

Learning Places Fall 2016

SITE REPORT #2

Morgan Library & Museum

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INTRODUCTION

We visited the Morgan Library & Museum which located on the corner of 36th Street and Madison Avenue. The Morgan Library & Museum has begun as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan. The library holds rare books, manuscripts, drawings, and paintings. Today the library is a complex buildings and open to public, a wonderful campus to dine, shop, and attend a concert.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos)



This is a plaster model of the façade of Morgan's library. Pierpont Morgan commissioned Charles McKim of the architectural firm McKim to design a structure for his growing collection of rare books and manuscripts. McKim completed several rounds of plans for the new library, drawing inspiration from Italian Renaissance. It shows the 36th Street façade of what would come to be known as Morgan's library, the rear of which you are now facing.



This room is the Pierpont Morgan's Study. The room where Pierpont Morgan kept some of his favorite artworks. These are lined in red silken damask and decorated with some paintings, including J.P. Morgan's portraits. The room has a wooden coffered ceiling in the style of a Italian Renaissance palazzo.



This space is the Rotunda, reminiscent of Roman palaces. The Rotunda is decorated with marble columns and pilasters and features a colorful marble floor with a Roman style pattern. The domed ceiling is decorated with gilded patterns, reliefs and paintings with classical scenes.



The most impressive room is the Original Library. What is illuminated in this room is the sheer expansiveness of Pierpont Morgan's collection, with many rare books and original manuscripts dating back to the Renaissance. The room is majestic. The ceiling's geometric structure showcases very complex murals that fold in portraits of some of the greatest literary, mythological and influential humans that he admired. Pierpont Morgan's stature is humanized in this room as the ceiling includes all of the signs of the zodiac.

GENERAL NOTES

- Morgan's library was built between 1902 and 1906 close to his residence at Madison Avenue and 36th Street.
- J. P. Morgan (Pierpont Morgan's son) realized that the library had become too important to remain in private hands.
- Present Morgan Library & Museum was completed in 2006. Designed by Renzo Piano.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

Charles McKim: An American Beaux-Arts architect of the late 19th century.

Italian Renaissance: The early period when Italy was the center of the Renaissance.

Palazzo: A large imposing building (as a museum or a place of residence) especially in Italy.

Studiolo: A "studiolo" (from the Italian, meaning little studio) is a small room, often lavishly decorated, dedicated to reading, studying and writing.

Piazza: An open square or public place in a city or town, especially in Italy.

Façade: The front of a building, especially an imposing or decorative one.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. How much was the building cost of the original Morgan Library?
2. How many books are there?
3. Why the stairs are hidden?