

## **5.0 INTRODUCTION to ARCHITECTURAL BREADTH**

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The Prothro Gallery is an exhibition space of approximately 2,000 square feet with high ceilings (14-18 feet). The Ransom Center features a vast array of archives which are rotated through the space. Some of these collections include pieces by manuscripts by T.S. Elliot, Hemmingway, and paintings by Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. Outside exhibits are also brought to the Ransom center on a regular basis. This space was designed to showcase all that the Ransom Center has to offer while providing the flexibility to do precisely that – allow the exhibits to change on average once every one to three months.

The architectural redesign will study several components within the existing construction documents and asses viable alternatives to the current design. In particular, this study will analyze overall appearance of the main gallery space as viewed from the lobby, circulation of space, handicapped access, ceiling conditions and integration with lighting systems, and the design of partitions. Alternative solutions will be conveyed through drawings, renderings, and three dimensional models.

## **5.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT**

### **OVERVIEW**

An architectural redesign of the Prothro Gallery could be of significant value to the Ransom Center because of its central importance in the overall success of the center. The astounding budget spent on acquiring new collections can also be used as justification to spend money on high quality room finishes. Several design considerations are addressed below.

### *Handicapped Access*

Accessibility was a main issue when redesigning the gallery. In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act officially required that museum and art galleries provide access for people with disabilities. The renovation of the gallery spaces was designed to increase disability access to the gallery spaces. Unfortunately, a sense of cohesion between the main lobby and gallery seems to be lost with the new handicapped ramp. A large half-wall for the ramp railing impedes on the view of the gallery and give the appearance of an unreachable, dimly lit space; no artwork is within view. An early photograph of the renovation shows how these walls create a barrier between the lobby (to the right) and the gallery (to the left).

*Photograph of Handicapped Stairwell During Construction*



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### *Room Clutter*

The current design for the gallery features an expensive wood paneled ceiling, exposed concrete columns, and significantly large incandescent track fixtures. Although the design integrates well with the other spaces, there is an overall feeling of clutter. The ceiling distracts visitors from the collections below, and moving partitions are very bulky. Permanent perimeter walls are also extremely complex and do not provide many surfaces to mount artwork. Paint color choices for the walls may also conflict with hung artwork and provide a distraction.

### *Photograph of Existing Gallery Space*



## **5.2 ARCHITECTURAL REDESIGN**

### **OVERVIEW**

The design concept for the redesigned Ransom Center gallery was a photograph of the Yale Art Museum, designed by architect Louis I Kahn. A suggested redesign of the Prothro Gallery would implement a tetrahedral ceiling system similar to the photograph below. In lieu of a concrete ceiling, dark stained wood is suggested. Dark wood shall compliment the floor material and will not require structural alteration of the ceiling.

The new ceiling will also feature “monopoint” track fixture mountings. Matching track fixtures to the lower ceiling areas of the galleries shall be specified here, but they will be mounted at individual locations and tucked into the tetrahedral ceiling grid.

Walls will be painted pure white instead of a green-grey color, helping to warm the space and compliment all colors of artwork. The new partition walls will sit on legs and be exposed along the bottom. This will provide a sense of simplicity and lightness to the space.

A stronger visual connection between the main lobby and gallery will be provided by removing the existing half-wall along the handicapped ramp and replacing it with an open metal railing.

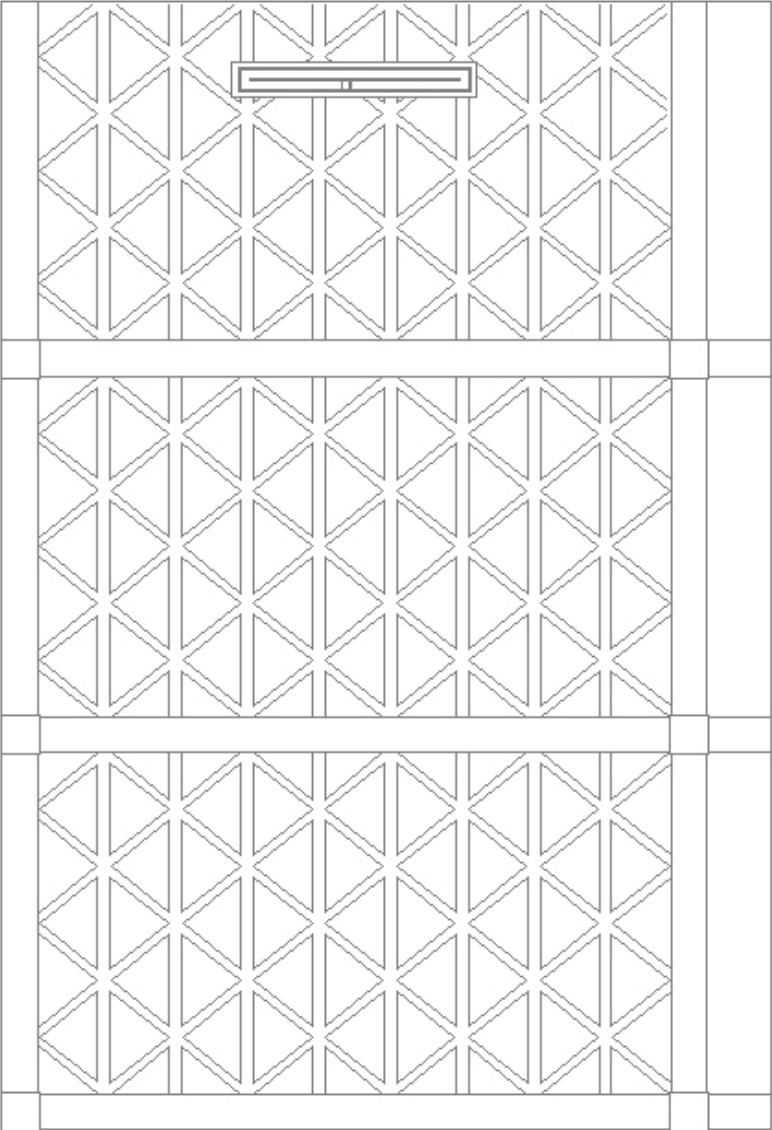
*Image of Yale Art Museum*



Courtesy New York Times <[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)>

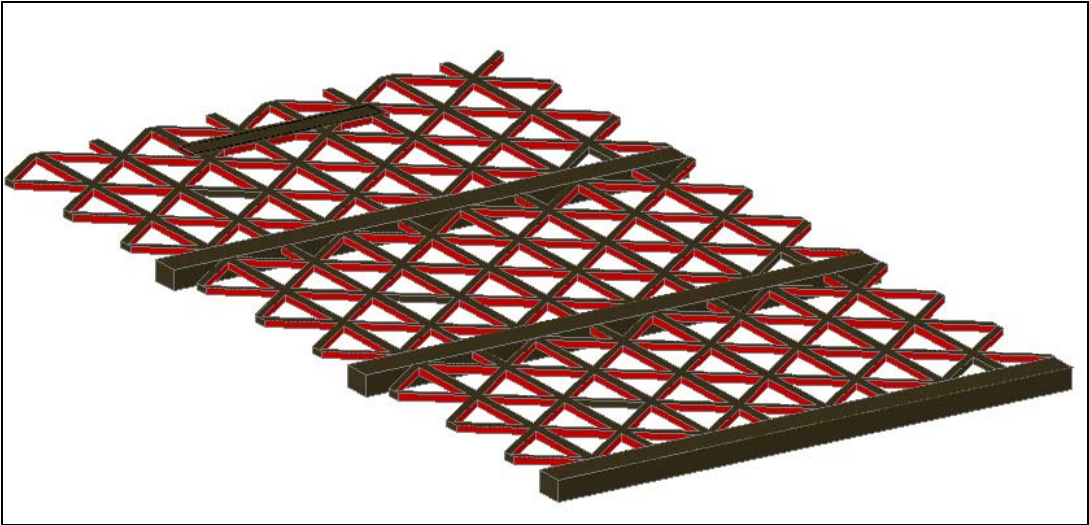
**TETRAHEDRAL CEILING GRID**

*Redesigned Ceiling Plan for the Main Gallery Room*

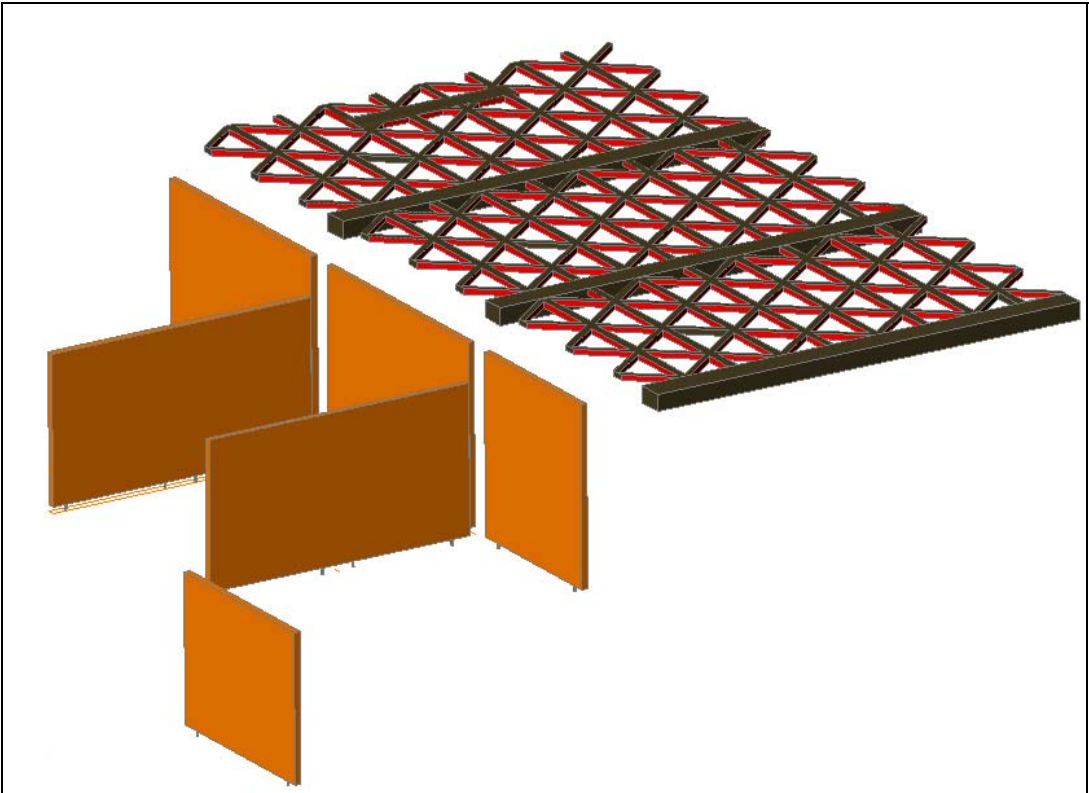




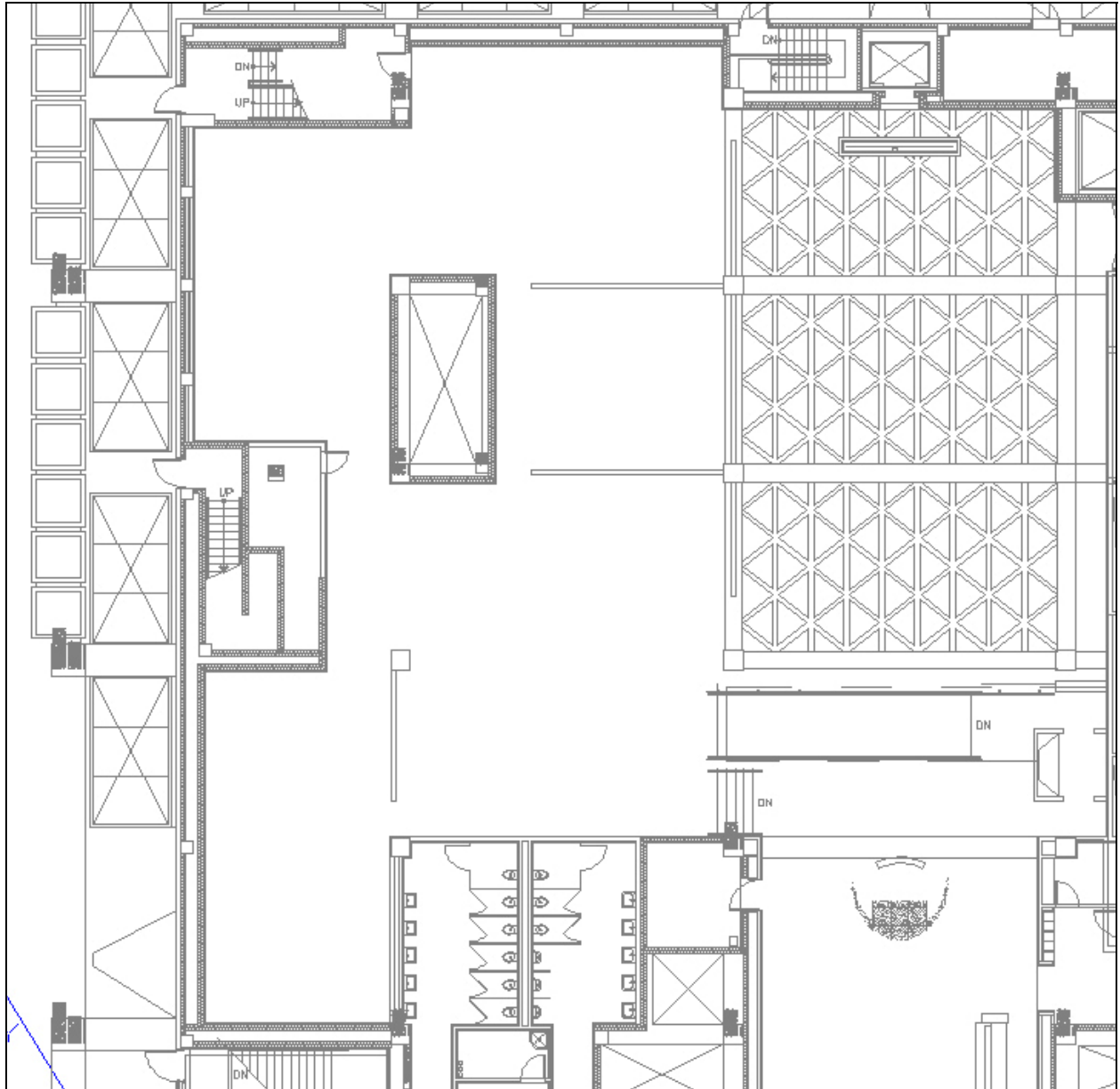
Tetrahedral Ceiling Grid, 3D Isometric View



3D Isometric View of New Partitions and Ceiling



Gallery Plan with Tetrahedral RCP



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*Gallery Rendering*





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*Comparison of Existing and Redesigned Gallery Space*



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*Lighting/Electrical Emphasis*

## **DISCUSSION**

The final renderings of the redesigned gallery space help reveal the advantages of the revisions. A careful process of planning and revision has resulted in a legible design that echoes the deep colors of the floor material. The tetrahedral grid virtually eliminates the accent lights from view without making any major sacrifices in lighting flexibility. The simplified partitions with white paint are subservient to the artwork and will help the collections stand out.