

## Greek and Roman Antiquities

The Greek artist was primarily concerned with the rendering of a human figure. The three great periods of Greek art are: the Archaic (6th century BCE), the classical (5th to 4th centuries BCE), and the Hellenistic (late 4th century BCE to the establishment of the Roman Empire, about 30 BCE).

Sculpture from the Archaic period shows in its earliest stages strong Egyptian and Near Eastern influences, seen in the kouroi (youth) statues, which portray male figures in a stiff and frontal pose, with arms held close to the body and legs placed together, left foot thrust forward. This pose derives from an Egyptian type that preceded the Greeks by at least two thousand years. The Archaic Greek type varied from the Egyptian in that the Greeks portrayed the body nude rather than robed, as they saw ideal beauty in the perfection of the human form.

Beginning in the 5th century BCE, the rigid stance of the archaic statue altered as sculpture began to portray movement. The athletic types by Polykleitos, a famous sculptor of this time, embodied theories on the proportion of the ideal human body, based on mathematical calculations. During the Classical period, gods and humans were depicted in a generalized and idealized manner, lacking signs of individuality which would make them appear like ordinary or recognizable people.

By the 4th century BCE, sculptors began to move away from idealization. Facial expressions were given freer treatment. This movement to greater realism reached a high point in the Hellenistic period, when interest in nature and individualism led the sculptors to search for new fields of subject matter. The natural world and various aspects of human life began to be included in art, subjects which were rarely depicted in earlier times: drunken people, the elderly, and others.

### Examples:

#### **Bearded Head**

*Archaic, second half of 6th Century BCE, Limestone*

This Archaic period piece is a fine example of sculpture from the Island of Cyprus. The limestone in which it is executed gives it a distinctive surface. The almond eyes originally had pupils, indicated by paint. The mouth, with its slight smile, and highly schematized hair, beard and mustache are characteristic of the Cypriot style. A stiff, almost posed, frontal pose is indicative of archaic art of this region, our head is frontal, stylized and formal.

#### **Head of a Horse**

*Roman, probably 1st Century CE, Marble*

This head, worked in the round, is a fragment of what was once a free-standing equestrian statue. When the Romans conquered the Greek world, Roman soldiers took many works to Rome, where they were highly prized, and as models for Roman sculptors who copied the Greek statues to meet the insistent Roman demand for more. In many cases, the original work created in bronze in Greece was transformed into marble.

This horse head may be derived from a Hellenistic prototype, as suggested by the realistic rendering of the eyes and the subtle treatment of the muscles, veins and sinews, showing the real rather than the ideal. The addition of the horse's bridle carved directly in stone, rather than attaching than attached, and made of metal is another characteristic of Hellenistic style.

### **Head of Aphrodite (Venus)** (part of Thayer Gallery in 2020 reinstallation)

*Roman, Antoine period, 2nd Century CE, after a Hellenistic type, Marble*

The goddess Aphrodite can be recognized by her distinctive coif, or love-knot. This head is clearly Roman work, based on Hellenistic types, characterized by the "smokey" or soft finish to the features (in painting, the quality known as *sfumato*, from the Italian, meaning smokey). The deep drill holes used to suggest the texture of the hair are typical of Roman work from this time. This work demonstrates the potential for sensitive and moving transformation of Greek originals into Roman art.

### **Pelophoros** (part of Ludington Court in 2020 reinstallation)

*Roman copy, 1st Century CE, of a Greek early 5th Century BCE original, Marble*

This type of female figure derives from an early Classical prototype. Clothed in a peplos, a heavy woolen garment worn by women in the 6th to 5th Centuries BCE this example is an expressive—and noble interpretation of young womanhood. It is strongly frontal in composition, reminiscent of early Greek and Egyptian works. The beautiful fall of the garment, the folds of the material, and the sense of dignity and repose conveyed in the figure's stance suggest the work of a sensitive artist.

### **Torso of the Doryphoros**

*Roman, Hadrianic copy of Greek original by Polykleitos, ca. 440 BCE, Marble*

This torso is very fine Roman work, a copy of a statue by Polykleitos, a sculptor best known for his statues of athletes. The stance is typically Polykleitan, with the weight of the body placed directly upon the right leg allowing freedom of movement to the left. The left hand held a spear which rested upon the shoulder (hence the name, "Doryphoros", or Spear-Bearer).

### **Funerary Loutrophorus**

*Greek, late 4th Century BCE, Marble*

The central feature of Ludington Court is this great vase, which may have been a grave marker. The loutrophorus was a distinctive type of water jar for carrying sacred spring water for the nuptial bath, and was sometimes placed on the tombs of unmarried persons, both men and women. Our example is a replica in marble of such a nuptial vase, much larger than life-size.

### **Lansdowne Hermes** (part of Ludington Court in 2020 reinstallation)

*Roman copy, Hadrianic, of Greek 4th Century BCE original, possibly by Lysippos (?), Marble*

Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, is depicted in this statue, which displays the canons of perfect human proportions (blending realism and idealism on a grand scale) as espoused by the sculptor Lysippos. The figure is robust and strong, with soft contours and gently molded surfaces. The marble used by the artist successfully captures qualities of both softness and strength. The left hand of the figure would have held the caduceus, or staff with two entwined snakes, symbolic of a herald and identifying the figure as that of Hermes. Of particular note is the skillful rendering of the hands and feet, the proportions and tilt of the head, yielding a thoughtful expression to the figure. The figure stands in a *contraposto* attitude, with contrasting thrust of hip and shoulder. The Lansdowne Hermes was excavated in 1771 at Tor Colombaro and came to the Museum through the generosity of Wright S. Ludington. Recent studies have shown that sections of the sculpture came from other ancient works. It was common in the last few centuries to create composite sculptures in this way from ancient fragments.

### **Venus Genetrix**

*Roman, copy of a Greek late 5th Century BCE original, possibly by Kallimachos, Marble*

Venus Genetrix, an image idealizing the concepts of feminine beauty, exemplifies the graceful, sinuous form admired by the Greeks and Romans. Venus, the Roman equivalent of the Goddess Aphrodite, was the patron Goddess of Rome, and her image served as a model of feminine grace. Executed in line-grain white

marble, the figure's form is revealed and concealed through a rendering style which exaggerates the shallow, clinging folds of the goddess' *chiton*, a light weight, sleeveless linen garment. The figure stands in repose, with her weight on the left (engaged) leg, with counterbalance suggested by the angle of hip and shoulder. The left arm, extended below the waist, may have held an apple, one of the Goddess' attributes, symbolizing the Greek mythological theme of the judgment of Paris. This Roman work exemplifies many aspects of Classical Greek sculpture:

- naturalistic pose
- drapery molded to emphasize the shape of the body beneath
- balanced and serene composition
- idealized form of the figure