

Paper Mache for 4-25-25 by David Read

Who is your favorite architect? Arguably, one of the best known must be Frank Lloyd Wright. He was even memorialized in a song by Simon and Garfunkel, "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright." He's certainly one of my favorites. I've been able to visit many of his buildings including Hollyhock House in Los Angeles, Taliesin West in Phoenix, the Marin County Courthouse not too far from us and the iconic "Fallingwater" in southwestern Pennsylvania. The magnificent private residence leans over the Bear Run stream and it exemplifies Wright's vision melding human habitations with nature.

I got to thinking about architects and architecture as a grand art form this past week when I heard a story about the possible canonization of Spanish architect, Antonin Gaudi. In addition to being a world-renowned architect, apparently Gaudi is now on the path to sainthood. In 2003, the Vatican opened his cause for sainthood, recognizing his deep Catholic faith and virtuous life. In 2021, Pope Francis declared him "Venerable," the second step toward canonization, acknowledging Gaudi's heroic virtues. The process now awaits a verified miracle attributed to his intercession for beatification. Gaudi developed a unique architectural style that blended Gothic and Art Nouveau forms with vibrant colors and organic shapes inspired by nature. Gaudi saw architecture as a form of worship and was often referred to as "God's Architect." His canonization would make him a rare example of a saint whose holiness was expressed through art, creativity, and unwavering faith.

Speaking of Spanish Architects, another favorite of mine is Santiago Calatrava, a Spanish-Swiss architect and structural engineer, known for his bridges, stadiums and museums, whose sculptural forms often resemble living organisms. I have visited his Milwaukee Art Museum, which unfolds in the morning like a giant bird on the shores of Lake Michigan and then the "wings" close back up in the evening. Locally, he is well known as the architect of the Sundial Bridge in Redding, his first bridge commission in the U.S.

I also love the very unconventional work of the vastly prolific Frank Gehry. Some of his building designs have been described as looking like a giant, untethered roll of aluminum foil. Canadian American architect Gehry rose to prominence in the 1970s with his distinctive style that blended everyday materials with complex, dynamic structures. I visited his Cabrillo Marine Museum in San Pedro while living in L.A. Gehry is known for his postmodern designs and use of bold, unconventional forms and materials. His most famous works include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, both utilizing the "aluminum foil" motif described above.

Chinese American architect, I.M. Pei moved to the U.S. in 1935 and attended the M.I.T. His East Wing of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC was a favorite of ours when we lived in the capitol region. I have also visited his John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston which Pei considered "the most important commission" in his life." And remember Pei's controversial work at the Louvre when he added the glass and steel pyramid in the courtyard? Magnifique!

I'm embarrassed not to be able to mention even one contemporary female architect, but how about Julia Morgan? She really matters because she broke barriers as the first woman licensed to practice architecture in California. Best known for designing Hearst Castle, she completed over 700 buildings, blending classical elegance with innovative engineering. Morgan's legacy extends beyond her structures—she redefined what women could achieve in a male-dominated field. Today, she is celebrated as a pioneer in architecture and gender equity. We are fortunate to have several Julia Morgan designed, private homes in Marysville.