

Frank Lloyd Wright's Legacy: Celebrating 150 Years

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The American Institute of Architects recognized Frank Lloyd Wright as “the greatest American architect of all time.” Now, 150 years after his birth in 1867, Wright’s legacy continues to influence generations of architects and designers. Steelcase proudly partnered with Wright in the late 1930s and continues to be inspired by his timeless architectural and furniture designs.

JOHNSON WAX HEADQUARTERS

David D. Hunting Sr., a Steelcase salesman and later a member of senior management, met Frank Lloyd Wright when Wright was working on the S.C. Johnson Wax Company headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin in the late 1930s. Their relationship lasted for years after their first meeting. Wright talked to Hunting about how he wanted the furniture in the space to fit the environment. He took a holistic approach to create a timeless design. The Metal Office Furniture Company, which would later become Steelcase, ended up engineering and manufacturing all of Wright’s furniture designs for the Johnson Wax building.



Later in his life, Hunting Sr. said it was Wright's approach to design that stayed with him.

"He (Wright) was always talking about not making an improvement, but solving the basic need in the best possible way. Starting from scratch instead of revising the already accepted thing. Most product improvement in our industry has just been that of modification and refinement. But, Wright said this approach did not bring the results as they should be. He would say, 'Let me put my mind to it and I may come up with something entirely different and unheard of — but it will bring the needed result.' I used this thought from then on," Hunting Sr. said. He credited this idea to helping him as a manager develop future workplace concepts such as Multiple 15 which allowed for better office space planning.

MEYER MAY HOUSE

Decades after its first partnership with Wright, Steelcase had an opportunity to help restore a part of his legacy in its home state of Michigan. In 1985, Steelcase purchased and began the two-year process of refurbishing the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids to Wright's original 1909 vision. Painstaking expert attention to hundreds of interior and exterior details help make it the most completely restored of Wright's homes.



One-hundred-and-fifty years after he was born, Frank Lloyd Wright's timeless approach to architecture and design still resonates. Just this year, the winner of the [NEXT Student Design Competition](#) sponsored by Steelcase said Wright's [Hollyhock House](#) in Los Angeles inspired her winning entry.

Wright's career stretched 70 years before he died in 1959. His passion for improving the world remains evident in the legacy he left behind.

"The mission of an architect is to help people understand how to make life more beautiful, the world a better one for living in, and to give reason, rhyme and meaning to life," Wright said in 1957, according to the [Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation](#).