



Frank Lloyd Wright's former school survives—and thrives—in the originaive works of Paolo Soleri.

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IRREBORN IN INNOVATION,

WHEN THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE at Taliesin announced in early 2020 that it would be closing its doors and separating from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation after 88 years, the future of the iconic educational institution was in doubt. But six months later, the school reopened with a new name—The School of Architecture (TSOA)—and a pair of new homes, Cosanti in Paradise Valley and Arcosanti in Mayer. Both locations are masterworks by pioneering Italian architect and former Wright apprentice, Paolo Soleri.

Founded as an apprenticeship program known as the Taliesin Fellowship in 1932 by Wright, it later evolved into the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture and, in 2017, the School of Architecture at Taliesin, with students splitting their time between Taliesin in Spring Green, Wis., and Taliesin West in Scottsdale. The unique system produced more than 1,200 graduates, including acclaimed masters John Lautner and Fay Jones.

“The School of Architecture was at Taliesin for decades,” says renowned local architect and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner Eddie Jones. “It was a point of pride for the community of the Valley of the Sun.”

ABOVE The School of Architecture's graduating class of 2021 designed shelters at Arcosanti as thesis projects. “Cinder,” created by Jessica Martin, is made of rammed earth.



TOP Martin's shelter sits on the mesa overlooking Arcosanti and the valley below. **RIGHT** Martin sourced the soil and sand from the surrounding area to make the Neapolitan-hued walls of her structure. **ABOVE** "These shelters are the physical symbol of how much these students love the opportunity to express themselves in a real, tiny piece of architecture," says architect Eddie Jones, who is a member of the school's board of governors.

Although the school was based at Wright's homes, it was independent of the foundation. Financial and operational issues that had been simmering for years precipitated the closure, which sent shock waves through the architecture world.

"I will never forget that meeting where we voted to close the school," says Jones, who is a member of the school's board of governors. "It was very difficult for us, but we were delightfully gratified to see a groundswell of support coming not just locally but from around the world."

Following the closure, a fellow board member reached out to the Cosanti Foundation, which was receptive to the idea of joining forces. "Cosanti has always been involved with education, and their team saw this as a way to amp up their educational activities," notes Chris Lasch, president of TSOA.

"Both Cosanti and Arcosanti are kind of modeled on Taliesin West," Lasch continues. "Paolo Soleri was an apprentice of Wright's, and when he left to set

up his own spaces, he followed Wright's model for doing and learning architecture. So there are studios, classrooms and labs at both sites.

"One thing that makes Arcosanti unique and attractive to the students is that there's an existing community of about 60 people who live and work there and are also dedicated to creativity and the arts," Lasch adds. "I think being part of a sympathetic movement is something the students enjoy."

While the name and locations of the school have changed, the Master of Architecture program remains relatively untouched. "It was important to us to deliver the same program that we had always offered," Lasch explains. "It's based on the ethos inherited from Frank Lloyd Wright: learning by doing, building with the landscape and, above all, experimentation and a dedication to innovation. Wright's buildings, whether it's the Johnson Wax Headquarters in Wisconsin or Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, all pushed the boundaries of design

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and technology for their times. We still take that same spirit with us.”

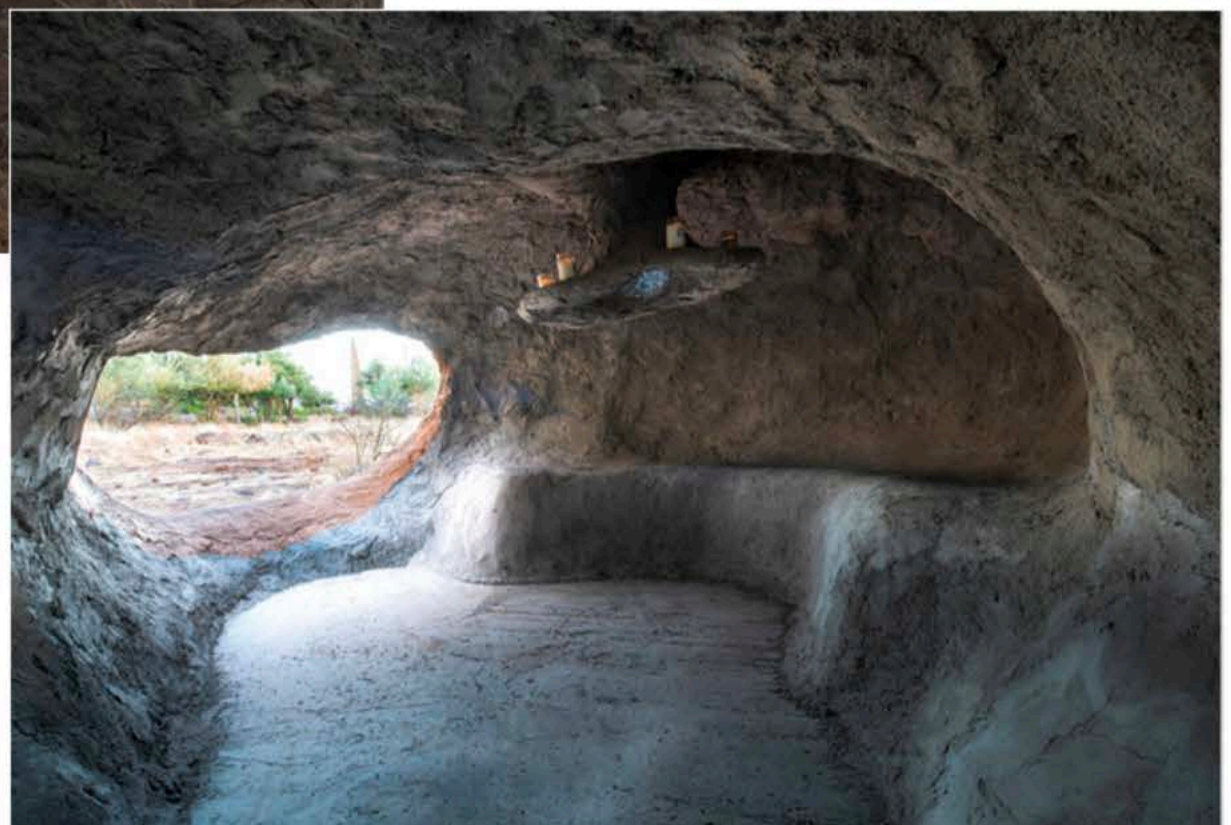
This innovative thought process can be seen in the first generation of shelters built by TSOA students at Arcosanti. For years, students have designed, built and inhabited experimental dwellings as their thesis projects. “I think this crop was the most varied that we’ve ever had,” says Lasch. “It was great to see the range of ideas and executions, and I think part of it was from being in this new context.”

Located on the mesa behind Arcosanti are “Cinder” by Jessica Martin, a monolithic structure made out of rammed earth that showcases colorful earthen layers. The egg-shaped concrete “Biopod 1” by Solomon Edelman, which would be right at home among the curved shapes of Cosanti, explores living in a biomorphic building. And the crystalline forms of



ABOVE “Solomon’s shelter is all about the interiors,” says Jones. “The way it frames the views is beautiful.”

LEFT Solomon Edelman’s egg-shaped “Biopod 01,” is an almost Paleolithic thin-shell concrete dwelling that echoes the rounded sand-cast buildings at Cosanti. **BELOW** In keeping with Biopod’s organic form, Edelman added seating and a central light fixture that integrate into the textured walls.



Azrien Isaac’s “Arch-i-part” are crafted of rigid foam and coated in an epoxy that was developed for truck bed lining. Lightweight, they can be disassembled and relocated.

Shelby Hamet’s temporary “Scuttlebutt,” which examines ephemerality through inflatable construction, was nestled within Arcosanti’s soaring vaults, while Michele Yeele’s “Shiro” was built in the valley below Soleri’s experimental city. A collaboration with the site’s agricultural program, the

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TOP Azrien Isaac's "Archi-i-Part," which looks like a crystalline rock cropping, is crafted of epoxy-coated rigid foam. The temporary structure has since been dismantled. **RIGHT** Michele Yeeles' "Shiro" showcases a flexible solar collector, walls that pivot open and up for shade and air circulation, and mycelium insulation, which the student grew herself. **ABOVE** Built in the valley below Arcosanti, near the community's gardens, "Shiro" is a collaboration with the organization's agriculture program.



Yeeles and student Shelby Hamet built the wood structure.

wood-framed shelter replaces traditional insulation with mycelium, the root network of mushrooms.

"When I saw the shelters, I was knocked over," Jones recalls. "I was so enthusiastic, and I thought, 'We have been reborn.'"

In May 2021, the renewed school celebrated its first graduating class. Jones gave the commencement speech. "I told the students, 'You guys are so lucky. I mean, who gets to live at Taliesin in Wisconsin, one of the greatest buildings of the 20th century, and who gets to live at Taliesin West, another of the greatest buildings of the 20th century? And now you live at Arcosanti, one of the most iconic places in America for architecture.' And they knew it. They were smiling from ear to ear."

For more information, see Sources.

