FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

America's Master Architect

Kathryn Smith

INTRODUCTION: AMERICA'S MASTER ARCHITECT

[I]n this work I think it would be well to see the growth of the idea.

Wright to the Taliesin Fellowship, August 13, 1952

While there is little dispute that Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) is America's greatest architect, there is a general lack of agreement as to the source and the extent of his achievement. His prodigious legacy embraces decorative art, graphic art, houses, public buildings, commercial buildings, and town planning; indeed, everything needed for a total living environment. Wright's philosophy of organic architecture sought unity in every detail, from furniture to freeways. Over his seventy-year career, he explored ideas that began with the American home and expanded to include the relationship between architecture and landscape and, finally, the relationship between architecture and community. As in a symphony, themes in his work develop, repeat, fall away and return again, in rhythmic patterns. Ultimately, Wright's vision was optimistic; he sought a harmonious balance between man, nature, and society.

Wright took inspiration from both the future and the past. His social philosophy, although grounded in Jeffersonian democracy, was outside the mainstream of its day. Pragmatic and idealistic, autocratic and populist, nostalgic and prophetic—it combined an Emersonian view of the moral good of nature with an American trust in self-reliance. It was based on a romantic understanding of complex economic and social forces as the underpinnings for a new society. Within his ideal state, the architect played a dominant role.

To understand Wright's philosophy requires knowledge of his formative experiences. His life began in 1867 in rural Wisconsin shortly after the Civil War. Westward settlement was swiftly transforming the virgin wilderness that was home to Native Americans into an agrarian countryside. With a family background in Unitarianism he absorbed the ideas of the Transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

DINING ROOM, Meyer May House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1908. (PAGE 6)

The notion of the preeminence of nature, gained from both experience and literature, made a vivid impression on the young Wright. After his arrival in Chicago in 1887, he quickly grasped the implications of the Industrial Revolution, both positive and negative, and began to forge a genuinely authentic American architecture, one in contrast to the European historical styles that dominated the times.

After an apprenticeship with the firm of Adler and Sullivan, in 1893 he established his independent practice in Oak Park, Illinois, by turning his attention to the American home. His goal was nothing less than the creation of the beautiful house in every detail. From the building itself to the furniture, carpets, and table linens, everything attracted his scrutiny, even arrangements of flowers and books.

Wright's formative years came to an end at the turn of the century with his development of a new type of American dwelling—the Prairie House—which, from its debut, started an international revolution that continues to reverberate. Suburbia, a unifying decorative scheme, and a reverence for family life merge in the Prairie House to create a building that, although dedicated to conservative values, was a radical departure from precedent due to its open spatial plan. Emanating from a consistent set of principles, the Prairie House nevertheless offered a variety of solutions to fit differing clients, budgets, and sites.

The period 1903–6 is critical. At this time, Wright made a commitment to modern materials, primarily reinforced concrete, with Unity Temple in Oak Park; and he introduced an austere abstraction with the Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo. For the remainder of this period, he continued to produce numerous houses for middle-class families and several on a very grand scale when the client and budget permitted.

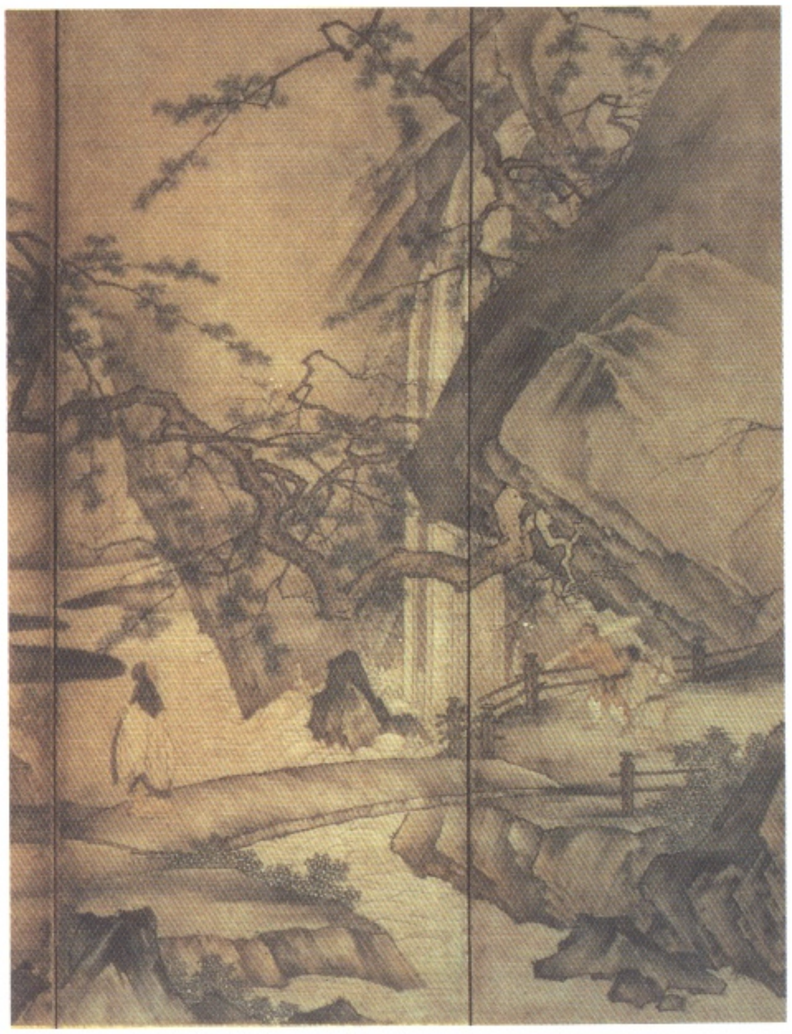
Feeling restricted by suburbia both personally and professionally, Wright soon sought a wider context for his expression. Redefining his ambitions in 1911 with the building of a new house and studio, Taliesin, he began an exhaustive search for a language that would reestablish a vital connection between architecture and nature, a link that Wright believed had existed in preliterate cultures.

Where Wright had used representation in the Prairie House, he now chose abstraction. For instance, in the art glass of the earlier Dana House (1902–4) in Springfield, Illinois, crystallized butterflies float over the dining room table as hanging lamps, and light plays against the stylized sumac leaves of the windows as if the house were being caressed by the forest. Taliesin became instead a metaphor for the surrounding landscape. Low roof lines echoed the profile of the hills, the walls were stained the color of the sand of the neighboring Wisconsin River, and native stone was laid up in horizontal layers to recall the stratified rock nearby.

The transition from the elaboration of a decorative style to the creation of a potent symbol of nature was facilitated by Wright's contact with Asian art. He had begun collecting Japanese prints as early as 1902. In 1905, he left the United States for the first time to spend three months in Japan. With information clearly gained in advance from books and

EDGAR J. KAUFMANN HOUSE, FALLINGWATER, Mill Run, Pennsylvania, 1934–37. (ABOVE)

Studio of Kano Motonobu (1476–1559). Detail of **THE FOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS,** late 16th to early 17th century (Muromachi Period). Ink and color on paper, 65¾ × 101⅜ (167 × 358 cm). (BELOW)



INTERIOR, William Palmer House, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950.

Japanese associates, Wright systematically sought out historic shrines and gardens, Japanese art and craft. By 1916, when he sailed for Japan to spend the majority of the next six years in Tokyo building the Imperial Hotel, he was eager to accumulate not only thousands of wood block prints, but screens, textiles, ceramics, printed papers, bronzes, sculptures, and rugs. Intellectually, these six years were ones of study and reflection, in which Wright found inspiration for many of the themes that would rejuvenate his work between 1925 and 1936. In Asian art, Wright discovered an aesthetic that revealed the inner geometric structure of nature, and which used elements of flora and fauna to symbolize a powerful and meaningful cosmology. His early exposure to and background in Transcendentalism prepared him for these points of view but not for the complex task of translating them into architectural form.

With the Hollyhock House (1916–21) in Hollywood, California, Wright began to refine the elements that would constitute his new domestic vocabulary: earth, fire, water, and the dome of the sky. By the 1920s, with his invention of a concrete block system of construction, he had created the perfect fusion of art and nature. These square concrete blocks, made partly of decomposed granite excavated in situ, were intended for all walls, floors, and even the roof. Structure and ornament, the building and the earth, became one.

In the following years, until his death, Frank Lloyd Wright designed on many levels simultaneously; he would introduce and reintroduce a given architectural idea in building after building until he perfected his composition. At the same time, he initiated new directions and areas of investigation beyond the strict confines of architecture. He was stimulated by the development of a personal aesthetic as well as the changing needs and demands of society. Although he almost always designed as the result of a specific commission from a client, on occasion he would investigate a theoretical problem in a fully worked-out scheme, usually for publication or exhibition. This dual evolution had particular relevance for the period between 1925 and 1936, in which he culminated his exploration of the connection between architecture and nature with the masterful Edgar J. Kaufmann country house, Fallingwater, and began to formulate his ideas for a new social order.

Wright's planning principles were now formed against the backdrop of the Great Depression, which challenged the average American's trust in the status quo. He presented his planning scheme in a model and text that he exhibited at Rockefeller Center in 1935. He called his vision "Broadacre City" to both confuse and confound his critics. Although the low-density zones of his *Usonia* (a term coined to refer to the United States of America) did, indeed, require a minimum of one acre of land per family, the resulting form of the metropolis did not conform to the prevailing definitions of a city. Decentralization, which he predicted would ultimately spread across the entire nation and swallow up all existing urban centers, was made possible by the automobile, telephone, radio, and television. The historical need for vertical density—geographic proximity to work and culture—had been made obsolete by modern transportation and telecommunications. "The city would go to

INTERIOR, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
1943–59.

the country," as Wright predicted, but without the urban congestion that he believed was the root of all economic and social injustice.

Lacking support for his reforms from any government, federal or local, Wright carried out his ideas on a smaller scale with individual clients. He had not forgotten the middle-class families that had formed the core of his practice during the Prairie House period; Broadacre City was to be built one Usonian House at a time. In the period between the Depression and the beginning of World War II, affordable middle-class housing was in short supply and Wright directed his attention to the construction system as well as the plan. The Usonian House formed a "kit of parts," a standard vocabulary of elements for the erection of floors, walls, windows, fireplaces, and roof. It assumed the elimination of the contractor as middle-man between architect and client. It challenged the homeowner to become involved in the construction of his own house. With efficient spaces, judicious proportions, and the elimination of the inessential, it embodied the ideal of "a natural house."

Between the end of World War II and his death in 1959 at the age of ninety-one, Wright would have abundant opportunities to express his views on man, nature, and society; during this period, he received more commissions than at any other stage of his career. The buildings he designed at this time are distinguished by their optimistic mood. The Usonian Automatic method of concrete block construction revived his earlier system of the 1920s for a generation of American veterans returning from the war. Indeed, the postwar housing shortage provided an opportunity to demonstrate the theory that decentralization in a mobile society could provide open space, light, and intimate contact with nature for all Americans.

In the 1950s, Wright's studio was filled with projects for churches, office buildings, schools, hotels, and theaters. The dozens of schemes that he produced for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York during the 1940s and 1950s were proof of his continued facility and tenacity. The solid rectangular blocks of the first decades of the century had given way to fluid curves encircling yet not containing space. With the Guggenheim Museum, Wright seems to have attained the promise of his earlier work—a building of continuity and plasticity that was a direct expression of the modern materials that formed it.

Frank Lloyd Wright sought to reconcile many of the opposing forces of the twentieth century: the rationalism of the machine with the mysteries of the earth, the rights of the individual with the need for community. Although Wright was a futurist, he dedicated his cause to traditional architectural values. The very paradoxes and contradictions that make him so difficult to compartmentalize are what give him such lasting appeal. His aesthetic prowess is unchallenged: masterpieces such as Fallingwater, Unity Temple, the Robie House, the Guggenheim Museum, and many more are among the greatest architectural landmarks in the United States, and possibly the world. At an early age Wright announced that his ambition was to become not only the greatest architect of his generation, but the greatest architect that ever lived. It is too early to render a judgment, but there is no doubt that his legacy will continue to influence generations well into the next century.


TRUTH IS LIFE.
GOOD FRIEND, AROVND THESE
HEARTH-STONES SPEAK NO EVIL
WORD OF ANY CREATVRE . . .

FORMATIVE YEARS (1887-1899)

Good friend, around these hearth-stones speak no evil word of any creature.

Inscribed over the mantel, Frank Lloyd Wright House & Studio

In 1887, when Frank Lloyd Wright was not yet twenty-one, he decided to leave his hometown, Madison, Wisconsin, and move to Chicago to become an architect. Within a short time he began work with the firm of Adler and Sullivan, which had earned a well-deserved reputation for the design of tall commercial buildings. Louis Sullivan recognized Wright's talent and eventually made him his assistant. Even at this early stage of his career Wright exhibited a predilection for residential architecture, and he began to design the few domestic commissions that Adler and Sullivan accepted.

With his marriage in 1889 to Catherine Lee Tobin and the birth of six children following in quick succession from 1890 to 1903, Wright built and then repeatedly remodeled his own house in the suburb of Oak Park. It was here that he perfected many of his ideas for the American family dwelling: the pinwheel plan that rotates around a masonry hearth as the gathering place for family and friends, the spacious dining room with a table enclosed by high-backed chairs lit by an indirect electric light fixture overhead, the playroom reserved for entertainment, whether intimate and casual, or festive and formal.

With a few notable exceptions, especially the plan for Chicago's Wolf Lake Amusement Park (1895), Wright's independent practice that began in 1893 was devoted to domesticity. Both in his home life and professional life, Wright dedicated himself to the complete redefinition of the American house. He seems to have been guided by the views of William C. Gannett, a family friend and the author of *The House Beautiful* (1895). (Wright designed and hand-printed an edition of the book in 1897 in partnership with his first independent client, William H. Winslow [see page 21].) Gannett discusses the importance not only of the careful selection and arrangement of the physical elements of a house—its architecture, furnishings, and decoration—but also how these elements create "The Building of God, not made with Hands." He emphasizes the spiritual life of the residents based on a reverence for familial values: consideration, love, and union.

During the 1890s, Wright executed several houses where the building appears to hug the ground, due to strong horizontal lines and a deep pitch to the roof. He experimented with the plan, opening the interior to create a more generous flow of space. He simplified the plan with built-in furniture—cabinetry and seating—and designed his own chairs and tables using unpainted wood, which was then simply stained and waxed. In sympathy with the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, he rejected the cluttered surfaces of the Victorian house and designed simple vessels to hold arrangements of weeds or wildflowers cut from a nearby roadside.

In 1898, he added a studio to his house in Oak Park (pages 24–25) so that he could be closer to his work. The top-lit, two-story drafting room and intimate octagonal library housed a small staff of draftsmen and secretaries. With his own house as his best form of advertising, Wright began to attract clients from Oak Park and the neighboring suburb of River Forest. By 1900, he had something of historic significance to offer them.

LIVING ROOM, Frank Lloyd Wright House, Oak Park, Illinois, 1889–90. (PAGE 14)

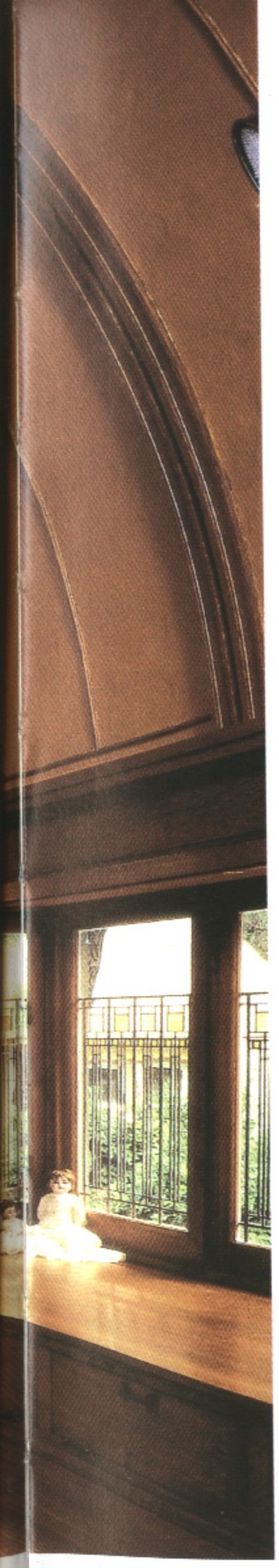
WILLIAM H. WINSLOW HOUSE, River Forest, Illinois, 1893–94. (LEFT)

INGLENOOK, William H. Winslow House, 1893–94. (BELOW)

For Dankmar Adler (1844–1900) and Louis Sullivan (1856–1924), **CHARNLEY-PERSKY HOUSE,** Chicago, 1891–92.

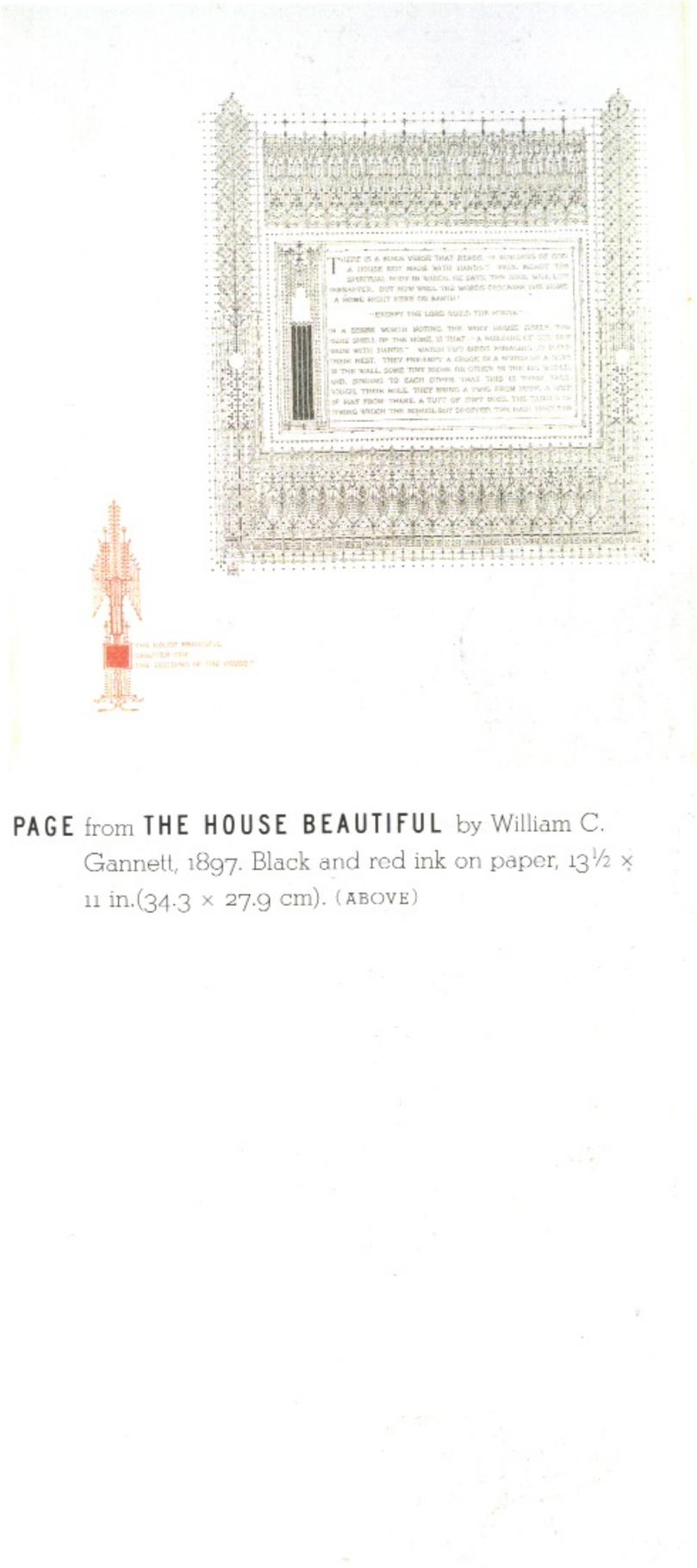
DINING ROOM, Frank Lloyd Wright House, 1895.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HOUSE, Oak Park, Illinois, 1889–90.

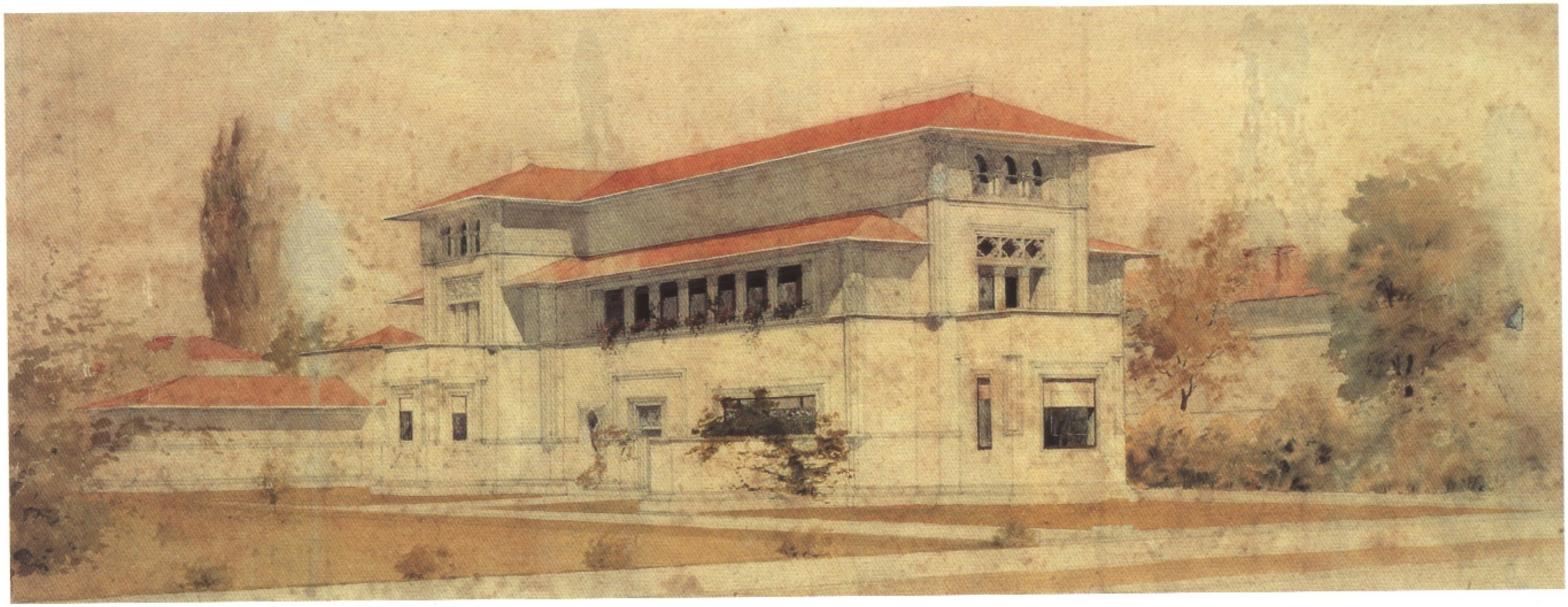


Frank Lloyd Wright and family on the steps of his Oak Park house, c. 1890. Wright is seated at right; at center Catherine Wright holds their child, Lloyd. (ABOVE)

PLAYROOM, Frank Lloyd Wright House, 1895. (LEFT)

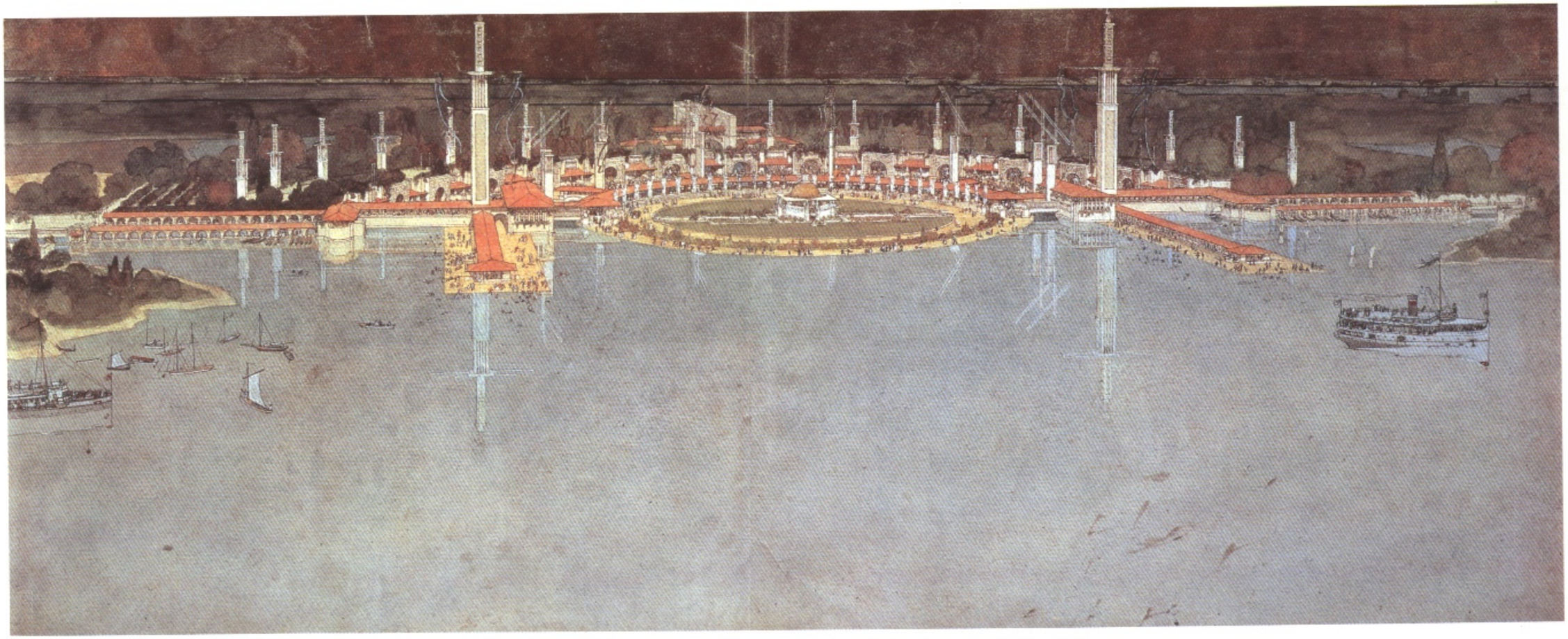


PAGE from **THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL** by William C. Gannett, 1897. Black and red ink on paper, 13½ × 11 in.(34.3 × 27.9 cm). (ABOVE)



ISIDORE HELLER HOUSE, Chicago, 1897. Perspective. (ABOVE)

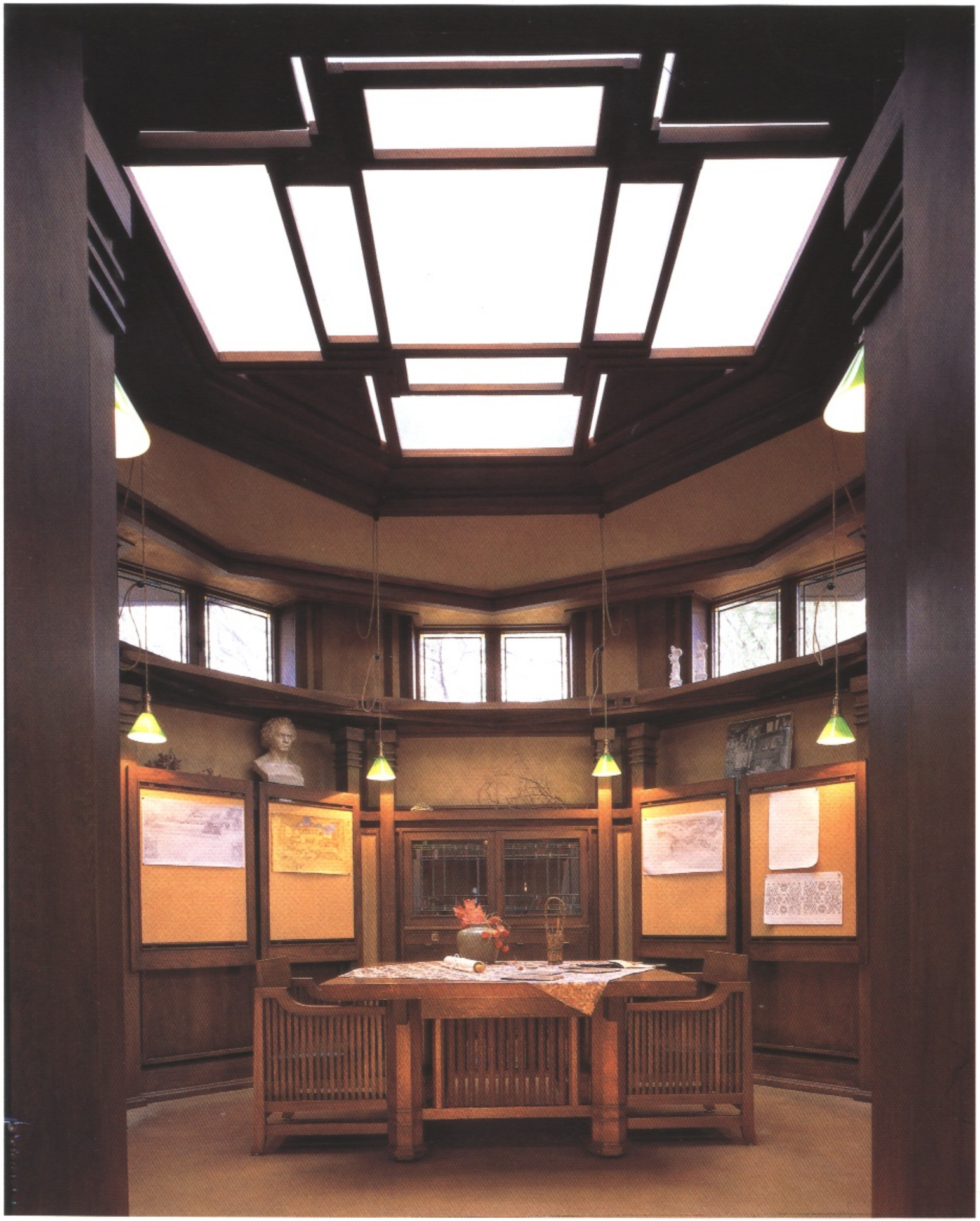
WOLF LAKE AMUSEMENT PARK, Chicago, 1895; unbuilt. Perspective. (BELOW)



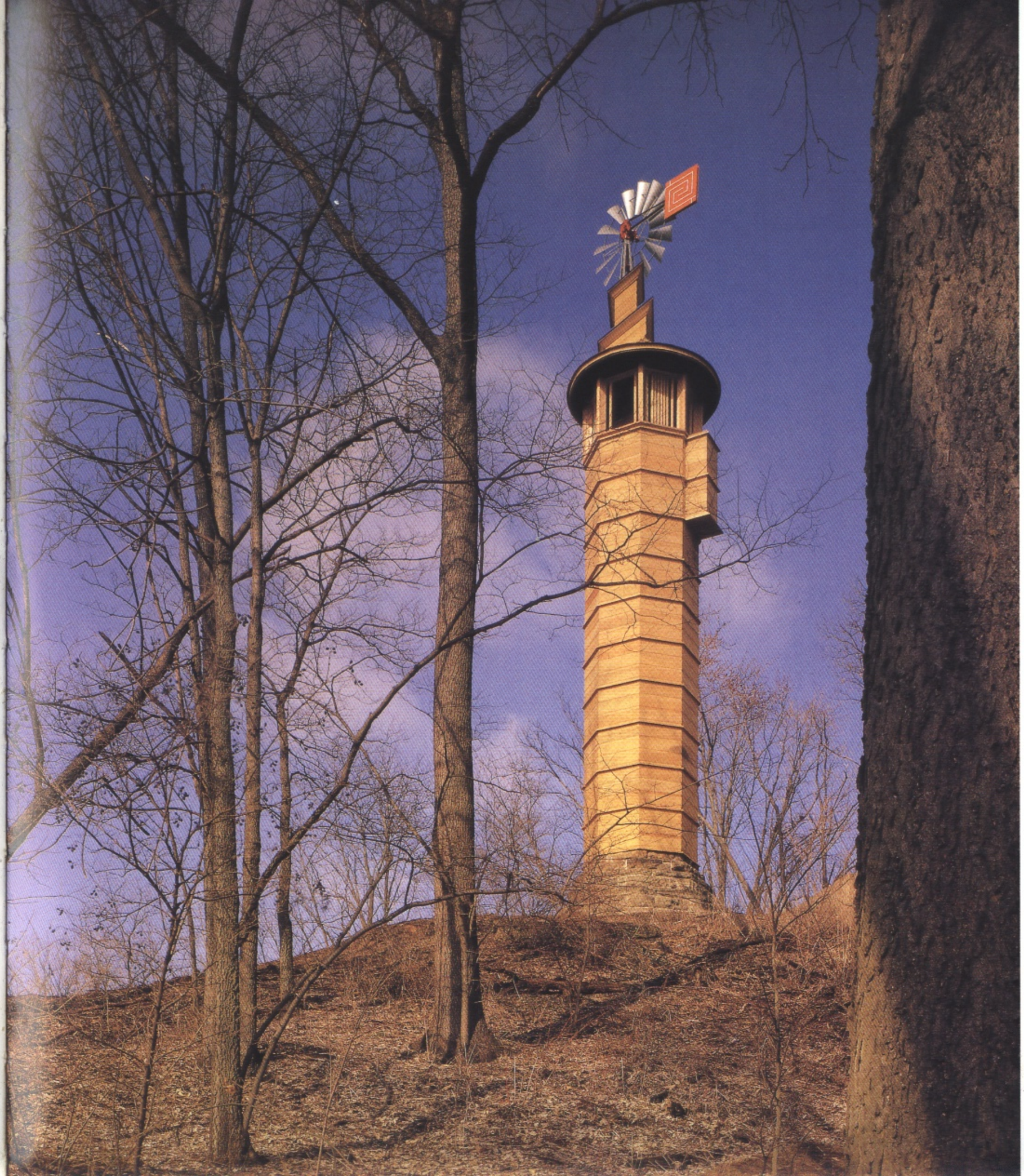
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT STUDIO, Oak Park, Illinois, 1898.

RECEPTION HALL, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, 1898. (ABOVE)

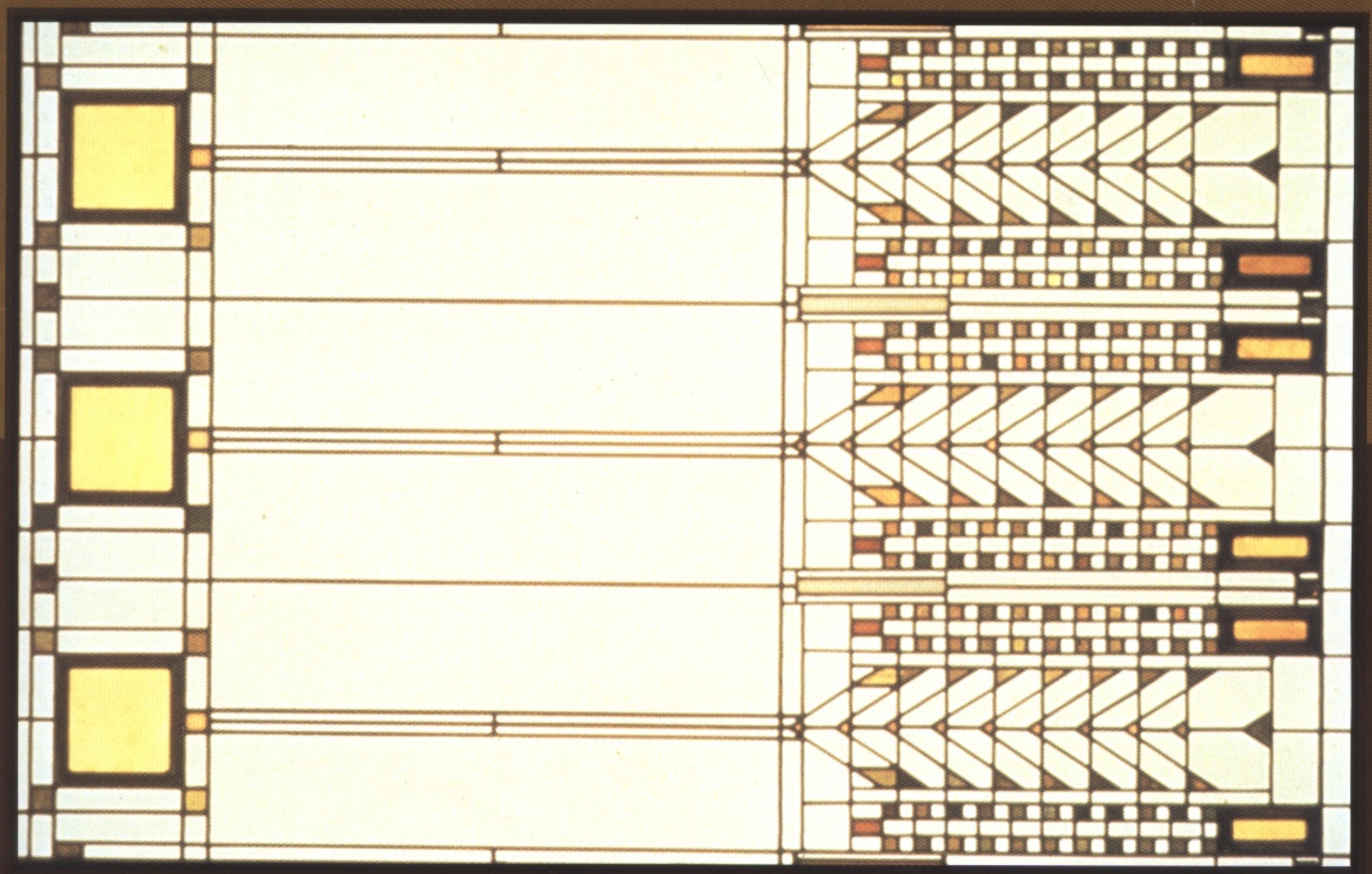
DRAFTING ROOM, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, 1898. (BELOW)



LIBRARY, Frank Lloyd Wright Studio, 1898.



ROMEO AND JULIET WINDMILL,
Spring Green, Wisconsin,
1896–97.



PRAIRIE PERIOD (1900–1910)

Now what can be eliminated?

Wright, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, January 1938

By 1900 Frank Lloyd Wright had created a new type of single family dwelling that he believed was the direct result of the changed circumstances of modern living. The Prairie House appealed to a progressive segment of Chicago's middle class because it represented a practical, new way of life—full of "light, air, and prospect"—in contrast to the claustrophobic, cluttered rooms of the Victorian house. The spatial innovation of the plan—the public rooms open to each other on the diagonal creating an open floor plan—was made feasible by the invention of modern mechanical heating systems. Wright eliminated the compartmentalization of the traditional house, the boxes within a box, allowing fluid movement where walls begin to define, rather than enclose, space. This was the first revolutionary change in architectural space since the Renaissance, and a younger generation of European architects and designers such as Mies van der Rohe and Theo van Doesburg seized on the discovery when Wright's work was published in Germany shortly before World War I.

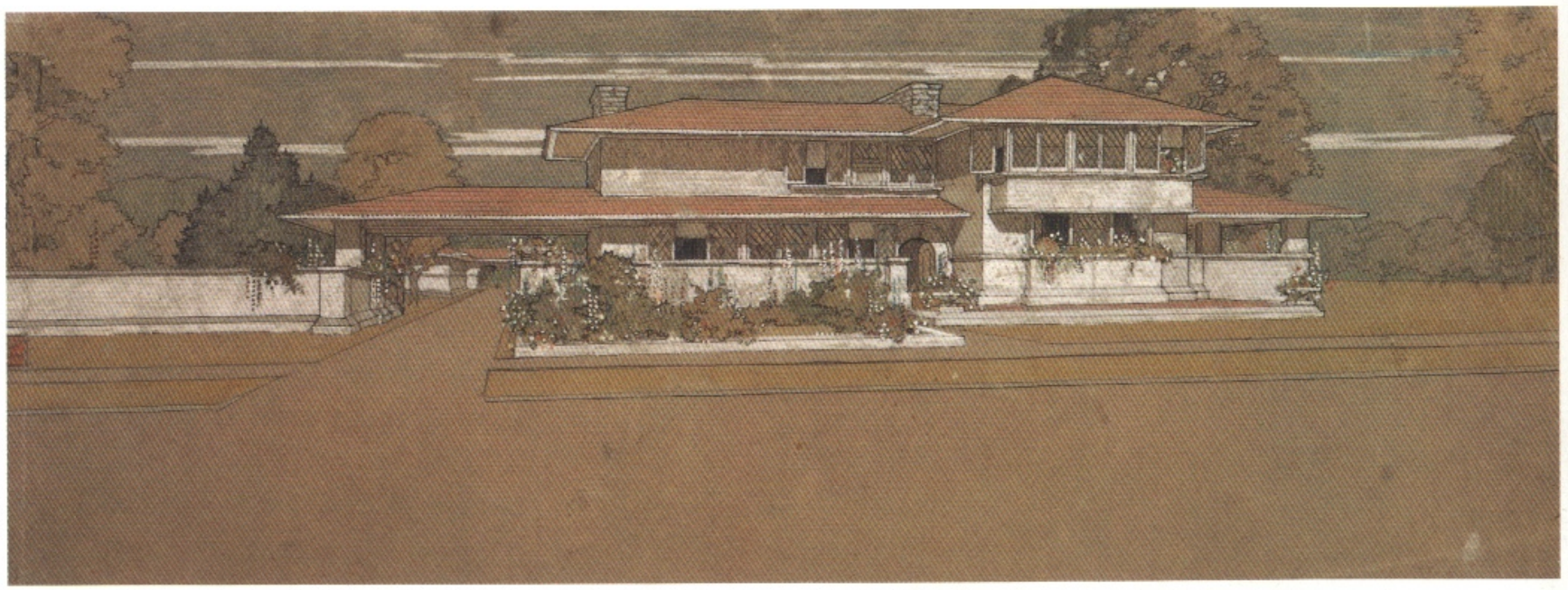
The Prairie Houses, so named because their horizontal lines imitated the flat ground plane so common throughout the Midwest, had a T-shape plan with a central masonry chimney; later, the plan developed variations, but the spatial flow around the fireplace at the core remained a common element. The interiors responded to family life. Despite innovations in heating, Wright emphasized the symbolic importance of the hearth as a gathering place for the family. Seating was comprised of either built-in or freestanding pieces grouped around the fireplace. A spacious dining room ritualized meals. Wright created a room within a room with the addition of a custom-designed dining table and high-backed chairs. Despite its common features, the architect believed that there should be as many different Prairie Houses as there were people, each a unique creation specifically suited to the particulars of the time, the place, and the client.

While the Prairie House demonstrated Wright's ability to perfect a domestic style, the opportunity to design public buildings between 1903 and 1906 ushered in a rigorous abstraction more attuned to the spirit of the industrial age. The solid rectangular block of the Larkin Administration Building in Buffalo, New York (page 35), was relieved at the corners by slender vertical stair towers. Inside, the interior light court was top-lit, each floor ringed with a high band of windows and built-in filing cabinets, with metal office furniture designed to make cleaning efficient. The cubic severity of Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois (pages 38–39), is accomplished through the uncompromising use of exposed reinforced concrete on the exterior. With the boldly expressed precision of the two cubes—one for the congregation, the other for meeting rooms—and the austerity of the material, Unity Temple was Wright's most daring contribution to the machine age.

The abstraction of the early work can be interpreted as the search for an architectural language for the twentieth century, an attempt at transforming industrial materials into monumental architectural form, and a clear statement about the potential of modern construction methods. The commissions that Wright received between 1903 and 1906 stimulated these concerns and laid a foundation for their development in the years ahead.

WILLIAM G. FRICKE HOUSE, Oak Park, Illinois, 1901. (LEFT)

WINDOW (TREE OF LIFE), Darwin D. Martin House, Buffalo, New York, 1904. Clear, opaque, opalescent, and gilt glass with lead cames, 39¾ × 27 in. (100.9 × 68.6 cm). (PAGE 28)



A HOME IN A PRAIRIE TOWN for **LADIES' HOME JOURNAL,** 1900; unbuilt. Perspective. (ABOVE)

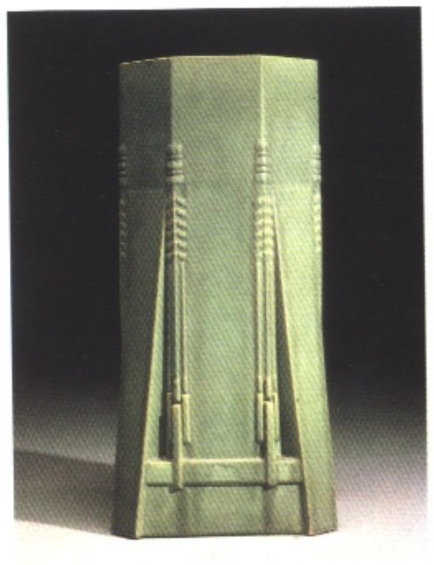
WARD W. WILLITS HOUSE, Highland Park, Illinois, 1901–3. (ABOVE)

DINING ROOM, Ward W. Willits House, 1901–3. (LEFT)

HANGING LAMP (BUTTERFLY LAMP), Susan Lawrence Dana House, 1902–4. Leaded glass, 19 × 23½ × 23½ in. (48.2 × 59.7 × 59.7 cm). (ABOVE)

DINING ROOM, Susan Lawrence Dana House, 1902–4. (ABOVE)

WINDOW, Susan Lawrence Dana House, 1902–4. Leaded glass and wood frame, 46¼ × 31½ in. (117.5 × 80 cm). (LEFT)



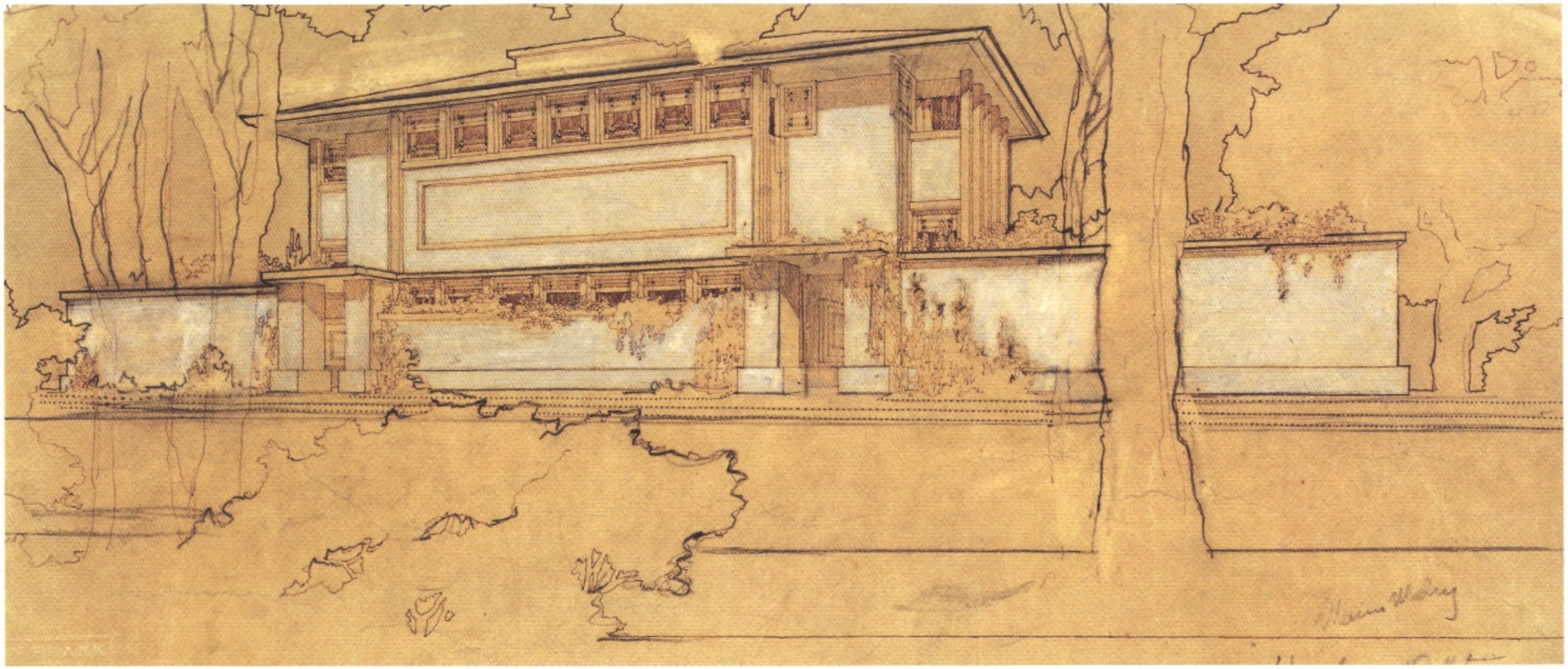
TECO VASE, Susan Lawrence Dana House, c. 1902–4. Glazed earthenware, height: 23 3/8 in. (59.4 cm).

SUSAN LAWRENCE DANA HOUSE, Springfield, Illinois, 1902–4. (BELOW)

OFFICE CHAIR, Larkin Administration Building, 1902–6. Painted steel with leather-covered seat and casters, 38 × 24½ × 21 in. (96.5 × 61.6 × 53.3 cm). (ABOVE LEFT)

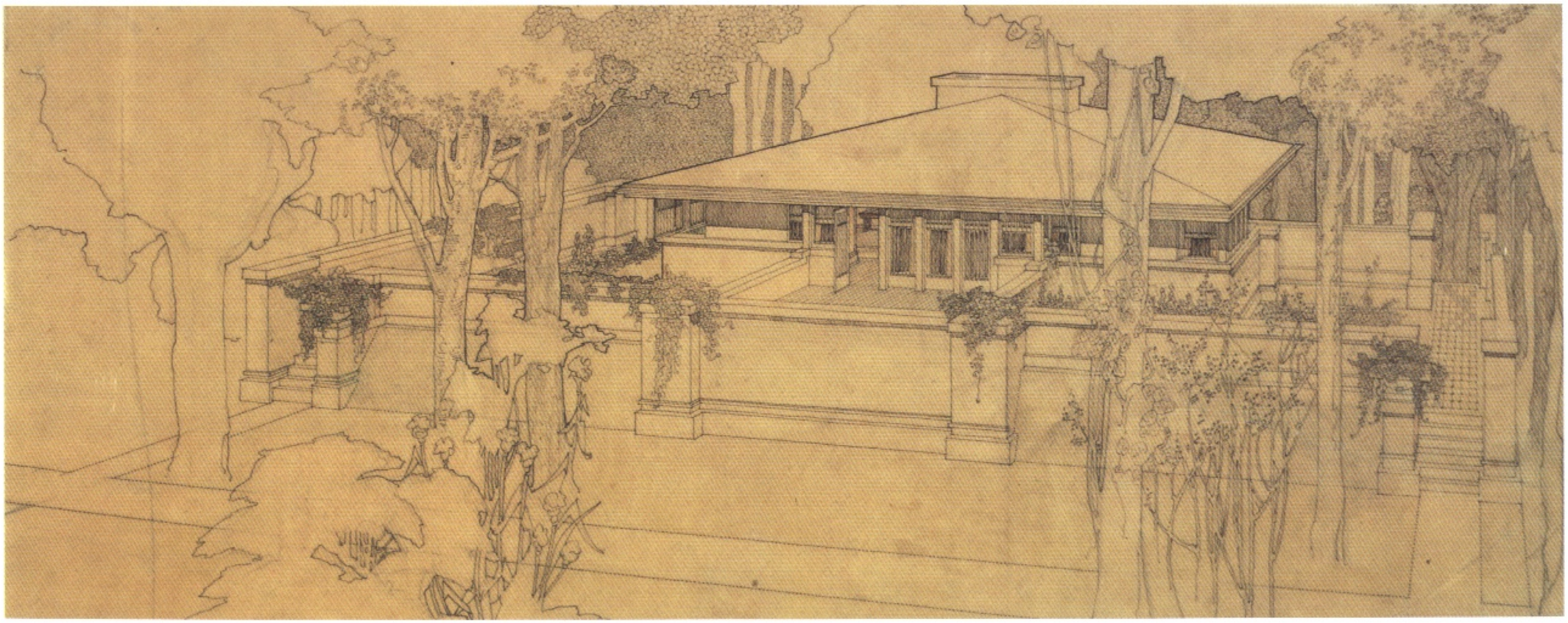
EXECUTIVE OFFICE, Larkin Administration Building, 1902–6. (ABOVE RIGHT)

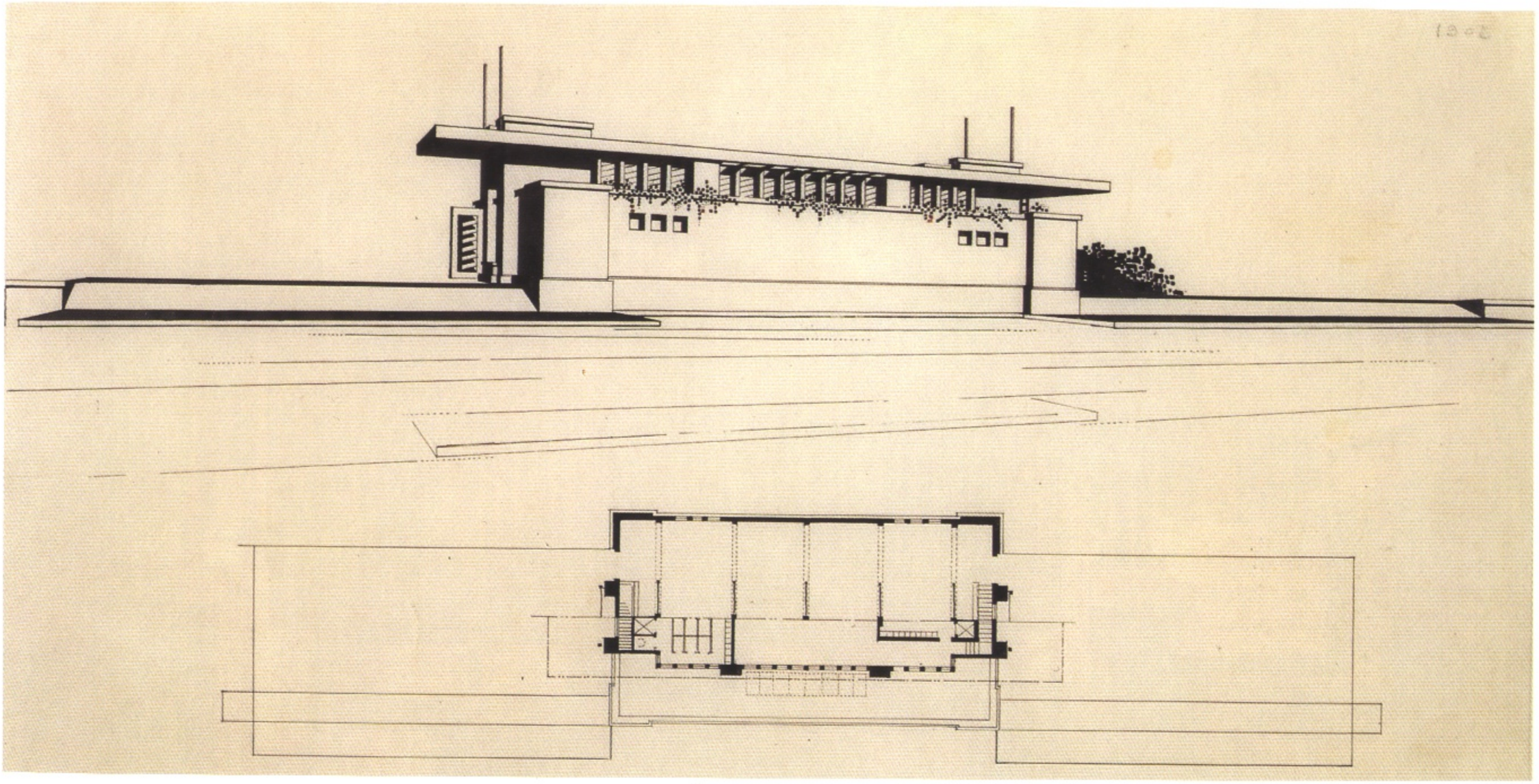
LARKIN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, Buffalo, New York, 1902–6; demolished 1950. (LEFT)



THOMAS P. HARDY HOUSE, Racine, Wisconsin, 1905. Perspective. (ABOVE)

EDWIN H. CHENEY HOUSE, Oak Park, Illinois, 1903. Perspective. (BELOW)



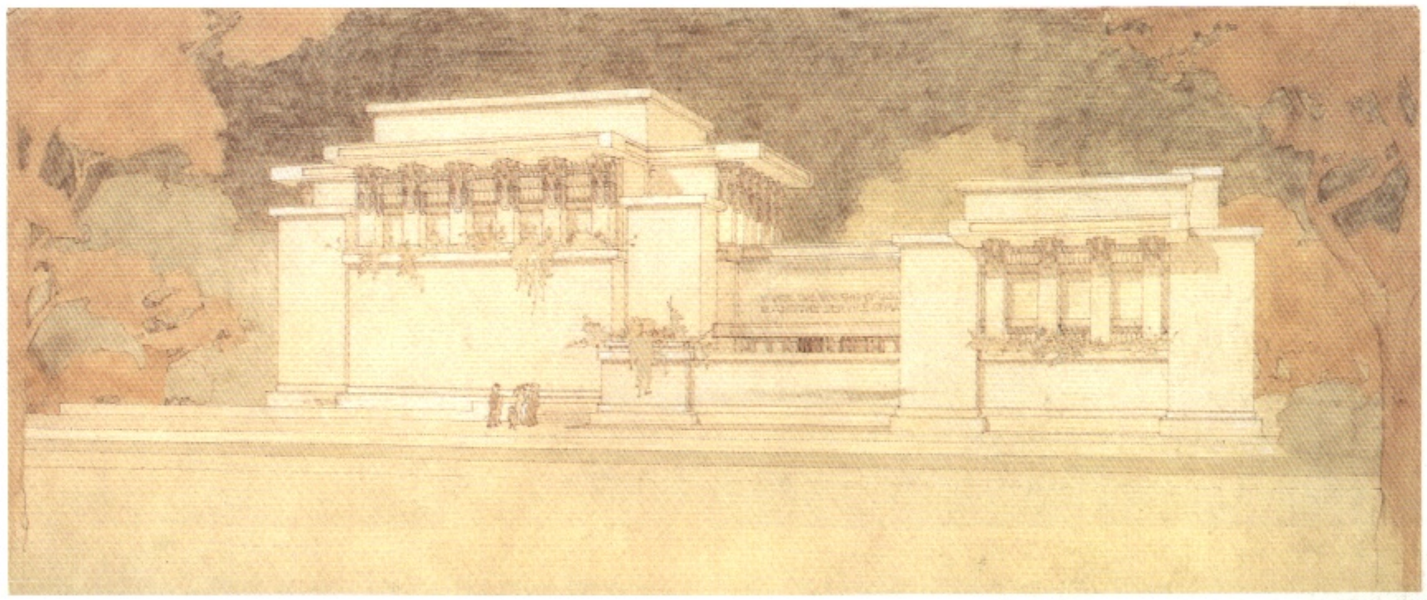


YAHARA BOATHOUSE, Madison, Wisconsin, 1905; unbuilt. Perspective.

INTERIOR, Unity Temple, 1905–8. (OPPOSITE)

LIGHT FIXTURE, Unity Temple, 1905–8. (LEFT)

UNITY TEMPLE, Oak Park, Illinois, 1905–8.
Perspective. (BELOW)



AVERY COONLEY HOUSE, Riverside, Illinois, 1906–8.

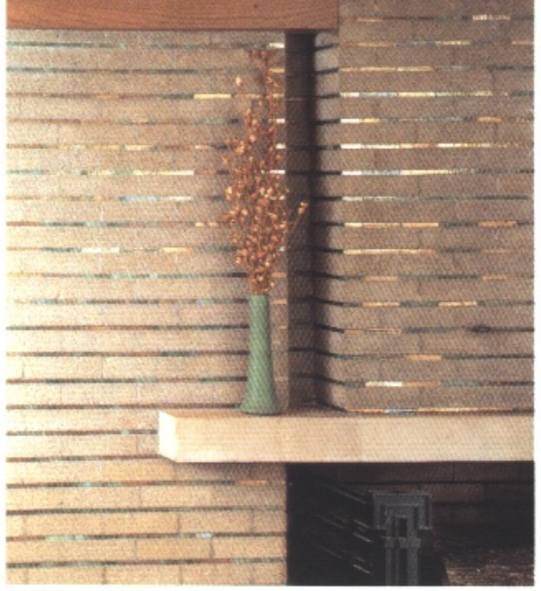
COPPER FRIEZE,
Meyer May House,
1908.

MURAL, Meyer May House, 1908. (ABOVE LEFT)

MEYER MAY HOUSE, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1908. (ABOVE)

LIVING ROOM WINDOWS, Meyer May House, 1908. (LEFT)

LIVING ROOM, Meyer May House, 1908.



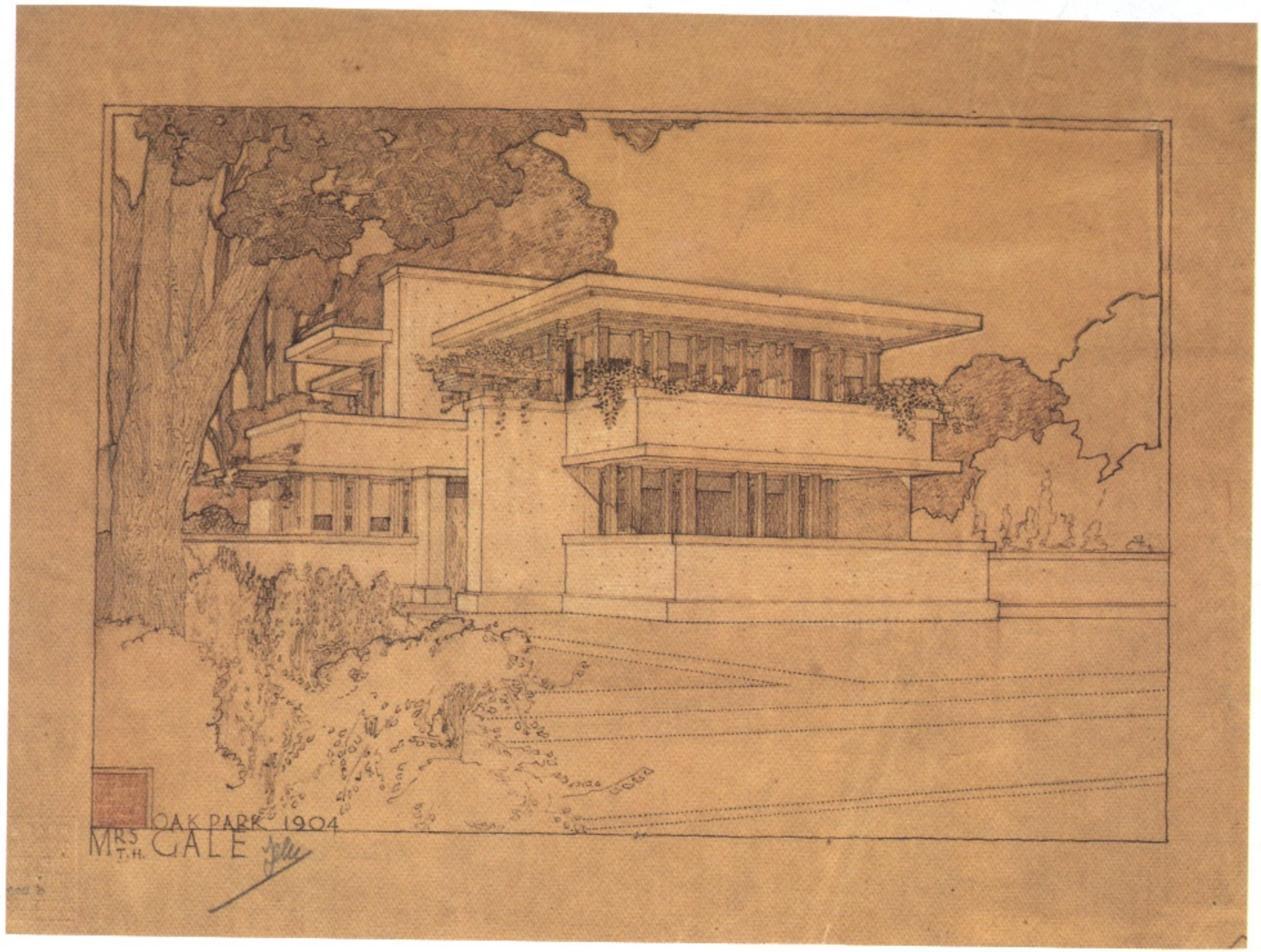
LIVING ROOM DETAIL, Meyer May House, 1908.

CHILD'S BEDROOM, Meyer May House, 1908. (ABOVE)

DINING ROOM, Meyer May House, 1908. (LEFT)

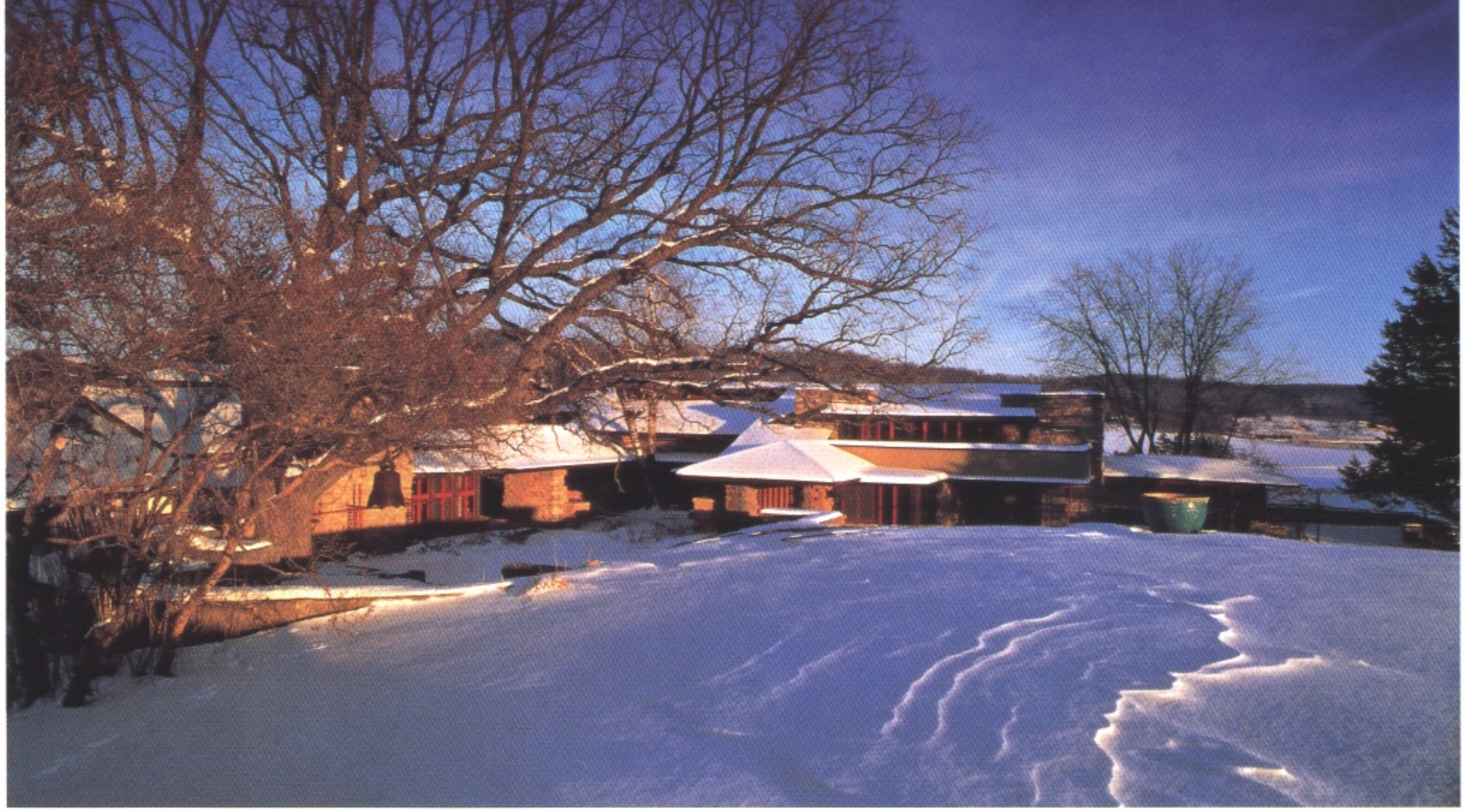
LIVING ROOM, Frederick C. Robie House, 1908–10. (ABOVE)

FREDERICK C. ROBIE HOUSE, Chicago, 1908–10. (OPPOSITE)



MRS. THOMAS GALE HOUSE, Oak Park, Illinois, 1909. Perspective.

DR. GEORGE C. STOCKMAN HOUSE, Mason City, Iowa, 1908.

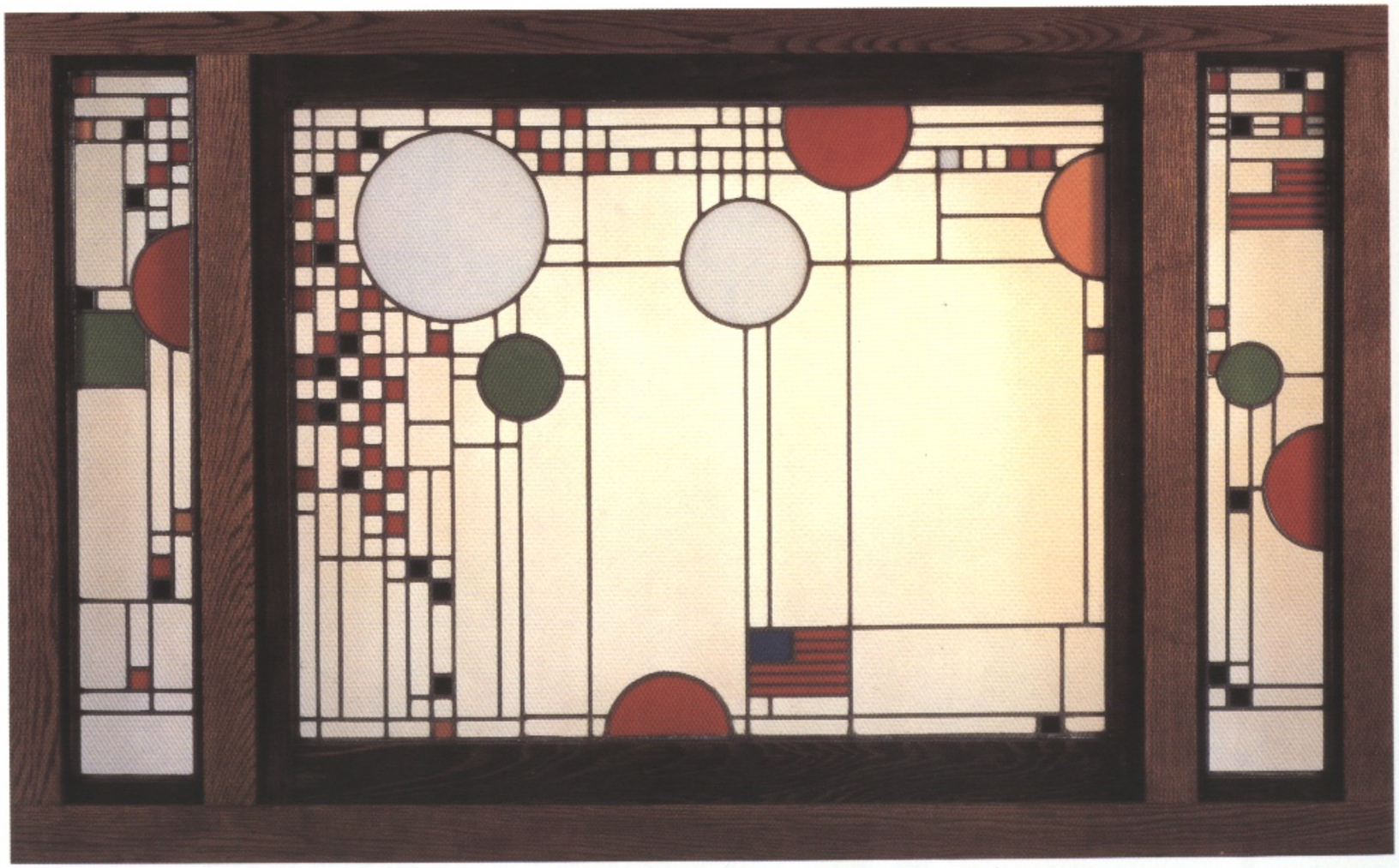


TALIESIN, Spring Green, Wisconsin, 1911–59. (ABOVE)

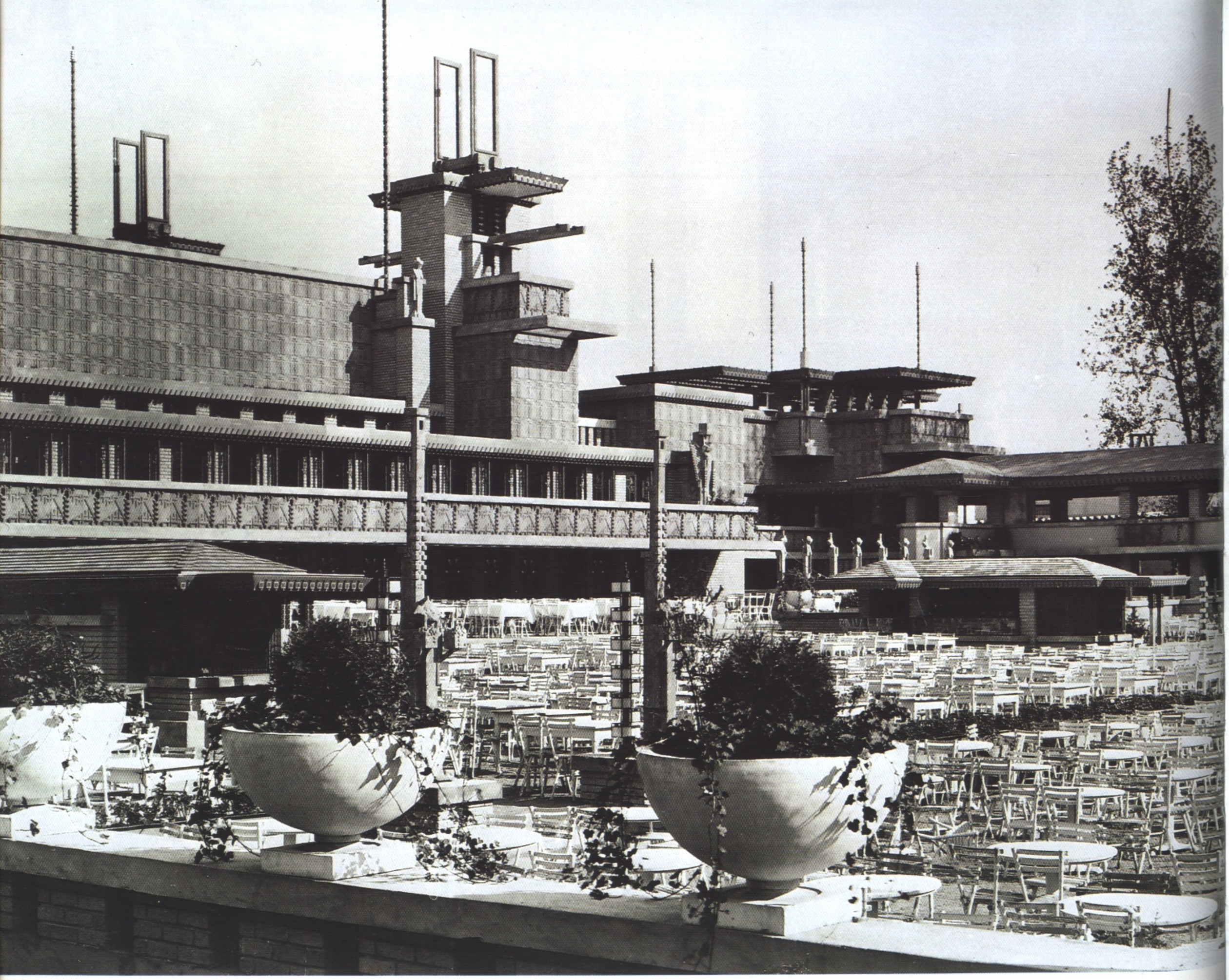
LIVING ROOM AND DINING ALCOVE, Taliesin, 1911–59. (LEFT)

AVERY COONLEY PLAYHOUSE, Riverside, Illinois, 1912. (LEFT)

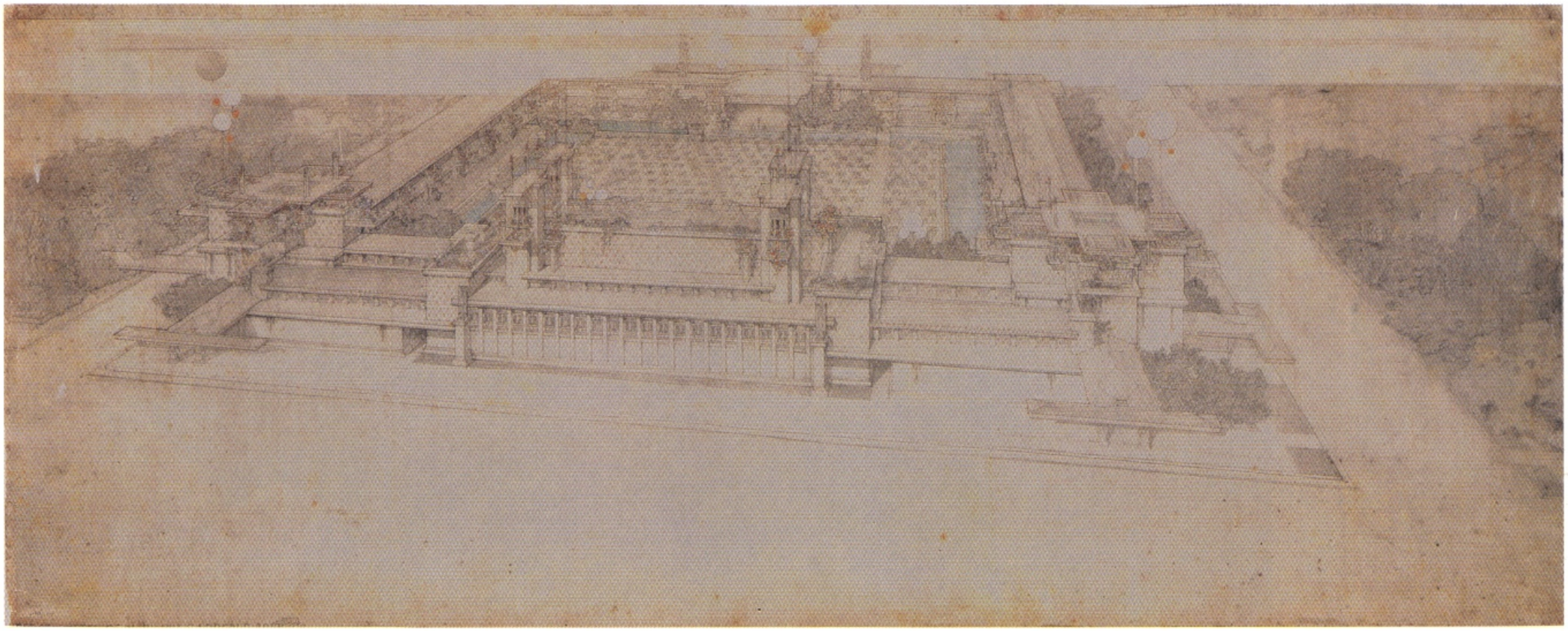
WINDOWS, Avery Coonley Playhouse, 1912. Leaded glass, 40½ × 64½ in. (102.7 × 165 cm). (BELOW)



INTERIOR, Avery Coonley Playhouse, 1912.



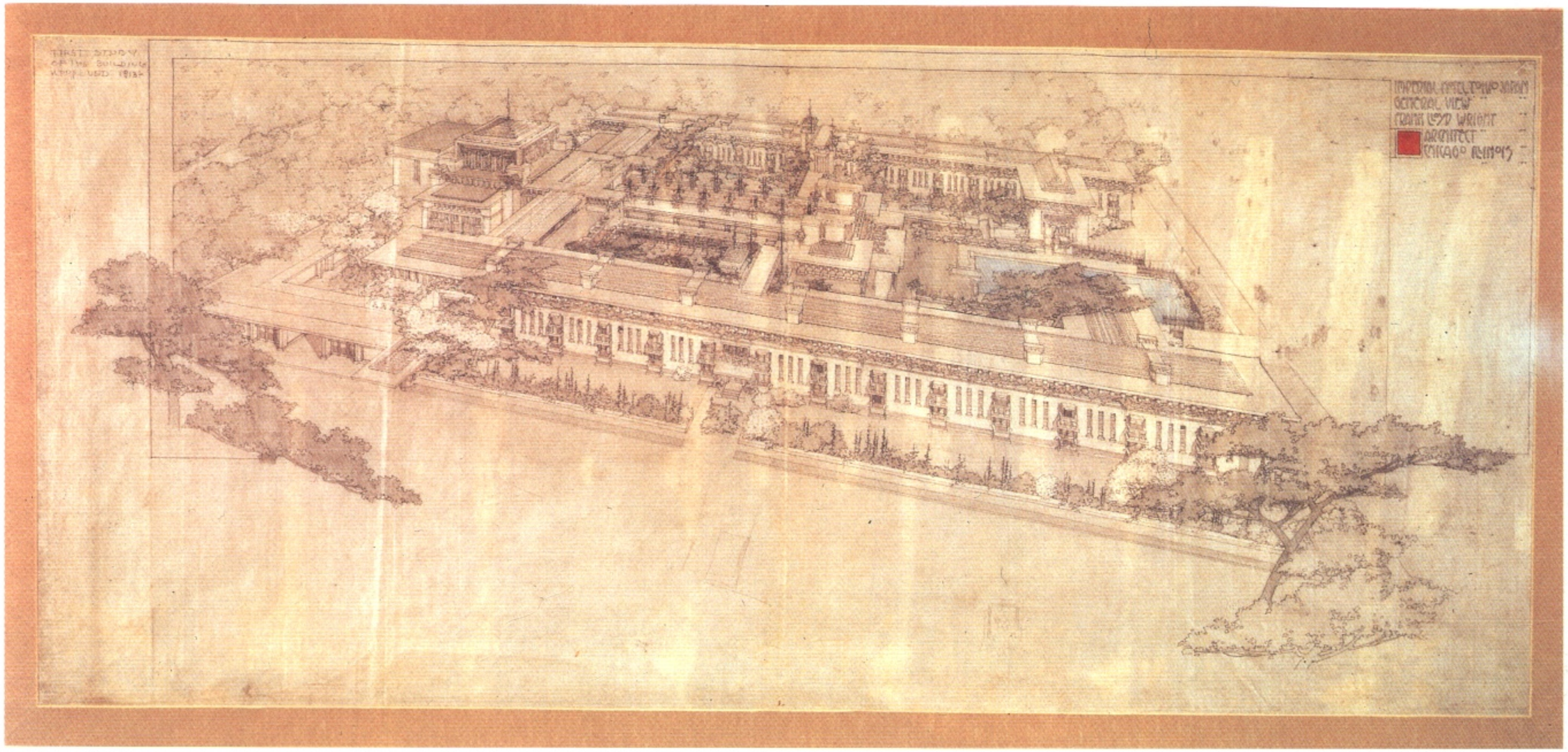
MIDWAY GARDENS, Chicago, 1913–14; demolished 1929. Perspective. (BELOW)



SUMMER GARDEN, Midway Gardens, 1913–14. (OPPOSITE)

AMERICAN SYSTEM-BUILT HOUSES FOR THE RICHARDS COMPANY, 1915–17.
Perspective of model C3 (AR). Lithoprint, 11 × 8½ in. (27.9 × 21.6 cm). (RIGHT)

FRANCIS W. LITTLE HOUSE, NORTHOME,
Deephaven, Minnesota, 1912–14, Living Room; demolished 1972. Living room reconstructed 1982 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (OPPOSITE)



IMPERIAL HOTEL, Tokyo, 1913–23; demolished 1968. Perspective. (ABOVE)

TEA SERVICE, Imperial Hotel, 1913–23. (LEFT)

FIREPLACE, Imperial Hotel, 1913–23. (OPPOSITE)

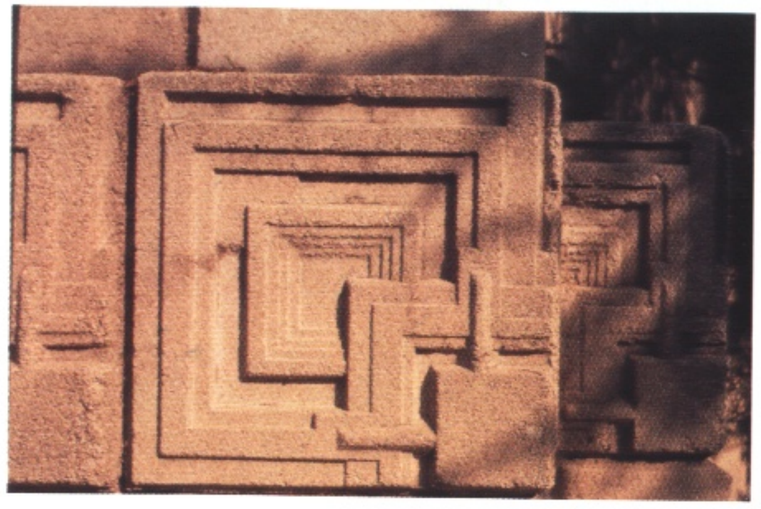
LIVING ROOM, Aline Barnsdall House, 1916–21. (LEFT)

ALINE BARNSDALL HOUSE, HOLLYHOCK HOUSE,
Hollywood, California, 1916–21. (OPPOSITE)

DINING ROOM, Aline Barnsdall House, 1916–21. (RIGHT)

JOHN STORER HOUSE, Hollywood, California, 1923–24. (ABOVE)

ALICE MILLARD HOUSE, LA MINIATURA, Pasadena, California, 1923–24. (OPPOSITE)



CONCRETE BLOCK, Ennis-Brown House, 1924–25. (LEFT)

ENNIS-BROWN HOUSE, Hollywood, California, 1924–25. (BELOW)

CORNER WINDOW, Samuel Freeman House, 1924–25. (ABOVE)

SAMUEL FREEMAN HOUSE, Hollywood, California, 1924–25. (LEFT)

REGENERATION AND RENEWAL (1925-1936)

> The good building makes the landscape more beautiful than it was before the building was built.
>
> Wright, "Two Lectures on Architecture," 1931

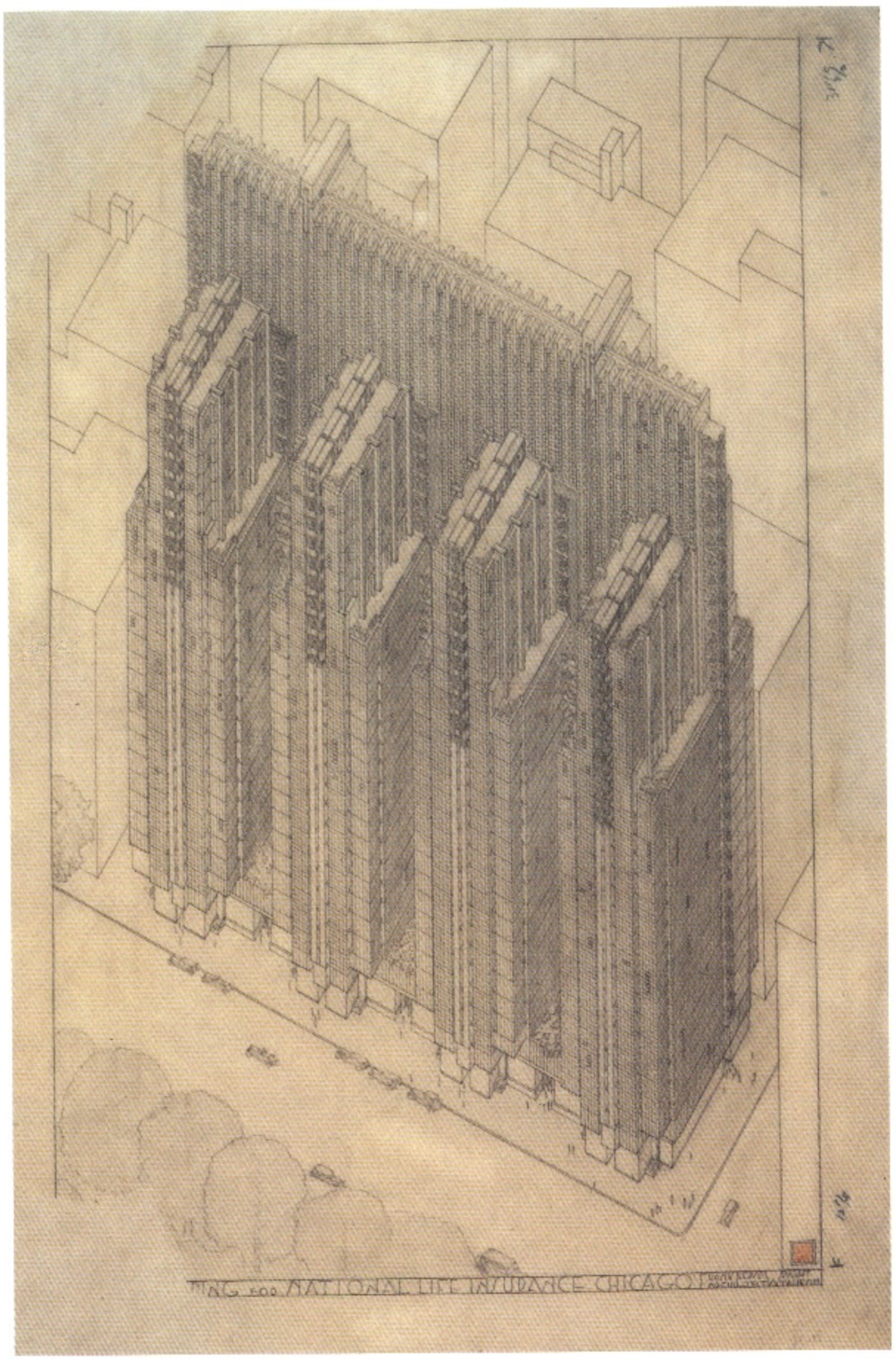
If the years 1911–24 marked a transition, they were followed by a period of invention from 1925–36 when Frank Lloyd Wright generated many of the ideas and elements that would form the foundation for his late work. While he struggled to support himself and his family with whatever jobs came his way, he was producing original architectural compositions and formulating a vision for a radical utopian society.

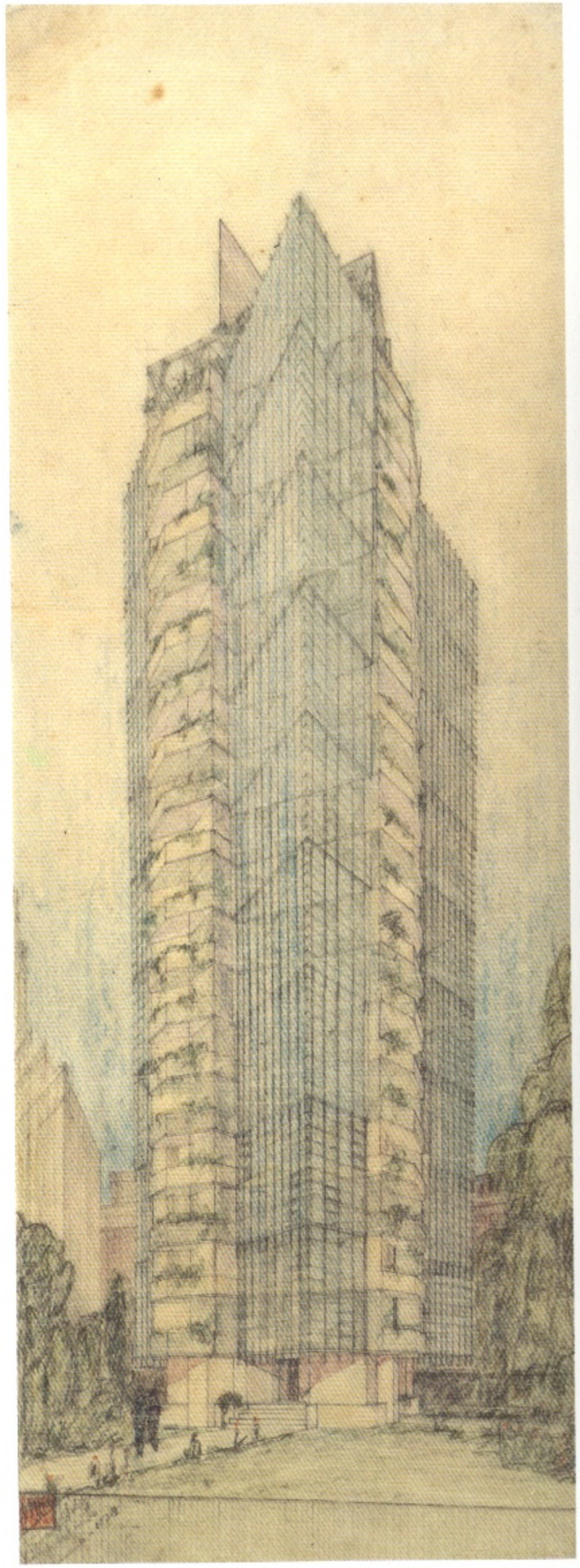
Since few commissions of this period were built, Wright was forced to put these drawings aside until opportunity presented itself later. Out of the plan for the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective (1924–25, page 77), for example, the spiral ramp of the Guggenheim Museum (1943–59, page 124) was born. The National Life Insurance Building (1924–25) and St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie Towers (1927–31, both page 76) use Wright's principles of cantilever construction for their towers. Likening a skyscraper to a tree, Wright proposed to project the floors of the building from the structural core like branches from a trunk. Decades later, the Johnson Research Laboratory Tower (1943–50, page 105) and Price Tower (1952–56, page 119) would both employ this idea.

Although Wright had returned to the Midwest, many of his commissions were located in wilderness areas of the United States, presenting him with vistas of unparalleled natural beauty. Whether on a mountain top in Maryland for the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective or in the harsh Arizona desert with the San Marcos-in-the-Desert Resort Hotel (1928–29) (page 77), Wright sought a sublime connection between the building and the pristine landscape around it.

Returning to the theme that he had inaugurated with the design of Taliesin, Wright pursued devices and motifs throughout these years to ground architecture visually and symbolically in nature. He reached the apotheosis of his search with the design for the Edgar J. Kaufmann country house, Fallingwater (pages 82–85). By placing the house over waterfalls, Wright guaranteed that architecture and nature would form one consummate union rather than a composition of disparate parts. He further reinforced the relationship by mimicking the form and arrangement of the waterfalls in the building—the broad concrete terraces echo the rock ledges below. While the building differentiates itself from its surroundings and retains its identity as a man-made object, it is perceived as a complement to nature; and as a result, each ennobles the other by its presence.

During these years, Wright was formulating a new strain of thought as a result of the turbulent economic and political conditions brought on by the Great Depression. He couched his reform in terms of town planning and called his ideal community Broadacre City (page 81). He first summarized his ideas in a book, *The Disappearing City,* which appeared in 1932, and again in *When Democracy Builds,* published in 1945. Broadacre City was based on the principle of decentralization and assumed that the nation would be crisscrossed by great arterial highways. It called for a pattern of low density settlement across the American landscape that would allow every family a minimum of one acre of land, one automobile, and access to telecommunications. Without government support, Wright was reduced to seeing his ideas realized on a small scale with individual clients as scores of middle-class Americans turned to him again as the country recovered from the Depression.

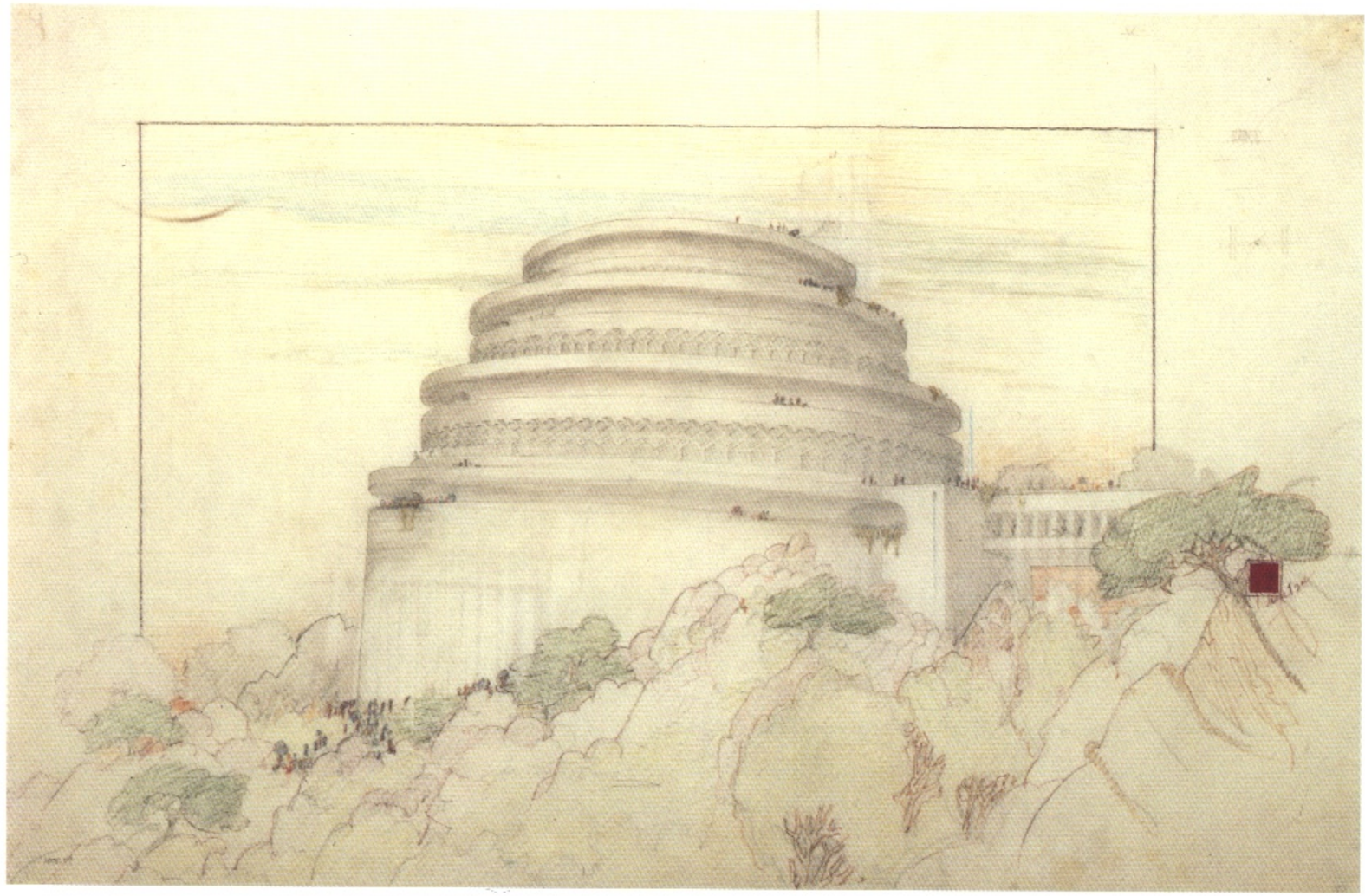




NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING, Chicago, 1924–25; unbuilt. Perspective. (ABOVE)

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-BOUWERIE TOWERS, New York, 1927–31; unbuilt. Perspective. (RIGHT)

EDGAR J. KAUFMANN HOUSE, FALLINGWATER, Mill Run, Pennsylvania, 1934–37. (PAGE 74)

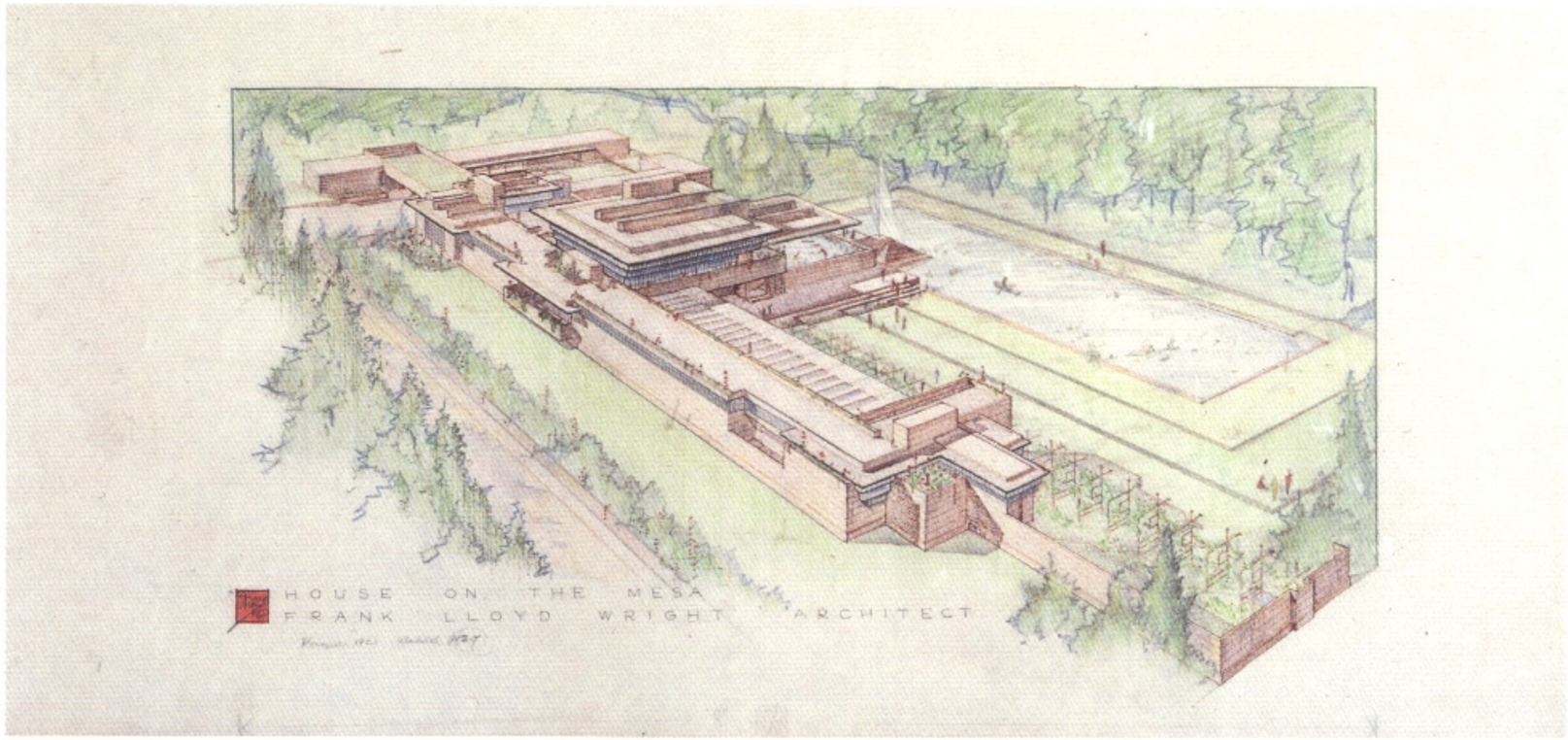


GORDON STRONG AUTOMOBILE OBJECTIVE, Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland, 1924–25; unbuilt. Perspective. (LEFT)

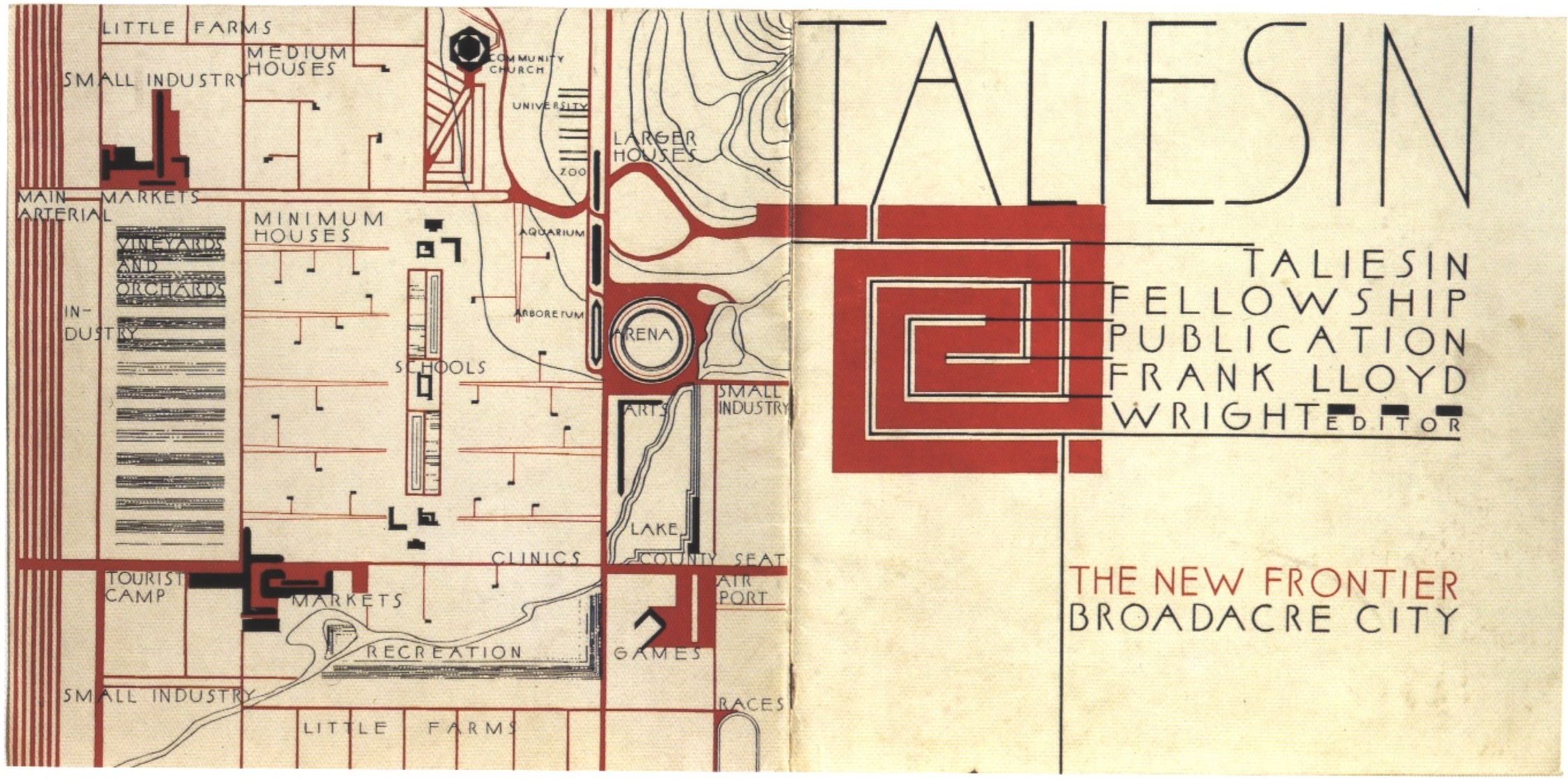
SAN MARCOS-IN-THE-DESERT RESORT, Chandler, Arizona, 1928–29; unbuilt. Perspective. (BELOW)

HOUSE ON THE MESA, Denver, Colorado, 1931; unbuilt. Perspective. (RIGHT)

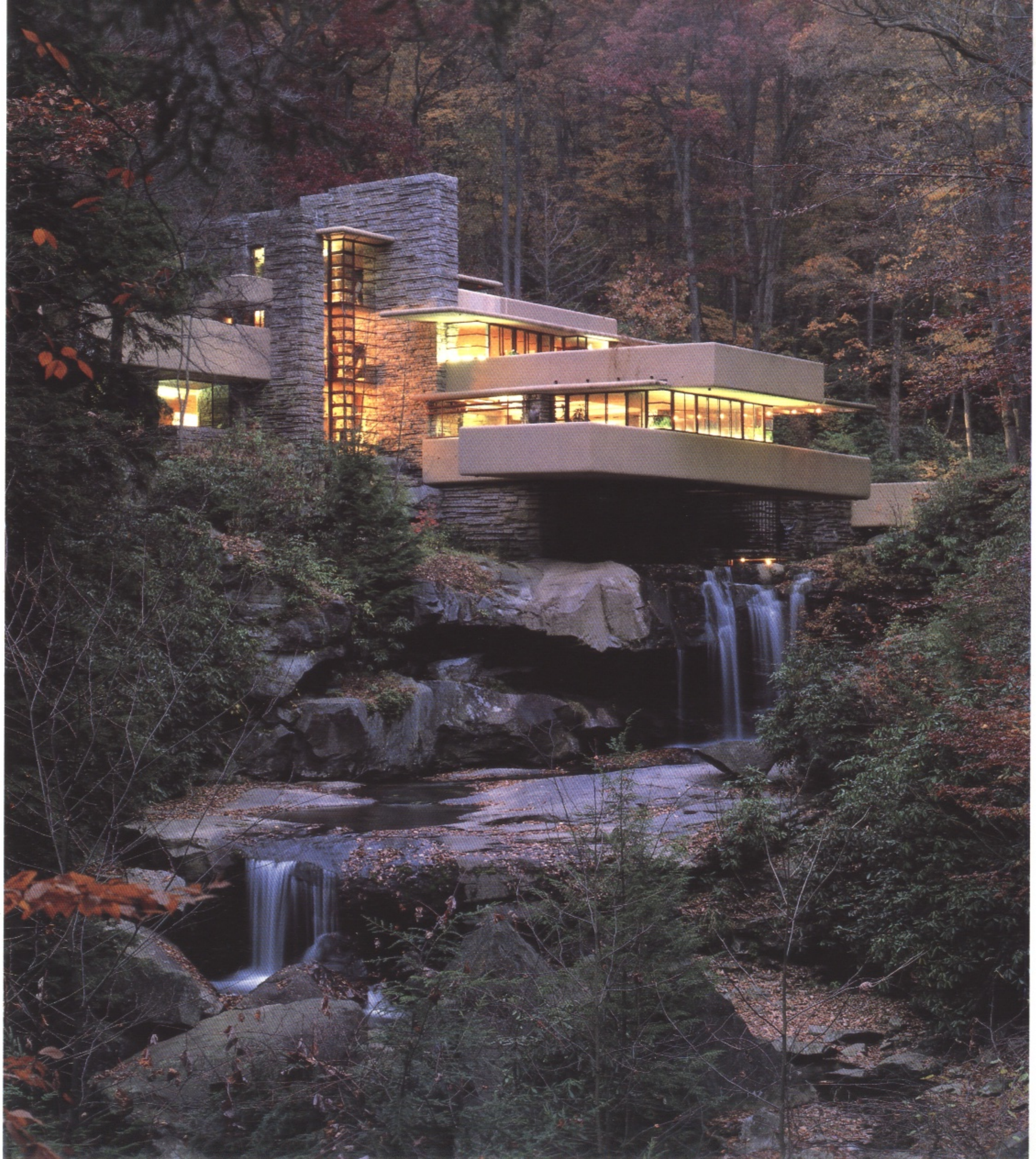
RICHARD LLOYD JONES HOUSE, WESTHOPE, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1928–31. (BELOW)



RICHARD LLOYD JONES HOUSE, WESTHOPE, 1928–31.



BROADACRE CITY, 1932, plan.



EDGAR J. KAUFMANN HOUSE, FALLINGWATER, 1934–37. (ABOVE)

EDGAR J. KAUFMANN HOUSE, FALLINGWATER, Mill Run, Pennsylvania, 1934–37. (OPPOSITE)

INTERIOR, S. C. Johnson & Son Administration Building, 1936–39. (ABOVE)

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT RECEPTION DESK, S. C. Johnson & Son Administration Building, 1936–39. (RIGHT)

S. C. JOHNSON & SON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, Racine, Wisconsin, 1936–39. (OPPOSITE)

USONIAN PERIOD (1937-1947)

> This Usonian dwelling seems a thing loving the ground with a new sense of space, light, and freedom—to which our U.S.A. is entitled.
>
> Wright, THE NATURAL HOUSE, 1954

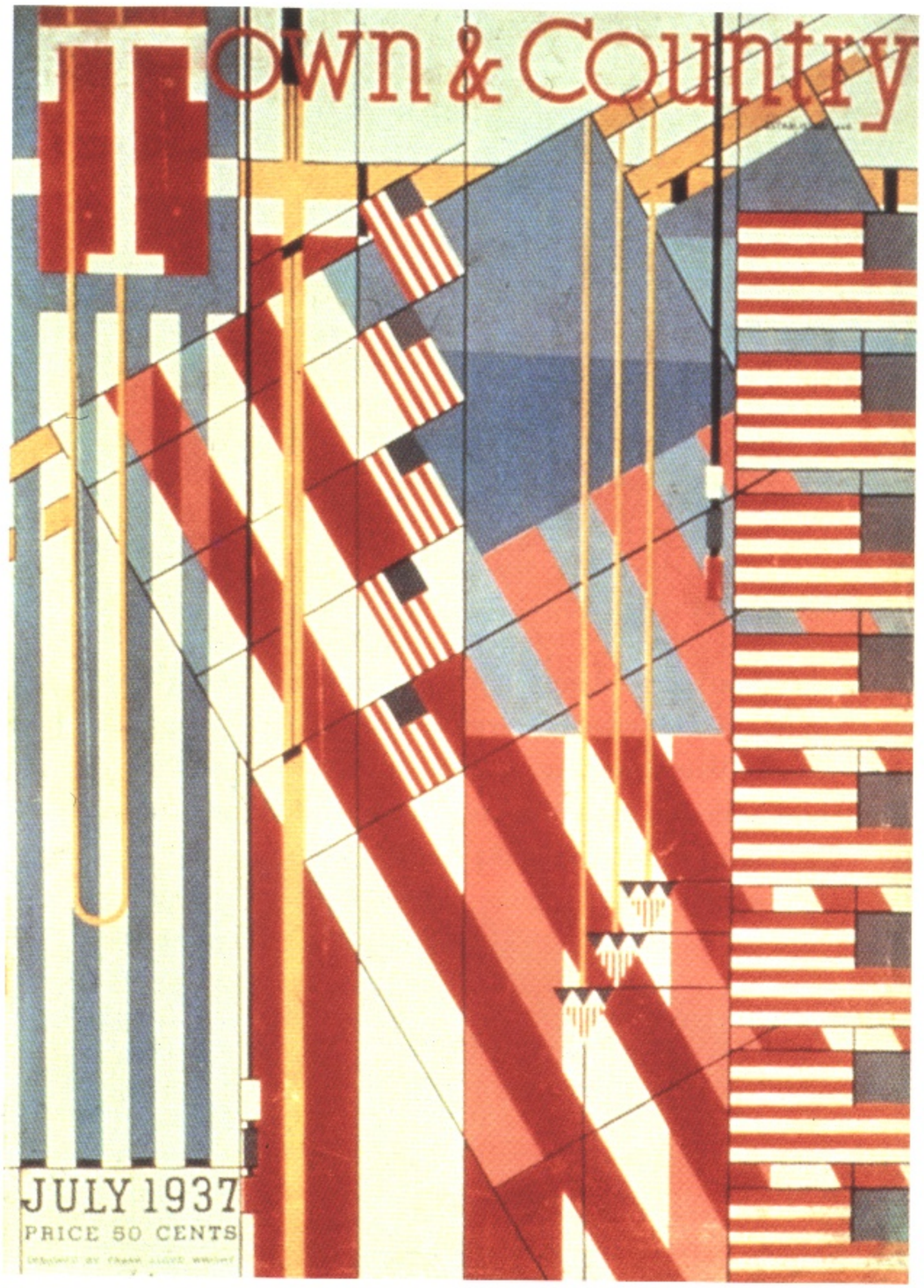
From the late 1930s until the beginning of World War II, Wright produced numerous regional variations of a housing type for his *Usonia* (a word coined to refer to the United States of America). In 1936, after several years of preliminary studies, he committed himself to designing and building a Usonian House for Herbert and Katherine Jacobs (opposite) for five thousand dollars. The one-story house with a flat roof opened to a generous private garden through a wall of French doors while turning a solid back to the street. The compact L-shaped plan contained two wings (one for the living room and dining alcove, the other for bedrooms and study), with the kitchen and one bath at the hinge of the L. To lower costs even further, Wright eliminated the garage by substituting an innovation: a covered but open shelter called a carport.

He believed the construction system was the source of high cost in housing. Along with glass, he used a few essential materials—concrete, brick, and wood—left unfinished or simply stained or waxed. He eliminated an excavated basement by pouring a concrete slab as foundation and finished floor. Brick piers and fireplaces were erected to be followed by construction of a sandwich wall of wood boards and batten, the same on the exterior and interior. The flat roof, windows and doors completed the structure. The total cost included built-in seating, tables, bookshelves, cabinets, and lighting.

The design reflected Wright's awareness of the changing nature of the American family. The spatial layout assumed the absence of servants, the importance of the housewife supervising the children, and an informal social life with time spent relaxing in the garden. Although the early Usonian Houses were designed for typical rectangular suburban lots, as the years went by Wright became increasingly impatient with the cramped spaces and pretentious houses of suburbia and he urged his prospective clients to buy one acre plots out in the country. He then introduced variations in plan to provide optimum orientation toward the sun, and to best accommodate the topography of the site, including vistas of natural features such as lakes or mountains.

Wright was unable to carry out his vision of Broadacre City, given the economic and political reforms it required. As a result, he welcomed opportunities to extend the benefits of *Usonia*—open space, light, and direct contact with nature—to an increasingly mobile society. Usonian Houses were built in every region of the United States and, whether in Arizona or Alabama, Wright used indigenous materials to anchor the building to its native locale.

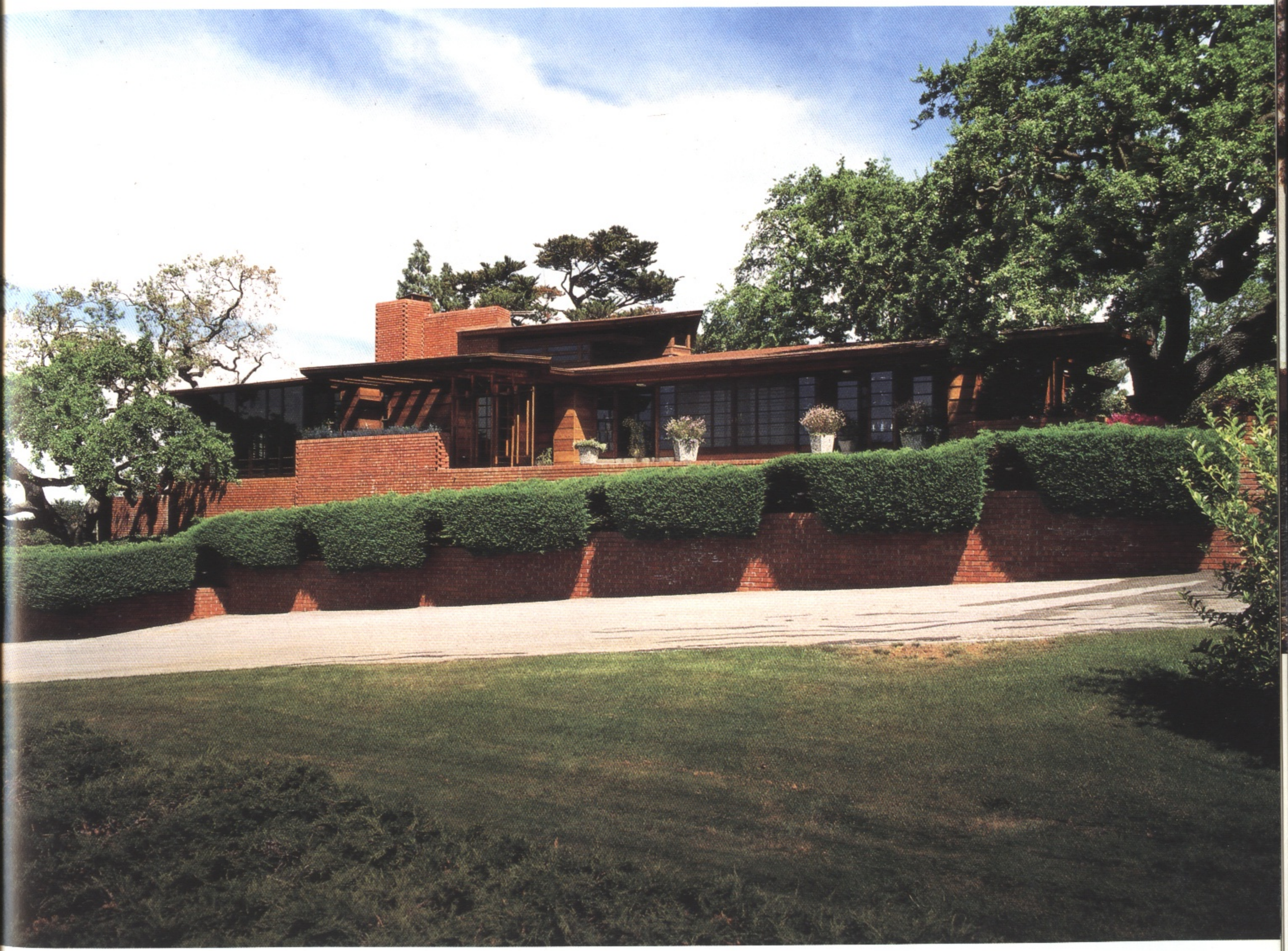
Government restrictions on materials affected his practice during World War II; but, on turning eighty, he showed no signs of slowing down, or diminished abilities. Indeed, he was approaching his most productive decade. He amply demonstrated his mastery of monumental public buildings, whether in urban or rural settings, in two unbuilt projects: the Pittsburgh Point Civic Center (page 111) and, for Huntington Hartford, several structures designed for a canyon in Hollywood, California (page 110). When the postwar building boom came, it found him ready and eager to take on larger commissions.



COVER, TOWN AND COUNTRY Magazine, 1937. Ink on paper, 13½ × 9¾ in. (34.3 × 24.7 cm). (LEFT)

LIVING ROOM, Paul R. Hanna House, 1935–37. (BELOW)

HERBERT JACOBS HOUSE, Madison, Wisconsin, 1936–37. (PAGE 88)

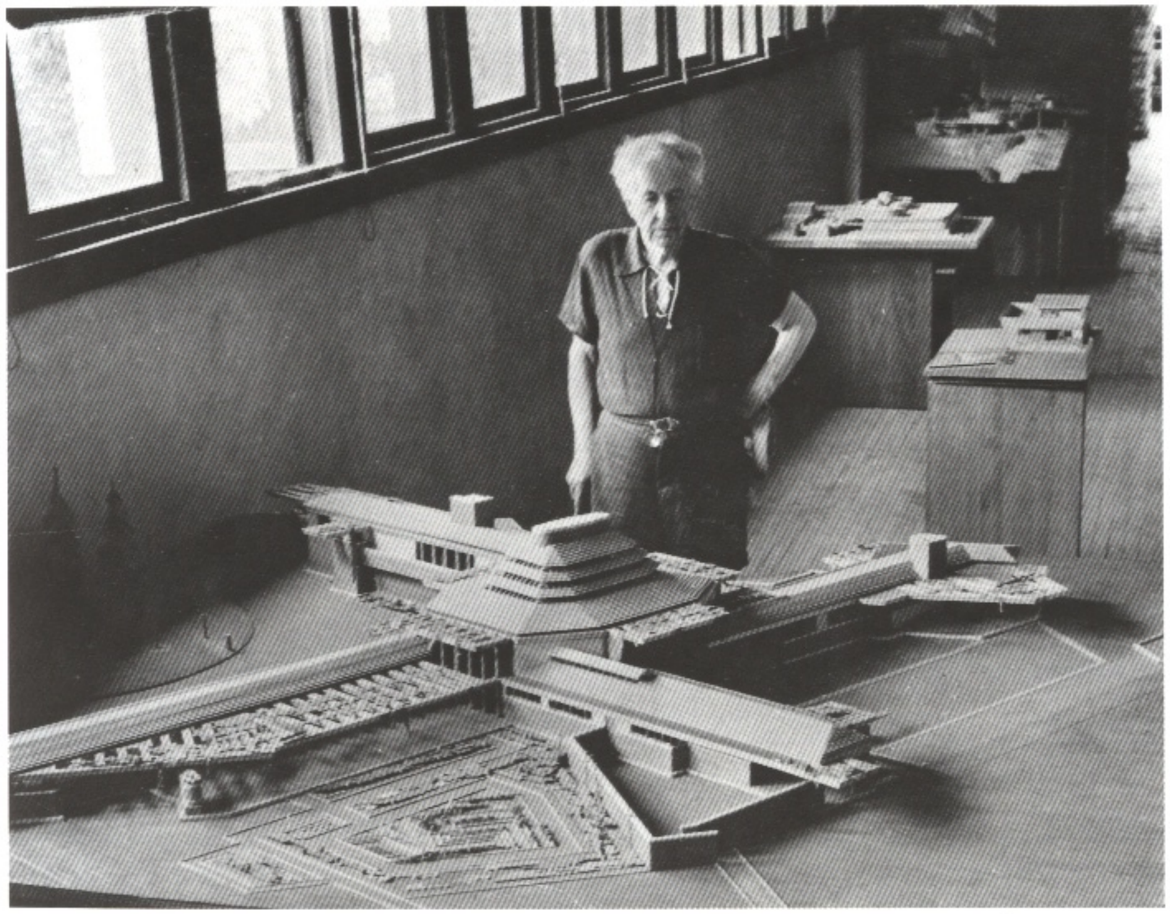


PAUL R. HANNA HOUSE, HONEYCOMB HOUSE, Palo Alto, California, 1935–37.

HERBERT F. JOHNSON HOUSE, WINGSPREAD, Racine, Wisconsin, 1937–39.

INTERIOR, Herbert F. Johnson House, 1937–39. (RIGHT)

Frank Lloyd Wright with model of **WINGSPREAD,** c. 1937. (BELOW)



TALIESIN WEST, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1937–59. (ABOVE)

Frank Lloyd Wright and apprentices at Taliesin, 1937. (RIGHT)

GARDEN ROOM, Taliesin West, 1937–59. (ABOVE)

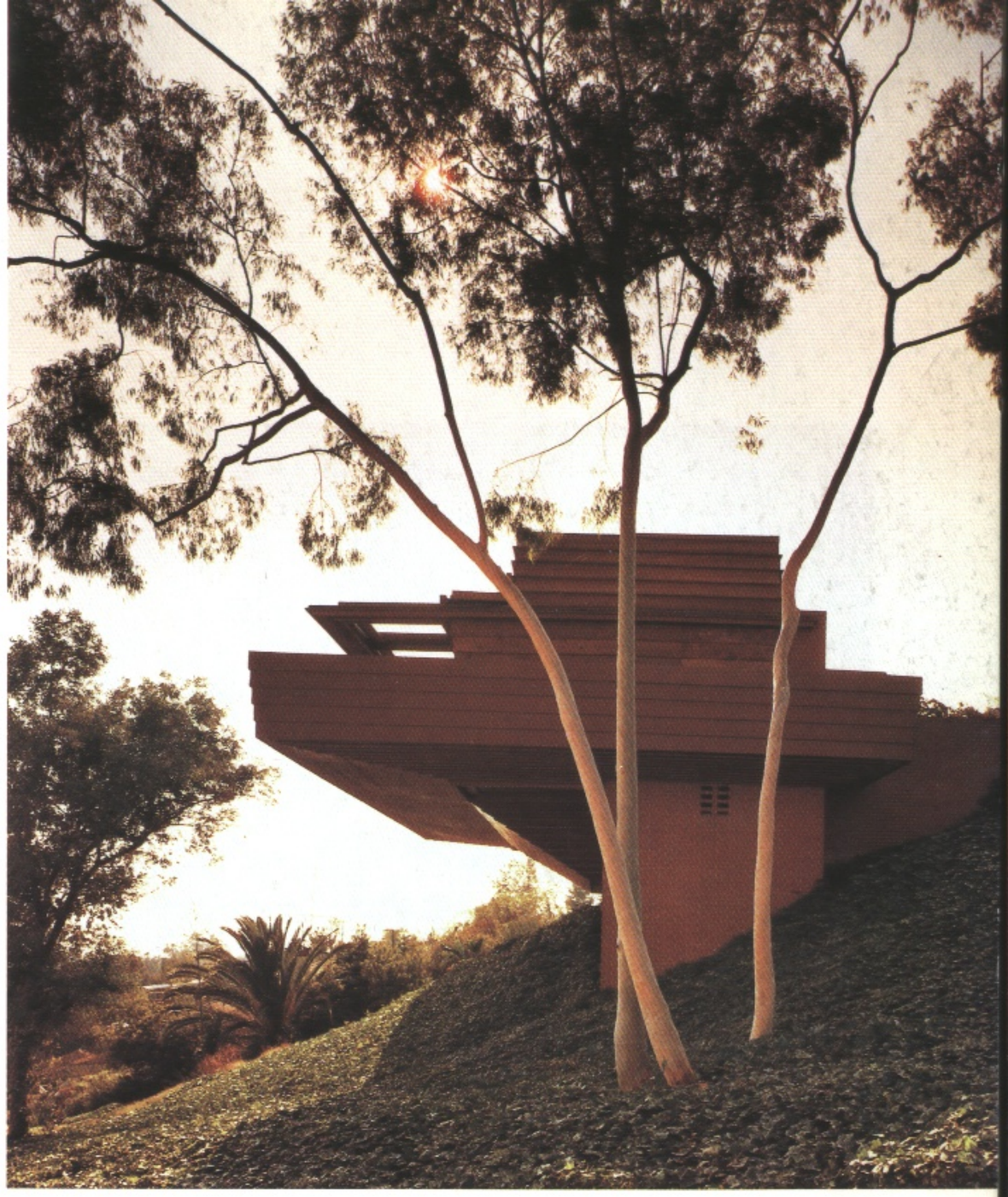
DRAFTING ROOM, Taliesin West, 1937–59. (LEFT)

INTERIOR, Annie Pfeiffer Chapel, Florida Southern College, 1938–41. (OPPOSITE)

ANNIE PFEIFFER CHAPEL, FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE, Lakeland, Florida, 1938–41. (BELOW)

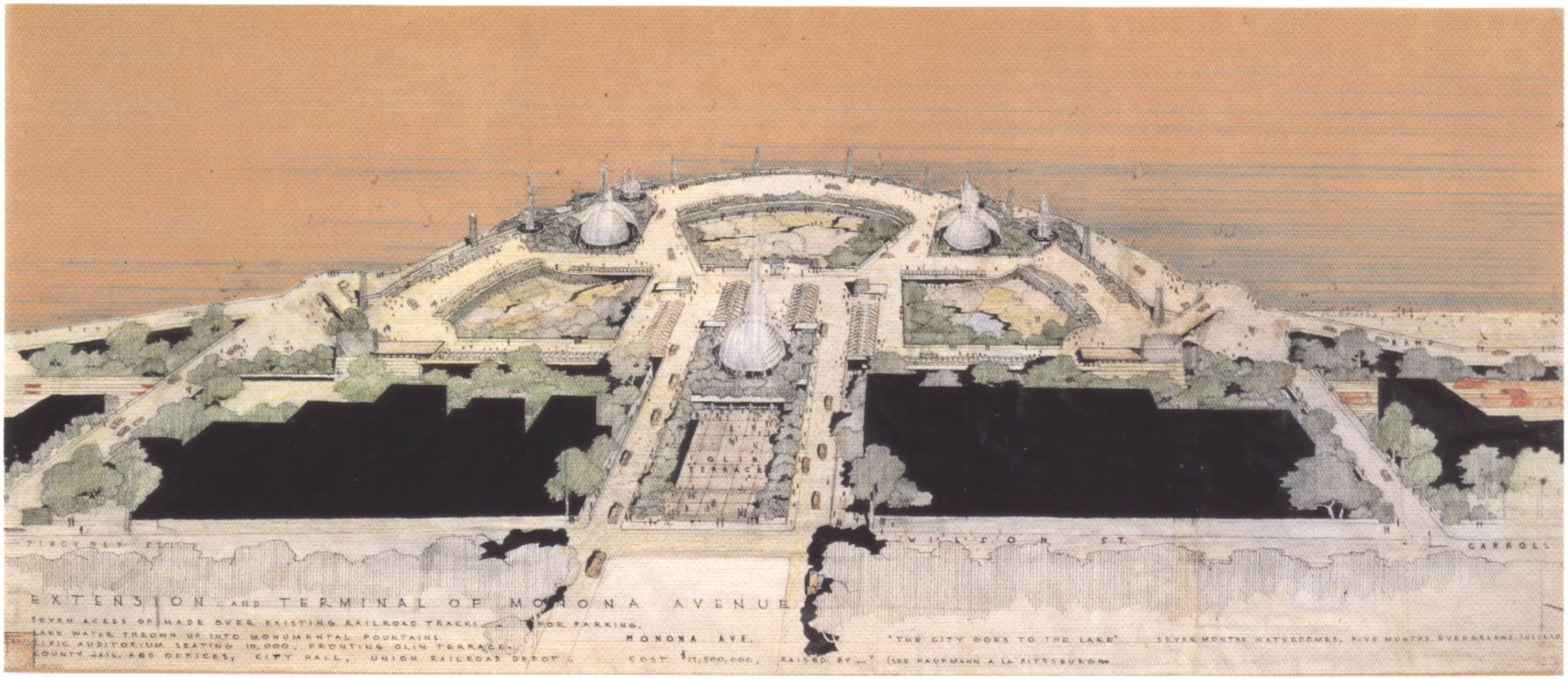
INTERIOR, John C. Pew House, 1938–40. (ABOVE)

JOHN C. PEW HOUSE, Madison, Wisconsin, 1938–40. (RIGHT)

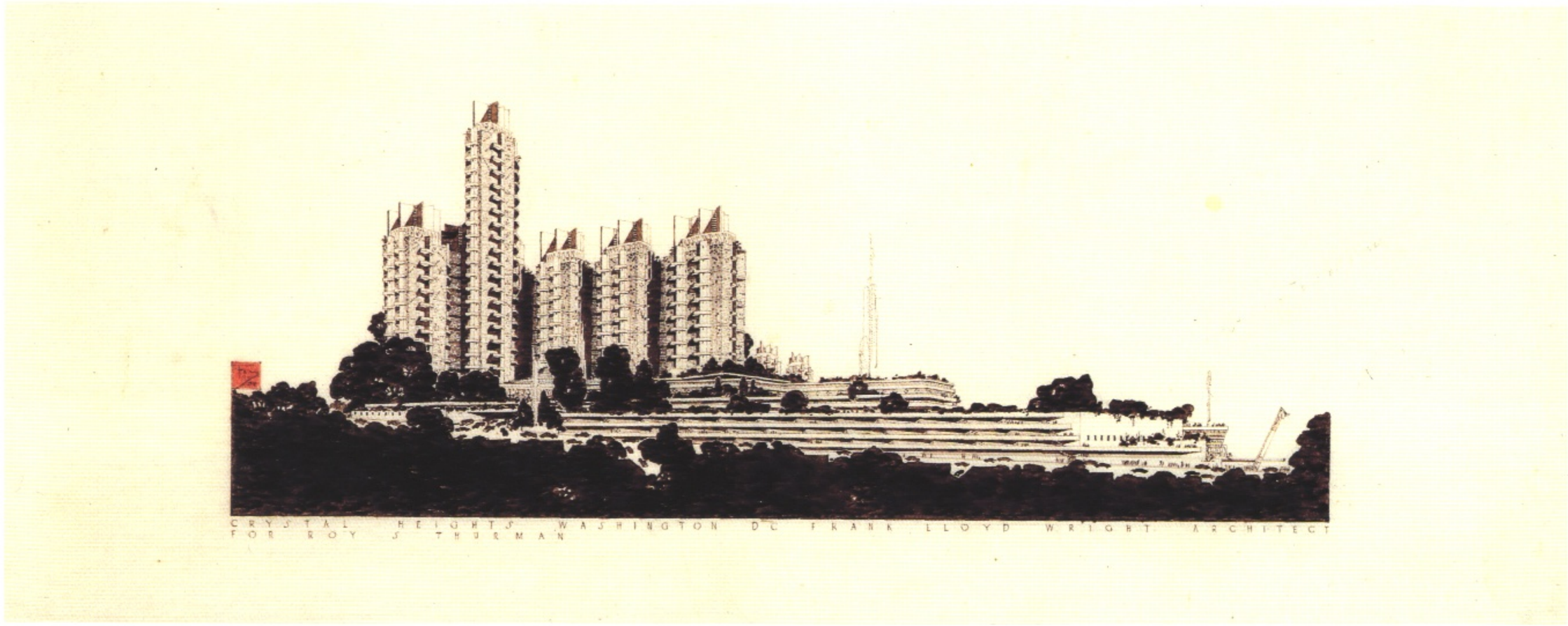


GEORGE D. STURGES HOUSE, Los Angeles, 1939. (ABOVE)

INTERIOR, Georges D. Sturges House, 1939. (LEFT)



MONONA TERRACE CIVIC CENTER, Madison, Wisconsin, 1938; unbuilt. Perspective.

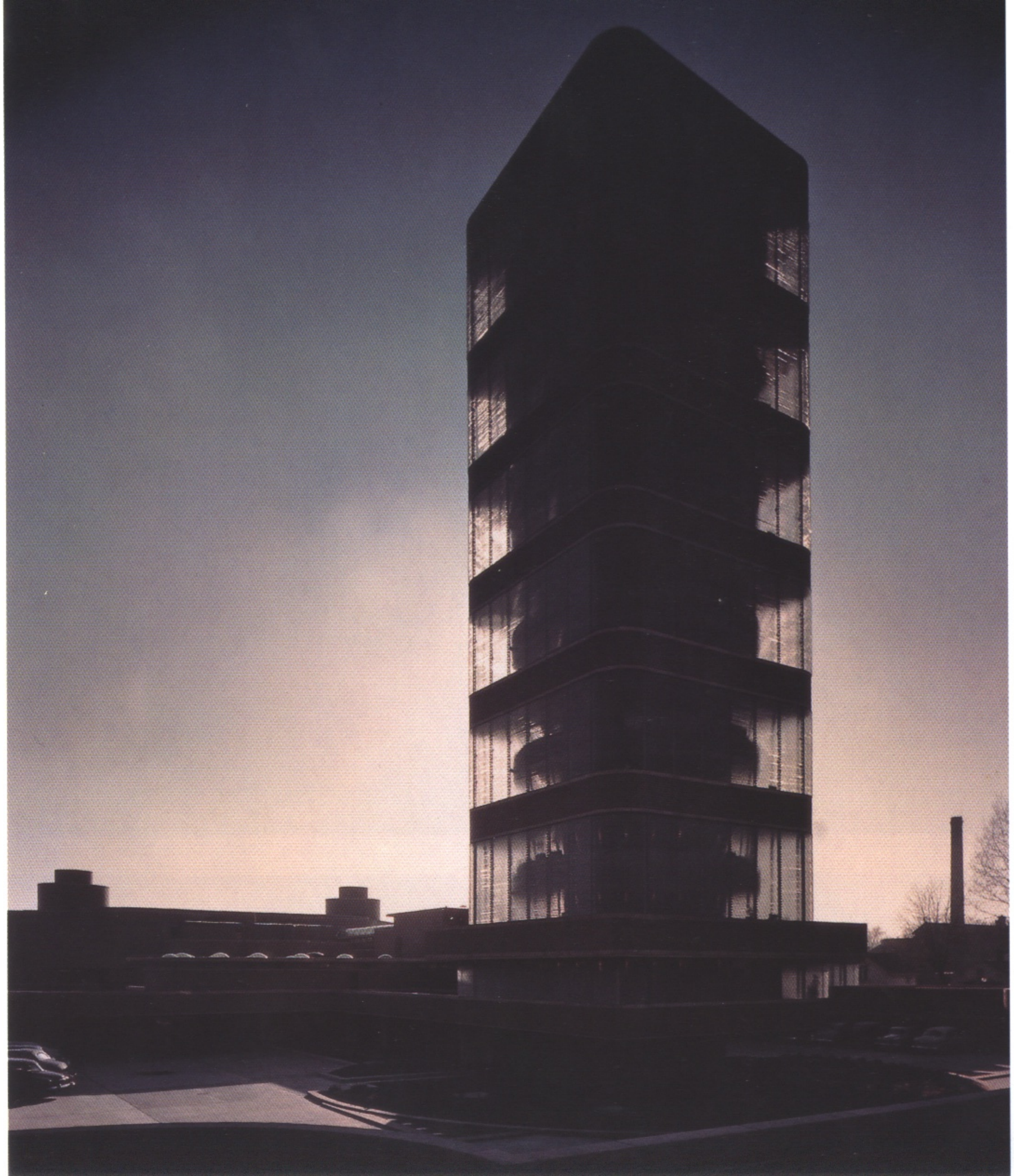


CRYSTAL HEIGHTS HOTEL, SHOPS, AND THEATER, Washington, D.C., 1939; unbuilt. Perspective.

GOETSCH-WINKLER HOUSE, Okemos, Michigan, 1939. (LEFT)

INTERIOR, Goetsch-Winkler House, 1939. (BELOW)

INTERIOR,
S. C. Johnson &
Son Research
Laboratory Tower,
1943–50.



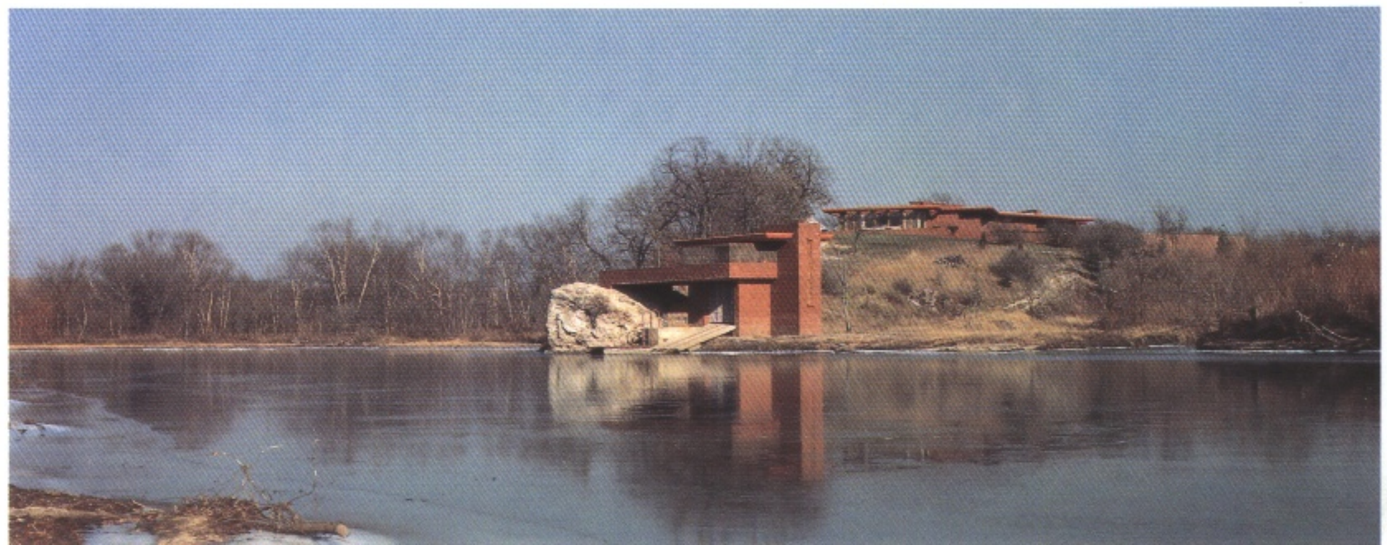
S. C. JOHNSON & SON RESEARCH LABORATORY TOWER, Racine, Wisconsin, 1943–50.

INTERIOR, Herbert Jacobs House, 1943–48. (ABOVE)

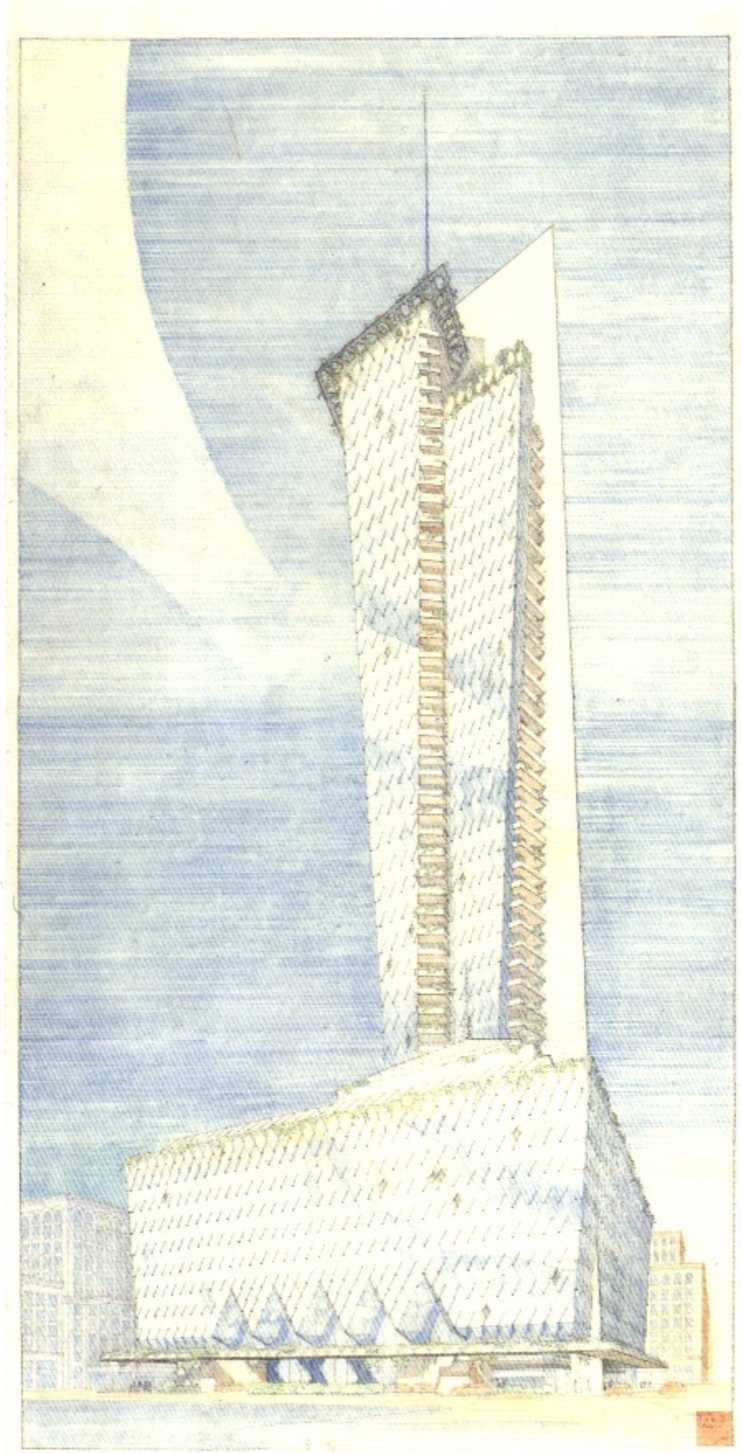
HERBERT JACOBS HOUSE, SOLAR HEMICYCLE,
Middleton, Wisconsin, 1943–48. (RIGHT)

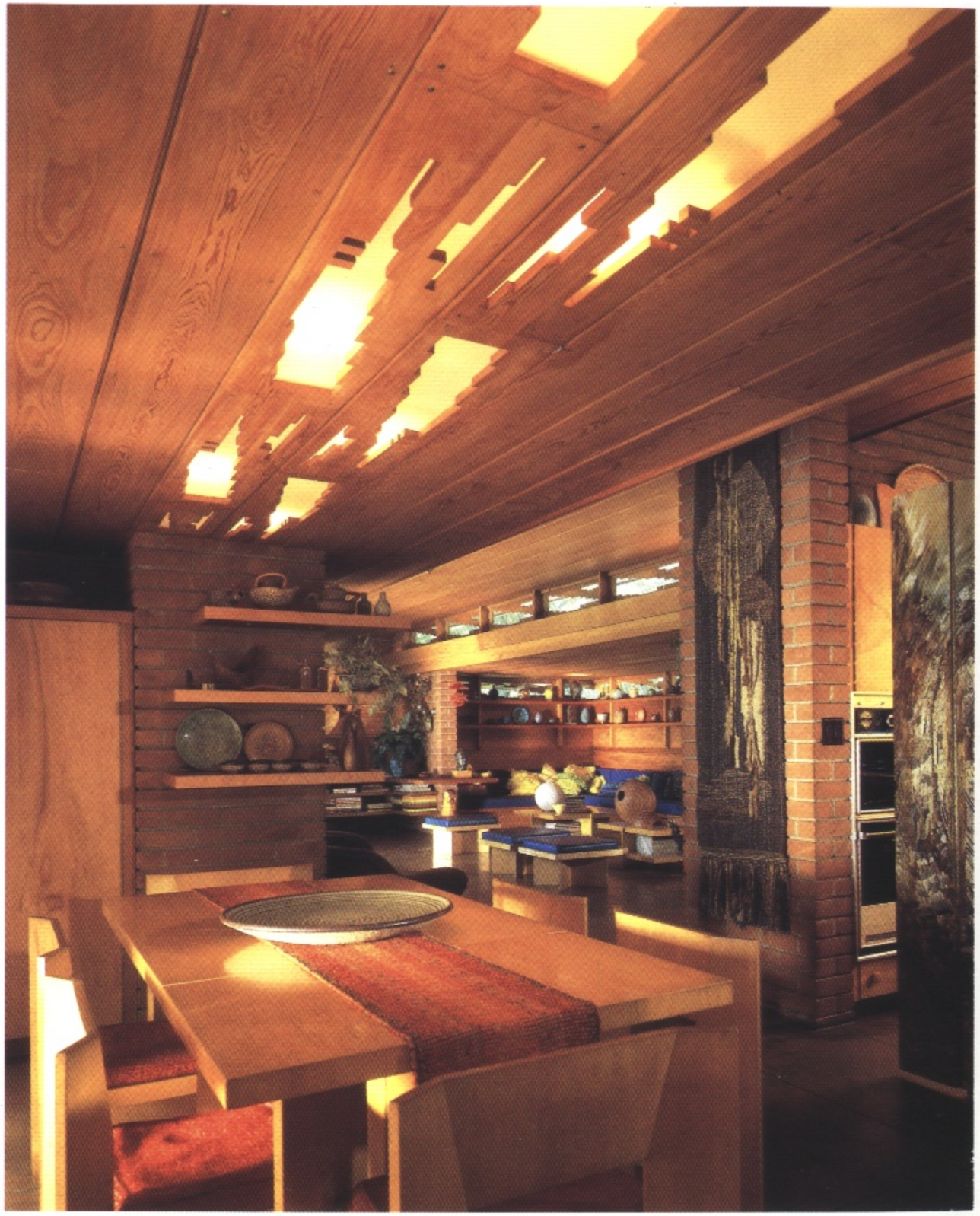
INTERIOR, Lowell Walter House, 1945. (ABOVE)

LOWELL WALTER HOUSE, Quasqueton, Iowa, 1945. (RIGHT)



ROGERS LACY HOTEL, Dallas, Texas, 1946–47; unbuilt. Perspective. (BELOW)





INTERIOR, Melvyn Smith House, 1946. (ABOVE)

MELVYN SMITH HOUSE, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 1946.

INTERIOR, William Palmer House, 1950. (ABOVE)

WILLIAM PALMER HOUSE, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1950. (LEFT)

SOL FRIEDMAN HOUSE, TOYHILL, Pleasantville, New York, 1948. (RIGHT)

ROLAND REISLEY HOUSE, Pleasantville, New York, 1951. (BELOW)

H. C. PRICE COMPANY TOWER,
Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 1952–56. (LEFT)

SIDE CHAIR, H. C. Price Company Tower, c. 1956. Aluminum with upholstered seat and back, 32⅝ × 19 × 20¾ in. (82.9 × 48.3 × 52.7 cm). (ABOVE)

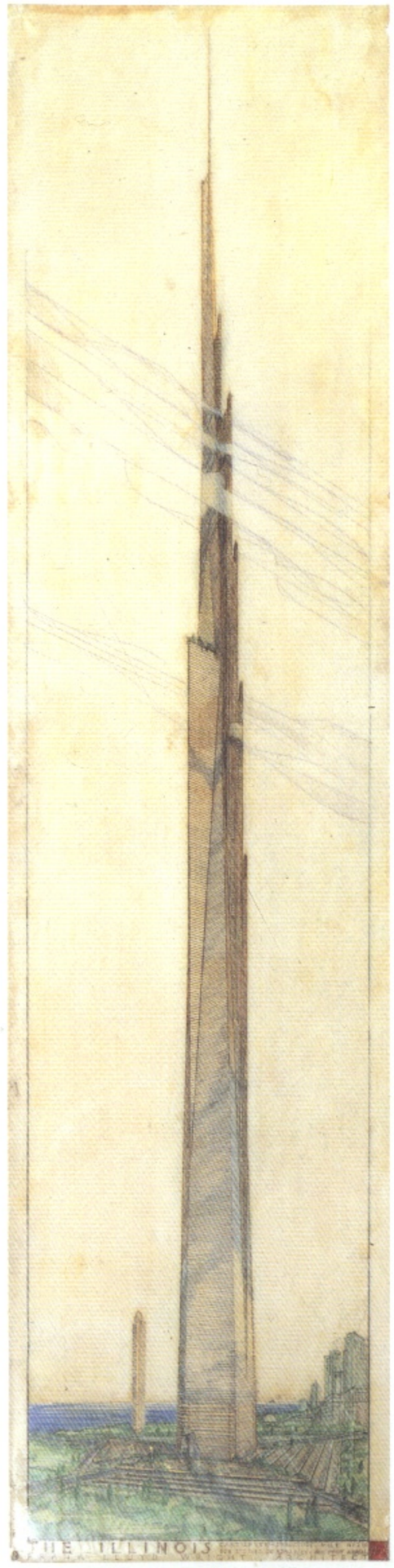
Frank Lloyd Wright at the exhibit **SIXTY YEARS OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE,** New York, 1953.

BETH SHOLOM SYNAGOGUE, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, 1953–59. (ABOVE)

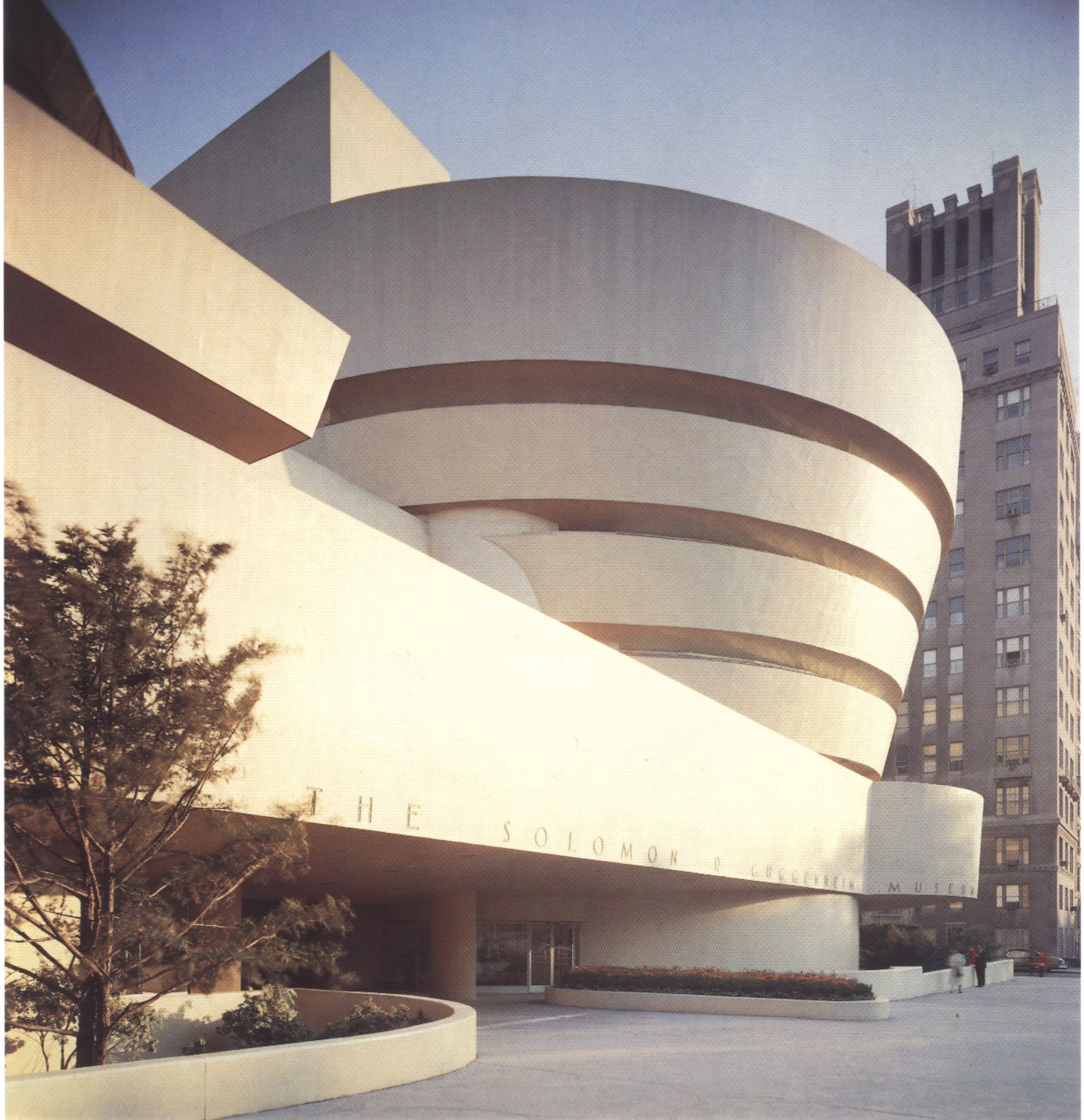
INTERIOR, Beth Sholom Synagogue, 1953–59. (RIGHT)

WILLIAM TRACY HOUSE, Normandy Park, Washington, 1955. (ABOVE)

WILLIAM TRACY HOUSE, 1955. (OPPOSITE)

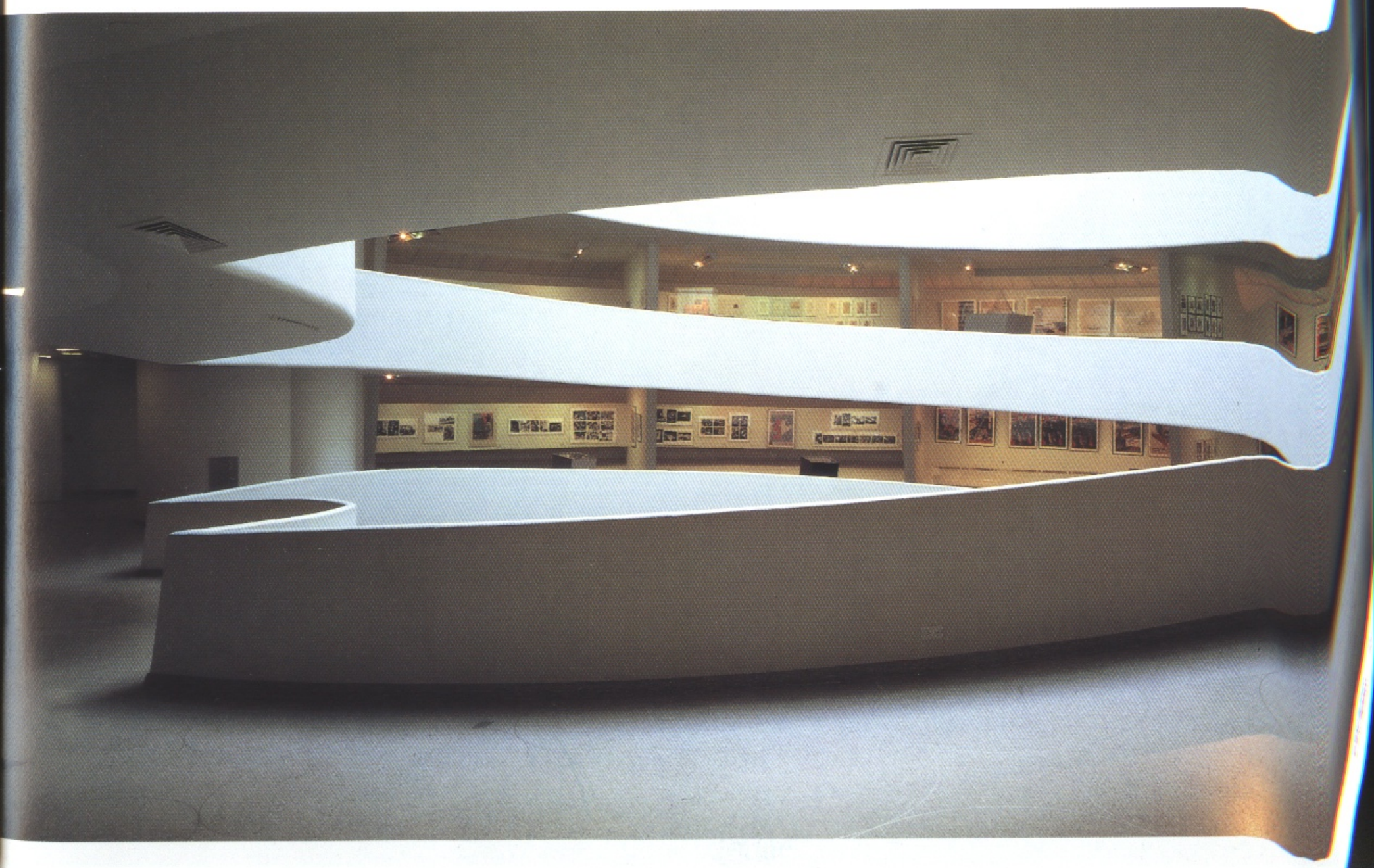


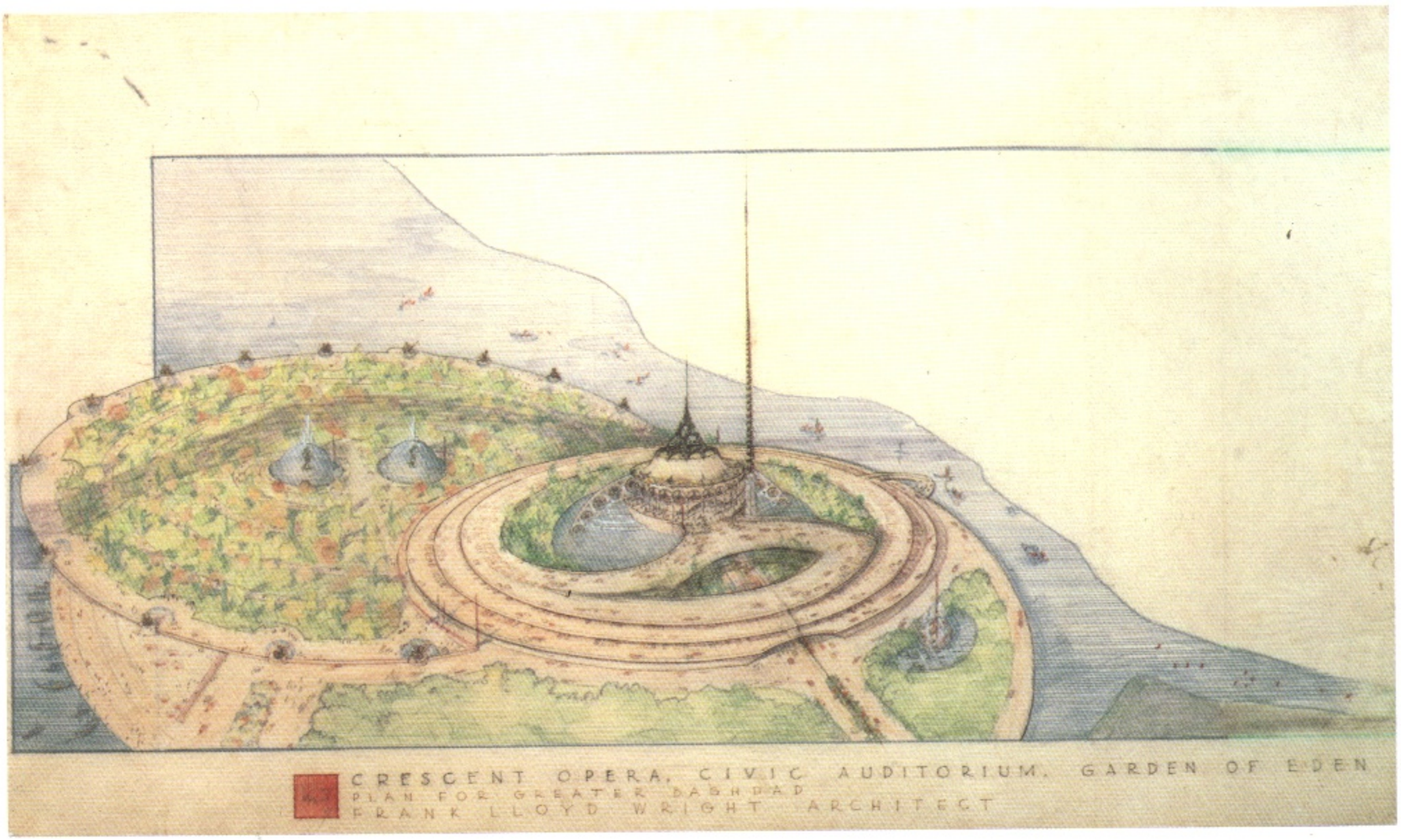
THE MILE HIGH ILLINOIS, Chicago, 1956; unbuilt. Perspective.


THE SOLOMON R GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, New York, 1943–59. (OPPOSITE)

INTERIOR, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1943–59. (BELOW)

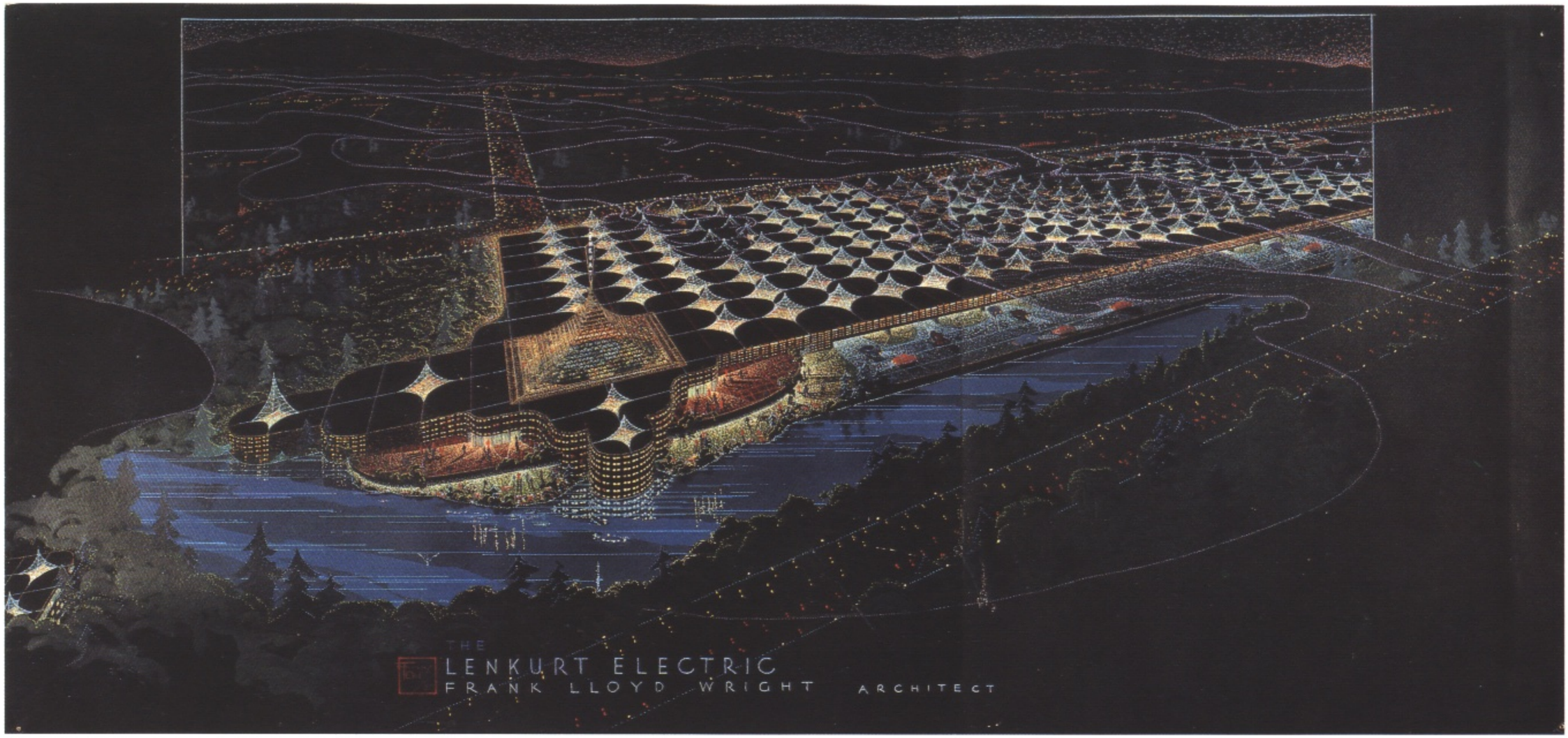




CIVIC AUDITORIUM, CRESCENT OPERA, Baghdad, Iraq, 1957; unbuilt. Perspective. (ABOVE)

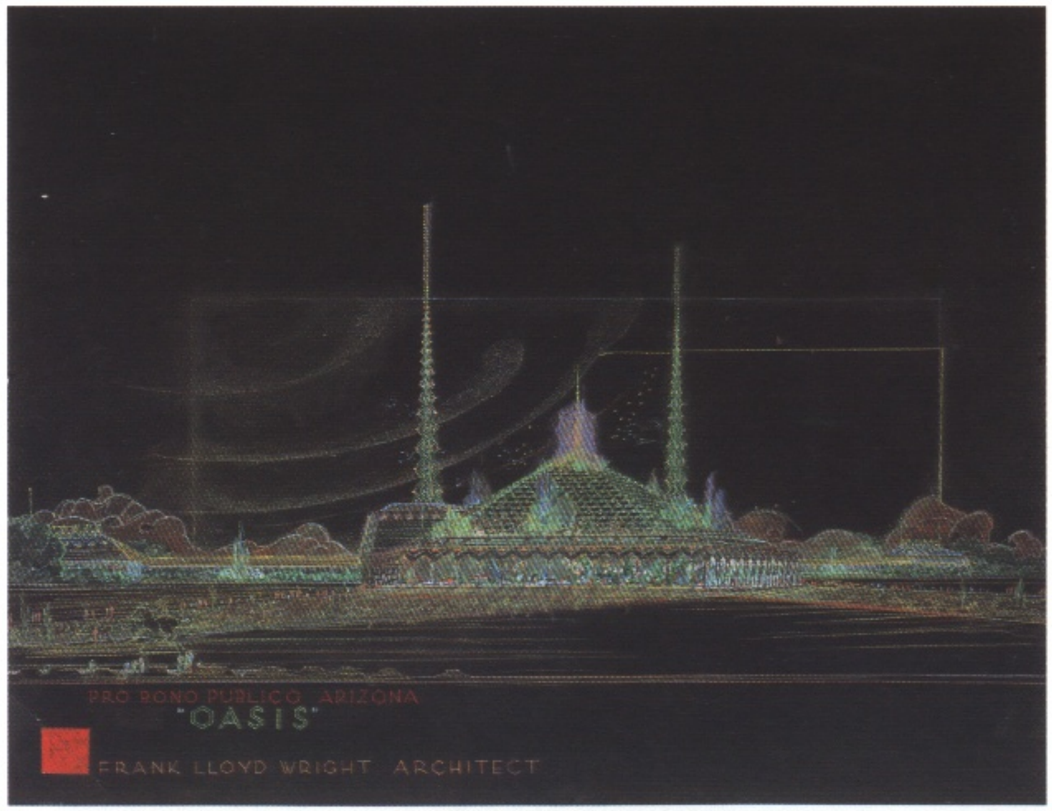
FABRIC (DESIGN NO. 104) for F. Schumacher & Co., New York, 1955. Printed silk and Fortisan, 117 3/8 × 49 3/4 in. (298 × 126.4 cm). (LEFT)

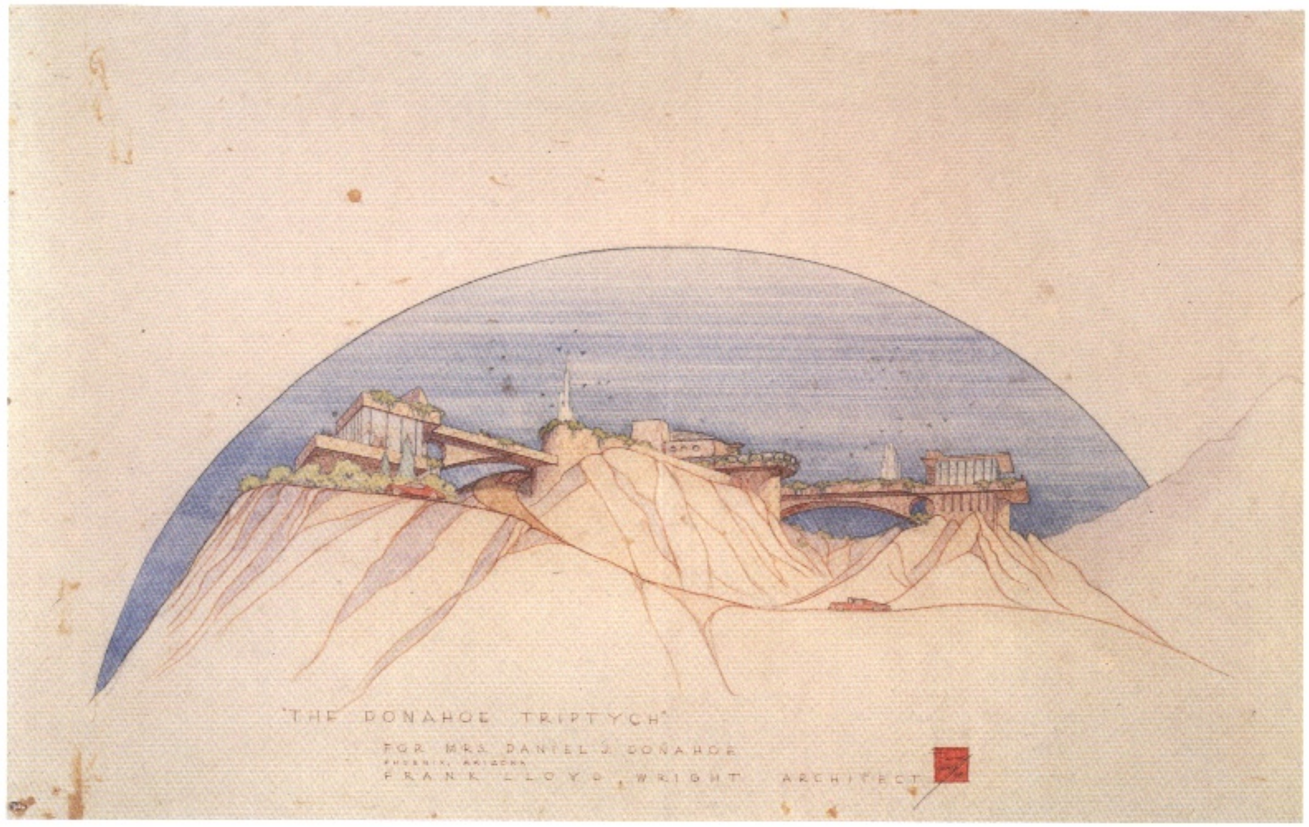
INTERIOR, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1943–59. (OPPOSITE)



LENKURT ELECTRIC COMPANY, San Mateo, California, 1955; unbuilt. Perspective. (ABOVE)

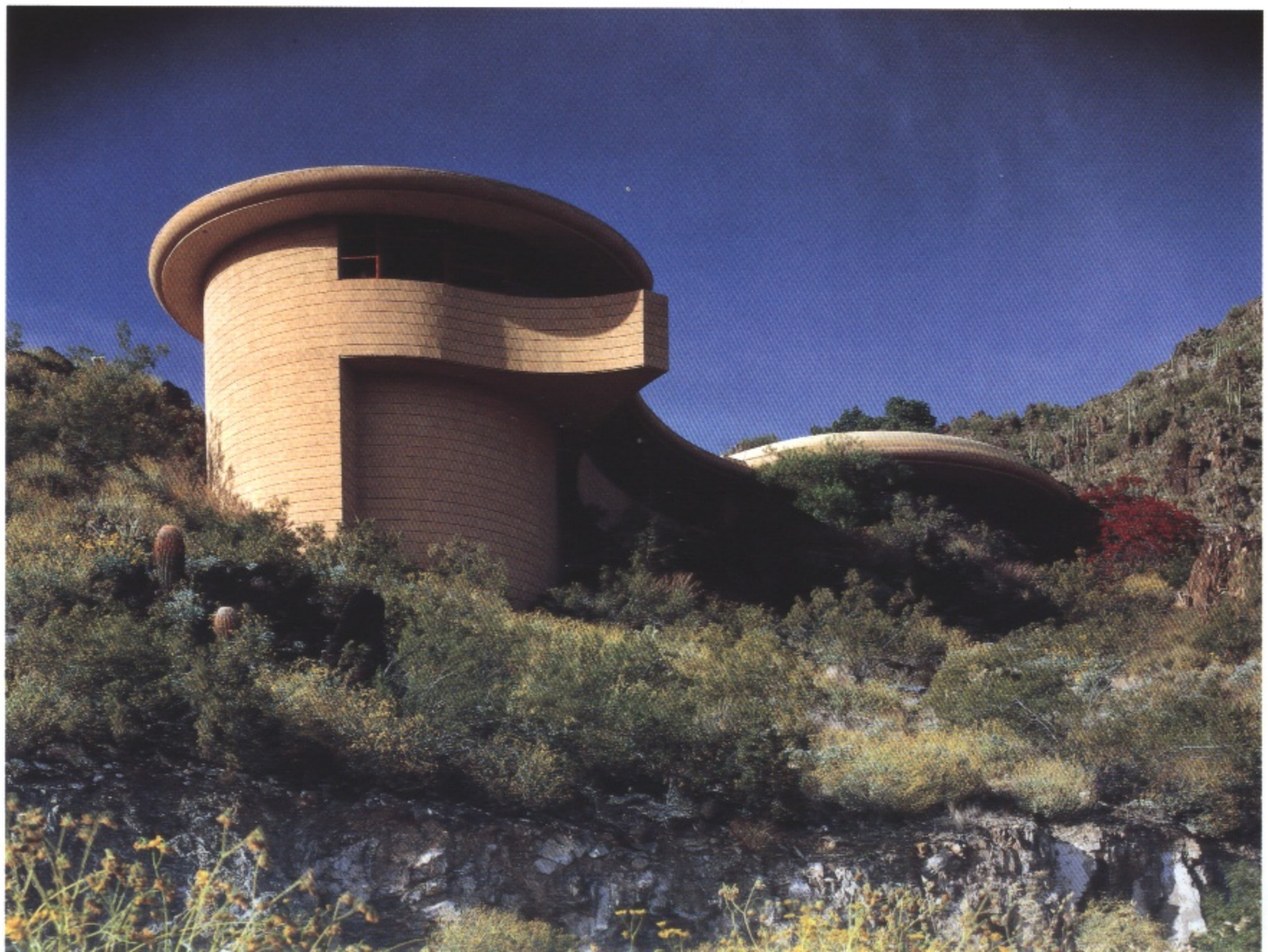
ARIZONA STATE CAPITOL, OASIS, Phoenix, 1957; unbuilt. Perspective. (RIGHT)

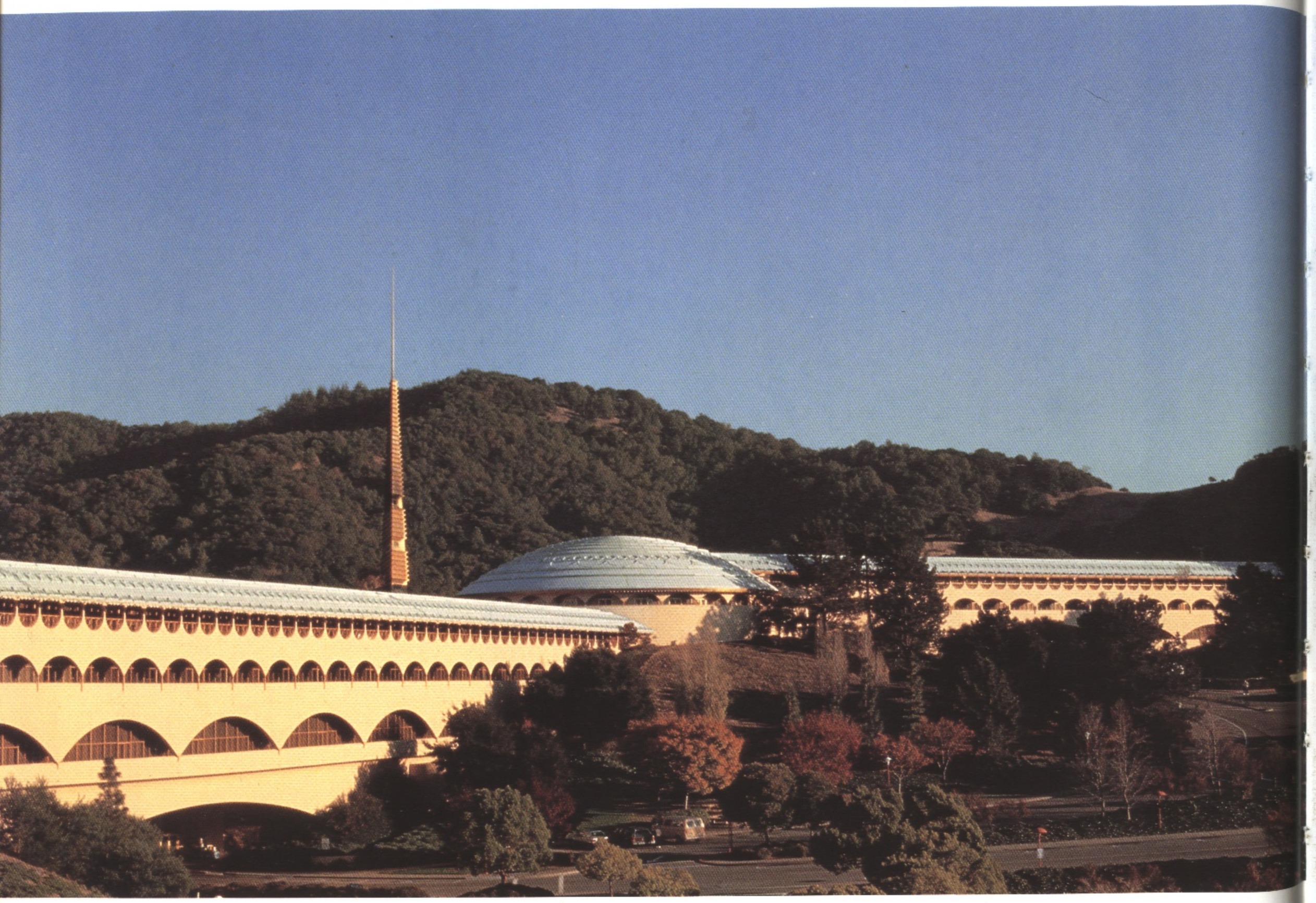




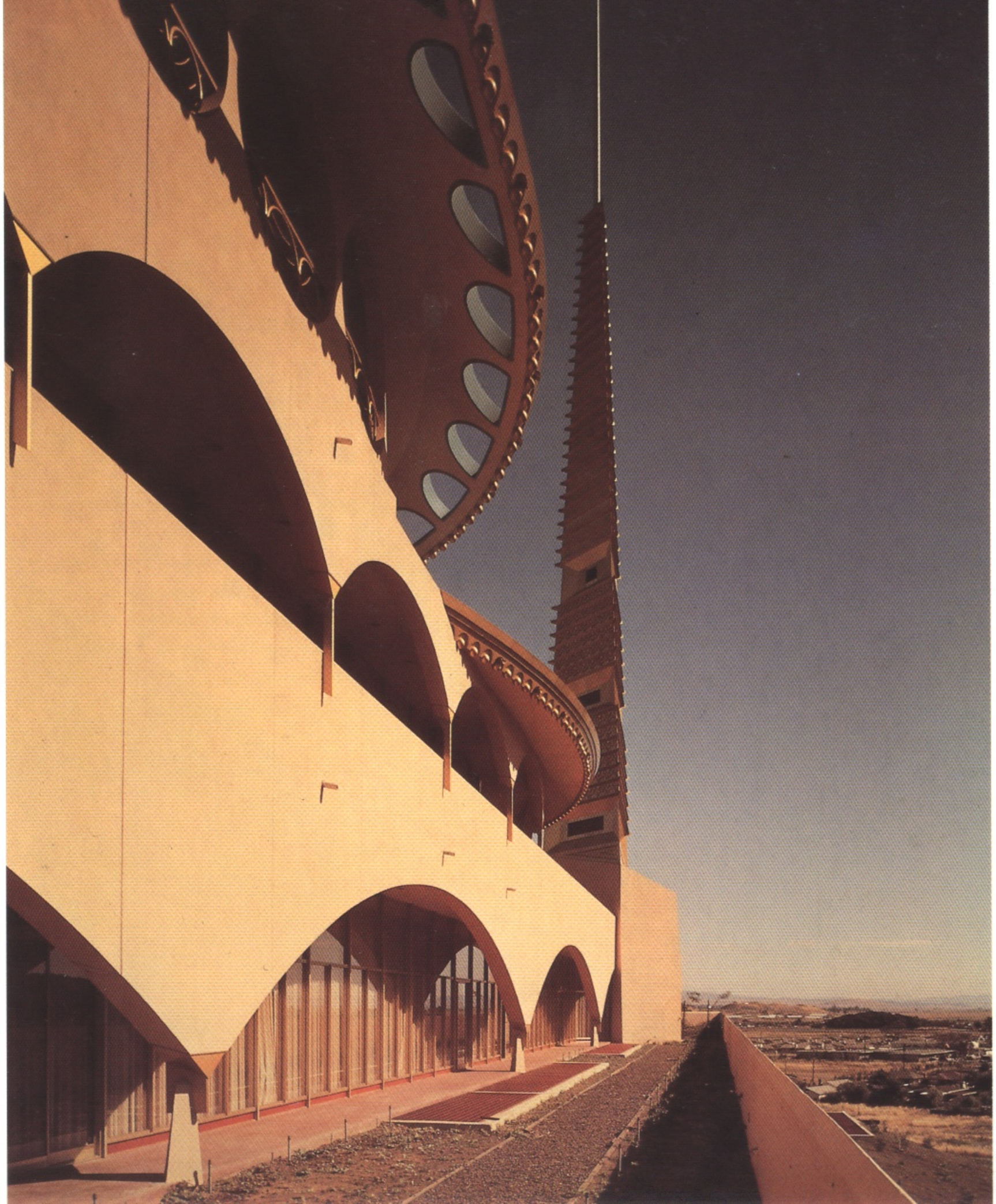
HELEN DONAHOE HOUSE, THE DONAHOE TRIPTYCH,
Paradise Valley, Arizona, 1959; unbuilt. Perspective. (RIGHT)

NORMAN LYKES HOUSE, Phoenix, Arizona, 1959–66. (BELOW)





MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER, San Rafael, California, 1957–62.



MARIN COUNTY CIVIC CENTER, 1957–62.

Studio of Kano Motonobu (1476–1559). **THE FOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS,** late 16th to early 17th century (Muromachi Period). Ink and color on paper, 65¾ × 101⅜ (167 × 358 cm). (ABOVE)

Detail of **CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND MAPLE LEAVES ON FLOATING WATER** (chiyogami), c. 1850s (Late Edo Period). Woodcut, 13⅜ × 18½ in. (34 × 47 cm). (PAGE 132)

Seal of Kano Jinnojō (active late 16th century). **THE MUSIC PERFORMANCE** from **THE TALE OF GENJI,** c. 1600. Ink, color, and gold leaf on paper, 67¾ × 146½ in. (172 × 372 cm).

Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858). **ROUGH SEA AT NARUTO IN AWA PROVINCE** from the series **PICTURES OF FAMOUS PLACES IN THE SIXTY-ODD PROVINCES, NO. 55,** 1855. Woodcut, 9⅝ × 9 in. (24.5 × 23 cm).

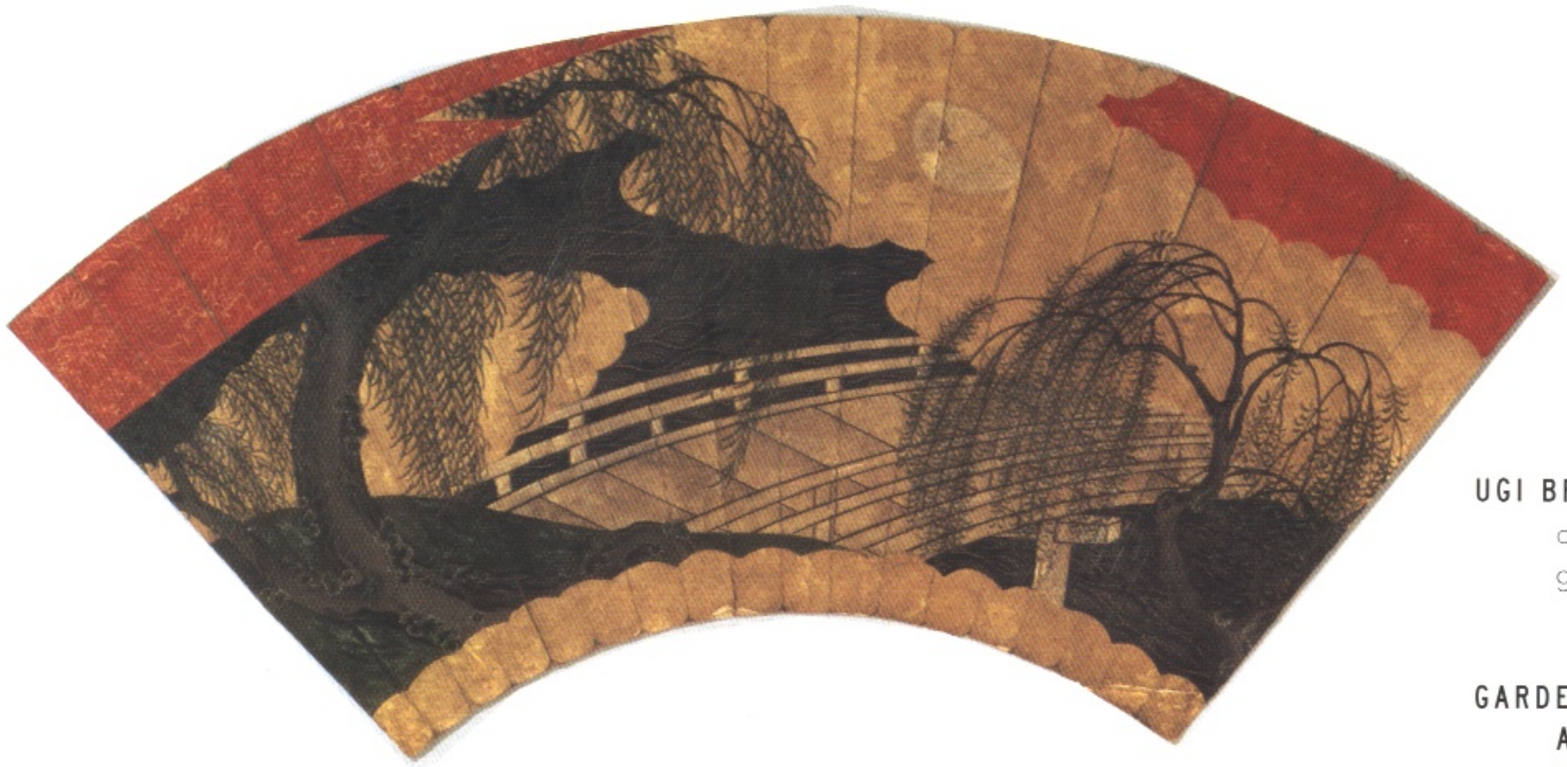
Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858). **THE PLUM ORCHARD AT KAMEIDO** from **ONE HUNDRED VIEWS OF FAMOUS PLACES IN EDO, NO. 30,** 1857. Woodcut, 9⅝ × 9 in (24.5 × 23 cm).

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). **HOBBY HORSE** from **THE HORSE SERIES** (surimono), 1822. Woodcut, 8⅜ × 7½ in. (21.2 × 19 cm).

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). **COLTS OF THE SHŌGI BOARD** from **THE HORSE SERIES** (surimono), 1822. Woodcut, 8⅜ × 7⅜ in. (21.2 × 18.6 cm).

Katsukawa Shuntei (1770–1820). **A WOMAN WITH A CHINESE FAN AND TWO CHILDREN** from the series **SEVEN WOMEN AS THE GODS OF GOOD LUCK** (surimono), c. 1825. Woodcut, 8 × 7¼ in. (20.4 × 18.4 cm).

Ryūryūkyo Shinsai (active c. late 1780s–early 1820s). **A PORCELAIN EWER, FOOD SERVER, AND CUPS** (surimono), c. 1820. Woodcut, 7⅞ × 7¼ in. (20.1 × 18.3 cm).



UGI BRIDGE IN MOONLIGHT WITH WILLOWS, c. early 18th century. Paint, ink, and gold on paper, 9⅜ × 19⅛ in. (23.8 × 48.6 cm).

GARDEN SCENE WITH AUTUMN GRASSES, KIKYO, AND BUTTERFLIES, c. early 18th century. Paint, ink, and gold on paper, 9¼ × 18½ in. (23.5 × 47 cm).

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