

ARCHITECTURE: MUSEUM AS MUSE

Teacher Resource | Secondary Program



Museum of Anthropology at UBC. Photo by Bill McLennan.

Museum of Anthropology at UBC
A place of world arts + cultures



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Museum of Anthropology is built on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of the Musqueam people.

MOA is internationally recognized for its diverse collection of world arts, but it is also famous for its unique architectural setting. *Architecture: Museums as Muse* is designed to encourage students to actively observe and respond to their built environments – and to museums – in new ways.

Program Objectives

- Explore the elements and principles of design in relation to context, purpose, and function of the architecture of various cultural institutions
- Consider design elements and principles present in museum architecture
- Use the senses to interpret design elements and principles, and use an appropriate vocabulary or medium to communicate a phenomenological (visual, spatial, and emotional) experience
- Describe the relationships between design and society, culture, and the environment
- Synthesize knowledge and concepts from other disciplines and the community in the process of designing



MOA Great Hall. Photo by Cory Dawson.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Part 1: Introduction to Architectural Design

- Presentation 1: *Introduction to Architecture + Phenomenology* (p. 4)
- Phenomenology Activity (pp. 5–6)

Part 2: Global Museum Architecture

- What is a Museum? (pp. 7–8)
- Presentation 2: *Museums of the World* (p. 9)
- Defining ‘Good’ Museum Architecture (pp. 10–11)

Part 3: MOA as Muse

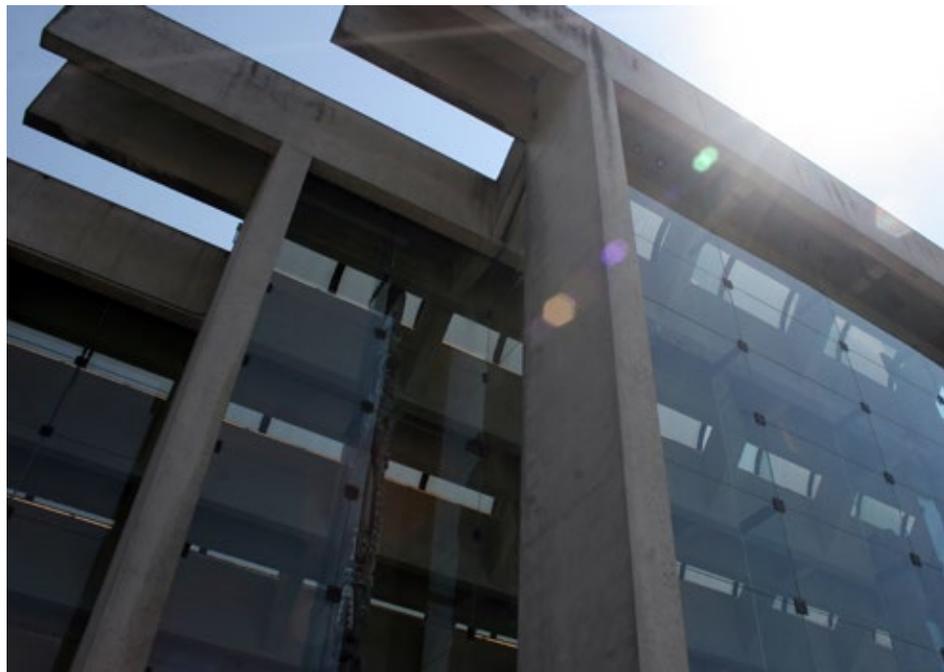
- Presentation 3: *Architecture of the Museum of Anthropology* (p. 12)
- MOA Great Hall Virtual Tour (p. 13)

Part 4: Applying Our Learning

- Designing a Museum Activity (pp. 14–16)

Supporting Documents

- Background Information (p. 17)
- Elements of Architectural Design (pp. 18–19)
- Glossary of Key Terms (pp. 20–21)
- Adjective Lists (pp. 22–23)



MOA glass and concrete façade. Photo by Eddie Jang.

1. INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Presentation 1: *Introduction to Architecture + Phenomenology*

This presentation introduces key concepts for the unit including 'Architecture,' 'Muse,' and 'Phenomenology,' and prompts students to begin building their vocabulary for describing architecture.

Instructions

Share the slide presentation video listed in the Resources section. Provide students with the Elements of Architectural Design resource (pp. 18–19) to supplement their viewing. After viewing the video, use the following guiding questions to facilitate a debriefing discussion or individual reflections.

Guiding Questions

- What is architecture? Why might it be useful to think/learn about architecture?
- What – or who – is a muse? How can museums act as muses for our learning?
- How can phenomenology help us understand architecture?

Resources

- Video Presentation: *Introduction to Architecture + Phenomenology*
<https://youtu.be/eZyC4mDCDDI>
- Elements of Architectural Design (pp. 18–19)

View of MOA from berm. Photo by Eddie Jang.



1. INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Phenomenology Activity

Guided by the principles of Phenomenology – the study of human experience – this activity will help heighten students' awareness of the build environments they occupy.

Instructions

Invite students to record their experience of two different areas of school, home, or another building they can safely access. Encourage students to use their senses to make new observations about familiar spaces. They can use descriptive words, drawings, texture rubbings, or other methods to record their experiences on the provided worksheet (p. 6). Provide students with the Adjective Lists (pp. 22–23) and Glossary of Key Terms (pp. 20–21) for reference.

The amount of time allotted for this activity will vary depending on the space selected. After completing the exercise, have students share and compare in a class discussion or in small groups using the following guiding questions.

Guiding Questions

- What did you notice in the two areas you explored? What were some differences/similarities between how you experienced each space?
- What was the function of each space?
- How did your space work with (or against) the objects or decorations inside of them?
- What are some possible muses that inspired their design?
- How would you change the architecture of these spaces?

Resources

- Phenomenology Activity worksheet (p. 6)
- Adjective Lists (pp. 22–23)
- Glossary of Key Terms (pp. 20–21)



MOA Great Hall. Photo by Kristi Fuoco.

PHENOMENOLOGY ACTIVITY

Name: _____ Date: _____

Record what you **sense** and **experience** in two different spaces, in words or pictures. Think about the relationship between the objects in the room and the space and structures around them.

Space #1: _____

Space #2: _____

2. GLOBAL MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

What is a Museum?

The architecture of a museum may be influenced by the museum's function, its collections, its donors, or its communities, among other factors. This class discussion prompts students to consider the social, aesthetic, political, and cultural functions of museums. This activity can be adapted into a written reflection exercise for students.



MOA Multiversity Galleries. Photo by David Campion.

Instructions

Begin by asking students to define "museum," recording their responses and making connections to create a collective definition. After coming to a consensus, share this excerpted definition from the International Council of Museums (ICOM):

[Museums] communicate and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (<https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>)

Compare the class' collective definition with the ICOM definition. Inform the class that ICOM recently determined that this definition "does not reflect and express adequately the complexities of the 21st century and the current responsibilities and commitments of museums, nor their challenges and visions for the future" (<https://icom.museum/en/news/the-museum-definition-the-backbone-of-icom/>). ICOM is currently in the process of changing this definition, in consultation with museum professionals from around the world.

To further expand students' understandings of what a museum can be, introduce examples of unique or surprising museum collections, such as the CupNoodles Museums in Japan (<https://www.cupnoodles-museum.jp/en/>). Use the guiding questions (p. 8) to provoke students to think deeper about museum architecture.

Guiding Questions

- What is a museum? What are they for? What do they do?
- What do museums look like? When you think of a museum's building, what do you expect?
- Who are museums for? Who could you expect to find inside a museum?
- What role do museums have in a community?

Resources

- Museum Definition (ICOM)
<https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>
- 'Creating the new museum definition: Over 250 proposals to check out!' (1 April 2019, ICOM)
<https://icom.museum/en/news/the-museum-definition-the-backbone-of-icom/>
- CupNoodles Museums (Japan)
<https://www.cupnoodles-museum.jp/en/>



Elspeth McConnell Gallery of Northwest Coast Masterworks, Museum of Anthropology.
Photo by Kyla Bailey.

2. GLOBAL MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

Presentation 2: *Museums of the World*

This presentation provides examples of museum architecture from around the world to inspire thinking about context, purpose, and function.

Instructions

Share the slide presentation video listed in the Resources section in class, or have students access it from home. After viewing the video, use the following guiding questions to facilitate a debriefing discussion or individual reflections.

Guiding Questions

- What were your first impressions of these buildings? How would you describe them?
- What senses might these buildings engage?
- Based on the architecture, what collections did you think were inside them?
- Who do you think is the target audience for these museums?

Resources

- Video Presentation: *Museums of the World* https://youtu.be/_yaLeqCkS-0
- CORPUS (Oegstgeest, Netherlands) <https://corpuserperience.nl/en>
- Mercedes-Benz (Stuttgart, Germany) <https://www.mercedes-benz.com/en/classic/museum/>
- Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (Whistler, BC) <https://slcc.ca/>
- The Mind Museum (Taguig, Philippines) <https://www.themindmuseum.org/>
- Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg, South Africa) <https://www.apartheidmuseum.org/>



Anabaptist ware in Koerner European Ceramic Gallery.
Photo by CJ Borchert.

2. GLOBAL MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE

Defining 'Good' Museum Architecture

This activity allows students to use learning from previous unit activities to inform their evaluations of museum architecture.

Instructions

After sharing examples of museum architecture in Presentation 2: *Museums of the World* (p. 9), invite students to explore more examples using the virtual museum tours listed in the Resources section (p. 11). Have students share their observations about the architecture of these museums, using the provided guiding questions to structure the discussion.

After their initial exploration, invite students to generate a list of criteria for 'good' museum architecture, either individually or in small groups. After finalizing their list, have students return to the virtual museum tours they initially explored and compare them against their new criteria.



MOA Great Hall. Photo by Cory Dawson.

Guiding Questions

- What is 'good' museum architecture? Who decides?
- When designing a museum building, what might an architect need to consider? (*Encourage students to think beyond aesthetics and consider other aspects including comfort, safety (for both people and objects), accessibility, sustainability, affordability, etc.*)
- How are museum buildings different from other built structures? What rooms/spaces should they have? (*e.g. spaces for objects, public programs, collections storage, conservation labs, shops, cafes or other dining areas, washrooms, etc.*)
- How might the architecture of a museum reflect its collections?
- Based on your virtual exploration, how might visitors experience these museums' buildings in person? What would they sense? What descriptive words might they use?

Resources

- Mercedes-Benz Museum (Stuttgart, Germany)
https://data.system360gmbh.de/vrs_tour/mbm_museum/index_en.html
- Louvre Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates)
<https://www.louvreabudhabi.ae/en/Explore/exhibitions/furusiyya-the-art-of-chivalry-between-east-and-west>
- Museum of Pop Culture (Seattle, United States)
<https://www.mopop.org/visit/venue-experiences/>
- Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (Bilbao, Spain)
<https://artsandculture.google.com/project/guggenheim-bilbao>
- Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, Netherlands)
<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/van-gogh-museum?hl=en>
- Museo Frida Kahlo (Mexico City, Mexico)
<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/museo-frida-kahlo?hl=en>
- More virtual museum tours available at Google Arts + Culture
<https://artsandculture.google.com/explore?hl=en>



MOA Multiversity Galleries. Photo by David Campion.

3. MOA AS MUSE

Presentation 3: *Architecture of the Museum of Anthropology*

This presentation outlines the architectural history of MOA and the relationship between MOA's collections, architectural design, and landscaping.

Instructions

Prior to delivering this presentation, review the Background Information resource (p. 17) outlining MOA's architectural history. Share the slide presentation video listed in the Resources section. After viewing the video, use the following guiding questions to facilitate a debriefing discussion or individual reflections.

Guiding Questions

- How does the architecture of a museum reflect its collections and institutional identity? What does MOA's building say about its identity as a cultural organization?
- What did architect Arthur Erickson and landscape architect Cornelia Oberlander consider when designing MOA's building?
- How does the architecture of a museum impact the visitor experience?



Museum of Anthropology. Photo by Ema Peter.

Resources

- Background Information (p. 17)
- Video Presentation: *Architecture of the Museum of Anthropology*
<https://youtu.be/t1V9Pf14uiU>
- Arthur Erickson (official website)
<https://www.arthurerickson.com/>
- Cornelia Oberlander (The Cultural Landscape Foundation)
<https://tclf.org/pioneer/cornelia-hahn-oberlander>

3. MOA AS MUSE

MOA Great Hall Virtual Tour

Students can virtually visit MOA's Great Hall to view its architecture and its collection of Northwest Coast poles, posts, canoes, and feast dishes.

Instructions

After introducing MOA's architecture in Presentation 3: *Architecture of the Museum of Anthropology* (p. 12), ask students to record their observations of the Great Hall as depicted in the virtual tour, reflecting on how the architecture works with (or against) the collections on display.



Kwakwaka'wakw feast dish covers in MOA Great Hall. Photo by Goh Iromoto.

Guiding Questions

- What did you notice about the architecture of the Great Hall? How would you describe it? What elements of design can you observe?
- Based on your virtual exploration, how might visitors experience the Great Hall in person? What would they sense? What descriptive words might they use?
- How does the space work with (or against) the objects inside of them?
- What are some possible muses that inspired the design of the Great Hall?
- What would you change about the Great Hall's architecture, and why?

Resources

- MOA Great Hall Virtual Tour
<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=h6dGbTSJ9mP>

4. APPLYING OUR LEARNING

Designing a Museum Activity

This final activity provides an opportunity for students to creatively put their learning about museum architecture into practice.



Side view of MOA post and beam architecture.
Photo by Cory Dawson.

Instructions

Invite students to design their own museum using the provided worksheet (p. 16). Ask them to consider the class' criteria developed during the Defining 'Good' Museum Architecture activity (pp. 10–11). The guiding questions (p. 15) can help facilitate their brainstorming process.

Have students begin by imagining what objects their museum will collect and exhibit, encouraging creative and out-of-the-box ideas. When brainstorming designs, students should take into consideration how the architecture will connect to, enhance, and protect these objects. Students can also refer back to the virtual museum tours visited during the Defining 'Good' Museum Architecture (pp. 15–16) and MOA Great Hall Virtual Tour activities (p. 13) for design inspiration.

To extend this activity, students can create a 3D model of their museum using recycled materials and craft supplies, or generate a digital model using the SketchUp design program. SketchUp is a 3D modeling program used by architects, engineers, video game designers, and students. SketchUp is available for free, both for download and as a web-based application.

Guiding Questions

- Museums collect all sorts of objects, from the ordinary to the extraordinary and even the downright bizarre. What objects will your museum collect and display? Consider how the architecture will connect to, enhance, and protect these objects.
- Who is your client? What are their needs? (e.g., staff, visitors, researchers, etc.)
- What spaces will you include in your museum? (e.g., displays, café, lobby, gift shop, etc.)
- How do you want visitors to experience your museum's architecture? How will you use elements of design to create this experience?



Photo by Sarah Race

Resources

- Designing a Museum worksheet (p. 16)
- SketchUp for Schools
<https://www.sketchup.com/products/sketchup-for-schools>
- SketchUp tutorial playlist (YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLF001616C0ADF4245>
- SketchUp Campus
<https://learn.sketchup.com/>

DESIGNING A MUSEUM ACTIVITY

What will your museum look like?

Sketch your museum ideas below, or describe them in words.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction to MOA Architecture

Vancouver's UBC Museum of Anthropology stands on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded lands of the Musqueam people. The museum was founded in 1949 in the basement of the Main Library at the University of British Columbia. In 1971, renowned Canadian architect and urban planner Arthur Erickson (1924-2009) designed the Museum. He based his award-winning design on traditional Northwest Coast post-and-beam structures and design elements from the Acropolis in Athens and Japanese Shinto sanctuaries.

The museum's architectural design combines Arthur Erickson's use of natural light and materials, respect for the building's environment, and impressive detailing to express the essence of West Coast style. The Great Hall's soaring glass walls create a seamless transition from the interior space to the outdoors: an imaginary coastal inlet, now graced by a beautiful reflecting pool. The museum grounds were designed by landscape architect Cornelia Oberlander, and feature indigenous plants and grasses.

For more than 35 years, the Museum of Anthropology has been one of Canada's best known buildings internationally. It has received numerous awards, including the Governor General Award for Architecture (1989), and was one of four buildings to receive the Prix du XXe Siècle Award for enduring excellence in Canadian architecture from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (2011).

Features include:

- A 'Welcome Plaza' showcases contemporary works by Musqueam artists Susan Point and Joe Becker
- The 'Rotunda,' where Bill Reid's massive sculpture, "The Raven and the First Men" is displayed
- An outdoor reflecting pool, which represents a coastal inlet
- The 15-metre glass walls of the Great Hall overlooking totem poles from the Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nisga'a, Oweekeno, and other First Nations
- An internationally recognized collection of more than 38,000 ethnographic objects and 535,000 archaeological objects
- The Koerner European Ceramics Gallery houses 600 pieces of 15th-19th C. pottery
- Multiversity Galleries providing public access to almost 10,000 objects
- The Audain Gallery, a 5,800-sq-ft temporary exhibition space, showcases world-class traveling and local exhibits

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Architects don't just make buildings – they create sensory experiences for those interacting with the built environments they design. They do so by choosing certain features for the building, depending on its function and how they want it to be experienced. These are the fundamental elements of architectural design:

Balance: the even distribution of elements to create a visually or physically stable design. It includes designs that are symmetrical or that have an even distribution of colour.

Colour: used to give a sense of balance, contrast, unity, or to create a certain mood. Colours may hold symbolic meanings that are culturally mediated.

Contrast: a noticeable difference between two or more elements, achieved using different colours, materials, or other design features. Contrast can be intentionally used to create a striking or impactful design.

Focus: what draws attention within a space. This could be an architectural feature, an item of decor, a particular view, or something else present.

Form + Shape: the shape or structure of a three-dimensional design feature, whereas shapes are geometric features (e.g. angular shapes, round shapes) that are incorporated into a design.

Light: used in a space to highlight a focus, create an atmosphere, delineate space, or reveal or hide texture. Both light and shadow can be manipulated by the architect for these purposes.

Materials: what a building is made of. A building's materials can impact its function, atmosphere, and longevity. Factors influencing the selection of materials include aesthetics, cost, sustainability, and availability of materials in a given place.

Movement: one's path through a space. An architect can design a continuous sequence of movement, a fragmented sequence of movement, or even a random sequence of movement through a space.

Perspective: the point of view from a given location inside a built environment, including both what is visible and what is hidden.

Scale: the size of a building or element in relation to something else, such as another building, another element, or the individual experiencing the building.

Space: the area within a built environment, ranging from wide open spaces, to enclosed, confined spaces. The height, breadth, and depth of a space will vary depending on the atmosphere an architect is intending to create.

Structure: the basic building blocks of a design, including openings (such as doorways and windows), defined areas of ground, paths, roofs, etc.

Surface: the outdoor-facing layer of a building. The surface can communicate the building's function while also protecting its contents from external factors, such as weather.

Texture: the feel or appearance of a surface, which can impact the atmosphere of a space. Light and colour can enhance or mask the appearance of texture.

Unity: the consistency in use of colour, texture, material, or other design elements. Unity can be used to create a balanced design.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- Architecture** The art and science of designing and building of structures.
- Atrium** Dramatic enclosed glass-roof indoor spaces.
- Axis** The centerline of openings or objects that align in a row along an imaginary line, a primary element in architectural composition, around which it is possible to create a sense of symmetry both in plan and in the elevation of a building.
- Beam** A horizontal load-bearing element that forms a principal part of a structure, usually using timber, steel, or concrete.
- Canopy** A projection or hood over a door or window.
- Column** A slender, upright structure usually a supporting member in a building.
- Dimensions** A measurement of the size of something in a particular direction (length, width, height, diameter).
- Elevation** A two dimensional view of some vertical features of a building (front, rear, side, interior elevation).
- Exhibition** A large-scale public showing or display of art, products, skills and activities.
- Façade** One of the exterior faces or walls of a building.
- Floor Plan** A representation of an intended floor layout.
- Foundation** The base of a house providing stability and rigidity.
- Function** The natural action or intended purpose of a person or thing in a specific role.
- Insulation** A material designed to control the passing of heat and or sound.
- Masonry** Stonework or brickwork.
- Molding** Shaped decorative outlines on projecting pieces of wood or stone.

- Orthographic** A drawing where true dimensions of an object or place are represented, a means of representing a 3-D object or place in 2-D.
- Phenomenology** The study of phenomena, that is the study of anything perceived as an occurrence or fact by the senses.
- Partition** An interior wall.
- Public Utilities** A horizontal load-bearing element that forms a principal part of a structure, usually using timber, steel, or concrete.
- Site Plan** A drawing that shows the boundaries of a section of land, including important landscape elements that impact the design and the placement of buildings, roads, driveways, utility needs, etc.
- Story** A horizontal division of a building, from the floor to the ceiling above it.
- Traffic Plan** A plan of room and door placement designed for convenience of movement of normal everyday activities.

ADJECTIVE LISTS

Descriptive words / Adjectives for Shapes and Patterns

adjacent baggy checkered concave contoured convex curved	dappled depressed elongated level narrow octagonal parallel	pointed protruding rectangular rounded serpentine shallow spherical	streamlined sunken swollen tight vertical wide winding
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Descriptive words / Adjectives for Touch and Feel

cold cool crisp damp dry elastic firm	fragile furry gritty hard hot oily icy	rough rubbery sharp silky slimy smooth soft	spongy thick thin warm waxy wet wooly
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Descriptive words / Adjectives for Smell

acidic acid aromatic balmy briny burnt damp	dank earthy fishy fragrant fresh gamy gaseous	mildewed moldy musty perfumed pungent rotten savory	spicy spoiled sour stagnant sweet tart tempting
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Descriptive words / Adjectives for Mood

agitated angry ambiguous ambivalent apathetic cynical disturbed	diverse dominant exuberant humorous hysterical insensitive irate	jovial lackadaisical livid morose precocious ruffled reserved	relaxed sarcastic sensitive sleepy soothed tired vivacious
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Descriptive words / Adjectives for Hearing (Soft Sounds)

buzz chime clink crackle faint gurgle harmony	hiss hum hush inaudible murmur mute mutter	patter peep purr rush rustle sigh snap	still swish tinkle twitter vertical whisper zing
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Descriptive words / Adjectives for Hearing (Loud Sounds)

bang bark blare bleat boom bump clamor clap	clash crash deafening ear-splitting grate hubbub jangle piercing	roar rowdy rumble scream screech shout slam smash	squawk stamp stomp thump thunder whine whistle thud
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