A brief history of art

Part 1

36,000 BC – 5500 BC: PREHISTORY		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Prehistoric men painted caves with figures representing animals, handprints and humans coloured with black and red ochre pigments. Examples of cave paintings are all over the world, in Europe the most visited are in France (Lascaux) and Spain (Altamira).	Primitive men carved images reproducing female bodies , icon of fertility and of the survival of the tribe. They used flint tools to carve fragments of limestone. The same type of little statues in marble and with more gentle and abstract forms were produced by the population of the Cyclades (group of islands in the Aegean Sea) about 5,000 years ago.	The Neolithic architecture reached Europe from Southwest Asia between 7000 BC and 5500BC. The Neolithic men were great builders , they used dry mud bricks for houses and villages, and stones for megalithic temples and tombs . Numerous tombs have survived in Ireland (Newgrange).

3,000 BC - 5th century AD: CLASSICAL ART

PAINTING

The ancient civilizations of Egyptians, Greeks and Romans developed their own style.

Egyptians painted walls and columns of temples and buildings and illustrated linen and papyrus manuscripts; favourite subjects were the afterlife and celebrations of gods and pharaohs.

Very little has survived from **Roman** and **Greek** painting, they both used to paint **frescoes** (painting on walls); examples of the ability of Greek painters can be found on the **pottery** while the most complete Roman frescoes are found in the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum. **Egyptians** developed a peculiar **bas relief style**: human faces are shown in profile but the rest of the body is seen from the front; bas relieves decorated **temples and palaces** with **war and religious scenes to celebrate pharaohs and gods**. They were skilful sculptors able to produce colossal works like the Sphinx (2500 BC) and impressive statues of sitting and standing gods and pharaohs like the front of Abu Simbel temple (1250 BC).

SCULPTURE

The basic feature of classical Greek Art (5th – 4th century BC) is **heroic realism**: sculptors represented perfect human bodies in movement or repose. Men and Gods were reproduced with forms and traits of exceptional beauty and perfection in dramatic and noble moments. The material used was white marble. Very few bronze statues have survived and some of them are known in Roman marble copies. The mid-5th century was the peak of Greek sculpture: sculptors were engaged to decorate public buildings like the Parthenon with statues that had to narrate stories of Gods and Men.

The **Romans** (1st – 6th century AD) developed the theme of **narrative sculpture** that had to **tell stories of victorious wars and battles and of heroic deeds by emperors and generals**. They also used to carve **portraits and statues depicting people's traits as real as possible and in triumphal and heroic postures**, unlike the Greeks, who used to idealise forms.

ARCHITECTURE

The **Egyptian** architects (3050 BC to 900 BC) planned **sacred spaces with enormous palaces and temples** dedicated to Gods outside cities and villages. They wanted to show the respect to the supernatural and the afterlife, **religion was the first interest of the members of the community**, priests represented the top social class after kings. Architects proved to have **high technical skills** in building **enormous obelisks and pyramids**.

Greek architecture. Religious and civic life were both important for the members of the Greek community. The most important form of religious architecture was the **temple**. It had a **rectangular plan surrounded by colonnades** and was built **to house the statue of a God**. As to civil life, the **agorà** (an open space surrounded by public buildings) was built for people to carry out political debates.

The **Romans** (850 BC to 476 AD) adapted architecture to their pragmatic and materialistic way of life. The forum, the Roman agora, became a **beautiful public square decorated with statues and buildings**. New **complex constructions** were built thanks to new achievements and developments in engineering like the **arch** (originally an Etruscan invention), the **vault** and the **dome**. The **invention of the concrete** facilitated the building of public structures like **aqueducts, baths and amphitheatres**.

9th - 12th century: ROMANESQUE and GOTHIC PAINTING **SCULPTURE** ARCHITECTURE In the Middle Ages **paintings and mosaics** Sculptors worked to decorate In the Middle Ages architects were used to decorate churches; Byzantine churches. They decorated the achieved great mastery in both artists depicted scenes and people from capitals of the pillars and the religious, civil and military Christianity on wooden panels (icons) and tympanums over the doors architecture. Churches were built in decorated the walls with multi-coloured with monsters and biblical the shape of Latin cross with thick bright mosaics. Gold was widely used to scenes. Vivid scenes with walls, low vaults, a central nave, represent the presence of God or a social numerous characters from the low side aisles and round arches status. Another form of decoration was the Last Judgement were carved for windows and doors. People fresco, but just a few of them have survived. on the church door. Particular lived in or close to castles, fortified Ireland and Britain developed a distinctive attention was paid to the details structures surrounded by walls and style derived from the ancient Celtic metal of monsters and devils to show towers made to house the local ruler. the forces of evil. works: geometric patterns and stylised animals were used by monks to decorate pages and initials of religious manuscripts Much of Gothic sculpture (12th The Gothic style (1200-1400) started (usually Gospel books). - 15th century) is associated to in Italy and spread throughout Europe, Main artists: Giotto, Cimabue. the great European cathedrals cathedrals are the buildings that best whose exterior is finely embody the style. Thinner walls with decorated with ornaments, flying buttresses supported walls in statues and pinnacles. Gothic carrying the loads of the roof. Pointed sculptures are tall and thin, arches, pinnacles and sharply pointed they are located between **spires** gave **verticality** to the structure the pillars to each side of the which had the basic function to be a entrance doors and reflect monumental expression of God whose the vertical lines of the new light is filtered through the **stained** style. They represent **religious** glass of the windows and the central scenes from the Bible or the rose. The scarcity of light had to Gospels and saints' life. represent the mystery and the power of God.

15 th -	15 th - 17 th century: RENAISSANCE		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE	
In Italy Renaissance represented a turning point in painterly practices thanks to the study of anatomy, light and perspective and the interest in the individuals . The subjects of painting look realistic well-proportioned and harmonious while medieval art looked flat, rigid and inexpressive. Subjects vary from classical themes, portraits and important events , to contemporary life , allegories and religious festivals . Wealthy and outstanding families commissioned decorations of their homes and government buildings , patrons were often included in the scenes. The Church commissioned large scale cycles of frescoes and altarpieces painted on wooden panels. In northern Europe Renaissance style is an evolution of the Middle Ages manuscripts, while in Italy artists promoted a revival of ancient classical art. <i>Main artists of the Italian Renaissance</i> : Masaccio, S. Martini, P. Uccello, D. Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, S. Botticelli, Raphael, Titian, A. Mantegna, the Carracci family. <i>Artists of the Northern Renaissance</i> : A. Dürer and H. Holbein (Germany), H. Bosch and P. Bruegel the Elder (the Netherlands)	Artists rediscovered of the realistic standing human figure as sculpted in Greece and Rome. The sculptor Donatello is considered the founder of this new trend, Michelangelo its universally renowned master. They developed classical nude sculpture adding human expressivity to traits because human beings and their feelings were the focus of renaissance art.	Masters of Renaissance architecture were Brunelleschi, Bramante and Palladio, who started a new style combining classical elements and the Gothic relationship between light and dark . They studied perspective and developed the Romanesque and Gothic vaults and arches to build domes and churches whose spaces were built to communicate joy and glory . Michelangelo is generally considered a Mannerist (late Baroque) because he worked through the Renaissance to Baroque; his masterpiece, the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, represents an evolution of Renaissance churches with Baroque details at the interior. The Renaissance in France, Germany and England preserved the features of Gothic architecture; in France Renaissance castles were built in the Loire valley, in England Inigo Jones, who studied in Italy, planned revolutionary symmetrical buildings with clear lines (Banqueting Hall at Whitehall).	

17 th century – mid 18 th century: BAROQUE and ROCOCO		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Baroque painting celebrated the Catholic revival with the help of intense light and dark shadows that represent the juxtaposition of God and men and the presence of God on the earth . Paintings had to evoke deep emotions of faith in the viewer through the vision of dramatic and emotional religious scenes inspired by the Holy Scriptures . <i>Main artists</i> : Caravaggio and G. Bernini (Italy), Rubens, Vermeer and Rembrandt (the Netherlands), Velázquez (Spain)	Master of the Baroque was Lorenzo Bernini whose name is linked to the embellishment of Rome at the times of the Counter-Reformation. Sculpture had to give dignity to Catholicism , to show the power of faith through impressive statues and structures with richly decorated details . God is often represented by means of sculpted golden rays enforced by the reflection of real rays of light. Sculptures represented scenes and allegories with movements and postures like a theatrical performance.	It is usually seen as a second phase of Renaissance; the oval became its predominant shape . Churches and palaces were richly decorated with extravagant ornaments, statues and golden decorations on walls and in gardens. The style best represented the wealthy European aristocracy of those times. The most important architect in Italy was Lorenzo Bernini who worked for the Pope in Rome. In England the most influential architect was Christopher Wren who was in charge of the reconstruction of London after the Fire (1666), he was master of a more severe and essential Baroque style with fewer decorations.
Rococo is a light, frivolous development of the Baroque style. It was focused on the French aristocracy that commissioned decorative paintings for the interiors of their palaces ; painters concentrated on portraits of frivolous people in contemporary or mythological settings . In England William Hogarth, developed a peculiar style satirizing the aristocracy seen in improper and sometimes ridiculous postures. <i>Main Baroque artists</i> : Caravaggio and G. Bernini (Italy), Rubens, Vermeer and Rembrandt (the Netherlands), Velázquez (Spain). <i>Main Rococo artists</i> : Watteau, Boucher and Fragonard (France), Tiepolo (Italy), Gainsborough and Reynolds (England).		The late phase of Baroque, called Rococo , represented a frivolous evolution of baroque , decorations became more elegant with shell- shapes , leaves and light geometric patterns .

mid 18th century – mid 19th century: NEOCLASSICISM		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Rococo style was followed by Neoclassicism, painters referred to ancient Greek and Roman art , with attention to proportions and order . It coincided with the Age of Enlightenment and of the American and French revolutions. <i>Main artists</i> : Jacques-Louis David (France), Jean Auguste Ingres (France), Anton Raphael Mengs (Germany), Andrea Appiani and Vincenzo Camuccini (Italy).	Classical models became source of inspiration again, Greek themes pervaded sculpture and painting. Rome is the centre of neoclassical sculpture that reached its peak in the works of Antonio Canova who produced finely modelled nudes with sinuous bodies , partly covered by light clothes. Soft bodies and smooth skin convey a general idea of elegance enclosed in perfect proportions .	A keen interest in the Renaissance and Palladio's work helped the return to the simplicity and the severe lines of Greek, Roman and Gothic buildings . Architects widely used columns, arcades and terraces . In England John Nash designed Buckingham Palace and the area around Regent street in London, early architects of the United States were influenced by Neoclassicism in their search for a new national architecture.

19th century: ROMANTICISM, IMPRESSIONISM and POST-IMPRESSIONISM

PAINTING

SCULPTURE

Romanticism reacted to the severe order of Neoclassicism by drawing attention on the supremacy of nature above mankind. Artists saw life in a doubtful, sorrowful and pessimistic light, dominated by the power of Nature. Favourite themes were landscapes with ruins of ancient temples and buildings, shipwrecks, violent natural events like eruptions and storms.

Main artists: Constable and Turner (Great Britain), Delacroix (France) Goya (Spain), Friedrich (Germany), Corot (France).

The Pre-Raphaelite movement

(Britain) emulated the art of late Middle-Age and early Renaissance. It was characterised by minute details and bright colours and by subjects of a noble, religious and moral nature. *Main artists*: Millais, Rossetti, Morris.

Impressionists introduced the so called **"en plein air" painting**, artists worked outdoors concentrated on the changeable conditions of light according to time and weather. Dominating themes were **contemporary people** and **natural landscapes**.

Main artists: Monet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley (France).

Symbolism and Aestheticism moved away from Academic Art. Symbolism (France) expressed hidden truth behind visible appearance. Aestheticism (Britain) focused on beauty.

Main artists: Moreau, Whistler.

Post-Impressionists were forerunners of 20th century art with the **personal symbolism** of Gauguin, the paint application and the use of **bright and neat colours** of Van Gogh, and the **interpretation of reality through abstract natural forms** of Paul Cézanne.

Other artists: Georges Seurat and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (France).

It was an age of **crisis and frustration** for sculptors: they needed commissions to work because of the high costs of materials and because it was quite **impossible to reproduce nature and visions**, the prevailing themes of **Romanticism** in art. The most outstanding sculptor of the time was August Rodin, a master in many materials including bronze, stone and wood. He followed and developed the Italian sculpture tradition of Renaissance and Baroque and he interpreted **classical subjects in a modern light**.

Other artists: G. Duprè and M. Rosso (Italy), V. Vela (Switzerland).

ARCHITECTURE

The Arts and Crafts movement was an international trend in the decorative and fine arts that developed in Britain and then across the British Empire and to the rest of Europe and America between about 1880 and 1920. It focused on traditional craftsmanship, and often used medieval, romantic, or folk styles of decoration. It supported economic and social reform and was anti-industrial in its orientation. It had a strong influence on the arts and architecture in Europe until it was displaced by Modernism in the 1930s, though its influence continued among architects, designers, and town planners.



19 th century: RUMAN LICISM, IMPRESSIONISM and POST-IMPRESSIONISM		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Art Nouveau in painting was characterised by highly stylised, curving, asymmetrical shapes, organic forms and decorative patterns. Materials were modern and new: glass, iron, silver and colours were soft. <i>Artists</i> : Gustav Klimt (Austria), Alphonse Mucha (Czech Republic).		In the late 19 th century, Architecture was dominated by Art Nouveau , a generic term describing new expressions of architecture and decorative arts. Historical models were abandoned to make way to free, creative forms inspired by nature. Each European country developed its own style: Art Nouveau in France, Sezession in Austria, Jugendstijl in Germany, Modernismo in Spain, and Liberty in Italy were simply different terms referring to the same innovative attitude. <i>Architects</i> : Antoni Gaudì and Louis Domènech I Montaner (Spain); Otto Wagner (Austria); Charles Rennie MacKintosh (Great Britain); Pietro Fenoglio (Italy). The late 19 th century saw important changes in architecture because new materials were introduced like prefabricated cast-iron and wrought- iron.

19th century: ROMANTICISM, IMPRESSIONISM and POST-IMPRESSIONISM

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20 th century: AVANT-GARDES, MODERNISM and POST-MODERNISM		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
In the 20 th century, a variety of avant- garde movements focused on different themes.	Sculpture and art in general became experimental. Costantin Brancusi (1876-1957), a Romanian sculptor, painter and photographer made his career in France. He is considered a pioneer of modernism, one of the most influential sculptors of the 20 th century and is called the patriarch of modern sculpture.	Bauhaus (1919-1933) was a school of art, craft and design founded by the German architect Walter Gropius. In Dessau, Gropius designed a revolutionary new building that created an ideal working environmen for students and teachers. The building became one of the most famous and influential of the Modern movement. <i>Other artists</i> : Meyer, Mies Van der Rohe
Expressionism (1890-1934) originated in Germany and focused on the distortion of reality to express emotions and ideas but was not the product of one unified group. Norwegian artist Edvard Munch helped inspire expressionism with his painting <i>The Scream</i> (1893). <i>Other artists</i> : Kandinsky, Klee.		
 Fauvism (1900-1920) focused on wild multi-coloured figures influenced by primitive art. it had a strong influence on art and design of the 20th century. Main artist: Matisse. Cubism (1907-1914) focused on the representation of reality through three solids: cube, sphere and cone. It was created by Pablo Picasso with his first work <i>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</i> and George Braque in France. Main artist: Léger. 	Cubist and Dada sculptors (1900- 1925) promoted free abstract expression of space and movement and experimentation of unusual materials; for example, Dada artists turned found objects into works of art called "readymades". <i>Main artist</i> : Man Ray (US).	Modern architecture (1900-1970s) focused on functionality: buildings were designed with linear forms according to their purpose. Skyscraper architecture was first seen in New York, but the genre was mastered by the Chicago School of Architecture. Louis Sullivan formulated the principle "Form follows function" which became basic in 20 th century architecture.
Futurism (1909-1916), the only 20 th century avant-garde movement in Italy, celebrated advanced technology and urban modernity. <i>Main artists</i> : Boccioni, Balla, Severini, Carrà.		By 1920s, the most important figures in modern architecture had established their reputation. The Big Four are commonly recognized as Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright.
Suprematism (1915-1935) derived from Cubism and Futurism and appeared in Russia developed by the painter Kasimir Malevich. Pictorial elements are reduced to simple geometric shapes and blocks of plain colours.		Organic architecture (1908-1970) , developed by the US architect Frank Lloyd Wright, designed structures in harmony with man and the environment . The design philosophy of the American architect, who worked for a time in Japan, has been kept alive by generations of Japanese
Dadaism (1916-1922) gave a new significance to ordinary objects . it began in Switzerland in 1916 as an "anti-art" movement protesting against the brutalities of the First World War. <i>Main artist:</i> Duchamp.		architects. <i>Other artists</i> : Oscar Niemeyer, Alvar Aalto, Eero Saarinen, Vittorio Giorgini.

	ry: AVANT-GARDES, MODERNISM and Po	
PAINTING Metaphysical painting (1917-1920s) was an Italian art movement founded by Giorgio De Chirico. He painted bizarre cityscapes with strong perspective, dramatic shadows and mysterious figures.	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Neo-Plasticism (1917-1931) was a pioneering style in abstract painting, dominated by geometric shapes, flat colours. and interlocking planes. Main artist: Mondrian.		
With the Nazi power in Germany, the climate towards modern and abstract painting became degenerated and unbearable, artists were subjected to sanctions and some of them migrated to New York. After the Second World War New York was a world centre of art-making. Artists began to practice new ways of painting based on spontaneity and absolute freedom in choosing materials, subjects and colours . New movements gained prominence and some of them are:		In 1932, the MoMA exhibition, the International exhibition of Modern Architecture consolidated the different trends in architecture into th International Style.
Surrealism (1924-1950s) was founded in Paris by the poet and critic André Breton in 1924, with the publication of The Surrealist Manifesto. Surrealism aimed to free conscious thoughts from reason and logic. <i>Main artists</i> : Dalì, Mirò, Ernst, Man Ray.	In the 1920s Surrealist sculpture rose from a desire to concretise what lies beneath. The movement began as artists began to dig deeper underneath everyday reality . Surrealists mixed geometric abstraction and classical realism . <i>Main artists</i> : Max Ernst (France), Joan Mirò (Spain).	
Abstract Expressionism (1943- 1970) emerged in the USA in the late 1940s and theorised "free abstraction". <i>Main artist</i> : Pollock. A development of Abstract Expressionism was Colour Field Painting (1947-1960s) that was essentially the covering of large canvasses with a single or few colours. <i>Main artist</i> : Rothko.	From 1950s to 1970s, sculpture was mainly influenced by Brancusi. Inspired by Brancusi, Henry Moore used positive space to create a negative one (a hole) within the material. Alberto Giacometti reflected philosophical preoccupations of the time and is famous for his emaciated figures, and Alexander Calder was well-known for his 'mobiles', kinetic sculptures of falt metal pieces connected by a wire that moved delicately in the air.	
Pop Art (1956-1960s) was the antithesis of Abstract Expressionism. It began in the mid-1950s in the USA and reached its peak in the 1960s. Pop Art celebrated consumerism with all the symbols of the mass production. <i>Main artists</i> : Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg.	Pop Art (1950-1970) was a major post-war movement which exhibited mass-production merchandise with irony and fun. <i>Main artists</i> : Warhol and Oldenburg.	



20 th century: AVANT-GARDES, MODERNISM and POST-MODERNISM PAINTINC		
PAINTING	SCULPTURE	ARCHITECTURE
Minimalism (1960s) followed the idea that art should be made of modern, industrial materials. Minimalist artists painted abstract, geometrical, and clean-lined figures. Main artists: Mangold, Stella, Youngerman.		
Conceptualism (1970s-1980s) . This umbrella term describes several different types of art including Performance Art, installations, Video art, Land art. Conceptual art is simply a way in which artists communicate their ideas. It has remained hugely influential since then. <i>Main artists</i> : Beuys, Broodthaers, Smithson, Christo.	By 1970, contemporary sculpture was becoming more and more experimental. It often crossed over into other forms of art such as <i>installation, assemblage art</i> and <i>theatre.</i> <i>Main artists</i> : Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst. <i>Artists of the Arte Povera</i> : Kounellis, Merz, Pistoletto, Boetti.	Contemporary architecture (1970-today). Since 1970s, architectural styles have become more fractured and, among contemporary architects, there are post-modernists , neomodernists , deconstructivists , contextualists , expressionists and others . The term "Contemporary Architectures" refers to the use of new materials and technologies, forms and architectura languages that are not rooted in pas tradition. <i>Main artists</i> : Gehry, Foster, Piano, Calatrava, Libeskind, Hadid, Koolhass.
Neo-Expressionism (1970s-1990s) was a reaction against Minimalism and Conceptual Art. It became the dominant style of avant-garde art in America, Germany and Italy. Artists returned to figurative painting including elements of autobiography and story-telling elements. Main artists: Clemente, Paladino, Haring, Basquiat.		
Hyperrealism (1990s-early 21 st century) aims at exceptionally precise paintings, so the final works appear as sharply realistic , as photographs . Most artists use mechanical methods to create their works such as photographic or multi- media projections onto canvasses to be traced around. <i>Main artists</i> : Peterson, Estes, Flack, Close.		21st century. Recently, new architecture sectors respectful of nature as bioclimatic architecture , sustainable architecture , alternativ architecture , and ecological architecture have brought new specialised contributions. These new "natural" tendencies find their applications in "green buildings" and have their roots in Organic Architecture, which can be defined the "mother" of all the architectures that tend to the barmony between
New media art (1970s-early 21 st century) exploites the new technological media and includes internet, video and computer animations, photography, smartphones and computer-related materials. Main artists: Heath, Bunting.		that tend to the harmony between man, technology and nature .



Part 2

How to describe a picture/sculpture

Description of a painting/sculpture

- Title
- Name of the artist
- When it was made
- Where it is housed
- General description of the scene/subject
- Background information about people, places, events
- Detailed description of people and objects represented, their position, clothes, posture, etc.
- Technique/Materials
- Artist's communicative intent
- Impression on the viewer

Painting

- **Types of painting**: *picture*, *landscape painting*, *portrait*...
- Position on the canvas: at the top, in the right/left corner, at the bottom, in the background, in the middle ground, in the foreground, in the upper/lower/right/left/central part, behind, next to...
- Materials and light: oil on canvas, watercolour, light/dark/loud colours, artificial/subdued light, daylight...

Description

- I/you can see...
- There is/are...
- It describes/shows...
- It is an image of...
- The scene is shown from a distance/a bird's eye view...
- The artist mainly uses...
- The event/people painted/sculpted/carved here is/are...
- The highlighted elements are...
- The subject/technique is typical of that age...
- The surface is smooth/polished/rough...

Intention

- The painter uses... to express...
- It is evident that the artist wants to point out/ show/criticise...
- The position of the characters symbolises...
- The characters exemplify...

Sculpture

- **Types of sculptures**: free-standing sculpture, bas-relief, full length 3D portrait of a person, bust, equestrian statue...
- Description: it is on a base, reclining figure, sense of dynamic/static equilibrium, the canons of proportion are/are not observed, the figures are jointed/separated/sitting on...
- Dimensions/Materials of a sculpture: small, huge, massive, light, bronze, marble, gypsum, stone, wood, clay...

Impression

- The painting/sculpture conveys a feeling of happiness/sadness/melancholy...
- The attention is focused on...
- The atmosphere is peaceful/troubled/quiet...
- The eyes seem to follow the viewer...
- The people in the picture seem alive/threedimensional...
- The picture conveys a message of...
- To me it seems that...

Main structures

- can
- present simple
- present continuous
- there is/are
- passive form



Part 3

General terms

Pyramid



Greek theatre



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Roman amphitheatre



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Greek temple



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Gothic cathedral



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Mosque





Office building



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