Great Museums
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York, NY

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The facade of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, NY. The museum sits in Central Park along 5th Avenue. Notice the city buildings in the background. The tall buildings start at the North End of Central Park.
Floor plan of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There are two floors, a roof top sculpture garden and basement area. (two million sq. feet)

6,953,927 visitors to its three locations in 2018, it was the third most visited art museum in the world. Its permanent collection contains over two million works, divided among 17 curatorial departments. The main building at 1000 Fifth Avenue, along the Museum Mile on the eastern edge of Central Park in Manhattan's Upper East Side, is by area one of the world's largest art galleries. A much smaller second location, The Cloisters at Fort Tryon Park in Upper Manhattan, contains an extensive collection of art, architecture, and artifacts from medieval Europe. On March 18, 2016, the museum opened the Met Breuer museum along Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side; it extends the museum's modern and contemporary art program.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art is celebrating its 150 years of being open.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 for the purposes of opening a museum to bring art and art education to the American people. The Fifth Avenue building opened on February 20, 1872, at 681 Fifth Avenue. The architects were Richard Morris Hunt. And Richard Howard Hunt. The style of architecture is called Beaux-Art.
The Great Hall. This is the main entrance to the museum. The permanent collection consists of works of art from classical antiquity and ancient Egypt, paintings, and sculptures from nearly all the European masters, and an extensive collection of American and modern art. The Met maintains extensive holdings of African, Asian, Oceanian, Byzantine, and Islamic art. The museum is home to encyclopedic collections of musical instruments, costumes, and accessories, as well as antique weapons and armor from around the world. Several notable interiors, ranging from 1st-century Rome through modern American design, are installed in its galleries.
This staircase leads to the second floor where you will find European Art, Modern Art and the Asian Art. Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Middle Age arts are located on the first floor. Along with arms and armor, a very fine collection encompassing the world of defense and weapons.

The museum is encyclopedic collection dating from 5,000 years ago to the present.
A room of Egyptian work. There are over 39 rooms filled with Egyptian Art.
Temple of Dendur, This room holds an Egyptian temple.
Temple of Dendur
Golden Coffin, returned to Egypt.
“Nedjemankh and His Gilded Coffin,”

Outer coffin of the Singer of Amun-Re, Henettawy.

Khonsu’s anthropoid coffins.
Egypt
Hippopotamus ("William")
ca. 1961–1878 B.C.
This statuette of a hippopotamus (popularly called "William") was molded in faience, a ceramic material made of ground quartz. Beneath the blue glaze, the body was painted with lotuses. These river plants depict the marshes in which the animal lived, but at the same time their flowers also symbolize regeneration and rebirth as they close every night and open again in the morning.
Greek and Roman Art at the Met.
The Greco-Roman galleries
Bronze statuette of a veiled and masked dancer
3rd–2nd century B.C.
Greek

The complex motion of this dancer is conveyed exclusively through the interaction of the body with several layers of dress. Over an undergarment that falls in deep folds and trails heavily, the figure wears a lightweight mantle, drawn tautly over her head and body by the pressure applied to it by her right arm, left hand, and right leg. Its substance is conveyed by the alternation of the tubular folds pushing through from below and the freely curling softness of the fringe. The woman's face is covered by the sheerest of veils, discernible at its edge below her hairline and at the cutouts for the eyes. Her extended right foot shows a laced slipper. This dancer has been convincingly identified as one of the professional entertainers, a combination of mime and dancer, for which the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria was famous in antiquity.
Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water)
ca. 430 B.C.
Attributed to the Marlay Painter
Obverse, horsemen
Reverse, komasts (revelers)

The longevity of the black-figure technique is indicated here by the ornament of the neck and especially by the animal frieze around the side of the lip. The horsemen ride along with an air of particular ease, conveyed not only by their seat but also by the exchange between them. They can be compared to the riders on the west frieze of the Parthenon.
Bronze statue of an aristocratic boy
27 B.C.–A.D. 14
Roman
This life-sized statue was found on the eastern Mediterranean island of Rhodes, whose ancient Greek cities were wealthy, flourishing centers of commerce and culture under the Romans. With his broad face and short hair, the boy resembles young princes in the family of Augustus, the first Roman emperor, but he may have been the son of an important Roman official stationed on Rhodes or the son of a wealthy Greek. As Roman influence spread throughout the Mediterranean world, there was interchange of fashion, customs, and culture. Romans had great admiration for Greek culture; the island of Rhodes was famous for its schools of philosophy and rhetoric, and this boy even wears a Greek himation (cloak) instead of the traditional Roman toga.
Wall painting from Room H of the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale ca. 50–40 B.C.

Roman

This painting of a seated woman playing a kithara is from Room H, either a dining room (triclinium) or a room for social gatherings (oecus), in the villa at Boscoreale. Each of the paintings that originally adorned this room derives from the Greek tradition of megalographia, or large-scale painting, about which so much was written in antiquity; Apollinaris of Sidonius, Petronius in the Satyricon, and Vitruvius all shed light on the use of megalographia in Roman villas.

In this fresco, the kithara player is depicted as a plump young woman clothed in a purple chiton and white himation. She is adorned with a bracelet, earrings, and headband with a central medallion, all of gold. A small figure of Atlas supports the arm of her elaborately carved chair that originally was lacquered a deep lustrous red. The instrument she plays is not a simple lyre, but a gilded kithara, a large concert instrument played by Apollo and professional musicians. Behind the seated woman stands a small girl wearing a sleeveless purple chiton. She, too, is adorned with a gold headband, bracelet, and loop earrings. Like portrait figures, the woman and the girl gaze directly at the spectator.
Statue of Dionysos leaning on a female figure ("Hope Dionysos")
27 B.C.–A.D. 68
Restored by Pacetti, Vincenzo

Roman copy of Greek original. Adaptation of a Greek work of the 4th century B.C.

Dionysos, god of wine and divine intoxication, wears a panther skin over his short chiton and his high sandals with animal heads on the overhanging skin flaps. He stands beside an archaistic female image whose pose and dress imitate those of Greek statues carved in the sixth century B.C. It is difficult to know whether the original Greek bronze statue of Dionysos, of which this is a copy, included the female figure. Supports in the form of pillars, herms, and small statues were not uncommon in Classical art, but this figure may have been added to support the outstretched arm and may represent Spes, a Roman personification of Hope, who was commonly shown as an archaistic maiden.
The Middle Ages. This is only a small part of the Medieval Collection. The bulk of the collection is uptown at the Mets “Cloisters”

The medieval collection in the main Metropolitan building, centered on the first-floor medieval gallery, contains about 6,000 separate objects. While a great deal of European medieval art is on display in these galleries, most of the European pieces are concentrated at the Cloisters (see below). However, this allows the main galleries to display much of the Met's Byzantine art side-by-side with European pieces. The main gallery is host to a wide range of tapestries and church and funerary statuary, while side galleries display smaller works of precious metals and ivory, including reliquary pieces and secular items. The main gallery, with its high arched ceiling, also serves double duty as the annual site of the Met's elaborately decorated Christmas tree.
The Cloisters

Opened in 1938 as a branch of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Met Cloisters is America’s only museum dedicated exclusively to the art and architecture of the Middle Ages. Including a museum and gardens within a single complex, it picturesquely overlooks the Hudson River in Fort Tryon Park in northern Manhattan and derives its name from the portions of five medieval cloisters incorporated into a modern museum structure. Not replicating any one particular medieval building type or setting, but rather designed to evoke the architecture of the later Middle Ages, The Met Cloisters creates an integrated and harmonious context in which visitors can experience the rich tradition of medieval artistic production, including metalwork, painting, sculpture, and textiles. By definition, a cloister consists of a covered walkway surrounding a large open courtyard that provides access to other monastic buildings. Similarly, the museum’s cloisters act as passageways to galleries; they provide as inviting a place for rest and contemplation for visitors as they often did in their original monastic settings.
This is a room of Tapestries at the Cloisters. The suite of seven are called the Unicorn Tapestries. The seven individual hangings known as "The Unicorn Tapestries," are among the most beautiful and complex works of art from the late Middle Ages that survive. Luxuriously woven in fine wool and silk with silver and gilded threads, the tapestries vividly depict scenes associated with a hunt for the elusive, magical unicorn.
In order to make the tapestries, plain wool yarns (the warp) were stretched between two beams of a large loom; a bobbin then brought dyed and metallic threads (the wefts) over and under the warp threads to create the design. Chemical analyses reveal that the dye pigments used in the Unicorn Tapestries came from such plants as weld (yellow), madder (red), and woad (blue), all of which are grown in the Bonnefont Cloister garden. With the aid of mordants, substances that help fix the dyes to fabric, these three primary colors were blended to achieve a dazzling spectrum of hues strategically highlighted by the addition of metallic threads.
the Unicorn Tapestries.
the Unicorn Tapestries.
The Hunt
the Unicorn Tapestries.
Capturing the Unicorn
Here the injured unicorn is being held at bay by three hunters ready to pierce him with their lances. The furious animal reacts with a gruesome attack on a greyhound before him, almost tearing the dog's body apart. The horn-blowing hunter at the lower left wears a scabbard with the inscription AVE REGINA C[OELI] (Hail, Queen of the Heavens). The huntsmen and other figures are garbed in the fashions of about the turn of the sixteenth century, including round-toed shoes and fitted bodices, and their headdresses and hairstyles also reflect contemporary tastes. The mastery of the weavers is evident in the convincing representation of different materials and textures in the costumes, such as brocade, velvet, leather, and fur.
Detail.
“The Unicorn in Captivity" may have been created as a single image rather than part of a series. In this instance, the unicorn probably represents the beloved tamed. He is tethered to a tree and constrained by a fence, but the chain is not secure and the fence is low enough to leap over: The unicorn could escape if he wished. Clearly, however, his confinement is a happy one, to which the ripe, seed-laden pomegranates in the tree—a medieval symbol of fertility and marriage—testify. The red stains on his flank do not appear to be blood, as there are no visible wounds like those in the hunting series; rather, they represent juice dripping from bursting pomegranates above. Many of the other plants represented here, such as wild orchid, bistort, and thistle, echo this theme of marriage and procreation: they were acclaimed in the Middle Ages as fertility aids for both men and women. Even the little frog, nestled among the violets at the lower right, was cited by medieval writers for its noisy mating.
Detail
The Cloisters, Church Abby with medieval tombs
The Cloisters
Rogier van der Wyden
The Merode Triptych
Patrons to the left are the donors of this triptych
In the center panel, you see an Annunciation scene. The Angel Gabriel tells Mary she will bear a child. The right panel is St. Joseph building a mouse trap.
The Met's Department of Arms and Armor is one of the museum's most popular collections.[46] The distinctive "parade" of armored figures on horseback installed in the first-floor Arms and Armor gallery is one of the most recognizable images of the museum, which was organized in 1975 with the help of the Russian immigrant and arms and armors' scholar, Leonid Tarassuk (1925–90). The department's focus on "outstanding craftsmanship and decoration," including pieces intended solely for display, means that the collection is strongest in late medieval European pieces and Japanese pieces from the 5th through the 19th centuries. However, these are not the only cultures represented in Arms and Armor; the collection spans more geographic regions than almost any other department, including weapons and armor from dynastic Egypt, ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the ancient Near East, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, as well as American firearms (especially Colt firearms) from the 19th and 20th centuries. Among the collection's 14,000 objects[47] are many pieces made for and used by kings and princes, including armor belonging to Henry VIII of England, Henry II of France, and Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor.
Video of Arms and Armor, (2.17 min.)
Click the center of the white screen
Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas
Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas
Ever since its establishment in 1870, the Museum has acquired important examples of American art. A separate "American Wing" to display the domestic arts of the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries opened in 1924; painting and sculpture galleries and a skylit courtyard were added in 1980.

Today, the Wing's ever-evolving collection comprises some 20,000 works of art by African American, Euro American, Latin American, and Native American men and women. Ranging from the colonial to early-modern periods, the holdings include painting, sculpture, works on paper, and decorative arts—including furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass, silver, metalwork, jewelry, basketry, quill and bead embroidery—as well as historical interiors and architectural fragments.

Monumental sculpture, stained glass, and architectural elements are installed in the Charles Engelhard Court; silver, gold, glass, and ceramics on the courtyard balconies. Narratives of American domestic architecture and furnishings, 1680–1915, are explored in twenty historical interiors, or period rooms. Changing rotations of painting, sculpture, works on paper, and textiles appear throughout the Wing.
Frederic Remington (American, 1861–1909). The Broncho Buster, 1895, revised 1909, cast by November 1910. Bronze, 32 1/4 x 27 1/4 x 15 in. (81.9 x 69.2 x 38.1 cm).

After regularly seeing casts and reproductions of The Broncho Buster at my first job at the Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg, New York, I am now quick to spot them in museums, flea markets, movies, and magazines. The pieces seem to be everywhere, representing the epitome of what many believe a cowboy to be and what Remington hoped he would embody—the last frontiersman and the master of a nation born out of wilderness, subsisting on an unsettled, magical land. I do still wonder—as I did frequently when I was younger—why this artist, who lived so close to the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation in upstate New York, traveled so far west to find his Native subjects? Maybe too many "Indians" and not enough "Cowboys" would have crushed his mythos of the American West.
George Caleb Bingham (American, 1811–1879). Fur Traders Descending the Missouri, 1845. Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 1/2 in. (73.7 x 92.7 cm)

Famous for its exceptional calm, this work seems more concerned with atmosphere than the narrative vignettes typical of genre painting. The original title, French Trader and Half-Breed Son, provides greater context for Bingham's masterpiece: French fur traders routinely married Indigenous women to establish the necessary kinship relations that made it possible for them to take furs from Native territories. These marriages not only created valuable trade networks but also established familial obligations of reciprocation that meant goods flowed into Native communities. Bingham's painting offers an alternative vision of western expansion—one characterized by intermarriage and trade, not conflict. The American Art-Union's change of title in 1845 from the more racialized and less palatable original resulted in a loss of insight into one facet of the early frontier.
Jules Tavernier (American [born France], 1844–1889). Dance in a Subterranean Roundhouse at Clear Lake, California, 1878. Oil on canvas, 48 x 72 1/4 in. (121.9 x 183.5 cm).

When the seasons change
we go to the roundhouse.
When it is a birthday
we go to the roundhouse.
When a funeral happens for an elder
we go to the roundhouse.
We unite.

First time I heard the eagle song
It was played in the roundhouse.
It was so powerful my uncle took out his eagle bone whistle
blew it four times in the air as if to call spirits down from the sky,
a circular opening above,
in the night
maps of stars.
Bright.
Clear.

The dust rose from the dancers’ feet.
People in pieces of regalia
jean jackets and shawls draped over shoulders
as if everyone was transforming into animal clans inside a lodge.

Dancers dance to the drum
like a chain for spirits to find their way into our little roundhouse.
Movements are prayers.
Seven years on the earth I was
with ear pressed on the dirt floor.
Now, every time I hear eagle song
I remember the roundhouse.

—Ty Defoe (Ojibwe and Oneida)
James Earle Fraser (American, 1876–1953). End of the Trail, 1918, cast 1918. Bronze, 33 x 26 x 8 3/4 in. (83.8 x 66 x 22.2 cm).

I remember visiting the Cherokee gift shop as a kid, where small novelty versions of this sculpture were for sale. At the time, I saw it as an image of a shamed, defeated Indian, and I wondered if this was really how the rest of the world viewed us. Over the years, I went to powwows with my family, where I saw End of the Trail screenprinted on flags used in ceremonies honoring veterans and prisoners of war. It was a symbol that had been completely reinvented in a Native context. I continue to have ambivalent feelings about this image, but I understand that for many it is a symbol of resilience and strength—characteristics traditionally associated with the warrior.

—Ty Defoe (Ojibwe and Oneida)
Washington Crossing the Delaware River

Artist  Emanuel Leutze  
Year  1851  
Medium  Oil on canvas  
Dimensions  378.5 cm × 647.7 cm (149 in × 255 in)  
Location  Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

The boatman pictured in the stern wears Native moccasins, leggings, and a shoulder pouch, and likely represents an Indigenous member of Washington's troops. Native American warriors fought, often decisively, on both sides of the war—British and American—according to their nation's interest. In 1778 the United States signed a treaty with the Lenape (Delaware), its first formal treaty with an Indigenous nation, securing assistance and safe passage through Delaware land in exchange for "articles of clothing, utensils, and implements of war." The treaty recognized Delaware sovereignty, guaranteed territorial rights, and offered the possibility of Indigenous statehood. But soon a (double) crossing of the Delaware took place: persistent treaty violations by settlers and the US government culminated in the 1782 Gnadenhütten Massacre, in which a Pennsylvania militia killed ninety-six defenseless Christian Lenape. Virtually all of America's Indigenous allies suffered similar fates.
As you can see, the images in the painting are all life size.
The images on this black-dyed bag, traditionally used to hold amulets and other personal possessions, are part of the pictorial language of Great Lakes cultures. The figures and abstractions express a complex universe alive with seen and unseen forces. In 1845 the Anishinaabe Methodist minister Peter Jones wore the pouch in Edinburgh, posing for a group of photographs that are considered the earliest of an identified Native North American. The strap is now missing.
War Shirt, 1890,
Crow, Native American

This richly embellished garment, which embodies layers of spiritual and military meaning, would have been worn by a man of great stature on ceremonial occasions. The red ocher paint on the upper half represents an aspect of holy power. The rolled fringes made from ermine pelts hanging from the arms and chest, together with the human hair on the flaps at the neck, signify bravery and victory over the enemy.
Cradleboard
ca. 1890
War club
ca. 1750
Anishinaabe, probably Ojibwa, Native American

This weapon was carved as an effigy of a deer’s leg. The sculptor carefully chose the hardwood so that the burled portion, where a branch was once attached, would strengthen the angled head. The heavy spherical element seems to have contained a projecting spike designed to split skulls in intertribal warfare or conflicts with Europeans in the Midwest. Highly polished and decorated with red pigment, this club would have been a warrior’s prized possession.
Rattle
19th century
Native American (Tsimshian)

The form of this rattle is that of a bird (raven) bearing a totemic emblem on its breast. On the bird's back are the figures of a shaman and a kingfisher, the mythological source of the shaman's supernatural powers. The figures are united by one tongue, which forms the bridge through which the magic force flows.
Feathered Basket
early 20th century
Pomo
Video for 3rd grade through 5
Video, 6-8th grades
Video, High School