

Learning Places Fall 2016

SITE REPORT #3

Metropolitan Museum of Art



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INTRODUCTION

During the visit to the MET Museum, we looked at the exterior of the museum as we were standing on the steps and taking pictures. We went into the lobby of the museum to look at the various architectural elements which we spoke about in class and have seen in other presentations, discussions and site visits.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos*)



We see the Fifth Avenue's MET Museum Beaux Arts façade of the building. We also see that many people are sitting on the steps of the museum. We spoke about how the steps is an extension to the city by being a part of the sidewalk of Fifth Avenue. We have seen similar columns and tripartite with the structure. The MET Museum was built in sections. By comparing the main entrance with the steps to the building connected to the Museum on the right (photo below),

you can see that the other building has a



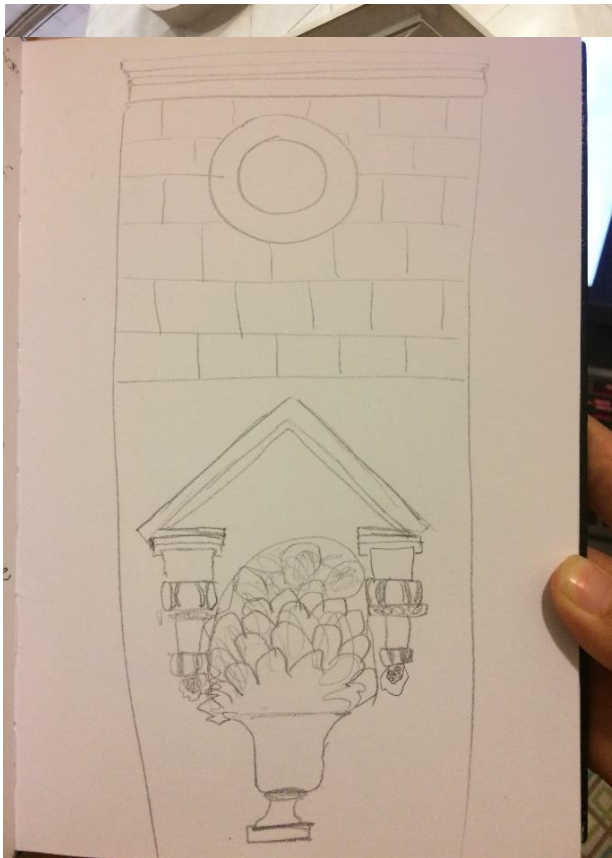
glass rooftop.

The picture and sketch from another point of view shows the pendentives and oculus in the lobby



of the fifth avenue MET Museum entrance. We can see that the lobby is well lit but also provides natural lighting coming in from the windows and entrance.

The arches on the entrance side of 5th Avenue also have lunette windows which reminds me of the ones in Grand Central Terminal's Main Concourse next to the zodiac mural on the ceiling. Another place where we saw lunette paintings was in the Morgan Library where there was different paintings of famous people representing different disciplines.



In the left upper sketch, it shows fresh flowers which is a continuous donation by Lila Acheson Wallace who was one of the Museum's biggest benefactors. This was embellished on a plate below the vase with her name on it. We also see acorns adorning niches and pillars which was seen in the Vanderbilt Hall's doorway and throughout Grand Central.

GENERAL NOTES:

- Different architects constructed different stages of the conjoined buildings.
- The MET Museum is the largest museum in United States.
- The MET Museum has free admission and special exhibits and collections.
- There are also acorn adornments on pillars and niches in the MET Museum as well as Grand Central Terminal.

INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

I have always watched people passing by in parks, coffee shops, and subways but it felt too awkward in an enclosed space. It's more natural to analyze in detail when people are in their natural elements from afar. On the MET steps, we can watch the city come alive and slumber. Since it is also within Central Park, it makes sense for the museum to be connected to the city and public space of gatherings. Since the MET Museum is free, it allows people of all classes to have access to understand and appreciate different modern or historical cultures and groups. It also feeds our curiosity and self-reflection, sometimes possibly making us question things we have never thought about or was aware of. It reminds me of the novel, *Open City* by Teju Cole, and the African Burial Grounds where an estimate of 15,000 freed and enslaved Africans were buried under New York, and many bodies are still undiscovered, yet people are walking, eating, and enjoying the streets of New York. The word "palimpsest" was used to describe New York and I was surprised that we brought it up in class. New York is of many layers of history, cultures, and diversity which I feel that museums such as the MET are able to preserve. I view the steps as a microcosm because there are people from all over the world whom you can interact with and comes in and out of the museum just to learn about why the MET Museum is the largest art museum in the United States. It's interesting that we don't see a ramp on the steps, but rather railings for those with difficulty or are handicapped. I think this also adds to the idea of the steps being a connection to the city and allowing people to gather with the trees, fountains and benches nearby. I thought that the acorns were interesting, and in a way might have been connected to Grand Central Terminal.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

***5 keywords minimum required per site visit**

Palimpsest – the concept of palimpsest is used to describe the way different generations alter the landscape of their ancestors. (Wiki)

Oculus – It is associated with cosmic and philosophical elements and we saw oculus of pendentives in the Great Hall of the MET Museum. It is a circular opening in the centre of a dome or in a wall. Originating in antiquity, it is a feature of Byzantine and Neoclassical architecture

Microcosm – “Small World”. A community, place, or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristic qualities or features of something much larger. This connects with my thoughts on how the people on the steps act as a microcosm. (Google)

Lunette – We saw the lunette windows which was similar to the lunettes we saw in Morgan Library, and Grand Central Terminal. In architecture, a lunette (French lunette, "little moon") is a half-moon shaped space, either filled with recessed masonry or void. A lunette is formed when a horizontal cornice transects a round-headed arch at the level of the imposts, where the arch springs. (Wiki)

Dome – We saw domes on the pendentives in the Great Hall. A *dome* (from Latin: domus) is an architectural element that resembles the hollow upper half of a sphere. (Wiki)

The Great Hall – The main entrance to the MET Museum and it is the only space we visited in the inside of the museum.

MET Museum – The site which we visited for this site report. The Metropolitan Museum of Art,

colloquially "the Met", is located in New York City and is the largest art museum in the United States, and is among the most visited art museums in the world. (Google)

Façade - In **architecture**, the **façade** of a building is often the most important aspect from a design standpoint, as it sets the tone for the rest of the building. (Wiki)

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Has the Museum ever considered banning people from the steps because of safety precautions or redesigning the steps so that there is access for people with disabilities? Was the steps originally meant for this purpose of connecting to the city and it's specific location (by the Great Lawn in Central Park)?
2. What distinguishes the Metropolitan Museum of Art from other art museums historically, architecturally, and in other capacities?
3. How long did it take each stage for the museum to be built and how do the different additions take shape (in terms of architectural elements and research done prior to erecting the new parts of the museum) into the main façade?