

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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GREATEST LIVING ARCHITECT COMES TO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

America's greatest architect for half a century, Frank Lloyd Wright, arrived in New York Sunday (November 10) to install the large, comprehensive exhibition of his work which the Museum of Modern Art will open to the public Wednesday, November 13, simultaneously with an exhibition of the work of David Wark Griffith. These two major exhibitions of the Museum's season are combined under the title Two Great Americans: Frank Lloyd Wright, American Architect and D. W. Griffith, American Film Master.

A few hours before Mr. Wright reached the city two huge trucks arrived loaded with the eighteen large models of his buildings which will compose a striking feature of the exhibition. With the trucks were several apprentices from Taliesin, the unique workshop-school-home community which Mr. Wright has developed over a long period of years near Madison, Wisconsin.

The eighteen models, all of which are on a larger scale than is usual with architectural models, include two skyscrapers (one of which is built of copper and glass); a twelve-foot-square model of an ideal city; a factory office building, a farm, a bridge, a filling station and models of twelve houses built by Mr. Wright from 1909 to 1940. The models have been made by Mr. Wright and his apprentices with the utmost attention to detail. Some of the models open up or the roofs can be lifted off so that the interiors may be easily seen. Furniture and automobiles, as well as trees, shrubs and other details are shown in scale to give a vivid picture of the project or the completed work which each model represents.

There have been a few small exhibitions of Mr. Wright's work in this country and abroad during the last thirty years but this is the first to attempt to show the entire range of his astonishing architectural career. The exhibition will cover a period of fifty years beginning with Wright's earliest work under

Louis Sullivan and ending with his designs for buildings now under construction or just about to be built.

Generally considered the world's greatest living architect, Wright has certainly been its most influential one. His revolutionary ideas of house planning and architectural form have penetrated to almost all parts of the civilized world. Countries as remote as Holland and Japan count him a major force in the development of their contemporary styles. He has actually built in thirty-one States in the country, and there is perhaps not a single State which does not show a number of buildings dominated by his influence.

In addition to the architectural models, the exhibition will show actual full-size details of special structural features invented by Wright. There will be drawings and architectural plans made by Wright fifty years ago, long since realized in buildings which have exerted a powerful influence on world architecture. There will be still other designs which are as yet only projected in the fertile brain of this great architect. The large black-and-white photographs, some color transparencies, and a color motion picture will give the average visitor, to whom architectural plans are somewhat of a mystery, a more easily realized view of Wright's tremendously diverse work: the house built over a waterfall at Bear Run, Pennsylvania, remarkable not only in architectural beauty and suitability to site but as a brilliant engineering feat; the great hotel Wright built in Tokyo in 1916, the only large building in that city to come through undamaged by the terrible earthquake of 1924; a permanent desert camp built of stone, wood and canvas near Phoenix, Arizona; pierced concrete block houses in California; and many other examples of his architectural genius and originality.

For Frank Lloyd Wright, architecture is not only a design for building but almost a design for life. Near Madison, Wisconsin, he has over a long period of years developed a workshop-school-home community which he calls Taliesin, a Welsh word meaning "shining brow." It is composed of sixty or more people--Mr. Wright, his wife and daughters, apprentices, students, workers who live, work, farm, study, play and engage in all the activities of a town within itself. They are all disciples of Wright, the philosopher, as well as advocates of his architecture. Some live with the Wrights in

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Taliesin itself, a wide-spreading house which with its courtyards crowns the brow of the hill; others live a quarter of a mile away, across the fields in another rambling group of structures--houses, workshop, studios, offices and a small theatre.

The buildings at Taliesin seem to grow naturally and inevitably out of their surroundings. Wright never fights or disturbs nature but works in a friendly conspiracy with it, making his buildings harmonize with their setting, or complement it sympathetically. Wright allowed his hilltop in Wisconsin to keep its natural rolling form and built in such accord with its age-old contours that Taliesin seems to merge with the earth, to grow out of it organically rather than to be set upon it arbitrarily.

Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 1869. His father a Baptist clergyman from Connecticut more interested in music than in preaching, his mother the daughter of a Welsh Unitarian, early settled in the rich farm lands of Wisconsin. Their son attended the State University in Madison briefly. He wanted to be an architect but as there was no architectural school at the University of Wisconsin he studied engineering and acquired practical experience working on buildings of the university under the dean of the engineering school. He also studied the history and criticism of art and archaeology. In this way he approached his architectural career from two opposite points of view: the practical and the esthetic.

In 1897 Wright left the University of Wisconsin and went to Chicago. After a year with another architect he entered the offices of Adler and Sullivan, at that time the best place in the world to learn architecture not as a tradition but as a modern practical profession. It was Louis Sullivan who created a new style of architecture for skyscrapers. In the office of this truly great American architect whom Wright still calls his "lieber Meister," Wright soon achieved a position of importance as a designer. Sullivan was not interested in building houses. Most of the domestic work which came to the firm fell to Wright. He built fifteen houses before he left the firm in 1894 to establish his own office.

Wright first became known as the architect of a new type

of suburban houses which were called "prairie architecture" chiefly because the region around Chicago was the only section of the United States that had the courage to patronize an original and thoroughly American architect at a time when the rest of the country was insisting on European imitations. Even in his early houses, Wright had the courage to throw tradition to the winds and build in an entirely new fashion. They are all distinguished by a kind of design which he originated--new both in exterior and interior treatment. His interiors are not composed of separate rooms but are treated as single, flowing spaces only partly divided. His walls are intersecting planes gathered beneath a covering of wide-eaved, low-pitched roofs. His windows form continuous bands that often run the full length of the house.

Wright was a pioneer in the use of new materials or materials that had not been considered suited to the uses to which he put them. He created for these new or unusual materials types of structural expression and even ornamental detail which were so logical as to appear wholly fresh and startling. He was the first to make use of reinforced concrete in monumental architecture. In the 1920's, working in the Southwest, he developed a novel type of construction--precast concrete blocks with reinforcement in the joints. His recent Johnson Building in Racine, Wisconsin, has soaring concrete columns, thirty-five feet high yet only five inches in diameter at the base; the tops spread out like mushrooms.

Now at the age of seventy-one Wright is still experimenting far in the vanguard and every year produces architecture with the creative freshness and originality of perennial youth. European architects of three decades ago whose work was greatly influenced by their tremendous admiration of Wright at that time are now among the older generation. Several new generations have been inspired and taught by Wright since his early recognition. And when he arrived in New York yesterday (Sunday, November 10) he was accompanied by the youngest generation of his architectural disciples who built the models and are helping the Master install the exhibition which will do honor to a great and living prophet in his own time and country.