



## Program Summary (16 January 2014)

At 7:00 p.m., President Byrnes welcomed the membership to the 662nd meeting of the HPS, which was founded in 1920. At 8:20 pm, President Byrnes introduced Will Cannady, who introduced tonight's speakers from the Rice University faculty: **Sarah Whiting**, Dean of the School of Architecture.

The title of this evening's talk was **New York you are an Egypt! But an Egypt turned inside out**. The membership warmly welcomed Dean Whiting. This is the 662nd meeting of the Houston Philosophical Society.

Sarah began by explaining what motivated the title of her talk, and what brought her to architecture. It was the power of architects to create new worlds, just as novelists create virtual worlds. The title comes from a quote by Salvadore Dali in 1936 when he first came to America and observed the skyline of Manhattan. Ancient Egypt's towers reflected slavery whereas the towers of Manhattan celebrated freedom and democracy.

Sarah surveyed a series of writers' musings about the impact New York had on first impression, and its significance in the greater fabric of the European and American landscapes.

One topic she introduced was the style of "Monumentality" of public buildings and its evolution from its pre-WWII rigidity to become open and collaborative spaces. For example, the Rockefeller Center offered itself as a public space for all New Yorkers, with its skating facility and open spaces.

Sarah continued to survey a vast literature and trace the evolution of opinion of many writers and critics both pro and anti city and its towering buildings. The monumentality extends to private buildings. With one of ten Americans living in New York and Los Angeles, Sarah asked if the cities have caught up with the Europeans sensibilities. There is some evidence of this, but there is much more that can be done.

Dean Whiting wrapped up her remarks at 8:48 with an invitation to ask questions. After a lively discussion, the program concluded. The audience warmly thanked the speaker.

After another round of applause, and the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

David W. Scott  
Recording Secretary