Greek Art

Prehistoric Greece
Ancient Greece
Classical Greece
There are 3 distinct civilizations that make up Prehistoric Greece. Remember, prehistoric means we do not have written evidence or very little is understood of what has been found.
The Cyclades

- Made up of 6 islands in the Aegean Sea
- Art that survives is mainly from tombs, mostly pottery and small figurines; vary in size from inches to feet
- Gender is (almost) always identified
  - Female figures tend to be abstract and geometric
  - Male figures tend to be seated and playing an instrument
The Cyclades - art that survives is mainly from tombs, mostly pottery and small figurines

3000- 2000 B.C

Cycladic Idols: male and female
Meaning of the figurines

• It is supposed that they were funerary.
• We don’t really know if these are figures of the deceased or of gods or someone/thing else.
  – The majority being found in intact burials and cemeteries, seem to have a connection with death.
  – But different ones could have different meanings, depending on how they were used (function).
Crete - rather than focus on death, they focused on building lavish palaces for their royalty.

Ceremonial and political center of Minoan civilization.

Sir Arthur Evans purchased the site in 1900 and financed excavations.

He restored the palace and the discovery of the culture, that he himself labeled Minoan, are inseparable from his name.

Palace of Knossos (1700-1400 BC)
The **Minoans** seem to have worshipped primarily goddesses, which has sometimes been described as a matriarchal religion.

Goddesses are usually represented with serpents, birds, poppies, and a vague animal (undeciphered) on the head.

Snake Goddess, ca. 1600 BC

La Parisienne
Bull leaping was a major festive celebration on Knossos, found in sculpture as well as fresco. This is a uniquely Minoan ceremony.

Women have light skin, men darker skin—this is an ancient technique to differentiate men from women.

This is a uniquely Minoan ceremony.
The end of the Minoans

• What happened to Minoan civilization around 1500 BC is not at all clear.
• But it is clear that at around this point its flourishing monumental culture came to an abrupt halt.
• Crete was conquered by Mycenaean's ca. 1450 to 1400 BC.
• There is very little after 1400 BC.
Mycenaean - art and architecture is about defense. This is similar to defensive architecture discussed in the Ancient Near East

Funerary Mask, Grace Circle A, Mycenae. 1600-1500 BC

Lion Gate, Mycenae. 1300-1250 BC
The tholos tomb became popular for the burials of entire royal families later in the Mycenaean period.

The most famous of these tholos tombs by far is the so-called Treasury of Atreus.
ca. 1400/1200 B.C. – ca 900 B.C. are the so called Dark Ages of Greece.

Disintegration of social order led to the disappearance of powerful kings, the loss of knowledge in masonry (i.e. how to construct citadels and tombs), painting and sculpting were forgotten – as were reading and writing.

Depopulation, poverty and loss of contact with outside civilizations led to a virtual collapse of society.

Then in 8th c B.C. conditions begin to improve, population begins to grow, trade commences once again, Olympic games are established, epic poems (i.e. Homer) were written down.

*This is the beginning of Ancient and Classical Greece.*
Ancient Greece
The Greek World
Artistic Periods

• **Geometric** (900-600 B.C.) – gods and human figures are composed of geometric shapes.

• **Archaic** (600-480 B.C) – an interest in naturalism takes root. There was a growing emphasis on the human figure that set the foundation for **Classical** art.
Geometric Period

Krater vs Amphora

Geometric krater, from the Dipylon cemetery, Athens, Greece, ca. 740 BCE

Geometric amphora with mourning scene, from the Dipylon cemetery, Athens, Greece, ca. 750 BCE.
Pottery

- **Krater** – ancient wide-mouthed bowl for mixing wine and water
- **Amphora** – ancient Greek two-handled jar used for general storage purposes, usually wine or oil

The easiest way to tell them apart is to look at the placement of the necks.
Note the triangular body shape. On the left, the torso appears to be an inverted “V” while the textured hair appears to be influenced by art from Mesopotamia (Ancient Near East). On the right, the centaur is clearly a human body with the tail of a horse added on. Don’t worry – the technique will improve!

Mantiklos Apollo, statuette of a youth dedicated by Mantiklos to Apollo, from Thebes, Greece, ca. 700–680 BCE

Hero and centaur (Herakles and Nessos?), from Olympia, Greece, ca. 750–730 BCE
kouros & kore

– Earliest figures of the Greek Archaic Period
– Function is unknown, but because they may have been found among the ruins of temples they are thought to be devotional or funerary statues.
– The men were depicted in the nude.
  • They were stylized, and followed artistic conventions. For example they might have had a slight smile which is now referred to as an “Archaic Smile”
Human Figure in Archaic Art

Male:

kouros (male youth)
kouroi (pl.)

Female:

kore (maiden)
korai (pl.).

Peplos Kore, from the Acropolis, Athens, Greece, ca. 530 BCE

Kouros, ca. 600 BCE.
Why did Greek artists render the male form in the nude?

The Greeks believed the male body to be the most perfect and beautiful form. It becomes one of the major subjects in Greek art.

Notice the subtle changes but the vast improvement in naturalism. Artists are no longer relying on geometric shapes to form the body.

The one step forward is an adaptation of Egyptian art.

Kroisos, from Anavysos, Greece, ca. 530 BCE
Architecture

3 Styles or orders of columns:

1.) Doric
   - Originated on the Greek mainland
   - Most common and the favored style of column

2.) Ionic
   - Used for smaller temples
   - Volutes are the swirls that appear on the sides

3.) Corinthian
   - Not widely used in Greece, favorite of Roman architects
   - Acanthus leaves appear throughout the top of the column
1 Steps
   (a) Stereobate
   (b) Stylobate
2 Shaft
   (a) Doric drum
   (b) Flute
   (c) Base
3 Capital
   (a) Necking
   (b) Echinos
   (c) Abacus
   (d) Volute
4 Column
5 Architrave
6 Frieze
   (a) Metope
   (b) Triglyph
7 Cornice
8 Entablature

Doric drum

Doric

Ionic

Corinthian
Temple of Hera I ("Basilica"), and plan, Paestum, Italy, ca. 550 BCE.

This is a Doric style temple.
Vase Painting

There were two types of vase painting – black figure and red figure. Both were used in Ancient Greece.

EXEKIAS, Achilles and Ajax playing a dice game (detail from an Athenian black-figure amphora), from Vulci, Italy, ca. 540–530 BCE.

ANDOKIDES PAINTER, Achilles and Ajax playing a dice game (amphora), from Orvieto, Italy, ca. 525–520 BCE. Red-figure side (right).
Classical Greece
Transition to the Classical Period

• The Classical period begins in 480 BC
• \textit{Implied movement} was the greatest advancement in the arts of the Early Classical period.
• By the Classical period, the Greeks were fixated on the ideas of harmony and balance, perfection and idealization. These ideas guided all forms of art – buildings, sculptures, vase paintings, etc. There was no room for error, flaws were not acceptable. There was no room for anything but \textit{absolute perfection}.
• The most copied subjects were Myron’s \textit{Disk-thrower} & Polykleitos’ \textit{Spear-bearer}
Artistic Periods

• Early & High Classical (480-400 B.C.)
• Late Classical (400 – 323 B.C.)
• Hellenistic (323-30 B.C.)

• The focus throughout these three periods is the human form. Gods, heroes, athletes, warriors – these are the preferred subjects. And these all fit perfectly with the male nude – the preferred subject of the Greeks.
• Female figures will also develop in this period but much slower and while the Greeks were fascinated by the male nude, the female nude was much to risqué, developing much, much, much, slower than the male nude.
Dying warrior, from the west pediment (top), from the east pediment (below) of the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina, Greece, ca. 500–490 BCE

Archaic Style – posed, rigid, looking out at viewer. Note his archaic smile.

Classical Style – Natural, human, oblivious to the viewer, in pain.
Posture in Statuary

*Kritios Boy (left)* is the earliest known example of *contrapposto*, a relaxed and natural stance.
*Notice how his weight shifts to his left leg and how his head turns slightly to his right.
*Notice the absence of the Archaic smile

This Riace Warrior (right), like most Classical Greek statues, was sculpted in bronze. Most Classical bronzes have not survived.
*Much of the Classical Greek sculptures today are Roman marble copies.*
The fascination with implied movement is noticeable in this sculpture. Look at the stance of Zues (or Poseidon?) – his arms are stretched out, his legs are open and positioned firmly and his feet are placed in different directions. He appears to be releasing something (we’ve lost it! It could be a trident or thunder bolt) from his back hand.
MYRON,

_Diskobolos (Discus Thrower)_). Roman marble copy of a bronze original of ca. 450 BCE

This is implied movement at its best! Look at this athlete – but really look at him. The veins in his arms and legs are bulging, his abdomen is sunken in as he’s taken a deep breath, that same breath causing his rib cage to rise and his ribs to stick out. His body is contorted, his extended arm is about to release the disk. This is perfection!
Doryphoros (Spear-bearer), POLYKLEITOS

• Originally titled Canon
• Established Polykleitos’ canon of proportions, setting ideal correlations among body parts
• Contrapposto
• Notice the harmony of opposites

Polykleitos sought to capture the ideal proportions of the human figure and developed a set of aesthetic principles governing these proportions that was known as the Canon or “Rule.” In doing this, he created a system based on a simple mathematical formula in which the human body was divided into measured parts that all related to one another.

Beauty consists in the proportion, not of the elements, but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the other parts to each other. (Summary of The Canon by Polykleitos)

POLYKLEITOS, Doryphoros (Spear Bearer). Roman marble copy from Pompeii, Italy, after a bronze original of ca. 450–440 BCE
Acropolis – Classical Architecture

- After the Persians destroyed the Acropolis, the Greeks mounted a massive building campaign under Pericles to rebuild it.

- The first major work that was rebuilt was a temple, The Parthenon, to the goddess Athena – protector of Athens.

- The Parthenon was designed by architects Iktinos and Kallikrates, and is the best example of the Doric order.
Aerial View, Acropolis, Athens, Greece
Site plan

1. **Parthenon**
2. Old Temple of Athena
3. **Erechtheum**
4. Statue of Athena Promachos
5. Propylaea
6. Temple of Athena Nike
7. Eleusinion
8. Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia
9. Chalkotheke
10. Pandroseion
11. Arrephorion
12. Altar of Athena
13. Sanctuary of Zeus Polieus
14. Sanctuary of Pandion
15. Odeon of Herodes Atticus
16. Stoa of Eumenes
17. Sanctuary of Asclepius or Asclepieion
18. Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus
19. Odeon of Pericles
20. Temenos of Dionysus Eleuthereus
21. Aglaureion
The Parthenon is a temple of the Doric order with eight columns at the facade, and seventeen columns at the flanks, conforming to the established ratio of 9:4. This ratio governed the vertical and horizontal proportions of the temple as well as many other relationships of the building like the spacing between the columns and their height.
Narratives & Figures from the Parthenon
All temples in Greece were designed to be seen only from the outside. The viewers never entered a temple and could only glimpse the interior statues through the open doors. The Parthenon was conceived in a way that the aesthetic elements allow for a smooth transition between the exterior and the interior that housed the over life size statue of Athena.
Lapith versus centaur, metope from the south side of the Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, ca. 447-438 BCE

**Centaur**: half-human, half-horse. Often shown as liminal beings (caught between the two natures) they represent untamed nature, as in their battle with the Lapiths (their kin), or as teachers (this is rare).
Three goddesses (Hestia, Dione, and Aphrodite?), from the east pediment of the Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, ca. 438–432 BCE

Helios and his horses, and Dionysos (Herakles?), from the east pediment of the Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, ca. 438–432 BCE
The ancient wooden image of the goddess, Athena Polais was housed here. This was the most important ritual image of the goddess on the Acropolis, the one brought out of the sanctum to receive the peplos brought by the Panathenaic Festival Procession.
Purpose of a caryatid was to act as architectural support.

**Caryatid** - female figurative pillars

Replaced the Ionic column.

Caryatid from the south porch of the Erechtheion, Acropolis, Athens, Greece, ca. 421–405 BCE
Late Classical Period

• 400 – 323 B.C; time of chronic warfare
  – Athens succumbs to the Spartans, the pre-eminent military and navy power in the Classical world
  – the Macedonians (Phillip II) invade Greece and defeat the united city states in 338 B.C.
  – 336 B.C. Phillip II is assassinated, his son Alexander the Great becomes ruler. Launches a massive military campaign and overthrows the Persian Empire (act of revenge) and took control of Egypt (est. Alexandria) and India.
• All of these events effected the appearance of art
Praxiteles

• Bold step to render a goddess in the nude & meant to be seen from all angles.

• Retains superhuman beauty but also includes sensuous and humanizing qualities – different from the cold, aloof gods and athletes used in earlier eras.

• Modesty is depicted – how? Look at her hand gesture. This stance become known as the Venus pudica, or modest Venus.

Praxiteles

- Notice S-curve of the body (pronounced *contrapposto*)
- New standard of adult and child interaction
- Humanized the gods

Praxiteles(?), Hermes and the infant Dionysos, from the Temple of Hera, Olympia, Greece. Copy of a statue by Praxiteles of ca. 340 BCE or an original work of ca. 330–270 BCE by a son or grandson.
• introduced a new canon of proportions where the bodies were more slender than those of Polykleitos
  *Doryphoros (Spear-bearer)*, 450 -40 B.C.

• wanted the viewer to see the statue from all angles, not just a frontal view

Lysippos, *Apoxyomenos (Scraper)*. Roman marble copy of a bronze original of ca. 330 BCE,
• exaggerated muscle development. Herakles is so tired that he needs to lean on his club in order to remain standing – *humanizing technique begun by Praxiteles*

• he holds the golden apples behind his back – another technique Lysippos used in order to engage the view to enjoy the statue from multiple angles.

Lysippos, Weary Herakles (*Farnese Herakles*). Roman marble copy from Rome, Italy, signed by GLYKON OF ATHENS, of a bronze original of ca. 320 BCE
Alexander the Great

- Official artist was Lysippos
- Alexander's creation of Greek colonies resulted in the spreading of Greek culture and art in the east and in a new Hellenistic civilization
- Alexander was associated with Achilles, a classical hero from *The Iliad*
Polykleitos the Younger, Theater, Epidauros, Greece, ca. 350 BCE

Auditorium is situated on a hillside, seats were stone benches, 55 rows of seats, 12,000 spectators – harmonious in proportion & acoustics allowed every single person in the audience to hear the actors and chorus.
Columns

Polykleitos the Younger, Corinthian capital, from the tholos, Epidauros, Greece, ca. 350 BCE.
Sculpture in the Hellenistic Period

- Human and identifiable aspects: long, bushy/curly hair, mustaches & torques (neck bands)
- twisting posture, theatrical gestures, emotional intensity = focus is on the psychological impact

Epigonos(?), Gallic chieftain killing himself and his wife. Roman marble copy of a bronze original of ca. 230–220 BCE
Epigonos(?), Dying Gaul. Roman marble copy of a bronze original of ca. 230–220 BCE

- Human and identifiable aspects:
  - long, bushy/curlly hair, mustaches & torques
  - (neck bands)
Here is your 2\textsuperscript{nd} female nude. She was meant to be sexually enticing unlike the earlier Aphrodite of Knidos.

ALEXANDROS OF ANTIOCH-ON-THE-MEANDER, Aphrodite (\textit{Venus de Milo}), from Melos, Greece, ca. 150–125 B.C.
New vs. Traditional Ideals

Sleeping satyr (*Barberini Faun*), from Rome, Italy, ca. 230–200 B.C.

Seated boxer, from Rome, Italy, ca. 100–50 B.C.

*1st work that is NOT idealized in the Classical world

Note the defeated, battered boxer. This is not the glorious athlete the Greeks favor. This is the beginning of Rome’s influence.
In the Hellenistic period we come to portraits that are interested in specific individual idiosyncrasies and personalities. This is something the Romans, the next “super power” of the ancient world will develop further.
ATHANADOROS, HAGESANDROS, and POLYDOROS OF RHODES, Laocoön and his sons, from Rome, Italy, early first century CE

It shows the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons Antiphantes and Thymbraeus being strangled by sea serpents.
Look at the evolution of the male figure in Greek Art -

Compare the human figures as developed in other Ancient societies ca. 700 – 200 BCE
Look at the evolution of the female figure in Greek Art
Compare this to female figures as developed in other Ancient societies
ca. 600 – 100 BCE
Look at the evolution of architecture in Greek Art
Compare religious architecture as developed in other Ancient societies
c a. 600 – 300 BCE
And now onto the Etruscans and Romans!
You’ll start with the Etruscans, progress to the founding of the Roman Republic, culminating in the Roman Empire.