



# FALLINGWATER EN PERSPECTIVA

Félix de la Concha Paints Frank Lloyd Wright's House on the Waterfall



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**State Museum of Pennsylvania**

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33 x 73.625" / Oil on canvas

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83.75 x 37.5" / Oil on canvas

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STUDY: NOCTURNAL FROM THE CLASSIC VIEW  
28 x 18" / Oil on canvas

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# INTRODUCTION

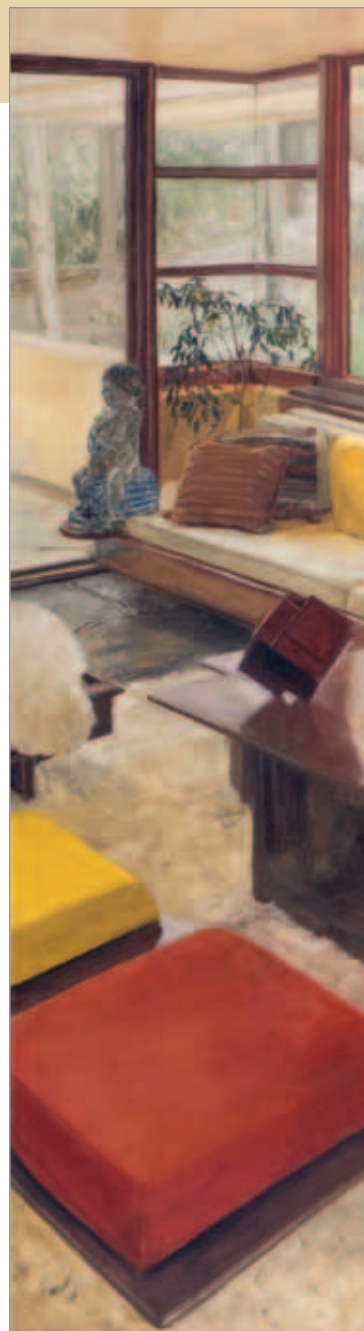
It is difficult not to be captivated by the work of Spanish realist painter Félix de la Concha. I certainly was when I first saw his exhibition entitled *Félix de la Concha, A Contrarreloj: A Race Against Time*, in the summer of 2004 at the Frick Art & Historical Center. *A Contrarreloj* featured 24 large-scale paintings—one for each hour of the day—of the exterior of Clayton, the home of Henry Clay Frick in Pittsburgh. The show also included 48 smaller, more intimate works of the interior that he called “diary scenes,” each of which was painted in a single eight-hour day. The idea of exploring the nuances of a single work of architecture over time—its transformation during the course of a day and through the seasons as the sun moves across the building’s surfaces—was intriguing.

I asked Félix if he would be interested in painting Fallingwater. Being one of the most recognized and photographed buildings in the world, Fallingwater poses a particularly daunting challenge to painters; for Félix it was no different. At first he was hesitant, but said he would think about it. A few days later he called, and we agreed upon a plan for him to visit the site for ten days to explore the possibilities.

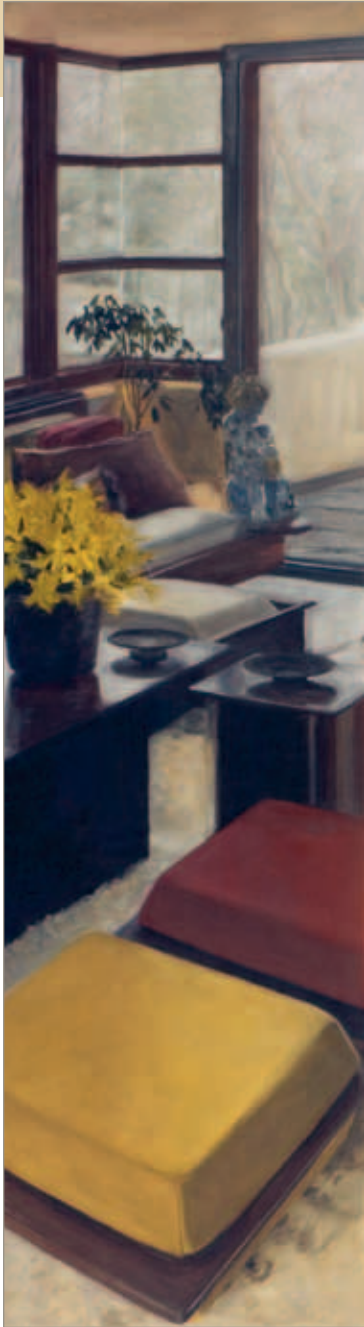
We offered him lodging in a nearby house and explained he could paint the exterior whenever he chose. The interiors, however, could only be accessed after hours or on days when we were closed to visitors. At the conclusion of the initial visit, it was clear Félix was captivated by Fallingwater, and we were captivated by Félix. Over the next year and a half, he would return to the site several times, staying for a few weeks each trip, to capture the house in every season.

All of Félix’s work is done en plein air. He works with such concentration on accuracy that he likens it “to the Buddhist path of losing oneself, to an ‘aesthetic of the ascetic.’” Intrigued by his approach, I asked filmmaker Kenneth Love to record Félix’s process and progress; the resulting documentary would become part of the exhibition.

Each day Félix arrived on site at eight in the morning to begin work. In winter, bundled up like an Eskimo, he stood outside in the snow for what seemed like hours at a time. In an effort to make the most of his days, he often worked without a break from morning until evening. Some staff, worried that he was not eating, brought him sandwiches.



TWO CORNERS WITH WINE DECANTER  
Diptych. 47.25 x 13" each / Oil on canvas



Observing and getting to know Félix as he worked fascinated everyone, and they were eager to help in any way they could. Our maintenance staff built stretchers for his canvases. When he was working on the large format series of the southwest elevation, they created a storage cupboard at the base of the waterfall so he did not have to carry the paintings up and down the hill each day. Finally, when all the paintings were complete and the exhibition opened in the summer of 2007, there was a shared sense of excitement in the accomplishment. The exhibition proved a success, and after Fallingwater it traveled to The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Price Tower Arts Center, the Kraus House in St. Louis, Florida Southern College's Melvin Gallery, and Concept Gallery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

One of the early programming efforts at Fallingwater was the intention to host artists-in-residence. In 1964 the famed ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson spent the winter at Fallingwater in that capacity. However, the growing visitation required the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to concentrate their efforts on visitor needs, and the program was abandoned. But the experience of having Félix on site has prompted a reassessment of the value of an artist-in-residence program. We all learned from Félix. To be sure, there were the new insights gained from his paintings. However, an unexpected outcome was an increased understanding and appreciation on the part of staff and visitors alike that art does not come easy. Félix knows this and so did Frank Lloyd Wright, who described the elements for success as "... dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen." Félix demonstrated to us that this remains just as true today.

Lynda S. Waggoner

Vice President, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Director, Fallingwater

# FALLINGWATER EN PERSPECTIVA

Frank Lloyd Wright's 1937 weekend house, known as "Fallingwater," for Pittsburgh department store magnate Edgar Jonas Kaufmann and his family has been the darling of photographers since it first graced the pages, and covers, of the era's most important architectural journals, and is among the world's most recognizable architectural designs. Its deeply cantilevered shelf-like terraces, and the illusion that they burst forth from their rock outcropping above a waterfall, have bestowed upon lensmen, dramatic, expressionistically shadowed perspectives awaiting capture on film. While acknowledging the historic bond between modern architecture and photography, Fallingwater has, curiously, rarely enticed artists of other media, especially painters. Félix de la Concha, however, saw the house on the waterfall as an inspiration, albeit a challenging one, when putting brush to canvas for his 2006 series *Fallingwater en Perspectiva*.

According to architectural critic Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1941, Fallingwater "combines two sorts of romanticism, the romanticism about nature, which has flourished since the eighteenth century, and the romanticism about scientific feats of construction, often considered of quite opposite character. A house over a waterfall sounds like a poet's dream. A house cantilevered over a waterfall is rather the realized dream of an engineer."<sup>1</sup> De la Concha's series of 50 paintings is an appreciation of both these aspects, luring viewers toward the canvas with the curiosity of a recognizable image, and mesmerizing them with the detailed mastery of his technique.

Félix de la Concha first visited Fallingwater on a tour in 1997, when he was painting *One a Day: 365 Views of the Cathedral of Learning*, a series of works, each executed in a day's time, for exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Art.<sup>2</sup> That project, along with *A Contrarreloj (A Race Against Time, 2004)*, a series of 24 panels depicting Clayton, the Pittsburgh home of Henry Clay Frick, at each hour of a single day, intrigued Lynda Waggoner, Director of Fallingwater, who invited de la Concha to return to Fallingwater in September 2005 for a fourteen-month artist's residency. There, he applied a similar methodology to capture Wright's masterpiece in different seasons, times of day, and lighting conditions.

That Fallingwater is so photographed did not prove daunting to de la Concha who, instead, found the prospect of painting the architectural icon intriguing. In a photograph, "every angle has been 'framed' through the lens," he explains. "Many people, wrongly I feel, describe my paintings as 'photographic,' but painting in oils can require more direct observation. Intentionally, the first painting I did was from a spot properly marked for snapshots, and where every visitor to Fallingwater seemingly goes. I however, painted it at night, a time when most people have not seen the house."<sup>3</sup>



## Félix de la Concha Paints Frank Lloyd Wright's House on the Waterfall

Admittedly ambivalent about Wright's famous design, he grew to highly regard Fallingwater, as well as the career of its architect. "[At first I felt] it was too much of a manifesto," he explained. "When I paint something, it has nothing to do with the admiration of the building. Often working 24 hours a day, and practically living at Fallingwater during the process, I could get on better terms with Wright's architecture, and began to perceive it on a more human scale."<sup>4</sup>

That humanism is ever apparent in *Fallingwater en Perspectiva*. Though often intermingled with sightseers while painting around and within the site, de la Concha has removed all signs of "Fallingwater, the tourist attraction" from his compositions. Thus, he offers viewers a personal opportunity to feel as though they are alone with—and in—the house, lookers onto the magical vistas and interior features experienced during his tenure there. Aided by "behind the ropes" access to position his easel at the foot of the falls, on pathways during moonless nights, or within a patch of fresh-fallen snow, we are also presented with scenery rarely experienced on a public tour. In this way, his interest in place and time shines through. A photograph, capturing but a moment, cannot compare to the emotional nuances and patient concentration put forth by Félix de la Concha to make *Fallingwater en Perspectiva* a poignant artistic souvenir of architectural adoration.

Scott W. Perkins

Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

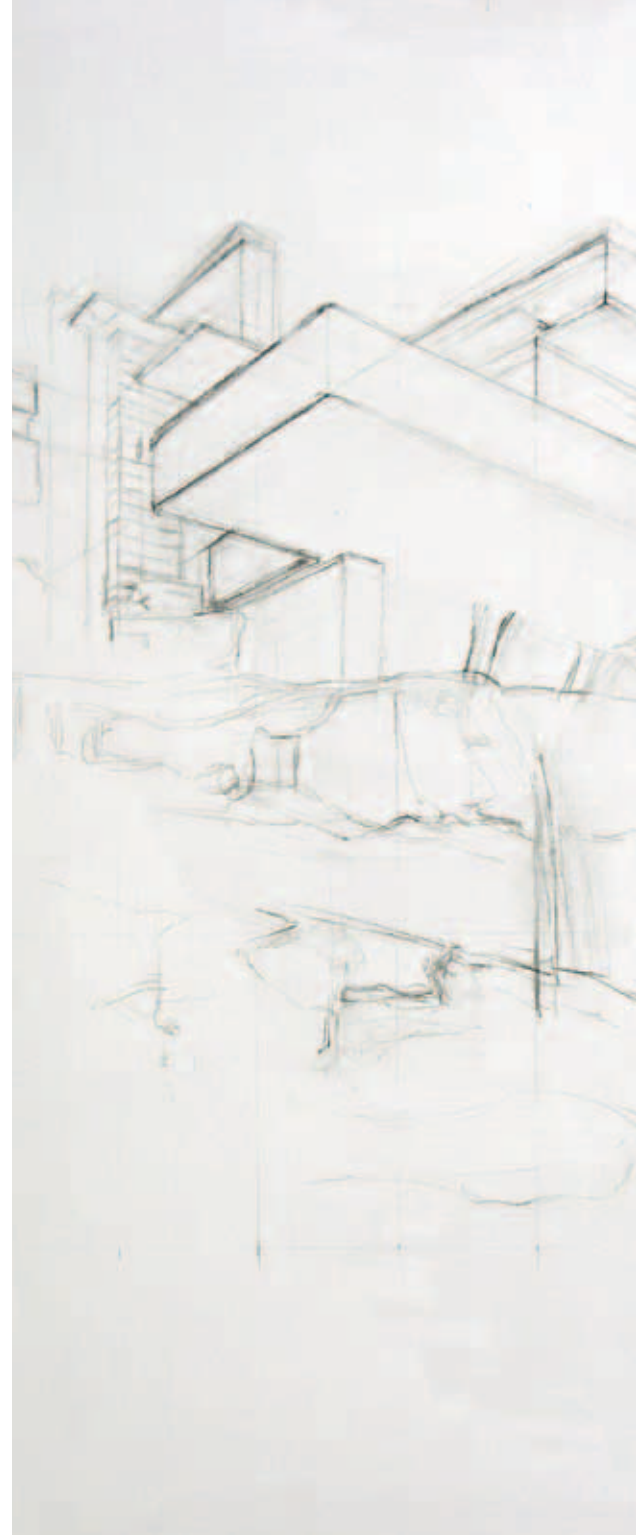
Price Tower Arts Center, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

1 Henry-Russel Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1942), 90.

2 This series is now on permanent display at Alumni Hall, University of Pittsburgh.

3 Correspondence with the author, November 16, 2008.

4 Ibid.



# FALLINGWATER: Earthwork,



# Airwork and Perspective

It was seventy-five years ago that the premiere North American architect erected what would be the most definitive work of his career, a composition halfway between art and industry, one which bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1936, Frank Lloyd Wright designed and built Fallingwater, a structure, which in a very substantial way sums up both the traditional and modern. In this house, the architect brilliantly achieves the integration of setting, function and structure in a way that resolves the problem of a design where space is inhabited by means of the senses, of perception and of an understanding of nature and artifice.

The gaze of the painter toward architecture is recurrent in the history of art, but even in the works of Piero Della Francesca it almost always focuses on architecture as a peripheral theme, one which accompanies the fundamental contents of the canvas. Nevertheless, coming face to face with an iconic work of architecture such as Fallingwater, making it the primary focus of the artwork, as Félix de la Concha does in his *Fallingwater en Perspectiva*, is a singular feat, one which is not easy to pull off successfully. It requires knowledge, willpower, time and solitude. The risks, much like those in a bullfight with the best Spanish Miura bulls, are very high—one must understand them, want them and have the time available to undertake the task. Shouldering such a project is quite epic, much like the construction of the house itself.

Fallingwater is a house built of stone and concrete. The first, stone, working with the continuous density of the earth (Earthwork), is constructed vertically, like the element resistant to the weight of compression that it is. The second, concrete, works within the realm of air (Airwork), through the piling up of horizontal spaces as it rises in height. The knowledge of this double structural aspect helps one understand the depth of the series of paintings in which Félix de la Concha engages with Fallingwater, paintings filled with air and matter, of spaces and of details.

Fallingwater gives rise to new perspectives and with those to previously unknown relationships between nature and culture. At Fallingwater nature is real—not simply a painted representation. So unlike the painters of Renaissance or Pompeian villas, the painter of Fallingwater is challenged to give nature equal consideration.

Indeed, the structure of Fallingwater changes the traditional order of architectural space. The traditional order—a pyramidal piling of one floor or part upon another, resulted in compressed spaces that were small and narrow as well as tall, with a decreasing amount of light; this has been substituted with an arboreal structure resistant to bending and traction, where light can have an inverse order and matter barely needs to maintain contact with the ground which supports it. This new order causes a fresh perspective in architecture to appear, a perspective of lightness and transparency from the ground up, where weight seems to support itself in the air, as if floating.

## AT THE FOOT OF THE FALLS

Installed view: State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg

approx. 7' x 24'

The painter tirelessly pursues this new perspective in his depictions of Fallingwater. The old perspective and its more traditional foreshortening of the vertical planes, imposed almost insurmountable borders between the inside and outside spaces. This has now been replaced with a continuity of horizontal flagstones, where interior and exterior spaces coexist. In the earlier point of view, the perspective was determined from a place either outside or the inside architectural space, it is now established from above or below said space. In this way the modern space of Fallingwater builds a vertical transition of spaces, new horizontal planes in space, where man situates himself above or below said flatness.

Félix de la Concha understood that to capture this transition of spaces it was necessary to undertake a series of paintings and that, only with this collection of multiple gazes would it be possible to derive the spatial and temporal essence of this complex work of architecture.

Jesús Aparicio

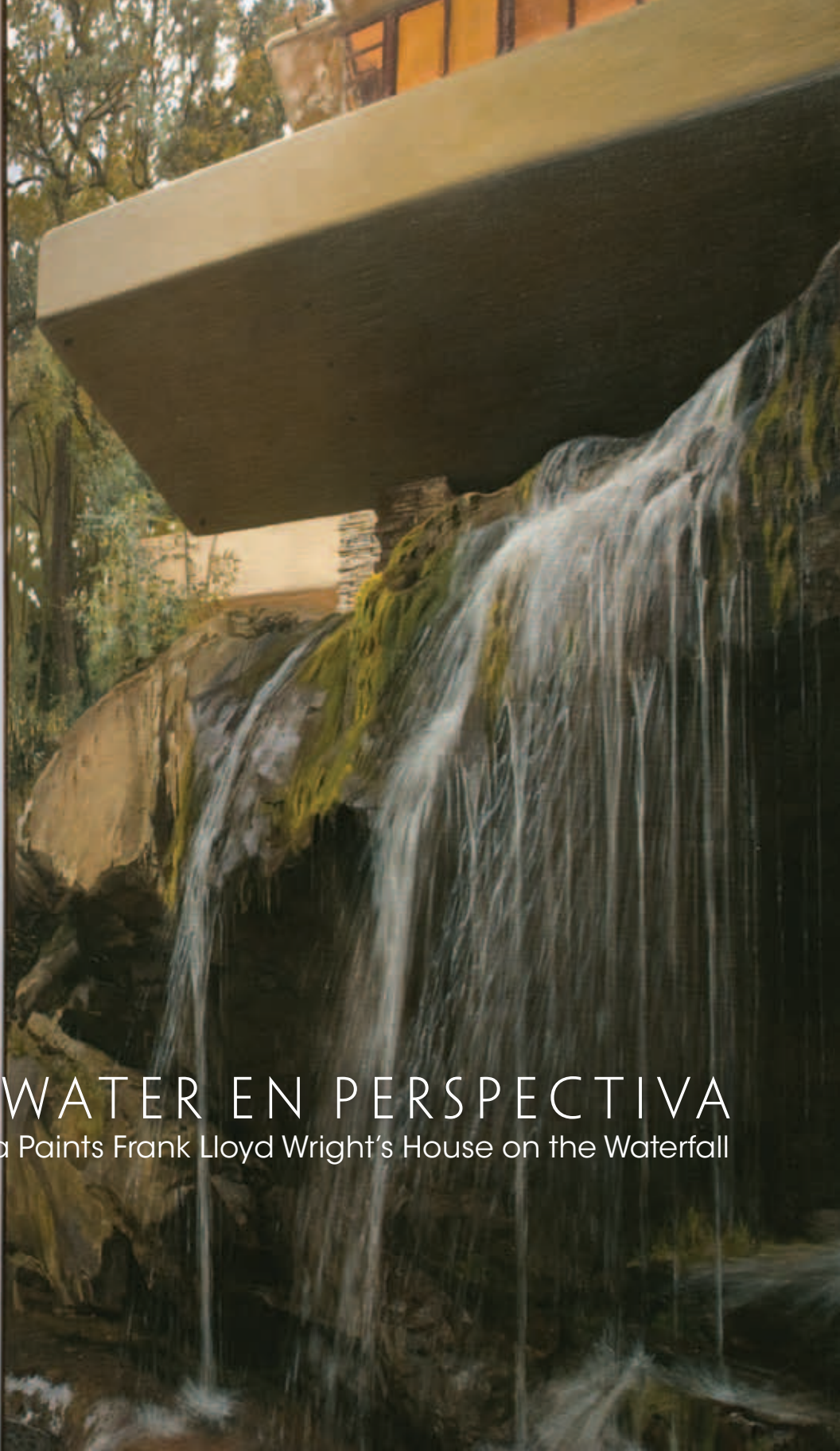
Architect and Professor of Building Design

Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid

Octubre 2011

*Translated by Elizabeth Polli*





# FALLINGWATER EN PERSPECTIVA

Félix de la Concha Paints Frank Lloyd Wright's House on the Waterfall



AT THE FOOT OF THE FALLS

Polyptych. Each panel: 83.75 x 37.5" / Oil on canvas





VIEW AT THE SECOND FALL

29 x 18.125" / Oil on canvas





VIEW UNDER THE BRIDGE

33.75 x 48.125" / Oil on canvas



MAGAÑA SCULPTURE ON POTTERY TERRACE

22.75 x 25.125" / Oil on canvas



WEST WINDOW AT SUNSET

18.125 x 28.75" / Oil on canvas



PICASSO IN THE MASTER BEDROOM

46.625 x 33" / Oil on canvas



INTERIOR SOUTHWEST CORNER OF GREAT  
ROOM ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON

35 x 28.375" / Oil on canvas



PARTNERS' DESK IN GREAT ROOM

36.75 x 45.25" / Oil on canvas



PORTRAIT OF EDGAR KAUFMANN SR. AT THE TABLE

38 x 23.5" / Oil on canvas



THE GUEST POOL  
29.75 x 48" / Oil on canvas





STEPPED CANOPY  
17.75 x 11" / Oil on canvas



ARP SCULPTURE ON EDGAR KAUFMANN JR.'S DESK  
31.5 x 19.5" / Oil on canvas



FACING THE HATCH FROM INSIDE

33 x 46.5" / Oil on canvas



EDGAR KAUFMANN SR.'S TERRACE  
WITH MAGAÑA SCULPTURE

29 x 18" / Oil on canvas



UNDER THE HATCH

18 x 29" / Oil on canvas



NOCTURNAL FROM  
THE CLASSIC VIEW

29 x 18" / Oil on canvas



NOCTURNAL AT THE FOOT OF THE FALLS

41.5 x 58.6" / Oil on canvas



WEST TERRACE AT TWILIGHT  
66.375 x 29.625" / Oil on canvas





NOCTURNAL OF THE GREAT ROOM EXTERIOR

11 x 24" / Oil on canvas



EAST TERRACE AT NIGHT

29.75 x 48" / Oil on canvas



WEST TERRACE AT NIGHT  
46.5 x 28.75" / Oil on canvas



SNOW VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

38 x 48" / Oil on canvas



NORTHWEST ELEVATION IN SNOW

34 x 48" / Oil on canvas



NOCTURNAL INTERIOR WITH ROTA BRASS RELIEF  
46.6 x 33" / Oil on canvas



THE ROOSTER BEFORE IT SINGS

21 x 33.75" / Oil on canvas



SWINGING KETTLE AND FIREPLACE

46.625 x 33" / Oil on canvas





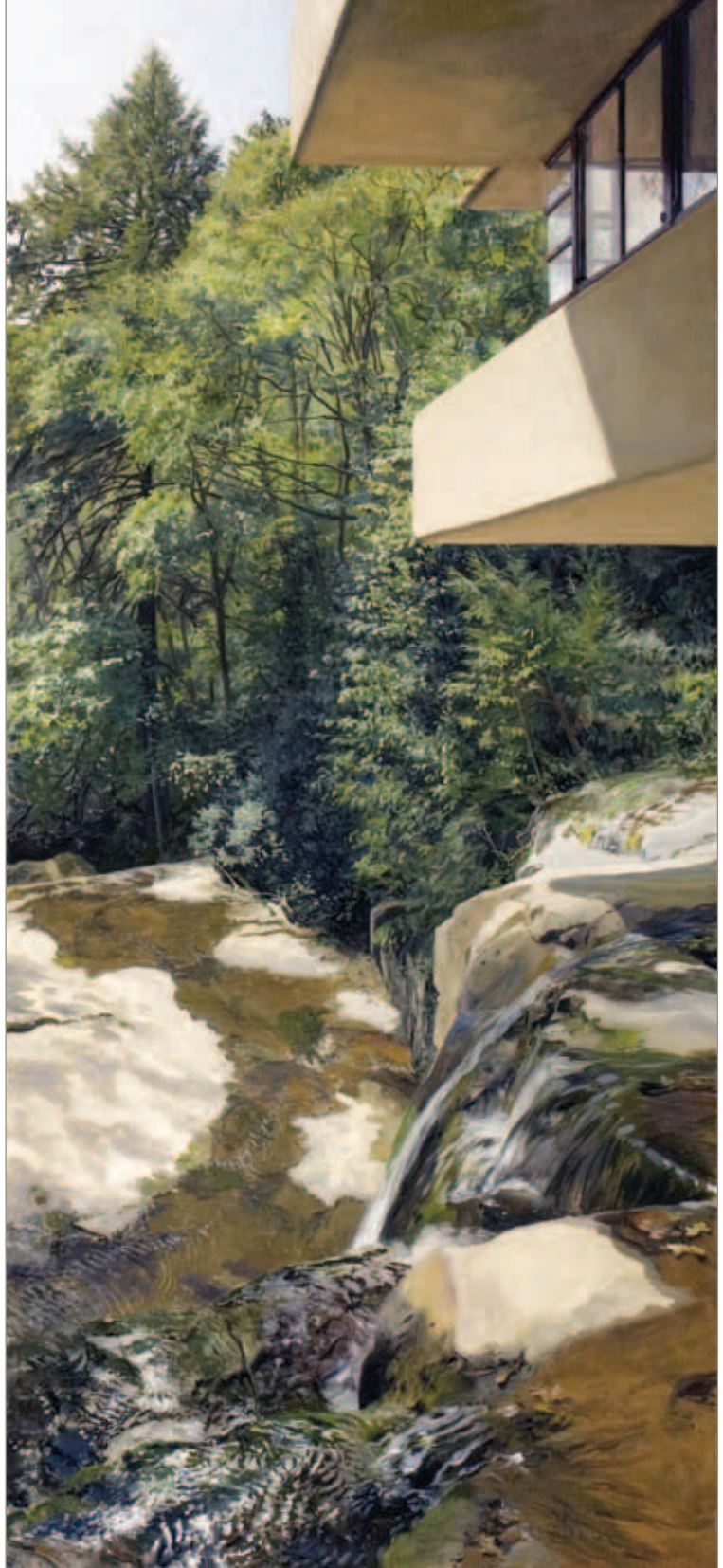
AT THE KITCHEN  
42.75 x 34.375" / Oil on canvas



GUEST HOUSE LIVING ROOM INTERIOR

29.75 x 41" / Oil on canvas

FALLS AT THE NOON SUN  
66.5 x 29.75" / Oil on canvas





THE GODDESS PARVATI IN THE COVERED BRIDGE  
47.25 x 33.5" / Oil on canvas



TONDO UNDER THE POTTERY TERRACE

40.75 x 37.5" / Oil on canvas



## INTERIOR PANORAMA OF THE GREAT ROOM

Installed view: Florida Southern College, Melvin Art Gallery, Lakeland, Florida, approx. 5' x 30'  
The following pages contain each individual panel along with an oil study on paper.





SOUTHWEST SIDE OF GREAT ROOM

48.5 x 42.5" / Oil on canvas

Study: 9 x 7.5" / Oil on paper







BUDDHA ON WEST TERRACE

48 x 59.5" / Oil on canvas  
Study: 9 x 9.5" / Oil on paper





KETTLE AND FIREPLACE

40.875 x 66" / Oil on canvas

Study: 7.75 x 12.5" / Oil on paper

Sketch indicating the 'golden rectangle'  
proportions.



DINING TABLE

48 x 59.375" / Oil on canvas  
Study: 9 x 11.125" / Oil on paper



ROTA BRASS RELIEF

45.25 x 56" / Oil on canvas

Study: 8.5 x 12" / Oil on paper



BUDDHA BY PARTNER'S DESK

50.5 x 40.875" / Oil on canvas

Study: 7.75 x 6.25" / Oil on paper





THE HATCH

48.125 x 59.375" / Oil on canvas

Study: 9 x 10" / Oil on paper



SOUTHEAST SIDE OF GREAT ROOM

48 x 52.25" / Oil on canvas  
Study: 9 x 9.25" / Oil on paper



# FÉLIX DE LA CONCHA

Félix de la Concha was born in León, Spain, in 1962. From 1981 to 1985 he studied at the Facultad de Bellas Artes in Madrid. He was awarded the Prix de Rome at the Academia de Bellas Artes in 1989, and worked in Rome until 1994. In 1995 he moved to the United States with his wife, poet Ana Merino. They reside in Iowa City, Iowa, and Madrid, Spain. Currently, he is working on a performance in collaboration with the Toledo Museum of Art and the Toledo Symphony Orchestra planned for February, 2012.

## SELECTED PROJECTS

### *Columbus Cornered: One Season From Each Corner*

The first major project in America consists of four panoramas comprising a total of 32 works painted at the corners of West Second and Michigan Avenues in Columbus, Ohio. Painted over a one-year period, each panorama depicts a single season.

Exhibited 1998: Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio  
In the permanent collection of the Columbus Museum of Art

### *One A Day: 365 Views of the Cathedral of Learning*

A series of paintings of the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning from 365 different vantage points, one for each day of the year.

Exhibited 1999: Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania  
In the permanent collection of the University of Pittsburgh, on display at the University of Pittsburgh's Alumni Hall

### *A Contrarreloj: A Race Against Time*

An exhibition of 24 paintings, one for each hour of the day, depicting Clayton, the former home of Henry Clay Frick. The paintings create a double panorama view of Clayton's exterior and its surrounding neighborhood. Included is a diary of 54 interior views of the house. The exhibition was a result of an artist-in-residency program sponsored by the Frick Art Museum & Historical Center.

Exhibited 2004: Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

### *Fallingwater en Perspectiva:*

#### *Félix de la Concha Paints Frank Lloyd Wright's House on the Waterfall*

A series of paintings produced on-site over the course of two years from 2005 to 2006 at the invitation of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

(Please see catalog Introduction.)



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LATERAL VIEW AT THE FOOT OF THE FALLS

66.2 x 18.3" / Oil on canvas







### *Public Portraits/Public Conversations*

A multimedia exhibition of 51 portraits and video recordings exploring the ways in which the portrait subjects have encountered conflict and their journey toward reconciliation.

Exhibited 2009: Hood Museum of Art and Baker Memorial Library, Dartmouth College  
In the permanent collection of the Hood Museum of Art



### *Portraying Holocaust Survivors* (in progress)

Portraits of Holocaust survivors from different countries accompanied by recorded testimonies. Undertaken in an intimate setting with time allowed for interaction, the survivors are invited to tell their story as their portrait is painted.



### *The Longest Story of Bilbao Ever Painted*

Seven paintings with recorded interview sessions portraying elderly people in Bilbao, Spain. Produced as a documentary film and screened at several film festivals, it was awarded Best Documentary Short at SENE, and Honorable Mention at the Los Angeles International Film Festival.



### *Portraits With Conversations*

A multidimensional portrayal of a number of leading Spanish cultural figures. The work includes recorded interviews on their life, work, and views on art.

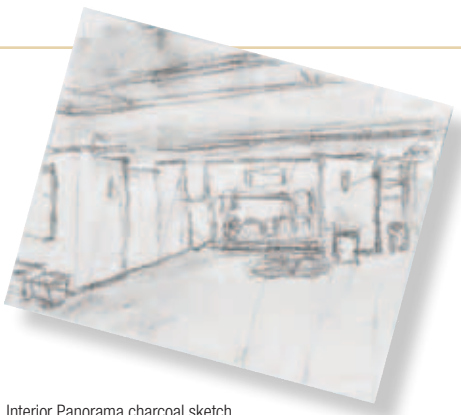
Exhibited 2008: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid  
Exhibited 2011: Museo Cervantes, Valladolid

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS IN USA

- Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire
- Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire
- Bayer Collection of Contemporary Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- University of Pittsburgh, Alumni Hall, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS IN SPAIN

- Colección La Caixa, Colecció Testimoni, Barcelona
- La Pedrera, Fundació Caixa Catalunya, Barcelona
- Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid
- Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid
- Teatro Real, Madrid
- Colección Campsa, Madrid
- Colección Banco de España, Madrid
- Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto de la Juventud, Madrid
- Ministerio de Defensa, Madrid
- Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada, Zaragoza
- Lonja de Alicante
- Museo de Bellas Artes de Santander
- Colección Saldañuela, Caja Burgos
- Ayuntamiento de Albacete
- Consejería de Cultura de Murcia



Interior Panorama charcoal sketch

"It is Félix de la Concha's exceptional achievement to have reinvigorated this centuries-old tradition with a contemporary understanding of the possibilities of painting."

— Mark Francis, Director, Gagosian Gallery in London;  
former curator at The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"By his own intense, dogged observations, and by tweaking perspective—sometimes differently in adjacent canvases—he makes the viewer aware of the complexities of looking and of seeing. Or of not seeing."

— Mary Thomas, Art Critic, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*



THE FOUNTAIN  
48 x 11.125" / Oil on canvas

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Félix de la Concha painting Northwest Elevation, Winter 2006.