

Waiting for the Site to Show Up. Henry Luce Makes Frank Lloyd Wright America's Greatest Architect¹

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ABSTRACT

Henry Luce, owner of "Life", "Time", "Fortune" and "Architectural Forum", recognized Frank Lloyd Wright's immense charisma and talent and featured both the architect and his work in all four of his renowned popular press journals in January 1938 – though clearly he did so for his own ends. Luce believed fervently in America. In 1937, the German architects Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius migrated to the USA to assume leadership of two of its finest schools of architecture. Luce countered this promotion of European architecture by featuring Wright in his four journals. Despite Wright's immense unpopularity at the time, Luce put him on the cover of "Time" and prominently presented him and his work in "Life", "Fortune", and "Architectural Forum". That Luce's ideals were not the same as those of Wright mattered little. With Luce's endorsement, Wright became the most popular American architect in history, a position he retains to this day. But how very odd that decidedly artificial mediation could so effectively disseminate and popularize an architecture whose essence was authenticity.

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KEYWORDS

Frank Lloyd Wright, Henry Luce, architecture and photography, Fallingwater, architecture and publicity.

«“Ocatilla” was published in German magazines two months after it was finished. Thank the machine, at least, for this ubiquity of publicity. Prevalence of the idea in some graphic thought-form – certainly one of the best things the machine has done for us in this age».

Frank Lloyd Wright (1932)²

«All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perception and arbitrary values».

Marshall McLuhan (1964)³

On January 17, 1938, despite Frank Lloyd Wright's immense *unpopularity*, Henry Luce put him on the cover of “Time” magazine. On exactly the same day, the inside-cover of Luce's “Life” magazine carried a large photograph of a wondrous house Wright had recently built.⁴ Luce's January issue of “Fortune” pictured Wright at his drafting board, a dozen young men looking over the shoulder of the venerated master.⁵ And the entire issue of his January 1938 “Architectural Forum” was composed by Wright and dedicated to the best of his past and current work.⁶

For twenty-eight years, Wright had been demonized by the popular press in America, excluded from participation in its World Fair, dismissed by its museum connoisseurs as less than modern. Yet in 1916, the Japanese had commissioned him to build a large and important hotel in its most prominent city. And in the Teens and Twenties, Europeans had shown great interest in his Prairie School work. In the USA, however, from 1922 to 1935, he built no large buildings and only a handful of houses. But in 1938, in the depth of the Great Depression, he was resurrected by Henry Luce, America's extraordinary media mogul. Why?

Fallingwater photographed: the idea in some graphic thought-form

In November 1937, a 25-year-old Chicago architectural photographer, Bill Hedrich, on assignment from “Architectural Forum”, traveled to a remote site in Western Pennsylvania to make pictures of a not-yet-completed vacation house built for a wealthy Pittsburgh retailer. [Fig. 1]

In the best known of Hedrich's photographs, a modern, utterly unique house appears to float above moving water, detached from the world,

1. This is an elaboration of *Frank Lloyd Wright: Waiting for the Site to Show Up* published in October 2014 digitally on http://www.historyphotography.org/doc/Daniel_Naegele.pdf and in print in the “Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments”, vol. CCLIV, Fall 2014, pp. 89-97.

2. F. Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, New York, Longmans, Green and Company, 1932, p. 306.

3. M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 199.

4. “Time. The Weekly Newsmagazine”, vol. XXXI, January 1938, No. 3, cover.

5. “Fortune Magazine”, vol. XVII, January 1938, No. 1, p. 138.

6. “Architectural Forum”, vol. LXVIII, January 1938, No. 1.



FIG. 1

Frank Lloyd Wright, Kaufmann Residence (a.k.a., Fallingwater), Mill Run Pennsylvania, 1936-1939 (Photo by Bill Hedrich, in “Life”, “Time” and “Architectural Forum”, January 1938).

mystically defying gravity. The view is not from the approach to the house or from within, but from the outside, downstream, a vantage point that renders the conceptual idea of the house in its entirety: an exclusive retreat alone in acres of wooded paradise; a house both of the earth and above the earth; the magic of immense heaviness levitating; the Biblical metaphor of water from rock.

Carefully composed, the photograph is divided horizontally into two equal realms. In the upper half, the angelically white house hovers. In the lower half, a natural rock ledge in gray is underscored by a deep black crevice stretching from one side of the image to the other. The waterfall is in the center of the photograph. Blurred liquid light, it is cloudlike and delicate. It pours forth from the house, emptying lightness into the darkness of the river below. Shadows of leafless November trees animate the levitating white rectangles of the house, enlarging the wooded surrounds and discreetly balancing the photograph's insistent horizontality. The shadow's verticality, its delicate overlay, is continued in the strands of the waterfall. All is resolved in the black pool of water at the bottom of the photograph.

Photography has portrayed the house as a phenomenon, a mirage-like apparition. Water, rock, house, trees, sky. Does the water come from the house? Or does the house rise from the water? In its brilliant and subtle ambiguity, Hedrich's photograph presents us with a legend. And like Aladdin and his lamp, Jesus on his cloud, Venus over the sea, the legend is cast in visual dialects.⁷

Advertising Wright: the ubiquity of publicity

On January 17, 1938, millions saw the photograph of the vacation house when it was featured in two of America's most popular weekly magazines, "Time" and "Life". In "Time", it was shown as one of many small photographs illustrating an article on its architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's portrait was on the cover of the issue, behind it a color rendering of the house that by then was dubbed, Fallingwater. [Fig. 2,3]

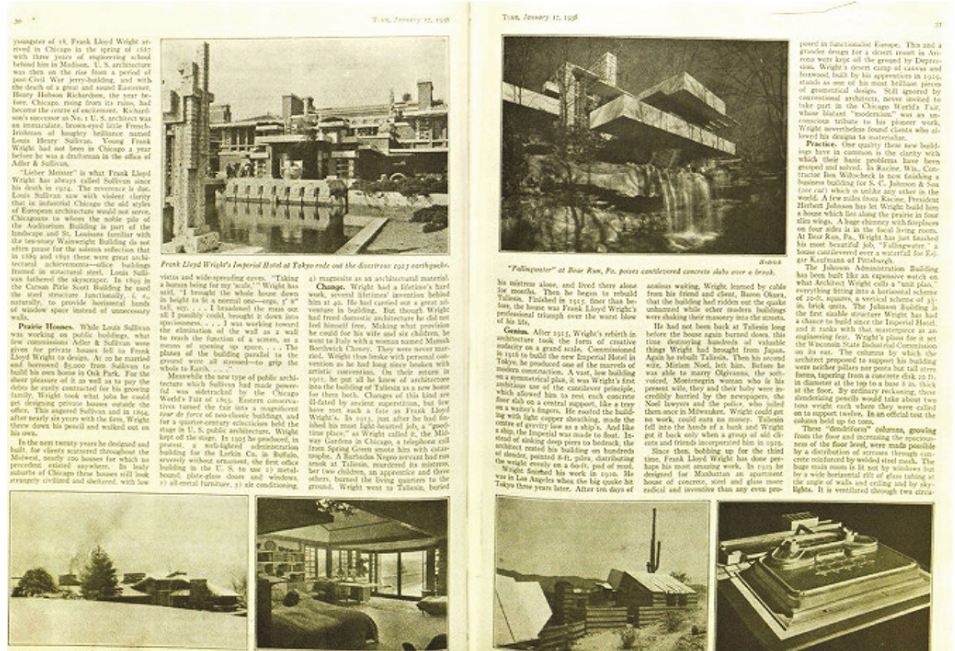


FIG. 2 The inside pages of "Time", vol. XXXI, 17 January 1938, No. 6, pp. 30-31.

7. Franklin Toker's brilliant *Fallingwater Rising: Frank Lloyd Wright, E.J. Kaufmann, and America's Most Extraordinary House*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003, especially pp. 287-88, offers the most insightful discussion of Hedrich's photograph, linking its great success to both its "Americanism" and to its imagery of "healing the damage from America's profligacy with water" incurred during the mid-1930s when unprecedented flooding overwhelmed the nation. Toker notes that Wright was not at first particularly enamored with Hedrich's downstream image exposing the underside of the magnificent house. This notion underscores what Pedro Guerrero, Wright's staff photographer, recalled Wright having once told him: «As you can see from my drawings and my architecture - and this is the way I want you to photograph it - I sit down at a desk and draw. I don't want bird's eyes views or worm's eye views. I want what I'm seeing on a paper or from a sitting position». Author's interview with Pedro Guerrero (unpublished), Spring Green, Wisconsin, 17 June 2011.

In "Life", it was featured prominently on the inside page of the magazine's dark cover, a cover that showed glowing metal industrial tanks on barren land beneath a near-black sky. [Figs. 4-5]

But Hedrich's photograph of Fallingwater dominated the page. Above it 'FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT' was stretched in thin, modern, red letters. Below it was printed, «The editors believe that this issue is the most important architectural document ever published in America [...] the first and only record in print of what we have come to call the Modern Movement [...]».⁸ The lower half of the page was completed with three, boldly captioned,

8. Advertisement, in "Life", 17 February 1938, unpaginated (inside cover).



FIG. 3 The cover of "Time", vol. XXXI, 17 January 1938, No. 3.

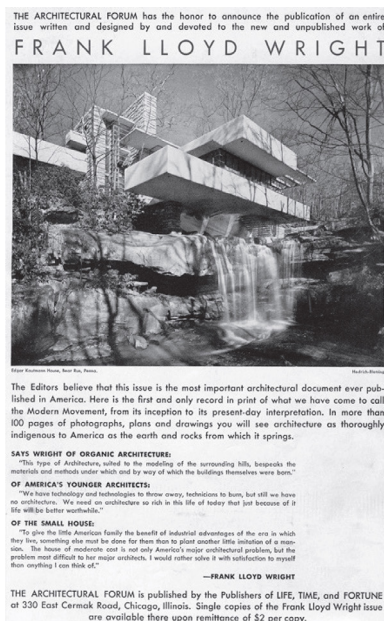


FIG. 4 The inside cover of "Life", vol. IV, 17 January 1938, No. 3.

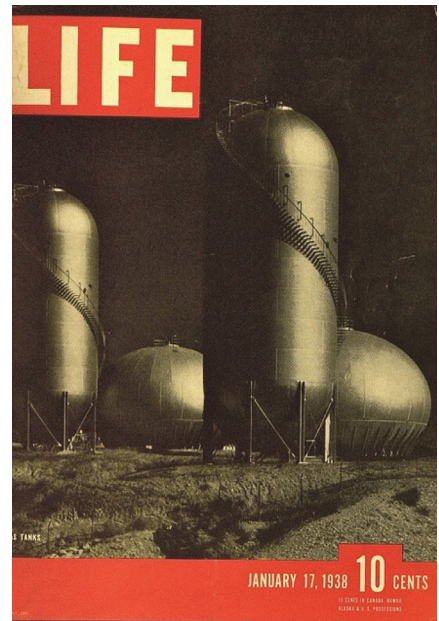


FIG. 5 The cover of "Life", vol. IV, 17 January 1938, No. 3.

'SAYS WRIGHT' statements: «Says Wright of Organic Architecture»; «Says Wright of America's Younger Architects»; «Says Wright of the Small House». After each, in a brief sentence or two, Wright articulates his position on these issues. He establishes himself as a «father of architecture» figure; describes his architecture as organic, indigenous, opposed to unnecessary technologies and technologists. And he expresses his concern, «in these depressed times», for the needs of the «little American family», recognizing their desire to build for themselves a new way of living. «The house of moderate means», one quote reads, «is not only America's major problem, but the problem most difficult to her major architects. I would rather solve it with satisfaction to myself than anything other I can think of». Though at first the page appears to be an exposé on Wright, in fact it is subtly construed advertisement. At the very top of the page, above the wondrous photograph, is printed: «The ARCHITECTURAL FORUM has the honor to announce the publication of an entire issue written and designed by and devoted to the unpublished work of FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT». And in smaller print, a note closes the page: «The ARCHITECTURAL FORUM is published by the Publishers of LIFE, TIME, and FORTUNE».⁹

9. *Ibid.*

Apparently a womanizer. And who needs that?

“Architectural Forum”, “Life”, “Time” and “Fortune”, four of America’s most prominent periodicals in the late 1930s, were owned and published by Henry Luce. In January 1938, all four of these journals featured articles or advertisements about Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright would have been well known to the American public then – more for his social indiscretions, though, than for his internationally acclaimed architecture. He was seventy years old at the time and ever since the age of forty-two had been mercilessly scorned and ridiculed by the popular press.

Twenty-nine years earlier, in 1909, Wright left his wife and six children in Oak Park to travel to Europe with his lover, Mamah Cheney, the wife of a client. He went first to Berlin to meet with publisher Ernst Wasmuth and then to Tuscany to prepare a monograph of his twenty years of exceptional work: domestic buildings on suburban sites, houses he called ‘organic’. Architecture, he was fond of saying, should grace, not disgrace, its site. But the houses Wright had designed from 1893-1909, the horizontal, ‘natural’ houses he would show in the Wasmuth portfolio, were at odds with both their vertical Victorian neighbors and the non-natural parcel of prepared land on which they were built. The inside of a Wright house opened out, but the suburbia that was outside could not be allowed in. Novel and aesthetically compelling, Wright’s houses nevertheless did not grace their site but rather seemed to – ungracefully – indict their suburban neighbors and by extension the suburban way of life they represented. So for Ernst Wasmuth Wright drew images of his houses – not exactly as they *were*, but exactly as he *wanted them to be* – showing them framed in vegetal growth and removed from the company of neighboring Victorian houses. [Fig. 6]

Published in 1910, the resulting 2-volume folio, luxurious and exclusive, was well received in Europe and was followed in 1911 by an inexpensive “small Wasmuth” comprised not of fictive drawings but of photographs of the work. [Fig. 7] Though the camera easily edited out neighboring Victorian

houses, it could not put non-existent vegetation into the image. At that time, “the camera never lied” and works that in the drawn portfolio were cloaked in vegetation, in photographs, even when camouflaged in dappled light, appear bare and remote. Not only did photography not render

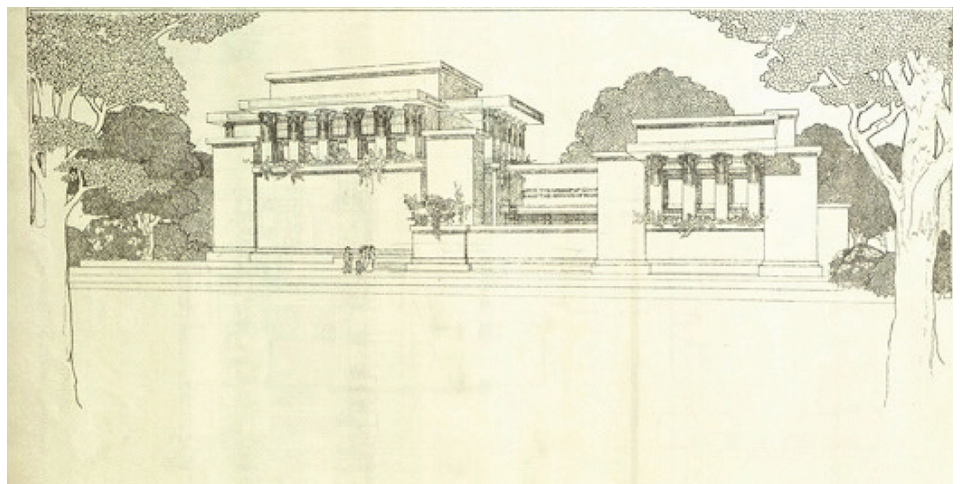


FIG. 6 Frank Lloyd Wright, Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois, 1905-1908. Drawing (Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright*, Berlin, Ernst Wasmuth A.-G., 1910, p. 63).



FIG. 7 Frank Lloyd Wright, Unity Temple, Oak Park, Illinois, 1905-1908. Photograph (Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten*, Berlin, Ernst Wasmuth, 1911, p. 14).

“natural” Wright’s suburban work, often it underscored the pathos of the natural house on a non-natural suburban site.

When Wright and Mamah Cheney returned to Chicago in the autumn of 1910, immediately they were ostracized by its polite society, the same society from which Wright’s principal clients had come. Unwanted in the city, they removed themselves to the rolling hills of rural Wisconsin. There – away from suburbia and Chicago – Wright built a house and studio for himself and Mamah: his first “natural” house which he called, Taliesin. When a servant burned down Taliesin in 1914, killing Mamah and five others, the popular press reported on the story daily in great detail, one article suggesting that the mass killings were divine retribution for a life lived in sin.¹⁰

Wright left Taliesin for Tokyo two years later, returning to the USA only in 1922 – and then not to Wisconsin but to Los Angeles. There he built a handful of houses of a unique, experimental material, a textile block of concrete made from the earth on which the house was placed. In Southern California, he did not escape bad publicity. The press reported on him and his turbulent love life wherever he went. And when eventually he returned to Taliesin in Wisconsin in the mid-1920s, journalists there, one imagines, were delighted. By then, he was divorced from his first wife, estranged from a second, and intimately involved with the woman who would be his third wife, Olgivanna Lazovich, a twenty-six year old Montenegrin Theosophist and dancer, married and with a young daughter.

10. See, for instance, *Awful Crime in Wisconsin Cottage: Mrs. Cheney and Five Others Slain In Frank Lloyd Wright Bungalow*, in “Chicago Sunday Tribune”, 16 August 1914, p. 1. Headlines below this main headline read: «Negro Helper Kills Family With A Hatchet / Architect in Chicago Hears of Crime and Goes to Scene / Slayer Captured». See also, *Wright Buries Mamah of Hills in Night Grave / Rituals Ignored as Nephews and Son Help Architect Carry Open Coffin / Art in Bungalow a Ruin and “This Ends All”, Says E. H. Cheney / Divorced Husband of Mamah Borthwick Brings Slain Children / Will Be No Funeral*, in “Chicago Daily Tribune”, 17 August 1914, p. 7. For a full account of the murders, see: A. Alofsin, *Frank Lloyd Wright The Lost Years, 1910-1922: A Study of Influences*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, pp. 96-100.

Wright's infamy continued into the 1930s, even as the Great Depression left him near destitute on the now crumbling Taliesin estate. With no commissions, he lectured throughout the country – most famously at Princeton University – about his belief in an American, organic architecture. In 1932, at the suggestion of Olgivanna, the now 65-year-old Wright wrote *An Autobiography* and began the Taliesin Fellowship, a school of architecture comprised not of students but of apprentices who came from around the world to study with the master in Wisconsin. It was the father of one of these apprentices, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., who commissioned Wright to design Fallingwater, his first major work since having left Los Angeles, the house that would prove – with the help of Hedrich's photograph and "Life" magazine – to be the pivotal work of his long life in architecture. But who was Henry Luce? And why would he have wanted to remove the infamous Frank Lloyd Wright from his unpopularity and place him on the cover of "Time" magazine?

Lucky Henry Luce

Henry Luce, like Frank Lloyd Wright, was a self-made man. [Fig. 8] He, too, was a divorcée who in 1935 had married the renowned American socialite, Clare Booth. Born in 1898 – the same year as Olgivanna Wright – at the age of twenty-three and only two years out of Yale, Luce quit his job and with his Yale colleague Briton Hatton began a weekly news magazine, a journal they called "Time". Hatton died prematurely in 1929 and the following year Luce launched a business magazine he called "Fortune". Later he acquired "Architectural Forum", and in 1936 he created America's most successful pictorial magazine, "Life".

Luce had been born in China and educated until the age of fifteen in English boarding schools. After graduating from Yale, he had studied for a year in England at Oxford University. In the mid-1930's, in the midst of the Great Depression, he began to exhibit tremendous enthusiasm for the USA, patriotism articulated most eloquently in his now-famous 1941, "Life" magazine article, "The American Century", in which he predicted that American values would dominate the 20th century.¹¹



FIG. 8 Edward Steichen, Portrait of Henry Luce, 1937.



FIG. 9 Photographer unknown, portrait of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1936.

11. H. Luce, *The American Century*, in "Life", 17 February 1941, pp. 61-65.

Frank Lloyd Wright must have appealed greatly to Henry Luce despite – or maybe because of – his well-publicized reputation with women. [Fig. 9] As an architect, he symbolized creative engagement with the world, the builder of modernity and a better way of life. His accomplishments were staggering, extending back nearly half a century. His current work in small-town America, of a size and kind that Luce's reader would understand and appreciate, was as great as any built anywhere at anytime. His confidence and youthful demeanor were indomitable even at seventy years of age when his sexual prowess – always a favorite target for journalists – was no longer of great concern.

Perhaps more important to Luce than any of these qualifications: Wright believed in America and persistently presented its culture to the world. In the Teens and early 1920s, he had built the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, a threshold between West and East. Before and after Tokyo, architects came to Wisconsin from Europe, Japan and China to learn from Wright – to learn *architecture* from him, certainly, but also to learn of America from him. «Young people had come from all over the world attracted by Taliesin's fame abroad as “American”, to share its spirit [...]», Wright wrote in his 1932 autobiography, «for Taliesin was at work quietly Americanizing Europe while American architects Europeanized America».¹² That same year, as noted above, he initiated a school of architecture at Taliesin. The school farmed the land, grew its own food, and with unbridled vigor imagined a new America for the centuries to come. In 1936, he set about solving «America's major problem» designing «the house of moderate means» for the «little American family», a project that “Life” would take up the following year¹³. And in 1937, he designed a cover for the July issue of “Town & Country” showing a series of flattened red, white and blue American flags laid out in his signature 30/60 composition. [Fig. 10]

Wright's belief in himself as an American, the importance he placed on being of America, was reflected in the rhetorical questions raised by Walt Whitman in a poem that accompanied images of Wright's work in the January 1938 “Architectural Forum” that Luce had commissioned. «Who are you, indeed, who would talk or sing to America?» the poem began unflinchingly. «Have you studied out the land, its idioms, and men? Have you learned the physiology, phrenology, politics, geography, pride, freedom, friendship of the land? Its sub-stratums and objects? Do you see those who would leave all feudal process and poems behind them – and assume the poems and process of democracy? Are you really very strong? Are you really of the whole people?».¹⁴

Underscoring Wright's “Americanism”, his belief in the ground, the government, the fabric of people and place, Whitman's interrogative



FIG. 10 Frank Lloyd Wright, Cover of “Town and Country”, July 1937.

12. F. Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, cit., p. 258.

13. These quotes, cited on the inside cover of 17 January 1938 “Life”, also appear in “Architectural Forum”, vol. LXVIII, January 1938, No. 1. In 1939, “Life” featured designs for small, affordable houses by a variety of architects, Wright being one of them.

14. W. Whitman, as published in “Architectural Forum”, vol. LXVIII, January 1938, No. 1, p. 13.

indicts the outsider. Less than a year before this special issue of “Forum” was published, the German architects Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, both former heads of the renowned Bauhaus, moved to America to escape the oppressive Hitler regime that had overtaken their homeland. Gropius was appointed chair of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, America’s most prestigious school. Mies was appointed chair of the Department of Architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago, Luce’s hometown. Both Gropius and Mies were labeled “International Style” architects by the Museum of Modern Art in their famous exhibition of architecture staged in 1932 and curated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. Wright was all but excluded from that exhibition, Johnson famously dismissing him as 19th century. In contrast to the German architects internationalism, Wright represented an organic architecture, grown in America and not easily transported to other lands. By the mid-1930s, worldwide economic depression had made land, place, and country important again.

«In an era blighted by Depression, prejudice, social turmoil, and the shadow of war», Luce’s biographer wrote seventy-five years later, «“Life” offered the comforting image of a nation united behind a shared, if contrived, vision of the American Dream». ¹⁵ Luce chose Wright to be the architect of that dream, and promoted him accordingly in his exceedingly popular journals.

“Life” is not really Wright

One might simply let it go at that. The Chicagoan Henry Luce, who believed adamantly in his country and its destiny and whose tremendously influential journals sought to please and gently direct the sensibilities of a broad and varied America, put forth Wright as “America’s Architect”, one supposes to counter the adulation of the Eastern academic establishment for European architects newly arrived from a country that would soon be declared America’s enemy. One imagines that the American public was persuaded. Bill Hedrich’s photograph of Fallingwater was the visual summation of a philosophy that Wright had sought for thirty years, but Wright’s philosophy was at odds with “Life”s.

At the height of the Great Depression, in the mid-1930s, tremendous flooding followed years of drought and famine across America and it was at this time that Luce inaugurated “Life”. As general policy, in the 1930s, “Life” presented news to America as hope. On the front cover of its very first issue, in November 1936, “Life” featured a photograph by Margaret Bourke-White of an immense dam at Ft. Peck, in northeast Montana. [Fig. 11]

Government-built by the Public Works Administration, the dam

15. A. Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2010, p. 239.

controlled the waters of the Missouri, preventing the disastrous flooding that so often had plagued the area. The dam was a physical symbol, an immense manifestation of highly advanced technology capable not only of controlling an often-destructive force but also of providing electricity to thousands of inhabitants in the rural area that surrounded it. What once was feared, the American government had harnessed and put to good use. Undeniable good came from the control of nature. Immediately "Life" presented the metaphor visually. Beside photographs of the great, government-built dams, it placed photographs of the catastrophic destruction caused by flooding, by uncontrolled 'nature'. [Fig. 12]

Yet "Life"'s promotion of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater was at odds with the control of nature. To Wright, nature and life were synonymous. To harness nature was to harness life. Man should not dominate nature, but respect and live in harmony with it – a belief he had manifested in his buildings for many years. In his residences, rainwater was encouraged to envelope the building, creating sheets of liquid light that veil the habitat, transforming it while making evident the workings of nature. In 1925, he enlarged this phenomenon, damming a branch of the Wisconsin River to build a "hydroelectric house" at Taliesin. [Fig. 13] The dam made manifest the presence of nature in the form of a sublime, utterly beautiful cascade. It visually objectified nature, but in a manner that Wright would amend in 1937.

At Fallingwater, nature is similarly made present, though without being geometricized. Clearly Wright had considered modifying the look of the waterfall, but ultimately decided against it, leaving it alone and magically suspending the house above it instead.¹⁶ [Fig. 14] In the built work, waterfall and building, separated though visually aligned, give presence to one another. Hedrich's photograph captures this condition exactly, presenting us with Wright's way of relating to Nature: man should not dominate but live in harmony with it.

In "Life"'s portrayal of the Norris dam, water is a commodity. Its potentially harmful power is harnessed, converted to another medium, and directed to an assumed common good. In Hedrich's photograph of Wright's Fallingwater, water is a sensuous and life-giving force, natural, original, and replete with symbolic potential. It exists unaltered, enhancing man's life with its beauty and the freedom of its liveliness.

A different Wright rises

The illustrated press of the Depression era popularized Frank Lloyd Wright. In resurrecting him, it created him in its own image – an image that Wright assumed with ease and grace. Honest; hard-working; deliberate; determined. *Of the people, for the people.* A sage, a wit, an individualist, self-made. Indomitable, enthusiastic, strong, hopeful. A savior in troubled

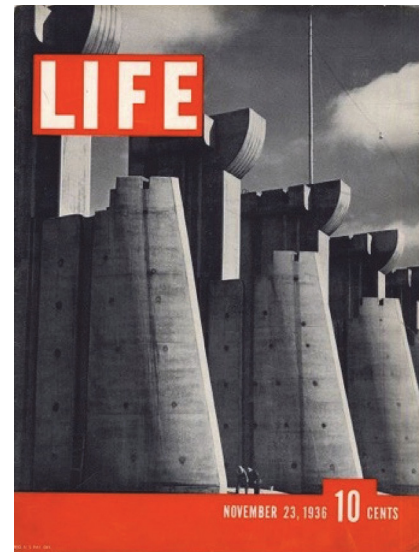


FIG. 11 Norris Dam on the cover of "Life", vol. I, 23 November 1936, No. 1 (photographed by Margaret Bourke-White).



The occupant of this house, Henry Vaske, took to a boat, drowned when the boat capsized

FIG. 12 A house washed down the Ohio River, in "Life", vol. II, 8 February 1937, No. 6, p. 20.

16. This is not entirely true. The exact course and velocity of the water were modified by the placement of the foundations of the house in the stream. The house does not literally hover above the water, but rather the water flows around it and then falls in front of it. In Hedrich's photograph of Fallingwater, the two diagonal piers that hold the house out of the stream are bathed in light and thus "camouflaged away". The house appears to be floating and the stream appears to flow from it, or under it, not around it.

times. The American comeback king. The characteristics bestowed on Wright by the press were characteristics that he wore well. His spirit was inspirational. He embodied American ideals.

In 1938, at the height of the Great Depression and on the eve of the Second World War, at a time when many had little more than hope, Henry Luce chose the image of Frank Lloyd Wright, "American Architect", to convey an unbridled enthusiasm for America's future, for the building of a better tomorrow. Bill Hedrich's photograph of Fallingwater – which Luce featured in three of the four publications in which he

promoted Wright – gave image to a natural architecture. Buildings would be angelic and glow. Pure, untroubled water would flow free and calm. Nature and the man-made world would be one and in agreement.

Wright's architecture, so different than that portrayed the following year in General Motor's *City of the Future* at New York's World's Fair, was valued by the American masses needed during this time of near hopelessness. A vision *of* and *for* the land in which they lived, implicitly it questioned the good sense of an academic establishment that, only a year earlier, had imported its architecture leadership from a Europe that was about to explode in world war. Luce's campaign to undermine this academic preference brought Wright the recognition he deserved. And Hedrich's photograph gave documentary evidence of Wright's poetic convictions.

The "prevalence of the idea in some graphic thought-form", Hedrich's image of Fallingwater seen by millions in a single day, was the visual manifestation of an ideal for which Wright had been striving for over forty years. For over forty years, Wright had waited for the site to show up. The *popular press*, not the ground on which he built, was that site. And though at first Wright seemed not to realize this, not to understand that finally a photograph had visually captured the idea of his natural house, he understood well the effect of mass and immediate publication.

Through Luce's publication of both his architecture and of Wright himself, Wright became America's most popular architect, a status he retained for the remaining twenty years of his 91-year life and a status he maintains to this day. That Wright believed in the American ideal but seldom in its reality, and that the American public did not, *could* not, know



FIG. 13 Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin II Hydro House, Spring Green, Wisconsin, 1920, destroyed 1946 (*Frank Lloyd Wright: 1917 – 1942, The Complete Works*, Köln, Taschen, 2010, p. 73).

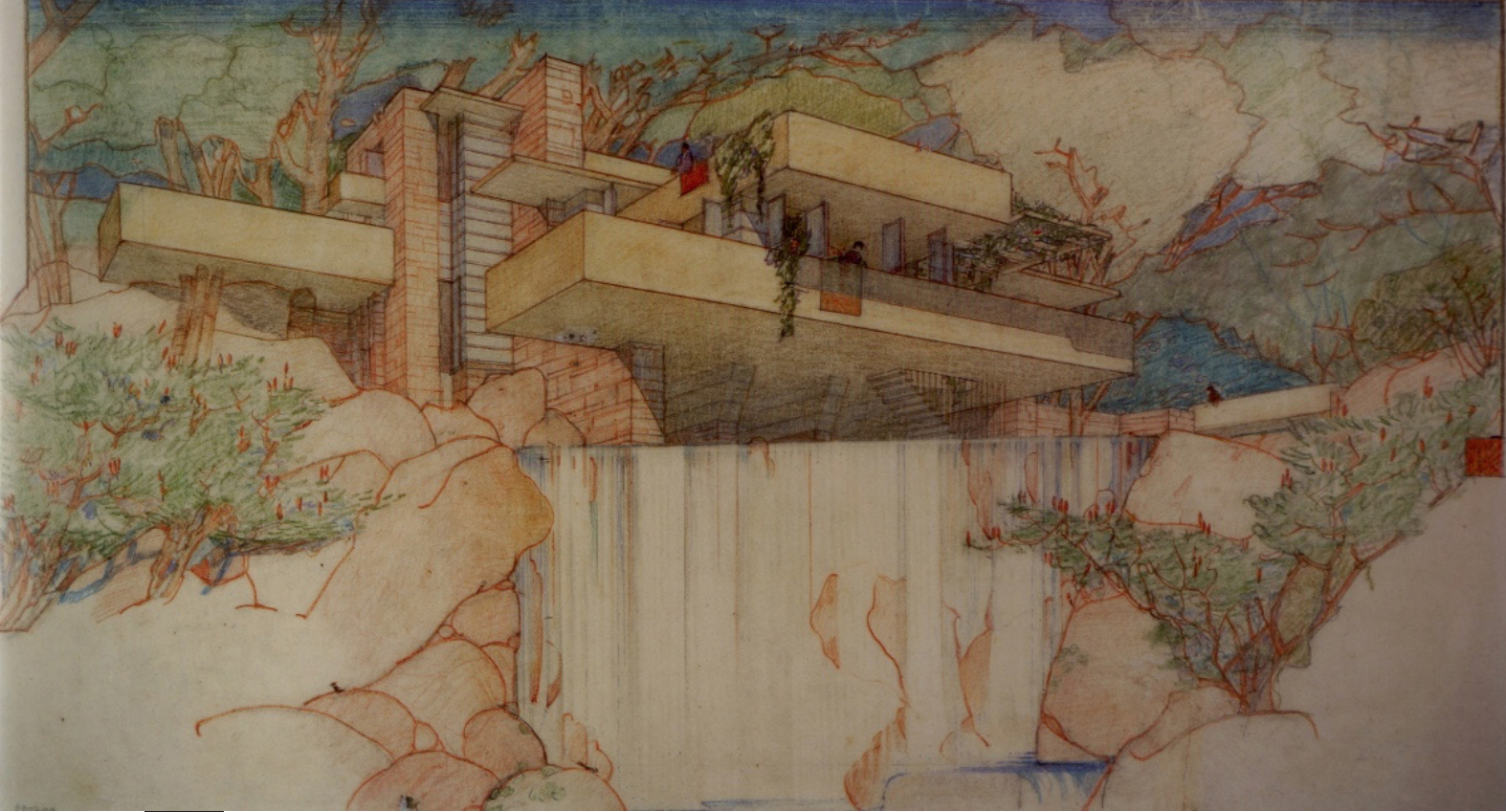


FIG. 14 Frank Lloyd Wright, Kaufmann Residence (a.k.a., Fallingwater), Mill Run Pennsylvania, 1936-1939 (Frank Lloyd Wright: 1917 – 1942, *The Complete Works*, Köln, Taschen, 2010, p. 249).

this, seemed to matter little either to him or to them. In their eyes, he became what he had believed himself to be since the beginning of this, the “American Century”: an unsurpassed Master Builder; the creator of a natural architecture; a renegade sage, prophet, and visionary.

It was artificial mediation, the illustrated journal, that disseminated and popularized an architecture whose essence was authenticity. Mediation – investing «lives with artificial perception and arbitrary values» - had allowed America to see what it would not have seen otherwise. But in doing so, it promoted artificially an architecture that eschewed the artificial. Wright, the one-time renegade who so often had kned the groin of polite America, now was heralded as its great hero.¹⁷

17. In the 1943 edition of *Space, Time and Architecture*, Sigfried Giedion – never mentioning Fallingwater – initially views Wright in terms of European architecture and then concludes, «Wright’s real influence, his great and educative influence, cannot be shown in a few poor photographs: his real influence is that of his methods and ideas, as they are reflected in his work». Two lines later, Giedion ends Part V of his now famous book with a footnote that reads, «Curiously enough, Le Corbusier was also directed to Wright through an article which appeared in the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* in 1912, and which was an extensive résumé by Berlage himself of a lecture he had given in Zurich». See: S. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 1943 (1941), p. 348.