

Frank Lloyd Wright and the Stuff of Dreams

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Frank Lloyd Wright and the Stuff of Dreams

Vincent Scully

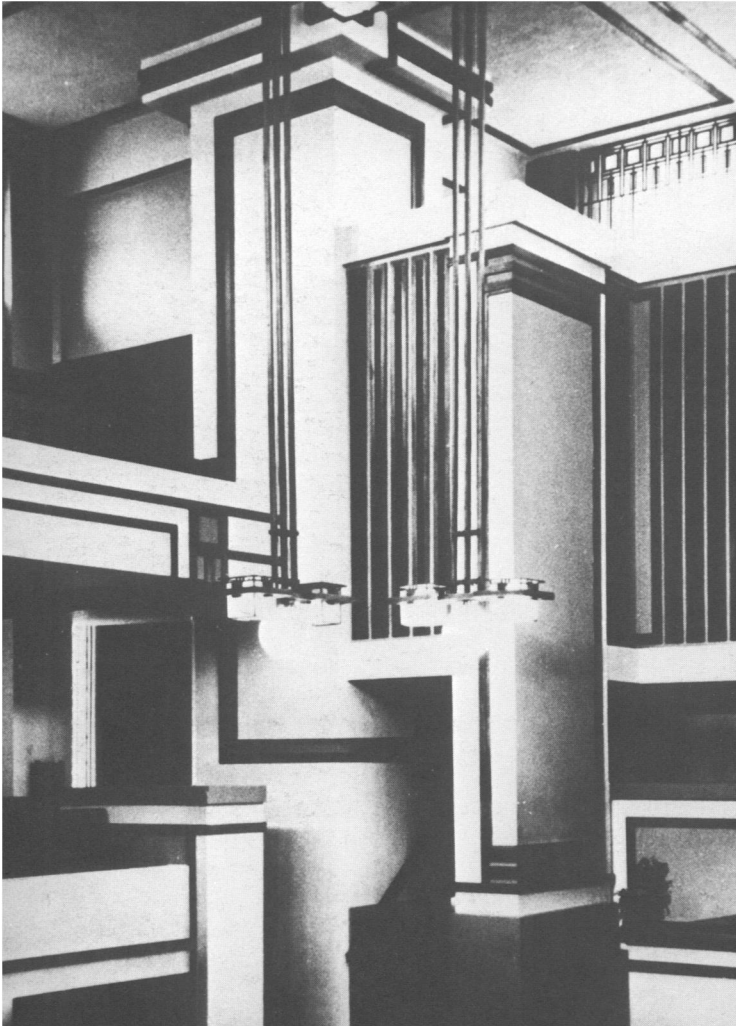
It should be said at the outset that this article is about Wright and Freud. The fact that it backs into that topic and at intervals backs away from it is due in part to its original conception, which was as a general talk about Wright's early work to be given in Oak Park, and for which the central theme emerged only during its preparation.¹ For this reason some extraneous material still adheres to it, and what now seems to me to be the most important point of all—the monumental fact of abstraction—comes through almost parenthetically, almost unconsciously, itself. Yet abstraction, created separately by Wright and Cubism in strikingly similar ways, should now, I think, be seen as quintessentially, indeed “unconsciously,” Freudian in its method—ininitely more so than the overtly “Freudian” symbolism employed by the Surrealists later.

Wright came first. It is therefore about his work that the fundamental questions must be asked. What does it mean? How do we experience it? What was in Wright's mind when he made it, and by what alchemy did he bring his intentions to physical form? These questions lie at the heart of the mystery of all art—and they seem especially urgent when we have to deal with forms like those of Unity Temple, for example: so unique and complete, rich and confident, sheltering and bold, stripped and symphonic, worthy of Wright's beloved music of Bach and Beethoven, which he called “an edifice of sound.” They are forms, most of all, which are so releasing to the human spirit that when we enter them we are at once brought close to our fellow human beings and, together with them, turned into giants. How can we approach those forms and the deep question behind them—the question of how they were imagined and brought into being?

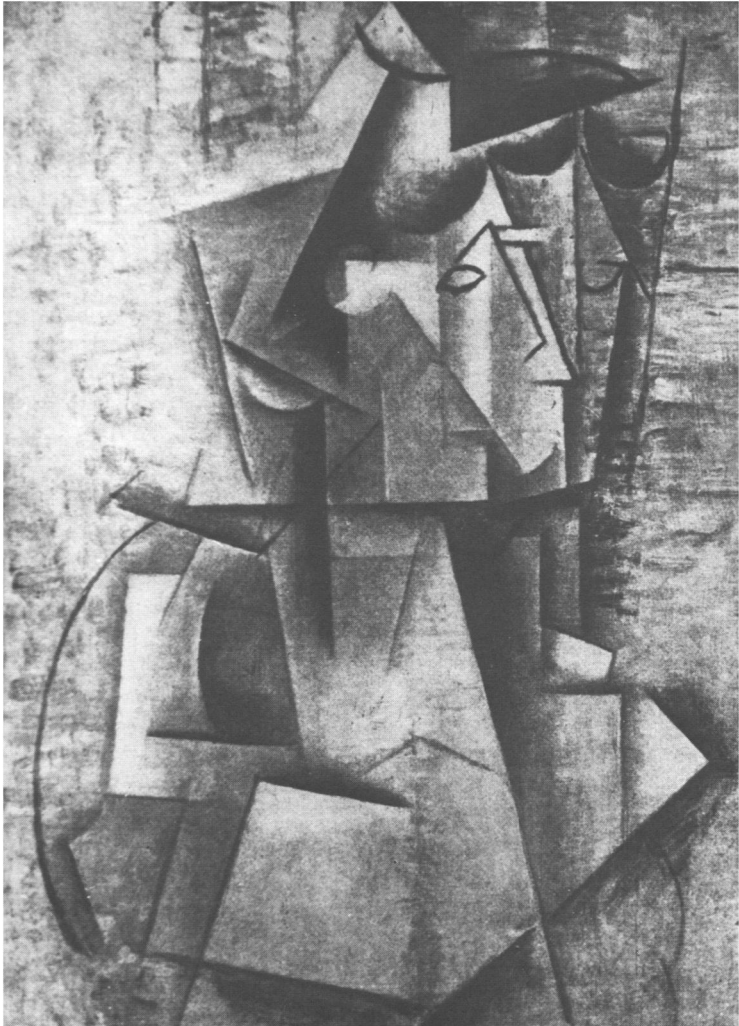
Interesting recent studies like those of Wright's life and social philosophy by Smith and Twombly and about the character of his clients by Eaton help us to know Wright and his environment, but that essential question of the complex process of the mind's making is never asked by them, so that their analysis of Wright's method of design tends to remain in the realm of program and intention, which is not that, or not yet that, of art.

One assumption which is made in all these studies, as in Manson's informative book before them, is that Wright's work has to be regarded as absolutely original, “creative” in a kind of “ur” sense, as if it owed nothing to what had gone before it during the nineteenth century. This is, of course, the view that Wright himself sedulously fostered—and which he even bolstered by his pious invocations of his Lieber Meister, Louis Sullivan—but it is not a true one, and it represents a concealment on Wright's part of one of the foundations of his work. He is not alone in such concealment: all artists are engaged in covering up their tracks—for reasons which are perhaps profound ones and which I think this study will show were indeed essential to Wright. But the fact is that if we are to get somewhere near the truth about Wright we must find out where he stood when he began to design buildings. What was there for him to see? How did he use it?

1. A talk given in Oak Park, Illinois on 7 September 1977 under the auspices of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the Yale Club of Chicago.



Frank Lloyd Wright
 Unity Temple, 1904–06



Pablo Picasso
L'Arlésienne, 1911–12



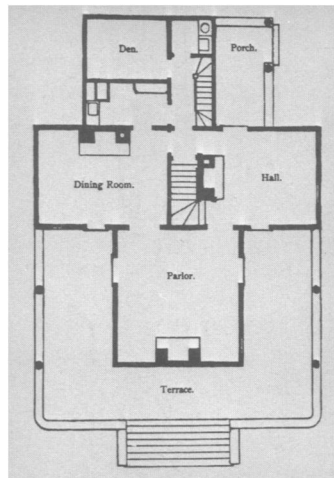
Bruce Price
W. Chandler House, 1885–86
Tower Hill, Tuxedo Park, New York



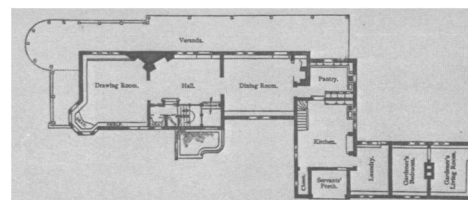
Bruce Price
William Kent House, 1885–86
Tower Hill, Tuxedo Park, New York



Frank Lloyd Wright
Frank Lloyd Wright House, 1889
Oak Park, Illinois



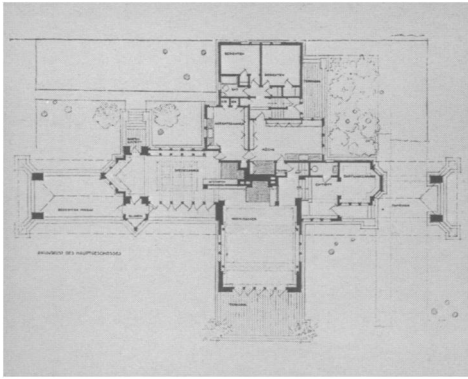
Bruce Price
William Kent House
Plan



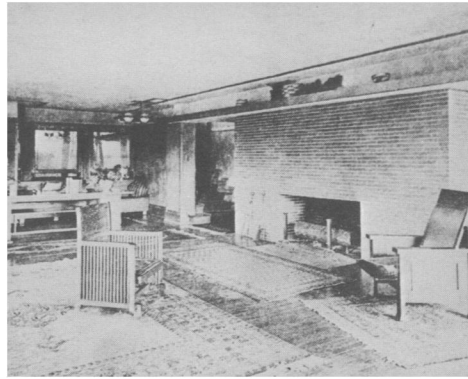
Wilson Eyre
Richard L. Ashhurst House, c.1885
Overbrook, Pennsylvania
Plan

In 1889, when, at the age of twenty-two or so (if we accept Hines' conclusions about Wright's birthdate, as I think we must), he designed his own house in Oak Park, Wright had the whole rich tradition of the American Shingle Style of the 1880s available to him. A late Shingle Style house at Tuxedo Park, N.Y., by Bruce Price, the Chandler House, was published in 1886; it slips two bay windows under an impressive gable with an arched window at attic level. Another house by Price at Tuxedo, the Kent House of 1885–86, was published in *Building* in the latter year. The Kent House presents its gable frontally and has, like the other, a little semi-Palladian arched window at the top. Wright adopts this design almost *in toto* but changes it in the following significant way: he condenses it, combines the arched window with the windows of the second floor, and makes the gable sharper and more dramatic. He also condenses two designs into one by sliding the twin bays from the side elevation of Price's other design under his frontal gable.

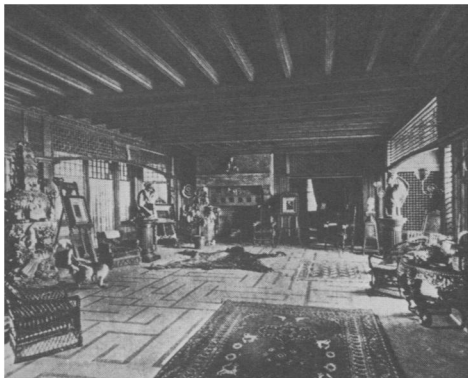
He does the same kind of thing as he begins to work out his revolutionary plans. Price's Kent House had used a cross-axial plan, recurrent in American houses since Jefferson's time. It breaks out of the old English box by projecting rooms into space and by drawing exterior space into the open volume, as the porch does here. Other plans of the Shingle Style of the eighties, like the Richard L. Ashurst House by Wilson Eyre, stretch out in long horizontals, each room widely open to the next, lighted on two sides, and extended by porches. Wright, by about 1900, as in the Ward Willitts House, had condensed the two types, clarified the openness of the space, and stressed its unity; he displaces the entrance so that it is discovered at the side, and the interior space then unfolds mysteriously in a new perspective beyond it. The fireplace is set firmly in the middle, so making the whole a highly dramatic representation of the idea of house: focused on fire, unity, oneness. Its clarity derives from its formal abstraction, through which, so Wright tells us, its power as symbol is firmly embodied and can be physically grasped. Conventional household emblems, such as mantelpieces, for example, are to be eliminated, so that worn-out associations will be revitalized by an intensely empathetic experience of what Wright called plastic form. Here Wright combines the pervasive nineteenth-century concept of physical empathy with the new concept of abstraction (as do Roger Fry and Wilhelm Worringer at about the same time), through which traditional images can now be represented indirectly by visual equivalents or surrogates. This is one of the essential conceptual bases for modern abstract art. The artist's "creation" becomes a new unity in which the meaning is built into the form, based upon a condensation, displacement, and abstraction of pre-existent materials now thoroughly reworked in terms of basic meanings physically conveyed.



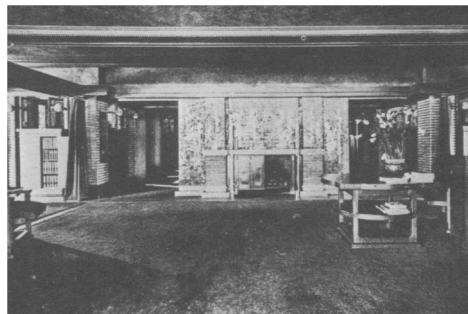
Frank Lloyd Wright
Ward W. Willitts House, 1902
Highland Park, Illinois
Main floor plan



Frank Lloyd Wright
Robert W. Evans House, 1908
Chicago, Illinois
Fireplace in living room



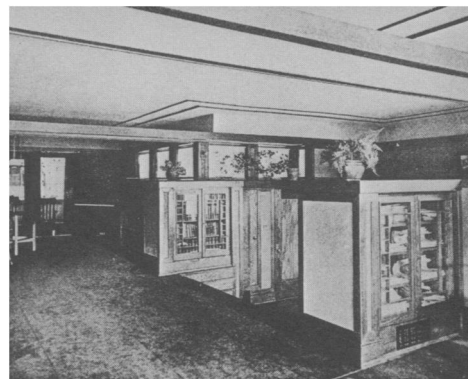
McKim, Mead, & White
Victor Newcomb House, 1880
Elberon, New Jersey
Living hall



Frank Lloyd Wright
Darwin D. Martin House, 1904
Buffalo, New York
Fireplace in living room



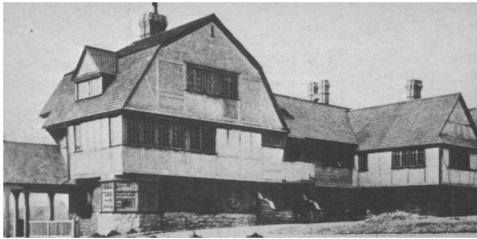
Parson Capen House
Topsfield, Massachusetts, 1683
Interior



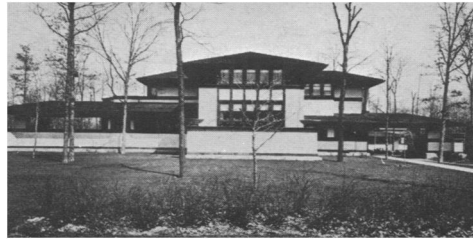
Frank Lloyd Wright
L.K. Horner House, 1908
Chicago, Illinois
Interior opposite entrance

The same holds true for the three-dimensional organization of the space. In a Shingle Style interior of 1880–81, by McKim, Mead and White, the space is open and horizontally extensive. The kamae and ramma of Japanese practice, with which American architects had become familiar at the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, lead the eye along the horizontal and weave the solids together in a continuous spatial movement. The fireplace moves asymmetrically into the fabric as a whole. The same words apply: he condenses, displaces, dramatizes, abstracts, and intensifies the plastic form so that it presents its basic symbol of fire with fresh intelligibility and new unity. And that will for unity controls the entire environment. The axes are crossed with great power; the spaces interpenetrate and are thus seen simultaneously and as a composite unity. The older Japanese details have become strong, beam-scaled elements carrying our vision deeply into space; the furniture is built-in or scaled to the whole. The environmental order is total. But the height of the scale-making beam, though always quite low and generally judged by Wright according to his moderate height of 5 feet 8½ inches, is appreciably varied in each case, apparently according to the height of the client.

Hence the new environment is non-classic; it is Realist and individual, exactly as Wright claimed it to be. The family has been brought into a specific but expansive place of total protection, permanence, and peace. That peace is also a condensation and dramatization, though Wright doesn't tell us so, of deep old cultural memories, especially of the colonial house, its furniture stern and sculptural and scaled to it, its ceiling low and defined by beams. A revival of that folk memory had been important, along with the influences from Japan, in the Shingle Style itself. Wright inherits that memory but opens it out to new spatial release. The ceiling is lowered, so that the protective, stable environment also rushes continuously out and away. Wright tells us that he both brought the house down and broadened it out into spaciousness, saying too that continuity of space was the major principle he had in mind. But he also condensed and displaced in that process. In the Horner House the stairs fall down toward the entrance, causing the plane of the living room floor, lifted well above ground level, to detach itself and to float forward with the ceiling just barely overhead; our eyes are carried, as Wright said they would be, by the continuous velocity of the stripping, to the ribbon of light of the continuous window voids with the raised terrace beyond them.



Wilson Eyre
Richard L. Ashurst House



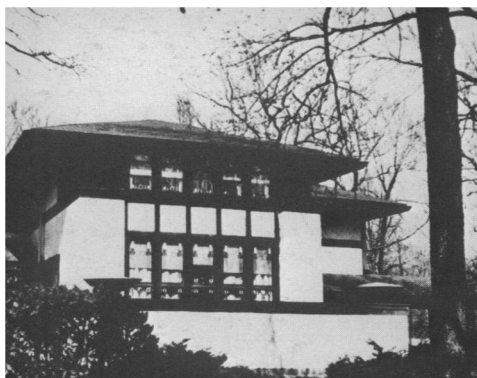
Frank Lloyd Wright
Ward W. Willitts House



Orange Street
New Haven, Connecticut



313-315 Mansfield Street
New Haven, Connecticut



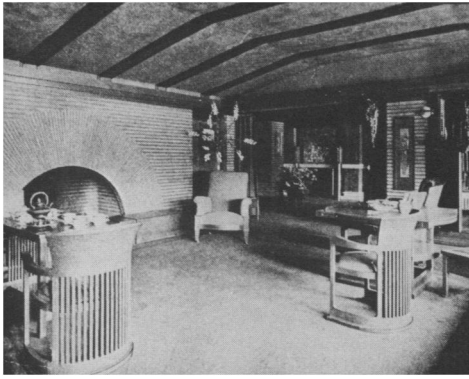
Frank Lloyd Wright
Ward W. Willitts House
Entrance Wing



Frank Lloyd Wright
Ward W. Willitts House
Exterior detail

At last the problem of the exterior is posed: last because Wright is careful to tell us that his design develops from within to without. A Shingle Style house by Wilson Eyre, of which we have already considered the plan, stretches out in a long horizontal, overhangs the second floor with a decided shadow line, is extended by a porch, uses ribbon windows going around the corner, but employs gambrel and gable roofs which are expressive of contained volumes of interior space. Once more, as in the Ward Willitts House, Wright condenses, displaces, and focuses with abstract power. The gambrel goes; the roofs are the lowest hips he can get away with, so that while they are still expressive of shelter they can also seem to interpenetrate like flat horizontal planes expressive of those long, low, interior spaces and extending them out in porches and porte-cochères to control the broad, squarish, middle-western suburban lot as a whole. On the exterior, as within, Wright needs little or no secondary revision of his design. It derives logically, so he tells us, from his analytical process: here from his plan and his space. There is essentially no facade, and the associational elements of the Shingle Style, whether colonial details or half-timbering, have all been eliminated, abstracted out, while the Japanese associations are muted and more remote.

How different this all is from, for example, the average nineteenth and early twentieth-century house on its narrow city lot, exemplified by any number of two-family houses in New Haven, Connecticut. Here is a tough verticality (which the nineteenth century called masculine), with a strong gable end. The gable gathers and points, a physical symbol of the family unit, proud and rather defiant, but it is also very good for defining the streets, with their complementary elms, and it thus functions as an effective urban facade. Each unit is semiologically aggressive, but each works in the larger architectural order. The frontal gables were part of a long tradition in America, one which ran through the Stick and Shingle Styles alike. It was with a condensed version of such a gable (see Frank Lloyd Wright House) that Wright started, and from which he made his great swerve, throwing out the arrowhead with its sharp-pointed frontal gesture, and with it the concept of the street facade, in order to express and extend the continuity of the interior space across a broad building lot. (If the lot is narrower, as are some of those in Oak Park, Wright will often employ the alternate tactic of turning the house sideways to the street to control it all.) So the mass of the house fragments and recombines in planes, sliding out and away and seeming, like



Frank Lloyd Wright
Darwin D. Martin House
Fireplace in Reception room

this view of the Willitts House as it was published in Germany, as if it had in fact no urbanistic context at all, had indeed broken free from its whole middle class environment and spun out into a new, abstract, revolutionary situation.

That was in fact the situation which the International Style of the teens to the sixties desired and fostered, and which illustrations of Wright's work, like the Ward Willitts house, did so much to bring into being. This is not our concern here, but it should be noted that one of the major challenges to the International Style, that mounted by Robert Venturi, came in America toward 1960 and started right back where Wright had started, with a single-family house, a frontal gable, and an arched Palladian motif. Venturi's house is also very much a facade, but it moves in the opposite direction from Wright: it pulls apart horizontally along one frontal plane and opens vertically up the middle, the space rising up through that aperture like smoke up a flue. Finally, on Nantucket, where so much of the old Shingle Style had found its inspiration, Venturi's building stands up like the nineteenth-century houses and fills out its gable with the arched window, so containing the expanding volume in the pointing arrow under the Atlantic sky and keeping itself above all a taut facade and a flat sign, much like those of the nineteenth-century house.

But that is not at all what Wright was after out in the Midwest in 1900. It is interior space, flowing out, floating out, but firmly defined, which he intends to have dominate the whole expression of the house, which will therefore present no "masculine" signal to the street but will instead embody a deep, expansive, pervading calm, which, deep back in shadows suggestive of sleep, will come home at last to the maternal hearth, Hestia's fire.

If we can trace Wright to this point by suggesting his relationship to his artistic past, is there any method by which we can penetrate more deeply into the meaning of his forms and the way they may have come into being? The words *condensation*, *displacement*, *dramatization*, *indirect representation involving simultaneity and composite figures*, and *a new unity* which I have already used to describe Wright's method of design were indeed chosen with this question in mind. They are the words which were employed by Sigmund Freud in 1900 in his major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as he attempted to describe for the first time the mysterious process whereby what he called the dreamwork brought dream

thoughts into dream content, or, we might say, into dream form. Freud called that process the *Vorstellung*, the setting forth. One of the phases which he sometimes included in it but later excluded from it, however, that of "secondary revision," played little part in Wright's way of working, as we have already had occasion to observe.² But that fact, too, seems especially interesting, because "secondary revision" was the only phase for which Freud proposed an architectural analogy; he suggested that it might sometimes have constructed, at the very end of the process, an acceptable "facade" for the dream. And it was precisely the concept of facade that Wright specifically discarded.

But are these words so important? Others could well have been used, and I have no intention of "reducing" the complexity of Wright's work by pretending that these words wholly or solely describe it. Yet, beyond that, can a consideration of an historical parallel between Wright and Freud help us to understand Wright's work better? Perhaps it can. Freud and Wright were contemporaries who, despite their geographical distance and cultural differences, still shared certain pervasive aspects of nineteenth-century culture and dealt with problems involving in many ways similar kinds of people: people formed by late nineteenth-century middle class family units, consisting of mothers and fathers and suffering children. It is therefore no wonder that the family was the basic concern of both men, Freud unravelling its secrets to heal its members, Wright moving from the opposite direction to construct what seemed to him the ideal, sane environment for it, and especially for its young.³

I am not competent to pass judgment on the merits of Freud's reading of those problems, but I believe that I do not have to do so here. I wish only to point out that Freud, in the major literary and scientific work of the beginning of the century—as Wright's houses of these Oak Park years were the major architectural works—used sequences of words to describe that most central of creative processes: how the mind makes those forms which embody the meanings that are most essential to it, which can be applied (and I think we can agree without strain of any kind) to the process whereby Wright made his houses. And I prefer those words, in their curious physicality so appropriate to architecture and so finally incomplete, to the infinitely more articulated combination of psychoanalytical and rhetorical terms which Harold Bloom, for example, employs as he

2. But Wright was always ready to remodel, as his own house and studio amply show. So he both came to decisions rapidly and as rapidly produced new forms. His confidence and energy were dauntless.

3. They were both Nietzschean: Wright openly (why not, it was another art), Freud protesting innocence (it was the same art). Many artists, philosophers, and critics were clearly involved with these ideas around 1900. Nancy Olsen, in her as yet unpublished essay on the use of words in Cubist paintings, "Cubism, Freud, and the Image of Wit," points out, for example, that Freud's book of 1905 on jokes, though proposing the same phases in their (for him) largely unconscious production, also owes something to Bergson's book of 1900 on the same topic. But, we must now go further, I think, to recognize that the very act of abstraction itself was Freudian, in terms of Freud's analysis of form-making, even though abstraction in modern art was not appreciated by Freud himself.

explores the problem of the making and reading of poetry. So Wright with the Shingle Style: he condensed, displaced, and so on—not on unconscious material at first, but on pre-existing architectural forms which he singled out for his attention. Literary critics like Bloom would insist that conscious repression, “willed falsification,” is involved in the artist’s “misreading” of such predecessors. We may accept that phenomenon as obvious enough and go on to say that in Wright’s case at least he worked down beyond them until he brought forth the depths and powers of his own mind—until, we might say, he at once trained his instincts and gained confidence in them—and could then work upon them by this same process. The artist, therefore, “learns” how to construct out his so-called “unconscious” by first developing that process on conscious material, i.e., on existing works of art.

4. “Condensation” and “displacement,” for example, are the major critical facts that link the Parthenon and Chartres and most distinguish them among the other temples and cathedrals of their series.

Freud, as scientist and artist, did the same. In any event, he proves to have been an excellent critic; his terms, along with others, can be valuably used to analyze the way in which many of the most critically important monuments in the history of art came to be made.⁴ Yet I do not have to claim that this is the way that all works of art are made. I think that in large measure they are made somewhat differently in different historical periods, just as Freud’s book would have been different if it had been written at a different time. Still, Freud, and all psychoanalysis after him, had a deep conviction that his discoveries were universal ones, and attempts by his followers, especially those of Carl Jung, disavowed by Freud, to simplify the problem into large collective patterns of symbolism, which Jung called archetypes, have often been regarded as useful for the criticism of works of art and will be referred to later here.

Yet the most important issue seems to me to be that of the structure of form which, beyond Freud’s own aesthetic limitations, the structure of *The Interpretation of Dreams* itself inevitably suggests and heroically approaches. Because all such questions must in the end come down to the problem of how form is made, since without form, as Freud shows, no symbol can be embodied. Form is content; content is form. Jacques Laçan has, of course, been concerned with exactly this in his linguistic analysis of Freud’s dream-structure, *The Language of the Self*, which, however, in its characteristic psychoanalytical focus upon the verbal discourse, upon the Word as the carrier of meaning (which Freud shares), does not deal with visual problems. And later semiologists from Eco to Jencks who have dealt with architecture invariably leap as fast as possible past the physical form to the associated verbal sign, while modern iconographers in the history of art itself, with the notable exception of Panofsky at his best,

have generally been more concerned with the simple identification of symbols than with the way they are embodied in form. But it is precisely in this, as we have seen, that the *Vorstellung* is of major artistic interest—of greater potential relevance, we art historians might now boldly claim, to the visual arts than to literature—and the parallels between Freud and Wright are close and rich in meaning. Each brings inexhaustible intellectual energy to the problem posed: Freud to the infinitely individual complexity of the analytical narrative, Wright to the multiple possibilities suggested by every detail of his design, perhaps most obvious and varied in the absolute particularity of the spatial stripping in every one of his houses. Hence, the forms made by Wright and those developed by Freud, no less than those identified by him, suggest each other, and since both are dealing with the family, their contents tend to merge.

What motivated the building of Wright’s houses, after all, but what Freud said motivated the production of dreams: “wish-fulfillment.” Surely that is exactly what Wright’s houses were for the people who built them, and that is what Wright gave his clients far beyond their identification of it: not simple associative references as, say, to Romanesque halls and Colonial kitchens, but something deeper in, the very stuff of their dreams. And how American it was at that period to day-dream of “better things.” Is that one major reason why there was nothing like these spaces by Wright produced in Europe? The “dream house” is an American concept after all. In any event, we recognize the national phenomenon, which is why we are so moved when Dreiser, who later knew Freud’s work well, wrote of (and to) Sister Carrie in 1900: “Know, then, that for you is neither surfeit nor content. In your rocking chair, by your window dreaming, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel.” Wright’s clients were not poor Carrie, but they clearly had their dream-wishes, perhaps not easily discernible in their waking lives. But that was no problem for Wright; he simply let them share his own, which were, in this artistic process, accessible to him—especially as he was creating in his houses what was so much a comforting child’s world. Oak Park itself shares that character; just in sight of the towers of Chicago along the magical elevated railroad line, but wholly silent, flat, and somnolent, an utter dream world, too.

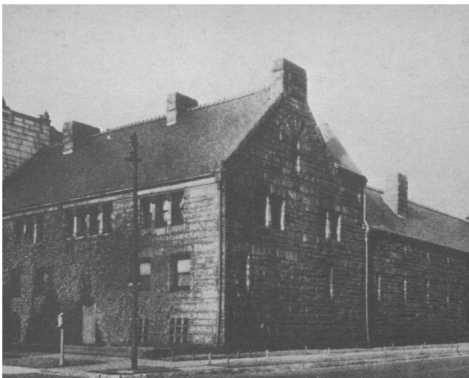
What is the function of dreams? asked Freud, and he replied "The dream is the guardian of sleep." It censors out, he claimed, the upsetting material that is clamoring for recognition in the mind, and when that censor fails, anxiety and nightmare will ensue. Hence for Freud the "disguised fulfillments of repressed wishes," and "one of the detours by which repression can be evaded." Are Wright's forms this? Perhaps all the forms of art in some measure are; they disguise so that our minds can deal with whatever lies in there, can begin to handle it somehow on these terms, which are those of the "new unity" of art's "setting forth." Like dreams, they at once probe our hopes and anxieties and protect us from them. Again, in previous ages there were more or less fixed iconographical systems which, as it were, ticketed and screened such problems through a battery of symbols; but the new modern man of the late nineteenth century began to be obliged to disentangle them for himself. So, in art, Wright eventually made his own—by, I think Freud would have said, his especially strong capacity to "regress" to the unconscious material of dreams. In doing so, he, the modern man, cut adrift from the past, found a new past within himself, which, as Thomas Mann later wrote, was the greatest gift of Freud's work to the modern world.

This is where the study of Freud can most help us to appreciate the greatness of Wright because it points out that, in an age when the old classic traditions and institutions were breaking down and the first glow of romanticism had long gone out, the individual was forced to construct all his works out of his childhood memories, out of whatever direct personal experiences had made him whatever he was. If they had made him ill, Freud set out "to unravel what the dream work has woven" in order to make him well. But Wright was strong (as he often tells us), and an artist, and he set out to put whatever he was, whatever he could "remember," to use. Freud discovered that the experiences of childhood were of supreme importance to the individual, were never really forgotten, and produced dream shapes in later years. Wright made art out of these experiences and constantly evoked the dream that might recall them. At the end of a night conversation with himself he cries, "Yes, it seems to me, that is what it means to be an artist . . . to seize this essence brooding just behind aspect." So he brings dream thoughts to consciousness at once intensified and concealed by his beloved abstraction (Freud's "pictorial arrangement"), so that his work of art is a waking dream. Indeed, Wright's interior spaces, with the fire glowing in the dark under the low ceiling with its hypnotic stripping leading us to other mysterious spaces beyond, go far toward dream states themselves. This can hardly be said of Brunelleschi, Ictinos, or the International Style, for example. They do other things. So,

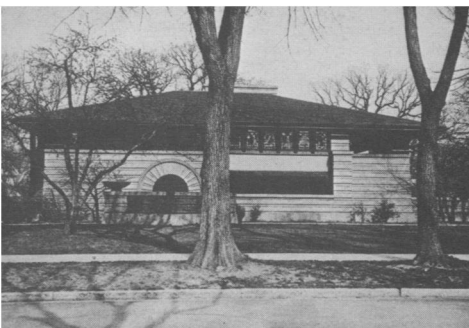
while the process of form-making which Freud distinguished may be widespread in time, the dream content, for which we alternatively read dream form, is not necessarily so. And here, as I have indicated, Freud and Wright are close, and the point can be made stronger.

For example, Freud came increasingly, and reluctantly, to the view that the major symbols of the dream content dealt with problems of human sexuality (arising, one might say from the structure of the modern family but tending to universality for Freud), and he invented the great concept of the Oedipus complex to describe what he felt lay at the heart of most of those problems, which was the boy's wish to kill the father in order to possess the mother. Again you will realize that I am not competent to comment upon the validity of Freud's views, and I am certainly no more anxious than Freud was to be accused of sexual sensationalism. Nor do I wish to fall or be accused of falling into the reductiveness of the "Freudian symbol," as employed by some would-be Freudians, assassins of the multiplicity of art. Nevertheless, I will claim that Wright's houses are deeply familial in quality and that their symbolism seems to be a rich interweaving of the male and female with the male strong but the female, the wife and mother, enclosing all. So the houses are caverns which engulf us and give us peace as we submit to their laws. They pull us in, and they do so according to the same principles of condensation, displacement, and abstraction which we have noted all along; but now that process is acting not only upon previous architecture but also upon fundamental symbols deep underneath it as well. That is why, one supposes, Wright had to have confidence in his "originality" and so insisted upon it throughout his life. Most of all, his principle of abstraction is fundamental here, since it permits Freud's "indirect representation" of physical images which would have been unacceptable otherwise to Wright or his clients.

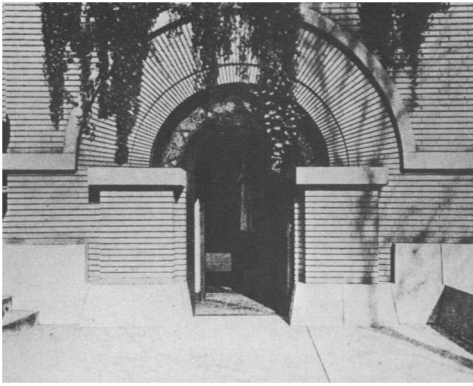
Behind the intense brooding little fireplace in the Martin House, of 1904, stand the deep Romanesque arches of Henry Hobson Richardson, images of physical engulfment into the hollow within. But Wright goes far beyond Richardson in pulling us into that hollow. Richardson's Glessner House in Chicago, of 1885–86, is what Wright called a "box" of space with an arched opening pushed up to the frontal plane. It is a closed box; we must push our way in. Wright's Heurtley House, of 1902, has opened up the box (Wright's proudest accomplishment) so that it draws us into it. It is at once secret, dark, and concealing, profoundly primitive and brooding in aspect but also inviting, leading us by tortuous ways into its enfolding body: cavern, pavilion, and castle all at once.



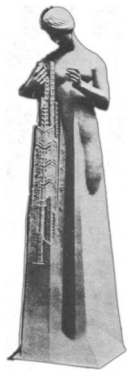
H.H. Richardson
J.J. Glessner House, 1885–87
Chicago, Illinois



Frank Lloyd Wright
Arthur Heurtley House, 1902
Oak Park, Illinois



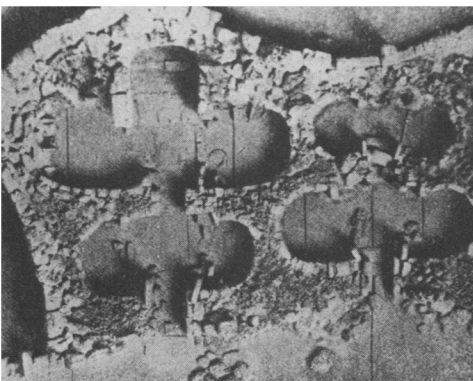
Frank Lloyd Wright
Susan L. Dana House, 1903
Springfield, Illinois
Entrance



Terra Cotta Figure, "The Flower in the Crannied Wall"
Entrance, Susan L. Dana House
Frank Lloyd Wright, designer; Richard Bock, sculptor



Megalithic Temples, Malta
View of model



Maltese Temples
Detail

5. Here I use the definition of the unconscious as "repressed" which Freud used when he wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Later he added another type of unconscious which he called the "original," claiming as Jung did, that it contained old folk memories.

There can be no doubt that Wright is dealing, through the necessary order and concealment of abstraction, with deep symbols of life and fertility in his houses and that their major image is of the female who encloses all. They are indeed temples to that idea. The arch of the Dana House is abstracted into a vibrant entrance; deep in the shadows within it stands a white column; it is a piece of sculpture designed by Wright and executed by his friend Richard Bock, shaped like a phallus and reminiscent, as a matter of fact, of contemporary, highly sexed work in Vienna, such as the paintings of Klimt. It was called "The Flower in the Crannied Wall," and I think that Freud would suggest that both those words represented perfect symbolic displacements. The point is important. It reminds us to ask once more whether Wright no less than Bock was not now working with unconscious, i.e. "repressed,"⁵ material; he was surely not using the words "womb" or "phallus" to describe to himself the forms he employed and would in all likelihood have indignantly rejected them if they had been suggested to him. The point is underlined: "abstraction" was essential. Of course, each one of the forms involved can take on any number of symbolic meanings. But the column standing in the female body to make a composite image of fertility, birth, and indeed, resurrection, is a very old and quite specific motif.

In his late work Wright was overtly to adapt rounded shapes like those of the Neolithic temples on Malta (as in the Martin Spence Project, the Guggenheim Museum, and so on) which were built like hollow goddesses with the column standing in the center of fancy, which is the head.⁶ The entrance to those temples suggested at once a labyrinth and that of a body itself. But even closer in noble form and familial meaning to Wright's combination of shapes in the Dana House is Giotto's meeting of Joachim and Anna, one pure united cone, before Jerusalem's Golden Gate. In all these instances the column is at the service of the female principle and is framed by it.

6. As I tried to show some years ago in my book on his work, Wright turns to a quite open use of Pre-Columbian, especially Mayan, forms after 1915 and condenses and displaces them into something very much his own by the early twenties. From the late thirties on Wright seems to quote from ancient non-Hellenic Mediterranean sources directly and with minimal revision of the model. Does this signal at once a renewed and increasingly more conscious interest in religious symbolism and a slackening of creative energy in the last decade or so of his life? It may be relevant to note that while Wright never seems to have shown any special interest in Freud or Jung he came in his later years increasingly under the spell, woven mainly by Ogilvanna Wright, of the mystical and pedagogically-oriented system of Gurdjieff, ultimately related to the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. It is possible here to think of a mind, once Freudian in its rigor, turned somewhat less realistic and self-critical by its increasingly exotic surroundings.

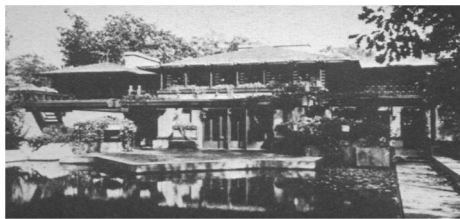
But Freud claimed that such symbols, like all the products of the mind's condensation of experience, usually had multiple meanings. The fireplace and the chimney are a case in point. We have already noted Wright's female hearths with the Colonial memory behind them. But what of the chimney? The tall chimneys of Colonial houses ran as massive solids up through the hollow of the house and protruded boldly above the roof. Herman Melville recognized this quality when he wrote his strange and witty story "I and My Chimney." In it the owner of a Colonial house is forced to defend its (by him) beloved chimney from the attacks of his wife and daughters who insist that it takes up



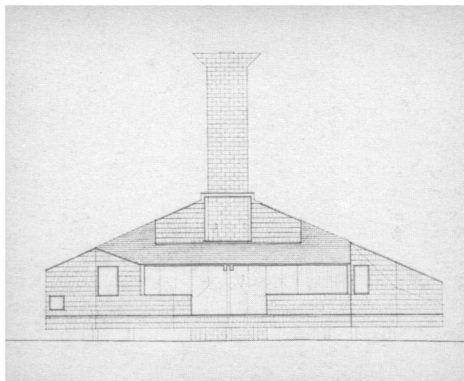
Giotto
Meeting of Joachim and Anna
Arena Chapel, Padua



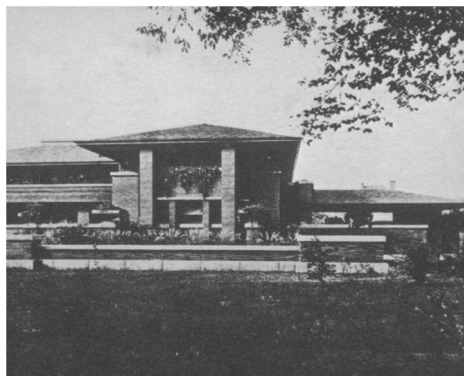
Parson Capen House



Frank Lloyd Wright
Avery Coonley House, 1908
Riverside, Illinois
Garden front with added pergola



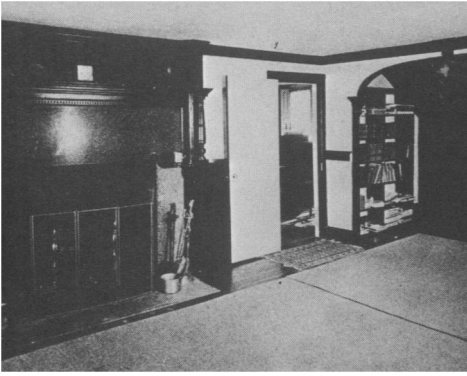
Robert Venturi
Beach House project, 1959



Frank Lloyd Wright
Darwin D. Martin House
Detail of West Side

too much room in the center of the house and is, besides, faulty in structure and might fall down at any moment. ("I and my chimney, we will never surrender," says Melville.) With Wright there is no contest. The chimney has plenty of space around it and protrudes above the roof only enough to satisfy whatever fire laws existed at the time. The principle remains that of enclosure. In that sense one might say that Venturi's madly aggressive chimney in his important project of 1959 is the first free chimney in American houses since before Wright's time, an expression of male liberation, one supposes—but in reality a purposeful exaggeration of the active sign. When Wright, for example, builds vertical piers other than chimneys he not only has them stand very free and strong but also—with only one significant exception which we will consider later—caps them off and encloses them in the overhanging roof. The family is kept together as one unity—one might say, calmly, stably, maturely—making, above all, a dignified spatial environment for the child. In this way what Smith correctly identifies as Wright's compelling interest in a strong, conservative family structure finds its formal embodiment, its symbolic vocabulary, and becomes art. Wright *builds* the family. It was what had formed him, what he knew, and what his architectural programs were. Later, when he himself breaks away from its suburban mode and conservative structure, his forms change in considerable degree but not, I think, in kind. And our experience of them always remains empathetic, physical. If we permit them to do so they comfort us by their close physical presence: they the family, we the child. This is one major reason, I think, why so many people have obdurately resisted the appeal of Wright's work and so many others given way to it wholly.

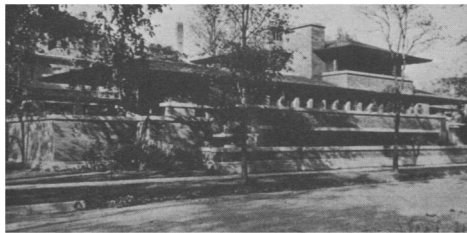
If, then, a consideration of Freud's proposed dream structure and its symbolic content helps in some measure to value Wright's artistic achievement, what of Jung's symbolic archetypes in that regard? It seems that they can be at least superficially applied, and it is what Maud Bodkin, in her book *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, was later to describe as the archetype of the Image of Woman which first suggests itself for transposition into architectural terms to describe Wright's work. That image may be regarded as dominant over the male images in Wright's houses, but it clearly poses no threat to his view of male sexuality. Instead, it completes it. He, who so much in his own personality embodied (like his father) another Jungian archetype—that of Devil, Hero, God—was somehow able to achieve complete artistic expression by weaving that image into the maternal body. He condenses the archetypes; he "marries" them.



Charles Follen McKim
Dennis House, 1876
Newport, Rhode Island
Living hall



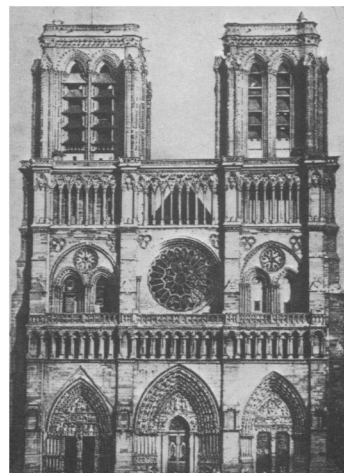
Frank Lloyd Wright
Avery Coonley House
Living room



Frank Lloyd Wright
Frederick C. Robie House, 1909
Chicago, Illinois



Frank Lloyd Wright
Frederick C. Robie House
Interior

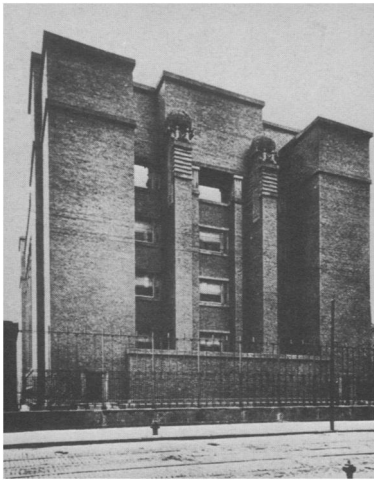


Notre Dame, Paris
Facade before restoration by Viollet-le-Duc

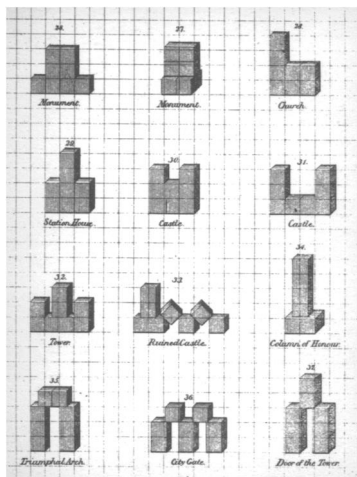
7. Wright's father clearly deserves more credit for Wright's character than he has normally received. He gave Wright his love of music and his essential "temperament," and when he left home he took up his lonely life in what can only be described as a manly way, without complaint or recrimination of any kind.

It is, as so often with Wright, a matter of scale, of our empathetic response to the size of things in relation to ourselves. For example, in a Colonial Revival room with fireplace of 1876 by Charles Follen McKim, the ceiling is low and the mantel high so that the occupant feels himself dominated by it. He is small in a small space. In Wright's Coonley House, the ceiling is low, so that the occupant towers over it, dominates the space, and is also led out by it to enormous physical release and triumph. It is like an illustration of one of Freud's most beautiful dreams, in which he is sitting on a terrace in a chair firmly fixed in place but also rushing forward at enormous velocity. Stability and movement, protection and release, fulfill several sets of wishes all together. The condensation is of multiple and contradictory symbols. The Robie House is at once an airplane and another of Jung's archetypes, a sacred mountain: heavy, hollowed, massive, and rising on wings. Death-and-Resurrection, Hell-to-Heaven, these other archetypes are also embodied here. One must go on an ancient labyrinthine journey, seeking the secret entrance, finding it finally concealed in a low, dark, restricted place through which one moves up and around the fireplace mass toward the light until the long horizontal release of the upper floor takes wing. The pilgrim has grown in stature. His head almost reaches the soffit; the fireplace is pushed down very low. Looming over it, he is a giant, a child become Oedipal hero, most specifically a Titan of earth, strong so long as he remains in touch with the mother, as he does here. The scale is everything.

This constant and wearisome use of the pronoun "he" is essential for the material and in relation to the nineteenth-century psychology and education out of which it grew. Wright himself was a triumphant product of that psychology and that education, and we should now consider the relevance of those nineteenth-century phenomena to an understanding of his genius. We are told, first of all, that when his mother, who was a teacher, became pregnant, she determined (a) that it would be a boy and (b) that he would be an architect, and to that end she hung engravings of the great Gothic cathedrals in her room. So the process began for Wright while he was still in the womb. When he finally appeared the engravings were placed in his room. So he was from the very first the builder, the victor, and during his adolescence, just before he left home to go to work in Chicago, his father was thrown out of the house and conveniently disappeared, so that Wright could sally forth as an Oedipus unrivalled, conqueror of the city, singing his song of work and manhood, cited by Smith: "I'll live as I work as I am/No work for fashion or sham/ . . . My work as befiteth a man" etc. How entranced poor Freud, with his neurotic Viennese, might have been with it all.⁷



Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building, 1904
Buffalo, New York



Froebel System
Third gift

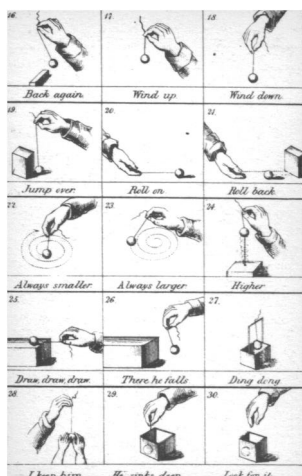
8. Wright claims that he played with the Froebel gifts after he was brought to his father's pastorate near Boston "at the age of three." But since the move to Boston took place in 1874 such was clearly impossible. Of course, Wright's mother may well have introduced him to Froebel long before 1876. Wright's association of his education with the Centennial may well represent one of his significant "displacements" of the type Hines discovered.

Therefore, it is probably no accident that the Larkin Building—where, almost uniquely in Wright's early work, the piers rise up uncapped by roofs and overhangs—is strongly reminiscent of Gothic cathedrals in its twin towers and its spatial interweaving of vertical and horizontal, solid and void. But its hard-edged, abstract shapes also have another very cogent source in the Froebel kindergarten blocks with which Wright was encouraged to play as a child. And who encouraged him? His mother, of course, whose "intense interest in the Froebel system was," he tells us, "awakened at the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876." Indeed, the mother and what he most usually called "the boy" were the two basic human units in Froebel's educational system. Friedrich Froebel was the inventor of the kindergarten, and he wrote his greatest book, *The Education of Man*, in 1826. Interest in his work and his pedagogical methods grew throughout the century and continued at a peak rate of republication, translation, and critique from the 1850s until about 1914. And I might add that women rather heroically broke a way for themselves into his system in various publications of the eighties and nineties. Froebel's theories were especially popular in America, perhaps because in them the child was to be trained through the practical use of his hands toward a way of grasping reality that would transcend previous human limitations and so connect him with the fundamental rhythm of the universe as a whole.

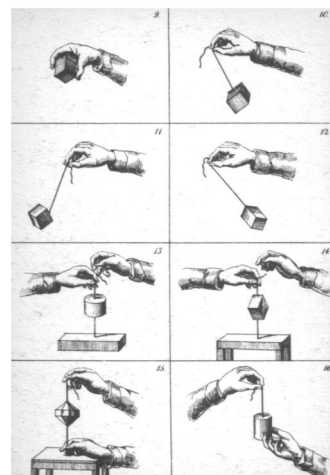
Wright passionately believed in all this throughout his life and repeatedly stressed the fact that the abstraction which evolved out of the Froebel system was the fundamental tool of his design, and it was emphatically essential, as we have noted, to the indirect representation of its symbolic content. Speaking about his play as a child with the Froebel elements, Wright wrote: "The virtue of all this lay in the awakening of the child mind to rhythmic structure in Nature—giving the child a sense of innate cause-and-effect otherwise far beyond child comprehension. I soon became susceptible to constructive pattern evolving in everything I saw. I learned to 'see' this way and when I did, I did not care to draw casual incidentals of Nature. I wanted to design." It all sounds very god-like, but what is especially interesting, I think, is that Wright later had to work his way back to Froebel too. Though there may be a kind of preconditioned Froebelism in early buildings like the Charnley House, there are apparently no overtly Froebelian details until they appear in Wright's remodelling of his own house and his building of its vaulted playroom for his children in 1895. His sympathetic association with their dreams and play, to which they all were later to attest, clearly helped him find his way back to his own childhood as well, and to a structural perception of that child's dream world which his mature houses were to embody.

Froebel's system is also based upon a symbolic imagery which is sexual in part. As he refined his ideas from 1826 onward, Froebel planned that the mother would give the child (usually, as I said, read as "boy") a series of what Froebel called "gifts," starting from his first year and running through his seventh. Various other of what Froebel called "occupations" were also involved and were to follow. Wright was already nine—again, if we accept Hines' date of 1867 for his birth—when his mother discovered this system, but that hardly seems to have blunted its effect.⁸ The first gift was a soft ball of yarn—in later refinements six balls. For Froebel the sphere of the ball was specifically intended to acquaint the child with the link between the mother's breast and the unity of the world. A psychologist, Denton J. Snider, of the Chicago Kindergarten College, writing on *The Psychology of Froebel's Play-Gifts* in 1900, described (presumably) his own sensation of playing with the ball in profoundly sexual terms, although he does not identify them as such. "You cannot blame your hand," he bumbles, "if it soon closes more passionately upon that Ball, with an eager embrace, to which the latter replies by a stronger and warmer osculation imparted to your palm and fingers . . . You nestle it, you coddle it, you rock it and swing it with both hands, you toss it up into the air like a baby and catch it coming down with a smile. It has all sorts of domestic suggestions—that of a nest with its birdling; you can house it between your palms in a cosy little home." This is all heady stuff, especially so because in the end the boy puts the ball back in the box and says, in this English version of 1871, "He sinks deep. Look for him." And there you are.

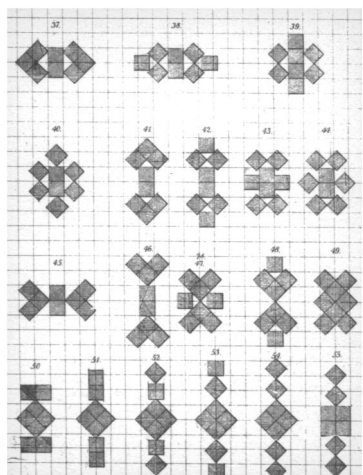
Wright—claiming, perhaps falsely, to have started all this later—discusses only the subsequent, tougher, hard-edged gifts: the wooden cylinder and cube which join the ball in the second, the hard-edged patterns that can be made with the cubes of the third. Finally, as here with the fourth gift, the child builds structures labelled "Triumphal Arch," recalling Leo von Klenze's Neoclassic Propylaea in Munich whose name figured in one of Freud's most famous dreams. The shapes are classicizing ones, as befits Froebel's publication date of 1826: strictly geometric, symmetrical, and hard. Finally, and this is the sixth gift, the boy builds the box and is presumably on his way. Perhaps most of all, he also builds a good clear European urbane facade for himself, a public face to carry off to school—like the facade of the Berggasse in Vienna behind which Freud and his family, like the other members of the Viennese middle class, lived their private lives.



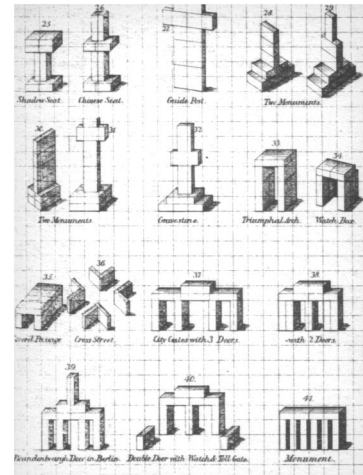
Froebel System
First gift



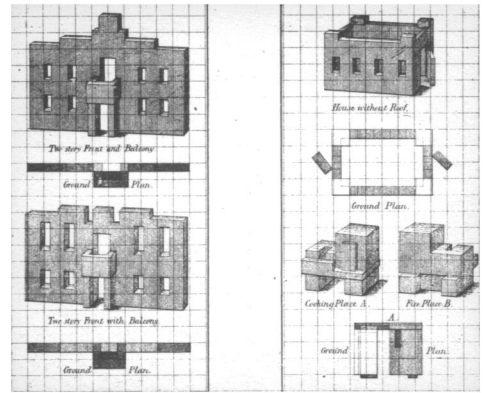
Froebel System
Second gift



Froebel System
Third gift



Froebel System
Fourth gift



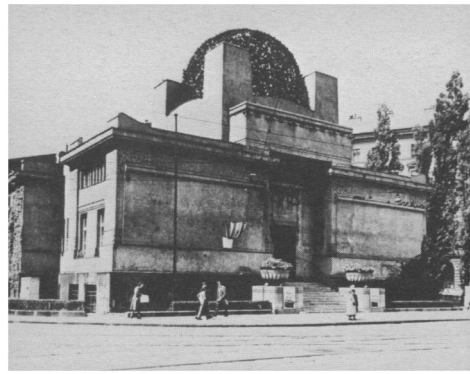
Froebel System
Sixth gift

In the context of this discussion, we obviously have to divert for a moment to ask ourselves whether Freud was interested in Froebel. We know that Froebel's system was well known in Vienna by the latter decades of the century, but I can safely state that his name does not occur in any of the literature by or about Freud. We know, however, that Freud too suppressed some early biographical data about himself and that information about his earliest education is especially scanty right up to the moment when at the age of seven, he began to read Philippon's Jewish Bible and to be taught by his father. Many years later his father sent him a copy of that book and recalled the event. Thus Freud's education, so far as we know it, was wholly verbal, exactly the opposite of Wright's. Yet, might not Freud have had contact with some variation of a Froebel system (gifts of the mother) in his earliest years? The Oedipal guilts which he describes in himself especially make us wonder if this might not have been so, but there is no evidence whatever for it. And it seems in the end that the mature Freud was truly not interested in Froebel, who had followed lines of investigation different from his own. They were Protestant and pedagogical, cultural worlds apart from Freud's Patriarchal Word and the gifts of the father. So even the concept of empathy is not valued by Freud, though known to him as *Einfühlung* through the writings of Lipps. Yet in later years he sometimes referred to the mother's breast as the primal form, which his follower, Rank, associated with the "maternal vessel."

The speculations to which all this gives rise cannot be pursued here, but one can hardly be blamed for being unable to resist suggesting them, especially in this context, because what is in some ways the most Froebel-like building of all is not by Wright but by Josef Maria Olbrich, and it is in Vienna. It is called the Secession Building and was in 1896–99, not far from the Ring, as a headquarters, exhibition, and work center for a new anti-establishment art. It is still flanked by a charmingly subversive bronze group of a Roman emperor in a chariot with coil springs drawn by lions (Vienna's own Marcus Aurelius but looking more like Nero). The building itself looks like Froebel blocks piled up. Was Olbrich, like Wright, trained in the Froebel system? That question remains to be answered, but I think we may safely bet that he was, because there it is, finally, the ball in the box—primal symbol of the beginning of a new, individualistic art—the sphere of open metalwork construction but, in contrast to the hard blocks that contain it, looking soft and compressible like Froebel's yarn. And those piers and that ball, no less than the avoidance of the usual deep roof slab, suggest that Wright was influenced by Olbrich when he designed the Larkin Building in 1904. The



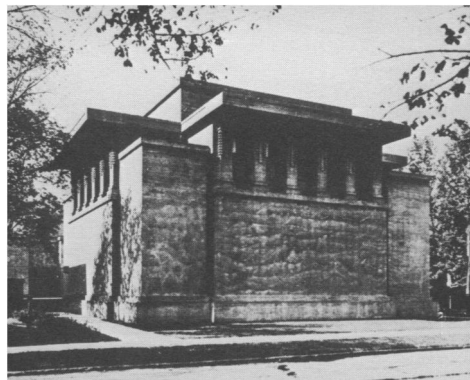
The Berggasse
Vienna, Austria



Josef Olbrich
Secession Building, 1899
Vienna, Austria



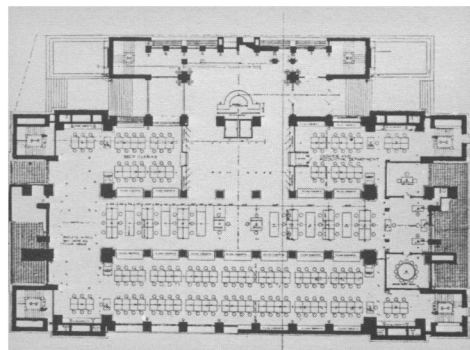
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building



Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple



Josef Olbrich
Secession Building
Exterior detail



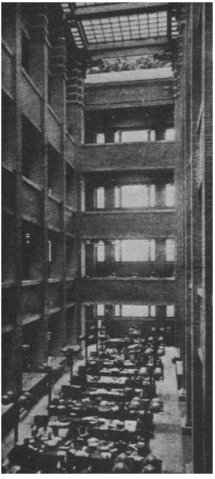
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
First floor plan

world globes (which are, one should point out, lifted by the piers and buttressed by babies), represent one of the very few times that Wright permitted himself quite this kind of what he normally characterized as rather overly literary representational form.

But if we go back to the Secession Building and look again at its closed blocky shape enclosing one major room we cannot help but realize that Unity Temple of 1904–06 is even closer to it than the Larkin Building was. Again, there are condensations and major displacements; the entrance is brought around to the side in order to leave the meeting room closed and inviolate on the street where, so Wright tells us, the noisy trolley tracks were laid. But there are many similarities. The advanced and recessed planes which, as Wright handles them, are clearly expressive of the spaces they contain, are at least suggested in the Secession Building, as is the detail of the cornice in both, striated in fine horizontal lines. But while Olbrich breaks out of a Froebel system by permitting Art-Nouveau figural ornament to grow like lovely vines along his surfaces, Wright characteristically disciplines it all out into pure Froebel abstractions.

Yet can it be that Wright was drawn to Olbrich precisely because of his Froebel-like qualities? Contemporary Europeans recognized the fraternal relationship between the two architects, and Wright tells us that when he visited Germany in 1909 he was called “the American Olbrich,” and so went to visit that architect in Darmstadt, where he had then been working. But when Wright arrived Olbrich was already dead. (This episode recalls Dürer’s famous story of himself and Schongauer, who died before Dürer could reach him.) It is especially touching because some of the buildings which Olbrich built for the Art School at Darmstadt during the first decade of the twentieth century strongly suggest not only earlier American forms but also a few designs made by Wright while he was still in Europe and shortly after his return. Wright of course says nothing about all this, but there was clearly some deep affinity at work between the two men.

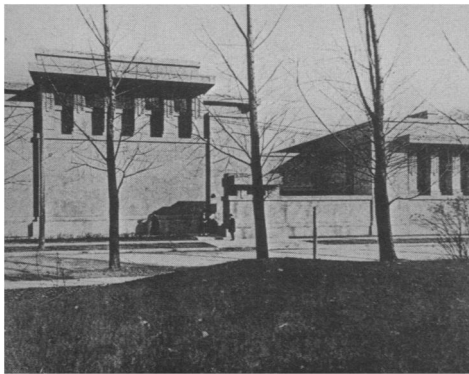
On the other hand, Wright’s buildings are more complex, more integrated, and I think we must say more multiple in meaning than Olbrich’s are. They are in that sense much more Freudian in structure. But we should perhaps try to read them at first in the driest and most straightforward of functional and structural ways, as expressions of a typically American passion, strong in the late nineteenth century, for practical organization and rationalized order. They can sustain even this supremely well. The Larkin Building can be read—indeed was read by the Dutch



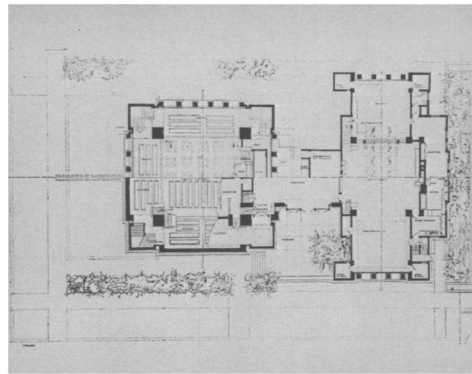
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
Interior Court



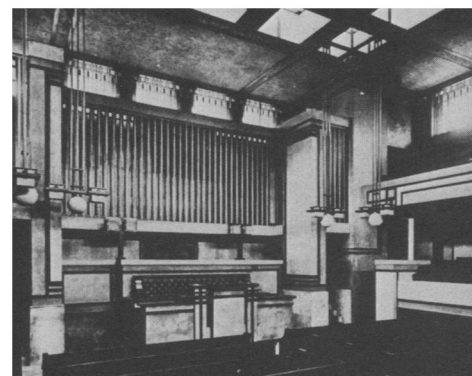
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
Office Interior



Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple, Unity House



Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple, Unity House
Plan



Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple
Interior of auditorium

architect Berlage—as a great machine, perfectly organized to carry out machine-age tasks. And Reyner Banham, claiming rather inaccurately that no one had done so before him, later praised it as a perfectly integrated environment. It is certainly all that and must be seen as it fulfills its primary function as an agreeable place to work. The desks of the office workers are set (were set) on spacious balconies around a central open space lighted from above. The employees had ample restroom and locker facilities and safe fire stairs enclosed in the corner towers. There was a roof garden. The noise and distractions of the neighborhood outside, near the railroad tracks, were filtered out by keeping the windows high so that the whole lift inside was to the sky, beautifully carried by the vertical piers of the structure, through which the horizontal floor slabs rode and in whose depth the filing cabinets were fitted. They, like all the furniture, were designed by the architect and adjusted to the entire structure. It was a great accomplishment; an uplifting place to work in, and Wright shows us on the outside that this is what the building is for, with its stairs, balcony levels, high windows, and noble central space reaching up at last to light and ornament and the symbolic sphere.

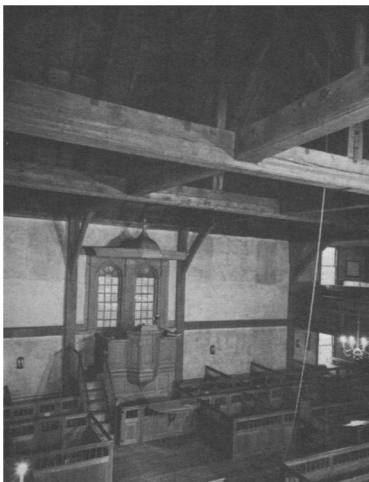
In his own extremely lucid descriptions of how he designed Unity Temple, Wright takes a similarly rational, clear, and hardheaded line. Now he will have no symbol at all, he says, by which he means no steeple. Instead it must be one great meeting room with a subsidiary space for parish activities on the other side. Entrance will be between the two with the pastor's headquarters bridging between them. These functions will be housed by concrete walls, laid up in wooden forms and with the pebble aggregate brought forward to the surface so that no painting or plastering will be required on the outside. For economy the construction forms should be reusable; hence walls of the same size are suggested by them—so forming a Froebel cube, “a noble form,” Wright says. With all that figured out beforehand, the architect then draws the scheme up through one long night, so that the plan, abstract as it seems, grows directly in a “new unity” out of the logic of the functional requirements and the structural facts, with little “secondary revision” involved. One will enter the great room from below, primarily from cloisters at the sides, so as not to disturb the rest of the congregation, and the crowds will flow down and out again past the minister in the pulpit who will thus be able, so Wright tells us, to greet them all as they leave. Otherwise, everyone has a fine view of the speaker, is indeed intimately connected with him, and hears him well, protected from outside distractions and lighted no less peacefully than inspiringly from above. Though one is inside a solid mass, no mass is felt. The stripping conceals the piers and carries the eye upward and around them so that only a

9. The tapping of the dream structure involved in the modern release of the self seems a much likelier source than the totally unrelated theories of Einstein (as cited by Giedion, for example) for the appearance of such elements in Wright and Cubism. Clearly, abstract art can be the most personal of all arts, since it is the most purely self-referential and, as we have already shown, can be the closest to "unconscious" motivations.

weightless space-defining character is felt in the surrounding planes. (Something of the sort was worked out at much greater scale in Hagia Sophia.) But here the space is small enough so that it is all one's own and the transparent simultaneities and interwoven compositions enlarge it around the self.⁹ One tends to climb to the top and look down into the center, protected and enclosed but also liberated and irradiated by the light coming down from above. Here is another of Wright's greatest displacements and intensifications of a model source, which is the traditional meeting house of New England, whose spire, we remember he had eschewed. Now the walls at once solidify and dissolve; the roof parts around its beams, and the heavenly light of Froebel's system shines through.

It is therefore obvious that Unity Temple and the Larkin Building, the two major buildings where Wright brings his family-formed individuals into the community environment of work and worship, fulfill their functions supremely well and are integrated in structure, space, and massing in ways undreamed of since the days of those Gothic cathedrals from which Wright had received his primary training. But there is surely much more to say about them than this, and it has to do with the symbols which are built into their forms. Let us begin by using, for simplicity if not for the whole truth, the Jungian Death-and-Resurrection and Hell-and-Heaven archetypes I mentioned earlier. On the outside of the Larkin Building we are shown what the interior is like, but we cannot enter it at the front. An arched entrance was originally proposed here but was discarded; so once more we have to look for an entrance at the side. There it is, tucked away. But it is guarded by some rather threatening objects. Down comes the fountain slab with a crack and cuts something off: water, a metal sheet. Anyway, watch out, especially as the monster is spouting formidably paternalistic slogans at the same time. Beyond it, if we make it, a dark narrow pathway between high threatening masses leads up into the building through doors of clear glass. Not really inviting, it is a heroic passage, but it pulls us in, where we find ourselves in a low, dark place, compressed by weighty structural masses, but if we follow forward: Hallelujah! Death and Resurrection, Hell to Heaven, mounting in "the heavenly ascent" like Dante guided by Beatrice toward the "supersensuous light."

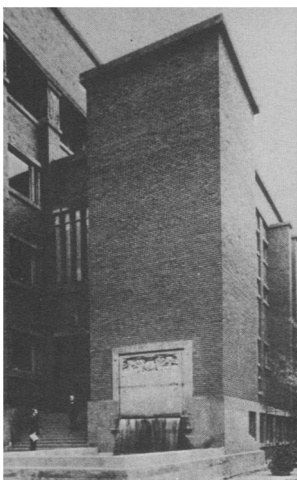
The plan itself, read this way, sings through all its abstraction of such tension and release, of what Jung called "frustration and transcendence." It embodies, if we return to Freud's more sober and clinical terms, the fact that "any given process originates in an unpleasant state of tension and thereupon determines for itself such a path that its ultimate issue coincides with a relaxation of this tension." And we can also recall Freud's



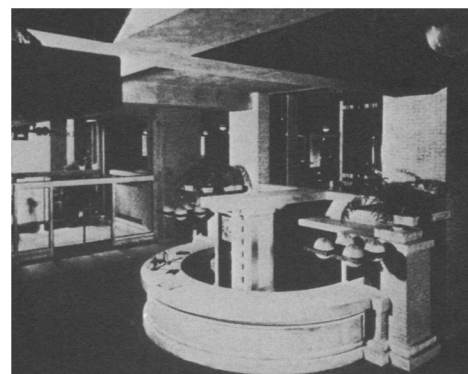
Old Ship Meeting House, 1681
Hingham, Massachusetts



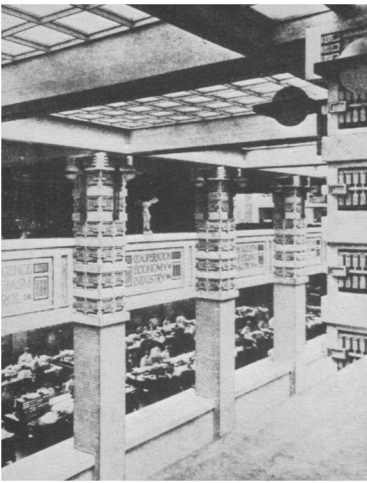
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building



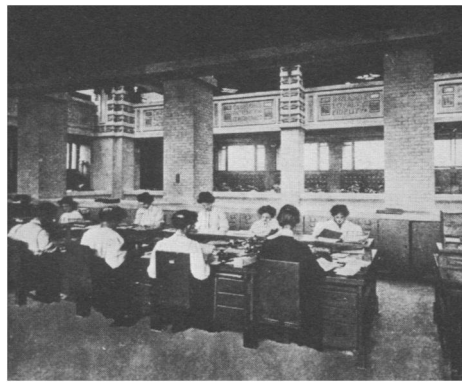
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
Entrance



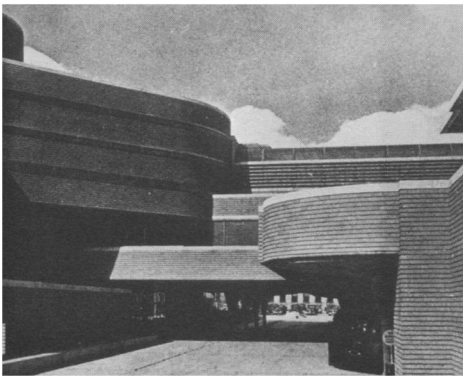
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
Information desk in entrance hall



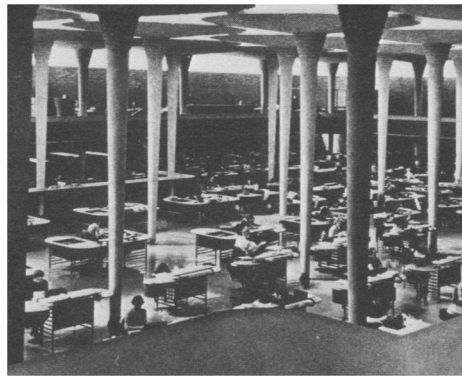
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
Partial view of upper gallery



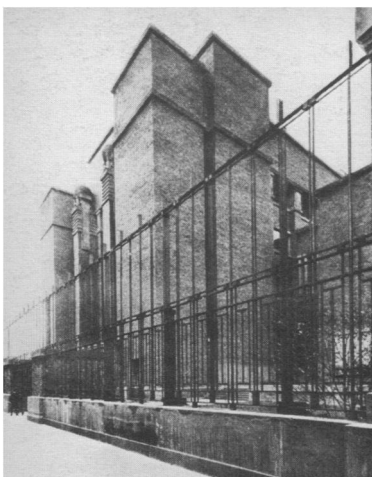
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building
View toward interior court



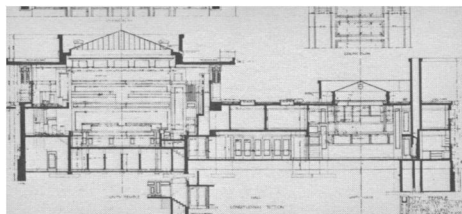
Frank Lloyd Wright
Johnson's Wax Administration Building, 1936–39
Racine, Wisconsin



Frank Lloyd Wright
Johnson's Wax Administration Building
Interior



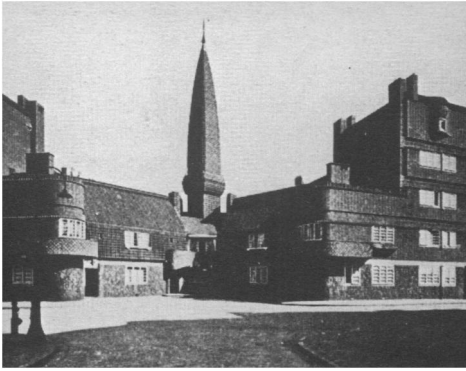
Frank Lloyd Wright
Larkin Building



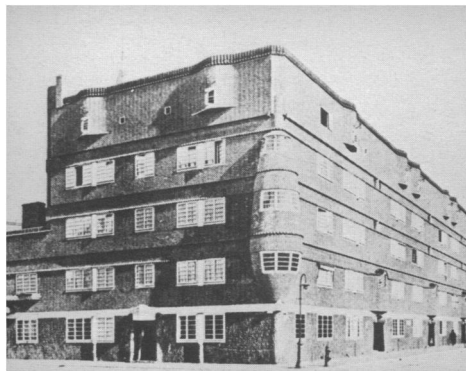
Frank Lloyd Wright
Unity Temple, Unity House
Section

own touching description of the course of a successful analysis, passing, so he says, through a wood, into a defile, and out into the open at last. The Jungian concept of the archetype is useful here, too, I think, in the Heaven to which we are at last introduced. So religious was the atmosphere that the management, as we know, introduced an organ for the appropriate "edifice of sound." It was their recognition of what can only be called, with Wallace Stevens, an American Sublime. And that environment created for the typists takes on further dimension when we remember Melville's sadistic story called "The Tartarus of Maids," about starved women working in a freezing cold horror factory somewhere in the North. Melville contrasted their state, in a fine perverted nineteenth-century polarity, with that of young men reading law in warm lodgings in London, in what he called "A Paradise of Bachelors." There was clearly plenty of sadism and guilt bound up in men's treatment of women throughout the earlier industrial period. Now, beset by paternalistic slogans, the typists can be regarded as saved, transported to Paradise themselves. In the Larkin Soap Company's house publication Wright called it all "a family gathering."

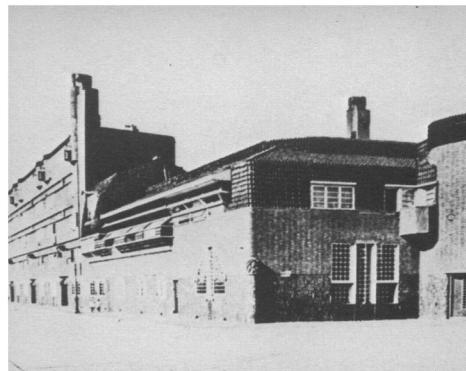
Wright did all this once again in the Johnson Wax Building of 1936, there in even more oceanic, and female, terms. We are pulled into the current, drowned, resurrected, and floated up to a watery heaven with the supersensuous light flooding down. A philosopher in a horrid interdepartmental seminar many years ago once remarked of this, "Isn't it rather excessive for typists?" Fortunately one could recall that other early modern prophet, Marx, and ask, I think correctly, "If not for workers, for whom?" The natural corollary to the tapping of the individual unconscious has to be the disappearance of a hierarchy of programs. As Wallace Stevens said, "The sublime comes down to the spirit and space." The modern human being must take it where he can find it, and if everyone can get it, so much the better. Certainly Wright was extremely proud of his achievement in the Larkin Building, which may be another reason why he for once gave his vertical piers free rein. Such a shout of triumph it is—the father victorious in the place of work—while Unity Temple, a concrete monolith, can be seen as the sacred mountain of the goddess with her cavern deep within it, her precious heavy box with its secret room inside. So we follow the labyrinth around the side, under the low, dark entrance into the gentle shadows, then forward again toward the light, all opening before us until we come up into the transcendent meeting space where the lifting shapes sing together in their chorus. They indeed transcend their archetype and are in fact Unitarian and Universalist, united and free, a brand-new structure of modern



Michael de Klerk
Public Utility Housing, 1918–21
Amsterdam, Holland



Michael de Klerk
Public Utility Housing, 1918–21
Amsterdam, Holland



Michael de Klerk
Public Utility Housing, 1918–21
Amsterdam, Holland

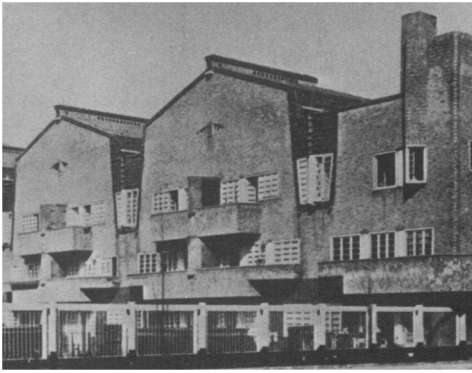


Frank Lloyd Wright
Mrs. Thomas Gale House, 1909
Oak Park, Illinois

symbolic form. Here, as in the Larkin Building, Wright's own Utopianism, his evangelically American democratic optimism give his work a special flavor which cannot be easily or wholly subsumed under Jung's religious visions or Freud's deeply sorrowful analytical stance. Yet we can hardly help but feel, in this ultimate edifice of new unity, that Freud's analysis of dreams and any deep experience of Unity Temple must in some sense coincide, since each has a kind of final result: the illumination of the individual human spirit and its release into the ultimate family, the community of mankind. Above all, what seemed closed, like the human mind or this building on the outside, is opened—what seemed dark, is light.

• • •

About that community of light in the twentieth century I cannot forebear to say one quick word as epilogue. Wright's buildings have sometimes been deprecated because they seem to serve primarily a restricted middle class. Freud has been criticized on similar grounds. Yet some of the finest Social-Democratic public housing built in Europe during this century owed a good deal to Wright's earlier work. One thinks first of the housing in Amsterdam during and just after World War I, where the most important architect was Michael de Klerk. De Klerk achieved his own condensation of symbols out of a Dutch past, like the spire in his Public Utility Housing of 1918–21, but the strong horizontal continuities that bring the heavy brick work into motion would have been unthinkable without the influence of Wright. They swing the building out from its old symbols to a new horizontal velocity along the railroad tracks. So in this community housing destined largely for railroad workers—who, in the European way, were proudly bound up both in their trade and their working-class solidarity—de Klerk indeed designed the whole group like a train of cars in motion, pulled along smartly by a powerfully chugging locomotive at the other end. Wright never allowed himself such overt representation of recognizable images in building form, but the feel of the whole as of much of Amsterdam is like that of his expansive, heavy, horizontally dynamic Midway Gardens of 1914 (now gone). Or take Wright's projection of flat-planed volumetric balconies, as on the Gale House. These had a profound effect in Holland. It is not too much to say that de Klerk quotes them at one remove in another of his housing projects, of 1921. Then that motif is expanded enormously in scale and lifted on great arches reminiscent of those of Richardson and Wright, and it becomes the monumental embodiment of Social-Democratic solidarity and defiance in the unmatched low-cost public housing that was built in Vienna between 1919 and 1934.



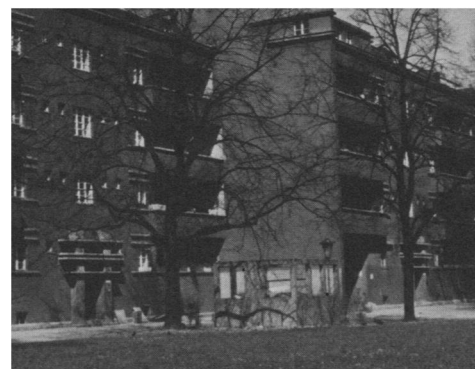
Michael de Klerk
Public Housing, 1921
Amsterdam, Holland



Karl Ehn
Karl Marx Hof
Vienna, Austria, 1927

The Heiligenstadt Houses of 1927, called, loyally and provocatively, the Karl Marx Hof, culminated that development. There the great images were drawn up in battle line to face the main street on one side and the urban railroad station on the other. They were the symbols of left-wing Vienna set out for all their friends and enemies to see. Beyond them north and south along the Heiligenstadt Strasse stretched spacious enclosed courtyards, long and wide, protected by narrow iron-grated entrances from the hostile forces outside. In those courtyards the aura of Wright is very strong—long balconies, interwoven planes. But the great flag-bearing insignia have got to be, I think, among the most moving of twentieth-century shapes, certainly among the most empathetically powerful. Fireplaces, chimneys, and balconies, not to mention Egyptian temples, Roman triumphal arches, and Gothic cathedral facades, are condensed into one body with outstretched arms to make the mother of all forms. It is remarkably like an enormous image of the great Stone Age Mother herself, as we can still see her today warding off anxiety from her own breast-shaped houses, the trulli of Apulia.

Can Karl Ehn and his associated architects who built the Karl Marx Hof have consciously had such images in mind? Probably not. One supposes that Jung would have liked to think that, at the least, some unconscious folk-memory guided their hands in their need for a magical sign to ward off the danger that already threatened these houses from the political right wing. Can Freud, who was explicitly no Marxist, have paid any attention to what went on here, and can he have recognized this most majestic of symbols for what it was? One guesses not, in this instance as well—and there is no expression whatsoever of interest in these houses to be found in Freud's biography—though Freud's own apartment on the Berggasse, as we mentioned earlier, was packed with archaeological objects embodying related themes.



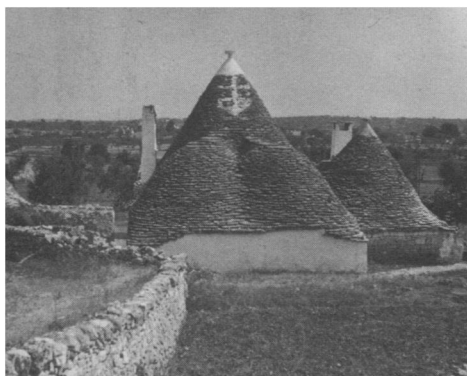
Karl Ehn
Karl Marx Hof



Karl Ehn
Karl Marx Hof

Can Ehn, in the larger sense, have been affected by Freud's work, or do we come at the end to another historical parallel, this time a poignant and rather ironic one? Ironic because the community houses of Vienna, the homes of that working class with which psychoanalysis from that day to this has failed to establish contact, were in sober fact Freud's protection and that of his house; they were the fortresses of that left wing which was, by the mid-thirties, the only serious bulwark that remained between Austria and the aggression of the National Socialists in Germany. And when those houses were stormed by Dolfuss and the Heimwehr in 1934, that bulwark was swept away, and the Nazis entered Vienna in the Anschluss of 1938. Freud, "the Jewish witch doctor," was forced to flee. He died in exile in London in 1939. Four of his sisters were not able to get out and were exterminated in the Final Solution.

Now, of course, we can see the Karl Marx Hof and the other community houses at peace under Austria's present Social-Democratic government, and occupied once more as they were intended to be. The Secession Building is also still there, rather playfully fulfilling its function in a typically Viennese way. Closer to home, Unity Temple, unlike the Larkin Building and so many other lost and irreplaceable masterpieces of American architecture, is still with us. But the process whereby it, like all great works of art, came to form will always remain one of the sacramental mysteries of our humanity. Freud above all recognized the inexhaustible ambiguity of art and even resented it a little, I think, and clearly held its link with the mind's secrets in the greatest reverence and awe. Wright tells us something about that as he draws up Unity Temple in his study. He writes:



Trulli
Apulia, Italy



Freud's Apartment on the Berggasse
Vienna, Austria



Frank Lloyd Wright
Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, 1889
Oak Park, Illinois
Entry

In all artists it is the same.

**Now comes to brood—to suffer doubt
and burn with eagerness. To test
bearings—and prove assumed ground
by putting all together in definite scale
on paper. . . .**

**Yet what a poor creature, after all,
creation comes singing through. . . .**

**Night labor at the drafting board is
best for intense creation. It may
continue uninterrupted.**

**Meanwhile, reflections are passing in
the mind . . . the “fine thing” is reality.
(Freud would have said the same.)**

**Reality is spirit . . . essence brooding
just behind aspect!**

**Seize it! And . . . after all, reality is
supergeometric; casting a spell or a
“charm” over every geometry. . . .**

**Yes, it seems to me, that is what it
means to be an artist . . . to seize this
essence brooding just behind aspect.
These questions arising each with its
train of thought by the way, as at work.**

It is morning.

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