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First Draft: Essay 5, Prof. Scanlan

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First Draft: The Main Attraction of Rockefeller Center

What are the reasons to go to Rockefeller Center? The ice skating rink is one reason of going there. It is open every winter for people to enjoy a good time skating. Also at Rockefeller Center is a great statue, Prometheus, who appears to be standing in front of the skating rink and he brings many stories and great honors to Rockefeller Center. The ice skating rink and Prometheus are very meaningful and attractive features of Rockefeller Center, and they supply good reasons to visit the area besides the massive skyscrapers that make up the Rockefeller Center area.

The statue, Prometheus, is named for the famous Greek god of the same name, from the ancient Greece mythology. It is said by Dianne Durante in her book *Outdoor Monuments of Manhattan* that:

Prometheus formed humans out of clay and water. He gave them sense and understanding, then taught them to work wood and make bricks, to build shelters, to use stars to tell the season for planting, to write, do math, to harness beasts of burden, and to build ships. Prometheus also gave humans the gift of fire, smuggling it from Mount Olympus inside a hollow reed. Zeus, however, had forbidden anyone to give humans fire. He ordered Prometheus chained to a rock in the distant Caucasus Mountains, where each day an eagle came to rip out his liver. Each night his liver grew back so the torture could begin anew. (136)

When I read this, I knew Prometheus was an interesting and logical choice for a statue at the ice rink. Ancient Greeks had their beliefs in their religion—which to us are now myths—and they should have honored a man/god like Prometheus. He gave life to humans and gave them all their knowledge. Additionally, the man who made this statue in Rockefeller Center, Paul Manship, was very specific on how he sculpted Prometheus. From Dianne Durante, we learn that “Manship chose to show Prometheus bringing fire to mortals. A torch waving in one hand,”…”not looking warily toward an angry Zeus, but down toward Earth.” “For Manship, what mattered was the life-enhancing gift Prometheus brought, rather than his later suffering” (137).

Prometheus means happiness to New York City. He signifies a sacrifice due to his actions that he did for humans. He is also a sculpture that is seen by most residents of New York and the tourists that come to the center. For this reason and for many others, a statue like Prometheus is taken care of. This statue is the centerpiece of Rockefeller Center, especially given its placement. It is why so much work goes into it as Joseph Lederer says in his book *All Around the Town*:

Manship’s floating Prometheus (Leaping Louie” to its early detractors) was installed in 1934, when the rarity of massive bronze covered with gold leaf made it a startling presence. Framed within the spray of the fountain, this embodiment of Radio City Modern is the focal point of the sunken plaza in front of the RCA Building (30 Rockefeller Plaza). Early in 1974, the figure (18 feet long, weighing 8 tons) was stripped of several coats of old gold leafing down to the original bronze core, in order to repair old chips, revive the sharp detail obscured by added coats of gold leafing, and restore the work to its early high glitter (get page number)

Next: how is the statue cared for and by whom? A statue always needs its maintenance and protection from the elements.