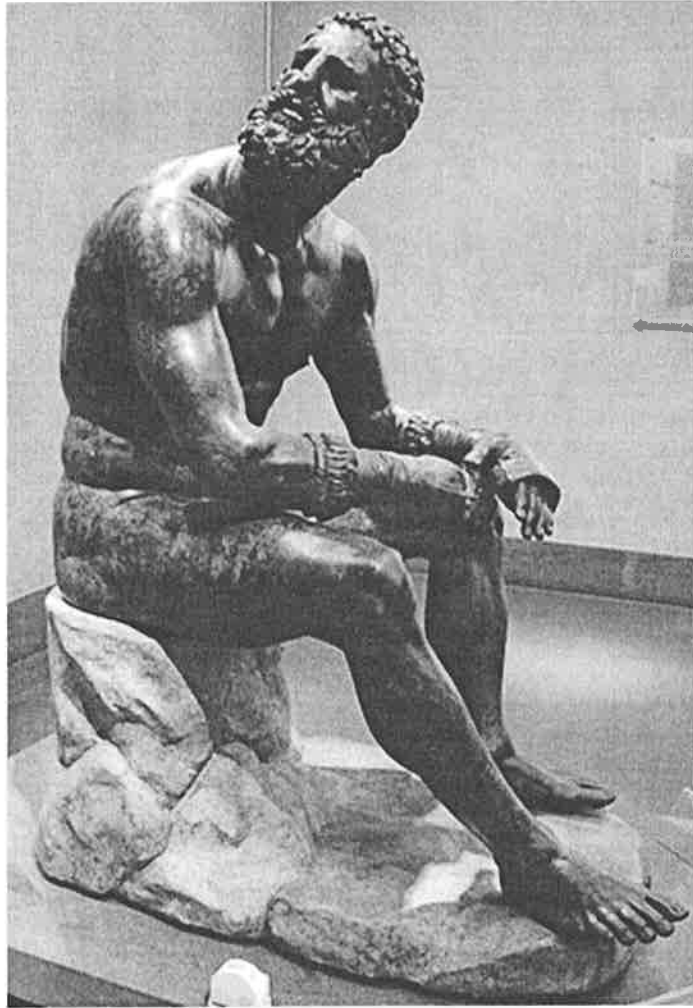


# AP Art History

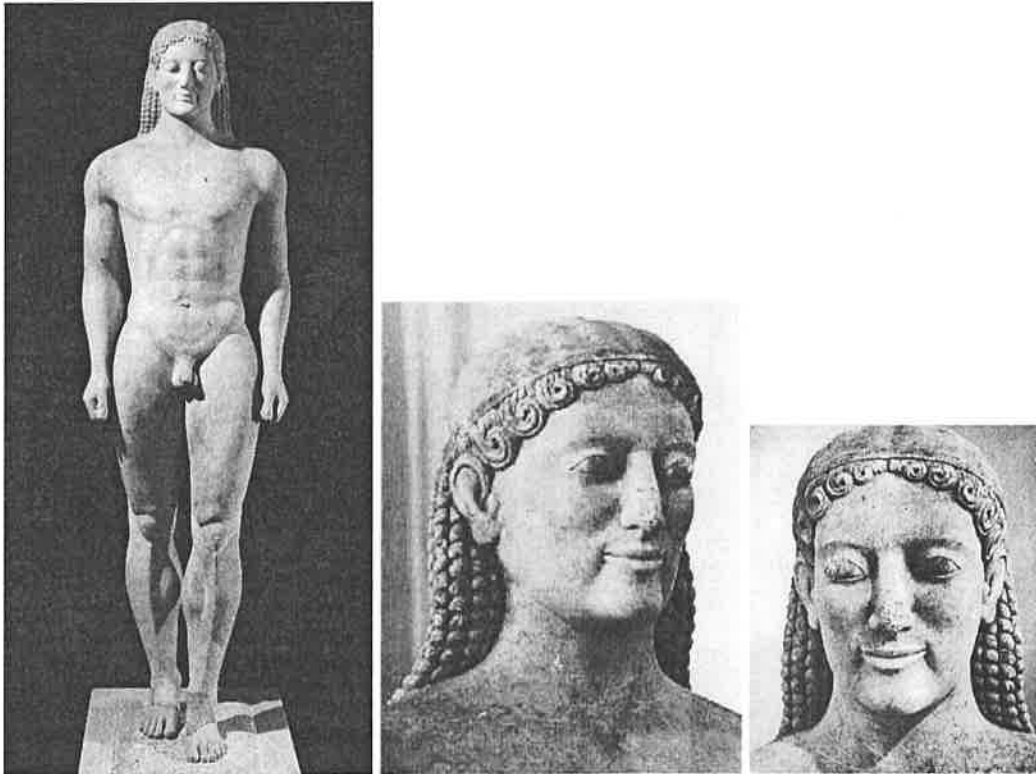
## Unit 2B: Ancient Greece and Rome



## Unit Reading

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27. Anavysos Kouros. Archaic Greek. c. 530 B.C.E. Marble with remnants of paint.



### Video

The kouros, Kroisos, stands in a frontal posture, with his left foot slightly advanced. He holds his arms, which are separated from his body, at his sides, and clenches his fists. He is unusually fleshy, which suggests to Stewart (122) East Greek influence. His hair is arranged in ringlets below a narrow taenia, but is summarily worked on the crown (as if he is wearing a skull cap). The locks of his hair, arranged strands of circular clumps, fall in a curve behind down his back, and are rounded on the sides.<sup>1</sup>

...a remarkable statue in marble that was set up over the grave of a wealthy young man on the family estate in rural Attica some time in the second half of the sixth century B.C. This statue also represents one of those rare cases where the statue base with its inscription was found together with the statue. The inscription reads: The young man died in battle and his name was Kroisos. He bore the same name as the sixth-century king of Lydia, the king whom Solon of Athens visited and who was fabled for his wealth. The youth's father may have enjoyed close relations with the Lydian King; quite possibly he was the official guest-friend or proxenos, making him a kind of Lydian consul in Athens. And so he named a son

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<sup>1</sup> Perseus.tufts.edu., 2015. 'Athens, NM 3851 (Sculpture)'. Accessed August 13 2015.  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Athens,+NM+3851&object=sculpture>.

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for his foreign friend. And by erecting this statue without armor, without clothing, belonging to the class of such figures that are known as "kouroi", the father suggested that Kroisos had become a hero attaining a status between mortality and divinity.<sup>2</sup>

### The Inscription:

στῆθι · καὶ οἰκτιρὸν · Κροίσου πατρὸς σέου θανάτου ·  
ὄν ποτ' ἐν προμάχοις · ὄλωσε θῆρος Ἄρης

Kouros (youth) sculptures were abundantly produced during the Archaic era (700-480 BCE), continuing a long line of small votive statues made of bronze. Around 600 BCE the first monumental figure sculptures appear in Greece and they depict youths, almost always standing in the nude, and were either votive or commemorative in nature.

Kouros, as was the case with the Kore statues, were almost always approximately life-size (some much larger), and with few exceptions were made of marble. They are depicted standing in a frontal pose with their left leg moved forward, their arms close to their bodies touching the side of their thighs, and they exhibit an almost strict symmetry as the different parts of the anatomy are depicted as simple geometric forms. In this respect, the Kouros statues have a great deal in common with Egyptian monumental sculpture that undoubtedly influenced their development. However, the similarities between Egyptian and Greek monumental statues are superficial. The Greek Kouros soon after the initial stages of the early 7th century begin to exhibit the marks of the inquisitive spirit, the inherent sense of freedom, and the curiosity of the Greek artists. They begin a refinement of form towards a definitive realism that was only possible through a society that revered the human form, and desired to understand the natural environment as a series of cause and effect arguments. It is indicative of this cultural attitude that the Kouros statues depict not deities or political leaders, but mere mortal human beings who were worthy of commemoration or of eternal service to their gods.

Many of the creative processes imported from Egypt or the Middle East were adopted and retained by the Greek artists. Early monumental statues resemble Egyptian art in form and technique but were quickly refined and expanded through a series of technical and conceptual innovations. Firstly, Greek artists of the early Archaic era had the benefit of iron chisels, which were much harder than the copper and bronze ones that the Egyptians utilized and thus, they were able to carve hard stone like marble.

The use of steel chisels after 500 BCE allowed for a different process of roughing-out and cutting the stone where the chisel can be held at an acute angle to cut against the stone allowing in turn for more freedom of movement and expression to the artist's hand. In contrast, a soft chisel (like bronze) against hard stone must be held perpendicular relative to the surface, and must be used to pulverize the surface crystals slowly.

<sup>2</sup> Brown.edu., 2015. 'The Hand Of Daedalus, Chapter 2'. Accessed August 13 2015.  
[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/publications/papers/daedalus/chapter2.html](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/publications/papers/daedalus/chapter2.html).

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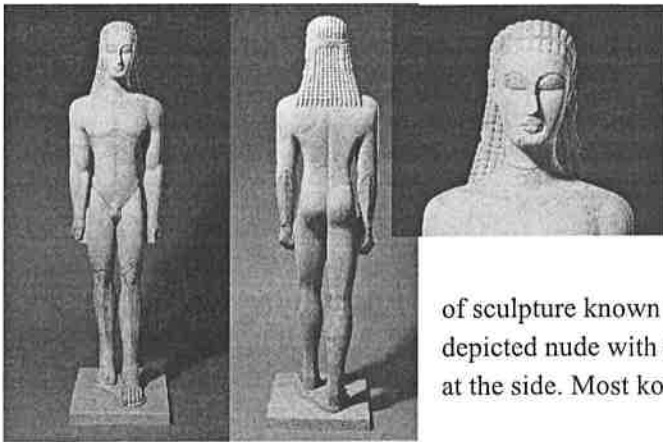
While Egyptian statues often were carved against a flat slab and at least partially clothed, Greek Kouros were freestanding and always nude, a feature that helped detach the Kouros from a specific historical setting. It is this nudity that allowed the individuals depicted in the sculpture to be seen in a context that transcends time and elevates each figure to a universal symbol for humanity.

Some early Kouros utilized the Egyptian technique of dividing the figure into a rigid grid, which divided the human figure into 21 equal squares from the eyes to the feet with one-half to two more squares from the eyes to the top of the head or the headdress (Metropolitan Kouros might have been created using such grid). Greek artists however favored a system of proportion that was relative to the individual parts of the figure. They utilized a measurement based on the length of the human foot to sketch the human body on the stone before carving, a concept that became famous later in Classical times by Polykletos. Most Kouros statues are between five and seven ancient Greek feet tall, and few are built in monumental scale.

The Greek sculptor, by not utilizing a rigid system of measurement, began depicting the parts of the human anatomy in proportions related to one another. The height of the head soon became the obvious point of reference, and a standing figure's height was expressed by a number of "heads". In reality, the human head's height would fit about seven times into the man's height, and conversely several Kouros exhibit the 1:7 head:body proportions (Kroisos, Aristodikos, Piraeus Bronze Kouros), some 1:8, some 1:6.5 (Sounio Kouros, Kleobis + Biton).

The main preoccupation of the Archaic sculptor seems to be the accurate depiction of the human features, an obsession that developed for over one century until it reached its apogee in classical Greece, and its conclusion in the Hellenistic and Roman art. The human body of the early Kouros was depicted as a series of carefully interrelated geometric planes that broadly suggested the human features in a strict symmetrical arrangement (Metropolitan Kouros). Even in the early Archaic period however the preoccupation with reality is evident through the highly stylized surfaces.<sup>3</sup>

### The Met Kouros:



Statue of a kouros (youth), ca. 590–580 B.C.; Archaic Greek, Attic, Naxian marble  
This noble figure of a youth is one of the earliest freestanding marble statues from Attica, the region around Athens. It is a type of sculpture known as a kouros (male youth), characteristically depicted nude with the left leg striding forward and hands clenched at the side. Most kouros were made in the Archaic period, between

<sup>3</sup> Sakoulas, Thomas. 2015. 'Kouros'. *Ancient-Greece.Org*. Accessed August 13 2015. <http://ancient-greece.org/art/kouros.html>.

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## 28. Peplos Kore from the Acropolis. Archaic Greek. c. 530 B.C.E. Marble, painted details.

G14, 114

S5, 115-116

SH

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<http://www.classics.cam.ac.uk/museum/collections/peplos-kore>

The Peplos Kore is the best known – and probably most loved – exhibit in the Museum of Classical Archaeology. She is a type of statue known as a *kore* (plural: *korai*), marble representations of young women used to mark graves or, more often, as votive offerings to the gods in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.

The word *kore* means 'young woman' or 'girl' in ancient Greek; it's a word classical archaeologists use to describe this type of Archaic sculpture. The original Peplos Kore was dedicated to the goddess Athena on the Akropolis in Athens c.530 BCE and now stands in the Akropolis Museum. Ours stands proud in the Cast Gallery – and she is brightly painted in a riot of color, as the original would have been.



Today, we are accustomed to viewing Greek sculpture as bright white; clean and fresh marble is no doubt what we think of most when we imagine ancient Greek art. And yet, we have known since the end of the eighteenth century that the Greeks painted their sculptures in bright colors and adorned them with metal jewelry.

### Color and Classical Sculpture

The Roman author Pliny the Elder – famous for meeting his end during the eruption of Vesuvius which buried Pompeii and Herculaneum – wrote in the first century CE of how statues were colored and polished to produce a full spectrum of effects upon their viewers. In the later nineteenth century, excavations on the Akropolis in Athens began to produce statues on which traces of colored paint could still be seen on the marble surface. The Peplos Kore was one of those statues.

In 1975, the Museum of Classical Archaeology acquired a new cast of the Peplos Kore. Since the Museum already owned a cast of the sculpture, the Curator, Prof. Robin Cook, made the decision to restore the new cast and to paint it as if its original colors were still

preserved. So little paint remains on the original that restoring her appearance was a tricky proposition which required some imagination.

Recent scientific analysis has suggested that the Peplos Kore's paintwork may have been even more elaborate, even cycling through several different designs. But the repainted statue gives visitors a good impression of what ancient Greek sculpture might have originally looked like.

Perhaps more importantly, our painted Peplos Kore also forces us to look at her anew and challenges our preconceptions. Nineteenth century notions of the so-called 'Classical Ideal' have made it hard for many viewers to accept that ancient Greek sculpture really was so very brightly colored. But neoclassicists who praised the pure white beauty of bare marble and the noble austerity of ancient architecture were really imposing nineteenth century aesthetics and morality onto ancient Greek art and culture.

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Of course, we have inherited those ideals and a particular way of viewing Greek sculpture – one which often makes it difficult to look beyond the glossy radiance of statues which long-ago lost their paintwork. Resistance lingers on today. Many museum visitors are shocked or even horrified to see the blues and reds of the Peplos Kore. One visitor even memorably wrote in the Visitor's Book 'Didn't like the painted woman'... In other words, our reconstructed Peplos Kore, as she stands next to her unpainted and fragmented sister-cast, still provokes a range of reactions.

### Looking at the Details

The Peplos Kore is 1.18 meters tall and the original is made of Parian marble, quarried not far from Athens. The traces of paint which survived on her surfaces have faded since she was first excavated from a pit near the Erechtheion on the Akropolis in 1884. Like fourteen other korai discovered on the Akropolis, she had been dumped there as part of the renovations following the Persian destruction of the Akropolis between 480-479 BCE.

The red garment she wears is called a *peplos*, and it is from this item of clothing that she gains her modern-day name. Her *peplos* is decorated with a green and white patterned band at its edges and green trimmings. It is constructed of a single large sheet of cloth, pinned at the shoulders and gathered at the waist by a belt. By the fifth century BCE, wearing a *peplos* had fallen out of fashion; it may even have looked slightly (and deliberately) out-of-date when the Peplos Kore donned it in the sixth century.

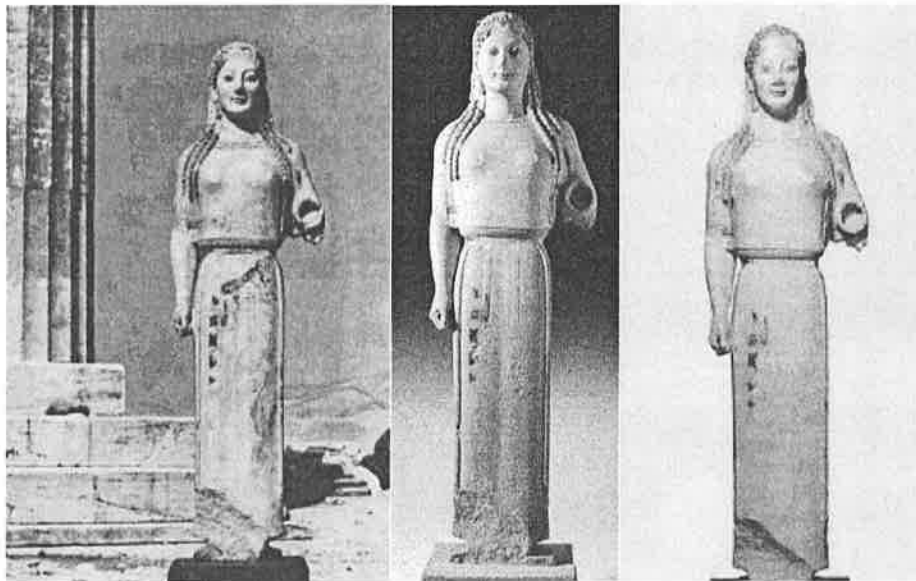
Underneath, she wears a blue crinkly dress called a *chiton*. The little umbrella on her head is called a *meniskos*; she wears it to keep the weather and the birds off. Her extended left arm holds out an offering, probably intended for the gods – although its effect is also to make her appear as if she reaches out to her more mortal viewers.

### Conservation

Even a cast sometimes needs some tender loving care. In 1996, the painted cast of the Peplos Kore was repainted. The paints used to paint her in 1975 had faded and cracked.

<http://www.dl.ket.org/latin2/links/mirror/peplos/peplostr.html>

MUSEUM OF CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, CAMBRIDGE



The Peplos Kore

**The Peplos Kore is the best known exhibit** in the Museum of Classical Archaeology. It is a plaster cast of an ancient Greek statue of a young woman (*kore* means young woman or girl in ancient Greek), wearing a garment called a peplos. She is painted brightly as the original would have been, which was set up on the Acropolis in Athens, around 530 BC.

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**33. Niobides Krater.** Anonymous vase painter of Classical Greece known as the Niobid Painter. c. 460–450 B.C.E. Clay, red-figure technique (white highlights), 21 ¼" x 22". Musee du Louvre, Paris, France.

G15, 141; G14, 143

A3, 147

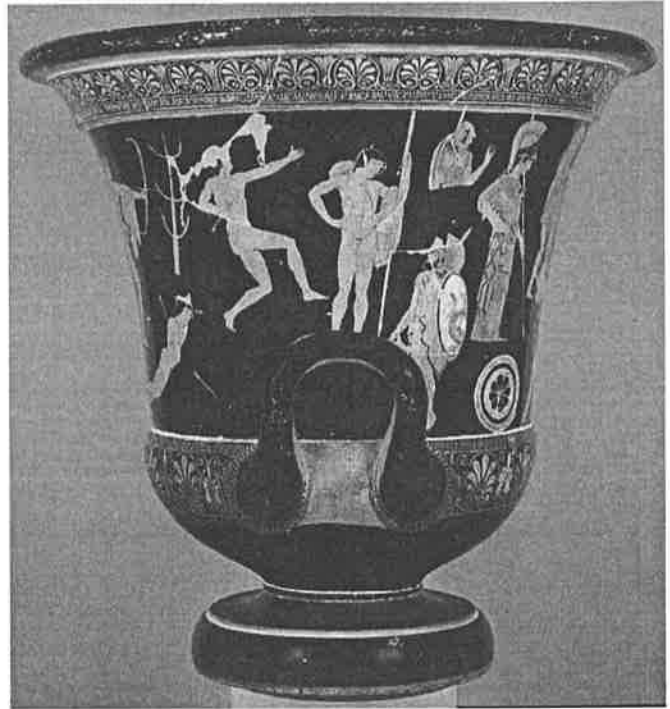
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Pins [Image 1](#) [Image 2](#) [Metamorphosis text](#) [Louvre Theseus detail](#)

<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/attic-red-figure-calyx-krater-known-niobid-krater>

### Attic Red-Figure Calyx Krater known as the "Niobid Krater"

The Niobid Painter, probably inspired by the large frescoes produced in Athens and Delphi, decorated this exceptional krater with two scenes in which the many figures rise in tiers on lines of ground that evoke an undulating landscape. On one side, Apollo and Artemis are shown decimating the children of Niobe with their arrows; on the other side is Heracles surrounded by Athena and heroes in arms, in a composition whose serenity is already classical, and whose meaning is still uncertain.



**A Mysterious Gathering:** The main side of the vase shows eleven figures placed at different levels. Only two of them are recognizable: Heracles, in the center, holding his club and bow, with his lion skin over his left arm, and Athena on the left. Around them several warriors are represented in varying poses.

Many questions have been asked about the meaning of this image. Two hypotheses frequently crop up: the Argonauts awaiting favorable winds in Iolcos, and the episode of Heracles descending into Hades to rescue Theseus and Pirithous, who were guilty of trying to carry off Persephone.

**Heracles and the Warriors of Marathon:** A final, more recent, hypothesis looks at the obvious emphasis given to Heracles – crowned with laurels, wrinkled and standing on a stepped base almost invisible to the naked eye. It is thought to be a statue of the deified hero, after he had completed his exploits. We know from ancient sources that Heracles was thought to have helped Marathon to victory and was subsequently the object of a cult in Athens. We may therefore be seeing, in this image, the warriors of Marathon, come to place themselves under the protection of the hero before battle.

The B side of the vase illustrates a legend that is rarely represented, and gave the painter his name. Here we see the massacre of the children of Niobe by Apollo and Artemis. Niobe, the mother of seven girls and seven boys, had bragged that she was superior to the goddess Leto, who only had two children. These two children, Apollo and Artemis, hastened to avenge the honor of their mother by killing all the children of the unfortunate mortal. This is the moment that the painter has chosen to represent – the divine archers shooting down the Niobids with their arrows. Half of them are already lying dead on the ground.

**The Influence of Sculpture and Large-Scale Paintings:** The stylistic characteristics of this krater owe much to contemporary sculpture and wall paintings. The poses of the key figures – Artemis, Apollo and Heracles – are

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reminiscent of those in Severe style statues, which can be seen in Olympia. However, by bringing in elements of wall paintings, the painter has given this vase its exceptional character. Wall painting was a major art form that developed considerably during the late fifth century BC, and is now only known to us through written accounts. Complex compositions were perfected, which involved numerous figures placed at different levels. This is the technique we find here where, for the first time on a vase, the traditional isocephalia of the figures has been abandoned.

### **Bibliography**

Martine Denoyelle, *Chefs-d'œuvre de la céramique grecque*, 1995, p. 138, Ed. de la Réunion des musées nationaux, n° 64.

M. Denoyelle, *Le Cratère des Niobides*, 1997.

<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/pottery/painters/keypieces/redfigure/niobid.htm>

**Museum:** Paris, Louvre

**Size:** 55cm. ([calyx-crater](#))

**Function:** convivial

**Technique:** red-figure with variable ground lines and landscape elements

**Style:** early classical

**Subject/s:** A. [Herakles](#) and [Athena](#) join Greek heroes. B. [Apollo](#) and [Artemis](#) avenge their mother by slaughtering the children of [Niobe](#) who boasted of her superiority.

**Date:** mid 5th c.

**Analysis:** the most famous example in Athenian vase-painting of the use of variable ground lines, landscape features such as hills, painted in white, and trees in red-figure, partially hidden figures and three-quartered and frontal faces. Painted not long after the wall painter [Polygnotos](#) was brought from Thasos to work at Delphi and Athens, it can help us to visualize the technique Pausanias says he used at Delphi.

**Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th Enhanced ed. 2011, pp. 135-136**

**NIOBID PAINTER** Polygnotos's influence is evident on a red-figure krater painted around the middle of the fifth century BCE by the Niobid Painter—so named because one side of the krater depicts the massacre of the Niobids, the children of Niobe. Niobe, who had at least a dozen children, had boasted that she was superior to the goddess Leto, who had only two offspring, Apollo and Artemis. To punish Niobe's hubris (arrogance) and teach the lesson that no mortal could be superior to a god or goddess, Leto sent her two children to slay all of Niobe's many sons and daughters. On the Niobid Painter's krater, the horrible slaughter occurs in a schematic landscape setting of rocks and trees. The figures are disposed on several levels, and they actively interact with their setting. One slain son, for example, not only has fallen upon a rocky outcropping but is partially hidden by it. The Niobid Painter also drew the son's face in a three-quarter view, something that not even Euphronios and Euthymides had attempted.

The placement of figures on different levels in a landscape on this red-figure krater depicting the massacre of Niobe's children reflects the compositions of the lost panel paintings of Polygnotos of Thasos.

**Adams, Laurie Schneider. *Art Across Time*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2007, pp 147-148.**

In addition to increased organic form, the Greek painters of the mid-fifth century B.C.E. began to set figures in nature and to depict elements of landscape. The *kalyx krater* by an artist known as the Niobid Painter has an unidentified scene on one side; the other, depicting *The Death of the Children of Niobe* (the Niobids), has a rudimentary tree and sloping terrain. Niobe was a mortal woman who boasted that she was greater than Leto because she had fourteen children. To punish Niobe for her arrogant pride, which the Greeks called *hubris*, Apollo (the son of Zeus and Leto) and his twin sister, Artemis, who were expert archers, killed all of Niobe's





**34. *Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)*. Polykleitos.** Original 450–440 B.C.E. Roman copy (marble) of Greek original (bronze). Height 6'11", tree trunk and brace strut are Roman additions. National Archaeological Museum, Naples, Italy.

G15, 129-130

G14, 132-133

S5, 134, 142

A3, 158

GW, 308

SH

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<http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/5851/the-doryphoros>

The MIA's *Doryphoros*, dating from the first century B.C., is a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze sculpture that was made between 450 B.C. and 440 B.C. by the sculptor, Polykleitos. It is the finest of the five known copies of the entire body of this famous masterpiece that have survived relatively intact.<sup>1</sup> Representing an athlete (or possibly

Achilles), this harmonious, balanced figure with idealized proportions, typifies art from the Classical period of Greece.

The *Doryphoros* and other Roman copies of Greek sculpture are extremely valuable because no bronze sculpture made by a famous Greek artist has survived to the present day. These works were often melted down in times of warfare and the metal was used for weapons. Roman copies, therefore, provide us with the only visual documentation available of Classical Greek sculpture. Before the existence of our copy was known, the best version was the one in the Museo Nazionale in Naples (found in the Municipal Gymnasium of Pompeii). In addition, both the Uffizi in Florence and the Braccio Nuovo of the Vatican have heavily restored versions.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Two significant historical events, the Persian War (early in the 5th century B.C.), and the temporary unification of Greece by Philip II of Macedonia (338 B.C.), mark the beginning and end of what we have come to call the Classical period of Greek civilization. Under Pericles (who was first elected as general-in-chief in 461 B.C.), Athens became the political, cultural, and commercial center of the western world. The pride, self-awareness, and confidence of the Greeks during their Classical Age, are reflected in the words of Pericles at the public funeral for the fallen heroes of the Peloponnesian War:

"Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now."<sup>2</sup>

During the Classical era, the Parthenon was built, Aeschylus staged his first drama, Herodotus wrote the history of the Persian wars, and democracy was established as a form of government. The philosophy of humanism developed, a philosophy which emphasized the importance of the individual in society. Sophocles wrote,

"The world is full of wonders, but nothing is more wonderful than man."<sup>3</sup>

The ideal man possessed not only a perfect body, but a perfect mind. At the festivals, such as the Olympic Games at Olympia and the Pythian Games at Delphi, prizes were awarded not only to the best athletes, but to the best poets, orators, dancers, and musicians as well. Through scientific observations of nature, the concepts of harmony and balance achieved through symmetry and correct proportion became the basis of Greek philosophy. The search for ideal beauty and perfection manifested itself in all areas of life including the visual arts.

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The Parthenon on the Acropolis summarized the Greek ideals of harmony and rational order in architectural forms. Polykleitos codified these ideals in sculpture. The *Doryphoros* exemplifies Polykleitos' *Canon* (rule) of ideal proportions. The *Doryphoros* combines the naturalism of the human body, at rest and in motion, with an idealization, based on theoretical perfection. Because the *Doryphoros* so completely embodies Greek ideals, it has remained, over time, the primary image of Classical Greece.

Given this degree of perfection, it is not surprising that the Romans adopted the pose of the *Doryphoros* and other Greek statues as models for their own sculpture. Before the end of the 3rd century B.C., the Romans had begun to collect Greek statues. After Rome absorbed Greece into its empire in 146 B.C., increasing numbers of Greek originals were acquired by Romans. According to some accounts, nearly 500 statues were robbed from the sanctuary of Delphi alone.

Because many wealthy Roman aristocrats wanted sculpture for their townhouses and country villas, the demands for Greek sculpture were greater than the supply. The demand created a thriving industry that provided replicas of and variations on famous Greek originals. Roman copies were considered works of art in their own right, as the Romans were more concerned with how the ideal qualities conveyed by the original could be translated into Roman terms than with honoring the more modern idea that a work of art must be the result of individual genius. Most of these replicas were actually made by Greek artists living in Greece or the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor, or by Greek artists working in Rome.

During the Imperial period, beginning with Emperor Augustus, Greek sculpture was produced for political reasons, as well. Roman rulers recognized the potential of the arts to promote the ideals of their administrations, particularly as the basis of propagandistic images of Imperial power. It became common Roman practice to make full-length portrait statues by topping a body that was copied from a Greek original with a specific portrait head. In contrast to the timeless quality of their Greek models, the Romans made commemorative sculpture that depicted specific people and events. Over time, the Roman adaptation of Greek sculpture resulted in the new art form of portraiture that signified the importance of ancestry to the Roman patrician families. By depicting real individuals, the Greek ideal gave way to Roman realism that emphasized actual physical appearance as well as the character of the individual portrayed.

Whereas Greek art was overwhelmingly public, Roman art was generally commissioned for private villas and townhouses, even when the commission was a direct copy of the Greek original like the MIA's *Doryphoros*.

### **POLYKLEITOS**

The two prominent names in the study of Classical Greek sculpture are Phidias (the master sculptor who planned the decorative program of the Parthenon and is renowned for his cult statues of Athena and Zeus) and Polykleitos, famous for his sculptures of victorious athletes. Little is known of the life of Polykleitos. He lived during the latter half of the 5th century B.C. (approximately 450-405 B.C.), and was from the Greek city-state of Argos in the eastern Peloponnesus. Polykleitos worked chiefly in bronze and became the most influential sculptor of the Peloponnesian school. He wrote a treatise on art called the *Canon* and created the bronze sculpture of the *Doryphoros* to demonstrate his theories. Both the treatise and the sculpture are referred to as the *Canon*.

The *Doryphoros* is Polykleitos' most famous work. Although about 20 of his statues are recorded in ancient sources, none of his original works has survived. The *Doryphoros* has been called the most copied statue of antiquity. It was certainly among the most famous. Polykleitos may have placed the *Doryphoros* in front of his

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workshop as both an example of his skill as a sculptor and an illustration of his theory of art. Pliny, a Roman writer of the 1st century A.D., noted that

"artists. . . draw from it the rudiments of art as from a code, so that Polykleitos is said to be the only man who has embodied Art itself in a work of art."

### **THE MIA'S DORYPHOROS**

This marble sculpture depicts a nude spear bearer that is slightly larger than life-size (six feet and six inches). His left hand originally held a bronze spear which has been lost. Some scholars have suggested that the athlete was intended to represent the strong, young, handsome Achilles, setting off for the Trojan War. This belief can be traced to the 1st century A.D. when Pliny the Elder referred to these nude statues of athletes with lances as 'effigies Achilleae,' images of Achilles.<sup>4</sup>

Other scholars like Brunilde Ridgway have argued that we cannot tell whether the figure represents a mortal or a hero. According to Ridgway:

"Some scholars have suggested that its superhuman size is not appropriate for a common man and have identified it as Achilles. But a Fifth century Greek would have needed more specific attributes to recognize the hero—some armor, or at least long hair, to judge from other contemporary representations. Quite probably the Doryphoros did not represent a particular individual but the athlete or the Olympic victor par excellence, with the heroic connotation attached to such a feat."<sup>5</sup>

The proportions of the *Doryphoros* together with the perfect balance between tension and relaxation, create a visual image of harmony. The *Doryphoros* is an idealized, youthful athlete, a representation of the perfectly proportioned male body, exemplifying what is most noble and admirable in man. At the height of both intellectual and physical perfection ("A sound mind in a sound body"), this youthful athlete represents both man's perfectibility and all the beauty and order in the universe. He stands in the contrapposto (literally, counterpoise) pose with his weight on his right leg (the engaged leg), which is balanced by his left arm that once held the spear. The left leg, which is bent and relaxed, is likewise balanced on the other side by the straight right arm. The sculpture realistically demonstrates how every part of the body is affected by this pose. Shoulders, elbows, hips, and knees are no longer on a horizontal axis, but rather, are shifted correspondingly upward or downward. The head is turned towards the weight-bearing leg, a typical stance of most of Polykleitos' statues. Other details of the figure have been skillfully crafted as well, from the locks of hair which have been chiseled into a distinctive pattern to the careful articulation of the toes and the veins... The articulation of the musculature under the skin (especially the muscles in the neck, shoulders, chest, and calves) imparts a sense of animation and vital responsiveness. The eyes look out serenely, and the expression of the entire face is distant and aloof.

To reproduce this bronze sculpture in marble, it was necessary to provide supportive structures because marble does not have the tensile strength of bronze. The copyist added struts between the arms and the body for support (only a remnant of the strut on the left side of the body remains). Further support for the statue is provided by the tree stump.

The pronounced musculature of the body may reflect another difference between bronze and marble. The bronze of the original would have had a shiny surface, which diffused light. Deep modeling of the figure was, therefore, required to reduce the glare of diffused light. In contrast, the marble of the replica absorbs light. Consequently, the modeling of the musculature appears more pronounced.<sup>6</sup>

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### THE *CANON*

Polykleitos based his *Canon* on the Pythagorean notion of *symmetria*, the idea that the parts of a form must have a proportional relationship to the whole. Thus, his *Canon* established a mathematical formula that determined the proportions of the ideal male body. The exact mathematical formula set forth in the *Canon* is still being debated, because neither the treatise nor the bronze original has survived. By studying ancient writings which mention the *Canon* and by testing out their theories on existing Roman marble copies, scholars have proposed several theories. They agree that Polykleitos established a module (perhaps the distal phalange of the little finger) and used it as a point of departure for determining all the proportions of the entire figure. One scholar, Richard Tobin, has proposed that

"By applying the most basic concepts of Greek geometry—ratio, proportion, *symmetria*—he [Polykleitos] developed a system which used a geometric mean in continuous progression."<sup>7</sup>

For example, it is hypothesized that the dimensions of the little finger might have been squared to calculate the length of the hand. The size of the hand in turn would have been squared to determine the length of the forearm, and so on to determine the size of each part of the human body.

Tobin further suggests that although Polykleitos believed that "perfection approximates the relationship of many numbers,"<sup>8</sup> he was also aware that "the rigidity of the numerical precision should be tempered by free irregularity, to give life and warmth to the mathematical precision."<sup>9</sup> In other words, there was a point at which Polykleitos departed from the *Canon* to use artistic license. This may account for the disproportionately large size of the head. Polykleitos may have enlarged the head to compensate for the loss of height that occurs when a figure is in the *contrapposto* position.

The system of proportion perfected in the *Doryphoros* coincides with Greek thinking during the classical period. Whether we look at Greek visual arts, philosophy, politics, music, or mathematics, we find the belief that the world is ordered and rational, and that this order is discernible to the human mind. The *Canon* was thus built upon the most basic elements of Pythagorean geometry, and within the Greek mathematical tradition. Polykleitos' depiction of a man based on mathematical principles is an ideal that the Greeks believed was more real than what is visible to our eyes. Since they believed that

"beauty reside[s]. . . in the proper proportion of the parts,"<sup>10</sup>

the relationship of the parts to the whole was of the utmost importance; for, when an artist used the perfect proportions, he would achieve harmony and beauty.<sup>11</sup>

Brunilde Ridgway has observed that this figure

"is [thus] seen as a sequence of interrelated measures that create the total harmony of the figure. . . . As such, no human being could ever look like the *Doryphoros*, and the statue assumes the value of a Platonic ideal, of which this world can afford only vague copies."<sup>12</sup>

"What is so intriguing is that this [*Doryphoros*] is an artificial construction. It does not correspond to nature at all. If any one of us were to be measured, the asymmetries in our bodies and the lack of proportions would be absolutely striking,"<sup>13</sup>



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and yet this artificial construction looks very real to us.

### THE CHIASTIC PRINCIPLE

Polykleitos proportioned the figure according to the *Canon*, but he relied on the *chiastic principle* to achieve a balance between muscular tension and relaxation. The term derives from the Greek letter *chi* (  $\chi$  ), which is formed by two lines, one straight, and one curved, crossing obliquely. When applied to the statue of a man, the principle works as follows: utilizing the bilateral symmetry of the human body, each element is shown in one of its two possible states, so that when one is tense, the other is relaxed and vice versa. For example, in the *Doryphoros*, the right arm is loose, the left is bent at the elbow; the right leg is tense, supporting the weight of the body, while the left trails free [the *contrapposto* pose]. This stance also affects the alignment of the hips and shoulders: the right shoulder dips while the hip muscle rises, so that the entire right side of the figure is compressed; on the other side of the median line, the left shoulder rises while the hip is lowered, thus producing the greatest possible stretch of the torso on that side within a quiet pose. The same "dissimilarity" principle applies to other elements of human anatomy: note the different shape of the two pectorals, the two collar bones, the two neck muscles. Even within the arm itself, when the biceps is flexed the muscle of the lower arm is relaxed and vice versa.

Four main elements of the human body describe an invisible *chi* across it: the raised left shoulder corresponds to the raised right hip, the lowered right shoulder is balanced by the lowered left hip.<sup>14</sup>

The entire balancing system of the statue is revealed if we visualize imaginary lines across the body at key points. As indicated on the diagram, a diagonal line passes through the ankles, slanting downward from the viewer's right to left. Likewise, a corresponding parallel line crosses the shoulders. The lines through the knees and hips move the opposite way (downward from the viewer's left to right).<sup>15</sup>

This visualization makes apparent the inner statics of the body: given the horizontal as the perfect balance, equilibrium is lost as the shoulders slant, it is recovered by the counteraction of the hips; this movement is then exaggerated by the knees to be again counterbalanced at the ankles.

Polykleitos has, thus, created a thoroughly artificial pose that is only made to look plausible. He creates a figure "poised about to walk but still at rest, relaxed and yet alert."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, movement and stability, action and relaxation, are in perfect harmony, as are the figure's proportions....

### WHERE WOULD IT HAVE BEEN PLACED?

Polykleitos may have placed the original *Doryphoros* in front of his workshop as both an example of his skill as a sculptor and an illustration of his theory of art. Roman copies, such as ours might have been placed in several different locations. The fact that the version of the *Doryphoros* in Naples was found in the municipal Gymnasium of Pompeii tells us that statues like this often might be placed where they could preside over the fitness programs of the urban youth. It was much more common in the Roman world, however, for a wealthy patron to order one (or two) such statues to be placed in his library or garden.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE *DORYPHOROS* ON LATER ART

The influence of Polykleitos began almost immediately. This is illustrated by a marble relief from Argos, carved between 380 and 340 B.C., which shows a figure modeled after the *Doryphoros* walking beside a horse.<sup>20</sup>

In fact,

"while nothing of the original statue of the *Doryphoros* by Polykleitos has survived, there are copies of the great statue made in all manner of materials for the discerning late Hellenistic Greek or Roman and Greek

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patrons of the Roman Empire, Emperors from Augustus to Hadrian and private citizens like Cicero's friend Atticus or Hadrian's friend Herodes Atticus. These survivors include restored statues, heads, torsos, little Hellenistic terracottas, as well as Attic and Argive funerary or votive reliefs of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, statues of the Roman emperors were very often merely images of the Doryphoros with portrait heads and armor on their bodies. This heritage, preserved by the Romans, would be copied by later artists who looked back to the classical past to add dignity and stature to their art—from artists of the Renaissance and Neo-Classical styles to artists of the present day.

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<http://www.learner.org/courses/globalart/work/138/index.html>

**Doryphoros (Canon)** » After Polykleitos of Argos (Greek, ca. 480/475–415 BCE)

Created by master sculptor Polykleitos of Argos (ca. 480/475–415 BCE), the Doryphoros, or Spear-Bearer, has long been regarded as an exemplum of male beauty as conceived of by the ancient Greeks.

Polykleitos sought to capture the ideal proportions of the human figure in his statues and developed a set of aesthetic principles governing these proportions that was known as the Canon or "Rule." In formulating this "Rule," Polykleitos 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.

Though we do not know the exact details of Polykleitos's formula, the end result, as manifested in the Doryphoros, was the perfect expression of what the Greeks called *symmetria*. In art of the High Classical period (ca. 450–400 BCE), *symmetria*, or symmetry, not only encompassed a sense of proportion and balance, but was also an exercise in contrasts. The body of the Doryphoros, for example, stands in what is termed *contrapposto*, meaning that his weight rests on his right leg, freeing his left to bend. In the process, the right hip shifts up and the left down; the left shoulder raises and the right drops. His body is brought into a state of equilibrium through this counterbalancing act.

Although the Doryphoros represents a warrior poised for battle, he does not don a suit of armor or any other protective gear. In fact, were it not for the actual spear that that statue originally held, it would have been difficult to identify him as such. A hallmark of classical Greek sculpture, male nudity or nakedness was understood as a marker of civilization that separated the Greeks from their "barbarian" neighbors.

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### 30. Audience Hall (*apadana*) of Darius and

**Xerxes.** Persepolis, Iran. Persian. c. 520–465 B.C.E.  
Limestone, area 1195 sq. yards, 72 columns 78'8" tall.  
G15, 48-51  
G14, 50-52  
S5, 44-47  
A3, 77  
SH and SH

Pins [Image 1](#) from list – tiny 35 kb [Aerial view from opposite side](#) [Image 2](#) [Reliefs](#) [Persepolis plan](#) [Video](#) [Video](#)

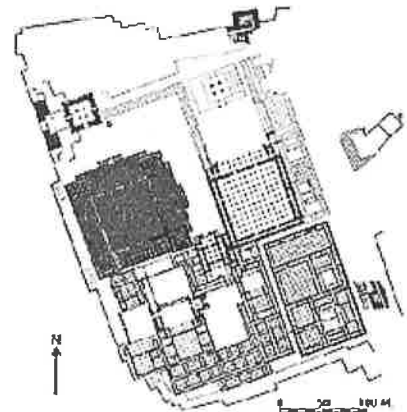


<http://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/persepolis/apadana>

#### Persepolis and Ancient Iran

##### The Apadana

By far the largest and most magnificent building is the Apadana, begun by Darius and finished by Xerxes, that was used mainly for great receptions by the kings. Thirteen of its seventy-two columns still stand on the enormous platform to which two monumental stairways, on the north and on the east, give access. They are adorned with rows of beautifully executed reliefs showing scenes from the New Year's festival and processions of representatives of twenty-three subject nations of the Achaemenid Empire, with court notables and Persians and Medes, followed by soldiers and guards, their horses, and royal chariots. Delegates in their native attire, some completely Persian in style, carry gifts as token of their loyalty and as tribute to the king. These gifts include silver and gold vessels and vases, weapons, woven fabrics, jewelry, and animals from the delegates' own countries. Although the overall arrangement of scenes seems repetitive, there are marked differences in the designs of garments, headdresses, hair styles, and beards that give each delegation its own distinctive character and make its origin unmistakable. Another means by which the design achieves diversity is by separating various groups or activities with stylized trees or by using these trees alone to form ornamental bands. There is also an intentional usage of patterns and rhythms that, by repeating figures and groups, conveys a grandiose ornamental impression.



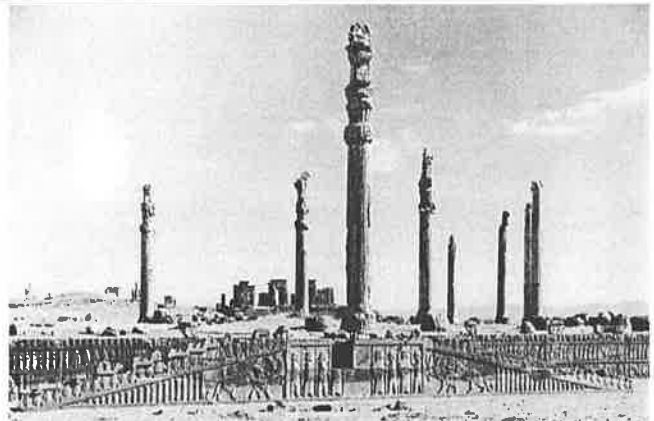
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/ancient-near-east1/persian/a/persian-art-an-introduction>

#### **Persian art, an introduction** Essay by Dr. Senta German

The heart of ancient Persia is in what is now southwest Iran, in the region called the Fars. In the second half of the 6th century B.C.E., the Persians (also called the Achaemenids) created an enormous empire reaching from the Indus Valley to Northern Greece and from Central Asia to Egypt.

#### **A tolerant empire**

Although the surviving literary sources on the



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Persian empire were written by ancient Greeks who were the sworn enemies of the Persians and highly contemptuous of them, the Persians were in fact quite tolerant and ruled a multi-ethnic empire. Persia was the first empire known to have acknowledged the different faiths, languages and political organizations of its subjects.

This tolerance for the cultures under Persian control carried over into administration. In the lands which they conquered, the Persians continued to use indigenous languages and administrative structures. For example, the Persians accepted hieroglyphic script written on papyrus in Egypt and traditional Babylonian record keeping in cuneiform in Mesopotamia. The Persians must have been very proud of this new approach to empire as can be seen in the representation of the many different peoples in the reliefs from Persepolis, a city founded by Darius the Great in the 6th century B.C.E.



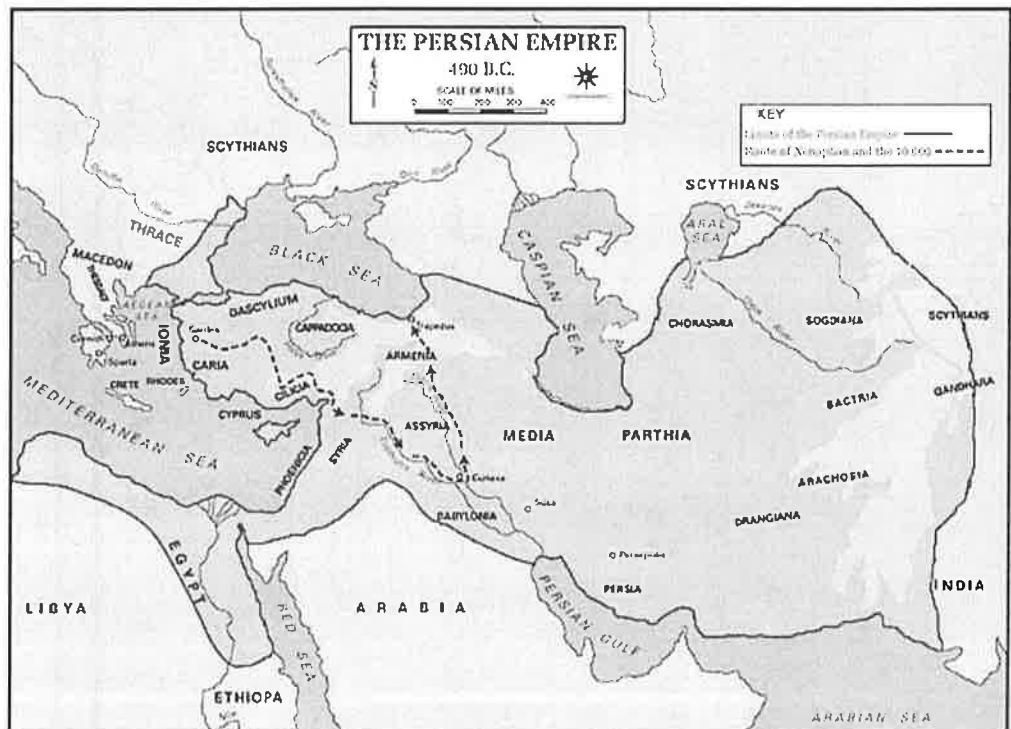
### The Apadana

Persepolis included a massive columned hall used for receptions by the Kings, called the Apadana. This hall contained 72 columns and two monumental stairways.

The walls of the spaces and stairs leading up to the reception hall were carved with hundreds of figures, several of which illustrated subject peoples of various ethnicities, bringing tribute to the Persian king.

### Conquered by Alexander the Great

The Persian Empire was, famously, conquered by Alexander the Great. Alexander no doubt was impressed by the Persian system of absorbing and retaining local language and traditions as he imitated this system himself in the vast lands he won in





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battle. Indeed, Alexander made a point of burying the last Persian emperor, Darius III, in a lavish and respectful way in the royal tombs near Persepolis. This enabled Alexander to claim title to the Persian throne and legitimize his control over the greatest empire of the Ancient Near East.

<http://www.persepolis3d.com/frameset.html>

Persepolis ( Parsa), the spiritual center of the first world power in recorded history, was the vision of the emperor Darius (Dariush) the Great who set forth his plan of a multi-cultural state in which a diversity of ideas took precedence over dictatorial oppression.

The spirit of Achamaenid rule from which Cyrus (Kourosh) the Great founded the Persian Empire (from approximately 559 B.C.) is best conveyed through the words of Darius:

"... I will not tolerate that the weak shall suffer injustices brought upon them by the mighty. What is just pleases me. ... You, my subjects, must not assume what the powerful undertake as sublime. What the common man achieves is much more extraordinary."

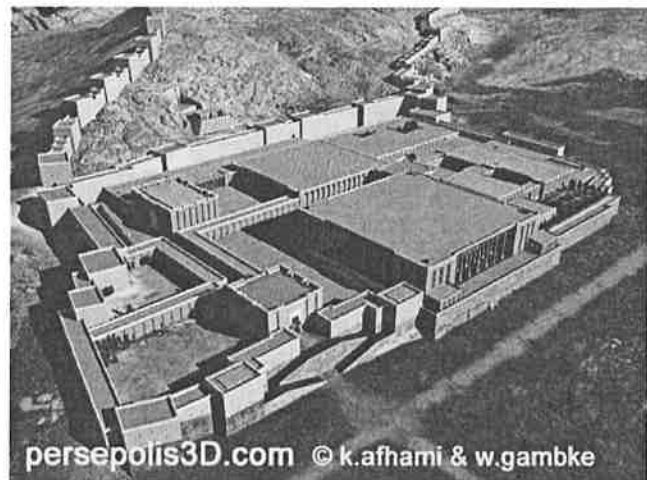
The air of tolerance, leniency and dignity of mankind are manifest in the artistic symbolism of the architecture of Persepolis. In 520 B.C., Darius, aware of the moral responsibilities of the state over which he reigned, called upon architects and artisans from every corner of his vast kingdom – from Libya and Egypt to India, from the Danube to the Indus, from the Caucasus Mountains to the Asiatic Steppes and from the Aral Sea to the Persian Gulf to work together with Persian architects to create something never before seen yet unmistakably Persian.

It is only through this type of master planning - born not of any single, preexisting architectural concept or idea - that a architecture could arise whose grandeur leaves little doubt as to its place as one of the greatest wonders of the Ancient world.

[http://www.persepolis3d.com/control\\_structures/apadana.htm](http://www.persepolis3d.com/control_structures/apadana.htm)

### **The Apadana**

(or Audience Hall) was the first building constructed and is the most important on the terrace of Persepolis. It stood architecturally and in the sense of urban planning as the hub of the terrace. It is an architectural wonder of the ancient world - its clever construction enabled dimensions without comparison in its time. The 20 meter (65.5 ft.) high columns were the tallest and thinnest that architects had mastered - and construction-wise, it was a clever feat. In many respects its construction was a masterpiece of architecture. The architects of



Darius had the courage to raise the height of the columns 1.5 meters (4,9ft) higher than those of the Temple of Artemisia at Ephesus and to refine the tapering of the diameter to 1:12. The distance between the columns, in comparison to the 5.9 meters (19.4 ft.) at the Temple of Artemisia, was stretched to an astounding 8.65 meters (28.4 ft.). This unique wide-spacing resulted in a festive spacious atmosphere in the Apadana. The effect of which was only possible by combining stone columns and wood ceiling beams, instead of the traditional all-stone construction. It is possible that this construction was a mixture of the Iranian master builders, whose wooden architecture had long been familiar, and Asia Minor architecture, with its much used narrow stone columns.

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## 26. Athenian agora. Archaic through Hellenistic Greek. 600 B.C.E.–150 C.E. Plan.

S5, 137-138

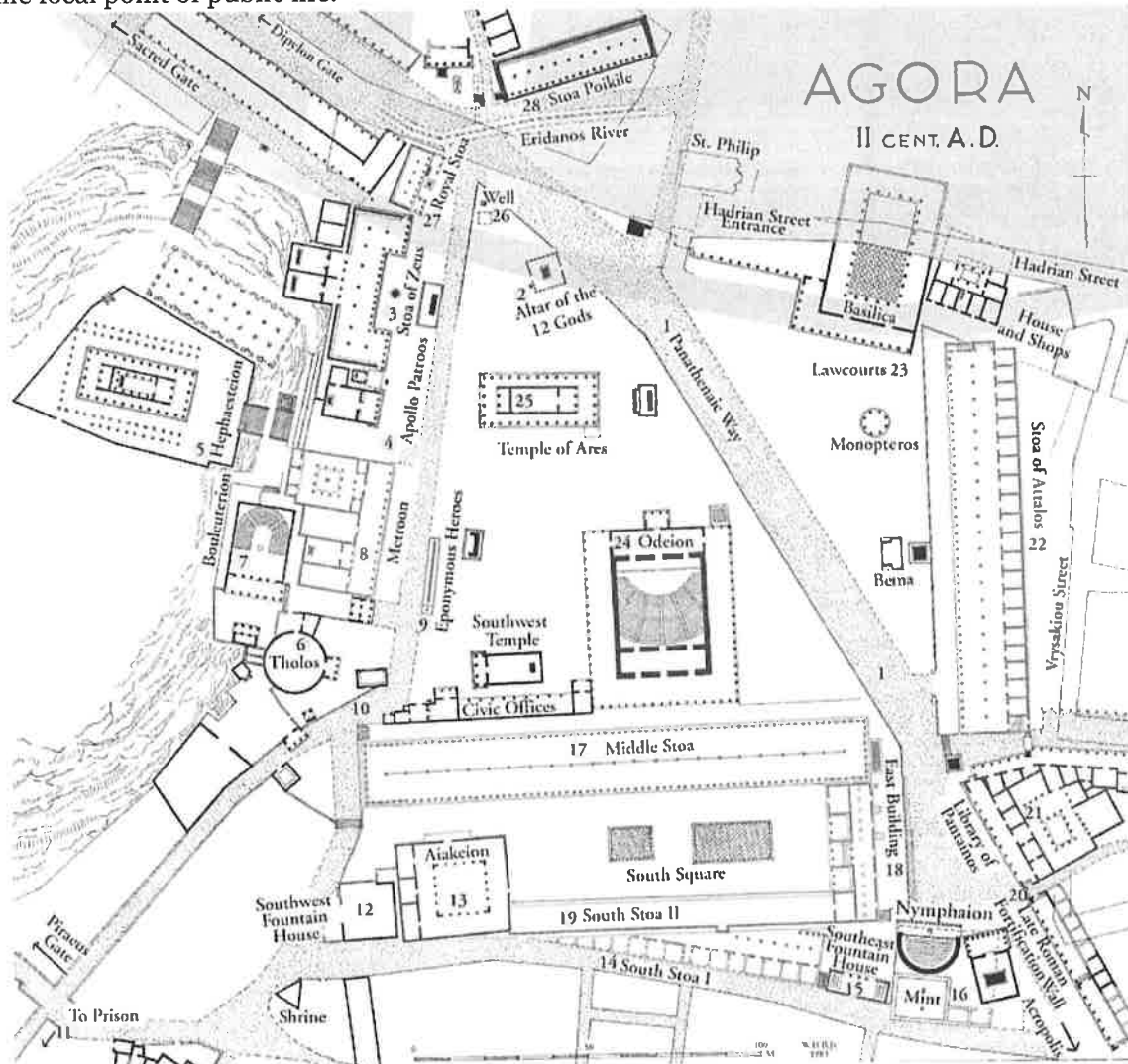
SH

Pin [Plan from list, no labels \(50 kb\)](#) [Plan with labels](#) [Reconstruction drawing](#) [Reconstruction drawing 2](#) [Website](#)  
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<http://www.agathe.gr/guide/>

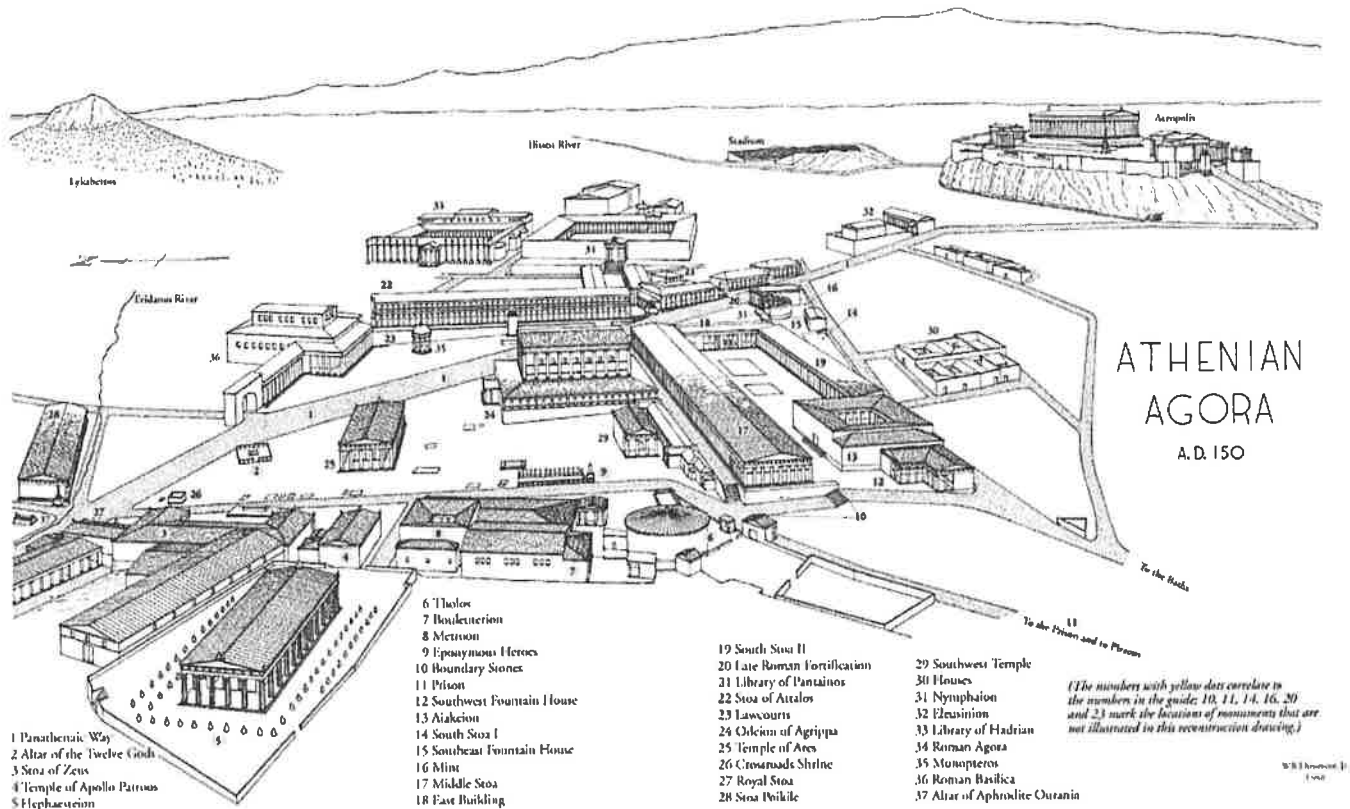
### Introduction

Classical Athens saw the rise of an achievement unparalleled in history. Perikles, Aeschylus, Sophokles, Plato, Demosthenes, Thucydides, and Praxiteles represent just a few of the statesmen and playwrights, historians and artists, philosophers and orators who flourished here during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., when Athens was the foremost city-state in Greece. Collectively they were responsible for sowing the seeds of Western civilization. Even when her power waned, Athens remained the cultural and educational center of the Mediterranean until the 6th century A.D. Throughout antiquity Athens was adorned with great public buildings, financed first by its citizens, and later with gifts from Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors. Nowhere is the history of Athens so richly illustrated as in the Agora, the marketplace that was the focal point of public life.



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Figure 1. Plan and restored drawing of the Agora at the height of its development in ca. A.D.150



A large open square, surrounded on all four sides by buildings, the Agora was in all respects the center of town (Fig. 1; and restored drawing). The excavated buildings, monuments, and small objects (Fig. 2) illustrate the important role it played in all aspects of civic life. The council chamber (*Bouleuterion*), public office buildings (Royal Stoa, South Stoa I) and archives (*Metroon*) have all been explored. The law courts are represented by the discovery of bronze ballots and a water-clock used to time speeches. The use of the area as a marketplace is indicated by the numerous shops where potters, cobblers, bronze-workers, and sculptors made and sold their wares. Long stoas (colonnades) provided shaded walkways for those wishing to meet friends to discuss business, politics, or philosophy, while statues and commemorative monuments reminded citizens of former triumphs. A library and concert hall (odeion) met cultural needs, and numerous small shrines and temples received regular worship. Here administrative, political, judicial, commercial, social, cultural, and religious activities all found a place together in the heart of ancient Athens.

<http://www.agathe.gr/Icons/pdfs/AgoraPicBk-12.pdf>

**AN ANCIENT SHOPPING CENTER The Athenian Agora AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 1993**

'In one and the same place you will find all kinds of things for sale together at Athens: figs-Policemen!  
 Grapes, turnips, pears, apples-Witnesses!  
 Roses, medlars, porridge, honey-comb, peas-Lawsuits!

18

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### 36. Grave stele of Hegeso. Attributed to Kallimachos. c. 410 B.C.E. Marble and paint.

G14, 142, 143, 146, 149

SH

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[http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/4/eh430.jsp?obj\\_id=5422](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/4/eh430.jsp?obj_id=5422)  
**Funerary stele of Hegeso**

This is one of the finest Attic grave stele of the Classical period and an exquisite example of the so-called Rich Style. It is shaped like a small temple, crowned by a pediment with palmette akroteria. The horizontal cornice bears the name of the deceased: Hegeso, daughter of Proxenos. The Athenian lady is depicted sitting on an elegant chair, her feet resting on a footstool. She wears a chiton, a himation and a transparent headdress. She picks a jewel (which was probably painted on the stele) from the open pyxis (jewelry box), which her young servant, standing opposite, extends. The slave wears the long-sleeved barbarian dress and a snood on her head. Traces of blue color are visible on the background. The sadness on the women's faces has a remarkable impact. The stele was probably executed by a skilled artist, possibly Kallimachos.



<http://www.namuseum.gr/collections/sculpture/classical/classic11-en.html>

The marble grave stele of Hegeso, found in Kerameikos, Athens  
410-400 BC.

Grave stele, made of Pentelic marble, found in 1870 in the ancient cemetery of the Kerameikos. An Athenian lady seated on a chair, her feet resting on a footstool, looks at a piece of jewellery held in her raised right hand, originally rendered in paint. Opposite her, a sorrowful standing attendant holds an open jewellery box. According to the inscription on the epistyle, the deceased is Hegeso, daughter of Proxenos. Her imposing appearance, along with the magnificence of the family grave plot, to which the stele belongs, indicate clearly her noble origin. Exquisite work, that has been attributed to the sculptor Kallimachos.

Height 1,56 m., width 0,97 m.

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbag/hd\\_dbag.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbag/hd_dbag.htm)

The ancient Greek conception of the afterlife and the ceremonies associated with burial were already well established by the sixth century B.C. In the *Odyssey*, Homer describes the Underworld, deep beneath the earth, where Hades, the brother of Zeus and Poseidon, and his wife, Persephone, reigned over countless drifting crowds of shadowy figures—the "shades" of all those who had died. It was not a happy place. Indeed, the ghost of the great hero Achilles told Odysseus that he would rather be a poor serf on earth than lord of all the dead in the Underworld (*Odyssey*, 11.489–91).

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*The Greeks believed that at the moment of death the psyche, or spirit of the dead, left the body as a little breath or puff of wind. The deceased was then prepared for burial according to the time-honored rituals.*

The Greeks believed that at the moment of death the *psyche*, or spirit of the dead, left the body as a little breath or puff of wind. The deceased was then prepared for burial according to the time-honored rituals. Ancient literary sources emphasize the necessity of a proper burial and refer to the omission of burial rites as an insult to human dignity (*Iliad*, 23.71). Relatives of the deceased, primarily women, conducted the elaborate burial rituals that were customarily of three parts: the *prothesis* (laying out of the body (54.11.5)), the *ekphora* (funeral procession), and the interment of the body or cremated remains of the deceased. After being washed and anointed with oil, the body was dressed (75.2.11) and placed on a high bed within the house. During the *prothesis*, relatives and friends came to mourn and pay their respects. Lamentation of the dead is featured in early Greek art at least as early as the Geometric period, when vases were decorated with scenes portraying the deceased surrounded by mourners. Following the *prothesis*, the deceased was brought to the cemetery in a procession, the *ekphora*, which usually took place just before dawn. Very few objects were actually placed in the grave, but monumental earth mounds, rectangular built tombs, and elaborate marble stelai and statues were often erected to mark the grave and to ensure that the deceased would not be forgotten. Immortality lay in the continued remembrance of the dead by the living. From depictions on white-ground lekythoi, we know that the women of Classical Athens made regular visits to the grave with offerings that included small cakes and libations.

The most lavish funerary monuments were erected in the sixth century B.C. by aristocratic families of Attica in private burial grounds along the roadside on the family estate or near Athens. Relief sculpture, statues (32.11.1), and tall stelai crowned by capitals (11.185a-c,f,g), and finials marked many of these graves. Each funerary monument had an inscribed base with an epitaph, often in verse that memorialized the dead. A relief depicting a generalized image of the deceased sometimes evoked aspects of the person's life, with the addition of a servant, possessions, dog, etc. On early reliefs, it is easy to identify the dead person; however, during the fourth century B.C., more and more family members were added to the scenes and often many names were inscribed (11.100.2), making it difficult to distinguish the deceased from the mourners. Like all ancient marble sculpture, funerary statues and grave stelai were brightly painted, and extensive remains of red, black, blue, and green pigment can still be seen (04.17.1).

Many of the finest Attic grave monuments stood in a cemetery located in the outer Kerameikos, an area on the northwest edge of Athens just outside the gates of the ancient city wall. The cemetery was in use for centuries—monumental Geometric kraters marked grave mounds of the eighth century B.C. (14.130.14), and excavations have uncovered a clear layout of tombs from the Classical period, as well. At the end of the fifth century B.C., Athenian families began to bury their dead in simple stone sarcophagi placed in the ground within grave precincts arranged in man-made terraces buttressed by a high retaining wall that faced the cemetery road. Marble monuments belonging to various members of a family were placed along the edge of the terrace rather than over the graves themselves.

Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Citation

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**37. Winged Victory of Samothrace.** Hellenistic Greek. c. 190 B.C.E. Marble, height 8'1". Musee du Louvre, Paris, France.

G15, 155

G14, 158

S5, 153, 155

A3, 184

SH

Pins [Image 1](#) [Image 2](#) [Image 3](#) [Louvre](#) [Louvre 2](#) [Article](#) [Article](#) [Article](#)

<http://www.samothrace.emory.edu/visualizing-the-sanctuary/interactive-plan/nike>



**Nike Monument**

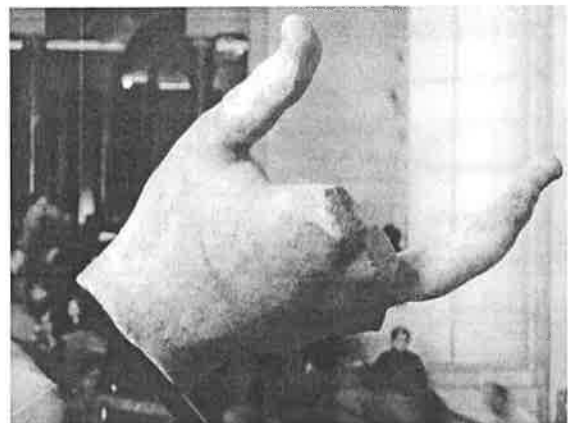
First half of the 2nd century B.C.

Parian marble for the statue; Lartos from Rhodes for the base

The most famous monument of Samothrace—and one of the earliest discoveries—is the great marble Winged Victory (Nike in Greek) lighting on the prow of a ship that appears to move swiftly forward. She touches down lightly on her slightly bent right leg while her left leg trails behind. Her torso twists, leaning to her right as her shoulders incline slightly towards her left. Her wings are blown back behind her, the right, as we now know, rising higher and more windswept than the left. Her dress billows over her thigh, chest, and stomach, clinging to her body while it gathers between her striding legs and around her

hips, creating a contrast between smooth skin and textured cloth. The ship's prow, set at angle to the rectangular precinct, emerged from the monument as though it were actually sailing through water, with the statue turned slightly inward toward the Sanctuary. The statue exemplifies the movement, gesture, and rich texturing of the finest Hellenistic sculpture. The Nike is carved from creamy colored Parian marble, while the ship is made of dark blue Rhodian marble from Lartos.

Originally, the Nike stood in an architectural niche above the theater and to the south of the stoa. Rising a towering 5.57 m. into the air, the great ensemble of ship and Victory were visible from many vantages within the Sanctuary. However, it is possible that the precinct walls, which are constructed of ashlar masonry, originally supported a roofed enclosure for the statue, which would have protected the statue but considerably reduced her visibility. The boulder retaining wall now visible at the site was later placed around the precinct to protect the monument. At one time it was thought that the monument formed a fountain, but that reconstruction now seems unlikely.



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The Nike must commemorate a great victory; the prominence of the ship suggests that the victory was connected with a naval engagement or with the achievement of naval supremacy. However, just when the Nike was commissioned and what she commemorates remains deeply contested. For many years, the style, material, and subject suggested to scholars that the Nike was dedicated by the Rhodians, whose navy was particularly accomplished and powerful at the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 2nd centuries B.C. The dark stone of the base has been associated with the quarries at Lartos on the island of Rhodes, and the ship has been identified as a trihemiolia. While the trihemiolia was common in many Hellenistic navies, it was especially prized by the Rhodians. Recently, however, the Rhodian naval connection has come under sharp scrutiny, and a range of dates, both earlier and later, have been proposed.

The Nike was found in April of 1863 by a French expedition led by the amateur archaeologist Charles Champoiseau, vice-consul to Adrianople (modern Edirne). Most of the remains were sent to Paris, where the reconstructed statue was installed in the Louvre in 1884 on the landing of the great Daru Stairway. She continues to command this dramatic position today. In 1950, part of her right hand was discovered and joined with a thumb and ring finger that had been discovered by Austrian archaeologists. Today, a plaster cast of the statue, along with a very few recently discovered fragments, are in the Samothrace Archaeological Museum.

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## **The Winged Victory of Samothrace**

**The winged goddess of Victory standing on the prow of a ship overlooked the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace. This monument was probably an ex-voto offered by the people of Rhodes in commemoration of a naval victory in the early second century BC. The theatrical stance, vigorous movement, and billowing drapery of this Hellenistic sculpture are combined with references to the Classical period-prefiguring the baroque aestheticism of the Pergamene sculptors.**

### **A presentation mixing grandeur and theatricality**

This exceptional monument was unearthed in 1863 on the small island of Samothrace in the northwest Aegean. It was discovered by Charles Champoiseau, French Vice-Consul to Adrianople (Turkey). The goddess of Victory (Nike, in Greek) is shown in the form of a winged woman standing on the prow of a ship, braced against the strong wind blowing through her garments. With her right hand cupped around her mouth, she announced the event she was dedicated to commemorate. The colossal work was placed in a rock niche that had been dug into a hill; it overlooked the theater of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods. This niche may also have contained a pool filled with water in which the ship appeared to float. Given its placement, the work was meant to be viewed from the front left-hand side; this explains the disparity in sculpting technique, the right side of the body being much less detailed. The highly theatrical presentation-combined with the



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goddess's monumentality, wide wingspan, and the vigor of her forward-thrusting body-reinforces the reality of the scene.

### **A commemorative Rhodian monument**

The sanctuary at Samothrace was consecrated to the Cabeiri, gods of fertility whose help was invoked to protect seafarers and to grant victory in war. The offering of a statue of Nike perched on a ship was a religious act in honor of these gods. It has also been suggested that this monument was dedicated by the Rhodians in commemoration of a specific naval victory. The type of ship depicted and the gray marble used for the prow and base of the statue both suggest that this is indeed a Rhodian creation. If it is associated with a major Rhodian naval victory, the work can be dated to the second century BC-it would have been erected in honor of the battle of Myonnisos, or perhaps the Rhodian victory at Side in 190 BC against the fleet of Antiochus III of Syria.

### **A Hellenistic work steeped in tradition**

*The Winged Victory of Samothrace* is one of the masterpieces of Hellenistic sculpture. The figure creates a spiraling effect in a composition that opens out in various directions. This is achieved by the oblique angles of the wings and the placement of the left leg, and emphasized by the clothing blowing between the goddess's legs. The nude female body is revealed by the transparency of the wet drapery, much in the manner of classical works from the fifth century BC, while the cord worn just beneath the breasts recalls a clothing style that was popular beginning in the fourth century. In the treatment of the tunic-sometimes brushing against the body, sometimes billowing in the wind-the sculptor has been remarkably skillful in creating visual effects. The decorative richness, sense of volume, and intensity of movement are characteristic of a Rhodian style that prefigures the baroque creations of the Pergamene school (180-160 BC).

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<http://cciv214fa2012.site.wesleyan.edu/hellenistic-period/exhibit-3/2/>

### **Winged Victory of Samothrace By: Laura Wasnick**

The Winged Victory of Samothrace, also known as the Nike of Samothrace, was created around 220-190 BC. It was built in honor of Nike, the messenger goddess of victory, and in honor of the victorious sea battle of the Macedonian general Demetrius between the years 295 and 289 BC in Cyprus (Winged Victory of Samothrace). The body portion of the statue is made of Parian marble, and the boat and base of it is made of gray Lartos marble (Musing On Culture).

The details of the Winged Victory of Samothrace make the appearance of the sculpture majestic. The massive statue stands 5.57 meters tall signifying the great victory of the sea battle that it represents (Nike Monument). The goddess is suggested to look as if she is descending from the heavens and stepping forward to announce the victory that has just occurred. The garments draped upon the goddess are positioned as if the goddess is standing ground against the harsh sea breeze; thus illustrating her life-like features of beauty, motion, energy, and strength. Although one is able to take in the beauty of the sculpture from every direction, the piece is meant to be viewed from the left-hand side of the goddess, seeing as the right side is



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**38. Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon.**  
**Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Hellenistic Greek.**  
**c. 175 B.C.E. Marble (architecture and sculpture).**  
**G14, 155-157**  
**S5, 149-152**

**SH**

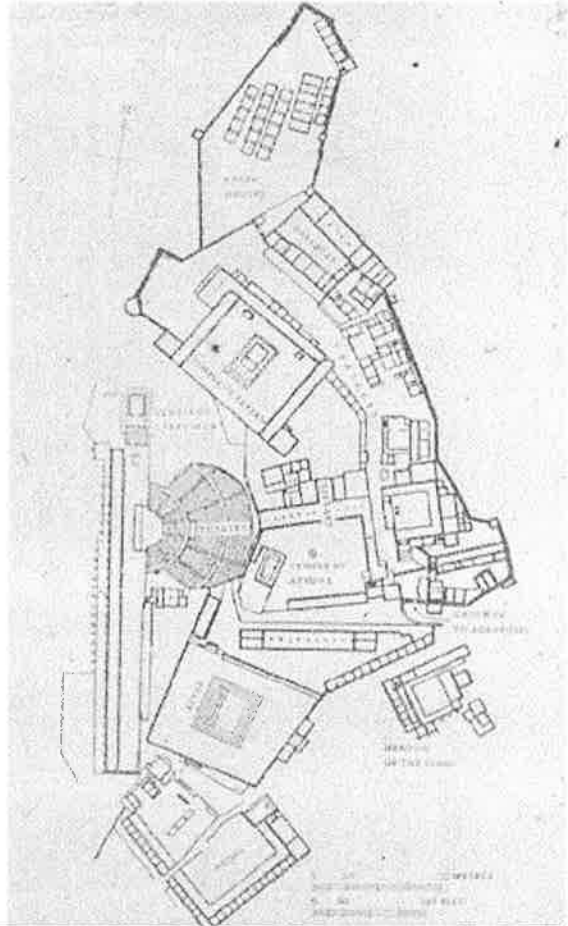
**Pins [Image](#) [Image](#) [Athena Plan](#)**

<http://arts.muohio.edu/faculty/henson/HellenismTwo/altarofzeus.htm>

## **The Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon, c175 BCE**

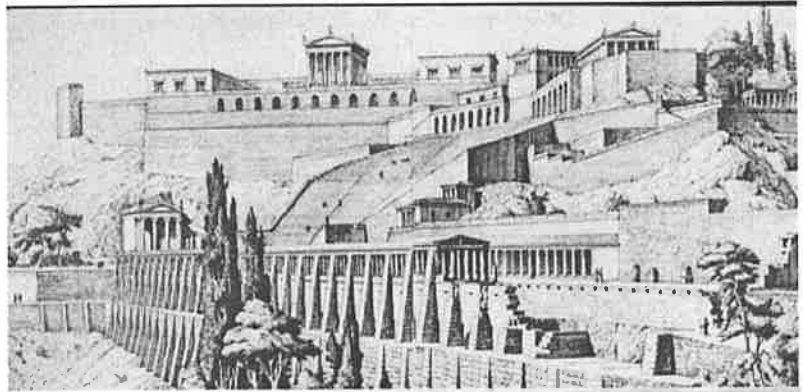
The Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon is one of the most important monuments of the Hellenistic period. The setting for the Altar is the high urbanized citadel of the Attalid kings in Pergamon (in Asia Minor), an imposing outcropping in a dramatic scenic setting. The buildings on the citadel form a civic/religious acropolis of enormous grandeur 800 feet above the actual city below. The palace of the kings was at the apex, surrounded by a complex of religious buildings that stepped down in planes

to the lower city. Once again, the difference between classical restraint and Hellenistic drama becomes clear.



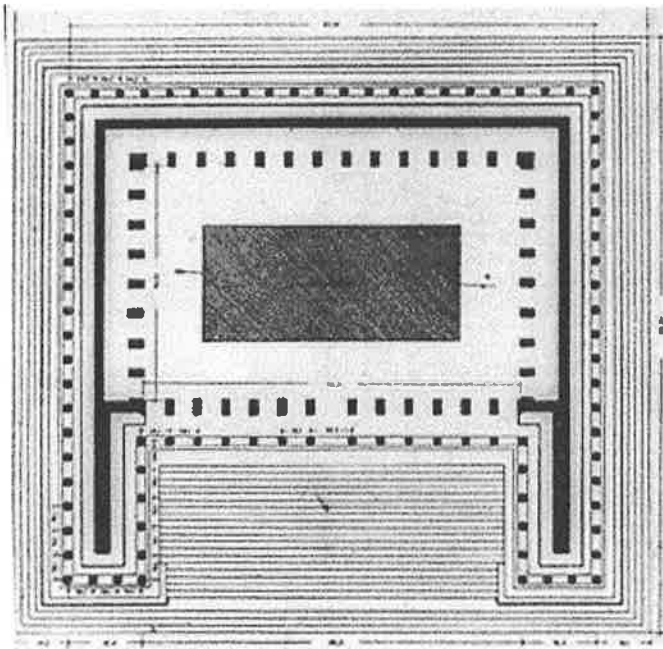
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A comparison of the two views at right and above -- the remains of the citadel and a reconstruction of it--show something of the complexity of the architecture and its relationship to the mountainous setting.



Terracing and the incorporation of natural landscape features, especially those of the steep slopes, are prominent characteristics. In the center of each view, a hillside theatre can be seen, oriented to a skene building atop the lowest set of retaining walls.

This view from the acropolis reveals the commanding position of the citadel and also indicates that the panorama of nature itself is now the true backdrop of the dramatic action in the theatre.



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The Altar of Zeus and Athena is not a conventional temple but an elaborate setting for sacrifices offered to the great Olympian deities. A functioning altar was enclosed by a surrounding Ionic colonnade. Another Ionic colonnade surrounded the exterior of the building over a tall podium covered with a large sculptural frieze. The western stairway approach was embraced by two extensions of the base and colonnade to the north and south, seen in the illustration below. (The Altar was removed from Pergamon in the 19th century by German archaeologists and installed in a museum of antiquities in Berlin where it can still be seen today.)



The subject of the sculptural frieze is a gigantomachy (battle of gods and giants) and the figures are over-lifesize. The complex interrelationship of the figures in their mortal struggles in some cases literally spills out of the illusionistic space of the frieze into the physical space of the stairs-- that is, into our space.

The strained poses are matched by the depiction of emotion in facial expression. The fury of the battle is reinforced by the chaotic qualities of the poses and other compositional elements which are nonetheless linked by interrupted linear passages such as can be seen in the illustration above where



curvilinear and angular elements form visual continuities for the observer.



This detail of the west frieze shows deeply cut drapery that reacts to the violent movements of the battling figures.

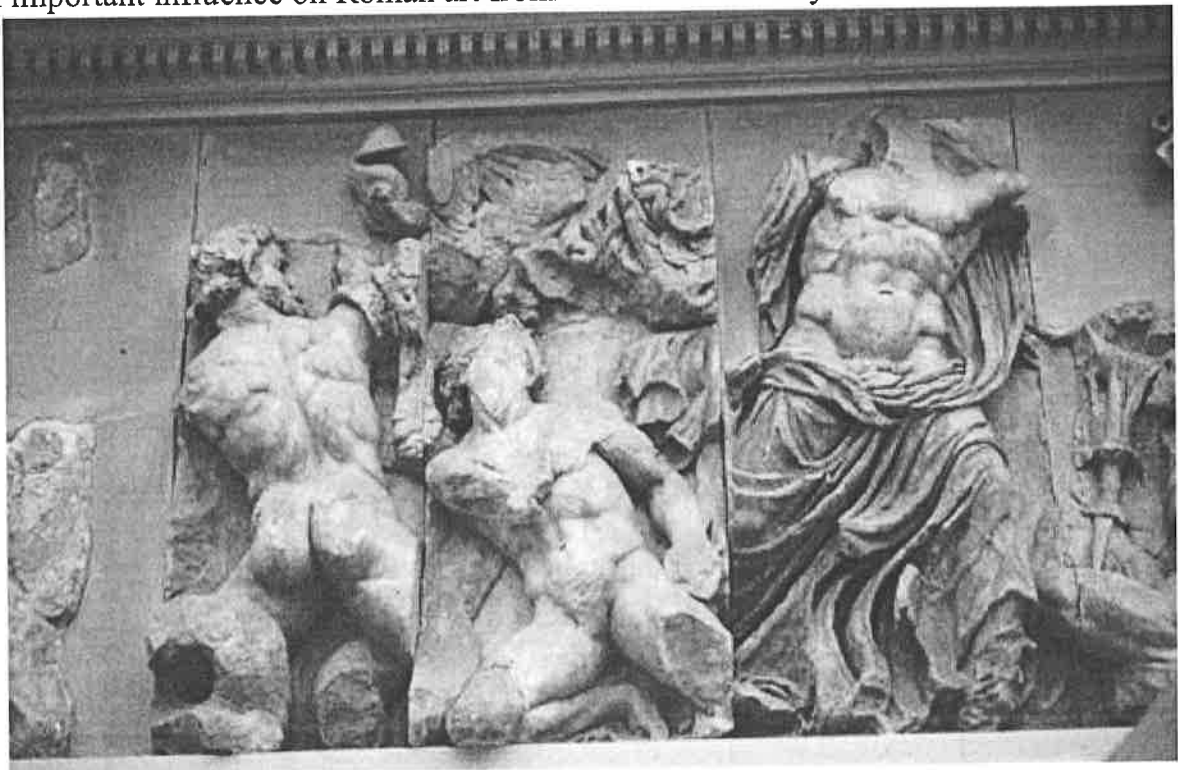
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The powerful figures in the friezes are excellent examples of the Hellenistic taste for dramatic action, violence, and struggle, even though elegant and ideal human forms were being carved simultaneously for other purposes and locations.

In 146 BCE, a new Mediterranean power subdued the Alexandrine empire in the eastern regions. In that year, Rome sacked Corinth, destroyed Carthage, and absorbed them and their civilizations into the Roman world. Although Rome had militarily conquered and politically westernized the entire eastern Mediterranean region, it readily accepted Greek culture and absorbed it. Not least, Roman rulers and nobility collected Greek art and commissioned Roman artists to copy it so that Greek art became

an important influence on Roman art from the second century BCE on.





**41. Seated boxer.** Hellenistic Greek. c. 100 B.C.E. Bronze, 4'2" high. Museo Nazionale Romano – Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome, Italy.

G15, 157

G14, 160

A3,185-186

SH

Pins [Image](#) [Photo of discovery site](#) [Video](#) [Article](#) [Article](#)

<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/now-at-the-met/features/2013/the-boxer>

### The Boxer: An Ancient Masterpiece Comes to the Met

[Seán Hemingway](#), Curator, Department of Greek and Roman Art

Posted: Monday, June 17, 2013

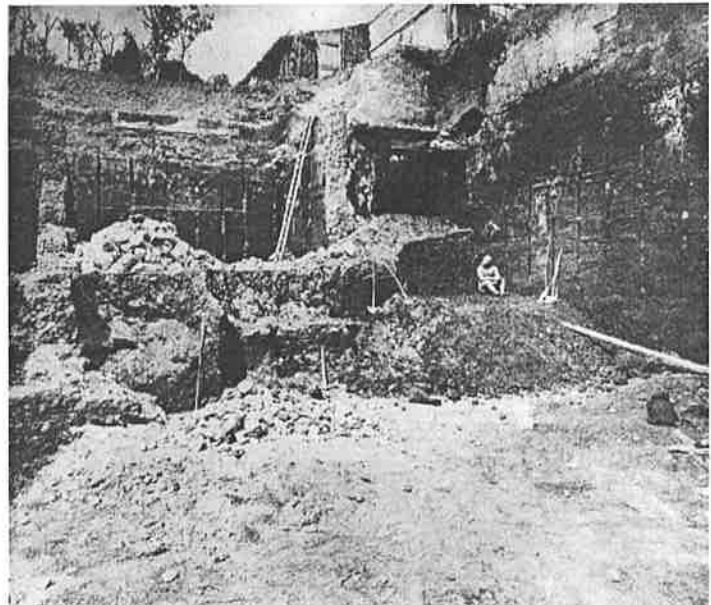
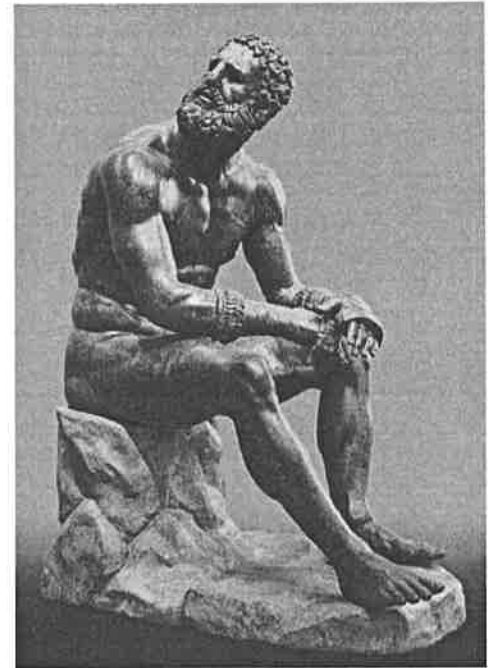
Since its discovery on the Quirinal Hill of Rome in 1885 near the ancient Baths of Constantine, the statue *Boxer at Rest*—currently [on view at the Met](#)—has astonished and delighted visitors to the Museo Nazionale Romano as a captivating masterpiece of ancient bronze sculpture. The archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani, an eyewitness present at the statue's excavation, wrote:

"I have witnessed, in my long career in the active field of archaeology, many discoveries; I have experienced surprise after surprise; I have sometimes and most unexpectedly met with real masterpieces; but I have never felt such an extraordinary impression as the one created by the sight of this magnificent specimen of a semi-barbaric athlete, coming slowly out of the ground, as if awakening from a long repose after his gallant fights."<sup>[1]</sup>

Fig. 2. The Bronze statue *Boxer at Rest* at time of discovery in 1885 on the south slope of the Quirinal Hill in Rome.

Indeed, in a photograph taken at the time of its discovery, the *Boxer at Rest* looks like he was just waiting to be found (fig. 2). Thousands of sculptures had been recovered from excavations in Rome before the *Boxer at Rest* came to light. Wherever a new building project was undertaken in the eternal city some new remnant of antiquity was inevitably revealed...More sculptures were found each year, but nothing like the *Boxer at Rest* had ever appeared. In the more than 125 years since, nothing quite like it has ever been discovered. The statue was displayed for many years in the Rotunda of the Baths of Diocletian

together with another great Hellenistic bronze of a heroic standing nude man, which was unearthed in the same general vicinity as the *Boxer at Rest*.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2005, it was moved into a new display in the Palazzo Massimo and it has only rarely traveled.<sup>[3]</sup> For the first time, the *Boxer at Rest* has come to the United States and is on view in



the Greek and Roman Galleries of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in celebration of *2013 – Year of Italian Culture in the United States* (fig. 1).

The statue portrays a boxer seated with his arms resting on his knees, his head turned to the right and slightly raised with mouth open (fig. 4). The figure is naked except for his boxing gloves, which are of an ancient Greek type with strips of leather attached to a ring around the knuckles and fitted with woolen padding (fig. 5), and the infibulation of his penis by tying up the foreskin, which was both for protection and an element of decorum.<sup>[4]</sup> The boxer is represented just after a match. His muscular body and full beard are those of a mature athlete, and his thick neck, lanky legs, and long arms are well suited to the sport. His face exhibits bruises and cuts. His lips are sunken as though his teeth have been pushed in or knocked out. His broken nose and cauliflower ears are common conditions of boxers, probably the result of previous fights, but the way he is breathing through his mouth and the bloody cuts to his ears and face make clear the damage inflicted by his most recent opponent. The muscles of his arms and legs are tense as though, despite the exhaustion of competition, he is ready to spring up and face the next combatant.



Fig. 4. *Boxer at Rest* (left) and Fig. 5. detail (right), Greek, Hellenistic period, late 4th–2nd century B.C., bronze with copper inlays. Museo Nazionale Romano - Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, inv. 1055. Lent by the Republic of Italy, 2013. Image courtesy Vanni/Art Resource, NY

The quick turn of his head is emphasized by drops of blood—represented by inlaid copper—that appear to have just fallen from his face onto his right thigh and arm (fig. 5). ...<sup>[5]</sup> Like the *Boxer at Rest*, this large-scale sculptural group was most likely a monument to athletic victory, perhaps representing the moment when the jockey, his horse still in mid-gallop, turns to look back at competitors

as he crosses the finish line. The sculpture also makes use of inlays to great effect, most notably the brand in the form of a winged Nike bearing a victory wreath on the horse's right rear haunch. The Nike brand would have been of a contrasting metal such as gold, silver, or even copper to give the appearance of seared flesh....

The pose and powerful physique of the *Boxer at Rest* have been aptly compared to Goya's *Giant* (fig. 9).<sup>[7]</sup> While the great Spanish realist painter could not have known the statue, Goya seems to be drawing on the same primal energy in his portrait. It is not known whether the *Boxer at Rest* was originally part of a larger group or was intended as a solitary work. Large-scale sculptural groups were certainly undertaken in the Hellenistic period but it is entirely possible that the statue functioned on its own, with the turn of his head only implying another or other figures in the scene such as the approach of his next opponent. His pose and the treatment of his beard recall two statues of Herakles, the great mythical strong man of antiquity, attributed to the bronze sculptor Lysippos, one of the most innovative masters of the fourth century B.C. and court sculptor of Alexander the Great. The assimilation of a realistic portrayal of a boxer after a match with a famous mythic hero at rest after his labors makes it difficult to know if a real or mythical figure is portrayed in the *Boxer at Rest*. Still, it is more likely that a real boxer is commemorated and, like Herakles, who successfully completed one impossible labor after another, there is no doubt that he will succeed again despite his battered state.

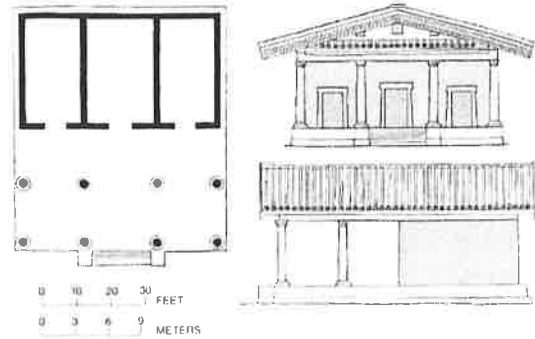
**31. Temple of Minerva (Veii, near Rome, Italy) and sculpture of Apollo. Master sculptor Vulca. c. 510–500 B.C.E. Original temple of wood, mud brick, or tufa (volcanic rock); terra cotta sculpture.**

S5, 158-160

A3, 190

SH

Pins [Plan](#) and [Sketch](#) [Model](#) [Apollo](#) [Article](#)



<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/etruscan/a/temple-of-minerva-and-the-sculpture-of-apollo-veii>

**Temple of Minerva and the sculpture of Apollo (Veii)**

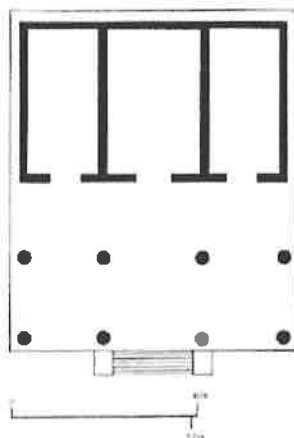
**Etruscan temples have largely vanished**

Among the early Etruscans, the worship of the Gods and Goddesses did not take place in or around monumental temples as it did in early Greece or in the Ancient Near East, but rather, in nature. Early Etruscans created ritual spaces in groves and enclosures open to the sky with sacred boundaries carefully marked through ritual ceremony.

Around 600 B.C.E., however, the desire to create monumental structures for the gods spread throughout Etruria, most likely as a result of Greek influence. While the desire to create temples for the gods may have been inspired by contact with Greek culture, Etruscan religious architecture was markedly different in material and design. These colorful and ornate structures typically had stone foundations but their wood, mud-brick and terracotta superstructures suffered far more from exposure to the elements. Greek temples still survive today in parts of Greece and southern Italy since they were constructed of stone and marble but Etruscan temples were built with mostly ephemeral materials and have largely vanished.



Reconstruction of an Etruscan Temple of the 6th century according to Vitruvius



**How do we know what they looked like?**

Despite the comparatively short-lived nature of Etruscan religious structures, Etruscan temple design had a huge impact on Renaissance architecture and one can see echoes of Etruscan, or 'Tuscan,' columns (Doric columns with bases) in many buildings of the Renaissance and later in Italy. But if the temples weren't around during the 15th and 16th centuries, how did Renaissance builders know what they looked like and, for that matter, how do we know what they looked like?

Fortunately, an ancient Roman architect by the name of Vitruvius wrote about Etruscan temples in his book *De architectura* in the late first century B.C.E. In his treatise on ancient architecture, Vitruvius described the key elements of Etruscan temples and it was his description that inspired Renaissance architects to return to the roots of Tuscan design and allows



archaeologists and art historians today to recreate the appearance of these buildings.

### Archaeological Evidence for the Temple of Minerva

The archaeological evidence that does remain from many Etruscan temples largely confirms Vitruvius's description. One of the best explored and known of these is the Portonaccio Temple dedicated to the goddess Minerva (Roman=Minvera/Greek=Athena) at the city of Veii about 18 km north of Rome. The tufa-block foundations of the Portonaccio temple still remain and their nearly square footprint reflects Vitruvius's description of a floor plan with proportions that are 5:6, just a bit deeper than wide. The temple is also roughly divided into two parts—a deep front porch with widely-spaced Tuscan columns and a back portion divided into three separate rooms. Known as a triple cella, this three room configuration seems to reflect a divine triad associated with the temple, perhaps Minerva as well as Tinia (Jupiter/Zeus) and Uni (Juno/Hera).

In addition to their internal organization and materials, what also made Etruscan temples noticeably distinct from Greek ones was a high podium and frontal entrance. Approaching the Parthenon with its low rising stepped entrance and encircling forest of columns would have been a very different experience from approaching an Etruscan temple high off the ground with a single, defined entrance.

### Sculpture

Perhaps most interesting about the Portonaccio temple is the abundant terracotta sculpture that still remains, the volume and quality of which is without parallel in Etruria. In addition to many terracotta architectural elements (masks, antefixes, decorative details), a series of over life-size terracotta sculptures have also been discovered in association with the temple. Originally placed on the ridge of temple roof, these figures seem to be Etruscan assimilations of Greek gods, set up as a tableau to enact some mythic event.

*Aplu (Apollo of Veii)*, from the roof of the Portonaccio Temple, Veii, Italy, c. 510-500 B.C.E., painted terra-cotta, 5 feet 11 inches high (Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome)

### Apollo of Veii

The most famous and well-preserved of these is the *Aplu (Apollo) of Veii*, a dynamic, striding masterpiece of large scale terracotta sculpture and likely a central figure in the rooftop narrative. His counterpart may have been the less well-preserved figure of Heracles (Hercules) with whom he struggled in an epic contest over the Golden Hind, an enormous deer sacred to Apollo's twin sister Artemis. Other figures discovered with these suggest an audience watching the action. Whatever the myth may have been, it was a completely Etruscan innovation to use sculpture in this way, placed at the peak of the temple roof—creating what must have been an impressive tableau against the backdrop of the sky.



### An artist by the name of Vulca?



Since Etruscan art is almost entirely anonymous it is impossible to know who may have contributed to such innovative display strategies. We may, however, know the name of the artist associated with the workshop that produced the terracotta sculpture. Centuries after these pieces were created, the Roman writer Pliny recorded that in the late 6th century B.C.E., an Etruscan artist by the name of Vulca was summoned from Veii to Rome to decorate the most important temple there, the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The technical knowledge required to produce terracotta sculpture at such a large scale was considerable and it may just have been the master

### 31a – Apollo of Veii (Temple of Minerva in separate document).

Sculpture of Apollo from the Temple of Minerva (Veii, near Rome, Italy).  
Master sculptor Vulca. c. 510–500 B.C.E. Terra cotta sculpture. Height 5'10".  
Museo Nazionale di Villa Guila, Rome

G15, 165-167

S5, 158-160

A3, 190

SH

Pins [Apollo](#) [Video](#)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-AP/AP-ancient-etruria/a/template-of-minerva-and-the-sculpture-of-apollo-veii>

#### Sculpture Essay by Dr. Laurel Taylor

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earned him not only a prestigious commission in Rome but a place in the history books as well.

**Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History*. 4th edition, 2011. p. 162.**

Although Etruscan temples were simple in form, they were embellished with dazzling displays of painting and terra-cotta sculpture. The temple roof, rather than the pediment, served as a base for large statue groups. Etruscan artists excelled at the imposing technical challenge of making huge terra-cotta figures for placement on temples. A splendid example is a life-size figure of **APOLLO**. To make such large clay sculptures, artists had to know how to construct figures so that they did not collapse under their own weight while the raw clay was still wet. They also had to regulate the kiln temperature during the long firing process. The names of some Etruscan terra-cotta artists have come down to us, including that of a sculptor from Veii (near Rome) called Vulca, in whose workshop this figure of Apollo may have been created.

Dating from about 510-500 BCE and originally part of a four figure scene depicting one of the labors of Hercules, the Apollo comes from the temple dedicated to Minerva and other gods in the sanctuary of Portonaccio at Veii. Four figures on the temple's ridgepole (horizontal beam at the peak of the roof) depicted Apollo and Hercules fighting for possession of a deer sacred to Diana, while she and Mercury looked on. Apollo is shown striding forward boldly. To our eyes, he seems to have just stepped over the decorative scrolled element that helps support the sculpture.

Apollo's well-developed body and his Archaic smile clearly demonstrate that Etruscan sculptors were familiar with the kouros of their Archaic Greek counterparts. But a comparison of the Apollo and a figure such as the Greek *Anavysos Kouros* reveals telling differences. Unlike the Greek kouros, the body of the Etruscan Apollo is partially concealed by a rippling robe that cascades in knife-edged pleats to his knees. The forward moving pose of the Etruscan statue also has a dynamic vigor that is avoided in the balanced, rigid stance of the Greek figure. This sense of energy expressed in purposeful movement is a defining characteristic of Etruscan sculpture and painting.

**Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th Enhanced ed. 2011, p. 226**

**APULU OF VEII** The finest of these rooftop statues to survive today is the life-size image of Apulu (FIG. 9-4), which displays the energy and excitement that characterize Archaic Etruscan art in general. The statue comes from a temple in the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii. It is but one of a group of at least four painted terracotta figures that adorned the top of the temple roof and depicted one of the 12 labors of Herakles/Hercles. The god confronts Heracle for possession of the Ceryneian hind, a wondrous beast with golden horns that was sacred to Apulu's sister Artumes. The bright paint and the rippling folds of Apulu's garment call to mind the Archaic korai of the Acropolis in Ionian garb (FIG. 5-12). But Apulu's vigorous striding motion, gesticulating arms, fanlike calf muscles, and animated face are distinctly Etruscan. Some scholars have attributed the Apulu statue to Vulca of Veii, the most famous Etruscan sculptor of the time (see "Etruscan Artists in Rome," above). The statue's discovery in 1916 was instrumental in prompting a reevaluation of the originality of Etruscan art.



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## 29. *Sarcophagus of the Spouses*. Etruscan. c. 520 B.C.E. Terra cotta.

G14, 169-170

S5, 163-164

GW, 266

SH

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<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/sarcophagus-spouses>

### The "Sarcophagus of the Spouses"

(Note: This is not the same one as in the image set.)

Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman

Antiquities: Etruscan Art (9th-1st centuries BCE)

This exceptional monument, a sarcophagus or cinerary urn, comes from Caere (modern Cerveteri), a city famous in the Archaic period for its clay sculpture. It features the deceased tenderly entwined, reclining on a bed in the attitude of banqueters, in accordance with a style that originated in Asia Minor. They are making the gesture of offering perfume, a ritual that, along with the sharing of wine, was part of the funeral ceremony.

### An example of terracotta sculpture from Caere

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* was found in 1845 by the Marquis Campana in the Banditaccia necropolis in Caere (modern Cerveteri). Purchased in 1861 by Napoleon III, this monument has often been regarded as a sarcophagus because of its exceptional dimensions. However, its function remains uncertain because burial and cremation were both practiced by the Etruscans. It may actually have been a large urn designed to contain the ashes of the deceased. Only one example similar to this work is known (Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome), which also demonstrates the high level of skill attained by the sculptors of Caere in clay sculpture during the late 6th century BC.

During the Archaic period, terracotta was one of the preferred materials in the workshops of Caere for funeral monuments and architectural decoration. The ductility of clay offered artisans numerous possibilities, compensating for the lack of stone suitable for sculpture in southern Etruria.

### Funerary banquet and ritual

This urn takes the form of a bed, upon which the deceased are resting in the position of banqueters. This theme was not an Etruscan invention, but originated in Asia Minor: the Etruscans, like the Greeks before them, had adopted the eastern custom of feasting in a reclining position, and the conventional method of representing it. Unlike in the Greek world, where banquets were reserved for men, the Etruscan woman, who held an important place in society, is represented by her husband's side, in the same proportions and in a similar pose. The couple are reclining on cushions in the form of wineskins, a reference to the sharing of wine, a ceremony that was part of funerary ritual. Tenderly clasped by her husband, the deceased woman is pouring a few drops of perfume into his hand, probably from an alabastron, as can be seen on a small urn displayed nearby (*cinerary urn with the spouses on the lid*, Louvre, CP 5193); in so doing, she is making the gesture of offering perfume, another essential component of funerary ritual. In her left hand she is holding a small, round object, possibly a pomegranate, a symbol of immortality.

### The influence of eastern Greece

The style of this monument shows the influence exerted by artists from eastern Greece on Etruscan art—particularly the Ionians, who emigrated in large numbers during the late 6th century BC. The casket and the lid



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are decorated with bright paintwork, now partially disappeared, which adds to the elegance of the woman's finery, and to the details of the fabrics and the hair. The smiling faces and full forms of the bodies are also inspired by Ionian sculpture. However, some of the features are typical of Etruscan art, such as a certain lack of formal coherence, the way the legs in particular have received less plastic volume, and the emphasis on the gestures of the deceased.

### Bibliography

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*Les Étrusques et l'Europe*, cat. exp. Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 15 septembre-14 décembre 1992, Altes Museum, Berlin, 25 février-31 mai 1993, organisée par la Réunion des musées nationaux, le Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Italie et les Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992, pp. 234-236, 330, 337, 354, 411, 432, n 411, fig. 352-357.

<http://sarcofagodeglisposi.fbk.eu/>

### Etruscan Cultural Heritage: the Sarcophagus of the Spouses project (This is the one in the image set.)

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses* (Italian: *Sarcofago degli Sposi*) is a late 6th century BC Etruscan anthropoid sarcophagus. It is 1.14 m high by 1.9 m wide, and is made of terracotta which was once brightly painted.<sup>[1]</sup> It depicts a married couple reclining at a banquet together in the afterlife and was found in 19th century excavations at the necropolis of Cerveteri (ancient Caere). It is now in

the Louvre in Paris and was in the National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia, Rome. The portrayal of a married couple sharing a banqueting couch is uniquely Etruscan; in contrast, Greek vases depicting banquet scenes reflect the custom that only men attended dinner parties.<sup>[1]</sup>

The smiling faces with their almond-shaped eyes and long braided hair, as well as the shape of the feet of the bed, reveal Greek influence. However, the marked contrast between the high relief busts and the very flattened legs is typically Etruscan. "The Etruscan artist's interest focused on the upper half of the figures, especially on the vibrant faces and gesticulating arms."<sup>[1]</sup> A masterpiece of Etruscan terracotta production renowned all over the world, the "Sarcofago degli Sposi" was found in 1881 in a tomb of the Banditaccia necropolis belonging to the Ruspoli princes: Felice Bernabei, the founder of Villa Giulia Museum, on perceiving its extraordinary beauty purchased the sarcophagus in fragments (more than 400 pieces). The sarcophagus contained the ashes of two deceased and consisted of a case, in the shape of a "banquet bed" (kline), and a lid, reproducing a banquet with a couple in a half-reclined position, according to the oriental fashion. The man shows his naked trunk while the rest of his body is covered with a cloak. His arm is placed round the woman's shoulder, in a loving attitude; the woman is lavishly dressed and wears a hat (tutulus) and pointed sandals (calcei repandi). They both hold vases and other banquet vessels in their hands. The theme of banquets was particularly frequent in funerary monuments and the representation of the couple portrays an



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important moment in Etruscan aristocratic life, highlighting their social standing and wealth and reflecting ancient ideals along with ritual patterns taken from the Greek Homeric world.

The sarcophagus was modeled as a whole and was later cut vertically into two halves to prevent damages during the baking; it was probably originally lively colored, colors that are partly preserved in the "twin" sarcophagus, also from Cerveteri, displayed at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The sculptor concentrated on the figures' heads, with the backs particularly round, and faces with thin ovals and elongated eyes, while the body structure is hidden by a soft drape, particularly elegant even in its details. Datable to the period between 530 and 520 BC, the sarcophagus shows stylistic elements characteristic of the so-called "Ionian" artistic trend launched by craftsmen from the Greek towns of Minor Asia, and which dominated throughout Etruria in the second half of the 6 century.

1. <sup>a b c</sup> Kleiner, Fred S. (2010). *A History of Roman Art, Enhanced Edition*, p. xxxi. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/the-sarcophagus-of-the-spouses.html>

## Sarcophagus of the Spouses

(One in Louvre, not one in Villa Giulia)

*Sarcophagus of the Spouses*, Etruscan, c. 520-510 B.C.E., painted terracotta (Musée du Louvre)

### The freedom enjoyed by Etruscan women

One of the distinguishing features of Etruscan society, and one that caused much shock and horror to their Greek neighbors, was the relative freedom enjoyed by Etruscan women. Unlike women in ancient Greece or Rome, upper class Etruscan women actively participated in public life—attending banquets, riding in carriages and being spectators at (and participants in) public events. Reflections of such freedoms are found throughout Etruscan art; images of women engaged in these activities appear frequently in painting and in sculpture.



The "Sarcophagus of the Spouses" was found in Cerveteri, a town in Italy north of Rome, which is the site of a large Etruscan necropolis (or cemetery), with hundreds of tombs. The sarcophagus vividly evokes both the social visibility of Etruscan women and a type of marital intimacy rarely seen in Greek art from this period.

### A funerary banquet?

In the sarcophagus (and another largely identical example at the Villa Giulia in Rome), the two figures recline as equals as they participate in a banquet, possibly a funerary banquet for the dead. In contemporary Greece, the only women attending public banquets, or symposia, were courtesans, not wives! The affectionate gestures and tenderness between the Etruscan man and woman convey a strikingly different attitude about the status of women and their relative equality with their husbands.

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### Terracotta

Aside from its subject matter, the sarcophagus is also a remarkable example of Etruscan large-scale terracotta sculpture (terracotta is a type of ceramic also called earthenware). At nearly two meters long, the object demonstrates the rather accomplished feat of modeling clay figures at nearly life-size. Artists in the Etruscan cities of Cerveteri and Veii in particular preferred working with highly refined clay for large-scale sculpture as it provided a smooth surface for the application of paint and the inclusion of fine detail.

Handling such large forms, however, was not without complications; evidence of this can be seen in the cut that bisects the sarcophagus. Splitting the piece in two parts would have allowed the artist to more easily manipulate the pieces before and after firing. If you look closely, you can also see a distinct line separating the figures and the lid of the sarcophagus; this was another trick for creating these monumental pieces—modeling the figures separately and then placing them on top of their bed.

### Color



A really lovely characteristic of this sculpture is the preservation of so much color. In addition to colored garments and pillows, red laced boots, her black tresses and his blond ones, one can easily discern the gender specific skin tones so typical in Etruscan art. The man's ochre flesh signifies his participation in a sun-drenched, external world, while the woman's pale cream skin points to a more interior, domestic one. Gendered color conventions were not exclusive to the Etruscans but have a long pedigree in ancient art. Though their skin and hair color may be different, both figures share similar facial features—archaic smiles (like the ones we see in ancient Greek archaic sculptures), almond shaped eyes, and highly arched eyebrows—all typical of Etruscan art.



### What were they holding?

One of the great puzzles of the sarcophagus centers on what the figures were holding. Etruscan art often featured outsized, expressive hands with suggestively curled fingers. Here the arm positions of both figures hint that each must have held small objects, but what? Since the figures are reclining on a banqueting couch, the objects could have been vessels associated with drinking, perhaps wine cups, or representations of food. Another possibility is that they may have held alabastra, small vessels containing oil used for anointing the dead. Or, perhaps, they held all of the above—food, drink and oil, each a necessity for making the journey from this life to the next.

Whatever missing elements, the conviviality of the moment and intimacy of the figures capture the life-affirming quality often seen in Etruscan art of this period, even in the face of death.

Text by Dr. Laurel Taylor



### 32. Tomb of the Triclinium. Tarquinia, Italy.

Etruscan. c. 480–470 B.C.E. Tufa and fresco.

G15, 170

G14, 172

S5, 162-163

(A3, 198-200 Tomb of the Leopards)

SH Intro to Etruscan Art

Pins [Image from list Tomb of the Leopards](#) [Musician](#)

[Video on Etruscans 1](#) [Video on Etruscans 2](#)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/etruscan/a/tomb-of-the-triclinium>

#### Tomb of the Triclinium

##### Elaborate funerary rituals

Funerary contexts constitute the most abundant archaeological evidence for the Etruscan civilization. The elite members of Etruscan society participated in elaborate funerary rituals that varied and changed according to both geography and time.

The city of Tarquinia (known in antiquity as *Tarquinius* or *Tarch(u)na*), one of the most powerful and prominent Etruscan centers, is known for its painted chamber tombs. The Tomb of the Triclinium belongs to this group and its wall paintings reveal important information about not only Etruscan funeral culture but also about the society of the living.

An advanced Iron Age culture, the Etruscans amassed wealth based on Italy's natural resources (particularly metal and mineral ores) that they exchanged through medium- and long-range trade networks.

#### Tomb of the Triclinium

The *Tomb of the Triclinium* (Italian: *Tomba del Triclinio*) is the name given to an Etruscan chamber tomb dating c. 470 B.C.E. and located in the Monterozzi necropolis of Tarquinia, Italy. Chamber tombs are subterranean rock-cut chambers accessed by an approach way (dromos) in many cases. The tombs are intended to contain not only the remains of the deceased but also various grave goods or offerings deposited along with the deceased. The *Tomb of the Triclinium* is composed of a single chamber with wall decorations painted in fresco. Discovered in 1830, the tomb takes its name from the three-couch dining room of the ancient Greco-Roman Mediterranean, known as the triclinium.





### A banquet

The rear wall of the tomb carries the main scene, one of banqueters enjoying a dinner party (above). It is possible to draw stylistic comparisons between this painted scene that includes figures reclining on dining couches (*klinai*) and the contemporary fifth century B.C.E. Attic pottery that the Etruscans imported from Greece. The original fresco is only partially preserved; although it is likely that there were originally three couches, each hosting a pair of reclining diners, one male and one female. Two attendants—one male, one female—attend to the needs of the diners. The diners are dressed in bright and sumptuous robes, befitting their presumed elite status. Beneath the couches we can observe a large cat, as well as a large rooster and another bird.

### Music and dancing

Scenes of dancers occupy the flanking left and right walls. The left wall scene contains four dancers—three female and one male—and a male musician playing the barbiton, an ancient stringed instrument similar to the lyre (left).

Common painterly conventions of gender typing are employed—the skin of females is light in color while male skin is tinted a darker tone of orange-brown. The dancers and musicians, together with the feasting, suggest the overall convivial tone of the Etruscan funeral. In keeping with ancient Mediterranean customs, funerals were often accompanied by games, as famously represented by the funeral games of the Trojan Anchises as described in book 5 of Vergil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*. In the *Tomb of the Triclinium* we may have an allusion to games as the walls flanking the tomb's entrance bear scenes of youths dismounting horses, variously described as being either apobates (participants in an equestrian combat sport) or the Dioscuri (mythological twins).

The tomb's ceiling is painted in a checkered scheme of alternating colors, perhaps meant to evoke the temporary fabric tents that were erected near the tomb for the actual celebration of the funeral banquet.

The actual paintings were removed from the tomb in 1949 and are conserved in the Museo Nazionale in Tarquinia. As their state of preservation has deteriorated, watercolors made at the time of discovery have proven very important for the study of the tomb.

### Interpretation



Barbiton player on the left wall (detail), *Tomb of the Triclinium*, c. 470 B.C.E., Etruscan chamber tomb, Tarquinia, Italy



Two dancers on the right wall (detail), *Tomb of the Triclinium*, c. 470 B.C.E., Etruscan chamber tomb, Tarquinia, Italy

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The convivial theme of the *Tomb of the Triclinium* might seem surprising in a funereal context, but it is important to note that the Etruscan funeral rites were not somber but festive, with the aim of sharing a final meal with the deceased as the latter transitioned to the afterlife. This ritual feasting served several purposes in social terms. At its most basic level the funeral banquet marked the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to that of the dead; the banquet that accompanied the burial marked this transition and ritually included the spirit of the deceased, as a portion of the meal, along with the appropriate dishes and utensils for eating and drinking, would then be deposited in the tomb. Another purpose of the funeral meal, games, and other activities was to reinforce the socio-economic position of the deceased person and his/her family, a way to remind the community of the living of the importance and standing of these people and thus tangibly reinforce their position in contemporary society. This would include, where appropriate, visual reminders of socio-political status, including indications of wealth and civic achievements, notably public offices held by the deceased.

Essay by Dr. Jeffrey A. Becker

[https://depts.washington.edu/hrome/Authors/jenomec/Tarquinia/1/pub\\_zbpage\\_view.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hrome/Authors/jenomec/Tarquinia/1/pub_zbpage_view.html)

### **Tombs of Tarquinia, Jenny Lee**

This site is located 90 km from Rome. It is situated on a 133m high hill overlooking the Marta River Valley. It is the Etruscan capital, located in the heart of Southern Etruria near the port of Civitavecchia and Fiumicino airport.

Tarquinia has over 3000 years of history and was the Etruscan capital. In Etruscan, the city was called Tarxuna. The Etruscans were the main tribe in Italy before the Romans and ruled until the Roman revolt in 510 B.C. The Etruscans were conquered and their language effectively extinguished by the Romans by 250 B.C. Little remains of the actual city that was once a center of life for the Etruscans. Limestone remains of some walls and the Ara Reginae temple are still present, but the main attraction is the extensive set of tombs located 4 miles southeast of present-day Tarquinia.



Little knowledge on the Etruscans is well established due to the inability of scholars to clearly decipher the Etruscan language. However, in the 17th century, the first Etruscan tombs were uncovered. The Etruscan civilizations erected these tombs to honor their culture and now provide valuable resources on the activities and lifestyle of the Etruscan people. The Etruscan language still proves difficult for many scholars to decipher but the art of the tombs provide many clues to Etruscan life.

The tombs at Tarquinia are the most interesting aspect of this site. They feature frescoes, wall and ceiling paintings, and underground tombs that appear as small grassy mounds from the surface. There are thousands of tombs, and they somewhat resemble the Shire.

Much interest has been directed at the depictions in the many frescoes that decorate the tombs. Some display games and sporting contests, while others show people involved in traditional ceremonies.

**Kleiner, Fred. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages, A Global History*, 13th edition, 2011. pp. 229-230.**

**TARQUINIA** Large underground burial chambers hewn out of the natural rock were also the norm at Tarquinia. Earthen mounds may once have covered the Tarquinia tombs too, but the tumuli are no longer preserved. In contrast to Cerveteri, the subterranean rooms at Tarquinia do not have carvings imitating the appearance of Etruscan houses. In some cases, however, paintings decorate the walls. Painted tombs are statistically rare, the privilege of only the wealthiest Etruscan families. Nevertheless, archaeologists have discovered many paintings at Tarquinia by using periscopes to explore tomb interiors from the surface before considering time-consuming and costly excavation. Consequently, art historians have an almost unbroken record of monumental painting in Etruria from Archaic to Hellenistic times.

**TOMB OF THE LEOPARDS A**

characteristic example dating to the early fifth century BCE is the Tomb of the Leopards (FIG. 9-9), named for the beasts that guard the interior of the painted chamber from their perch within the pediment of the rear wall. They are reminiscent of the panthers on each side of Medusa in the pediment (FIG. 5-17) of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu. But mythological figures, whether Greek or Etruscan, are uncommon in Tarquinian murals, and the Tomb of the Leopards



has none. Instead, banqueting couples (the men with dark skin, the women with light skin, in conformity with the age-old convention) adorn the walls—painted versions of the terracotta sarcophagus (FIG. 9-5) from Cerveteri. Pitcher and cup-bearers serve the guests, and musicians entertain them. The banquet takes place in the open air or perhaps in a tent set up for the occasion. In characteristic Etruscan fashion, the banqueters, servants, and entertainers all make exaggerated gestures with unnaturally enlarged hands (FIG. 9-1). The man on the couch at the far right on the rear wall holds up an egg, the symbol of regeneration. The tone is joyful.

The painting is a celebration of life, food, wine, music, and dance, rather than a somber contemplation of death. In stylistic terms, the Etruscan figures are comparable to those on sixth-century Greek vases before Late Archaic painters became preoccupied with the problem of foreshortening. Etruscan painters may be considered somewhat backward in this respect, but in other ways they seem to have outpaced their counterparts in Greece, especially in their interest in rendering nature. In the Tomb of the Leopards, the landscape is but a few trees and shrubs placed between the entertainers (and leopards) and behind the banquet couches. But elsewhere the natural environment was the chief interest of Tarquinian painters.

**TOMB OF HUNTING AND FISHING** Scenes of Etruscans enjoying the pleasures of nature decorate all the walls of the main chamber of the aptly named Tomb of Hunting and Fishing at



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Tarquinia. In the detail reproduced here a youth dives off a rocky promontory, while others fish from a boat and birds fill the sky all around. On another wall, youthful hunters aim their slingshots at the brightly painted birds. The scenes of hunting and fishing recall the paintings in Egyptian tombs and may indicate knowledge of that Eastern funerary tradition. The multicolored rocks resemble those of the Thera *Spring Fresco* but art historians know of nothing similar in contemporaneous Greek art save the Tomb of the Diver at Paestum. That exceptional Greek work, however, is from a tomb in Italy dated about a half century later than the Tarquinian tomb. In fact, the Paestum composition probably emulated older Etruscan designs, undermining the now-outdated judgment of art historians that Etruscan art was merely derivative and that Etruscan artists never set the standard for Greek artists.

Stokstad and Cothren, *Art History*, Fourth Edition, 2011. pp. 162 – 165.

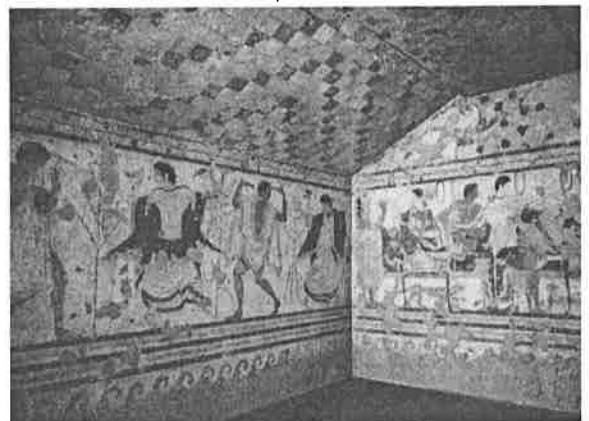
### THE ETRUSCANS

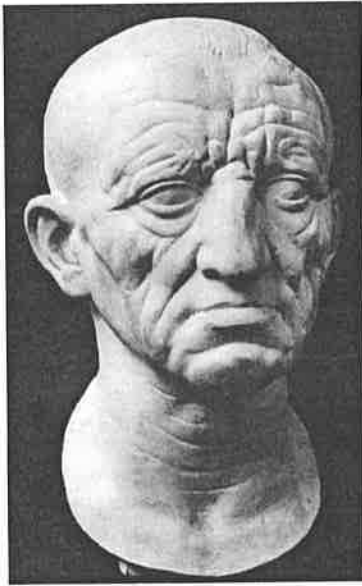
The boot-shaped Italian peninsula, shielded on the north by the Alps, juts into the Mediterranean Sea. At the end of the Bronze Age (about 1000 BCE), a central European people known as the Villanovans occupied the northern and western regions of the peninsula, while the central area was home to a variety of people who spoke a closely related group of Italic languages, Latin among them. Beginning in the eighth century BCE, Greeks established colonies on the mainland and in Sicily. From the seventh century BCE, people known as Etruscans, probably related to the Villanovans, gained control of the north and much of today's central Italy, and are known as Etruria. They reached the height of their power in the sixth century BCE, when they expanded into the Po River valley to the north and the Campania region to the south. Etruscan wealth came from fertile soil and an abundance of metal ore. Both farmers and metalworkers, the Etruscans were also sailors and merchants, and they exploited their resources in trade with the Greeks and with other people of the eastern Mediterranean. Etruscan artists knew and drew inspiration from Greek and Near Eastern art, assimilating such influences to create a distinctive Etruscan style.

### TOMB CHAMBERS

Like the Egyptians, the Etruscans seem to have conceived tombs as homes for the dead. The Etruscan cemetery of La Banditaccia at Cerveteri, in fact, was laid out like a small town, with streets running between the grave mounds. The tomb chambers were partially or entirely excavated below the ground, and some were hewn out of bedrock. They were roofed over, sometimes with corbel vaulting, and covered with dirt and stones....

Etruscan painters had a remarkable ability to suggest that their subjects inhabit a bright, tangible world just beyond the tomb walls. Brightly colored scenes of playing, feasting, dancing, hunting, fishing, and other leisure activities decorated the tomb walls.... In a painted frieze in the **TOMB OF THE TRICLINIUM**, somewhat later but also from Tarquinia, the diversions are more mature in focus as young men and women frolic to the music of the lyre and double flute within a room whose ceiling is enlivened with colorful geometric decoration. These dancers line the side walls, composed within a carefully arranged setting of stylized trees and birds, while at the end of the room couples recline on couches enjoying a banquet as cats prowl underneath the table looking for scraps. The immediacy of this wall painting is striking. Dancers and diners women as well as men are engaging in the joyful customs and diversions of human life as we know it.





**42. Head of a Roman patrician.** Republican Roman. c. 75–50 B.C.E.  
Marble, 14". Museo Torlonia, Rome, Italy.

(similar: Head of an old man, from Osimo, Italy G15,184

(similar: *Portrait Head of an Elder from Scoppito* S5, 167-169)

SH on similar work

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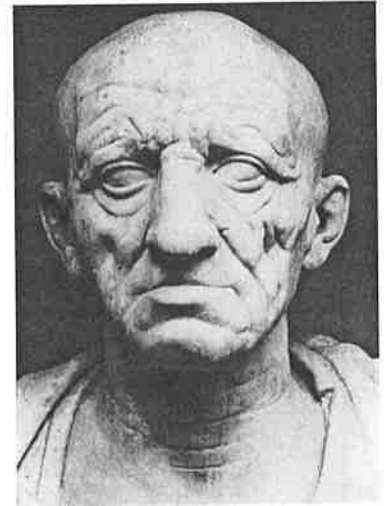
<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-AP/ap-ancient-rome/a/head-of-a-roman-patrician>

**Head of a Roman patrician**

Essay by Dr. Jeffrey A. Becker

Seemingly wrinkled and toothless, with sagging jowls, the face of a Roman aristocrat stares at us across the ages. In the aesthetic parlance of the Late Roman Republic, the physical traits of this portrait image are meant to convey seriousness of mind (*gravitas*) and the virtue

(*virtus*) of a public career by demonstrating the way in which the subject literally wears the marks of his endeavors. While this representational strategy might seem unusual in the post-modern world, in the waning days of the Roman Republic it was an effective means of competing in an ever more complex socio-political arena.



**The Portrait**

This portrait head, now housed in the Palazzo Torlonia in Rome, Italy, comes from Otricoli (ancient Otriculum) and dates to the middle of the first century B.C.E. The name of the individual depicted is now unknown, but the portrait is a powerful representation of a male aristocrat with a hooked nose and strong cheekbones. The figure is frontal without any hint of dynamism or emotion—this sets the portrait apart from some of its near contemporaries. The portrait head is characterized by deep wrinkles, a furrowed brow, and generally an appearance of sagging, sunken skin—all indicative of the veristic style of Roman portraiture.

**Verism**

Verism can be defined as a sort of hyperrealism in sculpture where the naturally occurring features of the subject are exaggerated, often to the point of absurdity. In the case of Roman Republican portraiture, middle age males adopt veristic tendencies in their portraiture to such an extent that they appear to be extremely aged and care worn. This stylistic tendency is influenced both by the tradition of ancestral *imagines* as well as a deep-seated respect for family, tradition, and ancestry. The *imagines* were essentially death masks of notable ancestors that were kept and displayed by the family. In the case of aristocratic families these wax masks were used at subsequent funerals so that an actor might portray the deceased ancestors in a sort of familial parade (Polybius *History* 6.53.54). The ancestor cult, in turn, influenced a deep connection to family. For Late Republican politicians without any famous ancestors (a group famously known as 'new men' or 'homines novi') the need was even more acute—and verism rode to the rescue. The adoption of such an austere and wizened visage was a tactic to lend familial *gravitas* to families who had none—and thus (hopefully) increase the chances of the aristocrat's success in both politics and business. This jockeying for position very much characterized the scene at Rome in the waning days of the Roman Republic and the Otricoli head is a reminder that one's public image played a major role in what was a turbulent time in Roman history.

**43. Augustus of Prima Porta.** Imperial Roman. Early first century C.E. Marble, originally colored, height 6'8". Musei Vaticani, Braccio Nuovo, Rome, Italy.

G15, 195-197

S5, 172-173

A3, 239-40

GW, 527

SH

Pins [Image](#) [MIT website](#) [Video](#) [Mencher Roman Sculpture Video](#)

[http://mv.vatican.va/4\\_ES/pages/z-Patrons/MV\\_Patrons\\_04\\_03.html](http://mv.vatican.va/4_ES/pages/z-Patrons/MV_Patrons_04_03.html)

The Augustus of Prima Porta, believed to have been commissioned in 15 A.D. by Augustus' adopted son Tiberius, is a majestic example of Imperial Roman statuary. It is currently under restoration, generously financed by the patrons of the Florida chapter.



It was discovered at Prima Porta nine miles outside of Rome in the villa belonging to Augustus' wife Livia. Although it may be a copy of a bronze original, dated 20 B.C., Tiberius made a significant addition to his marble copy: on the chest plate, he added scenes depicting the Roman victory over the Parthians. These scenes were used by Tiberius as a form of propaganda so that the viewer would recall the important role his father played in securing the Roman empire.

The Augustus of Prima Porta is based on the Doryphorus, a famous antique statue by Polykleitos portraying the ideal human proportions of an Athenian athlete. The depiction of Augustus portrays him as a victorious general making a speech. He is posed in the traditional contrapposto manner: his right leg is placed firmly forward while his left leg is bent and the heel slightly-raised. Augustus' right arm is stretched out in a noble and controlled Roman gesture and is counter-balanced by the slightly-bent left leg. Combined with these idealized features of strength and beauty, there are also personal features of Augustus: a broad cranium, deep-set eyes, sharp ridges in his brow, a well-formed mouth and a small chin. Furthermore, his face depicted in the manner of Apollo was meant to associate Augustus' abilities with those of the powerful god. Thus, Augustus wanted to portray himself as a perfect leader with flawless features, personifying the power and authority of the emperor who had the capacity to stabilize a society and an empire.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/roman/early-empire/a/augustus-of-primaporta>

**Augustus of Prima Porta** Essay by Julia Fischer

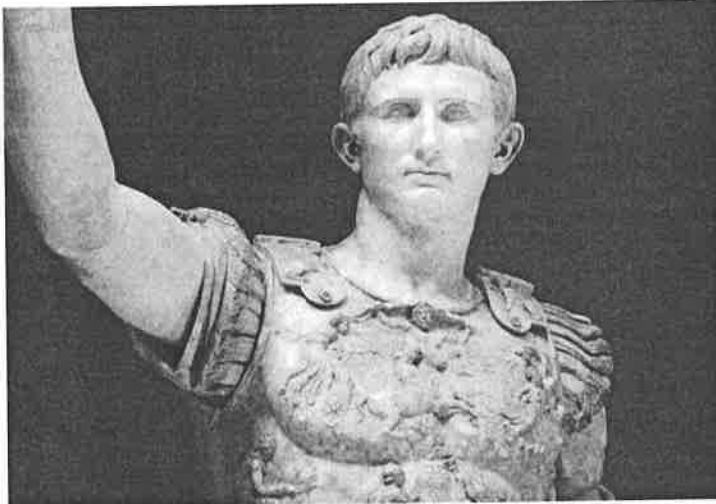
### **Augustus and the power of images**

Today, politicians think very carefully about how they will be photographed. Think about all the campaign commercials and print ads we are bombarded with every election season. These images tell us a lot about the candidate, including what they stand for and what agendas they are promoting. Similarly, Roman art was closely intertwined with politics and propaganda. This is especially true with portraits of Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire; Augustus invoked the power of imagery to communicate his ideology.



*Augustus of Prima Porta, 1st century C.E., marble, 2.03 meters high (Vatican Museums)*





### Augustus of Prima Porta

One of Augustus' most famous portraits is the so-called Augustus of Prima Porta of 20 B.C.E. (the sculpture gets its name from the town in Italy where it was found in 1863). At first glance this statue might appear to simply resemble a portrait of Augustus as an orator and general, but this sculpture also communicates a good deal about the emperor's power and ideology. In fact, in this portrait Augustus shows himself as a great military victor and a staunch supporter of Roman religion. The statue also foretells the 200 year period of peace that Augustus initiated, called

the Pax Romana.

### Recalling the Golden Age of Ancient Greece

In this marble freestanding sculpture, Augustus stands in a contrapposto pose (a relaxed pose where one leg bears weight). The emperor wears military regalia and his right arm is outstretched, demonstrating that the emperor is addressing his troops. We immediately sense the emperor's power as the leader of the army and a military conqueror.

*Doryphoros (Spear Bearer)*, Roman copy after an original by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos from c. 450-440 B.C.E., marble, 6'6" (Archaeological Museum, Naples)

Delving further into the composition of the Prima Porta statue, a distinct resemblance to Polykleitos' *Doryphoros*, a Classical Greek sculpture of the fifth century B.C.E., is apparent. Both have a similar contrapposto stance and both are idealized. That is to say that both Augustus and the Spear-Bearer are portrayed as youthful and flawless individuals: they are perfect. The Romans often modeled their art on Greek predecessors. This is significant because Augustus is essentially depicting himself with the perfect body of a Greek athlete: he is youthful and virile, despite the fact that he was middle-aged at the time of the sculpture's commissioning. Furthermore, by modeling the *Prima Porta* statue on such an iconic Greek sculpture created during the height of Athens' influence and power, Augustus connects himself to the Golden Age of that previous civilization.



### The Cupid and Dolphin

So far the message of the *Augustus of Prima Porta* is clear: he is an excellent orator and military victor with the youthful and perfect body of a Greek athlete. Is that all there is to this sculpture? Definitely not! The sculpture contains even more symbolism. First, at Augustus' right leg is cupid figure riding a dolphin.

The dolphin became a symbol of Augustus' great naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, a





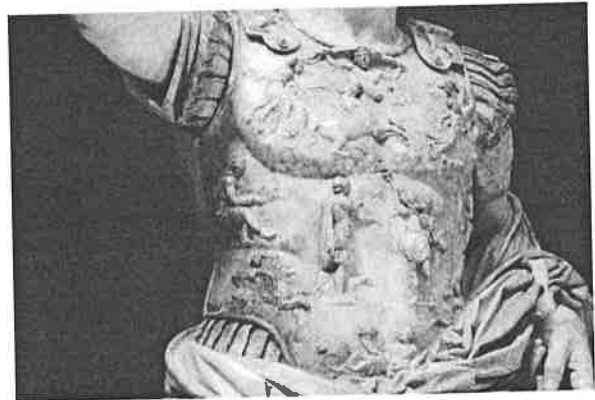
Marsha K. Russell  
St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Austin, TX

conquest that made Augustus the sole ruler of the Empire. The cupid astride the dolphin sends another message too: that Augustus is descended from the gods. Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Julius Caesar, the adoptive father of Augustus, claimed to be descended from Venus and therefore Augustus also shared this connection to the gods.

### The breastplate

Finally, Augustus is wearing a cuirass, or breastplate, that is covered with figures that communicate additional propagandistic messages. Scholars debate over the identification over each of these figures, but the basic meaning is clear: Augustus has the gods on his side, he is an international military victor, and he is the bringer of the Pax Romana, a peace that encompasses all the lands of the Roman Empire.

In the central zone of the cuirass are two figures, a Roman and a Parthian. On the left, the enemy Parthian returns military standards. This is a direct reference to an international diplomatic victory of Augustus in 20 B.C.E., when these standards were finally returned to Rome after a previous battle.



Surrounding this central zone are gods and personifications. At the top are Sol and Caelus, the sun and sky gods respectively. On the sides of the breastplate are female personifications of countries conquered by Augustus. These gods and personifications refer to the Pax Romana. The message is that the sun is going to shine on all regions of the Roman Empire, bringing peace and prosperity to all citizens. And of course, Augustus is the one who is responsible for this abundance throughout the Empire.



Beneath the female personifications are Apollo and Diana, two major deities in the Roman pantheon; clearly Augustus is favored by these important deities and their appearance here demonstrates that the emperor supports traditional Roman religion. At the very bottom of the cuirass is Tellus, the earth goddess, who cradles two babies and holds a cornucopia. Tellus is an additional allusion to the Pax Romana as she is a symbol of fertility with her healthy babies and overflowing horn of plenty.

### Not simply a portrait

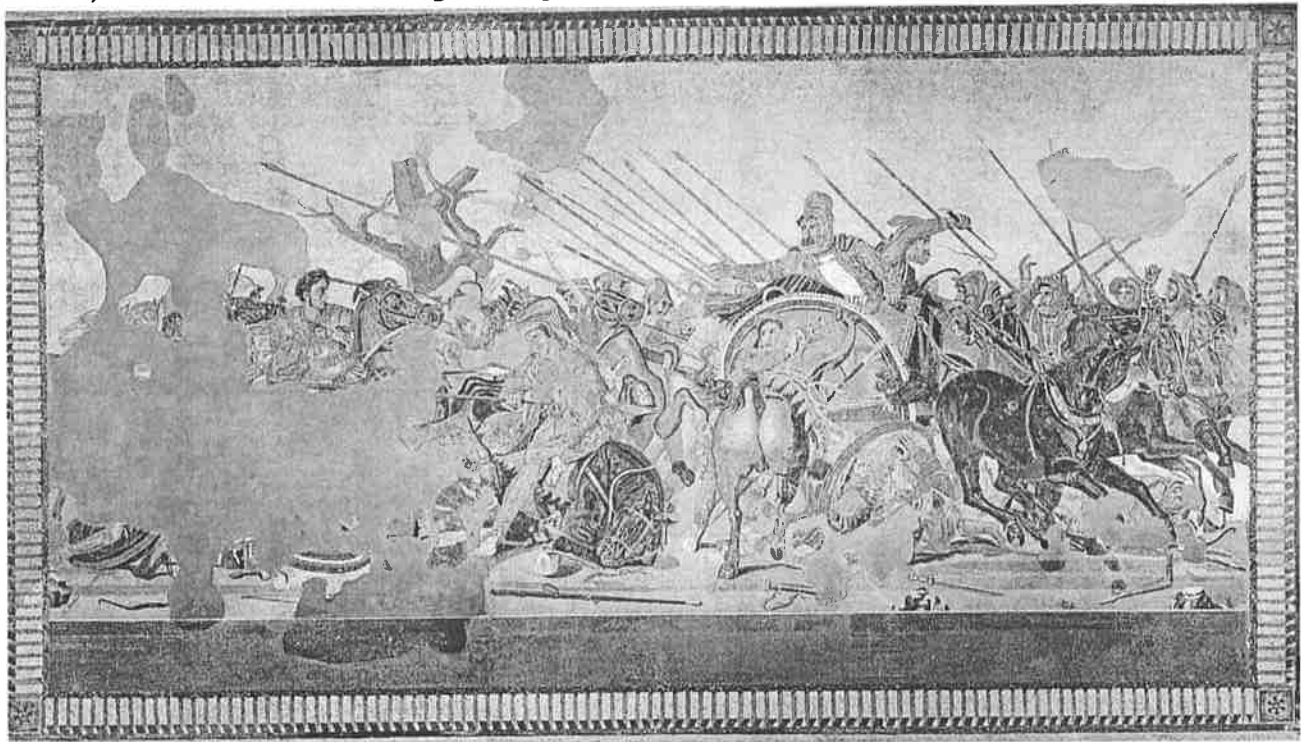
The Augustus of Prima Porta is one of the ways that the ancients used art for propagandistic purposes. Overall, this statue is not simply a portrait of the emperor, it expresses Augustus' connection to the past, his role as a military victor, his connection to the gods, and his role as the bringer of the Roman Peace.

[https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/politics/roman\\_imp\\_sculpt.html](https://www.oneonta.edu/faculty/farberas/arth/arth200/politics/roman_imp_sculpt.html)

**Dr. Allen S. Farber, SUNY Oneonta**

The so-called *Augustus of Prima Porta* was clearly made to provide visible testament to Augustus's claim to authority and the creation of a visual language of imperial images. Augustus holds in his left hand a spear which

Kleiner, Fred. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages, A Global History*, 13th edition, 2011. p. 142.



**BATTLE OF ISSUS** Further insight into developments in painting at the time of Alexander comes from a large mosaic that decorated the floor of one room of a lavishly appointed Roman house at Pompeii. In the *Alexander Mosaic* (FIG. 5-70), as it is usually called, the mosaicist employed *tesserae* (tiny stones or pieces of glass cut to the desired size and shape) instead of pebbles (see "Mosaics," Chapter 11, page 303). The subject is a great battle between the armies of Alexander the Great and the Persian king Darius III, probably the battle of Issus in southeastern Turkey, when Darius fled the battlefield in his chariot in humiliating defeat. The mosaic dates to the late second or early first century BCE. It is widely believed to be a reasonably faithful copy of *Battle of Issus*, a famous panel painting of ca. 310 BCE made by Philoxenos of Eretria for King Cassander, one of Alexander's successors. Some scholars have proposed, however, that the mosaic is a copy of a painting by one of the few Greek female artists whose name is known, Helen of Egypt.

*Battle of Issus* is notable for the artist's technical mastery of problems that had long fascinated Greek painters. Even Euthymides would have marveled at the fourth-century BCE painter's depiction of the rearing horse (FIG. 5-1) seen in a three-quarter rear view below Darius. The subtle modulation of the horse's rump through shading in browns and yellows is much more accomplished than the comparable attempts at shading in the Pella mosaic (FIG. 5-68) or the Vergina mural (FIG. 5-69). Other details are even more impressive. The Persian to the right of the rearing horse has fallen to the ground and raises, backward, a dropped Macedonian shield to protect himself from being trampled. Philoxenos recorded the reflection of the man's terrified face on the polished surface of the shield. Everywhere in the scene, men, animals, and weapons cast shadows on the ground. The interest of Greek painters in the reflection of insubstantial light on a shiny surface, and in the absence of light (shadows), was far removed from earlier painters' preoccupation with the clear presentation of weighty figures seen against a blank background. The Greek painter here truly opened a window into a world filled not only with

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figures, trees, and sky but also with light. This Classical Greek notion of what a painting should be characterizes most of the history of art in the Western world from the Renaissance on.

Most impressive about *Battle of Issus*, however, is the psychological intensity of the drama unfolding before the viewer's eyes. Alexander is on horseback leading his army into battle, recklessly one might say, without even a helmet to protect him. He drives his spear through one of Darius's trusted "Immortals," who were sworn to guard the king's life, while the Persian's horse collapses beneath him. The Macedonian king is only a few yards away from Darius, and Alexander directs his gaze at the Persian king, not at the man impaled on his now-useless spear. Darius has called for retreat. In fact, his charioteer is already whipping the horses and speeding the king to safety. Before he escapes, Darius looks back at Alexander and in a pathetic gesture reaches out toward his brash foe. But victory has slipped from his hands. Pliny said Philoxenos's painting of the battle between Alexander and Darius was "inferior to none."<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see why he reached that conclusion.

Stokstad and Cothren, *Art History*, Fourth Edition, 2011. pp. 146 - 147.

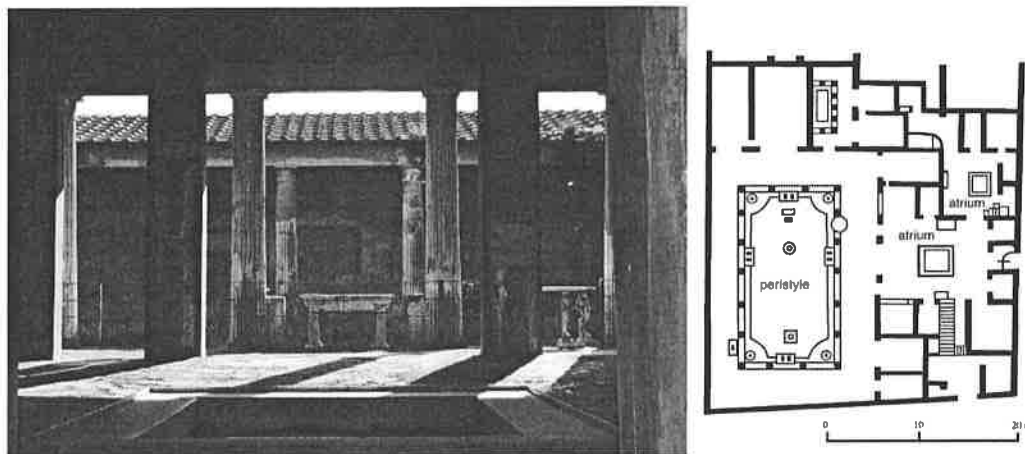
#### **Painting and Mosaics**

Roman observers such as Pliny the Elder praised Greek painters for their skill in capturing the appearance of the real world. Roman patrons also admired Greek murals, and they commissioned copies, in fresco or **mosaic**, to decorate their homes. (Mosaics created from **tesserae**, small cubes of colored stone or marble provide a permanent waterproof surface that the Romans used for floors in important rooms.) A first-century CE Roman mosaic, **ALEXANDER THE GREAT CONFRONTS DARIUS III AT THE BATTLE OF ISSOS**, for example, replicates a Greek painting of about 310 BCE. Pliny the Elder mentions a painting of this subject by Philoxenos of Eretria, but a new theory claims the original as a work of Helen of Egypt (see Women Artists in Ancient Greece, below).

Such copies document a growing taste for dramatic narrative subjects in late fourth-century BCE Greek painting. Certainly the scene here is one of violent action, where diagonal disruption and radical foreshortening draw the viewer in and elicit an emotional response. Astride a rearing horse at the left, his hair blowing free and his neck bare, Alexander challenges the helmeted and armored Persian leader, who stretches out his arm in a gesture of defeat and apprehension as his charioteer whisks him back toward safety within the Persian ranks. The mosaicist has created an illusion of solid figures through modeling, mimicking the play of light on three-dimensional surfaces by highlights and shading.

#### **Women Artists in Ancient Greece**

Although comparatively few artists in ancient Greece were women, there is evidence that women artists worked in many media. Ancient writers noted women painters Pliny the Elder, for example, listed Aristarete, Eirene, Iaia, Kalypso, Olympias, and Timarete. Helen, a painter from Egypt who had been taught by her father, is known to have worked in the fourth century BCE and may have been responsible for the original Greek wall painting of c. 310 BCE of *Alexander the Great Confronts Darius III at the Battle of Issos*.



39. House of the Vettii. Pompeii, Italy. Imperial Roman. c. second century B.C.E.; rebuilt c. 62–79 C.E. Cut stone and fresco.

G14, 190-191

S5, 178-181

SH

Pins [Plan](#) [Atrium](#) [Frescoes](#)

[Great Link to the Frescos](#)

[Awesome Video Tours and information on the House](#)

[Four Styles of Wall Painting from Art Institute Chicago](#)

[SmartHistory link to the four styles of painting in Pompeii](#)

## Background Relating to the House

1

The House of the Vettii is a relatively typical example of a home built during the Roman Period, and was located in one of the calmer parts of Pompeii. The house was owned by two relatives, Aulus Vettius Restitutus and Aulus Vettius Conviva. Most historic works mention that they were both freedman of some sort. Mau notes that from an inscription it can be concluded that Conviva was part of the Brotherhood of Augustus. Clarke specifically notes, in reference to Conviva's augustalis state, that his name appears as such, on a tablet found in the House of Caecilius Iucundus.[18] Part of achieving such a status, as Clarke notes, was due to Conviva's large donation to a public works project. This information would indicate that the extravagance of the Vettii home was not only motivated by their interests in demonstrating their status, but also because they were in fact, genuinely wealthy. [2]

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<sup>1</sup> Web.mit.edu., 2015. 'House Of Vettii'. Accessed September 2 2015. <http://web.mit.edu/course/21/21h.405/www/vettii/sources.html>.

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The House of the Vettii provides a detailed look into the transition that the city of Pompeii was undergoing in the mid-first century A.D. After a large earthquake in A.D. 62, recorded by Suetonius in his Life of Nero, many of the older elite families moved out of Pompeii to other towns. This wealth vacuum led to the rise of the "nouveau-riche", often wealthy freedmen pursuing power and stature [7]. The Vettii brothers were a prime example of this new class that arrived in Pompeii with the earthquake rubble. The very fact that these two brothers were able to rise from the status of slaves to wealthy merchants speaks to the social mobility within their society. It is theorized that the Vettii brothers made their fortune as wine merchants and were then able to essentially purchase the elite status of freeborn aristocrats. [8] Along with the rise of the wealthy freedmen in Pompeii, a notable decline in moral standards was could be observed. This is evidenced by the graphic and sexual nature of the artwork that dominated the post-earthquake decorations. The House of the Vettii contains several such graphic paintings and sculptures. Many of these works also point to the double standard women were held to within this society; many paintings depict scenes of women as sexual objects being exploited, and even raped, by men and gods. At the same time, nude males and phallic symbols were held up as symbols of fertility and protection for the household. Graffiti found on the Vettii's house also indicates that prostitution was quite a common, and inexpensive, service in Pompeii at this time. [9] Also present in these house are paintings that express the desire of the nouveau rich to show off their new social position by depicting various mythological and cult images for their guests. The layout and orientation of this particular house also demonstrates the semi-public nature of Roman houses. While private rooms, such as the women's gynaeceum and the servant quarters, were present in the construction, several of the large entertaining rooms also served as places to conduct business.

## Unique Features of the House

There are numerous ways which the house has added a variety of researchers in strengthening their academic assumptions. As Archer points out, some of the paintings in the house help provide incite on the transition between the Third and Fourth styles in paintings.

The house has also helped in presenting evidence for the influence of ancient Roman mural paintings on 14th century Christian murals. At one point in the article, Benton compares a specific work in the house, "The Punishment of Pentheus," with a Christian holy image. Many of the main features present in the Vettii work had been carried over to the more modern art.[4]

One more tangential feature of the house is its ability to assist in general discoveries about the society of Pompeii. In the early 1970s it was discovered that an area of Pompeii once contained a large vineyard. The project was geared to discovering what vegetation might have existed before Vesuvius erupted. After some digging a discovery was made that the cavities left in the soil by long decayed plant roots belonged to vines. Previously, there had been little concrete evidence of the presence of vineyards in ancient Rome. Once scientists knew about the existence of vineyards they were increasingly curious about the methods ancient Romans used to control the plants. The only sources that they could turn to are from ancient writings from individuals such as Pliny, who gives six methods. The House of the Vettii became a useful source in proving that Pompeians were aware of such methods. Of the many wall paintings

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featured in the house, one is of Cupids collecting grapes that were grown using one of the methods suggested, specifically on trees.[3]

The House of the Vettii or Casa dei Vettii (VI xv, 1) is a Roman townhouse (*domus*) located within the ruined ancient city of Pompeii, Italy. A volcanic eruption destroyed Pompeii in the year 79 C.E., thus preserving extraordinary archaeological remains of the Roman town as it was at the time of its cataclysmic destruction. Those remains constitute a nearly unparalleled resource for the study of the Roman world.

The standard house (*domus*) plan has several key architectural elements. Generally entered from the street via a narrow doorway (*fauces*), the large centralized reception hall (*atrium*) is flanked by wings (*alae*) and often bounded by bedrooms (*cubicula*). The office of the head of household (*paterfamilias*), known as the *tablinum*, links the public part of the house (*pars urbana*) to the private part of the house (*pars rustica*). This latter area often focuses on an open, colonnaded courtyard (*peristylum*) and serves as the center of family life, with the kitchen (*culina*), dining room(s) (*triclinium* or *oecus*), and often a small garden (*hortus*). Many houses also had a second level that may have contained additional sleeping spaces and perhaps storage.

The house was built atop the remains of an earlier house that survives, in part, in the form of the wings (*alae*) and a doorway. The plan of the House of the Vettii has two large central halls (*atria*) and, significantly, lacks an office space (*tablinum*). Entry to the house was gained from the east by way of a vestibule that granted admission to the larger atrium. The stone-lined basin for collecting rainwater (*impluvium*) lies at the center of the atrium. This larger atrium communicates directly with the peristyle (an open courtyard surrounded by fluted Doric columns) by means of a set of folding doors. The smaller atrium was the focus of the service portion of the house, while the peristyle and its well-appointed rooms was meant for entertainment and dining.<sup>2</sup>

[Link to a good PPT PDF on Private Spaces in Pompeii](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Khan Academy,. 2015. 'Khan Academy'. Accessed September 2 2015.  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/roman/wall-painting/a/pompeii-house-of-the-vettii>.

**45. Forum of Trajan.** Rome, Italy. Apollodorus of Damascus. Forum and markets: 106–112 C.E.; column completed 113 C.E. Brick and concrete (architecture); marble (column). Column of Trajan. Rome. 113-118 C.E., or after 117 C.E. Marble, overall height with base 125'; column alone 97'8"; length of relief 625'.

G15, 206-209; G14, 207-208

S5, 190-193

A3, 217-220

SH (column) SH (Forum)

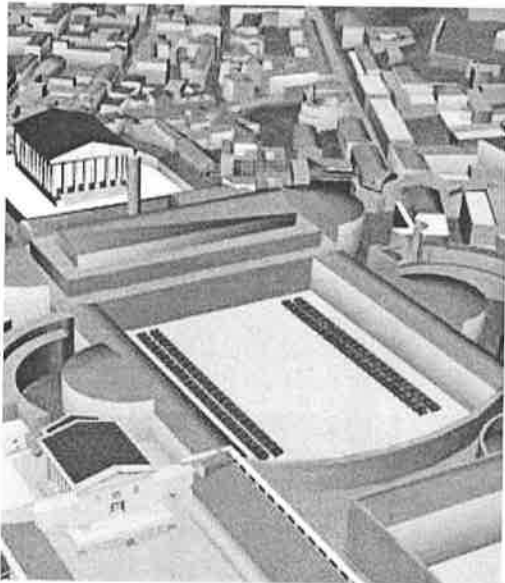
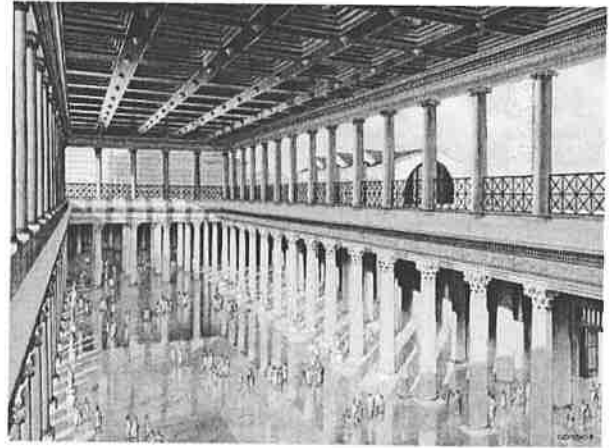
Pins Reconstruction drawing Another reconstruction

drawing Basilica Ulpia plan Basilica Ulpia plan, no labels

Restored exterior view of Basilica Restored cutaway view

of Basilica Restored interior view of Basilica Ulpia Plan of entire forum and market Trajan's Market from list

(poor quality image) Trajan's Market, higher res Market Trajan's Column from list Trajan's Column higher res 3D website (download video animations) Article Article



<http://romereborn.frischerconsulting.com/ge/FR-007.html>

#### FORUM OF TRAJAN

The last, largest, and arguably the grandest, of the imperial fora, it was built by Trajan (A.D.53-117) and designed by the architect Apollodorus of Damascus. Dedicated in A.D. 113, it celebrated the emperor's victories in the wars against the Dacians (A.D. 101 and 106). The forum consisted of a large plaza, dominated by a large bronze equestrian statue of Trajan and lined on its long sides by colonnades. Closing the plaza on the north was the Basilica Ulpia. Beyond this stood Trajan's Column, 138 feet high and topped by a statue of the emperor that could be seen far and wide in the city. Flanking the column were Greek and Latin libraries. After his death, Trajan's cremated ashes were placed in a golden urn set in the base of the column. The fate of the urn is an unsolved mystery.

**Stokstad, Marilyn. *Art History*. 4th edition, 2011. pp. 190 – 194.**

Domitian, the last Flavian emperor, was assassinated in 96 CE and succeeded by a senator, Nerva (r. 96 98 CE), who designated as his successor Trajan, a general born in Spain who had commanded Roman troops in Germany. For nearly a century, the empire was under the control of brilliant administrators. Instead of depending on the vagaries of fate (or genetics) to produce intelligent heirs, the emperors Nerva (r. 96 98 CE), Trajan (r. 98 117 CE), Hadrian (r. 117 138 CE), and Antoninus Pius (r. 138 161 CE) but not his successor, Marcus Aurelius (r.161 180 CE) each selected an able administrator to follow him, thus adopting his successor. Italy and the provinces flourished, and official and private patronage of the arts increased....Under Trajan, the empire reached its greatest territorial expanse...

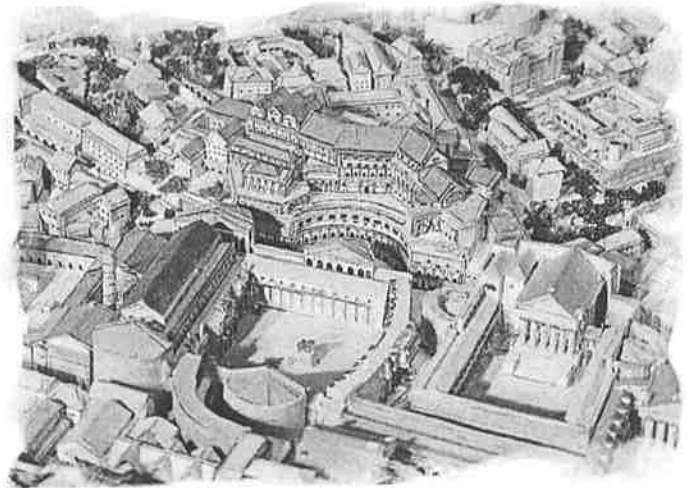
#### IMPERIAL ARCHITECTURE

The Romans believed their rule extended to the ends of the Western world, but the city of Rome remained the nerve center of the empire. During his long and peaceful reign, Augustus had paved the city's old Republican



Forum, restored its temples and basilicas, and followed Julius Caesar's example by building an Imperial Forum. These projects marked the beginning of a continuing effort to transform the capital itself into a magnificent monument to imperial rule. While Augustus' claim of having turned Rome into a city of marble is exaggerated, he certainly began the process of creating a monumental civic center. Such grand structures as the Imperial Forums, the Colosseum, the Circus Maximus (a track for chariot races), the Pantheon, and aqueducts stood amid the temples, baths, warehouses, and homes in the city center as expressions of successive emperors' beneficence and their desire to leave their mark on, and preserve their memory in, the capital.

**THE FORUM OF TRAJAN.** A model of Rome's city center makes apparent the dense building plan. The last and largest Imperial Forum was built by Trajan about 110-113 CE and finished under Hadrian about 117 CE on a large piece of property next to the earlier forums of Augustus and Julius Caesar. For this major undertaking, Trajan chose a Greek architect, Apollodorus of Damascus, who was experienced as a military engineer. A straight, central axis leads from the Forum of Augustus through a triple-arched gate surmounted by a bronze chariot group into a large, colonnaded square with a statue of Trajan on horseback at its center. Closing off the courtyard at the north end was the **BASILICA ULPIA**, dedicated in c. 112 CE, and named for the family to which Trajan belonged.



A **basilica** was a large, rectangular building with an extensive interior space, adaptable for a variety of administrative governmental functions. The Basilica Ulpia was a court of law, but other basilicas served as imperial audience chambers, army drill halls, and schools. The Basilica Ulpia was a particularly grand interior space, 385 feet long (not including the apses) and 182 feet wide. A large central area (the **nave**) was flanked by double colonnaded aisles surmounted by open galleries or by a clerestory, an upper nave wall with windows. The timber truss roof had a span of about 80 feet. The two **apses**, rounded extensions at each end of the building, provided imposing settings for judges when the court was in session.



During the site preparation for Trajan's forum, part of a commercial district had to be razed and excavated. To make up for the loss, Trajan ordered the construction of a handsome public market. The market, comparable in size to a large modern shopping mall, had more than 150 individual shops on several levels and included a large groin-vaulted main hall. In compliance with a building code that was put into effect after a disastrous fire in 64 CE, the market, like most Roman buildings of the time, was constructed of concrete faced with brick, with only occasional detailing in stone and wood.

Behind the Basilica Ulpia stood twin libraries built to house the emperor's collections of Latin and Greek manuscripts. These buildings flanked an open court, the location of the great spiral column that became Trajan's tomb when Hadrian placed a golden urn containing his predecessor's ashes in its base. The column

commemorated Trajan's victory over the Dacians and was erected either c. 113 CE, at about the same time as the Basilica Ulpia, or by Hadrian after Trajan's death in 117 CE.

**THE COLUMN OF TRAJAN.** The relief decoration on the **COLUMN OF TRAJAN** spirals upward in a band that would stretch almost 625 feet if laid out straight. Like a giant, unfurled version of the scrolls housed in the libraries next to it, the column presents a continuous pictorial narrative of the Dacian campaigns of 102-103 and 105-106 CE (**FIG. 6 43**). The remarkable sculpture includes more than 2,500 individual figures linked by landscape and architecture, and punctuated by the recurring figure of Trajan. The narrative band slowly expands from about 3 feet in height at the bottom, near the viewer, to 4 feet at the top of the column, where it is farther from view. The natural and architectural elements in the scenes have been kept small so the important figures can occupy as much space as possible.

The scene at the beginning of the spiral, at the bottom of the column, shows Trajan's army crossing the Danube River on a pontoon bridge as the first Dacian campaign of 101 CE is launched (**FIG. 6 44**). Soldiers construct battlefield headquarters in Dacia from which the men on the frontiers will receive orders, food, and weapons. In this spectacular piece of imperial ideology or propaganda, Trajan is portrayed as a strong, stable, and efficient commander of a well-run army, and his barbarian enemies are shown as worthy opponents of Rome.

**Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th Enhanced ed. 2011, pp. 314-315**

**FORUM OF TRAJAN** Trajan completed several major building projects in Rome, including the remodeling of the Circus Maximus, Rome's giant chariot-racing stadium, and the construction of a vast new bathing complex near the Colosseum constructed on top of Nero's Golden House. His most important undertaking, however, was a huge new forum, roughly twice the size of the century-old Forum of Augustus—even excluding the enormous market complex next to the forum. The new forum glorified Trajan's victories in his two wars against the Dacians (who lived in



what is now Romania) and was paid for with the spoils of those campaigns. The architect was Apollodorus of Damascus, Trajan's chief military engineer during the Dacian Wars. Apollodorus's plan incorporated the main features of most early forums, except that a huge basilica, not a temple, dominated the colonnaded open square. The temple (completed after the emperor's death and dedicated to the newest god in the Roman pantheon, Trajan himself) was set instead behind the basilica. It stood at the rear end of the forum in its own courtyard, with two libraries and a giant commemorative column, the Column of Trajan.

Entry to Trajan's forum was through an impressive gateway resembling a triumphal arch. Inside the forum were other reminders of Trajan's military prowess. A larger-than-life-size gilded-bronze equestrian statue of the emperor stood at the center of the great court in front of the basilica. Statues of captive Dacians stood above the columns of the forum porticos.

The Basilica Ulpia (Trajan's family name was Ulpian) was a much larger and far more ornate version of the basilica in the forum of Pompeii. It had *apses*, or semicircular recesses, on each short end. Two aisles flanked the nave on each side. In contrast to the Pompeian basilica, the entrances were on the long side facing the forum.

The building was vast: about 400 feet long (without the apses) and 200 feet wide. Light entered through clerestory windows, made possible by elevating the timber-roofed nave above the colonnaded aisles. In the Republican basilica at Pompeii, light reached the nave only indirectly through aisle windows. The clerestory (used millennia before at Karnak in Egypt provided much better illumination.

**COLUMN OF TRAJAN** The Column of Trajan was probably also the brainchild of Apollodorus of Damascus. The idea of covering the shaft of a colossal freestanding column with a continuous spiral narrative frieze seems to have been invented for this monument, but it was often copied in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and as late as the 19th century. Trajan's column is 128 feet high. It once featured a heroically nude statue of the emperor at the top. (The present statue of Saint Peter dates to the 16th century.) The tall pedestal, decorated with captured Dacian arms and armor, served as Trajan's tomb.

Scholars have likened the 625-foot band that winds around the column to an illustrated scroll of the type housed in the neighboring libraries. The reliefs depict Trajan's two successful campaigns against the Dacians. The story unfolds in more than 150 episodes in which some 2,500 figures appear. The band increases in width as it winds to the top of the column, so that it is easier to see the upper portions. Throughout, the relief is very low so as not to distort the contours of the shaft. Paint enhanced the legibility of the figures, but a viewer still would have had difficulty following the narrative from beginning to end.

Much of the spiral frieze is given over to easily recognizable compositions such as those found on coin reverses and on historical relief panels: Trajan addressing his troops, sacrificing to the gods, and so on. The narrative is not a reliable chronological account of the Dacian Wars, as was once thought. The sculptors nonetheless accurately recorded the general character of the campaigns. Notably, battle scenes take up only about a quarter of the frieze. As is true of modern military operations, the Romans spent more time constructing forts, transporting men and equipment, and preparing for battle than fighting. The focus is always on the emperor, who appears throughout the frieze, but the enemy is not belittled. The Romans won because of their superior organization and more powerful army, not because they were inherently superior beings.

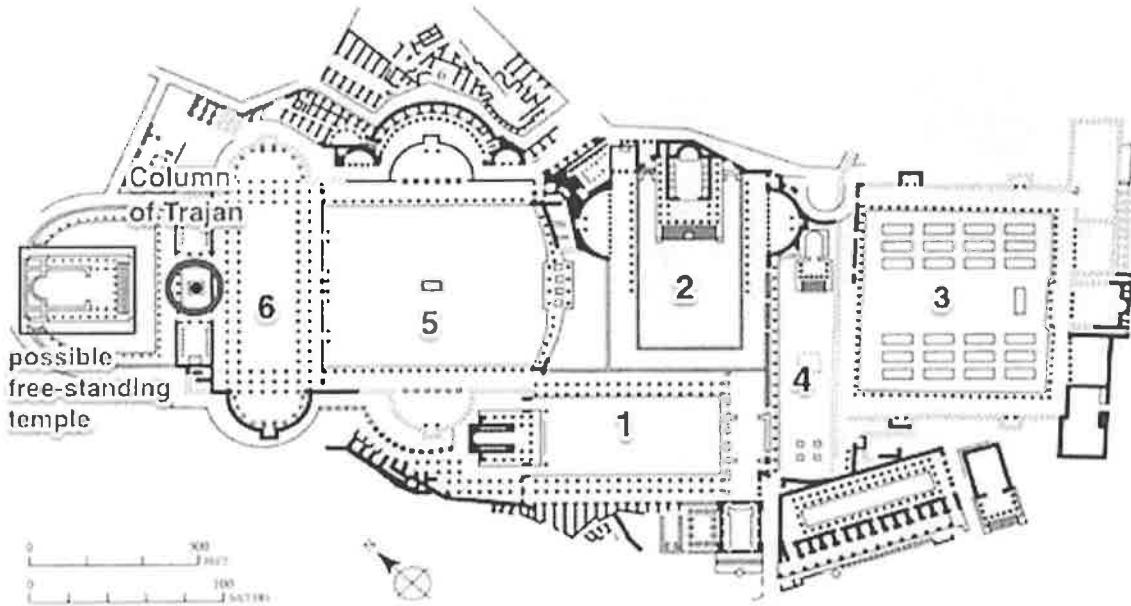


**MARKETS OF TRAJAN** On the Quirinal Hill overlooking the forum, Apollodorus built the Markets of Trajan to house both shops and administrative offices. As earlier at Palestrina, concrete made possible the transformation of a natural slope into a multilevel complex. Trajan's architect was a master of this modern medium as well as of the traditional stone-and-timber post-and-lintel architecture of the forum below. The basic unit was the *taberna*, a single-room shop covered by a barrel vault. Each *taberna* had a wide doorway, usually with a window above it that allowed light to enter a wooden inner attic used for storage. The shops

were on several levels. They opened either onto a hemispherical facade winding around one of the great exedras of Trajan's forum, onto a paved street farther up the hill, or onto a great indoor market hall resembling a modern shopping mall. The hall housed two floors of shops, with the upper shops set back on each side and lit by skylights. Light from the same sources reached the ground-floor shops through arches beneath the great umbrella-like groin vaults covering the hall.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/roman/beginners-guide-rome/a/imperial-fora>

For centuries, the Roman Forum (*Forum Romanum*) was the civic, juridical, and social heart of the ancient city of Rome, a place where civic buildings, sacred buildings, and monuments were to be both found and admired. Beginning in the first century B.C.E., a new series of public spaces, also dubbed as *fora* (*fora* being the plural form of the Latin noun *forum*) began to be created. These *fora* (called Imperial *fora* since they were built by Roman emperors during the Roman imperial period) would eventually number five in all and were important public spaces that relied upon the visual potential of monumental art and architecture to reinforce ideological messages.



The Forum of Trajan (*Forum Traiani*), the final imperial forum, was both the largest and the most lavish. Inaugurated in 112 C.E., the architectural complex relied upon imposing architectural and sculptural features to glorify the accomplishments and principate of the emperor Trajan. The elaborate forum complex has a vast footprint, measuring 200 x 120 meters. The open square of the forum is flanked by porticoes that contain exedrae and point viewer attention toward the main structure, the massive Basilica Ulpia. The architect Apollodorus of Damascus was responsible for the innovative design. On the western side of the basilica was another courtyard, flanked by two libraries (one Greek and one Latin), that contained a monumental honorific column, known today as the Column of Trajan.

The Column of Trajan, inaugurated in 113 C.E., is a main feature of the Forum of Trajan and is, in its own right, a masterwork of Roman art. The column carries an helical frieze of historical relief that provides a pictorial narrative of the events of Trajan's wars in Dacia (101–102 and 105–106 C.E.), culminating with the death of the enemy commander, Decebalus. The column stands 38 meters tall and its frieze wraps around the column shaft 23 times, with a total length of roughly 190 meters. Carved in bas relief, the exquisite frieze carefully narrates Trajan's campaigns and its level of detail is simply astounding.

The column's frieze may draw inspiration from earlier Roman triumphal art, the tradition of which was inclined to depict scenes from the foreign campaigns and, in so doing, glorify the accomplishments of the commander and his soldiers. Throughout the Forum of Trajan the theme of military victory, and its celebration, permeate the monumental decorative programs.

## 46. Pantheon. Imperial Roman. 118–125 C.E. Concrete with stone facing.

G14, 210-211

S5, 194-197

A3, 227-229

GW, 311-312

SH

Pins [Exterior](#) [Interior](#) [Sections](#) [Plan](#) [Panini Interior](#)  
[Cutaway](#) [Aerial View](#) [Video](#) [Video](#) [Video](#) [Video](#)

[http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/rome/rome\\_pantheon02.html](http://www.livius.org/ro-rz/rome/rome_pantheon02.html)



### Rome: Pantheon by Jona Lendering for [Livius.Org](#), 2007

Crossing a large threshold -the world's largest known piece of Lucullan black and red marble- the visitor entered the sanctuary itself. The interior of the Pantheon must have been more surprising than it is today. In the first place, the Pantheon was constructed between other buildings, and the visitor can not have known that he was about to enter a spacious vaulted room; in the second place, the contrast between the dark hall and the bright cult space -which is striking even today- must have been even more impressive in Antiquity, because the inner side of the dome was covered with gilded bronze. Since the conquests of [Trajan](#) in Dacia, this precious metal was in abundant supply. The gold must have reminded those who knew something about philosophy of the highest part of the earth's atmosphere, which was believed to consist of pure fire.



So the visitor entered the circular sanctuary which the emperor [Hadrian](#) had rededicated to the all-divine, i.e., heaven. Inside the rotunda were seven apses in which -as was once proposed by [Theodor Mommsen](#)- must have stood statues of the seven planets that, according to the ancients, moved around the earth; there was also a statue of [Julius Caesar](#), the dictator who had, after his death, been recognized as a celestial god. It is not recorded how the statues were arranged, but since the days of the Sicilian scientist [Archimedes](#) (287-212) it was customary to use a sequence based on revolution: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. If this sequence was also applied in the Pantheon, the statue of the Sun must have stood in the central apse, which can be seen on the next photo, to the left.

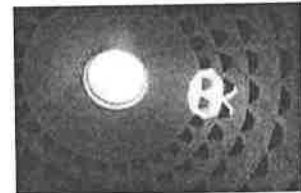
On one side, the Sun had the three male planets: son Mars, father Jupiter, and grandfather Saturn; on the other side were Lady Venus, the androgynous Mercury, and Mrs. Moon. Saturn and the Moon were as far from the Sun as possible, in accordance with the ancient theory that they were the coldest planets. The favorable planets (Moon, Jupiter, Venus) and the unfavorable ones (Saturn, Mercury, Mars) constituted two equilateral triangles. In this way, the seven apses were a copy of the universe. The most striking aspect of the vaulted space, however, was the big "eye" (*oculus*) in the top of the vault. Its function in the cosmological design is described by the [Athenian](#) philosopher [Plato](#), whose philosophical ideas were rapidly gaining popularity in the second century.

The gods see many blessed sights in the inner heaven, and there are many ways to and fro, along which the blessed gods are passing, every one doing his own work; he may follow who will and can, for jealousy has no place in the celestial choir. But when they go to banquet and festival, then they move up to the top of the vault of heaven. [...] For the immortals, when they are at the end of their course, go forth and stand upon the outside of heaven, and the revolution of the

spheres carries them round, and they behold the things beyond. But of the heaven which is above the heavens, what earthly poet ever did or ever will sing worthily? [Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247a-c; tr. B. Jowett]

The point is that the gods do not only belong to our universe, but are also transcendental: they are beyond this world. This idea, which can for the first time be documented in the cult of Amun in ancient Egypt, was often combined with monotheism: the gods venerated by the Greeks and Romans were manifestations of the one, supreme being, the all-divine or Pantheon.

The movement of one the seven planets could be seen in the Pantheon as it was described by Plato: the projection of the Sun on the gilded ceiling, "moving up to the top of the vault of heaven" in winter, when the Sun is low,



and down in summer, when the Sun is high. In a sense, the Pantheon is a large planetarium. This is a special photo, taken on the longest day of the year, 21 June, at astronomical noon. As you see, the light falls exactly in front of the entrance. If you would have entered the temple in Antiquity, you would have been absolutely blinded by the light, which appeared to come from the statue of the Sun.



This photo shows one of the apses in which the statues of the planets were standing. It is known from the *Natural History* (9.121) by Elder that the statue of Venus was decorated with earrings containing pearls that had once belonged to queen Cleopatra.

The building was reckoned among Rome's greatest wonders (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History*, 16.10.14: "a self-contained district under a high and lovely dome"), but is not often mentioned in our sources. We know that Hadrian held court in this temple (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69.7.1) and that the emperor Constantius II visited it in 357, and that's about it.

In 609, pope Boniface IV rededicated the Pantheon to S. Maria ad Martyres. Today, it is still in use as a church.

#### Literature

- Samuel Ball Platner and Thomas Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (1929 London), "Pantheon"
- This chapter was based on Jona Lendering, *Stad in marmer* (2002 Amsterdam), pp.290-294
- A satellite photo can be seen here.

<http://idialab.org/virtual-roman-pantheon-in-blue-mars-cryengine/> (See video at this site.)

Originally built by Agrippa around 27 BC under the rule of Augustus, it was destroyed by fire, then rebuilt and finally completed in its present form during Emperor Hadrian's reign, around 128 AD. Agrippa finished the construction of the building and it bears his name above the portico. The Pantheon would have contained numerous marble statues representing the major Roman deities. The statues displayed in this simulation represent a possible configuration and are scanned via photogrammetry. The buildings surrounding the Pantheon are built and interpreted by IDIA based on the large scale model of ancient Rome built by Italo Gismondi between 1935 and 1971. The model resides in the Museo della Civiltà Romana, just outside of Rome, Italy.

## 47. Ludovisi Battle

**Sarcophagus.** Late Imperial Roman.

c. 250 C.E. Marble, 5' high. Museo Nazionale Romano – Palazzo Altemps, Rome, Italy.

G15, 222

G14, 222-223

SH

Pins [Image](#) [Article](#) [Article](#)

**Lewis, Richard and Susan Lewis.**  
**Cengage Advantage Books: The Power of Art, 2nd Edition, 2009. p. 236.**

....As the Roman Empire entered its second century, the age of confidence was replaced by a time of troubles.

Historians continue to argue over the reasons, but inflation became rampant and trade diminished. Rome was plagued with a swollen bureaucracy and urban riots. There were also military defeats at the borders of the empire – defeats by the armies of the Persians in the east and Germanic tribes in the northwest.



The violent clashes between Roman armies and invaders are preserved in the dramatic relief sculpture, *Battle of Romans and Barbarians* on the *Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus*. (A sarcophagus was a stone coffin in which Roman aristocrats buried their dead.) Note the difference between the orderly Roman soldiers of Trajan's column and the writhing, twisting figures that crowd the surface of this stone box. Although the sculptors were still able to depict human figures convincingly, both Classical restraint and Republican realism have been abandoned. The battle shown here—probably against the Germanic tribes, or Goths—is violent, with gruesome corpses interspersed with the victorious Roman armies.

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rsar/hd\\_rsar.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rsar/hd_rsar.htm)

A sarcophagus (meaning "flesh-eater" in Greek) is a coffin for inhumation burials, widely used throughout the Roman empire starting in the second century A.D. The most luxurious were of marble, but they were also made of other stones, lead (65.148), and wood. Prior to the second century, burial in sarcophagi was not a common Roman practice; during the Republican and early Imperial periods, the Romans practiced cremation, and placed remaining bones and ashes in urns or ossuaries. Sarcophagi had been used for centuries by the Etruscans and the Greeks; when the Romans eventually adopted inhumation as their primary funerary practice, both of these cultures had an impact on the development of Roman sarcophagi. The trend spread all over the empire, creating a large demand for sarcophagi during the second and third centuries. Three major regional types dominated the trade: Metropolitan Roman, Attic, and Asiatic.

Rome was the primary production center in the western part of the empire, beginning around 110–120 A.D. The most common shape for Roman sarcophagi is a low rectangular box (48.76.1) and a flat lid. The kline lid, with full-length sculptural portraits of the deceased reclining as if at a banquet (1993.11.1), was inspired by earlier Etruscan funerary monuments. This type of lid gained popularity in the later second century, and was produced in all three production centers for very lavish sarcophagi....Most



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western Roman sarcophagi were placed inside mausolea against a wall or in a niche, and were therefore only decorated on the front and two short sides. ... Other common decorative themes include battle and hunting scenes...

**Kleiner, Fred S. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 13th Enhanced ed. 2011, p. 279-280**

### **THIRD-CENTURY SARCOPHAGI**

By the third century, burial of the dead had become so widespread that even the imperial family was practicing it in place of cremation. Sarcophagi were more popular than ever. An unusually large sarcophagus (FIG. 10-70), discovered in Rome in 1621 and purchased by Cardinal Ludovisi, is decorated on the front with a chaotic scene of battle between Romans and one of their northern foes, probably the Goths. The sculptor spread the writhing and highly emotive figures evenly across the entire relief, with no illusion of space behind them. This piling of figures is an even more extreme rejection of Classical perspective than was the use of floating ground lines on the pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius (FIG. 10-58). It underscores the increasing dissatisfaction Late Antique artists felt with the Classical style.

Within this dense mass of intertwined bodies, the central horseman stands out vividly. He wears no helmet and thrusts out his open right hand to demonstrate that he holds no weapon. Several scholars have identified him as one of the sons of Trajan Decius. In an age when the Roman army was far from invincible and Roman emperors were constantly felled by other Romans, the young general on the Ludovisi battle sarcophagus is boasting that he is a fearless commander assured of victory. His self-assurance may stem from his having embraced one of the increasingly popular Oriental mystery religions. On the youth's forehead is carved the emblem of Mithras, the Persian god of light, truth, and victory over death.



**Hartt, Frederick. *Art. A History of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture*, 4th ed. 1993. p. 274-275.**

Sarcophagus sculpture of the third century reflects the inner disorder of the period in a transformed relief style. The *Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus* is one of the most powerful examples. In comparison with the historical reliefs of the Arch of Titus and the Column of Trajan, through which the Romans move in evident command of their own destiny and triumph through their own valor, here both Romans and barbarians seem trapped in a perpetual conflict for which even victory offers no solution. The Romans conquer by sheer weight, pressing down on a shapeless tangle of anguished barbarian faces and tormented torsos and limbs. Space, mastered through centuries of Greek and Roman effort, has been swallowed up. Neither depth nor background is represented; the wall of bodies is piled in the foreground plane like the heap of weapons carved on the base of the Column of Trajan. And along with space the integrity of the human body has disappeared; not a single figure in this strange composition retains the capability of motion.

<http://wp.chs.harvard.edu/surs/2012/12/01/battle-sarcophagi/>

## 48. Catacomb of Priscilla. Rome, Italy.

Late Antique Europe. c.  
200–400 C.E. Excavated  
tufa and fresco.

G14, 237-239

S5, 220-222

GW, 317-318

SH

Pins [Greek chapel](#) [Orant fresco](#) [Good Shepherd fresco \(tiny image from list\)](#) [Good Shepherd vault](#) [Good Shepherd fresco from Catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus](#) [Article](#)

[http://www.catacombepiscilla.com/index\\_en.html](http://www.catacombepiscilla.com/index_en.html)

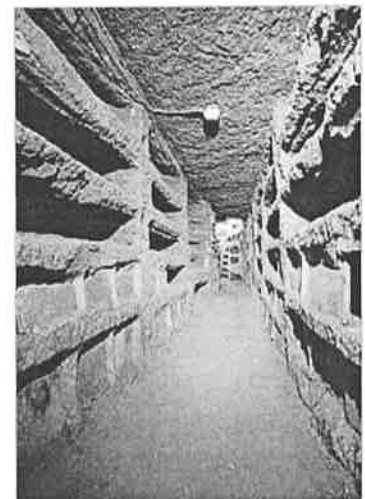
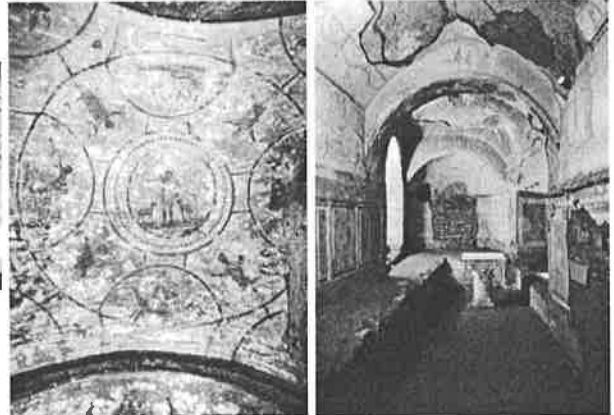
### THE QUEEN OF THE CATACOMBS

The Catacombs of Priscilla sits on the Via Salaria, with its entrance in the convent of the Benedictine Sisters of Priscilla. It is mentioned in all of the most ancient documents on Christian topography and liturgy in Rome; because of the great number of martyrs buried within it, it was called “regina catacubarum – the queen of the catacombs.”

Originally dug out from the second to fifth centuries, it began as a series of underground burial chambers, of which the most important are the “arenarium” or sand-quarry, the cryptoporticus, (an underground area to get away from the summer heat), and the hypogeum with the tombs of the Acilius Glabrio family. The noblewoman Priscilla, who granted the Church use of the property, was a member of this family; her commemoration is noted on January 16th in the Roman Martyrology, which speaks of her as a benefactor of the Christian community in Rome. This cemetery was lost like all the others after the entrances were blocked to protect it from thievery; however, it was also one of the first to be rediscovered, in the sixteenth-century. A large portion of the funerary inscription, sarcophagi, stone and bodies (presumed to be those of martyrs) were subsequently taken away; nevertheless, the catacomb does preserve some particularly beautiful and important paintings, the most significant of which are included on the regular visit.

### The Galleries of the Cemetery

Dug into the tuff, a soft volcanic rock used to make bricks and lime, the galleries have a total length of about thirteen kilometers, at various depths. The first level, which is the most ancient, winds along in a series of galleries; the walls are full of “loculi”, the most common kind of tomb. The bodies were laid within them, directly on the dirt, wrapped in a shroud, sprinkled with lime to restrain the normal process of decay, and closed in with pieces of marble, or tiles. Inscriptions were written in Greek or Latin on the tombs, or small objects placed near them to help identify graves with no inscription. Only on this level, where the martyrs were buried, do we find the small rooms known as “cubicula – bed chambers”, which were the tombs of wealthier families or of the martyrs themselves. Likewise, we find here the “arcosolia”, another type of tomb for the upper classes, often decorated with paintings of religious subjects. Most of the stories depicted are Biblical, from both the



Old and New Testaments, an expression of faith in the salvation and final resurrection obtained for us by Jesus Christ. The stone inscriptions on the tombs are often marked with symbols whose meaning was known to the Christians, but not to the pagans. The best known of these is the fish, the Greek word for which, ICHTHYS, was read as an acronym for the corresponding Greek words that mean "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

### The Cubiculum of the Veiled Woman

This room is named for the picture in the semi-circle on the back wall, in which a young woman, wearing a rich purple garment and a veil on her head, lifts up her arms in prayer. On either side of her are two scenes unlike any others among all of the paintings in the various catacombs, probably episodes of her life. In the middle, the Good Shepherd is painted in the Garden of Paradise, amid peacocks and doves. Before this scene, in the arch above the door, the prophet Jonah is shown emerging from the mouth of a sea-monster, a clear expression of faith in the Resurrection. The semi-circle on the left depicts the Sacrifice of Isaac, while on the right are shown the Three Children in the fiery furnace in Babylon; both of these episodes are expressions of faith in God's salvation, understood by the first Christians as prophecies of the salvation brought by the coming of Christ. These pictures, which are in a remarkably good state of preservation, date back to the second half of the third century.



### The Greek Chapel

When this area was found, it was full of dirt that had come down through the light shaft in the ceiling; it is named for the two Greek inscriptions, painted in the right niche, which were the first things seen by its discoverers.

Richly decorated with paintings and stuccos in the Pompeian style, it is formed of three niches for sarcophagi and a long seat for funeral banquets, called "refrigeria" or "agapae", which were held at the tombs in honor of the dead. The painting in the central arch at the back, on a red background, shows just such a banquet, but with a clear reference to the banquet of the Holy Eucharist, which also was sometimes celebrated by the Christians near venerated tombs. Seven persons are seated at the table, the first of which is breaking the bread as he stretches out his hands; at the sides of the table are seven baskets, a reference to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, when Jesus also promised the bread of eternal life.



Several episodes of the Old Testament are also shown: Noah on the ark; Moses making water run from the rock, a prophecy of the saving waters of baptism; the sacrifice of Isaac; and three stories of miraculous deliverance from the book of Daniel (Daniel among the lions, the three children in the furnace, Susanna accused of adultery by the elderly judges in Babylon, and saved by Daniel). Episodes of the New Testament are also depicted, such as the resurrection of Lazarus, and the healing of a paralytic; the former demonstrates Christ's power over death, the latter His power over sin. The adoration of the Magi is also represented, a very common image in the Christian cemeteries of ancient Rome, symbolizing the universality of salvation, since the Three Kings were the first pagans to adore Christ.

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<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150224-the-secrets-of-the-catacombs>

### **The Secrets of the Santa Priscilla Catacombs, Amanda Ruggeri, 25 Feb 2015**

When archaeologists in Rome at the end of the 19th Century began to excavate the Catacombs of Santa Priscilla, they hoped to find treasure: intricately carved monuments and vibrant frescoes of the type found in other ancient, underground cemeteries. Instead, they found devastation.

The marble sarcophagi they found inside had been broken into hundreds of pieces, wrote Rodolfo Lanciani, the scholar in charge of the dig. Lavish mosaics, a rare find in Rome's catacombs, had been pulled from the walls, "the marble incrustations torn off, the altar dismantled, the bones dispersed."

Some of the plundering, it turned out, had been carried out two centuries earlier – and on the Vatican's orders. In the mid-17th Century, both Pope Innocent X and Clement IX sent treasure-hunters deep into the catacombs' depths. Others may have destroyed the catacombs for a reason other than greed. Some think that early explorers vandalized the cemeteries believing they were cursed and had to be destroyed.

Lanciani recounts that men picnicking at the site spoke of "the ghosts who haunted the crypt below, when suddenly the carriage which had brought them there, pushed by invisible hands, began to roll down the slope of the hill." It fell into the river; oxen had to haul it out.

Few people think ghosts haunt the cemetery today. But the Catacombs of Santa Priscilla remain, in some ways, just as dangerous to traditional Church teachings. The discoveries there have sparked controversy over the role of women in the Church, and helped scholars re-evaluate the importance of the Virgin Mary in early Christian history.

Located on the Via Salaria, an ancient road leading north out of Rome, the Santa Priscilla catacombs aren't as well known to travelers as those on the Via Appia. But they are among Rome's most important. Thanks to the number of martyrs buried here as well as its sheer size, the underground cemetery was an important pilgrimage site throughout the Middle Ages.

#### **Ladies' supper?**

Today, its main draw for scholars and curious visitors is the Cappella Greca, or Greek Chapel. The space once held large, expensive marble sarcophagi, now lost. It also is lavished with an extraordinary number of frescoes – many that, unusually, feature women.

The most controversial is the fresco that depicts a Eucharistic banquet. The fresco shows seven individuals along a dining bench; the figure on the far left-hand side breaks bread. At the time of the fresco's discovery, the assumption was that "if that figure is breaking bread, then he has to be male, because women wouldn't break bread and be leading the Eucharist," says Nicola Denzey Lewis, professor of religious studies at Brown University and the author of *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women*. Perhaps to aid that interpretation, in the 19th Century, she says, someone rubbed off some of the face's pigment, making it look shadowed, as if it has a beard. Yet thanks to the figures' dress (one figure in the middle even wears a veil, as a Roman woman would) and their delicate features, few academics today, or even visitors, think the figures are male.

Some have argued that the fresco shows women leading a Mass – in other words, acting as priests – which would fly in the face of Catholic teachings. But instead it might depict a funereal banquet – the kind of celebration that both pagan and early Christian Romans would hold at the tomb of the deceased. "It was not a Eucharist. It was never meant to be a Eucharist. It was only called a Eucharist because the 19th-Century Catholic clergyman who discovered it, when he saw a meal, that's where his mind went," says

Denzey. "I think it's a woman in charge, absolutely. But I don't see evidence in that scene for women priests."

Yet, say Denzey and other scholars, whether women led Mass or not may be beside the point: the frescoes in Santa Priscilla show that women played a larger role in the early Church than is generally assumed. "I don't think anyone can seriously question whether there were women deacons until the 4th Century, at least," says Robin Jensen, professor of Christian art history at Vanderbilt University.

### **Curioser and curioser**

Mysterious frescoes aside, Santa Priscilla is notable for another reason. The traditional conception of Roman catacombs is that catacombs with Christian tombs were purely Christian establishments, laid out by the Church for this purpose. The implication? That the early Church was highly organized and already had a clear hierarchy. But, points out Barbara Borg, professor of classical archaeology at the University of Exeter, "this model doesn't work with the early catacombs." The Santa Priscilla catacomb was originally owned not by the Church, but privately, by Rome's illustrious Acilii Glabriones family. The family – which may or may not have been Christian – owned the land for more than 250 years. They began burying the dead of their extended family here, freedmen and slaves included, in a system of tunnels, which they added to as necessary. Even if they were Christian, they probably weren't just burying Christians: families in the early centuries of the Common Era were often of mixed religions, and the tombs here are organized around family groupings, not ecclesiastical hierarchies.

There is yet another piece of the Priscilla puzzle that calls traditional modes of thought into question: the supposed fresco of the Virgin Mary. Said to date to the 3rd Century, the painting shows a veiled woman with a child in her arms. If it is of Mary, it is the oldest image of Jesus' mother in existence. But it is also an odd one. The small fresco is oddly placed, tucked up on high, on the ceiling. Aside from this one, the first recognized images of Mary come from the 5th Century – after the Council of Ephesus in 431 officially recognized Mary as the mother of God.

But because of how unusually early the fresco would be, some doubt whether it's Mary at all. "It might be the very first image of the Virgin Mary. It might be a deceased woman with a baby," says Jensen.

The Virgin Mary or someone else? A Christian catacomb or a mixed one? Women as leaders, or no? If the catacombs had not been so damaged, so much of their archaeological context erased, we might have clearer answers. For now, only the ghosts know for sure.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2510473/Vatican-unveils-frescoes-Catacombs-Priscilla-paintings-FEMALE-PRIESTS.html>

**Do these images prove that early Christianity had FEMALE priests? Vatican unveils frescoes hinting that women held power in the early Church**

- The 230-240 AD frescoes were found in the Catacombs of Priscilla of Rome
- One fresco shows a group of women celebrating banquet of the Eucharist
- Another shows woman with outstretched arms like those of a priest
- Vatican says assertions that these women were priests are 'fairy tales'

By ELLIE ZOLFAGHARIFARD PUBLISHED: 07:03 EST, 20 November 2013

The catacombs of Priscilla, on Rome's Via Salaria, have been fully reopened after a five-year project that included laser technology to clean some of the ancient frescoes and a new museum to house restored marble fragments of sarcophagi.