



Alexander of Antioch,  
*Venus de Milo*,  
130-100 BCE,  
Louvre

# GREEK ART & ARCHITECTURE

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- Today, I give a brief introduction to the **thousand years** of art and architecture of ancient Greece. It has **inspired and influenced Western civilisations for two thousand years** and it raises the question of how did it develop in that place at that time? To answer is not clear but we get some idea by looking at the society in more detail.

## NOTES

- **Introduction (5-10 minutes):**
  - Briefly introduce the geographical and historical context of Ancient Greece, highlighting periods like Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic.
  - Briefly mention the key materials used in Greek art and architecture (marble, terracotta, limestone).
  - Briefly touch upon the major themes and functions of Greek art and architecture (religion, myth, civic expression, everyday life).
- **Early Greek Art and Architecture 1200-800 BCE (10-15 minutes):**
  - Discuss the Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations, their artistic achievements, and their influence on later Greek art.
  - Briefly touch upon the development of geometric pottery and early architectural forms like megarons.
- **Archaic Period 800-480 BCE (10-15 minutes):**
  - Discuss the emergence of the kouros and kore statues, their characteristics, and their role in representing ideals of beauty and athleticism.

- During the Archaic period (700-480 BCE), early Greek sculpture featured simplified, forward-facing figures like the kouros (nude male youth) and kore (clothed female figure). These were influenced by Egyptian and Near Eastern art.
- Briefly mention the development of black-figure pottery and its storytelling motifs.
- Briefly touch upon early temple architecture, like the Temple of Hera at Olympia, and its evolution towards the Doric order.

- **Classical Period (15-20 minutes):**

- Focus on the golden age of Athens under Pericles and its artistic splendour.
- Discuss the iconic Athenian Acropolis, including the Parthenon, Propylaea, and Erechtheion, highlighting their architectural features and sculptural decorations.
- Briefly mention the development of red-figure pottery and its refined artistry.
- Discuss the evolution of sculpture towards a more naturalistic and expressive style, focusing on works like Myron's Discobolus and Polykleitos' Doryphoros. In the Classical period (480-323 BCE), sculptors like Kritios, Polyclitus, and Praxiteles developed more realistic, idealized human forms with accurate proportions and a sense of movement and emotion. The contrapposto stance with weight shifted to one hip became a hallmark.

- **Hellenistic Period (10-15 minutes):**

- Briefly mention the political changes and the rise of new centers like Alexandria.
- Hellenistic sculpture (323-31 BCE) became even more dynamic, with figures shown in action, emotion, and dramatic poses. Sculptors also depicted non-idealized subjects like the elderly and dying.
- Briefly touch upon Hellenistic innovations in urban planning and architecture, like the Royal Stoa in Pergamon.

- **Conclusion (5-10 minutes):**

- Briefly summarize the key features and contributions of Greek art and architecture.

- Briefly mention the legacy of Greek art on later artistic movements, like Roman art and the Renaissance.
- Offer some closing remarks and encourage questions or discussion.

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- Although civilisations like ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia emerged earlier, the Minoan culture with its major centre at Knossos on Crete is considered one of the first major advanced societies to develop within Europe itself.
- The Minoans were conquered by the Mycenaean civilisation **about 1400 BCE**. Later following the **collapse** of the Mycenaean civilisation there was a period of political and cultural decline called the **Dark Ages** from c. 1200 to 800 BCE.
- The mountainous landscape created semi-isolated areas that developed into city states such as **Athens, Sparta, and Corinth** while the Mediterranean connected Greece to other civilisations and was a trade route that encouraged artistic and cultural exchange.
- The first period of Greek art known as the **Archaic Period** (c. 800-480 BCE) marked by the growth of these city-states, the development of the Greek alphabet, and the rise of epic poetry like **Homer's Iliad and Odyssey**.
- This was followed by the high point of their art, the Classical Period centred on Athens. This was the time of **Pericles** and **Alexander the Great**. Athens was a democracy although women and slaves could not vote. There was an emphasis on **free speech, debate, and meritocracy**, and it could be that this fostered an environment conducive to **innovation and creativity**.
- Physical fitness was important in ancient Greeks and the **Olympic Games** were founded in 776 BCE. Greeks from all the city states and from across the Mediterranean would gather every **four years even when they were at war**, a truce was declared. Olympia was a revered religious, athletic, and cultural center that was deeply woven into the fabric of ancient Greek society and identity and was the sanctuary for the Greek god Zeus, the king of the gods.



The gods were thought to reside on Mount Olympus.

- Another important site for all Greeks was **Delphi**, the site of the most important oracle in the ancient Greek world - the **Oracle of Delphi**, which was consulted on important decisions by individuals, city-states, and even foreign powers. The oracle was seen as the **mouthpiece of the god Apollo**. It was considered the centre of the world and was independent of any single Greek city state. The **Pythian Games** were held there every four years, second only to the Olympic Games.

## NOTES

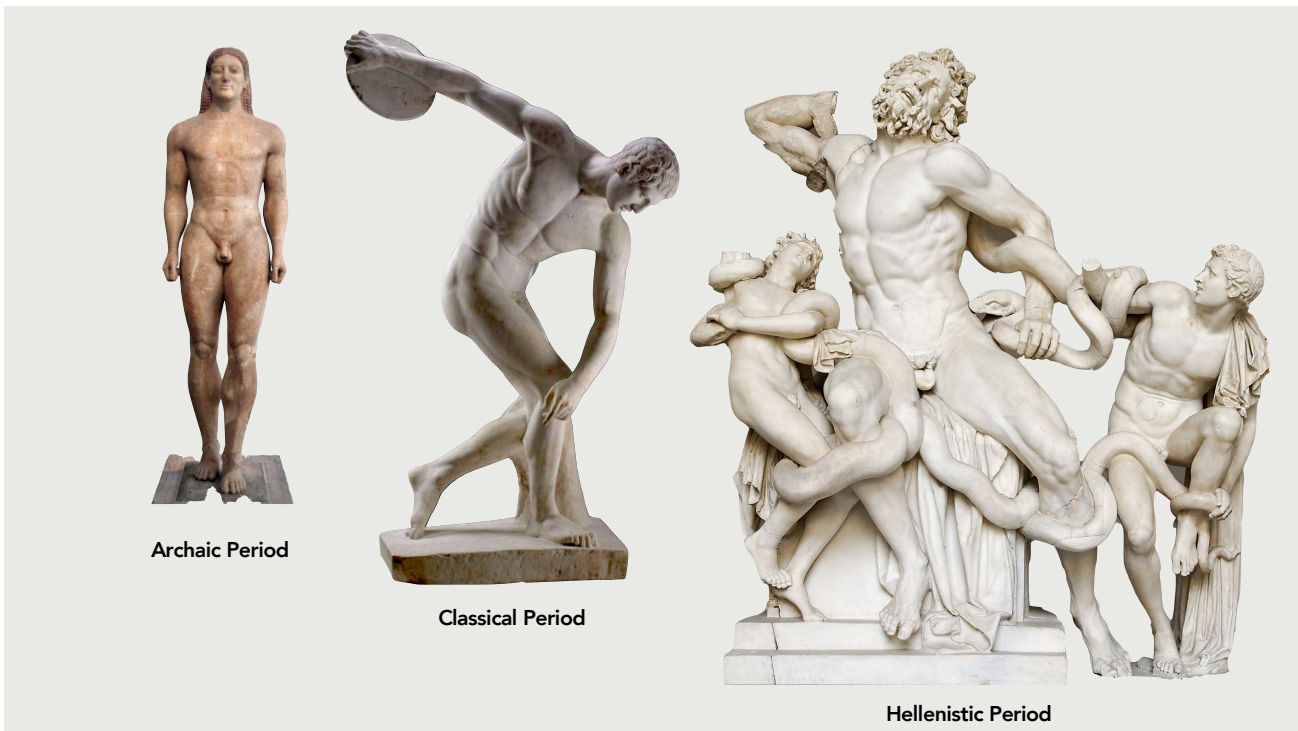
- Athens's status as an **imperial power** and **commercial hub** attracted skilled immigrants from across the Greek world, facilitating the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Athenian philosophers such as **Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle** were three of the greatest philosophers who have ever lived and they sought to understand the fundamental principles of the universe and human nature through rational inquiry.
- The availability of **resources and wealth** from Athens' empire allowed for significant patronage of the arts, philosophy, and architecture. Architectural achievements such as the **Parthenon** demonstrate their mastery of proportion, harmony, and symmetry.
- The Minoan civilisation was a bronze age culture based on Crete from c. 3100 to c. 1100 BCE. Often called the first civilisation of Europe. After c. 1450 BC, they came under the cultural and perhaps political domination of the **mainland Mycenaean Greeks**, forming a hybrid culture which lasted until around 1100 BC.
- The **First Persian Empire** was the ancient Iranian empire founded by Cyrus the Great in **550 BCE**. Based in modern-day Iran, it was the largest empire by that point in history. Also known as the Achaemenid Empire. In 490 BC the Persian forces under **Darius I were defeated by the Athenians at the Battle of Marathon**. **Darius's son Xerxes** launched a massive invasion in **480 BCE** but was delayed by a small Greek force at **Thermopylae**. Xerxes won a major sea battle and sacked Athens but the Greeks won a decisive sea victory at the **Battle of Salamis**. The Persian land army was then destroyed at the **Battle of Plataea** (pronounced 'plat-e-ah') leading to the Persian losing all their territories in Europe and Xerxes being assassinated. In **330 BCE**, the Achaemenid Empire was **conquered by Alexander the Great**, an ardent admirer of Cyrus.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) Persian Empire



- I mentioned three periods of ancient Greek art represented here by three sculptures.
  - During the **Archaic** Period sculpture was lifelike but **formal and rigid**.
  - (CLICK) During the Classical Period it became **naturalistic**, incorporating **fluid movement and action**. The **Classical Period** was from c. 480 to 323 BCE, a 157 year **golden age** of political stability, the flourishing of the arts and intellectual activities, and the rise of **democratic Athens under Pericles** (495-429 BCE). Key events include the **Persian** (499-449 BCE) and **Peloponnesian Wars** (431-404 BCE) between Athens and Sparta and won by Sparta with the help of the Persians. **Alexander the Great** (356-323 BCE) the son of King Philip II of Macedon and tutored by Aristotle. He conquered the Persian Empire and created a vast Macedonian Empire stretching all the way to India, before dying aged 32.
  - (CLICK) His death is seen as the beginning of the decline of ancient Greece and the beginning of the **Hellenistic** Period when art became **expressive of a full range of human emotions**. Alexander the Great's conquests resulted in **Greek culture spreading** throughout the Mediterranean and beyond and the Hellenistic Period saw innovations in science, philosophy, and art, but also political instability and the **rise of Rome**. Rome assisted Greece fighting the Kingdom of Macedonia and through alliances gradually absorbed Greece over several centuries culminating in the **Achaean**

(pronounced 'uk-KEE-un') **War in 146 BCE**, the defeat of the Achaean League and the **sack of Corinth**. From that point on Greece was **part of the Roman Empire**. However, culturally Greece continued to influence Rome leading to a synthesis known as the Greco-Roman civilisation.

- This development from formal rigidity, through a high point of naturalism to a degenerate form of exaggerated emotions is often seen as an inevitable development of art. This is simplistic and if we look at other civilisations by no means inevitable.

## **NOTES**

- During the Archaic period (700-480 BCE), early Greek sculpture featured simplified, forward-facing figures like the kouros (nude male youth) and kore (clothed female figure). These were influenced by Egyptian and Near Eastern art.
- The Classical period (480-323 BCE) is marked by the building of the Parthenon and its greatest sculptors **Phidias** (the 'greatest' and his statue of Athena in the Parthenon), **Polykleitos** (and his 'canon' of ideal human proportions and Doryphorus), **Praxiteles** (and his more sensual style, Aphrodite of Knidos), and **Lysippos** (sculptor to Alexander the Great and his Apoxyomenos). They all developed more a realistic, idealised human forms with accurate proportions and a sense of movement and emotion. The contrapposto stance with weight shifted to one hip became a hallmark. Praxiteles and Lysippos was transitional to the Hellenistic Period.
- Hellenistic sculpture (323-31 BCE) became even more dynamic, with figures shown in action, emotion, and dramatic poses. Sculptors also depicted non-idealized subjects like the elderly and dying. Agesander, Athenodorus, Polydorus (the three sculptors responsible for creating the **Laocoön and His Sons**, one of the most renowned works of Hellenistic art), Lysippos, Praxiteles, and Euphranor - are consistently cited as among the most renowned and influential artists of the Greek Hellenistic period

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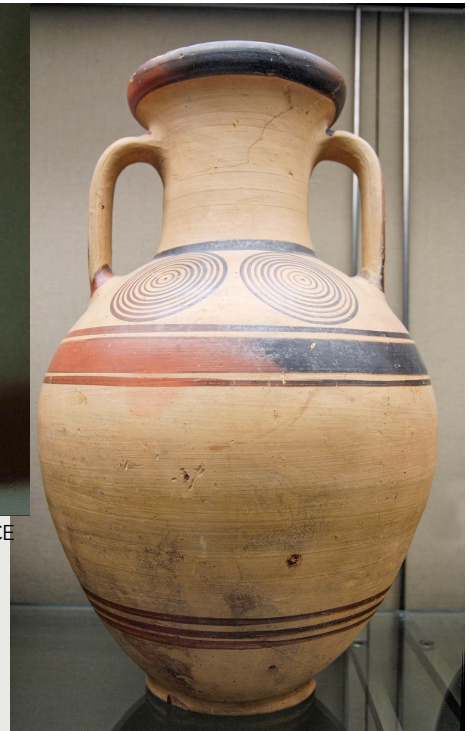
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Minoan New Palace Period, 1500-1450 BCE



Proto-Geometric amphora c. 975–950 BCE.  
Athens, now British Museum

Minoan New Palace Period, 1500-1450 BCE

Proto-Geometric amphora c. 975–950 BCE. Athens, now British Museum

- That was a quick overview now let us start at the beginning and look at the art more closely.
- The **Minoan civilization** preceded the Greeks and is regarded as the **first major civilization in Europe**. It was based on the island of **Crete** and developed from an earlier Neolithic culture around 3100 BCE. The most famous Minoan palaces are at **Knossos and Phaistos** ('fahy-stuhs').
- This is an example of a Minoan vessel decorated with a naturalistic image of an octopus. The octopus was a common theme as it represented their worship of the sea. It is shown naturalistically and was used on a wide variety of objects including ceramic coffin chests.
- After about 1400 BCE the Minoans were conquered by the Mycenaeans and formed a hybrid culture that lasted until 1100 BCE.
- The sudden collapse of both civilisations around 1100 BCE is called the **Late Bronze Age collapse** and there appears to be no single cause. Various factors have been put forward such as **climate change and famine, invasion by a mysterious "Sea People" or the Dorians** (from north and north west Greece and Macedonia), possible volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and a tidal wave and various economic and social factors.
- Whatever the reason this period is known as the **Dark Ages** with respect to Greek art.

- (CLICK) During this period pottery was **dominated by abstract decoration** and **representational art is largely absent** although it was fairly common during the Minoan and Mycenaean periods.
- This **Protogeometric style** (or Proto-Geometric) was led by Athens and produced between roughly 1050 and 900 BCE, in the **first period of the Greek Dark Ages**.

## **NOTES**

- **Early Greek Art and Architecture 1200-800 BCE (10-15 minutes):**
- **Dark Ages** (c. 1200-800 BCE): Following the Mycenaean civilisation's collapse, Greece entered a period of political and cultural decline.
- Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations, their artistic achievements, and their influence on later Greek art.

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Dipylon Master (fl. c. 760-735 BCE), Dipylon amphora, Attic vase-painting, height 160 cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens

Hirschfeld Painter (fl. 8th century BCE), *Hirschfeld Krater*, Attic late geometric krater depicting ekphora, the act of carrying a body to its grave, c. 750-735 BCE, National Archaeological Museum of Athens

Dipylon Master (fl. c. 760-735 BCE), Dipylon amphora, Attic vase-painting, height 160 cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens

Hirschfeld Painter (fl. 8th century BCE), *Hirschfeld Krater*, Attic late geometric krater depicting ekphora, the act of carrying a body to its grave, c. 750-735 BCE, National Archaeological Museum of Athens

- This is the Geometric style that began about 900 BCE and represents the last Mycenaean-Greek art form before the influx of foreign ideas about 800 BCE. Athens was its centre, and the growing moneyed population of new Greek cities was its market.
- The **Geometric period** from ca. 900 to 700 BCE laid the foundation of Greek civilisation. It was a time of **dramatic transformation** that led to the creation of the **Greek city-state** (polis), the **Greek alphabet**, and new opportunities for **trade and colonisation**. Cities were founded along the coast of Asia Minor, in southern Italy, and in Sicily.
- Note the vessels are decorated with stylised figures and animals. The object on the left is an amphora, a container with a narrow neck and two handles. The object on the right is a krater which was used to mix wine and water.
- With the development of the Greek city-states came the construction of **large temples** and sanctuaries dedicated to **patron deities**, which signalled the **rise of state religion**. Each polis identified with its **own legendary hero**.
- The eighth century BCE was the time of **Homer**, whose epic poems describe the **Greek campaign against Troy (the Iliad)** and the subsequent adventures of **Odysseus on his return to Ithaca (the Odyssey)**. We do not know whether

Homer was a real person or the name that became associated with the origin of a long oral tradition.

## **NOTES**

- A newly emerging aristocracy distinguished itself with material wealth and through references to the Homeric past. Their graves were furnished with metal objects, innately precious by the scarcity of copper, tin, and gold deposits in Greece. [1]
- Wine was diluted with water to reduce its strength as Greek wine was often around 16% alcohol, this helped promote moderation and self-control, it improved the flavour and other ingredients were sometimes added such as honey, herbs and even seawater and finally it helped preserve the wine when transported over long distances.

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François Vase, black-figure, mid-6th century BCE, 66cm, Florence, Museo Archeologico

François Vase, black-figure krater, c. 570-565 BCE , 66cm, Florence, Museo Archeologico. Signed in two places: "Ergotimos made me; Kleitias painted me", two celebrated craftsmen in Attic pottery and frequent collaborators.

- This krater is a milestone in the development of Greek pottery with its detailed craftsmanship and the richness of its narrative imagery.
- It is what is known as black figure produced by painting the figures on the pots using a form of liquid clay containing iron oxide that turned black on firing. It was invented in Corinth around 700 BCE but was quickly adopted by the Athenians.
- It was discovered in an Etruscan tomb at Chiusi (pronounced '**choosy**'), Italy, in 1844 and named after Alessandro François, the archaeologist who found it.
- The scenes depicted many different mythological stories such as, on the left, the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs at the wedding of the Lapith King Peirithoos. On the right the **Calydonian Boar Hunt** at the top and the **Patroclus' Funeral Games** (pronounced 'puh-TRO-kluhs', in Greek mythology Patroclus was a friend of Achilles and hero of the Trojan War) below.
- In 1900, a custodian of the museum was quarrelling with a coworker and he hurled a wooden stool against the protective glass casing. The vase broke into more than 600 fragments. While the damage seemed irreparable, the restorer (Peter Zei) was able to reconstruct the François perfectly; he also added a piece found in the meantime

## NOTES

- The François Vase is currently housed at the Museo Archeologico in Florence, Italy, and is considered one of the finest examples of ancient Greek pottery. Its artistic quality and the wealth of mythological imagery depicted on it have contributed to its fame. There are seven figure friezes on the body above one animal frieze; pygmies fight cranes on the foot
  - Side A (top to bottom): Calydonian Boar Hunt, Patroklos' Funeral Games, Wedding procession moves towards the house, Achilles chases Troilos and Polyxena at the fountain house drops her water pot, animal frieze. Pygmies fight cranes (foot).
  - Side B (top to bottom): Athenians arrive at Crete by boat and Theseus leads the group, Lapiths fight Centaurs, Wedding procession, animal frieze. Pygmies fight cranes (foot).
  - Unusual and finely made shape (first Athenian known in clay), wealth of small and finely executed mythological scenes, and proliferation of inscriptions, including the names of the painter Kleitias and the potter Ergotimos, indicate that this was a very special piece, exported to northern Italy in antiquity.
- One of the most remarkable examples of the black-figure technique of vase painting is an amphora by Exekias showing the Greek heroes Achilles and Ajax playing a game of dice. This scene was so famous in antiquity that it was copied over 150 times.
- In black-figure vase painting, figural and ornamental motifs were applied with a slip that turned black during firing, while the background was left the colour of the clay. Vase painters articulated individual forms by incising the slip or by adding white and purple enhancements (mixtures of pigment and clay).
- Black-figure painting on vases was the first art style to give rise to a significant number of identifiable artists.
- "On September 9, 1900, a custodian of the museum was quarreling with a coworker and hurled a wooden stool against the protective glass casing. The vase broke into more than 600 fragments. While the damage seemed irreparable, the restorer Peter Zei was able to reconstruct the François perfectly; he also added a piece found in the meantime. Restored once more in 1902, but missing a piece that was stolen, it had to face restoration again in 1973 after Florence was flooded in 1966, which resulted in the vase being damaged." [1]

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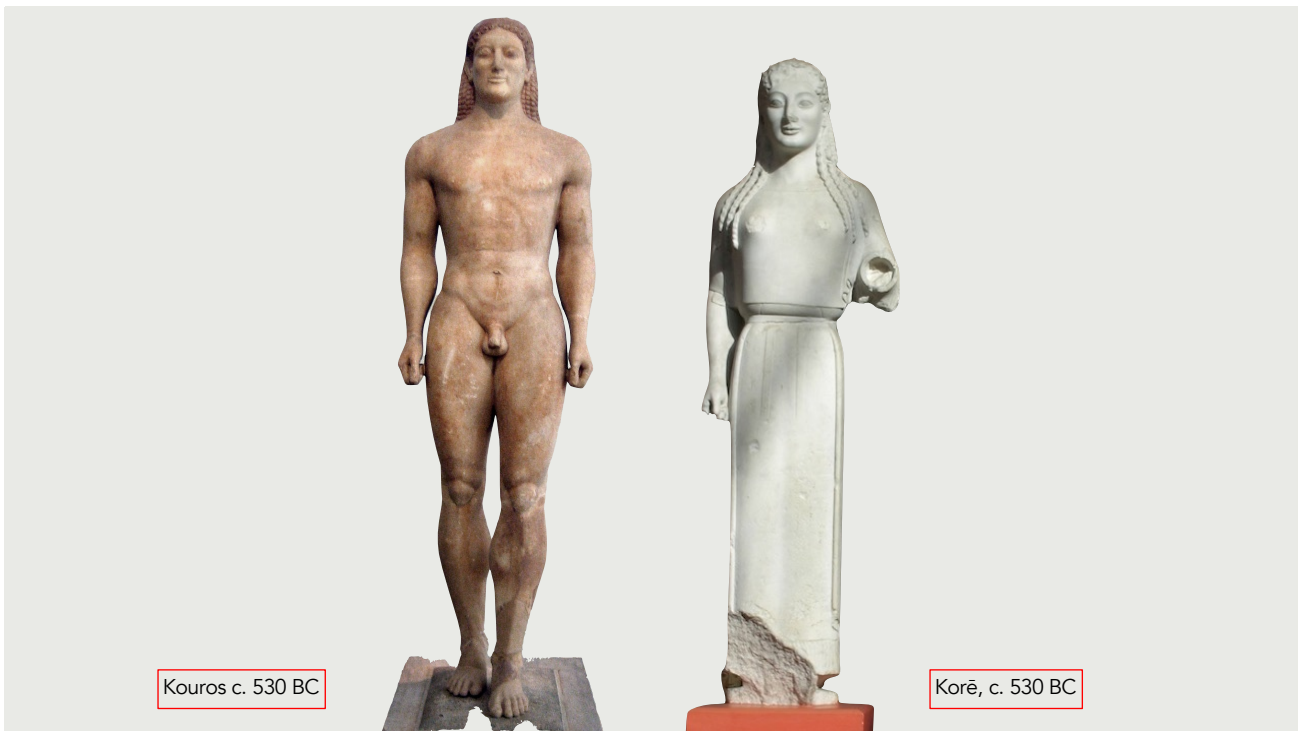
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Kouros, 530 BC

Kore ('young woman'), c. 530 BC, Peplos Athena dedicated to the goddess Athena. Every year in Athens a peplos (a one-piece woollen woven dress) was presented to the goddess Athena during the Panathenaic festival during August.

- If we focus on sculpture, the earliest Greek art consists of stylised, rigid life-size figures that, in the twentieth century became known as kouros (young man, singular pronounced '**KOO-ross**', plural kouroi, pronounced 'KOO-roy' or 'KOO-roy-ee') and korē (young woman, singular pronounced '**KOR-ay**', plural korai, pronounced 'KOR-eye' or 'KOR-eye-ee'), carved from limestone, later marble.
- Some early statues were made of **bronze** but most have been lost as the metal was valuable and was reused for other purposes. The few bronze statues we have were **buried** (like the Charioteer at Delphi) or found in shipwrecks (like the Antikythera Youth).
- The purpose of the statues was principally to represent the god Apollo or the goddess Hera or other deities. Others are found in cemeteries as memorials to the deceased and as memorials to famous victors and heroes, for example, Olympic winners. They were seen to represent male and female youth, beauty and virtue as symbolised by their balanced proportions and frontal, restrained pose. They were not intended to be accurate representations of particular people.
- Note that **male kouros were naked and female korai were clothed**. Women in ancient Greece had few rights in comparison to male citizens. They were

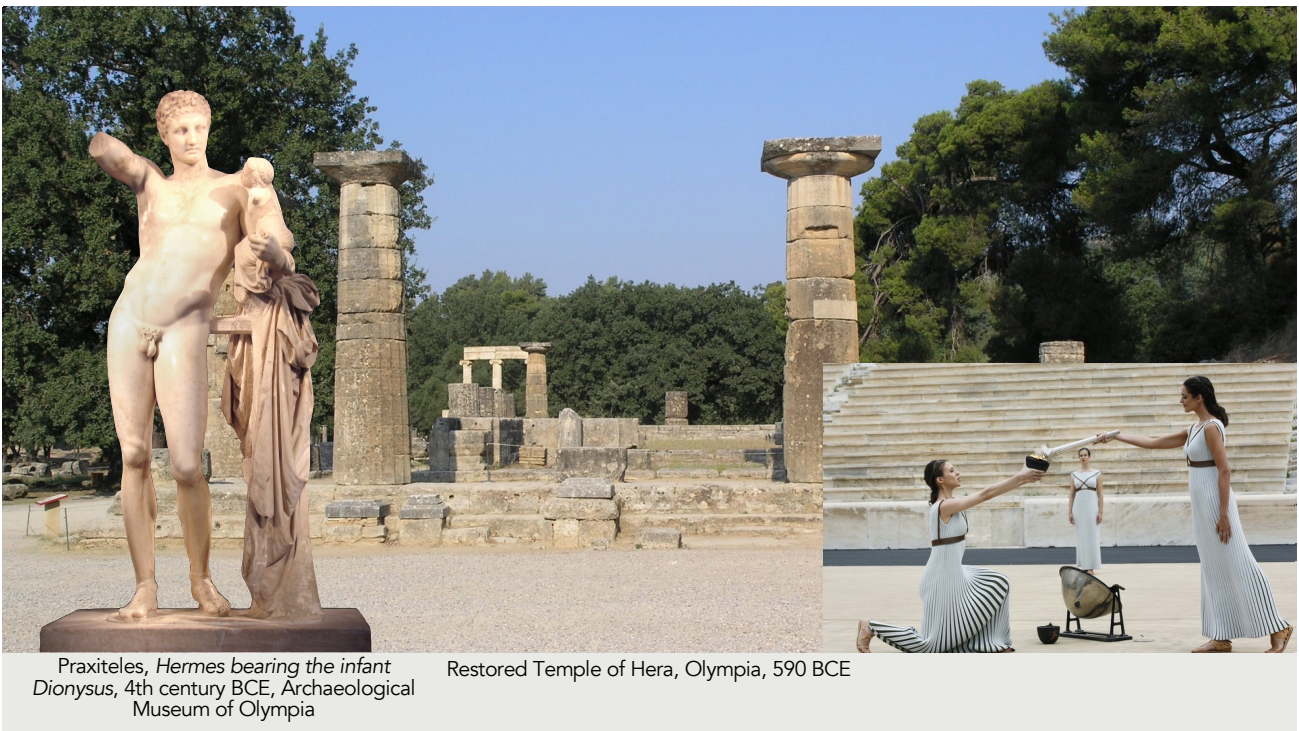
**unable to vote, own land, or inherit**, a woman's place was in the home and their purpose in life was the rearing of children.

- However, **Spartan women were treated somewhat differently** and they had to do physical training like men, were permitted to own land, and could drink wine. Girls were educated but with an emphasis on dancing, gymnastics, and musical accomplishment.
- Young women were expected to **marry as a virgin at the age of 13 or 14**, and marriage was usually organised by their **father or guardian, who chose the husband** and accepted from him a dowry. There was no role in Greek society for single mature females. **Contact with non-family males was discouraged** and women occupied their time with **indoor activities such as weaving**. They could visit the homes of friends and were able to participate in public religious ceremonies and festivals but not public assemblies. There were strict rules, for example an unmarried woman could attend the Olympic Games but a married woman was explicitly barred under penalty of death. **A woman's name was not mentioned in public** with a few exceptions, the priestess of the goddess Demeter (mother of Persephone, the Roman Ceres, fertility goddess and goddess of the harvest) could attend the Olympic Games, Spartan women could take part in local athletic competitions, wealthy women who owned chariot horses had their names recorded but did not compete and there were separate athletic competitions for women, such as the Heraean Games held in honour of the goddess Hera.
- **Slavery was widely accepted** and slaves worked on farms, in quarries and mines and as domestic servants. There is little known about slaves as little was written about them. An **Athenian household would own one to four slaves** and someone would need to be very poor to own no slaves. They were **acquired through war or piracy** or were bought at the market and there were many categories of enslavement. They lacked rights but "**even the most worthless slave could not be put to death without trial**". Athenian slaves could follow their own religion and could not be struck by their masters. Spartan slaves, known as helots had more rights. There were public slaves often in administrative roles who had a higher status. Sexual relationships between master and slave were common practice but in some city states the rape of a slave was punishable by a small fine.

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## Restored Temple of Hera, Olympia, 590 BCE

### Lighting the Olympic flame

Praxiteles, *Hermes bearing the infant Dionysus*, 4th century BCE, Parian marble, Archaeological Museum of Olympia. Possible originally coloured by the painter Nicias

- This is the oldest temple at Olympia and the **most revered in Greece**.
- (CLICK) It is where the Olympic flame is lit before it is carried round the world.
- The temple was built in approximately **590 BC**, but was destroyed by an earthquake in the early 4th century CE.
- Early Greek temples, in their most basic rectangular form with a porch, were directly influenced by and evolved from the earlier Mycenaean megaron design. The megaron's simple rectangular layout and porch-like entrance were carried over into the earliest Greek temple structures
- There are a number of important features to note, the temple is raised on a platform called the stylobate, the perimeter of the temple has stone columns **which were originally wooden** and the proportions of the columns are what is called Doric. Some of the features of Greek architecture mimicked the appearance of wooden structures such as wooden beams and pegs.
- The temple originally contained statues including **Zeus and Hera**. **Zeus** was the king of the Greek gods and **Hera** was queen and his wife and sister (Jupiter and Juno in Roman mythology). The temple was originally built for both of them until a separate temple was built for Zeus.

- (CLICK) Among the few of these objects to survive was a statue of **Hermes** (herald of the gods, the Roman Mercury) **holding baby Dionysos** (also known as Bacchus, god of wine making), which is generally identified as by **Praxiteles** (the first to sculpt the nude female form), one of the most important preserved examples of Greek sculpture. The statue was found in the temple but is from the later **Classical period**.

## **NOTES**

- Hera may have been the first deity to whom the Greeks dedicated an enclosed roofed temple sanctuary, at Samos about 800 BCE. It was replaced later by the Heraion of Samos, one of the largest of all Greek temples.
- During this period the most significant architectural feature was the **megarons**. The megaron was a central architectural feature of Mycenaean palaces and temples, as well as some domestic dwellings, during the Late Bronze Age (1380-1190 BC). The megaron design had a significant influence on the development of later Greek temple architecture, with some Classical Greek temples incorporating megaron-like features. (Prominent examples of megaron-style structures include the Mycenaean Palace of Nestor at Pylos and the Palace at Tiryns.)

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A reconstruction of how the Acropolis may have looked in ancient times, including the Parthenon. Illustration by Kate Morton

A reconstruction of how the Acropolis may have looked in ancient times, including the Parthenon. Illustration by Kate Morton

The Erechtheum, western side, Acropolis, Athens

Ionic capital at the Erechtheum (Athens), 5th century BC

Corinthian capital from the tools at Epidaurus, Archaeological Museum of Epidaurus, Greece, said to have been designed by Polyclitus the Younger, c.350 BC

- Which brings us on the **Classical Period**, seen as the high point of Greek art, the **golden age** of architecture and learning and is was **centred on Athens**.
- This is the **Acropolis** in Athens and its most famous building the **Parthenon**. The most important ruler during this period, before Alexander the Great, was **Pericles** (c. 495-429 BCE). Pericles promoted the **arts and literature**, and it was principally through his efforts that Athens acquired the reputation of being the **educational and cultural center of the ancient Greek world**. He started an ambitious project that generated most of the surviving structures on the **Acropolis**, including the Parthenon. The Acropolis, which means **highest point of the city**, is the name of the hill on which this enormous complex was built.
- Its **great size and lavish use of white marble** was intended to show off the **city's power and wealth** at the height of its empire, under Pericles.
- The temple on the left opposite the Parthenon is the **Erechtheion**. It is a temple dedicated to several deities, including **Athena, Poseidon**, and Erechtheus. It was shared between Athena and Poseidon to pacify him after he lost the

competition to become the patron god of Athens.

- (CLICK) Constructed between 421 and 405 BCE, the temple is known for its unique blend of **Ionic and Doric elements**, we will examine the Doric in a moment when we look at the Parthenon more closely.
- (CLICK) It has these six Caryatid figures, maidens who serve as supporting columns on the south porch.
- (CLICK) Note the Ionic columns on the temple. The **Ionic** with its spiral volutes and slender proportions and decorative flourishes, was often used for buildings associated with elegance and grace, such as temples for female deities like Athena.
- (CLICK) There was a third order called the **Corinthian**, that was more intricate and so more costly and was less widely used. In one Greek temple we find a single Corinthian column in the centre (Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae in Arcadia, c. 450–420 BCE). It consists of Ionic volutes combined with acanthus leaves. It became highly influential in Roman and subsequent architectural traditions but was used only occasionally by the Greeks.

## **NOTES**

- **Classical Period (15-20 minutes):**
  - Discuss the iconic Athenian Acropolis, including the Parthenon, Propylaea, and Erechtheion, highlighting their architectural features and sculptural decorations.

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Parthenon, Athens, Greece, photo taken in 1978

- **The Parthenon**, dedicated to the patron goddess and namesake of Athens, Athena.
- Originally the Parthenon housed a chryselephantine, that is gold and ivory, statue of **Athena Parthenon by Pericles friend, the sculptor Phidias**. Phidias is generally regarded as one of the **greatest** of all ancient Greek sculptors and his **Statue of Zeus at Olympia** was one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**.
- The **Parthenon is the greatest building of the period**. It is a marvel of architectural skill which has never been exceeded. It looks formal, rigid and formulaic but **every part of the structure is distorted in order to make it look perfect**. The columns lean in, they **bulge in the middle** (entasis) and the **stylobate rises in the centre**. It would take a complete talk to cover all the techniques used in its construction but to give you an idea of the skill all the columns lean inwards very slightly to both compensate for the curvature of the stylobate on which they rest and to make them look vertical. The angle they lean is so slight that if the columns were projected upwards they would converge 1.5 miles (or 2400 metres) directly above the centre of the building.
- (CLICK) In brief, first note it is Doric. The columns are fluted and there is a structure at the top of each column consisting of an **echinus** with an **abacus** on top that supports the **entablature**.
- (CLICK) This has a plain **architrave**, which means 'chief beam' in Greek, with a **frieze** above consisting of sculpted **metopes** separated by square **triglyphs**

each with three vertical raised lines. On top is the **cornice** (or geison) which contains the triangular **pediment** with its sculptures.

- Another detail, originally some of the blocks were held together with iron pins coated in lead to stop them corroding. Unfortunately restorers in the nineteenth century knew less about corrosion than the ancient Greeks and replaced them with iron pins that were not coated. As a consequence they corroded, expanded and cracked the marble.

## **NOTES**

- The seven traditional wonders are the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of Alexandria, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Temple of Artemis, the **Statue of Zeus at Olympia**, and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
- Some date the Classical period from 510 BCE the death of the last Athenian tyrant and it ends with the death of Pericles. This is the golden age of Athens under Pericles and its artistic splendour.
- Ancient Greek buildings with Doric columns:
  - **The Parthenon**, 447-438 BCE
  - **The Temple of Hephaestus**: Located in the Athenian Agora, the Temple of Hephaestus was built between 449 and 415 BCE and is dedicated to Hephaestus, the god of fire and metalworking. It is one of the best-preserved examples of a Doric temple.
  - **The Temple of the Delians**: Located on the island of Delos, the Temple of the Delians was built in the 5th century BCE and is dedicated to Apollo. It is an unfinished temple, but its remaining columns are a good example of the Doric order.
- Ancient Greek buildings with Ionic columns:
  - **Temple of Hera at Samos**: This colossal temple, built by the architect Rhoikos between 570 and 560 BCE, was one of the first great Ionic buildings. Though ultimately destroyed by an earthquake, a single Ionic column still stands today, a testament to the temple's grandeur.
  - **Erechtheion**: Located on the Athenian Acropolis, the Erechtheion is a temple dedicated to several deities,

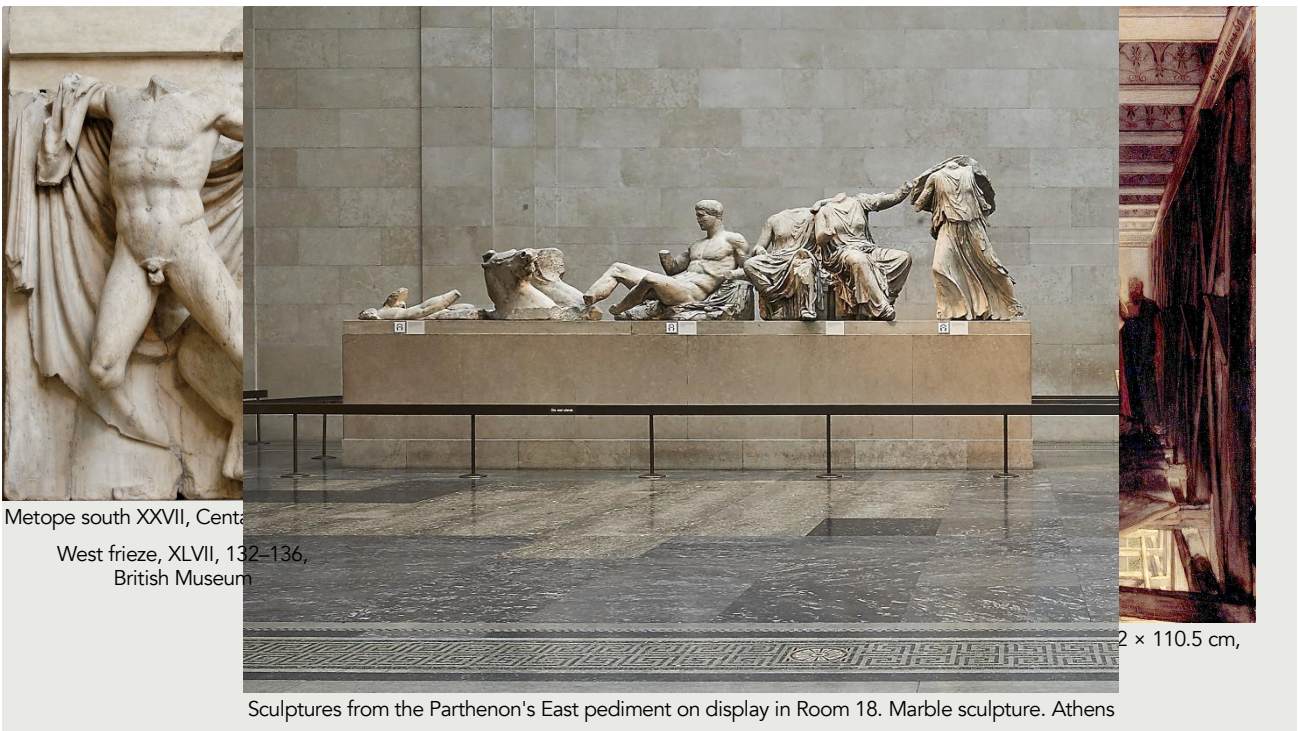


including Athena Polias, Poseidon, and Erechtheus. Constructed between 421 and 405 BCE, the temple is known for its unique blend of Ionic and Doric elements, and its six Caryatid figures, maidens who serve as supporting columns on the south porch.

- **Temple of Artemis at Ephesus:** Once classed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, this temple was an impressive Ionic structure. Built by Croesus, King of Lydia, in 550 BCE, it was famed for its size and the magnificent works of art that adorned it. Although destroyed by invading Goths in 262 CE, the temple's legacy lives on.
- The vast majority of Greek buildings used the Doric and Ionic orders but there are a few that use the Corinthian order:
  - **Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae:** Located in Arcadia, Greece, this temple, built around 425-420 BCE, is considered the oldest surviving example of a Corinthian column, although it stands alone within the temple and is not part of the main structure's order.
  - **Tholos at Epidaurus:** This circular building, erected around 350 BCE, is believed to be one of the first structures to use a complete colonnade of Corinthian columns on the exterior. However, it's important to note that the Tholos also has Doric columns supporting the roof.
  - **Choragic Monument of Lysicrates:** Built in Athens around 334 BCE, this small, circular monument dedicated to the god Dionysus is the first documented instance of the Corinthian order being used on the exterior of a structure in Greece.

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Metope south XXVII, Centaur and Lapith, 442 BCE, British Museum

West frieze, XLVII, 132–136, British Museum

72 × 110.5 cm,

Sculptures from the Parthenon's East pediment on display in Room 18. Marble sculpture. Athens

Metope south XXVII, Centaur and Lapith, 442 BCE, British Museum

Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912), *Pheidias and the Frieze of the Parthenon*, 1868, 72 × 110.5 cm, Birmingham Museums Trust

Sculptures from the Parthenon's East pediment on display in Room 18. Marble sculpture. Athens, 438–432 BC, Parthenon, Athens, Greece

- This is one of the metopes from the Parthenon showing a centaur, part man part horse, and a Lapith, another fabled tribe from northern Greece that fought them. The reason this battle was so often represented is because they saw it as a conflict between wild, uncontrolled impulses represented by the Centaurs and civilisation, reason and order represented by the Lapiths who won the battle.
- A metope is the square bas-relief situated above a Doric column. Each side of the Parthenon illustrates a different battle scene in the metopes. The south side shows the fight of **Centaurs and Lapiths**. The north side showed the **Fall of Troy**, the east a battle between **Giants and Olympian gods called a Gigantomachy**, and the west an **Amazonomachy**, a battle between the ancient Greeks and the Amazons, a nation of all female warriors. It is not known if the Amazons existed but burial sites have been found of female warriors.
- (CLICK) Inside the **outer peristyle is an inner frieze**. A peristyle is the name we give to the **row of columns** surrounding the actual building. This is a reconstruction by the nineteenth-century artist Lawrence Alma-Tadema of a viewing at the top of the scaffolding using to create the frieze. **Note that the frieze is painted in bright colours**. All the statues and bas-relief and the building itself were painted in bright colours.

- (CLICK) This is the actual carving in the British Museum that inspired Alma-Tadema. The frieze, the metopes and the pediment from the Parthenon in the British Museum have inspired artists for over two hundred years.
- (CLICK) At either end of the building was a **triangular pediment** and in the pediment were statues. They were probably made by several artists, including Agoracritos. The master builder for the whole site was Phidias. The statues were probably lifted into place by 432 BC, having been carved on the ground. **To the east shown here was the birth of Athena** and to the west the **quarrel between her and Poseidon** to become the **tutelary deity**, that is, the guardian and patron of Athens. There was a contest and Poseidon created a spring but it contained salt water. Athena created the first olive tree which provided wood for building a food so she won the contest. In revenge for losing he sent an enormous flood.

## **NOTES**

- Athens was named Cecrops before the naming contest between Athena and Poseidon. Poseidon created an inland spring for the city but it was salt water. Athena created the olive tree whose wood and fruit could be used.

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Andokides Painter (active ca. 530-515 BCE), Achilles and Ajax playing a dice game, c. 525-520 BCE, bilingual amphora, black-figure and red figure, Archaic style, 55.5 × 34 (diameter) cm, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, original site Orvieto, Italy

Andokides Painter (active ca. 530-515 BCE), Achilles and Ajax playing a dice game, c. 525-520 BCE, bilingual amphora, black-figure and red figure, Archaic style, 55.5 × 34 (diameter) cm, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, original site Orvieto, Italy

- We have seen black-figure pottery. It was replaced by **red-figure pottery in Athens around 520 BCE** and remained in use until the late 3rd century BCE and it replaced the previously dominant style of black-figure pottery within a few decades. It is thought to have been invented by a person called the **Andokides Painter** (pronounced 'aan-dhoh-kEE-dhee').
- This amphora is unusual as it shows black-figure on one side and red-figure on the other. The red figures were created by **painting the black clay slip over the background** and then using diluted black slip to paint the detail inside the figures. By varying the dilution levels of fine detail could be created that was impossible using the black-figure technique.
- Here the two heroes of the Trojan War are shown in a tranquil scene **playing a board game**. **Achilles**, the greater warrior, calls out four (tessera) and **Ajax** three (tria). The curve of their backs follows the curve of the amphora, their spears point down to the focus of their attention, the board, and up to the handles and their shields appear to continue the bottom of the handles.
- There are many variations of this theme of dice playing so it clearly represented an **important theme, perhaps of fate, life and death**. In Homer's Iliad Achilles is described as the greatest and Ajax as second best, perhaps this dice game in which Ajax loses represents his fate to be second.

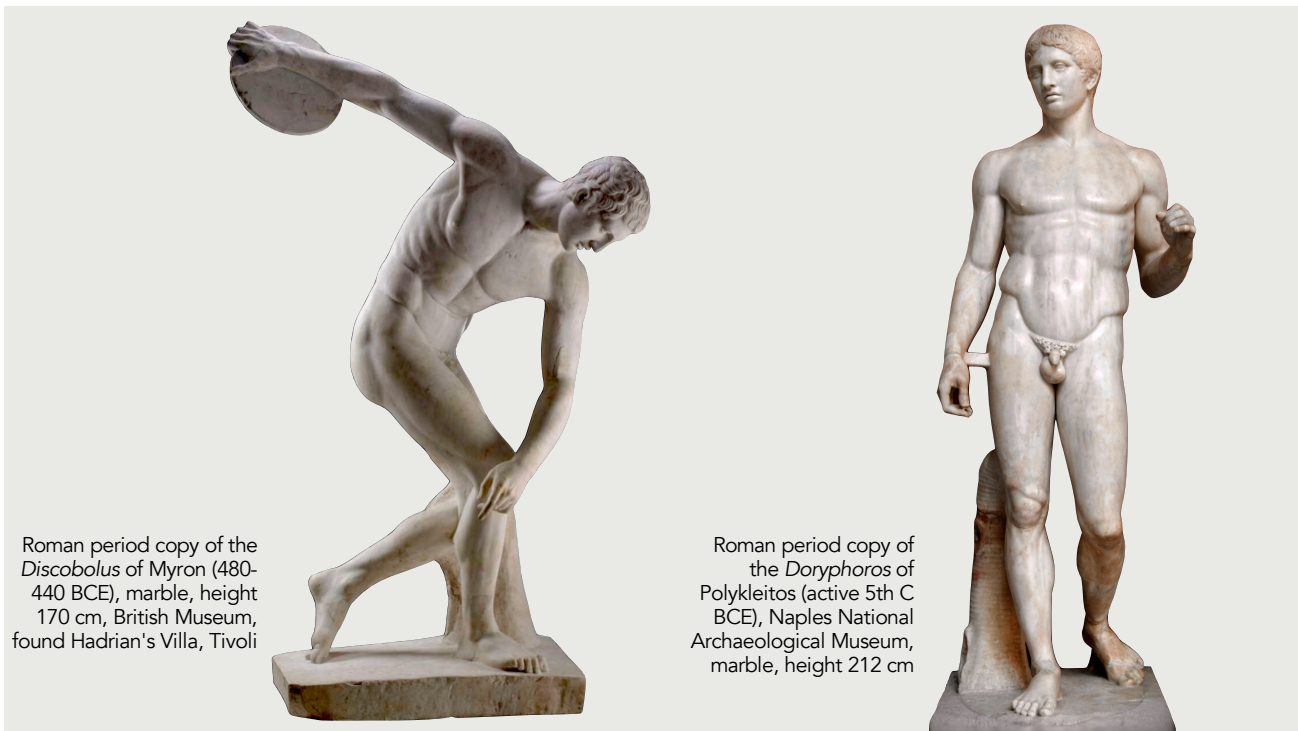
## **NOTES**

- Another famous red-figure Greek vase is signed by Sosias and shows Achilles tending Patroclus wounded by an arrow, identified by inscriptions on the upper part of the vase. Tondo of an Attic red-figure kylix, ca. 500 BC. From Vulci, Altes Museum.

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Roman period copy of the *Discobolus* of Myron (480-440 BCE), marble, height 170 cm, British Museum, found Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

Roman period copy of the *Doryphoros* of Polykleitos (active 5th C BCE), Naples National Archaeological Museum, marble, height 212 cm

- In the **Classical Period** (480-323 BCE), sculptors like Myron and Polyclitus developed more realistic, **idealised human forms** with accurate proportions and a sense of movement and emotion.
- One of Myron's (480-440 BCE) best known works is this *Discobolus* and one of Polykleitos's (active 5th C BCE) best known works is this, *Doryphoros*. Note that both are Roman copies. Typically, a famous artist would produce a definitive work that would then be copied hundreds of times by other artists over hundreds of years.
- The *Doryphoros* is an early example of the **contrapposto**. Contrapposto became the standard way of showing a full figure with the weight shifted onto one leg called the **engaged leg** causing the shoulders and hips to twist in opposite directions creating an 'S' shape curve in the body. The other free leg is back but appears to move forward and the head is often turned to one side to enhance the sense of movement. This stance became a **hallmark of Greek sculpture**. It was later revived by Renaissance artists like **Donatello, Leonardo, and Michelangelo**, who saw it as a key element of classical Greek and Roman art.

## NOTES

- The first known statue to use contrapposto is **Kritios Boy**, c. 480 BCE, so called because it was once attributed to the sculptor Kritios. It is possible, even likely, that earlier bronze statues had used the technique, but if they did, they have not survived and Kenneth Clark called the statue "the first beautiful nude in art". The statue is a Greek marble original and not a Roman copy.

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Bronze Statue of Zeus or Poseidon, found in sea of Cape Artemision, northern Euboea. early Classical, ca. 460 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens



Bronze Statue of Zeus or Poseidon, found in sea of Cape Artemision, northern Euboea. Severe Style statue, early Classical, ca. 460 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens

- This is an original early Classical Greek statue in bronze. It was preserved as the ship carrying sank and fishermen found it off the coast of Cape Artemision in 1928 and so it is known as the Artemision bronze. It is either Zeus or Poseidon depending on whether he originally held a thunderbolt or a trident in his right hand. It has always been associated with ancient sculptors Myron and Onatas. It is certainly the work of a great sculptor of the early Classical period, notable for the exquisite rendering of motion and anatomy.
- I mentioned that the male body was typically shown **nude**. That is because **bodily perfection and athleticism were equated with beauty and moral virtue**. There are other reasons why. Greek writers mention it was to demonstrate their **sophistication and morality in the face of Persian barbarism**. The Persians thought it was undignified to appear nude and so the Greeks were teaching them a lesson. Athletes in the original Olympic Games wore a loincloth but around 720 BCE or possible a bit later one athlete ran in the nude and then everyone else followed. Also, the word "**gymnasium**" comes from the Greek word "**γυμνός**" (pronounced 'yim-nos') **meaning naked**, and gymnasium proliferated in Greece from the 6th century BCE. The gymnasium was **linked to education and the conditioning of the body and the mind**, but they were also a link to sculpture, ceramics and other art forms. In ancient Greece, disrobing fully to become **naked for sport** became an assertive

communication of **maleness, ethnicity, status, freedom, privilege, and physical virtue.**" (Donald Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*).

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Aphrodite of Knidos, Cnidus Aphrodite.  
marble, Roman copy after a Greek original of  
the 4th century, Museo nazionale romano di  
palazzo Altemps



Aphrodite of Knidos, Cnidus Aphrodite. Marble, Roman copy after a Greek original of the 4th century. Marble; original elements: torso and thighs; restored elements: head, arms, legs and support (drapery and jug), Museo nazionale romano di palazzo Altemps

Bronze Statue of Zeus or Poseidon, found in sea of Cape Artemision, northern Euboea. Severe Style statue, early Classical, ca. 460 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens

- I have not mentioned female nudity. That is because women were kept hidden indoors and rarely went out although it was said that Spartan women athletes performed naked.
- This is a Roman copy of a 4th century BCE Greek Aphrodite. There were hundreds of copies made of a, now lost, original Greek masterpiece. These copies were produced in Greece and later mostly by Greek sculptors in Rome or shipped to Rome.
- The original statue of Aphrodite was commissioned by the city of Cnidus from the artist **Praxiteles** around 350-330 BCE. It was the **first female nude in ancient Greek** art as nudity had been reserved for male figures. The reason it was acceptable was that it was not a woman but a goddess. The pose it was argued does not indicate shame but fertility.
- It was placed in a temple where it could be **viewed from all sides** and it was an immediate sensation and visitors came to Cnidus to see it. There are stories of men becoming "**overcome with love**" for the statue and one sailor who hid in the temple overnight is said to have left semen stains on the sculpture as proof

of his love.

- In one ancient text (Lucian, *Amores*) he writes, "**Draped by no garment, all her beauty is uncovered and revealed, except in so far as she unobtrusively uses one hand to hide her private parts**". Later versions have her covering her breasts as well, a pose we will see later.

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Attributed to Dexamenos of Chios, Greek gold and blue chalcedony scabroid with a warrior, Classical period, c. mid 5th BCE, 3 cm



Dexamenos of Chios, engraved gemstone, 22 × 17 × 8 mm, Fitzwilliam Museum

- Attributed to Dexamenos of Chios, Greek gold and blue chalcedony (pronounced 'kal-SEH-duh-nee') scabroid with a warrior, Classical period, c. mid 5th BCE, 3 cm. Sold for \$34,020 on 17 October at Christie's in New York
- Dexamenos of Chios, engraved gemstone, 22 × 17 × 8 mm, Fitzwilliam Museum
- The other type of artwork that has survived is the engraved gemstone. There are two types, cameos are raised images and intaglios are designs cut as an impression into the gemstone.
- Despite their small size they show enormous skill. Many different gemstones were used and they were set in gold, silver or bronze mounts. They were originally produced for sealing documents but later were used ornamentally.
- The earliest were cut with iron tools in combination with abrasive emery powders. The diamond tipped drill was introduced in the 5th century BCE and is used here by the outstanding master of the craft, **Dexamenos of Chios**. Although born on the island of Chios he is thought to have worked in Athens.
- On the left is a **naked Greek warrior** holding a sword and in the other the end of a scabbard. The face of the warrior is similar to the face of a boxer and a harp player on works in the British Museum closely associated with Dexamenos. The level of detail is extraordinary, we can see individual strands of hair, a result of Dexamenus using the latest technology, a diamond point drill.
- One the **right is a Greek woman** and this work is signed by Dexamenus bottom right. The name at the top Mikes meaning 'of Mika' is probably the name or nickname of the owner. She is looking in a mirror, which were made from highly polished metal. We see her belly and breasts are beneath the folds of her

diaphanous tunic. As I said, in Athens, **women were confined to the home** and were expected to be obedient wives and loving women. Greek drama often deals with women who were thought to transgress these rigid constraints resulting in comedy or tragedy. Here, the woman at home in her boudoir was intended as the embodiment of the perfect fifth-century Athenian woman.

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The Alexander Mosaic, c. 100 BCE, mosaic, 273 x 513 cm, National Archaeological Museum, Naples, originally House of the Faun, Pompeii

**Lysippus, Alexander**, Roman copy of a herma by Lysippos, Louvre Museum. Copy of the Imperial Roman Era (1st or 2nd century CE) of a bronze sculpture made by Lysippos. Found in Tivoli, East of Rome, Italy. Pentelic marble, region of Athens.

- This is the **Alexander Mosaic**, dating from **c. 100 BCE**, is a Roman floor mosaic in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples, originally from the **House of the Faun** in Pompeii. It is believed to depict a battle between the armies of **Alexander the Great** and **Darius III of Persia** (2.72 by 5.13 metres). The mosaic is believed to be a **copy** of an early 3rd-century BCE **Hellenistic painting**.
- Most two-dimensional wall art has been lost although it was produced and is praised by writers at the time as being extremely realistic. The most famous example is a description of a competition between two artists, **Zeuxis** (fifth century B.C.) and his rival **Parrhasius**. Zeuxis painted grapes that were "**so successfully represented that birds flew up to it.**" But Zeuxis was beaten by Parrhasius, who painted a curtain so realistically that Zeuxis reached out to pull it back. Zeuxis had fooled the birds, but Parrhasius had fooled an artist at his own game. Unfortunately none of their work survives and we only have written accounts. One of these tells of how Zeuxis painted a picture of an old woman that was so amusing he died of laughter.
- (CLICK) **Plutarch reports that sculptures by Lysippus were the most faithful.** Hermes-type bust (pillar with the top as a sculpted head) of Alexander the Great

called *Hermes Azara*. Bears the inscription: "*Alexander [the Great], son of Philip, [king of] Macedonia.*"

- The Hellenistic period traditionally began in 323 BC, following **the death of Alexander the Great**. This date marks a turning point in the history of the ancient Greek world for several reasons:
  - **Fall of Alexander's Empire:** Alexander's death led to the disintegration of his vast empire, which stretched from Greece to the borders of India. His generals, known as the Diadochi ("successors"), engaged in a series of power struggles, ultimately carving the empire into several Hellenistic kingdoms.
  - **Shift in Political Landscape:** The independent Greek city-states, which had dominated the earlier classical period, largely lost their autonomy and were absorbed into these larger Hellenistic kingdoms. This marked a significant shift in the political landscape of the Greek world.
  - **Spread of Greek Culture:** Despite the political changes, Greek culture continued to flourish and spread throughout the newly formed Hellenistic kingdoms and beyond. This led to a unique blend of Greek, Eastern, and Egyptian influences in various spheres like art, literature, and philosophy.
  - **New Centres of Power:** The Hellenistic period witnessed the rise of new cultural and intellectual centres, **replacing the dominance of Athens** during the classical period. **Alexandria in Egypt, Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Antioch in Syria became major centres** of learning and scholarship.

## NOTES

- It is one of the most extraordinary works to have survived from antiquity. A vast mosaic floor unearthed in 1831 that has always been (CLICK) thought to show Alexander the Great routing Darius, the king of Persia in 330 BCE. There are **2.5 to 5.5 million tesserae** in total in five main colours. The scene is **a turning point in a battle**.(CLICK) The figures on the left are surging forward while the figures on the right are in turmoil. In particular, the tallest figure turns to look back even though his charioteer has already turned away and is whipping his team of black horses to carry them off as fast as possible. (CLICK) One of the soldiers has been caught out by the turning point of the battle and is about to be crushed under the wheel of

the flying chariot. We can see a last glimpse of his face reflected in his shield a moment before he is crushed. (CLICK)

- Alexander became a legendary leader to the Romans and to subsequent generations up to the present day. It was the convention to show the enemy as noble and therefore worthy opponents as this heightened the victory **was intended to evoke feelings of pity or sadness** (pathos) for the enemy.
- We do not know how the **mosaic arrived** in Pompeii. It may have been **bodily transported from Greece**, alternatively, it has been suggested it is the work of **Italian craftsmen copying an earlier Greek painting** that may have dated from the time of Alexander the Great. All of these different theories are based on references and other clues from the past. For example, **Pliny the Elder mentions a Greek painting** of a *Battle of Alexander against Darius* by Philoxenos of Eretria in the Macedonian court.
- Many mosaics and paintings from the **Roman period copy or are variations on a Greek original**. This would have **been known and appreciated by visitors** to the house. A great deal of research today consists of finding or usually **speculating about a Greek original**. There was an active trade in plunder, purchase and copying original works and there was a long tradition of easel painting in Greece and Rome but little if anything survives and scholars scour texts for any hint of an artist, painting, style or critical judgement.
- Today we value the original and regard copies as inferior. However, it is likely that Romans regarded Greek culture as a **lesser culture to their own but one associated with the origination and production of better art**. The Roman writer Horace said: 'Gracia capta ferum vicitorem cepit' (the conquered Greece conquered the barbarian conqueror).
- Roman women had to live and eat with their husband and homosexuality was considered a vice. Greek women had to live and eat in a different room, men mixed with men and homosexual relations were common. The Romans adopted a great deal of Greek culture (the arts, literature, philosophy, the alphabet, weights and measures, coinage, gods and cults and temple buildings) but they did conquer Greece and so would have regarded them as a lesser culture. It became a must for every rich young Roman to study in Athens or Rhodes and learn to speak Greek but some Romans did not trust the Greeks and thought that adopting Greek customs would lead to degeneration and the fall of Rome.

- If it does represent the victory of Alexander the Great over Darius III and the Persians at the Battle of Gaugamela (331 BC) then it shows one of Alexander's greatest victories. The Persians easily had double the number of troops as the Macedonians and they came prepared for victory with scythed chariots and the largest cavalry force that had ever been assembled up till then. Darius expected Alexander to outflank him as he had done previously but this time Alexander changed strategy. It is said that Alexander rejected a night attack as it would steal a victory. The next morning Alexander overslept and his men were well fed and relaxed. Darius's men had stayed awake the whole night fearing an attack. Alexander feigned an all out attack on the right wing and Darius moved the troops in his centre to his left wing. Alexander held off an outflanking manoeuvre and his infantry held the centre. He suddenly turned his elite troops to the centre and launched an all out attack on Darius himself. Alexander came close to Darius and flung his spear narrowly missing him. Darius tried to turn his chariot but was prevented by dead bodies so he fled on a horse. This led to confusion and disarray among his troops and Alexander achieving a total victory. Darius was later killed by one of his officers and Alexander found the body and buried him with full military honours in Persepolis, the former capital of the Persian Empire.

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## HELLENISTIC



**Laocoön and His Sons,**  
attributed by Pliny to  
Agesander,  
Athenodoros and  
Polydorus

**Laocoön and His Sons**, attributed by Pliny to Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus, we do not know if this is an original work or a copy of an earlier sculpture, probably in bronze, or made for a Greek or Roman commission.

- Hellenistic sculpture (323-31 BCE) became even **more dynamic, with figures shown in action, emotion, and dramatic poses**. Sculptors also depicted non-idealised subjects like the elderly and dying.
- This is Laocoön (pronounced 'lay-ok-oh-on') and His Sons and it was **dug up in Rome in 1506** and since then has been one of the most famous ancient sculptures ever excavated. It was placed on public display in the Vatican, where it remains to this day.
- It represents **the priest Laocoön**, famous from the story of the Trojan Horse in Virgil's Aeneid. Laocoön thought the horse left by the Greeks outside their besieged city was a trick. As a result he was punished by the gods (Poseidon or Apollo) who sent two giant sea serpents to attack and kill him and his two sons.
- The human body was an important focus in the Hellenistic Period as it symbolised many attributes such as manhood, strength, beauty and eroticism, and the form and structure of the body experiencing extreme emotions took on an increasing symbolic importance in more and more works of art.

### HELLENISTIC PERIOD

- The name originates from the Greek "**Λαοκόων**" (Laokoón).
- The period following the **conquests of Alexander the Great** (336-323 BC) is known as the Hellenistic Period. The sculpture includes portraits, nude female

figures and figures showing the **extremes of emotion**. It is sometimes seen as overwrought and therefore indicating the decline of Greek civilisation.

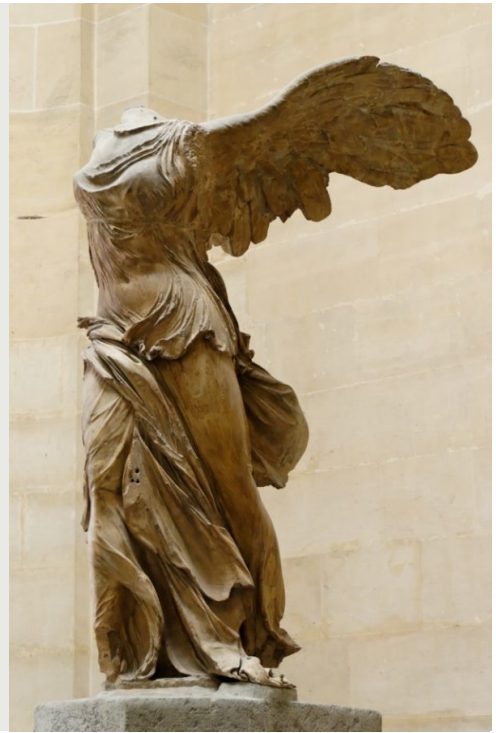
- **Alexander the Great** (356-323 BC) created one of the largest empires of the ancient world by the age of thirty, stretching from Greece to north-western India. He was undefeated in battle and is widely considered one of history's most successful military commanders. This portrait bust is assumed to be one of the few accurate representations as Lysippos (4th century BC) was his official sculptor.





**Dying Gaul**, a Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic work of the late 3rd century BC. Capitoline Museums, Rome

Winged Victory of Samothrace, 3rd or 2nd Century BCE, Musée du Louvre, Paris



**Dying Gaul**, a Roman marble copy of a Hellenistic work of the late 3rd century BC. Capitoline Museums, Rome

Winged Victory of Samothrace, 3rd or 2nd Century BCE, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen via Wikimedia Commons

Model of the Victory of Samothrace after Benndorf and Hauser, 1880

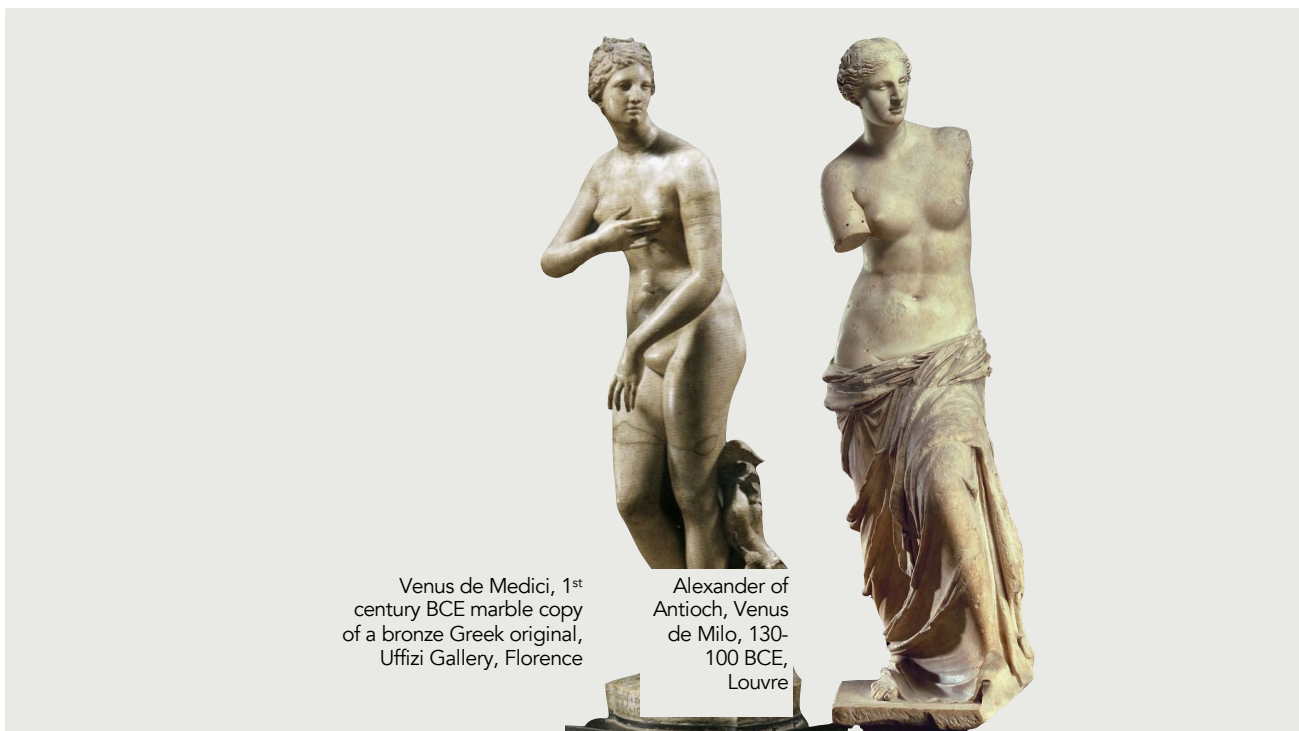
- **The Dying Gaul** is an ancient Roman marble copy of a lost Hellenistic sculpture, thought to have been originally executed in bronze. The original may have been commissioned some time between 230 and 220 BCE by **Attalus I of Pergamon** to celebrate his victory over the Galatians, the Celtic people of parts of Anatolia (modern Turkey). The Greeks were celebrating the heroism of the enemy. A brave and heroic enemy made a victory over them even greater. The identity of the sculptor of the original is unknown.
- (CLICK) **The Nike or Winged Victory of Samothrace** is a masterpiece, some say the greatest masterpiece, of Hellenistic sculpture. It was created between 200 and 190 BCE, not to honour the Greek goddess Nike but to honour a sea battle. The Macedonian general Demetrius first erected it following his naval victory in Cyprus.
- The female body is revealed by the **transparency of the wet drapery**. In some parts it brushes against the body and in other areas billows in the wind, the sculptor has been remarkably skilful in creating visual effects.[1]
- It was **discovered on the island of Samothrace by a French consul** who sent the statue and other pieces to the Louvre. It was found that the base formed the bow of a ship and Nike was originally blowing a trumpet.

- An art historian has pointed out that unlike earlier Greek and Egyptian art **the figure interacts with the space around the goddess**. She is straining against the wind and rain which means we become part of a larger story that expands out around the statue rather than it being a figure in isolation. Nearly two thousand years later we see a similar thing with **Michelangelo's David as his gaze and pose recreate his adversary Goliath**. This deliberate relationship with the imaginary space around the figure is rarely seen in art until the Renaissance.

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- Venus de Medici, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE marble copy of a bronze Greek original, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, first example of unrivalled beauty
- Alexander of Antioch, *Venus de Milo*, 130-100 BCE, Louvre, right, found by French, became prime example of beauty. Formerly thought to be by Praxiteles.
- We have already seen one version of Aphrodite of Cnidus. There were many variations on the theme.
- The **Venus de Medici was discovered** sometime before 1559. The pose is known as *Venus Pudica* and she covers her breasts and private parts. Seeing the Medici Venus was a **high point of the Grand Tour**. When Napoleon conquered Italy there was an attempt to hide it in Palermo but it was found and taken to Paris. It was known throughout Europe as the **pinnacle of Greek art**. When Napoleon was defeated in 1815 it was **one of the first works of art to be repatriated to Florence**. So France had lost its greatest ancient treasure.
- (CLICK) Then, **five years later**, in 1820, a French officer (Olivier Voutier) was touring the island of Milos and met a farmer (Yorgos Kentrotas) who had dug up part of a statue. The officer soon found the complete statue in parts and ten days later another French officer (Jules Dumont d'Urville) realised its significance and arranged for the French ambassador to Turkey (Charles-Francois de Riffardeau, later duc de Riviere) to purchase it.
- Despite some problems which involved various Turkish chiefs being whipped and fined and the most senior Turkish representative being executed, it arrived in Paris and the fakes news campaign began.
- The French announced the statue was by one of the most **famous classical**

**Greek sculptors Praxiteles** even before examining it.

- When they did they found the plinth had an inscription which read, in Greek, '**(Alex)andros son of Menides, citizen of Antioch on the Maeander made this (statue)...**'. This was unfortunate in two ways – it was not by Praxiteles and it was Hellenistic not Classical. The city of Antioch did not exist in the Classical period which dated the statue to the **Hellenistic period** which was regarded **in the nineteenth century as a period of decline** for Greek art.
- So what do you think happened?
- **The plinth with the inscription mysteriously disappeared and has never reappeared.** We only know of its existence because two detailed drawings were made before it disappeared.
- **From that point onwards the French who had lost the Venus de Medici successfully promoted the Venus de Milo as the most beautiful Classical Greek sculpture in the world.**

## NOTES

### THE CLASSICAL IDEAL

- Hay measured the ratios of famous classical nudes such as the Venus de Medici and the Venus de Milo. In the early part of the nineteenth century it was the Venus de Medici that was regarded as the ideal. The Venus de Milo was not discovered until 1820 and from then on was promoted by the French authorities as the greater treasure. They had been made to return the Venus de Medici to the Italians in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars. The statue was dutifully praised by many artists and critics as the epitome of graceful female beauty although Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) described it as a 'big gendarme'.
- The propaganda from the Louvre included losing the original plinth. We know from two surviving engravings that the plinth included the inscription '**...(Alex)andros son of Menides, citizen of Antioch on the Maeander made this (statue)...**'. The museum had been promoting the statue as by the much more famous Praxiteles from the Classical period (5th and 4th centuries BCE) but the inscription would make it later (as Antioch did not exist when Praxiteles lived) and move it into the Hellenistic period (323-31BCE). At the time the Hellenistic period was considered as a period of decline and so the evidence was destroyed.

- The Latin word 'pudica' refers both to the external genitals and to 'modest' or 'chaste' as well as 'shame'. In the case of these statues the term "pudica" refers to the modest, restrained pose, not the goddess's internal emotional state.

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Altar to Zeus in the Pergamonmuseum, Berlin

Altar to Zeus showing the **Gigantomachy** with, from left to right, the sea god Nereus, the sea goddess Doris one of 3,000 daughters of the Titan Oceanos opposite a Giant, Pergamonmuseum Berlin

The most important divine struggle in Greek mythology was the **Gigantomachy**, the battle fought between the Giants and the Olympian gods for supremacy of the cosmos.

The Titans were the pre-Olympian gods, six male, six female children of Uranus (sky) and Gaia (Earth).

- We switch to one of the greatest architectural wonders to survive, the Altar to Zeus from Pergamon.
- **Following the death of Alexander the Great his empire was divided between his generals.** One of these rump states became the city of **Pergamon**. It lasted 150 years from 133-129 BCE before being absorbed by the Roman Empire.
- In the first half of the 2nd century BCE this **enormous altar was constructed**.
- (CLICK) The high relief shows a battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods. It seems the altar was constructed to **thank the gods for various victories**.
- (CLICK) It was designed by **Phrymachos** (pronounced 'FY-roh-MAH-khos'), the seventh and last of the greatest Greek sculptors, who included **Myron, Phidias, Polykleitos, Scopas, Praxiteles and Lysippos**



- The Greek civilization declined gradually over several centuries, while the Romans built upon and carried on many aspects of Greek art and architecture.
- **The decline of the Greek civilization began after the Classical period** in the 5th century BCE, as political struggles between city-states reduced their power. The Greeks were eventually **conquered by the Macedonians** in the 4th century BCE. [1]
- However, Greek culture and ideas had a **major influence on the rising Roman civilization**. When the Romans conquered Greece in the 2nd century BCE, they adopted and adapted many elements of Greek art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and more. [2]

## NOTES

- The Romans incorporated Greek temple designs and sculptural ideals into their own architecture and art. For example, Roman buildings used the symmetrical columns and proportions of Greek temples. [3]
- In terms of Hellenistic innovations in urban planning and architecture, some key developments included:
  - **Orthogonal Town Planning**
  - The Hellenistic period saw the widespread adoption of orthogonal, grid-like town planning, with streets intersecting at right angles. This allowed for more organized and efficient urban layouts, compared to the more organic growth of earlier Greek cities. Examples include the cities of Olynthus and Pergamon. [4][5]
  - **The Royal Stoa in Pergamon**
  - The Royal Stoa in the city of Pergamon was a characteristic example of Hellenistic architecture. It was part of a large, sprawling architectural complex built by the Attalid kings, which was designed to conform to the natural terrain of the Acropolis. The stoa featured colonnaded galleries and was integrated into the overall urban plan. [5][6]
  - So while the independent Greek city-states declined, Greek culture and intellectual achievements were preserved and carried on through the Roman Empire, which spread Greco-Roman civilization throughout Europe. [1][2]

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- [5] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_art)
- [6] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pergamon\\_Altar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pergamon_Altar)



Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus, marble, late 2nd century BC, 1.2 metre high, from the Campo Marzio, Rome, Louvre Museum



Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus known as the "Census frieze", marble, Roman artwork of the late 2nd century BCE, 1.2 metre high, from the Campo Marzio, Rome, Louvre Museum

## ROMAN CONTROL

- This is the Altar of **Domitius Ahenobarbus** known as the "Census frieze" from the late 2nd century BCE. It is Roman. By this time, "**most of the sculptors working in Rome**" were **Greek**, often enslaved in conquests such as that of Corinth (146 BC), and sculptors continued to be mostly Greeks, often slaves, whose names are very rarely recorded. Vast numbers of Greek statues were imported to Rome, whether as booty or the result of extortion or commerce, and temples were often decorated with **re-used Greek works**.
- The Romans deeply admired and were heavily influenced by the artistic achievements of the Greeks, which they sought to **emulate and preserve**. But they were also capable of producing their **own original works**, especially in areas like **architecture**, that reflected their distinct cultural and practical sensibilities. The Romans saw **Greek art as a model to learn from and build upon**, rather than something they could simply surpass.
- This relief seems to have been commissioned by a general who vowed to **build a temple for the god of the sea following a sea victory**. It depicts the different stages in a census of the Roman citizens. It is one of the **first examples of the continuous narrative style** and is read from left to right.
- (CLICK) first the recording of the Roman citizens in the register of the censor
- (CLICK) second the purification of the army before an altar dedicated to Mars

- (CLICK) and finally the levy of the soldiers.
- There is more about the development of Roman art in my talk on 04-01 Roman art.

## **NOTES**

- Greek civilisation was divided between a number of city states which gradually declined over several centuries starting after the Classical period in the 5th century BCE. They were eventually conquered by the Macedonians in the 4th century BCE.
- However, Greek culture and ideas went on to have a major influence on the rising Roman civilization. When the Romans conquered Greece in the 2nd century BCE, they adopted and adapted many elements of Greek art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and more
- The Romans gained from the Greek influence in areas like trade, banking, administration, art, literature, and philosophy. Greek cities like Ephesus and Athens even flourished under Roman rule during the Pax Romana period of peace.
- Roman architecture and engineering incorporated and built upon Greek temple designs, using the symmetrical columns and proportions to construct government, religious, and civic buildings. Greek sculptural ideals of the human form also heavily influenced Roman art.
- So while the independent Greek city-states and political power declined, Greek culture and intellectual achievements were preserved and carried on through the Roman Empire, which spread Greco-Roman civilization throughout Europe.

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The Temple of Hephaestus in Athens



British Museum

The Temple of Hephaestus in Athens, built 449-415 BCE

British Museum

### **SUMMARY**

- Greek art and architecture made significant contributions that have had a **lasting impact on Western civilization**.
- Greek architecture is renowned for its highly formalised and elegant styles, particularly the classical orders - **Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian**. Greek temples, such as the **Parthenon in Athens**, are considered some of the finest examples of classical architecture, characterised by their symmetry, proportion, and use of marble.[1][4] Greek architects also pioneered the development of open-air theatres, public squares, and other civic structures.[4]
- Greek sculpture and vase painting were equally influential, with a focus on naturalism, proportion, and idealised human forms. Innovations like **contrapposto** and the depiction of **movement and emotion in statues** were hallmarks of Greek art.[2][3] Greek vase painting, mosaics, and engraved gems also demonstrate the Greeks' technical mastery and eye for detail.[3]
- Here we see on the left Temple of Hephaestus (built 449-415 BCE), a well-preserved Greek temple that remains standing largely intact today. It is a Doric peripteral temple on the north-west side of the Agora of Athens. It is preserved because from the 7th century until 1834, it served as the Greek Orthodox church.
- On the right is the British Museum (established 1753) built over two thousand years later and still clearly influenced by the ancient Greek temple.



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Alexander of Antioch,  
*Venus de Milo*,  
130-100 BCE,  
Louvre

# GREEK ART & ARCHITECTURE

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- The legacy of Greek art and architecture endures. The classical Greek forms and principles were later **adopted and adapted by the Romans**, and then **revived during the Renaissance** and in subsequent **neoclassical movements**.<sup>[1][2]</sup> The Greeks' emphasis on balance, harmony, and the human form continues to shape Western aesthetics to this day.<sup>[1][2]</sup>
- Thank you for your attention and I hope to be recording a talk on Roman art in the near future.

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[1] <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/beginners-guide-greece/a/introduction-to-greek-architecture>

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