

EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY: DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE

GRADE: 4-12

TIME: Two 50-minute sessions

What will the future look like? Frank Lloyd Wright outlined his vision for the future in his design of Broadacre City, a speculative city plan based on his prediction that the rise of the automobile would eliminate the need for a dense city center and allow for families to live and travel freely across the vast American landscape. In this vision for a decentralized future, a city that is “everywhere and nowhere,” gas stations would become both vital infrastructure and social centers. Though the Broadacre City plan can likely never be fully realized, the Lindholm Oil Company Service Station--built in Cloquet, Minnesota in 1958--is one structure from Wright’s utopian plan that was actually constructed and still stands today. In this lesson, students will look closely at the building to learn how Frank Lloyd Wright creatively applied his design philosophy and vision for the future to something as seemingly ordinary as a gas station. Then, students will use their own predictions and hopes for the world of tomorrow to “future-proof” buildings of today.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Images of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Lindholm Oil Company Service Station

A variety of images of Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture, including plans for Broadacre City

Sketchbooks

Pencils

Colored pencils

1. Explore the relationship between building typology and artistic style.
2. Identify characteristics of Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural style.
3. Apply Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture style to a common building type.
4. Understand how technological advancements and changing societal values affect the built environment.
5. Consider how design can anticipate the needs of the future.
6. Reinterpret a contemporary building type to better serve future generations.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What does a better world look like?
2. What is my style?
3. How can I apply my individual style to the design of a better world?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Ask students to visualize and draw a gas station.** Have students consider: What components make up this building type and why?
- **Display images of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Lindholm Oil Company Service Station and ask students to identify ways that the building is different from other service stations they may have seen.** Encourage students to sketch these differences.
- **Introduce students to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, highlighting his interest in geometry and designing in harmony with nature.** Have students consider: What characteristics make up Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural style?
- **Revisit images of the Lindholm Oil Company Service Station. Challenge students to identify ways that the building incorporates design elements specific to Frank Lloyd Wright's style and/or design approach.** (Tip: You can learn more about organic architecture—Wright's guiding design philosophy—at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/organic-design/>!)

ENGAGE

Session One

- **Challenge students to identify other building types such as hospitals, schools, shopping centers, offices, or factories.**
- **Have students select one building type to draw.** (Tip: For a more successful discussion with younger students, have students draw the same building type!) **Have students consider:** What components make up this building type and why?

DESIGN

Session One

- **Challenge students to revise their sketches to incorporate Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired design features.** Have students consider: How did the design change?

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session One

- **Have students share their sketches, noting any ways that the design incorporates Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural style.**
- **If students drew different building types, have students consider:** How is Frank Lloyd Wright's style expressed differently in different building types?

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

EXPLORE

Session Two

- **Review the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and characteristics of Wright’s buildings.**
- **Review Wright’s design of the Lindholm Oil Service Company.**
- **Introduce the Lindholm Oil Service Company as a part of Frank Lloyd Wright’s larger design of Broadacre City.**
 - Broadacre City was a speculative city plan based on Frank Lloyd Wright’s prediction that the rise of the automobile would eliminate the need for a dense city center and allow for families to live and travel freely across the vast American landscape. In this vision for a decentralized future, a city that is “everywhere and nowhere,” gas stations would become both vital infrastructure and social centers.
 - Background information about the Lindholm Oil Service Company as it pertains to Broadacre City can be found at <https://www.archdaily.com/121884/ad-classics-r-w-lindholm-service-station-frank-lloyd-wright>.
 - Background information about Broadacre City can be found at <https://franklloydwright.org/revisiting-frank-lloyd-wrights-vision-broadacre-city/> and in *The Living City* by Frank Lloyd Wright.
- **Have students consider:** How accurate were Frank Lloyd Wright’s predictions for the future? What aspects of Broadacre City are still relevant today? What would you change about the design?

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **Have students consider:** What will the future look like? What does a better world look like? **Students can express their predictions and ideas in writing and/or through sketching. Encourage students to consider housing, infrastructure, transportation, technology, and green space. If students are sketching, encourage them to incorporate their own style or interests into the design.**
- **Allow time for students to share their predictions and ideas.**

DESIGN

Session Two

- **Have students revisit their sketches from Session One. Ask students to revise their building sketches to better align with their ideas for a better world. Have students consider:** What changes need to be made to this building type in order to better serve future generations? How can my style be reflected in the design?

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Two

- **Ask students to display the three sketches of their building type side-by-side, noting any similarities and differences between them. Encourage students to comment on the work of their peers and look for ways that students were creative or innovative when designing a building for the future.**
- **Have students consider:** How would Frank Lloyd Wright design for today’s world?