

*The*  
**PRAIRIE**  
**SCHOOL**  
*Review*

Volume III, Number 3

Third Quarter, 1966

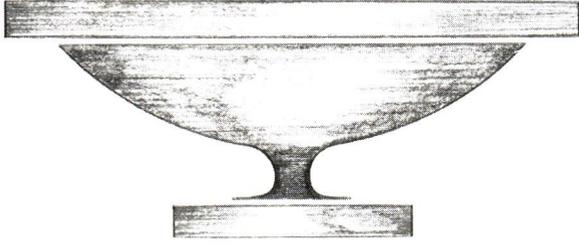
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*ABOVE: The sketch above was done by Architect Antonin Raymond who assisted Frank Lloyd Wright with the Imperial Hotel. The sharp featured figure at far left is Raymond himself; the other major figures in the foreground are, from left to right, Mr. Hayashi (Client), Frank Lloyd Wright, Paul Mueller, Sr. (Contractor), Mueller's son, and the caped figure on the right is Arata Endo, Architect.*

*COVER: The Main Hall (Kodo) of the Jiyu Gakuen School was designed with obvious "Prairie" influence by Arata Endo who also assisted in the design of the major school building by Frank Lloyd Wright. Photo by Lee Colegrove.*

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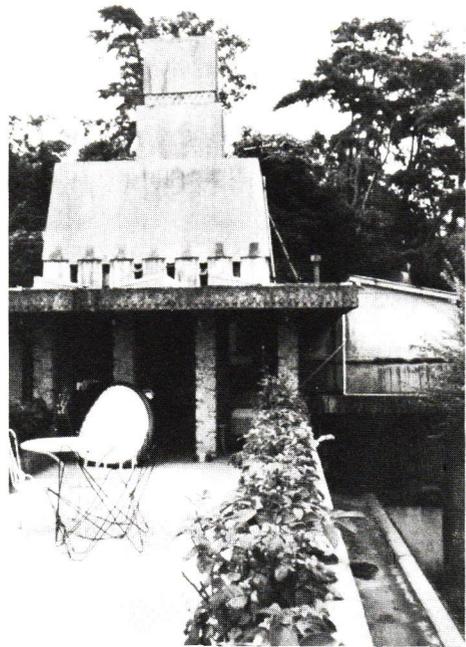
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*The deck of the Yamamura house. Note the similarity in detail to the Hollyhock house in California which was done a short time later. Photo by Curtis Besinger.*



## *From the EDITORS*

*One year ago we suggested, on this page, that consideration be given to the establishment of a museum of architecture in Chicago. Our proposal was that H. H. Richardson's Glessner House might serve admirably as the building to house such an institution.*

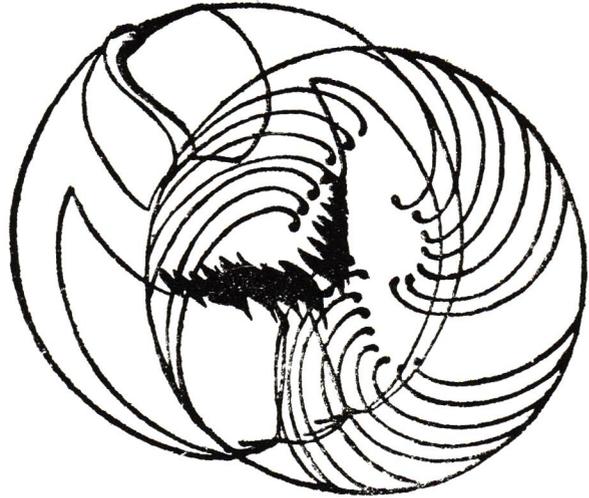
*Since that editorial last fall, this suggestion has become a fact. The Glessner House has been acquired by The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation. This non-profit corporation was formed specifically for that purchase, as well as the subsequent establishment of a museum of Chicago architecture and a center for related study of modern architectural history. It is your editor's privilege to sit as a member of the Board of Trustees for the Foundation.*

*We hasten to point out that while the preservation of the Glessner House has been accomplished, the formation of a suitable program of events and exhibits is still in the embryonic stage. It is our opinion that the immediate appointment of a full time, well qualified, Director of the Museum should be of prime importance. Fortunately the Board of Trustees is in agreement with this thought and has charged several members of the Board with the task of selecting an individual to fill this position.*

*The job is a challenging one. Seldom is such an opportunity available, and the person who is appointed can look forward to a great deal of hard work with results to be limited only by his ability. The salary is open for discussion and will depend largely upon the individual. There are no restrictions insofar as age or sex is concerned. Interested parties are invited to write the Editor of *The Prairie School Review* enclosing a brief resume of their education and experience.*

# Frank Lloyd Wright In Japan

by Robert Kostka



*Robert Kostka is presently teaching at the University of Illinois Circle Campus in Chicago where he is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art. He was formerly Art Director for WTTW, Chicago's educational television station, and still serves as a consultant in a similar capacity. Professor Kostka received his Bachelor of Science in visual design from the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology and later received a Master of Science in Art Education from the same Institution.\**

Few buildings of similar scale or degree of inventiveness seem to have been so often misunderstood as Frank Lloyd Wright's Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Some critics find in its design strong traces of Mayan influences, suggesting that there is an equivalent lack of insight into Pre-Columbian architecture as well. Wright himself wrote of creating a building that in its form would help "bridge the gap" between a culture "on its knees" to one which was "on its feet". In discussing why he did not make the opus more modern, Wright often wrote that there was a tradition there worthy of respect and he felt it his duty as well as his privilege to make the building belong to the Japanese culture so far as he might.<sup>1</sup>

As with so many of Wright's buildings, the Imperial Hotel maintains a popularity among

<sup>1</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright wrote the story of the Imperial Hotel in several of his published books. Each of the versions was essentially the same as the version contained in the first edition of *The Autobiography*, pp. 195-225. Most of the quotations in this article are from this source.

\*Special acknowledgement must be given Miss Margaret Gentles, Curator of the Japanese Print Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, for her valuable aid in clarifying Wright's own insights into Ukiyo-e prints and with regard to his role in the 1908 exhibition. Equal acknowledgement must be given to Mr. Lee Colegrove of Tokyo for furnishing photographs of the Jiyu Gakuen School and for interviewing Mr. Raku Endo. A conversation between the author and Mr. Bruce Goff also contributed insights into the design and construction of the Imperial Hotel. But most of all, acknowledgement and thanks to Mr. Antonin Raymond for making so much material available for this article.

people generally, and the *Teikoku* is still a place of dignity, of importance, *the place* for a society wedding or reception. However, Japan is entering its age of skyscrapers and mega-structures, and is, according to Buckminster Fuller, now "a nation on wheels". Speaking of the Imperial Hotel as an influence upon Japan's contemporary architecture, Kenzo Tange<sup>2</sup> once commented that "it reflects a kind of orientalism with which the Japanese no longer identify."

There is a Buddhist parable about twelve blind men encountering an elephant. One man touches its ear, and announces that an elephant is like a banana leaf. Another touching its tail, insists that an elephant is not like a banana leaf. . . it is like a rope! And so it has been with American experience of Japan, seemingly newly encountered every twenty years or so. This periodic rediscovery is made more difficult by many lingering misconceptions ranging from "nothing ever changes in the orient" to the belief that "oriental cultures are spiritual while ours is material".

From details in the rapidly changing fashions of the wearing of kimono, experts can often date Japanese prints almost to the year. Yet in all periods, buildings of every historical style have been built in Japan without the consciousness of the progression of styles that marks European

<sup>2</sup> Kenzo Tange (1913- ) is perhaps Japan's most widely known architect. He is often cited for his work in attempting to integrate Japan's architectural traditions with the needs of modern society.

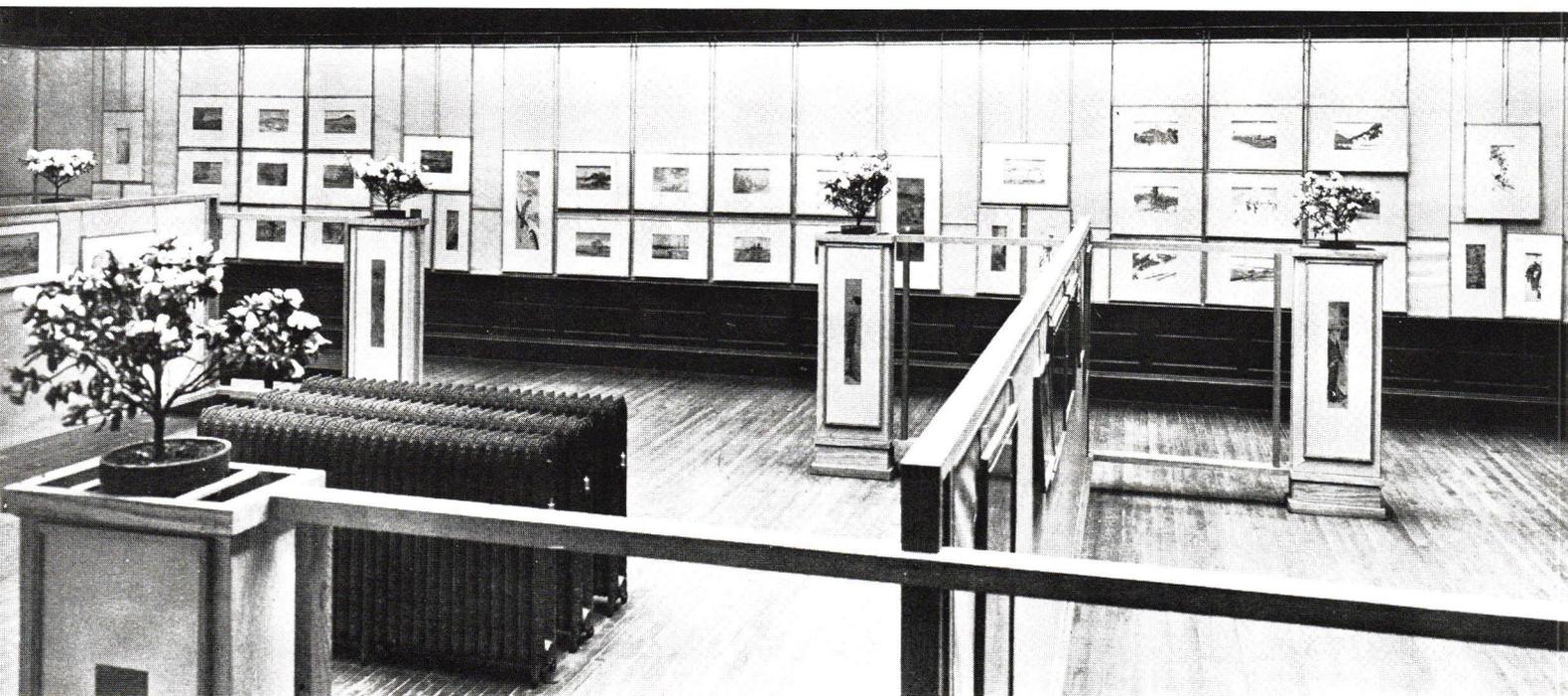
architecture. The destruction of the major cities during the war and exploding real estate values since the war's end, have created a pattern of architectural obsolescence unequalled in the west. In a land where 800 year old buildings are still in use, it is difficult to consider preserving a forty year old one merely because of its age.

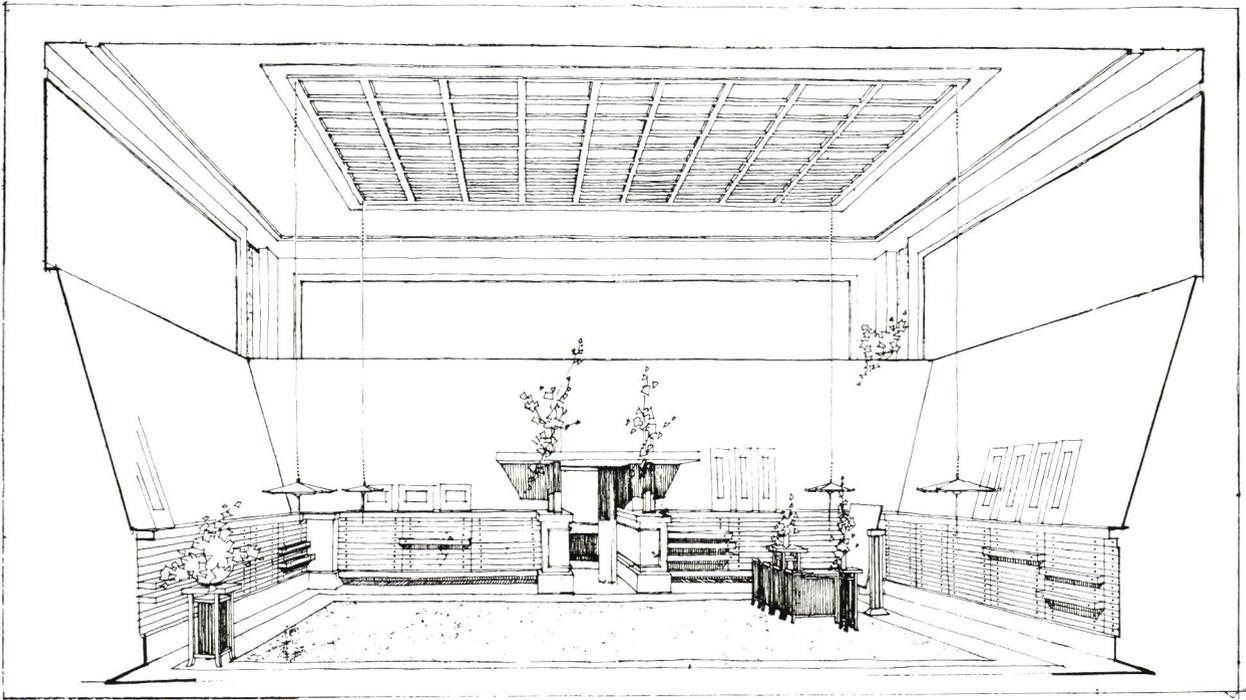
The social evolution that began in post-war Japan opened the traditional arts to all classes; the concept of an art being the property of a particular class has been long lost in the west. Suddenly anyone could study the Tea Ceremony, Calligraphy, or Flower Arranging, and thousands did. There is a determination among the traditional arts to meet the challenge of the contemporary, as found in one school of the Tea Ceremony in Kyoto. In addition to teaching Tea in the many traditional styles of teahouses, the ceremony is being adapted to the new formica-countered teahouse. The flower arranging school at Sogetsu uses "found objects" and scrap metal in a new style of arranging. Yet at the same time, the great traditional pottery kilns are producing work at a level which critics rate as highly as the greatest historical periods of Japanese ceramics.

Understanding the Imperial Hotel lies in weighing something of the cultural flavor of Japan at that time against Wright's own understanding of it. Wright had long been interested in the arts of

*RIGHT: "The Actor Nakazo I, in a Scene from a Drama" by Shunsho, ca. 1773. This print was formerly in the collection of Frank Lloyd Wright. Photo Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.*

*BELOW: In 1908 Frank Lloyd Wright designed the installation of the exhibit of Japanese prints illustrated here. Photo Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.*





*The W. S. Spaulding Print Gallery Project was designed for a location in Boston in 1919 after Wright had spent several months in Japan. This drawing is now part of the Collection of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Photograph by George Barrows through the Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art.*

Japan, and found the Japanese Building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition of special interest. The "Ho-o-den" was built in Japan and reassembled by Japanese carpenters on a wooded island in the fair grounds. It featured a teahouse, exhibited prints, furniture and other crafts. A stone lantern and ruins of the Japanese garden with its dry waterfall are all that now remain of this building in Chicago's Jackson Park.<sup>3</sup> Little has been written about the Turkish Pavillion at the Fair, which may have been equally influential in crystalizing the new Prairie Style.

Accompanied by his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Ward Willits, Wright made his first trip to Japan in 1905. It was perhaps the last chance to see "the old Japan", soon to fade into industrialization. The tokonoma was destined to become the most convenient place for the television set, but at this time Edo (Tokyo) still had the aroma of the world of the Ukiyo-e prints that Wright so eagerly collected. The countryside was still an organic pattern of fields, decentralized houses, craft industries, and

<sup>3</sup> For a complete description and study of the "Ho-o-den" the reader is referred to *The Japanese Influence in America* by Clay Lancaster, pp. 78-83.

scattered temples. Wright later developed a similiar pattern, expanded in scale by the automobile, as the basis for his Broadacre City.

The visual simplicity of spaces and materials in the Japanese house impressed him greatly, more as principles than as forms to be copied . . . although there may have been a few details too perfect to be resisted. He described the impact of the Shinto environment with its silent philosophy of materials and nature, but did not mention the great Buddhist and Zen works that so interest us today. Nor was Japanese interest itself too keen at just this moment, as indicated by photographs in the Ryoan-ji Temple showing the famous sand garden then overgrown with weeds. Wright was more attracted to the decorative painters such as Sotatsu or Korin and to the refined porcelains than the Zen-influenced raku or bizen kilns which have so influenced our potters today. But above all, he sought out prints.

Working with Mr. Gookin, the curator, in 1908 Wright designed the installation of an exhibition of 649 Japanese prints held at the Art Institute of Chicago. The prints were selected from the Gookin, Buckingham, Wrenn, and Webster collections, as well as from Wright's own. The exhibition was designed to relate the individual prints to the feeling of the space as a whole, an uncommon idea at the time. The six galleries were papered a pinkish-gray, the frames were unfinished chestnut and the matts were a natural vellum. The green hanging cords were arranged to form an unobtrusive yet unify-

ing module, and the vertical pillar prints were placed on low units approximating their point of view when seen in the Japanese house. The installation seems too dense by current standards, but in its time it presented an orderly appearance and visual unity seldom seen.

The Ukiyo-e prints were the art form of the rising merchant class, recording the day to day life of the teahouses, the theater, industries and other genre scenes. Ukiyo-e originally meant the art of the "miserable world", but it evolved into the meaning 'the transitory, or floating world'. The prints were subjected to government censorship, and sumptuary laws were evoked to keep the prints appropriate to their class. Despite, or perhaps because of this, it was essentially a democratic art. Wright bought vast numbers of these prints for his own collection as well as for others. Acting informally as a dealer he spent an estimated \$250,000 on prints in Japan alone, buying and selling until circumstances forced the sale of the entire collection in 1927.<sup>4</sup>

Certain critics have suggested that Wright was "anti-art", and in the case of a certain museum condemn the walls for lacking qualities that should be found only in the paintings themselves. Yet a year before Kandinsky was to publish *On The Spiritual In Art* and a year before the Armory Show, Wright wrote a startling little book setting forth an art theory which is still *avantgarde* today. In 1912, Wright's *The Japanese Print, An Interpretation* was published in Chicago. He wrote:

The most important fact to realize in a study of this subject is that, with all its informal grace, Japanese art is a thoroughly structural Art; fundamentally so in any and every medium. It is always, whatever else it is or is not, structural. The realization of the primary importance of this element of 'structure' is also at the very beginning of any real knowledge of design. And at the beginning of structure lies always and everywhere geometry. But, in this art, mathematics begins and ends here, as the mathematical begins and ends in music, however organically inherent here as there in the result.

But we have used the word structure, taking for granted that we agreed upon its meaning. The word structure is here used to designate an organic form, an organization in a very definite manner of parts or elements into a larger unity, — a vital whole. So, in design, that element which we call its structure is primarily the pure

form, as arranged or fashioned and grouped to 'build' the Idea; an idea which must always persuade us of its reasonableness. Geometry is the grammar, so to speak, of the form. It is its architectural principle. But there is a psychic correlation between the geometry of form and our associated ideas which constitutes its symbolic value. There resides always a certain 'spell-power' in any geometric form which seems more or less a mystery, and is, as we say, the soul of the thing. It would carry us far from our subject if we should endeavor to render an accurate, convincing account of the reason why certain geometric forms have come to symbolize for us and potently to suggest certain human ideas, moods, sentiments, — as for instance: the circle, infinity; the triangle, structural unity; the spire, aspiration; the spiral, organic progress; the square, integrity.<sup>5</sup>

Wright may also have been outlining as archetypes what were to become some of his most important works still to come in later decades . . . the circle, triangle, spire, spiral, and the square. Wright continued:

A Japanese artist grasps form always by reaching underneath for its geometry, never losing sight of its spiritual efficacy.<sup>6</sup>

Events led to the choice of Wright as the architect for the new building to replace the old wooden Imperial Hotel. The design and the construction were to fill six years (1916-1922),<sup>7</sup> and Wright made regular trips between the two lands. In his free moments in Japan, he hunted for prints and porcelains.

Besides accommodating its guests, the hotel was meant to be a setting for major public receptions ranging in size from the Peacock Room which can seat 1,000 at dinner, to the *Kiri-no-ma* which seats 16. The Chairman of the Board of Directors, Baron Okura, represented the 60% owned by the Imperial Household as well as his own interests. The other 40% was held by a group of businessmen, the largest single share being Baron Okura's. The initial capitalization was 1,500,000 Yen, with the land to be furnished by the Imperial Household. (In 1923 the exchange rate was 1 Yen = 52¢.) The final cost, greatly increased by many new innovations and unknown factors, was slightly more than 9,000,000 Yen.

5 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Japanese Print: An Interpretation*, Chicago, 1912, pp. 5-7.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

7 The preliminary design was approved in 1913 before Wright left for Japan. The final design and working drawings were largely done in Japan although some work was done in the United States.

4 A complete record of those prints sold is recorded in "The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of Japanese Prints," *Auction Catalog*, Anderson Galleries, New York, 1927.



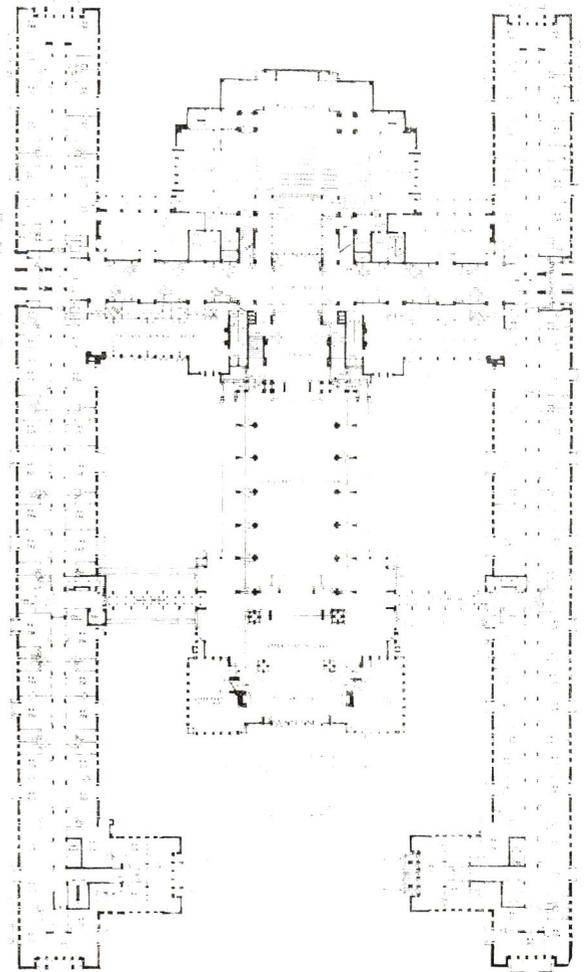
The site, located near the Palace and across from Hibiya Park, was a plot of land 500 by 300 ft. It was a drained marsh composed of about 60 ft. of liquid mud overlaid by 8 ft. of fill, creating factors which when combined with the ever present dangers of earthquake and fire, called for a new approach to the structure itself. The method devised by Wright in solving the unusual foundation problem has been published extensively. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to consider the building as essentially a great technical achievement while ignoring its architectural aspects for the Imperial Hotel was probably the most truly three-dimensional modern building that had been built up to that time, with an organic sense and changing complexity of spaces that defy photography.

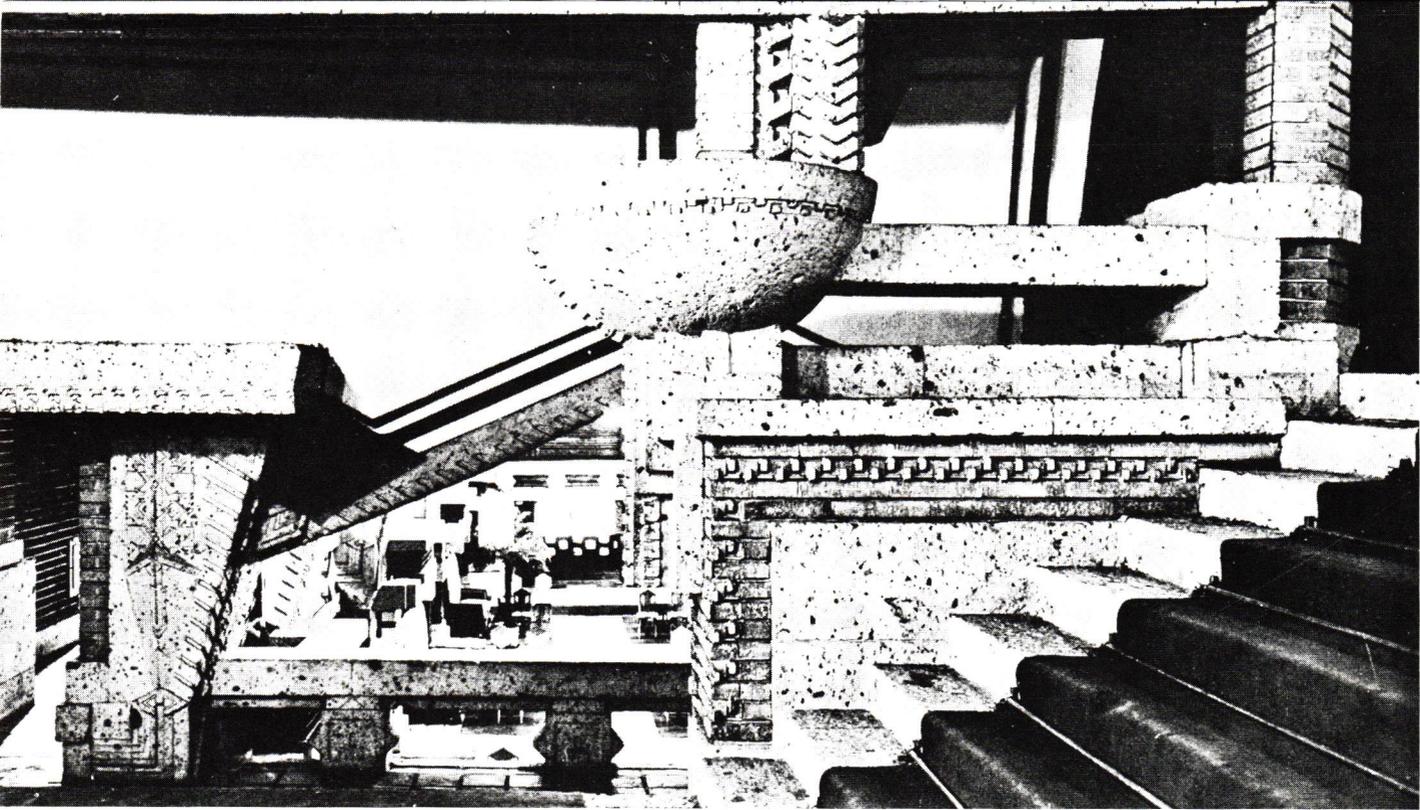
The Imperial Hotel is deceptive in scale, rising from a low entry way to a height of seven stories at the Peacock Room. In plan it is shaped like a letter "H" with another line crossing the center bar. The guest rooms are located at the outsides of the "H", while the lobby and the public rooms are located in the center. There are shops and a post office in the Arcade below, and a theater that seats 1,000 is located below the Peacock Room. A pool at the entrance was designed to, and in fact did, provide an emergency source of water during the earthquakes. There is one elevator, leading to the Peacock Room.

The exterior brick is now a soft burnt-orange in color, while the interior brick that is exposed in the Promenade and the corridors is a dark brown, contrasted by the interior mortar which has been lacquered gold. A lava stone found near Nikko, called "Oya", was used inside and out, varying in

*ABOVE: The front elevation of the Imperial Hotel as it appeared shortly before completion of the building. Gilman Lane photo, Oak Park Collection.*

*BELOW: Plan of a principle floor of the Imperial Hotel.*





*This interior detail shows some of the intricate oya stone carvings which make up the major ornament of the Imperial Hotel. Photo courtesy of Kindai Kenchiku.*

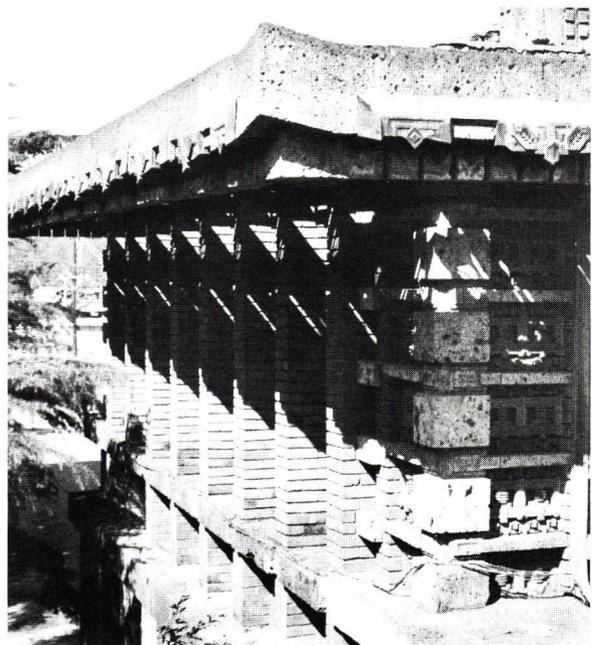
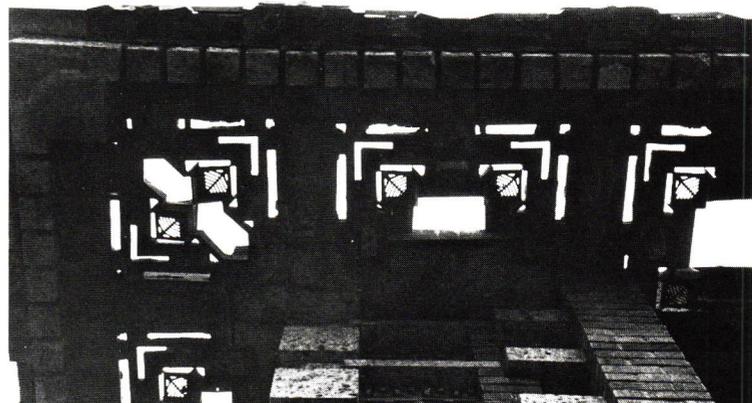
color from a grayish-green to a light amber. It is easily carved and was used for ornaments in low relief and in free-standing sculpture. Carving in low relief is traditional, found in early Stupas and recently used by Nagare in his wall designs for the Japanese Pavillion at the New York Fair. The oya in the Peacock Room and adjoining 300 ft. Promenade was polychromed.

The roof was tiled with copper for lightness, and the cantilevered concrete cornice was faced and filled with copper and oya. A punched out pattern of copper formed a pan that permitted light to penetrate while still collecting any debris that might fall during an earthquake. Ceramic grills and tiles were used throughout for exterior lighting units, ventilators, and expansion joints, while the drain pipes were made of lead to permit distortion during earthquake tremors.

The Peacock Room has a high-domed ceiling, faceted to suggest a turtle's shell. The oya ornaments were carved in a crane motif, suggesting the traditional symbol of the turtle and the crane *tsuru-kame*. This is a symbol of long life, for "both live a thousand years".<sup>8</sup> In use, the Peacock Room

8 Ed. Note: Wright had also used the "crane" motif on the cover of his book *The Japanese Print: An Interpretation* in 1912. The same motif was used on the cover of the catalog of an exhibit of Antique Colour Prints from the collection of Frank Lloyd Wright held in 1917 and on the cover of "The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of Japanese Prints," *Auction Catalog*, Anderson Galleries, New York, 1927. This flying crane symbol is used on the title page of this issue of *The Prairie School Review*.

*Below are two photographs showing the treatment of the cornice at the Imperial Hotel. The first picture shows the pattern of the stamped out copper pans set in the cornice while the second shows the effect of the shadow cast by these pans on the wall beneath them.*



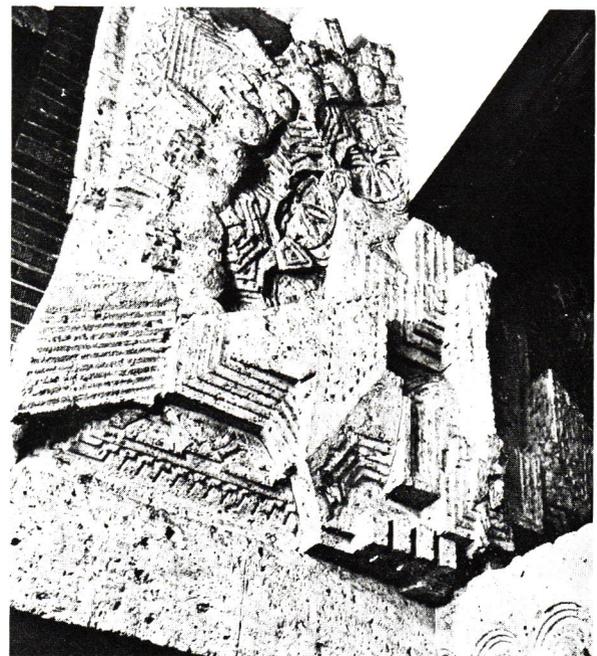


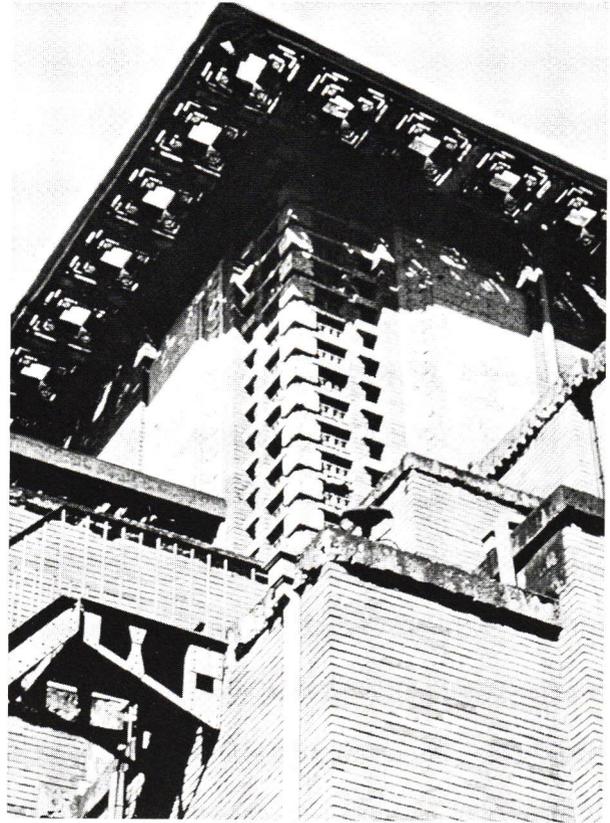
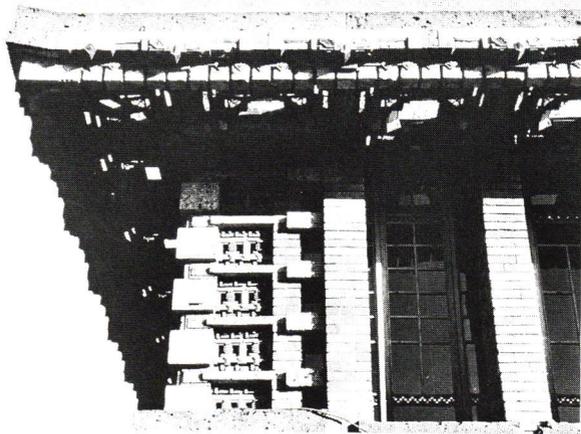
*The Peacock Room as it appears today. Many exclusive social events are held here where as many as 700 persons can dine at one time. Photo from The Imperial.*

gives people attending the feeling that they are outdoors. Directly below the room is a theater with a seating pattern similar to that of the Unity Temple in Oak Park

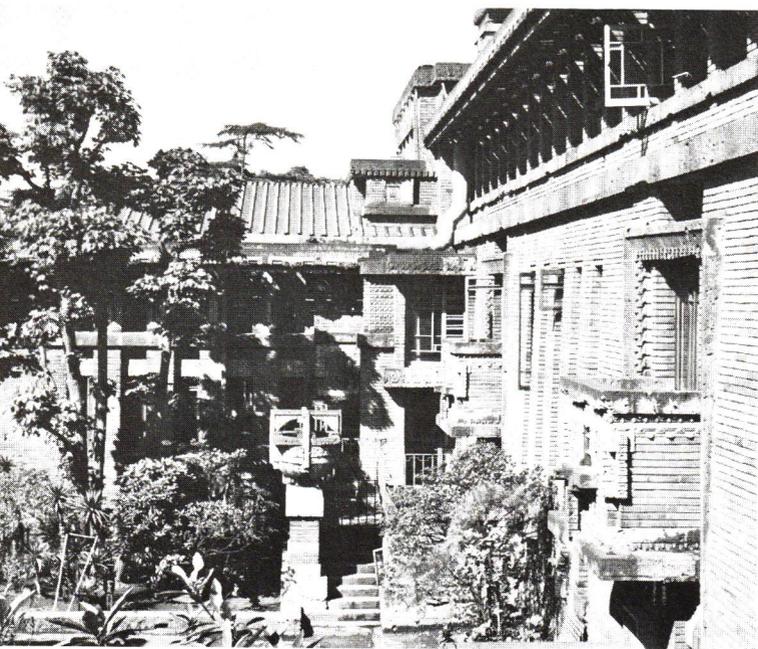
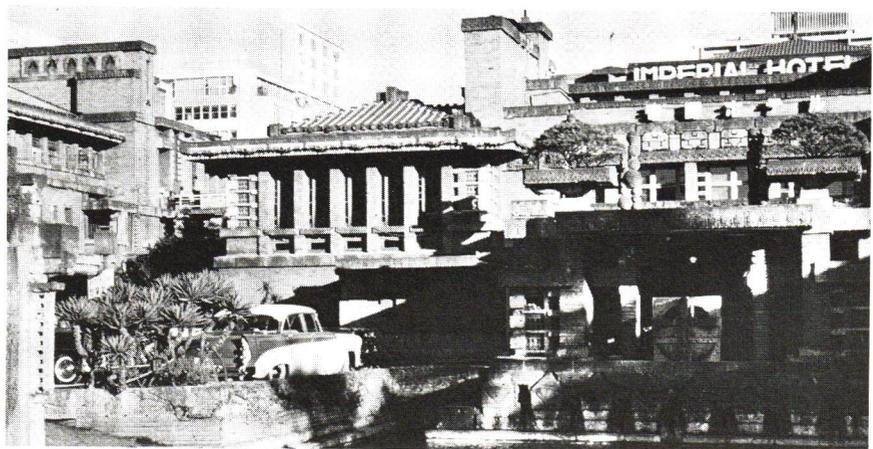
A frequent criticism of the Imperial Hotel and some of Wright's other early work is that the interiors are too dark. Wright once compared shadows in architecture to the brush strokes in a painting. He used an esthetic of shadows, an almost filmic awareness of moving light in his early Prairie houses that found confirmation in Japan. A walk through today's neon world of the Ginza shows that this tradition is fading. The Imperial Hotel, with its soft indirect lighting, drew the praise of one of Japan's greatest writers, Junichiro Tanizaki. In his essay "In Praise Of Shadows", Tanizaki took the view that the great traditional arts of Japan had all thrived in the shade. The low light levels of the teahouse, temple, or even the farmhouse, induced the contemplative spirit that is at the core of those arts . . . now being undermined by the electric light bulb. Even women's make-up, with its flat white powdered face and darkened teeth, was geared to softly harmonize in a shadowed interior. The brilliantly colored costumes of the

*This carved oya stone capital is typical of the larger ornament found in the Imperial Hotel. Photo Courtesy of Kandai Kenchiku.*





## *The Aesthetics of Shadows*



*TOP LEFT:* Cornice and detailing of roof. Photo by Robert Nichols.

*TOP RIGHT:* The Imperial Hotel exterior above the Peacock Room at the seventh story height.

*CENTER:* A view of the principle entrance to the Imperial.

*LEFT:* The north wing of the Imperial showing small balconies for various rooms.

Noh or Kabuki theaters assumed subtle harmonies in the shadowed theaters. (This is now an outmoded image, and a Japanese friend once expressed surprise that in English *we* use "the Japanese words for 'neon light'".)

Tanizaki wrote:

The fact that we did not use glass, concrete, and bricks, for instance, made a low roof necessary to keep off the driving wind and rain. A light room would no doubt have been more convenient for us, too, than a dark room. The

quality we call beauty, however, must always grow from the realities of life, and our ancestors, forced to live in dark rooms, presently came to discover beauty in shadows, ultimately to guide shadows towards beauty's ends. And so it has come to be that the beauty of a Japanese room depends on a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows . . . it has nothing else . . . .

The light from the garden steals in but dimly through the paper-paneled doors, and it is precisely this indirect light that makes for us the charm of a room. We do our walls in neutral colors so that the sad, fragile, dying rays can sink into neutral repose.<sup>9</sup>

9 From Junichiro Tanizaki, "In Praise of Shadows" (Translator: Edward Seidensticker) *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1955, pp. 141-144.

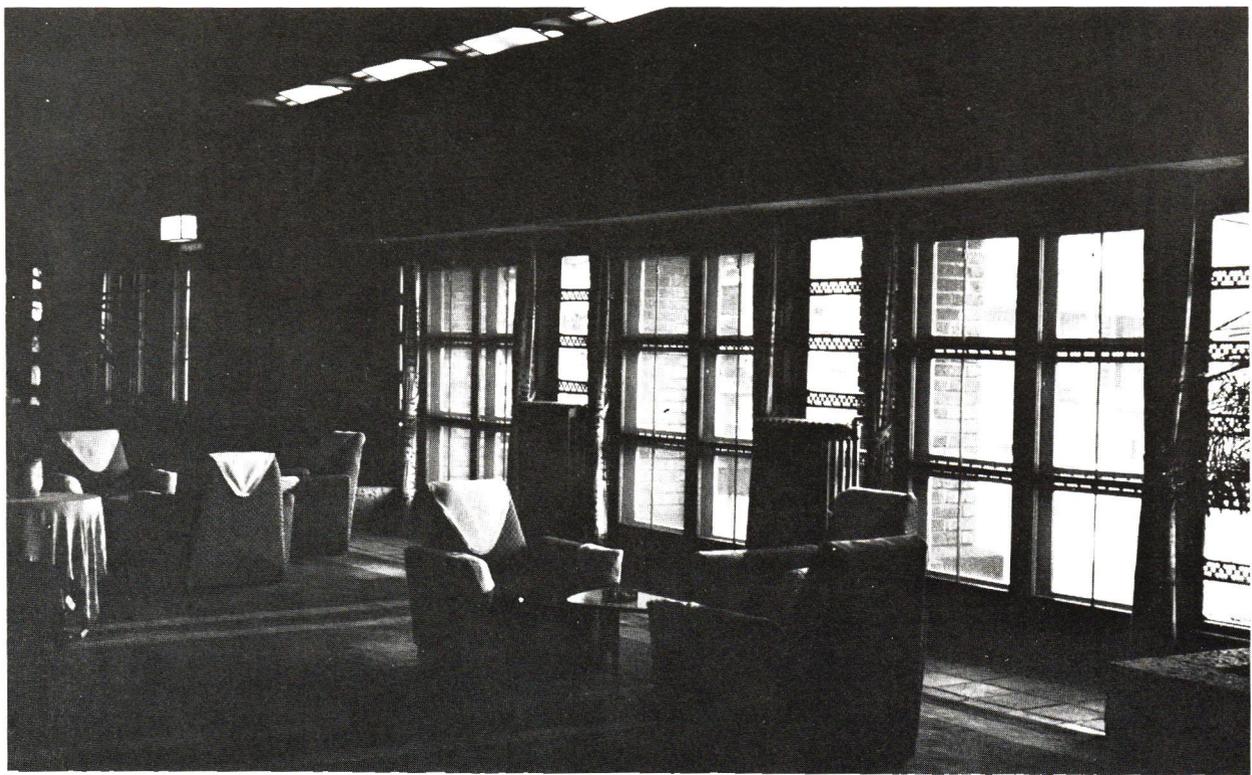


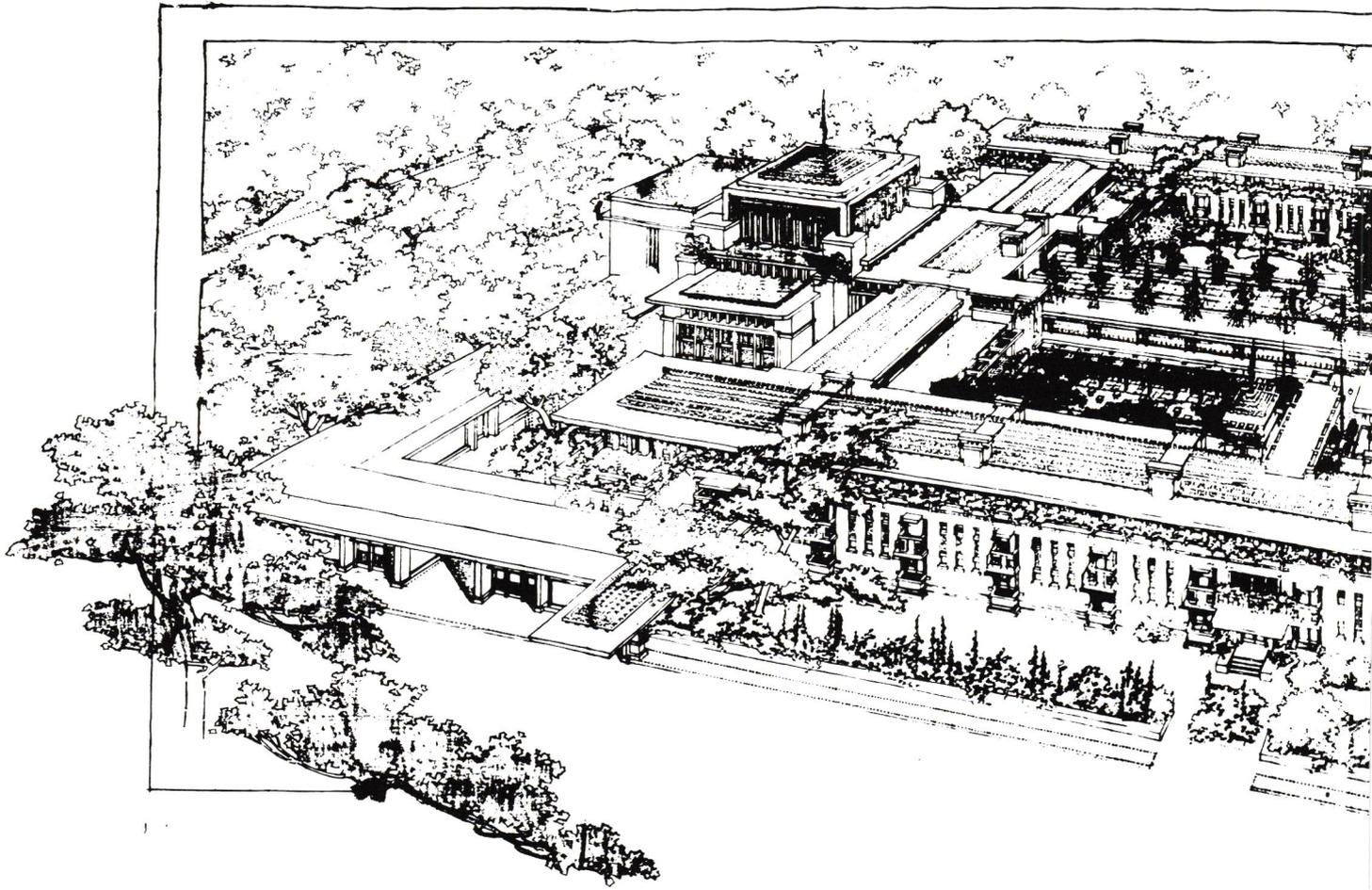
TOP: *The hallway at the Imperial Hotel between the main dining room on the right and the teagarden on the left. Doors open to permit movement between the two areas.*

ABOVE: *The stairway leading to the Imperial Arcade.*

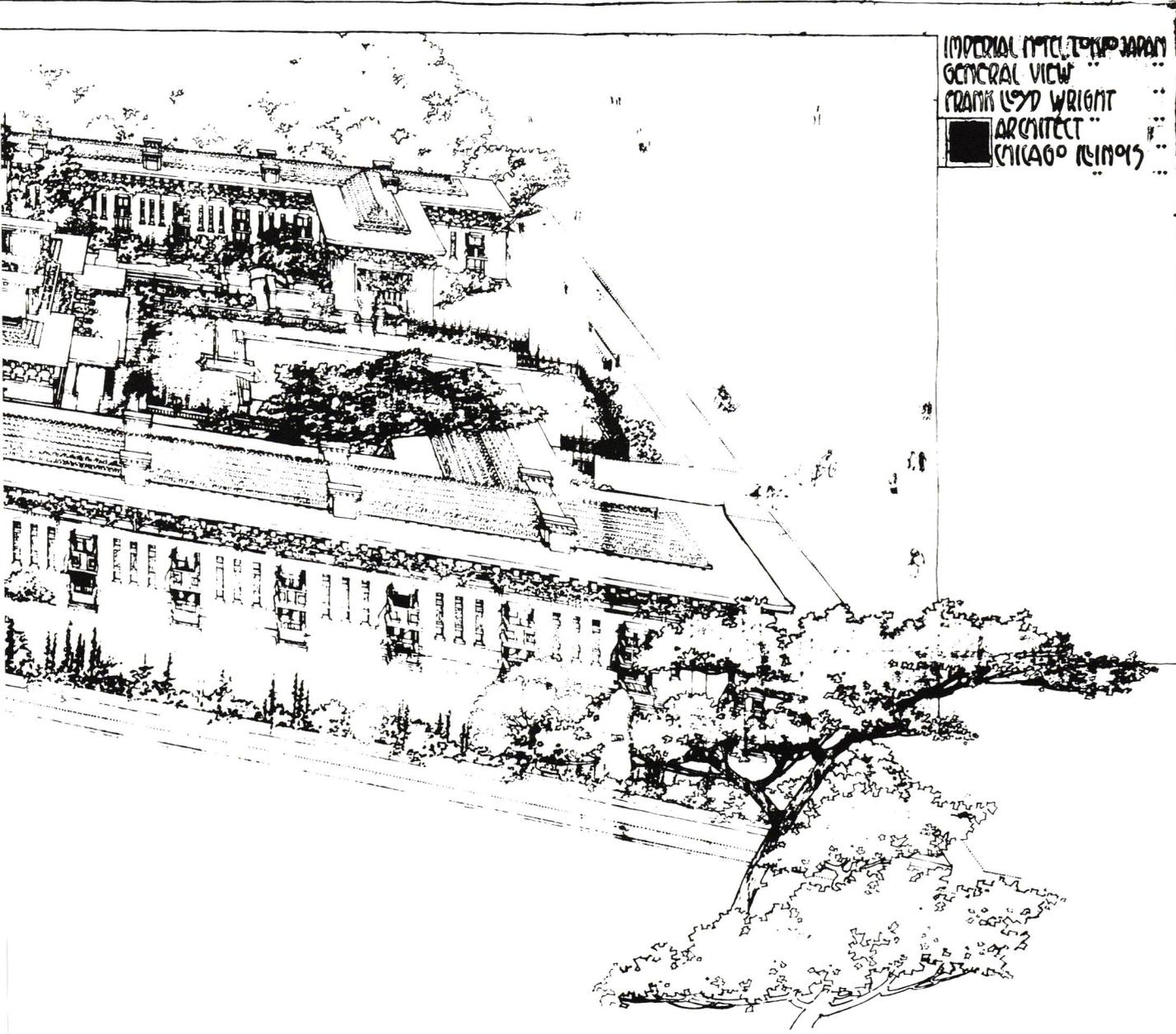
LEFT: *A view of the ceiling leading to the Peacock Room.*

BELOW: *The Imperial Hotel lounge.*

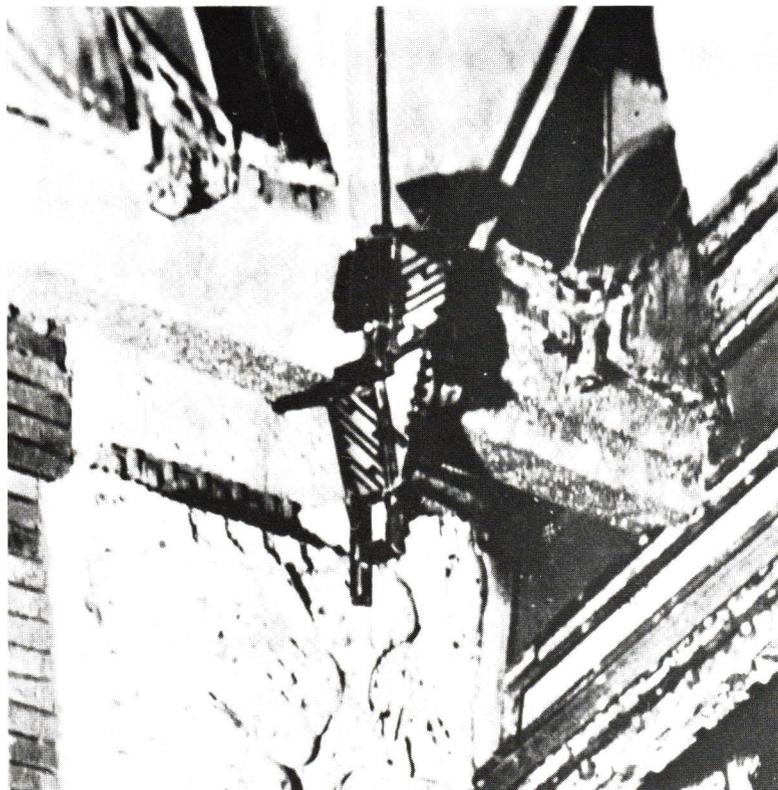




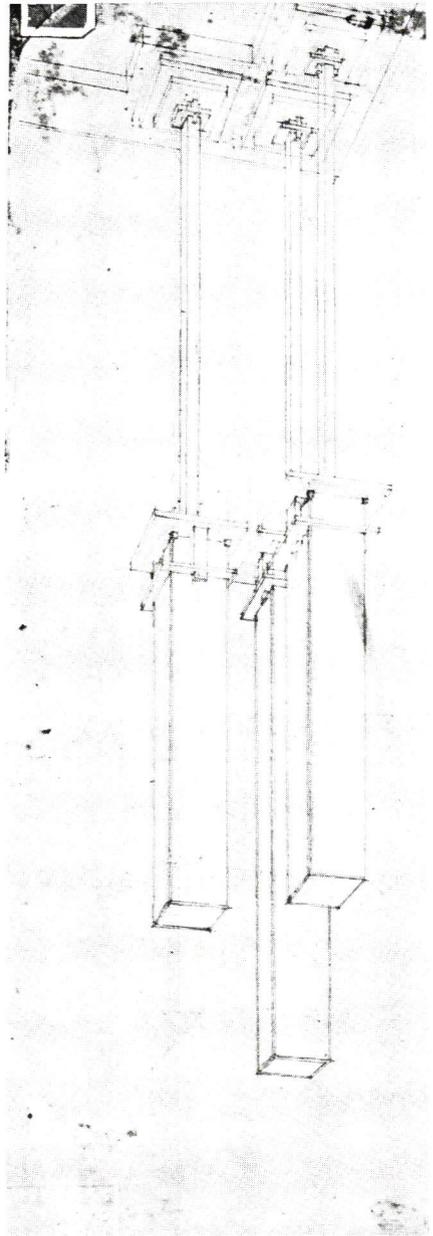
*This superb perspective of the Imperial Hotel was prepared by Frank Lloyd Wright's office and shows the first study of the building as it was approved in 1913. The building as constructed remains essentially the same. Photograph by George Barrows through the Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art. The original drawing is still in the collection of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.*



IMPERIAL HOTEL TOKYO JAPAN  
GENERAL VIEW  
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
ARCHITECT  
CHICAGO ILLINOIS



ABOVE: *Detail of an Imperial Hotel light fixture.*  
*Gilman Lane photo, Oak Park Collection.*



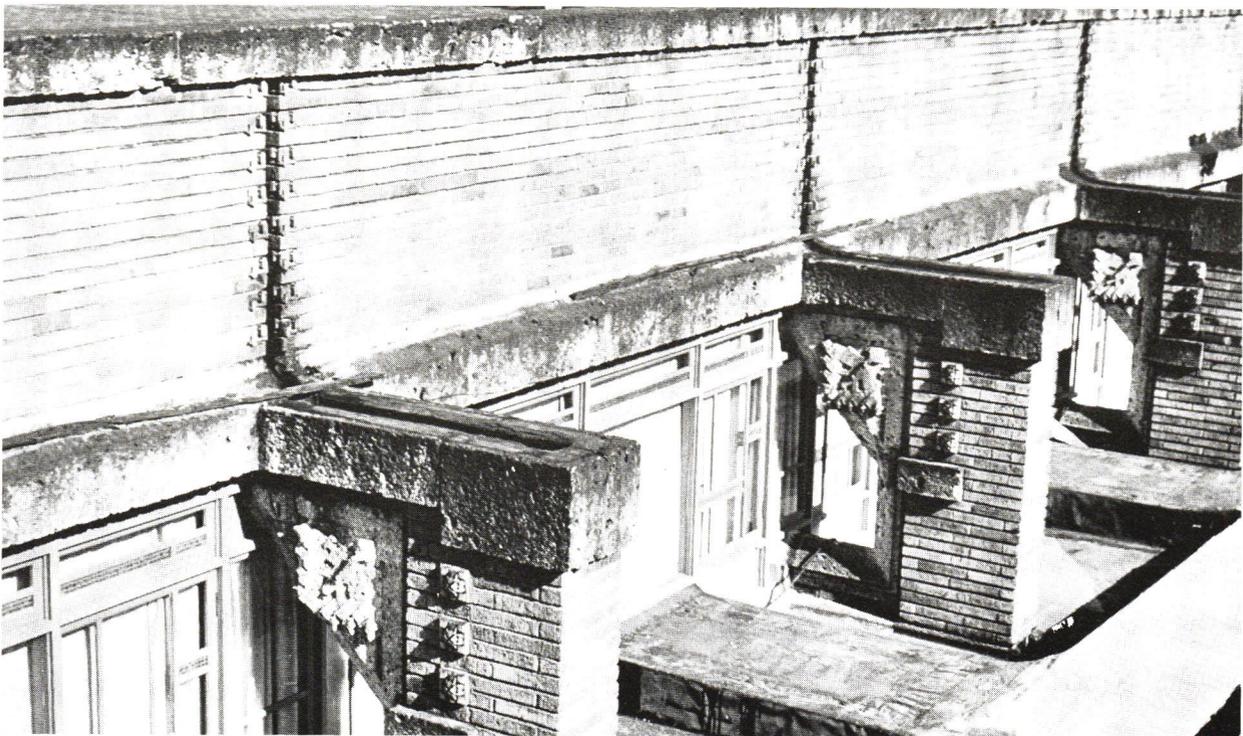
RIGHT: *Hanging light fixture for the Imperial Hotel.*  
*This sketch was done in 1915 and later redated 1904 indicating that it is probably an adaptation of a design originating at the earlier date. Photo by George Barrows through the Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.*



With an eye fixed upon this tradition, Wright designed a variety of lighting fixtures for the hotel, ranging from indirect units that softly wash light upon walls or the carved oya stone, to free-standing lamps and wall fixtures made of bronze and frosted glass. Stamped into the metal is a small checkered pattern, repeated as a decorative motif in the glass windows, the chair-backs, dishes and tableware. The glass is very simple, and the touches of the decorative pattern added a shimmer of contrast to the soft low-relief ornaments. The gold lacquered mortar between the dark brown bricks catches the light as one moves through the spaces, visually lightening the weight of the brick masses.

One cold winter evening Wright was a dinner guest at the house of the Baron Okura and there experienced at first hand the Korean style of heating. Tiled heat ducts ran throughout the floor, first warming the floor itself and then gravity heating the rest of the room. Wright was impressed by the pleasurable efficiency of this kind of heating which also happily removed the fixtures from sight. He arranged to have electric heating elements placed beneath the floors of the hotel bathrooms, lowering the ceiling slightly to create a space to accommodate the units, and the tile floors and built-in tile baths were therefore always warm. Wright liked the idea of the kind of heat that this

*The two photographs below and on the previous page show the interior and exterior of the wall of the main dining room of the Imperial Hotel. Note the flying buttresses and ornamented expansion joints.*



system produced; it was dustless and an integral part of the building . . . more a "climate" than heating. It permitted lower heat levels, avoiding the over-heated interior with its over-cooled corollary that seem to be hallmarks of our current desperate retreat from the threat of natural environments.

Wright once said that Japanese buildings were like an upside-down boat, the main structure creating a large roof under which stand walls. They relate to the general Pacific style, found all the way to New Guinea, and their main form developed as protection from heavy rains. The modern buildings then being built in Tokyo also had an aspect of being top-heavy. The traditional Japanese and Incan solutions to building with heavy stone in their earthquake areas was to place the stones so as to catch the force of shocks at angles not parallel to the ground. One can see this in Japanese castle foundations or sites in Cuzco, Peru. The thickness of the wall also tapered as the height of the building wall rose. This was only partially satisfactory since the entire building could not be built out of these massive stones and were of necessity limited to the foundations. The castles were outside the Japanese tradition, being inspired by prints of the European castles traded from the Dutch in the 16th century.

Wright conceived the idea of floating the building on the mud, much as the hull of a ship floats on water. To do this he fashioned a new foundation system related to the use of piers in the mud below the tall buildings Adler had engineered in Chicago.

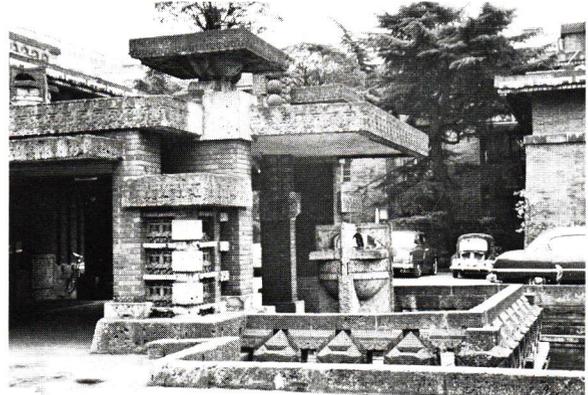
Tapered wooden piles 8 ft. long were driven into the fill, pulled out and concrete was poured in immediately. Thousands of these concrete pins or piers were formed, 2 ft. on centers, upon which the footings were laid. This in itself saved an estimated 200,000 Yen over the conventional massive foundations.

The building to be placed upon these footings had to be light, yet capable of withstanding the tremors. Reinforced concrete cantilevered floor-slabs were used with poured reinforced concrete behind the masonry, insuring a fire-proof building. The building is essentially divided into thirds, each of the long parallel sections being structurally discrete units. The unit was divided in the other direction into sections 60 ft. long, a figure based on the safe limit for cracks in reinforced concrete in that climate and at that date. The building was flexible in both directions, resembling less a boat than the pontoon bridges that Adler had built as an Army Engineer during the Civil War. The walls tapered upward, and the oya stone and brick were cast into a single structural unit when concrete was poured behind them.

Wright had many problems to overcome in adapting machine technology in a country then essentially oriented to hand labor, which he met with great success. He has written of the phenomenon of the building "coming to life", and he has written with bitterness of the criticisms of the A.I.A. committee who condemned the structure of the building.<sup>10</sup> The account of the great Kanto earthquake, with the survival of the Imperial Hotel totally intact,<sup>11</sup> is well known. The planning for water supplies, for structure, for fire, all proved sound and little new information was added to the study of earthquake behavior until recent times.

During the fire raids on Tokyo during World War II, the Peacock Room and the south wing of the Imperial Hotel were gutted. At the war's end the hotel was taken over by the U. S. Army as quarters for Staff Officers and V.I.P.'s. The Corps of Engineers was faced with the task of rebuilding the damaged sections without benefit of the original working drawings, so the building was surveyed and a set prepared. Bruce Goff tells of a conversation about the Imperial with Paul Mueller, the

contractor of this and other early works of Wright's. Too many new innovations were present in the building itself, so detailed working drawings never existed. The model and the general presentation drawings served as a guide for the actual construction itself. Bruce Goff also relates that Wright was asked to return to Japan at this time to remodel the Imperial Hotel. For some unexplained reason, Wright rejected the offer.



*The Porte Cochere at the Imperial Hotel as it appears today.*

Since accurate information on the design of the foundation was unavailable to them, the Corps of Engineers decided not to use the original foundation. A different type of foundation was installed and the restored wing was opened in June of 1946, giving the hotel a total of 250 rooms. Interestingly, in 1956 sections of the new foundations showed signs of settling.

The Peacock Room was restored by the aid of photographs, and the oya ornaments in the room and adjoining promenades were painted white. In 1950 a crack was discovered in one of the columns supporting the dome. Cantilevered from the columns were large ornamental stone masses that hung from four points where the "arms" of the structure supporting the large dome, crossed. It was decided to make the room "totally safe", and the stone ornaments with their crane designs were removed. Some people felt that the removal made the room look more "modern". Fire escapes were installed in a direct but architecturally insensitive manner cutting the orchestra stand directly in half. It was even suggested that the fine kiri wood *Paulownia* paneling in the *Kiri-no-ma* be removed to "lessen the fire hazard", but the intercession of Malcolm Morris, the hotel's G.I. Manager, saved the room.<sup>12</sup>

After the hotel was returned to private management, the Annex was built in 1956 making the Imperial Hotel the largest in the far east. No

<sup>10</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture*, New York, 1953, p. 311.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. Note: The Imperial Hotel did not actually come through the great Kanto earthquake undamaged despite many published claims to the contrary. The reader is referred to the January 1961 *Architectural Record* where on page 10, *Letters*, Structural Engineer Richard R. Bradshaw comments at length concerning the Imperial Hotel, its foundation system and its reaction to the earthquake.

<sup>12</sup> J. Malcolm Morris, *The Wise Bamboo*, Philadelphia, 1953.

attempt was made to relate the style of the new additions to the original. An article in *The Mainichi* quoted Wright's comments when he first saw photographs of the new additions. "Is this the addition? . . . Oh! No! I can't imagine a more outrageous insult to the feeling and the character of the building, for Japan. This addition has been built dead against it (feeling and character), A la the West."<sup>13</sup>

Antonin Raymond, who assisted Wright during the construction of the building and then stayed on in Japan to build an important practice of his own, also issued a protest published in *The Mainichi*. The statement traced the history of the building of the hotel in a Tokyo that was then a "rickshaw town" with few automobiles. It ended:

The new addition to the Imperial Hotel is not true to the great tradition of Japanese architecture and arts. It is rather 'Japanesque' and not truly Japanese, as for instance Architect Horiguchi's beautiful Hasshokan in Nagoya. The Imperial Hotel Annex caters to the low taste of the average middle class tourist, while Frank Lloyd Wright's Imperial Hotel aspired to art and beauty and was Architecture.<sup>14</sup>

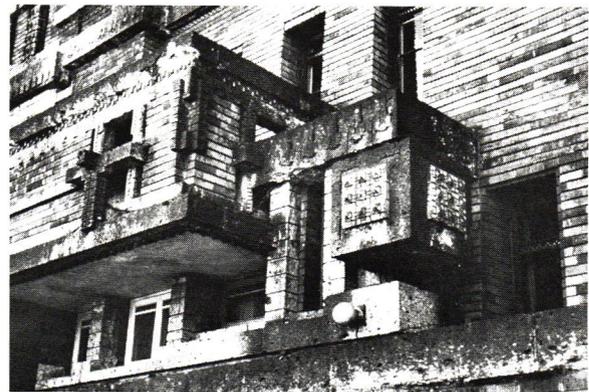
The original building was perfectly suited to the needs of its time, but as Tokyo became increasingly modernized and grew into the world's largest city, those needs naturally changed. In the late 1950's real estate values in the central area of Tokyo where the Imperial is located rose 300% a year . . . every year! The question of the demolition of the Imperial Hotel arose before World War II, and again before the recent Olympics. The number of new hotels that were built for the Olympics was such that there is a feeling that there is too much hotel space now, and competition is keener. A slight recession followed the Olympics complicating the economics of hotel management as well.

The building itself is suffering a similar fate as that of any Japanese teahouse in any American park . . . no amount of interest seems to spare it from falling into disrepair. Few park commissioners have ever understood the concept of wood being allowed to stay unfinished, for example, and a reverse phenomenon takes place with the western style buildings in Japan. Every concrete or masonry building in Japan soon shows signs of deterioration, while those built of traditional materials merely grow more mellow. The oya is crumbling, the wooden window frames (used instead of metal ones) are sagging, and the cornices are beginning

to decay. While these are maintenance problems that could be corrected, many people believe that someone in authority has already decided upon demolition.

Several solutions have been suggested to preserve all or part of the building. One plan is to demolish only the guest rooms and to build the new building in a "U" shape, surrounding some of the main public rooms and lobby, incorporating them into the new building.

Another suggestion concerns a new architectural museum near Nagoya, called "Meiji Village", into which a number of buildings from the Meiji period have been moved. The reign of the Emperor Meiji (1868-1912) is of great importance in Japanese history for it was during this era that Japan successfully transformed itself into an industrial state, as well as maintained its independence at a time when most of Asia had fallen to European domination. However, the cost of moving the building 227 miles to Nagoya would be astronomical, and to date neither the government nor any private source has expressed interest. Nevertheless, the structure of the building would permit relatively easy moving across the street into Hibiya Park. In this event, some new use for the building would have to be found relating it to a new plan for the park itself.

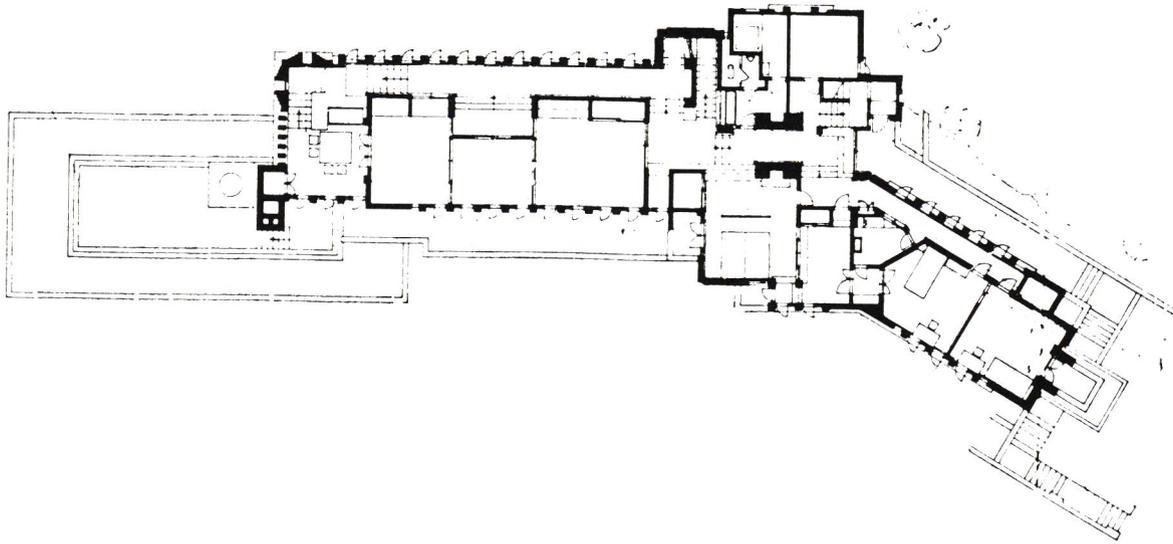
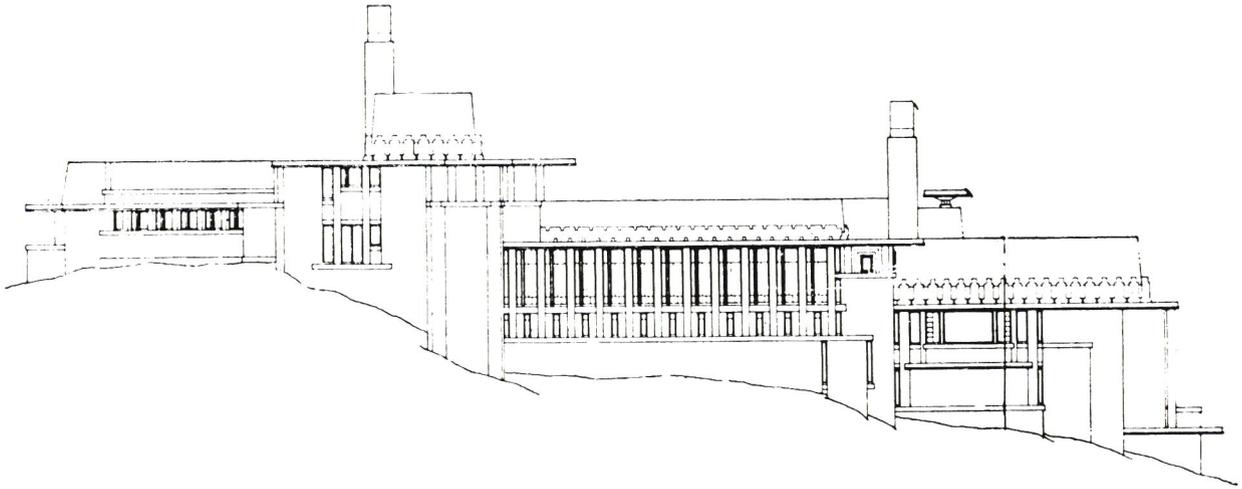


*This is a detail of one of the small balconies jutting out of the North wing of the Imperial Hotel which face the street. The deterioration of the oya stone is very evident at this location.*

The park already has a public hall, a restaurant, as well as garden landscaping and is a popular bit of green in the congested downtown area. There are signs of growing recognition of the desirability of saving the Imperial Hotel, if not for its architectural value then for its historical role in the great Kanto earthquake. Kenzo Tange has pointed out that Tokyo is the only city to have both a building by Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, although the energy of Japan's contemporary building responds more quickly to Le Corbusier's work than to Wright's.

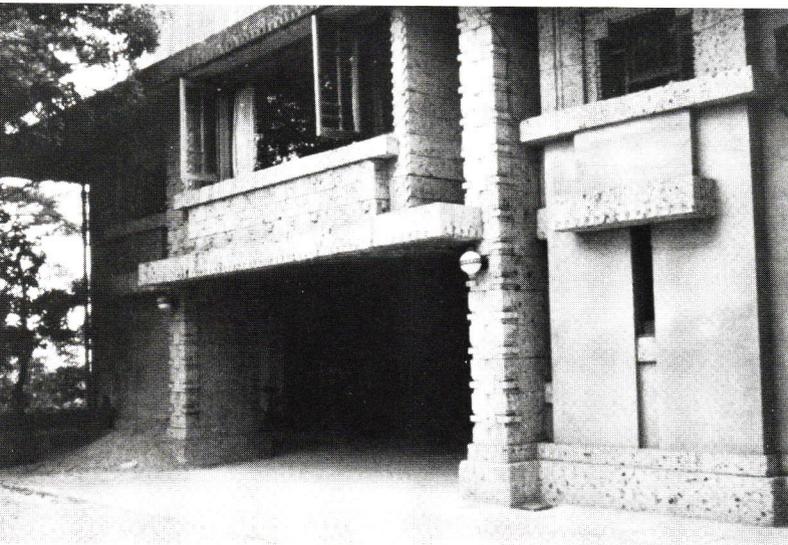
<sup>13</sup> "Wright Bitterly Criticizes New Imperial Hotel Annex", (UPI) *The Mainichi*, Tokyo, August 3, 1958.

<sup>14</sup> "Frank Lloyd Wright and Imperial Hotel" by Antonin Raymond, *The Mainichi*, Tokyo, August 15, 1958.



*ABOVE: The plan and an elevation of the Yamamura house in Ashiya, Japan. Frank Lloyd Wright designed this building in 1918.*

*BELOW: The Yamamura house is surrounded by dense foliage and is extremely difficult to photograph. Below is the main entrance to the house. Photo by Curtis Besinger.*



It is seldom noted that Frank Lloyd Wright designed at least eight other buildings besides the Imperial Hotel during his stay in Japan. These included projects for the Odawara Hotel in Nagoya, and a movie theater in Tokyo. There were also three private houses designed but not built. The Fukuhara house at Hakone was built and soon destroyed by earthquake. The Yamamura house and the Jiyu Gakuen School remain intact today.

The house for Mr. Yamamura, built between 1918 and 1922, in some ways appears as a more organic version of the "Hollyhock" house built in California for Aline Barnsdall at about the same time. It also bears a strong resemblance in detail to the Imperial Hotel. Now almost completely surrounded with foliage, it is extremely difficult to photograph. In plan, the Yamamura house bears little relationship to either the "Hollyhock" house or the Imperial Hotel. It is very tightly organized, bearing strong resemblance to the Usonian houses of twenty years later. The hillside location of the Yamamura house, as well as the angular lowest wing, help to make it an interesting study of Wright's handling of space.

*RIGHT:*

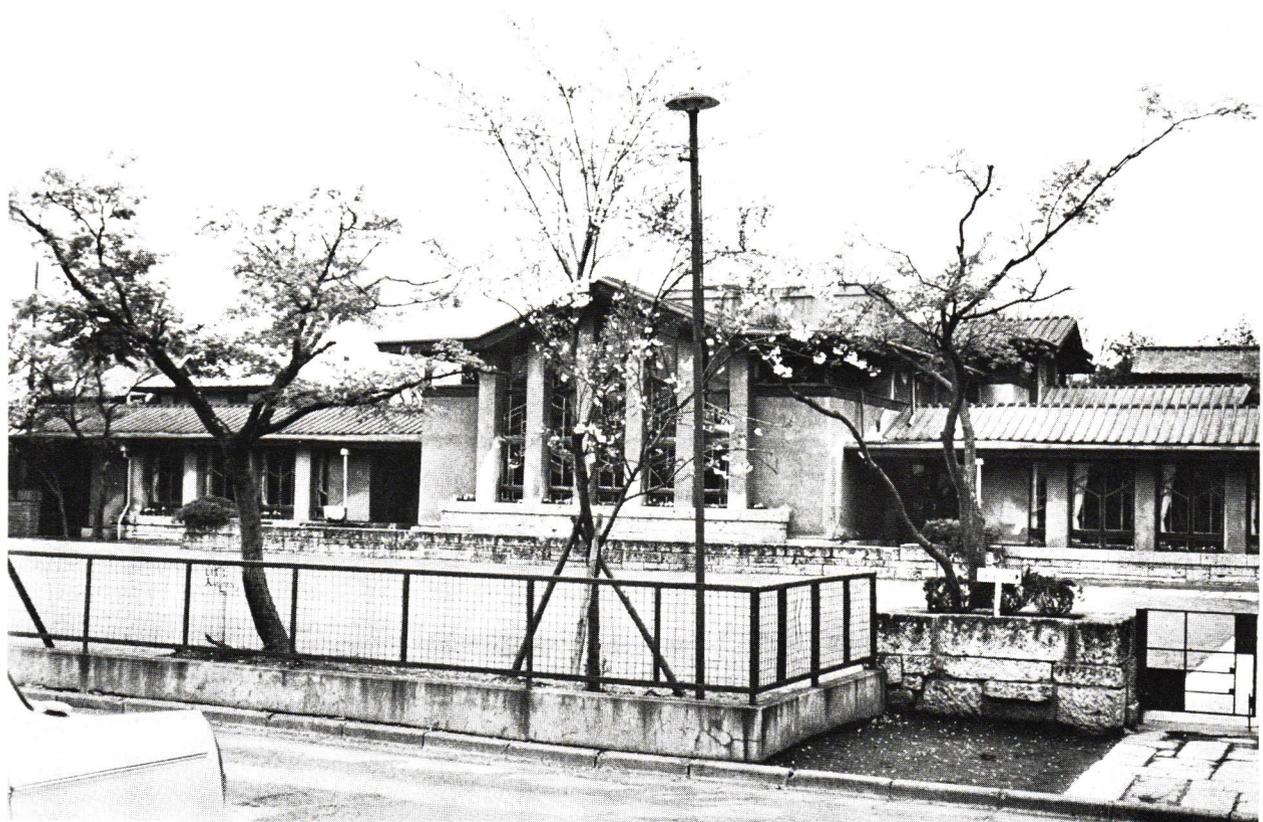
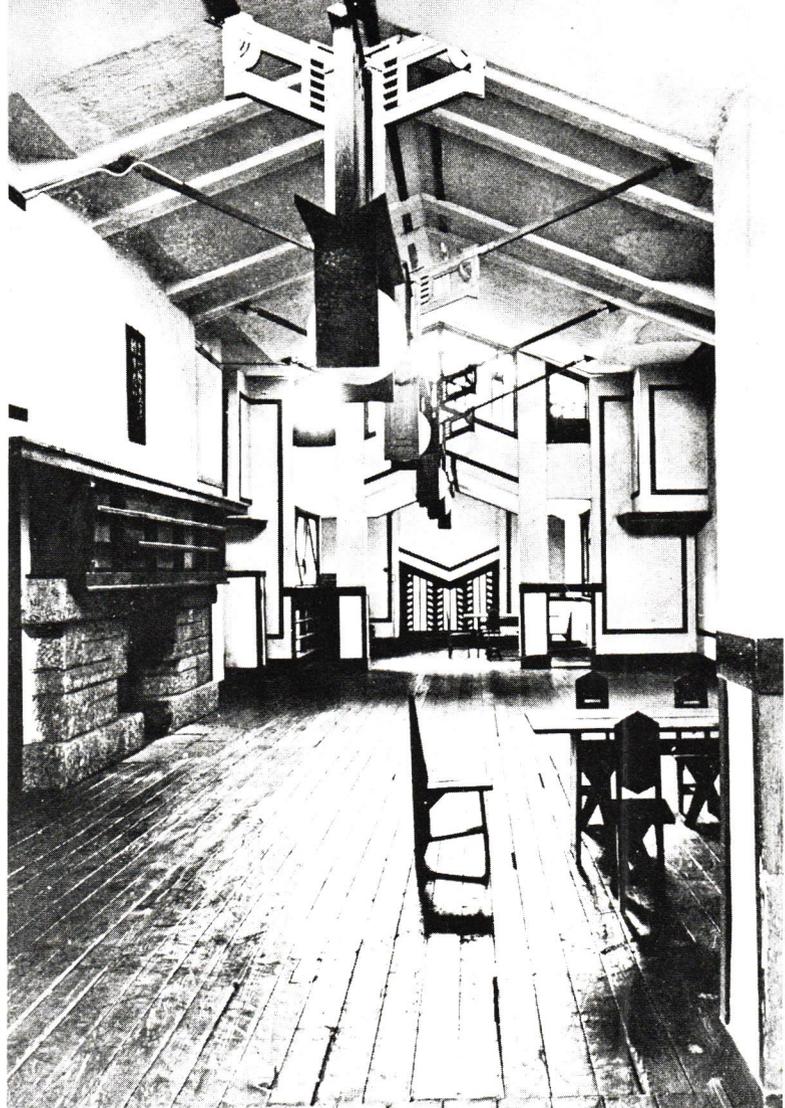
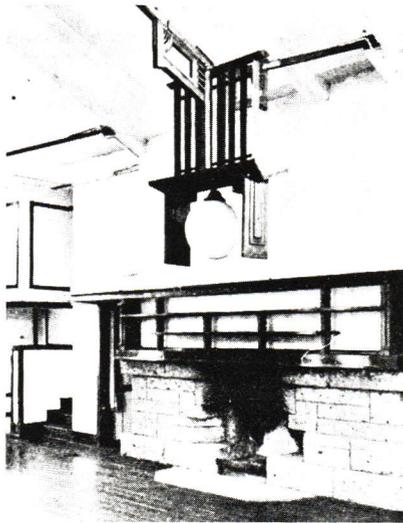
*A view of the dining room of the Jiyu Gakuen School designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1921. Photo Courtesy of Kindai Kenchiku.*

*CENTER:*

*A detail of the fireplace and a light fixture. Photo courtesy of Kindai Kenchiku.*

*BELOW:*

*The main building of the Jiyu Gakuen School, Mejiro campus in Tokyo. Photo by Lee Colegrove.*



Wright also designed the main building for the Jiyu Gakuen School and his influence is very obvious in the Main Hall building built several years after Wright left Japan.

The Jiyu Gakuen School (School of Freedom) was founded by Mrs. Hani, a figure whose activities paralleled those of Jane Addams. A Christian, her influence was widely felt through the pages of the pioneering women's magazine she founded, *Fujin No Tomo* (A Friend of Women). In addition to academic studies, handicrafts such as weaving are taught, and students are expected to work on the grounds . . . not dissimilar to the pattern Wright later established at Taliesin itself. The main building built in 1921 was designed by Wright and relates more closely to the Prairie tradition than to the traditions of Japan. This was to be expected since this new view of education related less to the "old Japan" than it did to the democratic patterns of life found in the American Middle-west.



*This is a detail of an apartment house in Tokyo designed by Endo Arata, Architect. This building was demolished in 1966. Photo courtesy of Endo Arata.*

The budget was modest; simple stove heating and a fireplace were used instead of centralized heating. Furniture and lighting units similar to those designed for the Imperial were used, although some supplemental fluorescent fixtures were later added. Despite years of active use and disrepair, the strong geometric forms dominate the interior space

in a typically Wrightian manner. There is, however, some uncertainty as to the exact relationship between Wright and Arata Endo in the design of this building. According to Arata Endo's son, Raku Endo, his father credited Wright with the design. While a student at Taliesin in 1957-58, Raku Endo was told by Wright that his father was primarily responsible for the design.

The second building, the Main Hall (Kodo) or gymnasium was designed by Endo and built in 1927. The school grew and a second campus was built at Hibarigaoka which was to be Arata Endo's most important work. Endo worked with Wright on the Imperial, and built in the Wrightian style Japan's first apartment house in 1921. The Ofukai Apartment house, soon to be demolished, was built by the Japan Women's University as a residence for its graduates. It has been popularly known as the "women's castle" of career women.

Arata Endo (1891-1951) worked in Manchuria for 13 years and built many buildings in Japan as well. The Koshien Hotel, between Osaka and Kobe near Nishinomiya is now used as a school. Many buildings were designed for the Hibarigaoka Campus, a Grammar School in 1929, the Girl's Department in 1934, and the Boy's Department in 1935-38. His son, Raku Endo, also working in the Taliesin style, is currently designing a library for the campus.

Wright never returned to Japan, and the Japan Wright loved, disappeared. He felt that the Far East had so little to learn from the West, and so much to lose where culture was concerned. Writing to Antonin Raymond in a letter dated August 22, 1958, Wright thanked him for sending the articles on the Imperial Hotel. "This, apropos of the very fine and noble defense of 'The Imperial'. It is — imperial still — but I could not bear to return to Japan. Could you do anything to get that devastating electric-sign off the Banquet Hall? With fond memories of 'auld-lang-syne' to both you and the little captain Noemi, Affection, FLLW." His attraction to the arts of Japan never faded, and yet the Japanese inspired details tended to disappear in his later works. Occasional touches, such as the Hokusai-like rendering of the waves in the drawing for the 1945 Morris house, occur as reminiscences. The Imperial Hotel was a transitional building and Wright later wondered ". . . if all buildings are not transition buildings in some sense if they are really great buildings."<sup>15</sup>

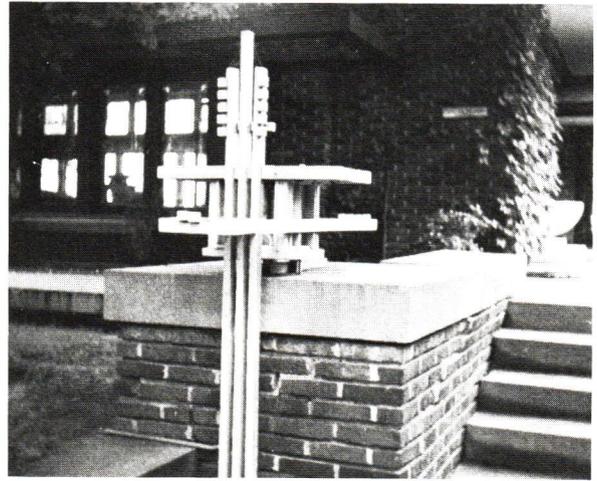
Wright never reached the high point of eclecti-

15 Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, New York, 1932, p. 225.

cism that marked Japanese influence in the 1950's, but always sought out the principles behind the forms . . . the Idea. In the sympathetic acceptance of the natural environment that marked traditional Japanese forms, Wright found a living model of the kind of organic life that his philosophy had prepared him to need. He read Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and Lao-tze whose pantheistic outlook he himself had observed and confirmed by direct contact with nature. While he admired the Japanese garden as a symbol of naturalness, like Jens Jensen, Wright recognized that the American solution must be naturalness itself. The tradition of the "found stone", whose natural form or beauty is recognized and honored, dates in Japan from early Shinto. In China the idea is perhaps even older, while among Buddhists, the Zen priest Muzokabu is believed to be the first to recognize the spirit of Zen within a stone. A similiar religious Idea is to be found at the Inca site of K'Kenkko, outside Cuzco. The traditional European mind limits the Idea of the spirit to the works of man . . . "carved" stone, or "tamed" nature. This remains the barrier dividing traditional western from eastern thought. The Chinese poet Wang Wei, between 451-443 AD wrote: "The spirit has no form; yet that which moves and transforms the form is the spirit."

Responding to Arizona's abundance of exciting rock, Wright occasionally placed stones in and around Taliesin. Some had beauty in their own

*Frank Lloyd Wright maintained a life-long interest in Japan. This interest often influenced his work as is evident in the photograph illustrated here.*



*This light fixture was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Little house of Waysata, Minnesota after his first design for the Imperial had been accepted. PSP Photo.*

right, while others were carved with petroglyphs by the early Indians of the region. Pre-Columbian art and ideas blended with those of the Far East at Taliesin West. Japanese art was essentially linear, while the Pre-Columbians were concerned with plastic masses and volumes . . . from which they formed still another kind of organic model. Wright's own work as well as that of the Prairie School, evolved forms which were a sympathetic interplay between line and mass. In forming an organic idea of building and in proving the possibility of such an architecture, Wright always sought forms that would be peculiarly and uniquely American . . . setting the stage for the new culture he felt certain was forming, perhaps a third organic model.

## Book Reviews

ADOLPH LOOS, *Pioneer of Modern Architecture*, by Ludwig Munz and Gustav Kunstler. Praeger, New York, 1965. 234 pp. illustrated, \$20.00.



Adolph Loos —

*A drawing by Oskar Kokoschka, 1910.*

This handsome volume describes in detail Adolph Loos' major works and includes a complete chronological catalogue of all his projects. It also contains three examples of his polemical writing, and illuminating forwards by Oskar Kokoschka and Nicolaus Pevsner.

Loos, along with Berlage and Peter Behrens, stands on the threshold of modern architecture in that generation immediately preceding Gropius, Corbusier, and Mies. The struggle against the ruling eclecticism in Vienna between 1900 and 1910 consumed his energy. As with Berlage and Behrens, his work showed historical influence. It remained for the Bauhaus school to devalue the historical and enthrone "pure functionalism". Since Loos and the protomodernists and the modern architects following are now all but history they are now subject to the scrutiny of a more detached survey of their position in relation to their time and locality.

Loos took an early formative trip to America which affected his thinking. America was to him a place of unbridled opportunity. He overlooked the problems in reverse, the formlessness of a

society without strong traditions. Tradition-bound Austria frustrated him, but he loyally attacked local issues. (He gives no thought apparently to the steel frame, a problem that engrossed Chicago in the 90's.) His influence is more regional than that of the modernists to follow. Early work is confined to remodeling of flats and storefronts, which brings to light a meticulous sense of detail and materials.

With the houses Steiner, Rufer, Moller, Müller, and the Tzara House in Paris, his most complete statement can be seen. It is interesting to note that the Steiner (1910) stands in the vanguard in Europe for its time, but the Moller and Muller houses (1931) are just two among many modern constructions by that time. In these latter houses Loos has been left behind by Corbu and Mies (Barcelona Pavilion 1927). The early revolutionary turned to solidifying his ground. Beset by a hostile public Loos' efforts resulted in few projects built and many battles to defend what did get built.

Loos' polemics tend toward oversimplification: free mankind of ornament (wasted work and sweat labor) and the millenium will result. The minimum workers housing is culture bound to Post World War I Vienna and hardly serves as a proto-type, and the recurring terrace housing schemes on flat terrain are ingenious but forced.

His quest to destroy ornament, yet his dependence on classical motifs to express the monumental, is the most interesting problem. The Doric column solution to the Chicago Tribune Competition was, as is now apparent, done in all seriousness and not as a joke.

Where his spiritual successors eschewed all ornament and relationship to tradition, he retains this curiously, but the nobleness of the intention should be honored. Apparently his sense of history and involvement was such that he realized a permanently symbolic building cannot be called forth out of the palette of the modern movement, but must participate in a cultural flow. Monuments of the modern movement now pale in retrospect and survive as cheapened proto models, (e.g. Lever House) and the best go back (Seagram, or Mies' work in general) to take strength from the classicism of Schinkel and the fastidious detail of Berlage.

Loos stands in both camps. He paved the way to the destruction of ornament which the functional zealots fulfilled, but maintained a dignified historical perspective. This latter position challenges us as successors to the modernists and now facing a new eclecticism. The extreme functionalists of the modern school in overfulfilling the goal, forgot

some basic truths of how to build buildings. Ironically technology was strained to solve its own inventions: the curtain wall, flashing, *dead* flat roofs, differential expansion of materials, etc. Building badly and the enshrining of functionalism as a tyrannical esthetic of its own are the excesses of the modern movement. Loos has served to illuminate these problems. He was a man of sensitivity and discipline. He could build well. He was a revolutionary innovator, yet concerned, perhaps not always rightly, with carrying forward a *valid* tradition.

In our time one cannot overlook history or produce architecture from a cultural vacuum. Loos' statement is for our very time: "To choose new architecture forms without tradition as the German, Austrian, and French architects do and as they derive from Cubist Berlin and Belgium . . . would only have the consequence that soon yet newer forms would replace them and the building would be out of date because these forms change like ladies hats." It is ironic this statement was made in defense of his Chicago Tribune Doric column. We in our time, heirs to the struggle for modern architecture, should heed the same words and if we are wise come to a fairer resolution of the problem.

Reviewed by Benjamin Weese

*THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTURAL BIBLIOGRAPHERS, PAPERS, Volume II, 1966 and Volume III, 1966. Edited by William B. O'Neal. University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville. 117 pp. and 140 pp. \$5.00 each.*

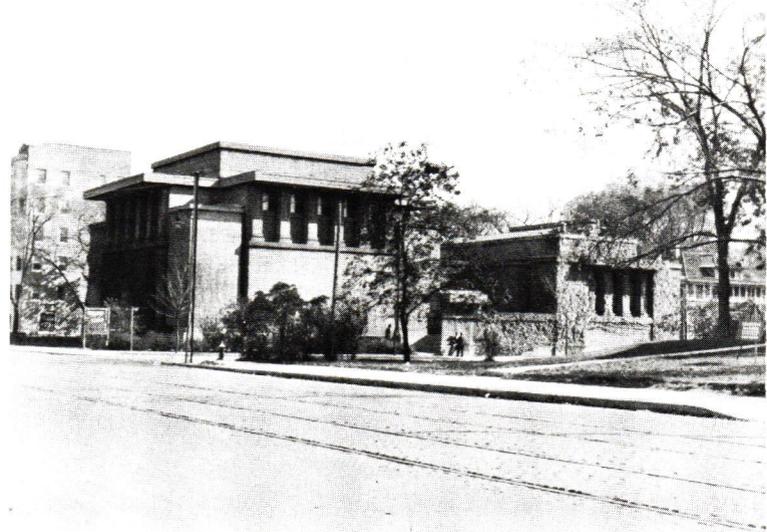
The first volume of this important series was reviewed in this journal several months ago. The comments concerning it were favorable, and the two latest volumes are similarly satisfactory.

*Papers, Volume II,* contains a bibliography of the work of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Part II of the Writings by and about Philip C. Johnson, an extensive treatment of the Chicago firm of Holabird and Roche and finally the early architecture of Virginia as found in various journals. As in Volume I, several bibliographic styles are used, but all are suitable.

*Papers, Volume III,* is devoted entirely to writings by and about Walter Gropius. There is an excellent forward by Ise Gropius, the architect's wife, who has been instrumental in maintaining a very complete collection of bibliographic material about her husband.

These volumes, and those to follow, constitute an invaluable source of information for the architectural historian.

*A GUIDE TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IN OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS. Edited by the Oak Park Public Library, Introduction by W. R. Hasbrouck. Oak Park Public Library, Oak Park, Illinois, 1966. 32 pp. illustrated, \$1.00 plus \$0.15 postage.*



The staff of the Oak Park Public Library under the direction of Librarian Lester Stoffel has published the best architectural guidebook we have ever seen. This guidebook covers only the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in the immediate area served by the Oak Park Public Library. It is to this area that visitors come, numbering in the thousands each year, to see the work of America's greatest architect in his formative years. Every Wright designed building in Oak Park and neighboring River Forest, thirty-one in all, is listed with the correct address, original owner's name, date of construction and has an identifying photograph. Brief descriptions are included for each building with somewhat longer discussions for a few of the more well known structures. A map with the location of each building is included, and a brief but informative introduction clearly advises the user of the significance of what he is seeing. It is understood that the major portion of the work of producing this fine piece of Wrightiana should be credited to Barbara Ballinger, Assistant Librarian of the Oak Park Library, with the layout and design having been done by Robert M. Neuman.

Oak Park's local author's collection includes the work of Ernest Hemingway and other important former residents of the suburb as well as many interesting Wright items. The Oak Park Public Library is to be commended for these contributions to the community's cultural heritage.

Reviewed by Lloyd H. Hobson

## In Chicago

The Chicago School of Architecture Foundation, a non-profit Illinois corporation, has purchased the J. J. Glessner House at 1800 South Prairie Avenue in Chicago. This Chicago Landmark Building was designed by Architect H. H. Richardson in the late 19th Century. The Foundation has been granted tax exempt status and is now implementing plans for the establishment of a museum of Chicago architectural history at the house. Funds for the initial purchase were raised through private subscription and efforts for raising additional funds for restoration of the building and the establishment of a suitable program for use of the house are continuing.

Immediate plans call for a general cleaning of the interior of the building, which is in relatively good condition, and the employment of a full time Executive Director at the earliest possible date (see the editorial on page 4 of this issue of *The Prairie School Review*). The house is now open on weekends during the day with self-guided tours available to visitors. Volunteers are temporarily manning the reception desk where a number of important publications concerning the Chicago or Prairie School of architecture can be purchased. Maps and useful guidebooks of the Chicago area are included. It is expected that the Glessner House will soon become the center of Chicago architectural information, both current and historical.

Eventually, the Glessner House will be open on a full time basis and will sponsor an extensive program of architectural interest. Public memberships are to be made available for those interested in taking a more than casual part in this most welcome undertaking.

## Letter to the Editors

Dear Editor and Assistant Editor:

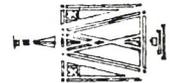
Our first bound volume of the *Prairie School Review* has just arrived — 1964 and 1965. By library standards, you have arrived; we always tend to regard any serial as a mere upstart until that first bound volume gets on the shelf! Congratulations and best wishes for continued success.

Nancy W. Boone  
Washington University Libraries

Anyone interested in receiving Catalog Number 2 listing all publications available from the Prairie School Press is invited to write for a copy at 117 Fir Street, Park Forest, Illinois 60466.

## Collector's Item

The Chicago Heritage Committee, long a leading group in the preservation field in Chicago, has discovered several copies of *The International Competition for a New Administration Building for the Chicago Tribune*. This volume, published in 1923, contains a reproduction of every drawing submitted in this great competition which resulted in the construction of the present Tribune Tower on north Michigan Avenue in Chicago. The several mint condition volumes now held by the Chicago Heritage Committee will be sold to the persons submitting the best offers before January 15, 1967. Limit is one to a person. Offers should be sent to Mr. Thomas B. Stauffer, 1030 East 50th Street, Chicago, Illinois. Please do not send money; successful bidders will be notified.



## Preview

The final issue of Volume III of THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL REVIEW will be concerned with the early work of Architect Barry Byrne. The text is being prepared by Sally A. Chappell with assistance from the architect himself. Mr. Byrne is also contributing a short essay concerning his years spent in Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park Studio.

A number of books will be reviewed including:

**Frank Lloyd Wright, A Study in Architectural Content**

Norris K. Smith

**American Building, The Historical Forces That Shaped It**

James Marston Fitch

**John Wellborn Root**

Harriet Monroe, Introduction by Reyner Banham

We will also continue to publish items of general interest concerning preservation of historic buildings and about the development of the modern movement in architecture. Letters to the editor are invited and will be published when appropriate.

The editors welcome constructive criticism by subscribers and invite comments and suggestions concerning future issues.

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*Except where credited otherwise, all photographs in this issue are by Robert Kostka.*

*Frank Lloyd Wright designed an office for himself at the Imperial. This is the door of his studio.*

