

**Learning Places Fall 2016**  
**Site Report #3**  
**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

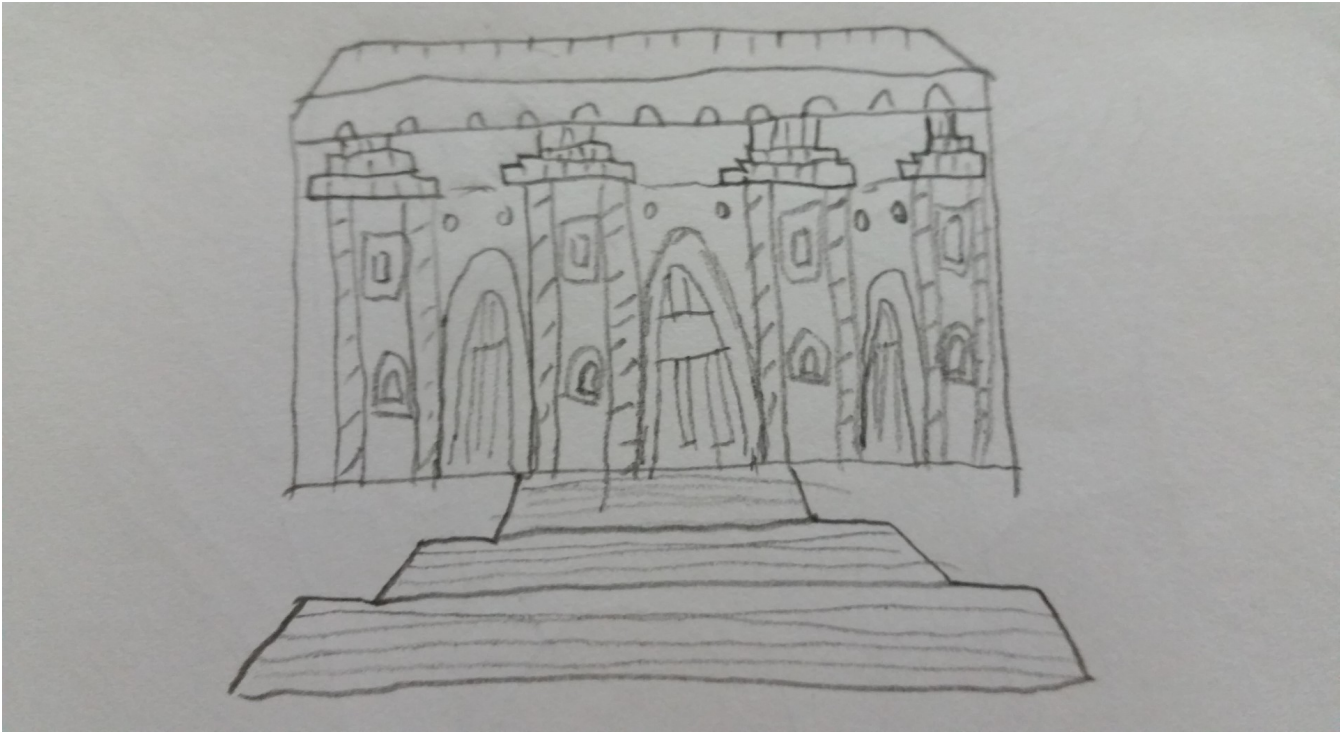


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**10/6/16**

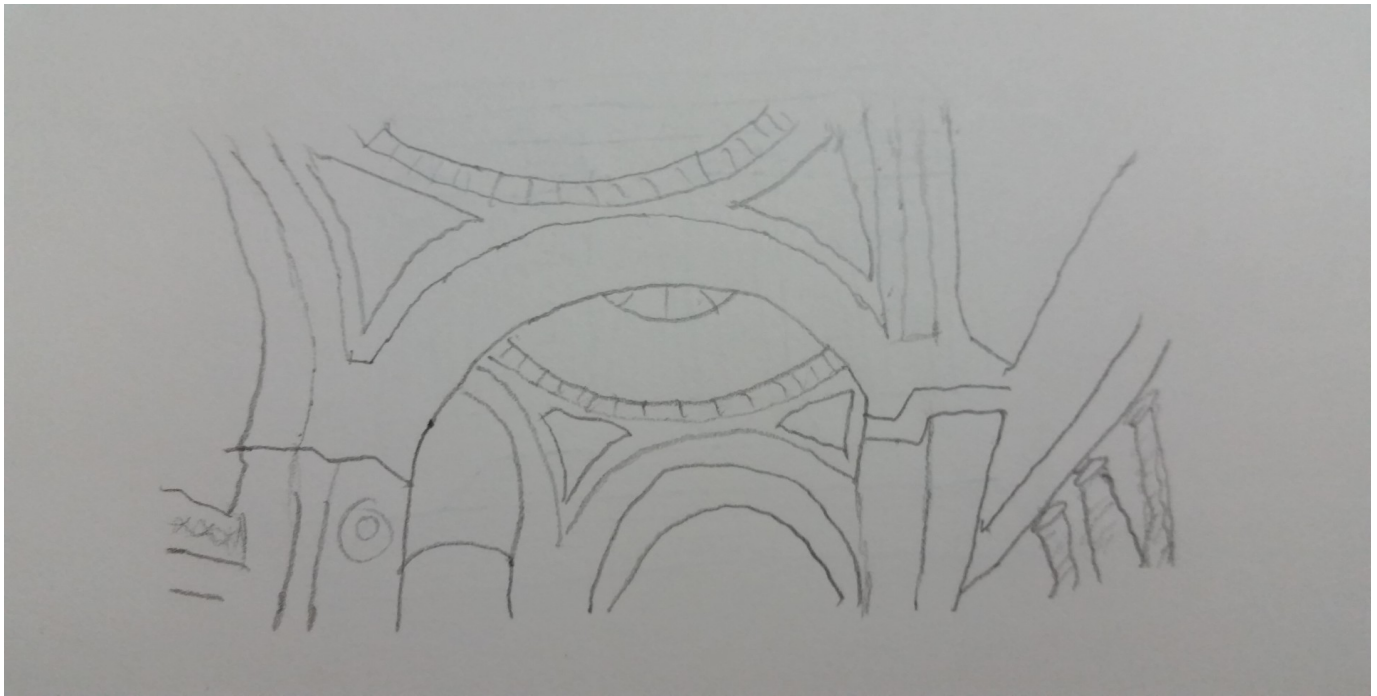
**Introduction**

We all first took an exterior look of the MET and captured a few photos. We then met together as a class and discuss our observations on the neoclassical look of the building and its surroundings. We then move inside towards the Great Hall and discuss how the architecture of the exterior compares with the architecture of the interior. We spent the rest of our time in the Great Hall trying to capture anything meaningful through cameras and sketching.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art's classical Beaux-Arts facade was designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt. At the very top is the ornamental gutter, "cheneau", which was also designed by Hunt. The four blocks of stone on top of the four pairs of pillars was actually suppose to be carved by four different sculptors representing 4 different eras of art. It never came to be due to financial reasons, however they still stand on top to give an overall balance to the building's design. The head of the Minerva of Velletri was an inspiration for the keystones located on top of the arches.

From a first look of the facade, I can tell it is neoclassical architecture. What stands out as neoclassical to me is the four pairs of pillars and the huge arches that sit between them. As for the long staircase that lead up to the inside of the museum, it can be looked as street theatre, people sit there to take in the urban environment. It's very appealing to the public, making it a social event where you can just grab a snack and take a look at the different types of art surrounding it.



The Great Hall is composed of three domes and eight arches with a balcony on the second floor. It serves as an entrance to the north, west, and south galleries of the museum. Lila Acheson Wallace was one of the MET's biggest contributors and the reason that all the fresh flowers placed around the museum are replaced every week with new ones.

Walking through the Great Hall felt very inviting. I was surprised to think it was just a lobby or an entrance to the actual galleries of the museum. The room itself has the same neoclassical look as the facade in terms of the pillars and arches.



The Marble statue of Athena Parthenos was founded at Pergamon in the Sanctuary of Athena in 1880. First carved back in 438 B.C. while the Hellenistic kingdom of Pergamon was rising. This statue here represents the goddess of knowledge and art. The statue is missing some of its features due to the condition it was found in.

When I took a look at this statue I had an idea that this was probably the entrance to the Greek gallery of the museum. It tells me how the women were dressed and represented back in B.C Greece.



The Colossal Statue of a Pharaoh represents the reign of Amenemhat II of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom in Dynasty 12 (1919-1885 B.C.). Discovered at Tanis, Egypt in the early 19 century. First carved in Aswan and completed in Memphis, Egypt. During the time of dynasty 19 kings Ramesses II and Merneptah added their names onto the statue and some of the facial features were modified to make it look similar to Ramesses II.

When I took a look at this statue I had an idea that this was probably the entrance to the Egyptian gallery of the museum. It's a good symbol to represent Egypt as the statue tells me how they treated their pharaoh as gods. I also see how they use hieroglyphics to communicate with the afterlife and with future generations.



The water fountains were part of a renovation project for the space outside of the museum in order to make it more inviting to the public. It was transform into a new plaza named after David H. Koch, a MET trustee who was responsible for the completion of the project. It operates 24/7 on a recycled stream that creates its own different patterns.

As I first walk upon the MET these fountains were the first parts of the museum that caught my eye. It definitely gives it a modern look in addition to the neoclassical design of the building. For a museum to have a stylish setup in its front entrance makes it more significant than any other museum.

## **General Notes:**

- The MET was first discovered in 1870 by a group of entrepreneurs, investors, and artists. They wanted to create a museum to educate people on art from all around the world.
- The museum first started with a collection of 174 paintings from various European artists.
- Over 5 million people come through the museum each year to explore the arts and history from different parts of the earth.
- The museum was moved to its present location in 1880, expanded in 1888, and the current entrance we see today was finished in 1926.
- The renovation led by “Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates” that took place from 1971 to 1991 made the museum more explicit and appealing to its visitors.

## **Insights/Discoveries**

When I first walk upon the MET, I see how wide the building is and the amount of people socializing just outside of the museum. It gave me the impression that this must not be a regular museum. I learn that the staircase upon the entrance was not just a way inside the museum but more like a social gathering. The reason for that was the amount of street vendors and street performances that filled up the whole block. I noticed that the museum's exterior is one of the very few with a neoclassical and modern combination. From that observation I was able to tell there must have been several renovations since its opening. As I walk through the Great Hall, I was surprised to see it was just a lobby to the actual galleries of the museum. It was a grand and glorious room filled with a few artifacts and large vases of flowers. It had the same type of neoclassical look as it did from the outside. In addition to learning it was serving as a location for the information desks, the Great Hall also hosts events from time to time. We were only able to visit a small portion of the museum, yet I was able to grasp the importance from its architecture and the amount of history it holds.

## **Keywords/Vocabulary**

Facade – a decorative front entrance of a building

Cheneau – an ornamental cresting on a gutter

Richard Morris Hunt – an American architect and one of the MET's trustee that design the facade and the Great Hall

The Great Hall – the lobby or entrance for the MET that leads to the north, west, and south galleries

Prehistoric art – the origins of human art accomplishments back in B.C.

## **Research Questions**

What makes the MET one of the most significant museums apart from the others?

How was the MET able to acquire its unique collection from different cultures around the world?

What possible new expansions or renovations are there in the museum's future?