LEARNING TO LOOK AT ARCHITECTURE
You spend time in buildings every day. But how often do you really look at or think about their design, their details, and the spaces they create? What did the architect want you to feel or think once inside the structure? Following the steps in TMA’s Art of Seeing Art™ process can help you explore architecture on a deeper level through close looking.

**LOOK:** Allow yourself to take the time to slow down and look carefully.

**OBSERVE:** Observation is an active process, requiring both time and attention. It is here that the viewer begins to build up a mental catalogue of the building’s visual elements.

**SEE:** Looking is a physical act; seeing is a mental process of perception. Seeing involves recognizing or connecting the information the eyes take in with your previous knowledge and experiences in order to create meaning.

**DESCRIBE:** Describing can help you to identify and organize your thoughts about what you have seen. It may be helpful to think of describing as taking a careful inventory.

**ANALYZE:** Analysis uses the details you identified in your descriptions and applies reason to make meaning. Once details have been absorbed, you’re ready to analyze what you’re seeing through these four lenses:

- **FORM**
- **SYMBOLS**
- **IDEAS**
- **MEANING**

**INTERPRET:** Interpretation, the final step in the Art of Seeing Art™ process, combines our descriptions and analysis with our previous knowledge and any information we have about the artist and the work—or in this case, the architect and the building. Interpretation allows us to draw conclusions about what we see.
Architecture has a language. For classical architecture of the Greco-Roman world, which was the inspiration for the Toledo Museum of Art’s main building, the vocabulary of that language equates to the parts of the three major classical orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

An order is the style of a classical building as defined by the columns (made up of the base, shaft, and capital) and the entablature (the structure the columns support, made up of the architrave, frieze, and cornice), and sometimes on top of that, a triangular pediment.

The various parts of the classical orders relate to each other in terms of ratios and proportions—length to width, height to diameter, etc. The overall effect of classical architecture is one of symmetry and the harmony of the parts to the whole.

Although originally developed by the Greeks for temples, the orders were adapted by the Romans (and all others after them) to all types of buildings. The parts of the orders named in the diagram illustrated here are always used in buildings inspired by classical architecture—though sometimes in different combinations or with variation and invention, whether they were built in the ancient world, the Renaissance, or the 17th through the 21st centuries.
In postmodern architecture, sometimes the reference to the classical orders is a playful one.

The continuity of the classical language of architecture has informed the design and ornament of buildings in the Western world (and even beyond) for 2,500 years, whether the architect faithfully followed the orders, adapted them in new ways, or reacted against them.

The three major buildings on the Museum’s campus—the Main Building, the Center for the Visual Arts, and the Glass Pavilion—all owe varying debts to the grammar of antiquity. How well can you recognize and read this language in the buildings around you?
A. Main Museum Building
Edward B. Green of Green & Wicks, Buffalo, New York with Harry Wachter, Toledo, Ohio
1912, 1925, 1933

The core of the Museum building was constructed in 1912, with additions in 1925 (back half of the core) and 1933 (the East and West Wings, including the Peristyle Theater). The architects derived the essence of their design from the classical Ionic style of architecture, first perfected in ancient Greece.

The Ionic order is most easily identified by the capitals at the top of the fluted columns:

Ionic capitals have elegant, spiraled volutes shaped like ram horns.

Look for Ionic columns inside the Museum and along the façade (the principle face of a building).

Other features that reference ancient Greek or Roman architecture include:

**EXTERIOR**

Symmetrical design with a marble façade and colonnade (row of marble columns) and a copper cornice of lion heads and acanthus leaves along the roof line.

IDEAS

Our experience of a building or a work of art is influenced by culture and history, as well as by contemporary society and our own personal experiences. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the architectural style typically chosen for museums was inspired by the ancient Greco-Roman world. This classical style was meant to express the enduring importance of the collection contained within—to be a kind of temple to art.

- Think of other buildings you’ve seen that have a similar classical design. What are their functions?
- What does classical architecture communicate to you? Does it signify importance and reverence to you? Or does it carry other, perhaps less positive meanings?
1. LIBBEY COURT

Constructed of Indiana limestone, Libbey Court was the original entrance hall to the Museum when the building was primarily accessed from the terraces and steps of the Monroe Street façade. Resembling the interior of a Greek temple, the space is lined on the north and south walls with Ionic columns topped by an elegant entablature (see top of the facing page) carved with an egg and dart motif.

2. THE PERISTYLE THEATER

Designed by Edward B. Green, architect of the Museum’s main building, the state-of-the-art Peristyle Theater opened in January 1933, as an addition to the East Wing of the Museum building. Peristyle means “surrounded by a colonnade,” and the design is based on ancient Greek architectural forms, specifically open-air theaters.

3. THE CLASSIC COURT (GALLERY 2)

The Classic Court gallery of the Museum was added in 1933 as part of the last major phase of construction on the main building begun in 1912.

Roman house, which centered on an atrium—a courtyard open to the sky (here a skylight) and surrounded by columns. Unlike the Ionic order used in the rest of the building, the Classic Court employs the Doric order, identified by columns with simple circular capitals and fluted shafts with no bases.

4. GALLERY 26 (THE ROTUNDA)

This round gallery (rotunda) reflects Roman architecture with its doorways with rounded arches and its domed ceiling. The shallow dome features a skylight with a frame that echoes the coffered ceiling with central oculus (circular opening) of rotundas like the ancient Roman Pantheon.

- Why do you think the Greeks and Romans established such order and formality in their architecture? What does that tell us about these ancient cultures? Why do you think the Museum’s architects adopted this same formality?
B. The Center for the Visual Arts
Frank O. Gehry and Associates, Inc., Santa Monica, California
1992

Located at the east end of the Museum and home to the University of Toledo's department of art and the Museum's art reference library, the Center for the Visual Arts (CVA) was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry (born 1929).

Like the Museum’s classical building, the CVA is composed of a central block and wings, but transformed into a V-shaped plan. Gehry's CVA was designed to harmonize with the height, proportions, location, and masonry of the Museum building.

- What other similarities or differences do you see between the two buildings? Do you think they “work” together? Why or why not?

GREEN GLASS
In surprising contrast to the energetic forms and lead-coated copper of the rest of the building, the quieter entrance façade features simple architectural forms that frame a courtyard bounded by a three-story wall of tinted green glass. The color echoes that of the oxidized copper of the main Museum building’s cornice.

LEAD-COATED COPPER CLADDING
Now almost synonymous with Gehry’s architecture, the lead-coated copper that sheathes the CVA declares the architect’s innovative use of materials. The arrangement of alternating rectangles of metal sheets echoes that of the Museum building’s marble blocks.

FORM
The CVA’s complex play of shapes and volumes is generated by varying rooflines, some deeply-set windows, overhanging floors, forms that seem to rotate, and curved and straight walls. Gehry himself described it at the time as “the most sculptural work I’ve built.”

- The CVA houses art studios and classrooms. What do its formal qualities—like shapes, lines, proportion, texture, and color—communicate about the building’s function?
C. The Glass Pavilion
Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA (Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates), Tokyo, Japan 2006

The Glass Pavilion was designed by SANAA, a Tokyo-based firm that won the prestigious Pritzker Prize for architecture in 2010. SANAA is known for using architectural glass with extraordinary skill. The Glass Pavilion was built to house the Museum’s celebrated glass collection and to provide state-of-the-art glassmaking facilities.

Elegantly simple in appearance but complex in organization, the building uses no ornament and is forthright in the display of its high-tech modern materials. Essential features include a squarish, asymmetrical plan with rounded corners, low profile (it’s only 15 feet tall) capped by a flat roof, clean lines, and pure forms.

• How do you think the Glass Pavilion relates to the main Museum building that faces it across the street? What features of the buildings harmonize with or challenge each other?

CURVED GLASS
Many of the 360 glass panels that make up the exterior and most interior walls are curved. In fact, with few exceptions, traditional right-angled corners are absent, replaced by graceful arcs of quarter-circles or semicircles. What is the effect of curved walls and rounded corners versus 45-degree angles?

INNOVATIVE STRUCTURAL SYSTEM
Since the glass walls could not support any weight, the design team created an exquisite structural system to hold up the roof, which is unusually slim and light. In addition, because the glass walls wouldn’t hide the usual pipes and wires, the narrow roof hides an astonishing array of electrical, structural, and mechanical devices so precise and complex that those involved in its design and construction likened it to a Swiss watch.

SYMBOLS
The floor-to-ceiling transparent glass walls of the Glass Pavilion diminish any sense that the building is a solid mass, making it all but disappear—the space outside seeming entirely continuous with the space within.

• What does glass symbolize to you?
• What do you think the architects wanted to communicate about the building by making it so transparent, so low-profile, and so deceptively simple?
CAMPUS MAP

MAIN MUSEUM MAP

1. Libbey Court
2. The Peristyle Theater
3. Classic Court (Gallery 2)
4. The Rotunda (Gallery 26)