



# ArchivesSpace

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## **Proposed Building of the Metropolitan Opera House / Benjamin W. Morris, Architect10258121**

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library
<b>Creator:</b>	Morris, Benjamin W (Benjamin Wistar), 1870-1944
<b>Title:</b>	Proposed Building of the Metropolitan Opera House / Benjamin W. Morris, Architect
<b>ID:</b>	10258121
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1926-1930
<b>Physical Description:</b>	100 drawings approximate
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .

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## Biographical / Historical

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Rockefeller Center was originally to be an Opera Center. By 1926, the Opera's quarters at 39th Street and Broadway had become small and antiquated, left behind in an inelegant commercial district by more northerly urban development. With the desire to provide a new home for its productions, the Metropolitan Opera Company commissioned designs for a new facility from Benjamin Wistar Morris. Morris was briefly associated on the Opera with the Austrian architect Joseph Urban who for many years designed the Opera's stage sets.

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## Biographical / Historical

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In January 1928, the location between 48th and 51st Streets, Fifth and Sixth Avenues appeared as a possible site for the Opera House. The 12-acre property had been owned by Columbia University since 1814. In May of that year, Morris prepared a scheme for the site which included most of the significant features of the final design--a land-use mix of theatrical, shopping and office facilities; a centralized, traffic-free plaza; and a combination of low and high-rise buildings.

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## Biographical / Historical

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In presenting his new scheme to its sponsors (a group which included John D. Rockefeller, Jr.), Morris insisted that the validity of his new scheme was economic, not merely aesthetic: "the whole thing stands or falls on the amount of increased revenue obtainable due to the creation of valuable new frontage on an open square." Thus Morris must be credited as having been the first to visualize the new center in both its fundamental physical and socioeconomic functions.

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## Biographical / Historical

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## Scope and content

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Consists of two framed renderings of the Proposed Metropolitan Opera house, one of the front elevation of the building and one of the interior perspective view of the Auditorium. In addition to the renderings, included are approximately 100+ photo stat and blueprint floor plans, site plans, and elevation drawings.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library

### Restrictions on Access

This collection is available for use by appointment in the Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. For further information, please email [avery-drawings@library.columbia.edu](mailto:avery-drawings@library.columbia.edu).

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Method of acquisition--Purchased, 2013.005.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Architecture -- United States -- Designs and plans
- Theaters -- Stage-setting and scenery
- architectural drawings (visual works)
- Interior design
- Urban, Joseph, 1872-1933
- Metropolitan Opera (New York, N.Y.)
- Rockefeller Center -- : History

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## Publication Date

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1926-1930

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