

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



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T H E M E T R O P O L I T A N M U S E U M O F A R T

NOTE

Few artists have contributed as much to American art as Frank Lloyd Wright. For more than seventy-five years he played a central role in the development of modern architecture, and he remains the most influential architect that the United States has produced. The Metropolitan Museum of Art now honors this exceptional artist with the permanent installation of the living room designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Francis W. Little house and an accompanying temporary exhibition of Wright material in the Museum's collection.

It is interesting to note that Frank Lloyd Wright's first contact with the Metropolitan came when he sold the Museum a series of Japanese prints in 1918–22. He first traveled to the Far East in 1905, and he was to visit Tokyo numerous times during the construction of the Imperial Hotel (c. 1916–22). Often acting as an agent for other American collectors, Wright himself acquired an extensive personal collection on these trips. In 1918 and 1922, recurring financial problems forced him to sell approximately four hundred works—including landscapes by Hiroshige and Kabuki actors by the Katsukawa artists—which are among the most important Japanese prints in the Metropolitan.

The first object designed by Wright to be acquired by the Museum was the stunning triptych of windows created for the Avery Coonley Playhouse (1912) in Riverside, Illinois. The wonderful abstract patterns of circles and squares in primary colors make these windows among the finest leaded-glass designs by Wright. Their acquisition in 1967, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Wright's birth, was made with funds provided by the Edgar J. Kaufmann Foundation and Edward C. Moore, Jr. Gifts. In the following year, the Museum acquired a pair of side chairs from the Imperial Hotel, Wright's greatest building executed outside the United States.

The Metropolitan's most ambitious undertaking in this area, however, was the acquisition in 1972 of the interiors from the Francis W. Little house (1912–14) in Wayzata, Minnesota, which was made possible by the bequest of Emily Crane Chadbourne. We were particularly fortunate to acquire all of the original furniture, textiles, and Japanese prints from the room. In addition, the Museum acquired at the same time a group of architectural and furniture sketches for the Little house—the Metropolitan's first drawings by Wright—as well as three copies of the famous Wasmuth portfolio of Wright's drawings published in 1910 and two of the 1911 Wasmuth books illustrated with photographs.

The latter material is housed in the Department of Prints and Photographs, which in recent years has actively expanded the

Museum's Wright collection to include decorative drawings, graphics, photographs, and books. Most notably the Pundt Collection, which was acquired in 1981, has augmented our holdings from the first decade of the century, the years generally referred to as Wright's Prairie period.

The greater part of our Wright collection, however, has been formed in the last four years. The acquisitions include furniture, ceramics, glass, textiles, sculpture, and architectural fragments ranging in date from the 1890s to the 1950s. Our holdings now constitute what is perhaps the finest Wright collection in any museum. While we have received gifts from numerous friends to whom we are very grateful, our most recent purchases have been made possible by the Theodore R. Gamble, Jr. Fund.

The opening of the Wright room and the accompanying exhibition is a notable occasion for The American Wing and for the Museum. Many people should be thanked for their contributions to this event. It was Edgar Tafel and Arthur Rosenblatt who in 1971 brought to our attention the impending demolition of the Little house, whose fate had been sealed by a decision to build another structure immediately adjacent. Thomas Hoving, Berry Tracy, and Morrison Heckscher negotiated the acquisition of the interiors from the Little house in 1971–72, and Heckscher oversaw the enormous task of dismantling and transporting this material to New York in 1972. The complex job of installing the Wright room and exhibition has been supervised by R. Craig Miller, who has also written an introductory essay for this publication. We are especially pleased to have had the participation of one of the leading Wright scholars, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.—the primary author of this publication and a man whose generosity has contributed greatly to the formation of our nineteenth-century American decorative arts collection. Among those in the Museum who have lent valuable assistance are Colta Ives and David Kiehl; Julia Meech-Pekarik, who also wrote the essay on Wright and Japanese prints in the following pages; and the members of the Metropolitan's conservation departments, Ezra Mills, in particular. Finally it is my pleasure to acknowledge Saul P. Steinberg and Reliance Group Holdings, Inc., without whose enormously generous and, I should add, timely and thoughtful grant we could not have proceeded with the construction of the room or the celebration of Frank Lloyd Wright through the exhibition and this *Bulletin*.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO
Director

Cover: Installation of the living room from the Francis W. Little house in The American Wing.

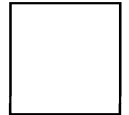
Inside front cover: Portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright. Platinum print by Eugene Hutchinson, c. 1915

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This *Bulletin* is the third in a series devoted to a single artist but the first of the group to focus on an architect. It is fitting that its subject should be America's foremost master of architecture, for no architect has captivated the American imagination like Frank Lloyd Wright.

Born in 1867 in Richland Center, Wisconsin, Wright grew up in an America still very much influenced by the Jeffersonian ideal of an agrarian society. In many ways he remained throughout his life a nineteenth-century man, for like Emerson and Whitman, he had a great love for nature. His abiding feeling for the land and his belief in man's need for a direct relationship with nature were essential to his concept of an "organic architecture"—what Wright envisioned as an American architecture distinct from the classical and Renaissance traditions. His antipathy toward European design was matched by a love for non-Western art, particularly that of Japan.

Wright began his career in Chicago in 1887, but his real architectural education was the five years spent with Louis Sullivan, whose office he joined as a draftsman in 1888. In 1893, though, Wright opened an independent practice and over the succeeding seventeen years was known as a rising young architect in Chicago.

In 1909 Wright left for a sojourn in Europe, and it was during this period that the two famous Wasmuth portfolios were issued. The first, printed in 1910, consisted of 100 beautiful lithographs; and the second, which appeared in the following year, was illustrated with photographs of Wright's executed projects. Their publication and an accompanying exhibition in Berlin brought Wright's work to the attention of a younger generation of European designers and established his place in the forefront of the modern movement.

On his return to the United States in 1911, Wright was an international figure; but his real importance was little recognized in this country. His controversial personal life—the breakup of his first marriage; the sensational murder of Mamah Borthwick, the woman for whom he left his family; and his later relationships—made his position untenable in conservative Midwest society; and the ensuing two decades were perhaps the most difficult years in Wright's life. Part of this time was spent on the West Coast and in Tokyo with the construction of the Imperial Hotel (c. 1916–22). At home, the economic constraints of the Depression compounded his professional problems, and few of Wright's projects were realized during this period.

By the 1930s, however, Wright—then in his sixties—re-emerged with a series of remarkable buildings and was once again an accepted leader in modern architecture. For the next quarter-century, he was to build on an unprecedented scale, until his death in 1959 at the age of ninety-two. Although he enjoyed immense fame in his later years, Wright had few distinguished followers. His was a highly individual genius that provided a unique solution for each client and site. Increasingly he also found himself in open conflict with European designers from the Bauhaus—such as Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who had been influenced by Wright some twenty-five years earlier and yet enjoyed considerable acclaim after their emigration to the United States in the 1930s. Most perplexing to Wright must have been the fact that the extremely talented generation of American architects that emerged after World War II largely followed this International Style current. To them, Wright's

vision of a native American architecture must have appeared eccentric, if not downright old-fashioned. It is perhaps only now, when we talk of Post-Modernism, a movement in strong reaction to the International Style, that Wright's work from this later period and his true genius can be appreciated.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is now forming its collection of modern American design, and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright is central to that effort. The American Wing has installed on permanent display a magnificent living room from the Francis W. Little house in Wayzata, Minnesota (1912–14). This will be the most contemporary period room in the Wing, which offers an ensemble of some two-dozen rooms that together represent the history of American interior design from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century. In addition, over the last fifteen years a selective collection of architectural and decorative designs by Wright has been assembled that will form the core of our collection of modern American design. The major part of this material will be shown for the first time in a temporary exhibition scheduled to be displayed from December 3, 1982, to February 27, 1983.

The Museum's recognition of Wright, however, has been somewhat belated. When the Metropolitan Museum was founded in 1870, one of its primary missions was the encouragement of contemporary American design. Unfortunately its efforts were initially confined to East Coast artists such as Louis Comfort Tiffany. Richard Bach expanded that vision considerably with a remarkable series of shows devoted to American industrial design held at the Metropolitan in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Wright was, in fact, offered the most prominent space in the Museum's 1929 show *The Architect and Industrial Arts* but, for whatever reason, did not participate.

In The American Wing, as well, the installation of the Wright room and exhibition signifies a shift in the scope of its collection. From its opening in 1924, the Wing's collection was essentially devoted to handcrafted objects dating from before 1830, when industrial manufacture began in this country. The landmark exhibition *Nineteenth-Century America*, staged in 1970 to celebrate the Museum's centennial, demonstrated a firm intention on the part of the Museum to build a great post-1830 collection. The acquisition of the living room from the Little house two years later was, in fact, the Wing's first major commitment to American Arts and Crafts design, a reform movement at the turn of the century devoted to the revival of the handicrafts. In the ensuing decade, however, The American Wing's collection has grown substantially to include not only handcrafted objects representing all of the nineteenth-century revival styles but also outstanding examples of American industrial design. It was, of course, Wright himself who championed mass production as early as 1901 in his famous lecture "The Art and Craft of the Machine," delivered at Hull House in Chicago; and the majority of the Wright collection consists appropriately of designs intended for mass production.

The new American Wing opened in 1980 with greatly expanded facilities and a renewed vision of its role. In his lifetime, Frank Lloyd Wright was vocal and often controversial in his views concerning the direction that American art and architecture should follow. The Wright design collection in The American Wing attests to the continuing power of his work to challenge our perceptions of American art.



View of the exhibition *Frank Lloyd Wright's Work*, sponsored by the Chicago Architectural Club at the Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITED

A COMMENTARY BY EDGAR KAUFMANN, JR.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art is opening a permanent installation of a large room designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, the living room from the 1912–14 Wayzata, Minnesota, country house of the Francis W. Little family. This notable recognition of Wright's genius raises questions. What has been the record of exhibitions of Wright's work in art museums and similar institutions over the years? And what did Frank Lloyd Wright think of them? Such exhibitions were numerous and Wright recognized their value; wherever possible he preferred to arrange them himself. In the earlier decades of Wright's career—which extended over seventy years, from 1889 to 1959—his exhibition designs were demonstrations of his architectural style, as surviving photographs reveal (see opposite). Later, Wright used another approach: drawings, photographs, and models of his works were rather casually assembled, suggesting a pell-mell of creative activity.

During Wright's working life there was scarcely a year when his work was not being exhibited publicly—except the period of 1917–28, when he was working in Japan and the western American states. As a young professional he welcomed opportunities as they came, but in maturity he often refused to join group showings. Wright's exhibitions were accompanied by wide publication in books and periodicals. The most recent and thorough bibliography of Wright lists some fourteen hundred items through 1959 (as compared to over a thousand architectural works designed by Wright, about four hundred of them actually built).

Frank Lloyd Wright began to practice architecture independently in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1893, and for the next twenty years the Art Institute of Chicago exhibited his work regularly, though his representation in different exhibitions varied from more than thirty items to merely one. These occasions were provided by the Chicago Architectural Club, whose annual show at the Art Institute, complete with catalogue, was an important cultural event in the city. In the years 1902, 1907, and 1913, Wright was especially featured. Always independent, Wright was not a member or even an associate of the club, but his relationship with the organization was one of mutual respect and cooperation. There is always discussion, when Wright's career is examined, about the community turning from him when his private life became flamboyantly unconventional, but the roster of exhibitions hardly supports this idea. In 1914, when Mamah Borthwick was murdered and arson destroyed the house she and Wright shared, the Art Institute surveyed his work of the years since his return

from Europe; and in 1916 the same museum placed on view Wright's plans for the great Imperial Hotel in Tokyo.

Despite this long-lasting support, Wright had reservations concerning the role of the Art Institute. In 1918 he told members of the Chicago Women's Aid:

we have... the best located, largest, and most successful in point of attendance of any institution of art in America... But academic centers have never been the life of art in any individual, city, or nation. Original impulses live outside, hostile to established orders. Institutions are in their very nature hostile to these impulses... An art institute should be no editor of genius in the spirit of connoisseur or collector. It should be an opportunity, a staff in the hand, a cloak for genius in the bitter wind...

In the years before 1925, Wright formed such attitudes, which were to dominate his later thinking, yet his need to have his projects seen and appreciated was stronger than his pessimism and he continued to have work exhibited. Possibly Wright had been encouraged by an exhibition of his architecture held in Berlin in 1910 or, more likely, 1911—an exhibition linked to the portfolios of drawings and the book of photographs and plans published in association with the firm of E. Wasmuth in that city. Although records of the event were obliterated by war, it is known that leading younger German architects, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius among them, were considerably affected by the exhibition. Apparently it took place after Wright's departure for the United States, and he may have been unaware of its impact. However, newly discovered correspondence with Wasmuth (now at the State University of New York, Buffalo, and Stanford University, Palo Alto, California) might clarify this issue once these papers become available for study.

According to recent research, while the Imperial Hotel was being built, from 1917 to 1922, Wright spent about half his time in Japan and also began to practice in California. When the Great Depression prevailed, he returned to Wisconsin. In 1930 he exhibited and lectured at the Art Institute of Chicago, at Princeton University, and at the Architectural League of New York. The following year a large exhibition of his architecture was organized for travel through Europe. After appearing briefly that February in Seattle and Eugene, Oregon, it went first to Amsterdam and thence to four major cities in Germany, two in Belgium, Paris, Prague, and eventually Tokyo before a final presentation in

Milwaukee. This tour abroad certainly pleased Wright more than his inclusion in the 1932 exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York launching the idea of an International Style in modern architecture. In that exhibition, Frank Lloyd Wright at the age of sixty-five could successfully challenge the younger professional talents.

In 1935 Wright exhibited Broadacre City, his concept of area planning for a reformed egalitarian society; it was presented in Rockefeller Center before going to Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh. The exhibition summed up ideas stimulated by the Depression and encompassed a large number of projects Wright had elaborated over the years. Broadacre City was at once the closing episode of the lean years when Wright had to depend on lecturing and writing, with almost no opportunity to build, and the prologue to his resurgence in what has been called Frank Lloyd Wright's second career.

Four great buildings opened the new chapter in Wright's productivity: Fallingwater (1936–39); the S. C. Johnson and Son Administration Building (1936–39); the Hanna hexagonal house (1937); and a splendidly economical house for the Herbert Jacobses (1937). It was Fallingwater that was first exhibited, in temporary quarters of the Museum of Modern Art. All four structures were featured in the January 1938 issue of the *Architectural Forum*, which heralded Wright's eloquent lectures in London the next year, when the Architectural Association displayed his works. During World War II the Royal Institute of British Architects awarded Wright their gold medal. In the United States, the forties opened with a Wright exhibition at the Institute of Modern Art in Boston. Later in the year the Museum of Modern Art held a one-man show of his work that included a model house in the museum garden. Three important books resulted from this event: *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture*, devoted to extracts from his writings over the years; Wright's *An Autobiography* (first published in 1932); and *In the Nature of Materials*, the basic record of Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings and projects to 1942. With these exhibitions and publications illustrating Wright's genius, his position was no longer in shadow; he was seen as a major, active force in creative architecture.

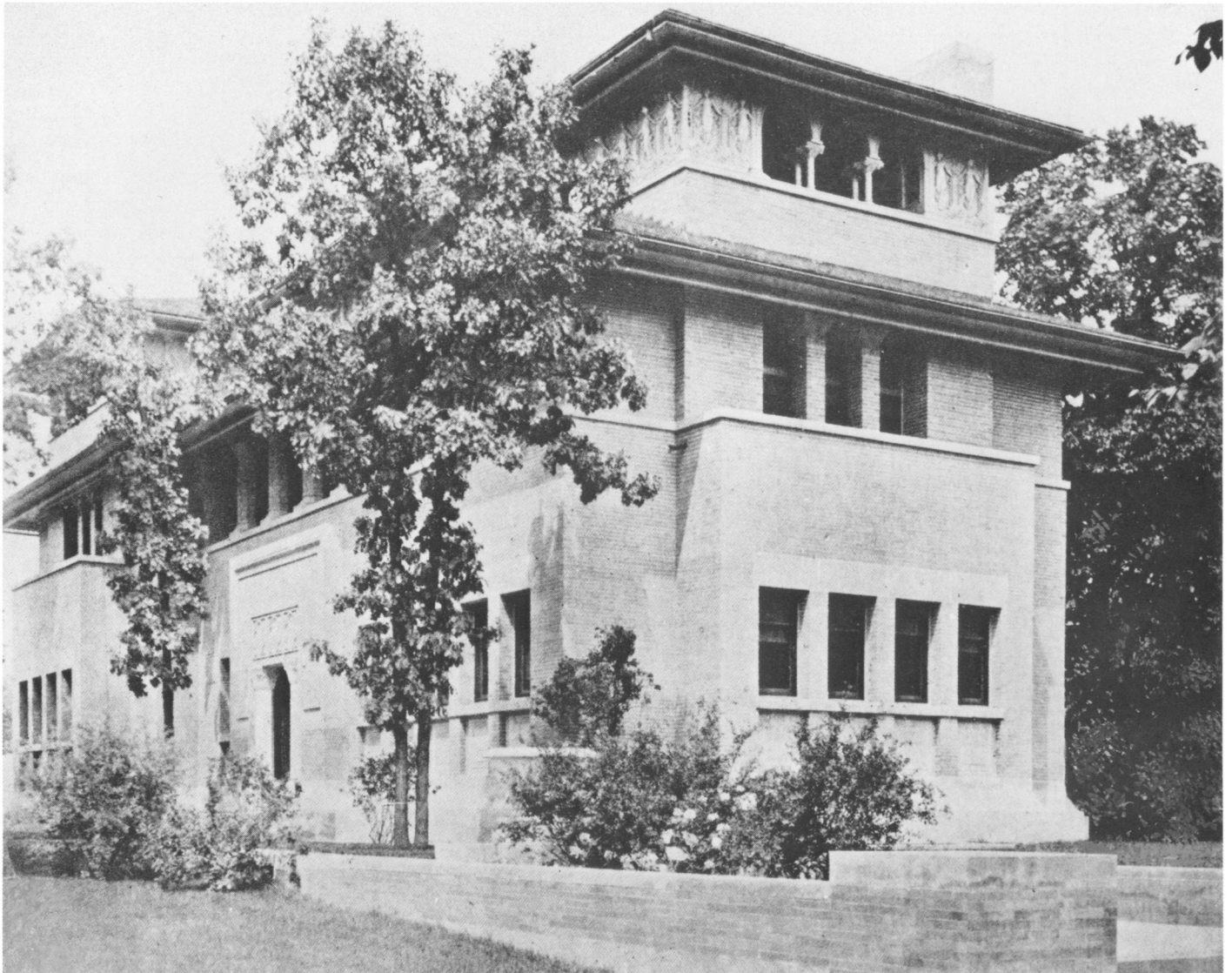
In 1943 the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University displayed Wright's work, as it had a decade earlier when it exhibited the 1932 Museum of Modern Art show. In 1945 the latter institution included his work in an exhibition devoted to small houses and in 1946 displayed a model of Wright's project for a luxury house in Redding, Connecticut. A Museum of Modern Art show of bridges that began its travels in 1948 also included a design by Wright.

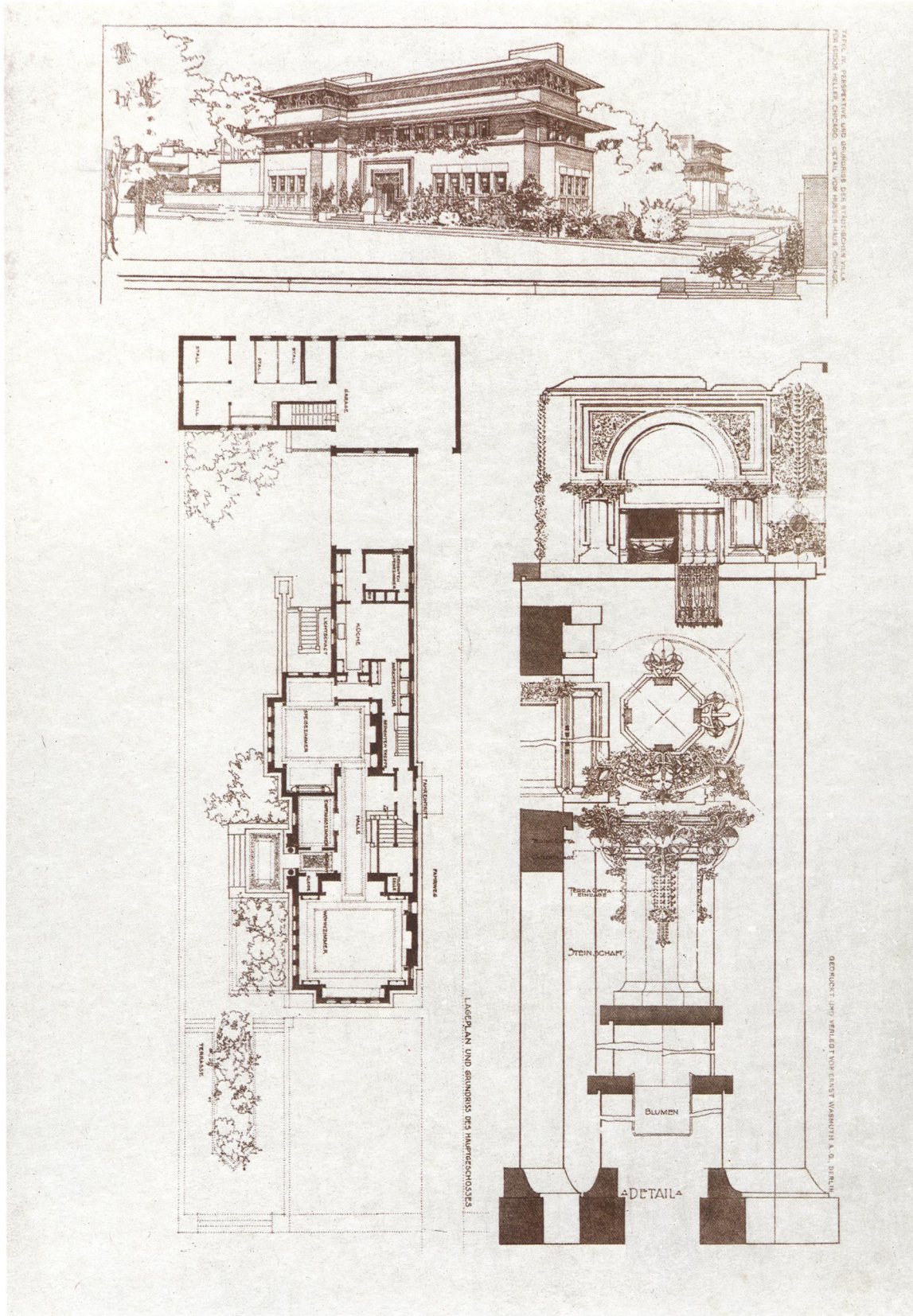
The last decade of Wright's life began with the greatest of his exhibitions, *Sixty Years of Living Architecture*, organized by the Philadelphia architect Oscar Stonorow. This testimony of international esteem for Wright was seen in Philadelphia before opening in Europe at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. Thereafter it proceeded to Zurich, Paris, Munich, Rotterdam, and Berlin. By autumn of 1952 it traveled to Mexico City. A year later it was refreshed for a grand showing on the future site of the Guggenheim Museum in New York, and again a model house was built in conjunction with the pictorial display. In 1953 a smaller exhibition was held in New York at the National Institute of Arts and Letters (as it was then called), on which occasion Wright was awarded a gold medal. *Sixty Years of Living Architecture* underwent several adaptations and appeared in Los Angeles in 1954. Shows were arranged that year in Holland, Michigan, and in Philadelphia (Temple University); the University of Wisconsin mounted a show in Madison in 1955. These lesser exhibitions were probably held in relation to talks delivered by Wright. In 1956 Chicago officially celebrated "Frank Lloyd Wright Day," and *Sixty Years*—enlarged by the extraordinary project that Wright had evolved for a mile-high skyscraper—appeared in that city. The Washington, D.C., Institute of Contemporary Art showed architecture by Wright in 1957, and he contributed works in the next two years to two exhibitions in New York—one celebrating the United Nations and the other, entitled *Form Givers at Mid-Century*, held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The latter was organized by *Time* magazine and circulated by the American Federation of Arts in 1959, the year of Wright's death. Since then, numerous exhibitions of his architecture have been held, some of them major efforts, but not until 1975 did a museum install a Wright interior. At that time the Allentown (Pennsylvania) Art Museum adapted a small library to its needs. This room was acquired from extensive material purchased by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972 when the Francis W. Little house was demolished.

The long annals of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural exhibitions show that the great reputation that accrued justly to the architect was notably abetted by museum activities. This recognition now is continued and broadened as his genius is amply represented by the Metropolitan Museum's large collection of objects designed by Wright, currently on exhibition, and by the permanent display of the Little house living room—a fitting cap to the long relationship between Frank Lloyd Wright and museums throughout the world.

In 1897 Wright built an elaborate house for the Heller family of Chicago on a narrow lot overlooking Lake Michigan. The exterior ornamentation began around the main entrance, was continued at second-floor window frames, and emphasized at belvederes on top. This ornament indicated Wright's fascination with the ideas of Louis Sullivan, whose office he had left four years earlier. At that time Sullivan had started to design a masterwork of American architecture, the Guaranty Building at Buffalo. Sullivan's assistant, G. G. Elmslie, who detailed the elaborate outer ornament of the Guaranty, continued to remain a friend and collaborator of Frank Lloyd Wright. Thus Wright was familiar with the Guaranty designs.

I. Heller house, Chicago, Illinois (1897).

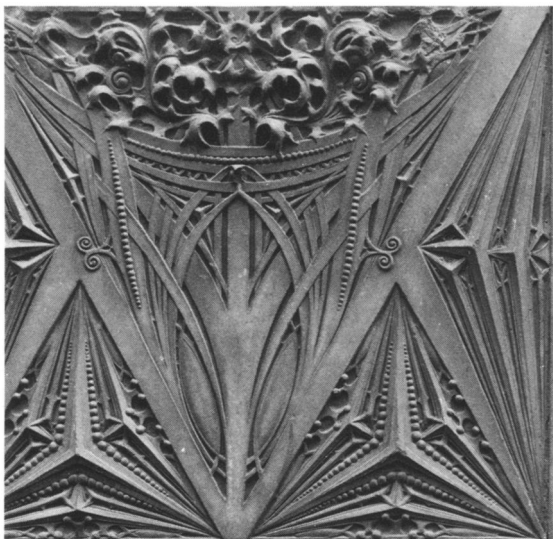




Top and left: Perspective and ground plan of Heller house from Wasmuth portfolio (1910).
 Right: Detail of Joseph Husser house, Chicago, Illinois (1899).

The capital molded in plaster of paris from the second floor of the Heller house (below) shows how Wright reinterpreted one of the main themes of the Guaranty ornament, a taut triangular element set against lush foliage. In the Guaranty Building, this device was used flatly, as terracotta cladding for steel uprights (right). The Heller capital, on the contrary, used the theme in the round and with differently conceived contrast between angularity and curves. Here the triangular element encapsulated nascent foliage, which burst ripely at the crown of the capital and crept through the interstices of a containing harness. Wright was demonstrating a new, more unitary reading of the Buffalo theme. Such rereadings were soon abandoned by Wright, whose individual manner became mature as the twentieth century opened. The Heller house capital is a memorable document of the development of American architectural expression.

Below: Capital from Heller house, 1897. Right: Terracotta cladding for steel uprights, Guaranty Building, Buffalo, New York.



Wright's architectural career began in earnest when he built a modest home for himself and his family in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1889. By 1895 he was enlarging it with a studio and other adjuncts; many of his new concepts were put to the test there. Early photographs show a small clerestoried octagon used as library and conference room (right).

Such photographs reveal that from the very beginning, Wright used typical forms of furniture and of houses but almost never repeated them

Entry, looking toward the loggia, Frank Lloyd Wright studio, Oak Park, Illinois (1895).

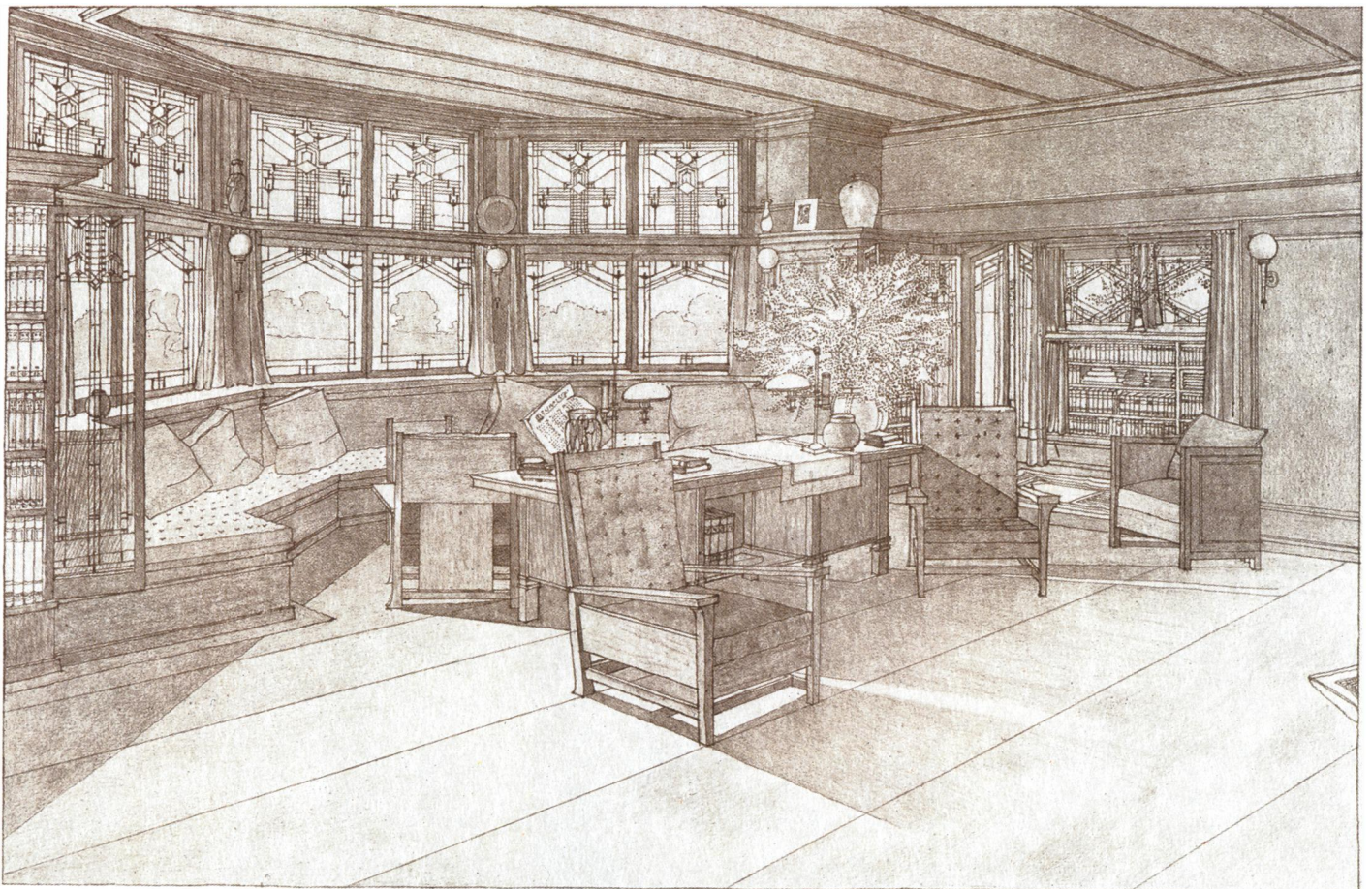


exactly. Wright did make them more severe or elaborate to suit the situation. Wright's early severe furniture, which may be seen in his home and studio at Oak Park to this day, owed a good deal to a large tapestry—designed by Edward Burne-Jones in the early 1890s and woven by William Morris's firm—that was reproduced in *The Studio* in 1894. This tapestry showed simple wood chairs of pure shapes. Such neo-Gothic influences can be seen in the armchair at the Oak Park studio (below, lower right).



Below: Octagonal library, Frank Lloyd Wright studio, Oak Park. Right: Tapestry designed by Edward Burne-Jones, woven by Morris & Co.

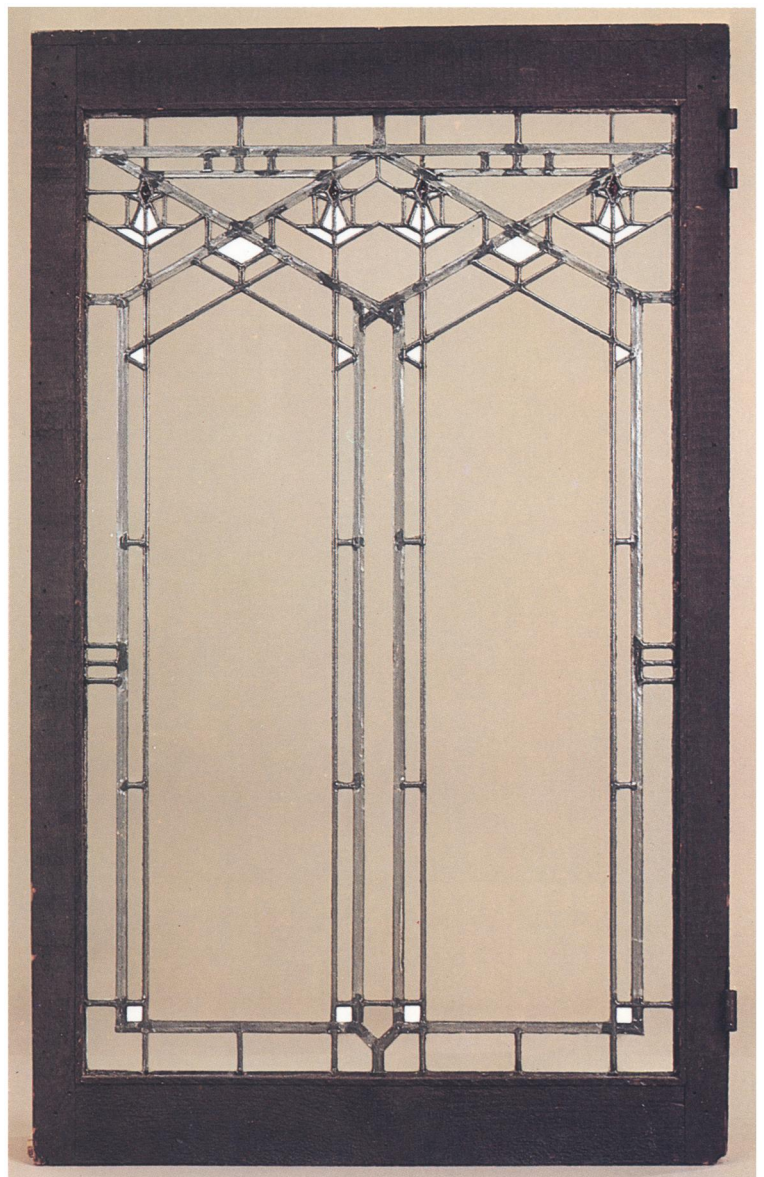


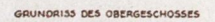
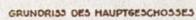
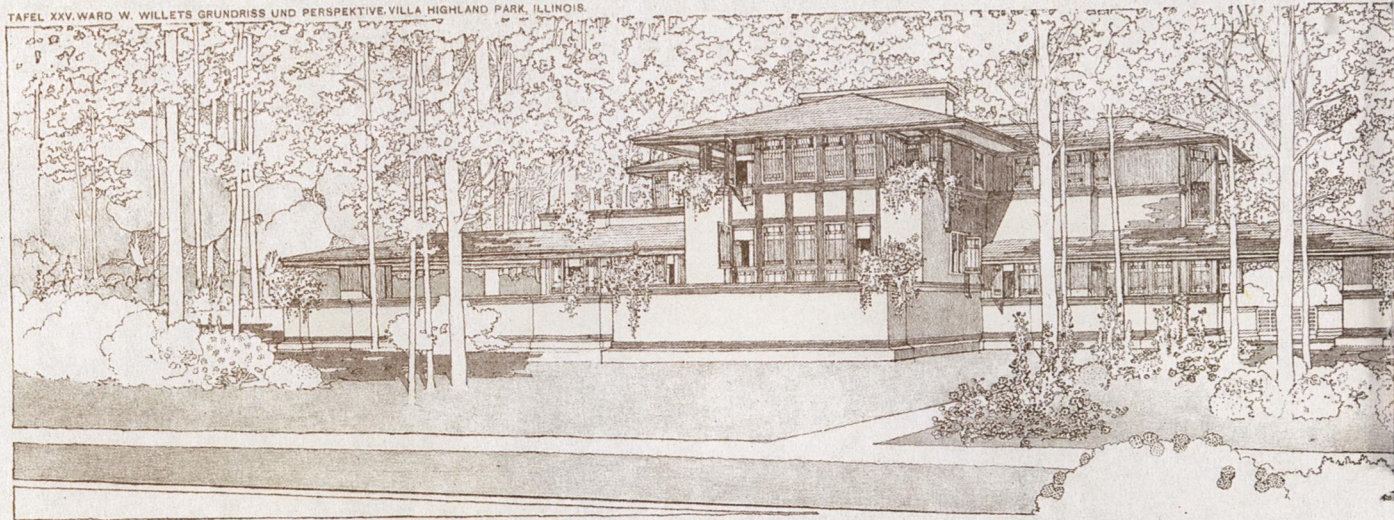


The B. H. Bradley house of 1900 (upper left), one of two in Kankakee, Illinois, that were designed by Wright and built that year for brothers-in-law, was beautifully detailed. The bay window in the living room (see right and lower left) showed a suburban garden through a pattern echoing the structure of the house. The living room used comfortable seating of Wright's severe type and a large table with cabinets below; despite slight moldings at the foot, this is a direct prototype for the grand table in the Little house living room.

The Bradley house was an example of one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most impressive plans, published in more mature form as "A Small House with 'Lots of Room in It'" in the July 1901 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. In the magazine Wright fully and concisely presented his design of a nuclear chimney mass anchoring freely extended wings for entry, living, dining, and services—one of the clearly original ideas of modern architecture, based on human enjoyment far more than on formal aesthetics.

Opposite, above: Exterior, B. H. Bradley house, Kankakee, Illinois (1900); below: living room, Bradley house, from Wasmuth portfolio (1910). Right: Window from living room, Bradley house.





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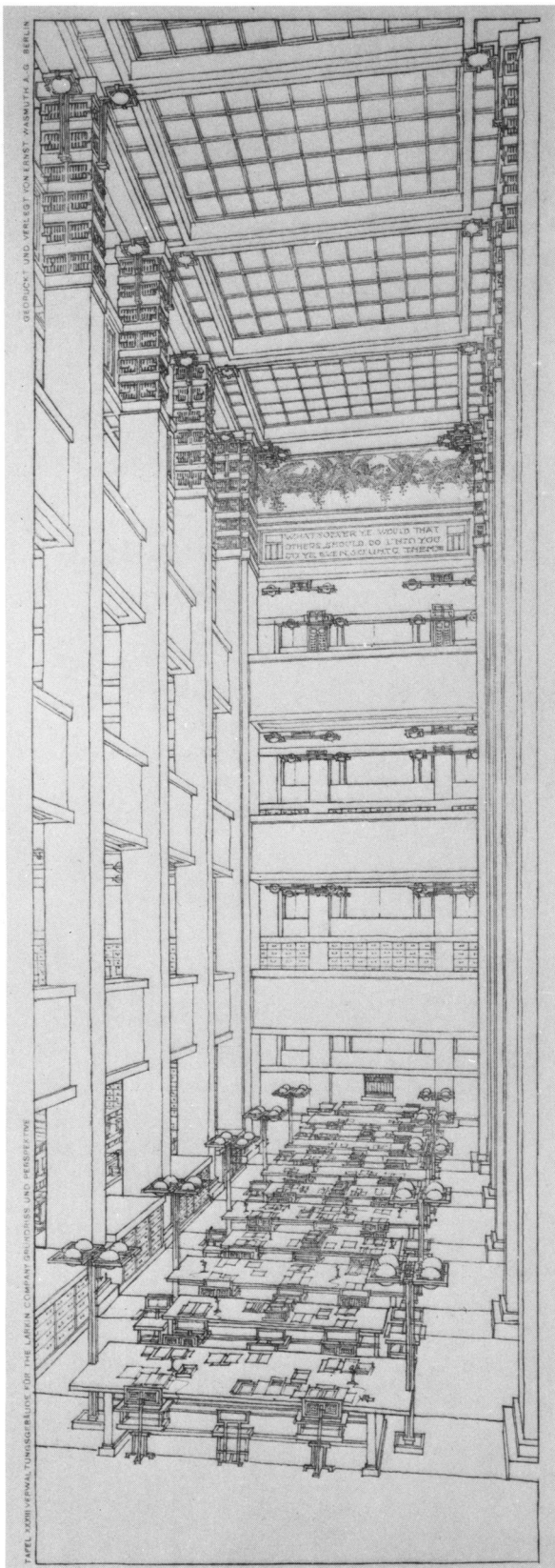
Ground plan and perspective, Ward W. Willits house, Highland Park, Illinois (1902), from Wasmuth portfolio (1910).



The high-backed dining chair (left) was one of Wright's reliable types, and here it is presented in a sturdy, austere version. The meaning of these chairs is not discoverable in a single example, for they were meant to perform a special duty in sets. Gathered around the dining table so that the outer sides of the high backs were reiterated, they formed an enclosure that created a special space for the social ceremony of eating. Hence, the outer backs are somewhat curved, while the fronts are strictly rectangular and utilitarian. Wright did not conceive of the dining table as a locus for family gathering, as sometimes claimed; he has written about his lack of family feeling, rooted no doubt in his upbringing. Rather, his furniture and his architecture were meant to serve the dignity of daily human procedures. The Willits dining chairs, in harmony with the architecture around them, achieved this aim.

Opposite: Side chair from Willits house dining room. Below: Dining room, Willits house.



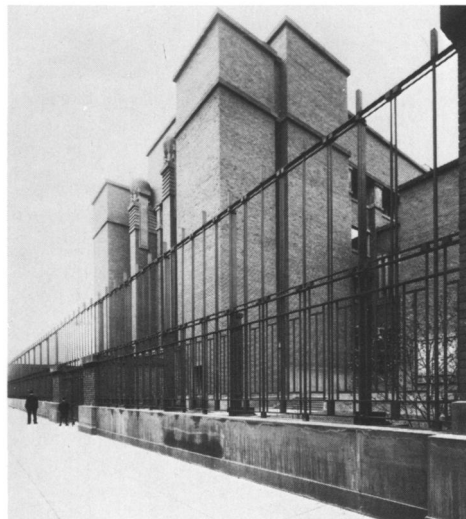


The Larkin Company Administration Building at Buffalo (1904) was one of Wright's most successful and original works, thanks in part to enlightened patronage. The officials of the Larkin mail-order enterprise made unusual but well-reasoned demands and allowed their architect a free hand in designing to suit their requirements.

One specification of the commission was the use of steel office furniture, and Wright was able to influence its design effectively. The Larkin enterprise depended on exact and orderly records, so that filing cabinets were a main consideration. The clerical staff worked at table surfaces adjusted to various operations and business machines; these tables were assembled from standardized parts. Workers sat on adjustable chairs that would swing into the knee space when not in use, allowing speedy night cleaning. Other metal chairs (see right and p. 20) served executives and visitors. The executive desks were grouped at ground level, accessible to the public, while clerical departments were distributed on the balconies. House telephones made communication easy. Furthermore, workers had a restaurant and rest areas near the greenhouse at the top. The interior was served by washed and filtered air, and large surfaces were made sound-absorbent; employees' lockers and washrooms were carefully equipped. Since the building was located at the head of the Larkin warehouses, served by rail, the district was grimy and noisy; the main building offered a large range of practical and pleasant services inside its shell. Probably this was the most carefully and considerately planned working environment to be found anywhere in the first decade of this century. The exterior was equally unprecedented.

When it was newly built, architectural experts found the Larkin building brutal and ugly, yet today its demolition at mid-century seems a critical loss for the history of architecture and American business. All that survive are drawings, photographs, written descriptions, and, most important, a few pieces of furniture.

Left: Interior court, Larkin Company Administration Building, Buffalo, New York (1904), detail from Wasmuth portfolio (1910). Below: Exterior, Larkin building. Opposite: Armchair from Larkin building.



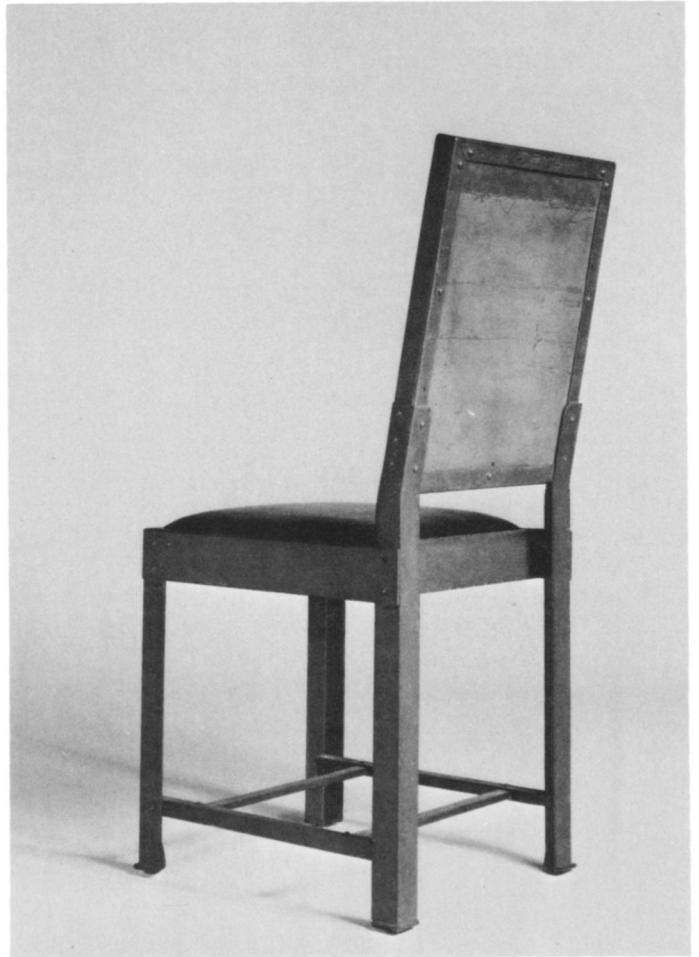
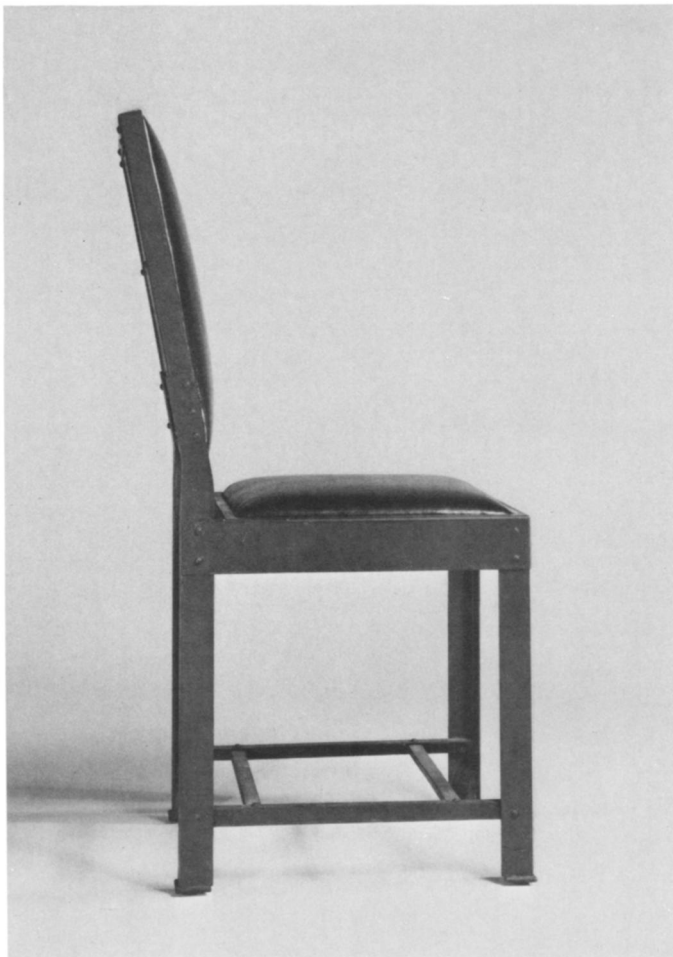


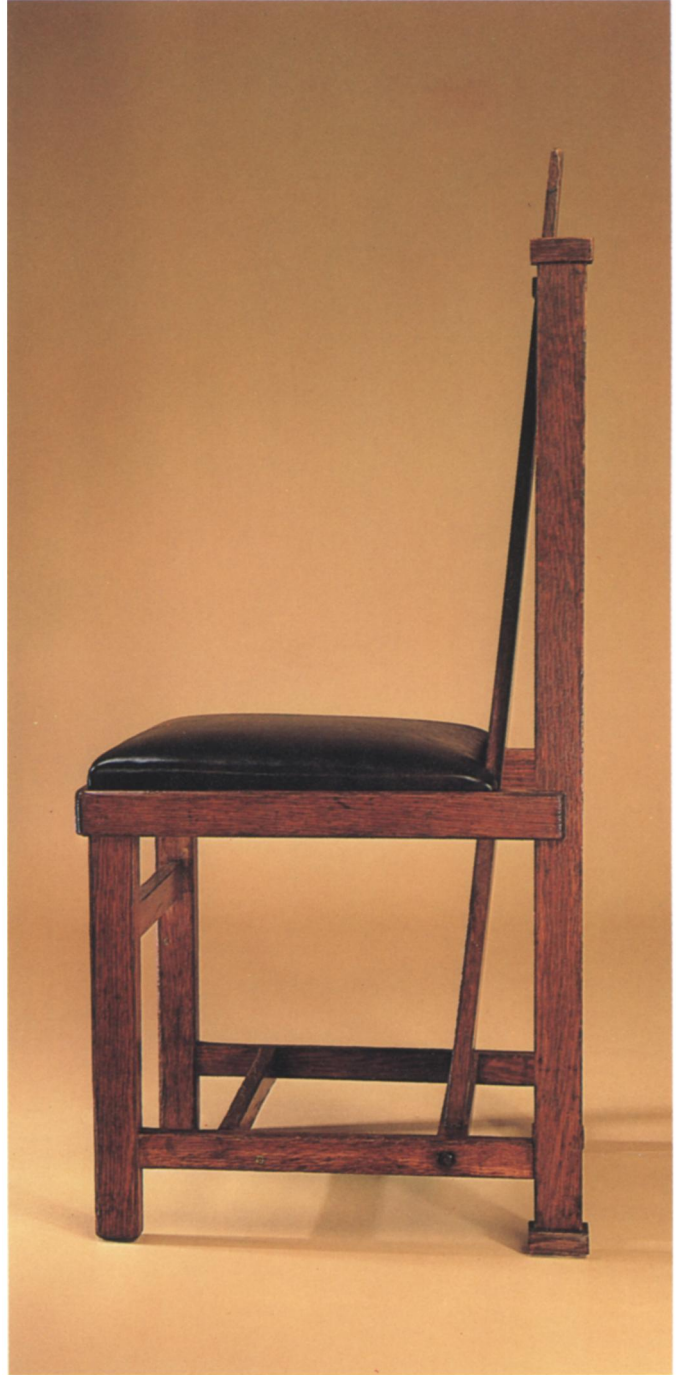
The two metal chairs at the Metropolitan Museum show the range of those produced; the swivel chair (p. 19) served executives and was used in the boardroom, while the side chair (below) was merely a supplement. Several intermediary models are known. The swivel chair proved, on careful examination, to have been painted in two related tones. Little has been written about metal furniture, and it is encouraging that the Museum acquired examples by Frank Lloyd Wright dating from several periods. As evidence is assembled it should be possible to understand the development of this genus of industrial product.

The wood side chair (right), like the Willits dining chair, represents a type often varied by Wright. The slanted board, run through the whole structure, not only serves as a backrest but also provides rigidity, resisting strains commonly placed on chairs in public use. The full-length diagonal brace had been a feature of Art Nouveau chairs produced on the Continent and was well known before 1904. Old photographs show the slant-back model scattered through the Larkin offices.

It is possible that the wood chair had been produced in quantity before the decision was made to adopt steel. Studies of Larkin documents may in time answer such small puzzles, and greater ones.

Below: Steel side chair from Larkin building. Opposite: Wood side chair from Larkin building.









While the Larkin building was under way D. D. Martin, one of the principal officers of the Larkin Company, was building his own residence to Wright's design. This house was one of Wright's finest efforts, but serious damages owing to neglect and change have reduced it to a token of its original power. One design device used in the Martin house was a series of multiple piers, regularly spaced. This unusual clustering of supports made it difficult for the chimney mass to be presented in the interior without confusing the composition. Wright decided to sheathe the chimney in a glass mosaic (left, below) while detailing floor and ceiling so that the living room and entrance hall overlapped, and the chimney stood as an isolated, elegant pier within the enlarged boundaries.

The glass mosaic of softly tinted wistaria vines in bloom against a gold mosaic background gleamed in the shifting light and immediately lifted the rather solemn, squat spaces into a gala atmosphere. The device had been used by Wright before, but less boldly: wrapping mosaic around four faces of a chimney introduced a strange element in the very heart of the house. The mosaic vanished long ago; only photographs and some sketches survive. Photographs indicate that the mosaic had little of Wright's draftsmanship, yet no doubt the result was carefully supervised by him. The drawing held by the Metropolitan (left, above) might well be by Wright, a tentative guide for the craftsman. Wright rarely used anything so overtly decorative in later years.



D. D. Martin house, Buffalo, New York (1904). Opposite page, left: Service entrance from driveway; upper right: garden elevation with porch; lower right: conservatory. This page, below: Entrance hall, looking toward conservatory; above: design for a wistaria mosaic for chimney breast.

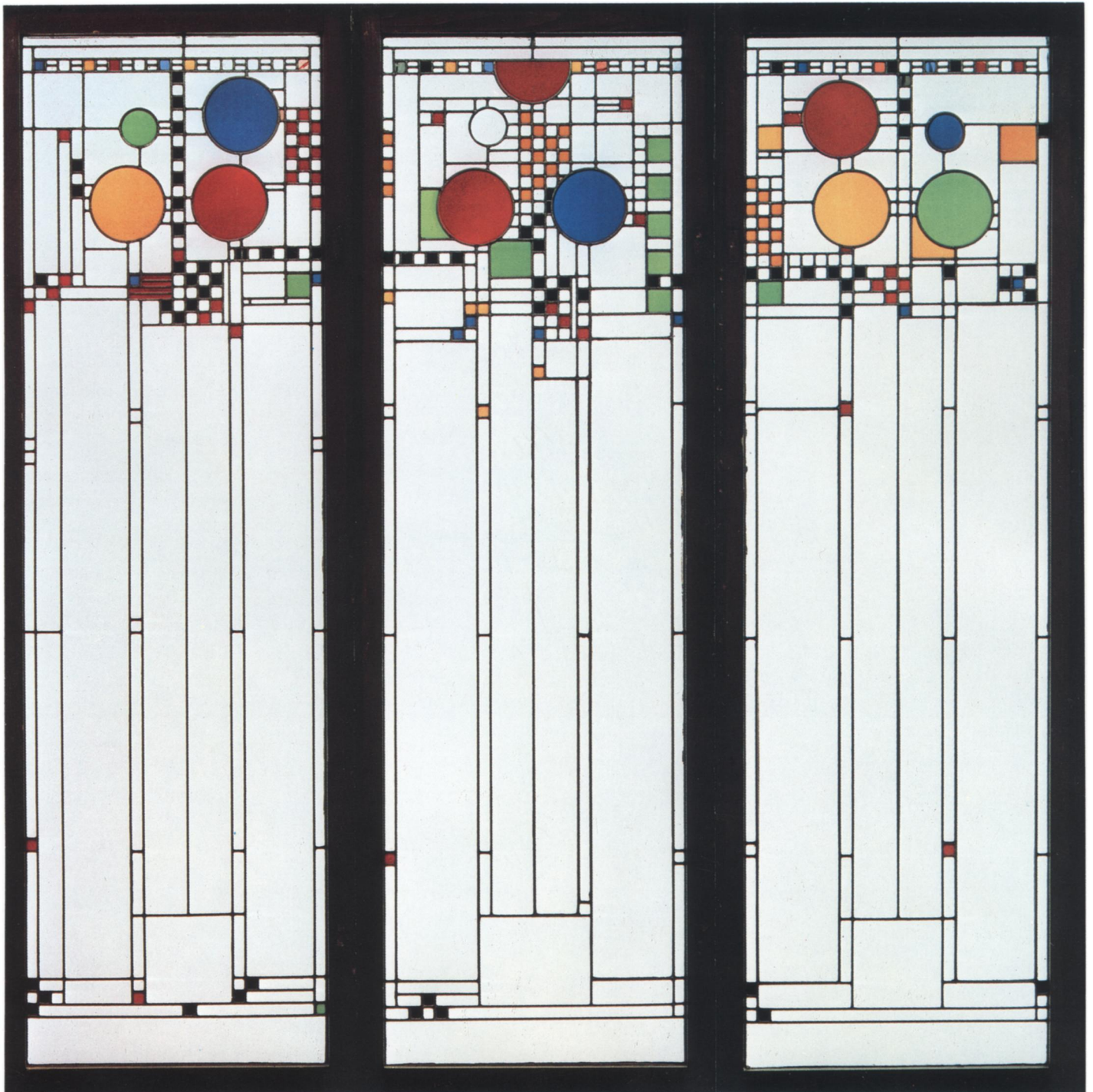


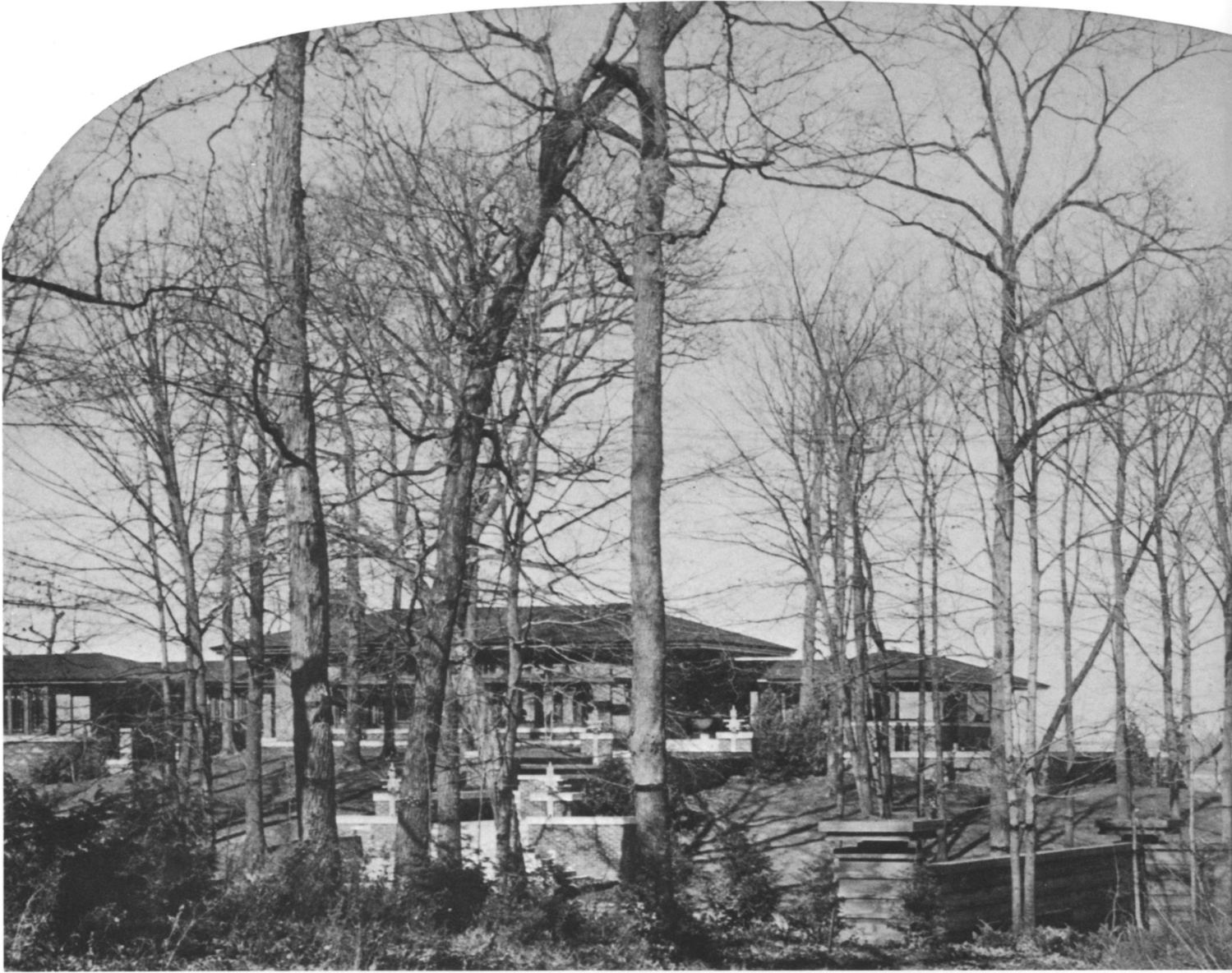
In 1912, on the Avery Coonley estate in Riverside, Illinois, Wright built for Mrs. Coonley a small playhouse for neighborhood children, where some of John Dewey's theories of education through experience could be explored. Wright considered the residence of 1908 his best early house. The Coonleys' renewed patronage was especially welcome to Wright, for he found few clients following his open rejection in 1910 of the marriage vows in favor of free love.

Some fifty years later, after the estate had passed into new hands and was being split into smaller dwellings, the decorated windows—including those in the playhouse—were put up for sale. The Metropolitan Museum acquired a large triptych of windows (right) from the small building, preserving it as a unit. In the original setting (left) it was surrounded by smaller colorful windows some distance away, but it was clearly conceived as a main, separate feature.

Wright's skill in decorative composition was exceptional, and in windows with glass of translucent colors held in a structure of thin metal dividers (comes) he found an agreeable medium. The Coonley triptych is generally considered the best of Wright's colored windows—beautiful as many others are. The design is an early example in Western art of geometrical, nonrepresentational composition, despite the small variation on the theme of the flag of the United States (itself geometrical) found on one panel. The Coonley trio, like most Wright ornamented windows, shows a concentration of detail at the top, ensuring a transition between the spanning lintel and the field of light. The other edges are softened by more open designs. It is a feature of the triptych that the large circles that seem to rise like children's balloons are not randomly distributed as their colors suggest, but are arranged in strict symmetry across the three units.

Left: Interior, Avery Coonley Playhouse, Riverside, Illinois (1912). Opposite: Window triptych from Coonley Playhouse.

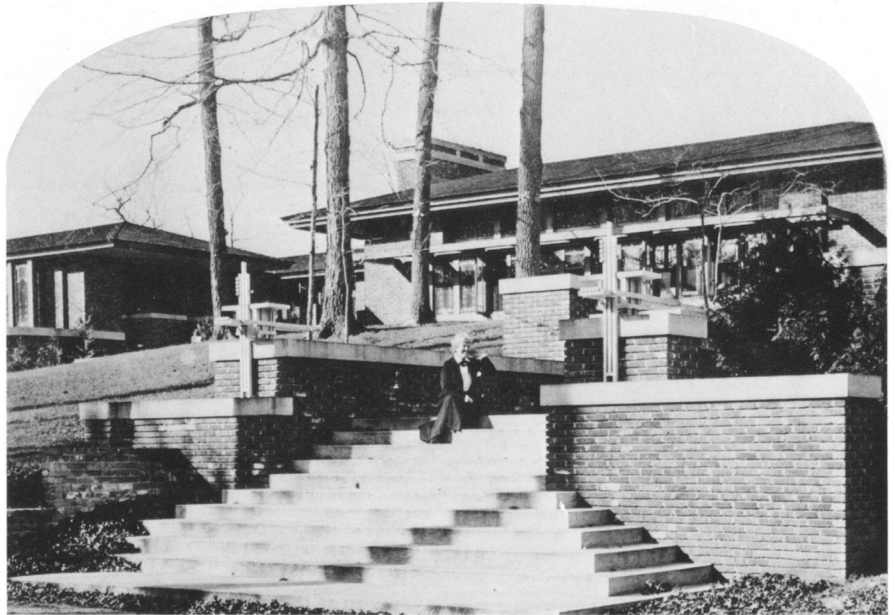




Five years after acquiring the Coonley windows The Metropolitan Museum of Art was able to buy much of the interior fittings and furniture of the country house Wright had built for Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Little in Wayzata, Minnesota, outside Minneapolis. The living room, at that time one of the largest Wright had built, is now installed in The American Wing of the Museum and furnished much as it was when the Littles used it. Other elements were sold to museums in Minneapolis; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Dallas; and Karlsruhe, Germany; so the Francis Little house will present Wright's work to large numbers of people over the years. It is worthwhile reviewing the story of the Littles and Wright, which allows the house to be better appreciated.

The Littles were both midwesterners, energetic, able, and prosperous; they were early members of the Art Institute of Chicago. Mrs. Little had finished her musical training at Cologne, where she was an outstanding student, and music remained an important part of her social and family activities. The Littles came to Wright to have him design their home when they lived in Peoria, in 1903, and when they moved five years later he was again their choice of architect for a country house. The Peoria house was roomy, rather formal, and central-halled, barely departing from bilateral symmetry yet overtly modern in its general tone. The country house on Lake Minnetonka was more extended and casual, with wide views over the lake on one side and tree-strewn knolls on the other.

When the Littles turned to Wright the second time, they became involved with his rapidly changing personal and professional life. They were among the contributors who helped him create the handsome Wasmuth portfolios. They also were willing to postpone their building plans while Wright found his way through the entanglements of marital separation and a new relationship. Meanwhile, at the lake, the Littles lived in temporary board-and-batten quarters that Wright had probably sketched.



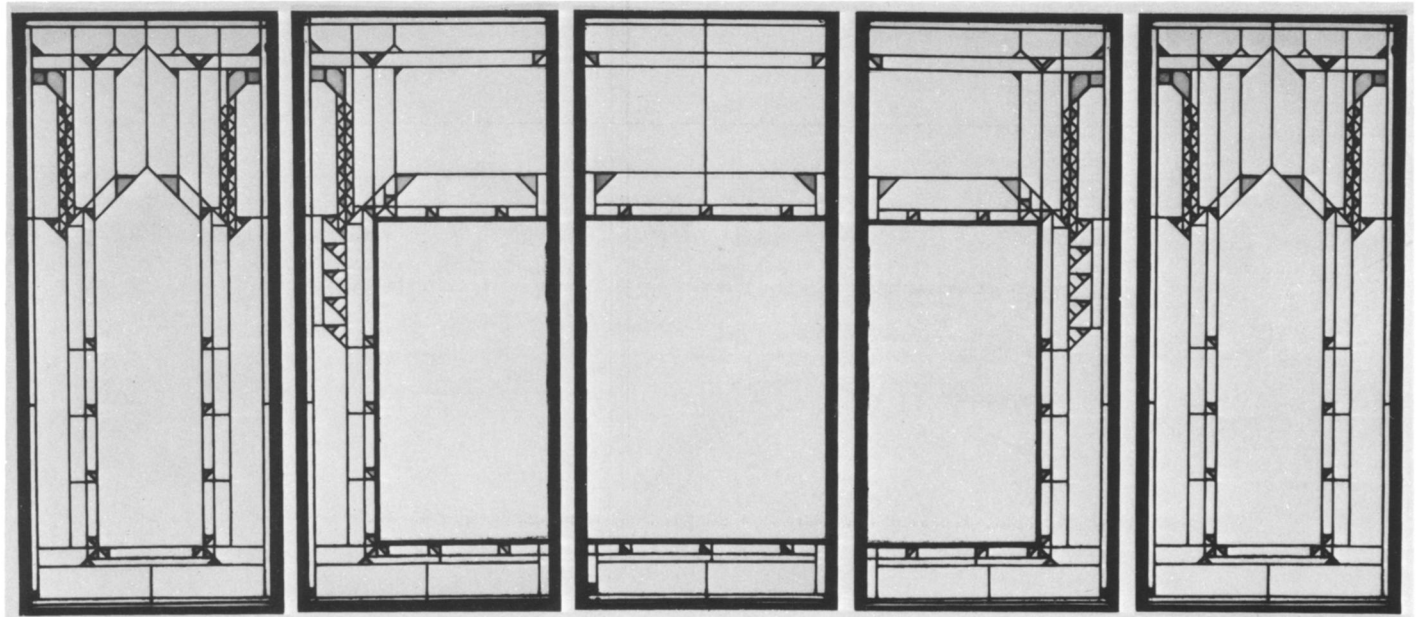
Francis W. Little house, Wayzata, Minnesota (1912–14). Stereographs. Opposite, above: Entrance side; below: viewed from Lake Minnetonka. Above: Mrs. Little at entrance.

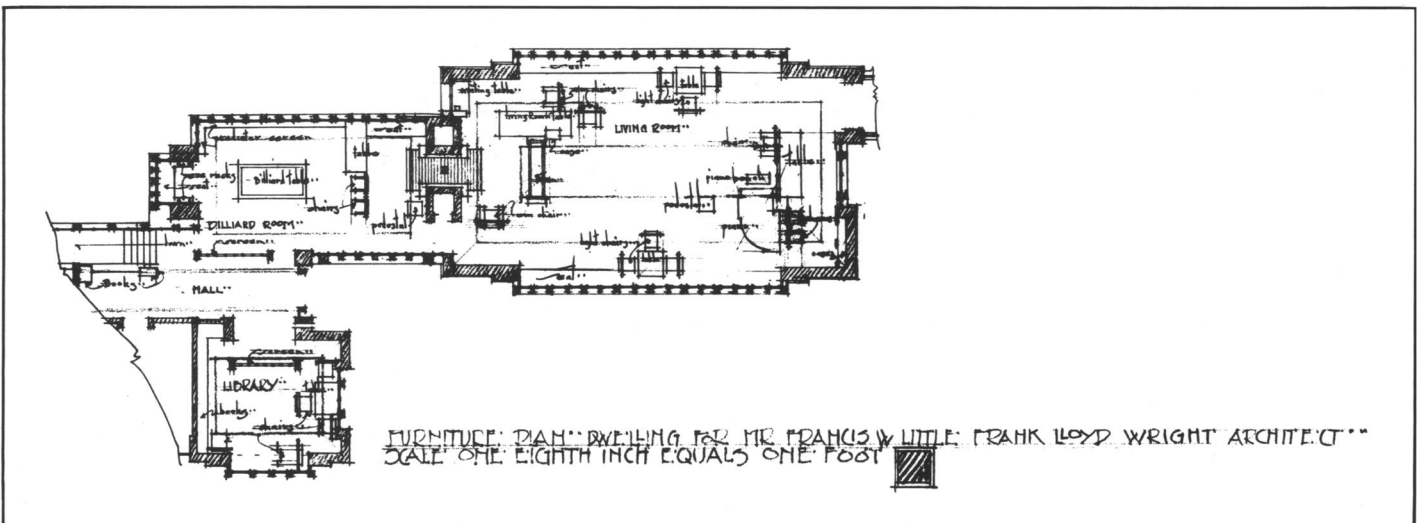
It was four years before the permanent structure was begun, and two more until it was habitable. In this span of time Wright developed new horizons for his art as well as for his private life. The Littles, too, were changing; with increased influence and ebbing health Mr. Little became more demanding, an attitude shared by his wife. Wright's initial proposals were somewhat grand and impractical. When Wright returned from Europe, he and the Littles found difficulty in working together, which is reflected in their correspondence. It is clear that Wright felt a deep obligation to give the Littles what they desired, but he found them unresponsive to his developing design.

They expected the Wright manner of the previous decade and were unready for important aspects of his new proposals. Wright compromised as best he could, but some degree of spontaneity inevitably was sacrificed. This can be noticed in the big room. Forty-eight feet and nine and one-half inches in length, it was intended to serve not only as a family living room, but also as a concert chamber. The early drawings for this room show the ceiling two feet lower, which surely would have created an impression different from the one that is now conveyed. Wright is said to have claimed that the change was made to please Mrs. Little. If so, was she seeking grandeur or some ideal of acoustics? Wright, after all, had been schooled by the American master of acoustics, Dankmar Adler, Sullivan's partner. Nor, Wright is quoted as saying, would Mrs. Little accept his design for the grand-piano case; the drawings show what surely would have been the most handsome piano of the era.

Mr. Little's objections as known from correspondence were centered on the designs for ornamental glass. He liked neither the rectangularity and restraint of the pattern proposed nor the green color prominent in it. Finally, a nearly colorless window and glass-door design (see p. 35) was used that recalls trusswork. The ceiling light fixtures in the main room are masterworks of Wright's glass design, more constrained but as beautiful as the Coonley playhouse windows. The unusually bold wood framing of the ceiling lights might be a reaction to raising them higher than first intended.

Below: Windows from Little living room. Opposite, below: Furniture plan for Little house; above: living room, Little house.





The Littles furnished the great room not as Wright planned, but with a mixture of tables, chairs, and lamps, some made expressly for the space and some reused from the Wright house of 1903. Certain older pieces seem to have been altered and refinished. A specially designed floor never was executed. In a very large space like the Little living room, Wright was ready to design furniture with large elements to suit.

Left: Plant stand from Little living room. Right: Wall lamp from Little living room.
Opposite: Armchair from Little living room.





The print table shown on these pages folds up into a slim but stable container for large, valuable prints, drawings, or other works of art. Besides ensuring safe storage, such a unit—often called a portfolio stand—kept unwieldy contents at a convenient height and, when opened, provided a generous surface on which documents could be spread out. Devised for people of means and cultivation, the print table was a sign of status.

Print table from Little living room.



The Littles' print table was probably not made for the living room of the house on Lake Minnetonka; its details suggest it was designed for the house Wright had built earlier for the same family. However, photographs of the later interior show the table next to one of the extended window seats (see p. 29). The table's strong vertical spine and broad surface accented the great horizontals of the architecture. Wright's bold, smoothly machined elements were expertly combined in this exceptional and functional piece of furniture.

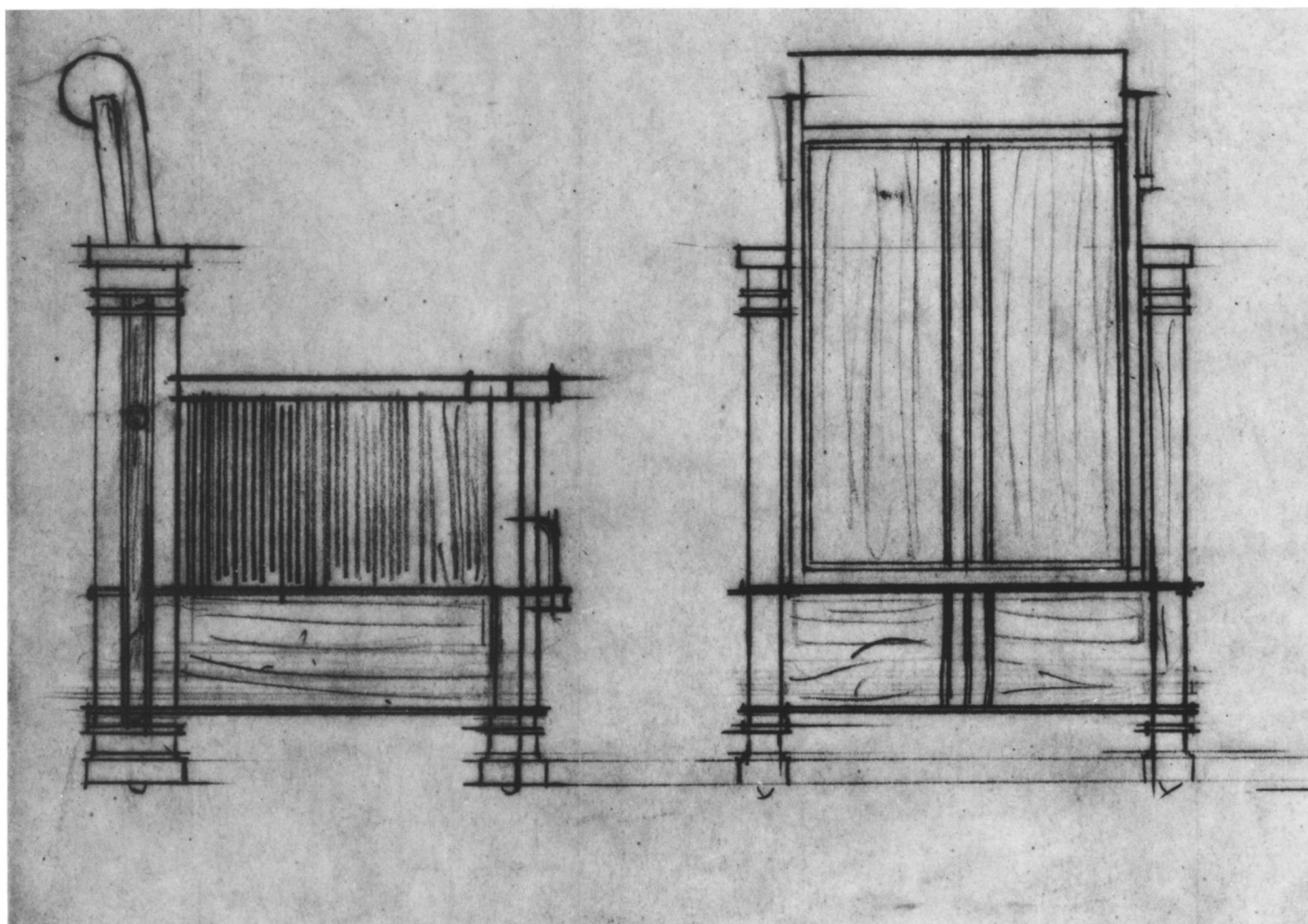


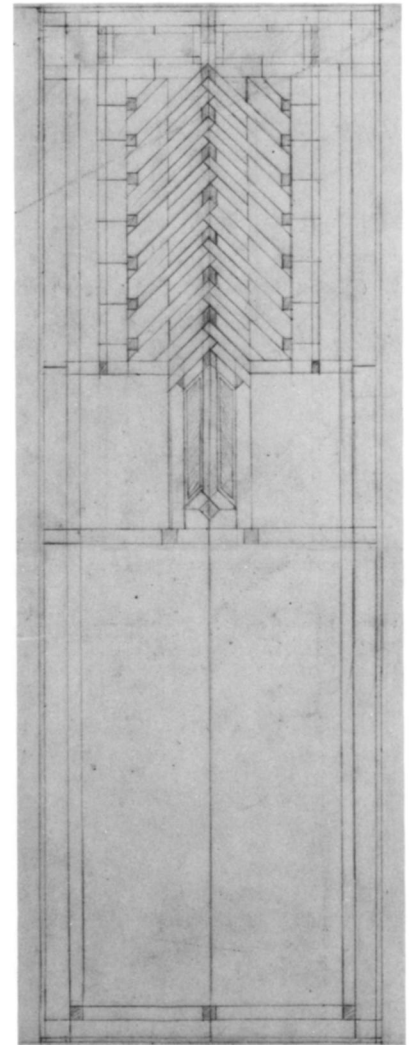
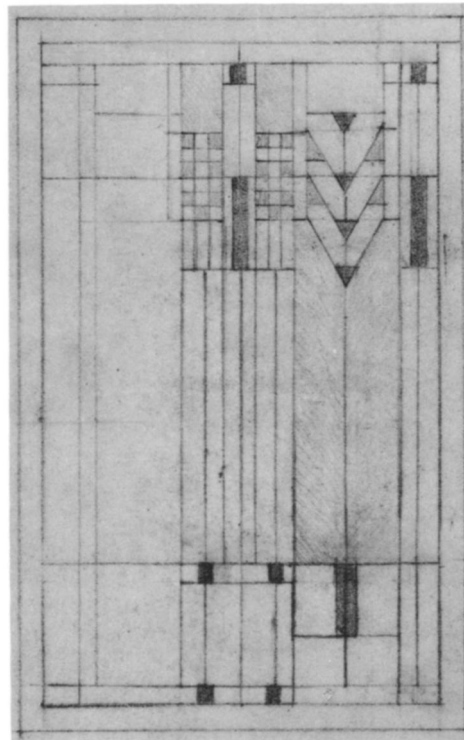
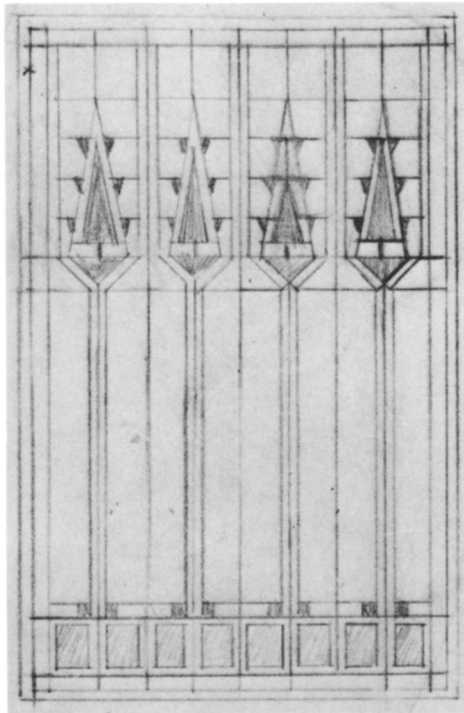
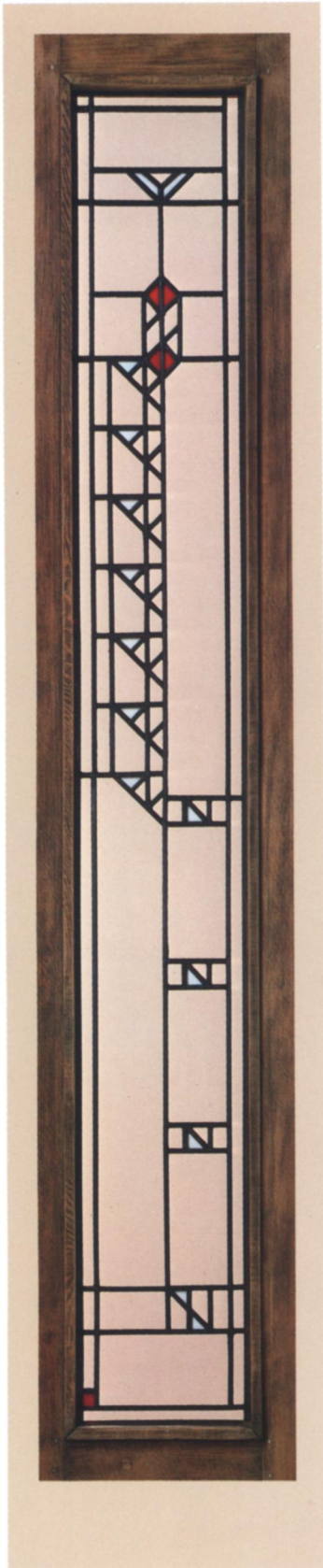
The Museum owns sketches by Wright of chairs, ornamented windows, and similar supplements to architecture. These drawings help to document the facility with which he produced the finishing touches for an architectural work.

A heavy armchair shown here resembles one used in the Little house living room (see p. 31), yet it is more carefully partitioned into small elements and uses contrasts of graining and openwork, indicating more opulent surroundings. The back of this chair shows a central division that would have been echoed in other furnishings planned for the same space.

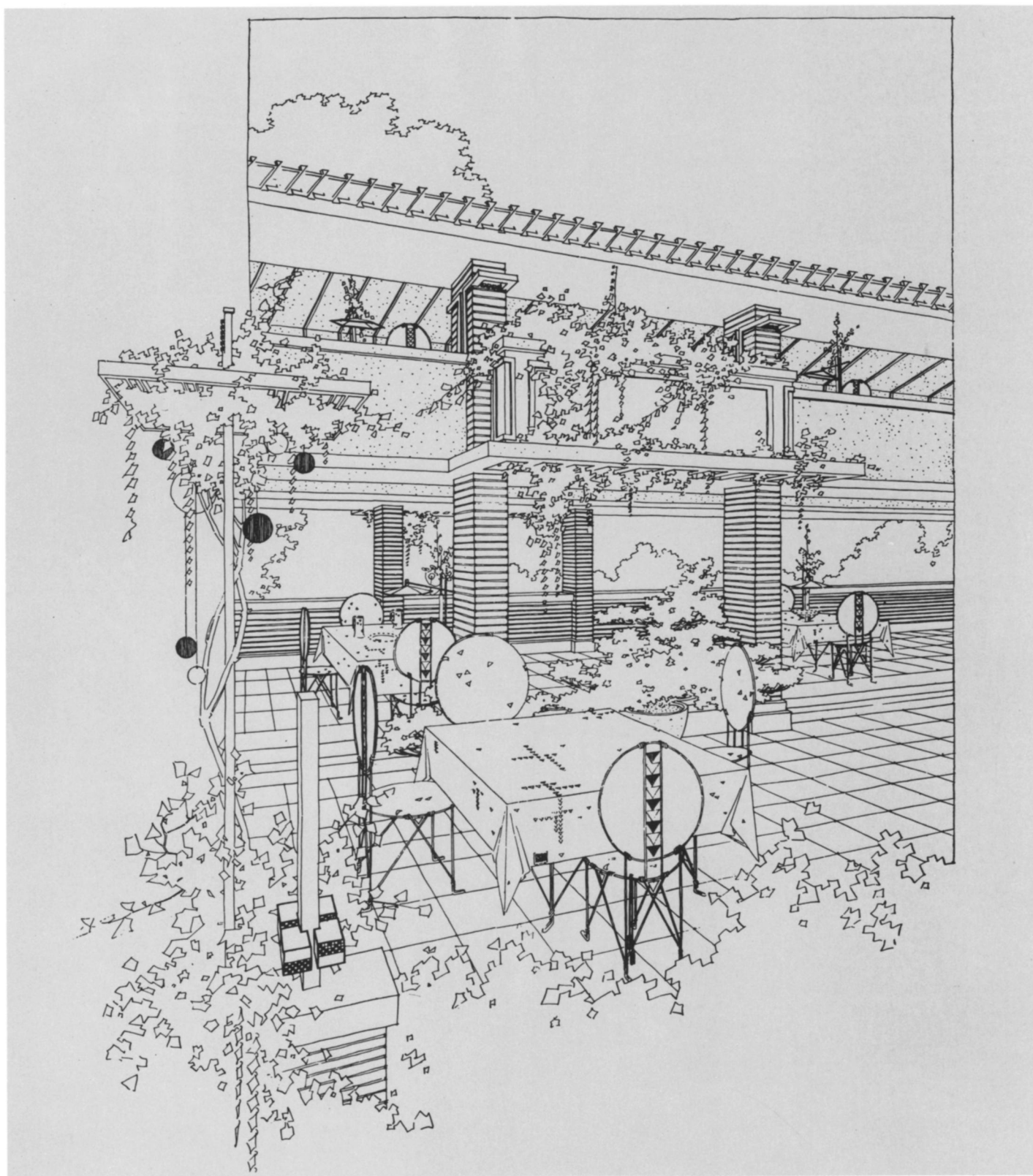
A similar division can be seen in a pencil sketch shown on the opposite page (center, below). The three pencil drawings depend on refined complexity, no doubt derived from the study of grasses and flowers; this contrasts with the bold, limited geometry of the design of the Little house window (opposite, left). Wright's use of colored glass was noticeably different from that of most stained glass of the era before the First World War. The lead comes that held stained glass were, as a rule, broad and curvilinear. Wright preferred a patent system called electroglazing that used neat, straight zinc comes. This technique was well suited to the abstraction of natural forms that he generally preferred to realistic representation. Wright also used sharp and clear colors, avoiding a naturalistic palette.

Detail, side and rear view of a lounge chair.



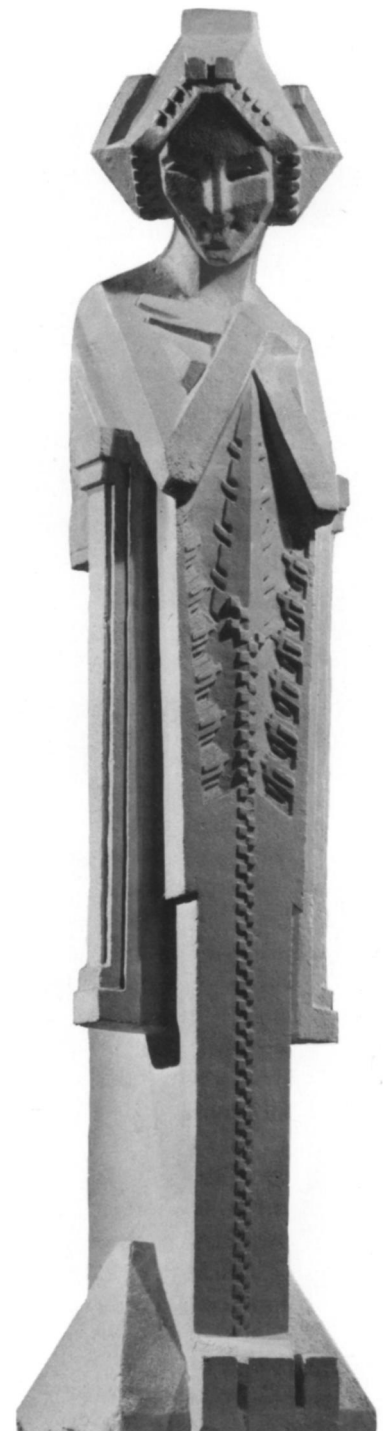


Left: Window from Little house living room. Center, above: Detail, design for a light unit; below: detail, lights for cabinets. Right: Glass for sideboard, D. D. Martin house.

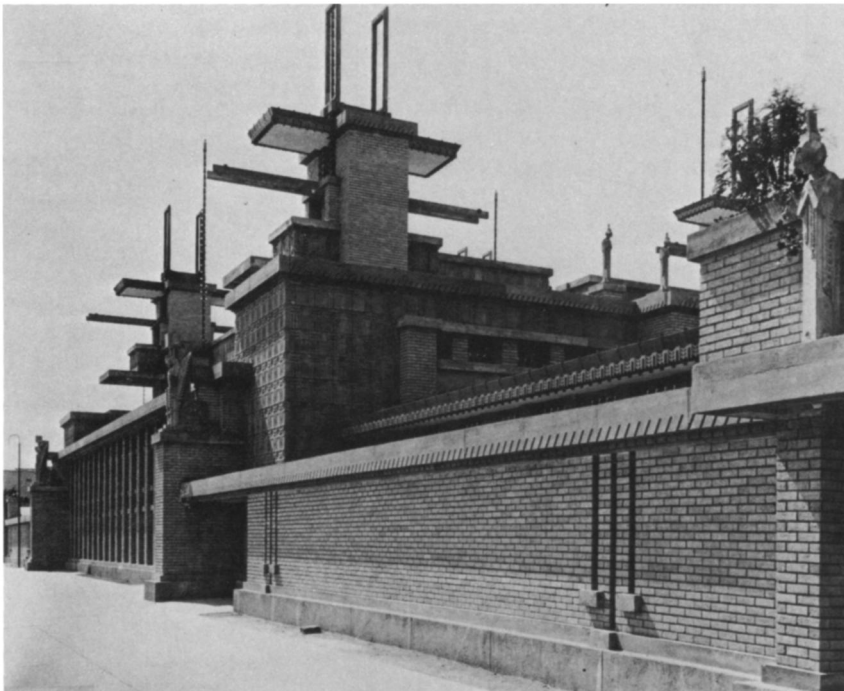


As the commission for the Little house was drawing to an end, Wright was fortunate to be invited to design quite different buildings, a great hotel for central Tokyo (see pp. 38–39), which took shape slowly, and a concert restaurant on Continental lines for Chicago. Midway Gardens, the restaurant complex on the site of the former world's-fair midway, gave Wright a maximum of independence in decorative embellishment. Large, fully abstract murals carried the spirit of the Coonley triptych into a new realm, and semiabstract figures (right) were cast in replicas and used throughout the interiors and terraces.

Wright was assisted in modeling these figures by Alfonso lanelli; the statues recall similar works made earlier in Europe that were reproduced in German art periodicals probably seen by Wright. He might have viewed such figures while traveling abroad in 1910. His approach to metal furniture for Midway Gardens was more original. These pieces were distinct in purpose and character from the Larkin ones. Wright took this new departure, it seems, from the then ubiquitous soda-parlor wire chairs and tables. He found a graceful way to use this technique, but unfortunately his designs were never produced.

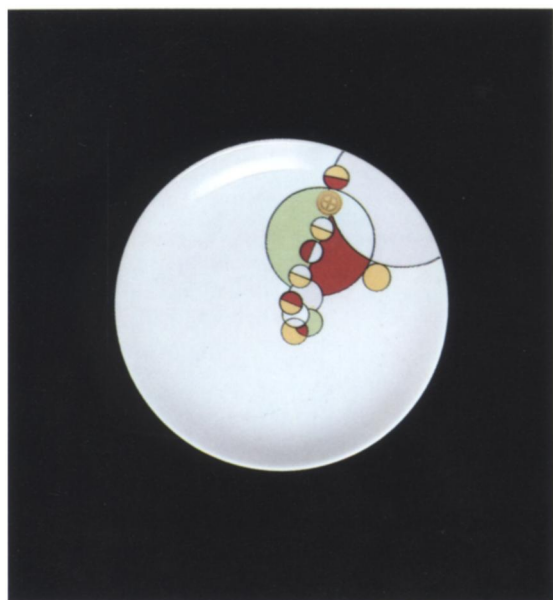
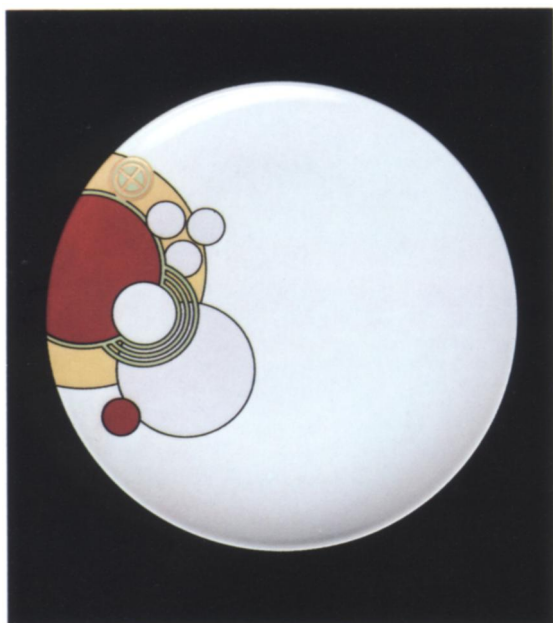


Opposite: Drawing of interior, Midway Gardens, Chicago, Illinois (1914).
Below: Street front, Midway Gardens. Right: Sprite from Midway Gardens.



The Imperial Hotel in Tokyo was a most interesting building, in both appearance and structure, yet it existed only a brief forty-five years. Eventually, weakened by bombardment and neglect and located on an important site in an expanding metropolis, it was demolished in 1967, ironically marking the architect's centennial. Like the loss of the Larkin building, this created a major gap in the evidence of Wright's creativity. A minor fragment of the hotel has been re-erected at Meiji Park in Tokyo, a curiosity more than a preservation.

Left: Dinner plate and salad plate from dinner service designed c. 1922 by Frank Lloyd Wright for Imperial Hotel, Tokyo (c. 1916–22). Right: Side chair from Imperial Hotel.



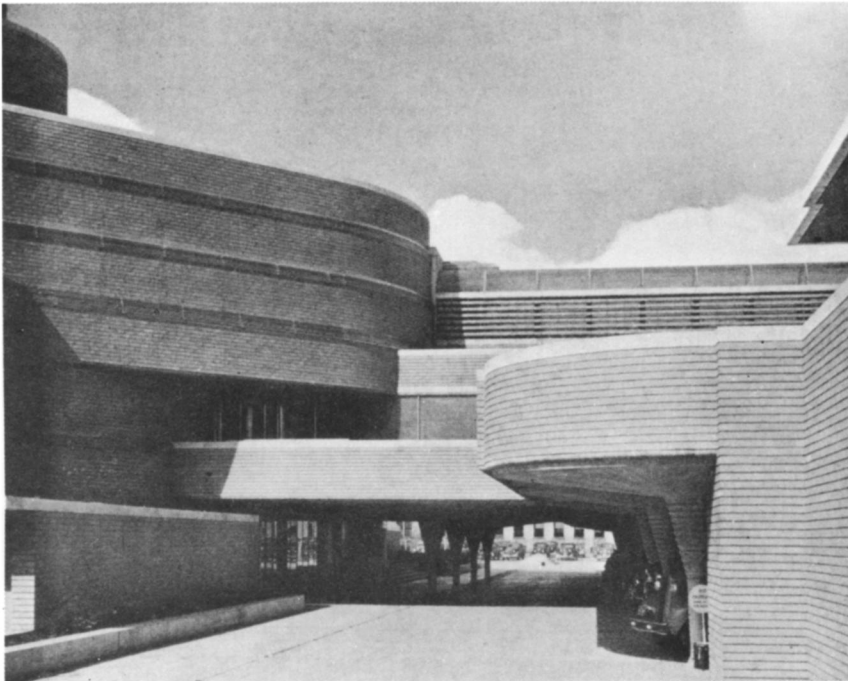
In isolation, a side chair from the hotel now in the Metropolitan Museum collection (left) seems very odd. Photographic records show that the eccentricity served a purpose—the festive elaboration of a promenade opening on rooms available for entertainment, a “peacock alley” of the Orient (see below). A similar chair from the Imperial Hotel in the Museum’s collection originally had caning and has been restored; it is the only such example known to remain after the destruction of the hotel.

Promenade, Imperial Hotel.





S. C. JOHNSON AND SON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING □



From 1936 to 1939 S. C. Johnson and Son built an administrative center in Racine, Wisconsin, designed by Wright. It was quickly recognized as one of the beacons signaling the resurgence of his architectural genius after long years of enforced inactivity. No building as grandly coherent as this had been designed since that of the Larkin Company. In structure and in concept the Johnson building in fact outstripped the Larkin, and many consider it more beautiful as well. Still in use (with some substitutions of elements), it stands as a monument of American enterprise, bold yet not bombastic.



Opposite: Interior, S. C. Johnson and Son Administration Building, Racine, Wisconsin (1936–39). Left, above: Entrance, S. C. Johnson building.

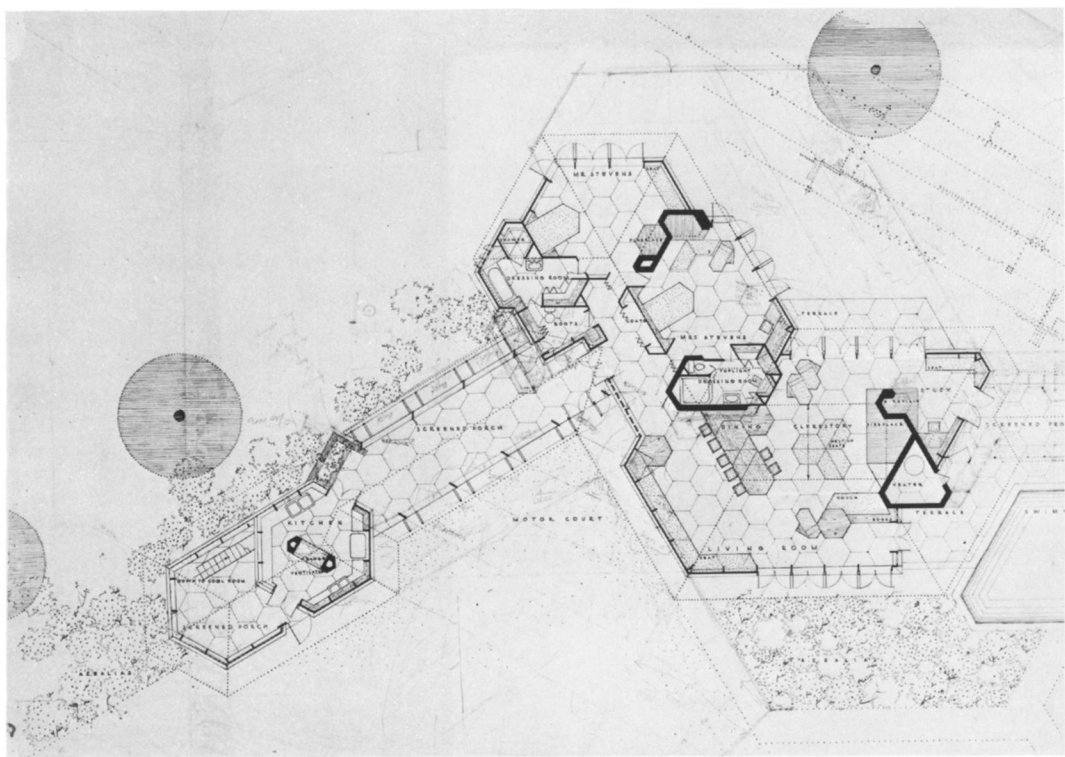
Detail, left: Pivoting storage drawers of desk from Johnson building (see pp. 42–43).





The Johnson Wax building, like the Larkin, was planned largely for clerical activity; it, too, was furnished with steel desks and chairs designed by the architect. These are more elegant than those of 1904, and it is instructive to compare the two groups of furniture similar in function and material yet diverse in character. The detailing of the Johnson furniture is closely related to that of the interior of the building and the ensemble is more meaningful than any portion of it, but the furniture can stand by itself without apology. Special features, such as the pivoting chair back and the pivoting storage drawers (see p. 41), are curious. What makes these objects admirable is their air of neat efficiency and spare strength, and the warm coloring rarely introduced into the work environment.

Desk and armchair from Johnson building.



The buildings at Auldbress Plantation in Yemassee, South Carolina, were erected for Leigh Stevens beginning in 1940, although not everything designed was realized. While the plantation, sheltered under rich vegetation, appeared as a poetic idyll, it was a productive enterprise. The buildings were sheathed around triangular wood bracing; the only regular surface was the floor, and even that in plan was angled through the incidents of terrain. At Yemassee, deep in the country, only elementary furnishings would be suitable, and such in fact were designed in plywood (see below). The angles of the furniture seem willful when removed from the architecture, but they brought these articles into accord with the character of Auldbress.

Opposite: Plan of Auldbress Plantation, Yemassee, South Carolina (1940). Below: Side chair, two triangular end tables, and sideboard from Auldbress Plantation.



In 1953 Wright built a tower for the H. C. Price Company of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. It was based on a proposal of 1929 for apartments in New York City: a nexus of vertical and horizontal reinforced-concrete slabs, anchored firmly in the ground and enclosed in glass and sheet copper. Wright designed several alternative variants of the scheme before and even after the Price Tower was built. There, both offices and dwellings were provided. H. C. Price's own office was housed at the top, and special furniture was created for his rooms and terraces, all of it in metal. These furniture designs are less felicitous than those Wright devised for earlier business buildings; the chair (right) in fact resembles that from the Imperial Hotel, but here the crisp, angular forms are related to the crimped metal of the curtain walls. The Price Tower is a late flowering of an earlier idea, and its cast-aluminum furniture shows a fresh approach to the material.

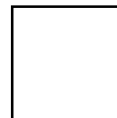
Left: Price Tower, Bartlesville, Oklahoma (1953–56). Right: Apartment in Price Tower. Opposite: Armchair from Price Tower.







Shunkō, Ichikawa Monnosuke II in the Shibaraku Role.



Private collectors in Chicago, Boston, and New York spent fortunes amassing Japanese prints during the first two decades of this century, and Frank Lloyd Wright was among the first to be smitten by the beauty of these works. He said he was "enslaved" by prints "because it is no secret that the prints choose whom they love and there is then no salvation but surrender." It is also no secret that they interested Wright as much for their monetary as for their aesthetic value. His sale of nearly four hundred Japanese prints to the Metropolitan Museum between 1918 and 1922 and the accompanying correspondence newly discovered in the Museum archives reveal both the rewards and pain of his career as a print dealer.

Wright, a champion of democratic art, greatly admired ukiyo-e (literally "pictures of the floating world"), mass-produced colored woodcuts with popular themes that appealed primarily to the lower strata of society, especially townsmen, in the growing metropolis of Edo (modern Tokyo) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In his autobiography he recalled that

during the years at the Oak Park [Illinois] workshop, Japanese prints had intrigued me and taught me much. The elimination of the insignificant, a process of simplification in art in which I was myself already engaged, beginning with my twenty-third year, found much collateral evidence in the print. And ever since I discovered the print Japan has appealed to me as the most romantic, artistic, nature-inspired country on the earth. . . . If Japanese prints were to be deducted from my education I don't know what direction the whole might have taken.

The prints that Wright offered the Metropolitan, and those he extols above all others in his writing, are predominantly of two categories, namely Kabuki actor prints by the Katsukawa artists Shunshō (1726–1792) and his pupils Shunkō (1743–1812) and Shun'ei (1768–1819), and landscapes by Hiroshige (1797–1858). He admired the actor prints as virile images in which the full force of the art was shown most surely. He boasted that almost all the actor prints in any of the collections of the world were once his—at one time he owned 1,100 Katsukawa school *hoso-e*, prints of small size in a narrow, vertical format. He was a great theater buff and claimed that to him these prints represented the entire history of the Japanese stage. It is apparent also that the actors' robes create strong rectilinear and curvilinear designs enriched by the tension of bold ornamental patterns that bear a marked resemblance to Wright's own aesthetic vocabulary. The

dominant and greatly enlarged motif of multiple squares at the center of the rugs in the Imperial Hotel guest rooms bears a marked resemblance to the familiar Ichikawa family crest. Wright's particular fondness for the matinee idol Ichikawa Danjurō in the voluminous brick-red garments of the Shibaraku (Wait a Moment) role is easy to understand (see p. 48). Perhaps these stark portraits embodied for Wright the elimination of the insignificant, the virtue he praised above all others in prints. The nearly three hundred Katsukawa ukiyo-e that Wright assembled for the Metropolitan, including not only single sheets but also diptychs, triptychs, and pentptychs, constitute one of the great collections of their kind anywhere (see p. 55).

Throughout his life Wright was enthralled by Hiroshige's well-known series, the One Hundred Famous Views of Edo and the Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaidō (see pp. 50–51). Their romantic and picturesque subjects had an obvious appeal, but they were also more generally available at the time. The best of the earlier prints had left Japan in the 1880s and 1890s to be sold in Paris by the renowned dealer Hayashi Tadamasa (1853–1906). Again and again Wright proclaimed Hiroshige to be the greatest artist in the world. When lecturing to his students at Taliesin, he enjoyed lining up many impressions of the same subject by Hiroshige for comparison. He held a print party at Taliesin every year: after a sukiyaki dinner he would bring out stacks of prints and talk for hours, patiently explaining the technique of the printing process (he owned many of the wood blocks) as well as discoursing on their value for students of architecture. "Hiroshige did, with a sense of space, very much what we have been doing with it in our architecture," he would say. "Here you get a sense of tremendous, limitless space. Instead of something confined within a picture. . . . On what is your attention focused? Nothing." He also told them that the prints would cultivate their sensibilities for landscape.

Wright frequently let buildings and trees break through the bounds of the frame in his drawings, but he carried the idea even further than had Hiroshige, who was, after all, constricted by the conventional size and shape of the wood block. Other Japanese qualities in Wright's drawings are his preference for asymmetry of composition, the use of a square red "seal," striated skies reminiscent of Hiroshige's rain, and the generally flattened, planar style of his renderings. The strongest connection occurs in the drawings executed under his supervision between 1904 and



Hiroshige, Maples at Mamma, the Tekona Shrine and Tsugi Bridge (from One Hundred Famous Views of Edo).



Hiroshige, A Sudden Shower at Ōhashi (from One Hundred Famous Views of Edo).

1906 by his assistant Marion Mahony (see below). They are remarkable for their beautiful and unusual borders of lush trees and foliage, complete with birds. Wright penciled in a notation on the drawing for the 1906 De Rhodes house in South Bend, Indiana: "Drawn by Mahony after FLW and Hiroshige."

It is not certain when Wright began collecting ukiyo-e, but he may have seen the display of works by Hokusai (1760–1849) and Hiroshige at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, about the time he opened his practice in Oak Park. A photo of the interior of the octagonal library attached to his Oak Park studio shows a gateleg oak table with a Japanese print propped up on an adjustable slanted easel (p. 11). A similar table was among the furnishings of the living room of the house he constructed for Francis W. Little in Wayzata, Minnesota, between 1912 and 1914 (see p. 29).

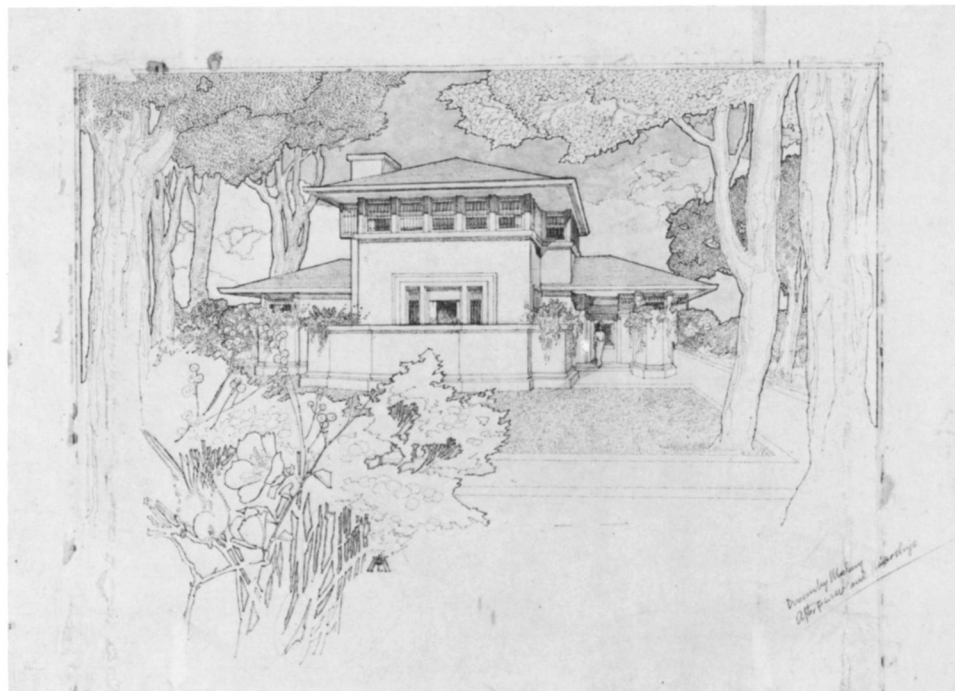
In February of 1905 Wright made his first voyage to Japan in pursuit of prints, and he did indeed return with enough expertise to stage an exhibition of his own Hiroshige collection at the Art Institute of Chicago in March of 1906. The prints were densely crowded, lacking the distinctive elegance of Wright's later wall groupings, but his use of narrow, vertical "pillar prints" (named for their display location in Japanese houses) as framing elements and decorative accents is already apparent.

Wright took part in a second print exhibition at the Art Institute in 1908 (see p. 53, upper left). Other Chicago lenders included Clarence Buckingham, then the foremost print collector in America, Frederick W. Gookin, Buckingham's curator and a leading scholar of prints, and J. Clarence Webster. Their combined contributions totaled an astonishing 659 prints spread through six galleries.

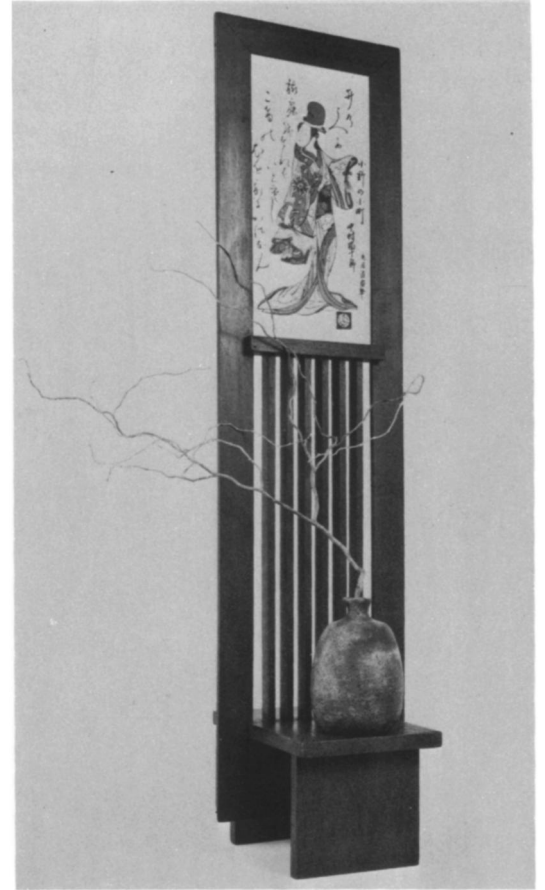
Wright designed the installation, which attracted a great deal of attention and favorable comment. The walls were covered with gray paper having a faint pinkish hue. Against this background the matted prints were hung in narrow frames of unfinished chestnut and suspended by green cords that made a decorative pattern of vertical lines across the upper part of the walls. Freestanding room dividers for the display of additional prints were flanked by posts capped with pots of Japanese dwarf trees and azaleas. The posts were appropriately accentuated with pillar prints. For this exhibition Wright had also invented a special three-foot-high mahogany stand for vertical prints, complete with a shallow projecting ledge to accommodate Japanese-style flower arrangements (see p. 53, upper right). The unmatted prints were fitted directly into the wooden frames, in accordance with Wright's desire to enhance those whose color had faded. A few years later Wright placed three of these small upright print stands in his own living room at Taliesin (see p. 53, lower left). Views of Taliesin interiors from the forties and fifties show that he also went on to design a print-viewing stand of honey-colored cypress with long, low proportions.

Wright liked to see prints hanging in the homes he built. The 1904 D. D. Martin house in Buffalo, New York, featured prints as the sole wall decoration in the hall, receiving room, and living room. The living room of the Little house entered the Metropolitan's collection complete with three of Wright's Hiroshige landscapes (see p. 29). Little at one time owned over three hundred of Wright's prints as well as quite a few Oriental rugs, a legacy of the architect's notoriously poor bookkeeping.

Wright was not only a collector but also a man of expensive



Rendering by Marion Mahony of K. C. De Rhodes house, South Bend, Indiana, 1906.



Top left: Exhibition of Japanese prints at the Art Institute of Chicago, 1908. Top right: Stand for Japanese print and vase. Bottom: Living room at Taliesin I, Spring Green, Wisconsin, c. 1911.

tastes who generally lived beyond his means. He was often forced to use prints as collateral for loans from generous supporters like Little and Martin. In 1910 Buckingham paid him some twenty-one thousand dollars for prints, most of which he had first to reclaim from Little, who had been holding them as collateral. Wright continued to recommend prints to Martin for their investment value, but Martin required prints only as inexpensive wall decoration.

In 1913 Wright entered into a serious business relationship with the famed Spaulding brothers, William (1865–1937) and John (1870–1948), of Boston, to whom he had been introduced by Gookin. William visited Wright that year at his office in Orchestra Hall in Chicago in order to purchase 100 actor prints. Hearing that Wright was about to embark for Japan in the fall of 1913 (in search of the commission of consulting architect for the new Imperial Hotel in Tokyo), William and Virginia Spaulding invited him to dinner at their Beacon Street home. It was agreed that Wright would receive \$20,000 from the Spauldings and set aside for them all the unique and superior prints that he could find, while keeping the remainder for himself. The original money soon ran out, and by the end of five months he had spent 125,000 Spaulding dollars.

I was to bring the prints to the Spaulding country home at Pride's Crossing. . . . [The Spauldings] had Gookin (as consultant connoisseur) present and several other collectors—Ficke, Mansfield, Chandler. For three days we laid out prints and prints and more prints and some more prints until neither the Spauldings nor Gookin (he was now leading expert in America) could believe their eyes. . . .

William Spaulding especially delighted—gratified was hardly the word—said, "Mr. Wright, this goes far beyond any expectations we had. You can't have much of your own after turning this over to us?"

"I have enough," I said. "I've done pretty well by myself, I assure you."

Charles H. Chandler and Arthur Davison Ficke were Chicago collectors, but Howard Mansfield (1849–1939), a New York lawyer, was a trustee and treasurer of the Metropolitan Museum. The Spaulding money had established Wright's buying power in Tokyo. Anything in the ordinary channels came to him first. "Wrieto-San" [as the Japanese called him] was . . . on the map of Tokyo as the most extensive buyer of the fine antique print. . . .

In December of 1916 Wright made the first of six long trips to Japan entailed by his commission to build the Imperial Hotel. "The pursuit of the Japanese print became my constant recreation while in Tokyo," he wrote in his autobiography. Wright's local guide and interpreter was the cosmopolitan and well-connected Shugio Hiromichi, a member of the imperial commission in charge of Japanese art exhibits sent to foreign expositions. The prints were mounted and grouped in Wright's workshop at the Imperial and then placed in Shugio's family storehouse.

In 1917 Wright wrote the catalogue and designed the installa-

tion for another exhibition of his prints, at the Arts Club of Chicago. He used the opportunity to praise his favorite artist, Hiroshige.

That same year Wright opened negotiations with the Metropolitan Museum for a series of major print sales. It was a time when he had severe financial problems, aggravated by a dearth of clients and the expense of rebuilding Taliesin after the disastrous fire and murders there in 1914. Over the next five years Wright corresponded regularly with S. C. Bosch-Reitz (1860–1938), who had been appointed the Museum's first curator of Far Eastern Art in 1915. Bosch-Reitz was a painter from Amsterdam who had spent the year 1900 in Japan, where he studied woodblock printing techniques and made at least one print of his own. He had a good eye and catholic tastes, and although known as a connoisseur of Chinese ceramics, he was, until the time of his retirement in 1927, remarkably active in the acquisition of ukiyo-e. The bulk of the Wright prints were purchased in two separate sales in 1918, for a total of \$20,000. Bosch-Reitz drove a hard bargain, selecting only one-third of the Hiroshiges that Wright had sent on consignment and dismissing the rest as high-priced without being very special. Wright responded instantly that he would hold onto them or offer them elsewhere:

The Boston Museum has none worth considering and they might be interested if the Metropolitan is not. . . . Look them over carefully. I have been in the thick of them for twenty-five years now and there is nothing better anywhere and in most cases nothing equal.

A month later, five days before Wright's departure for Japan, a desperate note to Bosch-Reitz arrived from Taliesin:

Take what prints you will at the price you think fair. I hope you will take many because I am sure the Museum will not have such an opportunity again—and I need the money.

I would rather almost be "land poor" than "art poor." The combination makes a permanent penitent of me.

Never again—

In Tokyo, Wright resumed buying prints. His Tokyo and Yokohama bank books for 1919 show payments to at least eight dealers.

Later that year he was even inspired to design a print gallery for the Spauldings. A skylight was intended to allow viewing by natural light, and plants—integral to all of his interiors—were judiciously located throughout the room. The walls above the storage cabinets were slanted, for ease of viewing and display, and a slanted easel, much like that in his Oak Park studio, was available for studying individual prints while seated. This ideal room was never built; the Spauldings may have lost interest in Wright, or perhaps they simply stopped collecting. In 1921 they promised their nearly seven thousand Japanese prints to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Early in 1920, while searching for prints on behalf of Howard Mansfield, Wright was defrauded of a vast amount of money by an unscrupulous Tokyo dealer who led him by train and rickshaw to a clandestine collection in a little Japanese house on the

outskirts of Nikko. Wright spent \$50,000 in two hours. Returning to America, he sold half of the prints to Mansfield for the same figure, making a tidy profit. But back in Tokyo again later that same year a fateful telegram arrived from Mansfield: some of the prints Wright had sold him had pinpricks, indicating "revamping"—or reprinting. Apparently several dealers had sponsored for years a studio in the country where craftsmen worked to improve the color of worn and faded prints. Wright was forced to throw open his vaults to Mansfield for an exchange of all the bad prints. A few years later, prior to his final sale to the Metropolitan in 1922, Wright explained the sad event to Bosch-Reitz:

I lost at that time—by means of restitutions I felt bound to make—about \$30,000, which I had earned by my work on the Imperial Hotel. . . . Upon my return to Tokyo I got after the principal dealer with all my resources—kept him out of business for two years on probation while the procurator had him in his toils—got the backing of the court with the help of Japanese friends in Tokyo and finally sold him out, home and all and took what he had which netted the munificent sum of yen 3500⁰⁰.

Since then, he continued, "not one print which is in any way bad has been purchased by me nor knowingly presented to me for consideration—and I think in Tokyo among all the dealers the matter is settled and most anyone now safe from imposition." He announced his imminent arrival in New York "to try and dispose of enough prints to meet my deficit this year. . . . In this matter I am a merchant and expect to be treated like one—I have little use for the 'gentleman' dealer in works of art. He bores me."

The Wright prints at the Metropolitan include some of the Museum's very finest ukiyo-e, but there are also a number of late and bad impressions and examples marred by conspicuous centerfold creases, as well as a few that have been revamped and others that have been remargined. Wright did admit to some "conditioning" of his own, but his correspondence with Bosch-Reitz suggests that he was naïve, dependent on the advice of his friend Shugio and exploited by a host of clever Japanese dealers. Hearing that Bosch-Reitz had questioned one of his prints as "too good to be true," he noted that he had it passed by the Old Prints Society in Tokyo, a group of ukiyo-e experts who had to give their unanimous approval for a print to be authenticated. Nonetheless, Bosch-Reitz was compelled on several occasions to admonish Wright for retouching prints he sold. In October of 1922 he sent the following note:

I dread to think what your feelings are going to be after reading what I have to say. However here it is: I went over the prints you left here and found that two of the early [Hiroshige] Toto Meisho set are revamped, all of the classic signs are there, pin holes, bright pink clouds, etc. . . . Further I found that of two Shunshos one background had been painted up with yellow and the other refreshed with blue.

If you allow me to give you a tip you should tell your man to take off the mats when he retouches the prints; painted lines which continue on the mat are a terrible give away.

Well now the worst is said, fume as you like.



Shunshō, Nakamura Tomijūrō I.

Wright, distressed by the accusation, replied the next week:

There is no intention on my part to deceive you or anyone else—I think you know this. Kindly forward suspected prints at once for inspection and comparison. I have never changed the values in any of my prints. As all collectors do and will do I have worked on them sometimes with color to retouch spots, clean surfaces, put the print into condition but very little even of that. I have done this usually with the mats on and no



Kiyonaga, *Shinagawa* (from *Twelve Months in the South*).

one could object to what I did. Long ago some fooling with some of my prints was done by my studio boys who had always access to them as to a kind of library—for their education and pleasure. But that was ten years ago or more and rejected long since. I have gone through the remaining prints carefully to eliminate the “taint” of the “vamp.”

N.B. Since the “revamping” came to light I have preferred to let my prints strictly alone—even to stains or wormholes or “pressing”—. And most of my prints acquired since that time are “as found” without the customary conditioning given by Gookin and others.

In the end, making the best of a bad situation, Wright was good-humored about offering to lend the Metropolitan a group of sixty finely executed “vamps” (“true vampires,” as he called them, “convicted and generally admired as such”) for a study exhibition that Bosch-Reitz had in mind. One such vampire, perhaps a legacy of the Tokyo scandal, was accepted from Wright as a gift in 1921 (above). It is a Kiyonaga diptych depicting a group of courtesans entertaining a customer at a teahouse in Shinagawa with a view of Tokyo Bay. The unprinted areas of sky and faces are heavily soiled and worn, yet the fugitive blue and purple in the robes and along the horizon, as well as the red, another sensitive color, appear incongruously fresh, as though in pristine condition. When the print is viewed from behind, numerous pin holes are visible. Guidelines for the tracer when cutting new color blocks, pin holes are the surest clues to a reworked print. In addition, facial outlines have been strengthened with a single-hair brush, and numerous large holes have been cleverly patched from behind. By coincidence, the left side of this same diptych is shown propped up on the print table in the early photo of Wright’s Oak Park studio (p. 11).

Surviving records indicate that Wright’s last purchase from a

Japanese dealer was made in 1923. He never returned to Japan thereafter. Although he continued to acquire Japanese art until the end of his life, his days as a serious print dealer were over. It was an interesting chapter in his life but a difficult one as well, if only from the point of view of the amount of his working time the prints consumed. He once told his apprentices at Taliesin that while he was drawing for the Imperial Hotel, vendors of Japanese prints were lined up outside his office, interrupting him throughout the day. In the end, however, the exhilaration of the search and the pride in forming a number of great American collections outweighed the sense of frustration or disappointment. His own compelling argument in favor of print selling was that it allowed him to refuse any work or clients that did not interest him—an enviable position.

Wright bought prints for many reasons—for investment (Japanese prints practically built Taliesin I and II, he said), for decoration, but above all for artistic and even spiritual inspiration. It is awesome that many of the best ukiyo-e in American museums passed through his hands. At the Metropolitan there are not only the Bosch-Reitz acquisitions but also the hundreds of outstanding Mansfield prints that entered the collection in 1936. Numerous Wright prints are among the 1,400 that Buckingham left to the Art Institute of Chicago; among the Spaulding prints at the Museum of Fine Arts; and among collections in museums in Kansas City, Minneapolis, Ann Arbor, and Philadelphia, to name but a few. Wright spent nearly half a million dollars in Japan on prints, a sum that would be exceptional even today. In his own words, the Japanese print is “one of the most amazing products of the world, and I think no nation has anything to compare with it.”

NOTES

Measurements are listed with height first, then, where applicable, width, width by depth, or diameter.

p. 5: Transcript of talk to Chicago Women's Aid, 1918. Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation archives, Scottsdale, Arizona. Quoted in *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture, Selected Writings*, ed. by Frederick Guthrie. New York, 1942.

p. 49: "...salvation but surrender.": Frank Lloyd Wright, *Antique Colour Prints from the Collection of Frank Lloyd Wright*. Exh. cat., The Arts Club of Chicago Exhibition. Nov. 12–Dec. 15, 1917, p. 3; Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*. Rev. ed., New York, 1977, pp. 217, 228; "hoso-e": Wright, *An Autobiography*, p. 550; "He was a theater buff...stage.": Transcript of Wright's lecture at a Japanese print party held at Taliesin on Sept. 20, 1950, pp. 14–15. Courtesy of Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona. I am indebted to Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Director of Archives for the Foundation, for his insights and generous assistance with my research.

p. 54: "I was to bring...": Wright, *An Autobiography*, p. 553; "Wrieto-San...": Ibid., p. 550; "The pursuit...Tokyo": Wright, *An Autobiography*, London, New York, and Toronto, 1932, p. 204; "The conservation...amateur.": Wright, *Antique Colour Prints*, p. 3; Wright to Bosch-Reitz, Taliesin, Aug. 10, [1918]. Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. ©Olivia Lloyd Wright 1982; Wright to Bosch-Reitz, Taliesin, Sept. 14, 1918. Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. ©Olivia Lloyd Wright 1982.

p. 55: Telegram from Mansfield: Wright, *An Autobiography*, rev. ed., 1977, p. 555; Wright to Bosch-Reitz, Taliesin, Oct. 17, [1922]. Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. ©Olivia Lloyd Wright 1982; Bosch-Reitz to Wright, New York, Oct. 26, 1922. Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

pp. 55–56: Wright to Bosch-Reitz, Nov. 2, 1922. Archives of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. ©Olivia Lloyd Wright 1982.

p. 56: "true vampires": Wright to Bosch-Reitz, Taliesin, Oct. 26, 1922; "one of the most...it.": Transcript of Wright's lecture at a Japanese print party, p. 21.

CREDITS AND PHOTO CREDITS

Unless otherwise noted, works are from the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and photography is by the Metropolitan Museum Photograph Studio. Photographs on pp. 9 (below), 13, 16, 20, 21, 30–33, 38 (right), 41 (below), 42–45, and 47 are by Frances McLaughlin-Gill.

Cover: Photo: Cervin Robinson. Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.60.1).

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pp. 4, 10, 11 (below), 12 (above), 18 (right), 22 (left; upper and lower right), 23 (below): Platinum prints by Henry Fuermann. Purchase, Gift of Hermann G. Pundt, Ph.D., and Purchase, Edward Pearce Casey Fund, 1981 (1981.1005.19, 16, 17, 14, 13.2, 1.9, 3). p. 4: 1907, 9¹/₁₆ x 7³/₁₆ inches; p. 10: after 1903, 7¹/₁₆ x 9¹/₂ inches; p. 11: after 1903, 7³/₁₆ x 9³/₁₆ inches; p. 12: 5¹/₂ x 9³/₁₆ inches; p. 18: 9¹/₂ x 7³/₁₆ inches; p. 22 (left): c. 1904, 9³/₁₆ x 7¹/₂ inches; p. 22 (upper right): c. 1904, 6³/₁₆ x 9³/₁₆ inches; p. 22 (lower right): c. 1904, 7¹/₂ x 9³/₁₆ inches; p. 23: c. 1904, 7³/₁₆ x 9³/₁₆ inches.

p. 7: Photo courtesy Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

pp. 8, 12 (below), 14–15, 18 (left): From *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1910), pls. 4, 22, 25, 33. Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.607.49 [4, 14, 16, 32], 51 [32]). p. 8: Lithograph in brown ink, 25¹/₄ x 17³/₁₆ inches; p. 12: lithograph in brown ink, 17³/₁₆ x 25¹/₄ inches; pp. 14–15: lithograph in brown and yellow ink, 17³/₁₆ x 25¹/₄ inches; p. 18: lithograph in brown ink on tissue, full sheet 25¹/₄ x 17³/₁₆ inches.

p. 9 (above): Photo: John Szarkowski. Courtesy the photographer.

p. 9 (below): Painted plaster of Paris, 14¹/₂ x 18 (top; base, 12) inches. Anonymous Gift, 1980 (1980.154.1, 2).

p. 11 (above): From *The Studio* 3 (1894).

p. 13: Lead comes, transparent and translucent glass, pine frame, 42 x 22 inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. I. Wister Morris, III (SL 82.66).

p. 16: Oak, 55³/₄ x 17 x 18¹/₂ inches. Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. David Lubart Gift, in memory of Katherine J. Lubart, 1944–1975, 1978 (1978.189).

p. 17: Collection The Art Institute of Chicago.

p. 19: Photo: Dirk Bakker. Painted steel, 38 x 20³/₄ x 24³/₄ inches. Theodore R. Gamble, Jr. Gift, in honor of his mother, Mrs. Theodore Robert Gamble, 1979 (1979.130).

p. 20: Painted steel, 35 x 14 x 17 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Carrara, 1979 (1979.302).

p. 21: Oak, 40³/₈ x 15 x 18³/₈ inches. Gift of William and Mary Drummond, 1981 (1981.437).

p. 23 (above), 34: Purchase, Gift of Hermann G. Pundt, Ph.D., and Purchase, Edward Pearce Casey Fund, 1981 (1981.1005.24, 27). p. 23 (above): c. 1904, pencil over carbon on tracing paper, 20¹/₁₆ x 17³/₁₆ inches; p. 34: pencil on tracing paper, n.d., full sheet 8²/₃₂ x 18¹/₁₆ inches.

p. 24: Platinum print attributed to Henry Fuermann, c. 1912, 10³/₃₂ x 6³/₃₂ inches. Gift of Edgar Tafel, 1976 (1976.556).

p. 25: Zinc comes, transparent and translucent glass, pine frame, each 86¹/₄ x 28 x 2 inches. Purchase, The Edgar J. Kaufmann Foundation and Edward C. Moore, Jr. Gifts, 1967 (67.231.1–3).

pp. 26–27: Courtesy Mrs. R. V. Stevenson.

pp. 28, 30 (left and right), 31, 32–33, 35 (left): Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.60.1a–e, 11, 1, 4, 8a, b, 1). p. 30 (left): 1915. Oak, 35³/₄ x 15¹/₂ x 15¹/₂ inches; p. 30 (right): 1915. Oak, 32 x 7 x 11 inches; p. 31: 1915. Oak, 33³/₄ x 37 x 29 inches; p. 32–33: Oak, 45³/₈ (verticals; horizontals, 25³/₈) x 10¹/₄ (wings folded; wings open, 37³/₈) x 44¹/₁₆ inches; p. 35 (left): zinc comes electroplated with copper, transparent and translucent glass, pine frame, 58³/₈ x 11¹/₈ inches.

p. 29 (below): Pencil and orange and brown colored pencil on tissue, n.d., 10¹/₃₂ x 36³/₁₆ inches. Purchase, Emily Crane Chadbourne Bequest, 1972 (1972.607.3).

p. 29 (above): Photo: Hollis. Courtesy Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

pp. 35 (upper and lower center; right): Frank Lloyd Wright, pencil on tissue. Purchase, Gift of Hermann G. Pundt, Ph.D., and Purchase, Edward Pearce Casey Fund, 1981 (1981.1005.33, 37, 28). p. 35 (upper center): c. 1905, full sheet 6³/₁₆ x 4³/₄ inches; (lower center): c. 1905, full sheet 7 x 8³/₁₆ inches; (right): c. 1904, 14¹/₃₂ x 6¹/₁₆ inches.

p. 36: ©The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation 1957.

p. 37 (left): Photo: Henry Fuermann & Sons, Chicago. Courtesy Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

p. 37 (right): Painted concrete, 65 x 14 x 12 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John T. Steele, 1979 (1979.304).

p. 38 (left): Porcelain, diam., above: 10³/₈; below: 7³/₈ inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roger G. Kennedy, 1978 (1978.501.4, 6).

p. 38 (right): Oak, 38 x 16 x 17 inches. Gift of Dr. Roger G. Gerry, 1968 (68.20.2).

p. 39: From "The Life-Work of the American Architect Frank Lloyd Wright," *Wendigen* (1925), p. 124. Magazine, 13¹/₄ x 13 inches. Lent by I. Wister Morris, III.

p. 40: Collection The Art Institute of Chicago.

p. 41 (above): Photo: Roy E. Peterson. Courtesy Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

pp. 42–43: Painted steel, walnut, and brass. Desk, 33³/₄ x 84 x 32 inches; chair 36 x 17³/₄ x 20 inches. Lent by S. C. Johnson and Son, Inc. (L1979.46.1, 2).

p. 44: ©The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation 1955.

pp. 44–45: c. 1939. Plycore with cyprus veneer over chestnut naugahyde upholstery, chair 28 x 21 x 28 inches; end tables 17³/₈ x 30 x 30, 22³/₈ x 26¹/₈ x 18¹/₄ inches; sideboard 28¹/₄ x 59¹/₂ x 26¹/₈ inches. Gift of Jessica Stevens Loring, 1981 (1981.438.1–5).

p. 46: Courtesy Phillips Petroleum Company.

p. 47: Aluminum, 30 x 26 x 26 inches. Lent by Mrs. Harold C. Price and Charles Price (SL 82.67.2).

p. 48: Wood-block print, c. 1789, 12³/₈ x 5³/₄ inches. Former collection of Frank Lloyd Wright. Rogers Fund, 1922 (JP 1343).

pp. 50, 51, 55: Former collection of Frank Lloyd Wright. Pulitzer Fund, 1918 (JP 646.643.381).

p. 50: Wood-block print, 1857, 14³/₈ x 9¹/₁₆ inches; p. 51: Wood-block print, 1857, 13³/₈ x 9¹/₂ inches; p. 55: Wood-block print, c. 1777, 11¹/₈ x 5¹/₁₆ inches.

pp. 52, 53 (below left): Courtesy The Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation.

p. 53 (above left): Collection The Art Institute of Chicago.

p. 53 (above right): c. 1908. Mahogany, 35¹/₂ x 9 x 10³/₄ inches. Courtesy Kelmscott Gallery, Chicago.

p. 56: Wood-block print, c. 1783, diptych, each 15¹/₄ x 10¹/₈ inches. Gift of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1921 (JP 1268).



FRANK
LLOYD
WRIGHT