

What Is Architecture? by Frank Lloyd Wright

What is architecture anyway? Is it the vast collection of the various buildings which have been built to please the varying taste of the various lords of mankind? I think not. No, I know that architecture is life; or at least it is life itself taking form and therefore it is the truest record of life as it was lived in the world yesterday, as it is lived today or ever will be lived. So architecture I know to be a Great Spirit ... Architecture is that great living creative spirit which from generation to generation, from age to age, proceeds, persists, creates, according to the nature of man, and his circumstances as they change. That is really architecture.

I still believe that the ideal of an organic architecture forms the origin and source, the strength and, fundamentally, the significance of everything ever worthy the name of architecture.

By organic architecture I mean an architecture that develops from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that is applied from without.

As we pass along the wayside some blossom with unusually glowing color or prettiness of form attracts us. Held by it we gratefully accept its perfect loveliness. But, seeking the secret of its ineffable charm, we find that the blossom, whose more obvious claim first arrested our attention, as nature intended, is intimately related to the texture and shape of the foliage beneath. We discover peculiar sympathy between the form of this flower and the system upon which leaves are arranged about the stalk. From this we are led on to observe a characteristic habit of growth and discover a resultant pattern of structure... Structure --as now we may observe--proceeds from generals to particulars arriving at the blossom, to attract us, proclaiming in its lines and form the nature of the structure that bore it. We have here a thing organic. Law and order are the basis of a finished grace and beauty. Beauty is

the expression of fundamental conditions in line, form and color true to those conditions and seeming to exist to fulfill them according to some thoughtful original design.

What is Architecture (cont.)

Organic simplicity might everywhere be seen producing significant character in the ruthless but harmonious order I was taught to call nature. I was more than familiar with it on the farm. All around me, I, or anyone for that matter, might see beauty in growing things and, by a little painstaking, learn how they grew to be beautiful. None was ever insignificant.

Only by patient study, to acquire knowledge of nature in this interior sense, are guiding principles ever to be established by the architect. Ideals gained by comprehension of these organic limitations are never lost. An artist having these may then defy his education. If he is really for nature in this inward sense he may be a rebel against his time and its laws but never lawless in his work nor as himself.

The architect must be the most comprehensive of all the masters, most comprehensive of all the human beings on earth. His word, the thing that is entrusted to him by way of his virtue, is the most broad of all.