

GLORIOUS GREECE: ANCIENT PAINTING & SCULPTURE
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Ancient Greek art developed between 900 BC and 323 AD. Beginning with early crude proportions and geometric shapes, artists slowly turned to greater reality in painting and sculpture. This reached an apex with the elegance and perfection of the High Classical Period. Greek developments in architecture, sculpture and painting influenced the Romans. Painting is known almost exclusively thru pottery. Many of these pots have been found in Etruscan tombs and other non-Greek locations as the Greeks marketed to the Mediterranean world. Doric and Ionic architecture developed simultaneously, followed by Corinthian much later. All of the orders provided space for relief sculpture to ornament buildings and add color. Drama and emotion filled the work of the Hellenistic period following the death of Alexander the Great.

Time periods in Greek art:

Geometric (900 – 600 BC)

Painting: vase painting with an emphasis on geometry
Sculpture: only small scale sculpture

Archaic (600 – 480 BC)

Painting: figures initially crude, but slowly became more sophisticated;
Change from Black Figure to Red Figure late in the period giving greater detail
Sculpture: life-sized rigid nude kouros (youth) and clothed kore (maiden) figures influenced by Egyptian work
Relief: temple pediments started with dissonant proportions, then figures assumed different poses to fill the triangular shape
All were painted with encaustic (wax + pigment)

Early Classical (480 – 450 BC): Severe Style

Painting: vase painting lost its connection with the shape of the container
Sculpture: introduction of contrapposto and increasing naturalism;
lack of emotion; idealized figures
Relief: greater interaction of figures within pediments and metopes

High Classical (450 – 400 BC): The Age of Pericles

The rebuilding of the Athenian Acropolis by Pericles and Phidias after Persian destruction.

Sculpture: gigantic chryselephantine figures by Phidias; wet drapery

Relief: figures were still aloof and idealized on the Acropolis buildings

Late Classical (400 – 323 BC):

Conquest of Greek city-states by Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great

Sculpture: primarily known from Roman copies; first nude female sculpture;

Famous sculptors: Praxiteles, Polykleitos, Lysippos

Portraits of Alexander

Relief: use of dramatic diagonals

Painting: use of chiaroscuro (light & shadow used to create the illusion of roundness on a flat surface); strong use of diagonals

Pebble mosaics

Hellenistic (323 – 31 BC): Art like the Greeks in areas that Alexander conquered.

Following the death of Alexander the Great, Greek art was modified in areas outside Greece. There were cultural centers in Antioch, Alexandria and Pergamon. Architecture grew to a huge scale and traditional elements were often manipulated.

Sculpture: previously artists only created ideal figures, now all subject matter acceptable; drunks, babies, old people, along with the idealization of the past; use of emotion

Roman marble copies of bronze originals

Relief: emotion; figures intrude into the spectator's space

146 BC – Conquest by Rome, Greece became a Roman province

31 BC – Battle of Actium

Defeat of Antony & Cleopatra by Octavian who then became Emperor Augustus, the first emperor