

Learning Places Summer 2016

SITE REPORT #2

New York Public Library: A New Chapter



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INTRODUCTION

During the second half of our semester, our focus shifted towards research methodology exploring topics such as: sources, citations, and fact-finding. In order to tie that into our analysis of old structures, we decided to explore the New York Public Library located on 5th Ave. The following is a recollection and overview of my photographs and findings.

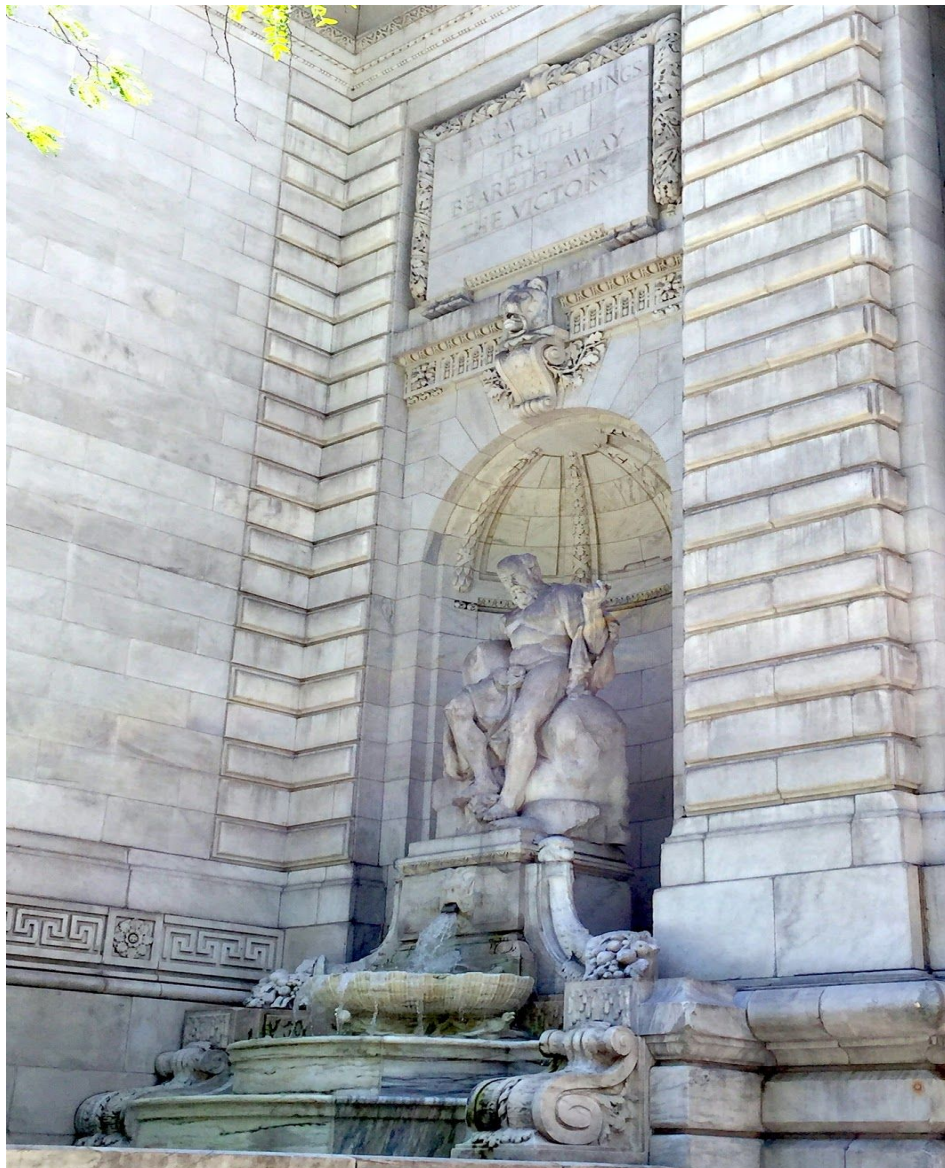
SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches/notes)



Vigilantly Guarding the Library, the first thing you're greeted by when approaching NYPL is the two lions lying down over the stairs at the front entrance. Being the Library's own mascots, lions can be seen throughout the inside of NYPL either as ornaments or as the logo of the library itself. Furthermore, the Lions make for some great shade on a hot summer day as seen on the picture on the left.

As you make your way up the stairs towards the main doors, you walk past what looks like these two fancy cups as seen on my photo to the right. In fact, these two sculptures are known as urns and were often used in Roman architecture. To me, they represent an appreciation for elegance and serve as a token for those who have entered the Library.





To the right of the urns, you can find two fountains with sculptures known as Beauty and Truth. The above photo, taken by me, shows Truth as he sits over what looks like rocks on a pedestal. If you look at the bottom of the sculpture, just above the last step, you can see that the entire structure is being held up by turtles....yeah. One detail that catches your eye is the clean white marble that surrounds the fountain. Across the walls leading into the niche that protects the sculpture, the marble really adds to the sophisticated nature of the entire artwork. Likewise, the detail that went into the scrolls next to the steps and the fruits found above them really gives the piece a natural look that complements the water coming out of the fountain.

When you first step into the Library, you can see that the inside is just as amazing as the outside. The huge arches and Vaulted Ceilings give the entrance a welcoming feeling, which is why I choose to include the picture to the right. Furthermore, I found it interesting to find pillars on the inside next to the doors. If you look at the bottom left corner, you could see how the turnstile entry clashes with the rest of the interior.



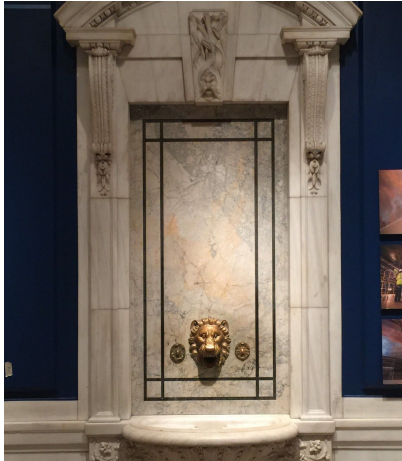
On this photo, you can see the rest of the interior in the main entrance. Looking at the top of the second floor and the bottom floor, you can see how they designed it with a single large arch that has an interior arch for the first floor and the top arch for the second one. To the right of the image you find the baluster on the upper level which if you look closer has multiple fine details that make them pop when you stand in front of them.



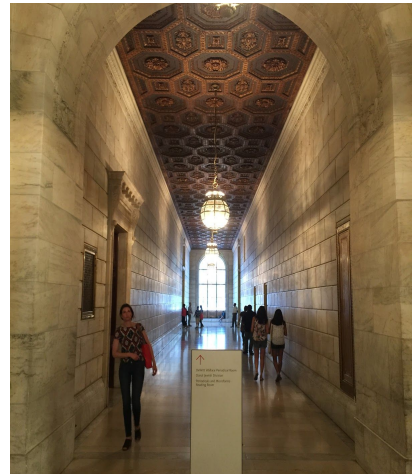
One of the more interesting rooms in the entire building is the McGraw Rotunda. In the next two photos, you can see how not an inch of space was wasted and is instead filled with various fine details. Everything from paintings to fine small engravings can be seen from wall to wall. The one feature of the room that stands out the most is the celestial painting shown above. While I was looking at it, the image appeared to portray some sort of battle between humans and what appears to be a god holding a lightning bolt.



I chose to add this image to the left because it shows the barrel vaulted ceiling in relation to the position of the paintings on it. You can see how the structure was designed with rounded concave recesses that make the flat framed paintings appear to be curved along the arch. In addition to this, this photo also shows how the light enters the rotunda and highlights the numerous gold features. Additionally, looking at both images and at the people in the lower room gives you a sense of how much vaulted ceilings help in making the area appear larger.



When looking through my phone, these images stood out to me because of the small details they contain; For example, the lion ornament, numerous light fixtures, and old computers in what looked like an office space.



I chose to add these images because looking at the chandeliers, shelves, and hallways really helps depict the sheer size of the library and its content.

DISCOVERIES

Without a doubt, the most interesting thing I found out about the New York Public Library is the actual space itself. What I mean by that is, for years I've walked past the Library and prior to our visit, I never decided to walk in. Unlike Grand Central, I was aware that you could go inside to do work on whatever project you had to do, but I always thought of it as distracting for some reason. As I walked into the Dewitt Wallace Periodical Room and the room next to it, I realized how tranquil and focus the entire room felt, even with us walking through it taking pictures. The quiet sound of the large rooms with nothing but keyboard and page turning sounds really puts you in a mindset for working on something. Continuing my tour, I realized the entire building had that sort of vibe to it and made me reconsider visiting it again for future projects.

Other than that, something I never knew about was the kids room on the lower floor. While I was walking through, I randomly walked into what was a room filled with moms and their kids. More amazingly, the place was filled with kids books and what looked like play areas. Another interesting thing I discovered was the old phone booths that were inside next to the elevators. It's not common to see those nowadays and it reminded me of when I was younger and people still used those as if it was common. Lastly, another thing that was new to me during our visit to The New York Public Library was the audio tour itself. Not only have I never done one before, but also I never knew how useful they can be. Thanks to the device giving the tour, I was able to not only learn about some history of the place, but to also interact with

whatever was being talked about.

KEYWORDS

Ornament: An accessory or adjunct, primarily functional, but often also fancy or decorative; (in pl.) equipment, trappings, furniture, attire.

Urn: An earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples esp. in former times (notably by the Romans and Greeks) to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. poet.) for ‘a tomb or sepulchre, the grave’.

Pedestal: Originally, in classical architecture: the part of a column below the base of the shaft, comprising the plinth or plinths and the dado (if present); the base on which a pillar stands. Later also: the base on which an obelisk, statue, vase, etc., is erected; a stand for an ornament.

Niche: A shallow ornamental recess or hollow set into a wall, usually for the purpose of containing a statue or other decorative object.

Turnstile: gateway formed of four radiating arms of timber or iron at right angles to each other, revolving horizontally on a fixed vertical post, set up in a passage or entrance, originally to exclude any but foot-passengers; now often to prevent the passage of more than one person at a time at a place where fees, fares, or tickets are collected, or where it is desired to count those passing.

Baluster: A short pillar or column, of circular section, and curving outline (properly, double-curved), slender above and swelling below into an elliptical or pear-shaped bulge; usually applied in a series called a balustrade.

Concave: A concave surface, or the structure presenting it; a vault, arch, hemisphere, etc., as viewed from the centre; often applied to the vault of the sky.

Recess: To make a recess or recesses in (a structure or object); to cut into, so as to form a recess.

Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved June 21, 2016, from
<http://www.oed.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu:2048/>