

Five Questions with Jeanne Gross

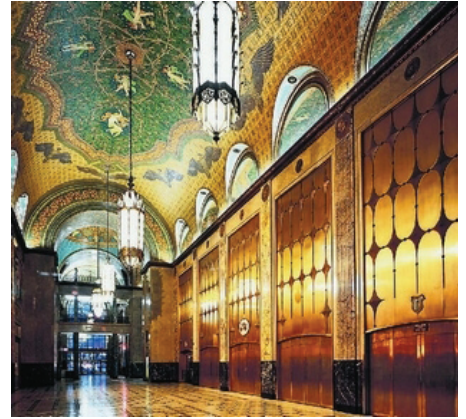
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Q: What's the most interesting feature of the Fisher Building?

A: The building itself. The Fisher Building is truly a work of art. It's the largest marble-exterior building in the world (with) 325,000 square feet of exterior marble. It cost \$9 million when it was built in 1928. The Fisher Brothers gave (architect) Albert Kahn an open checkbook to use the best finishes, tradesmen and artisans from all over the world.

Q: What are some unique features?

A: There are 40 different types of marble from the United States, Belgium, France, Mexico, Italy, Germany, Africa and Ireland. There are 1,800 bronze window frames. In the ceiling are 80 hand-painted nudes; no two are alike. There were more than 48 elevators in the building, most with hand-carved bronze frames. All are works of art themselves. The nine Art Deco crystal chandeliers in the arcade area range from 5 to 8 feet tall and weigh 1 to 3 tons. The U.S. Department of Interiors designated it a National Historic Landmark in 1989.



Q: What would people be most surprised to know?

A: It's the first building in the world to have an attached garage. At one point, it was considered the center of commerce in the city. You could come here, go to the doctor, meet friends for lunch, go shopping and go to the theater -- all without leaving the building. It was actually way before its time -- way ahead of the modern mall.

Q: What other interesting tidbits can you offer about the building?

A: WJR-AM (760), "broadcasting from the golden tower of the Fisher Building," and the Fisher Theatre are original tenants to the building. The theater was originally a movie house, but it was redone in 1961 and turned into a Broadway-level theater. It will celebrate its 50th anniversary as a Broadway-level theater in 2011. "Hello Dolly" and "Fiddler on the Roof" premiered here at the Fisher Theatre.

Q: What's your favorite place in the building?



A: The third-floor mezzanine that overlooks the (atrium). It gives you a full-spectrum view of all the hand-painted frescoes in the building. The main arcade exhibits many varicolored marbles and bronze ornamentation. You can see it from the ground level, too, but you get a better view from the mezzanine.

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