

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is the one art form that we interact with every day as we live, work, and play. Yet we seldom consciously think about architecture, and few of us have even the slightest training in this field. We may look at it all the time, but we don't really see it. However, if we stop and take the time to notice how buildings can affect our life experiences, we can come closer to an understanding of what makes a building "work" for its users, and even understand what makes a building such as Fallingwater a masterpiece in architecture. We can come to understand what makes architecture perhaps the most human of art forms.

Frank Lloyd Wright devoted his career to making architecture humane. At Fallingwater, he didn't just design a building in harmony with nature. According to Fallingwater patron Edgar Kaufmann, jr, "Wright understood that the Kaufmann family wanted some of the comforts of modern life, in a natural setting. So Wright did everything that he could, and it was quite a lot, to make the building a facility that made it easy and natural for *people to relate to nature*. That was the first duty of the house... to keep people and nature in good rapport with each other."

This unit presents a simple method to awaken our sense for architecture by starting with what we know: our own direct experience as people in architectural space. Architecture can be a daunting subject to teach, but by starting students with what they already know, students will feel much

more comfortable and equipped to describe and analyze a building in order to understand it. This method is basically a three-step process:

1. Describing an experience,
2. Analyzing that experience, and
3. Interpreting what that experience may mean.



RESOURCES

[The Experience of Place](#) by Tony Hiss. *The chapters on simultaneous perception and connectedness offer excellent examples of sensory awareness as it relates to buildings and natural spaces.*

[Sharing Nature with Children](#) and [Sharing Nature with Children II](#) by Joseph Cornell. *Both books present numerous sensory awareness activities involving the natural world, but there is transference to architecture, especially Fallingwater.*

[Experiencing Architecture](#) by Steen Eiler Rasmussen. *An upper-level text commonly used in college architecture courses.*

[Architecture is Elementary: Visual Thinking Through Architectural Concepts](#) by Nathan Winters. *A thorough curriculum.*