



# ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN IN TRANSITION AT PENN MUSEUM

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in conjunction with the Bryn Mawr College Praxis Program

Further reading and references  
in PowerPoint notes.

# Penn Museum

## Self-Description

- Mission: The Penn Museum transforms understanding of the human experience.
- Experience the richness of the ancient past, gain an understanding of our shared humanity.
- Connect with the cultures of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Mediterranean

## History: an ever-changing institution

- Founded in 1887, Penn prepared an expedition specifically to provide artifacts for the building.
- 1899 – The museum finds a permanent home in a building built for them (pictured right).
- 1915-2002 – Five wings are designed and built.







**Currently,** the Penn Museum is undergoing a renovation of all their galleries, as a part of the rebranding of the institution. They hope to expand appeal from academics to the broader public.

**Consider above,** an older gallery. All artifacts presented on the same level, prominently placed in a grand room. There is a clear image of “here are objects on display.”

**Consider to the right,** a newly renovated display. Artifacts are varied in presentation, where their careful relation to each other allows for relationships to jump out. The cases blend into the walls.



# The Sphinx



Another prominent part of the renovation, the Sphinx has been with the museum since they acquired it from the British School of Archaeology in Egypt in 1913. For the renovation they made a public display of moving the sculpture from a local deep within the museum to the museum's front hall.



My work was with the

# Exhibits team.

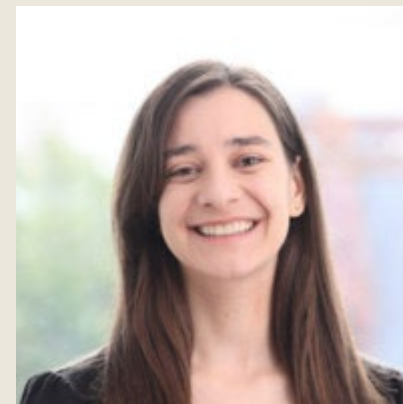
- Exhibits works closely with...
  - *Preparations team members: Zach Fay and Brian Zimerle.*
  - *A wide array of museum departments (Curators, Building Operations, IT, + more)*
- My Field Supervisor, Joshua Lessard, fills multiple niches for the museum.
  - *from realizing curator vision, to evaluating the building's structural integrity in preparation for enormous artifacts.*



**Kate Quinn**  
Director of Exhibitions and  
Public Programs



**Jessica Bicknell**  
Head of Exhibits



**Lauren Cooper**  
Interpretive Planner

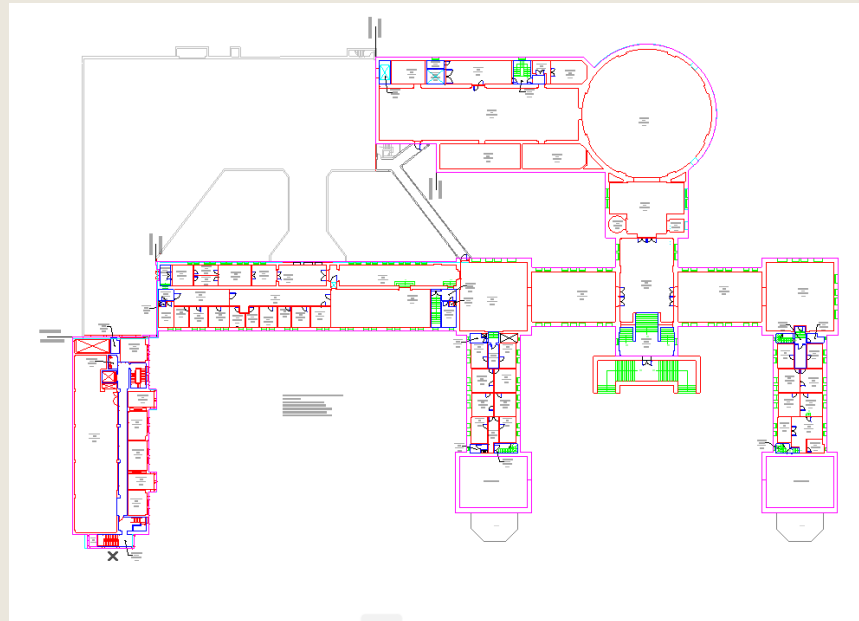


**Joshua Lessard**  
Exhibition Architect and  
Designer

# My Work

## Surveying

Evaluating light and sounds levels, providing a physical record of the visitor experience.



## 3D Printing: Touch Tours

Collaborating with non-profit specializing in tours for visually impaired to fabricate replica objects.

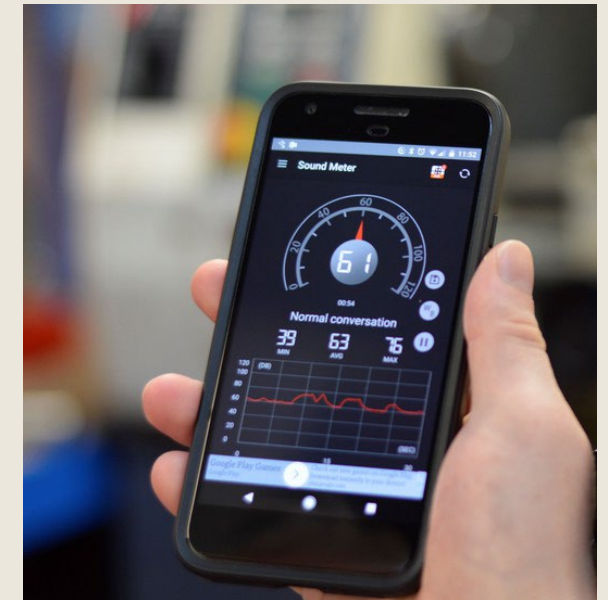


# Survey of Light and Sound

- **Why?** Informs future planning and design.
  - *Internal design work.*
  - *External consulting on accessibility.*
- **How?** Utilized different data-taking methodology and tools for each.
  - *Sound data was recorded once or twice per room, with record of lowest level, highest level, and median level.*
  - *Light data was recorded by taking a measurement of light level every 5-10 ft within a room.*
  - *Had to be aware of how and why sound and light change in a space: number of visitors, room layout and size, presence of visitors in neighboring spaces, etc.*
- **The Experience?** Unique opportunity to spend lots of time in the gallery.
  - *Got to observe who inhabits the galleries and how they interact with the material.*
  - *Navigated being a position of authority. As a representative of the museum, I was viewed as a figure of authority – especially when carrying a clipboard. I was seen as knowledgeable, and occasionally made people uncomfortable.*

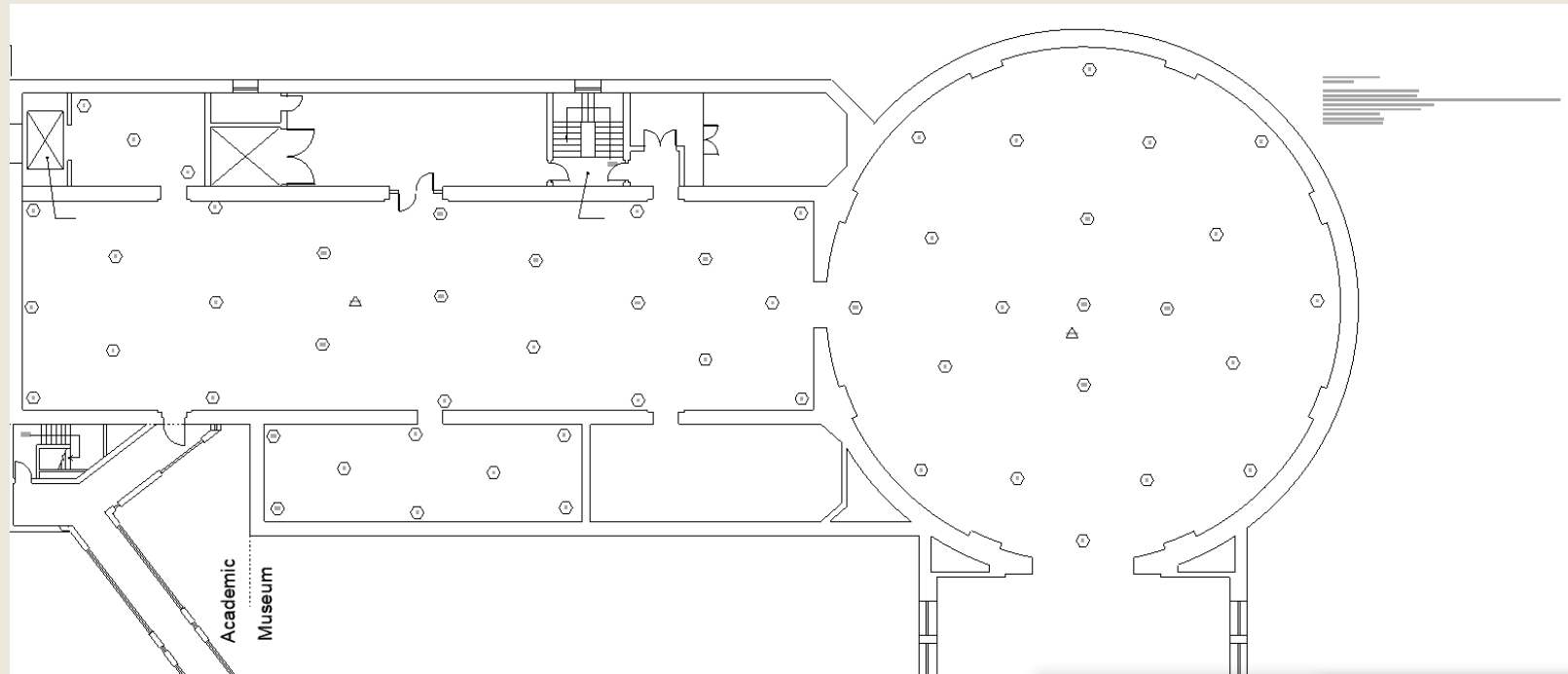


Light meter



Decibel meter

**Results** were integrated into the building floorplans for future reference.



This block shows a partial view of the floor plan from the top image, focusing on three specific survey points marked with hexagons containing the numbers 2, 3, and 5. Point 2 is located in the upper left, point 3 is in the lower right, and point 5 is in the lower left.

**Sound Survey, Times and Notes**  
Friday, 2/28/2020

- 10:25-10:45am Egypt: 10 people, school group of ~30
- 10:45-11:05am Asian: 6 people, school group of ~15
- 11:05-11:25am Pepper Hall: 10 people (mostly passing through), much of the background noise carried from the Sphinx room below
- 11:25-11:45am Discovery of Display: 7 people, 2 conservators
- 11:55-12:15pm Canaan: 8 people, school group of ~20
- 12:20-12:40pm Rome: 4 people
- 2:00- 2:15pm Etruria: 10 people
- 2:15- 2:30pm Greece: 4 people



# Touch Tours & Object Replicas

- Attended training by Philly Touch Tours
  - *A guided training in leading touch-based tours. The primary take away was the ability to understand how the audience interacts with objects.*
  - *I learned that touch tours are a different experience, not a substitute for vision-based tours. The information learned is quite different and equally enthralling.*
- Different sizes: Different purposes
  - *Some 3D prints were exact replicas, to be used in place of objects that are too delicate to handle.*
  - *Other 3D prints were blown up in size, to highlight the details and intricacies of an artifact.*



All of this informs and supports transitions...



...in an ever-changing institution.