

# EARLY AMERICAN MODERNISM

Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright

**Introduction to Architectural History**

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Spring 2021, 7:15 – 8:30pm

Remote

# THE CONTEXT OF EARLY AMERICAN MODERNISM

## The Shingle Style

# SHINGLE STYLE

(revival at end of 19<sup>th</sup> century)

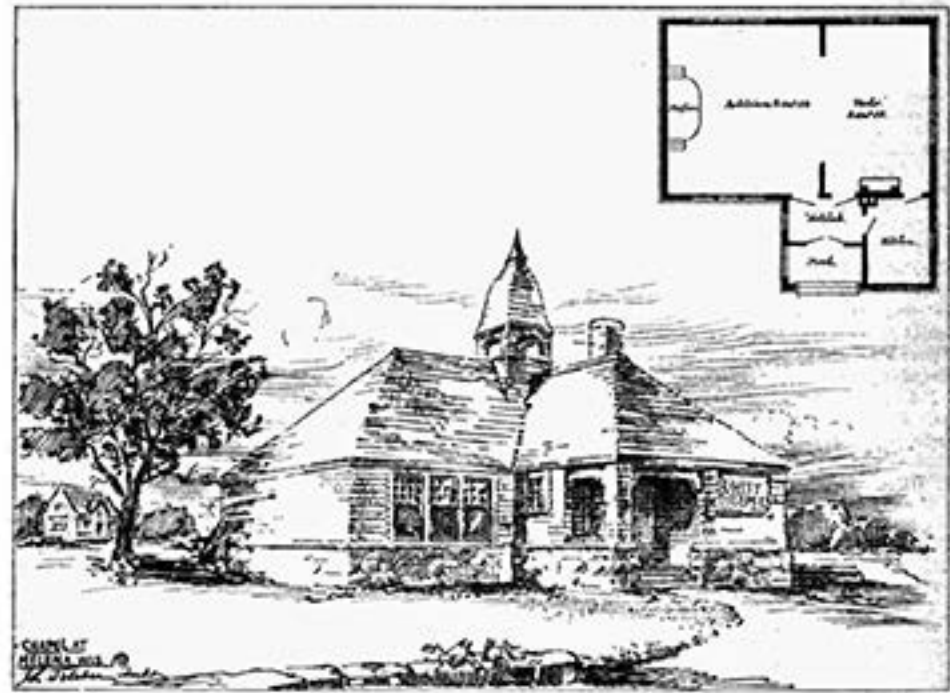
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- Reaction against many of the Victorian styles (Queen Anne, Neo-Gothic)
- Quite popular in the American Northeast
- Use of natural colors
- Shingles – hence the name of the style!



Joseph Lyman Silsbee  
American; 1848 - 1913

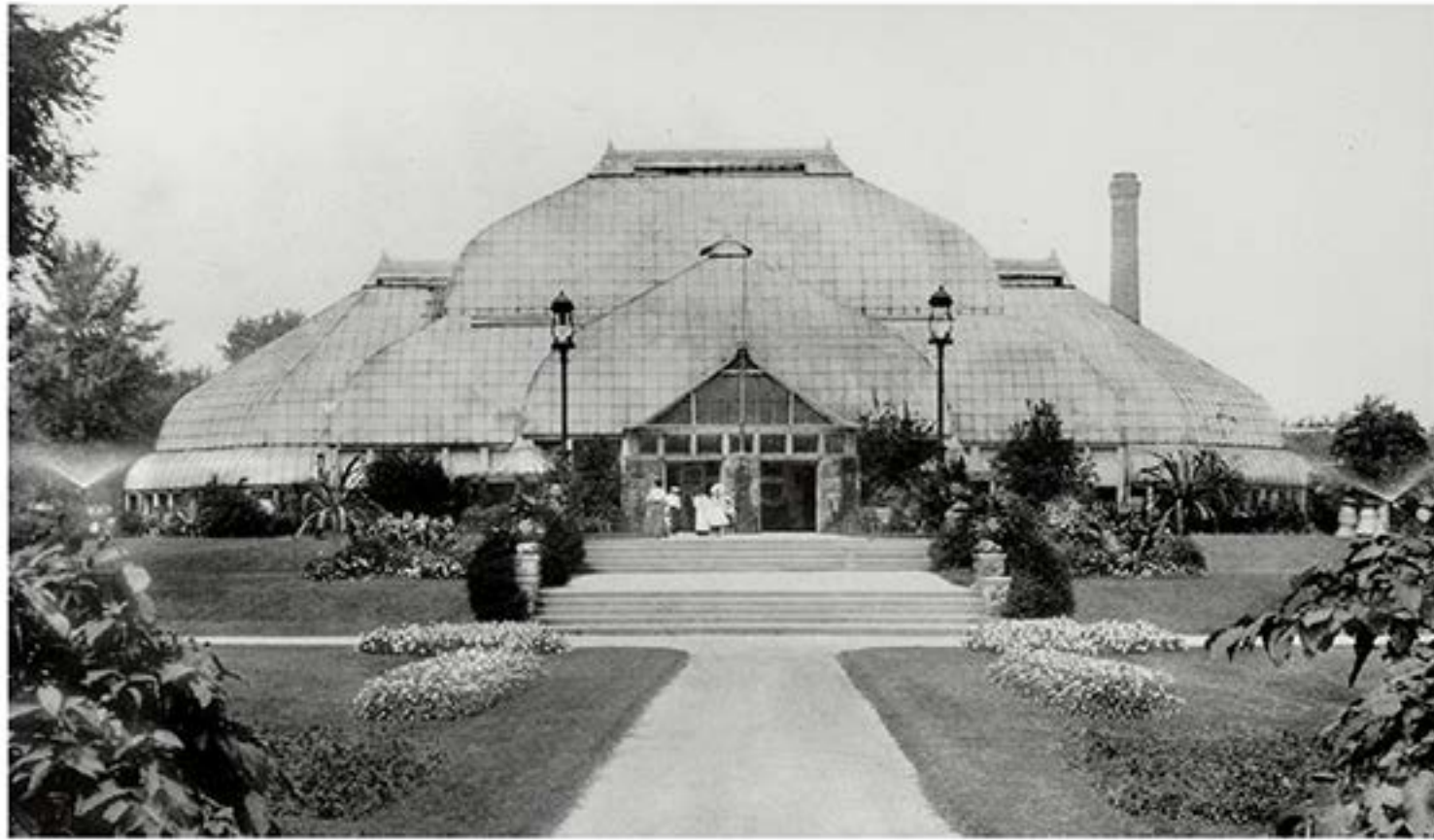
- His practice was centered in upstate NY and Chicago
- While his works ranged across style, he is remembered largely for his Shingle Style buildings



*Unity Chapel, Spring Green, Wisconsin (1885)*

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- A relatively modest scaled project, nevertheless, was exemplary the Shingle Style
- Shingles in 'wooded' tone – mimicking the forest (cedar shingles)



*Lincoln Park Conservatory, Chicago (1895)*



*Lincoln Park Conservatory, Chicago (1895)*



Left: *Syracuse Savings Bank Building, NY (1875)*  
Right: *White Memorial Building, Syracuse, NY (1876)*

- Examples of Silsbee's other works (he did not practice strictly in the Shingle Style)
- Elements of Gothic Revival





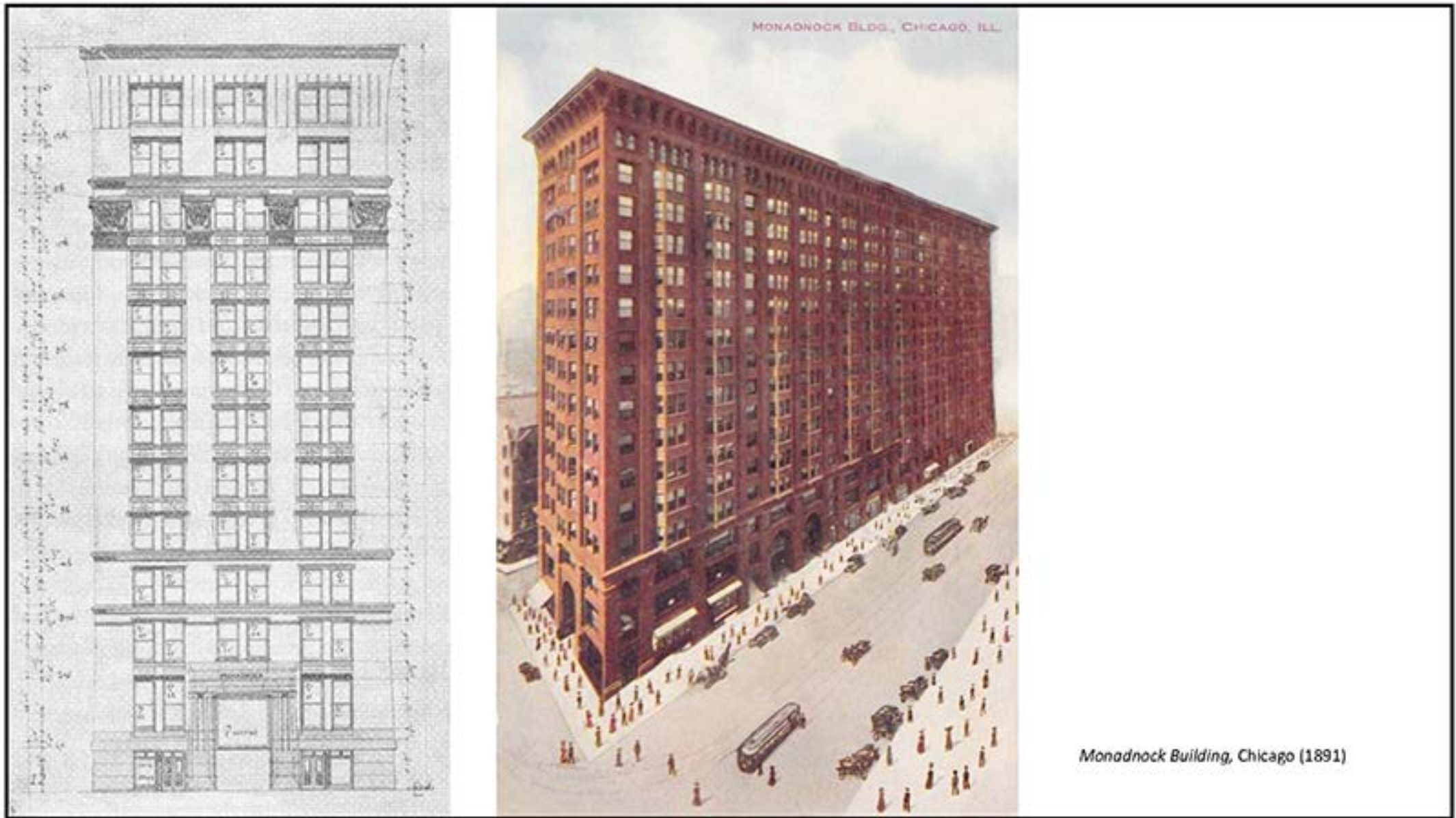
Left: HH Richardson, William Watts Sherman House, Newport, RI (1876)  
Right: Peabody & Stearns, Kraggsyde, Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA (1885, demo. 1929)

- Other (non-Silsbee) examples of the Shingle Style

# EARLY AMERICAN MODERNISM



Daniel Burnham  
American; 1846 - 1912



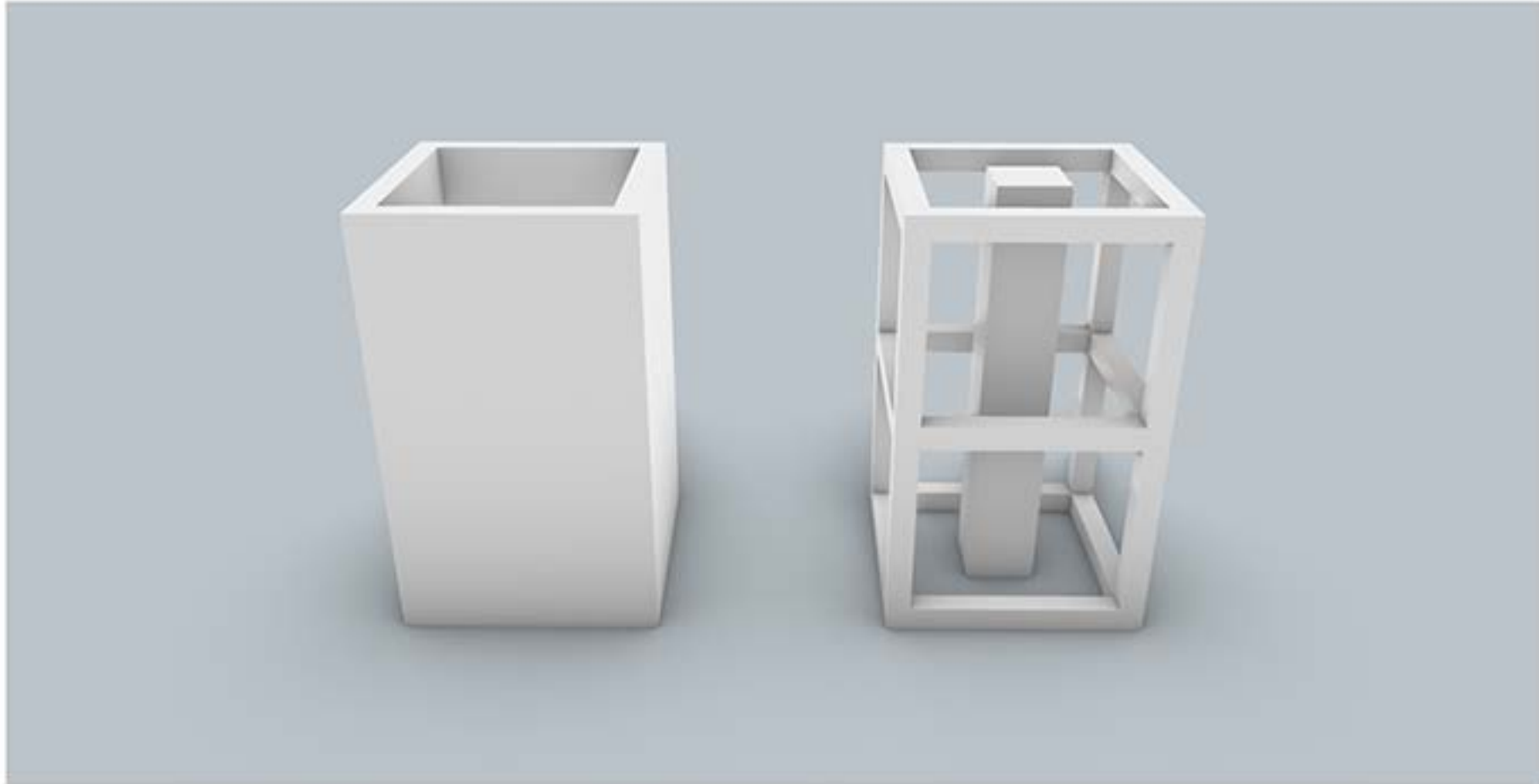
*Monadnock Building, Chicago (1891)*

- Example of an early 'skyscraper'
- The Monadnock Building is the world's tallest load-bearing brick building in the world.



*Monadnock Building, Chicago (1891)*

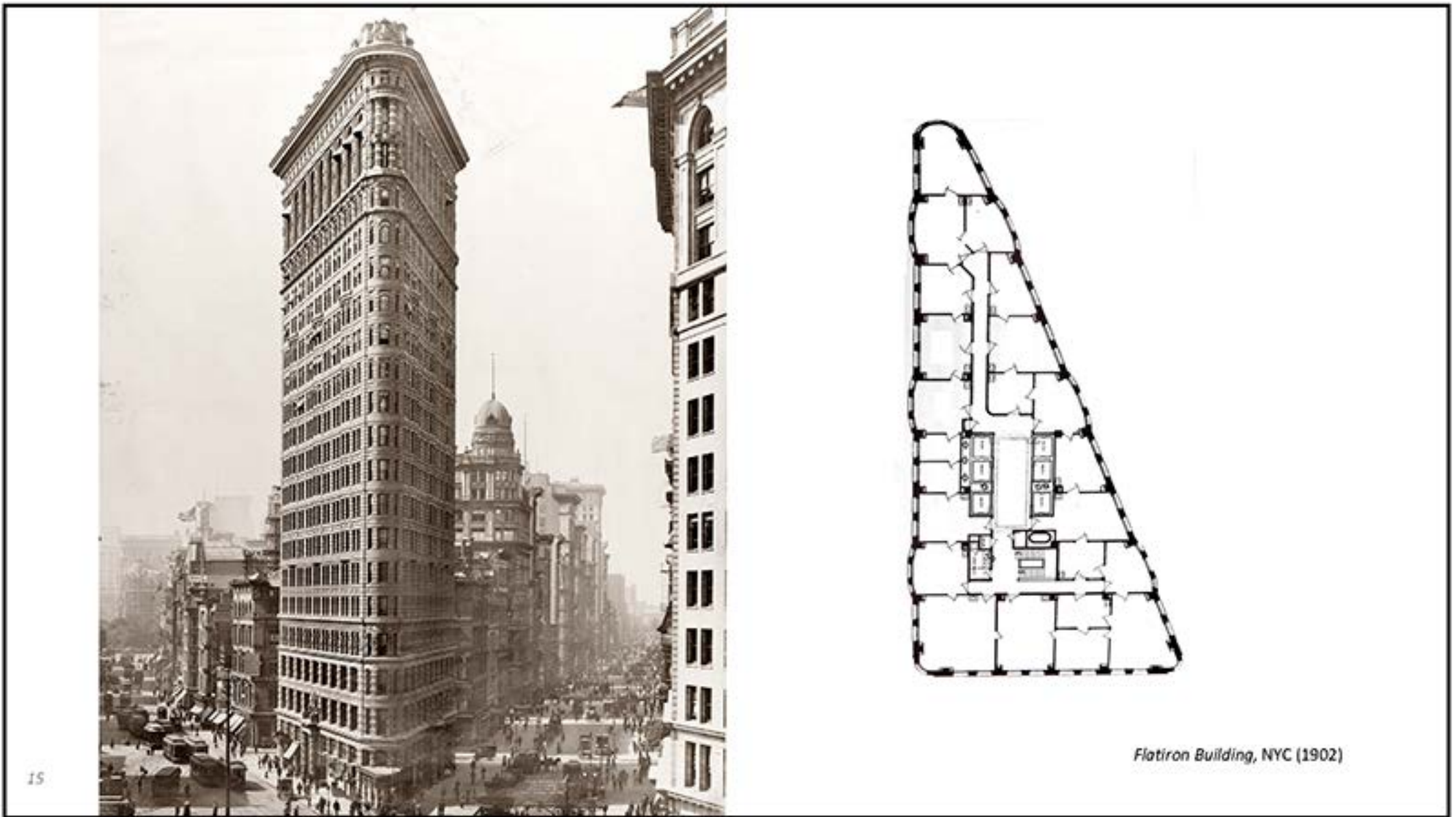
- Currently stand in excellent condition, as it underwent major remodeling in 1938.



Left: Illustration of Load-bearing structure  
Right: Illustration of Frame Structure

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- Load-bearing vs Frame Construction
- Because of the load-bearing form of the Monadnock building, lower walls measure at 6' side (!) while upper floors have walls at 18''



*Flatiron Building, NYC (1902)*

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- Burnham's most well-known work, the Flatiron Building in Manhattan (at the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave and Broadway)
- Largely made possible by the use of structural steel



*Flatiron Building, NYC (1902)*





**Dankmar Adler**

German-American, 1844 - 1900



**Louis Sullivan**

American, 1856 - 1924

- Left a strong legacy, namely because they are often credited with 'inventing' the skyscraper
  - This is a bit too generous



*Wainwright Building, St. Louis (1891)*

- The exterior is clad in highly ornamented terra cotta tile.
- Prime example of a Tripartite Composition, which itself is based on the composition of a Classical column

# Sullivan's Tripartite System

Based off of the anatomy of a column in the  
Classical Styles (Roman/Greek).  
This reference used as it accentuated the vertical  
axis, an important feature for 'skyscrapers'



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*base*



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*shaft*



# Sullivan's Tripartite System

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axis, an important feature for 'skyscrapers'

*cornice / crown*





*Guaranty (Prudential) Building, Buffalo, NY (1896).*

- Similar in execution and aesthetics to the Wainwright building.
- Same demonstration of Tripartite Composition.



Prudential Building, Buffalo, NY (1896).





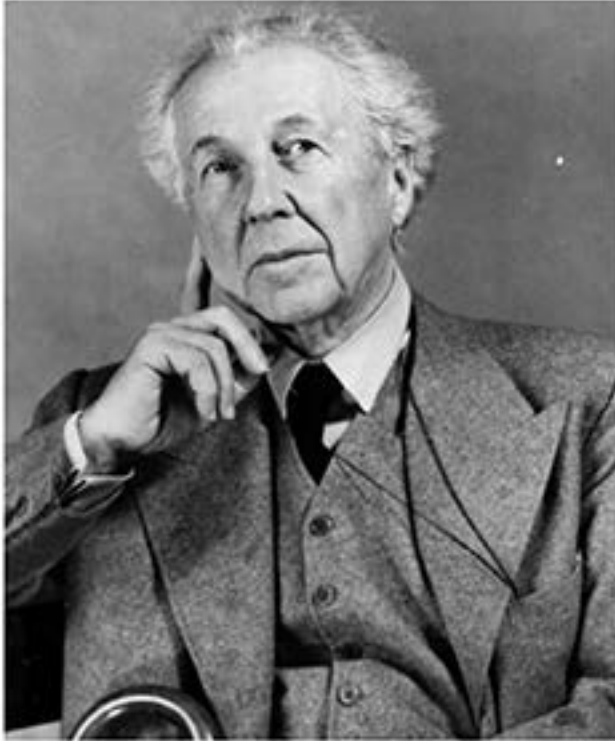
*Guaranty (Prudential) Building (detail), Buffalo, NY (1896).*

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- A hallmark of their style involved heavy ornamentation in combination with strong overall geometries.



*Wainwright Building, St. Louis, MO (1891).  
Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, Chicago, IL (1899 and 1903-04).  
Merchants' National Bank, Grinnell, IO (1914).*



Frank Lloyd Wright  
American; 1867 - 1959

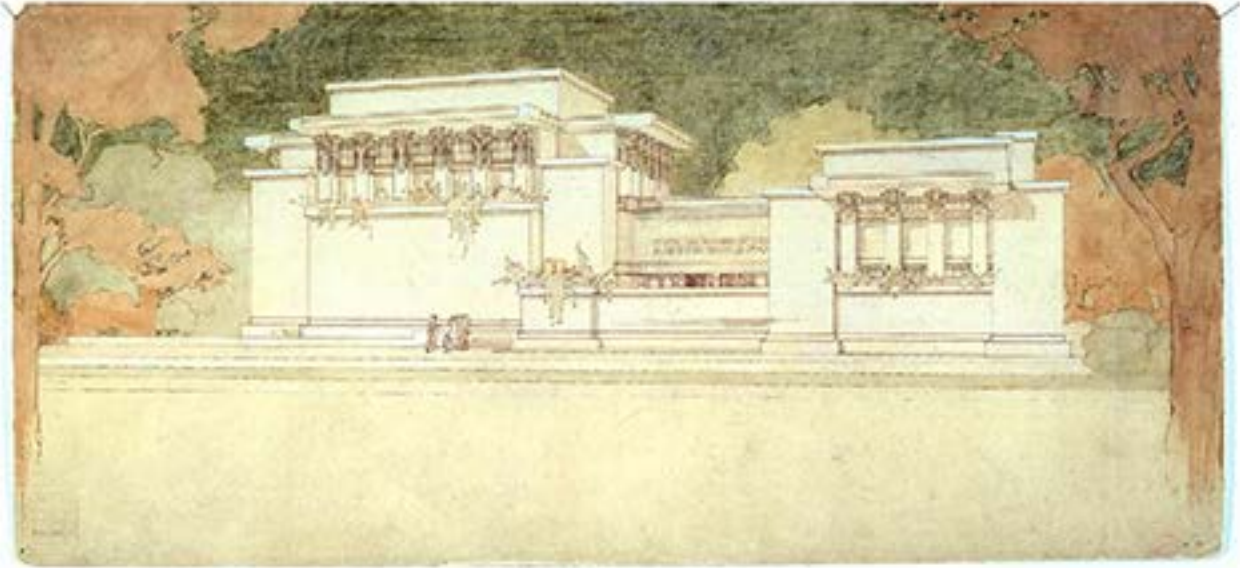
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- Wright moved to Chicago to work for Adler and Sullivan 1888
- Worked for them for about 5 years, then eventually transitioned to his own practice.
- Could very well be considered the single most important American architect of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Nathan G. Moore House, Oak Park, IL (1895, 1923)*

- Built a number of houses in the Chicago district of Oak Park
- His early studio was located in Oak Park
- FLW's prolific and life-long preoccupation with residential architecture pointed to his belief on the integrity of family.



*Unity Temple, Oak Park, IL, 1905-08*

- Examples of Wright's style
- Wright known today as much for his building as for his drawings



*William G. Fricke House, Oak Park, IL (1901 – 02)*

## Key comments on Wright's Prairie Style

- Long horizontal stretches in plan and section
- Continuity of spaces (especially in plan)
- Heavy use of geometric patterns
- Procession from low entrance to high ceiling main space
- Clear hierarchy of major and minor axes (in plan)

# The Prairie Style

Wright developed a series of design guidelines for residential architecture, that sought a connection between architectural form and family living.





- “reduce the number of necessary parts”
- “emphasis of all the planes parallel to the ground”
- “get the unwholesome basement up out of the ground”
- “‘light-screens’ instead of walls”
- “Geometrical or straight lines were natural to the machinery at work”
- “the ideal of an organic architecture”
- “furnishings, making them all one with the building”



*Rosenbaum House, Florence, AL (1940)*

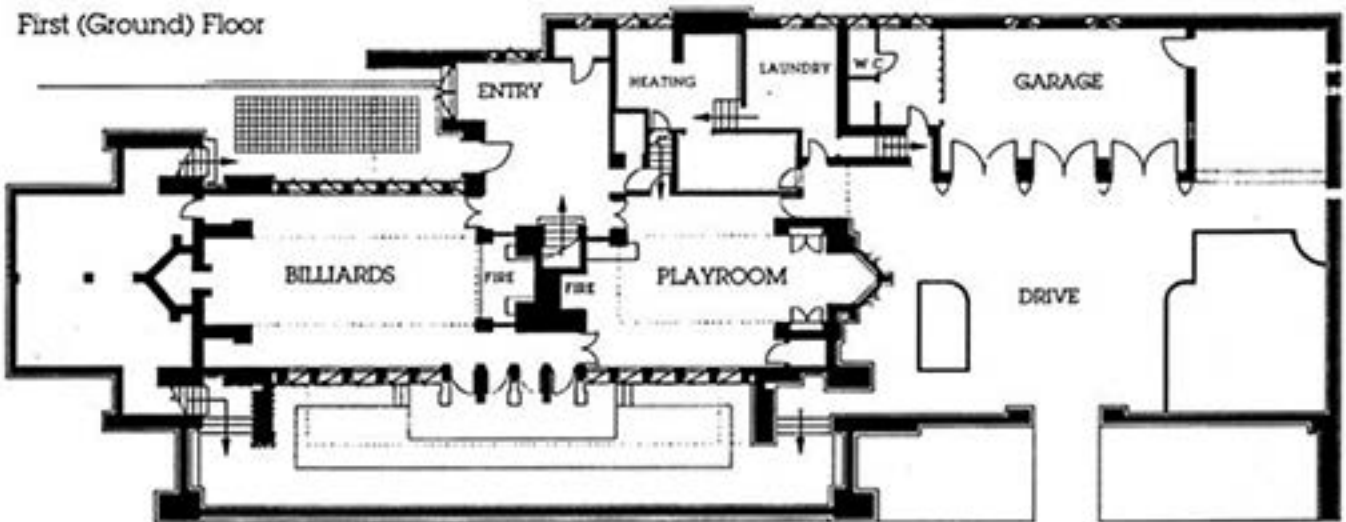
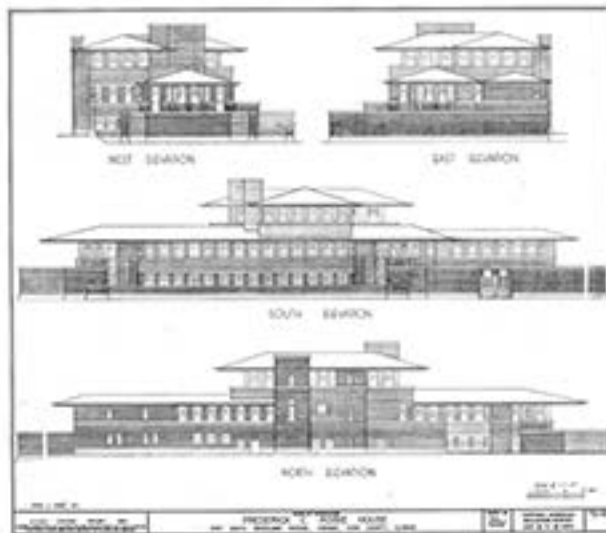
- When FLW speaks of the 'organic' quality to architecture, that means that all parts are part of one overall idea



*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*

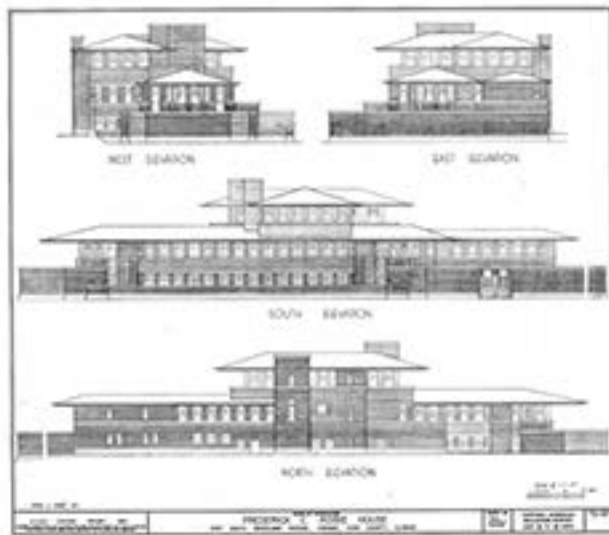
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- One of his most well-known residences, the Robie House in Oak Park (Chicago)
- Clear example of FLW's use of horizontals

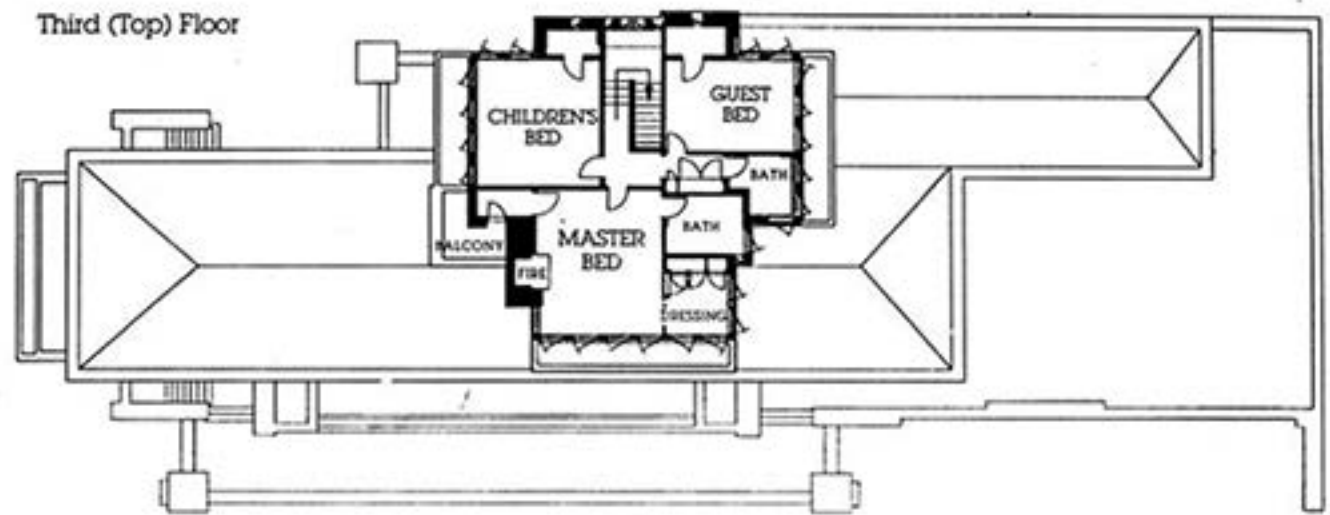


*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*

- Basic composition can be understood as 2 'bands'
  - First band = 'Front of House' – Here shown as Living and Dining
  - Second band = 'Back of House' – Kitchen, Servants' quarters, bath, etc.



Third (Top) Floor



*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*



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*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*



*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*



*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*

- Detail of brick and mortar
- Notice that the horizontal mortar line (bed joint) is wider than vertical
- Also, horizontal mortar line (bed joint) is white, whereas vertical is tinted in a similar color as the brick
  - The overall effect is that we see the horizontals much more than the verticals





*Frederick C. Robie House, Oak Park, IL (1909)*

- Globe lights throughout interior, illustrating Wright's passion for Japanese architecture and design



*Kaufmann House (Fallingwater), Mill Run, PA (1934-7)*

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- Kaufmann House, oftentimes better known as 'Fallingwater'
- Basic organization is formed by cantilevered concrete 'trays' for each of the floors



*Kaufmann House (Fallingwater), Mill Run, PA (1934-7)*

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- True to his other residential projects, and as shown in this sketch, visually horizontal, as if floating across the ravine.



*Kaufmann House (Fallingwater), Mill Run, PA (1934-7)*

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- Interior views, notice the lack of separating walls
  - Strong horizontals framing the natural landscape



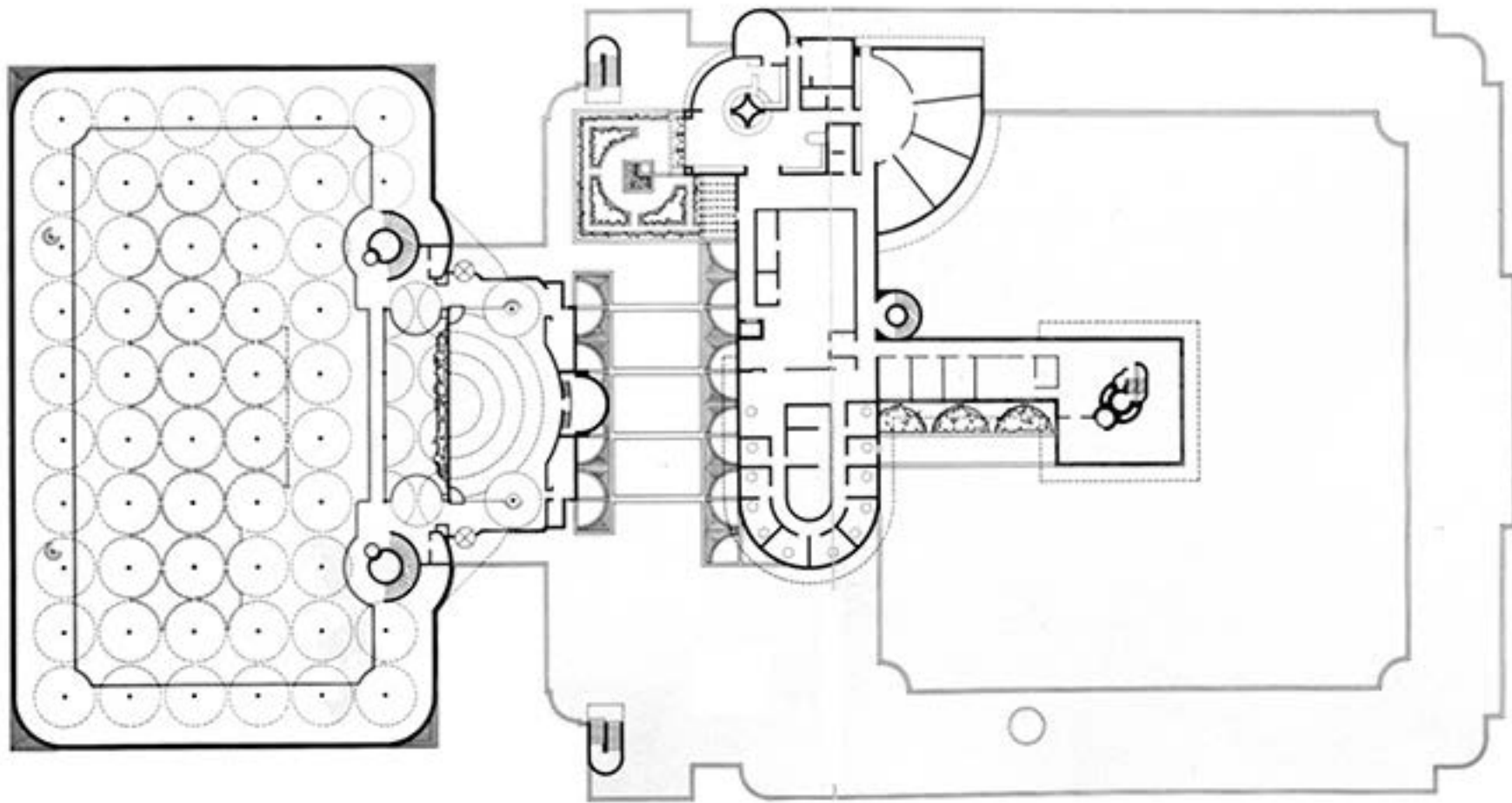
*Kaufmann House (Fallingwater), Mill Run, PA (1934-7)*



*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*

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- Johnson Wax as it stands today.
- No longer functional, but conserved due to its historical importance.
- Office block on right, notice that there are no windows
  - This was design for security. Natural daylight comes in from the ceiling.



*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*

- Plan view of headquarters
- On left office volume (with circles denoting mushroom columns).
- Research tower shown on right, at center of larger square.



*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*

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- Interior view of open-plan work stations.
- Columns at 22' tall, with a 9" base – particular portions.

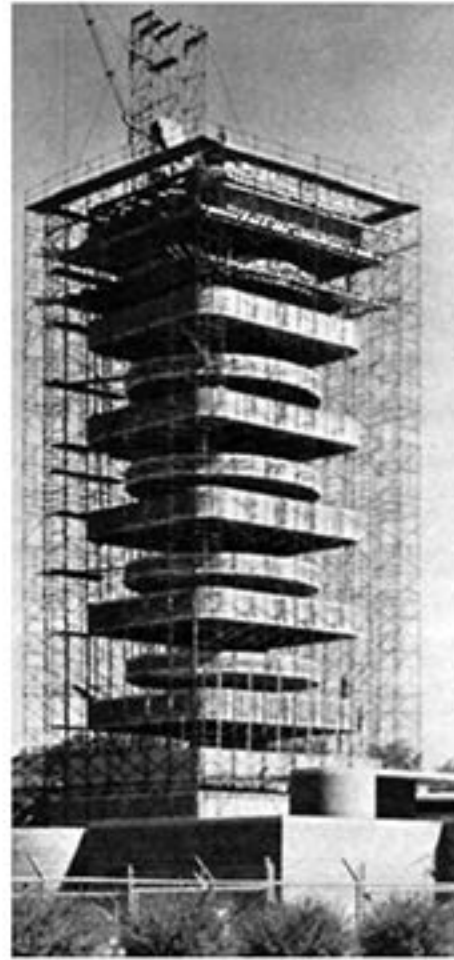
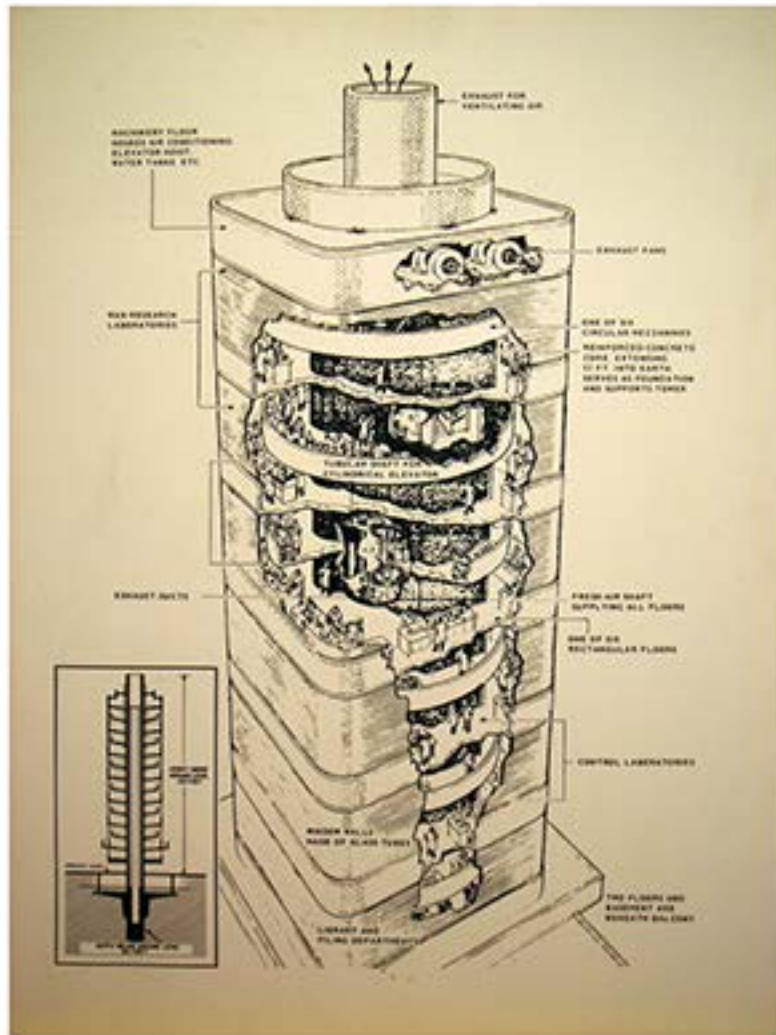




*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*

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- Left, view of atrium.
- Main office area incredibly hierarchical
- By today's standard, the layout is quite rigid, paternal, overly formal – though this was the norm at the time.



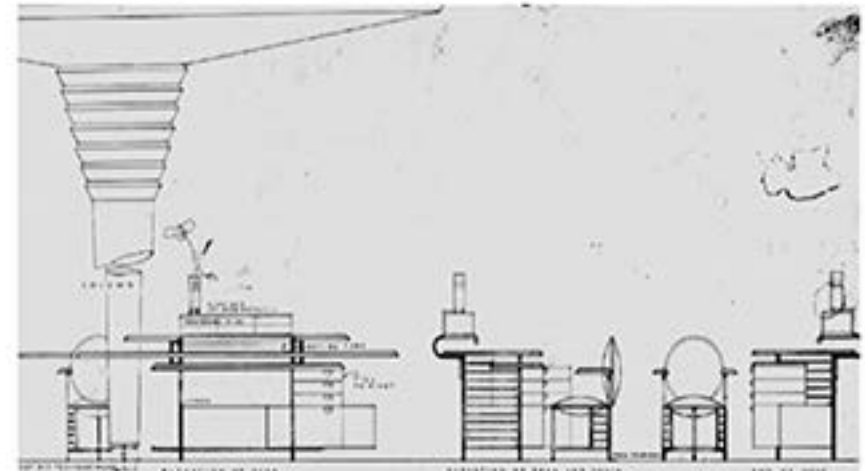
*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*  
 Laboratory Wing



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*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)*  
Laboratory Wing



*Johnson Wax Administration Center, Racine, WI (1936-9)  
Integrated Furniture Design*

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- Much like Wright's insistence on an organic flow throughout his residences, this idea continued in his office design.
- Design of furniture as an integrated part of his architecture.



*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)*



*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)*

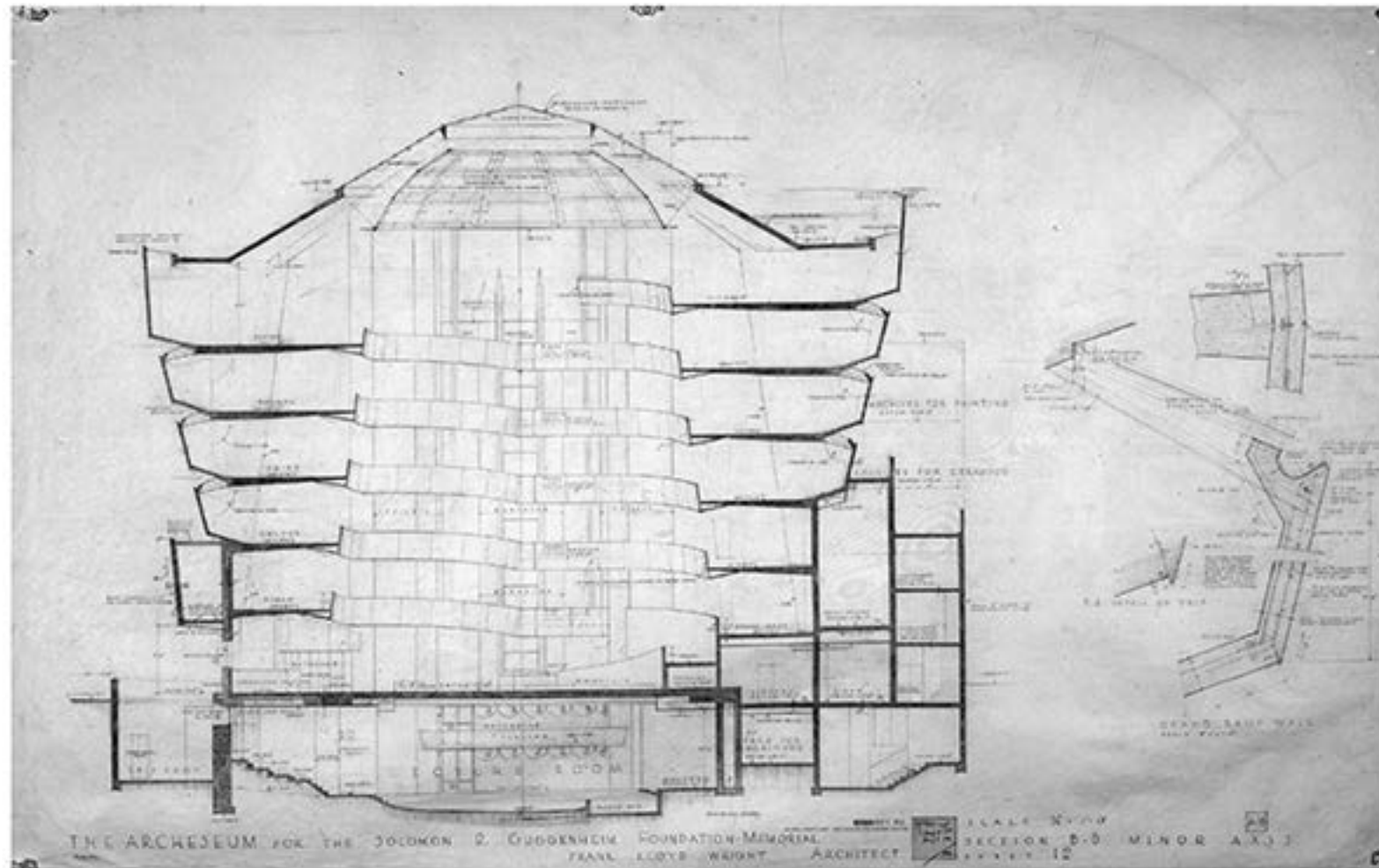
- The museum was intended by the Solomon R. Guggenheim foundation to house non-objective (abstract) art.
- Therefore, the museum was intended to be progressive, forward thinking, non-traditional.



*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)*

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- The building was intended to be a work of art, that itself exhibits works of art.

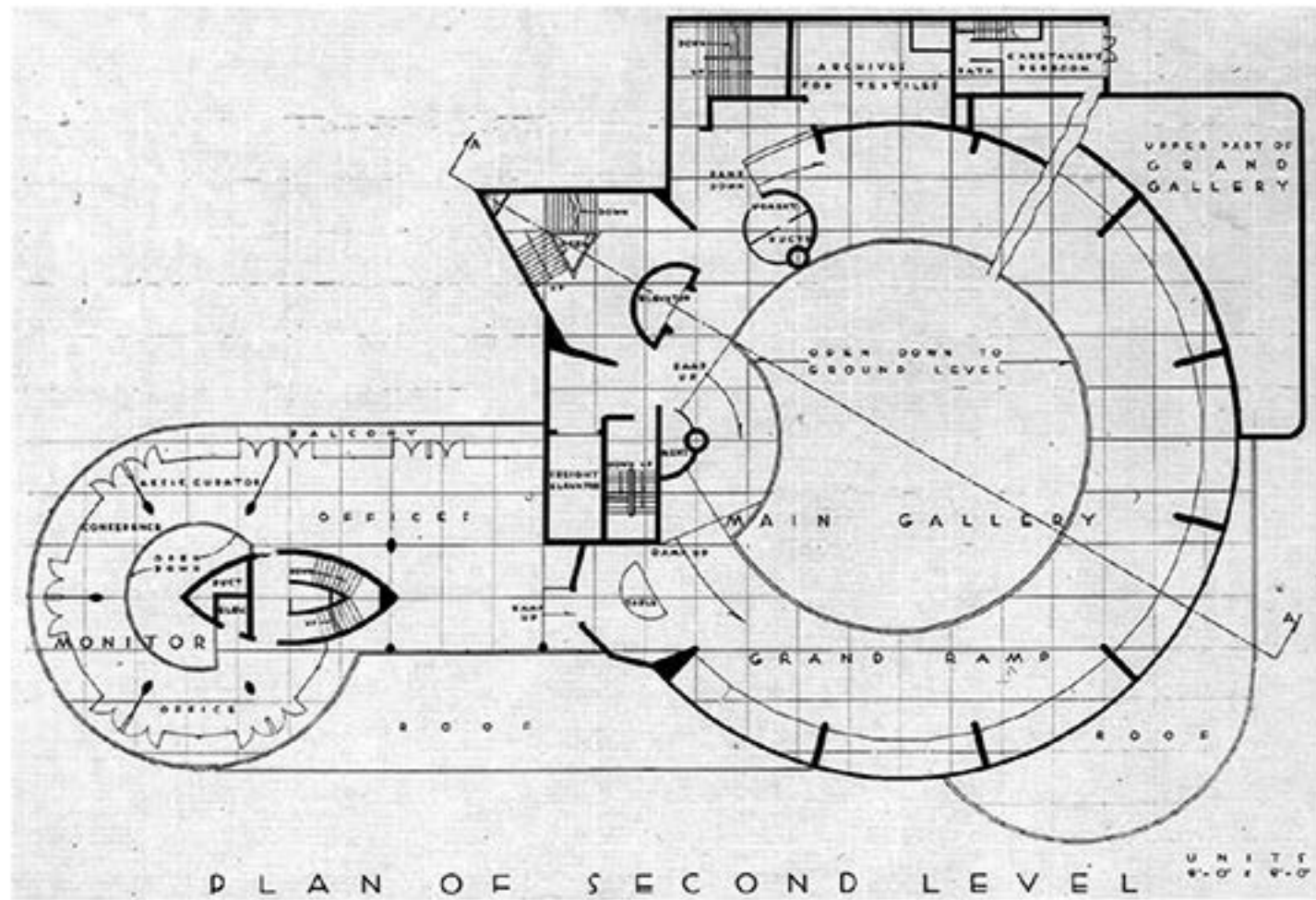


Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)

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- Another example of FLW's preoccupation with the 'organic'
  - Eschewed the immediate interruptions of space made with walls
- Spiral form as continuous space.





Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)



*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)*

- View from the top of the main gallery space downwards towards the atrium



*Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City (1937)*



Left: Harley Davidson  
Right: Maurizio Cattelan Exhibition

- Examples of contemporary uses of space.