

WOODLAWN RESEARCH PROJECT:
GROSS-NOLL MAUSOLEUM



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1. Introduction

Researching an unknown work of architecture can be an interesting pursuit when it is about a funerary building. Even more so when through it you can understand the history of its owners, especially if there is not much information about them. In this case, symbolism and specificity of the architectural features can provide us insights about who is buried as an act of memorialization. Regarding this, the aim of the following paper is to research, explore, and depict a part of the history of the Gross Noll mausoleum, located in the Pine plot at Woodlawn Cemetery, New York, as a way to obtain a deeper understanding of the history of its occupants; Jakob Gross and Franziska Noll, a couple of European immigrants from Germany and Hungary dedicated to fashion design in New York in between 1860 and 1890. Due to the age of the mausoleum and the lack of information available in written media or online sources, the first part of the research text attempts to piece together the few pieces found in order to weave a narrative line that aims to identify the links between the couple and the design of the mausoleum itself. After this, the text will focus on the architectural description of the mausoleum and its visual characteristics that make it a study of interest. Finally, in the third stage of the work, a description of the conditions will allow a general overview of the current state of the mausoleum to understand how its design has endured over time.

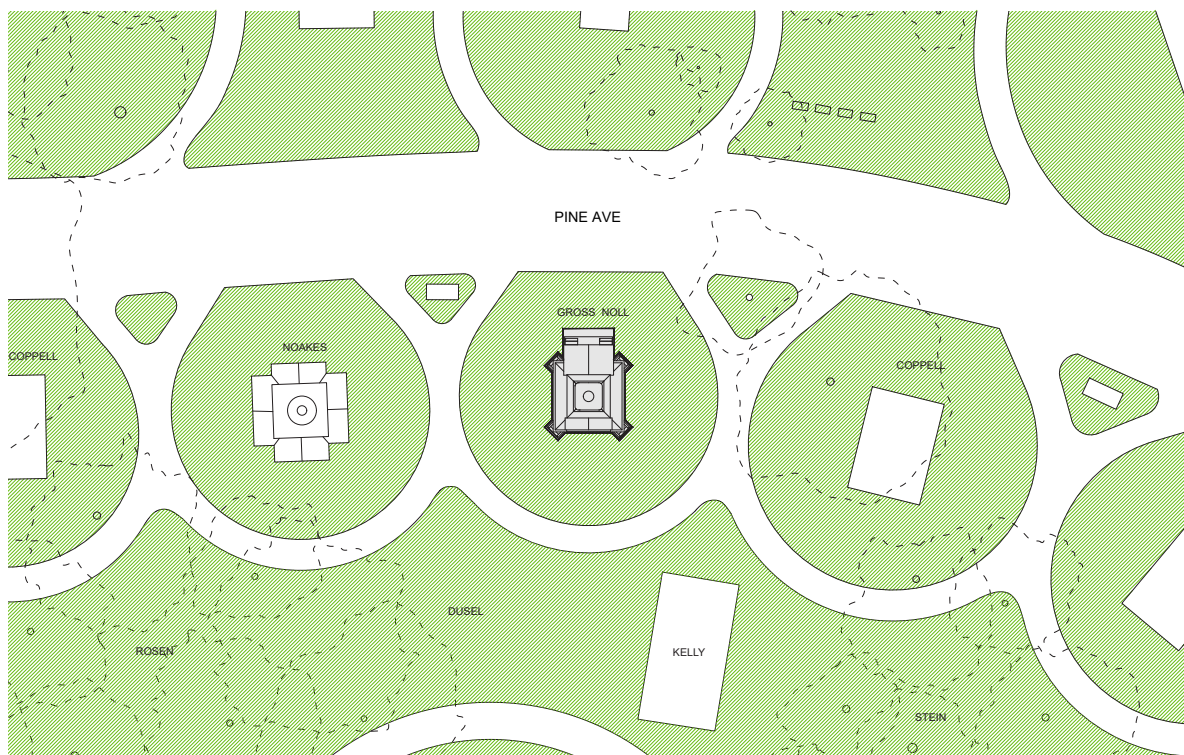


Figure 1. View of the row alignment of the Noakes and Gross mausoleums, facing Pine Avenue.

2. Site and context

Woodlawn Cemetery stands out for its design feature as a monumental funeral park, very different from other parks in New York at that time. Acknowledged by keeping the remains of various generations of New Yorkers for more than one and a half centuries, including politicians, artists, scientists, businessmen, socialites, and so on. Most of them have tombs, mausoleums, and columbariums, all of them alluding to different architectural styles, creating an experience for those who walk through the place.

The Gross-Noll mausoleum occupies a privileged position in the Pine plot where the remains of other eminent figures and mausoleums of great architectural quality are located, such as the Woolworth, Gates, Ehret, Kent, and Marceau, families. This section of the cemetery corresponds to a late nineteenth-century urban planning drafting, that can be seen in the designs made by 1874 according to Charles Griswold's plan¹. The Pine plot is surrounded by Central Avenue on the south, Pine Avenue on the north, West Border Avenue on the west, and Park Avenue on the east. The delimitation of the lots within the parcel mixes circular and orthogonal forms, which enacts a hierarchy between the different mausoleums and a visual attraction for those who walk along its avenues.



¹ Griswold, Charles. Map of the northern portion. Woodlawn Cemetery. Avery Library, Drawings & Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

The Gross Noll Mausoleum is located on the north side of the Pine plot, facing Pine Avenue. The plot where the mausoleum is placed has a circular shape of 43 feet in diameter and is surrounded by a row alignment of other circular lots that allow for an overall reading with the Coppel, Noakes, Roesch, and Barney lots. Surrounding the lot, a walkable border allows access to the central graveyards in Pine Parcel such as Dussel and Rhines. However, the main site feature is the relationship that this mausoleum establishes with the adjoining mausoleums, especially the Noakes, which stands out for its similarity in design, and both can be appreciated from a distance when walking along Pine Avenue to the east.

As for the original landscaping, according to the analysis of the aerial images obtained, it can be inferred that the predominant species is pine and that at some point there were two large pine trees next to the mausoleum. Possibly, this is one of the reasons for the choice of the design, tending to verticality and reaching a height that maintains a balanced relationship with the two large trees.



Figure 2. Gross Noll mausoleum at Pine plot. The aerial view shows part of the original landscaping of this part of Woodlawn Cemetery. The image has been manipulated to show two surrounding trees around the Gross Noll mausoleum. Reference: Suyman, James. Aerial Views of Woodlawn. Avery Library, Drawings & Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

3. Gross-Noll family overview

A particular feature of the Gross-Noll Mausoleum involves the two surnames inscribed in different parts of the building. "GROSS" occupies a frontal position on the entrance tympanum, while "NOLL" is inscribed on the second step. The fact that the two surnames are not carved together in stone is no coincidence, and the study of the biographical data of Franziska Noll Gross may shed some light on the history of this couple and its possible relation to the architectural elements in the mausoleum. The former owner of the referred mausoleum was Jacob Gross, a Hungarian emigrant dedicated to dressmaking, as is referred to in an 1880 census². In the same document, it is indicated that Jacob Gross was married to Franziska Gross, also a dressmaker of German origin born in Wurttemberg in the year 1831. Considering their social status as immigrants, there are few written records that detail specific facts of their lives and origin, specifically of Jacob Gross, who died in the year 1896 at the age of 58 years in New York.

Unlike Jacob Gross, there are a few records about his wife Franziska Noll (also known as Franzeska Noll, Franziska Gross Noll, and Franziska Ruf) whose life was marked by lights and shadows. According to records, her original name is Franziska Ruf, daughter of Agnes Ruf. Trial documents refer to Franziska an illegitimate daughter by the German laws of 1831. After her mother's death in 1858, Franziska moved to New York in search of new life opportunities with her husband, Josef Noll, with whom she married and had one son, Joseph J. Noll. However, the marriage did not prosper, and they divorced, leaving Franziska in charge of their son Joseph. In 1878, Franziska married Jacob Gross, with whom she worked from 1860 until 1890, in the field of women's fashion design as a bespoke designer for high-class clients. Her home and design studio can still be seen today at 136 East 19th Street.



Figure 3. Some of Franziska Noll-Gross's designs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The Gross Noll family lived and worked in 134 East 19th Street, New York City.

²United States Census, 1880. Page: 40C. New York City, New York. Enumeration District: 071.

³"This Agnes Ruf Aiple, around whom the controversy turns, was the teeming wife of Wunibald Aiple (fol. 369) , in Suabia, bore him twelve children (fols. 371, 372) , even after his death on October 15th, 1828 (fol. 369) continued to bear children (fol. 370) and so, three years later, on October 3rd, 1831, gave birth to said Franziska, who being thus conceived and born out of wedlock and having therefore under the German law the maiden name of her mother, was called Franziska Ruf (fol. 368) . Agnes Ruf Aiple died November 23rd, 1858. Franziska Ruf, came to New York, married as stated and became the mother of Dr. Joseph J. Noll." Cited from: Goncourt, Edmond de., Goncourt, Jules de. Journal; mémoires de la vie littéraire. Monaco: Impr. nationale, 1911.

The dressings designed by Franziska under the firm Madame Noll Gross, stand out for their beauty, originality, and sensuality, making her feminine dresses groundbreaking for the time. In the year 2022, the Metropolitan Museum organized the exhibition “An Anthology of Fashion in America” in which the American filmmaker Sofia Coppola designed a scene using three garments designed by her, this being a posthumous recognition of Franziska Gross Noll’s work. Currently, the MET holds original design pieces donated by Edith Gardiner. Finally, Franziska Noll Gross died on June 27, 1906, and was buried in the Gross-Noll Mausoleum on the Pine lot in Woodlawn.



Figure 5. Sofia Coppola’s installation at the MET’s McKim, Mead, and White Stair Hall, using some of Franziska Noll’s designs for the 2022 exhibition “*In America, An Anthology of Fashion*”.

4. Architectural Style of the Gross Noll Mausoleum

It is worth mentioning that much of the mausoleum architecture present at Woodlawn was made to order, based on a design catalog and according to the agreement between the owners and the builders, who offered a wide variety of formats, styles, and decorations according to the purchasing power of their clients. As a result, much of the monumental architecture present in the cemetery is not related to specific aspects of the life of its owners, beyond some symbols and ornaments that gave singularity. In our case, it has not been possible to identify the date of construction, nor any architect or construction company associated with the construction of the Gross-Noll mausoleum. Nevertheless, it is possible to find mausoleums of similar architecture in the same cemetery, such as Noakes mausoleum -following the Gross-Noll- in Pine plot, or the well-known mausoleum of Dr. Dunlop, also in Woodlawn. The latter was built by the C. E. Tayntor Granite Co. in the early 20th century. Another possible construction company could have been Lazzari and Barton, an eminent company that was already working in Woodlawn Cemetery, following the mausoleum designs of the architect Liance W. Cottrell, who in 1909 designed The Pennsylvania State Memorial. However, no information has been found to confirm the relationship between any of the aforementioned companies with the construction of the Gross Noll mausoleum.



Figure 4. References of different mausoleums across New York City. All of them have similarities with the Gross-Noll mausoleum. From Left to Right: Catalogue mausoleum model made by Lazzari and Barton and designed by Liance W. Cottrell. The second one is the Holder Mausoleum at Westchester Hills Cemetery in NY. The third is Dr. Dunlop Mausoleum at Woodlawn.

From reference images, could be inferred that the design and style of this mausoleum correspond to a catalog concept that was later adapted by the decisions of ornaments and details chosen by its owners. In general terms, the mausoleum expresses a stylistic eclecticism that mixes currents and influences from different origins. Predominantly, late neoclassical style is recognized, which is expressed through the use of abstract geometric lines which is decorated with some typical neoclassical details, such as the use of a porticoed access supported on columns and flying buttresses in the four corners of the main volume. However, in most of these elements the detail and decoration is simplified, which speaks of a transition between classical into an early art nouveau style, expressed mainly in the floral motifs in low and high relief present in the tympanum of the portico, as well as in the capitals of the pillars and the bronze details of the door. Possibly, the integration of these decorations in the mausoleum suggests that its architecture integrates part of the personalities of Franziska Noll and Jacob Gross, taking into account that both were dedicated to the design of avant dard fashions at the time, so they were people with knowledge of design and aesthetics, also expressed in the work they produced.



Figure 5. Relationship between Franziska Noll Gross's work with detailed drawings from the Gross Noll Mausoleum, as Portico, door, stain-glassed panels and column ornaments.

5. Architectural Features and Construction

The Gross-Noll mausoleum design is based on a compact basic geometry, a cubic volume 10 feet wide by 10 feet long and approximately 10 feet high on the main volume, supported on a platform of granite stone masonry. On this platform, thick granite walls are supported, which reach a width of approximately 11 inches. From this basic piece, other architectural elements are added: an access portico supported by granite columns and an ornamental dome, which rises over successive roofs of different types of inclinations until reaching a height of 24 feet. Also, a portico and corner buttresses on the corner are placed on the main volume to develop its main geometry.

One of the interesting aspects of the mausoleum is its material expression. The entire structure is built from granite stone, which is carved and finished in various ways to separate architectural elements or the different layers of the building: A rusticated finish generates a base, which gives visual robustness to the structure. On top of this, granite walls are erected with a clean and finished finish. The solid granite blocks fit almost perfectly with the other modular units, joined by mortar. Finally, the roof is a succession of several layers of stone slabs in different orientations and slopes that arise from the main volume to support the ornamental cupula.



Figure 6. Photographic elevations of the Gross-Noll mausoleum, and an interior view showing the stained glass window and marble finishings.

The corners of the building are reinforced by granite buttresses resting on the mausoleum platform, which then support a pair of undecorated curved pedestal columns. The shaft of the column and its base have a polished granite finish, differentiated from the rest of the building. The capital of the column presents a floral relief carving, a kind of abstract geometrization of the classical capital with the acanthus leaf, this time replaced by the presence of a flower in the center. The cubic volume of the mausoleum is crowned by a dome, eclectic in style as it brings together motifs from different types of architectural influences. This dome, in turn, gives verticality to the reading of the building as a way of standing out from the rest. The boundary between the interior and exterior of the mausoleum is divided by a vaulted stone portico, a transitional space that mediates between the monumentality of the park and the small scale of the interior as a form of seclusion. The door, built entirely in bronze with flat glass panels, is highly decorated with floral motifs again.

The layout of the interior is simple: the entrance door faces the niches directly. In the opposite direction, two symmetrical stained-glass windows allow a controlled and subtle light to enter the interior of the mausoleum. Constructively speaking, the mausoleum is composed of a series of layers that allow water tightness on the outside and ventilation of the crypts inside in parallel, both elements separated by an air chamber between the exterior stone walls and the granite walls to drain moisture and fluids related to human decomposition.

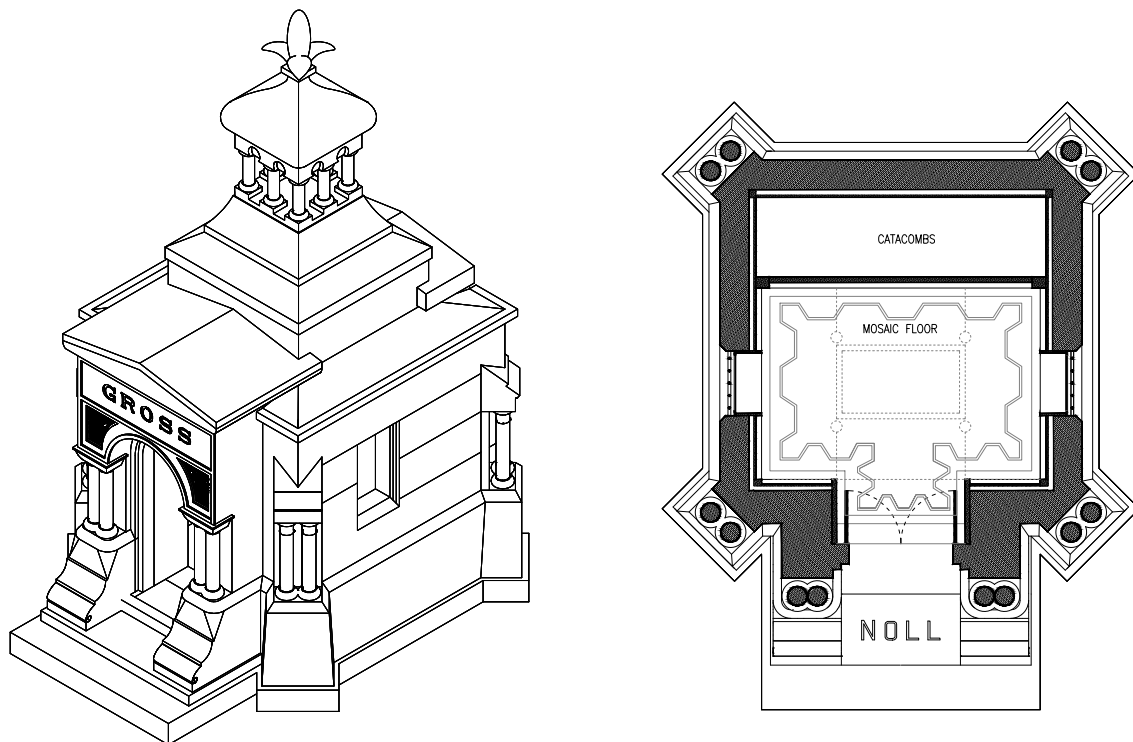
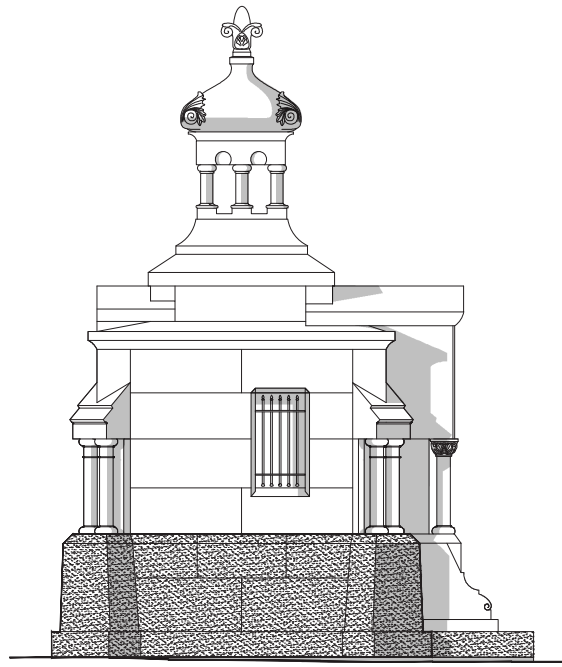


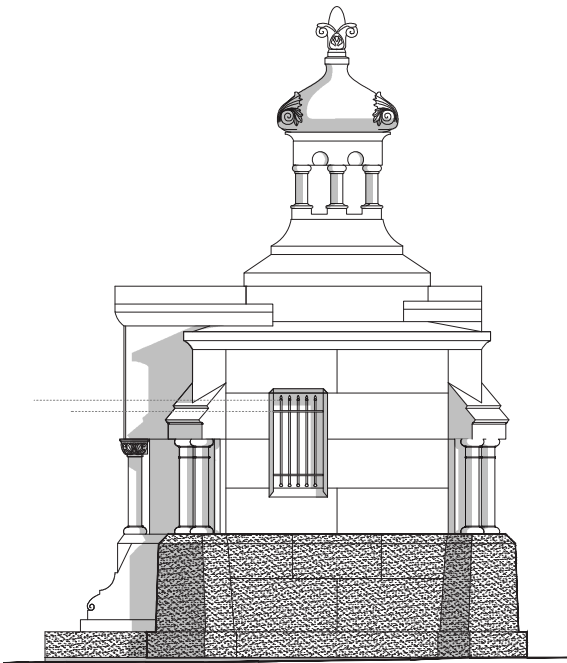
Figure 7. Axonometric view and Floor plan of the Gross-Noll Mausoleum



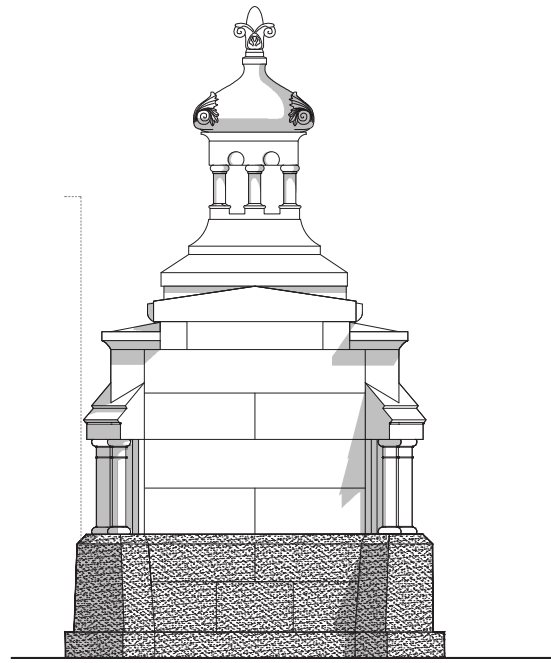
North Elevation



East Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation

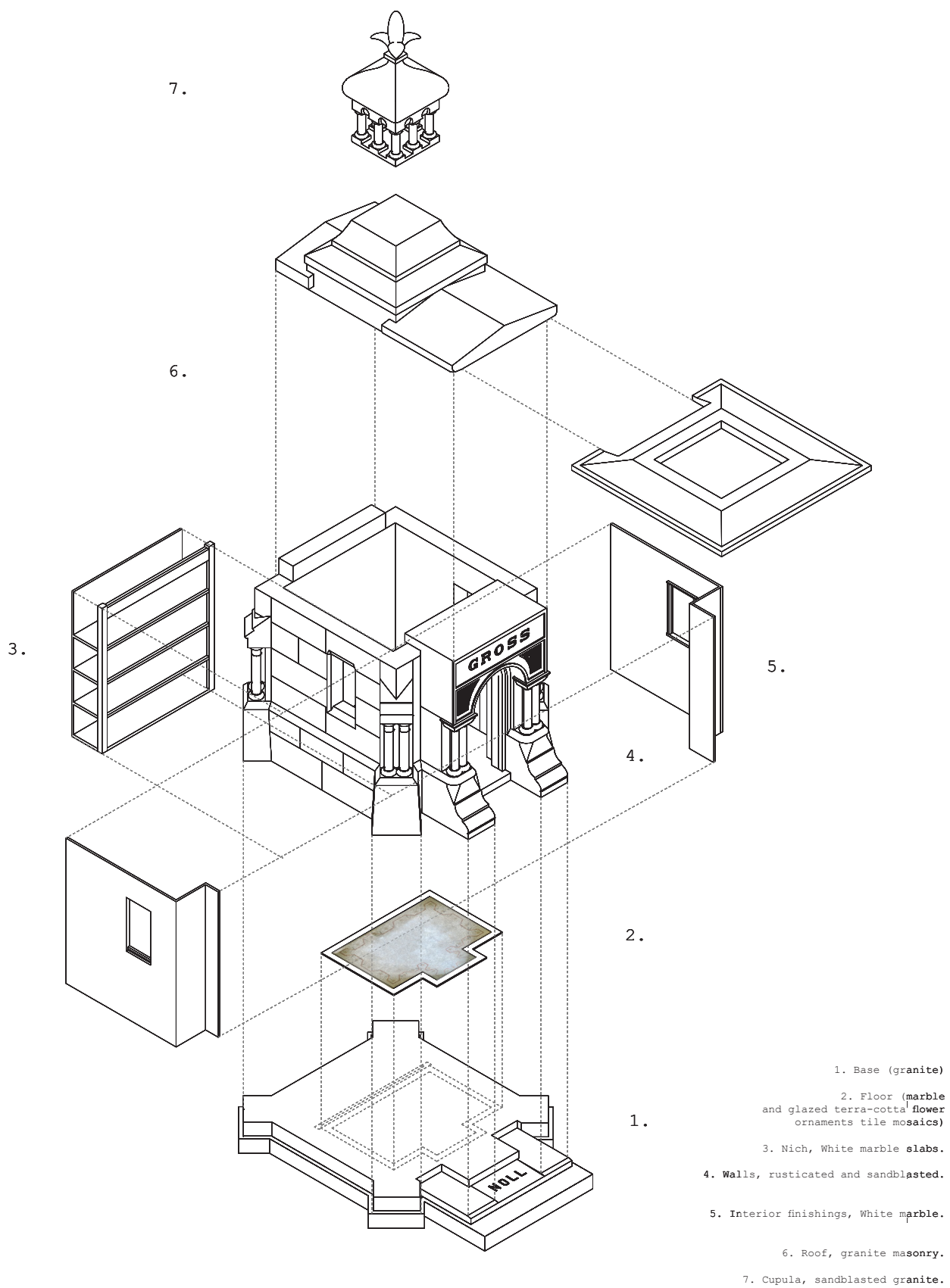
Figure 8. Elevations drawing of the Gross-Noll mausoleum.

The interior finishings of the mausoleum's walls and ceiling are white marble, arranged in large panels that form a light and cold interior, which is colored when light passes through the lateral stained-glass windows. These stained-glass windows are also moderately simple, and their graphic pattern tends to abstract floral symbolism, with the absence of any religious iconography. On the other hand, the floor is a detailed piece of craftsmanship, built of marble mosaics of small pieces, in whose perimeter a geometric and floral motif is drawn.

In general terms, the architectural composition of the mausoleum is simple and sober, directly related to the biography of its owners represented as wealthy people, but not of great wealth. It is also inferred that the presence of the floral ornamentation is a sign of the aesthetic preferences of its owners, especially Franziska who used floral geometries in her prints and hats, reflecting one of the contemporaries that is also subtly carved in the mausoleum as an expression of the character of its owners.



Figure 9. Left: Mosaic floor is made of Marble and Terracotta tiles following geometrical and flourish motifs. Right: East facade Stained glass window. East facade and West facade windows share the same pattern design.



- 1. Base (granite)
- 2. Floor (marble and glazed terra-cotta flower ornaments tile mosaics)
- 3. Nich, White marble slabs.
- 4. Walls, rusticated and sandblasted.
- 5. Interior finishings, White marble.
- 6. Roof, granite masonry.
- 7. Cupula, sandblasted granite.

Figure 10. Exploded axonometric.

6. General Conditions

The construction and design features of the mausoleum have allowed it to remain without mayor issues over time, withstanding remarkably more than 130 years of history. Obviously, in the course of this time, deterioration has occurred as an effect of the resistance of the material over time. Most of these conditions are on the exterior of the mausoleum. The visual evaluation carried out in the field has revealed a degree of incipient erosion of the granite due to the effect of water and humidity to which the mausoleum has been exposed. The vertical faces are the main elements exposed to continuous moisture since the roof and sloping elements tend to displace the passage of water more easily. The presence of humidity and even biological growth has been detected in the most intricate areas of the mausoleum, such as the joints between the elements of its base and the union of the rusticated blocks of the base.



ELEMENT: STEP
CONDITION: MOISTURE AND EROTION



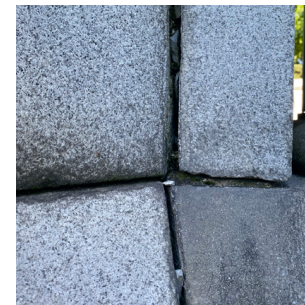
ELEMENT: PILASTER BASE
CONDITION: MOISTURE / ORGANIC GROWTH



ELEMENT: COLUMN CAPITAL
CONDITION: MOISTURE AND EROTION



ELEMENT: COLUMN BASE
CONDITION: MOISTURE / ORGANIC GROWTH AND EROTION



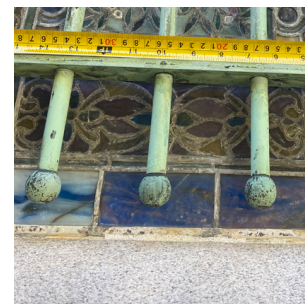
ELEMENT: MORTAR JOINTS
CONDITION: ERODED MORTAR JOINT



ELEMENT: JOINTS
CONDITION: ORGANIC GROWTH AND EROTION



ELEMENT: DOOR
CONDITION: CORROSION AND OXITATION

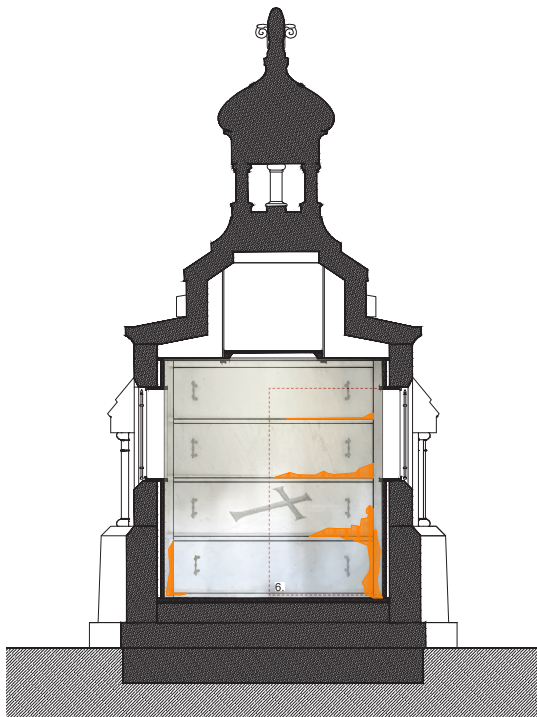
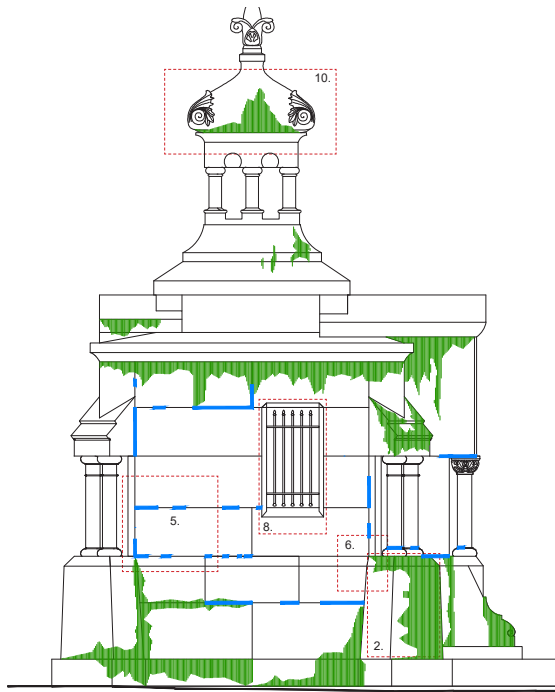
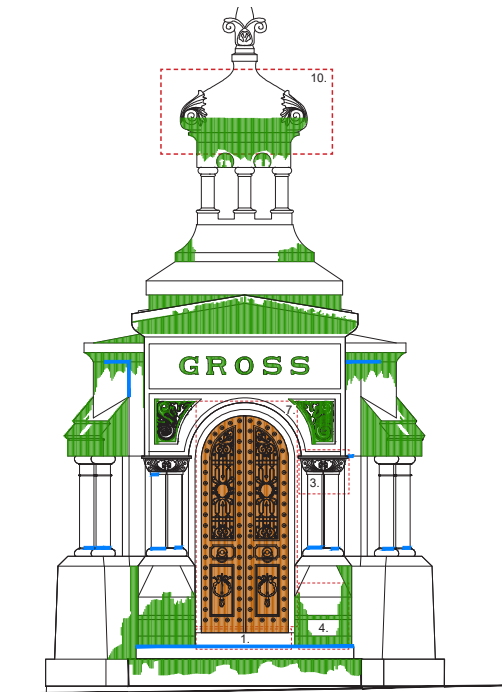


ELEMENT: WINDOW FENCE
CONDITION: CORROSION AND OXITATION



ELEMENT: MASONRY BLOCK
CONDITION: CRACKING

Figure 10. General conditions documentation.



- MOISTURE DEGRADATION
- ACID OR SALT EFFLORESCE
- OXIDATION
- ERODED MORTAR JOINT
- CRACKING

Figure 11. General conditions documentation.

The element that shows the greatest degree of deterioration on the exterior is the mortar joints that join the granite blocks. At some points, the joints have been exposed due to the movement and dilatation of the different blocks in the face of sudden temperature changes, losing part, or eroding.

The metallic elements such as the door and the window protections present a low level of oxidation, due to the presence of copper in the metallic alloy, which produces a chemical reaction that prevents the biological agents that promote the deterioration of the metal. An interesting fact is that the stone area of the exterior walls under the windows has been cleaned with the detachment of copper from the metallic elements, showing its effect as a biological agent against fungi that are stored in the porosity of the stone.

On the other hand, the interior of the mausoleum is in very good condition. Some conditions are observed specifically on the floor, where a fissure crosses part of the marble mosaic work of the floor. There are also incrustations of glazed and colored terra-cotta mosaic, which has lost part of its protective layer over time, which produces the erosion of these pieces in contrast to the white marble, which has withstood remarkably over time. Acid efflorescence and humidity are also observed in some specific areas of the niches, as well as in the lintel of the access door. In general, the interior conditions are much more favorable than the exterior, which proves the effectiveness of the design of the mausoleum and its great resistance over time.

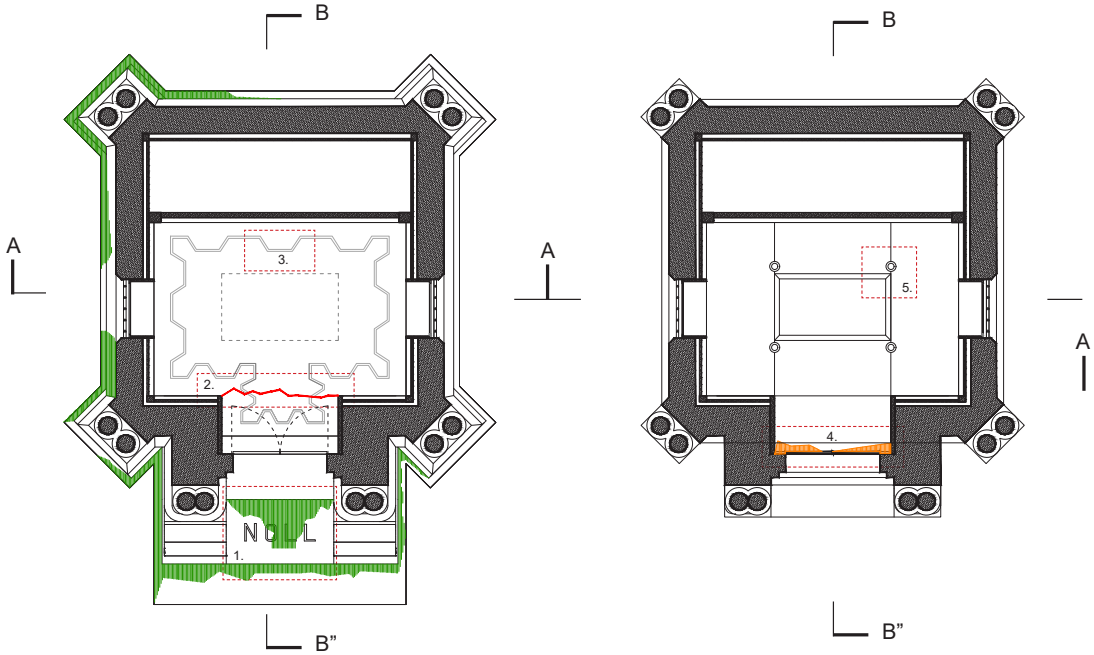


Figure 12. Floor plan and ceiling plan conditions documentation.

7. References and Bibliography

Griswold, Charles. Map of the northern portion. Woodlawn Cemetery. Avery Library, Drawings & Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery Records. 1874.

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