



Architectural Forum 68, no. 1 (January 1938)

## **Frank Lloyd Wright: Publishing the Self**

The Museum of Modern Art, Cullman Education Building  
Mezzanine

May 9–June 30, 2017

Throughout his prolific and dramatic career, architect Frank Lloyd Wright mobilized communications media with great skill to manifest a distinctive persona, promote his work, start a school, and influence public opinion, leaving a legacy of documentation that continues to be examined today.

In conjunction with Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive (Sixth Floor galleries, June 12–October 1) this exhibit examines print publications by and about Wright drawn from the Library and the Architecture and Design Photo Archive. Examples range from a portfolio that influenced the first generation of European modernist architects to house plans commissioned for magazines to promotional materials for his school, Taliesin, to Wright's six-volume autobiography. The works tell a story of identity-making, organized around themes such as self-definition, self-promotion, self-education, and self-reflection.

Organized by Jennifer Tobias, Reader Services Librarian,  
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## **Self-definition**

Wright was encouraged from childhood to believe in his individuality and genius, and publications by and about him helped to fulfill the prophecy. From the beginning to the end of his long and tumultuous career, Wright leveraged publishing to formulate his ideas, build a recognizable persona, and stay in the public eye.

**An Autobiography** (New York: Longmans, Green, 1932)

William Herman Winslow, William C. Gannett, and Frank Lloyd Wright. **The House Beautiful** (River Forest: Auvergne Press, 1896–97. Reprint, 1963)

“Frank Lloyd Wright Talks about Photography” in **Photography** 34, no. 2 (February 1954)

**The Sovereignty of the Individual in the Cause of Architecture** (Florence: Palazzo Strozzi, 1951). Architecture and Design Photo Archive

**To Meet the Great American Architect Frank Lloyd Wright** (Philadelphia: Gimbel's, 1951)

Bernice Decker. “Meet the Architect ‘Most Discussed’” in **Christian Science Monitor** (September 17, 1957)

Finis Farr. “Frank Lloyd Wright: Defiant Genius” in **Saturday Evening Post** 234 (February 1961). Architecture and Design Photo Archive

Ada Louise Huxtable. “That Museum: Wright or Wrong?” in **New York Times Magazine** (October 25, 1959)

## **Self-promotion: Europe**

In the first two decades of his career, Wright's work became known through publications, beginning an influential exchange between the architect and European modernists.

**Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright** (Completed Buildings and Designs of Frank Lloyd Wright) (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1910, 1924)

The first comprehensive publication of Wright's work dates to 1910 and was reprinted several times. The impetus is believed to have been the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, where Berlin publisher Ernst Wasmuth was featured and Wright learned about European architectural trends. As the portfolio circulated in Europe, it influenced architects Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Hendrik Petrick Berlage, among others. Wright's design choices, including papers, ink, composition, and consistent line quality, create a unified impression and reflect his interest in Japanese prints.

**Wendingen** 4, no. 11 (1921)

*Wendingen* editor Hendrik Wijeveld devoted eight issues of the Dutch design journal to Wright, including this one, from 1925. Wright's interest in natural materials, diverse influences, and decorative elements was consistent with the journal's ethos of architectural eclecticism. Wijeveld designed all but one of the covers in geometricized decorative typography.

## Self-promotion: America

Throughout his career, Wright successfully promoted his work through journals, especially American ones, beginning with the publication of his house designs in a 1901 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*. During lean times, especially in the 1930s, Wright aggressively marketed work of many different types, including decorative designs for *Century Magazine* covers, numerous opinion pieces, interviews, and even product endorsements. He found steadfast support at *House Beautiful*, where editor Elizabeth Gordon championed him as an alternative to European modernism. In the drive to disseminate his ideas, Wright made little distinction between elite and popular journals, or between editorial content and advertising.

Robert Spencer. "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright" in **Architectural Review** 7, no. 6 (June 1900. Reprint)

"A Small House with 'Lots of Room in it'" in **Ladies Home Journal** 18, no. 8 (July 1901). Architecture and Design Photo Archive

Elizabeth Gordon. "The Essence of Frank Lloyd Wright's Contributions" in **House Beautiful** 101, no. 10 (October 1959)

"Frank Lloyd Wright's Contribution" in **House Beautiful** 98, no. 11 (November 1955)

**Schumacher's** (1959)

**Futuramic Oldsmobile** (1948)

Henrietta Murdock. "Accent on Living" in **Ladies Home Journal** 62 (June 1945)

## **Self-activation**

Wright had strong opinions about all aspects of American life and spread them widely through media, much of it self-published. Wright's most ambitious and sustained campaign was Broadacre City, a utopian vision of decentralized urbanity. Promotion of the project centered upon a large-scale model supplemented with numerous publications. Similarly, publishing played a role in disseminating Wright's populist Usonian House project.

**Taliesin Square Paper** no. 8 (May 1945). Architecture and Design Photo Archive

**The Disappearing City** (New York: Payson, 1932)

**Modern Architecture: Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930** (Princeton: Princeton, 1931)

Baker Brownell and Frank Lloyd Wright. **Architecture and Modern Life** (New York: Harper, 1937)

**Genius and the Mobocracy** (New York: Durell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949)

**The Natural House** (New York: Horizon Press, 1954)

**Taliesin** 1, no. 1 (1940)

"Broadacre City: A New Community Plan" in **Architectural Record** 77, no. 4 (April 1935)

**Usonia Homes** (Usonia: Usonia Homes, 1947).  
Architecture and Design Photo Archive

Clifford Hicks. "Co-op Village" in **Popular Mechanics** 96, no. 1 (July 1951)

## **Self-education**

Wright and his wife Olgivanna founded the Taliesin Fellowship in 1932 in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Structured as an apprentice system and a self-sufficient community, it enabled students to gain exposure to Wright's philosophy and design process in exchange for constructing and maintaining the complex. In 1937, the Wrights established Taliesin West, a winter presence in Scottsdale, Arizona. Publications about Taliesin evince the couple's centrality to the program, in which Wright's "learn by doing" ethos meshed with Olgivanna's background in performing arts and Theosophy, a mystical philosophy.

**Taliesin** (Scottsdale: Taliesin West, 1965). Architecture and Design Photo Archive

**Taliesin** 1, no. 1 (1934)

"Journey to Taliesin West" in **Look** 16, no. 1 (January 1952)

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Wolfgang Wijdeveld and Keith Mac Cutcheon.

**A Song for Frank Lloyd Wright** (Amsterdam: n.p., 1948)

"The Living Heritage of Frank Lloyd Wright" in **Arizona Highways** 38, no. 4 (April 1962)

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