

This article was downloaded by: [Texas A & M International University]

On: 05 October 2014, At: 02:21

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The Journal of Architecture

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjar20>

Between icon and institution: the vacillating significance of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum

Samiran Chanchani^a

^a College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, 247 4th Street, Atlanta GA, 30332, USA

Published online: 08 Dec 2010.

To cite this article: Samiran Chanchani (2000) Between icon and institution: the vacillating significance of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum, The Journal of Architecture, 5:2, 159-188, DOI:

[10.1080/136023600408692](https://doi.org/10.1080/136023600408692)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/136023600408692>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Between icon and institution: the vacillating significance of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum

Samiran Chanchani

*College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of
Technology, 247 4th Street, Atlanta GA 30332
USA*

How might the perceived significance of an architectural work change across time, and what are the parameters within which such a changed perception is manifested? These are questions that this paper attempts to answer through a study of writings on Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum. The writings discussed range from those published in the mid-1940s, when Wright's early schemes were first seen in journals, to the more recent criticism of the restoration and addition by Gwathmey Seigel Architects. The varying significance accorded to the Guggenheim Museum as well as the underlying regularities guiding the variations are discussed. A dichotomy is identified in writings on the Guggenheim Museum between the building comprehended as an architectural icon and as one understood as serving the institutional needs of an art museum. It is suggested that this dichotomy, formed despite (and sometimes abetted by) the attempts of historians and critics to offer reasoned understandings of the building, was eventually resolved through the absorption of the iconic value of Wright's building into the institutional programme of the museum.

Introduction

In February 1986, the AIA conferred on Frank Lloyd Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum an award in celebration of its 25th year. Far from singing paeans about the building, *Architecture*, the official journal of the AIA, covered the event with a report by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean that describes the chequered history of its critical reception. The report begins with these words from Lewis Mumford's article 'What Wright has Wrought':

The Guggenheim Museum is a formidable, ponderous, closed-in concrete structure of almost indescribable individuality . . . in every aspect of architecture, except as an abstract composition of interior space, one's final judg-

ment of Wright's Guggenheim Museum must be a sadly unfavorable one.¹

Mumford's reaction, the report points out, belongs to a larger body of the then contemporary writings that received the building negatively. While a few writers, like Philip Johnson, called the Guggenheim 'New York's greatest building, one of the greatest rooms of the 20th century . . . ' many others seemed to agree with art critic John Canaday who saw the building as a 'war between architecture and painting in which both come out badly maimed.'² The news report in *Architecture* suggests that over the years the Guggenheim had become a battlefield in an 'ongoing war between architecture and art, architects and curators,

functionalists and formalists.' The most recent manifestation of the 'war' cited in that report is the controversy over the proposed major addition to the existing building by New York architects Gwathmey Seigel. It is significant that the building that was once pointedly criticised is by this time perceived as a monument not to be disturbed. As Dean writes in the report, 'What were regarded as its transgressions in the past have been forgiven, if not totally forgotten.'³

In the main, the *Architecture* report traces the history of the reception and criticism of the building rather than of its construction and use. The implication here is that what makes a building significant is not only its physical presence, but also the manner in which it is received and understood. The differing ways in which this building is understood at different times become apparent in the writings on the museum. That the news report considers writings on and criticisms of the building to be significant contributions is important as it brings out two notions pertinent to my paper. First, that the significance of the Guggenheim Museum, far from remaining consistent over time and across writings, is subject to appreciable change in comprehension; second, that the Guggenheim Museum is often discussed in relation to larger issues, ranging from debates related to architecture proper to those outside of it. The news report, however, does not describe the complexity of writings and criticism on the building, even as it discerns the changing significance of the building over a period as short as 25 years. Writings on the Guggenheim Museum, and the changes therein, are far more complex than the report suggests.

My paper is a study of writings on the Guggenheim Museum published over a period of about five decades. An aim is to understand the ways in which the building was comprehended during important phases in its history. The paper assumes that the differing significance of the building is manifested in accordance with certain regularities. Regularities imply the organisation of concepts and images defined by conformity to set procedures and principles seen to recur in these writings. Regularities describe and allow for the formation of relationships between different ideas, which effectively arrange representations of the building in the writings about it. Regularities may be discerned, for example, in the repeated use of concepts such as 'space,' 'function,' or 'structure' to describe the museum; in the recurring use of metaphors such as 'the chambered nautilus' to illustrate the form of the museum; and in the repeated use of certain kinds of visual representations such as the plan, perspective drawings or photographs taken from a specific angle. These repetitions, however, may not constitute regularities by themselves. What gives definition to the term 'regularities' is the consistent way in which these different notions are ordered to form and inform interpretations of the building. The paper describes regularities as they are discerned from the writings about the building, and to see how these are themselves subject to change.

Keeping in view the purpose of describing the varying significance accorded to the Guggenheim Museum throughout writings about it and across time, the paper is organised in three sections and a conclusion. The first section discusses the ways

in which the museum building has been interpreted in what may be called 'histories' of the Guggenheim Museum. The second section describes the plurality of significances accorded to the Guggenheim Museum in writings aimed at reporting the controversy surrounding the Gwathmey Seigel addition to the building. The third section provides an overview of the changing significance of the Guggenheim Museum from the time of publication of the earliest writings on it until the present day.

Chronological systems in the 'histories' of the Guggenheim Museum

Broadly speaking, 'histories' of Wright's Guggenheim Museum place the building in two chronological systems. The first of these is a system internal to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. The second system of chronology is formed around the design and construction of the building and the subsequent working of the institution. These chronological systems are often found in the same writings on the building, indicating that the two bear upon each other in certain ways.

A first chronological system: the Guggenheim Museum as a culminating point in Wright's architecture

William Jordy's scholarly essay on the Guggenheim Museum is the first substantial historical work on the building.⁴ Jordy's assessment takes as a point of departure the following paradox that it sees in the building: 'How tragic, then, that this embodiment on a heroic scale of so much that is central to Wright's philosophy of architecture and life

should in many ways be disappointing.'⁵ For Jordy, the building is '*the* culminating statement in Wright's achievement after World War II ...';⁶ however, this 'culminating statement' refers to concepts not entirely realised in the physical reality of the building. Jordy writes that the building is 'a mere sketch of what it should be, raw and bare, and in part painfully awkward.'⁷ Jordy sees the Guggenheim Museum as the building that becomes meaningful in relation to Wright's philosophical ideas and architectural themes that he pursued through his life. The contingencies of construction and the requirements of the institution appear to be factors that impede the full realisation of the concept.

Jordy constructs a chronological system describing the development of Wright's architecture to interpret the Guggenheim as a fulfillment of the architect's ideas. Referring to the building, he writes that

... it is the point of focus for what had preceded in Wright's work, and a point of projection for what he believed organic architecture might become. Assertively unique as the Guggenheim is, it emerges from four recurrent themes in his career: the circle; the cantilever; the interpenetrated form; the walled building enclosing a large unitary space surrounded by balconies.⁸

Jordy goes on to explain how these four formal themes were consistently (if not concurrently) present in Wright's architecture. He builds a thematic chronology of buildings and projects designed by Wright with the Guggenheim building positioned as the culminating work. The theme of the circle is

seen to recur in the mural at the Coonley Residence (1909), the Midway Gardens Project (1914), in the Sugar Loaf Mountain Project (1925) as well as in works such as the V. C. Morris Gift Shop (1948–50), two Pittsburgh projects (1947) and the David Wright House (1952) – the last four designed after the drawing of the initial scheme of the Museum. The theme of the cantilever is traced back to the Mrs Thomas Gale House (1909) and the Robie House, and subsequently to Fallingwater (1936–8) and Sturges House (1939). The theme of interpenetration is seen to occur in 'Romeo and Juliet' (1896) as well as the Robie House and Fallingwater. The theme of the unitary space occurs in the Larkin Building (1904–6), Unity Church (1904–7), the Johnson Wax Building (1936–7) and the V.C. Morris Gift Shop.⁹ It is significant that in none of these buildings do all four of the themes occur concurrently. Only in the Guggenheim Museum are they brought together under a single conceptual scheme. This gives the Guggenheim Museum a privileged position in the chronological system constructed by Jordy.

Jordy is neither the first to construct a chronology internal to Wright's work nor alone in doing so. As early as 1959, the year when the museum opened to the public, Peter Blake formulated such a chronology in his often-cited article 'The Guggenheim: Museum or Monument'.¹⁰ Blake wrote: 'The most remarkable fact about the Guggenheim Museum is that it represents, literally, the summing up of almost everything Wright tried to do in his lifetime.'¹¹ Blake's understanding of Wright's architectural themes, however, is quite different from Jordy's. According to him:

What Wright tried to do over the years, in logical order and with utter dedication, was this: first the creation of open rectangular structures that contained open spaces; next, the manipulation of space so it began to move within structures – horizontally outward and inward, as well as up and down; then the development of *fluid* structures to complement fluid space – fluid structures not entirely unlike those found in sea-shells; and finally, the complete marriage of fluid structure and fluid space. The Guggenheim Museum is the most important fruit of that marriage.¹²

While the understanding of Wright's 'themes of a lifetime' seem to be so different in the writings of Blake and Jordy, the examples that they use to elucidate their interpretations, as well as the chronology of projects and buildings that they describe are not. Only one of the buildings discussed by Blake is not mentioned in this context in the Jordy article – the Imperial Hotel. Significant as the use of similar examples might be, a deeper resemblance between the two writers is suggested here. In both articles, as mentioned earlier, a chronological organisation of Wright's work and ideas is constructed to position the Guggenheim as the climactic achievement.¹³

Other writers have used similar chronological systems to explain the Guggenheim Museum. David Watkin uses a chronological and a thematic formulation quite similar to Jordy's.¹⁴ In his report on the Guggenheim Museum, historian and Wright scholar Jack Quinan also constructs a chronology of Wright's projects to explain the relation of the Guggenheim with the architect's lifelong philosophical beliefs and

passion for geometry.¹⁵ Consistent with the aforementioned chronological formulations, in Quinan's too the Guggenheim occupies a pre-eminent position. The mode of writing described above is also found even in broader histories of modern architecture. Kenneth Frampton sees in the Guggenheim the attainment of an Utopian vision present in earlier works.¹⁶ Like Frampton, Tafuri and Dal Co also place the building under the umbrella of Wright's usonian ideals, while linking it to his earlier works.¹⁷ William Curtis sees in the Guggenheim the apotheosis of Wright's organic philosophy, which, present in earlier works, is fully realised here.¹⁸ Trachtenberg and Hyman find in the Guggenheim Museum a development of the underlying scheme of the Larkin building.¹⁹ Scully sees the Guggenheim as not only a culminating building in Wright's career, but also as a final outcome of modern architecture.²⁰ In all these cases interpretations of the Guggenheim are made possible by relating it to earlier works of Wright, and by forming a chronology of the crystallisation of Wright's ideas in his architecture. The interpretations given to the building are certainly diverse; the system of chronological arrangement and the emergence of the museum as the important work of this phase, if not the culminating building of Wright's career, is consistent across these writings.²¹ This chronological system is the first of the two that may be discerned from the 'histories' of the Guggenheim Museum.

A second chronological system: dynamics of the building and the institution

A second chronology within which the Guggenheim Museum is placed relates the building with the institution quite explicitly. The past of the institution, the

long period of construction of Wright's building, and the institutional and architectural changes thereafter are recounted here. The position accorded to Wright's building within this chronological system is varying. In some instances, the building and its construction are the focal point of the writings, while in others the building is an incident (although a significant one) in a larger history of the institution. In either case, the building and the institution are put into a complex and often conflicting relationship with each other. This complexity is enhanced by the fact that the first and the second chronological systems are not mutually exclusive constructs; they often occur in the same writing, putting into motion a dynamic association between the building seen as a consequence of the aesthetic and philosophical intentions of the architect and the museum understood as institution.

Up to four stages in the history of the Guggenheim may be identified in the writings which use the second chronology. The first discusses the formation of the institution. This stage is often seen as the beginning of a 'story', wherein Solomon Guggenheim came into contact with Hilla Rebay and began his collection of non-objective art. Different personalities, ranging from Rebay to Wassily Kandinsky to Rudolph Bauer are credited for having a formative influence in the establishment of the institution for exhibiting the works.²²

The second stage describes the conception of the building. This stage is seen to commence in about 1939, when Rebay voices her desire to house Solomon Guggenheim's collection of paintings in a permanent museum building. This eventually leads to the commissioning of the project from Wright

in 1943.²³ Pertinent to this stage are Wright's early conceptions of the museum, the genesis of the spiral form, his presentation of the model; importance is also given to the delaying of the project because of the war, the acquisition of the site, and Wright's exchange of ideas with Rebay and with Guggenheim. Less significant in these histories is the considerable amount of publicity that the project received at the time.²⁴

The third stage in this chronology is formed around the construction of the building. This begins after 1949, when Guggenheim died and several institutional changes took place – of which a most significant one was the replacement of Rebay by James Johnson Sweeney, a key event that brought Wright and the institution at odds with each other. The writing on this stage is marked by two recurrent themes. The first addresses the institutional changes that took place. The second addresses the feasibility of the project and its construction, as well as conflicts with the city of New York over building codes.²⁵

The beginning of the fourth stage is marked by the death of Wright, the completion of the museum and its critical reception. This stage is seen as beginning in 1959–60 and continuing to the present. Perhaps more than any other period in the past of the Guggenheim Museum, this stage is one of institutional changes; the substantial changes that the building undergoes are often judged to be consequences of changing institutional needs.²⁶ Some changes are observed to be attempts to undo the wrongs committed on Wright's building by Sweeney.²⁷ The Gwathmey Seigel addition is the most significant change made to the Wright building during this time. Indeed, a number of the

histories were written after the completion of the addition and alterations to Wright's building by Gwathmey Seigel Architects.²⁸ In many of these writings, the interpretation of Wright's building is a base on which judgements of the Gwathmey Seigel addition are built. Quinan is one of the writers who see the addition as having a negative effect on the building. He writes:

While it is quixotic, at this point, to argue for an authentic restoration and a return to the building's function solely as a repository and exhibition space for Solomon Guggenheim's collection of non-objective paintings, it is clear that the recent alterations by Gwathmey Seigel have seriously compromised the essential spiritual qualities of Wright's design, that is to say, the transcendency of the spiraling rotunda.²⁹

On the other hand, Tom Krens, the director of the Guggenheim Museum, writes that the work of Gwathmey Seigel had a dual purpose – to increase display and administrative space and to return Wright's building to its original condition. He states:

Guided by the administration's desire to return all elements of the museum's architecture to their original state, the restoration process was as committed to historical accuracy as to preservation. As an institution, the Guggenheim has finally come to terms with Wright's design . . . The restoration of Wright's building to its pre-original condition has redeemed a troublesome history and resolved a basic dilemma – the antagonism between the architecture and the art that it was meant to house – that has bedeviled the museum from its inception.³⁰

Krens' text is a history of the institution in which Wright's building is an important 'event'. A chronology internal to Wright's *oeuvre*, wherein the Guggenheim Museum epitomises the work of a lifetime, is of little importance for him. Rather, Wright's building is judged as one that challenges the curatorial functions it must fulfill. The Gwathmey Seigel addition is seen to resolve many of the challenges presented to the curator, a task it supposedly performs without compromising the existing building. For while Wright's purported intentions are of little importance to Krens, that the building itself is a work of art on display is never questioned. Indeed, the institution presents as its continuing programme the notion that its museum buildings have architectural and artistic value – a programme for which Wright's building serves as the historic example. Krens writes:

As a discourse on twentieth century values – which are so closely linked to art and culture of the period – the Wright building itself is an extraordinary work of art. Architectural quality and architectural adventure are attributes that have been associated with the Guggenheim since its inception.³¹

The architectural quality of Wright's building, its 'extraordinariness,' epitomises the institution's programme of constructing equally extraordinary museum buildings in different parts of the world. Krens writes of the Hans Hollein-designed museum in Salzburg that 'As a commentary on architecture [it] is both the opposite and the complement of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building in New York.' Similarly, the Frank Gehry project in Bilbao, Spain [he writes] '... is as important and unique in its own right as

the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Guggenheim.'³² Apart from being an artefact in its own right, Wright's building is set up to play another role in this institutional framework – one of a standard with which other museum buildings of the institution have to measure up. The attribute 'architectural quality' is abstracted from Wright's building to be applied to any of the other Guggenheim Museums around the world, no matter how different they may be, both formally and in their functioning.

Unlike Krens, for Quinan, the second chronology is clearly less important than the understanding of the Wright building as the culmination of the architect's philosophical and aesthetic beliefs. Ending his summation of the long process of the conception and construction of the building, Quinan writes:

While this skeletal summary provides an indication of the major events and dates that mark the sixteen-year history of the design and construction of the Guggenheim Museum, it only hints at the extraordinary tenacity with which Wright pursued the commission...Wright's persistence with the Guggenheim project in the face of unprecedented opposition from every quarter, including his own failing health, suggests that this commission held particular significance for him.³³

The second chronology here serves the purpose of augmenting the place the building occupies in the *first* chronology. Such association between the two systems sets up a relationship of friction between the institution and the building. Quinan sees a continual clash between the institution and the building in the changes that took place over the years after the opening of the museum.³⁴ The Gwathmey

Seigel addition and alteration are discussed in this light. Quinan writes about these latest changes: 'These most recent alterations and additions, driven primarily by the need for more exhibition space, have seriously compromised the Wright-designed building inside and out.'³⁵ Clearly, this judgement of the recent alterations seems to be opposed to Krens', who implies that justice has finally been done to Wright's building.

The histories of the Guggenheim Museum reveal that within the boundaries of certain discernable regularities (such as those described by the chronologies), Wright's building is subject to different interpretations. The significance of the building seems to arise out of the manner and the place where the object 'Wright's building' emerges in the writings. Depending on the location of its emergence, the Guggenheim is broadly understood either as a culminating point in Wright's architecture, or as an integral (and even iconic) part of an institution. The dynamic relationship between the institution and the building that is set up in these histories forms a point of departure in the controversy and debate surrounding the Gwathmey Seigel addition to Wright's building. For while the nature of the writings that partake in the controversy is different from that of the histories, the aforementioned polarities still form and inform the significance of the Guggenheim Museum.

The addition and the restoration to an 'original' condition

The earliest articles that referred to the restoration of the Guggenheim Museum appeared towards the end of 1985. In a report published in *Architecture*

magazine, Lynn Nesmith described reactions to the proposed restoration and addition to Wright's building. The article cited commentators equally divided between those who supported the addition and those who opposed it. William Wesley Peters, opposing the project, asserted that, 'If the present proposed high-rise attempt to second guess Wright's design is realized, the world may bid farewell to the quality and spirit that are inherent in this major work of transcendent genius.' Kevin Roche, a supporter, wrote: 'I believe that not only will [the addition] solve the museum's functional needs in a sensible and appropriate way, but it will do so without impairing the character of one of Wright's great masterpieces.' Roche seems to be echoing the ideas of the architect of the project, Charles Gwathmey, who was cited as saying: 'The palette and the materials were selected to render each component as an articulate element of the whole. Our purpose was to preserve the integrity of the Wright masterpiece.'³⁶

Most of the writers and critics mentioned above discussed the addition in terms of its relationship with Wright's building. Not surprisingly, this was to be a characteristic feature of the debate and criticism over the next decade, wherein Wright's building and its interpretation formed the basis for the critique of the addition. It appears, both from the brief report cited above and the larger debate that was to follow, that a generally accepted understanding of Wright's building as 'original' and a work of art was shared by many, regardless of their opinion on the addition. The apparently stable significance of Wright's building in the controversy is questioned in an article written by Alan Plattus

and Celia Imrey, who suggest that the premise of an unambiguous understanding of the building as presented in the criticism is problematic.³⁷ Indeed, writings that critique the Gwathmey Seigel project do both – ascribe a plurality of interpretations to the Wright building while accepting unquestioningly its significance as *the* original work of art – presenting an apparently paradoxical situation that needs to be explained.

Despite their concurrence with many of the histories, this set of writings differ from them in that chronological systems are not manifested with perceptible regularity. This is pertinent because a purpose that chronological systems served was not just giving the building a privileged position in Wright's architecture or as part of the institution, but also providing rationales for its significance. In rare cases are chronological systems suggested in this set of writings; two instances of this are an article by Kenneth Frampton and the criticism of the addition by Martin Filler.³⁸ However, the significance of Wright's building as a 'masterpiece', a 'work of transcendent genius' and 'an important architectural resource' is accepted by most others without such reasoning.³⁹ In many writings of the period, Wright's building is treated with undiluted reverence.

An example of the veneration accorded to Wright's building is Michael Sorkin's criticism of the early scheme for the addition by Gwathmey Seigel. In his critique, 'Leaving Wright Enough Alone', Sorkin wrote: 'Not simply is this [the Wright building] a work of undisputed genius, perhaps the greatest building in the city; it's one of the pre-eminent icons of American architecture . . . ' and

went on to compare the addition with the defacing of the *Mona Lisa*.⁴⁰ Sorkin's treatment of the building may be considered an extreme version of a generally accepted notion that the building is an extraordinary work of art that provides participants in the debate with a stable ground for discussion.⁴¹ Yet, acceptance of the building as art did not provide a sufficient basis for the criticism of the addition, since it did little to explain either its formal qualities or institutional functions housed in the building. A more clear understanding of Wright's building was needed for critics to explain how it might be affected by the addition, and this opened the way for novel interpretations of the Wright building – *now without recourse to the chronological systems found in the histories*. What is significant is that even in the absence of chronological regularities, the plurality of significances accorded to Wright's building still emerges between a common understanding of the *building as an icon* on the one hand and the Guggenheim Museum as *an institution* on the other.

In his article, Sorkin denied the possibility of coming to a singular understanding of the building, implying that any such interpretation of the building would be reductive.⁴² Yet, the building emerges as a distinct object of discussion in his writing – one whose significance is constructed through its opposition to the Gwathmey-Seigel proposal. Sorkin explained:

Wright's is an architecture of spiral and collision. Gwathmey Seigel's is one of right-angles and reveals. It's the opposition of an architecture conceived in three dimensions with one conceived in two . . . The Guggenheim, like

the abstract expressionism with which it was contemporary, is action art. The new addition tries to compose it.⁴³

Like Sorkin, Martin Filler saw the Wright building as complete and most strongly opposed the addition.⁴⁴ Yet, his understanding of the Wright building differed quite significantly from that of Sorkin. Filler argued that the building was the 'ultimate triumph of [Wright's] lifelong attempt to "break out of the box",' and gave an overarching importance to the 'internal dynamic, which made the rotunda one of the world's most compelling architectural volumes.'⁴⁵ While Sorkin linked the Wright building with the art it was supposedly contemporary with, Filler described it as being internal to Wright's thought and architecture. Writers who agreed on the importance of the Wright building as a work of art and whose position was similar with regard to the addition – that it should not be built – also interpreted the building quite differently from each other. Such differing understandings arose despite the fact that they had a common target of criticism – the Gwathmey Seigel interpretations of the Wright building which both found unconvincing.

Gwathmey Seigel explained the Wright building in two ways. The first of these was through a geometric analysis carried out on the drawings of the building. This analysis rationalised the proposed Gwathmey Seigel addition as an extension in agreement with the inherent geometry of the Wright building. The Wright building was understood to be a bipartite one that wanted to be tripartite – a condition the addition promised to fulfill (Fig. 1).⁴⁶ Changes in the Gwathmey Seigel proposal occur

within the limits set by this geometrical interpretation of Wright's building, which was described along the same principles by the architects through the decade (Fig. 2).⁴⁷ Complementing this geometric analysis was a second interpretation put forward by the architects – one which gained in importance with the introduction of their final proposal for the addition. This interpretation drew on a precedent set by Wright when he had proposed an addition, the drawings of which were published in *Architectural Forum* in 1952 (Fig. 3). Using a perspective view attributed to Wright, Gwathmey Seigel illustrated the similarity in proportion and treatment between the Wright proposal and their own. The perspective view was seen as further evidence of Gwathmey Seigel's faithfulness to Wright's intentions. The architects described their project as a completion of the Wright building, one that not only expressed the tripartite nature of the building, but also put the circular buildings in a proper context with the city.

An intriguing aspect of the Gwathmey Seigel interpretations is that even while they write of their intention address to both institution needs and the architecture of Wright's building, their analytical drawings as well as their use of Wright's 1952 drawings do not reflect this dual intention. For instance, it would matter little if the drawings put to geometrical analysis were not plans and elevations of a museum since they ignore anything but the geometric schema presented by them. Further, the architects underplay the importance of the plans of the addition that were published with the perspective in 1952. In an article written after the completion of the addition, Charles Gwathmey

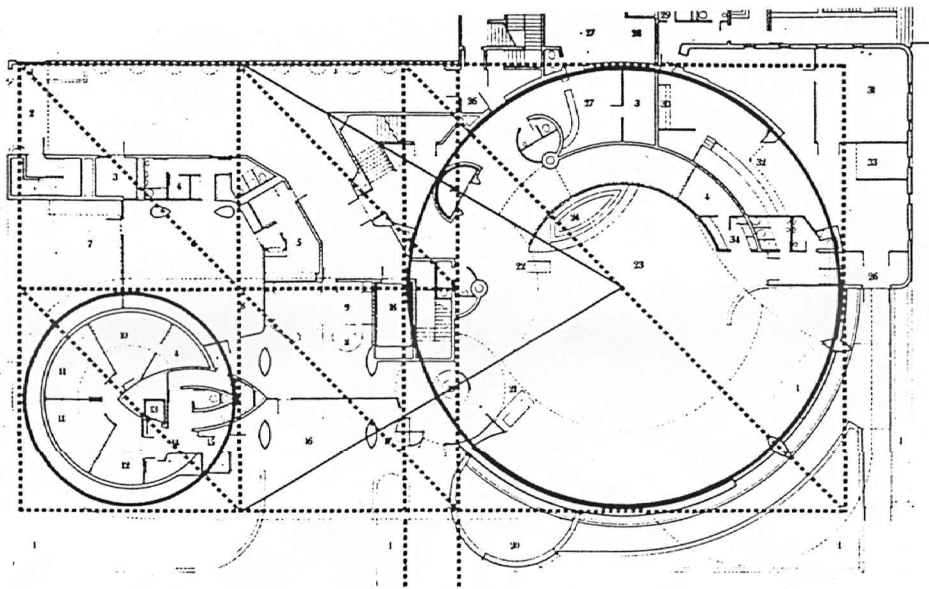


Figure 1. Geometric analysis of the Guggenheim Museum by Gwathmey Seigel Architects – early scheme (*Studio International*, 1987).

wrote about the precedent set by the 1952 scheme:

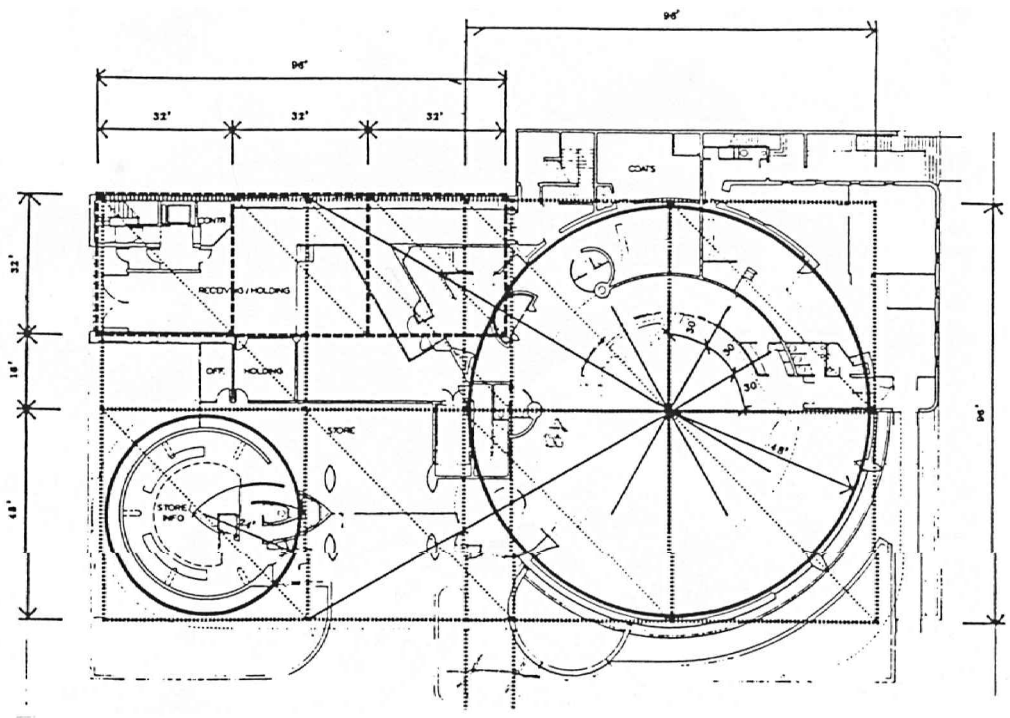
The projected program [of the Wright proposal] was less important to the idea, than the intention to establish a referential plane as a mediating background wall to the iconic objects and the adjacent context. The proposed facade was rendered as a 'tartan grid' acting as a geometric counterpoint to the curvilinear, dynamic forms of the rotunda. The graphic representation rather than the specific materiality was of primary importance.⁴⁸

If Sorkin and Martin Filler see no possibility of bridging the gap between the building and the

institution, the architects seem to have accepted the split between the two from the very onset. It seems that even while they want to address both the building and the institution, they need to be addressed separately. Further, the division between the Wright building as an icon and the programmatic requirements of the institution is effected here through the very manner in which the building is represented by visual and textual means. Indeed, the use of illustrations takes on a particularly significant aspect not just in Gwathmey Seigel's case but also through the writings in this period.

Drawing on the similarities as well as differences in visual representation of the building, the ten-year period of publications on the addition may

Figure 2. Geometric analysis of the Guggenheim Museum – final scheme (*Architecture + Urbanism*, 1993).



be organised into three phases. The first phase represents the earliest articles on the addition and restoration; illustrations are used here to set up comparisons between photographs of Wright's building (or of Wright's perspective, that is, his conception of an addition) and those of the proposed addition by Gwathmey Seigel. In these early articles, written during the period 1985–6, illustrations that recur are generic exterior photographs of the Wright building, views of the model, often photographed from a similar angle to those of the

building; the 1952 perspective (also constructed from a comparable viewpoint) and an elevation drawn by Gwathmey Seigel Architects (Fig. 4).⁴⁹

The second phase is coincident with the publication of Gwathmey Seigel's final scheme in 1987. During this period, the use of images to construct a comparative framework remains in order; however, the objects that are set up for comparison change. A new dimension here is the exclusion of both photographs of the existing building and the 1952 perspective. Rather than a comparison of the

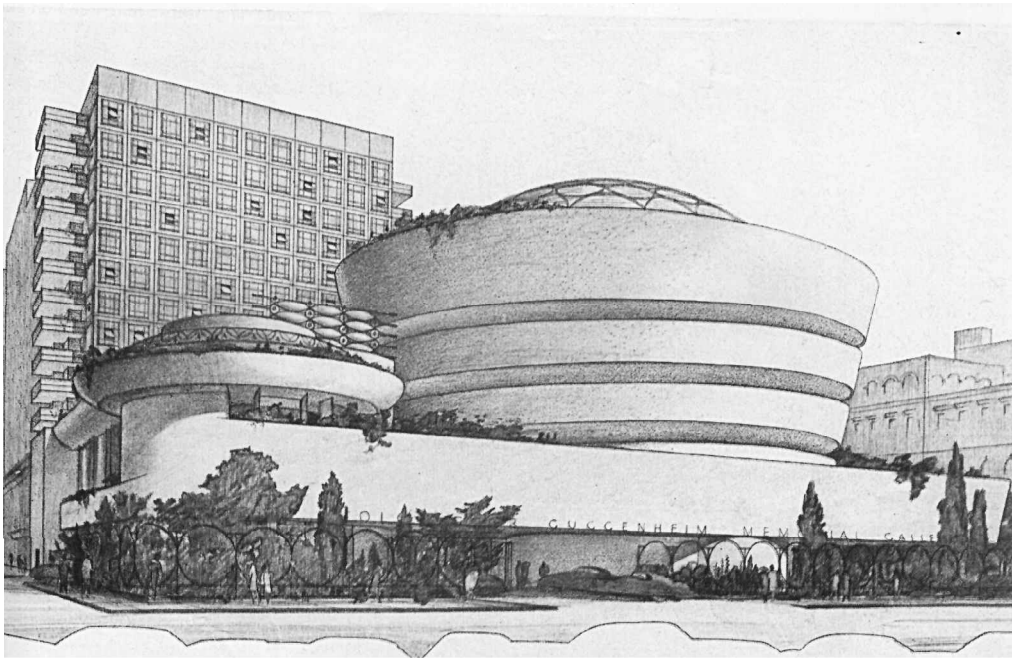


Figure 3.
Perspective view of
the Guggenheim
Museum by Wright
(*Architectural Forum*
1952).

existing building with the new proposal, correspondence is now set up between the earlier scheme and the final one. The images of the earlier model are maintained in the publications, supplemented by those of the new proposal (Fig. 5).⁵⁰

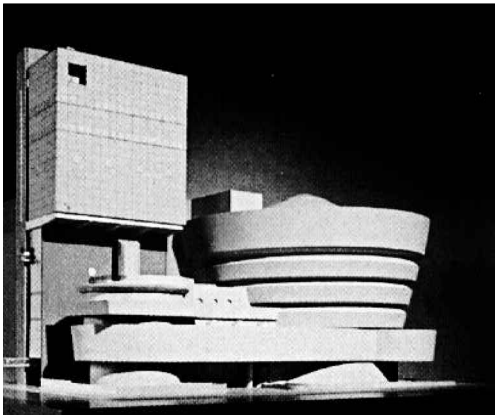
A third phase in the writings on the addition begins in about 1990, and extends to the completion and critical reception of the Gwathmey Seigel project. These later articles are marked by the re-introduction of the 1952 perspective and the geometric analysis and by the introduction of new forms of illustration: axonometric views;

photographs of the interior, which had been largely excluded in the earlier stages; and importantly, labeled plans of the addition and Wright's building.⁵¹ The model of the addition is replaced by photographs of the building – taken both from similar positions as the early images of Wright's building, and from positions emphasising the side view of the building (Fig. 6).

Illustrations in these articles, especially those in the first two stages, seem aimed at describing visual relationships between buildings. By placing images of the existing building alongside those of the model shot from similar angles as well as the

Figure 4. Model of Guggenheim Museum with the early version of the addition (*House and Garden*, 1987)

Figure 5. Model of Guggenheim Museum with the final version of the addition (*House and Garden*, 1987)



1952 perspective, the articles appear to be explaining the ways in which what Gwathmey calls 'iconic objects' would be affected by the addition. It is pertinent that widely published views of Wright's building are used here, as this highlights the iconic significance of Wright's building. The 'graphic representation', as Gwathmey calls Wright's perspective drawing, stresses not simply what the addition should look like. It also emphasises a point of view, coincident with that in the photographs, from which the Wright building and the 'background' building ought to be comprehended.

Visual material is seen to be addressing primarily the building and its iconographic features while relegating the programme of the institution and the functioning of the building to a secondary position. By being recurrently published in articles in which Wright's building emerges in a plurality of interpretations, illustrations act as a unifying device that allows for a stable understanding of the

building as an icon. Such a use of illustrations in these articles stands in contrast with their use in the histories; in the histories, illustrations usually serve a purpose of bolstering the claims of the writers and complement textual references.⁵² In the articles currently under discussion, illustrations are frequently not complemented by textual references; instead they seem to stand in for the work of art that the Guggenheim Museum is understood to be – a universal understanding that still allows for a plurality of interpretations.

If one is to go by illustrations alone in these critiques and reports, it might be assumed that the institutional programme for the building is of little importance here. This would be inaccurate; at the very onset of the debate regarding the addition, the museum authorities conceded that 'the primary purpose of this addition is to double the permanent collection exhibition space, while secondary consideration would be an enlarged bookstore, archives, the library, art storage and conservation,

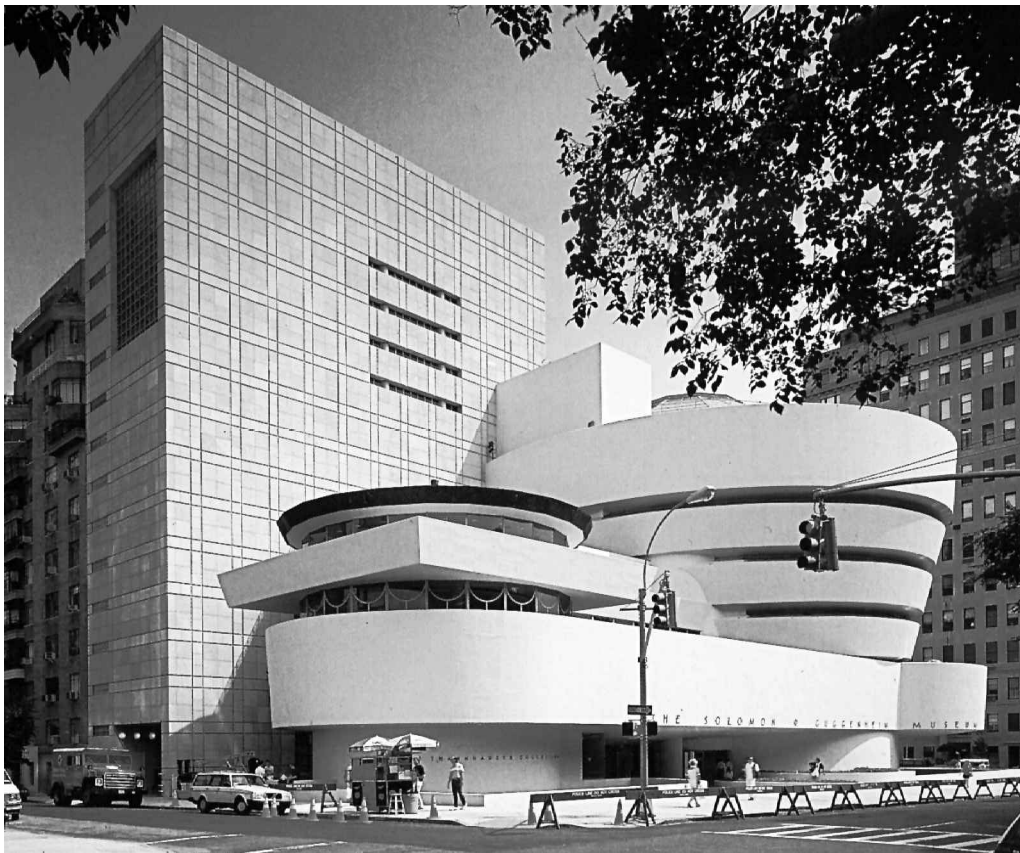


Figure 6. View of the museum with the completed addition (Gwathmey Seigel, 1993).

and improved office space.' Thomas Messer, then director of the museum, is cited as saying that 'although the museum has been fortunate to be the custodian of the "great Frank Lloyd Wright spiral," the newly designed plan 'rationalizes and improves the administrative area . . . ', thus differentiating between the building as artifact and the

institutional functions of the museum. While programmatic requirements of the institution were largely excluded from the architect's geometric analysis, at an early stage Charles Gwathmey described his proposal as one that would also meet the programmatic requirements of the institution.⁵³ Even while formal aspects of the building may have

been discussed in the text, illustrations seem to be purposefully excluding the institutional programme almost to the very end. What emerges here is a split between the presentation of programmatic requirements, discussed primarily in the text, and the iconic representations of the building in the accompanying images. This division in the representation of the icon and the presentation of the programme in written form seems to set the groundwork upon which associations between the two facets of the Guggenheim Museum – building and institution – have continually played out over the past five decades, starting with Wright's early assertions.

Constructs of the museum building in writings through its past

Wright presented his project for a museum for non-objective art as one which had no precedent – both as a building and as an institution. He began his 1946 article on the museum with the following words that described the building as an entirely new form and structure:

For the first time in the history of architecture a true logarithmic spiral has been worked out as a complete plastic building: a building in which there is but one continuous floor surface: not one complete floor slab above another floor slab, but one single, grand, slow wide ramp, widening as it rises for about seven stories – a pure plastic development of organic structure.⁵⁴

Rather than dissociating its form from the institutional functions that the building was meant to house (as the above description might suggest),

Wright went on to stress its novelty in its suitability for such functions. Asserting that the building itself would act as a perfect frame for viewing the paintings, he wrote:

For the first time, purely imaginative paintings, regardless of the representation of any natural object, will have an appropriate, congenial environment suited to their character and purpose as harmonious works of art for the eye as music is for the ear.⁵⁵

Wright's description of the museum shifted continually between the formal and structural aspects of the building, the functional aspects of the institution, and the use of advanced technology for the different systems that form the infrastructure of the building. He asserted, 'All effects are integral parts of the building itself, both exterior and interior.'⁵⁶ The 'modern gallery', as the Guggenheim Museum was then called, was presented by the architect as a building in which structure, function, and form could not be separated. In most articles Wright's proposed programme for the museum seems to have been accepted without much criticism or questioning. *Time*, for example, simply enumerated the technologies to be used in the museum and its functional aspects – presumably presented to the press by Wright himself.⁵⁷ A report in *Architectural Forum* was equally accepting of Wright's description of the institutional functions to be housed in the museum.⁵⁸

The suggested unity between form, structure, and function was illustrated with images of the detailed model presented before the press. These images recurred quite consistently in articles published in the 1940s, taking the place of a



Figure 7. Wright presenting the model of the museum as published in *Life* magazine (1945).

building that did not yet exist in physical reality (Fig. 7).⁵⁹ The images were often accompanied by captions that described the form, the construction, and the functioning of the museum. Form, function, and structure were illustrated by showing the 'building' in its three-dimensionality, making explicit its structure, as well as describing its functioning with the assistance of accompanying text. That the model could be opened up in various ways, allowing for simultaneous views of the interior and the exterior, reinforced Wright's proposed significance of the building as an 'organic whole.'

While such a unity was accepted by writers almost uncritically at the time, significances very different from those above were given to visual aspects of the building. This is apparent in the way other objects and images were likened to the Wright project. Wright himself drew parallels between his buildings and other objects when he likened the building to the ziggurat (an 'optimistic' one since his building widens as it rises)⁶⁰ and to the chambered nautilus, a characterisation that was discussed by William Jordy about three decades later.⁶¹ Others were cited as saying that the model

Figure 8. The
Guggenheim
Museum
photographed soon
after its completion
(*Arts Magazine*,
1959).



looked 'like a big, white ice-cream freezer'⁶² and 'a jumping off place for Buck Rogers, the man from the 25th century.'⁶³ After the building was constructed, the objects set up for comparison tended to be more architectural. A most common work of architecture with which the Wright building was compared is the Pantheon in Rome; some of the others are San Sophia, Hitler's bunkers,⁶⁴ the baroque Frauenkirche in Dresden,⁶⁵ the Vatican⁶⁶ and the Tower of Babel.⁶⁷ However, even at this later stage, the use of non-architectural objects to compare with the Wright building was to be found. An article in *Newsweek* cited 'devotees of painting' as calling the museum a

cupcake; other critics related the museum to objects such as the corkscrew, the washing machine, and a marshmallow.⁶⁸

A diverse array of objects – ranging from buildings and natural forms to household appliances – was thus brought into relationship with Wright's building in early writings. Most of these objects share neither structural nor functional similarity with either Wright's building or with each other. What several of them do share, however, is iconic similarity with the Wright building. This field of objects ordered around the Guggenheim Museum helped comprehension in familiar terms of a building construed as novel in the written accounts such as those discussed above.

It is pertinent that the comprehension of Wright's building through such an array of objects is accompanied by a persistent use of recurring views of the building, both interior and exterior (Figs. 8, 9).⁶⁹ Just as the comparative framework described above suggests a familiarising schema based on objects other than the building, the 1952 perspective and photographs of the building and its interior spaces are important in the comprehension of the Wright building as an icon in its own right. The images of the interior may be seen as being complementary to the generic exterior views of the museum, working towards a visual familiarity for the atrium just as the perspective view worked for the exterior. But the specificity of occurrence of these images in particular writings also points to the role played by them in forging relationships between building and institution.

If the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s may be characterised as one during which the Wright building became a familiar image, with its iconic value comprehended, then this was also the period when a polarity between the institution and the building became more pronounced. This split is especially noticeable in the criticism of the Wright building during its construction as well as that immediately following its completion. In his review of the Guggenheim Museum, Peter Blake wrote:

Any attempt to evaluate the building is bound to be complex also, for such an evaluation should try to answer these questions: first, what sort of a structure and what sort of space was Wright trying to create? Second, does this sort of structure and this sort of space make



Figure 9. View of the atrium of the museum published soon after the completion of the building (*Interiors Magazine*, 1959).

for a good museum – and what is a good museum anyway? And third – intent and function aside – is the Guggenheim Museum a beautiful piece of architecture?⁷⁰

Such an approach, treating the functioning of the museum as separate from the quality of its architecture, is quite obviously at odds with the 'organic' unity proposed by Wright. Indeed, Blake comes to the conclusion that while the building makes for a problematic museum, its real worth is in its architectural value; the building, according to Blake, is

Figure 10. An early
image of the gallery
space of the
Guggenheim
Museum (*Zodiac*,
1960).

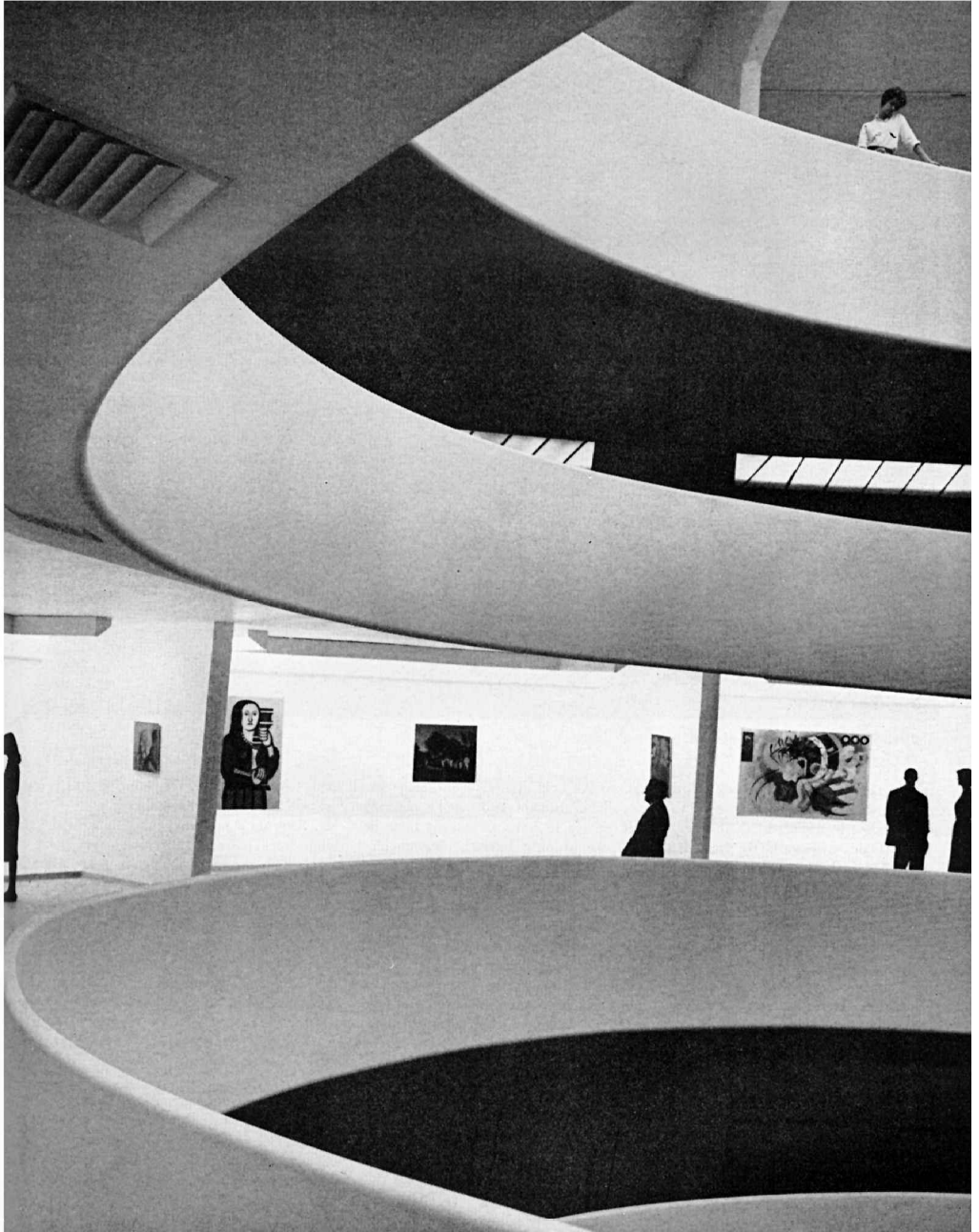




Figure 11. Graphic design of the atrium on the cover of *Art in America* (1965).

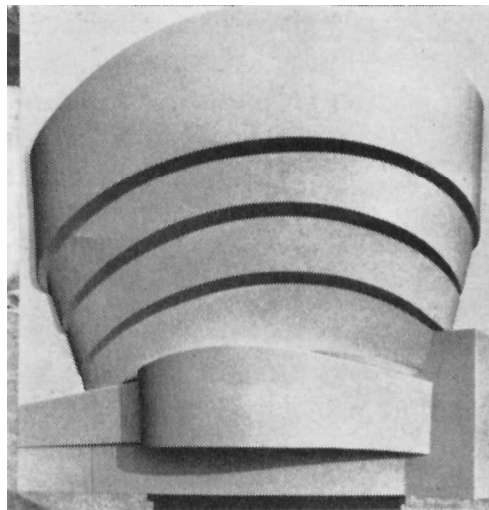


Figure 12. Fibreglass sculpture of the Guggenheim Museum, Richard Hamilton, 1965–6 (*Arts Magazine*, 1967).

purposes . . . Virtuoso in its formal inventiveness, dazzling and unnecessary in its singularity, it is completely and unassailably self-concerned . . . [it is] a kind of monstrous *object d'art* which doubles as a warehouse in which paintings can be stored but not really looked at.⁷³

'the most valuable piece in the Guggenheim collection.' Like Blake, other critics also value the building as a work of architecture apart from its functioning as an art museum. Mumford deems the museum a failure in every respect except as 'an abstract composition in interior space.'⁷¹ An article entitled 'The Guggenheim: Great Architecture, Difficult Installation' in *Industrial Design* describes the split felt between the formal qualities of the building and its functioning.⁷² Art critic Hilton Kramer writes: 'Here is a building totally irrelevant to its

illustrations of gallery spaces first began to appear in these articles that critiqued the functioning of the building as an art museum (Fig. 10). Also published at this stage in a number of articles were floor plans of the Wright building. Images of galleries and of the floor plans, usually labelled to show the organisation of functional spaces in the building, complemented the written critique, in which the building was understood as one that (unsuccessfully) housed the functions of an art museum. Such a use of images as documenting a critique of its functioning is paralleled by the use

Figure 13. US
Postage stamp
depicting Wright
with the
Guggenheim
Museum in the
background, 1966
(*AIA Journal*, 1966).



of visual material mentioned earlier; while one points to the building as a work of art and perhaps a cultural icon, the other points to the building that functions to house an institution.

The coequal weight given to representations of building and institutional functions at this time stands in contrast with the greater importance accorded to the building two decades later. Between the early criticism of the Wright building and its reception during the Gwathmey Seigel controversy a significant change seems to have been effected that allowed for the pictorial depiction of the building as an icon in the later stage. A description of the manner in which the Guggenheim Museum was conceived in the few writings published in the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s suggests that its iconic value was already well established much before the Gwathmey Seigel controversy.

The Guggenheim Museum featured as a cover story in *Art in America* in June 1965. The cover was an abstract design based on the interior photograph showing the skylight of the Guggenheim (Fig. 11). The magazine at the time published works of art on its cover, often without captions. In this case, the graphical abstraction of the atrium and skylight doubles for such a work of art.⁷⁴ During the same period, British Pop Artist Richard Hamilton reproduced images of the Guggenheim spiral in various media ranging from sculptures of fibreglass and cellulose to drawings using pastels and gouache, through to silk screen prints (Fig. 12).⁷⁵ Also issued at the same time was the commemorative stamp of Frank Lloyd Wright, in which is featured a portrait of the architect with the sketch of the spiral looming in the background – an image that Sorkin is to refer to in his critique of the Gwathmey Seigel scheme as exemplifying the iconic value of the Wright building (Fig. 13).⁷⁶ What is important here is that in the 1960s the Guggenheim Museum had already filtered into popular culture, so that its recognition as a cultural icon and a work of art at later stages would remain undisputed and to a large extent give it a significance that required little explaining as in the Gwathmey Seigel debate.

A complex mechanism of continuity and change in comprehending the significance of the Guggenheim Museum can thus be observed from these writings, and has been clarified through descriptions of patterns of representation of the building. Certain categories which reveal the significance of the building in writings and organise its

comprehension, such as relationship of the building with the institution, remain stable over long periods of time; others, such as the historical chronologies discussed above, while in operation from the first phase of reports about the building, gain prominence only later, through their proliferation in a wide variety of publications; yet other modes of ordering, such as certain visual representations discussed above, disappear, only to be retrieved in later writings as if from a repository of past events. The relationships between these different elements, as they appear, become pertinent, then disappear, only to reappear in later writings, allow for varying comprehensions of the Guggenheim Museum to be manifested. Consequently, it may be understood that the varying significances afforded to Wright's Guggenheim Museum become intelligible when they are seen to be constructed, consciously or otherwise, in accordance with regularities such as the orderings and transformations of interpretations and representations described in this paper.

Conclusion: the Guggenheim Museum as icon and institution

It is perhaps fitting at the end of the paper to see if new dimensions of significance have been added to the Guggenheim Museum with the construction of the Gwathmey Seigel building. In the revised edition of his book on the history of modern architecture published after the Gwathmey Seigel project was completed, William Curtis makes no mention of the addition. The implication of this seems to be that the 'original' building may still be understood in its pristine condition, and that the addition has not altered its significance as a climactic work in the

career of Frank Lloyd Wright.⁷⁷ Frampton expresses mixed feelings about the change to Wright's building. He seems to feel that the addition has improved the exterior while resulting in a loss of meaningfulness in its interior. Martin Filler sees the addition as being wholly detrimental to the Wright building – both inside and outside.⁷⁸ Seen in the light of these mixed reactions, Tom Krens' expressed belief in the redeeming qualities of the addition makes one wonder if the building and the addition together may be seen as being charged with a significance that was thus far hidden from plain view.

Upon its completion, the Wright building was strongly criticised for its exhibition space. The curved, sloping wall, it was argued, provided an unsuitable space for the display of flat, rectilinear paintings. Efforts to overcome this problem often brought criticism from some quarters for the disservice they apparently did to paintings.⁷⁹ The uneasy relationship between the art displayed and the architecture of the building was discussed at the time by writers addressing the problem of exhibiting flat paintings against curved surfaces. While the iconic value of the exterior was often taken for granted, the interior surface was attacked for not fulfilling its function successfully. The icon and the institution were maintained as separate categories, often through a separation of 'architecture' and exhibition surface.

Krens had written that the Gwathmey Seigel addition 'has redeemed a troublesome history and resolved a basic dilemma – the antagonism between architecture and art that it was meant to house – that has bedeviled the museum from its inception.' (cf. note 28.) Even while the addition

does provide some flat surface to display paintings, this statement seems intriguing, especially since the interior surface of Wright's building was supposedly restored to its original condition – and therefore still provided a curved datum with reference to the flat paintings.⁸⁰ The 'redeeming' of this fundamental dilemma, I suggest, takes place on the exterior surface rather than in the interior of the building. The addition is seen by many as providing a background for Wright's building; in architect Charles Gwathmey's words the new building accords with Wright's intentions as shown in the perspective of 1952, 'a referential plane . . . to the iconic objects'. Wright's building, cited by Peter Blake, Tom Krens and others to be the best piece in the Guggenheim collection, was possibly seen to be incomplete in that it had no suitable surface against which to be viewed. Wright's perspective provided an imaginary plane against which the iconic objects could be viewed. The addition appears to provide just such a surface – this time in concrete reality – against which Wright's building stands on exhibition. If 'flat' works of art are to be viewed against a curved surface in the interior, in the display space constructed outside, a curvilinear object – Wright's building – is to be viewed against a planar background (Fig. 6).

The relationship between painting and wall in the interior surface of the building is thus effectively inverted on the outside. By itself, Wright's building still allows for its significance to be read in the way described in Curtis' history. Seen in association with the addition, Wright's building is an icon on exhibition. Together the old and the new signify, with a formal inversion of surface for display

and work of art, the space of exhibition and the building that is Wright's Guggenheim Museum.

Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Dr Ronald Lewcock and Dr John Peponis, whose insightful comments and criticism contributed significantly to this paper. I would also like to thank Dr Robert Craig for his helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of the paper. [N.B. Appreciation is due to Micha Bandini for bringing to notice the significance of architectural reception.]

Notes and references

1. Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, 'Wright's Guggenheim Museum Receives AIA's 25-Year Award,' *Architecture*, 75 (1986), pp. 13,16.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
4. William Jordy, 'The Encompassing Environment of Free-Form Architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum' in *American Architects and their Buildings: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* 4 (New York, 1972), pp. 279–359.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 281–311.
10. P. Blake, *Architectural Forum*, 111(1959), pp. 86–92. Blake's article is not a history of the museum in the strictest sense. None the less, it is one of the first articles to place the Guggenheim Museum in an historical context – internal to Wright's work as it may be.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

13. In Jordy's writing, this culmination is conceptual; in Blake's, the culmination is 'literal', that is, it is manifested in the physical reality of the building.
14. 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Guggenheim Museum,' *AAFiles*, 21 (Spring 1991), pp. 41–8. Watkin writes: '... the Guggenheim Museum draws on four of Wright's principal obsessions: the cantilever, the central void, the interpenetration of forms, the spiral.' (p. 44).
15. J. Quinan, 'Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: A Historian's Report,' *JSAH*, 52 (December 1993), pp. 466–82. Quinan writes: 'It is characteristic of the organic nature of Wright's architecture that to raise ... questions with regard to a single building is to engage the entire enterprise of his life and work ... two formative ingredients, his philosophy and his passion for geometry, are important to the assessment of any part of his work.' (pp. 469–70). Further, Quinan agrees with Jordy that the Guggenheim 'summarizes and embodies the major themes of Wright's career ...' but argues that its principle significance is embodied in the transcendent form of the spiral. 'It is a measure of Wright's achievement in the Guggenheim that in this culminating effort he produced a building that is unique in world architecture. Among a handful of spiral form-buildings in history, the Guggenheim is the only expanding spiral ever constructed.' (p. 476).
16. K. Frampton, see *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London and New York, 1985), pp. 189–90. Frampton writes: 'Wright's Usonian Vision, first crystallised in his masterworks in the mid-1930s, attained its fulfillment in the Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1943.' (p. 189).
17. However, they present a much more complex understanding of these ideals than does Frampton. Rather than forming a continual link with works of the past, Tafuri and Dal Co see the building as representing two aspects of the usonian ideal – memory (wherein it relates to older works by Wright as well as his experience of architecture in Rome) and an imagined future (seen in the space ship-like form of the building). See Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (New York, 1979), pp. 352–7.
18. See W. Curtis, *Modern Architecture from 1900* (New Jersey, 1996), pp. 268–70. Curtis writes: 'Thus the Guggenheim Museum was an apotheosis of Wright's organic philosophy, in which plan, section, and elevation ideas of his earlier experimentation were brought together in a cogent, three-dimensional weave of form, space and abstraction.'
19. Trachtenberg and Hyman write that this 'late modern' work of Wright is based on the underlying scheme of the Larkin. According to them, 'At the Guggenheim Museum, Wright transformed the underlying scheme of the Larkin Building into one of the most magical spatial experiences ...' See Trachtenberg and Hyman, *Architecture: From Pre-history to Post-Modern* (New York and New Jersey, 1987), p. 537.
20. Scully writes: 'As such it is the final monument to the mobile, mass-moving aspect of American democratic mythology, and it brings the spatially continuous phase of modern architecture, inherent since Piranesi, to its only possible denouement, and, probably, its close.' See Scully, *Modern Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (New York, 1974). Also, in his early and often cited book on Wright, Scully sees the Guggenheim as climax of the 'mystical drives' already expressed in Wright's earlier work. See Scully, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York, 1960), p. 30.
21. Such a way of understanding the Guggenheim Museum may even be discerned in a recent exhaustive chapter on the building, its conception and construction, written by Neil Levine in his book on Wright's architecture. See 'The Guggenheim's Logic of Inversion,' Ch. 10, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton, 1996), pp. 298–363.

22. See, for example, D. Watkin, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Guggenheim Museum' *op. cit.* and J. Quinan, 'Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum' *op. cit.* But see also Eleanor Heartney, 'Wright Rewrit,' *Art in America*, 80 (September, 1992), pp. 108–115, 75; William J. Hennessey, 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Guggenheim Museum: A New Perspective,' *Arts Magazine*, 52 (April, 1978); and Thomas Krens, 'The Genesis of a Museum,' *Art of the Century: The Guggenheim Museum and Its Collection* (New York, 1993), pp. 7–42.
23. A history that begins at this stage, so that the earlier stage of the formation of the institution recedes into the background, is 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Guggenheim Museum' by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer (see *Art of the Century, op. cit.*, pp. 43–85). The article is broadly based on the book B. B. Pfeiffer (ed.) *The Guggenheim Correspondence* (Carbondale, 1978). Both are important in that they are probably the first extensively to use archival sources.
24. Krens is one of the few writers to give some importance to the publicity the project received. In his aforementioned article Krens writes, that in 1946, 'Life' published an article featuring Wright's model, which was complete with mock wiring and a mock exhibition. Entitled "New Art Museum Will Be New York's Strangest Building", the article made the cylindrical structure famous – or perhaps infamous – well before it was built.'(p. 10).
25. Most articles do not give a detailed account of this aspect of the construction. One of the few that does is Jordy's referred to earlier. Heartney describes the structural and design modifications in her article in some detail, acknowledging Jordy as a source. In a later article called 'Modernization and Mediation: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Impact of Technology' Kenneth Frampton discusses in some detail this aspect of the realisation of the Guggenheim Museum. However, in terms of description of the problem and its resolution, the article seems to accept the premise put forward by Jordy. See *Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect* (New York, 1996). Among the histories of the museum Pfeiffer, Quinan and Watkins all write about the problems in conforming the building to the city's building codes – with Pfeiffer perhaps giving it more importance than others.
26. For instance, Pfeiffer, who most clearly demarcates the different stages, writes, as an introduction to this stage: 'Museums across the world seem besieged with the problem of space as their collections and office spaces expand and their demand for more exhibition areas steadily increases. Added to these needs are the growing requirements for conservation and climate control. The Guggenheim Museum is no exception.' (p. 65).
27. This is most clear in Krens' article, when he sees Sweeney's successor, Thomas Messer, as having corrected a number of wrongs done to the building by his predecessor.
28. Quinan and Krens are among the many who wrote histories of the Guggenheim after the completion of the Gwathmey Seigel addition. Among the ones referred to, only Hennessey and Jordy had written their histories before Gwathmey Seigel were called in to present a proposal for the addition.
29. Quinan, *op. cit.*, p. 482.
30. Krens, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 36. In his article, Krens clearly distinguishes Wright's building from the institution, which goes under the name of the Guggenheim Foundation, or simply, the Guggenheim. Thus, when he writes, 'Architectural quality and architectural adventure are attributes that have been associated with the Guggenheim since its inception,' he is referring to the institution, not the building. This distinction needs to be made clear since so many writings refer to the building as the Guggenheim.

32. Krens, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
33. Quinan, *op. cit.*, p. 469.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 479.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 479.
36. L. Nesmith, 'Gwathmey Seigel's Guggenheim Addition Draws Mixed Reactions,' *Architecture*, 74 (December, 1985), p. 11.
37. Plattus and Imrey write about an apparently unambiguous, and therefore problematic, understanding of the Wright building in the debate and controversy surrounding the addition and restoration project. 'The 1959 Frank Lloyd Wright building [they write] was constantly referred to as the "original" Guggenheim, suggesting not only its status as a unique creative achievement, which it undoubtedly is, but also that it was both an unambiguously stable and identifiable ground for all discussion and coterminous with the institution itself, which is at least an arguable set of propositions . . . In case of the Guggenheim, is the "original" to which we appeal really the building as it was "finished" in 1959 and first occupied, does it include some but not all modifications introduced in constructions and early use and such additions as the 1968 annex by Taliesin associates . . . or is it some moment in the design process as documented by the "original" drawings and assumed to correspond to something like Frank Lloyd Wright's "original" intentions?' See A Plattus and Colmrey, 'The sum of the parts: adding to Modernism,' *Casabella*, 594 (October, 1992), p. 69.
38. K. Frampton, 'Usonia Revisited: The Recasting of the Guggenheim Museum.' The title recalls Frampton's earlier understanding of the Guggenheim as the fulfillment of Wright's usonian vision. *Architecture + Urbanism*, 268 (January, 1993), pp. 87–9. Also see Filler, 'Back into the Box,' *Design Quarterly*, 156 (Summer, 1992), p. 8.
39. These phrases are quoted in Nesmith, *op. cit.*
40. Sorkin, 'Leaving Wright Enough Alone,' *Architectural Record*, 174 (March 1986). In this article, as also in the municipal hearing on the Guggenheim, Sorkin refers to the building as 'holy' – a sacred icon that must not be touched. See also M. Sorkin, 'Proposed Guggenheim Addition Debated at Municipal Hearing,' *Architecture*, 75 (August, 1986).
41. In the aforementioned article, Sorkin wrote, 'The fact remains, however, that the inclusion of these possibilities on site is in direct conflict with the conservation of the greatest item in the Guggenheim's collection – the Guggenheim.' In another article, Tom Krens, a promoter of the project, is cited as saying that the building is 'one of the most prized works in our collection.' See Peter Lemos, 'Diminished Outside, Dazzling Inside,' *Artnews*, 91 (May, 1992).
42. Sorkin, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Sorkin wrote, 'As an architectural statement, the Guggenheim is complete. The scheme to expand by Gwathmey Seigel and Associates – whatever its local merits – is thus forced to contend with the fact that it may be impossible.' Filler went a step further in his *post facto* criticism of the addition. He ended his article 'Back Into the Box' with the words: 'The egregious "donkey's ears" campaniles added to the facade of the Pantheon in the seventeenth century . . . at least did not affect its interior and were wisely torn down some 250 years later. Perhaps future generations of Americans will have an equally just sense of how to deal with this inexcusable defilement of architecture for the ages.'
45. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
46. In 'Leaving Wright Enough Alone,' Sorkin attacked Gwathmey Seigel's interpretation as an exercise in 'conventionally simplistic art historical geometric studies', and wrote, 'This longing for trinity allows Gwathmey Seigel to impute legitimacy to what can

- only be seen as a drastic and reductive alteration.' (p. 81).
47. One of the articles that explains the Gwathmey Seigel analysis in some detail is Eric Gibson, 'Two Proposals for the '90s,' *Studio International*, 199 (September, 1986). This analysis refers to an earlier iteration of the proposal; however, the manner in which the geometry of the Wright building is described does not differ from the *post facto* publication of the Gwathmey Seigel analysis. For a later iteration of the drawings, including the plan, see Charles Gwathmey, 'Addition, Renovation, Restoration', in *Architecture + Urbanism*, 268 (January, 1993).
 48. *Ibid.* It is important to note that while the plans of the new addition proposed by Wright were published in 1952, these are seen as having little importance in the current context.
 49. See Nesmith, *op. cit.*; Ziva Freeman, 'Gwathmey Seigel's Guggenheim: Redoing Wright,' *Progressive Architecture*, 66 (November, 1985); M. Filler, 'Wright Wronged' *House and Garden*, 158 (February, 1986); Sorkin, 'Leaving Wright Enough Alone,' *op. cit.*, and 'Proposed Guggenheim Addition Debated at Municipal Hearing,' *op. cit.*, and Gibson, *op. cit.*. All except the last one bring the addition in comparison with either a generic image of the existing building, or a reproduction of the 1952 perspective. Only two of the above-mentioned articles present the geometric analysis – the last and 'Leaving Wright Enough Alone'. Only the last one presents the geometric analysis carried out on the plans.
 50. For illustrations published in this phase, see David Morton, 'Guggenheim Revision,' *Progressive Architecture*, 68 (March, 1987); Lynn Nesmith, 'Guggenheim Unveils Modified Gwathmey Seigel Addition', *Architecture* (1987); 'What Wright has Wrought,' *Metropolis*, 7 (April, 1987); Martin Filler, 'Square One Round Two,' *House and Garden*, 159 (July, 1987); Paul Sachner, 'A far, far better thing: The Guggenheim and Whitney redesign their expansion scheme,' *Architectural Record*, 175(April, 1987).
 51. Most of the articles of this phase were written in 1992, following the completion of the addition. An early one in which the axonometric view was published is Ross Miller, 'Adding to Icons,' *Progressive Architecture*, 71 (June, 1990). Published together with a photograph of the model, the axonometric, it is suggested, 'reveals how the new structure connects to the existing building.' Other articles that publish these drawings are: M. Filler, 'Back into the Box', *op. cit.*; P. Lemos, 'Diminished Outside, Dazzling Inside' *op. cit.*; Carter Wiseman, 'Guggenheim Go-Around' and Charles Gwathmey, 'On Wright's Foundations,' *Architectural Record*, 180 (October, 1992); Plattus and Imrey, *op. cit.*; Gwathmey, 'Addition, Renovation, Restoration' *op. cit.*; and Frampton, 'Usonia Revisited,' *op. cit.*
 52. See, for example, the writings of Jordy and Hennessey, *op. cit.*
 53. See M. Sorkin, 'Proposed Guggenheim Addition Debated at Municipal Hearing,' *op. cit.*
 54. Frank Lloyd Wright, 'The Modern Gallery; For the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation: New York City,' *Magazine for Art*, 39 (January, 1946), pp. 24–6. Wright continued to hold such a view till later. In a volume published after the completion of the museum building, Wright was cited as saying in 1952: 'Here for the first time architecture appears plastic, one floor flowing into another . . . instead of the usual superimposition of stratified layers cutting and butting into each other by way of post and beam construction.' See *The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum* (New York, 1960).
 55. See 'The Modern Gallery,' *ibid.*, p. 24.
 56. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
 57. 'Museum a la Wright', *Time*, 46 (July 23, 1945), p. 72.

58. 'Wright's Spiral' *Architectural Forum*, 96 (August, 1945).
59. See, for example, 'Speaking of Pictures . . . ' *Life*, (1945); 'Monolithic Masterpiece,' *Architectural Forum*, 83 (October, 1945); *Art Digest*, (October 15, 1945) for illustrations only; 'Optimistic Ziggurat', *Time*, 46 (August, 1945), p. 74; the aforementioned article by Wright in *Magazine for Arts* (1946); and other articles published at this time. In his article 'Frank Lloyd Wright and the Conquest of Space' Bruno Zevi used the Wright design and illustrations of the model – as yet an unrealised project – as a point of departure to discuss Wright's architecture as one that addressed the problem of space. See *Magazine of Art*, 43 (May, 1950), pp. 186–91.
60. See 'Optimistic Ziggurat,' *op. cit.* According to the article, 'Wright said he got his basic idea from Assyrian ziggurats . . . Eventually he decided that "the ziggurat is pessimistic," because it is pyramidal, so he turned it upsidedown to get his own building. Pointing to the model, he said triumphantly: "This is pure optimism."'
61. See *Architectural Forum* (January, 1946), and 'Naughty Nautilus', *Time*, 67 (August 10, 1953), p. 70.
62. 'Optimistic Ziggurat,' *op. cit.*
63. 'Museum a la Wright,' *op. cit.*
64. In his critique of the completed Guggenheim Museum, Lewis Mumford used all the buildings mentioned above to compare with the Wright building. See L. Mumford, 'What Wright has Wrought', *The Highway and the City* (New York, 1963), pp. 129–31.
65. See Henry Russell Hitchcock, 'Notes of a Traveller: Wright and Kahn,' *Zodiac*, 6 (1960), pp. 14–21. Hitchcock argues that the building is more akin to the baroque church in Germany than to the Pantheon.
66. This comparison was made by correspondent Matthew Peters in *Architectural Forum*, 111 (December, 1959), p. 205. This comparison was also drawn on later by Peter Blake in an article entitled 'Who Really Designed the Guggenheim?' *Interior Design*, 63 (September, 1992), pp. 242–3.
67. 'Last Monument', *Time*, 76 (November 2, 1959), p. 67. In his article 'What Wright has Wrought,' Mumford made this reference, concretising it further by referring specifically to the painting by Breughel.
68. *Newsweek* (August 1, 1960) p. 72, and 'Guggenheim and the critics – some comments from the New York Press,' *Architectural Forum*, 111 (December, 1959), pp. 93.
69. One of these images is that of the 1952 perspective, first published in *Architectural Forum*, 96 (April, 1952). The views were also published in *Art News* (October 1953) and *Time* (August 10, 1953). For other images, see Thomas B. Hess, 'First view of the Guggenheim,' *Art News*, 68 (November, 1959); Peter Blake, 'The Guggenheim: Museum or Monument?'; 'Frank Lloyd Wright's Sole Legacy to New York,' *Interiors*, 119 (December, 1959), pp. 88–95; 'Wright's Startling Museum Spiral,' *Life* (November 2, 1959), p. 81.
70. Blake, 'The Guggenheim: Museum or Monument,' *op. cit.*
71. Mumford, 'What Wright has Wrought,' *op. cit.*, p. 136.
72. George McAuliffe, 'Great Architecture, Difficult Installation,' *Industrial Design*, 6 (November, 1959), pp. 66–70.
73. H. Kramer, 'Month in Review' *Arts*, 34 (December, 1959).
74. The story itself featured a double page spread of the night view of the museum drawn by Wright and first published in *Architectural Forum* in 1952. The article, written by museum director Thomas Messer, was one of the few which described the William Wesley Peter addition that was to become a precedent for change for Gwathmey Seigel about two decades later. See

- Thomas Messer, 'Past and Future,' *Art in America*, 53 (June, 1965), pp. 25–32. The cover was designed by Elton Robinson.
75. *Art in America*, 54 (June, 1966), p. 97; 'Pragmatists and Theoreticians,' *Studio International* 172 (December, 1966), p. 315.
 76. 'The Guggenheim Backs Up Frank Lloyd Wright' *AIA Journal*, 45 (June, 1966), p. 36.
 77. Curtis, *Modern Architecture from 1900*, *op. cit.*
 78. See Frampton, 'Usonia Revisited' and Filler, 'Back into the Box' *op. cit.*
 79. In his review in *Arts*, Hilton Kramer is extremely critical of director Sweeney's exhibition techniques, which involved projecting the paintings out from the wall on thin, invisible rods. In his article, Thomas Hess writes on this system of display: 'The paintings are offered to the public as marshmallows stuck to the end of twigs.' See 'First View of the Guggenheim' *op. cit.*
 80. That the sloping walls still pose a challenge to curators can be judged from the fact that temporary vertical partitions were made for a recent exhibition of the works of Elsworth Kelly. An article that praises the unity between the architecture of the Guggenheim Museum and the paintings does not fail to mention this significant – and perhaps expensive – change made to the Wright building. See Paul Goldberger, 'When Art Talks Back to Buildings, We Listen,' *The New York Times* (December 1, 1996).