

The Master



Frank Lloyd Wright.

Photo courtesy of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

For more than seven decades, Frank Lloyd Wright revolutionized architecture of the 20th century across the country.

Before his vision of what American architecture should be, buildings were designed and built in accordance with man's concept of God. This imagination translated into architecture imported from Europe and designed to tower toward the heavens, a physical manifestation of man's desire to reach out and touch God. But this way of thinking made Wright uncomfortable; he liked things simple. His philosophy asked instead, "Why should we reach out for God when God is within us?" To this end, he created architecture that could be enjoyed and experienced as opposed to being glorified and worshiped.

"Frank used to say, 'Nature is a manifestation of God,' and nature was the inspiration of his work," says John Rattenbury, a Taliesin West architect that lived and worked with Wright for nine years. Taliesin West, located in Scottsdale, was Frank Lloyd Wright's home for more than two decades. Rattenbury and Wright worked together on the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

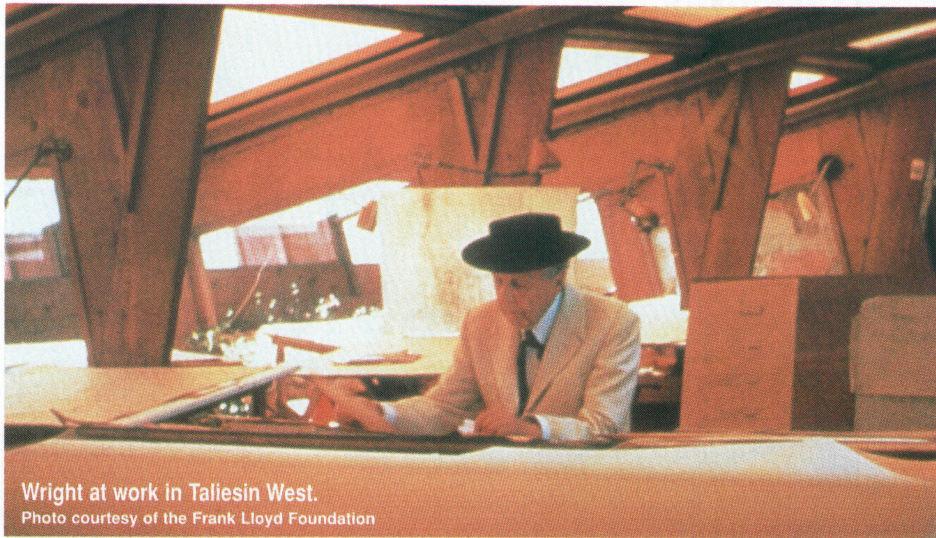
"Every building that Frank did was a religious building in that it had a spirit," says Rattenbury.

This spirit shown in everything Frank Lloyd Wright did because he had a respect for land and people, a sacredness that has been greatly diminished or lost by many today. Thomas Moore best captured this spirit and respect that Wright strived for in his book, *Care of the Soul*.

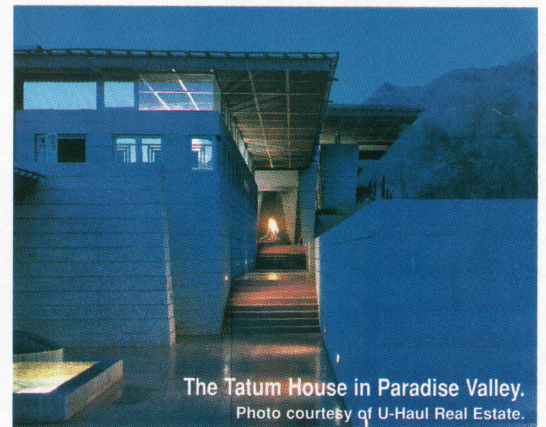
Moore writes, "What if we took more seriously this capacity of things to be close to us, to reveal their

beauty and expressive subjectivity? The result would be a soul-ecology, a responsibility to the things of the world based on appreciation and relatedness rather than on abstract principle. Our felt relationship to things wouldn't allow us to pollute or to perpetuate ugliness.... We can only treat badly those things whose soul we disregard."

Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, on June 8, 1867. He was the son



Wright at work in Taliesin West.
Photo courtesy of the Frank Lloyd Foundation



The Tatum House in Paradise Valley.
Photo courtesy of U-Haul Real Estate.

by **C y n t h i a S c a n l o n**

Simplicity, vision and inspiration

**IT MAKES
PEOPLE FEEL
HEALTHY IN
ALL THE
RIGHT
PLACES.**

TROTTER®

A United Medical Company



**PLACES LIKE
CANYON RANCH,
LA COSTA AND PRITIKIN
LONGEVITY CENTERS.**

Three of the world's most prestigious health spas—where Trotter fitness trainers are the preferred

exercise equipment.

These fitness experts chose Trotter for a lot of good reasons.

Like the fact that this is the one type of exercise almost everyone can benefit from.

And that Trotter fitness trainers are programmed to meet a huge range of fitness goals.

**EXERCISE EQUIPMENT
OF ARIZONA**

Phoenix

4317 E. McDowell • 954-8888

Tucson

2415 N. Campbell • 326-0950

of William Carey Wright, a preacher and musician, and Anna Lloyd Jones, a teacher whose Welsh family settled the valley area near Spring Green, Wisconsin, where Wright built his first home, Taliesin.

"His mother always felt Frank was going to be a great architect," says R. Nicholas Loope, managing principal of Taliesin West Architects, the for-profit subsidiary of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, also located in Scottsdale. "Very early in his conscious life, he had a sense of his own greatness," he says.

According to Loope, Wright believed it might be possible to go through life not actually seeing a great piece of art or a great sculpture, but that was not possible with architecture. Architecture is everywhere. And people would have

**The desert came
to be his best
inspiration, and, in
1937, Wright built
Taliesin West in
Arizona as a winter
home for the Taliesin
Fellowship.**

come into contact with architecture just by the nature of living their lives. "So Wright saw architecture as the Mother Art," Loope says.

After graduating from college in 1887, Wright pursued architecture in Chicago, eventually working with Louis Sullivan for nearly seven years. In 1890, Wright met and married Catherine Lee Tobin with whom he had four sons and two daughters. Learning all that he could from Sullivan, Wright experimented with modern architecture and eventually ventured out on his own in 1893. He set up his own architectural studio next to his home in Oak Park, Illinois, and there he created his first masterpiece, the Winslow House, built for William Winslow.

"Frank wanted to design architecture that made you feel good about yourself," says Suzette Lucas, director of external affairs for Taliesin West. "He felt sites had a basic soul to them, and his



**new associates
are coming for
training,
with all new
equipment
on line.
good thing your
branch office
is there to pull
you through.**

kinko's®
Your branch office

**Open 24 hours,
7 days a week.**

More than 800 locations worldwide.
For the nearest location, call 1-800-2-KINKOS.

10 valley locations including:

Paradise Valley: 13637 N. Tatum Blvd • 494-4399
North Valley: 402 E. Greenway Pkwy • 863-2200
North Scottsdale: 9301 E. Shea Blvd • 314-2424
Scottsdale: 4000 N. Scottsdale Rd • 946-0500
Glendale: 4920 E. Thunderbird • 978-5050
Phoenix: 4801 N. Central Ave • 241-9440
Mesa: 1840 W. Southern Ave • 969-3326
East Mesa: 1437 E. Main St • 833-0036
Tempe: 933 E. University Dr • 894-1797
Ahwatukee: 4940 E. Ray Rd • 893-0700

architecture gives you a sense of serenity and comfort. People feel that in all of his buildings.”

Wright was enamored with the United States and its foundation of democracy and freedom. He conveyed this enchantment in so many of his designs. The desert came to be his best inspiration, and, in 1937, Wright built Taliesin West in Arizona as a winter home for the Taliesin Fellowship. The complex, built of native stone and wood, remained in a constant state of evolution as Wright experimented through the years.

“Natural beauties here in the desert allowed Wright to grow his genius,” Loope says. So captivated was he by the desert, Wright once wrote: “The desert, with its rim of arid mountains, spotted like the leopard’s skin or tattooed with amazing patterns of creation, is a grand garden the like of which in sheer beauty of reach, space, and pattern does not exist, I think, anywhere else in the world.”

Wright’s influence in the Valley can be seen in such landmarks as Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium at Arizona State University; the Adelman house, a Biltmore golf course residence made of concrete block; the Boomer cottage, a small home in a secluded Phoenix neighborhood where the rubble-stone fireplace rises through two floors; and the Pauson house, which burned to the ground shortly after its construction, but whose remnants remained a Phoenix monument for decades. The fireplace was saved and now serves as the entrance marker for Biltmore Alta Vista estates.

Taliesin Architects is currently completing a \$4.5 million conference center for the five-star Boulders Resort in Carefree, Arizona. The center includes an unusual boulder-shaped ballroom without a single straight line. Floor to ceiling windows will overlook towering boulder outcroppings, and the foyer will feature retractable glass walls that open onto an elevated terrace with adobe fireplaces and views of the surrounding desert.

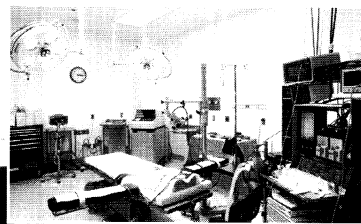
**Today, the Frank Lloyd Wright
collection holds more
than 400,000 artifacts from
Wright’s life and work, having
survived three fires.**

Timing is everything

Wright created the kind of architecture that we take for granted here in the Valley and around the nation—things like ranch houses, bank teller windows, carports and corner windows. He invented textile blocks that led to the concrete blocks of today. He also invented radium floor heating, where hot water is pumped through piping below a floor to generate heat. He used reinforced concrete in the construction of buildings when it was only being used for sidewalks at the time. “Frank was way ahead of his time on all of these things,” Loope says.

John Meunier, dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Arizona State University, thinks Wright came into architecture just when the country was in need of new vision and style.

“Frank Lloyd Wright was fortunate. He came on the scene when America was in the process of remaking itself,” he says. “There was a very strong reform movement, and he happened to be in Chicago where the movement was strong. He was very much in tune with the times.”



**W.P. ROWLAND
COMPANIES**
1635 E. Myrtle Ave
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85020
602/944-5944

WP Rowland Companies is a construction and development manager/general contractor headquartered in Phoenix, serving customers throughout the West, Southwest, and contiguous states. “This Phoenix-based construction firm has built an international reputation as a quality builder handling construction and development projects for owners and investors from around the world.” Rowland people know that it is not one thing done 1000 times better that makes their work A Matter of Excellence - it is 1000 things done just a little better that creates a Margin of Excellence. This Margin of Excellence determines success on many of our projects.

By 1910, Wright began to garner world-wide acclaim, both for divorcing his wife when divorce was unheard of and by producing 140 structures of dramatic new architecture.

He called his work “organic architecture,” a form that blended building with surroundings, a philosophy based on the premise that all parts relate to the whole as they relate to each other. He felt architecture should reflect and reinforce the value of something.

“Frank had the ability to conceive of a building in his heart and mind before he even laid pencil to paper,” says Rattenbury. “He could walk around these buildings in his mind. Then he simply recorded what he knew.”

“Modest housing was his goal,” adds Lucas. “He wanted everyone to live in a beautiful environment whether it be 300 square feet or 10,000 square feet.”

By 1911, Wright moved to Wisconsin to begin



construction of his new home Taliesin, which means “shining brow.” Wright believed that a building should not sit on top of a piece of land, but rather on the brow of the land, which tends to blend in with the surroundings.

In 1928, Wright married Olgivanna Lazovich, the daughter of a Supreme Court Justice of Montenegro and a woman many credit with Wright’s inspiration and genius in the latter part of his life. The couple founded an architectural school in Wisconsin based on an apprenticeship program. The program, called Taliesin Fellowship, continues today as the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture.

Mrs. Wright once said that Wright’s genius was his capacity to absorb, and Rattenbury agrees, “He was constantly soaking everything in.”

According to Loope, Wright had a passion and love for learning, growing and doing that celebrated beauty, harmony and the American Dream. To this end, Wright is best known for the destruction of box architecture. He opened up floor plans allowing people to move freely about within a space and experience that space unencumbered. “He believed Americans were free people and shouldn’t be living in boxes,” says Lucas. “He revered democracy.”

In 1936, Wright received two commissions which literally changed modern architecture worldwide— the



Top: The Tatum House was designed by Wright in 1954. Left: An entryway to the Tatum House.

Photos courtesy of U-Haul Real Estate.

Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine, Wisconsin, and Fallingwater, a house built over a waterfall in Pennsylvania for Edgar J. Kaufmann. These two works brought a flood of commission that would only be interrupted by World War II.

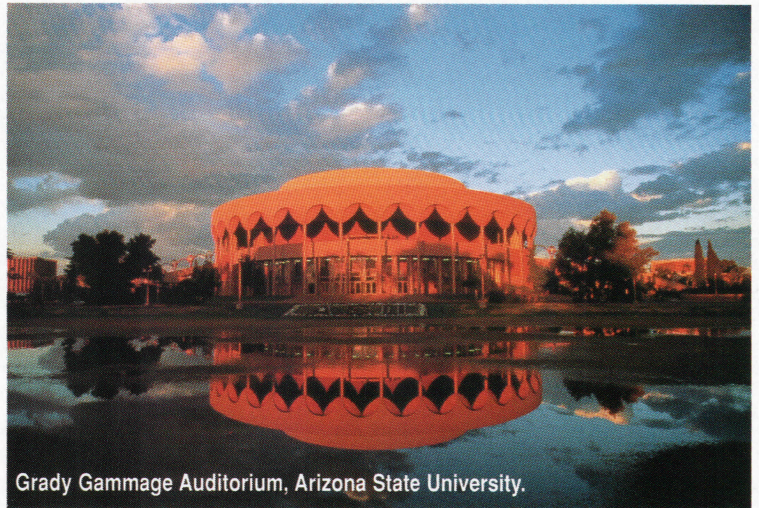
Whether his genius made him controversial or his controversy enhanced his giftedness is not a debate with easy answers. It is said that Wright could be charming and demanding, funny and acerbic. He was a complex man with exacting standards.

"He comes across as arrogant in his writings," says Lucas. "People said he had a dry sense of humor, but he said things tongue in cheek. And some of his writing is very stilted, but his ideas are crystal clear."

Lucas adds, "His apprentices thought he was hard, but fair. He was not a humble man. He knew what he wanted, and he demanded excellence."

But Loope says there was a side to Wright that inspired confidence and hope. "His clients found a close companion, confidant and friend," he says.

Wright and his wife lived in Taliesin West, a 600-acre natural Sonoran desert site at the foothills of the



Grady Gammage Auditorium, Arizona State University.

McDowell Mountains, with no electricity and no telephones until he died in 1959. His last decade was as productive as his whole career. He worked on commissions, until three days before his death, holding more at the end of his career than at any other time of his life. "Some people claim that his marriage to Mrs. Wright was the reason he lasted as long as he did," says Meunier. "But Frank Lloyd Wright also had the advantage that he lived a life that was hugely rewarding."

Continuing the legacy

Today, the Frank Lloyd Wright collection holds more than 400,000 artifacts from Wright's life and work, having survived three fires. Only 10 percent of the collection has ever been seen by the public. In all, Wright designed 1,146 works including architecture, furniture, lamps, fabrics, carpets, china, silver and graphic designs. Only 523 designs were executed.

Wright's legacy continues through Taliesin Architects, his successor firm in Scottsdale, which is currently working on more than 80 projects in China, Australia, Thailand, Europe, Canada, and 28 states in the United States.

Today, Taliesin West is not only home to the apprentices in the architectural program and headquarters for Taliesin Architects, but is also a major tourist center, receiving more than 80,000 visitors a year.

The complex, like its creator is a myriad of eclectic designs comprising living quarters, pools, terraces, gardens, workshops and residences that seem to defy principles, yet uphold the truth and sacredness Wright aspired to all his life.

"You could never apply a rule to Frank," says Rattenbury. "The minute he came up with what people thought was a rule, he broke it."

AB

Cynthia Scanlon is a free-lance writer based in Tempe



Furnishings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Photo courtesy of U-Haul Real Estate.