

Learning Places Fall 2016

SITE REPORT #3

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (*Façade & Hall*)



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INTRODUCTION

The façade of the MET that we see today is not the original. Behind this façade are older and new buildings that now surround the original museum. The façade was completed in 1926. It was constructed at different times and designed by different architects in three pieces. The middle which has the main entrance, was designed by Richard Morris Hunt. Then on both sides of the main entrance, are the north wing and the south wing. The north and south extension wings were designed by McKim, Mead and White. The Hall which is inside the middle section with the main entrance, was also designed by Richard Morris Hunt. The design style of the façade and the hall is Neo-Classical.

At the front of the MET is a huge open public space that is meant to welcome people into the museum. It is almost like a huge park since there are water fountains and sections with benches, tables, trees and shades where people can eat and drink. The one thing that stands out when looking from afar is the middle section with the stairs. This is important because it is the main entrance. The outside almost extends to the interior of the hall so that when one walks in, the transition is not sudden. This can be seen because natural light enters through circular inlets in the domes and the same Neo-classical design on the outside is used inside the hall.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos*)

*3 photos minimum required per site visit



This picture shows the main entrance with the stairs. The stairs do not only take people from street level to the doors, it acts as a public meeting place and theater. On the sidewalk, there are always random musicians and singers that perform making the stairs into a theater. The stairs also make a good meeting place which is where we also meet for class. Because the stairs act as an outdoor theater, it attracts more people to the building. The building it-self is a fancy building and some may not feel welcomed so the stairs were perhaps designed in such a way to welcome people. It connects the outdoor area or public to the building.



A picture of one of the water fountains at the front. This is another attracting element at the front of the MET. The front of the MET represents a public area like a public park and having a water fountain would attract people to come closer and possibly go inside.

Another thing that can be seen from this picture is the Neo-Classical design. The Neo-Classical design emphasizes a monumental look and this can be seen from this view of the building in the background. A tripartite division can also be seen. The base shows Rustication which in turn makes it look heavy. Even though it's not obvious in this image, the stairs also tie-in to the heaviness of the base since it looks heavy. Above that is the middle section with the three huge Roman arches and the long free standing pillars on the sides. The pillars show the clean lines and are placed equally apart. The top section has smooth sections and looks light. These are all key elements of the Neo-Classical façade.



This image shows a tripartite division on one of the wings that look like the design of the Morgan Library. This is because McKim, Mead and White designed both wings. The arches and the top ledges with the dentils look a lot like the ones on the Morgan Library.



Another thing that caught my eye is the empty space seen in the image. This image is on north extension wing but there is also one on the south extension wing. At the Morgan Library, there are two empty spaces that look a lot like the ones on the MET. The ones on the Morgan Library were supposed to be for sculptures that were never made and maybe the same happened for the MET.

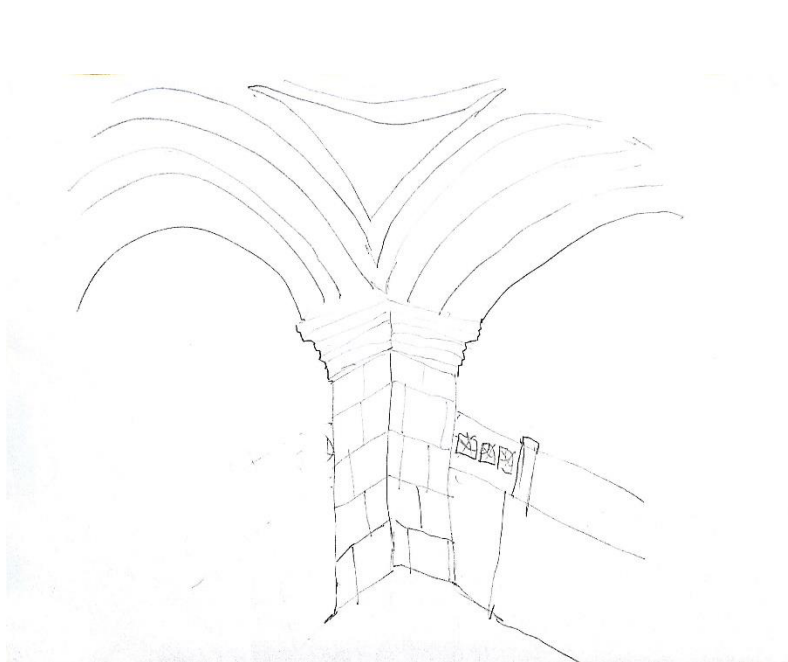
There are also empty spaces like this one on the middle part of the building on either side of the entrance doors but they are covered by the red banners.



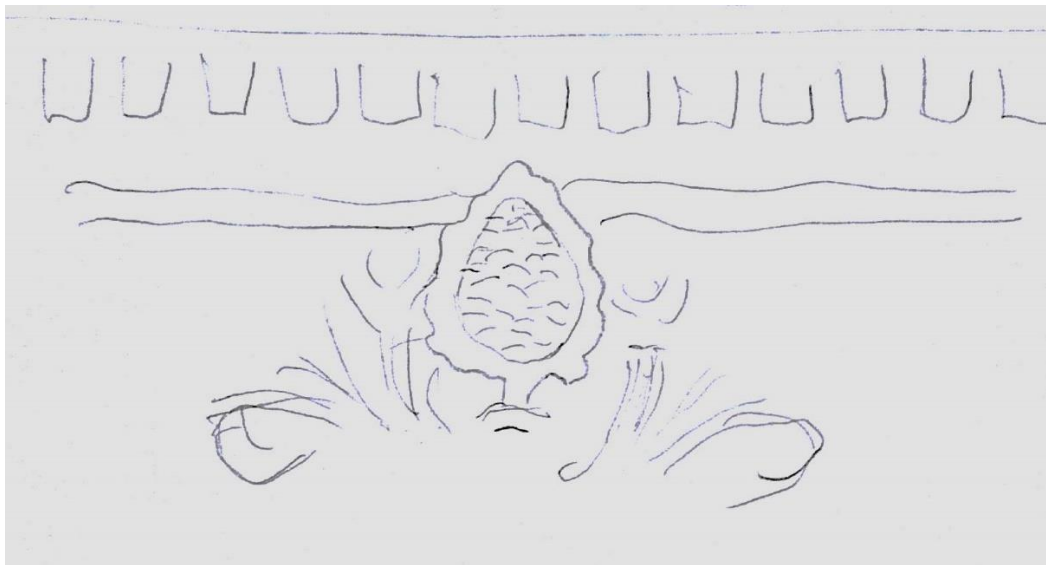
The two images above show the pendentive, vaults, arches and oculus or circular glass opening at the top of the dome. The oculus allows natural light into the hall. The hall is still an open public area since it is not controlled by ticketing. It is a meeting area and these light inlets perhaps make it feel like an extension of the exterior public meeting area. The circular openings make the connection to the outside. This is a good transition from bringing outside to the inside but still feel a bit like outside. I think this makes it a great welcome hall.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (sketches*)

*2 sketches minimum required per site visit



The image to the left is a sketch the pendentive, vaults, arches and the rustication of the bricks on one of the corners of the hall. These Neo-Classical elements from the outside extend into the hall making it a harmonious transition to the inside. The design extension is meant to connect the outside to the inside.



The above image is a sketch of what looks like an acorn. These are on the walls of the hall at the MET. At Grand Central, we were advised that the acorn is an insignia of the Vanderbilt's. It seems that the acorn may have some significance to wealth or status.

GENERAL NOTES:

- The façade was completed in 1926.
(a-brief-history-of-the-museum)
- The facade was completed in three pieces at different times by different architects.
(the-museum-constructed)
- The middle which has the main entrance, was designed by Richard Morris Hunt.
(the-museum-constructed)
- North and south extension wings were designed by McKim, Mead and White.
(the-museum-constructed)
- The hall was also designed by Richard Morris Hunt.
(the-great-hall-of-the-metropolitan-museum-of-art)
- The Neo-classical design extends from the façade into the hall. (Observing)
- The stairs act as a theater and meeting place. (Class)
- The entire front of the MET is public space that is like public park (Observing)

INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

Looking at the MET while walking towards it, I saw that it is an elaborate building. Without thinking that I saw this before and I know what it is, I realized that the building is huge and looks important, and it is in the art world. This Neo-classical design is mainly used for monumental structures and I also know of a lot of government buildings that use the same design. Just looking at the building and not the whole picture, the feeling I get could have prevented from going in. The building looks exclusive. On the other hand, looking at the building, the public space and the stairs as one picture, the feeling is different. It does feel approachable especially because of the public space. The stairs act as a theater and seeing all the people sitting there definitely makes one feel like taking a closer look. The stairs are in an open form instead of being enclosed by railings or banisters, so it makes one feel like going up. I guess this had to be an architectural element of stairs that was considered since stairs with rails or banisters are usually used on private properties like homes. Once I walked into the hall it didn't feel much different in terms of feeling private or exclusive. With the architectural elements that continued from the outside to the inside and the natural light, it feels public and welcoming. The one thing I found interesting is that McKim, Mead and White designed the North and south extension wings. Even though the entire front was designed by different architects at different times, there was still architectural symmetry and this is because the same architectural design was used.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

*5 keywords minimum required per site visit

Oculus: Roundel, circular opening or recess, bull's-eye, or œil-de-bœuf, as in a window in the tympanum of a pediment or at the top of a dome (e.g. the Pantheon, Rome). (A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) An architectural referring the opening at the top of the domes.

Dentils: Definition Small block forming one of a long horizontal series. (A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) An architectural element referring to the square decorations under the ledges.

Pendentive: The triangular section of a vault, with the apex resting on a pier, and the base supporting the drum of a dome, which enables a dome to be built over a square. (The Oxford Companion to Architecture)

Neoclassical: architecture, music, literature, etc., that is based on or influenced by classical models, or a style that has become established as 'classical' (OED). The design style of Grand Central is Neoclassical.

Tripartite: Divided into or composed of three parts or kinds (OED) Referring to an architectural element.

Vault: A vault is a roof or ceiling, usually in brick, concrete, or stone, built according to the principle of the arch. (The Oxford Companion to Architecture) Referring to an architectural element.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. What is the procedure when renovating or adding to an existing structure that was designed by another architect?
2. There is no obvious entry for disabled people at the MET but I know there is one at the 81st street entrance but kind of hidden, does this affect the number of disabled people that would want to go in?
3. It seems that the MET is the only building built on or into Central Park, why was it built there instead of on a regular city block?

References

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