

# DESIGNING ORGANICALLY

**GRADE:** 3-5, Middle School, High School

**TIME:** OPEN

Frank Lloyd Wright believed buildings should be a product of their place, purpose, and time. A concept he called Organic Architecture. The greatest examples of this include Wright's Prairie style Robie House and Fallingwater. Each thoughtfully enhance their native landscapes and include unique and surprising details. In this lesson, participants investigate Wright's organic work to gain understanding of this design philosophy. Afterward, participants will apply their understanding of organic design as they work collaboratively to create a public mural for their community.

**INTEGRATED SUBJECTS:** Visual Art & Social Studies

## OBJECTIVES

### MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of Wright's Organic Architecture  
Frederick C. Robie House  
Unity Temple  
Fallingwater

1. Thoughtfully investigate a concept (Organic Architecture) to gain deeper knowledge and understanding.
2. Successfully apply understanding of a new concept through artmaking.
3. Work collaboratively towards a common goal.
4. Positively contribute to the local community.
5. Explore the impact of public art.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What is Organic Architecture?
2. What methods and strategies are used to investigate and understand a concept?
3. What are successful strategies when working collaboratively?
4. How does public art impact a community?

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## EXPLORE

- Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and Organic Architecture. (<https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/organic-design/>)
- Explore examples of Organic Architecture like the Prairie style Robie House, Unity Temple, and Fallingwater. Images are available at: <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/multimedia/>
- Provide time for participants to individually explore the designs and follow their own curiosity.
- **To help guide exploration ask:** What do you see? What do you want to know? What are the characteristics of the Prairie style? What characteristics do you see in the Robie House? How does Wright use specific design elements to enhance these characteristics? How would the Robie House look in the desert? Why is Unity Temple divided into two main sections? How does the building's use influence the design? How does the design enhance how the building is used? What do you notice first about Fallingwater? How does it get its name? How did Wright incorporate the landscape into the design?

## ENGAGE

- Have participants experiment in their sketchbooks with their own organic designs.
- Provide time for them to share and check-in with one another for feedback.
- Further discuss organic design and evaluate how participant understanding has evolved.

## DESIGN

- Organize participants to collaboratively design a mural for a public space in the community.
- During planning, remind participants to consider:
  - LOCATION: Where will the mural be located? What are the characteristics of the location? What characteristics should the mural enhance or contrast? What inspiration can the location contribute?
  - AUDIENCE: Who will see the mural? Are they residents? Daily commuters? Visitors?
  - INTERPRETATION: What is the mural's purpose? What message should the mural communicate? What feelings, emotions, or actions do we want to provoke? How do we visually communicate this? What symbols and images would successfully share our message?
- Create drafts and plans as necessary.
- Provide time for participants to all work on the final mural.

## CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

- Once the mural is finished, provide an opportunity for participants to present their mural to the community.
- Have participants write a self-reflection. Ask participants to answer: How did you use Wright's concept of Organic Architecture to collaboratively design a mural? What strategies did you use to collaborate and problem solve? How will the mural impact the community and those who view it?