



_Sculpture terrace, Yale University Art Gallery. 2012

Yale: Yale University Art Gallery.....NEW 1.22.13

The Renovated Yale University Art Gallery:

Seeing Old and New Simultaneously

By Jan Garden Castro

Recently, I experienced the ambiance of the new Yale University Art Gallery at a press event led by **Jock Reynolds**, Yale University Art Gallery Henry J. Heinz II Director, and the architects responsible for the Gallery's renovation and expansion, **Richard M. Olcott**, Design Partner, and **Duncan Hazard**, Management Partner, of Ennead Architects. This 135 million dollar, 18-year project began with a planning study in 1994 led by Mr. Hazard. Today, the project is significant not only for the way in which it unites, enlarges, and updates three historic buildings – the 1953 Louis Kahn building, the 1928 Old Yale Art Gallery designed by Egerton Swartwout, and the 1866 Street Hall by Peter Bonnett Wight – but also for Ennead's meticulous attention to both historic preservation and modern innovation. The landmark buildings have been seamlessly combined into a new, cohesive whole while the distinctive architectural identity of each has been maintained. The re-design has an overall ease of flow, aesthetic continuity, and openness, with close to 70,000 square feet of space allowing the Gallery to present a vastly larger portion of its priceless collection of over 200,000 works than heretofore possible.

Before discussing its architectural and art features, it is important to point out two major accomplishments. First, viewing the Gallery's range of notable art is not only free to all who enter its three joined buildings, but its rationalized connections between buildings allow the visitor to view the vast collection either in a hierarchical, pedagogical way, or to roam freely among the art's various periods and cultures. The design, including components such as lighting and wall text (important yet minimal), presents the collection in the best possible light and allows the art to "speak" for itself. Kahn's second floor of African and Asian art leads to the Old Yale Art Gallery's European art and to Street Hall's American paintings & sculpture.

The third and fourth floors of the Kahn and Old Yale Art Gallery buildings feature Indo-Pacific, 20th & 21st Century art & design, prints, drawings, photography, and special exhibitions – starting with Katherine Dreier’s Société Anonyme, which introduced contemporary art to America starting in 1920. While restoring the Gallery’s historic fabric, the architects have added modern interventions that provide for visual surprises and fresh encounters. A new rooftop addition on the fourth floor of the Old Yale Art Gallery provides a suite of new temporary-exhibition and study galleries, along with a sculpture terrace clad in zinc and glass.

Second to note is the stunning way in which light has become an integral facet of the installations. From the stain glass windows spanning the double height vaulted sculpture gallery and the new louvered skylights in the Old Yale Art Gallery building, to the windowed bridge between the Old Yale Art Gallery and Street Hall, and the glass curtain wall of the Kahn building, natural light is both welcomed and modulated throughout the Gallery, with each gallery area specifically designed to literally show off its art in the best possible light. When I asked about the overall role of natural light, Duncan Hazard told me:

The role of daylight in galleries is a particular interest of mine, and it is an essential part of the best gallery design, purely because daylight provides the correct color spectrum for viewing art. Art is, for the most part, created in daylight and should be seen properly in daylight. Also, in galleries where we are able to have skylights and windows, the natural movement of light provides instant refreshment of the eye as light varies in a space. Another important role of daylight in the galleries is not just letting the light in, but also allowing you to look out. Having windows as you move through a museum refreshes your point of view. It’s particularly important to us and something we always try to include to the maximum extent.

Richard Olcott added:

On the fourth and fifth floor level galleries in the Old Yale Art Gallery, we added a skylight with UV control, directly under which are operable louvers and a lighting system, made up of both LED and incandescent lights. In Street Hall, all skylights are new high performance assemblies sized and profiled to resemble the original. The bridge between these two buildings is two levels, with a skylight on the upper level where the Edward Hoppers are exhibited. On the lower level of the bridge, windows face north over the street. The absence of south facing windows reduces the amount of direct sunlight to the gallery and protects such treasures as Van Gogh’s “The Night Café”.

Duncan Hazard outlined the history of the project from 1994 through December 2012:

We first started working on the gallery in 1994 when we were hired to assess the problems that the Kahn building was having. In the course of doing that, we proposed doing a planning study for the Gallery so that they could use the building in a better fashion. It became apparent that the gallery needed more space. That was when the idea of expanding the Gallery into the Old Yale Art Gallery and Street Hall first came up. This involved the interests of the other arts departments – the schools of art, drama, architecture, history of art, as well as the University’s two museums and arts library — who asked for planning for the arts southwest quadrant of the campus. As a result of that earlier study, we confirmed that the History of Art Department would move out of Street Hall and that the completed Gallery would include the Kahn building, the Old Yale Art Gallery building, often known as Swartwout, and Street Hall. I led those planning efforts and in 2006, we finished the Kahn building and then began the design work on the Old Yale Art Gallery and Street Hall. I’ve tended to focus more on the restoration of the buildings, and Richard has focused on the beautiful new piece on the top and the galleries in the Old Yale Art Gallery tower.

Two of the most important innovations have been the above-mentioned creation of a rooftop sculpture terrace and the suite of new temporary-exhibition galleries on the top of the Old Yale Art Gallery building. As Richard Olcott points out, these additions involved aesthetic and structural considerations:

The most interesting part of the project is the dialogue between old and new. Wherever you go, you are always seeing both new and old simultaneously. The creation of this balance is both rewarding and challenging. The new addition of the rooftop terrace was created by the removal of the old skylight on the third floor of the Old Yale Art Gallery. A new stair connects the upper level to the Kahn building, joining the two into a cohesive whole with a new circulation pattern. The new gallery spaces are an insertion into the original tower of the Old Yale Art Gallery building which was never built out. It originally finished inside only up to the third floor, leaving an empty unbuilt shell. We finished the tower by floating the two new gallery levels inside, and wrapping a staircase around them. The new addition of the rooftop terrace was created by the removal of the old skylight on the third floor of the Old Yale Art Gallery. A new stair connects this upper level to the Kahn building, joining the two with a new and coherent circulation pattern.

To refinish the spectacular leaded glass windows in the Old Yale Art Gallery, Olcott and Hazard installed new thermal windows to the inside of the original leaded glass exterior windows. From outside, visitors still see the original exterior windows, which were all releaded and restored. Other interesting finishes include the stainless steel handrails on the new masonry circular stair between Street Hall and the Old Yale Art Gallery, which were “bead blasted,” a process that enhances the steel surface’s look, feel, wear, and strength.

It is also interesting to note the variety of oak flooring in the three buildings. Mr. Olcott elaborated:

We restored the wood floors with a change in scale designed to be in concert with the art and the scale of the galleries themselves. Details vary room to room. In the period galleries, for example, you have narrower floor boards and smaller rooms, whereas the newer galleries have wider floorboards befitting more contemporary work. The Kahn building still has its original white oak floors, in a distinctive pattern which has been copied in the lobby but made to match the original.

At the press event I attended, Jock Reynolds continually introduced and credited various members of the Yale team, from the educators and curators of the gallery’s many departments, to the architects. Could this multi-year process really have been as seamless as it appeared to be at Yale’s press preview? It is an impressive role model not only for architects but also for universities, curators, and all who appreciate art. Jock Reynolds’ indefatigable dedication to making art a “living” rather than an “institutional” practice and his zeal for interdisciplinary collaboration – that extends to everyone, perhaps especially to students and the community – is remarkable. Thanks to Reynolds, Yale’s out-going President Richard C. Levin and its new President Peter Salovey, all departments at Yale are encouraged to include art in their curricula. This project shows us that new architecture is not about having the money to build; it’s about having a vision worth achieving.

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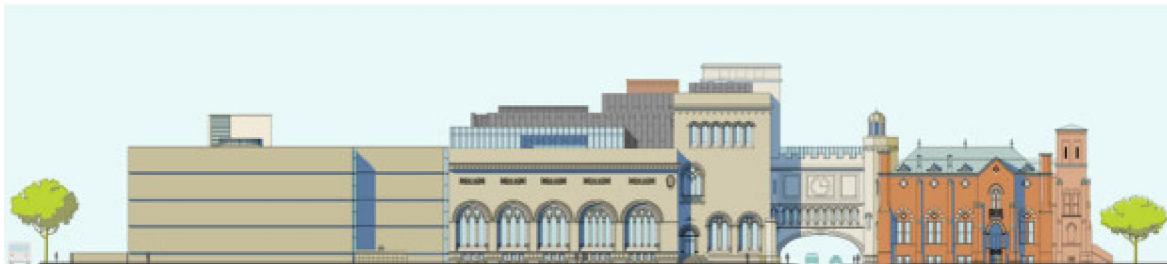
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Exterior view of the Yale University Art Gallery, (left to right: Louis Kahn building, Old Yale Art Gallery building, Street Hall). © Chris Gardner, 2012



South exterior elevation, (left to right: Louis Kahn building, Old Yale Art Gallery building, Street Hall). © Ennead Architects



Ancient art sculpture hall, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



European art galleries, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



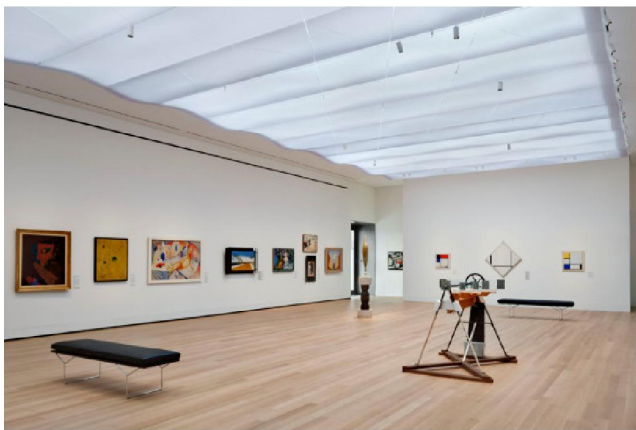
European art galleries, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



American paintings and sculpture galleries, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



Modern and contemporary art galleries, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



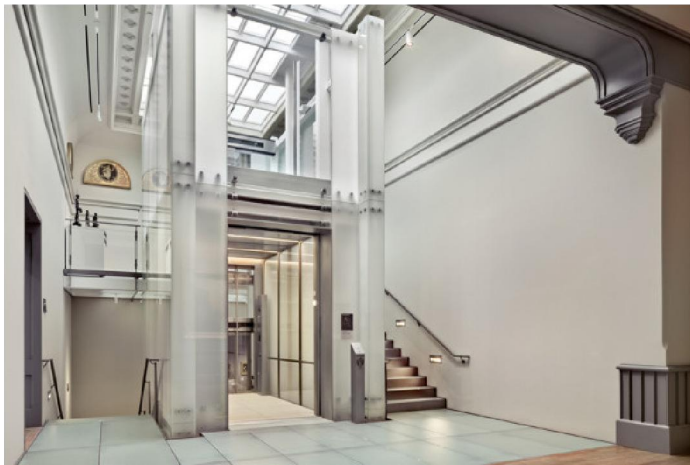
Special-exhibition galleries in Old Yale Art Gallery, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



American decorative arts galleries, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



Restored Yellin Gates, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012



Street Hall elevator and stair, Yale University Art Gallery. © Elizabeth Felicella, 2012
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