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Building, Rebuilding, and Renewing a Museum for Princeton: A New Episodic History

JAMES CHRISTEN STEWARD

The concept of a “university museum” can be traced back to Europe’s medieval universities, where collections of objects served as learning aids, particularly anatomical specimens used in the teaching of medicine. The first botanical garden (*hortus botanicus*) and anatomical theater (*theatrum anatomicum*) were established at universities in Italy during the sixteenth century. The first modern university museum is generally understood, however, to have been the Ashmolean Museum at the University of Oxford, founded by Elias Ashmole and opened in 1683, marking the beginning of the widespread development of university museums across Europe and North America, which continued quietly but steadfastly in the eighteenth century and gained momentum in the nineteenth century. This phenomenon was distinguished by three key characteristics. The first was the rise of specialized disciplines in the formation of such museums and collections, including art, archaeology, natural history, and ethnography. The second was the understanding that such collections should play an important role in both research and teaching, affording scholars and students the opportunity to study artifacts and specimens firsthand, rather than from reproductions or illustrations. The third was the precedent set by the Ashmolean of inviting public access to its collections.

All three characteristics inform the advent and history of collecting and of museum making at what is now Princeton University. Chartered in 1746 as the College of New Jersey, the school moved into handsome new stone-built quarters in Princeton in 1756, but even before doing so, the College had begun to acquire its first works of art. New Jersey’s colonial governor Jonathan Belcher made a gift of what he termed “my own Picture at full length in a gilt Frame” in 1755, which can thus be cited as the dawn of art collecting at Princeton. Belcher’s portrait was duly installed by the College’s grateful trustees in the central prayer hall in Nassau Hall, where it was soon joined

by a portrait of England's King George II, who served as monarch at the time of the College's founding. These two works were in turn joined by ancient architectural fragments, natural history specimens, and other objects to form a kind of "museum" of the Enlightenment, building on the model established at Oxford. Such a collection was understood as a way of both organizing knowledge and reinforcing the legitimacy of the collecting institution, in the spirit of the cabinets of curiosity that had preceded the academic museum as a collecting typology starting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

If Princeton aspired from its beginnings to be seen as an Enlightenment enterprise and regarded the collecting of objects as part of such an act of identity building, its efforts to do so proved to be uneven for a very long time, a history reflected in both its collections and its trajectory of building, demolishing, and rebuilding homes for such collections. It lost its first home during the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777, when a conflagration sparked by cannon fire gutted Nassau Hall and most of the works in it, including the portraits of the previous king and his colonial governor. With the cessation of conflict in 1783 and the advent of the American republic, the trustees of the College determined that collecting should begin again. They inaugurated their efforts with panache, commissioning a full-length portrait of the hero of both the Battle of Princeton and the Revolutionary War, George Washington (fig. 1), then resident in Princeton during the months when the Continental Congress had evacuated there from Philadelphia. Philadelphia's Charles Willson Peale, probably the early nation's most distinguished portraitist, was given the job and received an unsurpassed seven sittings with the great general and future president. By 1787, according to an eyewitness, the prayer hall was ornamented by several paintings, "particularly [of] the famous battle in the town."¹ It is sadly impossible to know what they were, for disaster struck again with another fire on March 6, 1802, which once again destroyed the College's early collections, although this time at least one of the key works, Peale's portrait of Washington, was rescued by students and staff of the College and happily endures to this day.

Despite a period of institutional decline and decay in the early years of the nineteenth century, efforts were made to bolster the College's art collections, particularly by the young professor John Maclean, Class of 1816, who carried out a lifelong effort to secure for the College a collection of portraits of its presidents and other notables. As Karl Kusserow, the Museum's John Wilmerding Senior Curator of American Art, has argued, Maclean understood the value of history and of historical portraiture to the strengthening and durability of an institution.² That the same John Maclean should go on to found the Alumni Association in 1826 as a mechanism for raising funds and strengthening ties to the young college—ultimately an enormously successful effort that had profound consequences for the College's later collections building—suggests the degree to which a single academic can shape an institution's course.

Fig. 1 Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827; born Chester, MD; died Philadelphia, PA), *George Washington at the Battle of Princeton*, 1783–84. Oil on canvas, 237 × 145 cm. Princeton University, commissioned by the Trustees (PP222)



These initial efforts set the tone for Princeton's collecting over the next century and suggest an early commitment to teaching from original objects and using them as tools for accessing and understanding the wider world. By the middle years of the nineteenth century, the College was deeply involved in the development of systems of classification, including the need to develop more complex historical narratives, which gave rise elsewhere to the founding of encyclopedic museums of science and art in Boston in 1870 and in New York in 1869 and 1872.³ No images of this period of collecting at Princeton survive, for fire struck yet again on March 12, 1855, although this time much of the collection was rescued "without injury to a place of safety" by students and residents of the town, who rallied to save it.⁴ Upon the subsequent rebuilding of the space to designs by John Notman, the room that had once been the College's prayer hall evolved yet again, initially from library to museum, befitting the increasing importance of a collection that had been "rather wandering in its character. . . hustled from one room to another," in the words of the *Nassau Literary Magazine*.⁵ To support such use, a raised second-floor gallery was built around the room's perimeter, and large skylights were installed.

Princeton's first proper museum was shaped by the geography professor Arnold Guyot and named the E. M. Museum, for an anonymous benefactor. Opened in 1874, the new museum dedicated its first zone to the College's historic portraits, followed by diverse archaeological, paleontological, and geological materials, in an array that to today's eyes can only be described as chaotic (fig. 2). Underpinning that chaos, however, was the age's commitment to epistemological and museological evolution, an effort not incidentally propelled by Princeton in the development of its first properly understood museum. Guyot's achievement, building on what Maclean had begun, was said at the time to rival the collections of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.⁶



Fig. 2 E. M. Museum of Geology and Archaeology, Nassau Hall, Princeton University, ca. 1870s–1890s. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

Fig. 3 E. M. Museum of Geology and Archaeology, Nassau Hall, Princeton University, ca. 1886. Princeton University Library, Department of Special Collections



Guyot referred to the gallery as his “Synoptic Room,” where “the leading idea in the arrangement . . . is that [the displays] should strike the eye as an open book in which the student can read, at a glance, the history of the creation from the dawn of life to the appearance of man.”⁷ Essential to such an idea was the addition of a suite of seventeen newly commissioned paintings by the British natural history artist Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins depicting prehistoric life as it was understood at the time. Commissioned by Guyot in 1875, the paintings suggest a linear, progressive account of life on earth from its imagined beginnings to the development of mammals, urged on, seemingly, by a stone statue of the flying figure of Mercury, who in turn points upward to the gallery of portraits of the College’s historical luminaries (fig. 3).⁸

The E. M. Museum, as curated by Guyot, exemplified the university museum’s growing role in research and teaching, allowing scholars and students to study objects and artifacts firsthand, just as it advanced the precedent set by Ashmole in the seventeenth century of affording the public access to expanding collections in the fields of fine art, archaeology, natural history, and ethnography. But apart from collections of historic portraits, plaster casts after works of antiquity acquired for teaching, and occasional paintings such as the series by Hawkins, the E. M. Museum’s art collections were modest.⁹ This began to change due to dramatic curricular revisions that swept the College under the presidency of James McCosh (fig. 4), who was himself a collector who donated works of Chinese and Japanese art to the College in the early years of his presidency.¹⁰ Scottish by birth and training, McCosh brought with him progressive European ideas about education, including the then-new field of art history, first developed in Germany. Guided by the concept of a coherent and holistic integration of disciplines, he built on the College’s traditions and strengths, including the classics and an understanding of Greek and Latin as the

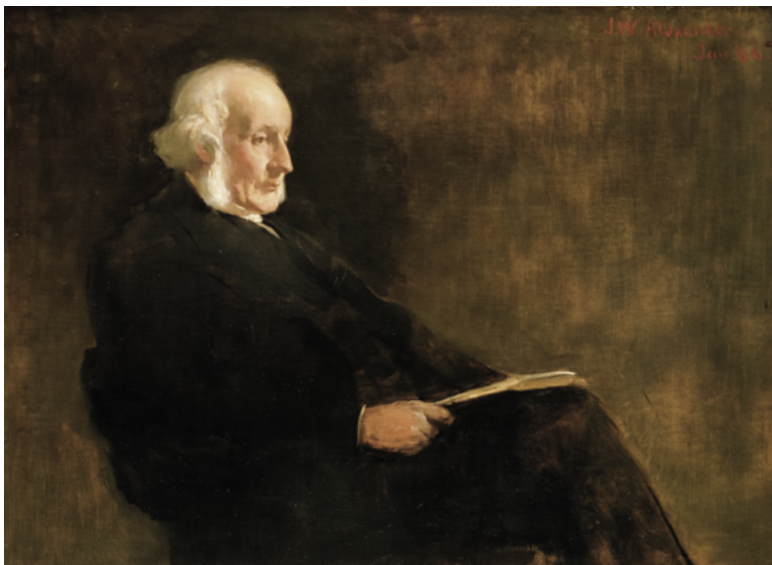


Fig. 4 John White Alexander (1856–1915; born Allegheny, PA; died New York, NY), *James McCosh* (1811–1894), President (1868–88), 1886. Oil on canvas, 89.2 × 123 cm. Princeton University, gift of alumni (PP37)

essential instruments for conveying to the modern man a knowledge of the ancient world. It was McCosh's desire that the modest art holdings of the E. M. Museum should become the nucleus of something grander, which, beginning as early as the 1870s, he termed a "Museum of Historic Art."¹¹

The project of making such a museum both administratively and architecturally preoccupied McCosh through much of his tenure. By 1882 he was building a team that he charged with bringing his vision to life, including William Cowper Prime (fig. 5), a Princeton alumnus and a founding trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870, and George McClellan, the Civil War general and hero who was by then the governor of New Jersey. Prime was, like McCosh, a collector of art, one of arguably only a handful of American collector-connoisseurs at the time, who committed his holdings of decorative art to the nascent museum, which he and McClellan argued had to be at the center of a new curriculum. Forging their ideas at a series of intellectual discussions called Library Meetings, held at the president's home in Prospect House, they argued that "the foundation of any system of education in Historic Art must obviously be in object study"—a term that remains at the heart of today's Museum—and that such object study should go well beyond the fields of art and the classics to include "many other branches of the collegiate course."¹²

The first steps in the implementation of their proposed curriculum included the appointment of Allan Marquand, Class of 1874 (fig. 6), as director of a newly created administrative unit and as chair of what is now the Department of Art & Archaeology, as well as the commissioning of A. Page Brown in 1882 to design a building that would house the art museum. Like Prime, Marquand—the son of Elizabeth Love Allen and Henry Marquand, who served as the second president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art—came with credentials. But his appointment was also a bold one. Trained as a theologian and a philosopher, Marquand in his first year on the faculty at Princeton



Fig. 5 Fridolin Schlegel (born ca. 1820, Germany; died after 1874; active United States), *William C. Prime*, 1825–1905, 1857. Oil on canvas, 91.4 × 74 cm. The New York Historical. Gift of Benjamin L. Prime (1953.188)

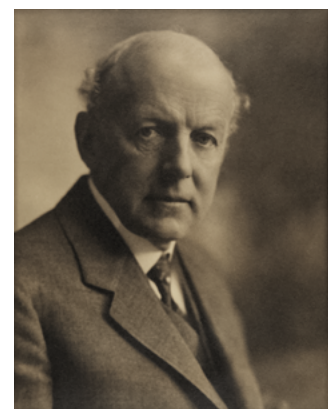


Fig. 6 Orren Jack Turner Sr. (ca. 1889–1968; active Princeton, NJ), *Allan Marquand*, 1922–25. Photoengraving, 22.7 × 18 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Most likely a gift of the sitter (x1983-217)

devised a mechanical logical machine that was a precursor to modern computing. McCosh found Marquand's approach to teaching logic "unorthodox and uncalvinistic";¹³ coupled with his inventions, this must have recommended him to McCosh as the person to take on something so novel as the making of a new museum.

Marquand set a laudable example by serving as the inaugural director of the museum for forty years, retiring in 1922, and bringing with him the financial capacity not only to be a noteworthy collector in his own right but also to buy works of art for the Museum and essentially fund it and the department's operating expenses out of his own pocket. His early efforts were abetted by student activists. In addition to crying out for courses on art, the students called for the College to build on its then-meager holdings of art, so that there could be "something more than the engravings in the Library and the portraits in North to interest and instruct the sketcher, to cultivate the taste of the general student, and to add to the reputation and real value of the College equipment."¹⁴ In fact, the collections were growing and taking on an increasingly international character in these years, which saw a large collection of pre-Columbian objects gifted in the 1870s, followed by documentary photography in 1876–77 and an important corpus of Native American material in 1877–78.

The College agreed that monies should be raised to create a purpose-built—and fireproof—building to house McCosh's new Museum of Historic Art. University trustee and patron Moses Taylor Pyne, Class of 1877—arguably still Princeton's greatest historical benefactor—summarized the situation in a letter to a Mr. Murray, dated November 12, 1886:

Now we have a large number of valuable Art Books, engravings, etchings, etc., Collections of Assyrian, Greek and Cypriot remains, a number of valuable gems etc. etc. which need someplace where they can be displayed. At present most of them are kept in drawers and closets in Dr. Marquand's house, the College affording no room for them. . . . With these collections & with other valuable Art Works, already promised in case the building be created and with a few plaster casts of the more celebrated sculptures of Europe we should at once have a very good Museum of Art. We can create a wing of a building to be hereafter completed, for the sum of say \$40,000 [\$1.3 million today]. Of this we have already raised \$18,000. Here is the subscription list.

Henry G. Marquand \$10,000 [\$334,000 today]
Mr. Robert L. Stuart 5,000
Allan Marquand 2,000
M. Taylor Pyne 1,000

We cannot afford to wait much longer.¹⁵



Fig. 7 Arthur Page Brown (1859–1896; born Ellisburg, NY; died San Francisco, CA), Accepted proposal for the Art Museum, Princeton University, 1887. Princeton University Library, Department of Special Collections

A Mr. Robert Garrett (possibly the father of Robert Garrett, Class of 1897) subsequently subscribed \$7,000, leaving only \$15,000 to be raised, as of November 17, 1886. Six months later, on May 13, 1887, the goal of \$40,000 had been met.¹⁶

In a story that seems all too familiar today, the process of constructing what became known as the Page Brown building, after the New York architectural firm that designed it, did not prove straightforward. The initial designs, largely the work of a junior member of the team in Brown's firm, were rejected. The funds raised proved inadequate to achieve the accepted full design (fig. 7), which had been shaped in large part by Stanford White, whose offices were in the same building as Brown's; flanking wings to the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival core were removed from the plan and never built (fig. 8). The site selected was personal for McCosh: he chose it himself for its adjacency to his home in Prospect House, on a gentle rise known as the Acropolis, suitable to his ambitions for a new cultural center (fig. 9). Even after sustaining substantial cuts—what today would be termed value engineering—the design retained a commitment to the use of noble materials. Newark brownstone with broken ashlar was chosen for the exterior walls, with North River bluestone to be used at the ground plane and a frieze in terracotta, a gift of the Perth Amboy Terra Cotta Company, below the roofline, while the floors were six-inch-thick concrete, a material that came into widespread use in building construction in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷ Ground breaking took place during commencement week, on June 21, 1887, on which occasion students wrote, "Our Museum of Art will not only provide for better storage and exhibition of the fine collections already gathered, but will add to that fame of ennobling ideals and devoted purpose to the higher type of culture and refinement by which Princeton has ever been characterized" (fig. 10).¹⁸

Completed in 1890, two years after McCosh's retirement, the new Museum was not without its critics, some of whom felt that he had lavished too much money on new buildings, but it certainly served as the catalyst for collecting that students and others had anticipated.¹⁹ The Trumbull-Prime collection of pottery, assembled by William Prime and his wife, came upon the Museum's completion as promised, followed that same year by the purchase of a large corpus of Cypriot pots being deaccessioned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and purchases of Etruscan, Roman, and South Italian pottery. Located in what is now Princeton's Marquand Park, Allan Marquand's home, which he had named Guernsey Hall, became a locus of bachelor communal living in the years prior to his marriage to Eleanor Cross in 1896. It acted both as an incubator of ideas for the Museum and ultimately as

Fig. 8 Arthur Page Brown, *Art Museum, Princeton College: Front Elevation*, 1886. Pen, black ink, and watercolor, 68.4 × 80 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of A. Page Brown (x1963-33)

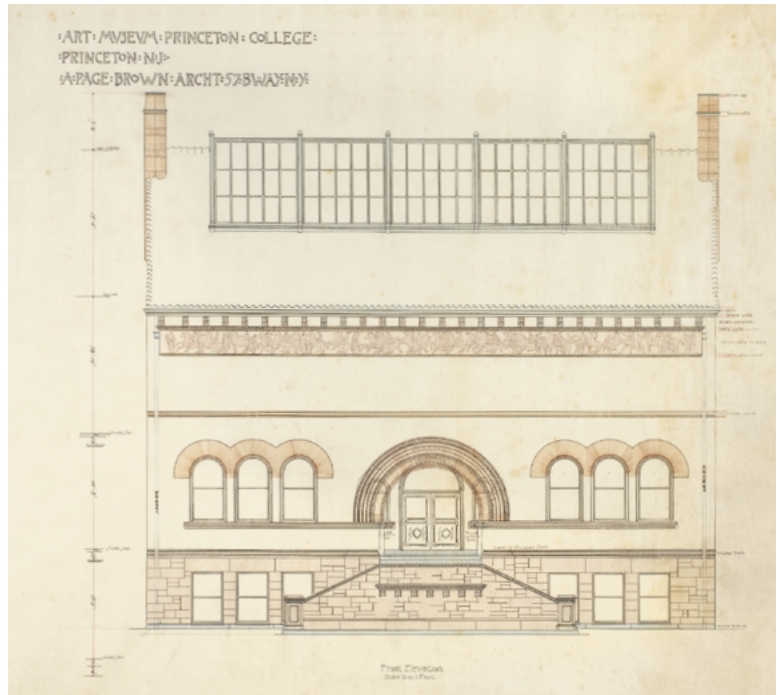


Fig. 9 Museum of Historic Art, Princeton University, mid- to late 1890s. Arthur Page Brown, architect; completed 1890. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections





Fig. 10 The Museum's Upper Hall, early 20th century. Collection of the Historical Society of Princeton

a feeder of objects to the Museum's collections. By the time of Marquand's death in 1924, *Christ Before Pilate*, attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, had entered the Museum's holdings; other works collected by the Marquands, such as the monumental Venetian doorway acquired in 1892–93, came after their deaths in 1924 and 1970, respectively.

Marquand's tenure was characterized by a pattern of building, repairing, demolishing, and rebuilding that would be repeated throughout the Museum's subsequent history. By 1895—a mere five years after its opening—the collections and classrooms were already competing for space, and a plea went out to alumni for the money with which to construct the originally proposed side wings. As director, Marquand was thwarted in this by the university architect, Ralph Adams Cram, who had other ideas, aligned with his insistence on the Collegiate Gothic as the style for all new construction at Princeton. Indeed, Cram fought Marquand by arguing that the Page Brown building should be wrapped in a curtain wall of Gothic Revival, to which Marquand adamantly objected. Cram ultimately won out when the creation of a School of Architecture at Princeton—initially housed alongside the Museum of Historic Art and the Department of Art & Archaeology in the Page Brown building—gave rise to the need for expansion.

Delayed by World War I, this expansion was designed by Cram himself, who already had the challenge of grappling with the diversity of architectural styles in the immediate campus neighborhood, from Italianate Brown Hall to Romanesque Dod Hall to the classical temples of Whig and Clio Halls, so Cram chose something “neutral,” derived from northern Italy. This addition was given the green light in March 1921, thanks to a generous commitment from Mrs. Cyrus Hall McCormick Sr., widow of the Class of 1879, for whose family the new construction was named. Of an estimated project cost of \$125,000, the vast majority (\$100,000) came from the McCormick family, who would go on to be among the most important philanthropists in the Museum’s history.²⁰ In a precedent relevant to our own time, when the University has once again made an essential financial commitment to the creation of a new building, an additional \$35,000 came from the University’s Finance Committee.

By the time the new wing was completed and dedicated on June 16, 1923 (fig. 11), the scholar and collector of medieval and Renaissance art Frank Jewett Mather Jr. had succeeded Marquand as director, going on to serve until 1946. Mather described the Museum he took on in 1922 as “the oddest kingdom of shreds and patches imaginable.”²¹ The same two priorities that had preoccupied Marquand—building and making sense of the collections as well as grappling with space problems—quickly came to absorb Mather too. Like Marquand, he used his substantial personal fortune to acquire works of art for the Museum, including classical and pre-Columbian antiquities, not the least of which were Princeton’s share of the results of the partage excavations at ancient Antioch-on-the-Orontes, in what was then Syria. Mather also acquired one of the finest collections of American drawings in the country, an endeavor that was pioneering at a time when few museums accorded significance to American art and that enabled Princeton over time to acquire a collection in this area that is among the best of any academic museum, particularly in the field of nineteenth-century landscape painting. Mather recalled his acquisition of the Museum’s *Martyrdom of Saint George* window when “in September of 1923 I found myself at Lausanne to put my children in school.”²² The *Martyrdom* was described by the dealer as an authentic, intact stained-glass window from Chartres Cathedral, supposedly from the collection assembled by the French architect-critic Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. It is in fact a composite of both medieval and modern glass, assembled in the early twentieth century, after Viollet-le-Duc’s death in 1879.

From others, Mather was able to secure major gifts of works of art, including a significant collection of Italian paintings assembled by Henry White Cannon Jr., Class of 1910; a collection of more than five hundred snuff bottles (primarily Chinese) assembled by Colonel James Blair, Class of 1903; a collection of several thousand paintings and prints by bequest in 1933 from Junius Spencer Morgan II, Class of 1888, nephew of the industrialist J. P. Morgan; and also by bequest, in



Fig. 11 Museum of Historic Art, after McCormick Hall addition, ca. 1925–30. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

1938, a gift of Italian drawings from Dan Fellows Platt, Class of 1895, that laid the foundation for the Museum's drawings collection. Another key benefactor and Museum champion of the time was Baron Carl Otto von Kienbusch, Class of 1906, a tobacco merchant who, his rather grand name notwithstanding, lived out the whole of his ninety-one years on New York's East Seventy-Fourth Street. Kienbusch was a donor from the 1930s to the 1970s of both art and funds that supported the acquisition of works as varied as ancient bronzes, medieval stained glass, and a print by Josef Albers.

Even so, achieving the quality of what he intended for Princeton was, for Mather, a perpetual struggle. His goal was to create "not a place that will be occasionally visited, but one that will be used by Princeton men and their friends all the time." But against this goal, he observed: "I have found that there is an impression that what encumbers a home may adorn a museum. The Princeton Museum is not going to be adorned that way, even at the risk of occasionally disappointing an eager donor. Our space is small and precious. We have tried being a kind of storage warehouse and have found it unsatisfactory. We want the things that a trained collector hates to let go, and we shall get them when our collecting friends and alumni realize that to give Princeton a fine work of art is to assure it worthy and permanent exhibition in best company."²³

Early in his tenure, Mather was again confronting the second priority—space, not least having inherited from Marquand a marriage of buildings rife with inadequacies that had been noted practically from the opening of the Cram wing. At one point, leaks from the primary skylight in the Page Brown building led to a proposal to remove the skylight, replace it with a solid roof, and make windows to bring daylighting in, in lieu of the terracotta frieze adorning the exterior of its upper level. Alumnus Cyrus McCormick, who had been one of the building's original donors, was asked to pay for half the cost, in order to avoid having to close the Museum indefinitely.²⁴ A debate about whether to go from depending entirely on natural light to a system using only artificial light ensued, thus ensuring that the necessary fix was not undertaken and ultimately leaving Mather with a larger problem to solve—one that had already been on his mind for some time. In a letter of January 30, 1925, Mather wrote, "I have talked the matter over with [University] President Hibben and he agrees with me that in a not very remote future the Museum to survive and grow must have its own building." He then went on to request a variety of potential campus sites in ranked order, before concluding, "Accessibility should be considered for in a few years I shall make the Museum a place of resort second only to Old Nassau," by which he meant the oft-burned Nassau Hall.²⁵

Citing various spatial, design, and lighting problems, including the challenge of sharing space with not one but two academic departments, Mather continued his lobbying campaign through 1926, arguing that the kind of small interventions that were being considered

were short-term fixes at best and that what was needed was a free-standing museum, divorced from the competing needs of the School of Architecture and the Department of Art & Archaeology. His requested location offered proximity to the latter, and he argued in a letter of November 10, 1926, that this would make it likely that a donor would support the project.²⁶ That location, perhaps ironically, is approximately where the present Museum has been constructed.

Just as Marquand fell short of his ambitions, losing the two wings from the original Page Brown design, Mather, too, did not achieve his goal and instead had to be satisfied with another in a series of additions. What became the 1927 addition was the subject of much debate architecturally, with Mather again arguing that it should hew to the Collegiate Gothic. Ultimately, the design was made by three professors in the School of Architecture whose primary focus was on creating monumental studio space. Completed in 1928, the result was a little-remembered addition that moved the entrance to the complex to the south, under a tower intended to announce it (figs. 12, 13), and included a courtyard in which some of the Museum's Antioch mosaics were later displayed outdoors and a large atelier with north- and east-facing light, which marked a new Beaux-Arts model of architectural instruction for Princeton.

By 1935 advocacy had emerged for yet further additions or renovations, intended at least in part to "counteract the drift away from the

Fig. 12 Drawing of proposed addition to McCormick Hall, 1927. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

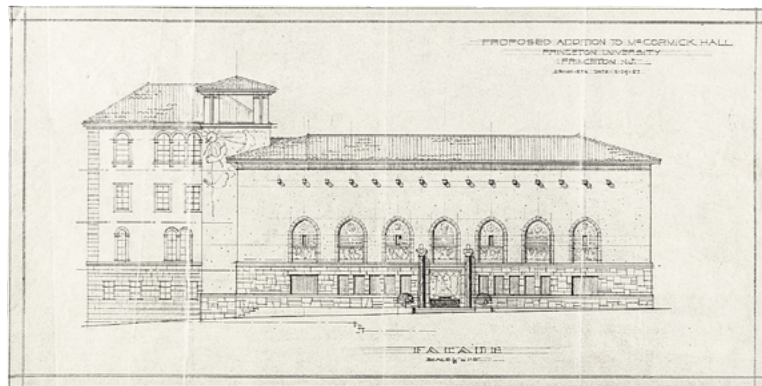


Fig. 13 McCormick Hall with the addition to the south side, 1928. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections



Humanities to the Social Sciences.”²⁷ Perhaps most importantly, the Museum already seemed to be shrinking relative to its cohabitants: at this time, the whole of the Museum constituted a space of about 5,000 square feet, of which 4,490 were for exhibitions, 182 for offices, and 336 for art storage. A writer described the dilemma in the *Bulletin of the Department of Art & Archaeology* in June 1939:

This institution [the Museum of Historic Art], if exception is made of the support of a very small group of generous and discerning alumni, has shared the incredible neglect experienced by the University Library during the past twenty-five years, and deserves it no more than that other step-child of Princeton. The Museum may be a vague term to some Princetonians, but it is well-known to art-lovers and scholars of this country and abroad as one of the best small collections in America. The Chartres Window, the Princeton Saint, the Bosch Christ before Pilate [fig. 14], the Antioch mosaics, the Cannon paintings²⁸ (and several other items of first rank), are names found frequently enough in the literature of art to lift the Princeton Museum out of the common run of American collections and make it a place that foreign connoisseurs feel that they must not omit from their itineraries in the United States.

But, the article continues, “This excellent collection is crowded into the old museum building with no chance of the effective display with which museums of less importance attract greater interest than does ours.” Yet another proposed addition to McCormick Hall “would solve a crucial problem of the present, viz. how to secure for the University the fine collections that are ready to come to it when assured of proper housing. . . . The proffer of such contingent gifts is becoming more and more frequent: the impossibility of accepting them for lack of space all the more distressing.”²⁹

By the time Ernest DeWald became director of the Museum in 1946, storage was bursting at the seams; even the basement of Nassau Hall had been called into action for art storage. DeWald, who became director in the same year he completed his graduate training at Princeton, had been one of the so-called Monuments Men charged with protecting and returning the cultural heritage of Europe during World War II. Because so many Princetonians, both faculty and alumni, served with the Monuments program, the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna lent the landmark work *The Art of Painting* by Johannes Vermeer for what proved to be an eight-day blockbuster exhibition in Princeton in May 1950. Prior to that, for the University’s bicentennial in 1946, DeWald took on the task of refurbishing the Museum’s galleries, including the inaugural display of a new collection of Chinese scroll paintings donated by DuBois Schanck Morris, Class of 1893.

That bicentennial reinstallation marked a major turning point for the Museum in heightening interest and awareness, anchored by an



Fig. 14 Follower of Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516; born and died 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands), *Christ Before Pontius Pilate*, ca. 1520. Oil and tempera on oak panel, 80 × 104 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of Allan Marquand, Class of 1874 (5711)

Fig. 15 Northern Wei dynasty (386–535 CE), China, Tomb retinue, early 6th century CE. Earthenware. Gift of J. Lionberger Davis, Class of 1900 (Y1950-93, -102, -88, -86)



exhibition of its new Chinese paintings. Asian art proved to be one of the most important arenas for expansion during DeWald's tenure (fig. 15). He was enormously aided by Professor Wen Fong, Class of 1951, who would go on to become one of the world's leading authorities on Chinese art and the founding director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Asian art department. Among their many joint successes was the gift of the Lowrie collection of Asian art in 1960 from Mrs. Walter Lowrie, who also donated the house that later became the University president's official residence on Princeton's Stockton Street. A gift from Mrs. Donald Doyle in 1947 was another turning point, the first bequest to Princeton of works of African art, in this case assembled before 1923 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 1949 Alfred Stieglitz's photograph of 1907 *The Steerage* (fig. 16) became the first fine art photograph to enter what would grow into one of the Museum's most robust collections, at a time when few museums were ready to embrace photography as a fine art form.

Against this background of growth was the by-then-familiar refrain of concern about the dramatic shortcomings of the Museum's physical plant—as well as its staffing. Early in DeWald's tenure, in May 1949, *The Nassau Sovereign* ran an article titled "Campus Treasure House," with the lede "Once unknown, the Art Museum now overflows with sights and sight-seers." The article went on to note that "a great change has taken place within the collegiate mind during the last ten years, one which has placed the Museum of Historic Art on the Princeton map."³⁰ Citing attendance of one thousand visitors a month, the writer went on to refer to the Museum's physical home as "the phantom of the Princeton campus," arguing energetically that "a new building or an addition to the present one is necessary if the Museum is to reach its full efficiency and rank with Harvard and Yale in this field."³¹ The work of mounting exhibitions, caring for the collections, and welcoming the public was carried out by a skeleton staff of four—a director, an assistant director, a secretary, and an assistant curator of



Fig. 16 Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946; born Hoboken, NJ; died New York, NY; active New York), *The Steerage*, 1907, printed 1911 or later. Photogravure, 33.3 × 26.4 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of Frank Jewett Mather Jr. (x1949-154)

classical art—two of whom were part-time, in addition to two faculty curators of classical and “Far Eastern” art. As Sara E. Bush writes in her architectural history of the Museum, “Princeton might have had a collection equal to that of other university museums, but its prestige was crippled by the physical conditions of its building, which still had no running water, no means of controlling the heat, and no space for art storage or supplies or for unpacking or conserving the collections.”³²

By January 19, 1953, in a report for University President Harold Dodds, DeWald described the situation as “desperate” and lacking in any “modern museum equipment”—with a tiny staff who were charged with presenting, as if by magic (to paraphrase *The Princeton Bulletin* of March 9, 1945), examples of artworks from the earliest times to the present and with supporting the teaching of the Department of Art & Archaeology.³³ An ardent champion of a “final” resolution to these decades-long spatial dilemmas was Rensselaer W. Lee, Class of 1920, then chair of the Department of Art & Archaeology, who wrote of his ambitions for the Museum in 1957:

The new museum would be above all a teaching museum in which maximum use would be made by undergraduates as well

as graduate students of the museum's collections. While many of our finest objects would continue to be on permanent exhibition, a large proportion of our collection would be readily available to students in "live" or "study" storage (as opposed to dead storage as at present) from which objects could be easily moved into nearby preceptorial rooms located in the museum itself. This is the notion of the "humanistic laboratory" already made concrete in the Firestone and Marquand libraries, applied to the museum. Also changing exhibitions of works of art in the corridors... would constantly invite the attention of students on their way to and from classes.³⁴

Lee's invocation of the Museum as a humanistic laboratory was an arresting resuscitation of the concept that prevailed in discussions of making a museum building for the first time in the 1870s and 1880s and that, unknowingly, I invoked again in describing a "new" yet old typology for the Museum in the 2010s.

Faced with such a divergence between reality and possibility, it is little wonder, then, that DeWald's tenure as director was shorter than that of his predecessors. Retiring in 1960, DeWald was succeeded as director by a fellow Monuments Man, Patrick Joseph Kelleher, Class of 1947. It fell to Kelleher to spearhead the fundraising for and construction of the long-awaited new home for the Museum, made possible by the University's landmark \$53 million capital campaign, which set a new standard for nonprofit fundraising. The lead gift of \$250,000 to the new building was made by Carl Otto von Kienbusch (fig. 17), who was described by Kelleher as "patron saint of the Art Museum for almost half a century."³⁵ Among other patrons, George Craig Jr., Class of 1921, of Pittsburgh, named a Gallery of Contemporary Art; James F. Lawrence, Class of 1929, endowed a gallery of pre-Columbian and other "Native Arts"; George S. Heyer Jr., Class of 1952, endowed a "Treasure Room"; and Louise La Beume, an architect from Saint Louis, made a gift to construct a "Laboratory for Conservation and Restoration," termed "an essential for any museum." The Class of 1929 led the charge, naming galleries of ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, and classical art; the art of the Middle Ages; Far Eastern art; and temporary exhibitions. In total, members of the Class of 1929 donated \$1 million—philanthropy remarkable for its time and equal to more than \$10 million today. Throughout, Kienbusch, in Kelleher's words, "with a romantic recklessness in character with his magnificent collection of armor and his penchant for the hauteur of a medieval knight, continued to pass out shekels to an impecunious, if ardent museum staff."³⁶

In 1962, following years of challenge in reaching an agreement as to the scale and design of the project—a first design proposal was put forward by the New York architectural firm of Steinmann and Cain in 1960—packing and removal of the Museum's collections began, and by the summer of 1963, Marquand Library had been moved to



Fig. 17 Margaret Wood White (born 1893, Chicago, IL; active United States), *Carl Otto von Kienbusch*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 107 × 91.5 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. Bequest of Carl Otto von Kienbusch, Class of 1906, for the Carl Otto von Kienbusch Jr. Memorial Collection (y1977-28)



Fig. 18 The Museum's former Marquand Mather Court. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

Firestone Library, while department and Museum offices moved into Aaron Burr Hall, and many objects from the collections went on the road to Baltimore, New York, Oberlin, and Williamsburg. Demolition of the 1890 Page Brown building and of the 1927 addition began in 1963, and the debris was left on a site off Alexander Street between the Stony Brook and the Delaware and Raritan Canal. A press release dated October 26, 1966, announced an event to be held three days later to celebrate the opening of the new Museum, some forty-one years after such a project had first been mooted. The new building, designed by Steinmann and Cain, was greeted with widespread acclaim and more than a little surprise that a campus museum should see itself as a lively, and public, destination (fig. 18). The *Princeton Alumni Weekly* noted, a bit gruffly: "The old Art Museum hid away in a loft; the new spacious one, oddly enough, is one of the liveliest places on campus. Several thousand visitors stroll through every year, hundreds of undergraduates in precepts."³⁷ *Antiques Magazine* wrote that the Museum "welcomes the serious student, the interested collector, the browsing Sunday public, as each gives the lie to Edith Wharton who complained that Americans tolerated art only so lofty and remote 'that it bored people to death, and they locked it up in Museums to get rid of it.'"³⁸ The new Museum complex was deemed to be so large that undergraduates dubbed it the "Massif Central," after the highland region of France (fig. 19).³⁹

Like his predecessors, Kelleher excelled at collections building even as he pushed boulders up hills to solve spatial problems successfully. Among the highlights of his tenure was the acquisition in 1965 of the Chester Dale Carter collection of eighty-three ancient Chinese bronzes as a donative sale, funded by William McAlpin, Class of 1926; David Hunter McAlpin, Class of 1920; and Hugh T. Adams, Class of 1935, all of them members of the Museum's Advisory Council, formed to guide the director and secure needed funds for both capital projects and operations. Another highlight was the acquisition of the Sackler collections in 1968, from Arthur Sackler



Fig. 19 Students leave classes at McCormick Hall, ca. 1966. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

and the Sackler Foundation, including the most important body of work by Tao-Chi (born 1641). Kelleher's directorship also saw dramatic strides in Princeton's standing in the field of photography. David Hunter McAlpin donated a collection of nearly five hundred photographs to the Museum in 1971, as well as endowing a fund for further purchases and the nation's first professorship in the history of photography, a position first occupied by Peter Bunnell in 1972. Key additions to the Museum's curatorial staff such as Bunnell may have been Kelleher's most lasting legacy: he also appointed Gillett G. Griffin as curator of pre-Columbian art in 1967, a position he held until 2004, shaping for Princeton what is probably the finest collection of Mesoamerican art in any museum in the United States.

Perhaps the most visible art on the Princeton campus is the Putnam Collection of Sculpture (fig. 20), whose origins also date to Kelleher's directorship, when, in 1968, Princeton received an anonymous gift of \$1 million in honor of Lieutenant John B. Putnam Jr., Class of 1945, who had been killed in a plane crash during World War II. Begun in 1969 and 1970 under the leadership of a committee led by Kelleher that also included Alfred H. Barr Jr., Class of 1922, the

Fig. 20 Louise Nevelson (1899–1988; born Kyiv, Ukraine; died New York, NY), *Atmosphere and Environment X*, 1969–70. Cor-Ten steel, 510.5 × 304.8 × 152.4 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. The John B. Putnam Jr. Memorial Collection, Princeton University (y1969-18)



founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, and Thomas Hoving, Class of 1953, then the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the early years of this effort led to commissions by major artists of the time, including Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson (see fig. 20), David Smith, Tony Smith, and many others. Two other initiatives launched during these years continue to be hallmarks of the Museum's work: the precursor to the docent program launched in 1967, one year after the opening of the then-new Museum, with teacher engagement and outreach efforts beginning in earnest the following year, and the Museum Travel Program, inaugurated in 1969 with a tour to the lands of the ancient Maya (Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico) led by Griffin.

Like other museum directors of his time, Kelleher understood the importance of temporary exhibitions as drivers of both original research and attendance. Building on DeWald's innovations in previous decades—including his presentation in 1948 devoted to the art of Pablo Picasso (fig. 21), deemed a blockbuster before the term had been applied to exhibitions—Kelleher championed exhibitions that not only utilized the spaces newly available to mount them but also would have an outsize legacy, even into our own times. *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America from 1876 to 1916*, presented in 1972 and curated by faculty member Robert Judson Clark, was heralded at the time as “the most comprehensive exhibition of its kind ever mounted.”⁴⁰ It led to a wholesale reconsideration of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States as one of singular craftsmanship as well as to a renewed appreciation for now-canonical makers such as Charles Rohlfs and Frank Lloyd Wright (as furniture designer and metalworker).

Only a few years later, Peter Bunnell (fig. 22) added the Museum's directorship to his portfolio of responsibilities, succeeding Kelleher in 1973 as the first non-Princeton-educated individual to hold the position. In a press statement of May 14, 1973, announcing his appointment as director, Bunnell is quoted as saying, in words I might have used at my own appointment in 2009: “I want, for example, to make the Museum a focal point for the student body in general, not only the art history majors. The Museum should become more a part of every student's experience.”⁴¹ In addition to training a generation of leading scholars and curators in the history of photography, Bunnell built on the platform established in the late 1960s to shape one of the great institutional collections of photography anywhere, now numbering more than twenty-seven thousand works, as well as holding the archives of the artists Clarence H. White, Minor White, and Ruth Bernhard. (To these were added, in 2023, the photographic archive of Emmet Gowin, whom Bunnell hired to teach photographic practice in 1973, the year after he joined the faculty.)

Bunnell's tenure as director lasted only five years, before he returned to full-time teaching and research and passed the baton to Allen Rosenbaum, who became director in March 1980. Like so many before him, Rosenbaum faced the dilemma of once again needing to grapple



Fig. 21 Visitors to *Picasso Drawing*, Princeton University Art Museum, 1948. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections

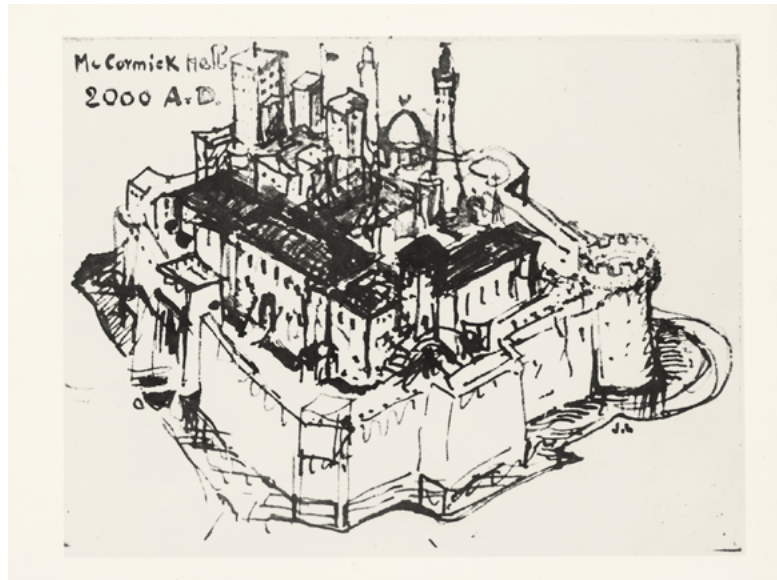


Fig. 22 Judy Dater (born 1941, Los Angeles, CA), *Peter Bunnell*, 1977. Gelatin silver print, 34.1 × 26.7 cm. Princeton University Art Museum. The Peter C. Bunnell Collection, gift of the artist (2002-138)

Fig. 23 The Mitchell Wolfson Jr., Class of 1963, Wing, Princeton University Art Museum. Mitchell Giurgola, architects; dedicated 1989. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections



Fig. 24 Jean Labatut (1899–1986; born Martres-Tolosane, France; died Princeton, NJ), *McCormick Hall, 2000 A.D.*, n.d. Princeton University Library. Department of Special Collections



with the inadequacies of space even as he continued to build the collections, making particularly noteworthy acquisitions from Renaissance and Baroque Europe, including what may be the most important collection of northern Mannerist paintings in the United States. In 1989 he initiated yet another series of improvements to the Museum's physical plant, including renovations to the 1966 building as well as the addition of a 27,000-square-foot wing designed by the New York firm Mitchell Giurgola in a loosely postmodern style (fig. 23).

By this point the Museum had indeed begun to resemble the village that had been sarcastically predicted as early as the 1930s by Professor Jean Labatut, who imagined a future museum that was by the year 2000 a random and chaotic assemblage of additions in a host of disparate and even jarring historicizing styles (fig. 24). My immediate predecessor, Susan Taylor, imagined that the only way forward with an essentially landlocked facility was to build a series of satellite

facilities in disparate campus locations, a scheme that imagined re-locating the bulk of the Museum's collections and its conservation program to an area a few miles distant and creating a new venue for contemporary art and temporary exhibitions elsewhere on the main Princeton campus. This concept might well have gone forward but for the Great Recession of 2008–9, which put a pause on most of the University's anticipated capital projects. Even so, Taylor's leadership continued the process of growth and professionalization that had in many ways been inaugurated by Bunnell and Rosenbaum, stabilizing the Museum's operating resources and raising funds for endowed curatorships. Taylor was instrumental in assuring a sustained, dedicated focus on the art of our own times, modern art having been broadly marginalized in the Museum's collecting activities through much of the twentieth century.

With ambitions for a long-awaited solution to facilities shortcomings on hold when I became director in April 2009, our focus instead turned to deepening the Museum's reach across both the Princeton campus and the wider communities around us. A renewed emphasis on what Bunnell had termed a commitment to making the Museum matter to every Princeton student, along with a parallel investment



Fig. 25 The Museum's annual Picnic on the Lawn, 2012

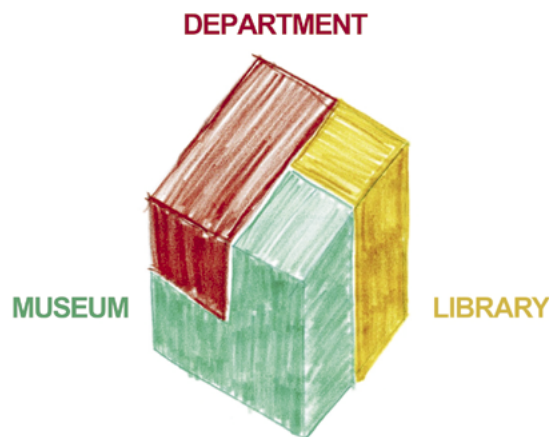


Fig. 26 Students visiting the Museum, 2015

in opening it out more successfully to the non-University communities around it, led attendance to double to more than 200,000 visitors a year, while use of the Museum's collection-specific object study rooms by University students rose by as much as 700 percent (figs. 25, 26). At the time of the publication of the most recent handbook of the collections in 2013, the Museum's holdings were thought to comprise 80,000 works of art; they now number more than 117,000 objects.⁴²

The result was that the dilemma of space had to be addressed, not least because the Museum had outgrown its physical plant. By my estimate, no more than 2 percent of the collections were ever on view at one time (a far cry from Mather's museum), and the galleries simply could not contend with the scale and physical and technical requirements of contemporary art. It was also becoming clear that significant interventions of one kind or another were inevitable, as the systems of the 1966 building and even of the 1989 wing were beginning to fail, and it was unclear how, among other things, new state-of-the-art climate systems could be installed in a building that by then contained no fewer than eighteen floor plates—eighteen moments where visitors, artworks, and even ductwork had to negotiate changes in elevation. Charged with truly understanding the Museum's needs then and for the next generation (the planning horizon was determined to be thirty years), we elected to hire an architect who plans, rather than a planner who designs, to partner with us in undertaking a deep feasibility study.

Fig. 27 Architect and planner Frederick Fisher described the McCormick Hall complex as a Rubik's Cube of tangled connections. Drawing by Frederick Fisher and Partners, 2012



The effort was led by Fred Fisher of Frederick Fisher and Partners in Los Angeles, who happily for us came with a thorough knowledge of the Princeton campus, having designed both Sherrerd Hall and the interiors of the refurbished Firestone Library. The most important questions asked and answered were (1) how large a new museum would need to be to meet the needs of at least the next thirty years, (2) what its building program would need to be, and (3) whether a museum of sufficient scale could be built or expanded on the site of the already much-expanded complex then known as McCormick Hall (fig. 27). The answers to these questions ultimately led to the

realization that what was needed was a building approximately double the size of the 77,000-square-foot structure that housed the Museum at that time and that indeed such a facility could be constructed at the present location—but only by demolishing much if not all of the complex that had arisen between the years 1922 and 1989.

From the outset, it was understood that a new Museum could come about only if an adequate degree of philanthropic support would be available to fund such a project—one whose costs at that stage could only be estimated roughly on the basis of the Fisher study's recommendations. What emerged over a few years of critical conversations was a philanthropic and University partnership, with a handful of enormously generous benefactors stepping forward even prior to the selection of an architect or the schematic design of a new facility. In contrast to previous building campaigns, there was no single lead benefactor; instead a consortium of donors emerged, assuring that the result could continue to be known simply as the Princeton University Art Museum. Such philanthropic success, coupled with a major investment of University assets in the project under the leadership of President Christopher L. Eisgruber and provosts Deborah Prentice and now Jennifer Rexford, enabled the project to go forward.

Our mandates to an architect were complex. We wanted a facility that would declare itself as a center of University life and in particular as a hub for the humanities and an entry point for wider publics, building on decades of experience in the public humanities and in cross-curricular engagement. We wanted a facility that would nestle within the complex planning environment of its neighborhood on campus, large but hopefully without overwhelming its rather discrete neighbors already built in an abundance of architectural styles. We wanted a building that would overcome the challenge of “threshold resistance” and instead shape a sense of invitation and welcome, and in which visitors, having entered, would regularly be reminded where they were in the world, with substantial views onto the Princeton campus. Perhaps most importantly, we wanted a building that would overcome the upstairs-downstairs problem of the existing museum, built in 1966, in which European, American, and contemporary art dominated the more commodious upstairs galleries, while non-Western cultures and ancient art were consigned to the downstairs galleries, where data suggested that as many as 40 percent of Museum visitors never ventured.

Building on these and other elements of a complex value proposition, University Architect Ron McCoy and I led a process of identifying a host of architects who might have the talent and experience to meet the complex goals identified by the Fisher report. The result, ultimately determined by President Eisgruber, was that in 2020 the Ghanaian British architect David Adjaye, his firm Adjaye Associates, and executive architects Cooper Robertson were selected to design a facility of 146,000 square feet that would effectively double the Museum's size. Then best known for his design of the National Museum of





NANCY A. NASHER &
DAVID J. HAEMISEGGER FAMILY
HALL & GRAND STAIR

Fig. 28 The National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC. Philip Freelon, David Adjaye, and J. Max Bond Jr., architects; completed 2016



African American History and Culture, which responded to its context on the National Mall in Washington, DC (fig. 28), in richly complicated ways, Adjaye adopted an approach to the project that stood out for its understanding of the history and circulatory pathways of the campus and for its commitment to an ethical architecture. The resultant design springs from the decision to retain the footprint of Marquand Library—the University’s remarkable fine arts library, which had its origins in the private library of Allan Marquand—and results in a network of nine interlocking “pavilions” (of which Marquand Library is one) (fig. 29). Built across three levels, the design shapes both a public zone and a gallery zone to facilitate operations and dramatically expand hours and accessibility, while forming gallery volumes of constant variation both to suit the needs of the Museum’s varied collections and to help overcome the phenomenon known as museum fatigue. To my surprise, the design team was able to manifest our desire to overcome the prevailing hierarchy across the collections quite literally, by designing a building in which 95 percent of the galleries would occupy a single level.

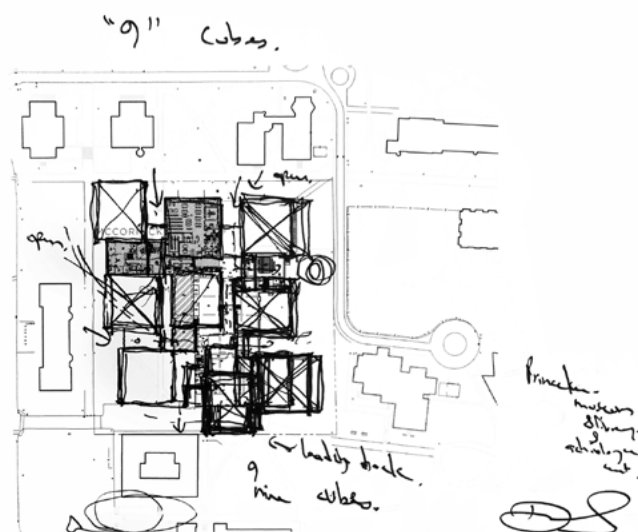


Fig. 29 David Adjaye (born 1966, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania), Floor plan sketch for the new Princeton University Art Museum, 2018/19

The new Museum will, I hope, spare my successors from having to grapple with the spatial conundrums that have preoccupied my predecessors (and me) since the 1880s. Designed along principles of flexibility, its cubic “pavilions” and other gallery, teaching, and social spaces are intended to allow future generations to reassign functions should the needs of the collections and our evolving publics continue to shift as dramatically as they have in the past sixty years, since the construction of the 1966 building. These aspects of the design should afford those who come after us the ability to make changes if certain areas of the collections grow in quality or quantity more than others, or if the needs of contemporary art—including time-based media and specifically works of a scale that would have been unimaginable in the 1960s—continue to evolve or if needs we cannot even contemplate today arise over the decades to come.

The final design and the building that has now been created from that design contain a number of signature elements whose success will ultimately be determined by the nature of the visitor experience. Spatially, the building nestles into the landscape as a series of nine cubes or “pavilions” that respond to the scale of the historic buildings around them, from the brownstone of Murray Dodge Hall to the white marble of Whig and Clio Halls. The use of both elegant and basic building materials—from cast-in-place concrete to monumental honed precast panels to bronze and glass—in a variety of restrained colors seeks to respond to the tapestry of materials in those nearby buildings. The exterior element over which we may have obsessed more than any other was the color and blend of the stone aggregate, so that, when cut and faceted, the materials revealed would resonate subtly—almost subliminally—with the building’s neighbors (fig. 30). Gentle uplighting designed by the project lighting designer, Tilletson Associates, picks out the ziggurat of the precast panels installed on the bias, just



Fig. 30 The blend of the stone aggregate in the exterior curtain wall “fins” reflects the color palette of the nearby historic buildings

as sunlight radiates from above during daylight hours. Landscaping privileging native plant materials selected to withstand climate change and provide interest in all seasons was shaped by Field Operations, the New York–based landscape firm, which also sought to create compelling site opportunities for public art outside the Museum. Entrances on all four sides give the building its core organizational premise while continuing the pedestrian pathways of the campus through the structure. A similar circulatory device was deployed at the University of Michigan Museum of Art under my directorship, as part of the expansion and refurbishment designed by Allied Works Architecture and completed in 2009.

Once inside Princeton’s new Museum, the visitor discovers a building in which form has largely followed function, the need for amply proportioned gallery spaces having dictated the form and volume of the pavilions. Interstitial spaces linking the pavilions afford ample opportunities for bringing daylighting into the building, while shaping vistas onto the campus in every direction that allow visitors to orient themselves and remind them of the University that has shaped the collections they now enjoy. On the second floor these areas function as both circulatory spaces and as galleries proportioned to the collections destined for them, allowing most of the building’s 80,000 square feet of galleries to be gathered together on this floor—a footprint that is the second largest in the historic core campus (second only to Level A of Firestone Library). The interiors bring together a rich assortment of materials only hinted at by the more restrained exteriors, including Vermont white oak (fig. 31), Canadian blue spruce, terrazzo in two colorways that occasionally extends from the floors to the walls and casework, and Vermont granite that surrounds most of the gallery portals and is first discovered on the stair treads and risers of the Grand Stair. From the extraordinary “flying buttresses” of cast-in-place stone aggregate in the Grand Hall to the more intimate wood-lined spaces of three “viewing rooms”—moments of respite from the densely installed gallery spaces—the building is a symphony of themes and variations designed to keep visitors fresh and focused and to overcome “museum fatigue.”

This idea of themes and variations emerges not only in the design of the building as it moves from grand to intimate and back but also in its curation. Rather than shaping a monochromatic or even insistent curatorial viewpoint across the whole of the institution, I have sought to foster approaches to display and interpretation as varied as the voices and perspectives of our fifteen curators and of the many educators and outside experts who have joined us in shaping the new installations. Our hope is that, as with the musical concept from which I have borrowed this language, the whole will operate cohesively while allowing for a diversity of curatorial approaches and encouraging visitors to participate in their own meaning making, no matter the nature of their previous museum experience.

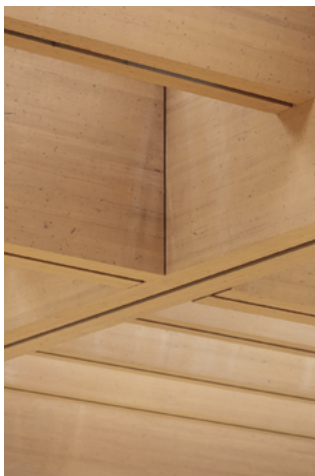


Fig. 31 Heavy timber, used in the ceiling system to carry many of the building’s mechanical elements, creates the Museum’s strongest aesthetic feature

The Museum we open today would have been hard to predict from its humble origins in the 1750s. The museum field has undergone a steady process of professionalization since the middle decades of the twentieth century, and by the time we open our doors in October 2025, we will be a staff of about 180 caring for collections of a size and complexity that would be unimaginable to our predecessors and responding to and anticipating the needs of audiences of a parallel complexity. The Museum we celebrate is one that builds on the past to welcome novice and expert alike; to allow every visitor to find points of resonance with their own lived experience; and to bring students, faculty, and community members together in pursuit of a shared journey of discovery, learning, and even sometimes delight.

- 1 Reverend Manassah Cutler of Connecticut, quoted in Donald Drew Egbert, *Princeton Portraits* (Princeton University Press, 1947), 4.
- 2 Karl Kusserow, "Memory and Meaning in the Faculty Room," in Kusserow, *Inner Sanctum: Memory and Meaning in Princeton's Faculty Room at Nassau Hall* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 67.
- 3 See Joel J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740–1870* (University of Alabama Press, 1990).
- 4 See "Nassau Hall in Ruins," *New-York Daily Times*, March 14, 1855.
- 5 *Nassau Literary Magazine* 29, no. 4 (April 1, 1874): n.p.
- 6 See Harrison Blackman, "Princeton's Lost Museum: Arnold Guyot's E. M. Museum and the History of American Natural Science," lecture, May 11, 2017, First Campus Center, Princeton University, https://mediacentral.princeton.edu/media/Princeton%27s+Lost+Museum+A+Arnold+Guyot%027s+E.+M.+Museum+and+the+history+of+American+natural+science/1_ykcgzkin.
- 7 Guyot, quoted in Sara E. Turner, "The E.M. Museum: Building and Breaking an Interdisciplinary Collection," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 65, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 237.
- 8 See Kusserow, "Memory and Meaning," 85.
- 9 The collection is enumerated in *The Catalogue of the College of New Jersey for 1875–76*, quoted in Betsy Rosasco, "The Teaching of Art and the Museum Tradition: Joseph Henry to Allan Marquand," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 55, no. 1/2 (1996): 13.
- 10 For a far richer accounting of the early developments of art history and an art museum at Princeton, see Rosasco, "Teaching of Art," 7–52.
- 11 "The College Buildings," 4, Allan Marquand Papers, CO 269, box 9, folder 2, Manuscripts Division, Princeton University Library.
- 12 George B. McClellan and William C. Prime, "Suggestions on the Establishment of a Department of Art Instruction in the College of New Jersey," 1882, 7. The models for their proposal were once again at Oxford, where the lectures of John Ruskin were providing a foundation in the English language for the new discipline of art history, as well as at Harvard, where Charles Eliot Norton's lectures, undertaken in 1874, were doing the same.
- 13 McCosh, quoted in Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Eye of the Tiger: The Founding and Development of the Department of Art and Archaeology, 1883–1923, Princeton University* (Dept. of Art and Archaeology and the Art Museum, Princeton University, 1983), 9–10. Lavin explains that this is an oral tradition. In his obituary for Marquand, Frank Jewett Mather Jr. remembered, "It was Dr. McCosh's suspicion of Marquand's Calvinism that shifted the brilliant young metaphysician tactfully from the more or less contentious history of philosophy to the then quite harmless history of art. It was a step in which chance and policy seemed to conspire with predestination." Frank Jewett Mather Jr., obituary for Allan Marquand, *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 25, no. 1 (October 8, 1924): 30.
- 14 *Princetonian* 6, no. 13 (February 3, 1882): 157.
- 15 Moses Taylor Pyne to M. Murray, November 12, 1886, Department of Grounds and Buildings Technical Correspondence Records, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.
- 16 For a detailed discussion of the fundraising for and development of the building project, see Sara E. Bush, "Architectural History of the Art Museum," in "An Art Museum for Princeton: The Early Years," special issue, *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 55, no. 1/2 (1996): 77–85.
- 17 Building Specs, Grounds and Buildings, Technical Correspondence, box 17, folder 4.
- 18 *Princetonian* 12, no. 24 (June 21, 1887): 2.

- 19 At the time of his retirement, McCosh wrote: "I never looked on these new buildings as constituting our chief work. I remember that some critics found fault with me for laying out too much money on stone and lime; but I proceeded on system, and knew what I was doing. I viewed the edifices as means to an end, at best as outward expressions and symbols of an internal life." Quoted in William Milligan Sloane, ed., *The Life of James McCosh: A Record Chiefly Autobiographical* (Scribner, 1896), 196.
- 20 The arrival in 1973 of a major endowment from Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, restricted to the purchase of works of art, along with several relatively more minor endowments, made possible the process of strategic collections building in subsequent decades. Fowler McCormick was heir to two of the country's most notable economic dynasties: His grandfather was Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the reaper and founder of what became International Harvester; his mother was the former Edith Rockefeller, daughter of John D. Rockefeller Sr., who founded Standard Oil.
- 21 Frank Jewett Mather Jr., "An Art Museum at Princeton: The University's Growing Collection," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 25, no. 18 (February 11, 1925): 417.
- 22 Mather, "Art Museum at Princeton," 417. On the origins of the *Martyrdom* window, see the entry on the Museum's website, <https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/34722>.
- 23 Mather, "Art Museum at Princeton," 420.
- 24 Henry B. Thompson to Cyrus McCormick, June 19, 1928, Department of Grounds and Buildings Technical Correspondence Records.
- 25 Frank J. Mather to Mr. Wintringer, January 30, 1925, Department of Grounds and Buildings Technical Correspondence Records.
- 26 Frank J. Mather to President John Hibben, November 10, 1926, Department of Grounds and Buildings Technical Correspondence Records.
- 27 Charles Rufus Morey to President Dodds, September 18, 1935, Department of Grounds and Buildings Technical Correspondence Records.
- 28 Forty Italian paintings, gifted in 1935 by Henry White Cannon, Class of 1910.
- 29 [E. Baldwin Smith], "Space," *Bulletin of the Department of Art & Archaeology*, June 1939, 15–16.
- 30 *Nassau Sovereign*, May 1949, 20.
- 31 *Nassau Sovereign*, May 1949, 30.
- 32 Bush, "Architectural History," 97.
- 33 Ernest T. DeWald to Harold W. Dodds, 1953, Archives of the Princeton University Art Museum.
- 34 "Rensselaer W. Lee '20: The Need for a New Art Museum," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 58, no. 9 (November 15, 1957): 9.
- 35 Patrick J. Kelleher, "Interim Notes for a New Art Museum," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 63, no. 8 (November 9, 1962): 9.
- 36 Kelleher, "Interim Notes," 10.
- 37 "New Art Acquisitions," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 69, no. 5 (October 22, 1968): 9.
- 38 Hedy Backlin-Landman, "The Art Museum, Princeton University," *Antiques Magazine*, November 1967, n.p.
- 39 "The New McCormick Hall," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 66, no. 8 (November 9, 1965): 9.
- 40 David L. Shirley, "Arts and Crafts with Vibrancy," *New York Times*, October 25, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/10/25/archives/arts-and-crafts-with-vibrancy.html>.
- 41 Department of Public Information, Princeton University, "Bunnell Appointment," press release, May 14, 1973, 2, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library.
- 42 Such dramatic growth certainly reflects a period of ambitious collecting but is also the result of a collections-wide inventory being conducted but incomplete at the time the handbook was being compiled. The first full inventory conducted in fifty years has led to a far more detailed understanding of the Museum's holdings.