

PREPARATIONS FOR EXHIBITION AT SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM HEIGHTEN NEED FOR EXPANDED ARCHIVES

Co-producing the exhibition *Frank Lloyd Wright* with their curatorial counterparts at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York is both a labor of love for the staff of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives as well as an ever-present reminder that larger, more functional space is needed, particularly to plan and stage exhibitions of such magnitude.

The original exhibition will focus on Wright's lifelong passion to design and build for the human spirit in harmony and balance with the natural world to enrich and elevate daily living. On view at the Guggenheim Museum, Wright's iconic masterpiece, from May 15 through August 23, 2009, the exhibition will be a multimedia feast that features: some 220 of Wright's drawings, many of them never before made available to the public; newly commissioned and historic models; photography, including large-scale formats shot specifically for the show; and related books, periodicals, correspondence, and more.

Indeed, the scope and significance of the project are reinforcing the foresightedness of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation's decision to make fundraising for a new Archives building an important part of its first capital campaign, scheduled to launch early next year.

Phil Allsopp, the Foundation's president and CEO who developed

the partnership with his counterpart, Thomas Krens, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, explained, "This exhibition is the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation speaking for itself about the heightened relevance of Wright's ideas about nature, architecture, and community by drawing on the massive amount of materials contained in our Archives, the largest by far of any devoted to a single artist or architect on the planet. The exhibition at the Guggenheim will use only a tiny portion of our total holdings. In theory, we could produce an exhibition as extensive as the one being planned and designed for 2009 once every year for the next 100 years without ever displaying the same drawing, photograph, or item of correspondence more than once.

"We have about 3,000 square feet today housing 22,000 drawings and 300,000 other archival items, but we need close to 30,000 square feet," Allsopp continued. "To preserve this treasure trove of material for future generations, we are clearly in dire need of a new, state-of-the-art building that will enable what we have to be kept safe and secure so that our Archives' staff can operate according to best practices in every aspect of their work. Simultaneously, such a new facility must support and encourage scholarship and research by providing proper surroundings for such work

as well as dedicated space for the public to view selected pieces of Wright's works—mini exhibitions, if you will."

There is an intensified urgency driving the production of this exhibition, in turn creating its own set of operational and physical challenges within the confines of the Archives facility, which opened in 1984. The idea for the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the Guggenheim Museum to produce an exhibition that marries the Archives' collection and the Guggenheim's landmark building was conceived just over a year ago.

Recalled Krens, "We were just beginning to think about the renovation and restoration of our building and what we might do to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2009. Phil suggested that we pool the resources of our respective organizations—their collection and our building, audience platform, and experience in organizing important exhibitions to create the definitive Frank Lloyd Wright event."

The organizations began the elaborate process of honing the terms of the agreement and developing the exhibition's concept, content, flow, design, and messaging. Both agreed that 2009 should be the target date to celebrate the visionary architect on the 50th anniversary of both the completion of the Guggenheim and of his death.

Explained Margo Stipe, curator and registrar of collections of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, "We're fast tracking this exhibition. The Guggenheim has a well-honed system to produce exhibitions, and an exhibition is usually five or more years in the planning. We're doing this in a little over one year."

Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, noted, "We are working at breakneck speed—cogs in the exhibition machine. Often museums submit proposals for

exhibitions and then send curators here to work. This has been different, though, because it has been a team effort, a true collaboration from the start, and the Guggenheim team is wonderful to work with.

"There would be no Guggenheim exhibition focusing on Wright without the Archives," he added. "It is the leading component in the whole show. We have a limited number of people on the Archives' staff and a small amount of space to accomplish this, and it's a very stressful situation to mount a show this way. We can manage and are managing, but it is difficult and requires a lot of juggling. For example, we've never used books and periodicals to further illustrate a project in an exhibition, and when we photograph them it's hard to find a place to do so. Thirty years ago the

(Below) This rendering of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is one of more than 200 original drawings from the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives that will be exhibited at the Guggenheim in New York City from May 15 through August 23, 2009. FLLW FND #4305.017. © Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation.

collection had been adequately kept, but since then we've inventoried, catalogued, photographed, and entered the material into databases. If we had more space we could accomplish more work. It's amazing that we do what we do with what we have and are able to perform."

As Oskar Munoz, assistant director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, observed, being so heavily involved with an exhibition from beginning to end is totally consistent with the Foundation's mission.

"The Foundation needs to step up and talk about things people need help with and current issues of the built environment," he said. "And with the Archives, we have the 'stuff' to speak to those issues."

Allsopp acknowledged that the demands imposed upon the design and engineering team for the new Archives building will be immense.

"When funding is secured to design and build this vitally important building and to fund its continued operation, you can imagine how much care and attention the Foundation

will be paying to the myriad of functional, environmental, and construction details comprising the building's design," Allsopp said. "For such a structure to be located at the Foundation's National Historic Register campus of Taliesin West, the Foundation will be imposing very special design and construction criteria to ensure that the resulting facility celebrates and respects where it is. It will need to be state-of-the-art in every respect, yet provide a framework to accommodate advances in archival, environmental, and building technologies in future years. Even at this early stage in our thinking, these are very tough design criteria, but I can think of at least half a dozen of the world's finest architecture and engineering firms whose work demonstrates their proven ability to meet the Foundation's unique challenge."

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