Film and architecture: Discovering the self-reflection of Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright through contextual analysis

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FILM AND ARCHITECTURE: DISCOVERING THE SELF-REFLECTION
OF FRANK CAPRA AND FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
THROUGH CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

by

Marie L. Kohler

Bachelor of Science
Arizona State University
1983

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication
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Graduate College
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Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Film and Architecture: Discovering the Self-Reflection of Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright Through Contextual Analysis

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Film and architecture were analyzed to evaluate the rhetorical potential these media hold in communicating the self-reflection of their creators. In an attempt to uncover common communication elements which further link the relationship between film and architecture, specific works of director Frank Capra and architect Frank Lloyd Wright were examined. The study utilizes both an historical, case study approach, combined with a contextual analysis of two selected works. Because Zettl's (1990) theory of applied media aesthetics emphasizes the importance of the medium in the communication process, this methodology was applied to Capra's film It's A Wonderful Life and Wright's building the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Conclusions indicate that the selected works were both culminating and transcendent in their manner of exposing the self-reflection of Capra and Wright's belief in the unity of humanity.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research is based upon a realization that those who design and create messages have much in common that extends beyond what is seen on the surface. Perhaps unknowingly, two separate artists from the same period in history have conveyed a similar message through radically different media. Such is the challenge of this study, an attempt to find the commonalties of self-reflection between film and architecture, and between two master craftsmen – Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Justification

Few individuals have impacted contemporary society with the meticulous vision of film director Frank Capra and architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The stories and structures each artist left behind remain much more than celluloid or brick and mortar; each creation stands as a fervent reminder of life, beauty, faith, passion and the tenacity to share one's optimistic vision with the world.

Although literature on Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright is abundant, there is still a great deal to learn about the impact their work has had on society. During their peaks of performance, and well after their lives ended, volumes of books and thousands of articles have acclaimed and criticized each man. Discovering what these great artists
held in common is a curious reason to embark on a study of this nature. The fact that no research exists that directly ties together the life and works of Capra and Wright is an even more important justification for this research.

At first glance, the two men may appear to have little in common. A closer look, however, reveals numerous commonalities, among which are the findings that both continue to be highly respected and recognized creators within their professions, both led rather turbulent lives, and, finally, both Capra and Wright had important messages for their audiences. Each film produced and each building designed was a self-reflection of personality, underlying values, morals and religious motifs.

Sandefur (1999, May) expounds on Frank Lloyd Wright, “When one stands in one of his buildings – his Wisconsin home Taliesin, for instance – the power of his personality, of his whole world view, seems to exude from the walls like the soft and constant light” (paragraph 3).

Capra used his films for a more deliberate purpose; nonetheless, they are a reflection of who he was: “Capra’s politics, as interpreted from his films, interviews and autobiography, were seen to span the political spectrum” (Mortimer, 1994, paragraph 4). Frank Capra had a definite agenda in all of his films – to communicate what was important to him. According to Mortimer (1994), his audiences testify to the significance of Capra films as being an integral part of the fabric of their lives, of growing up in America, and providing a sentimental education in democracy and humor.

Another factor that warrants this study is the perception that there are many common elements between film and architecture. The relationship between film and architecture, as obscure as it may seem, does exist, as “both architects and filmmakers deal with the world of illusions” (Penz, 1994, p. 39).
After reviewing literature on the relevant connection between film and architecture, it is evident that the bond between the two media remains more than an illusion. Not only does film replicate architecture through set designs, architects strive to replicate what they see in films. Another aspect of the relationship is even grander. Both buildings and films have the capacity to communicate ideas about life and assist in understanding our place in the universe (van Schaik, 1989). In past decades it was architecture that provided the greatest impact, or "tangible dreams;" today, according to van Schaik (1989), it is film that provides the greatest impact (p. 28). Such is the ebb and flow of film and architecture's relationship; a link between two unique media, and an even more important bond with society.

Other common elements found between film and architecture, as defined by van Schaik (1989), are the use of the human scale, that architectural drawings have been inspiring to filmmakers, and, according to Toy (1994), "The actual experience of architectural space by an observer within that space has many similarities to the viewer's perception of a chosen sequence in a film" (p. 7).

An interesting finding that warrants further study is that it appears that the architecture profession is reaching out to communicate what it believes are commonalties between itself and the film industry. There is sufficient research from the architectural side; in fact, an entire issue of Architectural Design in 1994 was devoted to architecture and film.

On the film side, it is unusual to find such an abundance of research. When located, it often promotes the use of architecture to enhance films through set design and construction (Penz, 1994). When the film industry does publish findings on the relationship between film and architecture, it is evident that film comes first – then
architecture: "Though there is abundant evidence of mutual admiration, filmmakers are as likely to touch architecture through other films as through direct experience, while architects, who are attracted to the creative power of film and its ability to reach large audiences, are beginning to attempt in form what they have seen in films" (van Schaik 1989, p. 28).

Capra and Wright were both artists who created for themselves and inherently for the betterment of society. Because the process of creation is rooted in the expression of ideas about life, contextualism offers a convenient mode in which to study the self-reflection of Capra and Wright through their work. Zettl (1990) is of the belief that the process of creation must rely on one's life experiences:

We should evaluate art within its historical epoch and according to what the artist felt while creating it. The relationship between art and life also means that art is not an isolated object hidden away in a museum; instead it is a process that draws on life for its creation and, in turn, seems necessary in order for humans to live life with quality and dignity. (Zettl, 1990, p. 3).

To summarize the justification of this thesis topic, consider these elements: First and foremost, no research exists that uncovers correlations between Capra and Wright. Second, a definite relationship between film and architecture exists, creating a synthesis on a variety of levels. Third, evidence exists – through the theory of Contextualism – that Capra’s films and Wright’s buildings remain vehicles of self-expression and communication, offering tremendous rhetorical power.
Review of Literature

Four relevant areas of literature will be reviewed here: 1) literature regarding contextualism as a method of analyzing Capra and Wright; 2) studies focusing on film and architecture theory - uncovering the relationship between the two; 3) studies highlighting the life and works of Frank Capra; and 4) studies concerning the life and works of Frank Lloyd Wright. This research combines a historical case study approach with a contextual analysis of two selected works (one by each artist), and thus necessitates an examination of literature in all four areas.

Literature on Contextualism

In Herbert Zettl's (1990) book *Sight-Sound-Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*, the scholar suggests that contextualism is a convenient frame of reference for the discussion of media aesthetics. Applied media aesthetics expands the traditional concept of aesthetics to include a more functional or operational understanding, an "optimal synthesis" of the various aesthetic media elements (p. 2). Stephen C. Pepper's (1965) *Aesthetic Quality* theory is also grounded in contextualism. His contextualistic interpretation of art, however, offers a more purely aesthetic approach based on beauty.

In other words, Zettl's theory is more utilitarian, while Pepper's is more purely artistic. Donis A. Dondis (1973), in *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, explains further, "The most frequently cited difference between the utilitarian and the purely artistic is the measure of motivation toward producing the beautiful. Utility describes the design and making of objects and materials and demonstrations that respond to basic needs" (p. 3). It would be sensible to conclude that films and buildings respond to basic human needs. In addition, film and architecture serve as *monuments of understanding*. They reflect
civilization, thereby enabling a better understanding of our place in the world. A final utilitarian function is the fact that both media reflect the mind-set of their creators.

Due to the utilitarian function of film and architecture in society, and the potentially powerful message each media is capable of demonstrating, a more “applied” theory, such as Zettl’s, is appropriate for this study.

Applied aesthetics and contextualism, according to Zettl (1990), may be categorized into four major concepts:

1) **Incidents of Life** – The quality of life is determined by the various event details, how they relate contextually, and how they finally fuse together to become an event of significance (aliveness, unpredictability, change, impermanence).

2) **Art and Life** – There exists an essential, intimate and purposeful relationship between art and life. This means that art should be evaluated within its historical epoch and according to what the artist felt while creating it (the connection between art and life is often an everyday occurrence).

3) **Art as Clarified and Intensified Experience** – Aesthetic experiences can be drawn from all aspects of life, yet by giving line and composition even to a rather ordinary scene, an artist can help an audience perceive its inherent beauty. Ordinary daily experiences are not art, yet have the potential to provide raw material for the process of aesthetic communication (artists turn ordinary experiences into exquisite accounts through clarification, intensification and interpretation).

4) **Order and Experience Complexity** – Human experiences are complex and unique. The artist must look at an event, search for its essential qualities, and
then select, emphasize and order its most important elements in a way that they will fuse to become a significant new event-of-quality worth communicating (order and complexity are not adversaries, but essential companions). (Zettl, 1990, p. 2-5)

If the works of Capra and Wright are, in fact, a mirror of whom they were and what they wanted to tell the world about life, then contextualism is an appropriate method of discovery.

**Literature on Film and Architecture Theory**

In the area of literature on film and architecture theory, there are several journal articles that illustrate the relationship between film and architecture. One article of great significance is Leon van Schaik’s (1989) article “Design for Dreaming” found in *Film Comment*, which eloquently states his sentiments on film and architecture: “Good films and good buildings alike draw you in and keep you moving along, visually stimulated by their rhythm, repetitions, illuminations, juxtapositions, and plays of shadow and light” (p. 28). Among the differences between the two media, according to van Schaik, is that film has an “immediate currency, fully engaging and repeatable,” while architecture “is on the margins of our awareness and acts on us in ways of which we are not necessarily conscious” (p. 28).

Just as the suggestion that architecture helps us understand or represent our (human beings’) place in the universe, film adds meaning to what cannot be realized in life. To illustrate this point, Yvette Biro (1982), in *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema* includes a quote from Dziga Vertov in the book’s introduction:
The Theory of Relativity on the Screen

We ought to look for our own original rhythm, and we will find it in the movement of objects. The film is an art of imaginary objects in space obeying the dictates of science. It is the incarnation of the dream of its inventor, be he a scientist, engineer, or carpenter. The film makes possible the realization of what cannot be realized in life. (Biro, 1982, p. 1)

Biro (1982) also makes a strong case for film's compulsion of "self-reflection," which the author labels a "revolution," as a primer to this statement: "Modern film is not simply a personal vision but also a self-reflection, in which consciousness examines its relation to the object of its study" (p. 6). The scholar also cites the Russian semiotican Lotman's reference to "self-reflection" as the "modeling function," when a work "models the most general aspects of the world's image ... it conveys information" (p. 6). An inference could be made here that Biro's notion of self-reflection might include what is happening in the world, and also what is inside its creator.

In short, film and architecture, because of their innate ability to communicate, are both media capable of portraying the self-reflection of the artist.

It is obvious that Capra used his films as a means of self-expression and reflection. Film critics and other industry professionals showed a tremendous interest in Capra's brand of self-reflection as seen in his pictures. In Charles Wolfe's (1987) Frank Capra: A Guide to References and Resources, the author lists over 1,100 articles about Capra, written from 1922 and 1981. On the surface, a heroic American theme seemed to permeate each project (American Studies at the University of Virginia, 1998). A more thorough interpretation of Capra's agenda has eluded critics, as illustrated by Bill Misticelli (1997, Fall): "The composite Capra that emerges from those films is almost
impossible to pin down politically” (p. 118). Mistichelli (1997, Fall) further describes critics’ confusion about Capra as a “chaos of discrepancy,” which “all but annihilates Capra as a recognizable artist or a human agent: his work and his person are more or less interpreted out of existence” (p. 19).

The irony in this statement is that typical audiences never looked deep enough to see that Capra’s message was far more self-reflective than the face value of what they saw on the screen. It appears Capra was misunderstood.

Wright was also misunderstood by many. In “Reeling in Wright” (1998, November), a review of filmmaker Ken Burns’ documentary on Wright, author Curtis Wayne cites filmmaker Burns’ description of Wright’s life as “a contradiction: that unresolved conflict between Wright’s professional genius and his tumultuous relations with those around him.... If he hadn’t been Frank Lloyd Wright, he’d be a schmuck, an insufferable pain in the butt” (paragraph 5). According to Wayne, in 1998, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick produced a documentary entitled Frank Lloyd Wright that aired on PBS as a two-part mini-series in 1998 and 1999. The documentary will prove to be an invaluable resource for this study. In another review of Burn’s documentary, author Jessie Hamilton (1998, November 8) includes a quotation from Wright, which balances his sensitivity toward nature with his headstrong confidence, “Early in life I had to chose between honest arrogance and hypocritical humility,” he once said. “I chose honest arrogance” (paragraph 4).

In the previously referenced article by Wayne (1998, November), Burns also mentions evidence of Wright’s ability to communicate through his work: “When you’re in the presence of a Wright building, he’s there. It’s like he’s whispering in your ear, talking to you. It’s powerful stuff” (paragraph 1).
From the Wright platform, further evidence supporting the connection between film and architecture is offered by former professor of architectural history Katherine Smith (1998) in her book *Frank Lloyd Wright: America's Master Architect*. Smith (1998) describes eloquently Wright’s architectural style: “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” (p. 8).

Compare this description to Charles Affron’s (1982) explanation of film's sense of timing in *Cinema and Sentiment*: “Film invites us to respond.... Infinitely repeatable, continuous in its unfolding, discontinuous in its syntax, its temporalities catch us in modes of forward, reverse, and stop. The conventional length of a film, the narrative structure of the fiction, the duration of shots, and the rhythm of their inter-cutting govern the spectator’s cinematic time sense” (p. 159).

Consider other analogies between film and architecture, such as Michael Dear’s (1994) citing of critical studies in “Between Film and Architecture,” where Fischer “places architects on a par with directors and actors in German Expressionist movies” (p. 9). Dear (1994) goes on to state that many practicing architects have sought to work in both media (film and architecture).

More complex analogies include architecture’s long litany of reference to film. According to Dear (1994), “For example, Ingersoll claims that architecture is the latent subject of almost every movie; and Ramirez leaves no doubt that the architecture of film is absolutely central to an understanding of what ... is happening in contemporary design” (p. 9).
Dear's (1994) article also provides inferences that relate to the politically themed nature of many of Capra's films; in the article, Andrea Kahn is quoted as follows, "All architecture ... configures form and material in spatial constructs with ideological force. All architecture ... politicizes space" (p. 9).

In Maggie Toy's (1994) editorial in the "Film & Architecture" issue of *Architectural Design*, she relates the inextricable link between the creation of film and the development of our "built environment" to an "exploration of volumetric space in time" (p. 7). Another commonality of film and architecture is hypothesized by Jean-Paul Lebeuf's (1965) article, "Myth and Fable: Africa," as cited in Suzanne Preston Blier's (1987) *The Anatomy of Architecture*, that "architecture was a kind of script that could be read" (p. 10).

Blier (1987) further states that the significance of architecture is grounded in the experiences and intellectual explanations of its makers and users. If this is true, and if film and architecture are as closely related as this research indicates, then surely film is also grounded in the experiences and intellectual explanations of its makers and users.

As the abundance of literature suggests, film and architecture are linked on a variety of levels, some obvious, others more obscure. From a rhetorical standpoint, both media are used as an important means of self-reflection and expression.

**Literature on Frank Capra**

If the twentieth century needed to identify just one iconographer of theological optimism few would be more eligible than the film director Frank Capra. His life spans most of the century (1897-1991) and his films are said to depict a sky-blue world that combines folksy family values with Norman Rockwell paintings. Some critics dubbed his output 'Capra-com,' though we hear less of those sneers with the passage of time. More durable has been the term "Capra--esque" to
denote contemporary pieces that evoke whimsical good humor with the championing of any David who takes on a Goliath.

— Stephen J. Brown, *Theology*

Figure 1. Director Frank Capra at Columbia Studios, circa 1930.

Extensive literature exists on Frank Capra (see figure 1). One challenge of this study is to qualify what constitutes “quality” information on the man, and then carefully focus on what is relevant to this study. The most complete reference located is Charles Wolfe’s (1987) *Frank Capra: A Guide to References and Resources*. Throughout its 449 pages, the book offers biographical background information on Capra, a critical summation of his work from Wolfe’s point of view. In addition, the book lists writings, interviews (published and non-published), books, archival sources, and Capra’s film distributors. Wolfe provides credits, synopses, and notes on Capra’s 56 films, from his first project in 1922 – *Fulta Fisher’s Boarding House* – to his final film in 1964 – *Rendezvous in Space*. 

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In Wolfe’s (1987) chapter on “Writings about Frank Capra,” the author lists 1,101 articles written about the director over a period of approximately 60 years, from 1922 to 1981. Among the eclectic variety of the periodicals featuring these articles are Motion Picture News, the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Cinema, New Yorker, Film Comment, Film Quarterly, Enclitic, and Daily Variety. Wolfe also includes other film-related activities of Capra, including proposed projects and films where Capra served as a writer or producer.

A second comprehensive source on the life and works of Frank Capra is his autobiography (1971) entitled The Name Above the Title. The book, much like Capra’s career, has received mixed reviews. On an introductory “Applause” page in the front of the book, the Hollywood Reporter commented: “A traditional American success story, real and inspirational ... probably the best autobiography ever written by a Hollywood figure” (introduction). An opposing viewpoint is offered by Donald C. Willis (1974), in The Films of Frank Capra. In Willis’ opinion, Capra’s autobiography is “loosely-organized ... amiable, a bit preachy, usually fairly interesting, ultimately insubstantial for its length. But the book’s real message is that Capra believed in what he was doing” (p. 205).

He also believed in heroes. Because nearly every film was laced with a hero motif, Willis (1974) includes a plot summation and analysis of four of Capra’s American Hero films: Mr. Deeds Goes To Town (1936), Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939), Meet John Doe (1941) and It’s A Wonderful Life (1946). An Internet site hosted by the American Studies Department at the University of Virginia (1998, January 20) provides an in-depth look at Capra’s heroic characters in the article Capra, Smith & Doe: Filming
A more positive view of the beloved filmmaker is found in Ron Miller’s (1998, April 20) review of American Movie Channel’s (AMC) 90-minute documentary, *Frank
Capra’s American Dream. The documentary, which will prove valuable to this research, formulates an opinion that Capra was famous for “all the wrong reasons,” (Miller, 1998, April 20, paragraph 2). The film, as reviewed by Miller (1998, April 20), emphasizes that Capra was dismissed as sentimental and corny, when in reality his films shared his ideals about living the American dream, a deeper undertone rarely acknowledged by most viewers.

Religion is yet another motif in Capra’s life and work. In the America article, by Blake (1991, September 21), entitled, “The Catholic Imagination of Frank Capra,” the author indicates that Capra’s positive symbolism almost nonexistent. With his portrayal of “corner drug stores, white picket fences and walks in the moonlight ... there is one image of old-time America that is strangely lacking” (p. 169). The author is referring, of course, to religion, “He almost never mentions religion or churches” (p. 169). Author Steven J. Brown (1998, November-December), in the article “Theological Optimism in the Films of Frank Capra,” disagrees with Blake. Brown (1998, November-December) dedicates a seven-page article in Theology to uncovering the religious meanings in Capra’s It’s A Wonderful Life, suggesting that God supports the main character, George Bailey, throughout the film. “The potential (amid the pitfalls) is there for it to be a wonderful life. It will not, however, be realized without our need of God” (p. 440).

Negative criticism can’t take away from Capra’s accomplishments. It is perhaps the juxtaposition of good and evil, of religion and lack thereof, of pleasure and suffering, that continues to make Capra’s work as much a focus of study in the present as it has been in the past. There remain constant reminders of Frank Capra’s America. In the film The American President (1995), upon entering the White House for the first time, lobbyist Sydney Ellen Wade comments to a guard on the “Capra-esque” quality of the
moment. Gentle reminders such as The American President along with volumes of literature that strive to uncover Capra's style and agenda, suggest that the world's fascination with Frank Capra is alive and well:

Capra transformed himself into the quintessential American hero: one from humble origins who works hard, struggles against intellectual, established, and often corrupt individuals and institutions, employs native intelligence and values in the fight to preserve American ideals, lives a plain life, knows some failure and hardship, and never loses sympathy for common people. (American Studies at the University of Virginia, 1998, January, paragraph 41)

Literature on Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright was, very probably, the last of the true Americana. This is not intended to suggest that he was of Red Indian origin (which he wasn't) or that his ancestors came over on the Mayflower (which they didn't). It is intended to mean that Wright was the last great representative of all the things this country once stood for in the world when "America" was still a radical concept, rather than a settled continent: a symbol of absolute, untrammeled freedom for every individual, of as little government as possible, the end of classes and castes, of unlimited equal physical opportunities for the adventurous, of the absence of all prejudice – excepting prejudices in favor of anything new and bold; of the absence of form and formality, and, finally, a symbol of society of many individuals living as individuals in individual settlements – not a society of masses living in giant cities.

- Peter Blake, The Master Builders: Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe.

Frank Lloyd Wright
Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was both a prolific builder and a prolific writer (see figure 2). Although others have authored many books on Wright, it is Wright's autobiography entitled, Frank Lloyd Wright: An Autobiography, written in 1943, that provides the most illuminating insights into the artist's life and work. This is one of 15 books written by Wright.

Wright’s (1943) autobiography is written in the style of a novel, relating specific circumstances that impacted the architect, from childhood until the early 40s. Of particular interest is Wright’s (1943) discussion of his divorce from his second wife, Miriam Noel, a subject of great debate and scandal throughout his career. It appears Wright had hoped that recounting the divorce in his book would help rid his soul of ill feelings. As is apparent in his “Retrospect” account, his true resentment shows through, “And I don’t see how it is going to help anyone else in danger of being in my case and in the fix I was in at the time. I hope no one ever will be. Not even my worst friends nor my best enemies” (p. 299). Several print journalists colorfully describe Wright’s dramatic life, for example, David Dillon of The Dallas Morning News: “Divorces,
bankruptcies, exile, the murder of a mistress, all were subsumed by a mythological drama in which he always played the starring role" (1998, November 8, paragraph 3).

Putting pen to paper was one of Wright's mainstays. A good number of the books written by the architect are a compilation of letters he wrote to clients and associates. The first such book is entitled Letters to Apprentices (Pfeiffer, 1982). The letters concern the Taliesin Fellowship, a group of young men and women who were apprentices from 1932 to 1959. According to the book, "It is intended to recapture the experiences, emotions, trials, errors, and triumphs of the Taliesin Fellowship" (1982, p. ix). Two other such books by Wright are Letters to Architects (Pfeiffer, 1984), and Letters to Clients (Pfeiffer, 1986).

John Nichols' (1997, July 18) article in The Madison Wisconsin Capital Times indicates that all three books formed an underpinning for Meryle Secret's biography, Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography (1992). Nichols goes on to describe Letters to Architects as brilliantly capturing Wright's struggle to provide a new shape to architecture "unfettered by the conventions he disdained" (Nichols, 1997, July 18, paragraph 8).

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.'s (1989) 9 Commentaries on Frank Lloyd Wright mirrors Wright's passion for the new and inventive, even during the numerous crises in his lifetime. "The deployment of Wright's creativity continued despite personal travail and was only partially hindered by the pressure of public indignation" (p. 87). The book also provides an excellent discussion of the influence the Froebel teaching method had on Wright as a young boy. An on-line article from Augustana College (1997, December) provides a succinct overview of Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, his teaching methods, and the establishment of the first kindergarten ("garden of children") in Germany in 1837.
(paragraph 1). While Kaufmann (1989) and Merel Secrest’s (1992) Frank Lloyd Wright emphasize the Froebel lessons (hands-on activities involving bright colors, patterns, folded paper, and geometric forms) as a tremendous influence on Wright’s career as an architect, in Wright’s (1943) autobiography the impact of Froebel schooling is mentioned only briefly.

Another influence, according to Kaufmann (1989), was Wright’s ‘Lieber Meister’ (German for inspiring master). Louis H. Sullivan became Wright’s mentor in the late 1800s, and is discussed in varying degrees in nearly every book used in this research. Wright adopted as his own many of Sullivan’s philosophies of during his employment at the architectural firm of Adler & Sullivan.

Scholar Katherine Smith (1998), in Frank Lloyd Wright: America’s Master Architect, offers an excellent overview of Wright’s works over the years with a positive, opinionated take on the organic nature of Wright’s philosophy. This book, along with Terence Riley and photographer Farrell Grehan’s Visions of Wright (1997), beautifully illustrate, through photographs, Wright’s signature theme of organic architecture. Wright’s philosophy about the unity of nature and the human spirit is captured in Visions of Wright through the use of quotations from Wright himself: “Architecture, after all, I have learned, or before all, I should say, is no less a weaving and a fabric than the trees.... There must be some kind of house that would belong to that hill, as trees and the ledges of rock did; as Grandfather and Mother had belonged to it, in their sense of it all” (p. 56).

There is great discrepancy with regard to the actual number of buildings Wright designed and built throughout his lifetime. Riley and Grehan (1997) indicate the architect produced approximately 1,000 designs, completing over 400 structures, or
"built buildings." A periodical source, *Time* (1998, June 8) indicates the number of completed buildings is 450. At the age of 88, in an interview with TV anchor Mike Wallace, Wright himself takes credit for 769 built buildings, as featured in Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s (1998) documentary *Frank Lloyd Wright*. This video is an important resource to this research, as it appears to offer an objective view of Wright’s life and work. Another critical documentary is Peter Lydon’s (1993) *1071 Fifth Avenue: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Story of the Guggenheim Museum*, produced after a major renovation of the museum that made the structure more in keeping with Wright’s original conception. This video will be of particular value to this research when embarking on the contextual analysis phase. Another valuable resource for the contextual analysis is Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer’s (1994) *The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* which provides excellent detailed information about Wright’s design philosophy as well as photographs, schematic, perspectives and study elevations of the building’s exterior.

In addition to the *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*, a handful of Wright’s grand creations include the *Fallingwater house*, the *Robbie house*, the *S.C. Johnson Wax Building*, and the *Unity Temple* in Chicago. One outstanding compendium of nearly every Wright creation is Iain Thomson’s (1999) *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Visual Encyclopedia*. Thomson’s book provides an alphabetized photographic listing of Wright’s private, religious, corporate, public, commercial and civic buildings, in addition to people, places and events that influenced him.

Norris Kelly Smith’s book *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content* (1979) indicates that Wright was clearly ahead of his time. From a more critical and scholarly perspective, Smith’s book is another excellent source of information.
concerning Wright's work. Perhaps less critical are quarterly journals published by the
Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. One such journal, the Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly
(1998, Spring), outlines Wright's fascination with music. Entitled "Architecture and
Music," the journal features four articles explaining the role music played in Wright's
life and designs. One article in this volume, "Musical Sites," outlines the various
musical spaces, such as Midway Gardens, Imperial Hotel Theatre, Anne Pfeiffer Chapel,
Hillside Theatre, Kalita Humphreys Theatre, Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium,
and at Wright's own Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona - Music and Dance Pavilion
and Cabaret Theatre.

Often, Wright would attempt to incorporate a theatre-like space in the homes he
designed for wealthy clients. In The Natural House, Wright (1954) expounds on
virtually every element of the house - materials, lighting, basement, kitchen, children's
rooms, furniture, furnishings, paint and air conditioning. In addition, the book provides
an excellent commentary on Wright's love for the house, its unity and unique
"grammar" (p. 181).

Several journal articles found in The Humanist, Architecture, Design Quarterly
and American Jewish History pay tribute to the Burns & Novick (1998) documentary,
and elaborate on Wright's tumultuous life and designs. Hoffman (1992, Spring), in
"Dismembering Frank Lloyd Wright," emotes disdain for much of Wright's work: "Bits
and pieces of his architecture are being scattered like the bones of a saint. Exhibited in
museums or private collections as if precious treasures of the so-called decorative arts,
these pathetic fragments ought to be seen instead as evidence of greed, ostentation, and
the most shallow of relationships to art" (p. 4).
Other articles, such as "Wright's Beth Sholom Synagogue," by George Goodwin (1998, September), paint a far more positive portrait of Wright: "Wright's legacy lives. Many of his buildings have become museums, and his drawings, windows, furniture and interiors have been collected in this country and in Europe" (paragraph 3).

Goodwin (1998, September) further states that, while largely forgotten as the designer of the American synagogue, Wright's Beth Sholom represents only one of the architect's numerous religious buildings.

A more recent journal article by Ned Cramer (1999, March) in Architecture overviews the accomplishments of Frank Lloyd Wright Jr.'s career and the complex relationship he had with his father, the master architect. This relationship will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

Summary of Literature

In addition to the literature mentioned previously, many of the remaining sources include mainstream periodicals, the Internet, videos and films. The collection of writings highlighted here proves that there is an adequate amount of scholarly literature in all four areas (contextualism, film and architecture theory, Capra and Wright) to form a solid foundation for this study.

Methodology

The methodology followed by this study is two-fold: 1) a historical, critical case study approach, and 2) a contextual analysis of two selected works (one by each artist). Optimal results of this study will further prove the relationship between film and architecture while uncovering commonalities in the self-reflection of Capra and Wright as
evident in their work. In essence, this study seeks to advance a new theory — that of the rhetorical relationships that have occurred between Capra and Wright.

To fulfill the historical, critical approach, a wide array of literature and media shall be researched, including academic studies, autobiographies, books, films, mainstream consumer periodicals and Internet sources. The ultimate goal of literature and media, early in the study, is to establish both film and architecture as viable rhetorical forms, and further illustrate the relationship between film and architecture. Literature will also prove useful in describing the personality, values, morals, and lives of Capra and Wright.

The theory of contextualism offers the analysis component of this study. Zettl’s (1990) contextualism approach of applied media aesthetics will be used to compare and contrast two specific works completed by Capra and Wright: Capra’s *It’s A Wonderful Life*, and Wright’s *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum*. These two celebrated projects were selected for several reasons, the most important being the availability of literature on each. Next is the overall ability of each project to impact a mass audience.

The contextual study of *It’s Wonderful Life* and the *Guggenheim* will focus on the rhetorical message of each creation while investigating the more technical aspects, such as editing and shooting style, dialog, characters, contrast, shadows, geometry, interior design, interplay with nature, as well as spatial, psychological and spiritual dimensions.

This chapter includes the purpose and justification, in addition to a review of literature found in the four areas of concern: contextualism, film and architecture theory, Capra and Wright. Chapter one also seeks to provide solid evidence of the relationship between film and architecture, yet does not delve into specifics about what Capra and
Wright shared in common. Literature reviewed in this chapter lends insights about Capra and Wright’s personalities and how the public viewed them.

The second chapter in this study focuses more specifically on the lives and works of Capra and Wright from a biographical standpoint. The summary of chapter two will seek to highlight what the two artists shared in common with regard to their lives and rhetorical messages.

Chapter three is a more in-depth look at self-reflection from a critical perspective. Zettl’s (1990) theory of applied media aesthetics will be detailed. In addition, the relative elements of film and architectural design will be defined to provide a better understanding of how the media (film and architecture) relate to Zettl’s theory.

Chapter four is the crux of this study, providing the contextual analysis of It’s A Wonderful Life and the Guggenheim Museum. Prior to the contextual analysis, the chapter will offer a detailed justification of why these two works were selected for study. Using Zettl’s (1990) inductive approach – applied media aesthetics – Capra’s film and Wright’s building will be analyzed according to their Fundamental Image Elements of 1) light and color, 2) two-dimensional space, 3) three-dimensional space, 4) time and motion, and 5) sound.

The final chapter will reflect upon major conclusions of this research, as well as propose recommendations for further study on the topic.
An abundance of literature exists detailing the biography of Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright. Selected volumes of books, articles and documentary presentations on Capra and Wright were significant in helping to piece together an analysis that suits this study. It would be impossible, however, to include every aspect of every detail that evolved into the values and opinions that were reflected in their work. For the purpose of this research, the biographical focus remains an overview of the life and works of Capra and Wright, with an emphasis on incidents and details that appear to contribute to their character from the perspective of self-reflection.

Frank Capra's Life and Works

And like his heroic protagonists, Capra experienced his own grueling rite of passage. His life could be essentially summed up as a series of personal and professional triumphs interspersed with nagging self-doubt and bitter disappointment. But through it all, his idealism remained intact.

- Bill Desowitz, Los Angeles Times

This opening remark appears far too simple an explanation of the life of what some deem a hero, a man whose nearly 100 years of living touched the American public
like no other. Resembling his films, Frank Capra was inherently complex, a one-of-a-kind compilation of brashness, arrogance, self-confidence, generosity, sensitivity, sentiment, self-doubt and deep depression (Bowser, 1997). In the forward of Capra’s autobiography The Name Above The Title (1971), John Ford aptly describes him as accomplishing greatness in the motion picture industry “without compromising his own exacting sense of the good, the beautiful, and the appropriate; without ever losing a friend or having a scene censored” (Foreword).

Without question, there is one word most scholars, movie-goers and followers of Frank Capra associate with his name – America: “A great man, a great American, Frank Capra is an inspiration to those who Believe in the American Dream” (Capra/Ford, 1971, Foreword.) Proud of his adopted country, Capra’s idealistic view of America was an important element in most of the films he directed. He carefully designed and presented a portrait of America that was decent, honest and willing to fight for its beliefs (Bowser, 1997). The relationship Capra cultivated between himself and his America was so unified, a popular quote by director/actor John Cassavetes provides an appropriate description: “Maybe there really wasn’t an America, maybe it was only Frank Capra” (Bowser, 1997).

Capra’s life played like a drama, similar to those he portrayed in his own motion pictures. His mother, Saridda, had lost several children at birth or in infancy – it was doubtful that Frank would survive his difficult birth. A story that was handed down in the Capra family foreshadowed Capra’s life. It is told that Saridda’s concerned father entered the room just after Capra was born in 1897, urgently exclaiming to his daughter that she should take care of the child – “He would be known all over the world” (McBride, 1992, p. 19).
Following the lead of his uncles, their brothers and his eldest son Ben, Capra’s father, Salvatore, packed up his family and immigrated to the United States from Sicily in 1903, settling in Los Angeles (McBride, 1992). Although overlooked in Capra’s autobiography, it was his brother Ben who dreamed of an education for him and Frank. McBride (1992) describes Capra’s constant exaggeration about the differences between himself and his family: “He was unique in his family in the degree to which he ultimately rose beyond his origins, but Ben’s dogged efforts on his and other’s behalf show that Frank was not unique among the Capras in having the desire, the determination, and the ability to succeed in America” (p. 25). Frank was but one Capra who earned a college degree from Cal-Tech in chemical engineering.

Regarding Capra’s support of his immigrant family, literature suggests some relevant contradictions. For example, M. David Lewis (1996-99) states, “Capra was a devoted, hard-working son who supported his family and put himself through college, graduating as a chemical engineer” (paragraph 1). Others suggest Capra was not so noble in his early years. It was Capra’s brother Tony who worked at Western Pipe and Steel to raise money to pay for Frank’s education, while his mother and sisters Ann and Luigia provided him with additional financial support throughout college (American Studies at the University of Virginia (ASUV), 1998, January; McBride, 1992). It is suggested that Capra exaggerated his family’s lack of education in order to garner the spotlight for his own scholastic accomplishments (ASUV, 1998).

To further embrace his newly adopted country, and further reject his immigrant status, Capra’s attempts at “self-conscious Americanism” included a name change from Francis Rosario Capra to Frank Russell Capra, which became his legal name in 1920.
Maintaining his "ghetto survivor status," Capra was dedicated to success by holding a wide variety of jobs - delivering newspapers, playing poker, selling books and phony mining certificates door-to-door, playing the guitar and working as a janitor (ASUV, 1998; Bowser, 1997). Long before his Hollywood career started, Capra was a "tin-horn gambler," a "petty financial pirate," and a hustler living by his wits (ASUV, 1998, paragraph 39; Bowser, 1997). He often employed the stance of innocence in his efforts to beguile his potential customers, and later in his filmmaking career a resulting conflict would surface, as seen in films such as The Miracle Woman, Meet John Doe, and It's A Wonderful Life. Capra's career of hustling led him to question the average man's acuity and realize how tentative the ideals of a mass population can be. "Doubts about the people's capacities led also to Capra's mistrust of mass movements, particularly labor unions" (ASUV, 1998, paragraph 41).

Beyond the cynicism, however, patriotism was an integral part of who Capra was. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1917, achieving the rank of lieutenant, and fully intended to serve his country in WWI, but Capra "was barely in uniform before the War ended" (Bowser, 1997). Upon his discharge from the military, Capra had trouble finding work in Los Angeles, and, due to family pressure, Capra fled to San Francisco specifically to work in the newly-emerging film business: "I never saw a movie until I made one (Fultah Fisher's Boarding House in 1922 for which he was paid $75)" (Thomas, 1997, paragraph 3). In fact, Capra, who claimed he had little or no experience whatsoever in film or theatre before landing Fultah Fisher's Boarding House, actually had quite a good deal of hands-on experience, including a theatre club in high school, an extra in John Ford westerns, an actor and director in Nevada, a prop man and set builder
for Christie Film Company, and a director for Columbia’s Screen Snapshots newsreel series in 1920 (ASUV, 1998).

After directing his first film, Capra realized there was much he still needed to know about his newfound craft. He took it upon himself to receive the training he felt necessary. “By his own volition, he started from square one by processing amateur films” (M. Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99, paragraph 1). Shortly thereafter, comedy director Bob Eddy allowed Capra to serve as an apprentice, which opened the door for Capra’s brief role as a comedy writer. This was Capra’s first exposure to comedy and would later provide great influence on most of his films.

Poague (1975) describes the two major types of comedy Capra practiced as “clown-oriented comedy of the Aristophanic and Chaplinesque sort, and plot-oriented comedy of the Shakespearean or Jonsonian sort” (p. 25).

It was Will Rogers who helped elevate Capra to his first rung on the ladder of fame, by encouraging the struggling writer to fine-tune his skills while working as a gag writer on the Hal Roach Studio in Culver City, California, in 1924. “When he (Rogers) found out I had no office or typewriter he said I could use his dressing room and typewriter and he’d charge me one gag a day... I tried to give him one gag a day, but for my one he gave me twenty” (Capra, 1971, p. 40). Eventually, Capra wrote gags for veteran vaudevillian Harry Langdon, a disciple of Mack Sennet, who Capra believed fathered the “Golden Age of Film Comedy” (p. 57). Langdon then took Capra with him when he moved to First National Studios. When Langdon’s favorite director departed, Capra took over the direction of silent films such as Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Strong Man and Long Pants. On the surface, the two seemed like a perfect match. “The films
that Capra directed for Langdon created a chemistry that elevated both men into the top echelon of screen artists” (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99, paragraph 2).

Sure that the other's success was a result of their own unique talent, the two artisans began to detest one another. Capra left Langdon in 1927, and when he did he graduated from clown-oriented comedy to the plot-oriented comedy he was so well known for. The summation of Capra's experience enabled him to work with producer Harry Cohn, head of Columbia Studios. At the time Capra joined Columbia, the studio was referred to as a “poverty row studio,” because it didn't have big budgets or huge stars on its roster (Bowser, 1997). In Capra's first dealings with Cohn, he insisted on writing, producing and directing his first film for a fee of $1,000 (Capra, 1971). The climate and tempo at Columbia, though fast-paced, disorganized and demanding, was an ideal place to nurture and develop a directorial style that was a “personal vision” (Bowser, 1997). It was at Columbia with Cohn that Capra made most of his classic films. Capra is credited with enabling Columbia Pictures to shed its poverty row status. In its early years, Columbia was known as “CBC” after its partners – Cohn, Bryant and Cohen. In the industry it was known as “Corn Beef and Cabbage” (Bowser, 1997).

Cohn and Capra had a tumultuous relationship from the start; however, it was the “adversarial relationship between Cohn and Capra that was the foundation on which Columbia was built” (Bowser, 1997). Realizing Capra had extraordinary talent, yet was strong-willed, Cohn kept Capra “within the Columbia dream factory” by giving the headstrong director extensive creative control over his work (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99, paragraph 3). Capra, in turn, was said to model some of his characters after Cohn: “The moral authorities take virtually the same form throughout Capra’s work, appearing as big, fat, sedentary, cigar-chomping heads of large
bureaucracies (often with an uncanny physical resemblance to Harry Cohn, Capra's sometimes tyrannical boss at Columbia Pictures)” (Carney, 1986, p. 49).

Throughout the 30s and 40s, Capra collaborated with writer Robert Riskin to create 10 films with sound, virtually all of which were hits upon release; many were Oscar winners and remain classics (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99). Among them are Platinum Blonde (Columbia, 1931), American Madness (Columbia, 1932), Lady for a Day (Columbia, 1933), It Happened One Night (Columbia, 1934), Broadway Bill (Columbia, 1934), You Can't Take It With You (Columbia, 1938), Meet John Doe (Warner Brothers, 1941), and Riding High (Paramount, 1950). Capra and Riskin formed a close friendship and working relationship. “Their collaboration was probably one of the most important ones in my Dad's career,” stated Capra's son (Bowser, 1997).

The combination of Riskin’s deep devotion to the human condition and Capra’s gift for portraying these emotions on film was extremely effective. Capra himself referred to his films as “Capracorn;” the collaboration of Riskin and Capra was a “mixture of sentimentality and the darker side of machinations of human beings” (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99, paragraph 4). A host of metaphors are present in all of the films Capra and Riskin created, including the family, “rich and varied in its range of application and its multiplicity of roles” (Misticelli, 1997, Fall, p. 126).

Another critical collaboration was Capra’s contributions to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences when he served as president from 1935 to 1941. The Academy was in serious need of membership growth due to the Depression, and Capra is credited with “literally rescuing” or “saving” the failing organization, returning it to its prominent status (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99; Bowser, 1997).
Capra enlisted in the U.S. Army again in 1942 to serve his adopted country. As a major, he earned honors for a series of documentary defense films he created called Why We Fight (1942-45). Although it is rarely mentioned, Capra actually supervised the series, working with Anatole Litvak, Stuart Heisler, John Huston, George Stevens, William Wyler, Eric Knight, James Hilton, Walter Huston, Robert Stevens, Robert Flaherty, Alfred Newman, William Hornbeck, Joseph Biroc and Dimitro Tiomkin (Maland, 1980). According to Louis Gianetti (1976), Anton Litvak is credited as co-director of at least two of the films, Divide and Conquer and The Battle of Russia. An expert propagandist, Capra designed the series to include seven films which were largely constructed of re-edited existing footage, “much of it taken from captured enemy newsreels and Nazi propaganda films” (Gianetti, 1976, p. 228). The purpose of these documentaries was to serve as Capra’s contribution to World War II, and also to inspire servicemen and the public to continue supporting their country.

In his autobiography, Capra (1971) claims the Why We Fight series exemplified the “official policy” of the United States at the time, and further takes credit for being America’s voice: “Yes, I will say it. I was the first ‘Voice of America’” (p. 337).

After leaving the military, Frank Capra and fellow military peers George Stevens, Sam Briskin and William Wyler formed an independent studio known as Liberty Films. It was under the umbrella of Liberty that Capra directed what would come to be known as his “unquestioned masterpiece,” It’s A Wonderful Life. (Bowser, 1997). It is suggested that Capra wanted to be his own studio head, like Harry Cohn, but due to the lackluster public reception of It’s A Wonderful Life (box office proceeds barely re-couped production costs), Liberty Films was forced to close its doors (Bowser, 1997).
Maland (1980) refers to It’s A Wonderful Life as a culminating work, “one of the most personal visions ever realized in commercial cinema,” even though its success was not brought to fulfillment until well after its initial release in 1946 (p. 131). Maland further describes the term “culminating work” as “one of those rare works of narrative art in which an artist finds a form to express precisely the preoccupations he or she has been dealing with in a number of earlier works” (p. 131).

Alongside all of Capra’s preoccupations, he always had a message. “He progressed as a smooth professional to a smooth professional with a message. His films retained the wit, action, humor and all the workings of a Hollywood production, but more than ever they began to preach a personal sermon to his audience” (IMSA, 1999, April 5, paragraph 1). For example, consider this explanation of character George Bailey’s unselfish concern for the well-being of others in It’s A Wonderful Life: “That which denies his opportunity to help others represents a cancellation of himself. His altruism is indistinguishable from his self-interest, his generosity the most glorious expression of his self-awareness” (Misticchelli, 1997, Fall, p. 126).

Other themes in Capra films include an “inhibited prewar fantasy world of corner drug stores, ice cream, white picket fences and walks in the moonlight with the girl next door that had little relationship to postwar realities” (Blake, 1991, p. 169).

The films Capra directed during the Great Depression offered messages of faith and strength through adversity. The scholarly interpretation of the religious virtues of Capra’s films remains varied, however. In “The Catholic Imagination of Frank Capra,” Blake (1991) offers a strange irony among Capra’s images of old-time America: “With all his fascination with traditional virtues and values, he almost never mentions religion or churches. The boy who immigrated from Sicily as a child abandoned completely the
images of his Catholicism” (p. 169). On the other hand, Brown (1998) credits Capra for displaying deep religious meaning, “If the twentieth century needed to identify just one iconographer of theological optimism few would be more eligible than the film director Frank Capra” (p. 437).

It is doubtful that Capra would have achieved his iconographer status without the assistance of writer Robert Riskin. The collaboration between Riskin and Capra ended in 1951, when Riskin suffered a debilitating stroke. His most productive years behind him, Capra produced and directed three more major motion pictures: Here Comes the Groom (Paramount, 1951), Hole in the Head, (United Artists, 1959), and A Pocket Full of Miracles (United Artists 1961), which was a remake of Lady for a Day under new title. With this film, starring Bette Davis, some say the cinematic master had come full circle (M. David Lewis Enterprises, 1996-99).

Others would beg to differ. McBride (1992), in Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success, reviewed in America (1991), discusses what is termed a “gap between film critics and the public” (p. 19). “The popular misperception of Frank Capra as a sentimental, small-town purveyor of happy endings simply does not stand up to critical analysis. A filmmaker whose major themes are contemplated suicide and exploitation does not sprinkle the world with his fairy dust” (p. 19). The reviewer goes on to describe Capra’s Why We Fight series as “an embarrassment with nasty racism” (p. 19).

Yet another gap is seen in politics. While many critics describe Capra’s films as politically charged, Capra took a strong stance against this viewpoint. “People talk to me about my political films. I stop them. I never made political films. I made films about people” (Thomas, 1997, May 17, paragraph 32). Nonetheless, opinions on Capra’s political stance span the spectrum of conservative, right wing (Mortimer, 1994), as well
as a populist. It is Carney (1986), however, who most accurately describes Capra's film politics: “More than being about states of political or social affairs, as they are usually taken to be, Capra's films are more correctly described as being explorations of states of feeling that cut beneath all the abstract or intellectual ways of understanding life” (p. 6).

Political or not, Capra made socially conscious films in a socially conscious style. Capra's sets were relaxed and emanated a fondness for actors: “The best thing about Frank Capra's directing was his fundamental appreciation of actors” (Bowser, 1997). Among Capra's most prized leading ladies was Barbara Stanwyck, who was featured in several of his films. Bowser (1997) comments that the love affair between Capra and Stanwyck ended in 1933, and marked the beginning of his long-term marriage with his wife Lucille. It is suggested that Capra even modeled his future leading ladies after Lucille (“Lou”). Capra fathered four children with Lou: Frank; Jr., John; Lucille; and Tom; he relied upon his family to provide "solace and relief from the anxieties and depressions that were beginning to emerge as small cracks in his otherwise idealistic life" (Bowser, 1997).

Capra suffered several bouts of serious depression, usually after an unexpected negative response following the release of a film, or when he felt personal humiliation, often at the hands of Harry Cohn. The most notable occurred after the release of Broadway Bill in 1934, when Capra experienced serious emotional trauma and physical collapse, and underwent two exploratory surgeries (Bowser, 1997).

Through it all, Capra is consistently likened to a hero, his character “John Doe,” for example, standing on a national stage, speaking to the people of America and managing to move them in a remarkable way (Bowser, 1997).
Others were moved by Capra’s work, in particular the inhabitants of his birthplace, the Sicilian village of Bisacquino, Italy. In 1977, after 74 years in America, Capra returned to a thrilled hometown crowd. McBride (1992) describes Capra’s experience there as “an ordeal of the purest agony” (p. 10). While it should have been a triumph for Capra, he was uncomfortable around his countrymen, and when asked about the experience, the champion of American ideals was quoted as stating “I felt nothing,” and “I never suffered so much” (McBride, 1992, p 9; p. 11).

Capra’s autobiography The Name Above The Title (1971) was, most likely, an exploration of Capra’s understanding of his own life, although in the book it is not made clear whether Capra felt disdain for his Italian heritage, or guilt about his personal success. His reaction to the trip in 1977 is ironic in light of Capra’s film messages, many of which were laced with heartfelt sympathy and compassion for common folk.

Some say that his message of the simple, honest man with courage, wit and love finding triumph over his environment was, in fact, his own biography, “transferred to the mythical canvas of motion pictures” (Arnold, 1991, September 4).

Throughout his lifetime it is doubtful that Capra was ever emotionally ready to realize his own success. Even if he did not, the media of the day realized it, as written in this Time article from 1938, entitled “Columbia’s Gem”: “Frank Capra has an almost unparalleled record of having turned out only one real flop. On the strength of this record he is regarded not only as the mainstay of his company (Columbia Pictures) but as the top director in his industry” (p. 35).

The film director, who achieved international acclaim by celebrating the hero and American values, died of natural causes on May 3, 1991, at the age of 94.
A complete listing of films directed and produced by Frank Capra can be found in Appendix 1.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Life and Works

Wright's uncommonly long and fruitful life was by turns unruly and heroic, and posterity has been working overtime to sort it all out and assign him a place in the pantheon of American greats.

- Curtis Wayne, House Beautiful

Equally colorful is the character of Frank Lloyd Wright who wittingly said, "So long as we had the luxuries, the necessities could pretty well take care of themselves" (Wright, 1943, p. 118).

Wright was not only a masterful architect, he was a master at self-promotion: cane in hand, cape swirling behind him and broad-rimmed hat pulled down slightly over one eye - this is the vision most people conjure up at the name of Frank Lloyd Wright. According to Secrest (1992), Wright's "costume" (originally worn by advertising pioneer Elbert Hubbard) was painstakingly conceived to accentuate drama, "No one who ever saw him make an entrance in that regalia ever forgot him" (p. 156). His cane was not a crutch, but was used as a "decorative adjunct," for making "broad gestures that would outline a new scheme or jab home a point" (p. 156).

Wright was born shortly after the Civil War ended in 1867, in rural Wisconsin. The official record of his birth is two years later on June 8, 1869; experts speculate that Wright lied about his age (Bey, 1998, June 7). In the mid-1870s a German kindergarten movement was making its way to the Midwest via immigrants. Wright's mother, Anna, became keenly interested in the new "Froebel" technique and underwent training in
kindergarten instruction (Kaufmann, 1989). “This new system of child-centered education emphasized the object lesson, nature, and a permissive educational environment” (Augustana College, 1997, December 12, paragraph 1). Froebel lessons included hands-on activities involving bright colors, patterns, folded paper, and geometric forms – spheres, cubes, cylinders and triangles. Moved by his early education, Wright devoted several pages in Frank Lloyd Wright: An Autobiography to his memories of his mother’s teachings based on the Froebel method.

Wright’s destiny to be an architect was ‘set in stone’ long before he matured. “Fascinated by buildings, she [Anna Lloyd-Jones Wright] took ten full-page wood-engravings of the old English Cathedrals from ‘Old England,’ a pictorial publication to which the father had subscribed, had them framed simply in flat oak and hung upon the walls of the room that was to be her son’s. Before he was born, she said she intended him to be an architect” (Wright, 1943, p. 11; Kaufmann, 1989, p. 34).

One of the most influential occurrences during Wright’s youth was when his father, William, a preacher and lover of music, abandoned his family when Wright was just 15 years old. William never returned and Wright never forgave him (Henry, 2000, February 5). As Wright matured, he was greatly influenced by the interests and attitude of his father. Wright embodied his father’s sense of freedom, deep affection for music, and adherence to religious thought. In later years, ironically, Wright mirrored his father’s actions by abandoning his first wife, Catherine, and their six children.

A major life-shaping event was when Wright was sent to stay on an Uncle’s farm near Spring Green, Illinois, which forced him to develop a strong work ethic. Secrest (1992), refers to Wright’s detailed description of the backbreaking work in his autobiography as an effort to “arouse the reader’s sympathy for the small victim” (p.
Wright tried several times to escape the hard work, but, each time, his relatives brought him back, stating “add tired to tired,” a quote he used frequently and “approvingly” in later years (Secrest, 1992, p. 65).

Another behavior Secrest (1992) attributes to Wright’s time on the farm was his pattern of slipping away, often to daydream. She deduces this to be a common solution he would often turn to when faced with intolerable situations throughout his lifetime. “It also betrays a certain need for vindictive triumph that, as an adult, would reinforce his determination to win, whatever the cost” (Secrest, 1992, p. 65).

According to Kaufmann (1989), at the age of 20, against the advice of his elders, Wright moved to Chicago to begin his career as an architect. At this time, he had undergone only brief training in drafting from the University of Wisconsin. Wright’s first job was at the office of Joseph Lyman Silsbee, who “designed hexagonal rooms and cantilevered bays – the kind of thing Wright would later employ” (Bey, 1998, June 7, paragraph 11). He worked at a variety of firms over the next few years, always in search of a more “inspiring master” and a better rate of pay; eventually, Wright met his “Lieber Meister” at the firm of Adler and Sullivan in 1887 (Kaufmann, 1989, p. 37).

Louis H. Sullivan and the young Wright worked closely together. At this time (late 1800s), architecture was changing due to a rapidly industrializing nation. “Sullivan was not only a designer of buildings, but a man to whom architecture was more than a business, or even a profession, but rather a fundamental component in the development of human society” (Kaufmann, 1989, p. 37). Kaufmann (1989) also suggests that Sullivan left Wright with two legacies which would influence every Wright creation: “I mean those two words they applied to architecture: organic and democratic” (p. 38).
What Wright also gained from Sullivan was the legacy of creating an architecture that was indicative of American culture. Wright believed that America needed a style “of our own time and place,” and should “cut the umbilical chord from the influences of Europe” – as virtually all U.S. and state capital buildings are styled after Greek and Roman architecture (Henry, 2000, February 5).

Kathryn Smith (1998) states that Wright demonstrated a philosophy of organic architecture in every detail, “from furniture to freeways” (p. 7). His social philosophy, grounded in Jeffersonian democracy, was not considered mainstream in its day, “Pragmatic and idealistic, autocratic and populist, nostalgic and prophetic – it combined the Emersonian view of the moral good of nature with an American trust in self-reliance” (Smith, p. 8).

An Emersonian Glossary (1999) provides definitions of two key terms that relate to Frank Lloyd Wright’s underlying architectural philosophy – America and Art. America is “a grand idea where the old cultural institutions of Europe could be radically reformed to justly serve the culture of the individual;” Art is “the soul’s action on the world; to educate the perception of beauty” (paragraph 2-3).

A series of Wright essays edited by William Cronin and reviewed by Philip Jacks (1994), refers to the formative influences in Wright’s life as being “his Welsh upbringing, his mother’s educational progressivism, and the pervasiveness of transcendentalist themes in his writings” (paragraph 2). The review further points out that Cronin recognizes Ralph Waldo Emerson, not Frederick Froebel, as the basis for Wright’s organic architecture, and, to him, the obvious connection between the Emersonian dictum of self-reliance and Wright’s belief that architecture should be self-sufficient.
Self-sufficiency was the American way, and nothing was more American to Wright than the home. Wright (1954), in *The Natural House*, states that he longed for the chance to build a "sensible house," remarking that homes of the day "lied about everything," were "stuck up in thoughtless fashion," and "had no sense of unity at all nor any such sense of space as should belong to a free people" (p. 14). He was out to make a grand impact on the world of architecture by focusing on how an architect could manipulate a person's vision of a space (Wright, 2000, February 5). He accomplished this first through his unique housing designs.

Ian Thomson (1999) summarizes the architect's major principles as derived from Wright's essay "In the Cause of Architecture," as follows:

**Simplicity** – All which is unnecessary should be eliminated.

**Multiple Styles** – Show more concern for the requirements of the individual than the styles of the time.

**Sympathy with the Environment** – The site and architecture should be in harmony. Buildings and colors "grow" from their environment. Local materials must be used for construction to ensure harmony.

**The "Nature" of Materials** – Buildings should not be disguised, building materials should show their natural characteristics.

**Buildings Should Bring People Joy** (p. 11-12)

Although some of his designs approached the new aesthetic of the International Style, Wright remained largely indifferent to the work of other architects (Jacks, 1994). As described by Thomson (1999), Wright's work can be divided into distinct periods:

**The Early Period** – Derivative of the work of his contemporaries, Queen Anne or shingle styles used while designing at Adler & Sullivan.
The **Prairie Period** – (1901-1910) Signified by a “new house” which was characterized by strong horizontal themes, low roof lines and organic architecture principles – natural materials and harmony between building and site.

The **Textile Block Period** – Indicative of Mayan-inspired, cast concrete houses, many of which are located in California.

The **Usonian Period** – (1935-55) These homes were more cost-effective than Prairie houses, could be self-built by the client (Usonian “automatics”), and could also be prefabricated.

Wright was prolific and dramatic in nearly every aspect of his life. Riley and Grehan (1997) in *Visions of Wright*, indicate that the architect produced an astonishing number of designs and still had a restless mind. Just as he would develop a distinct form of expression, “organic architecture,” for example, he would go into a totally new direction. Secrest (1992) notes that Wright reveled in Saturday mornings, when he would delight in rearranging the furniture in his home. Riley and Grehan (1997) state that Wright’s claim to greatness rests not in his “architectural theories,” but in the structures he designed (p. 7). Others were impressed with the control he would exercise over every project, insisting on designing furniture, accessories, artwork, dinnerware, silverware – even the dresses of female clients (Henry, 2000, February 5; Burns & Novick, 1998).

Unfortunately, many of the architect’s finest structural achievements were never available to an American audience, such as the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (1923), that withstood an earthquake while other buildings around it tumbled to the ground (Riley & Grehan, 1997).
Wright's grand plan for cities, states Luscombe (1998, June), seemed "fantastical and cinematic," a "lesson in poetic functionalism" (p. 1). Other Frank Lloyd Wright originals include the Hollyhock House (1917), the Charles Ennis House (1923), the Beth Sholom Synagogue (1954), the Hoffman Auto Showroom (1954), and the Marin County Civic Center (1957), to name a few.

Norris Kelly Smith (1979) indicates that Wright was clearly ahead of his time. Wright has long been associated with the Modern Movement in architecture, as Nikolaus Pevsner stated in 1936: "[Wright's] position in 1903 was almost identical with that of the most advanced thinkers on the future of art and architecture today" (p. 11). Wright, according to Jacks (1994), was a "reluctant modernist" (paragraph 4).

It is further suggested by Smith (1979), that the "flowering" of modern architecture he brought forth in Germany and the Netherlands when he fled to Europe in 1909, "should rightly have occurred in Chicago" (p. II). Wright's exit from America coincides with his love affair with Mrs. Edwin Cheney, the wife of former Oak Park, Illinois client Edwin Cheney, and signals the onset of his Textile Block Period. Although his affairs were widely publicized by the media, Wright was married three times in his lifetime, and spent virtually all of his adult years in committed relationships.

Tumultuous relationships did not impact Wright's ability to create. Some of the most remarkably designed architecture and accessories, from towering office buildings, resorts and churches, to prairie homes, a gas station, fireplaces and furniture, were one-of-a-kind Wright originals. In Smith's (1979) book on Wright's architectural content, the author contrasts the architectural practices of many of Wright's peers to "thinking in Greek," while Wright himself thought in "Hebrew" (p. 52).
Concerning Wright's own religion, Goodwin (1998, September) suggests that the architect displayed a contradiction in beliefs, "While Wright preached traditional values, he was, fundamentally, an iconoclast" (attacked the widely accepted ideas, values and beliefs of others) (paragraph 7). Wright, who considered "Nature" his only religion, designed many places of worship, including 18 synagogues (Burns & Novick, 1998).

Wright was prolific at nearly everything he did and supremely self-confident. Director Ken Burns (1998) describes Wright as a "genius who strutted loudly on the world stage," and illustrated this belief with a segment from an interview with Mike Wallace in 1957, when Wright stated he could "shake designs from his sleeve," and that, given time, he could totally rebuild America (Hamlin, 1998, Nov. 8, p. 48)

By many accounts, Wright was difficult to work with, and predictably his projects nearly always went well over budget. "You had to be a risk-taker to hire Frank Lloyd Wright," states Henry (2000, February 5); due to the unique nature of his designs coupled with his reputation for going over budget, it was quite difficult for clients to obtain bank financing for Wright projects. Of necessity, most of his clients were wealthy. Wright, however, was not. Although Wright insisted on partaking of the finer things in life, he was never affluent. Wright often lived on the brink of bankruptcy. "This love for beautiful things - rugs, books, prints or anything made by art of craft or building - especially buildings - kept the butcher, the baker, and the landlord always waiting. Sometimes incredibly long" (Wright, 1943, p. 118).

Wright was enchanted by many things in life. He had a deep reverence for man, nature and art. He was fond of oriental artifacts, particularly Japanese prints, which the architect considered to be the greatest two-dimensional art in the world (Henry, 2000, February 5). Eventually, Wright became the largest collector and dealer of Japanese
prints and artifacts in the United States. Wright was extremely fond of music; in fact, an entire edition of the *Frank Lloyd Wright Quarterly* (1998, Spring) is dedicated to this passion. The opening scene in Ken Burns and Lynn Novic's (1998) documentary focuses on Wright's theory that music and architecture are developed “plot and plan in much the same way.” Wright believed that music was the language beyond words - it was of the human heart. Often referring to his architecture as “eye music,” Wright was of the opinion that Beethoven's music, because of its emotional range and depth, was “divine harmony alive in the human spirit” (Lucas, 1998, p. 4).

Music and art continue to be an integral part of Wright's Taliesin Fellowship program, as text from the original 1932 brochure suggests: “The Taliesin Fellowship is an extension of architecture at Taliesin to the architecture of music, sculpture and painting by way of agriculture, manufacture and building” (Pfeiffer, 1982, p. 3-4).

Wright evolved his home in Spring Green, Wisconsin, into his first architectural school in 1932. Actually, the school was the idea of his third wife, Olgivanna Iovanna Svetlana, in an effort to help Wright's otherwise failing career (Burns & Novick, 1998). In his later years, Wright became infatuated with the desert and built an extension of Taliesin in Scottsdale, Arizona. Much of Wright's *Taliesin West* complex is constructed with desert materials, rocks and sand, from the surrounding area. For 22 years, from 1937 to 1959, each winter Wright and his students would migrate from Wisconsin to Arizona, to construct the ever-enlarging complex, using what Wright described as “desert rubblestone” construction (Thomson, 1999, p. 312).

It was at *Taliesin West* that Wright took time out to enjoy one of his favorite past-times – watching Western movies (Henry, 2000, February 5). Wright fashioned a special cabaret room equipped with a large projection screen for this purpose. It is interesting
to note that a man who had such passion for the home felt most at home with Westerns. Genre films, according to Affron (1982), “are contextual ‘homes’ for the viewer,” offering at the same time comfort in the known and “meaningful disarrangement” when the intimacy and comfort is breached (p. 37).

Wright felt most comfortable in the country and indicated that he did not like cities, often suggesting that his clients build as far away from urban areas as possible. He described the architecture in New York City as “bigger and better insignificance” than any other city from coast to coast, “deadly monotony,” and its buildings were “man-eating skyscrapers” (Wright, 1943, p. 316). Ironically, Wright did design and construct his own skyscrapers. Fascinated with technology, Wright is credited for designing the first building in the United States equipped with air conditioning—the Larkin Company Administration Building, built in 1903, and demolished in 1949 (Henry, 2000, February 5; Thomson, 1999).

Smith (1979) offers a striking comparison of two buildings to illustrate Wright’s style—Mies van der Roche’s Seagram Building versus Wright’s Price Tower:

Whereas the latter (Seagram Building) is a wholly impersonal and objective statement about the possibilities of purity and perfection in design—the purity of an irreducibly simple system of construction and the perfection of a system of proportions—Wright’s tower vigorously declares, by means of its rich variations of color, material, shape, saliency, and rhythm, its architect’s conviction that life in the modern city—for the doctor and engineer in their offices no less than for the family in its apartment (the Tower contains both offices and apartments)—should be lively and exciting, touched with novelty and adventure, rising high and proud in the midst of mundane banality. (p. 18)
One important contribution to the City of New York was Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Like most of his controversial life (divorces, bankruptcies, the murder of a mistress, fires, fights and failures), the construction of the Guggenheim was a drama in its own right, but largely known as the crowning achievement of Frank Lloyd Wright's late career (Pfeiffer, 1994).

Always ready to take on the world and tout his accomplishments, many times at the expense of others, Frank Lloyd Wright, as described by Time in 1938, was a remarkable figure. In reference to his studio, the author says, “Its name is Taliesin, a Welsh word meaning ‘shining brow.’ Its history is one of tragic irony. Its character is one of extraordinary repose. It is the home of Frank Lloyd Wright, the greatest architect of the 20th Century” (p. 29).

In 1959, at the age of 92, Wright died at Taliesin West in Arizona and was buried near his Taliesin home in Wisconsin.

A timeline of Wright's life and architectural works appear in Appendix 2.

General Observations

A great deal can be concluded about the similarities between Capra and Wright, beginning with the fact that both men were true artists and believers in their work. From an early age, both were prophesized to contribute greatly to the world.

An extreme sense of confidence prevailed in both men, although Wright was more steadfast in his confidence, and appears to be more emotionally stable than was Capra. The director suffered greatly from depression throughout his lifetime. After finding out that Harry Cohn used Capra's name on the English prints of a "B" picture to
capitalizing on Capra’s popularity, Capra sued Cohn and refused to work for at least a year (Bowser, 1997). Such an incident, likely, would not have fazed Wright.

When Wright’s hired hand Julian Carlton, in 1914, unaccountably went berserk, setting fire to Wright’s beloved Taliesin and slaughtering Mamah Cheney (his mistress), her two children, and four others with an axe, the architect “bounced back” (Thomson, 1999; Burns & Novick, 1998). In fact, within a short period of time of the tragedy, Wright had fallen in love with the woman who would later become his second wife, Miriam Noel. It is not clear whether Wright’s relationships indicate great emotional stability, or emotional shallowness.

No one will ever know exactly how Wright dealt with crises inside. Blake (1960) comes to the conclusion that Wright was much more like Capra with regard to his sensitivities. Wright spent most of his life defending the fact that he was a simple country boy (“hick”); this contributed greatly to his disdain for urban sophisticates and big cities. “He was intensely conscious of his clothes (he learned to dress like a king), intensely conscious of what people thought and said of him, intensely conscious of and deeply hurt by what he considered to be the insults regularly hurled at him by the city slickers” (Blake, 1960, p. 267). This indicates Wright may have been much more impressionable than his outward reactions led others to believe.

The sensitive side of both men did not prevent them from exaggerating the truth for their own personal gain. Capra and Wright were regularly referred to as hustlers, con men and self-promoters. Each was said to have distorted his life story, as is told in Capra’s The Name Above The Title (1971), and in Wright’s Frank Lloyd Wright: An Autobiography (1943). Described as a “wild self-promoter,” Wright was said to have invented numerous details and to have been desperate for publicity, particularly at the
time his autobiography was published in 1943. The book is actually credited for breathing life into Wright’s late career (Burns & Novick, 1998). Capra’s autobiography was also a source of controversy. One review states the book discloses Capra’s “preternatural ego,” another found the book “mechanically scrupulous in aborting blame and credit to himself and others” (Willis, 1974, p. 205).

Emotionalism was a way of life for Capra and Wright. Capra was said to have explosive arguments with Harry Cohn at Columbia, which many believed would spell the end of Capra’s contract with the studio. Moments after the explosion, the two would be seen having a leisurely lunch together (Bowser, 1997). Wright had a similar relationship with his eldest son, John Lloyd Wright (Lloyd). Lloyd became Wright’s assistant around 1912, and the two were said to have had turbulent arguments at construction sites. While the workers around them were quite shaken by these events, father and son would quickly reconvene as if the heated discussions had never taken place (Burns & Novick, 1998).

As recounted in journal article “Wright the Younger” (Cramer, 1999, March), Wright once wrote to his son Lloyd, “I have been your ‘excuse’ for too long, my son!” (paragraph 2). The article goes on to characterize those harsh words as containing “more than a grain of truth: In his own egomaniacal way, Wright managed to characterize the complex, disjointed relationship between a titanic father and the son who would forever labor in his shadow” (Cramer, 1999, March, paragraph 2).

Biographer Merele Secrest, as interviewed in the documentary Frank Lloyd Wright (1998), makes note of Wright’s childlike behavior, “He was so much at the mercy of his emotions, that you think he’s at the other spectrum. He’s barely a human being.” Later in the documentary, Secrest likens Wright to a juvenile who craved the full
attention of his first wife, Catherine. She, however, was so consumed with raising the 
couple’s six children, that she was never able to fully dedicate herself to Wright; this was 
likely the catalyst behind Wright’s affair with Mamah Borthwick Cheney (Burns & 

Though extremely powerful men in their level of outward confidence and 
prolific output of work, Capra and Wright were slight of build physically. Both men 
were less than five feet, nine inches tall. These less-than-towering figures, however, 
gained the cover of *Time* magazine in the height of their respective careers. Perhaps 
one of the most unexpected discoveries in researching Capra and Wright is the fact that 
both men were featured along with the company of such greats as Albert Einstein, Betty 
Davis, Orson Welles and golfer Johnny Goodman on the cover of *Time* in the same year 
- 1938.

Another interesting finding is that both men lived to be over 90 years of age. 
Capra was 94 when he died in 1991, and in 1959, Wright died at the age of 92.

Neither Capra nor Wright was ever extremely wealthy, though Capra never 
suffered the sort of bankruptcies that Wright did. It was widely known that Capra had a 
deep disdain for living his early years in poverty; his quote “I hated being poor” (Capra, 
1971) can be found in most biographical studies on the man. Capra was not known for 
living beyond his means, however, and was often praised for exhibiting an upstanding 
and simple life. Wright, on the other hand, was an extreme risk-taker at nearly 
everything he did. He had a deep desire to always *live on the edge*; perhaps it is here that 
he felt most alive. Wright was described as a “Golden Boy who never grew up,” playing 
with other people’s money like a child, and never worrying about paying his own debts 
(Burns & Novick, 1998).
While Wright lived most of his life in scandal, and nearly ruined his career due to infidelity, Capra's marriage with Lou was upheld for its simplicity and strength. An article in *The Ladies Home Journal* in 1941 called them "one of the most normal couples in Hollywood - an accolade in a town where screwiness has become conventional" (McBride, 1992, p. 265-266). With the exception of Capra's on-and-off love affair with Barbara Stanwyck prior to his marriage to Lou, Capra was not in the media spotlight for questionable relationships.

Wright had at least four notable relationships and three marriages, many of which were considered scandalous and greatly discredited his career. Wright did little to hide them. Outraged by the media's negative coverage of his affair with Mamah Cheney, Wright held a press conference on December 25, 1911 to explain his actions. The basic message to the media was that "the ordinary man needed rules to guide his conduct. He (Wright) was not ordinary" (Burns & Novick, 1998).

In addition to being artists, both men longed to be respected and powerful businessmen. Capra's attempt was after WWII when he and three other colonels with whom he had served in the military conceived Liberty Films. Sadly, the fledgling production company lasted less than two years due to the initially poor reception of *It's A Wonderful Life*. In Capra's (1971) autobiography, he refers to Liberty Films as "an independent production company that became the bellweather of independent film production," and never mentions the poor reception of the film as a reason why Liberty was not financially stable (p. 379). Instead, he takes credit for keeping the company together, claiming that profits from the film were delayed, and Great Britain "slapped a 75 percent-of-earnings tax" on American films (Capra, 1971, p. 386).
Wright's attempts at business would have been equally dismal were it not for the controlling efforts of his third wife, Olgivanna. Just before he received the commission to build "the most famous house in the world," also known as the Kaufman House or Fallingwater, Wright and his apprentices had virtually no project in the works (Burns & Novick, 1998). Thomson (1999) describes landing the project in 1935 as a "fortuitous" time (p. 194). It was Wright's Taliesin Fellowship and the tuition of its apprentices that the ever-struggling architect was forced to rely upon financially during the latter portion of his career.

Dedicated to every aspect of their work, both Capra and Wright were fast and productive workers. Capra was trained to labor at a brisk pace when he first started at Columbia Pictures, and fine-tuned his ability to expedite as his career progressed. In his autobiography, Capra (1971) claims to have completed It's A Wonderful Life in just four months. Wright completed most of the drawings for Fallingwater in approximately a three-hour period, just before Mr. Kaufman walked into the Taliesin office (Burns & Novick, 1998).

Emerging technologies were fascinating to Capra and Wright. Capra, who earned an engineering degree, embraced the advent of sound in the early 1900s, using it to its full advantage primarily through dialogue and sound effects. Music, however, was used sparingly in his films. Wright, though enamored by nature, was fond of automobiles and often experimented with using innovative materials in design projects - steel, plastics and glass. To enhance open workspaces in the Johnson Wax Administration Building (1936-1950), recognized as one of the most remarkable structures built in the inter-war period, Wright used lighting tubes in horizontal bands to add light and warmth to the interior (Thomson, 1999, p. 184, 186).
Realizing the power of the media to influence, Capra and Wright used it to their advantage. In Capra's film *Meet John Doe*, financed by Warner Brothers in 1941, the director foreshadows the power of mass media to sway an otherwise steadfast crowd in support of the main character (Bowser, 1997). According to Maland (1980), Capra created the John Doe character to embody his own idealistic principles; in reality, the film became his darkest. Through this film, he and Riskin would “astonish the critics with contemporary realities; the ugly face of hate; the power of uninformed bigots.... the agony of disillusionment; and the wild dark passions of mobs” (Capra, 1971, p. 297; Maland, 1980, p. 109-110).

Wright, who embraced the spotlight, was quite content to rouse the media's attention with his outrageous lifestyle and magnificent claims. In one of two TV interviews with Mike Wallace in 1957, Wright confidently stated, “I've been accused of saying I am the greatest architect in the world. If I said so [and he did], I don’t think it would be very arrogant” (Burns & Novick, 1998).

When Capra and the actor who played his John Doe character were both featured on the cover of two separate issues of *Time* magazine in 1938, Maland (1980) suggests Capra wondered if he might have been a “huckster” like Doe: “Both (Capra and Doe) were getting recognition, and both wondered if they deserved it” (Maland, 1980, p. 113).

Without question, one of the greatest attributes the two artists shared was a deep-seated fondness of America. Capra loved his adopted country. He strove throughout his lifetime to communicate an enduring picture of his own brand of America using honesty, sentiment and humor. Wright focused on architecture that was truly American, always working toward a vision of an open and flowing exploration,
combining utilitarian design with the organic aspects of nature. He wanted people to experience his vision: "His vision of what it would be like to live in that space is that it would be transformative. It would make people different who inhabited that space" (Burns & Novick, 1998).

Ultimately, the artists longed for those who viewed a Capra film or lived or worked in a Wright building to be more enlightened for having done it.
CHAPTER 3

FILM AND ARCHITECTURE AS COMMUNICATION DEVICES

It would be difficult in a study of this nature to overlook rhetoric as a vital factor in the communication process. As distinct and deliberate forms of communication, both film and architecture serve to persuade and convince. Harrington (1973), in The Rhetoric of Film, states that rhetoric is a practical and necessary art that deals with the "effectiveness of communication that manifests itself in every mode of language. Almost by definition, communication goes hand in hand with persuasion" (p. 3).

Harrington (1973) also states that there are situations in which the communicator has no conscious thoughts of persuading an audience, citing as an example the slow-motion cine-poem film Dream of the Wild Horses: "The result is a film of beautiful, graceful movement, but no real 'point' exists" (p. 4). One would surmise that Harrington uses the term 'point' as an analogy for persuasion or purpose. If this is true, it is unlikely that either Capra or Wright ever created a film or designed a building in which no real point existed.

Distinguished by the three communication components: speaker (voice, sender), audience (receiver) and subject, Aristotle defined the basic lines of rhetoric (see Figure 3) as being the tone and attitude as conveyed by the speaker (Harrington, 1973). It is through these two non-tangible traits of tone and attitude that the speaker defines his/her relationship to the audience and to the subject. In order to effectively...
communicate, one “must adopt a voice with a style and manner presenting a subject in a way most pleasing to an audience” (p. 5).

In relating the basic lines of rhetoric to film and architecture, the speaker is the filmmaker/architect, the subject is the film/building, and the audience is the filmgoer/client. Realizing and acknowledging the exact tone utilized to impact the audience and the attitude taken with the subject matter are far more difficult to define, as motives are neither tangible nor visible.

In order to determine motives, the audience must strive to interpret and comprehend. Bordwell (1997) indicates that comprehension and interpretation involve constructing a meaning out of textual cues, a psychological and social activity.

The perceiver is not a passive receiver of data but an active mobilizer of structures and processes (either ‘hard-wired’ or learned) which enable her to search for information relevant to the task and data at hand. In watching a film, the perceiver identifies certain cues which prompt her to execute many inferential activities – ranging from the mandatory and very fast activity of perceiving apparent motion, through the more ‘cognitively penetrable’ process of
constructing, say, links between scenes, to the still more open process of ascribing abstract meanings to the film. In most cases, the spectator applies knowledge structures to cues which she identifies within the film. (Bordwell, 1997, p. 3)

Although architecture lacks the illusion of motion that film is capable of, one might suggest that the basic task of perceiving meaning is similar to Bordwell's (1997) explanation. An important difference is that an audience of architecture has the luxury of physically moving about a structure, in addition to the ability to engage the sense of touch to gain further understanding. Creating perceived links between scenes and links between rooms are akin to developing a final interpretation of meaning and a comprehension of the creator's rhetoric.

In *Understanding Architecture*, Roth (1993) writes that architecture is an unavoidable art because it permeates our very existence. "It is possible to take deliberate steps to avoid looking at painting, sculpture, drawings, or any of the other visual arts, but architecture constantly touches us, shapes our behavior, and conditions our psychological mood.... it is the art form we inhabit" (Roth, 1993, p. 1, 3).

As both a science and an art, architecture is concerned with the perception of buildings, and enjoyment thereof, which may be largely based on physiological responses that the skillful architect understands well how to manipulate for maximum impact. Roth (1993) also suggests that the role of the perceiver is an active one; that the fullest experience of architecture is gained from expanding knowledge about the building, history, structure and meaning, while "reducing our prejudices and ignorance" (p. 5).
Architecture, as Tillich (1987) notes, is unlike other arts – which is both an
advantage and a disadvantage. Architecture serves a utilitarian purpose. For this
reason it cannot be as directly and purposely “expressive as a picture or sculpture. On
the other hand, it has a great advantage: it is bound by purpose to a definite character
and cannot go wild with irrational imagination” (Tillich, 1987, p. 192).

Self-Reflection and Audiences

One aim of this chapter is to reveal the ability of film and architecture to
communicate the intended self-reflection of its creators. As such, an important
conclusion drawn by Ronald Schenk (1992) illustrates the difference between
perception/appearance and practical action/meaning: “Perception is considered as a
passive enterprise, which in and of itself, has no effect on the world. Change is brought
about through overt action in the world. Appearance is associated with that which is
merely superficial, while meaning is connected with that which is operating invisibly.
To attain meaning, one needs to act to uncover it” (p. 23).

In order to gain a deeper understanding (meaning) of the works of Capra and
Wright, one must first understand that which is operating invisibly. Chapter two
highlighted the character of each artist, his experiences, morals and values. Though
many times not visible, these incidents very likely made a substantial impact on
audiences by their subtle manifestation in a Capra film or a Wright building.

Considering that film and architecture are art, Zettl (1990) suggests that the
process of art must draw on life. Therefore, in order to create, one must live, and in
drawing upon the experiences of living, one has inadvertently engaged in self-reflection.
However potent the art (communication) is, however, it is the responsibility of the viewer to “act” in uncovering the true meaning or self-reflection. Perception alone is not potent enough for this discovery.

In discussing perception, Dondis (1973) indicates that designs are created from colors, shapes, tones and relative proportions; when these elements are related interactively, meaning is intended. The manipulation of the visual elements – line, color, shape, direction, texture, scale, dimension, motion and light – depend on the artist’s subjective expression as exemplified by the emphasis and arrangement of selected elements over others. “In these choices, the artist finds his meaning. The final result is the artist’s true statement” (Dondis, 1973, p. 21).

Meaning also depends on the response of the viewer, who modifies and interprets “through the net of subjective judgement” (Dondis, 1973, p. 21). Relevant theories of evaluating art, such as Zettl’s (1990) applied media aesthetics, assist in making interpretation several steps closer to true objectivity than could otherwise be achieved.

Even considering the illusionary aspects of film and architecture (a single dimension versus a three-dimensional object), several relevant parallels are found between the two media. Van Schaik (1989) indicates that postmodern filmmaking follows architecture’s “current embrace of decentered subjectivity.... While others argue that films are structured in ways that parallel architectural layering and narrative” (p. 28). Whether film models architecture, or architecture models film, one critical finding is that both media share much with regard to perspective.

In short, it is the viewing context that brings the two together. In “The Architecture of Reception,” Arnold likens the cinema to classical paintings because of a
similarity in “perspective construction” which equals a “shared ideological ‘essence’” (p. 37). Arnold (1985) emphasizes the exhibition of paintings, photography and cinema as being that which drives control over perspective, and therefore, controls the reception of the image. The flow of traffic through an art gallery or the division of social strata in Renaissance theatre seating illustrates this point. So, too, viewers of buildings are controlled (by the architect) via their reception of the image.

Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, was a master at controlling how one saw and perceived a structure (exterior) and a space (interior), often called a “procession” (Wright, 2000, February 5). The architect used low ceilings, small doorways, 90-degree turns and stairs to dramatize the entrance into spaces such as the Unity Temple (1908). This procession enhanced the feeling of a religious experience (Burns & Novick, 1998).

In keeping with the theme of theatre reception, a key concern of Wright’s while designing and constructing theatres and auditoriums, was striving to link the audience with the stage by eliminating the proscenium (the archway or frame that conceals the edges of the set) (Lucas, 1998, Spring).

Though Arnold (1985) suggests viewers of cinema “absorb” as a passive audience, the filmmaker, through the ability to control participants, establishes a realistic illusion of perspective. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) states that images are comprised of two types of participants, “represented participants (the people, the places and things depicted in images), and interactive participants (the people who communicate with each other through images, the producers and viewers of images)” (p. 119). And while there may be a disjunction between the “context of the production” and the “context of reception,” ultimately there are interactive meanings which are visually encoded based on the competencies (social interactions and social relations) shared by
producers and viewers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 121). In essence, realizing shared experiences assists producers to better impact audiences. Further, through realizing shared experiences, viewers can gain a truer understanding of the producer's intentions.

Another applicable type of image is known as a "demand" image. Carefully constructed by their interactive participants (producers), demand images compel viewers to take action through evoking emotion. "When images 'demand,' they demand, one could say, the 'goods-and-services' that realize a particular social relation" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 129).

It could be reasoned that as producers Capra and Wright were keenly aware of the context of production and reception and used this inherent knowledge to better control their participants. The "demand" images they created sought to evoke the responses they desired of their audiences - a revived spirituality, hope for a better tomorrow, or a belief in good over evil.

For example, one of Capra's key editing strategies was to use reaction shots of characters, which would "bring his audience into the film, and increase their absorption of the story" (Maland, 1980, p. 149). In a final sequence of It's A Wonderful Life, Capra contrasts the bewildered reaction shots of George Bailey with cutaways of the happily changed faces of other characters in an effort to stress how different Pottersville was (Maland, 1980). The intended result of this series of "cut-aways" is the emotional transformation of the viewer - from disparity to hope.

Wright's "demand" images where the house was concerned were about unity of image. In The Natural House, Wright (1954) articulates that every work of art must have a "grammar of its own," and the "grammar" of a house (like all structures) is the manifestation of all its parts: "This will be the 'speech' it uses.... When the chosen
grammar is finally adopted (you go almost indefinitely with it in everything you do) walls, ceiling, furniture, etc., become inspired by it" (p. 118). The architect used synergy among all elements in his homes to transform its residents, almost as if they would be better human beings by living in his preconceived environment.

Applied Media Aesthetics

Several communication models exist which do not emphasize the medium as a critical factor in the communication process. Zettl's (1990) applied media aesthetics integrates the influence of the medium on the message. "The medium is, therefore, considered an essential and integral part of the total communication process. The medium not only distributes the message but also helps shape it" (Zettl, 1990, p. 11).

It would be nearly impossible to conduct a contextual analysis of two radically different media such as film and architecture without acknowledging the importance of the medium itself. This would be as impotent as analyzing a building without acknowledging that the structure existed.

Figure 4. Integrated Communications Model (Zettl, 1990, p. 11).
According to Zettl (1990), the Integrated Communications Model is well suited for incorporating the medium into the entire communication process (see Figure 4). Notice that the medium is located directly next to the event taking place, and influences each ring that extends out to the end result – the perceived event.

Zettl (1990) states that the method of presenting applied media aesthetics is inductive, and grounded in the artistic philosophy of Russian painter and teacher Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). While teaching at the Bauhaus in Germany, Kandinsky advocated building a scene by combining “graphic elements,” the fundamental building blocks of painting – dots, lines, planes, color, texture, etc. By following this approach, an artist is not limited to what is available in his/her immediate world, but can extend their vision to what is believed “ought to be there – the construction of a new world” (Zettl, 1990, p. 11).

The Bauhaus movement was largely responsible for returning to the basics of design, inspiring the production of simple and functional products with a modern flair through “hands on” explorations of the essential qualities in materials (Dondis, 1973). Another important Bauhaus theme was forming an understanding of the capabilities of the machine, and searching for ways to combine design with effective adaptation of the product to “mass production” (Dondis, 1973, p. 170). The Bauhaus followers designed clean, simple everyday products; furniture, tools, dishes, and were guided by the credo “Form follows function” (Zettl, 1990, p. 9).

Louis Sullivan, Wright’s Lieber Meister, was a firm believer in this credo. However, Blake (1960), who states that Wright acknowledged Sullivan as the only influence on his work, suggests Sullivan had a slightly different interpretation of the aesthetic principle. “What he meant was not – or not only – that form must grow out of
function, but that form, beautiful form, could only be created after functional expression had been satisfied” (Blake, 1960, p. 283).

While traditional aesthetics are very much concerned with the beauty and philosophy of art, Zettl (1990) describes three features of applied media aesthetics (AMS) that makes it different from other theories of contextualism: 1) AMS deals with a number of aesthetic phenomena, such as light, space, time-motion, and sound, and perceptual reactions to them; 2) The medium is essential to the aesthetic communication process; and 3) AMS goes beyond analysis, offering the ability to provide synthesis.

Where synthesis is concerned, the process of completing a film and constructing a building are quite similar and inductive in nature; selected elements in careful combination result in a finished product that has some meaning to its audience.

Just as Wright (1954) suggested a building has its own, unique “grammar” which is the combination of everything in the space as a unified whole, Harrington (1973) writes about the grammar and syntax of film. It is the complex interplay of the parts of the film – visual and auditory elements – that establish a film’s rhetorical form.

Film and architecture have their own unique syntax. In order to gain a better understanding of how each medium communicates, it is necessary to describe the important individual elements that make up the whole.

Elements of Film

Film can represent reality. The medium works well simultaneously on two levels – concrete and abstract. On the concrete level, the story and characters that seem so real on the screen appear so due to film’s extraordinary ability to allow the viewer to suspend disbelief (Harrington, 1973). However, because film is masterful at abstraction,
it has an inherent ability to only represent reality; actually it offers no tangible evidence of the reality it constructs for viewers.

The basic visual elements of film, according to Harrington (1973) are as follows:

**The Frame** – The smallest discernible unit. A single photographic image that contributes to a larger unit. Approximately 24 frames per second pass through a projector, with the average feature film containing nearly 130,000 separate frames.

**The Shot** – A single interrupted view from a camera. The smallest functional unit of film making, lasting anywhere from two frames to hundreds of frames. The average shot lasts two to thirty seconds, and is categorized by the apparent closeness of the camera lens to the object or person filmed. Actual distance from the camera lens is an illusion depending on the focal length of the lens. Typically a human subject is used to describe the seven types of shots.

**Extreme Long Shot (ELS)** – Also known as an establishing shot, it places the subject very far from the lens. The setting dominates the frame.

**Long Shot (LS)** – The subject fills more of the frame, but the setting receives strong emphasis.

**Medium Long Shot (MLS)** – Reveals approximately three-fourths of the subject.

**Medium Shot (MS)** – Also known as a mid-shot. Typically shows the subject from the waist up and focuses the viewer’s attention on the subject, rather than the setting. Continues to maintain a relationship between the subject and the setting.

**Medium Close-up (MCU)** – Features the subject from the shoulders up.

**Close-up (CU)** – Shows only the head of the subject.
Extreme Close-up (ECU) – Reveals only a small part of the face, an eye, for example.

The Scene – A series of shots make up a scene. The viewer perceives the series of shots as being taken at the same location during relatively the same time period. Some scenes are a single shot, while others last several minutes and are comprised of several shots. Usually strives to convey a single point.

The sequence – The largest unit of the visual grammar of film, similar to an act in a play, or a chapter in a book. Several scenes that are related in location, time, action, point of view, or cast make up a sequence. Provides an enlarged context to which individual shots and scenes contribute. A self-contained unit that may undergo evaluation and or criticism. (Harrington, 1973, p. 9-20)

Toy (1996) indicates that it is the experience of the “sequence” that bring film and architecture closer together as media, “The actual experience of architectural space by an observer within that space has many similarities to the viewer’s perception of a chosen sequence in a film” (p. 7). In this statement Toy (1996) could be referring to the observer’s ability to visually connect walls, passageways, ceilings, steps and individual rooms into a vision of a building which is more representative of its whole. A room by itself cannot provide a vision of the entire building in which it belongs, just as a single scene from a film cannot tell the entire story.

Although the frame, shot, scene and sequence are the most basic elements of film, outlining them here provides enlightenment on the complexities of film design and production – the “cut-and-paste” succession of the medium. A film’s rhetorical success hinges on the manner in which the director arranges these elements, along with a host of
other variables such as budget, story line, actors, music, sound effects, cinematographer and crew, film stock and location, to name just a few.

Elements of Architecture

Buildings can represent reality. Architecture enables humans to better understand their place in the world, while providing order. “Architecture is integrally identified with human activity, experience, and expression, for, in ordering space, architecture also orders human action” (Blier, 1987, p. 2). As tangible as architecture may be, there remains an illusionary aspect to a structure.

Perhaps this is due to the story-telling ability of architecture when combined with its surrounding landscapes, what Pottinger and Purinton (1998) call Landscape Narratives. The authors use an excerpt from Calvino to illustrate what a city’s narrative, for example, consists of:

Relationships between measurements of its space and the events of its past: the height of the lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper’s swaying feet; the line strung from the lamppost to the railing opposite and the festoons that decorate the course of the queen’s nuptial procession; the height of that railing and the leap of the adulterer who climbed over it at dawn; the tilt of a guttering and a cat’s progress along it as he slips into the same window.

(Pottinger & Purinton, 1998, p. 7)

Following this theme, Blier (1987) describes African architecture as having a basis in history, numerology, philosophy, performance principles, therapeutic concepts and cosmology, and that it represents a “kind of text or language system whose meaning can
be understood through its orientation, form, materials, construction process and details” (p. 1).

Buildings are capable of communication by the manner in which the basic elements of architecture are combined and ordered. Roth (1993) states that Marcus Vitruvius compiled the most basic definition of architecture in about 25 B.C., after consulting sixty-three books on the subject. The basic elements as described by Vitruvius have remained essentially unchanged: “Architecture, he wrote, must provide utility, firmness, and beauty;” or, as later paraphrased by Sir Henry Wotten in the seventeenth century, “commodity, firmness and delight” (Roth, 1993, p. 9). For the purpose of this discussion, the elements set forth by Vitruvius, as interpreted by Roth, will be outlined here:

Function is the utility of an object, its being appropriately fitted to a particular use. The term function is difficult to define and interpret. Most human activities cannot be adequately quantified or reduced to a kind of mechanical formula. A second difficulty is seen in change. As the needs of a family or company change, the original function of a building may no longer serve its purpose adequately.

Roth (1993) further describes three components of function:

Pragmatic Utility – The most basic component. A room or space created for a specific purpose. Most buildings are made up of many rooms with interrelated functions.

Circulatory Function – People must move from room to room within a space; designs should direct and enhance movement from area to area. Louis Sullivan was concerned with defining and emphasizing the functional zones within
buildings. Many architects realize the social aspects of the circular function by creating spaces for people to naturally congregate.

**Symbolic Function** – A building makes a visible statement about its use. Does the form and appearance of a building match its actual use? The United States national Capital building in Washington, D.C., has well established an image of government. Figure 5 illustrates the degree to which a building's functionality relies upon the type and intended use of the structure. (Roth, 1993, p. 11-14)

![Figure 5. Relative components of function in different building types (Roth, 1993, p. 15).](image)

**Firmness** – Also known as “structure.” The most apparent visible aspect of a building - what makes a structure stand up via materials (steel, stone, brick, wood) and how they are assembled and engineered. Structure/firmness is as much a cultural expression as it is a necessity, “suggesting either massiveness or dematerialization, are part of the view that a culture has of itself and its relationship to history” (Roth, 1993, p. 43). Firmness includes two structural categories:
**Physical Structure** – The literal elements that hold a building up. The beginning of any structure is the wall. Among other physical structural elements are posts, beams, columns, frames, arches, vaults, trusses, domes and shells.

**Perceptual Structure** – What is seen or appears to hold up a building. Has much to do with our empathetic analysis of how forces (vertical and horizontal) are handled. Does a building appear solid and strong, heavy or light, balanced or unbalanced? (Roth, 1993, p. 19-43)

**Beauty** – The final basic element outlined by Marcus Vitruvius 2000 years ago. Beauty is definitive of making a space delightful through manipulation. Frank Lloyd Wright believed that space was the essence of architecture. By carefully shaping space, architecture serves more than a utilitarian function. “Architecture is the art into which we walk; it is the art that envelopes us” (Roth, 1993, p. 45). Within the realm of beauty there are several spatial concepts to consider.

**Physical Space** – The volume of air bound by walls, expressed in cubic feet or meters.

**Perceptual Space** – The space that can be perceived or seen, but not quantifiable.

**Conceptual Space** – A mental map or plan stored in memory. Buildings that work well, lack confusion, and are easy for the “mind’s eye” to grasp.

**Behavioral Space** – Shaping of the space so as to determine how the space is used and the movement within the space. Architecture is said to be a powerful shaper of human behavior. Within behavioral space are such concepts as:

- **Interwoven Space** – Creating fluid or flowing motion by the placement of rooms and hallways.
- **Static Space** – Unused space for purposeful effect.
Directional Space – Suggesting patterns of behavior (movement) through configuration (obvious pathway).

Nondirectional Space – An open space, or a variety of pathways to choose from.

Positive Space – Conceived as a void, then contained.

Negative Space – Created by hollowing out a solid that previously existed.

Personal Space – Not strictly architectural, but must be taken into consideration when designing space. The distance that members of the same species put between themselves when moving about a space.

(Roth, 1993, p. 45-55)

Other obvious elements that impact the perception of architecture include what Roth (1993) considers to be the most powerful – light. Light can be used to focus the attention of inhabitants, enhance the openness of space, and create a sense of awe or mystery. Without light the realization of color is not possible.

Color within a space may be used to create physiological reactions; for example, given cool colors like green and blue, “the body experiences a release of muscular tension, a slowing of the heartbeat, and a slight lowering of the body temperature (Roth, 1993, p. 76). The mind interprets warm colors (yellow, red and orange) as being closer to the eye than they actually are, while heightening bodily functions. An obvious method used by architects and designers to manipulate the perception of a space is to carefully select and apply appropriate paint colors or wall finishes.

Finally, beauty can be conveyed by architectural acoustics. Sound is created by a succession of pressure waves in the air. Live spaces are those constructed of highly
sound-reflective surfaces, such as "dense, polished marble, ceramic tile, mosaic on massive walls or other hard rigid surfaces" (Roth, 1993, p. 91). Dead spaces absorb sound with furnishings, carpeting, fabric on windows, etc. Curved walls and ceilings are capable of dispersing or focusing reflective sound. Figure 6 illustrates how sound is capable of being controlled by the architect in designing flat or curved walls within a space.

![Figure 6. Reflection of sound waves on flat and curved surfaces.](image)

It should not go unmentioned that architects are greatly concerned with building acoustics. The perception of sound has played a major role in the design of theatres, symphony halls, cathedrals and churches throughout the ages. Carefully calculated physics have been practiced, optical models developed, wavelengths calculated, echoes realized, and innovative structures have been tried and tested in the name of sound, music and beauty.

As hopefully noted in this chapter, both film and architecture have a rich and varied ability to communicate an intended message. Although film is most obvious in its ability to 'demand' a response from its audience, architecture possesses an equally robust ability to 'demand.' While the audience of a film appears to be passive in the manner in which it perceives, the audience must activate its thinking in order to uncover
the intended meaning. Though not physical, this process is similar to touring an architectural structure, viewing it by an unraveling procession, an uncovering of its many facets by discovery and active realization.

Self-reflection must have been an inherent part of the creative process for Capra and Wright. The media of film and architecture each possess their own 'grammar' or syntax that is carefully combined to tell a story, to make the audience feel something, or realize a transformation.

Perhaps for Capra it was his belief in America, that the little guy does win, and that by banding together in faith any problem can be overcome. For Wright it was his belief and faith in 'Nature,' that mankind should strive to better understand the wonder of organic living by building, occupying, and appreciating structures that were uniquely American.
CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In order to conduct a contextual analysis via applied media aesthetics, it was necessary to select one Capra film and one building designed by Wright. The decision to choose Capra’s *It’s A Wonderful Life* and Wright’s *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* lent itself easily to several factors that will be discussed here.

This chapter will also provide a description of the film’s plot, facts of interest surrounding the film’s production, the scenes selected for analysis, and the actual analysis of these scenes. Following this theme, the events surrounding the design and construction of the museum will be presented, along with a description of the building, a description of the portion of the building selected for analysis, and the contextual analysis of the structure.

Applied media aesthetics’ five fundamental image elements to be utilized in the contextual analysis are 1) light and color, 2) two-dimensional space, 3) three-dimensional space, 4) time-motion, and 5) sound (Zettl, 1990).

**Justification of Works Selected**

With over 50 films to Capra’s credit and somewhere between 400 and 800 built buildings designed by Wright, it was not difficult settling on two projects that shared significant common ground.
First, it was decided that the projects should have been created late in the respective careers of Capra and Wright, allowing for a maturity of craft and keen awareness of their internal machinations. Capra began working on *It's A Wonderful Life* in 1945, shortly after his service in World War II. The film was officially completed in mid-1946, when Capra was 48 years of age. Previously, Capra had produced and or directed 44 films. After completing *It's A Wonderful Life*, he worked on only seven more films. Wright signed an agreement to begin design work on the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on June 29, 1943 (Pfeiffer, 1986). Wright was 73 years of age when he took on the commission. During the nearly 17 years it took to complete the museum, Wright and his team of Taliesin architects continued to design numerous other buildings. The museum officially opened in fall of 1959, just six months after Wright died.

Second, the projects needed to be far reaching, possessing the greatest possibility of mass impact. In the case of Capra—a film that remains his most memorable and one with a continued, even current, following. Wright's *Guggenheim Museum* is a public building on a grand scale, located in a place with a very large population that continues to garner attention. Maland (1980) mirrors the sentiments of many film scholars that *It's A Wonderful Life* is Capra's unquestioned masterpiece, "If Frank Capra had to be remembered for only one work, that film would be *It's A Wonderful Life*" (p. 131). The *Guggenheim* is widely known as the "greatest building of Frank Lloyd Wright's late career" (Pfeiffer, 1996, p. 1). Architect Phillip Johnson describes the *Guggenheim* as the fulfillment of Wright's dream of a dramatic spiral building, and "one of the great rooms in the world" (Burns & Novick, 1998).
Third, the film and building selected needed to share even subtler commonalities. As uncovered in this research, one shared element is a deep religious undertone. Capra’s religious critics complained that the director made films that abandoned images of Catholicism, and never featured ceremonies like church weddings or baptisms (Blake, 1991). However true this statement may be, It’s A Wonderful Life is a film actually packed with altruism and optimism of the theological variety. In “Theological Optimism in the Films of Frank Capra,” Brown (1998, November-December) devotes much attention to explaining the complex religious message intended by Capra as portrayed in It’s A Wonderful Life (IAWL). From beginning to end, the scholar examines Capra’s religious rhetoric: “The opening credits place these four words (IAWL) of the title in quotation marks, as if to suggest that this is the hypothesis to be examined in the course of the film, rather as God allows Satan to test Job’s goodness” (p. 439). At the end of the film, George Bailey’s transformation from suicide to life represents a re-birth, all the while his supporters are singing “Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth” (p. 444).

In the fantasy sequence of the film, when George is shown what life without him would have been like, Capra renames the town “Pottersville.” This word bears a striking resemblance to the biblical term “potter’s field,” which refers to a parcel of land that was purchased by chief priests and elders with the 30 pieces of silver Judas was paid to betray Jesus; as told in Matthew 27:3-10 and Zechariah 11:12-13 (Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, 2000, paragraph 5). Potter’s field holds the connotation of a field of blood where unclaimed paupers and the insane were laid to rest.
Costello (1999, Fall) claims "uses elements of Puritan rhetoric to articulate individual and community, material success and public virtue" (p. 37). The film emphasizes religion in George's preparation to accept his moral worth and the community's pilgrimage to build a moral community (Costello, 1999, Fall). Obviously, on a larger scale, the film is an extrapolation of good and evil.

For Wright, religion was nature and vice versa. Historian William Cronan suggests that Wright was of the belief that man could be closer to God through nature: "In the expression of what the soul experiences in nature, something more natural than nature itself emerges - which is as close as we get to God" (Burns & Novick, 1998). Wright referred to the Guggenheim as an "optimistic ziggurat." Built around 2100 BC in Sumeria, the ziggurat was a Mesopotamian platform and temple structure derived from the Assyrian "ziggurat," meaning high; priests climbed to the top of these structures to worship, and the gods were said to have visited earth there (Compton's, 1998).

Perhaps it is from the ziggurat that Wright coined another phrase to describe his museum - "archaism," or "the building from which to see the highest" (Burns & Novick, 1998). From an engineering and design perspective, Joncas (1991) describes Wright's architecture as containing "a deep physical and spiritual synthesis manifest in an 'occult symmetry' with nature and 'God' through the resolution of opposing building types and their material construction" (abstract). Wright's relentless focus on transcendent design values, as seen in the form of non-rectangular geometry, clearly emerges in Wright's scheme of the Guggenheim (Joncas, 1991). Mello (2000), as quoted from historian Bruno Zevi, metaphorically describes the interior of the spiral as a "cathedral of art" (paragraph 3). Quinan (1993, December) adds an Emersonian twist to the theme of religion by stating, "It is difficult to imagine that the essential spiral that
constituted the 'heart of his [Emerson’s] aesthetic' was not imbedded in Wright’s psyche at an early age, only to emerge as the crowning statement at the end of his career in the form of the Guggenheim Museum” (p. 471).

Just as drama is realized in film, drama is also apparent in architecture. With this in mind, the fourth common element between IAWL and the Guggenheim could be more broadly described as possessing “filmic” characteristics. Although there is no standardized definition of the term filmic, in this research it shall be likened to the University of Maryland’s (1996 & 1997) definition of the “Construction of Meaning – The manner in, and devices by which, linguistic, filmic, or other tests generate meaning” (paragraph 41).

It should not go unmentioned that attempts have been made to adapt architectural thought and design to cinematic techniques in an effort to highlight a continuity between architectural space and filmic space (van Shaik, 1989). One such example is Bernard Tschumi’s series of books containing numbered sequential drawings called The Manhattan Transcripts. The Transcripts contain four separate books entitled The Park, The Street, The Tower (The Fall), and The Block, and are based on exploring a parallel method of design by using a “montage” fashion of ordering illustrations (van Shaik, 1989). Pottinger and Purinton (1998) provide further illumination on The Park, as Tschumi is quoted: “Photographs direct the action, plans reveal the alternatively cruel and loving architectural manifestations, diagrams indicate the movements of the main protagonists” (p. 13).

Obviously, IAWL is filmic in the manner and devices utilized to create meaning. However, this Capra film possesses “architectonic” qualities, due to the director’s mastery of his medium. Architectonic is defined as “architectural qualities, as observed
in subjects which are not typically architectural ones" (Artflex, 1996-1999). One example of this is Capra’s ability to keep the audience involved through an invigorating pace. In this film, Capra shows an inherent ability to construct action and richness through scenes that are packed with detail. The director also demonstrates a clear understanding that things must occur faster in film than they do in real life (Bowser, 1997).

If architecture is the expression of thought in building form, then the Guggenheim truly proves the fact that Wright was filmic in his design process - a vision of a spiral, a circular sweep of a shell that leads to the top of a grand ziggurat. Wright was concerned about every inch of the museum and how its patrons would fully enjoy the space, where people would congregate and talk, and how they might situate themselves while viewing paintings. In one large-scale perspective drawing of the Guggenheim, entitled “The Masterpiece,” a little girl peers over one interior parapet wall, looking down into the rotunda space. Before showing the drawing to the board of trustees, “Wright took out his pencil and deftly added the yo-yo that hangs from the girl’s hand,” (Quinan, 1993, December).

Every detail of the Guggenheim is meant to convey meaning and drama. The confined entryway, for example, empties patrons into a dramatic seven-story, six-level rotunda. The never-ending spiral ramp allows patrons to move easily up or down - a deliberate, yet never perfectly horizontal surface from which to view artwork. Consider also the function of natural light filtered through the skylight and harnessed to illuminate walls. Without taking into account the art in which the building houses, the entire museum is a sequence of linear narratives; in essence, the building itself is art.

Filmic is an appropriate term to describe the inception, site selection and construction of the Guggenheim, which was plagued by drama in epic proportions for
the more than 16 years it took to complete the structure. These insights will be discussed later in this chapter.

And finally, the film and building selected should represent the artist's culmination of talent. This certainly is true of IAWL, according to Maland (1980), who cites three critics who deem the film “one of the most personal visions ever realized in commercial cinema,” “an all time masterpiece,” and one of the “greatest American films” (p. 131). Maland (1980) likens the film to Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in its ability to reveal the personal reflections of its creator: “It's A Wonderful Life is clearly a culminating work. By that term I mean one of those rare works of narrative art in which an artist at last finds a form to express precisely the preoccupations he or she has been dealing with in a number of earlier works” (p. 131).

Willis (1974) states that in the film's flashbacks Capra uses his technical mastery to economically establish the relationship of the main character, George Bailey, to most other characters in the film: “This is one of the most expertly made movies” (p. 63).

As Capra's personal all-time favorite, clearly IAWL is the sum total of the director's movie-making career.

Wright's original vision for the Guggenheim emphasized the horizontal; however, it quickly changed to embrace the spiral he had long been interested in (Pfeiffer, 1986). Quinan (1993, December) points out that Wright's attraction to the spiral was multidimensional: the spiral not only offered an irresistible challenge to the architect, the spiral is two-dimensional in its true existence, representing for Wright the vertical or third dimension. As Wright's work was always influenced by a close observation of nature, consider the fact that “Whirlpools, tornadoes, and other fluid spirals in nature have no tolerance for interruption, they either move away from the
intruding object, subsume it, or their flow is interrupted and the spiral is destroyed” (Quinan, 1993, December, p. 480). This description provides insight into Wright’s personality and lifestyle, and thus the “optimistic ziggurat” is a culminating self-reflection of the architect.

Darragh and Snyder (1993) designate the Guggenheim Museum as a “new museum building” which has become a symbol through its “architectural distinctiveness” (p. 236). Through the following description by Wright himself, one may realize that the architect’s obsession with creating a relationship between nature and man via architecture was finally realized: “The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum walls and spaces, inside and outside, are one in substance and effect. Walls slant gently outward forming a giant spiral for a well defined purpose; a new unity between beholder, painting and architecture” (Riley & Grehan, 1997, p. 138).

In summary, It’s a Wonderful Life and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum were selected for the contextual analysis portion of this research due to the many common traits that go beyond the boundary of each respective medium. By determining the criteria outlined previously in this chapter (created late in career, mass impact, religious undertones, filmic qualities and culminating tendency), It’s A Wonderful Life and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum lend themselves naturally to this study.

**Analysis of Frank Capra’s It’s A Wonderful Life**

**Description of Plot**

Often analogized as a Norman Rockwell painting, It’s A Wonderful Life is actually far darker and less sentimental than what is seen on the surface: “With its dissection of the local power structure, (it is) far more socially conscious than most movies today” (Alter, 1997,
July 14, paragraph 7). In terms of structure, the story is told in a series of flashbacks combined with a fantasy sequence.

The story begins on Christmas Eve in Bedford Falls, New York, where prayers of the local residents are heard in an omniscient fashion. Folks are praying for Capra’s hero, and the pillar of their society, George Bailey (played by James Stewart). In emotional turmoil, George dropped out of sight earlier that night. Two angels, represented by twinkling stars, discuss George’s situation and decide that a third angel should return to earth to help the deeply troubled man.

His strong sense of duty to others has prevented George from fulfilling his dream of travelling the world. He is frustrated and unhappy, but dutifully takes over his father’s failing Building and Loan Company. George is further dedicated to Bedford Falls when he marries Mary Hatch (Donna Reed) and the couple begins having children. The character of Mr. Potter (Lionel Barrymore) represents the face of capitalism in villain form. Potter is a banker and member of the Building and Loan Board of Directors. While George’s business diligently tries to rescue people from poverty, Potter works just as hard to hoard his money at the expense of others.

Tragedy strikes when George’s Uncle Billy (Thomas Mitchell) inadvertently misplaces a bank deposit of $8,000. The Building and Loan has struggled along on the verge of bankruptcy, and without this deposit it will surely be forced to close its doors. Fearing scandal and ruin, a distraught George Bailey ends up on a local bridge contemplating suicide. Before George can jump, Clarence (Henry Travers), his guardian angel, plunges into the freezing water in the hopes that George’s need to “do good” will prevail. True to his nature, George plunges in to rescue Clarence.
Upon saving Clarence, the two embark on a fantasy of what life would have been like if George had never been born. As an indication of impending doom, the town is now called “Pottersville,” and is laden with dance clubs, pubs and residents who lack significant moral qualities or sensitivity toward others. After realizing the significance of these visions, George wants to live again. While he was away from home the townsfolk were busy collecting donations to help the Building and Loan keep its doors open. George is transformed in his belief in others and himself. An irony explicit through most of the film is finally acknowledged at the end, as “the town George so desperately wants to escape from offers him a fuller life than probably any he could find elsewhere” (Willis, 1974, p. 66).

Facts of Interest

According to Maland (1980), the original story, entitled “The Greatest Gift,” was written by Philip van Doren Stern, and printed as a Christmas card pamphlet around 1943. Stern’s agent sold the story rights to Hollywood, which Capra purchased in 1945. As the movie neared completion in 1946, the story was adapted for radio broadcast on CBS’ “Lux Radio Show.”

Willis (1974) adds that the wife-husband team of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, along with Frank Capra, who remained uncredited, wrote the actual screenplay for the film. Incidentally, this is one of the few films in which Capra took on some of the writing. Capra knew almost immediately that Jimmy Stewart was perfect for the part of George Bailey: “Stewart embodied the heroic Everyman that Capra sought” (Hoving, 1986, December, p. 108).

Although the finished product did not reach as large an audience, in its time, as Capra had intended, it was not due to the fact that Capra’s hands were tied: “In casting,
as in all other matters, from the largest conceptual concerns to the smallest technical
details, he had a completely free hand” (Hoving, 1986, December, p. 108). IAWL was
one of only two projects produced by Liberty Films. During the shooting of Liberty’s
second project, State of the Union, Capra’s fledgling independent production company
was sold to Paramount.

IAWL was shot in a matter of months on one of the largest sets ever built – four
acres of land (Hoving, 1986, December). Capra (1971) describes the brief shooting
schedule as follows: “The pace was that of a four-month non-stop orgasm” (p. 382).
Though nominated for five Academy Awards, including directing, film editing, sound
recording, best actor and best picture, IAWL won but a single award in another
category. Capra’s love of technology inspired fabricated snow that was worthy of an
exclusive Academy Award for the film’s special effects (Hoving, 1986, December).

The lackluster reception of IAWL reflected a different type of film audience.
Subsequent Capra films found audiences around the country had changed from
unification – to fragmentation, paranoia and doubt (Bowser, 1997). This was not an
ideal audience for a Capra film.

The governmental paranoia associated with the McCarthy era blacklisting made
a permanent mark on Capra’s courage and enthusiasm, when even he was investigated.
Although charges were never brought forth, Capra was bewildered that the government
for whom he had worked so hard would suspect him of Communism; this deeply
scarred “the man who so fiercely loved and believed in his country” (Bowser, 1997).

Further bewilderment came when the face of Hollywood transformed. The ’50s
and ’60s ushered in a new bureaucracy of "star power," where directors and studios
were no longer in control of productions. Capra’s last two films marked the end of his
reigning film career, when he was forced to take a subservient role in A Hole in the
Head (1959) and Pocket Full of Miracles (1960) to screen legends Frank Sinatra, and
Glenn Ford, respectively (Bowser, 1997). Although Capra is credited as director in these
films, few experts would call them true Capra pictures.

It was during his retirement that Capra finally saw It\textsuperscript{aw}L realize the success it
deserved. In 1952, the film's broadcast as a Christmas classic breathed new life into
Capra’s masterpiece; in mid-1980, Capra was still receiving fan mail (Hoving, 1986,
December). Actor Richard Dryfus aptly sums up the film’s continued rebirth: “Never
was a film grasped with such yearning” (Bowser, 1997).

**Contextual Analysis using Applied Media Aesthetics**

The black and white version of Capra’s It’s a Wonderful Life will be used in this
analysis. Length does not permit a contextual analysis of Capra’s entire film; for this
reason, three individual scenes have been selected based on overall significance to the
film, variety and the availability of literature for additional interpretation. These scenes
will be referred to as follows:

1) **Train Scene** – George meets his brother and his new wife at the Bedford Falls
train station where it is revealed to him that his brother will not be moving back to take
over the family business. This scene is representative of Capra’s constant and intended
isolation of George in scenes with other characters. Willis (1974) suggests that Capra
uses this technique to further express George’s psychological and emotional tension
(See Figure 7).

2) **Phone Scene** – Frustrated George asks Mary Hatch to marry him while they
speak to her current beau on the phone. In doing so, George gives up his dreams of
success and the freedom to travel the world. This scene is the longest take in the film –
over ninety seconds – and dramatically illustrates George’s misunderstood ambivalence toward Mary. Willis (1974) indicates the scene is a culmination of main themes in the picture: “George’s wish to quit Bedford Falls, Mary’s patient love, George’s placing of the Building and Loan above financial success and travel” (p. 68). (See Figure 8.)

3) Dark House Scene – Within the fantasy sequence, George hops a cab back to the home he and Mary once lived in; the house is no longer their home, but a dark tattered structure resembling a house of horrors. The house, 320 Sycamore, represents a central visual motif in the film, according to Maland (1980). (See Figure 9.)

![Figure 7. Train Scene - George meets his brother at the train station.](image)

![Figure 8. Phone Scene - George declares his love for Mary Hatch.](image)

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Light and Color – Lighting can be used to articulate space, intensify volume and clarify the three-dimensional nature of objects as well as the space that surrounds them (Zettl, 1990). The lighting styles used in the three scenes under analysis represent radically different techniques. Zettl (1990) defines the several lighting types which Capra employs in these scenes as follows:

**Flat** - High-key lighting with generally bright illumination and light background; non-selective illumination fairly evenly distributed. Shadows are transparent or subtle.

**Chiaroscuro** - Low-key lighting selectively illuminated figures, yet generally dark background. Shadows are more dramatic.

**Silhouette** - No illumination of foreground figures. Background illumination may be bright. Shadows are nonexistent.

The **Train Scene** is flatly lit. The scene begins with a medium shot of George and Uncle Billy waiting for the train to arrive. George is happy thumbing through travel brochures, discussing his exciting future. The lighting is extremely flat and bright with no visible shadows. Both subjects and the background are light and in sharp focus. A
left moving vertical wipe reveals a four shot of the characters at the side of the train. (A transition is a change from one image to another.) The lighting, still flat, is high-key, brighter, and casts noticeably dark shadows as the characters move on the set. The brim of George's hat often casts shadows over his eyes.

During this scene George is surprised with two unexpected pieces of news: his brother is now married, and he has been offered a job that will not allow him to take over the family business, which would otherwise have freed him to pursue his dreams. Throughout the scene George begins happy, becomes sad when he learns his brother is married, then happy about the marriage, sad when he hears of the job offer, and happy again at his brother's opportunity for a better life. Interestingly, there is an absence of shadows in the two-shot before George receives the disappointing news. Perhaps Capra intended the shadows in the second portion of the scene to foreshadow and intensify George's anguish.

Lighting for the Phone Scene, though flatly lit, begins with harsher, more contrasting lighting as George approaches Mary's home in the evening. The lighting is darker, to represent the time of night and the exterior setting. Shadows are quite dark and apparent, as if the moon and a nearby street light are the only sources of illumination. Shadows are dramatic, yet a great amount of detail is evident in the entire scene.

After he enters Mary's home, the lighting, although the background is not as dark as in the exterior shots, remains similar in contrast. In fact, even though the two characters are inside, the contrast and shadows are far more extreme than in the Train Scene, which is supposedly out of doors. The high contrast lighting causes shadows to fall on the characters, creating highly illuminated hot spots in different areas of the set.
This also causes Mary's dress to appear almost angelic in medium shots. In one two-shot of George and Mary sitting on the couch, a lamp in the room provides bright illumination behind George's head; this technique could be thought of as representing the good in George. Carney (1986) indicates that Capra made use of cinematic lighting to represent spiritual illumination. When Mary receives a call from her boyfriend, and he asks to speak with George, the lighting becomes softer and the scene more dreamy as the two stand within inches of one another. Strands of light reflect off of Mary's tears in an over-the-shoulder shot of her face, a reminder of the bright illumination in the room.

Before this scene, George has no real intentions of even seeing Mary. His dream is still alive, but fate draws him to her, so strongly that she becomes a fixed presence in George's existence. Willis (1974) suggests that Capra idealized Mary Hatch, portraying the power of a beautiful face, which results in an illustration of patience, endurance and hope. Lighting is a key factor in communicating this idealization, as her white dress is brightly illuminated throughout the scene.

Both the Train Scene and the Phone Scene represent what Dick (1990) defines as high-key lighting. Even though shadows are present, there exists almost uniform brightness and low contrast, "the kind used in musicals, comedies and for scenes of tranquility and peace" (Dick, 1990, p. 77).

Given the emotionally charged nature of these two scenes, it is remarkable that Capra chose to use lighting that conveys tranquility and peace.

The Dark House Scene is unique to the film in that it contains the least amount of illumination. Dick (1990) defines this technique as low-key - a high contrast ratio of key (primary) and fill (secondary) light. This highly dramatic scene, along with others in the fantasy sequence, is associated with film noir style. Dick (1990) describes film noir...
as "a type of melodrama where passions run high in urban settings that are grimy and
often fogbound and where streets are dark, mean and continually rain-slick" (p. 77).
The strong contrasts of light and extreme darkness make this scene much more difficult
to interpret.

Two other lighting styles, Chiaroscuro and silhouette, are used in the Dark House
Scene. The Chiaroscuro style is known for its selective illumination, low-key lighting
with low light levels and backgrounds predominately dark, in addition to fast falloff
light with distinct, often dense shadows (Zettl, 1990). The second style used in this scene
is silhouette lighting. When George and his angel Clarence are grappling with the police
officer in front of the house, the camera is positioned as if it is on the porch. A high-
beam spotlight from the taxicab provides the background illumination. All characters
are dark and unlit. Silhouette lighting shows contour and outline, but no volume or
three-dimensional aspects. The eerie darkness of this scene furthers Capra's portrayal of
the doom and despair George is experiencing.

Color in all three scenes is limited to black and white, and shades of gray. Zettl
(1990) describes color as adding excitement, joy and organization to our environment.
Most certainly the absence of color in filmmaking is positive, in that its elusive and
influential nature does not disrupt or cause confusion about the message and how it is
perceived. In black and white, the images in IAWL vary in brightness or value only;
they are monochrome in nature (Zettl, 1990). Therefore color (hue) and its purity
(saturation) are not present in the film. Each scene unfolds in its purest storytelling form
- white and black, and varying shades of grayscale. The lack of color impairs the
perception of visual form, while insisting viewers engage mentally by ascribing or filling
in color. The absence of color simplifies the message; lost however, is Capra's potential of using color composition in moving images for added symbolism and emotional effect.

**Two-Dimensional Space** - "The screen provides us with a new, concentrated living space, a new field for aesthetic expression" (Zettl, 1990, p. 85). Rather than real space that can be physically traveled through, screen space provides the boundaries in film. Zettl (1990) outlines four structural factors, known as forces within the field, which are associated with screen space: 1) aspect ratio, 2) object size, 3) image size, and 4) inductive and deductive approaches.

All three scenes in this study share the same horizontal orientation and the same aspect ratio. The normal television screen and classic motion picture screen have an aspect ratio of 3:4, or three units vertically to four units horizontally (Zettl, 1990). An important advantage of this screen ratio is seen in the **Phone Scene**, when Capra uses a two-shot close-up of George and Mary on the telephone. There is very little unused screen space, encouraging the viewer to focus on the actors. This is one of the few close-up shots used in the three scenes under analysis.

With regard to object size, the most common standard for judging the actual size of an object is its comparison to the human being (Zettl, 1990). In fact, there are few scenes in the entire film that do not contain human figures. This is an important realization overall, as the story is very *human* in nature and Capra relies on people to tell his tale. In the **Train Scene**, George is taller than the other characters, yet is distraught while there is happiness surrounding him. In contrast, Harry Bailey's new bride, Ruth, stands on the train steps before being introduced to George, and is the tallest figure in the scene until she steps down to deliver the devastating news. Perhaps this is a showing of power over her new brother-in-law. George towers over Mary Hatch in the
Phone Scene, yet in the end, the giant succumbs to Mary’s unspoken wishes. In the Dark House Scene, George’s lack of power is further portrayed as the tattered house is gigantic in comparison to him. In addition, George is never taller than the other characters, even though he is in most other scenes.

Concerning image size, Zettl (1990) indicates that if an object is familiar to a viewer, it is perceived as normal size regardless of the type of shot it is framed in; therefore, perception is guided by size consistency. However, in the presence of an overwhelmingly large Cinemascope screen, “people as well as things attain dramatic proportions, not only physically but also psychologically” (Zettl, 1990, p. 95). In this respect, all three scenes (viewed on a 32” television set via video) lack the grandeur of the enhanced energy provided by large screen viewing. Zettl (1990) refers to this grandness as the “landscape” aspect of a scene; film derives its energy from the landscape and people in a scene, while television must rely on people and their complexities to power a given scene. Capra had intended the film to be shown on a large-screen in theatres, today; however, the movie is viewed predominantly on television.

In all three scenes, Capra employs a shooting approach that is predominantly deductive in nature. This approach, according to Zettl (1990) is well suited to the large-sized movie screen, and reveals images from the general to the specific (long shot to close-up). In contrast, the inductive approach is ideal for television, revealing details first, then a providing a general overview (close-up to long shot) (Zettl, 1990).

Evidence of the deductive style is seen, for example, in the Train Scene, when a long-shot of all four characters gives way to a medium close-up of George’s change in mood as he realizes he must react in an unselfish manner to his brother’s new job. In the
Phone Scene, Capra uses a series of long and medium shots to establish the interaction between George and Mary, and ends with a close-up of both characters as their tension climaxes. Central to the beginning of the Dark House Scene is an extreme long-shot of the 320 Sycamore house and George from behind as he approaches the structure. One could surmise that Capra’s shot selection was indicative of a more traditional approach to film structure, and the fact that the film would be shown in a large-screen setting.

Within the two-dimensional field, Zetl (1990) establishes the interplay between forces as a way of clarifying and intensifying events. The six major types of field forces are 1) main directions, 2) magnetism of the frame and attraction of mass, 3) asymmetry of the screen, 4) figure-ground, 5) psychological closure, and 6) vectors (Zetl, 1990). For the purposes of this study, one field force that occurs in architecture will be discussed - main directions.

Zetl (1990) states that horizontal lines suggest calmness and tranquility, “We feel normal when operating on this familiar plane,” while vertical lines are more powerful and exciting: “The pull of gravity charges them with more energy” (p. 102). Everyday living reflects a comfortable combination of horizontal and vertical lines. An example of how the horizontal and vertical is represented in architecture is as follows:

The extreme vertical orientation of Gothic cathedrals (roughly from 1150 to 1400) and their imposing size were designed to remind people of their insignificance relative to God and to direct their spirit upward toward heaven. The horizontal orientation of Renaissance buildings (roughly from 1400 to 1600) appropriately reflected people’s renewed interest in human affairs. Horizontal buildings are in keeping with this new attitude of glorifying human importance.

(Zetl, 1990, p. 102-103)
The first two scenes in this study aptly combine both vertical and horizontal forces; no apparent main direction is emphasized. Shots are generally at eye-level and camera movement is limited to pans (camera movement from right to left or left to right). In this respect, the Train Scene and Phone Scene share a more horizontal orientation. The Phone Scene does include two shots that reveal Mary’s mother listening in at the top of the stairs. These shots are more vertical in orientation, as the camera is positioned at the bottom of the stairs looking up through the vertical stair spindles and railing. Perhaps with these shots, Capra meant to indicate the power Mary’s mother had over her. In the end, the horizontal wins out, as Mary’s mother, upset at the scene below, retreats to her bedroom.

There are no such vertical shots in the Train Scene; however, the train in the background provides strong vertical lines behind the four characters. Another horizontal camera move (pan) follows George in a continuous medium close-up as he walks away from the train to rejoin his family. This movement approximates a 180-degree turn, and features George’s internal transformation – his second loss of hope. The first occurs earlier in the film when the board of the Building and Loan asks him to stay on as director. The third loss of hope is seen in the Phone Scene when the frustrated George asks Mary to marry him.

Capra’s influential use of horizontals suggests that the director is preoccupied with the importance of the human spirit.

The Dark House Scene features noticeably stronger vertical lines throughout; in particular when the camera faces the spotlight (creating the silhouette effect). In this scene vertical lines are present in the form of the characters themselves and in the configuration of porch posts and trees. Clarence, George’s angel, is present on and off in
this scene. Even though George is being tormented and is almost hauled off to jail, it may be suggested that the vertical images throughout represent God’s protection over those who are inherently good. They may also suggest George’s insignificance and loss of power over his circumstances. Finally, Capra could have intended a combination of the two interpretations to enhance the audience’s disbelief or disorientation toward George’s unusual circumstances. Whatever the intention, the effect is one of tremendous emotional power in portraying conflict.

Three-Dimensional Space in film, television, photography and painting is an illusion. It is through what Zettl (1990) defines as depth and volume that the illusion of the third dimension may be created. Discussion of the three-dimensional field incorporates five topics: 1) positive and negative volumes, 2) graphic depth factors, 3) depth characteristics of lenses, 4) z-axis motion vector, and 5) major graphication devices (Zettl, 1990). As they most relate to architecture, the topics to be discussed in this section are positive and negative volumes and z-axis motion vector.

The various objects that fill an otherwise empty frame help to define the space and make it possible for depth to be perceived. According to Zettl (1990), the x and y coordinates (horizontal and vertical, respectively) indicate the width and height of an object, while the z coordinate implies how far away the object is from the frontal plane.

Where positive and negative volumes are concerned, the Train Scene, the Phone Scene, and the Dark House Scene are considered to have volume duality, or the interplay of positive and negative volumes (Zettl, 1990). For example, shot in studio settings, each scene is considered negative volume, yet is articulated with the positive volume of scenic elements. To articulate each scene further, Capra employs the use of character movement to change the volume duality. For example, at the beginning the
In the **Train Scene**, George walks toward the camera and back again to his original location. It could be posited that Capra did this to gain the audience's attention, as well as to help create a sense of the third dimension.

In the **Phone Scene**, a majority of the scene is shot inside Mary's living room. Although this is considered negative volume, the space is described by the illusion of walls, ceiling and floor, and furnishings, all of which are positive volume. Capra has filled this scene with so much positive volume, it may actually add to a feeling of entrapment on George's behalf. The **Train Scene** is far less cluttered, yet appears much darker with the heavy positive volume of the train seen in the background. Once again, this scene feels boxed-in and restricted, even though it is representative of the out of doors.

The **Dark House Scene** is the most oppressive in feel due to the overall dark nature of the scene. The house appears quite large, but lacks a sense of vastness associated with dominant negative volume. Also shot in a studio, extreme movement of characters within the frame helps to define the space outside of the house, yet does not invite freedom.

It is clear that although Capra used both negative and positive volume to enhance the third dimension, in his use of an abundance of positive volume he actually furthered his narrative intentions, in addition to controlling the emotions of his audience.

Zettl (1990) states that motion along the z-axis is one of the strongest possible indicators of depth. A director can create motion via one of three methods: 1) camera dolly (camera physically moves up or back on a track); 2) zoom (camera lens focal length changes to attain close-up, long-shot, etc.); and 3) movement of object/subject (toward...
or away from the camera). The wide-angle lens exaggerates the perceived z-axis, or speed with which an object appears to move toward or away from the camera (Zettl, 1990); However, Capra does not make use of such lenses in the three scenes in this study. Although the zoom lens had been available in a rather rudimentary form since the 1920s (Bordwell, 1997), the technique of zooming in and out to enlarge detail remains largely unused by Capra in this film.

The director does, nevertheless, make use of dolly shots and noticeable character movement on the z-axis to simulate the third dimension.

In the Train Scene, passersby throughout the scene walk in front of the camera on the z-axis. In addition, three of the characters walk toward the camera then stop in order to be introduced to Harry Bailey’s fiancée. Next, all four characters walk in unison toward the camera, which is dollying in front of them. This movement creates the illusion of being in an open three-dimensional space.

The Phone Scene begins with a medium dolly shot of George walking toward the camera. A stick in his hand, George stops to tap his walking stick on the Hatches’ mailbox. A delighted Mary scurries downstairs to meet George. While the camera pans her movement, the placement of the camera at the bottom of the stairs mimics a z-axis movement. Mary places a drawing she has crafted for George on an easel and hurries back toward the camera. She opens the front door and invites George in. He struggles with the gate, finally opens it, and begins walking directly toward the camera, which is positioned over Mary’s right shoulder. This shot is cut together with a shot of George walking away from the camera and up to the door (nearly 14 seconds of z-axis motion). The entire scene, though confined to one location, includes some of the most telling z-axis motion in the film, as seen primarily through its characters.
In the Dark House Scene, George exits the cab and runs directly away from the camera to the front door. The police officer exits his car and walks closer to the camera on the z-axis. In a matching action shot, George goes further toward the front door; the film then cuts to a medium shot of George moving toward the camera. Once in the drafty old house, George moves away from the camera, then toward and past it in horror at the realization that his family is no longer there. In the silhouette-lit portion of the scene, a prelude to a scuffle features George running away from the camera toward the police officer and cab driver.

By investigating the three scenes in this study, it is clear that Capra was well aware of the methods of creating the illusion of the third dimension by utilizing positive and negative screen volume and z-axis motion vector. He was able to achieve this success without relying on less subtle methods such as narrow-angle and wide-angle lens distortion. Capra allowed his characters to tell the story of the third dimension through effective z-axis blocking, the directing of motion staged and blocked toward and away from the camera (Zettl, 1990).

Yet another way Capra was able to achieve effective blocking was the use of multiple cameras in shooting: “Frank Capra used multiple cameras even in relatively simple scenes, to guarantee a sense of uniformity and spontaneity in the performances of the actors” (Giannetti, 1976, p. 141).

Time-Motion is known as the four-dimensional field, and is the fourth element of this contextual analysis. Zettl (1990) indicates that time has attained a new existential significance in modern society. Film and television make use of both objective time and subjective time. Day and night cycles, the seasons of the year and what an accurate clock reports, are all examples of objective time (Zettl, 1990). In the case of the film It's A
Wonderful Life, the objective time of the film is its actual time - approximately 160 minutes. The objective length of the three scenes being studied are as follows: Train Scene – 2 minutes, 25 seconds; Phone Scene – 7 minutes, 42 seconds; and Dark House Scene – 4 minutes, 2 seconds.

Subjective time is psychological in that it quantifies how the passage of time feels, which may be defined in three elements: 1) perceived duration, 2) duration as vertical vector, and 3) vector magnitude of subjective time. In addition to subjective time, this study will also analyze time direction, or past-present-future as portrayed in IAWL.

Zettl (1990) describes perceived duration as how long an event feels based on viewer involvement. In the case of IAWL, generally speaking, this would translate into an individual interpretation based on individual viewer interest and involvement. The same is true for the three scenes under analysis. For example, the Train Scene plays shorter than the Phone Scene, based on the fact that its objective time is shorter, but it also contains expanded action, faster dialog and increased number of characters that make it potentially more involving for the viewer. Due to the exorbitant action in the Dark House Scene, it is perceived to be quite short in duration; even shorter than the Train Scene, when in fact, it is twice as long.

Using Zettl’s (1990) duration as vertical vector, there are a point (zero point) at which a viewer’s involvement, in terms of intensity, no longer concerns itself with objective time. In other words, the viewer is so consumed by the film that they have almost forgotten about the actual passing of objective time. One technique Capra used to gain viewer involvement is the compression of time within the film. Willis (1974) describes Capra’s mastery of this in the film’s introduction:
Before the movie is very far along, it's clear that Capra and the writers are after something big; they have compressed material that might constitute a whole movie into an introduction, and yet they haven't reduced it to throwaway biographical data. The compression of the introductory material is also an enrichment of it – the relationships between the characters are developed through complex scenes. (Willis, 1974, p. 65)

Zettl (1990) also points out that the three factors that influence subjective time are 1) event intensity, 2) event density, and 3) experience intensity. These three concerns are the basis of vector magnitude of subjective time. Obviously, high-energy events are more intense than low-energy events, thus, "a high-energy event is more likely to involve us more than is a low-energy event and, consequently, increase the magnitude of the subjective time vector" (Zettl, 1990, p. 245).

In relative order of energy (highest to lowest) the three scenes analyzed would rank as follows: 1) Dark House Scene, 2) Train Scene and 3) Phone Scene.

Event density refers to the manner in which many things occur in a relatively brief clock-time (Zettl, 1990). High-density events, such as a rapid-fire succession of shots in a brief scene, are perceived as being shorter than low-density events. According to Maland (1980), event density may be fabricated by several factors, such as a tightly woven narrative structure that covers more than a quarter century, as well as the selection and presentation of details in the narrative which are both dense and extremely appropriate. This is true of all three scenes in this study.

Experience intensity refers to the number of relative experiences viewers go through simultaneously, or one after the other, and the depth or impact the experiences create (Zettl, 1990). Obviously, the intensity depends on the relevancy of the event for
each individual; however, critics continue to praise the film for the overall intensity of the viewing experience: “Pechter calls It’s A Wonderful Life both funny and bleak – a strange combination – yet many viewers I’ve talked to have commented on the extreme range of and power of the emotional journey they take in watching Wonderful Life, moving from utter despair in the fantasy sequence to transcendent joy in the conclusion” (Maland, 1980, p. 145).

Nowhere is the experience intensity so noticeable as in the Phone Scene, which Bowser (1997) calls one of the greatest love scenes of all time: “It is the craziest proposal ever put on film.” Anger and frustration are evident in every nuance of this scene. George is enraged at his love for Mary because he knows that it will surely destroy his hopes and dreams; nevertheless, he realizes that another side of him desperately needs the hope and optimism only Mary can offer. Through the intimate positioning of the characters as they listen on the phone, Capra is able to hook viewers emotionally with the simultaneous intensity of the moment - knowing Mary’s mother is listening above, feeling that the two should not be standing so close together, and hearing bits of what is being said on the other end of the phone.

The Train Scene offers event intensity partly due to Capra’s ability to isolate George in a crowded location. “The movie fluently and unobtrusively isolates George - within busy, noisy scenes - in order to probe his mental and emotional state, in effect to fix his consciousness at key points in the narrative” (Willis, 1974, p. 67). After George’s brother leaves him to go back and retrieve luggage, the camera is fixed on George in a medium-close-up. He never speaks, but the audience knows he is realizing the loss of his dreams. The camera then follows George as he rejoins the group; this circular
camera movement intensifies the experience, because it forces the audience to stay with George and his emotions.

Emotions run high in the Dark House Scene as well. George frantically searches 320 Sycamore to find his family, and ends up in a scuffle with his former friend, the police officer. This scene is intense for several reasons, fast-paced action and editing, the film noir style of the scene, and George's emotional desperation. The scene culminates when the police officer, in trying to cuff George, is bitten on the wrist by the angel Clarence - adding Capra humor to the intensity mix. "Clarence provides comic relief in the fantasy sequence, which otherwise would be too intense" (Maland, 1990, p. 145).

Time direction is an important applied media aesthetics element to address. Zettl (1990) describes time direction as being past, present or future, and while "our" present time is a paradox that remains difficult to perceive, in film the present is not nearly so elusive. The narrative in ITAWL may be segmented into ten major parts, each one dealing with a specific time in George's life - present and past (Maland, 1990). A majority of the film is an extended flashback, containing six of the ten parts. The Train Scene and the Phone Scene are located in the extended flashback, while the Dark House Scene is placed in what scholars call the fantasy sequence. Because this sequence does not really have a place on the past-present-future continuum, Maland (1990) refers to this sequence as "out of time" (p. 138). Further, Maland (1990) refers to the expanse of time covered in the film (1919-1946) as yet another reason why ITWAL constitutes a culminating work for Capra: "It virtually sums up the cultural history of this American small town" (p. 138).

One method to cover so much in such a short amount of objective time is the editing strategy Capra uses to create motion. Zettl (1990) indicates that the three
principal motions are 1) primary motion, the event motion in front of the camera; 2) secondary motion, the movement of the camera including zoom; and 3) tertiary motion, the movement and rhythm established by a shot sequence. The third principal, tertiary motion as it relates to editing style, shall be discussed here.

The cut is an instantaneous change from one image to another. With the exception of vertical, soft-edged wipes from scene to scene, and an occasional dissolve to indicate the passing of time, Capra utilizes unobtrusive cuts throughout the film. While no common rhythm of cutting can be detected in any of the three scenes under investigation, it should be noted that Capra’s overall timing and ability to match action and continuity in object direction is responsible for the pacing and flow of the film. Zettl (1990) indicates that rapid or slow cutting establishes an event rhythm and also regulates the density of an event. For example, the many cuts (24) in the Dark House Scene increase the event density. Likewise, the fewer cuts in the Phone Scene (41) actually achieve a similar density so that it appears more agonizing for George. After Capra establishes the close-up of George and Mary on the telephone, he holds this shot for an extended period of time to create additional intensity.

The Train Scene represents a different editing style, as it contains the fewest number of cuts (7). Although shots are held an extraordinarily long time, primary and secondary motion carry a majority of the action in the scene, creating the perception of a faster pace. Table 1 indicates the number of cuts and average number of seconds each shot lasts in the three scenes being studied here.
Table 1. Number of Cuts and Average Length of Shots in Three Scenes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Length / Seconds</th>
<th>Cuts</th>
<th>Average Length of Shot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>2:26</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>7:42</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark House</td>
<td>4:02</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As previously noted, a key editing strategy of Capra’s was the use of reaction shots to increase the audience’s absorption of the story. This technique is evident in all three scenes. The entire film contains non-stop action, in which the pace of editing contributes greatly. “The movie doesn’t stop for a second. It’s like boom, it’s six months later, boom they’re married, boom there’s a run on the bank. He (Capra) doesn’t wait and the audience is right there” (Bowser, 1997). The perception of motion is an element the film is most recognized for.

Sound is the final applied media aesthetics element to be discussed. In film, sound may include dialogue between characters, narration or voice-over, music and other indirect yet literal noises that contribute greatly to the overall context of a scene. Zettl (1990) outlines the following major functions of sound in television and film: 1) information, 2) outer orientation, 3) inner orientation, 4) energy, and 5) structure.

A majority of auditory information in *It's A Wonderful Life* is conveyed vocally via conversations between characters. One exception to this is in the Train Scene, when the camera tracks George alone as he contemplates his fate as a longstanding resident of Bedford Falls. Dialogue in this scene would shatter its overall effectiveness. The only
use of what one would consider off-camera narration throughout the film is in the beginning where prayers are heard and when the angels discuss George’s fate.

Outer orientation sound functions much like light in that it helps to further define conditions within a scene (Zettl, 1990). Outer orientation sounds, although in the background, add much to the richness of all three scenes in this research. For example, in the Train Scene, emotion is conveyed by means of the train whistle and the bustling of passengers. When George is alone on camera, the outer orientation grows louder, as if to envelop him, then it dies down as he approaches his brother’s fiancée. In the Phone Scene, exterior street sounds and footsteps are heard before George enters the house.

The Dark House Scene is filled with the sound of wind and autos passing by. Dramatic background music punctuates the beginning of the scene, lasting only 59 seconds.

Music, according to Zettl (1990), is one of the most direct methods of establishing mood, also known as inner orientation. Capra uses music quite sparingly throughout the film. No music is heard in the Train Scene, while in the Phone Scene Mary puts a recording on the phonograph (Buffalo Gals) which permeates the scene until George’s exit prompts Mary to destroy the record. The Dark House Scene represents the only use of what one would consider mood music. The musical score by Dimitri Tiomkin in this scene is both dramatic and frightful. As George enters 320 Sycamore, the music sounds less planned and is dominated by a high-pitched organ note, heightening the instability of George’s environment and emotions, thereby heightening the viewer’s own emotional perception.

Unlike other fast-paced movies, Capra does not utilize music to enhance the perceived pace of the film. Although in the Phone Scene the recording aids in the passing of the scene, it is also used to fill in the lack of conversation between the two
characters. Clearly, not music but the character’s awkwardness drives this scene. Music used in the Dark House Scene propels the energy of the scene more noticeably, yet the pace of the music is slow and deliberate. The last half of the scene, when the scuffle takes place, contains no music – just the sound of the whistling wind outside of the house. Capra could have easily used music to build the scene to a high-point, yet once again, he uses characters to do this.

The structure within all three scenes includes no noticeable parallel picture and sound structuring, i.e., where the editing beat is accompanied by an identical beat in the sound (Zettl, 1990). Even so, the concepts of sound perspective (matching close-up pictures with close-up sounds), and continuity (maintaining a steady volume and quality of sound over a series of edits) are maintained throughout the film and the three scenes analyzed.

It is clear in this portion of the analysis that Capra realized the importance of sound, yet used it in a subtle fashion to augment the complexities of life as portrayed in It’s A Wonderful Life. In other words, sound adds to the overall success of the film’s structure without attracting unnecessary attention. Even the absence of sound, in many cases, enhances the visually suggestive nature of the internal struggles within certain characters.

Analysis of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Events Surrounding Design and Construction

Wright’s life was tainted with peaks and valleys, many of which were caused by his flamboyant lifestyle. In 1943, when his architectural commissions were practically at a standstill, Wright received a letter from Baroness Hilla von Rebay, curator of a
collection of non-objective art owned by millionaire mine owner Solomon R. Guggenheim. This letter was the catalyst behind New York City’s “incredibly soaring spiral ... the last and greatest building in New York” (Lydon, 1993). It also marked the inception of Wright’s newly positive relationship with a city he claimed to loath, and the architect’s continuing battle to construct buildings that were “artistic” in nature and unique to the American landscape.

“The story of it’s (Guggenheim) birth was a drama that played out for nearly 17 years before it opened in 1959” (Lydon, 1993). Perhaps Wright, himself, was the hero, always fighting for his vision against the villains – a foundation board and antagonistic museum director that rejected his aesthetic concepts.

A series of letters in the book The Guggenheim Correspondence (1986) brings the drama to life. The letters reveal an intricate plot with colorful characters, including the architect (Frank Lloyd Wright), the advocate (Hilla Rebay), the client (Solomon Guggenheim), the nephew (Harry Guggenheim), and the villain (James Johnson Sweeney – Rebay’s successor). Incidentally, Wright was age 73, while his client was 82 when the two entered into their business agreement on June 29, 1943. Age is an interesting side note because both Wright and his client would never live to see the museum’s completion.

Rebay’s first letter dated June 1, 1943, revealed that the museum curator was awestruck by the organic nature of Wright’s work:

I need a fighter, a lover of space, an originator, a tester and a wise man. Your three books which I am reading now gave me the feeling that no one else would do.... I have never seen a building you made but photos, and I feel them – while I never felt others’ work as much, [theirs being] lacking in organic perfection and
adapting to the task’s originality. I want a temple of spirit, a monument!

(Pfeiffer, 1986, p. 4)

According to Lydon (1993), in the most basic explanation of events surrounding the museum’s construction, Solomon Guggenheim’s death in 1949, left his nephew Harry Guggenheim and a board of trustees in charge of the construction. The trustees soon became disenchanted with Rebay and replaced her with a new curator, James Johnson Sweeney. Striving to realize his uncle’s vision, Harry Guggenheim fully supported Wright – Sweeney did not. “Wright and Sweeney were in constant conflict over the nature of the proposed museum and found it almost impossible to agree about anything” (Thomson, 1999, p. 301). Another bane to Wright’s existence during the designing and planning of the museum was New York City Commissioner Robert Moses: “The conflicts resulted in Moses doing all he could to obstruct the building of the museum” (Thomson, 1999, p. 234).

The museum’s difficult birth is detailed in letter after letter drafted by Wright, in an almost fruitless attempt to retain the building’s original intent. After Wright died in early 1959, it took just six months for Sweeney to “mutilate” many of Wright’s plans and intentions (Lydon, 1993), as detailed by Pfeiffer (1986):

How would he (Frank Lloyd Wright) react to the upper ramps being converted for storage? To the drive-through at the entrance being glazed in for a restaurant and gift shop? To the charming café he designed next to the ground floor being converted for storage and restoration work? To the Thannhauser gallery that cuts into the main ramp like a blast of honky-tonk jazz into the middle of a Beethoven symphony? And now, to the impending structure that is to rise behind and above it? (Pfeiffer, 1986, p. 305)
There were other difficulties, too. Wright’s age and failing health did not allow the Guggenheim to realize the architect’s unprecedented attention to detail. Set against the New York skyline lined with the uniformed grids of newly constructed corporate towers, Wright’s “slightly lumpy concrete spiral seemed willful and idiosyncratic” (Quinan, 1993, December, p. 477). Art enthusiasts found Wright’s spiral controlling (Quinan, 1993, December), while artists themselves were bitter at the thought of their paintings being suspended (propped up) on curved walls that were a slant angle away from the floor (Lydon, 1993). Last but not least was the fact that Wright’s original design did not take into account an ever-expanding collection of art, nor the notion that there may be significant changes in the nature of new art (Quinan, 1993, December).

1992 marked the end of a two-year period of restoration for the Guggenheim in which many of Wright’s original plans were brought back to their “pre-original condition” (Lydon, 1993). In addition, other rooms that offshoot the ramp area were constructed to allow for a more traditional exhibition of art. Architects Gwathmey Siegel & Associates also designed a ten-story annex building that includes four new levels of exhibition space. The natural lighting was enhanced throughout the museum by replacing the antiquated single-pane skylight glass with double-paned thermal glazed glass, which carries ultraviolet and infrared shielding to protect artwork from harmful sunlight rays (Crosbie, 1995, March). Other lighting considerations included an artificial skylight system using fluorescent lamps concealed in ceiling grid patterns (Barna & Henderson, 1990, March).

Controversy continues to surround restoration efforts. Wright purists believe the alterations, the construction of the annex building in particular, has greatly disfigured the architect’s original intentions. The limestone-clad annex tower, necessary for the
The museum's expanding collection of art, as described by Quinan (1993, December) as an "interruption" in "the spiraling movement implied in Wright's rotunda" (p. 480). Wright's original conception was an eleven-story tower, which was to serve as a backdrop for the more dominant rotunda. Original exterior schematics show that the proposed tower was complimentary to the rotunda by means of offset balconies, which created the illusion of subtly shifting planes (Quinan, 1993, December). The annex designed by Gwathmey Siegel & Associates appears overpowering and does not echo the relationship between the large rotunda and the smaller monitor building.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, as a proponent of the 1992 renovation, praises the design team for its historical accuracy and preservation efforts, which is in keeping with the Foundation's "desire to return all elements of the museum's architecture to their original state" (Pfeiffer, 1994).

**Building Description**

For the purpose of this research, the Guggenheim will be described in its current state. Located at 1071 Fifth Avenue (at Eighty-ninth Street) in New York City, in its most basic form, the museum consists of two primary elements, a large seven-story rotunda and the new rectangular eleven-story annex building. In addition, a smaller rotunda (the monitor building) is located directly in front of the annex, and is connected to the large rotunda by way of a solid floor underneath and porthole-lined hallway.

The building's exterior is "creamy white" in color, as Wright had intended it to complement the color of the traditional New York sky (Lydon, 1993). Surface materials vary: the rotunda, is "glazed," while the newer annex building has a rough limestone finish (Quinan, 1993, December).
The structure is radically different from the surrounding rectangular towers made of steel and glass. The inverted spiral contradicts the usual chessboard-styled structures, typical of large cities. Described by Lydon (1993) as a "creamy white flying saucer," the rotunda or spiral represents the most significant visual element of the Guggenheim. As the rotunda structure grows successively larger from bottom to top, it is one of a "handful of spiral-formed buildings in history.... The Guggenheim is the only expanding spiral ever constructed" (Quinan, 1993, December, p. 476). Upon approaching the museum entrance, the series of spiral levels advance over the road in a cantilever fashion, then recede, "sucking you in;" the end result is a "statement of weight over your head" (Lydon, 1993).

Figure 10 illustrates the dramatic exterior of the Guggenheim as photographed by Bruno Balestrini (Thais in 2000, 2000).

![Figure 10. Indicative of the Guggenheim is its large curved overhang.](image)
Visitors entering the museum are funneled through to the admissions area on the right, and then empty into the large rotunda. The museum's bookstore and information desk expand to the left into the first level of the small rotunda (monitor). Walls throughout the rotunda, monitor building and annex are smooth in finish and warm ivory in color.

A spiral ramp circles the interior walls of the rotunda, creating six spiral levels. Each pass around the spiral ramp offers the opportunity to exit into one of five annex galleries on floors seven, five, four, three and two. According to Brown (2000, March 9), Wright's recommended method of experiencing the museum is to take an elevator up to the top of the spiral, weaving in and out of the annex galleries throughout the descent. "People like to walk around the ramp from the top down, so they can take in the dramatic view."

As previously mentioned, lighting is a mixture of natural and manmade, a combination of natural light from the rotunda skylight, with additional fixtures hugging the edges of rotunda walls. The galleries, with ceiling heights ranging from nine to 19 feet, feature a double ceiling of rectangular slots that conceal adjustable track lighting fixtures (Barna & Henderson, 1990, March). In addition to the large skylight at the top of the rotunda, smaller circular skylights line the edge of the circular ceiling.

From the curved, outwardly slanted walls of the rotunda were meant to be suspended the museum's permanent collection of paintings in an unframed fashion, thereby, heightening the identity of each work and eliminating the "picture-as-window" effect (Quinan, 1993, December). In other words, Wright strove for a more liberating approach to displaying paintings, less confining than traditional methods of exhibition. In February 2000, the rotunda did not contain paintings.
According to Brown (2000, March 9), the use of the rotunda walls varies depending on the current art installation; there are three special installations (exhibits) annually. Past exhibits, as seen in photos from Progressive Architecture (1989), illustrate the use of rotunda walls to display large paintings. In these photos, it appears the slanting and curvature of the walls was masked temporarily with large sheets of wallboard to present a more rectilinear mounting surface.

Pfeiffer’s (1994) The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum features photos of the rotunda walls while bare; however, large lettering on the outside rotunda parapet railing – known as “wall text” – is used as a dramatic and artistic method of communicating information about the current installation (Brown, 2000, March 9). When artwork is displayed in the rotunda, it is arranged either thematically or chronologically depending on the exhibition.

Flooring throughout the rotunda is light gray Terrazzo, an aggregate and cement mixture, poured and polished to resemble a smooth granite-like surface (American Marble Co., 1999). All floors in the museum, including the parquet wood flooring once used in the earlier annex addition, now bear the Terrazzo finish.

Contextual Analysis using Applied Media Aesthetics

The emphasis of this section is analyzing the Guggenheim’s large rotunda, or spiral from an interior perspective. The following images were captured from the documentary 1071 Fifth Avenue: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Story of the Guggenheim Museum (1993), and illustrate the interior spiral effect created by the ramp (see Figure 11), as well as the means of lighting the rotunda by way of skylights (see Figure 12).
Following the theme set forth in the analysis of the three scenes in IAWL, the Guggenheim spiral will be analyzed according to the same criteria: 1) light and color, 2) two-dimensional space (aspect ratio, object size, image size, and inductive and deductive approaches), 3) three-dimensional space (positive and negative volumes, and
z-axis motion vector), 4) time-motion (objective time, subjective time, event intensity, event density and experience intensity, time direction, and editing), and 5) sound (information, outer orientation, inner orientation, energy, and structure).

Light – it should be mentioned that Wright was best known for his mastery of space with regard to its beauty as a "resident" of both function and form (Blake, 1960). There can be no doubt that lighting was a critical element in the success of Wright’s strive for beauty. To allow for a better infusion of natured elements, Wright’s design of the rotunda begins with a large circular skylight at the top of the seven-story structure. Although there are disadvantages in admitting daylight into the museum setting (some paintings may have an allowable limit of 20 footcandles or less, while illumination on a clear sunny day may reach 2,000 footcandles) (Darragh & Snyder, 1993), Wright would never have considered the exclusion of natural light.

The daylight streaming in from the New York sky could be classified as flat lighting, bright and high-key. This method of lighting the interior of the rotunda offers several advantages. First, skylights give off an abundance of light relative to the size of the opening (Darragh & Snyder, 1993). The rotunda skylight is extremely large. Next, daylight, whether dim or bright, provides viewers with a continuous spectral curve, which is most appropriate for revealing all colors in works of art (Darragh & Snyder, 1993). Finally, even the changes in daylight illumination are effective in a museum setting, as they cause an involuntary muscular action of the pupils. Constantly readjusting to changes in lighting helps keep viewers more alert throughout the museum experience (Darragh & Snyder, 1993).

The high-key lighting created by the large skylight and smaller circular skylights casts shadows, yet the shadows appear diffused and soft. Top lighting provides even
illumination throughout the rotunda and into the circular walkways. As Dick (1990) mentions, lighting of uniform brightness and low contrast is effective for creating tranquility and peace. However, on extremely bright days, depending on the direction of the sun, dramatic patterns may be visible on the walls of the rotunda. For example, a distorted replica of the steel frame of the skylight may be seen on a wall of the top floor of the rotunda.

Upon nearing the outward most edges of the rotunda, natural light is augmented with artificial lighting systems. Before 1992 pendant-mounted ceiling fixture systems provided both indirect uplighting (ambient) and opportunities for focused track fixtures (Barna & Henderson, 1990, March). After the 1992 renovation, the artificial skylight lighting systems that line each enclave create a wall-washing effect which is diffused and flat. In addition, when the ambient light from above is low, lighting in the enclave areas becomes much more contrasting and dramatic; on bright days, it tends to blend in more. These daylight-equivalents (fluorescents) typically have a limited use in museums, due to the fact that they produce a diffused, flat light that does not enhance details in three-dimensional objects (Darragh & Snyder, 1993).

One significant hurdle for lighting engineers is the transition between the rotunda and other rectilinear galleries in the annex. The change in rich daylight to the artificially lighted galleries causes a "psychological breakdown" in that "the artificially lighted galleries feel insignificant in comparison with the monumental daylighted space of the main atrium" (Barna & Henderson, 1990, March). The artificial daylight systems mentioned earlier in this chapter helps to provide a smoother transition into the annex galleries.
It is clear that Wright was well aware of the power of ambient lighting to further his intentions of experiencing both tranquility and grandeur while in the Guggenheim.

Color is an important design element inside the museum; however, Wright’s typical use of color was to subtly enhance the uniformity of a structure – never to draw attention to the color itself. The spiral is analogous to a single molded structure, rather than a series of walls, railings and floors. Color is used to further the expansive flow of the spiral. In October 1959, James Johnson Sweeney insisted the interior be painted all-white, despite Wright’s specification of a soft, off-white or cream color: “The effect of seeing vibrantly colored paintings, so unrelated to the architectural space and clashing with an unsympathetic dead white, was startling and disturbing” (Pfieffer, 1994, p. 34). The 1992 renovation brought a return to Wright’s original conception of color, creating a more inviting contrast between painting and wall.

The cream color of the walls is constant throughout the museum, barring a special display or exhibition. The consistent wall and ceiling color, however, does allow for tonal qualities, from light to dark in a series of graduated steps, depending on lighting conditions and point of view of the visitor. In this respect, the interior of the museum is much like the tonal qualities found in black and white film. The Terrazzo flooring provides a warm gray contrast to the cream interior walls, and is the darkest actual color in spectrum and tonal quality found in the structure.

Two-Dimensional Space is an engaging and difficult aesthetic concept to apply to a building. The structural element of aspect ratio appears to have little application; however, from another perspective, if one’s field of vision is considered similar to the aspect ratio of the screen, there is some room for discussion. Dondis (1974) states that the camera lens acts in much the same way as the human eye, particularly in its ability to
simulate dimension and perspective. One important difference is aspect ratio. A wide-angle lens may broaden the scope of the visual field for a camera, however, the eye’s field of vision is far greater (Dondis, 1974). If the aspect ratio of classic cinema and TV is 3:4, then the aspect ratio of the human eye may be 5:7, for example. With consideration for expanse of peripheral vision, this ratio is probably underestimated.

In viewing the interior of the Guggenheim, the aspect ratio of the human eye allows for an extremely broad visual field, a much more sweeping and dramatic perspective due to the lack of confining borders or other masking devices. And, unlike the television or the film screen, the effect of peripheral vision adds a good amount of leftover space on all four sides of the visual field (Zettl, 1990). One commonality with the aspect ratio of television and film is that the aspect ratio of the human eye remains constant throughout the viewing experience, whether far from an object or close-up.

Object size in the Guggenheim is relatively simple to identify, particularly when people are present. The seven-story spiral towers over its human inhabitants. The translation of the interior images into actual size is greatly influenced by other contextual clues, including the relative size of people travelling up and down the ramp, the height of the ramp railings, openings into the galleries in the annex, and any artwork that may be present on the rotunda walls.

Image size, in the case of the rotunda and ramp, takes on a unique perspective in that it is similar to the overwhelmingly large Cinemascope screen. Zettl (1990) refers to this presentation as a spectacle that attains dramatic proportions both physically and psychologically. One element that aids in this breathtaking experience is the building’s ramp, a strong horizontal element that tends to dramatize the building’s two-dimensional illusion:
In the Guggenheim Museum the ramp takes on an all-embracing role: it is not only the means of access, circulation and exhibition, it constitutes the very form of the building itself. The ramp ends on one edge as a parapet overlooking the central court, and on the other as it slopes up to become the wall surface, both inside and out. It is both floor and ceiling. Wright's concept of open, flowing interior space as the reality of the building reaches its zenith here.

(Pfeiffer, 1994, p. 38)

The panoramic feature of the ramp combined with the expansive landscape aspect of the visual carries an additional amount of relative energy, which also energizes the viewing experience. This offers a substantially more stimulating overall experience than could be gained in viewing a film or television screen.

In reference to deductive and inductive approaches to picture sequence, it is apparent that a deductive approach is employed. Upon entering the rotunda, viewers must experience a wide establishing view of the spiral, from top to bottom. Physically taking an elevator up to the top of the spiral or walking up the ramp allows for a progressively tighter view of detail. Zettl (1990) indicates the deductive approach is especially well suited to the wide motion picture screen.

As previously discussed, Wright was concerned with the procession involved in viewing a structure, often confining and carefully concealing entryways, then dramatically overwhelming visitors with expansive interior views. In few of Wright's other works is the procession more dramatic and filmic than it is in the Guggenheim Museum.

The discussion of forces within the screen to enhance the clarity and intensity of events in the two-dimensional field include main directions (horizontal and vertical).
The rotunda spiral is an elegant combination of the horizontal and vertical. It should be mentioned here that in the first half of Wright's career, the architect was greatly concerned with two-dimensional geometries, as seen in the rectilinear constraints of Prairie and post-Prairie years (Quinan, 1993, December). In 1935, Wright “began increasingly to mine the possibilities of circles, hexagons, and triangles as plan and forms and as modules for plans for the nearly 200 commissions of his second career” (Quinan, 1993, December). With the Guggenheim, one of Wright's goals was to “break the box” in the third or vertical dimension by way of the large and open rotunda.

Interestingly, he was able to achieve the perception of the vertical by using a predominance of horizontal lines, as seen in the stacking nature of the ramps. This encourages viewers to tilt their field of vision directly up to the top of the rotunda, where the large skylight is the focal point. The question here is whether the main direction in the rotunda is horizontal or vertical. Certainly the answer to this query is an individual one; however, it may be suggested that Wright intended on a main direction that was a combination of the horizontal-vertical. The strength of the open feel of the rotunda almost forces the eye upward to the vertical, yet the near horizontal lines of the ramp suggest calmness and tranquility that may act to psychologically detract from the impact of the vertical.

The structural walls, positioned one on top of the other outlining each enclave, also add to the vertical nature of the rotunda. Yet the continuous inset lighting system around the rotunda walls, parallel to the ramp railings, once again reinforces the horizontal perception.

Zettl (1990) suggests that extreme vertical orientations are imposing, as if to remind people of their insignificance relative to God; horizontal orientations are
friendlier, reflecting a spirit of humanism. If such is true, perhaps Wright's intention is to remind patrons that nature contains the same principle: horizontal-vertical orientation (trees grow perpendicular to the ground) (Zettl, 1990). The horizontal lines are familiar, warm and inviting, and their succession to the top via a vertical direction is bold, a reminder of the overwhelming power of nature in the presence of man.

Three-Dimensional Space in the Guggenheim, as in all buildings, is different from film in that it is reality - not an illusion. It is suggested that the spiral is the manifestation of Wright's most successful attempt to "break the box" by emphasizing the third dimension through lifting the top of the box, or the roof (Qunian, 1993). In this case, a large skylight looks up toward heaven, open as if to allow nature into the building, yet high enough to suggest it is untouchable.

The building is comprised of a precedence of negative volume. The entire rotunda is open from top to bottom, creating an expansive open and spacious feel. Zettl (1990) indicates that although a less restricted feel may be present, too much negative volume can promote a certain emptiness, creating a feeling of smallness, coldness and isolation. Obviously this feeling would be intensified if the rotunda were occupied by just a handful of patrons.

A half-moon-shaped water fountain on the bottom floor carefully and minimally articulates the negative volume inside the rotunda. An identical shape pushes delicately outward from the circular parapet ramp walls above the fountain on each of the spiral walkway levels. Further articulation is seen in the small enclave walls that surround the exterior of each level of the ramp. Artwork is an obvious articulation device, depending on the current exhibition.

The three-dimensional negative volume expressed by the rotunda is primarily
articulated by the spiral ramp, which evokes a sports stadium atmosphere. As deduced from Zettl (1990), the ramp walls are similar to the empty benches found in a stadium setting. The horizontal aspect of this notion represents powerful graphic vectors that can inspire awe and further a feeling of being dwarfed.

The z-axis motion vector inside a three-dimensional object is an obscure concept; nonetheless, it will be addressed in terms of a patron’s movement inside the rotunda. Wright was careful to address the air of magnificence inside the structure as it is dramatized by the spiral. This point is driven home in a letter Wright wrote to Hilla Rebay, dated January 20, 1944:

A museum should be one extended and expansive, well proportioned floor space from bottom to top – a wheel chair going around and up and down throughout. No stops anywhere and such screened divisions of the space gloriously lit within from above.... The whole thing will either throw you off your guard entirely or be just about what you have been dreaming about. (Pfeiffer, 1994, p. 5-6; Pfeiffer, 1986, p. 40-41)

It is apparent from Wright’s correspondence that, although he intended to make the viewing of art a richer experience than what a traditional museum could offer, his new museum was meant to convey an ultimate use of the third dimension through the illusion of freedom of movement. Wright, though, very carefully constricted the flow of traffic on the ramp. The width of the ramp is larger at the top and becomes successively smaller at the bottom. Perhaps this coincides with Wright’s coined phrase “downward drift” when referring to the public access within the building: “Clearly, it was his intention that visitors would enter the building, take the elevator to the top level, and begin their descent” (Pfeiffer, 1994, p. 21). Even so, upon descending, patrons can see, at
any place along the ramp, where they have been and where they intend to go, thus obtaining a relief from the possible sense of constriction. “In this way no precise distinction exists between the upward and downward slopes and it is possible to have different perceptions of the surrounding space at all levels which increases or decreases according to a balance between an expansion or contraction of events” (Mello, 2000, paragraph 5).

From another perspective, as one travels forward on the ramp (the z-axis), a strong horizontal movement may be gained by way of observing the adjacent ramp railing and the railing on the opposite side of the rotunda; having the potential of detracting from the perception of forward movement. This tension may add to the feeling of drama. Freedom of movement is apparent, yet on the ramp one could feel insignificant in comparison to its grandeur and overriding control.

In essence, on the ramp Wright effectively employs z-axis blocking by way of enclave walls and railings to carefully control the movement of patrons forward or backward. Depth cues are noticeable as people pass by one another, works of art, and enclave walls.

Time-Motion in the Guggenheim is realized via objective and subjective means. First, the actual passing of time may be easily realized by daytime lighting cycles, the positioning of the sun and variable clouds that control ambient light streaming into the rotunda. Subjective time is more complex to identify.

The three elements that aid in the perception of the passage of objective time, as defined by Zettl (1990) are 1) perceived duration, 2) duration as vertical vector, and 3) vector magnitude of subjective time. The perceived duration of a patron’s visit varies greatly, especially when considering the art on display and the patron’s level of interest.
in the art. Where event density is concerned, there are several factors to consider. First, travelling along the sections of the ramp where the enclaves contain no art could be equated to a shot in a film that lasts an extended period of time, therefore prolonging the museum experience. In this case, the event density would be minimal. Next, the passing by of enclave walls when artwork is present adds punctuation to the viewing experience, much like the rapid succession of cuts in editing. The actual pace would be determined by the speed with which the viewer travels down the ramp.

With duration as a vertical vector, a zero point at which the viewer's involvement is so intense that they are no longer concerned with the passage of time is highly dependent upon the individual patron. However, it may be suggested that Wright's preoccupation with melding the container and its contents could enable patrons to enjoy a more intense viewing experience, thereby creating a lack of concern for the passing of objective time.

It (the Guggenheim) went far beyond a new interaction between container and contained that Italian architects, notably Carlo Scarpa and Franco Albini, began to implement in the mid-1950s. At the Guggenheim, Wright respected the classical museum typology of a central dome and grand stair (transformed by him into a ramp) and at the same time revolutionized the relationship between art, architecture and the viewer. (Newhouse, 1998, p. 220-221)

The vector magnitude of subjective time is concerned with 1) event intensity, 2) event density and 3) experience intensity. The event intensity inside the rotunda would be radically different depending on the installation. McDonough (2000, March 13), producer of CBS Sunday Morning News segment “The Father of Interactive Art,” reports that Wright's rotunda currently houses an interactive exhibition that strives to
humanize technology: “From the garden of TV screens clear up to the top of the laser-lit waterfall, the museum’s rotunda has been transformed by Nam June Paik, a legendary multimedia visionary.... Standing near the foot of Paik’s cascading laser waterfall, you can see why the Guggenheim chose his work to launch the new millennium.” The abundance of electronic stimuli seen throughout the rotunda in the Paik installation (February 11 to April 26, 2000) is quite different from Lothar Baumgarten’s site-specific installation in 1993. Baumgarten’s “America Invention” relied heavily on dramatic red, black and gray wall text applied to the railings facing into the open rotunda, and on the base of the curved wall surfaces (Pfeiffer, 1994).

Excluding the art presentation inside of the rotunda, the event intensity of travelling along the circular ramp would most likely culminate at the top of the rotunda. The initial entry into the rotunda may constitute another zenith in event intensity.

Event density, as noted before, is created by the application of art throughout the rotunda. Obviously, the more dense the installation, the greater the event density in the rotunda. Because the ramp narrows as it proceeds downward, one may conclude that meandering down the ramp would result in an increased feeling of density. At the end of the viewing, one might feel an extreme sense of density, in particular when exiting the rotunda into the low-ceiling entryway.

Zettl (1990) indicates that event intensity is the number of simultaneous stimuli experienced by viewers, as well as the depth and impact of these experiences. With this in mind, one could logically conclude that the initial view of the rotunda from the ground floor would constitute the greatest event intensity. Part of this intensity is the overall unified physical structure of the building. “There is no way in which the form of the museum, its physical appearance, can be separated from its structure any more than
the leaves and branches of a tree can be considered separate from its roots and trunk” (Pfeiffer, 1994, p. 38).

Other locations of event intensity occur when looking across the rotunda and down from over the railing – taking in the immense depth from floor to skylight, noticing the vast distance from one ramp across to the opposite ramp, seeing the sunlight strike selected walls, and passing by the very same location previously seen from a distance.

It would be fair to surmise that Wright intended the Guggenheim experience to be rooted in an emotional journey for visitors that would transcend or rise above all other museum experiences.

Time direction as seen in the Guggenheim rotunda mimics film in that one is constantly aware of the forward direction (future) and reminded by way of the rotunda levels of where one has been (past). As in real life, the here and now remains a paradox. One may also perceive the ramp levels as akin to the flashbacks and flash-forwards utilized to convey time direction in film.

With regard to pacing to increase the perception of the passing of time, the spiral itself, the circular shape of walls, railings, floor, light fixtures, even the subtle circles embedded in the flooring constitute continual pacing and movement. “The spiral is linear, but it exists in three dimensions; it defines space without strictly containing it; whereas circles, squares, and triangles are stable and static, the spiral has powerful connotations of movement” (Quinan, 1993, December, p. 475).

Sound may also contribute to the conceptions of movement. For the purpose of this study, Zettl’s (1990) outer orientation will be addressed, also known as ambient noise or natural sound. Darragh and Snyder (1993) indicate that noise in museums may
be controlled by three factors: the reduction of noise from equipment, the use of materials and construction methods, and the use of sound isolation techniques where noise is unavoidable. Acoustically, the more rigid construction materials are, the more noise can spread through a building. Hard surfaces, such as the plaster walls and solid floors found in the Guggenheim, reflect much of the sound they receive. The glass ceiling of the rotunda tends to amplify, echo and reverberate sound.

It seems clear by these choices of materials that Wright had intended more on encouraging the reflection of ambient sound rather than making great efforts to absorb it. One exception is in the enclave areas throughout the structure. The ceiling heights are lower in these areas, creating less sound reflection and a more intimate environment in which to view artwork. Pfeiffer (1994) states that in the enclave areas, Wright was interested in placing works of art in a setting that was more human in scale.

Curved surfaces, such as the walls of the Guggenheim rotunda, pose a unique acoustical challenge to sound in two ways. First, curved walls tend to focus sound into selected areas; second, curved walls tend to slightly delay the reception of sound (Roth, 1993). This results in echoing, yet another form of sound reflection.

The hot spots and echoing may be the outcome of an intended disorientation of the viewing experience. No doubt Wright took this into account when he specified the curvature of walls and eliminated sound-absorbing surfaces in his design. Perhaps the variety and intensity of ambient sounds in the Guggenheim rotunda mimics the sounds one may hear while walking through nature. The prevalence of sound reverberation adds to the aliveness of the Guggenheim experience, and the overall power of the interior structure.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The intent of this research was to discover the inherent self-reflection of Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright through a contextual analysis of It's A Wonderful Life and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. The overall influence of the medium on the message is critical. For this reason, Zettl's (1990) theory of applied media aesthetics was adapted by way of the five fundamental image elements known to television and film (light and color, two-dimensional space, three-dimensional space, time-motion and sound). Due to the complex yet proven relationship between film and architecture, this study endeavored to apply the fundamental image elements to both a film and to a building. The non-traditional application of Zettl's principals to a structure, while challenging, assisted greatly in further uncovering the contextual functions of Wright's work.

The basic purpose of applied media aesthetics is to clarify, intensify and interpret events for large audiences. By doing so, the entire communication process is enhanced in several ways. Zettl (1990) states that applied media aesthetics enables audiences to see the world in a new perspective, and to experience the world in fresh and heightened ways. Implied in the process of designing and executing works such as a film or a building is knowledge on behalf of the creator that he or she has the ability to influence a mass audience. In realizing the potential of influence or manipulation over audiences,
the concerned creator must acknowledge and accept the responsibility with which he or
she is charged. Most certainly, this is the case with Capra and Wright.

Obviously, story content or the idea is important in establishing a rapport with
an audience; however, Zettl (1990) indicates this, in and of itself, does not make for mass
communication. The idea must be molded so that it is appropriately expressed within
the medium's technical and aesthetic production and reception requirements. The
molding or sculpting process takes into account the artist's knowledge and execution of
the five fundamental image elements. It is the synthesis of these five elements that
effectively shapes and accentuates the impact of the story or idea.

General Observations

Although IAWL and the Guggenheim share common applied media aesthetics
attributes (flat lighting, limited use of color, object size in relation to humans, deductive
approach to revealing images, vertical and horizontal forces, carefully articulated
positive volume, and an effective use of outer oriented sound), if just one element were
singled out for its overwhelming inclusion, that element would be time-motion. More
specifically, motion.

Capra expertly creates the illusion of motion in the three scenes analyzed and
throughout the film. The emotional weight of Capra's message is emphatically
portrayed through the motion, which is subtly embedded into the context of the film.
Consider first the circular effect of the plot. George literally grows up before his
audience, his dreams are shattered, he evolves into a psychological state in which he
prefers discontent, he contemplates suicide, and he is exposed to what life would have
been like without him. Finally, in his violent refusal to accept death, he is once again in acceptance of life (Willis, 1974).

Each scene under analysis portrays the same sense of motion by way of the plot. For example, in the **Train Scene**, George evolves from elation about his freedom, to utter despair, and back to happiness at his brother's opportunity to break away from Bedford Falls. In the **Phone Scene**, a circular motion is realized when George's life is altered forever due to his marriage proposal to Hatch. The **Dark House Scene** is circular in several aspects, as this is the first scene in the fantasy sequence to reveal that George's family has never existed. The scene also reveals that the people George thought were his supporters are, in fact, his adversaries. The motion Capra employs in this scene causes its perceived duration to whisk by.

Motion is further experienced by the overall event intensity and density of the scenes analyzed. Consider the tightly woven narrative with its wealth of detail, the experience intensity as exemplified by the Phone Scene. Capra's use of time direction provides further circular motion, taking the audience from the present to the past, to the fantasy sequence, and finally back to the present. And lastly, the director's extensive use of primary (character) motion and tertiary motion (editing pace) creates an illusion of motion in which the viewer is unable to escape.

The **Guggenheim Museum**, though a stationary object, is the incarnation of motion. Visualize the circular effect of the spiral ramps that line the interior of the rotunda, and the movement of patrons down and up the ramp. Wright had intended visitors to experience flowing movement from top to bottom. The event intensity inside of the large rotunda, no doubt, reaches its fervor at the bottom looking up, and again at the top looking down.
Wright created a deliberate pacing similar to the cuts in film editing by emphasizing the enclave walls on each of the six spiral levels. The faster visitors flow down the ramp, the more the illusion of motion and time is enhanced by these walls. Event density is created by the display of artwork and sculpture throughout the rotunda. Event intensity is enhanced through the expansive view from nearly any point on any floor in the spiral. Keep in mind, also, that the ramp floor is consistently at a slight angle, creating the perception of further motion.

A culminating element as portrayed through motion in It's A Wonderful Life and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is an overall emotional journey, in the end creating a greater understanding of each artist. The emotional journey could be likened to an emotional whirlwind, one with a tremendously lasting impact.

Conclusion

Scholars have applied terms such as culminating, spiritual, symbolic, and transcendental in attempting to understand the nature and significance of IAWL and the Guggenheim. But what is the nature of the self-reflection offered by these two creations?

First, it should be emphasized that Capra and Wright were extensively committed to the creation of these projects. After his service in WWII, it is said that Capra had changed. After experiencing the human devastation of the war, Capra questioned whether filmmaking was a frivolous endeavor (Maland, 1980). Even so, he continued on with what is perhaps his most spiritually personal and, arguably, his most powerful message in the form of the character George Bailey.
Capra experienced the same feverish and constant reexamination of life that George exemplifies in the film. Willis (1974) adds that the film mirrors life, as seen in the arbitrary way in which one's attitude can fluctuate from one moment to the next. No doubt, this complete range of emotion plagued Capra all of his life.

Capra (1971) describes the film as not only the greatest film he had made, but "the greatest film anybody made" (p. 383). The director further describes his intentions:

It wasn't made for the oh-so-bored critics, or the oh-so-jaded literati. It was my kind of film for my kind of people; the motion picture I had wanted to make since I first peered into a movie camera's eye piece in that San Francisco Jewish gymnasium. A film to tell the weary, the disheartened, and the disillusioned; the wino, the junkie, the prostitute; those behind prison walls and those behind Iron Curtains, that no man is a failure! (Capra, 1971, p. 383)

From George's and Capra's ambivalence toward capitalism, to the minute details of Capra's life that parallel George's, it is evident that Capra's involvement in the film was all-encompassing. Maland (1980) describes a few of the autobiographical parallels: George takes charge of the Building and Loan in 1928, the same year Capra began at Columbia. Mary and George marry in 1932, the same year Capra married Lucille Reyburn. And except for the death of his son in 1938, Capra would, like George, have had four children.

Both Capra and George lived with fears and self-doubt, yet it is clear that the message in It's A Wonderful Life is a transcendental one. By affirming his values of family and community, Capra is able to push aside the bleak realities of his own self-destructiveness, thereby reaffirming his preoccupation with human life and social solidarity.
Wright had many preoccupations that are exemplified by the Guggenheim. Although he claimed to loath the city, in actuality he had a great love for cities and for what they represent as a symbol of collective understanding (Smith, 1979). The Guggenheim represents Wright's crowning gift of glory to the city and his sense of the meaning of value, loyalty, participation and membership within the city structure. He pursued the commission with extraordinary tenacity, in light of his age and failing health. Quinan (1993) indicates that Wright's spiritual beliefs were rooted in Unitarianism and transcendentalism, which was disseminated through the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

Wright acknowledged that many of the ideas expressed by Emerson, such as "Nature," "The Over-Soul," and "Self Reliance," played a central role in his utter self-confidence and in the formation of his architectural vision (Quinan, 1993). Emerson believed that a fundamental sense, current or energy unifies all things in nature, including man, the soul and God. Leading Emersonian scholars imply that the path of this current is the elusive spiral.

Wright held the belief that architecture could be made transcendent. Nowhere is this more evident than in the spiral of the Guggenheim Museum, where Wright had one final opportunity to express his beliefs in the oneness of man with nature. "Wright's continued concern with breaking the box is proof of his continuing preoccupation with the themes of unity and transcendency" (Quinan, 1993, p. 473).

The architect himself provides further illumination on the organic nature of the design of his new museum:

Conceive that here came a new sense of building on American soil ... expressive far beyond mere function in the realm of the human spirit.... The Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum walls and spaces, inside and outside, are one in substance and effect. Walls slant gently outward forming a giant spiral for a well-defined purpose; a new unity between beholder, painting and architecture. (Wright in Visions of Wright, Grehan, 1997, p. 138-141)

The spiral is a mysterious, elusive and peculiar form that, unlike other geometric forms, is unique in that it is conceived in nature and symbolizes the unification of all it touches. “It is very likely that Wright would have recognized something of himself in the eccentric, transcendent nature of the spiral” (Quinan, 1993, p. 475). Also note that if one traces the path of a spiral, though circular, it begins in one place and ends in another.

After careful consideration and study of the contextual elements presented here, one could gather that George is Capra, just as the Spiral is Wright. It is in their intelligent creation of story through images, and form through manipulating space, that manifests the totality of Capra and Wright’s self-reflection.

It should be concluded here that Capra and Wright shared one all-encompassing self-reflection as exemplified by It’s A Wonderful Life and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum - that of the unity of humanity.

For Capra it was his ultimate belief that the self-less hero would never fail at the hands of his friends. Humanity will ultimately bind together to fervently uphold what is good and right in the world.

For Wright it was his undying faith in endeavoring to tell the world that man and nature must coincide in mutual respect. Humanity will ultimately bind together with nature, creating a unification of God, man and soul.
As a final rhetorical touch, consider the declaration Capra placed beneath a photo of George's father in the Building and Loan set:

"ALL YOU TAKE WITH YOU IS THAT WHICH YOU'VE GIVEN AWAY."

Similarly, Wright's motto is seen in the form of a memorial plaque embedded into the entryway floor of the Guggenheim:

"LET EACH MAN EXERCISE THE ART HE KNOWS. ARISTOPHANES. THIS MUSEUM DESIGNED BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IS THE GIFT OF SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM."

Recommendations for Further Study

The purpose of this historical and critical study, to reveal the self-reflection of two artists creating messages in two different media, though insightful, has much room for further critical interpretation. Zetti's (1990) applied media aesthetics, while an appropriate means for analyzing film and television, poses concerns when applied to architecture. Several of the critical factors within each of the five fundamental elements simply do not apply to a structure. For example, in creating the illusion of the third dimension or screen volume, film has an inherent ability to maximize camera positioning, camera angles, lens focal length, and various editing techniques. These techniques which allow the director to have total control of the message are the cornerstones of film production, in architecture they simply do not exist.

To remedy this situation, it is recommended that a continued study of film and architecture take place by utilizing other means of analysis. Bordwell's (1989) Making Meaning, though intended for use in film criticism, offers several potentially viable methods of interpretation, which may be more efficiently applied to architecture. One
such example is known as symptomatic interpretation, a social scientific way of investigating the cultural consciousness of one’s creation. A second critical method is semantic interpretation, in which a semantic field constitutes a set of relations of meaning found between conceptual or linguistic units. Criticism of this nature organizes potential meanings in relation to one another.

In Rybacki & Rybacki’s (1991) Communication Criticism: Approaches and Genres, an application of auteur criticism may provide yet a third method of study. This approach to film interpretation focuses criticism on the person who is responsible for the film’s overall message. In essence, this theory emphasizes the director’s personal history, political views, degree of control over the project, biases, prejudices, morals and values, etc., which may be illustrated in the form of film. As such, it would seem logical that Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright would be ideal choices to whom to apply this type of criticism.

Finally, from an architectural standpoint, Pottinger and Purington’s (1998) Landscape Narrative: Design Practices for Telling Stories offers another viable means of drawing conclusions in intended communication. The act of sequencing a landscape narrative is potentially useful for analyzing both architecture and film. By way of defining flash-forwards, flashbacks, flash-betweens, and other transitional devices, the structure plot and order of landscape narratives may be studied. “Film is perhaps the closest medium to landscape design in terms of potential means for structuring plot” (p. 113). This method of critical interpretation emphasizes the events of a story, which ultimately uncover the overriding plot.

In conclusion, although the theory of applied media aesthetics was selected as a means of analyzing film and architecture in this research, there are numerous other
ways in which to further understand the self-reflection of artists. The overriding factor here is an acknowledgement that great creators do have a message in all that they present to the world. Without the message, it is very likely that there would exist no inspiration to create. In many cases the message is obvious, in other cases it takes effort in the form of vigilant study to begin to tap into the communicator's thoughts.

Only after this has been accomplished can one begin to see the world in a new and more significant light.
Frank Capra's film and television credits, all of which are directing credits unless otherwise noted.

Fultah Fisher's Boarding House, short, 1922
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, co-director, co-screenwriter, 1926
The Strong Man, 1926
His First Flame, 1927, co-screenwriter
Long Pants, 1927
For the Love of Mike, 1927
That Certain Thing, 1928
So This is Love, 1928
The Matinee Idol, 1928
The Way of the Strong, 1928
Say it with Sables, 1928
Submarine, 1928
The Power of the Press, 1928
The Younger Generation, 1929
The Donovan Affair, 1929
Flight, 1929
Ladies of Leisure, 1930
Rain or Shine, 1930
Dirigible, 1931
The Miracle Woman, 1931
Platinum Blonde, 1931
Forbidden, 1932
American Madness, 1932
The Bitter Tea of General Yen, 1933
Lady for a Day, 1933
It Happened One Night, 1934
Broadway Bill, 1934
Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, also producer, 1936
Lost Horizons, also producer, 1937
You Can't Take it With You, also producer, 1938
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, also producer, 1939
Meet John Doe, also producer, 1941
Why We Fight Series
- Prelude to War, documentary, co-director, 1942
- The Nazis Strike, documentary, co-director, 1942
- Divide and Conquer, documentary, co-director, 1943
- Battle of Britain, documentary, co-director, 1943
- Battle of Russia, documentary, producer, 1943
- Battle of China, documentary, co-director, 1943
- The Negro Soldier, documentary, 1944
- War Comes to America, producer, 1944
- Tunisian Victory, documentary, co-director, 1944
- Know Your Enemy: Japan, documentary, co-director, 1945
- Two Down and One to Go, documentary, 1945
Arsenic and Old Lace, 1944
It's a Wonderful Life, also producer, co-screenwriter, 1947
State of the Union, also co-producer, 1948
Riding High, also producer, 1950
Here Comes the Groom, also producer, 1951
Our Mr. Sun, TV science special, 1956
Hemo the Magnificent, TV science special, 1957
A Hole in the Head, also producer, 1959
Pocket Full of Miracles, also producer, 1960

Chronology of Built Projects and Selected Events in the life of Frank Lloyd Wright.

1867  Frank Lloyd Wright born in Richland Center, WI on June 8.  
      He is the first child of William Cary Wright and Anna Lloyd Jones Wright.

1869-1877 Wright family moves to McGregor, IA.  
        Subsequent moves take the family to Pawtucket, RI and Weymouth, MA.

1876  Anna Lloyd Wright introduces the "Froebel Kindergarten" training to her son.

1878  The Wright family moves to Madison, WI.  
      Wright spends the summer months at the James Lloyd Jones farm near Spring Green, WI into the 1880s.

1885  Wright's parents divorce and his father leaves Madison. Wright takes a part-time job as a draftsman with Allan D. Conover, University of Wisconsin engineering professor, who is serving as construction superintendent for the new Dane County Courthouse and a complex of campus buildings including the new Science Hall.

1886  Wright attends University of Wisconsin as a special student. Also involved in the work of building the Lloyd Jones family chapel (Unity Chapel) near Spring Green, dedicated in August, 1886. Official architect was Joseph L. Silsbee.

1887-1889 He leaves Madison for Chicago, finding employment first at the office of Joseph L. Silsbee and eventually with the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan. Plays a significant role in the design of the original Hillside Home School Building, (demolished in 1950) credited to Silsbee but claimed by Wright as his own.

1889  Wright marries Catherine Lee Tobin.  
      Designs his own home in Oak Park, IL, Frank Lloyd Wright Home, Oak Park, IL

1890  Wright is assigned all residential design handled by Adler and Sullivan.  
      Birth of Lloyd, first of six children by Catherine.  
      House for James Charnley, Ocean Springs, MS  
      House for W.S. MacHarg, Chicago, IL  
      Cottage and Stable for Louis H. Sullivan, Ocean Springs, MS

1891  House for James Charnley, Chicago, IL

1892  House for George Blossom, Chicago, IL  
      House for W. Irving Clark, La Grange, IL  
      House for Robert Emmond, La Grange, IL  
      House for Thomas Gale, Oak Park, IL  
      House for Dr. Allison Harlan, Chicago, IL (demolished)  
      House for Robert Parker, Oak Park, IL  
      House for Albert Sullivan, Chicago, IL (demolished)  
      Wright leaves offices of Adler and Sullivan

1893  Wright opens his own practice.  
      House for Walter Gale, Oak Park, IL  
      Cottage for Robert Lamp, Madison, WI (demolished)

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Lake Mendota Boathouse, Madison, WI (demolished)
House and Stables for William H. Winslow, River Forest, IL
House for Francis Wooley, Oak Park, IL
Playroom addition on Wright's Oak Park Residence

1894
First exhibition of Wright's work is held at the Chicago Architectural Club.
Daughter Catherine Lloyd Wright is born.
House for Frederick Bagley, Hinsdale, IL.
House remodeling for Dr. H.W. Bassett, Oak Park, IL (demolished)
House for Peter Goan, LaGrange, IL
Four Houses for Robert Roloson, Chicago, IL

1895
Second exhibition of Wright's work held at the Chicago Architectural Club.
Son David Samuel Wright is born.
Francis Apartments for Terre Haute Trust Company, Chicago, IL (demolished)
Francisco Terrace Apartments for Edward C. Waller, Chicago, IL
House for Nathan G. Moore, Oak Park, IL
Edward C. Waller Apartments, Chicago, IL (demolished)
House for Chauncey Williams, River Forest, IL
House Remodeling for H.P. Young, Oak Park, IL

1896
Wright writes the lecture "Architecture, Architect, and Client," and a "Work Song"
House for H.C. Goodrich, Oak Park, IL
House for Isidore Heller, Chicago, IL
House Remodeling and Stables for Charles E. Roberts, Oak Park, IL
Romeo and Juliet Windmill Tower, Spring Green, WI
House for George Smith, Oak Park, IL

1897
Wright moves his office to Steinway Hall, Chicago
House for George Furbeck, Oak Park, IL
Boathouse for Henry Wallis, Lake Delavan, WI (demolished)

1898
Exhibition of Wright's work at the Chicago Architectural Club
Daughter Frances Lloyd Wright born.
River Forest Golf Club, River Forest, IL (demolished)

1899
Exhibition of Wright's Work at the Chicago Architectural Club.
House for Joseph Husser, Chicago, IL (demolished)
House remodeling for Edward C. Waller, River Forest, IL (demolished)

1900
Wright delivers lecture "The Architect" at the Second Annual Convention of the
Architectural League of America.
He writes the lecture "A Philosophy of Fine Art" and "What is Architecture?"
An exhibition of Wright's work is held at the Chicago Architectural Club.
House for William Adams, Chicago, IL
House for Harley Bradley, Kankakee, IL
Summer Cottage for Stephen A. Foster, Chicago, IL
House for Warren Hickox, Kankakee, IL
Boathouse for Fred B. Jones, Lake Delavan, WI
House Remodeling and Garage for Warren McArthur, Chicago, IL
Summer Cottage for E.H. Pitkin, Sapper Island, Desbarats, Ontario, Canada
Summer Cottage for Henry Wallis, Lake Delavan, WI

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Three Summer Cottages for Mrs. Thomas Gale, Whitehall, MI
House for W.A. Glasner, Glencoe, IL
House for Thomas P. Hardy, Racine, WI
House for William R. Heath, Buffalo, NY
House for A.P. Johnson, Lake Delavan, WI
Lawrence Memorial Library, Dana House, Springfield, IL
Gardener's Cottage for Darwin D. Martin, Buffalo, NY
Rookery Building, Interior Remodeling, Chicago, IL
Bank for Frank L. Smith, Dwight, IL

1906
Wright exhibits his collection of Japanese prints by the artist Hiroshige at the Art Institute of Chicago.
House Remodeling for P.A. Beachy, Oak Park, IL
House for K.C. DeRhodes, South Bend, IN
House for Grace Fuller, Glencoe, IL (demolished)
House for A.W. Gridley, Batavia, IL
House for E.R. Hills, Oak Park, IL
House for P.D. Hoyt, Geneva, IL
House for George Madison Millard, Highland Park, IL
House for Frederick Nicholas, Flossmoor, IL
Pettit Mortuary Chapel, Belvidere, IL
River Forest Tennis Club, River Forest, IL
House for Frederick C. Robie, Chicago, IL

1907
Exhibition of Wright's work is held at the Chicago Architectural Club
Garage for George Blossom, Chicago, IL
House for Avery Coonley, Riverside, IL
House Remodeling for Col. George Fabyan, Geneva, IL
House for Stephen M.M. Hunt, La Grange, IL
Larkin Company Exhibition Pavilion, Jamestown, VA (demolished)
Emma Martin House Additions to the Fricke House, Oak Park, IL
Pebbles and Balch Remodeled Shop, Oak Park, IL (demolished)
Tan-y-deri House for Andrew Porter, Spring Green, WI
House for F.F. Tomek, Riverside, IL

1908
Japanese prints from Wright's collection are exhibited with other collections in a major exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago.
House for E.E. Boynton, Rochester, NY
Browne's Bookstore, Chicago, IL (demolished)
House for Walter V. Davidson, Buffalo, NY
House for Robert W. Evans, Chicago, IL
House for Eugene A. Gilmore, Madison, WI
House for L.K. Horner, Chicago, IL (demolished)
House for Meyer May, Grand Rapids, MI
House for Isabel Roberts, River Forest, IL
House for Dr. G.C. Stockman, Mason City, IA
Garage for William H. Copeland, Oak Park, IL

1909
Wright leaves his practice and family for Europe accompanied by Mamah Borthwick Cheney.
House for J.H. Amberg, Grand Rapids, MI
House for Frank J. Baker, Wilmette, IL

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House for Hiram Baldwin, Kenilworth, IL
Blythe-Markley City National Bank and Hotel, Mason City, IA
Como Orchards Summer Colony, Darby, MT
Bitter Root Inn, near Darby, MT (demolished)
Robert Clark House Additions to the Little House, Peoria, IL
House Remodeling for Dr. W.H. Copeland, Oak Park, IL
House for Mrs. Thomas Gale, Oak Park, IL
House for Kibben Ingalls, River Forest, IL
House for E.P. Irving, Decatur, IL
House for Robert Mueller, Decatur, IL
House for Oscar M. Steffens, Chicago, IL (demolished)
House for George Stewart, Montecito, CA
Stohr Arcade and Shops, Chicago, IL (demolished)
Thurber's Art Gallery, Fine Arts Building, Chicago, IL (demolished)
Bathing Pavilion for Edward C. Waller, Charlevoix, MI
House for J.R. Ziegler, Frankfort, KY

1910
Wright returns from Italy where he, his son Lloyd and others had worked on illustrations for "Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright," published in Berlin by Ernst Wasmuth.
Blythe-Markley City National Bank Building and Hotel Law Office
Universal Portland Cement Company Exhibition Pavilion, Madison Square Garden, New York (demolished)
House for Reverend J.R. Ziegler, Frankfort, KY

1911
Wright begins building a new home and studio near Spring Green, WI. He calls the complex Taliesin.
House for Herbert Angster, Lake Bluff, IL (demolished)
House for O.B. Balch, Oak Park, IL
Banff Park Pavilion, Banff National Park, Alberta Canada (demolished)
Playhouse, Gardener's Cottage and Stables for Avery Coonley, Riverside, IL
Lake Geneva Inn, Lake Geneva, WI (demolished)
Taliesin I, Spring Green, WI (partly demolished)

1912
Wright opens an office in Orchestra Hall, Chicago. He publishes "The Japanese Print An Interpretation."
Playhouse for Avery Coonley, Riverside, IL
House for William B. Greene, Aurora, IL
House for Francis W. Little, Wayzata, MN
Park Ridge Country Club Remodeling, Park Ridge, IL (demolished)

1913
Wright visits Japan to secure commission for the Imperial Hotel and to acquire Japanese prints for American clients.
House for Harry S. Adams, Oak Park, IL
Midway Gardens, Chicago, IL (demolished)

1914
A crazed servant kills Mamah Cheney her two children and four others, then sets fire to Taliesin. Wright begins after a month to rebuild.
The exhibition "Frank Lloyd Wright's work since 1911" is held at the Art Institute of Chicago.
Wright meets Miriam Noel whom he later marries.
Taliesin II, Spring Green, WI
1915
House for Emil Bach, Chicago, IL
House for Sherman Booth, Glencoe, IL
House for E.D. Brigham, Glencoe, IL
A.D. German Warehouse, Richland Center, WI
Ravine Bluffs Bridge and Housing, Glencoe, IL

1916
Contract signed for the Imperial Hotel commission at Taliesin.
Wright sails to Japan with Miriam Noel and opens a office in Tokyo.
House for Joseph Bagley, Grand Beach, MI
House for Frederick C. Bogk, Milwaukee, WI
House for W.S. Carr, Grand Beach, MI
Imperial Hotel (1915) Tokyo, Japan (demolished)
Imperial Hotel Annex, Tokyo, Japan
Duplex Apartments for Arthur Munkwitz, Milwaukee, WI (demolished)
Duplex Apartments for Richards Company, Milwaukee, WI (both duplex
apts are the American System Ready-Cut)
Two Small Houses for Arthur L. Richard, Milwaukee, WI
House for Ernest Vosburgh, Grand Beach, MI

1917
Exhibition of prints from Wright's collection at the Arts Club in Chicago.
House for Henry J. Allen, Wichita, Kansas
Hollyhock House for Aline Barnsdall, Los Angeles, CA
House of Aisaku Hayashi, Tokyo, Japan
House for Stephen M.B. Hunt, Oshkosh, WI

1918
Wright goes to China. He visits the monuments and art treasures of China as a
guest of Ku Hung Ming, a noted Chinese scholar.
House for Arinobu Fukuhara, Hakone, Japan (demolished by the 1923 Kanto
earthquake)
House for Tazaemon Yamamura, Ashiya, Japan

1919
Wright receives his first citation, "Kenchiko Ho, Royal Household Japan" conferred
by the Imperial Household.

1920
Wright's mother Anna, visits him in Tokyo
Residence A for Aline Barnsdall, Los Angeles, CA

1921
Jiyu Gakuen School, Tokyo, Japan
Residence B for Aline Barnsdall, Olive Hill, Los Angeles, CA

1922
Wright returns for final time from Japan, opens an office in Los Angeles.
Wright and Catherine are divorced.
Harper Avenue Studio for Frank Lloyd Wright, Los Angeles, CA

1923
Wright's mother, Anna, dies and is buried in Unity Chapel cemetery.
Kanto earthquake demolishes much of Tokyo. The Imperial Hotel survives.
Wright publishes "Experimenting with Human Lives," concerning the earthquake
and the Imperial Hotel.
He marries Miriam Noel.
Construction begins on the textile block houses in Los Angeles.
House for Charles Ennis, Los Angeles, CA
House for Samuel Freeman, Los Angeles, CA

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La Miniatura House for Alice Millard, Pasadena, CA
House for John Storer, Los Angeles, CA

1923 Wright separates from Miriam Noel. Louis Sullivan dies. Wright meets Olga Lazovich (Olgivanna).

1925 Second major fire occurs at Taliesin. Daughter Iovanna is born to Wright and Olgivanna.
Wright again rebuilds Taliesin.
Taliesin III, Spring Green, WI

1926 The Bank of Wisconsin takes title to Taliesin, due to Wright's indebtedness.
Wright and Olgivanna are arrested near Minneapolis for allegedly violating the Mann Act (a law which prohibits taking women across State lines for immoral purposes). Wright starts work on his autobiography.

1927 Wright is honorary member of the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts, Belgium.
Prints from Wright's collection offered for sale at the Anderson's Galleries.
Wright begins a series of articles under the heading, "In the Cause of Architecture," subsequently published monthly in "The Architectural Record."
Wright and Miriam Noel divorced.
Wright travels with Olgivanna to Puerto Rico.
Spends the winter in Phoenix, AZ with Olgivanna while working on the Arizona Biltmore Hotel.
Greycliff House for Darwin D. Martin, Derby, NY
Ras-el-Bar, Beach Cottages, Damyat, Egypt (demolished)

1928 Wright marries Olgivanna at Rancho Santa Fe, California. Wright Inc. is formed by a group of Wright's friends who obtain title to Taliesin for Wright.
"Ocatilla," Frank Lloyd Wright's Desert Compound and Studio near Chandler, AZ (demolished)

1928 Wright is made an "Extraordinary Honorary Member" of the Akademie der Kunst, Berlin.
Work continues on projects for Chandler, but following the stock-market crash on October 29, these projects come to a halt.
Camp Cabins for Chandler Land Improvement Co., Chandler, AZ (demolished)
House for Richard Lloyd Jones, Tulsa, OK

1929 Wright delivers the Kahn lectures at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, and publishes them under the title "Modern Architecture" in 1931.
Wright continues work on his autobiography and "The Disappearing City."

1930 The Wrights visit Rio de Janeiro as guests of the Pan American Union to judge a series of designs for the Columbus Memorial.
An exhibition of Wright's life work travels to New York City; Amsterdam; Berlin; Frankfurt; Brussels; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Eugene, OR; and Chicago, IL.
Wright published "The Hillside Home School of the Allied Arts: Why We Want This School."

1931 The Wrights found the Taliesin Fellowship and convert the Hillside Home School buildings at Hillside into the Taliesin Fellowship Complex.
"An Autobiography" and "The Disappearing City" are published. Wright is made an honorary member of the National Academy of Brazil. Wright's work is included in the "International Style Exhibition" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. Taliesin Fellowship Complex, Spring Green, WI

1933

Hillside Playhouse, Spring Green, WI
House for Malcolm Willey, Minneapolis, MN

1934

Wright and apprentices begin construction of a scale model of a section of Broadacre City. Wright meets future client Edgar Kaufmann. The first issue of "Taliesin" a magazine founded by Wright is published by the Taliesin Press.

1935

Construction of the Broadacre City model continues at "La Hacienda" in Chandler, AZ. The completed model is exhibited at "National Alliance of Arts and Industry Exposition" Rockefeller Center, New York City. "Fallingwater" House for Edgar J. Kaufmann, Bear Run, PA

1936

Wright meets future client Herbert F. Johnson at Taliesin. Honeycomb House for Paul R. and Jean Hanna, Stanford, CA
House for Herbert Jacobs, Madison, WI
S.C. Johnson & Son Co. Administration Building (Johnson Wax), Racine, WI
Deertrack House for Mrs. Abby Beecher Roberts, Marquette, MI

1937

The Wrights are invited by Russia to attend the World Conference of Architects. Wright and author Baker Brownell write and publish "Architecture and Modern Life." Wright purchases approximately 800 acres of government land near Phoenix, AZ and design and construction of Taliesin West begins. The Taliesin Fellowship begins its annual migration between Wisconsin and Arizona.
Wingspread House for Herbert F. Johnson, Racine, WI
Office for Edgar J. Kaufmann, Pittsburgh, PA (dismantled and on display at Victoria & Albert Museum, London)
House for Ben Rehuhn, Great Neck Estates, NY
Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ

1938

The January issue of "Architectural Forum," which is dedicated to Wright's work. Wright appears on the cover of "Time" magazine. Wright submits first design for "Olin Terraces" a civic complex in Madison overlooking Lake Monona.
Florida Southern College Master Plan for Dr. Ludd M. Spivey, Lakeland, FL
Anne Pfeiffer Chapel, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL
House for Ralph Jester, Palos Verdes, California (project) later executed for Arthur and Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, Scottsdale, AZ
Guest House for Edgar J. Kaufmann, Bear Run, PA
House for Charles Manson, Wausau, WI
Midway Barns and farm buildings, Taliesin, Spring Green, WI
Sun Top Homes for Otto Mallery and the Todd Company, Ardmore, PA

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1939
Wright is invited to London to deliver a series of lectures at The Sulgrave Manor Board. They are published as "An Organic Architecture." Wright is awarded an honorary master of arts by Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT.
House for L.N. Bell, Los Angeles, CA (project) later executed for Joe Feldmann, Berkeley, CA (1974)
House for Andrew F. H. Armstrong, Ogden Dunes, IN
House for Sidney Bazett, Hillsborough, CA
House for Joseph Euchman, Baltimore, MD
House for Lloyd Lewis, Libertyville, IL
House for Rose and Gertrude Fauson, Phoenix, AZ
House for John C. Pew, Madison, WI
House for Loren Pope, Falls Church, VA
House for Stanley Rosenbaum, Florence, AL
House for Bernard Schwartz, Two Rivers, WI
Auldbrass House and Plantation buildings for Leigh Stevens, Yemassee, SC
House for George Sturges, Brentwood Heights, Los Angeles, CA
House for Kathrine Winckler and Alma Goetsch, Okemos, MI

1939
"The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," a major retrospective exhibition is held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.
Wright founds the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.
House for Gregor Affleck, Bloomfield Hills, MI
House for Theodore Baird, Amherst, MA
House for James Christie, Bernardsville, NJ
Community Church, Kansas City, Missouri
Seminar Buildings, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL
Gatehouse for Arch Oboler, Malibu, CA
House for Clarence Sondern, Kansas City, MO

1940
Wright is made an honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and receives The Royal Gold Medal for Architecture; the honors conferred by King George VI.
Wright is awarded the Sir George Medal Chair by the Royal Institute of British Architects and honored by the Sulgrave Manor Board.
Wright and Frederick Gutheim publish "On Architecture". The second issue of "Taliesin" is published by the Taliesin Press.
Five issues of "A Taliesin Square-Paper: A Nonpolitical Voice from Our Democratic Minority" are published by the Taliesin Press.
Roux Library, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL
House for Roy Peterson, Racine, WI, later executed for Haddock, Ann Arbor, MI (1979)
Retreat for Arch Oboler, Malibu, CA
House for Stuart Richardson, Glen Ridge, NJ
Snowflake House for Carlton D. Wall, Detroit, MI

1942
Wright is made an honorary member of the National Academy of Architects, Uruguay.
Industrial Arts Building, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL.
1943 A revised edition of "An Autobiography" and Wright publishes "Book Six: Broadacre City." Wright is made an honorary member of the National Academy of Architects of Mexico. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (original design) Farm Unit for Lloyd Lewis, Libertyville, IL

1944 An issue of "A Taliesin Square-Paper" is published Solar Hemicycle. House for Herbert Jacobs, Middleton, WI S.C. Johnson & Son Co. (Johnson Wax) Research Tower, Racine, WI

1945 Wright publishes "When Democracy Builds". Two issues of "A Taliesin Square-Paper" are published. Administration Building, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL Lodge for Arnold Friedman, Pecos, NM House for Lowell Walter, Cedar Rock, Quasqueton, IA Taliesin Dams, Spring Green, WI

1946 Wright is made an honorary member of the National Academy of Finland. Stepdaughter Svetlana dies in automobile accident on September 30. An issue of "A Taliesin Square-Paper" is published. House for Amy Alpaugh, Northport MI Esplanades, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL House for Douglas Grant, Cedar Rapids, IA House for Chauncey Griggs, Tacoma, WA House for Dr. Alvin Miller, Charles City, IA House for Melvyn Maxwell Smith, Bloomfield Hills, MI Unitarian Meeting House, Shorewood Hills, WI

1947 Wright is awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts by Princeton University. House for Dr. A.H. Bulbulian Rochester, MN Dairy and Machine Shed, Midway Barns, Taliesin, Spring Green, WI Parkwyn Village Housing Master Plan, Kalamazoo, MI Usonia II Housing Master Plan, Pleasantville, NY

1949

Wright publishes "Genius and the Mobocracy."
Wright is made an honorary member American National Institute of Arts and Letters.
He is awarded the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects and the Gold Medal of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.
Wright is given the Peter Cooper Award for the Advancement of Art.
House for Howard Anthony, Benton Harbor, MI
House for Eric Brown, Kalamazoo, MI
Cabaret Theatre, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ
House for James Edwards, Okemos, MI
House for Kenneth Laurent, Rockford, IL
House for Ward McCartney, Kalamazoo, MI
House for Henry J. Neil, Minneapolis, MN
House for Edward S. Selen, Usonia II, Pleasantville, NY

1950

Wright is awarded an honorary doctorate of laws by Florida Southern College, Lakeland; and the Centennial Award by "Popular Mechanics" magazine.
House for Robert Berger, San Anselmo, CA
House for Raymond Carlson, Phoenix, AZ
House for John O. Carr, Glenview, IL
House for Dr. Richard Davis, Marion, IN
House for S.P. Elam, Austin, MN
House for John A. Gillin, Dallas, TX
House for Dr. Ina Harper, St. Joseph, MI
House for John Haynes, Fort Wayne IN
House for Thomas E. Keys, Rochester, MN
House for Arthur Mathews, Atherton, CA
House for Robert Muirhead, Plato Center, IL
House for William Palmer, Ann Arbor, MI
House for Wilbur Pearce, Bradbury, CA
House for Don Schaberg, Okemos, MI
House for Seymour Shavin, Chattanooga, TN
House for Richard Smith, Jefferson, WI
Southwest Christian Seminary for Peyton Canary, Glendale AZ (project)
executed for the First Christian Church, Phoenix, AZ (1973)
House for Karl A. Staley, North Madison, OH
House for J.A. Sweeton, Cherry Hill, NJ
House for Robert Winn, Kalamazoo, MI
House for David Wright, Phoenix, AZ
House for Isadore J. Zimmerman, Manchester, NH

1950

Wright and his apprentices design and construct an exhibition of Wright's work entitled "Sixty Years of Living Architecture." It includes models, photomurals, and original drawings. The show opens at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. Wright is awarded the Medici Medal, conferred by the city of Florence.
The Star of Solidarity is awarded to Wright in the Doge's Palace in Venice.
Wright opens a West Coast office in San Francisco with Aaron Green, Associate.
House for Benjamin Adelman, Phoenix, AZ
House for Gabrielle Austin, Greenville, SC
Summer Cottage for A.K. Chahroudi, Lake Mahopac, NY
House for W.L. Fuller, Pass Christian, MS (demolished by Hurricane Camille)
House for Charles F. Glore, Lake Forest, IL
House for Patrick Kinney, Lancaster, WI
House for Russell Kraus, Kirkswood, MO
House for Roland Reisley, Usonia II, Pleasantville, NY
House for Dr. Nathan Rubin, Canton, OH
Wetmore Auto Service Station Remodeling, Ferndale, MI

1951

The exhibition "Sixty Years of Living Architecture" travels from Florence to Zurich, Paris, Munich, and Rotterdam.
Fire partly destroys Wright's Hillside Home School buildings in Spring Green, WI.
Anderton Court Shops, Beverly Hills, CA
House for Quentin Blair, Cody, WY
House for Ray Brandes, Issaquah, WA
Hillside Theatre, Spring Green, WI
House for George Lewis, Tallahassee, FL
House for R.W. Lindholm, Cloquet, MN
House for Luis Marden, McLean, VA
House for Arthur Pieper, Paradise Valley, AZ
Price Tower for the H.C. Price Company, Bartlesville, OK
House for Frank Sander, Stamford, CT
Studio-Residence for Archie Teater, Bliss, ID

1952

The exhibition "Sixty Years of Living Architecture" is on view in Mexico City and NY. Wright is made an honorary member of the Akademie Royal des Beaux Arts, Stockholm; and an honorary member of the National Academy of Finland.
Wright publishes "The Future of Architecture."
Hugh Downs interviews Wright for television.
Cottage for Jorgine Boomer, Phoenix, AZ
House for Andrew B. Cooke, Virginia Beach, VA
House for John Dobkins, Canton, OH
Science and Cosmography Building, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL
House for Lewis Goddard, Plymouth, MI
House for Louis Penfield, Willoughby Hills, OH
House for Harold Price, Jr., Bartlesville, OK
Riverview Terrace Restaurant, Spring Green, WI
Usonian Exhibition House and Pavilion for "Sixty Years of Living Architecture"
New York, NY (dismantled)
House for Robert Llewellyn Wright, Bethesda, MD

1954

The Exhibition "Sixty Years of Living Architecture" concludes its run at Wright's Hollyhock House in Los Angeles.
Wright is awarded a citation and Brown Medal by The Franklin Institute of Philadelphia.
Wright is awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts by Yale University, New Haven, CT. Wright publishes "The Natural House."
House for E. Clarke Arnold, Columbus, WI
House for Bachman and Wilson, Millstone, NJ
Beth Sholom Synagogue, Elkins Park, PA

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House for Cedric Boulter, Cincinnati, OH
House for John E. Christian, West Lafayette, IN
House for Ellis Feiman, Canton, OH
Danforth Chapel, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL
House for Louis B. Frederick, Barrington Hill, IL
House for Dr. Maurice Greenberg, Dousman, WI
House for I.N. Hagan, Chalkhill, PA
Auto Showroom for Max Hoffman, New York, NY
House for Willard Keland, Racine, WI
Exhibition Pavilion for Los Angeles, CA
Grandma House for Harold Price, Paradise Valley, AZ
House for William Thaxton, Houston, TX
House for Gerald Tonkens, Cincinnati, OH
Guest House for David Wright, Phoenix, AZ
Hotel Plaza Apartment Remodeling for Frank Lloyd Wright, New York, NY

1955

Wright is awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts by the University of Wisconsin, Madison; an honorary degree by the Technische Hochschule of Darmstadt, Germany; and an honorary degree by the Technische Hochschule of Zurich, Switzerland.

Wright and Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., publish "An American Architecture."

Wright opens office and residence in New York City, "Taliesin East" at the Plaza Hotel.

Dallas Theatre Center for Paul Baker, Dallas, TX
House for Randall Fawcett, Los Banos, CA
House for Max Hoffman, Rye, NY
House for Dr. Toufic Kalil, Manchester, NH
Kundert Medical Clinic, San Luis Obispo, CA
House for Don Lovness, Stillwater, MN
House for T.A. Pappas, St. Louis, MO
House for John Rayward, New Canaan, CT
House for Robert H. Sunday, Marshalltown, IA
House for W.B. Tracy, Normandy Park, WA
House for Dr. Dorothy Turkel, Detroit MI

1956

Wright publishes "The Story of the Tower." Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago declares October 17 "Frank Lloyd Wright Day."

Wright presents the "Mile High Illinois" at an exhibition at the Hotel Sherman in Chicago.

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Wauwatosa, WI
House for Frank Bott, Kansas City, MO
House for Allen Friedman, Bannockburn, IL
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, final revised scheme, New York, NY
House for Frank Iber, Stevens Point, WI
House for Arnold Jackson, Beaver Dam, WI
Lindholm Service Station, Cloquet, MN
Clinic for Dr. Kenneth Meyers, Dayton, OH
House for Joseph Mollica, Bayside, WI
House for Carl Post, Barrington, IL
Music Pavilion, Taliesin West Scottsdale, AZ
House for Dudley Spencer, Brandywine Head, DE
House for Dr. Paul Trier, Des Moines, IA
155

House for Eugene Van Tamelen, Madison, WI
Wyoming Valley School, Wyoming Valley, WI

1957

Wright invited to Baghdad, Iraq, where he is asked to design a cultural center to include an opera house, two museums, plus a post office and telecommunications building.
The Wrights visit London, Paris and Cairo.
Wright publishes "A Testament."
Wright is interviewed twice on television by Mike Wallace in New York City.
House for William Boswell, Cincinnati, OH
Clinic for Herman Fasbender, Hastings, MN
House for C.E. Gordon, Aurora, OR
Juvenile Cultural Study Center, University of Wichita, KS
House for Sterling Kinney, Amarillo, TX
House for James B. McBean, Rochester, MN
Marin County Civic Center and Post Office, San Rafael, CA
Rayward Playhouse for Victoria and Jennifer Rayward, New Canaan, CT
House for Walter Rudin, Madison, WI
House for Carl Schultz, St. Joseph, MI
House for Dr. Robert Walton, Modesto, CA
House for Duay Wright, Wausau, WI

1958

Wright publishes "The Living City."
Wright is awarded the Gold Medal by the National Concrete Masonry Association.
House for Dr. George Ablin, Bakersfield, CA
Lockridge Medical Clinic, Whitefish, MT
Cottage for Donald and Virginia Lovness, Stillwater, MN
House for Paul Olfelt, St. Louis Park, MN
Cottage for Seth C. Peterson, Lake Delton, WI
Pilgrim Congregational Church, Redding, CA
Additions to House for John Rayward, New Canaan, CT
House for Don Stromquist, Bountiful, UT

1959

Wright begins work on a history of architecture for teenagers, to be called "The Wonderful World of Architecture."
Wright dies on April 9 in Arizona.
Services, officiated by the minister of the Madison Unitarian Society, are held on April 12 at Taliesin near Spring Green, IL.
Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
House for Norman Lykes, Phoenix, AZ
Solomom R. Guggenheim Museum opens to the public.

Note: Every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the above information; however, sources vary on facts and dates. Building dates are generally the dates of design. Unbuilt Projects are not included.

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**Tours/Interview**

Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ.

Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ.


**Internet/CD-ROM**


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Thesis Title

Film & Architecture: Discovering the Self-Reflection of Frank Capra and Frank Lloyd Wright through Contextual Analysis

Thesis Examination Committee

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