Rethinking Frank Lloyd Wright at 150

Sept. 13 – 15, 2017
The Museum of Modern Art
New York, NY
A symposium organized by

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BUILDING CONSERVANCY

In cooperation with

MoMA

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Featuring 18 architects, critics, architectural historians and conservators, this international symposium highlights new thinking about Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture and its ongoing interest to contemporary architectural history, culture and practice. Sessions ranging from historiography to preservation to critical reception and influence will look backward and forward in time to offer a framework for reassessing the meaning of Wright’s architecture and its broad impact over the past century and a quarter. How have perceptions of his work changed and evolved? How can its effects on contemporaries be better understood? Is his architectural thought still relevant today? And how were Wright’s ideas about preservation different from those at work today? These are just some of the questions to be debated.

Symposium Committee
Neil Levine, chair
Richard Longstreth
Dietrich Neumann
Jack Quinan

Founded in 1989, the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of the remaining structures designed by Frank Lloyd Wright through education, advocacy and technical services. To become a member visit savewright.org.
WEDNESDAY
SEPT. 13

5:00 P.M. Symposium check-in opens
5:30 P.M. Theater opens

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

6:30 – 7:45 P.M. Barry Bergdoll, “Unpacking Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive”

THURSDAY
SEPT. 14

8:00 A.M. Symposium check-in opens
8:30 A.M. Theater opens
9:15 A.M. Welcome remarks

SESSION 1: WRITING WRIGHT’S HISTORY
Neil Levine, Moderator

9:30 – 10:45 A.M. Panel: Revisiting Wright’s Final Two Decades
Jean-Louis Cohen, “Wright on the European Scene: Observation and Instrumentalization”
Cammie McAtee, “Wright, The Postwar ‘Form-Giver’”

Kathryn Smith, “Revelations Regarding Wright’s Architectural Exhibitions, 1894-1959”
Jack Quinan, “Wright Under the Sign of Phenomenology”

12:30 P.M. Lunch break (lunch not provided)
SESSION 2: PRESERVING WRIGHT'S WORK
Richard Longstreth, Moderator

2:00 – 3:15 P.M. Panel: Wright’s Own Attitude Toward Preservation

Daniel Bluestone, “Wright Saving Wright: Preserving Robie 1957”

Alice Thomine-Berrada, “The Masieri Memorial Controversy in the Context of Venice’s Cultural Heritage”

3:45 – 5:00 P.M. Panel: What the Future Holds

Gunny Harboe, “A Preservation Plan for Taliesin West”

Ellen Moody, “The Conservation and Display of Wright’s Models and Building Fragments at MoMA”

FRIDAY SEPT. 15

SESSION 3: BUILDING ON WRIGHT’S WORK
Barry Bergdoll, Moderator

9:30 – 10:45 A.M. Panel: Wright’s Influence on His Contemporaries

Dietrich Neumann, “Wright, Mies and the European Context”

Timothy Rohan, “Wright, Paul Rudolph and Resistance to the International Style”

11:15 A.M. – 12:30 P.M. Panel: Wright’s Future Influence

Aaron Betsky, “Learning from and at Taliesin”

Critics’ Roundtable: Michael Kimmelman (moderator), Reed Kroloff, Mark Lamster, Alexandra Lange

8:00 A.M. Symposium check-in opens

8:30 A.M. Theater opens

9:00 – 9:20 A.M. Annual meeting of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy
BARRY BERGDOLL

Barry Bergdoll is the Meyer Schapiro Professor of Modern Architectural History at Columbia University and Curator in the Department of Architecture and Design at The Museum of Modern Art, where from 2007-13 he served as The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design. At MoMA he has organized, curated and consulted on several major architecture exhibitions, including most recently (with Jennifer Gray), Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive and in 2014 Frank Lloyd Wright and the City: Density vs. Dispersal. He is author or editor of numerous publications. He served as president of the Society of Architectural Historians in 2006-08 and Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge University in 2011.

"UNPACKING FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AT 150: UNPACKING THE ARCHIVE"

MoMA’s current exhibition celebrates the fifth anniversary of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive’s new life in an innovative collaboration between the museum and the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library through the experimental format of inviting scholars and art conservators to “unpack” individual works from the archives, some of them works rarely placed in the limelight. Wright is one of the rare architects that most people can readily name, and whose buildings many readily recognize. So how to open up new vectors of understanding of his historical significance and contemporary relevance was the challenge of this exhibition. Based on three months of visitors’ and critics’ reactions to the experimental curatorial strategy of putting the very activity of research on display, this talk will explain the approach and consider future prospects for scholarly inquiry and public encounters with this rich architectural archive.
JEAN-LOUIS COHEN


“WRIGHT ON THE EUROPEAN SCENE: OBSERVATION AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION”

The presence of Frank Lloyd Wright on Europe’s architectural scene took many forms between 1910 and 1959. While journals and books informed professional audiences about his buildings, his designs and his ideas, from the Netherlands to Germany, France and Italy, he was inserted in narratives casting him as a “precursor” of modernism. His work also captured the attention of Russian designers and critics, who gave him a prominent role at the 1937 Architects’ Congress in Moscow. After 1945, he represented sometimes an alternative to the hegemony of architects such as Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra and Le Corbusier, while being drafted by Bruno Zevi in his crusade for an “organic” democracy. Unwillingly, Wright ended up serving in the cause of many contradictory perceptions of modern architecture.
CAMMIE McATEE

Cammie McAtee is a Montreal-based architectural historian and curator. She recently completed her doctoral dissertation, “The ‘Search for Form’ in Postwar American Architecture,” at Harvard University. She is a former curator at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, where, among other projects, she was the lead researcher and assistant curator for Mies in America (2001). In addition to her recent co-edited volume, The Politics of Furniture: Identity, Diplomacy and Persuasion in Post-War Interiors (with Fredie Florè), McAtee has published essays on the work of Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Philip Johnson, Hideo Sasaki and the furniture company Knoll.

"WRIGHT, THE POSTWAR ‘FORM-GIVER’"

If the major apologists of modern architecture in the 1930s and early ‘40s had largely discounted Frank Lloyd Wright as representing a significant force for the future, the postwar period saw Wright re-emerge from the ashes of his own reputation. Wright, however, had not changed. Change had instead occurred in his audience. As this presentation will consider, the reception of Wright’s work was tied to broader shifts in architectural culture that saw form triumph over function, and the architect, now a form-giver, reclaim the position of the artist. In a climate in which feeling and emotion were increasingly valued and the concept of personal expression cautiously admitted into architecture, the eyes and ears taking in Wright’s designs and statements perceived the architect in a new light.
KATHRYN SMITH  
Kathryn Smith is an architectural historian, historic preservation consultant, author and lecturer. Her books include *Wright on Exhibit: Frank Lloyd Wright’s Architectural Exhibitions* (2017), *Frank Lloyd Wright: American Master* (2009), *Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin and Taliesin West* (1997) and *Frank Lloyd Wright, Hollyhock House and Olive Hill* (1992). She has been a consultant to Graycliff Conservancy, Florida Southern College and Barnsdall Park. She has held NEH, NEA and Graham Foundation fellowships. In 2003, she was scholar-in-residence at the Robie House in Chicago. In 2001, Smith received the Wright Spirit Award from the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy.

Session 1: Writing Wright’s History

"REVELATIONS REGARDING WRIGHT’S ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITIONS, 1894-1959"

Almost 125 exhibitions of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work were mounted between 1894 and his death in 1959. Bypassing juries and curators, Wright organized the majority of these himself. He used them to introduce his new work to architects and the general public, and to explain his ideology. In her book *Wright on Exhibit*, Smith presents the first history of this neglected aspect of the architect’s influential career. Drawing extensively from unpublished correspondence, she challenges the preconceived notion of Wright as a self-promoter who displayed his work in search of money, clients and fame. She shows how he was an artist-architect projecting an avant-garde program, an idealist changing public attitudes about architecture, and a social activist driven to revolutionize society through design.
JACK QUINAN

Jack Quinan is distinguished service professor emeritus at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He studied art history at Dartmouth College and Brown University. In 1975 he began a long-term involvement in Wright’s Darwin D. Martin House, which led to the formation of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, the acquisition of the Wright-Martin Papers and the restoration of the Martin House complex, now nearing completion. He is the author of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Larkin Building: Myth and Fact (AHF/MIT Press, 1987), Frank Lloyd Wright’s Martin House: Architecture as Portraiture (Princeton Architectural Press, 2004) and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Buffalo Venture (Pomegranate Press, 2012).

“WRIGHT UNDER THE SIGN OF PHENOMENOLOGY”

Why Wright and Phenomenology? This presentation will briefly examine what Phenomenology is, what it shares with Wright’s organic thought, and why it offers fresh opportunities to broaden and deepen our understanding and appreciation of Wright’s architecture. Drawing upon the embodied Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Wright’s small Cabaret (1951) at Taliesin West will be analyzed in terms of the ways that his attention to sound, touch and the kinesthetic sense are synthesized with the building’s more immediately apparent visual properties to enrich the experience of event attendees.
Daniel Bluestone is director of preservation studies and professor of history of art and architecture at Boston University. He is a specialist in 19th-century American architecture and urbanism. Bluestone’s *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (W.W. Norton, 2011) received the Society of Architectural Historians 2013 Antoinette Forrester Downing Book Award. The book surveys the changing history, nature and politics of historic preservation in the United States between the early 19th century and today. Bluestone’s book *Constructing Chicago* (1991) was awarded the American Institute of Architects International Book Award and the National Historic Preservation book prize.

"WRIGHT SAVING WRIGHT: PRESERVING ROBIE 1957"

This talk will situate the Robie House preservation campaign in the context of the broader historic preservation movement. Often viewed as a great leap forward for preservation—advocacy of a 20th-century building that had not even reached the 50-year mark—the Robie campaign actually narrowed and set back historic preservation in significant ways. It did this by suggesting that iconic architecture by leading architects constituted the primary, or the only, basis for legitimate preservation advocacy. This embrace or canonical formalism dislodged a much broader palate for preservation that was part of its deeper history of preservation in the United States.
ALICE THOMINE-BERRADA

Trained at the Ecole des Chartes and the Ecole du Patrimoine in Paris, followed by a post-doctoral fellowship at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Alice Thomine-Berrada published the first of her books and catalogues in 2004 based on her PhD dissertation on the important 19th-century French architect Emille Vaudremer. She was head of the programs for History of Architecture at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art between 2000 and 2007. Since 2008, she has been a curator at the Musée d’Orsay. Beginning in 2015, she has co-organized and taught a graduate seminar on Frank Lloyd Wright at the Université de Lorraine in Nancy, involving an ongoing lecture series at the Paris museum devoted to Wright.

“THE MASIERI MEMORIAL CONTROVERSY IN THE CONTEXT OF VENICE’S CULTURAL HERITAGE”

In November 1955, after more than two years of sharp controversies, the Venetian Commission on buildings refused to give the authorization to construct a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright along the Grand Canal in memory of one of his young Italian admirers, Angelo Masieri. In this talk, this project, which would have been the only work of Wright’s constructed in Europe, will be analyzed as an important step in the complex history of the relationships between old cities and contemporary architecture. By reconsidering the work of Wright in the larger context of Venetian heritage and urban preservation, it will try to better understand why this project became an important reference for Venice and how Wright himself considered the role of history.
GUNNY HARBOE

Gunny Harboe, FAIA, Fellow US/ICOMOS, is president of Harboe Architects. He received his MArch from MIT; a MSc in historic preservation from Columbia University; an AB in history from Brown University; and completed the ARC98 course at ICCROM in Rome. He is a board member of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, a founding member and current board member of DOCOMOMO US, and a founding member and current vice president of the ICOMOS Twentieth Century Heritage International Scientific Committee. He is also an adjunct professor at IIT. He has worked on many modern masterpieces by Sullivan, Mies and Wright, including Unity Temple, the Robie House and Taliesin West.

"A PRESERVATION PLAN FOR TALIESIN WEST"

Taliesin West was one of Frank Lloyd Wright’s most personal and important works. Begun in 1938, it served as his winter home and studio for the last 20 years of his life. The site continued to undergo change annually until his death in 1959 and beyond. Today, Taliesin West serves as the home of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the School of Architecture at Taliesin, and welcomes more than 100,000 visitors every year. It is a living and vibrant historic site that exists in a sometimes hostile desert environment. How can this important heritage place be preserved for future generations? In 2015 a Preservation Master Plan was created to aid the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in mapping out Taliesin West’s path forward. This presentation will discuss the key elements of the plan.
ELLEN MOODY

Ellen Moody is the assistant projects conservator at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, where she documents, repairs and preserves three-dimensional objects in the museum’s collection. Since 2013 she has led the conservation of the portion of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archive housed at MoMA. She holds an MS in objects conservation with an additional concentration in preventive conservation from the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation, and a BA in art history from Pomona College.

“THE CONSERVATION AND DISPLAY OF WRIGHT’S MODELS AND BUILDING FRAGMENTS AT MOMA”

In 2012 The Museum of Modern Art and Columbia University’s Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library jointly acquired the Frank Lloyd Wright Archive. Charged with the stewardship of the three-dimensional works, MoMA’s Conservation Department has undertaken the treatment of the archive’s models, building fragments, studies and samples so that they can be safely displayed and studied. These works arrived at the museum in varied states of condition, from pristine to severely deteriorated, requiring a range of interventions and aesthetic choices. This talk will review some of the decisions made in these treatments and the central considerations guiding them, including the condition of the works, their context and history, conservation ethics and curatorial goals for display.
Dietrich Neumann is professor of history of art and architecture, and director of urban studies, at Brown University. He was trained as an architect in Munich, Germany, and at the Architectural Association in London. He received his PhD from Munich University. He writes on modern European and American architecture and has organized a number of traveling exhibitions. Among his books are publications on the history of movie set design, architectural illumination, Richard Neutra’s Windshield House for the Brown Family, and a children’s book about the Empire State Building. He is currently finishing a biography of the German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Session 3: Building on Wright’s Work

“WRIGHT, MIES AND THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT”

Frank Lloyd Wright loomed large in the early debates about modern architecture in Northern Europe. Introduced via lectures and publications since 1910, his work had a particularly strong impact in the Netherlands and Germany, where some considered Wright, by 1924, “the greatest architect of our time,” prompting J. J. P. Oud to warn his fellow Dutch designers not to blindly imitate him. Wright, in turn, criticized the “affected simplicity” of his “European Colleagues” in an open letter. One of Wright’s early proponents, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, had adopted some of his spatial innovations, but also had a visible impact on Wright’s later work. Mies’ move to the United States in the late 1930s provided the opportunity for several personal encounters between the two architects.
TIMOTHY ROHAN

Timothy Rohan is associate professor of art history at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and an architectural historian whose research focuses on modernism, especially of the post World War II era. Rohan has a BA from Yale University and a PhD from Harvard University. His book, The Architecture of Paul Rudolph (Yale University Press, 2014), is the first monograph about one of the most important modernist architects of the mid and late 20th century. Rohan was the first scholar to examine the Paul Rudolph papers, which he helped organize and catalog at the Library of Congress. He curated the exhibition Model City: Buildings and Projects by Paul Rudolph for Yale and New Haven in 2008.

“WRIGHT, PAUL RUDOLPH AND RESISTANCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE”

The International Style achieved its apotheosis in the 1950s. And yet resistance to its purported conformity and repetitiveness quickly emerged, sometimes inspired by Wright. One of the foremost opponents of the International Style, American architect Paul Rudolph (1918-1997), found models in Wright’s buildings for an expressive, emotionally charged alternative architecture, evidenced by his Florida houses, his Yale Art & Architecture Building (1958-63) and later structures.
Aaron Betsky is president of the School of Architecture at Taliesin. He was born in Montana but received his grade and high school education in The Netherlands. He earned his BA and MArch degrees from Yale University. Betsky’s leadership of major art and architecture institutions includes serving as the director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam in 2001-06, the curator of architecture and design of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1995-01, and the artistic director of the International Architecture Biennale in Venice, Italy, in 2008. A prolific writer and editor with a dozen books and hundreds of articles to his credit, Betsky is also a lecturer and critic who teaches around the world.

“LEARNING FROM AND AT TALIESIN”

The legacy of the Fellowship Frank Lloyd Wright founded in 1932 continues in the School of Architecture at Taliesin, a graduate program in which students from around the world learn in and from both Taliesin and Taliesin West. Newly independent, the School believes that we can learn from Wright how to make an architecture that is sustainable in a profound and organic sense; open or socially just; and simply and satisfyingly beautiful. The School also continues the tradition of “learning by doing,” as students design, build and occupy their own shelters. As a laboratory for the future of the designed environment, the School asks students to ask themselves how we can be at home in a world of sprawl, and how we can learn how to build in and for sprawl by following Wright’s (and others’) research and design.
MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

Michael Kimmelman is the architecture critic of The New York Times. His work has often focused on urban affairs, public space, infrastructure and social equity as well as on new buildings and designs. He was the paper’s chief art critic; and, based in Berlin, created the Abroad column, covering cultural and political affairs across Europe and the Middle East. For his role in saving the David and Gladys Wright House, Kimmelman received the Wright Spirit Award in 2014.

REED KROLOFF

Reed Kroloff is the founding principal of jones | kroloff, a practice that develops strategy for clients in the architecture and design industry. Kroloff previously served as director of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum, dean of the Tulane University School of Architecture, and editor-in-chief of Architecture magazine. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and Yale University, and has practiced architecture in Texas and Arizona.

MARK LAMSTER

Mark Lamster is the architecture critic of the Dallas Morning News, a professor in the architecture school at the University of Texas at Arlington, and a 2017 Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He is the author of several books, and is currently at work on a major new biography of the late architect Philip Johnson, to be published by Little, Brown.

ALEXANDRA LANGE

Alexandra Lange is the architecture critic for Curbed. Her writing has appeared in Architect, Domus, Dwell, New York Magazine, the New Yorker, The New York Times and more. She has taught design criticism at the School of Visual Arts and New York University. Lange is the author of Writing About Architecture: Mastering the Language of Buildings and Cities (Princeton Architectural Press, 2012). In 2018, Bloomsbury USA will publish her next book, on the design of childhood.
NEIL LEVINE

Neil Levine is Emmet Blakeney Gleason Research Professor of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University. He has published many articles and essays on subjects dealing with 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century European and American architecture, with a considerable focus on Frank Lloyd Wright. He has authored numerous publications, including *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (both published by Princeton University Press) and *Modern Architecture: Representation and Reality* (Yale University Press). He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and serves on the board of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy.

RICHARD LONGSTRETH

Richard Longstreth is professor of American studies and director of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at George Washington University, where he has taught since 1983. He has served as president of the Society of Architectural Historians and vice president of the Vernacular Architecture Forum. He served as president of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy in 2013-15. Long active in the historic preservation field, he is author and editor of numerous books, including *The Charnley House, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Making of the Chicago Gold Coast*; and *Frank Lloyd Wright: Preservation, Design, and Adding to Iconic Buildings*. 