

# SO WRIGHT

Seminal architect's plans provide inspiration for a stunning circular Lake Tyler house

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INTERIOR DESIGN BY **MARY ANNE SMILEY**







On a shore of Lake Tyler sits a stunning tan stucco and stone house that includes a series of large round rooms with exterior walls of windows that provide a spectacular view of the water.

Its eye-catching architecture is unlike anything in East Texas.

The home is based on a design by Frank Lloyd Wright, America's most influential architect. Wright, who died in 1959, is famous for structures that are in harmony with their natural surroundings.

When the owners decided to move from their Tyler Azalea District neighborhood to a prime location on Lake Tyler, they hired an East Texas architect/builder who was inspired by Wright's work.

Shortly after construction began, the couple ended their affiliation with the builder and turned to Steve Thornton of Thornton Design & Construction of Tyler to bring the project to fruition.

When the homeowners later visited the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, a Wright designed masterpiece that also emphasizes a striking circular design, they learned just how closely their home follows one of Wright's iconic designs.

In 1939, Ralph Jester, a motion picture costume designer, commissioned Wright to create for him a



Top, stucco and stone create a welcoming facade, while the swimming pool, left, reflects the home's undulating lines. Above, the windows in the custom door are a nod to Frank Lloyd Wright. Previous pages, designer Mary Anne Smiley added a satin nickel detail and teak trim to the Austin stone fireplace in the living room.

"The mother art is architecture. Without an architecture of our own we have no soul of our own civilization."

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
ARCHITECT

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house overlooking the Pacific Ocean in California. Although Jester decided not to build the home, the design helped establish Wright's reputation for innovation.

The Jester House was Wright's first foray in incorporating the circle into residential architecture and is one of his "unbuilt masterpieces," according to [apointindesign.com](http://apointindesign.com).

On the website [cubed.com](http://cubed.com), architectural historian Patrick Sission describes Wright's vision for the home as a series of "self-contained, cylindrical rooms clad in plywood." Noting a seamless incorporation of a large courtyard and pool into the larger concept, Sission praises the design as the "elegant interpretation of the bring-the-outside-in concept."

The Jester House plans began receiving attention after a model of the home was included in a 1943 exhibition of influential architecture at Harvard's Fogg Museum of Art.

The homeowners used designer Mary Anne Smiley of Dallas to finish the interiors with furnishings in harmony with the home's unique design.

Smiley does not shy away from the lake house's connection to the famous architect. "Round walls, low ceilings, stacked stone columns make this Frank Wright inspired home a classic," she praises on her website.

Smiley describes the home as "the ultimate classic contemporary dream house" and notes that it has "diamond polished concrete floors, a fully appointed round kitchen and bath, carefully selected custom furnishings and finishes."

Steve Thornton, the builder, was excited to be able to take over the project in the early stages of construction. The homeowners are his friends and wanted the home completed in time for them to host a wedding reception.

"It was a challenge," Thornton says. "I had not done this (round rooms) before so there was pressure to get it right."

He says that at the time he was not aware the house was inspired by the work of Wright. He was more concerned with mastering the challenge of working with circular design and getting the home finished on time for his clients.

Thornton says the extra effort that went into building the home was well worth it. The long stretches of windows create a panoramic view of Lake Tyler that is perhaps unparalleled.

"When you're in the house, it feels like you are right on the water," Thornton says. "They (the owners) are wonderful people. They have an artistic flair and wanted something different. They love it."

Mary Anne Smiley, recognized by her peers as one of the top designers in Dallas, was born in Seminole, Oklahoma, and is an honor graduate of Oklahoma State University. One of the first designers registered in the State of Texas after passing the NCIDQ exam, Smiley is a member of ASID. She has been featured in a myriad of publications, and is the recipient of numerous awards for excellence in design. She has been on the Best Designers in Dallas list since 2007, and was celebrated in 2013 as one of the FAB FIVE TOP DESIGNERS IN DALLAS by Luxe and Roche Bobois.

Dan Piassick is a photographer whose shots have been seen in *Veranda*, *Southern Accents*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *D Home*, *D magazine*, *Western Interiors* and *Texas Home and Living*, *Southwest Art*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and a variety of coffee table books.

Top left, a custom-designed dining table by designer Mary Anne Smiley has a steel base and solid walnut top. A Mies van de Rohe lounge is placed perfectly for a spectacular lake view. Left, the master bedroom has its own sitting area.







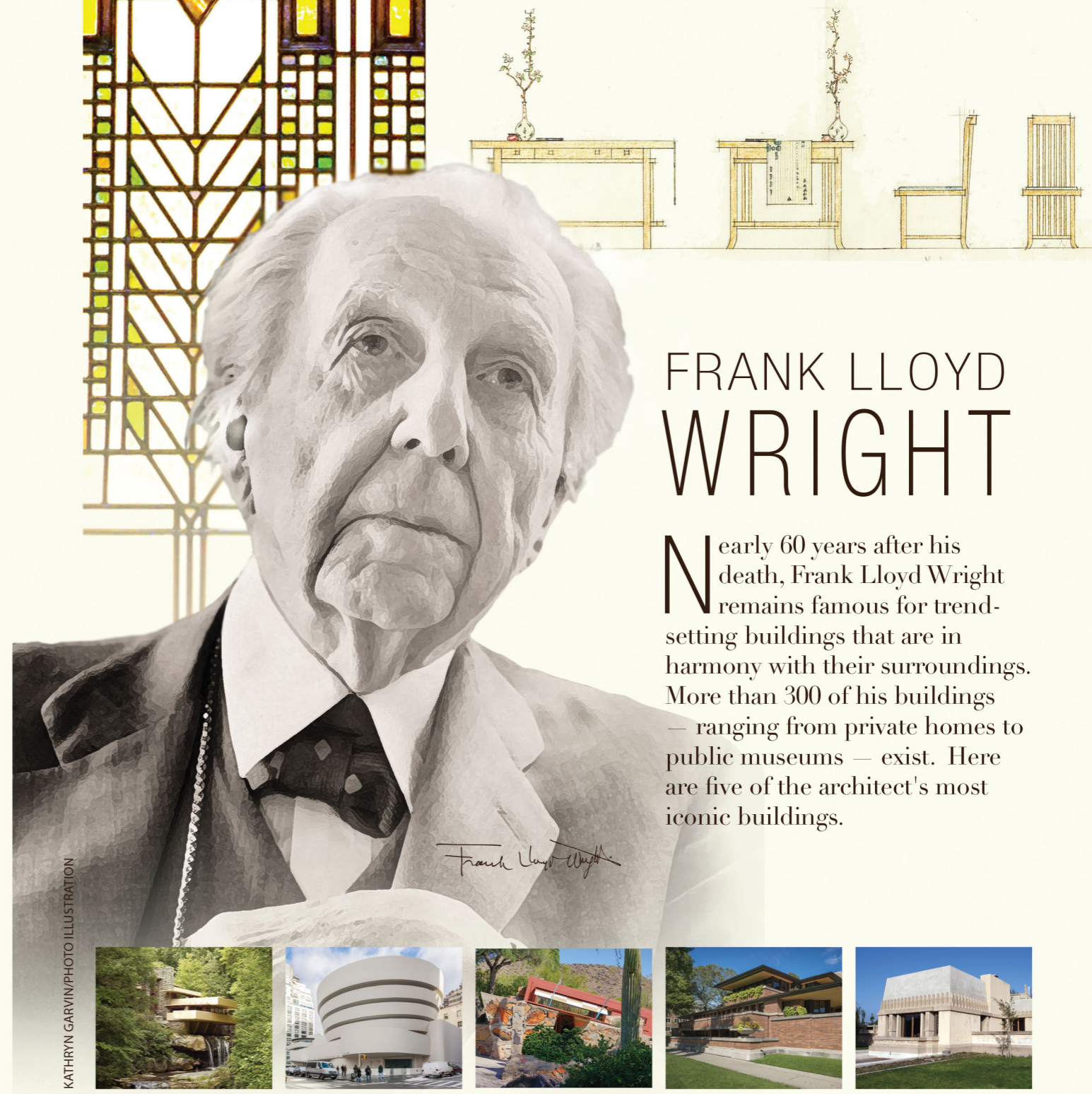
The kitchen's round walls were no obstacle to cabinetmaker Michael Renzikoff, of Renzikoff Custom Furniture in Everman. The cabinets, circular island and built-in banquette are fabricated in teak.





“Form follows function — that has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
ARCHITECT



# FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Nearly 60 years after his death, Frank Lloyd Wright remains famous for trend-setting buildings that are in harmony with their surroundings. More than 300 of his buildings — ranging from private homes to public museums — exist. Here are five of the architect's most iconic buildings.

KATHRYN GARVIN/PHOTO ILLUSTRATION



## FALLINGWATER

Built in the mountains of Pennsylvania in the 1930s, Fallingwater is praised as Wright's ultimate expression of organic architecture. The home features cantilevered terraces built over a waterfall.

## THE GUGGENHEIM

Located on Fifth Avenue in New York City, the Guggenheim Museum is famous for its distinctive spiraling circular design. It is hailed as a geometric masterpiece.

## TALIESIN WEST

Wright's winter home near Scottsdale, Arizona, is now the home of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. Its form reflects the surrounding desert landscape.

## ROBIE HOUSE

Built in 1910 on the campus of the University of Chicago, the Robie House is an example of Wright's prairie style, incorporating long horizontal lines. He also designed the art-glass windows and many of the home's furnishings.

## HOLLYHOCK HOUSE

Built in 1923 on a hill overlooking Los Angeles, the home gets its name for the geometric motifs of hollyhocks. It was one of Wright's earliest experiments in the use of ornamental concrete.