

TALIESIN® APPRENTICES



SEVEN DECADES OF
ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE

HEWLETT
AUGUST 23 – SEPTEMBER 10, 1999
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY
PITTSBURGH, PA

an exhibition researched, designed,
and built by students and apprentices of
the carnegie mellon school of
architecture, and the frank lloyd wright
school of architecture

PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
TALIESIN FELLOWS
AIA PITTSBURGH
CARNEGIE MELLON
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

In 1932 Frank Lloyd Wright founded the Taliesin Fellowship at his home in the lush hills of southern Wisconsin and later expanded it to the Sonoran desert of Arizona. The Fellowship was to be "an extension of architecture at Taliesin to the architecture of music, sculpture, and painting by way of agriculture, manufacture and building." Wright, with the help of his wife Olgivanna, sought to create a community of individuals who were challenged to experience life and work as a continuous unity.

The launch of the Fellowship provided Wright with renewed physical, intellectual and spiritual support to carry out his visionary search for an organic architecture. Although it is difficult to isolate the exact contributions of these apprentices to Wright's work, there can be no doubt that their manual and creative efforts fueled Wright's own creativity and productivity. Working within the guidelines of Wright's sketches they began to develop their own visions of an organic architecture. When they left Taliesin, and after Wright's death in 1959, these apprentices helped spread ideas of organic architecture as well as a multiplicity of other lessons from this shared Fellowship experience across America and around the world. A vision of a unified community continues to exist in the Taliesin Fellowship to this day, while the educational project is being carried on by the accredited Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture at Taliesin.

Wright's legacy thus lies not only in his buildings, but also in the apprentices he trained and the system of architectural education he developed within the Taliesin Fellowship. The approximately 1300 apprentices that have passed through Taliesin during and after Wright's lifetime, their interpretations of the master's work, and the very persistence of Taliesin itself, however, have been largely ignored. This exhibit seeks to redress this gap by focusing on the root experience that all the Taliesin apprentices past and present have in common: the Taliesin apprenticeship itself.

This exhibit explores the Taliesin apprentices from a unique perspective: it is a project about past and present student apprentices that was researched, designed, and built by current students and apprentices. Guided by Kai Gutschow, a professor of architectural history at Carnegie Mellon University, and Ari Georges, a senior member of the Taliesin Fellowship and Director of Curriculum at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, seven Taliesin apprentices collaborated with ten undergraduate architectural students from Carnegie Mellon University to produce this exhibit.

The exhibit is the result of a semester of preparatory work and sporadic communication via email and the internet, and three weeks of intensive collaborative group effort at Taliesin in Wisconsin and here in Pittsburgh. By integrating the CMU students into the Fellowship life and working long hours on site in the Pittsburgh Gallery the students and apprentices approached the true spirit of Taliesin's unified architectural and living experiment and its "learning-by-doing" approach to architectural education.

The complexity of the material and the issues, the sheer volume of information on Taliesin and the apprentices, and the closeness of the subject matter often blurred our vision. Although the goals of the exhibit were realigned and the focus often shifted, the exhibit nonetheless begins to explain the Taliesin experience from the perspective of these students and apprentices. The creators of the exhibit hope that the Taliesin apprentices continue to be of interest to scholars of Frank Lloyd Wright and modern architecture, but also to the world of architectural education and practice, as well as the public at large. If this hope is fulfilled, then this exhibit will act as a departure point for further exploration and not as an apotheosis.

THE TEAM:

CMU Course 48-441

Sarah Cone	Soph
Erik Hoffland	5 Sen
Jennell McKinney	Junior
Kelsi Montgomery	4 Sen
Megan Nash	Soph
Jarrett Pelletier	Soph
Richard Rebottini	Soph
Neil Stroup	Soph
Stacey Tetzlaff	Soph
Jared Winchester	Soph

FLLWSA Apprentices

Fatma Elmalipinar	M.Arch 2
Monika Herrmann	M.Arch 3
Aaron Kadoch	M.Arch 2
Fabian Mantel	M.Arch 1
Fred Prozzillo	M.Arch 1
Matthew Schansberg	B.A.S 2
Thomas Wright	M.Arch 2

Kai Gutschow

Professor of Architectural History, CMU

Ari Georges

Director of Curriculum, FLLWSA

The Taliesin Tradition

Taliesin has come to represent not only a place but also a "family" and a philosophy steeped in tradition and surrounded with mystique. So strong and alluring is this, that the appeal of Taliesin seems to be at least as strong now as it was seven decades ago when the Taliesin Fellowship began in 1932. What is it that continues to draw each of us to explore this experience? Is our apprenticeship as valid today as it was during the lifetime of Frank Lloyd Wright or under the guidance of his widow Olgivanna?

It has been noted that Taliesin seems to maintain its own sense of time or perhaps timelessness. The name bestowed by Frank Lloyd Wright upon his home and the Fellowship alike was drawn from that of a Medieval Welsh poet who found beauty in the form of words and prose, a concept very much in keeping with Wright's ancestors, the Lloyd-Jones'. The name also means 'shining brow' relating to Wright's decision to build his home on the brow of the hill of his family's land rather than on top.

We follow other long standing Taliesin traditions when we find beauty in the process of creation, study Nature as the example for structure and pattern, and learn lessons from the most menial of labors. Whether planting, maintaining and gathering the produce of the vegetable gardens, living in desert shelters of our own design or experiencing the critique and support from our peers on our Box Projects, we cannot help but learn about ourselves as we live and work with each other through these endeavors.

Other activities, born out of necessity, have become traditions as well. Regular tea breaks from daily activities continue, as does the annual migration from the approaching winters in Wisconsin to Taliesin West. During the early years apprentices helped carry out Mr. Wright's plans to build this winter camp and since that time the apprentices have been maintaining and making improvements to these buildings under the direction of the Taliesin Architects and the resident Fellowship.

With the death of Frank Lloyd Wright in 1959 a core group of apprentices decided to remain at Taliesin and under the direction of Olgivanna formed the Taliesin Associated Architects. They took it upon themselves to complete his unfinished work and forge ahead with what they had learned as apprentices. They also assumed the challenge of being the mentors for the many apprentices to come.

Taliesin did not end with the days of the Wrights. The tradition of apprenticeship continues today as the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. Accredited Bachelor and professional Masters Degree programs allow apprentices and architects to continue to live, learn and work together at Taliesin.

Experiences for Life

The concept and practice of "learning by doing" remains woven deep into the fabric at Taliesin. It was a part of the Hillside Home School program started and run by two of Wright's aunts around the turn of the century. The school buildings first designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1886 and later added onto and rebuilt by the apprentices remain essential to daily life for the Fellowship. Inside is a beehive of activity from the kitchen where we all take our turn preparing meals, to the Hillside Theater where generations of apprentices have shared the stage or attended lectures and concerts. The hub of life today surrounds the large drafting studio, often called the "Abstract Forest," with apprentice rooms along each side. These now historic spaces continue to be used and maintained by the apprentices for a great variety of learning opportunities.

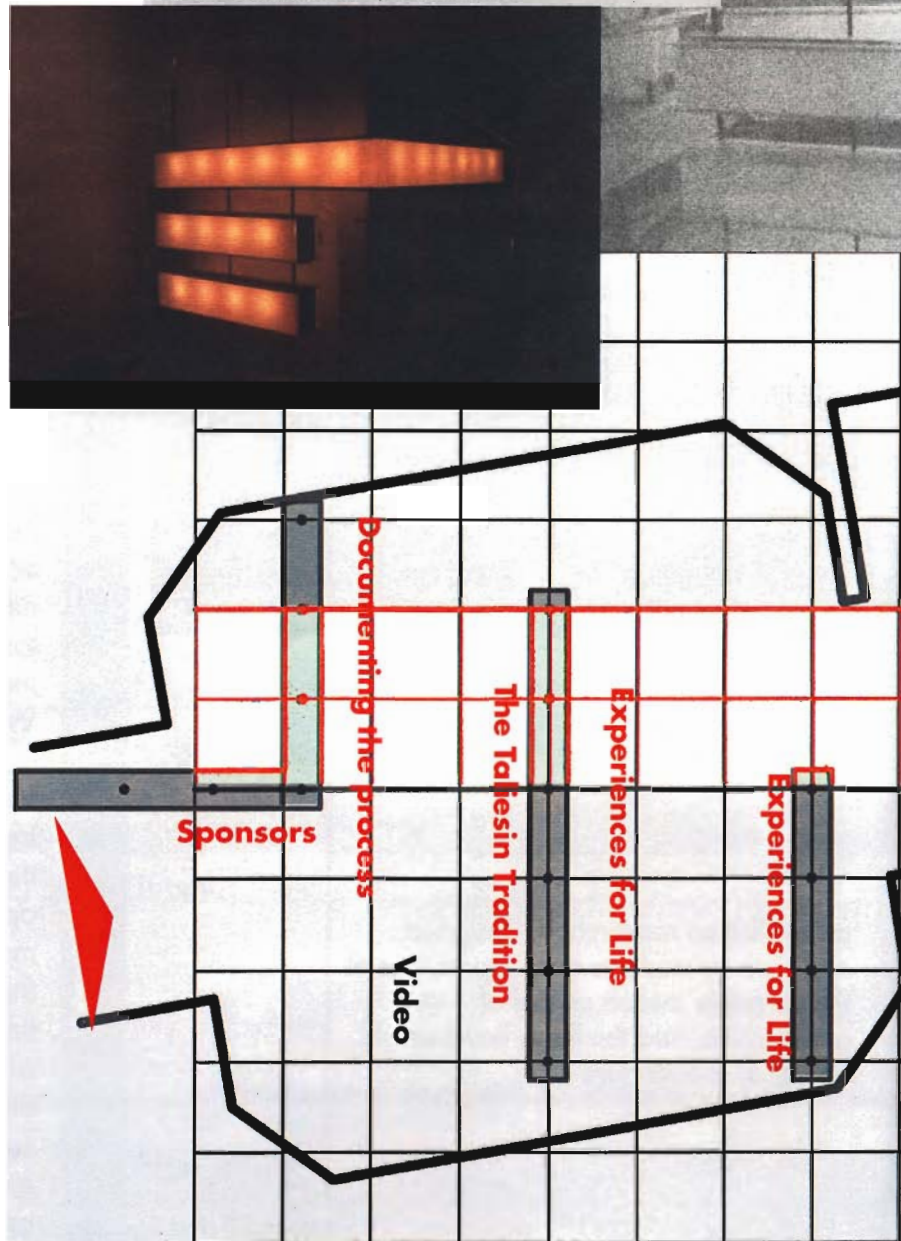
By being involved in every aspect of making a community function properly each of us experiences the frustration and satisfaction of not being taught in the traditional environment. Each has moved projects out of the way of leaks, and then been forced to repair both. The field mouse or desert pack rat continues to invade our space. We still streak through cactus and rock strewn trails with sleep in your eyes, trying not to miss breakfast. We learn how the beautiful buildings in which we live and work evolve and function by being responsible for maintaining and changing them for our ever evolving needs.

The Expression of an Idea

Frank Lloyd Wright defined Architecture as the mother of all arts. Through involvement in the "allied arts" apprentices at Taliesin have been able to develop a palette of rhythms, words, patterns, colors, sensitivities and understandings which in turn can broaden our architectural scope. Readings from Whitman, productions of Shakespeare, creating original musical compositions, and working with sculptors and poets allows us to discover many outlets for creativity. Our diverse backgrounds and experiences insure variety and surprise in the results of these endeavors. While architectural design remains the ultimate end, the allied arts are essential tools in the educational process and an integral part of our dynamic community. In this way apprentices have discovered talents and passions that may otherwise have gone undiscovered.

In search of experience

Apprenticeship remains at the center of the architectural education at Taliesin. The architect/apprentice ratio at Taliesin has changed from 1:30 under Frank Lloyd Wright to 1:2 under the guidance of Taliesin Architects. By working alongside trained individuals the nature of architecture continues to reflect the human experience. Relationships develop and personal responsibility come into play as each architect depends upon you to tackle the tasks at hand. The studio work for apprentices continues to be 'real work' as each of us learn to work under the constraints of a professional office.



Hewlett Gallery Layout



A Gift of Design

The Box Project is another tradition within the Taliesin Fellowship. Beginning as gifts to Wright at Christmas time and his June 8 birthday, apprentices prepared designs of all kinds and compiled them in an elaborately crafted box. Wright revered these 'gifts' and responded to each individually. Projects reflected the individual character of apprentices, highlighting an architectural design, rendering skills, painting, abstractions of nature, weavings or perhaps a piece of original sheet music.

Over the years, the Box Project has evolved into the primary demonstration of an apprentice's architectural development, becoming the tool for comprehensive design evaluation. More recently Box Project critiques from both Taliesin Architects and invited guests have taken over the role originally reserved for Mr. Wright. This has broadened the opinions and comments on apprentice work and has revealed to the rest of the world our development as architects. As apprentices we choose a mentor with whom to work and develop a theoretical design program, client, and site. The size constraints of building an actual Box have been done away with in recent years, thus opening up the possibility of varied and updated presentation materials and mediums.

Post-Taliesin Work

Leaving behind life within the Taliesin Fellowship, many apprentices find the 'outside world' very different than the close-knit, regimented fellowship life they had been active so active in. Many go on to apply their intensive community-based experience to design their own 'utopian' communities through residential and commercial developments around the world. Others look back on their experiences at Taliesin as enriching life experiences or have applied their lessons to other creative endeavors.

Shelters

Apprentices build shelters upon sites, which have been chosen by our predecessors. Like the hermit, we construct our homes amongst past apprentice's shells, continuing their dreams and rebuilding their ruins. This architectural dialogue between the past and the present, is where apprentices show how they would like to live in the desert, experience the sky, the sun, the air the earth and all the creatures.

Shelters are strewn about the desert landscape as if Taliesin were a band of travelling gypsies. But like the gypsies, we love the sense of freedom which the desert provides. We live out there at transitional points in our lives, when we are just beginning to find and express our own architectural voice, and are questioning the nature of existence in general.

Each shelter is a unique experience. A shelter must be thoroughly designed and cost estimated, and then approved by a committee before construction can begin. Apprentices have solicited donations for materials and have even contracted work out like a true architect. The challenge is to make special time to build as well as convince friends that a valuable learning opportunity exists at your job site.



Documenting the process

This exhibition has been researched, designed, built, and installed by a group of students from Carnegie Mellon University School of Architecture (CMU) in joint effort with Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture (FLLWSA) apprentices. The preparation of the exhibit was an element of a new course of Architectural History at Carnegie Mellon titled "Frank Lloyd Wright and his Taliesin Apprentices." At FLLWSA the project was carried as a group Independent Study. The pedagogical and educational experiences remained an active pursuit during the process.

Inspiration

At Taliesin, as if wandering through a deep, dark and intriguing forest path, each of us has most likely felt lost or frustrated at various times. Even after leaving the Fellowship many still struggle to find their own voice in the bigger picture. Guided by philosophy, tradition and determination, they are drawn by a love for architecture, a creative, adventuresome spirit. Is it a desire to emulate the dynamic work of Frank Lloyd Wright? At what point does our voice become truly our own? Simply being at Taliesin we are forced to consider the nature, the context, and the relevance of all that was and is before us.