

We are Taliesin, Taliesin cannot be closed.

A Manifesto on the ethos of The School of Architecture at Taliesin

The capitalistic system is a gambling game. It is hard to cure gamblers of gambling and everybody high and low in this country prefers the gamblers chance at a great fortune to the slower growth of a more personal fortune.

So creative activity is a thing of the past — so far as it goes with machine power in these United States. Little art of any but the most superficial kind — the formula or the fashion — now characterizes the life of the States. The capacity for spiritual rebellion has grown small and the present ideals of success are making it smaller every day.

We don't use the word organic as referring as something hanging in the butcher shop, organic means in philosophical sense, entity, where the whole is to the part and the part is to the whole.

-Frank Lloyd Wright

Following the intransigence of the so-called guardians of dead history, we stand together in opposition to the efforts to sabotage The School of Architecture at Taliesin with the aim of transforming Taliesin into a Theme Park.

United we stand against the opportunism and frivolity that misleads people into thinking that a legacy of a place like Taliesin is preserved by gambling on profit in detriment of what Frank Lloyd Wright called the 'slower growth of a more personal fortune.'

Closing the school cancels all the genuine activities and the life that has historically been central to Taliesin, with its students and faculty living and working on the landscape, in touch with nature, imagining the possibility of better futures. Taliesin was created as an architectural laboratory, not a museum.

Killing the school through unreasonable demands, institutional pressure, and intellectual sabotage is destroying the very Foundation of Taliesin: a place created to live in architecture to make architecture.

Taliesin is not just an Architecture School. Taliesin has been our home, where we share experiences, ideas, and discourses. Taliesin has been our laboratory, where we test ways to think, make, and live in architecture. Taliesin has been our legacy, where we learn from history while making new history.

History won't be kind to those who think the ethos of Taliesin can be found 'hanging in the butcher shop.' The legacy of Taliesin can't be bought on souvenir shops or faux organic products. The legacy of Taliesin can't be exchanged into profitable tour tickets, or into dinners in the drafting studio, or into wedding photos on the prow.

Endangering the legacy of a laboratory like Taliesin is what Frank Lloyd Wright feared about what he called the mob. He thought that the mob didn't know anything about architecture (its implications, its processes, its messiness). Closing the school turns the Foundation (the one claiming to be responsible for the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright) into a mob. Frank Lloyd Wright didn't think architecture is for the mob. The mob hates architecture.

Following the principles of organic architecture, the 'modern ideal and the teaching so much needed if we are to see the whole of life, and to now serve the whole of life' we must go against 'cherishing any pre-conceived form fixing upon us either past, present or future'. 'On every side we see evidence of inglorious quarrel between things as they were and things as they must be and are'. To treasure the past in detriment of what is taking place in order to create the future is to be un-organic or, even worst, anti-organic.

Organic are the ways the students, faculty, staff, former fellows, and the community at Taliesin learn from the landscapes of the rolling hills and prairies in Wisconsin, and the wild, blossoming desert in Arizona. Organic are the histories that are shared and the life that is lived in Taliesin. Organic are the experiments that the students execute living with and in nature, in their buildings that find new ways to relate to their material, historical, and architectural contexts. Organic are the future architectures to be devised by those who have lived and been educated at Taliesin.

Under the reign of the 'Guardians of Dead History' we have witnessed a hostile environment that sees innovation as a menace to profit. We have experienced the oppressing presence of an institution that sees the learning process as an unnecessary and unsustainable model. We have lived through the looming presence of an institution that has many times threatened to close the school and leave the students, faculty, and staff without a place to continue the legacy of Taliesin.

Nothing will probably come out of this manifesto, but this manifesto is all we are left with in order to express our opposition to the closure of The School of Architecture at Taliesin. We believe in what the school, as an accredited program of architecture has to offer to the students, the faculty, and the world. We believe in the School as space for intellectual exchange, for the free exploration of ideas, and for the testing of new ways of living.

Design doesn't happen without taking risks. Design can't happen under the pressure of expecting direct translation into profit. Design can't happen without living in the present and moving to the future.

Architecture is not a formula, nor a series of steps, nor a style. If the Foundation believes that they're doing something for Architecture by getting rid of the school, they cannot be more mistaken. Frank Lloyd Wright believed that with the youth lies 'the hope of the future'. 'Now architecture with us is a matter of the future'. Those fixated in the past will miss the train to the future.

Today we stand in opposition to this charade of historical proportions. We stand against the caricaturization of Taliesin into a commodity. We stand against the fetishization of the past. We stand against the oppressing forces that value profit over experimentation and pictorial postcards over real life.

In defense of Taliesin as a living space for exploration, curiosity, and discovery, we must acknowledge that Frank Lloyd Wright already warned us about the threat that the Foundation presents: 'Little visible change in the life or the attitude toward life of the intelligentsia of the United States is evident. No clear thinking is possible to them. They are all the hapless beneficiaries of a success-system they have never clearly understood, but a system that worked miracles for them while they slept. The hardships of the last three years have left them confused but not without hope that more miracles will come to pass in their behalf. They are willing to wait for them to happen.'

On record Frank Lloyd Wright stood against the romantic institutionalization of architecture. Taliesin has always been about creating a culture of critical rebelliousness that rejects the 'little art of any but the most superficial kind — the formula or the fashion.' Because 'the capacity for spiritual rebellion has grown small and the present ideals of success are making it smaller every day' as a community we need to be acutely aware of the value of germinating a style recognized by popular culture and what that means for future commodification. We need to be cognizant of the potential impact opportunists can have on our field who fetishize and exploit the ethos of what we stand for. We must claim the philosophical territory and take no prisoners securing that value to be in service of architecture, lest any more establishments like The School of Architecture at Taliesin to become the victims of assassination by the very institutions sworn to protect them.

Now more than ever we stand with the legacy and the future of Taliesin. Now more than ever we stand in stark opposition to what The Foundation represents. Now more than ever we stand by the school as a place for the empowerment of students aiming to make new worlds collectively.