

CHAPTER 5- *GODS, HEROES AND ATHLETES* The Art of Ancient Greece

SUMMARY:

Introduces the student to the Greek world and its contribution to Western civilization.

- Discern the differences between the art of Greece and the art of the world covered thus far.
- For the Greeks the body was the visible means of conveying perfection.
- You will notice the developing forms of sculpture from the geometric period and its schematic naïve presentation to the full realization of the human form as a vehicle to illustrate “natural movement in a hard and intractable form as marble.
- The tenet of Greek art production: balance, harmony and symmetry.
- These ideals are reflected in architecture as well as sculpture.

LECTURE:

- Compare Greeks and Egyptians similarities and differences and focus on the diversity of the Ancient World.
- Use a social methodology when analyzing the difference among the cultures.
- Point out the influences and how these motifs have been adapted to fit a new canon and aesthetic definition.

■ Geometric and Orientalizing Periods

9th-7th C. BCE

■ Archaic Period 6th C. BCE

■ Classical Period 5th C. BCE

■ Late Classical Period 4th C. BCE

■ Hellenistic Period 323-31 BCE

Major Differences

- Between early period and its counterpart in the Ancient Near East is *the fascination the human body had for the Greeks.*
- Even in 8c. BCE the Greeks interested in depiction of anatomy and natural movement.



- **5.2** show a marked fascination with the body and movement. Illustrates sense of volume and natural movement, anatomy even though one figure is a mythic creature, centaur.
- Shows more natural representation of the figures by showing the soft curve of the body; lower torsos of both figures depict a primitive attempt at showing the human figure (form).
- Thought to be the battle between Herakles and Nessos, by aligning the arms of both figures as if in wrestling match.



- **5.3** Mantiklos Apollo
- Focus of the Geometric Artist
- Fascination for human anatomy and how to present such figures.
- Upper torso showing more anatomical naturalism
- From the shoulders to the stomach, the artist illustrating a more realistic representation of the human male figure.

GEOMETRIC PERIOD



- **5.1** Geometric krater
- Illustrates Greek Vase painting reflects the development of figural representation in a 2-dimensional format-krater illustrates this evolution.
- Figures on the body of the krater are almost schematic in shape.
- *Important* depiction of the narrative
- Shown is a funeral of an individual and the mourners demonstrating their grief by the gestures of raised arms.
- Different from the Egyptians this is straightforward depiction of a funeral: no mythic creatures are present.

ARCHAIC PERIOD 6TH C. BCE

- Human figure more fluid.
- Fascination with Male figure and representation of not only a naked body but also body clearly defined musculature.



5.8 Kouros,

- Kouros: a young male sometimes representing the god or a votive figure or a grave marker.
- This is reminiscent of the work of Egypt

COMPARE TO:



3.13 Menkaure and Khamerernebtj

- Shows similarity in representation.
- Male figures with their arms clasped to their sides and striding forward
- Departure Greek Archaic work: shows the figure is naked and the arms are not part of the marble but carved freely.
- **EMPHASIS IS ON THE NATURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE BODY**



5.7. Lady of Auxerre

- Female figure depicted clothed/male naked.
- Together show the continuing Greek fascination for the human body.
- Both figures indicate the evolution in representation of human anatomy
- **COMPARE TO 3.13** Lady Auxerre shows more realistic handling of her anatomy
- Roundness of her shoulders, cocked elbow and hand to her breast suggest a more comfortable handling of figural representation.



5.11 Peplos Kore

- Shows developing concern for depicting a more natural figural representation.
- Artist has attempted to move figure from a “frozen in Time” moment to a “momentary pause”
- Slight tilt to her head and the smile (archaic smile seen on all figures at this time) could indicate a “pause” rather than a “stop in time” and could indicate that this is a depiction of a living person, still alive.
- Male figure or Kouros took on a variety of personas.



5.10 Kroisos figure 530 BCE

- A Grave marker for the young man who died in battle.
- **COMPARE TO EARLIER KOUROS**
- Shows 70 yr span figural representation has undergone great strides in human figural depiction.
- The musculature is becoming more realistic, even though depicted in same manner.
- Final break with Egyptian style came with the Kritios Boy 480 BC.



5-33 CLASSICAL PERIOD 5TH C BCE.

- Figure occupies space it is in, in a relaxed and real sense.
- Contrapposto or counterbalance is shown
- Final evolution in Early Classical period laid the foundation for the High Classical period that saw the human male figure go from “frozen” moments to existing in real space and almost moving within that space.
- Continued development of 3-d sculpture in the Hellenistic period 323-32 BCE now allowed the sculptors to develop the female figure in the same fashion as the male figure.

HELLENISTIC Propensity for emotional and vigorous figural representation is shown in the work of Praxiteles.



5.60 Aphrodite of Knidos 350-340 BCE

- He did not break with Early Classical tradition of great beauty and perfect bodies for the divinities
- But now the gods and goddesses also have a sensual quality focused on their more human natures.
- For the Greeks their gods and goddesses had all the flaws that humanity had, anger, jealousy, envy, lust as well as the virtues, nobility, loyalty, courage, wisdom.
- Praxiteles has captured the sensual beauty of the goddess.
- The sculptor has stripped from the divine being all unnecessary artifice and clothing.
- Aphrodite stands in all her naked beauty, yet the hand gesture shows a modesty, which allows the viewer to witness “divine beauty” as a tribute to the goddess and not as a voyeur “peeking”.
- Praxiteles created a vision of the goddess and amplified her extraordinary beauty.
- He further created an ideal of a nude by allowing her facial expression to remain serene and controlled. He removed any hint of salaciousness by gesture and facial expression.



5.89 Laocoon

- Exhibits movement and emotion
- Dynamics of the movement and placement of the figures within real space allow the viewer to witness not only the virtuosity of the sculptors about also the end result of the development of sculpture from a Greek perspective.
- The father and his son suffer a terrible vengeance of the gods, we are witnesses to their suffering.
- As seen in the sculptural programs developed for pediments of the Greek temples this work also functions as a tool to not only tell a story but also show the penalties the gods exacted when humans dared to countermand their wishes. Laocoon tried to warn the Trojans against bringing in the Greek gift of the Trojan horse.



5.80 Gallic Chieftain Killing Wife and Self 220 BCE Ludovisi group

- Same dynamic gestures
- Wife, dying or dead still supported by the chieftain, her husband.
- He is in the act of plunging his sword into his chest as the final gesture of defiance.

ARCHITECTURE

- Replaced wood and mud brick construction with permanent construction in marble.
- Contact with Egypt helped change methods of construction.
- Compare Djoser's complex at Saqqara with Temple of Hera !



3.7



5.13

- The engaged columns bear a strong resemblance to the later Greek Doric column.
- Temple architecture was developing in a parallel fashion much the same as sculpture.
- The architect was creating not only a building to house the cult statue but also a building which would reflect the Greek aesthetic vision:
- Symmetry, Harmony and balance.
- The post and lintel structure served this vision very well.

The development of the temple led to refinements that were finally realized in the Parthenon 447-438 BCE



5.42

- Parthenon represents the high point of Athenian culture.
- Became the crowning achievement of Pericles and a symbol of the Delian League.
- The acropolis of Athens represent the statesmanship and management skills of Pericles.



5.40

- The Greek temple was not to be just the house of the cult statue but also the role of sculptural architecture.
- A building which also functions as a monument.
- Greek temples were dedicated to the gods and goddesses and the pedimental sculptures also served as a text to not only reflect the glory of the divinities, but also to remind the public of the service they owed to the city=state.
- The east pediment of the *Temple of Zeus*, Olympia 470-457 BCE serves this purpose.,



5.30

- The sculptor has shown a visual format the story of the interaction between the gods and humanity.
- Given a brief glimpse at the foundation of the Olympic Games.
- Detailed the penalty for perjury and the consequences of such actions.
- The pediment in clam and tranquil presentation depicts the chariot race and th important characters;
- The event is known by all and the outcome as well.
- Only the figure of the seer 5.31 allows the viewer to suspect a different



outcome.

VASE PAINTING

Careful development of figural depiction

- Architecture was treated as a 3 d work that co existed with the programs developed to create a dialog with the viewer/worshipper.

- The programs served as vehicles to explain the activities of the gods and also to show the relationship of the city-state to the gods.
- These sculptural programs also illustrated, visibly proper codes of behaviors and conduct.
- Vase painting developed along those same lines.
- Depicted heroes, gods, goddesses but also a glimpse into their daily lives.



5.1 Geometric krater

- Gives a view of a funeral and mourning process



5.18

- Gives us selected representation of Greek mythology
- In addition to figural presentation the vase delineates the impact Greek visual art had on its trading partners.



5.23

- Late Archaic vessel a kylix or drinking vase shows the life of a servant the artist.
- Vase painting does allow us to gain a greater understanding of the status of women in Greek society.



- A Classical work by Achilles Painter 5.56 shows a wife sitting at home awaiting the return of her warrior husband (this lekythos was a funerary offering).
- This type of representation, patiently waiting at home was one vehicle for the presentation of the woman.