
Chicago Architectural Club, 1894–1914

When Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), not quite twenty, left Wisconsin in 1887 to make his way as an architect, he was fortunate that the closest major city was Chicago, still in the midst of a building boom brought on by the devastating 1871 conflagration that destroyed the heart of the pre-Civil War city (figure 1.1). Amid the teeming activity of the downtown Loop, Wright soon identified the most progressive architectural firms, those applying industrial construction techniques to the problems of new building typologies. On the brink of what was then the most creative period of commercial design in the world, he was lucky in 1888 to find employment with two professionals about to make history: Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan.

By his choice of Chicago, Wright was thrust into the most crucial debate of late nineteenth-century architecture: whether the social and technical consequences of the Industrial Revolution would lead in the field of architecture to the rejection of historic styles—in other words, “eclecticism”—in favor of a new design methodology. As Adler declared in 1886, “How great is the privilege granted us, in being part, not of a Renaissance, but of a naissance in architecture. For there is surely being born into our world a new style, the style of America, the style of the civilization of the nineteenth century, developed by its wants, its conditions and limitations.”¹

It now seems destined that Wright, who had voluntarily left the university before graduation, would spend his formative years, 1888–93, under the tutelage of Sullivan. While steel frame office buildings were being transformed by his “Lieber Meister” into vertical towers, the raging argument of the day remained whether European styles should continue to be imposed on American

conditions. Sullivan interpreted the argument in literary terms, borrowing from his heroes: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. “Before we can have an indigenous architecture, the American architect must himself become indigenous,” Sullivan explained in 1899. “How this is to be done is very easy to explain, but rather difficult of performance; for it is equivalent to asking him to become a poet, in the sense that he must absorb into his heart and brain his own country and his own people.”²

At the center of Sullivan’s ideology was democracy, which he spelled with a capital “D,” acknowledging that “what we call Democracy or The New Way, is but the ancient primordial urge within us of integrity or oneness.” Referring back to “Nature,” the “urge” as an “organic law” was the “essential nature of Democracy. For Democracy and the oneness of all things are one.”³ Yet Sullivan believed that neither the true indigenous American architecture nor Democracy, the two inextricably linked, had yet been achieved. To accomplish these ends required an immense effort because, “Should anything come fresher from the soil of a richly cultivated nature, should anything be more natural, more spontaneous, in its unfolding plan, should anything, can anything come straighter from the life of the people, straighter from the heart, the brain, of the artist than a truly fine building?”⁴ Calling the architecture all around him “hideous,” and the cause of both “shame” and “humiliation,” he now declared “the beauteous art of architecture, as a once living presence in the heart of man,” now “dead and gone.” But “if there is to be a new art, there must be a new birth.” Sullivan’s conclusion made in 1897, only four years after Wright left the firm, stated that the realization of a truly indigenous American architecture, grounded in the organic

1.1 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1895. (FLWFA, 6002.003)

laws of Nature, that itself would realize Democracy, “awaits only the coming of a great, an intense, personality:—a man of passion:—with a great and beautiful architecture in his heart.”⁵

These ideas resonated with many in the Chicago architectural community in the 1880s and 1890s, especially the younger generation. The battleground came with the founding of a new organization that brought together both experienced professionals and novices. Within it, Wright would find comrades of like mind, a showcase for his accomplishments, and a training ground for publicly presenting his work, and of this last, he would hold to its lessons for the remainder of his life.

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURAL CLUB

The Chicago Architectural Club (the Chicago Architectural Sketch Club at its origin in 1885 until the name change in 1895) began as an educational venture. The club scheduled lectures, design competitions, social activities, and their main public event—an annual exhibition—so that draftsmen could improve their skills by exposure to the senior men. Although such clubs existed in other major American cities—for instance, Boston and Philadelphia—in the late nineteenth century unique regional circumstances crafted a creative synergy in Chicago.⁶ Chicago as the growing commercial center of the Midwest was meeting the demand for tall towers, which maximized the potential profit of land, and, at the same time, kept construction costs low. Access to new materials such as steel and plate glass and inventions such as the elevator revolutionized the design of office buildings, hotels, and department stores. Architectural firms such as Adler and Sullivan, Burnham and Root, Holabird and Roche, and William Le Baron Jenny were leaders in engineering techniques and design solutions for modern building types. After direct experience with the new architecture, when the younger generation matured and left the large firms to start their own practices they carried with them doubts about the authority of historical styles. Lively debate and theoretical discussions were characteristic of these progressives, who became active members of the club, ultimately rising to influential positions. By the time Wright entered his first exhibition in 1894, Robert C. Spencer, Richard E. Schmidt, Hugh M. G. Garden, George Dean, and Dwight H. Perkins were all active in club affairs.

In the earliest years (1895–99), the club’s activities were devoted to its membership, in other words, architects and draftsmen, but with the new century, the general public was drawn increasingly to the annual exhibition, which was held at the Art

Institute of Chicago, the city’s major art museum and school of fine arts. Coverage, including announcements and reviews, expanded from professional publications such as *Inland Architect*, the *Brickbuilder*, and *American Architect and Building News* to the numerous daily newspapers including the *Tribune*, *Examiner*, *Evening Post*, *Inter-Ocean*, *Chronicle*, and *Times Herald*.⁷ In 1899, a consortium of clubs from major cities such as Chicago, Saint Louis, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Detroit among others agreed on a nonconflicting schedule that would allow local members to send their work on a circuit of out-of-town venues. Thus architects gained wider exposure for their built and unbuilt work, which otherwise was known only to a few.

The debate over a new direction for American architecture continued with lectures and papers by members throughout the twenty years Wright followed club affairs. The dominant position was that of the established generation, who adhered to historical revival styles and held to the doctrines of the *École des Beaux-Arts*. The slogan “Progress before Precedent” was put forward as the objective of the Architectural League of America in June 1899.⁸ While on the surface, the argument revolved around the choice between following a design methodology that arose out of the requirements and materials of the job versus passively applying a historic style copied from ancient models, for the most thoughtful of the Chicago architects, it was far more complicated. For instance, both Sullivan and Wright rejected the motto for different reasons. Wright would give his clearest rebuttal in the March 1908 *Architectural Record* under the slogan, “In the Cause of Architecture.”

Architectural discourse in Chicago became more heated in the decades leading up to World War I. Club politics were played out behind the scenes, and in some years the progressives gained ascendancy, and in other years they were driven out of influential positions and remained on the sidelines. The extent of Wright’s participation in club exhibitions was directly tied to these political swings of power, which is why his most important Chicago Architectural Club shows were in 1900, 1902, and 1907, all years the progressives were in control.⁹

In the early years of the twentieth century, no single architect had more exposure or critical attention under the auspices of the Chicago Architectural Club than Frank Lloyd Wright. In the two decades between 1894 and 1914, Wright participated in eight exhibitions with the club, experiences that would mold him for the rest of his career. This was ironic, as he never joined the organization, remaining always an outsider.¹⁰ His success in acquiring the private display spaces and personalized publications

he desired was derived from his cultivation of friendships with powerful members who made the important decisions about who would exhibit and under what circumstances. Through these associations he attained a privileged status that became a double-edged sword. It allowed him to gain almost total control over how his work was displayed, but it also ultimately led to harsh personal attacks and retribution against himself and his allies from other club members.

Wright was extremely fortunate that one of his closest friends, Robert Clossen Spencer Jr. (1865–1953), was very active in the politics of the club. Wright, no doubt, found Spencer compatible because they had a common background. Spencer, two years older than Wright, was also born in Wisconsin; he attended the university at Madison and graduated with a degree in engineering. Preparing for a career in design, he left Wisconsin to spend two years in the architectural program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Then, while still in the Boston area, he worked for a few years in established firms; first with Wheelwright and Haven and then the successor firm to Henry Hobson Richardson: Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge. In contrast to Wright, who served his apprenticeship with Sullivan, Spencer followed a more conservative path and toured Europe for two years after being awarded the prestigious Rotch scholarship. On his return, Spencer entered the Chicago office of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge to take direct charge of the interior design and decoration of the Chicago Public Library (1892). In 1895, he opened his independent practice, moving into the Schiller Building near Wright.¹¹

A pivotal moment in the development of modern architecture occurred in May 1897, when Wright, Spencer, and Myron Hunt joined Perkins in his office at 1107 Steinway Hall. From this

location, alliances were forged and experimental work undertaken. Both H. Allen Brooks and Wilbert Hasbrouck, historians of this period, describe the outgrowth of this group sometimes as the “Eighteen,” as Wright later called it, or more loosely as a luncheon club, but both agree that the artistic fervor decidedly affected the direction of the Chicago Architectural Club.¹²

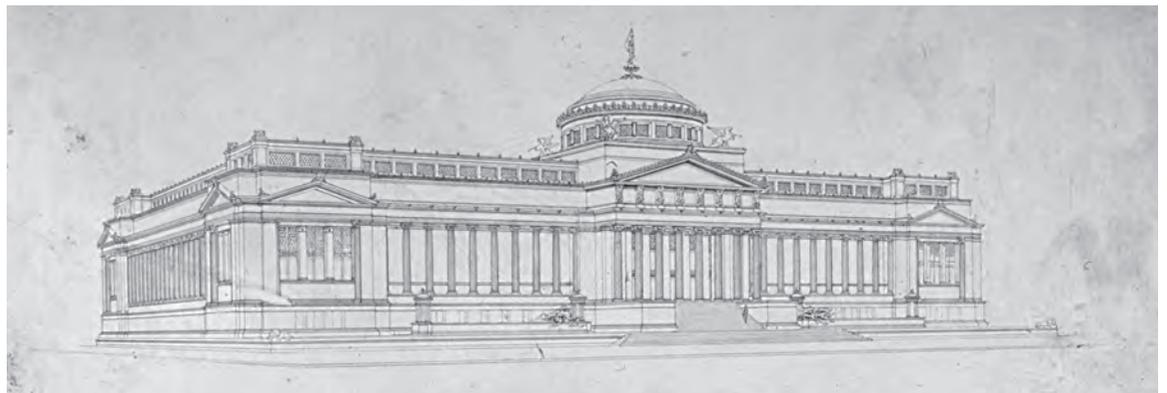
By this time, Wright was making clearly defined breakthroughs in planning and in the organization of elevations, especially in his residential work. Connections he made through Steinway Hall would propel him into prominence after 1900 by achieving preferred treatment in the club exhibitions. By 1903, due to Wright’s artistic leadership and commanding personality, the center of creative breakthroughs would shift from Steinway Hall to his Oak Park Studio (opened in 1898).

1894–99

In retrospect, it would seem obvious that Wright’s exhibitions at the Chicago Architectural Club, parallel in time with the achievements of the Oak Park Studio years, would stand out as milestones in his career. But it is doubtful that he would have achieved even a fraction of his prominence without the support of his close-knit group of colleagues. It was during the five years between 1894 and 1899 that a certain commonality existed among the progressives; at the same time, year by year, Wright gradually began to differentiate himself from the others in the experimental nature of his design and in the ambitious character of his personality.

Wright wasted no time in exhibiting his work, submitting his first items in May 1894, just one year after starting his independent practice. Since 1893 had been a year of economic recession,

1.2 Frank Lloyd Wright,
Milwaukee Library and Museum
competition entry, 1893. Ink on
paper, 23% × 45% in. (FLWFA,
9306.002)



his amount of work was slight. Perhaps the most surprising revelation is that the first one of his own drawings that Wright ever exhibited was his submission to the Milwaukee Public Library and Museum competition, held October 3, 1893, to January 5, 1894: a symmetrical composition that was a study in the classical orders (figure 1.2). The building, resting on a high base, was divided into five parts with a pair of colonnades flanking a central pedimented entrance topped with a dome.

Of the six items Wright exhibited that year, five were houses drawn in watercolor by Ernest Albert (1857–1946).¹³ Albert was thirty-seven, ten years older than Wright, when the architect chose him as one of his first renderers. Born in New York, he moved to Chicago to provide color schemes and ornamental designs for many buildings at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. A locally recognized painter and scenic artist, he probably met Wright while working on stage design for the Auditorium Building. Their association deepened through a mutual interest in the pictorial depiction of landscape and when he became one of a group of painters, which included Charles Corwin, William Wendt, and Charles Francis Browne, whose artwork Wright collected and displayed in his Oak Park home in the 1890s. In fact, Wright’s involvement may have extended to venturing out with his friends to create his own plein air drawings and photographs of plant life. After his return to New York, Albert began devoting himself to his primary interest, landscape painting.¹⁴

In the first decade of his practice, Wright chose watercolor as the medium for his perspectives, which allowed for equal treatment of the building and its surroundings—almost always, landscape—using identical colors and tonal values. Although he employed different renderers, this painterly approach was consistent throughout the 1890s, until a more graphic style, influenced by the two-dimensionality of Japanese woodblock prints, began to be adopted in the early 1900s.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify which houses Wright exhibited in 1894, as the only available information appears on the exhibition checklist where each item is simply listed as “Water Color—Residence.” The one exception is the Dutch Colonial design for the executed Frederick Bagley House (1894; Hinsdale, Illinois) because it was reproduced in the catalog (figure 1.3).¹⁵ Almost no renderings exist from 1893 in the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, but it is likely that the William H. Winslow House (1893–94; River Forest, Illinois) was displayed (figure 1.4).

In the years ahead, how and when Wright exhibited with the club was directly related to the fortunes of his allies. It was not



1.3 Frederick Bagley House, Hinsdale, Illinois, 1894. Ernest Albert, delineator. Watercolor on paper, dimensions unknown. (Chicago Architectural Sketch Club Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital File # casc.1894_08)

until 1900 that the progressives, principally Spencer and Perkins, assumed important leadership roles. Up to that time, Wright’s participation was slight, exhibiting one item per year in 1895 and 1898, and none between 1896 and 1897.¹⁶

1900–1902

By 1900, it is clear that several things began to coalesce simultaneously. First, Wright had reached a new level of maturity as a designer, and with it had come an ambition for recognition; this, coupled with the support of powerful club members, led to a series of unparalleled exhibitions and publications. From this date forward, Wright would establish a personal approach to presenting his work that he would adhere to for the remainder of his career.

Wright exhibited at both the 1900 and 1902 Chicago Architectural Club annuals, but it is the sequence of events between 1900 and 1902 taken together that point to a permanent pattern in the years ahead. First, he chose to exhibit his work in the largest quantity possible in a separate space of his own, creating what amounted to a one-man show; second, to further showcase his designs he wanted them published, and that publication should be lavishly illustrated and elegantly designed by himself, with the highest quality printing and reproduction; third, to be better understood, a separate publication expressing his philosophy should be available; and last, a writer from his inner circle should evaluate his work sympathetically in an article or book with even more high quality illustrations. This is exactly what happened between 1900 and 1902, and the series of events was repeated

again between 1907 and 1911. These dates distinguish the two major phases of Wright's first twenty years of practice: the experimental and the mature periods.

By 1900, despite the economic depression of the 1890s, Wright had passed through an exploration stage to a breakthrough of design invention that encompassed residential and commercial buildings and decorative arts such as furniture, art glass, and vases. In collaboration with Spencer, he set about creating an appropriate showcase. No doubt through his professional contacts in Boston where he had lived for many years, Spencer was able to successfully propose an extensively illustrated critical summary, "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," for the June issue of the well-respected journal, *Architectural Review*.¹⁷ This article was clearly in process when plans were forming for the Thirteenth Annual club exhibition.¹⁸ Timing was opportune as Spencer was also first vice president of the club, as well as on the Executive, Hanging, and Publicity Committees.¹⁹ When the exhibition opened on March 20, 1900, it contained the largest selection of Wright items ever to be on public view.

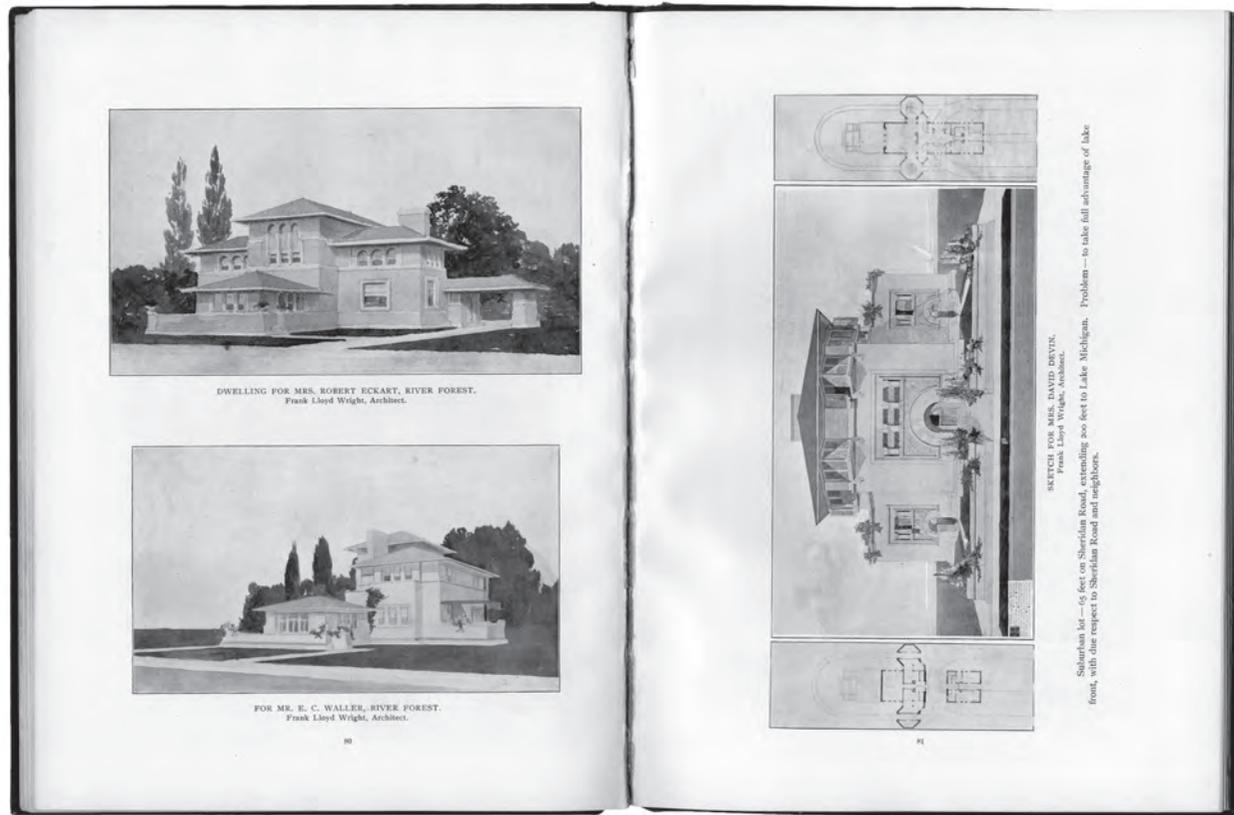
On display in a club gallery at the Art Institute of Chicago were six photographs, four renderings (called "sketches" on the checklist), and a perspective, for a total of eleven items. With Perkins as editor of the exhibition catalog, Wright was accorded an unprecedented ten-page section illustrating five photographs, six renderings, and eight plans, for a total of nineteen illustrations (figure 1.5). But when Spencer's article

appeared three and one half months later, it was generously illustrated with ninety-seven illustrations (figure 1.6). Because of the close relationship between Wright and Spencer, it is probable that Wright suggested the illustrations, or he chose them himself.²⁰ In order to deduce Wright's intentions in his first major survey of his independent work, it is necessary to judge all three components together: the *Review* article, the exhibition, and the section of the club catalog.

Spencer was the inevitable choice as author of the first article to assess Wright's nineteenth-century accomplishments. He was an experienced architectural writer, a Wright champion, and a modern in his preferences and philosophy. His main argument concerns Wright's place as second only to Sullivan as a leader of a "living, national architecture" in opposition to practitioners of the "outward forms of the various styles and periods . . . 'adapted,' plagiarized or caricatured according to the caliber and taste of the individual designer." In so doing, he analyzed several buildings in detail—Nathan Moore House (1895; Oak Park, Illinois), Wright Studio (1897–98; Oak Park, Illinois), William H. Winslow House, and Abraham Lincoln Center (1898–1905; Chicago)—but also provided cogent analysis of architectural issues. For instance, anticipating a debate that would preoccupy Wright in the 1940s, Spencer declared, "While it is true that in a building form should follow function, the proposition is true only in its larger sense, in the sense in which it is exemplified in nature, who always seeks to clothe the



1.4 William H. Winslow House, River Forest, Illinois, 1893–94. Ernest Albert, delineator?
Watercolor on paper, 12 × 32% in. (FLWFA, 9305.013)



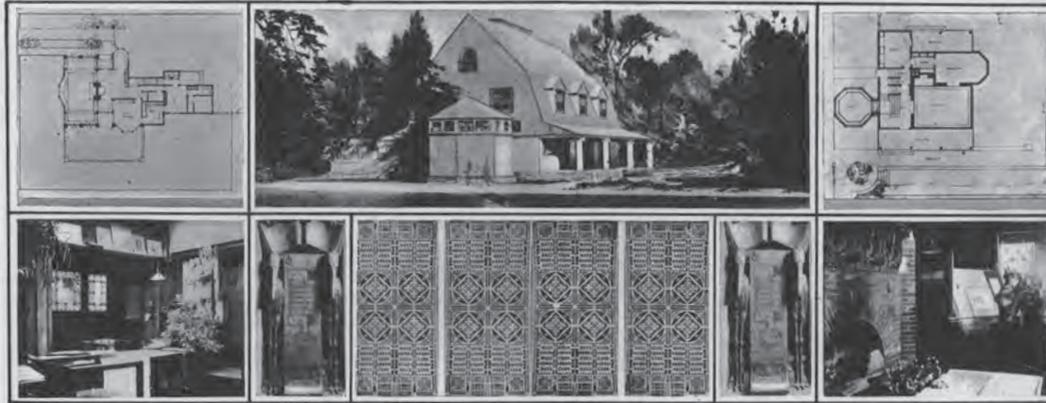
1.5 *Annual of the Chicago Architectural Club Being the Book of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition 1900* (Chicago: Art Institute, 1900), Frank Lloyd Wright section, 1900. (Courtesy Randolph C. Henning with permission.) The two illustrations on the left are mistitled. The top illustration is the E. C. Waller House; the lower one, Mrs. Robert Eckhart, his daughter.

working mechanism of her organisms beneath a protective covering none the less fair or beautiful because fitted to its purpose. The sticklers for naked cast-iron in façades of modern construction would do well to contrast the plumaged bird with the plucked and naked specimen, and that in turn with the bony skeleton.”²¹ While in later years Wright would edit the text of some of his commentators, it is certain that Spencer’s opinions remained uncensored because he enumerated Wright’s main influences—Sullivan, Friedrich Froebel, Nature, and Japanese architecture. In later years, Wright would argue to have some of these topics excised from essays about his work.

Although Spencer’s text has a distinct organizational structure, the illustrations were not presented either chronologically or thematically. Wright’s predilection was always to exhibit as much material as possible, unless constraints such as limited space were a factor. Thus the *Review* article provides a penetrating insight into how he viewed his first seven years of practice. Wright chose not to display any work done with Adler and

Sullivan as an employee or outside of his contract, the so-called bootlegged houses such as the Robert G. Emmond (1892; La Grange, Illinois), Warren McArthur (1892; Chicago), or George Blossom (1892; Chicago) Houses. The exceptions to this rule are the Henry N. Cooper House (1887/1890–95; La Grange, Illinois) and the Dr. Allison W. Harlan House (1892; Chicago), both of which Wright held in high esteem throughout his entire life. In fact, many decades later, Wright made a strong stand to have the little known Harlan House exhibited in his last career retrospective in Florence, Italy.

While he singled out his daring design for his Oak Park Studio, the accomplished Isidore Heller House (1897; Chicago), and the prophetic Winslow House and Stable for full-page plates, they were side by side with the Tudor-style Nathan Moore House. It appears, at this early date, that Wright did not intend to edit his work to emphasize its modernity, as he also published the H. C. Goodrich (1896; Oak Park, Illinois), H. P. Young (1895; Oak Park, Illinois), and Chauncey Williams (1895; River Forest,



scroll beneath the fruitful tree typify the elements of an architect's work. The solemn secretary birds have their meaning to the designer who in these caps has enjoyed taking a quiet fling at the reactionary spirits who dominate the "Arts and Crafts" movement. With their broad backs and hoary heads bent low, their forms crouched into rigid masses, the two hoary figures which flank the porch were wellnamed by the sculptor, Richard Bock, who created them, "The Boulder," as typifying the struggle of the oppressed and shackled soul to break its bonds and find self expression. Seen upon a summer day, embowered with trees, generous the stone urns which flank the steps overflowing with flowers and dripping masses of foliage, the façade of this architect's workshop, is one of his most successful creations. It is to be hoped that this experiment in separating the creative and executive activities of an architect, giving to the former a quiet, congenial and helpful setting, will continue to prove as satisfactory in every way as it has since it was undertaken.



About two miles west of Oak Park in the suburb of River Forest, there are several examples of Mr. Wright's work, one of which, the Winslow House, is more than worth a pilgrimage to see. In fact, it is the broadest, the most characteristic and the most completely satisfying thing that he has done. This opportunity came to him in the third year of his independent practice and is the only site beautiful in itself that has yet come into his



hands. Upon the chosen site Nature has been at work for years building the wonderful elm which, with its spreading arms and feathery sprays, was destined to shade this house, and the character of the house was somewhat determined by the circumstance of this tree. The sympathy that has been firmly established



between them is felt by the cultivated and uncultivated. The street façade, as will be seen in the photograph, is simple with a breadth of treatment that carries the exquisite refinement of its detail with perfect dignity. Within the grounds to the rear we are afforded a more intimate knowledge of the conditions of life within



and the scheme becomes less reticent and is more picturesque without sacrificing the quiet formality of the whole. The impression conveyed by the exterior is the impression conveyed by the elm. A certain simple power of an organic nature that seems to have as much right to its place and is as much a part of the site as the tree. The analogy begins there and continues, for the details of the house are as much in their place and as consistent in themselves and in relation to each other, as the whole house is to its surroundings. A "layman" has said that his first view of this house gave him the same thrill that he felt when listening for the first time to an orchestra. The stable in the rear, with its background of tall trees, one of which shoots upward through the eaves, is a classic little gem in keeping with the house, and contains the printing shop of the Auvergne Press, where Mr. Winslow and

1.6 Robert C. Spencer Jr., "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural Review*, June 1900, 65 (Kathryn Smith collection). The illustrations on this page are primarily devoted to Wright's house and studio (1889-98), with the exception of the Bagley House, top center.



1.7 C. A. McAfee House, Kenilworth, Illinois, 1894. Robert C. Spencer Jr., delineator. Watercolor and watercolor wash on art paper, 10 × 29 in. (FLWFA, 9407.01).
Legend: “Designed June 5, 1894 for C. A. McAfee, Kenilworth, Frank Lloyd Wright Architect.” This drawing was reproduced in the 1900 CAC Annual, Wright section, 79.

Illinois) Houses. Nor did he seek to distance himself from Sullivan’s influence as both the Heller and Joseph and Helen Husser (1899; Chicago) Houses were well represented. This was the first, and only, instance where the largely forgotten Orrin Goan House (1894; La Grange, Illinois) was published (by a perspective and an inset plan). The article presented Wright as a residential architect, as the first seven of the twelve pages were devoted to houses. However, larger structures were included. The Francis Apartments (1895; Chicago) and Francisco Terrace (1895; Chicago) were well illustrated. The exceptional Mendota Boathouse (1893; Madison, Wisconsin) had two photographs and a split plan. Oddly, the somewhat awkward Cheltenham Beach Resort (1899; Chicago) was featured, while the more accomplished Wolf Lake Amusement Park (1895; Chicago) was not. The problematic design for the Abraham Lincoln Center, a commission from his uncle, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, appears, but the daring design of the executed Romeo and Juliet Windmill (1896; Spring Green, Wisconsin), for his aunts, Jane and Ellen, was excluded. Although the text was exemplary—although idolatrous—especially for such an early date, the size of the illustrations, which, in most cases were the size of postage stamps, was extremely disappointing to Wright. By 1910, he would say he was sick of “over reduction.”²²

From this vast richness of material, Wright chose only six works to exhibit at the Art Institute. Of course, he was thinking of the audience in both cases. The *Architectural Review* was a national publication primarily directed at other architects and

designers, while the Chicago exhibition was open to the general public—potential clients—as well as the local design community. As a result, he opened the show with five photographs of his recently completed Oak Park Studio, four color renderings of residential projects in idealized settings, and the unexecuted Lincoln Center. The fact that Wright chose all unbuilt houses—C. A. McAfee (1894; Kenilworth, Illinois; figure 1.7), Mrs. David Devin (1896; Chicago), E. C. Waller (1898; River Forest, Illinois), and Mrs. Robert Eckhart (1899; River Forest, Illinois; figure 1.8)—all rendered in a similar style indicates that he was presenting work that was for hire. Thus the show announced that he was open for business as a residential architect of exquisite sensibility, while the *Review* presented an important new American architect of great originality.

In addition to exhibitions, Wright used public lectures to advance his avant-garde program; he gave one of his most important theoretical statements, “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” at Hull House on March 6, 1901, which was subsequently printed in the club catalog that year.²³ With this paper he presented an impassioned plea for the use of the machine in elevating the quality of architecture as long as it was used as a tool by artist-architects and not as an end in itself. This lecture became in the decades ahead one of Wright’s most influential manifestos, yet, at the same time, it was misunderstood by the next generation of European architects, who first hailed him as a prophet and then castigated him for rejecting his own first principles with his 1920s designs.



1.8 Mrs. Robert Eckhart House, River Forest, Illinois, 1899. Watercolor on paper, 10 × 18½ in. (FLWFA, 9805.008).

E. C. Waller commissioned this house for his daughter. It was reproduced in the 1900 CAC Annual, but mistitled as E. C. Waller House, 80. See figure 1.5.

1902

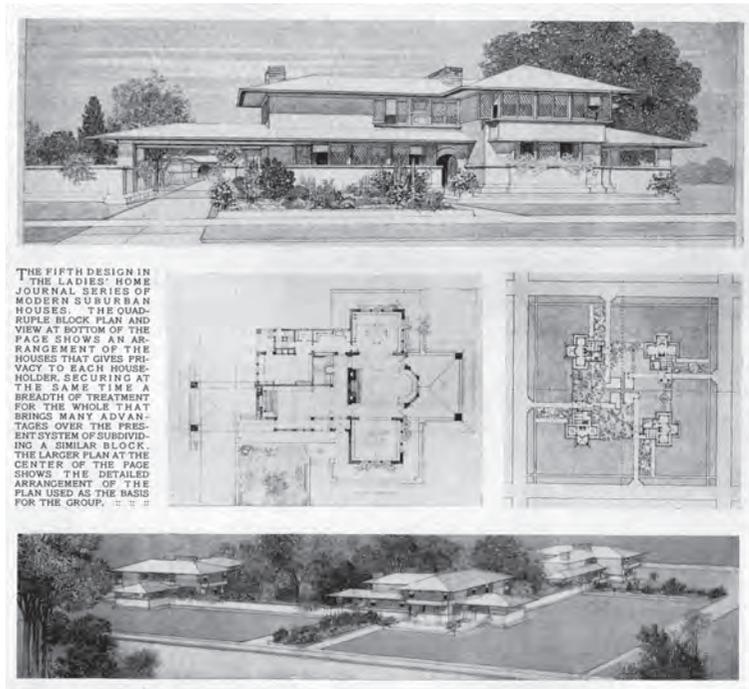
The timing of the March 1902 Fifteenth Annual could not have been better. By that date, Wright had made his revolutionary conceptual breakthrough with two distinct plan types for residences and public buildings that he would refine for the rest of the decade: the “open plan” Prairie House and the binuclear plan for churches and schools. On an artistic level, the 1902 exhibition was groundbreaking for Wright. He was fortunate that the key members of the “Eighteen” were totally in control from the top down: Spencer was serving as president and as a member of the jury alongside Schmidt and Dean, who also was editor of the catalog.²⁴ He was also fortunate that these rival architects recognized the quality of his work, and breaking with club precedent accorded him privileges never given to others.

First, he was allocated a separate gallery at the Art Institute and the freedom to design the installation. Second, he was allowed more items than anyone else, sixty-four in total: Wright expanded his exhibition technique beyond simulacra—drawings and photographs—to include furniture and decorative arts such as lamps, bowls, vases, and lighting, which made up at least half of his display.²⁵ In addition, the catalog, which was monopolized by the progressives, contained a fourteen-page section devoted to the Oak Park architect, titled in his own graphic style “The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright,” certainly selected and designed by Wright, which amounted to a small monograph in and of itself (figures 1.9–10).²⁶

The 1902 annual also marked the first public exhibition of Wright’s collaboration with the first of his most important architectural photographers: Henry Fuermann, whose firm



1.9 Chicago Architectural Club Annual, 1902, title page.
(Scott Architectural Archive)



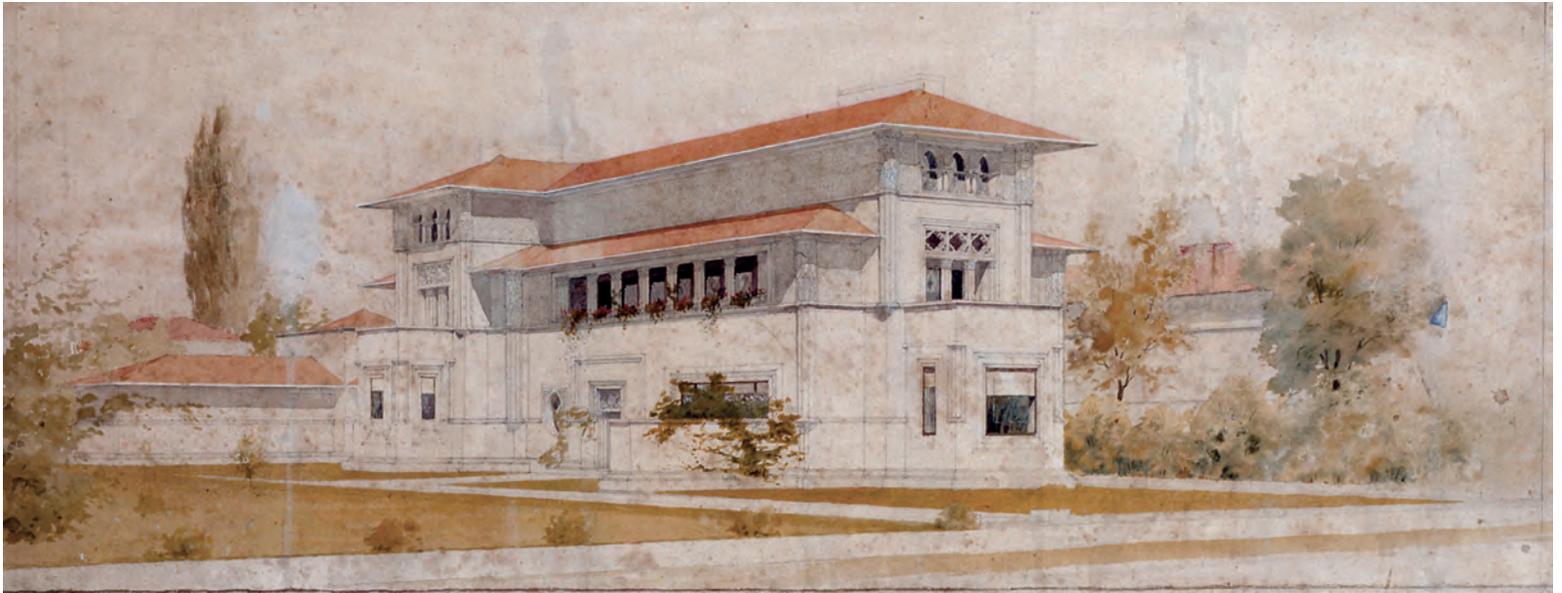
1.10 Chicago Architectural Club Annual, 1902, page one.
(Scott Architectural Archive)

photographed much of Wright's built work between 1902 and 1914. Born in Watertown, Wisconsin, northeast of Madison, Fuermann (1861–1949) opened his business in Chicago in early 1902 under the company name, Fuermann and Williams. Over time, he brought in his two eldest children, Clarence and Leon, and changed the name to Henry Fuermann and Sons; Henry and Clarence have been credited with extensively photographing the work of Wright and of Adler and Sullivan before World War I. Fuermann photographs are known for their exquisite tonal values and clarity of detail due to the fact that prints were made from large-format glass negatives. Wright apparently prized the work of both photographers, Henry and Clarence, as he employed them continuously up to and including 1914, some of the few collaborators who stayed with him after his move to Wisconsin in 1911.²⁷

In conformance with his aesthetic ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), Wright designed the gallery as an extension of his architectural studio. The color scheme (soft brown and gray) and decorative details were coordinated with the furniture and craft objects on display. The walls were covered in brown burlap banded with strips of natural wood to harmonize with the drawing frames. Desks and tables (fabricated by John Ayers, mainly for

the B. Harley Bradley [1900; Kankakee, Illinois] and Warren Hickox [1900; Kankakee, Illinois] Houses) draped with brown leather covers were placed around the gallery; they served as surfaces to display tall slender copper vases and bronze repoussé bowls (made by James A. Miller) filled with arrangements of delicate dry branches and milkweed pods.

Wright took advantage of the generous amount of space he had been given by displaying a good selection—about 40 percent—of nineteenth-century work. He devoted the most prominent place to the Winslow House and Stable and the Husser House, shown alongside the McAfee, Heller (figure 1.11), and Frank Thomas (1901; Oak Park, Illinois, figure 1.12) Houses. But the most groundbreaking aspects of the show were the drawings and photographs devoted to the Bradley and Hickox Houses shown in context with displays of houses and the plan for a Prairie Town, which appeared in the February and July 1901 *Ladies' Home Journal* (figures 1.13–16). Also in the same gallery were drawings or photographs illustrating the Oak Park Studio (figure 1.17) and the Hillside Home School (1901–3; Spring Green, Wisconsin). The spatial discoveries in this group of buildings were revolutionary and secured Wright's reputation as a modern architect.



1.11 Isidore Heller House, Chicago, Illinois, 1897.
Watercolor and graphite pencil on tracing paper mounted to heavy art paper, 12¼ × 30 in. (FLWFA, 9606.007)

1.12 Frank Thomas House, Oak Park, Illinois, 1901.
Ink and watercolor on tracing paper, 7¾ × 21¾ in. Drummond, Long, or Mahony, delineator. (FLWFA, 0106.001)



1.13 B. Harley Bradley House, Kankakee, Illinois, 1900. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0002.0056). Wright reproduced this photograph in his 1902 catalog.

1.14 B. Harley Bradley House, Kankakee, Illinois, 1900. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0002.0009). This photograph is almost identical to the one illustrated in the 1902 CAC catalog.



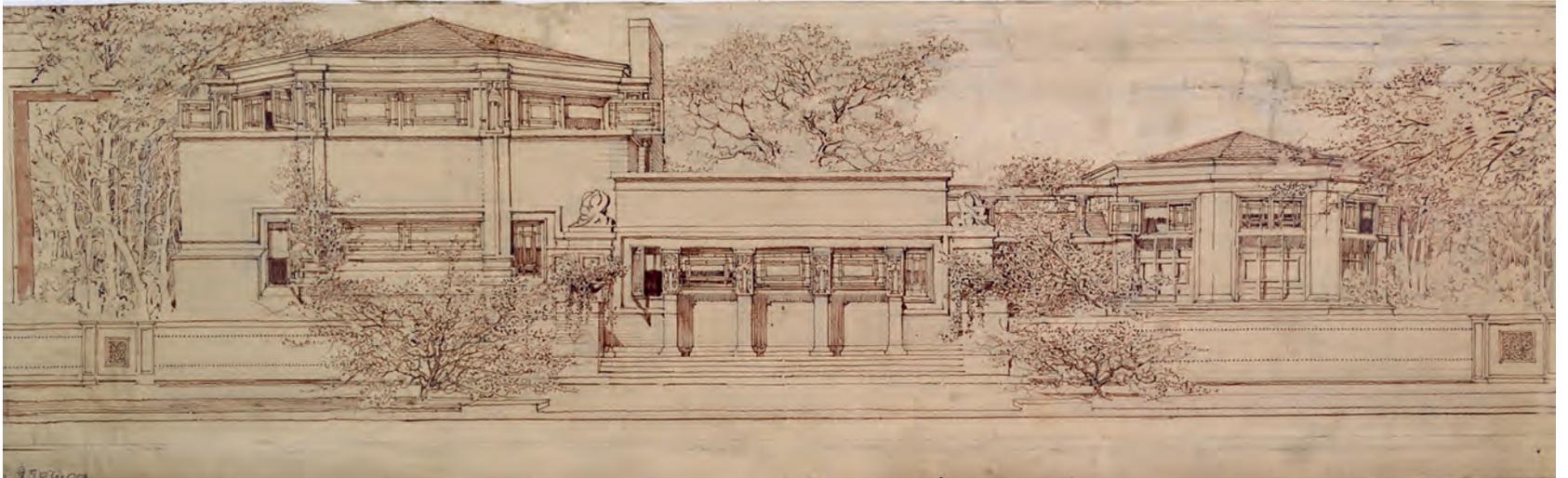
1.15 Warren Hickox House, Kankakee, Illinois, 1900. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0004.0014).
This photograph is almost identical to the one illustrated in the 1902 catalog.



1.16 "A Home in a Prairie Town," for *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1900.

India ink, graphite pencil, watercolor, and white tempera on gray art paper, 14½ × 25 in. Marion Mahony and others, delineator. (FLWFA, 0007.001).

This drawing was simplified for an illustration in the 1902 annual, see figure 1.10.



1.17 Frank Lloyd Wright and others, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, Oak Park, Illinois, 1897–98. Sepia ink on paper, 6 × 19½ in. (FLWFA, 9506.001)

At this period of Wright's career, the spatial plan of the Prairie House was more important than structural innovation. By analyzing the functional components of the single family dwelling, he went from what he called "the general to the particular." For instance, he categorized the public spaces (living, dining, and library) as primary and the service spaces (entry, kitchen, pantry, servants' quarters) as secondary. Using axial organization and a square grid system as ordering devices, he gave modern expression to the classical principle of hierarchy of spaces.

A major conceptual breakthrough that he made early on was the realization that mechanized heating made it no longer necessary to close rooms off from each other to conserve heat. This discovery led to the open plan in public spaces—for instance, where the living room opened to the dining room on a diagonal—while maintaining compartmentalized rooms for services. With the hearth no longer used as the major source of heat, Wright was free to use it as a freestanding vertical plane in space.

The other major advance represented by the Prairie House was the rejection of the wall as the traditional solid barrier between inside and outside. Rather, with the Bradley House, for example, he broke the wall down into a series of elements such as piers, flat planes, and window bands—all geometrically organized by dark wood strips. The wall was now defined as an enclosure of space. Windows were no longer holes punched through a mass, but a light screen filtering sunlight into the interior. The movement outward toward the landscape was amplified by the addition of porches, terraces, flower boxes, and planter urns.

It is clear that by 1901, Wright had derived inspiration from nature, absorbing his studies of the Midwest prairies, woods, and ponds. One of his greatest sources was from the land itself, including all aspects of the natural world: wildflowers, leaves, and grasses. The turning point came when he began to incorporate specific characteristics into his architectural language. The straight line of the horizon became the low sheltering roof, trees and flowers were abstracted as geometric patterns in the art glass windows, and leaves contributed their autumnal palette to the plaster surfaces.

While Wright could feel confident in the recognition of his peers—although it is not clear how deeply Spencer, Dean, and Perkins understood how radical Wright's spatial experiments were—the reviews in the popular press were decidedly mixed. The *Chicago Post* neither recognized nor understood the innovations in the houses or public buildings, but focused on the more accessible decorative arts, politely noting that, "All about are

object lessons in good taste." The furniture was lauded for being "designed along lines of beauty and restfulness" and "made to last a generation."²⁸ While the anonymous reviewer for the *American Architect* took a different tack, classifying Wright's designs with the "less important work of the younger men . . . who strive for the semi-grotesque, the catchy. Their compositions lack the best principles of honest design." Sounding a very caustic note, the reviewer questioned, "Why in an architectural exhibit, the chief one in Chicago for the year, why should Mr. Wright's tables and chairs, and his teazles and milkweeds and pine branches cover so much space?"²⁹

The reviewer was decidedly sympathetic with the more conservative branch of architecture, but even more damning, he raised a moral issue. "From the standpoint of professional ethics," he queried, "it seems questionable whether such a pronounced personal exhibit should have its place in a general architectural exhibition, as it certainly smacks of advertising more than anything else."³⁰ The accusation of favoritism hung over the club exhibitions until 1914—the last of Wright's participation—and created a backlash against the progressives for the next five years.³¹ More important, by 1902, Wright's preferences for exhibiting were fully formed; he would not compromise in the decades ahead without first waging a strategy of intimidation to the shock and dismay of others.

The conservatives gained ascendancy in 1903 and, as a result, Wright spent the next few years estranged from the club. After the outrage of 1902, the club adopted a rule prohibiting "special exhibits by individuals," a policy that was unacceptable to Wright.³² But these would be years of creative ferment and great productivity. While drawings Wright hung in future exhibitions rarely came solely from his own hand, something far more significant was on display as Barry Byrne, employed in the Oak Park Studio from 1902 to 1909, recalled, "In the period I have indicated he transformed himself from the more superficial precision of the draftsman type into a master architect whose occupation was no longer mere delineation, but whose concern was that immeasurably greater thing, the large-scale manipulation of spaces and masses into a vital, intrinsic architecture. In that transformation the relatively lesser person, the careful pictorial draftsman, diminished in importance and skill . . . by 1908 . . . Wright as draftsman had almost ceased to exist and that more vital being, Wright as architect, was operating in full possession of his extraordinary creative power."³³



1.18 Frank Lloyd Wright, ca. 1908. (FLWFA, 6002.0002)

1907–11

Although there were four years of stalemate, there was a positive outcome. By 1907, when sympathetic members, principally Irving K. Pond and Howard van Doren Shaw (along with Alfred H. Granger), were appointed as the Jury of Admission, Wright had good reason to mount a solo exhibition (figure 1.18).³⁴ He had produced work that would establish his reputation in Chicago and beyond for the remainder of his life. He had no illustrated section of the catalog that year, but as events unfolded during the aftermath of the exhibition, he was motivated to create some of his most enduring publications.

Following an already established pattern, Wright designed his installation at the 1907 annual to create a dynamic rather than static space. Within the rectangular room, he used three-dimensional objects—large-scale pedestals holding aloft white plaster models; sparkling, colorful art glass panels; and metal office furniture where glazed ceramic vases, bronze lamps, and piles of black-and-white photographs rested—to create a spatial experience where the viewer strolled from one area to the other, never taking in the entire exhibition at one glance. The walls

were covered with framed drawings, arranged salon style, hanging from a picture rail by colored silk cords; the cords themselves establishing a linear decorative pattern across the gallery walls (figure 1.19). One reviewer took special note, commenting at the time, “The quiet color of the walls, the restfulness of the small molding decoration, the framing of prints unite with objects of decoration and furniture to stimulate more than passing interest.”³⁵

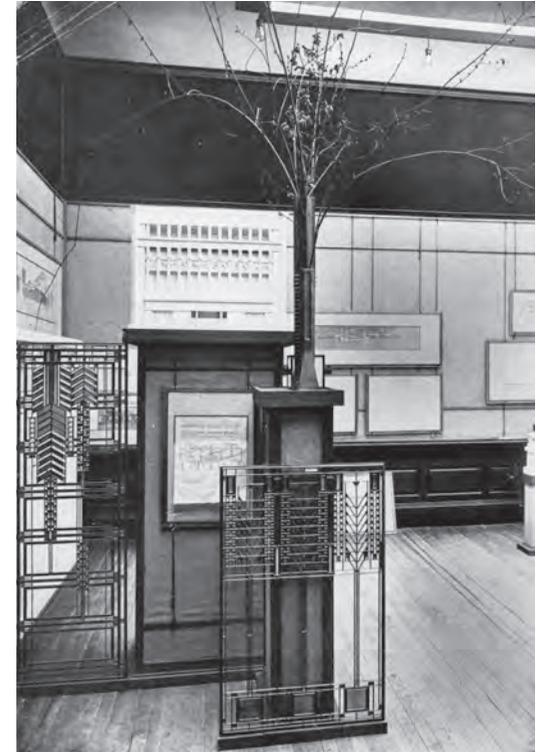
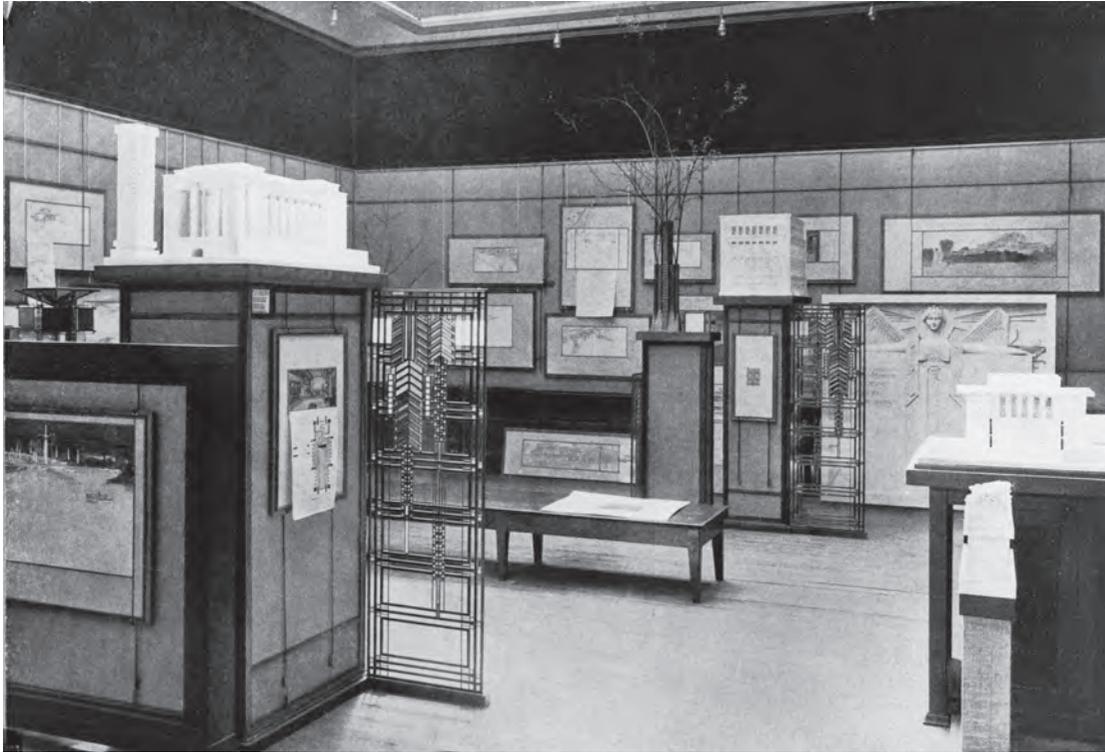
Installation photographs by Fuermann, which Wright commissioned, communicate the overall effect, which was like walking into his Oak Park Studio. Within the center of the gallery, he created a triangular configuration of three freestanding pedestals or furniture groupings. In one corner was the model of Unity Temple (1905–8; Oak Park, Illinois); diagonally opposite on a higher pedestal the Lincoln Center model, flanked by a Teco “Triplicate” vase and his most extraordinary work in glass, a door panel from the Susan Lawrence Dana House (1902–4; Springfield, Illinois) (figures 1.20–21); on the opposite diagonal was a furniture grouping: a metal desk with built-in seat and an office chair, both from the Larkin Company Administration Building (1902–6; Buffalo, New York) (figure 1.22).³⁶ The Larkin furniture was surrounded on two sides by a partition and pedestal with the Larkin model held aloft, creating a room within a room. The overall effect was of an exhibition of exquisite drawings punctuated with the bold form of three-dimensional models. The photographs were presented casually for the visitor to examine by hand.

With the exception of a few outstanding works shown in 1902, which were prototypes of what was to evolve—the *Ladies’ Home Journal* houses and Quadruple Plan, Lincoln Center, and early Prairie Houses—the buildings were a survey of work undertaken or completed since his last exhibition. The catalog listed thirty-eight buildings and projects. In retrospect, except for the last masterpieces completed after his departure for Europe, all the great works were there: the full elaboration of the Prairie House and the two experimental public buildings (figure 1.23).

The 1907 exhibition was particularly noteworthy for the quality of perspectives—drawings made for either publication or for presentation to clients, who were not adept at reading plans and elevations—most of which were executed by Marion Mahony. Although Wright had hired other renderers, such as Charles Corwin, Louis Rasmussen, and Birch Burdette Long among others, in the past, Mahony, who had started work for Wright at Steinway Hall in 1895, developed a highly refined individual style that enhanced Wright’s designs for his clients and the public. Using the medium of india ink or sepia ink alone or



1.19 Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0700.0006).
Left, metal office furniture from the Larkin Administration Building; *top right*, Metzger House drawing.

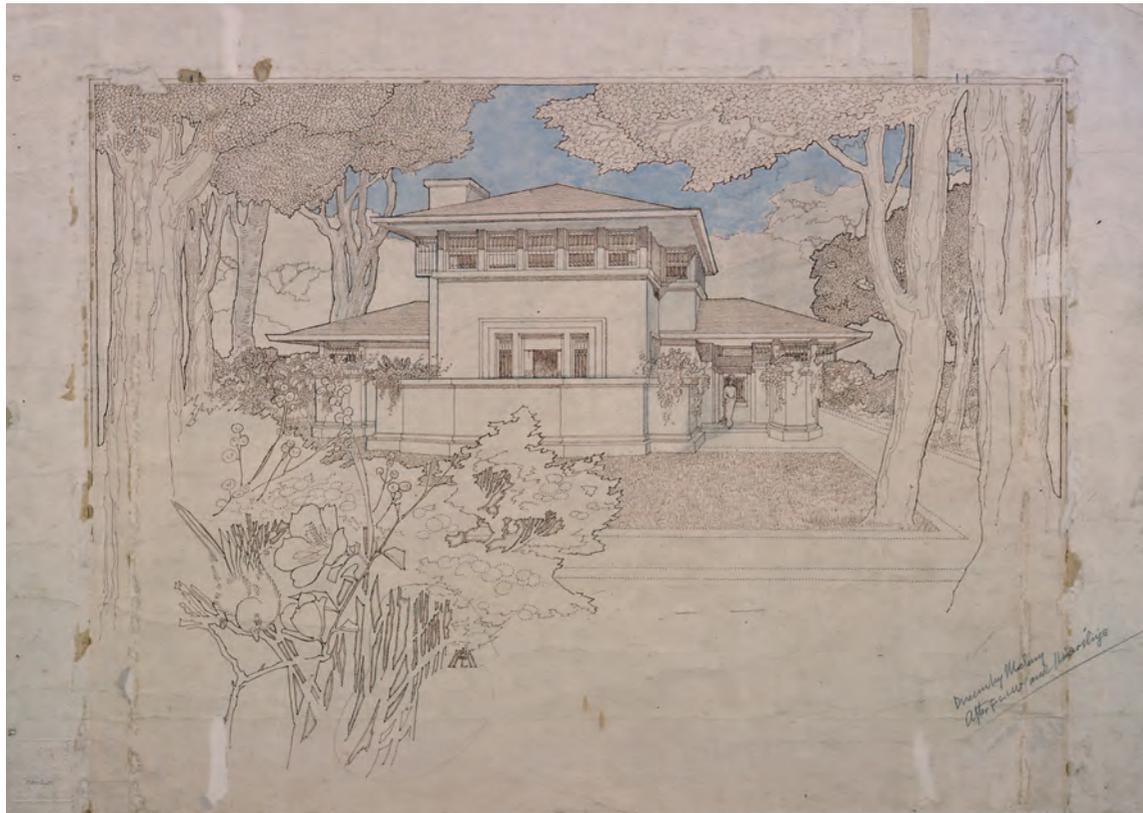


1.20 Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0700.0004). *Left*, Larkin Administration Building model with a maquette of a column for Unity Temple;
middle, Abraham Lincoln Center model; *right*, partial view of Unity Temple model.

1.21 Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0700.0005). *Left*, art glass door panel from the Susan Lawrence Dana House;
middle, Abraham Lincoln Center model; *right*, Tecco "Triplicate" vase.



1.22 Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 0403.0068).
Left, Larkin Administration Building model; *middle*, Larkin Administration Building metal office furniture;
right, Edwin Cheney House perspective.



1.24 K. C. De Rhodes House, South Bend, Indiana, 1906. Marion Mahony, delineator. Sepia ink, pencil, and watercolor wash on off-white paper, 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (FLWFA, 0602.001). Mahony's initials appear within the drawing at *lower left*; Wright inscribed marginalia in pencil at *lower right*, "Drawn by Mahony—After FLIW and Hiroshige," at a later date.

Opposite top: 1.25 Edwin Cheney House, Oak Park, Illinois, 1903–4. Marion Mahony, delineator. India and sepia ink, graphite pencil on off-white tracing paper, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (FLWFA, 0401.017). This drawing can be seen in figure 1.22 at the *right*.

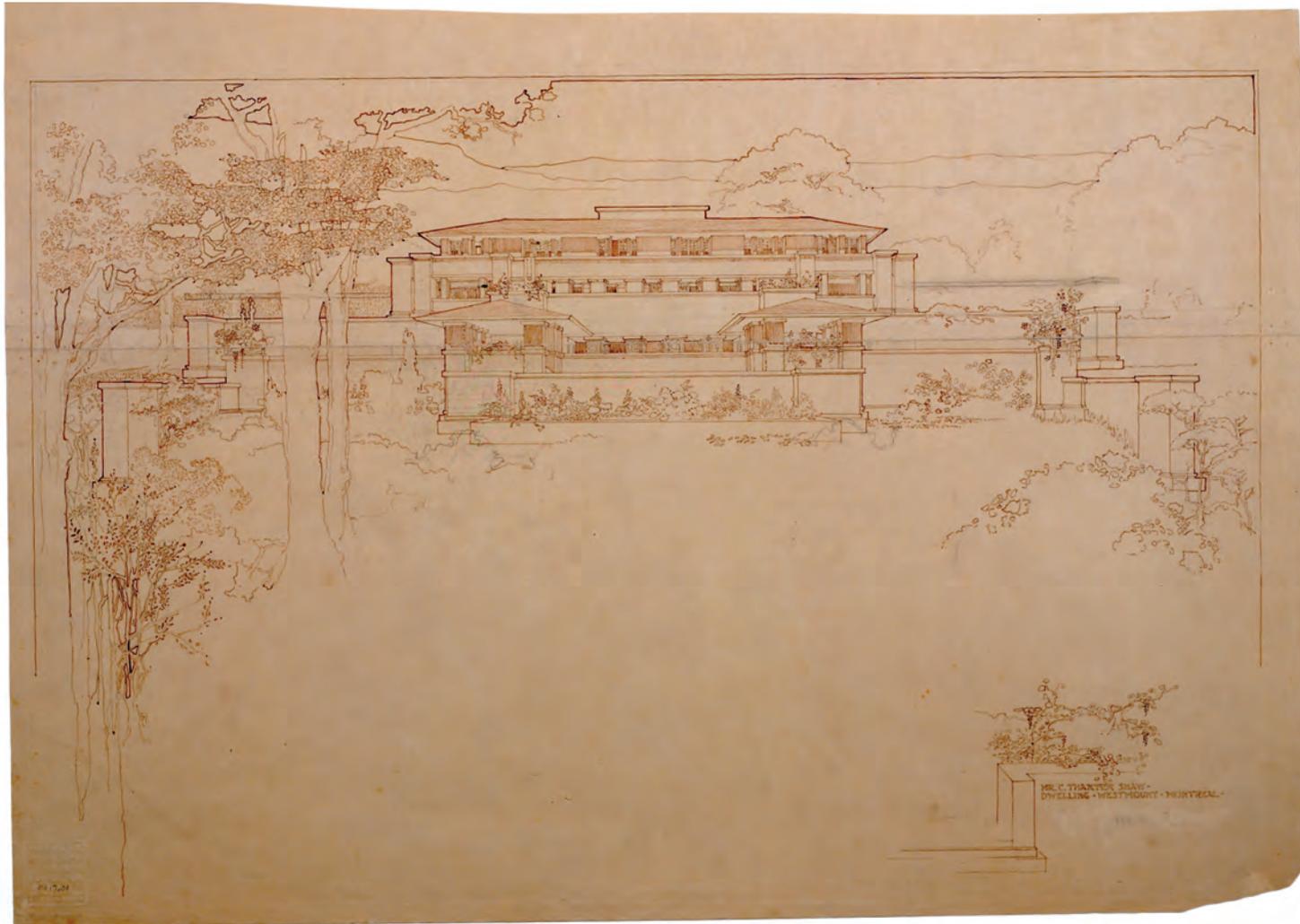
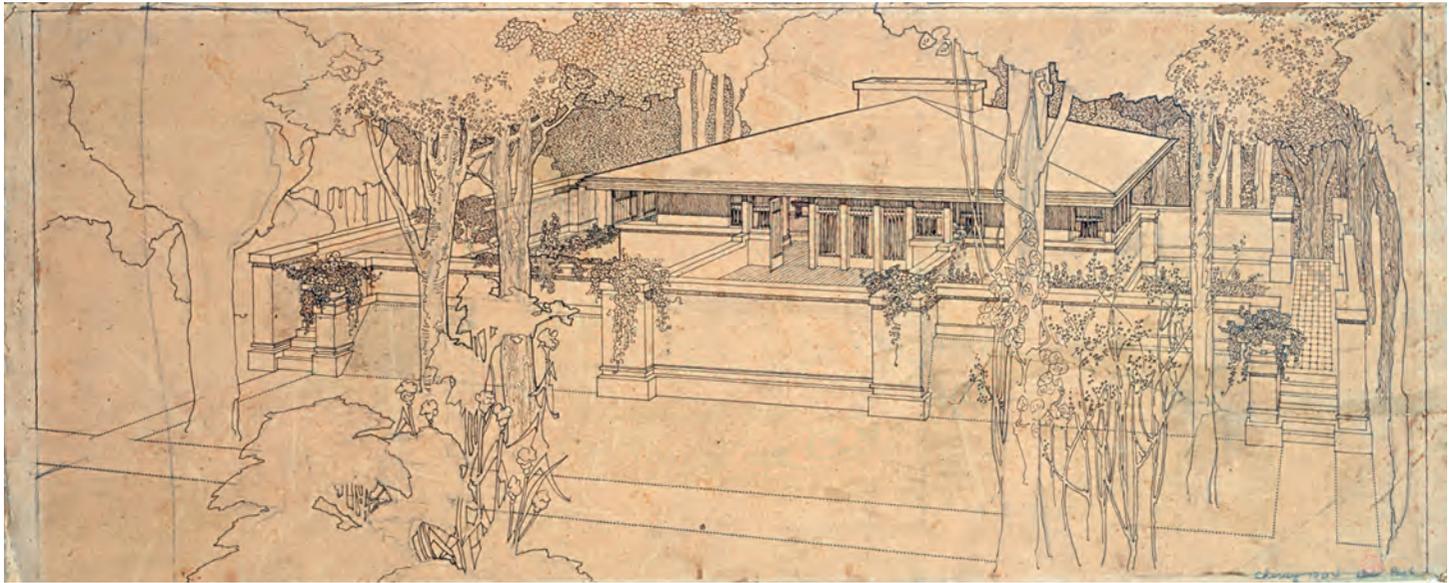
Opposite bottom: 1.26 C. Thaxter Shaw House, Montreal, Canada, 1906. Marion Mahony, delineator. Sepia ink on paper, 19 $\frac{5}{6}$ × 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (FLWFA, 0617.001). At *lower right* within the drawing: C. Thaxter Shaw Dwelling, Westmount, Montreal.

with watercolor wash, Mahony was skilled at delineating the building within an ideal landscape setting that evoked Japanese art in general, and woodblock printmakers such as Ando Hiroshige—Wright's favorite artist, whose work he collected in quantity—specifically (figure 1.24). While Wright collaborated on the genesis of these perspectives, Mahony seems to have been given latitude in carrying the drawing to completion. These drawings differ from the earlier use of watercolor alone—the painterly approach—where the building and its surroundings blend together; the new technique focused on architecture as subject.³⁷ Among the houses shown were the Victor Metzger (1902; Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan), Dana, Edwin Cheney (1903–4; Oak Park, Illinois; figure 1.25), Darwin D. Martin (1903–5; Buffalo, New York), C. Thaxter Shaw (1906; Montreal, Canada; figure 1.26), and Avery Coonley Houses (1906–9; Riverside, Illinois), his most complete works where the budget was generous.

For large-scale work, Wright seemed well aware of his achievement in creating two monumental buildings, both of which represented innovations in planning and materials—the Larkin Building and Unity Temple—as the placement of the

models, fabricated by the Chicago sculptor, Albert Van den Berghen, made them visible from any point in the gallery.³⁸ The Yahara Boathouse (1905; Lake Mendota, Madison, Wisconsin), exhibited as U. of W. (University of Wisconsin) Boathouse, was not singled out for special attention, nor would it be published a year later in the *Architectural Record*. It would take several decades before Wright came to understand its importance for modern architecture; that would be a lesson learned from Europe. It certainly was characteristic of Wright at the Chicago Architectural Club exhibitions to concentrate on recent work, but, for the 1907 event, Wright seemed to understand precisely that this grouping of buildings represented an unprecedented achievement in his career. It was one of the six most important exhibitions in his sixty-six years of practice.

This was only partially understood in the popular press. While some newspapers were generous in their praise, recognizing the Oak Park architect as a great innovator in his field, others were less perceptive. The *Chicago Record Herald* described him as "an original genius," who had attracted "a considerable following, so that he is actually one of those rare architects who





1.27 Harriet Monroe. Photograph by Foltz. (University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf1-00894. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library)

have the honor of founding a school.” The anonymous writer clearly admired the residential designs, pointing out “[the] long, low roof, casement windows, banded under the broad eaves, or otherwise arranged as an adornment; much unbroken wall space, and frequent use of garden or terrace walls to give the house privacy.”³⁹ The *Chicago Post* also was laudatory: “Mr. Wright’s model of Unity Church, Oak Park, which is constructed in concrete,” the reviewer opined, “and the numerous drawings and plans make the collection housed in this gallery an exhibition of considerable merit.”⁴⁰

But 1907 was remarkable for another reason, Wright faced his first objective art critic: the formidable Harriet Monroe (1860–1936; figure 1.27). The sister-in-law of John Root, the talented design partner of Daniel Burnham before his untimely death in 1891, Monroe aspired to be a published poet but often supported herself with intermittent jobs as a journalist. Although she traveled widely (two trips to Europe, 1890 and 1897; western United States, 1898; Europe and Asia, 1910), she made her

reputation in her hometown, Chicago, as a writer for the *Examiner* and the *Tribune*. Her enduring reputation rests on her founding of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, which first opened its pages to new serious poets in 1912, thereby bringing the modern idiom of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, and Wallace Stevens among many others to a wider audience.

Wright’s encounter with Monroe was extremely important, not the least for what it reveals about how he would handle adverse criticism in the decades ahead, but also, because her reaction motivated him to write his manifesto, “In the Cause of Architecture,” published the following year. Monroe, who devoted an entire column to Wright’s exhibition, was charmed by his houses, which she wrote, “seem to grow out of the ground as naturally as the trees, and to express our hospitable suburban American life, a life of indoors and outdoors, as spontaneously as certain Italian villas express the more pompous and splendid life of those old gorgeous centuries. Especially graceful in the grouping of lines and masses are the dwellings of Avery Coonley at Riverside, of Elizabeth Stone at Glencoe, of T. P. Hardy of Racine, and of V. H. Metzger away up on a rocky hill at Sault St. Marie” (figure 1.28). However, she disliked his public buildings, which were “so unusual, at times even bizarre,” looking “like fantastic blockhouses, full of corners and angles and squat, square columns, massive and weighty, without grace or ease nor monumental beauty.” She summed him up by explaining that he believed “the three Greek orders have done their utmost in the service of man, until in modern hands their true meaning is distorted and lost. Therefore, he thinks it is time to discard them and all their renaissance derivatives, and begin afresh from the beginning.”⁴¹

Wright lost little time in sitting down and thinking through a very long, well-composed response that ran to fourteen paragraphs. After putting her in her place as a “critic,” accusing her indirectly of “I-may-not-know-what-Art-is-but-I-know-what-I-like,” he went on to the essence of his argument. Using words that would almost be repeated word for word in the 1908 *Architectural Record*, he explained: “it is the very spirit that gave life to the old forms that this work courts. That it is the true inspiration that made of the time honored precedent in its own time a living thing that it craves. Venerable traditional forms are held by this work still too sacred to be paraded as a meretricious mask for the indecencies and iniquities of the market place! Long ago, yes, ages ago, from Nature came inspiration to the Architect and back to Nature with the principles deduced from these dead forms or formulae we will go again for inspiration. I know we shall find it for the Gods still live.”⁴² He continued, “Concerning our friend, the ‘squat’—we



1.28 Victor Metzger House, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, 1902. Birch Burdette Long, delineator?
India ink and watercolor on tan tracing paper, 9½ × 38½ in. (FLWFA, 0209.002)

happen to be living on the prairie. The prairie has a beauty of its own. A building on the prairie should recognize the features of its quiet level and accentuate them harmoniously. It should be quiet, broad, inclusive. . . . Hence, broad sheltering eaves over determined masses, gentle roofs, spreading base and outreaching walls. What is publicly set forth in this little collection could hardly be American Architecture. No—not yet.”⁴³

Monroe complained, “You responded by calling me names. Thus unhappily the argument was cut off where it began. And I am with much regret that it seems impossible to pursue it.”⁴⁴ Wright’s immediate retort was unexpected in the circumstances, but characteristic nonetheless. Offering his apology, he concluded with, “Anyhow, Whistler had his ‘Arry’,—now have I not my ‘Arriet’? Hers and henceforth hers only, Frank Lloyd Wright.”⁴⁵ As charmingly as the correspondence came to a close, the argument had not ended; in the months ahead, Wright made plans to publish an even longer well-thought-out response.

The importance of the 1907 exhibition can hardly be overestimated. It was Wright’s most well designed mounting of his most distinguished work of the first fifteen years of his career. It brought him face to face with an objective critic, whose challenge motivated him to write the clearest expression of his design principles to date. When he opened his essay, “In the Cause of Architecture,” the following year with the sentence, “Radical though it be, the work here illustrated is dedicated to a cause conservative in the best sense of the word,” surely Monroe’s review was in the back of his mind.⁴⁶

1908

The 1907 exhibition was not accompanied by a publication of Wright’s work, so it seems that Monroe’s critical opinions motivated him to rectify that absence. While the editors of *Architectural Record* were already aware of him because he had been positively reviewed in the July 1905 issue, the March 1908 article, which illustrated thirty-four buildings and projects, served as the de facto catalog of the 1907 club exhibition with 50 percent of its contents illustrated.⁴⁷ The graphic layout divided Wright’s article into two distinct parts: the text and a portfolio of black-and-white illustrations, predominantly of built work, but also perspectives, plans, one model, and one work of sculpture. It is significant that the text ends with an illustration of the 1907 exhibition (figure 1.29).

The Larkin Building was prominently featured, introducing the illustrated section with eleven exterior and interior photos. The long explanatory caption ended with the sentence, “Therefore the work may have the same claim to consideration as a ‘work of art’ as an ocean liner, a locomotive or a battleship.”⁴⁸ It would be another fifteen years before Le Corbusier published a similar statement. What followed was a portfolio of fifty-six photographs, primarily by Fuermann and Sons, of executed Prairie Houses, exterior and interior views, and one of Unity Temple. At publication, it was Wright’s best illustrated and clearest exposition of his accomplishments in architecture to date.



1.29 Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1907.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. This photograph was reproduced as the last illustration in "In the Cause of Architecture,"
Architectural Record 1908. (FLWFA, 0700.0001)

ERNST WASMUTH VERLAG, BERLIN, 1908–11

Although the 1908 text of “In the Cause of Architecture” is now regarded as a seminal work in Wright literature, the illustrations were poorly printed and the architect was justifiably disappointed. In the same year, Wright received a letter from the Berlin publishing firm Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, soliciting his cooperation in the publication of a book of photographs of his executed work. Ernst Wasmuth (1845–1897) founded the eponymous firm in 1872, and was joined by his younger brother, Emil (1848–1894), in 1875. At the time, photographic reproduction, especially color lithography and collotype, was dramatically changing art publishing in Germany; in 1884, the firm expanded into a multistoried building—containing offices, photography and graphic design studios, storage, and later, exhibition space for architectural drawings—where the brothers produced an impressive range of books on the history of the arts and architecture.⁴⁹

The next major chapter in the history of the firm began when Emil’s widow, Antonie, inherited the business at the death of her brother-in-law, Ernst, in 1897. While she raised her five children, Otto Dorn (18??–1926), a Berlin bookseller, appointed managing director, continued the growth of the company.⁵⁰ Dorn assumed authority at an auspicious time when German architects and architectural students were demanding more exposure to “modern” architecture.⁵¹ Under Dorn’s leadership between 1898 and 1913, the firm was incorporated in 1903, four major architecture magazines flourished, and milestone books and folios were published.⁵²

In 1897, Bruno Möhring, along with Ernst Splinder, began to edit the monthly titled *Berliner Architekturwelt: Zeitschrift für Baukunst, Malerei, Plastik und Kunstgewerbe* (*Berlin Architecture World: Magazine for Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, and Arts and Crafts*), under the auspices of the Association of Berlin Architects. As a supplement to that journal, in 1901 the publisher conceived small books known as *sonderheft* (special issue), titled *Berliner Künstlerhefte* (*Berlin Artist Books*), inexpensive monographs on the work of individual artists or designers offered at a discount price to existing subscribers.⁵³

In the same year, the firm began publication of two additional periodicals, the lavish and expensive annual, *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts: Zeitschrift für moderne Baukunst* (*20th Century Architecture: Journal of Modern Architecture*) and *Charakteristische Details von ausgeführten Bauwerken* (*Characteristic Details of Executed Buildings*).⁵⁴ These publications, ventures that focused on contemporary architecture, were edited by Hugo Licht (1841–1923), an architect, who began working with the Wasmuth



1.30 Hugo Licht, 1900. Photograph by Hermann Walter. (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum, Leipzig. Wikimedia Commons)

brothers in 1877, editing architectural books (figure 1.30).⁵⁵ Licht influenced the development of modern German architecture through these two periodicals by publishing new building types such as office buildings, stores, and factories as valid works of architecture and by presenting German architects to an international audience.⁵⁶ By 1907 or early 1908, following the popular success of the sale of *sonderhefte* to *Berliner Architekturwelt* subscribers, a similar series was created as a supplement to the annual *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts*. The books, varying in length from fifty to one hundred pages, devoted to the executed work of one architect from selected cities or regions of Germany, consisted of black-and-white photographs and some plans, with a brief introductory text by the art historian Max Creutz (1876–1932), the director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Cologne.⁵⁷ The first issue, devoted to the work of Friedrich von Thiersch (1852–1921), who taught for forty years at the Technische Hochschule in Munich, did not look forward, but rather backward toward the nineteenth century as he practiced in the neo-Romanesque style. Despite this conservative start, the timing of the Wasmuth firm’s letter to Wright indicates that he was among the first architects chosen for the series.⁵⁸

For both personal and professional reasons, Wright contemplated going to Berlin, but he needed to postpone the trip due to new commissions.⁵⁹ Wright was at this time deeply in love with

Mamah Borthwick Cheney, who had been an Oak Park residential client along with her husband, Edwin, in 1903. He and Mamah proposed to marry, but Wright's wife, Catherine, arguing for a one-year wait, refused to grant him a divorce. In the meantime, Wasmuth Verlag moved ahead with plans for the first of the *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts sonderhefte*. It is tempting to think that Licht personally selected Wright due to the power and authority he held over *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts*, but there is no evidence to support this conclusion.⁶⁰ In his autobiography, Wright speculated that it was Kuno Francke, a professor of German history and literature at Harvard University, a visitor to his Oak Park Studio, who had recommended him.⁶¹ The architectural historian Anthony Alofsin has speculated that it was Bruno Möhring, who had been in the Midwest in 1904 attending the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in Saint Louis.⁶² On the other hand, Creutz is another possibility as he had been in the Midwest also for the exposition.⁶³ Whether it was Licht, Möhring, Francke, Creutz, or some other individual or a combination of several people, it is likely that the March 1908 *Architectural Record* played a role. It would have been concrete evidence that there were a sufficient number of photographs of executed buildings to fill a book of fifty to one hundred pages.⁶⁴ In the year that elapsed before Wright's departure for Europe in September 1909, two new *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts sonderhefte*, numbers 2 and 3, both with introductions by Creutz, appeared. They were *Carl Moritz—Cöln, Wohnhauser und Villen (Carl Moritz—Cologne, Apartment Houses and Villas)* and *Joseph M. Olbrich—Dusseldorf, Warenhaus Tietz in Dusseldorf (Joseph M. Olbrich—Dusseldorf, Tietz Department Store, Dusseldorf)*.

The latter volume had additional meaning because Olbrich had died on August 8, 1908, while the Berlin firm was in the midst of publishing a lavish portfolio, *Architektur von Olbrich*, in installments: no. 1 (1901), no. 2 (1904). The Olbrich folios, which were designed by the Austrian architect himself, were superb examples of fine art bookmaking. They consisted of large format loose monochromatic and color plates illustrating buildings as well as applied arts and furniture. The separate sheets were contained within folders printed with a decorative design and the title, series number, and name and address of the publisher on the cover in hand-lettered type. Each plate was stamped with a chop designed by Olbrich with the title of the book and the name and address of the publisher within a square.⁶⁵

When Wright first stepped into the Wasmuth offices in early November 1909, it is clear that he would have been shown *sonderhefte* one, two, and three of *XX. Jahrhunderts* and the two

Olbrich folios, almost certainly by Otto Dorn.⁶⁶ A few months later, Wright explained to the English designer Charles R. Ashbee the details of his initial contact with the German publishing house, “[Wasmuth Verlag] had written me in America for material for a Sonderheft [Special Issue] to appear in a regular series now in publication. This material to consist wholly of photographs of actual work and plans. . . . This work was their enterprise. . . . The article . . . was to have been written by some German in Cologne whom I do not know.” Wright also declared that he owned “outright” a larger work of “about 100 plates” because he believed it would be “profitable and there is no cleaner way for an architect to find his money than in the sale of his own works in this way.”⁶⁷ Wright's account, which is contemporary with events as they occurred, points to the fact that it was he who had proposed the lavish two-volume portfolio, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright (Executed Buildings and Studies by Frank Lloyd Wright)*, as his own “enterprise,” to Wasmuth Verlag. One that he conceived and designed, specified as to paper, inks, and binding, and that he financed and owned outright as his own publishing venture for sale in the United States. There is no record of how Wright became inspired to create this ambitious art book, but consistent with his personality, it is probable that he came to the idea in Berlin after reviewing the large-format Olbrich folios with which it bares a very close comparison. In fact, Wright said so as much himself in 1911 when he described his two folios as “the finest publication of an Architect's work in any country—not excepting the work of the Austrian Architect, Olbrich.”⁶⁸ During the month of November 1909, no doubt, Wright worked out the details of the large-format folios with Dorn.⁶⁹

What he intended to create was a handmade fine art book, recalling the days when he worked with his client, William Winslow, at the Auvergne Press.⁷⁰ In order to produce a unified publication, every image—perspectives, plans, and details—had to be redrawn and then transferred to large lithographic stones, a medium that had been used since the mid-nineteenth century for printing books and magazines, but was also employed by European painter-printmakers such as Edgar Degas.

Wright also wanted very fine and varied papers, so he chose cream and gray wove papers and tissue paper for the plans. Drawing on his knowledge of Japanese art, the inks he chose were extremely unusual: sepia and gray for the image, and occasionally gold, with white and blue as accents; bronze powder; and gold ink was used for the title page of the German text enclosure. The line drawings, characteristic of the Oak Park Studio during the

1900s—a synthesis of the style of both Wright and Marion Mahony—were very delicate.⁷¹ According to the November 24, 1909, contract with the publisher, Wright was obligated to remain in Europe until the drawings were complete and he had approved the printer’s proof for each plate.⁷² By July, Wright was surveying the last steps in the process and making plans to depart Italy in early September 1910.⁷³

The *sonderhefte* of *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts* continued in publication until 1914, on the eve of the outbreak of World War I; throughout the history of the series, Wasmuth Verlag chose only German or Austrian subjects, Wright was the only exception.⁷⁴ He also was the most avant-garde, except for Olbrich; the other architects were primarily working in the conservative historical styles. He also was probably the most difficult. Wright’s number was originally scheduled as the fourth issue in 1909 directly after Olbrich’s monograph on the Tietz department store. However, by 1910, Wright became more ambitious, wanting to include photographs of work still being completed in America such as the Frederick C. Robie House (1908–10; Chicago). The additional photographs did not arrive in Europe until June, thus causing Wasmuth Verlag to postpone the Wright *sonderheft* until 1911.⁷⁵ The publisher moved another issue up to number 4.⁷⁶ The change in schedule threw Wasmuth Verlag off completely for issues 5 and 6, so the firm took two books previously published in 1905 and 1906 and offered them to the subscribers.⁷⁷

In October 1910, Wright returned to Chicago after approving all the proofs of the one hundred plates for the two-volume portfolio and the layout of the photographic special issue. He had rejected Creutz and solicited Ashbee to write the introduction: “Frank Lloyd Wright, A Study and Appreciation.” After a few months back in the United States, Wright, who had originally been motivated to cooperate with the Berlin publisher because of his disappointment with the poor quality reproductions of the 1908 *Architectural Record*, had serious misgivings about the quality of the special issue with 4,000 copies printed. He decided to reject it in person in Berlin, which gave him the opportunity to redesign the entire book. Ashbee’s essay was translated into German for the European and American edition, the latter censored by Wright. Wright objected to some of Ashbee’s analysis, especially the allegation that he imitated Japanese art. Not for the last time in his life, Wright edited another man’s work by deleting passages that he felt were erroneous or offensive.⁷⁸

Wright signed a new contract with Wasmuth Verlag in February 1911, and in March the publisher advertised the

sonderheft for sale in the pages of *Berliner Architekturwelt*.⁷⁹ The announcement called for a September 1911 release and described the book as 113 pages with 163 illustrations, but when the book appeared the illustrations were reduced to 148.⁸⁰ The only known review is of the European *sonderheft*, which appeared eight months later in *Kunst and Künstler* by Walter Curt Behrendt.⁸¹

As for the American edition of the *sonderheft*, this is where we see Wright at his characteristic best. It is 141 pages with 193 illustrations. He had created a larger, better quality book with forty-five more photos (30 percent more than offered) and twenty-eight more pages (25 percent more). With all the delays and time spent by Wright to improve the Wasmuth Verlag publications, it was not until well into 1912 that they went on sale. But what had started with his 1907 Chicago Architectural Club exhibition had culminated with permanent landmarks to his first twenty years of architecture.

While all three German publications are now rare collector’s items, at the time, they were conceived for a variety of audiences. Wasmuth Verlag intended to sell the Wright *sonderheft* to European subscribers of their more expensive annual publication, *XX. Jahrhunderts*. Wright, it appears, had both pragmatic and idealistic motives for publishing his own work. On the one hand, he professed to believe the sales would bring in much needed revenue: it was a business venture.⁸² On the other hand, he directed the work at “the young man in architecture” with the purpose of engaging in architectural discourse, raising consciousness, reforming society, and realizing an authentic American architecture. An unsigned January 1913 letter from Wright’s Chicago office (probably by Harry F. Robinson, his assistant) explained, “Mr. Wright’s intention . . . [was] to sell the Monograph for \$50.00 . . . and the ‘Sonderheft’ . . . was to be [a complimentary] part of the Monograph set. This idea, however, he gave up as he felt after paying a commission to the book sellers that the price made necessary thereby was too great for the ‘younger men’ and decided to sell the book from the office here and make the ‘Sonderheft’ a separate issue.”⁸³ To carry out the idealistic plan, Wright chose to take out advertising with the major trade publications such as *Architectural Record*, *Western Architect*, and the *Brickbuilder*; to work to secure reviews in the same periodicals; and to reduce the price of the monograph to \$32 on an installment plan of \$4 down and four payments of \$7 per month (figure 1.31).⁸⁴ He sold the *sonderheft* separately for \$3.50.⁸⁵ It is difficult to say how successful Wright was at operating a mail order business; surviving correspondence suggests meager returns: a 1912 office report lists seven sales.⁸⁶

102 THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORD.



“Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright”
Two portfolios 17½" x 25½" in size, of lithographed plates showing plans, elevations, and perspectives of seventy buildings by this architect. Published by Ernst Weismuth, of Berlin. Special arrangements have been made for selling this work direct to the purchaser. Write for descriptive circular to
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, 605 Orchestra Hall, Chicago

CRUSHED TRAP ROCK
The Hardest, Toughest, Cleanest, Best
CONCRETE MATERIAL
It does not *calcine* under fire. It sells as *cheap* as inferior rocks or gravels. *Dampness* does not affect it. Why not insist upon the *best*? It does not "pull out" or "stuff off." Why not **specify** Trap Rock in concrete?
Write for list of retail dealers who deliver Trap Rock direct to job in N. Y. City and vicinity.
THE NEW YORK TRAP ROCK CO.
17 Battery Place, New York City



A Mineral-Wool Lined House
As shown in these sections, is **warm in winter, cool in summer**, and is thoroughly **Deafened**. The lining is vermin proof. **Mineral Wool** checks the spread of **Fire** and keeps out the dampness.
Sample and Circular Free
U. S. MINERAL WOOL COMPANY
90 West Street. NEW YORK

1.31 Advertisement for Frank Lloyd Wright *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe*, *Architectural Record*, March 1913, backmatter.

THE MYSTERIOUS BERLIN EXHIBITION, 1910

Much has been written about a comprehensive Wright exhibition held in Berlin in 1910.⁸⁷ Of course, if such an event had occurred it would have been of extraordinary importance for the development of modern European architecture and for Wright himself. It is almost certain that it never took place in any way that exhibitions are generally understood; in other words, as an advertised formal display open to the public.⁸⁸ By 1910, Wright had developed a very strong attitude about how his work would be presented to others. As long as he was in Europe, which he was, he would not only have been present, he would have chosen the drawings, designed the installation, and hung it himself. He also

would have fully informed his intimates at the time and written about it later in his memoirs. This he never did.

In 1911, when Wright reappeared in Chicago with two impressive European publications immortalizing his Oak Park practice, he was perceived very differently than he had been before he had left. He was not famous. Rather, he was infamous. He was now tarred with the domestic scandal that resulted from his wife's refusal to give him a divorce, forcing him to live with Mamah Borthwick out of wedlock. In 1911, the estrangement took on another aspect when Wright and Borthwick, both back in the Midwest, moved out of Chicago, building a new home and studio, Taliesin, adjacent to Wright's ancestral lands in southern Wisconsin.

1913–14

By his return to Chicago in 1911, Wright had broken his close ties with his former allies in the Chicago Architectural Club; his last show being in 1907. The club had been grappling with accusations of favoritism as a result of Wright's demands for a private gallery to hang a one-man show. He was not ready to exhibit again until 1913, but when he did, he faced an entirely different climate than he had enjoyed at the height of his accomplishments between 1902 and 1907. Local circumstances, both positive and negative, influenced not only how he was critically received, but also how he responded. With the closing of the Oak Park Studio in 1909, his former employees and contemporaries had opened their own practices; obtained commissions, large and small; and entered competitions. Architects such as Walter Burley Griffin, William Drummond, and the firms of Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie and Spencer and Powers were engaged all over the Midwest building churches, schools, and houses. In addition, in 1912, Griffin had won the competition to design the federal capitol for Canberra, Australia, garnering international publicity. At the same time, although he was still alive, Sullivan's career was on the wane, but his place in history was on the ascendant. All this was occurring while Wright was seeking not only to reestablish his prominence but also to find an appreciative and paying public for his German publications.

He began tentatively by entering a modest selection of work—Hotel Madison (1911; Madison, Wisconsin), Lake Geneva Hotel (1911; Lake Geneva, Illinois), and the Sherman Booth (1911–12; Glencoe, Illinois) and Edward Schroeder (1911; Milwaukee, Wisconsin) Houses—in the Twenty-Sixth Annual Chicago Architectural Club exhibition, which opened May 6,

1913.⁸⁹ The critical reception was almost nonexistent. Monroe gave him one sentence—although this time it was positive—remarking on “the one or two fine things marked by horizontal lines.”⁹⁰ The first public inkling of the dismissive attitude was in a review by Griffin’s brother-in-law, Roy A. Lippincott, in the June *Architectural Record*. The wide-ranging article found praise for both eastern and midwestern architects, but rejected Wright’s entries as “typical of his peculiar genius.”⁹¹

But a few months later the *Chicago Tribune* article, “‘Rebels’ of West Shatter Styles of Architecture,” under the byline of staff writer Henry M. Hyde, clearly attracted Wright’s attention.⁹² Hyde asserted that there was a “New School Ascendant” where, for the first time, there was an “art indigenous to the American soil being developed. For the first time a new form, a new style, free from the traditions of historic schools, has begun to win recognition.” Proclaiming Sullivan the “master,” the principles he laid down were “form should follow function,” and “progress should go before precedent.” Although Wright was listed as “among the leading members,” he was not singled out, but was lumped into a list that included Griffin, and firms such as Perkins, Fellows, and Hamilton and Tallmadge and Watson. Hyde then continued by declaring that Wright was “the most extreme member of the school,” and that he was accused of sacrificing “the practical to the picturesque.” He then went on to devote four concluding paragraphs to enumerating the elements of the new school, echoing Wright’s 1908 “In the Cause” manifesto. Wright must have been seething when he read the last line: “their work is attracting more attention and causing more comment than any other architectural development in America.” Ironically, a similar argument was emerging in Europe with the writings of the Dutchman, H. P. Berlage, who had visited America in 1911; although, in this case, Wright was the center of the discussion.⁹³ Wright’s characteristic reaction to this type of press coverage was to immediately pick up his pen and write a rebuttal. In combination with a generous display of his recent drawings and models, he believed he could set the record straight. This is the background to the last exhibition Wright would mount at the Chicago Architectural Club, falling twenty years from the date of his first.

1914

By 1913, Wright had become adept at publications. With his 1907 show, he had to wait a full year before his well-illustrated article appeared in *Architectural Record*, the delay blunting the public

effect. He turned again to the *Record*, where Michael A. Mikkelsen, who would prove a strong ally in difficult times, was just taking over as editor from Herbert Croly. What he proposed was highly unusual: first, the essay had no illustrations; it was not devoted to any past or current work; nor did it present an elucidation of design principles. Rather, it was a tirade with accusations of insincerity, imitation, and plagiarism directed at Henry Hyde and those Wright labeled “my disciples and pupils.”⁹⁴

It opened with a warning, “Style, therefore, will be the man. Let his forms alone.” His tone was maudlin, bitter, and self-serving, but it put forth an argument for distinctions that Wright would hold fast for decades to come, especially when he resurrected the argument against proponents of the “International Style” from the 1930s into the 1950s. Having been formed during the era of the dominance of historical styles—Gothic Revival, Italianate, neo-Classicism—he made a clear distinction between a style that could be learned and imitated by copying visual characteristics or rules and his own definition of style. “Style is a by-product of the process and comes of the man or of the mind in the process,” he wrote. “The style of the thing, therefore, will be the man—it is his. *Let his forms alone*. To adopt a ‘style’ as a motive is to put the cart before the horse and get nowhere beyond the ‘Styles’—never to reach *Style*.” According to the exhibition checklist, copies of the essay, “In the Cause of Architecture—Second Paper,” were available for free at his display in advance of its publication in May 1914.

The arrangements leading up to opening night were unusual. The exhibition was sponsored by three different organizations—Chicago Architectural Club, the Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the Chicago Architects Business Association—Wright was not a member of any of the three. His work was not submitted to the jury, but George Maher explained that there was a shortage of exhibits in 1914. “Mr. Wright was invited to participate,” Maher added, “as he has before. We were very glad to get him to take a room.” Maher continued, “He wouldn’t need to submit his work to a jury. Everybody knows his type of work.”⁹⁵

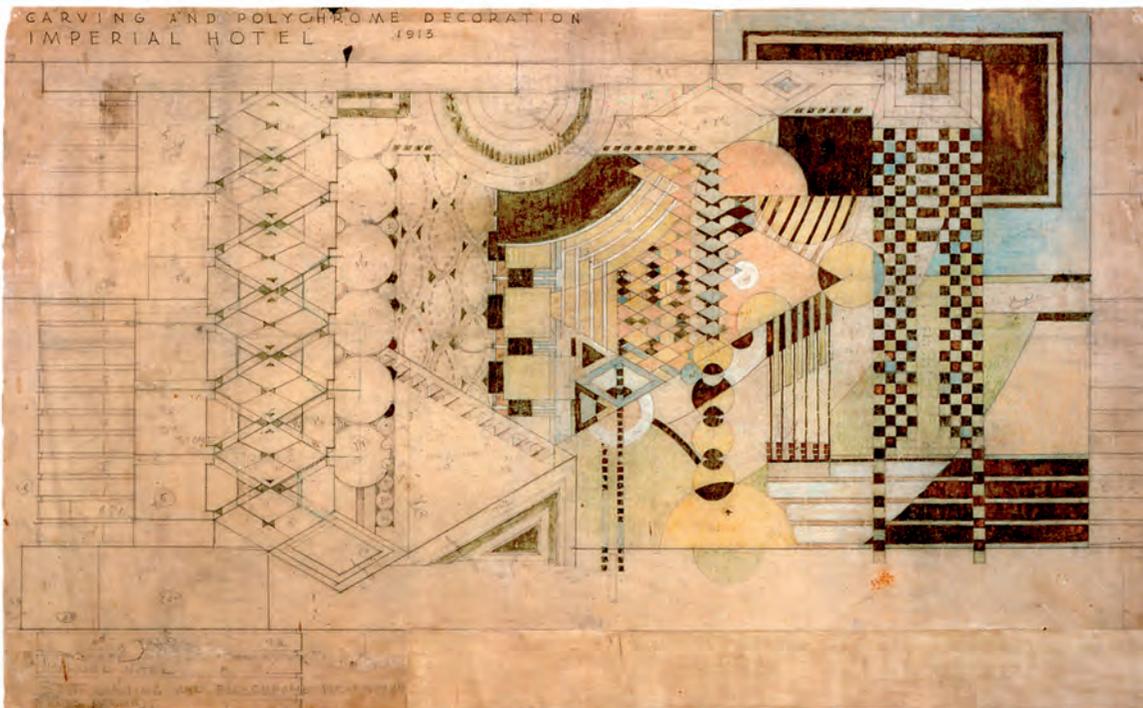
The *Chicago American* opened its pages on the day of the preview, April 9, 1914, with the headline, “Architects Quit Big Exhibit.” The staff writer, Florence Patton, identified the “storm-center” as Frank Lloyd Wright. J. F. Surrman, chairman of the Chicago Architectural Club, went on record by stating, “Mr. Wright has been especially granted three walls . . . not only on account of the merit of his work, but on account of the interest attached to his private life.” With further questioning Surrman added, “Yes, he’s just as interesting to the public one way as

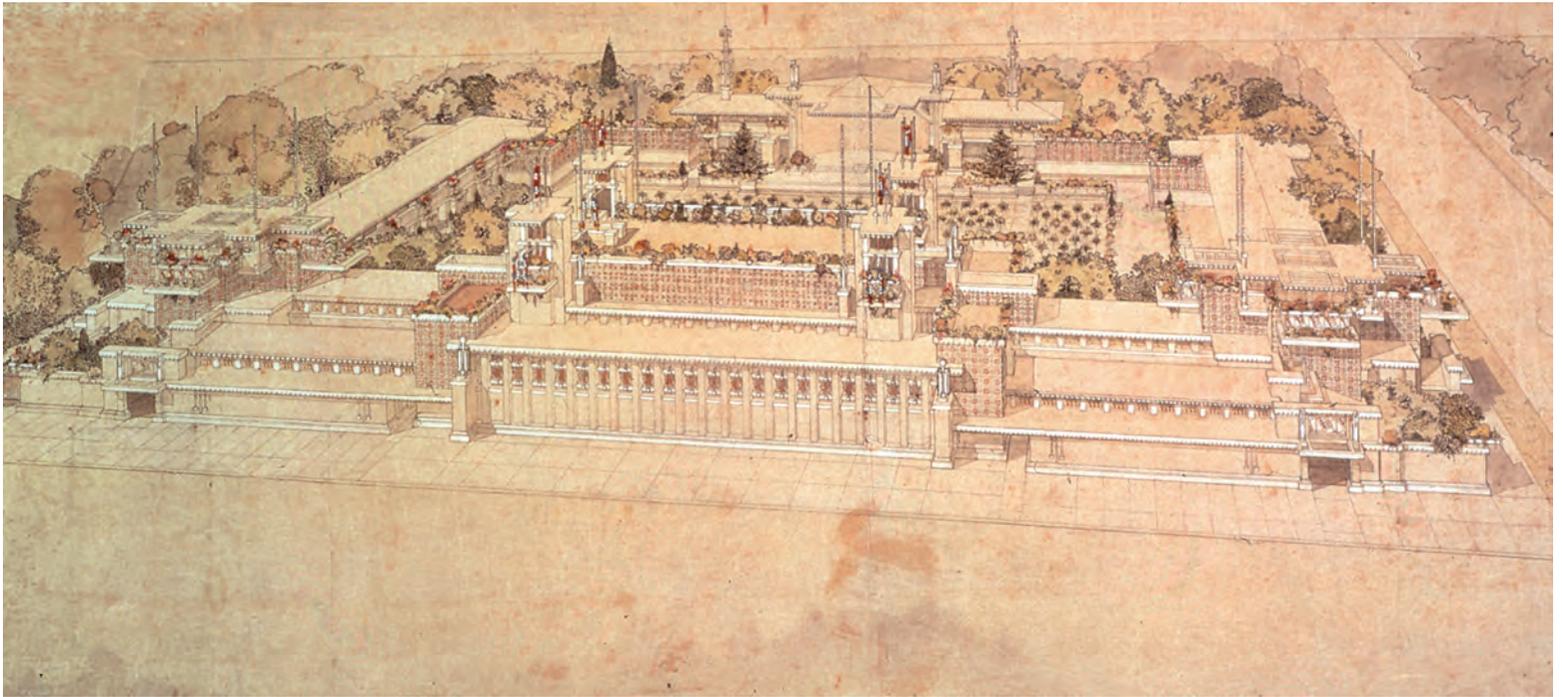


1.32 Sherman M. Booth House,
Glencoe, Illinois, 1911–12.
Graphite pencil, color pencil, and
watercolor on off-white tracing paper,
20 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (FLWFA, 1118.001).

This drawing can be seen in
figure 1.37 at right.

1.33 Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, Japan,
stone carving and polychrome
decoration for north parlor fireplace,
1913–23. Graphite pencil, color
pencil, and gold ink on tracing paper,
21 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (FLWFA, 1509.005)





1.34 Midway Gardens, Chicago, Illinois, 1913–14. Ink, color inks, color pencil, and watercolor on off-white tracing paper, 16% × 40% in. (FLWFA, 1401.004). This drawing can be seen in partial view in figure 1.38 at left.

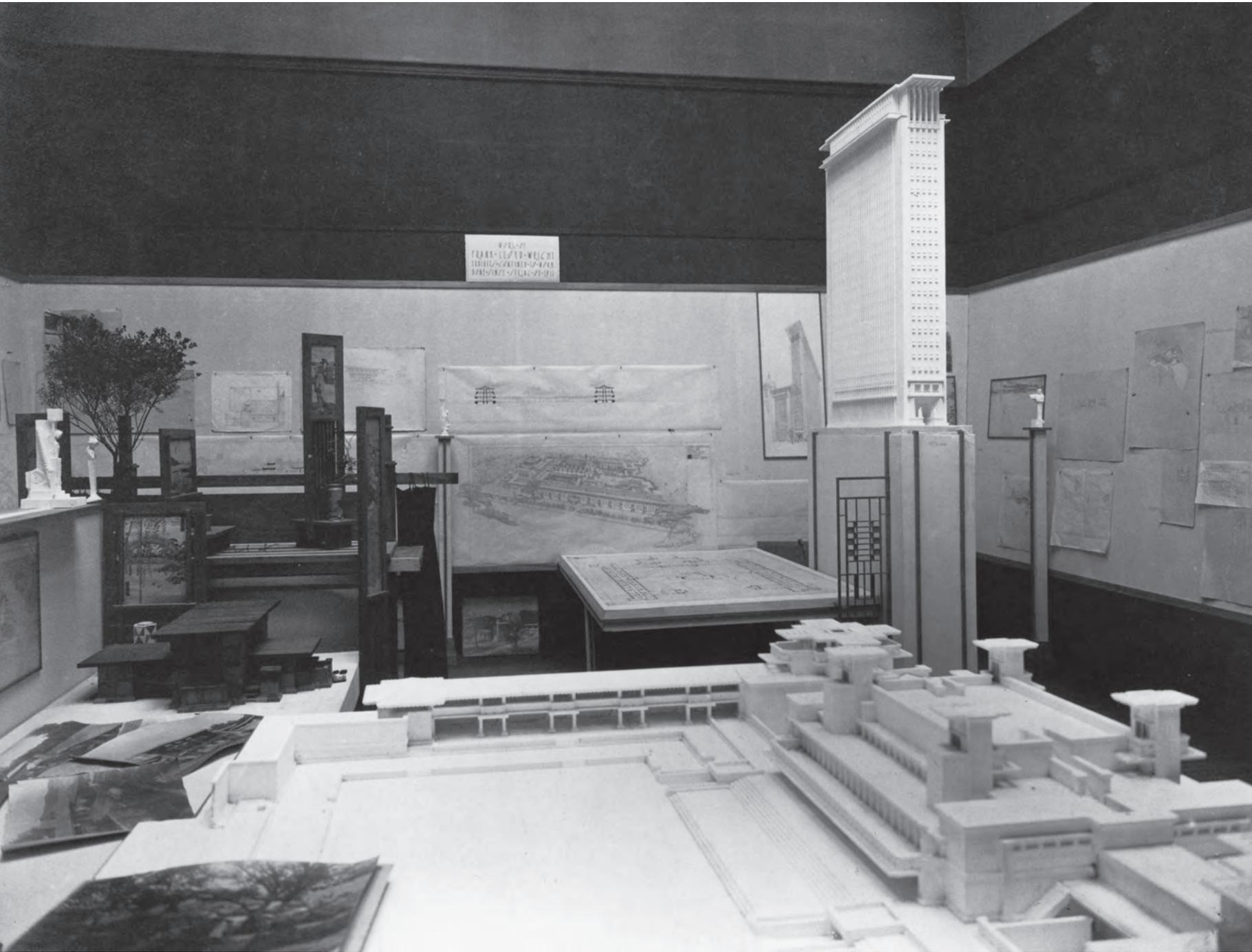
another and will draw a big crowd.” The following day, the *American* printed that Wright was accused of “buying his way” into the exhibit with a \$500 donation, but that allegation was denied by all parties involved. Wright was equally of the same mind as his defenders. The newspaper quoted him as responding, “Let them talk. Let them say what they will. Let them resurrect all the old scandal of the past three years. What do I care. I have three walls for my work. I am erecting the Imperial Hotel at Tokyo and I am doing other big work in the world—both the scandal and what I am doing artistically will bring us greater crowds. Let them talk, let them talk.”⁹⁶

As it turns out, it may have been his first exhibition with an official title, *Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: Exhibit Confined to Work Done since Spring of 1911*.⁹⁷ And with that, he surely was making a self-conscious attempt to regain his authority after his return from Europe. Unlike previous years, the display contained public buildings and houses equally, with several commissions located outside the United States (Japan and Canada), more than thirty-one items altogether, as some buildings were represented by perspectives, plans, and details; also included were photographs, furniture, and art glass (Coonley Playhouse windows);

toys by himself and his sons, Lloyd and John; and Japanese print stands. He put emphasis on his largest or most impressive public buildings by showing plaster models of The Call Building (1912–13; San Francisco, California), Midway Gardens (1913–14; Chicago), and the Coonley Playhouse (1913–14; Riverside, Illinois), but he also exhibited hotels, a library, a post office, and a bank.⁹⁸ While many of the residences did not depart from the forms of the Prairie Houses, distinct new directions were evident in the designs for the Sherman Booth House (1911–12; Glencoe, Illinois), Midway Gardens, and the Imperial Hotel (1913–23; Tokyo; figures 1.32–34). He drew on the same principles for installation design as he had in 1907; however, in 1914, the pieces appeared more hastily assembled and mounted. Two models dominated the space; The Call tower was placed on a high pedestal, emphasizing its “tallness,” while the Midway Gardens was decidedly low, horizontal, and spread out, occupying the center of the room (figure 1.35). On a diagonal were pieces devoted to children—a model of the Coonley Playhouse opposite a puppet theater that Wright had designed for his youngest child, Robert Llewellyn, then eleven (figure 1.36). On the walls, some perspectives were quietly framed with slender wood frames,



1.35 *The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1914. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 1500.001).
Left to right: Midway Gardens model, aerial perspective of the Imperial Hotel, art glass window from Coonley Playhouse, The Call Building model no. 1, Midway Gardens sculpture maquette.



1.36 *The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1914. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 1500.0008).
Background, left to right: Midway Gardens sculpture maquettes, Japanese print stands, Imperial Hotel drawings, The Call Building model no. 1.
Foreground: Fuermann and Sons photographs and Midway Gardens model.

while most were simply pinned on the wall as in a studio. In the center of the room was a table, where the Wasmuth Verlag folios were open to the plates (figure 1.37). Compared with the 1907 mounting, the 1914 exhibition had somewhat of a haphazard feeling; on a table, black-and-white photographs of Taliesin by Fuermann and Sons can be seen scattered about (figure 1.38).

The uproar over the issue of favoritism dominated the newspaper reports, and the only thoughtful review was again by Monroe. During the years 1910–14, when Wright was undergoing a transformation, partly brought on by foreign travel, Monroe was acquiring a new level of sophistication herself. In 1910, she traveled around the world, making extended stays in China and Japan (including Nara, Kobe, Nikko, Kyoto, and Tokyo). On her return, she began planning her avant-garde magazine, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, which under the watchful eye of the irascible Ezra Pound first appeared in October 1912.⁹⁹ By 1914, Monroe was in the forefront of the modern poetry movement by being the first to publish Imagist poems written on the Continent.

Monroe's review, "The Orient an Influence on the Architecture of Wright," on April 12 in the *Chicago Tribune*, sparked an exchange between the architect and critic that indicated a rapprochement. After alluding to the now commonly recognized resemblance between Wright's forms and the Japanese, she went beyond the familiar arguments by calling attention to his more recent work. "Perhaps the most complete opportunity which Mr. Wright has had as yet to express his ideas," Monroe explained, "will be the Midway concert gardens . . . of which a model is shown." She expressed an opinion that revealed an understanding that had alluded Wright in the popular press when she stated, "Here the general public will have its first opportunity at a fair judgment of this artist, who is devoting his professional career to an effort to give us an authentic and indigenous architecture. Hitherto the public has known too little about his work."¹⁰⁰ This prompted a warm note the next day in which Wright revealed, "I believe that stripped of all this factional professional enmity—the qualities in any artist's endeavor stand truly revealed in course of time—a belief in the immortality of the soul assures me of this."¹⁰¹

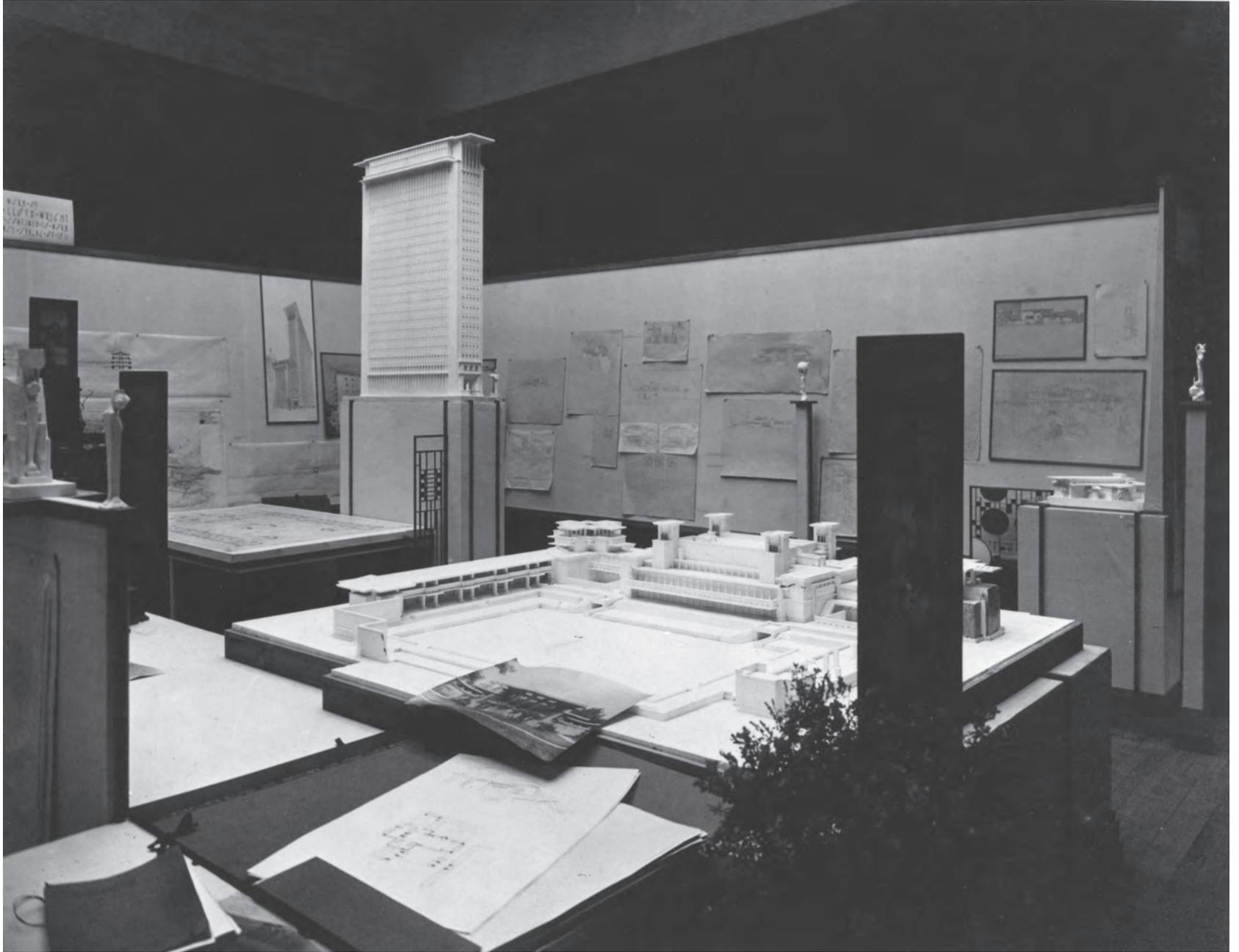
With letters crossing in the mails—her note is lost—he again took up the correspondence on April 20. In this important letter, he made a gesture that would be more commonplace in the years ahead, especially in the 1930s and 1940s. Sensing a sympathetic tone in Monroe's review, he chose not to challenge her on her claims of Japanese influence, but instead reached out to her in a more substantial way. "The *Record* of New York wants to give a number to the work included in the exhibit to be published soon and something might be done there and then." He explained,

"They will want a critical article—something that touches the thing where it lives and explains it with some degree of sympathy—for what it is. . . . Would you care to undertake it?"¹⁰²

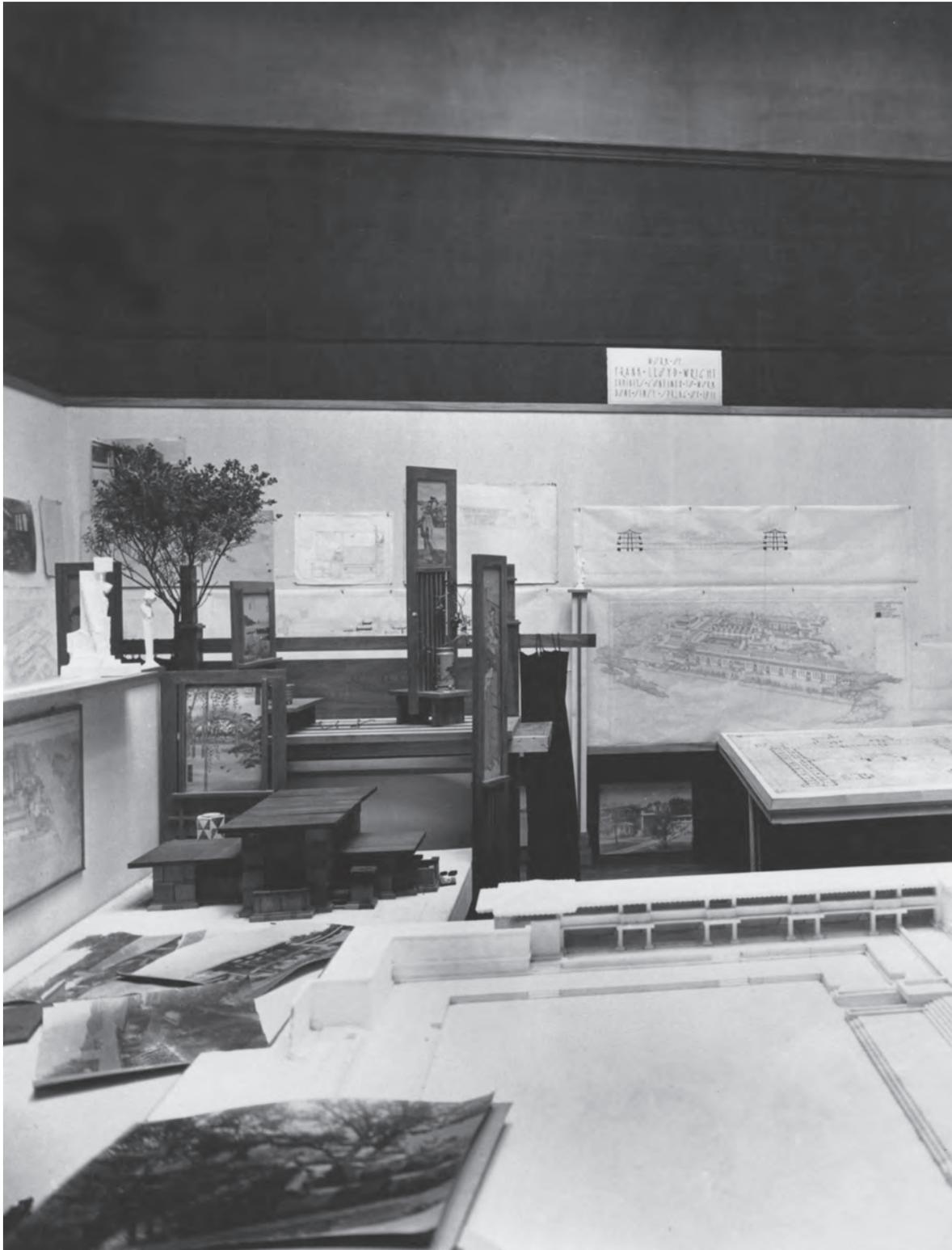
Wright's proposition to Monroe indicated he was intending to pick up where he had left off before his move to Taliesin. He was intent on his strategy of linking public exhibitions with personally arranged publications in an effort to move his career and his idealistic goal of creating a genuine American architecture forward. However, only four months later, this momentum would literally stop dead in its tracks. In an event that would affect Wright for many years into the future, Mamah, her two children, and four others were killed by a deranged servant, who then proceeded to burn the living quarters of Taliesin to the ground. As Wright recalled, "The entire portion of the edition [of the Wasmuth Verlag folios] meant for America was consumed in the fire destroying the first Taliesin."¹⁰³ He had spent two years in their preparation and production, created the drawings and text as a manifesto to his first twenty years of architecture, and for almost two years had strategized to sell them to the next generation of American architects without much success. Certainly, Wright was hoping that this publication would bring him the respect and stature Olbrich commanded in Europe. Unfortunately, this was not to take place in the United States.

In the year of Wright's last exhibition with the Chicago Architectural Club, he was forty-seven years old (life expectancy for an American man was fifty-two years). No one could have predicted that he would live another forty-five years and would have to adapt to changing social values and new European architectural importations. During these early decades, his approach and attitude toward exhibiting were formed in Chicago, but his shows in the future would take place primarily on the East Coast and in Europe. Although he was showing with a group of working professionals, the setting of the Art Institute of Chicago was influential; he soon separated himself from the others and, in the role of artist-architect, took over a private gallery for himself. For the 1907 and 1914 exhibitions, he hired Fuermann and Sons to photograph them (an event unique in club history).

The original purpose of the club was draftsmanship, and Wright adopted a method of exclusively showing drawings and a few models, which were primarily made for public display rather than as design study models, thereby integrating exhibition production into his artistic practice. As his body of built work grew, he displayed black-and-white photographs, primarily by Fuermann and Sons, and placed them in loose piles on tables for closer examination. He believed at this time that delicate line and



1.37 *The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1914.
Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 1500.0017). *Left to right*: Midway Gardens sculpture maquettes, The Call Building model no. 1.
Foreground: Wasmuth Verlag folios and Fuermann and Sons photographs adjacent to Midway Gardens model. *Right*: Coonley Playhouse model.



1.38 *The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Chicago Architectural Club, Art Institute of Chicago, 1914. Photograph by Henry Fuermann and Sons. (FLWFA, 1500.0012). *Left to right*: Japanese print stands, Imperial Hotel drawings. *Foreground*: Fuermann and Sons photographs of Taliesin.

watercolor drawings should not be hung next to photographs. One represented the architect's ideal, the other a product of construction. From this time forward, he included his own publications set about the gallery for the public and other architects to study; the literary a complement to the architectural.

The audience for his exhibitions changed as he matured from a young aspirant to an accomplished designer and public persona. While his displays could be experienced on several levels, in the early years, 1894–1902, the club drew directly from its membership and a body of related artisans, while by 1907, the general public was in attendance as can be deduced from the considerable coverage in the local press. After 1911, there was a dramatic shift: Wright became an antihero, a perception caused by the public scandal associated with his private life, the self-conscious bohemian manner of his dress and appearance, and his outspoken interviews with inquiring newspaper reporters. By 1914, people came more out of morbid curiosity than aesthetic appreciation.

In keeping with the spirit of the Chicago Architectural Club, Wright viewed his exhibitions and their supplementary publications and lectures as educational, directed to “the young man in architecture” specifically and the American people in general. Due to the privileges accorded him by his allies in the club, he had a direct relationship with the general public, eliminating any mediation by a jury or curator; visitors were invited in as if stepping into his architectural studio.

On an ideological level, Wright was a product of his time and milieu; he had adopted the nineteenth-century belief of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horatio Greenough, and Walt Whitman that America should develop an original culture—literary and aesthetic—and permanently reject European models and historic styles. Wright believed, like Whitman and Sullivan, that a genuine American architecture was not an end itself, but a means to an end: nothing less than the realization of a true democracy, not in the political definition of the term, but as a state of consciousness that would result in intellectual and spiritual freedom and the development of self-determination. His work could be experienced on many levels, but, intellectually, the primary one for Wright was as the realization of an original, and authentic, American architecture. When confronted with his critics, he was

continually disappointed to find that his buildings alone did not serve the didactic influence he intended. Exhibitions either began or ended with literary expositions of his philosophy, which required careful reading. Yet this in itself was a very difficult task as Wright gave familiar words—democracy, nature, and organic—new meanings that were rarely self-evident; rather, they were Platonic ideals, thus his frequent use of the abstractions: Democracy, Nature, and Organic. Wright's point of view was optimistic, his agenda utopian. Remarkably, it remained so throughout his career, though his pedagogy would be subject to severe tests.¹⁰⁴

What followed after the Taliesin tragedy was a geographic and social break from the Midwest that would continue well into the late 1920s. Commissions arose that took Wright west to the Pacific rim: Asia, and the California coast. While on this journey, also an intellectual odyssey, Wright would remove himself by thousands of miles from the industrial heartland of the United States and settle in Japan: the land of Buddhist temples, landscaped water gardens, antique woodblock prints, and painted screens highlighted with gold leaf. He immersed himself in this culture, which held spiritual significance for him, for more than a decade while the next generation of architects in Germany, Holland, and France were moving forward with the idea of an architecture based on rationalism and machine production. When this exile and spirit journey came to an end and he finally returned home to Taliesin in Wisconsin, his career was in a decline. One of his first thoughts for reviving it: an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago.

For the remainder of his career, Wright would not waiver from his pattern of accompanying his public exhibitions with an explanation of his ideology, either in print or, often, in a lecture. However, each circumstance would present new opportunities and challenges. He would face opposition and competing agendas, especially from established art museums; critics and historians were regarded with suspicion or animosity until they were converted to his point of view. Minor exhibitions took place as a matter of routine, but major exhibitions invariably led to last-minute dramas of operatic proportions.