

BEGINNING

EXHIBITION 34 a

EARLY MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

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See A - P in Catalogue of Wesleyan University
Architectural Exhibitions

A. MUSEO PIO-CLEMENTINO. Vatican City
c. 1770-p. 1786

By Michelangelo SIMONETTI (1724-1781) and
Pietro CAMPORESI (1726-1781). Completed by
Giulio CAMPORESI (1763-1822)

1. PLAN (from Letarouilly's "Le Vatican", vol. iii, 1882)
2. CORTILE OTTAGONA
3. SALA DELLA ROTONDA (from "Le Vatican")
4. SALA A CROCE GRECA

This museum of antique sculpture in the Vatican is almost entirely a new construction. Only a small portion is an adaptation of the earlier Palazzetto of Innocent VIII. The contiguous Museo Egizio and Museo Etrusco constitute separate collections dating from the pontificate of Gregory XVI and occupy space behind Bramante's north facade of the Cortile della Pigna.

The Vatican museums received no particular monumental exterior treatment since they were attached to a complex of earlier constructions. With, in effect, a facade by Bramante, Simonetti and Camporesi wisely restricted their creative efforts to the interiors. The galleries established the type for the display of antique sculpture. Each one was a separate composition of handsome proportions and fine materials. Ennio Quirino Visconti installed the collections in such a way as to group the minor objects by classes and to isolate the more important works as focal points in the interior architecture.

B. MUSEE DU LOUVRE, Paris
1784 (1806-1810)

Designed by Hubert ROBERT (1733-1806) (Executed by PERCIER and FONTAINE)

1. PROJECT FOR THE ADAPTATION OF THE GRANDE GALERIE

(sketch for the painting at Tsarskoie Seloe)

The first regular public art museum in France was at the Luxembourg Palace. Beginning in 1750 about a hundred pictures from the royal collections were exhibited there two days a week. In 1769 d'Angivillier persuaded Louis XV to approve his project to make a museum of the Louvre. In 1774 he had Soufflot prepare plans for adapting the Grande Galerie. In 1784 Hubert Robert became Garde des Tableaux at the Louvre and then presumably prepared his project for overhead lighting. But the Grande Galerie was not opened to the public until 1793 after the Revolution.

Under the Empire, Percier and Fontaine adapted various apartments for museum purposes, following in the Grande Galerie Robert's project in a general way. Further galleries chiefly for sculpture were installed under the Restoration so that by the middle of the century the nineteen galleries of the Empire had been extended to forty-four. Under the Second Republic Villot began to rehang the collections in historical sequence and Duban restored the Galerie d'Apollon and the Salon Carré in traditional style, marking the opening of a new period of museum treatment.

At Versailles considerable work of adaptation was carried out under Louis Philippe, notably the Galerie des Batailles of 1836 by Fontaine and Nepveu inside Mansart's south wing of the palace.

C. MUSEE DES MONUMENTS FRANCAIS
1796-1814

By Alexandre LENOIR (1761-1839)

The plan and the three views of galleries and two of the garden are taken from Biet's "Souvenir du Musée des Monuments Français", 1821.

In 1790 the revolutionary government began to store works of art in the ex-convent of the Petits Augustins. In 1792 Alexandre Lenoir was put in charge of the collections there and the next year they were opened to the public with a catalogue prepared by Lenoir. So great was the popular interest that eleven more editions of the catalogue were required by 1816.

Lenoir gradually made of this storehouse in an old convent a real museum and was permitted by the government to make acquisitions for it, receiving under the Empire considerable funds for the purpose. By the time of the Restoration there were over five hundred works of art arranged in galleries decorated according to Lenoir's naturally rather inaccurate ideas of the styles of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The galleries of this first archaeological museum installation (at least in the only way we can know them, from the paintings and prints of the time) appear to have offered a more agreeable setting for the sculpture than did the galleries of the Louvre where such of the objects as were not returned to their original sites in churches have been exhibited since Lenoir's museum was broken up in the early twenties.

Lenoir was not a conscientious archaeologist in restoring his monuments. Some of the most famous like the tomb of Héloïse and Abelard were pure fabrications. But the importance of his work in salvaging such works as the royal tombs from Saint Denis and in turning public attention to the neglected art of the Middle Ages was very great. Along with the architects of the new museums in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century this director deserves particular credit for his extension of the range of museum activities and his innovations in installation.

D. PICTURE GALLERY, God's Gift College, Dulwich, England.
1811-1814

By Sir John SOANE (1753-1837)

1. PLAN AND ELEVATIONS (from Soane's "Designs for Public and Private Buildings", 1822)
2. EXTERIOR
3. INTERIOR (from an early photograph in the possession of the Soane Museum)

This museum was built according to the terms of Sir Francis Bourgeois' bequest to contain the collection formed by Noël Desenfans, artistic agent for Stanislas, King of Poland. The small attached mausoleum, was a monumental Neo-Classical design with extremely original incised detail. The galleries, in contradistinction to those prepared for sculpture at the Vatican, were extremely simple and distinguished only by pleasant proportions and an ingenious scheme of lantern lighting. Evidently Soane was not responsible for the installation of the pictures, which is to our present taste overcrowded; for in 1829 he was so distressed by the dark color of the walls that he had them repainted at his own expense.

Dibdin, at a loss to describe in revivalistic terms what was actually a modern building of a quite new type, wrote of the Dulwich Gallery: "What a thing! What a curious creature it is! A Moeso-Gothic, semi-Arabic, Moro-Spanish, Anglico-Norman, a what-you-will production. . . ." Yet this, the first museum built solely to contain paintings, remains architecturally perhaps the most satisfactory.

E. GLYPTOTHEK, Munich

1816-1830

By Leo von KLENZE (1784-1864)

1. PLAN AND TWO SECTIONS (from von Klenze's "Sammlung Architektonischer Entwuerfe")
2. EXTERIOR (from the "Sammlung")
3. INTERIOR WITH THE AEGINA PEDIMENTS (from the "Sammlung")
4. INTERIOR

Ludwig I of Bavaria while still Crown Prince began in 1805 on his first trip to Italy the collections of the Glyptothek. In 1814 he selected von Klenze's plans for the building and continued during the period of construction to increase the collections. The sculptures, most unfortunately restored by Thorwaldsen, were installed by von Klenze himself in chronological sequence.

The galleries are even more than those of the Vatican complete interior compositions in which the exhibits and the settings combine to splendid architectural effect. The forms of the rooms and the materials are extremely handsome although the murals by Peter Cornelius and the contemporary decorations on the vaults rather overpower the exhibited sculpture. The exterior is, however, one of the dullest monuments of Neo-Classicism, redeemed chiefly by the harmonious general scheme of the Königsplatz with Ziebland's Staatsgalerie of 1838-1845 opposite and the Propyläen at the end.

F. BRACCIO NUOVO, Vatican City

1817-1822

By Raffaele STERN (1771-1820)

1. PLAN (from Letarouilly's "Le Vatican", vol. iii, 1882)
2. INTERIOR

This new gallery south of the Cortile della Pigna is connected with those of the Museo Pio-Clementino by the Museo Chiaramonti inaugurated in 1817 by Pius VII in the corridor on the east side of the Cortile della Pigna.

Stern's interior is finer both technically and aesthetically than those which preceded it, incorporating successfully Roman mosaics in the floors and antique marble columns along the walls. The space composition is splendid, the materials rich and the exhibits well spaced. The omission of distracting contemporary mural painting and elaborate ornament is an advantage over the Glyptothek and over most later monumental sculpture galleries.

G. ALTES MUSEUM, Berlin

1824-1828

By Karl Friedrich SCHINKEL (1781-1841)

1. PLANS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS (from Schinkel's "Sammlung Architektonischer Entwuerfe", 1828)
2. EXTERIOR
3. INTERIOR OF THE ROTUNDA (from the "Sammlung")
4. SECTION AND REAR ELEVATION (from the "Sammlung")
5. INTERIOR OF THE PAINTING GALLERIES

Schinkel had for the first time the difficult problem of providing in one museum for the exhibition of both sculpture

and painting. His rotunda for sculpture is based on that by Simonetti at the Museo Pio-Clementino but is superior in its proportions and in the simplicity of the niches behind the individual statues. The painting galleries without toplighting are not very satisfactory, although the system of screens between the windows gave a certain desirable flexibility. After the attached Neues Museum was built by Stueler in the years 1843-1855 the pictures were moved out of the Altes Museum which has since then contained antiquities only.

The exterior is at once more magnificent and also much simpler than von Klenze's Glyptothek. The rear facades with their regular alternation of windows and wall spaces are superior even to those of Soane at Dulwich in attaining a dignified straightforwardness.

H. CITY ART GALLERY, Manchester, England

1824-1834

By Sir Charles BARRY (1795-1860)

1. PLANS OF FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS
2. EXTERIOR

This building was built as the Royal Manchester Institution to serve like the original Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford a variety of cultural purposes of which annual exhibitions of works of art was only one. The first exhibitions were held elsewhere and only in 1829 were the galleries of the unfinished Institution available. In 1882 the Institution, of which the educational activities had been as important a function as the artistic, was taken over by the municipality and become the City Art Gallery. Since the Institution was at first not so much a permanent Art Museum as a place for temporary exhibitions, it is not possible to illustrate the original installation.

This was Barry's first work. It follows the prevailing Neo-Classic style in its Greek phase rather than the Italian phase which he was to introduce in 1829 in the Travellers' Club and which von Klenze used at the Alte Pinakothek.

I. BRITISH MUSEUM, London

1825-1847

By Sir Robert SMIRKE (1781-1867)

1. PLAN (from Ferguson's "The British Museum etc.", 1849)
2. EXTERIOR
3. INTERIOR OF THE EGYPTIAN SALOON

Smirke's first designs date from 1823. The East Wing containing the King's Library was finished by 1828 and the South front with the portico was practically completed when Sydney Smirke succeeded his brother as architect in 1847. In the following decade the West Wing was built according to the original designs and the present circular reading room in the central court instead of that shown in the early plan.

The collections of the British Museum started with the bequest of Sir Hans Sloane in 1753 and various libraries. They were housed at first in Montagu House which was to some extent adapted and enlarged. The Library has always been a most important feature of the British Museum and was the first portion to be provided for in Smirke's constructions. The Museum galleries, as a matter of fact, fall rather late in the period of early museum building. But the exteriors and the interiors of the British Museum executed according to the original designs are very typical of the Neo-Classic style.

Unfortunately, the museums of the next half century very generally followed similar precedents with rather less success.

J. AELTERE PINAKOTHEK, Munich
1826-1838

By Leo von KLENZE (1784-1864)

1. PLANS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS
(from von Klenze's "Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe")
2. EXTERIOR
3. SECTION AND ELEVATION (from the "Sammlung")

Dynastic changes brought to Munich at the end of the eighteenth century various Wittelsbach collections of paintings. For these the Elector Karl Theodor built a gallery in the Hofgarten now used as an Ethnographical Museum. This was soon overcrowded, particularly after 1805 when the Düsseldorf pictures came to Munich. Definite decision to build a new gallery, however, was not made until 1822, and not until Ludwig I became king was the building begun.

The plan of the Alte Pinakothek resembles that of the Dulwich Gallery. It is, of course, much larger and has a lower storey beneath the main exhibition floor. The scheme of a range of very large toplighted galleries down the center with smaller sidelighted cabinets on either side has been much imitated. It is distinctly less convenient for circulation than plans based on that of the Glyptothek running around a central court or rotunda. The very high galleries with their richly decorated ceiling coxes imitated unwisely the palace galleries of the past.

On the exterior von Klenze substituted for the severity and simplicity of Neo-Classic design, a more elaborate yet curiously barren-looking revival of High Renaissance forms.

K. NATIONAL GALLERY, London
1828-1837

By William WILKINS (1778-1839)

1. PLAN OF CENTRAL PORTION; PLAN OF WEST WING; SECTION OF WEST WING (from the architect's drawings in possession of H. M. Office of Works)
2. EXTERIOR
3. INTERIOR OF MR. ANGERSTEIN'S GALLERY
(from a painting by F. Mackenzie in the Victoria and Albert Museum)

The Angerstein Collection purchased by the Nation in 1824 was the nucleus of the National Gallery. It remained for more than ten years in Angerstein's house at 100 Pall Mall and after 1834 at 105 Pall Mall. Wilkins' designs of 1828 were not accepted for three years and construction did not start until 1833. The Eastern half of the new building was occupied by the Royal Academy which did not remove until 1869. A small enlargement of the National Gallery was planned by Pennethorne in 1848 and executed only in 1860. Since that date there have been several enlargements and modifications including the replacement of Wilkins' original lantern lighting imitated from Dulwich.

The National Gallery has been so changed that little remains of the original design except the facade. The galleries were at first few and large and always overcrowded even before the collections began to grow. The exterior is at once monotonous and incoherent, for the Neo-Classic discipline was beginning to break up. The curious skyline has little relation to the interior of the building and represents that desire for picturesque as well as splendid exterior effects which made the museum architecture of the later nineteenth century so meaningless and undistinguished.

L. MUSEE DE L'ECOLE DES BEAUX ARTS,
Paris

1833-1838

By Jacques-Felix Duban (1797-1870)

1. PLAN
2. EXTERIOR

This museum for casts of sculpture and architecture is chiefly of interest for the metal construction over the glazed court and as a background for the fragments of Renaissance architecture set up before it. It was the only important new museum construction in France before 1850.

M. THORWALDSENS MUSEUM, Copenhagen
1839-1848

By Michel Gottlieb BINDESBOLL (1800-1856)

1. PLANS AND SIDE ELEVATION (from Bindsbolls original drawing)
2. EXTERIOR
3. THE COURT
4. INTERIOR

In 1837 in Rome Thorwaldsen decided to leave his own works, his collection of antiques and his wealth to form a special museum in Copenhagen. The completion of the building was made possible by the contributions of the Kings Frederik VI and Christian IV, of the city of Copenhagen and the Danish Parliament. Before Thorwaldsen's death in 1844 it was arranged that he should be buried under the center of the courtyard.

The frescoes on the exterior showing Thorwaldsen's arrival in Copenhagen with his collections in 1838 and their removal to the museum were suggested by Bindsbolls and executed by J. Sonne. The decorations in the courtyard of laurels, oaks, and palms date from 1844 and were done by H. C. From. The architect supervised the elaborate painted decorations of the interior vaults. Thus, the whole museum, in its architecture, its decorations, and its collections was completed at one time and in accordance with the ideas of two men, the sculptor, whose work it chiefly contains, and the architect. Since it was intended primarily for contemporary works, the decorations are more harmonious with the exhibits than in most museums of the time. Architecturally and in its installation it remains a model of what a small museum with a fixed permanent collection should be.

N. NEUE PINAKOTHEK, Munich
1846-1853

By August von VOIT (1801-1870)

The Neue Pinakothek on account of its situation had to be a sort of pendant to von Klenze's Alte Pinakothek. It was intended to house the contemporary works Ludwig I had been acquiring in quantities and for future acquisitions. It provided more toplit galleries than von Klenze's plan had done and made up for the resultant plain walls with large exterior murals by Kaulbach which have, perhaps fortunately, all but disappeared. In style it followed rather the more mediaeval Italianism of von Gaertner's Ludwigstrasse than the Neo-Classic and High Renaissance style of von Klenze. The greater simplicity and better proportions of the exterior make of it one of the most successful early museum designs. It is, for example, distinctly superior to Huebsch's Badische Kunsthalle of 1836-1845 although Huebsch was in general a far better architect than von Voit.

Early Museums in America

The earliest museum founded in America was the Charleston Museum which dates from 1773. Its collections were miscellaneous and objects of art were only incidental. Moreover, it built no building of its own within the early museum period and is today housed in a modern edifice.

In 1805 the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia built its first building but this was an art school and not a museum. At a later date Peale's Museum was exhibited here and the institution today is at least in part a museum. The present edifice, however, dates from after the Civil War.

Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth, erected from the designs of Alexander Parris in 1824 in the form of a Doric temple, was from the first a museum of historical relics and has never been an art museum. The original Greek wooden portico was most unfortunately replaced by an awkward Roman Doric portico from the designs of McKim, Mead and White in 1920.

Among American museums only the Trumbull Gallery at Yale and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford had buildings intended for the display of works of art before the Civil War, although of course the beginnings of several collections now housed in later buildings go back into the eighteenth century.

Museum architecture in America is almost entirely a product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and reflects generally the chaos of the period.

O. TRUMBULL GALLERY, Yale University, New Haven
1831-1832

By John TRUMBULL (1756-1843)

Trumbull's collection was acquired from funds appropriated by the State of Connecticut. The gallery was built by the University from designs by the artist whose work was chiefly to file it. Trumbull had the advice of Ithiel Town, then the chief architect of Connecticut, and provided a small building with two toplighted galleries on the upper floor. The lower floor was occupied by a cabinet of minerals.

The Yale art collections were moved in 1867 to a new building and the Trumbull Gallery was destroyed in 1901. With its destruction Yale University lost one of her few good buildings.

P. WADSWORTH ATHENEUM, Hartford
1842-1844

By Ithiel TOWN (1784-1844)

The Wadsworth Atheneum was originally built to provide quarters for the Hartford Young Men's Institute, the Connecticut Historical Society and a Gallery of Paintings. The first organization has since become the Hartford Public Library and this, together with the Connecticut Historical Society, still occupies the old building. The Gallery of Paintings has expanded into a complex museum which is housed in the Morgan Memorial and the newly erected Avery Memorial.

The interior of the old Atheneum was entirely reconstructed in 1893 and the building is of interest chiefly as the only museum which uses the forms of the Gothic Revival.