welsh bard, Taliesin, which emerged for his new residence.

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[55] John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is on Earth,* 80.

[56] See Neil Levine, “The Story of Taliesin: Wright’s First Natural House,” in *Wright Studies Volume One: Taliesin 1911-1914,* ed. Narciso Menocal (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992): 2-10.

[57] Wright, *Autobiography*, 167.

The challenge in discussing Taliesin is that the home is not a straightforward affair of one structure preserved over time. Instead, Taliesin is a culmination of three residential building projects over the course of Wright's lifetime. Wright, himself, found it necessary to label Taliesin as Taliesin I, II, and III in order to summarize the structure which evolved over the course of almost five decades. Two devastating fires consumed much of the first two Taliesin structures. However, Wright used each loss as a motivation to improve successive designs. The dates for each phase of Taliesin are: Taliesin I- 1911-1914; Taliesin II- 1914-1925, and; Taliesin III- 1925-present. Historian Neil Levine pointed out that Taliesin held a unique place among all Wright's works, "Taliesin is not like any other building Wright designed. [I]t was as much a representation of Wright's belief system as it was a sign of its artistic efficacy."[60] Alofsin concurred that Taliesin contains a special character which was connected to the oldest impulses of architecture which sought to create, "a mystical marriage of man and nature."[61]

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[58] Wright, Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1952, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 46,8 as referenced *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 68.

[59] Wright, *Autobiography*, 167-168. Also see, Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 96-99. Wright noted, "Taliesin was the name of a Welsh poet, a druid-bard who sang to Wales the glories of fine art. Many legends cling to that beloved revered name in Wales."

Wright envisioned the concept of Taliesin I as a working farm intimately tied to his home. He did not dismiss agriculture as a lowly occupation but, instead, celebrated farm life, "Yes, Taliesin should be a garden and a farm behind a real workshop and a good home."[62] As a young man he was exposed to his Uncle Jenkin Lloyd Jones extolling the beauty and spiritual value of farming from his Unitarian pulpit in Chicago. Rev. Jones was as comfortable using an agricultural manual for a preaching guide as the Bible and found universal truth encompassed in the experience of nature through agriculture. For example, at Taliesin I Wright prominently placed a rectangular hayloft in mid-air which resembled a covered bridge resting on supports at both ends.

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[60] Neil Levine, "Under the Aegis of Taliesin," in *The Wright State: Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin*, (Milwaukee Art Museum, 1992): 33. An excellent description of Taliesin's evolution over time is Levine's "The Story of Taliesin" in *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd* Wright (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 75-111.

[61] Anthony Alofsin, "Taliesin: To Fashion Words in Little," in *Wright Studies Volume One: Taliesin 1911-1914*, ed. Narciso Menocal (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992): 56-60.

[62] Wright, *Autobiography*, 170.

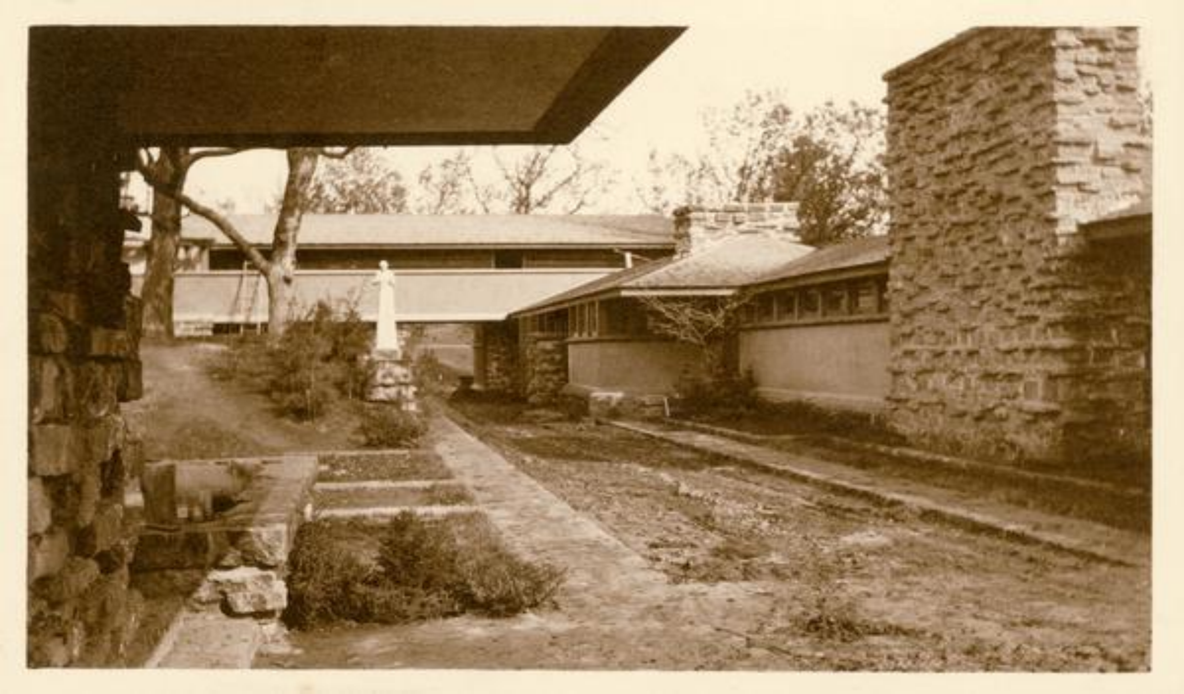

Figure 23. Wright incorporated a hayloft in the design for Taliesin I which looked like a covered bridge suspended on both ends. This was not only an important agriculture motif but framed the perimeter of the grounds (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1912).

A dirt road leading to Taliesin was specifically designed to wind its way along the sloped hillside to provide exit or entry through the opening created by the overhanging hayloft. The hayloft was placed higher in elevation than the architectural workshop and residential spaces. A hayloft, as an agricultural motif, created a powerful point of passage in relationship to the architecture of Taliesin. Under the hayloft were stables for the farm animals, in this case cows and horses, which would have been a natural element for early twentieth century life in rural America. Located south of the hayloft were an impressive milk house, water tower, and garage. What is of interest is how close Wright placed these stables to his home. It was not simply a matter of convenience for chores but also a statement on the noble and spiritual value of agriculture as he connected them both architecturally and symbolically as one.

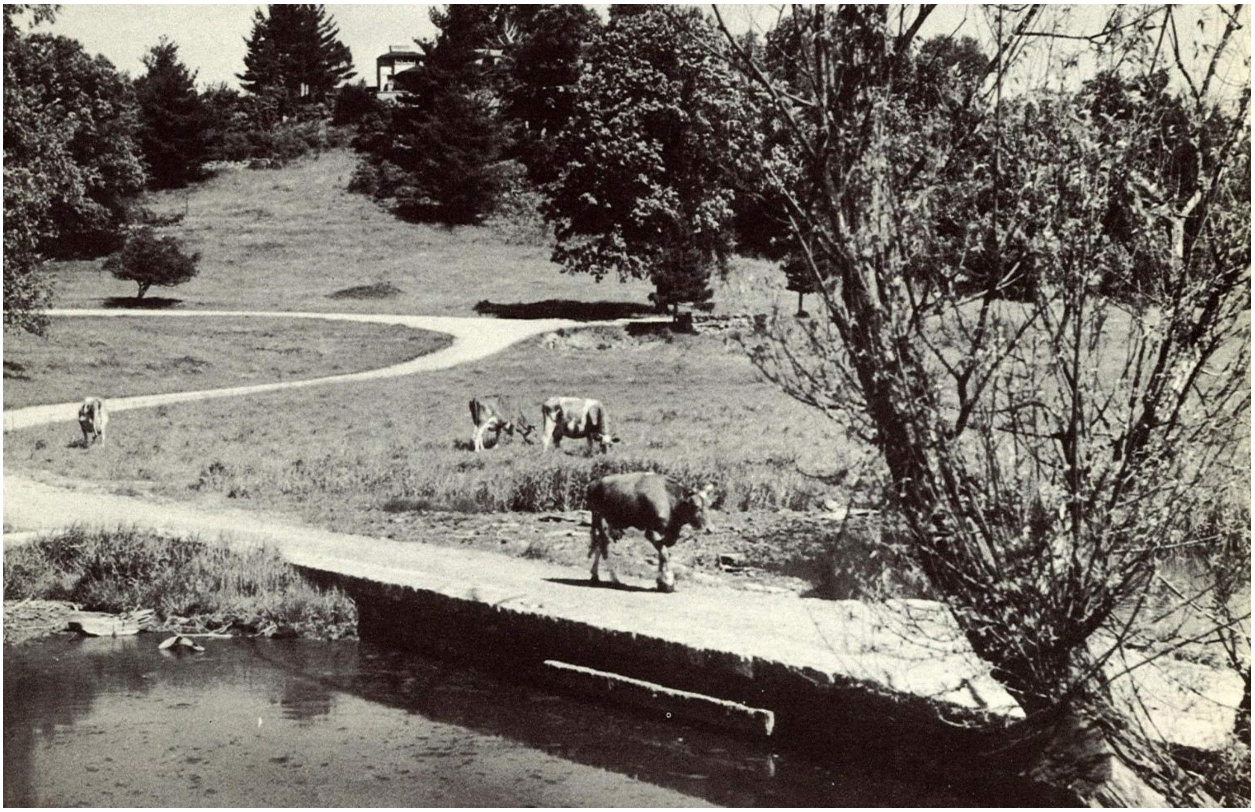

Figure 24. Wright welcomed agricultural symbolism at Taliesin as cows and other livestock grazed freely on the hills surrounding his residence (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1955).

Cows, a symbol of the value of farm life, were just as welcome to roam Taliesin's hill as any human visitor as Wright noted, "The gentle Holsteins and a monarch of a bull- a sleek glittering decoration of the fields and meadows as they moved about, grazing." Wright understood farm animals to play both a functional and artistic role at Taliesin. Cattle were decorations about the hills and colors of the Valley included the scarlet combs of roosters and swans floating on the pond. Wright's imagery of the Valley was a sacred, peaceable kingdom which included the sights and sounds of animals which completed the scenery of the Garden of Eden.

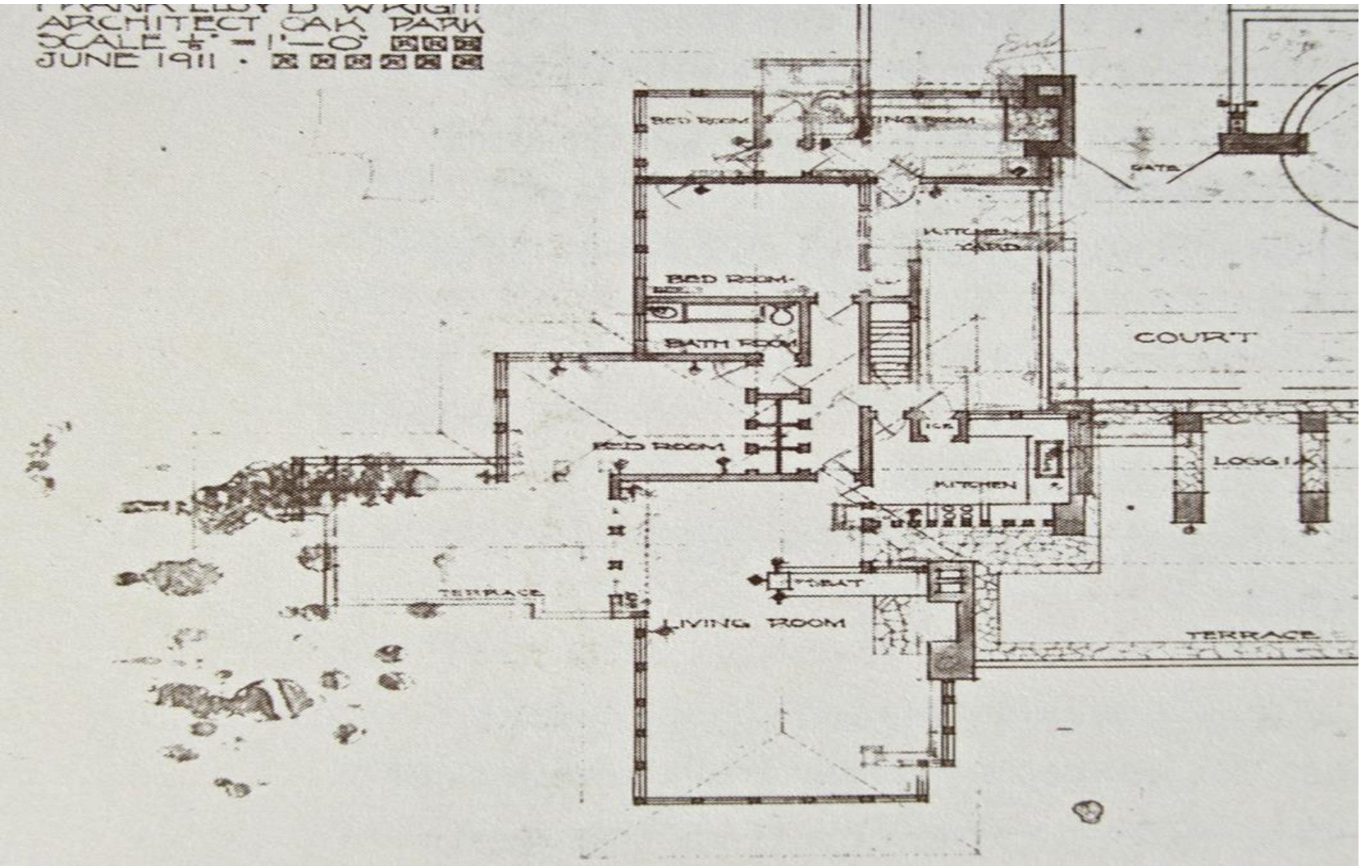
ARCHITECT OAK PARK
SCALE ⅛" = 1'—0"
JUNE 1911
BED ROOM
ING ROOM
GATE
KITCHEN YARD
BED ROOM
BATH ROOM
COURT
BED ROOM
KITCHEN
LOGGIA
TERRACE
SEAT
LIVING ROOM
TERRACE

Figure 25. Floor plan of the residential wing of Taliesin I with a large living room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, a sitting room, and terraces. (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, June, 1911).

His original concept for approaching Taliesin routed traffic from the south-east which would have approached the living quarters first, then under the porte-cochere, and after a sharp left turn one would travel past workshop spaces to the right and a limestone retaining wall to the left and then, finally, under the suspended barn. The garden area above the retaining wall featured a sweeping, semi-circular limestone half-wall, or 'Tea Circle' as Wright called it, which provided seating among a number of large trees.[63] The Tea Circle was built around two existing oak trees which offered shade for those who gathered to hear Wright converse and lecture. This semi-circular wall provided a dramatic geometric contrast to the straight lines of the architecture of Taliesin I. It also served a purpose in pointing out something quite important to Wright- he did not build on the crown of the hill which had significant sentimental value, “This hill on which Taliesin now stands as ‘brow’ was one of my favorite [childhood] places. [W]hen you are on the low hill-crown you are out in mid-air [w]ith tree-tops standing below all about you.”[64] This garden area and Tea Circle limestone half-wall provided a view of the hilltop that Wright left untouched. The area was kept ruggedly natural with trees, shrubs, and plantings mimicking the same kind of natural beauty of the surrounding countryside. It was not a delicately groomed garden, but instead a reflection on the beauty of nature in its natural form. Wright understood nature in even its rawest forms to be complimentary and not distracting to his work. He wanted Taliesin to blend into the favorite hill of his boyhood years without destroying it, “It was unthinkable to me, at least unbearable, that any house should be put *on* that beloved hill.”[65]

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[63] See R. Bruce Allison, *Every Root and Anchor: Wisconsin's Famous and Historic Trees* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 2005).

In reality Taliesin I was as close to the crown of the hill as one could get without covering it. Wright’s Tea Circle wall and garden area had the look of an ancient altar which celebrated the relationship between architecture and the hill itself. A set of limestone stairs led up to the elevated, circular seating which also framed the old oaks which shared the space. In the shadow of the trees, Wright carefully placed a large, sculptural figure which juxtaposed both geometric planes and the free-flowing curves of a female form. It was his own design which also incorporated Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem, “Flower in the Crannied Wall.”

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[64] Wright, *Autobiography*, 167.
[65] Ibid, 168.

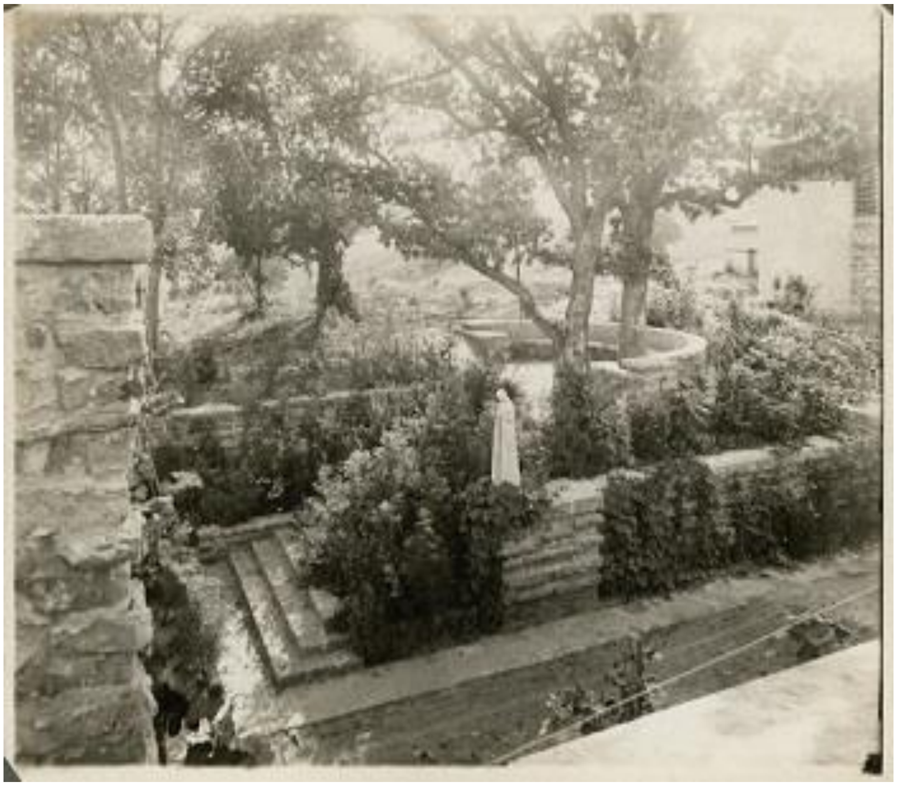

Figure 26. Wright embraced a rugged naturalism on the grounds of Taliesin I as seen in a summer view of the Tea Circle. His sculpture, *Flower in the Crannied Wall,* was placed in a prominent position facing the residential wing. (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Henry Fuermann and Sons, ca. 1911).

To appreciate Wright's correlation of sacred and geometric themes in this sculpture, one needs explore his attraction to Tennyson's poem, "Flower in the Crannied Wall" which contemplated humanity's search for the divine in nature,

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower- but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Menocal noted that for Tennyson and ultimately for Wright, both the crannied wall and flower are representational of universal principles: if one could truly understand the layers of meaning in something as simple as a flower one could also comprehend cosmic principles and ultimately both the divine and created order. His son John echoed this sentiment, "When I first worked for Dad I observed that he was convinced a Source existed which, by its very nature, produced ideas in the mind that could be reproduced in the world."[66]

Wright found it fitting to inscribe Tennyson's poem, along with a treble clef with musical notation, as a part of a terra-cotta sculpture he designed in 1903 for the Dana House in Springfield, Illinois. He commissioned a second casting of the work in plaster for this garden area of Taliesin in 1911. The sculpture was placed in a prominent location which would have been visible along the pathway past the residence as well as sitting in the circular limestone seat just above it. The white plaster sculpture stood as a bright contrast to the natural colors of the garden and limestone walls nearby.

Wright was quite intentional to include the narrative of "Flower in the Crannied Wall" in his concept for fully experiencing Taliesin. The sculpture captured a realistic form of a female nude emerging from contrasting crystal shapes representing a sumac tree. She looks down upon the slender crystal forms which could almost be taken as the model for a thin skyscraper. In her right hand the figure holds a piece of crystal and, by her fixed gaze, appears to contemplate its meaning.

It is worth noting that Wright combined Tennyson's poem with the imagery of humanity and geometry in this sculptural expression of his sacred narrative concerning architecture and nature. Thus, the sculpture became a three-dimensional literary form.

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[66] John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is On Earth*, 92.

Levine concurred that the sculpture held great metaphoric significance reflecting the narrative of Taliesin as "the Flower in the Crannied Wall takes on a more definite figurative meaning as it literally embodies the spirit of the place." Wright turned the work to face the living quarters as if to create an ongoing dialogue between the house and female figure. However, he did not place "Flower on the Crannied Wall" or Taliesin on the crown of the hill as many architects might have done. Wright honored the top of the hill as something too profound to build upon. He left it alone and positioned his home and sculpture as a support to the beauty and energy of the summit of *natura naturans*.[67]

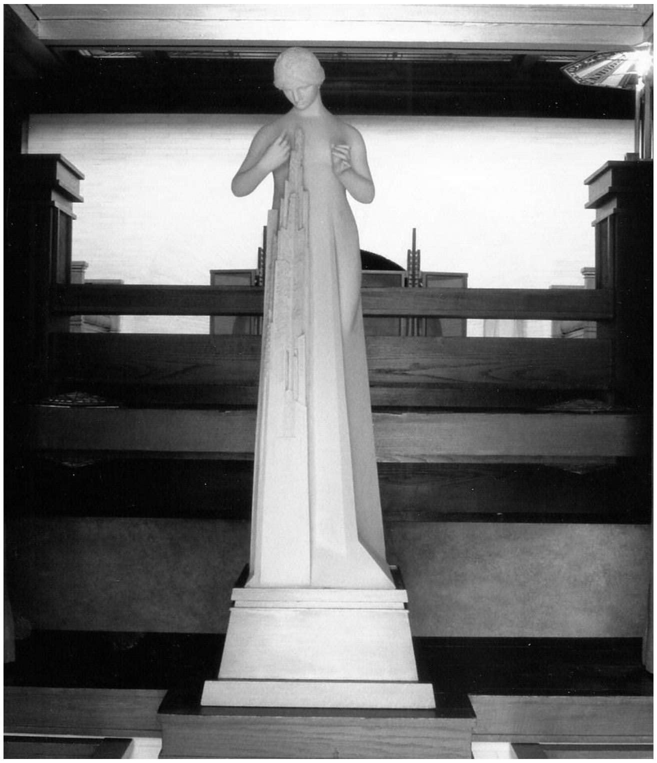

Figure 27. Detail of Wright's "Flower in the Crannied Wall' showing the juxtaposition of a crystalline tower with a naturalistic, female form originally designed for the Dana House in 1903. Its original placement at Taliesin I is seen in Figure 24 (Flickr, William Dougherty, 2016).

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[67] Interestingly, in the late 1920's Wright would entirely reverse his concept of how one should approach Taliesin. Instead of using the south-east road as the entry, he shifted to using the north-west road that passed under the hayloft. Moving under the hayloft, which paralleled the north-south axis of the residence, one was placed in a processional path to Wright's living quarters.

What should be explored in the design and mythic narrative concerning Taliesin I is how Wright interpreted his residence in the context of sacrality. Levine, in a thoughtful article published in 1992, believed that in order to fully understand Taliesin one must be open to the idea of it holding "affective, magical qualities."[68] His argument was grounded in Wright's love of the folktale or fairly-tale elements of Welsh culture, particularly the mythic symbolism of the ancient bard Taliesin. The significance of Wright's own narrative concerning mythic ideas of architecture, which were inherently tied to the Valley, was as informative as Taliesin itself. Menocal echoed this correlation between Wright's mythic narrative and his residence due to his, "belief that Taliesin (the bard) and Taliesin (the building) were interchangeable with his own persona."[69] An oral, narrative tradition developed concerning Taliesin similar to the manner in which the Lloyd Jones clan held to an oral transmission of the mystic qualities of Welsh culture. Wright's mythic narrative was part of the initiation into Taliesin and the culture Wright built into the Fellowship experience. Levine noted that the narrative was also somewhat confrontational as it was "reiterative and achieves legitimacy through belief. [W]right's narrative structure… appears to demand nothing less than a conversion."[70] This narrative was intended to shape the Fellowship community's appreciation of the mystical nature of the landscape. It may be understood as paralleling a 'sacred narrative' in that it conveyed Wright's fundamental belief in the presence of the divine through nature and was presented in a ritual, or repetitive fashion. In the case of Taliesin, Levine noted that the narrative focused on the "sense of continuity of building and landscape" which was not to be lost on the successive flow of new apprentices that formed a community intensely shaped by Wright's worldview, "hearing and retelling the narratives of the sites were part of the initiation rite of the Fellow and a fundamental activity throughout its existence."

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[68] Neil Levine, *The Wright State: Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin*, (Milwaukee Art Museum, 1992): 36.
[69] Menocal, "Taliesin, Gilmore House and Flower in the Crannied Wall," 80.
[70] Levine, "Under the Aegis of Taliesin," 40.

Jacquelyn Tuerk addressed relationships between ideas of the magical and sacred in her 2009 article, "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets." Tuerk began her article with an investigation of where sacred space may be found and noted that hierotopy is physically located in places, images, objects, and performances. However, she also emphasized the significance of narrative in its formation, "People create, experience, maintain, and recognize sacred space through images, words, and performances that specifically offer an identity between the sacred and the viewer. [T]his human psychological experience of identifying with sacred narrative creates hierotopy."[71] Tuerk, interestingly, touched on two key themes which also intrigued Levine in her discussion of how sacred spaces emerge: the significance of a shared imaginative narrative and the presence of a sacred quality which she labeled as "magical imagery and its psychological power." Tuerk's research, therefore, provides a strong parallel to precisely what Levine addressed in his analysis of Taliesin; namely, the power of Wright's mythic narrative and the possibility of emotive, magical qualities felt in experiencing the unified whole of Taliesin. Tuerk's insights, I suggest, provide an important link that Levine approximated but did not fully explore which is the idea that *Wright intentionally created Taliesin as sacred space.* This is consistent with the shared, imaginative narrative of the Valley as symbolic of the Garden of Eden based not only in mythic Welsh history but also transcendental and Unitarian ideas concerning the presence of the divine in nature. In short, Taliesin is hierotopic because, as Tuerk noted, "narrative identity creates sacred space." Lidov's work also supports this premise with its definition of hierotopy which involves "a special type of consciousness, in which our categories of the artistic, ritual, spatial [are] interwoven in the inseparable spiritual whole."[72]

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[71] Jacquelyn Tuerk, "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets," in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Space*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 216, 84, 103, 87, 130.

Francesco Pellizzi, in his exploration of the anthropological dynamics of sacred space, asked the important question of whether it is possible to recognize "a non- or post-religious sacrality of place in the modern world."[73] His concern was whether one might legitimately discuss the idea of sacrality in the context of non-religious places such as a public museum. He also examined the possibilities of experiencing the sacred though non-religious art as in the case of a post-mortem exhibition of Polaroid photographs made by Andy Warhol which were intended only for private, artistic use. Pellizzi concluded that it is possible to apprehend a sacrality of place if the location meets the criterion of fulfilling "the category of separation [which] underlies any sacral dimension. [T]he sacred entity is both right *there*, in that topos, yet also separate (hieros)." He noted the importance of mediation as a hierotopic function in that the invisible (mythic or spiritual) is made visible or the "integration of Non-being within Being."

These arguments from contemporary scholars lend credibility to the suggestion that what Levine described as magical, emotive qualities in Taliesin was Wright's intention to make it a sacred space. Levine captured a certain experiential 'something' which he correlated to 'magical.' However, he overlooked recognition of Wright's own admission of interest in searching out the divine correlation between nature and architecture, especially in the mythic setting of the Valley. Wright's own imaginative narrative, which he repeated throughout the course of his entire life, centered on a prophetic role that nature and architecture could offer to humanity. Levine astutely noted that Taliesin was primarily a statement of Wright's belief system. Alofsin concurred, "Bringing to mind the ancient origins of the search for a new life, Taliesin became Wright's image of himself as poet, priest, prophet."[74] His belief system, it must be understood, represented far more than a mere interest in fairy tales. Instead, Taliesin was designed to present revelations of cosmic importance on how architecture could be a reflection of the sacred and offer a salvific function for humanity.

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[72] Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Space*, 130.

[73] Francesco Pellizzi, "Anthropological Aspects of Hierotopy" in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Space,* ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 216, 219-220.

Wright used the idea of an 'awakening' when experiencing his architecture and in reference to Midway Gardens (1914) he noted, "It awakened a sense of mystery and romance in the beholder. Each responded with what he had in him to give."[75] It is extremely important to note that Wright correlated an experiential notion of the sacred with art and architecture, "The song, the masterpiece, the edifice are a warm outpouring of the heart of man- human delight in life triumphant: *we glimpse the infinite*. That glimpse or vision is what makes art a matter of inner experience- *therefore sacred* [italics mine]."[76] Wright consistently paralleled ideas more commonly associated with religion in his effort to describe architecture. This perhaps shouldn't be surprising as Wright viewed art and religion as being the foundation for any culture as he stressed, "The soul of any civilization on earth has been and still is Art and Religion. [S]pirit is man's new power if he is to be truly mighty in his civilization. Only Art and Religion can bring this new vision as reality to a nation."[77] His conclusion for *A Testament* also drew a correlation to architecture as both an earthly and spiritual endeavor.[78]

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[74] Alofsin, "Taliesin: To Fashion Words in Little," 60.
[75] Wright, *Autobiography*, 191.
[76] Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: In the Realm of Ideas*, 19.
[77] Wright, *A Testament*, 98, 129.

The idea of Taliesin representing sacred space for Wright is supported by research in both hierotopy and architectural history. Tuerk asked the important question of what constitutes sacred and 'not-so-sacred' space. Her answer provided clarification for understanding Taliesin as hierotopy as it involved the "semiotic mechanism [of] the communication between human believers and what is sacred *for them*. [H]ierotopy is the psychological space and emotional state of uniting with one's god, encouraged and focused through place, [t]ime, [a]nd sensory perception of material."[79] Communication with the divine, for Wright, involved not only an intimacy with nature experienced in the mythic Valley but architecture expressing the truth of divine order. Menocal provided further direction on how Wright attempted to exemplify the sacred through architecture, "Wright, it would seem, answered for himself Tennyson's question concerning 'what God and man is.' Architecture was but an extension- or perhaps a mirror- of that truth."[80] Menocal brought to light Wright's association of geometric and crystalline forms as key to perceiving the expression of the organic order of the divine in nature. This correlation, in turn, guided Wright to the expression of this cosmic truth through the geometry of architecture.

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[78] Ibid., 253-254. Wright stated, "[Architecture, the Arts, Philosophy, Religion] all come to nourish or be nourished by this inextinguishable light within the soul of man. [A]nd so when Jesus said, 'the kingdom of God is within you,' I believe this is what he meant."

[79] Tuerk, *Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets,* 106-107.

[80] Menocal, "Taliesin, Gilmore House, and Flower in the Crannied Wall," 80, 108, 74. Menocal noted, "If Tennyson could understand the flower 'all in all,' that is to say, all of the flower, including its existential existence, he would understand the secret of the universe, including what 'God and man is."
Menocal pointed out the relationship between geometry and landscape for Wright, "That geometry was reflected, as in everything else, in the structure of the crust of the earth and, consequently, in the landscape as well. The next logical step was to consider architecture within a hierarchy that went from universe to planet to landscape to building."

Wright's Architectural Methodology and Expression of the Sacred Narrative

Wright intended to create sacred space as he understood it at Taliesin and the next level of interpretation involves his architectural methodology for accomplishing it. He relied upon certain conceptions, spatial proportions, and materials as a formula for creating a sacred experience at Taliesin. What specifically is 'magical' about the actual construction and forms which emerged over the course of five decades of work at Taliesin? One of the key elements in understanding Wright's architectural language for expressing hierotopy is found in his ideas on negative and positive space. Wright believed that interior space created by architecture was not empty, but instead was a metaphysical reality which held the same meaning as the materials which created the space. Interior space, therefore, was interpreted as a transcendent, positive reality which reflected the inner truth of a building. Historian Kevin Nute noted that while Wright was influenced by Japanese culture and architecture, the idea of interior space as a positive substance was in direct contrast to the Japanese interpretation of space as a negative void. Wright, in *An Autobiography,* expressed his dismay and shock to discover that the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu (c. 6th century BC) wrote on the metaphysical significance of interior space. Wright had assumed he discovered this interior principle of positive space only to find it in Lao-tzu's writing. He reflected on his own architectural realization of this idea of interior space before knowing of Lao-tzu's ancient words, "Laotze [*sic*] expressed this truth, now achieved in architecture, when he declared, 'the reality of the building does not consist in the roof and walls but in the space within to be lived in.' I have built it."[81] However, Nute pointed out an important difference between Lao-tzu and Wright's interpretation of space, "Wright himself interpreted Lao-tzu's void as implying the positive entity space, as opposed to the negation, or non-being, which it is traditionally taken to mean. [This] serves to highlight a fundamental difference between Wright's work and traditional Japanese architecture, there having been no real notion of space as a definite object in the latter."[82]

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[81] Wright, *A Testament*, 106

Wright addressed this positivistic view of space at Taliesin I through dramatic compression and sudden expansion of the interior, which mimicked the same technique at Unity Temple (1905-1908) built prior to Taliesin, "When Unity Temple was built this sense of interior space began to 'come through': 1906."[83] Wright created a labyrinth experience at Unity Temple by which one must travel through smaller, compressed space until reaching the proportionately massive super-cube of the space for worship.[84]

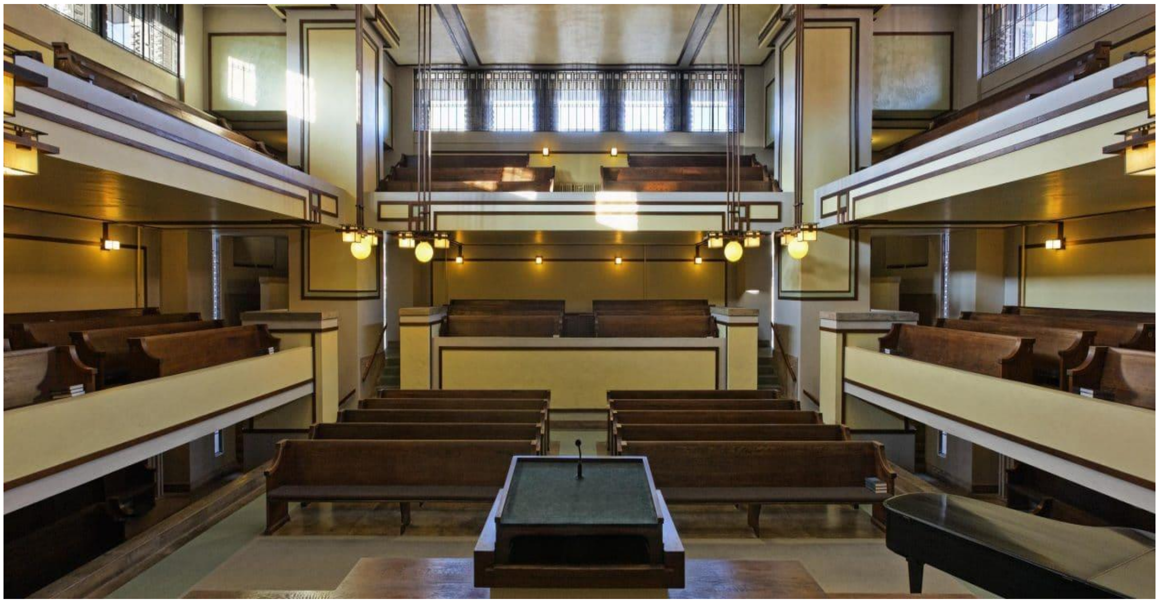

Figure 28. Labyrinth-like passages were designed by Wright as an experiential contrast to the dramatic super-cube for worship at Unity Temple (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 2015).

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[82] Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Rutledge, 2000): 123.
[83] Wright, *A Testament*, 106.
[84] Interestingly, Wright also used a labyrinth motif in his early stationery instead of a solid red square.

This experience offered both a heightened awareness of 'self' and 'other.' Awareness of 'self' was gained through the individual experience of positive-entity, interior space and awareness of 'other' occurred in the context of the congregation and the divine in worship. Historian Joseph Siry noted, "the primary spatial volume serves as a setting for a group whose collective self-awareness was heightened by Wright's design."[85]

Wright continued this labyrinth experience, or juxtaposition of compressed and expanded volumes of interior spaces for dramatic effect, with Taliesin I. Ceiling heights were varied throughout the design and a central hallway with a low ceiling height allowed one to look down most of the residential wing of the house like a tunnel. This compressed passage with its low ceiling was positioned to create an experiential contrast with the voluminous space of the living room. Entering the living space with its relatively soaring ceiling height and expansive views of the Valley was intended by Wright to create a powerful experience akin to entering the sanctuary of Unity Temple. This experience of moving from a compressed space to much larger spatial volume was a way to emphasize the power of interior residential space as a positive entity. Added emphasis was placed on the height of the living and dining rooms at Taliesin I with colored bands trimmed by small strips of wood demarcating the angles of the ceiling. Wright wanted to draw attention to vertical, positive spaces with ceiling decoration.[86]

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[85] Joseph Siry, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 189.

[86] This ceiling decoration was an unusual technique which Wright ultimately eliminated in later work on the living room.

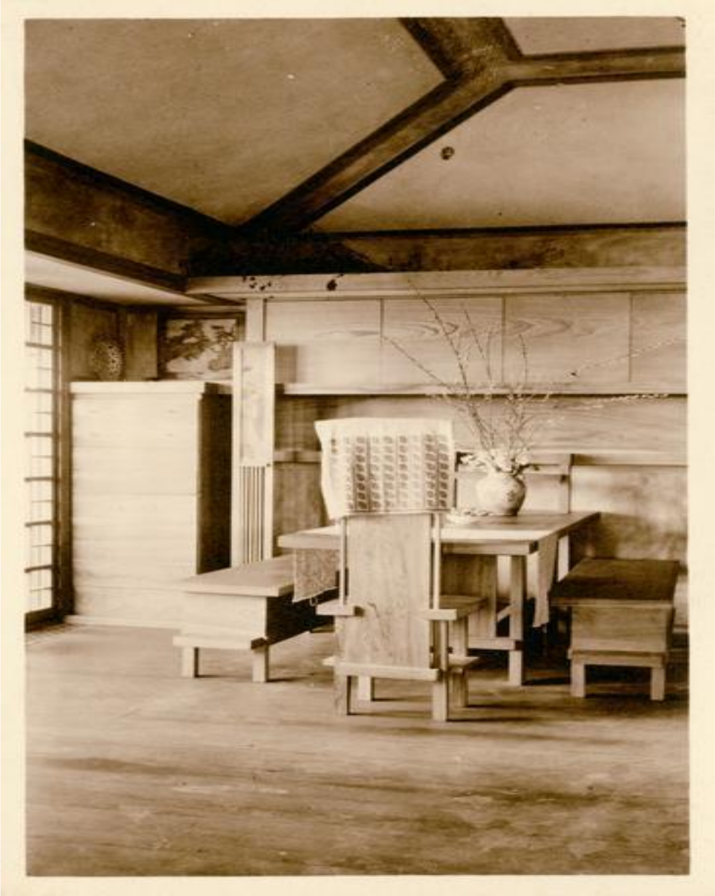

Figure 29. Taliesin I dining area displaying Wright's use of wood and paint as ceiling decoration which emphasized the verticality of the space (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Taylor Woolley, ca. 1911).

Nute pointed out Wright's mastery of interior space designs which "progressively 'unfold' as one moves through them- never fully revealing themselves from any single viewpoint- [with] carefully controlled sequence of glimpsed views presented to the observer."[87] This control of both space one's passage through space touches on both Lidov and Dale's emphasis that hierotopy involves the choreography of movement through time and within space.[88]

Wright continually worked with manipulating space as a substance at Taliesin and he choreographed the way one moved through and experienced it. His residence became a workshop for experimentation with this positivistic concept of space. For example, Wright altered the space in his bedroom because it was too voluminous from the vantage point of his bed. His remedy was to install a partial, low-hanging ceiling above his bed which effectively cut the space into upper and lower portions. The ceiling served no other function than to subdivide his sense of being overwhelmed by too heavy a volume of space. Wright described Taliesin as essentially a container to hold space as a positive entity, "But the constitution of the whole, in the way the walls rose from the plan and the spaces were roofed over, was the chief interest of the whole house."[89]

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[87] Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, 124.

[88] Thomas Dale, "From 'Icons in Space' to Space in Icons: Pictorials Models for Public and Private Ritual in the Thirteenth-Century Mosaics of San Marco in Venice" in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, Ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 145.

A second key conceptual element in the sacralization of space for Wright was the notion of space as holding a spiritual meaning which was shaped by geometric expressions of form. Nute noted, "It seems that Wright [equated] space with spirit, apparently leading him to regard his own 'organic' architectural forms as partial realizations of an unfolding Hegelian spirit, and the space within and around them as the unmanifested component of the same transcendent 'Idea.'"[90] Wright pointed to this spiritual interpretation of architecture, "Beautiful buildings are more than scientific. They are true organisms, spiritually conceived."[91] Moreover, Wright identified reality as a spiritual concept presented in geometric form, "Reality is spirit- the essence brooding just behind all aspect. [A]nd- after all you will see that the pattern of reality is supergeometric."[92] This correlation of interior space as being *positive substance holding spiritual content* is inherent in understanding how Wright could interpret architecture, not solely architecture created for religious purposes such as a church or synagogue, as holding the potential for creating sacred space. Any commission, whether residential, civic, or commercial, that was grounded in Wright's narrative and executed in a manner consistent with his principles for an organic architecture, held the potential to provide a hierotopic experience. The plan of Taliesin I (Fig. 17), including all the supporting elements such as the workroom and stables, shows it to be a complex arrangement of geometric patterns in an interlocking relationship with one another.[93] One rectangle or cube unfolded into another to lead into a new experience of space and nature. The primary geometric motif of the floorplan was clearly the rectangle which Wright elongated and compressed as needed. The entirety of the Taliesin complex forms a U-shape with the hayloft and stables forming one side boundary and the residential spaces forming the other.

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[89] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 173.

[90] Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, 125-126. Wright identified interior space as the reality of architecture when he added a handwritten note in the upper right corner of a drawing for Unity Temple which stated, "Sense of Space- to be lived in, the REALITY of the bldg."

[91] Wright, *A Testament*, 64.

[92] Wright, *Autobiography*, 157.

The Tea Circle and garden areas were placed in the center of this U-shape to create an overall motif of one large rectangle oriented southeast to northwest. Unlike later designs which celebrated curvilinear lines, Taliesin I was an exercise in manipulation of the rectangle. The only contrasting circular shape comes from the Tea Circle.

The rectangle was elongated for the workroom space which was a point of connection between the residential wing and the farm spaces. The motif allowed the working spaces, whether stables or drafting room, to be in relationship with the living quarters. The living room was the largest interior space and designed to be in geometric harmony with the sweeping vistas of nature surrounding it. Wright wanted to capture pleasing mathematical proportions that would provide an experience of oneness with nature, or the cosmos, while experiencing Taliesin I. He manipulated both the rectangle and cube to create a personal feeling of harmony with nature. Through compression and expansion of the cube, as he discovered in Unity Temple, Wright intended Taliesin to provide a sacred experience of both architectural space and oneness with the Valley.

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[93] See Figure 15.

A third methodological technique, especially seen at Taliesin, involved the intentional blurring of interior and exterior boundaries which allowed a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding geography. Wright noted, "My sense of the 'wall' was no longer the side of a box. It was enclosure of space [b]ut it was also to bring the outside world into the house and let the inside of the house go outside."[94] The abundant and creative use of glass allowed the exterior landscape to visually permeate interior architectural spaces. The experience of moving through interior spaces, particularly the living room, became one in which exterior vistas poured inward to meet the viewer. At Taliesin I, this was akin to experiencing and repeating a sacred ritual in which an individual was led through a procession of space, or the choreography of movement, in order to be given the opportunity to encounter divine nature. Wright fully intended the viewer to be saturated by the immanent presence of nature received primarily visually but also through other senses depending on the season. One could not escape it from within Taliesin as Wright noted, "Walls opened everywhere to views as the windows swung out above the tree tops, the tops of red, white, and black oaks and wild cherry trees festooned with wild grape vines. In spring, the perfume of the blossoms came full through the windows, the birds singing there the while, from sunrise to sunset."

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[94] Ibid., 141, 173.

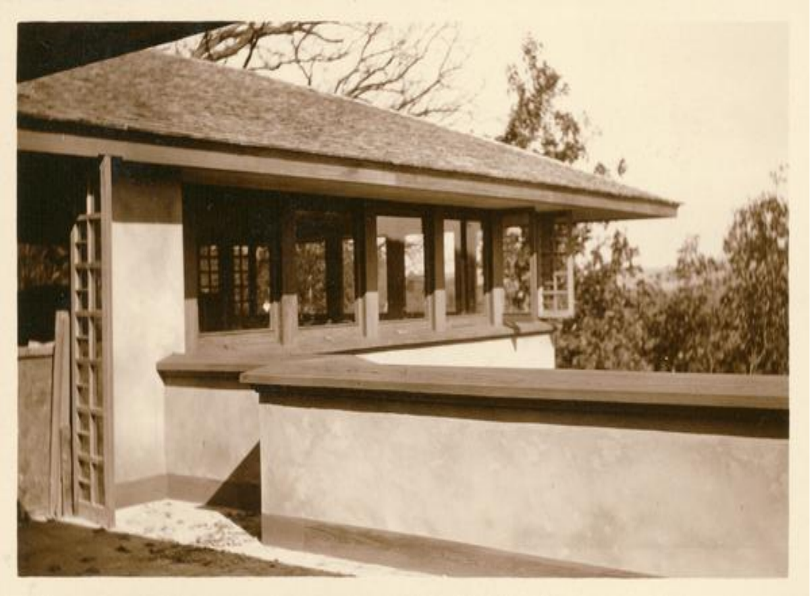

Figure 30. Wright designed an extraordinary number of windows for Taliesin I as seen in this image of the living room exterior. Numerous windows served not only to visually link the interior of the residence with the Valley but allowed seasonal fragrances to fill the home (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Taylor Woolley, ca. 1911).

To experience Wright's residence was to be confronted and immersed in the power of the image-paradigm of the Valley. A contemplative encounter with nature was an element of Wright's expression of sacrality. The viewer would be given the opportunity for an intimate, reflective experience of both the immanence and transcendence of nature with a capital "N." Levine concurred, "wherever one turns, a vista cuts across architectural boundaries and makes inside and outside seem like a single, continually expanding space."[95] Taliesin I was built into a steeply sloped hillside which allowed Wright to create residential spaces which opened views into the branches of surrounding trees. It is as if, particularly with the southeast views of the living room, that the house was built among the tops of the trees. Accordingly, the southeast foundation took on the appearance of a massive bulwark of stone reaching deep into the hillside. It was a huge expense of labor and materials to perch the living spaces of Taliesin I high into the air which facilitated such a dramatic view of the surrounding Valley.

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[95] Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 93.

A fourth component of sacrality at Taliesin involved a statement of how architecture could capture a comprehensive, sensory experience of the Valley involving sight, smell, and the texture of materials presented in an authentic (organic) manner. Wright physically brought nature into Taliesin though his passion for flower arrangements and bringing in tree branches to both decorate the residence and fill it with the fragrance of nature. His son John recalled how the sense of smell was engaged within the experience of Taliesin, "The last time we visited him, Taliesin was a bower of pine branches and anemone, wholesome and fragrant as the woods themselves. The perfume of burning oak in the seventeen stone fireplaces- the aroma of red apples and shagbark hickory nuts drifted to the threshold when we entered. Here was a beauty we could feel and smell as well as see- the beauty of simplicity."[96] Margaret Barker, in her 2009 article, "Fragrance in the Making of Sacred Space: Jewish Temple Paradigms of Christian Worship," explored the power of fragrance in both creating sacred space and providing connections to memories of the past. Particularly fitting for a discussion of Wright's use of natural smells throughout Taliesin, Barker suggested that the presence of temple perfumes in Solomon's temple held associative meaning for both Jewish and Christian followers. In particular, the temple symbolized the Garden of Eden and its destruction by the Babylonians in the sixth century BC represented the lost Garden. Lost, too, was the fragrance of perfumed oil and incense in the temple which the early Christian church brought back into use to demarcate sacred space. Barker also noted the Enoch tradition of the fragrant tree of life which held "a fragrance beyond all fragrance."[97] Wright's saturation of Taliesin with natural smells, whether those introduced by bringing objects such as pine branches indoors or the seasonal fragrances which naturally drifted through open windows, was an intentional effort to create a more powerful and associative experience of the Valley through fragrance. Wright understood nature as the source of such scents as he noted that apple trees in bloom provided, "[p]erfume drifting down the Valley."[98] His sister Maginel concluded, "There is no other house on earth quite like [Taliesin]. It has its own smell."[99].

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[96] John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is on Earth*, 174.

Local construction materials, particularly native stone and wood also provided a natural association with the Valley and brought the texture of the landscape into the interior, "Taliesin was to be an abstract combination of stone and wood as they naturally met in the aspect of the hills around about. [T]he plastered surfaces of the light wood-walls… were like the flat stretches of sand in the river below."[100] Wood was never to be painted, but either left in its natural state or covered with stain to bring out its natural beauty. Glass played a key role in allowing a continual sensory relationship with the surroundings through sight. Eliminating corner framing materials in windows was a unique feature which Wright used at Taliesin to not impede the visual relationship with the landscape. A glass-on-glass corner allowed the geometry of the box to disappear and encouraged a more complete interaction with exterior views. Sightlines provided a strong element of this symbiotic relationship with the land as Wright intended the geometric lines of Taliesin to extend indefinitely into the horizon. Menocal noted that Wright was very intentional about locating architecture within "a larger topographical structure by making them profit from important views through manipulation of their axes [which] extended through openings into sightlines."[101] The dominant sightlines of Taliesin were intended to propel one visually outward into nature and through the far reaches of the Valley. The design of Taliesin was also intentionally created to mimic the geographic patterns in the Valley, "the lines of the hills were the lines of [Taliesin's] roofs, the slopes of the hills [its] slopes."[102]

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[97] Margaret Barker, "Fragrance in the Making of Sacred Space: Jewish Temple Paradigms of Christian Worship," in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 71-77.
[98] Wright, *Autobiography*, 169.
[99] Maginel Wright Barney, *The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses*, 145.
[100] Wright, *Autobiography*, 171.

Memorialization: Sacred Themes of Destruction and Recreation

Any assessment of the architectural and symbolic meaning of Taliesin must also consider the pattern of creation and destruction which Wright documented in *An Autobiography*. Taliesin became a motif for a repeated pattern of tragic loss and recreation in Wright's life as he noted, "[Taliesin] was intensely human, I believe."[103] Wright chose to include religious discourse as a means of summarizing this pattern of destruction and renewal stemming from the well-publicized murders of Borthwick, her two children, and other workers at Taliesin by a troubled staff member in 1914.[104] The murderous plot also involved intentionally setting Taliesin ablaze. A second major fire badly damaged Taliesin II in 1925. Each point of devastation was followed by a period of renewal and reconstruction. Wright, consistent with his use of biblical references throughout his writings, turned to Old Testament imagery to express the pattern of destruction and regeneration at Taliesin. Specifically, he cast the prophet Isaiah as the nemesis of Taliesin in a battle of wills. The contrast emerged from his interpretation of Isaiah as a mythic symbol of condemnation which stemmed from boyhood memories of his grandfather's preaching, "But I was forgetful, for the time being, of Grandfather's Isaiah. His smiting and punishment."[105] In language that is atypical of any architect of his era, Wright created an epic, ongoing confrontation on par with mythic battles of ancient gods. In this case, it was Isaiah and Taliesin who were at war, "Isaiah is the vengeful prophet of an antique wrath. I say Taliesin is a nobler prophet, not afraid of him."[106]

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[101] Menocal, "Taliesin, the Gilmore House, and Flower in the Crannied *Wall*," 68.

[102] Wright, *Autobiography*, 171. Wright was careful to keep the destruction of natural surroundings to a minimum during construction of a project in a natural environment which included building around natural objects such as trees. However, such practices have come with a price at Taliesin due to the foundation and wall damage done by now towering trees in close proximity to the house.

[103] Ibid., 174.

[104] See Neil Levine, "The Story of Taliesin: Wright's First Natural House" in *Wright Studies: Volume One (Taliesin 1911-1914),* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 21.

Wright found the symbolism of Isaiah a literary tool to both encapsulate his struggle with conventional morality and the major destruction of Taliesin. It was an allegorical contrast which allowed him to personalize his suffering and the loss of that which he treasured most in 1914- Borthwick and Taliesin. Wright also cast Isaiah in naturalistic terms, equating the prophet with the storms that swept through the Valley as he continued, "No doubt Isaiah still stood there in the storms that muttered, rolled and broke again over low-spreading shelter. [T]aliesin the gentler prophet of a more merciful God was tempted to lift an arm to strike back in self-defense but suffered in silence and waited." With each major fire, however, Wright discovered within himself a need for recreating Taliesin. It would have been perfectly understandable for Wright to have walked away from the site following the murders of Borthwick and her children. Many individuals would have simply found it too psychologically difficult to rebuild anything at a location of such horrific personal loss. However, Wright eventually discovered a desire to rebuild Taliesin primarily as a sign of renewal and hope within himself,

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[105] Ibid., 168, 73. Wright recalled, "My uncle's soul seemed a sort of spiritual dynamo that never rested. His preaching like Grandfather's, had force and fervor."
[106] Ibid., 273-274. Wright declared, "The ancient Druid Bard sang and forever sings of merciful beauty."

"Perhaps a new consciousness had to grow as a green shoot will grow from a charred and blackened stump?"[107] He summarized the rebuilding of Taliesin following the 1925 fire also as a spiritual quest, "I myself had more patience, a deeper anxiety. More humility. Yet in the same faith, moving forward. [I]n this third trial, granted by Life itself, new life itself helped build the walls and make them more noble than before."

Why was Wright compelled to use biblical and spiritual imagery to discuss the pattern of creation, destruction, and recreation at Taliesin? I suggest that Wright came to understand this cycle of devastation and renewal in a manner that parallels the concept of memorialization through which an individual suffers in the context of spiritual growth and ultimately a higher cause. Wright described his personal experience of suffering following the 1914 tragedy involving the murders of Borthwick, her children, and staff as a spiritual journey, "I believe any spiritual faculty as well as physical faculty, overtaxed, becomes numb. The real pain in that realm, too, comes when healing begins. It is thus the spirit seems subject to the same laws as the body."[108] He documented the physical toll of his suffering after Borthwick's loss in some detail, "Unable to sleep, numb, I would get up, take a cold bath to bring myself alive and go out on the hills in the night, not really knowing where. [A]fter the first terrible anguish, a kind of black despair seemed to paralyze my imagination in her direction and numbed my sensibilities."

In what we would likely call today a severe reactive depression, Wright lost weight, had boils break out on his back and neck, and had to start wearing glasses for the first time. He eventually came to interpret the losses at Taliesin, however, as 'sacrifices' which inferred something given up for a higher purpose, thus memorializing the tragedy.

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[107] Ibid., 188, 273.

[108] Wright's reflections on the spiritual and physical toll of the losses at Taliesin are found in Wright, *An Autobiography*, 186-190. He reflected, "Have I been describing despair? A feeling unknown to me."

Ultimately Wright found it necessary to rationalize the tragedies and fires at Taliesin as a means of renewal in language that referred to death as a sacrifice, "I finally found refuge in the idea that Taliesin should live to show something more for its mortal sacrifices than a charred and terrible ruin on a lonely hillside in the beloved ancestral Valley where great happiness had been. [S]teadily, stone by stone, board by board, Taliesin II began to rise from the ashes of Taliesin I."[109]

In an interesting corollary, Wright tied the very location where Borthwick was murdered to a sightline with his family's Unity Chapel just down the hill. Wright's memorialization at Taliesin falls within a response that religions typically offer in relationship to tragedy. Authors Frida and Roy Furman noted in their study of collective tragedies, "Religions have frequently used master narratives to give meaning to death, to rescue human beings from 'dying in vain.'" Wright indicated that his decision to rebuild Taliesin in 1914 should be interpreted as a memorialization of the human loss which took place there. Even though Taliesin was residential architecture Wright cloaked its rebuilding with spiritual dialogue in his autobiography. His insistence on renewal in the light of tragedy was consistent with his personal narrative of "Truth Against the World" and the rallying cry of the Lloyd Jones clan. A visit to the family cemetery beside Unity Chapel shows the use of the emblem / | \ on many of the Lloyd Jones headstones. Wright was carrying on the Lloyd Jones narrative of survival in the face of unexpected and enormous tragedies. Taliesin, in turn, became a significant symbol of this sacred narrative.

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[109] Levine noted, "Taliesin revealed the extent to which myth, history, and symbol would ultimately have to be redefined in modern terms as part of a uniquely personal process of the creation, or rather, re-creation of a sense of place." See Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 109. Wright noted, "What had been beautiful at Taliesin should live as a grateful memory creating the new [s]o I believed and resolved."

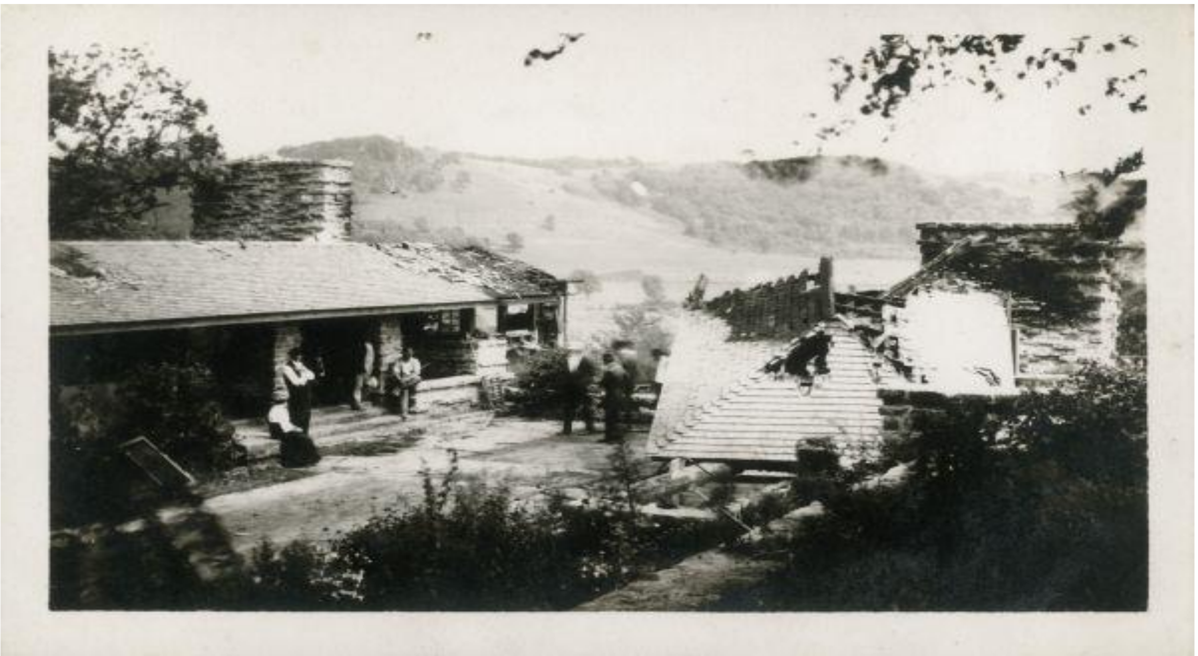

Figure 31. The magnitude of the 1914 fire is captured in this image. The entire living quarters of Taliesin I is missing (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, Albert Rockwell, 1914).

Denys Turner has examined the relationship between the genre of autobiography and the exercise of memory.[110] Like Augustine's *Confessions* written some ten years or more after the events described, Wright reflected on his memories of destruction long after experiencing the tragedies.

His *An Autobiography* was first published in 1932, some eighteen years after the 1914 murder of Borthwick and fire and seven years following the 1925 fire. Turner elaborated on the 'magic of memory' by which remembering is an act of the present determined by what we can actually recall of the past. Memory, therefore becomes an 'inter-text' between the past and temporal present. Turner suggested that an autobiography, such as *Confessions,* was not simply a recollection of facts and events but the construction of an identity, or a present construction of selfhood, "the construction of that narrative which constitutes what I am now. I *am* my story."[111] In the case of Wright, his assessment of the meaning of loss and devastation at Taliesin, between seven and eighteen years later, was to analogize it to a quest for personal renewal and memorialization of tragic death for a higher purpose. He chose to encapsulate this meaning in a dialogue between Isaiah as a metaphor for divine judgment and the personalization of Taliesin as a survivor. A religious framework thereby shaped the narrative of meaning for Wright. More than any other example of his architecture, Wright identified his own life with the past at Taliesin and his ongoing work of regeneration. Taliesin, in both memory and reality, became symbolic of Wright himself. Historian David Lowenthal proposed that the past is an essential ingredient in creating a sense of identity in the present, noting, "the sureness of 'I was' is a necessary component of the sureness of 'I am.' Ability to recall and identify with our own past gives existence meaning, purpose and value."[112]

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[110] Denys Turner, "Memory, Memorials, and Redemption," in *Suffer the Little Children: Urban Violence and Sacred Space*, ed. Kay A. Read and Isabel L. Wollaston (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2001): 103-113.

Wright also chose to memorialize tragedy at Taliesin through the practice of embedding fragments of objects lost in the 1925 fire into walls throughout the house. For example, in the living room Wright placed a fragment of a Quan Yin figure into the upper reaches of an interior limestone wall. It is an interesting commentary that Wright placed a fragment of Quan Yin, the Buddhist deity of compassion and mercy, in the walls of both the living room and bedroom. The fragment in the living room, the head of the Quan Yin, was placed somewhat discreetly as to be unnoticed by most visitors to the home. Yet, the object had a prominent vantage point overlooking the living room. A larger Quan Yin fragment was also placed in the limestone wall of Wright's bedroom. This particular object had a unique location correlated to the movement of the sun. The figure was placed adjacent to a small window, which cleverly allowed light to fall upon the Buddha during the spring solstice.

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[111] Ibid., 105.

[112] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 41.

Lowenthal suggested that a review of past events is necessary in explaining and appreciating the present, "As with memory, we reinterpret relics and records to make them more comprehensible, to justify present attitudes and actions, to underscore changes of faith. The unadulterated past is seldom sufficiently ancient or glorious."[113] In Wright's case, he memorialized the death of Borthwick and the loss of Taliesin as a point of reference in his own life and architectural journey. Levine agreed with this assessment, "Taliesin collapses past and present history into a complex representation of place. [It was] intended from its outset to tell a story with a specifically autobiographical meaning, forming an image of Wright's personal life woven into the fabric of his family's land."[114]

Wright's recollections in *An Autobiography*, the continued rebuilding of Taliesin, and the embedding of sculptural fragments in the walls of Taliesin, took on significance as memorials dedicated to themes of survival and regeneration. Lowenthal noted this as a common feature of memorialization and which leads to interpreting the past as a "stimulus for subsequent creations." In some cases, this leads to changing the memory of the past to make it more palatable in these recreations, "we alter the past to 'improve' it-exaggerating aspects we find successful, virtuous, or beautiful, celebrating what we take pride in, playing down the ignoble, the ugly, the shameful."[115] Wright seldom focused on the emotional and financial pain his actions caused to others including his first wife, children, and extensive list of creditors. Instead, he mythologized the past and personal losses using religious language and memorialization. He came to interpret each devastation as a catalyst for new creation and deeper understanding of the truth of life and architecture. He, for the most part, rejected any notion that somehow the tragedies he faced bore any correlation to his own actions. Ultimately, however, he found it necessary to both rationalize and mythologize the past through the symbol of Taliesin.

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[113] Ibid., 324-325.

[114] Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 76, 98. Levine noted, "Taliesin personified Wright's quest for an expression of the elementary basis of architecture and became Wright's alter ego."

Wright's Sacred Narrative

There are signs that Wright's narrative of an organic architecture reflective of divine nature is being diluted in twenty-first century, postmodern American culture. Levine noted that Wright developed a mythic narrative in which nature "replaced culture as the direct source for architectural ideas. The cultural gap was filled by the narrative of myth."[116] The salient elements of a sacred narrative can be lost by new generations who do not hold to the same worldview. Postmodern culture is marked by a belief in individual realities and no attachment to one tradition alone as a representation of truth.[117] Wright's sacred narrative is vulnerable to being approached as an historical artifact rather than a vibrant narrative to shape new generations of architects. Popular appreciation for Wright tends to reflect on the enormous creativity and originality for an architect working in late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth century America. However, Wright's own sacred narrative for the social and spiritual value of an organic architecture was also most powerful when he was the storyteller. It can be perceived as an historical narrative to be studied as a relic of the past tied to the person of Wright himself. Frederick Gutheim, as one who knew Wright, touched on this primacy of personality, "At Taliesin recollections of Frank Lloyd Wright have been institutionalized. In them a saintly figure has emerged."[118] Following the death of Olgivanna in 1985, for example, the Fellowship reverted to playing tape recordings of Wright's voice during Sunday morning gatherings for breakfast. As Friedland and Zellman wistfully noted, "the Fellowship increasingly became a religion of the dead."[119] Wright certainly influenced multiple generations of architects during his life due to his charisma, creative mind, and realized projects but his narrative gradually lost energy following his death. Perhaps Wright himself captured this inevitable sense of placement within history, despite all attempts to be ahistorical, when he spoke of America's struggle to break free of past influences, "But Ruskin and Morris are now 'once upon a time.'"[120]

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[115] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*: 332-334

[116] Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 76.

[117] Lily Kong, "Religion and Technology: Refiguring Place, Space, Identity, and Community," (Royal Geographical Society, 2001): 404-413.

I am not suggesting that new generations of architects are entirely overlooking Wright's life or buildings as inspiration for their work. His remarkable designs and sensitive use of materials along with seeking a harmonious relationship between architecture and the environment are tremendously appealing concepts for any architect in the modern era. The Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, however, consistently has a small following of 15-20 students enrolled at one time.[121] Perhaps as a sign that Wright's ideas need new relevancy the school brands itself currently as an

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[118] Frederick Gutheim, "Recollections," in *About Wright: An Album of Recollections by Those Who Knew Frank Lloyd Wright*, ed. Edgar Tafel (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993): 216.

[119] Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 591.

[120] Wright, *A Testament*, 105.

[121] The Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture is what used to be known as the Taliesin Fellowship and is operated by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

"experimental architecture institution." Its advertising materials note that the school has evolved from Wright's idea of organic architecture but is now seeking to be a shaping force for experimental architecture. Its search for applicants for the Teaching Fellow in Residence for the 2016-2017 academic year noted that the school is looking for "architects, engineers, artists, designers, and educators who are committed to experimental architecture."[122]

It can be reasonably assumed that the need for an organic architecture, with its emphasis on nature and spirituality as Wright professed, has the potential to be diluted and even lost, to some measure, on postmodern culture. Perhaps this break in identification comes through the disconnection of postmodern society to the agricultural and natural motifs so familiar to Wright and his era. Many Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century had some relationship to the land with some 40% of the population making a livelihood through agriculture.[123] One hundred years later, less than 3% of the population was dependent on farming. The shift to an overwhelmingly urban and suburban model for living may provide some explanation for a decline of interest in Wright's philosophy of architecture. Wright's poetic musings about the characteristics of the cow or chicken would be appreciated by his generation but likely dismissed as unfamiliar and irrelevant in postmodern life. Few would have sentimental attachment to Wright's farm reflections, "First farm familiars- the Cows. Calling them- 'So-o Boss! So-o Boss! So-o Boss!' A baritone call. [G]etting the cows into their proper places in the barn. Feeding them. Milking them early in the morning."[124]

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[122] Please see the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture website at www.http://taliesin.edu/. The school has decoupled itself from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in order to maintain academic accreditation. Bylaw changes from the accrediting Higher Learning Commission in 2012 required the school to function as an independent organization from the Foundation. The total student body fluctuates between 15-25 students and at one point in the past five years the school made a decision to close. However, an aggressive fundraising campaign was instead launched which raised two million dollars.

[123] See "Farm Population Lowest Since 1850's," *New York Times* (July 20, 1988): 12.

Wright's work, however, is being examined in new ways by contemporary movements which focus on issues like sustainability, energy efficiency, and renewable resources.[125] Wright's exploration of passive solar heating, wind control for ventilation and cooling, natural lighting, fireplaces, and radiant in-floor heating systems are a few examples of ecological awareness in architectural design. Even his enthusiasm for locally grown food, not only at Taliesin but for large-scale urban living in Broadacre City, has provided unexpected inspiration for resource management in the twenty-first century.

Another contemporary comment on the longevity of Wright's narrative is held by Taliesin itself. Nature, in some senses, is reclaiming Taliesin. Roofs sag and windows are understandably out of square due to foundation settling. Timber bracing shores up retaining walls and the heating system within Taliesin failed long ago. When Taliesin is closed for typically harsh Wisconsin winters, the home has no heat except for the drafting room which alone has a functioning boiler and radiators. In perhaps one of the most telling images of the physical decline of Taliesin, the statue, "Flower in the Crannied Wall" no longer holds a prominent view in the garden area. Instead, it is sheltered from the weather in an exterior stairwell not far from its original location. The figure is now armless and discolored, having ironically been broken by a falling limb from one of the Tea Circle oaks.

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[124] Wright, *Autobiography*, 42.

[125] Please see Alan Hess and Alan Weintraub, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Natural Design, Organic Architecture: Lessons for Building Green from an American Original* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012).

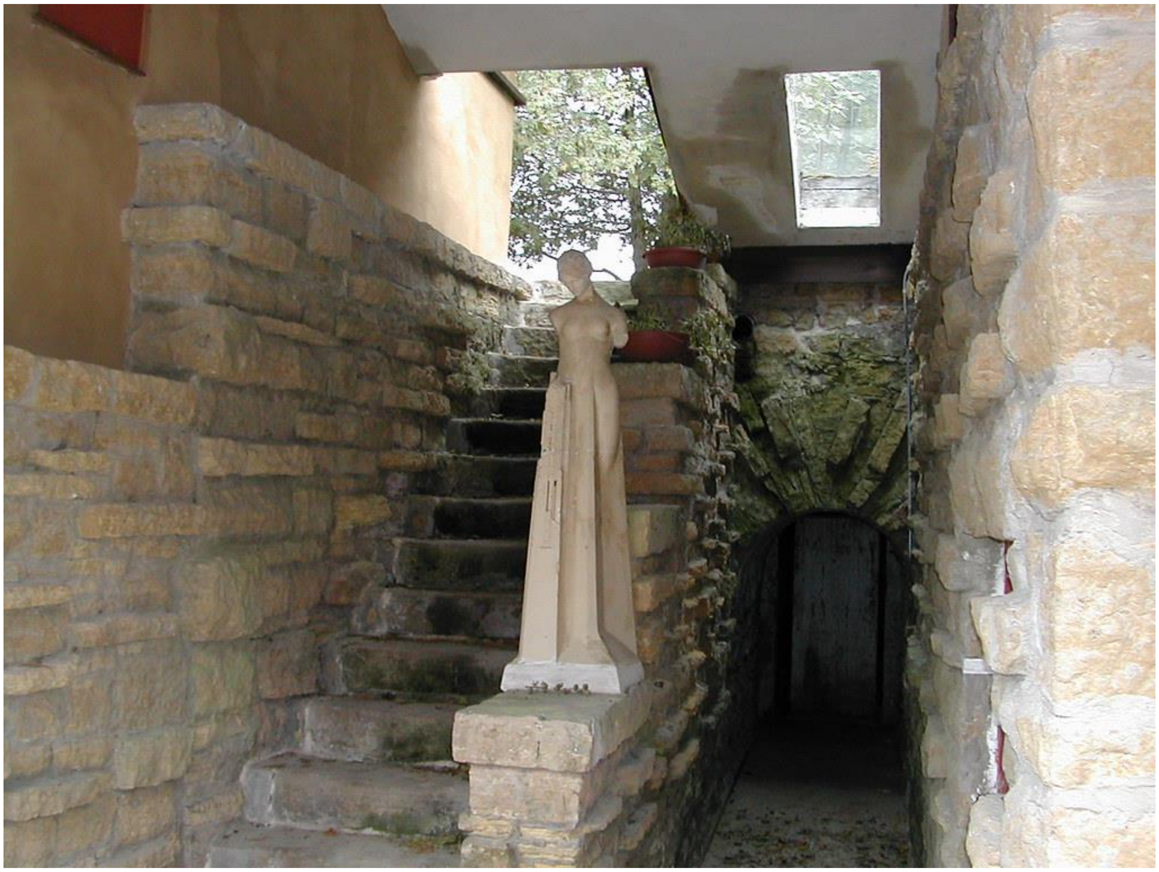

Figure 32. Wright's "Flower in the Crannied Wall" now assumes a much less dramatic role under shelter in a stairwell at Taliesin. The sculpture was moved from its original location after the figure's arms were broken by a falling oak limb (Flickr, Lize, 2007).

Architectural historian Donald Hoffman addressed the interest in Wright's work not as a contemporary philosophy for architecture but instead as memorabilia and historic artifacts in his 1992 article, "Dismembering Frank Lloyd Wright."[126] Hoffman argued that a fascination with Wright by art collectors and "a misguided museum world" has encouraged a scavenging of his architectural work as a source of valuable antiques. He lamented this as a "dismemberment of his buildings, physically and intellectually, into mere fragments."[127] Hoffman's warning provides a parallel to the same forces at play with Taliesin- an interpretation of the value of Wright's architectural ideas as primarily historic material. As a case in point, the state of Illinois paid more for six objects associated with the Dana-Thomas House than what was paid to acquire the entire property. In 1981 the state paid $1 million to buy the house and by 1988 an offer of $1,034,000 was needed to return two lamps, a music cabinet, and three original Wright drawings. While Wright, during his lifetime, was willing to exhibit his drawings, models, furniture, and architectural ideas in museums, it was always an effort to promote his idea that an organic architecture could provide contemporary solutions for the demise of American culture. Merely showcasing examples of Wright's architecture as artifacts of a past era, according to Hoffman, is "an egregious violation of his art [f]rom which in truth every trace of a living architecture has been drained."[128]

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[126] Donald Hoffman, "Dismembering Frank Lloyd Wright" in *Design Quarterly* (Spring, 1992): 2-5.
[127] Ibid., 3.

While Hoffman may have been zealous in his criticism of the appeal of Wright's work to collectors, his concern pointed to something far more threatening- the loss of the Wright's sacred narrative in a postmodern world. It is a loss of the sacred narrative which empties meaning from the object on display. The sense of loss isn't from the display of Wright's architectural elements in a museum for preservation and appreciation. Instead, it would be in the dismissal of Wright's ideas as increasingly irrelevant in the modern world, which is exactly what he did not want to occur as he wrote in his 1937 book *Architecture and the Modern Life*, "I am trying to present that architecture here in words as architecture 'organic': the living expression of living human spirit. Architecture alive."[129] Wright's life and architecture, as time progresses, may be viewed as a testimony to a genius whose ideas struggled to inspire large numbers of architects to follow his call to transform the world through his sacred narrative of an organic architecture. Historian Anna Andrzejewski has proposed the useful concept of "Wrightification" in which fragmented elements of Wright's Prairie Style have been mimicked, often superficially, by architects and builders in the Madison, Wisconsin area in an attempt to identify with modernist architectural themes.[130] Wrightification also provided a solution to popularize generic elements of the Prairie Style for building plans which could be mass-produced across America or focus on economy in building for middle-class homeowners. Such stylistic imitation, however, typically lacked commitment to a serious study of Wright's philosophy of architecture.

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[128] Ibid., 4.

[129] Wright, "Architecture and Modern Life," in *Collected Writings, Volume 3,* 240.

Wright accepted the demolition of enormously important buildings such as The Larkin Building (demolished in 1950) and the Imperial Hotel (demolished in 1967) in good stride. He took delight in the fact that tearing his buildings down often required far more effort than contractors estimated. However, he would certainly lament the loss of his concept of a living, organic architecture imbued with sacred meaning as the guide for the future. Perhaps Hoffman captured the dilemma with a twinge of despair, "Bits and pieces of his architecture are being scattered like the bones of a saint."[131]

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[130] Anna Andrzejewski, "Frank Lloyd Wright, 'Wrightification,' and Regional Modernism in Wisconsin's Capital City," *Vernacular Architecture Forum 33rd Annual Meeting*, Madison, Wisconsin (2012), 38-39.

[131] Donald Hoffman, "Dismembering Frank Lloyd Wright" in *Design Quarterly* (Spring, 1992): 2-5

CHAPTER THREE

Hierotopic Commercial Architecture:

Wright's Passion for Democracy and the Johnson Wax Buildings

Ideas of the sacred not only permeated Frank Lloyd Wright's concepts for residential architecture, such as Taliesin, but they also found their way into his plans for commercial architecture as well. Such concepts provided a substantive core for Wright's interpretation of the world and he consistently lectured and wrote about architecture using such themes. For example, in a 1946 *Taliesin Square-Paper Number 10* Wright emphasized, "The true architecture of democracy will be the externalizing of this inner seeing of the man as Jesus saw him, from within- not an animal or a robot, but a living soul."[1]

Historian Norris Kelly Smith also noted that Wright gravitated toward religious references for expressing architectural ideas, "[Wright] spoke of Jesus as the very embodiment of the ideal to which he was devoted."[2] Therefore, though it might surprise the casual observer of Wright's architecture to find religious references in his writings, it should be no shock to see these ideas being applied to all genres of architecture including purely commercial commissions. The Johnson Wax Administrative Building (1936-1939) in Racine, Wisconsin provides a perfect case in point. The building was created in the context of a commercial enterprise for the Johnson family's rapidly expanding, progressive company which produced household waxes and viewed innovative research as key to their success. Yet, Wright was simultaneously able to interpret the commission as an opportunity to create hierotopy consistent with his ideas of organic architecture but also to dedicate it to theories of labor he was concurrently hashing out in his plan for reorganizing American life called Broadacre City. He went so far as to lobby for the installation of a pipe organ for the design of the central working space of the Administrative Building called the "Great Workroom." The pipe organ was rejected by Herbert 'Hib' Johnson who was the third successive generation to oversee the company. The spiritual overtones, however, in Wright's design for this commercial space cannot be dismissed. Particularly striking in the Great Workroom design was his extraordinary effort to create an ethereal experience of natural light radiating through a ceiling made of glass tubing. Wright's concept for lighting the space not only pushed the capabilities of technology at the time but added significant cost to the project. Wright compared sunlight, as we shall see, not only with God but the light of the human soul. Natural light, in his Johnson Wax designs, was intended to symbolize spiritual and democratic enlightenment. Sunlight flooded the Great Workroom and would eventually encase a second design, the Johnson Wax Research Tower, with the use of futuristic glass-tube walls. Why would Wright make any correlation between the purposes of commercial buildings and hierotopic themes?

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[1] Wright, "Building a Democracy," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 301.

[2] Norris Kelly Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966): 158.

This chapter will explore that question by following a path that begins with Louis H. Sullivan and involves Wright's philosophical, spiritual, and architectural aims for reordering American society. It also draws from the communal goals of the Taliesin Fellowship and ends with the rationale and designs for the Johnson Wax Buildings. A detailed discussion of Wright's architectural idealism will lay the foundation for an exploration of how the Johnson Wax buildings were intentionally designed to weave hierotopic meaning into their commercial functions.

Wright's relationship with Sullivan can be interpreted in the context of an idea both men called 'Democracy' which significantly shaped their writings about American culture. Wright was highly influenced by Sullivan's theoretical framework for Democracy and wrestled most of his life to provide architectural solutions to remedy what both men envisioned to be a steady deterioration in American culture. The Johnson Wax commissions provided Wright an enlightened benefactor in Hib Johnson and the freedom to explore the architectural expressions best suited to capture the idea Sullivan had addressed in a previous generation. Hib's son, Samuel, noted that his father had the insight to surround himself with smart people and their expertise, "For example, when my father wanted advice on how to build an office building, he turned to Frank Lloyd Wright, who you could say was a consultant in architecture. The structure we got was the product of the interaction between my father and Wright."[3] Wright would likely have taken offense at Johnson's assessment that he was merely a consultant in architecture. However, he did recognize his own desperate need for a commission during the economic collapse of the Great Depression. The additional bonus was the potential of convincing Hib Johnson to create a truly democratic working environment for the administrative complex at his family-owned company. Wright would quickly discover that Johnson was as ideal of a client as he could have hoped for in the social and economic despair of the 1930's. Johnson Wax was a leader in concepts of fair treatment for workers and desired to create an office building reflective of its standard of quality for both its products and people. The company, for example, offered paid vacations for all employees beginning in 1900. A profit-sharing program was introduced in 1917 along with group life insurance. By 1926 Johnson Wax had limited the work week to forty hours and in 1934 created one of the first pension plans in America. Wright clearly had a sympathetic individual with the corporate wealth to explore the relationship between architecture, democracy, and the dignity of the American worker. Samuel C. Johnson said of his father, "He believed in the good of individual creativity and in the dignity of man and woman. He also thought of the community in much the same way."[4]

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[3] Samuel C. Johnson, *The Essence of a Family Enterprise: Doing Business the Johnson Way* (Indianapolis: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1988): 33.

Democracy, spelled by Sullivan and Wright with a capital 'D,' was a concept which meant, at least in Wright's case, a massive restructuring and decentralization of twentieth century American life. Its premise was founded on an unbounded faith in the power of both architecture and architects to reorder society based on an agrarian model of land distribution. What Wright also gleaned from his mentor, Sullivan, was a commitment to universal, or cosmic, principles as a guiding force for architecture. Sullivan and Wright believed in the need to uncover key universal principles or truths for architecture which would in turn unlock the sacred secrets of the cosmos. Wright would come to label the discovery and adherence to such universal principles as 'organic architecture' which also contained significant religious underpinnings. It was Wright's quest for Democracy which he mapped out in his idealistic, urban planning program for American society called Broadacre City. It is important to note that Wright was deeply involved in thinking through both Democracy and Broadacre City when he secured the Johnson Wax Administration Building commission in 1936. These themes, not surprisingly, found their way into its design and ultimately also allowed Wright to overtly explore hierotopic meaning in a commercial architectural context. Some ten years following the completion of the Administration Building, Wright would be given a second opportunity by the Johnson Wax Company to examine ideas of sacred space and commercial architecture in the design of a research facility. This commission would be expressed as a vertical tower which also happened to be an integral component in his plans for high-density populations in Broadacre City. Wright, therefore, created two very different commercial designs for the same company to encapsulate hierotopic meaning based upon the unique community each building served. It is beneficial to investigate the meaning Sullivan attached to Democracy, including the religious overtones, to more completely understand its effect on Wright and the Johnson Wax commissions.

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[4] Ibid., 164.

Relationship between the Material and Immaterial

Wright came to work in Sullivan's office in 1887 as a young man hoping to make his way in Chicago. As a highly capable artist, Wright was soon Sullivan's leading draftsman and spent the next six years absorbing all that Sullivan had to offer including his ideas concerning the inherent relationship between nature and architecture. Sullivan, too, defined nature with a capital 'N' and taught in his 1917 book, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings*, that great architecture was to "follow Nature's processes, Nature's rhythm's, because those processes, those rhythms are vital, organic, coherent, logical above all book-logic."[5] Sullivan's influence was both profound and lasting as documented by Wright in his 1949 tribute titled, *Genius and the Mobocracy*. The book was laced with spiritual language that further explored ideas related to Democracy which Wright had already been working on for several decades through Broadacre City as he noted, "Spirit is a science mobocracy does not know."[6] However, Wright also used *Genius and the Mobocracy* as an overdue credit to Sullivan as one of the great, unrecognized geniuses of his time, "In any century great individuals like Louis H. Sullivan have been few. [A]spiring disciples congregate at the individual font they call MASTER."[7] Sullivan was so influential for Wright's own ideas on organic architecture that historian Merfyn Davis called the six years they worked together as "the most exciting and consequential years of Wright's long and tumultuous career, when Sullivan's ideas and vision rubbed off on his youthful, receptive mind."[8] Since the concept of Democracy increasingly became a driving force in Wright's life as well, it is worth exploring Sullivan's own passion for the idea.

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[5] Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats and Other Writings* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1968): 119.

Figure 33. Louis H. Sullivan was at the height of his architectural career when Wright was hired by Adler & Sullivan as a draftsman. Wright acknowledged his enormous influence by affectionately giving him the title *lieber-meister* in later years (Chicago Architecture Center, 2016).

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[6] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Horizon Press, 1971): 13.
[7] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 19.
[8] Merfyn Davies, "The Embodiment of the Concept of Organic Expression: Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural History*, vol. 25 (1982): 120-130, 166-168.

Much has been written in architectural history on the relationship between Sullivan and his creed of ‘form follows function.’ The subject has been widely approached as design methodology by which the function of a structure was a primary consideration for determining its architectural form. Sullivan, it must be understood, viewed the connection between function and form as involving a *spiritual relationship*. Form was understood not simply as an architectural or mechanical by-product of function. Instead, form was a physical manifestation of the ‘Infinite Creative Spirit.’ Using religious discourse, Sullivan noted that this Infinite Creative Spirit was known in his mind as God, who as creative oneness was the life force behind all form. In this universal scheme *every function was in a creative spiritual search for its suited form*. This search was not simply about functions of nature searching for physical forms but a universal creative law of God affecting everything in existence. Sullivan’s idea of universal oneness held that function and form were in a constant state of existing oneness or searching for oneness. This form and function equilibrium, however, required a spiritual reality for completion. In a key paragraph from *Kindergarten Chats* Sullivan explained his worldview, “The gist of it is, I take it, behind every form we see there is a vital something or other which we do not see, yet which makes itself visible to us in that very form. In other words, in a state of nature the form exists because of the function, and this something behind the form is neither more or less that a manifestation of… what I call God.”[9]

This reality of an immaterial, spiritual existence approximated Mircea Eliade’s view of the sacred. For both Sullivan and Eliade, the sacred made itself known to humanity through its breakthrough or ‘eruption’ into the physical world. Sullivan believed that form was a universal construct which took on many kinds of appearances. He described these as ranging from definite to indefinite or nebulous versus concrete. But the unchanging aspect of form was its existential relationship as a material entity to its immaterial source. Form was a dialogue between the Infinite Creative Spirit and the finite mind. This understanding is sympathetic to what Eliade described as the sacred erupting into humanity's realm of knowing.

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[9] Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, 46.

The journey to achieving Democracy, therefore, was a quest which involved the search for God versus 'Feudalism' which symbolized archaic, unenlightened thought that resulted in the oppression and subjugation of humanity. It was the desperate condition of humanity, according to Sullivan, which created the need for such a message of freedom against the darkness of Feudalism. Both Sullivan and Wright believed that the teachings of Christ represented the new theory of Democracy for the world. This glimmer of truth, however, was polluted by a feudal church corrupted by the impulse for power and dominion.

Sullivan cloaked his concept of Democracy in many layers of religious context which is important for understanding why Wright would similarly integrate spiritual ideas into his social and architectural theories. Religious language was used extensively in Sullivan's 1908 work, *Democracy: A Man Search,* in which he argued for the great awakening of the human race to Democracy. It is from the vantage point of the spiritual quest that Sullivan equated Democracy with a universal reality or Spirit, "The God-Search and the Man-Search are in effect but two interchangeable aspects of a single aspiration- the search, by man's spirit, for the integral Spirit of Universal Life."[10] The metaphysical reality of Democracy resided in the universal spirit, which Sullivan identified as the perfect unity of life. He rejected any sense of a contrasting dualism between earthly and cosmic, but instead saw the life spirit of Democracy as universal oneness. In Sullivan's worldview the Spirit or All-Life was, indeed, a reality which existed outside of the human context. The Spirit was an independent entity which interacted with humans, nature, and all of created order, and the feudal mind was the flaw which kept humanity from realizing true social integrity. In the battle between the forces of good and evil humans necessarily participated in either force as there was no neutral place for one to simply exist. A life was to be measured in its contribution to either Democracy or Feudalism.

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[10] See Louis Sullivan, *Democracy: A Man-Search* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961): 4.

Not surprisingly, Wright included this profane nature of feudalism in his own writing on Democracy,

> "The only assumption made by Broadacres as an ideal is this: that these… rights will become the possession of the citizen as soon as the folly of endeavoring to cheat him of their democratic values become as apparent to those who hold, (feudal survivors or survivals), as it is becoming apparent to the thinking people who are held, blindly abject or subject against their will. In short, as soon as the meaning of Democracy becomes clear to America."[11]

While Wright was working out the social and architectural elements of Broadacre City on paper, Hib Johnson was similarly concerned about how concepts of community and social responsibility impacted his employees' sense of wellness. He developed a concept of 'inside-out' which he described in terms of social environment and health, "We cannot have a healthy environment within a company unless we have an equally healthy environment outside in which employees can live and work."[12] Creating a healthy environment not only for workers, but for a larger community was of keen interest to both Wright and Johnson. Wright, however, understood architecture as the primary tool in the reshaping of American society. Johnson had no grand vision of recreating the nation, but instead was in search of a sophisticated expression of form for the building that would represent his company, "I wanted to build the best office building in the world, and the only way to do that was to get the greatest architect in the world."[13] Johnson would certainly pay an enormous sum to see this goal realized, but he faithfully carried through with his intention.[14] His son, Samuel C. Johnson, credits two transforming events for moving Johnson Wax from a small, Midwestern company to a major corporation. One was the insight to sponsor the *Fibber McGee and Molly* radio show which reached countless Americans with the Johnson Wax brand. The other was Wright's Administration Building, which drew international attention to not only their products but also their philosophy of being a socially responsible business that provided a dramatically new concept for the work environment.[15] It was a bold experiment that created national interest in the relationship between the wellness of workers and architectural innovation.

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[11] Wright, "The New Frontier: Broadacre City," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 47.

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[12] Joe W. Lindner, ed., "Philanthropy and Social Responsibility," *Johnson Wax Magazine*, vol. 59, no. 1 (Dec., 1986): 58.

[13] Ibid., 7.

[14] The final cost of the Administration Building totaled one and a half year's entire corporate profit for Johnson Wax. It was a risky expenditure for a growing company to allocate for an architectural project.

[15] See Samuel C. Johnson, *The Essence of a Family Enterprise: Doing Business the Johnson Way* (Indianapolis: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1988) 130-138.

Wright incorporated hierotopic themes into the Administration Building to create an environment exhibiting unity between sacrality and Democracy. It was intended to create a cathedral-like sense of inspiration and awe in a secular business setting which is exactly what Hib Johnson desired, "[Hib] wanted a building where the people who worked there could be happy. [A]n uplifting and invigorating work environment."[16]

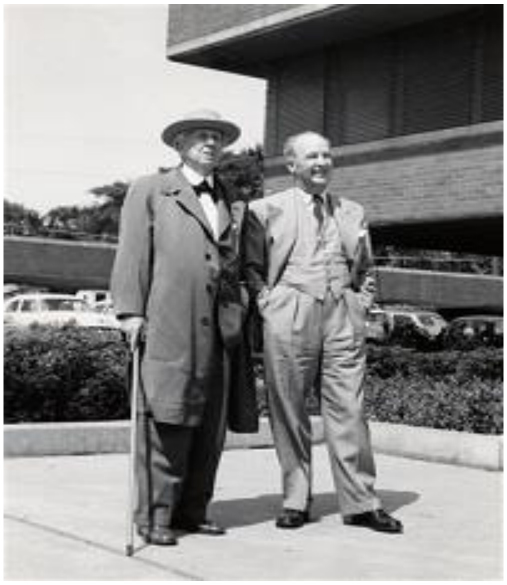

Figure 34. Wright and Hib Johnson. Johnson helped reinvigorate Wright's career with the Administration Building commission during the Great Depression. Both men had progressive ideas about architecture and its role in creating inspiration and a sense of happiness for employees (Courtesy SC Johnson, 1953).

Wright, it should be noted, interpreted Democracy as being consistent with religious ideals. The concept paralleled the preaching he heard for years from within his own family's religious heritage. His family's grounding in Unitarianism created notable thinkers both in Wales and America and Wright was keenly aware of this liberal strain of religious thought. His mother's brother, Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, was a powerful liberal voice in the debates within the Western Unitarian Conference at the end of the nineteenth century. Universal unity, not denominational division, was at the heart of the Unitarian life which was not simply unity within the Christian faith, but unity among all religions on earth. His family's liberal religious vision sought the universal principle of unity which existed in all humanity. Wright would strike a similar tone in his beliefs as he noted in 1939, "Yet, in this modern era Art, Science, Religion- these three will unite and be one, unity achieved with organic architecture as center."[17] Lloyd Jones Unitarianism, of course, was an important part of the lens through which Wright understood life itself. The religious ideology and theological content of his family's faith shaped his interpretation of Democracy and Wright was able to appreciate and absorb Sullivan's spiritual principles through this religious filter. Sullivan, unfortunately, was viewed by his contemporaries as a tragic failure due to his impoverished later years and alcoholism. He died a penniless and mostly forgotten person. Wright, however, viewed Sullivan as a misunderstood genius. Why was Wright one of the few individuals able to appreciate Sullivan in such a different light? Wright gleaned the symbiotic relationship between spirituality and architecture from his *lieber-meister* (Sullivan) which was sympathetic to his religious understanding of the world through his own version of mystic-Unitarianism. At the end of his life, Sullivan believed that Wright's work would have been impossible without his influence. He concluded that Wright was the only architect who truly understood Democracy.

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[16] Johnson, *The Essence of a Family Enterprise*, 137.

Organic Architecture and the Theology of 'Principle'

Wright ultimately summarized Sullivan's primary influence on his life using the construct of ‘principle’ which is key for a meaningful interpretation of what he meant by ‘organic architecture.’ Belief in the idea of universal principle or truth, was a predictable pattern of thought for Wright if one understands the influence of his uncle Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones and the debates within the Western Unitarian Conference in the late nineteenth century. The important theological debates of the 1880’s centered on the differentiation between ‘principle’ and ‘belief’ in religion. The theological question was in reference to the need for creeds or affirmations of faith as an element in the religious life of Unitarians. Wright’s uncle was at the forefront of the liberal position denying the use of creeds as he believed they impeded the freedom of religious thought. Rev. William Channing Gannett, who would have several versions of his own sermon printed on a hand press by William Herman Winslow as *The House Beautiful* between 1896-1898 using Wright’s visual designs, was the other strong voice in these debates.[18] Both Jones and Gannett argued that principle was the universal and unchanging construct upon which all religion was grounded. Jones, for example, understood principle to encompass ideas of the existence of the divine and the impulse toward ethical relationships between people. The mission of the modern church was to preach principle as universal, not sectarian, truth. In this Unitarian debate beliefs were viewed by Jones and Gannett as time-bound, specific manifestations of universal principle. Gannett argued, for example, that divisions of belief which separated religion were of far less importance than the principle of religion for humanity. It is plausible that Wright, as a Lloyd Jones clan member and Unitarian, was exposed to the significance of this debate between principle and belief within his denomination and family. While Wright does not document any impression of these Unitarian debates, his own thought paralleled the use of principle as a universal construct, "Organic architecture does prove the unity of structure and the unity of nature of aesthetics *with principle* [italics mine]."[19]

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[17] Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970): vii.

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[18] See William C. Gannett, *The House Beautiful* (Rohnert Park: Pomegranate Artbooks: 1996).

Wright specifically engaged the idea of universal principle to provide a summary of Sullivan's life. He offered this unique perspective of Sullivan, "Principle is all and single the reality the beloved master, Louis Sullivan ever loved."[20] Sullivan's Democracy, in Wright's view, appeared as a manifestation of principle which in this sense indicated Sullivan's passion for the notion of universal truth which was unchanging. Integrity, for example, was a principle and as Sullivan noted, "the most ancient and modern thing in the cosmos."[21] The principle of integrity provided the essence of Democratic oneness. Sullivan's concept of Democratic oneness was easily translated as harmony and the principle of unity in the Lloyd Joneses' Unitarian perspective. In Sullivan, Wright found an architectural prophet of unity who proclaimed the same Unitarian sermons his family preached from pulpits which was not simply principle, but also eternal truth as Wright saw it, "No stopping anywhere once the eternal 'principle' prophesied anew by [Sullivan] so clearly in the immediate field of his symphonic eloquence was recognized." [22] This was Sullivan's teaching which meshed, as Wright noted, with several dimensions of his life: his Unitarian roots, childhood Froebel blocks, a love of the land, and the idea of principle as universal truth. He wrote with admiration, "So the philosophy of which Louis H. Sullivan was now champion was not Greek to me in that early day but easily prophetic."[23]

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[19] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy,* 99. See also *Joseph Siry, Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[20] Ibid., 94. Wright noted in his book, *In the Cause of Architecture*, "Principles are not invented, they are not evolved by one man or one age, but Mr. Sullivan's practice of them amounted to a revelation." See Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 1: 1894-1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 86.
[21] Sullivan, *Democracy*, 149.
[22] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy,* 78. Wright would note, "The spirit of unity proclaimed by this poet-architect was a very familiar voice to the Lloyd Jones clan."

Unity, or organic architecture, was conceived theoretically with Sullivan but given full life in Wright who offered his own interpretation of form and function: "Use both the word organic and the word Nature in deeper senses- essence instead of fact: say form and function are one. Form and idea then do become inseparable; the consequence not material at all except as spiritual and material are naturally of each other."[24]

Organic form and function at Johnson Wax was to involve Wright's most creative and daring architectural solution for a commercial building up to this point in his career. The Larkin Building (1904-1906) preceded the Administration Building by some thirty years and was a far more conservative design. Both structures were similarly set in a drab urban environment which caused Wright to create buildings which inwardly oriented. A healthy form and function for each neutralized the relationship with the site and instead created an inspiring world within. Johnson Wax, however, was a quantum leap in the manipulation of shapes, colors, and lighting as a representation of nature. Wright proposed two basic components for the Administration Building. A massive, rectangular room sheltered under mushroom-like columns would house and inspire the employees while an attached parking structure would provide automobile and service access. Exercise was important to Hib Johnson so a recreation deck and squash court were placed on the second level of the parking structure. These two primary forms would be separated by the pedestrian entry and lobby. A mezzanine encircled the Great Workroom which provided open office spaces for mid-level managers.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Wright, *Autobiography*, 146. Wright continued, "If form really 'followed function'- as the Master declared- here was the direct means of a more spiritual idea that form and function are one."

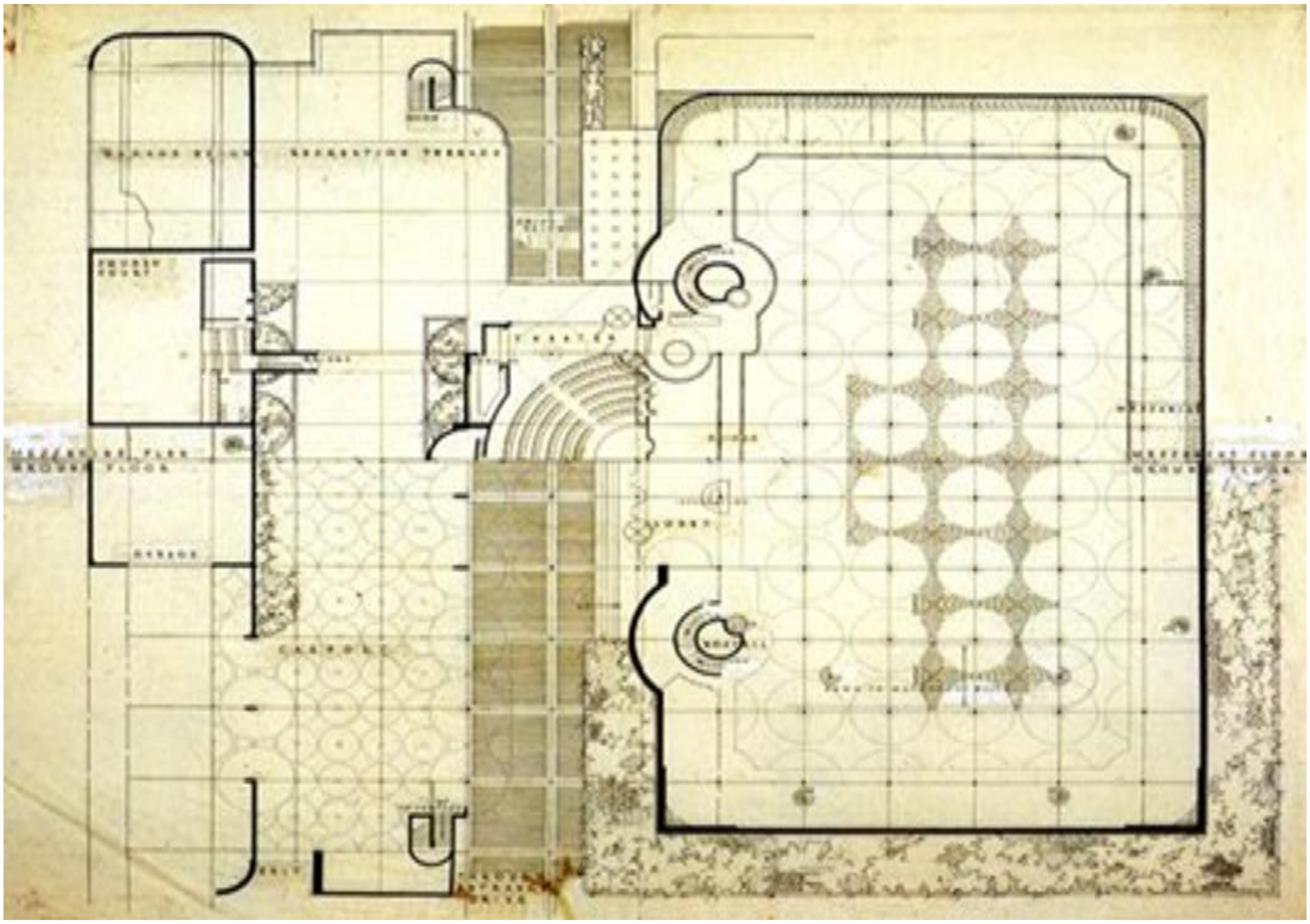

Figure 35. Floor plan for the Johnson Wax Administration Building. The Great Workroom is the rectangle located to the right with ground level parking on the left. Wright connected these main elements with a second-story theater and third-story executive office spaces including Hib Johnson's penthouse office (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1936).

The small second-story held a theater for 200 viewers while the rounded, V-shaped third story provided a centrally located penthouse for Johnson and the executive conference room. The two wings that radiated outward from Johnson's penthouse each contained offices for executives of the two primary divisions of Johnson Wax (operations and advertising/public relations).

Form and function included both hierotopic and hierarchical themes as Wright and Johnson were immensely concerned about embedding inspiration and harmony into the building complex. However, the design also contained a distinctly hierarchical flavor with Johnson's penthouse occupying the central location which presented clear patriarchal symbolism for the company. Johnson's office was flanked by executives on this highest level of the design. The mezzanine provided the location for mid-level managers while the ground level of the Great Workroom presented an open concept for employees. Glass-encased rooms muffled noises from loud, duplicating machines, but no private office spaces were offered at either the lower or mezzanine levels. Much like the Larkin Building atrium, the Great Workroom would be buzzing with activity for everyone to see and hear throughout the workday. Wright's idea of organic form and function incorporated his own interpretation of the value of work and the need to spiritually inspire employees with materials, scale, light, and intimacy in architecture, "Wright's decision to put all the clerical workers in a single room had several implications. He considered work to have spiritual value… [T]he great sunlit space [e]voked a feeling of unity similar to that experienced in Gothic cathedrals..."[25] The very concept of organic architecture emerged out of universal principle for Wright as he noted, "Principle is the only safe tradition. Organic architecture- natural architecture- is capable of infinite variety in concept and from, but faithful always to principle. It is- in fact and in deed- itself principle."[26] While Sullivan ultimately waited for a social revolution to transpire through sacred Democracy, Wright foremost recognized the concept as a methodology for developing architectural solutions for commissions like Johnson Wax. His goal for democratic form and function was to create architecture that offered spiritual and aesthetic unity with the guiding principles of the cosmos and the practical demands of the commission itself. In doing so, all architecture held the potential for sacrality.

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[25] Jonathan Lipman, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Johnson Wax Buildings* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1986): 93-94.

[26] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Story of the Tower," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 145.

Organic Law

The essence of Democracy, to Sullivan, was also a sense of oneness, or unity, within the hearts and minds of people. He viewed Democracy as a new organic law that would inspire people to create a new level of self-governance, which is also key in

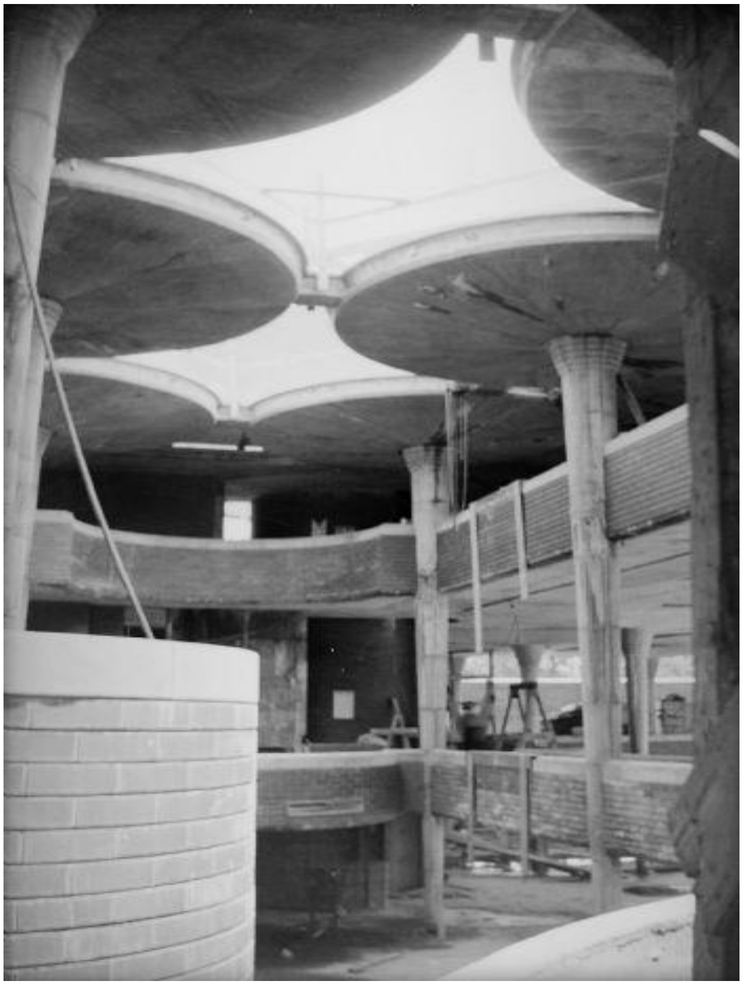

Figure 36. The Great Workroom under construction. Wright pushed available construction technology to its limits to flood the Great Workroom with light. The effect was intended to parallel an experience in a cathedral (Courtesy the Historical Society of Wisconsin, John Howe, ca. 1936).

understanding Wright's ideas for Broadacre City. This oneness was a guide for both moral human interaction and unity with nature. Sullivan saw these two modes of unity, human and nature, as spiritual relationships which were part of 'The New Way.' This 'New Way' would emerge as an organic law in the hearts of all people in the forthcoming age of Democracy. Wright, however, had the insight to mix principle, organic Democracy, and architecture into his new order based in his master's work, or "[T]his new democratic architecture we call organic."[27] Smith has suggested that Wright's use of the word "organic" should also be understood to encapsulate meaning that had religious overtones, "Wright's chief value-word was 'organic.' [I]t had for him the kind of meaning we customarily designate by the word 'religious': in general, it pertained to his emotional commitment to certain convictions about man and the world."[28] This new vision of an organic architecture called not for a social revolution as Sullivan predicted, but an architectural revolution which was inherent to the life spring of Democracy. It was Wright's organic revelation of architecture that held the keys to Democracy. Wright wrote, "Yes citizen. If we want to really live in fruitful peace instead of frightful conflict, simple principles of organic architecture not only contain the basis but are the center of any possible establishment of a form for a true democratic order."[29]

This detailed examination of Sullivan's ideas explains why Wright was so passionate in his quest to define and participate in the arrival of a new form of self-governance in America through Broadacre City and why Johnson Wax was such a significant philosophical commission for him. Echoes of Sullivan permeated Wright's own quest, "Democracy and architecture, if both are organic, cannot be two separate things. [B]oth must come from within, spontaneously. In architecture, as in Democracy, this organic natural way is new to us only because the interior nature of man is still new to mankind, and Democracy is still a search for organic form."[30] It was this ongoing concern for Democracy that prompted Wright, when receiving the American Institute of Architects prestigious Gold Medal in 1949 to offer this chastisement, "We call our faith Democracy- but when are we, ourselves, going to learn to understand this faith and ourselves practice what we preach? *When* are we going to learn to *build for Democracy?* When are we going to learn the true significance of Democracy?"[31] The Administration Building gave Wright the opportunity to explore his passion for Democracy in the context of a commercial commission and its relation to the meaning of labor.

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[27] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 38.
[28] Smith, *Study in Architectural Content*, 127.
[29] Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 40.

The Gospel of Work

A key component of Wright's construct of Democracy was his belief in the redemptive quality of work. In his autobiography, he described his own discovery of the value of manual labor in his autobiography as an epiphany. As a young boy in the Valley, Wright reflected on how difficult it was for him to adjust to the rigors of the demanding physical work on a farm. Casting himself as a reluctant learner, Wright recalled doing his best to hide and even run away from the strenuous daily chores. However, each time he ran away his uncle would simply track him down, bring him back to the farm, and get him up early in the morning for another day's work. Wright portrayed this gradual and difficult transformation as involving an awakening in which he eventually grasped both the physical and spiritual significance of manual labor. He was shaped into a believer in the dignity of hard work and began to interpret the land in relationship to work, "The entire field is becoming a linear pattern of Work."[32]

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[30] Wright, *"Building a Democracy*," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 300.

[31] Wright, "AIA Acceptance Address," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 328.

Although his uncles, Enos and James, showed Wright the value of physical work it was his Uncle Jenkin who offered a theological value of labor through his preaching in Chicago. Jones' message of physical and spiritual unity would have simultaneously paralleled what Wright was learning from Sullivan, "It is one of the Jones' cardinal principles that everything is unity, one law governs material and spiritual realities. Since sowing wheat and educating children are two versions of the same thing, then observing nature, reading a Department of Agriculture Bulletin and studying the Bible, all three, lead the receptive mind to truth."[33] Jones continued, "Good corn and good boys are raised by the same process."

It was this spiritual principle of unity which would allow Wright to comfortably conceive of a commercial building like Johnson Wax as a form of sacred space. If the principle of organic unity Wright was exposed to through his uncle's theology could understand an agricultural publication and the Bible as being inherently the same, then it followed, for Wright at least, that a commercial building like Johnson Wax might provide religious and ethical functions similar to a church. The influence of Rev. Jones on Wright's own worldview has likely been underestimated. Jones, for example, bemoaned the condition of urban life in America as much as his nephew would years later as Wright noted, "Alas! How much bad sowing is there in our municipalities. How much poor planning in our cities!"[34] Wright followed his uncle's use of spelling Nature with a capital 'N' and interpreting the Midwest prairie using Edenic analogies. To Jones, as with Wright, the pioneers of America were mythic, spiritual leaders on par with the Old Testament prophets, "Religion begins out there also. The joys and inspirations of the prophet are interpreted by the life of the pioneer. The leader in the realms of the spirit parallels the experience of the men who converted the wild prairie into gardens."[35] Wright certainly had full exposure to Jones' theology while in Chicago as he not only attended services at All Souls Church but also was a frequent guest at the parsonage. He made this observation about Jones, "My uncle's soul seemed a sort of spiritual dynamo that never rested. His preaching like Grandfather's, had force and fervor."[36]

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[32] Wright, *Autobiography*, 121.

[33] Jenkin Lloyd Jones, "The Agricultural Social Gospel in America: The Gospel of the Farm" in *Studies in American Religion*, vol. 19, ed. Thomas E. Graham (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986): 57,77.

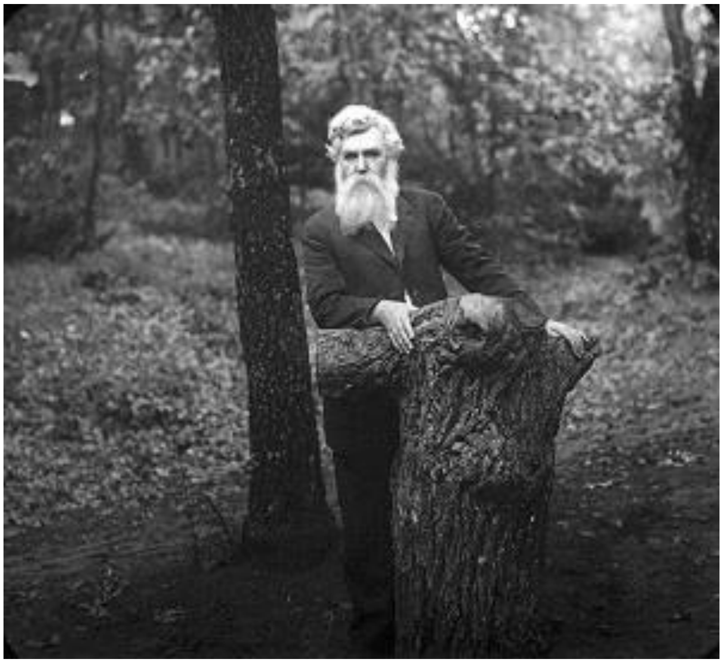

Figure 37. Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones (above) was an enormous influence on Wright during his young adulthood in Chicago. Wright attended his uncle's nationally known All Souls Unitarian Church and spent ample time in Jones' home (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, ca. 1905-1912).

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[34] Ibid., 68.
[35] Ibid., 16.
[36] Wright, *Autobiography*, 73.

Wright would adapt his hard-earned lessons of labor on the farm to a concept he called ‘the gospel of work’ and he took great pleasure in exposing young apprentices to its value, “Taliesin is preaching an unpopular gospel. I admit: preaching, by practice, the gospel of Work.”[37] Wright and his apprentices practiced this ‘gospel of work’ by farming the fields surrounding Taliesin to make it a self-sustaining enterprise. This gospel of work had a direction correlation to Wright’s interest in elevating the dignity of work for the American laborer. At the core of the Broadacre City proposal was Wright’s insistence on the need for the United States to return to the land as the center of hope and productivity for the American family, “Broadacre City is the entire country and predicated upon the basis that every man woman and child in America is entitled to ‘own’ an acre of ground so long as they live on it or use it and every man at least owning his own car or plane.”[38] Wright would channel a great deal of his theory for urban living into the commission for Johnson Wax as they were simultaneous endeavors. The Fellowship completed the scale model of Broadacre City between late 1934 and early 1935 which was placed on tour in major American cities through the rest of the year. It provided details and visualization of Wright’s ideas on urban planning which he had been mulling over for some five years.

The commission for the Administration Building arrived in the summer of 1936 while Broadacre City was certainly fresh on Wright’s mind. The ties between them are unmistakable as Wright’s initial proposal to Johnson was to move the Administration Building to a new location in the countryside, some five miles from Racine. It would have been an opportunity to create a commercial version of Taliesin far removed from the gritty appearance of this industrial community. However, when Johnson insisted on its urban location Wright was forced to turn the building *inward* to insulate it from the dreariness of its surroundings and focus on the sacred meaning of labor instead of vistas of nature. Since he was not allowed to offer sweeping views of nature Wright *recreated* nature, *natura naturata*, in the interior of the building, particularly in the Great Workroom. Therefore, both the sacredness of work and a recreated nature could exist in a symbiotic relationship to elevate the quality of life for the employees.

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[37] Ibid., 400.
[38] Wright, “The New Frontier,” *Collected Writings, Vol. 4*, 51.

Sustainability and Community

The Great Depression had a devastating impact not only on the American laborer but also on Wright himself who remained without work for years. The Depression essentially shut down his architectural practice and he saw only two realized projects between the years 1928-1936. Wright's words reflected bitterness over the lack of commissions and even the ability to maintain property, "This economic, now historic nationalistic failure of the attempt by Production to control Consumption, so ignorantly termed a 'depression,' is here. Economic breakdown is so complete at this time that no workman's hammer is ringing in our great state of Wisconsin."[39] These years were a financial drought and Wright desperately turned to writing and lecturing as a source of income. He also had plenty of time on his hands to rethink his concept of American culture through Broadacre City and he now saw his efforts as a means to remedy unemployment, "Broadacres as conceived here would automatically end unemployment and all its evils forever. There would never be labor enough, nor could there be under-consumption."[40]

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[39] Wright, *Autobiography*, 388.

Broadacre City was conceived primarily as a four square-mile community for fourteen hundred families which would be replicated throughout the United States. Wright's philosophy centered on the sustainability of the small community guided by the leadership of architects or an 'architocracy.' His democratic vision was intended to reshape American society though architecture and to bring about a spiritual enlightenment of its population. Wright understood Democracy, as Sullivan had proposed, as the ultimate social state which struck the proper balance between selfhood and a collective unity which, above all else, preserved individual freedom as the true expression of democratic ideals, "Humanity, especially on a democratic basis, lives only by virtue of individuality."[41] In this vein both the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu and Jesus, according to Wright, exemplified and taught the truth about the dignity of individualism.

Many of Wright's ideas for decentralized urban planning were consistent with a late-nineteenth century American ideal of home ownership away from the congestion of the inner city. Owning such a home, for some, became a symbol of success, hard work, and individualism, or in other words, fulfillment of the American dream. However, Wright did not maintain much faith in the ability of government to provide for the common good of society, "It is notorious that the human animal is of such a character and nature that he cannot be trusted with authority. And just when we need quality the most, here comes mediocrity rising into high places. We have the domination of the mediocre."[42] Wright did not eliminate communal architecture in Broadacre City but concentrated it in vertical buildings as residential apartments. Each story of a tower would include park-like features such as a balcony terrace to tie the building into environmental themes. Such tall buildings would be set some distance from one another in large green zones of some thirty acres each.

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[40] Wright, "The New Frontier," *Collected Writings, Vol. 4,* 48.
[41] Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1954 in Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 113:7 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture,* 68.
[42] Transcript of voice recording made of Wright in 1957 in Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives,

Contemplating and designing cities of the future, as Wright was doing with Broadacre City, is a complicated endeavor involving projections about how built environments may someday interact with the landscape, technologies, and population growth. Wright's own futuristic guesses were rooted in what he believed to be the sanctifying effects of nature on all individuals whether in a single-family residence or high-rise apartment structure. His primary focus in Broadacre City was to advocate closeness with the land through organic architecture and the decentralization of populations by spreading cities out with generously large residential plots. Centralization, where necessary, could be kept humane and inspiring with large green spaces providing buffers to combat aesthetic and social concerns of overcrowding. Broadacre City, with its emphasis on a harmonious relationship between nature, architecture, and human populations was surprisingly consistent with the ancient concept of Chinese urban planning called *Shan-Shui City*. Sociologist Chen Yulin noted that *Shan-Shui* is a historic Chinese model for the harmonious integration of urban environments with mountains *(Shan*) and water (*Shui*) as a means of social engineering or "aesthetics bringing out the best in each other."[43] Yulin explored how *Shan-Shui City* provided an urban planning model in China which advocated for the harmonious relationship between visual scenery, natural topography, and the built environment.

Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, no. 200, 11 as referenced in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, 76.

[43] Chen Yulin, *Shan-Shui City: A Chinese Spatial Planning Tradition*, 46th ISOCARP Congress (2010): 1.

Yulin was most concerned with the rapid destruction of *Shan-Shui* harmony in modern China and "the increasing power of modern technologies to change [destroy] the nature settings."[44] As rapid urban sprawl disregards the environment and detaches itself from *Shan-Shui*, Yulin argued it creates a dehumanizing effect in which people lose "the delightful life."[45]

Wright was similarly concerned about the degradation of American culture as it moved away from a primarily agricultural model of society to a modern, urban-centered society. His scathing critiques of New York City certainly captured his disdain for the aesthetics, functionality, and quality of life in large American cities. However, for Wright the promise of 'the delightful life' lay not only in a renewed connection to the land for America, but the need for architecture that was consistent with principles of beauty and spiritual harmony. His concept of 'sustainability' was grounded in a reordering of American culture based upon the sacrosanct relationship of organic architecture and the land. However, Wright's surprisingly integrated futuristic ideas of nuclear energy, skyscrapers, and private gyrocopters as compatible with the good life in Broadacre City. Sustainability, however, had an entirely different connotation for Wright from its current meaning in the twenty-first century. Futurism, sustainability, and urban design today are primarily concerned with concepts of a community's energy consumption and carbon footprint instead of the relationship between spiritual harmony and urban aesthetics.[46] .

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[44] Ibid., 8. Yulin also warned about the need to protect existing historic *Shan-Shui City* sites from destruction as cities rapidly expand in China.

[45] Ibid., 9.

[46] Case in point is Abu Dhabi's futuristic city of Masdar which had a goal of becoming the world's first zero-carbon city. Sustainability, in this sense, had little to do with Shan-Shui but everything to do with harnessing the most advanced technologies to create a Jetson-like city of the future paving the way for other green communities. Author Suzanne Goldberg, however, noted that the city appears to be "the

Wright, along with being concerned about sustainability, relished the opportunity to design a structure for a progressive company which could be used as a laboratory for promoting community. Johnson Wax was Wright's foray into expressing the sacred value of work and developing *koinonia* around it. This was a familiar theme concurrently being explored by Wright through the Taliesin Fellowship. The Fellowship was an experiment in communal living which centered upon Wright's architectural, religious, and social ideas. The subtitle in *An Autobiography* described the proposal of the Fellowship as "A Station for the Flight of the Soul."[47] Both Wright and Olgivanna made no bones about the idea that the Fellowship was intended to be a holistic experience involving everything from working the land to preparing food, or a "kind of daily work-life" also described as an "organic life."[48] Since his architectural practice was at a standstill, it was also an innovative idea for an additional source of badly needed revenue and purpose during the throes of the Depression. The Taliesin Fellowship opened in October, 1932 and welcomed 23 apprentices at the cost of $650 per year in tuition.

While Wright was the figurehead of the endeavor, Olgivanna's own experience in a communal environment under the mystic Georji Gurdjieff played a key role in the structuring of its day-to-day operations. Gurdjieff taught that individuals lived in a lower form of hypnotic sleep that could be transcended only by awakening one's consciousness through personal discipline which included challenging physical labor, voluntary suffering, and participation in sacred dances. Olgivanna, as a young woman, submitted to Gurdjieff's demanding communal lifestyle for several years and in the process also

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world's first green ghost-town." Not only has the goal of being a zero-carbon city been abandoned for practical reasons, the experiment in urban and social planning has failed in its ability to inspire people to want to live and work there.

[47] Wright, *Autobiography*, 389.

[48] Ibid., 392.

learned the practicalities of feeding and caring for a community of devotees. These lessons served her well in managing similar details for the Fellowship which was advertised as a center for architectural education, but also realistically provided a source of income and free manual labor. However, it also offered a forum for Wright to gather his own 'disciples' and spread his ideas concerning mystic-Unitarianism, organic architecture, and the dignity of labor. The influence of his aunts' Hillside Home School was reflected in the non-traditional manner of training which centered on the value of all work, more akin to medieval apprenticeship, whether cooking or fieldwork, and the practical experience of construction and management of Wright's own projects by apprentices. As Friedland and Zellman pointed out, "[T]he Taliesin Fellowship was intended to be a far-reaching social experiment- a prototype, in fact, for a new form of American community."[49]

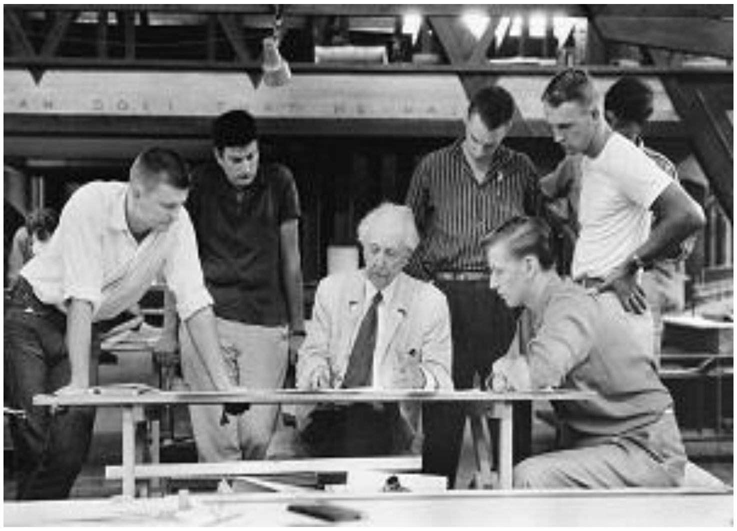

Figure 38. The Taliesin Fellowship was greatly influenced by Wright's concept of education gleaned from his aunts' Hillside Home School and Olgivanna Wright's experience in a communal lifestyle. It was an unconventional enterprise which included manual labor, artistic performance, daily chores, and architectural studies through Wright's real-world commissions (Courtesy Getty Images, Marvin Koner, ca. 1950).

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[49] Friedland and Zellman, *The Fellowship*, 161.

Wright's emphasis on the dignity of work in the Fellowship also hearkened back to the similar values espoused by the Cistercians and their medieval monastic communities. Of particular relevance to the Taliesin Fellowship were the ideas of a location in a rural setting, a meaningful connection with the land, *conversi* who were attached to the monastery to aid in manual labor, a goal of financial self-sufficiency, and the elevation of labor as an expression of fulfilment in life. The Cistercians embraced the role of laymen, or *conversi*, who took vows of lifelong service and provided valuable manual labor. The *conversi* were viewed as 'quasi-monks' and treated as full members of the community as they devotedly worked the land which allowed monks to more fully tend to spiritual matters.[50] Wright did not gloss over a fundamental conversion to his gospel of work in the apprentices and labeled it with a spiritual overtone as 'the world of interior discipline.' The success of the Fellowship depended on enlightening young minds (and strong backs) as to the dignity of all forms of manual labor, "The concept that all work is important is new. There is no menial labor. [T]he field work is as important a responsibility as the work in draughting rooms."[51] Wright described this transformation in one apprentice in a manner that might ring from the same kind of spiritual enterprise as in a monastery. The apprentice initially balked at doing kitchen labor, but he eventually came to an enlightened view of it as an inner discipline worthy of focus and respect. This, in turn, led to his mastery of cooking and flower arranging. Interestingly, the 'conversion' of this apprentice mentioned nothing about being exposed to architectural ideas. Instead, it was discovering the dignity of manual labor that offered inner freedom. This was ultimately the kind of transformation Wright and Olgivanna intended for the

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[50] *The Cistercian Abbeys of Britain: From the Concourse of Men*, ed. David Robinson (London: B T Batsford, 2002): 7-13.
[51] Wright, *Autobiography*, 425.

Taliesin experience, one which would create a new loyalty that superseded ties to biological families, "This participation in our maintenance has a strengthening and unifying effect on the group. Taliesin has become their real home."[52]

If there were any doubt that Wright envisioned the Fellowship as a foray into the world of inner discipline and the ultimate discovery of the meaning of self, in a parallel to monastic training, his own reflections concerning the role of an apprentice went so far as to offer the model of Christ and his disciples. Wright called this journey of self-discovery the Alter-Ego and tied it to the idea of discipleship, "The disciple is a legitimate form of the Alter Ego. Jesus had twelve disciples, such as they were, and there were such as they always are."[53] Using spiritual language Wright continued by describing himself as the master that offered the true path of self-enlightenment for apprentices, "[The apprentice] will gradually grow independent by way of the sincerity of his devotion to his master; his devotion becoming the door or window through which he sees what his master sees: [p]erhaps being saved years of wasted effort by the light that shines from his master. [T]hen only is he an honest asset to the Fellowship."

Johnson Wax was to be a counterpoint to Taliesin, a statement that when an unnatural building environment was presented to Wright, he would recreate nature and focus on the value of interior discipline through work. Taliesin reveled in the intimate connection with sacred nature through its place in nature. Its interior was designed to immerse one in nature whether through its sightlines into nature or its materials taken from the Valley. Johnson Wax had to offer an entirely differently kind of sacred correlation. Wright, as was noted earlier, desperately wanted to move the entire project

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[52] Ibid., 426.
[53] Ibid., 463.

five miles out of Racine into a setting where he would have been most comfortable. Such a move, which Johnson rejected, would have provided the opportunity for Wright to have explored a segment of Broadacre City through the Administration Building. The design, more than likely, would have been more akin to Taliesin, a celebration of nature in its natural state.

Wright wanted to place the Johnson Wax community in nature as was Taliesin. One wonders how different the design for the Administration Building might have been had Johnson agreed. Instead of needing to build a cocoon, an insulated structure that looked inward, Wright would have likely been set loose to create a symbiotic structure that happily looked outward to nature. One might envision an entirely different skin of the building permeated by clear views peering outward into the surrounding world. Instead, due to Johnson's insistence that the building remain in Racine and located adjacent to other unfortunately bland buildings and an "utterly unworthy environment," Wright turned the concept inward to offer a man-made *natura naturata*.[54] If he couldn't place the building in Eden he would re-create the garden himself. It would have to become a metaphor for the Garden, with tree tops and sunlight, which simultaneously celebrated interior discipline and the sanctity of labor. Noted architectural historian Kenneth Frampton pointed out that the Administration Building, "It is at one and the same time both *res publica* and unspoilt nature, both corporate cathedral and the original domain of God."[55] It had to become a different kind of hierotopy more akin to Unity Temple in Oak Park than the natural setting of Taliesin. The expression of form, due to constrictions of location, called for a different manifestation of sacred nature. And, if his

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[54] Ibid., 468.

[55] Jonathan Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, xii. See introduction by Kenneth Frampton.

Uncle Jenkins was correct that all matter, whether a Bible or agricultural pamphlet, had equal significance, then a purely commercial structure could certainly be interpreted in sacred terms, especially if it celebrated the gospel of work. It would be a temple of sorts, dedicated to the progressive ideas Wright was concurrently developing in his concepts for Broadacre City. Johnson Wax would be a place where sacred Democracy could play out in the manufacturing of household wax products.

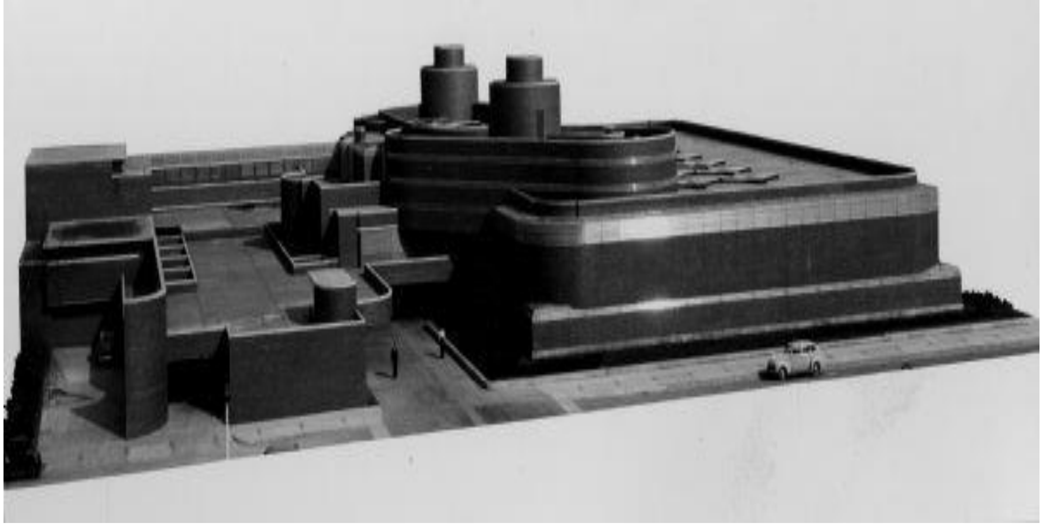

Figure 39. Model of the Administration Building detailing Wright's concept to insulate the structure from its surroundings in Racine by essentially eliminating exterior windows (Courtesy the Wisconsin Historical Society, 1936).

The Administration Building Commission

Johnson Wax was a family-owned business and one of the most progressive companies of its time. The Johnson family valued and promoted the concept of a corporate family rather than an impersonal bureaucracy. They instituted a forty-hour work week in 1917, years ahead of other American companies and maintained a 'no-layoff' policy through the depths of the Great Depression. While it was a rapidly growing corporation in the 1930's, it had a decentralized power structure which would have greatly appealed to Wright. The progressive characteristics of the Johnson company stood in contrast to a corporate model far less concerned with employee rights and more obsessed with stock valuations and profits. Wright would label the latter as the 'Cashandcarry mentality' and blamed the American university system for correlating professional success with the accumulation of money. He argued, "Democracy badly needs a new Success Ideal. [C]ashandcarry 'Success' knows no qualities nor can admit or permit of any mastership but Money [*sic*]."[56] Wright likely had little love for bankers due to the ongoing threat of repossession of Taliesin and he also targeted them as the masterminds of the 'Cashandcarry' mentality. Johnson Wax, however, offered Wright a more holistic company that would be sympathetic with the virtues of Broadacre City. Wright held out little hope for a culture based primarily upon the accumulation of wealth as he noted at the age of 70, "Civilization, chiefly a money-matter, approaches its inevitable end."[57]

While Wright was disappointed not to bring Johnson Wax into Eden, he was working with the perfect company to explore the symbolism and implementation of elements of Democracy. It was a company that had for some time provided security and respect for its workers. Wright could have found no better place to explore *natura naturata* than Johnson Wax. And given that Johnson was a visionary businessman who also understood the economic value of symbols and advertising, Wright also found deep pockets to bring his vision to life. It was a needed fit as the project would have massive budgetary overruns and eventually cost more than ten times the initial estimate. Little did

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[56] Wright, *Autobiography*, 459-460.
[57] Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970): viii.

Johnson realize just how far over budget Wright could take him when he wrote, "At the next [Board of Directors] meeting I will advise them of your goal- the building complete at $250,000."[58]

Wright took only ten days to develop the proposal for Johnson as he turned to a previous unrealized design for the *Capitol Journal*, a newspaper publisher in Salem, Oregon, as the basis for the Great Workroom. The *Capitol Journal* design had originally offered the great dendriform columns massed in a cluster to shelter a large interior space intended for a floor of printing presses. Wright was a master of recycling previous designs for new applications when opportunities arose and time was short, "But, at once, I knew the scheme I wanted to try. I had it in mind when I drew the newspaper plant at Salem, Oregon, for Editor George Putnam, which he had been unable to build. A great simplicity."[59] Progress on the design moved so rapidly that by late September, 1936 just some 60 days after his first meeting with Johnson, drawings were in place to allow excavation to begin in October.[60]

The innovative design of the dramatic columns of the Great Workroom, with their massive circular tops and relatively miniscule bases, was a result of a functional requirement in the *Capitol Journal* project and *not* an original idea specifically for the Johnson commission. The large circular tops were physically necessary to support second story apartments and roof gardens and the small, almost pointed, metal bases of the columns were set on their own, independent foundations within the floor slab. This was Wright's solution to prevent the continual vibrations of the printing presses from being transferred vertically into the second story apartments.[61]

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[58] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 33. As found in correspondence between Wright and Johnson from August 15, 1936.
[59] Wright, *Autobiography*, 469.
[60] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 44-45.

By introducing the Pyrex ceiling where a roof garden and apartments would have been located, Wright was able to reimagine the design for a floor of printing presses into an entirely new, hierotopic iconography with Johnson Wax. He was very clear about the relationship he intended to create between sacred space and social dignity for the worker in the Great Workroom, "Organic architecture designed this great building to be as inspiring a place to work in as any cathedral ever was in which to worship. It was meant to be a socio-architectural interpretation of modern business at its top and best."[62] Wright was interested in creating a hierotopic space which would not only inspire employees but also offer an architectural expression of a harmonious workplace. Johnson Wax, he quickly understood, provided a golden opportunity to accomplish these goals. Hib Johnson was also a visionary who wasn't intimidated by Wright's idea, "[Hib] was a man with vision- an all-important, long-range vision. He seldom thought only in terms of months or years, but of entire generations."[63]

As noted, the floor plan of the Administration Building complex consisted of two primary forms- the Great Workroom and parking structure. The Great Workroom with an interior lobby was enclosed in the dominant, rectangular motif which was streamlined by its rounded corners. The north wall of the Administration Building provided the main entrance point linked to the adjacent, covered parking area designed as a less prominent rectangle. Wright took pains to repeat the dendriform column motif throughout the parking spaces which, given the proximity to the glassed entrance, created an intimate relationship between the automobile and the Great Workroom. Wright embraced the automobile as symbolic of modernism instead of attempting to keep it hidden and far from sight. He was enamored with expensive, well-designed automobiles, as seen in his collection, which included vehicles from Cadillac, Lincoln, Bentley, Mercedes, Jaguar and his favorite 1929 Cord L-29.[64]

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[61] See Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 9-12.
[62] Wright, *Autobiography*, 472.
[63] Johnson, *The Essence of a Family Enterprise*, 166.

More importantly for Johnson Wax, Wright was also making a statement about the role of unimpeded transportation in a modern world and particularly in Broadacre City. Cars would have been clearly visible from the interior of the Great Workroom, parked only feet away from the clear, plate-glass doors. Automobiles, high-speed monorails and private helicopters (aerotors), which traveled up to 200 miles an hour and could dock at an individual's home, played an important role supporting Democracy and the ability to sustain the decentralization of Broadacre City. Unimpeded, futuristic mobility was inherent in supporting the freedoms of Democracy for Wright, "Form and Function are one in Broadacres; therefore Broadacres is no finality. [T]he traffic problem has had especial attention for the sooner mobility is made a comfort and a facility the sooner will Broadacres arrive at its finality. Every Broadacres citizen has his own car or more."[65]

In fact, the automobile played such a key role in Broadacre City that houses were categorized according to how many cars would be owned as Wright continued, "We speak of them as a one-car house, a two-car house, a three-car house, and a five-car house." He included a three-car garage as early as 1908 in his design for the Robie House in Chicago and integrated carports into his later Usonian house designs. However, it was at Johnson Wax that he created a symbiotic relationship between a commercial interior space and the imagery of the automobile. The car was a celebrated tool in achieving the democratic freedoms offered in both the Great Workroom and Broadacre City. The fact that Wright would let vehicles encroach so closely to the space of the Great Workroom was a comment on their significance to the new democratic world order he envisioned.

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[64] Ingrid Steffensen, "The Auto as Architect's Inspiration," in *The New York Times,* August 6, 2009,
[65] Wright, "The New Frontier," in *Collected Writings, Vol. 4*, 48-49.

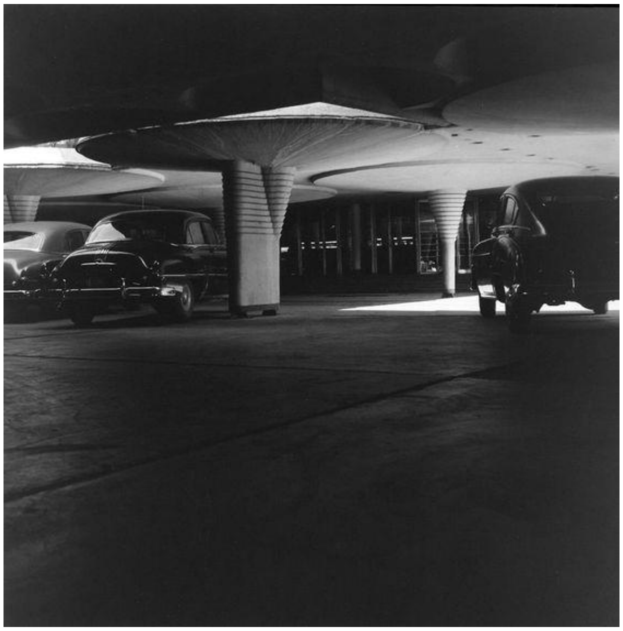

Figure 40. Wright envisioned a primary role for the automobile and forms of high-speed transportation in Broadacre City. He placed ground level parking in close proximity to the entry doors of the Administration Building (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives, Jack Loftus, 1950).

The Great Workroom and the Liturgy of Work

The Administration Building was designed as a three-level structure with the ground floor providing the largest amount of working space for employees. A second-level mezzanine encircled the perimeter of the Great Workroom and was intended for middle management. However, in good Democratic fashion, management was not provided any form of private office space. It was an entirely open plan on the first and second levels to provide a sense of equality and openness for all members of the Johnson Wax Company working in the Administration Building. The only private office was reserved for Hib Johnson as a third-level penthouse suite with an attached conference room. Nestled in the upper reaches of the Great Workroom, Johnson's office provided a spectacular view of the Pyrex ceiling, columns, and multiple levels of the company's operations. It also provided the benevolent symbolism of a patriarchal overseer responsible for guiding the Johnson family of employees. This imagery is noticeable in a 1939 photograph from a Christmas profit-sharing meeting as employees were assembled in the Great Workroom like a congregation. Johnson addressed the large gathering from an elevated platform flanked by the company choir to his left and the company band to his right. Had Wright been given his way, a pipe organ would have also towered over Johnson. Employees were finely dressed as in any Sunday worship service of the era and the ecclesiastic parallels are not at all difficult to absorb. It is evident the Great Workroom served the leadership and community of Johnson Wax in the similar manner a sanctuary serves a church. Wright envisioned the Great Workroom as hierotopic space with multiple functions as sacred as the auditorium of Unity Temple or any other church or synagogue he would design.

For example, Johnson Wax maintained a company choir which wore robes, carried candles, sang religious hymns, and processed throughout the Great Workroom during Christmas celebrations. In this grand choreography of movement the Great Workroom became liturgical space dedicated to the celebration of a religious holiday and the koinonia of the Johnson Wax community.

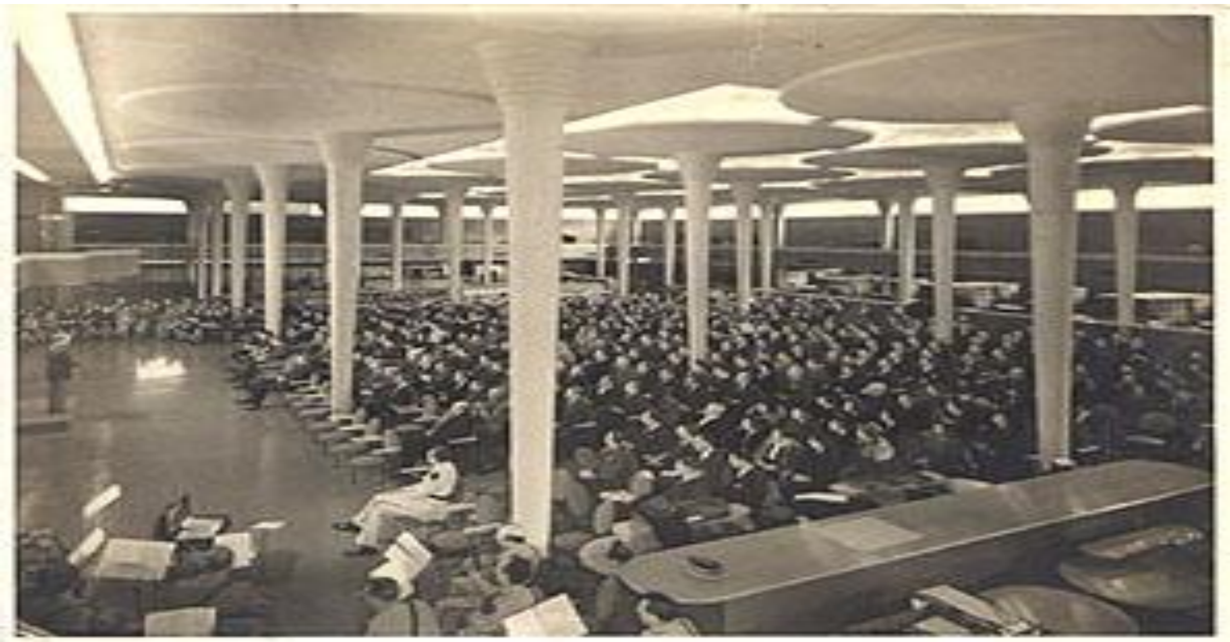

Figure 41. An image of the Christmas profit-sharing meeting in the Great Workroom. Hib Johnson addressed the company employees akin to a congregation in a sanctuary. Johnson Wax was unusual as it maintained a company choir and band which performed during such meetings (Courtesy SC Johnson, 1939).

The idea that employees of Johnson Wax could also function in the role of a church choir pointed to the ways in which the Great Workroom offered multiple layers of meaning for a gathered community. Not long after Wright's death in 1959, Norris Kelly Smith proposed that Wright should be primarily understood as an architect who reflected a Hebraic paradigm representing passion and poetic romanticism versus the static, rational mindset in Greek concepts of form. In fact, Smith went so far as to argue that Wright was the first architect since the time of Christ to truly represent this Hebraic notion through architecture, "[I]t was only with Wright that Biblical thought found expression in the art of architecture."[66] In turn, Smith found that it was fair to consider work as a form of liturgy and referenced monastic comparisons in his argument. In particular, he found 'liturgical work' to be the essence of belonging and participating in a community. Johnson, without question, was keenly interested in developing not just a wax company but a familial community. Johnson's daughter, Karen Boyd, noted that her father's greatest interest was creating an environment where the employees would find happiness in their work.[67] Elements that contributed to a sense of well-being included employee profit sharing, paid vacations, a no-layoff policy, and remarkably inspiring architecture for a commercial wax business. Smith did not provide any concrete examples of how liturgical work actually expressed itself in the lives of employees working in the Administration Building. However, I would certainly suggest that a company choir's processional through the spaces of the Great Workroom holding candles and singing religious hymns would qualify as a liturgical event.

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[66] Ibid.

Historian Alexandr Podosinov has examined how a processional movement helps to clarify and "frame sacred space [t]o concentrate the God's energy inside it for the realization of liturgical acts."[68] In particular, Podosinov was interested in the movement of processions in typically concentric circles around an altar which represented the center of a sacred world but was also reflected in circular patterns of movement within and outside of a sacred building. Interestingly, the second-story mezzanine of the Administration Building created a form of concentric, controlled movement around the perimeter of the Great Workroom. If one subscribes to Smith's idea of liturgical work, it could be said that the 'processional' pattern created by the mezzanine was meant to encircle the activity of work below. The daily movements of the employees in their devotion to work on the ground floor could have been easily viewed and appreciated from the second-story mezzanine as the ‘center’ of the energy of the Great Workroom.

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[67] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 1.

[68] Alexandr Podosinov, "The Liturgical Movements in Sacred Space: On the Classical Origins of Eastern Christian Rites," in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik), 68-70.

This would parallel Podosinov’s theme concerning the circuitous nature of processions around an altar but in a much different context given Wright’s devotion to the ‘gospel of work.’ Above the second-story processional space sat Johnson’s office as the symbol of the patriarchal overseer of the entire community. Wright believed his design had exactly the intended effect of uplifting those who labored throughout the building, “Work and morale increased one-tenth to a third the first year the building was in use. The officials loved the place as much as the help did, and some of both of them said they hated to leave it to go home.”[69] The building functioned as a quasi-sanctuary which, as Wright portrayed, offered so much inspiration and meaning that it transcended the desire to leave.

Unity Temple and the Hierotopic Meaning of Light

It is worthwhile, therefore, to explore parallels between a religious commission in Unity Temple (1905-1908) and the Administration Building. Wright used a similar architectural solution for both buildings in that, given the urban environment in which he was asked to build; he essentially turned both buildings inward. Each is insulated from its urban setting by protective walls which offered no gaze outward. Instead, the gaze is directed upward with the use of overhead, natural lighting from clerestory windows and skylights. It is an attempt to create an ethereal quality which emphasized the significance of the vertical. While the religious symbolism of light would have been quite easy to discern in a sanctuary, Wright used it in the Great Workroom in a more naturalistic reference. Both buildings, however, combine the unmistakable imagery of light and geometry. For Unity Temple, Wright integrated stained-glass skylights which emphasized the geometry of the square in relationship to the imagery of the three-dimensional cube as he noted, "I flooded these side alcoves with light from above to get a sense of a happy, cloudless day into the room. And with this feeling for light the center ceiling between the four great posts became skylight." [70] However, Johnson Wax emphasized the power of the circle through the dendriform columns in conjunction with the subtle lines of the Pyrex tubing. Unity Temple's skylights punch through its ceiling as a uniform grid. The Administration Building's lighting, however, streams past the massive circular tops of the columns as sunlight through a heavy canopy of trees of which Wright was proud to note, "[I]n the Johnson Building you catch no sense of enclosure whatever at any angle, top or sides. You are looking at the sky and feel the freedom of space."[71] It was the sacred space of a man-made forest dedicated to the gospel of work and Wright said as much to Johnson, "[I will] give you a beautiful building so that whoever will work there will feel as though he were among the pine trees breathing fresh air and sunlight."[72]

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[69] Wright, *Autobiography*, 474.

While the dominant motif in in the Great Workroom is the circle of the dendriform columns, a more delicate, secondary motif is found in the square corners found in the Pyrex tubing which created intricate geometric patterns. The glass tubes were not run in parallel, lengthwise fashion over the massive circles of the columns which would seem to have been the simplest and most cost-effective manner of installation.

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[70] Ibid., 153.

[71] Wright, *Writings & Buildings* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960): 284-286

[72] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings,* 41.

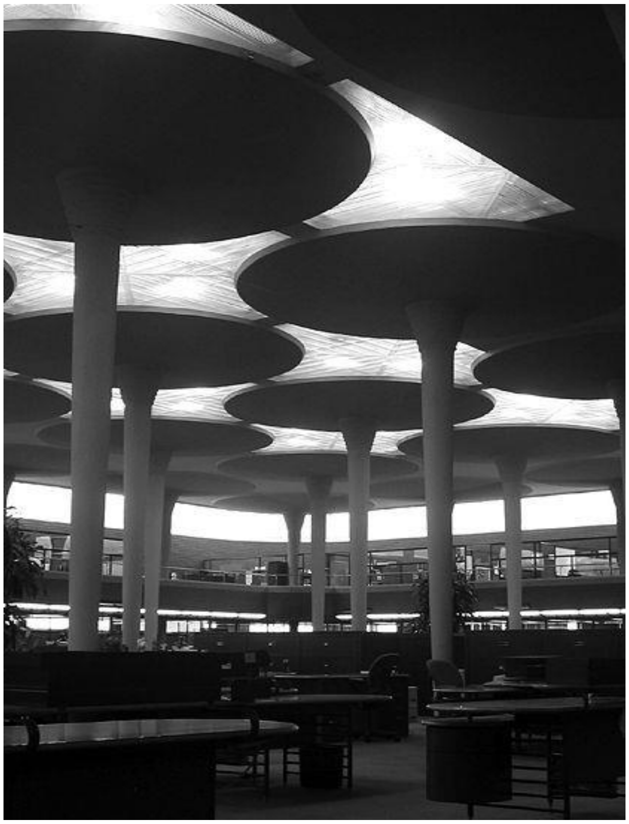

Figure 42. Wright understood the Great Workroom in a naturalistic motif of being under a great canopy of trees flooded by sunlight (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Jack Loftus, 1950).

The tubes were instead installed in a motif of squares, in such a way that right angles were created in the open spaces between the columns. Images during construction of the Great Workroom captured workmen, dressed in customary bib overalls, perched on scaffolding during installation of the Pyrex tubes. The glass tubing presented delicate and difficult challenges being installed in such a revolutionary manner. The obstacles of such a roofing system would have been even more complicated by the need to align not only parallel surfaces of the tubes but also angles where the direction of the tubing turned ninety degrees. Wright, therefore, mixed both the metaphors of light and geometry in the glass ceiling of the Great Workroom. If one is to accept Wright’s forest analogy the glassed-over spaces between the circular tops of the columns could be viewed to represent conventionalized patterns in the sky, as if the Pyrex tubing symbolized the rhythm of clouds. It was a masterful statement on *natura naturata*, an Eden insulated from the world around defined by geometry, earth-toned colors, light, and the intensive manipulation of materials.

Wright also included a band of clerestory lighting which encircled the Great Workroom similar to his design at Unity Temple. The difference is that Unity Temple's clerestory lighting was provided in the form of square blocks of geometric stained glass which allowed light to flood the upper reaches of the auditorium. In the Johnson design, the clerestory evolved into a continual, space-age ribbon of glass which wrapped itself around the upper corner of the building. The band of glass tubing provided light which streamed under the canopy of the forest. It is suggestive of the light of dawn which peeks over the horizon and penetrates the very forest itself. It is not

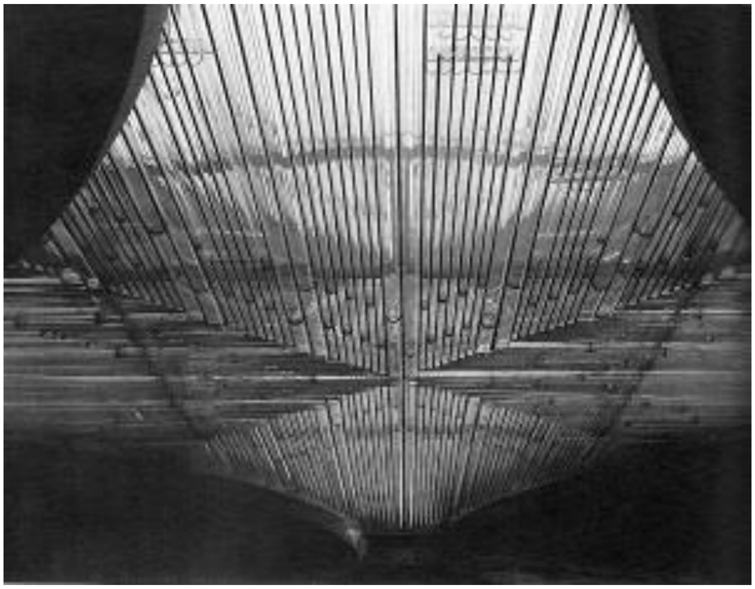

Figure 43. The Pyrex tubing involved enormous complexities for installation including aligning and sealing parallel surfaces as well as angles. The tubes created an undulating surface in the spaces between the circular column tops (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Jack Loftus, 1950).

surprising that Wright would spend so much energy on the futuristic using of glass to provide a novel experience of light in Johnson Wax. After all, there were far simpler and less expensive solutions to overhead lighting. A sloped glass roof or traditional skylights could have accomplished the goal of providing natural lighting in the Great Workroom without the complexities and cost of Pyrex tubing. Why all the effort given the likelihood of leakage due to extremes of Wisconsin weather ranging from humidity and heat to the weight of heavy snow accumulation in winter?

One answer lies in Wright's understanding of the hierotopic meaning of light and his desire to provide spiritual inspiration in the Great Workroom. In a passage from his 1958 revision of Broadacre City, called *The Living City*, he equated light with spiritual knowledge, "The spiritual temple is locked with many keys, and those who are vain enough to believe they can invade it by their own power, and without being shown the way by the *light of wisdom*, will storm against it in vain [italics mine])."[73] By the close of his life Wright said much about the connections between light, spirituality, and architecture. At the age of ninety he proposed that in the same way sunlight is created by the sun, humanity has an 'inner light' which is displayed through art, architecture, and religion. Wright correlated this inner light with Christ's teaching that the kingdom of God was to be found 'within you.' In fact, it was the subject of light that Wright chose to conclude his second to last book, *A Testament*, and he connected this interior light with the metaphysical construct of the soul, "Mankind has various names for this interior light, "the soul" for instance."[74] He also identified God, or "the Father" as "supreme light" in his argument, in a nod to Sullivan's view, that the message of Christ had been corrupted by the church. Wright's perspective on the meaning of light and spirituality, once again, detailed how much he synthesized religious ideas as an architect. Far more than any architect of the twentieth century, Wright spoke and wrote about spirituality as inextricably bound with architecture. He clearly understood the power of light as a spiritual metaphor and used it masterfully in designs ranging from Community Christian Church to Beth Sholom Synagogue.

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[73] Wright, "The Living City," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 252.
[74] Wright, *A Testament* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957): 254.

Wright took the association of light and spirituality to an entirely new level with his design for Community Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri (1939-1942). He offered a novel metaphor of light in this religious application. The upward gaze would become a universal motif in the form of four roof-top floodlights which, set at sixty-degree angles inward, would create a steeple of light in the night sky of Kansas City. It was a radical statement on the use of light to direct one's eyes and thoughts to the heavens. The church was intended as a lighthouse of sorts, with a focal point of vertical infinity. Wright intended the massive searchlights to be a metaphoric steeple of light as he noted, "[the design] will aspire toward heaven- with reaching fingers of light rather than a solid Gothic steeple."[75] If light coming downward through the ceiling of Unity Temple or the Administration Building was a powerful experience Wright must have concluded that the next logical progression was to send light upward *into* heaven. It was a further exploration of *natura naturata* through the creation of light itself and returning it back to the cosmos. Light was intended not only to flood the interior sanctuary but converse with the exterior world as an *axis mundi* for all to see. Limitations over available lighting sources during World War II kept the searchlights from being installed to complete this steeple of light originating from the roof of the church. Finally, in 1994, Community Christian Church fulfilled Wright's intentions and put in place the powerful flood lights he had envisioned some fifty years earlier.

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[75] See Joseph Siry, *Beth Shalom Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright and Modern Religious Architecture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012): 219.

In Beth Sholom Synagogue in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania (1954-1959) Wright shrouded the entire sanctuary in translucent light. Once again, there is no gaze outward to the surrounding environment through conventional windows but only upward from within the 'glass tetrahedron' sanctuary to a blanket of natural light. Wright

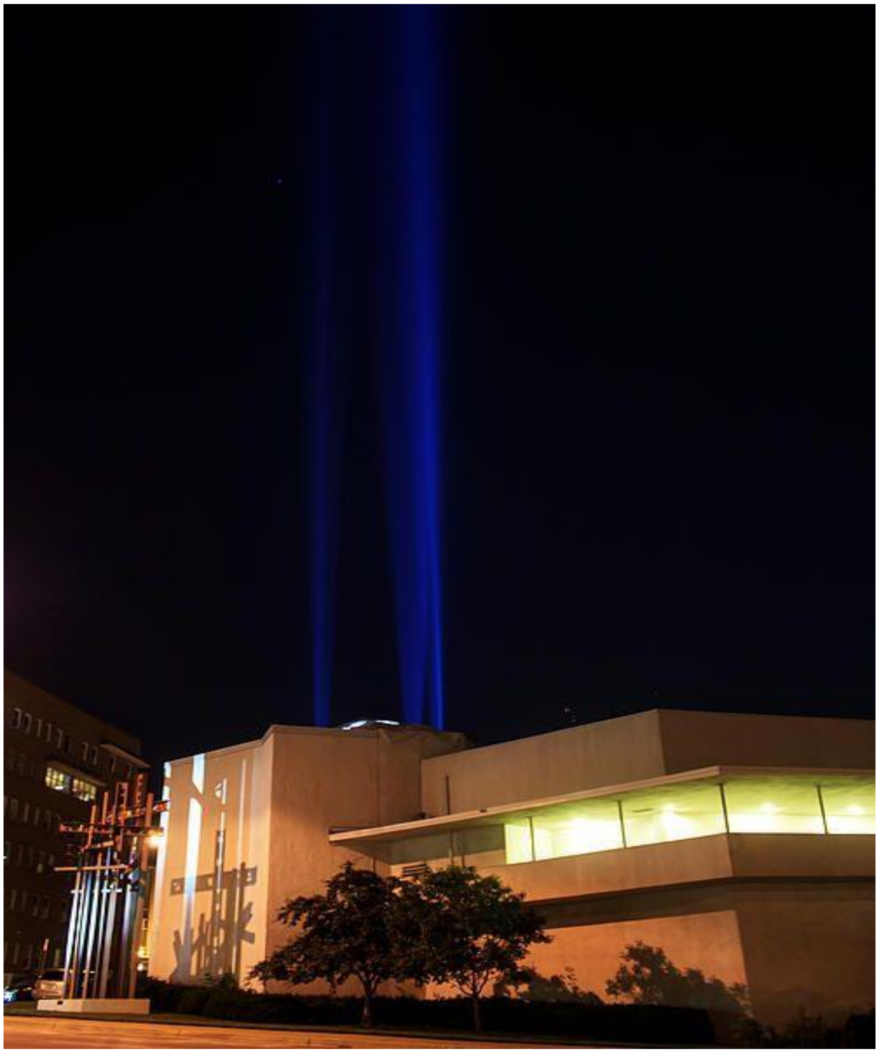

Figure 44. Community Christian Church with its steeple of light. Wright incorporated vertical beams of light as an *axis mundi* but never saw the idea realized in his lifetime (Fine Art America, Kevin Anderson, 2016).

understandably chose the symbolism of a natural form- a mountain, in this case the biblical Mount Sinai- as the inspiration for the design. He followed a consistent pattern of design in Unity Temple, the Administration Building, and Beth Sholom Synagogue which involved keeping the primary space insulated from the exterior world. In each case he prevented distractions on the floor level by intentionally directing the participants' gaze upward. The same concept was utilized in three different thematic applications which support the argument that Wright envisioned all three spaces achieving a similar experiential outcome- inspiration. In the case of Beth Sholom Synagogue, however, it wasn't being within the Garden of Eden as in the Great Workroom. Instead, it was being one with the holy mountain where Moses met with God. While Moses radiated light in the Old Testament account, Wright completely saturated the mountain with light in the synagogue. Light, accordingly, played a key role in evoking an experience of inspiration.

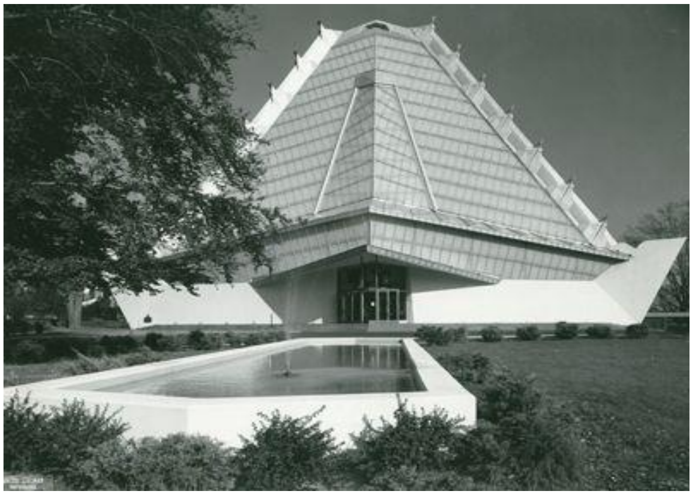

Figure 45. The scriptural Mt. Sinai was Wright's spiritual and naturalistic motif for Beth Sholom Synagogue (Jacob Stelman Collection, 1959).

Vegetation and the Ecosystem of the Great Workroom

Wright also introduced vegetation into his interior plan for the Administration Building. His use of plants and climbing vines might have been viewed as out of place given the streamlined, futuristic feel of the interior. A photograph of the lobby taken shortly after the opening of the building captured a myriad of plant life introduced in a strong horizontal band above the glassed entrance. Climbing above this band of vegetation were leafy, clinging vines which wove their way along the mortared brick walls and wrapped themselves around the slender columns of the Great Workroom. Below the horizontal band of plants was an abundant supply of clinging ivy which covered most of the wall. Wright certainly captured the imagery of a thick, vegetative forest with the combination of dendriform columns and green vegetation. The plants and vines were an intentional element of the design and hearkened to the deep woods where ferns, ivy, and clinging plant life wrapped around the trunks of trees and covered the forest floor. Strong horizontal bands of red brick also supported the Edenic imagery as a representation of layers of soil supporting the plant life. Wright recreated not only the trees but the supporting ecology of this image-paradigm of the Garden of Eden consistent with Lidov’s proposal that the formation of sacred space involves the organization of spatial imagery around a given typology.[76] In this context, the Great Workroom was an ecosystem of the Garden, an interplay between soil, plants, trees, human life, and meaningful labor which Wright recognized as having spiritual relationships, “The spiritual dignity of this new humane life for mankind, is the Spirit of Man himself sacrosanct."[77]

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[76] See Alexei Lidov, “Spatial Icons as a Performative Phenomenon,” in *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 16-20.

One does not want to overlook the imagery of the custom work desks, chairs, and filing cabinets that filled the floor of the Great Workroom in supporting this ecosystem. Wright repeated the circular motif of the columns to create U-shaped workstations scattered about the floor.

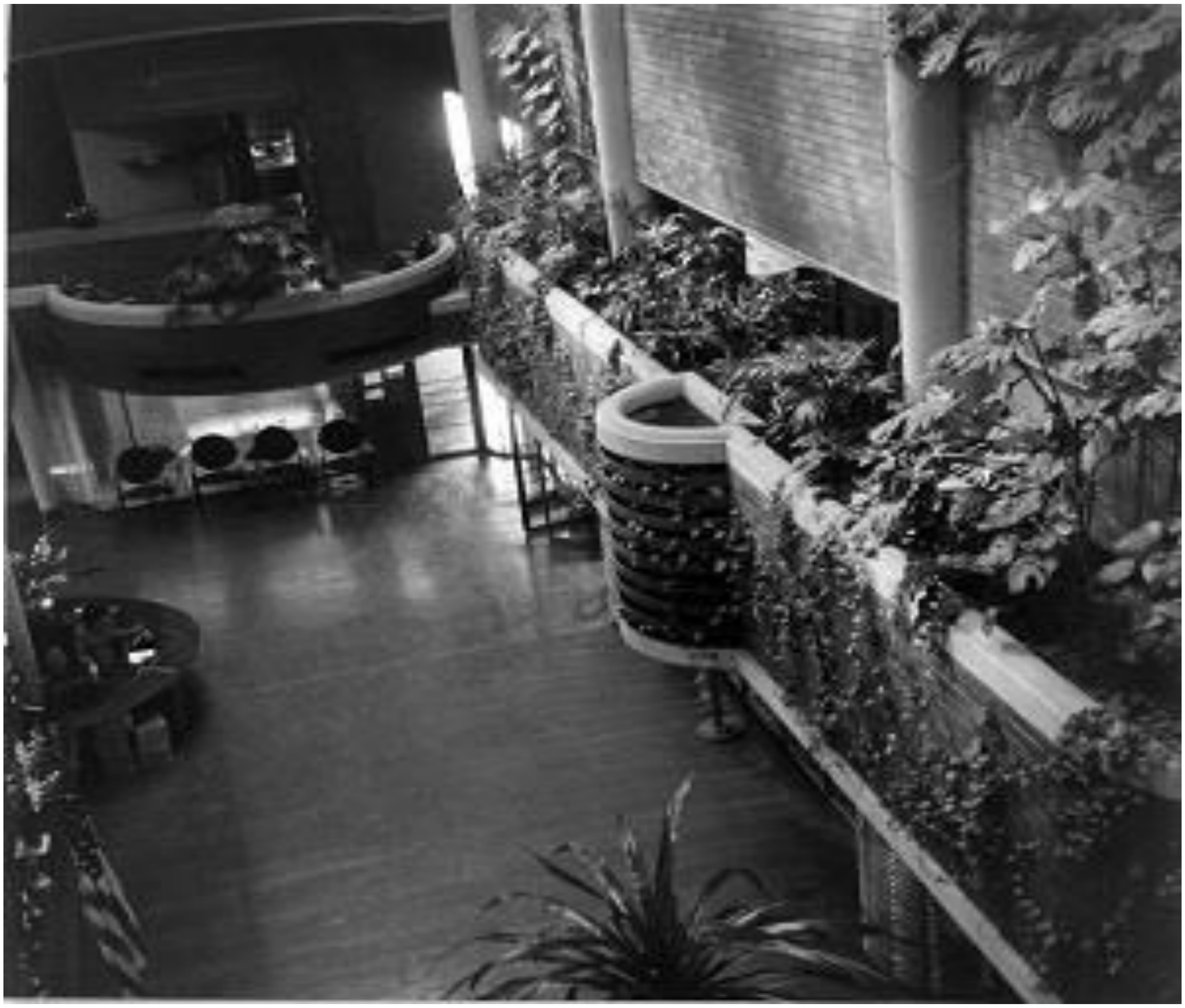

Figure 46. Wright incorporated a large amount of plant life in the Great Workroom which supported the metaphor of Edenic nature (Courtesy SC Johnson, 1971).

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[77] Wright, "A Testament," *in Collected Writings, Vol. 5,* 191.

The effect of the rounded corners of the multitude of desks created a soft, repetitive pattern reminiscent of some form of organism growing from the earth, which also supported the far larger columns hovering as trees. Whether imaginary toadstools, flowers, or some other kind of vegetation, the workstations, with their thin legs as stems and flat tops, created a sense of something emerging from the ground. While the Great Workroom is now carpeted, the original design was concrete stained in Cherokee Red and covered in what would be expected- Johnson wax. The sheen of the floor resembled the reflection of shimmering water on a hardened, earthen surface which created even more naturalistic overtones in the Great Workroom as if a fresh rain had just covered the floor of the forest. While the analogy might initially seem far-fetched and has not been noticed by Wright scholars, Bissera Pencheva pointed out that the use of marble to create 'liquid' surfaces in ecclesiastic interiors was introduced by Constantine and carried on through the centuries. In the case of the fourth century basilica of St. Peter's the "shining stone slabs appeared like a sea. They aesthetically linked the sound of flowing water, heard around the fountain of the atrium, to the visual experience of the interior as a sea ruffled by the waves of marble veins."[78]

Pencheva suggested that shiny surfaces, such as a marble floors, were intentionally introduced to create an 'iconic landscape' and a representation of the cosmos within the building itself. Her investigation of the use of shimmering surfaces as symbols of cosmic meaning certainly aligns with Wright's concerns to create symbiotic relationships between architectural materials and the imagery of nature.

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[78] Bissera Pencheva, "The Descent of Grace: Art, Nature, and Religion in Hagia Sophia," in *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 38-39.

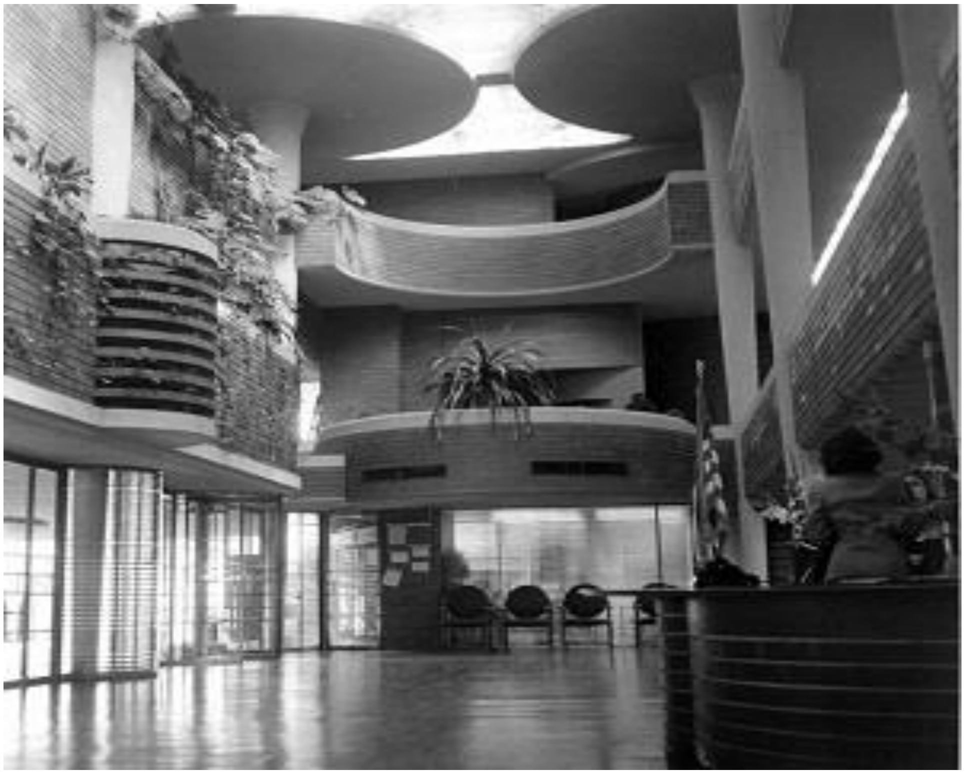

Figure 47. The shimmering floor of the Great Workroom created naturalistic associations of water covering the ground (Courtesy SC Johnson, 1971).

The repetition of desk forms emerging from this glossy floor also provided a sense of scale for the towering columns and only added to the sense that the building was, indeed, a living ecosystem. Danica Popovic suggested that hierotopy must recognize the role of conceptualized landscapes or landscapes of the mind which incorporate non-living, visual symbols ranging from petroglyphs to graffiti, as representations of sacred ideas.[79] Since Wright couldn’t offer views of the Garden on the outside he strove to create a landscape of the mind using earth-tone colors, a shimmering earthen floor, vegetation, and curvilinear forms within the Great Workroom itself.

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[79] Danica Popovic, “Iconic and Performative in Sacred Landscape: The Cave Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Ras and its Imagery,” in *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 30-34.

A New Johnson Commission and the Church Bell Tower

Some ten years after the completion of the Administration Building Hib Johnson's need for a new research facility was on Wright's drawing board. Whereas the Administration Building allowed him to explore the visual imagery of the deep woods, Wright was determined to allow this commission to reflect the engineering principles of a *single tree.* Johnson looked to the eventual end of World War II and the need to expand the Johnson Wax research department in order to capture what he must have envisioned to be a significant growth in consumer spending once the troops arrived home. Johnson contacted Wright in October, 1943 with his specific proposal for a research facility. Understandably, he dedicated a fair amount of energy in his initial correspondence warning Wright that he would not travel down the same quagmire of cost overruns and construction dilemmas as with the Administrative Building. Johnson described his idea as a "plain factory kind of job" but he was also sensitive to the location of a research facility in close proximity to Wright's now ten-year-old Administration building.[80] Johnson hesitated to visit personally with Wright regarding the commission and resorted to excuses of wartime rationing of gasoline and tires as reasons for not meeting. Of course, the president of a growing, major corporation could have certainly afforded both gas and tires for a face-to-face meeting. He was, instead, cautious about getting involved in a new project with Wright at the helm. After all, Administration Building absorbed nearly half of Johnson Wax's net worth upon its completion which resulted in Johnson being "embarrassed by how much it cost."[81] Nonetheless, he contacted Wright and proposed the concept of conserving ground space by building a vertical research structure.

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[80] Correspondence between Johnson and Wright dated October 4, 1943 as reproduced in Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 122.

[81] Robert Sharoff, "A Corporate Paean to Frank Lloyd Wright," in *The New York Times*, B7, April 29, 2014.

As with the Administration Building, Wright quickly turned to recycling an idea he had been pondering for some fifteen years to provide an architectural response in a short amount of time. If he could persuade Johnson to follow his lead Wright would finally be able to construct a vertical tower based upon the principle of a lone tree rooted deep into the ground. Johnson clearly recognized that dealing with Wright could result in a far more extravagant and costly solution than his goal of building a plain research factory. Wright's gift of persuasion prevailed and he would lead Johnson, once again, down the familiar path of justifying artistic merit with significant underestimation of actual costs of construction. It must have been a déjà vu for Johnson when Wright's initial 1944 estimate of $750,000 became $2 million by 1948. The final cost by 1950 including research equipment came in at $3.5 million.[82]

Wright was able to produce initial designs for Johnson within just a few days as the structural elements of the tower had previously been worked out in 1929 for an unrealized project for apartment buildings in Manhattan. Interestingly, that proposal did not come from a real estate developer but the historic church of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery. The pastor of St. Mark's envisioned using the church grounds to develop residential housing to provide a stream of income for the parish. Wright developed plans for three apartment towers which would have surrounded the landmark church; however, the project failed due to the Great Depression. Wright, in conceiving vertical space, was keenly interested in proving that nature could provide the engineering principles necessary for building upward as he noted, "The first expression of a tree-like, mast structure was designed in a project for St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, New York, in 1929."[83] The solution he found in nature was based on what he called the 'tap-root' system in which the central vertical stack was the trunk to which 'branches' or floors were tied. The 'tap root' of the tree would be the foundation which would be sunk deep into the earth to stabilize the core and allow the cantilevering of floors. It was eventually shaped as a foundation over fifty feet into the earth as Wright proposed, "A daylight research-laboratory would be great if hung to a tall central stack- say eighteen floors."[84] Wright was so confident of the potential in his 'tap-root' engineering principle of anchoring skyscrapers that his early limit of eighteen floors as proposed in plans for residential towers in Broadacre City was exponentially increased in his plans for the "Illinois," a mile-high skyscraper to be located in Chicago as described in his 1957 book, *A Testament*. As Wright explored the potential of building vertically, and first realized this goal through the Johnson tower, he envisioned a futuristic building of 258 stories powered in part with atomic energy and housing some 130,000 people. The available technology clearly could have not overcome the structural issues with such height.[85] However, due to the eventual success of the Johnson tower, Wright was comfortable pointing to nature as capable of informing the design of such a monumental concept, "The ILLINOIS employs the now proved system of 'tap-root' foundation sloping to hard-pan or bedrock, again similar to the foundations of the Heliolaboratory [Johnson Wax Research Tower] and the Price Tower."[86]

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[82] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 145-157

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[83] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Story of the Tower," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 154.
[84] Ibid., 123.
[85] The world's tallest building erected some fifty years later, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, reaches half the proposed height of the Illinois.
[86] Wright, *A Testament*, 238-240.

Japanese Pagodas and Motif of the Spire

While Wright emphasized his observation of nature as providing the source for his 'tap-root' engineering theory, and denied influences from Japanese architecture, it is worthwhile to note the parallel found in Japanese religious architecture and the related symbolism of trees long before the twentieth century. Jonathan Lipman, in 1986, recognized the similarity between the Johnson Research tower and the form of the Japanese pagoda. He, unfortunately, offered only one short paragraph on the subject and did not develop the idea in any detail. However, he provided an insightful point, "The strongest comparisons with the Johnson buildings are to Japanese religious complexes."[87] In particular, Lipman singled out one of the oldest wooden structures in the world, the five-story pagoda Horyu-ji in Nara, Japan dating from the early seventh century. What he found compelling was the manner in which the structures of the Horyu-ji shrine complex provided a strong horizontal building program powerfully contrasted with the singular tower of the pagoda in the center of a courtyard. He neglected to note, however, that both the Johnson tower and Horyu-ji pagoda are capped by a tower form. In the case of the Johnson tower it was the shape of a supporting base and antenna while the Horyu-ji took the appearance of a sculpted spire.

Wright's use of the spire as a significant iconographic form has been little discussed by historians. The spire became an increasingly important motif in Wright's later years and he was equally comfortable applying it in religious, commercial, and civic commissions. For example, a spire was included in a residential setting for Auldbrass (1939-1959) located in Yemassee, South Carolina, his only design for a plantation. The

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[87] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 130.

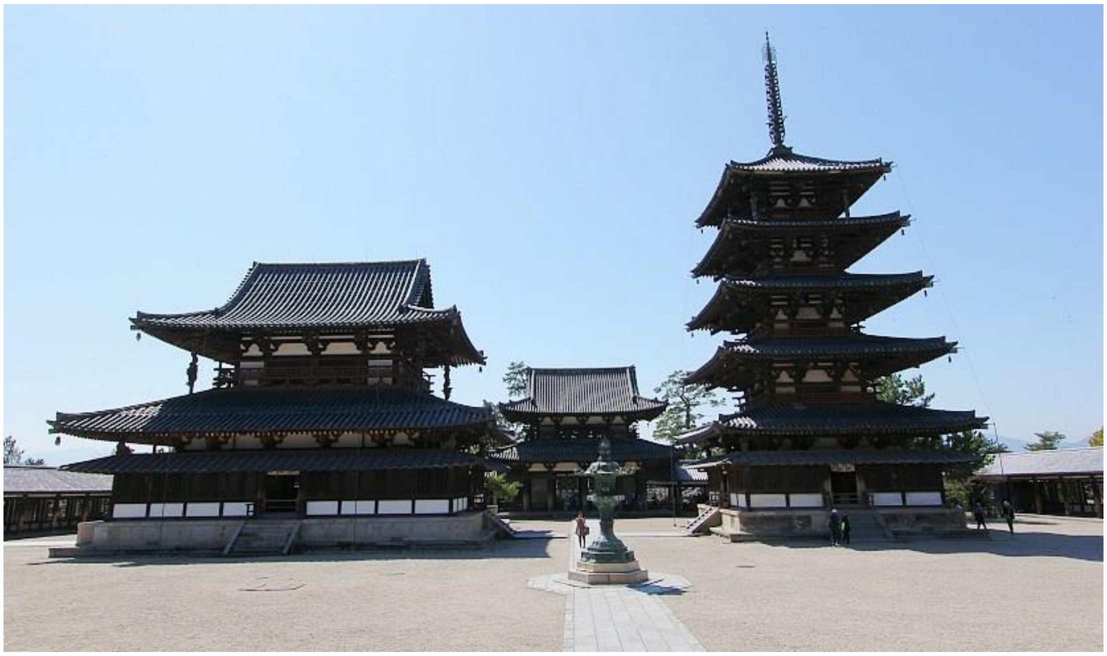

Figure 48. Horyu-ji temple complex. Note the relationship between a more horizontal building with a vertical tower and the spire which emerges from the roof as a comparison to the Johnson Wax buildings (Japan-Guide, ca. 2015).

Anderton Court Shops (1952), a small, multi-level shopping complex in Beverly Hills, California surprisingly featured a geometric spire as a main motif. Wright turned to the spire as an important symbol in his design for the sprawling Marin County Civic Center (1957-1970) in San Rafael, California. The spire also found its way into a 1958 perspective drawing for Broadacre City as a stand-alone design nestled between a building and roadway.[88] His plans eventually used for the First Christian Church, Phoenix, Arizona, (designed by Wright in 1950 and built posthumously from 1971-1973) featured an imposing double spire. One spire, laced with stained glass, emerged from the central peak of the roof to reach 77 feet high in a manner visually similar to the spire of the Horyu-ji shrine. Wright dramatically repeated the spire motif in a free-standing, 120-foot-tall bell tower topped by a twenty-two foot-tall cross, adjacent to the church. The chapel and bell tower were originally part of an eighty-acre campus design for Southwest Christian Seminary's proposal for a new university. The seminary, unfortunately, failed in 1951 before any construction could begin. Years later, the pastor of First Christian Church, a growing congregation in Phoenix, recalled the plans for the failed seminary that were shelved at Taliesin West. He was able to acquire the rights to build just the church and bell tower from Olgivanna in 1970 and the church broke ground shortly after in 1971.

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[88] See Wright, “The Living City,” *Collected Writings*, vol. 5, 275.

It is important to point out that Wright took the same spire motif from his 1950 church design for Southwest Christian Seminary and applied it two years later for a shopping mall on fashionable Rodeo Drive. Wright, it should be noted, correlated the spire with the idea of 'aspiration' in his 1912 book, The Japanese Print: An Interpretation, and historian Kevin Nute noted aspiration as "the most essential of religious sentiments."

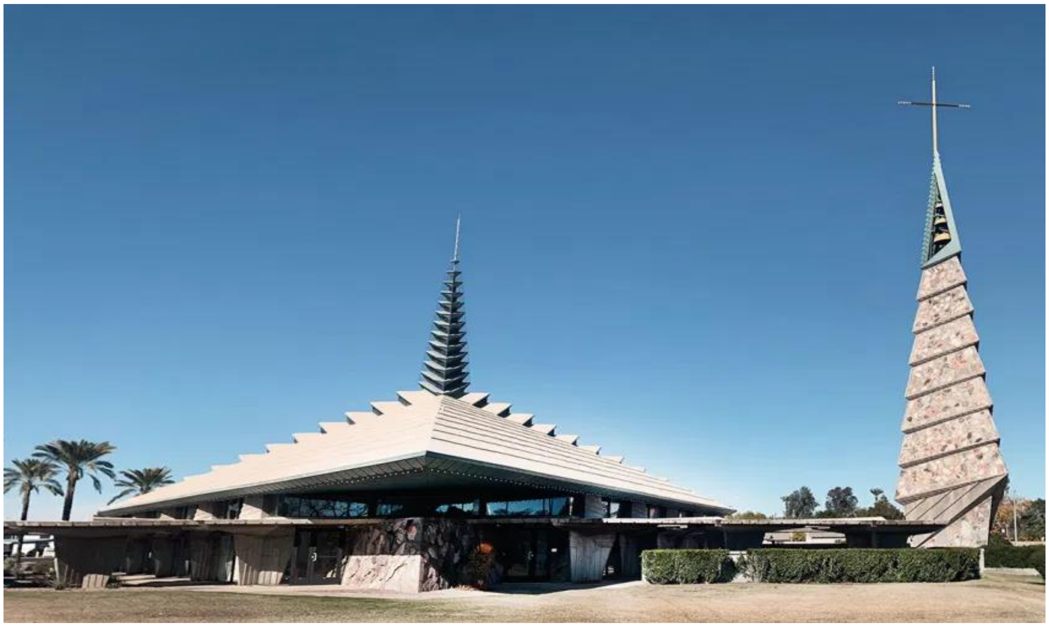

Figure 49. Wright's frequently incorporated spires in his architecture. This was the double-spire design for the Southwest Christian Seminary's chapel that was eventually built as First Christian Church, Phoenix, Arizona (ArchEyes, 2020).

In this context Wright also made the important comment, “There resides always a certain ‘spell-power’ in any geometric form which seems more or less a mystery, and is, as we say, the soul of the thing.”[89] Wright evolved in his acceptance of the spire in a range of building programs. I say this in the context of his 1905 design for Unity Temple in which he purposely avoided the use of a spire as too predictable a form as he noted, “Then why the steeple of the little white church? Why *point* to heaven?”[90] However, by 1950 Wright was readily pointing to heaven with the spire in the context of different genres of architecture. In the case of First Christian Church (Southwest Christian Seminary chapel) he planted the spire at the top of the roof and doubled the imagery with the imposing bell tower capped with a cross. Wright recognized that the spire held significant ‘spell-power’ in more than just religious applications and used it increasingly toward the end of his life. While I draw a comparison between the spires of the First Christian Church and Horyu-ji pagoda there is no anecdotal evidence of Wright having visited the Horyu-ji shrine complex. However, Lipman felt it was inconceivable that the architect had missed seeing it during the five years he lived primarily in Japan designing and overseeing construction of the Imperial Hotel (1919-1923).

While Lipman provided an insightful correlation between the completed Johnson Wax building program and the Horyu-ji religious complex, it was M.F. Hearn who developed a more detailed comparison specifically between the Research Tower and the

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[89] Wright, “The Japanese Print: An Interpretation,” in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 1: 1894-1930*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 117.
[90] Wright, *Autobiography*, 153.

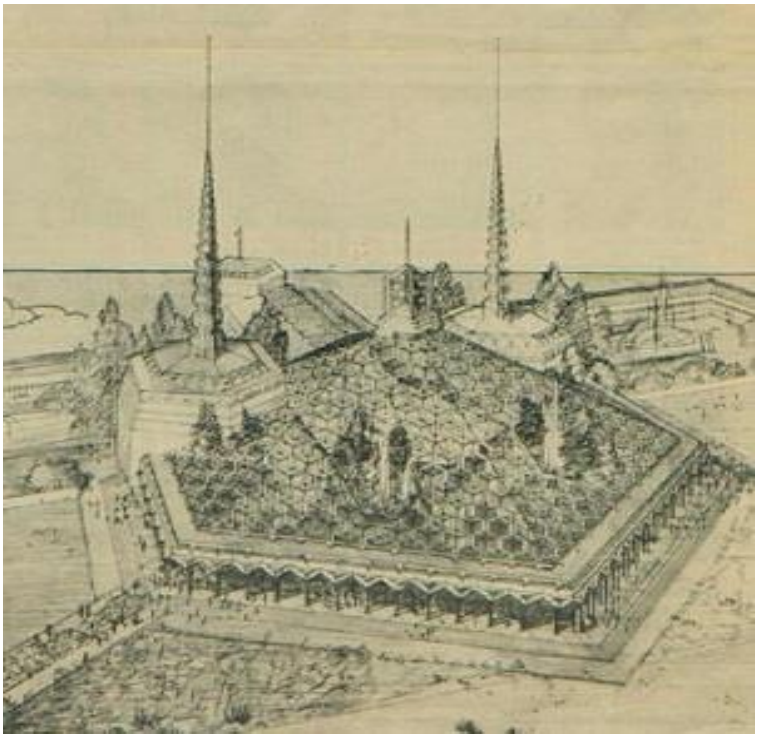

Figure 50. Wright also considered multiple spires for the unrealized Arizona State Capitol design. (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1957).

Horyu-ji pagoda in a short article published in 1991.[91] Hearn's primary focus was the central 'spine' of the pagoda and the iconographical image of the cosmic pillar and 'tree of enlightenment' familiar in Buddhist thought. He argued that Wright likely 'covered his tracks' and was not willing to admit that the Japanese pagoda was, in fact, the likely structural roadmap for his skyscraper designs beginning with his 1924 unrealized design for the National Life Insurance Company in Chicago. Hearn stressed the fact that both ancient Chinese and Japanese construction had developed the central spine mounted on stone deep into the ground as a primary form of creating earthquake resistant pagodas. It was the same concept that Wright employed many times over in creating a shock-resistant foundation for the Imperial Hotel which allowed it to withstand the massive

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[91] M.F. Hearn, "A Japanese Inspiration for Frank Lloyd Wright's Rigid-Core High-Rise Structures," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Mar., 1991): 68-71.

Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 relatively unharmed. The hotel was essentially floated on numerous individual foundation ‘fingers’ sunk into the soil which allowed the building flexibility and strength in absorbing the tremendous seismic movement which leveled most of Tokyo on September 1, the day of the hotel’s opening. Wright’s innovative foundation design and the survival of the Imperial Hotel in the midst of massive destruction provided him world-wide recognition and appreciation.

Nute significantly advanced the relationship between Japonisme and Wright in his work published in 2000, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*. He, however, pointed to a different religious structure as having influenced Wright’s vertical designs, the East Pagoda of the Yakushi-ji temple complex from the early eighth century. What is most compelling about the East Pagoda is its rhythmic use of larger and smaller roof forms that appear cantilevered from a central core. In a telling reference, Wright himself noted his familiarity with pagodas and their iconological tie to pine trees, “Trees must have awakened [humanity’s] sense of form. The pagodas of China and Japan definitely resemble the pines with which they were associated.”[92] Wright was a great admirer of Japanese culture and saw in it the same focus on the essence of life and artistic form as he sought through his principle of organic architecture. He felt Japanese artists had mastered geometric analysis, which allowed the revelation of the secret essence of reality or what Wright also labeled as Plato’s eternal idea. Wright, consistent with what he had learned from Sullivan, sought expression of the spiritual notion of the eternal through material form which he felt was captured by Japanese artists. In good Unitarian language Wright called this effort “the inner harmony which penetrates the outward form or letter and is its determining character."[93] Ultimately, Wright used material means for a spiritual end, and in a defining statement equivocated this quest for expressing the eternal idea, "But the expression we seek and need is that of harmony or of the good; known otherwise as the true, often spoken of as the beautiful, and personified as God."[94] Michitaka Suzuki, in his 2009 comparison between conceptualizations of Japanese images and Eastern Orthodox icons, struck a similar vein as Wright. Suzuki noted the importance of recognizing that images in Japanese culture have 'consciousness' and are understood as having a life-energy, "They are not 'as if' living, but 'actually' living. Images in Japan are all living in general."[95] Wright must have recognized some element of this 'actually living' paradigm during his time in Japan as he reflected on what he learned from the Japanese print, "[W]e do sense a certain psychic quality which we may call the 'spell-power' of the form. [A] Japanese artist grasps form always by reaching underneath for its geometry. [T]o him they are fundamental verities of structure, *pre-existing and surviving particular embodiments* in his material world [italics mine]."[96] Wright indicated his belief in some kind of metaphysical embodiment or consciousness, to use Suzuki's term, present in Japanese art.[97]

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[92] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963): 44-45

Lipman, Hearn, and Nute all provided valuable contributions in identifying streams of influences emerging from Japanese culture and architecture on Wright. However, what they each overlooked was the way in which Wright may have used

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[93] Wright, "The Japanese Print," in *Collected Writings,* vol. 1, 118.
[94] Ibid., 122.
[95] Michitaka Suzuki, "Hibutsu (Hidden Buddha): Living Images in Japan and the Orthodox Icons," in *Spatial Icons: Textuality and Performativity* (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 90-92.
[96] Wright, "The Japanese Print," in *Collected Writings,* vol. 1, 118.
[97] I shall return to this theme in Chapter Four in a discussion of Wright's ideas concerning the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Theosophist beliefs of Hilla Rebay.

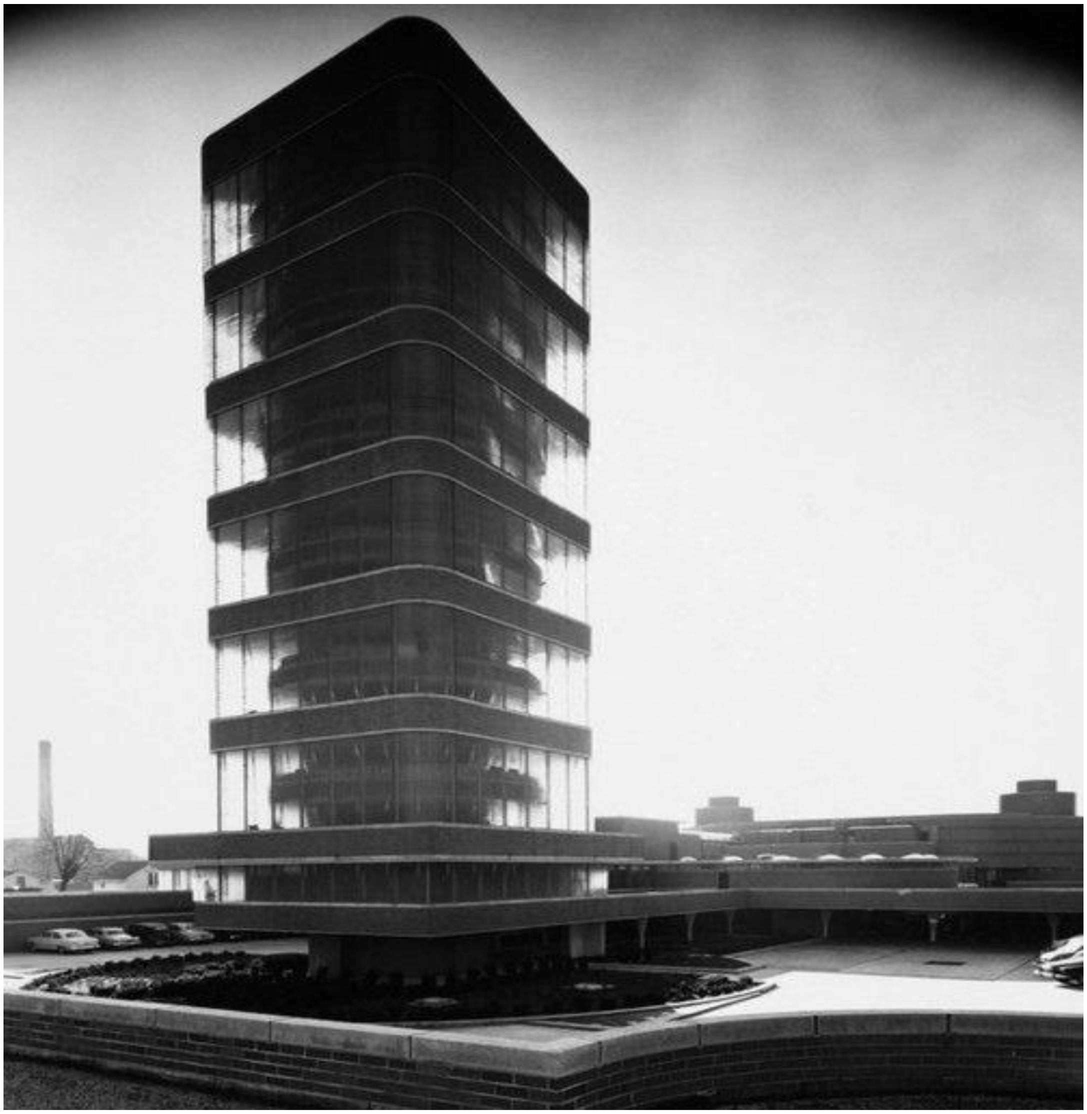

Figure 51. Johnson Wax Research Tower showing interior core from which floors and glass curtain walls were cantilevered (Courtesy SC Johnson, ca. 1962).

religious Japanese architecture to shape the possibility of creating this sense of the eternal idea, or hierotopy, in a commercial building complex. Each of the authors was able to see the religious imagery emerging from the Japanese pagodas but did not capture the idea that Wright transferred the idea of sacred space to both the Johnson Wax Administration Building and Research Tower. Wright envisioned the Research Tower, for example, to be just as sacred as either the Horyu-ji or East Pagoda. Sacrality, as we have seen, could emerge in any architectural context through the proper expression of organic architectural principles which would reveal the unity of nature and the universe or “instrumental cosmic law.”[98]

Therefore, I would like to draw a parallel between the Johnson Wax buildings and the First Christian Church design. In his chapel design Wright referred to the traditional form in Christian architecture of a church building flanked by a free-standing bell tower. In this case, the church offered the primarily horizontal design element while the bell tower soared beside the church with strong vertical emphasis. The chapel was designed in 1950 which was also the final year of construction on the Research Tower. I suggest that the chapel design and Johnson Wax buildings are related in iconographical emphasis. Wright was clearly offering an ecclesiastic reference in his description and goals for the Administration Building, the design of sacred space for the American worker. Therefore, in this analogy, the Great Workroom becomes the sanctuary for the expression of dignity through labor and the Research Tower takes the form as a free-standing bell tower dedicated to knowledge. The vertical Research Tower provided a distinct counterpoint to the horizontality of the Administration Building and a contrast in themes. The Administration Building provided a message of hope through the gospel of labor during the Great Depression. Now, having survived the darkness of World War II, the Research Tower would be a beacon of light concerning knowledge. Wright proposed to Johnson that the goal of research was not simply greater financial profits but the uplifting of humanity to a more complete and fulfilling life, “more Light to live by, more fun, and live happier- gratified by things of the Mind [*sic*].”[99] Johnson would share a similar thought when he wrote, “In life, as in business, the deep spiritual values must never be lost sight of.”[100] It was a theme that would be consistent with Wright’s overhaul of American culture through the enlightenment of organic living in Broadacre City. The tower was part of Wright’s architectural and moral solutions for what he perceived as the dystopia of the American city and the ills of a ‘Cashandcarry’ society.

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[98] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963): 44.
[99] Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, 125.

The Research Tower is a fifteen-story structure with typically Wrightian, narrow stairwells connecting each floor and one, small central elevator. Cherokee Red cabinets provided the thematic interior color along with the stained, concrete floors buffed to a waxy shine which repeated the same color motif from the Great Workroom. The alternating dimensions between each story created essentially two possible floor plans for the building. While a square floor presented the larger plan the next circular story above it would be the smaller space. The extraordinarily narrow, almost claustrophobic, circular stairwell provided an experiential compression before arriving into the working laboratories on each level. Each floor was filled with the scientific equipment needed for ongoing research for the company and included burners, ovens, beakers, centrifuges, and emergency showers in case of contamination. The motif of Pyrex tubing was repeated on each floor of the tower, but in a far more intimate manner than the Great Workroom as the glass tubes formed the exterior walls encircling each floor. The Pyrex glass walls were within reach of researchers as they worked in their laboratory spaces. While a clear, unencumbered view of the exterior was intentionally blocked by the tubing it was possible to discern forms through the undulating glass due to its proximity to the working areas. The effects could be somewhat disorienting as exterior images were essentially broken into visual fragments by the repetitive curves of the tubes akin to wearing a pair of glasses made of Pyrex tubing. Fred Billman, a chemist who worked in the tower for five years, pointed out the optical peculiarities in viewing the nearby company helicopter as the glass tubes created, "ten images of [the helicopter] taking off."[101]

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[100] Ibid., 127.

An even greater visual challenge was the amount and intensity of light radiating directly into the workspaces. The brightness of sunlight and numerous glares being refracted through the tubing was a constant challenge for researchers. It was so difficult to overcome that scientists resorted to wearing sunglasses during the day and even petitioned Johnson to issue company sunglasses to all employees working in the Research Tower. Curtains were eventually installed in some portions of the building to combat the effects of glaring light.

Despite the visual and climatic difficulties of working in the tower scientists apparently enjoyed such an innovative building as chemist Fred Reichly noted, "There was a real pride in working in the Tower. There [was] nothing like it in the world and we were working in it."   As with the Great Workroom Wright intended the unconventional, cutting-edge tower as a source of inspiration but for an entirely different community.

Unlike the office workers and staff supporting the administrative functions of the company, the Research Tower was a place for science and it had all the imagery of a futuristic lab. Inspiration, in this form, was not intended to create the same sense of harmony between employees and the symbolism of Eden. It was instead meant to be a super-charged environment for innovation and scientific ideas.

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[101] Mark Hertzberg, *Frank Lloyd Wright's SC Johnson Research Tower* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2010): 59.

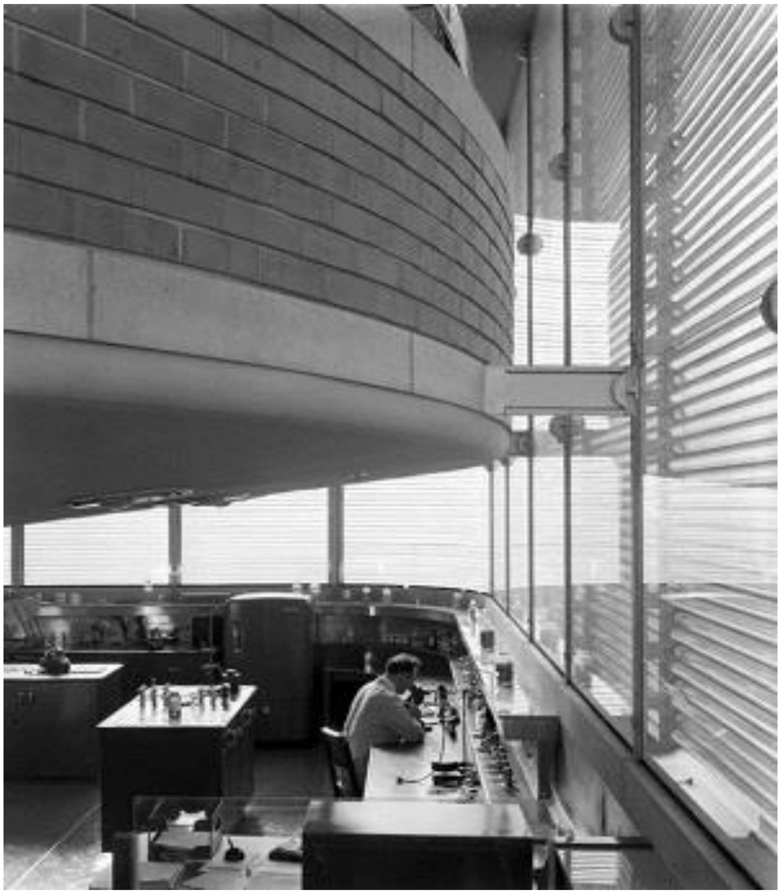

Figure 52. The radical design of the Research Tower with its use of glass walls and cantilevered floors provided both an inspiring and challenging environment in which to work (Courtesy SC Johnson, ca. 1955).

One scientist, Don Whyte, attributed the radically unique environment as inspiring researchers to think differently. The idea of the Research Tower was intended to form a union between researchers and the inspiration of knowledge by unlocking the science of the universe. It was a dialogue between the individual researcher's mind and the elements of nature. Billman captured this sentiment, "We had six people [on our floor] but we had privacy. [The Research Tower] was successful in that you were isolated. Occasionally you were so wrapped up in your work that you forgot what time it was."

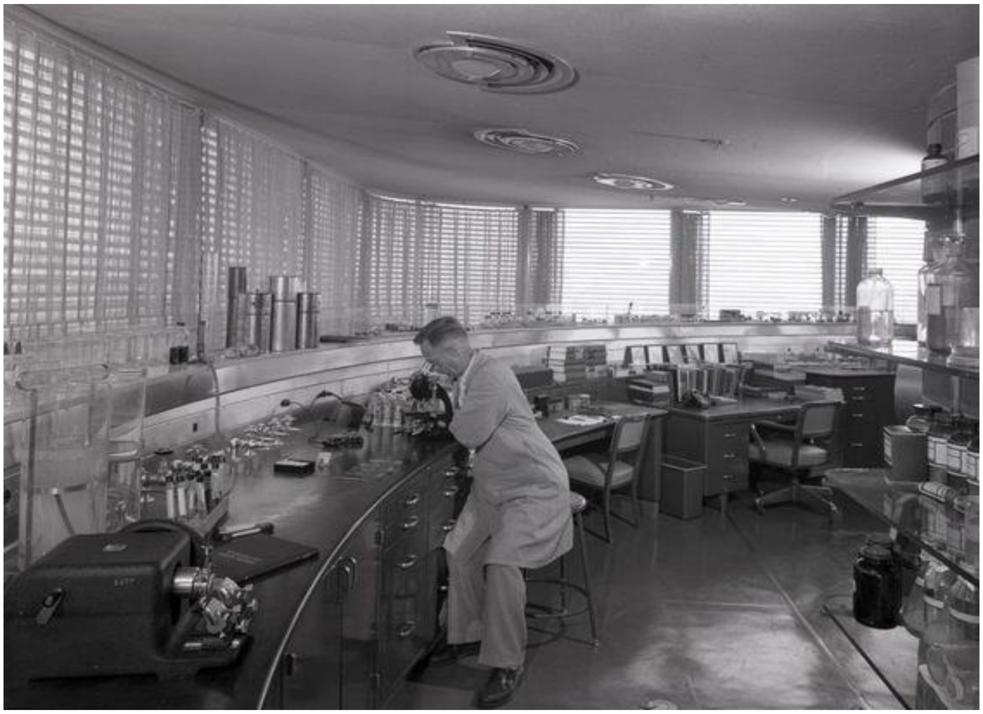

Figure 53. Wright envisioned the Research Tower as a place that would help people lead happier lives through its discoveries. (Courtesy SC Johnson, ca, 1955).

The cocoon-like nature of the Research Tower was also a fitting analogy of the shroud of secrecy needed by researchers in the competitive world of commerce. Trade secrets, experiments, and formulas developed for products were highly guarded pieces of information for a global corporation like Johnson Wax.

A significant difference between the tower and Great Workroom, however, was in the shaping of community. While the Great Workroom fostered an openness and sense of unity in its enormous floor plan the tower was its antithesis in its fragmentation of community into layers and small laboratories. It would have required effort to make the trek up or down several floors to engage other scientists in the building. The tower promoted separation rather than integration as an analogy to the individualism also needed for Democracy to thrive. Individualism was highly prized and promoted by

Wright and the tower would have been the showcase of individual minds working both alone and together on behalf of Johnson Wax. The arrangement of small workstations, centrifuges, and other scientific equipment in the tower conveyed the sense of the significance of individual experimentation. While an overall feel of a corporate enterprise was present, the workstations captured the idea that only one person could stand or operate a certain piece of gadgetry at a time. A great deal of the sophisticated equipment needed to conduct research was also integrated into the central core of the building. There is circularity, therefore, in the way in which researchers had to function within each floor. While the exterior shape of the tower was a square with polished, rounded edges, the interior flow of movement was circular, based upon passage around the central core. Podosinov's concept of circularity in liturgical processions takes on new meaning in the tower. In this case, the movement by researchers within the tower would have necessarily been circular and would have focused inward on the interior core of scientific equipment. It is as if the altar of labor at the center of the Great Workroom was replaced by the altar of gadgets, science, and knowledge in the Research Tower.

Wright's design was aesthetically successful and created tremendous prestige for Johnson Wax. It also had the intended effect of inspiring creative ideas for new product lines for the company. Within eight years after opening the tower the Johnson researchers managed to create new commercial products that successfully diversified the company, such as Pledge furniture polish and Glade air freshener. At the same time, researchers also branched into an entirely new field of science with the insect repellant Off! and the insecticide Raid.[102] While such innovative products created great momentum and profit, the building was ultimately a victim of Wright's unusually narrow stairwells. By 1982 the Research Tower was deemed in violation of modern fire codes as the stair system would not adequately allow researchers time exit the building in an emergency. This violation was so insurmountable that the Research Tower was closed. No other viable use for the structure was found, so it was relegated as a storage facility for some thirty years. However, Johnson Wax has recently refurbished two lower floors of the building, complete with beakers and memorabilia, in its efforts to support historic preservation and public appreciation of the tower. In an ironic twist, this temple of research was closed due to the shortsightedness of its design. A space dedicated purely to innovation lost its ability to influence new generations of researchers because it was just a bit too innovative and lacked the practicality of proper egress.

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[102] Meg Jones, "Frank Lloyd Wright-Designed S.C. Johnson Research Tower Finally Goes Public," *Milwaukee Wisconsin Sentinel-Journal* (April, 23 2014).

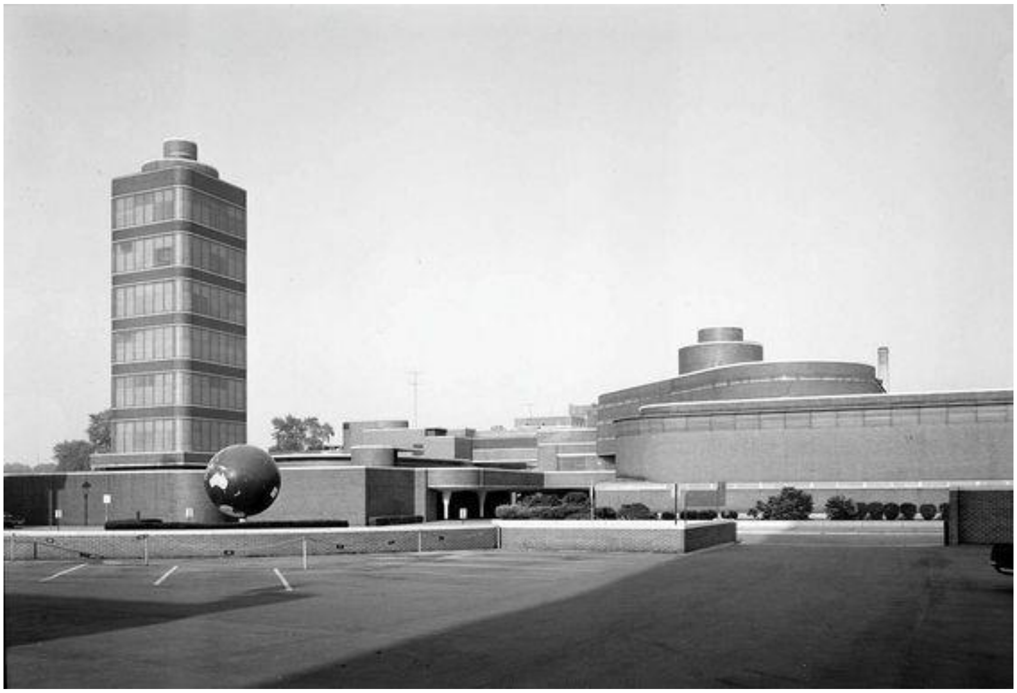

Figure 54. Wright and Johnson agreed that a vertical tower was the correct architectural solution for a new research facility to compliment the Administration Building (Courtesy of the Library of Congress, ca. 1969).

From His Gods to God

Some sixty years after the completion of the Research Tower it must be said that Wright was likely correct in his initial proposal to move the Administration Building five miles outside of Racine. Johnson Wax, even more today, sits as an oasis in a sea of outdated and deteriorating commercial and residential structures. The Johnson campus stands in stark contrast to its surroundings both by its perimeter security fence and architectural imagery far removed from the struggles of inner-city Racine. Yet, it was this very problem which forced Wright to seek a different solution to the answer of creating hierotopic space for a wax company. The very thing that disturbed Wright in 1936, the drab condition of Racine's surroundings, provided clear evidence that American culture was in decline, "Then why and for what are these overgrown American cities so desperately maintained? [H]eld for militocracy, prostitution, banking and war?"[103] As Narciso Menocal has insightfully pointed out, Wright provided an American jeremiad- a wake-up call to anyone who would listen concerning the need for revolutionary thinking regarding the future of the country.[104] The answers he provided through Broadacre City were so futuristic that their full implementation would have required a radical reshaping of the very democracy he was engaging. Wright's dream of providing each citizen a full acre of land for a home seems best left to a country constructed only on paper. What filtered out of such dreams, however, was Wright's determination to create spiritually enlightened spaces, or hierotopy, which he felt would inspire the human soul as he labeled it, "Organic Architecture sixty years ago began this needed readjustment toward the objective universe. The quite changed attitudes of the individual human-soul towards life- towards himself and toward his fellowmen everywhere surround us."[105] The Johnson Wax buildings weren't simply an exercise in geometric relationships, glass tubes, and earth-toned palettes. The buildings were his 'sermons in stone' intended to offer people the possibility of experiencing oneness between the essence of their being and the fullness of the cosmos or as he might say at times- God. It mattered little to Wright whether the sacred space would take on the material form of a building for a wax company or a synagogue because his own worldview did not recognize the limitations of such boundaries. He believed that the sacred could be experienced just as readily in front of a Bunsen burner in the Research Tower as in a sanctuary. The type of building (residential or commercial) mattered little as it was the typology (organic architecture) that counted most. Wright understood himself as a Sherpa of sorts, a guide who had the vision and architectural genius to allow his buildings to become a gateway for simultaneously knowing oneself and entering into universal oneness. The last few lines of a handwritten message by Wright found on his desk the day he died in 1959 explained it this way, "Man's necessities include the spiritual life and out of this his buildings and architecture grew, the very flower and fruit of human vision. [B]ut man sees form and function as one of the imaginative realm, where space is embodied in the world of form we call architecture. This is the greatest consequence of the life of art by mankind as man comes from his aboriginal cave on the way from his gods to God."[106]

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[103] Wright, "The Living City," in *Collected Writings, Vol*. 5, 272.

[104] Menocal, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Concept of Democracy: An American Architectural Jeremiad," 149-164.

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[105] Frank Lloyd Wright, "Influence or Resemblance," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 71.

[106] Wright, "Preamble to The Wonderful World of Architecture," in *Collected Writings, Vol. 5*, 348.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hierotopic Civic Architecture: The Guggenheim Museum, Seashells, and the Mystical Pathway

The commercial nature of the Johnson Wax buildings in Racine allowed Wright to fully explore the relationship between Democracy and the sacred during the 1930's and 1940's. However, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, a civic commission in New York City, occupied the last two decades of his life. This project provided the opportunity to fully explore a hierotopic idea he labeled 'plasticity.' It was a term, Wright noted, that Louis Sullivan used generously in reference to his integration of ornamentation as an inherent element of architecture. Sullivan contrasted his more cohesive philosophy of ornamentation with the notion of applied surface ornament which lacked a deeper, more integral relationship to a building.

Wright compared his organic understanding of plasticity with Sullivan's idea of ornamentation. Wright argued that a true interpretation of "form and function are one" must recognize both a material and spiritual component in design. He looked beyond Sullivan's ornamentation to suggest that a truly organic plasticity would mean a holistic design in which "walls, ceilings, floors become seen as component parts of each other, their surfaces flowing into each other."[1]

This chapter will examine how Wright interpreted the Guggenheim Museum as sacred space and how intertwined spiritualty and architecture were from the very beginning of the commission due to the influence of Hilla Rebay (1890-1967) and her intentions for a museum of non-objective art. Wright's hierotopic intention for the

Guggenheim Museum will be explored through the his concept of organic plasticity as an expression of unity, spiritual associations with the geometry of the spiral, the concept of the mystical pathway in relation to spiritual contemplation of space and art, and the archetypal imagery of the cosmic mountain.

Wright was persistent in discussing architectural ideas using references that involved spirituality when few of his contemporaries did the same. An unassuming letter received by Wright dated June 1, 1943 from Hilla Rebay opened the door to a unique commission which explored relationships between painting, architecture, and spirituality for the following sixteen years. Rebay began her invitation in a rather modest manner, “Could you ever come to New York and discuss with me a building for our collection of non-objective paintings?”[1] However, by the end of her short invitation she made a curious request that must have piqued Wright’s own interests, “I want a temple of spirit, a monument!”[2] Wright quickly returned a letter to Rebay, inviting her to Taliesin to discuss the project. In a return note Rebay gently informed Wright that time was of the essence due to the benefactor, Solomon Guggenheim, being advanced in age.[3] Rebay, a devout theosophist, had very definite and articulate ideas concerning the arts and spiritualty. Little did Wright know that Rebay’s simple invitation would lead to a remarkably complicated commission that would occupy the rest of his life.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, as it became known, was a convergence of hierotopic ideas of movement through space and the contemplative experience with art. Its final form took shape as a massive, primary spiral form for the main gallery with an adjacent, less prominent rotunda for administration which Wright called the Monitor Building. Both vertical elements were perched by Wright on a strong, horizontal band, or bridge, which provided the appearance of a foundation parallel to street level.

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[1] Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Guggenheim Correspondence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986): 4.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 6

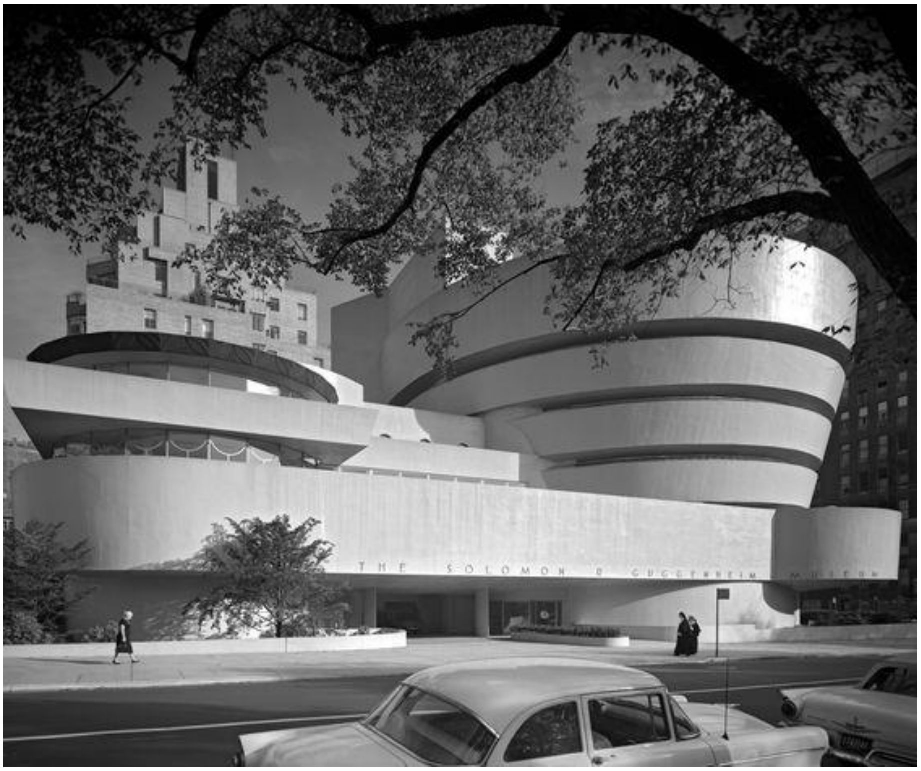

Figure 55. Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum involved two primary forma. The main gallery was conceived as a massive spiral form while the Monitor Building, to the left, was a far less dominant rotunda. A strong horizontal band connected the two elements and provided a covered space for the main entry and vehicular access (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, Robert E. Mates, 1959).

Wright integrated contrasting, horizontal striations on the exterior of the main gallery by deeply recessing the concrete walls. Artificial lighting was even installed in these deep grooves for a dramatic effect in darkness. These shadow-filled bands were used to break up the monolithic dominance of the circular form into four separate rings with the widest residing at the very top of the building. Wright also employed the cantilever, a favorite architectural device, in the exterior view with a cantilevered plane jutting out under the main gallery, echoing the circular forms overhead. A cave-like entrance was intentionally incorporated by Wright to prepare viewers for a radically novel experience in the history of museum architecture. The long, difficult road to its completion was not altogether different from the winding, spiral path Wright chose as an iconic symbol for the museum's interior.

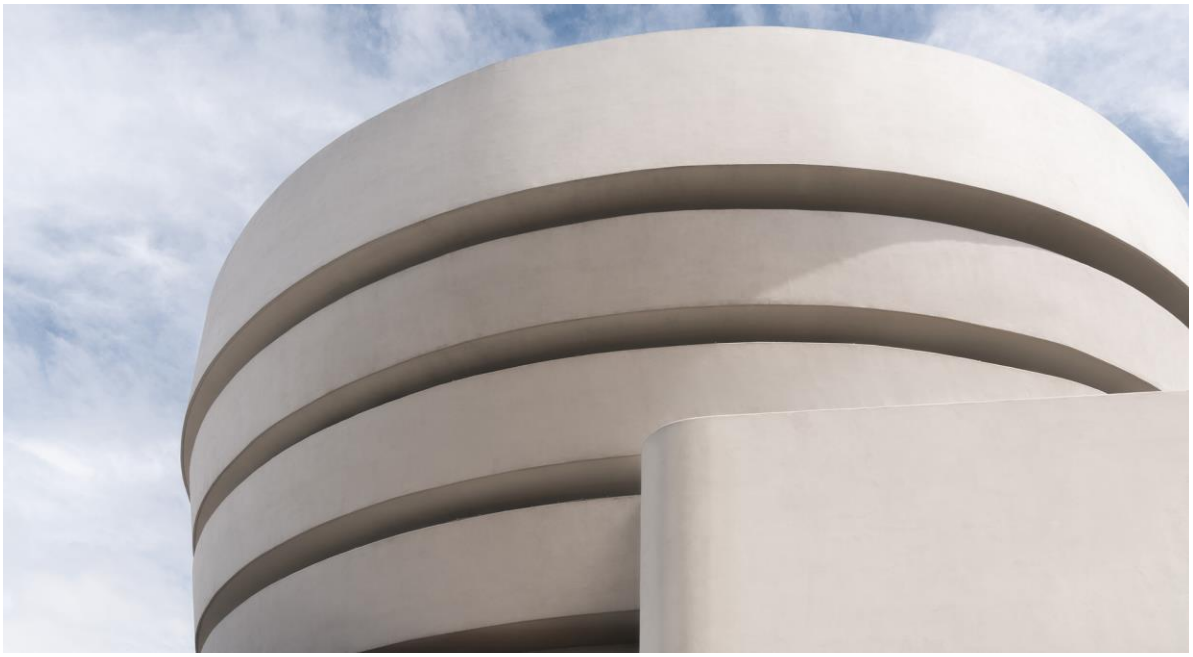

Figure 56. Wright accentuated the solid, exterior mass of the rotunda with deeply recessed striations (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, ca. 2000).

The challenges stemmed not only from the prominent nature of the commission itself (a privately funded museum in a prominent location in Manhattan) but also from the very complicated personalities involved. Rebay and Wright were both extraordinarily complex individuals who had well-formed opinions concerning the relationship between painting and architecture. Wright wistfully commented on himself to architect H.T.H. Wijdeveld, "You were right in your conclusion that I would be difficult to work with. In fact I am impossible to work with."[4] However, both Wright and Rebay could agree that there was an intrinsic relationship between art, architecture, and spirituality. Her intention for a museum to house Guggenheim's growing collection of "non-objective art," as she labeled it, was clearly spelled out to Wright as requiring a spiritual focus. In fact, she envisioned the museum as a temple of sorts, or a "dome of the spirit" that would enlighten humanity, "With infinity and sacred depth create the dome of the spirit: expression of the cosmic breath itself- bring light to light. [I]n dignity, quiet and out of love for the magic spell of spiritual order and infinite grace, let us create a shrine to forget our personal illusions to be healingly embraced with perfected harmony by the order of spiritual reality."[5] While some architects might have been taken back by such language, Wright's transcendental upbringing would have made him quite acclimated to her ideas. The concept of architecture holding the potential for the expression of cosmic breath and associations with magic spells, light, and sacrality could have easily been pulled from Wright's own words. Recall Wright's use of the term 'spell power' in reference to geometric shapes, "There resides a certain 'spell power' in any geometric form which seems more or less a mystery, and is, as we say, the soul of the thing."[6] Wright recognized the idea of interior light as another name for the soul and identified God as the ultimate form of light, "Mankind has various names for this interior light, "the soul" for instance." Rebay's language and aspirations for the museum would have been no threat at all to Wright. In fact, in their disagreements concerning the proper relationship between painting and architecture, Wright summarized his sympathetic view that the ultimate meaning for both art and architecture was as a "spiritual instructive force" for humanity. This concept might be as close to a concise definition of architecture that Wright ever offered which he emphasized in italics, "I love Art with a capital A more than painting per se as such. And the way to honor painting is to Honor great Art wherever and however it exists in the human soul as a spiritual instructive force- because *that is precisely what Architecture means to me*."[7]

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[4] Donald W. Hoppen, *The Seven Ages of Frank Lloyd Wright: The Creative Process* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1998):165. David Watkin also noted, "At last Wright had met his match [with Rebay] in the creation of vainglorious rhetoric." See David Watkin, "Frank Lloyd Wright & the Guggenheim Museum," in *AA Files,* No. 21 (Spring) 1991: 40-48.

[5] Correspondence between Rebay and Wright dated June 23, 1943 in Joan M. Lukach, *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1983): 186

[6] Anthony Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright The Lost Years, 1910-1922: A Study of Influence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993): 90-91, 122.

Rebay's ideas were not conventional but were well within the boundaries of Wright's own thinking. After all, Wright associated his idea of organic architecture as the 'expression of living spirit' which approached the arts from a spiritual vantage point. The irony of the long-standing, and at times difficult, relationship between Wright and Rebay is that neither would be present at the opening ceremony for the Guggenheim on October 20, 1959. Rebay, under tremendous pressure, resigned from the project in 1952, and Wright would not live to see the final six months needed to complete the museum.

Hilla Rebay's Spirituality and Non-Objective Art

In order to fully appreciate the hierotopic aspirations for the Guggenheim project for both Wright and Rebay it is necessary to better understand the person of Hilla Rebay.[8] Wright would ultimately acknowledge that the Guggenheim commission would have been impossible without Rebay's influence and guidance, "Mr. Guggenheim can never find a better or more faithful curator than you are. This whole building has been built for you and around you whether you know it or not. Or whether he knows it or not."[9] Rebay was born into a wealthy German family and her father was a career military officer. Rebay had enjoyed the benefit of private painting, drawing, and music lessons throughout her youth. She was considered a gifted artist and with the enthusiastic support of her family chose painting as a career. Unknown to her parents, however, was Rebay's adherence at a young age to the esoteric movement of Theosophy. At the age of fourteen she was already attending classes taught by philosopher and architect Rudolf Steiner that introduced her to its mystical ideas.[10] She became a devoted follower of the Theosophical Society and would adhere to its mysticism the rest of her life.

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[7] Correspondence between Rebay and Wright dated April 11, 1944 in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art*, 195.

[8] See *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art* (New York, 1983), and; The Museum of Non-Objective Painting: Hilla Rebay and the Origins of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, 2009).

Rebay moved to the United States in January, 1927, where she lived with friends in Philadelphia. Two months later she moved to New York City to develop her artistic career selling collages and producing commercial art as she noted, "I starve often enough, and must work very hard when there is work.[11] However, by the end of the year her collages and drawings had been featured in two exhibits and, more importantly, several pieces had been purchased by Solomon and Irene Guggenheim. With her growing success Rebay was able to relocate to a studio in Carnegie Hall which she also used as a modest gallery for European artists such as Paul Klee (1879-1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). Rebay not only painted Solomon Guggenheim's portrait in 1928, she also nurtured their friendship that would bring her into their inner circle of family and acquaintances. Their growing friendship opened the door for her to convince Guggenheim of the merit of non-objective, or non-representational, painting of which she was already an enthusiastic collector. The movement had grown from the works of

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[9] Wright, *Guggenheim Correspondence*, 68.
[10] Lukach, *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art*, 2-4.
[11] Rebay in a letter dated June 8, 1927 in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art*, 45.

Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) and Kasmir Malevich (1878-1935) which lacked any reference to the natural world but instead used geometric configurations, typically without linear perspective, as motifs. Malevich explored non-objectivity through his own idea of Suprematism as early as 1913 which was a concentration on pure form instead of artistic representations of the natural world. Malevich's manifesto of aesthetic theory, *The Non-Objective World*, was published in 1927 as part of a Bauhaus series. *The Non-Objective World* summarized Malevich's argument against utilitarianism and promoted non-objective art as the purest form of art which encapsulated timeless values.[12] Rebay did not focus on collecting Malevich's works, however, but was drawn to the paintings of Kandinsky who was also a pioneer of non-objective art.

By 1929 Rebay was personally traveling with the Guggenheims and, during a trip to Europe, arranged a meeting in Paris with Kandinsky. Her efforts paid off handsomely as she noted shortly after their visit, "Mr. Guggenheim wants to invest in a non-objective collection."[13] Guggenheim initially planned to develop a collection that would be given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but by 1930 he envisioned building his own museum. Kandinsky's work would ultimately form the core of Guggenheim's impressive collection shaped by Rebay's expertise and guidance.

It should come as no surprise that Rebay focused heavily on Kandinsky's work as she was most influenced by his ideas on art and spirituality. Rebay's nephew, Roland von Rebay, recalled that "[Hilla] was convinced that non-objective art could make people

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[12] See Kasmir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola (New York, (2003) and Branislav Jakovljevic, "Unframe Malevich! Ineffability and Sublimity in Suprematism," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), 18-31.

[13] From a letter dated August 5, 1929 in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art*, 45

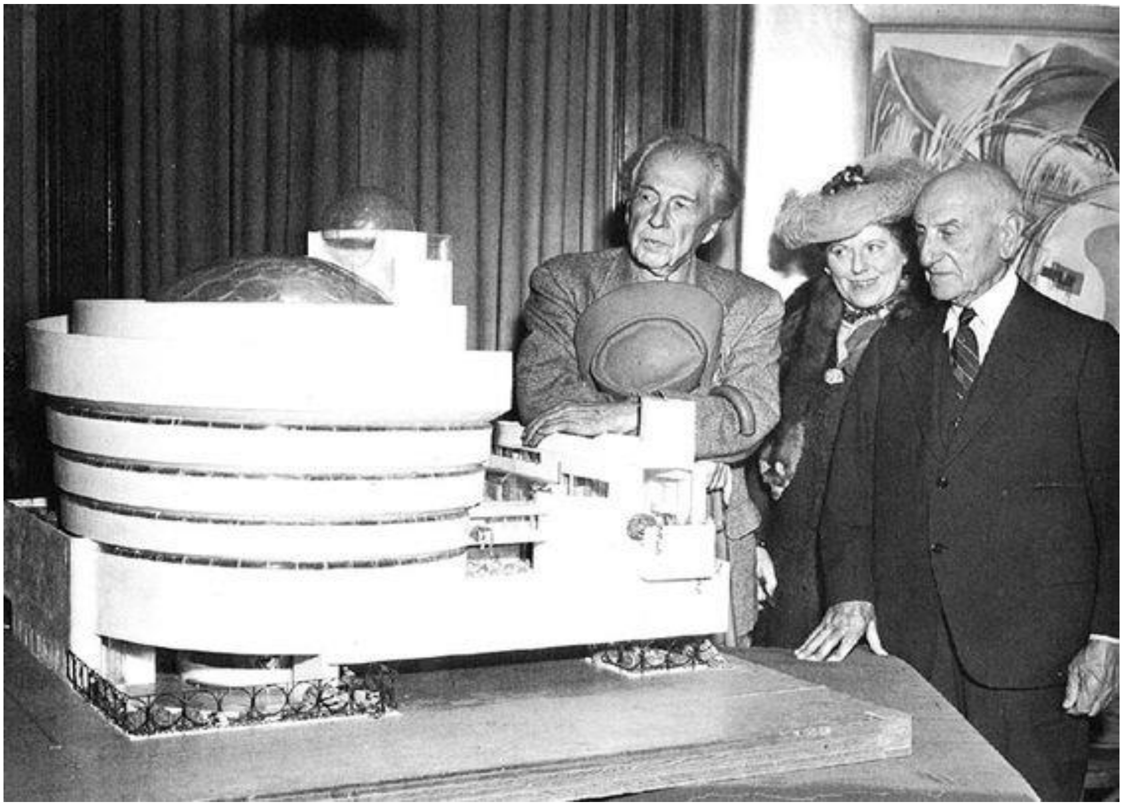

Figure 57. The three key decision makers in the early development of the Guggenheim Museum: Wright, Hilla Rebay, and Solomon Guggenheim. The death of Guggenheim in 1949 eventually resulted in Rebay's resignation from the project (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, 1945).

less materialistic, more spiritual, and that the world would be a better place as a result. She had developed a doctrinaire, esoteric concept of art under the influence of Vasily Kandinsky's ideas."[14]

Kandinsky, like Rebay, was greatly influenced by theosophical ideas, and in 1912 he published a small book, *Uber das Geistige in der Kunst*. The text summarized Kandinsky's belief that art and spirituality were intertwined, "The spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forwards and upwards."[15] Kandinsky likened this progressive movement to a spiritual pyramid. Only through enlightenment and self-awareness of the spiritual possibilities in art could one reach the uppermost peak of the triangle. This esoteric knowledge involved comprehending the psychic effects of color and resulting spiritual vibrations colors produced.

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[14] Ronald von Rebay, "I Will Make You World Famous," in *Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1995): 230.

This principle was so important Kandinsky proposed in capital letters, "COLOR HARMONY MUST REST ONLY ON A CORRESPONDING VIBRATION IN THE HUMAN SOUL."[16] He also defined form as bearing relationship to the soul, "FORM IS THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THIS INNER MEANING. [F]ORM HARMONY MUST REST ONLY ON A CORRESPONDING VIBRATION OF THE HUMAN SOUL."[17]

Figure 58. Wassily Kandinsky. Rebay was an avid early collector of Kandinsky's work and was influenced by his ideas concerning the relationship between spirituality and art (Musee national d'Art Moderne, ca. 1922).

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[15] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. Michael Sadler (Las Vegas: IAP, 2009):18-19.
[16] Ibid., 42.
[17] Ibid., 82.

Rebay, like Kandinsky, believed that non-objective art provided a spiritual beacon for those who would understand its meaning. Rebay defined non-objective art as an art which required no object as its source, "Non-objective painting represents no object or subject known to us on earth. It's is simply a beautiful organization of colors and forms to be enjoyed for beauty's sake and arranged in rhythmic order."[18]. Rebay, too, adamantly believed in the spiritual power of non-objective painting as she noted in 1937, "Non-objectivity will be the religion of the future. [N]on-objective paintings are prophets of spiritual life. Those who have experienced the joy they can give possess such inner wealth as can never be lost."[19] She viewed non-objective painting as the ultimate form of art as it represented the artist's intuitive nature which flowed from divine inspiration.

From the outset Rebay envisioned a museum of non-objective painting as offering spiritual meaning. As early as 1930 she used the same language as that found in her first letter to Wright written almost fifteen years later. The museum, as she envisioned it in Theosophic terms, had cosmic spiritual implications, "The Temple of Non-objectivity and devotion- 'Temple'- is better than 'Church.' [I]t must become the Temple for children. [T]he standard of greatness for all nations, truly the Temple of Peace in the Universe."[20] While Rebay had been percolating over grand ideas for a museum of non-objective painting for years, Wright had been simultaneously mulling over the use of the spiral as a geometric form of architectural significance. It is little wonder that when the two converged in 1943 their ideas about the potential for such a museum bubbled over as Wright noted late in the same year, “I am so full of ideas for our museum that I am likely to blow up (or commit suicide) unless I can let them out on paper.”[21]

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[18] Rebay in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art*, 144.

[19] Hilla Rebay, "The Beauty of Non-objectivity" in *Second Enlarged Catalogue of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection of Non-Objective Paintings* (1937). See also *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art* , 96.

[20] Rebay in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art,* 62.

What Rebay did not know is that Wright was desperate for work given the austere conditions of World War II. The arrival of her letter was a financial lifeline and Wright was anxious to begin work on any project let alone a major commission backed by a wealthy benefactor in New York City. When the Guggenheim commission was secured, it was celebrated by Wright and those who remained in the Fellowship. A majority of apprentices had either been drafted or volunteered for military service while several were given deferment based upon their role farming Wright’s land surrounding Taliesin. Those who refused to answer the draft as conscientious objectors were either already in prison or in danger of prison sentences. Three apprentices were sentenced to Sandstone Federal Prison, a low-security facility at Sandstone, Minnesota. Wright’s time was not consumed by architectural projects but in keeping the Taliesin and Fellowship afloat. As a show of support, he drove to Sandstone in 1942 to encourage all who were imprisoned there for refusing the draft. He thought the prison looked more like a monastery and noted, “[I] am here with you in Sandstone in spirit at least.”[22] He offered uplifting words to remind his own apprentices and other prisoners to not let the government’s punishment destroy their inner man. The unexpected letter from Rebay in 1943 provided a long-awaited opportunity for Wright to finally switch from the challenges of war-time America and once again concentrate on architecture.

It appears that both Wright and Rebay agreed early in their discussions that a circular motif would be ideal for the museum. While negotiations continued through 1944 on where to best locate the museum, Rebay emphasized that a purely horizontal design would not suffice. Instead, she envisioned a strong vertical element which would reach "up to the infinite infinity of space."[23] Wright concurred but preferred to not produce any working designs until a site had been selected and purchased. As the months dragged on with no commitment on a location from Guggenheim, it was Rebay who prodded Wright to offer some visualization of the museum. Wright conceded and created his first sketches in early 1944. In March, 1944 Guggenheim purchased property at Fifth Avenue and 89th Street adjacent to Central Park. Wright and Rebay were elated to finally have a site for the museum but neither envisioned how many years would elapse before construction would actually begin.

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[21] Wright, *Guggenheim Correspondence*, 22.

[22] Frank Lloyd Wright, “Address at Sandstone Prison,” in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 107.

The Spiral and Movement Through Space

Wright's earliest exploration of the spiral for a major architectural design emerged in the unrealized Gordon Strong Planetarium project of 1924-1925. The project was initiated by Gordon Strong, a wealthy Chicago real estate investor and manager. Strong approached Wright in the autumn of 1924 with an idea to develop Sugarloaf Mountain, property he owned near Washington D.C., into a resort and recreation facility which would focus on easy automobile access. The project had three distinct phases beginning with preliminary sketches that clearly featured the primary motif of an ascending spiral, with a massive spire emerging from its center. This initial design incorporated a variety of spaces for a resort such as dancing and picnic areas. The second phase of the design shifted away from smaller recreational areas toward a central theater located in the interior of the spiral. The central spire was removed and converted into a tower adjacent to the entrance of the spiral ramp. Wright also envisioned a massive and bold use of glass in this second phase. Not only would the theater have a glass dome but the spiral ramp itself would incorporate large amounts of glass block. The final design for the commission converted the theater into a planetarium. A double-spiral ramp would encircle the planetarium and allow traffic to simultaneously ascend and descend, thus the concept of an 'automobile objective.' Wright was an enthusiastic advocate of the automobile and correctly envisioned it as an indispensable element of American life. The spiral, in this case, was designed as architecture for the automobile. It was experiential in nature from the vantage point of a moving car, both ascending and descending, with accompanying views of the countryside surrounding Sugarloaf Mountain.[24] Wright was attuned to the experiential meaning of movement through space.

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[23] Rebay in *Hilla Rebay: In Search of the Spirit in Art,* 187.

Unity Temple was an experiment in controlling how individuals walked toward, into, and completely through a hierotopic space. Wright, by a carefully controlled path of entrance and egress, was able to affect the sanctuary experience of Unity Temple. The planetarium project allowed him to now explore the passage of people not on foot, but in vehicles, in an ascending and descending path. Far beyond the bounds of interior spaces, Wright now wanted to affect how people experienced nature as they looked over the expanse of natural beauty surrounding Sugarloaf Mountain. He would later juggle the relationships in the Guggenheim Museum and direct individuals entering the main gallery to instinctively look upward, fixing their gaze on the ascending spiral and massive oculus overhead.

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[24] See Mark Reinberger, "The Sugarloaf Mountain Project and Frank Lloyd Wright's Vision of a New World," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Mar., 1984): 38-52.

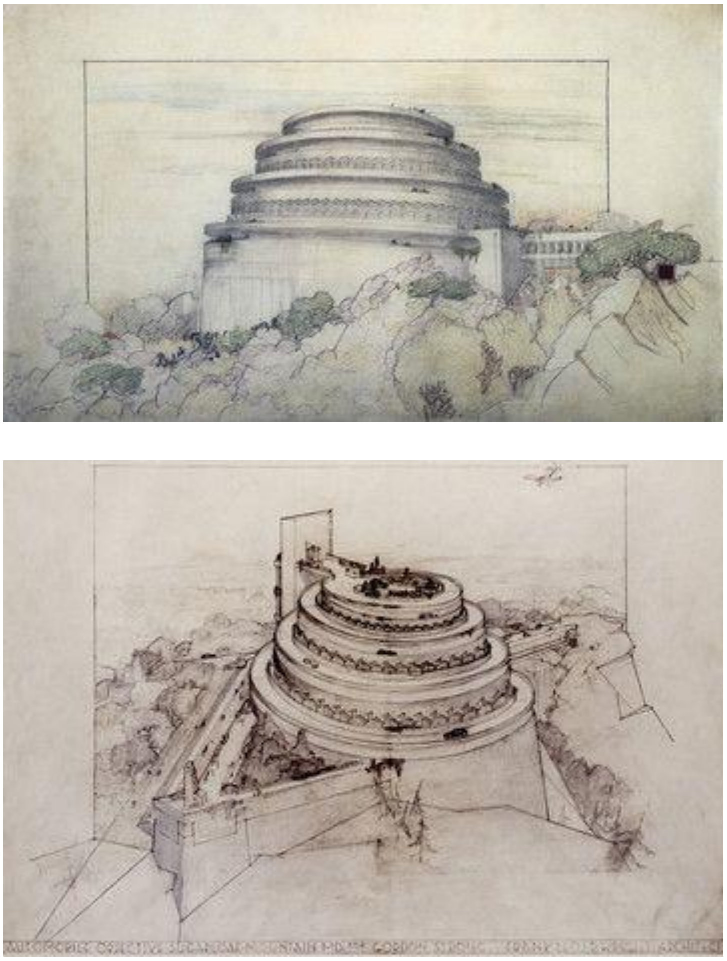

Figure 59. Wright's unrealized plans for the Gordon Strong Planetarium were revisited in his concept for the Guggenheim Museum (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1925).

Strong initially hired Wright precisely because he wanted concepts that were daring and bold. However, he instantly rejected the planetarium proposal using a comparison to the Tower of Babel. With a healthy dose of sarcasm, Strong pointed out in his rejection letter that not only did a man in his own picture of the Tower of Babel lose his voice but he also "lost his shirt. [W]hich was the end of the first attempt at an externally ramped automobile observatory… ."[25] Not being one to be outdone in sarcasm, Wright responded a few days later, "[I] should have diddled it away with platforms and seats and spittoons for introspective or expectorating businessmen and the flappers that beset them [l]eaving the automobiles [s]till ‘parked’ aside,- betrayed and abandoned.”[26] Needless to say, the project was never built. However, Wright did not abandon the concept and asked for the planetarium plans to be returned in 1929. He indicated intent to use them some day for an art gallery to be constructed in Europe.[27] The details of such a European art gallery remain unknown; however, the comment was consistent with Wright’s ability to recycle plans for entirely new applications. Little did Wright know that almost fifteen years later he would, indeed, design a museum incorporating concepts from Strong’s Tower of Babel for New York City.

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[25] Ibid., 46.

The spiral was not only a form that attracted Wright as he grew older, it was also associated with Emersonian and transcendental thought as the pathway of energy which ultimately united both the material and spiritual in the cosmos. Emerson noted the importance of the spiral in his commentary on the mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) in one of seven essays comprising *Representative Men* published in 1850. Swedenborg’s theory of forms was hierarchical, with the lowest forms being angular, and moved progressively to the circle, spiral, and vortex, which he defined as a perpetual-spiral. Emerson noted the highest level of form, for Swedenborg, was the perpetual-celestial which was spiritual. While Emerson did not elaborate on Swedenborg’s identification of form for the spiritual, the pathway clearly involved spiral movement.[28] The form of a spiral is both circular and propulsive, which in the case of the Strong Planetarium design, was deemed a viable solution by Wright for harnessing the energy of the automobile. Historian Jack Quinan proposed that while Wright made no mention of the Emersonian spiral in his writings he must have been familiar with it due to his maternal family's passion for Emerson. Quinan suggested that the transcendentalist imagery was likely "imbedded in his psyche at an early age, only to emerge as the crowning statement of his architecture at the end of his career… ."[29] Wright certainly became captivated by the architectural potential of the spiral as his career progressed.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Donald Hoppen, *The Seven Ages of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 140.

[28] Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Swedenborg, or the Mystic,” in *Representative Men Seven Lectures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 65.

Hierotopy and the Meaning of Color

While Wright once reflected that he was able to shake architectural designs out of his sleeve it must be remembered that some twenty years had elapsed between this first use of the spiral and the Guggenheim design. Since he made associations between the Gordon Strong Planetarium design and an art gallery it would have made sense to recycle the idea in his initial proposal to Rebay. Wright would use the Guggenheim commission as an ultimate statement, in so far as materials would allow, about plasticity in architecture. Remember that the term plasticity was not only an architectural term for Wright but also an idea of spiritual oneness between design, materials, and the cosmos.

He used an anthropomorphic analogy in calling plasticity "the expressive flesh-covering of the skeleton as contrasted with the articulation of the skeleton itself." Wright was so enamored with the possibility of creating 'oneness' (a very transcendental notion) in architecture that he described the consequences as creating new architectural effects that startled and even amazed him. Yet, he credited these effects of striving for plasticity as "the working of this spiritual principle." In other words, Wright seemed to understand plasticity as a reflection of an absolute principle of oneness that could be captured and reflected through architecture.

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[29] Jack Quinan, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: A Historian's Report," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Dec., 1993): 470-471.

His earliest sketches proposed a circular structure which was largest at its base and narrowest at the top. This was consistent with the overall motif of the planetarium design which anchored the building aesthetically to the earth. His color sketch of this early museum proposal indicated a reddish colored exterior which generated some heated exchanges with Rebay concerning the spiritual significance of color.

Wright's use of red for the museum countered everything Rebay had learned about color in years of Theosophic training**.** Red, for her and other Theosophists, was a completely unsuitable color for the exterior of the museum. It was, in her view, the most materialistic color and she insisted that Wright alter his plans for the red marble and brick exterior displayed in the early phases of the project. Rebay, like Kandinsky, believed that color held intrinsic spiritual value and that colors maintained metaphysical relationships with one another that awakened certain emotions within the soul. Kandinsky offered a musical correlation to the spiritual power of color, "In music light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello; a still darker a thunderous double bass; and the darkest blue all- an organ."[30] Each color, in turn, had an effect on the soul. Green, for instance, was the most peaceful color of all and white, Kandinsky continued, "has the appeal of nothingness that is before birth, of the world in the ice age."[31] To Kandinsky, red held a powerful intensity which offered the greatest flexibility of being either warm or cold depending on its shade. He compared a light, warm red to a trumpet with a harsh, strong sound yet the color also offered a feeling of determination and triumph. Unlike Rebay, however, Kandinsky saw great possibilities in the use of red which also held cultural and spiritual significance in traditional Russian culture. Orthodox homes, for example, maintained a "red corner" or "beautiful corner" where icons and other items of religious value were located for private devotions.

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[30] Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 56-57.
[31] Ibid.

Wright, for his part, believed there were no inherently bad colors which meant he and Rebay had to hash out their differences over the spiritual value of red as he noted in a letter from August 1945, "I forgot the controversy concerning RED. [I] am operating on the belief that all color is one and spiritual or not as it is qualified by the artist and used. [T]here is no bad color. No one color is better than another in itself."[32] He, however, deferred to Rebay's belief and changed the concept of the exterior to a neutrally colored polished-marble aggregate. This is not to say, however, that Wright was indifferent about color as he did make correlations between color and sacred meaning. In the interior of Beth Sholom Synagogue, for example, Wright called for the use of an interior pale ivory in deference to "the spirit of whiteness as a symbol of chasteness in religious life." [33] Wright was to fight many battles during the final years of the Guggenheim project concerning the proper colors for both the interior and exterior of the museum. While Wright did not hold the same beliefs as Rebay about the value of certain colors, it must be said that he was an active observer of color in nature. His descriptions of nature are peppered with detailed images of color.

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[32] Wright. *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 67.

[33] Joseph M. Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*: W*right and Modern Religious* Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012): 446.

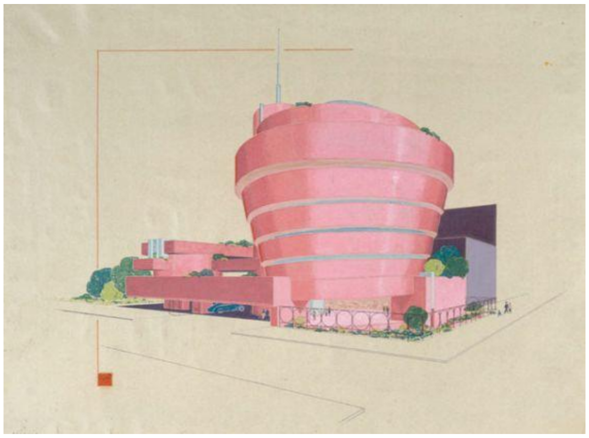

Figure 60. Wright's earliest renderings of the Guggenheim Museum presented a structure with an exterior reddish tint. Rebay abhorred the idea as she believed colors held uniquely intrinsic spiritual value and associated red with materialism (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1944).

For instance, his recollection of a field in summer as a young boy, "The swath of yellow stubble left by the rounds of the gay reaper shows faint undertone of living green. The gaily painted reaper, pulled by three white horses, cuts its way around round after round. [A]dolph in a bright blue shirt is setting up the shocks."[34] Wright summarized his beloved Valley as a "vast panorama of life. Human experience a colorful tapestry shot through with threads of gold as light beams…"[35]

Wright did associate mythic meaning to color. Red was clearly his favorite color and white was his least as he called it the loudest of all colors which nature used sparingly. His preference for red came from his belief that it best represented creation. He saw it as symbolizing the mythic pulse of life, "[Red] courses even in the veins of all plant life: Green is the camouflage of red. [I]t is the color of life. [T]he Sun is the soul of Red."[36] As is well known, Wright became personally associated with his signature color Cherokee Red, which actually had slight variations of hue do to its iron oxide base.

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[34] Wright, *An Autobiography*, 121.
[35] Ibid., 326.
[36] Wright, *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 43.

Wright discovered the color early in his career and combined it with a square to create his professional stamp of the Red Square. Wright's affinity for red called attention to the universal meaning he associated with color. He insisted on painting two of his luxury automobiles in Cherokee Red which became so identified with Wright's life that it eventually gained protection as a legal trademark by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Color, after all, conveys emotional and psychological meaning and Wright clearly found it in Cherokee Red.[37] Author Michael Taussig reflected on the question of sacred associations with color in his 2006 article, "What Color is the Sacred?"[38] One poignant note, which has great relevance to Wright, was the idea that color provides more than an ocular-cerebral exchange. Taussig suggested that the power of color is found in its creation of a holistic, bodily experience, "Color vision becomes less a retinal and more a total bodily activity common to fairy tales in that we may pass into the image while we are looking at it."[39] He recommended the idea of understanding color as "something alive, like an animal" and continued to note the mystery of color was found in "[t]he combustible mix of attraction and repulsion [t]hat best brings out its magical qualities."[40] In a similar manner, Cherokee Red wasn't simply a favorite color for Wright. It held mythic qualities that, more than any other color, symbolized nature itself which is why the Red Square became Wright's personal symbol not only on his architectural drawings but on buildings themselves.[41] A signed, ceramic Red Square was attached to architectural projects (like the Guggenheim Museum) deemed worthy of this final stamp of approval. Cherokee Red and the Red Square became motifs of Wright himself because of their mystical, cosmic meaning which aligned with one of Taussig's main points, "Color lies at the chemical heart of the cosmos." Wright would ultimately find himself fighting enormous battles over the colors of both the interior and exterior of the Guggenheim Museum. Cherokee Red would not be part of the final answer except for the small, signature Red Square tile attached to the exterior.

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[37] Thomas J. Madden, Kelly Hewett, and Martin S. Roth, "Managing Images in Different Cultures: A Cross-National Study of Color Meanings and Preferences," in Journal of International Marketing, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2000), 90-107.

[38] Michael Taussig, "What Color is the Sacred?" in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Autumn 2006), 28-51.

[39] Ibid., 30-31.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Wright also had a great affinity for Wisconsin barns and declared that all barns should be painted red. For more on Theosophic associations with the color red see Eugena Victoria Ellis, "The Red Square: Frank Lloyd Wright, Theosophy and Modern Conceptions of Space," www.bauarchitecture.com.

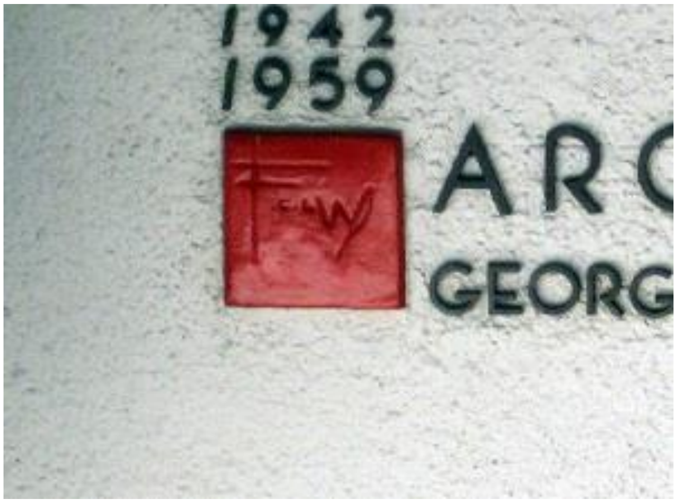

Figure 61. An inscribed, ceramic red square was placed on the Guggenheim exterior as Wright's signature on the building (Bikes and Books, 2009).

Exterior Interplay of Geometric Forms and the Sheltered Entrance

Wright's architectural ingenuity for the Guggenheim prompted both admiration and ridicule for its space-age imagery. *The New York Times* called it the "most controversial building ever to rise in New York" with opinions ranging from bitter and caustic to exciting.[42] Beyond the public debate about the appropriateness of the museum's forms Wright masterfully succeeded in creating iconic architecture. What exactly made the Guggenheim stand apart in such an architecturally diverse place as New York City?

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[42] Sanka Knox, "New Art Museum Opens on 5th Avenue," in *The New York Times* (October 21, 1959): 1.

The exterior of the Guggenheim was a dramatic departure in aesthetics for its location at East 89th Street and Fifth Avenue on the upper east side of Manhattan. Wright had no intention of letting the building blend into its surroundings or reflect much of the nature of Central Park located just across the street. A few tree and other plantings were incorporated into the landscaping of the museum, particularly facing Fifth Avenue, but the greenery provided a modest connection with Central Park. This seeming contradiction with nearby nature was a reflection of how Wright understood organic architecture. His Prairie School designs sought a symbiotic relationship to their surroundings even to the point of designing around trees or other elements of nature. In the Guggenheim, conversely, Wright insulated the building from its environment by rejecting almost any form of cooperation. The Guggenheim stands alone on its corner as radically different from the surrounding architecture of late-nineteenth and twentieth century multi-level structures. While much of the neighborhood around the Guggenheim is residential, a large number of notable museums line a twenty-block stretch of Fifth Avenue including The Frick Collection, The National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. However, the Guggenheim's originality emerged through its geometric boldness and the daring use of an expanding spiral. It was an expression of individuality which Wright would have seen as consistent with the creative, individual expression of form encouraged through organic architecture.

The exterior, iconic imagery of the building emerged through several key elements. First, was the aesthetically sensitive arrangement of geometric forms. Wright was clearly a master designer and handler of bold geometric shapes. He succeeded in creating a building that was sculptural as he noted, “Here for the first time architecture appears plastic; one floor flowing into another (more like sculpture) instead of the usual superimposition of stratified layers cutting and butting into each other by way of post and beam construction.”[43] With it, he captured and challenged people’s imagination. Without question, Wright’s futuristic design was a creative *tour de force* and aesthetically sensitive sculptural form. Architect Philip Johnson concluded that the Guggenheim was “Mr. Wright’s greatest building, New York’s greatest building.”[44]

Wright cleverly juxtaposed the long, horizontal bridge of the base of the museum with the dominant vortex of the main gallery. Akin to a teeter-totter, he counterbalanced the mass of the main gallery with a less dominant rotunda of the administrative Monitor Building. It is clear that the towering, main gallery is the heart of the design but the smaller rotunda of the Monitor provided a pleasing, supportive repetition of circular form. However, it is also apparent that Wright was concerned aesthetically about the interplay between horizontality and vertical circularity in his design. He felt a need to essentially bisect the small rotunda of the administrative building by a rectangular, horizontal form. Without this repetition of horizontality Wright must have felt the overall design would become too circular and not offer enough contrast between the smaller rotunda and the dominant main gallery.

Wright also provided a surprising integration of the cantilever to create a sense of mystery in the exterior view. While the ascending circularity of the main gallery pushed upward to challenge gravity, a cantilevered, horizontal band of concrete levitated from beneath its south-western corner. In effect, Wright challenged gravity in two directions by pushing upward with the main gallery and defying gravity's downward pull with a dramatic cantilever just above ground level.

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[43] Frank Lloyd Wright in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and Horizon Press, 1960): 16.

[44] Robert Alden, “Art Experts Laud Wright’s Design,” in *The New York Times* (October 22, 1959): 41.

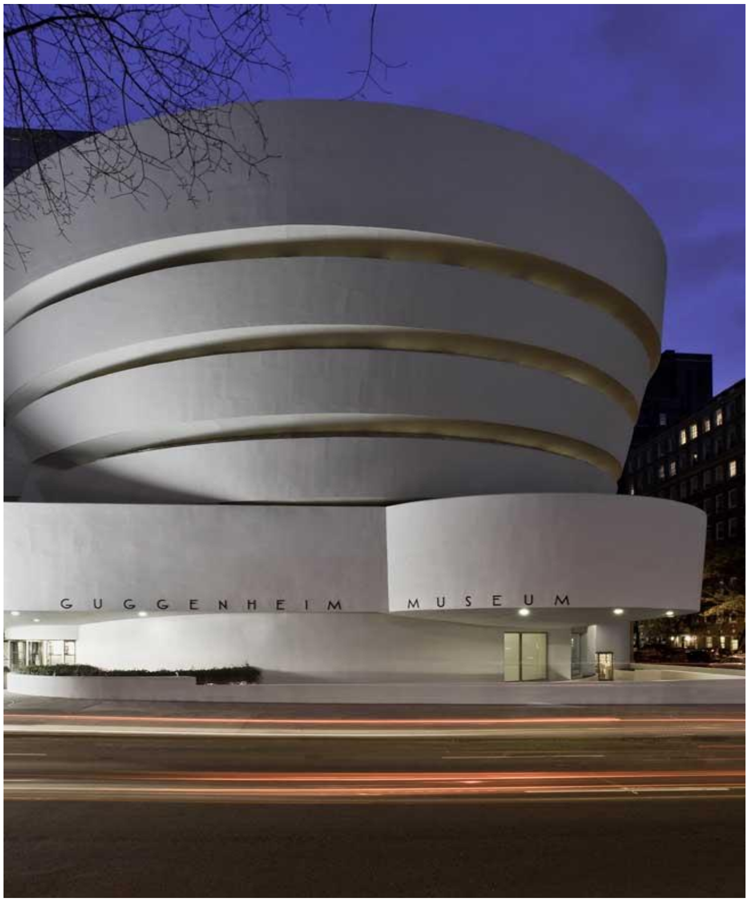

Figure 62. Wright made masterful use of cantilevers throughout his career as an architectural element of gravity-defying suspense. He incorporated a cantilever in the southwest corner of the Guggenheim Museum (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Robert E, Mates, ca. 2000).

Wright relished any opportunity to defy gravity with his designs and stretch the capacity of building materials to their limits in doing so. The Robie House and Fallingwater provided two residential examples of dramatic cantilevers in Wright's earlier work. He recognized that a cantilever created a sense of mystery by challenging gravity and he surprisingly found a way to incorporate this architectural trick in the Guggenheim design.

Another carryover from his residential designs is the sheltered entrance that he favored in his Prairie houses. While the Guggenheim did not offer a traditional roof line he managed to create a sheltered entrance nonetheless by recessing the public doors under the horizontal bridge. The glassed entrance was embedded into the base of the main gallery and bore some resemblance to the sheltered entry doors of the Johnson Wax Administration Building. Like the Johnson Wax plan, Wright's original design allowed automobile traffic in close proximity of the entrance of the museum. Traffic could turn off busy Fifth Avenue and drive between the administrative rotunda and main gallery, under the bridge, to allow patrons direct access to the glass entrance. Drivers would then continue left around the east side of the Monitor Building and exit the property onto East 89th Street.[45]

The Guggenheim's sheltered entrance was characteristically hidden from view and not intended to be a focal point of the museum's design. Wright's use of the sheltered entrance conveyed the transition from the exterior world into an interior sense of protection and security in his residential designs and he apparently wanted the same feeling for the Guggenheim. What he also gained was the opportunity to create a dramatic contrast between the darkened, low ceiling of the entry into the main gallery and the massive, light-filled expansion of space within. It was Wright's most profound and effective use of compression and expansion of architectural space in his career. The super-cube of Unity Temple was transformed four decades later into the super-spiral of the Guggenheim Museum.

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[45] In 1975 this access drive was eliminated by enclosing the space between the main gallery and Monitor Building to create an additional entrance and bookstore.

Wright also saw the need to break up the mass of the exterior of the main gallery by slicing three horizontal bands around its circumference. These recessed rings around the structure provided a location for small skylights and created a contrast of dark and light on the exterior cup-like form of the main gallery. The 1946 model of the Guggenheim repeated the ascending spiral of the interior as a recessed spiral which also circled its way up the exterior of the main gallery. However, Wright ultimately eliminated the exterior spiral and retained a greater sense of horizontality by keeping the recessed bands parallel with the ground. By doing so, he divided the exterior into four segments divided by four smaller shadow-filled rings.

Wright knew the exterior mass of the main gallery was far too overpowering without some form of striation to break it up which created its futuristic, spaceship-like imagery. He humorously made an atomic-age reference to the coil-like qualities of the main gallery as capable of withstanding a nuclear bomb being dropped on New York City. Akin to the Imperial Hotel's survival of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake Wright lauded his "true logarithmic spiral" and noted with humor, "When the first atom bomb lands on New York City it will not be destroyed. It may be blown a few miles up into the air but when it comes down it will bounce."[46] While the spiral form of the main gallery would not have bounced in a nuclear war, it certainly did set off a war of words as to its suitability for the shape of a museum.

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[46] Frank Lloyd Wright, *Architectural Forum* (January, 1946): 84-85.

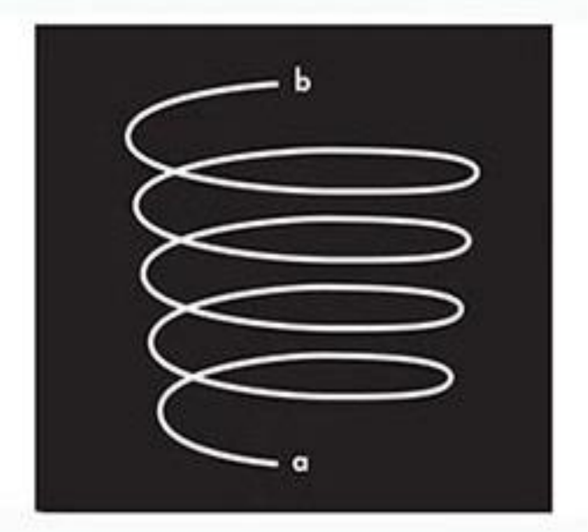

Figure 63. Impression of the Guggenheim Museum by MGMT.design reflecting its spring-like energy. Wright called it a "true logarithmic spiral" and joked it would bounce on its return to earth if ever hit by an atomic bomb (Courtesy the Guggenheim Museum, 2016).

Spiraling Challenges

As with the exterior imagery, Wright recognized that a solid spiral ramp climbing up the interior of the main gallery would have been aesthetically too predictable. He created a counterpoint to the spiral by interrupting it with an intersecting arc which housed the elevator and stairwell for the building. This created the convergence of two, overlapping spirals, much as the common area shared by two overlapping circles in a Venn diagram. The spiral ramp climbed from the ground level and wound its way up six evolutions to terminate into a spine-like support in the wall just under the massive glass dome, or oculus, which capped the main gallery. The engineering ingenuity of the iconic ramp involved Wright's use of the cantilever as architectural drama. No interior supports were initially planned for the ramp which was to be cantilevered out from the supporting exterior shell of the structure. Ultimately a number of spine-like supports had to be integrated into the design to satisfy the building code of New York City. However, Wright still maintained the illusion of the ramp being suspended in space from the interior atrium. He noted, "The structural calculations are thus those of the cantilever and continuity rather than the post and beam. The net result of such construction is a greater repose, the atmosphere of the quiet, unbroken wave."[47] A solid parapet, or half-wall, was attached to the inner side of the ramp which emphasized both its serpentine flow and the gravity defying cantilever.

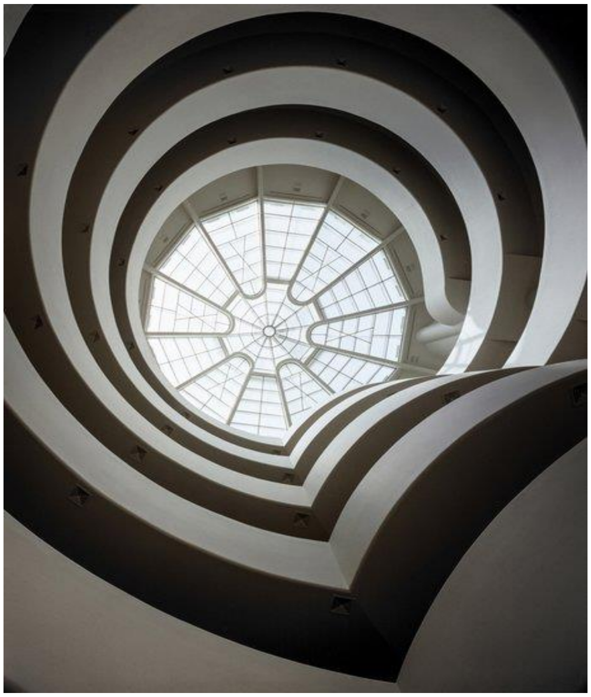

Figure 64. Wright created variation in the rotunda interior by intersecting the main spiral with a smaller spiral that created a contrasting 'bump,' as in the overlapping of a Venn diagram (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, 2018).

The spiraling walkway was Wright's reinterpretation of the dramatically suspended balconies of Fallingwater pulled, twisted, and lengthened into a pathway. As with the exterior, the main gallery of the museum worked well as a sculptural space. Its aesthetic appeal, notwithstanding questions about the display of art, was critically acclaimed as Philip Johnson labeled it "one of the greatest rooms in the twentieth century."[48] Wright's profound sense of the harmonious and beautiful in architecture was on full display in the main gallery as a work of art in itself. This, of course, was also at the heart of the criticism of Wright's design. Rebay summarized as early as 1945, "While I have no doubt that your building will be a great monument to yourself [w]e need a monument to painting also which is our main interest."[49] The chairman of the museum's board of directors reflected in 2004 that the greatest work of art in the Guggenheim collection was the building itself.

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[47] Wright in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright*, 16.

The challenge for Wright lay in how a patron was to interact with art on a curving, incline. A great deal of the furor over the concept of the ramp emerged from the unorthodox idea of taking away the rectilinear surrounding for displaying the two-dimensional art in Guggenheim's collection. It was a question that provoked concerns not only for Rebay, but also for the artistic community in New York City and elsewhere. Wright, characteristically, brushed aside such concerns as unnecessary and simultaneously managed to ridicule the artists, who wrote an open letter in late 1956 to the Guggenheim trustees, with the museum under full construction, to voice their grievances. The group of twenty-one artists asked the trustees to essentially abandon Wright's design as it was incompatible for the proper display of paintings or sculpture. The idea of a ramp was, in their collective opinion, "a callous disregard for the fundamental rectilinear frame of reference necessary for the adequate visual contemplation of works of art."[50] Never sidestepping a good controversy Wright essentially accused all of them of being narrow-minded and unable to think in broader terms about what art represents. The elder architect quickly turned the tables and chastised much younger artists of not being open to change. It must have been a cherished moment for Wright who, remarkably, was at the zenith of his career in his late eighties. Solomon Guggenheim's nephew, Harry Guggenheim, gladly defended Wright and pointed out to the public that the three percent incline of the ramp (it was closer to five percent) was scarcely more than the two percent grade permitted for sidewalks in the code of New York City which was "unnoticeable to pedestrians."[51] In actuality, the artists' public squabble was a waste of time. The Guggenheim Museum was rising from the earth and after all the years of planning and difficulties overcoming numerous code violations with the city of New York nothing was going to keep Wright or the Guggenheim Trustees from bringing the project to completion. While the question of whether a spiraling ramp was a proper form for the display of two-dimensional art continued long after the museum was completed, Wright savored the opportunity to challenge the avant-garde of his day by accusing them of overreacting. He predicted this problem well ahead of time in correspondence from 1952, "The Reactionary, though perhaps fascinated by [the museum], will not really like it. It will scare him."[52]

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[48] Robert Alden, "Art Experts Laud Wright's Design," in *The New York Times* (October 22, 1959): 41.
[49] Rebay in *Hilla Rebay and the Spirit in Art*, 195.

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[50] See text of open letter to Guggenheim trustees in *The Guggenheim Correspondence,* 242.
[51] Harry Guggenheim as reported in "Guggenheim Chides Critics of Museum," in *The New York Times* (Dec. 22, 1957): 2.
[52] Wright in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright,* 18.

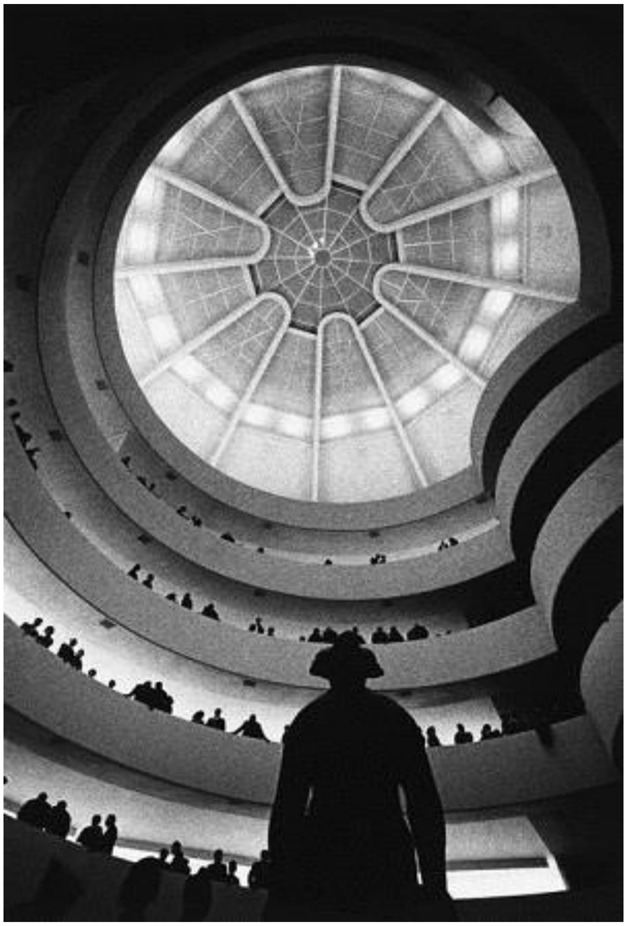

Figure 65. The Guggenheim opened in 1959 to widespread criticism and adulation. Unfortunately, Wright did not live long enough to see the project completed (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1959).

Wright resolved the worries over the presentation of paintings by suggesting they be attached directly to the walls along the circumference of the spiral ramp which would have tilted the canvasses slightly outward as if on an easel. This, in Wright's view, was the ideal solution in creating harmony between the art, viewer, and museum. In a sense, he wanted the art to be absorbed into the building as individual parts of the whole, "Walls slope gently outward forming a giant spiral for a well-defined purpose: a new unity between beholder, painting, and architecture. As planned, in the easy downward drift the viewer on the giant spiral, pictures are not to be seen bolt-upright…"[53] Wright wanted paintings and architecture to have a symphonic beauty, or unity, never seen before in the history of museums and noted that he did not want to "subjugate the paintings to the building."[54] With Solomon Guggenheim's death in 1949 and Rebay's resignation under pressure in 1952, however, Wright was left to convey his lofty ideals to a new generation who lacked loyalty to the aging architect. It was Guggenheim's nephew, Harry, however, who energetically took up the cause of the museum and eventually became an ardent supporter of Wright. Unfortunately, Rebay's replacement in James Johnson Sweeney (1900-1986) created an entirely new web of tension and problems for Wright to endure as an elderly man. Wright viewed Sweeney as a malicious person who wanted to sabotage the design and aesthetics of the project. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer has noted that, "[Wright] was paying a staggering price for that museum, for at times it wore heavily on his health. [H]e found the battle to build that building with integrity a burden that pressed down upon him unmercifully."[55] Sweeney, a far more combative director than Rebay, challenged Wright's decisions on important elements of the design, particularly how art was to be presented and the interior color of the museum. Sweeney wanted the main gallery to display art at a ninety-degree angle using metal rods protruding from the walls. This was in direct contrast to leaning the art at the ninety-seven-degree slope of walls as Wright planned. Whereas Wright insisted that the interior of the main gallery be painted an off-white ivory to create symmetry between exterior and interior, Sweeney battled for a bright white. Incensed at Sweeney's confrontational positions Wright was not constrained with his opinions. In correspondence with *The New*

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[53] Ibid., 19.
[54] Ibid., 48.
[55] Pfeiffer in *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 234.

York Times art and architectural critic Aline Saarinen, who was also a personal friend, Wright railed, "A picture-hanger (named Sweeney) is authorized by the Trustees- Harry Guggenheim, Chairman, to barge in on the architect of the museum and paint the interior dead-white- this tearing the inside from the outer walls of the organic building."[56] He continued in his bristling letter, "A pity to have a masterpiece (it is) daubed to death at the end to gratify a metempsychosis for the white-sepulchre for a museum." Wright's death in 1959 finally gave Sweeney freedom of control over these two important details in the final six months of construction. Harry Guggenheim, who often mediated differences between Wright and Sweeney, found a tactful way to honor both men and their opinions not long after the museum opened, "The techniques of display and lighting which were developed by James Johnson Sweeney, former Director of the Museum, have won wide acclaim here and abroad. Although they differed from those envisioned by Mr. Wright [t]he architect's aim, namely, that the paintings would appear to be floating in space, was happily achieved."[57] It was a Pyrrhic victory for Sweeney, however, as he unexpectedly resigned only six months after the opening of the Guggenheim. Within a few years the interior was repainted a less bright ivory, and in 1992 a color similar to Wright's original specification was finally used in the main gallery. Wright's color palette ultimately prevailed some thirty years after the contentious battles occurred.

Sweeney, an enthusiastic Modernist, was credited with expanding the scope of collection for the Guggenheim well beyond Rebay's strict focus on non-objective art. He retrieved works that had been relegated to storage and added new pieces to the collection by Modern artists.[58] Finally, in a clear move away from Rebay's most important goal for the museum, Sweeney abruptly ended discussion that the Guggenheim would facilitate the spiritual relationship between art and patrons.

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[56] Frank Lloyd Wright correspondence with Aline Saarinen in *Letters of Note* at <www.lettersofnote.com/search/label/franklloydwright>.

[57] Harry Guggenheim in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright*, 10.

The Guggenheim as a Mystical Pathway

Historian Nicoletta Isar has explored embodiments of the sacred in secular art in her article, "Vision and Performance: A Hierotopic Approach to Contemporary Art." Particularly provoking was her identification of hierotopic themes in contemporary art ranging from experimental theater to the viewing of images on a plasma screen. She provides a scholarly examination of sacred encounters with non-religious art located in secular environments. Isar examined ritual performances in an attempt to find meaning for what she labeled "contemporary hierotopy," or the discovery of the sacred in the art of today. Isar's work offers a helpful parallel in examining Wright's use of the spiral as a means of encountering art in the Guggenheim.

The spiral motif was Wright's *tour de force* in his design for the museum and a lightning rod for criticism about the proper relationship between museum architecture and the art which was displayed. Wright clearly challenged the conventional ideas of what a museum represented and the very relationship between the audience and the art itself. This was in some measure what Rebay wanted in her temple of non-objective art or she (and in turn Guggenheim) would have never validated Wright's idea. Pfeiffer noted, "[Rebay] approached her art like a high-priestess, and as such was zealous in a missionary sense, convinced that absorbing one's self in great works of art could heal, inspire, placate, deliver, uplift, drive away evil and bring down blessings from above."[59] Wright was certainly interested in redefining the relationship between viewer and art in his only museum commission. His goal for the interaction between a patron and art was to convey a full sense of what it meant for an object to be monumental and 'alive.' Interestingly, Wright felt that museums were showcases for failed cultures and the "vast accumulations [of] the 'debris' of the human race."[60] His goal for the Guggenheim, therefore, was to allow the art to convey a sense of aliveness within the context of twentieth century culture.

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[58] Information included in the *National Historic Landmark Nomination: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* (Feb. 13, 2007): 16.

Performance artist Marina Abromovic has proposed a radical shift in the relationship between art and viewer that someday would lead, in her mind, to a non-objective world in which physical manifestations of art become unnecessary. Ultimately, Abromovic believes, an artist will be able to develop such a "high level of consciousness and such a strong mental state that he or she can transmit thoughts and energy to other people, without needing objects in between."[61] While this proposal of telepathic artistic messaging seems far-fetched, it does offer food for thought regarding the relationship between art and audience that Wright himself was challenging in the Guggenheim design. Wright questioned the visual framing of art by architecture. It is as if he took the 'deconstruction of the box' which characterized his Prairie School designs and applied it to the optics of displaying art. Critics complained that an ascending ramp would destroy the optically harmonious, parallel relationships between floors and ceilings with the lines of the canvasses themselves. An ascending spiral provided no square walls for the display of art.

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[59] Wright, *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 28.

[60] Wright, "The Eternal Law," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 128-130.

[61] Marina Abromovic, "Art Meets Science and Spirituality," in *Hierotopy: Comparative Studies of Sacred Spaces*, ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2009): 347.

Outside of the consideration of how the art was to be viewed is the question of the pathway, and its ritualistic associations, to the art. In using a spiral form, Wright limited the pathway to only one of two primary movements- either ascending or descending. In either case, he incorporated the novel concept of vertical movement in approaching art. While Wright opted for a single ramp, there are examples of double helix staircases which allow simultaneous, separate traffic patterns for both ascending and descending a building. Guiseppe Momo (1875-1940) incorporated a double helix into his 1932 Vatican staircase commission also known as the Spiral Staircase. It consisted of two separate wrought iron staircases intertwined with one another to bring pedestrian traffic from street level up to the floor of the Vatican Museums. Separate stairs allowed for the division of ascending and descending traffic from the Vatican Museums. The single ramp of the Guggenheim, however, did not allow for the physical separation of upward and downward traffic flow.

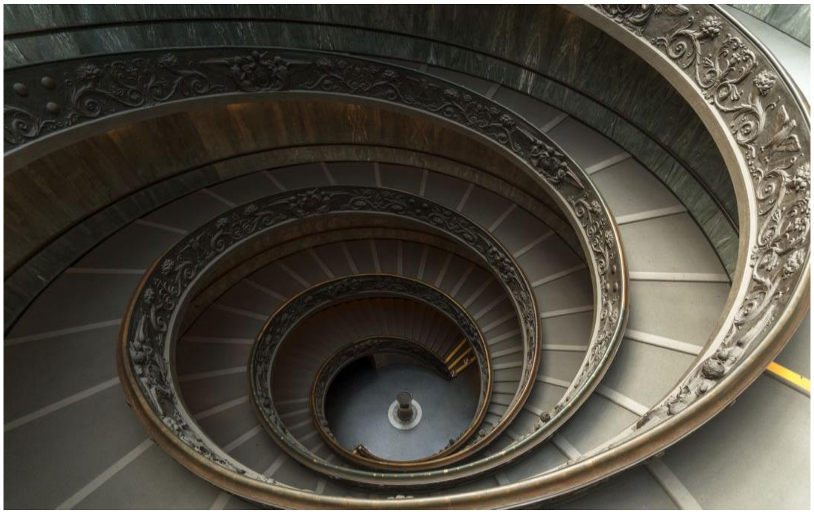

Figure 66. Guiseppe Momo's double-helix staircase at the Vatican was designed in 1932 which included an overhead oculus (*Smithsonian Magazine*, Valery Romanov, 2014).

The Guggenheim's exterior form represented a negative vortex, larger at its top and smaller near the ground. Wright labeled it a "taruggiz" or an inverted ziggurat which he cleverly spelled backwards. The image of a negative vortex was used centuries earlier in reference to a passage into the underworld as seen in Sandro Botticelli's fifteenth century illustration, *Map of Hell*, which was included in his illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Its tornado-like shape was a representation of the nine circles of hell and their according punishments in Dante's *Inferno*. Botticelli's vortex paralleled the use of spiral and labyrinth forms in ancient funerary art which symbolized descending into the earth's womb in order to be reborn into the afterlife. Jill Purce also noted the artistic and ancient correlation between death and rebirth with initiation rituals, "[S]uch a descent into the underworld (the kingdom of Pluto) is the theme of most initiation rituals, and is comparable to the passage through the wilderness, or the 'dark night of the soul', which is experienced by mystics on their path. It is furthermore nearly always symbolized by the spiral."[62]

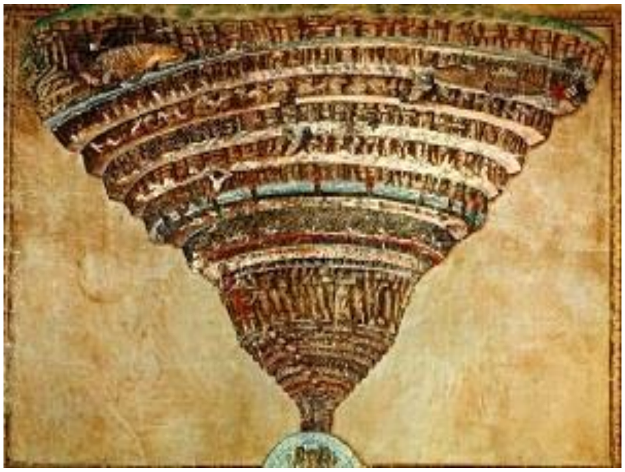

Figure 67. Botticelli's vortex illustrating the *Map of Hell* from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The spiral was a common theme in ancient funerary art symbolizing descent into the underworld.

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[62] Jill Purce, *The Mystic Spiral: Journey of the Soul* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 30.

An ascending spiral, in a similar vein, was associated architecturally with spiritual life as exemplified in the ninth century Minaret of the Mosque of Samarra, Iraq. This impressive religious monument, also known as the Milwiya Tower, stands over 170 feet tall and contains five revolutions of an external ramp to reach a cylindrical room at its upper-most level. The ritualistic meaning for the tower was intimately tied to the daily calls to prayer for worshippers from this soaring room. The spiral ascent was a ritual pathway which allowed time for reflection and preparation in conjunction with prayer. The descending spiral retraced the ritual pathway to return to ground level and metaphorically the conditions of life on earth.

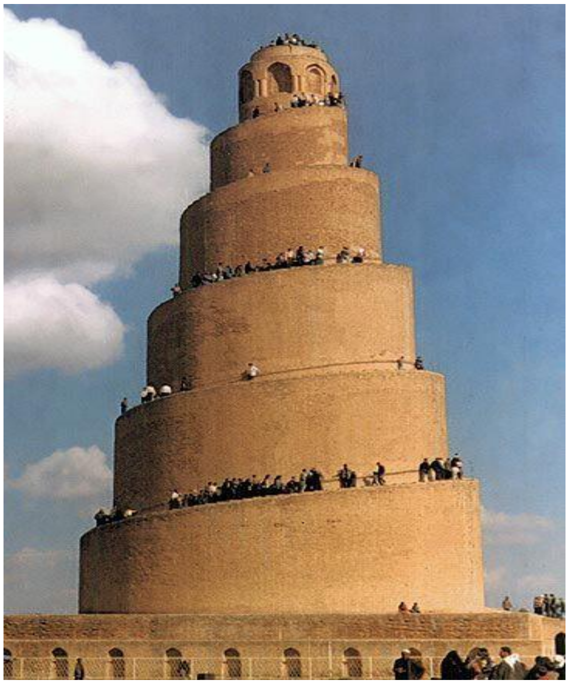

Figure 68. The Minaret of the Mosque of Samarra was designed as a spiraling mystical pathway (Courtesy Atlas Tours, ca. 1997).

The spiral form implies a journey which one must necessarily travel in order to reach the individual pieces of art in the Guggenheim. In conventional museum designs there are typically intersecting spaces that allow patrons to choose a variety of paths throughout each floor, but Wright's plans imposed the pathway upon the viewer. In Wright's Guggenheim design, there is only one pathway to take which is circular. The architecture itself is the guide in experiencing the art. Wright was particularly pleased with this as he noted, "There is no retracing your circuit. You have made the tour once, always going forward…"[63] Wright felt his design was the most innovative idea in museum architecture over the past five hundred years.

Wright was, of course, a master of controlling the movement of people through space. He would turn to a favorite architectural tool in conceiving the space of the Guggenheim commission from its earliest stages of design. He created an experience intended to grab the patron's full attention through the dramatic contrast of a compressed entry followed explosive expansion of interior space. An intentionally low, almost tunnel-like entrance was used by Wright as a theatrical dichotomy to the towering six-story central atrium. While Wright used the dendriform columns to provide a contrast of scale within the Johnson Wax building, it is the impressive scale of negative space in the Guggenheim's atrium, surrounded by the interior, winding spiral path and overhead oculus that demanded complete attention. He intended to capture the viewer's complete focus, a moment where one would not want to imagine being anywhere else but in that particular point in space and time. Wright pointed out to Saarinen in late 1957 while the building was under construction, "When it is finished and you go into it, you will *feel* the building. Your will feel it as a curving wave that never breaks. You will feel its quiet and consistency."[64] Like Unity Temple and the Johnson Wax Administration building,

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[63] Wright, *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 111.

[64] Aline B. Saarinen, "Tour With Mr. Wright," in *The New York Times* (September 22, 1957): 230.

Wright turned the Guggenheim completely inward in a reclusive manner. While the exterior, spiral motif provided a powerful image to the public, there was no intention of creating a transparent building as Wright noted, "[P]eople go into a museum to look *in* not *out*."[65] The Guggenheim is the antithesis to Taliesin in that it is a fully introverted structure, a statement on the pathway as a place of interior contemplation. Wright noted during his tour of the unfinished museum with Saarinen, "[H]ere the spine is coiled and the ribs-or floor- grow only inward."[66]

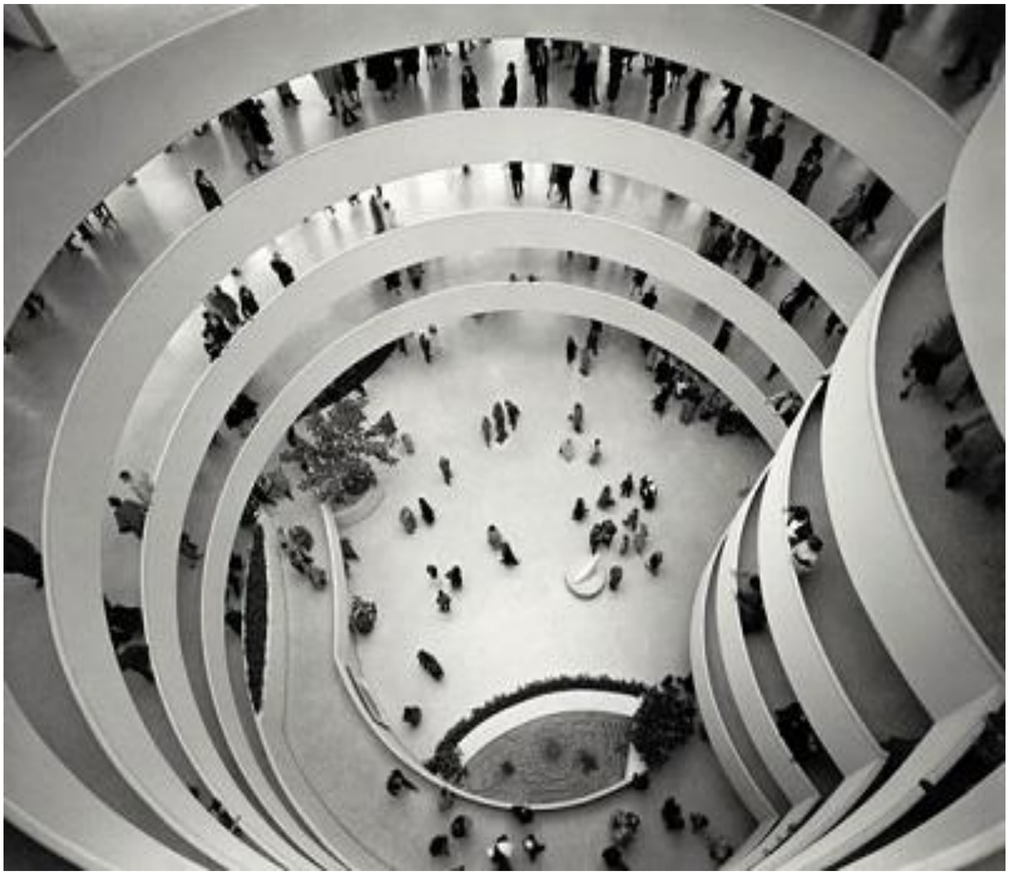

Figure 69. Wright masterfully controlled the movement of people through space in the rotunda creating a mystical pathway for contemplation (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Robert E. Mates, ca. 1980).

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[65] Wright, *Guggenheim Correspondence*, 241.
[66] Saarinen, "Tour With Mr. Wright," 230.

The pathway was such a powerful intention of the design, particularly combined with historic spiritual associations to the spiral, that it is reasonable to consider the Guggenheim a *mystical pathway*- a guided journey for aesthetic contemplation and spiritual reflection on the meaning of art. Wright was very clear in his correspondence with Rebay that his intention for the Guggenheim was consistent with her spiritual ideals concerning the ultimate meaning in art, "The Environment that is the building must make the *principles* represented by those works more desirable to more people, because they see them [i]n a more harmonious atmosphere than they have ever been seen in before. The cause of spiritual expression of all Art will gain thereby- immensely."[67] Wright, therefore, was intent on shaking up the conventional relationship between audience and art to allow spiritual meaning to emerge. He went a step further to state his own belief that he was attempting to create a harmonious environment for the spiritual contemplation of art, "I would drop it all today if I did not have this faith to sustain me."[68] He maintained this hierotopic perspective throughout the entire Guggenheim commission and was particularly pleased with artists such as Mondrian and Kandinsky who were "working solely with geometric shapes, were seeking spiritual relationships."[69]

Pfeiffer has noted that the Guggenheim ramp creates a "space-time continuum" in which one can see both the past (where you have been) and the future (where you are going) simultaneously.[70] His comment touched on the unique experiential quality of the winding spiral as a mystical pathway in combining a sense of present, past, and future simultaneously. Purce called this the "spiral continuum of direction" and noted that the center of the spiral metaphorically remains the same while the viewpoint traveling around the evolutions of a spiral, or circumference, is what creates change. She related this differentiation to spirituality in which the center is seen as a place of focus and concentration which was unchanging while the journey along the circumference is understood as pilgrimage involving personal change.[71] The circumference of the spiral, appropriately, was where Wright placed the display of art for contemplation. The sacred center provided stability while the circumference was a path of pilgrimage and interaction with the meaning of art.

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[67] Wright, *The Guggenheim Correspondence*, 106.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Saarinen, "Tour With Mr. Wright," 230.

[70] Arthur Lubow, "The Triumph of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Smithsonian Magazine*, Vol. 40:3 (June, 2009): 52-61.

In the case of the Guggenheim, the sacred center, or *axis mundi*, is denoted by the circle centered in the radiating glass oculus, or skylight, which hovers over the central atrium of the spiral.[72] It is an *axis mundi* captured by one perfectly situated circle surrounded by outwardly radiating geometric lines and light. It is the point around which the ramp revolves and is seen, in a symbolically important gesture, only by looking upward as a sign of cosmic awareness. Wright deliberately placed a signifier of the *axis mundi* at the pinnacle of the building but also repeated the symbol in the brass-ringed circular motifs embedded in the floor ninety-two feet below. This repetition of forms created geometric referral to the ethereal optic at its highest point which centers the entire vortex of the building. The central circle of the oculus, therefore, is the 'eye' of the building, the unchanging center, which looks down upon the sacred center. As author Arthur Lubow has noted, "To Wright's way of thinking, any building, if properly designed, could be a temple."[73] Rebay used temple language in her description of the goals for the museum and Wright concurred, "The nature of the building design is such as to seem more like a temple in a park on the Avenue…"[74]

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[71] Purce, *The Mystic Spiral*, 19-20.

[72] The concept of *axis mundi*, or a cosmic axis connecting heaven and earth, was introduced by Mircea Eliade in the 1950's as an element of order in comparative mythology. It referenced associated images, meanings, and experiences associated with interpretations of a sacred center. See Eliade's *Patterns of Comparative Religion* (New York, 1958), pp. 367-387 and Eliade's *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York, 1959), pp. 20-67.

What is particularly surprising, however, is the striking similarity between the Guggenheim's atrium and oculus compared with Momo's double-helix staircase and oculus for the religious setting of the Vatican which predated the Guggenheim commission by over ten years. The spiral staircase was Momo's creative architectural solution for the entry to the Vatican Museum. Each architect's design featured a spiral pathway centrally covered by a large, glass oculus defined by radiating geometric patterns emerging from a centrally defined circle in the glass. Historian David Watkin briefly touched on the similarities between the two designs but drew no conclusion concerning the possibility that Wright may have been familiar with Momo's work.[75] Is it possible that Wright knew of Momo's spiral staircase and oculus as a precedent for the Guggenheim's atrium? Clearly a decade was plenty of time for Wright to have noticed Momo's clever circumambulatory solution for pedestrian traffic at the Vatican, particularly for such a high-traffic area as the grand entry to the Vatican Museums. If Wright knew nothing of Momo's work at the time of his Guggenheim design it was a tremendous act of parallelism in which two contemporary architects provided strikingly similar architectural solutions using a spiral pathway and overhead oculus for museum-related commissions. The only alternative theory is that Wright had knowledge of Momo's design but made no verbal or written attribution. It might be difficult to assume that Wright did not know of Momo's Spiral Staircase given its length of time in existence before the Guggenheim commission and its noteworthy correlation to the Vatican Museums. It is of interest to note that Wright was in Rome in 1951 in conjunction with the international tour of his exhibit *Sixty Years of Living Architecture*. When the exhibit was in Florence, where Wright received the De' Medici Gold Medal, he also first toured Rome. Upon his arrival back in the United States he made a reference between the Pantheon and Guggenheim, so he clearly had the opportunity to make correlations between the architecture of Rome and the unbuilt museum project. While the Guggenheim design was firmly solidified by the date of his 1951 visit to Rome, the question remains whether he knew of Momo's design during the design phases of the Guggenheim. Wright's ongoing familiarity with Italian culture and architecture would make even greater sense given Wright's firsthand experience in Europe, and particularly Italy, during his self-created 'exile' from 1909-1910 with Borthwick. They lived together in Fiesole, a small village near Florence, in 1910 and dedicated several months to experiencing Italian architecture and art.

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[73] Lubow, "The Triumph of Frank Lloyd Wright," 52-54

[74] Wright in *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Architect: Frank Lloyd*, 18.

[75] David Watkin, "Frank Lloyd Wright & the Guggenheim Museum," in *AA Files*, No. 21 (Spring, 1991): 45.

It isn't unimaginable that Wright, whether through his own continued contact with Italian culture or perhaps a discussion of travels with an apprentice, was familiar Momo's design. Wright was not averse to recycling his own designs. The question remains, however, as to whether he would have been so greatly influenced as to emulate Momo's dual motifs of a spiral stair and overhead oculus for his Guggenheim plans. Whether or not the historic connection can be drawn, the two architectural solutions in relationship to museums bear great similarity to one another.

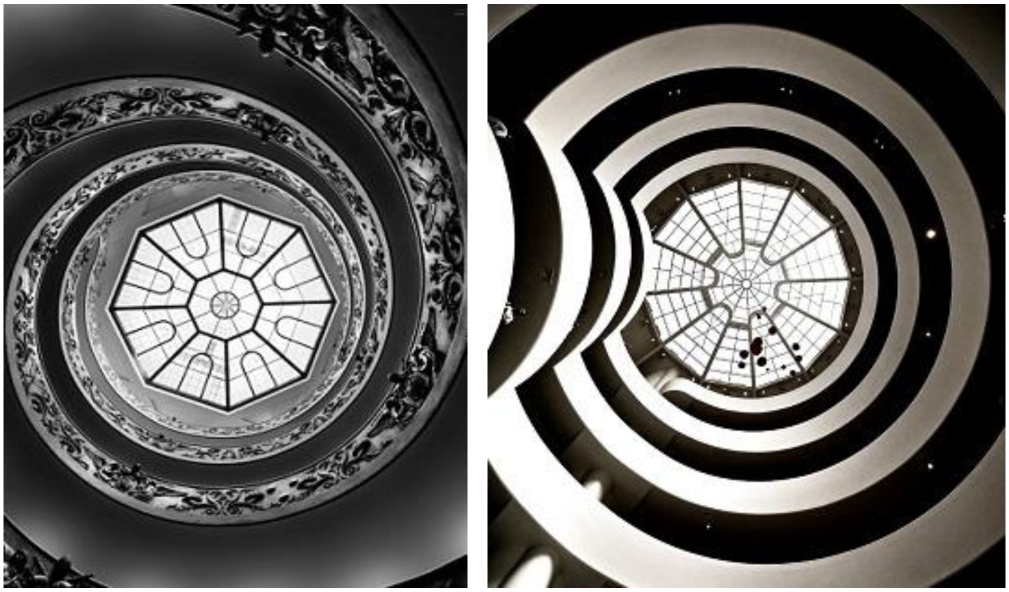

Figure 70. Guiseppe Momo designed an oculus (left) to provide dramatic effect with the Vatican staircase. Wright also incorporated an oculus (right) for natural lighting over the Guggenheim rotunda. (Dreamstime.com, Eliza Adamyan, 2015 and RobertoDeMicheli.com, Roberto DeMicheli 2012)

The significant difference between the two designs, however, is Wright's creation of a powerfully large, negative space which captures the imagination as to its relationship to both the hovering oculus and surrounding ramp. What is the sacred center in the Guggenheim Museum? Wright cleverly offered the sacred center as apparently *nothing at all*. That is, unless one understands his conceptualization that negative space is an entity, just as much a reality as concrete or bricks. What Wright expressed as the *axis mundi* of the museum was his recognition that negative space has substance and creative energy, the invaluable lesson he had learned from Japanese architecture long ago. Wright called this awareness of space the fourth dimension or the "depth-dimension" which was "the element we call *space* given a new concept."[76] He directly tied it to the teaching of Lao-tzu and the importance of the void as an entity. Kevin Nute pointed out that Wright combined the spatial meaning of the vacancy of the tearoom with Lao-tzu's concept of the void to form his idea “to equate space with spirit” as “essentially a continuous flowing substance.”[77]

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[76] Wright, *A Testament* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957): 155.

While one might think that the only visual interest in the Guggenheim is outward, along the circumferential walls and displayed art (non-objective icons), there is also an inward draw to the sacred center. Examine almost any image of the interior of the Guggenheim and invariably there are individuals not only exploring the art but also patrons standing along the interior half-wall of the ramp looking inward. In a reflective pose, Wright himself was photographed staring thoughtfully into the mystical center of the building during construction. The building created a pull to looking inward into the negative space of the sacred center and then upward (heavenward) toward the oculus as a reminder that ‘something’ was actually there- a positive entity that elevated one’s spirit. Wright was quite clear that the building was designed as an environment to foster spiritual contemplation in relationship to art. While one experienced non-objective icons at the circumference of the spiral, the mystical center provided a sacred space for the contemplation. Wright noted, “This new sense-of-the-within naturally unfolding, taking form by the culture of art, architecture, philosophy, and religion, natural; all being content to look within to the Spirit for the solution of very human problem - [t]his would be old wisdom, ancient as Lao-tzu at least, yet modern.”[78]

A parallel may be drawn between the Guggenheim and central spaces surrounded by circular ritual paths in religious settings. Mary W. Helms explored temporal and spatial dimensions of consecrated centers with circumambulation in European monastic environments.[79] She proposed that both in architectural design and ritual behaviors, monastic complexes held cosmological significance as the recreation of a sacred landscape which provided “a sense of connectedness and of oneness with what we may call the ‘first principles’ that defined and motivated their faith. Foremost among these were references [t]o the conditions characteristic of the original (‘mythic’) state of being.”[80] Helms noted that such ‘first principles’ were also reflected in the architectural layouts of medieval monasteries. In particular, the central cloister consisting of a central garden (garth) surrounded by four covered walkways or cloister walks. Such covered galleries were interpreted to be ritual pathways which emphasized and repeated on a daily basis, with the footsteps of monks around the garth- a circumambulatory cosmological order.

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[77] Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 124-125.

[78] Frank Lloyd Wright, ”The Living City” in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 251-343.

Interestingly, this central garth was designated as a place for personal meditation or quiet discussions with no formal ritual activities taking place there. Even more importantly, it was viewed as a metaphoric Garden of Eden and an archetypal sacred or cosmic mountain. Linked to both ancient cosmogonies and scriptural references such as Mt. Sinai, the cosmic mountain was understood as a bridge between earth and heaven “filled with prodigious energies and vital forces and served both as the *axis mundi*, where earth and sky met, and as the *omphalos* of the world, the point of absolute beginnings.”[81]

Helms omitted a discussion of the ancient form of a ziggurat as representational of the cosmic mountain. However, modern appreciation of a ziggurat as a cosmic mountain dates to the late nineteenth century and was contemporary with Wright’s early career. It was rooted in the German concept of *Weltberg* by which the Mesopotamian ziggurat was understood symbolically as a world-mountain where heaven and earth converged. Although the *Weltberg* theory of Mesopotamian culture fell out of favor by the latter part of the twentieth century, Mircea Eliade embraced it. Eliade, in 1957, reflected *Weltberg* in his discussion of the sacred meaning of ziggurats when he noted, "As for the assimilation of temples to cosmic mountains as links between earth and heaven, the names given to Babylonian sanctuaries themselves bear witness; they are called 'Mountain of the House' [or] 'Link Between Heaven and Earth,' and the like. The ziggurat was literally a cosmic mountain."[82]

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[79] Mary W. Helms, “Sacred Landscapes and the Early Medieval European Cloister,” in *Anthropos*, Bd. 97, H.2 (2002): 435-453.
[80] Ibid., 437.
[81] Ibid., 444-445.

The correlation between *Weltberg* and Wright isn't difficult to make with his continued reference to the archetypal ziggurat as the inspirational form for the Guggenheim. The museum, therefore, was a reinterpretation by Wright of the cosmic mountain encircled by a mystical pathway. The circumferential pathway provided a way both *up and down* the cosmic mountain, much as Moses traveled twice up and down Mt. Sinai where, in the scriptural account, he met with God and was given divine revelation. Interpreting the interior ramp as a path of pilgrimage, or mystical pathway, on this cosmic mountain is entirely consistent with Rebay and Wright's mutual goal to encourage a metaphysical exchange between spirituality and art. The Guggenheim, then, becomes a place of pilgrimage toward a goal of spiritual enlightenment up or down the cosmic mountain through the contemplation of art. Individual points of artistic contemplation were placed along the changing circumference, not the unchanging sacred center, of the spiral. It was meant to be a mystic journey guided by the hand of the architect interacting with spiritual qualities inherent in non-objective art as both Rebay and Wright believed. This architectural imagery of a winding circular pathway was also consistent with the historic relationship of the spiral to both spiritual and ritualistic applications. William Blake (1757-1827) noted these intertwined relationships between the spiral, or vortex, and spirituality in his epic poem *Milton,*

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[82] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest, 1959): 39.

> So Milton went guarded within
> The nature of infinity is this: That everything has its
> Own Vortex; and when once a traveller thro' Eternity
> Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind
> His path… [T]hus is the heaven a vortex pass'd already, and the earth
> A vortex not yet pass'd by the traveller thro' Eternity.
> [A]nd every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause and Not
> A Natural for a Natural Cause only seems; it is a Delusion.[83]

Eliot Weinberger has explored the prolific presence of the vortex in myth and spirituality across time and diverse cultures. Vortical myths of creation were present for societies as separated as the ancient Greeks and Aztecs. The very act of creation, in Aztec belief, was at the hand of Quetzacoatl, the God of Wind, who used the vortex of a conch shell to blow life over bones. Greeks adhered to a cosmic vortex that both mixed and separated the elements of the universe into being.[84] The mythic imagery of the vortex across cultures included symbols as a whirlwind, whirlpool, waterspout, spiral staircase, and spiral path.

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[83] William Blake, *Milton a Poem,* Copy D, Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress (London: William Blake, 1818), object 17, 28. Also see Eliot Weinberger, "The Vortex," in *Chicago Review,* Vol. 51/52 (Spring, 2006): 200.

[84] Eliot Weinberger, "The Vortex," in *Chicago Review,* Vol. 51/52 (Spring, 2006): 186-202.

Kandinsky, Klee, and the Mystic Center

While a mystical pathway provided a means to contemplate art, it must also be remembered that some of the very artists showcased in Guggenheim's collection adhered to the concept of a mystic center or as Klee pointed out, "the womb of nature in the primal ground of creation where the secret key to all things lies hidden."[85] Klee, in a lecture from 1924, defined an artist as one having a mission to tap into the mysteries of primal origins as a source for the creative beginning point of both art and life. This mystic center was understood as the first principle for harnessing artistic energy from what Klee labeled "the cosmogenetic moment." This mystic center was represented visually by Klee as a spiral exemplified in his 1916 painting, *In the Beginning*, and a 1940 work, *Inside the Body's Cavern*, which translated the concept of a person as a spiral complete with stick legs and feet.

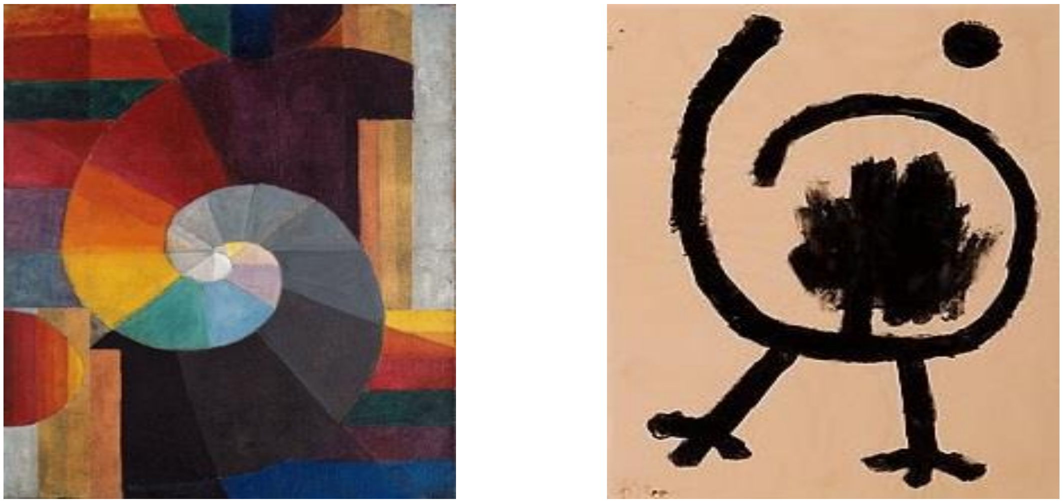

Figure 71. Paul Klee and the spiral of the mystic center as represented by *In the Beginning* (left) and *Inside the Body's Cavern* (right).

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[85] Robert Knott, "Paul Klee and the Mystic Center," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter, 1978-1979): 114.

Kandinsky, a life-long friend of Klee, also believed in the idea of a cosmic center, or “zero-point” which was the archetypal beginning represented by art but discerned through the spiritual life and meditation.[86] Wright’s use of a central ring of the oculus of the Guggenheim paralleled Klee’s use of a circular point fixed centrally as seen in his painting *Southern Gardens* (1921).[87] Wright was quite familiar with the search for primal origins as inspiration for his architecture. He looked to the ziggurat and spiral as a source for the Guggenheim but in an earlier period turned to ancient Mayan architecture as a creative source for architectural motifs in residential designs.

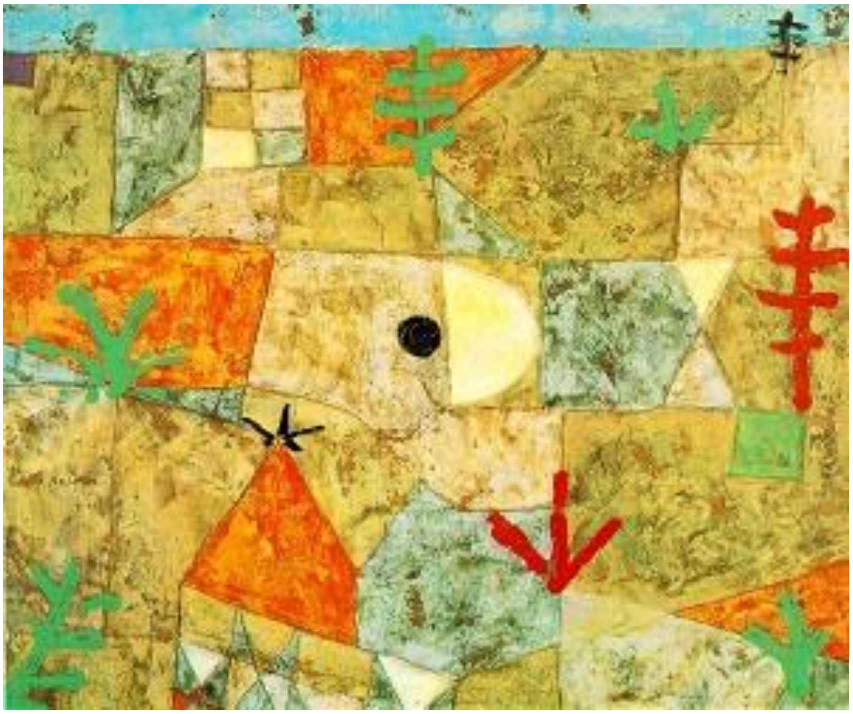

Figure 72. Klee believed in a cosmic center which was to be discerned spiritually but represented in art. In *Southern Gardens* Klee symbolically placed a dark circle in the center of the work.

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[86] Knott, *Paul Klee and the Mystic Center*, 116-117.
[87] See Figure 65.

He turned to Mayan sources particularly for a series of four residential projects in California designed between 1917 and 1923. While this Mayan Revival period was relatively short-lived, it stood in stark contrast to his Prairie Style residential designs from 1893-1910. The Aline Barnsdall Hollyhock House, located in Los Angeles, was the first of the Mayan influenced houses designed in 1917 and built from 1919-1921. It was a solid example of how Wright's search for origins could create enormously novel forms and variations in architectural expression. The exterior of the Hollyhock House created imagery of a miniature Mayan temple complete with inclined walls and fortress-like mass. Barnsdall, a wealthy heiress, intended that Wright design and build an entire complex of structures to serve as an artistic colony which would include a theater and apartments for resident artists. While the full scope of the colony never materialized, Wright's Hollyhock House was a radical departure from some of his most advanced Prairie designs such as Taliesin or the Herbert F. Johnson House (Wingspread).

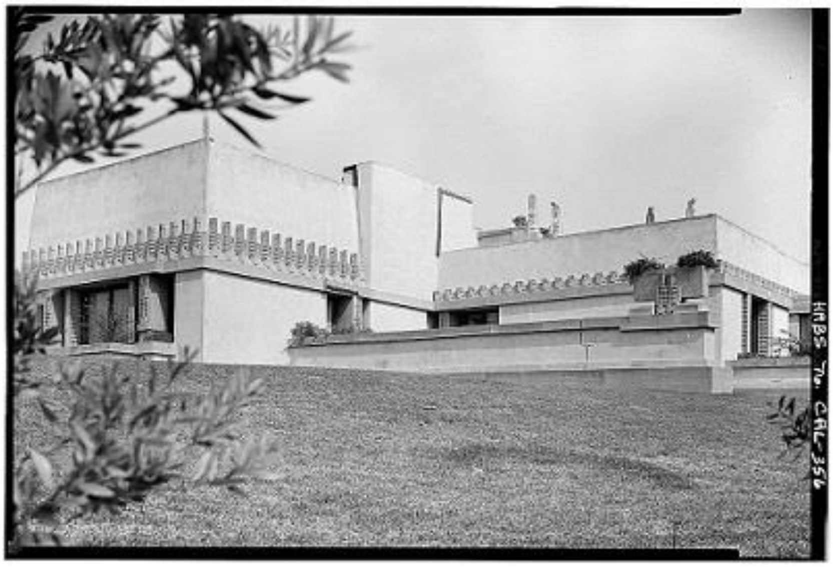

Figure 73. The Hollyhock House was an example of Wright's search for primal origins which led him to reinterpret Mayan themes, instead of his Prairie Style, for southern California. Four such Mayan period houses were built by Wright in Los Angeles (Courtesy the Library of Congress, Marvin Rand, 1965).

While Wright looked to the Valley for primal origins in designing Taliesin, he turned to ancient architectural forms from Mayan culture as an appropriate source of origins for southern California. He linked his interest in such forms to his youth, "I remember how as a boy, primitive American architecture – Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, Inco – stirred my wonder. [T]hose great American abstractions were all earth-architecture [a]ll planned as one mountain."[88] If one thinks Wright wasn't aware of the concept of the cosmic mountain his enthusiastic description of this ancient architecture should suffice to argue the point, "These were human creations, cosmic as sun, moon and stars! *[E]ntity even more cosmic had not yet been born.* [A]rchitectural grandeur was thus made one with the surrounding features of mountainous land; [these] buildings grew to be man-mountains."[89] He concluded that these original forms were "grandiloquent religious rituals to stand forever in the eye of the sun as the earthly embodiment of the mystery of human majesty, honoring deity." Wright wonderfully described the concept of the cosmic mountain blending architecture and an ancient cosmology from South America.

Why, however, would Wright look for such different imagery for residential projects in California when his Prairie School houses had been quite successful in defining his architectural ideas? While these Mayan Revival homes appear an anomaly in Wright's career, the creative principle which generated such divergent forms, he believed, was entirely consistent throughout his life. Wright explained this architectural principle to Taliesin apprentices during a Sunday morning talk in 1953 by referencing a tray filled with seashells. By studying the creative differences between the shells, he noted, one would find a consistent, cosmic principle of organic integrity at work in all of them, "All these infinitely variable forms are saying exactly the same thing. No interior change in idea, yet here is another and another and another individual. [H]ere, for instance, is a beautiful form of principle at work."[90]

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[88] Wright, *A Testament*, 111.
[89] Ibid, 111-112.

What might be of surprise is that Wright ascribed a sense of the divine as being at work in each shell, which allowed it to simultaneously embody cosmic unity and individuality, "There must have been a sense of God in these little forms to produce this infinite beauty of form."[91] Wright, therefore, looked to a first principle of origins, whether a Mayan Revival house in California or the spiral of the Guggenheim, as drawing closer to an authentic architectural expression of integrity, or oneness with the divine for that particular time and place. He expressly noted this correlation in his admiration for Mayan architecture which he viewed as involving both worship and "simple primitive integrity of form. Architecture intrinsic to Time, Place, and Man."[92]

The search for the expression of integrity and divine oneness was a major hierotopic theme which necessarily involved both spirituality and geometry in Wright's worldview, "Geometry is at the center of every Nature-form we see- not to be simply 'looking-at' nature, but looking into nature, grasping the principles at work, and then building forms that are not imitative but creative."[93] Wright understood this extrication of architectural forms from primal, natural origins as being a spiritual process which he stressed more vocally in the last years of his life. Without question, he understood architecture as a spiritual quest guided by this principle of natural origins. This, in turn, would lead both the architect and humanity toward an ethic of nature which was ultimate truth about life itself, "Ethics in line with principles of Nature never go wrong. [T]here are fashions in morality. There are none in ethics."[94] Wright understood this "Nature-pattern of principle" as an ethical guide based on the concept of universal truth, or integrity for "human thought, conduct, or in our works of art" which was present in any civilization in the past or yet to come.[95]

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[90] Wright noted, "There is but one generic principle here: All those little shell-houses are doing the same thing, but not in the same way. [E]very ornamentation, that is to say, every pattern, you see here, and the exquisite forms of the shells themselves, are tributary to the force that is being exerted by its like upon itself from within, as the growing shell is being made." See Wright, "Faith in Your Own Individuality," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings, Volume 5: 1949-1959,* ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1995): 132.

[91] Wright, "Faith in Your Own Individuality," 133.

[92] Wright, *A Testament*, 112.

[93] Penny Fowler, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Graphic* Artist (San Francisco: Pomegranate Communications, 2002): 99)

While geometry provided the language to express nature, it was the search for plasticity, or physical continuity within a building, that held the final key toward complete unity in architectural form which is why the Guggenheim was such an important step forward in the expression of complete oneness with the creative cosmos. He called plasticity a movement from the material to the spiritual realm which was "the spiritual idea of simplicity."[96] During his Sunday morning lecture on seashells he highlighted plasticity as the very process which shaped the essence of each shell, "Always, in these forms, in these little poems, there is the ebb and flow, the plasticity of the elements by way of which, and in which, they came to exist."[97] In turn, Wright would also comfortably talk of the Guggenheim in reference to seashells, "[t]he construction of the great ramp like that of a seashell, is clear of interior supports of any kind."[98] He happily referred to the Guggenheim, in another reference to seashells, as a chambered nautilus.

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[94] Wright, "Nature," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 274.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Wright, *Autobiography*, 147-148.

[97] Wright, *"Faith in Your Own Individuality,"* 132.

[98] Frank Lloyd Wright, "Frank Lloyd Wright," in *Architectural Forum*, 88, No. 1 (Jan., 1948): 136.

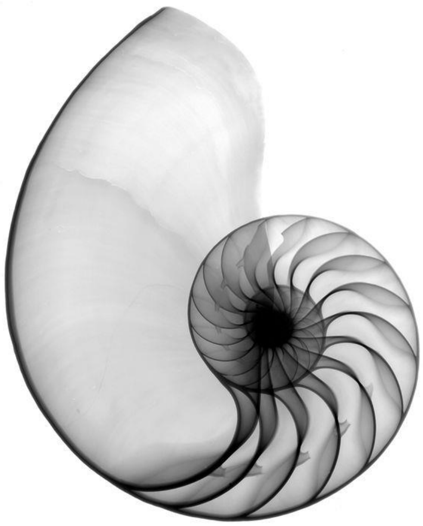

Figure 74. Wright compared the Guggenheim design to a chambered nautilus (Medium.com, Bert Myers, 2014).

Plasticity and Shooting the Guggenheim

The key to Wright's ability to achieve a new sense of hierotopic continuity in the Guggenheim Museum lay in his use of the sprayed concrete material called Gunite.[99] The curvilinear forms needed to create the exterior shell, or metaphoric seashell, necessitated using a material that had some element of liquidity. Gunite, or shotcrete, is a wet, relatively fluid concrete which can adhere to vertical surfaces and yet provide the strength needed for structural security. Historian Jack Quinan noted the complexity in achieving Wright's design, "Among the handful of spiral-formed buildings in history, the Guggenheim is the only expanding spiral ever constructed."[100] Richard Neutra, a one-time apprentice of Wright, had successfully experimented with Gunite in his Los Angeles Lovell House (1927-1929) not long after Wright completed the Ennis House (1923-1925), his final Mayan Revival residence. Wright applauded Neutra for his work and by

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[99] See Joseph Siry, "Seamless Continuity versus the Nature of Materials: Gunite and Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 71, no. 1 (March, 2012): 78-108.

[100] Jack Quinan, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: A Historian's Report," 476.

1942 was also using Gunite in the construction of Community Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri. The structural lessons learned with Community Church would enable Wright to turn confidently to Gunite for both the exterior of the Guggenheim and its interior vertical surfaces. The floor of the great spiral ramp would be engineered in poured concrete while the vertical surfaces, including interior walls where art was to be displayed, would be formed with Gunite. It was a bold experiment in the capabilities of sprayed concrete to provide both structural strength and aesthetic finesse in a public museum setting. Of course, for Wright, Gunite was the ultimate solution in approximating a truly plastic building, "For the first time in the history of architecture a true logarithmic spiral has been worked out as a complete plastic building. [N]ot only is the entire monolithic building plastic in the form of a rising spiral but it is plastic in actual construction also."[101]

It took almost a full year, from September 1957 until August 1958, to complete all the Gunite work including a break for winter weather. While Wright was unhappy about the residual imperfections left in the exterior Gunite from its plywood forms, the contractor was able to smooth the curvilinear surface before applying an advanced, buff-colored plastic paint called Cocoon which guaranteed preservation from water absorption and longevity for the Gunite. Wright argued that the interior Gunite walls were sufficiently smooth for the presentation of art, but Sweeney won that battle, and the interior surfaces were plastered before being painted.

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[101] Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Modern Gallery," in *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, Volume 4: 1939-1949*, ed. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (New York: Rizzoli, 1994): 281-283.

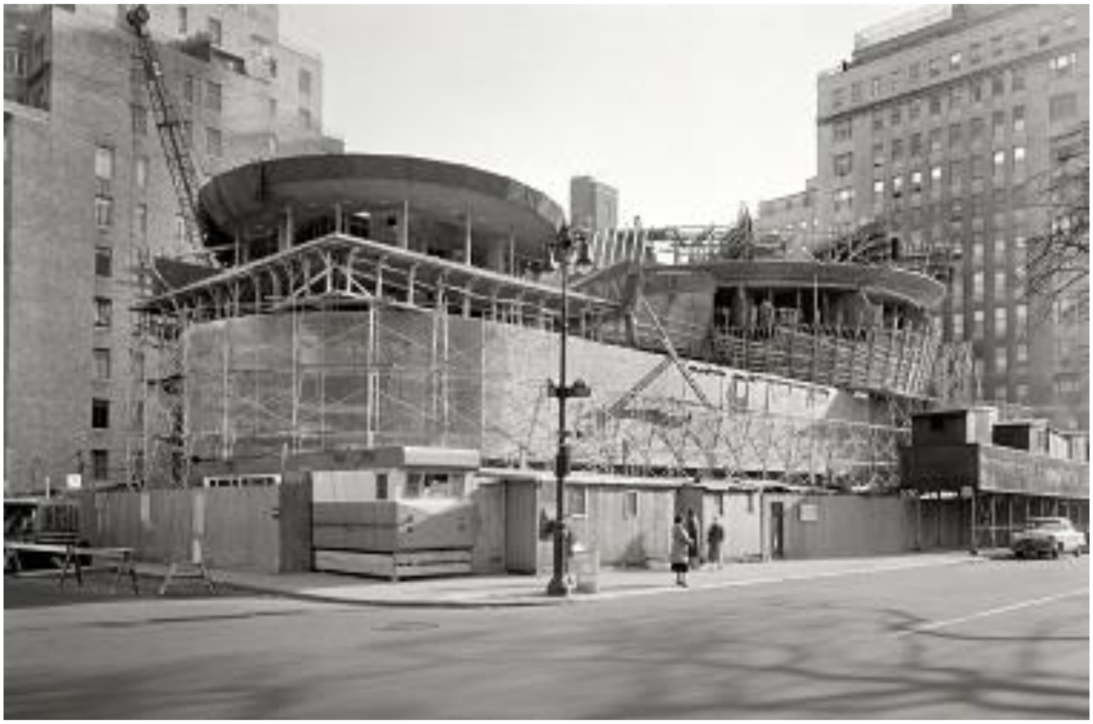

Figure 75. The final cost of the Guggenheim would be significantly higher than Wright's ongoing estimates as it was an enormously labor-intensive design. Construction of the shell involved the use of hand-built forms sprayed with liquid concrete called Gunite (Courtesy the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Gottscho-Schleisner, 1957).

The Second Cosmic Mountain of Beth Sholom Synagogue

The relationship between the Guggenheim, as inverted ziggurat, and the cosmic mountain helps one to understand why Wright would so easily return to the same concept for his design for Beth Sholom Synagogue in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania (1953-1959). The synagogue was designed some ten years after the Guggenheim was first put to paper, but due to the many years of delay for the museum, both projects ended up being under construction at the same time. The inspiration for the cosmic mountain for this project, however, was not the ziggurat but Mt. Sinai. The architectural interpretation of this epic, sacred mountain was integral to the synagogue design and verbally expressed in discussions with leaders of the congregation. Wright produced his first drawings for the project in March, 1954 which were quickly presented by Rabbi Mortimer Cohen to the board of directors. Cohen, as rabbi of the congregation, feared that Wright's blatantly cosmic mountain design for their future synagogue would be rejected by its directors as far too radical. Before revealing the drawings, Cohen prepared the board by explaining they were about to see something completely novel but, in fact, consistent with their faith. He grounded his presentation in the relationship between God, Moses, and Mt. Sinai. The rabbi reminded the board that God gave the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai but also journeyed with the Israelites to the Promised Land. Therefore, a synagogue was also to be understood as a "traveling Mt. Sinai."[102] Cohen's correlation to Mt. Sinai was effective and, to his relief, the design was immediately embraced as an acceptable metaphor for their synagogue by the board of directors.

Instead of covering the cosmic mountain with an oculus of light, as in the Guggenheim, Wright entirely shrouded the mountain with light in Beth Sholom. In an unprecedented use of transparent materials, he literally designed a mountain of glass. The first widely published image of the design was a night view displaying multiple beacons of light radiating outward from the entire building. If Community Christian Church was meant by Wright as a steeple of light, Beth Sholom was offered as a holy mountain aflame with light. The imagery was not lost on Rabbi Cohen as he wrote, "Beth Sholom- Mt. Sinai, made of glass [i]s flooded with a mystic light that recaptures the mood of ancient Sinai."[103]

Beth Sholom Synagogue was not Wright's first cosmic mountain to be realized architecturally. The Guggenheim, in fact, was his first cosmic mountain and Beth

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[102] Joseph M. Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 410-411.
[103] Mortimer Cohen, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Design for the Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 5 (unpublished manuscript). See Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 413-414.

Sholom flowed out of its archetypal symbolism. While Wright chose the spiral as the motif for the Guggenheim, he looked to the crystal-like form of a tetrahedral dome as a conventionalized representation of Mt. Sinai for Beth Sholom. But it must not be

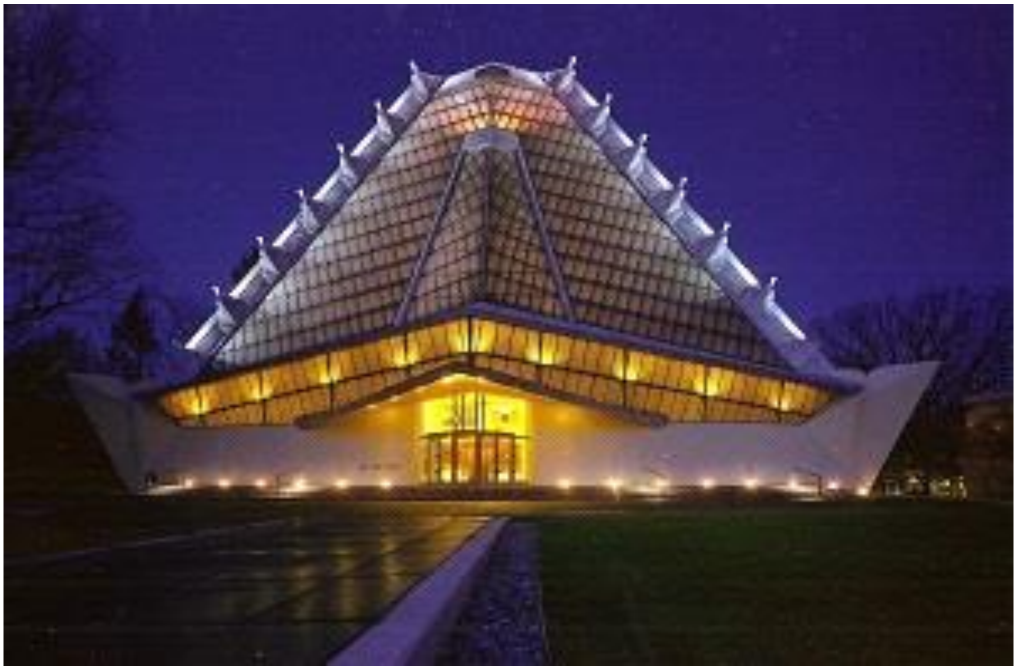

Figure 76. Beth Sholom Synagogue was Wright's second 'cosmic mountain' design (Courtesy the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 2015).

When Wright spoke of the synagogue's meaning to its congregation, he was consistent with Helm's definition of a cosmic mountain as a recreation of an archetypal beginning point or 'first principle' which motivated a particular faith. Wright pointed out in his design for the synagogue, "you will find the spirit of a great faith. It goes back in form, [i]t is elemental. And within, the spirit of it shines through. And when you are in it comes the light from above."[104] Not only was Wright reaching back to a hierotopic, cosmological moment in time for his design (the meeting between God and Moses on Mt. Sinai) but he also believed that his synagogue would stand for hundreds of years to come as he noted to Cohen, "This building [w]ill be working for you for centuries."[105] A poignant reference was also made by Wright which reflected his interpretation that a renewed relationship between this archetypal Mt. Sinai and the divine would exist. While Moses met face-to-face with God in the scriptural account, Wright appreciably intertwined God and nature as forming a bond with the translucent synagogue, "Let God put his colors on, for He is the great artist. When the sun shines, the temple will glitter like gold. [W]hen the heavens are blue, a soft blue will cover the building."[106]

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[104] Siry, *Beth Sholom Synagogue*, 416.

The Final Motif

While Beth Sholom was an ingenious tetrahedron, Wright remained particularly captivated with the spiral motif of the Guggenheim design through the end of his life. During the long wait for the museum to be realized he returned to it for a divergent group of projects ranging from small commissions to herculean proposals. Wright's V. C. Morris Gift Shop (1948) interior offered a beautifully sweeping, one-story spiraling stairway highly reflective of the Guggenheim ramp. Its arc is more curvaceous but it clearly is an offspring of the museum's spiraling form. He also created plans for the megalithic Point Park Civic Center (1947-1948) intended as a revitalization of Pittsburgh. Edgar J. Kaufmann funded Wright's unrealized design which proposed a circular, domed structure one thousand feet in diameter encircled by a spiral. The massive structure would have contained a planetarium, sports center, opera house, several theaters, stores, and offices but the scope of the design was far beyond the financial scale of an entire city to construct. Whether a tiny boutique or a megastructure, the spiral was now capable of expressing meaning for Wright in any context. He turned to it again in a 1951 residential design for his son David. This project was the Guggenheim turned inside-out with a gently curving spiral walkway leading to the residence. A bold, exterior spiral ramp wrapped itself around the exterior of the house, as if circling a small concrete block castle. If the Guggenheim offered the imagery of a giant spaceship landed in Manhattan the David Wright House was a smaller version docked in the Phoenix desert.

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[105] Ibid., 419.

[106] Patricia Talbot Davis, *Together They Built a Mountain* (Lititz: Sutter House, 1974): 111.

The Guggenheim Museum was a life-changing experience for Wright. In it he expressed his constant theme of organic architecture, but with a powerful new form. The motif for the closing chapter of his life, it seems, was the spiral. In it, whether flattened or ascending, he realized the closest ideal to plasticity and oneness with the cosmos though architectural form. His boldness and willingness to challenge architectural conventions was like the expanding spiral of the Guggenheim itself. He pushed onward and upward on his own mystic-Unitarian pathway not only as an architect, but as one unbridled in his later years by fear or concern. Although an elderly man, Wright was still able to "shake designs out of his sleeve," his imaginative powers were even bolder and stronger than before. In his late eighties Wright had not only managed to create the most controversial building in New York City, he had fostered a new genre for the display of art museums as art. Paul Goldberger has noted that the Guggenheim became "the progenitor of every architecturally assertive museum since."[107] There was one thing, however, that even Wright's boldness could not change- the flow of time. He simply ran out of time. Wright knew he was battling the clock as he hammered out the completion of the Guggenheim and was not able to live through its final moments. Not long before he died, he candidly asked Taliesin photographer Pedro Guerrero for something quite uncharacteristic. Sitting in his room the aged architect said, “Pete, I must be getting old. I seem to have trouble getting up. Give me a hand.”[108] In the end Wright asked for one thing that no one could give him. He wistfully noted in late 1957, “If I had another fifteen years to work I could rebuild this entire country, I could change the nation.” [109]

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[107] Paul Goldberger, "Spiralling Upward: The Sky Line," in *The New Yorker*, 85:15 (May 25, 2009): 88.

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[108] Hoppen, *The Seven Ages of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 167.

[109] Frank Lloyd Wright in *The Mike Wallace Interview* recorded on September 1, 1957. Transcript and video available at <www.hrc.utexas.edu/multimedia/video/2008/wallace/wright_frank_lloyd_t.html>

CONCLUSION

Hierotopy and Wright's Theology of Architecture

It is evident that Wright's theology of architecture was sophisticated. The amount of thought and writing that he dedicated to the correlation of spirituality and architecture was far greater than historians have appreciated. His life's work was to create buildings and civic plans in harmony with divine Nature (with a capital N). Such harmony would, he believed, necessarily produce aesthetic beauty, and more than that, create a harmonic spirituality, which was consistent with the divine, "Religion is powerless to inspire a people with the image: recourse to great Art. And constant reference to principles of Nature is the only sure basis of a true image."[1]

Wright very much intended his work to create a profoundly affective reaction for those who experienced it. He wanted to bring people into his world, such as the one he created at Taliesin, and he was appalled at the idea of architecture without any sense of the spiritual, "Housing has become a mere materiality of no great value to life whatsoever, except as little breeding stables without any sense of God."[2] His world was one in which unity with sacred Nature, achieved through design and a naturalistic use of materials would offer a life-changing experience. He wanted to help people live an enlightened, inspired life which was free of clutter and filled with new meaning found through their surroundings, akin to what he experienced in Japan. Wright believed that the Japanese, more than Americans, were more fully aware of a spiritual relationship to architecture, and he felt this quality in their homes, "Spiritual significance is alive and singing in everything concerning the Japanese house. A veritable song. And it is in perfect unison with their Heaven."[3]

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[1] Wright, *Collected Writings*, "Nature," Vol. 4, 274.
[2] Wright, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 133.

Wright did not develop his architectural theology in a vacuum; it was shaped throughout his life by people who sensitized him to seeing spiritual connections to the material world. These people included his own Unitarian family, Louis Sullivan, Olgivanna Wright, and Hilla Rebay. He became bolder about proclaiming such spiritual dimensions of architecture as he moved through life, and his architecture became bolder, too. There was a progression from geometric rigidity in his early career to a far greater fluidity in his later years- moving from the square to the spiral. As he increasingly challenged architectural conventions and the limits of construction materials, he believed that only a few more years were needed to change American culture.

One important problem that he did not make time to solve before his death was the transmission of his ideas, particularly the spiritual value of architecture. Wright wanted the concept of organic architecture to be a movement, not simply an historic style. The situation was akin to that of a religious leader who achieved great success in life but for whom there was no replacement of similar stature. Wright was an iconic person for whom there was simply no adequate replacement. What he left behind, however, was the concept that any building designed in harmony with the principles of organic architecture, which also meant in harmony with cosmic divinity, would offer hierotopic meaning regardless of genre as he noted, "How beautiful is the building in its harmony and reposeful interflow, expressing the Spiritual Realm in which art lives."[4]

Wright's architecture and writings will continue to be reexamined by new generations of historians, architects, artists, and urban planners. Ideas that seemed ludicrous to his contemporaries, such as a mile-high skyscraper, are no longer laughable concepts due to more advanced materials and technologies. The rapidly growing use of drones gives rise to the possibility that one day, as Wright envisioned, the average American just might be shuttling around in their own aerotor as he called them. However, if his architecture is reinterpreted primarily from an aesthetic design approach, the richness of Wright's spiritual intentions may be forgotten. His corpus of work will move from being grounded in what he called organic architecture, with its overt spiritual analogies, to something possibly labeled experimental architecture with a new set of optics and goals in mind. Wright understood himself as a prophet for a world view based on the principles of organic architecture which was not simply about experimenting with architecture but contemplating humanity's relationship to the sacred. In order to understand what Wright was trying to accomplish we must include the hierotopic intent which he professed throughout his life. A person, Wright believed, could approach Unity Temple or the Guggenheim Museum with a similar set of expectations- that through architecture one might experience what it means to know a harmonious relationship with sacred Nature which enlightened humanity to know the divine.

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[3] Wright, *Autobiography*, 199.

[4] Wright as noted in Lukach, *Rebay, In Search of the Spiritual in Art*, 209.

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