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AJNR

Celebrating 35 Years of the AJNR: January 1986 edition

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Title: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. The Guggenheim, originally commissioned in 1943, took Frank Lloyd Wright 16 years to complete. Just like the Eiffel Tower in its day, it was initially subject to vitriolic criticism, being seen, even by some avant-garde artists, as a traumatic, even barbaric, disruption to the morphology and mood of the neighborhood. It was derisively referred to as a washing machine, an inverted oatmeal bowl, and a hot cross bun, comments that are more understandable from an exterior perspective. In addition to jolting the neighborhood, it jolted traditions of art museum interiors and corresponding viewer experiences by replacing typical box-like rooms with linear and orthogonal doorways and passages, with a single continuous spiral ramp curving upwards to a glass dome. Some find the layout promotes a dream-like state, while others feel a sense of disequilibrium. It certainly provides a novel experience of seeing where you were, where you are, and where you are going all at once. Wright advised students to "study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." It is claimed that the spiral shell of the nautilus was one of his inspirations for the Guggenheim.

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