

Frank Lloyd Wright: The Greatest Architect Arguably in the World (November 2018)

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I. INTRODUCTION

The year is 1867. The place, Bear Valley, Wisconsin. June 8, a future architect that would go on to create some of the most magnificent buildings in the country and the world was born. The person of discussion, Frank Lloyd Wright. With a career of 70 years and a foundation of only one year in college at the University of Wisconsin School of Engineering, Wright went on to help design over 400 of his own creations over the years while working under other architects (4).

A. A Childhood

As a child, Frank Lloyd Wright was exposed to many different settings throughout living with his mother and father. His father, William Carey Wright, was a preacher who also was known to teach music as well. According to (1) he was known to teach his son the importance of music and the geometric correlations in the world that surrounded him. Wright's mother, Anna Lloyd-Jones was also known to be a teacher and had full assurance in her son that he would one day be an architect and be successful.

He moved to Chicago and once he had enough connections, he landed a job with the city's leading architect. Wright met his first love, Kathrine Tobin at the age of 16 and after two years had a child. With money borrowed from his boss, he was able to buy a plot of land in Oak Park where the "saloons ended, and the steeples started" and he built his first home.

B. The Beginning of a Design Legend

Some (1) speak of his first home that he built (Figure 1) is very different than those of the same time period that it was created. A large amount of symmetry that is created while the upper portion of the house looks top-heavy. Most unique of this home is that he had the words, "Truth is life" inscribed above the hearth of the home and it acted as a centerpiece of viewing to anyone who entered the home. His first building is also considered to be his first step of his career because it attracted the attention of those around him, and then he began creating homes for more than fifty people, and did so with 6 children of his own at the time.

According to (1), Frank Lloyd Wright liked to call conventional houses "boxes" and he enjoyed destroying said box by creating anticipation and different elements of the mind for the viewer of his architecture. He also was known to be very overbearing of his work so that no essence of his creations was lost by artwork that wasn't his or furniture that was created by someone else. As described in the documentary "Frank Lloyd Wright: The Man Who Built America" (1), Wright was known to call interior designs "inferior desecrators".



Figure 1.

C. A New Chapter for Wright

His fame and individualism started when he began his affair with a client's wife. He abandoned his family when news spread to the public and moved to Europe to begin a new chapter of his life for a year. However, he returned a year later but not in Oak Park but in the valley of his childhood and built his new home Taliesin (Figure 2). Built into a hill, or of the hill, Wright unified nature and architecture by creating this new home for himself and titled it "organic architecture" (1). To Wright, organic architecture meant that the philosophy of a building rises to its own position in nature by many factors including material's-used and location.

One key element of Frank Lloyd Wright's designs is his element of having the house open up as you enter it. This is done as seen below (figure 3), and is also done in my model. When you enter, there are low ceilings and then you walk into a large octagonal room with a high ceiling as if the room is a breath of fresh air.

This perfect home and organic architecture were ruined, however, when one of Wright's servant went on a surprise rampage at the home and burnt the building down. In addition, he went on a murdering spree killing two children and Wright's, at the time, wife. This put him into a depressive state which had him working abroad once again. Another beginning started in Wright's lifetime at the age of 57, however this one brought upon a creative rebirth of his architectural career.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

D. The 1920 Stock Market Crash

As stated by (1), another huge impact on Frank Lloyd Wright's career was the 1920 stock market crash which put the architecture community in a downward spiral for two years. He was so unsuccessful during this time that he was almost assumed to be dead by the general public. He created a new apprentice practice called the Taliesin West Fellowship where he allowed individuals to come work with him and learn from his creative spirit. His youngest apprentice being Vern Swaback who arrived at the age of 17. According to (2) he had planned to only stay with Wright for about a year; however, he only found himself leaving after 21 years had passed. Only in 1933 did a commission begin for Wright and his apprentices, up until then all were designing and dreaming for a day like this to occur.

II. INSPIRATION

A. The Blair Residence



Figure 4.

When written about in the Household Magazine (3), the author says that the household was, “part of the landscape, as it grew there”. It is characterized by its unique positioning in the middle of a field that was once barren but now has been landscaped and decorated with trees (figure 4). It is titled as “A Modern house in the Old West” and is prized for its exterior as well as its interior. In 1991 it was also registered in the historic building registry (3) and is considered to be a monument of prestige.

B. The Emmond Residence



Figure 5.

Many of Frank Lloyd Wright’s earlier homes included this large octagonal room that acts as a key area of the house. With windows on almost every side of the room, the individuals in the room have a feeling of relaxation with a view.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

At my home we have two rooms much like this as well (figure 6/7), elevated above another room like (figure 5) and it acts as an observation room. I feel as though any room of this size and stature, there must be large windows to view out of as well.

C. G.C. Stockman Residence



Figure 8.

Like many of Frank Lloyd Wright’s designs, there is always a level of symmetry that is included. I feel that this will be a strength of my house.

The symmetry that occurs in this model will occur on only one axis rather than both as the Stockman Residence is (Figure 8). By adding the symmetry, the house can be elongated rather than squished and shortened, in my opinion.

D. The Location

While on a trip to the Midwest with my family we visited many different states. However, while never being able to actually visit Wyoming or view any of its treasures, we were able to at least take in the scenery. This meaning we saw nothing but flat land, mountains in the distance and rocks everywhere we could see. This is very true for many of the states in the Midwest and is usually a very common characteristic for this region of the United States; where the Blair Residence was built is just the same as this as well. There should not have been much difficulty while building this home or even during the excavation process.

The setting for my house that I have created is the same as the Blair Residence. The building is long and straight and I feel as though having a windowed wall is nice, only if there is a view to look at. I think that a nice focal point for this would be a mountain range in the valleys of Wyoming or Montana.

III. MODEL MAKING

When I began building my models for this class, I personally felt as though I had a lot of creative freedom to figure out my style of building and designing while still following a set of boundaries as well. The barn being the first of the four models we made (figure 9) and ending with a Japanese styled home with a traditional Engawa. I felt as though it was difficult to actually build the projects since this is my first time actually doing something of this nature.

I felt that when I began the very first model, the skin of the barn, I wanted to be able to create something that was doable in my eyes but also could be stylistic. The inspiration coming from my families own barn that we have on our grounds. The coop on the top of the barn being in resemblance to the three we have on top of our barn.



Figure 9.

After the creation of the skin of the barn, we were to create a skeleton double the size of the first model we created (figure 11/12). However, there had to be additional trusses and beams to show where the support for the structure would be.

In addition, the skeleton of our barn at my home has a lot of different pieces to it that keep it structurally sound since it is a large building. Not visible until on the inside of the building, one is able to see that there is numerous amounts of beams and trusts that keep the stable together. This being what inspired me to create the skeleton of my modeled barn (figure 10).



Figure 10.

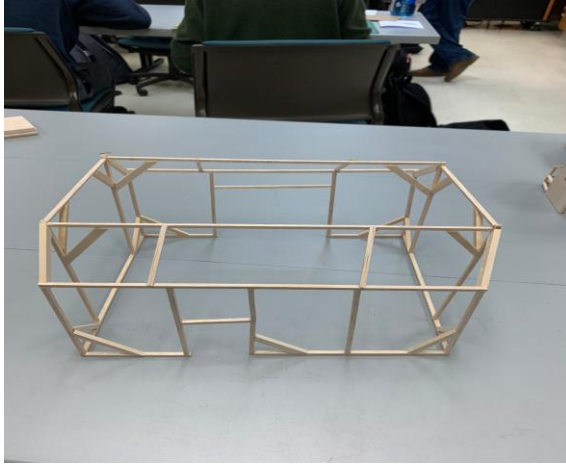


Figure 11.

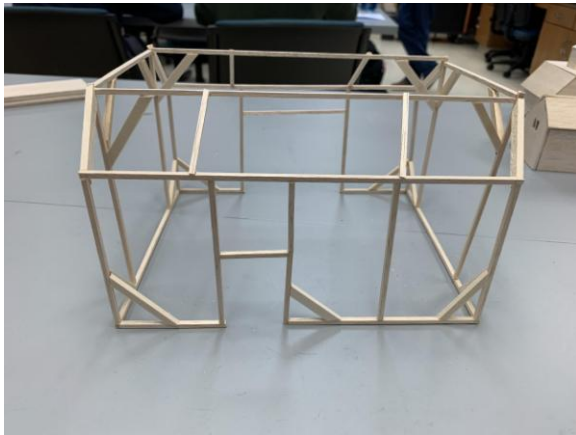


Figure 12.

When creating a farm house for the class, I felt as though no matter what I created, there must be a porch (figure 13). While growing up, whenever my family went to my grandfather's home, we would always have to step onto a large wall that led into the porch of the home that he lived in. I made many memories in my childhood there at his home located in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania.



Figure 13.

Lastly, of the four projects we were to create in the First Year Seminar, was the Japanese home with the Engawa. I felt as though I was a tad bit uninspired going into this stage of the models. I knew that I only had a limited amount of time to do so. I decided that I would create a home that had a different level of roofing like we were shown in a video earlier on in the course. They do this so that at certain times there was a level of wind that would be consumed by the home but also air would have the power to leave the building as well.



Figure 14.

I found myself still struggling because I was not happy when I created this building. It was too large and too boxy in my personal opinion. I ended up throwing this model out and created a new one that had two levels and two sets of roofing. The Japanese style that I found in this case was the overhanging roofs and windows on the front of the home (figure 14). I did not put many windows anywhere else because many homes that have engawas, are on a street next to many other homes as well.

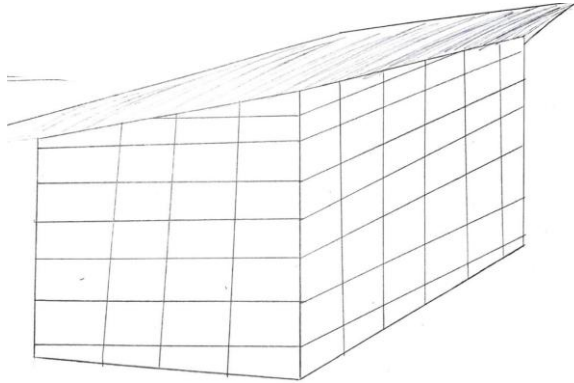


Figure 15.

IV. THE FIFTH MODEL

A. Materials

I created my Japanese house (figure 14) with cardboard and felt as though I flew threw that building process simply because of how easy it was to cut everything. However, I came to the conclusion that the best idea is to create a model out of the wood given.

B. The Process

To begin this project, I started by cutting out the large window wall because it is simply the most important element in my mind (figure 15). There is no reason to not build the whole project around this focal point in my personal opinion. I built this project out of wood if possible, even though I find it hard to cut with the Exacto Knives we have been using.

When I started creating this project as shown in the drawing below (figure 16), I found that my project was actually being made in separate sections that all have their own importance to the piece.

The next step of this process for me was to create many of the straighter elements of the home. I felt as though this would be easiest as the octagonal room would prove to be the hardest part if the model to build.

Whatever I decided to do the order of this project I felt as though the last piece of this should be the roof. In addition, the octagonal room had a very tricky roof to cut out as well, and I felt as though this took a lot of focus so that it looked nice.

I was also given a limited amount of resources so a large portion of this project will be based on the idea that I must be able to not make many mistakes with the materials I am using. To do this I must understand the dimensions of my model and the amount of wood I used for each part of the project. I know that I am someone who can be known to second guess herself when it comes to creating things. I wanted to make sure that everything I was doing was mapped out and had no room for error.

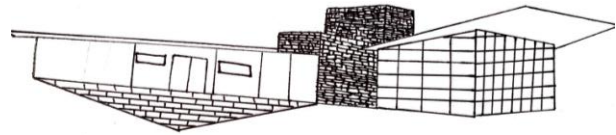


Figure 16

C. Elevations

The west side of the home (Figures 17&18) is also the main entrance to the home. However, any window you choose to look out of will grace your eyes with a view of a barren land of few trees but enough space for wildlife to roam.

The elevations of the home are all flat and one level because of the location of the home. I felt that if there was any elevation then the level of the home would be interrupted and would go against the natural flatness of the land surrounding it. The south part of this home being the length of the building. When an individual looks out of the south side of the home (figure 19&20), one will see a few trees but many mountain ranges around the building.

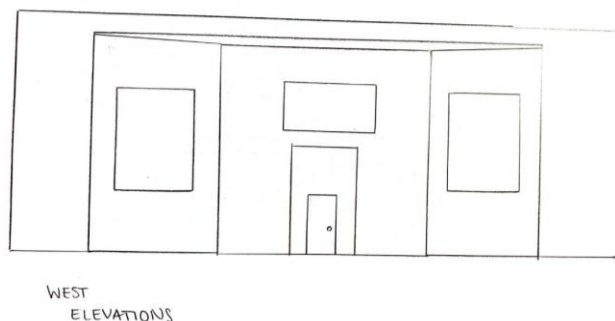


Figure 17.

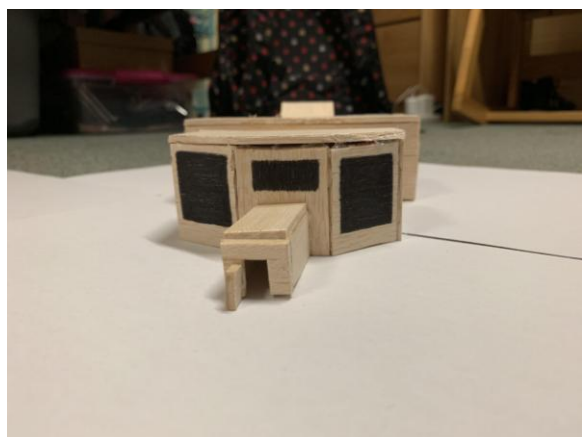


Figure 18.

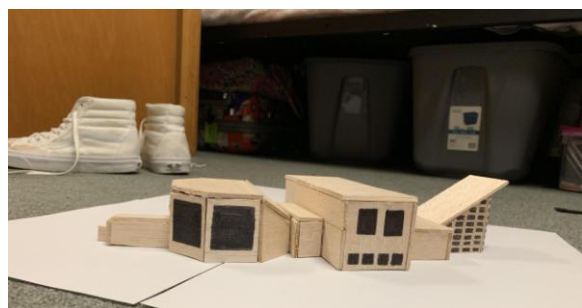


Figure 19.

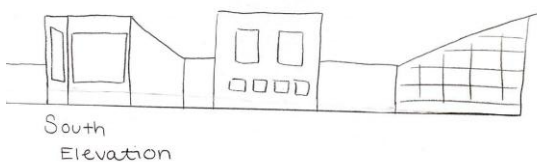


Figure 20.

D. Personal Inspiration

When I was younger in a middle school setting, we were given a project to design race cars in my technology education class. This was the first time I was ever given creative freedom while using these types of resources; wood, spray paint, power tools. I felt almost overwhelmed as I have felt building my models for this FYS as well, simply because I have labeled myself as someone who will never be an engineer or an architect in the future. The cars we created could look any way we wanted them to as long as they followed a list of set rules. I feel as though this is a personal connection that I have to this class and ultimately have towards creating my Frank Lloyd Wright house.



Figure 21.

The inspiration to choose this house (figure 21) came from the passion I specifically chose to not create something just from Wright's earlier homes, rather than pieces from his later years in life as well; I felt like I was more interested in his more modern pieces; the museum he created and his older ones also.

V. CONCLUSION

There were definitely times throughout Frank Lloyd Wright's life that created a sense of uncomfortableness for himself, that he had to learn to create around. During the Great Depression of the United States he was not paid for about two years straight and was not successful whatsoever during this time. This is how I feel as though I need to continue to push through this project and figure out an effective way to complete it if I would like to succeed. Every model has been a new chance for me

to try a new style of design building for myself and many people do not get the chance to say that they have this opportunity.

In the eyes of some individuals in the world (1), Frank Lloyd Wright is considered to be the best architect throughout all of history and that he is overlooked in his creativity due to his background. When looking at other architectural masterpieces, some can say that there is always a hint of Frank Lloyd Wright and his organic architecture. He is an individual that many architects (1) can look up to even in the changing design world and the fast paced society that we all live in. While finishing with the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, Wright was one to say that he wanted to build things that (1), “belongs where [they are] standing, and [are] a grace not a disgrace”.

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- [3] Roland, Albert. “Quintin and Ruth Blair Residence, Cody, Wyoming.” *Household Magazine*, June 1956, pp. 25–27.
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