



The Campus as a Curated Gallery of Fine Architecture: *inspiring architects and developers*

Is a Campus just a group of buildings? Can an architectural “collection” serve an educational purpose?

This depends upon what a school wants to teach its students -- and how it wants to teach it to them. But consider how Robert A.M Stern has revitalized the Yale School of Architecture in the past 15 years.

Robert Stern is the Dean of the Yale School of Architecture – and has been since 1998. As an architect, he has won prizes and accolades. Many architectural critics believe that, under his leadership, the Yale School of Architecture has returned from blandness to become one of the best and most exciting architecture schools in the world. Many critics and commentators feel this way despite the fact that they dislike the buildings that Robert Stern (the architect as opposed to the educator) designs. Rather, they appreciate what he has done for the School and the students taught there: <http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=3007>.

Dean Stern is praised for bringing a diversity of stellar architects, with an extraordinary range of styles, to teach at Yale. These include architects such as Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Greg Lynn, David Adjaye, and Peter Eisenman. He has exposed the architecture students to these extra-ordinary yet differing architects. Some have even said that Dean Stern has “curated” a faculty of star architects.

Yet a famous architect might teach at only one university at time. Nonetheless, many students on many campuses can experience that architect’s buildings, if one of the architect’s buildings is nearby.

The Curated Campus: Consider the Yale University Campus, in New Haven, Connecticut. The central part of campus, including the residential dormitories, are primarily neoclassical. Many are red-brick Georgian and grey-stone Collegiate Gothic. Much of that was designed by the celebrated James Gamble Rogers. But there is also Greek-revivalist among them. Buildings constructed since the 1950s take a different approach.

Interspersed are magnificent and striking modern buildings by Louis I. Kahn, Paul Rudolph, Cesar Pelli, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, Robert Venturi, Philip Johnson, Frank Gehry, along with others. For a map of many of these buildings, see http://www.yale.edu/architectureofyale/archtour_map.pdf. For photos and descriptions of a select number of these buildings, see <http://www.yale.edu/architectureofyale/>.

This curation of excellent architecture is an ongoing process, as new buildings are erected (see for example Kroon Hall <https://environment.yale.edu/kroon/> or Evans Hall <http://som.yale.edu/our-approach/edward-p-evans-hall/project-overview>) and other buildings are lovingly restored and renovated (see for example http://www.buildings.yale.edu/past_gallery.aspx).

But Yale is not alone in this planning scheme. Consider the Campus of the California Institute of Technology (CalTech) in Pasadena, California. There is something strikingly similar about CalTech’s campus and Yale’s – despite their many differences, including their educational focus.

- CalTech is a much smaller university than Yale. (12,000 students at Yale, 2,000 at CalTech)
- CalTech has a much smaller campus. (837 acres at Yale, 124 acres at CalTach)
- California’s regional architecture is Spanish colonial. Yale’s is New England colonial.
- California’s semi-tropical vegetation is quite different than temperate Connecticut’s.

However, both use courtyard-based residential facilities as an interesting but neutral palette from which spring surprising, delightful and carefully chosen modern buildings. This is much the way paintings are acquired and hung in a gallery space, or on a museum wall. See: <http://cats.caltech.edu/tourdesc>. Such a “curated” method for planning a growing campus may not suit all, but is certainly worth considering.