A Continuous Present and a Queer Historiography: Bruce Goff's Bavinger House

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ABSTRACT

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Damien Smith

The critical historiography of American architect Bruce Goff (1904 -1982) has been, and continues to be, fraught with conflicting narratives regarding his sexuality. Most scholarly and critical accounts of Goff's work have focused solely on formal analysis of his architecture; yet a significant number have imbricated sexuality into an interpretive analysis of his work, often through the use of a coded language referring to sexuality (specifically homosexuality). Such interpretive approaches to Goff's work have served to marginalize his inclusion in the canon of mid-twentieth century American modernism. Moreover, recent attempts by critics and scholars to examine Goff under the auspices of Gay and Lesbian Studies and Queer Studies continue to draw from the visual tropes of homosexuality and queerness, thus maintaining the idea of a latent queer sensibility drawn from the signifiers of Camp within Goff's architecture

Through discourse analysis, a deconstructive approach which aims to examine and unveil language that defines and frames discussion of a subject, this thesis argues that the scholarly approaches to Goff's *oeuvre* perpetuate an insubstantial connection between sexuality and interpretive readings of his work. In response to the existing writings on Goff, the author of this thesis proposes instead that Goff drew on a queer genealogy through the writings of Gertrude Stein and the practice of *bricolage* to construct a space that is actively queer. Refuting essentialized interpretations predicated upon the visual aesthetic signifiers of queerness, a queer sensibility emerges in Goff's architecture as considered through the lens of queer phenomenology, resulting in a space to be both constructed and physically experienced as queer.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

13. Bruce Goff, *Study for Space Study Institute* (First drawing of three), 1956, pencil and ink on paper. Source: Ryerson and Burnham Archives, Art Institute of Chicago. Series III, OP 1.16. http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/14838/rec/76 Retrieved September 5, 2017

Introduction

> . . . we are returning instead of starting because it has taken us all of our lives, and people's lives before us, to be part of a continuing thing, before we are able to continue into this composition. So we really don't start it when we start the composition; we don't really begin then, we begin again and again, as Gertrude Stein says.
>
> — Bruce Goff[1]

"The Bavinger House receives the 'It's Gone award'." This was the subject line of an email from the "Bavinger Boys" dated Sunday, April 17th, 2016 and later posted to an online chat forum.[2] There was no message in the body of the email, only an attached jpg image depicting a cleared lot, littered with broken tree branches, shattered glass fragments, stone rubble, and an excavator [Fig. 1]. This cleared site was once the location of American architect Bruce Goff's Bavinger House, now completely dismantled and levelled and cleared. The demolition of Bavinger House was reported by Caleb Slinkard in the *Norman Transcript* two days later, in an article which outlined the controversial circumstances surrounding Bavinger's House deterioration and its subsequent destruction.[3] Informal and anecdotal accounts of Bavinger House describe a continuing dispute over funding and restoration costs, and issues of conservatorship, between Bob Bavinger (the son of Eugene and Nancy Bavinger) and the University of Oklahoma School of Architecture.

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[1] Philip B. Welch, *Goff on Goff: Conversations and Lectures* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 195.

[2] A screenshot of this email was retrieved and posted to the Save Wright website chat forum on April 25th 2016. Zachary Matthews writes in his post: "The son of original homeowner had a crew out over the last week to completely clear the lot of the rubble from the semi-demolished house. The remaining stone and glass cullet were dumped in an Oklahoma landfill. The owners then sent out the following email, pretty much bragging they had finally erased the house from the site." SaveWright.org, http://wrightchat.savewright.org/viewtopic.php?t=9582. Retrieved February 15, 2019.

[3] Allison Meir, "An Icon of Midcentury Organic Modern Architecture is Destroyed," Hyperallergic.com, May 11, 2016. https://hyperallergic.com/296105/an-icon-of-midcentury-organic-modern-architecture-is-destroyed/ Retrieved December 27, 2016. Also see Caleb Slinkard, "Goff-Designed Landmark Demolished," *The Norman Transcript*, April 28, 2016. http://www.normantranscript.com/news/goff-designed-landmark-demolished/article_e54dba0a-2361-5f51-b101-d23e0c4f009e.html Retrieved December 27, 2016.

Throughout a career that spanned six decades, Goff designed approximately five hundred projects, of which one hundred and forty were built.[4] One of these buildings, Bavinger House, was completed in 1955 [Fig. 2]. Bavinger House was not the first of his designs that incorporated geometric floor plans and made innovative use of repurposed industrial and commercial materials, nor was it the first that merged the human-made with the organic elements of nature, integrating both into the surrounding landscape. However, the images of Bavinger House, published in national magazines like *Life* and *Time* [Fig.3], ensured its status as an original expression of organic modernism fused with technological and futuristic elements. Such recognition cemented Goff's original approach to architecture and Bavinger House became an iconic and signature image of its creator's reputation.[5] Bavinger House was awarded the Twenty-Five Year Award from the American Institute of Architects in 1987, and in 2001 was added to the National Register of Historic Places. After the deaths of Eugene (1997) and Nancy Bavinger (2007), their two sons took possession of the house. By 2005 it had become an uninhabited "creeper-clad spiral of stone that can barely be glimpsed through the trees surrounded by no trespassing signs."[6] Visitors would only intermittently be allowed to tour the home. During a severe storm in 2011, the mast which supported the roof was irreparably damaged. The building was closed to visitors the following year and was utterly demolished, and its site razed in 2016. In February 2017 Bavinger House was removed from the National Register of Historic Places.[7]

Bruce Alonzo Goff was born June 8th, 1904 in Alton, Kansas and died in Tyler, Texas on the 4th of August 1982. Goff was a child prodigy who – at his father's urging – began an apprenticeship at the Tulsa Oklahoma architectural firm Rush Endicott Rush at the age of twelve and was made a partner when he was twenty-six, remaining with the firm until it closed down in 1936. It was during Goff's apprenticeship at Rush Endicott Rush that his *Design for an Indiana Limestone Residence*, made when he was fourteen years old, earned him the moniker "Frank Lloyd Wright Junior."[8] Goff had no idea who Frank Lloyd Wright was then but initiated

[4] "Resources Designed by Bruce Goff in Oklahoma," "United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. NPS Form:10-900-b, 0MB NO. 1024-0018, 1992.Accessed February 2, 2015. http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500490.pdf.
[5] "Space and Saucer House by Bruce Goff." *Life Magazine* (March 19, 1951): 155.
[6] Michael Webb, "Saving Bruce Goff." *Architectural Review*, no. 217 (June 2005): 44.
[7] National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior National Register of Historic Places, Weekly List, last modified March 10, 2017. https://www.nps.gov/nr/listings/20170310.htm Retrieved 15, August 2017.
[8] DeLong, 198.

correspondence with the architect who mentored Goff during his early years as an apprentice and young architect. In 1936 Goff relocated to Chicago where he taught part-time at the Art Institute of Chicago and worked on various projects as an architect-designer. In 1942 he enlisted in the U.S. Navy's Naval Construction Branch ("Seabees") where he designed the McCann Memorial Chapel at Camp Park, California. McCann Memorial Chapel marked the first example of what was to become Goff's signature and mature style.[9] Intended to serve a multi-denominational military community, the chapel was economically designed and constructed due to wartime material shortages. The chapel's signature features, two surplus warehouse-type Quonset huts repurposed to serve as naves and positioned in a cross-like form flanking a cinder block-walled alter, marked the first instance of Goff's incorporation of industrial materials as integral components of this architectural designs. Following the end of the Second World War and his work as an architect for the Seabees, in 1947, he became a professor of architecture at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma City. The following year he was appointed the chair of the School of Architecture where he continued to teach first and final year students, shifting the pedagogy of the school towards a radically experimental and organic approach to modern architecture.[10] During the period from 1947 to 1955, his reputation as an architect and teacher flourished and his most iconic and recognizable buildings were completed.

Goff left the School of Architecture in December 1955. In November of that year he had been arrested on a morals charge: the charge was for ostensibly corrupting the morals of a young boy. The charge, and the shame of the public revelation of his homosexuality in the local press, compelled him to resign.[11] [12] The publication of Goff's arrest henceforth became the evidence of his sexuality, which has intermittently framed both his biography and the critical historiography of his architectural production. Yet Goff himself made no public acknowledgement of his sexuality, even later in his career during the burgeoning gay rights movement of the 1970s.

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[9] DeLong, 241.

[10] Pauline Saliga and Mary Woolever, eds., *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1995), 15

[11] DeLong cites a newspaper report, "Architect Denies Morals Charge," published in the *Daily Oklahoman* on December 4, 1955. See: De Long, 323.

[12] In an interview that took place in 1984 with William H. Wilson, with a student who had studied with and worked for Goff in the 1950s, tells DeLong that Goff was indeed targeted by the Norman, Oklahoma police. A fourteen-year old boy "known to be sexually promiscuous" was used as bait to entrap Goff and "had been dusted with a special powder that so that Goff's hands would later show any evidence of physical contact." Furthermore, according to Wilson, the boy used to entrap Goff was offered legal immunity for his co-operation. See: Delong, 324.

Perhaps it not only is the lack of self-disclosure that frames the ambivalence of how – and when – Goff's sexuality is examined in relation to his architecture. The disclosure of Goff's sexuality was made under the spectre of scandal and criminality in a symbolically violent manner. The act of "coming out of the closet" was not Goff's choice, it was revealed publicly. Criminality and sexuality were conflated in the published newspaper articles detailing his arrest, especially in the climate of 1950s America and the fraught associations linking sexuality with deviance and criminality have influenced how the issue of Goff's sexuality was addressed. Both Goff's silence and the scandal regarding this matter during his lifetime have encouraged scholarly ambivalence, reductive interpretative approaches, and even outright dismissal of his sexuality as an element informing his sensibilities as an architect. Even posthumously, self-disclosure emerged not from Goff himself – either in the archival evidence of writings or recordings – but rather through the revelations of a close friend and colleague.

In an article published in the June 1983 issue of the French architectural periodical *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* one of Goff's former students, the architect Bart Prince, spoke about Goff and of his sexuality. He recounts Goff's regret at having married young as he "didn't seem to 'fit' into society where his personal feelings were concerned."[13] Goff, we learn, married because it was the 'normal' thing to do.[14] The architect had confided in Prince that he realized that his attempt to "fit in" to society was deleterious to himself once he saw the negative effects it produced:

> One was that he found himself doing less design work and painting outside office hours, which disturbed him and his growing awareness of his homosexual feelings which he had denied for the most part up until then. He said that he found a great release in accepting himself and his innate feelings about things rather than trying to do what others expected. This also helped to free him in his design work. He often commented to me the importance of his sexual attitude to all other aspects of his work and life. Those who knew him very well know the truth of this and Goff's interest in eventually having this aspect of himself understood.[15]

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[13] Bart Prince, "Bruce Goff Architect: A Personal Memoir," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 227, (June, 1983): LII.
[14] Adrienne Rich employs the term "compulsory heterosexuality" to describe the socially codifying and regulatory institutions of a society which serves to erase specific identities. Rich is explicitly referring to the erasure of lesbian identities and histories by mainstream second-wave feminism of the 1960s through the 1970s. See: Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer, 1980): 631-660.
[15] Prince, LII.

Prince never precisely specifies how Goff's sexual identity impacted his design work other than by "freeing him up."[16] Probably Goff never elaborated further himself. It is noteworthy, however, that Goff consistently used the terms "free," "freedom," and "individual" when describing and writing about his design practice, suggesting a connection between his sexuality and his creative production. Price recounts Goff saying that "It should not be ignored and should be brought out in writings about me after my death so that others who have like minds will understand the tremendous importance of being themselves."[17] Goff's wish to have his sexual identity brought to light after his death is an appeal to architectural historians to acknowledge the impact of personal experience upon his life and work. Goff also sought to have his sexual identity known in the hope that it would serve to help others see how their own sexuality might be understood as a source of creativity and individual expression. In light of the contested and conflicting legacies regarding Goff's sexuality, this thesis seeks to explore how Goff's request has been taken up – or ignored – by architectural historians.

The evocative narrative of an analogous parallel between the history of Bavinger House and Goff's historiography informs this thesis; just as the physical terrain of Bavinger House was contested between factions with their vested interests, so too the place of Goff's sexuality is contested territory amongst critics and historians of his work. Examining the differing interpretations of Goff's architecture, instances emerge where crystalized moments of struggle surrounding his sexuality can be identified, each handled with varying degrees of success. While some scholars have ignored Goff's sexuality entirely, others have deployed hackneyed visual tropes of homosexuality to either denigrate or celebrate his achievements. This thesis will examine how sexuality has been projected upon Goff's work in various critical interpretations of his architecture.[18] My decision to focus upon Bavinger House as a case study for this thesis stems from its status as Goff's most iconic and photographically reproduced building that has been interpreted through institutional and popular media as a vision of an organic modernist futurity. Secondly, Bavinger House's unconventional design and its formation of materials and space provide a subversive example of an architecture that refuses modernism's ethos of

[16] Ibid., LII.
[17] Ibid., LII.
[18] An equally pertinent and fecund example for a robust examination of the intersection of sexuality and architecture within Goff's domestic architecture would be the Joe Price Studio, mentioned in this thesis through the examination of both Aaron Betsky's and Carol Mason's scholarship on Goff .

homogeneity and linearity as means to imagine a space that can be understood and potentially experienced as a queer space.

I organize my approach to this material in two parts. The first part of this thesis conducts a discourse analysis of the historiography of Goff's architecture. For philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault, discourse is a social construct, created and perpetuated by those who have the power and means of communication and "... systematically form the objects of which they speak. In addition, discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention."[19] Discourse analysis as a method aims to contemplate and call attention to the systemic means by which meaning is attributed to a subject, and how such systemic re-iterations informs the body of knowledge about a subject.[20]

Through this methodology I will examine how dominant discourses have either avoided Goff's homosexuality altogether or alluded to it through the use of coded language, taking loaded notions about Camp – a term pertaining to a characteristically effeminate or homosexual aesthetic, as key to the critical assessment of his work. The use of coded language moves from a closed and negative assessment of his work towards a more open and sympathetic interpretation of his architecture, yet even recent queer scholarship on Goff has used language that promotes an embedded and essentialized interpretation his work. In response to this, the second part of the thesis considers how Goff's work can be interpreted beyond the limits of essentializing discourse. Taking inspiration from Goff's borrowings from the writer Gertrude Stein, and through a visual analysis of the floor plans and photographic documentation of Bavinger House, this thesis adopts the idea of *bricolage* as a lens to examine how Goff actively queered his architecture.. Such an approach is opposed to existing texts, which look at Goff's work for its visual inscription of a queerness/homosexuality/sexual identity that is separate from his building and passively inscribed in it as an inherent attribute. Goff's practice of intellectual and

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[19] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 49.

[20] *George L. Dillon, "Discourse Analysis," The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman, 2nd ed. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 263.*

architectural *bricolage* enabled him to build and create a space that opens to view a more active and phenomenologically informed analysis of the intersection between queerness and architecture. Employing Sarah Ahmed's notion of a queer phenomenology as a theoretical touchstone, this thesis seeks to shift the predominant discourse surrounding Goff: from one which interprets his work as queer through an investment in the visual signifiers of a latent homosexuality, to one which asks instead how the experience of space itself becomes queer – and queered – through Goff's architectural design.

I am well aware of the challenges in deploying the term queer, which historically has been used as a pejorative slur against LGBT individuals, and has been taken up critically in an academic context under the umbrella term queer theory, which emerged in conjunction with the social activism during the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 1980s and early 90s. In the body of this thesis, I employ the terms "sexuality", "sexual identity", and "homosexual" as appropriate to the historiographical context in which they are used. I take my cue here from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick regarding the use of the terms "homosexual" and "gay" and "sexuality" as terms "applicable to distinct, nonoverlapping periods in the history of a phenomenon for which there then remains no overarching label."[21] As noted in this thesis, terminology changes in accordance with the prevailing socio-political attitudes of each era. Recent scholarship claims Goff as a queer architect, reflecting current discourse, yet still employs queer as a noun. Where I bring in the term queer in this thesis it is intended to shift focus from the physical subject (i.e. Goff) towards the idea of queer as practice and experience rather than a taxonomy.

While it would be undeniably problematic to label Goff as queer retroactively, it is another matter to examine, and hence recast the history of LGBTQ2 subjects through queer theory. Such a project requires breaching the historical plea to adhere to the notion of an objective "period eye."[22] My choice to employ the term queer *avant la lett*re is not a relabelling of Goff but rather a critical, deconstructive move meant to reveal the way his architecture

[21] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 17.
[22] This term was introduced by the art historian Michael Baxendall as a conceptual means to examine how artists and their works functioned in their original social, commercial and religious context. See Baxendall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University press, 1988).

functions and to disrupt and recast a consideration of simplistic and essentialist sexual and gender dichotomies. As David Halperin notes in *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*:

> As the very word implies, 'queer' does not name some natural kind or refer to some determinate object; it acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm. Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without essence.[23]

The theoretical themes that frame this thesis and my methodology are indelibly influenced by Kosofsky Sedgwick. While she does not figure prominently in this thesis, her seminal ideas address the spectre of the history of queer subjects and their sexuality. The mechanisms of power, official and unofficial discourse, and disclosure; all are recurring themes throughout Goff's historiography. For Kosofsky Sedgwick queer is that which is at odds with whatever is considered normal as legitimized by a dominant culture: queer disrupts binary thinking and practices. So why examine Goff and his architecture as queer then? Queer, and queer theory, "opens up the possibility of various readings, meanings, actions" and offers an "ever-shifting space for and means of resistance … it is a space in excess to the normative."[24] Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of the closet and of coming out as a continuous and performative act speaks to the way in which the subject of Goff's sexuality emerges and then disappears throughout critical and historical discussions of his work – specifically in the manner in which this thesis examines the way in which the discourses of the open secret and coded language of camp have determined the historiography of Goff in section one. Section two looks at a queer genealogy and phenomenology of Goff's architecture to argue how queer is made and acted out in Bavinger House. Again Kosofsky Sedgwick is useful here as she defines queer theory as an "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically."[25] In bringing ideas of queerness into conjunction

[23] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.
[24] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
[25] Ibid., 8.

with Bavinger House this thesis seeks to re-direct Goff's architecture beyond the conflicting interpretations of sexuality which have dominated the existing scholarship on Goff and his architecture.

PART ONE: A Queer Historiography … of Sorts

When the question of Goff's sexuality is approached – though intermittently so –current scholarship acknowledges it in two different ways. The first is the official and authoritative approach that focuses exclusively on his architecture and on his place within the canon of modernist architecture. This approach either completely ignores his sexuality or only addresses it as a biographical fact unconnected to his work. The second approach forges an interpretive link between Goff and his sexuality but takes different avenues to do so. Some scholars are coded in their language, obliquely implicating Goff's sexuality as embedded within his architecture. Other critics and historians are more overt, openly acknowledging Goff's sexual identity but still seeing it as fundamentally evident in the surfaces of his buildings. In both approaches, the uniqueness of Goff's architecture is presented as being encoded within the work through the maker. Moreover, both approaches trade in allusive tropes and cultural markers of homosexuality or Queerness which have not only served as descriptions of Goff and his architecture, and consequently have framed aesthetic and critical assessments of his work.

Standard Assessments of Bruce Goff

The standard assessment of Goff is of an eccentric, strange genius, who worked outside of the major metropolitan centers of architecture, creating an undefinable but undeniably individual body of work. His architecture draws from many disparate sources and influences and impels even the most objective of critics and historians to remark upon its originality. James Wood, the Director and President of the Art Institute of Chicago has observed that "Bruce Goff occupies a unique place in American architecture. His buildings look like those of no other architect."[26] Wood notes that the distinctiveness of Goff's work is predicated upon "his reliance on unusual materials [that] resulted in strange, sometimes futuristic combinations of colours and textures."[27] Wood's assessment of Goff is shared by other architects and critics. Amongst architectural historians and critics, a common theme emerges, with individual variation, when assessing Goff: flamboyant, eclectic, and wildly imaginative. Goff's combination of futuristic materials and elements with natural and organic materials mark him as an original, if not idiosyncratic,

[26] James N. Wood. "Forward," *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1995), 7.
[27] Ibid., 7.

practitioner of organic modernism. Both Goff's principal biographer, architectural historian David DeLong, and British architectural critic Rayner Banham have described a "folk art" and "grassroots" American tradition in his work, which they identify as deriving from an improvised and ad-hoc repurposing of local materials and the lack of integrated format and of "finish" on his surfaces.[28] The website landing page of the Bruce Goff Archive at the Art Institute of Chicago describes him as one of the "most inventive and iconoclastic architects of the twentieth century."[29] The biographical mythopoeias of Goff is shot through with such terms as "great," "genius," "master," "organic aficionado," "otherworldly," "expressionistic and romantic," "innovative and iconoclastic," which have informed his legacy as an architect.[30] The standard assessment of Goff – one that continues to be advocated to this day – is that of an innovative maverick and genius and an individualist-minded spirit who lived and worked in the American heartland.[31]

In contrast with these positive reactions to Goff's highly subjective approach to architecture, less charitable epithets appear amongst various critics, who describe him as "mad," "anarchistic," "vulgar," and an "undisciplined romantic."[32] Disdain for Goff's work also extended to his approach to teaching and mentoring young architects. Despite his reputation as a supportive teacher and mentor during his tenure at the University of Oklahoma, not all faculty and students appreciated his unorthodox pedagogy and its focus on individual expression and experimentation. In *Architectural Forum*'s 1948 feature on Goff, one returning student recounts how he views "with horror" the changes Goff made to the architecture schools' curriculum and is quoted as saying "when I look for a job I'm going to make it clear that I was a pre-Goff student."[33] The same article further cites a Columbia-trained, Oklahoma City-based architect who dismisses Goff's approach to design as "so much architectural finger painting."[34] De Long surmises that some of the objections to Goff's teaching methods were due to the more staid and conservative aesthetic nature of some students.[35] In De Long's interviews with alumni, it emerges

[28] "A Home is not a House," Reyner Banham and François Dallegret, *Art in America* 2,1965): 7.
[29] AIC Bruce Goff Archive http://www.artic.edu/research/bruce-goff-archive
[30] David DeLong, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff: Buildings and Projects 1916 -1974* (New York: Garland, 1977), 15-17.
[31] Saliga and Woolever, 4.
[32] DeLong, 13.
[33] "Pride of the Prairie," *Architectural Forum* 88 (May 1948): 99.
[34] Ibid, 99.
[35] De Long, 146.

that amongst the University of Oklahoma's professoriate Goff's teaching methods and "avant-garde" approaches to design were viewed with suspicion and contempt.[36] Individual faculty members (never named) allegedly harbored professional resentment of Goff as he was hired without possessing the standard academic credentials – he lacked both a Bachelor and a Master of Architecture degree.

Overall, the predominant narrative surrounding Goff and his architecture is that of a polarizing and, perhaps consequently, marginalized figure. David DeLong describes Goff as an often-overlooked master of modernist architecture.[37] Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable concurs. In her review of Goff' first retrospective held at the American Architectural Association in New York in early 1970, she broaches the issue of why she believes Goff's architecture has been excluded from the broader critical history of modernist architecture:

> [T]he Eastern Architectural Establishment doesn't really believe in Bruce Goff. He is apt to be dismissed as a figment of Midwestern imagination, inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, a designer of outré fantasies which elicit a polite frisson along the elite East Coast axis that has produced a generation of cool corporate splendour spawned by the "correct" International Style.[38]

Huxtable adroitly points towards another concern here: that Goff's "outré fantasies" go against the grain of the International Style's cool corporate splendour; that his architecture is not "correct". The ethos of modernism and its universalizing claims was as socially determinate in its hygienical zeal to envision a better world as it was misogynistic, racist, and homophobic. The writings of influential modernists such as Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos frequently made broad proclamations privileging the moral superiority and physical vitality of the heterosexual (and heteronormative) male body in their essays and manifestos.[39]

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[36] Ibid., 147.
[37] Ibid., 20.
[38] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Peacock Feathers and Pink Plastic," *New York Times*, February 8, 1970. https://www.nytimes.com/1970/02/08/archives/architecture-peacock-feathers-and-pink-plastic.html Accessed May 30, 2015.
[39] Architecture historian Beatriz Colomina, in her examination of the relationship between architects Le Corbusier and Eileen Gray suggests that Le Corbusier's peculiar "war" on Gray's architecture was related to both her gender and her non-heterosexuality. Describing a pivotal event which ultimately severed their friendship, Le Corbusier defaced one of walls of Gray's influential modernist house, E.1027 , painting a mural of a nude female without Gray's permission. Colomina interprets that "[t]his extraordinary scene, a defacement of Gray's architecture, was perhaps even an effacement of her sexuality" and an assertion of Le Corbusier's masculinity. See: Beatriz Colomina, "Battle Lines: E. 1027," Renaissance and Modern Studies: Space and Gender 39, no 1 (1996): 95-105..

Goff's dismissal by the elite architectural establishment, as Huxtable hints at in her review, seems as much predicated upon his sexuality as on his lack of formal education and professional association with the leading schools and figures of modernist architecture in mid-twentieth century America. Within the canon of American architectural history, Goff is an anomaly, an outlier. He is tangentially associated with the organic school of architecture, yet his architecture is also viewed as a subgenre of the Prairie School of Architecture due to the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on his formative work. Marcus Wiffen appraises Goff as of one of the most original architects categorizing him in his "Wrightian" category of American architecture.[40] Official architectural history places Goff in proximity to canonical movements in architecture yet does not see him as part of the broader narrative or canon of mid-twentieth century American modernism. Instead, he remains an interstitial figure, confined to a subgenre of American Modernism (Prairie School, Organic School), whose "outré originality" has secured a romanticized narrative for his life and work: Goff the individualistic genius. This has emerged as the operative paradigm in historiographical treatments of Goff, in both scholarly and non-scholarly media.

It is easy to see how Goff's non-normative sexuality could be made to fit quite easily within this narrative – marshalled as another instance of his unorthodoxy. This, however, has not been the typical response to his work. Consider the retrospective exhibition organized by the Art Institute of Chicago in 1995 and entitled *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present*. The catalogue for the show, introduced and edited by Pauline Saliga and archive director Mary Woolever, consists of chapters individually authored by historians, architects, and architectural critics, as well as friends and colleges of Goff's. Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect or period of Goff's work and life and covers subjects such as Goff's artistic influences and interests, his experimentation in geometry and musical composition, his impact as a teacher and mentor, and his unique contributions to architecture: the minutiae of his life and work are examined in scholarly detail.[41] And yet no mention is made of Goff's arrest nor of his resignation from the school of architecture – he simply "left."[42] Despite the fact that

[40] Marcus Wiffen. In "Chapter 6: Styles That Have Flourished since 1945," *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to The Styles*, (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), 268-69.
[41] In 1990 The Art Institute of Chicago received Goff's comprehensive archive through the Shin'enKan Foundation, Inc. and Goff's estate executor, Joe Price.
[42] Saliga and Woolever, 15.

Goff's sexual orientation had been publicly announced in the early 1980s and claimed as an important engine for his creative production, for the Art Institute of Chicago it seems to have been entirely irrelevant.

The omission of Goff's' sexuality persists even to this day. A 2013 master's thesis by Francesca Hankins scrupulously examines the historiography of Goff, claiming that "the 20th-century modern architectural canon marginalized Goff's design work."[43] Yet Hankins avoids any consideration of the possibility that this marginalization may have stemmed from attitudes towards his sexuality; in fact, there is no acknowledgement of Goff's sexual identity in the entire thesis. This is not simply a student oversight. Scholar Carol Mason recounts her dismay upon attending an architectural history conference on Goff in 2011 where she noted that not one scholar ever mentioned his sexuality nor considered it as a subject worthy of scholarship.[44]

Not all sources on Goff ignore his sexuality entirely, however. Preceding the Art Institute of Chicago exhibition and catalogue by seven years, David DeLong's *Bruce Goff: Towards Absolute Architecture* remains the definitive scholarship on Goff's Life and work.[45] DeLong's examination of Goff's multifarious practice as an artist, designer, professor, mentor, and an architect is comprehensive in its study of Goff's floor plans, drawings, relationship with his clients, colleagues, and students and of Goff's personal and professional life. De Long first met Goff in 1972 when he undertook doctoral research on Goff and maintained an active friendship with the architect until his death.[46] *Towards Absolute Architecture* provided a more detailed personal and biographical portrait of Goff than did De Long's 1977 dissertation, and included personal accounts and recollections from De Long himself as well as friends and clients such as Joe Price, and Gene and Nancy Bavinger.[47] The 1988 monograph openly refers to Goff's

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[43] Francesca Hankins, "The Marginalized Maverick: A Critical Analysis of Bruce Goff's Continuous Present." M.S. Arch. Thesis, Washington State University, 2013.

[44] Carol Mason, *Oklahomo: Lessons in Unqueering America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 120.

[45] Officially, it was architect Jeffery Cook who wrote the first monograph on Goff (*The Architecture of Bruce Goff*. Manchester: Granada, 1978). Cook was known for his interest in organic architecture, and it was he who designated Goff as an "organic" architect. However, DeLong's 1988 monograph, *Bruce Goff :Towards Absolute Architecture,* remains the most extensively researched and authoritative publication.

[46] De Long's thesis was initially submitted in 1976 (Columbia University) and published in 1977 as *Bruce Goff: Towards Absolute Architecture*. See, David Gilson De Long, *The Architecture of Bruce Goff: Buildings and Projects 1916 -1974* (New York: Garland Press, 1977). His 1988 monograph is an extension of this doctoral research

[47] Architect Herb Greene was a former student and studio assistant to Goff during early 1950s. Green claims that Goff's homosexuality was known amongst those close to him and "that Goff had had sex with other men – students from the university." Greene claims that he learned this only after leaving The University of Oklahoma. Contrary to

sexuality in two brief paragraphs towards the conclusion of a chapter on the buildings Goff designed during his tenure as chair and professor at the University of Oklahoma's school of architecture from 1947 until 1955. As DeLong tells us, Bruce Goff was charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor on the University of Oklahoma Campus on Saturday, November 26, 1955.[48] Goff was formally charged in Cleveland County court where he pleaded innocent and was released on a $2500 bond with the condition that he leave Norman.[49] DeLong explains the circumstances surrounding the 1955 arrest in an endnote. There is, however, no further discussion or examination of this incident; rather, it is presented briefly as fact which marked the end of Goff's teaching career and of his time spent in Norman, Oklahoma.[50] DeLong's acknowledgment of Goff's arrest thus appears to be strictly a biographical footnote in a work that is more generally concerned with presenting a formal and stylistic discussion of Goff's architecture. Delong talks about sexuality as biographical – divorced from any formal or aesthetic analysis of Goff's architecture. Goff's arrest is duly noted by DeLong as a biographical event yet also indicates a tacit acknowledgment of Goff's sexuality. Further complicating a formal analysis of Goff's *oeuvre*, his architecture becomes linked to the scandal and thus becomes hidden so that the focus can be on the building, evading salaciousness, and out of a concern for respectability, returning Goff to the closet, so to speak. Not everything is closeted however; even after Price's posthumous recollection of Goff in *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* was published, the issue of sexuality waxes and wanes within the critical and historical accounts of Goff's life and work that have either ignored it or mention it in passing.

Goff, Greene doesn't see Goff's sexuality as having a direct effect upon his work. The original source for this quote was taken from Herb Greene's website portfolio, from the page "Personal Influences," under a "heading titled "Did BG's Sexual Orientation Influence his Architecture?" http://www.herbgreene.org/GREENE%20IMAGES/Architecture/BUILT%20WORK/INFLUENCES/BRUCE%20GOFF.htm Originally Accessed June 28, 2016. Attempting to access the same link on 20 June 2019 reveals that Green's website has been re-designed with much of the original content removed.

[48] See note 12 above.

[49] Kyuk Logan, "Famous Designer Arrested," *Oklahoma City News*, 2 December 2, 1955.

[50]DeLong, 324.

An Architecture Imbued with Sexuality: Oblique Eye for The Queer Guy

If then, for the most part, the dominant and authoritative approach to Goff has been to isolate his sexuality and to either separate it from his work or ignore it altogether, there are nevertheless moments – both within the dominant discourse and outside of it – where a different approach emerges. Despite an objective and neutral approach to Goff's work, David DeLong occasionally furnishes an assessment that points towards Goff's sexuality. In one instance he suggests that Goff's use of geometric floor plans turn inward to offer an external appearance of openness yet also provide secluded spaces, a phenomenon which DeLong interprets as reflecting a predilection for secluded spaces stemming from his personal experiences. DeLong suggests that Goff himself did not like being outdoors, perhaps "because of his fear of exposure stemming from the public disclosure of his arrest in 1955."[51] Furthermore, DeLong interprets Goff's aversion to the outdoors as paradoxical, since Goff's architecture was "situated in the rural landscape, often in open fields or clearings."[52] Overall, in spite of the occasional attempt at biographical interpretation, DeLong does not use Goff's sexuality in his interpretations of Goff's architecture in an overdetermined fashion; however, his writing does include a mild attempt to see a psychological component to Goff's approach to design and an awareness of the paradox created by the settings he chose for his dwellings, contrary to his habits and preferences. Goff's homosexuality does not play a prominent role in DeLong's treatment of his work but is brought up fleetingly and obliquely as an aspect of interpretive explanations of Goff's personality and habits as an architect.

Oblique references to Goff's sexuality have not only been made as an attempt to interpret his work but have also been employed to describe Goff's person, employing coded language as a surreptitious way of indicating his homosexuality. Such coded language emerges even in objective journalistic accounts of his life and work and is specifically apparent in a published account of his 1955 arrest [Fig. 4]. News of his arrest was announced in the December 2, 1955 edition of the *Oklahoma City News* in an article titled "Famous Designer Arrested", describing Goff as a "designer" rather than an "architect." This semantic sleight of hand confers an effeminate cast

[51] Ibid., 335.
[52] Ibid., 342.

upon his profession and points to his homosexuality "through the conjunction of homophobia and misogyny" commonly associated with the figure of a (male) interior designer/decorator."[53]

Assessments of Goff's architecture have at times perpetuated such veiled suggestions of perversion and pathology linked to sexuality. Such veiled suggestions not only operated as shibboleths of homosexuality but imbricated sexuality into depreciatory assessments of his architecture. In his survey *Architecture in the United States* architectural historian Dell Upton describes Bavinger House as a "transparent metaphor of nature," belying a stylistic conceit: whatever is human-made is "artificial, refined corrupt but also *effete* (emphasis mine)." [54] The word "effete" is defined as pretentiousness, feebleness, or effeminacy,[55] and Upton's semantic choice to use it is indicative of how a polysemic word can operate both as a stylistic assessment and as a personal attack couched as aesthetic judgment. Upton's combination of "effete" and "corrupt" suggests a moral judgment of Goff's architecture: buildings cannot be corrupt but people can. The coded term "effete" refers to weakness, decadence, a lack of vitality when used to describe someone, and is most often used to describe a *particular kind of* male: if not an emasculated male, then certainly a homosexual one. In Upton, then, a pathologized language of criticism surfaces though descriptions of Goff's person and his architecture. If Upton's language positions Goff as a modernist "failure" through its pointedly codified associations with sexuality, Goff's lack of formalist rigour (the credo of modernist architecture) is dismissed as disingenuous and unnatural. The upshot of Upton's deft use of "effete" is to pathologize Goff though his architecture. Indeed, there are overtones here of Michel Foucault's *scientia sexualis* – a discourse of sexuality that codifies and classes subjects (that is, people) according to their sexual conduct, further linking that conduct to Christian notions of sin and practices of confession. The disclosure of sexual conduct serves as a means of identification and regulation of behavior. It is inherently political as it is a knowledge that frames sexuality through a rhetoric of censure and an apparatus of power. Upton's allusion to Goff's homosexuality similarly frames the critical reception of Goff and his architecture and though a discourse that further embeds that sexuality onto the surfaces of his architecture: as Foucault pithily summarizes, "Sex, the explanation for everything."[56] As we

[53] Peter McNeil, "Designing Women: Gender, Sexuality and the Interior Decorator, c. 1890-1940," Art History 17, no 4 (December 1990): 638.
[54] Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 134.
[55] *The Oxford Dictionary* of Current *English,*. Revised 2nd Edition, s.v. "effete."
[56] Michel Foucault, Robert J. Hurley trans., *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 78.

shall see, this pattern of thinking pervades other examinations of Goff's work, framing his sexuality as a basis for both formal examination and biographical interpretation.

The Category is Camp: Sontag and Jencks

The most prominent way of attempting to track the influence of Goff's sexuality within his architecture draws on the implications of his use of building materials and their particular valence as Camp. Here too the pattern of coded references repeats itself, emphatically so in the architectural historian and critic Charles Jencks's 1973 survey *Modern Movements in Architecture*, where Jencks categorizes Goff as an example of "Camp Architecture."[57]

Jencks defines Camp architecture as one that relies exceedingly on a singular statement or effect expressed by its preoccupation with artifice, exaggeration, decoration, and surface at the expense of content or function.[58] Jencks locates within Camp architecture an "easy cliché" that is "disassociated from form" and a "new sensibility which definitely claims the right of spontaneous expression leading perhaps to insult."[59] However, what could this insult be? To an aesthetic sensibility? Notions of good taste? The answer comes clear when we realize that Jencks's taxonomy of Camp architecture draws from Susan Sontag's influential 1964 essay "Notes on Camp," in which she defined "Camp" as a distinct cultural phenomenon: a private code which derives from homosexual sensibility:

> A sensibility (as distinct from an idea) is one of the hardest things to talk about; but there are special reasons why Camp, in particular, has never been discussed. It is not a natural mode of sensibility, if there be any such. Indeed, the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration. Moreover, Camp is esoteric – something of a private code, a badge of identity, even among small urban cliques.[60]

Sontag concludes her essay by identifying the "*peculiar* [italics mine] relation between Camp taste and homosexuality."[61] [62] The "insult" that Jencks alludes to might be understood as a

[57] Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), 190.
[58] Ibid., 191.
[59] Ibid., 90-91.
[60] Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (Penguin Modern Classics, 2009), 105.
[61] Sontag, ibid., 117.
[62] Jencks,193.

reference to an over-refined aesthetic sensibility – one that opposes the tenets of modernism's insistence upon integrated materials and forms. Camp lacks gravitas and sobriety but, as Jencks culls from Sontag's writing, what can be understood as an insult extends beyond Camp's aesthetic effrontery; it is a visual marker of difference that disorientates and dis-integrates the assumed (heterosexual) purity of objects.

Jencks acknowledges "Camp" architecture as a counter-movement to the more formalized and formulaic architectural modernism that prevailed in mid-twentieth century America, yet claimed that the Camp architect "does not try to produce integrated, serious work."[63] Camp architecture lacks refinement and rigorous, high-minded seriousness. It is described as "a mental set towards all sorts of objects that fail from a serious point of view."[64] The riposte to this statement is the question: "From whose serious point of view?" If an identifiably Camp architecture lacks integration does it necessarily mean a lack of seriousness, rigour, or high-mindedness? What constitutes architectural failure, and by what standards? Jencks fails to provide a thorough explanation of why Goff is a Camp architect and why, consequently, that constitutes failure. For the critical historiographer, the question becomes how such easy clichés can be discerned and thus described in Goff's work.

Jencks makes no direct reference to homosexuality in his definition of "Camp" architecture, but clearly follows Sontag's more forthright codification. While Sontag does not claim the relationship between camp and homosexuality to be exclusive and states that "not all homosexuals have Camp taste," she sees homosexuals (specifically urban homosexuals) as constituting the "vanguard – and most articulate audience – of Camp."[65] According to Sontag, one of the defining sentiments identified with Camp is that of irony.[66] Yet Goff was not ironic and in fact, took his work and his personal stake and approach to architecture seriously. Nor, as Jencks would have it, was Goff interested only in producing one effect; indeed, Goff would claim that "the final design must show evidence of being derived from a multifarious world."[67] But perhaps aesthetic accuracy is not a main concern here. The esoteric references that Sontag

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[63] Ibid, 195.
[64] Sontag, 105.
[65] Sontag, 117.
[66] Ibid.,120.
[67] Bruce Goff, William Murphy, and Louis Muller, "Introduction," *Bruce Goff: A Portfolio of the Work of Bruce Goff*, (New York: Architectural League of New York, 1970), Ii.

associates with the vanguard of Camp – homosexuals – circulate as cultural shibboleths of a predominantly coded language. Jencks re-asserts a veiled reference to sexual identity that insinuates itself in his critical assessment through his classification of Goff's architecture.

Like Sontag, Jencks perceived and indeed invoked a close connection between the related phenomena of Camp and kitsch. It is no surprise, then, that six years later he referred to Goff as "the Michelangelo of Kitsch."[68] In a text published in *Bizarre Architecture*, Jencks re-classifies Goff as a kitschy example of "Ad Hoc Juxtaposition" by virtue of the way the architect employs "various geometries and materials in a way which is spatial, structural and metaphorical all at once." Jencks's language now moves away from the Camp sensibility of Sontag's "urban pastoral" towards a visual analysis that expresses a different type of revulsion. This revulsion is rooted in the potentially threatening associations of the primordial in Goff's interiors where Jencks describes a "combination of viscous surfaces, protoplasmic ooze, and hallucinogenic effects."[69] Jencks' descriptions of Goff are now moving towards something more abject, fascinating yet also revolting,[70] and the effect of this was to further excise Goff from the mainstream of architectural developments. The classic distinction between Camp and kitsch is that kitsch is naïve – deprived of any of Camp's artful self-referentiality. As postmodernism grew in importance, such self-referentiality was key. For Jencks, however, the playful and often ironic and rhetorical juxtaposition of materials, forms, signifiers, associated with the recognized and acclaimed architects of early post-modern architecture are not "seen" in Goff's work. Goff, for Jencks, was better understood as an outlier from any mainstream movement in architecture, modern or post-modern.

An important strand in writing about Goff thus depends on a procession of coded terms and references (designer, effete, Camp, kitsch) that are covertly understood by those versed in its nuances of meaning — operating as shibboleths, and thus constituting Goff's sexuality as an "open secret." But the open secret is, of course, not a secret at all; it operates as a tenuous social

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[68] Charles Jencks, *Bizarre Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 10.

[69] Ibid., 34-35.

[70] Julia Kristeva examines the idea of the abject as the state of horror experienced when confronted with an experience that disrupts the boundaries (binaries) between self and the Other and threatens one's life – or more specifically, one's subjective sense of one's' life. Commonly cited example of the abject are mucus, feces, and other such bodily viscera; matter out of place – or not contained in its proper place. See: Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia, 1982).

contract which maintains outward appearances of normality or respectability.[71] Art historian Christopher Reed argues that the "open secret" of homosexuality was paradoxical considering that the modernist art that challenged middle-class values also reinforced "the most fundamental of all capitalist values: individualism."[72] New modernist and avant-garde forms of art "allowed individuals to indulge in vicarious individualist transgression without risking loss of authority."[73] The possibility of a secret homosexuality, associated with difference, otherness, and the vicarious thrill of outrageousness and subversion, could never be openly declared. Such "performance" of secret-keeping became a "perpetual rehearsal of homosexual shame and heterosexual privilege."[74] While veiling itself in the pretense of social and aesthetic progressiveness, the open secret was, as Reed demonstrates, in fact a form of authority and control. The open secret by its very lack of articulation operates as power: it regulates the behavior of both those who hold the secret and the subject of the secret. Operating as a form of power, this dynamic of the open secret has contributed to the surrounding discourse of Goff's historiography, using coded language to see an essential homosexual identity or presence in his buildings. Eventually, in the hands of a Dell Upton, such coded language became a veiled *ad hominem* attack.

There are, however, critics who take another view of Goff and the question of how his sexuality can be interpreted as informing his approach towards architecture. These approaches valorize questions of sexuality and recast the previous symbolic violence of veiled language as a positive and sympathetic touchstone from which to re-assess the uniqueness of his work. It is to these approaches that I now propose to turn.

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[71] Reed, 137.

[72] Christopher Reed, "The Avant Grade and the Open Secret, in *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 137.

[73] Ibid.,137.

[74] Ibid.,137.

Sympathetic Advances, Essentializing Expositives

As a potential antidote to Upton, consider Joe Scanlon's review of the Art Institute of Chicago's exhibition in the British art periodical *Frieze* – a review which, unlike the exhibition that occasioned it – does openly addresses Goff's homosexuality and suggests that this identity determined the interior design of Bavinger house:

> Despite his purist, 'continuous present' approach, however, there are recurrent themes in Goff's work that reveal a lot about his understanding of people's domestic needs - and perhaps a little about being a gay Oklahoman architect during the Eisenhower era. It has to be mentioned that in 1955, at the relative height of his success and popularity, Goff was entrapped and arrested for 'endangering the morals of a minor,' forced to resign his chair at the University of Oklahoma [...] Revealingly, his designs of the 40s and 50s consisted of separate rooms or volumes arranged as satellites around a central tower or mast. In all of these, the volumes rarely touch or share walls. Instead, they are delineated as raised platforms, enclosed cylinders or hanging pods in which you could be isolated from the rest of the house, refuting the notion of the congenial, nuclear family and perhaps depicting Goff's own social experience.[75]

. Scanlon's review is the first direct attempt to cast Goff's sexuality as a palpable influence on his architecture. His visual analysis and identification of a gay or queer sensibility resides in a binary-entrenched comparison of the cohesive, unified nuclear family on the one hand and the presumed social and physical isolation of the queer architect on the other. Scanlon's consideration of the repressive climate of the 1950s is sympathetic, but sex and sexuality are still associated with social ostracization and thus are expressed through objects that do not connect and touch one another, and thus float in isolation, presumably like the cliched figure of the socially isolated homosexual in 1950s America. Addressing the social-political circumstances of Goff's milieu offers a less pathologizing formal interpretation of Goff's architecture, but still does not elude the essentializing associations which conflate gayness or queerness into Bavinger House as another manifestation of the *scientia sexualis*.

Similarly, in his 1997 book *Queer Space*, architectural curator Aaron Betsky also addresses the question of how Goff's sexuality is relevant to his architecture and how the kinds of spaces he created can be read as queer. But what does Betsky mean by this? The introduction

[75] Joe Scanlan, "No Place Like Home: The Architecture of Bruce Goff," *Frieze* no. 26 (January-February 1996): 57.

to *Queer Space* informs us that "the goal of queer space is orgasm."[76] Indeed, this is the predominant theme expressed throughout the various case studies of other architects and spaces examined in the book. Betsky is writing about spaces such as bathhouses, discos, cruising grounds and buildings identified with specific acts of queer activity – specifically the pursuit and act of gay sex. As regards to Goff, Betsky's visual analysis of focuses upon the architect's 1956 design for the Joe Price Studio [Fig. 5], a domestic "bachelor pad" designed for a heterosexual male by a "Queer architect."[77]

In Betsky's hands, the elements of the Joe Price Studio are highly sexualized, to the point of encompassing a ribald campiness. The examination centres on the conversation pit of the studio, a space where bachelor Price would entertain guests or dates. Betsky describes the central feature of the pit as a hydraulically operated coffee-table/bar that emerges "phallically" from the floor. A variety of other features are further cited as queer: the plush carpeting of the pit, a suspended ceiling of turkey feathers which hovered over the conversation pit, cloud-like, and the glass turkey inseminators decoratively appliquéd as triangular frames along the wall (Price was a successful turkey farmer/magnate). Betsky insists that Goff's interiors are queer due to their "enveloping softness".[78] For Betsky, queer space is orgasmic space and is emphatically about sex and sexual release.[79] He sees this in the Joe Price studio identifying Camp as being about a particular type of queer sex, a queered and Camped-up take on the heterosexual sex of the figure of the "randy bachelor." Perhaps Betsky is taking his cue from Ada Louise Huxtable's description of Price Studio in her 1970 review of Goff' first retrospective at the Architectural Association of America where she describes "the house for Joe Price was a Playboy dream if Playboy were an architect."[80] The sexual proclivities of the bachelor, and of his bespoke "Playboy dream" interior with its "chef-d'oeuvre of untrammeled, sybaritic fancy in gold anodyzed [*sic*] aluminum nylon carpeted floor and walls, goose feather ceilings and hanging plastic 'rain' is interpreted through the lens of a detached Camp sensibility towards sex (and in

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[76] Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1997), 17.

[77] The Price Studio had further additions added to when Joe Price later married and had children and the building itself was later renamed *Shin'enkan,* a Japanese word meaning "place of the faraway heart. The name was suggested by Goff who was re-commissioned by Price to design and supervise the construction of the additions. See: DeLong and Cook.

[78] Betsky, 91-92.

[79] Ibid., 5.

[80] Ibid,5

the case of Price's Studio, heterosexual sex).[81] Ultimately for Betsky, queer sex is about the sexual desires of a very particular type of queer sex: the sexual desires and activity of white, cisgender males both gay and straight.

In similar ways, Betsky and Scanlon represent a shift in writing on Goff. Their work takes an open approach to the architect's sexual identity, but still finds that sexuality expressed through the interior itself, as something innate and essential within it. This sympathetic shift in looking at Goff as a queer architect offers a corrective to the previous, pathologizing interpretations of his work. However, Scanlon and Betsky still rely on earlier assessments of Goff's work (its Campiness, for example) and ultimately employ his sexuality as a reductive lens through which to interpret his work. Sexuality is visually located and interpreted – and hence revealed – as essentially imbricated within his architecture. Gavin Butt reveals what is at stake in such writing:

> In most of these studies, the gay artist is appealed to as the "truth" of the work's meaning, the paintings themselves cast as confessional texts which speak to their maker's gay subjectivity in hidden or coded language. For Silver, author of a pioneering essay on gay identity and Pop art, "disclosure" is the preferred metaphor here, implying that the hermeneutic job at hand is one of unearthing, of making visible what is hidden, of making the silenced gay self speak.[82]

In this way, such an attempt remains hampered by interpretations of Goff's sexuality as something manifested in his architecture. Goff may now be considered "queer" rather than "homosexual" but the visual analysis remains the same: it is enmeshed in an essentialist assumption of what constitutes a taxonomical indicator of queerness, precisely, a queer essence or identity not made, but still interpreted as something ephemeral yet visually embedded in the architecture.

What we are seeing here, of course, is the impact of the emergence of gay and lesbian art history in the 1970s and its transition into queer studies in the 1990s. The investment in language that transparently speaks of – or to – the sexuality of an artist has political ramifications that

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[81] Ibid,.5.

[82] Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World: 1948 -1963* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 3-5. See also: Kenneth E. Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Hand Painted Pop: American Art in Transition 1955-1962*, ed. Russell Ferguson (New York: Rizzoli 1992), 179-203. Silver is specifically writing about painting; however, such interpretive acts of disclosure of a gay or queer artist through the deciphering of a "confessional text" applies to the way Goff and his work have been considered.

influence radical new possibilities in the scholarship of the lives and works of queer/homosexual subjects, forging a critical turn from a discussion of sexuality as a pathology towards a critique and re-examination of the institutions and discourses that have limited, submerged, and often erased gay and lesbian histories. Art historian Norman Bryson outlines the distinction between gay and lesbian studies and queer studies as "related yet distinct strands of thinking within art history and visual/cultural studies."[83] In Gay and Lesbian Studies, art history endeavors to restore visibility to a social group through inclusion in a canon considered as incomplete. The project of queer art studies, by contrast, questions the very field of institutional discourse. It regards stigmatization "as massively overdetermined, as connected to all dimensions of cultural normalization" and investigates "the ways in which structures of heteronormativity pervade the whole of the canon and its organization."[84] Betsky and Scanlon are instrumental in openly discussing Goff's sexuality, and Betsky in particular is resolute in his embrace of the language of queerness, yet their interpretation of Goff is still, for the most part, entrenched in the practices of Gay and Lesbian history: sexual orientation is read into the work in a literal way and hence, essentializes it. Yet such identification of a queer aesthetic is, I would propose, a limited and one-dimensional way of looking at Goff's work. Inherent qualities that, together, constitute a queer "essence," reside in the particular actions, objects, forms, and surfaces of whatever a queer body creates. The stereotypes and characteristics associated with homosexuality and queerness are seen as the biological traces or index of a visible sexual identity. Feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz identifies the notion of an "essence," and the practice of essentialization, as a codified constraint that "refers to the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes, and ahistorical functions that limit the possibilities of change and thus of social reorganization."[85] Such a practice is problematic as it limits the scope of multivalent interpretive possibilities, and limits our view of queer creators likewise. What might a more updated queer studies perspective look like? How can an architect claimed as queer by contemporary scholarship be seen as an active agent of queering space, rather than the passive conduit a stylistic trope of gayness or queerdom?

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[83] Norman Bryson, "Todd Haynes's Poison and Queer Cinema," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies* 1 (Winter 1999): n.pag. Visual & Cultural Studies Program, University of Rochester..https://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/bryson/bryson.html. Accessed 28 May, 2015

[84] Ibid.

[85] Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995). 84.

Carol Mason and Unqueering

Eighteen years after Betsky's reclamation of Goff as not merely a "gay" or "homosexual" architect but emphatically a "queer architect," academic Carol Mason picks up the dropped thread of queer scholarship on Goff. Her writing offers an antidote to the essentializing aspects of Betsky insofar as she provides a social and historical context that enables us to understand how identity is affected by historical forces. In her study of Goff in *Oklahomo: Lessons in Unqueering America,* she examines the historical and social forces that were brought to bear on gay men in Oklahoma in the 1950s.[86] Specifically, Mason examines the historical removal of queers (her term) from public and civic institutions and describes such acts of erasure as "unqueering,"[87] For Mason, the term unqueering references a direct form of social engineering achieved through censorship and punishment. She examines how queerness is erased not only from official discourse but is physically erased by the elimination of queer individuals from social, political, and educational institutions. Unqueering is "the removal of queer persons and identities from the public sphere."[88] Mason situates her examination of Goff's 'unqueering' within the social-historical context of mid-twentieth century America, during the decade following the end of WWII when the executive branch of the United States government-initiated loyalty reviews for all federal employees under the pretext of national security. In 1947, "Executive Order 9835," more commonly known as the Loyalty Order, was signed into effect by President Harry Truman and sought to protect American institutions and individuals from communist influence and the subversion of democratic society. It was during this climate of fear, referred to as the Red and Lavender Scares of the mid-1950s that Goff worked, and it was during this period in which he was allegedly entrapped on a morals charge. Institutions such as the University of Oklahoma were Land Grant institutions and legally obliged by Executive Order 9835 to report and dismiss suspected subversives like communists and homosexuals.[89]

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[86] In *Oklahomo: Lessons in Unqueering America* Carol Mason uses the state of Oklahoma as a case study to examine how the conservative right has attempted to suppress LGBTQ rights and individuals from the 1950s to the present. Mason examines the lives of anti-gay crusaders Sally Kern and Anita Bryant in contrast to the lives of two teachers who were affected by anti-gay rhetoric and professional dismissal: James Hargis and Bruce Goff. Mason coins the term "unqueering" to describe and articulate the forces in which the conflation of homosexuality with the threat of communist or un-American subversion impacted the lives (and livelihoods) of rural, non-metropolitan gays and lesbians.

[87] Mason,5.

[88] Ibid., 5.

[89] Ibid., 117.

Addressing a broader context lacking in previous scholarship on Goff, Mason notes the overall political climate of the 1950s pervasively eroded substantial support and access the to many social and institutional networks that otherwise would have accepted Goff. "The quiet accommodation of queer eccentrics that had characterized many Oklahoma locales gave way to overt state repression of homosexuality."[90] While Mason's socio-historical examination of Goff is firmly situated within the realm of Queer Studies, Mason is not a visual artist or an art historian and when examining examples of Goff's buildings her otherwise sure-footed analysis falters. Instead, Mason reiterates Betsky's visual analysis of the Price House and consequently repeats Bestsky's claim that Goff's work was about sex, specifically the sexual identity of a white, cis-gendered male. Mason recognizes the construction of a systemic process that identifies queerness in order to eradicate it, yet she does not make a case for looking at his architecture as *constructed* though queerness. Instead, the previous paradigms of interpretation are repeated. There is, however, a way to begin to look at Goff through another lens as a means to take up the interpretive baton Mason has dropped and to see Goff as proactively making a space that is queer, drawing knowingly from his experience. What is required is a reading of queerness that is less about the expression of a pre-existing sensibility and more about the potentiality of something that is *done to and perhaps through* the architecture: a queerness less about being than a queerness that is constructed.

[90] Ibid.,7.

PART TWO: Queer Construction Time

> "The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything. This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks , it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen."[91]
>
> — Gertrude Stein

> "Queer always exceeds the monologue dimension of signification. It is emanating in all directions – in time and space.[92]
>
> — Esther Hutfless & Elisabeth Schäfer

To define or identify what is queer is to define it by what it is not: queer is predicated on binary oppositions.[93] To queer as a verb is to shift from an identity that appears in opposition to the norm and move towards action, that is, to "move from a human being to a human doing."[94] The act of queering or of queering something does not eradicate the binary but reveals the tenuous assumptions that sustain binary oppositions. To "queer", as Nikki Sullivan explains, is to initiate "a deconstructive approach to the hierarchized binary opposition" of concepts such as heterosexual/homosexual, natural/unnatural, and so forth.[95] In the second half of this thesis I shall argue how Goff's Bavinger House disrupts a number of binaries: that between inside and

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[91] Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," in *The Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Carl Van Vechten (New York: Random House, 1946), 461-2.
[92] Esther Hutfless & Elisabeth Schäfer: Thinking the Transience of the Living / Promising a Queer Philosophy.https://www.academia.edu/10600314/Hutlfess_and_Schäfer_Thinking_the_Transience_of_the_Living_Promising_a_Queer_Philosophy_english_version_
[93] Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (*New* York: New York University Press 2003), 51.
[94] Jacobson, 516.
[95] Sullivan, 51.

outside; that between natural and man-made; that between straight and twisted. My claim is that in doing so, the building does not manifest queerness, so much as it creates it.

One of these binaries I wish to begin with, is that between good taste and bad taste, which has framed and often limited assessments of Goff's work. In her writing on Camp and Camp aesthetics, Susan Sontag reveals the tension she experiences when confronted by its blurring of the boundary between good and bad taste: "I am strongly drawn to Camp, and almost as strongly offended by it," pointing out that to tread that boundary "requires a deep sympathy modified by revulsion."[96] The binary tension of a Camp aesthetic, or sensibility, as described by Sontag, and of its association with homosexual men (i.e. queer men) is partially predicated upon revulsion. Revulsion for Sontag "modifies" any sympathy or pleasure from the Camp object or gesture. The Camp object/aesthetic/sensibility is identified as revolting, unpleasant, and possibly abnormal: Camp reveals and refuses the binary between normative and non-normative taste. Camp thus "queers" things and re-orientates the way they are experienced and perceived. In this sense, Bavinger House is supremely Camp, for it blurs the aesthetic binaries of good/bad taste though its juxtaposition of recycled objects and materials with organic and crafted ones. And yet, as we have seen, discussions of the Campiness of Goff's architecture are riddled with difficulty in their essentializing approaches, taking "Campiness" as an expression of a previously existing and innate queer identity. Taking this into consideration, can discussion of the elements of Camp in Goff's work ever be anything more than a mere repetition of the interpretive gesture that positions his architecture as a transparent reflection of his innate homosexuality? In response to this question I would like to pose another: what if Goff's unorthodox juxtapositions of conventional and Camped-up materials do not *express* his queerness so much as they function as the agents of a queering process?

Goff the *Bricoleur*

A key critical concept that can help us understand this distinction, and thus the radical character of Goff's disruption, is that of *bricolage*. Claude Lévi-Strauss defines "*bricolage*" as "playing around with the elements available to us in such a way as to bend their meanings to our own

[96] Sontag, 175.

purposes."[97] I want to pause on this notion of bending – a very action-oriented term – because it offers a different way of thinking about the role of Camp in Goff's architecture.

In key ways, to 'Camp-up' an object is to perform an act of *bricolage*: putting familiar elements to work in different contexts so as to warp their conventional associations. The design of Bavinger House itself, and its vital structural elements, does this – redeploying old components and *bricolaging* them into new structures that enact a "*détournement"* of recuperated materials through the re-routing of their intended uses re-orientate spatial experience. I will discuss this at greater length in the pages to come, but for now one example will suffice: an image of the main floor as seen through interior ponds and visitor area. [Fig. 6]. The view, photographed at a low eye level next behind one of the interior ponds depicts a space composed of materials sourced from – in fact recycled from – organic and industrial processes. The ironstone used to construct the wall in the background was recuperated from the site and from a quarry nearby.[98] Within this wall, as well as along the edge of the pond, are large blue chunks of crystalline blue glass cullet, the scrap material left over from large-scale industrial glass manufacturing. Hovering to the centre-left of the image is one of the carpeted sleeping pods, suspended by steel rods and airplane cable, and surrounded with netting. The stairs leading up to the sleeping pods are wooden treads supported by industrial strength cables; the floor resembles a standard flagstone floor popular in outdoor patios of the mid-1950s but here instead forms most of the ground level flooring and steps. Behind the sleeping pod is a contemporary electric heater and to the far right is a vintage (but working) pot belly stove. Within this limited view of Bavinger house already we can see how Goff assembles objects and materials of different origins within this space. Bavinger house does not simply put unexpected elements together, however; it often juxtaposes elements that are more usually at opposite ends of a pole: inside and outside, for example, or man-made and organic. And as we have seen, to the extent that something destabilizes the easy binaries that underpin identity, such destabilizing of mater can be claimed as engaging in a process of queering.

The assemblage and juxtaposition of objects in a domestic interior seems antithetical to modernist design principles; indeed, the figure of the collector and the act of collecting harkens

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[97] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind,* trans. Doreen Weightman and John Weightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 14.
[98] DeLong, 144.

back to nineteenth-century bourgeois practices. Art historian John Potvin examines the idea of collecting as a queered act, drawing from theorist Walter Benjamin the idea of the collector as a patchwork allegorist, assembling *bric-a-brac* as subjectively coded objects of desire and performativity. The collection and curating of *bric-a-brac*, historically associated with the figure of the bourgeois 'lady of the house" and the "aesthete" *defies* the modernist imperative of ascetic space.[99] Potvin notes: "Like the queer figure, the collector holds close his stories, revealing only to a privileged few parts, tidbits that are as opaque and fragmentary as the archives. *Bric-a-brac* functions in a similar way, as it is often only scraps, lonely and lost parts of a perceived whole whose former glory has since passed."[100] What Goff is collecting for his interiors is – in fact – a *bric-a-brac* of sorts, a call back to the bourgeois practice of collecting and the gendered notion of collecting and assembling *bric-a-brac* as perversion due to its associations with the feminine. However, the objects Goff assembles are not the rarified objects of exotic cultures; they are the cast-offs, rejects, and unwanted waste of modernist production. These cast off and unvalued scraps are incorporated into a domestic setting, defying the modernist imperative for clean surfaces and clear sightlines, and are absorbed into the interior of Bavinger House as a new *kind* of bric-a-brac for a new vison of a 1950s domestic space.

Architectural critic Jonathan Boorstein identifies a queer design aesthetic that offers an alternative interpretation of what makes space queer. Like Jencks, Boorstein draws from Sontag but moves away from Camp. Boorstein sees queer design deploying three defining characteristics: Camp, drag, and bricolage.[101] A Camp aesthetic is subversive and ironic, drag is an adornment for theatrical effect, and bricolage is "the assemblage and appropriation of elements – real or referential" and serve "to build a queer identity for one's self or to identify as queer to others."[102]

Seen through the lens of *bricolage*, then, Camp is reoriented away from essence and towards action. Indeed, Boorstein suggests that such agential function is at the very heart of *bricolage*, giving it a power to bend and shape. *Bricolage*, for Boorstein, is a practice that

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[99] John. Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2014), 67.
[100] Ibid., 67.
[101] Jonathan Boorstein, "Queer Space" in Building *Bridges: Diversity, Connections. American Institute of American Architects National Diversity Conference Proceedings* (Washington DC: American Institute of Architects 1995). 73.
[102] Ibid.74

doesn't *express* queer identity so much as it *builds* it; his use of the term "build" shifts the stress of the term "queer" from an adjective that defines a visual aesthetic to a verb. Queer is no longer the passive expression of an identity; it is now a proactive construction of a particular kind of experience. What can be interpreted as queer is no longer strictly latent and embedded within the work. It can be seen as process, or as Goff described his designs, a "composition."[103]

This is a significantly different view of Camp than the one that has hegemonized previous assessments of Goff's work. On this view, Bavinger House is no longer identified as queer because of its Campy aesthetic, but because of its dynamic potential to shift and disrupt the experience of space itself. With this move, we are leaving behind a view in which architectural queerness is a manifestation of a pre-existing sensibility and moving towards something more actively productive of newness. Bavinger House, I want to assert, can be read as a composition and configuration of domestic space that disrupts the conventional structure and layout – and hence the quotidian flow and interactions – of the standard mid-twentieth century home. The relationship between its *bricolaged* surfaces and spatial disorientations determine a space that is unconventional and eschews the binaries of interior-exterior relationships but also of the relationships between the organic/inorganic, the natural and unnatural, rejecting the traditional hierarchical layout of domestic architecture, and even rigid 1950s binary notions of sexuality. The design of the house itself and its vital structural elements redeploy old components, effectively *bricolaging* them into new structures that 'detourn' the recuperated materials and re-orientate spatial experience[104]. All of this adds up to a space that is very queer.

Goff and Stein

There are a multitude of ways in which this claim may be supported, but perhaps the foundational one is in reference to Goff's education. Goff had no formal academic training in art or architecture beyond high school. His professional education as an architect derived from his prodigious talent developed during his apprenticeship with Rush, Endicott and Rush. His

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[103] Welch, 246.

[104] The term dertournement refers to a technique developed in the 1950s by Situationist theorist Guy Debord and is defined by the integration of extant artistic productions into new forma that shift, and in effect, hijack and change their meaning. Here, I am employing the term to describe how Goff's ^ materials are redirected from their original uses and meanings and re-incorporated in new and surprising ways. See: Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 2006).

introduction to works of art, architecture, music, literature, philosophy, did not occur within the academy or university; there was no linear or cumulative trajectory of a curriculum in Goff's education. His intellectual formation was influenced through his interactions with other architects, artists, friends, and colleagues and it was this fragmentary acquisition of cultural knowledge that coalesced and thus informed his theories of architecture. Goff, in other words, was an autodidact, developing his artistic and architectural sensibilities through the ideas and cultural artifacts and information he encountered unsystematically. Specifically, Goff selected parts and passages of artworks, other architectural works, music, and writings that resonated with his own aesthetic sensibilities which were then incorporated into his designs [105]. And these he put to use, not in slavish or even accurate ways, but very much to his own ends and purposes.

One of Goff's borrowings – and a critical one for Bavinger House -- was Gertrude Stein's notion of the "continuous present." The notion was derived from his reading of Stein's 1925 essay "Composition as Explanation." There, Stein describes the act of composition as an act which draws from and blurs temporal knowledge and experience. She writes of "a constant recurring and beginning … a marked direction in the direction of being in the present although naturally, I had been accustomed to past, present, and future, and why, because the composition forming around me was a prolonged present."[106] The continuous present is not, as the term seems to imply, an isolated moment of the present or even the possibility of a never-ending present, but of a moment of action which draws from experience and offers a marked direction – a future potentiality. Furthermore, Goff's adaptation of the term is to this day cited as if it formed a manifesto for his work, and yet it doesn't proceed the work the way other architectural manifestos have, as architectural historian Beatriz Colomina points out. Rather, Goff's idea of the continuous present operates as a pseudo-manifesto describing both his practice and the work he sought to build as "a blueprint for the future."[107]

Goff's interpretation of how the continuous present is articulated in his design philosophy is ambiguous. He employs the term to describe his design process for each new project – a "beginning and beginning again," as he quotes from Stein – but also to describe the intended effect of his architecture, specifically the effect his interiors would inculcate as one inhabited and

[105] DeLong, 322.
[106] Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," in *The Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Carl Van Vechten (New York: Random House, 1946), 461.
[107] Beatriz Colomina, *Manifesto Architecture: The Ghost of Mies* (Sternberg Press: Berlin, 2014), 1.

moved through them. He explicitly described Bavinger House in these terms, as: "a primitive example of the continuity of space-for-living … it is not a 'back-to-nature' concept of living space. It is a living with nature today and every day [in] space, again as part of our continuous present."[108] What are we to make of such claims in light of Bavinger House?

It is generally conceded that Goff, while innovative, was not theoretically rigorous in elaborating his ideas. Thus, David De Long observes that Goff's ideas, while aphoristic, "tended to be unclear and were never fully developed or articulated."[109] Taken as an instance of *bricolage*, however, this may be a strength rather than a weakness. In fact, it may lie at the root of a genuinely queer interpretation of Goff's oeuvre.

Consider this: Goff's loosely defined design philosophy of the continuous present draws exclusively from a queer source (Stein) that discursively addresses repetitive events (composition in Stein's words) and the themes of temporality and trajectory in queered manner. Stein's queered manner stems from her deconstructive use of language and syntax. Stein is not only describing the "topic" of her essay but through skewed and unconventional use of syntax and repetition is describing the process of the "dispersal of old structures into new ones which employ the elements of the old but often in new functions."[110] Stein not only deconstructs language to generate new potentialities of meaning through repetition and description but performs something akin to the act of *bricolage* – dispersing old forms into new ones. These new forms generate new experiences and new meanings and, to return to Boorstein, build a queer/queered identity.[111]

Goff's misinterpretation; or rather, re-interpretation of Stein's "continuous present," shifts and re-orients itself throughout his comments. In a parallel way, he hoped that his buildings would shift and reorient their inhabitants – much as Stein's altered syntax did. He sought to achieve an ever-changing space, a space of unconventional levels and trajectories and of visual sensations of objects and surfaces that bedazzle, bewilder and perceptually shift as one moves

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[108] Ibid, 294.
[109] Saliga and Woolever, 30.
[110] Bruce Bassoff, "Gertrude Stein's 'Composition as Explanation'," *Twentieth Century Literature: Gertrude Stein* 24 (Spring 1978): 78.
[111] Daniela Miranda identifies Stein's primary obsessions as repetition and difference and argues that for Stein "description involves repetition rather than insistence" See, Daniela Miranda, "The Queer Temporality of Gertrude Stein's Continuous Present," *Gender Forum* 54 (2015).n.pag. http://www.genderforum.org/issues/special-issue-early-career-researchers-iii/the-queer-temporality-of-gertrude-steins-continuous-present/ Accessed October 28, 2016.

through this space, generating an "effect of being 'out of place." This intentional dis-orientation of space and of "being out of place" shifts the focus from the expressive aesthetic of a queer sensibility conventionally associated with Camp, towards an agency that informs the *experience* of space as phenomenologically queer. Understood as a manifestation of the "continuous present," Goff saw the experience of Bavinger House as a series of constant reorientations for the visitor as they moved through space

Continuous Design and Queer Collaboration

One of the multiple ways in which Goff employed the notion of a 'continuous present' was in reference to the process of designing each new building. The architect described the design consultation process for each project as a perpetual "beginning again" with each new client. "Worming it out of them," to discover what it is that "people really want and need … the continuous present goes into this."[112] Herb Greene, a former student of Goff's, worked as a delineator during the design and construction of Bavinger House [Fig. 7] and recalls how Goff's "genius included his awareness of his clients' existential qualities, attributes, and features as form-generating sources for his architecture. Goff would take inspiration from their physiques, favorite colors, collections, hobbies, and personalities"[113] He would then devise a series of floor plans and presentation drawings, integrating his consultation with the clients into the design scheme and materials selected for each new commission. His integration of his client's design needs or specifications was thus a very personalized form of bespoke architecture, but it was also more than this, in that the architect also worked to merge his specific approach to architecture with their personal tastes and desires. This mutually informative process was important to Goff, who sought to achieve an overlap between their individual sensibilities and his own: "Feeling is the most important thing," he claimed, "that you should feel something about your problem."[114] Clients relayed their personal needs, likes, and so forth to Goff – knowing that the space he would build for them would not be what they might envision physically, but one that he would nevertheless be composed collaboratively with them, attuned to their individual sensibilities. In

[112] Welch, 217.
[113] DeLong, 242.
[114] Welch, 28.

this way, Goff did not merely design according to his client's aesthetic predilections; rather he transposed his client's specifications though his own aesthetic sensibility into the design of each house: floor plans, choice of materials, and even into his presentation drawings of the interior and exterior presentation drawings. In this open embrace of collaboration Goff diverged from standard architectural discourse, with its privileging of the architect as a primary creative force for a project. By contrast to this discourse, Goff did not hesitate to acknowledge that the very nature of architecture is a deeply collaborative process between architect, client, engineers, and other tradespersons. In this alone, he might be described as queering the normative rhetoric of architectural creativity.

Goff's primary architectural collaborators on the project were Eugene and Nancy Bavinger, artists who both taught with Goff at the University of Oklahoma. The Bavingers emphatically wanted an open-concept house, not the traditional design that they described as "a box with tiny windows."[115] The Bavingers were a traditional nuclear family: a husband, his wife, and their two children. Yet in their desire for a domestic space that was unconventional, Eugene and Nancy Bavinger opened themselves to a reorganization of the quotidian practices of their family's daily life, for such practices were intimately tied to the organization of their living space. In this, the couple were active participants, progenitors even, of an architectural process that eschewed the conventional plan and structure of a domestic space associated with a heteronormative nuclear family. In Bavinger House we see a space designed in close collaboration with a queer architect co-mingling with the norms of a heteronormative nuclear family performing their daily lives. To name such a collaboration as "queer" is not to insist on a total refusal of those norms – the family remained nuclear – but it is to suggest that *some* of the quotidian practices and relationships that took place within the space might be re-aligned in new and potentially radical ways through the vagaries of radically different trajectories, objects, surfaces, and perspectives. Such a possibility is suggestive of what theorist Judith Halberstam describes as a "queer attitude": one that can accommodate "an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices."[116] On this understanding of the

[115] Delong, 45.
[116] Judith Halberstam, "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies," *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press: New York, 2005), 4.

term, the Bavingers were indeed queer collaborators, for they were open to the strangeness and ambiguity Goff's unique domestic design and were willing to live in it.

In Bavinger House, then, we find the co-mingling of a heteronormative nuclear family performing their daily lives within a space that was designed in close collaboration with an architect working outside the normative pathways of architectural education – a queer architect who drew in turn from the queer modernist writer Gertrude Stein to create a house that re-orientated (as well as disorientated) physical trajectories and spatial perception and disrupts the senses, as well as disrupting the binary boundaries of domestic space – both inside and outside. If to be queer, or to do/make queer is to embark upon a radical questioning of identity and boundaries, under these terms, Goff successfully composes and constructs Bavinger House as a queer – or queered space. He begins with the blurring of boundaries of materials and spatial configurations.

Bavinger House: Suspended Binaries

> By its very nature, queer space is something that is not built, only implied, and usually invisible. Queer space does not confidently establish a clear, ordered space for itself. It is altogether more ambivalent, open, self-critical or ironic, and ephemeral. Queer space often doesn't look like an order you can recognize, and when it does, it seems like an ironic or rhetorical twist on such an order.[117]
>
> – Aaron Betsky

> No space is totally queer or completely unqueerable, but some spaces are queerer than others.[118]
>
> — Christopher Reed

In the plans and elevations for Bavinger House, boundaries between interior and exterior, and of what is conventionally understood as public and private spaces, are blurred. [Figs. 7 and 8] At certain junctures, interior and exterior elements and spaces are merged. The plan and elevation drawings for Bavinger House are based upon a logarithmic spiral, a shape that simultaneously evokes a geometric fluidity of space but also a drawing in and closing in of space as well as form. The stone wall that forms the logarithmic spiral abolishes the idea of a clear inside and outside altogether and undoes their binary demarcation. At certain points, it is strictly an interior wall yet then as it curves, lowers, and extends outwards it functions as the sole interior and exterior wall, and at its furthest point outward becomes a non-load bearing garden wall or retaining wall. This wall of rusticated stone serves as an external shielding wall and is also the

[117] Betsky, 18.
[118]Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal* 55, no. 4 (1996): 64-70.

single interior wall. There is no differentiation of treatment for the wall on the interior side; there is no insulation, studding nor drywall, such as would be found in a traditional house. The exterior of the house appears – ominously fortress-like – with the apex of the spiral forming into a turret centered around a mast fashioned from a recycled drill rig. From the top of the "mast" or drill rig, recycled airplane cables suspend the roof of the dwelling and also suspend the sleeping pods and other suspended interior elements.

Such use of stylized organic forms in art architecture and design were *de rigueur* during Goff's formative years in the 1920s and 30s. The use of the logarithmic spiral as the geometrical plan for Bavinger House draws from these influences. Goff has stated that his father's occupation as a jeweler had influenced his taste for geometric shapes and forms. An interest in Theosophy further reinforced this direction and DeLong notes that Goff was fascinated by the works of Theosophist writer and artist Claude Bragdon [Fig.9], whose drawings had inspired his use of overlapping and inverting geometric shapes for his plans.[119] Goff was also a painter and was influenced by the paintings Gustave Klimt and their use of geometric spirals and decorative geometric motifs, a predilection that informed his architectural designs.[120] The logarithmic spiral motif that defines the structure and plan of Bavinger House is derived from the form of the nautilus shell is simultaneously is an open form (as it is generated from the inside outwards) and one that is private and protective as it tightens in and closes in upon itself.

Furthermore, the floor plan of Bavinger illustrates a tightly coiled interior wall that opens out broadly as it lowers in elevation towards the exterior garden-patio. The innermost coil of the rock wall/spiral houses (hides) the service features of the house: the bathroom, part of the kitchen service areas, and plumbing services. This configuration of concealing plumbing, heating, and electrical systems is not unique to Goff's design. Indeed, a contemporaneous design by modernist Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for his famous Farnsworth House (1949), a glass and steel framed platform house which offered total visibility from both interior and exterior views (and thus, no privacy for its inhabitants), hid its bathrooms and mechanical services in a central rectangular core. This, of course, is an efficient and space-saving means to centralize plumbing and mechanical systems but also serves to maintain the idealized open plan aesthetic of the modernist house. Contradictory here is the binary between what can be seen and what not:

[119] DeLong, 292.
[120] Ibid., 317.

certain binaries are blurred and certain conventions of domestic space radically refuted, but not entirely. The site of bodily functions and their associations with uncleanliness, abjectness, and shame remained private and hidden from any avant-garde or utopian floor plans of a progressive and unconventionally designed residential space.

The spiral plan of Bavinger House does not wholly dispense with conventions of architectural design, for the inner workings and services are centralized and hidden from view in a space that otherwise opens outwards and upwards in directions that move towards a "transparent" and a "flexible notion of space."[121] Considering the particular way the material register of Bavinger house purveys a flexible notion of space, objects of nature and culture appear to meld through the overlapping juxtaposition and interplay of man-made and organic construction materials. The recycled debris of industrial technology is repurposed in ways not intended in "correct" or "suggested" usage: they are instead redirected in their compositional relationships to each other and to the visual aesthetic and effect of the building. Their trajectories as *bricolaged* objects blur clear distinctions between interior/exterior and open /closed space.

The relationship between interior and exterior elements merges on the main floor where ponds and large plants extend inward from the exterior garden into the living/entertaining and form an interstitial space. Clearly demarcated zones for ponds, plants, and other such landscape elements traverse the traditional boundaries of interior and exterior and house and garden. Typical modernist architectural designs positioned elements like ponds or pools and groupings of foliage outside of the living area or at least adjacent to it. The main floor plan of Bavinger House illustrates a main floor space broken up with low "dividers" that also serve as planters which frame and loosely demarcate space yet do not close off space from any vantage point on the main floor. The interpenetration of external and internal elements negates the conventional layout of domestic space and furthermore blurs distinctions of how the house is situated in site/landscape: the house appears to be simultaneously emerging from and submerging into the landscape. This is not the typical modernist convention of a home that opens up to nature by clearly demarcating the placement of natural and constructed elements such as in Mies van Der Rohe's Farnsworth House or Philip Johnson's Glass House. Goff's design for Bavinger House –

[121] Welch, 295.

both vertically and horizontally – obfuscates the interstices of where house and landscape begin, perceptually chimeric in its surfaces and forms.

Trajectories and Temporalities: Towards a Queer Phenomenology

"Orientations are about how we begin, how we proceed from here."[122]

— Sara Ahmed

Of the various intents behind Goff's invocation of the continuous present, the most important seems to have been his ambition to create the experience of an "everlasting" space.[123] Goff describes his idealized architecture as one where "there is no beginning, and there is no ending. Only in our limited frames of perception and understanding is there a beginning and an ending."[124] Goff strove to create an architecture that was constantly shifting in perspective, refusing design solutions which favoured the logic of the singular vantage point. This notion of an everlasting space – *bricolaged* together from Stein and Theosophy – emphasizes the sensations of individual and subjective experience as something transcendental, in which space is freed up for the people inhabiting it, opened to their infinite capacity for experience. [125] This experience, for Goff, was about a space of ever-changing and ever shifting boundaries and perspectives.

In the introduction to *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Sara Ahmed poses the question: "if orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence, of how we inhabit spaces as well as 'who' or 'what' we inhabit spaces with."[126] Ahmed calls attention to the nuances of meaning associated with "orientation," a word whose meaning indicates a position and potential trajectory, but also describes sexual preference.[127] Ahmed proposes that sexual and spatial orientation can be re-imagined together as a phenomenological question; a matter of not only how we see and experience the world around us physically and perceptually, but also how the world and the

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[122] Sarah Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no.4, (2006): https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202832. Accessed January 2017.
[123] Welch, 59.
[124] Ibid, 59.
[125] Ibid, 60.
[126] Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 2.
[127] The Oxford Dictionary defines "orientation" as: "The relative position or direction of something."; "A person's basic attitude, beliefs, or feelings in relation to a particular subject or issue."; And as a short form for "sexual orientation." See: *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. Revised 2nd ed. Edited by Della Thompson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

objects and forms within it approach us, as a form of reciprocal imminence that prioritizes neither subject or object.

Through such proximities of objects in relationship each other, our bodies and the objects around us shift, emerge, and then disappear as "queer objects," through their refusal to adhere to clear and predictable movement.[128] Ahmed draws from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, describing how when such queer objects present themselves our tendency is to straighten out such "queer effects" and thus re-align them in order to "see straight."[129] Furthermore, Ahmed points out that the body straightens its view in order to extend into space; to redress any queer effects involves both a perceptual and physical re-alignment of ourselves.[130] This corrective urge to "straighten out" situates the body along a correct or normative trajectory: we "fix" ourselves in order to look ahead and move forward correctly and to negate any expression of "queer effects." All of this suggests that the idea of disorientation is potentially queer in that it is a condition where bodies and/or objects are not "straight" or "aligned" properly: manifesting an orientation that is not "normal" and in synch with straight perspective and trajectory. The space of Bavinger House draws into its interior mesh of multiple trajectories not only bodies, but also abandoned materials and objects that hover in proximity to one another, redirecting their potential trajectories, and blurring the physical and visual distinctions between structure and effect.

Queer sexualities and their effects that either refuse or fail to re-orientate themselves are perceived as "odd, bent, twisted."[131] If "queerness disrupts spatial relations by not following accepted patterns," Bavinger House is emphatically queer. Influenced by the words of Gertrude Stein, fascinated by unconventional materials and non-Euclidean geometries, Goff's architecture, and certainly his interiors, emphatically disrupt established conventions of domestic space and queer the phenomenological experience of space through their constant shifting of trajectories.

Ahmed's concept of a queer phenomenology provides a theoretical framework to analyse how Goff activates a queer design approach to a domestic interior as a lived, physical, and spatial

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[128] Ahmed uses the example of the writing table, specifically the writing table of the philosopher as a phenomenologically queer object. The table supports the act, the experience, of the writing but in effect disappears from the writing itself. See: Ahmed, 63. Font

[129] Ahmed here is taking inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's use of the phrase "queer effects," wherein his original meaning queer is "odd," "unusual," or "strange". See: Ahmed, 65.

[130] Ibid., 65-66.

[131] Ibid., 161.

experience. De Long sees in Goff's complex forms and ambiguous definitions of space and matter as compositions intended to traverse beyond the body of architecture through their "... uncertainties relative to position and shape and the contrasts of the finite with the infinite."[132] The potentially destabilizing effect of Goff's architecture induces an a queer sensation – in both senses of the word – a phenomenological experience akin to Ahmed's notion of disrupted spatial relations and unruly trajectories where "objects and space point somewhere else" and what is experienced "here becomes strange."[133] Goff's interiors are indeed intended to be experienced as queer; however, it is Ahmed who articulates – *avant la lettre* – how Goff's interiors operate as a *queered* phenomenological experience of circulating objects and ever-changing trajectories

Bavinger House: Views from the Inside

In the previous section Ahmed's concept of a queer phenomenology was a theoretical touchstone to analyse how Goff composed spaces that generated physical experiences that instigated queer effects of a space. Now, I would like to take another analytic approach looking at the interior design of Bavinger House as a visual strategy – still potentially queer, though the examination of two photographs produced for mass media publications to analyse how a queered interior operates when flattened out two-dimensionally. The appeal of Goff's architecture, whether reproduced in architectural magazines or in mass distributed publications such as *Time* or *Life,* resides in the depiction of its unorthodox spatial – and indeed queer – effects meant to be experienced physically in the house itself. Design historian Charles Rice draws attention to the question of the interior, its image and its relation to space. "The interior thus emerged with significance as a physical, three-dimensional space, as well as an image, whether it be a two-dimensional representation such as a painting, a print in a portfolio of decoration, or a flat backdrop that could conjure up an interior as a theatrical scene.´"[134] Furthermore, he argues that interiors as images "have a life independent of supposed spatial referents" and that the nature "between image-based and spatial interiors is often far from transparent."[135] Space and

[132] David DeLong, "Bruce Goff Remenbered," In *The Architecture of Bruce Goff, 1904-1982: Design for the Continuous Present,* ed. Pauline Saliga and Mary Woolever (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1995), 31
[133] Ahmed, 160.
[134] Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.
[135] Ibid.,4.

materiality represented visually engenders a different experience and perception than it would if experienced physically. The published images and accompanying texts that introduced Goff's work to the public tended to focus on its futuristic qualities, its "space age" fusion of the technological and organic and in turn evoked a neutered vision of his architecture. Yet, even within the tightly framed photographs of Bavinger House, vestigial queer traces can be discerned.

In the colour reproduction that appeared in *Horizon Magazine*'s November 1961 feature on Bavinger House, the immediate and notable visual effect is the melding and blurring of the distinctions between structure, surface, and the decorative objects within. [Fig. 10] Chunks of glass culets are embedded into the walls, planters, and room dividers punctuating rustically integrated surfaces with their disrupting gleam. Plants emerge from planters yet also creep along floor edges and scale up the wall. The viewpoint of the photograph (the viewer's orientation) is positioned above one of the interior ponds, also bordered by rock and chunks of glass cullet. The wall curves away, obliquely into the background and beyond the frame of the image. The skylight forms a curve along the top of the wall but then dips below its anticipated trajectory to form a large window in the upper right-hand corner. A cascade effect of circular forms is visible in the centre-right of the image: the roof, the metal frame that serves as a curtain rod for the circular sleeping pod that hovers above a circular conversation pit and its circular glass coffee table. Embedded amongst the creeping plants and wall a circular closet appears to emerge from the wall and foliage, touching the sleeping pod but unlike it there are no visible means of support it is not part of the structure nor is it suspended by rods and cable like the sleeping pod or the stairs on the right that curve out of view but re-emerge behind the sleeping pod, leading up to the top story studio.

Intensified by the highly saturated Ektachrome colour of the photograph, the predominance of orangey-yellow and golden-brown hues interspersed with the dark green of the foliage compress surfaces and objects into texture, rendering it difficult to discern objects from one another. There are instances of clarity; however, discrete objects and forms can be identified – such the glass coffee table, the curved bottom of the sleeping pod, and the netting and drapery that surrounds it. Within this compressed photograph, objects move into our field of vision, become recognizable and then merge into other surfaces or morph into shapes defined by colour only. The circular elements at the centre of the image provide a focal point, a "clear" space

accentuating the verticality of the open common area, yet everything else around this centre is in a state of flux – visually and spatially – a Technicolor *claire-obscure*. There are many visual trajectories through this space, but there are no clearly defined paths for our bodies to follow, only the walkway that frames the conversation pit, the only view of "a path well-trodden."[136] The inner circular forms draw our eye around their surfaces, wood, flagstone, metal, and carpet leading the eye upwards towards objects and spaces not readily identifiable: the hovering pod seen from underneath only reveals its purpose upon ascending the winding staircase. Even within the framed field of vision that a photograph offers, the main floor of Bavinger House is disorientating and confounds an imagined trajectory of moving though this space. It is a space of tension as much as it is a space of divergent objects and trajectories.

There are, however, straight lines in Bavinger House: straight lines that do not diverge into a matrix of "queer" or bent trajectories. These straight lines in Bavinger House are integral to the construction of the building inasmuch as they are integral to how it is supported structurally — albeit unconventionality. They are the cables which support and tether the roof to the stone wall and the ground outside of the house. Inside, these cables suspend the sleeping pods and staircase. In an unpublished image intended for an article on Bavinger House for *Life Magazine,* the Bavinger's' son is depicted playing in one of the sleeping pods. [Fig. 11] The article, "Space and Saucer House by Bruce Goff", describes a "family that lives in suspension in a unique new structure" and predicts that the boy will "grow up a true 20th Century space child."[137] The uniqueness of this particular house, the writer of this article suggests, is living "in suspension" and the possibility that this kind of architecture of suspended living indicates a new way of living and a different future for the children who will be raised in such houses.[138] In the article, domestic spaces like Bavinger House form the trajectory of future generations who grow up in space-age like homes of suspended rooms and furnishings. This generational emphasis suggests a genealogy of heteronormative futurity, a "line of social investment."[139] In the image,

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[136] Ibid., 554.

[137] "Space and Saucer House by Bruce Goff," *Life Magazine,* Vol. 39, No. 12, September 19, 1955, 155-56. https://books.google.ca/books?id=t1YEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA155&lpg=PA155&dq=space+and+saucer+house+life+magazine&source=bl&ots=kaRtgk7vY8&sig=ACfU3U0rwri_MLAX6y9hRBcSLr0frzLvYw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjStYaco5HgAhVjxoMKHTYIBS8Q6AEwBnoECAcQAQ#v=onepage&q=space%20and%20saucer%20house%20life%20magazine&f=false, Accessed, 15 August, 2017.

[138] Ibid.,156.

[139] Ahmed, 17.

the young Bavinger child is framed by straight lines of the cables that hold the house in place and prevent the suspended elements therein from plummeting down to the ground. Emanating from the multiple trajectories that redirect the quotidian performativity of a nuclear family, another potentiality emerges, a trajectory of a futurity that lies beyond Bavinger House. These possible trajectories are not confined to the interior of Bavinger House, or earth, but toward the cosmos. The vison of a space-age future for the Bavinger children predicted in the *Life* magazine article reflects 1950s ideas of a technology-orientated and heteronormative future. Yet Bavinger House is a queered space that rejects a singular vision of the family home of the future. Suspended and floating in a matrix of lines and mesh in a domestic setting that merges the sensibilities of the organic with space-age optimism, the Bavinger child – like the Bavinger family – inhabits a possibility of multiple and alternate trajectories that offers new experiential pathways for a nuclear family.

The straight lines of the cables, cut through the multiple and vertiginous trajectories of objects and elements in Bavinger House. Tension is a force that pulls and exerts a force on the objects to which the cables are connected. Tension holds opposing objects in equilibrium, but only as long as the tensile strength, and material integrity of the cable is not overburdened by tensile stress.[140] The physical dynamics of tension are thus fraught with precarity; they depend upon the mass of one diametrically opposed object not superseding the other. A tensile line is always a straight line, whether it is horizontal, vertical or diagonal. Straightness is held in precarious relation to the queerly suspended objects that constitute Bavinger House. Imminence, the condition of a thing about to happen, entails objects or events not just approaching one another in proximity but the menacing possibility of such objects and events moving counter-forcibly in trajectories that threatens the potentiality of rupture and collapse: it is the potentially of disorder and the threat of losing one's bearings.

My aim here is not to forge another binary between 'straight' and 'queer' as metaphorically described through the structural rapport between cables and spiral stone wall. In fact, the salvaged cables, *bricolaged* and re-purposed to suspend the interior elements of Bavinger House, are vital in the construction of a space that is phenomenologically queer in their precarious and imminent relationship to each other. Ahmed observes that: "The lines that direct

[140] *Oxford Concise Science Dictionary*, Third edition, s.v. "tensile strength," eds. Allan Isaacs, John Dainith, Elizabeth Martin,

us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition."[141] While structurally integral to Goff's design, the straight lines of the cables do not constitute a negation of queer space. They operate as objects in tensional proximity to other objects and bodies and are as such orientated to one another inasmuch as "neither the object or nor the body has integrity in the sense of being 'the same thing' with and without the others ... as well as objects, take shape though being orientated toward one another."[142] These straight lines, held in tension, are orientated to the objects that they suspend, objects that refuse conventional placements and proximities thus forming a constellation of divergent paths and visual imminency within the *bricolaged* surfaces and uncertain spaces of Bavinger House. The space was intentionally composed and constructed by Goff to fulfill his idea of a continuous present to be activated by the visitor. It thus offers a queered experience of space that takes shape through two sensibilities orientated towards each other: that of Goff and of the person who perceives this space.

[141] Ahmed, 553.
[142] Ibid.,54.

Conclusion

After Goff left the University of Oklahoma in December, 1955, he moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma and settled into a Frank Lloyd Wright designed building where he established his home and architectural studio.[143] In early 1956 he produced a suite of three drawings [Fig. 12] for what he envisioned as the home for a Space Study Institute.[144] Conceived of as a structure intended to demonstrate the interconnectedness and plasticity of modern human life, the purpose of Goff's Space Study Institute was to house a center of study dedicated to new ways of perceiving architecture and the pursuit of how "we can free architecture from it's [*sic*] Earth-bondage and to allow it to become of time and space as our other ways of life are becoming."[145] There is an appeal to a spiritual, and an expression of an obliquely utopian desire expressed here: ideals of liberation and of change.

Goff's idea of space was designed to be "boundless in feeling and expression" for the visitor or inhabitant.[146] His *bricolaged* architecture is the result of an expressive attempt to conjure such boundlessness: a mystical space of freedom and acceptance on a universal scale, where one's own individuality and subjectivity could exist beyond the limiting constraints of the present and its social arrangements. Perhaps this was what he intended to articulate when he confided to Price how he felt his sexuality mattered to his work? Goff mentioned to Price that he saw his homosexuality as important to his work, yet never specified exactly how that influence manifested itself. Goff's intent for the Space Study Institute, and indeed for all of his work, obliquely articulates a desire for architecture to generate novel and individualized experiences that point towards a future of personal and potential collective liberation.

Amongst the twisting and bending of geometry into a matrix of multiple trajectories and *bricolaged* materials, Goff's architecture offers the promise of an imminent future freedom from the present. "Queerness," as theorist José Esteban Muñoz observes, "is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality."[147] Munoz situates the concept of utopia as reflective of a "longing that is

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[143] DeLong, 248.
[144] The drawings were described by De Long as "fragmentary sketches" that were never fully developed into a realized architectural project. Instead, they were a "hypothetical study" and were abandoned for other projects and commissions. DeLong, 249.
[145] Ibid., 249.
[146] Welch., 267.
[147] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 26.

relational to historically situated struggles," identifying queerness as a "utopian formation" grounded in the hope of a different and transformative future.[148] Goff spoke often of a "freedom through discipline" approach to architecture; and how through the intricacies of geometric shapes and forms he sought a venue for free expression.[149]

Architectural critic Robert Winter concurs, "Goff's monomaniacal desire to free himself from this world's limitations, a personal as well as an aesthetic journey" was that of a gay man in conservative Oklahoma at the height of the McCarthyite era and the Lavender Scare who looked elsewhere to a freer future.[150] Winter's interpretation situates sexuality as something that informed Goff's work, suggesting that a desire for freedom influenced and informed his approach towards architecture. Drawing from experience and sensibility to build a space of multiple trajectories, Goff's spaces are neither here nor there and not tethered to present circumstances. His work was utopian in its evocation of transcendence. Through collaborations with his students and clients he instigated an experience of "queerness as collectivity."[151] Goff's notion of the continuous present was obliquely informed by his own sexual identity; summoning a queer genealogy though the writing of Gertrude Stein he envisioned and realized a queer architecture that embedded strange and compelling phenomenological experiences.

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[148] Ibid., 26.

[149] Welch, 239.

150 Robert Winter, review of Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture, by David G. Delong, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 49, no.1 (March 1990): 120. http://jsah.ucpress.edu/content/49/1/119 Retrieved 30 May 2016,

[151] While Muñoz is specifically speaking of a post-1960s idea of a queer collective utopia, influenced by that decade's experiments of collective and communal living and social rights activism, Goff's allusion to a future evoked a more individualist and existential potentiality of freedom.

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Figures

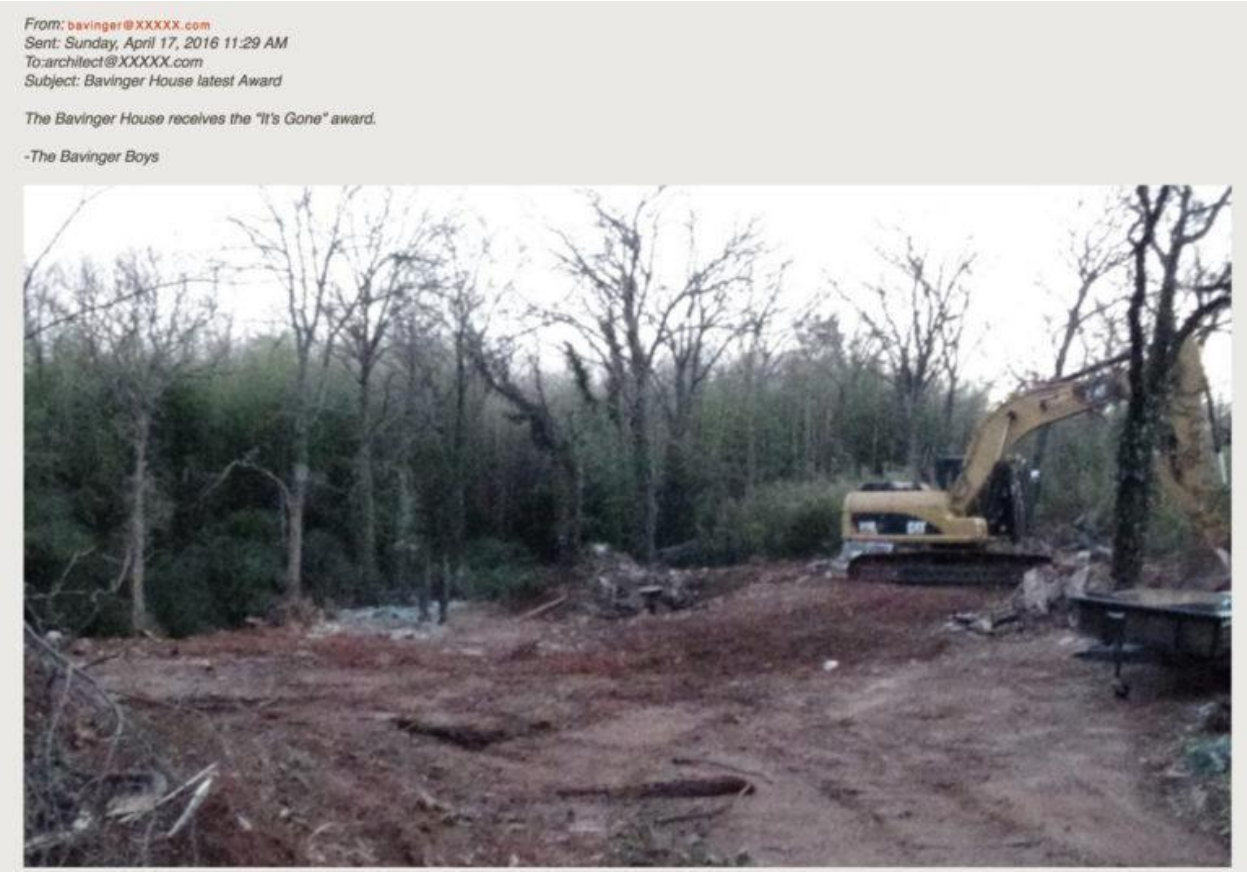


Fig. 1: Screenshot of email from "The Bavinger Boys".
Source: Alison Meier, "An Icon of Midcentury Organic Modern Architecture Is Destroyed", *Hyperallergic,* May 11, 2016. Accessed September 2018https://hyperallergic.com/296105/an-icon-of-midcentury-organic-modern-architecture-is-destroyed/

Fig. 2: Photo of Bavinger House 1955 (Photo by Eugene Bavinger). Source: David De Long, *Bruce Goff: Towards an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

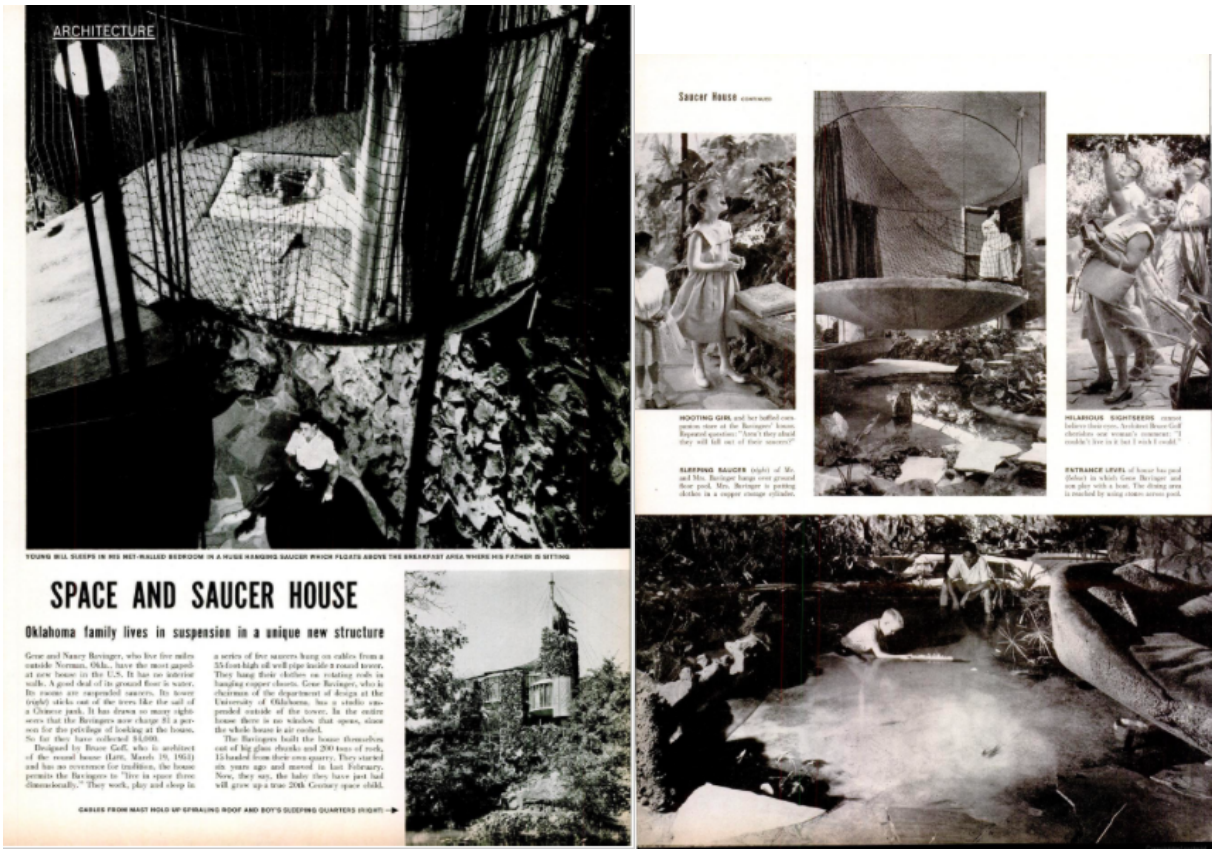
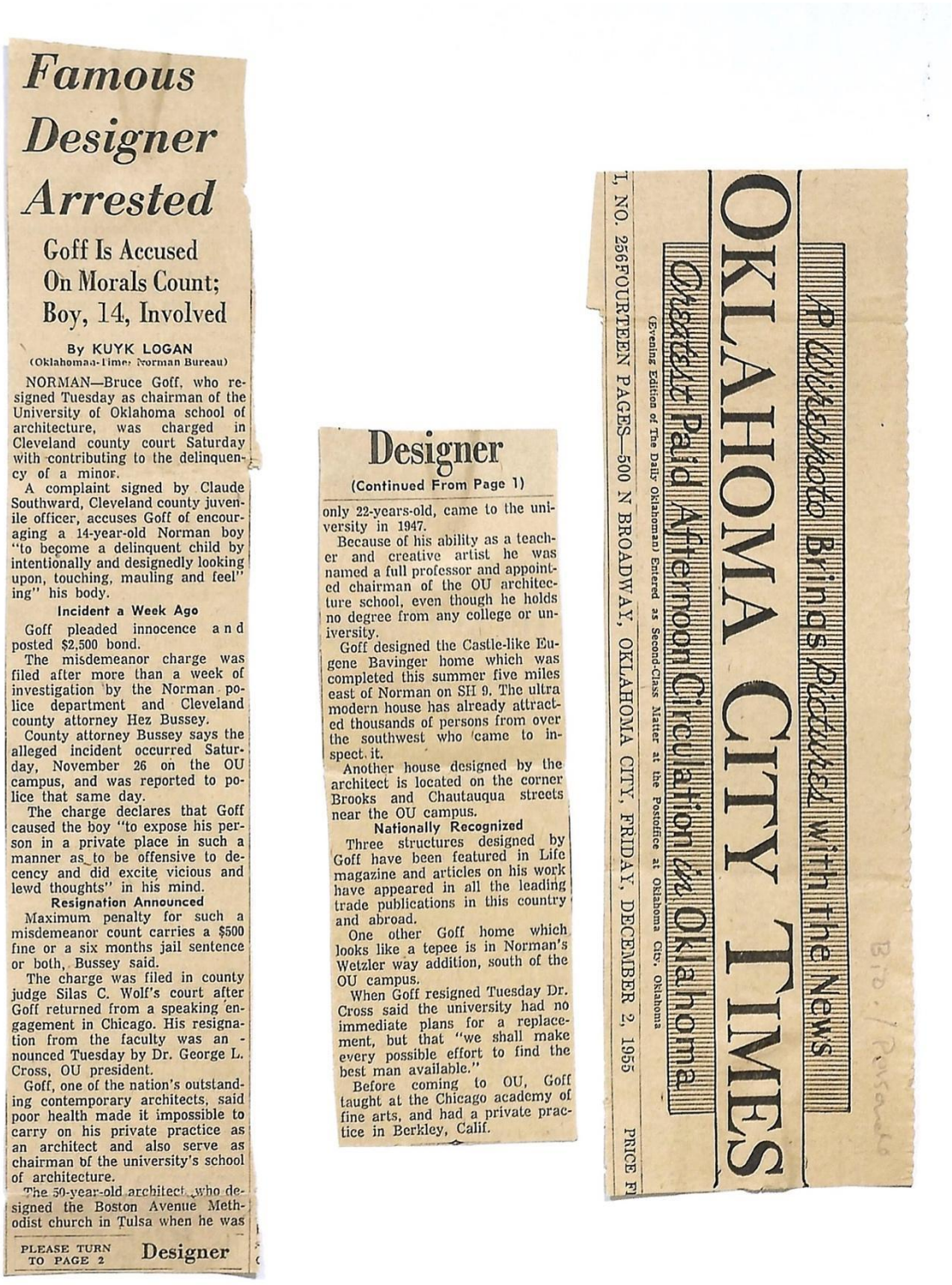


Fig 3: "Space and Saucer House by Bruce Goff", *Life Magazine,* March 19, 1951.



Famous Designer Arrested

Goff Is Accused On Morals Count; Boy, 14, Involved

By KUYK LOGAN
(Oklahoman-Times Norman Bureau)

NORMAN—Bruce Goff, who resigned Tuesday as chairman of the University of Oklahoma school of architecture, was charged in Cleveland county court Saturday with contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

A complaint signed by Claude Southward, Cleveland county juvenile officer, accuses Goff of encouraging a 14-year-old Norman boy "to become a delinquent child by intentionally and designedly looking upon, touching, mauling and feeling" his body.

Incident a Week Ago

Goff pleaded innocence and posted $2,500 bond.

The misdemeanor charge was filed after more than a week of investigation by the Norman police department and Cleveland county attorney Hez Bussey.

County attorney Bussey says the alleged incident occurred Saturday, November 26 on the OU campus, and was reported to police that same day.

The charge declares that Goff caused the boy "to expose his person in a private place in such a manner as to be offensive to decency and did excite vicious and lewd thoughts" in his mind.

Resignation Announced

Maximum penalty for such a misdemeanor count carries a $500 fine or a six months jail sentence or both, Bussey said.

The charge was filed in county judge Silas C. Wolf's court after Goff returned from a speaking engagement in Chicago. His resignation from the faculty was announced Tuesday by Dr. George L. Cross, OU president.

Goff, one of the nation's outstanding contemporary architects, said poor health made it impossible to carry on his private practice as an architect and also serve as chairman of the university's school of architecture.

The 50-year-old architect who designed the Boston Avenue Methodist church in Tulsa when he was

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 2 Designer

Designer

(Continued From Page 1)

only 22-years-old, came to the university in 1947.

Because of his ability as a teacher and creative artist he was named a full professor and appointed chairman of the OU architecture school, even though he holds no degree from any college or university.

Goff designed the Castle-like Eugene Bavinger home which was completed this summer five miles east of Norman on SH 9. The ultra modern house has already attracted thousands of persons from over the southwest who came to inspect it.

Another house designed by the architect is located on the corner Brooks and Chautauqua streets near the OU campus.

Nationally Recognized

Three structures designed by Goff have been featured in Life magazine and articles on his work have appeared in all the leading trade publications in this country and abroad.

One other Goff home which looks like a tepee is in Norman's Wetzler way addition, south of the OU campus.

When Goff resigned Tuesday Dr. Cross said the university had no immediate plans for a replacement, but that "we shall make every possible effort to find the best man available."

Before coming to OU, Goff taught at the Chicago academy of fine arts, and had a private practice in Berkley, Calif.

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Bio / Research

Fig. 4: "Famous Designer Arrested." *Oklahoma City Times* December 2,1955. Source: Bruce Goff Archive, Art Institute of Chicago. Publications, Series VII, Box 3, 3.13.

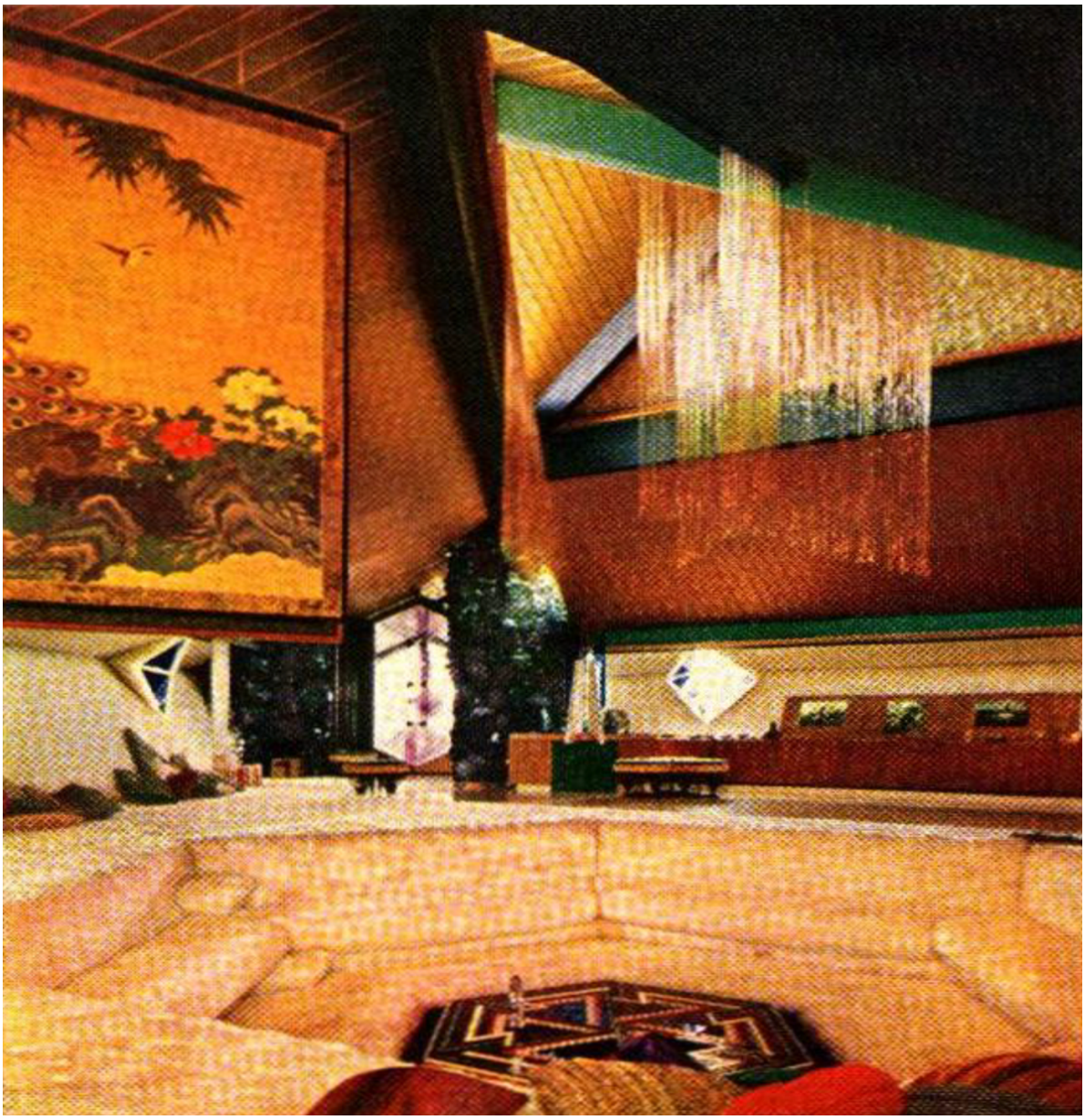

Fig 5: Bruce Goff, Joe Price Studio (interior), 1956. Source: David De Long*, Bruce Goff: Towards an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

Fig. 6: Interior view of Bavinger House , view of main floor. Source : one360.eu. https://one360.eu/blog/archives/38423. Retrieved: July 5, 2019.

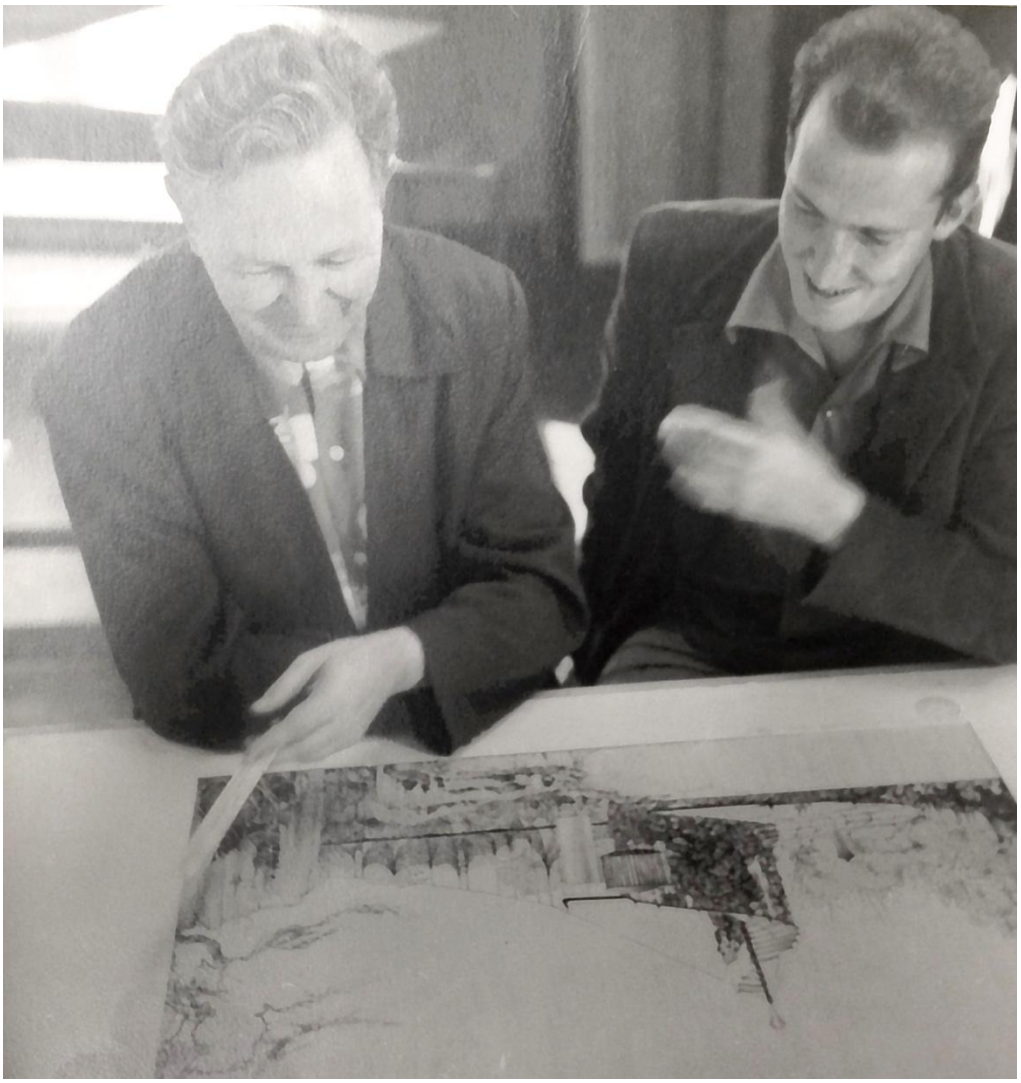

Fig. 7: Bruce Goff and Herb Greene with Drawing of Bavinger House c.1950, Source: Reproduced by the author from The Bruce Goff Archive, The Ryerson and Burnham Archives, Art Institute of Chicago. 1990.1 Series XVIII, Box 18, 1.5.

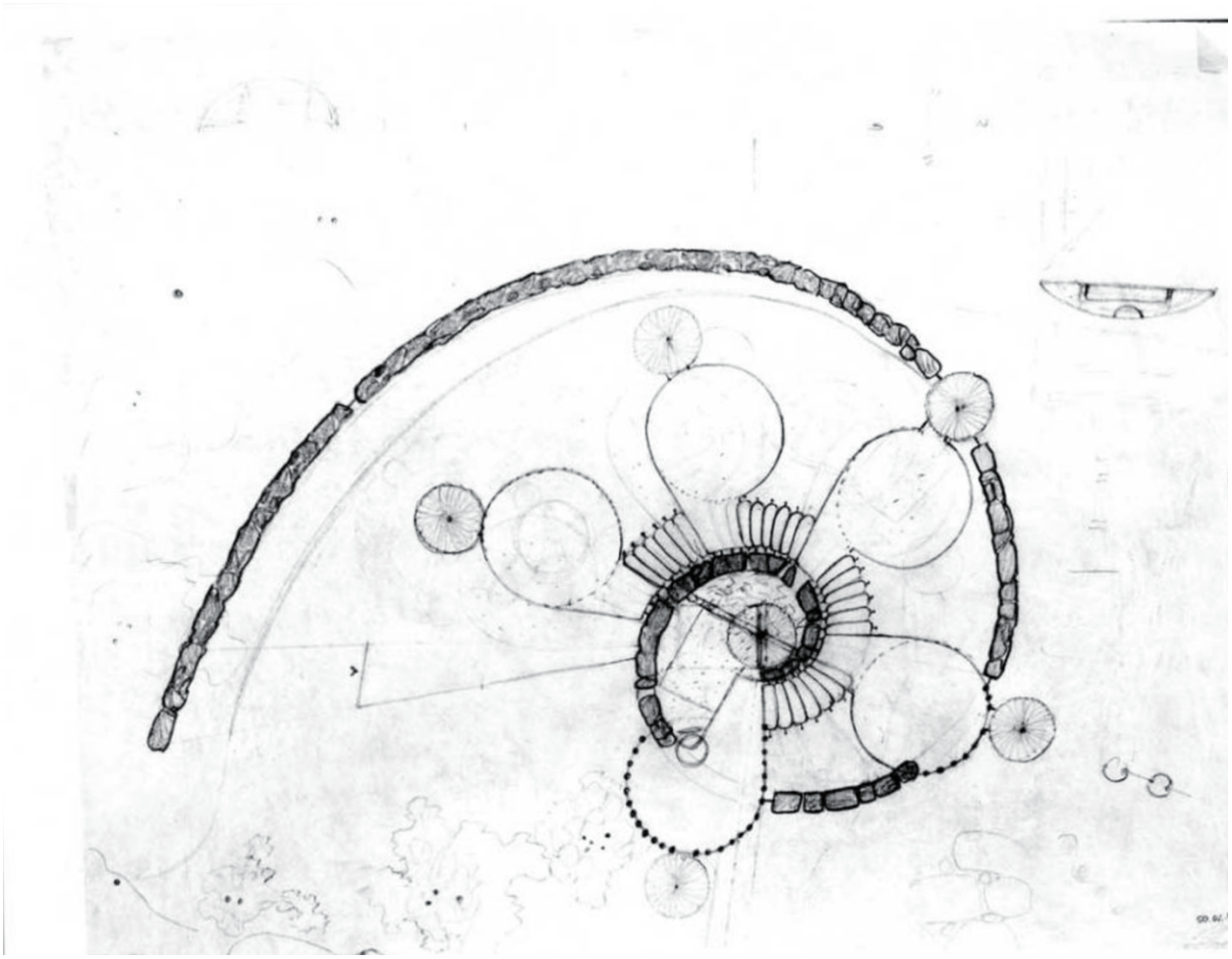

Fig 8: Bruce Goff, Bavinger House Plan of Lower Level 1950/51.
Source: Ryerson & Burnham Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, Series 3, Box FF 2.26 http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/1264/rec/79 Retrieved April 1, 2015.

Fig. 9: Bruce Goff (architect) and Herb Green (delineator), Bavinger House Plan of Lower Level Showing Water Garden 1950/51. Source: Ryerson & Burnham Archives, Art Institute of Chicago, Series 3, Box FF 2.26 http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/1264/rec/79 Retrieved April 1, 2015.

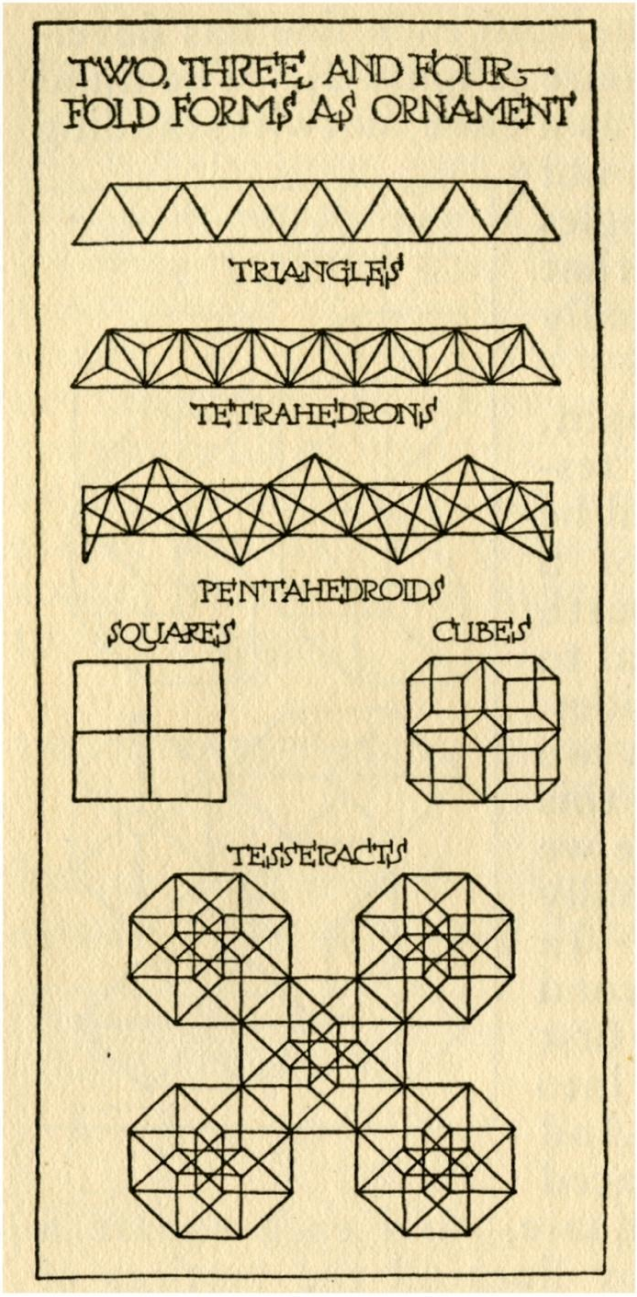

Fig. 10: Claude Bragdon, *Projective Ornament*, Rochester, NY: The Manas Press, 1915, p. 20. The Department of Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, University of Rochester River Campus Libraries, New York. See also: Christina Malathouni, "Claude Bragdon's 'Projective Ornament': Mineral, Vegetable, Animal, Human", *Architectural Theory Review* Volume 20, 2015 - Issue 3: Animal, Mineral, Vegetable, June 3, 2016. Source: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13264826.2016.1195419?src=recsys&. Accessed December 2017.

Fig. 11: Interior image of Bavinger House. Source: John Canaday, "Pavilions on the Prairie" Horizon Magazine, November 1961, 47. Reproduced by the author from Bruce Goff Archive, The Ryerson and Burnham Archives, Art Institute of Chicago. Box 1 Series XVIII 1.2.

Fig. 12 Unpublished photo by A.Y. Owen intended for Life Magazine from August 1955 depicting the Bavinger's son Bob playing in one the suspended sleeping pods. Image borrowed from The LIFE Images Collection via Getty Images/Getty Images)

https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/tourist-visiting-the-bavinger-house-house-seems-to-grow-news-photo/50669665?adppopup=true

Fig. 13: Bruce Goff, *Study for Space Study Institute* (First drawing of three), Pencil and Ink on paper, 1956.Source: The Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago. Series III, OP 1.16. http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mqc/id/14838/rec/76 Accessed September 5, 2017.