

AR[T]CHITECTURE

At first glance, the extra “t” inserted in this article’s title might seem a bit tacky and on the nose; because it is. But it serves its purpose in perhaps the easiest, most streamlined way. The reason for the words you’re reading: to highlight the plain fact that architecture itself is an art form - a study, a craft, a science, a technique. A form that most are aware of and all bear witness to, but that often gets passed over. From metropolises like Miami and New York to more obscure dwellings like Columbus, Indiana or Palm Springs, architecture is present and for all to see.

Architecture is an eclectic mix of science, technology, engineering, business practice, history, and of course art (and so many other things not listed). But most importantly, it’s on public display, free of charge, every day, no members-only discount night needed. On the way to get groceries, on a daily walk, or just in observing your own living space, architecture is there, holding a vast number of global connections and references with it. This alone can be enough to add a spark or touch of creativity to what one may be considering a drab day; knowing that the space you occupy or live near could be the result of a tiny but historic art movement, a one-of-a-kind structural experiment, or a style that helps define an entire era, decades of human thought.



The residential, corporate, and public spaces we move around 24/7 certainly represent a way of thinking, but on a more technical level, they also showcase the state of past economies and countries by what was physically available and occurring at the time of their construction. The Romans didn’t develop arches and domes until the invention of concrete. Architecture constructed during the Medieval period was mostly thick and defensive with limited openings because of the Crusades. In the 1950s, Brutalism came about and stemmed from Constructivism, which was a small movement coming out of the Soviet Union post-World War I, which sought to make spaces more beautiful and modern despite having limited materials and finances. Hence all the concrete, sharp lines, and minimal detailing. Time circles back. I am not a historian and am aware that many more aspects influenced these architectural styles and moments, but knowing even these simple links provides me with more daily excitement when I pass a brick or concrete slab for a building, personal preferences aside. I value the opportunity to seek out the small details – what is present, what remains. I can learn about art, history, and human progress by simply observing the doorframe, window, roof, shape of a building.

This is one of many reasons I feel lucky enough to live in a city like New York, and why I recently spent several hours touring, standing, and staring at Columbia University and its campus. To, on an otherwise average day, see history and be able to marvel at it. To take note of the amalgamation of aesthetics and movements on display, even if they are “neo” versions and nods to the O.G’s themselves. After I really

took care to inspect the details, the edges, the angles of the buildings, the layout and the democratization of the common spaces, I truthfully did feel a bit overwhelmed; intimidated by how much history – *information* – was surrounding me, and how much I had to learn. Because there is so much of the past around us. When they say it's inescapable, when it comes to architecture, nothing could be truer.

Eventually though, I found comfort in reminding myself that I am in fact *not* an architect, and it isn't my job to know every term, style, or movement (though I have an unhealthy addiction to researching them anyway). I was already doing my part and giving these structures with their Renaissance revival and Beaux-arts ornamentation their due attention. Relishing the chance to examine the shadows falling in response to the piedmonts and pilasters, the occasion to study the fluid clashing of aesthetics and geometric forms, to watch as students mingled throughout structures referencing some of the primary staples of Western architecture. A stunning example of the past and present intermixed as one, while simultaneously forging the future. (The Graduate School of Architecture was literally steps from me at the time). The largest and ever-expanding public gallery known to man.

But all this coming from the guy who stopped for 32 minutes to stare at the detailing on the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, while on his way to get his discount H-Mart salmon. (What I would arguably classify as hot boy shit. Or at least the neo version, if you will).

Take it as you will. Just stop and stare at the moldings while you do. The art of the architecture of it all.



*All photographs property of Aleksandr Beaudoin
Taken at Columbia University's Morningside Heights campus in New York City*