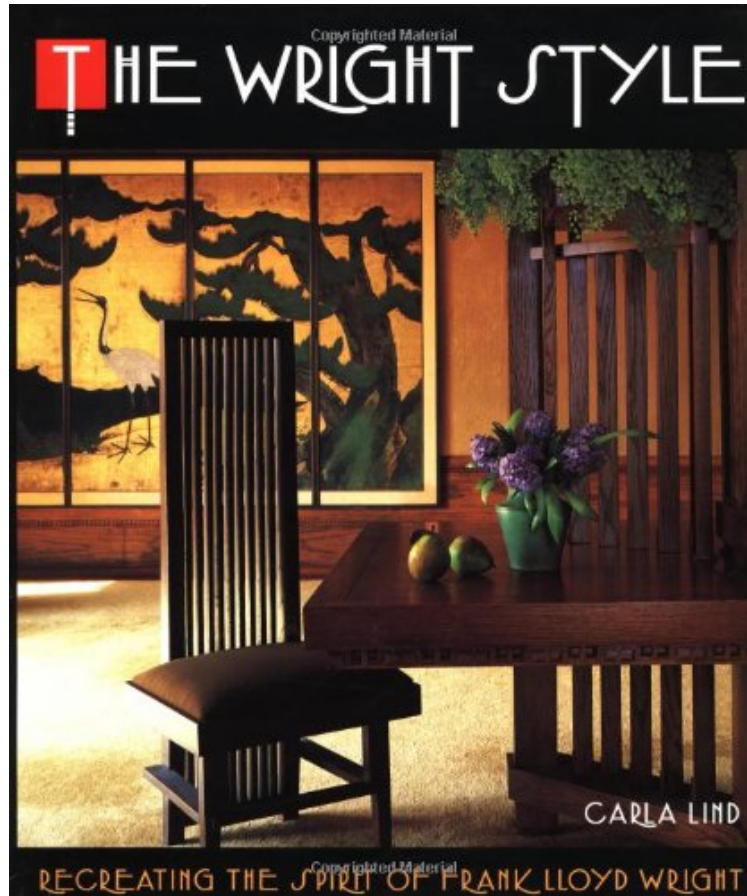


(Free and download) The Wright Style: Re-Creating the Spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright

## The Wright Style: Re-Creating the Spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright

Carla Lind

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**Carla Lind : The Wright Style: Re-Creating the Spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Wright Style: Re-Creating the Spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright:

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If you've ever wanted to step inside a house designed by frank Lloyd Wright or if you've ever dreamed of living in one The Wright Style offers the next best thing: an extraordinary look inside dozens of Wright's incomparable houses, all of them filled with countless inspiring ideas from America's favorite architect. From "pure" Wright houses to homes where his decorative magic has been mixed with related styles, the book captures the essence of the architect's timeless designs the spaces, the textures, the colors, the light, the furniture, the special features that all say Frank Lloyd Wright.

As the magnificent houses here show, each of Wright's buildings was a complex composition of many interrelated elements; he regarded them as symphonies. Wright designed not just the shell, but everything inside as well: furniture, skylights, art glass windows, light fixtures, textiles, carpets, wall murals, decorative accessories, even the landscaping. Illustrating how Wright affected and inspired other houses, *The Wright Style* also presents interpretations of Wright's principles by some of his followers and apprentices providing a guided walk through a century of his unsurpassed influence on design. And for those who love Wright but who cannot live in complete, authentic rooms or purchase antique Wright furnishings, the book's catalogue of products makes it possible at least to bring a touch of the Wright style home. "Wright's ideas have so permeated our architectural world that we have lost track of the source," writes author Carla Lind. "His open floor plans led to family rooms, kitchens open to living areas, indoor spaces open to outdoor living spaces, garden rooms, decks, and carports. His use of glass opened window walls and brought generous amounts of light and inspiring vistas into rooms. He altered America's collective subconscious. By bringing together many elements and inspirations, most neither new nor original, he was able to synthesize fresh new forms that reflected the character of the nation."

'No book concerning Wright's achievement has received such devotional treatment from photographers, authors and publishers... an imaginative and exciting book with surprises on every page' - House and Garden

About the Author: Carla Lind, author of *Lost Wright and the Wright at a Glance* series, has worked to preserve Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings for more than two decades. She has directed the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation and the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy as well as the restoration of Wright's May house in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 1 THE WRIGHT STYLE

Frank Lloyd Wright's Architecture Was Rooted In Nature; He Called it Organic. At the Heart of His Work Was Simplicity, Harmony, Unity, and Integrity. He Tossed Out Our Boxlike Spaces, Forever Changing the Idea of What a House Could Be.

ORIGINS

There is a certain irony in talking about a "Wright style," because the uniformity this term implies probably would be viewed negatively by Wright himself. To Wright, the inherent differences in each building, designed to fit the needs of each client and the attributes of each site, defied grouping it into a category. The only "style" involved was how well a building was designed to serve its own purpose. Wright suggested that "as humanity develops, there will be less recourse to the 'styles' and more style...that quality in each that was once painfully achieved by the whole." His own work clearly reflected this attitude. Each Wright-designed structure was unique and vital. That was his style. Yet there is an undeniable commonality about the vast number of designs that burst forth from this artistic genius. Frank Lloyd Wright's creations were based on a life philosophy that was undeniably rooted in his childhood. Further shaped by his life experiences, his designs developed distinct attributes that, when repeated, pushed some of his buildings helplessly into sub-styles such as Prairie (1901-1913), textile block (1917-1924), and Usonian (1936-1959), terms used by Wright himself. While useful, these terms do not do justice to the individuality of each building, and they do not describe many of his designs that cannot be neatly labeled. Like any great artist, his work has been grouped into periods to denote shifts in his personal and professional direction. Such categories, like his buildings, are not boxes; instead, they are open and informal shelters. Wright called the totality of his work organic architecture. This concept provides the breadth and flexibility required to define Wright's style as he and his followers have practiced it for the past century. It is far more enduring than the term "style" implies.

To Wright, standardization was useful but should not limit the architect's vision. In fact, his fascination with technology and his desire to bring good design into the homes of average Americans led to several production-line projects, for prefabricated houses, glassware, fabrics, wallpapers, and furniture. By agreeing to design lines of interior furnishings, he was certainly selling his "style," because for the most part they would not be used in buildings he designed. Many fibers in Wright's life were woven together to create a unified, ideological tapestry just as all of the elements in his buildings were combined and interrelated to yield a complete composition for living. Wright acknowledged that some of the fibers contributed more to the ultimate fabric than others.

UNITY

The origins of Frank Lloyd Wright's aesthetic sensitivity can be traced to his youth. His mother, Anna Lloyd Wright, the child of tough, Unitarian, Welsh farmers, introduced her son to many of the experiences that shaped his life. Anna Lloyd-Jones was raised in the Wisconsin River Valley near Spring Green, Wisconsin, and she loved the earth. Wright described her as being "in league with the stones of the field." Anna had a vision for her son -- that he would become a great architect. Thus, his early education, at home and at school, was directed toward this goal. She provided a simple but stimulating environment for his learning. Her maternal influence was augmented by the dominating Lloyd-Jones family. Wright frequently visited the Wisconsin farms of his uncles and learned firsthand about hard work, simplicity, and self-confidence. The concept of unity was a compelling early lesson. So intrinsic was it to the Unitarianism of his family that it must have played an indelible role in creating his world view. As he recalled in his autobiography, "Unity was their watchword, the sign and symbol that thrilled them, the Unity of all things!" Wright's grandfather, father, and uncles were powerful preachers who pounded the concepts of their faith into the depths of the soul of the child. Unity -- a oneness with the world, with God, with all forms of life. Truth, truth above all, truth against the world, the beauty of truth. This refrain also echoed in Wright's young world. How could these concepts be forgotten as he forged his own philosophy? They could not. They became

its foundation. MUSIC Wright's father made a lasting impact on the architect's aesthetics, although some historians have considered him, unlike Wright's mother, an insignificant and somewhat temporary influence. Like the Lloyd-Jones family, William Russell Cary Wright also was a Unitarian, a minister as well as a lawyer and musician. From him, Wright discovered his passion for Baroque music. As a child, he would lay awake listening to his father playing Beethoven on the piano. The interplay of the notes, the minor themes and major themes, the harmony, the building, the movement from general to particulars, all deeply affected the way he viewed his world. Music did not merely entertain him but also enriched his life in many ways. It provided an analogous system that he could use to help translate his ideas into another art form, architecture. In his autobiography, Wright described the commonalities between an architect and a musician: "the striving for entity, oneness in diversity, depth in design, repose in the final expression of the whole. I am going to a delightful inspiring school when I listen to Beethoven's music." In a special edition of *House Beautiful* magazine published in 1955, Wright, then eighty-eight, wrote: What I call integral ornament is founded upon the same organic simplicities as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, that amazing revolution in tumult and splendor of sound built upon four tones, based upon a rhythm a child could play on the piano with one finger. Supreme imagination reared the four repeated tones, simple rhythms, into a great symphonic poem that is probably the noblest thought-built edifice in our world. And architecture is like music in this capacity for the symphony. To Wright, both music and architecture were sublimated mathematics. He credited his father with making the comparison by referring to a symphony as an "edifice of sound."

NATURE Nature, above all else, was Wright's most inspirational force. He advised his students to "study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." His childhood experiences on the family homesteads in the rugged, driftless area of southwestern Wisconsin put him in touch with the rhythms, patterns, colors, and systems of nature. The simple concept of the interdependence of all living things was absorbed at an early age. Nature was synonymous with God to Wright, and it was his greatest teacher. Through his mother, Wright also learned to appreciate the work of the naturalist writers of the time: Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Blake, and Thoreau. Their writings encouraged him to find wisdom in the natural world. In 1953, in one of his Sunday morning spontaneous talks to his students, Wright advised them: The place for an architect to study construction first of all, before he gets into the theory of the various formulas that exist in connection with steel beams, girders, and reinforced concrete, is the study of Nature. In Nature you will find everything exemplified, from the blade of grass to the tree, from the tree to the geological formations to the procession of the eras beginning with the first from the sea downwards.... That doesn't mean you are to go out and just look at the hills and the ways the animals conduct themselves.... The study of Nature, Nature with a capital N, Nature, inner Nature, Nature of the hand, of this apparatus, of this glass. The truth concerning all those things is architectural study. He did not suggest copying nature but, instead, allowing it to be an inspiration, understanding the fundamental principles and elements -- its essence. The visual delights that nature provides became a part of his designs as well. The sympathetic relationship between site and building, the easy transitions from the inside to the outside, the gardens and planters all illustrate a respect for the natural world that is compelling. It is difficult to visit one of Wright's buildings and not interact, in a memorable way, with its setting. He built homes around trees, rather than remove them. He used the sun's power to help warm the rooms and provide an ever-changing pattern of light and shadow. He framed views, both nearby and distant. He borrowed nature's devices to provide repose using the line of the horizon, to extend reach using the cantilever like a branch, to create protective shelter like a natural cave. The interplay of people, building, and site was harmonious and masterful.

GEOMETRY As a result of Anna Lloyd Wright's continuous search for educational techniques that would encourage young Frank's creative skills, she discovered the Froebel blocks. These teaching tools for Friedrich Froebel's kindergarten education program introduced Wright to geometry, spatial relationships, and systems in a fundamental way. The program's basic theme was that child's play could be gently guided, using specific techniques, toward a greater appreciation for the elements and laws of nature. The tools were simple, pure shapes, unlike the gawdy, frivolous toys of the period. It is from the Froebel "gifts," as they were called, that he learned the basic forms of nature -- geometric forms -- in two and three dimensions. First, he worked with colored yarn shapes, then smooth maple blocks in cubes, spheres, and triangles, then colorful cardboard shapes made into patterns on a tabletop grid. Each exercise was a new problem that challenged the budding designer. As a child, he spent hours with these gifts, later attributing to them a formative and lasting influence on his architecture. Their impact was apparent in every building Wright ever designed. From nature and elemental geometry grew Wright's ability to abstract natural forms -- reducing a flower or leaf to pure geometric shapes. This pattern could then be manipulated in various combinations into a new composition. These geometric exercises became the sources of floor plans, elevations, and decorative arts, each element generated from the same design theme. Once converted into three-dimensional forms, the elements would all work together in harmony like the natural shapes that were their source. Each building was given its own lexicon of forms, a language then used throughout the design. The art glass related to the furniture, which related to the moldings, which related to the floor plan, which related to the site plan. They became inextricably linked through geometry. Abstracted natural motifs were used for art glass window designs in the early houses. Sometimes, a specific plant was selected, such as the tulip in the 1895 playroom of his own home in Oak Park or the sumac in the Dana-Thomas house of 1904. But in other commissions, such as the May house of 1908 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a more generic plant form appears to be the

source. A thematic, geometric design was cast into the concrete blocks that Wright first introduced in California about 1920. In the Freeman house alone are fifty-two versions of the block design, which apparently is based on an abstraction of the site plan with a grove of eucalyptus. The variations of this basic design were repeated over and over and when massed into walls create a pattern and rhythm of their own. In 1936 Wright designed his first Usonian house, a word he used to describe buildings uniquely suitable for life in the United States. In these houses, the abstractions are even clearer than in his early Prairie Style designs. Each home was based on a geometric grid used both in plan and in elevation. The two-by-four-foot rectangular module of the first Jacobs residence in Madison, Wisconsin, was drawn on the architectural plans as well as scored into the concrete floor. The module, or unit of design, selected for a particular building would twist and turn and be repeated over and over in the floor plan and elevations. Squares, hexagons, circles, parallelograms, and triangles also were used at different times as the basis for building designs.

**LOUIS SULLIVAN** Wright moved to Chicago from his native Wisconsin in 1887, leaving the University of Wisconsin after only two semesters. He first apprenticed with Joseph Lyman Silsbee, who was actively introducing the Shingle Style to the Midwest. Within a year, Wright began his tenure at the side of Louis Sullivan, whom he would thereafter refer to as his *lieber Meister* (beloved master). Sullivan also inspired Wright to look at nature's rhythms and processes and to create architecture that related to contemporary life. Sullivan, the philosophical father of what became known as the Prairie School, provided the rhetoric that called for an American architecture that was not bound by tradition. More practically, he taught Wright about ornament. Rather than applied, he believed, it should be integral to the building itself. Wright learned from Sullivan that the elements of a building could provide all of the ornamentation that was needed. Again the refrain that governed Wright's work -- simplicity, unity, nature.

**JAPANESE DESIGN** Wright also was profoundly influenced by Japanese design. His first exposure was the imperial Japanese exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Known as the *Ho-ho-den*, its fluid spaces were covered by a broad, sheltering roof, with generous overhanging eaves. Light poured in from all sides. The walls moved, opening up spaces, releasing the box. This experience provided more data for Wright's creative mind to devour and synthesize. The simplicity of Japanese design also revealed itself in Japanese wood-block prints, which combined his love of nature and the pureness of geometry. His fascination with them began as a young man. When he and his first wife, Catherine, visited Japan for the first time in 1905, he was able to study Japanese architecture and roam the back alleys in search of prints. At various times in his life, his impressive collection of Japanese art was sold to pay debts, and at other periods it grew to include screens, kimonos, ceramics, and textiles. But the print remained as a symbol of simplicity and elimination of all that was unnecessary. This quality provided such a pivotal impact on his design aesthetic that he published his first book, *The Japanese Print*, on the subject in 1910.

**ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE** Through years of careful, intuitive observation, study, and experimentation, Wright was able to translate his unique concept of architecture into a total design ideology that he called organic architecture. He welcomed opportunities to articulate this ideology in lectures and publications throughout his life. Perhaps the act of organizing his thoughts and communicating them so frequently helped instill them so securely in his own behavior that the architectural consistency was sure to follow -- it may have been the synthesizing process that pulled it all together. His work embodied his ideals. He truly created a new architectural language. In 1894, at age twenty-seven, he is thought to have conceived a famous essay, "In the Cause of Architecture," that was ultimately published in *The Architectural Record* in 1908. In the essay, he set forth propositions that established an enduring grammar for his work and that of his followers. Here is a summary of this advice, which included some very specific suggestions:

- \* "Simplicity and repose are the qualities that measure the true value of any work of art." Limit the number of rooms and spaces to only what is needed. Openings should be seen as part of the structure. Eliminate unnecessary detail and ornament (for example, use a piece of wood without an extra molding, a plain wooden slat rather than a turned baluster, plain fabrics and floor coverings). Build in unsightly appliances and equipment. Use pictures only as part of an overall scheme. Build in as much furniture as possible. Consider the whole as an integral unit. Use simple unbroken wall surfaces from the water table to the roof (or the frieze below the roof).
- \* Each home should express the owners' individuality and be unique.\* A building should appear to grow easily from its site. Design gently sloping roofs (low-pitch hipped, unbroken; low with pediments on long ridges; or a simple slab). Keep proportions low. Use suppressed heavy chimneys. Build sheltering overhangs. Include low terraces. Construct garden walls that reach out.\* Use natural colors. "Go to the woods and fields for color schemes." Choose warm, soft tones of earth and autumn. Do not select pessimistic blues, purples, or cool colors of the "ribbon counter."
- \* Bring out the nature of materials. Use natural wood finishes. Show the natural texture of plaster with stain applied to it. Reveal the friendly and beautiful nature of all materials.\* Put the machine to work to serve civilization. Maximize its usefulness (for example, use furniture with clean-cut, straight-line forms).\*
- Eliminate the boxlike compartments we live in. Open up the spaces.\* Group windows in a rhythmic way. Use casement windows, not double-hung, guillotine-style windows.\* Create floor plans in an axial and balanced order. Conceive room designs in three dimensions.\* Provide a place for natural foliage or flowers. Use urns, planters, garden walls.\* Use ornamentation that is of the building. Ornament is "constitutional" and begins with the building's conception. Create art glass windows with straight-line patterns that suit the characteristics of the glass and metal components.\* Determine one form for a particular building and adhere to that motif throughout the building, designing

every detail of the whole.<sup>f0</sup> \* As it grows olden a house with character will grow more valuable than one that is merely in "fashion."\* Above all, strive for integrity. These concepts were the fundamentals of Wright's style. Certainly, they were the marks of his Prairie Style houses, designed from the turn of the twentieth century to the mid-teens. For six decades, Wright articulated these same principles in varying ways, but he never deviated from them. In May 1952 he defined the terms of organic architecture for *Architectural Record* once again. He reiterated his principles, but this time the specifics related more to his Usonian houses than to their Prairie Style predecessors. Organic architecture was definitely a new sense of shelter for humane life. Shelter, broad and low. Roofs, either flat or pitched, hipped or gabled, but always comprehensive Shelter. Wide flat eaves were sometimes perforated to let trellised light through upon characteristic ranges of windows below. Ornament was nonexistent unless integral. Walls became screens, often glass screens, and the new open-plan spread space upon a concrete ground mat: the whole structure intimate and wide upon and of the ground itself. This ground-mat floor eventually contained the gravity-heating system (heat rises naturally as water falls) of the spaces to be lived in: forced circulation of hot water in pipes embedded in a broken stone bed beneath the floor slabs (soon misnamed "radiant heat"). Other new techniques, new forms adapted to our inevitable machine-methods appeared in these new structures. The economics of continuity and cantilevered structure were realized. Even the walls played a new role or disappeared altogether. A new sense of space in appropriate human scale pervaded not only the structure but the life itself lived in it was broadened, made more free because of sympathetic freedom of plan and structure. The interior space to be lived in became the reality of the whole performance. Building as a box, was gone. The integral character of the third dimension was born to architecture. How did Wright's philosophy translate into actual buildings? What are the unique attributes that have become so identified with him? The following sections provide an overview of the elements that define his work. At the root of each was simplicity, and from simplicity came the harmony, unity, and integrity that we today identify as Wright's own style.

**THE SITE** Wright building and its site are wedded -- one cannot be considered without the other. The most committed marriage of house to site is Fallingwater near Mill Run, Pennsylvania; cantilevered over a waterfall, the house is one with the rocky, terrain. Similarly, the topography, the flora and fauna, and the other natural attributes of a location as well as the characteristics of the region influenced the appearance of Wright's other buildings. Houses built on the prairie, for example, reflected the whole area's horizontality, not just aspects of the specific site. In Wright's opinion, the horizontal line was the line of repose, tranquility, and domesticity. Each building, he proclaimed, should be of the earth, not perched on it.

**SPACE** "The room within is the great fact about the building," wrote Wright in 1928. This space, the reason for the building itself, dictates the exterior shape. To Wright, spaces were meant to be fluid, free flowing, and informal like the American lifestyle. In Wright houses, living spaces tend to blend together. Closed rooms are limited to bathrooms and bedrooms. He beckoned Americans to break out of their boxes, reach outside -- visually, through window walls, and actually, using terraces, porches, and sensitive site planning. He also used space as a technique for controlling experiences within a building. Entrances and rooms were often narrow and confining so that the space at the end would feel more expansive. Confine-and-release proved an effective exercise in contrasts, one that provokes a subliminal awe in those who experience Wright's spaces firsthand.

**SCALE** The logical source of scale in his residences was, of course, the humans who inhabited them. More often than not, however, the scale he used was his own, five feet, eight inches. The structure's proposed use and building materials also contributed to the scale chosen, but once a unit of measure was determined it became the standard for the entire building and from it grew the proportions. Doorways and ceiling heights were brought down to a more human scale, creating a feeling of comfort and oneness with the architecture.

**MATERIALS** Natural materials in their natural condition and place provided inspiration for Wright's buildings. To be most effective, the number of materials was limited. Once again, simplicity. One material was always primary, while others were merely supplementary. Exterior and interior materials were often the same, just as the exterior was an expression of the interior space. Wright explored the very essence and capabilities of each type of building material so it could be most expressive in his final design. The texture inherent in the dominant material provided a "feeling," an identity. The context of a building certainly played an important role in what was chosen. City and suburban dwellings were more likely to be built of even, level, brick; asymmetrical stone was more appropriate for the countryside.

\* Stone. Of all the materials Wright used, he probably spoke about stone the most. He had great appreciation for this ancient building material and built Taliesin, his own home in Spring Green, Wisconsin, from native limestone carried from a nearby quarry and Taliesin West from the boulders found on the Arizona desert floor. He looked to the quarry itself for guidance on how to lay up stone. "The rock ledges of a stone-quarry are a story and a longing to me. There is a suggestion in the strata and character in the formations," he wrote in 1928. A local stonemason who worked for Wright at Taliesin for fourteen years stated it in a different way: "Frank liked that stick-out stuff," he said, referring to the alternate layers of projecting stones with barely visible mortar that mimicked the quarry strata. For nearly fifty years, Wright continued to shape, mold, expand, and define Taliesin using stone. The apprentices who studied with him learned about its properties by building walls there. Local indigenous stone was specified for numerous commissions in different areas of the country. The results were houses clearly in sympathy with their setting.

\* Brick. Brick in a variety of colors, finishes, and dimensions was specified throughout Wright's career and was not limited to use as an exterior building material. He saw no need to hide what many

regarded as too crude a material for the living room. He not only left it exposed inside but liberally used it to define the central core of his buildings. Whether he used brick of standard proportions or the flatter, Roman style, Wright often accented the horizontality of a building by requesting custom tooling and coloring of the mortar. Vertical joints were cut flush with the brick face and colored to match the brick, but horizontal joints were deeply raked to create a long shadow. A massive masonry chimney stood at the core of the majority of his residences and served as the focal point for family life as well as the design itself.\* Wood. Before advances in steel fabrication technology, Wright depended primarily on wood as his principal structural element. Those currently restoring his early homes are amazed at the confidence he had in the material. Its properties were certainly stretched as his bold new designs sometimes outpaced technology. But machine technologies were put to use to cut costs and enhance the qualities of wood. Using veneers helped reduce the ecological impact on forests and saved money. For interiors, Wright favored certain woods during different periods of his career, but they were always used with great respect for their inherent beauty. He abhorred covering the intricate, luscious patterns of wood grain with paint or concealing its linear power with curvaceous turning or scrollwork. Stains and shellacs were sometimes used to enhance the color of the wood, and waxes and oils were preferred over varnishes. In the early years, oak, particularly quartersawn, was dominant, although he also used other woods such as birch, walnut, and maple. Later, cypress and Philippine mahogany were used extensively. A few of the early residences and numerous Usonian houses used broad boards and battens, often of cypress, as the principal building material both inside and out. The introduction of plywood offered new possibilities, because it, too, was inexpensive, durable, and flexible. Simple bands of wood trim, sometimes called marking strips, inside and out defined surface planes and led the eye. This technique accented the horizontality and fluidity of the open spaces Wright created, which in turn helped relate a building's scale to the inhabitants.\* Plaster. Plaster finishes typically had a sand float and were sometimes stained or colored, rather than painted. Wright also used special painting techniques called stippling and scumbling to further enhance wall textures; these somewhat mottled finishes tended to dissolve the solidity of the wall, giving the illusion of more openness. Additionally, he cast plaster in molds with elaborate Sullivanesque patterns and integrated these panels into several of his early buildings, designs that frequently were mistaken for terra cotta. The stork panels outside his own studio in Oak Park Illinois, and the roofline friezes on homes such as the Winslow, Dana, Heller, and Husser houses in Illinois were some of his significant decorative elements.\* Stucco. This durable, inexpensive building material was repeatedly used during the Prairie Style period. While it was most often seen in Wright's designs for affordable housing such as the "Fireproof House for \$5,000" of 1906 and the Richards American System Built Homes of 1916, it was employed also in numerous larger commissions, such as the William Martin and Fricke houses in Oak Park.\* Concrete. Once again, Wright looked at a lowly construction material, studied its properties, and made it beautiful. Lacking the inherent beauty of other materials, concrete was redeemed by its plasticity. It was poured into monolithic walls and cantilevered terraces. It was molded into tactile blocks. It was combined with steel to create a solid fabric. It was mixed with fine sand and large rocks to create natural panels. It was colored. It was poured as a floor, covering radiant heating systems. It was used as a roof. Wright shaped it and stretched it in countless ways in his buildings for more than fifty years.\* Copper. The decorative potential of copper, previously viewed primarily as a durable sheet metal, included color (from blue-green to bronze) and an inherent plasticity. Beginning with the horizontal stretch of the eaves, Wright wrapped this ancient material around other features, particularly near window expanses. Its liberal use in the Coonley house in Riverside, Illinois, and May house in Grand Rapids, Michigan, emphasized certain motifs and added richness to the overall designs. Pleated copper roofs were specified on several commissions, but they were not always built because of the cost and availability.\* Glass. Advances in glass technology, more than any other innovation, permitted Wright to break open the box. A foil for the texture and weight of other building materials, glass served to lighten Wright's designs. It enabled him to balance solid screens with light screens so that the building would no longer have to be confining. In the Prairie Style years, his intricate, geometric art glass designs repeated building colors and patterns and provided a privacy screen for the family within. The different facets of the glass reflected light in such a way that window coverings were unnecessary in the daytime. He discovered that when mitered at a corner, glass actually dissolved the intersection. When butted into a stone wall, glass served as protection from the weather while accenting the strength and texture of the stone. Used generously, glass allowed Wright to integrate inside and outside spaces, blurring the distinction between them. COLOR Wright selectively drew his color schemes from nature, leaning more towards the colors of autumn in the Midwest. The inherent colors of the building materials certainly dominated and set the tone for all of his decorative schemes. The warm tans and browns of the brick, stone, and wood usually were combined with varying shades of their component hues, from red to yellow-green, producing an analogous color scheme. Most often they ranged from a warm reddish gold to a muted yellow-green. Creams, beiges, warm grays, and browns were suitable additions. The colors were relatively intense but toned down enough not to be harsh. The appearance of an organic home was harmonious and restful, a unity of form and color. The palette might include several shades of the same basic colors that were varied throughout the house. There is a noticeable absence in Wright's repertoire of pure black and white; they seem to be in bold violation of his thesis of harmony and unity. Characteristic colors remained warm and autumnal for decades. Only in his later years, when others became more involved in the interiors, did occasional

clear blues and chartreuse begin to appear in his homes. Wright's use of red became his signature. In fact, red was the color of the square signature tile that he began to place on his houses in the 1930s. His long-time associate John Howe remembers that a client, one of the Pauson sisters, was a potter and suggested creating such a tile. Wright was delighted with the idea. While many reds were used in his schemes, he preferred a warm, brownish red that he called Cherokee red. Some say the color came from a favorite native American pot, but it could just as well have been inspired by the warm red barns that dotted his rural Wisconsin homeland. That red, actually an iron oxide mixture, was used to help preserve the wood in the barn. It was a familiar and natural companion to the colors of the foliage. Wright colored his own Midway farm buildings at Taliesin Cherokee red, as well as his fleet of cars, his roofs, his gates, and his signs. It was specified as the accent color in many of his buildings and continues to be generously used by his followers. Even concrete floors were integrally colored and waxed with a warm red. The particular shade and intensity of red vary from site to site and use to use depending on the light, the building materials, and the setting. In practice, Cherokee red is not just one color but has become a range of hues. For instance, Taliesin West, Wright's home in Scottsdale, Arizona, uses a lighter value than Taliesin in Wisconsin. Paint pigmentation and composition have changed so dramatically since Wright first began his practice that now there is a hundred times more variety than before. For environmental and stability reasons, many of the natural pigments have been replaced with synthetics. But the ability to create a rich, brownish red is still a challenge. Wright also experimented with metallic paints and gold leaf. Walls in his own Oak Park studio entrance were painted with a bronze paint; he even proposed gold leaf for the exterior of his masterpiece, Fallingwater. He was particularly fond of gold during his Imperial Hotel era in the late teens and 1920s, no doubt borrowing it from the Japanese screens he loved. Using different methods, he laid gold in the mortar joints of the brick fireplaces of the Martin house in Buffalo, May house in Grand Rapids, and Allen house in Wichita. Certainly a product of the earth, it added a richness, an elegance, that other materials could not.

**LIGHT** Both natural and artificial light were partners in Wright's harmonious whole. Houses were sited to make the most of the sun's powers. Window walls were most likely on the south elevation allowing the sun to flood the rooms with light and warmth. Skylights and clerestory windows brought natural light into rooms away from open window walls. The changing quality of light in different seasons and different times of day, controlled by the shape and location of his light screens, affected life in the home. Electricity, introduced to the Chicago area at about the time Wright was building his first home in Oak Park, offered new opportunities for integrating lighting. It was now safe to conceal light behind grillework and art glass, reflect it off ceilings, and hang it over furniture. It could augment the sun's ability to create shadows and texture. For most of his career, Wright was fond of using decks -- long, deep shelves that seemed to float below the ceiling -- to hide indirect light fixtures, create spatial variety, and reduce the perceived height in a room to human scale. These decks, constructed of the same material as the ceiling, usually are on the perimeter of a space, but sometimes they span openings from one room to another.

**DECORATIVE ARTS** The majority of the decorative elements in a Wright environment are designed to be part of the unified whole. Wright liked to integrate all of the arts. Furniture, light fixtures, carpets, fireplace andirons, sometimes linens and china often were augmented by sculpture, decorative grilles, screens, and murals designed for that particular site. George Niedecken, who coordinated many of Wright's interiors during the heyday of the Prairie Style years, began working with Wright as a muralist. His paintings of plants and flowers were used on the upper walls of several major commissions including the Dana, Coonley, and May residences. Marion Mahony, the only woman designer in the Oak Park studio, also was responsible for many of the early decorative art designs. Later, Gene Masselink provided masterful geometric murals that became focal points of Wright interiors. Japanese screens were sometimes recommended to clients and would be attached to or built into a wall. Perforated wood panels or concrete blocks in abstracted nature patterns were used as screens for natural and artificial light. Two outstanding examples of ceiling grilles are in Wright's Oak Park home, one in the playroom and the other in the dining room (page 17). Nearly every Usonian house had its own geometric, perforated grille pattern that created shadows in the appropriate motif throughout the home.

**FURNITURE** Wright began to design furniture for his buildings as he was formulating his concepts of organic architecture. First, in the 1880s and 1890s, he adopted the conventional mode by building in some cabinets and shelving. Soon he added seating units around fireplaces and in hallways. Then in 1895 he designed his own dining room table and chairs, possibly his first free-standing furniture. His concept of a totally integrated, harmonious interior required that he design more and more furniture for his buildings, because there was little on the market that had the rectilinear simplicity required to fulfill his vision. But the extent to which Wright actually designed pieces for the early houses varied, probably based on the willingness of clients to either spend the money or submit to his ideas. In some of the Prairie houses, he designed built-in cabinets and possibly a bench, a large dining or library table, and maybe some chairs. These would be mixed with more ornate pieces owned by the client. As his concepts and his ability to persuade clients matured, he was able to design more and more elements so that the furniture was barely distinguishable from the building itself, as can be seen in the later Prairie and Usonian houses; the furniture was made of the same materials, same finishes, same details and proportions. The clients who moved into his houses often were forced to leave their old furniture behind. They neither needed it nor wanted it to interfere with the unity of their new homes. His furniture styles thus evolved, just as his architectural vocabulary changed. The solid rectilinear oak pieces of the Prairie era became lighter and then more Oriental in feeling as his architectural interests

shifted. The economical simplicity of the Usonian houses called for basic furniture, built of plywood, presumably constructed on site by the carpenters but usually by local cabinetmakers. The versatility of the pieces, in addition to their inherent suitability to the spaces, makes it hard to imagine one without the other. In 1955 Wright created a line of furniture for the Heritage-Henredon Furniture Company, thus opening his creativity to those who did not own a Wright-designed home. While this may seem to be a compromise in his ideals, the line was based on the same principles as his house-specific furniture. Using basic circular, rectilinear, and triangular shapes, most of the seventy-five mahogany pieces were modular, so that they could adapt to different settings. They were simple and functional, with the ornament integral -- not applied to it.

**TEXTILES** Textiles that Wright selected were simple and natural -- no heavy brocades or elaborate floral prints. Instead, he preferred simple linens, cottons, and wools in flat weaves or fine, short-napped velvets. He was known to assist in the actual design of a particular weave of upholstery or drapery fabric. Textiles were used to complement or accentuate the surrounding texture of a room. In the first few decades, satin-weave wools, velvets, and tightly woven linens seemed to be the dominant choices. Eventually, more handwoven and nubbier textures provided contrast for the smoother Usonian houses. When a pattern was used, it was geometric and related to the overall motif of the building. Leather was a popular chair covering, and an occasional animal skin was added to provide variety in textures. Each textile became one more unit that contributed to the integrity of the whole.

Influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement near the turn of the century, and encouraged by the needlework ability of the wife of one of his designers, George Niedecken, Wright included custom-designed linens in several of his Prairie Style houses. Patterns used in the table and bed scarves again were drawn from the house's dominating geometric motif. Carpets and floor coverings also were simple and made of natural fibers. Wright or one of his associates, such as George Niedecken or Marion Mahony, custom designed woven carpets for some of the Prairie houses. As part of the unified whole, they served to pull together the geometric motifs and colors that were used elsewhere in the home. Current reproductions are often tufted but, if properly done, can provide the same appearance as the historic weaves. In some of the later homes, woven linen, jute, and wool mats were chosen, providing a textured foil for the smooth concrete floors. Geometric Oriental, native American, and Scandinavian rugs and weavings also were widely used, allowing owners to personalize their homes with their textile collections.

**ACCESSORIES** Free-standing accessories most compatible with Wright interiors tend to be somewhat geometric and nature oriented. Tree branches and boughs, usually evergreens, are brought inside and spread overhead across light decks, on shelves, and on tabletops in both of Wright's Taliesins. Simple, natural bouquets of seasonal flowers or dried weeds fill geometric vases. Arts and Crafts, native American, pre-Columbian, and contemporary pottery fit easily into his geometric schemes. Certain Arts and Crafts ceramics and metalware also work comfortably in a Wright interior. Items with solid matte finishes and geometric shapes are most compatible. The blue-green color of Teco pottery is a nice complement to the warm tones preferred by the architect. Wright-designed spaces can accommodate sculptures more readily than paintings because of the limited amount of open wall space. This deliberate rejection of most two-dimensional art excluded his beloved Japanese prints, which he stored and exhibited on specially designed print tables or easels.

Wright's care in selecting accessories was the culmination of the attention he gave to every aspect of his houses, from fitting the form to the site, selecting the materials, and using natural inspirations wherever he found them. His organic architecture speaks to the values of today's society even more accurately than it did at the turn of the century. In a hectic, complex, impersonal world that is being forced to look at the lessons of nature to save the planet, there is great relevance in Wright's teachings. His designs were based on simplicity, the dignity of the individual, and, above all, an abiding respect for nature.

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