ARTH 110 - ART HISTORY I



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ARTH 110 - Art History I

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1: Thinking and Talking About Art

1.1: What is Art?
1.2: Visual Elements
1.3: Content
1.4: Art in Society
1.5: Historical Context

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1.1: What is Art?

What is Art?

Interactions between the elements and principles of art help artists to organize sensorially pleasing works of art while also giving viewers a framework within which to analyze and discuss aesthetic ideas.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the frameworks we can use to analyze and discuss works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The interplay between the principles and elements of art provide a language with which to discuss and analyze works of art.
- The principles of art include: *movement*, *unity*, *harmony*, *variety*, *balance*, *contrast*, *proportion* and *pattern*.
- The elements of art include: *texture*, *form*, *space*, *shape*, *color*, *value* and *line* .
- How best to define the term art is a subject of constant contention.
- Since conceptual art and postmodern theory came into prominence, it has been proven that anything can be termed art.

Key Terms

- **Formalism**:The study of art by analyzing and comparing form and style—the way objects are made and their purely visual aspects.

What is Art?

Art is a highly diverse range of human activities engaged in creating visual, auditory, or performed artifacts— artworks—that express the author's imaginative or technical skill, and are intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power.

The oldest documented forms of art are visual arts, which include images or objects in fields like painting, sculpture, printmaking , photography, and other visual media . Architecture is often included as one of the visual arts; however, like the decorative arts, it involves the creation of objects where the practical considerations of use are essential, in a way that they usually are not in another visual art, like a painting.

Art may be characterized in terms of mimesis (its representation of reality), expression, communication of emotion, or other qualities. Though the definition of what constitutes art is disputed and has changed over time, general descriptions center on the idea of imaginative or technical skill stemming from human agency and creation. When it comes to visually identifying a work of art, there is no single set of values or aesthetic traits. A Baroque painting will not necessarily share much with a contemporary performance piece, but they are both considered art.

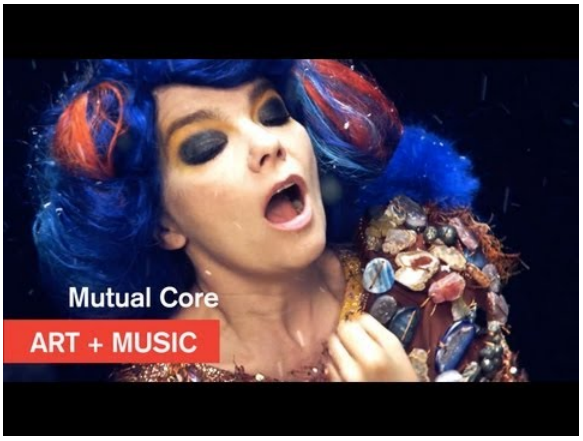
Despite the seemingly indefinable nature of art, there have always existed certain formal guidelines for its aesthetic judgment and analysis. Formalism is a concept in art theory in which an artwork's artistic value is determined solely by its form, or how it is made. Formalism evaluates works on a purely visual level, considering medium and compositional elements as opposed to any reference to realism , context, or content.

Art is often examined through the interaction of the *principles* and *elements* of art. The principles of art include *movement*, *unity*, *harmony*, *variety*, *balance*, *contrast*, *proportion* and *pattern*. The elements include *texture*, *form*, *space*, *shape*, *color*, *value* and *line*. The various interactions between the elements and principles of art help artists to organize sensorially pleasing works of art while also giving viewers a framework within which to analyze and discuss aesthetic ideas.



Ecce Homo, Caravaggio, 1605: This is an example of a Baroque painting.

Björk, *Mutual Core,* 2011: This is an example of a contemporary performance piece.



The link to this video is provided at the bottom of this page.

What Does Art Do?

A fundamental purpose inherent to most artistic disciplines is the underlying intention to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion.

Learning Objectives

Examine the communication, utilitarian, aesthetic, therapeutic, and intellectual purposes of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to the objects we use every day, such as a glass or a chair.
- Art therapy is a relatively young type of therapy that focuses on the therapeutic benefits of art-making, using different methods and theories.
- Since the introduction of conceptual art and postmodern theory, it has been proven that anything can, in fact, be termed art.

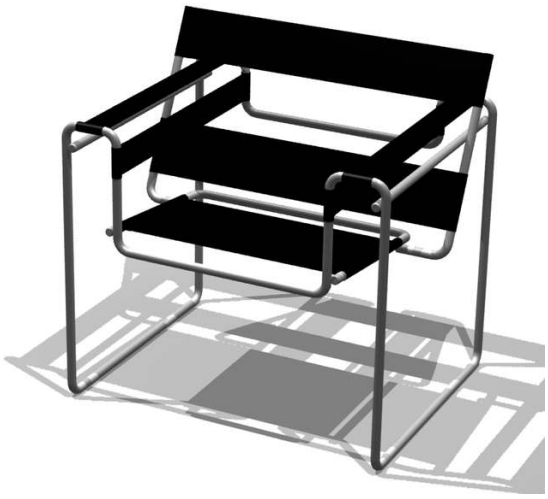
- It can be said that the fine arts represent an exploration of the human condition and the attempt at a deeper understanding of life.

Key Terms

- **human condition**:The characteristics, key events, and situations which compose the essentials of human existence, such as birth, growth, emotionality, aspiration, conflict, and mortality.
- **fine arts**:Visual art created principally for its aesthetic value.
- **aesthetic**:Concerned with artistic impact or appearance.

A fundamental purpose common to most art forms is the underlying intention to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion. However, the term is incredibly broad and is broken up into numerous sub-categories that lead to utilitarian , decorative, therapeutic, communicative, and intellectual ends. In its broadest form, art may be considered an exploration of the human condition, or a product of the human experience.

The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to everyday objects, such as a glass or a chair, transforming them from a mere utilitarian object to something aesthetically beautiful. Entire schools of thought exist based on the concepts of design theory intended for the physical world.



Bauhaus chair by Marcel Breuer: The decorative arts add aesthetic and design values to everyday objects.

Art can function therapeutically as well, an idea that is explored in art therapy. While definitions and practices vary, art therapy is generally understood as a form of therapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication. It is a relatively young discipline, first introduced around the mid-20th century.

Historically, the fine arts were meant to appeal to the human intellect, though currently there are no true boundaries. Typically, fine art movements have reacted to each other both intellectually and aesthetically throughout the ages. With the introduction of conceptual art and postmodern theory, practically anything can be termed art. In general terms, the fine arts represent an exploration of the human condition and the attempt to experience a deeper understanding of life.

What Does Art Mean?

The meaning of art is shaped by the intentions of the artist as well as the feelings and ideas it engenders in the viewer.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the perspectives behind the meaning of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The meaning of art is often shared among the members of a given society and dependent upon cultural context.

- The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture.”
- Some purposes of art may be to express or communicate emotions and ideas, to explore and appreciate formal elements for their own sake, or to serve as representation.
- Art, at its simplest, is a form of communication and means whatever it is intended to mean by the artist.

Key Terms

- **mimesis**:The representation of aspects of the real world, especially human actions, in literature and art.

The meaning of art is often culturally specific, shared among the members of a given society and dependent upon cultural context. The purpose of works of art may be to communicate political, spiritual or philosophical ideas, to create a sense of beauty (see aesthetics), to explore the nature of perception, for pleasure, or to generate strong emotions. Its purpose may also be seemingly nonexistent.

The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture.” It has been defined as a vehicle for the expression or communication of emotions and ideas, a means for exploring and appreciating formal elements for their own sake, and as mimesis or representation. More recently, thinkers influenced by Martin Heidegger have interpreted art as the means by which a community develops for itself a medium for self-expression and interpretation.



Helen Frankenthaler, 1956: A photograph of the American artist Helen Frankenthaler in her studio in 1956.

Art, in its broadest sense, is a form of communication. It means whatever the artist intends it to mean, and this meaning is shaped by the materials, techniques, and forms it makes use of, as well as the ideas and feelings it creates in its viewers . Art is an act of expressing feelings, thoughts, and observations.

What Makes Art Beautiful?

Beauty in terms of art refers to an interaction between line, color, texture, sound, shape, motion, and size that is pleasing to the senses.

Learning Objectives

Define “aesthetics” and “beauty” as they relate to art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Beauty in art can be difficult to put into words due to a seeming lack of accurate language.
- An aesthetic judgment cannot be an empirical judgment but must instead be processed on a more intuitive level.
- Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and taste. Aesthetics is central to any exploration of art.
- For Immanuel Kant, the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective, but common, human truth.
- For Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the freest and most pure and truthful that intellect can be, and is therefore beautiful.

- Art is often intended to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion.

Key Terms

- **aesthetics**:The branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, taste, and the creation and appreciation of beauty.
- **intuitive**:Spontaneous, without requiring conscious thought; easily understood or grasped by instinct.

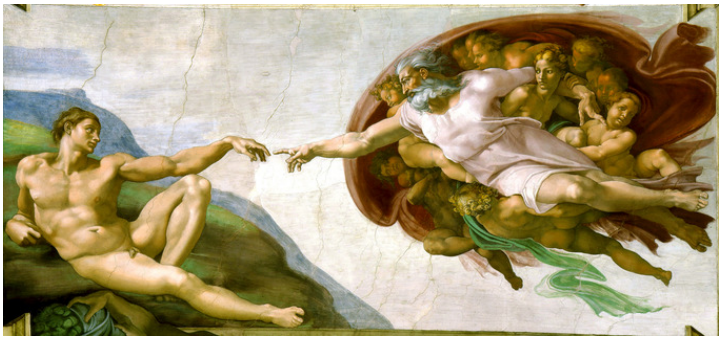
What makes art beautiful is a complicated concept, since beauty is subjective and can change based on context. However, there is a basic human instinct, or internal appreciation, for harmony, balance, and rhythm which can be defined as beauty. Beauty in terms of art usually refers to an interaction between line, color, texture , sound, shape, motion, and size that is pleasing to the senses.

Aesthetic Art

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and appreciation of art, beauty, and taste. Aesthetics is central to any exploration of art. The word “aesthetic” is derived from the Greek “aisthetikos,” meaning “esthetic, sensitive, or sentient. ” In practice, aesthetic judgment refers to the sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object (not necessarily a work of art), while artistic judgment refers to the recognition, appreciation, or criticism of a work of art.

Numerous philosophers have attempted to tackle the concept of beauty and art. For Immanuel Kant, the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective, but common, human truth. He argued that all people should agree that a rose is beautiful if it indeed is. There are many common conceptions of beauty; for example, Michelangelo’s paintings in the Sistine Chapel are widely recognized as beautiful works of art. However, Kant believes beauty cannot be reduced to any basic set of characteristics or features.

For Arthur Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the freest and most pure that intellect can be. He believes that only in terms of aesthetics do we contemplate perfection of form without any kind of worldly agenda.



Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*, The Sistine Chapel, 1508-1512:

Beauty in art can be difficult to put into words due to a seeming lack of accurate language. An aesthetic judgment cannot be an empirical judgment but must instead be processed on a more intuitive level.

Art and Human Emotion

Sometimes beauty is not the artist’s ultimate goal. Art is often intended to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion. Artists may express something so that their audience is stimulated in some way—creating feelings, religious faith, curiosity, interest, identification with a group, memories, thoughts, or creativity. For example, performance art often does not aim to please the audience but instead evokes feelings, reactions, conversations, or questions from the viewer . In these cases, aesthetics may be an irrelevant measure of “beautiful” art.

Who Is an Artist?

An artist is a person who is involved in the wide range of activities that are related to creating art.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the evolution of the term “artist” and its predecessors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In ancient Greece and Rome there was no word for “artist,” but there were nine muses who oversaw a different field of human creation related to music and poetry, with no muse for visual arts.
- During the Middle Ages , the word “artista” referred to something resembling “craftsman.”
- The first division into major and minor arts dates back to the 1400s with the work of Leon Battista Alberti.
- The European Academies of the 16th century formally solidified the gap between the fine and the applied arts which exists in varying degrees to this day.
- Currently an artist can be defined as anyone who calls him/herself an artist.

Key Terms

- **muses**:Goddesses of the inspiration of literature, science, and the arts in Greek mythology.
- **Pop art**:An art movement that emerged in the 1950s that presented a challenge to traditions of fine art by including imagery from popular culture such as advertising and news.
- **fine arts**:The purely aesthetic arts, such as music, painting, and poetry, as opposed to industrial or functional arts such as engineering or carpentry.

An artist is a person who is involved in the wide range of activities that are related to creating art. The word has transformed over time and context, but the modern understanding of the term denotes that, ultimately, an artist is anyone who calls him/herself an artist.

In ancient Greece and Rome, there was no word for “artist.” The Greek word “techne” is the closest that exists to “art” and means “mastery of any art or craft.” From the Latin “tecnicus” derives the English words “technique,” “technology,” and “technical.” From these words we can denote the ancient standard of equating art with manual labor or craft.

Each of the nine muses of ancient Greece oversaw a different field of human creation. The creation of poetry and music was considered to be divinely inspired and was therefore held in high esteem. However, there was no muse identified with the painting and sculpture; ancient Greek culture held these art forms in low social regard, considering work of this sort to be more along the lines of manual labor.

During the Middle Ages, the word “artista” referred to something resembling “craftsman,” or student of the arts. The first division into “major” and “minor” arts dates back to the 1400s with the work of Leon Battista Alberti, which focused on the importance of the intellectual skills of the artist rather than the manual skills of a craftsman. The European academies of the 16th century formally solidified the gap between the fine and the applied arts, which exists in varying degrees to this day. Generally speaking, the applied arts apply design and aesthetics to objects of everyday use, while the fine arts serve as intellectual stimulation.

Currently, the term “artist” typically refers to anyone who is engaged in an activity that is deemed to be an art form. However, the questions of what is art and who is an artist are not easily answered. The idea of defining art today is far more difficult than it has ever been. After the exhibition during the Pop Art movement of Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Box* and *Campbell’s Soup Cans*, the questions of “what is art?” and “who is an artist?” entered a more conceptual realm. Anything can, in fact, be art, and the term remains constantly evolving.



Andy Warhol, *Campbell’s Soup Cans*, 1962: Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans* have come to be representative of the Pop Art movement.

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1.2: Visual Elements

Line

A line is defined as a mark that connects the space between two points, taking any form along the way.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast different uses of line in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- *Actual lines* are lines that are physically present, existing as solid connections between one or more points.
- *Implied line* refers to the path that the viewer ‘s eye takes as it follows shapes, colors, and forms along any given path.
- S*traight* or *classic* lines provide stability and structure to a composition and can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal on a work’s surface.
- *Expressive lines* refer to curved marks that increase the sense of dynamism of a work of art.
- The *outline* or *contour* lines create a border or path around the edge of a shape, thereby outlining and defining it. “Cross contour lines” delineate differences in the features of a surface.
- *Hatch lines* are a series of short lines repeated in intervals, typically in a single direction, and are used to add shading and texture to surfaces, while *cross-hatch lines* provide additional texture and tone to the image surface and can be oriented in any direction.

Key Terms

- **texture**:The feel or shape of a surface or substance; the smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. of something.
- **cross-hatching**:A method of showing shading by means of multiple small lines that intersect.
- **line**:A path through two or more points.

The line is an essential element of art, defined as a mark that connects the space between two points, taking any form along the way. Lines are used most often to define shape in two-dimensional works and could be called the most ancient, as well as the most universal, forms of mark making.

There are many different types of lines, all characterized by their lengths being greater than their width, as well as by the paths that they take. Depending on how they are used, lines help to determine the motion, direction, and energy of a work of art. The quality of a line refers to the character that is presented by a line in order to animate a surface to varying degrees.

Actual lines are lines that are physically present, existing as solid connections between one or more points, while *implied lines* refer to the path that the viewer’s eye takes as it follows shape, color, and form within an art work. *Implied lines* give works of art a sense of motion and keep the viewer engaged in a composition. We can see numerous implied lines in Jacques-Louis David’s *Oath of the Horatii*, connecting the figures and actions of the piece by leading the eye of the viewer through the unfolding drama.



Jacques-Louis David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784: Many implied lines connect the figures and action of the piece by leading the eye of the viewer through the unfolding drama.

Straight or *classic* lines add stability and structure to a composition and can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal on the surface of the work. *Expressive lines* refer to curved marks that increase the sense of dynamism of a work of art. These types of lines often follow an undetermined path of sinuous curves. The *outline* or *contour* lines create a border or path around the edge of a shape, thereby outlining and defining it. *Cross contour lines* delineate differences in the features of a surface and can give the illusion of three dimensions or a sense of form or shading.

Hatch lines are a series of short lines repeated in intervals, typically in a single direction, and are used to add shading and texture to surfaces. *Cross-hatch lines* provide additional texture and tone to the image surface and can be oriented in any direction. Layers of cross-hatching can add rich texture and volume to image surfaces.

Light and Value

Value refers to the use of light and dark in art.

Learning Objectives

Explain the artistic use of light and dark (also known as “value”)

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In painting, value changes are achieved by adding black or white to a color.
- Value in art is also sometimes referred to as ” tint ” for light hues and “shade” for dark hues.
- Values near the lighter end of the spectrum are termed “high-keyed” while those on the darker end are called “low-keyed.”
- In two-dimensional art works, the use of value can help to give a shape the illusion of mass or volume .
- Chiaroscuro was a common technique in Baroque painting and refers to clear tonal contrasts exemplified by very high-keyed whites, placed directly against very low-keyed darks.

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**:An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

The use of light and dark in art is called value. Value can be subdivided into tint (light hues) and shade (dark hues). In painting, which uses subtractive color, value changes are achieved by adding black or white to a color. Artists may also employ shading, which refers to a more subtle manipulation of value. The value scale is used to show the standard variations in tones . Values near the lighter end of the spectrum are termed high-keyed, while those on the darker end are low-keyed.



Value scale: The value scale represents different degrees of light used in artwork.

In two-dimensional artworks, the use of value can help to give a shape the illusion of mass or volume. It will also give the entire composition a sense of lighting. High contrast refers to the placing of lighter areas directly against much darker ones, so their difference is showcased, creating a dramatic effect. High contrast also refers to the presence of more blacks than white or grey. Low-contrast images result from placing mid-range values together so there is not much visible difference between them, creating a more subtle mood.

In Baroque painting, the technique of chiaroscuro was used to produce highly dramatic effects in art. Chiaroscuro, which means literally “light-dark” in Italian, refers to clear tonal contrasts exemplified by very high-keyed whites, placed directly against very low-keyed darks. Candlelit scenes were common in Baroque painting as they effectively produced this dramatic type of effect. Caravaggio used a high contrast palette in such works as *The Denial of St. Peter* to create his expressive chiaroscuro scene.



Caravaggio, *The Denial of St. Peter*, 1610: Caravaggio’s *The Denial of St. Peter* is an excellent example of how light can be manipulated in artwork.

Color

In the visual arts, color theory is a body of practical guidance to color mixing and the visual impacts of specific color combinations.

Learning Objectives

Express the most important elements of color theory and artists’ use of color

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Color theory first appeared in the 17th century, when Isaac Newton discovered that white light could be passed through a prism and divided into the full spectrum of colors.
- The spectrum of colors contained in white light are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo , and violet.
- Color theory divides color into the ” primary colors ” of red, yellow, and blue, which cannot be mixed from other pigments, and the “secondary colors” of green, orange, and violet, which result from different combinations of the primary colors.
- Primary and secondary colors are combined in various mixtures to create tertiary colors.
- Complementary colors are found opposite each other on the color wheel and represent the strongest contrast for those particular two colors.

Key Terms

- **complementary color**:A color which is regarded as the opposite of another on the color wheel (i.e., red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue).

- **value**:The relative darkness or lightness of a color in a specific area of a painting or other visual art.
- **primary color**:Any of three colors which, when added to or subtracted from others in different amounts, can generate all other colors.
- **tint**:A color considered with reference to other very similar colors. Red and blue are different colors, but two shades of scarlet are different tints.
- **gradation**:A passing by small degrees from one tone or shade, as of color, to another.
- **hue**:A color, or shade of color.

Color is a fundamental artistic element which refers to the use of hue in art and design. It is the most complex of the elements because of the wide array of combinations inherent to it. Color theory first appeared in the 17th century when Isaac Newton discovered that white light could be passed through a prism and divided into the full spectrum of colors. The spectrum of colors contained in white light are, in order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Color theory subdivides color into the “primary colors” of red, yellow, and blue, which cannot be mixed from other pigments; and the “secondary colors” of green, orange and violet, which result from different combinations of the primary colors. Primary and secondary colors are combined in various mixtures to create “tertiary colors.” Color theory is centered around the color wheel, a diagram that shows the relationship of the various colors to each other .



Color wheel: The color wheel is a diagram that shows the relationship of the various colors to each other.

Color ” value ” refers to the relative lightness or darkness of a color. In addition, “tint” and “shade” are important aspects of color theory and result from lighter and darker variations in value, respectively. “Tone” refers to the gradation or subtle changes of a color on a lighter or darker scale. “Saturation” refers to the intensity of a color.

Additive and Subtractive Color

Additive color is color created by mixing red, green, and blue lights. Television screens, for example, use additive color as they are made up of the primary colors of red, blue and green (RGB). Subtractive color, or “process color,” works as the reverse of additive color and the primary colors become cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK). Common applications of subtractive color can be found in printing and photography.

Complementary Color

Complementary colors can be found directly opposite each other on the color wheel (purple and yellow, green and red, orange and blue). When placed next to each other, these pairs create the strongest contrast for those particular two colors.

Warm and Cool Color

The distinction between warm and cool colors has been important since at least the late 18th century. The contrast, as traced by etymologies in the Oxford English Dictionary, seems related to the observed contrast in landscape light, between the “warm” colors associated with daylight or sunset and the “cool” colors associated with a gray or overcast day. Warm colors are the hues from red through yellow, browns and tans included. Cool colors, on the other hand, are the hues from blue green through blue violet, with most grays included. Color theory has described perceptual and psychological effects to this contrast. Warm colors are said to advance or appear more active in a painting, while cool colors tend to recede. Used in interior design or fashion, warm colors are said to arouse or stimulate the viewer , while cool colors calm and relax.

Texture

Texture refers to the tactile quality of the surface of an art object.

Learning Objectives

Recognize the use of texture in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Visual texture refers to an implied sense of texture that the artist creates through the use of various artistic elements such as line , shading, and color.
- Actual texture refers to the physical rendering or the real surface qualities we can notice by touching an object.
- Visible brushstrokes and different amounts of paint will create a physical texture that can add to the expressiveness of a painting and draw attention to specific areas within it.
- It is possible for an artwork to contain numerous visual textures but still remain smooth to the touch.

Key Terms

- **tactile**:Tangible; perceptible to the sense of touch.

Texture

Texture in art stimulates the senses of sight and touch and refers to the tactile quality of the surface of the art. It is based on the perceived texture of the canvas or surface, which includes the application of the paint. In the context of artwork, there are two types of texture: visual and actual. Visual texture refers to an implied sense of texture that the artist creates through the use of various artistic elements such as line, shading and color. Actual texture refers to the physical rendering or the real surface qualities we can notice by touching an object, such as paint application or three-dimensional art.

It is possible for an artwork to contain numerous visual textures, yet still remain smooth to the touch. Take for example Realist or Illusionist works, which rely on the heavy use of paint and varnish, yet maintain an utterly smooth surface. In Jan Van Eyck’s painting “The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin” we can notice a great deal of texture in the clothing and robes especially, while the surface of the work remains very smooth .



Jan van Eyck, *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin*, 1435: *The Virgin of Chancellor Rolin* has a great deal of texture in the clothing and robes, but the actual surface of the work is very smooth.

Paintings often use actual texture as well, which we can observe in the physical application of paint. Visible brushstrokes and different amounts of paint will create a texture that adds to the expressiveness of a painting and draw attention to specific areas within it. The artist Vincent van Gogh is known to have used a great deal of actual texture in his paintings, noticeable in the thick application of paint in such paintings as *Starry Night*.



Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889: *The Starry Night* contains a great deal of actual texture through the thick application of paint.

Shape and Volume

Shape refers to an area in a two-dimensional space that is defined by edges; volume is three-dimensional, exhibiting height, width, and depth.

Learning Objectives

Define shape and volume and identify ways they are represented in art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- “Positive space ” refers to the space of the defined shape or figure.
- “Negative space” refers to the space that exists around and between one or more shapes.
- A ” plane ” in art refers to any surface area within space.
- ” Form ” is a concept that is related to shape and can be created by combining two or more shapes, resulting in a three-dimensional shape.
- Art makes use of both actual and implied volume .
- Shape, volume, and space, whether actual or implied, are the basis of the perception of reality.

Key Terms

- **form**:The shape or visible structure of an artistic expression.
- **volume**:A unit of three-dimensional measure of space that comprises a length, a width, and a height.
- **plane**:A flat surface extending infinitely in all directions (e.g., horizontal or vertical plane).

Shape refers to an area in two-dimensional space that is defined by edges. Shapes are, by definition, always flat in nature and can be geometric (e.g., a circle, square, or pyramid) or organic (e.g., a leaf or a chair). Shapes can be created by placing two different textures , or shape-groups, next to each other, thereby creating an enclosed area, such as a painting of an object floating in water.

“Positive space” refers to the space of the defined shape, or figure. Typically, the positive space is the subject of an artwork. “Negative space” refers to the space that exists around and between one or more shapes. Positive and negative space can become difficult to distinguish from each other in more abstract works.

A “plane” refers to any surface area within space. In two-dimensional art, the ” picture plane ” is the flat surface that the image is created upon, such as paper, canvas, or wood. Three-dimensional figures may be depicted on the flat picture plane through the use of the artistic elements to imply depth and volume, as seen in the painting *Small Bouquet of Flowers in a Ceramic Vase* by Jan Brueghel the Elder.



Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Small Bouquet of Flowers in a Ceramic Vase*, 1599: Three-dimensional figures may be depicted on the flat picture plane through the use of the artistic elements to imply depth and volume.

"Form" is a concept that is related to shape. Combining two or more shapes can create a three-dimensional shape. Form is always considered three-dimensional as it exhibits volume—or height, width, and depth. Art makes use of both actual and implied volume.

While three-dimensional forms, such as sculpture, have volume inherently, volume can also be simulated, or implied, in a two-dimensional work such as a painting. Shape, volume, and space—whether actual or implied—are the basis of the perception of reality.

Time and Motion

Motion, a principle of art, is a tool artists use to organize the artistic elements in a work; it is employed in both static and time-based mediums.

Learning Objectives

Name some techniques and mediums used by artists to convey motion in both static and time-based art forms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Techniques such as scale and proportion are used to create the feeling of motion or the passing of time in static a visual piece.
- The placement of a repeated element in different area within an artwork is another way to imply motion and the passing of time.
- Visual experiments in time and motion were first produced in the mid-19th century, and the photographer Eadweard Muybridge is well-known for his sequential shots.
- The time-based mediums of film, video, kinetic sculpture , and performance art employ time and motion by their very definitions.

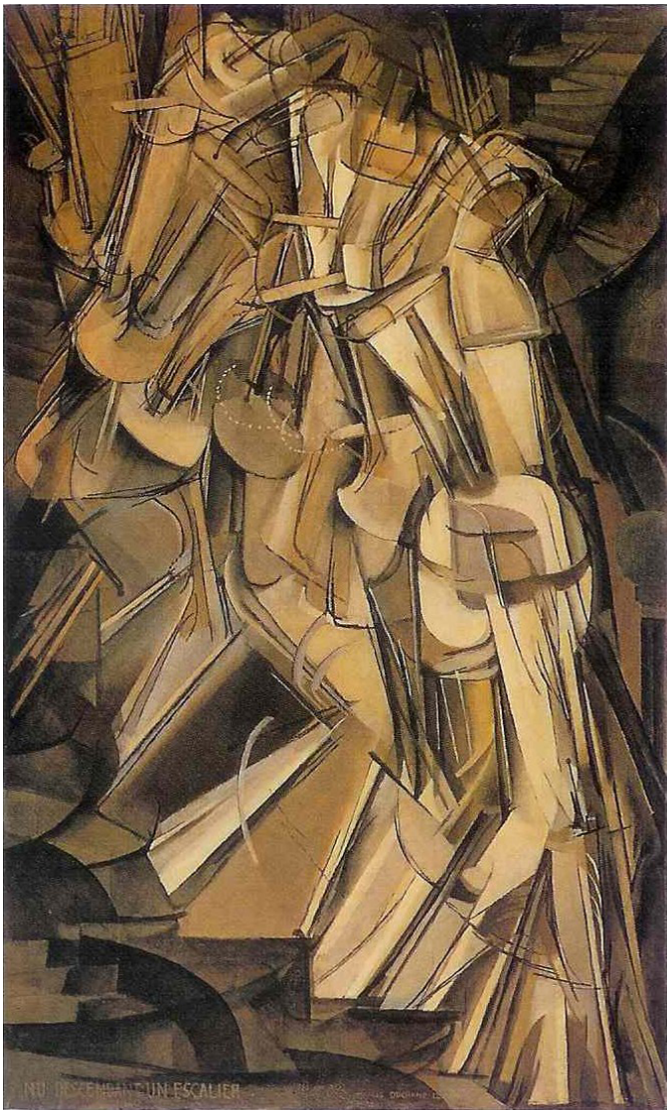
Key Terms

- **frames per second**:The number of times an imaging device produces unique consecutive images (frames) in one second. Abbreviation: FPS.
- **static**:Fixed in place; having no motion.

Motion, or movement, is considered to be one of the “principles of art”; that is, one of the tools artists use to organize the artistic elements in a work of art. Motion is employed in both static and in time-based mediums and can show a direct action or the intended path for the viewer ‘s eye to follow through a piece.

Techniques such as scale and proportion are used to create the feeling of motion or the passing of time in static visual artwork. For example, on a flat picture plane , an image that is smaller and lighter colored than its surroundings will appear to be in the background. Another technique for implying motion and/or time is the placement of a repeated element in different areas within an artwork.

Visual experiments in time and motion were first produced in the mid-19th century. The photographer Eadweard Muybridge is well known for his sequential shots of humans and animals walking, running, and jumping, which he displayed together to illustrate the motion of his subjects. Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* exemplifies an absolute feeling of motion from the upper left to lower right corner of the piece.



Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912: This work represents Duchamp’s conception of motion and time.

While static art forms have the ability to imply or suggest time and motion, the time-based mediums of film, video, kinetic sculpture, and performance art demonstrate time and motion by their very definitions. Film is many static images that are quickly

passed through a lens. Video is essentially the same process, but digitally-based and with fewer frames per second . Performance art takes place in real time and makes use of real people and objects, much like theater. Kinetic art is art that moves, or depends on movement, for its effect. All of these mediums use time and motion as a key aspect of their forms of expression.

Chance, Improvisation, and Spontaneity

Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Fluxus movement all relied on the elements of chance, improvisation, and spontaneity as tools for making art works.

Learning Objectives

Describe how Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Fluxus movement relied on chance, improvisation, and spontaneity

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Dadaists are known for their “automatic writing” or stream of consciousness writing, which highlights the creativity of the unconscious mind.
- Surrealist works, much like Dadaist works, often feature an element of surprise, unexpected juxtaposition , and tapping into the unconscious mind.
- Surrealists are known for having invented ” exquisite corpse” drawing.
- The Fluxus movement was known for its ” happenings ,” which were performance events or situations that could take place anywhere, in any form , and relied heavily on chance, improvisation, and audience participation.

Key Terms

- **happening**:A spontaneous or improvised event, especially one that involves audience participation.
- **assemblage**:A collection of things which have been gathered together..

Chance, improvisation, and spontaneity are elements that can be used to create art, or they can be the very purpose of the artwork itself. Any medium can employ these elements at any point within the artistic process.



Marcel Duchamp, *Urinal*, 1917: Marcel Duchamp’s *Urinal* is an example of a “ready-made,” which were objects that were purchased or found and then declared art.

Dadaism

Dadaism was an art movement popular in Europe in the early 20th century. It was started by artists and poets in Zurich, Switzerland with strong anti-war and left-leaning sentiments. The movement rejected logic and reason and instead prized irrationality,

nonsense, and intuition. Marcel Duchamp was a dominant member of the Dadaist movement, known for exhibiting “ready-mades,” which were objects that were purchased or found and then declared art.

Dadaists used what was readily available to create what was termed an “assemblage,” using items such as photographs, trash, stickers, bus passes, and notes. The work of the Dadaists involved chance, improvisation, and spontaneity to create art. They are known for using “automatic writing” or stream of consciousness writing, which often took nonsensical forms, but allowed for the opportunity of potentially surprising juxtapositions and unconscious creativity.

Surrealism

The Surrealist movement, which developed out of Dadaism primarily as a political movement, featured an element of surprise, unexpected juxtaposition and the tapping of the unconscious mind. Andre Breton, an important member of the movement, wrote the Surrealist manifesto, defining it as follows:

“Surrealism, n. Pure psychic automatism , by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought. Dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation. “

Like Dadaism before it, the Surrealist movement stressed the unimportance of reason and planning and instead relied heavily upon chance and surprise as a tool to harness the creativity of the unconscious mind. Surrealists are known for having invented “exquisite corpse” drawing, an exercise where words and images are collaboratively assembled, one after another. Many Surrealist techniques, including exquisite corpse drawing, allowed for the playful creation of art through assigning value to spontaneous production.

The Fluxus movement

The Fluxus movement of the 1960s was highly influenced by Dadaism. Fluxus was an international network of artists that skillfully blended together many different disciplines, and whose work was characterized by the use of an extreme do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic and heavily intermedia artworks. In addition, Fluxus was known for its “happenings,” which were multi-disciplinary performance events or situations that could take place anywhere. Audience participation was essential in a happening, and therefore relied on a great deal of surprise and improvisation. Key elements of happenings were often planned, but artists left room for improvisation, which eliminated the boundary between the artwork and the viewer , thus making the audience an important part of the art.

Inclusion of All Five Senses

The inclusion of the five human senses in a single work takes place most often in installation and performance art.

Learning Objectives

Explain how installation and performance art include the five senses of the viewer

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- In contemporary art, it is quite common for work to cater to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing, while it is somewhat less common to address smell and taste.
- “Gesamtkunstwerk,” or “total work of art,” is a German word that refers to an artwork that attempts to address all five human senses.
- Installation art is a genre of three-dimensional artwork that is designed to transform the viewer ‘s perception of a space .
- Virtual reality is a term that refers to computer-simulated environments.

Key Terms

- **happening**:A spontaneous or improvised event, especially one that involves audience participation.
- **virtual reality**:A reality based in the computer.

The inclusion of the five human senses in a single work takes place most often in installation and performance-based art. In addition, works that strive to include all senses at once generally make use of some form of interactivity, as the sense of taste clearly must involve the participation of the viewer. Historically, this attention to all senses was reserved to ritual and ceremony . In

contemporary art, it is quite common for work to cater to the senses of sight, touch, and hearing, while somewhat less common for art to address the senses of smell and taste.

The German word “Gesamtkunstwerk,” meaning “total work of art,” refers to a genre of artwork that attempts to address all five human senses. The concept was brought to prominence by the German opera composer Richard Wagner in 1849. Wagner staged an opera that sought to unite the art forms, which he felt had become overly disparate. Wagner’s operas paid great attention to every detail in order to achieve a state of total artistic immersion. “Gesamkunstwerk” is now an accepted English term relating to aesthetics , but has evolved from Wagner’s definition to mean the inclusion of the five senses in art.

Installation art is a genre of three-dimensional artwork that is designed to transform the viewer’s perception of a space. *Embankment* by Rachel Whiteread exemplifies this type of transformation. The term generally pertains to an interior space, while Land Art typically refers to an outdoor space, though there is some overlap between these terms. The Fluxus movement of the 1960s is key to the development of installation and performance art as mediums.



Rachel Whiteread, *Embankment*, 2005: Whiteread’s installation *Embankment* is a type of art designed to transform the viewer’s perception of space.

“Virtual reality” is a term that refers to computer-simulated environments. Currently, most virtual reality environments are visual experiences, but some simulations include additional sensory information. Immersive virtual reality has developed in recent years with the improvement of technology and is increasingly addressing the five senses within a virtual realm. Artists have been exploring the possibilities of these simulated and virtual realities with the expansion of the discipline of cyberarts, though what constitutes cyberart continues to be up for debate. Environments such as the virtual world of Second Life are generally accepted, but whether or not video games should be considered art remains undecided.

Compositional Balance

Compositional balance refers to the placement of the artistic elements in relation to each other within a work of art.

Learning Objectives

Categorize the elements of compositional balance in a work of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

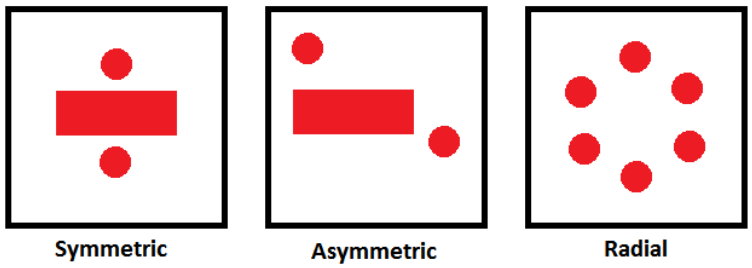
- A harmonious compositional balance involves arranging elements so that no one part of a work overpowers or seems heavier than any other part.
- The three most common types of compositional balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial .
- When balanced, a composition appears stable and visually right. Just as symmetry relates to aesthetic preference and reflects an intuitive sense for how things “should” appear, the overall balance of a given composition contributes to outside judgments of the work.

Key Terms

- **radial**:Arranged like rays that radiate from, or converge to, a common center.
- **symmetry**:Exact correspondence on either side of a dividing line, plane, center, or axis. The satisfying arrangement of a balanced distribution of the elements of a whole.
- **asymmetry**:Want of symmetry, or proportion between the parts of a thing, especially want of bilateral symmetry. Lacking a common measure between two objects or quantities; Incommensurability. That which causes something to not be symmetrical.

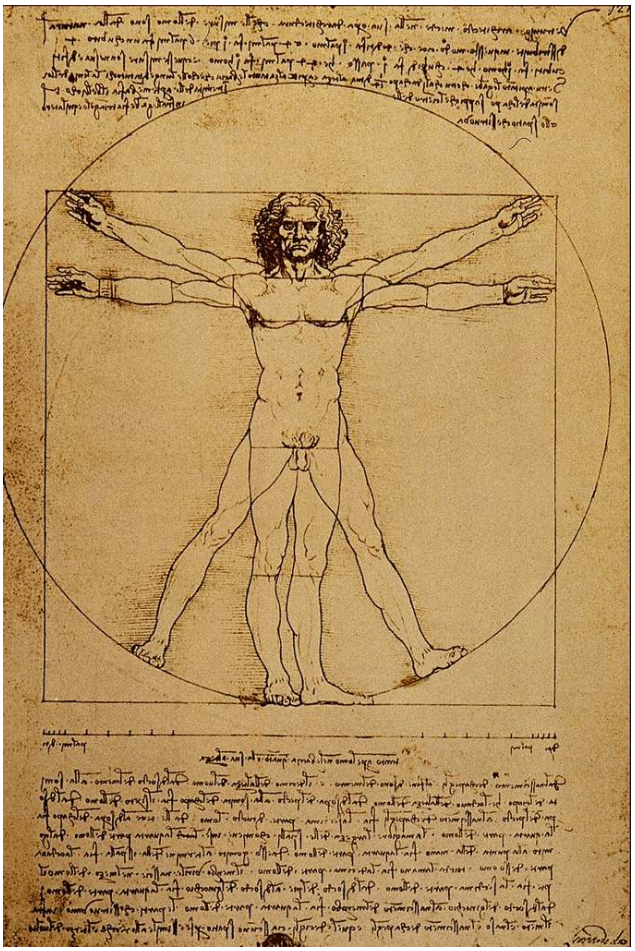
Compositional balance refers to the placement of the elements of art (color, form , line , shape, space , texture , and value) in relation to each other. When balanced, a composition appears more stable and visually pleasing. Just as symmetry relates to aesthetic preference and reflects an intuitive sense for how things “should” appear, the overall balance of a given composition contributes to outside judgments of the work.

Creating a harmonious compositional balance involves arranging elements so that no single part of a work overpowers or seems heavier than any other part. The three most common types of compositional balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial.



Compositional balance: The three common types of balance are symmetric, asymmetric, and radial.

Symmetrical balance is the most stable, in a visual sense, and generally conveys a sense of harmonious or aesthetically pleasing proportionality. When both sides of an artwork on either side of the horizontal or vertical axis of the picture plane are the same in terms of the sense that is created by the arrangement of the elements of art, the work is said to exhibit this type of balance. The opposite of symmetry is asymmetry .



Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, 1487: Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* is often used as a representation of symmetry in the human body and, by extension, the natural universe.

Asymmetry is defined as the absence of, or a violation of, the principles of symmetry. Examples of asymmetry appear commonly in architecture. Although pre-modern architectural styles tended to place an emphasis on symmetry (except where extreme site conditions or historical developments lead away from this classical ideal), modern and postmodern architects frequently used asymmetry as a design element. For instance, while most bridges employ a symmetrical form due to intrinsic simplicities of design, analysis, fabrication, and economical use of materials, a number of modern bridges have deliberately departed from this, either in response to site-specific considerations or to create a dramatic design statement. .



Oakland Bay Bridge: Eastern span replacement of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge reflects asymmetrical architectural design.

Radial balance refers to circular elements in compositions. In classical geometry, a radius of a circle or sphere is any line segment from its center to its perimeter. By extension, the radius of a circle or sphere is the length of any such segment, which is half the diameter. The radius may be more than half the diameter, which is usually defined as the maximum distance between any two points of the figure. The inradius of a geometric figure is usually the radius of the largest circle or sphere contained in it. The inner radius of a ring, tube or other hollow object is the radius of its cavity. The name "radial" or "radius" comes from Latin *radius*, meaning "ray" but also the spoke of a circular chariot wheel.

Rhythm

Artists use rhythm as a tool to guide the eye of the viewer through works of art.

Learning Objectives

Recognize and interpret the use of rhythm in a work of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rhythm may be generally defined as a “movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions” (Anon. 1971).
- Rhythm may also refer to visual presentation as “timed movement through space ” (Jirousek 1995), and a common language of pattern unites rhythm with geometry.
- For instance, placing a red spiral at the bottom left and top right, for example, will cause the eye to move from one spiral, to the other, and everything in between. It is indicating movement in the piece by the repetition of elements and, therefore, can make artwork seem active.

Key Terms

- **symmetry**:Exact correspondence on either side of a dividing line, plane, center or axis. The satisfying arrangement of a balanced distribution of the elements of a whole.

The principles of visual art are the rules, tools, and guidelines that artists use to organize the elements of in a piece of artwork. When the principles and elements are successfully combined, they aid in creating an aesthetically pleasing or interesting work of art. While there is some variation among them, movement, unity, harmony, variety, balance, rhythm, emphasis, contrast , proportion, and pattern are commonly sited as principles of art.

Rhythm (from Greek *rhythmos*, “any regular recurring motion, symmetry ” (Liddell and Scott 1996)) may be generally defined as a “movement marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements, or of opposite or different conditions” (Anon. 1971). This general meaning of regular recurrence or pattern in time may be applied to a wide variety of cyclical natural phenomena having a periodicity or frequency of anything from microseconds to millions of years. In the performing arts, rhythm is the timing of events on a human scale, of musical sounds and silences, of the steps of a dance, or the meter of spoken language and poetry. Rhythm may also refer to visual presentation, as “timed movement through space” (Jirousek 1995), and a common language of pattern unites rhythm with geometry.

In a visual composition , pattern and rhythm are generally expressed by showing consistency with colors or lines . For instance, placing a red spiral at the bottom left and top right, for example, will cause the eye to move from one spiral, to the other, and then to the space in between. The repetition of elements creates movement of the viewer ‘s eye and can, therefore, make the artwork feel active. Hilma af Klint’s *Svanen (The Swan)* exemplifies the visual representation of rhythm using color and symmetry.



Hilma af Klint, *Svanen (The Swan)*, 1914: Color and symmetry work together in this painting to guide the eye of the viewer in a particular visual rhythm.

Proportion and Scale

Proportion is a measurement of the size and quantity of elements within a composition.

Learning Objectives

Apply the concept of proportion to different works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hierarchical proportion is a technique used in art, mostly in sculpture and painting, in which the artist uses unnatural proportion or scale to depict the relative importance of the figures in the artwork.
- Mathematically, proportion is the relation between elements and a whole. In architecture, the whole is not just a building but the set and setting of the site.
- Among the various ancient artistic traditions, the harmonic proportions, human proportions, cosmic orientations, various aspects of sacred geometry , and small whole-number ratios were all applied as part of the practice of architectural design.

Key Terms

- **golden ratio**:The irrational number (approximately 1·618), usually denoted by the Greek letter φ (phi), which is equal to the sum of its own reciprocal and 1, or, equivalently, is such that the ratio of 1 to the number is equal to the ratio of its reciprocal to 1. Some twentieth-century artists and architects have proportioned their works to approximate this—especially in the form of the golden rectangle, in which the ratio of the longer side to the shorter equals this number—believing this proportion to be aesthetically pleasing.

Proportion is a measurement of the size and quantity of elements within a composition . Hierarchical proportion is a technique used in art, mostly in sculpture and painting, in which the artist uses unnatural proportion or scale to depict the relative importance of the figures in the artwork. In ancient Egyptian art, for example, gods and important political figures appear much larger than common people. Beginning with the Renaissance , artists recognized the connection between proportion and perspective , and the illusion of three-dimensional space . Images of the human body in exaggerated proportion were used to depict the reality an artist interpreted.



Depiction of Narmer from the Narmer Palette: Narmer, a Predynastic ruler, accompanied by men carrying the standards of various local gods. This piece demonstrates the ancient Egyptians' use of proportion, with Narmer appearing larger than the other figures depicted.

Mathematically, proportion is the relation between elements and a whole. In architecture, the whole is not just a building but the set and setting of the site. The things that make a building and its site "well shaped" include everything from the orientation of the site and the buildings on it, to the features of the grounds on which it is situated. Light, shade, wind, elevation , and choice of materials all relate to a standard of architectural proportion.

Architecture has often used proportional systems to generate or constrain the forms considered suitable for inclusion in a building. In almost every building tradition, there is a system of mathematical relations which governs the relationships between aspects of the design. These systems of proportion are often quite simple: whole number ratios or incommensurable ratios (such as the golden ratio) were determined using geometrical methods. Generally, the goal of a proportional system is to produce a sense of coherence and harmony among the elements of a building.

Among the various ancient artistic traditions, the harmonic proportions, human proportions, cosmic orientations, various aspects of sacred geometry, and small whole-number ratios were all applied as part of the practice of architectural design. For instance, the Greek classical architectural orders are all proportioned rather than dimensioned or measured modules, because the earliest modules were not based on body parts and their spans (fingers, palms, hands, and feet), but rather on column diameters and the widths of arcades and fenestrations .



Temple of Portanus: The Greek Temple of Portanus is an example of classical Greek architecture with its tetrastyle portico of four Ionic columns.

Typically, one set of column diameter modules used for casework and architectural moldings by the Egyptians and Romans is based on the proportions of the palm and the finger, while another less delicate module—used for door and window trim, tile work, and roofing in Mesopotamia and Greece—was based on the proportions of the hand and the thumb.

Dating back to the Pythagoreans, there was an idea that proportions should be related to standards, and that the more general and formulaic the standards, the better. This concept—that there should be beauty and elegance evidenced by a skillful composition of

well understood elements—underlies mathematics, art, and architecture. The classical standards are a series of paired opposites designed to expand the dimensional constraints of harmony and proportion.

Space

Space in art can be defined as the area that exists between two identifiable points.

Learning Objectives

Define space in art and list ways it is employed by artists

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The organization of space is referred to as composition and is an essential component to any work of art.
- The space of an artwork includes the background, foreground, and middle ground , as well as the distance between, around, and within things.
- There are two types of space: positive space and negative space.
- After spending hundreds of years developing linear perspective , Western artistic notions about the accurate depiction of space went through a radical shift at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Cubism and subsequent modernist movements represented an important shift in the use of space within Western art, which is still being felt today.

Key Terms

- **space**:The distance or empty area between things.
- **Cubism**:An artistic movement in the early 20th century characterized by the depiction of natural forms as geometric structures of planes.

The organization of space in art is referred to as composition, and is an essential component of any work of art. Space can be generally defined as the area that exists between any two identifiable points.

Space is conceived of differently in each medium . The space in a painting, for example, includes the background, foreground and middle ground, while three-dimensional space, like sculpture or installation , will involve the distance between, around, and within points of the work. Space is further categorized as positive or negative. “Positive space” can be defined as the subject of an artwork, while “negative space” can be defined as the space around the subject.

Over the ages, space has been conceived of in various ways. Artists have devoted a great deal of time to experimenting with perspectives and degrees of flatness of the pictorial plane .

The perspective system has been a highly employed convention in Western art. Visually, it is an illusionist phenomenon, well suited to realism and the depiction of reality as it appears. After spending hundreds of years developing linear perspective, Western artistic conventions about the accurate depiction of space went through a radical shift at the beginning of the 20th century. The innovations of Cubism and subsequent modernist movements represented an important shift in the use of space within Western art, the impact of which is still being felt.



Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is an example of cubist art, which has a tendency to flatten the picture plane, and its use of abstract shapes and irregular forms suggest multiple points of view within a single image.

Two-Dimensional Space

Two-dimensional, or bi-dimensional, space is a geometric model of the planar projection of the physical universe in which we live.

Learning Objectives

Discuss two-dimensional space in art and the physical properties on which it is based

Key Takeaways

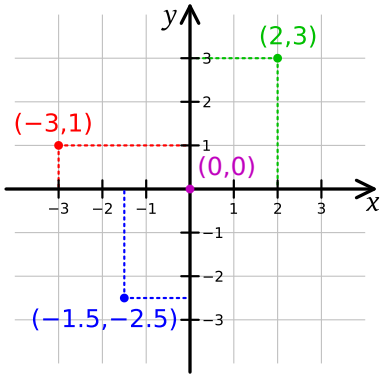
Key Points

- In physical terms, dimension refers to the constituent structure of all space and its position in time.
- Drawing is a form of visual art that makes use of any number of instruments to mark a two-dimensional medium .
- Almost any dimensional form can be represented by some combination of the cube, sphere, cylinder, and cone. Once these basic shapes have been assembled into a likeness, then the drawing can be refined into a more accurate and polished form.

Key Terms

- **dimension**:A single aspect of a given thing. A measure of spatial extent in a particular direction, such as height, width or breadth, or depth.
- **Two-Dimensional**:Existing in two dimensions. Not creating the illusion of depth.
- **Planar**:Of or pertaining to a plane. Flat, two-dimensional.

Two dimensional, or bi-dimensional, space is a geometric model of the planar projection of the physical universe in which we live. The two dimensions are commonly called length and width. Both directions lie on the same plane . In physics, our bi-dimensional space is viewed as a planar representation of the space in which we move.



Mathematical depiction of bi-dimensional space: Bi-dimensional Cartesian coordinate system.

In art composition , drawing is a form of visual art that makes use of any number of drawing instruments to mark a two-dimensional medium (meaning that the object does not have depth). One of the simplest and most efficient means of communicating visual ideas, the medium has been a popular and fundamental means of public expression throughout human history. Additionally, the relative availability of basic drawing instruments makes drawing more universal than most other media.

Measuring the dimensions of a subject while blocking in the drawing is an important step in producing a realistic rendition of a subject. Tools such as a compass can be used to measure the angles of different sides. These angles can be reproduced on the drawing surface and then rechecked to make sure they are accurate. Another form of measurement is to compare the relative sizes of different parts of the subject with each other. A finger placed at a point along the drawing implement can be used to compare that dimension with other parts of the image. A ruler can be used both as a straightedge and a device to compute proportions. When attempting to draw a complicated shape such as a human figure, it is helpful at first to represent the form with a set of primitive shapes.

Almost any dimensional form can be represented by some combination of the cube, sphere, cylinder, and cone. Once these basic shapes have been assembled into a likeness, then the drawing can be refined into a more accurate and polished form. The lines of the primitive shapes are removed and replaced by the final likeness. A more refined art of figure drawing relies upon the artist possessing a deep understanding of anatomy and the human proportions. A trained artist is familiar with the skeleton structure, joint location, muscle placement, tendon movement, and how the different parts work together during movement. This allows the artist to render more natural poses that do not appear artificially stiff. The artist is also familiar with how the proportions vary depending on the age of the subject, particularly when drawing a portrait.



Drawing human figures: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Madame Palmyre with Her Dog*, 1897.

Linear Perspective and Three-Dimensional Space

Perspective is an approximate representation on a flat surface of an image as it is seen by the eye.

Learning Objectives

Explain perspective and its impact on art composition

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Systematic attempts to evolve a system of perspective are usually considered to have begun around the 5th century B.C. in the art of Ancient Greece.
- The earliest art paintings and drawings typically sized objects and characters hierarchically according to their spiritual or thematic importance, not their distance from the viewer .
- In Medieval Europe, the use and sophistication of attempts to convey distance increased steadily but without a basis in a systematic theory.
- By the Renaissance , nearly every artist in Italy used geometrical perspective in their paintings, both to portray depth and also as a new and "of the moment" compositional method.

Key Terms

- **curvilinear**:Having bends; curved; formed by curved lines.
- **horizon line**:A horizontal line in perspective drawing, directly opposite the viewer's eye and often implied, that represents objects infinitely far away and determines the angle or perspective from which the viewer sees the work.
- **vanishing point**:The point in a perspective drawing at which parallel lines receding from an observer seem to converge.
- **Perspective**:The technique of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface.

In art, perspective is an approximate representation on a flat surface of an image as it is seen by the eye, calculated by assuming a particular vanishing point . Systematic attempts to evolve a system of perspective are usually considered to have begun around the 5th century BCE in the art of Ancient Greece. By the later periods of antiquity , artists—especially those in less popular traditions—were well aware that distant objects could be shown smaller than those close at hand for increased illusionism. But whether this convention was actually used in a work depended on many factors. Some of the paintings found in the ruins of Pompeii show a remarkable realism and perspective for their time.

The earliest art paintings and drawings typically sized objects and characters hierarchically according to their spiritual or thematic importance, not their distance from the viewer. The most important figures are often shown as the highest in a composition , also from hieratic motives, leading to the “vertical perspective” common in the art of Ancient Egypt , where a group of “nearer” figures are shown below the larger figure(s).

The art of the Migration Period had no tradition of attempting compositions of large numbers of figures, and Early Medieval art was slow and inconsistent in relearning the convention from classical models, though the process can be seen underway in Carolingian art. European Medieval artists were aware of the general principle of varying the relative size of elements according to distance, and use and sophistication of attempts to convey distance increased steadily during the period, but without a basis in a systematic theory.

By the Renaissance, however, nearly every artist in Italy used geometrical perspective in their paintings. Not only was this use of perspective a way to portray depth, but it was also a new method of composing a painting. Paintings began to show a single, unified scene, rather than a combination of several. For a while, perspective remained the domain of Florence. Gradually, and partly through the movement of academies of the arts, the Italian techniques became part of the training of artists across Europe and, later, other parts of the world.



Perspective in Renaissance Painting: Pietro Perugino’s usage of perspective in this fresco at the Sistine Chapel (1481–82) helped bring the Renaissance to Rome.

A drawing has one-point perspective when it contains only one vanishing point on the horizon line . This type of perspective is typically used for images of roads, railway tracks, hallways, or buildings viewed so that the front is directly facing the viewer. Any objects that are made up of lines either directly parallel with the viewer’s line of sight or directly perpendicular (the railroad slats) can be represented with one-point perspective. These parallel lines converge at the vanishing point.

Two-point perspective can be used to draw the same objects as one-point perspective, but rotated—such as looking at the corner of a house, or looking at two forked roads shrink into the distance. In looking at a house from the corner, for example, one wall would recede towards one vanishing point and the other wall would recede towards the opposite vanishing point.

Three-point perspective is used for buildings depicted from above or below. In addition to the two vanishing points from before, one for each wall, there is now a third one for how those walls recede into the ground . This third vanishing point would be below the ground.

Four-point perspective is the curvilinear variant of two-point perspective. The resulting elongated frame can be used both horizontally and vertically. Like all other foreshortened variants of perspective, four-point perspective starts off with a horizon line,

followed by four equally spaced vanishing points to delineate four vertical lines. Because vanishing points exist only when parallel lines are present in the scene, a perspective with no vanishing points (“zero-point”) occurs if the viewer is observing a non-rectilinear scene. The most common example of a nonlinear scene is a natural scene (e.g., a mountain range), which frequently does not contain any parallel lines. A perspective without vanishing points can still create a sense of depth.

Distortions of Space and Foreshortening

Distortion is used to create various representations of space in two-dimensional works of art.

Learning Objectives

Identify how distortion is both employed and avoided in works of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional space when drawn or “projected” onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately depict three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane .
- However, there are several constructs available which allow for seemingly accurate representation. Perspective projection can be used to mirror how the eye sees by the use of one or more vanishing points .
- Although distortion can be irregular or follow many patterns, the most commonly encountered distortions in composition , especially in photography, are radially symmetric, or approximately so, arising from the symmetry of a photographic lens.

Key Terms

- **radial**:Arranged like rays that radiate from, or converge into, a common center
- **projection**:The image that a translucent object casts onto another object.
- **foreshortening**:A technique for creating the appearance that the object of a drawing is extending into space by shortening the lines with which that object is drawn.

A distortion is the alteration of the original shape (or other characteristic) of an object, image, sound, or other form of information or representation. Distortion can be wanted or unwanted by the artist. Distortion is usually unwanted when it concerns physical degradation of a work. However, it is more commonly referred to in terms of perspective, where it is employed to create realistic representations of space in two-dimensional works of art.

Perspective Projection Distortion

Perspective projection distortion is the inevitable misrepresentation of three-dimensional space when drawn or “projected” onto a two-dimensional surface. It is impossible to accurately depict three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional plane. However, there are several constructs available that allow for seemingly accurate representation. The most common of these is perspective projection. Perspective projection can be used to mirror how the eye sees by making use of one or more vanishing points.



Giotto, *Lamentation (The Mourning of Christ)*, 1305–1306: Giotto is one of the most notable pre-Renaissance artists to recognize distortion on two-dimensional planes.

Foreshortening

Foreshortening is the visual effect or optical illusion that causes an object or distance to appear shorter than it actually is because it is angled toward the viewer . Although foreshortening is an important element in art where visual perspective is being depicted, foreshortening occurs in other types of two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional scenes, such as oblique parallel projection drawings.

The physiological basis of visual foreshortening was undefined until the year 1000 when the Arabian mathematician and philosopher, Alhazen, in his *Perspectiva*, first explained that light projects conically into the eye. A method for presenting foreshortened geometry systematically onto a plane surface was unknown for another 300 years. The artist Giotto may have been the first to recognize that the image beheld by the eye is distorted: to the eye, parallel lines appear to intersect (like the distant edges of a path or road), whereas in “undistorted” nature, they do not. In many of Giotto’s paintings, perspective is employed to achieve various distortion effects.



Foreshortening: This painting illustrates Melozzo da Forlì’s usage of upward foreshortening in his frescoes at The Basilica della Santa Casa.

Distortion in Photography

In photography, the projection mechanism is light reflected from an object. To execute a drawing using perspective projection, projectors emanate from all points of an object and intersect at a station point. These projectors intersect with an imaginary plane of

projection and an image is created on the plane by the points of intersection. The resulting image on the projection plane reproduces the image of the object as it is beheld from the station point.

Radial distortion can usually be classified as one of two main types: barrel distortion and pincushion distortion. Barrel distortion occurs when image magnification decreases with distance from the optical axis. The apparent effect is that of an image which has been mapped around a sphere (or barrel). Fisheye lenses, which take hemispherical views, utilize this type of distortion as a way to map an infinitely wide object plane into a finite image area.

On the other hand, in pincushion distortion, the image magnification increases with the distance from the optical axis. The visible effect is that lines that do not go through the center of the image are bowed inwards, towards the center of the image, like a pincushion. A certain amount of pincushion distortion is often found with visual optical instruments (i.e., binoculars), where it serves to eliminate the globe effect.

Cylindrical perspective is a form of distortion caused by fisheye and panoramic lenses, which reproduce straight horizontal lines above and below the lens axis level as curved, while reproducing straight horizontal lines on lens axis level as straight. This is also a common feature of wide-angle anamorphic lenses of less than 40mm focal length in cinematography. Essentially it is just barrel distortion, but only in the horizontal plane. It is an artifact of the squeezing process that anamorphic lenses do to fit widescreen images onto standard-width film.

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1.3: Content

Types of Content

Content in art takes the form of portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.

Learning Objectives

Describe different categories of figurative or abstract art.

Key Takeaways

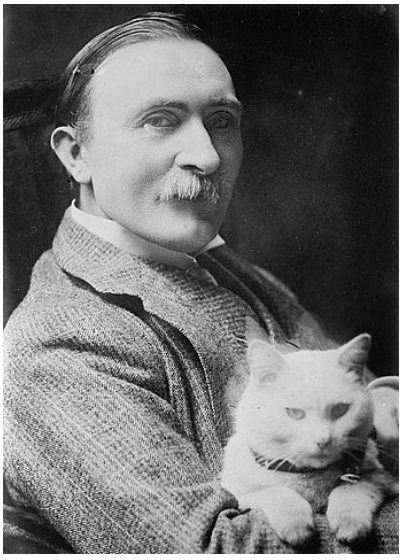
Key Points

- Content in a work of art refers to what is being depicted and might be helpful in deriving a basic meaning. It appears in the visual arts in several forms , all of which may be figurative (realistic) or abstract (distorted). Among them are portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.
- Portraits represents the likeness of a person and can include a study of the sitter's mood or personality.
- Landscapes depict natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, especially where the main subject is a wide view.
- A still-life is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects that may be either natural or man-made.
- Genre art involves the pictorial representation in any of various media of scenes or events from everyday life, whereas narrative art tells a story that may be real or imagined.

Content in a work of art refers to what is being depicted and might be helpful in deriving a basic meaning. Sometimes content is straightforward; in other cases, however, it is less obvious and requires additional information. Content appears in the visual arts in several forms, all of which may be figurative (realistic) or abstract (distorted). Among them are portraits, landscapes, still-lifes, genre art, and narrative art.

Portraits

A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression are predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person. For this reason, in photography a portrait is generally not a snapshot, but a composed image of a person in a still position. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the painter or photographer in order to most successfully engage the subject with the viewer .



Philip Burne–*Jones Holding a Cat* : George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Landscapes

Landscape painting, also known as landscape art, is the depiction in art of landscapes—natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, especially where the main subject is a wide view—with its elements arranged into a coherent composition . In other works, landscape backgrounds for figures can still form an important part of the work. Sky is almost always included in the view, and weather is often an element of the composition. Detailed landscapes as a distinct subject are not found in all artistic traditions and develop when there is already a sophisticated tradition of representing other subjects.



Henri Matisse. *Landscape at Collioure* (1905): Oil on canvas. 38.8 x 46.6cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Matisse was a member of the Fauves (French for “wild beasts”), who used bold colors to convey emotions.

Still Lifes

A still life (plural still lifes) is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects that may be either natural (food, flowers, dead animals, plants, rocks, or shells) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewelry, coins, pipes, and so on). Early still-life paintings, particularly before 1700, often contained religious and allegorical symbolism relating to the objects depicted. Some modern still lifes break the two-dimensional barrier and employ three-dimensional mixed media, and use found objects, photography, computer graphics, as well as video and sound.



Maria van Oosterwijk. *Vanitas Still-Life* (1668): Oil on canvas. 73 x 88.5cm. Kunsthistorisches Musuem, Vienna.

Genre Art

Genre art is the pictorial representation in any of various media of scenes or events from everyday life, such as markets, domestic settings, interiors, parties, inn scenes, and street scenes. Such representations (also called genre works, genre scenes , or genre views) may be realistic, imagined, or romanticized by the artist.



Nicolaes Maes. *The Idle Servant (*1655): Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London. Dutch Baroque genre scenes often have important moral lessons as their subtexts.

Narrative Art

Narrative art is art that tells a story, either as a moment in an ongoing story or as a sequence of events unfolding over time. Some of the earliest evidence of human art suggests that people told stories with pictures. However, without some knowledge of the story being told, it is very hard to read ancient pictures because they are not organized in a systematic way like words on a page, but rather can unfold in many different directions at once.



Hagesandros, Athenedoros, and Polydoros. *Laocoön and His Sons* (First century BCE): Marble. Vatican Museum, Rome. This marble sculpture depicts a scene from Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*, in which the Trojan seer Laocoön foresees the Trojan Horse and the destruction of Troy by the Greeks. Before he can warn his fellow townspeople, the sea god Neptune (an ally of the Greeks) sends his serpents to kill Laocoön and his sons.

Figurative and Abstract Art

Art exists along a continuum from realistic representational work to fully non-representational work.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish between figurative and abstract art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

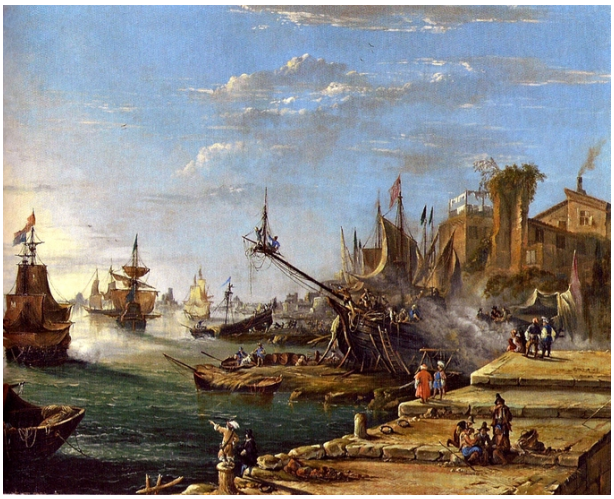
- Representational art, or figurative art, references objects or events in the real world.
- Romanticism , Impressionism , and Expressionism contributed to the emergence of abstract art in the nineteenth century.

- Even representational work is abstracted to some degree; entirely realistic art is elusive.

Key Terms

- **verisimilitude**:The property of seeming true, of resembling reality; resemblance to reality, realism.

Painting and sculpture can be divided into the categories of figurative (or representational) and abstract (or non-representational). Figurative art describes artwork – particularly paintings and sculptures – which are clearly derived from real object sources, and therefore are, by definition, representational. Since the arrival of abstract art in the early twentieth century, the term "figurative" has been used to refer to any form of modern art that retains strong references to the real world.



Johann Anton Eismann, *Ein Meerhafen*, 1600s: This figurative work from the 17th century depicts easily recognizable objects—ships, people, and buildings.

Artistic independence was advanced during the nineteenth century, resulting in the emergence of abstract art. Three movements which contributed heavily to the development of these styles were Romanticism, Impressionism, and Expressionism.

Abstraction indicates a departure from reality in its depiction of imagery . Abstraction exists along a continuum; it can formally refer to compositions that are derived (or abstracted) from figurative or other natural sources, or it can refer to non-representational art and non-objective art that has no derivation from figures or objects.

Even art that aims for verisimilitude of the highest degree can be said to be abstract, at least theoretically, since perfect representation is likely to be exceedingly elusive. Artwork which takes liberties, altering, for instance, color and form in ways that are conspicuous, can be said to be partially abstract.



Robert Delaunay, *Le Premier Disque*, 1912–1913: Delaunay's work is an example of early abstract art.

Non-representational art refers to total abstraction, bearing no trace of any reference to anything recognizable. In geometric abstraction, for instance, one is unlikely to find references to naturalistic entities. Figurative art and total abstraction are nearly mutually exclusive, but figurative or representational art often contains at least one element of abstraction.

Meaning in Nonrepresentational Art

Meaning in nonrepresentational art is highly subjective and can be difficult to define.

Learning Objectives

Relate the meaning of nonrepresentational art, its goals, and its specific expressions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Nonrepresentational artwork refers to art that does not attempt to represent or reference reality.
- In the late 19th century, artists began to move toward increasing abstraction as a means of communicating subjective experience more personally and creatively.
- Artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian viewed art as an expression of spirituality.

Key Terms

- **expressionism**:A movement in the arts in which the artist does not depict objective reality, but rather the subjective expression of inner experience.
- **nonrepresentational**:Not intended to represent a physical object in reality.

Nonrepresentational art refers to compositions which do not rely on representation or mimesis to any extent. Abstract art , nonfigurative art, nonobjective art, and nonrepresentational art are related terms that indicate a departure from reality in the depiction of imagery in art. Meaning in nonrepresentational art is highly subjective and can be difficult to define. We can focus on the elements of the artwork (form, shape, line , color, space , and texture) in terms of the aesthetic value of the work, but the *meaning* will always be personal to the viewer unless the artist has made a statement about his or her intentions.

Generally, we can look at nonrepresentational art as the personal expression of an artist's subjective experience. Certain movements have described their intentions as an aim to evoke moods or emotions in the viewer. A good example are the expressionists of the early 20th century, who aimed to present the world solely from a subjective perspective , distorting it radically for emotional effect.

Nonrepresentational art has often been explored by artists as a means to spiritual expression. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian painter, printmaker, and art theorist, is one of the most famous 20th century artists and is generally considered the first important painter of modern abstract art. As an early modernist in search of new modes of visual expression and spiritual expression, he theorized (as did contemporary occultists and theosophists) that pure visual abstraction had corollary vibrations with sound and music. He posited that pure abstraction could express pure spirituality.



Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition VII*, 1913: Kandinsky is recognized as the father of modern abstract art in the 20th century.

Piet Mondrian's art was also related to his spiritual and philosophical studies. In 1908 he became interested in the theosophical movement launched by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who believed that it was possible to attain a knowledge of nature more profound than that provided by empirical means, and much of Mondrian's work for the rest of his life was inspired by his search for that spiritual knowledge.

Iconography

Iconography is the scholarly study of the content of images, including identification, description, and interpretation.

Learning Objectives

Define iconography and interpret or perform an iconographical analysis of an image

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Academic studies of iconography in painting emerged in the 19th century in France and Germany.
- Iconographical scholarship became particularly prominent in art history after 1940.
- In the 20th century, studies of iconography have become of interest to a broad public beyond the scholarly community.

Key Terms

- **iconography**:The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images.

Iconography is the branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images such as the subjects that are depicted, particulars of composition , and other elements that are distinct from artistic style .

Iconography as an academic art historical discipline developed in the nineteenth century in the works of scholars such as Adolphe Napoleon Didron (1806–1867), Anton Heinrich Springer (1825–1891), and Émile Mâle (1862–1954). Christian religious art was the main focus of study throughout this period, and French scholars were especially prominent. They looked back to earlier attempts to classify and organize subjects encyclopedically, as guides to understanding works of art, both religious and profane, in a more scientific manner than the popular aesthetic approach of the time. These early contributions paved the way for encyclopedias, manuals, and other publications useful in identifying the content of art.

In early twentieth-century Germany, Aby Warburg (1866–1929) and his followers Fritz Saxl (1890–1948) and Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) elaborated the practice of identification and classification of motifs in images to using iconography as a means of understanding meaning. Panofsky codified an influential approach to iconography in his 1939 *Studies in Iconology*, where he defined it as "the branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to form". The distinction he and other scholars drew between particular definitions of "iconography" (put simply, the identification of visual content) and "iconology" (the analysis of the meaning of that content) has not been generally accepted, though it is still used by some writers.

While most iconographical scholarship remains highly dense and specialized, some analyses began to attract a much wider audience; for example, Panofsky's theory (now generally out of favor with specialists) is that the writing on the rear wall in *The Arnolfini Portrait* by Jan van Eyck turned the painting into the record of a marriage contract. Holbein's *The Ambassadors* has been the subject of books for a general market with new theories as to its iconography; as well as being a double portrait, the painting contains a still life of several meticulously rendered objects, the meaning of which is the cause of much debate. The most notable and famous of Holbein's symbols in the work is the distorted skull which is placed in the bottom center of the composition. The skull, rendered in anamorphic perspective , another invention of the Early Renaissance , is speculated to have been a reminder of death and mortality.



Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434: The iconography in this work has historically been the subject of debate due to its many signifiers. Some scholars have theorized that the painting was actually a marriage contract due to the writing on the wall in the background.

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1.4: Art in Society

Religion as a Theme

Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic artistic traditions have used elements of symbolism, narrative, ritual, iconoclasm, and authorship to express the tenets of their beliefs throughout history.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the history and elements of Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Christian sacred art is produced in an attempt to illustrate, supplement, and portray, in tangible form , the principles of Christianity; most Christian art is built around themes familiar to the intended observer.
- Buddhist art followed believers as the dharma spread and evolved in each new host country. It developed to the north through Central Asia and into Eastern Asia to form the Northern branch of Buddhist art; and to the east as far as Southeast Asia to form the Southern branch of Buddhist art.
- Islamic art prohibited the depiction of representational images in religious art . Therefore, the naturally decorative nature of Arabic script led to the use of calligraphic decorations, which usually involved repeating geometrical patterns that expressed ideals of order and nature.
- Religion and spirituality has been a theme in art throughout history and throughout many areas of the world, from Hinduism and Judaism to indigenous spiritual practices.

Key Terms

- **iconoclasm**:The deliberate destruction of religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **religious art**:Artistic imagery using religious inspiration and motifs, often intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual.

Religious art is art that makes use of religious inspiration and/or motifs . It is often intended to uplift the mind to the spiritual or communicate the principles of the religion. While incredibly large and varied individually, we can identify certain elements that Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic artistic traditions have used to express the tenets of their beliefs using symbolism , ritual , iconoclasm , and authorship.

Christian Art

Christian art is typically produced in order to illustrate the various principles and narratives of the religion. Throughout time, most Christian sects have used art to some extent, though there have been definite periods of iconoclasm within the history of the religion. Most Christian art alludes to themes that are familiar to a practicing Christian, such as the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus or the crucifixion. While Christianity is a monotheistic religion, Christians believe God is triune, meaning that the three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are in one union in which each figure is also wholly God. Most Christian art focuses on Jesus, particularly at the Crucifixion or stories from the Bible, while the Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove or tongue of fire. God as the Father of Jesus is rarely visually depicted.

Christianity has historically made use of an elaborate iconographic system, whereby each saint is associated with a particular object or animal. For example, Saint Peter is depicted with keys and Saint Patrick is depicted with a shamrock in order to quickly convey narratives to potentially illiterate audiences.



Virgin and Child. Wall painting from the early catacombs, Rome, 4th century.: One of the most common Christian themes is that of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus.

Buddhist Art

Buddhist art originated on the Indian subcontinent following the historical life of Siddhartha Gautama, also known as Gautama Buddha, in the sixth to fifth century BCE, evolving via contact with other cultures as it spread throughout Asia and the world. Buddhist art followed believers as the dharma spread, adapted, and evolved in each new host country. It developed to the north through Central Asia and into Eastern Asia to form the Northern branch of Buddhist art and to the east as far as Southeast Asia to form the Southern branch of Buddhist art. In India, Buddhist art flourished and even influenced the development of Hindu art, while Tibetan Buddhist art was created as a meditation practice. An important example of Tibetan meditation art is the sand mandala , made and used by monks for meditation.

Thematically, Buddhist art is typically comprised of devotional works depicting mythology and narratives associated with the Buddha and bodhisattvas . There is great variation in the types of Buddhist art as the religion is so vast. Some Buddhist art contains animist themes, meaning the depiction of natural elements (animals, nature, earth) as spiritual entities. The creation of art has traditionally been considered both a meditation itself, as well as a method to produce an object to aid others in meditation. Works are rarely, if ever, signed by the artist or group of artists, as the art-making process is considered sacred and communal.



Sand mandala: An example of Tibetan meditation art is the sand mandala, made by monks and used in meditation.

Islamic Art

Islamic art prohibits representational images in religious art, and evolved to be comprised mainly of calligraphic decorations and repetitive geometric patterns. Intended to express the ideals of order and of nature, these geometric patterns are used to adorn religious architecture, carpets, manuscripts, and other art objects. Sacred Islamic art reflects a worldview focused on spiritual essence as opposed to physical form.

Calligraphy is the most highly regarded and most fundamental element of Islamic art. The employment of calligraphy as ornament had a definite aesthetic appeal but often also included an underlying talismanic component. Geometric patterns make up one of the three non-figurative types of decoration in Islamic art, which also includes calligraphy and vegetal patterns. Abstract designs not only adorn the surfaces of monumental Islamic architecture but also function as the major decorative element on a vast array of objects of all types.



Islamic calligraphy: Eighteenth century writing in Ottoman calligraphy, depicting the phrase “In the name of God, Most Merciful, Most Gracious”.

The Market

The key components of the art market are the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the roles of the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector in the art market

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The art market is an economic ecosystem that relies not only on supply and demand, but also on the fabrication of a work's predicted future monetary and/or cultural value .
- The primary art market refers to art that enters the market for the first time. The secondary market refers to artworks that have been sold at least once before.
- An art dealer is a person or company who buys and sells works of art.
- Art galleries are commercial or privately funded businesses that deal in artworks, typically made by contemporary artists.
- The curator is the manager or director of the gallery who traditionally programs the space and organizes art shows.
- Art fairs act as conventions or large-scale shows where galleries display the work of select artists whom they represent.

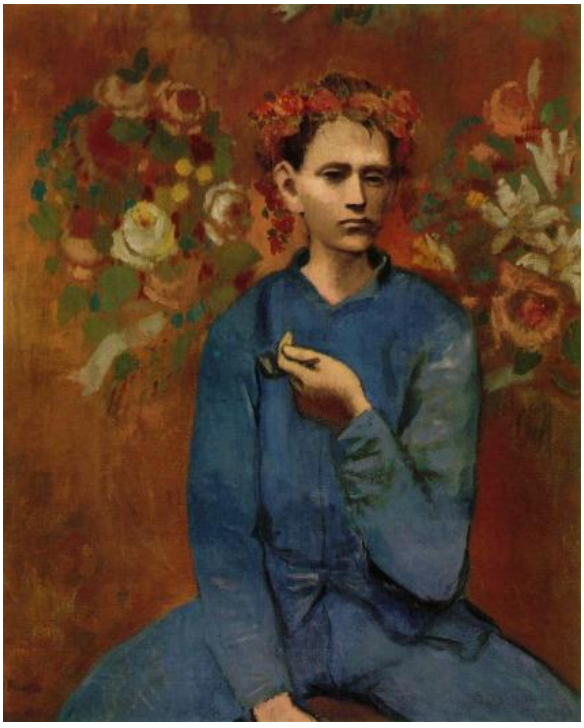
Key Terms

- **nonprofit**:An organization that exists for reasons other than to make a profit, such as a charitable, educational, or service organization.
- **curator**:A person who manages, administers, or organizes a collection, either independently or employed by a museum, library, archive, or zoo.

The art market is an economic ecosystem that relies not only on supply and demand, but on the fabrication of a work's predicted future monetary and/or cultural value. The art market can appear somewhat unclear, since artists do not make art with the sole intention of selling it, and buyers often have no idea of the value of their purchase.

The art market is made up of two parts: the primary market and the secondary market. The primary art market refers to art that enters the market for the first time, while the secondary market refers to artworks that have been sold at least once before.

Once a work is sold, it enters the secondary market and the price at which it sold has a direct influence on its subsequent price. For example, the Picasso painting *Garçon à la Pipe* sold for $104.2 million at auction, thereby setting its worth at $104.2 million. Supply and demand affects the secondary market more than the primary market, as contemporary art with no market history relies on speculative analysis to determine its value.



Picasso, *Garçon à la Pipe*, 1905: Picasso's "*Garçon à la Pipe* sold for, and is thereby valued at, $104.2 million.

The important players in the art market are the gallery, curator, dealer, consultant, and collector. Art galleries are commercial or privately funded businesses that deal in artworks, made by contemporary or historical artists. Nonprofit galleries are typically a step above commercial galleries, and include museums and galleries that are funded by the government or charity that do not sell artwork, such as the Tate Modern.

The curator is generally the manager of the gallery and the person who programs the space and organizes art shows. Curators at commercial galleries may have the responsibility of selling work, while those at museums generally maintain the organizational aspects of exhibitions.

Art dealers are persons or companies who buy and sell works of art. They typically seek out artists to represent while simultaneously building relationships with collectors and museums to whom they might be able to sell the work. Dealers are often able to anticipate market trends, and some prominent dealers might be able to influence the taste of the market. Many dealers specialize in a particular style , region, or time period and travel internationally to exhibitions, auctions, artists' studios, and art fairs to pick up new work. An example of a highly notable art dealer is Larry Gagosian, who also owns Gagosian Gallery, a highly influential art gallery.

Art fairs act as conventions or large-scale shows where galleries display the work of select artists whom they represent and are important to the structure of the contemporary art market. Prominent art fairs include Art Basel, Scope, Frieze Art Fair, NADA, and the Armory Show. The tradition of selling art at auction dates back to the 17th century and continues to thrive today. Art auctions deal in the most highly valued of art, such as works by Picasso, Manet, Jeff Koons, and Andy Warhol. The leading auction houses are Christie's and Sotheby's.

National Pride

Art can be used to advance nationalistic goals by providing a state or nation with political and social legitimacy.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate the relationship between certain types of artwork and national pride

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romantic nationalism refers to the phenomenon by which a state derives power from the unity of those it governs, whether it be through culture , religion, customs, language, or race.
- Romantic nationalism was a key component of Romanticism as well as certain post-Enlightenment philosophies.
- National anthems, national epics, and national treasures are part of the language of Romantic nationalism, and date back to the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Today, cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—is regarded as highly valuable.
- A "national treasure" refers to shared culture which has been deemed exceptionally valuable.
- Governments influence the artistic output of their regions by presenting grants and awards to artists whose careers they wish to support.

Key Terms

- **worldview**:The totality of one's beliefs about reality.
- **national treasure**:A person, place, or object that is deemed of great value to an entire nation, usually due to its cultural significance.

Art can be used to advance nationalistic goals by providing a state or nation with political and social legitimacy. "Romantic nationalism" refers to the phenomenon by which a state derives power from the unity of those it governs, whether it be through culture, religion, customs, language, or race. Romantic nationalism was a key component of Romanticism as well as certain post-Enlightenment philosophies that focused on the development of national language, folklore, and traditional customs. This form of nationalism arose in reaction to imperial and dynastic hegemony , which acquired legitimacy not from the bottom-up but from the top-down; in other words, from the authority down to the people. National anthems, national epics, and national treasures are part of the language of Romantic nationalism, and date back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

After the 1870s, Romantic nationalism became a very familiar movement in the arts that allowed for a form of reinterpretation of the past, without being considered merely historicist. Nationalist movements for the separation of Finland and the kingdom of Bavaria from Germany proved successful, Czech and Serb nationalism created conflict, Welsh and Irish tongues experienced a poetic revival, and the Zionist movement both revived Hebrew and began immigration to Israel. In the first few decades of the 20th century, Romantic nationalism had exerted an important influence on political events. The belief that nation states forming around unities in culture and ethnicity was in some sense "natural" was prominently held. After the Second World War, however, Romantic nationalism took on a darker tone .

Some degree of art-based national pride still exists today. The age-old notion of the state gaining political prowess through its artistic output still holds true. Cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—is regarded as highly valuable. It is not uncommon for museums and art galleries to be owned by the state, thereby imparting biased and/or nationalistic world views on exhibitions. A "national treasure" refers to shared culture which has been deemed exceptionally valuable and could be a skilled musician, such as Yo-Yo Ma, or a cultural object of great value , such as Britain's Bayeux tapestry . Governments influence the artistic output of their regions by presenting grants and awards to artists whose careers they wish to support—a model which is not unlike the dynastic patronage common throughout Europe in the past.



Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—nearly 70 metres (230 ft) long, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy and Harold, Earl of Wessex (later King of England) and culminating in the Battle of Hastings.

Museums and Private Collections

Museums and private collections are engaged in both the collection and display of works of art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the history and role of museums and private collections in the consumption of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early museums began as the private collections of wealthy families and individuals.
- "Cabinets of curiosity," or cabinets that held collections of artifacts and art objects, were the beginnings of museums and private collections.
- The majority of significant museums were opened to the public in the 18th century Enlightenment Era, such as the Louvre and the Hermitage Museum.
- Numerous art works in museums today were donated from private collections.
- It is not uncommon to see a note next to a work of art in a temporary museum exhibition, stating that it is on loan from a particular private collection.

Key Terms

- **engaged**:Attached to a wall or sunk into it halfway.

- **Enlightenment**:A philosophical movement in 17th- and 18th-century Europe; the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, emphasized rationalism.
- **conservation**:The act of preserving, guarding, or protecting; the keeping (of a thing) in a safe or entire state; preservation.

Museums are institutions that collect art objects and make them available for public viewing through either permanent or temporary exhibitions. A museum does not sell works of art, but essentially holds them in public trust, and engages in varying levels of education and conservation practices. Private collections are privately owned works of art which may or may not be available for viewing by the public. Museums and private collections are both engaged in the collection and display of works of art.

Early museums began as the private collections of wealthy families and individuals. Originally, only nobility collected art, but soon the wealthy classes began to adopt the habit of collecting and displaying archaeological and art objects in their salons and living rooms. “Cabinets of curiosity,” or cabinets that held these collections of artifacts and art objects, became commonplace, and were the beginnings of museums and private collections. Often, these private collections were available for viewing by the so-called “respectable” public, but the majority did not become open to the public until the 18th century.

The majority of significant museums were opened to the public in the 18th century, or the Enlightenment era, a time known for its pursuit and dissemination of knowledge throughout society. The arts were especially important during the Enlightenment and viewed as a deeply noble pursuit. The Grand Tour , which became very popular during this time, solidified the habit of collecting works for display from these trips abroad. Many of the most significant private collections of art were opened to the public in the 18th century, such as the Uffizi gallery in Florence, Italy; The Louvre in Paris, France; and The Hermitage Museum, founded in 1764 by Catherine the Great.



The Louvre, Paris: The Louvre museum in Paris was a private collection opened to the public in the 18th century.

Numerous art works in museums today were in fact donations from private collections. In addition, commonly a note is posted next to a work of art in a temporary museum exhibition stating that it is on loan from a particular private collection. Currently, some private collections remain private, while some are available for public viewings. The Frick Collection in New York City is one of the preeminent small art museums in the city. Housed in the mansion of its owner, Henry Clay Frick, the collection includes old master paintings by Jan van Eyck, Fragonard, Rembrandt, and others.

Preservation and Restoration

Preservation and restoration is a profession devoted to the conservation of cultural heritage, such as works of art, for future generations.

Learning Objectives

Examine the profession of preserving and restoring art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The goal of the conservator is to attempt to maintain cultural heritage objects as close to their original condition as possible, for as long as possible.
- The tradition of conservation is considered by most to have begun in 1565, with the restoration of the Sistine Chapel frescoes .
- Today, all museums employ teams of conservators to keep their collections up to date, conduct frequent tests, and engage in analysis and documentation.
- Conservators are often involved in what is termed “preventative conservation,” which refers to protecting art and cultural works from damage from environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity, and exposure to light.
- A guiding principle of conservation is the idea of “reversibility”; that is, any intervention with the object should be fully reversible.
- “Interventive conservation” refers to any act that involves a direct interaction between the conservator and the cultural material, such as cleaning, stabilizing, repairing, or replacing of parts.

Key Terms

- **fresco**:In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to wet or fresh lime mortar or plaster.
- **conservator**:A professional who works on the conservation and restoration of objects, particularly artistic objects.

Preservation and restoration is a profession devoted to the conservation of cultural heritage, such as works of art, for future generations. The activities involved in this profession include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventative conservation. The goal of the conservator is to attempt to maintain cultural heritage objects as close to their original condition as possible, for as long as possible. The conservator acts as a sort of steward for these objects, which range from archaeological to artistic.

The tradition of conservation is considered by most to have begun in 1565, with the restoration of the Sistine Chapel frescoes. During the 19th century, the fields of science and art became somewhat intertwined, and scientific processes were used to care for artistic objects. Today, all museums employ teams of conservators to keep their collections up-to-date, conduct frequent tests, and engage in analysis and documentation. In addition, numerous organizations create standardized methodologies for the conservation of art objects, such as the International Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and the American Institute for Conservation.



A painting, before and after restoration: This before-and-after image of a painting and frame exemplifies how art restoration can restore an art work to its original state.

The conservator's activities are guided by ethical standards. They must choose if, when, and how to alter a work of art in order to bring it closer to its original state. Since the original state is often beyond the conservator's lifetime, a certain degree of guesswork is required. Conservators are often involved in what is termed "preventative conservation," which refers to protecting art and cultural works from damage from environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity, and exposure to light. This is why, for example, it is common to see textiles or photography exhibited in dimly-lit galleries.

A guiding principle of conservation is the idea of "reversibility"; that is, any intervention with the object should be fully reversible, and the object should be able to be returned to its original state. "Interventive conservation" refers to any act that involves a direct interaction between the conservator and the cultural material, such as cleaning, stabilizing, repairing, or replacing of parts. The conservator is required to fully justify any work of this sort and to complete documentation of the process before and after. Examples of interventive conservation include securing flaking paint and the tinted varnish treatment, whereby the restorer applies a tinted varnish over the original varnish, giving the illusion that spots on a work have been repainted.

Conflicts

Destruction, mislabeling, appropriation, and repossession can contribute to conflicts surrounding the preservation of art.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the events that can contribute to conflicts in terms of the preservation of art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- War, political unrest, accidents, and disaster are the typical outside factors that contribute to the non- preservation of art.
- Looting refers to when art is stolen during such times of conflict.
- Art repatriation refers to the process of returning artworks to their rightful owners.
- The use, or appropriation of, art has inspired much controversy and contributed to cultural subjugation. A prime example of appropriation and subjugation is seen in the appropriation of sacred Native American images, iconography , and sculptures for commercial use by non-natives.
- Copyright can give the creator of an original work exclusive rights to it, usually for a limited time.

Key Terms

- **Copyright**:The right by law to be the entity which determines who may publish, copy, and distribute a piece of writing, music, picture, or other work of authorship.
- **appropriation**:The use of pre-existing objects or images with little or no transformation applied to them.

While institutions and owners do their best to preserve works of art, it is not uncommon for conflicts to arise due to issues related to ownership, human error, destruction, and appropriation. War, political unrest, accidents, and disaster are the typical outside factors that contribute to preservation conflicts when it comes to works of art.

Ownership conflicts are common, especially during times of unrest, such as war, when there is a higher potential for unethical behavior. Art is often stolen, or looted, during periods of conflict, as well as destroyed. Plunder, appropriation, and spoliation are related terms that describe the process of looting. During World War II, the Nazis looted a lot of European art, much of which was eventually repatriated, or returned to, its rightful owners.

Appropriation is a complex issue in art. The appropriation of Native American iconography, sacred images, and sculptures for commercial use by non-natives has been a source of controversy, contributing to cultural subjugation. The Kachina doll, for example, is a sacred Hopi sculpture that was traditionally meant to be seen only during specific Hopi ritual events. Many commercial replicas have been created to sell to tourists, altering the original intent of the object.

Appropriation has been embraced in certain Western art movements. Dadaist and Surrealist works, for example, typically utilize a great deal of appropriation, as seen in Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*



Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919: *L.H.O.O.Q.* is an example of appropriation deemed acceptable in art.

A copyright can give the creator of an original work exclusive rights to it, usually for a limited time. However, after that time is up, the work of art might be appropriated and used by others, thereby creating conflict. The internet has further complicated issues surrounding ownership and appropriation, especially in art.

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1.5: Historical Context

Context of Creation

The political, socioeconomic, and cultural setting that a work of art is created in will affect how it is perceived within art history.

Learning Objectives

Recognize the importance of an artwork's context of creation to art history

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Patronage of the arts, and art history by extension, has been used throughout history to endorse the ambitions and agenda of the dominant power of any given age. Art history is the academic study of objects of art in their historical development and stylistic contexts (i.e., genre , design, form , and style).
- Art conveys political, religious, and philosophical themes and judgments that arise as much from the artist's environment as they do from his or her creative impulse.
- Some of the contextual forces that shape artists and their work are their teachers and the influences of preceding styles; their patrons and their demands; their audiences; and their general socioeconomic, political, and cultural climate.

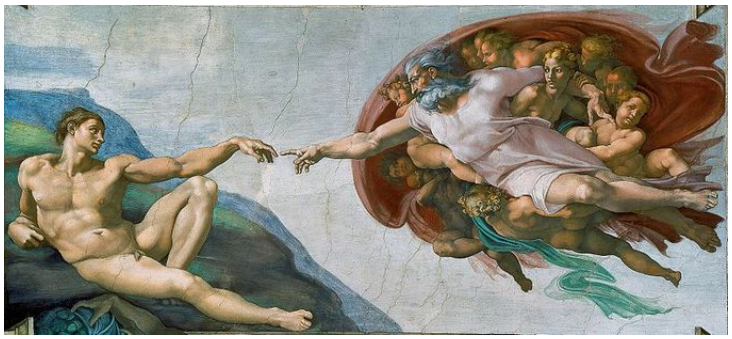
Key Terms

- **iconography**:The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.
- **oeuvre**:The complete body of an artist's work.

Art has existed almost as long as humankind itself and serves as a vehicle for the expression and communication of ideas and emotions. The canon of art history, however, has historically conveyed the political, religious, and philosophical ideals of the dominant power. Art history categorizes artworks and theories with a heavy reliance on the context or environment that the artwork was created in (i.e., its political, social, cultural, and economic settings).

Art history is the academic study of art objects in their historical development and stylistic contexts (i.e., genre, design, form, and style). A work of art from a particular historical period can be treated as an original source of information that was created at the time under study, and provides information about that time. Art historians study the contextual forces that shaped artists and their oeuvres , including their teachers and the influences of preceding styles; their patrons and their demands; their audiences; and their general socioeconomic, political, and cultural climate. These factors produce and influence different artistic styles and iconography , which are characteristic of their age and geographical location with reference to visual appearance, technique, and form.

In many ways, the historical backbone of art history is a celebratory chronology of beautiful creations of art commissioned by religious or civic institutions or wealthy individuals. Patronage of the arts has been used throughout history to endorse the ambitions and agenda of these institutions and individuals, and has been particularly important in the creation of religious art . For example, the Roman Catholic Church was an enthusiastic sponsor of the arts that resulted in a tremendous outpouring of architecture, painting, sculpture , and decorative crafts in medieval and Renaissance Europe.



The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel ceiling: Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City under the patronage of Pope Julius II between 1508 and 1512.

Intended Context of Reception

Art's context of reception depends on a variety of circumstances, both on the part of the artist as well as the artistic community the artist is participating in.

Learning Objectives

Identify the non-motivated, as well as motivated, factors that have given rise to art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Art arises from a combination of non-motivated factors driven by the intrinsic human impulse towards harmony and creativity as well as motivated factors, which consciously aim to communicate specific messages to other individuals.
- Art may be used to evoke particular emotions or moods, for social inquiry and political change, for questioning and criticizing society, or as a means of propaganda or commercial advertisement for influencing popular conceptions.
- Religious art uses religious inspiration and themes in order to illustrate the principles of the religion and to provide spiritual instruction to audiences.
- Patronage of the arts was typically used as a means of expressing and endorsing political, social, and cultural agendas and of displaying personal prestige. Works of art commissioned by wealthy patrons usually reflect their desires and aims.

Key Terms

- **patron**:An influential, wealthy person who supports an artist, craftsman, scholar, or aristocrat.
- **motif**:A recurring or dominant element in a work of art.

Art's context of reception depends on a variety of circumstances, both on the part of the artist as well as the artistic community and climate that the artist is participating in. Throughout human history, art has been created across a range of media for many different reasons and to serve many different functions. Some of these purposes are intrinsic to the human instinct for harmony and balance, as well as the human desire to experience mysterious things and express the human imagination. Art can transcend the concept of utility or external purpose. These ideas are called the non-motivated purposes of art. However, art also comes from intentional, conscious actions that aim towards specific external goals, and those qualify as the motivated purposes of art. Motivated purposes usually arise from the artwork's historical context, which consists of a multitude of different factors, including the social, political, economic, and cultural settings of the period; the artist's patrons; and the artist's intended audience.

Primarily, art is a form of communication, and like most forms of communication, has intents and goals directed toward other people. It may be used for entertainment, seeking to evoke particular emotions or moods in viewers , or for social inquiry and political change by portraying aspects of society in complimentary or critical ways.



Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830: This painting reflects contemporary events, commemorating the July Revolution of 1830, which toppled Charles X of France. A woman personifying liberty leads the people forward over the bodies of the fallen, holding the flag of the French Revolution in one hand and brandishing a musket with the other. The painting reflects the context of the time: namely, a shift towards representing political current events in art.

Similarly, art may also be used as a form of propaganda by subtly influencing popular conceptions, or for commercial purposes, by making specific products more attractive to potential consumers. Religious or sacred art uses religious inspiration and motifs in order to illustrate the principles of a religion in a tangible form, and is often intended to provide spiritual instruction and connection with believers.



Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with Eight Angels*, 1478: An example of religious art, this painting was commissioned by the Catholic Church during the Renaissance. Like a great deal of religious art, the painting is meant to communicate the spiritual beauty of the religious concept echoed in the aesthetic beauty of an oil painting. The work reflects the context of its time, in which art was driven nearly exclusively by religious institutions and used to illustrate and provide instruction about the principles of the religion.

Through the course of history, much of art has traditionally been patronized by wealthy and powerful individuals, including rulers and aristocrats, as well as various civic and religious institutions. Patronage of the arts was typically used as a means of expressing and endorsing political, social, and cultural agendas and of displaying personal prestige. Works of art commissioned by wealthy patrons usually reflect their desires and aims.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 2: Prehistoric Art

2.1: The Stone Age
2.2: The Paleolithic Period
2.3: The Mesolithic Period
2.4: The Neolithic Period
2.5: The Bronze Age

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2.1: The Stone Age

The Stone Age

Stone Age art illustrates early human creativity through small portable objects, cave paintings, and early sculpture and architecture.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic Periods of the Stone Age, giving a brief description of the art from each period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Stone Age lasted from 30,000 BCE to about 3,000 BCE and is named after the main technological tool developed at that time: stone. It ended with the advent of the Bronze Age and Iron Age .
- The Stone Age is divided in three distinct periods: the Paleolithic Period or Old Stone Age (30,000 BCE–10,000 BCE), the Mesolithic Period or Middle Stone Age (10,000 BCE–8,000 BCE), and the Neolithic Period or New Stone Age (8,000 BCE–3,000 BCE).
- The art of the Stone Age represents the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing.

Key Terms

- **Parietal Art**:Paintings, murals, drawings, etchings, carvings, and pecked artwork on the interior of rock shelters and caves; also known as cave art.
- **prehistory**:The span of time before recorded history; all the time preceding human existence and the invention of writing.
- **Nomad**:A member of a community of people who move from one place to another, rather than settling permanently in one location.

The Stone Age

The Stone Age is the first of the three-age system of archaeology, which divides human technological prehistory into three periods: the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. The Stone Age lasted roughly 3.4 million years, from 30,000 BCE to about 3,000 BCE, and ended with the advent of metalworking.

The Stone Age has been divided into three distinct periods:

- Paleolithic Period or Old Stone Age (30,000 BCE–10,000 BCE)
- Mesolithic Period or Middle Stone Age (10,000 BCE–8,000 BCE)
- Neolithic Period or New Stone Age (8,000 BCE–3,000 BCE)

The art of the Stone Age represents the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing. While numerous artifacts still exist today, the lack of writing systems from this era greatly limits our understanding of prehistoric art and culture .

The Art of the Stone Age: Paleolithic

The Paleolithic era is characterized by the emergence of basic stone tools and stone art in the archaeological record. For the first time, humans began to create durable products of self expression that served no function for survival. The diagnostic art of this period appears in two main forms: small sculptures and large paintings and engravings on cave walls. There are also various examples of carved bone and ivory flutes in the Paleolithic era, indicating another art form utilized by prehistoric humans.

Paleolithic small sculptures are made of clay, bone, ivory, or stone and consist of simple figurines depicting animals and humans. In particular, Venus figurines are the most indicative of this era. They are highly stylized depictions of women with exaggerated female parts representing fertility and sexuality. They typically date to the Gravettian period (26,000–21,000 years ago), but the earliest known Venus figurine (Venus of Hohle Fels) dates to at least 35,000 years ago, and the most recent (Venus of Monruz) dates to roughly 11,000 years ago. They are most common in the Mediterranean region, but there are examples from as far as Siberia. Archaeologists can only speculate on their meaning, but their ubiquitous nature indicates a universal human attraction to art and possibly religion.



Venus of Hohle Fels: Oldest known Venus figurine. Also the oldest known, undisputed depiction of a human being in prehistoric art. Made of mammoth tusk and found in Germany.



Venus of Laussel, an Upper Paleolithic (Aurignacian) carving:

The second main form of Paleolithic art consists of monumental cave paintings and engravings. This type of rock art is typically found in European cave shelters, dating to 40,000–14,000 years ago, when the earth was largely covered in glacial ice. The images are predominately depictions of animals, human hand prints, and geometric patterns. The most common animals in cave art are the more intimidating ones, like cave lions, woolly rhinoceroses, and mammoths . These paintings could be creative recordings of nature, factual recordings of events, or part of some spiritual ritual , but scholars generally agree there is a symbolic and/or religious function to cave art.

The Art of the Stone Age: Mesolithic

From the Paleolithic through the Mesolithic, cave paintings and portable art such as figurines, statuettes, and beads predominated, with decorative figured workings also seen on some utilitarian objects. Venus figurines—an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric female statuettes portrayed with similar physical attributes—were very popular at the time. These figurines were carved from soft stone (such as steatite , calcite, or limestone), bone or ivory, or formed of clay and fired. The latter are among the oldest ceramics known. Also in this period, personal accessories and adornments were made from shell and bone. All the examples mentioned above fall under the category of portable art: small for easy transport.

Archaeological discoveries across a broad swath of Europe (especially southern France, like those at Lascaux; northern Spain; and Swabia, in Germany) include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculptures that are among the earliest undisputed examples of representational image-making. Paintings and engravings along the caves' walls and ceilings fall under the category of parietal art .



Prehistoric cave paintings in Lascaux, France:

The Art of the Stone Age: Neolithic

The Neolithic saw the transformation of nomad human settlements into agrarian societies in need of permanent shelter. From this period there is evidence of early pottery, as well as sculpture, architecture, and the construction of megaliths . Early rock art also first appeared in the Neolithic period.



Female figure from Tumba Madžari, Republic of Macedonia:

The End of the Stone Age

The advent of metalworking in the Bronze Age brought additional media available for use in making art, an increase in stylistic diversity, and the creation of objects that did not have any obvious function other than art. It also saw the development in some areas of artisans, a class of people specializing in the production of art, as well as in early writing systems.

By the Iron Age, civilizations with writing had arisen from Ancient Egypt to Ancient China.

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2.2: The Paleolithic Period

Paleolithic Architecture

The oldest examples of Paleolithic dwellings are shelters in caves, followed by houses of wood, straw, and rock.

Learning Objectives

Describe Paleolithic dwellings and shelters

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early humans chose locations that could be defended against predators and rivals and that were shielded from inclement weather.
- Weather, water, and time have destroyed the majority of campsites; our understanding of Paleolithic dwellings is therefore limited.
- Caves are the most famous example of Paleolithic shelters.

Key Terms

- **Mammoth**:Alarge, hairy, extinct elephant-like mammal of the taxonomic genus Mammuthus.
- **Hut**:A small wooden shed, a primitive temporary dwelling.
- **Paleolithic**:Early stage of the Stone Age, when primitive stone tools were used.

The Paleolithic Age, or Old Stone Age, spanned from around 30,000 BCE until 10,000 BCE and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity. Due to a lack of written records from this time period, nearly all of our knowledge of Paleolithic human culture and way of life comes from archaeologic and ethnographic comparisons to modern hunter-gatherer cultures. The Paleolithic lasted until the retreat of the ice, when farming and use of metals were adopted.

Paleolithic Societies

A typical Paleolithic society followed a hunter-gatherer economy. Humans hunted wild animals for meat and gathered food, firewood, and materials for their tools, clothes, or shelters. The adoption of both technologies—clothing and shelter—cannot be dated exactly, but they were key to humanity's progress. As the Paleolithic era progressed, dwellings became more sophisticated, more elaborate, and more house-like. At the end of the Paleolithic era, humans began to produce works of art such as cave paintings, rock art, and jewelry, and began to engage in religious behavior such as burial and rituals .

Dwellings and Shelters

Early men chose locations that could be defended against predators and rivals and that were shielded from inclement weather. Many such locations could be found near rivers, lakes, and streams, perhaps with low hilltops nearby that could serve as refuges. Since water can erode and change landscapes quite drastically, many of these campsites have been destroyed. Our understanding of Paleolithic dwellings is therefore limited.

As early as 380,000 BCE, humans were constructing temporary wood huts . Other types of houses existed; these were more frequently campsites in caves or in the open air with little in the way of formal structure. The oldest examples are shelters within caves, followed by houses of wood, straw, and rock. A few examples exist of houses built out of bones.



Temporary wood hut: An artist's rendering of a temporary wood house, based on evidence found at Terra Amata (in Nice, France) and dated to the Lower Paleolithic era.

Caves

Caves are the most famous example of Paleolithic shelters, though the number of caves used by Paleolithic people is drastically small relative to the number of hominids thought to have lived on Earth at the time. Most hominids probably never entered a cave, much less lived in one. Nonetheless, the remains of hominid settlements show interesting patterns. In one cave, a tribe of Neanderthals kept a hearth fire burning for a thousand years, leaving behind an accumulation of coals and ash. In another cave, post holes in the dirt floor reveal that the residents built some sort of shelter or enclosure with a roof to protect themselves from water dripping on them from the cave ceiling. They often used the rear portions of the cave as middens, depositing their garbage there.

In the Upper Paleolithic (the latest part of the Paleolithic), caves ceased to act as houses. Instead, they likely became places for early people to gather for ritual and religious purposes.

Tents and Huts

Modern archaeologists know of few types of shelter used by ancient peoples other than caves. Some examples do exist, but they are quite rare. In Siberia, a group of Russian scientists uncovered a house or tent with a frame constructed of mammoth bones. The great tusks supported the roof, while the skulls and thighbones formed the walls of the tent. Several families could live inside, where three small hearths, little more than rings of stones, kept people warm during the winter. Around 50,000 years ago, a group of Paleolithic humans camped on a lakeshore in southern France. At Terra Amata, these hunter-gatherers built a long and narrow house. The foundation was a ring of stones, with a flat threshold stone for a door at either end. Vertical posts down the middle of the house supported roofs and walls of sticks and twigs, probably covered over with a layer of straw. A hearth outside served as the kitchen, while a smaller hearth inside kept people warm. Their residents could easily abandon both dwellings. This is why they are not considered true houses, which was a development of the Neolithic period rather than the Paleolithic period.

Paleolithic Artifacts

The Paleolithic era has a number of artifacts that range from stone, bone, and wood tools to stone sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of the artifacts during the Paleolithic era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

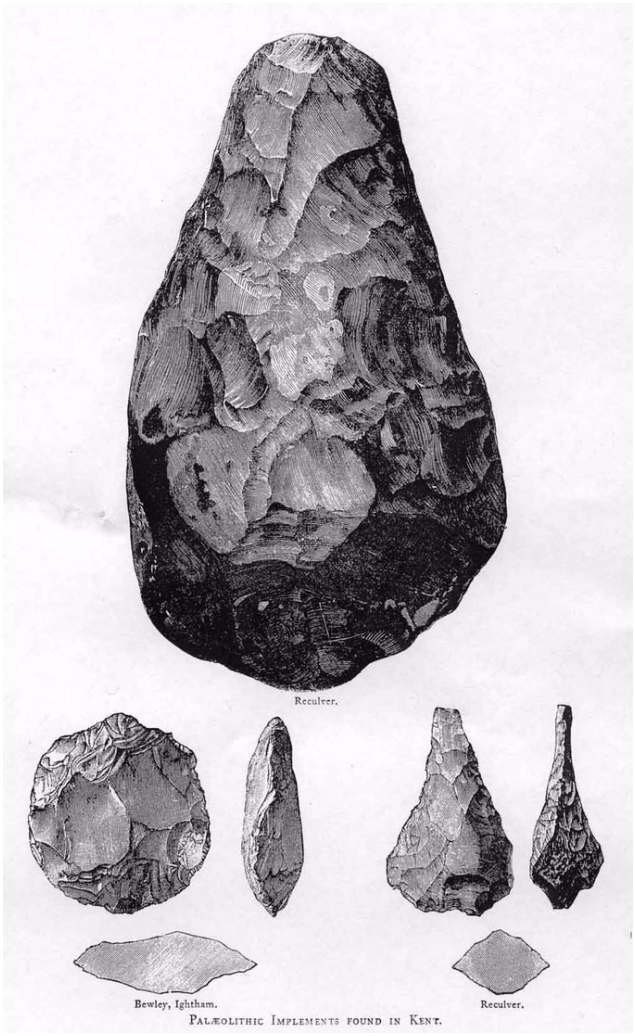
- Artifacts dating from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic remain disputed as objects of artistic expression.
- There is some evidence that a preference for aesthetic emerged in the Middle Paleolithic due to the symmetry inherent to discovered artifacts.

- The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some archaeologists to be the earliest representation of the human form .
- The Venus of Berekhat Ram is believed by some to be a representation of a female human figure dating from the early Middle Paleolithic, however, the claim is highly contested.
- A carved elephant bone from Bilzingsleben has been interpreted as an early example of art making.
- The Paleolithic is characterized by the use of stone tools, although at the time humans also used wood and bone tools.

Key Terms

- **quartzite**:Ametamorphic rock consisting of interlocking grains of quartz.
- **ochre**:An earth pigment containing silica, aluminum, and ferric oxide
- **flint**:A hard, fine-grained quartz that fractures conchoidally and generates sparks when struck.
- **paleoliths**:A stone relic of the Paleolithic era.
- **artifacts**:Objects that are created by a human being with cultural and historical significance.

The Paleolithic or Old Stone Age originated around 30,000 BCE, lasting until 10,000 BCE, and is separated into three periods: the Lower Paleolithic (the earliest subdivision), Middle Paleolithic, and Upper Paleolithic. The Paleolithic era is characterized by the use of stone tools, although at the time humans also used wood and bone tools. Other organic commodities were adapted for use as tools, including leather and vegetable fibers; however, due to their nature, these have not been preserved to any great degree. Surviving artifacts of the Paleolithic era are known as paleoliths .



Acheulean hand-axes: Acheulean hand-axes from Kent. The types shown are (clockwise from top) cordate, ficron, and ovate. Evidence shows these early hominids intentionally selected raw materials with good flaking qualities and chose appropriate-sized stones for their needs to produce sharp-edged tools for cutting.

The earliest undisputed art originated in the Upper Paleolithic. However, there is some evidence that a preference for aesthetic emerged in the Middle Paleolithic due to the symmetry inherent in discovered artifacts and evidence of attention to detail in such things as tool shape, which has led some archaeologists to interpret these artifacts as early examples of artistic expression. There has been much dispute among scholars over the terming of early prehistoric artifacts as "art." Generally speaking, artifacts dating from the Lower and Middle Paleolithic remain disputed as objects of artistic expression, while the Upper Paleolithic provides the first conclusive examples of art making.

Disputed Art(ifacts): Early Venuses

The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some to be the earliest representation of the human form . The Venus, a 2.3 inch long piece of quartzite rock dated between 300,000 and 500,000 years ago during the Middle Paleolithic, was discovered in 1999 in a river terrace deposit on the north bank of the Draa River, just south of the Moroccan village of Tan-Tan. There is controversy among archaeologists as to its nature and origin. Some archaeologists believe it was created by a combination of geological forces as well as tool-based carving. Visible smudge stains have been interpreted by some as remnants of red ochre pigments. For others, the rock's shape is simply the result of natural weathering and erosion, and any human shape is a mere coincidence.



Drawing of the Venus of Tan-Tan: The Venus of Tan-Tan is an alleged artifact found in Morocco that is believed by some to be the earliest representation of the human form.

The Venus of Berekhat Ram is a contemporary of the Venus of Tan-Tan, found at Berekhat Ram on the Golan Heights in 1981. Some believe it to be a representation of a female human figure, dating from the early Middle Paleolithic; however, the claim is highly contested. The object is a red tufic pebble, about 1.4 inches long, which has at least three grooves, possibly incised with a sharp-edged stone tool. The grooves have been interpreted as marking the neck and arms of the figure by some, while others believe these to be purely naturally-occurring lines .

Mask of la Roche-Cotard

Also known as the Mousterian Protofigurine, the Mask of la Roche-Cotard is an artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of the La Roche-Cotard cave, situated on the banks of the Loire River in France. Constructed using flint and bone, the stone is believed to represent the upper part of a face, while the bone has been interpreted as eyes. While some archaeologists question whether this artifact does indeed represent a rendered face, it has been occasionally regarded as an example of Paleolithic figurative artistic expression.

Bilzingsleben

Bilzingsleben is a site of early Paleolithic human remains discovered in Thuringia, Germany. The area was also the site of discovery of many stone and bone tools such as hoes, scrapers, points, and gougers. One bone fragment, an elephant tibia, has two groups of incised parallel lines which some have interpreted as an early example of art making. The regular spacing of the incisions, their sub-equal lengths, and V-like cross-sections suggest that they were created at the same time, with a single stone; however, no conclusive agreement has been made.

Blombos Cave

Discoveries of engraved stones in the Blombos Caves of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art. Made from ochre, the stones are engraved with abstract patterns, and while they are simpler than prehistoric cave paintings found in Europe, some scholars believe these engraved stones represent the earliest known artworks, dating from 75,000 years ago. Although, much like the other pieces, this belief remains contested.



Engraved ochre from the Blombos Cave: Engraved ochre from the Blombos Cave has led some historians to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of symbolic art.

Paleolithic Cave Paintings

Paleolithic cave paintings demonstrate early humans' capacity to give meaning to their surroundings and communicate with others.

Learning Objectives

Identify the types of images found in cave paintings in Europe dating from the Paleolithic era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Cave paintings can be grouped into three main categories: animals, human figures, and abstract signs.
- Animals depicted include familiar herbivores and predatory animals.
- The most spectacular examples of cave paintings are in southern France and northern Spain.
- Interpretations vary from prehistoric star charts, accounts of past hunts or mystical rituals for future ones, and shamanism .

Key Terms

- **chiaroscuro**:An artistic technique developed during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **shamanism**:A range of traditional beliefs and practices concerned with communication with the spirit world.
- **Parietal Art**:Paintings, murals, drawings, etchings, carvings, and pecked artwork on the interior of rock shelters and caves; also known as cave art.
- **polychromy**:The art or practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.

The Paleolithic , or Old Stone Age, ranges from 30,000 BCE to 10,000 BCE and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity, preceding the invention of writing. Archeological discoveries across a broad swath of Europe (especially southern France and northern Spain) include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculpture that are among the

earliest undisputed examples of representational image-making. Paintings and engravings along the caves' walls and ceilings fall under the category of parietal art .

Themes and Materials

The most common themes in cave paintings are large wild animals, such as bison, horses, aurochs , and deer. The species found most often were suitable for hunting by humans, but were not necessarily the typical prey found in associated bone deposits. For example, the painters of Lascaux, France left mainly reindeer bones, but this species does not appear at all in the cave paintings; equine species are the most common.

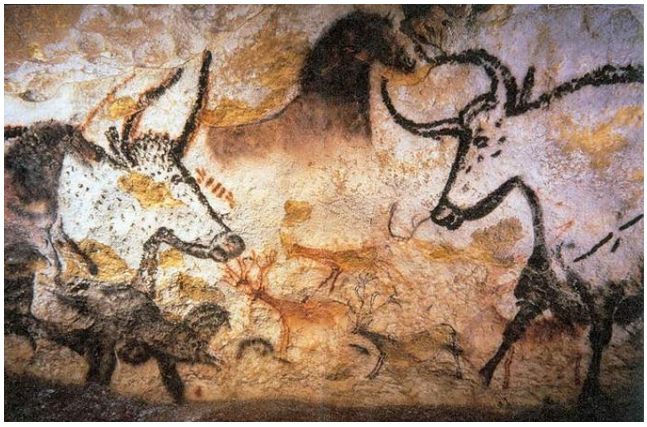
Drawings of humans were rare and were usually schematic in nature as opposed to the detailed and naturalistic images of animals. Tracings of human hands and hand stencils were very popular, however, as well as abstract patterns called finger flutings.

The pigments used appear to be red and yellow ochre , manganese or carbon for black, and china clay for white. Some of the color may have been mixed with fat. The paint was applied by finger, chewed sticks, or fur for brushes. Sometimes the silhouette of the animal was incised in the rock first, and in some caves many of the images were only engraved in this fashion, taking them out of a strict definition of "cave painting."

Main Examples of Cave Paintings: France and Spain

France

Lascaux (circa 15,000 BCE), in southwestern France, is an interconnected series of caves with one of the most impressive examples of artistic creations by Paleolithic humans.



Cave paintings in Lascaux, France: The most famous section of the cave is "The Great Hall of the Bulls," where bulls, equines, and stags are depicted.

Discovered in 1940, the cave contains nearly two thousand figures, which can be grouped into three main categories—animals, human figures, and abstract signs. Over nine hundred images depict animals from the surrounding areas, such as horses, stags, aurochs, bison, lions, bears, and birds—species that would have been hunted and eaten, and those identified as predators. The paintings contain no images of the surrounding landscape or the vegetation of the time.

The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave (circa 30,000 BCE) in the Ardèche department of southern France contains some of the earliest known paintings, as well as other evidence of Upper Paleolithic life. The Chauvet Cave is uncharacteristically large, and the quality, quantity, and condition of the artwork found on its walls have been called spectacular. Hundreds of animal paintings have been catalogued, depicting at least thirteen different species—not only the familiar herbivores that predominate Paleolithic cave art, but also many predatory animals, such as cave lions, panthers, bears, and cave hyenas.



Drawings of horses from the Chauvet Cave in France: The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in the Ardèche department of southern France is a cave that contains some of the earliest known cave paintings.

As is typical of most cave art, there are no paintings of complete human figures in Chauvet. There are a few panels of red ochre hand prints and hand stencils made by spitting pigment over hands pressed against the cave surface. Abstract markings—lines and dots—are found throughout the cave.

The artists who produced these unique paintings used techniques rarely found in other cave art. Many of the paintings appear to have been made after the walls were scraped clear of debris and concretions, leaving a smoother and noticeably lighter area upon which the artists worked. Similarly, a three-dimensional quality and the suggestion of movement are achieved by incising or etching around the outlines of certain figures. The art also includes scenes that were complex for its time—animals interacting with each other. For instance, a pair of wooly rhinoceroses are seen butting horns in an apparent contest for territory or mating rights.

Spain

Altamira (circa 18,000 BCE) is a cave in northern Spain famous for its Upper Paleolithic cave paintings featuring drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals and human hands. The cave has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.



Painting of a bison in the Great Hall of Policromes, Altamira, Spain: Altamira's famous Upper Paleolithic cave paintings feature drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals and human hands.

The long cave consists of a series of twisting passages and chambers. Human occupation was limited to the cave mouth, although paintings were created throughout the length of the cave. The artists used polychromy—charcoal and ochre or haematite—to create the images, often diluting these pigments to produce variations in intensity , creating an impression of chiaroscuro . They also exploited the natural contours in the cave walls to give their subjects a three-dimensional effect.

Interpretations

Like all prehistoric art, the purpose of these paintings remains obscure. In recent years, new research has suggested that the Lascaux paintings may incorporate prehistoric star charts. Some anthropologists and art historians also theorize that the paintings could be an account of past hunting success, or they could represent a mystical ritual to improve future hunting endeavors. An alternative theory, broadly based on ethnographic studies of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies, is that the paintings pertained to shamanism.

Paleolithic Sculpture

Paleolithic sculptures found in caves are some of the earliest examples of representational art.

Learning Objectives

Discuss aspects and characteristics of Paleolithic cave sculptures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Sculptural work from the Paleolithic consists mainly of figurines , beads, and some decorative utilitarian objects constructed with stone, bone, ivory , clay, and wood.
- “Venus figurines” is an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric statuettes of women that have been found mostly in Europe, but also in Eurasia and Siberia.
- Venus figurines are characterized by shared stylistic features, such as an oval shape, large belly, wide-set thighs, large breasts, and the typical absence of arms and feet.
- Also known as the Mousterian Protofigurine, the Mask of La Roche-Cotard is a representational artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of a cave named La Roche-Cotard.
- Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Caves of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapien*s were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art.

Key Terms

- **Eurasia**:The largest landmass on Earth, consisting of Europe and Asia.
- **flint**:A hard, fine-grained quartz that fractures conchoidally and generates sparks when struck.

The Paleolithic or Old Stone Age existed from approximately 30,000 BCE until 10,000 BCE, and produced the first accomplishments in human creativity. Archeological discoveries across Europe and Asia include over two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings, and sculptures that are among the earliest undisputed examples of representational art-making. Sculptural work from the Paleolithic consists mainly of figurines, beads, and some decorative utilitarian objects constructed with stone, bone, ivory, clay, and wood. During prehistoric times, caves were places of dwelling as well as possible spaces for ritual and communal gathering. Unsurprisingly, caves were the locations of many archeological discoveries owing to their secluded locations and protection from the elements.

Venus Figurines

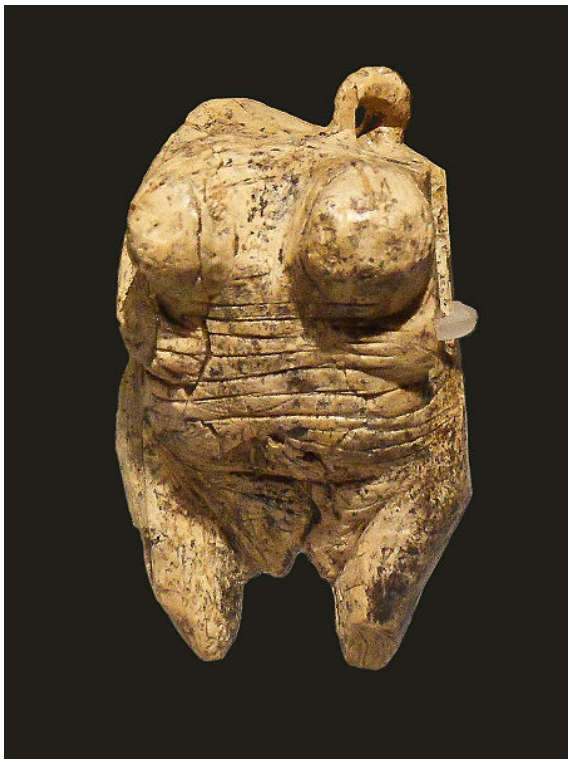
“Venus figurines” is an umbrella term for a number of prehistoric statuettes of women that have been found mostly in Europe, but also in Asia and Siberia, dating from the Upper Paleolithic. These figures are all quite small, between 4 and 25 cm tall, and carved mainly in steatite , limestone , bone, or ivory. These sculptures are collectively described as “Venus” figurines in reference to the Roman goddess of beauty, as early historians assumed they represented an ideal of beauty from the time.

The Venus figurines have sometimes been interpreted as representing a mother goddess; the abundance of such female imagery has led some to believe that Upper Paleolithic (and later Neolithic) societies had a female-centered religion and a female-dominated society. Various other explanations for the purpose of the figurines have been proposed, such as the hypothesis that the figurines were created as self-portraits of actual women.

Stylistic Features

Venus figures are characterized by shared stylistic features, such as an oval shape, large belly, wide-set thighs, large breasts, and the typical absence of arms and feet. Hundreds of these sculptures have been found both in open-air settlements and caves. The Venus

of Hohle Fels, a 6 cm figure of a woman carved from a mammoth ‘s tusk, was discovered in Germany’s Hohle Fels cave in 2008 and represents one of the earliest found sculptures of this type.



The Venus of Hohle Fels: The Venus of Hohle Fels, a 6 cm figure of a woman carved from a mammoth’s tusk, was discovered in Germany’s Hohle Fels cave in 2008 and represents one of the earliest found sculptures of this type.

Additionally, the Venus of Willendorf is a particularly famous example of the Venus figure. While initially thought to be symbols of fertility, or of a fertility goddess, the true significance of the Venus figure remains obscure, as does much of prehistoric art.



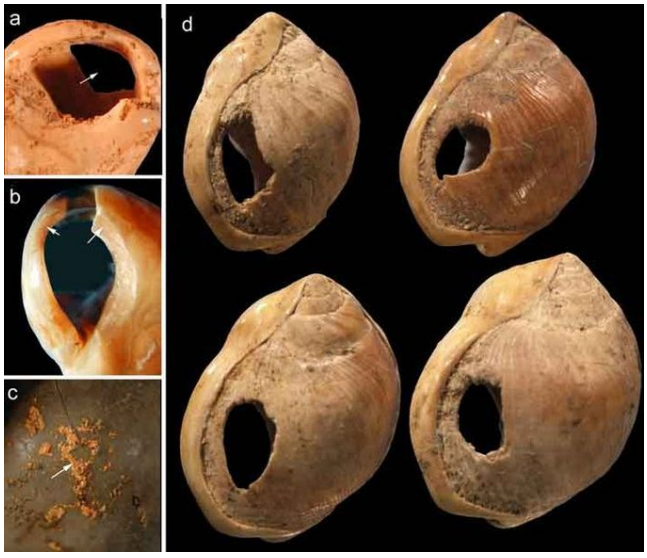
The Venus of Willendorf: The Venus of Willendorf is a particularly famous example of the Venus figure.

Mask of La Roche-Cotard

It is also known as the “Mousterian Protofigurine,” the Mask of La Roche-Cotard is an artifact from the Paleolithic period that was discovered in the entrance of a cave named La Roche-Cotard, on the banks of the Loire River in France. Constructed using flint and bone, the stone is believed to represent the upper part of a face, while the bone has been interpreted as eyes. While some archaeologists question whether this artifact does indeed represent a rendered face, it is typically regarded as an example of Paleolithic figurative artistic expression.

Blombos Cave

Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Cave of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art. Made from ochre , the stones are engraved with abstract patterns, while the beads are made from Nassarius shells. While they are simpler than prehistoric cave paintings found in Europe, some scholars believe these engraved stones represent the earliest known artworks, dating from 75,000 years ago.



Nassarius shell beads from the Blombos Cave: Discoveries of engraved stones and beads in the Blombos Cave of South Africa has led some archaeologists to believe that early *Homo sapiens* were capable of abstraction and the production of symbolic art.

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2.3: The Mesolithic Period

Mesolithic Art

During the Mesolithic period, humans developed cave paintings, engravings, and ceramics to reflect their daily lives.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Mesolithic period with the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age is an archaeological term used to describe specific cultures that fall between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic Periods.
- The use of small chipped stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets are the key factor to identify the Mesolithic as a prehistoric period.
- Mesolithic people likely continued the art forms developed during the Upper Paleolithic Period, including cave paintings and engravings , small sculptural artifacts , and early megalithic architecture.
- The most extensive collection of Mesolithic rock art has been found on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. These paintings consist of human and animal figures in scenes of hunting and early agricultural activities, such as collecting honey.
- A Mesolithic pendant excavated in England bears striking similarities with contemporary pendants produced in Denmark. Whether this points to intercultural contact or travel across vast expanses is unclear.

Key Terms

- **Microlith**:A small stone tool.
- **Mesolithic**:A prehistoric period that lasted between 10,000 and 5,000 BC.
- **Megalith**:A construction involving one or several roughly hewn stone slabs of great size.

The Mesolithic Period, or Middle Stone Age, is an archaeological term describing specific cultures that fall between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic Periods. While the start and end dates of the Mesolithic Period vary by geographical region, it dated approximately from 10,000 BCE to 8,000 BCE.

The Paleolithic was an age of purely hunting and gathering, but toward the Mesolithic period the development of agriculture contributed to the rise of permanent settlements. The later Neolithic period is distinguished by the domestication of plants and animals. Some Mesolithic people continued with intensive hunting, while others practiced the initial stages of domestication. Some Mesolithic settlements were villages of huts , others walled cities.

The type of tool used is a distinguishing factor among these cultures. Mesolithic tools were generally composite devices manufactured with small chipped stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets. The Paleolithic utilized more primitive stone treatments, and the Neolithic mainly used polished rather than chipped stone tools.



Backed edge bladelet: Mesolithic tools were generally composite devices manufactured with small chipped small stone tools called microliths and retouched bladelets.

Art from this period reflects the change to a warmer climate and adaptation to a relatively sedentary lifestyle, population size, and consumption of plants—all evidence of the transition to agriculture and eventually the Neolithic period. Still, food was not always available everywhere, and Mesolithic populations were often forced to become migrating hunters and settle in rock shelters. It is difficult to find a unique type of artistic production during the Mesolithic Period, and art forms developed during the Upper Paleolithic (the latest period of the Paleolithic) were likely continued. These included cave paintings and engravings, small sculptural artifacts, and early architecture.

Mesolithic Rock Art

A number of notable Mesolithic rock art sites exist on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. The art consists of small painted figures of humans and animals, which are the most advanced and widespread surviving from this period in Europe and possibly worldwide. Notably, this collection is the largest concentration of such art in Europe. The human figure is frequently the main theme in painted scenes. When in the same scene as animals, the human runs towards them. Hunting scenes are the most common, but there are also scenes of battle and dancing, and possibly agricultural tasks and managing domesticated animals. In some scenes gathering honey is shown, most famously at Cuevas de la Araña en Bicorp.



The Man of Bicorp: The Man of Bicorp holding onto lianas to gather honey from a beehive as depicted on an 8000-year-old cave painting near Valencia, Spain.

The painting known as *The Dancers of Cogul* is a good example of the depiction of movement in static art. In this scene, nine women are depicted, something new in art of this region, some painted in black and others in red. They are shown dancing around a male figure with abnormally large phallus, a figure that was rare if not absent in Paleolithic art. Along with humans, several animals, including a dead deer or buck impaled by an arrow or atlatl, are depicted.



Dance of the Cogul: El Cogul, Catalonia, Spain.

The native Mesolithic populations were slow in assimilating the agricultural way of life, starting solely with the use of ceramics . It took a thousand years into the Neolithic period before they adopted animal husbandry (which became especially important to them) and plant cultivation. When they eventually developed interest in the more fertile areas utilized by the late Danubian cultures, they compelled the Danubian farmers to fortify their settlements.

Findings from Archaeological Excavations

Excavation of some megalithic monuments in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, and France has revealed evidence of ritual activity, sometimes involving architecture, during the Mesolithic Period. One megalith (circa 9350 BCE), found submerged in the Strait of Sicily, was over 39 feet long and weighing nearly 530,000 pounds. Its purpose remains unknown. In some cases, however, megalith monuments are so far removed in time from their successors that continuity is unlikely. In other cases, the early dates or the exact character of activity are controversial.

An engraved shale pendant unearthed in Star Carr, England in 2015 is believed to be the oldest Mesolithic art form on the island of Great Britain. Engraved jewelry from this period outside of Scandinavia is extremely rare. Although the hole in the upper angle of the rock suggests that it was worn, archaeologists are currently analyzing the object to determine whether this was the case. The incised patterns are similar to those on pendants found in Denmark, which suggests contact with cultures on the continent or migration from the continent to Britain. However, these possibilities remain under investigation.



Star Carr pendant: The incised lines bear striking similarities to similar objects found in Denmark.

In northeastern Europe, Siberia, and certain southern European and North African sites, a “Ceramic Mesolithic” can be distinguished between 7,000-3,850 BCE. Russian archaeologists prefer to describe such pottery-making cultures as Neolithic, even though farming is absent. These pottery-making Mesolithic cultures were peripheral to the sedentary Neolithic cultures. They created a distinctive type of pottery with point or knob base and flared rims, manufactured by methods not used by the Neolithic farmers. Though each area of Mesolithic ceramics developed an individual style , common features suggest a single point of origin. The earliest manifestation of this type of pottery may have been around Lake Baikal in Siberia.

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2.4: The Neolithic Period

Neolithic Art

Art in the Neolithic Near East owes its existence to developments in agriculture, architecture, and other areas.

Learning Objectives

Outline the phases of the Neolithic period in the Near East and identify characteristics of each

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neolithic is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.
- Neolithic culture in the Near East is separated into three phases based on agricultural developments, advances in architecture, and the production of pottery.
- The temple located in southeastern Turkey at Gobekli Tepe circa 10,000 BCE is the oldest human-made place of worship. Among the architectural finds are pillars decorated with reliefs of animals.
- The settlement at ‘Ain Ghazal in present-day Jordan is best known as the earliest culture to produce large-scale human figures. Lacking details beyond the face and intended to be viewed only from the front, these likely served funerary purposes.
- Terra cotta pottery and fertility figures were found at Tell-Halaf in northern Syria and Tell-al-Ubaid on the coast of the Persian Gulf.

Key Terms

- **domesticated**:Tame, naturalized.

The Neolithic or New Stone Age was a period in human development from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE. Considered the last part of the Stone Age, the Neolithic period is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.

The ancient Near East was home to the earliest civilizations within a region roughly corresponding to the modern Middle East, including Mesopotamia , ancient Egypt, ancient Iran, the Levant, and the Arabian peninsula. Sites in these locations dating to approximately 9500 BCE are considered the beginning of the Neolithic period.

Neolithic culture in the Near East is separated into three phases: Neolithic 1 (Pre-Pottery Neolithic A), Neolithic 2 (Pre-Pottery Neolithic B), and Neolithic 3 (Pottery Neolithic).

Neolithic 1 (PPNA)



View of Gobekli Tepe: Situated in the southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, this is recognized as the oldest known human-made religious structure.

The Neolithic 1 phase likely began with a temple in southeastern Turkey at Gobekli Tepe circa 10,000 BCE. The structure is as the oldest known human-made place of worship. It features seven stone circles covering 25 acres that contain limestone pillars carved with animals, insects, and birds, believed to serve as roof supports. The complexity of the temple and the effort involved in its construction imply it was built by long-term settlers. The major advances of the Neolithic 1 phase revolve around developments in farming practices, such as harvesting, seed selection, and the domestication of plants and animals.

At the oldest layer of Gobekli Tepe, T-shaped mud brick pillars are decorated with abstract , enigmatic pictograms and carved animal reliefs. The pictograms may represent commonly understood sacred symbols known from Neolithic cave paintings elsewhere. The reliefs depict mammals such as lions, bulls, boars, foxes, gazelles, and donkeys; snakes and other reptiles; arthropods, such as insects and arachnids; and birds, particularly vultures. The deceased were likely exposed for consumption by vultures and other carrion birds.



Pillar with low reliefs of what are believed to be a bull, fox, and crane.: Although pillars with animal reliefs are abundant in Gobleki Tepe, very few depictions of human and humanoid figures have been found.

When the edifice was constructed, the surrounding country was likely forested and capable of sustaining this variety of wildlife, before millennia of settlement and cultivation led to the near-Dust Bowl conditions prevalent today.

Neolithic 2 (PPNB)

The Neolithic 2 began around 8800 BCE and is characterized by settlements built with rectangular mud-brick houses with single or multiple rooms, the greater use of domesticated animals, and advancements in tools. These developments in architecture point to settlement in permanent locations. While mud brick is perishable, the investment of time and effort in the construction of houses indicates the desire to remain in a single location for the long term. Burial findings and the preservation of skulls of the dead, often plastered with mud to create facial features, suggest an ancestor cult.

A settlement of 3,000 inhabitants was found in the outskirts of Amman, Jordan. Considered to be one of the largest prehistoric settlements in the Near East, ‘Ain Ghazal was continuously inhabited from approximately 7,250 – 5,000 BCE. This settlement produced what are believed to be the earliest large-scale human figures. Modeled from plaster, these consist of full statues and busts, some of which are two-headed. Great effort was put into modeling the heads, with wide-open eyes and bitumen-outlined irises. The statues represent men, women, and children. Women are recognizable by features resembling breasts and slightly enlarged bellies, but neither male nor female sexual characteristics are emphasized, and none of the statues have genitals. Only the faces have detail.



Figures from ‘Ain Ghazal (c. 7,500-5,000 BCE): Plaster and bitumen. Amman, Jordan.

Although they were produced to be free-standing, they were likely intended to be viewed only from the front, hence their disproportionate flatness. The manufacture of the statues would not have permitted them to last long. Since they were buried in pristine condition, they may have been produced for the purpose of intentional burial and never been displayed.

Neolithic 3 (PN)

Beginning around 6400 BCE, this period is characterized by the emergence of distinctive cultures throughout the Fertile Crescent , such as the Halafian (Turkey, Syria, Northern Mesopotamia) and Ubaid (Southern Mesopotamia).

Pottery was first produced and used in this era, a direct effect of agriculture and the permanent settlements that arose as a result. No longer nomadic , individuals used ceramic vessels to store the food they grew or raised and water collected from local sources. Additionally, the need arose for plates, cups, and additional objects used in the consumption of food and beverages.

Halafian Period

Tell Halaf is an archaeological site in northeastern Syria near the Turkish border, that flourished from about 6100 to 5400 BCE. It was the first site of Neolithic culture, subsequently dubbed Halafian culture, characterized by glazed pottery painted with geometric and animal designs.



View of the excavated ruins at Tell Halaf, Syria: It was the first find of the Neolithic culture, subsequently dubbed the Halaf culture.

The best known, most characteristic pottery of Tell Halaf, called Halaf ware, was produced by specialist potters. It was sometimes painted with one or two colors (the latter called polychrome) with geometric and animal motifs . Other types of Halaf pottery include unpainted cookware and ware with burnished surfaces.

There are many theories about the development of this distinctive pottery style . The polychromatic painted Halaf pottery has been proposed to be a “trade pottery”—pottery produced for export—however, the predominance of locally produced painted pottery in

all areas of Halaf sites calls that theory into question. That said, Halaf pottery has been found in other parts of northern Mesopotamia and at many sites in Anatolia (Turkey) suggesting that it was widely used in the region.



Example of Halafian pottery: These were produced by specialist potters. Some were painted with geometric and animal motifs.

In addition to ceramics, the Halafian culture produced female figurines of partially baked clay and stone. Because of the prominence of their breasts and abdomens and subordination of their facial features, they are likely fertility figures. As the bands on the figure below suggest, these figurines were painted to some extent.



Tell Halaf fertility figure (c. 5,000 BCE): This statuette is seated with legs extended, her arms cradling her protruding breasts. Bands of pigment emphasize the full, rounded forms of her limbs and suggest facial features, a necklace, and loincloth.

Ubaid Period

The Ubaid culture flourished from about 6500 to 3800 BCE in Mesopotamia and is characterized by large village settlements that employed multi-room rectangular mud-brick houses. The appearance of the first temples in Mesopotamia, as well as greenish pottery decorated with geometric designs in brown or black paint, are important developments of this period. Tell-al-Ubaid is a low, relatively small mound site that extends about two meters above ground level. The lower level was a site where large amounts of Ubaid pottery, kilns , and a cemetery were discovered.



Pottery from the Late Ubaid period: Ubaid-style pottery has been found at various sites along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf.

Neolithic Monuments

Neolithic art in Western Europe is best represented by its megalithic (large stone) monuments.

Learning Objectives

Describe Neolithic cultural characteristics in Western Europe, particularly passage tombs and megaliths particular.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neolithic or New Stone Age was a period in human development from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE.
- Stonehenge and Avebury, both located in the county of Wiltshire in England, are the best known megalithic henges . Both were built in stages over several centuries. Their exact purposes remain a matter of debate.
- Passage tombs or graves consist of narrow passages made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers been covered in earth or stone. A common layout is the cruciform passage grave .
- The carvings at Newgrange and Knowth are separated into ten categories consisting of curvilinear and rectilinear forms . The monuments at both sites are aligned with the solstices and equinoxes.
- The megalithic temples in Ggantija, Malta, have been theorized as possible sites of a fertility cult due to numerous figurines found on site.

Key Terms

- **rectilinear**:In a straight line.
- **henge**:A prehistoric enclosure in the form of an arc, defined by a raised circular bank and a circular ditch inside the bank, with one or more entrances to the enclosed open space.
- **trilithon**:A structure consisting of two stone pillars supporting a horizontal stone.
- **cruciform**:Having the shape of a cross.
- **serpentiform**:Having the form of a serpent.
- **curvilinear**:Formed by curved lines.
- **passage grave**:A burial chamber consisting of a narrow passage made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone.

Also known as the New Stone Age, the Neolithic period in human development lasted from around 10,000 BCE until 3,000 BCE. Considered the last part of the Stone Age, the Neolithic is signified by a progression in behavioral and cultural characteristics including the cultivation of wild and domestic crops and the use of domesticated animals.

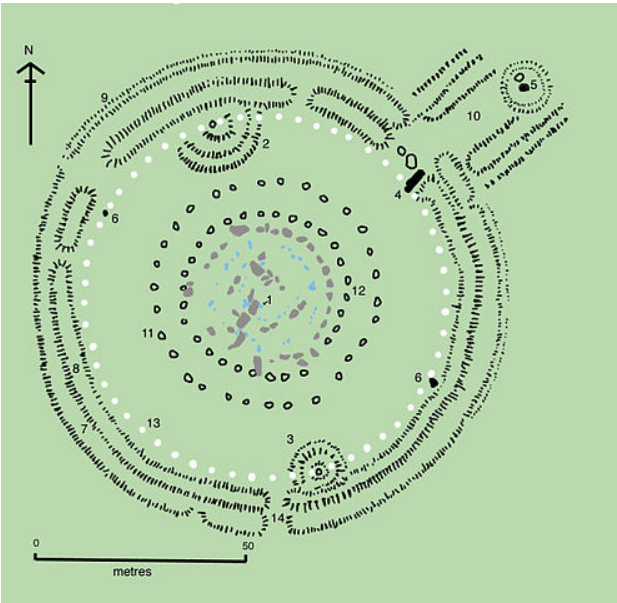
Agrarian societies first appeared in southeast Europe in the seventh millennium BCE. Through migration and cultural diffusion, Neolithic traditions spread to northwestern Europe by around 4500 BCE. The development of agriculture allowed groups of people to form larger permanent settlements in single locations, as opposed to living as nomadic hunter gatherers. Permanent settlements resulted in the construction of megalithic monuments requiring considerable time and effort that was unavailable to nomads .

Megalithic Henges

Neolithic societies produced female and animal statues, engravings , and elaborate pottery decoration. In Western Europe, though, this period is best represented by the megalithic (large stone) monuments and passage tomb structures found from Malta to Portugal, through France and Germany, and across southern England to most of Wales and Ireland.

Stonehenge

Perhaps the best known megalithic henge is Stonehenge, located on Salisbury Plain in the county of Wiltshire in south central England. Archaeologists believe it was constructed from 3000 BCE to 2000 BCE. The surrounding circular earth bank and ditch, which constitute the earliest phase of the monument, have been dated to about 3100 BCE. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the first bluestones in the innermost ring of Stonehenge were raised between 2400 and 2200 BCE, although they may have been at the site as early as 3000 BCE.



Plan of Stonehenge: Key to plan: (1) The Altar Stone, (2) barrow without a burial, (3) “barrows” without burials, (4) the fallen Slaughter Stone, (5) the Heel Stone, (6) two of originally four Station Stones, (7) ditch, (8) inner bank, (9) outer bank, (10) the Avenue, (11) ring of 30 pits called the Y Holes, (12) ring of 29 pits called the Z Holes, (13) circle of 56 pits, known as the Aubrey holes, (14) smaller southern entrance.

Although human remains have been found at the site, archaeologists are uncertain whether the site served funerary purposes, ritual purposes, or both. Its alignments with the sunrise of the summer solstice and sunset of the winter solstice present the possibility that the site served as a rudimentary astronomical calendar to help early agrarian societies acclimate to the approaching growing season and harvest.



Stonehenge: Salisbury Plain, England.

Even the smallest bluestones weigh several tons each. These stones, so-called because they appear blue when wet, were quarried approximately 150 miles away in the Prescelli Mountains in southwest Wales. Even more impressive, the quarrying and transport of the stones took place without the aid of the wheel, requiring a sophisticated method of transport and construction involving felled trees and earthen mounds. The larger Sarcen stones that form the post-and-lintel ring and he free-standing trilithons were quarried approximately 25 miles to the north of Salisbury Plain, requiring the same transport system of felled trees and earthen mounds.

Avebury

One of the best known prehistoric sites in the United Kingdom, Avebury contains the largest stone circle in Europe. Located in the same county as Stonehenge, Avebury lies north of the better-known site. Constructed over several hundred years in the third millennium BCE, the monument comprises a large henge with a large outer stone circle and two separate smaller stone circles situated inside the center of the monument. Its original purpose is unknown, although archaeologists believe that it was likely used for ritual or ceremony . The Avebury monument was part of a larger prehistoric landscape containing several older monuments.



Avebury: Part of the south inner circle.

The chronology of Avebury's construction is unclear. It was not designed as a single monument but was the result of various projects undertaken at different times during late prehistory . Experts date the construction of the central cove to 3,000 BCE, the inner stone circle to 2,900 BCE, the outer circle and henge to 2,600 BCE, and the avenues to 2,400 BCE. The construction of Avebury and Stonehenge indicate that a stable agrarian economy had developed in this region of England by 4000 to 3500 BCE.

Passage Tombs

Passage tombs or graves consist of narrow passages made of large stones and one or multiple burial chambers covered in earth or stone. Megaliths were commonly used in the construction of passage tombs and typically date to the Neolithic. A common layout is the cruciform passage grave, characterized by a cross-shaped structure.

Newgrange, Ireland

Newgrange is part of the Neolithic *Bru na Boinne* complex, a collection of passage tomb mounds built around 3200 BCE and located in County Meath, Ireland.



View of Newgrange, Ireland: Newgrange is more than five hundred years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt and predates Stonehenge by about a thousand years.

The Newgrange monument is comprised of a large mound built of alternating layers of earth and stones, covered with growing grass and with flat white quartz stones studded around the circumference. The mound covers 4500 square meters of ground . Within, a passage stretches through the structure ending at three small chambers.

Newgrange contains various examples of abstract Neolithic art carved onto its rocks. These are separated into 10 categories consisting of curvilinear forms like circles, spirals, arcs, serpentiforms, and dot-in-circles, as well as rectilinear examples such as chevrons, lozenges, radials, parallel lines , and offsets.

There is no agreement as to what the site was used for, but it has been speculated that it had some form of religious significance due to its alignment with the rising sun which floods the stone room with light on the winter solstice.

Knowth, Ireland

Knowth is a Neolithic passage grave and monument located in the valley of the River Boyne in Ireland. Located in close proximity to similar sites such as Newgrange, Knowth consists of one large cruciform passage tomb and 17 smaller satellite tombs, estimated to date between 2500 and 2000 BCE.



View of the eastern passage, Knowth, Ireland: The east-west orientation of the passages at Knowth suggests astronomical alignment with the equinoxes.

Additionally, the monument contains three recesses and basin stones into which the cremated remains of the dead were placed. The right recess is larger and more elaborately decorated than the others, a typical trait of Irish passage graves. The reason, however, remains unknown. Many monuments at Knowth were megalithic tombs, and archaeologists speculate that most have religious significance.

Knowth is reputed to have approximately one-third of all megalithic art in Western Europe carved into its rock faces. Typical motifs include spirals, lozenges, and serpentiform markings. Much of the art was carved on the backs of stones, a phenomenon known as hidden art. There are many theories about the function of hidden art, including a desire to hide images or the recycling of stones in order to use both sides.

Ggantija, Malta

The megalithic temple complexes of Ggantija on the Mediterranean islands of Gozo and Malta are notable for their gigantic Neolithic structures dating to 3,600 BCE.



Entrance to megalithic temple at Ggantija, Malta: The Ġgantija temples are older than the pyramids of Egypt and have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Situated at the end of the Xanghra plateau and facing the southeast, the temples are built in a clover-leaf shape, with inner facing blocks marking the outline which was then filled with rubble. They lead to a series of semi-circular apses connected by a central passage.

The temples have been theorized as the possible site of a fertility cult due to numerous figurines found on site. The Hypogeum of Hal-Saflieni, located in Pola, Malta, is a subterranean structure excavated circa 2500 BCE, the only prehistoric underground temple in the world, showing a degree of stone artistry unique to the Maltese islands.

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2.5: The Bronze Age

Art of the Bronze Age

The Bronze Age saw the birth of civilization and the development of advanced cultures in Europe, the Near East, and East Asia.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the art of the Bronze age found in the Ancient Near East, East Asia, and Western Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bronze Age is characterized by the use of copper and bronze as the chief hard materials in the manufacturing of implements and weapons.
- The Bronze Age is the earliest period for which we have direct written accounts, since the invention of writing coincides with its early beginnings.
- Cultures in the Near East and China developed the first systems of writing.
- Burials in the British Isles shifted from the communal interments of the Neolithic Age to more individual burials in barrows and cists .
- The Bronze Age is marked by widespread migrations and trade, especially across Europe and in the Mediterranean region.

Key Terms

- **barrow**:A mound of earth and stones raised over a grave or graves.
- **cist**:A small stone-built coffin-like box used to hold the bodies of the dead.
- **cairn**:A human-made pile of stones.
- **smelt**:Production of metal—especially iron—from ore in a process that involves the chemical reduction of melted metal compounds into purified metal.
- **metallurgy**:The science of metals: their extraction from ores, purification and alloying, heat treatment, and working.
- **civilization**:An organized culture encompassing many communities, often on the scale of a nation or a people; a stage or system of social, political, or technical development.

The Bronze Age is part of the three-age system of archaeology that divides human technological prehistory into three periods: the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age . The Bronze Age spanned from 3,300 to 1,200 BCE and is characterized by the use of copper and its alloy bronze as the chief hard materials in the manufacturing of implements and weapons. This period ended with further advancements in metallurgy , such as the ability to smelt iron ore.



Bronze castings: Assorted bronze Celtic castings dating from the Bronze Age, found as part of a cache, probably intended for recycling. Somerset County Museum, Taunton, UK.

The Bronze Age is the earliest period for which we have direct written accounts, since the invention of writing coincides with its early beginnings. Bronze Age cultures differed in development of the first writing. According to archaeological evidence, cultures in Egypt (hieroglyphs), the Near East (cuneiform), and the Mediterranean, with the Mycenaean culture (Linear B), had viable writing systems.



Linear B inscription: This fragment from the Mycenaean palace of Pylos contains information on the distribution of bovine, pig, and deer hides to shoe and saddle-makers. Linear B was the earliest Greek writing, dating from 1450 BCE, an adaptation of the earlier Minoan Linear A script. The script is made up of 90 syllabic signs, ideograms, and numbers. This and other tablets were fortuitously preserved when they were baked in the fire that destroyed the palace around 1200 BCE. It is on display at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

The Art of the Ancient Near East

Cultures in the ancient Near East (often called the Cradle of Civilization) practiced intensive year-round agriculture, developed a writing system, invented the potter's wheel, created a centralized government, law codes , and empires, and introduced social stratification, slavery, and organized warfare. Societies in the region laid the foundations for astronomy and mathematics.

From Mesopotamia came the empires of Sumeria, Babylon, and Assyria. From the fertile floodplains of the Nile emerged the Egyptians, with their great monuments and sophisticated society. From the Iranian Plateau came the Medes and then the Persians, who nearly succeeded in uniting the entire civilized world under one empire.

In Mesopotamian Babylonia, an abundance of clay and lack of stone led to greater use of mud brick. Babylonian temples were massive structures of crude brick supported by buttresses , with drains to remove rain. The use of brick led to the early development of the pilaster , column , frescoes , and enameled tiles. Walls were brilliantly colored and sometimes plated with zinc or gold, as well as with tiles. Painted terra cotta cones for torches were also embedded in the plaster. In Babylonia, three-

dimensional figures often replaced bas-relief—the earliest examples being the Statues of Gudea, which are realistic if somewhat clumsy. The paucity of stone in Babylonia made every pebble precious and led to perfection in the art of gem cutting.



Statue of Gudea: Neo-Sumerian period, circa 2,090 BCE.

In Ancient Egypt , the Bronze Age began in the Protodynastic period circa 3,150 BCE. The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization, such as art, architecture, and many aspects of religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic period and lasted until about 2,686 BCE. During this period, the pantheon of the gods was established and the illustrations and proportions of their human figures developed; and Egyptian imagery , symbolism , and basic hieroglyphic writing were created. During the Old Kingdom, from 2686-2181 BCE, the Egyptian pyramids and other more natural sculptures were built. The first-known portraits were also completed. At the end of the Old Kingdom, the Egyptian style moved toward formalized seminude figures with long bodies and large eyes.



Reverse and obverse sides of Narmer Palette, this facsimile on display at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada: The Narmer Palette, named after Egyptian King Narmer, is a significant Egyptian archeological relic dating from about the 3,100 BCE, containing some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions ever found.

The Art of East Asia

In the East, civilization emerged in the Indus River valley, and from the Yellow River came the beginnings of Chinese civilization. Chinese bronze artifacts are generally either utilitarian , like spear points or adze heads, or ” ritual bronzes,” more elaborate versions of everyday vessels in precious materials of everyday vessels, tools, and weapons. In addition to numerous large sacrificial tripods known as dings in Chinese, there are many other distinct shapes. Ritual bronzes were highly decorated with taotie motifs , including highly stylized animal faces, in three main types: demons, symbolic animals, and abstract symbols. Many large bronzes also bear cast inscriptions that comprise the bulk of surviving early Chinese writing and have helped historians and archaeologists piece together the history of China.



Ritual cooking vessel: China, Shang or Zhou dynasty bronze, c. 1000 BCE. Taotie – a mask of an imaginary animal with eyes, horns, snout, and jaw. Motif common in Shang and early Zhou dynasties.

The Art of Western Europe

The Atlantic Bronze Age is the period of approximately 1300 to 700 BCE that includes different cultures in Portugal, Andalusia, Galicia, and the British Isles. It is marked by economic and cultural exchange. Commercial contacts extended to Denmark and the

Mediterranean. The Atlantic Bronze Age was defined by a number of distinct regional centers of metal production, unified by a regular maritime exchange of products.



Bronze sword blade (c. 800 BCE): Museum of National Antiques, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France.

In Great Britain, the Bronze Age is dated from around 2,100 to 750 BCE. Migration brought new people to the islands from the continent. Recent tooth enamel isotope research on bodies found in early Bronze Age graves indicate that some of the migrants came from the area of modern Switzerland. Burial of the dead, previously communal, became individual as bodies were interred in barrows and cists covered with cairns.

The greatest quantities of bronze objects in England were discovered in East Cambridgeshire—especially in Isleham, where more than 6,500 pieces were found. Alloying of copper with zinc or tin to make brass or bronze was practiced soon after the discovery of copper. The earliest identified metalworking site (Sigwells, Somerset) is much later, dated by Globular Urn style pottery to approximately the 12th century BCE.

The Bronze Age in Ireland commenced around 2,000 BCE, when copper was alloyed with tin and used primarily in the field of metallurgy. One of the characteristic types of artifact of the Early Bronze Age in Ireland is the flat axe, notably the Ballybeg-type flat axe. Ireland is also known for a large number of Early Bronze Age burials.

Bronze Age Rock Carvings

Petroglyphs, or rock engravings, exist around the world and range in purpose from ritual to communication to narration.

Learning Objectives

Define and describe the different kinds of petroglyphs found around the world

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rock carvings are found worldwide, with the highest concentrations in Africa, Scandinavia, Siberia, southwestern North America and Australia dating between the late Upper Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods, although some date to the Bronze Age .
- The majority of rock carvings were produced in caves or canyons by hunter-gatherers who inhabited the area and typically depicted animals and humans as well as some narrative scenes.
- Traditionally, individual markings are called motifs , while groups of motifs are known as panels.
- Some petroglyphs are thought to be astronomical markers, maps, or other such forms of communication. Carvings in Sweden seem to communicate land boundaries occupied by a specific tribe or clan.
- Common symbols such as the cup-and-ring mark have been found in various locations across Europe. Scholarly theories range from mere coincidence to migration to a common origin of the artists.

Key Terms

- **logogram**:A character or symbol that represents a word or phrase (e.g., a character of the Chinese writing system).

- **motifs**:Individual rock carvings.
- **panels**:Groups of rock carving motifs.
- **geocontourglyph**:A petroglyph that represents land form or surrounding terrain.

Petroglyphs (rock engravings) are images containing pictograms and logograms created by removing part of a rock surface via incising, picking, carving, and/or abrading. Rock carvings are found worldwide, with the highest concentrations in Africa, Scandinavia, Siberia, southwestern North America, and Australia dating between the late Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic periods, approximately 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. However, some carvings date to the Bronze Age. Many rock carvings were produced by hunter-gatherers who inhabited the area and typically depicted animals and humans as well as some narrative scenes.



Petroglyphs in Tanum, Sweden (c. 1700–500 BCE).: Rock carving with the shape of a flock of birds.

Interpretations

Traditionally, individual markings are called *motifs*, while groups of motifs are known as panels. Rock carvings are found across a wide geographical and temporal scope of cultures . Scholars have devised numerous theories to explain their purpose, depending on location, age, and image type.

Some petroglyphs are thought to be astronomical markers, maps, or other such forms of communication. A petroglyph that represents a land form or the surrounding terrain is known as a *geocontourglyph*. Glyphs from the Nordic Bronze Age (c. 1700-500 BCE) seem to refer to a territorial boundary between tribes, in addition to possible religious meaning. It also appears that local or regional dialects from similar or neighboring peoples existed.



Composite photograph of petroglyphs from Häljesta, Sweden (c. 1700–500 BCE): The glyphs have been painted to make them more visible. They have been identified as (top to bottom, left to right): Plowing with oxen (the branch in the farmer's hand is assumed to be part of a fertility ritual), archer/hunter with bow, fishing from a small boat, (middle row) a procession of unknown nature, foot prints, (bottom row) man with dog, typical Scandinavian rock carving ship symbol.

Many researchers have noticed the notable resemblance of different styles of petroglyphs across different continents. This could be mere coincidence, an indication that certain groups of people migrated widely from some initial common area, or indication of a common origin.

One common symbol called the cup-and-ring mark has been found on petroglyphs in the British Isles as well as on the European continent in locations as diverse as Spain, Scandinavia, and Greece. This symbol consists of a concave depression, no more than a

few centimeters in diameter, pecked into a rock surface and often surrounded by concentric circles also etched into the stone. Sometimes a linear channel called a gutter protrudes from the middle.



Laxe dos carballos (fourth-second millennium BCE): Cup-and-ring mark and deer hunting scenes. (The cup-and-ring mark lies to the right of the deer.) Campo Lameiro, Galicia, Spain.

Some scholars have suggested that the cup-and-ring mark was symbolically linked to water, having sacred associations in late prehistoric society. As evidence, they note that a number of the larger cups, referred to as basins, would have collected rain water. They believe that cup-and-ring marks look like the ripples produced when raindrops hit water.

Bronze Age Advancements in Metallurgy

The discovery of bronze through existing metallurgical techniques revolutionized the production of weapons and works of art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the development of metallurgy and how it impacted art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The discovery of bronze , produced by combining copper and tin, was a major advancement in metallurgy during the Bronze Age . A stronger material than its stone and copper predecessors, bronze allowed for the production of more durable weapons, armor, artistic media , and luxury objects.
- Bronze is divided into “classic” and “mild,” consisting of ten percent and six percent tin, respectively. Classic bronze is better suited for casting , while mild bronze is better suited for hammered objects.
- Bronze was originally used in the production of weapons, but artisans soon discovered its use as an artistic medium. Both product categories were highly valued, with hoards of axe blades discovered across Europe.
- Lost wax casting is the oldest method of producing bronze sculptures. *Dancing Girl* from Mohenjodaro is believed to be the oldest cast bronze sculpture.
- The Únětice culture of Central Europe was highly advanced in its metallurgical techniques. Among its most interesting artifacts is the *Nebra Sky Disk*, a hammered object consisting of bronze and gold. It has been interpreted as an astronomical instrument as well as an item of religious significance.

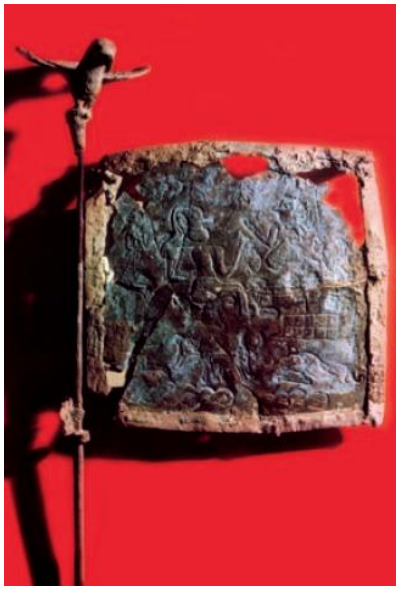
Key Terms

- **metallurgy**:The science and extraction of metals from ores, purification and alloying, heat treatment, and working.

An important development of the Bronze Age was the evolution of metallurgy, which resulted in the discovery of bronze. Certain metals, notably tin, lead and (at a higher temperature) copper, can be recovered from their ores by heating the rocks in a fire or blast furnace, a process known as smelting. The first evidence of this extractive metallurgy dates to Serbian sites from the fifth and sixth millennia BCE.

In approximately the fourth millennium BCE in Sumer, India, and China, it was discovered that combining copper and tin creates a superior metal, an alloy called bronze. This discovery represented the beginning of the Bronze Age, enabling people to create metal objects that were harder than previously possible. Bronze tools, weapons, armor, and building materials such as decorative tiles were more durable than their stone and copper predecessors.

Initially, bronze was made out of copper and arsenic, forming arsenic bronze, or from naturally or artificially mixed ores of copper and arsenic, with the earliest known artifacts coming from the Iranian plateau in the fifth millennium BCE. It was only later, approximately in 3500 BCE, that tin became the major non-copper ingredient of bronze. Tin bronze was superior to arsenic bronze in that the alloying process could be more easily controlled and the resulting alloy was stronger and easier to cast. Furthermore, unlike arsenic, metallic tin and fumes from tin refining are not toxic. In the Bronze Age, two forms of bronze were commonly used. “Classic bronze,” about ten percent tin, was used in casting. “Mild bronze,” about six percent tin, was hammered from ingots to make sheets. Bladed weapons were mostly cast from classic bronze, while helmets and armor were hammered from mild bronze. The flag pictured below was also likely hammered from mild bronze.



Bronze flag (third millennium BCE): Found in Shahdad, Kerman, (now Iran).

In many parts of the world, large hoards of bronze artifacts have been discovered, suggesting that bronze also represented a store of value and an indicator of social status. In Europe large hoards of bronze tools, typically socketed axes with little to no signs of wear, have been found. Axes were the most valued tools of the period.



Socketed axe blades.: A hoard of axes from the Bronze Age found in modern Germany. Archaeological Museum of the state of Brandenburg.

Although bronze was originally used for producing weapons, metal workers soon applied the alloy to the production of art. Among the oldest and most common method of producing bronze sculptures is through the lost wax process, which creates hollow one-of-a-kind sculptures in whatever form the artist chooses. *Dancing Girl* (c. 2500 BCE), from Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley, is perhaps the first bronze statue of the world. Although it is in a standing position, it was named *Dancing Girl* with an assumption of

her profession. This is one of two bronze art works found at Mohenjodaro that show more flexible features when compared to other more formal poses. The girl is naked, wears a number of bangles and a necklace, stands in a naturalistic position with her right hand on her hip, and holds an object in her left hand, which rests against her thigh.



Dancing Girl (c. 2500 BCE): Bronze. 4 1/8 in × 2 in. National Museum, New Delhi.

The Únětice culture arose at the beginning of the Central European Bronze Age (2300-1600 BCE). The culture is distinguished by its characteristic metal objects including ingot torques, flat axes, flat triangular daggers, bracelets with spiral-ends, disk- and paddle-headed pins, and curl rings, which are distributed over a wide area of Central Europe and beyond. An interesting mixed media object from this culture is the *Nebra Sky Disk* (c. 1600 BCE), which consists of a blue-green patina inlaid with gold symbols. These symbols have been interpreted generally as a sun or full moon, a lunar crescent , and stars (including a cluster interpreted as the Pleiades). Two golden arcs along the sides, marking the angle between the solstices, were added later. A final addition was another arc at the bottom surrounded with multiple strokes (of uncertain meaning, variously interpreted as a solar barge with numerous oars, as the Milky Way, or as a rainbow). Likely produced through hammering, the disk is possibly an astronomical instrument as well as an item of religious significance.



Nebra Sky Disk (c. 1600 BCE): Bronze and gold. 30 cm diameter. Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 3: Art of the Ancient Near East

3.1: Mesopotamia
3.2: Assyria
3.3: Neo-Babylonia
3.4: Persia

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3.1: Mesopotamia

The Mesopotamian Cultures

Sumer was an ancient Chalcolithic civilization that saw its artistic styles change throughout different periods in its history.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the historical importance of the various civilizations that existed in Mesopotamia

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Eridu economy produced abundant food, which allowed its inhabitants to settle in one location and form a labor force specializing in diverse arts and crafts.
- Writing produced during the early Sumerian period suggest the abundance of pottery and other artistic traditions.
- Elements of the early Sumerian culture spread through a large area of the Near and Middle East.
- The Sumerian city states rose to power during the prehistorical Ubaid and Uruk periods.

Key Terms

- **theocratic**:A form of government in which a deity is officially recognized as the civil ruler. Official policy is governed by officials regarded as divinely guided, or is pursuant to the doctrine of a particular religion or religious group.
- **casting**:A sculptural process in which molten material (usually metal) is poured into a mold, allowed to cool and harden, and become a solid object.
- **Cuneiform**:One of the earliest known forms of written expression that began as a system of pictographs. It emerged in Sumer around the 30th century BC, with predecessors reaching into the late 4th millennium (the Uruk IV period).
- **Chalcolithic**:Also known as the Copper Age, a phase of the Bronze Age in which the addition of tin to copper to form bronze during smelting remained yet unknown. The Copper Age was originally defined as a transition between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age.

Sumer was an ancient civilization in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages. Although the historical records in the region do not go back much further than ca. 2900 BCE, modern historians believe that Sumer was first settled between ca. 4500 and 4000 BCE by people who may or may not have spoken the Sumerian language. These people, now called the “Ubaidians,” were the first to drain the marshes for agriculture; develop trade; and establish industries including weaving, leatherwork, metalwork , masonry, and pottery.

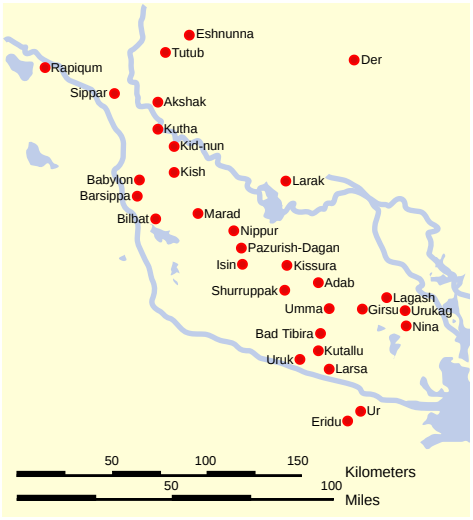
The Sumerian city of Eridu, which at that time bordered the Persian Gulf, is believed to be the world’s first city. Here, three separate cultures fused—the peasant Ubaidian farmers, the nomadic Semitic-speaking pastoralists (farmers who raise livestock), and fisher folk. The surplus of storable food created by this economy allowed the region’s population to settle in one place, instead of migrating as hunter-gatherers. It also allowed for a much greater population density, which required an extensive labor force and a division of labor with many specialized arts and crafts.

An early form of wedge-shaped writing called cuneiform developed in the early Sumerian period. During this time, cuneiform and pictograms suggest the abundance of pottery and other artistic traditions. In addition to the production of vessels , clay was also used to make tablets for inscribing written documents. Metal also served various purposes during the early Sumerian period. Smiths used a form of casting to create the blades for daggers. On the other hand, softer metals like copper and gold could be hammered into the forms of plates, necklaces, and collars.



Stele of the Vultures: Battle formations on a fragment of the Stele of the Vultures. Example of Sumerian pictorial cuneiform writing.

By the late fourth millennium BCE, Sumer was divided into about a dozen independent city-states delineated by canals and other boundary makers. At each city center stood a temple dedicated to the particular patron god or goddess of the city. Priestly governors ruled over these temples and were intimately tied to the city's religious rites.



Sumer: Map of the Cities of Sumer.

The Ubaid Period

The Ubaid period is marked by a distinctive style of painted pottery, as seen in the example below, produced domestically on a slow wheel. This style eventually spread throughout the region. During this time, the first settlement in southern Mesopotamia was established at Eridu by farmers who first pioneered irrigation agriculture. Eridu remained an important religious center even after nearby Ur surpassed it in size.



Ubaid pottery

The Uruk Period

The transition from the Ubaid period to the Uruk period is marked by a gradual shift to a great variety of unpainted pottery mass-produced by specialists on fast wheels. The trough below is an example of pottery from this period.



Uruk trough: The unpainted surface of this trough marks it as a production of the Uruk period.

By the time of the Uruk period (ca. 4100–2900 BCE), the volume of trade goods transported along the canals and rivers of southern Mesopotamia facilitated the rise of many large, stratified , temple-centered cities where centralized administrations employed specialized workers. Artifacts of the Uruk civilization have been found over a wide area—from the Taurus Mountains in Turkey, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and as far east as Central Iran. The Uruk civilization, exported by Sumerian traders and colonists, had an effect on all surrounding peoples, who gradually developed their own comparable, competing economies and cultures.

Sumerian cities during the Uruk period were probably theocratic and likely headed by priest-kings (*ensis*), assisted by a council of elders, including both men and women. The later Sumerian pantheon (gods and goddesses) was likely modeled upon this political structure. There is little evidence of institutionalized violence or professional soldiers during the Uruk period. Towns generally lacked fortified walls, suggesting little, if any, need for defense. During this period, Uruk became the most urbanized city in the world, surpassing for the first time 50,000 inhabitants.

Gilgamesh

The earliest king authenticated through archaeological evidence is Enmebaragesi of Kish, whose name is also mentioned in the Gilgamesh epic (ca. 2100 BCE)—leading to the suggestion that Gilgamesh himself might have been a historical king of Uruk. As the *Epic of Gilgamesh* shows, the second millennium BCE was associated with increased violence. Cities became walled and increased in size as undefended villages in southern Mesopotamia disappeared.

Ceramics in Mesopotamia

The invention of the potter's wheel in the fourth millennium BCE led to several stylistic shifts and varieties in form of Mesopotamian ceramics.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate Ubaid pottery from later styles in Mesopotamian ceramics

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The invention and evolution of the potter's wheel allowed individuals to produce vessels at increasing speeds and in increasing numbers.
- Ubaid pottery was more decorative and unique than Uruk pottery.
- As ceramics evolved, shapes and sizes of clay objects became more varied.
- Clay could also be used for writing tablets that could be fired, if the owner believed the text was important.

Key Terms

- **ceramics**:The craft of making objects from clay.
- **throwing**:Shaping clay on a potter's wheel.
- **stylus**:A writing implement that incises lines into surfaces, such as clay.
- **kiln**:A special kind of oven used for firing ceramic objects at high temperatures.

Although ceramics developed in East Asia c. 20,000-10,000 BCE, the practice of throwing arose with the invention of the potter's wheel in Mesopotamia around the fourth millennium BCE. The earliest clay vessels date to the Chalcolithic Era, which is divided into the Ubaid (5000-4000 BCE) and Uruk (4000-3100 BCE) periods.

The Chalcolithic Era

The Ubaid period is marked by a distinctive style of fine quality painted pottery which spread throughout Mesopotamia. Ceramists produced vases, bowls, and small jars domestically on slow wheels, painting unique abstract designs on the fired clay.



Vase from the Late Ubaid Period, 4500-4000 BCE: A pottery jar from the Late Ubaid Period on display in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Experts differentiate the Ubaid period from the Uruk period by the style of pottery produced in each era. During the Uruk period, the potter's wheel advanced to allow for faster speeds. As such, ceramists could produce pottery more quickly, leading to the mass production of standardized, unpainted styles of vessels.

The Akkiadian Empire

As the Akkadian Empire overtook the Sumerian city-states , ceramists continued to produce bowls, vases, jars, and other objects in a variety of shapes and sizes. Like Uruk pottery, the surfaces of these objects were left unpainted, although some vessels appear to

have a form of abstract reliefs on the surface. This photograph displays the various forms (including a form that resembles a present-day cake stand) that pottery took during the Akkadian Empire.



Akkadian pottery: A collection of Akkadian pottery on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

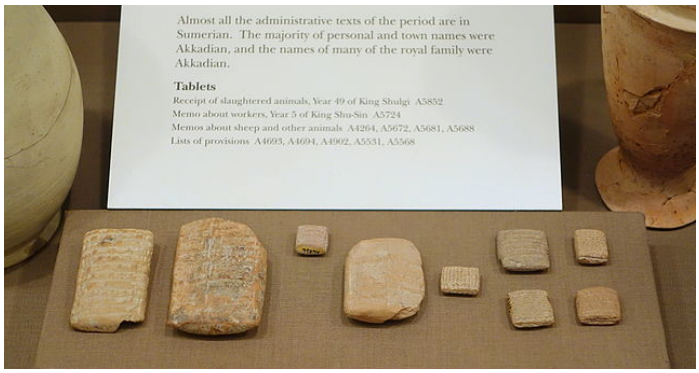
Ur III

The Third Ur Dynasty , better known as Ur III, witnessed the continuation of unpainted ceramic vessels that took a variety of forms. This photograph depicts an urn that resembles today's flower vases, as well as bowls, cups, and a smaller vase.



Pottery from the Ur III period: A collection of pottery from the Ur III period on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

As in previous eras, clay was also used to produce writing tablets that were incised with styluses fashioned from blunted reeds. Often, tablets were used for record-keeping (the ancient version of an office memo). Like other ceramic objects, tablets could be fired in a kiln to produce a permanent form if the text was believed significant enough to preserve. The tablets in the photograph below contain information about farm animals and workers.



Administrative texts in cuneiform writing : A collection of administrative texts in cuneiform writing on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

Babylonian Ceramics

Pottery produced during the “Old” Babylonian period shows a return to painted abstract designs and increased variety in forms. In this photograph, a bowl, a jar, and a goblet show remnants of paint on their exteriors.



Old Babylonian pottery: A collection of old Babylonian pottery on display at the Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago.

Sculpture in Mesopotamia

While the purposes that Mesopotamian sculpture served remained relatively unchanged for 2000 years, the methods of conveying those purposes varied greatly over time.

Learning Objectives

Identify the purposes of the sculptures featured in this concept

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mesopotamian sculptures were predominantly created for religious and political purposes.
- Common materials included clay, metal, and stone fashioned into reliefs and sculptures in the round .
- The Uruk period marked a development of rich narrative imagery and increasing lifelikeness of human figures.
- Hieratic scale was often used in Mesopotamian sculpture to convey the significance of gods and royalty.
- After the end of the Uruk period, subject matter began to depict scenes of warfare and became increasingly violent and intimidating.

Key Terms

- **register**:A usually horizontal division of separate scenes in two- or three-dimensional art.
- **hieratic scale**:A visual method of marking the significance of a figure through its size. The more important a figure is, the larger it appears.
- **terra cotta**:Clay that has been fired in a kiln.
- **high relief**:A sculpture that projects significantly from its background, providing deep shadows.
- **votive**:An object left in temples or other religious locations for a variety of spiritual purposes.
- **colossal**:Extremely tall.
- **lyre**:A hand-held stringed instrument resembling a small harp.
- **cylinder seal**:A small object adorned with carved images of animals, writing, or both, used to sign official documents.
- **in the round**:Sculpture that stands freely, separate from a background.
- **relief**:A sculpture that projects from a background.
- **mixed-media**:Artwork consisting of two or more different materials.
- **nomadic**:Mobile; moving from one place to another, never settling in one location for too long.

The current archaeological record dates sculpture in Mesopotamia the tenth millennium BCE, before the dawn of civilization . Sculptural forms include humans, animals, and cylinder seals with cuneiform writing and imagery in the round or as reliefs. Materials range from terra cotta , stones like alabaster and gypsum, and metals like copper and bronze .

Hunter-Gatherers and Samarra

Because the artists of the hunter-gatherer era were nomadic , the sculptures they produced were small and lightweight. Even after cultures discovered agricultural methods, such as irrigation and animal domestication, artists continued to produce small sculptures. The seated female figure below (c. 6000 BCE), likely carved from a single stone, hails from the prehistoric Samarra culture (5500-4800 BCE). Like many prehistoric female figures, the features of this sculpture suggest that it was used in fertility rituals . Its breasts are accentuated, and its legs are spread in a position that might resemble a woman in labor. While the artist emphasized areas of the body related to reproduction, he or she did not add facial features or feet to the figure.



Female statuette from Samarra (c. 6000 BCE) : A female statuette from Samarra on display at the Louvre Museum.

Uruk Period

Spirituality and communication are reflected in sculptures dating the Uruk period (4000-3100 BCE) of the late prehistoric era. Scholars believe that the gypsum Uruk trough was used as part of an offering to Inanna, the goddess of fertility, love, war, and wisdom. In addition to reliefs of animals, reliefs of reed bundles, sacred objects associated with Inanna, adorn the exterior of the trough. For these reasons, scholars do not believe the trough was used for agricultural purposes.



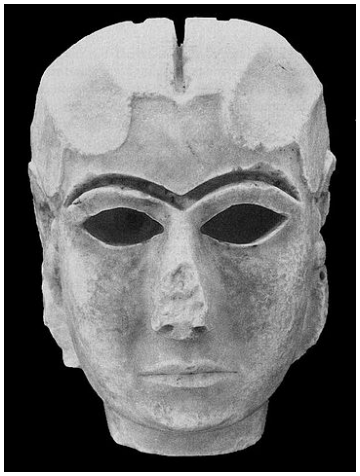
Uruk trough (3300-3000 BCE): An Uruk trough on display at the British Museum.

Animals, along with forms of writing, also appear on early cylinder seals, which were carved from stones and used to notarize documents. Officials or their scribes rolled the seals on wet clay tablets as a form of signature. Cylinder seals were also worn as jewelry and have been found along with precious metals and stones in the tombs of the elite members of society. The trough, cylinder seals, and various other sculptures of the Uruk period serve as examples of the rich narrative imagery that arose during this time.



Uruk-period cylinder seal with stamped clay tablet (4100-3000 BCE): An Uruk-period cylinder seal and stamped clay tablet featuring monstrous lions and lion-headed eagles, on display at the Louvre Museum.

The Uruk period also marked an evolution in the depiction of the human body, as seen in the Mask of Warka (c. 3000 BCE), named for the present-day Iraqi city in which it was discovered. This marble "mask" is all that remains of a mixed- media sculpture that also consisted of a wooden body, gold leaf "hair," inlaid "eyes" and "eyebrows," and jewelry. Like most sculptures produced during the time, the sculpture was originally painted in an attempt to make it look lifelike.



Uruk Head, also known as the Mask of Warka (c. 3000 BCE) : The eyes and eyebrows on this Uruk marble head are hollow to accommodate the original inlay.

Early Dynastic Period

Sculpture built on older traditions and grew more complex during the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2350 BCE). Although artists still used clay and stone, copper became the dominant medium. Subject matter focused on spiritual matters, war, and social scenes.

A cylinder seal discovered in the royal tomb of Queen Puabi depicts two registers of a palace banquet scene punctuated by cuneiform script, marking a growing complexity in the imagery of this form of notarization. Each register features hieratic scale, in which the queen (upper register) and the king (lower register) are larger than their subjects.



Cylinder seal and stamped clay fragment from the tomb of Queen Puabi (c. 2600 BCE): The queen sits on the top register, while the king sits on the bottom. Each figure is set apart from his or her subjects through hieratic scale.

Another sculpture of note is a mixed-media bull's head that once adorned a ceremonial lyre found in Puabi's tomb in Ur. The head consists of a gold "face," lapis lazuli (a blue precious stone) "fur," and shell "horns." Although much of the lyre, whose dominant

material was wood, disintegrated over time, contemporaneous imagery depicts lyres with similar decoration. Scholars believe that lyres were used in burial ceremonies and that the music that was played held religious significance.



Bull's head from ceremonial lyre (c. 2600 BCE) : This lyre was found in the tomb of queen Pu-Abi. The lapis lazuli, shell, red limestone decoration, and the head of the bull are original. The bull's head is covered with gold. The eyes are lapis lazuli and shell. The beard and hair are lapis lazuli. A lyre of the same type is shown on the Standard of Ur.

Sculptures in human form were also used as votive offerings in temples. Among the best known are the Tell Asmar Hoard, a group of 12 sculptures in the round depicting worshipers, priests, and gods. Like the cylinder seal found in Queen Puabi's tomb, the figures in the Tell Asmar Hoard show hieratic scale. Worshipers, as in the image below, stand with their arms in front of their chests and their hands in the position of holding offerings. Materials range from alabaster to limestone to gypsum, depending on each figure's significance. One common feature is the large hollowed out eye sockets, which were once inlaid with stone to make them appear lifelike. The eyes held spiritual significance, especially that of the gods, which represented awesome otherworldly power.



Votive figure of a male worshiper from Tell Asmar (2750-2600 BCE): The votive figure—made from alabaster, shell, black limestone, and bitumen—depicts a male worshiper of Enil, a powerful Mesopotamian god.

Akkadian Empire

During the period of the Akkadian Empire (2271-2154 BCE), sculpture of the human form grew increasingly naturalistic, and its subject matter increasingly about politics and warfare.

A cast bronze portrait head believed to be that of King Sargon combines a naturalistic nose and mouth with stylized eyes, eyebrows, hair, and beard. Although the stylized features dominate the sculpture, the level of naturalism was unprecedented.



Head of an Akkadian ruler, probably Sargon (2270-2215 BCE): This portrait combines naturalistic and stylized facial features and was cast using the lost-wax method. The eye sockets were once inlaid.

The Victory Stele of Naram Sin provides an example of the increasingly violent subject matter in Akkadian art, a result of the violent and oppressive climate of the empire. Here, the king is depicted as a divine figure, as signified by his horned helmet. In typical hieratic fashion, Naram Sin appears larger than his soldiers and his enemies. The king stands among dead or dying enemy soldiers as his own troops look on from a lower vantage point. The figures are depicted in high relief to amplify the dramatic significance of the scene. On the right hand side of the stele, cuneiform script provides narration.



Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (12th century BCE): The king stands in the center of the stele wearing a horned headpiece. His dead and dying enemies surround him while his own soldiers passively observe.

Babylon and Assyria

The second millennium BCE marks the transition from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age . The most prominent cultures in the ancient Near East during this period were Babylonia and Assyria. Clay was the dominant medium during this time, but stone was also used. The most common surviving forms of second millennium BCE Mesopotamian art are cylinder seals, relatively small free-standing figures, and reliefs of various sizes. These included cheap plaques, both religious and otherwise, of molded pottery for private homes.

Babylonian culture somewhat preferred sculpture in the round to reliefs. Depictions of human figures were naturalistic. The Assyrians, on the other hand, developed a style of large and exquisitely detailed narrative reliefs in painted stone or alabaster. Intended for palaces, these reliefs depict royal activities such as battles or hunting. Predominance is given to animal forms, particularly horses and lions, which are represented in great detail. Human figures are static and rigid by comparison, but also minutely detailed. The Assyrians produced very little sculpture in the round with the exception of colossal guardian figures, usually lions and winged beasts, that flanked fortified royal gateways. While Assyrian artists were greatly influenced by the Babylonian style, a distinctly Assyrian artistic style began to emerge in Mesopotamia around 1500 BCE.



Burney Relief (c. 1800-1750 BCE): The Burney Relief is a Mesopotamian terra cotta plaque in high relief of the Old-Babylonian period, depicting a winged, nude, goddess-like figure with bird's talons, flanked by owls, and perched upon supine lions. Apart from its distinctive iconography, the sculpture is noted for its high relief and relatively large size, which suggests that is was used as a cult relief, which makes it a very rare survival from the period.

Architecture in Mesopotamia

Domestic and public architecture in Mesopotamian cultures differed in relative simplicity and complexity. As time passed, public architecture grew to monumental heights.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate how Mesopotamian cultures approached domestic and public architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mesopotamian cultures used a variety of building materials. While mud brick is the most common, stone also features as a structural and decorate element.
- The ziggurat marked a major architectural accomplishment for the Sumerians , as well as subsequent Mesopotamian cultures.
- Palaces and other public structures were often decorated with glaze or paint, stones, or reliefs .
- Animals and human-animal hybrids feature in the religions of Mesopotamian cultures and were often used as architectural decoration.

Key Terms

- **alto relief**:A sculpture with significant projection from its background.
- **bas reliefs**:Sculptures that minimally project from their backgrounds.
- **public sphere**:The world outside the home.
- **ziggurat**:A towering temple, similar to a stepped pyramid, that sat in the center of Mesopotamian city-states in honor to the local pantheon.
- **private sphere**:The home, or the domestic realm.
- **load-bearing**:A form of architecture in which the walls are the structure's main source of support.

- **stacking and piling**:A form of load-bearing architecture in which the walls are thickest at the base and grow gradually thinner toward the top.
- **pilaster**:
  A rectangular column that projects partially from the wall to which it is attached; it gives the appearance of a support, but is only for decoration.

The Mesopotamians regarded “the craft of building” as a divine gift taught to men by the gods, and architecture flourished in the region. A paucity of stone in the region made sun baked bricks and clay the building material of choice. Babylonian architecture featured pilasters and columns , as well as frescoes and enameled tiles. Assyrian architects were strongly influenced by the Babylonian style , but used stone as well as brick in their palaces, which were lined with sculptured and colored slabs of stone instead of being painted. Existing ruins point to load-bearing architecture as the dominant form of building. However, the invention of the round arch in the general area of Mesopotamia influenced the construction of structures like the Ishtar Gate in the sixth century BCE.

Domestic Architecture

Mesopotamian families were responsible for the construction of their own houses. While mud bricks and wooden doors comprised the dominant building materials, reeds were also used in construction. Because houses were load-bearing, doorways were often the only openings. Sumerian culture observed a rigid division between the public sphere and the private sphere , a norm that resulted in a lack of direct view from the street into the home. The sizes of individual houses varied, but the general design consisted of smaller rooms organized around a large central room. To provide a natural cooling effect, courtyards became a common feature in the Ubaid period and persist into the domestic architecture of present-day Iraq.

Ziggurats

One of the most remarkable achievements of Mesopotamian architecture was the development of the ziggurat, a massive structure taking the form of a terraced step pyramid of successively receding stories or levels, with a shrine or temple at the summit. Like pyramids, ziggurats were built by stacking and piling . Ziggurats were not places of worship for the general public. Rather, only priests or other authorized religious officials were allowed inside to tend to cult statues and make offerings . The first surviving ziggurats date to the Sumerian culture in the fourth millennium BCE, but they continued to be a popular architectural form in the late third and early second millennium BCE as well .



Chogha Zanbil ziggurat: The Chogha Zanbil ziggurat was built in 1250 BC by Untash-Napirisha, the king of Elam, to honor the Elamite god Inshushinak.

The image below is an artist’s reconstruction of how ziggurats might have looked in their heyday. Human figures appear to illustrate the massive scale of these structures. This impressive height and width would not have been possible without the use of ramps and pulleys.



An artist's reconstruction of a ziggurat: Like most Mesopotamian architecture, ziggurats were composed of sun-baked bricks, which were less durable than their oven-baked counterparts. Thus, buildings had to be reconstructed on a regular basis, often on the foundations of recently deteriorated structures, which caused cities to become increasingly elevated. Sun-baked bricks remained the dominant building material through the Babylonian and early Assyrian empires.

Political Architecture

The exteriors of public structures like temples and palaces featured decorative elements such as bright paint, gold, leaf, and enameling. Some elements, such as colored stones and terra cotta panels, served a twofold purpose of decoration and structural support, which strengthened the buildings and delayed their deterioration.

Between the thirteenth and tenth centuries BCE, the Assyrians replaced sun-baked bricks with more durable stone and masonry. Colored stone and *bas* reliefs replaced paint as decoration. Art produced under the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), Sargon II (722-705 BCE), and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE) inform us that reliefs evolved from simple and vibrant to naturalistic and restrained over this time span.

From the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2350 BCE) to the Assyrian Empire (25th century-612 BCE), palaces grew in size and complexity. However, even early palaces were very large and ornately decorated to distinguish themselves from domestic architecture. Because palaces housed the royal family and everyone who attended to them, palaces were often arranged like small cities, with temples and sanctuaries , as well as locations to inter the dead. As with private homes, courtyards were important features of palaces for both utilitarian and ceremonial purposes.

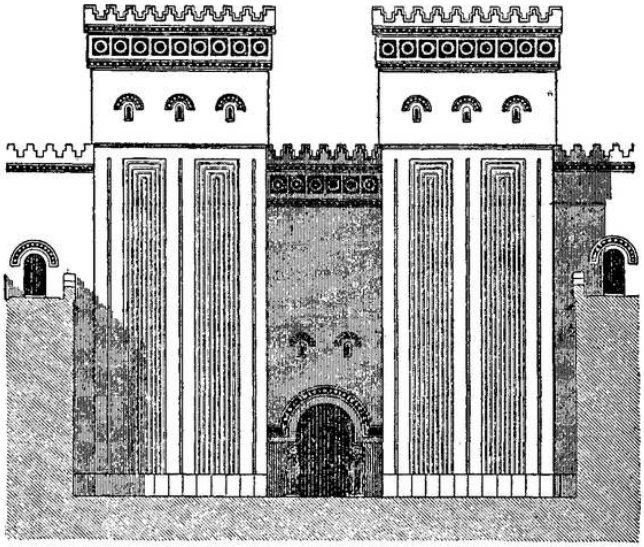
By the time of the Assyrian empire, palaces were decorated with narrative reliefs on the walls and outfitted with their own gates. The gates of the Palace of Dur-Sharrukin, occupied by Sargon II, featured monumental *alto* reliefs of a mythological guardian figure called a *lamassu* (also known as a *shedu*), which had the head of a human, the body of a bull or lion, and enormous wings. Lamassu figure in the visual art and literature from most of the ancient Mesopotamian world, going as far back as ancient Sumer (settled c. 5500 BCE) and standing guard at the palace of Persepolis (550-330 BCE).



Lamassu: This is only one example of how a lamassu would appear in Mesopotamian art. Other sculptures wear conical caps, face the front, or have the bodies of lions. In literature, some lamassu assumed female form.

Although the Romans often receive credit for the round arch, this structural system actually originated during ancient Mesopotamian times. Where typical load-bearing walls are not strong enough to have many windows or doorways, round arches

absorb more pressure, allowing for larger openings and improved airflow. The reconstruction of Dur-Sharrukin shows that the round arch was being used as entryways by the eighth century BCE.



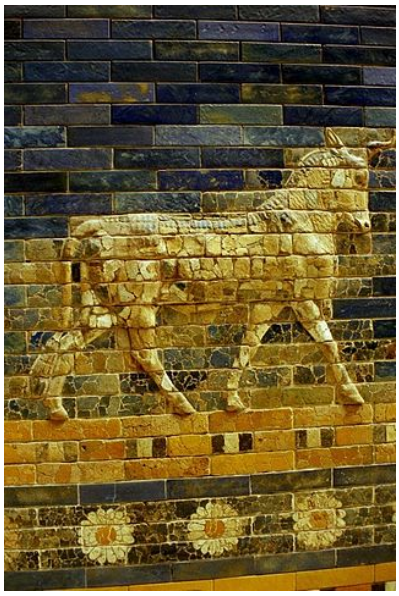
Palace of Dur-Sharrukin: Round arches can be found in the central portal, as well as in each window on the right and left.

Perhaps the best known surviving example of a round arch is in the Ishtar Gate, which was part of the Processional Way in the city of Babylon. The gate, now in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, was lavishly decorated with lapis lazuli complemented by blue glazed brick. Elsewhere on the gate and its connecting walls were painted floral motifs and *bas* reliefs of animals that were sacred to Ishtar, the goddess of fertility and war.



Ishtar Gate (c. 575 BCE): The reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.

The photograph above shows the immense scale of the gate. The photograph below shows the detail of a relief of a bull from the gate's wall.



Detail of bull relief on Ishtar Gate: An aurochs, or bull, above a flower ribbon.

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3.2: Assyria

The Assyrian Culture

The Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian capitals of Nimrud, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh are known today for their ruins of great palaces and fortifications.

Learning Objectives

Describe the key aspects of the Assyrian capitals of Nimrud, Dur-Sharrukin, and Nineveh

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Nimrud, also known as Kalhu, was the Assyrian capital from the thirteenth century BCE until 706 BCE. Ashurnasirpal II made the city famous when he built a large palace and temples on top of ancient ruins c. 880 BCE.
- Dur-Sharrukin was a single-period site; therefore, few individual objects were found. The primary discoveries shed light on Assyrian art and architecture.
- Nineveh, the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire , rose to greatness under Sennacherib . He laid out new streets and squares and built within it the famous “palace without a rival”, the plan of which has been mostly recovered.

Key Terms

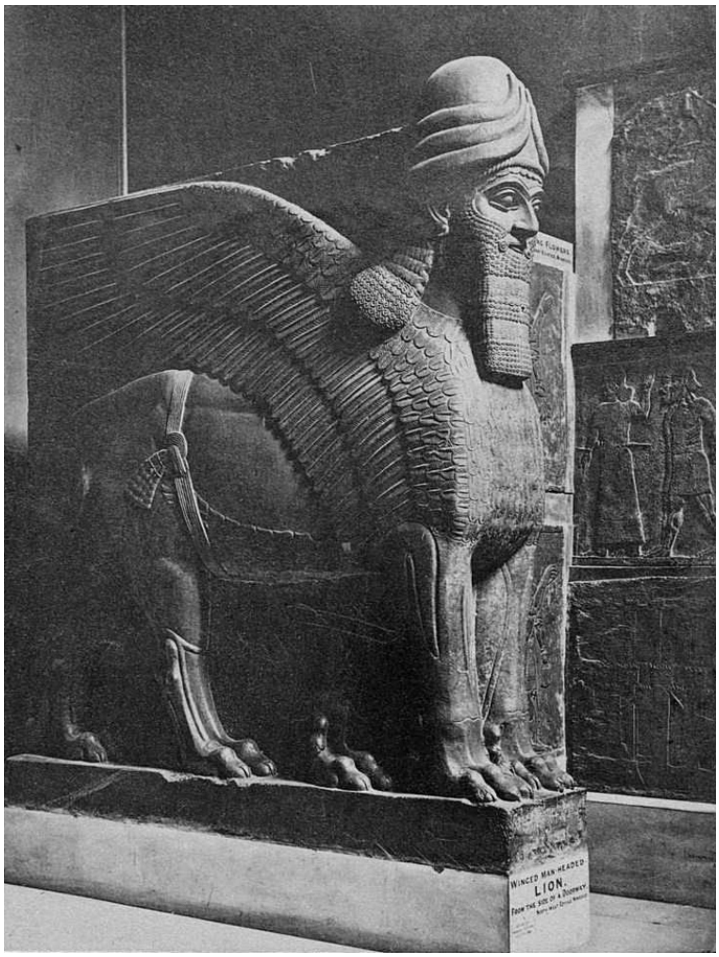
- **Obelisk**:A tall, square, tapered, stone monolith topped with a pyramidal point, frequently used as a monument.
- **ziggurat**:A temple tower of the ancient Mesopotamian valley, having the form of a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories.

Nimrud and Ashurnasirpal II

Nimrud is an ancient Assyrian city located in southern, modern Iraq on the River Tigris. In ancient times the city was called Kalhu. The ruins of the city are found some 30 kilometers (19 miles) southeast of Mosul.

The Assyrian king Shalmaneser I made Nimrud, which existed for about a thousand years, the capital in the thirteenth century BCE. The city gained fame when king Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria (c. 880 BCE) built a large palace and temples on the site of an earlier city that had long fallen into ruins. Nimrud housed as many as 100,000 inhabitants and contained botanic gardens and a zoologic garden. Ashurnasirpal’s son, Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), built the monument known as the Great Ziggurat and an associated temple. The palace, restored as a site museum, is one of only two preserved Assyrian palaces in the world. The other is Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh. Nimrud remained the Assyrian capital until 706 BCE when Sargon II moved the capital to Dur-Sharrukin, but it remained a major center and a royal residence until the city was completely destroyed in 612 BCE when Assyria succumbed under the invasion of the Medes.

Excavations at Nimrud in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries revealed remarkable bas- reliefs, ivories , and sculptures . A statue of Ashurnasirpal II was found in an excellent state of preservation , as were colossal winged man-headed lions, each guarding the palace entrance. The large number of inscriptions pertaining to king Ashurnasirpal II provide more details about him and his reign than are known for any other ruler of this epoch.



Gate Guardians: The Man-Headed Lions: This Portal Guardian (Lamassu) from Nimrud guarded the entrance to the palace at Nimrud.

Portions of the site have been also been identified, such as temples to Ninurta and Enlil, a building assigned to Nabu (the god of writing and the arts), and extensive fortifications. Furthermore, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, discovered in 1846, stands six-and-a-half-feet tall and commemorates the king's victorious campaigns from 859–824 BCE. It is shaped like a temple tower at the top, ending in three steps.



Black Obelisk: The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III commemorates the king's victorious campaigns from 859–824 BCE.

On one panel, Israelites led by king Jehu of Israel pay tribute and bow in the dust before king Shalmaneser III, who is making a libation to his god. The cuneiform text on the obelisk reads "Jehu the son of Omri" and mentions gifts of gold, silver, lead, and

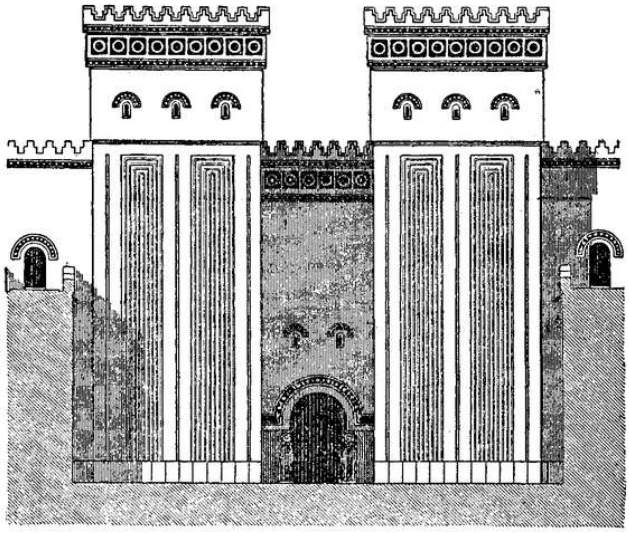
spear shafts . The “Treasure of Nimrud” unearthed in these excavations is a collection of over 600 pieces of gold jewelry and precious stones.



Obelisk detail: Depiction of either Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi, or Jehu’s ambassador, bowing before Shalmaneser III.

Sargon II and Dur-Sharrukin

Dur-Sharrukin, or present day Khorsabad, was the Assyrian capital in the time of King Sargon II. Today, Khorsabad is now a village in northern Iraq, and is still inhabited by Assyrians. The construction of Dur-Sharrukin was never finished. Sargon, who ordered the project, was killed during a battle in 705. After his death, his son and successor Sennacherib abandoned the project and relocated the capital with its administration to the city of Nineveh.



Palace of Khorsabad (artist’s reconstruction)

Dur-Sharrukin was constructed on a rectangular layout. Its walls were massive, with 157 towers protecting its sides. Seven gates entered the city from all directions. A walled terrace contained temples and the royal palace. The main temples were dedicated to the gods Nabu, Shamash, and Sin, while Adad, Ningal, and Ninurta had smaller shrines. A ziggurat was also constructed at the site. The palace was adorned with sculptures and wall reliefs, with its gates flanked by winged-bull *shedu* statues weighing up to 40 tons. On the central canal of Sargon’s garden stood a pillared pleasure-pavilion which looked up to a great topographic creation—a man-made Garden Mound. This mound was planted with cedars and cypresses and modeled after the Amanus mountains in northern Syria.



Winged bull: The winged bull figure, known as a *shedu* or a *lamassu*, was a common guardian figure in palace architecture.

The colossal bull statue (above) was uncovered outside the throne room. It was found split into three large fragments. The torso alone weighed about 20 tons. Since Dur-Sharrukin was a single-period site that was evacuated in an orderly manner after the death of Sargon II, few individual objects were found. The primary discoveries from Khorsabad shed light on Assyrian art and architecture.

Nineveh

Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, and the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Its ruins are across the river from the modern-day major city of Mosul in Iraq.

Today, Nineveh's location is marked by two large mounds, Kouyunjik and Nabī Yūnus "Prophet Jonah," and the remains of the city walls. These were fitted with fifteen monumental gateways which served as checkpoints on entering and exiting the ancient city, and were probably also used as barracks and armories. With the inner and outer doors shut, the gateways were virtual fortresses. Five of the gateways have been explored to some extent by archaeologists.

Nineveh was an important junction for commercial routes crossing the Tigris. Occupying a central position on the great highway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, Nineveh united the East and the West, and received wealth from many sources. Thus, it became one of the oldest and greatest of all the region's ancient cities, and the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The area was settled as early as 6000 BCE, and by 3000 BCE had become an important religious center for worship of the Assyrian goddess Ishtar.

It was not until the Neo-Assyrian Empire that Nineveh experienced a considerable architectural expansion. King Sennacherib is credited with making Nineveh a truly magnificent city during his rule (c. 700 BCE). He laid out new streets and squares and built within it the famous "palace without a rival", the plan of which has been mostly recovered. It comprised at least 80 rooms, many of which were lined with sculpture. A large number of cuneiform tablets were found in the palace. The solid foundation was made out of limestone blocks and mud bricks. Some of the principal doorways were flanked by colossal stone-door figures that included many winged lions or bulls with the heads of men. The stone carvings in the walls include many battle and hunting scenes, as well as depicting Sennacherib's men parading the spoils of war before him.



Royal Nineveh carving: The king hunting lion from the North Palace, Nineveh, seen at the British Museum.

Nineveh's greatness was short-lived. In around 627 BCE, after the death of its last great king Ashurbanipal, the Neo-Assyrian empire began to unravel due to a series of bitter civil wars, and Assyria was attacked by the Babylonians and Medes. From about 616 BCE, in a coalition with the Scythians and Cimmerians, they besieged Nineveh, sacking the town in 612, and later razing it to the ground .

The Assyrian empire as such came to an end by 605 BC, with the Medes and Babylonians dividing its colonies between them. Following its defeat in 612, the site remained largely unoccupied for centuries with only a scattering of Assyrians living amid the ruins until the Sassanian period, although Assyrians continue to live in the surrounding area to this day.

Architecture in Assyria

Assyrian architecture eventually emerged from the shadow of its predecessors to assume distinctive attributes, such as domes and diverse building materials, that set it apart from other political entities.

Learning Objectives

Identify the distinguishing characteristics of Assyrian architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Inscriptions and reliefs produced under the Assyrian Empire depict structures with octagonal and circular domes , which were unique to the region at the time.
- Assyrian ziggurats eventually consisted of enameled walls and two towers.
- Massive fortified walls are a common attribute in Assyrian fortresses, pointing to the political instability of the time and the need for architectural defense.
- Architectural materials in the Assyrian empire were quite diverse, consisting of a variety of woods, stones, and metals.

Key Terms

- **lamassu**: A guardian figure consisting of the head of a human, massive wings, and the body of a lion or bull.

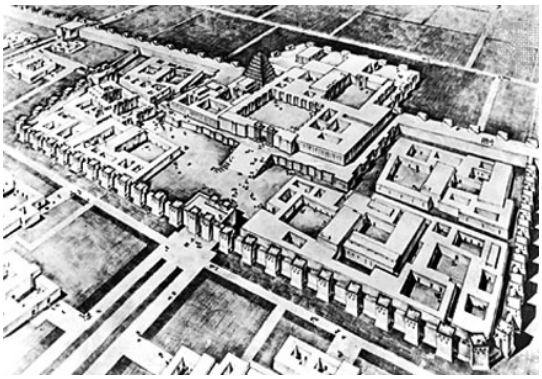
During the Assyrian Empire's historical span from the 25th century BCE to 612 BCE, architectural styles went through noticeable changes. Assyrian architects were initially influenced by previous forms dominant in Sumer and Akkad. However, Assyrian structures eventually evolved into their own unique style.

Temples

Little is known of the construction of Assyrian temples with the exception of the distinctive ziggurats and massive remains at Mugheir. Ziggurats in the Assyrian Empire came to be built with two towers (as opposed to the single central tower of previous styles) and decorated with colored enameled tiles. Contemporaneous inscriptions and reliefs describe and depict structures with octagonal and circular domes, unique architectural systems for the time. Little remains of the temple at Mugheir, but the ruins of its base remain quite impressive, measuring 198 feet (60 m) long by 133 feet (41 m) wide by 70 feet (21 m) high.

Dur-Sharrukin

Building plans remained rectangular through much of the empire's history. The fortress of Sargon II (reigned 722–705 BCE) at Dur-Sharrukin, or Khorsabad, was the best known. Consisting of a stone foundation punctuated by seven gates, the fortress housed the emperor's palace and a ziggurat among massive load-bearing walls with regularly spaced towers.



Reconstruction of the palace of Sargon II at Dur-Sharrukin: Image shows the typical rectangular plan and massive fortified walls of Assyrian palace architecture.

Despite the intended political symbolism of Assyrian superiority, these fortified walls signify preparation for an attack by enemy invaders. Among the ornamental features excavated was a monumental lamassu outside the throne room. After the death of Sargon II, the site was abandoned.



Lamassu from Dur-Sharrukin

Nimrud

Lamassu figures abounded throughout the Assyrian Empire, featuring in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (reigned 883-859 BCE) at Nimrud. Reconstructions show that they adorned the gateways of the palace, including an entrance marked by a round arch . According to contemporaneous inscriptions, the palace consisted of wood from a diverse number of tree species, alabaster , limestone , and a variety of precious metals. As with Dur-Sharrukin, the palace of Ashurnasirpal II was surrounded by fortified load-bearing walls.

Balawat Gates

Builders increasingly used wood, particularly cedar and cypress, in architecture. As a result, much of the architecture has decayed, leaving archaeologists to produce reconstructions for present-day scholars. One example is the Balawat Gates, from the Assyrian outpost of Balawat, or Imgur-Enlil. Two sets were commissioned during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II and one addition set under the reign of his son Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE). Assyrian inscriptions suggest the gates were made of cedar. Experts estimate that the gates stood over 22 feet high. The metal bands that adorned the gates suggest that they measured 285 feet wide. Lacking hinges, the gates opened by turning enormous pine pillars that rotated in stone sockets. Despite the long-term fragility of wood, the

scale of the gates and the mechanisms by which they opened and closed point to the political instability of the time and the need to defend all parts of the empire.



Reconstruction of the Balawat Gates at the British Museum: Woman in photograph provides an idea of the scale of the gates.

Artifacts of Assyria

Assyrian artifacts consist of a variety of media and range in size from hand-held to monumental.

Learning Objectives

Discuss artifacts that have been found from Assyria

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Assyrian Lion Weights and the Statue of Ashurnasirpal II represent rare examples of surviving Assyrian sculpture in the round .
- The Assyrian Lion Weights represent the importance of weights and measures and accommodation of more than one language.
- The Statue of Ashurnasirpal II, the lamassu reliefs , and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III provide examples of art rich in political and religious symbolism .
- The Statue of Ashurnasirpal II and the lamassu reliefs provide examples of royal hairstyles and beard lengths.

Key Terms

- **stylized**:Art that is not naturalistic, yet not distorted enough to be abstract.
- **sculpture in the round**:A free-standing object that is usually meant to be viewed from multiple angles.
- **relief**:A sculpture that projects from a background.
- **Obelisk**:Four-sided monument that tapers with height and is usually capped by a pyramidal form.
- **register**:A usually horizontal band on an artwork that divides designs into logical patterns.
- **bas relief**:A sculpture with minimal projection from its background.

Artifacts produced during the Assyrian Empire range from hand-held to monumental and consist of a variety of media , from clay to bronze to a diversity of stone. While reliefs comprise the majority of what archaeologists have found, existing sculptures in the round shed light on Assyrian numerical systems and politics.

Assyrian Lion Weights



Assyrian Lion Weights: These weights represented one of only two known systems of weights and measures in Mesopotamia at the time.

The Assyrian Lion Weights (800-700 BCE) are a group of solid bronze weights that range from two centimeters (approximately 0.8 inches) to 30 centimeters (approximately 12 inches). Admired as sculptures in the round today, the weights represent one of only two systems of weights and measures in the region at the time. This system was based on *heavy mina* (about one kilogram) and was used for weighting metals. Additionally, they bear inscriptions in Assyrian cuneiform and Phoenician script, indicating use by speakers of both languages. Eight lions in the set bear the only known inscriptions from the reign of Shalmaneser V (reigned 727-722 BCE).

Statue of Ashurnasirpal II



Statue of Ashurnasirpal II: The king's beard and hairstyle set him apart from his subjects. He holds a sickle as a form of mythological defense and a mace as a symbol of authority.

This magnesite (magnesium carbonate) sculpture of Ashurnasirpal II (9th century BCE) serves as a rare example of sculpture in the round produced during the Assyrian Empire. The kings stands stiffly with a sickle in his right hand (at his side) and a mace in his left, which he holds to his torso. Both objects are symbolic; the sickle was used as a weapon against monsters, while the mace was a symbol of political and religious authority. The inscription on his chest announce his genealogy, titles, and military triumphs. Although the sculpture is stylized , it gives the viewer a glimpse into fashion norms for rulers at the time. The length of the king's hair and beard set him apart from commoners, who would have found such styles impractical.

Lamassu



Lamassu: Each lamassu figure faced a specific cardinal direction.

The lamassu was a mythological guardian figure with large wings, the head of a human, and the body of a lion or a bull. Originally a protective spirit to the households of Babylonian commoners, the lamassu was later adopted by Assyrian royalty to protect political and religious interests. In Assyrian sculpture, lamassu figures bear similar beards and hairstyles to those of Ashurnasirpal II in the sculpture discussed above. These monumental sculptures usually appeared in relief form in pairs at major entrances to cities, palaces, or fortresses. Each lamassu directed its gaze toward one of the cardinal directions, which explains why some look straight ahead and others have their heads turned.

Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III



Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III: This limestone obelisk contains 20 registers depicting conquered kings paying tribute to Assyrian power and celebrating the military campaigns of Shalmaneser III.

Erected during a time of civil war (825 BCE), the limestone Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III is the most intact Assyrian obelisk found to date. Each side consists of five registers of *bas* reliefs that celebrate the achievements of King Shalmaneser III (reigned 858-824 BCE). Three registers on each side focus on conquered kings from specific regions paying tribute to the Assyrian ruler. The registers at the top and bottom of each side bear an inscription from the annals of Shalmaneser III, celebrating his annual military campaigns.

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3.3: Neo-Babylonia

Neo-Babylonia

The Neo-Babylonian Empire developed an artistic style motivated by their ancient Mesopotamian heritage.

Learning Objectives

Describe the artistic and architectural accomplishments of King Nebuchadnezzar II, including the city of Babylon

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Neo-Babylonian Empire was a civilization in Mesopotamia between 626 BCE and 539 BCE. During the preceding three centuries, Babylonia had been ruled by the Akkadians and Assyrians, but threw off the yoke of external domination after the death of the last strong Assyrian ruler.
- Neo-Babylonian art and architecture reached its zenith under King Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled from 604–562 BC. He was a great patron of art and urban development and rebuilt the city of Babylon to reflect its ancient glory.
- Most of the evidence for Neo-Babylonian art and architecture is literary. Of the material evidence that survives, the most important fragments are from the Ishtar Gate of Babylon.
- Neo-Babylonians were known for their colorful glazed bricks, which they shaped into bas-reliefs of dragons, lions, and aurochs to decorate the Ishtar Gate.

Key Terms

- **glazed**:Having a vitreous coating whose primary purposes are decoration or protection.
- **aurochs**:An extinct European mammal, Bos primigenius, the ancestor of domestic cattle.
- **ziggurat**:A temple tower of the ancient Mesopotamian valley, having the form of a terraced pyramid of successively receding stories.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire, also known as the Chaldean Empire, was a civilization in Mesopotamia that began in 626 BC and ended in 539 BC.

During the preceding three centuries, Babylonia had been ruled by the Akkadians and Assyrians, but threw off the yoke of external domination after the death of Assurbanipal, the last strong Assyrian ruler. The Neo-Babylonian period was a renaissance that witnessed a great flourishing of art, architecture, and science.

The Neo-Babylonian rulers were motivated by the antiquity of their heritage and followed a traditionalist cultural policy, based on the ancient Sumero-Akkadian culture . Ancient artworks from the Old-Babylonian period were painstakingly restored and preserved, and treated with a respect verging on religious reverence. Neo-Babylonian art and architecture reached its zenith under King Nebuchadnezzar II, who ruled from 604–562 BC and was a great patron of urban development, bent on rebuilding all of Babylonia's cities to reflect their former glory.

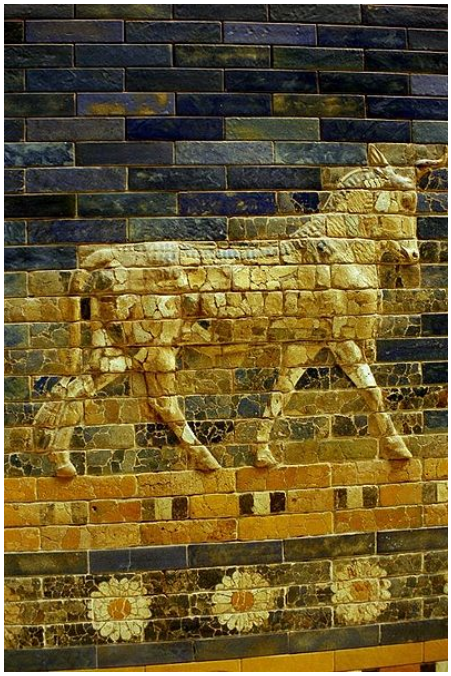
It was Nebuchadnezzar II's vision and sponsorship that turned Babylon into the immense and beautiful city of legend. The city spread over three square miles, surrounded by moats and ringed by a double circuit of walls. The river Euphrates, which flowed through the city, was spanned by a beautiful stone bridge. At the heart of the city lay the *zigguratEtemenanki*, literally "temple of the foundation of heaven and earth." Originally seven stories high, it is believed to have provided the inspiration for the biblical story of the Tower of Babel.

It was also during this period that Nebuchadnezzar supposedly built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, although there is no definitive archeological evidence to establish their precise location. Ancient Greek and Roman writers describe the gardens in vivid detail. However, the lack of physical ruins have led many experts to speculate whether the Hanging Gardens existed at all. If this is the case, writers might have been describing ideal mythologized Eastern gardens or a famous garden built by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) at Nineveh roughly a century earlier. If the Hanging Gardens did exist, they were likely destroyed around the first century CE.



19th-century reconstruction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon: Two lamassu sculptures in the round face each other in the foreground, while another reconstruction of the ziggurat Etemenanki dominates the background.

Most of the evidence for Neo-Babylonian art and architecture is literary. The material evidence itself is mostly fragmentary. Some of the most important fragments that survive are from the Ishtar Gate, the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon. It was constructed in 575 BC by order of Nebuchadnezzar II, using glazed brick with alternating rows of bas-relief dragons and aurochs. Dedicated to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, it was a double gate, and its roofs and doors were made of cedar, according to the dedication plaque. Babylon's Processional Way, which was lined with brilliantly colorful glazed brick walls decorated with lions, ran through the middle of the gate. Statues of the Babylonian gods were paraded through the gate and down the Processional Way during New Year's celebrations.



Ishtar Gate detail: An aurochs above a flower ribbon with missing tiles filled in (Ishtar Gate bas-relief, housed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin). A prominent characteristic of Neo-Babylonian art and architecture was the use of brilliantly colorful glazed bricks.

The reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way, built at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin in 1930, features material excavated from the original site. To compensate for missing pieces, museum staff created new bricks in a specially designed kiln that was able to match the original color and finish. Other parts of the gate, which include glazed brick lions and dragons, are housed in different museums around the world.



Ishtar Gate at Pergamon Museum: This was reconstructed in Berlin in 1930, using materials excavated from the original build-site.

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3.4: Persia

Art of the Persian Empire

The art of the Persian Empire combined a diversity of styles from other cultures to create a unique Persian style.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the art produced at the beginning of the Persian Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Assyria, ancient Egypt, and Mycenae are three of many cultures whose styles feature in Persian art.
- Gold and silver objects demonstrate advanced skill in metalworking among artists living in the Persian Empire.
- Multilingual inscriptions, such as those on a relief of Cyrus the Great, demonstrate the diversity of those living in the Persian Empire.

Key Terms

- **rhyton**:A large ceremonial drinking cup fashioned in the shape of an animal's head.
- **syncretic**:Art that bears the style(s), themes, or other attributes of more than one culture.
- **stylized**:Art that is not naturalistic but not distorted enough to be abstract.

Persia, centered around present-day Iran, was the site of a vast empire that existed in three general phases. The Achaemenids (550–330 BCE) established the first Persian Empire under Cyrus the Great, who quickly expanded the empire's borders. Zoroastrianism , an ancient monotheistic religion, dominated the Persian Empire until Islam supplanted it in the seventh century CE. While the religion was unique, the art of the empire was largely syncretic , combining the styles of diverse conquered and neighboring peoples. The result was a new, unique Persian style.



Early Persian Empire: In the Achaemenid period, the Persian Empire stretched across a vast swath of the Middle East into northern Africa and southern Europe.

Metalworking

One artistic technique incorporated from other cultures involved the smithing and hammering of gold, possibly adopted from the Medes. The most common surviving metal objects are ceremonial drinking cups called rhyta made of gold and silver. Rhyta were used in prehistoric Aegean and Greek cultures, most notably the Mycenaeans in the sixteenth century BCE. The gold rhyton below, which bears a stylized ram's head in relief, dates to the Achaemenid period.



Gold rhyton (550–330 BCE)

Better known than ceremonial rhyta is the Oxus Treasure, a 180-piece trove of reliefs, figurines , jewelry, and coins made of gold and silver. The treasure is important because it demonstrates the variety of forms in which metal was worked during the early Persian Empire. The gold chariot below demonstrates the precision possible with small sculptures and includes a small votive based on the Egyptian god Bes.



Gold chariot from Oxus Treasure, amalgamated from fragments of other objects in the trove

The griffin-headed bracelet also found in the treasure was once inlaid with enamel and precious stones. Once thought to have originated with the ancient Egyptians, the manner of goldsmithing evident in the amulet was later found in Assyrian art. The style of the animals originated with the Scythians, who inhabited the Steppes of Russia.



Bracelet from the Oxus Treasure: Indentations show where the bracelet once held enamel and stone inlay.

Cyrus the Great

Persian art incorporated not only the styles of conquered peoples but also their languages. A large *bas* relief representing Cyrus the Great as a four-winged guardian figure proclaims his rank and ethnicity as an Achaemenidian in three languages. The stylized profile pose in which the king stands recalls the dominant Egyptian style of depicting the human body in art.



Cyrus the Great as a winged guardian figure: This stylized relief of Cyrus borrows from the Egyptian style of depicting the human body and proclaims the king's ethnicity and rank in three languages.

Cyrus is believed to have died in December 530 BCE and was interred in a tomb that further demonstrates the syncretism of Persian art. The load-bearing tomb, pyramidal-roofed, sits atop a geometric mound that resembles a stepped pyramid of Pre-Dynastic Egypt. Despite the razing of the original city centuries ago, the tomb remains largely intact.



Tomb of Cyrus the Great: Syncretic attributes include the pyramidal base of the tomb.

Art and Architecture of the Achaemenid Empire

The Achaemenid Empire was known for its eclectic style of art and architecture synthesized from many foreign influences between 550 and 330 BCE.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Achaemenid art and architecture in the Persian Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Achaemenid Empire stretched across western Asia from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon in the west.
- The quintessential characteristic of Persian art and architecture is its eclectic nature, combining elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek styles .
- The Achaemenid Persians were particularly skilled at constructing complex frieze reliefs , crafting precious metals, and glazed brick masonry. They also constructed spectacular cities for governance and habitation, temples for worship and social gatherings, and mausoleums honoring fallen kings.
- The ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire was Persepolis, which preserves the best of ancient Persian architecture. It is best known for its pillared Apadana Hall, decorated with complex sculptural reliefs depicting the king and his subjects.
- The palace at Persepolis stood for nearly 200 years until it was looted and burned by the armies of Alexander the Great in 330 BCE.

Key Terms

- **hypostyle**:Having a roof supported on a row of columns.
- **immortal**:A member of an elite regiment of the Persian army.
- **fluted**:Having semicylindrical vertical grooves, either for decoration or to trim weight.
- **capital**:The topmost part of a column.
- **frieze**:Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

Ancient Persian art developed and flourished under the Achaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 BCE), an Iranian empire in Western Asia, which eventually came to rule the ancient world from the Indus Valley in the east to Thrace and Macedon in the west.

Not only was the Achaemenid Dynasty militarily and politically influential, but it also left a long-lasting social and cultural legacy throughout its vast realms. Among its greatest cultural achievements was the development of Achaemenid art and architecture, which were intimately intertwined, reflected techniques and influences from the many corners of its huge empire, and synthesized different styles to develop a unique Persian style.



Decorative frieze from the palace of Darius the Great at Susa, ca. 510 BCE: Decorative panels from the terra-cotta griffins' frieze. The vivid colors were preserved, thanks to the ruins being buried underground and protected from the elements.

The Achaemenid Persians were particularly skilled at constructing complex frieze reliefs; crafting precious metals into jewelry, vessels , statuettes, and a myriad of other shapes; glazed brick masonry; decorating palaces; and creating gardens. They also constructed spectacular cities for governance and habitation, temples for worship and social gatherings, and mausoleums honoring fallen kings. The quintessential characteristic of Persian art and architecture is its eclectic nature, combining elements of Median, Assyrian, and Asiatic Greek styles.

Persepolis

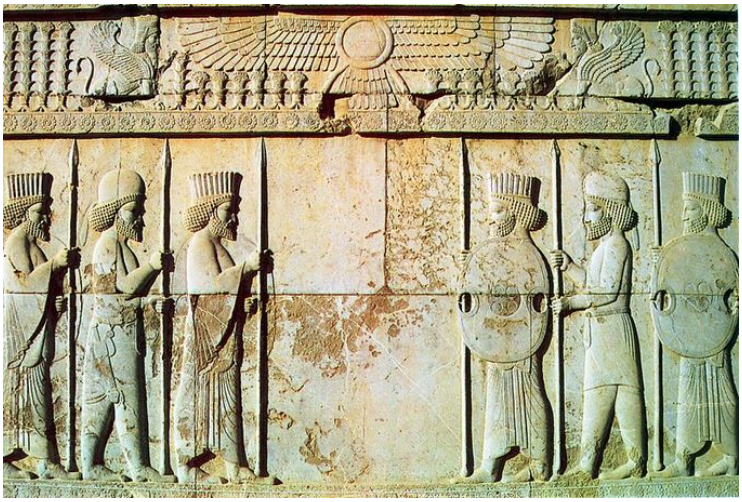
The extraordinary architectural legacy of the Achaemenids is best seen in the ruins of the opulent city of Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. Located about 70 kilometers northeast of the modern Iranian city of Shiraz, Persepolis is a wide, elevated complex 40 feet high, 100 feet wide, and a third of a mile long.



Persepolis: A panoramic view of its ruins.

It consists of multiple halls, corridors, a wide terrace, and a symmetrical double stairway providing access to the terrace, decorated with reliefs depicting scenes from nature and daily life. The largest hall in the complex is the audience hall of Apadana. This hypostyle hall has a total of 36 fluted columns with capitals sculpted into unique forms . It famously features the exquisite "Treasure Reliefs"—friezes emphasizing the divine presence and power of the king and depicting scenes from all across his vast empire and his army of Persian immortals .

The construction of Persepolis was initiated by Darius I (550–486 BCE), who also commissioned the construction of a grand palace in the city of Susa. The palace featured imperial art on an entirely unprecedented scale. Materials and artists were drawn from all corners of the empire to work on it. Styles, tastes, and motifs intermingled in a lavish expression of the hybrid art and architecture that was characteristic of the Persian Achaemenid style. This attention to diversity also appears in the reliefs from the hall of Apadana, in which leaders and dignitaries from various provinces appear in regional fashions beneath a frieze punctuated by male lamassus adopted from previous Mesopotamian cultures .



Relief from Apadana Hall, Persepolis: Features 5th century BC carving of Persian and Median soldiers in traditional costume. Note the subtle differences in the clothing and style of the soldiers on each side. The Medians are wearing rounded hats and boots.

The palace at Persepolis stood for nearly 200 years. In 330 BCE, the Macedonian emperor Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) captured the city and allowed his troops to loot the palace. Inscriptions describe a great fire that engulfed "the palace" but do not specify which palace. Scholars believe these writings describe the destruction of Persepolis, based on the condition of the ruins found there. The fire likely started in the living quarters of the former emperor Xerxes I (518–465 BCE) and spread throughout the rest of the city. This event brought an end to the Achaemenid Empire and made Persepolis a Macedonian province.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 4: Ancient Egyptian Art

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4.1: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art

Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art

Ancient Egyptian art is the painting, sculpture, and architecture produced by the civilization in the Nile Valley from 5000 BCE to 300 CE.

Learning Objectives

Create a timeline of ancient Egyptian civilization, marking the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ancient Egyptian art reached considerable sophistication in painting and sculpture , and was both highly stylized and symbolic.
- The Nile River, with its predictable flooding and abundant natural resources, allowed the ancient Egyptian civilization to thrive sustainably and culturally. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments; hence, the emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past. In a narrower sense, Ancient Egyptian art refers to the second and third dynasty art developed in Egypt from 3000 BCE and used until the third century.
- Most elements of Egyptian art remained remarkably stable over this 3,000 year period, with relatively little outside influence.

Key Terms

- **wadi**:A valley, gully, or stream bed in northern Africa and southwest Asia that remains dry except during the rainy season.
- **Ancient Egypt**:A civilization that existed in the valley of the Nile River from 3150 BC to 30 BC. Noted for building the Great Pyramids of Giza.
- **pyramid**:An ancient massive construction with a square or rectangular base and four triangular sides meeting in an apex, such as those built as tombs in Egypt or as bases for temples in Mesoamerica.

Ancient Egyptian art includes the painting, sculpture, architecture, and other arts produced by the civilization in the lower Nile Valley from 5000 BCE to 300 CE. Ancient Egyptian art reached considerable sophistication in painting and sculpture, and was both highly stylized and symbolic. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments; hence, the emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past. In a narrower sense, Ancient Egyptian art refers to art of the second and third dynasty developed in Egypt from 3000 BCE until the third century. Most elements of Egyptian art remained remarkably stable over this 3,000 year period, with relatively little outside influence. The quality of observation and execution began at a high level and remained so throughout the period.

Ancient Egypt was able to flourish because of its location on the Nile River, which floods at predictable intervals, allowing controlled irrigation, and providing nutrient-rich soil favorable to agriculture. Most of the population and cities of Egypt lie along those parts of the Nile valley north of Aswan, and nearly all the cultural and historical sites of Ancient Egypt are found along riverbanks. The Nile ends in a large delta that empties into the Mediterranean Sea. The settlers of the area were able to eventually produce a surplus of edible crops, which in turn led to a growth in the population. The regular flooding and ebbing of the river is also responsible for the diverse natural resources in the region.

Natural resources in the Nile Valley during the rise of ancient Egypt included building and decorative stone, copper and lead ores, gold, and semiprecious stones, all of which contributed to the architecture, monuments, jewels, and other art forms for which this civilization would become well known. High-quality building stones were abundant. The ancient Egyptians quarried limestone all along the Nile Valley, granite from Aswan, and basalt and sandstone from the wadis (valleys) of the eastern desert. Deposits of decorative stones dotted the eastern desert and were collected early in Egyptian history.

The Prehistory of Egypt spans the period of earliest human settlement to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt in ca. 3100 BCE, beginning with King Menes/Narmer. The Predynastic Period is traditionally equivalent to the Neolithic period, beginning ca. 6000 BCE and including the Protodynastic Period (Naqada III). The Predynastic period is generally divided into cultural periods, each named after the place where a certain type of Egyptian settlement was first discovered. However, the same

gradual development that characterizes the Protodynastic period is present throughout the entire Predynastic period, and individual "cultures" must not be interpreted as separate entities but as largely subjective divisions used to facilitate the study of the entire period.

Old Kingdom

The Old Kingdom is the name given to the period in the third millennium BCE when Egypt attained its first continuous peak of civilization in complexity and achievement—the first of three so-called "Kingdom" periods which mark the high points of civilization in the lower Nile Valley (the others being Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom). While the Old Kingdom was a period of internal security and prosperity, it was followed by a period of disunity and relative cultural decline referred to by Egyptologists as the First Intermediate Period. During the Old Kingdom, the king of Egypt (not called the Pharaoh until the New Kingdom) became a living god, who ruled absolutely and could demand the services and wealth of his subjects. Under King Djoser, the first king of the Third Dynasty of the Old Kingdom, the royal capital of Egypt was moved to Memphis. A new era of building was initiated at Saqqara under his reign. King Djoser's architect, Imhotep, is credited with the development of building with stone and with the conception of the new architectural form—the Step Pyramid . Indeed, the Old Kingdom is perhaps best known for the large number of pyramids constructed at this time as pharaonic burial places. For this reason, the Old Kingdom is frequently referred to as "the Age of the Pyramids."



Djoser pyramid: Step pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, Egypt.

Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom of Egypt is the period in the history of ancient Egypt stretching from the establishment of the Eleventh Dynasty to the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, between 2055 and 1650 BCE. During this period, the funerary cult of Osiris rose to dominate Egyptian popular religion.



Osiris: The gods Osiris, Anubis, and Horus, from a tomb painting.

New Kingdom

The New Kingdom of Egypt, also referred to as the Egyptian Empire, is the period between the sixteenth century and the eleventh century BCE, covering the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt. The New Kingdom followed the Second Intermediate Period and was succeeded by the Third Intermediate Period. It was Egypt's most prosperous time and marked the peak of its power.

The Ptolemaic dynasty was a Macedonian Greek royal family which ruled the Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt during the Hellenistic period. Their rule lasted for 275 years, from 305 BCE to 30 BCE. They were the last dynasty of ancient Egypt.

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4.2: The Early Dynastic Period

Art in the Early Dynastic Period

The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization, such as art, architecture and religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic Period.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the common aesthetic practices in the Early Dynastic Period of Egyptian art, including the use of symbolism and color

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Early Dynastic Period of Egypt immediately followed the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt around 3100 BC, and is generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties .
- Ancient Egyptian art forms depicted gods, human beings, heroic battles, and nature, and were intended to provide solace in the afterlife; many of the common aesthetic practices were formalized during the Early Dynastic Period.
- Much of Egyptian art revolved around the theme of permanence, as artists endeavored to preserve everything from the present as clearly and permanently as possible.
- Symbolism , ranging from the pharaoh's regalia (signifying his power to maintain order) to depictions of goddesses, gods, and animals, is omnipresent in Egyptian art. Colors also served symbolic purposes to suggest concepts such as youth, royalty, or divinity.
- The first mastabas were constructed as burial sites for eminent Egyptians and became models for the Step Pyramids that would be developed later in the Old Kingdom.

Key Terms

- **pictographs (hieroglyphics)**:An ideogram that conveys its meaning through its pictorial resemblance to a physical object; often used in writing and graphic systems.
- **mastaba**:A rectangular structure with a flat top and slightly sloping sides, built during Ancient Egyptian times above tombs that were situated on flat land.

The Early Dynastic Period of Egypt immediately followed the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt around 3100 BC. It is generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties, lasting from the Protodynastic Period of Egypt until about 2686 BC, or the beginning of the Old Kingdom.

During the First Dynasty, the capital moved from Abydos to Memphis, with a unified Egypt ruled by an Egyptian god-king. Abydos remained the major holy land in the south. Before the unification of Egypt, the land was settled with autonomous villages. With the early dynasties, and for much of Egypt's history thereafter, the country came to be known as the Two Lands, and the rulers established a national administration and appointed royal governors. The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian civilization , such as art, architecture and many aspects of their polytheistic religion, took shape during the Early Dynastic period.

Many of the common aesthetic practices of Egyptian art and architecture were formalized during this era, as Egyptian society grew and advanced rapidly toward refined civilization. Much of Egyptian art revolved around the theme of permanence, from large architectural structures to writing and imagery of the afterlife. Artists endeavored to preserve everything from the present as clearly and permanently as possible.

A new and distinctive pottery appeared during this time, along with the use of copper, the Mesopotamian process of sun-dried bricks, and architectural building principles such as the arch and decorative recessed walls. Ceramic objects were commonly interred with the dead in tombs. Mundane objects such as plates ensured the continuation of activities practiced in the physical world, while other vessels stored the internal organs of the body after it was embalmed. Open-air temple buildings of the central government were constructed of wood or sandstone.



Ceramic plate (c. 3900 BCE): This is a plate from the Early Dynastic Period of Ancient Egypt. It depicts a man on a boat alongside a hippopotamus and crocodile. In this context, the hippopotamus probably symbolizes chaos and destruction in the form of the god Seth (Set), while the crocodile could symbolize the god Sobek, who occasionally served as a protective deity.

It was also during this period that the Egyptian writing system was further developed: Initially composed of a few symbols, by the end of the third dynasty, it had been expanded to include more than 200 symbols, both phonograms and ideograms.



Sunken relief of the crocodile god, Sobek: Animals were usually also highly symbolic figures in Egyptian art.

While funeral practices for peasants remained much the same as in predynastic times, wealthier members of Egyptian society began seeking something more. The first mastabas were constructed in the form of a flat-roofed, rectangular structure with outward sloping sides that marked the burial site of many eminent Egyptians. These structures became models for the Step Pyramids that would be developed later in the Old Kingdom.

Symbolism is omnipresent in Egyptian art, and played an important role in establishing a sense of order. Symbols ranged from the pharaoh's regalia (signifying his power to maintain order), to the individual symbols of Egyptian gods and goddesses, to animals depicted as highly symbolic figures. The crocodile god Sobek, depicted in the sunken relief below (and possibly in the imagery of the plate above), served a variety of purposes including fertility, military prowess, and protection. On the other hand, the god Seth (also known as Set), sometimes symbolized by a hippopotamus, symbolized chaos and disorder.

Colors were more expressive rather than natural. For instance, red skin painted on characters implied vigorous, tanned youths; yellow skin was used for women or middle-aged men who worked indoors; blue or gold indicated divinity because of its unnatural

appearance and association with precious materials; and the use of black for royal figures expressed the fertility of the Nile from which Egypt was born. Stereotypes were employed to indicate the geographical origins of foreigners.

Art forms were characterized by regularity and detailed depiction of gods, human beings, heroic battles, and nature, and were intended to provide solace to the deceased in the afterlife. Media ranged from papyrus drawings to pictographs (hieroglyphics) and included funerary sculpture carved in relief and in the round from sandstone, quartz diorite, and granite. The art displays an extraordinarily vivid representation of the Ancient Egyptian's socioeconomic status and belief systems.

Architecture of the Early Dynastic Period

The hallmarks of ancient Egyptian architecture took shape during the Early Dynastic Period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the building materials and characteristics of Egyptian architecture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Due to the scarcity of wood, the two predominant building materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and limestone .
- Ancient Egyptian houses were made of mud collected from the Nile River. The mud was placed in molds and left to dry in the hot sun to harden.
- Ancient Egyptian temples were aligned with astronomically significant events like solstices and equinoxes, requiring precise measurements at the moment of the particular event.
- Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors.
- Human sacrifice was practiced as part of the funerary rituals associated with all of the pharaohs of the first dynasty and is clearly demonstrated by retainers being buried near each pharaoh's tomb.

Key Terms

- **Early Dynastic Period**:The period in Egyptian history immediately following the unification of Lower and Upper Egypt, c. 3100 BC; generally taken to include the First and Second Dynasties.
- **tenon**:A projecting member left by cutting away the wood around it, and made to insert into a mortise, and in this way secure together the parts of a frame.

First and Second Dynasties

Due to the scarcity of wood, the two predominant building materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and limestone. After the end of the Early Dynastic Period , stone became used in tombs and temples, while bricks were used even for royal palaces, fortresses, and the walls of temple precincts.

Ancient Egyptian houses were made of mud collected from the Nile River. The mud was placed in molds and left to dry in the hot sun to harden. Many Egyptian towns situated near the cultivated area of the Nile Valley have disappeared, either by flooding as the river bed slowly rose during the millennia, or the mud bricks of which they were built were used by peasants as fertilizer. Fortunately, the dry, hot climate of Egypt preserved some mud brick structures.

Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors. Stone was used in quantity for the manufacture of ornaments , vessels , and occasionally for statues. Tamarix was used to build boats such as the Abydos Boats. One of the most important indigenous woodworking techniques was the fixed mortise and tenon joint, where xed tenon was made by shaping the end of one timber to fit into a mortise (or hole) that is cut into a second timber. A variation of this joint using a free tenon eventually became one of the most important features in Mediterranean and Egyptian shipbuilding. It creates a union between two planks or other components by inserting a separate tenon into a cavity (mortise) of the corresponding size cut into each component.



The stepped pyramid at Saqqara: Large tombs of pharaohs at Abydos and Naqada, in addition to cemeteries at Saqqara and Helwan near Memphis, reveal structures built largely of wood and mud bricks, with some small use of stone for walls and floors.

Tombs and Funerary Practices

Human sacrifice was practiced as part of the funerary rituals associated with all of the pharaohs of the first dynasty. It is clearly demonstrated as existing during this dynasty by retainers being buried near each pharaoh's tomb as well as animals sacrificed for the burial. The tomb of Djer is associated with the burials of 338 individuals. The people and animals sacrificed, such as donkeys, were expected to assist the pharaoh in the afterlife. For unknown reasons, this practice ended with the conclusion of the dynasty, with *shabtis* taking the place of actual people to aid the pharaohs with the work expected of them in the afterlife.

Ancient Egyptian temples were aligned with astronomically significant events like solstices and equinoxes, requiring precise measurements at the moment of the particular event. Measurements at the most significant temples may have been ceremonially undertaken by the pharaoh himself.

Painting of the Early Dynastic Period

The Early Dynastic Period of Ancient Egypt reached a high level in painting and sculpture that was both highly stylized and symbolic.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of painting and sculpture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Much of the surviving art of the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt comes from tombs and monuments, and thus there is an emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past.
- All Egyptian reliefs were painted, and less prestigious works in tombs, temples, and palaces were just painted on a flat surface.
- Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person, a technique known as composite view.
- The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief , which is well suited to very bright sunlight.
- By Dynasty IV (2680–2565 BCE) at the latest, the idea of the Ka statue was firmly established. These were put in tombs as a resting place for the *ka* portion of the soul.

Key Terms

- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **Ka statue**:A type of ancient Egyptian statue intended to provide a resting place for the ka, or spirit, of the person after death. The ancient Egyptians believed the ka (or life-force), along with the physical body, the name, the ba (personality or soul), and the šwt (shadow) made up the five aspects of a person.

Ancient Egyptian art reached a high level in painting and sculpture , and was both highly stylized and symbolic. Much of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments, and thus there is an emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past.

Painting

All Egyptian reliefs were painted, and less prestigious works in tombs, temples, and palaces were just painted on a flat surface. Stone surfaces were prepared by whitewash, or, if rough, a layer of coarse mud plaster, with a smoother gesso layer above; some finer limestones could take paint directly. Pigments were mostly mineral, chosen to withstand strong sunlight without fading. The binding medium used in painting remains unclear; egg tempera and various gums and resins have been suggested. It is clear that true fresco , painted into a thin layer of wet plaster, was not used. Instead the paint was applied to dried plaster, in what is called *fresco a secco* in Italian. After painting, a varnish or resin was usually applied as a protective coating, and many paintings with some exposure to the elements have survived remarkably well, although those on fully exposed walls rarely have. Small objects including wooden statuettes were often painted using similar techniques.

Many ancient Egyptian paintings have survived due to Egypt’s extremely dry climate. The paintings were often made with the intent of making a pleasant afterlife for the deceased. The themes included journey through the afterworld or protective deities introducing the deceased to the gods of the underworld (such as Osiris). Some tomb paintings show activities that the deceased were involved in when they were alive and wished to carry on doing for eternity. Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person—a technique known as composite view. Their main colors were red, blue, black, gold, and green.



Wall painting of Nefertari: Egyptian paintings are painted in such a way to show a profile view and a side view of the animal or person. This painting, for example, shows the head from a profile view and the body from a frontal view. The main colors used were red, blue, black, gold, and green.

Sculpture

The monumental sculpture of Ancient Egypt is world famous, but refined and delicate small works exist in much greater numbers. The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief, which is well suited to very bright sunlight. The main figures in reliefs adhere to the same figure convention as in painting, with parted legs (where not seated) and head shown from the side, but the torso from the front, and a standard set of proportions making up the figure, using 18 “fists” to go from the ground to the hair-line on the forehead. This appears as early as the Narmer Palette from Dynasty I, but elsewhere the convention is not used for minor figures shown engaged in some activity, such as the captives and corpses. Other conventions make statues of males darker than females. Very conventionalized portrait statues appear from as early as Dynasty II (before 2,780 BCE), and, with the exception of the art of the Amarna period of Ahkenaten and some other periods such as Dynasty XII, the idealized features of rulers changed little until after the Greek conquest.



A sculpted head of Amenhotep III: Very conventionalized portrait statues manifest idealized features of rulers.

By Dynasty IV (2680–2565 BCE) at the latest, the idea of the Ka statue was firmly established. These were put in tombs as a resting place for the *ka* portion of the soul. The so-called reserve heads, or plain hairless heads, are especially naturalistic, though the extent to which there was real portraiture in Ancient Egypt is still debated.

Early tombs also contained small models of the slaves, animals, buildings and objects – such as boats necessary for the deceased to continue his lifestyle in the afterworld – and later Ushabti figures. However, the great majority of wooden sculpture has been lost to decay, or probably used as fuel. Small figures of deities, or their animal personifications, are commonly found in popular materials such as pottery . There were also large numbers of small carved objects, from figures of the gods to toys and carved utensils. Alabaster was often used for expensive versions of these, while painted wood was the most common material, normally used for the small models of animals, slaves, and possessions that were placed in tombs to provide for the afterlife.

Very strict conventions were followed while crafting statues, and specific rules governed the appearance of every Egyptian god. For example, the sky god (Horus) was essentially to be represented with a falcon's head, while the god of funeral rites (Anubis) was to be always shown with a jackal's head. Artistic works were ranked according to their compliance with these conventions, and the conventions were followed so strictly that, over three thousand years, the appearance of statues changed very little. These conventions were intended to convey the timeless and non-aging quality of the figure's *ka.*

Sculpture of the Early Dynastic Period

The small-scale sculptures of the Early Dynastic Period in ancient Egypt provide insight into the foundations of Egyptian customs and the unification of the country.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the characteristics of sculpture during the Early Dynastic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Many conventions of ancient Egyptian sculpture developed during the Early Dynastic period.
- The sculpture of Early Dynastic Egypt consisted of small objects carved in the round , in sunken relief , and in low relief.
- The small-scale El-Amra clay model of cattle provides an example of typical tomb sculptures of Early Dynastic Egypt.
- The rich detail of the Palette of Narmer provides an artistic interpretation of the unification of Egypt.

Key Terms

- **hieratic scale**:A manner of depicting figures' sizes as relative to their importance.

The monumental sculpture of Ancient Egypt is world famous, but refined and delicate small works exist in much greater numbers. The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunken relief, which is well suited to very bright sunlight. The main figures in reliefs adhere to the same figure convention as in painting, with parted legs (where not seated) and head shown from the side, but the torso from the front, and a standard set of proportions making up the figure, using 18 "fists" to go from the ground to the hair-line on the forehead. This appears as early as the Narmer Palette from Dynasty I (c. 31st century BCE), but there, as elsewhere, the convention is not used for minor figures shown engaged in some activity, such as the captives and corpses. Other conventions make statues of males darker than females. Very conventionalized portrait statues appear from as early as Dynasty II (before 2,780 BCE).

Early tombs contained small sculptural models of the slaves, animals, buildings, and objects, such as boats necessary for the deceased to continue his lifestyle in the afterlife, and later Ushabti figures. However, the great majority of wooden sculpture has been lost to decay, or probably used as fuel. Small figures of deities, or their animal personifications, are commonly found in popular materials such as pottery. There were also large numbers of small carved objects, from figures of the gods to toys and carved utensils. Alabaster was often used for expensive versions of these, while painted wood was the most common material, normally used for the small models of animals, slaves, and possessions that were placed in tombs to provide for the afterlife.

Tomb Sculpture

The El-Amra clay model of cattle (c. 3500 BCE) predates the Early Dynastic Period but provides an idea of the appearance and production method of tomb sculptures of the time. Cattle more commonly represented a source of blood, rather than meat or dairy products, but likely symbolized a source of food in the afterlife. The model is small scale (8.2 cm high), was fired at a low temperature, and was originally painted. Remnants of linen on the model suggests that it was either placed under a cloth or completely wrapped in one.



El-Amra clay model of cattle: This model was found in a tomb and was likely intended as a symbolic source of sustenance in the afterlife.

Palette of Narmer

The Palette of Narmer (c. 31st century BCE) is named for the pharaoh who unified Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt and founded the Dynasty I. As in the art of many cultures of ancient times, the palette contains hieratic scale , in which Narmer is the largest figure. Narmer's headgear symbolizes the historic unification of the two kingdoms. On the recto (front) side of the palette, he wears the bulbed White Crown of Upper Egypt. To the right is a set of papyrus flowers, which symbolize Lower Egypt. On the second register of the verso (back) side, he wears the more geometric Red Crown of Lower Egypt. The figures on both sides of the palette were carved in low relief.

The recto side of the palette depicts the unification of Egypt as a violent one. Narmer wields a mace in his right hand as he grabs a kneeling man by the hair with his left. The king's right arm is raised in a manner that foreshadows a deadly blow about to be struck to the enemy. Behind Narmer is his servant holding his sandals. In the bottom register, two conquered foes either flee in fear or lie dead or dying. The hieroglyphs to the left of each man's head respectively represent a walled city and the name of a defeated town. Meanwhile, the presence of the cow goddess Bat on the top register and the falcon god Horus to the right of Narmer suggests that the king acted with divine approval.

The subject matter of the verso side is more complex than that of the recto side. Bat once again flanks each side of the top register. On the second register, Narmer marches between his sandal bearer on the left and a procession of standard bearers. To the far right are ten decapitated corpses of vanquished foes. Above them are the names of towns that have fallen to Narmer. The third register depicts two mythological animals whose intertwined necks symbolize the newly unified Egypt and form a recessed area in which cosmetics were ground. On the bottom-most register, a bull tramples a vanquished foe and knocks over the walls of a city. From the epithet "Bull of His Mother," the image likely symbolizes the pharaoh, the perceived son of Bat. In later hieroglyphics , the bull with the bowed head would symbolize force.



The Palette of Narmer: On each side of the palette, the first king of a unified Egypt is depicted as an active conqueror and as a victorious son of divinity.

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4.3: The Old Kingdom

The Pyramids of the Old Kingdom

Known as the “Age of the Pyramids,” the Old Kingdom was characterized by revolutionary advancements in architecture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the layout and function of the Pyramids of Giza

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Old Kingdom (2686 BC–2182 BC) was a period of political stability and economic prosperity, during which great tombs were built for Egyptian Kings in the form of pyramids .
- Early Egyptians built mastabas to mark the tombs of their deceased. The first king to launch a major pyramid building project was King Djoser, who built his famous “Step Pyramid” at Saqqara.
- The Pyramids of Giza are the greatest architectural achievement of the time and include three pyramid structures and the Great Sphinx monument.
- While we know that the stone for the pyramids was quarried, transported, and cut from the nearby Nile , we still cannot be sure just how the massive stones were then put into place.

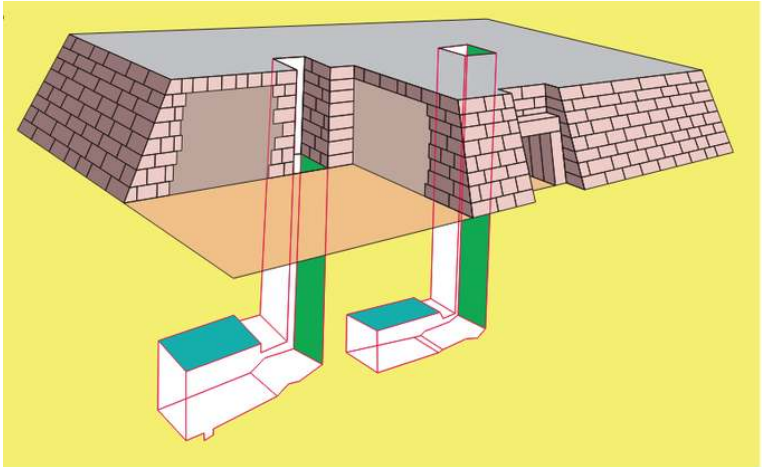
Key Terms

- **mastaba**:A rectangular structure with a flat top and slightly sloping sides, built during Ancient Egyptian times above tombs that were situated on flat land.
- **sphinx**:A creature with the head of a human and the body of an animal (commonly a lion).
- **limestone**:An abundant rock of marine and freshwater sediments, primarily composed of calcite ($CaCO_3$); it occurs in a variety of forms, both crystalline and amorphous.
- **quarry**:To obtain (mine) stone from an excavation pit, usually by blasting, cutting, or digging.
- **Pyramid Texts**:A collection of spells to assure the resurrection of the deceased and protect the Pharaoh from various malignant influences.

The Old Kingdom of Egypt existed from the third through the sixth Dynasties (2686 BC–2182 BC). A period of political stability and economic prosperity, it is characterized by revolutionary advancements in royal funerary architecture. Both Egyptian society and the economy were greatly impacted by the organization of major state-sponsored building projects, which focused on building tombs for their kings. These tombs were built in the form of great pyramids, and for this reason, the Old Kingdom is frequently referred to as the “Age of the Pyramids.”

Evolution of the Mastaba

During the Old Kingdom, royal mastabas eventually developed into rock-cut “step pyramids” and then “true pyramids,” although non-royal use of mastabas continued to be used for more than a thousand years. As the pyramids were constructed for the kings, mastabas for lesser royals were constructed around them. The interior walls of the tombs were decorated with scenes of daily life and funerary rituals . Because of the riches included in graves, tombs were a tempting site for grave-robbers. The increasing size of the pyramids is in part credited to protecting the valuables within, and many other tombs were built into rock cliffs in an attempt to thwart grave robbers.



Mastaba schematic: Inside the mastaba, a deep chamber was dug into the ground and lined with stone or bricks. Over time these tomb chambers sank more deeply and were connected by stairs. The above-ground structure had space for a small chapel to which priests and family members could bring offerings for the soul of the deceased.



Example of a Mastaba: Royal mastabas were used to mark burial sites of many important Egyptians.

Djoser's "Step Pyramid"

The first king to launch a major pyramid building project was King Djoser, who ruled in the 3rd Dynasty. He built his famous "Step Pyramid" at Saqqara, not far from the capital city of Memphis (near modern-day Cairo). In the following dynasties, the pyramid design changed from the "step" pyramid to a true pyramid shape as kings continued to build tombs for their kings. Among these, the Pyramids of Giza are considered the greatest architectural achievement of the time.



Step Pyramid at Saqqara: Djoser's step pyramid was the first of the great pyramids built during the Old Kingdom in Eqypt. Unlike later pyramids, it used a step design that is easily recognized.

The Pyramids of Giza

The Pyramids of Giza, also known as the Giza Necropolis , are one of the oldest remaining wonders of the world. The Necropolis includes three pyramid complexes: the Great Pyramid (built by King Khufu of the 4th Dynasty); the somewhat smaller Pyramid of Khafre (buit by Khufu's son); and the relatively modest-sized Pyramid of Menkaure.



The Pyramids of Giza: This view shows all three pyramid structures: the Great Pyramid, the Pyramid of Khafre, and the Pyramid of Menkaure.

The Necropolis also includes several cemeteries, a workers' village, an industrial complex, and a massive sculpture known as the Great Sphinx. The Great Sphinx is a limestone statue of a reclining sphinx—a mythical creature with a lion's body and a human head. It is commonly believed that the head is that of King Khafra, who ruled during the 4th dynasty. It is the largest monolith statue in the world, standing 241 ft long, 63 ft wide, and 66.34 ft high.



Albumen print of the Sphinx of Giza, partially excavated, with two pyramids in background: The Great Sphinx of Giza is the largest monolith statue in the world and was believed to have been built for King Khafra during the 4th Dynasty.

We still do not know exactly how the huge and impressive stone monuments were built. Most of the stone for the interior seems to have been quarried immediately to the south of the construction site. The smooth exterior of the pyramid, however, was made of a fine grade of white limestone that was quarried from the other side of the Nile River. These exterior blocks had to be carefully cut, transported by river barge to Giza, and dragged up ramps to the construction site. Theorists disagree as to the method by which the stones were then put into place and how possible the method was. It's also possible that the architects developed their techniques over time.

The sides of all three of the Giza pyramids were astronomically oriented to the north-south and east-west within a small fraction of a degree. To ensure that the pyramid remained symmetrical, the exterior casing stones all had to be equal in height and width. Workers might have marked all the blocks to indicate the angle of the pyramid wall and trimmed the surfaces carefully so that the blocks fit together.

The work of quarrying, moving, setting, and sculpting the huge amount of stone used to build the pyramids might have been accomplished by several thousand skilled workers and unskilled laborers. Evidence from the tombs indicates that a workforce of 10,000 laborers working in three-month shifts took around 30 years to build a single pyramid.

Mummification and Burial Ritual

In order to preserve the body and, therefore, the soul of the deceased, Egyptians used the process of mummification. This involved removing the internal organs, wrapping the body in linen, and burying the mummy in a rectangular stone sarcophagus or wooden coffin. Because it was believed that the deceased would continue his or her earthly life in the afterlife, accommodations were made to ensure this transition. The Opening of the Mouth Ceremony was a ritual involving the symbolic animation of a mummy by magically opening its mouth so that it could breathe, speak, eat, and drink in the afterlife.

Many mummies were provided with some form of funerary literature, often consisting of spells and instructions for navigating the afterlife. During the Old Kingdom, only the pharaoh had access to this material, which scholars refer to as the Pyramid Texts . The Pyramid Texts are a collection of spells to assure the royal resurrection and protect the pharaoh from various malignant influences.

Sculpture of the Old Kingdom

Egyptian artisans during the Old Kingdom perfected the art of sculpting and carving intricate relief decoration out of stone.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the role of *ka* statues and funerary art in the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Egyptian sculpture took the form of statues (which were often life-sized) and reliefs (which were carved into blocks of stone). Many sculptures were painted using natural minerals.
- Sculptures from the Old Kingdom are characteristically more natural in style than their predecessors.
- Sculptures, such as the *ka* statues , often served as funerary art , accompanying the deceased in burial tombs with the intention of preserving life after death.
- Reserve heads, found in the tombs of commoners, might have served as an equivalent of the *ka* statue, but the exact purpose remains a matter of debate. The Great Sphinx , located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world.

Key Terms

- **Ka statue**:A type of ancient Egyptian statue intended to provide a resting place for the ka, or spirit, of the person after death. The ancient Egyptians believed the ka (or life-force), along with the physical body, name, ba (personality or soul), and šwt (shadow) made up the five aspects of a person.
- **funerary art**:Any work of art forming, or placed in, a repository for the remains of the dead (such as a tomb).
- **ochre**:An earth pigment containing silica, aluminum, and ferric oxide.
- **monolith**:A large single block of stone used in architecture and sculpture.

Egyptian sculptors created the first life-sized statues and fine reliefs in stone, copper, and wood. They perfected the art of carving intricate relief decoration and produced detailed images of animals, plants, and even landscapes, recording the essential elements of their world for eternity in scenes painted and carved on the walls of temples and tombs. Kings used reliefs to record victories in battle, royal decrees, and religious scenes, and sculptures of kings, goddesses, and gods were common as well. Sculptures from the Old Kingdom are characteristically more natural in style than their predecessors. Toward the end of the Old Kingdom, images of people shifted toward formalized nude figures with long bodies and large eyes.



Egyptian sculpture of the Old Kingdom: This sculpture was created in the Fourth Dynasty, and represents the goddess Hathor, King Menkaure, and the goddess Bat.

The Great Sphinx, located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world, standing 241 feet long, 63 feet wide, and 66.34 feet high. Carved out of limestone , it represents a mythical creature known as a sphinx, with a lion’s body and a human head. It is commonly believed that the head of the Great Sphinx is that of the Fourth Dynasty (2680-2565 BCE) pharaoh Khafre, whose pyramid stands directly behind the giant sculpture.



The Great Sphinx of Giza: The Great Sphinx, located among the Pyramids of Giza, is the largest monolith statue in the world.

While most sculptures were made of stone, wood was sometimes used as a cheap and easily carved substitute. Paints were obtained from minerals such as iron ores (red and yellow ochres), copper ores (blue and green), soot or charcoal (black), and limestone (white). Paints could be mixed with gum arabic as a binder and pressed into cakes, which could be moistened with water when needed.

By the Fourth Dynasty, the idea of the *ka* statue was firmly established. Typically made of wood or stone, these statues were placed in tombs as a resting place for the *ka*, or spirit, of the person after death. Other sculptural works served as funerary art, accompanying the deceased in burial tombs with the intention of preserving life after death. Strict conventions that changed very little over the course of Egyptian history were intended to convey the timeless and non-aging quality of the figure's *ka*.



Ka statue of Horawibra

The Fourth Dynasty also witnessed the production of so-called "reserve heads," plain and hairless naturalistic busts found primarily in non-royal tombs. Each head bears a striking individuality despite many common features, leading to the argument that they were

portraits. Some scholars believe that they were intended as the commoners' equivalent of *ka* statues, although the exact purpose remains a matter of debate.



Reserve heads (c. 26th century BCE): These individualized busts might have been the commoners' equivalent of the *ka* statue, but the exact purpose remains unknown.

Very strict conventions governed the crafting of deity figures, and these rules were followed so strictly that over three thousand years, the appearance of statues changed very little. For example, the sky god (Horus) was to be represented with a falcon's head, while the god of funeral rites (Anubis) was to be always shown with a jackal's head.

In addition to funerary art, Egyptians surrounded themselves with objects to enhance their lives in this world, producing cosmetic vessels and finely carved and inlaid furniture. Over time, Egyptian artists adopted a limited repertoire of standard types and established a formal artistic canon that would define Egyptian art for more than 3,000 years while remaining flexible enough to allow for subtle variation and innovation.

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4.4: The Middle Kingdom

Sculpture of the Middle Kingdom

Innovations during the Middle Kingdom included the solemnity evident in portraits of Senusret III and block statues.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the sculptural innovations during Egypt's Middle Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mentuhotep II was the first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom , restoring stability after a period of pharaonic weakness and civil war. Senusret III is considered to be perhaps the most powerful Egyptian ruler of the dynasty and led the kingdom to an era of peace and prosperity.
- Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures in which he appears careworn and grave. While many statues portray him as a vigorous young man, others deviate from this standard and illustrate him as mature and aging. This is often interpreted as a portrayal of the burden of power and kingship.
- Another important innovation in sculpture during the Middle Kingdom was the block statue, which consisted of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest.
- Aristocratic women's role as art patrons during the Middle Kingdom speaks to their high status and gender equality.

Key Terms

- **deified**:To be treated as worthy of worship, or regarded as a god.
- **Middle Kingdom**:Egypt in the Twelfth and Thirteenth dynasties, between 2055 BC and 1650 BC.

Mentuhotep II

The Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1650 BCE) was marked by the reunification of Egypt following a period of weak pharaonic power and civil war called the First Intermediate. Mentuhotep II restored stability in 2041 BCE after launching an attack that met with little resistance. After toppling the last rulers of the Tenth Dynasty, Mentuhotep II began consolidating his power over all Egypt, completing the process circa 2000 BCE. His subjects considered him to be divine or semi-divine, as suggested in a relief depicting the pharaoh receiving offerings .



Mentuhotep II receiving offerings: Mentuhotep II, seated, holds the crook as a symbol of power.

Senusret III

During the Middle Kingdom, relief and portrait sculpture captured subtle, individual details that reached new heights of technical perfection. Some of the finest examples of sculpture during this time was at the height of the empire under Pharaoh Senusret III.

Senusret III (also written as Senwosret III or Sesostris III) ruled from 1878–1839 BCE and was the fifth monarch of the Twelfth Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom. His military campaigns gave rise to an era of peace and economic prosperity that not only reduced the power of regional rulers, but also led to a revival in craftwork, trade, and urban development in the Egyptian kingdom. One of the few kings who were deified and honored with a cult during their own lifetime, he is considered to be perhaps the most powerful Egyptian ruler of the dynasty.



Head of pharaoh Sesostris III, made of red granite, circa 1850 BCE: Some of the sculptures of Senusret III, like this one, portray him as an aging man—a style that deviated from the standard representation of kings.

Aside from his accomplishments in architecture and war, Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures in which he appears careworn and grave. Deviating from the standard way of representing kings, Senusret III and his successor Amenemhat III had themselves portrayed as mature, aging men. This is often interpreted as a portrayal of the burden of power and kingship. The change in representation as ideological, and not something to be interpreted as the portrayal of an aging king, is shown by the fact that in one single relief, Senusret III was represented as a vigorous young man, following the centuries old tradition, *and* as a mature aging king.



Three black granite statues of the pharaoh Sesotris III, seen in right profile (Twelfth Dynasty, circa 1850 BCE): Senusret III is known for his strikingly somber sculptures.

Block Statues and Women Patrons

Another important innovation in sculpture that occurred during the Middle Kingdom was the block statue, which would continue to be popular through to the Ptolemaic age almost 2,000 years later. Block statues consist of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest and his arms folded on top of his knees. Often, these men are wearing a wide cloak that reduces the body of the figure

to a simple block-like shape. In some cases the cloak covers the feet completely, and in others the feet are left uncovered. The head of the sculpture contains the most detail.



Example of a block statue: Block statues of the Middle Kingdom consisted of a man squatting with his knees drawn up to his chest.

The sculpture pictured below—the fact that a private woman could have a sculpture made for herself—speaks volumes for the equality of gender in ancient Egypt. The heavy tripartite wig frames the broad face and passes behind the ears, thus giving the impression of forcing them forward. They are large in keeping with the ancient Egyptian ideal of beauty; the same ideal required small breasts, and in this respect, the sculpture is no exception. Whereas the natural curve of the eyebrows dips towards the root of the nose, the artificial eyebrows in low relief are absolutely straight above the inner corners of the eyes, a feature which places the bust early in the early Twelfth Dynasty. Around 1900 BCE, these artificial eyebrows, too, began to follow the natural curve and dipped toward the nose.



Head and torso of a noblewoman (Twelfth Dynasty): This sculpture, commissioned by a noblewoman, provides evidence of gender equality among the elite during the Middle Kingdom.

Tombs of the Middle Kingdom

Grand and royal tombs continued to be built for the deceased during the prosperous Middle Kingdom.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the tombs and burial goods of the Middle Kingdom with those of the Old Kingdom.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom restored the country's prosperity and stability, they stimulated a resurgence of art, literature, and monumental building projects, including tombs and burial goods .
- While burial goods continued to be common, objects of daily use were not typically included as they were in the Old Kingdom.
- Toward the end of the Middle Kingdom, new objects were introduced, such as shabtis and scarabs.
- Coffin Texts evolved from the previous Pyramid texts of the Old Kingdom, expanding and introducing spells that were more relatable to nobles and non-royal Egyptians.

Key Terms

- **Pyramid Text**:A collection of spells to protect the pharaoh from harm in the afterlife.
- **Osiris**:The god of the underworld and husband of the goddess Isis in the Egyptian pantheon. He is usually depicted with green skin and wrapped in a mummy's linen.
- **shabti**:A figurine placed in tombs to act as servants for the deceased in the afterlife.
- **sarcophagus**:A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **burial goods**:Items included in tombs that were thought to be necessary in the afterlife, from everyday objects to jewelry and valuables.

Royal funerary practices in the Middle Kingdom remained much the same as in the Old Kingdom, with kings continuing to build pyramids for their burials. Unlike the Old Kingdom, however, Middle Kingdom royal pyramids were not quite as well constructed, and so few of them remain as pyramid structures today. Among the tombs built during this time are Amenemhat I's funerary monument at El-Lisht; Sesostris I's funerary monument; Amenemhat III's pyramid at Hawara, which includes an elaborate labyrinth complex; and Sesostris II's pyramid at Illahun. The construction of pyramids declined toward the end of the Twelfth Dynasty , as instability led to the decline of the Middle Kingdom.

Burial goods continued to be commonplace in tombs. Starting in the First Intermediate period, wooden models became very popular, often depicting everyday activities that the deceased expected to continue doing in the afterlife. The standard coffin was rectangular and brightly painted, often including an offering formula. Unlike the Old Kingdom, objects of daily use were not often included in the tombs; however, they reappeared toward the end of the Middle Kingdom.

Other new objects were introduced toward the end of the Middle Kingdom as well, including the first shabtis (also known as ushabtis) and the first scarabs. Shabtis were funerary figurines placed in tombs of the deceased to help them in the afterlife. Used from the Middle Kingdom until the end of the Ptolemaic Period nearly 2000 years later, most shabtis were of a small size, often covering the floor around a sarcophagus . Exceptional shabtis were of larger size, or produced as a one-of-a-kind master work. They were generally distinguished from other statuettes by being inscribed with the name of the deceased, his titles, and often with spells from the Coffin Texts. Shabtis were created to act as the deceased's servants, performing the manual labor necessary for the plentiful existence of the afterlife.



Shabti figures: Shabti were funerary figurines that were placed in tombs along with the deceased to assist them in the afterlife.

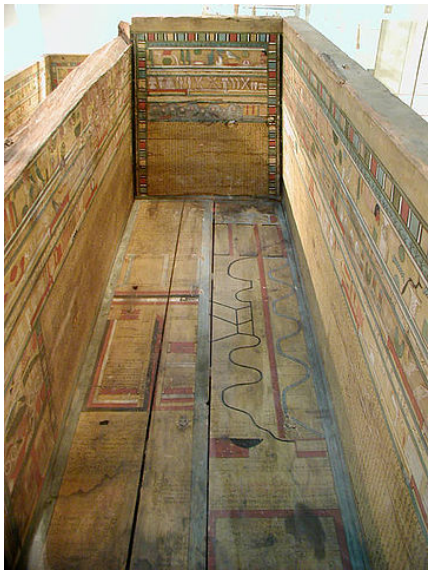
Scarabs were popular amulets believed to be protectors of written products. The scarab was also used as a holder or medium for personal name seals. A figurine of a scarab would be carved out of stone, and then on the smooth stomach of the scarab, the engraving of a seal was made.



A modern imitation of an ancient Egyptian scarab amulet: Scarabs were often included in tombs along with other burial goods as protectors of written products.

Another change in funerary practice during this time had to do with non-royal Egyptians. In contrast to elitist Old Kingdom attitudes towards the gods, the Middle Kingdom experienced an increase in expressions of personal piety and what could be called a democratization of the afterlife. In this worldview , all people possessed a soul and could be welcomed into the company of the gods after death.

In the Old Kingdom, the Pyramid Texts, which contained spells to help the dead reach the afterlife successfully, were only accessible to the elite. During the Middle Kingdom, Egyptians outside of the elite levels of society gained access to this funerary literature and began incorporating it into their own burials. Coffin Texts, as they are called by the scholars, expanded upon the Pyramid Texts, introducing new spells and incorporating slight changes to make them more relatable to the nobility. As seen in the image below, Coffin Texts could appear as paintings or inscriptions on the inside of the coffin. Due to the limited writing surfaces of some of these objects, the spells were often abbreviated, giving rise to long and short versions.



Map of the netherworld from the coffin of Gua, from Deir el-Bersha, Egypt (Twelfth Dynasty, 1985-1795 BCE): The map inscribed in this coffin comprises part of the Coffin Texts intended to help the deceased navigate through the Duat.

In contrast to the Pyramid Texts, which focus on the celestial realm, the Coffin Texts emphasize the subterranean elements of the afterlife ruled by Osiris in a place called the *Duat*. People of all classes had access to this afterlife, in which they would be judged by Osiris and his council according to their deeds in life. This realm is described as containing threatening beings, traps, and snares for which the deceased must be prepared. Spells in the Coffin Texts were intended to help the deceased contend with these impediments.

Stelae of the Middle Kingdom

The stelae of Ancient Egypt served many purposes, from funerary, to marking territory, to publishing decrees.

Learning Objectives

Describe the purposes of stelae in ancient Egyptian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest Egyptian stelae date back to the mid- to late third millennium BCE.
- Stelae are stone slabs that are inscribed, carved, or painted with imagery or text. While most were taller than they were wide, slab stelae took a horizontal dimension .
- Funerary stelae were generally built in honor of the deceased and decorated with their names and titles.
- Stelae also were used to publish laws and decrees, record a ruler’s exploits and honors, mark sacred territories or mortgaged properties, or to commemorate military victories.
- Obelisks , special forms of boundary stelae, were erected in pairs to mark the entrances of temples.

Key Terms

- **obelisk**:A tall, four-sided, narrow tapering monument which ends in a pyramid-like shape at the top.
- **lintel**:A structural horizontal block that spans the space or opening between two vertical supports.
- **funerary**:Of or relating to the interment or commemoration of the dead.
- **stelae**:Stone or wooden slabs, generally taller than they are wide, often erected for funerals commemorative purposes and decorated with images or text.

Egyptians were well known for their stelae, the earliest of which date back to the mid- to late third millennium BCE. Stelae are stone slabs that served many purposes, from funerary, to marking territory, to publishing decrees. Images and text were intimately interwoven and inscribed, carved in relief , or painted on the stelae. While most stelae were taller than they were wide, the slab

stelae took a horizontal dimension and was used by a small list of ancient Egyptian dignitaries or their wives. The huge number of stelae surviving from ancient Egypt constitute one of the largest and most significant sources of information on those civilizations .

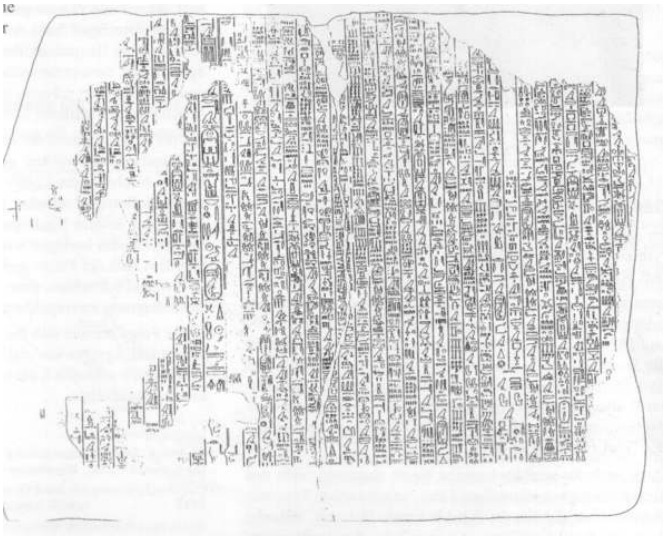
Funerary stelae were generally built in honor of the deceased and decorated with their names and titles. While some funerary stelae were in the form of slab stelae, this funerary stelae of a bowman named Semin (c. 2120-2051 BCE) appears to have been a traditional vertical stelae.



Funerary stelae of the bowman Semin: Funerary stelae were usually inscribed with the name and title of the deceased, along with images or hieroglyphs.

Slab stelae, when used for funerary purposes, were commonly commissioned by dignitaries and their wives. They also served as doorway lintels as early as the third millennium BCE, most famously decorating the home of Old Kingdom architect Hemon.

Stelae also were used to publish laws and decrees, to record a ruler's exploits and honors, mark sacred territories or mortgaged properties, or to commemorate military victories. Much of what we know of the kingdoms and administrations of Egyptian kings are from the public and private stelae that recorded bureaucratic titles and other administrative information. One example of such stelae is the *Annals of Amenemhat II*, an important historical document for the reign of Amenemhat II (r. 1929–1895 BCE) and also for the history of Ancient Egypt and understanding kingship in general.



Annals of Amenemhat II: This drawing represents one of the larger fragments of this stelae.

Many stelae were used as territorial markers to delineate land ownership. The most famous of these would be used at Amarna during the New Kingdom under Akhenaten. For much of Egyptian history, including the Middle Kingdom , obelisks erected in pairs were used to mark the entrances of temples. The earliest temple obelisk still in its original position is the red granite Obelisk

of Senusret I (Twelfth Dynasty) at Al-Matariyyah in modern Heliopolis. The obelisk was the symbol and perceived place of existence of the sun god Ra.



Obelisk of Senusret I: This obelisk is one half of a pair that originally marked the entrance to the temple of the sun god Ra.

Architecture of the Middle Kingdom

When Egypt had military and political security and vast agricultural and mineral wealth, its architecture flourished.

Learning Objectives

Describe the major building projects initiated during Egypt's Middle Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The reign of Amenemhat III is known for its exploitation of resources and construction of the so-called "Black Pyramid ."
- Ancient Egyptian architects used sun-dried bricks, fine sandstone, limestone , and granite for their building purposes, though typically reserved stone for temples and tombs.
- Hieroglyphic and pictorial carvings in brilliant colors were abundantly used to decorate Egyptian structures.
- Senusret III is known for his construction of massive forts to defend the region after his many military campaigns.
- The Karnak Temple Complex is an example of fine architecture that was begun during the Middle Kingdom and continued through the Ptolemaic period.

Key Terms

- **hieroglyph**:An element of an Egyptian writing system.

As the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom restored the country's prosperity and stability, there was a resurgence of building projects. When Egypt had secured military and political security and vast agricultural and mineral wealth, its architecture flourished. Grand tombs in the form of pyramids continued to be built throughout the Middle Kingdom, along with villages, cities, and forts. The reign of Amenemhat III is especially known for its exploitation of resources, in which mining camps—previously only used by intermittent expeditions—were operated on a semi-permanent basis. A vast labor force of Canaanite settlers from the Near East aided in mining and building campaigns.

Ancient Egyptian architects used sun-dried bricks, fine sandstone, limestone, and granite for their building purposes. As in the Old Kingdom, stone was most often reserved for tombs and temples, while bricks were used for palaces, fortresses, everyday houses, and town walls. Mud was collected from the nearby Nile River, placed in molds, and left to dry and harden in the hot sun until they formed bricks for construction. Architects carefully planned all their work, fitting their stones and bricks precisely together.

Hieroglyphic and pictorial carvings in brilliant colors were abundantly used to decorate Egyptian structures, and motifs such as the scarab, sacred beetle, solar disk, and vulture were common.

The “Black Pyramid” of Amenemhat III

The Black Pyramid, the first to house both the pharaoh and his queens, was built for Amenemhat III (r. 1860–1814 BCE). It is one of the five remaining pyramids of the original eleven pyramids at Dahshur in Egypt. Originally named *Amenemhet is Mighty*, the pyramid earned the name “Black Pyramid” for its dark, decaying appearance as a rubble mound. Typical for Middle Kingdom pyramids, the Black Pyramid, although encased in limestone, is made of mud brick and clay instead of stone. The ground-level structures consist of the entrance opening into the courtyard and mortuary temple, surrounded by walls. There are two sets of walls; between them, there are ten shaft tombs, which are a type of burial structure formed from graves built into natural rock. The capstone of the pyramid was covered with inscriptions and religious symbols.

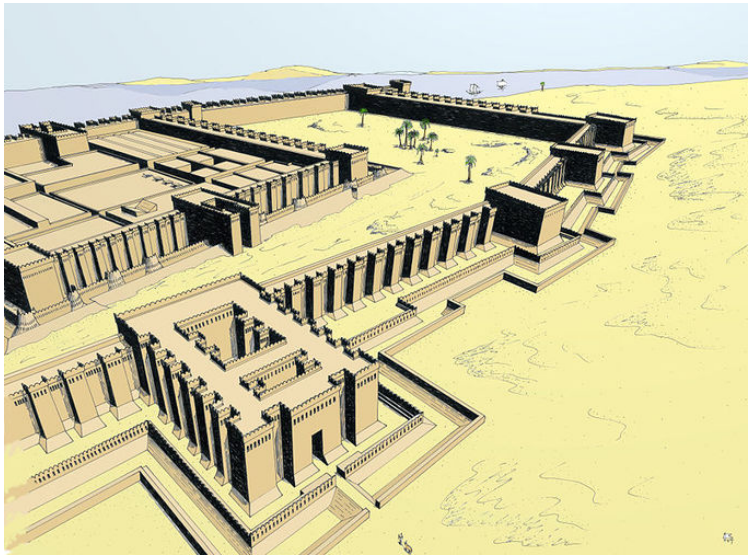


Black Pyramid of Amenemhat III: Middle Kingdom pyramids consist of mud brick and clay encased in limestone.

Workers’ Villages and Forts

Workers’ villages were often built nearby to pyramid construction sites. Kahun (also known as El-Lahun), for example, is a village that was associated with the pyramid of Senusret II. The town was laid out in a regular plan, with mud-brick town walls on three sides. No evidence was found of a fourth wall, which may have collapsed and been washed away during the annual inundation. The town was rectangular in shape and was divided internally by a mud brick wall as large and strong as the exterior walls. This wall divided about one third of the area of the town, and in this smaller area the houses consisted of rows of back-to-back, side-by-side single room houses. The larger area, which was higher up the slope and thus benefited from whatever breeze was blowing, contained a much smaller number of large, multi-room villas, indicating perhaps a class separation between workers and overseers. A major feature of the town was the so-called “acropolis” building; its column bases suggest its importance.

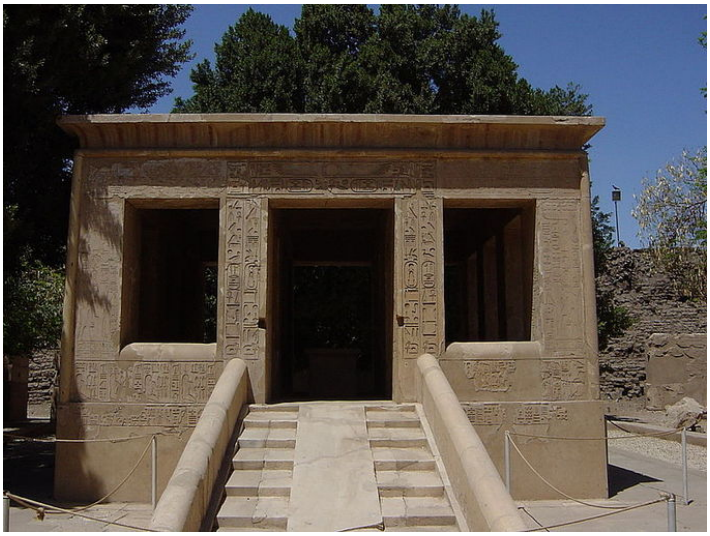
Senusret III was a warrior-king who helped the Middle Kingdom reach its height of prosperity. In his sixth year, he re-dredged an Old Kingdom canal around the first cataract to facilitate travel to upper Nubia, using this to launch a series of brutal campaigns. After his victories, Senusret III built a series of massive forts throughout the country to establish the formal boundary between Egyptian conquests and unconquered Nubia. Buhen was the northernmost of a line of forts within signaling distance of one another. The fortress itself extended more than 150 meters along the west bank of the Nile, covering 13,000 square meters, and had within its wall a small town laid out in a grid system. At its peak, it probably had a population of around 3500 people. The fortress also included the administration for the whole fortified region. Its fortifications included a moat three meters deep, drawbridges, bastions, buttresses , ramparts, battlements, loopholes, and a catapult. The walls of the fort were about five meters thick and ten meters high .



A view of Buhen from the north: Buhen was an ancient fort built by Senusret III during his multiple campaigns. Its moat, drawbridges, and bastions would have provided good defense against enemy attacks.

The Karnak Temple Complex

The Karnak Temple Complex is an example of fine architecture that was begun during the Middle Kingdom and continued through the Ptolemaic period. Built by Senusret I, it was comprised of a vast mix of temples, chapels, pylons , and other buildings. The White Chapel, also referred to as the Jubilee Chapel, is one of the finest examples of architecture during this time. Its columns were intricately decorated with reliefs of a very high quality. Later in the New Kingdom, the Chapel was demolished; however, the dismantled pieces were discovered in the 1920s and carefully assembled into the building that is seen today.



The White Chapel: The White Chapel of Senusret I at Karnak is a good example of the fine quality of art and architecture produced during the Twelfth Dynasty. Its columns hold reliefs of a very high quality, which are hardly seen elsewhere at Karnak.

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4.5: The New Kingdom

Architecture of the New Kingdom

The golden age of the New Kingdom created huge prosperity for Egypt and allowed for the proliferation of monumental architecture.

Learning Objectives

Explain why the New Kingdom is considered the golden age of Ancient Egyptian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Luxor Temple is a large temple complex located in what was ancient Thebes and is known for its use of symbolism and illusionism.
- The Temples at Karnak, part of the great city of Thebes, were constructed as an ancient place of worship for the god Amun. They consist of a vast mix of temples, chapels, pylons , obelisks , and hypostyle halls decorated with elaborate friezes .
- The Temples of Karnak consists of four main parts: the Precinct of Amun-Re, the Precinct of Mut, the Precinct of Montu, and the Temple of Amenhotep IV.
- Although pyramids were no longer built at this time, magnificent tombs were constructed for the pharaohs and powerful nobles of the New Kingdom in the Valley of the Kings over a period of nearly 500 years.
- Among the most famous tombs in the Valley of the Kings are the tombs of Tutankhamun, Hatshepsut, Ramesses, and Nerfertiti.

Key Terms

- **pylon**:A gateway to the inner part of an Ancient Egyptian temple.
- **hypostyle hall**:A structure in which a roof is supported by columns.
- **frieze**:Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

The New Kingdom is known as the golden age of ancient Egyptian history and is the period of Hatshepsut, Tutankhamun, Ramses II, and other famous pharaohs. The wealth gained through military dominance created huge prosperity for Egypt and allowed for the proliferation of monumental architecture, especially works that glorified the pharaohs' achievements. Starting with Hatshepsut, buildings were of a grander scale than anything previously seen in the Middle Kingdom .

Luxor Temple

Luxor Temple is a large temple complex located on the east bank of the Nile River in what was ancient Thebes (today the city of Luxor). There are six great temples: four on the left bank known as Goornah, Deir-el-Bahri, the Ramesseum, and Medinet Habu; and two on the right bank known as the Karnak and Luxor. The Luxor temple was built with Nubian sandstone from south-western Egypt. Like other Egyptian structures, common techniques were the use of *symbolism* and *illusionism*. For example, a sanctuary shaped like an Anubis Jackal was used as a representational symbol of Anubis. To emphasize height and distance and enhance an existing pathway, two obelisks flanking the entrance were built with the illusion that they were the same height—even though they weren't.

Temples at Karnak

This complex is comprised of a vast mix of decayed temples, chapels, pylons, and other buildings. An ancient place of worship for the god Amun, it was part of the monumental city of Thebes. Today, the complex is a vast open-air museum and the largest ancient religious site in the world. The complex consists of four main parts: the Precinct of Amun-Re, the Precinct of Mut, the Precinct of Montu, and the Temple of Amenhotep IV.

The Precinct of Amun-Re, also referred to as the *Temple of Amun*, is the largest of the temples and the only one open to the public today. The columns of its Hypostyle Hall imitate lotus plants and contain elaborate sunken relief .



A panorama of the great hypostyle hall at Karnak: The Precinct of Amun-Re is part of the great temple complex at Karnak.

Almost every pharaoh of that dynasty has added something to the temple site. It features large sandstone columns, several colossal statues, and one of the largest obelisks, weighing 328 tons and standing 29 meters tall. Many of the walls were decorated with richly ornamented friezes.



A panorama of a frieze in the Precinct of Amun-Re: Great monuments and temples were often decorated with elaborate relief sculpture during the New Kingdom.

Located to the south of the newer Amen-Re complex, the Precinct of Mut was dedicated to the mother goddess *Mut*. Hapshepsut helped to restore the original precinct, which had been ravaged during the Hyksos occupation, and had twin obelisks erected at the entrance to the temple; one still stands as the tallest surviving ancient obelisk in the world. The precinct has several smaller temples associated with it and has its own sacred lake, constructed in a crescent shape. Six hundred black granite statues were found in the courtyard to her temple, possibly the oldest portion of the site.

The smaller Precinct of Montu is dedicated to the war-god of the Theban Triad, *Montu*, and is located to the north of the Amun-Re complex.

The Temple of Amenhotep IV was located east of the main complex and was destroyed immediately after the death of its builder, so its full extent and layout is currently unknown.

The Valley of the Kings

By this time, pyramids were no longer built by kings, but they continued to build magnificent tombs. This renowned valley in Egypt is where, for a period of nearly 500 years, tombs were constructed for the Pharaohs and powerful nobles of the New Kingdom. The valley is known to contain 63 tombs and chambers, the most well known of which is the tomb of Tutankhamun (commonly known as King Tut). Despite its small size, it is the most complete ancient Egyptian royal tomb ever found. In 1979, the Valley became a World Heritage Site, along with the rest of the Theban Necropolis .

Hatshepsut

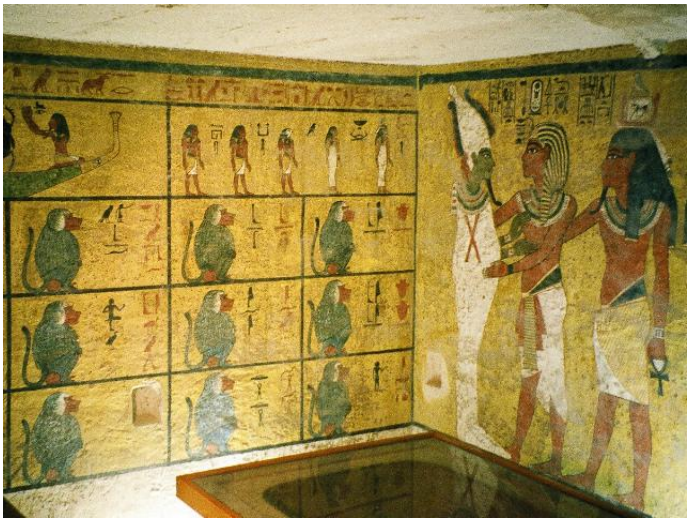
The Temple of Hatshepsut was Hatshepsut's mortuary temple and was the first to be built in the area. The focal point of the tomb was the *Djeser-Djeseru*, a colonnaded structure of perfect harmony that predates the Parthenon by nearly one thousand years. Built into a cliff face, *Djeser-Djeseru*, or "the Sublime of Sublimes," sits atop a series of terraces that once were graced with lush gardens. Funerary goods belonging to Hatshepsut include a lioness "throne," a game board with carved lioness head, red-jasper game pieces bearing her title as pharaoh, a signet ring, and a partial shabti figurine bearing her name.



Colonnaded design of Hatshepsut temple: Hatshepsut's temple is most famous for its Djeser-Djeseru, a colonnaded structure of such architectural skill that predates the Parthenon by nearly one thousand years.

Tutankhamun

Tutankhamun was an Egyptian pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who ruled from around 1332 BC to 1323 BCE. Popularly referred to as "King Tut," the boy-king took the throne when he was nine and ruled until his early death at age nineteen. Tutankhamun was buried in a tomb that was small relative to his status. His death may have occurred unexpectedly, before the completion of a grander royal tomb, so that his mummy was buried in a tomb intended for someone else. His mummy still rests in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings, though is now on display in a climate-controlled glass box rather than his original golden sarcophagus . Relics and artifacts from his tomb, including his pectoral jewels and a red granite lion, are among the most traveled artifacts in the world.



Painted walls in the burial chamber of Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of the Kings, Egypt (late 14th century BCE): Tutankhamun's burial chamber contained beautiful works of art, text, and hieroglyphics.

Ramses II

The Tomb of Nefertari, the most famous of Ramses's consorts, is also located in the Valley of the Kings and is known for its magnificent wall paintings.

The Ramesseum was the great mortuary temple of Ramses II. An enormous pylon representing scenes of the great pharaoh's reign stood before one of the opening courts, with the royal palace at the left and a gigantic statue of the king looming up at the back. Scattered remains of two statues of the seated king can be seen, one in pink granite and the other in black granite, which once

flanked the entrance to the temple. Thirty-nine out of the 48 columns still stand in the hypostyle hall, and part of the gold-and-blue decorated ceiling has also been preserved.



Ramesseum courtyard: The design of Ramses's mortuary temple adheres to the standard canons of New Kingdom temple architecture. Oriented northwest and southeast, the temple itself comprised two stone pylons (gateways, some 60 m wide), one after the other, each leading into a courtyard.

The ancient temples in Thebes were transformed to reflect honor to Ramses's power. Later, Ramses moved the capital of his kingdom from Thebes to the newly established city of Pi-Ramses, which he used as a main base for his campaigns. Dominated by huge temples and the king's vast residential palace, it was complete with its own zoo. Ramses constructed the complex of Abu Simbel and is perhaps best known for his mortuary temple known as the Ramesseum. After his death, he was buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings; his body was later moved to a royal cache , where it was discovered in 1881. It is now on display in the Cairo Museum.

The Book of the Dead

The *Book of the Dead* was a funerary text designed to assist a deceased person's journey through the underworld and into the afterlife.

Learning Objectives

Describe what the *Book of the Dead* was and explain its use in Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The *Book of the Dead* was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom and Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom .
- Unlike previous texts which were written on walls or objects in the funerary chamber, the *Book of the Dead* was written on expensive papyrus .
- There was no single *Book of the Dead*, and works tended to vary widely, perhaps based on the preferences of the people commissioning them.
- The text of a *Book of the Dead* in the New Kingdom was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs , with lavish illustrations between the text.

Key Terms

- **hieratic**:A writing system used in pharaonic Egypt that was developed alongside the hieroglyphic system, primarily written in ink with a reed brush on papyrus, allowing scribes to write quickly without resorting to the time consuming hieroglyphs.
- **papyrus**:A material similar to paper made from the Cyperus papyrus plant.

The *Book of the Dead* is the modern name of an ancient Egyptian funerary text, used from the beginning of the New Kingdom (around 1550 BCE) to around 50 BCE. The original Egyptian name is translated as “Book of Coming Forth by Day,” or “Book of Emerging Forth into the Light.” According to ancient Egyptian beliefs, it was the *ba* (the free-ranging spirit aspect of the deceased) that went “forth by day” into the underworld and afterlife, while the *ka* (life force) remained in the tomb.

Despite the word “book” in the common title, the *Book of the Dead* was actually printed on scrolls, as opposed to bound texts. The text, placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased, consisted of magic spells intended to assist a deceased person’s journey through the *Duat*, or underworld, and into the afterlife. At present, some 192 spells are known, though no single manuscript contains all of them. The spells served a range of purposes, such as giving the deceased mystical knowledge in the afterlife, guiding them past obstacles in the underworld, or protecting them from various hostile forces. In total, the spells in the *Book of the Dead* provide vital information regarding ancient Egyptian beliefs on death, interment, and the afterlife.

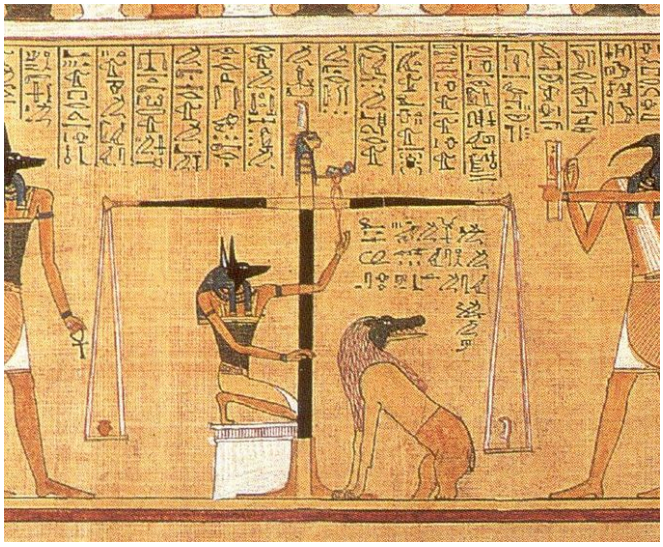
Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts

The *Book of the Dead* was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom and the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom. However, it differed from its predecessors in many ways. For instance, Pyramid Texts were written in an unusual hieroglyphic style , were exclusive to those of royal privilege, and saw the afterlife as being in the sky. The Coffin Texts used a newer version of the language, included illustrations for the first time, and were available to wealthy private individuals. Both were painted onto walls or objects in the funerary chamber. The *Book of the Dead*, in contrast , was painted on expensive papyrus, written in cursive hieroglyph, and saw the afterlife as being part of the underworld. The earliest examples developed towards the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period, around 1700 BCE, and included new spells among older texts. By the Seventeenth Dynasty , the spells were typically inscribed on linen shrouds wrapped around the dead, though occasionally they are found written on coffins or on papyrus.

The Book of the Dead

The New Kingdom saw the *Book of the Dead* develop and spread further. The famous “Spell 125,” the Weighing of the Heart, is first known from the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III (c.1475 BCE). In “Spell 125,” the heart of the deceased must be weighed against the Feather of Truth before the deceased can pass into the afterlife. The jackal-headed god Anubis weighed the heart, while the ibis-headed god Thoth recorded the results. A heavy heart indicated sin and resulted in the deceased being devoured by a crocodile-like creature named Ammit. On the other hand, a lightweight heart equal with the weight of the feather allowed the deceased to enter the afterlife and enjoy an eternity that, although plentiful, required manual labor. For this reason, the *Book of the Dead* included spells for statuettes called *shebti* (later *ushebti*) to perform in the deceased’s place.

From the fourteenth century BCE onward, the *Book of the Dead* was typically written on a papyrus scroll and the text was illustrated with elaborate and lavish vignettes. Later in the Third Intermediate Period, the *Book of the Dead* started to appear in hieratic script as well as in the traditional hieroglyphics. The last use of the *Book of the Dead* was in the first century BCE, though some artistic motifs drawn from it were still in use in Roman times.

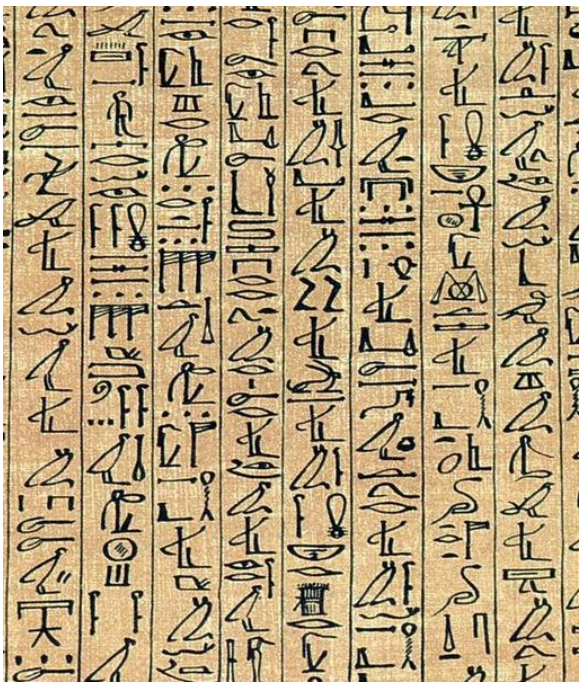


The Weighing of the Heart: In Spell 125, Anubis weighs the heart of Hunefer. This spell is first known from the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmose III, c. 1475 BC.

There was no single *Book of the Dead*, and works tended to vary widely. Some people seem to have commissioned their own copies, perhaps choosing the spells they thought were most vital in their own progression to the afterlife. Later in the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasties, however, the Book was revised and standardized, with spells consistently ordered and numbered for the first time.

Books were commissioned by people in preparation for their own funeral, or by the relatives of someone recently deceased. They were written by scribes, and sometimes the work of several different scribes was literally pasted together. Composed of joined sheets of papyrus, the dimensions of a *Book of the Dead* could vary from one to 40 meters. Books were often prefabricated in funerary workshops, with space left for when the name of the deceased would be written in later.

The text of a New Kingdom *Book of the Dead* was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs, most often from left to right, but also sometimes from right to left. The hieroglyphs were in columns separated by black lines , and illustrations were put in frames above, below, or between the columns of text. The text was written in both black and red ink from either carbon or ochre , respectively. The style and nature of the vignettes used to illustrate a *Book of the Dead* varies widely: some contain lavish color illustrations, even making use of gold leaf , while others contain only line drawings or a simple illustration at the opening.



Cursive hieroglyphs from the Papyrus of Ani: During the New Kingdom, the *Book of the Dead* was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs.

Sculpture of the New Kingdom

Sculpture in the New Kingdom continued in the traditional style until undergoing a drastic shift during the Amarna period.

Learning Objectives

Summarize ancient Egyptian sculpture during the New Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Traditionally, all Egyptian reliefs were painted.
- The Egyptians used the distinctive technique of sunk relief , which is well suited to very bright sunlight.
- Statues typically depicted Egyptian pharaohs, often representing them as gods.
- Amarna art is characterized by a sense of movement and activity in images, with figures being more realistically (less idealistically) depicted.

Key Terms

- **sunk relief**:A type of artwork in which an image is made by cutting the relief sculpture itself into a flat surface.
- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.

Sculpture in the New Kingdom continued in the traditional Egyptian style , with many great works produced by pharaohs over the years. However, during the later Amarna period, it underwent a drastic shift in style to emphasize more naturalistic (and less idealistic) human figures, such as those with drooping bellies. While reliefs and sculptures in the round continued to be painted, the skin tones of male and female figures was now the same value of brown. Some scholars believe that the shift was due to a new group of artists whose training was different from those trained in the traditional methods at Karnak.

Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut's (1508–1458 BCE) construction of statues was so prolific that, today, almost every major museum in the world has a statue of hers among their collections. While some statues show her in typically feminine attire, others depict her in the royal ceremonial attire. The physical aspect of the gender of pharaohs was rarely stressed in the art, and with few exceptions, subjects were idealized. The Osirian statues of Hatshepsut, located at her tomb, follow the Egyptian tradition of depicting the dead pharaoh as the god Osiris. However, many of the official statues commissioned by Hatshepsut show her less symbolically, and more naturally, as a woman in typical dresses of the nobility of her day.



Detail of Hatshepsut (c. 1473–1458 BCE): Hatshepsut is depicted in the clothing of a male king, though with a feminine form—differing from the Osirian statues in which she appears much more androgynous.

Ramses II

Statues typically depicted Egyptian pharaohs, often representing them as gods. In the famous sculptures outside the main temple at Abu Simbel, Ramses II (1303–1213 BCE) is depicted in a row of four colossal statues. Other deities are frequently shown in paintings and reliefs. Most of the larger sculpture survives from Egyptian temples or tombs, where massive statues were built to represent gods and pharaohs and their queens.



Colossal statues of Ramses II outside of Abu Simbel: This famous work depicts four repeating statues of Ramses II, following the tradition of deifying pharaohs.

Amarna Art

The style of sculpture shifted drastically during the Amarna Period in the late Eighteenth Dynasty , when Pharaoh Akhenaten moved the capital to the city of Amarna. This art is characterized by a sense of movement and activity in images, with figures having raised heads, many figures overlapping, and many scenes full and crowded. Sunken relief was widely used. Figures are depicted less idealistically and more realistically, with an elongation and narrowing of the neck; sloping of the forehead and nose; prominent chin; large ears and lips; spindle-like arms and calves; and large thighs, stomachs, and hips. For example, many depictions of Akhenaten's body show him with wide hips, a drooping stomach, thick lips, and thin arms and legs. This is a divergence from the earlier Egyptian art which shows men with perfectly chiseled bodies, and there is generally a more "feminine" quality in male figures. Some scholars suggest that the presentation of the human body as imperfect during the Amarna period is in deference to Aten.



Artist's sketch: *Walk In The Garden*; limestone, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, c. 1335 BC: A relief of a royal couple in the Armana style. The figures are thought to be Akhenaten and Nefertiti, Smenkhkare and Meritaten, or Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamun.

Like previous works, faces on reliefs continued to be shown exclusively in profile. The illustration of figures' hands and feet showed great detail, with fingers and toes depicted as long and slender. The skin color of both males and females was generally dark brown, in contrast to the previous tradition of depicting women with lighter skin. Along with traditional court scenes, intimate scenes were often portrayed. In a relief of Akhenaten, he is shown with his primary wife, Nefertiti, and their children in an intimate setting. His children are shrunken to appear smaller than their parents, a routine stylistic feature of traditional Egyptian art.



Relief portrait of Akhenaten (c. 1345 BCE): Akhenaten represented in the typical Amarna period style.

While the religious changes of the Amarna period were brief, the styles introduced to sculpture had a lasting influence on Egyptian culture .

Painting of the New Kingdom

Painting for much of the New Kingdom continued to follow established conventions. However, significant changes to the human form emerged during the Amarna Period.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Egyptian painting in the New Kingdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- For much of the New Kingdom, paintings continued in the conventions established during the Early Dynastic Period .
- Paintings in tombs continued to be made with the intent of making a pleasant afterlife for the deceased.
- During the Amarna Period, human figures were produced in a more naturalistic and less idealized manner than figures from earlier eras.
- The decoration of Amarna Period tombs for non-royals was quite different from previous eras and clearly worshiped the Aten over other gods and goddesses.

Key Terms

- **Aten**:
  The supreme sun disk that assumed the apex of the Egyptian pantheon under Akhenaten's religious reforms.

Painters for much of the New Kingdom continued to depict the human figure in largely the same manner as their predecessors in previous eras. A significant change, however, occurred during the Amarna Period under the pharaoh Akhenaten (r. 1351–1334 BCE), when the body assumed a less idealized form . While many theories exist as to why this change occurred, the exact reason remains unknown.

TT52

The tomb known as TT52 houses an official named Nakht and his wife Tawy (14th century BCE). Among the decorations are richly colored paintings that depict the couple in the standard 18 fists-high profile pose, frontal torso, outward palms pose. As in

paintings of previous eras, both figures are the same height. Their skin tones also follow the traditions that depict men with dark brown skin and women with light yellow skin.



Nakht and Tawy making an offering: The figures in this painting continue the conventions established during the Early Dynastic Period.

Elsewhere in the tomb, Nakht assumes a more dynamic (albeit still stylized) pose as he hunts and fishes, a convention that also follows the style established during the Early Dynastic Period.

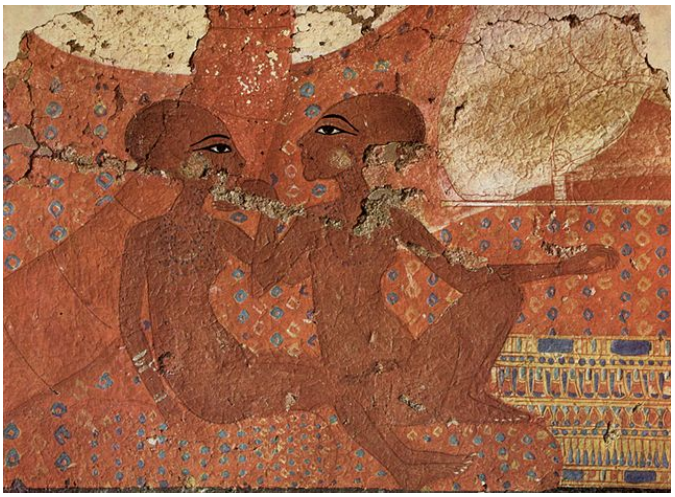


Nakht hunting and fishing in the afterlife: The figures in these paintings convey a sense of dynamism, albeit still stylized as in the past.

During the New Kingdom, religious scenes comprise the majority of paintings in the tombs of the elite. This trend, echoed in the decorative objects in these tombs, is evident in the painting of Nakht and Tawy making an offering . However, scenes from everyday life, such as hunting and fishing, remain an important part of the imagery .

Amarna-Style Painting

Art from this period is characterized by a sense of increased movement and activity in images, with busy and crowded scenes and many of the figures overlapping. Male and female figures are depicted with the same dark brown skin tone, a departure from the past in which women are depicted with lighter skin tones. The human body is portrayed more realistically, rather than idealistically, though at times depictions border on caricature. For example, many depictions of Akhenaten's body show him with wide hips, a drooping stomach, thick lips, and thin arms and legs. This is a divergence from the earlier Egyptian art which shows men with perfectly chiseled bodies, and there is generally a more "feminine" quality in male figures. Some scholars suggest that the presentation of the human body as imperfect during the Amarna period is in deference to the Aten.



Akhenaten's daughters: Following the conventions of the Amarna Period, the figures in this painting have protruding bellies, overlap one another, and appear more relaxed than figures in previous eras. Although the depicted figures are girls, their skin tone is the same as their male counterparts.

Non-Elite Tombs

Although many non-elite tombs from the New Kingdom were plundered, leaving few images and objects for modern scholars to study, it is evident that the decoration was quite different from previous eras. These tombs did not feature any funerary or agricultural scenes. Images of the tomb occupant were also absent, with the exception of instances in which he or she was depicted with a member of the royal family. Decorations from the Amarna Period clearly worshiped the Aten, with excerpts from the *Hymn to the Aten* often present in the tombs. There is an absence of other gods and goddesses and no mention of Osiris or the underworld.

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4.6: Late Egyptian Art

Late Egyptian Art

The Late Period of Ancient Egypt (664–332 BCE) marked a maintenance of artistic tradition with subtle changes in the representation of the human form.

Learning Objectives

Describe art in the Late Period of Ancient Egypt

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Though foreigners ruled Ancient Egypt during the Late Period , Egyptian culture was more prevalent than ever.
- Some sculptures of the Late Period maintain traditional techniques, while others feature more naturalistic attributes.
- One major contribution from the Late Period of ancient Egypt was the Brooklyn Papyrus . This was a medical papyrus with a collection of medical and magical remedies for victims of snakebites based on snake type or symptoms.
- The Thirtieth Dynasty took its artistic style from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.

Key Terms

- **Late Period**:The time of Ancient Egypt between the Third Intermediate Period until the conquest by Alexander the Great, from 664 BCE until 332 BCE; often regarded as the last gasp of the Egyptian culture.

The Late Period of ancient Egypt refers to the last flowering of native Egyptian rulers after the Third Intermediate Period from the Twenty-Sixth Saite Dynasty into Persian conquests, and ended with the conquest by Alexander the Great and establishment of the Ptolemaic Kingdom. It ran from 664 BC until 332 BCE. Though foreigners ruled the country at this time, Egyptian culture was more prevalent than ever. Libyans and Persians alternated rule with native Egyptians. Despite continued conventions in art, some notable changes in the human form did arise. The sculpture (pictured below) of the god Horus as a child (664–332 BCE) represents a combination of the typical stylized stance of Egyptian statuary with a fleshier body and pensive gesture of the right hand and arm.



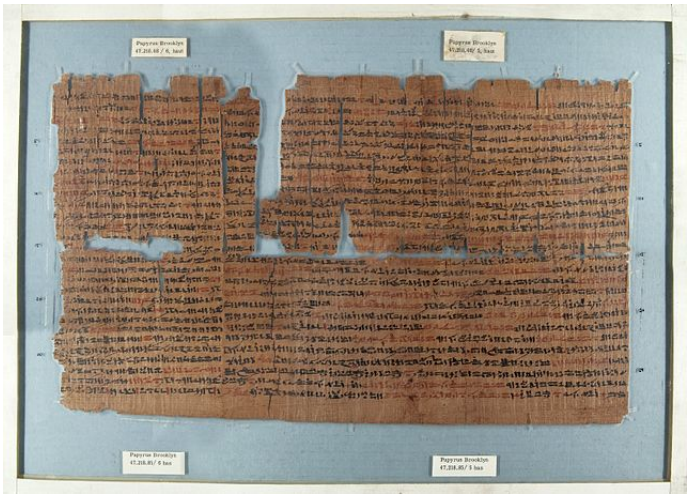
Horus as a Child (664–332 BCE)

The Late Period is often regarded as the last gasp of a once great culture, during which the power of Egypt steadily diminished.

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

The Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, also known as the Saite Dynasty, reigned from 672–525 BCE. Canal construction from the Nile to the Red Sea began. According to Jeremiah, during this time many Jews came to Egypt, fleeing after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 BCE). Jeremiah and other Jewish refugees arrived in Lower Egypt, notably in Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis. Some refugees also settled at Elephantine and other settlements in Upper Egypt (Jeremiah 43 and 44). Jeremiah mentions pharaoh Apries (as Hophra, Jeremiah 44:30) whose reign came to a violent end in 570 BCE. This and other migrations during the Late Period likely contributed to some notable changes in art.

One major contribution from the Late Period of ancient Egypt was the Brooklyn Papyrus. This was a medical papyrus with a collection of medical and magical remedies for victims of snakebites based on snake type or symptoms.



Brooklyn Papyrus (c. 450 BCE): This papyrus provides the most striking evidence for the closely parallel roles of the physician *swnw* and the various priests concerned with healing.

Artwork during this time was representative of animal cults and animal mummies . The faience sculpture below shows the god Pataikos wearing a scarab beetle on his head, supporting two human-headed birds on his shoulders, holding a snake in each hand, and standing atop crocodiles. The style of this sculpture marks a departure from its predecessors in its fleshiness, positioning of its arms and hands, and slight smile.



Figure of Pataikos (664–630 BCE): This glazed faience sculpture of the god Pataikos shows a somewhat naturalistic departure from traditional depictions of Egyptian deities.

Despite the changes that took place in the sculpture of Pataikos, artists continued to use the traditional canon of proportions. A sunken relief from a chapel at Karnak depicting Psamtik III, the final pharaoh of this dynasty, displays the maintenance of

traditional conventions in representing the body.



Relief of Psamtik III at a chapel in Karnak: Despite changes in the sculptures of Horus and Pataikos, this image of the last pharaoh of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty appears in the more traditional stylized form.

Twenty-Seventh Dynasty

The First Achaemenid Period (525–404 BCE) marked the conquest of Egypt by the Persian Empire under Cambyses II. In May 525 BCE, Cambyses defeated Psamtik III in the Battle of Pelusium in the eastern Nile Delta. This basalt portrait bust (pictured below) of an unknown Egyptian dignitary from the period shows little change from convention in the representation of the human form. His necklace is typical of those made in the Achaemenid Period.



Statue of an Egyptian dignitary from the Twenty-Seventh Dynasty: The necklace on this dignitary has been identified as typical of the era of Persian occupation.

Twenty-Eighth through Thirtieth Dynasties

The Twenty-Eighth Dynasty consisted of a single king, Amyrtaeus, prince of Sais, who rebelled against the Persians and briefly re-established indigenous Egyptian rule. He left no monuments with his name. This dynasty reigned for six years, from 404–398 BCE. The Twenty-Ninth Dynasty ruled from Mendes, from 398–380 BCE.

The Thirtieth Dynasty took the art style from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. A series of three pharaohs ruled from 380 BCE until their final defeat in 343 BCE led to the reoccupation by the Persians. Art featuring Nectanebo II, the final ruler of this dynasty, appears largely in the traditional Egyptian style. Except for the small-scale greywacke (sandstone) statue in the Metropolitan Museum, which shows him standing before the image of Horus as a falcon, no other annotated portraits of the pharaoh are known.



Horus and Nectanebo II (360–343 BCE): This is believed to be the only surviving annotated sculpture of the last pharaoh of the Thirtieth Dynasty.

A fragment of Nectanebo II's portrait, with its partial smile and sagging chin, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon, is slightly more naturalistic than previous representations of pharaohs.



Head of Nectanebo II : This portrait features a combination of traditional and naturalistic features.

Art and Architecture in the Kingdom of Kush

The Kingdom of Kush was an ancient African state whose art and architecture were inspired by Egyptian design, but were distinctly African.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the influence of both Egyptian and African art on the art produced by the Kingdom of Kush

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Kushite pharaohs built and restored many temples and monuments throughout the Nile Valley, and the construction of Kushite pyramids became widespread.
- The Kushites used relief sculpture to decorate the walls of palaces and pyramids. The cuts used were deeper and more strategic than Egyptian hieroglyphics . The reliefs mostly depict scenes from African daily life, animals, battle scenes, and kings.
- Kushite portrait sculpture adopts some Egyptian attributes but emphasizes distinctly indigenous features, such as wide faces and unique regalia, hairstyles, and symbolism.
- Pottery was an important Kushite craft and consisted mostly of pots and bowls that were shaped from clay and then painted in many different colors. Common decorative motifs included animals and geometric and plant-based patterns.
- The kings of Kush adopted the Egyptian architectural idea of building stone pyramids as funerary monuments. However, Kushite pyramids were built above the underground graves, whereas the Egyptian graves were inside the pyramid.

Key Terms

- **relief**:A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.
- **pyramid**:An ancient massive construction with a square or rectangular base and four triangular sides meeting in an apex, such as those built as tombs in Egypt or as bases for temples in Mesoamerica.

The Kingdom of Kush was an ancient African state situated on the confluences of the Blue Nile, White Nile, and River Atbara in what is now the Republic of Sudan.



Africa in 400 BCE: Map of kingdoms, states, and tribes in 400 BCE Africa.

Established after the Bronze Age collapse and the disintegration of the New Kingdom of Egypt, Kush was centered at Napata in modern day northern Sudan in its early phase, and then moved further south to Meroë in 591 BCE. After king Kashta invaded Egypt in the eighth century BCE, the Kushite kings ruled as Pharaohs of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty of Egypt for a century, until they were expelled by Psamtik I in 656 BCE. The reign of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty ushered in a renaissance period for ancient Egypt, and art and architecture emulating the styles of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms flourished. Kushite pharaohs built and restored many temples and monuments throughout the Nile Valley, and the construction of Kushite pyramids became widespread. Some of these are still standing in modern Sudan.

Kushite Arts

The Kushite arts were inspired by the Egyptians, but were drastically African. Most remarkable among these was Kushite relief sculpture, which adorned the walls of palaces or pyramids. The cuts that are on the walls are deeper and more strategic than Egyptian hieroglyphics. There are many reliefs scattered across the land of Africa. They mostly depict scenes from African daily life and animals. Reliefs depicting battle scenes or kings are somewhat less common.

Statues of rulers and other royal individuals emphasize the foreign, non-Egyptian origin of their subjects. The *Head of a Kushite Ruler* (c. 716-702 BCE), identified by some scholars as King Shabaqa, depicts a man with a typically round Kushite face. Although his eyes bear resemblance to those of Egyptian individuals in art, his hairstyle and regalia are distinctly non-Egyptian. The front of his headband once featured two cobras. While Egyptian pharaohs commonly wore a single cobra on their headgear, the double-cobra motif was unique to the Kushite culture .

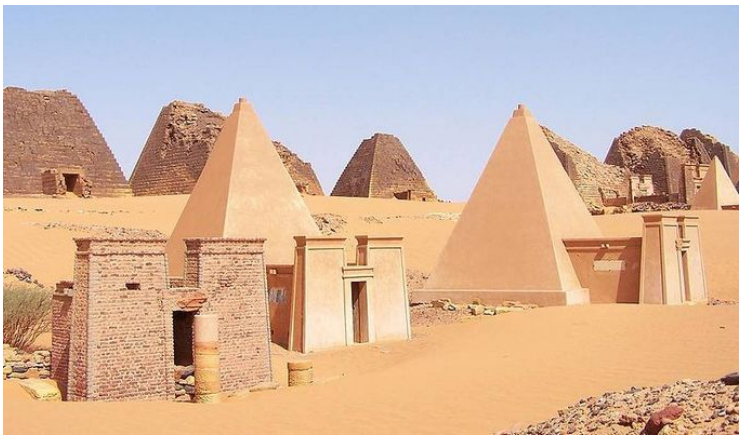


Head of a Kushite Ruler (c. 716–702 BCE): This sculpture combines Egyptian and unique Kushite attributes.

Pottery was another important Kushite craft and consisted mostly of pots and bowls that were shaped from clay and then painted in many different colors. Most pottery was initially made for the wealthy, but later on, many commoners also began using pottery in their households. While decoration usually took the form of painted designs, some types of pottery also had stamped designs. Common motifs included geometric and plant-based patterns. The finest pottery was decorated with paintings of animals, such as giraffes, antelopes, frogs, crocodiles, snakes, and a variety of birds.

Kushite Architecture

The kings of Kush adopted the Egyptian architectural idea of building pyramids as funerary monuments. However, Kushite pyramids were built above the underground graves, whereas the Egyptian graves were inside the pyramid. The kings' tombs were lodged under large pyramids made of stone. For a short time, the Kushite kings were mummified. Ordinary citizens were buried in much smaller pyramids. The most famous examples of Kushite pyramids are located in their capital Meroë. There are three cemeteries in Meroë; the north and south cemeteries are royal cemeteries and house the pyramids of kings and queens, whereas the west cemetery is a purely non-royal site.



Sudan Meroë pyramids : Sudan Meroë pyramids — UNESCO World Heritage.

Egyptian Art After Alexander the Great

Hellenistic art, richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development, characterized culture after Alexander the Great.

Learning Objectives

Describe the major events of the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the key characteristics of Hellenistic art

Key Takeaways

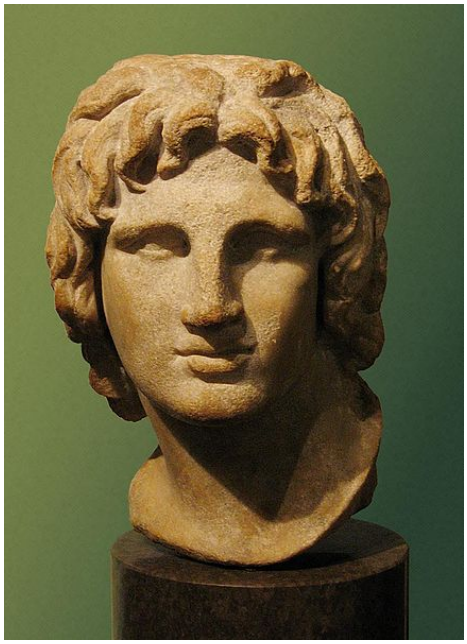
Key Points

- The Ptolemaic Kingdom (332–30 BCE) in and around Egypt began following Alexander the Great ‘s conquest in 332 BCE and ended with the death of Cleopatra VII and the Roman conquest in 30 BCE.
- Hellenistic art is richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development. It was created during an age characterized by a strong sense of history. For the first time, there were museums and great libraries, such as those at Alexandria and Pergamon.
- Prominent in Hellenistic art are representations of Dionysos, the god of wine and legendary conqueror of the East, as well as those of Hermes, the god of commerce. In strikingly tender depictions, Eros, the Greek personification of love, is portrayed as a young child.
- Hellenistic civilization continued to thrive even after Rome annexed Egypt after the battle of Actium and did not decline until the Islamic conquests.
- Portraits of male rulers grew increasingly naturalistic, while those of female rulers and non-elites remained stylized .

Key Terms

- **Hellenic**:Referring to the ancient Greek world.
- **Alexander the Great**:Alexander the Great was a king of Macedon, a state in northern ancient Greece. Born in Pella in 356 BCE, Alexander was tutored by Aristotle until the age of 16. By the age of 30, he had created one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from the Ionian Sea to the Himalayas. He was undefeated in battle and is considered one of history’s most successful commanders.

The Ptolemaic Kingdom (332–30 BCE) in and around Egypt began following Alexander the Great’s conquest in 332 BCE and ended with the death of Cleopatra VII and the Roman conquest in 30 BCE. It was founded when Ptolemy I Soter declared himself Pharaoh of Egypt, creating a powerful Hellenistic state stretching from southern Syria to Cyrene and south to Nubia. Alexandria became the capital city and a center of Greek culture and trade.



Alexander the Great bust: Portrait of Alexander the Great, said to be from Alexandria, Egypt. Marble, second to first century BC.

Hellenistic Art

Hellenistic art is richly diverse in subject matter and in stylistic development. It was created during an age characterized by a strong sense of history. For the first time, there were museums and great libraries, such as those at Alexandria and Pergamon. Hellenistic artists copied and adapted earlier styles , and also made great innovations. Representations of Greek gods took on new forms . The popular image of a nude Aphrodite, for example, reflects the increased secularization of traditional religion. Also prominent in

Hellenistic art are representations of Dionysos, the god of wine and legendary conqueror of the East, as well as those of Hermes, the god of commerce. In strikingly tender depictions, Eros, the Greek personification of love, is portrayed as a young child.



Eros Sleeping (Hellenistic, specific date unknown): Nudity in sculptures of gods like Eros signified an increasing humanization of deities during the Hellenistic era.

Encouraged by the many pharaohs, Greek colonists set up the trading post of Naucratis, which became an important link between the Greek world and Egypt's grain. As Egypt came under foreign domination and decline, the pharaohs depended on the Greeks as mercenaries and even advisers. When the Persians took over Egypt, Naucratis remained an important Greek port, and the colonists were used as mercenaries by both the rebel Egyptian princes and the Persian kings, who later gave them land grants, spreading the Greek culture into the valley of the Nile . When Alexander the Great arrived, he established Alexandria on the site of the Persian fort of Rhakortis. Following Alexander's death, control passed into the hands of the Lagid (Ptolemaic) dynasty ; they built Greek cities across their empire and gave land grants across Egypt to the veterans of their many military conflicts. Hellenistic civilization continued to thrive even after Rome annexed Egypt after the battle of Actium and did not decline until the Islamic conquests.



Nile Mosaic of Palestrina (c. 100 BCE)

One significant change in Ptolemaic art is the sudden re-appearance of women, who had been absent since about the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty. This phenomenon was likely due, in part, to the increasing importance of women as rulers and co-regents, as in the case of the series of Cleopatras. Although women were present in artwork, they were shown less realistically than men in the this era, as

is evident in a portrait of a Ptolemaic queen (possibly Cleopatra VII) from the first century BCE. Unlike its Classical and Hellenistic counterparts elsewhere in the Hellenic world, this sculpture bears a more stylized appearance.



Sculpture of a Ptolemaic Queen, possibly Cleopatra VII (c. 50–30 BCE): Despite a growing naturalism among portraits of male elites, those of women remained stylized.

Among male rulers, portraiture assumed a more naturalistic appearance, even when the sitter was pictured in traditional Egyptian regalia, as in a relief of Ptolemy IV Philopator (r. 221–204 BCE), who wears the traditional pharaonic crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. However, even with this Greek influence on art, the notion of the individual portrait still had not supplanted Egyptian artistic norms among non-elites during the Ptolemaic Dynasty.



Ptolemy VI Philometor (c. 186–145 BCE): In this relief from a ring, Ptolemy VI wears the traditional white and red dual crown of Upper and Lower Egypt while displaying the naturalistic and individualized facial features typical of Classical and Hellenistic portraiture.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 5: Art of the Aegean Civilizations

5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age

5.2: Minoan Art

5.3: Mycenaean Art

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5.1: The Aegean Bronze Age

Sculpture of the Cyclades

Cycladic art during the Greek Bronze Age is noted for its abstract, geometric designs of male and female figures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the form and function of the Cycladic marble figurines

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Cyclades are a chain of Greek islands in the middle of the Aegean Sea. They encircle the island of Delos.
- Cycladic marble figurines of abstract male and female forms have been found at burial sites. These figurines are small, abstract, and rely on geometric shapes and flat plans for their design and would have been painted.
- The female figurines depict a woman with her legs together and arms folded over her abdomen, with her breasts and pubic region emphasized.
- The male figures are often depicted sitting in a chair and playing a harp or a lyre .

Key Terms

- **incised**:To mark or cut the surface of an object for decoration.
- **Cycladic**:Of, or relating to the Cyclades.

The Cyclades are a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea that encircle the island of Delos. The islands were known for their white marble, mined during the Greek Bronze Age and throughout Classical history.

Their geographical location placed them, like the island of Crete, in the center of trade between Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Near East. The indigenous civilization on the Cyclades reached its high point during the Bronze Age. The islands were later occupied by the Minoans, Mycenaeans, and later the Greeks.



Map of the Cyclades islands: A map marking the Cyclades islands.

Cycladic Sculptures

Cycladic art is best known for its small-scale, marble figurines. From the late fourth millennium BCE to the early second millennium BCE, Cycladic sculptures went through a series of stylistic shifts, with their bodily forms varying from geometric to organic. The purpose of these figurines is unknown, although all that have been discovered were located in graves. While it is clear that they were regularly used in funerary practices, their precise function remains a mystery.

Some are found in graves completely intact, others are found broken into pieces, others show signs of being used during the lifetime of the deceased, but some graves do not contain the figurines. Furthermore, the figurines were buried equally between men and women. The male and female forms do not seem to be identified with a specific gender during burial. These figures are based in simple geometric shapes.

Cycladic Female Figures

The abstract female figures all follow the same mold. Each is a carved statuette of a nude woman with her arms crossed over her abdomen. The bodies are roughly triangular and the feet are kept together. The head of the women is an inverted triangle with a rounded chin and the nose of the figurine protrudes from the center.

Each figure has modeled breasts, and incised lines draw attention to the pubic region with a triangle. The swollen bellies on some figurines might indicate pregnancy or symbolic fertility. The incised lines also provide small details, such as toes on the feet, and to delineate the arms from each other and the stomach.

Their flat back and inability to stand on their carved feet suggest that these figures were meant to lie down. While today they are featureless and remain the stark white of the marble, traces of paint allow us to know that they were once colored. Paint would have been applied on the face to demarcate the eyes, mouth, and hair. Dots were used to decorate the figures with bracelets and necklaces.



Cycladic female figure: A Cycladic female figure. Marble. Cyclades, Greece. c. 2500 BCE

Cycladic Male Figures

Male figures are also found in Cycladic grave sites. These figures differ from the females, as the male typically sits on a chair and plays a musical instrument, such as the pipes or a harp. Harp players, like the one in the example below, play the frame harp, a Near Eastern ancestor of the modern harp.

The figures, their chairs, and instruments are all carved into elegant, cylindrical shapes. Like the female figures, the shape of the male figure is reliant on geometric shapes and flat planes . The incised lines provide details (such as toes), and paint added

distinctive features to the now-blank faces.



Cycladic male figure: A Cycladic male figure with the harp. Marble. Santorini, Greece. c. 2500 BCE.

Other Cycladic Figures

While reclining female and seated male figurines are the most common Cycladic sculptures discovered, other forms were produced, such as animals and abstracted humanoid forms. Examples include the terra cotta figurines of bovine animals (possibly oxen or bulls) that date to 2200–2000 BCE, and small, flat sculptures that resemble female figures shaped like violins; these date to the Grotta–Pelos culture , also known as Early Cycladic I (c. 3300–2700 BCE). Like other Cycladic sculptures discovered to date, the purposes of these figurines remain unknown.



Terra cotta figurines (2200–2000 BCE): These bovine figures may be oxen or bulls.



Violin-shaped female figurines (c. 3300–2700 BCE): These flat, abstracted figurines of the female body provide one example of how its representation evolved in Cycladic art.

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5.2: Minoan Art

The Minoans

The Protopalatial period of Minoan civilization (1900 to 1700 BCE) and the Neopalatial Period (1700 to 1450 BCE) saw the establishment of administrative centers on Crete and the apex of Minoan civilization, respectively.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the key elements of the Minoan Propalatial and Neopalatial periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Minoan civilization was named after the mythical King Minos, because the first excavator, Sir Arthur Evans , mistook the many rooms and corridors of the administrative palace of Knossos to be the labyrinth in which Minos kept the Minotaur.
- The Protopalatial period (1900–1700 BCE) saw the establishment of administrative centers on the island of Crete. The identifying features of Minoan civilization—extensive sea trade and the building of communal civic centers—are first seen on the island during this time.
- The Protopalatial period ended in 1700 BCE when the palaces of the island were destroyed and life on the island was significantly disrupted. The unknown cataclysmic event is believed to be either an earthquake or an invasion.
- During the Neopalatial period (1700–1450 BCE), the Minoans recovered from the cataclysm and reached the height of their civilization, eventually controlling the major trade routes in the Mediterranean.

Key Terms

- **labyrinth**: A maze, especially underground or covered.
- **minotaur**: A monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man.
- **Linear A**: A syllabary used to write the as-yet-undeciphered Minoan language, and an apparent predecessor to other scripts.

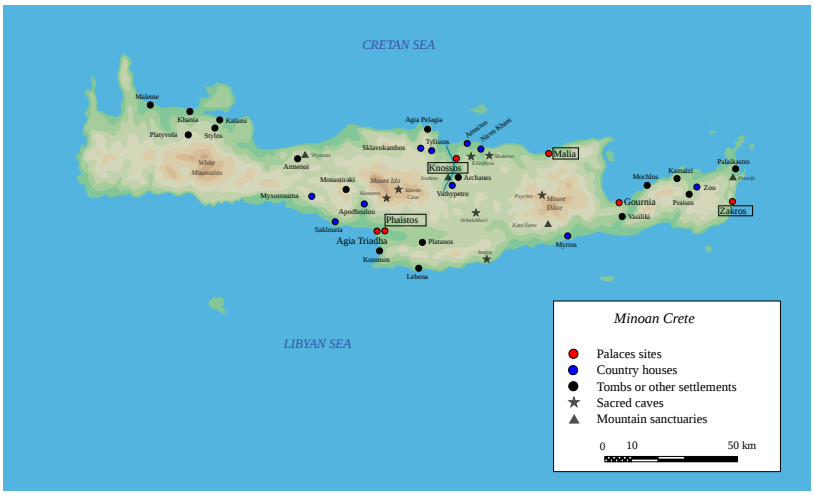
Discovery and Excavation

The ancient sites on the island of Crete were first excavated in the early 1900s by the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans. Evans excavated the site of Knossos, where he discovered a palace. From this fact and related points, he decided to name the civilization after the mythical King Minos.

The many rooms of the palace at Knossos were so oddly shaped and disordered to Evans that they reminded him of the labyrinth of the Minotaur. According to myth, Minos' wife had an illicit union with a white bull, which lead to the birth of a half bull and half man, known as the Minotaur. King Minos had his court artist and inventor, Daedalus, build an inescapable labyrinth for the Minotaur to live in.

Archaeological evidence dates the arrival of the earliest inhabitants of Crete in approximately 6000 BCE. Over the next four thousand years the inhabitants developed a civilization based on agriculture, trade, and production. The Minoan's civilization on Crete existed during the Bronze Age , from 3000 to 1100 BCE , although the Mycenaeans from Greece invaded the island in the mid-1400s BCE and occupied it for the last centuries before the Greek Dark Age.

The Minoans were known as great seafarers. They traded extensively throughout the Mediterranean region.



Map of Minoan Crete: A map of Minoan Crete.

Protopalatial Period

The Protopalatial Period is considered the civilization's second phase of development, lasting from 1900 to 1700 BCE. During this time the major sites on the island were developed, including the palatial sites of Knossos, Phaistos, and Kato Zakros, which were the first palaces or administrative centers built on Crete.

These civic centers appear to denote the emergence of a collective community governing system, instead of system in which a king ruled over each town. During this period the Minoan trade network expanded into Egypt and the Near East; the first signs of writing, the still undeciphered language Linear A , appear. The period ended with a cataclysmic event, perhaps an earthquake or an invasion, which destroyed the palace centers.

Neopalatial Period

The Neopalatial period occurred from 1700 to 1450 BCE, during which time the Minoans saw the height of their civilization. Following the destruction of the first palaces in approximately 1700 BCE, the Minoans rebuilt these centers into the palaces that were first excavated by Sir Arthur Evans.

During this period, Minoan trade increased and the Minoans were considered to rule the Mediterranean trading routes between Greece, Egypt, Anatolia , the Near East, and perhaps even Spain. The Minoans began to settle in colonies away from Crete, including on the islands of the Cyclades, Rhodes, and in Egypt.

Minoan Architecture

Minoan palace centers were divided into numerous zones for civic, storage, and production purposes; they also had a central, ceremonial courtyard.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the architectural design of Minoan palaces

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The palaces excavated on Crete functioned more as administrative centers with rooms for civic functions, storage, workshops, and shrines located around a central, ceremonial courtyard.
- The palaces have no fortification walls, suggesting a lack of enemies and conflict, although the natural surroundings provide a high level of protection, and the multitude of rooms creates a continuous, protective façade .
- Minoan columns were uniquely shaped, constructed from wood, and painted. They are tapered at the bottom, larger at the top, and fitted with a bulbous, pillow-like capital .
- The complex at Phaistos bears many similarities with its counterpart at Knossos, although it is smaller.
- Minoan builders rebuilt new complexes atop older ones in the aftermath of damaging earthquakes.

Key Terms

- **pithoi**: (Singular: pithos) Large storage jars for liquids—oil, wine, and water—and grains.
- **labyrinth**: A maze, especially underground or covered.
- **fresco**: A water-based painting applied to wet or dry plaster.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.

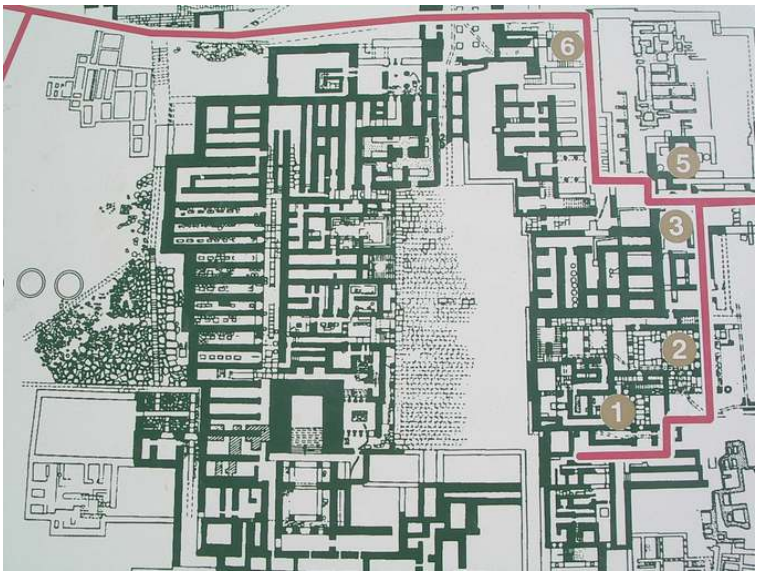
The most well known and excavated architectural buildings of the Minoans were the administrative palace centers.

When Sir Arthur Evans first excavated at Knossos, not only did he mistakenly believe he was looking at the legendary labyrinth of King Minos, he also thought he was excavating a palace. However, the small rooms and excavation of large pithoi , storage vessels , and archives led researchers to believe that these palaces were actually administrative centers. Even so, the name became ingrained, and these large, communal buildings across Crete are known as palaces.

Although each one is unique, they share similar features and functions. The largest and oldest palace centers are at Knossos, Malia, Phaistos, and Kato Zakro.

The Complex at Knossos

The complex at Knossos provides an example of the monumental architecture built by the Minoans. The most prominent feature on the plan is the palace's large, central courtyard. This courtyard may have been the location of large ritual events, including bull leaping, and a similar courtyard is found in every Minoan palace center.



Plan of the palace at Knossos: An overview map of the palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece, circa 1700–1400 BCE.

Several small tripartite shrines surround the courtyard. The numerous corridors and rooms of the palace center create multiple areas for storage, meeting rooms, shrines, and workshops.

The absence of a central room and living chambers suggest the absence of a king and, instead, the presence and rule of a strong, centralized government.

The palaces also have multiple entrances that often take long paths to reach the central courtyard or a set of rooms. There are no fortification walls, although the multitude of rooms creates a protective, continuous façade. While this provides some level of fortification, it also provides structural stability for earthquakes. Even without a wall, the rocky and mountainous landscape of Crete and its location as an island creates a high level of natural protection.



Restored north portico: The rocky and mountainous landscape of Crete creates a high level of natural protection.

The palaces are organized not only into zones along a horizontal plain, but also have multiple stories. Grand staircases, decorated with columns and frescos , connect to the upper levels of the palaces, only some parts of which survive today.

Wells for light and air provide ventilation and light. The Minoans also created careful drainage systems and wells for collecting and storing water, as well as sanitation.

Their architectural columns are uniquely constructed and easily identified as Minoan. They are constructed from wood, as opposed to stone, and are tapered at the bottom. They stood on stone bases and had large, bulbous tops, now known as cushion capitals. The Minoans painted their columns bright red and the capitals were often painted black.



Restored interior stairwell: Palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece. Circa 1700–1400 BCE.

Phaistos

Phaistos was inhabited from about 4000 BCE. A palatial complex, dating from the Middle Bronze Age , was destroyed by an earthquake during the Late Bronze Age. Knossos, along with other Minoan sites, was destroyed at that time. The palace was rebuilt toward the end of the Late Bronze Age.

The first palace was built about 2000 BCE. This section is on a lower level than the west courtyard and has a nice facade with a plastic outer shape, a cobbled courtyard, and a tower ledge with a ramp that leads up to a higher level.

The old palace was destroyed three times in a time period of about three centuries. After the first and second disaster, reconstruction and repairs were made, so there are three, identifiable construction phases. Around 1400 BCE, the invading Achaeans destroyed Phaistos, as well as Knossos. The palace appears to have been unused thereafter.

The Old Palace was built in the Protopalatial period. When the palace was destroyed by earthquakes, new structures were built atop the old. In one of the three hills of the area, remains from the Neolithic era and the Early Minoan period have been found.

Two additional palaces were built during the Middle and Late Minoan periods. The older one looks like the palace at Knossos, although the Phaistos complex is smaller. On its ruins (probably destroyed by an earthquake around 1600 BCE), the Late-Minoan builders constructed a larger palace had several rooms separated by columns.

Like the complex at Knossos, the complex at Phaistos is arranged around a central courtyard and held grand staircases that led to areas believed to be a theater, ceremonial spaces , and official apartments. Materials such as gypsum and alabaster added to the luxurious appearance of the interior.



View of the complex at Phaistos from the south: A view of the ruins of the complex at Phaistos.

Minoan Painting

Minoan painting is distinguished by its vivid colors and curvilinear shapes that bring a liveliness and vitality to scenes.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between Kamares ware and Marine-style vase painting, and describe Minoan wall paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The fresco known as Bull Leaping, found in the palace of Knossos, is one of the seminal Minoan paintings. It depicts the Minoan culture ‘s fascination with the bull and the unique event of bull leaping—all painted in the distinctive Minoan style .
- The Minoan city of Akrotiri on the island of Thera was destroyed by a volcanic eruption that preserved the wall paintings in the town’s homes. One fresco, known as Flotilla, depicts a highly developed society.
- Kamares ware is pottery made from a fine clay. These vessels are painted with marine scenes and abstract flowers, shapes, and geometric lines .
- Marine-style vase painting depicts marine life and scenes with organic shapes that fill the entire surface of the pot, using a technique known as horror vacui . Unlike Kamares ware, Marine-style scenes are painted in dark colors on a light surface.

Key Terms

- **horror vacui**: Latin, meaning fear of empty space; this is also the name for a style of painting when the entire surface of a space is filled with patterns and figures.
- **fresco**:In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to plaster.
- **buon fresco**:A more durable mural painting technique in which alkaline resistant pigments, ground in water, are applied to plaster when it is still wet, as opposed to fresco-secco when the plaster has been allowed to dry and is remoistened.

Wall Painting

The Minoans decorated their palace complexes and homes with fresco wall paintings. Buon fresco is a form of painting where the pigment is painted onto a wet limestone plaster. When the plaster dries the painting also dries, becoming an integral part of the wall.

In the Minoan variation, the stone walls are first covered with a mixture of mud and straw, then thinly coated with lime plaster, and lastly with layers of fine plaster. The Minoans had a distinct painting style with shapes formed by curvilinear lines that add a feeling of liveliness to the paintings. The Minoan color palette is based in earth tones of white, brown, red, and yellow. Black and vivid blue are also used. These color combinations create vivid and rich decoration.

Because the Minoan alphabet, known as Linear A , has yet to be deciphered, scholars must rely on the culture's visual art to provide insights into Minoan life. The frescoes discovered in locations such as Knossos and Akrotiri inform us of the plant and animal life of the islands of Crete and Thera (Santorini), the common styles of clothing, and the activities the people practiced. For example, men wore kilts and loincloths. Women wore short-sleeve dresses with flounced skirts whose bodices were open to the navel, allowing their breasts to be exposed.



Fresco depicting three women: This fresco from the complex at Knossos depicts a popular fashion for Minoan women.

Knossos

Fragments of frescoes found at Knossos provide us with glimpses into Minoan culture and rituals . A fresco found on an upper story of the palace has come to be known as Bull Leaping. The image depicts a bull in flying gallop with one person at his horns, another at his feet, and a third, whose skin color is brown instead of white, inverted in a handstand leaping over the bull.

While the different skin color of the figures may differentiate male (dark) and female (light) figures, the similarity of their clothing and body shapes (lean with few curves) suggest that the figures may all be male. The figures participate in an activity known as bull-leaping.

The human figures are stylized with narrow waists, broad shoulders, long, slender, muscular legs, and cylindrical arms. Unlike the twisted perspective seen in Egyptian or Ancient Near Eastern works of art, these figures are shown in full profile, an element the adds to the air of liveliness.



Bull Leaping : A fresco found on an upper story of the palace at Knossos, Crete, Greece. Circa 1450–1400 BCE.

Although the specifics of bull leaping remain a matter of debate, it is commonly interpreted as a ritualistic activity performed in connection with bull worship. In most cases, the leaper would literally grab a bull by his horns, which caused the bull to jerk his neck upwardly. This jerking motion gave the leaper the momentum necessary to perform somersaults and other acrobatic tricks or stunts.

Bull Leaping appears to divide these steps between two participants, with a third extending his arms, possibly to catch the leaper.

Thera

The Minoans settled on other islands besides Crete, including the volcanic, Cycladic island of Thera (present-day Santorini). The volcano on Thera erupted in mid-second millennium BCE and destroyed the Minoan city of Akrotiri. Akrotiri was entombed by pumice and ash and since its rediscovery has been referred to as the Minoan Pompeii. The frescoes on Akrotiri were preserved by the blanketing volcanic ash.

The wall paintings found on Thera provide significant information about Minoan life and culture, depicting a highly developed society. A fresco commonly called Flotilla or Akrotiri Ship Procession represents a culture adept at a variety of seafaring occupations.

Differences in clothing styles could refer to different ranks and roles in society. Deer, dolphins, and large felines point to a sense of biodiversity among the islands of the Minoan civilization .



Flotilla or Akrotiri Ship Procession: This panoramic fresco depicts the Minoans as a highly developed civilization.

In one room is a wall painting known as the Landscape with Swallows, or as the Spring Fresco. It depicts a whimsical, hilly landscape with lilies sprouting from the ground . Sparrows, painted in blue, white, and red, swoop around the landscape. The lilies sway gracefully and the hills create an undulating rhythm around the room. The fresco does not depict a naturalistic landscape, but instead depicts an essence of the land and nature, whose liveliness is enhanced through the colors and curvilinear lines.



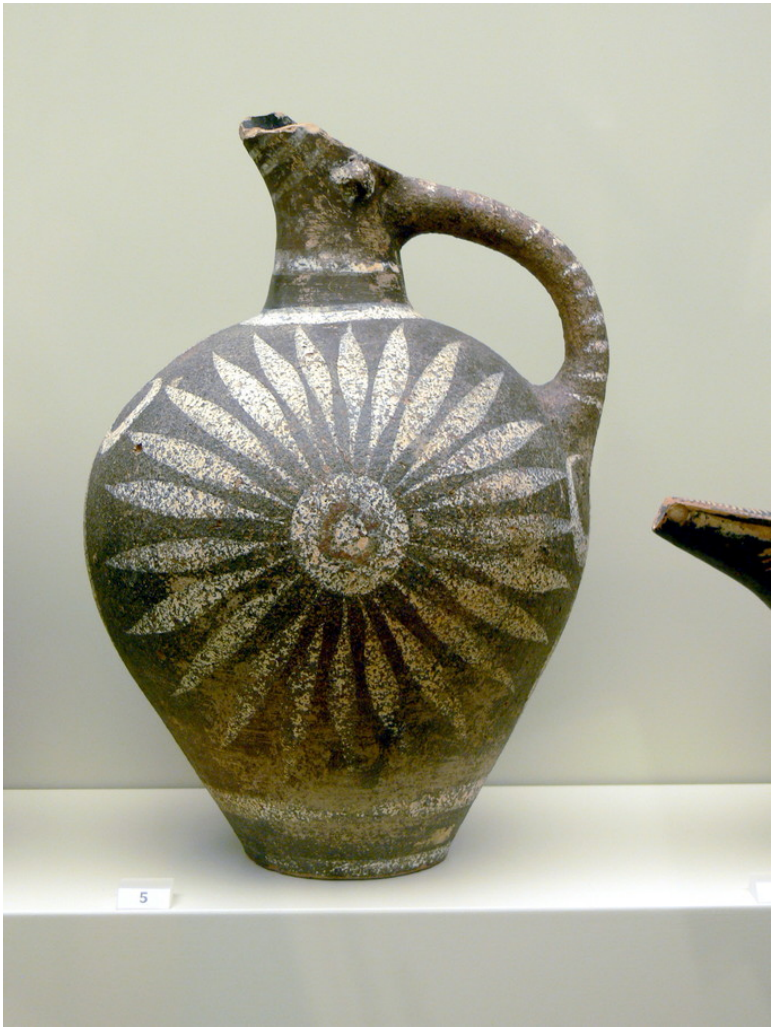
Landscape with Sparrows, or Spring Fresco: Akrotiri, Thera, Greece. c. 1650 BCE.

Vase Painting

Minoan ceramics and vase painting are uniquely stylized and are similar in artistic style to Minoan wall painting. As with Minoan frescoes, themes from nature and marine life are often depicted on their pottery. Similar earth-tone colors are used, including black, white, brown, red, and blue.

Kamares ware, a distinctive type of pottery painted in white, red, and blue over a black backdrop, is created from a fine clay. The paintings depict marine scenes, as well as abstract floral shapes, and they often include abstract lines and shapes, including spirals and waves.

These stylized, floral shapes include lilies, palms, papyrus , and leaves that fill the entire surface of the pot with bold designs. The pottery is named for the location where it was first found in the late nineteenth century—a cave sanctuary at Kamares, on Mount Ida. This style of pottery is found throughout the island of Crete as well in a variety of locations on the Mediterranean.



Kamares ware vessel: This is a Kamares ware vessel with an abstract floral design. Minoan, circa 2100–1700 BCE.

The Marine style emerged during the late Minoan period. As the name suggests, the decorations on these vessels take their cue from the sea. The vessels are almost entirely covered with sea creatures such as dolphins, fish, and octopi, along with seaweed, rock, and sponges.

Unlike their Kamares ware predecessors, the light and dark color scheme is inverted: the figures are dark on a light background. Like the landscape frescoes at Thera, these paintings demonstrate a keen understanding and intimate knowledge of the marine environment.

In the Marine-style Octopus Vase from the city of Palaikastro, the octopus wraps around the jug, mimicking and accentuating its round shape. The octopus is painted in great detail, from each of its distinct stylized suckers to its bulbous head and the extension of its long tentacles. The surface of this vessel is covered by the main image; bits of seaweed fill the negative space .

This filling of the empty space with additional images or designs is another characteristic of Minoan Marine-style pottery. The style is known as horror vacui, which is Latin for fear of empty space. The same aesthetic is seen later, in Greek Geometric pottery.



Octopus vase: Octopus vase from Palaikastro, Crete, Greece. Circa 1500 BCE.

Minoan Sculpture

Minoan sculpture consists of figurines that reflect the culture's artistic style and important aspects of daily life.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of Minoan sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Most known Minoan sculptures are small scale. They range from single figures, often frontal, to figure groups that include both people and animals. The wide variety of materials used for these figurines represent the extent of the Minoan trade network throughout the Mediterranean.
- The Snake Goddess statue from Knossos represents an important female figure in Minoan culture . Due to her connection with snakes and felines, as well as her bare breasts, she is perhaps an earth goddess or a Minoan priestess.
- The Bull Leaper demonstrates the Minoan use of bronze in art as well as highlighting the importance of the bull in Minoan sculpture and artistic style .
- An ivory bull leaper from Knossos demonstrates another position the acrobat's body assumed during the act.
- The Palaikastro Kouros is a rare example of a large-scale Minoan sculpture. Its size and rare materials lead experts to believe that it was used as a cult image.

Key Terms

- **lost-wax casting**:The most common method of using molten metal to make hollow, one-of-a-kind sculptures. When heat is applied to the clay mold, the wax layer within melts and forms channels, which the artist then fills with molten metal.
- **faience**:A low-fired, opaque, quartz ceramic that creates a glass-like material in bright shades of blue, green, white, and brown that originates from Ancient Egypt.
- **chthonic**:Dwelling within or under the earth.
- **curvilinear**:Having bends; curved; formed by curved lines.

As with their painting, Minoan sculpture demonstrates stylistic conventions including curvilinear forms; active, energized scenes; and long-limbed humans with broad shoulders and narrow waists. Women are often depicted in large, long, layered skirts that accentuate their hips. So far, the majority of sculptures and figurines found during Minoan excavations have been small scale.



Minoan Woman, c. 1600-1500 BCE.: Bronze. Crete.

Materials

The small-scale sculptures of the Minoans were produced in many different materials including ivory, gold, faience , and bronze. The variety of materials acknowledges the extensive trade network established by the Minoans. For instance, faience, an quartz ceramic , is an Egyptian material. Its presence in sculpture found on Crete demonstrates that the material was shipped raw from Egypt to Crete, where it was then formed to create Minoan sculpture.

Bronze was an important material in Minoan culture and many figurines were produced in this medium , mostly created using the lost-wax casting technique.

Snake Goddess

One figurine, known as the Snake Goddess , depicts a woman with open arms who holds a snake in each hand, with a feline sitting on her head. The purpose or function of the statue is unknown, although it is believed that she may have been an earth goddess or priestess.

The snakes are considered chthonic animals—related to the earth and the ground—and are often symbols of earth deities . Furthermore, the Snake Goddess is dressed in a layered skirt with a tight bodice, covered shoulders, and exposed breasts. The prominence of her breasts may suggest that she is fertility figure. Although her function remains unknown, the figure's significance to the culture is unquestionable.



Snake Goddess, circa 1600 BCE.: Palace at Knossos, Knossos, Crete.

Other figures in similar poses and outfits have also been found among Minoan ruins.

Bull Leaper

The Bull Leaper bronze, depicting a bull and an acrobat, was created as a single group. The figures are similar in style and position, as seen in several bull-leaping frescoes , including one from the palatial complex at Knossos.



Bull Leaper, circa 1550–1450 BCE.: Bronze. Southwest Crete.

The bull stands frozen in a flying gallop, while a leaper appears to be flipping over his back. The acrobat's feet are planted firmly on the bull's rump, and the figure bends backwards with its arms planted on the bull's head, perhaps preparing to launch off of the bull. The two figures, bull and man, mirror each other, as the bull's back sways in the gallop and the man's back is arched in a deep back bend.

In another sculpture of a bull leaper (c. 1500 BCE), the acrobat is frozen in a forward-facing mid-somersault position. This ivory sculpture from Knossos is the only complete surviving figure from a larger arrangement and is the earliest three-dimensional representation of the bull leap. Experts believe that thin gold wires were used to suspend the figure over a bull.



Bull Leaper, circa 1500 BCE.: Sculpted from ivory. Knossos, Greece.

The figures are made with curvilinear lines and the positioning of both figures adds a high degree of movement and action that was commonly found in Minoan art.

Palaikastro Kouros

While most known Minoan sculpture is small scale, at least one sculpture serves as an exception to this rule. The so-called Palaikastro Kouros (not to be confused with the stylized male sculptures of ancient Greece), which dates to the Late Minoan period (late fifteenth century BCE), stands at almost 20 inches (50 cm) tall.

It is an example of a Chryselephantine sculpture: it consists of a wooden frame, with thin carved slabs of ivory attached to represent the flesh. Sheets of gold leaf likely represent details such as hair and clothing. Its head consists of a semiprecious green stone called serpentine with rock crystal eyes. Because of its scale and the rareness of its media, experts believe the sculpture was a cult image.

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5.3: Mycenaean Art

Mycenaean Architecture

The architecture of Mycenaean citadel sites reflects the society's war-like culture and its constant need for protection and fortification.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Mycenaean architecture, such as their use of Cyclopean masonry and the corbel arch

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The city of Mycenae was the center of Mycenaean culture . It is especially known for its protective gateway, the Lion Gate, and the Treasury of Atreus, an example of a tholos tomb. Mycenaean architecture reflects their warring society. A wide, strong wall built from large, roughly cut stones (known as cyclopean masonry) was one method of protection, as was limited access to citadel sites and well-protected gates.
- Since a lintel over a doorway could not support the wall above it without collapsing, the Mycenaeans used corbeled vaults and a relieving triangle over lintels to redistribute the weight off the horizontal beam and into the supporting walls.
- The central feature of a Mycenaean citadel site was the megaron , a room that functioned as the king's audience chamber. The megaron is entered through a porch with two columns and the main room included four columns around a central hearth.
- Uniformity among the citadel sites throughout the Mycenaean civilization allow us to easily compare components such as megarons.

Key Terms

- **post-and-lintel**: A simple construction method using a header as the horizontal member over a building void supported at its ends by two vertical columns.
- **corbel**: A structural member jutting out of a wall to carry a superincumbent weight.
- **ashlar**: Masonry made of large, square-cut stones.
- **megaron**: The rectangular great hall in a Mycenaean building, usually supported with pillars.
- **cyclopean masonry**: A type of stonework found in Mycenaean architecture, built with massive limestone boulders that are roughly fitted together with minimal clearance between adjacent stones and no use of mortar.
- **citadel**: The core fortified area of a town or city.

Mycenaean Architecture

Mycenaean culture can be summarized by its architecture, whose remains demonstrate the Mycenaeans' war-like culture and the dominance of citadel sites ruled by a single ruler. The Mycenaeans populated Greece and built citadels on high, rocky outcroppings that provided natural fortification and overlooked the plains used for farming and raising livestock. The citadels vary from city to city but each share common attributes, including building techniques and architectural features.

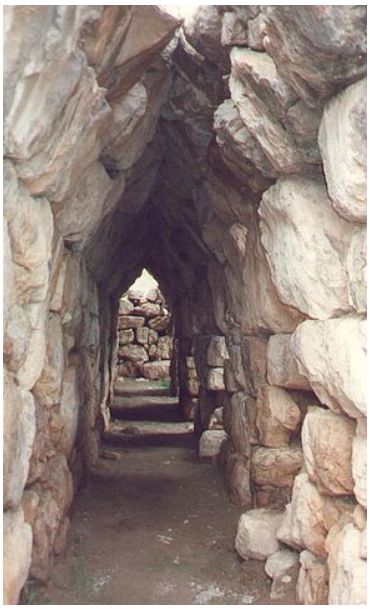
Building Techniques

The walls of Mycenaean citadel sites were often built with ashlar and massive stone blocks. The blocks were considered too large to be moved by humans and were believed by ancient Greeks to have been erected by the Cyclopes—one-eyed giants. Due to this ancient belief, the use of large, roughly cut, ashlar blocks in building is referred to as Cyclopean masonry. The thick Cyclopean walls reflect a need for protection and self-defense since these walls often encircled the citadel site and the acropolis on which the site was located.

Corbel Arch

The Mycenaeans also relied on new techniques of building to create supportive archways and vaults. A typical post and lintel structure is not strong enough to support the heavy structures built above it. Therefore, a corbeled (or corbel) arch is employed over doorways to relieve the weight on the lintel.

The corbel arch is constructed by offsetting successive courses of stone (or brick) at the springline of the walls so that they project towards the archway's center from each supporting side, until the courses meet at the apex of the archway (often, the last gap is bridged with a flat stone). The corbel arch was often used by the Mycenaeans in conjunction with a relieving triangle, which was a triangular block of stone that fit into the recess of the corbeled arch and helped to redistribute weight from the lintel to the supporting walls.



Corbeled vault, Tiryns: This photo shows the offsetting successive courses of stone at the springline of the walls so that they project towards the archway's center from each supporting side, until the courses meet at the apex of the archway.

Citadel Sites

Mycenaean citadel sites were centered around the megaron, a reception area for the king. The megaron was a rectangular hall, fronted by an open, two-columned porch. It contained a more or less central open hearth, which was vented though an oculus in the roof above it and surrounded by four columns. The architectural plan of the megaron became the basic shape of Greek temples, demonstrating the cultural shift as the gods of ancient Greece took the place of the Mycenaean rulers.

Citadel sites were protected from invasion through natural and man-made fortification. In addition to thick walls, the sites were protected by controlled access. Entrance to the site was through one or two large gates, and the pathway into the main part of the citadel was often controlled by more gates or narrow passageways. Since citadels had to protect the area's people in times of warfare, the sites were equipped for sieges. Deep water wells, storage rooms, and open space for livestock and additional citizens allowed a city to access basic needs while being protected during times of war.

Mycenae

The citadel site of Mycenae was the center of Mycenaean culture. It overlooks the Argos plain on the Peloponnesian peninsula, and according to Greek mythology was the home to King Agamemnon.

The site's megaron sits on the highest part of the acropolis and is reached through a large staircase. Inside the walls are various rooms for administration and storage along with palace quarters, living spaces, and temples. A large grave site, known as Grave Circle A, is also built within the walls.

The main approach to the citadel is through the Lion Gate, a cyclopean-walled entrance way. The gate is 20 feet wide, which is large enough for citizens and wagons to pass through, but its size and the walls on either side create a tunneling effect that makes it difficult for an invading army to penetrate.

The gate is famous for its use of the relieving arch, a corbeled arch that leaves an opening and lightens the weight carried by the lintel. The Lion Gate received its name from its decorated relieving triangle of lions one either side of a single column. This composition of lions or another feline animal flanking a single object is known as a heraldic composition. The lions represent cultural influences from the Ancient Near East. Their heads are turned to face outwards and confront those who enter the gate.



Lion Gate, limestone, circa 1300–1250 BCE, Mycenae, Greece: The Lion Gate is famous for its use of the relieving arch, a corbeled arch that leaves an opening and lightens the weight carried by the lintel.

Mycenae is also home to a subterranean beehive-shaped tomb (also known as a tholos tomb) that was located outside the citadel walls. The tomb is known today as the Treasury of Atreus, due to the wealth of grave goods found there.

This tomb and others like it are demonstrations of corbeled vaulting that covers an expansive open space. The vault is 44 feet high and 48 feet in diameter. The tombs are entered through a narrow passageway known as a dromos and a post-and-lintel doorway topped by a relieving triangle.

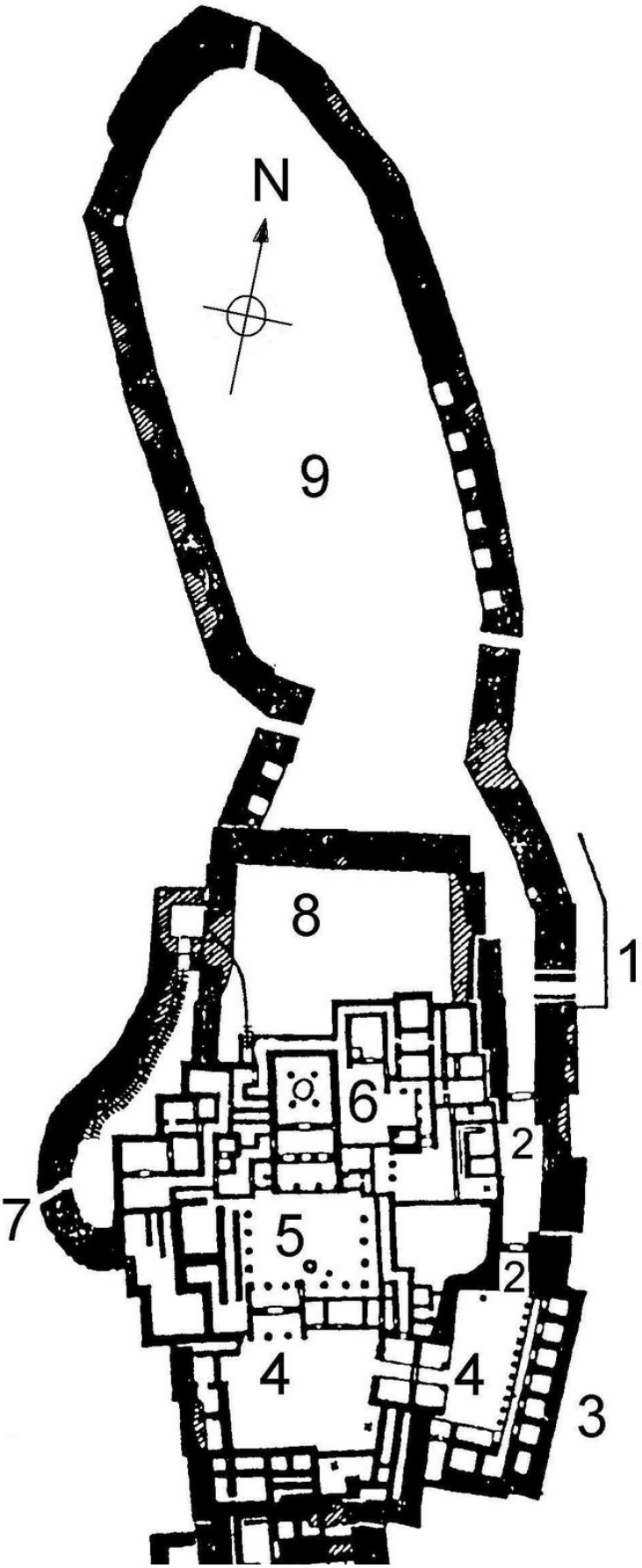


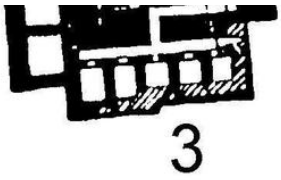
Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae, Greece, circa 1300–1250 BCE.: The Treasury of Atreus and others tombs like it are demonstrations of corbeled vaulting that covers an expansive open space.

Tiyrns

The citadel site of Tiryns, another example of Mycenaean fortification, was a hill fort that has been occupied over the course of 7000 years. It reached its height between 1400 and 1200 BCE, when it was one of the most important centers of the Mycenaean world. Its most notable features were its palace, its Cyclopean tunnels, its walls, and its tightly controlled access to the megaron and main rooms of the citadel.

Just a few gates provide access to the hill but only one path leads to the main site. This path is narrow and protected by a series of gates that could be opened and closed to trap invaders. The central megaron is easy to locate, and it is surrounded by various palatial and administrative rooms. The megaron is accessed through a courtyard that is decorated on three sides with a colonnade .


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Ground plan of the citadel of Tiryns, circa 1400–1200 BCE, Tiryns, Greece: The citadel site of Tiryns is known for its Cyclopean vaulted tunnels that run next to its walls and its tightly controlled access to the megaron and the main rooms of the citadel.

The famous megaron has a large reception hall, the main room of which had a throne placed against the right wall and a central hearth bordered by four wooden columns that served as supports for the roof. It was laid out around a circular hearth surrounded by four columns. Although individual citadel sites varied to a degree, their overall uniformity allows us to compare design elements easily. For example, the hearth of the megaron at the citadel of Pylos provides an idea of how its counterpart at Tiryns appears.



Megaron hearth at the citadel of Pylos: Due to the uniformity of citadel plans throughout the Mycenaean civilization, we can get an idea of how the hearth of the megaron at Tiryns looked by comparing it to its counterpart at Pylos. The holes at the corners of the surrounding square once held wooden columns.

Mycenaean Metallurgy

The Mycenaeans were masterful metalworkers, as their gold, silver, and bronze daggers, drinking cups, and other objects demonstrate.

Learning Objectives

List the items found in Mycenaean burial sites that demonstrate the Mycenaeans' skill in metallurgy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Grave Circle A and B, at Mycenae, are a series of shaft graves enclosed by a wall from the 16th century BCE. These grave sites were originally excavated by Heinrich Schleimann, and the grave goods found there demonstrate the incredible skill Mycenaeans possessed in metalwork.
- Gold death masks were commonly placed over the face of the wealthy deceased. These death masks record the main features of the dead and are made with repoussé , a metalworking technique. When compared to other masks, the Death Mask of Agamemnon is most likely a fake.
- Bronze daggers inlaid with gold, silver, and niello are a common grave good found at Mycenaean burial sites. These daggers represent international trade and cultural connections between the Mycenaeans and the Minoans, Egyptians, and Near Eastern cultures .
- Rhytons were also crafted out of gold and silver. Some, such as the Silver Siege Rhyton, were used for ritual libations .

- Other objects of gold, silver, and bronze have been excavated from Mycenaean grave sites and cities, including armor, jewelry, signet rings, and seals.

Key Terms

- **diadem**: A crown or headband worn as a symbol of sovereignty.
- **repoussé**: A metalworking technique in which a thin sheet of malleable metal is shaped by hammering from the reverse side to create a design in low relief.
- **rhyton**: A container, having a base in the form of a head, from which fluids are intended to be drunk.
- **niello**: Any of various black metal alloys, made of sulphur with copper, silver or lead, used to create decorative designs on other metals.

Grave Circle A at Mycenae

Grave Circle A is a set of graves from the sixteenth century BCE located at Mycenae. The grave circle was originally located outside the walls of the city but was later encompassed inside the walls of the citadel when the city's walls were enlarged during the thirteenth century BCE.

The grave circle is surrounded by a second wall and only has one entrance. Inside are six tombs for nineteen bodies that were buried inside shaft graves. The shaft graves were deep, narrow shafts dug into the ground .

The body would be placed inside a stone coffin and placed at the bottom of the grave along with grave goods. The graves were often marked by a mound of earth above them and grave stele .

The grave site was excavated by Heinrich Schleimann in 1876, who excavated ancient sites such as Mycenae and Troy based on the writings of Homer and was determined to find archaeological remains that aligned with observations discussed in the Iliad and the Odyssey. The archaeological methods of the nineteenth century were different than those of the twenty-first century and Schleimann's desire to discover remains that aligned with mythologies and Homeric stories did not seem as unusual as it does today. Upon excavating the tombs, Schleimann declared that he found the remains of Agamemnon and many of his followers.

Grave Circle B

An additional grave circle, Grave Circle B, is also located at Mycenae, although this one was never incorporated into the citadel site. The two grave circles were elite burial grounds for the ruling dynasty . The graves were filled with precious items made from expensive material, including gold, silver, and bronze.

The amount of gold, silver, and previous materials in these tombs not only depict the wealth of the ruling class of the Mycenae but also demonstrates the talent and artistry of Mycenaean metalworking. Reoccurring themes and motifs underline the culture's propensity for war and the cross-cultural connections that the Mycenaeans established with other Mediterranean cultures through trade, including the Minoans, Egyptians, and even the Orientalizing style of the Ancient Near East

Gold Death Masks

*Repous*sé death masks were found in many of the tombs. The death masks were created from thin sheets of gold, through a careful method of metalworking to create a low relief .

These objects are fragile, carefully crafted, and laid over the face of the dead. Schleimann called the most famous of the death masks the Mask of Agamemnon, under the assumption that this was the burial site of the Homeric king. The mask depicts a man with a triangular face, bushy eyebrows, a narrow nose, pursed lips, a mustache, and stylized ears.

This mask is an impressive and beautiful specimen but looks quite different from other death masks found at the site. The faces on other death masks are rounder; the eyes are more bulbous; and at least one bears a hint of a smile. None of the other figures have a mustache or even the hint of beard.

In fact, the mustache looks distinctly nineteenth century and is comparable to the mustache that Schleimann himself had. The artistic quality between the Mask of Agamemnon and the others seems dramatically different. Despite these differences, the Mask of Agamemnon has inserted itself into the story of Mycenaean art.



Mycenaean death mask: Mycenaean death mask with a hint of a smile. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave Shaft IV, at Mycenae, Greece.



Mask of Agamemnon: The Mask of Agamemnon, identified by Heinrich Schliemann. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE (?). It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave shaft V, at Mycenae, Greece.

Bronze Daggers

Decorative bronze daggers found in the grave shafts suggest there were multicultural influences on Mycenaean artists. These ceremonial daggers were made of bronze and inlaid in silver, gold, and niello with scenes that were clearly influenced from foreign cultures.

Two daggers that were excavated depict scenes of hunts, which suggest an Ancient Near East influence. One of these scenes depicts lions hunting prey, while the other scene depicts a lion hunt. The portrayal of the figures in the lion hunt scene draws distinctly from the style of figures found in Minoan painting. These figures have narrow waists, broad shoulders, and large, muscular thighs.

The scene between the hunters and the lions is dramatic and full of energy, another Minoan influence. Another dagger depicts the influence of Minoan painting and imagery through the depiction of marine life, and Egyptian influences are seen on a dagger filled with lotus and papyrus reeds along with fowl.



Mycenaean hunting dagger: A mycenaean hunting dagger with a scene of a lion hunt. Bronze with gold, silver, and niello inlay. Circa 16th century BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, at Mycenae, Greece.

Gold and Silver Drinking Cups

A variety of gold and silver drinking cups have also been found in these grave shafts. These include a rhyton in the shape of a bull's head, with golden horns and a decorative, stylized gold flower, made from silver repoussé. Other cups include the golden Cup of Nestor, a large two handle cup that Schleimann attributed to the legendary Mycenaean hero Nestor, a Trojan War veteran who plays a peripheral role in The Odyssey.



The Cup of Nestor: The Cup of Nestor. Gold, circa 1600–1500 BCE. It was found in Grave Circle A, Grave Shaft IV, at Mycenae, Greece.

A silver rhyton called the Silver Siege Rhyton was likely used for ritual libations. The Silver Siege Rhyton is unique for its depiction of a siege. The scene is only preserved on a portion of the rhyton, but a landscape of trees and a fortress wall are clearly recognizable. The figures in the scene appear to be in various positions, some men fight each other. An archer crouches with his bow and arrow, while others throw rocks down from the wall at the invaders.

A third rhyton in the form of a bull's head suggests a similarity with the Minoan culture, like the dagger mentioned earlier. The rhyton consists primarily of silver with gold-leaf accents. Its purpose as a ceremonial vessel arguably places the bull in a role of significance in the Mycenaean culture.



Rhyton in the form of a bull's head: Mycenaean. Circa 1600–1500 BCE. Found in Grave Circle A.

Other Objects

Additional gold trinkets include signet rings that depict images of hunts, combat, and animals, along with other decorative jewelry, such as bracelets, earrings, pendants, and diadems (headbands designating their wearers' sovereign status).

Bronze armor, including breastplates and helmets, were also uncovered in excavations of the tomb sites.



Gold diadems: Circa 1600–1500 BCE. Found in Grave Circle A.

Mycenaean Ceramics

The Mycenaeans were talented potters whose ceramic styles and decorations reflect their skill and the values of their culture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the figurines, rhytons, kraters, and other ceramic objects made by the Mycenaeans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mycenaean pottery can be identified by the types of clay and painting the artists used to create and decorate their vessels . Different pottery centers preferred different clay, slips , and motifs . Popular themes include nature, marine life, narratives, and abstract design.
- The Warriors Vase depicts a static scene of a woman bidding farewell to armed warriors. The vase, from Mycenae, is decorated with minimal color and a uniform design. This vase represents the culture ‘s dependence on warfare.
- Mycenaean rhytons crafted from terra cotta were usually conically shaped and painted to represent different animals, such as a boar or a bull; they also had other details added to them.
- Small-scale Mycenaean figurines made from terra cotta are abstract simple figures, often of women, that are simply painted and detailed. The figures have bodies that are rounded or stand with outstretched arms, their legs are represented by cylindrical bases.

Key Terms

- **rhyton**: A container, having a base in the form of a head, from which fluids are drunk.
- **krater**: An ancient Greek vessel for mixing water and wine.
- **figurine**: A small carved or molded figure; a statuette.

Mycenaean Ceramics

The Mycenaeans created numerous ceramic vessels of various types and decorated them in a variety of styles . These vessels were popular outside of Greece, and were often exported and traded around the Mediterranean and have been found in Egypt, Italy, Asia Minor, and Spain.

Two of the main production centers were the Mycenaean cities at Athens and Corinth. The products of the two centers were distinguishable by their color and decoration. Corinthian clay was a pale yellow and tended to feature painted scenes based on nature, while the Athenian potters decorated their vessels with a rich red and preferred geometric designs.

Vessels

The most popular types of vessels included kraters —large, open-mouth jars to mix wine and water—pitchers, and stirrup jars, which are so named for the handles that came above the top of the vessel. Mycenaean vessels usually had a pale, off-white background and were painted in a single color, either red, brown, or black.

Popular motifs include abstract geometric designs, animals, marine life, or narrative scenes. The presence of nature scenes, especially of marine life and of bulls, seems to suggest a Minoan influence on the style and motifs painted on the Mycenaean pots.

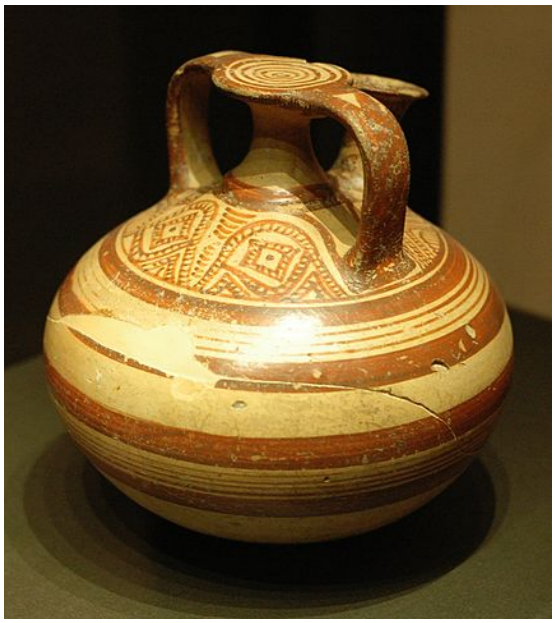
Vessels served the purposes of storage, processing, and transfer. There are a few different classes of pottery, generally separated into two main sections: utilitarian and elite.

1. Utilitarian pottery is sometimes decorated, made for functional domestic use, and constitutes the bulk of the pottery made.
2. Elite pottery is finely made and elaborately decorated with great regard for detail. This form of pottery is generally made for holding precious liquids and for decoration.

Stirrup Jars

Stirrup jars, mainly used for storing liquids such as oil and wine, could have been economically valuable in Mycenaean households. The arrangement of common features suggests that a stopper is used to secure the contents and the contents are what make the jar a valuable household item.

The disc holes and third handle may have been used to secure a tag to the vessel, suggesting it had commercial importance and resale value . The locations where stirrup jars have been found reflect the fact that the popularity of this vessel type spread quickly throughout the Aegean, and the use of the stirrup jar to identify a specific commodity became important.



Mycenaean stirrup jar : Terra cotta. c. 1350 BCE.

Warrior Vase

The Warrior Vase (c. 12oo BCE) is a bell krater that depicts a woman bidding farewell to a group of warriors. The scene is simple and lacks a background.

The men all carry round shields and spears and wear helmets. Attached to their spears are knapsacks, which suggest that they must travel long distances to battle. On one side, the soldiers wear helmets ornamented with horns. The soldiers on the other side wear hedgehog-style helmets. A single woman stands to the left with her arm raised and a group of identically dressed and heavily armed men is marching off to the right.

There is no way to tell which woman is waving goodbye, as all the figures are generic and none specifically interacts with her, nor do they interact with each other. The figures are stocky and lack the sinuous lines of the painted Minoan figures.

Furthermore, while the men all face right with wide stances and appear to move in that direction, their flat feet and twisted perspective bodies inhibit any potential for movement. Instead the figures remain static and upright. The imagery depicts a simple narrative that in the warrior culture of the Mycenaeans must have often been reenacted.



Warrior Vase: Warrior Vase. Terra cotta. c. 1200 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

Many scholars observe that the style of the figures and the handles of this thirteenth century BCE vase are very similar to eighth century BCE pottery. Similar spearmen are also depicted in eighth century BCE pottery which introduces a curious 500 year gap in

styles.

Figurines

Small terra cotta figurines and statuettes are found throughout Mycenaean grave sites and cities. The purpose of these figures is unknown, although they may carry a votive or cult association. Some figurines found in children's tombs may be toys.

The most common style depicts female figures and are from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE. The figures are small and are divided into two categories:

1. Those that look like the Greek letter phi (phi-types), with a rounded upper body shape.
2. Those that look like the Greek letter psi (psi-types), which have outstretched arms.

Both figures have heads that are narrow and pinched into a triangle. Details such as the eyes, mouth, and nose are painted on. The bases of the figures are cylindrical and their legs seem to be painted as a visual afterthought. These figures are painted simply with stripes and zigzags, often on the upper body, and details such as eyes are also added in with paint, while breasts are portrayed with clay protrusions.



Phi figures: Mycenaean phi figures. Terra cotta, c. 13th century. BCE. Mycenae, Greece.



Psi figure: Mycenaean psi figure. Terracotta, c. 1280 BCE. Tiryns, Greece.

There are few examples of large-scale, freestanding sculptures from the Mycenaeans. A painted plaster head of a female—perhaps depicting a priestess, goddess, or sphinx —is one of the few examples of large-scale sculpture.

The head is painted white, suggesting that it depicts a female. A red band wraps around her head with bits of hair underneath. The eyes and eyebrows are outlined in blue, the lips are red, and red circles surrounded by small red dots are on her checks and chin.



Female head: Female head of a priestess, goddess, or sphinx. Painted plaster. c. 1300-1250 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

Rhytons

Rhytons are elaborate, decorative drinking cups that often take the shape of animals. They are usually made of precious materials, such as gold or silver, but they may also be made of terra cotta.

Several Mycenaean rhytons have been excavated, and include one in the shape of a boar's head and another in the shape of a bull's head. The bull-headed rhyton may have been influenced by or intended for trade with the Minoans. Both of these rhytons are conically shaped, painted in a single color with abstract shapes, and have defining features, such as ears and eyes.



Bull-headed rhyton: Bull-headed rhyton. Terra cotta, circa 1300–1200 BCE. Mycenae, Greece.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 6: Ancient Greece

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6.1: Introduction to Ancient Greece

Introduction to Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek culture spans over a thousand years, from the earliest civilizations to the cultures that became the Ancient Greeks.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate a timeline of ancient Greece from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ancient Greek culture is noted for its government, art, architecture, philosophy, and sports, all of which became foundations for modern western society. It was admired and adopted by others, including Alexander the Great and the Romans, who helped spread Greek culture around the world. Before Greek culture took root in Greece, early civilizations thrived on the Greek mainland and the Aegean Islands. The fall of these cultures and the aftermath, known as the Dark Age, is believed to be the time when the Homeric epics were first recited.
- Greek culture began to develop during the Geometric, Orientalizing, and Archaic periods, which lasted from 900 to 480 BCE. During this time the population of city-states began to grow, Panhellenic traditions were established, and art and architecture began to reflect Greek values .
- The Early, High, and Late Classical periods in Greece occurred from 480 to 323 BCE. During these periods, Greece flourished and the polis of Athens saw its Golden Age under the leadership of Pericles . However, city-state rivalries lead to wars, and Greece was never truly stable until conquered.
- The Hellenistic period in Greece is the last period before Greek culture becomes a subset of Roman hegemony . This period occurs from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, to the Greek defeat at the Battle of Actium in 30 BCE. It marks the spread of Greek culture across the Mediterranean.

Key Terms

- **polis**: A city, or a city-state. Its plural is poleis.

Ancient Greek Culture

Ancient Greek culture covers over a thousand years of history, from the earliest civilizations in the area to the cultures that became the Ancient Greeks. Following a Greek Dark Age, Greece once more flourished and developed into the ancient culture that we recognize today .



Classical Greece: Map of Ancient Greece.

Greek culture is based on a series of shared values that connected independent city-states throughout the region, and expanded as far north as Mount Olympus. Greek society was insular, and loyalties were focused around one's polis (city-state). Greeks considered themselves civilized and considered outsiders to be barbaric.

While Greek daily life and loyalty was centered on one's polis, the Greeks did create leagues, which vied for control of the peninsula, and were able to unite together against a common threat (such as the Persians).

Greek culture is focused on their government, art, architecture, philosophy, and sport. Athens was intensely proud of its creation of democracy, and citizens from all poleis (city-states) took part in civic duties. Cities commissioned artists and architects to honor their gods and beautify their cities.

Greek philosophers, mathematicians, and thinkers are still honored in society today. As a religious people, the Greeks worshipped a number of gods through sacrifices, rituals, and festivals.

Bronze Age and Proto-Greek Civilizations

Cycladic Civilization

During the Bronze Age, several distinct cultures developed around the Aegean. The Cycladic civilization, around the Cyclades Islands, thrived from 3,000 to 2,000 BCE. Little is known about the Cycladic civilization because they left no written records. Their material culture is mainly excavated from grave sites, which reveal that the people produced unique, geometric marble figures.

Minoan Civilization

The Minoan civilization stretches from 3700 BCE until 1200 BCE, and thrived during their Neopalatial period (from 1700 to 1400 BCE), with the large-scale building of communal palaces. Numerous archives have been discovered at Minoan sites; however their language, Linear A , has yet to be deciphered. The culture was centered on trade and production, and the Minoans were great seafarers on the Mediterranean Sea.

Mycenaean Civilization

A proto-Greek culture known as the Mycenaeans developed and flourished on the mainland, eventually conquering the Aegean Islands and Crete, where the Minoan civilization was centered. The Mycenaeans developed a fractious, war-like culture that was centered on the authority of a single ruler. Their culture eventually collapsed, but many of their citadel sites were occupied through the Greek Dark Age and rebuilt into Greek city-states.

The Dark Age

From around 1200 BCE, the palace centers and outlying settlements of the Mycenaeans' culture began to be abandoned or destroyed. By 1050 BCE, the recognizable features of Mycenaean culture had disappeared.

Many explanations attribute the fall of the Mycenaean civilization and the collapse of the Bronze Age to climatic or environmental catastrophe, combined with an invasion by the Dorians or by the Sea Peoples, or to the widespread availability of edged weapons of iron, but no single explanation fits the available archaeological evidence.

This two- to three-century span of history is also known as the Homeric Age. It is believed that the Homeric epics The Iliad and The Odyssey were first recited around this time.

The Geometric and Orientalizing Periods

The Geometric period (c. 900–700 BCE), which derives its name from the proliferation of geometric designs and rendering of figures in art, witnessed the emergence of a new culture on the Greek mainland. The culture's change in language, its adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet, and its new funerary practices and material culture suggest the ethnic population changed from the mainland's previous inhabitants, the Mycenaeans.

During this time, the new culture was centered on the people and independent poleis, which divided the land into regional populations. This period witnessed a growth in population and the revival of trade.

The Orientalizing period (c. 700–600 BCE) is named for the cultural exchanges the Greeks had with Eastern, or Oriental civilizations. During this time, international trade began to flourish. Art from this period reflects contact with locations such as Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Phoenicia, and Israel.

Archaic Greece

Greece's Archaic period lasted from 600 to 480 BCE, in which the Greek culture expanded. The population in Greece began to rise and the Greeks began to colonize along the coasts of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The poleis at this time were typically ruled by a single ruler who commanded the city by force.

For the city of Athens, this led to the creation of democracy. Several city-states emerged as major powers, including Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes. These poleis were often warring with each other, and formed coalitions to gain power and allies. The Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BCE marked the end of the Archaic period.

Classical Greece

The era of Classical Greece began in 480 BCE with the sacking of Athens by the Persians. The Persian invasion of Greece, first lead by Darius I and then by his son Xerxes, united Greece against a common enemy.

With the defeat of the Persian threat, Athens became the most powerful polis until the start of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BCE. These wars continued on and off until 400 BCE. While marred by war, the Classical period saw the height of Greek culture and the creation of some of Greece's most famous art and architecture.

However, peace and stability in Greece was not achieved until it was conquered and united by Macedonia under the leadership of Philip II and Alexander the Great in the mid-third century BCE.

Hellenistic Greece

The Hellenistic period began with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, and ended with the Roman victory at the Battle of Actium in 30 BCE. Greece poleis spent this time under the hegemony of foreign rulers, first the Macedons and then the Romans, starting in 146 BCE.

New centers of Hellenic culture flourished through Greece and on foreign soil, including the cities of Pergamon, Antioch, and Alexandria—the capitals of the Attalids, Seleucids, and Ptolemies.

The Ancient Greek Gods and Their Temples

Greek religion played a central and daily role in the life of ancient Greeks, and group worship was centered on the temple and cult sites.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ways in which Greek life and art was influenced by the gods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The history of the Greek pantheon begins with the primordial deities Gaia and Uranus and their children, the Titans. The pantheon of Greek gods consisted of twelve Olympian gods plus a variety of additional principal and minor gods and goddesses. The gods had human characteristics and personalities, and their lives were detailed by the mythologies told about them.
- The gods played a central role in Greek daily life. They were consulted, blamed, and honored for a variety of reasons, including natural occurrences (from earthquakes to rain), as well as for the public and private affairs of the polis and its people.
- The mythologies and cult worship of heroes also played an important role in Greek religion and ritual . Heroes—especially Perseus, Hercules , Theseus, and those involved in the Trojan War—were often depicted in art, and the location of their feats became cult sites.
- The temple was considered the home of the god and was often an expensive and lavishly decorated building. The temple included a naos , the main room that held the cult statue. Offerings and dedications were left for the gods, and sacrifices took place outdoors.

Key Terms

- **primordial**: Existing at or before the beginning of time.
- **demigod**: A half-god or hero; the offspring of a deity and a mortal.

- **libation**: The act of pouring a liquid or liquor, usually wine, either on the ground or on a victim in sacrifice, in honor of some deity.
- **naos**: The central room in the god's temple, where a cult statue of the god is erected.
- **polytheistic**: A religious system whose members worship many deities.
- **votive**: A small religious offering deposited at a temple without the purpose of display or retrieval.

Greek religious traditions encompassed a large pantheon of gods, complex mythologies, rituals, and cult practices. Greece was a polytheistic society, and looked to its gods and mythology to explain natural mysteries as well as current events. Religious festivals and ceremonies were held throughout the year, and animal sacrifice and votive offerings were popular ways to appease and worship the gods. Religious life, rituals, and practices were one of the unifying aspects of Greece across regions and poleis (cities, or city-states , such as Athens and Sparta).



The principal religious sanctuaries of the Greek Aegean: This map lists the major Greek gods and shows where their principal religious sanctuaries are located throughout the Greek Aegean region.

Greek Gods

Greek gods were immortal beings who possessed human-like qualities and were represented as completely human in visual art. They were moral and immoral, petty and just, and often vain. The gods were invoked to intervene and assist in matters large, small, private and public.

City-states claimed individual gods and goddess as their patrons . Temples and sanctuaries to the gods were built in every city. Many cities became cult sites due to their connection with a god or goddess and specific myths. For instance, the city of Delphi was known for its oracle and sanctuary of Apollo, because Apollo was believed to have killed a dragon that inhabited Delphi.

The history of the Greek pantheon begins with the primordial deities Gaia (Mother Earth) and Uranus (Father Sky), who were the parents of the first of twelve giants known as Titans. Among these Titans were six males and six females.

- The males were named Oceanus, Hyperion, Coeus, Crius, Iapetus, and Kronos.
- The females were named Themis, Mnemosyne, Tethys, Theia, Phoebe, and Rhea.

Kronos eventually overthrew Uranus and ruled during a mythological Golden Age. Over time, he and Rhea had twelve children who would become the Olympian gods. However, Kronos heard a prophecy that his son would overthrow him, as he did to Uranus. In an effort to avert fate, he ordered Rhea to allow him to devour each of the children upon their birth.



Themis: One of the first 12 Titans, Themis was the personification of divine law, as opposed to human ordinance.

The Olympian Gods

Best known among the pantheon are the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses who resided on Mt. Olympus in northern Greece. Zeus, the youngest son of Rhea and Kronos, was hidden from his father, instead of being swallowed. Once he became a man, he challenged his father's rule, forcing Kronos to regurgitate the rest of his swallowed children. These children were Zeus's siblings, and together they overthrew Kronos, making Zeus the father of gods and men.

Violence and power struggles were common in Greek mythology, and the Greeks used their mythologies to explain their lives around them, from the change in seasons to why the Persians were able to sack Athens.

The traditional pantheon of Greek gods includes

- Zeus, the king of gods and the ruler of the sky,
- Zeus' two brothers, Poseidon (who ruled over the sea) and Hades (who ruled the underworld).
- Zeus's sister and wife, Hera, the goddess of marriage, who is frequently jealous and vindictive of Zeus's other lovers.
- Their sisters Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, and Demeter, the goddess of grain and culture .
- Zeus's children:
- Athena (goddess of warfare and wisdom).
- Hermes (a messenger god and god of commerce).
- the twins Apollo (god of the sun, music, and prophecy) and Artemis (goddess of the hunt and of wild animals).
- Dionysos (god of wine and theatre).
- Aphrodite (goddess of beauty and love), who was married to Hephaestus (deformed god of the forge).
- Ares (god of war and lover of Aphrodite) are also part of the traditional pantheon.
- Hephaestus was in some mythologies the son of Zeus while in others the fatherless son of Hera.



Hermes and the Infant Dionysos by Praxiteles: Here, Hermes cares for the now motherless Dionysos. Originally, Hermes held a bunch of grapes, with which he teased the infant god of wine. c. 4th century BCE.

Heroes

Heroes, who were often demigods , were also important characters in Greek mythology. The two most important heroes are Perseus and Hercules.

Perseus

Perseus is known for defeating the Gorgon, Medusa. He slew her with help from the gods: Athena gave him armor and a reflective shield, and Hermes provided Perseus with winged sandals so he could fly.

Hercules

Hercules was a strong but unkind man, a drunkard who conducted huge misdeeds and social faux pas. Hercules was sent on twelve labors to atone for his sins as punishment for his misdeeds. These deeds, and several other stories, were often depicted in art, on ceramic pots, or on temple metopes . The most famous of his deeds include slaying both the Nemean Lion and the Hydra, capturing Cerberus (the dog of the underworld), and obtaining the apples of the Hesperides.

Theseus

A third hero, Theseus, was an Athenian hero known for slaying King Minos's Minotaur . Other major heros in Greek mythology include the warriors and participants of the Trojan War, such as Achilles, Ajax, Odysseus, Agamemnon, Paris, Hector, and Helen.

Hero cults were another popular form of Greek worship that involved the honoring of the dead, specifically the dead heroes of the Trojan War. The sites of hero worship were usually old Bronze Age sites or tombs that the ancient Greeks recognized as important or sacred, which they then connected to their own legends and stories.



Hercules and Cerberus : Hercules bringing Cerberus back to King Eurystheus. Black figure hydra. c. 525 BCE.

Sacred Spaces

Greek worship was centered on the temple. The temple was considered the home of the god, and a cult statue of the god would be erected in the central room, or the naos. Temples generally followed the same basic rectangular plan, although a round temple, known as a tholos , were used at some sites in starting in the Classical period.

Temples were oriented east to face the rising sun. Patrons would leave offerings for the gods, such as small votives, large statues, libations or costly goods. Due to the wealth dedicated to the gods, the temples often became treasuries that held and preserved the wealth of the city. Greek temples would be extensively decorated, and their construction was a long and costly endeavor.

Rituals and animal sacrifices in honor of the god or goddess would take place outside, in front of the temple. Rituals often included a large number of people, and sacrifice was a messy business that was best done outdoors. The development and decoration of temples is a primary focus in the study of Greek art and culture.



Sacrificial scene: Scene of a sacrifice. Attic red-figure bell krater. Circa 430–420 BCE. Athens, Greece.

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6.2: The Geometric Period

Pottery in the Greek Geometric Period

The Geometric period in Greek art is distinguished by a reliance on geometric shapes to create human and animal figures as well as abstract décor.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key characteristics of the pottery produced during the Geometric period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Geometric period marked the end of Greece's Dark Age and lasted from 900 to 700 BCE.
- The Geometric period derives its name from the dominance of geometric motifs in vase painting. Monumental kraters and amphorae were made and decorated as grave markers. These vessels are characteristic of Geometric vase painting during this period.
- The most famous vessels from this period uses a technique called horror vacui , in which every space of the surface is filled with imagery .

Key Terms

- **horror vacui**: From the Latin, fear of empty space, it is a style of painting where the entire surface of a space is filled with patterns and figures.
- **amphora**: A two-handled jar with a narrow neck that was used in ancient times to store or carry wine or oils.
- **krater**: An ancient Greek vessel for mixing water and wine.

Geometric Pottery

In the eleventh century BCE, the citadel centers of the Mycenaeans were abandoned and Greece fell into a period with little cultural or social progression. Signs of civilization including literacy, writing, and trade were lost and the population on mainland Greece plummeted.

During the Proto-Geometric period (1050–900 BCE), painting on ceramics began to re-emerge. These vessels were only decorated with abstract geometric shapes adopted from Mycenaean pottery. Ceramicists began using the fast wheel to create vessels, which allowed for new monumental heights.



Proto-Geometric amphora: Proto-Geometric amphora, c. 975–950 BCE.

In the Geometric period that followed, figures once more became present on the vessel. The period lasted from 900 to 700 BCE and marked the end of the Greek Dark Ages. A new Greek culture emerged during this time. The population grew, trade began once more, and the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet for writing.

Unlike the Mycenaeans, this culture was more focused on the people of the polis , which is reflected in the art of this period. The period gets its name from the reliance on geometric shapes and patterns in its art, and even their use in depicting both human and animal figures.

Athens

The city of Athens became the center for pottery production. A potter's quarter in the section of the city known as the Kerameikos was located on either side of the Dipylon Gate, one of the city's west gates. The potters lived and work inside the gate in the city, while outside the gate, along the road, was a large cemetery.

In the Geometric period, monumental-sized kraters and amphorae up to six feet tall were used as grave markers for the burials just outside the gate. Kraters marked male graves, while amphorae marked female graves.

The Dipylon Master, an unknown painter whose hand is recognized on many different vessels, displays the great expertise required for decorating these funerary markers. The vessels were first thrown a wheel, an important technological development at the time, before painting began. Both the Diplyon Krater and Dipylon Amphora demonstrate the main characteristics of painting during this time.

For one, the entire vessel is decorated in a style known as horror vacui, a style in which the entire surface of the medium is filled with imagery. A decorative meander is on the lip of the krater and on many registers of the amphora. This geometric motif is constructed from a single, continuous line in a repeated shape or motif.

The main scene is depicted on the widest part of the pot's body. These scenes relate to the funerary aspect of the pot and may depict mourners, a prothesis (a ritual of laying the body out and mourning), or even funerary games and processions.

On the Dipylon Krater, two registers depict a processional scene, an ekphora, (the transportation of the body to the cemetery) and the prothesis. The dead man of the prothesis scene is seen on the upper register. He is laid out on a bier and mourners, distinguished by their hands tearing at their hair, surround the body. Above the body is a shroud, which the artist depicts above and not over the body in order to allow the viewer to see the entirety of the scene.

On the register below, chariots and soldiers form a funerary procession. The soldiers are identified by their uniquely shaped shields. The Dipylon Amphora depicts just a prothesis in a wide a register around the pot.

In both vessels, men and women are distinguished by protruding triangles on their chest or waist to represent breasts or a penis. Every empty space in these scenes is filled with geometric shapes—M's, diamonds, starbursts—demonstrating the Geometric painter's horror vacui.



Geometric amphora: Geometric amphora, from the Dipylon Cemetery, Athens, Greece, c. 740 BCE.



Geometric krater: Geometric krater. From the Dipylon Cemetery, Athens, Greece, c. 740 BCE.

Sculpture in the Greek Geometric Period

Although derived from geometric shapes, the Ancient Greek sculptures of the Geometric period show some artistic observation of nature.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key characteristics of the sculptures produced during the Geometric period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Geometric sculptures are primarily small scale and made of bronze , terra cotta , or ivory . The bronze figures were produced using the lost-wax method of casting .
- The human and animal figures produced during this period have geometric features, although the legs on humans appear relatively naturalistic.
- Geometric bronzes were typically left as votive offerings at shrines and sanctuaries , such as those at Delphi and Olympia.
- Horses came to symbolize wealth due to the high costs of their upkeep.

Key Terms

- **votive**: An type of offering deposited within a religious site without the purpose of display or retrieval.

The ancient Greek sculptures of the Geometric period , although derived from geometric shapes, bear evidence of an artistic observation of nature in some circumstances. Small-scale sculptures, usually made of bronze, terra cotta, or ivory, were commonly

produced during this time. Bronzes were made using the lost-wax technique, probably introduced from Syria, and were often left as votive offerings at sanctuaries such as Delphi and Olympia.

Human Figures

The human figures are made of a triangle as a torso that supports a bulbous head with a triangular chin and nose. Their arms are cylindrical, and only their legs have a slightly more naturalistic shape. These attributes can be seen in a small sculpture of a seated man drinking from a cup that displays the typical modeling figures as simple, linear forms that enclose open space . Especially noteworthy are his elongated arms that mirror the dimensions of his legs.



Seated Male Figure: This is made of bronze and created around 750–700 BCE. Note how the statue's elongated arms mirror the dimensions of his legs.

A relatively naturalistic rendering of human legs is also evident in Man and Centaur, also known as Heracles and Nessos (c. 750–730 BCE). Without the equine back and hind legs, the centaur portion of the sculpture is a shorter man with human legs.

Like the seated man above, the two figures feature elongated arms, with the right arm of the centaur forming one continuous line with the left arm of the man. While the seated man appears to be clean shaven, the figures in Man and Centaur wear beards, which usually symbolized maturity. The hollow eye sockets of the figure of the man probably once held inlay for a more realistic appearance.



Man and Centaur (Heracles and Nessos) : This bronze statue was made around 750–730 BCE.

Animal Figures

Animals, including bulls, deer, horses, and birds, were also based in geometry. Horse figurines were commonly used as offerings to the gods. The animals themselves became symbols of wealth and status due to the high cost of keeping them. Equine bodies may be described as rectangles pinched in the middle with rectangular legs and tail and are similar in shape to deer or bulls.

The heads of these mammals are more distinctive, as the horse's neck arches , while the bull and deer have cylindrical faces distinguished by horns or ears. While the animals and people are based in basic geometric shapes, the artists clearly observed their subjects in order to highlight these distinguishing characters.



Geometric Horse statuette: This bronze statue from Olympia, Greece, circa 700 BCE.

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6.3: The Orientalizing Period

Vase Painting in the Orientalizing Period

During the Orientalizing period, Greek art evolved to feature a blend of Near Eastern and Egyptian stylistic conventions.

Learning Objectives

Examine Greek vase painting during this period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Orientalizing period lasted from 700 to 600 BCE in Greece. During this time, trade with foreign cultures from Asia Minor, Egypt, and the Ancient Near East allowed for new artistic conventions to influence and be incorporated into Greek art.
- The Corinthians developed the technique of black-figure painting. Corinthian black-figure vases in the Orientalizing period are distinguishable by the inclusion of exotic and mythical animals. This style quickly spread throughout Greece, and artists later developed uniquely Greek images.
- Proto-Attic pottery refers to vases produced in Athens and the surrounding areas. This style is distinguished by the use of orange clay, the presence of simple human forms , and the first depictions of mythological scenes in vase painting.

Key Terms

- **black figure painting**: A style of antique Greek vase painting where the figures are painted onto the pot with a slip that, when fired, turns black. The outlines and details of the figures are incised before firing. Additional red and white pigments may also be added to the pot.
- **Proto-Attic**: A term applied to Orientalizing pottery from Athens and its environs.

The Orientalizing Period

The Orientalizing Period followed the Geometric period and lasted for about a century, from 700 to 600 BCE. This period was distinguished by international influences—from the Ancient Near East, Egypt, and Asia Minor—each of which contributed a distinctive Eastern style to Greek art.

The close contact between cultures developed from increasing trade and even colonization. Motifs , creatures, and styles were borrowed from other cultures by the Greeks, who transformed them into a unique Greek–Eastern mix of style and motifs.

Corinthian Pottery

During the Orientalizing period in Corinth human figures were rarely seen on vases. Animals such as lions, griffins, sphinxes , and sirens were depicted instead.

Palmettes and lotus blossoms were used instead of geometric patterns to fill empty space , although on some vessels negative space became more prominent. This oriental black figure style originated in the city of Corinth, spread to Athens, and was exported throughout Greece.



Corinthian black figure jug: Corinthian black figure jug with animal frieze, circa 580 BCE.

Black Figure Painting

The Corinthians developed the technique of black figure painting during this period. Black figure pottery was carefully constructed and fired three different times to produce the unique red and black colors on each vase.

The black color came from a slip painted onto the vessel, after which incised lines were drawn on to outline and detail the figures. Additionally, red and white pigments could be added for more color or to differentiate details.

The unpainted portions of the vase would remain the original red-orange color of the pot. The full effect of this style of painting would not have been seen until after the vase emerged from its firings in the kiln . As the style spread, the subject matter changed from strictly Near Eastern animals to scenes from Greek mythology and everyday life.

Proto-Attic Pottery

Pottery produced during the Orientalizing period across the Isthmus of Corinth in Athens is known as Proto-Attic. In this region, floral and animal motifs are common, but the human figure appears in the work of the most prominent painters such as the Analatos Painter, the Mesogeia Painter, and the Polyphemos Painter.

The Proto-Attic style marked the first depictions of discernibly Greek religious and mythological themes in vase painting. The bodies of men and animals were depicted in silhouette, though their heads were drawn in outline. Women were drawn completely in outline. Proto-Attic vases are usually distinguished by their orange clay, which is available in the Athens area.



The Polyphemos Painter, The Blinding of Polyphemos, c. 600 BCE: This detail from a Proto-Attic amphora shows the outline and silhouette-based forms in which the human body was depicted at the time, as well as the orange clay available to Attic ceramicists.

Sculpture in the Greek Orientalizing Period

Sculpture produced during the Orientalizing period shares stylistic attributes with sculpture produced in Egypt and the Near East.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Greek sculpture during the Orientalizing period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Sculpture during this time was influenced by Egyptian and Near Eastern artistic conventions. Rigid, plank-like bodies, as well as its reliance on pattern to depict texture , characterized Greek sculpture in the Orientalizing period.
- The Daedalic style , named for the mythical inventor Daedalus, refers the use of patterning and geometric shapes (reminiscent of the Geometric period) during the seventh century BCE.
- The differences between the Lady of Auxerre and the Mantiklos Apollo demonstrate the early establishment of traditional social expectations of the sexes in ancient Greek culture .

Key Terms

- **kore**: A sculpture of a young woman from pre-Classical Greece.
- **Daedalic**: A style of sculpture during the Greek Orientalizing period noted for its use of patterns to create texture, as well as its reliance on geometric shapes and stiff, rigid bodily postures.

The Orientalizing Period lasted for about a century, from 700 to 600 BCE. This period was distinguished by international influences, from the Ancient Near East, Egypt, and Asia Minor, each of which contributed a distinctive Eastern style to Greek art. The close contact between cultures developed from increasing trade and even colonization.

Styles were borrowed from other cultures by the Greeks who transformed them into a unique Greek-Eastern mix of style and motifs . Male and female sculptures produced during this time share interesting similarities, but also bear differences that inform the viewer about society's expectations of men and women.

The Lady of Auxerre

A small limestone statue of a kore (maiden), known as the Lady of Auxerre (650–625 BCE), from Crete demonstrates the style of early Greek figural sculptures. This style is known as Daedalic sculpture, named for the mythical creator of King Minos's labyrinth

, Daedalus. The style combines Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs.



The Lady of Auxerre, circa 650–625 BCE: This small limestone statue is possibly from Crete.

The Lady of Auxerre is stocky and plank-like. Her waist is narrow and cinched, like the waists seen in Minoan art. She is disproportionate, with long rigid legs and a short torso. A dress encompasses nearly her entire body—it tethers her legs together and restricts her potential for movement. The rigidity of the body recalls pharaonic portraiture from Ancient Egypt .

Her head is distinguished with large facial features, a low brow, and stylized hair. The hair appears to be braided, and falls down in rigid rows divided by horizontal bands. This style recalls a Near Eastern use of patterns to depict texture and decoration.

Her face and hair are reminiscent of the Geometric period. The face forms an inverted triangle wedged between the triangles formed be the hair that frames her face. Traces of paint tell us that this statue would have originally be painted with black hair and a dress of red and blue with a yellow belt.



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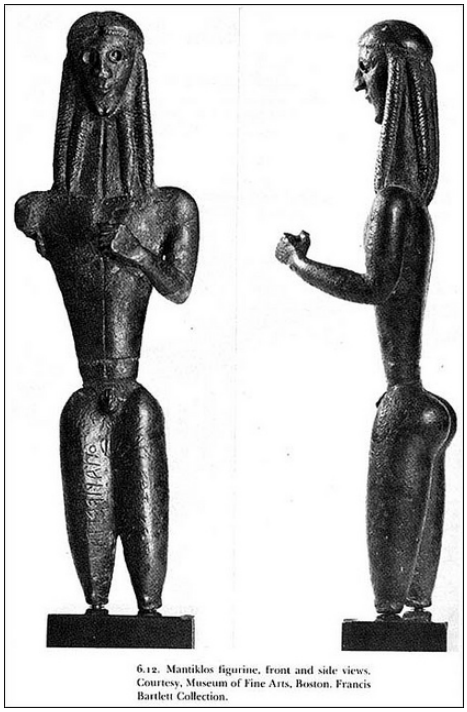
Lady of Auxerre reconstruction: A reconstruction of the original Orientalizing sculpture. Cambridge University.

The Mantiklos Apollo

There are no inscriptions on sculpture before the appearance of the bronze Mantiklos Apollo (early seventh century BCE) found in Thebes. The figure, named for the individual who left it as an offering , is that of a standing man with a rigid and somewhat Daedalic form.

His legs bear the inscription, “Mantiklos offered me as a tithe to Apollo of the silver bow; do you, Phoibos [Apollo], give some pleasing favor in return.” The inscription is a declaration of the statuette to Apollo, followed by a request for favors in return.

Apart from the novelty of recording its own purpose, this sculpture adapts the formulae of later Orientalized sculptures, as seen in the shorter more triangular face and slightly advancing left leg. This is sometimes seen as anticipating the greater expressive freedom of the later seventh century BCE. As such, the Mantiklos figure is referred to in some quarters as proto-Daedalic.



Mantiklos Apollo: Bronze Early 7th century BCE. Thebes. The side view shows the separation of the figure’s arm from his chest and his slightly advancing left leg.

Similarities of the Statues

Despite the separation of several decades and over 200 miles, the Mantiklos Apollo and the Lady of Auxerre share interesting similarities, including their long plaited hair, cinched waist, stylized smile, and hand raised to the chest—all of which recall ancient Egyptian sculpture. Although the right arm of the Mantiklos Apollo is missing, the position of its shoulder implies a possible position similar to that of the left arm of the Lady of Auxerre, straight at its side.

However, we can already see striking differences that will remain the standard in Greek art for centuries. The male body, as a public entity entitled to citizenship, is depicted nude and free to move. This freedom of movement is seen not only in the legs of the Apollo figure but also in the separation of his hand from his chest.

On the other hand, the female body, as a private entity without individual rights, is clothed and denied movement. While the Mantiklos Apollo holds his hand parallel to his chest, the Lady of Auxerre places her hand directly on hers, maintaining the closed form expected of a respectable woman.

Temple Architecture in the Greek Orientalizing Period

The temples of the Greek Orientalizing period had simple plans and sculpture that were influenced by styles from Egypt and the Near East.

Learning Objectives

Identify some of the outside influences on Greek temples

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The earliest stone temples in ancient Greece derive their structure from Minoan and Mycenaean designs.
- Temple A at Prinias, Crete is the earliest known Greek temple decorated with sculpture . It consisted of a single chamber and a portico with three simple columns .
- The remains of friezes from Temple A share stylistic attributes with Egyptian, Near Eastern, and contemporaneous free-standing Greek Orientalizing sculptures.

Key Terms

- **entablature**: The lintel area of a temple portico.
- **anta**: The simplest form of an ancient Greek temple, it consists of a pronaos (portico) with two columns and a naos, or cella.
- **lamassu**: A mythical winged creature with the head of a human and the body of a lion or bull.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.
- **base**: The bottommost part of a column.
- **cella**: Also known as a naos, the central chamber of a temple, usually where the cult statue was housed.

Greek Temple Architecture

The basic principles for the development of Greek temple architecture have their roots between the tenth and seventh centuries BCE. In its simplest form as a naos or cella , the temple was a simple rectangular shrine with protruding side walls (antae) that formed a small porch. By adding columns to this small basic structure, the Greeks triggered the development and variety of their temple architecture.



Anta schematic: Early anta-planned temples consisted of a portico (pronaos) and an inner

chamber (naos/cella) atop a simple platform. Two columns marked the entrance to the inner chamber.

The building of stone temples first began during the Orientalizing period. Earlier temples were made from wood and other perishable materials and used terra cotta revetments in the form of rectangular and circular panels. With the introduction of stone as a building material, revetments became unnecessary and were replaced by sculptural ornamentation.

These temples derive their structure from Minoan and Mycenaean architectural designs. Minoan shrines, as seen at Knossos, were tripartite shrines fronted by three columns, while the plan of the Mycenaean king's chamber (or megaron) was appropriated for use by the gods.

Oriental Greek stone temples were fronted by three columns and one entrance which lead into a single room chamber (cella), where the cult statue would be placed. The temple cella was reserved for the cult statue, while cult rituals (often sacrifices) took place outside in front of the temple and usually around an altar.

Temple A at Prinias

Temple A at Prinias (c. 650–600 BCE) on the island of Crete is the oldest known Greek temple decorated with sculpture. Its plan was similar to the anta design with a third column in the center in front of the doorway. One step spanning the width of the facade led to the pronaos . The columns were very simple, rectangular (as opposed to cylindrical) blocks with very thin bases and capitals . Unlike Minoan columns, the shafts of the columns of Temple A did not taper; rather, their width remained constant for the entire length.

On the entablature , the frieze of the facade consisted of a series of reliefs depicting a procession of riders on horseback with little variation. The scale of the horses dwarfs that of their riders. Each horse stands in profile, while each rider faces the viewer with his sword raised and his shield seemingly connecting his head to his legs.

Although their shields cover most of their bodies, the seemingly bare state of their legs implies that the riders might be nude, as was typical for the male body in art. Each rider has a stylized nose, eyes, and eyebrows and wears a helmet. Like free-standing sculptures of the time, the hairstyle of the riders is plaited in a somewhat Egyptian style .

A meander runs atop the reliefs. The current cracked condition of the frieze is a likely indicator that it was assembled in a piecemeal fashion, as opposed to being carved as a singular entablature. Atop the entablature sat sculptures of two winged female creatures resembling the sphinx or the lamassu of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian cultures .



Temple A portico frieze: Made of marble and originally from Prinias, Crete, c. 650–600 BCE.

Behind the facade of Temple A sat a doorway with an intricately designed lintel . Its frieze consisted of six stylized panthers standing in high relief . This motif is typical of northern Syria.

Unlike the horses on the façade frieze, each group of three panthers face each other with their heads turned toward the viewer. Between each group sits a plain rectangular recess, probably to mark the location of the central column that supported the lintel.

Atop the frieze sit two stylized female sculptures in the round who face each other. One figure places her hands flatly on her lap, while the other holds her hands in a position to accommodate a cup or similar object. It is believed that these figures represent goddesses, although the identities of those goddesses remain disputed.

Each sits in profile on a plain backless bench. The face of each figure has almond-shaped eyes and stylized eyebrows similar to those on Egyptian sculptures. Their hair is plaited and falls to either side of their shoulders.

Like the free-standing sculptures of the Orientalizing period, each figure on the lintel of Temple A wears Egyptian-style headgear with geometric patterns and cloaks atop their geometrically patterned dresses, which are cinched at the waist. While their feet

protrude from beneath their long skirts, the blocks that define the lower parts of their bodies provide no acknowledgement of the body beneath the clothing.



Lintel from Temple A: Made of marble and originally from Prinias, Crete, c. 650–600 BCE.

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6.4: The Archaic Period

Delphi and Greek Treasuries

Delphi was an important cult site for Apollo and was home to many treasuries that housed the community's offerings to the god.

Learning Objectives

Describe the treasuries built during the Archaic period in Delphi, with attention to both their style and function

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Delphi was an essential city and sanctuary site for the Greeks. Not only was the city the main cult site for Apollo, it was also the home of the Delphic Oracle and the Panhellenic games, known as the Python Games, which honored Apollo's slaying of the Python.
- The site is known for its numerous treasuries . These treasuries were built by various poleis to house their city-states ' offerings and votives to Apollo. The treasuries were small, single-room structures that were decorated to commemorate the deeds of the city.
- The Siphian Treasury was built in an Ionic style in 530 BCE with caryatids instead of columns . The continuous frieze and pediments are high reliefs carved in the Archaic style. The figures on the pediment appear more stiff and rigid than the figures on the frieze, who are engaged in battle.
- The Athenian Treasury was built between 510 and 490 BCE to honor Athenian military power against the Persians. The structure is Doric and while only fragments of the metopes survive, these fragments display the emergence of the naturalism that is found in Archaic sculpture.

Key Terms

- **peristyle**: An external colonnade surrounding the perimeter of a temple.
- **stylobate**: The level of a temple platform on which its columns stand.
- **triglyph**: Three vertically channeled tablets of the Doric frieze in classical architecture, so called because of the angular channels in them.
- **tripod**: A three-legged stand or mount.
- **treasury**: A place where state or royal money and valuables are stored.
- **gigantomachy**: The battle fought between the Titans and the Olympian gods for supremacy of the cosmos.
- **columns in antis**: The upright posts located between two pillars or piers on either side of a doorway or entrance to a Greek temple.
- **metope**: A rectangular architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze.
- **Panhellenic**: Relating to all of Greece or all of the Greeks.

Delphi

The ancient site of Delphi, located in central Greece on the slope of Mt. Parnassus, was known for its Sanctuary of Apollo, the Delphic Oracle, and the Pythian Games. Delphi was home to the dragon Python who protected the navel of the earth.

Apollo slew the Python, establishing his presence at the site. The Panhellenic Pythian games that were held every four years, along with musical compositions , commemorated Apollo's victory over the beast.

Not only was the site the main place of worship for the god Apollo, it was also the home of an oracle. The oracle was a sibyl or priestess known as a Pythia.

According to myth, when Apollo slew the Python, the creature's body fell into a fissure and began decomposing. The oracle would place her tripod seat over the fissure, inhale the fumes, and then would be possessed by Apollo, allowing him to speak through her.

The Delphic Oracle was an essential part of Greek life and was consulted for matters public and private, small and large, and so had commanding power over the lives of the Greeks. The oracle's prophecies were usually unintelligible and would be translated into poetic meter by priests.

Temple of Apollo

The site of Delphi is dominated by a central Temple of Apollo, a fourth-century BCE replacement of the Archaic sixth-century temple. One peristyle of Doric columns (the order used in Archaic architecture) surrounded the perimeter of the stylobate that rested atop two steps.

Inside the Temple of Apollo was the seat of the Pythia, in a small restricted room in the back of the naos , known as an adyton, which translates to English as not to be entered.



Temple of Apollo: Reconstructed Doric columns mark the east end (front) of the temple.

There was also a large theater built into the hillside located just above the Temple of Apollo. The theater was first built in the fourth century BCE and renovated multiple times in the following centuries. It could seat 5,000 spectators and offered a view of the entire sanctuary site and the valley.

Treasuries

The road leading up to the sanctuary site of Apollo was lined with votive statues and treasuries. The treasuries were built by different poleis to honor the oracle, thank her for her advice, and commemorate military victories. These small, temple-like structures held the votives and offerings made to Apollo as well as a small proportion of the spoils won from battle from each polis . Because the buildings held a wealth of materials and goods, they are known as treasuries. These buildings were single-room naosoi (plural of naos) fronted by two columns in antis and decorated in either the Doric or Ionic style.

Siphnian Treasury

The Siphnian Treasury was built for the polis of Siphnos, a city-state that occupied a Cycladic island. The Siphnians had large gold and silver mines, from which they profited enormously, and they used the profits to erect their treasury at Delphi.

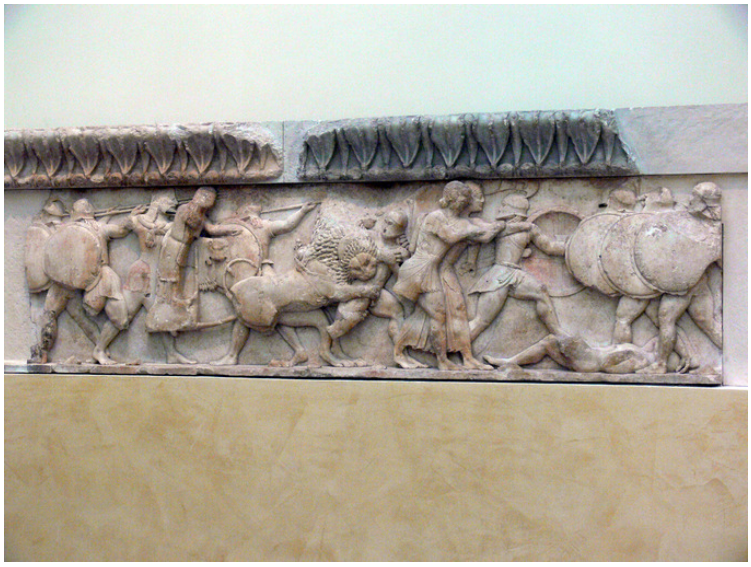
The treasury housed their gold and silver gifts to the gods. The Siphian Treasury was the first structure built entirely from marble when it was erected in 530 BCE and was elaborately decorated.

The two columns in the antis were not typical columns but caryatids, support columns that took the shape of women. A continuous Ionic frieze that wrapped around the top of the treasury beneath the pediment depicted scenes from Greek mythology, including a gigantomachy on the north side, the Judgment of Paris on the west side, and gods watching the sack of Troy by the Greeks on the south and east sides.

The east pediment recounts the story of Herakles stealing Apollo’s tripod, which visually connects the pediment and the treasury to the oracle site at the Temple of Apollo.



Herakles and Apollo: Herakles stealing the tripod of Apollo. From the east pediment of the Siphnian Treasury. Marble. c. 530 BCE. Siphnian Treasury, Delphi, Greece.



Gigantomachy: A gigantomachy scene from the north frieze of the Siphnian Treasury. Marble. c. 530 BCE. Siphnian Treasury, Delphi, Greece.

The figures are carved in an Archaic style and in high relief, and they are almost, but not entirely, freed from the wall of the frieze. While the figures appear to be in motion, with wide stances and arms open wide for battle, the majority of them stand with both feet flat on ground . This inhibits the sense of motion given by the rest of their bodies.

The pedimental figures are especially rigid and linear, although the figures are no longer scaled to fit into the small corners of the pediment. When looking at these figures, from the front they appear to appropriately model the body, while from the side the figures appear block-like, emphasizing the fact that they were carved from stone.

Athenian Treasury

The Athenian treasury at Delphi was built between 510 and 480 BCE to commemorate the Athenian victory over the Persians during the Battle of Marathon. Like the Siphnian Treasury, the Athenian Treasury was constructed entirely of marble.

The treasury has Doric columns and a frieze of triglyphs and thirty metopes that depict scenes from the life of Theseus, an Athenian mythological hero, and Herakles. The metopes also display the development of Archaic relief and temple decoration. The figures do not feel forced into their frame but instead begin to fill out the scene.

Most of the scenes consist of only two characters and few scenes, such as Herakles fighting the Ceryean Hind (an enormous deer), display a new sense of ingenuity. The figure of Herakles breaks out of the frame as he leans on the hind's back, trying to catch it.

Furthermore, the figures, unlike those on the Siphnian pediment, appear modeled from all sides, as opposed to just frontally.



Herakles and Ceryean Hind: Metope depicting Herakles and Ceryean Hind. Marble. c. 510-480 BCE. Treasury of Athens, Delphi, Greece



Athenian treasury: Athenian treasury. Marble. c. 510–490 BCE, Delphi, Greece.

Temple Architecture in the Greek Archaic Period

The temples of the Archaic period are the first stone temples built in Greece. They demonstrate a developing knowledge of stone building through their use of decorative spaces on buildings.

Learning Objectives

Explain the sculptural design choices on different areas of the temples: identify the naos, pronaos, prostyle, antae, and opisthodomos, and indicate the specific features that were characteristic of the Doric order

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The design of Greek stone temples was influenced by Mycenaean megarons (a porch with columns in antis and a central room) and their earlier wooden temples. Many decorative elements, such as the triglyphs , replicated the visual design of wooden temples in stone.
- During the Archaic period, the Greeks began to develop the ideal temple design. It included a central naos surrounded on two ends by an opisthodomos and a pronaos , but accessed only through the pronaos. These rooms were surrounded by a peripteral colonnade on a raised platform with two or three steps.

- The Doric order is the oldest Greek classification of architecture. It is identified by its columns and its frieze . The columns had no base, a bulge in the middle of their shaft , and squashed, flared capitals . The frieze was divided by triglyphs and metopes.
- Designers utilized the spaces on the metopes to depict individual mythological events on earlier temples, and then as a collective series of moments in an event, such as the Twelve Labors of Herakles on the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The pedimental spaces were also used to depict heroic or mythological events at either end of the temples. The Temple of Hera I and the Temple of Hera II at Paestum, Italy demonstrated the development of the Doric style from its earliest stage through various refinements as the Greeks became more comfortable with building in stone.
- The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina is one of the last temples whose design did not conform to the architectural standards of the time.

Key Terms

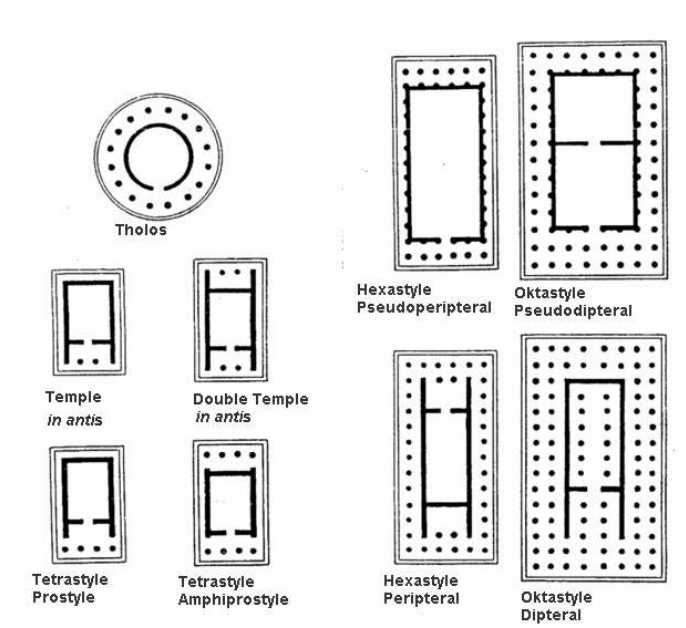
- **peripteral**: Surrounded by a single row of columns.
- **naos**: The inner chamber of a temple that housed the cult statue. Also known as a cella.
- **megaron**: The rectangular great hall in a Mycenaean building, usually supported with pillars.
- **pediment**: The triangular space left above the frieze by the shape of the roof at the narrowest ends of the temple.
- **entasis**: A slight convex curvature introduced into the shaft of a column for aesthetic reasons, or to compensate for the illusion of concavity.
- **stylobate**: A raised stone platform on which temples are erected.
- **pronaos**: The front porch of a temple.
- **anta**: The post or pillar on either side of a doorway or entrance of a Greek temple.
- **opisthodomos**: The rear room of a Greek temple.
- **votives**: Objects displayed or deposited at a sacred place without the intent of recovery or use.
- **echinus**: A convex molding that commonly bears the egg-and-dart motif.
- **entablature**: The area of a temple facade that lies horizontally atop the columns.
- **triglyph**: A decorative panel with three grooves.
- **tholos**: A circular, colonnaded building, usually a temple.
- **metope**: A rectangular architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze.
- **prostyle**: Free-standing columns across the front of a building.

Temples of the Archaic Period

Stone temples were first built during the Archaic period in ancient Greece. Before this, they were constructed out of mud-brick and wood—simple structures that were rectangular or semi-circular in shape—that may have been enhanced with a few columns and a porch. The Archaic stone temples took their essential shape and structure from these wooden temples and the shape of a Mycenaean megaron.

Temple Design

The standard form of a Greek temple was established and then refined through the Archaic and Classical period. Most temples were rectilinear in shape and stood on a raised stone platform, known as the stylobates , which usually had two or three stairs.



Temple plans: These illustrations show various examples of Greek temples.

The main portion of the temple was the naos. To the front of the naos was the pronaos, or front porch. A door between the naos and pronaos provided access to the cult statue. Columns, known as prostyle , often stood in front of the pronaos. These were often aligned with molded projections to the end of the pronaos's wall, called the anta (plural antae). Such aligned columns were referred to as columns in antis.

A rear room, called the opisthodomos, was on the other side of the temple and naos. A wall separated the naos and opisthodomos completely. The opisthodomos was used as a treasury and held the votives and offerings left at the temple for the god or goddess. It also had a set of prostyle columns in antis that completed the symmetrical appearance of the temple.

Other Temple Plans

While this describes the standard design of Greek temples, it is not the most common form found. One notable exception to this standard was the circular tholos , dedicated to Apollo at Delphi. Columns were placed on the edge of the stylobate in a line or colonnade, which was peripteral and ran around the naos (an inner chamber that holds a cult statue) and its porches.

The first stone temples varied significantly as architects and engineers were forced to determine how to properly support a roof with such a wide span. Later architects, such as Iktinos and Kallikrates who designed the Parthenon, tweaked aspects of basic temple structure to better accommodate the cult statue.

Mathematical Scale

All temples, however, were built on a mathematical scale and every aspect of them is related to one another through ratios. For instance, most Greek temples (except the earliest) followed the equation $2x + 1 = y$ when determining the number of columns used in the peripteral colonnade.

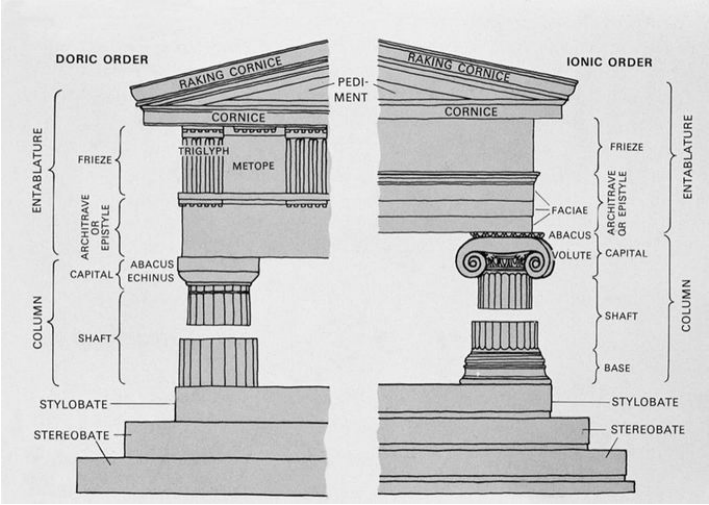
In this equation, x stands for the number of columns across the front, the shorter end, while y designates the columns down the sides. The number of columns used along the length of the temple was twice the number plus one the number of columns across the front. Due to these mathematical ratios, we are able to accurately reconstruct temples from small fragments.

Doric Order

The style of Greek temples is divided into three different and distinct orders, the earliest of which is the Doric order. These temples had columns that rested directly on the stylobate without a base. Their shafts were fluted with twenty parallel grooves that tapered to a sharp point.

The capitals of Doric columns had a simple, unadorned square abacus and a flared echinus that was often short and squashed. Doric columns are also noted for the presence of entasis , or bulges in the middle of the column shaft. This was perhaps a way to create an

optical illusion or to emphasize the weight of the entablature above, held up by the columns.



Doric and Ionic order: This drawing illustrates the stylistic differences between the Doric and Ionic order.

The Doric entablature was also unique to this style of temples. The frieze was decorated with alternating panels of triglyphs and metopes. The triglyphs were decorative panels with three grooves or glyphs that gave the panel its name. The stone triglyphs mimicked the head of wooden beams used in earlier temples. Between the triglyphs were the metopes.

Decorative Spaces

Sculptors used the metope spaces to depict mythological occurrences, often with historical or cultural links to the site on which the temple stood.



Herakles fights the Cretan Bull: This is one of the metopes from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. It is one of the Twelve Labors depicted on the temple.

On the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (constructed between 470BC and 456BC), the choice to sculpt the Twelve Labors of Herakles was in direct correlation with the site's Olympic Games and the spirit of triumph in physical challenge. Most sculptors attempted to use the limited and angular space of metopes to show distinct moments that filled the shape, but not all were successful in doing so.

Another space used for decoration was the pediment at each end of the temple. Due to the larger space afforded by these sections, the sculptors often chose to depict larger and more eventful scenes.



The sculptures from the pediments on the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina: These scenes show fight scenes between Greeks and Trojans, such as those described in Homer's Iliad.

The shape of the pediment made it difficult to arrange figures in a coherent and cohesive scene, so the sculptors placed the most prominent ones in the apex (the highest point of the triangle). All of these decorative sculptures would be painted in bright colors and recognizable to onlookers.

Paestum, Italy

The Greek colony at Poseidonia (now Paestum) in Italy, built two Archaic Doric temples that are still standing today .



Temple of Hera II and Temple of Hera I, Paestum, Italy. c. 500–460 BCE.: The Greek colony at Poseidonia (now Paestum) in Italy, built two Archaic Doric temples that are still standing today.

The first, the Temple of Hera I, was built in 550 BCE and differs from the standard Greek temple model dramatically. It is peripteral, with nine columns across its short ends and 18 columns along each side. The opisthodomos is accessed through the naos by two doors. There are three columns in antis across the pronaos. Inside the naos is a row of central columns, built to support the roof.

The cult statue is placed at the back, in the center, and is blocked from view by the row of columns. When examining the columns, they are large and heavy, and spaced very close together. This further denotes the Greeks unease with building in stone and the need to properly support a stone entablature and heavy roof. The capitals of the columns are round, flat, and pancake-like.

The Temple of Hera II, built almost a century later in 460 BCE, began to show the structural changes that demonstrated the Greek's comfort and developing understanding of building in stone, as well as the beginnings of a Classical temple style.

In this example, the temple was fronted by six columns, with 14 columns along its length. The opisthodomos was separated from the naos and had its own entrance and set of columns in antis. A central flight of stairs led from the pronaos to the naos and the doors opened to look upon a central cult statue. There were still interior columns; however they were moved to the side, permitting prominent display of the cult statue.

Aegina

The temple of Aphaia on the island of Aegina is an example of Archaic Greek temple design as well as of the shift in sculptural style between the Archaic and Classical periods. Aegina is a small island in the Saronic Gulf within view of Athens; in fact, Aegina and Athens were rivals.

While the temple was dedicated to the local god Aphaia, the temple's pediments depicted scenes of the Trojan War to promote the greatness of the island. These scenes involve the Greek heroes who fought at Troy—Telamon and Peleus , the fathers of Ajax and Achilles.

In an antagonistic move, the battle scenes on the pediments are overseen by Athena, and the temple's dedicated deity , Aphaia, does not appear on the pediment at all. While very little paint remains now, the entire pediment scene, triglyphs and metopes, and other parts of the temple would have been painted in bright colors.



Temple of Aphaia at Aegina, c. 500–490 BCE: The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina as it stands today.

Temple Design

The Temple of Aphaia is one of the last temples with a design that did not conform to standards of the time. Its colonnade has six columns across its width and twelve columns down its length. The columns have become more widely spaced and also more slender.

Both the pronaos and opisthodomos have two prostyle (free-standing) columns in antis and exterior access, although both lead into the temple's naos. Despite the connection between the opisthodomos and the naos, the doorway between them is much smaller than the doorway between the naos and the pronaos.

As in the Temple of Hera II, there are two rows of columns on either side of the temple's interior. In this case there are five on each side, and each colonnade has two stories. A small ramp interrupts the stylobate at the center of the temple's main entrance.



Plan of the sanctaury of the Temple of Aphaia: Ground plan of the Temple of Aphaia and the surrounding area.

Sculpture in the Greek Archaic Period

Sculpture during the Archaic period became increasing naturalistic, although this varies depending on the gender of the subject.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the kouroi and korai sculptures of the Archaic period, and recognize the increasing naturalism seen in both free-standing and pedimental sculptures of the Archaic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Dedicatory male kouroi figures were originally based on Egyptian statues and over the Archaic period these figures developed more naturalistic nude bodies. The athletic body was an ideal form for a young Greek male and is comparable to the ideal body of the god Apollo.
- Instead of focusing on the body, female korai statues were clothed and throughout the Archaic period artists spent more time elaborating on the detailed folds and drapery of a woman's clothing. This reflected the Greek ideals for women, who were supposed to be fully clothed, modest, and demure.
- To add an additional naturalistic element to the body, the typical Archaic smile was added to both male and female statues. While today the smile seems false, to the ancient Greeks it added a level of realism.
- Pedimental sculpture in the Archaic period was often scaled to fit into the space of the pediment and served an apotropaic instead of a decorative function.
- Pedimental sculptures from the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina show a gradual move toward the naturalism of the Classical style that followed the Archaic.

Key Terms

- **Archaic smile**: A stylized expression used in sculpture from 600 to 480 BCE to suggest a sense of lifelikeness in the subject.
- **peplos**: An Ancient Greek garment, worn by women, made of a tubular piece of cloth that is folded back upon itself halfway down, until the top of the tube is worn around the waist, and the bottom covers the legs down to the ankles; the open top is then worn over the shoulders, and draped, in folds, down to the waist.
- **apotropaic**: Intended to ward off evil.
- **kouros**: A sculpture of a naked youth in Ancient Greece; the male equivalent of a kore.

- **kore**: An Ancient Greek statue of a woman, portrayed standing, usually clothed, painted in bright colors, and having an elaborate hairstyle.
- **chiton**: A loose, woolen tunic, worn by both men and women in Ancient Greece.

Sculpture in the Archaic Period

Sculpture in the Archaic Period developed rapidly from its early influences, becoming more natural and showing a developing understanding of the body, specifically the musculature and the skin. Close examination of the style's development allows for precise dating.

Most statues were commissioned as memorials and votive offerings or as grave markers, replacing the vast amphora (two-handled, narrow-necked jars used for wine and oils) and kraters (wide-mouthed vessels) of the previous periods, yet still typically painted in vivid colors.

Kouroi

Kouroi statues (singular, kouros), depicting idealized, nude male youths, were first seen during this period. Carved in the round , often from marble, kouroi are thought to be associated with Apollo; many were found at his shrines and some even depict him. Emulating the statues of Egyptian pharaohs, the figure strides forward on flat feet, arms held stiffly at its side with fists clenched. However, there are some importance differences: kouroi are nude, mostly without identifying attributes and are free-standing.

Early kouroi figures share similarities with Geometric and Orientalizing sculpture, despite their larger scale. For instance, their hair is stylized and patterned, either held back with a headband or under a cap. The New York Kouros strikes a rigid stance and his facial features are blank and expressionless. The body is slightly molded and the musculature is reliant on incised lines .



New York Kouros, c. 600 BCE: New York Kouros. Marble. Origin unknown.

As kouroi figures developed, they began to lose their Egyptian rigidity and became increasingly naturalistic. The kouros figure of Kroisos, an Athenian youth killed in battle, still depicts a young man with an idealized body. This time though, the body's form shows realistic modeling.

The muscles of the legs, abdomen, chest and arms appear to actually exist and seem to function and work together. Kroisos's hair, while still stylized, falls naturally over his neck and onto his back, unlike that of the New York Kouros, which falls down stiffly and

in a single sheet. The reddish appearance of his hair reminds the viewer that these sculptures were once painted.



Kroisos, c. 530 BCE: Kroisos, from the Anavysos Group. Marble. Greece.

Archaic Smile

Kroisos's face also appears more naturalistic when compared to the earlier New York Kouros. His cheeks are round and his chin bulbous; however, his smile seems out of place. This is typical of this period and is known as the Archaic smile. It appears to have been added to infuse the sculpture with a sense of being alive and to add a sense of realism.

Kore

A kore (plural korai) sculpture depicts a female youth. Whereas kouroi depict athletic, nude young men, the female korai are fully-clothed, in the idealized image of decorous women. Unlike men—whose bodies were perceived as public, belonging to the state—women's bodies were deemed private and belonged to their fathers (if unmarried) or husbands.

However, they also have Archaic smiles, with arms either at their sides or with an arm extended, holding an offering. The figures are stiff and retain more block-like characteristics than their male counterparts. Their hair is also stylized, depicted in long strands or braids that cascade down the back or over the shoulder.

The Peplos Kore (c. 530 BCE) depicts a young woman wearing a peplos, a heavy wool garment that drapes over the whole body, obscuring most of it. A slight indentation between the legs, a division between her torso and legs, and the protrusion of her breasts merely hint at the form of the body underneath.

Remnants of paint on her dress tell us that it was painted yellow with details in blue and red that may have included images of animals. The presence of animals on her dress may indicate that she is the image of a goddess, perhaps Artemis, but she may also just be a nameless maiden.



Peplos Kore: Reconstruction of the paint on the Peplos Kore.

Later korai figures also show stylistic development, although the bodies are still overshadowed by their clothing. The example of a Kore (520–510 BCE) from the Athenian Acropolis shows a bit more shape in the body, such as defined hips instead of a dramatic belted waistline, although the primary focus of the kore is on the clothing and the drapery. This kore figure wears a chiton (a woolen tunic), a himation (a lightweight undergarment), and a mantle (a cloak). Her facial features are still generic and blank, and she has an Archaic smile. Even with the finer clothes and additional adornments such as jewelry, the figure depicts the idealized Greek female, fully clothed and demure.

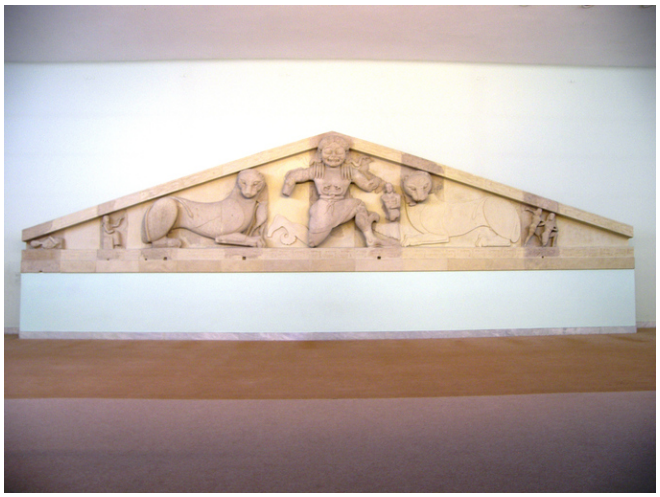


Acropolis Kore, c. 520–510 BCE: Wearing a chiton and himation. Marble. Athens, Greece.

Pedimental Sculpture: The Temple of Artemis at Corfu

This sculpture, initially designed to fit into the space of the pediment, underwent dramatic changes during the Archaic period, seen later at Aegina. The west pediment at the Temple of Artemis at Corfu depicts not the goddess of the hunt, but the Gorgon Medusa with her children; Pegasus, a winged horse; and Chrysaor, a giant wielding a golden sword surrounded by heraldic lions.

Medusa faces outwards in a challenging position, believed to be apotropaic (warding off evil). Additional scenes include Zeus fighting a Titan, and the slaying of Priam, the king of Troy, by Neoptolemos. These figures are scaled down in order to fit into the shrinking space provided in the pediment.



Pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu, c. 600–580 BCE: Sculpture and reconstruction of the west pediment. Limestone. Corfu, Greece.

Pedimental Sculpture: The Temple of Aphaia at Aegina

Sculpted approximately one century later, the pedimental sculptures on the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina gradually grew more naturalistic than their predecessors at Corfu. The dying warrior on the west pediment (c. 490 BCE) is a prime example of Archaic sculpture. The male warrior is depicted nude, with a muscular body that shows the Greeks' understanding of the musculature of the human body. His hair remains stylized with round, geometric curls and textured patterns.

However, despite the naturalistic characteristics of the body, the body does not seem to react to its environment or circumstances. The warrior props himself up with an arm, and his whole body is tense, despite the fact that he has been struck by an arrow in his chest. His face, with its Archaic smile, and his posture conflict with the reality that he is dying.



Dying Warrior, c. 490 BCE: Marble, west pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

Aegina: Transition between Styles

The dying warrior on the east pediment (c. 480 BCE) marks a transition to the new Classical style. Although he bears a slight Archaic smile, this warrior actually reacts to his circumstances. Nearly every part of him appears to be dying.

Instead of propping himself up on an arm, his body responds to the gravity pulling on his dying body, hanging from his shield and attempting to support himself with his other arm. He also attempts to hold himself up with his legs, but one leg has fallen over the pediment's edge and protrudes into the viewer's space. His muscles are contracted and limp, depending on which ones they are, and they seem to strain under the weight of the man as he dies.



Dying Warrior, c. 480 BCE: Marble, East Pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

Ceramics in the Greek Archaic Period

Archaic black- and red-figure painting began to depict more naturalistic bodies by conveying form and movement.

Learning Objectives

Describe the similarities and differences between black- and red-figure painting during Greece's Archaic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Black-figure painting was used throughout the Archaic period before diminishing under the popularity of red-figure painting.
- Exekias is considered one of the most talented and influential black-figure painters due to his ability to convey emotion, use intricate lines , and create scenes that trusted the viewer to comprehend the scene.
- Red-figure painting was developed in 530 BCE by the Andokides Painter, a style that allows for more naturalism in the body due to the use of a brush.
- The first red-figure paintings were produced on bilingual vases, depicting one scene on each side, one in black figure and the other in red figure.
- The painters Euthyides and Euphronios were two of the most talented Archaic red-figure painters, with their vessels depict space , movement, and naturalism.

Key Terms

- **burin**: A chisel with a sharp point, used for engraving; an engraver.
- **slip**: A thin, slippery mix of clay and water.
- **red-figure**: One of the most important styles of figural Greek vase painting, based on the figural depictions in red color on a black background.
- **black-figure**: A style of Greek vase painting that is distinguished by silhouette-like figures on a red background.

Pottery Decoration Overview

The Archaic period saw a shift in styles of pottery decoration, from the repeating patterns of the Geometric period , through the Eastern-influenced Orientalizing style, to the more naturalistic black- and red-figure techniques. During this time, figures became more dynamic and defined by more organic—as opposed to geometric—elements.

Black-Figure Painting

Black-figure painting, which derives its name from the black figures painted on red backgrounds, was developed by the Corinthians in the seventh century BCE and became popular throughout the Greek world during the Archaic period. As painters became more confident working in the medium , human figures began to appear on vases and painters and potters began signing their creations.

The François Vase

One of the most famous early Athenian black-figure pots is a large volute krater by the potter Ergotimos and the painter Kleitias, known as the François Vase. The krater, named for the man who discovered it in the nineteenth century, depicts 270 figures on the six registers that wrap around the krater.

Unlike the monumental vases of the Geometric period, this krater stands at 66 cm (2.17 feet) tall. The surface depicts various mythological scenes with many figures labeled by name. On one side of the krater's neck are scenes from the Calydonian Boar hunt, in which several men and a powerful woman named Atalanta hunted and killed a monstrous boar sent by Artemis to terrorize the region of Calydon after the king offended her.

The other side depicts Theseus, who slayed the Minotaur , with Athenian youths and his wife Ariadne. Other registers depict scenes of the Trojan War and Peleus with his son Achilles. The detail and skill demonstrate new styles of Archaic vase painting, shifting away from past centuries' animal motifs and geometric patterns.

Instead of filling negative space with patterns and geometric designs, Kleitias leaves areas empty. The people and horses are depicted differently than Oriental and Geometric prototypes. Bodies are more accurately rendered and less dependent on geometric shapes, although profile views dominate, and sharp lines provide texture for musculature and clothing. While many figures still stand flat-footed, the limbs of people, horses, and centaurs show movement and are dramatic compositions within the confines of the style.



Francois Vase: Made by Kleitias and Ergotimos. The François Vase is an Athenian black-figure volute krater, c. 570 BCE, Chiusi, Italy.

Exekias

Exekias, considered the most prominent black-figure painter of his time, worked between 545 and 530 BCE in Athens. He is regarded by art historians as an artistic visionary whose masterful use of incision and psychologically sensitive compositions mark him as one of the greatest of all Attic vase painters. His vessels display attention to detail and precise, intricate lines.

Exekias is also well-known for reinterpreting mythologies. Instead of providing the entire story, as Kleitias did on the François Vase, he paints single scenes and relies on the viewer to interpret and understand the narrative.

One example is an amphora that depicts the Greek warriors Achilles and Ajax playing dice. Both men are decorated with fine incised details, showing elaborate textile patterns and almost every hair in place. As they wait for the next battle with the Trojans, their game foreshadows their fates. Inscribed text allows the two figures to speak: "Achilles has rolled a four, while Ajax rolled a

three.” Both men will die during the the Trojan War, but Achilles dies a hero while Ajax is consistently considered second best, eventually committing suicide.



Achilles and Ajax: By Exekias, Achilles and Ajax Playing a Dice Game. Athenian Black-figure amphora, c. 540–530 BCE. Vulci, Italy.

Red-Figure Painting

Red-figure painting developed in Athens in 530 BCE and remained popular into the Classical period. The technique is similar to black-figure painting but with key differences.

Instead of painting a figure with black slip and using a burin to scrape away the slip to create details, red-figure painting has the background painted black and the figures left the red color of the terra cotta . Black slip was painted with a brush to add detail.

Brushes could achieve more fluid lines than a burin, so details were better rendered and figures became livelier than the black-figure silhouettes. The black slip could also be diluted with water to create shades for modeling bodies or clothing. Overall, the technique allowed vase painters to create compositions that rendered the body more naturally.

Bilingual Painting

Bilingual vase painting became popular with the advent of red-figure painting. Bilingual vases were painted with a single scene on each side of the vessel, usually the same scene rendered twice. One side depicts the scene in black-figure and the other side depicts the scene in red-figure.

The Andokides Painter is credited as the inventor of red-figure style and its early production on bilingual vases. Several of his bilingual amphorae mimic some of Exekias’s most famous subjects, such as Achilles and Ajax playing dice. These similarities lead many scholars to conclude that he was Exekias’s student.

A score of vases with black figures, whose attribution is disputed by some researchers, show that the Andokides painter gradually attained greater control and virtuosity in the technique. Earlier examples appear a little stiff. Later, the artist exploits the benefits inherent in the technique and utilizes a range of colors from red to dark brown.

The Andokides painter marked the arrival of the red-figure style that was later used by many artists. The painter’s most favored subject matter was a wide range of mythological scenes that depicted the gods and heroes. Heracles was his favorite character.



Herakles and Athena: Herakles and Athena. Red-figure side of a bilingual amphora, c. 520–510 BCE, Vulci, Italy.



Herakles and Athena: Herakles and Athena. Black-figure side of a bilingual amphora, c. 520–510 BCE, Vulci, Italy.

Additional Red-Figure Painters

Additional red-figure painting can be seen in the work of the rivals Euthymides and Euphronios. Euthymides is known as a pioneer of red-figure painting.

His vessels depict people in movement and he attempted perspective by showing figures with foreshortened limbs. The Revelers Vase is an amphora that depicts three drunk men dancing. While the figures do not overlap, the bodies are in shown in profile, three-quarter view, and from behind.

Breaking the traditional rigidity of contemporary Archaic statues and paintings, the revelers are in dynamic postures. The two outer figures stand in active stances, with their legs and hands in motion. The middle figure is in a twisted position, with his back to the viewer and his head looking over his left shoulder. The use of foreshortening , although rudimentary, gives the entire composition a more natural and believable feel. It is perhaps the use of this relatively untried technique that led Euthymides to write on his vase, “As never Euphronios [could do!]” as a taunt to his contemporary and rival.



Euthymides. Revelers Vase: Red-figure amphora, c. 510 BCE.

The painter Euphronios is also recognized for his dramatic and complex compositions. He used diluted clay slip to create a range of shades to color his figures, making them appear energetic and present in three-dimensional space.

A scene of Herakles and Antaios wrestling conveys the bodies of both men with previously unseen naturalism. The men's bodies bend and twist and their limbs overlap, disappear and reappear, which helps achieve both naturalism as well as a sense of space.



Herakles and Antaios: Euphronios. Herakles Wrestling Antaios. Athenian Red-figure calyx krater. (C. 510 BCE. Cervetri, Italy.)

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6.5: The Early Classical Period

Marble Sculpture and Architecture in the Greek Early Classical Period

Early Classical Greek marble sculptures and temple decorations display new conventions to depict the body and severe style facial expressions.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of the Kritios Boy, Spear Bearer, and the Temple of Zeus

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The sculpture found on the pediment and metopes at the Temple of Zeus at Olympia represent the style of relief and pedimental sculptural during the Early Classical period.
- The Severe style is an Early Classical style of sculpting where the body is depicted naturalistically and the face remains blank and expressionless. This style notes the artist's understanding of the body's musculature, while maintaining a screen between art and reality with the stoic face.
- Contrapposto is a weight shift depicted in the body that rotates the waist, hips, chest, shoulders, and sometimes even the neck and head of the figure. It increases that naturalism in the body since it correctly mimics the inner workings of human musculature.
- Kritios Boy is an early example of contrapposto and Severe style. This marble statue depicts a nude male youth, muscular and well built, with an air of naturalism that dissolves when examining his Severe style face.
- Polykleitos, an artist and art theorist, developed a canon for the creation of the perfect male body based on mathematical proportions. His Doryphoros (Spear Bearer) is believed to be a sculptural representation of his treatise. The figure stands in contrapposto, with a Severe-style face.

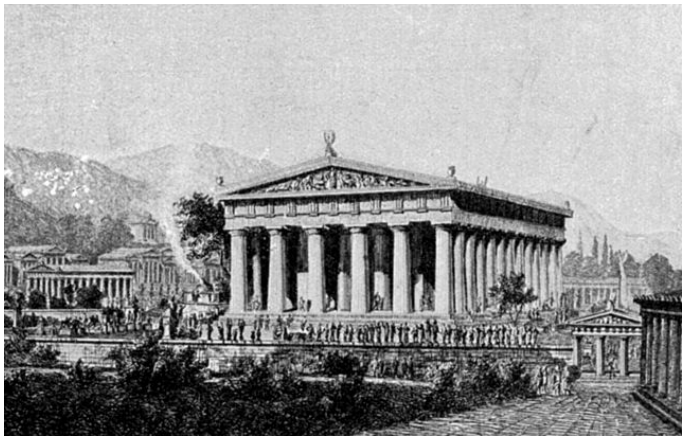
Key Terms

- **Severe style**: The dominant idiom of Greek sculpture in the period from 490 to 450 BCE. It marks the breakdown of the canonical forms of Archaic art and the transition to the greatly expanded vocabulary and expression of the classical movement of the late 5th century.
- **Perserchutt**: A German term meaning Persian debris or rubble, that refers to the location of ritually buried architectural and votive sculptures that were destroyed following the sack of Athens by the Persians. The area was first excavated by the Germans in the late 19th century.
- **hexastyle**: Describes a building with six columns in the front and back and 13 down each side.

Temple of Zeus at Olympia

The Temple of Zeus at Olympia is a colossal ruined temple in the center of the Greek capital Athens that was dedicated to Zeus, king of the Olympian gods. Its plan is similar to that of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina.

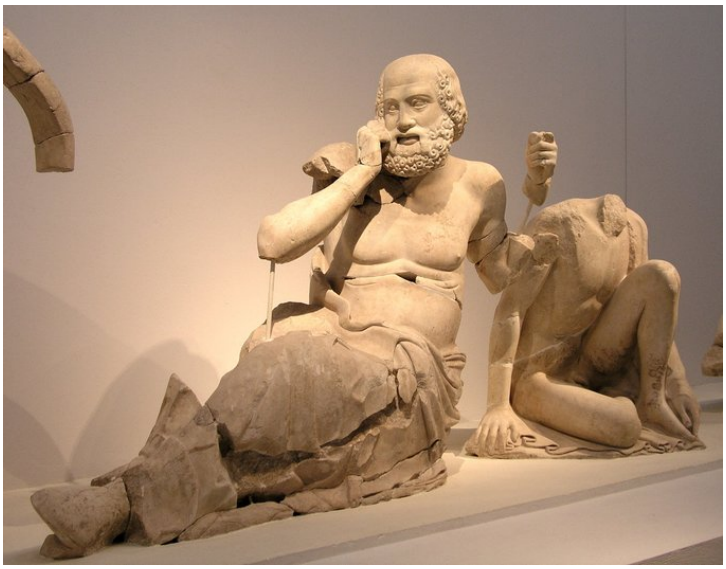
It is hexastyle , with six columns across the front and back and 13 down each side. It has two columns directly connected to the walls of the temple, known as in antis, in front of both the entranceway (pronaos) and the inner shrine (opisthodomos). Like the Temple of Aphaia, there are two, two-story colonnades of seven columns on each side of the inner sanctuary (naos).



Temple of Zeus at Olympia: Wilhelm Lübke's illustration of the Temple as it might have appeared in the fifth century BCE.

The pedimental figures are depicted in the developing Classical style with naturalistic yet overly muscular bodies. Most of the figures are shown with the expressionless faces of the Severe style.

The figures on the east pediment await the start of a chariot race, and the whole composition is still and static . A seer, however, watches it in horror as he foresees the death of Oenomaus. This level of emotion would never be present in Archaic statues and it breaks the Early Classical Severe style, allowing the viewer to sense the forbidding events about to happen.



Seer from the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus, marble, c. 470–455 BCE, Olympia, Greece: The level of emotion on the seer's face would never be present in Archaic statues and it breaks the Early Classical Severe style, allowing the viewer to sense the forbidding events about to happen.

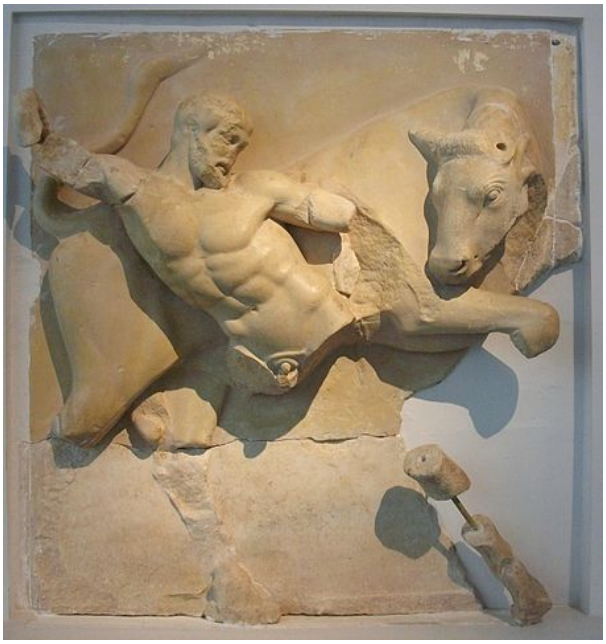
Unlike the static composition of the eastern pediment, the Centauromachy on the western pediment depicts movement that radiates out from its center. The centaurs, fighting men, and abducted women struggle and fight against each other, creating tension in another example of an early portrayal of emotion. Most figures are depicted in the Severe style. However, some, including a centaur, have facial features that reflect their wrath and anger.



Centauromachy, c. 460 BCE: West pediment, Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

The twelve metopes over the pronaos and opisthodomos depict scenes from the twelve labors of Herakles. Like the development in pedimental sculpture, the reliefs on the metopes display the Early Classical understanding of the body. Herakles' body is strong and idealized, yet it has a level of naturalism and plasticity that increases the liveliness of the reliefs.

The scenes depict varying types of compositions. Some are static with two or three figures standing rigidly, while others, such as Herakles and the Cretan Bull, convey a sense of liveliness through their diagonal composition and overlapping bodies.



Herakles and the Cretan Bull, c. 460 BCE: This metope fragment depicts Herakles in a more dynamic and emotive pose. It is from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.



Athena and Herakles depicting the Stymphalian Birds, c. 460 BCE: This metope fragment depicts Herakles with relatively calm body language. From the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

Kritios Boy

A slightly smaller-than-life statue known as the Kritios Boy was dedicated to Athena by an athlete and found in the Perserchutt of the Athenian Acropolis. Its title derives from a famous artist to whom the sculpture was once attributed.

The marble statue is a prime example of the Early Classical sculptural style and demonstrates the shift away from the stiff style seen in Archaic kouroi. The torso depicts an understanding of the body and plasticity of the muscles and skin that allows the statue to come to life.

Part of this illusion is created by a stance known as contrapposto. This describes a person with his or her weight shifted onto one leg, which creates a shift in the hips, chest, and shoulders to create a stance that is more dramatic and naturalistic than a stiff, frontal pose. This contrapposto position animates the figure through the relationship of tense and relaxed limbs.

However, the face of the Kritios Boy is expressionless, which contradicts the naturalism seen in his body. This is known as the Severe style. The blank expressions allow the sculpture to appear less naturalistic, which creates a screen between the art and the viewer. This differs from the use of the Archaic smile (now gone), which was added to sculpture to increase their naturalism. However, the now empty eye sockets once held inlaid stone to give the sculpture a lifelike appearance.



Kritios Boy, marble, c. 480 BCE, Acropolis, Athens, Greece: This marble statue is a prime example of the Early Classical sculptural style and demonstrates the shift away from the style seen in Archaic kouroi.

Polykleitos

Polykleitos was a well-known Greek sculptor and art theorist during the early- to mid-fifth century BCE. He is most renowned for his treatise on the male nude, known as the Canon, which describes the ideal, aesthetic body based on mathematical proportions and Classical conventions such as contrapposto.

His Doryphoros, or Spear Bearer, is believed to be his representation of the Canon in sculpted form . The statue depicts a young, well-built soldier holding a spear in his left hand with a shield attached to his left wrist. Both military implements are now lost. The figure has a Severe-style face and a contrapposto stance. In another development away from the stiff and seemingly immobile Archaic style, the Doryphoros' left heel is raised off the ground , implying an ability to walk.



Doryphoros: Polykleitos's Doryphoros, or Spear Bearer, is believed to be his representation of the Canon in sculpted form. This is a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original, c. 450 BCE.

This sculpture demonstrates how the use of contrapposto creates an S-shaped composition. The juxtaposition of a tension leg and tense arm and relaxed leg and relaxed arm, both across the body from each other, creates an S through the body.

The dynamic power of this composition shape places elements—in this case the figure's limbs—in opposition to each other and emphasizes the tension this creates. The statue, as a visualization of Polykletios' canon, also depicts the Greek sense of symmetria, the harmony of parts, seen here in the body's proportions.

Bronze Sculpture in the Greek Early Classical Period

Surviving Greek bronze sculptures from the Early Classical period showcase the skill of Greek artists in representing the body and expressing motion.

Learning Objectives

Discuss characteristics and examples of Greek Bronze sculpture during the Early Classical Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While bronze was a popular material for Greek sculptors, few Greek bronzes exist today. We know a majority of famous sculptors and sculptures only through marble Roman copies and the few bronzes that survived, often from shipwrecks.
- Early Classical bronzes are sculpted in the lost wax method of casting . The figures are created in the Severe style with naturalistic bodies and blank, expressionless faces. The sculptures' lightweight appearance is due to their hollowness and contributes to their implied potential energy and movement.
- The Charioteer of Delphi, the Riace Warriors, and the Artemision Bronze all display the sculpting characteristics of the Early Classical Severe style while also demonstrating the characteristics of bronze sculpting, including the lightness of the material and liveliness that could be achieved.

Key Terms

- **strut**: A support rod.
- **contrapposto**: The position of a figure whose hips and legs are twisted away from the direction of the head and shoulders.
- **lost wax**: A method of casting in which a model of the sculpture is made from wax. The model is used to make a mold. When the mold has set, the wax is made to melt and is poured away, leaving the mold ready to be used to cast the sculpture.

Greek Bronze Sculpture

Bronze was a popular sculpting material for the Greeks. Composed of a metal alloy of copper and tin, it provides a strong and lightweight material for use in the ancient world, especially in the creation of weapons and art. The Greeks used bronze throughout their history.

Because bronze is a valuable material, throughout history bronze sculptures were melted down to forge weapons and ammunition or to create new sculptures. The Greek bronzes that we have today mainly survived because of shipwrecks, which kept the material from being reused, and the sculptures have since been recovered from the sea and restored.

The Greeks used bronze as a primary means of sculpting, but much of our knowledge of Greek sculpture comes from Roman copies. The Romans were very fond of Greek art, and collecting marble replicas of them was a sign of status, wealth, and intelligence in the Roman world.

Roman copies worked in marble had a few differences from the original bronze. Struts , or supports, were added to help buttress the weight of the marble as well as the hanging limbs that did not need support when the statue was originally made in the lighter and hollow bronze. The struts appeared either as rectangular blocks that connect an arm to the torso or as tree stumps against the leg, which supports the weight of the sculpture, as in this Roman copy of the Diadoumenos Atenas.



Diadoumenos Atenas (Roman copy): The extension connecting the tree trunk to the leg of the figure is an example of a strut used in marble Roman copies of original Greek bronzes.

Lost Wax Technique

The lost wax technique, which is also known by its French name, cire perdue, is the process that ancient Greeks used to create their bronze statues. The first step of the process involves creating a full-scale clay model of the intended work of art. This would be the core of the model.

Once completed, a mold is made of the clay core and an additional wax mold is also created. The wax mold is then be placed between the clay core and the clay mold, creating a pocket, and the wax is melted out of the mold, after which the gap is filled with bronze. Once cooled, the exterior clay mold and interior clay coreis are carefully removed and the bronze statue is finished.

The multiple pieces are welded together, imperfections smoothed, and any additional elements, such as inlaid eyes and eyelashes, are then added. Because the clay mold must be broken when removing the figure, the lost wax method can be used only for making one-of-a-kind sculptures.

Charioteer of Delphi

The Charioteer of Delphi is an Early Classical bronze sculpture of a life-sized chariot driver. An inscription at the base tells us that the statues were originally dedicated by a man, named Polyzalus of Gela, to Apollo at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi.

Polyzalus commissioned and dedicated the work in commemoration of his victorious chariot race during the Pythian Games. The Charioteer is the only remaining part of a large statue group that included the chariot, grooms, and horses.



Charioteer of Delphi: Charioteer of Delphi. Bronze. c. 475 BCE. Sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi, Greece.

While the commissioner was a tyrant of the Greek colonial city of Gela on Sicily, the statue is believed to have been made in Athens. It was made by the lost wax technique in multiple sections and then assembled.

The Charioteer stands tall, his right arm stretched out to grasp reins; his left arm is missing. He has a high waist, which probably looked more natural when he stood on his chariot. However, despite the high waist, the figure has a high degree of naturalism , on par with the marble sculptural developments of the Early Classical style. The arms, face, and feet are rendered with high plasticity, and the inlaid eyes and added copper of his lips and eyelashes all add a degree of naturalism.

When compared to Archaic sculptures, it appears very natural. However, as an Early Classical sculpture, the Charioteer has yet to achieve the full Classical style. The Archaic smile is gone, but his appears almost blank and expressionless, on par with other sculptures produced in the Severe stye of the Early Classical period.

Riace Warriors

The Riace Warriors are a set of two nude, bronze sculptures of male warriors that were recovered off the coast of Riace, Italy. They are a prime example of Early Classical sculpture and the transition between Archaic to Classical sculpting styles.

The figures are nude, unlike the Charioteer. Their bodies are idealized and appear dynamic, with freed limbs, a contrapposto shift in weight, and turned heads that imply movement. The muscles are modeled with a high degree of plasticity, which the bronze material amplifies through natural reflections of light. Additional elements, such as copper for the lips and nipples, silver teeth, and eyes inlaid with glass and bone, were added to the figures to increase their naturalism. Both figures originally held a shield and spear, which are now lost. Warrior B wears a helmet, and it appears that Warrior A once wore a wreath around his head.



Riace Warriors: Warrior A (right) and Warrior B (left). Bronze, c. 460–450 BCE, Riace, Italy.

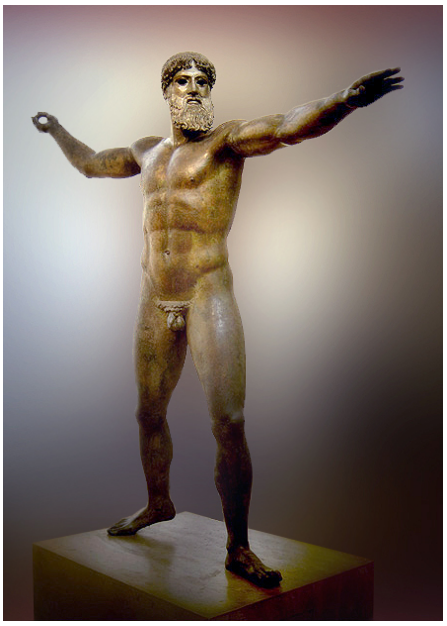
Artemision Bronze

The Artemision Bronze represents either Zeus or Poseidon. Both gods were represented with full beards to signify maturity. However, it is impossible to identify the sculpture as one god or the other because it can either be a lightning bolt (symbolic of Zeus) or a trident (symbolic of Poseidon) in his raised right hand.

The figure stands in heroic nude, as would be expected with a god, with his arms outstretched, preparing to strike. The bronze is in the Severe style with an idealized, muscular body and an expressionless face.

Like the Charioteer and the Riace Warriors, the Artemision Bronze once held inlaid glass or stone in its now-vacant eye sockets to heighten its lifelikeness. The right heel of the figure rises off the ground , which anticipates the motion the figure is about to undertake.

The full potential of the god’s motion and energy, as well as the grace of the body, is reflected in the modeling of the bronze.



Artemision Bronze: The Artemision Bronze figure depicts either Zeus or Poseidon, c. 460–450 BCE, Cape Artemision, Greece.

Ceramics in the Greek Early Classical Period

The ceramic art from Early Classical Greece displays important compositional developments and increased naturalism in the figures.

Learning Objectives

Examine the developments in ceramic art during the Early Classical period, including naturalism and white-ground painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Red-figure painting continued during the Early Classical period. The changes in the depiction of the body and in the drapery of the figures began to change, reflecting the stylistic changes and increased naturalism seen in Classical sculpture .
- The style of red-figure painting also diversified as painters began to depict figures on multiple ground lines , show characters from a variety of perspectives (including three-quarter view), and utilize more naturalism (as seen by the work of the Niobid Painter).
- White-ground painting, developed in 500 BCE, became popular during the Classical period. White-ground pottery was coated in a white slip before being fired and painted, allowing for the use of polychromy .
- Early white-ground painting (Type I) resembled black-figure painting until it was supplanted by the more familiar outline paintings. White-ground painting became the primary style for lekythoi, vessels used to hold oils that had a funerary context. Due to this context, many of the scenes painted on lekythoi depicted scenes of funerary rites and rituals , or scenes that alluded to impending death.

Key Terms

- **lekythos**: A type of ancient Greek pottery used for storing oil and previous liquids. The body is narrow and has a single handle attached to the neck of the vessel. They typically stood 10 to 20 inches tall, but when used as grave markers could be much larger.
- **polychromy**: The art or practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.
- **white-ground**: A style of ancient Greek vase painting in which figures appear on a white background.

Classical Period Ceramics

The Classical period witnessed the continuation of red- and black-figure painting techniques on ceramic objects. While artists continued to produce black-figure paintings into the second century BCE, the technique became increasingly rare, overtaken

around 520 BCE by red-figure painting.

Attic red-figure vases were exported throughout Greece and beyond, and for a long time dominated the market for fine ceramics. Only a few centers of pottery production could compete with Athens in terms of its innovation, quality, and production capacity.

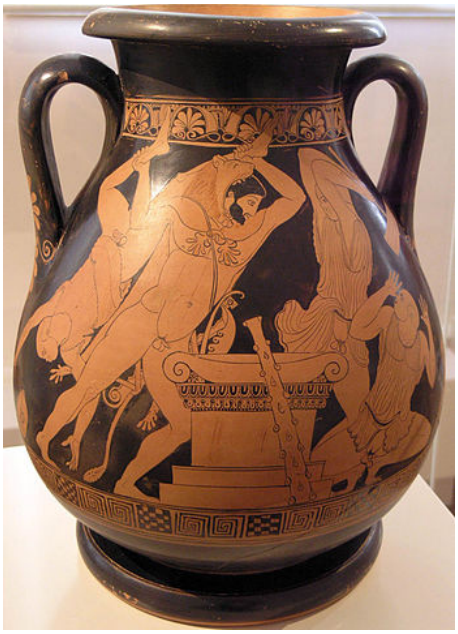
Red-Figure Painting

Red-figure painting continued to flourish during the Early, High, and Late Classical periods. The naturalism of the figures in Early Classical vase painting continued to increase, as the figures became less stocky and less linear. Both the figures and their drapery began to appear more plastic, and the scenes often depicted a single moment within a mythical story or event. Furthermore, vase painting began to be influenced by the changes occurring in both sculpture and the large-scale painting of walls and panels.

The Mannerists

The Mannerists were a group of Attic red-figure painters known for their affected (emotive) subject matter. They were active from about 480 BCE until near the end of the fifth century BCE. Their main characteristic is that they maintained features of black-figure vase painting in the red-figure technique.

Their figures seem elongated and have small heads, the garment folds fall stiff and resemble stairs, and the images are framed with black-figure style ornamentations. The range of motifs is also influenced by previous periods. The figures gesticulate as if using a form of sign language—the hands often appear stiff and theatrical. We can see typical Mannerist small heads and affected gestures in the Pan Painter's Herakles Fighting Busiris (c. 470 BCE).



Herakles Fighting Busiris: A mannerist red-figure by the Pan Painter, c. 470 BCE.

The Niobid Painter's red-figure krater of Artemis and Apollo slaying the children of Niobe, from 460 BCE, is believed to be a composition inspired by a panel painting. The side of the vessel depicting Artemis and Apollo relates to the myth of the twin god and goddess who slew Niobe's fourteen children after she boasted that her ability to birth children exceeded Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis.

This story alludes to ancient Greek admonitions against hubris, or extreme pride. The scene is one of the first vase painting scenes to show the figures on different ground lines. Apollo and Artemis stand in the center of the vessel as Niobe's children fall to ground around them. One child has even fallen behind a rock in the landscape.

On the other side of the vase is an image of gods and heroes, with Herakles at the center. All the figures stand and sit on various ground lines. The figures on both sides are depicted from multiple angles, including three-quarter view, and a profile eye is used for the figures in profile, a first in Greek vase painting.



Herakles with Gods and Heroes: Painted by the Niobid Painter. The reverse side of the krater depicts Artemis and Apollo slaying the children of Niobe. An Athenian red-figure calyx krater, c. 450 BCE, Orvieto, Italy.



Artemis and Apollo Slaying the Children of Niobe: Painted by the Niobid Painter on an Athenian red-figure calyx krater, c. 450 BCE, from Orvieto, Italy.

The Berlin Painter is another well-known Early Classical vase painter. His unique style depicts figures, isolated from context, on a small ground line against a glossy black background. His figures also start in the middle of the vase and extend onto the vessel's shoulder, stopping at the neck.

He pays particular attention to the details of the body and the drapery of each figure, and allows both figure and drapery to express emotion, space , and movement. His painting entitled Ganymede with a Hoop and Cock conveys a sense of dynamism by arranging the body through a series of diagonal outlines, using contour lines to mark the locations of muscles and tendons beneath the skin.



Ganymede with a Hoop and Cock: Painted by the Berlin Painter on an Attic red-figure bell krater, c. 500–490 BCE.

White-Ground Painting

White-ground painting developed around 500 BCE and gained popularity during the following century. The technique is based on the use of paints, instead of slip, to create polychrome vessels.

The vessels were first coated in a white slip before various colors of paint were added. The white background and firing techniques allowed for various colors to be used, including blue, yellow, red, brown, and green. Because the style is less durable than black- and red-figure painting, it was often used for votives and as grave offerings .

The common outline paintings of the white-ground technique would not dominate the style until approximately the mid-fifth century BCE. For the first 50 years of white-ground painting, known as Type I, the imagery resembled conventional black-figure painting, with the color of the background as the only difference. This depiction of Herakles fighting Geryon provides an example of Type I white-ground painting.



Herakles Fighting Geryon: Herakles (in the center) attacks Geryon (on the far right). Eurytion lays wounded at their feet. Athena (on the left) watches the scene. Attic white-ground black-figure lekythos.

White-ground painting is often seen on a lekythos , a vessel used to hold oils, which were sometimes used for anointing the dead. Due to this funerary function, lekythoi were also used as grave offerings. As such, many of the scenes painted on white-ground lekythoi depict or allude to funerary scenes (such as funerary rites and rituals) or images of warriors departing their wives for battle and death. While the scene of Herakles fighting Geryon depicts a rather violent prelude to death, the imagery on later lekythoi is somewhat more sedate.



Woman Attending a Tomb: Painted by the Thanatos Painter on an Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440–430 BCE.

The Achilles Painter, a pupil of the Berlin Painter and creator of both red-figure and white-ground vessels, is one of the most well-known white ground painters. The scenes he painted on his white-ground lekythoi are filled with pathos and sorrow, often depicting women sitting in front of grave stelae or bidding their battle-bound husbands farewell.



Muse with Lyre: Painted by the Achilles Painter on an Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440–430 BCE.

Overall, in both white-ground and red-figure painting during the Early Classical period, the form of the body was perfected by the artisans. Painted vessels were now depicting figures on a two-dimensional plane, with the illusion of three-dimensional space. These figures were rendered in that space naturally, in terms of their movement and form.

Black-figure painting nearly disappeared in the Early Classical period and was primarily reserved for objects made to seem old or to recall antique styles, such as victory amphorae for the Panhellenic Games.

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6.6: The High Classical Period

Architecture in the Greek High Classical Period

High and Late Classical architecture is distinguished by its adherence to proportion, optical refinements, and its early exploration of monumentality.

Learning Objectives

Identify the departures from traditional Classical Greek architecture in the Temple of Apollo Epicurius, the Tholos of Athena Pronaia, and the Theatre at Epidauros

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecture during the Early and High Classical periods was refined and the optical illusions corrected to create the most aesthetically pleasing proportions. The High and Late Classical periods begin to tweak these principles and experiment with monumentality and space .
- Temples during the Late Classical period began to experiment with new architectural designs and decoration. The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi is a circular shrine with two rings of columns , the outer Doric and the inner Corinthian.
- The Temple of Epicurious at Bassae is noted for its unique ground plan and the use of architectural elements from all three Classical orders: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The temple's use of architectural decoration and a ground plan demonstrate changing aesthetics .
- The theater in the city of Epidauros is a prime example of advanced engineering skills during this period. The theater is built with refined acoustics that could amplify the sounds on the stage to every one of the theater's 14,000 spectators.

Key Terms

- **skênê**: The structure at the back of a theatre stage.
- **aniconic**: Of, or pertaining to, representations without human or animal form.
- **tholos**: A circular structure, often a temple.

Classical Greek Architecture Overview

During the Classical period, Greek architecture underwent several significant changes. The columns became more slender, and the entablature lighter during this period.

In the mid-fifth century BCE, the Corinthian column is believed to have made its debut. Gradually, the Corinthian order became more common as the Classical period came to a close, appearing in conjunction with older orders, such as the Doric.

Additionally, architects began to examine proportion and the chromatic effects of Pentelic marble more closely. In the construction of theaters, architects perfected the effects of acoustics through the design and materials used in the seating area.

The architectural refinements perfected during the Late Classical period opened the doors of experimentation with how architecture could define space, an aspect that became the forefront of Hellenistic architecture.

Temples

Throughout the Archaic period, the Greeks experimented with building in stone and slowly developed their concept of the ideal temple. It was decided that the ideal number of columns would be determined by a formula in which twice the number of columns across the front of the temple plus one was the number of columns down each side ($2x + 1 = y$).

Many temples during the Classical period followed this formula for their peripteral colonnade , although not all. Furthermore, many temples in the Classical period and beyond are noted for the curvature given to the stylobate of the temple that compensated for optical distortions.

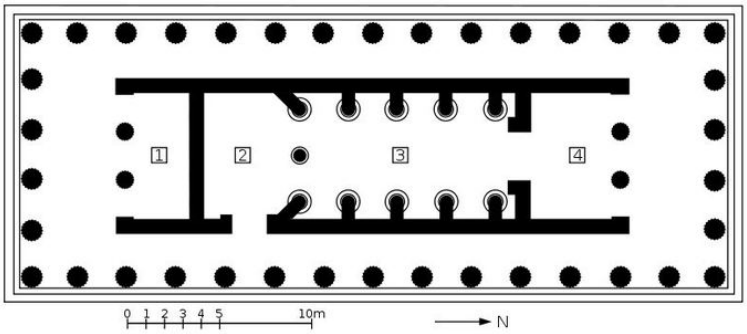
Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae

The Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae is a hexastyle temple with fifteen columns down its length. The temple was built by Iktinos, known for his work on the Parthenon, in the second half of the fifth century BCE. The temple's plan is unusual in many

respects.

- The temple is aligned north to south instead of east to west, which accommodates the landscape of the site.
- The temple has a door on the naos that provides access and light to the inner chamber.
- It shares some attributes with the Parthenon, such as a colonnade in the naos. However, in this case the colonnade is a single story, and only the columns of the temple (not the stylobate) have entasis .
- The temple has elements of all three architectural orders and has the earliest known example of a Corinthian capital .

Interestingly, the temple has only one Corinthian column, located in the center of the naos. Experts hypothesize that it was placed in that location to replace the cult statue as an aniconic representation of Apollo.



Plan of the Temple of Apollo Epicurius at Bassae : Marble. Late 5th century BCE. Bassae, Greece.

Tholos of Athena Pronaia

The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi (380–360 BCE) was built as a sanctuary by Theodoros of Phoenicia. Externally, 20 Doric columns supported a frieze with triglyphs and metopes . The circular wall of the cella was also crowned by a similar frieze, metopes, and triglyphs to a lesser extent.

Inside, a stone bench supported 10 Corinthian style pilasters , all of them attached to the concave surface of the wall. The Corinthian capital was developed in the middle of the fifth century and used minimally until the Hellenistic era; it was later popular with the Romans.

The manifold combination and blending of various architectural styles in the same building was completed through a natural polychromatic effect that resulted from the use of different materials. The materials used included thin slabs of Pentelic marble in the superstructure and limestone at the platform.

When exposed to the air, Pentelic marble acquires a tan color that sets it apart from whiter forms of marble. The building’s roof was also constructed of marble and housed eight female statues carved in sharp and lively motion.



Tholos of Athena Pronaia: The Tholos of Athena Pronaia at Delphi, Greece (380–360 BCE) was built as a sanctuary by Theodoros of Phoenicia.

Theater at Epidauros

The large theater located at Epidauros provides an example of the advanced engineering at that time. The theater was designed by Polykleitos the Younger, the son of the sculptor Polykleitos, in the mid-fourth century BCE.

The theater seats up to 14,000 people. Like all Greek theaters, this theatre was built into the hillside, which supports the stadium seating, and the theater overlooks a lush valley and mountainous landscape. The original 34 rows were extended in Roman times by another 21 rows.

As is usual for Greek theatres, the view on a lush landscape behind the skênê is an integral part of the theatre itself and is not to be obscured. The theater is especially well known for its acoustics. A 2007 study indicates that the astonishing acoustic properties may be the result of its advanced design. The rows of limestone seats filter out low-frequency sounds, such as the murmur of the crowd, and amplify high-frequency sounds from the stage.



Theater at Epidauros: The large theater located at Epidauros, Greece, provides an example of the advanced engineering at that time. The theater was designed by Polykleitos the Younger.

The Acropolis

The Athenian Acropolis is an ancient citadel in Athens containing the remains of several ancient buildings, including the Parthenon.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the history and structure of the Acropolis of Athens

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Acropolis, dedicated to the goddess Athena, has played a significant role in the city from the time that the area was first inhabited during the Neolithic era. In recent centuries, its architecture has influenced the design of many public buildings in the Western hemisphere.
- Immediately following the Persian war in the mid-fifth century BCE, the Athenian general and statesman Pericles coordinated the construction of the site's most important buildings including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, and the temple of Athena Nike.
- The structures on the Acropolis incorporated the Cyclopean foundations of older Mycenaean-era structures.
- In its heyday, the Parthenon featured a Doric facade and Ionic frieze interior, while the Doric Propylaea—the gateway to the Acropolis and an art gallery in the Classical era—lacked friezes and pedimental sculptures. The Ionic Erechtheion, believed to have been dedicated to the legendary King Erechtheus, features a porch supported by columnar caryatids . The Temple of Athena Nike, which celebrates Athenian war victories, was built in the Ionic order.
- The sculptures from each of these buildings depict scenes specific to their historical and mythological significance to Athens.

Key Terms

- **peripteral**: Surrounded by a single row of columns.
- **prostyle**: Free-standing columns across the front of a building.
- **entablature**: The area of a temple facade that lies horizontally atop the columns.
- **elevation**: A geometric projection of a building, or other object, on a plane perpendicular to the horizon.
- **Geometric period**: An era of abstract and stylized motifs in ancient Greek vase painting and sculpture. The period was centered in Athens and flourished from 900 to 700 BCE.
- **Pericles**: A prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator, and the general of Athens during the city's Golden Age—specifically, the time between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.
- **capital**: The topmost part of a column.

The Athenian Acropolis

The study of Classical-era architecture is dominated by the study of the construction of the Athenian Acropolis and the development of the Athenian agora . The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located on a high, rocky outcrop above and at the center of the city of Athens. It contains the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance.

The word acropolis comes from the Greek words ἄ (akron, meaning edge or extremity) and π (polis, meaning city). Although there are many other acropoleis in Greece, the significance of the Acropolis of Athens is such that it is commonly known as The Acropolis without qualification.



The Acropolis at Athens: The Acropolis has played an important role in the city of Athens from the time the area was first inhabited.

The Acropolis has played a significant role in the city from the time that the area was first inhabited during the Neolithic era. While there is evidence that the hill was inhabited as far back as the fourth millennium BCE, in the High Classical Period it was Pericles (c. 495–429 BCE) who coordinated the construction of the site's most important buildings, including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion, and the temple of Athena Nike.

The buildings on the Acropolis were constructed in the Doric and Ionic orders, with dramatic reliefs adorning many of their pediments , friezes, and metopes .
In recent centuries, its architecture has influenced the design of many public buildings in the Western hemisphere.

Early History

Archaeological evidence shows that the acropolis was once home to a Mycenaean citadel. The citadel's Cyclopean walls defended the Acropolis for centuries, and still remains today. The Acropolis was continually inhabited, even through the Greek Dark Ages when Mycenaean civilization fell.

It is during the Geometric period that the Acropolis shifted from being the home of a king to being a sanctuary site dedicated to the goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron . The Archaic -era Acropolis saw the first stone temple dedicated to Athena, known as the Hekatompedon (Greek for hundred-footed).

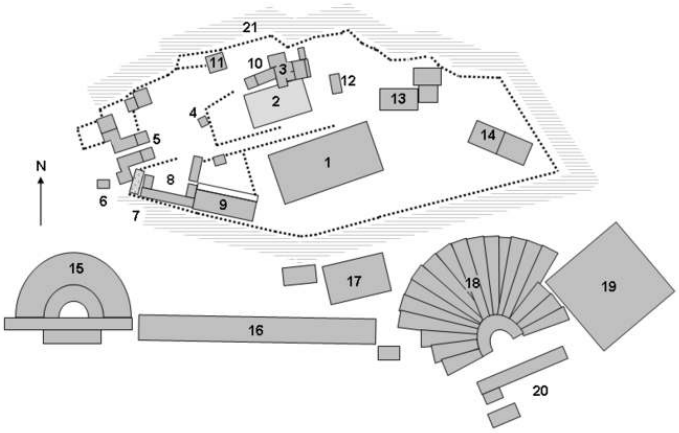
This building was built from limestone around 570 to 550 BCE and was a hundred feet long. It has the original home of the olive-wood statue of Athena Polias, known as the Palladium, that was believed to have come from Troy.

In the early fifth century the Persians invaded Greece, and the city of Athens—along with the Acropolis—was destroyed, looted, and burnt to the ground in 480 BCE. Later the Athenians, before the final battle at Plataea, swore an oath that if they won the battle—that if Athena once more protected her city—then the Athenian citizens would leave the Acropolis as it is, destroyed, as a monument to the war. The Athenians did indeed win the war, and the Acropolis was left in ruins for thirty years.

Periclean Revival

It was immediately following the Persian war that the Athenian general and statesman Pericles funded an extensive building program on the Athenian Acropolis. Despite the vow to leave the Acropolis in a state of ruin, the site was rebuilt, incorporating all the remaining old materials into the spaces of the new site.

The building program began in 447 BCE and was completed by 415 BCE. It employed the most famous architects and artists of the age and its sculpture and buildings were designed to complement and be in dialog with one another.



Plan of the Acropolis: Plan of the Acropolis and surrounding area. The buildings include: (1) Parthenon (2) Old Temple of Athena (3) Erechtheum (4) Statue of Athena Promachos (5) Propylaea (6) Temple of Athena Nike (7) Eleusinion (8) Sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia or Brauroneion (9) Chalkotheke (10) Pandroseion (11) Arrephorion (12) Altar of Athena (13) Sanctuary of Zeus Polieus (14) Sanctuary of Pandion (15) Odeon of Herodes Atticus (16) Stoa of Eumenes (17) Sanctuary of Asclepius or Asclepieion (18) Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus (19) Odeon of Pericles (20) Temenos of Dionysus Eleuthereus (21) Aglaureion.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon represents a culmination of style in Greek temple architecture. The optical refinements found in the Parthenon—the slight curve given to the whole building and the ideal placement of the metopes and triglyphs over the column capitals —represent the Greek desire to achieve a perfect and harmonious design known as symmetria.

While the artist Phidias was in charge of the overall plan of the Acropolis, the architects Iktinos and Kallikrates designed and oversaw the construction of the Parthenon (447–438 BCE), the temple dedicated to Athena. The Parthenon is built completely from Pentalic marble, although parts of its foundations are limestone from a pre-480 BCE temple that was never completed.

The design of the Parthenon varies slightly from the basic temple ground plan . The temple is peripteral , and so is surrounded by a row of columns. In front of both the pronaos (porch) and opisthodomos is a single row of prostyle columns.

The opisthodomos is large, accounting for the size of the treasury of the Delian League, which Pericles moved from Delos to the Parthenon. The pronaos is so small it is almost non-existent. Inside the naos is a two-story row of columns around the interior, and set in front of the columns is the cult statue of Athena. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece.



The Parthenon: The Parthenon, designed by Iktinos and Kallikrates, is a temple on the Athenian Acropolis, Greece, dedicated to the maiden goddess Athena, the patron of Athens. Its construction began in 447 BCE when the Athenian Empire was at the height of its power.

The Parthenon's elevation has been streamlined and shows a mix of Doric and Ionic elements. The exterior Doric columns are more slender and their capitals are rigid and cone-like. The entablature also appears smaller and less weighty then earlier Doric temples. The exterior of the temple has a Doric frieze consisting of metopes and triglyphs.

Inside the temple are Ionic columns and an Ionic frieze that wraps around the exterior of the interior building. Finally, instead of the columns, the whole building has an entasis , a slight curve to compensate for the human eye. If the building was built perfectly at right angles and with straight eyes, the human eye would see the lines as curved. In order for the Parthenon to appear straight to the eye, Iktinos and Kallikrates added curvature to the building that the eye would interpret as straight.

The sculpted reliefs on the Parthenon's metopes are both decorative and symbolic, and relate stories of the Greeks against the others. Each side depicts a different set of battles.

1. Over the entrance on the east side is a Gigantomachy , depicting the battle between the giants and the Olympian gods.
2. The west side depicts an Amazonomachy, showing a battle between the Athenians and the Amazons.
3. The north side depicts scenes of the Greek sack of Troy at the end of the Trojan War.
4. The south side depicts a Centauromachy, or a battle with centaurs. The Centauromachy depicts the mythical battle between the Greek Lapiths and the Centaurs that occurred during a Lapith wedding.

These scenes are the most preserved of the metopes and demonstrate how Phidias mastered fitting episodic narrative into square spaces.



Centauromachy: A metope from the south side of the Parthenon, of a Lapith and a centaur. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 447–438 BCE.

The interior Ionic processional frieze wraps around the exterior walls of the naos. While the frieze may depict a mythical or historical procession, many scholars believe that it depicts a Panatheniac procession.

The Panathenaic procession occurred yearly through the city, leading from the Dipylon Gate to the Acropolis and culminating in a ritual changing of the peplos worn by the ancient olive-wood statue of Athena. The processional scene begins in the southwest corner and wraps around the building in both directions before culminating in the middle of the of the west wall.

It begins with images of horsemen preparing their mounts, followed by riders and chariots, Athenian youth with sacrificial animals, elders and maidens, then the gods before culminating at the central event. The central image depicts Athenian maidens with textiles, replacing the old peplos with a new one.



Horsemen in the Processional Scene: An Ionic frieze from the interior of the Parthenon. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 447–438 BCE.

The east and west pediments depict scenes from the life of Athena and the east pediment is better preserved than the west; fortunately, both were described by ancient writers. The west pediment depicted the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens. At the center of the pediment stood Athena and Poseidon, pulling away from each to create a strongly charged, dynamic composition .

The east pediment depicted the birth of Athena. While the central image of Zeus, Athena, and Haphaestus has been lost, the surrounding gods, in various states of reaction, have survived.



Sculpture group from the east pediment of the Parthenon: While the central image of Zeus, Athena, and Haphaestus has been lost, the surrounding gods, in various states of reaction, have survived (c. 447–439 BCE).

The Propylaea

Mnesicles designed the Propylaea (437–432 BCE), the monumental gateway to the Acropolis. It funneled all traffic to the Acropolis onto one gently sloped ramp. The Propylaea created a massive screen wall that was impressive and protective as well as welcoming.

It was designed to appear symmetrical but, in reality, was not. This illusion was created by a colonnade of paired columns that wrapped around the gateway. The southern wing incorporated the original Cyclopean walls from the Mycenaean citadel. This space was truncated but served as dining area for feasting after a sacrifice .

The northern wing was much larger. It was a pinacoteca , where large panel paintings were hung for public viewing. The order of the Propylaea and its columns are Doric, and its decoration is simple—there are no reliefs in the metopes and pediment.



The Propylaea: The Propylaea as it stands today. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 437–432 BCE.

Upon entering the Acropolis from the Propylaea, visitors were greeted by a colossal bronze statue of Athena Promachos (c. 456 BCE), designed by Phidias. Accounts and a few coins minted with images of the statue allow us to conclude that the bronze statue portrayed a fearsome image of a helmeted Athena striding forward, with her shield at her side and her spear raised high, ready to strike.

The Erechtheion

The Erechtheion (421–406 BCE), designed by Mnesicles, is an ancient Greek temple on the north side of the Acropolis. Scholars believe the temple was built in honor of the legendary king Erechtheus.

It was built on the site of the Hekatompedon and over the megaron of the Mycenaean citadel. The odd design of the temple results from the site's topography and the temple's incorporation of numerous ancient sites.

The temple housed the Palladium, the ancient olive-wood statue of Athena. It was also believed to be the site of the contest between Athena and Poseidon, and so displayed an olive tree, a salt-water well, and the marks from Poseidon's trident to the faithful.

Shrines to the mythical kings of Athens, Cecrops and Erechteus—who gives the temple its name—were also found within the Erechtheion. Because of its mythic significance and its religious relics , the Erechtheion was the ending site of the Panathenaic festival, when the peplos on the olive-wood statue of Athena was annually replaced with new clothing with due pomp and ritual.



The Erechtheion: A view from the southwest. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 421–405 BCE.

A porch on the south side of the Erechtheion is known as the Porch of the Caryatids, or the Porch of the Maidens. Six, towering, sculpted women (caryatids) support the entablature. The women replace the columns, yet look columnar themselves. Their drapery, especially over their weight-bearing leg, is long and linear, creating a parallel to the fluting on an Ionic column.

While they stand in similar poses, each statue has its own stance, facial features, hair, and drapery. They carry egg-and-dart capitals on their heads, much as women throughout history have carried baskets. Between their heads and this capital is a sculpted cushion, which gives the appearance of softening the load of the weight of the building.

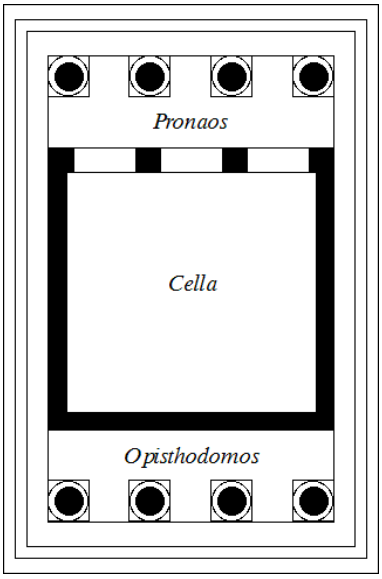
The sculpted columnar form of the caryatids is named after the women of the town of Kayrai, a small town near and allied to Sparta. At one point during the Persian Wars the town betrayed Athens to the Persians. In retaliation, the Athenians sacked their city, killing the men and enslaving the women and children. Thus, the caryatids depicted on the Acropolis are symbolic representations of the full power of Athenian authority over Greece and the punishment of traitors.



The porch of the Erechtheion: The porch of the Erechtheion is held up by the caryatids. Acropolis, Athens, Greece. c. 421–405 BCE.

The Temple of Athena Nike

The Temple of Athena Nike (427–425 BCE), designed by Kallikrates in honor of the goddess of victory, stands on the parapet of the Acropolis, to the southwest and to the right of the Propylaea. The temple is a small Ionic temple that consists of a single naos, where a cult statue stood fronted by four piers . The four piers aligned to the four Ionic prostyle columns of the pronaos. Both the pronaos and opisthodomos are very small, nearly non-existent, and are defined by their four prostyle columns.



The plan for the Temple of Athena Nike : This temple is a small Ionic temple that consists of a single naos, where a cult statue stood fronted by four piers, c. 427–425 BCE.



Temple of Athena Nike: The Temple of Athena Nike, c. 427–425 BCE. Acropolis, Athens, Greece.

The continuous frieze around the temple depicts battle scenes from Greek history. These representations include battles from the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, including a cavalry scene from the Battle at Marathon and the Greek victory over the Persians at the Battle of Plataea.

The scenes on the Temple of Athena Nike are similar to the battle scenes on the Parthenon, which represented Greek dominance over non-Greeks and foreigners in mythical allegory . The scenes depicted on the frieze of the Temple of Athena Nike frieze display Greek and Athenian dominance and military power throughout historical events.

A parapet was added on the balustrade to protect visitors from falling down the steep hillside. Images of Nike, such as Nike Adjusting Her Sandal, are carved in relief.

In this scene Nike is portrayed standing on one leg as she bends over a raised foot and knee to adjust her sandal. Her body is depicted in the new High Classical style. Unlike Archaic sculpture, this scene actually depicts Nike's body. Her body and muscles are clearly distinguished underneath her transparent yet heavy clothing.

This style, known as wet drapery , allows sculptors to depict the body of a woman while still preserving the modesty of the female figure. Although Nike's body is visible, she remains fully clothed. This style is found elsewhere on the Acropolis, such as on the caryatids and on the women in the Parthenon's pediment.



Nike Adjusting Her Sandal: This statue is in the Temple of Athena Nike, c. 425–420 BCE. It is located in the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

Urban Planning in the Greek High Classical Period

Hippodamus of Miletus is considered the father of rational city planning, and the city of Priene is a prime example of his grid-planned cities.

Learning Objectives

Describe the role of Hipposamus of Miletus in the development of grid-planned cities in Classical Greece

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As an architect and city planner, Hippodamus of Miletus (fifth century BCE) developed an urban plan based on streets that intersect at right angles, known as the Hippodamian Plan.
- The Hippodamian Plan is based on a grid of right angles and the allocation of public and private space . The center of the city is the home of the city's most important civic public spaces, including the agora , the bouleuterion , theaters, and temples. Private rooms surround the city's public areas.
- Since the Hippodamian Plan is based on angles and measurements, it can be laid out uniformly over any kind of terrain. In the city of Priene, the plan is laid out over a sloping hillside, and the terrain is terraced to fit into the rational network of houses, streets, and public buildings.

Key Terms

- **Ionia**: An ancient Greek settlement on the west coast of Asia Minor inhabited by one of the four, main Hellenic tribes.
- **bouleuterion**: A building that housed the council of citizens in Ancient Greece; an assembly hall.
- **grid plan**: A type of city plan in which streets run at right angles to each other.

Hippodamus of Miletus

Although the idea of the grid was present in early Greek city planning, it was not pervasive prior to the fifth century BCE. Following the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, many cities were left decimated and in need of rebuilding. Before rational city planning, cities grew organically and often radiated out from a central point, such as the Acropolis and Agora at the center of Athens.

Hippodamus of Miletus on the Ionian coast (the western coast of modern Turkey) was an architect and urban planner who lived between 498 and 408 BCE. He is considered the father of urban planning, and his name is given to the grid layout of city planning, known as the Hippodamian plan.

His plans of Greek cities were characterized by order and regularity in contrast to the intricacy and confusion common to cities of that period. He is seen as the originator of the idea that a town plan might formally embody and clarify a rational social order.

The Hippodamian plan is now known as a grid plan formed by streets intersecting at right angles. Hippodamus helped rebuild many Greek cities using this plan, and the construction was exported to newly settled Greek colonies. It was later adopted by Alexander the Great for the cities he founded and was eventually used extensively by the Romans for their colonies.

The plan not only encompassed the grid pattern for the streets but also designated a standard size for city blocks and allocated public and private space. Typically the public spaces of the Greeks' agorae and theaters were located at the center of the city. Additional space would be cleared for gymnasiums and stadiums. The acropolis, the highest part of the city, was always reserved for the city's most important temples.

Priene and Miletus

The city of Priene, located near Miletus on the Ionian coast, is a prime example of the Hippodamian plan. The city is located on a hillside, and the urban plan forces structure onto the natural landscape. The city's grid-planned streets divide the sloping hillside into blocks, which are further divided into lots for private housing.

In the middle of the city were many public buildings. The agora was the central component of the city. Its colonnaded stoa bounded the public space to the north. The agora stretched the length of six city blocks and was flanked on its southern side by the Temple of Zeus.

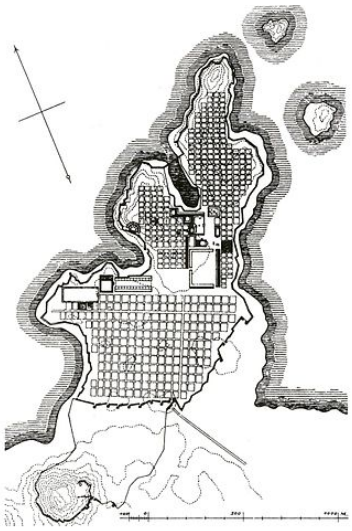
North of the stoa was the bouleuterion, the assembly hall, and a small theatre. A Temple of Athena was located just northwest of the agora. Blocks of housing surrounded the agora. Down the slope from them on level ground were the gymnasium and stadium. Above the city, high on a hillside, was the city's acropolis.



Bouleuterion: A bouleuterion in Priene, Turkey.

The plan of Priene follows the rational grid plan established by Hippodamus and demonstrates its function, even when laid over the rocky and hilly terrain. The city's location on a hillside did not constrict its uniformity or the allocation of public and private space. Instead, the rational plan of Priene allowed for access to multiple sites of the city and easy navigation through the city.

In Hippodamus' home city of Miletus, the grid plan would become the model of urban planning followed by the Romans. What is most impressive is its wide central area, which is kept unsettled according to his macro-scale urban estimation and in time evolved to the Agora, the center of both the city and society.



Grid plan of Miletus, c. 400 BCE: In Hippodamus' home city of Miletus, the grid plan would become the model of urban planning followed by the Romans.

Stelae in the Greek High Classical Period

Large, relief-carved stelae became the new funerary markers in Greece during the High Classical period.

Learning Objectives

Describe the function of stelae in High Classical Greek sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Funerary stelae were large and rectangular. They were often topped by pediments that were often, although not always, supported by columns . Stelae were originally painted and in some cases adorned with metal props such as spears.
- The funerary stelae of Classical Greece are idealized portraits that attempt to relate the character and social position of the dead through attributes depicted on the grave marker. Examples include a warrior depicted in battle or a woman adorning herself in jewelry.
- The reliefs on funerary stelae followed the stylistic characteristics of the Classical period. The bodies of the men are well modeled and, if standing, they often stand with contrapposto . Drapery is often portrayed in the wet-drapery style , which allows for the form of the body to be shown.
- The funerary stelae of children often depict companion animals, such as doves and other birds, which might have had symbolic connections with the afterlife.

Key Terms

- **naiskos**: A small temple made in the Classical order with columns or pillars and pediment.
- **Kerameikos**: An area of Ancient Athens located northwest of the Acropolis on either side of the Dipylon Gate. The location is known as the potter's quarter.
- **stele**: A tall, slender stone monument, often with writing carved into its surface

Funerary Stelae

A stele (plural: stelae) is a large slab of stone or wood erected for commemorative and funerary purposes. The stelae of ancient Greece replaced the funerary markers of the Geometric kraters and amphorae, and the Archaic kouroi and korai of the Classical period.

The stelae were wide and tall and were Classical-style portraits. While the figures were still idealized, they were meant to represent specific individuals. Stelae were inscribed with the name of the dead and often the names of the relatives. Most stelae are rectangular and often topped with a pediment. Columns often, but not always appear on each side, seemingly to support the pediment. Stelae in this faux-architectural style assume the form of a funerary temple called a naiskos . An inscription would be located on the pediment or below the image, in which case the pediment was painted, plain, or decorated simply with geometric designs.

The figures depicted on Classical-era stelae are in the same style and manner seen in Classical sculpture and on sculptural decoration of architecture, such as a temple's pediments and frieze . Stelae as grave markers became popular around 430 BCE, coinciding with the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Each stele is unique for its attempts to individualize and characterize the attributes and personality of the dead.

Grave Stele of Hegeso

The Grave Stele of Hegeso from the Kerameikos Cemetery outside of Athens depicts a seated woman. The stele dates to 400 BCE, and the woman fits the stylistic representation of women at this time.

Hegeso sits on a chair with her feet resting on a footstool. She is elegantly dressed in long, flowing drapery. A female attendant in simple dress stands before her holding a small box, from which Hegeso chooses jewelry. The jewelry is now absent because it was only a painted detail, as opposed to carved in relief.

Both women wear transparent clothing that clings to their body to relieve their feminine form, although the clothing is more revealing on Hegeso than her servant. This style, known as wet drapery , also appears on the Temple of Athena Nike in Athens. Both figures are expressionless and emotionless.



Grave Stele of Hegeso: This stele is from the Kerameikos Cemetery outside of Athens and depicts a seated woman with her servant before her. The stele dates to 400 BCE, and the woman fits the stylistic representation of women at this time.

Grave Stele of an Athlete

The Grave Stele of an Athlete (early fourth century BCE), from the island of Delos, depicts a male athlete receiving lekythos of oil from a male youth. The athlete's body is reminiscent of Polykleitos's Doryphoros. It is athletic, and the muscles are defined through modeling instead of lines .

He stands in a contrapposto pose with a cocked head, reaching for the flask held by the young attendant. The youth's age is defined not by his well-built body (which is very similar to that of the athlete) but by his diminutive size.



Grave Stele of an Athlete: This stele show an athlete standing in a contrapposto pose with his head cocked, reaching for the flask held by the young attendant. Circa 375 BCE, from Delos, Greece.

Grave Stele of Dexileos

The Grave Stele of Dexileos (390 BCE) in the Kerameikos Cemetery of Athens is another demonstration of how stele reliefs reflect the sculpture style and motifs of the period. This stele recalls the carved relief of Athenian horsemen from the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon.

Dexileos rides astride a rearing horse, charging down an enemy. The inscription refers to his early death in a battle against the Corinthians. He probably originally held a metal spear in his raised hand. The two figures, Dexileos and the Corinthian, are dressed differently. The Corinthian's nudity signifies his difference from the civilized Athenian who is properly clothed. Dexileos's flying cape and rearing horse add drama to scene, which despite its content, is oddly expressionless due to emotionless faces of the characters.



Grave Stele of Dexileos: This marble stele recalls the carved relief of Athenian horsemen from the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon. Circa 390 BCE, from the Dipylon Cemetery in Athens, Greece.

Grave Stele of a Little Girl

While the above stelae commemorate adults, grave stelae also commemorate children. The Grave Stele of a Little Girl (450–440 BCE), which lacks a pediment and allows the deceased to assume most of the space , depicts a young child holding two doves, presumably her pets.

One bird perches in her hands, while the other seems to cuddle next to her and affectionately peck at her mouth. She bows her head toward both doves, wearing a solemn facial expression, as if bidding the animals farewell. Such images of children and companion animals are common subject matter on grave stelae of the Classical era.

The doves' ability to fly connected them to death and the afterlife. Some experts theorize that doves were believed to be able to communicate with those in the afterlife. Like the women on the Grave Stele of Hegeso, the child's clothing assumes the wet-drapery style to accentuate the contours of her body while allowing her to maintain feminine modesty.



Grave Stele of a Little Girl : This stele lacks a pediment and allows the deceased to assume most of the space. It depicts a young child holding two doves, presumably her pets. From the Island of Paros, c. 450–440 BCE.

Painting in the Greek High Classical Period

Panel and tomb paintings from the High Classical Period depict natural figures with high plasticity and dynamic compositions.

Learning Objectives

Describe the styles of painting that developed through the High Classical period as seen in panel and tomb paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Few examples of panel, fresco , and wall painting survive due to their organic materials. However, the examples that do survive from the Archaic , Classical , and Late Classical periods demonstrate the same development of the figure—from stiff, rigid images to dynamic scenes of natural figures.
- The painter Apollodorus was considered one of the most talented painters in the Classical period. He developed a technique to depict shadows and depth known to the Greeks as skiagraphia, which is similar to the Renaissance use of chiaroscuro .
- The Roman Alexander Mosaic is believed to be a copy of a large-scale Greek fresco or panel painting from the late fourth century BCE. Its remarkable detail and identifiable characteristics of Alexander the Great amidst a dynamic battle point to the skill of Greek painters at the end of the Classical era.

Key Terms

- **symposium**: A drinking party, especially one with intellectual discussion, in ancient Greece.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Classical Greece was a 200-year period in Greek culture that lasted from the fifth through fourth centuries BCE. This Classical period, following the Archaic period and succeeded by the Hellenistic period, had a powerful influence on the Roman Empire and greatly influenced the foundations of the Western Civilization . Much of modern Western politics and artistic thought, such as architecture, scientific thought, literature, and philosophy, derives from this period of Greek history.

Panel Painting

Panel painting is the painting on flat panels of wood, either a large single piece or several joined together. Because of their organic nature many panel paintings no longer exist. Panel paintings were usually done in encaustic or tempera and were displayed in the interior of public buildings, such as in the pinacoteca of the Propylaea of the Athenian Acropolis.

The earliest known panel paintings are the Pitsa Panels that date to the Archaic period between 540 and 530 BCE; however, panel painting continued throughout the Classical Period.

The painter Apollodorus was considered by the Greeks and Romans to be one of the best painters of the Early Classical period, although none of his work survived. He is credited for the use of creating shadows by a technique known as skiagraphia. The technique layers crosshatching and contour liners to add perspective to the scene and is similar to the Renaissance technique of chiaroscuro.



Pitsa Panels: These are the earliest known panel paintings, and date to the Archaic period between 540 and 530 BCE.

Tomb Painting

Tomb painting was another popular method of painting, which due to its fragile nature has often not survived. However, a few examples do remain, including the 480 BCE Tomb of the Diver and the wall paintings from the royal Macedonian tombs in Vergina that date to the mid-fourth century BCE. A comparison between the paintings demonstrate how painting followed sculptural development in regards to the rendering of the human body.

The Tomb of the Diver is from a small necropolis in Paestum, Italy, which was then the Greek colony of Poseidonia, and dates from the beginning of the Classical period. The tomb depicts a symposium scene on its walls and an image of diver on the inside of the covering slab.

The images are painted in true fresco with a limestone mortar. The scene of the diver is simple image with a small landscape of trees, water, and the diver's platform. The diver is nude and his body is simply defined through the use of line and color. The bodies of the men at the symposium more accurately demonstrate an Archaic reliance on line to model the form of the body and the draping of their clothing.



Tomb of the Diver: This is the symposium-scene fresco painted on the Tomb of the Diver.

Compared to the wall paintings from the tombs at Vergina, the Early Classical tomb painting is static and rather Archaic. The frescos from Vergina depict figures in a full-painted version of the High Classical style .

For example, there is an image believed to depict King Philip II on a chariot pulled by two horses. The fresco is poorly preserved but one is able to see on Philip's horse the modeling of the animals produced by the color shading and a suggestion of perspective

when looking at the chariot. The artist relies on the shades and hues of his paints to create depth and a life-like feeling in the painting.



Man on a Chariot: The frescos from Vergina depict figures in a full-painted version of the High Classical style.

One of the quintessential wall paintings at Vergina is Hades Abducting Persephone. The painted scene appears similar to the Late Classical sculptural style and the dynamic, emotion-filled composition seems to predict the style of Hellenistic sculpture.

The scene depicts Hades on his chariot, grasping on to Persephone's nude torso as the pair ride away. The colors are faded and faint, but the bright red drapery worn by Persephone is still easily identifiable. Lines and shading emphasize its folds.

The style appears almost impressionistic, especially when examining Persephone's face and hair. Persephone and Hades create a tension filled chiastic composition, as Hades races to the left, against the pull of Persephone's outward, desperate reach to the right.



Hades Abducting Persephone. : One of the quintessential wall paintings at Vergina is a scene of Hades abducting Persephone.

Alexander the Great

Alexander III of Macedonia (356–323 BCE), better known as Alexander the Great, very carefully controlled and crafted his portraiture. In order to maintain control and stability in his empire, he had to ensure that his people recognized him and his authority.

Because of this, Alexander's portrait was set when he was very young, most likely in his teens, and it never varied throughout his life. To further control his portrait types, Alexander hired artists in different media such as painting, sculpture, and gem cutting to design and promote the portrait style of the medium. In this way, Alexander used art and artisans for their propagandistic value to support and provide a face and legitimacy to his rule.

Alexander Mosaic

The Alexander Mosaic is a Roman floor mosaic from approximately 100 BCE that was excavated from the House of the Faun in Pompeii. The mosaic depicts the Battle of Issus that occurred between the troops of Alexander the Great and King Darius III of Persia. The mosaic is believed to be a copy of a large-scale panel painting by Aristides of Thebes, or a fresco by the Philoxenos of Eretria from the late fourth century BCE.



Alexander Mosaic (Battle of Issus): This is believed to be a copy of a fresco by Philoxenos of Eretria or a panel painting by Aristides of Thebes (late fourth century BCE). Alexander is depicted in profile at the far left. This is a Roman piece, from the House of the Faun in Pompeii during the late second or third century BCE.

The mosaic is remarkable. It depicts a keen sense of detail, dramatically unfolds the drama of the battle, and demonstrates the use of perspective and foreshortening . The two main characters of the battle are easily distinguishable and this portrait of Alexander may be one of his most recognizable. He wears a breastplate and an aegis , and his hair is characteristically tousled. He rides into battle on his horse, Bucephalo, leading his troops. Alexander's gaze remains focused on Darius and he appears calm and in control, despite the hectic battle happening around him.

Darius III, on the other hand, commands the battle in desperation from his chariot, as his charioteer removes them from battle. His horses flee under the whip of the charioteer and Darius leans outward, stretching out a hand having just thrown a spear. His body position contradicts the motion of his chariot, creating tension between himself and his flight.

Other details in the mosaic include the expressions of the soldiers and the horses, such as a collapsed horse and his rider in the center of the battle, to a terrified fallen Persian, whose expression is reflected on his shield.

The shading and play of light in the mosaic, reflects the use of light and shadow in the original painting to create a realistic, three-dimensional space . Horses and soldiers are shown in multiple perspectives from profile, to three quarter, to frontal, and one horse even faces the audience with his rump. The careful shading within the mosaic tesserae models the characters to give the figures mass and volume .

Sculpture in the Greek High Classical Period

High Classical sculpture demonstrates the shifting style in Greek sculptural work as figures became more dynamic and less static.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the styles of Polykleitos, Phidias, and Myron during the High Classical period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- After mastering the portrayal of naturalistic bodies from stone, Greek sculptors began to experiment with new poses that expanded the repertoire of Greek art. The sculptures of this later period are moving away from the Classical characteristics they still maintain: idealism and the Severe style .
- Polykleitos is most well known for his Canon, depicted in the Doryphoros, but is also known for his Diadumenos and Discophoros. These two, sculpted athletes are also done in accordance to his canon and are depicted in contrapposto with chiastic poses.
- Phidias was one of the most renowned sculptors his time. He oversaw the sculptural program for the Athenian Acropolis and is also known for his giant chryselephantine cult statues of Zeus and Athena Parthenos.
- Myron is a bronze sculptor of the High Classical period. His statues are known for being imbued with potential energy. His Discobolos is poised to spring, preparing to throw a discus. While still idealized, the figure appears to be frozen in an action of intense movement.

Key Terms

- **chryselephantine**: Made of gold and ivory.
- **aegis**: An attribute of Zeus or Athena, usually represented as a goatskin shield.

Polykleitos

Polykleitos was a famous Greek sculptor who worked in bronze. He was also an art theorist who developed a canon of proportion (called the Canon) that is demonstrated in his statue of Doryphoros (Spear Bearer) Many of Polykleitos's bronze statues from the Classical period, including the Doryphoros, survive only as Roman copies executed in marble. Polykleitos, along with Phidias, is thought to have created the style recognized as Classical Greek sculpture.

Another example of the Canon at work is seen in Polykleitos's statue of Diadumenos, a youth trying on a headband, and his statue Discophoros, a discus bearer. Both Roman marble copies depict athletic, nude, male figures.

The bodies of the two figures are idealized. The nudity allows the harmony of parts, or symmetria, to easily be seen and illustrates the principles discussed in the Canon. The Canon focused on the proportion of parts of the body in relationship to each other to create the ideal male form . Both statues demonstrate fine proportion, ideal balance, and the definable parts of the body.



Discophoros: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Polykleitos, c. 440 BCE.



Diadoumenos: This is a Roman marble copy of Greek bronze original by Polykleitos, circa 430 BCE.

The athletes are shown in contrapposto stances. The Discophoros shifts his weight to his left leg. His hips and the slightly forward lean toward his right leg exaggerate the weight shift. The figure is balanced on his left leg, which is drawn back, and the rest of his body appropriately responds to this stance.

The Diadumenos also stands in contrapposto, although his movement seems more forward and stable than that of the Discophoros. He ties on a band that identifies him as a winner in an athletic contest. His raised arms add a new dynamic component to the composition .

The Discophoros and Diadumenos, along with the Doryphoros, demonstrate the flexibility of composition based on the Canon and the innate liveliness produced by contrapposto postures. Despite the lively aspects and unique poses of the figures, all three still retain the Severe style and expressionless face of early Greek sculpture.

Polykleitos not only worked in bronze but is also known for his chryselephantine cult statue of Hera at Argos, which in ancient times was compared to Phidias' colossal chryselephantine cult statues.

Phidias

Phidias was the sculptor and artistic director of the Athenian Acropolis and oversaw the sculptural program of all the Acropolis' buildings. He was considered one of the greatest sculptors of his time and he created monumental cult statues of gold and ivory for city-states across Greece.

Phidias is well known for the Athena Parthenos, the colossal cult statue in the naos of the Parthenon. While the statue has been lost, written accounts and reproductions (miniatures and representations on coins and gems) provide us with an idea of how the sculpture appeared.

It was made out of ivory, silver, and gold and had a wooden core support. Athena stood crowned, wearing her helmet and aegis . Her shield stood upright at her left side and her left hand rested on it while in her right hand she held a statue of Nike. An artist's reconstruction is housed in the Parthenon in Nashville.



Reconstruction of Phidias's Athena Parthenos: This is housed in the Parthenon in Centennial Park, Nashville, TN.

Before he created the statue of Athena Parthenos for Athens, Phidias was best known for his chryselephantine statue of Zeus at Olympia, which was considered one of the wonders of the world. The statue of Zeus at Olympia is said to have been 39 feet tall chryselephantine statue.

As with Athena Parthenos, not much is known for sure about how the statue looked, although written accounts and marble and coinage copies provide possible ideas. Besides being built on a colossal scale, reports indicate that the figure of Zeus was seated and held a scepter and a statue of Nike. An eagle was perched either at his side or on his scepter.

Besides being decorated with gold and ivory, the sculpture was further embellished with ebony and previous stones. An artist's conception of the colossal sculpture resides in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.



Reconstruction of Phidias's Zeus at Olympia: An artist's conception of the colossal sculpture resides in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.ia.

Myron

The Athenian artist Myron also produced bronze sculptures during the mid-fifth century BCE. His most famous work is of the Diskobolos, or discus thrower (not to be confused with Polykletios' discus bearer, Discophoros). The Diskobolos shows a young, athletic male nude with a Severe-style face. His body holds a contrapposto pose; one leg bears his weight, while the other is relaxed. A relaxed arm balances his body and the other arm tenses, preparing to let go of the disc. The Diskobols demonstrates a dynamic, chiastic composition that relies on diagonal lines to move the eye about the sculpture.



Diskobols: This is a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original by Myron, c. 450 BCE.

This figure represents another new element in Classical sculpture—the illustration of the potential for energy. His energy appears wound up, waiting for the figure to release it. The statue depicts a swift and transitory moment and that is frozen at a precise moment to exhibit the harmony, balance, and rhythm perfected by both the athlete and the artist.

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6.7: The Hellenistic Period

Architecture in the Hellenistic Period

Architecture during the Hellenistic period focused on theatricality and drama; the period also saw an increased popularity of the Corinthian order.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Hellenistic architecture, including stoas, the Corinthian order, and the use of theatricality

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hellenistic architecture, in a manner similar to Hellenistic sculpture, focuses on theatricality, drama, and the experience of the viewer . Public spaces and temples were created with the people in mind, and so were built on a new, monumental scale.
- Stoas are colonnaded porticos used to define public space and protect patrons from the elements. Stoas are often found around a city's agora , and turn the city's central place for civic, administrative, and market elements into a grand space.
- The Temple of Apollo at Didyma was an oracle site with an ambitious building plan that was never completed. Its plan consisted of a double colonnade of massively tall columns that engulfed the viewer in dark corridors before opening into a bright courtyard and the shrine to the god.
- The Corinthian order, developed during the Classical period, witnessed increased popularity during the Hellenistic period. The columnar style of the order is similar in many ways to the Ionic order except for the column's capital , which is vegetal and lush. A double layer of acanthus leaves line the basket from which stylized tendrils and volutes emerge.

Key Terms

- **abacus**: A flat slab that forms the uppermost member or division of the capital of a column.
- **volute**: The spiral curve on an Ionic capital.
- **acanthus**: An ornament that resembles the foliage or leaves of Acanthus spinosus that is used in the capitals of the Corinthian and composite orders.
- **orthogonal**: In linear perspective drawing, the diagonal line pointing to the vanishing point; sometimes referred to as vanishing or convergence line.
- **stoa**: In Ancient Greece, a walkway with a roof supported by colonnades, often with a wall on one side; a portico.
- **dipteral**: Having a double row of columns on each flank, as well as in the front and rear; often said of a temple.
- **colonnade**: A series of columns at regular intervals.

Architecture in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period developed theatrical tendencies, as had Hellenistic sculpture. The conquests of Alexander the Great caused power to shift from the city-states of Greece to the ruling dynasties . Dynastic families patronized large complexes and dramatic urban plans within their cities. These urban plans often focused on the natural setting, and were intended to enhance views and create dramatic civic, judicial, and market spaces that differed from the orthogonal plans of the houses that surrounded them.

Architecture in the Hellenistic period is most commonly associated with the growing popularity of the Corinthian order. However, the Doric and Ionic orders underwent notable changes. Examples include the slender and unfluted Doric columns and the four-fronted capitals on Ionic columns, the latter of which helped to solve design problems concerning symmetry on the temple porticos.

Stoa

A stoa, or a covered walkway or portico, was used to bind agorae and other public spaces. Highlighting the edge of open areas with such decorative architecture created a theatrical effect for the public space and also provided citizens with a basic daily form of protection from the elements. Both the stoa and the agora were used by merchants, artists, religious festivals, judicial courts, and civic administrations.

The Stoa of Attalos (c. 150 BCE) in Athens was built in the Agora, under the patronage of King Attalos II of Pergamon. This portico consists of a double colonnade. It was two stories tall, and had a row of rooms on the ground floor. The exterior colonnade

on the ground level was built in the Doric order, and the interior was Ionic. On the second level, Ionic columns lined the exterior, and columns with a simple, stylized capital lined the interior.



The restored Stoa of Attalos: This is a view of the ground-level marble colonnades in the Agora in Athens, Greece.

Temple of Apollo at Didyma

Other examples of grand and monumental architecture can be found in Ionia , modern day Turkey in Pergamon, and Didyma. The Temple of Apollo at Didyma was both a temple and an oracle site.

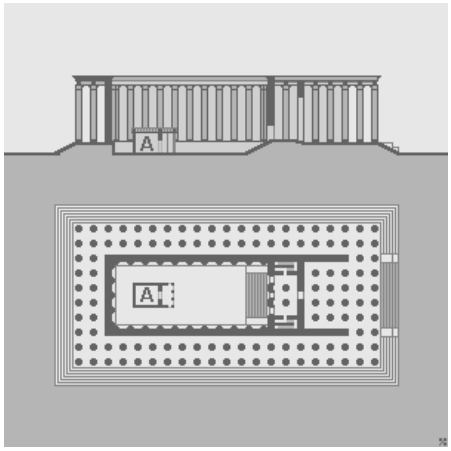


Temple of Apollo: Begun around 313 BCE, this was both a temple and an oracle site in Didyma, Turkey.

The temple was designed by the architects Paionios of Ephesus and Daphnis of Miletus. Its construction began in 313 BCE but was never completed, although work continued until the second century CE. This temple's site is vast.

The interior court was 71 feet wide by 175 feet long and contained a small shrine. The court was also dipteral in form, edged with a double row of 108 columns, each 65 feet tall, that surrounded the temple. The structure creates a series of imposing spaces, from the exterior colonnade to the oracle rooms, and the interior courtyard inside of which the shrine to Apollo stood.

The building plan also played with theatricality and drama, forcing its visitors through a dark interior and then opening up into a bright and open courtyard that did not have a roof. The building is dramatically different from the perfected Classical plan of temples. Instead of focusing on symmetry and harmony, the building focuses on the experience of the viewer.



Plan and elevation of the Temple of Apollo: Construction began c. 313 BCE, in Didyma, Turkey. The building plan also played with theatricality and drama, forcing its visitors through a dark interior and then opening up into a bright and open courtyard that did not have a roof.

Corinthian Order

The Corinthian order is considered the third order of Classical architecture. The order's columns are slender and fluted and sit atop a base . The capital consists of a double layer of acanthus leaves and stylized plant tendrils that curl up towards the abacus in the shape of a scroll or volute.

The decorative Corinthian order was not widely adopted in Greece, although it was popular in tholoi. It was, however, used substantially throughout the Roman period.



Corinthian capital: A corinthian capital at the Odeon of Agrippa, c. 14 BCE, in the Agora inAthens, Greece.

The ruined Temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens (also known as the Olympieion) contains one of the best-known examples of the Corinthian column in Hellenistic architecture. Originally designed in the Doric order in the sixth century BCE, the temple was redesigned in the second century BCE in the Corinthian order on a colossal platform measuring 134.5 feet by 353.5 feet.

It was to be flanked by a double colonnade of eight columns across the front and back and twenty-one on the flanks, surrounding the cella . The design was eventually changed to have three rows of eight columns across the front and back of the temple and a double row of twenty on the flanks, for a total of 104 columns. The columns stand 55.5 feet high and 6.5 feet in diameter. In 164 BCE, the death of Antiochus IV (who had presented himself as the earthly embodiment of Zeus) brought the project to a halt, and the temple would remain incomplete.



Temple of Olympian Zeus: Note the corinthian colonnades and Pentelic marble.

Pergamon

Pergamon rose as a power under the Attalids and provides examples of the drama and theatrics found in Hellenistic art and architecture.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate the dramatic and theatrical nature of the Pergamon, as seen in the Altar of Zeus, the Gigantomachy, and the Dying Gauls

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Pergamon was the capital city of the Kingdom of Pergamon, which was ruled by the Attalids in the centuries following the death of Alexander the Great .
- The Acropolis of Pergamon is famous for its monumental architecture. Most of the buildings command a great view of the surrounding countryside and together create a dramatic public space .
- The Altar of Zeus at Pergamon was a monumental u-shaped Ionic building that stood on a high platform and was accessed by a wide set of stairs. Besides its dramatic architecture, the altar is known for its Gigantomachy frieze and sculptures of defeated Gauls .
- The Gigantomachy frieze represents the full blossoming of Hellenistic sculpture. The figures are dramatic, and the scenes are full of tension. They are carved in high relief with deep drilling that allows for a play of light and shadows that increases the naturalism of the figures.
- The statue group of the Dying Gauls depicts a defeated trumpeter and a Gallic chief killing himself and his wife. The figures, while enemies of Pergamon, are depicted with incredible pathos and heroics to demonstrate their worthiness as adversaries and empower the Attalid victors.

Key Terms

- **chiastic**: Referring to a figure that repeats concepts in reverse order, in the same or modified form.
- **Gaul**: An ancient person from the region that roughly corresponds to modern France and Belgium.
- **torc**: A large, rigid—or at least stiff—neck ring in metal, made either as a single piece or from strands twisted together.

The ancient city of Pergamon, now modern day Bergama in Turkey, was the capital of the Kingdom of Pergamon following the death of Alexander the Great and was ruled under the Attalid dynasty . The Acropolis of Pergamon is a prime example of Hellenistic architecture and the convergence of nature and architectural design to create dramatic and theatrical sites.

The acropolis was built into and on top a steep hill that commands great views of the surrounding countryside. Both the upper and lower portions of the acropolis were home to many important structures of urban life, including gymnasiums, agorae, baths, libraries, a theater, shrines, temples, and altars.



Scale model of Pergamon as it might have looked in antiquity: Center left: Theatre of Pergamon. Center right: Altar of Zeus. Pergamon Museum, Berlin.

The theater at Pergamon could seat 10,000 people and was one of the steepest theaters in the ancient world. Like all Hellenic theaters, it was built into the hillside, which supported the structure and provided stadium seating that would have overlooked the ancient city and its surrounding countryside. The theater is one example of the creation and use of dramatic and theatrical architecture.

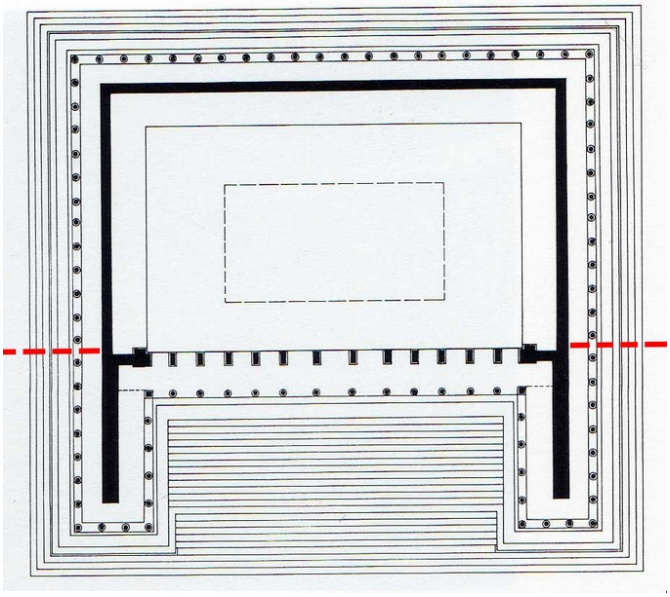


Theater of Pergamon: The theater at Pergamon could seat 10,000 people and was one of the steepest theaters in the ancient world.

Altar of Zeus

Another element found at Pergamon is the great Altar of Zeus (now housed in Germany). The altar was commissioned in the first half of the second century BCE during the reign of King Eumenes II to commemorate his victory over the Gauls, who were migrating into Asia Minor.

The altar is a U-shaped Ionic building built on a high platform with central steps leading to the top. It faced east, was located near the theater of Pergamon, and commanded an outstanding view of the region. The altar is known for its grand design and for its frieze depicting the Gigantomachy—it wraps 370 feet around the base of the altar.



Plan of the Altar of Zeus: The altar is a U-shaped Ionic building built on a high platform with central steps leading to the top, c. 175 BCE, in Bergama, Turkey.



Altar of Zeus: Originally from Bergama, Turkey, the altar is now in Berlin, Germany.

The Gigantomachy

The Gigantomachy depicts the Olympian gods fighting against their predecessors the Giants (Titans), the children of the goddess Gaia. The frieze is known for its incredibly high relief, in which the figures are barely restrained by the wall, and for its deep drilling of lines with details to create dramatic shadows.

The high relief and deep drilling of the figures also increases the liveliness and naturalism of the scene. The figures are rendered with high plasticity. The texture of their skin, drapery, and scales add another level of naturalism. Furthermore, as the frieze follows the stairs, the limbs of the figures begin to spill out of their frame and onto the stairs, physically breaking into the space of the viewer . The style and high drama of the scenes is often referred to as the Hellenistic Baroque for its exaggerated motion, emphasis on details, and the liveliness of the characters.



Nereus, Doris, a Giant, and Oceanus: Located on the north frieze of the Altar of Zeus, Bergama, Turkey, e. c. 175 BCE. The high relief and deep drilling of the figures also increases the liveliness and naturalism of the scene.

The most famous scene on the frieze depicts Athena fighting the giant Alkyoneus. She grabs his head and pulls it back while Gaia emerges from the ground to plead for her son's life and a winged Nike reaches over to crown Athena.

Athena's drapery swirls around her with deep folds and her whole body is nearly removed from the frieze. The figures are depicted with the heightened emotion commonly found on Hellenistic statues. Alkyoneus's face strains in pain and Gaia's eyes, which are all that remain of her face, are full of terror and sorrow at the death of her son.

The entire composition is depicted in a chiastic shape. Athena stretches out to grasps Alkoyneus's head, the two figures pull at each other in opposite directions. Meanwhile, the figure of Nike moves diagonally towards Athena, showing their convergence in a moment of victory. The diagonal line created by Gaia mimics the shape of her son, connecting the two figures through line and pathos. The scene is filled with the tension and emotion that are key features in Hellenistic sculpture.



Athena and Alkyoneos: Located on the east frieze of the Altar of Zeus, Bargama, Turkey, c. 175 BCE. The entire composition is depicted in a chiastic shape, and the scene is filled with the tension and emotion that are key features in Hellenistic sculpture.

The Dying Gauls

A group of statues depicting dying Gauls, the defeated enemies of the Attalids, were situated inside the Altar of Zeus. The original set of statues is believed to have been cast in bronze by the court sculptor Epigonus in 230–220 BCE. Now only marble Roman copies of the figures remain.

Like the figures on the frieze and other Hellenistic sculptures, the figures are depicted with lifelike details and a high level of naturalism. They are also depicted in the common motif of barbarians. The men are nude and wear Celtic torcs . Their hair is

shaggy and disheveled. The figures are positioned in dramatic compositions and are shown dying heroically, which turns them into worthy adversaries, increasing the perception of power of the Attalid dynasty. All three figures in the group are depicted in a Hellenistic manner. To fully appreciate the statues, it is best to walk around them. Their pain, nobility, and death are evident from all angles.

One Gaul is depicted lying down, supporting himself over his shield and a discarded trumpet. He furrows his brow as he looks downward at his bleeding chest wound as he prepares himself for death. His muscles are large and strong, signifying his strength as a warrior and implying the strength of the one who struck him down.



Dying Gaul: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Epigonos, c. 230–220 BCE, in Pergamon, Turkey.

Two other figures complete the group. One figure depicts a Gallic chief committing suicide after he has killed his own wife. Also known as the Ludovisi Gaul, this sculpture group displays another heroic and noble deed of the foes, for typically women and children of the defeated would be murdered to avoid them from being captured and sold as slaves by the victors. The chief holds his fallen wife by the arm as he plunges his sword into his chest, where blood is already exiting the wound.



Ludovisi Gaul: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Epigonos, c. 230–220 BCE, in Pergamon, Turkey.

Sculpture in the Hellenistic Period

A key component of Hellenistic sculpture is the expression of a sculpture's face and body to elicit an emotional response from the viewer.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the new Hellenistic style of sculpture from the previous Classical era, and discuss the significance of Roman patronage in the second century BCE

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hellenistic sculpture takes the naturalism of the body's form and expression to level of hyper-realism where the expression of the sculpture's face and body elicit an emotional response.
- Drama and pathos are new factors in Hellenistic sculpture. The style of the sculpting is no longer idealized. Rather, they are often exaggerated, and details are emphasized to add a new, heightened level of motion and pathos.
- New compositions and states of mind are explored in Hellenistic sculptures including old age, drunkenness, sleep, agony, and despair.
- Portraiture became popular in this period. The subjects are depicted with a sense of naturalism that displays their imperfections.
- Hellenistic sculpture was in especially high demand after the Greek peninsula fell to the Romans in 146 BCE. Notable sculptures produced for Roman patrons include
  Laocoön and His Sons and the Farnese Bull.

Key Terms

- **satyr**: A male companion of Pan or Dionysus with the tail of a horse and a perpetual erection. Also known as a faun.
- **patrician**: An aristocrat or other elite member of society; it may also be used as an adjective.
- **pathos**: That quality or property of anything that touches the feelings or excites emotions and passions, especially that which awakens tender emotions, such as pity, sorrow, and the like; a contagious warmth of feeling, action, or expression; a pathetic quality.

Hellenistic sculpture continues the trend of increasing naturalism seen in the stylistic development of Greek art. During this time, the rules of Classical art were pushed and abandoned in favor of new themes, genres , drama, and pathos that were never explored by previous Greek artists.

Furthermore, the Greek artists added a new level of naturalism to their figures by adding an elasticity to their form and expressions, both facial and physical. These figures interact with their audience in a new theatrical manner by eliciting an emotional reaction from their view—this is known as pathos.

Nike of Samothrace

One of the most iconic statues of the period, the Nike of Samothrace, also known as the Winged Victory (c. 190 BCE), commemorates a naval victory. This Parian marble statue depicts Nike, now armless and headless, alighting onto the prow of the ship. The prow is visible beneath her feet, and the scene is filled with theatricality and naturalism as the statue reacts to her surroundings.

Nike's feet, legs, and body thrust forward in contradiction to her drapery and wings that stream backwards. Her clothing whips around her from the wind and her wings lift upwards. This depiction provides the impression that she has just landed and that this is the precise moment that she is settling onto the ship's prow.

In addition to the sculpting, the figure was most likely set within a fountain, creating a theatrical setting where both the imagery and the auditory effect of the fountain would create a striking image of action and triumph.



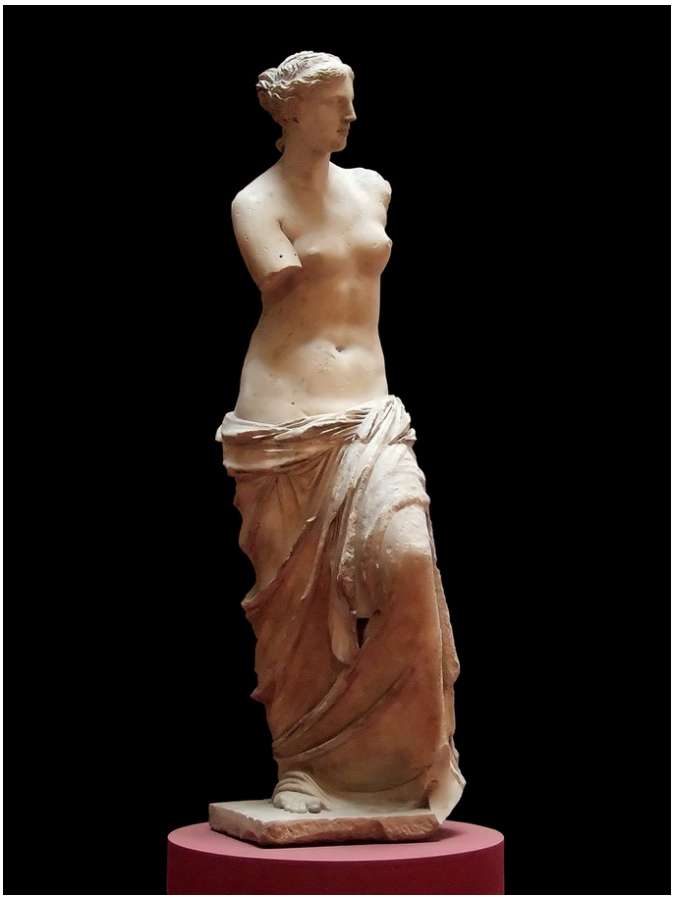
Nike of Samothrace: Also known as the Winged Victory (c. 190 BCE), this marble statue, in Samothrace, Greece, commemorates a naval victory.

Venus de Milo

Also known as the Aphrodite of Melos (c. 130–100 BCE), this sculpture by Alexandros of Antioch, is another well-known icon of the Hellenistic period. Today the goddess's arms are missing. It has been suggested that one arm clutched at her slipping drapery while the other arm held out an apple, an allusion to the Judgment of Paris and the abduction of Helen.

Originally, like all Greek sculptures, the statue would have been painted and adorned with metal jewelry, which is evident from the attachment holes. This image is in some ways similar to Praxitiles' Late Classical sculpture Aphrodite of Knidos (fourth century BCE), but it is considered to be more erotic than its earlier counterpart.

For instance, while she is covered below the waist, Aphrodite makes little attempt to cover herself. She appears to be teasing and ignoring her viewer , instead of accosting him and making eye contact.



Venus de Milo: This marble statue, in Melos, Greece, was sculpted by Alexandros of Antioch, c. 130–100 BCE.

Altered States

While the Nike of Samothrace exudes a sense of drama and the Venus de Milo a new level of feminine sexuality, other Greek sculptors explored new states of being. Instead of reproducing images of the ideal Greek male or female, as was favored during the Classical period, sculptors began to depict images of the old, tired, sleeping, and drunk—none of which are ideal representations of a man or woman.

The Barberini Faun

The Barberini Faun, also known as the Sleeping Satyr (c. 220 BCE), depicts an effeminate figure, most likely a satyr, drunk and passed out on a rock. His body splays across the rock face without regard to modesty.

He appears to have fallen to sleep in the midst of a drunken revelry and he sleeps restlessly, his brow is knotted, face worried, and his limbs are tense and stiff. Unlike earlier depicts of nude men, but in a similar manner to the Venus de Milo, the Barberini Faun seems to exude sexuality.



Barberini Faun: This is a Roman marble copy, in Rome, Italy, of the Greek bronze original, c. 220 BCE. Italy.

Drunken Old Woman

Images of drunkenness were also created of women, which can be seen in a statue attributed to the Hellenistic artist Myron of a drunken beggar woman. This woman sits on the floor with her arms and legs wrapped around a large jug and a hand gripping the jug's neck.

Grape vines decorating the top of the jug make it clear that it holds wine. The woman's face, instead of being expressionless, is turned upward and she appears to be calling out, possibly to passersby. Not only is she intoxicated, but she is old: deep wrinkles line her face, her eyes are sunken, and her bones stick out through her skin.



Drunken Old Woman: This is a Roman marble copy of the Greek bronze original by Myron, c. 200–180 BCE.

Seated Boxer

Another image of the old and weary is a bronze statue of a seated boxer. While the image of an athlete is a common theme in Greek art, this bronze presents a Hellenistic twist.

He is old and tired, much like the Late Classical image of a Weary Herakles. However, unlike Herakles, the boxer is depicted beaten and exhausted from his pursuit. His face is swollen, lip spilt, and ears cauliflowered. This is not an image of a heroic, young athlete but rather an old, defeated man many years past his prime.

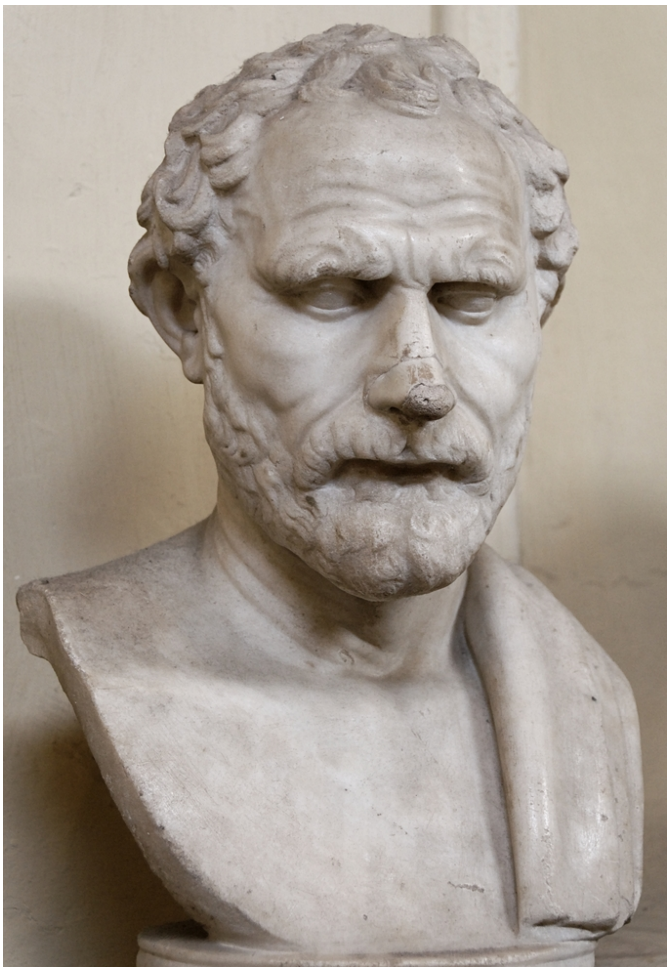


Seated Boxer: This bronze statue, c. 100–50 BCE, is in Rome, Italy.

Portraiture

Individual portraits, instead of idealization, also became popular during the Hellenistic period. A portrait of Demosthenes by Polyeuktos (280 BCE) is not an idealization of the Athenian statesman and orator. Instead, the statue takes notes of Demosthenes's characteristic features, including his overbite, furrowed brow, stooped shoulders, and old, loose skin.

Even portrait busts, often copied from Polyeuktos' famed statue, depict the weariness and sorrow of a man despairing the conquest of Philip II and end of Athenian democracy.



Demosthenes: This is a Roman copy of the Greek, bronze, original portrait bust by Polyeuktos.

Roman Patronage

The Greek peninsula fell to Roman power in 146 BCE. Greece was a key province of the Roman Empire, and the Roman's interest in Greek culture helped to circulate Greek art around the empire, especially in Italy, during the Hellenistic period and into the Imperial period of Roman hegemony .

Greek sculptors were in high demand throughout the remaining territories of the Alexander's empire and then throughout the Roman Empire. Famous Greek statues were copied and replicated for wealthy Roman patricians and Greek artists were commissioned for large-scale sculptures in the Hellenistic style.

Originally cast in bronze, many Greek sculptures that we have today survive only as marble Roman copies. Some of the most famous colossal marble groups were sculpted in the Hellenistic style for wealthy Roman patrons and for the imperial court. Despite their Roman audience, these were purposely created in the Greek style and continued to display the drama, tension, and pathos of Hellenistic art.

Laocoön and His Sons

Laocoön was a Trojan priest of Poseidon who warned the Trojans, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts," when the Greeks left a large wooden horse at the gates of Troy. Athena or Poseidon (depending on the story's version), upset by his vain warning to his people, sent two sea serpents to torture and kill the priest and his two sons.

Laocoön and His Sons, a Hellenistic marble sculpture group (attributed by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder to the sculptors Agesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus from the island of Rhodes) was created in the early first century CE to depict this scene from Virgil's epic, The Aeneid.



Laocoön and His Sons: This marble statue is attributed by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder to the sculptors Agesander, Athenodoros, and Polydorus from the island of Rhodes.

Similar to other examples of Hellenistic sculpture, Laocoön and His Sons depicts a chiastic scene filled with drama, tension, and pathos. The figures writhe as they are caught in the coils of the serpents. The faces of the three men are filled with agony and toil, which is reflected in the tension and strain of their muscles. Laocoön stretches out in a long diagonal from his right arm to his left as he attempts to free himself.

His sons are also entangled by the serpents, and their faces react to their doom with confusion and despair. The carving and detail, the attention to the musculature of the body, and the deep drilling, seen in Laocoön's hair and beard, are all characteristic elements of the Hellenistic style.



Laocoön and His Sons: This detail of Laocoön's face shows the carving and detail, the attention to the musculature of the body, and the deep drilling that are all characteristic elements of the Hellenistic style.

Farnese Bull

The Farnese Bull (c. 200–180 BCE), named for the patrician Roman family who owned the statue in the Italian Renaissance , is believed to have been created for the collection of Asinius Pollio, a Roman patrician. Pliny the Elder attributes the statue to the artists and brothers Apolllonius and Tauriscus of Trallles, Rhodes.

The colossal marble statue, carved from a single block of marble, depicts the myth of Dirce, the wife of the King of Thebes, who was tied to a bull by the sons of Antiope to punish her for mistreating their mother. The composition is large and dramatic, and demands the viewer to encircle it in order to view and appreciate the narrative and pathos from all angles. The various angles reveal different expressions, from the terror of Dirce, to the determination of Antiope's sons, to the savagery of the bull.



Farnese Bull: This marble statue, c. 200–180 BCE, was sculpted by Apollonius and Tauriscus of Tralles, Rhodes.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 7: The Etruscans

7.1: Early Etruscan Art
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7.1: Early Etruscan Art

The Etruscan Culture

Etruscan society developed in central Italy. The Orientalizing period connected Etruscan arts with eastern Mediterranean culture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the Orientalizing period of Etruscan culture and their use of gold and ivory

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Etruscan civilization flourished in central Italy and expanded as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and northern Campania.
- Despite having a distinct artistic style , due to Greek influence, Etruscan art follows the artistic and stylistic developments of the Greeks, and is divided into similar artistic periods, including the Orientalizing (700–600 BCE), Archaic (600–480 BCE), and Classical (480–200 BCE) periods.
- Etruscan art during the Orientalizing period demonstrates oriental influences, similar to those seen in Greek art, including the use of intricate designs, patterning, and the depiction of animals—including lions, leopards, and composite animals like sphinxes and griffins.
- The Etruscans are known for their metalwork , and especially for their skill in crafting gold. Gold jewelry was popular among the Etruscans and often buried with its owners. The fibulas, earrings, bracelets, and other pieces of jewelry and decoration demonstrate Etruscan skill with repoussé and granulation .

Key Terms

- **pyxis**: A shape of vessel from the classical world, usually a cylindrical box with a separate lid.
- **granulation**: The attachment of granules of precious metal to the underlying metal of jewelry.
- **repoussé**: A metalworking technique in which a thin sheet of malleable metal is shaped by hammering from the reverse side to create a design in low relief.

Etruscan Civilization

The Etruscan civilization thrived in central Italy during the first millennium BCE. Occupying the approximate area of present-day Tuscany, the region derives its name from the word Etruscan.

During the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, the Etruscans became sea traders and actively participated in Mediterranean trade. The civilization also began to expand, and the Etruscans eventually settled as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and the northern parts of Campania.

Aside from trade, a large part of Etruscan wealth came from the rich natural resources of the territories they lived in. The soil was fertile for agriculture and the land was rich with minerals and metals, which were mined. Etruscan cities and regions appear to have been ruled over by a king, and Etruscan kings are accounted for as the early rulers of Rome . While the Romans proudly remember overthrowing their Etruscan rulers, many aspects of Etruscan society were adopted by the Romans.



Map of the Etruscan civilization, 750–500 BCE: The Etruscans eventually settled as far north as the Po River and as far south as the Tiber River and the northern parts of Campania.

Very little is known about the Etruscans through written records. The Etruscans did not leave any written historical accounts, and what is known today about their culture and history is from written records by the Greeks and Romans that have survived.

These records, while providing information, view Etruscan culture from an outside, foreign eye and so can be deceptive in their accounts of Etruscan society. Because of this, most of what is known about the Etruscans comes from archaeological records.

Since many Etruscan cities have been continually occupied since their foundation—first by the Etruscans, then the Romans, up to today—a majority of Etruscan archaeological sites are tombs and necropoleis. Archaeologists and historians rely on Etruscan funerary culture to derive ideas about the society's culture, customs, and history.

Orientalizing Art

Despite the distinctive character of Etruscan art, the history and stylistic divisions generally follows the divisions seen within Greek art history and stylistic developments. The Etruscans established contact with Eastern cultures, including Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians, around 700 BCE, and this marks the beginning of the Orientalizing period of their culture.

As is similar with the Greek Orientalizing period, the art of this period in Etruria reflects Eastern themes and motifs . The patterning and depictions of animals were common— especially lions, leopards, and mythological composite creatures such as sphinxes and griffins .

Gold and Ivory

The Etruscans were master metal smiths and mined various ores including iron, tin, copper, silver, and gold; they even smelted bronze to work with. Artists who worked with metal were extremely talented and developed unique skills and specialized techniques, including granulation and repoussé.

Gold ornaments and jewelry depict both of these techniques, demonstrating the Etruscans' precision when working with gold to create intricate designs and patterns in incredibly fine detail. The gold jewelry that came from a wealthy Etruscan family's tomb (the Regolini-Galassi tomb), including an enormous gold fibula and golden bracelets that date from 650–600 BCE, displays these techniques.

The elaborate and intricate metal work was not isolated to the Orientalizing period but continued to be created by the Etruscans through the next several centuries. A gold reel, possibly an earring stud, from the early fourth century BCE represents the combination of both the hammered relief of repoussé as well as the careful and precise fusing of tiny gold granules.

The work also shows lingering, oriental-inspired designs that depict repetitive images of Pegasus and the chimera. Another earring from the Archaic period combines repoussé and granulation with glass beads and intricate, patterned designs.



Gold Earring Stud: This earring from the Archaic period combines repoussé and granulation with glass beads and intricate, patterned designs, c. 530–480 BCE.



Gold Stud with Pegasus and Chimera: Earring stud with Pegasus and Chimera. Gold. c. 4th century BCE.

Other objects besides the gold jewelry found in the Regolini-Galassi tomb demonstrate the Orientalizing influences on Etruscan art. An ivory pyxis , which appears to imitate a Phoenican style, has a clearly Etruscan origin.

The ivory was imported into the region, likely from an Eastern source. The reliefs are carved in an Etruscan style, with egg-shaped human heads and distinctly thin, straight noses and oval eyes. The sphinxes on the lid and on the bottom register , as well as the frieze of animals at the op, reflect the Eastern theme. The middle register depicts a procession of horses and chariots.



Pyxis with a sphinx-shaped handle lid: Note the sphinx-shaped handle lid. This piece is made of ivory, c. 650–625 BCE. It is from the Regolini-Galassi tomb, Cerveteri, Italy.

Etruscan Ceramics

The Etruscans are known for their impasto and bucchero pottery, as well as local versions of black- and red-figure vase painting.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the ceramic works of the Etruscan culture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Etruscans are known for their impasto and bucchero pottery. Their contact with Greek settlements also influenced their production of black- and red-figure vase painting.
- Impasto is a coarse, unrefined clay used in the production of funerary vases and storage vessels . Its popularity spread beyond the Etruscan civilization , becoming a major exported good to Greek colonies in southern Italy.
- Bucchero is a fine, often thin, black pottery that is fired and burnished to create a rich, lustrous shine. It was developed to imitate metal and became a luxury good in its own right.
- Etruscan black-figure painting initially imitated the Corinthian and Attic styles before adopting a manneristic silhouette technique towards the end of its existence.
- Etruscan red-figure painting began as pseudo-red-figure, involving lighter figures painted on a black slip . Subject matter grew increasingly minimalistic during the second half of the fourth century BCE.

Key Terms

- **hydria**: A three-handled ceramic vessel used for carrying water.
- **symposium**: In ancient Graeco-Roman culture, a drinking party.
- **bucchero**: A type of dark grey Etruscan terra cotta pottery.

The Etruscans were well known for their pottery, which was typically made from two materials: impasto and bucchero.

Impasto

Impasto is a coarse form of pottery made from a clay that contains chips of mica, a silicate, or stone. In its soft form, impasto clay can range from red to brown. After it is fired, its surface becomes black and glossy.

It was first used by the Villanovan civilization, which preceded the Etruscans, around the tenth century BCE. Between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, the Greek colonies to the south of Etruria began importing impasto vessels, a testament to their intercultural popularity.

The Etruscans used impasto for basic, utilitarian pottery, such as storage jars and cooking pots, as well as for funerary urns during the Orientalizing period. Artists incised the vessels with geometric designs, as well as stylized images of humans and animals.

The amphora in the image below depicts a spiral and a stylized bird, among other designs. Spiral motifs appear frequently in the art of numerous European cultures beginning in the Neolithic era. While their meanings are still a matter of debate, scholars hypothesize that spirals could symbolize astronomical phenomena or specific religious references.

The bird, on the other hand, could be a reference to love or fertility. Turan (the Etruscan goddess of love, fertility, and vitality) was commonly associated with a variety of avian species. Similarly the lynx, a bird-like creature in Etruscan mythology, also symbolizes love.



Etruscan impasto amphora: Spiral motifs appear frequently in the art of numerous European cultures beginning in the Neolithic era. This amphora is c. 700–680 BCE.

Bucchero

Bucchero pottery, developed around 675 BCE, was an Etruscan invention. It was created from a fine clay fired to produce a glossy black surface and burnished to shine. A finished bucchero surface imitated the appearance of metal.

The Etruscans produced a variety of objects—such as plates, chalices, vases, and pitchers—from bucchero, demonstrating the versatility of the material. While less expensive than metal, it was still considered a luxury item and was exported around the Mediterranean. Bucchero goods have been found as far east as Egypt and Syria.

During the Orientalizing period, objects could be as little as less than two millimeters. This is type of bucchero ware is known today as bucchero sottile, or delicate bucchero, and the thin delicate walls further reinforced the material's imitation of metal.

Decoration on bucchero was often limited to abstract designs and did not usually include figures. Bucchero was often simply decorated with incised lines that formed geometric and abstract patterns. Some patterns were incised with a stylus and others with a

toothed wheel or comb-like instruments to create consistent rows of dots or patterns of dots in the shape of fans.

While bucchero thrived during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods, its production began to decline during the Classical period as painted Greek pottery became more available and popular in Etruscan culture, and as goods for funerary deposits.



Bucchero Etruscan plate: Decoration on bucchero was often limited to abstract designs and did not usually include figures. This plate is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Vase Painting

Vase painting in the Etruscan culture thrived from the seventh to the fourth century BCE. It was strongly influenced by Greek vase painting and followed the main trends in style over the period. Besides being producers in their own right, the Etruscans were the main export market for Greek pottery outside Greece. Among the Etruscans, richly decorated vases were often interred with the dead.

Black-Figure Painting

Initially, Etruscan vases followed the examples of black-figure vase painting from Corinth and East Greece. It is assumed that in the earliest phase, vases were produced mainly by immigrants from Greece.

They mainly produced amphorae, hydriai and jugs. Depictions included revelers, symposia , and animal friezes . Mythological motifs occur more rarely, but are already created with great care.

By this time, Etruscan vase painting began to take its main influence from Attic vase painting. The black-figure style ended about 480 BCE. In its final phase, it developed a tendency toward a manneristic style of silhouette drawing.



Etruscan hydria with black-figure painting: The black-figure style ended about 480 BCE. In its final phase, it developed a tendency toward a manneristic style of silhouette drawing.

Pseudo-Red-Figure Painting

The Etruscans developed an imitative adoption of the red-figure technique (known as pseudo-red-figure) around 490 BCE, nearly half a century after that style had been invented in Greece. As on some early Attic vases, this was achieved by covering the whole vase body in black shiny slip, then adding figures on top, using paints that would oxidize into red or white during firing .

In true red-figure painting, the red areas were left free of slip. In pseudo-red-figure painting, internal details were marked by incisions, similar to the usual practice in black-figure vase painting, rather than painted on, as is true in red-figure painting. Even after true red-figure painting became the dominant style, some workshops continued to specialize in pseudo-red-figure painting into the fourth century BCE.



Athena and Poseidon: A pseudo-red-figure krater by the Nazzano Painters, c. 360 BCE.

Red-Figure Painting

Only by the end of the fifth century BCE was the true red-figure technique introduced to Etruria. In the second half of the fourth century BCE, mythological themes disappeared from the repertoire of the Etruscan vase painters.

Instead, the vase bodies were mostly covered with ornamental and floral motifs, and larger compositions only occurred in exceptional cases.



Etruscan red-figure stamnos: In the second half of the fourth century BCE, mythological themes disappeared and the vase bodies were mostly covered with ornamental and floral motifs. This stamnos is c. 360–340 BCE.

Etruscan Sculpture

Archaic Etruscan art often includes terra cotta statues that are stylistically and aesthetically Etruscan but influenced by Greek art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the stylistic influences on Etruscan sculpture during the Archaic period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During the Archaic period (600–480 BCE), the Etruscans began to build large wood and terra cotta temples, create underground burial chambers, and produce large-scale stone and terra cotta sculptures .
- The stylistic influences from the Greeks on Etruscan Archaic sculpture include the Archaic smile and the stylized patterning of hair and clothing. However, Etruscan sculpture was distinct. The figures had egg-shaped heads and almond eyes, were clothed, and their bodies had a higher degree of plasticity.
- The Centaur of Vulci is a subtractive sculpture straddling the Orientalizing and Archaic periods. It uses some Greek attributes but modifies them in a way to make the object uniquely Etruscan.The Apulu of Veii is an example of Etruscan Archaic sculpture. The figure, believed to have been made by the Etruscan artist Vulca from Veii, depicts Apulu in mid-stride, with an outstretched arm. The figure is more dynamic than Greek Archaic examples.
- The Sarcophagus of the Spouses depicts a couple reclining together on a dining couch. The figures are distinctly Etruscan, animated through their gestures, with faces made from the same mold and distinguished by feminine or masculine characteristics.

Key Terms

- **Archaic smile**: A technique used by Greek Archaic sculptors, especially in the second quarter of the 6th century BCE, possibly to suggest that their subject was alive and infused with a sense of well-being.
- **subtractive**: A sculptural process in which the artist begins with more material than he or she needs and gradually takes away material until the desired form is achieved.
- **terra cotta**: Earthenware clay after it has been fired in a kiln.
- **akroteria**: Architectural ornaments placed on a flat base and mounted at the apex of the pediment of a building in the classical style.
- **additive**: A sculptural process in which the artist begins with little to no material and gradually attaches more material until the desired form is achieved.
- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.

Etruscan Sculpture

During the Archaic period (600–480 BCE), the Etruscan culture flourished. The Etruscans began building stone and wood temples and creating subterranean tombs. Etruscan trade flourished, and the civilization expanded to its furthest boundaries.

The period and style of art is named for its Greek counterpart. Although there are similarities between Etruscan and Greek Archaic art, significant differences mark specific sculptures as uniquely Etruscan.

The Centaur of Vulci

The area of Italy that was home to the etruscan civilization is rich in volcanic rocks such as tufa and nenfro. Such materials provide ample media for sculptures that are made through subtractive processes like carving and chiseling.

The Centaur of Vulci (c. 590–580 BCE), a nenfro statue discovered in a tomb in the necropolis of Poggio Maremma in Vulci Archaeological Park, appears to mark a transition between the Orientalizing and Archaic styles. Similar to Greek centaur sculptures of this period, the body appears to depict a standing human with a stylized cylindrical equine body emerging from the back.

Unlike the Greek Orientalizing and Archaic centaurs, this sculpture was produced without a tail. Its arms and legs below the knees are missing. Its hands are visible on the hips, suggesting a stiff pose like early Greek kouroi. Its eyes are large and almond-shaped, and it might have worn an Archaic smile before it was damaged.

The centaur's hair falls in stylized plaits like its Greek counterparts. The style of braids, however, appears less like beads, as seen in the Greek kouros , and more like twisted plies of a rope. On the back of the centaur's head, three braids and several ringlets run in a horizontal pattern to connect with the braids on the left and right. Evidence of drill work can be seen in the curls that fall across the centaur's forehead.



Centaur of Vulci: A nenfro statue discovered in a tomb in the necropolis of Poggio Maremma in Vulci Archaeological Park.

Terra Cotta

Few examples of large-scale or monumental Etruscan sculptures survive. Very few Etruscan bronzes escaped being melted down for reuse, and the Etruscans did not often work in marble or other hard stones. Instead, many surviving examples of Etruscan sculpture are in terra cotta, or earthenware clay that has been fired in a kiln .

Working with terra cotta was a means for additive sculpture. Unlike the subtractive sculptural techniques employed in the carving of rock or stone, this allowed for subtle modeling and more expressive and dynamic features.

A pair of winged horses from the Altar of the Queen, an Etruscan sanctuary located in Tarquinia, are examples of the Etruscans' skill and modeling with terra cotta. The horses are muscular, with strong chests, fine legs, and elongated bodies. They appear to prance as they wait to pull a chariot. Their necks arch , with manes blowing in the wind, and their heads are drawn in, as if pulled back by a pair of unseen reins.



Winged Horses: Working with terra cotta lets the artist create subtle modeling and more expressive and dynamic features, as seen in these horses.

Apulu of Veii

The Apulu of Veii is a prime example of Etruscan sculpture during the Archaic period. Apulu, the Etruscan equivalent of Apollo, is a slightly larger than life-size terra cotta akroteria figure in the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, an Etruscan city just north of Rome .

The figure was part of a group of akroteria that stood on the ridgepole of the temple and depicted the myth of Heracles and the Ceryneaian hind . The figure of Apulu confronts the hero, Heracles, who is attempting to capture a deer sacred to Apulu's sister, Artumes (Artemis). Apulu is the most intact surviving statue of the akroteria figures from this temple.

The figure of Apulu has several Greek characteristics. The face is similar to the faces of Archaic Greek kouroi figures. The face is simply carved and an archaic smile provides a notion of emotion and realism . The hair of Apulu is stylized and falls across his shoulders and down his neck and back in stylized, geometric twists that seem to represent braids. The figure, like Greek figures, was painted in bright colors, and the edge of his toga appears to be lined in blue.



Apulu of Veii: This painted terra cotta statue is a slightly larger than life-size terra cotta akroteria figure in the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, Italy.

Unlike Archaic Greek statues and kouroi, the figure of Apulu is full of movement and presents the viewer with an entirely different aesthetic from the Greek style. The figure of Apulu is dynamic and flexible. He strides forward with an arm stretched out. He leans on his front foot, and his back foot is slightly raised.

The body is more faithfully modeled (comparable to later Greek kouroi), and instead of being nude, he wears a toga that is draped over one shoulder. The garment's folds are patterned and stylized but cling to the body, allowing the viewer to clearly distinguish the god's chest and thigh muscles. While the Etruscan artist applied an Archaic smile to Apulu, the figure's lips are full and his head is more egg-shaped than round—both characteristics of Etruscan art and sculpture.

The Apulu of Veii is believed to have been made by the Etruscan artist Vulca of Veii. Besides this sculpture, Vulca is credited by Roman historians with the creation of the cult statue for the Temple of Jupiter Optiumus Maximus, the most important temple in Rome. Vulca created this statue when the last Etruscan king Tarquinius Superbus ruled Rome.

The Sarcophagus of the Spouses

A late sixth century sarcophagus excavated from a tomb in Cerveteri is a terra cotta sarcophagus that depicts a couple reclining together on a dining couch. The sarcophagus displays not only the Etruscan Archaic style but also Etruscan skill in working with terra cotta.

The figures' torsos are modeled, and their heads are in a typical Etruscan egg-shape with almond shaped eyes, long noses, and full lips. Their hair is stylized, and their gestures are animated. The use of gesture is seen throughout Etruscan art, both in sculpture and painting. The woman might have originally held a small vessel , and the couple appears to be intimate and loving due to the fact that man has his arm around the woman.



Sarcophagus of the Spouses: The sarcophagus displays not only the Etruscan Archaic style but also Etruscan skill in working with painted terra cotta. C. 520 BCE. Found in the Banditaccia Necropolis, Cerveteri, Italy.

A close look at the figures reveals some peculiarities. First, their faces are the same and in fact were most likely created from the same mold, a technique common in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture. The identical faces are differentiated by the addition of female and male hairstyles, including the man's beard. Furthermore, despite the modeling of their upper bodies, the legs of the figures are flat and rather lifeless, an odd comparison to the liveliness of the figures' upper halves.

Etruscan Temples

Etruscan temples derive from Greek models but are distinguished by a high podium, deep porch, prostyle columns, and frontality.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast Etruscan temples with their Greek counterparts

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The superstructures of Etruscan temples were built from wood and mud brick that was often covered in stucco , plaster, or painted for decoration. The temple had a stone or tufa foundation, and the roof was covered in protective terra cotta tiles.

- Despite their Greek origins, Etruscan temples are unique. They are frontal and axial and often have more than one cella . Etruscan temples stand on high podia with a single central staircase located at the front. Prostyle Tuscan columns stand on a deep porch and support the roof.
- The temple's wide eaves, low pitch roof, and terra cotta tiles protect the building's organic materials. Antefixes further protect the building from the elements and animals by concealing the wood beams.
- Akroteria , life-sized terra cotta sculptures , were placed along the ridgepole and on the cornice and peaks to decorate the temple. These figures were often tied together thematically or through myths.

Key Terms

- **antefix**: The vertical blocks that terminate the covering tiles of the roof of a Roman, Etruscan, or Greek temple.
- **hind**: A female deer, especially a red deer at least two years old.
- **cella**: The inner chamber of a temple where the cult image or statue is kept.

Etruscan Temples

Etruscan temples were adapted from Greek- style temples to create a new Etruscan style, which, in turn would later influence Roman temple design. The temple was only one part of the templum, the defined sacred space that includes the building, altar and other sacred ground , springs, and buildings. As in Greece and Rome , the altar used for sacrifice and ritual ceremonies was located outside the temple.

Today only the foundations and terra cotta decorations of Etruscan temples remain, since the temples themselves were primarily built of wood and mud brick that eroded and degraded over time. The Etruscans used stone or tufa as the foundation of their temples.

Tufa is a local volcanic stone that is soft, easy to carve, and hardens when exposed to air. The superstructure of the temple was built from wood and mud brick. Stucco or plaster covered the walls and was either burnished to a shine or painted. Terra cotta roof tiles protected the organic material and increased the longevity and integrity of the building.



The foundation of an Etruscan temple at Orvieto: The central stairway highlights the frontality of the temple that once stood at this site.

The Basic Temple Structure

Archaeology and a written account by the Roman architect Vitruvius during the late first century BCE allow us to reconstruct a basic model of a typical Etruscan temple. Etruscan temples were usually frontal, axial, and built on a high podium with a single central staircase that allowed access to the cella (or cellas).

Two rows of prostyle columns stood on the front of the temple's portico . The columns were of the Tuscan order, a derivative of the Doric order consisting of a simple shaft on a base with a simple capital . A scale model of the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Minerva suggests that the bases and capitals of its columns were painted with alternating dark- and light-valued hues .

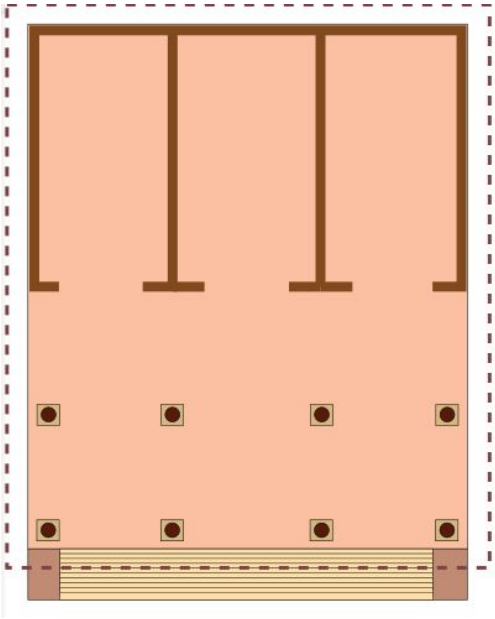
While most portico columns were made of wood, there is evidence that some were made of stone, as at Veii. They were tall and widely spaced across a deep porch, aligning with the walls of the cellas.



A model of Portonaccio Sanctuary of Minerva: C. 510 BCE, in Veii, Italy.

Etruscans often, although not always, worshiped multiple gods in a single temple. In such cases, each god received its own cella that housed its cult statue. Often the three-cella temple would be dedicated to the principal gods of the Etruscan pantheon —Tinia, Uni, and Menrva (comparable to the Roman gods Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva).

The wooden roof had a low pitch and was covered by a protective layer of terra cotta tiles. Eaves with wide overhangs helped to protect the organic material from rain.



Ground plan of an Etruscan temple: Etruscan temples were usually frontal, axial, and built on a high podium with a single central staircase that allowed access to the cella (or cellas).

Many aspects of Vitruvius' description fit what archaeologists can demonstrate. However deviations did exist. It is clear that Etruscan temples could take a number of forms and also varied over the 400-year period during which they were being made. Nevertheless, Vitruvius remains the inevitable starting point for a description and a contrast of Etruscan temples with their Greek and Roman equivalents.

Antefix

To further protect the roof beams from rain, insects, and birds, the end of each row of roof tiles was capped by an ornament known as an antefix. Antefixes also lined the area of the façade that corresponds to the top of the frieze and bottom of the pediment on a Greek temple.

These flat ornaments were usually made of terra cotta from a mold, and were sometimes made of stone. The antefixes were brightly painted and often depicted images female and male faces or simple geometric designs. The male faces were often representations of the Etruscan equivalent to Dionysus or his followers, including Silenus or fauns.

Although some antefixes depicted women, many of the female figures were representations of Gorgons, such as Medusa. The Gorgon-faced antefixes often showed a wide-eyed, circular face surrounded by either wings or snakes. The Gorgon and Dionysiac antefixes served apotropaic functions, intended to ward off evil and protect the temple site.



Antefix with the head of a Gorgon: The Gorgon and Dionysiac antefixes served apotropaic functions, intended to ward off evil and protect the temple site. This one is made of terra cotta, c. 6th–5th century BCE.



Antefix with a Silenus face: The male faces were often representations of the Etruscan equivalent to Dionysus or his followers, including Silenus or fauns.

Akroteria

For much of their history, the Etruscans did not decorate their temples in the Greek manner with friezes or pedimental sculptures. Instead, they placed terra cotta statues called akroteria along the roof's ridge pool and on the peaks and edges of the pediment.

These akroteria figures were generally built slightly larger than life-sized and were connected thematically. The Apulu of Veii is one example of an akroteria and is part of a sculptural group that depicts the story of Herakles and the Ceryneaian Hind .

Etruscan Tombs

Etruscan tombs, grave goods, and necropoleis provide invaluable evidence for the study of Etruscan society and culture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the tombs, funerary practices, and grave goods of the early Etruscans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Etruscan burial methods include both cremation and inhumation. The funerary practices of the Etruscans changed from their use of cinerary urns in the shape of huts in the 9th and 8th century to subterranean tombs carved from tufa and living rock that was richly decorated.
- The Banditaccia Necropolis at Cervetri is known for its tufa tombs craved into tumuli. These tombs often took the shape of Etruscan homes and included roof beams and thatching carved into the ceilings. The tombs hold beds or niches or sarcophagi for the remains of the deceased.
- The Tomb of the Reliefs is a richly decorated, multi-generation tomb. The walls and pillars of the tomb are carved with a variety of objects that would be used by the dead in the afterlife, from everyday to specialty objects, including dining utensils, helmets, and swords.
- The Monterozzi Necropolis outside of Tarquinia was used from the 9th century to the 2nd century BCE. It is most well known for its frescoed tombs that include painted scenes of symposia , dancing, hunting, fishing, and ritual .
- The so-called Tomb of the Augurs was the first tomb in Tarquinia to depict Etruscan funerary customs in addition to the already established mythological scenes. The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing and the Tomb of the Leopards depict typical Etruscan funerary imagery in a common Etruscan painting style . The scenes relate to Etruscan culture and society, and show the inclusion of women in a symposium and a close connection to nature.

Key Terms

- **cippus**: A low, round, or rectangular pedestal used as a funerary boundary post by the Etruscans. The Romans would later use it for military purposes.
- **dromos**: A long, narrow passage to a tomb.
- **necropolis**: A large cemetery, especially one of elaborate construction in an ancient city.
- **augur**: A seer who bases his or her prophecies on interpretations derived from the behavior of birds.
- **tumulus**: A mound of earth, especially one placed over a prehistoric tomb; a barrow.
- **apotropaic**: Intended to ward off evil.

Etruscan Tombs

Tombs and necropoleis are among the most excavated and studied parts of Etruscan culture. Scholars learn about Etruscan society and culture from the study of Etruscan funerary practice. Burial urns and sarcophagi, both large and small, were used to hold the cremated remains of the dead.

Early forms of burial include the burial of ashes with grave goods in funerary urns and small ceramic huts. Later, in the seventh century BCE, the Etruscans began burying their dead in subterranean family tombs. The necropoleis at Cerveteri and Tarquinia are the most well known for their tumuli and frescoed tombs.



Hut urn: Etruscan cinerary hut urn with a door, made of impasto, 8th century BCE.

The grave goods found in these tombs point to the Etruscan belief in an afterlife that required the same types of goods and materials as in the world of the living. Many examples of Greek pottery have been recovered from Etruscan tombs. These vessels , along with other foreign goods, demonstrate the extent of the Etruscan trade network.

Painted scenes of frivolity, celebration, hunting, and religious practice tell the viewer about Etruscan daily life, rituals, their belief about the afterlife, and their social norms. The imagery and grave goods found in Etruscan tombs help inform the modern-day viewer about the nature of Etruscan society.

Banditaccia Necropolis at Cerveteri

The tombs of the Banditaccia Necropolis outside Cerveteri were carved into large, circular mounds known as tumuli. Each tumulus was the burial site for a single family, and one to four underground tombs were cut into the round tumulus.

Each tomb often represented a separate generation. The tombs were carved with a long, narrow entranceway known as a dromos that opened into a single or multi-room chamber. The decorative style of each chamber and tomb varied with the period and the family's wealth—the wealthier the family, the more intricately carved and decorated the tomb.



Banditaccia Necropolis: This is current-day photo of the Banditaccia Necropolis, c. 7th–2nd BCE, in Cerveteri, Italy.

Most tombs assumed the shape and style of Etruscan homes. The ceilings were often carved to represent wood roof beams. Thatching and decorative columns were often added to a room. The entrances and the individual rooms inside were often framed by doorways carved in a typical design.

Piers are topped with capitals carved in a stylized motif that resembles those from Corinthian columns. Each room contained beds or niches, sometimes with a carved tufa pillow, for the deposition of the body.

The most recent tombs in Banditaccia date from the third century BCE. Some of are marked by external boundary posts called cippi (singular cippus). Cylindrical cippi outside a tomb indicate that its occupants are male, while those in the form of small houses indicate female occupants.



Cippi outside a tomb in the Banditaccia necropolis: The phallic shape of these cippi indicates that men are interred in the tomb.

The Tomb of the Reliefs

The Tomb of the Reliefs is one of the most well known, largest, and richly decorated tombs from the Banditaccia Necropolis. This tomb is named for the numerous tufa reliefs of everyday objects inside.

The walls and piers are covered in carved and painted reliefs of everyday objects including rope, drinking cups, pitches, mirrors, knives, helmets, and shields. Not even companion animals were forgotten in the afterlife. A stretching cat adorns the base of the column on the left, while one in mid-motion (stalking prey?) adorns the base of the column on the right.

Elsewhere in the tomb, mythological subject matter appears. In the center is a depiction of the three-headed dog, Cerberus, the guardian to the underworld.



Tomb of the Reliefs: This is the interior of the Tomb of the Reliefs. It is composed of carved tufa and paint from the 3rd century BCE.

Monterozzi Necropolis at Tarquinia

The tombs of the Monterozzi Necropolis outside of Tarquinia are also subterranean burial chambers. The graves from the necropolis date from the seventh century BCE until the first century BCE. The tombs here are similar to the underground, tufa cut tombs of Cerveteri that were accessed through a dromos.

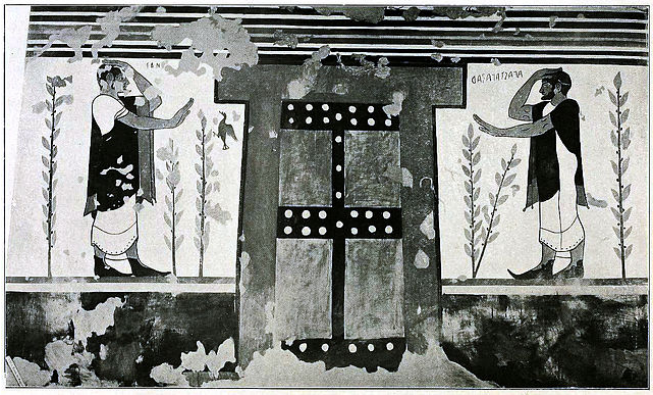
The Tomb of the Augurs

The Tomb of the Augurs (530–520 BCE) was one of the first in Tarquinia to have figurative decorations on all four walls of its main or only chamber. Its name derives from a possible misinterpretation of two figures on the rear wall.

This tomb is also the first to depict Etruscan funerary rites and funerary games in addition to mythological scenes, which were already established in traditional funerary art .

A fresco depicting a door flanked by two men appears on the rear wall of the Tomb of the Augurs. Scholars have come to different conclusions as to the significance of the door. Some interpret it as a representational illustration of the door to the tomb. Others argue that it is a symbolic door or portal to the underworld that acts as a barrier between the kingdom of the living and the kingdom of the dead.

The two men each extend one arm toward the door and places the other hand places the hand against his forehead in a gesture of salutation and mourning. Past interpretations identify the men as augurs. However, the word Apastanasar, which appears on the wall next to the man on the right, contains the root of apa, which means father. This leads scholars to conclude that they two men are more likely relatives of the deceased.



Augurs: A fresco on the interior rear wall of the Tomb of the Augurs, c. 530 BCE.

The Tomb of the Leopards

The Tomb of the Leopards (early fifth century BCE) consists of a single room and is one of the best-known tombs of Tarquinia. The Banqueting Scene, the most famous mural in the tomb, is divided into two panels: the pediment and the frieze .

The pediment depicts two white leopards in a heraldic composition . This depiction is reminiscent of the leopards from the pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu. The felines are used for their protective features.

Below the pediment is the main scene depicted on a central frieze that wraps around the room. This image depicts men and women with servants at a symposium. The scenes are festive and joyous. The men and women are distinguished respectively with dark and light skin tones .

The mere presence of women in the Banqueting Scene is unique for its time, suggesting a gender-inclusive culture. However, the women's assumption of the same positions as their male counterparts and their apparently active participation in the festivities suggest a level of gender equality unseen among the Greeks or, later, the Romans.



The Banqueting Scene: A fresco on the interior back wall of the Tomb of the Leopards, c. 480–470 BCE.

The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing

The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing consists of two rooms. The frescos in the first room are badly damaged but appear to depict Etruscans dancing outside. Two trees frame the doorway into the second room. This room gives the tomb its name, as it depicts a scene of men hunting and fishing.

Men in boats are fishing in a sea populated by fish and dolphins. On a rock outcropping in the water, one man prepares to dive, while another climbs to the top. Meanwhile, another man aims a slingshot at the birds that flock overhead. This scene depicts the Etruscans' relationship with nature and the importance of hunting and fishing in Etruscan society.



Tomb of Hunting and Fishing: This is a fresco on the interior back wall from the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, c. 530–520 BCE.

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7.2: Later Etruscan Art

Etruscan Bronze Sculpture

Etruscan bronze classical art demonstrates the range and skill of artists who crafted large votive offerings and small, personal trinkets.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the different forms of bronze objects produced by the Etruscans

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Few examples remain of any large-scale Etruscan bronze statues from the Classical era.
- The Chimera of Arezzo is a unique bronze votive offering to the god Tinia. The bronze sculpture demonstrates the Etruscans' skill in bronze casting through the beast's tense and plastic musculature, stylized mane, and fierce expression.
- The bronze Ombra della sera depicts the human body in an elongated fashion that is unusual for its time, while the Mars of Todi depicts a much more naturalistic representation. Small objects such as mirrors and cistae, small boxes, were also made of bronze during the Classical period. These objects were decorated with engravings or low relief casts that depict mythological scenes and were popular grave goods .
- While distinctly different from large-scale bronze, the small bronze objects demonstrate the variety and skill of Etruscan metal smiths that was first seen in the Orientalizing period with Etruscan jewelry and granulation techniques.

Key Terms

- **engrave**: To carve text or symbols into (something), usually for the purposes of identification or art.
- **cista**: A Latin word for a small box that used to hold unguents, jewels, or toiletries. They are generally used and related to women and domestic functions.
- **pyxis**: A small box.

Etruscan Bronze Sculptures

During its Classical period, from 480 to 300 BCE, Etruscan art was known for its hollow cast bronze sculptures and smaller utilitarian objects. Objects such as mirrors and cistae were engraved or incised with rich imagery that was made noticeable by a white substance inserted into the outlines and contour lines .

The Etruscan sculptures of human subjects range from naturalistic to exaggerated, almost modernist, forms , and the mythical creatures from the Greek and Eastern traditions found their way into their subject matter. In total, Etruscan sculpture incorporates a variety of cultural styles and motifs , including Orientalizing, Archaic , and Classical.

Very few Etruscan bronze sculptures survived because they were melted down in the following centuries to be used for other purposes.

Lost-Wax Casting

Also known by its French name cire perdue, lost-wax casting is the oldest method of producing metal sculptures. Although any material that can be liquified and subsequently solidified can be cast, metal is the most common. Of all metals, bronze is the most commonly cast.

In lost-wax casting, the sculptor begins by making a clay mold of the intended sculpture, coats it in wax, and applies an outer layer of plaster to it, fastening metal rods to hold the shell in place and wax rods to vent the mold. Intense heat is then applied, causing the wax to melt and flow out of the mold. This step leaves open channels into which molten metal is poured.

When the metal has cooled and hardened, the mold is broken, the sculpture is removed, and the holes left from the pins and rods are filled and smoothed. Finally, the sculpture is polished and ready for display. Because the mold must be destroyed, sculptors use the lost-wax method to produce one-of-a-kind sculptures.

Chimera of Arezzo

The bronze statue of the Chimera , discovered in the city of Arezzo in 1553, has recently been judged as a forgery. The reasoning rests more on the fact that there are no comparable existing Etruscan sculptures than on scientific testing.

An inscription on the right foreleg marks the bronze as a votive offering to the supreme Etruscan god, Tinia (comparable to Roman Jupiter). The sculpture depicts the Chimera, a mythical beast with the body and head of a lion, a serpent for a tail, and with a goat's head in the middle of its back. The beast plagued the area of Lycia until it was slain by the hero Bellerophon.

The serpent tail was not discovered with the statue; the current tail is an eighteenth century restoration.



Chimera of Arezzo: The bronze statue demonstrates Etruscan artistic techniques and how the liveliness seen in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture is transmitted into the bronze medium.

The bronze statue demonstrates Etruscan artistic techniques and how the liveliness seen in Etruscan terra cotta sculpture is transmitted into the bronze medium . The figure is well modeled and expressive—from its tense muscles, ready pose, and roaring face of the lion and goat. The beast's ribs are clearly visible and a wound on its rump bleeds. The lion's posture—he crouches and looks up—suggests that there may have been an additional figure of Bellerophon to create a votive group. The figure's face and mane is stylized and the patterning is reminiscent of Near Eastern depictions of lions.

Ombra della sera

Produced in the metal-rich town of Velathri (later Volterra), the Ombra della sera (Italian for Evening Shadow) represents a male nude that is nearly two feet high. Archaeologists estimate its date of production to the third century BCE.

In ancient times, Volterra bronze workers were known for their ability to fuse copper ores with tin to form bronze. The body of the sculpture is very elongated, while the scale of its head is naturalistic.

The title Ombra della sera was applied to the sculpture centuries later by a poet who likened its exaggerated form to shadows cast by the setting sun. These unusual proportions lead some experts to believe that the sculpture was intended as a votive offering.



Ombra della Sera: The unusual proportions of this third-century bronze statue lead some experts to believe that the sculpture was intended as a votive offering.

Mars of Todi

The so-called Mars of Todi (late fifth-early fourth century BCE) is a nearly life-size bronze warrior produced as a votive offering, possibly to Laran, the Etrucscan god of war. The figure probably held a patera (libation bowl) in his extended right hand, and a spear in the left.

His helmet is missing, but his body armor is one of the best surviving examples that shows how plate armor from the period appeared. Unlike the Ombra della sera, the Mars of Todi is very naturalistic, complete with a dynamic contrapposto pose and inlaid eyes.

A dedication that combines the Etruscan alphabet and Latin dialect from Umbria (central Italy) is inscribed on the skirt of the breastplate. It translates as, “Ahal Trutitis gave [this as a] gift.” Interestingly, the name of the donor was Celtic in origin, denoting the cosmopolitan nature of the region in ancient times.



Mars of Todi: This bronze statue is a nearly life-size bronze warrior, and was produced as a votive offering, possibly to Laran, the Etrucscan god of war.

Bronze Objects

The Etruscans also used bronze to create small objects, including storage jars, or cistae, and mirrors. Etruscan bronze mirrors were used by women and often deposited as grave goods. These mirrors were highly burnished on one side to reflect an image, and on the other side were decorated with engraved or low-relief casted scenes.

The images depicted were often scenes from Greek mythology, that demonstrate the importation of Greek culture and mythology. Many of these mirrors were inscribed with the deceased’s name, and ritual blessings.



Judgment of Paris: Etruscan bronze mirrors were used by women and often deposited as grave goods. This shows a mirror with an engraving of the Judgment of Paris.

Cistae were also often inscribed and were also decorated with engravings and added bronze elements, such as feet, chains, and decorative handle lids. The cistae were small boxes with lids, much like a pyxis , that was made from bronze and was usually cylindrical.

The handles of the lids were often figures, such as a man or a sphinx , or figural groups. Like the mirrors, the engraved scenes represented images from mythology, but some images also depict scenes from Etruscan history.



Cista with a battle between Etruscans and Gauls on it: The handles of the lids were often figures, like the men on this cista, or a sphinx, or figural groups.

Etruscan Art under the Influence of the Romans

As the Etruscan territories fell under Roman dominance, Etruscan culture and art changed to reflect Roman influence and new cultural values.

Learning Objectives

Describe the changes that appeared in Etruscan art during the Roman period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Funerary imagery changed in Etruscan society as the Etruscans began to encounter violence and conquest by their Roman neighbors. The figures of the underworld demons Charun and Vanth, as well as apotropaic figures, are depicted in tomb paintings and and on sarcophagi during the Etrusco-Roman period.
- The Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena not only depicts the figures of Charun and Vanth, the lid also depicts the deceased as a prosperous and wealthy Etruscan, complete with a scroll listing his accomplishments. The sarcophagus demonstrates the shifting values in Etruscan society.
- The life-size bronze statue of Aule Metele depicts an Etruscan man dressed and behaving as a Roman. The man wears a toga and Roman sandals and is posed in a position of oration, as would be common for a Roman magistrate. The sculpture demonstrates the mixing of Etruscan and Roman styles and culture .

- Temple sculpture also changed during the Roman period, with terra cotta pedimental sculptures adorning at least two temples during the second century BCE. Both sculpture groups display Graeco-Roman naturalism in the depiction of the body. One group wears Roman-style military attire.

Key Terms

- **veristic**: Realistic; true to life.
- **cinerary urn**: A vessel used to hold the ash remains of the cremated deceased.

Etruscan Art under Rome

In 509 BCE, the Etruscan kings of Rome were expelled from the city, and the Roman Republic was established. By the fourth century BCE, Rome was beginning to expand across the Italian peninsula, and the first Etruscan city to fall was Veii in 396 BCE.

Over the following centuries, Etruria was involved in Roman wars, and Etruscan territory was fully conquered by the Romans by the beginning of the first century BCE. While Roman culture drew from its Etruscan roots, borrowing and adapting Etruscan customs, Etruscan society was also influenced by Roman culture.

During this period, art begin to adopt a Roman style and display the permeation of Roman culture and values into Etruscan society. The threat of invasion also led to the common presence of violence, especially in funerary images.

Funerary Art and Sarcophagi

Funerary art , both in tomb paintings and on carved sarcophagi, underwent a noticeable change in subject matter during the Roman period. The figures of Charun and Vanth, demons of the underworld, were depicted with increasing regularity.

Both figures are often depicted with wings, while Charun is often depicted with blue skin to signify putrefying flesh. They also carry torches, used to light the way to the underworld, or sometimes keys to open the door to the underworld, which underline the figures' role as guides between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In the tomb paintings in Tarquinia, the figures of Charun and Vanth can be seen painted in front of or around doorways.



Charun and Vanth: Charun guards the gate to the Underworld, while Vanth guides the deceased to the gate in this fresco from the third century BCE.

While Charun's name is likely a derivative of the Greek underworld ferryman Charon, Vanth appears to be uniquely Etruscan. Due to Charun's menacing associations, theories have attempted to associate Vanth with the avenging Greek Furies. However, her role as a benevolent guide conflicts with this suggestion.

Regardless of Vanth's exact role and origins, the appearance of a less-than-joyous afterlife and menacing figures in Etruscan funerary art does not emerge until after the beginning of the Roman incursions into Etruscan territory. Perhaps Vanth is a gentler apotropaic figure, offering the reassurance of an ally in the afterlife to counteract the trials faced in the face of impending cultural collapse and absorption.

The Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena

Charun and Vanth also appear on stone and terra cotta sarcophagi. Charun is also sometimes depicted with a hammer. On the Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena, two figures of Charun (with hammers but without wings) are depicted on either side of a central figure, most likely Lars Pulena, swinging their hammers at his head. The violent image might have been used as an apotropaic device to ward off evil.

However, in comparison to earlier funerary images, the level of violence seems to mimic the new level of violence in Etruscan society from Roman forces and influence. Two winged representations of Vanth also appear on the sarcophagus, at either end of the frieze .

The lid of the sarcophagus depicts a portrait of the deceased. The man lies alone, wearing a somber expression, unlike the earlier terra cotta Sacophagus of the Spouses.

His face is wrinkled and reflects a Roman republican portrait style, which equates age with wisdom and leadership capabilities. He has a pot belly, signifying his wealth, good life, and robust eating, and he holds a scroll across his lap that is inscribed with a list of his accomplishments.



Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena: The sculpture reflects a Roman republican portrait style, which equates age with wisdom and leadership capabilities. Figures of Charon and Vanth are also on the frieze.

Smaller cinerary urns assumed the shapes of sarcophagi during this period. These urns are topped with images of the deceased lying across the lid, often in Roman dress, with relief-carved scenes of battle, violence, or Charun and Vanth.

The woman who reclines atop the urn wears attire more akin to that of a Roman matron than to the woman on the Sarcophagus of the Spouses. Unlike the Etruscans, who buried their dead in tombs designed to mimic the appearance and comforts of private homes, the Romans practiced cremation and stored the ashes of their deceased in cinerary urns. This shift in Etruscan culture demonstrates the adoption of Roman funerary practices.



Cinerary urn: This shows a terra cotta cinerary urn for a woman. The top of the urn has an image of the deceased lying across the lid, and apotropaic imagery is seen on the urn.

Aule Metele

Aule Metele, also known as The Orator, is a life-size bronze sculpture of an Etrusco-Roman man. The figure is depicted wearing a Roman toga and Roman sandals. He stands in a pose of an orator, with his hand raised to address a crowd. To further emphasize this gesture, the hand is slightly enlarged.

He is clearly depicted as an individual, and an inscription on the hem of his toga in Etruscan names him as Aule Metele. Aule Metele dresses as a Roman magistrate, and his face is a cross between Hellenistic and Roman veristic portraiture.



Aule Metele: Also known as The Orator, this is a life-size bronze sculpture of an Etrusco-Roman man. The sculpture shows a level of individuality through the gaunt cheeks, thin lips, and wrinkled forehead.

The sculpture shows a level of individuality through the gaunt cheeks, thin lips, and wrinkled forehead. As with the sculpture on the Sarcophagus of Lars Pulena, these attributes of age align with the respect afforded to elders in Roman society. While the inscription marks him as an Etruscan, his attire and pose demonstrate the absorption of Roman culture into Etruscan society and the adoption—especially by the ruling class of Etruscans—of Roman civic practices.

Late Temple Sculpture

By the second century BCE, at least two Etruscan temples began to show evidence of the absorption of the Roman culture. Unlike early temples, whose pediments were largely unadorned, the temples in the cities of Luna and Talamone incorporated pedimental sculptures in the style of the Greeks.

Although Roman pediments remained free of sculpture groups, the Roman influence is clearly visible in these terra cotta figures. Whereas pre-Roman temple sculptures were largely stylized like the Apulu of Veii, the pedimental figures from the temples at Luna and Talamone possess the naturalism of Classical and Hellenistic sculpture, both of which were adopted by the Romans.

Unlike Greek pedimental sculpture that depicted male nudes, the figures from the pediment from Talamone, which depicts the fate of the Seven against Thebes, wear Roman battle gear, including short-sleeved skirted armor. By the time the sculpture groups from both temples were produced, their cities were under Roman control.



Pedimental fragments from the Temple of Luna: The pedimental figures from the temples at Luna and Talamone possess the naturalism of Classical and Hellenistic sculpture, both of which were adopted by the Romans.



Pediment from the Temple of Talamone : The first closed pediment in Etruria, this sculpture group depicts the fate of the Seven against Thebes.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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8.1: The Romans

The Romans

Rome was founded in the mid-eighth century BCE by eight tribes who settled in Etruria and on the famous Seven Hills.

Learning Objectives

Describe the rise of the Roman civilization and the people who made up its population

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The foundation myths of Romulus and Aeneas are the most common means of recounting the founding of Rome , and ancient historians used them to justify their bloody culture . However, the historical record provides a more reliable story. April 21, 753 BCE, is the date given by ancient Roman historians to the founding of Rome. Archaeological research supports this assertion, confirming that the site of Rome was inhabited by the mid-eighth century BCE.
- The Romans were descended from the Italic tribes, mainly the Latins (originally from the Alban Hills to the southeast) and the Sabines (originally from the Apennines to the northeast).
- What was to become Rome originally existed as a collection of autonomous villages atop each of the city's famous Seven Hills. The Palatine Hill, located at the city center, marked the original settlement of the Romans, as well as significant temples and religious festivals. The Quirinal Hill became the home of the Sabines until the sixth century BCE, as well as the sites of significant temples and sanctuaries .

Key Terms

- **Septimontium**: A festival celebrating the first federation of the Seven Hills of Rome.
- **Latial**: Describing a cultural element that deviates from the mainstream Latin culture.
- **wattle-and-daub**: A composite building material used for making walls, in which a woven lattice of wooden strips are coated with a sticky material usually made of some combination of wet soil, clay, sand, animal dung and straw.

Foundation Myths

The Romans relied on two sets of myths to explain their origins: the first story tells the tale of Romulus and Remus, while the second tells the story of Aeneas and the Trojans, who survived the sack of Troy by the Greeks. Oddly, both stories relate the founding of Rome and the origins of its people to brutal murders.

Romulus killed his twin brother, Remus, in a fit of rage, and Aeneas slaughtered his rival Turnus in combat. Roman historians used these mythical episodes as the reason for Rome's own bloody history and periods of civil war. While foundation myths are the most common vehicle through which we learn about the origins of Rome and the Roman people, the actual history is often overlooked.

The Historical Record

Archaeological evidence shows that the area that eventually became Rome has been inhabited continuously for the past 14,000 years. The historical record provides evidence of habitation on and fortification of the Palatine Hill during the eighth century BCE, which supports the date of April 21, 753 BCE, as the date that ancient historians applied to the founding of Rome in association with a festival to Pales, the goddess of shepherds. Given the importance of agriculture to pre-Roman tribes, as well as most ancestors of civilization , it is logical that the Romans would link the celebration of their founding as a city to an agrarian goddess.

Romulus, whose name is believed to be the namesake of Rome, is credited for Rome's founding. He is also credited with establishing the period of monarchical rule. Six kings ruled after him until 509 BCE, when the people rebelled against the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, and established the Republic. Throughout its history, the people—including plebeians , patricians , and senators—were wary of giving one person too much power and feared the tyranny of a king.

Pre-Roman Tribes

The villages that would eventually merge to become Rome were descended from the Italic tribes. The Italic tribes spread throughout the present-day countries of Italy and Sicily. Archaeological evidence and ancient writings provide very little

information on how—or whether—pre-Roman tribes across the Italian peninsula interacted.

What is known is that they all belonged to the Indo-European linguistic family, which gave rise to the Romance (Latin-derived) and Germanic languages. What follows is a brief history of two of the eight main tribes that contributed to the founding of Rome: the Latins and the Sabines. Information about a third culture, the Etruscans, is found in Chapter 7.

The Latins

The Latins inhabited the Alban Hills since the second millennium BCE. According to archaeological remains, the Latins were primarily farmers and pastoralists . Approximately at the end of the first millennium BCE, they moved into the valleys and along the Tiber River, which provided better land for agriculture.

Although divided from an early stage into communities that mutated into several independent, and often warring, city-states , the Latins and their neighbors maintained close culturo-religious relations until they were definitively united politically under Rome. These included common festivals and religious sanctuaries.

The Latins appear to have become culturally differentiated from the surrounding Italic tribes from about 1000 BCE onward. From this time, the Latins' material culture shares more in common with the Iron Age Villanovan culture found in Etruria and the Po valley than with their former Osco-Umbrian neighbors.

The Latins thus shared a similar material culture as the Etruscans. However, archaeologists have discerned among the Latins a variant of Villanovan, dubbed the Latial culture.

The most distinctive feature of Latial culture were cinerary urns in the shape of huts . They represent the typical, single-room abodes of the area's peasants, which were made from simple, readily available materials: wattle-and-daub walls and straw roofs supported by wooden posts. The huts remained the main form of Latin housing until the mid-seventh century BCE.



Cinerary urn: This Villanovan urn likely replicates the form that pre-Roman Latin huts assumed before the mid-seventh century BCE.

The Sabines

The Sabines originally inhabited the Apennines and eventually relocated to Latium before the founding of Rome. The Sabines divided into two populations just after the founding of Rome. The division, however it came about, is not legendary.

The population closer to Rome transplanted itself to the new city and united with the pre-existing citizenry to start a new heritage that descended from the Sabines but was also Latinized. The second population remained a mountain tribal state, finally fighting against Rome for its independence along with all the other Italic tribes. After losing, it became assimilated into the Roman Republic.

There is little record of the Sabine language. However, there are some glosses by ancient commentators, and one or two inscriptions have been tentatively identified as Sabine. There are also personal names in use on Latin inscriptions from the Sabine territories, but these are given in Latin form. The existing scholarship classifies Sabine as a member of the Umbrian group of Italic languages and identifies approximately 100 words that are either likely Sabine or that possess Sabine origin.



Pre-Roman tribes: Map showing the locations of the tribes who settled Rome.

The Seven Hills

Before Rome was founded as a city, its people existed in separate settlements atop its famous Seven Hills:

1. The Aventine Hill
2. The Caelian Hill
3. The Capitoline Hill
4. The Esquiline Hill
5. The Palatine Hill
6. The Quirinal Hill
7. The Viminal Hill

Over time, each tribe either united with or was absorbed into the Roman culture.

The Quirinal Hill

Recent studies suggest that the Quirinal Hill was very important to the ancient Romans and their immediate ancestors. It was here that the Sabines originally resided. Its three peaks were united with the three peaks of the Esquiline, as well as villages on the Caelian Hill and Suburra.

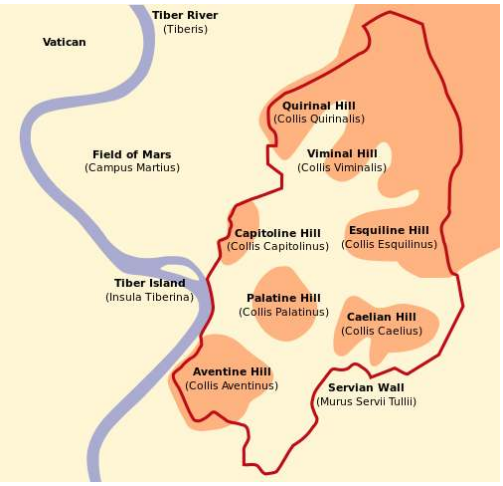
Tombs from the eighth to the seventh century BCE that confirm a likely presence of a Sabine settlement area were discovered on the Quirinal Hill. Some authors consider it possible that the cult of the Capitoline Triad (Jove, Minerva, Juno) could have been celebrated here well before it became associated with the Capitoline Hill. The sanctuary of Flora, an Osco-Sabine goddess, was also at this location. Titus Livius (better known as Livy) writes that the Quirinal Hill, along with the Viminal Hill, became part of Rome in the sixth century BCE.

The Palatine Hill

According to Livy, the Palatine Hill, located at the center of the ancient city, became the home of the original Romans after the Sabines and the Albans moved into the Roman lowlands. Due to its historical and legendary significance, the Palatine Hill became the home of many Roman elites during the Republic and emperors during the Empire.

It was also the site of a temple to Apollo built by Emperor Augustus and the pastoral (and possibly pre-Roman) festival of Lupercalia, which was observed on February 13 through 15 to avert evil spirits, purify the city, and release health and fertility.

Festivals for the Septimontium (meaning of the Seven Hills) on December 11 were previously considered to be related to the foundation of Rome. However, because April 21 is the agreed-upon date of the city's founding, it has recently been argued that Septimontium celebrated the first federations among the Seven Hills. A similar federation was celebrated by the Latins at Cave or Monte Cavo.



The Seven Hills of Rome: A schematic map of Rome showing the Seven Hills.

Roman Society

Ancient Roman society was based on class-based and political structures, as well as by religious practices.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Roman society

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Roman society consisted of several divisions of social classes that held varying degrees of power and prestige. This structure was echoed on a familial level under the power of the father, or pater familias .
- In matters of government, the Senate remained a fixture from the founding of Rome to the collapse of the Empire, although its power and influence grew and weakened over time.
- As Rome became a global power, its government consisted of levels on the colonial and municipal levels, as well as on the central level in the imperial capital .
- The Roman pantheon of gods is comparable to its Greek counterparts, who Romans worshiped and sent prayers to throughout their lives. The Romans were flexible in their worship and absorbed foreign gods into their pantheon.
- In the Imperial period, an imperial cult developed to worship the emperors who were deified upon their death.

Key Terms

- **Pontifex Maximus**: The official head, or chief priest, of the Roman state’s religion. In Imperial Rome this title and office was given to the Emperor.
- **plebeian**: A free Roman citizen who was not a patrician.
- **equite**: The lower of the two aristocratic classes of ancient Rome, ranking below the patricians.
- **pater familias**: The father, or (male) head of household.
- **insula**: An apartment building that housed most of the urban citizen population of ancient Rome, including ordinary people of lower- or middle-class status (the plebians) and all but the wealthiest from the upper-middle class (the equites).
- **patrician**: A member of a hereditary ruling-class family.

Social Structure

Life in ancient Rome centered around the capital city with its fora, temples, theaters, baths, gymnasia, brothels, and other forms of culture and entertainment. Private housing ranged from elegant urban palaces and country villas for the social elites to crowded insulae (apartment buildings) for the majority of the population.

The large urban population required an endless supply of food, which was a complex logistical task. Area farms provided produce, while animal-derived products were considered luxuries. The aqueducts brought water to urban centers, and wine and oil were

imported from Hispania (Spain and Portugal), Gaul (France and Belgium), and Africa.

Highly efficient technology allowed for frequent commerce among the provinces. While the population within the city of Rome might have exceeded one million, most Romans lived in rural areas, each with an average population of 10,000 inhabitants.

Roman society consisted of patricians , equites (equestrians, or knights), plebeians , and slaves. All categories except slaves enjoyed the status of citizenship.

In the beginning of the Roman republic, plebeians could neither intermarry with patricians or hold elite status, but this changed by the Late Republic, when the plebeian-born Octavian rose to elite status and eventually became the first emperor. Over time, legislation was passed to protect the lives and health of slaves.

Although many prostitutes were slaves, for instance, the bill of sale for some slaves stipulated that they could not be used for commercial prostitution. Slaves could become freedmen—and thus citizens—if their owners freed them or if they purchased their freedom by paying their owners. Free-born women were considered citizens, although they could neither vote nor hold political office.

Pater Familias

Within the household, the pater familias was the seat of authority, possessing power over his wife, the other women who bore his sons, his children, his nephews, his slaves, and the freedmen to whom he granted freedom. His power extended to the point of disposing of his dependents and their good, as well as having them put to death if he chose.

In private and public life, Romans were guided by the mos maiorum, an unwritten code from which the ancient Romans derived their social norms that affected all aspects of life in ancient Rome.



Roman family: Relief of a Roman family with the child in the middle, the father on the left, and the mother on the right.

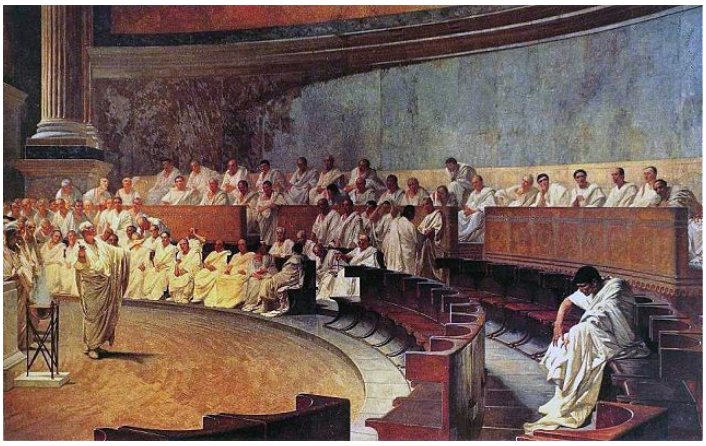
Government

Over the course of its history, Rome existed as a kingdom (hereditary monarchy), a republic (in which leaders were elected), and an empire (a kingdom encompassing a wider swath of territory). From the establishment of the city in 753 BCE to the fall of the empire in 476 CE, the Senate was a fixture in the political culture of Rome, although the power it exerted did not remain constant.

During the days of the kingdom, it was little more than an advisory council to the king. Over the course of the Republic, the Senate reached the height of its power, with old-age becoming a symbol of prestige, as only elders could serve as senators. However the late Republic witnessed the beginning of its decline. After Augustus ended the Republic to form the Empire, the Senate lost much of its power, and with the reforms of Diocletian in the third century CE, it became irrelevant.

As Rome grew as a global power, its government was subdivided into colonial and municipal levels. Colonies were modeled closely on the Roman constitution, with roles being defined for magistrates, council, and assemblies. Colonists enjoyed full Roman citizenship and were thus extensions of Rome itself.

The second most prestigious class of cities was the municipium (a town or city). Municipia were originally communities of non-citizens among Rome's Italic allies. Later,Roman citizenship was awarded to all Italy, with the result that a municipium was effectively now a community of citizens. The category was also used in the provinces to describe cities that used Roman law but were not colonies.



The Roman Senate: A nineteenth-century fresco in the Palazzo Madama in Rome, depicting a sitting of the Roman Senate in which the senator Cicero attacks the senator Catiline.

Religion

The Roman people considered themselves to be very religious. Religious beliefs and practices helped establish stability and social order among the Romans during the reign of Romulus and the period of the legendary kings. Some of the highest religious offices, such as the Pontifex Maximus , the head of the state's religion—which eventually became one of the titles of the emperor—were sought-after political positions.

Women who became Vestal Virgins served the goddess of the hearth, Vesta, and received a high degree of autonomy within the state, including rights that other women would never receive.

The Roman pantheon corresponded to the Etruscan and Greek deities . Jupiter was considered the most powerful and important of all the Gods.

In nearly every Roman city, a central temple known as the Capitolia that was dedicated to the supreme triad of deities: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (Zeus, Hera, and Athena). Small household gods, known as Lares, were also popular.

Each family claimed their own set of personal gods and laraium, or shines to the Lares, are found not only in houses but also at street corners, on roads, or for a city neighborhood.



Lararium: A fresco and stucco lararium from the House of the Vettii.



Capitoline Triad: Juno, Jupiter, and Minerva made up the Capitoline Triad. They often shared a temple, known as the Capitolia, in the center of a Roman city. This photo is taken in the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia, Palestrina, Italy.

Roman religious practice often centered around prayers, vows, oaths, and sacrifice . Many Romans looked to the gods for protection and would complete a promise sacrifice or offering as thanks when their wishes were fulfilled. The Romans were not exclusive in their religious practices and easily participated in numerous rituals for different gods. Furthermore, the Romans readily absorbed foreign gods and cults into their pantheon.

With the rise of imperial rule, the emperors were considered gods, and temples were built to many emperors upon their death. Their family members could also be deified, and the household gods of the emperor's family were also incorporated into Roman worship.

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8.2: The Republic

Roman Sculpture under the Republic

During the Roman Republic, members of all social classes used a variety of sculptural techniques to promote their distinguished social statuses.

Learning Objectives

Describe the defining characteristics of sculpture during the Roman Republic

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Continuous narration arose during the Republic as a means of telling a story from beginning to end in a visual form . Art patrons used it on public monuments to celebrate their status in society.
- The patronage of public sculpture extended to freedmen, as seen in the massive and uniquely decorated tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker.
- Veristic portraiture depicts the subject in hyper- realism , wrinkles and individual facial characteristics are carefully formed in these images.
- Portraits of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar set precedents for future imperial portraiture by quoting iconographic characteristics and introducing a likeness of the living imperator on coins.
- Death masks provided a means for a family to remember their ancestors as well as to remind others of the illustriousness of their ancestry.

Key Terms

- **verism**: The style of portraiture favored during the Roman Republic in which the subjects were portrayed in a super-realistic likeness; from the Latin word for true.
- **continuous narration**: A visual art technique that illustrates multiple scenes of a story within a single frame and without any separation between scenes and actions.
- **Imperator**: A Latin word meaning general or ruler; a title given to triumphant generals during the Republic.

Roman Art in the Republic

Early Roman art was influenced by the art of Greece and that of the neighboring Etruscans, themselves greatly influenced by their Greek trading partners. As the expanding Roman Republic began to conquer Greek territory, its official sculpture became largely an extension of the Hellenistic style , with its departure from the idealized body and flair for the dramatic. This is partly due to the large number of Greek sculptors working within Roman territory.

However, Roman sculpture during the Republic departed from the Greek traditions in several ways.

- It was the first to feature a new technique called continuous narration.
- Commoners, including freedmen, could commission public art and use it to cast their professions in a positive light.
- Portraiture throughout the Republic celebrated old age with its verism .
- In the closing decades of the Republic, Julius Caesar counteracted traditional propriety by becoming the first living person to place his own portrait on a coin.

In the examples that follow, the patrons use these techniques to promote their status in society.

The Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus

Despite its most common title, the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus (late second century BCE) was more likely a base intended to support cult statues in the cella of a Temple of Neptune (Poseidon) located in Rome on the Field of Mars. The frieze is the second oldest Roman bas- relief currently known.

Domitius Ahenobarbus, a naval general, likely commissioned the altar and the temple in gratitude of a naval victory between 129 and 128 BCE. The reliefs combine mythology and contemporary civic life.

One panel of the altar depicts the census, a uniquely Roman event of contemporary civic life. It is one of the earliest reliefs sculpted in continuous narration, in which the viewer reads from left to right the recording of the census, the purification of the army before the altar of Mars, and the levy of the soldiers.



Altar of Domitius Ahenobarb: This panel of the altar depicts the census, a uniquely Roman event of contemporary civic life.

The other three panels depict the mythological wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite. At the center of his scene, Neptune and Amphitrite are seated in a chariot drawn by two Tritons (messengers of the sea) who dance to music. They are accompanied by a multitude of fantastic creatures, Tritons, and Nereides (sea nymphs) who form a retinue for the wedding couple, which, like the census scene, can be read from left to right.

At the left, a Nereid riding on a sea-bull carries a present. Next, Amphitrite's mother Doris advances towards the couple, mounted on a hippocampus (literally, a sea horse) and holding wedding torches in each hand to light the procession's way. Eros hovers behind her. Behind the wedding couple, a Nereid riding a hippocampus carries another present.



Altar of Domitius Ahenobarb: The other three panels of the altar depict the mythological wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite.

Tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker

The patronage of public sculpture was not limited to the ruling classes during the Republic. The tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker (c. 50–20 BCE) is one of the largest and best-preserved freedman funerary monuments in Rome. Its sculpted frieze is a classic example of the plebeian style in Roman sculpture.

The deceased built the tomb for himself and perhaps his wife Atistia in the final decades of the Republic. While the tomb's inscription lacks an L to denote the status of a freedman, the tripartite name of the deceased follows the pattern of names given to and adopted by former slaves.

The tomb, approximately 33 feet tall, commemorates the deceased and his profession. It three main components are a frieze at the top and the cylindrical niches (probably symbolic of a kneading machine or grain measuring vessels) below it.

The surviving text of the inscription translates as "This is the monument of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces, baker, contractor, public servant." The frieze represents various stages in the baking of bread in continuous narration.

Although time-worn, the naturalistic depiction of human and animal bodies in a variety of poses is still evident. This record of each stage in a mundane process demonstrates the sense of pride the deceased must have had in his profession. Because the wearing of togas was not conducive to manual labor, the simple clothing on the figures marks them as plebeians, or commoners.



The Tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the Baker: The frieze represents various stages in the baking of bread in continuous narration.

Portraiture

Roman portraiture during the Republic is identified by its considerable realism, known as veristic portraiture. Verism refers to a hyper-realistic portrayal of the subject's facial characteristics. The style originated from Hellenistic Greece; however, its use in the Roman Republic is due to Roman values , customs, and political life.

As with other forms of Roman art, portraiture borrowed certain details from Greek art but adapted these to their own needs. Veristic images often show their male subjects with receding hairlines, deep winkles, and even with warts. While the faces of the portraits often display incredible detail and likeness, the subjects' bodies are idealized and do not correspond to the age shown in the face.



Portrait of a Roman General: When created as full-length sculptures, the veristic portrait busts appear to have been paired with idealized (mass-produced?) bodies that create a sense of disunity.



Bust of an old man: Verism refers to a hyper-realistic portrayal of the subject's facial characteristics, such as the wrinkles on this man's face.

The popularity and usefulness of verism appears to derive from the need to have a recognizable image. Veristic portrait busts provided a means of reminding people of distinguished ancestors or of displaying one's power, wisdom, experience, and authority. Statues were often erected of generals and elected officials in public forums—and a veristic image ensured that a passerby would recognize the person when they actually saw them.

The Late Republic

The use of veristic portraiture began to diminish in the first century BCE. During this time, civil wars threatened the empire, and individual men began to gain more power. The portraits of Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, two political rivals who were also the most powerful generals in the Republic, began to change the style of the portraits and their use.

The portraits of Pompey are not fully idealized, nor were they created in the same veristic style of Republican senators. Pompey borrowed a specific parting and curl of his hair from Alexander the Great . This similarity served to link Pompey visually with the likeness of Alexander and to remind people that he possessed similar characteristics and qualities.



Marble bust of Pompey the Great: Portraits of Pompey combine a degree of verism with an idealized hairstyle reminiscent of Alexander the Great.

The portraits of Julius Caesar are more veristic than those of Pompey. Despite staying closer to stylistic convention, Caesar was the first man to mint coins with his own likeness printed on them. In the decades prior to this, it had become increasingly common to place an illustrious ancestor on a coin, but putting a living person—especially oneself—on a coin departed from Roman propriety. By circulating coins issued with his image, Caesar directly showed the people that they were indebted to him for their own prosperity and therefore should support his political pursuits.



Julius Caesar portrait: A portrait of Julius Caesar on a denarius. On the reverse side stands Venus Victix holding a winged Victory.

Death Masks

The creation and use of death masks demonstrate Romans' veneration of their ancestors. These masks were created from molds taken of a person at the time of his or her death. Made of wax, bronze , marble, and terra cotta , death masks were kept by families and displayed in the atrium of their homes.

Visitors and clients who entered the home would have been reminded of the family's ancestry and the honorable qualities of their ancestors. Such displays served to bolster the reputation and credibility of the family.

Death masks were also worn and paraded through the streets during funeral procession. Again, this served not only a memorial for the dead, but also to link the living members of a family to their illustrious ancestors in the eyes of the spectator.

Roman Architecture under the Republic

Roman architecture relies heavily on the use of concrete and the arch to create unique interior spaces and architectural forms.

Learning Objectives

Explain the importance of both concrete and the arch in Roman architecture.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Roman architecture began as an imitation of the Classical Greek style but eventually grew into its own style with technological advances and modifications on traditional Greek elements. Roman temple design is based on a mixed use of Etruscan and Greek models. They are typically strictly frontal, on a high podium with a flight of stairs, and have a deep, colonnaded portico in front of the cella .
- Concrete is an essential building material in Roman architecture. It is lightweight, strong, and durable and could even be used underwater.
- Most Roman buildings were constructed with concrete and brick and then faced in stucco , expensive stone, or marble.
- The arch is a highly significant architectural shape in Roman architecture, often employed to allow for wider openings in structures. Arches can be used together to create vaults (barrel and groin) and domes , as well as to create unique interior spaces .

Key Terms

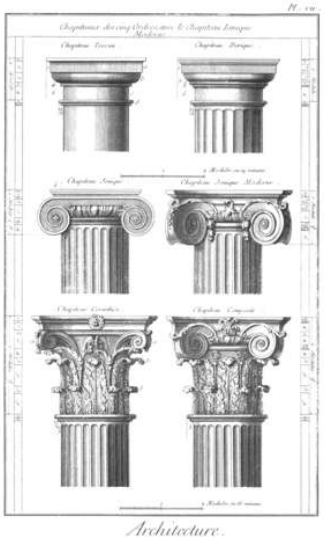
- **pozzolana**: A type of volcanic ash used for mortar or for cement that sets under water.
- **psuedoperipteral**: A building with free standing columns in the front and engaged columns along the peripheral walls; this style is often used on Roman temples.
- **barrel vault**: A simple roof having a curved, often semicircular, cross section used to span large distances in railway stations, churches, etc., and usually supported on columns.
- **exedra**: A semicircular recess, with stone benches, used as a place for discussion.
- **cella**: The inner chamber of a temple where the cult image or statue is kept.

Roman Architecture

Roman architecture began as an imitation of Classical Greek architecture but eventually evolved into a new style. Unfortunately, almost no early Republican buildings remain intact. The earliest substantial remains date to approximately 100 BCE.

Innovations such as improvements to the round arch and barrel vault , as well as the inventions of concrete and the true hemispherical dome, allowed Roman architecture to become more versatile than its Greek predecessors. While the Romans were reluctant to abandon classical motifs , they modified their temple designs by abandoning pedimental sculptures, altering the traditional Greek peripteral colonnades , and opting for central exterior stairways.

Likewise, although Roman architects did not abandon traditional column orders, they did modify them with the Tuscan, Roman Ionic, and Composite orders. This diagram shows the Greek orders on the left and their Roman modifications on the right.



Greek and Roman column orders: From top to bottom: Doric and Tuscan, Ionic and Roman Ionic (scrolls on all four corners), Corinthian and Composite.

Roman Temples

Most Roman temples derived from Etruscan prototypes. Like Etruscan temples, Roman temples are frontal with stairs that lead up to a podium, and a deep portico filled with columns. They are also usually rectilinear , and the interiors consist of at least one cella that contained a cult statue.

If multiple gods were worshiped in one temple, each god would have its own cella and cult image. For example, Capitolia—the temples dedicated to the Capitoline Triad—would always be built with three cellae, one for each god of the triad: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.



The Temple of Portunus : A typical Roman Republican temple. Rome, c. 75 BCE.

Roman temples were typically made of brick and concrete and then faced in either marble or stucco. Engaged columns (columns that protrude from walls like reliefs) adorn the exteriors of the temples. This creates an effect of columns completely surrounding a cella, an effect known as psuedoperipteral . The altar, used for sacrifices and offerings , always stood outside in front of the temple.

While most Roman temples followed this typical plan, some were dramatically different. At times, the Romans erected round temples that imitated the Greek tholos . Examples can be found in the Temple of Hercules Victor (late second century BCE), in the Forum Boarium in Rome . The temple consists a circular cella within a concentric ring of 20 Corinthian columns. Like its Etruscan predecessors, the temple rests on a tufa foundation. Its original roof and architrave are now lost.



Temple of Hercules Victor: A Roman modification of a Greek tholos. Rome, from the late second century BCE.

Concrete

The Romans perfected the recipe for concrete during the third century BCE by mixing together water, lime, and pozzolana , volcanic ash mined from the countryside surrounding Mt. Vesuvius. Concrete became the primary building material for the Romans, and it is largely the reason that they were such successful builders.

Most Roman buildings were built with concrete and brick that was then covered in façade of stucco, expensive stone, or marble. Concrete was a cheaper and lighter material than most other stones used for construction. This helped the Romans build structures that were taller, more complicated, and quicker to build than any previous ones.



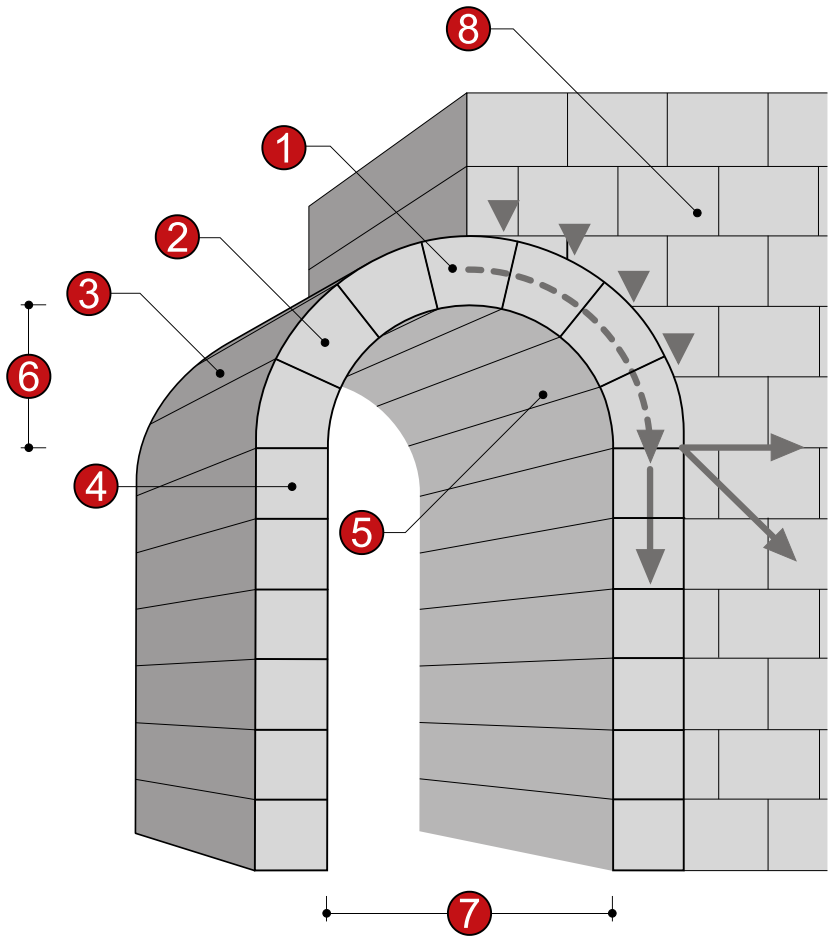
Wall of a tomb on the Via Appia, Rome: The ruins show the internal core of the building, made in Roman concrete.

Once dried, concrete was also extremely strong, yet flexible enough to remain standing during moderate seismic activity. The Romans were even able to use concrete underwater, allowing them build harbors and breakers for their ports. The ruins of a tomb on the Via Appia (the most famous thoroughfare through ancient Rome) expose the stones and aggregate that the Romans used to mix concrete.

Arches, Vaults, and Domes

The Romans effectively combined concrete and the structural shape of the arch. These two elements became the foundations for most Roman structures. Arches can bear immense weight, as they are designed to redistribute weight from the top, to its sides, and down into the ground . While the Romans did not invent the arch, they were the first culture to manipulate it and rely on its shape.

An arch is a pure compression form . It can span a large area by resolving forces into compressive stresses (pushing downward) that, in turn, eliminate tensile stresses (pushing outward). As the forces in the arch are carried to the ground, the arch will push outward at the base (called thrust). As the height of the arch decreases, the outward thrust increases. In order to maintain arch action and prevent the arch from collapsing, the thrust needs to be restrained, either with internal ties or external bracing, such as abutments (labeled 8 on the diagram below).



Schematic illustration of an arch: This diagram illustrates the structural support of an arch extended into a barrel vault. The dotted line extending downward from the keystone (1) shows the strength of the arch directing compressive stresses (represented by the downward-pointing arrows outside the arch) safely to the ground. Meanwhile, tensile stress (represented by the horizontal and diagonal-facing arrows) is contained by the surrounding wall.

The arch is a shape that can be manipulated into a variety of forms that create unique architectural spaces. Multiple arches can be used together to create a vault. The simplest type is known as a barrel vault.

Barrel vaults consist of a line of arches in a row that create the shape of a tunnel. When two barrel vaults intersect at right angles, they create a groin vault . These are easily identified by the x-shape they create in the ceiling of the vault. Furthermore, because of the direction, the thrust is concentrated along this x-shape, so only the corners of a groin vault need to be grounded. This allows an architect or engineer to manipulate the space below the groin vault in a variety of ways.

Arches and vaults can be stacked and intersected with each other in a multitude of ways. One of the most important forms that they can create is the dome. This is essentially an arch that is rotated around a single point to create a large hemispherical vault. The largest dome constructed during the Republic was on the Temple of Echo at Baiae, named for its remarkable acoustic properties.



Temple of Echo at Baiae: The dome on Temple of Echo at Baiae creates the building's remarkable acoustic properties.

Arches and concrete are found in many iconic Roman structures. The Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia (c. 120 BCE) at Palestrina, Italy is a massive temple structure built into the hillside in a series of terraces, exedras , and porticoes. Concrete was used as the primary building material and barrel vaults provide structural support, both as a terracing method for the hill and in creating interesting architectural spaces for the sanctuary.



Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia (scale model): Concrete was used as the primary building material and barrel vaults provide structural support, both as a terracing method for the hill and in creating interesting architectural spaces for the sanctuary.

Roman aqueducts are another iconic use of the arch. The arches that make up an aqueduct provided support without requiring the amount of building material necessary for arches supported by solid walls. The Aqua Marcia (144–140 BCE) was the longest of the eleven aqueducts that served the city of Rome during the Republic. It supplied water to the Viminal Hill in the north of Rome, and from there to the Caelian, Aventine, Palatine, and Capitoline Hills. Where the Aqua Marcia had contact with water, it was coated with a waterproof mortar.



Aqua Marcia: These are some ruins from the aquaduct near Tivoli, Italy, c. 144–140 BCE.

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8.3: The Early Empire

Imperial Sculpture in the Early Roman Empire

Augustan art served a vital visual means to promote the legitimacy of Augustus' power, and the techniques he employed were incorporated into the propaganda of later emperors.

Learning Objectives

Describe the elements of propaganda in Augustan art and in the art commissioned by later emperors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The intricate and deliberate iconography of Ara Pacis Augustae promotes religious piety, fertility, and the flourishing of the empire under Augustus.
- Augustus abandoned the veristic portraiture of the Roman Republic in favor of creating an image of a forever-youthful emperor. His imperial portraits often promoted his piety and military accomplishments.
- Augustus's successor, Tiberius, and the penultimate Julio-Claudian emperor Claudius, employed the attributes of eternal youthfulness and prowess in their political portraiture as a measure of political promotion.

Key Terms

- **meander**: A decorative border constructed from a continuous line, shaped into a repeated motif.
- **lictors**: The bodyguards for a magistrate in the Republican Rome and emperors during Imperial Rome. They carried fasces, a bundle of wooden rods with an axe, which symbolized the power of the magistrate or emperor.
- **cuirass**: A metal breastplate that serves as armor.
- **pomerium**: The sacred boundary around a city that marked the city's urban, legal, and religious limits. No armies were allowed within this boundary.
- **register**: A vertical level in a work that consists of several levels, especially where the levels are clearly separated by lines.

Augustus

During his reign, Augustus enacted an effective propaganda campaign to promote the legitimacy of his rule as well as to encourage moral and civic ideals among the Roman populace.

Augustan sculpture contains the rich iconography of Augustus's reign with its strong themes of legitimacy, stability, fertility, prosperity, and religious piety. The visual motifs employed within this iconography became the standards for imperial art.

Ara Pacis Augustae

The Ara Pacis Augustae, or Altar of Augustan Peace, is one of the best examples of Augustan artistic propaganda. Not only does it demonstrate a new moral code promoted by Augustus, it also established imperial iconography. It was commissioned by the Senate in 13 BCE to honor the peace and bounty established by Augustus following his return from Hispania (Spain) and Gaul; it was consecrated on January 30, 9 BCE.

The marble altar was erected just outside the boundary of the pomerium to the north of the city along the Via Flaminia on the Campus Martius. The actual u-shaped altar sits atop a podium inside a square wall that demarcates the precinct's sacred space .



Ara Pacis Augustae: The actual u-shaped altar sits atop a podium inside a square wall that demarcates the precinct's sacred space.

The north and south walls depict a procession of life-sized figures on the upper register . These figures include men, women, children, priests, lictors , and identifiable members of the political elite during the Augustan age. The elite include Augustus, his wife Livia, his son-in-law Marcus Agrippa (who died in 12 BCE), and Tiberius, Augustus's adopted son and successor who would marry the emperor's widowed daughter in 11 BCE. While the altar as a whole celebrates the Augustus as a peacemaker, this scene promotes him as a pious family man.



Ara Pacis Augustae: A detail from the processional scene on the south wall.

Imperial Portraiture

Augustus very carefully controlled his imperial portrait. Abandoning the veristic style of the Republican period, his portraits always showed him as an idealized young man. These portraits linked him to divinities and heroes, both mythical and historical.

He is often shown with an identifiable cowlick that was originally shown on the portraits of Alexander the Great . His lack of shoes signifies his supposed humbleness despite the great power he possessed. Two portraits of him, one as Pontifex Maximus and the other as Imperator , depict two different personae of the emperor.

Augustus's portrait as Pontifex Maximus shows him attired with a toga over his ever-youthful head, an attribute that serves to remind viewers of his own extreme piety to the gods.



Augustus: Portrayed as Pontifex Maximus.

The Augustus of Primaporta shows the influence of both Roman and Classical Greek works, including the Spear Bearer by Polykleitos and the Etruscan bronze Aule Metele. Assuming the role of imperator, Augustus wears military grab in a pose known as adlucotio, addressing his troops. Despite his poor health, which left him with a frail body, he appears healthy and muscular.

Cupid rides a dolphin at Augustus' feet, a symbol of his divine ancestry. Cupid is the son of Venus, as was Aeneas, the legendary ancestor of the Roman people. The Julian family traced their ancestry back to Aeneas and, therefore, consider themselves

descendants of Venus.

As Caesar's nephew and adopted son, this use of iconography allows Augustus to remind viewers of his divine lineage. In addition to adopting the body language and attire of a general, the relief on the cuirass shows one of Augustus' greatest victories—the return of the Parthian standards.

During the civil wars, a legion's standards were lost when the legion was defeated by the Parthians . In a great feat of diplomacy, and curiously not military action, Augustus was able to negotiate the return of the standards to the legion and to Rome . Additional figures on the cuirass personify Roman gods and the arrival of Augustan peace.



Augustus of Primaporta: The Augustus of Primaporta statue shows the influence of both Roman and Classical Greek works. Cupid rides a dolphin at Augustus' feet, a symbol of his divine ancestry.

The Legacy of Augustan Sculpture

Upon the death of Augustus, Tiberius (14–37 CE) assumed the title of emperor and Pontifex Maximus of Rome. Like his father-in-law, Tiberius maintained a youthful appearance in his portraiture in sculpture.

A general in his pre-imperial career, Tiberius appears in a sculpture very similar to the Augustus of Primaporta. He wears military attire and stands erect in a dynamic contrapposto pose with his arm raised. Although he wears boots, which would appear to contradict the suggestion of humbleness seen in full-length sculptures of Augustus, his plain cuirass and the absence of religious iconography suggest a competent leader who does not promote his accomplishments or divine ancestry.



Full-length sculpture of Tiberius in military garb: Tiberius' plain cuirass and the absence of religious iconography suggest a competent leader who does not promote his accomplishments or divine ancestry.

Like Augustus, who suffered from poor health, Claudius, who succeeded Caligula in 41 CE, was also infirm. In addition to health issues, Claudius lacked experience as a leader but quickly overcame this shortcoming as emperor.

During his reign, Rome annexed the province of Britannia (present-day England and Wales) and witnessed the construction of new roads and aqueducts . Despite these achievements, Claudius's opponents still saw him as vulnerable, a situation that forced him to shore up his position almost constantly, resulting in the deaths of many senators. Perhaps this need to prove his competency in his role prompted him to commission a sculpture of himself as Jupiter, a sculpture that also bears striking similarities to the Augustus of Primaporta.

He continues the standard of the eternally youthful and healthy emperor begun by Augustus. His face and body are idealized. Like his predecessor, Claudius appears barefoot in a gesture of humility balanced with a symbol of divinity, in this case, an eagle to symbolize Jupiter. He wears a laurel crown as a metaphor of victory. While the positions of his arms and hand are similar to those of Augustus, Claudius holds a bowl (an offering to signify his piety) in one hand and a scepter-like object (to signify his power) in the other.



Claudius as Jupiter: Claudius holds a bowl (an offering to signify his piety) in one hand and a scepter-like object (to signify his power) in the other.

Architecture of the Early Roman Empire

The Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties of the early Roman Empire oversaw some of the best-known building projects of the era.

Learning Objectives

Identify the prominent architectural accomplishments of the early Roman Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The first Roman emperor, Augustus, was said to have transformed Rome from a city of brick to one of marble. One of the projects of his reign was the rebuilding of the Basilica Julia, named in honor of his adopted father Julius Caesar. Elements of its design would later appear on the Colosseum.
- Nero built the Domus Aurea on appropriated land following the devastating fire in 64 CE. The palatial structure was lavishly decorated and the Octagonal Hall demonstrates the architectural innovations that are available to architects and engineers when working with concrete.
- Titus, Vespasian's eldest son, is best known for suppressing the Jewish rebellion and his conquest over Judea in 70 CE. This is celebrated in the Arch of Titus that was erected by his brother after Titus' death. Titus ruled from 79—81 CE.
- The Flavian Amphitheatre , also known as the Colosseum, was constructed under the Flavians on land in Rome owned by Nero. This shrewd political act not only returned Roman land back to the people but also provided a means of entertaining the masses of the city for centuries to come.

Key Terms

- **menorah**: A holy candelabrum with seven branches used in the Temple of Jerusalem; or a candelabrum with nine branches used in Jewish worship on Hanukkah.
- **damnatio memoriae**: A phrase from Latin meaning the condemnation of one's memory, a dishonor given by the Roman Senate to particularly hated Emperors. It attempted to erase all memory and history of the person by removing their name from all documents and destroying all their portraits.
- **spandrel**: The space (often triangular) between the outer curve of an arch (the extrados) and a straight-sided figure that bounds it, or the space between two contiguous arches and a straight feature above them.
- **grotesque**: Originating from the Italian word for cave, this is an extravagant style of ancient Roman painting found on the walls of basements in ancient ruins.
- **basilica**: A public building where courts and other official and public functions were held. Essentially, a Roman town hall.

- **apotheosis**: The fact or action of becoming or making into a god; deification.

Early Roman Empire Architecture

The early Roman Empire consisted of two dynasties : the Julio-Claudians (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero) and the Flavians (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian). Each dynasty made significant contributions to the architecture of the capital city and the Empire.

The first Roman emperor, Augustus, enacted a program of extensive building and restoration throughout the city of Rome. He famously noted that he “found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.”

This building program served the people of Rome by expanding public space , allocating places for trade and politics, and providing and improving the temples so the people could the serve the gods. As with his artistic iconography , this too became the standard that later emperors modeled their own building programs on.

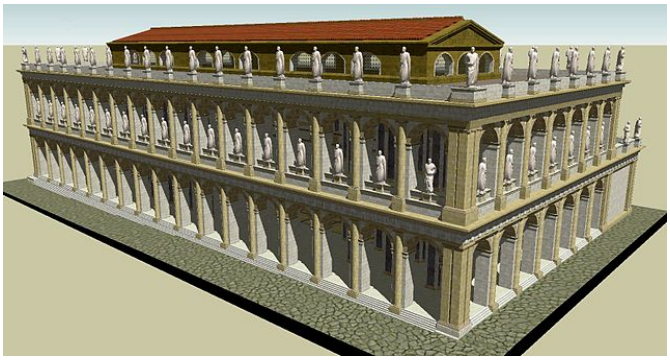
Basilica Julia

The basilica is a form of building that dates to the Roman Republic. Essentially it is the town hall in ancient Roman life, and many senators and emperors commissioned basilicas to commemorate their contributions to society.

In 46 BCE, Julius Caesar began the construction of the Basilica Julia, funded by spoils from the Gallic War, in the Roman forum . The basilica burned shortly after its completion, but Augustus oversaw its reconstruction and rededicated the building in 12 CE, naming the building after his great uncle and adoptive father.

The Basilica Julia housed the civil law courts and tabernae (shops), and provided space for government offices and banking. In the first century, it also housed the Court of the Hundred, which oversaw matters of inheritance.

It was a large and ornate structure with two levels of arcades . On both levels, an engaged column stood between each pair of arches. Tuscan columns adorned the ground level, while Roman Ionic columns adorned the second level. Full-length sculptures of men, possibly senators or other significant historical or political figures, stood under each arch on the second level and lined the roof above each engaged Ionic column. A similar pattern would appear on the Colosseum under the Flavians in the late first century CE.



Basilica Julia: This is a computer generated image of the basilica, a large and ornate structure with two levels of arcades.

The Domus Aurea

In 64 CE, a fire erupted in Rome and burned ten of the fourteen districts in the city. Nero appropriated some of the newly cleared land for his own use. This land, located on the hills east of the Forum Romanum, became home to his new palatial structure known as the Domus Aurea, or the Golden House.

Nero’s complex included a private lake, landscaped gardens and porticoes, a colossal golden statue of himself, and rooms for entertaining that were lavishly decorated with mosaics , frescoes , and gold leaf . The surviving frescoes provide excellent examples of Pompeiian fourth- style painting, a fantastical style that inspired Renaissance grotesque when portions of the palace were discovered at the end of the 1400s.

Nero’s architects and engineers, Severus and Celer, designed the Domus Aurea and demonstrated some of the unique architectural shapes made possible through concrete construction. An octagonal hall testifies to the architects’ ingenuity. The octagonal room stands between multiple rooms, possibly for dining, and is delineated by eight piers that support a domed roof with an oculus that

lit not only the hall but also the surrounding rooms. The octagonal hall emphasizes the role of concrete in shaping interior space, and the use of natural light to create drama.



Domus Aurea: The octagonal room with its surviving concrete dome and oculus.

Following Nero's forced suicide in 68 CE, Rome plunged into a year of civil war as four generals vied against each other for power and Vespasian emerged victorious. After the year of warfare, Vespasian sought to establish stability both in Rome and throughout the empire. He and the sons who succeeded him ruled Rome for twenty-seven years.

Vespasian was succeeded by his son Titus, whose reign was short. Domitian, Titus's younger brother, became the next emperor and reigned until his assassination in 96 CE. Despite being a relatively popular emperor with the people, Domitian had few friends in the Senate. His memory was condemned formally through damnatio memoriae —an edict that erased all memory and history of the person by removing their name from all documents and destroying all their portraits.

Flavian Amphitheater

Upon his succession, Vespasian began a vast building program in Rome that was continued by Titus and Domitian. It was a cunning political scheme to garner support from the people of Rome.

Vespasian transformed land from Nero's Domus Aurea into public buildings for leisure and entertainment, such as the Baths of Titus and the Flavian Amphitheatre. Nero's private lake was drained and became the foundations for the amphitheater, the first permanent amphitheater built in the city of Rome. Before this time, gladiatorial contests in the city were held in temporary wooden arenas.

The amphitheater became known as the Colosseum for its size, but in also in reference to a colossal golden statue of Nero that stood nearby. Vespasian had the colossus reworked into an image of the sun god, Sol.



Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum): The exterior of the Flavian Amphitheater or Colosseum, 70–80 CE, in Rome, Italy.

The building of the amphitheater began under Vespasian in 72 CE, and was completed under Titus in 80 CE. Titus inaugurated the amphitheater with a series of gladiatorial games and events that lasted for 100 days.

During his reign, Domitian remodeled parts of the amphitheater to enlarge the seating capacity to hold 50,000 spectators and added a hypogeum beneath the arena, for storage and to transport animals and people to the arena floor. The Colosseum was home not just to gladiatorial events—because it was built over Nero's private lake, it was flooded to stage mock naval battles.

Like all Roman amphitheaters, the Colosseum is a free-standing structure, whose shape comes from the combination of two semi-spherical theaters. The Colosseum exists in part as a result of improvements in concrete and the strength and stability of Roman engineering, especially their use of the repetitive form of the arch. The concrete structure is faced in travertine and marble.

The exterior of the Colosseum is divided into four bands that represent four interior arcades. The arcades are carefully designed to allow tens of thousands of spectators to enter and exit within minutes. Attached to the uppermost band are over two hundred corbels which supported the velarium —a retractable awning to protect spectators from sun and rain. The top band is also pierced by a number of small windows, between which are engaged composite pilasters .

The three bands below are notable for the series of arches that visually break up the massive façade. The arches on the ground level served as numbered entrances, while those of the two middle levels framed statues of gods, goddesses, and mythical and historical heroes. Columns in each of the three Greek orders stand between the arches. The Doric order is located on the ground level, Ionic on the second level, and Corinthian on the third. The order follows a standard sequence where the sturdiest and strongest order is shown on bottom level, since it appears to support the weight of the structure, and the lightest order at the top. However, despite this illusion the engaged columns and pilasters were merely decorative.

Arch of Titus

Following his brother's death, Domitian erected a triumphal arch over the Via Sacra, on a rise as the road enters the Republican Forum. The Arch of Titus honors the deified Titus and celebrates his victory over Judea in 70 CE. The arch follows the standard forms for a triumphal arch, with an honorific inscription in the attic, winged Victories in the spandrels , engaged columns, and more sculpture which is now lost.

Inside the archway at the center of the ceiling is a relief panel of the apotheosis of Titus. Two remarkable relief panels decorate the interior sides of the archway and commemorate Titus's victory in Judea.



Arch of Titus: Via Sacra, Rome. 81-82 CE.

The southern panel inside the arch depicts the sacking of Jerusalem. The scene shows Roman soldiers carrying the menorah (the sacred candelabrum) and other spoils from the Temple of Jerusalem.

The opposite northern panel depicts Titus's triumphal procession in Rome, awarded in 71 CE. In this panel, Titus rides through Rome on a chariot pulled by four horses. Behind him a winged Victory figure crowns Titus with a laurel wreath. He is accompanied by personifications of Honor and Valor.

This is one of the first examples in Roman art of humans and divinities mingling together in one scene; indeed, Titus was deified upon his death. These panels were originally painted and decorated with metal attachments and gilding. The panels are depicted in high relief and show a change in technical style from the lower relief seen on the Ara Pacis Augustae.



Triumph of Titus: This relief from the Arch of Titus that shows the triumphal procession for Titus upon his victory over Judea.



Sacking of Jerusalem.: This is a relief from the Arch of Titus.

Painting in the Early Roman Empire

Roman frescoes were the primary method of interior decoration and their development is generally categorized into four different styles.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast the Pompeian First, Second, Third, and Fourth Styles of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The development of fresco -painting styles is a visual example of the changing tastes from the third century BCE through the first century CE. The change in styles reflects the changes that occurred in Roman society.
- Pompeiian First Style, which originated from the Greeks, is also known as masonry style. It mimics marble and colored stone to create the illusion of an expensive veneer. It was popular from 200 to 80 BCE.
- Pompeiian Second Style is known for its dissolution of the wall into an architectural vista that makes logical sense. This style was typically used from 80 to 20 BCE. Examples of this style adorn the walls of the Villa of Livia and the Villa of the Mysteries.
- Pompeiian Third Style is a whimsical style full of fanciful architecture and Egyptian motifs that focuses more on creating an ornate rather than realistic space . It also includes painted scenes floating on a monochromatic backdrop. This style became popular in 20 BCE until about 60 CE. Examples of this style can be found at the Villa of Agrippa Postumus.
- Pompeiian Fourth Style is a less ornamented but more complex reaction to Third Style. It borrows elements from the three preceding styles, including faux masonry, architectural vistas, ornamental decorations, and panels of painted scenes. Fourth-Style painting was popular during the first century CE. Examples of this style are found at the House of the Vettii and the House of the Tragic Poet, as well as in a contemporary scene of a riot at a local amphitheater.

Key Terms

- **triclinium**: Formal dining room.
- **buon fresco**: A painting that involves applying wet paint to wet lime plaster. As both components dry, a chemical reaction causes them to fuse together, literally making the painting part of the wall.
- **encaustic**: A wax-based paint that is fixed in place by heating; a painting produced using this paint.
- **fresco**: In painting, the technique of applying water-based pigment to lime mortar or plaster.
- **Egyptomania**: Roman fascination with all things related to Egypt following the death of Cleopatra in 31 BCE and the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE.
- **trompe l'oeil**: A genre of still-life painting that exploits human vision to create the illusion that the subject of the painting is real.

Roman Painting

Roman painters often painted frescoes, specifically buon fresco , a technique that involved painting pigment on wet plaster. When the painting dried, the image became an integral part of the wall. Fresco painting was the primary method of decorating an interior space. However, few examples survive, and the majority of them are from the remains of Roman houses and villas around Mt. Vesuvius.

Other examples of frescoes come from locations that were buried (burial protected and preserved the frescoes), such as parts of Nero's Domus Aurea and at the Villa of Livia. These frescoes demonstrate a wide variety of styles. Popular subjects include mythology, portraiture, still-life painting, and historical accounts.

The surviving Roman paintings reveal a high degree of sophistication. They employ visual techniques that include atmospheric and near one-point linear perspective to properly convey the idea of space. Furthermore, portraiture and still-life images demonstrate artistic talent when conveying real-life objects and likenesses. The attention to detail seen in still-life paintings include minute shadows and an attention to light to properly depict the material of the object, whether it be glass, food, ceramics , or animals.

Roman portraiture further exhibits the talent of Roman painters and often shows careful study on the artist's part in the techniques used to portray individual faces and people. Some of the most interesting portraits come from Egypt, from late first century BCE to early third century CE, when Egypt was a province of Rome .



Fayum mummy portrait: A mummy portrait of a young women found in the Fayum Necropolis, Egypt, from the second century CE.

These encaustic on wood panel images from the Fayum necropolis were laid over the mummified body. They show remarkable realism , while conveying the ideals and changing fashions of the Egypto-Roman people.

Classification

At the end of the nineteenth century, August Mau, a German art historian, studied and classified the Roman styles of painting at Pompeii. These styles, known simply as Pompeian First, Second, Third, and Fourth Style, demonstrate the period fashions of interior decoration preferences and changes in taste and style from the Republic through the early Empire.

First Style

Also known as masonry style, Pompeian First Style painting was most commonly used from 200 to 80 BCE. The style is known for its deceptive painting of a faux surface; the painters often tried to mimic the richly veneered surfaces of marble, alabaster , and other expensive types of stone veneer.

This is a Hellenistic (Greek) style adopted by the Romans. While creating an illusion of expensive decor, First-Style painting reinforces the idea of a wall. The style is often found in the fauces (entrance hall) and atrium (large open-air room) of a Roman domus (house). A vivid example is preserved in the fauces of the Samnite House at Herculaneum.



Pompeian First Style: A Pompeiian first-style wall painting from the Samnite House. Fresco. Second century BCE. Herculaneum, Italy.

Second Style

Pompeiian Second Style was first used around 80 BCE and was especially fashionable from 40 BCE onward, until its popularity waned in the final decades of the first century BCE. The style is noted for its visual illusions. These trompe l'oeil images are intended to trick the eye into believing that the walls of a building have dissolved into the depicted three-dimensional space.

Wall frescoes were usually divided into three registers , with the bottom register depicting false masonry painted in the manner of the First Style, while a simple border was painted in the uppermost register. The central register, where the main scene unfolds, is the largest and the focal point of the painting. This space was an architectural zone that became the main component of Second-Style painting.

Typically, paintings that relied on near-perfect linear perspective to depict architectural expanses and landscapes that were painted on a human scale. The desired effect was to make the viewer feel as if, while in the room, he or she was physically transported to these spaces.

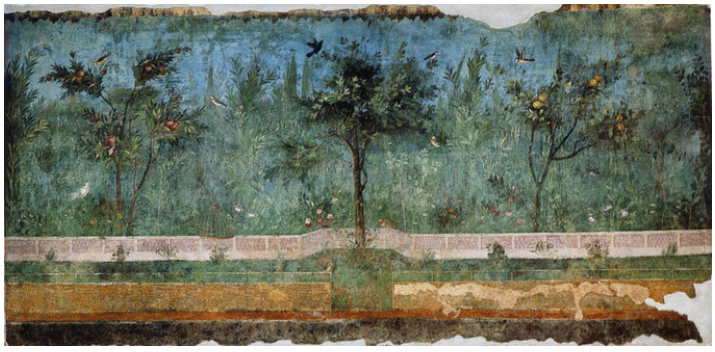


Detail from the villa of P. Fannius Synistor: An architectural vista from a second-style wall painting in Boscoreale, Italy. c. 50–40 BCE.

Villa of Livia

As the style evolved, the top and bottom registers became less important. Architectural scenes grew to incorporate the entire room, such as at the Villa of the Mysteries and the Villa of Livia.

In the case of the Villa of Livia, architectural vistas are replaced with a natural landscape that completely surrounds the room. The painting mimics the natural landscape outside the villa, depicting identifiable trees, flowers, and birds. Light filters naturally through the trees, which appear to bend in a slight breeze. Naturalistic elements like this, along with the flight of the birds and other details, help transport the occupant in the room into an outdoor setting.



Villa of Livia: A Second-Style garden vista from the Villa of Livia, in Primaporta, Italy, from the late first century BCE.

Villa of the Mysteries

At the Villa of the Mysteries, just outside of Pompeii, there is a fantastic scene filled with life-size figures that depicts a ritual element from a Dionysian mystery cult. In this Second-Style example, architectural elements play a small role in creating the illusion of ritual space. The people and activity in the scene are the main focus .

The architecture present is mainly piers or wall panels that divide the main scene into separate segments. The figures appear life-size, which brings them into the space of the room.



Villa of the Mysteries: One wall on the ritual scene depicted at the Villa of Mysteries, in Pompeii, Italy, c. 60–50 BCE.

The scene wraps around the room, depicting what may be a rite of marriage. A woman is seen preparing her hair. She is surrounded by other women and cherubs while a figure, identified as Dionysus , waits. The ritual may reenact the marriage between Dionysus and Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos.

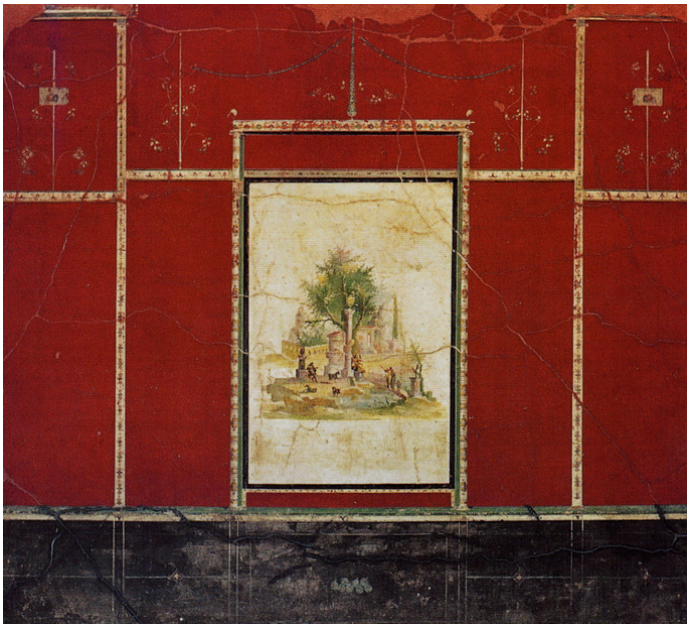
All the figures, except for Dionysus and one small boy, are female. The figures also appear to interact with one other from across the room. On the two walls in one corner, a woman reacts in terror to Dionysus and the mask over his head. On the opposite corner, a cherub appears to be whipping a woman on the adjoining wall. While the cult aspects of the ritual are unknown, the fresco demonstrates the ingenuity and inventiveness of Roman painters.

Third Style

Third-Style Pompeiian painting developed during the last decades of the first century BCE. It was popular from 20 BCE until the middle of the first century CE. During this period, wall painting began to develop a more fantastical personality.

Instead of attempting to dissolve the wall, the Third Style acknowledges the wall through flat, monochromatic expanses painted with small central motifs that look like a hung painting. The architecture painted in Third-Style scenes is often logically impossible. The wall is frequently divided into three to five vertical zones by narrow, spindly columns and decorated with painted foliage, candelabra, birds, animals, and figurines .

Often these creatures and people were derived from Egyptian motifs, resulting from a contemporary Roman fascination with Egypt known as Egyptomania , following the defeat of Cleopatra at Actium and the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE.



Third-Style wall painting: Detail of a Third-Style wall painting from the Villa of Agrippa Postumus in Boscotrecase, Italy, c. 10 BCE.

Fourth Style

The Pompeian Fourth Style became popular around the middle of the first century CE. While considered less ornate than the Third Style, the Fourth Style is more complex and draws on elements from each of the three previous styles.

In this style, masonry details of the First Style reappear on the bottom registers, and the architectural vistas of the Second Style are once more fashionable, although infinitely more complex than their Second-Style predecessors. Fantastical details, Egyptian motifs, and ornamental garlands from the Third Style continued into the Fourth Style. Large pictures, connected to each other by a program or theme, dominated each wall, such as those in the House of the Vettii.

House of the Vettii

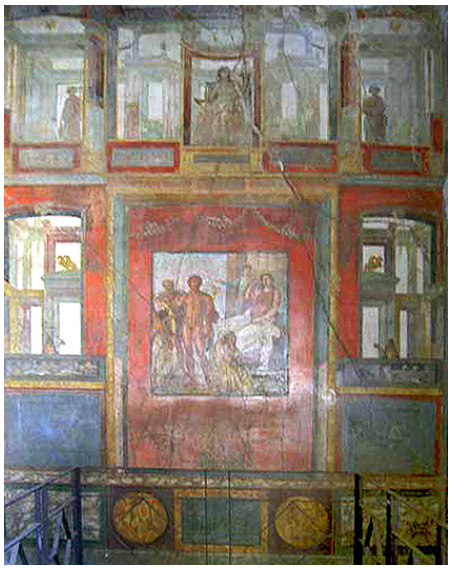
Many rooms in the House of the Vettii are lavishly painted. Each triclinium is themed and painted in the Fourth Style. Each panel in the room follows the room's theme, providing visual entertainment and a narrative during dining.

The Ixion Room, for instance, is a model of Fourth-Style wall painting. Within each red panel is a scene that depicts myths where the main character commits a major slight. One panel is dedicated to Ixion, who refused to pay a dowry and murdered his father-in-law. He also lusted after Zeus's wife, betraying the relationship between guest and host.

Another panel depicts Daedalus presenting a wooden cow to Pasiphaë, the wife of King Minos, so she could relieve her lust for a white bull. From this union, Pasiphaë birthed the Minotaur , a half-man, half-bull monster. Another Fourth-Style triclinium depicts scenes from the lives of Hercules and Theseus.



Daedelaus and Pasiphaë: Daedalus presents Pasiphaë with a wooden heifer.



Fourth Style: A Fourth- Style wall fresco in the Ixion Room of the House of the Vettii.

House of the Tragic Poet

The atrium of the House of the Tragic Poet includes a series of paintings that depict scenes from the Trojan War. The panels on the walls depict scenes that appear to be interrelated. As in the panels that decorate the House of the Vettii, the subject matter in the paintings in the House of the Tragic Poet are interrelated based on a common theme. Scholars believe these themes were carefully crafted not only to relate stories, but also to depict the virtues of the house's owner.

Two panels on the south wall relate the beginnings of the Trojan War. One panel is of Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida. Another, badly damaged, appears to be a scene of the Judgment of Paris. These panels relate the beginnings of the Trojan War while portraying womanly ideals.

Two pairs of scenes, set across from each other, depict different, interrelated themes. The abduction of women is one theme visible in one image of Helen with Paris leaving for Troy. Another image portrays the abduction of Amphitrite by Poseidon. In both cases, a man abducts a woman.

The other two scenes deal with the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon, which begins the story of the Illiad. Of these two scenes, one depicts Achilles with Agamemnon, while the other depicts Achilles returning Briseis, his lover and captive, to his commander, Agamemnon.

A final image, found in the peristyle , depicts the Sacrifice of Iphigenia. All of these paintings are related to one another through themes such as marriage, womanly virtue, and the Trojan War.

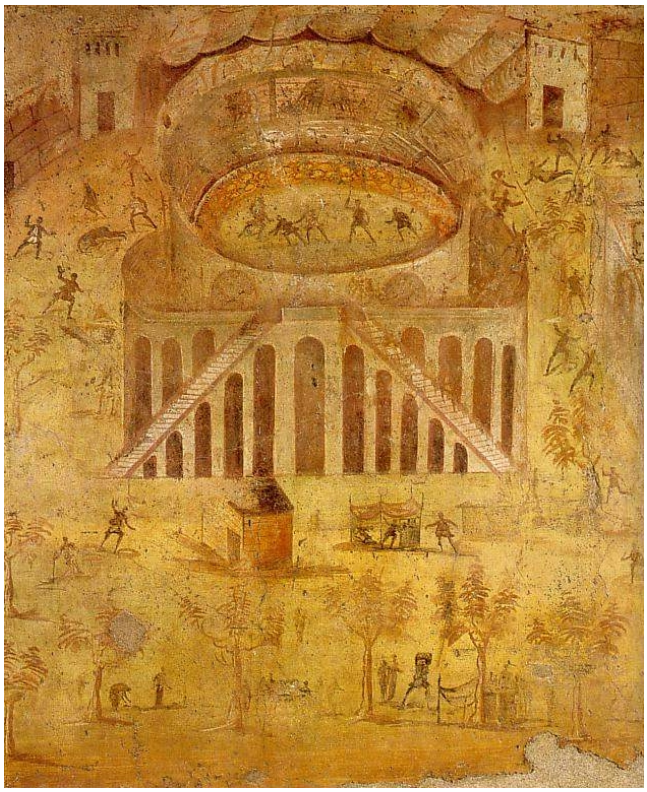


The Sacrifice of Iphigenia: A panel in the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii, Italy, c. 60–65 CE.

Riot at the Amphitheatre

While the above examples of Fourth-Style painting depict scenes from mythology, at least one contemporary scene is represented in a surviving fresco. In 59 CE, a riot broke out between the citizens of Pompeii and the citizens of nearby Nuceria during a gladiatorial event. The brawl in the amphitheater resulted in serious injuries between both parties and the banning of all gladiatorial events for ten years.

A fresco from Pompeii that depicts the event has also survived. The fresco depicts the Pompeiian amphitheater, with its distinctive exterior staircase, as well as an awning, the velarium . It also depicts the riot occurring both inside the arena and on the grounds surrounding the amphitheater.



Depiction of a riot at the amphitheatre at Pompeii: In 59 CE, a riot broke out between the citizens of Pompeii and the citizens of nearby Nuceria during a gladiatorial event. The brawl in the amphitheater resulted in serious injuries between both parties and the banning of all gladiatorial events for ten years.

Architecture at Pompeii

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE preserved many structures in the city of Pompeii, allowing scholars a rare glimpse into Roman life.

Learning Objectives

Describe the physical layout of the domus, or house, and describe the significances of the Amphitheater of Pompeii, the Temple of Isis, and the Suburban Baths

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The main public part of the domus included the fauces, an entryway, the atrium , and the tablinum, a space for conducting business. The main private portions included the peristyle and garden and the triclinium or dining room. All components contained intricate decoration. Additional parts included a cubiculum, a kitchen, and open spaces known as alae.
- Pompeiian houses deviated greatly from the standard model created by historians. Examples demonstrate how the standard elements could be rearranged to fit almost any footprint and the wealth of the patron .
- The Amphitheater of Pompeii was the first stone amphitheater in the Roman world and the largest before the construction of the Colosseum. Its design foresees the construction of the Colosseum one century later, while simultaneously looking back to Greek theaters for its seating.
- The Temple of Isis exhibits elements of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian architecture. Its presence in a Roman city demonstrates religious tolerance and a willingness to incorporate foreign deities into the Roman pantheon .
- The Suburban Baths, while containing the standard tepidarium and caldarium of all Roman bath houses, has a single dressing room that archaeologists believe was used by both men and women.

Key Terms

- **atrium**: A square hall lit by daylight from above, into which rooms open at one or more levels.

- **peristyle**: A colonnade that surrounds a courtyard, temple, etc.
- **patrician**: Originally, a member of any of the families constituting the populus Romanus, or body of Roman citizens, before the development of the plebeian order; later, one who, by right of birth or by special privilege conferred, belonged to the senior class of Romans, who, with certain property, had by right a seat in the Roman Senate.

Mount Vesuvius and the Preservation of Pompeiian Architecture

During the Roman Republic and into the early Empire, the area today known as the Bay of Naples was developed as a resort-type area for elite Romans to escape the pressure and politics of Rome . The region was dominated by Mt. Vesuvius, which famously erupted in August 79 CE, burying and preserving the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, along with the region's villas and farms.

When Vesuvius erupted on August 25, a cloud of ash spewed south, burying the cities of Pompeii, Nuceria, and Stabiae. While not everyone left prior to the eruption, archaeological evidence shows that people did leave the city. Some houses give the impression of having been packed up and in some cases furniture and objects were excavated jumbled together. Other objects of value appear to have been buried or hidden. There is evidence of people returning after the eruption to dig through the remains—either recovering lost goods or looting for valuables.



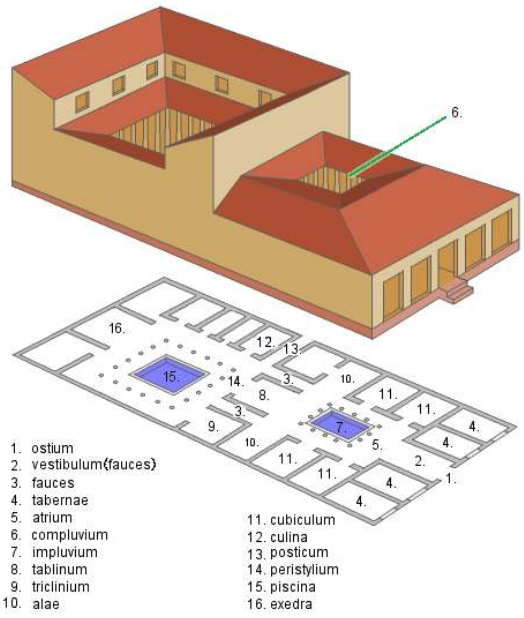
The eruption of Mount Vesuvius: The black and gray areas show the direction in which the wind blew the ash and pyroclastic clouds.

In Pompeii, an ash flow suffocated the remaining population and allowed all organic matter to decompose. However, where bodies and other organic objects (from bodies to wooden architectural frames) once lay or stood, empty cavities within the ash remained and preserved their outer forms .

A pyroclastic flow of superheated gas and rock went west to the coast and the city of Herculaneum. Unlike the ash blanket of Pompeii, the pyroclastic flow in Herculaneum petrified organic material, ensuring the preservation of human remains and wood, including the preservation of wooden screens, beds, and shelving. Many of the frescoes , mosaics , and other non-organic materials in both the ash and pyroclastic flows were preserved until their excavation in the modern period.

The Roman Domus

The Roman domus, or house, played two important roles in Roman society: as a home and as a place of business for patricians and wealthy Romans. To facilitate this dual functionality, the domus had a distinct set of rooms that could be used as either public or private spaces. While no modern domus adheres to the standard model of a domus, many Roman houses, both small and large, have nearly all of these different rooms.



Roman Domus: A standard plan of a Roman domus.

The design of the domus reflects the Roman patronage where a client is protected by a wealthy patron, and in return supports the actions and estate of the patron. Many of a patron's clients would be freedmen or other plebeians and lesser patricians.

The domus is often set back from the main street, and tabernae (shops) line the streets on either side of the house's main entrance. Clients entered the house through the fauces (Latin for jaw), which was a narrow entryway into an atrium.

The atrium was the most important part of the house since it was the spot where clients and guests were greeted. It often included an impluvium, or basin that collected rain water. The roof did not cover the impluvium. The open space above the basin was called the compluvium.

The atrium was often richly decorated with thematic frescos and images of the patron's ancestors. Cubicula , or rooms, lined the atrium, and at the far end was the tablinum. The tablinum functioned as the office of the patron and was where he met with his clients during the morning ritual of salutatio. The tablinum often provided a glimpse into the private sphere of the house, which was set behind the office.

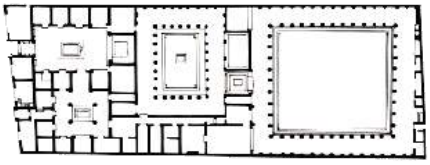
Typically, the front half of the house served as public space, while the back of the domus was reserved for the more private functions of the family. In the back of the house, beyond the tablinum, would be one or more triclinium (plural: triclinia), or dining rooms. The dining rooms were lavishly decorated and typically furnished with dining couches and a low table.

A peristyle—a colonnaded courtyard—was usually the main feature of the back of the house. It could contain gardens and even a pool and provided light as well as shade and breeze for hot summer days. Other features of the domus, include alae (open rooms) with an unknown function, kitchens (culina), and additional rooms for work, sleeping, and servants.

Domus at Pompeii

Each domus throughout Pompeii represents the various ways the standard components of a domus were used to create unique floor plans that showcase the status and wealth of the owner.

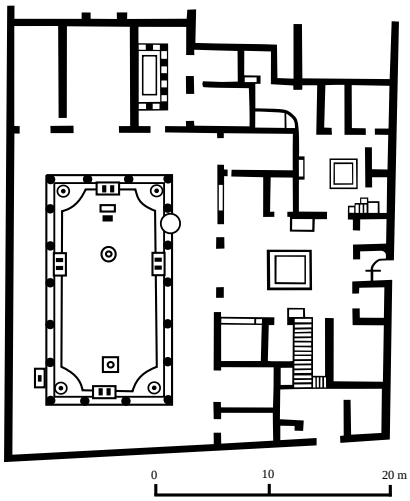
The large complex of the House of the Faun encompasses an entire city block. This domus has two atria, each with its own fauces, although with two peristyles of different sizes. In essence, the House of the Faun was a private villa despite its urban setting.



House of the Faun: Ground plan of the House of the Faun in Pompeii, Italy.

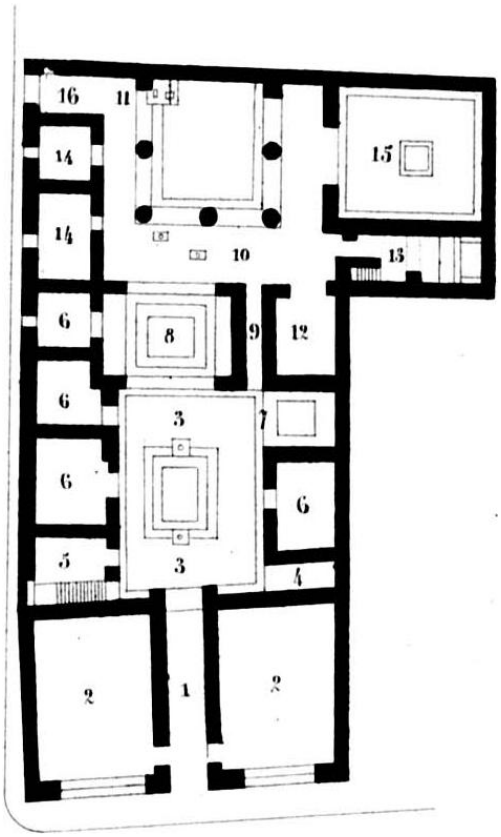
Two houses, the House of the Vettii and the House of the Tragic Poet—both previously discussed for their wall paintings—are simpler constructions than the House of the Faun, but both house plans still readily depict the wealth of the household.

Visitors entering the House of the Vettii were greeted by a frescoed image of Priapus, an image that portrayed the wealth and luck of the two bachelors who lived inside. The main attributes of their house were the atrium and the large garden peristyle, surrounded by decorated triclinium and a garden complete with fountains, statues, and flowers. While this house had fewer public-private access restrictions than the standard domus, it did include the main attributes of a traditional Roman house.



House of the Vettii: Ground plan of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, Italy.

The House of the Tragic Poet was small but maintained the public-private access characteristic of the traditional domus. The fauces was especially noted for its mosaic image of a dog, complete with the warning “Cave canem,” or, roughly, “Beware of dog.” The fauces led the guest into the atrium and the tablinum, which divided the public front of the house from the private back of the house, where a small peristyle and a frescoed triclinium were located.



House of the Tragic Poet: Ground plan of the House of the Tragic Poet.

Public Architecture

The ash cloud that blanketed Pompeii in 79 CE preserved public buildings, as well as domi. Among the best preserved are the amphitheater, the Temple of Isis, and the Suburban Baths.

Amphitheater of Pompeii

The Amphitheater of Pompeii is the oldest surviving Roman amphitheater. Built around 70 BCE, the current amphitheater is the earliest Roman amphitheater known to have been built of stone. Previous amphitheaters were constructed of wood.

The design is seen by some modern crowd control specialists as near optimal. Similar to the Colosseum, but constructed over a century later, its arcaded exterior appears to have been conducive to efficient evacuation. Its washroom, located in the neighboring wrestling school, has also been cited as an inspiration for better bathroom design in modern stadiums.



Amphitheater of Pompeii: Built c. 70 BCE.

Derived from the Greek words amphi (on both sides) and theatron (a place for viewing), an amphitheater combines two theaters into a circular or ovoid form. The interior of the amphitheater at Pompeii resembles two Greek theaters, with its tiered seating overlooking a central staging area. Still structurally and acoustically sound, the amphitheater was the site of notable rock concerts in 1971 and 2016.



Amphitheatre of Pompeii: The interior, with its tiered seating, shows the influence of Greek designs.

Temple of Isis

Roman culture was accommodating of most of the religious beliefs of its conquered peoples, and often built temples and sanctuaries to non-Roman deities and incorporated them into their own pantheon. One such example is the Temple of Isis, dedicated to the Egyptian mother goddess.

The principal devotees of this temple are assumed to be women, freedmen, and slaves. Initiates of the Isis mystery cult worshiped a compassionate goddess who promised eventual salvation and a perpetual relationship throughout life and after death.

The temple's design combines Roman, Greek, and Egyptian architectural elements. It is surrounded by brick columns faced with plaster in a stylized reed motif often found on Egyptian columns. Their general shape recalls both the Doric and Tuscan orders.

Like typical Roman temples, the portico and cella rest on a raised platform connected to the ground by a central stairway. The columns on the portico appear to have been Tuscan. To either side of the cella is an arched niche flanked by either Corinthian or Composite pillasters.



Temple of Isis: The temple's design combines Roman, Greek, and Egyptian architectural elements.

Suburban Baths

The Suburban Baths (c. late first century BCE), built against the city walls, served as a public bath house for the residents of Pompeii. The entrance to the Baths is through a long corridor that leads into the dressing room.

Excavation of the Baths revealed only one set of dressing rooms and has led archaeologists to believe that both men and women shared this facility. The dressing room then led to the tepidarium (lukewarm room), followed by the caldarium (hot room), both of which were standard in public baths throughout the empire.



Suburban Baths: Built against the city walls, this structure served as a public bath house for the residents of Pompeii.

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8.4: The Nervan-Antonines

Architecture under the Nervan-Antonines

The emperors Trajan and Hadrian were the two most prolific emperors who constructed buildings during the Nervan-Antonine dynasty.

Learning Objectives

Discuss Trajan's Forum, Trajan's Markets, Hadrian's Pantheon, and Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Trajan's Forum was built from 106 to 113 CE from the spoils of the conquest of Dacia , and it celebrates Trajan's military power. The forum provided much-needed public space for law courts and other political and administrative meetings.
- The Markets of Trajan were built into the Quirinal Hill. The vaulted halls provided rooms for administrative offices, shops, and perhaps even apartments.
- Apollodorus of Damascus was Trajan's court architect who designed and built many of Trajan's architectural projects. He was dismissed by Hadrian, because he did not appreciate Hadrian's architectural inspirations.
- Hadrian rebuilt the Pantheon of Agrippa in 118–125 CE. The Pantheon is an architectural innovation with a magnificent unreinforced concrete dome .
- Hadrian's villa at Tivoli demonstrates his interest in the eclectic cultural styles he saw during his travels around the empire, as well as his own innovative spirit toward architecture.

Key Terms

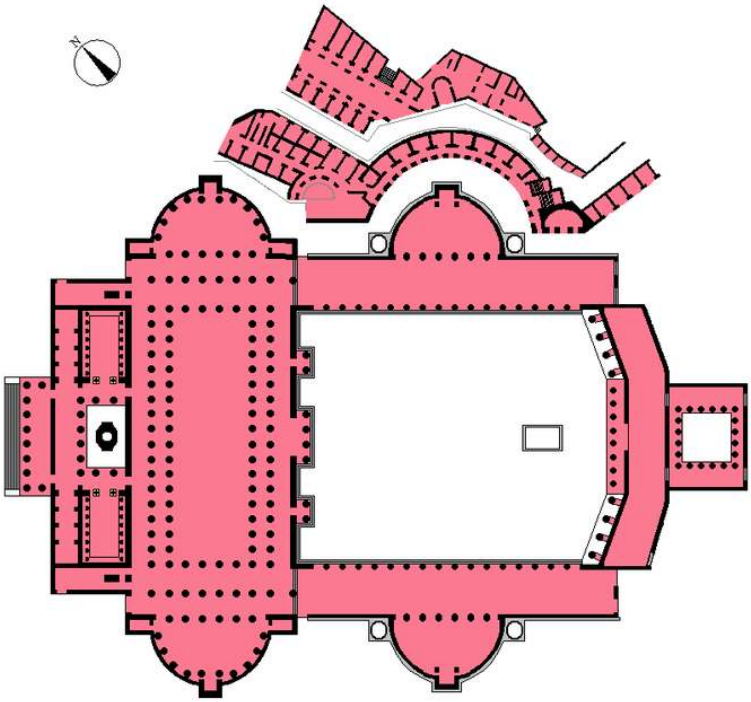
- **coffered**: Having an ornamental sunken panel in a ceiling or dome.
- **quadriga**: A Roman chariot drawn by four horses abreast.
- **exedra**: A semicircular recess, with stone benches, used as a place for discussion.
- **forum**: A public square in an ancient Roman city.
- **oculus**: A window or other opening that has an oval or circular shape (as of an eye).

Public Building Programs

Public building programs were prevalent under the emperors of the Nervan-Antonine dynasty . During this period of peace, stability, and an expansion of the empire's borders, many of the emperors sought to cast themselves in the image of the first imperial builder, Augustus. The projects these emperors conducted around the empire included the building and restoration of roads, bridges, and aqueducts . In Rome , these imperial building projects strengthened the image of the emperor and directly addressed the needs of the citizens of the city.

Trajan's Forum

Trajan's Forum was the last of the imperial fora to be built in the city. The forum's main entrance was accessed from the south, near to the Forum of Augustus as well as the Forum of Caesar (which Trajan also renovated). The Forum of Augustus might have been the model for the Forum of Trajan, even though the latter was much larger. Both fora were rectangular in shape with a temple at one end. Both appear to have a set of exedra on either side.



Plan of the Forum of Trajan and Trajan's Markets: Trajan built the forum and markets around the same time from 106 to 113 CE.

Trajan built his forum with the spoils from his conquest of Dacia. The visual elements within the forum speak of his military prowess and Rome's victory. A triumphal arch mounted with an image of the emperor in a six-horse chariot greeted patrons at the southern entrance.

In the center of the large courtyard stood an equestrian statue of Trajan, and additional bronze statues of him in a quadriga lined the roof of the Basilica Ulpia, which transected the forum in the northern end. This large civic building served as a meeting place for the commerce and law courts. It was lavishly furnished with marble floors, facades , and the hall was filled with tall marble columns .

The Basilica Ulpia also separated the arcaded courtyard from two libraries (one for Greek texts, the other for Latin), the Column of Trajan, and a temple dedicated to the Divine Trajan.

Trajan's Markets

Trajan's markets were an additional public building that the emperor built at the same time as his forum. The markets were built on top of and into the Quirinal Hill. They consisted of a series of multi-leveled halls lined with rooms for either shops, administrative offices, or apartments. The markets follow the shape of the Trajan's forum.

A portion of them are shaped into a large exedra, framing one of the exedra of the forum. Like Trajan's forum, the markets were elaborately decorated with marble floors and revetment, as well as decorative columns to frame the doorways.



Trajan's Markets: Trajan's Markets as they stand today.

Apollodorus of Damascus

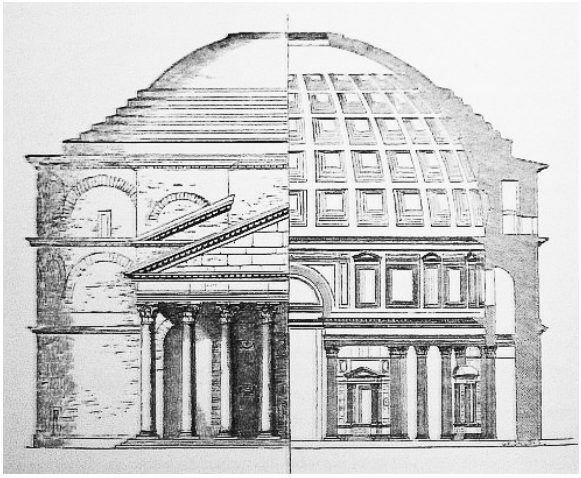
Many of Trajan's architectural achievements were designed by his architect, Apollodorus of Damascus. Apollodorus was a Greek engineer from Damascus, Syria. He designed Trajan's forums and markets, the Arch of Trajan at Benevento, and an important bridge across the Danube during the campaigns against the Dacians.

Unfortunately for Apollodorus, Trajan's heir Hadrian also took an interest in architecture. According to Roman biographers, Apollodorus did not appreciate Hadrian's interests or architectural drawings and often discredited them. Upon the succession of the new emperor, Apollodorus was dismissed from court.

Hadrian's Pantheon

Hadrian's most famous contribution to the city of Rome was his rebuilding of the Pantheon, a temple to all the gods, that was first built by Agrippa during the reign of Augustus. Agrippa's Pantheon burned down in the 80s CE, was rebuilt by Domitian, and burned down again in 110 CE.

Hadrian's Pantheon still remains standing today, a great testament of Roman engineering and ingenuity. The Pantheon was consecrated as a church during the medieval period and was later used a burial site.



Elevation drawing of the Pantheon: The Pantheon is an architectural innovation with a magnificent concrete, unreinforced dome.



Pantheon: Hadrian rebuilt the Pantheon of Agrippa in 118–125 CE.

The most unusual aspect of the Pantheon is its magnificent coffered dome, which was originally gilded in bronze. The concrete dome, which provided inspiration to numerous Renaissance and Neoclassical architects, spans over 142 feet and remains the largest unreinforced dome today. It stands due to a series of relieving arches and because the supportive base of the building is nearly twenty feet thick.

The cylindrical drum on which the dome rests consists of hollowed-out brick filled with concrete for extra reinforcement. At the center of the dome is a large oculus that lets in light, fresh air, and even rain. Both the oculus and the coffered ceiling lighten the weight of the dome, allowing it to stand without additional supports.

The Pantheon takes its shape from Greek circular temples, however it is faced by a Roman rectangular portico and a triangular pediment supported by monolithic granite columns imported from Egypt. The portico, which originally included a flight of stairs to

a podium, acts as a visual trick, preparing viewers to enter a typical rectangular temple when they would instead be walking into a circular one.

A dedicatory inscription is carved in the entablature under the pediment. The inscription reads as the original inscription would have read when the Pantheon was first built by Agrippa. Hadrian's decision to use the original inscription links him to the original imperial builders of Rome.

Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

Hadrian traveled extensively during his reign and was frequently exposed to a variety of local architectural styles. His villa at Tivoli (built during the second and third decades of the second century CE) reflects the influence of styles found in locations such as Greece and Egypt.

Among the designs he borrowed are caryatids and statues beside them that depict the Egyptian dwarf and fertility god Bes. A Greek Maritime Theater exhibits classical Ionic style, whereas the domes of the main buildings, as well as the Corinthian arches of the Canopus (a pool) and Serapeum (an artificial grotto), clearly show the influence of Roman architecture.

One structure in the villa is the so-called Maritime Theater. It consists of a round portico with a barrel vault supported by pillars . Inside the portico was a ring-shaped pool with a central island. Inside the outer wall and surrounding the moat are a ring of unfluted Ionic columns.

The Maritime Theater includes a lounge, a library, heated baths, three suites with heated floors, washbasin, an art gallery, and a large fountain. During the ancient times, the island was connected to the portico by two wooden drawbridges. On the island sits a small Roman house complete with an atrium , a library, a triclinium , and small baths. The area was probably used by the emperor as a retreat from the busy life at the court.



Maritime Theater at Hadrian's villa: The theater includes a lounge, a library, heated baths, three suites with heated floors, washbasin, an art gallery, and a large fountain.

The villa utilizes numerous architectural styles and innovations. The domes of the steam baths have circular holes on the apex to allow steam to escape. This is reminiscent of the Pantheon.

The area has a network of underground tunnels. The tunnels were mostly used to transport servants and goods from one area to another. In total, the villa's structures demonstrate the emperor's innovative spirit in the field of architecture.



Great Baths at Hadrian's villa.: The domes of the steam baths have circular holes on the apex to allow steam to escape.

Imperial Sculpture under the Nervan-Antonines

The imperial portraiture of men and women in the early- to mid-second century reflects an increasing austerity and interest in the Greeks.

Learning Objectives

Contrast male and female imperial portraiture during this time period from that of the Flavian dynasty

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The portraiture of Nerva and Trajan display a militaristic look.
- Hadrian changed the Roman portrait style to reflect the Greek style and he mimicked the hair and beard style of ancient Greek politicians. Antoninus Pius continued this style, while Marcus Aurelius modeled his appearance after Greek philosophers.
- Commodus believed himself to be the reincarnation of Hercules and commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules, complete with attributes associated with the hero and his deeds.
- Imperial women set the style and fashion for elite hair styles. The styles of Trajan's wife Pompeia Plotina and his niece Matidia demonstrate a simplified abstract vertical form based on the earlier curly, extravagant Flavian style.
- Both Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius's wives chose to follow their respective husband's choice of style, and are depicted with hairstyles that derive from Greece, though they are notably more subdued than the styles of their predecessors.

Key Terms

- **Hercules**: The son of Jupiter and Alcmene, he is a celebrated hero who possessed exceptional strength. Most famous for his 12 labors performed to redeem himself after killing his family.
- **Pericles**: A prominent and influential Greek statesman, orator, and a general of Athens during the city's Golden Age—specifically, the time between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars.

Imperial Portraiture

Imperial portraiture under the Flavians first depicted the emperors as mature, older men. Nerva, who only reigned for two years before his natural death in 98 CE, was declared emperor by the Senate following Domitian's assassination. Since he had no natural sons of his own, Nerva adopted a young and popular general, Trajan, to be his successor.

Nerva's portraiture followed the style of imperial portraiture during the Flavian era. The few portraits that remain from the two years of his rule depict a man with a receding hairline and small mouth. The portraiture of Nerva and later of Trajan display an increasing militaristic look.



Nerva: The portraiture of Nerva and later of Trajan display an increasing militaristic look.

Nerva's successor and adopted son Trajan was a much more successful emperor who was well liked by both the Senate and the people of Rome . He reigned for nearly twenty years (98–117 CE), and expanded the empire's borders while implementing extensive public building and social welfare programs. Trajan's portraits depict him as aging, but always with a full head of hair and a typical Roman hairstyle that is reminiscent of, although not identical to, those of Augustus and Alexander the Great .



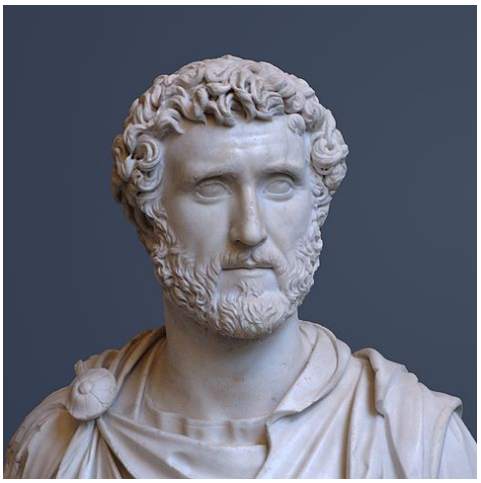
Trajan: Trajan's portraits depict him as aging, but always with a full head of hair and a typical Roman hairstyle that is reminiscent of, although not identical to, those of Augustus and Alexander the Great.

Hadrian, Trajan's adopted son and heir, peacefully became emperor in 117 CE. He was a great lover of Greek culture and wore a closely trimmed beard in the style of Classical Greek statesmen, such as the Athenian Pericles . Hadrian set a fashion for beards among Romans, and most emperors after him also wore a beard. Prior to Hadrian nearly all Roman men were clean shaven.



Hadrian: Hadrian set a fashion for beards among Romans, and most emperors after him also wore a beard.

Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's adopted heir and successor, mimics his predecessor's appearance in his official portraits—thick curly hair and a curly, closely-trimmed beard. By having his own portraits copy those of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius forged a visual link between himself and his predecessor.



Antoninus Pius: By having his own portraits copy those of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius forged a visual link between himself and his predecessor.

Antonius Pius's adoptive sons Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius are also identified by the beards they wore. Both men are depicted with heads of thick, curly hair and a long, curly beards. Unlike the closely trimmed beard style of Greek statesmen, this style was more akin to the preferred style of the Greek philosophers. Marcus Aurelius admired the Greeks and was himself a philosopher. This style matched his personality and interests.



Marcus Aurelius: Marcus Aurelius admired the Greeks and was himself a philosopher. He wore his beard long and curly, like the Greek philosophers.



Lucius Verus: The brother of Marcus Aurelius also wore his beard long and curly, like the Greek philosophers, unlike the closely trimmed beard style of Greek statesmen.

Unlike the rest of the emperors of the Nervan-Antonine line , Marcus Aurelius fathered a son who became his heir. Commodus's portrait style followed that of his father and of preceding emperors. Commodus was egotistical and even had the head of the

Colossus of Nero (now an image of the god Sol) recast in his own likeness.

Commodus also believed he was the reincarnation of Hercules and claimed power from Hercules's father, Jupiter. He even commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules. These portraits show him with the now-traditional imperial style of thick, curly hair and a curly beard. Hercules's lion skin is draped over his head and around his shoulders and he often carries a club and sometimes the apples of the Hesperides.



Commodus as Hercules: Commodus believed he was the reincarnation of Hercules and claimed power from Hercules's father, Jupiter. He even commissioned portraits of himself as Hercules.

Imperial Female Portraiture

The women of imperial families set the standards of fashion and beauty during the reigns of their husbands or other male family members. These women also established the hairstyles of the period, which are so distinctive that busts and statues are easily dated to specific decades in accordance with the hairstyle of the woman depicted.

During the Nervan-Antonine period, the portraits of imperial women and their hairstyles kept some Flavian flavor but were simpler than they had been. The fashionable style among women during the reign of the Flavians involved hairpieces and wigs to create a stack of curls on the crown of the head.

Trajan's wife Pompeia Plotina and his niece Matidia established a new style that was almost an abstraction of the Flavian style. Their hairstyles still involved a vertical element, but the curls were simplified on the crown of the head. Matidia's natural hair was gathered above nape of the neck, while Pompeia Plotina wore a braid at the back of her head.



Pompeia Plotina: This profile view of Pompeia Plotina shows the long braid worn behind the crown-like pile of hair in the front.



Matidia: Matidia established a new hair style that was almost an abstraction of the Flavian style.

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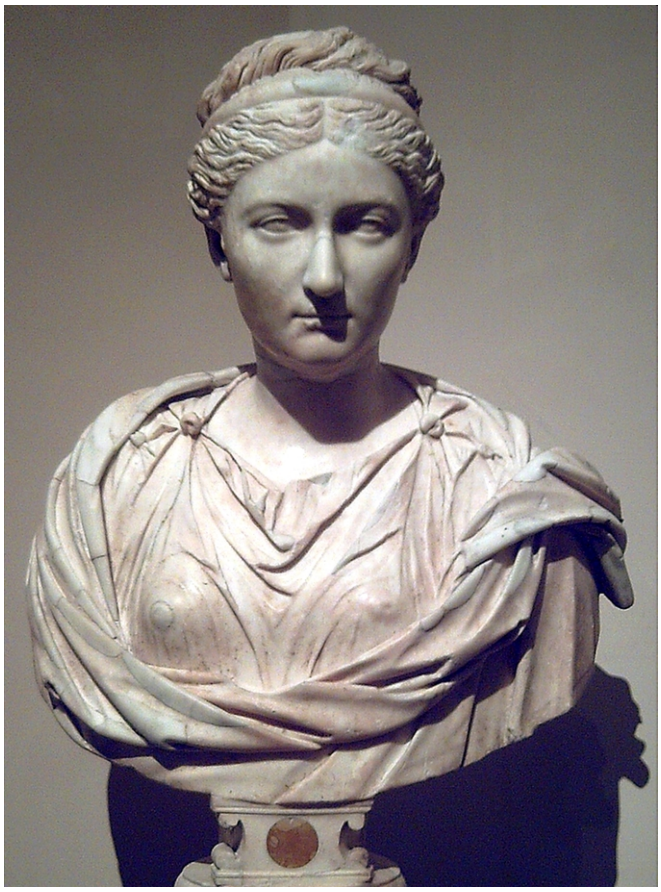


Bust of a Flavian woman: The fashionable style among women during the reign of the Flavians involved hairpieces and wigs to create a stack of curls on the crown of the head.

Just as Hadrian chose to wear his hair and beard in a Greek style, his wife Sabina also chose a Greek hair style, helping to promote Hadrian's Panhellenic agenda. Sabina is depicted with simplified facial features, and her style is comparable that worn by Praxitiles's sculpture Aphrodite of Knidos. Her hair is held back by a band and carefully woven around the back of the head. A similar style was promoted by Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina the Younger, who is depicted with carefully crimped hair worn close the head.



Faustina the Younger: Greek hair style was promoted by Marcus Aurelius's wife, Faustina the Younger, who is depicted here with carefully crimped hair worn close the head.



Vibia Sabina: Just as Hadrian chose to wear his hair and beard in a Greek style, his wife Sabina also chose a Greek hair style, helping to promote Hadrian's Panhellenic agenda.

Victory Columns under the Nervan-Antonines

The monuments dedicated to the reigns of Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius emphasize their military achievements, divinity, and public works.

Learning Objectives

Describe the monuments dedicated to the reigns of Trajan, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius and what they emphasized

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Emperor Trajan continued an era of peace and stability that saw the fullest expansion of the empire, as well as the execution of numerous public works, ranging from building programs to social welfare.
- The Column of Trajan is an artistic feat that depicts Trajan's military conquest over the Dacians (101 CE–102 CE and 105 CE–16 CE), through a series of more than 150 episodes that show over 2,500 figures .
- The Antonine dynasty consists of four emperors, who ruled from 132 to 192 CE. Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius are considered the last two of the Five Good Emperors who reigned consecutively during the second century CE.
- The pedestal for the Column of Antoninus Pius, erected by his adopted sons and heirs, depict both a conservative Classical artistic style as well as a new artistic style that was previously only seen in plebeian art.
- Despite sharing several attributes with the Column of Trajan, the Column of Marcus Aurelius features higher reliefs , stockier figures, distorted proportions, and emphasis on military strength. These new elements point to the changing priorities and social-political attitudes of the period.

Key Terms

- **apotheosis**: The fact or action of becoming or making into a god; deification.
- **decursio**: A Roman military exercise that involves the cavalry riding in a circle.
- **Dacia**: An ancient kingdom located in the area now known as Romania. The Dacian kingdom was conquered by the Romans and later named Romania after them.
- **frieze**: Any sculptured or richly ornamented band in a building or, by extension, in rich pieces of furniture.

Imperial Memorial

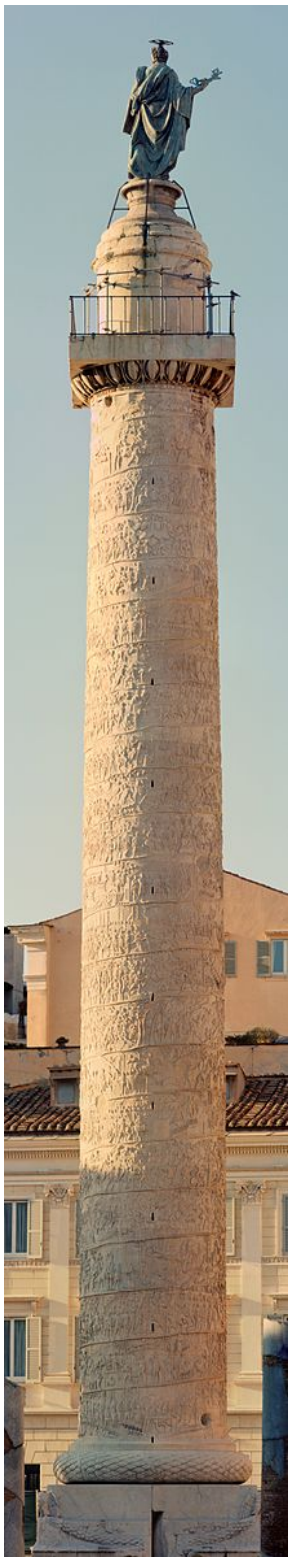
Trajan was born in Spain and rose to prominence in the Roman army during the reign of Domitian. He was a popular general who was adopted by the Emperor Nerva as his son and heir after Nerva realized he needed chose a successor who was liked by the people.

During Trajan's reign of nearly twenty years, from 98 CE to 117 CE, the Roman Empire reached its greatest territorial range. Trajan established large building programs both in Rome and throughout the empire.

Column of Trajan

Trajan and his architect Apollodorus of Damascus designed and built a large forum complex in the center of Rome. Standing between the libraries of the Forum of Trajan is a 128 foot tall victory column, known as the Column of Trajan. It stands on top of a large pedestal carved with a relief of the spoils of war.

The pedestal later served as a tomb for Trajan's ashes upon his death and deification. He is the first emperor to be buried inside the pomerium , the religious boundary around the city of Rome. A 625-foot frieze that depicts Trajan's two military campaigns against the Dacians is sculpted in a spiral relief that wraps around the column, from its bottom to its top.



Column of Trajan: The pedestal later served as a tomb for Trajan's ashes upon his death and deification. Located in Rome, Italy, c. 112 CE.

The frieze depicts over 150 episodes with more than 2,500 figures. The scenes show the Roman army preparing for war, including scenes of moving the army, building fortifications, Emperor Trajan addressing the troops, battles, and the eventual surrender by the Dacians.

Only one quarter of the narration depicts battles, while the remaining panels depict scenes of preparation and other activities. The heavy emphasis on preparation, instead of battle, emphasizes the Romans' organization and the power behind the army.

The visual narration is depicted in low relief (bas relief) and relies little on naturalistic detail, preferring to show some scenes in multiple perspectives and with figures on different ground lines . Important characters, such as Trajan, reappear throughout the frieze and are easily identified.

Trajan himself appears 59 times, leading his troops as the head of the army and the empire. With the exception of the appearance of a few Victory figures and a river god, the Romans and Trajan are shown conquering the Dacians under their own power, through their own superiority over their enemy, without the help of divine intervention.



Detail from the Column of Trajan: This detail shows five registers or bands from the Column of Trajan.

Trajan's victory column was originally topped by an eagle and later with a statue of Trajan. The statue of Trajan eventually disappeared and was replaced in the sixteenth century by a bronze statue of St. Peter.

Scholars have recently called the legibility of the figures into question. Because of the column's location, nestled between the libraries and the basilica of the Trajan's Forum, the scenes, which are carved in low relief, are small and hard to read. It is uncertain how much of the column's relief Romans would have been able to see. There is some speculation whether knowledge of the idea of the narrative was more important than being physically able to read the narrative.

The Column of Antoninus Pius

Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 CE), the first of the Antonine emperors, was the adopted son of Hadrian. His heirs, Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius, had a column erected to him on the Campus Martius, the base of which survives today.

On two of its sides is an identical scene of a military decursio depicting cavalry men parading around soldiers, two of whom hold standards. The relief carvings are high enough to protrude from the sides and be visible when viewing the non-decursio side of the pedestal. It depicts each figure from a ground-level perspective while showing the circular parade from a bird's eye view.



The pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius: This side shows the decursio scene. The relief carvings depict each figure from a ground-level perspective while showing the circular parade from a bird's eye view.

On one of the other two sides is a dedicatory inscription. On the opposite panel is a scene of the apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina. The scene depicts a large winged figure named Aion (Eternity) carrying the couple, surrounded by two eagles, to heaven.

Two figures look on from the ground. One is a personification of the Campus Martius, lounging on the ground with an arm around Augustus' sundial obelisk , the location where the ritual of deification occurred. The other is a personification of Rome, who appears as a woman wearing armor. She salutes the emperor and empress during their apotheosis, while leaning on a shield depicting the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus.



Pedestal of Column of Antoninus Pius.: The apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, c. 61 CE.

The Column of Marcus Aurelius

A victory column was also erected for Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE). This column is modeled on Trajan's column and was originally erected on the Campus Martius between the Temple of Divine Hadrian and the Temple of Divine Marcus Aurelius. A relief frieze encircles the column and depicts Marcus Aurelius's military campaigns at the end of his life in Germania.



Column of Marcus Aurelius: A detail of five bands from the column, circa 193 CE.

Despite the similar military scenes, the artistic style of the Column of Marcus Aurelius differs greatly from the Column of Trajan. The figures in this column are stockier and their proportions are distorted. The extra-large heads and deep relief carving were utilized so that the figures were easier to see from the ground than those on Trajan's column.

The military strength of the empire is emphasized more so than on the Column of Trajan, where the majority of the scenes depict the preparation for battle, instead of the battles themselves. The new style, high relief , and military emphasis demonstrates the changing priorities and social-political attitudes of the period.

Architecture under Hadrian

Hadrian was a great lover of architecture and the buildings he designed reflect attributes of his character.

Learning Objectives

Name the defining characteristics of Hadrian's building projects

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Hadrian reigned from 117 to 138 CE. Under his reign, the port city of Ostia grew significantly, with its population inhabiting apartment blocks called insulae .
- Hadrian's general religious tolerance is reflected in the diversity of religious temples and even a Jewish synagogue in Ostia.
- The Arch of Trajan at Benevento depicts scenes often seen on triumphal arches , including scenes of military conquest, imperial piety and divinity, as well programs of building and social works that Trajan implemented.
- Hadrian built a mausoleum for himself and his family that became an imperial mausoleum over the next several generations.

Key Terms

- **cardo**: A north-south street in Ancient Roman cities.
- **insula**: The Latin term for Roman apartment-style housing.
- **triumphal arch**: A monumental arch that commemorates a victory.
- **decumanus**: An east–west-oriented road in a Roman city.

- **engaged column**: A column embedded in a wall and partly projecting from the surface of the wall, sometimes defined as semi- or three-quarter detached.
- **mausoleum**: A large, stately tomb or a building that houses such a tomb or several tombs.

Hadrian's Reign

Like Trajan before him, the emperor Hadrian had a long and successful career as an emperor of Rome , reigning from 117 to 138 CE.

Hadrian's time as emperor was marked with peace and relative stability throughout the empire. He was an active general in the military, both before and after becoming emperor, despite a lull in military conflicts during his reign. He worked to strengthen Rome's borders by building fortifications, outposts, and walls.

The most famous of these is Hadrian's Wall in Britainnia that marked the northern boundary of the empire on the isle. Hadrian also traveled extensively, enjoying new cultures , inspecting troops, and promoting military readiness.

Ostia

During Hadrian's reign, the port city of Ostia grew significantly, reaching over 75,000 inhabitants by the third century CE. Located at the mouth of the Tiber on the Tyrrhenian Sea, Ostia was the main port city of Rome. The city was first founded during the third century BCE, as one of Rome's earliest colonies.

The ruins of Ostia are from the city's imperial period when it was at the height of its prosperity. Since Rome was settled inland, Ostia was always an important component to the capital city, especially as the empire expanded and relied on its provinces for survival. Merchant vessels and large ships filled with grains, building materials, and other goods to sell in Rome docked at Ostia, where the goods were eventually transferred upriver.

Insulae

Ostia was a typical of a Roman city, including a large central forum , bath houses, temples, a theatre, barracks for firemen, and apartment buildings. The two central streets of the city, the cardo and decumanus , ran north–south and east–west through the city, intersecting at the forum—the center of the city's civic and religious activities.

The citizens of Ostia lived in apartment houses or insulae, which stood six or seven stories high. The insulae of Ostia demonstrate the cramped and noisy living style that was common in Roman cities. Shops, known as tabernae, occupied the ground level of the insulae, while the upper stories housed apartments.

Roman apartments varied in size from larger homes located on the lower floors with private dining and cooking areas, as well as private toilets, to small, cramped rooms with communal cooking areas and toilets on the upper floors.



Insulae at Ostia.: Insulae, or apartment blocks, in the city of Ostia.

Religion

Excavations at Ostia reveal a variety of temples and meeting sites for cults and rituals . This reflects the relative religious diversity within the Roman Empire. Common features throughout the Empire include the Capitolium, the temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, in the forum at the center of the city.

Across from the Capitolium in the forum stands a temple dedicated to Augustus and Roma. Within close proximity is the Temple to Hercules , and throughout the city are temples dedicated to gods related to shipping and commerce, as well temples built by guilds , such as the ship builders or the rope makers, for their patron gods.

On the city's outskirts, there is also a large sanctuary to the goddess Cybele or Magna Mater, attesting to her popularity in the city. The god Mithras was also popular among the Ostians and worshiped solely by men in the form of a mystery cult. Over 15 mithraea have been discovered in the city. These mithraea are nearly all built underground to replicate the cave central to the myths of Mithras. Hadrian's general religious tolerance is reflected in this religious diversity, including the presence of a Jewish synagogue.



The Capitolium at Ostia: This temple is dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, and is located in the forum at the center of the city.

The Arch of Trajan at Benevento

The Arch of Trajan in Benevento draws visual cues from the Arch of Titus at Rome. This arch, built between 114 and 117 CE, was erected over the Via Appia, one of Rome's most ancient roads through southern Italy, as the road entered Beneventum.

Like the Arch of Titus, the Arch of Trajan is ornately decorated with scenes of conquest and the deeds completed by Trajan. On both sides of the arch is a dedicatory inscription. The exterior is decorated with engaged columns and reliefs of Trajan's military conquest of Dacia , the extent of the Roman empire, and allegorical scenes of imperial power, as well as Trajan's good deeds as both a builder of public works and as the founder of a charitable institution for children in Roman Italy.



The Arch of Trajan at Benevento: View from the north. Benevento, Italy. 114–117 CE.

The two interior relief panels depict the religious activity of Trajan. One shows him making a sacrifice in one of Rome's oldest fora, the Forum Boarium, which was home of some of the city's oldest temples.

The other panel depicts Trajan being welcomed after his apotheosis by the Capitoline Triad. These two scenes depict Trajan's piety as well as the approval given him by the three most important gods in the Roman pantheon .

Hadrian's Mausoleum

Hadrian also built a large mausoleum for himself and his family on the right bank of the Tiber River in Rome. Its original design seems to have purposely recalled the Mausoleum of Augustus, located across the river on the Campus Martius.

The Mausoleum of Hadrian was a large cylinder topped by a garden and quadriga statue. A central room housed the ashes of Hadrian and his family, as well as several of the emperors who succeeded him. While Hadrian's Mausoleum still stands today, it was later converted into a residence and fortress under the Roman popes and now serves as a museum.



Hadrian's Mausoleum: The Mausoleum of Hadrian was a large cylinder topped by a garden and quadriga statue. A central room housed the ashes of Hadrian and his family, as well as several of the emperors who succeeded him.

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8.5: The Decline of the Roman Empire

Architecture during the Severan Dynasty

The Severan Dynasty was the last stable period of imperial reign over the Roman Empire until that of Constantine.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Triumphal Arches of Septimius Severus, the Baths of Caracalla, and Caracalla's Serapeum on the Quirinal Hill

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Septimius Severus established the Severan dynasty and declared himself a son of Marcus Aurelius to legitimize his reign and depicted himself in the fashion of the last good emperor.
- The Arch of Septimius Severus in Rome visually relates to the triumphal arches of the city, especially the triple arch of Augustus, not only by commemorating a victory over the Parthians but by also using similar narrative conventions to establish Severan authority.
- The Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna, the emperor's hometown, is a unique four-sided arch that demonstrates both the new style of the Late Antique as well as the triumphal events of Septimius Severus's victory over the Parthians that occurred in Rome.
- The Baths of Caracalla were his major building program in Rome as a gift to the Roman people. The baths demonstrate the impressive and expansive use of Roman concrete, vaults , and architectural design.
- Caracalla's commission of a Serapeum , dedicated to an Egyptian god with Greek attributes, on the Quirinal Hill highlights the diversity reached in the Roman pantheon by the third century.

Key Terms

- **Serapeum**: A temple or sanctuary dedicated to the Egypto-Hellenic god Serapis.
- **mithraeum**: The place of worship for followers of Mirthras. It was often in a cave-like space that was underground, narrow, and lined with benches. Mithraea is plural for mirthraeum.

The assassination of Commodus in 192 CE once again plunged the Roman Empire into a year of civil war. Five generals succeeded one another until the fifth, Septimius Severus, consolidated power and managed to reign over Rome until his death from illness, 19 years later in 211 CE.

He established the Severan Dynasty that reigned until 235 CE, overseen by five different emperors. Unfortunately for Rome, the economy and the bureaucratic and administrative power of the Emperor and the Senate were declining during this time.

The five Severan emperors faced great difficulties maintaining control over the empire. Their troubles demonstrate the importance of this pivotal period that ultimately led to Rome's decline.

Septimius Severus

To strengthen his claim as emperor, Septimius Severus declared himself to be the secret son of Marcus Aurelius and even had his portrait fashioned in a similar manner to him. Like Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus wore his beard thick and curly in the style of Greek philosophers. His portraits show him as old, but fit and without the winkles of wisdom seen in Republican veristic portraiture.

Triumphal Arches of Septimius Severus

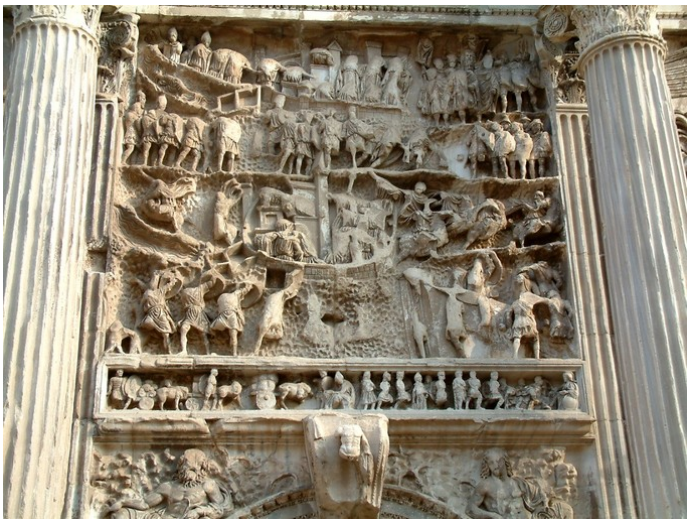
Two triumphal arches commissioned by Septimius Severus still stand today: the first at the northwest entrance to the Roman forum , and the second on the main road leading into the city of Leptis Magna, the Roman colony in modern Libya where Septimius Severus was born. Both were erected in 203 CE and commemorate the emperor's victory over the Parthians.

The Roman Arch of Septimius Severus recalls the triumphal arch of Augustus, also erected to honor his own victory over the Parthians. Like Augustus' arch, that of Septimius is a triple arch—the only surviving one in Rome.

Decorative panels depict scenes of conquest echoing the military scenes on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. These, however, depart from the Classical style, stylistically resembling more the figures on the Column of Marcus Aurelius. The figures on the panels are carved in high relief , and each shows multiple scenes.

Small friezes recounting the triumphal procession also frame the panels. Other decorative elements include winged victories in the spandrels and two sets of four columns, one on each side, that frame the archways.

The columns are free-standing, decorative additions to the arch. On the pedestal of each are reliefs of Romans leading captive Parthians away. This arch visually recalls the triumphal arches of the past that stood in the Roman Forum and expresses the continuity of Septimius Severus' imperial rule and the momentum of the empire.



The Arch of Septimius Severus: Detail of a panel relief.



The Roman Arch of Septimius Severus: This arch visually recalls the triumphal arches of the past that stood in the Roman Forum and expresses the continuity of Septimius Severus' imperial rule and the momentum of the empire.

The Arch of Septimius Severus at Leptis Magna is architecturally distinct and unique in comparison to the triumphal arches of Rome. This arch is four-sided and acts as a gateway into the city. Corinthian columns, eight in total, stand at each corner and support a broken pediment , a common architectural feature in the North African and Eastern provinces.

Despite its very different design, the arch's components are in dialogue with the triumphal arch in Rome. Depictions of war spoils and captive barbarians line the interior of the arches and a frieze wraps around them, depicting the triumphal procession that occurred in Rome.

This frieze is both a portrayal of the actual triumph that Septimius Severus enjoyed as well as a mythical presentation, as gods and personifications are also present in the procession and at the sacrifice that followed.



Arch of Septimius Severus: The arch at Leptis Magnus demonstrates the emerging artistic style of the second century CE and Late Antiquity.

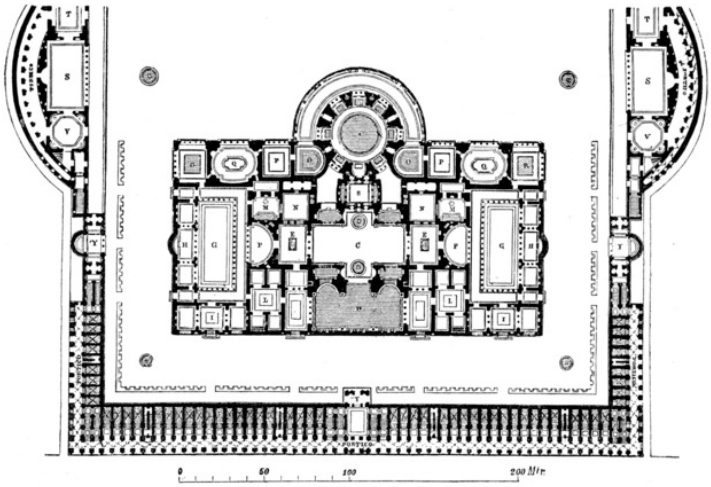
Most importantly, the arch at Leptis Magnus demonstrates the emerging artistic style of the second century CE and Late Antiquity . The figures in the frieze are squat and square. The limbs are thick, and their clothing is stylistically rendered with incised lines that give no indication of the body underneath. It is a complete displacement of the Classical style that dominated Roman art during the previous three centuries

Baths of Caracalla

Caracalla was one of the last emperors of the century who had the time, resources, and power to build in the city of Rome.

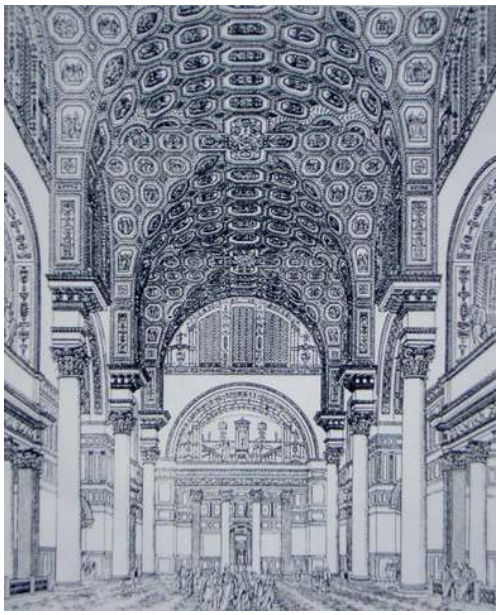
His longest-lasting contribution is a large bath complex that stands to the southeast of Rome's center. It covered over 33 acres and could hold over 1,600 bathers at a time. Bathing was an important part of Roman daily life, and the baths were a place for leisure, business, socializing, exercising, learning, and illicit affairs.

These baths not only held the traditional bathing pools but also exercise courts, changing rooms, and Greek and Latin libraries. A mithraeum has also been found on the site.



Baths of Caracalla: A reconstructed ground plan of this vast complex.

Architecturally, the Baths of Caracalla demonstrate the impressive mastery of Roman building and the importance of concrete and the vaulting systems developed by the Romans to create large and impressive buildings with ceilings that span great distances. The building was lavishly decorated with marble veneer, fanciful mosaics , and monumental Greek marble statues.



Baths of Caracalla: This artist's reconstruction shows a groin-vaulted interior, Composite columns, and decorative panels on the ceiling. Human figures have been added for scale.

Quirinal Hill Serapeum

In 212, Caracalla erected a temple (called a Serapeum) on Quirinal Hill dedicated to the Egyptian god Serapis, a human-headed deity who shared Greek and Egyptian attributes. This Serapeum was, by most surviving accounts, the most sumptuous and architectonically ambitious of those built on the hill.

The temple covered over three acres. It was composed by a long courtyard (surrounded by a colonnade) and by the ritual area, where statues and obelisks were erected. Designed to impress its visitors, the temple boasted columns nearly 70 feet tall and over six feet in diameter, sitting atop a marble stairway that connected the base of the hill to the sanctuary .

The ruins of the Serapeum show a mixture of brick and concrete with a regular use of the round arch. Symbolically, the temple signified the diversity that the Roman pantheon had reached by the third century.



Ruins of Caracalla's Serapeum on the Quirinal Hill: The ruins of the Serapeum show a mixture of brick and concrete with a regular use of the round arch.

Sculpture during the Decline of the Roman Empire

The Dominate Period, when warring generals controlled Rome, was a time marked by insecurity, anxiety, and a rapid succession of emperors.

Learning Objectives

Contrast the Late Antique style with earlier Classical conventions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Portraits of the soldier emperors reflect the anxiety and fear the men probably felt with their lives in peril. The need to depict oneself as heroic, strong, and firm is also evident.
- The Crisis of the Third Century saw over twenty-five men claim the title of emperor and assume power over the empire.
- Sculpture during this time fully develops into the Late Antique style , which derives from second century CE plebeian art. An early instance of its use is seen on the Arches of Septimius Severus.
- The Late Antique style becomes simple, less realistic, and rejects Classical conventions that focused on naturalism and the proper rendering of the body and clothing in favor of simplicity and heavy, angular lines , squat bodies, and incised details.

Key Terms

- **Praetorian Guard**: The force of body guards used by Roman emperors.
- **adlocutio**: An address by a general (usually the emperor) to his massed army and a general salute from the army to their leader.
- **late antique**: The style of art that covers the transition from the Classical world and the civilizations of Greece and Rome into the Middle Ages. In terms of artistic style, it covers the transition from Roman to Medieval and Byzantine art.
- **Parthians**: An ancient Persian empire based in the northeast of modern day Iran.

After Caracalla

Emperor Caracalla was assassinated while campaigning against the Parthians in 217 CE. He was quickly succeeded by a member of his personal guard, Macrinus, who ruled for less than a year before his own death.

Elagabalus, the grandson of Julia Domna's sister, and his cousin Alexander Severus were the last in the Severan line. Both men managed to maintain control of Rome , and Alexander Severus was even able to improve the economic condition of the empire.

Following Alexander's death at the hands of his own soldiers, Rome plunged into a long period of uneasy, rapid successions referred to as the Crisis of the Third Century, a crisis that lasted for fifty years.

Soldier Emperors

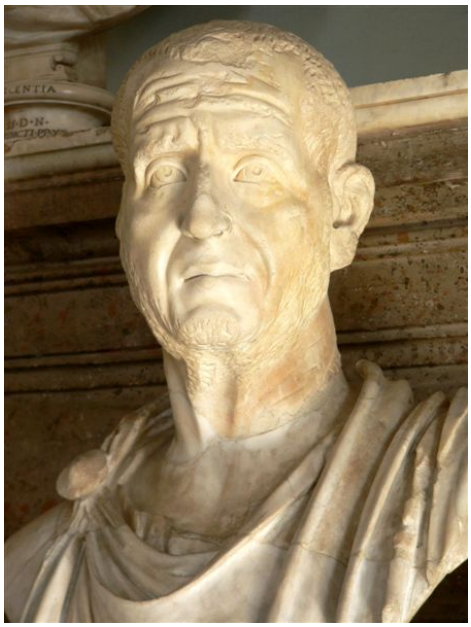
The first 26 emperors of this period were generals who either proclaimed themselves or were officially acknowledged as the emperor. Their reigns lasted from a couple of months to a couple of years. The fact that they were all generals in the Roman army underscores the military insecurity of the empire at this time.

Instead of protecting the border or trade routes, legions of soldiers were often fighting each other in support of one emperor or another. Since Roman power was still centered in Rome, the only building project that succeeded through this period was the building and maintaining of the city's Aurelian Wall, under the emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275 CE).

The portraits of Trajan Decius (r. 249–251 CE) and Trebonianus Gallus (r. 252–253 CE) serve to illustrate the instability of the period and the need for soldier-emperors to assert power to maintain some semblance of control.

Trajan Decius

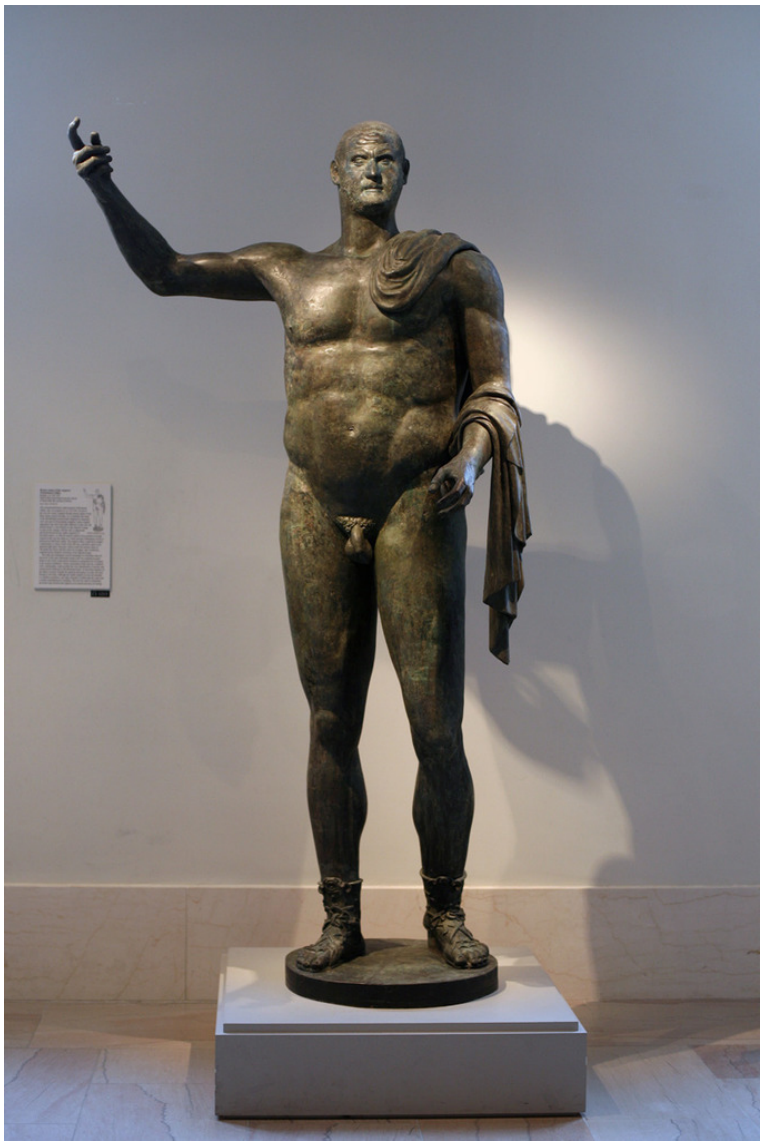
Trajan D's portrait at first seems to take its artistic style from Republican veristic portraiture, but a closer look reveals something else. Instead of depicting a hyper-realistic portrait of an old and wise man, this portrait reveals the anxiety and nervousness of the emperor. His brow is furrowed with worry and wrinkles, and his eyes and mouth impart a feeling of fear and anguish.



Trajanus Decius: Instead of depicting a hyper-realistic portrait of an old and wise man, this portrait reveals the anxiety and nervousness of the emperor.

Trebonianus Gallus

The portrait of his successor, Trebonianus Gallus takes a different style, relying on old sculpture and narrative conventions to depict the emperor as a contemporary hero. This larger-than-life bronze statue depicts a muscled, nude man with his right arm raised in a gesture of speech. He seems to be in adlocutio pose, addressing the troops or perhaps the people of Rome. His head is notably smaller than his torso and disproportional to his body. This places emphasis on his bulk and reminds the viewer of the emperor's power and the stability he hoped to create.



Trebonianus Gallus: This portrait takes a different style, relying on old sculpture and narrative conventions to depict the emperor as a contemporary hero.

Late Antique Art: The Ludovisi Sarcophagus

Sculpture during this period demonstrates the style and design of Late Antique art that was initially developed during the late second century CE from plebeian models. The emergence of the style corresponds with the social, political, and economic upheaval of the empire that began during the reign of Commodus.

This style removes Classical conventions of realism . It pushes its characters into the foreground and almost entirely removes the background.

In the scenes shown on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus, the undercutting of the deep relief exhibits virtuosic and very time-consuming drill work that conveys chaos and a sense of weary, open-ended victory. It differs from earlier battle scenes on sarcophagi in which more shallowly carved figures are less convoluted and intertwined.

Unlike earlier Roman depictions of warfare, this scene does not differentiate the general by his attire or engagement in battle. Rather, he is only slightly larger than the figures around him.



Ludovisi Sarcophagus: In the scenes shown on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus, the undercutting of the deep relief exhibits virtuosic and very time-consuming drill work that conveys chaos and a sense of weary, open-ended victory.

From the late second century, Roman art increasingly depicted battles as chaotic, packed, single-plane scenes that emphasize dehumanized barbarians who are subjected mercilessly to Roman military might, at a time when in fact the Roman Empire was undergoing constant invasions from external threats that led to the fall of the empire in the West. Although armed, the barbarian warriors, usually identified as Goths, are depicted as helpless to defend themselves.

After the Soldier Emperors

The Crisis of the Third Century continued after the reign of the Soldier Emperors as the title of emperor was auctioned off to the highest bidder by the Praetorian Guard and various men, not always generals, from around the empire seized power for brief periods of time. This process continued until the reign of Diocletian, beginning in 284 CE.

Imperial Sculpture under the Tetrarchy

Emperor Diocletian institutionalized the Tetrarchy, a co-rule that re-established stability in the empire for the period of Diocletian's reign.

Learning Objectives

Define the Tetrarchy as seen during Diocletian's rule

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Diocletian reigned from 284 to 305 CE as an individual emperor and as a member of the Tetrarchy .
- The Tetrarchy, or rule of four, was established by Diocletian as a means to administrate the empire more effectively. The four chosen men were given the title of Augustus for the senior emperor, or Caesar to designate the junior emperor.
- Portraits of the Tetrarchs depict four nearly identical men standing with their arms around each other to represent their solidarity, authority, and the stability that their reign brought to the empire.
- A portrait bust of the Tetrarch Galerius demonstrates the increasingly abstract direction in which portraiture was moving in the Late Antique period.

Key Terms

- **tetrarchy**: Historically, an empire that was ruled by four rulers.
- **porphyry**: A hard, igneous rock that consists of large crystals in a fine-grained matrix.

The Tetrarchy

Diocletian , a military general from the cavalry, was declared emperor by his legion in 284 CE. He re-established stability in the empire and paved the way for fourth-century political and social developments.



Portrait of Diocletian: Diocletian achieved stability by establishing the Tetrarchy, Greek for rule by four.

Diocletian achieved stability by establishing the Tetrarchy, Greek for rule by four. The Tetrarchy consisted of four emperors who reigned over two halves of the empire. Each pair of emperors was given control over either the eastern or western portion of the empire. Of the pair, one was given the title Caesar (a junior emperor) and the other Augustus (the senior emperor).

This allowed Diocletian and his fellow emperors to organize the administration of the provinces, separate military and civic command, and restore authority throughout the realm. They further solidified their commitment to each other and communal rule by marrying into each other's families.

Portraits of the Tetrarchs

Imperial portraiture of the Tetrarchs depicts the four emperors together and looking nearly identical. The portraiture symbolizes the concept of co-rule and cohesiveness instead of the power of the individual. The idea of the Tetrarchy, which is apparent in their portraits, is based on the ideal of four men working together to establish peace and stability throughout the empire.

The medium of the famous porphyry sculpture of the Tetrarchs, originally from the city of Constantinople, represents the permanence of the emperors. Furthermore, the two pairs of rulers—a Caesar and an Augustus with arms around each other— form a solid, stable block that reinforces the stability the Tetrarchy brought to the Roman Empire.



Portrait of the Tetrarchs: Portrait of the Tetrarchs from Constantinople; since the Middle Ages it has been fixed to a corner of the facade of St Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy.

Stylistically, this portrait of the Tetrarchs is done in Late Antique style , which uses a distinct squat, formless bodies, square heads, and stylized clothing clearly seen in all four men. The Tetrarchs have almost no body.

As opposed to Classical sculptures, which acknowledge the body beneath the attire, the clothes of the Tetrarchs form their bodies into chunky rectangles. Details such as the cuirass (breastplate), skirt, armor, and cloak are highly stylized and based on simple shapes and the repetition of lines .

Despite the culmination of this artistic style, the rendering of the Tetrarchs in this manner seems to fit the connotations of Tetrarch rule and need for stability throughout the empire.

Portrait of Galerius

Galerius served in the Tetrarchy from 293 to 311 CE, beginning his career as the Caesar of the West (293–305) under Diocletian, and eventually rising to Augustus of the West (305–311) after Diocletian's retirement.

During his reign he campaigned, aided by Diocletian, against the Sassanid (Neo-Persian) Empire, and sacked their capital in 299. He also campaigned across the Danube against the Carpi (in present-day eastern Romania), and defeated them in 297 and 300.

He opposed Christianity and oversaw the carrying out of the Diocletianic Persecution, which rescinded the rights of Christians and ordered that they comply with traditional Roman religious practices. However, toward the end of his reign in 311, he issued an edict of toleration.

A porphyry bust of Galerius (c. 300 CE) shows the direction that portraiture was taking in the fourth century. This bust from the emperor's palace features a face that is largely naturalistic with large expressive eyes and eyebrows, similar to those on the group portrait of the Tetrarchs, that lean toward abstraction.

These attributes follow those of other sculptures of the Late Antique style and foreshadow the increasingly geometric form that facial features would assume in imperial portraiture and sculpture in general.



Portrait Bust of Galerius: This bust from the emperor's palace features a face that is largely naturalistic with large expressive eyes and eyebrows, similar to those on the group portrait of the Tetrarchs, that lean toward abstraction.

Diocletian's Palace

Despite increasing abstraction in Late Antique sculpture, Diocletian's Palace maintains the tradition of Classicism in Roman architecture.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate the significance of Diocletian's Palace and its contribution to Roman architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Diocletian abdicated from power and retired to his palace, an imperial villa built in the model of a military encampment known as a castrum .
- Diocletian's palace features numerous traditional attributes of Roman architecture, including Composite columns , round arches , and a domed ceiling with an oculus .
- The arcuated pediment in the Peristyle is a rare attribute in Roman architecture.
- The northern half of the palace was not as well preserved as the rest of the structure. Scholars can only form educated guesses as to its purpose.
- The presence of Egyptian sphinxes points to the former emperor's eclectic taste in decoration.

Key Terms

- **arcuated**: Describing a form containing a curve that makes it concave.
- **revetment**: A sloping structure placed on a bank or cliff in such a way as to absorb the energy of incoming water.
- **castrum**: Latin for camp or fortress; a military encampment planned in a square or rectangle with two main roads in each direction.

- **cardo**: A street that runs north to south in an ancient Roman city.

Diocletian's Palace

Diocletian abdicated power in 305 CE and left the Tetrarchy to his co-emperors and Severus, the newly inaugurated general. Diocletian then retired to his boyhood palace in Dalmatia.

The palace's remains became the center of the modern city of Spilt in Croatia. Diocletian's palace was built as a fortress, demonstrating that despite Diocletian's success as emperor, he still required security living in a hostile Roman environment. Despite the stylistic changes in sculpture , Diocletian's palace serves as a reminder that the style of Roman architecture continued to be based on Classical models and forms.

In addition to its numerous round arches and Classical columns, the palace also contains a vestibule with a domed ceiling that has an oculus somewhat reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome .



Vestibule: Note the domed ceiling with a wide oculus in Diocletian's Palace, in Split, Croatia, c. 305 CE.

The palace was set up in a similar fashion to a castrum and contained courts, libraries, and other features found in imperial villas. It was constructed from local materials including limestone , marble, and brick. Some material for decoration was imported: Egyptian granite columns, fine marble for revetments , and some capitals produced in workshops in the Proconnesos (present-day Marmara Island off the coast of Turkey).

The southern wall, which was the only unfortified part of the palace, was practically built on the waterfront and appeared to rise out of the Adriatic Sea.



Diocletian's Palace: An artist's reconstruction of the original structure.

Diocletian's palace demonstrates the Roman use of vaults in the substructure and the use of columns, peristyles, and entablatures to create monumental spaces . For example, the central court of the palace, known as the Peristyle, demonstrates the stylistic and monumental use of these architectural elements.

Furthermore, the central court was sunken and a flight of stairs enclosed the court and led up to the decorative Peristyle and surrounding rooms. This increased the feeling of monumentality while emphasizing Diocletian's imperial power, as members of the court had to stand several steps below the entrances to the temples, mausoleum , and court rooms.



The Peristyle at Diocletian's Palace: The arcuated pediment is a rare feature in Roman architecture. Resting on four Composite columns, the pediment contains a round arch that rises into its base toward its apex.

A main feature of the Peristyle is the portico that marks the entrance to Diocletian's private apartments. Following the format of a traditional Roman temple to a degree, the portico rests atop a raised platform. Behind it rests a marble-faced brick wall with three entrances: an archway flanked by a rectangular portal on each side.

Perhaps its most unique feature is the arcuated pediment that sits atop the temple facade. Resting on four Composite columns, the pediment contains a round arch that rises into its base toward its apex . An arcade supported by Composite columns stands to either side of the facade.

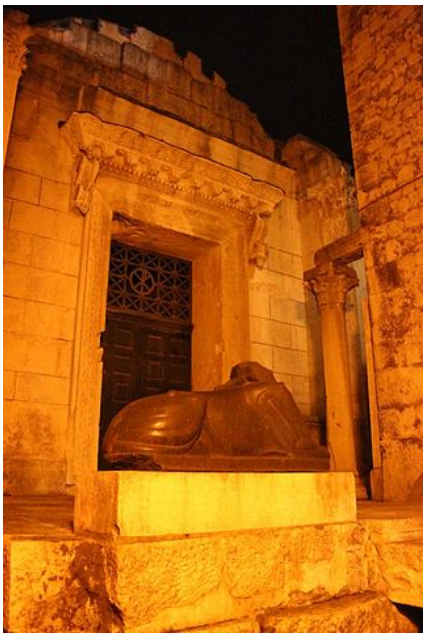
The northern half of the palace, divided in two parts by the cardo leading from the northern gate to the Peristyle, is not as well preserved as the rest of the palace. Scholars posit that each part was a residential complex that housed soldiers, servants, and possibly some other facilities. Both parts were apparently surrounded by streets. Leading to the perimeter walls there were rectangular buildings that were possibly storage magazines.

While the architectural aspects of the palace follow Roman traditions, several decorative choices hail from Egypt. Diocletian adorned his new home with numerous 3500-year-old granite sphinxes, originating from the site of Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III.

Only three have survived the centuries. One is still on the Peristyle, the second sits headless in front of Jupiter's temple, and a third is in the city museum.



Sphinx from the tomb of Thutmose III: Diocletian adorned his new home with numerous 3500-year-old granite sphinxes, originating from the site of Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III.



Headless sphinx in front of the Temple of Jupiter: Located in Diocletian's Palace in Split, Croatia, c. 305 CE.

Architecture under Constantine

Constantine seized sole power over Rome to establish authority and stability, and then moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople.

Learning Objectives

Identify the actions and works of art that Constantine is most noted for

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Constantine reigned from 306 to 337 CE. He managed to re-establish stability in the empire and rule as a single emperor, legalize Christianity, and move the imperial capital to the newly-formed city of Constantinople.

- The Arch of Constantine, a triumphal arch commemorating Constantine's victory over Maxentius, makes use of spolia from monuments dedicated to Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius.
- Constantine completed the Basilica Nova, the construction of which was begun by his rival, Maxentius. This massive concrete building displayed the impressive power and authority of Constantine.
- At one end of the Basilica Nova sat the Colossus of Constantine: over 40 feet tall and made of marble, brick, wood frames, and bronze gilding. The Colossus further emphasized the sole authority, control, and power held by Constantine.
- After Constantine relocated, the city of Rome became vulnerable to barbarian hoards who pillaged local monuments and buildings. Outside Rome, Constantine oversaw the construction of the imperial district of Constantinople and the Aula Palatina in Trier (present-day Germany).

Key Terms

- **nave**: The central area of a basilica.
- **apse**: A semicircular recess covered with a hemispherical vault, also known as an exedra.
- **colossus**: A statue of gigantic proportions. The name was especially applied to certain famous statues in antiquity, such as the Colossus of Nero in Rome, and the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.
- **basilica**: A building having a nave with a semicircular apse, side aisles, a narthex, and a clerestory. The Roman design of the basilica became the model for Christian churches.
- **spolia**: The reuse of building material or decorative sculpture for new buildings or monuments. Latin for spoils.

Constantine

Diocletian and his co-emperor Maximian abdicated power on May 1, 305 CE. However, over the course of the next five years, Maximian made several attempts to regain his title, and then committed suicide in 310. In the meantime, power passed to Maximian's son Maxentius and Constantine, the son of a third co-emperor, Constantius.

Unfortunately for Diocletian's legacy and the stability created by the Tetrarchy , a power struggle between the two heirs erupted a year after the former Augustus' abdication. When Constantius died on July 25, 306, his father's troops proclaimed Constantine as Augustus in Eboracum (York, England).

In Rome, the favorite was Maxentius, who seized the title of emperor on October 28, 306. Galerius, ruler of the Eastern provinces and the senior emperor in the Empire, recognized Constantine's claim and treated Maxentius as a usurper. Galerius, however, recognized Constantine as holding only the lesser imperial rank of Caesar.

Despite a mutiny against Galerius' co-emperor Severus in 307, and Galerius's subsequent failure to take Rome, Constantine managed to avoid conflict for most of this period. However, by 312, Constantine and Maxentius were engaged in open hostilities, culminating in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which Constantine emerged victorious.

Although he attributed this victory to the aid of the Christian god, he did not convert to Christianity until he was on his deathbed. The following year, however, he enacted the Edict of Milan, which legalized Christianity and allowed its followers to begin building churches. With the Christian community growing in number and in influence, legalizing Christianity was, for Constantine, a pragmatic move.

Following a rebellion from Licinius, his own co-emperor in 324 CE, Constantine eventually had his former colleague executed and consolidated power under a single ruler. As the sole emperor of an empire with new-found stability, Constantine was able to patronize large building projects in Rome. However, despite his attention to that city, he moved the capital of the empire east to the newly founded city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

Arch of Constantine

The Arch of Constantine demonstrates the continuance of the newly-adopted artistic style for imperial sculpture . This arch was erected between the Colosseum and Palatine Hill, the home of the imperial palace. It stands over the triumphal route before it enters the Republican Forum . This forms a dialog with the Arch of Titus at the top, overlooking the Forum, and the Arch of Septimius Severus, which, in turn, stands at the other end of the Forum before the Via Sacra heads uphill to the Capitolium.



Arch of Constantine: The Arch demonstrates the continuance of the newly-adopted artistic style for imperial sculpture.

The Senate commissioned the triumphal arch in honor of Constantine's victory over Maxentius. It is a triple arch and its iconography represents Constantine's supreme power and the stability and peace his reign brought to Rome.

The Arch of Constantine is especially noted for its use of spolia: architectural and decorative elements removed from one monument for use on another. Those from the monuments of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius—all considered good emperors of the Pax Romana—were reused as decoration.

Trajanic panels that depict the emperor on horseback defeating barbarian soldiers adorn the interior of the central arch. The original face was reworked to take the likeness of Constantine. Eight roundels, or relief discs, adorn the space just above the two smaller side arches. These are Hadrianic and depict images of hunting and sacrifice .

The final set of spolia includes eight panel reliefs on the arch's attic, from the era of Marcus Aurelius, depicting the dual identities of the emperor, as both a military and a civic leader. The incorporation of these elements symbolize Constantine's legitimacy and his status as one of the good emperors.

The rest of the arch is decorated using Late Antique styles. The proximity of different artistic styles, under four different emperors, highlights the stylistic variations and artistic developments that occurred, both in the second century CE, as well as their differences to the Late Antique style.

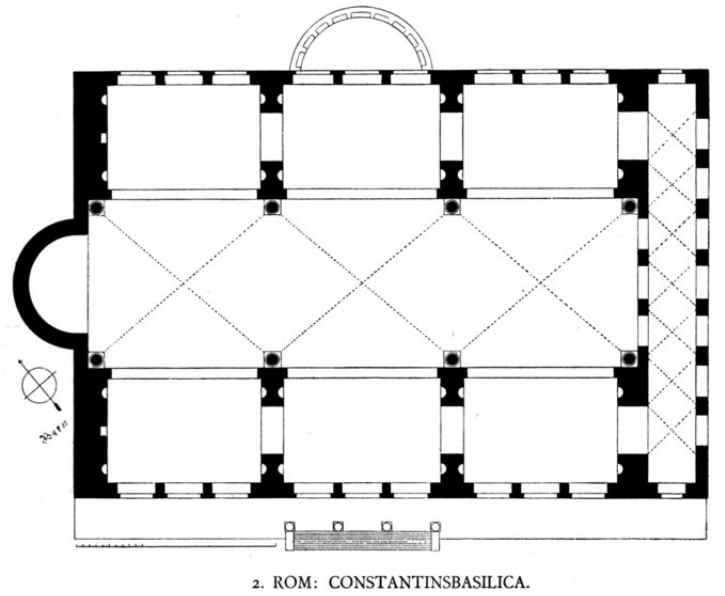
Besides the decorative elements in the spandrels , a Constantinian frieze runs around the arch, between the tops of the small arches and the bottoms of the roundels. This frieze highlights the artistic style of the period and chronologically depicts Constantine's rise to power. Unlike previous examples of Late Antique art, the bodies in this frieze are completely schematic and defined only by stiff, rigid clothes. In one scene, featuring Constantine distributing gifts, the emperor is centrally depicted and raised above his supporters on a throne .



A detail of the northern frieze of the Arch of Constantine: This detail shows Constantine distributing gifts from his throne down to his supporters.

Basilica Nova and the Colossus of Constantine

When Constantine and Maxentius clashed at the Milvian Bridge, Maxentius was in the middle of building a grand basilica. It was eventually renamed the Basilica Nova, and was located near the Roman Forum. The basilica consisted of one side aisle on either side of a central nave .



Basilica Nova: The ground plan of the Basilica Nova in Rome.

When Constantine took over and completed the grand building, it was 300 feet long, 215 feet wide, and stood 115 feet tall down the nave. Concrete walls 15 feet thick supported the basilica's massive scale and expansive vaults . It was lavishly decorated with marble veneer and stucco . The southern end of the basilica was flanked by a porch, with an apse at the northern end.



Basilica Nova: As it stands today in Rome, Italy.

The apse of the Basilica Nova was the location of the Colossus of Constantine. This colossus was built from many parts. The head, arms, hands, legs, and feet were carved from marble, while the body was built with a brick core and wooden framework and then gilded.



The head of the colossus of Constantine: The head is over eight feet tall and 6.5 feet long.

Only parts of the Colossus remain, including the head that is over eight feet tall and 6.5 feet long. It shows a portrait of an individual with clearly defined features: a hooked nose, prominent jaw, and large eyes that look upwards. Like the porphyry bust of Galerius, Constantine's portrait combines naturalism in his nose, mouth, and chin with a growing sense of abstraction in his eyes and geometric hairstyle.

He also held an orb and, possibly, a scepter, and one hand points upwards towards the heavens. Both the immensity of the scale and his depiction as Jupiter (seated, heroic, and semi-nude) inspire a feeling of awe and overwhelming power and authority.

The basilica was a common Roman building and functioned as a multipurpose space for law courts, senate meetings, and business transactions. The form was appropriated for Christian worship and most churches, even today, still maintain this basic shape.

Rome after Constantine

Following Constantine's founding of a New Rome at Constantinople, the prominence and importance of the city of Rome diminished. The empire was then divided into east and west. The more prosperous eastern half of the empire continued to thrive, mainly due to its connection to important trade routes, while the western half of the empire fell apart.

While Byzantium controlled Italy and the city Rome at times over the next several centuries, for the most part the Western Roman Empire, due to being less urban and less prosperous, was difficult to protect. Indeed, the city of Rome was sacked multiple times by invading armies, including the Ostrogoths and Visigoths, over the next century.

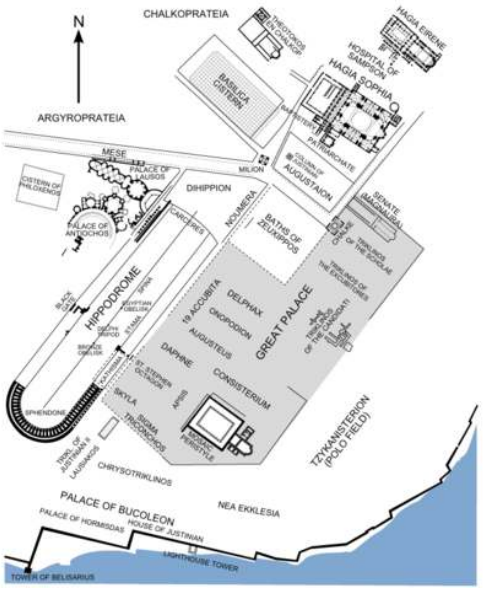
The multiple sackings of Rome resulted in the raiding of the marble, facades, décor, and columns from the monuments and buildings of the city. Parts of ancient Rome, especially the Republican Forum, returned once again to the cow pastures that they originally were at the time of the city's founding, as floods from the Tiber washed them over in debris and sediment.

Constantinople

Constantine laid out a new square at the center of old Byzantium, naming it the Augustaeum. The new senate-house was housed in a basilica on the east side. On the south side of the great square was erected the Great Palace of the Emperor with its imposing

entrance and its ceremonial suite known as the Palace of Daphne.

Nearby was the vast Hippodrome for chariot races, seating over 80,000 spectators, and the famed Baths of Zeuxippus. At the western entrance to the Augustaeum was the Milion, a vaulted monument from which distances were measured across the Eastern Roman Empire.



The Imperial district of Constantinople: Present-day Istanbul, Turkey.

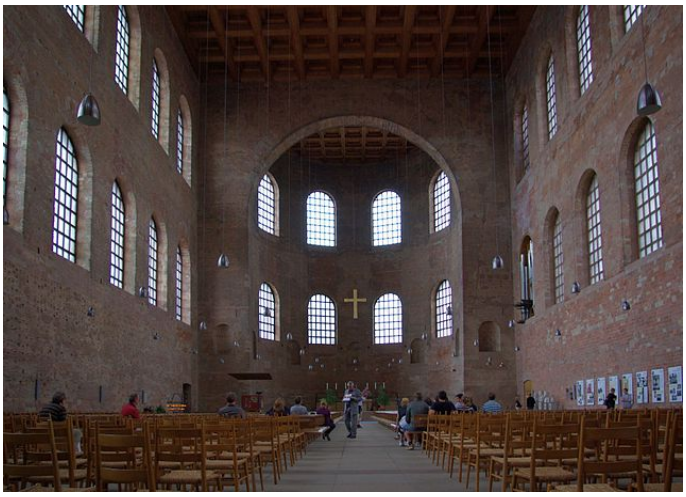
The Mese, a great street lined with colonnades , led from the Augustaeum. As it descended the First Hill of the city and climbed the Second Hill, it passed the Praetorium or law-court. Then it passed through the oval Forum of Constantine where there was a second Senate house and a high column with a statue of Constantine in the guise of Helios, crowned with a halo of seven rays and looking toward the rising sun. From there the Mese passed on and through the Forum Tauri and then the Forum Bovis, and finally up the Seventh Hill (or Xerolophus) and through to the Golden Gate in the Constantinian Wall.

The Aula Palatina, Trier, Germany

Constantine built the Aula Palatina (c. 310 CE) as a part of the palace complex. Originally it was attached to smaller buildings (such as an antehall, a vestibule, and service buildings) attached to it. The Aula Palatina has a simplified Roman basilica plan, consisting of a wide nave that ends in a north-facing apse.

Although round arches repeat throughout the interior and exterior, the building deviates from the traditional basilica with the flat ceiling that covers the nave and the flat roof that tops the apse.


Aula Palatina: Known today as the Church of the Redeemer in Trier, Germany, c. 310 CE.



Aula Palatina: The Aula Palatina has a simplified Roman basilica plan, consisting of a wide nave that ends in a north-facing apse.

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8.6: Early Jewish and Christian Art

Early Jewish Art

Early Jewish art forms included frescoes, illuminated manuscripts and elaborate floor mosaics.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how the prohibition of graven images influenced the production of Jewish art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Jews, like other early religious communities, were wary of art being used for idolatrous purposes. Over time, official interpretations of the Second Commandment began to disassociate religious art with graven images .
- The zodiac, generally associated with paganism , was the subject of multiple early Jewish mosaics .
- An ancient synagogue in Gaza provides a rare example of the use of graven images in mosaics, depicting King David as Orpheus.
- Dura-Europos is the site of an early synagogue, dating from 244 CE.

Key Terms

- **Haggadah**: A text that sets forth the order of the Passover seder.
- **syncretic**: Describing imagery or other creative expression that blends two or more religions or cultures.
- **Tanakh**: The body of Jewish scripture comprising the Torah, the Neviim (prophets), and the Ketuvim (writings), which correspond roughly to the Christian Old Testament.
- **rabbinical**: Referring to rabbis, their writings, or their work.

The Second Commandment and Its Interpretations

The Second Commandment, as noted in the Old Testament, warns all followers of the Hebrew god Yahweh, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” As most Rabbinical authorities interpreted this commandment as the prohibition of visual art, Jewish artists were relatively rare until they lived in assimilated European communities beginning in the late eighteenth century.

Although no single biblical passage contains a complete definition of idolatry , the subject is addressed in numerous passages, so that idolatry may be summarized as the worship of idols or images; the worship of polytheistic gods by use of idols or images; the worship of trees, rocks, animals, astronomical bodies, or another human being; and the use of idols in the worship of God.

In Judaism, God chooses to reveal his identity, not as an idol or image, but by his words, by his actions in history, and by his working in and through humankind. By the time the Talmud was written, the acceptance or rejection of idolatry was a litmus test for Jewish identity. An entire tractate, the Avodah Zarah (strange worship) details practical guidelines for interacting with surrounding peoples so as to avoid practicing or even indirectly supporting such worship.

Attitudes towards the interpretation of the Second Commandment changed through the centuries. Jewish sacred art is recorded in the Tanakh and extends throughout Jewish Antiquity and the Middle Ages . The Tabernacle and the two Temples in Jerusalem form the first known examples of Jewish art.

While first-century rabbis in Judea objected violently to the depiction of human figures and the placement of statues in temples, third-century Babylonian Jews had different views. While no figural art from first-century Roman Judea exists, the art on the Dura-Europos synagogue walls developed with no objection from the rabbis.

Illuminated Manuscripts and Mosaics

The Jewish tradition of illuminated manuscripts during Late Antiquity can be deduced from borrowings in Early Medieval Christian art. Middle Age Rabbinical and Kabbalistic literature also contain textual and graphic art, most famously the illuminated Haggadahs like the Sarajevo Haggadah , and manuscripts like the Nuremberg Mahzor. Some of these were illustrated by Jewish artists and some by Christians. Equally, some Jewish artists and craftsmen in various media worked on Christian commissions.

Byzantine synagogues also frequently featured elaborate mosaic floor tiles. The remains of a sixth-century synagogue were uncovered in Sepphoris, an important center of Jewish culture between the third and seventh centuries. The mosaic reflects an interesting fusion of Jewish and pagan beliefs.

In the center of the floor the zodiac wheel was depicted. The sun god Helios sits in the middle in his chariot, and each zodiac is matched with a Jewish month. Along the sides of the mosaic are strips that depict the binding of Isaac and other Biblical scenes.



Mosaic floor at Sepphoris synagogue: This fifth-century mosaic is a depiction of the Zodiac Wheel.

The floor of the Beth Alpha synagogue, built during the reign of Justinian I (518–527 CE), also features elaborate nave mosaics. Each of its three panels depicts a different scene: the Holy Ark, the zodiac and the story Isaac's sacrifice . Once again, Helios stands in the center of the zodiac. The four women in the corners of the mosaic represent the four seasons.



Beth Alpha mosaic: The Byzantine synagogue at Beth Alpha features elaborate nave mosaics.

As interpretations of the Second Commandment liberalized, any perceived ban on figurative depiction was not taken very seriously by the Jews living in Byzantine Gaza. In 1966, remains of a synagogue were found in the region's ancient harbor area. Its mosaic floor depicts a syncretic image of King David as Orpheus, identified by his name in Hebrew letters. Near him are lion cubs, a giraffe and a snake listening to him playing a lyre .

A further portion of the floor was divided by medallions formed by vine leaves, each of which contains an animal: a lioness suckling her cub, a giraffe, peacocks, panthers, bears, a zebra, and so on. The floor was completed between 508 and 509 CE.



Gaza synagogue mosaic: This mosaic from the ancient synagogue at Gaza is an unusual example of figurative depiction in early Jewish art.

Dura-Europos

Dura-Europos, a border city between the Romans and the Parthians , was the site of an early Jewish synagogue dated by an Aramaic inscription to 244 CE. It is also the site of Christian churches and mithraea, this city's location between empires made it an optimal spot for cultural and religious diversity.

The synagogue is the best preserved of the many imperial Roman-era synagogues that have been uncovered by archaeologists. It contains a forecourt and house of assembly with frescoed walls depicting people and animals, as well as a Torah shrine in the western wall facing Jerusalem.

The synagogue paintings, the earliest continuous surviving biblical narrative cycle, are conserved at Damascus, together with the complete Roman horse armor. Because of the paintings adorning the walls, the synagogue was at first mistaken for a Greek temple. The synagogue was preserved, ironically, when it was filled with earth to strengthen the city's fortifications against a Sassanian assault in 256 CE.



Remains of the synagogue at Dura-Europos: This is the best preserved ancient synagogue to be uncovered by archaeologists.

The preserved frescoes include scenes such as the Sacrifice of Isaac and other Genesis stories, Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law, Moses leading the Hebrews out of Egypt, scenes from the Book of Esther, and many others. The Hand of God motif is used to represent divine intervention or approval in several paintings. Scholars cannot agree on the subjects of some scenes, because of damage, or the lack of comparative examples; some think the paintings were used as an instructional display to educate and teach the history and laws of the religion.



A fresco depicting a scene from the Book of Esther: From the synagogue at Dura-Europos, c. 244 CE.

Others think that this synagogue was painted in order to compete with the many other religions being practiced in Dura-Europos. The new (and considerably smaller) Christian church (Dura-Europos church) appears to have opened shortly before the surviving paintings were begun in the synagogue. The discovery of the synagogue helps to dispel narrow interpretations of Judaism's historical prohibition of visual images.

Early Christian Art

Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was created by Christians or under Christian patronage throughout the second and third centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the influence of Greco-Roman culture on the development of early Christian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was produced by Christians or under Christian patronage from the earliest period of Christianity to between 260 and 525.
- The lack of surviving Christian art from the first century could be due to a lack of artists in the community, a lack of funds, or a small audience.
- Early Christians used the same artistic media as the surrounding pagan culture . These media included frescos , mosaics , sculptures, and illuminated manuscripts .
- Early Christians used the Late Classical style and adapted Roman motifs and gave new meanings to what had been pagan symbols. Because the religion was illegal until 313, Christian artists felt compelled to disguise their subject matter.
- House churches were private homes that were converted into Christian churches to protect the secrecy of Christianity. The house church at Dura-Europos is the earliest house church that has been discovered.

Key Terms

- **syncretism**: The conveyance of more than one religion or culture, particularly in visual art.
- **Catacombs**: Human-made subterranean passageways used as burial locations.
- **domus ecclesiae**: A term that has been applied to the earliest Christian places of worship, namely churches that existed in private homes.
- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **canonical**: According to recognized or orthodox rules.
- **graven image**: A carved idol or representation of a god used as an object of worship.
- **cubicula**: Small rooms carved out of the wall of a catacomb, used as mortuary chapels, and in Roman times, for Christian worship.

Early Christianity

By the early years of Christianity (first century), Judaism had been legalized through a compromise with the Roman state over two centuries. Christians were initially identified with the Jewish religion by the Romans, but as they became more distinct, Christianity became a problem for Roman rulers.

Around the year 98, Nerva decreed that Christians did not have to pay the annual tax upon the Jews, effectively recognizing them as a distinct religion. This opened the way to the persecutions of Christians for disobedience to the emperor, as they refused to worship the state pantheon .

The oppression of Christians was only periodic until the middle of the first century. However, large-scale persecutions began in the year 64 when Nero blamed them for the Great Fire of Rome earlier that year. Early Christians continued to suffer sporadic persecutions.

Because of their refusal to honor the Roman pantheon, which many believed brought misfortune upon the community, the local pagan populations put pressure on the imperial authorities to take action against their Christians neighbors. The last and most severe persecution organized by the imperial authorities was the Diocletianic Persecution from 303 to 311.

Early Christian Art

Early Christian, or Paleochristian, art was produced by Christians or under Christian patronage from the earliest period of Christianity to, depending on the definition used, between 260 and 525. In practice, identifiably Christian art only survives from the second century onwards. After 550, Christian art is classified as Byzantine , or of some other regional type.

It is difficult to know when distinctly Christian art began. Prior to 100, Christians may have been constrained by their position as a persecuted group from producing durable works of art. Since Christianity was largely a religion of the lower classes in this period, the lack of surviving art may reflect a lack of funds for patronage or a small numbers of followers.

The Old Testament restrictions against the production of graven images (an idol or fetish carved in wood or stone) might have also constrained Christians from producing art. Christians could have made or purchased art with pagan iconography but given it Christian meanings. If this happened, “Christian” art would not be immediately recognizable as such.

Early Christians used the same artistic media as the surrounding pagan culture. These media included frescos, mosaics, sculptures, and illuminated manuscripts.

Early Christian art not only used Roman forms , it also used Roman styles. Late Classical art included a proportional portrayal of the human body and impressionistic presentation of space . The Late Classical style is seen in early Christian frescos, such as those in the Catacombs of Rome, which include most examples of the earliest Christian art.

Early Christian art is generally divided into two periods by scholars: before and after the Edict of Milan of 313, which legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire. The end of the period of Early Christian art, which is typically defined by art historians as being in the fifth through seventh centuries, is thus a good deal later than the end of the period of Early Christianity as typically defined by theologians and church historians, which is more often considered to end under Constantine, between 313 and 325.

Early Christian Painting

In a move of strategic syncretism , the Early Christians adapted Roman motifs and gave new meanings to what had been pagan symbols. Among the motifs adopted were the peacock, grapevines, and the “Good Shepherd.” Early Christians also developed their own iconography. Such symbols as the fish (*ikhthus)*, were not borrowed from pagan iconography.



Fish and Loaves: This fish-and-loaves fresco—iconography particular to Christians and representative of the Eucharist—is found in the Catacombs of San Callisto.

During the persecution of Christians under the Roman Empire, Christian art was necessarily and deliberately furtive and ambiguous, using imagery that was shared with pagan culture but had a special meaning for Christians. The earliest surviving Christian art comes from the late second to early fourth centuries on the walls of Christian tombs in the catacombs of Rome. From literary evidence, there might have been panel icons which have disappeared.

Depictions of Jesus

Initially, Jesus was represented indirectly by pictogram symbols such as the ichthys, the peacock, the Lamb of God, or an anchor. Later, personified symbols were used, including Daniel in the lion's den, Orpheus charming the animals, or Jonah, whose three days in the belly of the whale prefigured the interval between the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, the depiction of Jesus was well-developed by the end of the pre-Constantinian period. He was typically shown in narrative scenes, with a preference for New Testament miracles, and few of scenes from his Passion. A variety of different types of appearance were used, including the thin, long-faced figure with long, centrally-parted hair that was later to become the norm. But in the earliest images as many show a stocky and short-haired beardless figure in a short tunic , who can only be identified by his context. In many images of miracles Jesus carries a stick or wand, which he points at the subject of the miracle rather like a modern stage magician (though the wand is significantly larger).



Jesus Healing a Bleeding Woman: Typical of a depiction of Jesus for its time, this fresco depicts a clean-shaven man with short hair. From the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter. , c. 300–350.

The image of The Good Shepherd, a beardless youth in pastoral scenes collecting sheep, was the most common of these images and was probably not understood as a portrait of the historical Jesus. These images bear some resemblance to depictions of *kouroi* figures in Greco-Roman art.



The Good *Shepherd*: A fresco from the catacombs of San Callisto.



The Good Shepherd: This painting of the Good Shepherd motif is a fusion of pagan and Christian symbolism.

The almost total absence from Christian paintings during the persecution period of the cross, except in the disguised form of the anchor, is notable. The cross, symbolizing Jesus's crucifixion, was not represented explicitly for several centuries, possibly because crucifixion was a punishment meted out to common criminals, but also because literary sources noted that it was a symbol recognized as specifically Christian, as the sign of the cross was made by Christians from the earliest days of the religion.

House Church at Dura-Europos

The house church at Dura-Europos is the oldest known house church. One of the walls within the structure was inscribed with a date that was interpreted as 231. It was preserved when it was filled with earth to strengthen the city's fortifications against an attack by the Sassanians in 256 CE.



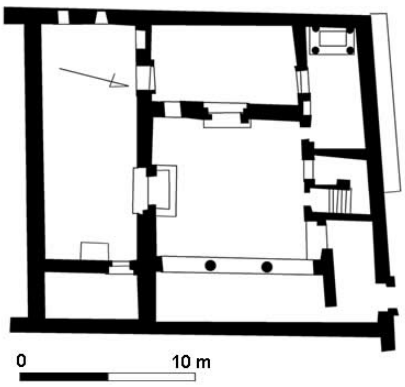
Remains of a house church at Dura-Europos: House churches, where Christians congregated secretly, were common prior to the legalization of Christianity.

Despite the larger atmosphere of persecution, the artifacts found in the house church provide evidence of localized Roman tolerance for a Christian presence. This location housed frescos of biblical scenes including a figure of Jesus healing the sick.

When Christianity emerged in the Late Antique world, Christian ceremony and worship were secretive. Before Christianity was legalized in the fourth century, Christians suffered intermittent periods of persecution at the hands of the Romans. Therefore, Christian worship was purposefully kept as inconspicuous as possible. Rather than building prominent new structures for express religious use, Christians in the Late Antique world took advantage of pre-existing, private structures—houses.

The house church in general was known as the *domus ecclesiae* , Latin for house and assembly. *Domi ecclesiae* emerged in third-century Rome and are closely tied to domestic Roman architecture of this period, specifically to the peristyle house in which the rooms were arranged around a central courtyard.

These rooms were often adjoined to create a larger gathering space that could accommodate small crowds of around fifty people. Other rooms were used for different religious and ceremonial purpose, including education, the celebration of the Eucharist, the baptism of Christian converts, storage of charitable items, and private prayer and mass . The plan of the house church at Dura-Europos illustrates how house churches elsewhere were designed.



Plan of the house church at Dura-Europos: Domi ecclesiae emerged in third-century Rome and are closely tied to the domestic Roman architecture of this period, specifically to the peristyle house in which the rooms were arranged around a central courtyard.

When Christianity was legalized in the fourth century, Christians were no longer forced to use pre-existing homes for their churches and meeting houses. Instead, they began to build churches of their own.

Even then, Christian churches often purposefully featured unassuming—even plain—exteriors. They tended to be much larger as the rise in the popularity of the Christian faith meant that churches needed to accommodate an increasing volume of people.

Architecture of the Early Christian Church

After their persecution ended, Christians began to build larger buildings for worship than the meeting places they had been using.

Learning Objectives

Explain what replaced the Classical temple in Early Christian architecture and why

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architectural formulas for temples were unsuitable, so the Christians used the model of the basilica , which had a central nave with one aisle at each side and an apse at one end. The transept was added to give the building a cruciform shape.
- A Christian basilica of the fourth or fifth century that stood behind an entirely enclosed forecourt that was ringed with a colonnade or arcade . This forecourt was entered from the outside through a range of buildings that ran along the public street.
- In the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire, churches tended to be centrally planned, with a central dome surrounded by at least one ambulatory .
- The church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy is a prime example of an Eastern, centrally planned church.

Key Terms

- **lunette**: A half-moon shaped space, usually above a door or window, either filled with recessed masonry or void.
- **presbytery**: A section of the church reserved for the clergy.
- **theophany**: A manifestation of a deity to a human.
- **prothesis**: The place in the sanctuary in which the Liturgy of Preparation takes place in the Eastern Orthodox churches.
- **fascia**: A wide band of material that covers the ends of roof rafters, and sometimes supports a gutter in steep-slope roofing; typically it is a border or trim in low-slope roofing.
- **basilica**: A Christian church building that has a nave with a semicircular apse, side aisles, a narthex and a clerestory.
- **cloister**: A covered walk, especially in a monastery, with an open colonnade on one side that runs along the walls of the buildings that face a quadrangle.
- **mullion**: A vertical element that forms a division between the units of a window, door, or screen, or that is used decoratively.
- **triforium**: A shallow, arched gallery within the thickness of an inner wall, above the nave of a church or cathedral.
- **diaconicon**: In Eastern Orthodox churches, the name given to a chamber on the south side of the central apse of the church, where the vestments, books, and so on that are used in the Divine Services of the church are kept.
- **clerestory**: The upper part of a wall that contains windows that let in natural light to a building, especially in the nave, transept, and choir of a church or cathedral.

Early Christian Architecture

After their persecution ended in the fourth century, Christians began to erect buildings that were larger and more elaborate than the house churches where they used to worship. However, what emerged was an architectural style distinct from classical pagan forms .

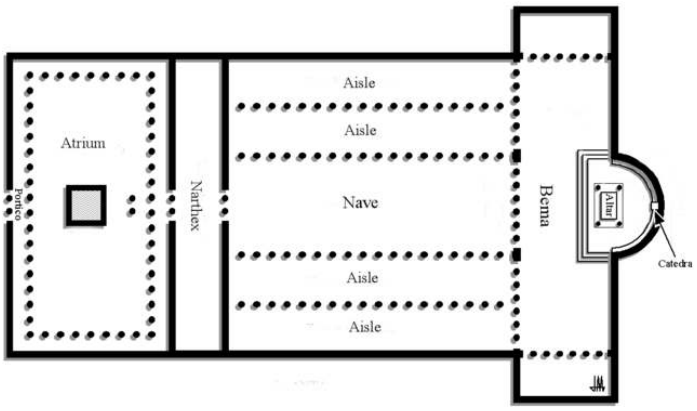
Architectural formulas for temples were deemed unsuitable. This was not simply for their pagan associations, but because pagan cult and sacrifices occurred outdoors under the open sky in the sight of the gods. The temple, housing the cult figures and the treasury , served as a backdrop. Therefore, Christians began using the model of the basilica, which had a central nave with one aisle at each side and an apse at one end.

Old St. Peter’s and the Western Basilica

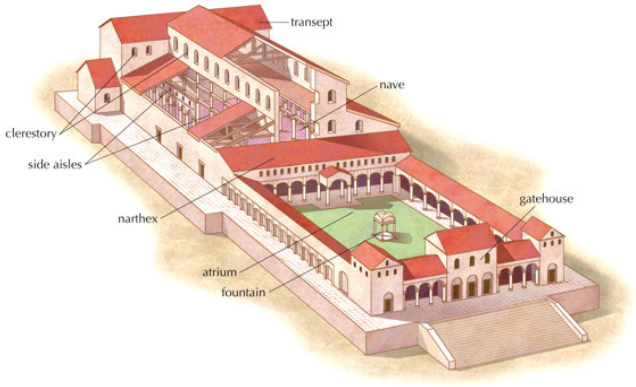
The basilica model was adopted in the construction of Old St. Peter’s church in Rome . What stands today is New St. Peter’s church, which replaced the original during the Italian Renaissance.

Whereas the original Roman basilica was rectangular with at least one apse, usually facing North, the Christian builders made several symbolic modifications. Between the nave and the apse, they added a transept, which ran perpendicular to the nave. This addition gave the building a cruciform shape to memorialize the Crucifixion.

The apse, which held the altar and the Eucharist, now faced East, in the direction of the rising sun. However, the apse of Old St. Peter's faced West to commemorate the church's namesake, who, according to the popular narrative, was crucified upside down.



Plan of Old St. Peter's Basilica: One of the first Christian churches in Rome, Old St. Peter's followed the plan of the Roman basilica and added a transept (labeled Bema in this diagram) to give the church a cruciform shape.



Exterior reconstruction of Old St. Peter's: This reconstruction depicts an idea of how the church appeared in the fourth century.

A Christian basilica of the fourth or fifth century stood behind its entirely enclosed forecourt. It was ringed with a colonnade or arcade, like the stoa or peristyle that was its ancestor, or like the cloister that was its descendant. This forecourt was entered from outside through a range of buildings along the public street.

In basilicas of the former Western Roman Empire, the central nave is taller than the aisles and forms a row of windows called a clerestory . In the Eastern Empire (also known as the Byzantine Empire, which continued until the fifteenth century), churches were centrally planned. The Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy is prime example of an Eastern church.

San Vitale

The church of San Vitale is highly significant in Byzantine art, as it is the only major church from the period of the Eastern Emperor Justinian I to survive virtually intact to the present day. While much of Italy was under the rule of the Western Emperor, Ravenna came under the rule of Justinian I in 540.



San Vitale: Unlike Western churches like St. Peter's, San Vitale consists of a central dome surrounded by two ambulatories. This is known as a centrally planned church.

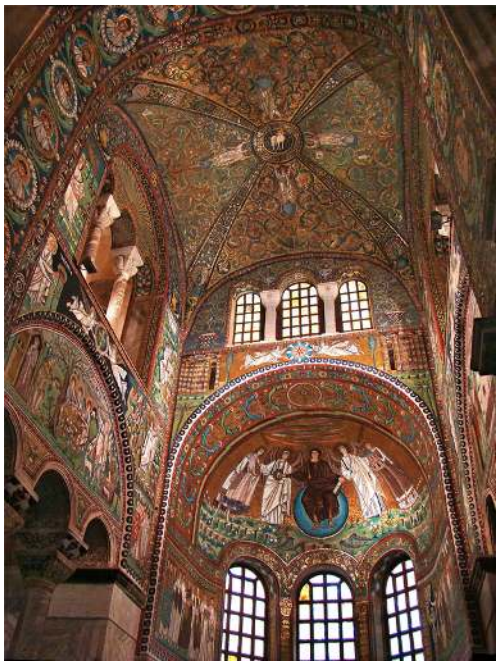
The church was begun by Bishop Ecclesius in 527, when Ravenna was under the rule of the Ostrogoths, and completed by the twenty-seventh Bishop of Ravenna, Maximian, in 546 during the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna. The architect or architects of the church is unknown.

The construction of the church was sponsored by a Greek banker, Julius Argentarius, and the final cost amounted to 26,000 solidi (gold pieces). The church has an octagonal plan and combines Roman elements (the dome, shape of doorways, and stepped towers) with Byzantine elements (a polygonal apse, capitals , and narrow bricks). The church is most famous for its wealth of Byzantine mosaics —they are the largest and best preserved mosaics outside of Constantinople.

The central section is surrounded by two superposed ambulatories, or covered passages around a cloister. The upper one, the matrimoneum, was reserved for married women. A series of mosaics in the lunettes above the triforia depict sacrifices from the Old Testament.

On the side walls, the corners, next to the mullioned windows, are mosaics of the Four Evangelists, who are dressed in white under their symbols (angel, lion, ox and eagle). The cross-ribbed vault in the presbytery is richly ornamented with mosaic festoons of leaves, fruit, and flowers that converge on a crown that encircles the Lamb of God.

The crown is supported by four angels, and every surface is covered with a profusion of flowers, stars, birds, and animals, specifically many peacocks. Above the arch , on both sides, two angels hold a disc. Beside them are representations of the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. These two cities symbolize the human race.



The presbytery at San Vitale: The cross-ribbed vault in the presbytery is richly ornamented with mosaic festoons of leaves, fruit and flowers that converge on a crown encircling the Lamb of God.

Sculpture of the Early Christian Church

Despite an early opposition to monumental sculpture, artists for the early Christian church in the West eventually began producing life-sized sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate Early Christian sculpture from earlier Roman sculptural traditions

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Early Christians continued the ancient Roman traditions in portrait busts and sarcophagus reliefs , as well as in smaller objects such as the consular diptych .
- Such objects, often in valuable materials, were also the main sculptural traditions of the barbaric civilizations of the Migration period. This may be seen in the hybrid Christian and animal- style productions of Insular art .
- The Carolingian and Ottonian eras witnessed a return to the production of monumental sculpture. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, there are records of several apparently life-size sculptures in Anglo-Saxon churches.
- Monumental crosses sculpted from wood and stone became popular during the ninth and tenth centuries in Germany, Italy, and the British Isles.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A pair of linked panels, generally in ivory, wood, or metal and decorated with rich sculpted decoration.
- **sculpture in the round**: Free-standing sculpture, such as a statue, that is not attached (except possibly at the base) to any other surface.

The Early Christians were opposed to monumental religious sculpture. Nevertheless, they continued the ancient Roman sculptural traditions in portrait busts and sarcophagus reliefs. Smaller objects, such as consular diptychs, were also part of the Roman traditions that the Early Christians continued.

Small Ivory Reliefs

Consular diptychs were commissioned by consuls elected at the beginning of the year to mark his entry to that post, and were distributed as a commemorative reward to those who supported his candidature or might support him in future.

The oldest consular diptych depicts the consul Probus (406 CE) dressed in the traditional garb of a Roman soldier. Despite showing signs of the growing stylization and abstraction of Late Antiquity , Probus maintains a contraposto pose. Although Christianity had been the state religion of the Roman Empire for over 25 years, a small winged Victory with a laurel wreath poses on a globe that Probus holds in his left hand. However, the standard he holds in his right hand translates as, “In the name of Christ, you always conquer.”



Consular diptych of Probus: Despite showing signs of the growing stylization and abstraction of Late Antiquity, Probus maintains a contraposto pose.

Carolingian art revived ivory carving, often in panels for the treasure bindings of grand illuminated manuscripts , as well as in crozier heads and other small fittings. The subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings, as were those with more hieratic images derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.

One surviving example from Reims, France depicts two scenes from the life of Saint Rémy and the Baptism of the Frankish king Clovis. Unlike classical relief figures before Late Antiquity, these figures seem to float rather than stand flatly on the ground .

However, we can also see the Carolingian attempt to recapture classical naturalism with a variety of poses, gestures, and facial expressions among the figures. Interacting in a life-like manner, all the figures are turned to some degree. No one stands in a completely frontal position.



Carolingian treasure binding scenes from the life of Saint Rémy and King Clovis.: Note the Carolingian attempt to recapture classical naturalism with a variety of poses, gestures, and facial expressions among the figures.

The Revival of Monumental Sculpture

However, a production of monumental statues in the courts and major churches in the West began during the Carolingian and Ottonian periods. Charlemagne revived large-scale bronze casting when he created a foundry at Aachen that cast the doors for his palace chapel, which were an imitation of Roman designs. This gradually spread throughout Europe.

There are records of several apparently life-size sculptures in Anglo-Saxon churches by the tenth and eleventh centuries. These sculptures are probably of precious metal around a wooden frame.

One example is the Golden Madonna of Essen (c. 980), a sculpture of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus that consistes of a wooden core covered with sheets of thin gold leaf . It is both the oldest known sculpture of the Madonna and the oldest free-standing, medieval sculpture north of the Alps.

It is also the only full-length survivor from what appears to have been a common form of statuary among the wealthiest churches and abbeys of tenth and eleventh century Northern Europe, as well as one of very few sculptures from the Ottonian era.

In the Golden Madonna of Essen, the naturalism of the Graeco-Roman era has all but disappeared. The head of the Madonna is very large in proportion the remainder of her body. Her eyes open widely and dominate her nose and mouth, which seem to dissolve into her face. In an additional departure from classical naturalism, the Baby Jesus appears not so much as an infant but rather as a small adult with an adult facial expression and hand gesture.



Golden Madonna of Essen: This statue has a wood core covered by thin gold leaf, c. 980.

Sculpted Crosses

Monumental crosses such as the Gero Crucifix (c. 965–970) were evidently common in the ninth and tenth centuries. The figure appears to be the finest of a number of life-size, German, wood-sculpted crucifixions that appeared in the late Ottonian or early Romanesque period, and later spread to much of Europe.

Charlemagne had a similar crucifix installed in the Palatine Chapel in Aachen around 800 CE. Monumental crucifixes continued to grow in popularity, especially in Germany and Italy. The Gero Crucifix appears to capture a degree of Hellenistic pathos in the twisted body and frowning face of the dead Christ.



Gero Crucifix: This appears to be the earliest and finest of a number of life-size German wood sculpted crucifixions that appeared in the late Ottonian or early Romanesque period that later spread to much of Europe.

Engraved stones were northern traditions that bridged the period of early Christian sculpture. Some examples are Nordic tradition rune stones, the Pictish stones of Scotland, and the high cross reliefs of Christian Great Britain.

Large, stone Celtic crosses, usually erected outside monasteries or churches, first appeared in eighth-century Ireland. The later insular carvings found throughout Britain and Ireland were almost entirely geometrical, as was the decoration on the earliest crosses. By the ninth century, reliefs of human figures were added to the crosses. The largest crosses have many figures in scenes on all surfaces, often from the Old Testament on the east side, and the New Testament on the west, with a Crucifixion at the center of the cross.

Muiredach's High Cross (tenth century) at Monasterboice is usually regarded as the peak of the Irish crosses. Whereas the Carolingian treasure binding and the Gero Crucifix attempt to recapture the attributes of classical sculptures, the figures on Muiredach's High Cross lack a sense of naturalism.

Some have large heads that dwarf their bodies, and others stand in fully frontal poses. This departure from the classical paradigm reflects a growing belief that the body was merely a temporary shell for—and therefore inferior to—the soul.



Muiredach's High Cross: Muiredach's High Cross (tenth century) at Monasterboice is usually regarded as the peak of the Irish crosses.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 9: The Byzantines

9.1: Early Byzantine Art
9.2: Middle Byzantine Art
9.3: Late Byzantine Art

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9.1: Early Byzantine Art

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire began as a continuation of the Roman Empire but gradually became distinct through cultural changes.

Learning Objectives

Explain the rise and duration of the Byzantine Empire

Key Takeaways

Key Points

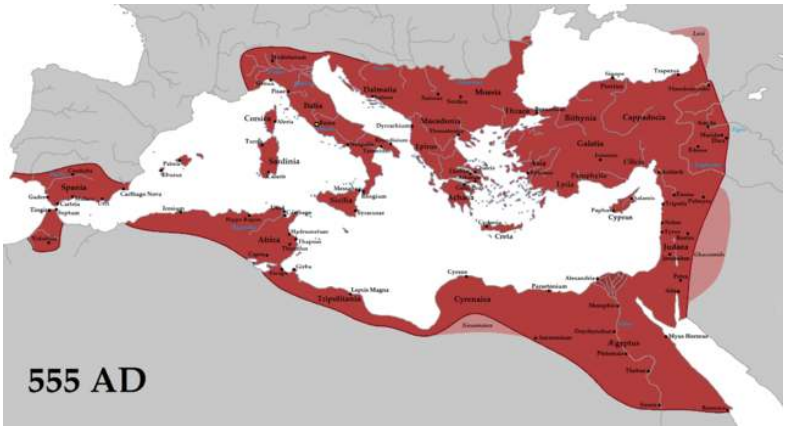
- The Byzantine Empire, so-called for the former name of Constantinople, was the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire. After the Western Empire fell in 476, the Byzantine Empire would continue for another millennium.
- Those living within the borders of the empire called themselves Romans, as opposed to Byzantines. Cultural shifts between them emerged with the change of the official language in the early seventh century, and the Byzantine split with the Roman Catholic Church in the eleventh century.
- The surviving Byzantine art is predominantly religious and follow traditional models that translate their carefully controlled church theology into artistic terms.
- Byzantine churches began in the style of many Western Roman churches but gradually shifted to centrally planned and then to Greek-cross structures over the course of the empire's history.

Key Terms

- **Greek-cross**: The dominant architectural form of middle- and late-period Byzantine churches, featuring a square center with an internal structure shaped like a cross, topped by a dome.
- **centrally planned**: Having a central nave with an aisle on either side separated by a colonnade, and an apse at one end.

The East–West Schism

After the death of Theodosius I in 395, the Roman Empire was divided into an Eastern half, based in Constantinople, and a Western, half based in Rome . Less than a century later, in 476, the last Western emperor Romulus Augustulus abdicated to a Germanic warlord who placed his own rule under that of the Eastern emperor. This act effectively ended the line of Western emperors and marked the end of the Western Empire. However, the Eastern portion (what historians call the Byzantine Empire) would continue for approximately another millennium.



The Byzantine Empire at its height: The Byzantine Empire (red) and its vassals (pink) in 555 CE during the reign of Justinian I.

The word Byzantine derives from Byzantium , the original name of Constantinople before Constantine moved the Roman imperial capital there in the fourth century. Despite this present-day appellation, those living within the borders of the Byzantine Empire did not call themselves Byzantine. They continued to call themselves Romans and, until the early seventh century, continued to speak Latin. Even Roman Catholicism remained the official religion of the Byzantine Empire until the eleventh century.

In an effort to recreate a unified Roman Empire, Justinian I (r. 527–565) was able to reconquer most of the Mediterranean coast, including North Africa, Rome, and southern Spain. This swath of territory remained in the Byzantine Empire for two centuries.

A significant cultural shift occurred in the early seventh century when Heraclius (r. 610–641) replaced Latin with Greek as the official language of the Empire. This caused religious tensions with the church in Rome that began in the fourth century, and resulted in seven Ecumenical Councils over six hundred years. Finally, in 1054, the East–West Schism officially made the Eastern Orthodox Church, centered in Constantinople, its own separate entity from the Roman Catholic Church.

From the tenth century to the fifteenth, the empire experienced periods of peace and prosperity, as well as war and economic downturns. In the late eleventh century, the empire lost much of Asia Minor to the Turks, a temporary setback that foreshadowed the eventual weakening of Constantinople and the further loss of territory to the growing Ottoman Empire . In 1453, the Ottoman Turks invaded and captured Constantinople, bringing the Byzantine Empire to an end.

Byzantine Art and Architecture

Surviving Byzantine art is mostly religious and, for the most part, highly conventionalized, following traditional models that translate their carefully controlled church theology into artistic terms. Painting in frescos , mosaics , and illuminated manuscripts , and on wood panels were the main, two-dimensional media . Manuscript painting preserved some of the classical realist tradition that was missing in larger works. Figurative sculpture was very rare except for small, carved ivories .

Byzantine art was highly prestigious and sought-after in Western Europe, where it maintained a continuous influence on medieval art until near the end of the period. This was especially true in Italy, where Byzantine styles persisted in modified form through the twelfth century.

However, few incoming influences affected Byzantine style. By means of the expansion of the Eastern Orthodox church, Byzantine forms and styles spread throughout the Orthodox world and beyond.

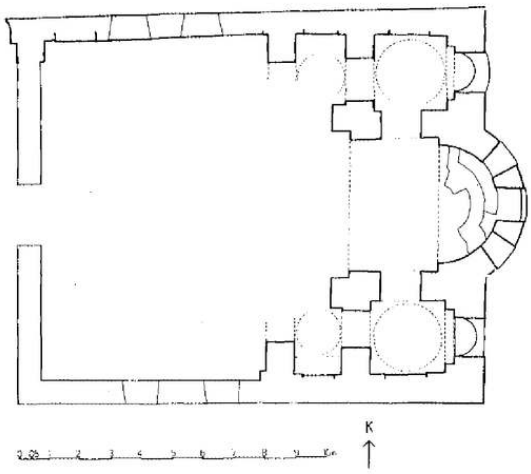


Ascension scene from the Rabula Gospel: Miniatures of the sixth-century Rabula Gospel display the more abstract and symbolic nature of Byzantine art.

Early Byzantine architecture drew upon the earlier elements of Roman architecture. After the fall of the Western Empire, several churches, including the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and San Vitale in Ravenna, were built as centrally planned structures. However, stylistic drift, technological advancement, and political and territorial changes gradually resulted in the Greek-cross plan in church architecture.

Buildings increased in geometric complexity. Brick and plaster were used in addition to stone for the decoration of important public structures. Classical orders were used more freely. Mosaics replaced carved decoration. Complex domes rested upon massive piers , and windows filtered light through thin sheets of alabaster to softly illuminate interiors.

Influences from Byzantine architecture, particularly in religious buildings, can be found in diverse regions from Egypt and Arabia to Russia and Romania. Most of the surviving structures are sacred in nature; secular buildings are mostly known through contemporaneous descriptions.



Plan of the katholikon church of the Pelekete monastery: The plan of katholikon church provides the typical layout of Byzantine churches after the eighth century.

Architecture in the Early Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I launched an ambitious building program to develop holy sites to restore the glory of the Roman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Byzantine architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Christian architecture was a significant component of Justinian's project of imperial renovation.
- The church-building program of Justinian was intended to assist the Emperor in his mission of religious unification.
- Justinian hoped to recreate the glory of the Roman Empire, partly through his building projects in Constantinople.
- The Hagia Sophia was the most notable of Justinian's projects, intriguing scholars and architects for centuries and influencing the designs of religious architecture, particularly mosques .
- Justinian also ordered the construction of the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, and the reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Apostles. Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, who also designed the Hagia Sophia, designed both structures.

Key Terms

- **pendentive**: A constructive device that permits the placing of a circular dome over a square room or an elliptical dome over a rectangular space.
- **buttress**: An architectural structure built against or projecting from a wall that serves to support or reinforce the wall.
- **narthex**: An architectural element typical of early Christian and Byzantine basilicas and churches consisting of the entrance or lobby area, located at the west end of the nave.

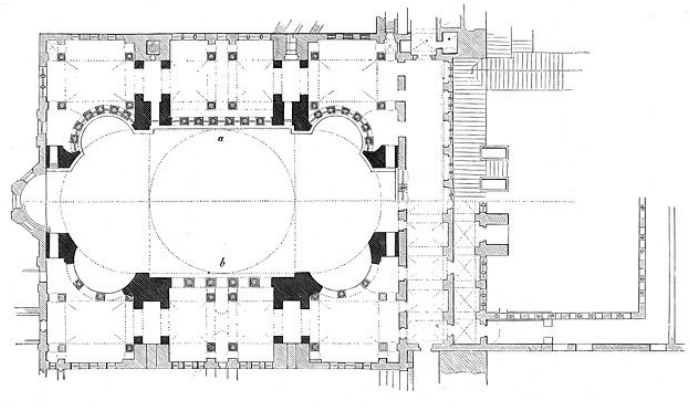
Justinian I devoted much of his reign (527–565 CE) to reconquering Italy, North Africa, and Spain. During his reign, he sought to revive the empire's greatness and reconquer the lost western half of the historical Roman Empire. This attempt at restoration included an ambitious building program in Constantinople and elsewhere in the empire, and is the most substantial architectural achievement by one person in history.



Justinian I from San Vitale in Ravenna: Byzantine Emperor Justinian forcefully pushed for the spread of Christianity along with the expansion of his empire.

Hagia Sophia

One notable structure for which Justinian was responsible is the Hagia Sophia, or Church of Holy Wisdom, built by Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles, both of whom would oversee most building projects that Justinian ordered within Constantinople. Like most Byzantine churches of this time, the Hagia Sophia is centrally planned , with the dome serving as its focal point.



Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles plan for the Hagia Sophia: a) Plan of the gallery (upper half); b) Plan of the ground floor (lower half).

The vast interior has a complex structure. The nave is covered by a central dome that at its maximum is over 180 feet from floor level and rests on an arcade of 40 arched windows. Although the dome appears circular at first glance, repairs to its structure have left it somewhat elliptical, with its diameter varying between 101 and nearly 103 feet.



An interior view of Hagia Sophia: The Emperor Justinian ordered the construction of Hagia Sophia in 532 CE.

The dome of Hagia Sophia has spurred particular interest for many art historians, architects, and engineers because of the innovative way the original architects envisioned it. The cupola is carried on four, spherical, triangular pendentives , an element that was first fully realized in this building.

The pendentives implement the transition from the circular base of the dome to the rectangular base below to restrain the lateral forces of the dome and allow its weight to flow downwards. They were later reinforced with buttresses .

At the western entrance side and the eastern liturgical side are arched openings that are extended by half domes of identical diameter to the central dome, and carried on smaller semi-domed exedras . A hierarchy of dome-headed elements creates a vast, oblong interior crowned by the central dome, with a span of 250 feet.

The Imperial Gate, reserved only for the emperor, was the main entrance of the cathedral . A long ramp from the northern part of the outer narthex leads up to the upper gallery, which was traditionally reserved for the empress and her entourage. It is laid out in a horseshoe shape that encloses the nave until it reaches the apse .

After the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, the plan of the Hagia Sophia would significantly influence the construction and design of the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550–1557).

The Church of the Holy Apostles

The Church of the Holy Apostles, originally built under the purview of Constantine in 330, was no longer considered grand enough when Justinian ascended the throne. Because of this, the architects Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles designed and built

a new church on the same site in the late 540s (consecrated in 550).

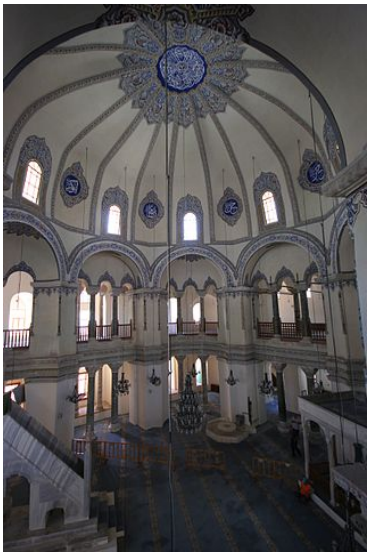
Like the original church, Justinian's replacement had a cruciform plan and and was surmounted by five domes: one above each arm of the cross and one above the central bay where the arms intersected. The western arm of the cross extended farther than the others to form an atrium . Because blueprints did not exist yet, and because the church was demolished shortly after the Ottoman conquest, the design details of the building are a matter of dispute.

The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus

The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus (527–536), known today as Little Hagia Sophia, was probably a model for the actual Hagia Sophia. It was recognized at the time as an adornment to all of Constantinople.

During the reign of Justinian's uncle Justin I, the future emperor faced accusations of conspiring against the current emperor and was killed for it. However, the Saints Sergius and Bacchus were said to intervene and vouched to Justin that his nephew was innocent. After the restoration of his title, Justinian commissioned Isidorus of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles to construct the church as a gesture of thanksgiving.

When the church was built, it shared its narthex, atrium and propylaea with another church. It became one of the most important religious structures in Constantinople.



Little Hagia Sophia: A general view of the interior, looking south and west.

Painting in the Early Byzantine Empire

The Early Byzantine period witnessed the establishment of strict guidelines for the production of icons.

Learning Objectives

Contrast Early Byzantine representations of religious figures to those of earlier Christian art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- As Christians were able to practice their religion openly, paintings depicting the stories of martyrs became popular.
- Byzantine icons follow a strict code of symbolism based on color and imagery .
- Early Byzantine icons were wooden panels covered with encaustic paint. Icons from the sixth century and earlier were incredibly lifelike and sometimes caused veneration of the objects, as opposed to who the objects represented. This led to a fifth-century ban on the representation of secular imagery.

Key Terms

- **iconoclastic**: Pertaining to the belief in, participation in, or sanction of destroying religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **icon**: An image, symbol, picture, or other representation that is usually an object of religious devotion.
- **pagan**: A person not adhering to any major or recognized religion; a follower of a pantheistic or nature-worshipping religion.
- **hagiography**: The study of saints.

Icon Painting

Icon painting, as distinct from other forms of painting, emerged in the Early Byzantine period as an aid to religious devotion. In contrast , earlier Christian art had relied more on allegory and symbolism. For example, earlier art might have featured a lamb or a fish rather than Christ in human form.

Before long, religious figures were being depicted in their human form to emphasize their humanity as well as their spirituality. While this issue would be debated and challenged during the later Iconoclastic period, for a time, images of the saints in icon paintings flourished.

After the adoption of Christianity as the only permissible Roman state religion under Theodosius I, Christian art began to change not only in quality and sophistication but also in nature. Paintings of martyrs and their feats began to appear, and early writers commented on their lifelike effect. Statues in the round were avoided as being too close to the principal artistic focus of pagan cult practices, as they have continued to be (with some small-scale exceptions) throughout the history of Eastern Christianity.

Icons were more religious than aesthetic in nature. They were understood to manifest the unique presence of the figure depicted by means of a likeness to that figure maintained through carefully maintained canons of representation. Therefore, very little room is made for artistic license.

Almost every aspect of the subject matter has a symbolic aspect. Christ, the saints, and the angels all have halos. Angels, as well as some depictions of the Holy Trinity, have wings because they are messengers. Figures have consistent facial appearances, hold attributes personal to them, and use a few conventional poses.

Use of Color

Color plays an important role, as well. Gold represents the radiance of Heaven. Red signifies divine life, while blue is the color of human life. White is the Uncreated Light of God, only used for scenes depicting the resurrection and transfiguration of Christ. In icons of Jesus and Mary, Jesus wears a red undergarment with a blue outer garment (God as Human), and Mary wears a blue undergarment with a red outer garment (humanity granted divine gifts). Thus, the doctrine of deification is conveyed by icons. Most icons incorporate some calligraphic text naming the person or event depicted. Because letters also carry symbolic significance, writing is often presented in a stylized manner.



Russian icon depicting the Holy Trinity: Christ, seated in the middle, wears a blue garment over a red one to symbolize his status as God made human. All three figures wear wings to signify their roles as messengers. The gold background places their location in Heaven.

Early Byzantine icons were painted in encaustic on wooden panel and, like Egyptian funerary portraits produced in the same media , they appeared very lifelike. Nilus of Sinai, in his fifth-century Letter to Heliodorus Silentiarius, recounts a miracle in which St. Plato of Ankyra appeared to a Christian in a dream. The Saint was recognized because the young man had often seen his portrait.

Veneration of Icons

This recognition of a religious apparition from its likeness to an image was also a characteristic of pagan, pious accounts of appearances of gods to humans and was a common theme in hagiography . During this period, the church began to discourage all non-religious human images, with the Emperor and donor figures counting as religious.

By the second half of the sixth century, there were isolated cases of direct veneration of the icons themselves, as opposed to the figures represented on them, due to continued claims of icon-associated miracles. This perceived misuse, in part, justified the banning and destruction of icons in the eighth century.



Icon of St. Peter : This icon of St. Peter, produced in encaustic, bears lifelike qualities that eventually vanished from icons in favor of more stylized imagery. This icon is from St. Catherine's Monastery at Mt. Sinai, circa sixth century.

Documentation exists to prove the use of icons as early as the fourth century. However, there are no surviving examples produced before the sixth century, primarily due to the period of Iconoclasm that ended the Early Byzantine period.

The surviving evidence of the earliest depictions of Christ, Mary, and the saints therefore comes from wall paintings, mosaics , and some carvings. Because Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) argued that no one knew the appearance of Jesus or that of Mary, the earliest depictions of Jesus were generic, rather than portrait images, and generally represented him as a beardless young man. Such an example can be seen in a mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, which houses the remains of the daughter of Theodosius I.



Christ as the Good Shepherd: This mosaic from the mid-fifth century is an example of a generic beardless Christ, as he might have appeared in contemporaneous icons. From the mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Italy, circa 450.

Mosaics in the Early Byzantine Empire

In the Byzantine period, a building's interior decoration often took the form of mosaic paintings, but with an added sense of spiritual drama that ordinary paintings could not convey.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the Byzantines used mosaics to convey a sense of spirituality in their architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mosaic tiles were more costly than the materials for traditional painting, and demonstrate the wealth of the Byzantine empire.
  The use of mosaics in Greek and Roman design was reserved for placement in the floor. Byzantine artists continued this precedent but also went further and adorned walls and ceilings with dramatic scenes.
- Mosaics in Middle Eastern locations like Mount Nebo and Mount Sinai provide examples of both dramatically spiritual and seemingly mundane imagery .
- The Italian city of Ravenna is the site of many of the great Byzantine structures that incorporated mosaic. The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia and the Arian Baptistery are prime examples of the powerful impact and spiritual effect of the Byzantine-mosaic style .

Key Terms

- **tesserae**: Small square pieces of stone, wood, ivory, or glass used for making a mosaic.
- **mandorla**: A luminous cloud that surrounds the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary in traditional Christian art.
- **mosaic**: A piece of artwork created by placing colored squares (usually tiles) in a pattern to create a picture.
- **mausoleum**: A large, stately tomb or a building housing such a tomb or several tombs.

Mosaic Art

Mosaic art flourished in the Byzantine Empire from the sixth to the fifteenth centuries. Whereas in Antiquity , walls were usually decorated with less-expensive painted scenes, the Byzantine aesthetic favored the more sumptuous, glittering effect of mosaic decoration.

Some of the finest surviving Byzantine mosaics are preserved in the Middle East and in the Italian city of Ravenna. Mosaics were not a Byzantine invention. In fact, some of the most famous surviving mosaics are from ancient Greece and Rome .

The artists of the Early Byzantine period expanded upon precedent by celebrating the possibilities of the mosaic technique. They began to use it on wall surfaces as a type of painting technique in stone. Unlike traditional wall paintings, however, mosaics could create a glittering, shimmering effect that lent itself to a heightened sense of spirituality. The imagery befit the Byzantine culture that emphasized the authority of one, true religion.

The mosaic technique was more expensive than traditional wall painting, but its effects were so desirable as to make it worth the cost. Further, technological advances (lighter-weight tesserae and a new cement recipe) made wall mosaics easier than they had been in the preceding centuries, when floor mosaics were favored.

The mosaic technique involved fitting together small pieces of stone and glass (tesserae). When set together, the tesserae create a paint-like effect in which different colors meld into one another to create shadows and a sense of depth. Moreover, Byzantine artists often placed gold backing behind the clear glass tesserae, such that the mosaics would appear to emit a mysterious light of their own. This play of light added a sense of drama and spiritualism to the images that suited the symbolism and magic inherent in the Byzantine religious ceremony .

Mount Nebo, Jordan

Most often, however, mosaic decoration in the classical world was reserved for floor surfaces. Byzantine churches continued this tradition in locations such as Mount Nebo in Jordan, a medieval pilgrimage site where Moses is believed to have died.

The Church of Saints Lot and Procopius (founded 567 CE) has a richly tiled floor that depicts activities like grape harvesting. Seemingly mundane, the grape harvest could be symbolic of the wine component of the Eucharist. The mosaic is located in the baptistery, where infants were initiated into the Christian faith and, according to biblical teachings, be cleansed of Original Sin. Thus, a symbolic depiction of the next sacrament in the religion would help to underscore the theme of salvation.

Another Mount Nebo floor mosaic (c. 530) depicts four registers of men and animals. The first two registers are hunting scenes in which the men hunt big cats and wild boars with the help of domesticated dogs. On the bottom two registers, the animals appear more domesticated, peacefully eating fruit from trees as a shepherd observes them at the left; they wear leashes pulled by their human masters. Among the domesticated animals are a camel and what appear to be a zebra and an emu. As in the Church of Saints Lot and Procopius, this mosaic likely has a religious message beneath its seemingly mundane subject matter.



Floor Mosaic from Mount Nebo: Hunting and grazing scenes from a floor mosaic in Mount Nebo, circa 530 CE.

Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai

Important Justinian-era mosaics (c. 548–565) decorate Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai. In the apse is a depiction of the Transfiguration on a golden background, that denotes the otherworldliness of the event. Christ, standing in the center as the focal point, is crowned with a halo and surrounded by a mandorla as his awestruck apostles observe the event. The apse is surrounded with bands containing the medallions of Biblical apostles and prophets, and two contemporary figures who are identified as Abbot Longinos and John the Deacon.



Transfiguration of Jesus: Apse of the monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt, circa 548–565 CE.

Ravenna

Arian Baptistery

Inside the Arian Baptistery in Ravenna are four niches and a dome with mosaics that depict the baptism of Jesus by Saint John the Baptist. Although the mosaics were produced before Justinian I annexed Italy to the Byzantine Empire, their overall design is very similar to those produced under Byzantine rule.

Jesus is shown as a beardless, half-submerged youth in the Jordan River. John the Baptist, wearing a leopard skin, stands on the right, while the personification of the Jordan River stands to the left. Above, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove sprays holy water from its beak. Below, a procession of the Apostles, led in separate directions by Saint Peter and Saint Paul circle the dome, meeting at a throne with a bejeweled crucifix resting on a purple cushion.



Baptism of Jesus: Located in the Arian Baptistery, Ravenna, Italy, and created in the late fifth to the early sixth century.

It took the artists several years to complete these mosaics, as can be clearly seen from the different colors of the stones used to depict the grass at the feet of the apostles. The designs are quite simple, but the use of a gold background should be noted, as it was typically used in this era to infuse these simple scenes with an ethereal glow.

Mausoleum of Galla Placidia

The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia is one of the earliest Byzantine buildings in Ravenna. While the exterior is plain, the interior is extensively decorated in elaborate mosaics. These mosaics create a truly spiritual space–a world removed from the ordinary. The vaulting is covered with floral motifs (possibly symbolic of the Garden of Eden) and the stars that stand out against a blue background seem to sparkle with their own mystical light.



Ceiling mosaic at the mausoleum of Galla Placidia: The Byzantines used mosaics more creatively and liberally than other cultures in the classical world.

Mosaics cover the walls of the vault , the lunettes , and the bell tower. The iconographic themes developed in the decorations represent the victory of eternal life over death. The inside contains two famous mosaic lunettes, and the rest of the interior is filled with mosaics of Christian symbols.

The central bay ‘s upper walls are decorated with four pairs of apostles, including Saints Peter and Paul, who acclaim a giant gold cross in the center of the dome against a blue sky of stars. Symbols of the four evangelists float among the clouds. The other four apostles appear in the barrel vaults of the transepts .



An internal view of the mausoleum of Galla Placidia: This early Byzantine structures demonstrates the intricate use of mosaics in Byzantine design.

Ivory Carving in the Early Byzantine Empire

Carved, ivory relief sculptures were central features of Early Byzantine art.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ivory miniature sculptures of the early Byzantine period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ivory carving has a special importance to the Byzantine Empire because it has no bullion value and cannot be melted down or otherwise recycled. Elaborate ivory diptychs were central to the art of this period. Early Christians valued the small scale of these relief sculptures that contrasted with the monumental sculpture favored by pagans .
- The Barberini Diptych and the Archangel Ivory are two significant examples of ivory carving from the first half of the sixth century.
- Ivory panels were used as book covers, usually as a centerpiece that was surrounded by metalwork and gems. They were assembled from up to five smaller panels because of the limited width of the tusk. Carved ivory covers were used for treasure bindings on the most precious illuminated manuscripts .
- Western art gradually began to focus on monumental sculpture and ivory carving declined in importance. However, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, it remained significant.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on two tablets, usually connected by hinges.
- **relief**: A type of artwork in which shapes or figures protrude from a flat background.

The Appeal of the Miniature

Ivory carving is the manual or mechanical carving of either animal tooth or tusk, wherein very fine detail can be achieved, and the surviving works often demonstrate intricate and complicated designs. This art form has a special importance to the history of Byzantine art because it has no bullion value and is not easily recycled like precious metals or jewels. Because of this, many ivory carvings from the Early Byzantine period still survive. Ivory diptychs, often elaborately decorated, were issued as gifts by newly appointed consuls.

In the Early Christian period, Christians avoided monumental sculpture, which was associated with the old pagan Roman religion and sculpted almost exclusively in relief. During the persecution of Christians, such reliefs were typically kept small in scale, no larger than the reliefs on sarcophagi.

Objects that were small-scale and lightweight are more easily carried and hidden, attributes that a persecuted class worshiping in secret would have found necessary. When Christianity was legalized and later became the official religion of the Empire these attitudes remained. As a result, small-scale sculpture—for which ivory was in many ways the best material—was central to art in a way that it rarely was at other times.

Consuls—civil officers who played an important administrative role until 541—gave Roman consular diptychs as presents. The form was later adopted for Christian use, with images of Christ, the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary), and saints. Such ivory panels were used as treasure bindings (elaborate book covers) from the sixth century, usually as centerpieces, and surrounded by metalwork and gems. These book covers were sometimes assembled from up to five smaller panels due to the limited width of the tusk. Carved ivory covers were used as treasure bindings on the most precious illuminated manuscripts.

The Barberini Diptych

The Barberini Diptych (c. 500–550 CE) is a Byzantine ivory leaf from an imperial diptych dating from Late Antiquity . It is carved in the style known as Late Theodosian, representing the emperor as triumphant victor .



Barberini Diptych: This is an early example of Byzantine ivory work, circa 500–550 CE.

The Barberini Diptych is attributed to an imperial workshop in Constantinople. The emperor depicted in it is usually identified as Justinian, or possibly Anastasius I or Zeno. Although it is not a consular diptych, it shares many features of their decorative schemes.

The emperor is accompanied in the main panel by a conquered barbarian in trousers to the left, and a crouching allegorical figure on the right that probably represents territory conquered or reconquered, and who holds his foot in gratitude or submission. An angel or Victory crowning the emperor with the traditional palm of victory, which is now lost.

The spear that partially conceals the barbarian does not wound him. He seems more astonished and overawed than combative. Above, Christ, with a fashionable, curled hairstyle, is flanked by two more angels in the style of pagan victory figures. He reigns above, while the emperor represents him below on Earth.

In the bottom panel barbarians from the West (left, in trousers) and East (right, with ivory tusks, a tiger and a small elephant) bring tribute, which includes wild animals. The figure in the left panel, apparently representing not a saint but a soldier, carries a statuette of Victory; his counterpart on the right is lost.

The Archangel Ivory

Dating to approximately the same period as the Barberini Diptych is the Archangel Ivory (c. 525–550 CE), the largest surviving half of an ivory diptych from the Early Byzantine period. The subject matter is an archangel, possibly Michael, who holds a scepter in his left hand and an orb capped with a cross in his right hand, which he extends in a gesture of offering .

This is the insignia of imperial power. Above the angel hovers a Greek cross surrounded by a laurel wreath, possibly signifying victory. Its missing half might have depicted Justinian I, to whom the archangel would be offering the insignia. It and the Barberini Diptych are the two most important surviving sixth-century Byzantine ivories attributed to the imperial workshops of Constantinople under Justinian.



Archangel Ivory: This is the largest surviving half of an ivory diptych from the Early Byzantine period.

The figure is depicted in a highly classical style, wearing Greek or Roman garb, and with a youthful face and proportions that conform to the ideals of classical sculpture. Although the architectural elements consist of a classical round arch supported by Composite columns , the space is more typically Byzantine in its bending of spatial logic.

The archangel's feet are at the top of a staircase that recedes from the base of the columns, but his arms and wings are in front of the columns. His feet are also not firmly planted on the steps. The top of the ivory bears a Greek inscription that translates as, "Receive this suppliant, despite his sinfulness;" it is possibly an expression of humility on the part of Justinian.

In the Byzantine and Eastern Orthodox world, the disapproval of large religious sculpture was to remain unchanged to the present day. However, in the West it was overcome, probably beginning with the court of Charlemagne in the ninth century. As large monumental sculpture in other materials became more important, the centrality of ivory carving slowly lessened.

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9.2: Middle Byzantine Art

Architecture and Mosaics in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Architecture and mosaic decoration thrived during the Middle Byzantine period that followed Iconoclasm's stifling of the arts.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics and innovations of Byzantine religious art that followed the end of the Iconoclasm controversy

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Two periods of state-sanctioned iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries ended the Early Byzantine period that led to the prohibition and destruction of religious images. Iconoclasm ended in 843, leading to the renewal of churches through decorative and figurative mosaics and frescos . New elements and styles began to emerge during the Middle Byzantine period under the rule of the Macedonian emperors.
- The Theotokos mosaic of the Virgin and Child, in the central apse of the Hagia Sophia, is believed to reconstruct an earlier sixth century mosaic destroyed during Iconoclasm. It combines the Early Byzantine style with the new development of softer folds, increased modeling, and the addition of perspective .
- At the Hosios Loukas monastery in Greece are two connected churches that combine the older use of pendentives and the newer use of squinches beneath their domes . The monastery's mosaics depict figures in a more schematic manner and on flat, gold backgrounds with little hints about the setting.
- Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice , Italy, is a Greek cross-plan church richly decorated in marble revetment , pattern stone floors, and a detailed and extensive program of mosaics.

Key Terms

- **squinch**: A structure constructed between two adjacent walls to aid in the transition from a polygonal to a circular structure; as when a dome is constructed on top of a square room.
- **aniconic**: Opposed to the use and veneration of images, especially religious images.
- **pendentive**: The concave triangular section of vaulting that provides transition between a dome and the square base on which it is set, and transfers the weight of the dome.
- **Katholikon**: The major temple or church building of a monastery or diocese in an Eastern Orthodox Church.
- **Pantocrator**: The ruler of everything, especially as an epithet for Jesus Christ; an artistic depiction of Jesus in this aspect.
- **iconoclasm**: The belief in, participation in, or sanction of destroying religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.

The First and Second Iconoclasms

Broadly defined, iconoclasm is defined as the destruction of images. In Christianity, iconoclasm has generally been motivated by people who adopt a literal interpretation of the Ten Commandments, which forbid the making and worshipping of graven images . The period after the reign of Justinian I (527–565) witnessed a significant increase in the use and veneration of images, which helped to trigger a religious and political crisis in the empire. As a result, aniconic sentiment grew, culminating in two periods of iconoclasm—the First Iconoclasm (726–87) and the Second Iconoclasm (814–42)—which brought the Early Byzantine period to an end.

Byzantine Iconoclasm constituted a ban on religious images by Emperor Leo III and continued under his successors. It was accompanied by the widespread destruction of images and persecution of supporters of the veneration of images. The goal of the iconoclasts was to restore the church to a strict opposition to images in worship that they believed characterized at the least some parts of the early church.

The Feast of Orthodoxy

After the death of the last Iconoclast emperor Theophilos, his young son Michael III, with his mother the regent Theodora and Patriarch Methodios, summoned the Synod of Constantinople in 843 to bring peace to the Church. At the end of the first session,

on the first day of Lent, all made a triumphal procession from the Church of Blachernae to Hagia Sophiato to restore the icons to the church in an event called the Feast of Orthodoxy.

Imagery , it was decided, is an integral part of faith and devotion, making present to the believer the person or event depicted on them. However, the Orthodox makes a clear doctrinal distinction between the veneration paid to icons and the worship which is due to God alone.

Since Iconoclasm was the last of the great Christological controversies to trouble the Church, its defeat is considered to be the final triumph of the Church over heresy. When the Iconoclasm controversy came to an end in 843, Byzantine religious art underwent a renewal.

A series of naturalistic innovations can be seen in examples from the Hagia Sophia, the monastery of Hosios Loukas, and Saint Mark's Basilica. This revival of a classical style of art was partly due to a renewed interest in classical culture , which accompanied a period of military successes, during the Macedonian Renaissance (867–1056).

Theotokos Mosaic at the Hagia Sophia

The Hagia Sophia is a former Greek Orthodox patriarchal basilica (church), constructed from 537 until 1453. A combination of a centrally planned and basilican building, it is considered the epitome of Byzantine architecture.

After the end of iconoclasm, a new mosaic was dedicated in the Hagia Sophia under the Patriarch Photius and the Macedonian emperors Michael III and Basil I. The mosaic is located in the apse over the main alter and depicts the Theotokos, or the Mother of God. The image, in which the Virgin Mary sits on a throne with the Christ child on her lap, is believed to be a reconstruction of a sixth-century mosaic that was destroyed during the Iconoclasm.

An inscription reads: "The images which the impostors had cast down here, pious emperors (Michael and Basil) have again set up." This inscription refers to the recent past and the renewal of Byzantine art under the Macedonian emperors.



Theokotos and Child: This image, in which the Virgin Mary sits on a throne with the Christ Child, is believed to be a reconstruction of a sixth-century mosaic that was destroyed during the Iconoclasm.

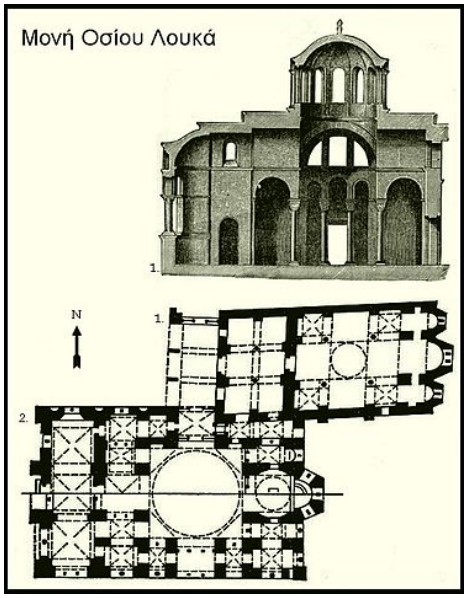
The image of the Virgin and Child is a common Christian image, and the mosaic depicts Byzantine innovations and the standard style of the period. The Virgin's lap is large. Christ sits nestled between her two legs. The figures' faces are depicted with gradual shading and modeling that provides a sense of realism that contradicts the schematic folding of their drapery.

Their drapery is defined by thick, harsh folds delineated by contrasting colors: the Virgin in blue and Christ in gold. The two frontal figures sit on an embellished gold throne that is tilted to imply perspective. This attempt is a new addition in Byzantine art during this period. The space given to the chair contradicts the frontality of the figures, but it provides a sense of realism previously unseen in Byzantine mosaics.

Hosios Loukas, Greece

The monastery of Hosios Loukas (St. Luke) in Greece was founded in the early tenth century to host the relics of St. Luke. Located on the slope of Mount Helicon, the monastery is known for its two churches, the Church of the Theotokos (tenth century) and the main building called the Katholikon (eleventh century).

The churches were decorated in mosaics, frescoes , and marble revetment. The two churches are connected together by the narthex of the Theotokos and an arm of the Katholikon. The churches demonstrate two different styles of architecture.



Plan of Hosios Loukas: Top (1 on diagram): Plan of the Church of the Theotokos. Bottom (2): Plan of Katholikon.

Church of the Theotokos and the Katholikon

The Church of the Theokotos represents a Greek cross-plan style church. It has a large central dome that rests on a series of pendentives. The Katholikon is also a Greek cross-plan style church but instead of the dome resting on pendentives, the dome of the Katholikon rests on squinches, which create an octagonal transition between the square plan of the church and the circular plan of the dome.

The difference in style between the pendentives and the squinches allow for different relationships between the architecture and the decoration and different play of light and darkness in the shapes the squinches provided.



The Katholikon's dome: Unlike the Church of the Theokotos, the dome of the Katholikon rests on squinches.

The mosaics found in the Katholikon were created in an early Byzantine style commonly seen in the centuries before Iconoclasm. The scenes depicted are flat with little architecture or props to provide a setting. Instead, the background is covered in brilliant gold mosaics.

The figures in the scenes, such as those seen in the apse mosaic of Christ washing the feet of his disciples, are depicted with naturalistic faces that are modeled with long, narrow noses and small mouths. The clothing of the figures is represented through schematic folds and contrasting colors. While the folds of the drapery represent a body underneath, there appears to be no actual mass to the body.

These characteristics of Byzantine mosaics began to change in the following century, partially through the addition of perspective in the Theokotos of the Hagia Sophia.

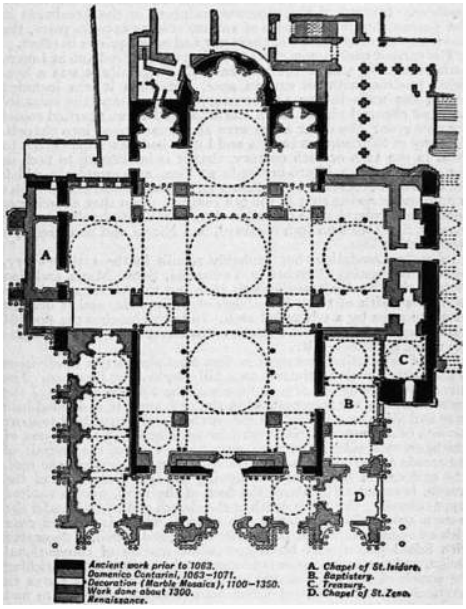


Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples: In the Katholikon, the figures in these scenes are depicted with naturalistic faces that are modeled with long, narrow noses and small mouths.

Saint Mark's Basilica, Venice

Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy, was first built in the ninth century and rebuilt in the eleventh century in its current form following a fire. The basilica is a grand building, built next to the Doge's Palace. It initially functioned as the doge's private chapel, then a state church, and in 1806 became the city's cathedral . The basilica houses the remains of Saint Mark, which the Venetians looted from Alexandria in 828 and prompted the building of the basilica.

Saint Mark's Basilica was built in the Byzantine Greek-cross plan. Each arm is divided into three naves and topped by a dome. At the crossing is a large central dome. The main apse is flanked by two smaller chapels. The narthex of the basilica is U-shaped and wraps around the western transept . It is decorated with scenes from the lives of Old Testament prophets.



Plan of St. Mark's Basilica: The circles mark the location of each dome.

The entirety of the basilica is richly decorated. The floor is covered in geometric patterns and designs that use the Roman decoration techniques known as opus sectile and opus tessellatum.

The lower walls and pillars are covered in marble polychromatic panels, and the upper walls and the domes are decorated with twelfth- and thirteenth-century mosaics. The central dome depicts an image of Christ Pantocrator , and the overall decorative program depicts scenes from the life of Christ and images of salvation from both the Old and New Testament.



The interior of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, Italy: A view from the clerestory-level walkway shows its richly decorated mosaics and marble, polychrome panels.

Objects of Worship in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Personal objects (psalters and triptychs), reliquaries, and icons were popular objects of worship during the Middle Byzantine period.

Learning Objectives

Identify the principal objects of worships in Byzantine art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The triptych is a small, personal object made from three panels (either painted or carved from wood or ivory) that was used by an individual to guide their devotion and prayers to God. The Harbaville Triptych and the Borradaile Triptych are prime examples.
- Psalters were another form of personal devotion. These books contained the Books of Psalms and were often richly decorated, or illuminated, with scenes and miniatures .
- The reliquary was a protective container for a relic —a body part of a saint or a sacred object—that was preserved for veneration. While they could be simple, these containers were often decorated with or made from expensive materials such as gold, silver, and precious stones.
- The icon is an image of a saint that was also a considered sacred and was venerated by the public. These images, which vary in size and subject, were often painted panels.

Key Terms

- **reliquary**: A container to hold or display sacred objects.
- **triptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on three tablets connected by hinges.
- **Deesis**: A traditional iconic representation of Christ in Majesty enthroned, carrying a book, and flanked by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, and sometimes other saints and angels.
- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **cloisonne**: A decorative technique for metalwork, especially brass, whereby colored enamel is baked between the raised ridges of the metal.
- **icon**: An image, symbol, picture, or other representation that is usually as an object of religious devotion.

Triptych

Triptychs are a type of panel painting or relief carving for devotional objects that are created on three panels. The panels could also be divided in two, known as diptychs, or sometimes had more than three panels, known as a polyptych .

The use of triptychs began in the Byzantine period, and they were originally made to be small and portable. Later during the Gothic period, multi-panel devotional paintings were enlarged as altarpieces . However, the small, portable triptychs of the Byzantine period were used as personal objects of worship. They were designed to guide their owner in prayer and direct their thoughts towards Christ.

The triptych was designed with one central panel and two wings that folded over the main image and allowed the object to be portable, when closed, and to stand, when the wings were open. The wings are typically carved with portrayals of saints, while the main image often depicted Christ, although the imagery varied. The Harbaville Triptych depicts a scene of Deesis with Christ as the Pantocrator, while the Borradaile Triptych depicts an image of the Crucifixion.

Harbaville Triptych

The Harbaville Triptych is an early example from the mid-tenth century of the new ivory triptychs that replaced diptychs during the Middle Byzantine period. The main scene depicts the figures of Christ Pantocrator flanked by John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, in a supplication scene known as a Deesis.

John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary are depicted as intercessors, praying on behalf of the triptych's owner to Christ. On the register below them are the apostles James, John, Peter, Paul, and Andrew. The two side panels depict two registers with two characters each, all of which are identifiable saints.



Harbaville Triptych: The supplication scene, Deesis with Saints. Made of ivory, circa 950.

The figures are carved in a recognizably Byzantine style . Their bodies are elongated and narrow, and they seem to float or hover just above the ground instead of stand with weight. This illusion is furthered by the fact that nearly each character stands on a small platform.

The saints are elegantly draped, and their bodies are distinguished by the folds of their drapery and not any type of modeling. The figures' facial expressions are solemn, and their facial features are deeply carved. The saints each face outward, except for John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, who are each slightly turned and bowing to an enthroned Christ. Christ sits on an elaborate throne as the Pantocrator, with a book of Gospels in one arm and his hand gesturing in a motion of blessing.

Borradaile Triptych

The Borradaile Triptych's main image depicts the Crucifixion of Christ instead of a Deesis. The central image takes up the entirety of the main frame and the two wings are divided into three registers. The figures on the wings are images of saints, similar to the Harbaville Triptych.

The central scene is dominated by the image of Christ on the cross. Two angels flank him above his arms. Below are the figures of the Virgin Mary and St. John. St. John gestures and averts his eyes, while Mary lifts a veil to her face, which bears a distraught expression.



Borradaile Triptych: Central panel carved with the Crucifixion, the Virgin and St. John, and above, the half-length figures of the archangels Michael and Gabriel; on the left leaf, from top to bottom: St. Kyros; St. George and St. Theodore Stratilates; St. Menas and St. Prokopios; on the right leaf: St. John; St. Eustathius and St. Clement of Ankyra; St. Stephen and St Kyrion. On the reverse are two inscribed crosses and roundels containing busts of Saints Joachim and Anna in the centers, with Saints Basil and Barbara, and John the Persian and Thekla at the terminus. Made of ivory, circa 10th century.

The figures, like those of the Harbaville Triptych, are elongated, although less narrow and more rigid. They also are less deeply carved and appear more insubstantial. Except for Christ's upper body, which is unclothed, the bodies of the figures are defined by their rigid drapery. The saints stand in straight, upright positions that further provide a sense of solemnity to the scene.

Christ is seen on the cross in a stance that focuses on his divine qualities and not his human suffering. The only emotion from the scene derives from his mother, the Virgin Mary, who stands weeping beneath him.

Reliquaries

A reliquary is a protective container used for the storage and display of sacred objects called relics. Relics were a part of the body of a dead saint that was preserved for veneration. Some relics are believed to be endowed with miraculous powers, and other relics have come to play key roles in certain church festivals.

The veneration of relics and use of reliquaries became popular during the Byzantine period when the bodies of saints were often moved and divided between Churches. While many relics were honored and venerated, the church never considered this form of devotion as a form of worship—that was an act reserved for God.



Reliquary of the True Cross: This reliquary depicts a scene of the Crucifixion with fourteen saints around the border. The reliquary is very small and probably contained a piece of the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified.

Reliquaries take many forms and shapes and are made out of a variety of materials. However, many reliquaries were made from or decorated with expensive material, such as gold and precious stones.

A reliquary from the early ninth century depicts a scene of the Crucifixion with fourteen saints around the border. The reliquary is very small and probably contained a piece of the True Cross, the cross on which Christ was crucified. This reliquary is made from cloisonné, a metalworking technique in which metal was soldered into compartments and was then filled with enamel, glass, gems, or other materials. This reliquary is made with green, white, blue, and red enamel and gold and is only four inches high by nearly three inches wide.

Psalters

Like triptychs, psalters were small, private objects used for private devotion and worship. A psalter is a book that contains the Book of Psalms and other liturgical material such as calendars. They were often commissioned and were richly decorated and illuminated. The surviving psalters contain many fine examples of the painting styles and techniques from the Middle Byzantine period.

The Paris Psalter is a mid-tenth century manuscript with fourteen, full-page, miniature paintings created in a classical style. As with most of the art produced under the Macedonian Dynasty , the figures and subject matter were influenced by a revived interest in classical culture .

The figures painted in these scenes have bodies with mass and drapery that conforms, not shapes, their bodies. The image depicts David, a psalmist, in an idyllic country setting outside a city (seen in the distance) composing psalms on his harp. He sits with a sheep, goats, dogs, and an angel, representing Melody, while a personification of Echo peers around a column .

A male figure, representing the mountain of Bethlehem, lounges on the ground. The image is reminiscent of a Greco-Roman wall painting of the musician Orpheus charming people and animals with his music. While the figures appear modeled and are reminiscent of classical art, the psalter has a Byzantine style to it.

The clothing is still rendered with bright, contrasting colors and the folds of the drapery are stylized and dark. The slightly skewed perspective given to the vase on top the column and the city in the background are additional elements that provide the scene with a Byzantine artistic style.



Paris Psalter: David composing on his harp.

Icons

Icons remained popular devotional objects during the Byzantine period. These objects, which varied in size, depicted the image of a saint, or a sacred person such as Christ or Mary, who was considered sacred and was venerated. The images were often painted panels and the display of icons surged following the end of Iconoclasm in the ninth century.

Many icons, once reaching this status, would be furthered objectified and protected through the addition of custom gilded frames, or gold or silver cases that covered the entirety of the image except for the face of the subject. Other icons, such as a ninth-century depiction of the Crucifixion, contained imagery on both sides.



Double-sided icon with the Crucifixion and the Virgin Hodegitria: The original painting was done in the ninth century, and additional details were added in the thirteenth century.

Painting in the Middle Byzantine Empire

Paintings were popular materials for representing stories and to guide devotion during the Middle Byzantine period.

Learning Objectives

Relate the progression and stylistic changes of painting during the Middle Byzantine period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Emotional elements begin to be seen in Middle Byzantine painting, as one can see in the Lamentation wall painting from the Church of St. Pantaleimon. The figures of the scene are rendered with humanity and sorrow as they grieve over the dead body of Christ.
- Naturalism and schematics combine in the Death of St. Onesimus. The folds of the figures' clothing follow the contours of their bodies. However, the folds are defined by thick lines , and the title figure seems to hover over the landscape.
- The Theotokos of Vladimir is a late 11th to early 12th century icon of the Virgin and Child. The icon is considered a protective icon of Russia and depicts a compassionate and emotionally charged Virgin and Child.

Key Terms

- **Lamentation of Christ**: The scene depicts the body of Christ being mourned after the removal of his body from the cross by his family, friends, and followers.

Painting in the Middle Byzantine

Painting during the Middle Byzantine period began to progress and change stylistically. Artists approached common scenes with an ingenuity based on a mix of naturalism in the conveyance of emotional reaction, and schematics in specific renderings of the body. This can be seen in the fresco of the Lamentation found in the Church of Saint Pantaleimon in the city of Nerezi, Macedonia, an illumination of the Death of St. Onesimus, and an icon of the Virgin and Child.

Lamentation from Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia

The Lamentation of Christ is an iconic scene that depicts the Virgin Mary holding and mourning her dead son, just after Christ has been removed from the cross. She wraps an arm around his shoulders and presses her face against his. St. John grasps Christ's right hand while Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus kneel at Christ's feet. A fifth follower enters the scene with arms outstretched from the right and a group of angels fly above the scene in the deep blue sky.

The Macedonian painters created a scene filled with emotional tension that was unprecedented in Byzantine art. The figures faces are neither solemn nor formal but instead are emotionally charged with grief and sorrow. Mary's face especially denotes the emotion and pain that a mother feels when grieving a lost child.

The figures are also bent over Christ's body, which further emphasizes the emotions in the scene—no longer stiff or static , these figures feel and cause the viewer to be filled with emotion.



Lamentation of Christ: This is a detail from the wall painting in the Church of Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia.

Despite these elements of naturalism, there are some elements of Byzantine style in the fresco. For one, the figures' clothing is still schematically rendered, even though most of the figures appear to have bodies and mass under their garments. For another, the seminude body of Christ is rendered in a style similar to the drapery. The muscles are defined through schematic lines that denote parts of his body, such as his knees and abdominal muscles.

Another oddity is that Christ's body is not on the ground but instead hovers unnaturally off the ground. This is hardly noticed at first, since the placement of his torso and feet make sense in their individual context, but as a whole it requires Christ's body to float instead of lay naturally on the ground.

The Death of St. Onesimus

A similar mixture of naturalism and stylization is evident in a painting that depicts the martyrdom of Saint Onesimus (c. 985 CE). The image is part of the Menologion of Basil II, an illuminated manuscript compiled circa 1000 CE as a church calendar.

The Epistle to Philemon, written by Paul the Apostle to the slave-master Philemon, concerns a runaway slave called Onesimus. This slave found his way to the site of Paul's imprisonment to escape punishment for a theft of which he was accused. After hearing the Gospel from Paul, Onesimus converted to Christianity.

Paul, having earlier converted Philemon to Christianity, sought to reconcile the two by writing the letter to Philemon which today exists in the New Testament. During the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian and the persecution of Trajan, Onesimus was imprisoned in Rome and might have been martyred by stoning, although some sources claim that he was beheaded.



The Death of St. Onesimus: From the Monologion of Basil II, a painting produced around 985 CE; the book was assembled around 1000.

As in the Lamentation scene above, the Death of St. Onesimus combines the naturalistic and the schematic. The two men who beat Onesimus to death convey a sense of dynamism as they bend at the waists and knees. The folds of their clothing and of Onesimus's loincloth follows the contours of their bodies as they assume their poses.

Although the painting is damaged, Onesimus's furrowed brow, possibly suggesting anger or frustration, is still visible. Despite these realistic elements, the folds of the figures' clothing appears more linear than natural, defined by deep, noticeable lines. Like the figure of Christ in the Lamentation, Onesimus seems to hover over the landscape and rest the top half of his body on the leg of one of his attackers. Furthermore, the blood pours from his legs in a linear manner, appearing more like strings than liquid.

Theotokos of Vladimir

The Theotokos of Vladimir, an icon of the Virgin and Child, represents the new style of icons that were created in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These icons depict emotion, compassion, and the growing trend in spirituality.

The mother and child are depicted with serene faces in the Byzantine style. Mary's nose is long and narrow and her mouth small. She looks out and confronts the viewer with compassionate, knowing eyes that remind the viewer of Christ's future sacrifice . The Christ child is small, although his face is adult-like and he is drawn to his mother and embraces her. His drapery shines as if it was golden rays, and the Virgin is dressed in rich, dark fabric with gold embellishments.

The compassion and humanity between the characters prefigures the emotional Late Byzantine style of the next two centuries. The image was given as a gift to the Grand Duke of Kiev in 1131 by the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople and is an important and protective icon of the Russian cities of Vladimir and Moscow and the country of Russia itself.



Theotokos of Vladimir: This new style of icons depict emotion, compassion, and the growing trend in spirituality.

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9.3: Late Byzantine Art

Late Byzantine Art

Late Byzantine Art began after the sack of Constantinople in 1204 and continued until the fall of Byzantium in 1453.

Learning Objectives

Explain how art during the Late Byzantine period departed from the standards and styles seen in its early and middle periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The French and Italian armies sacked Constantinople during the Fourth Crusades in 1204 and divided the Byzantium empire into smaller kingdoms. The Byzantines eventually re-conquered Constantinople in 1261 and the Byzantine Empire continued to reign until falling to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.
- Art during the final centuries of the Byzantine Empire is known as Late Byzantine art and the styles and conventions of the Early and Middle Byzantine periods begin to change to reflect emerging dynamics and tastes.
- Mosaics and frescoes were still used for church decoration, although frescoed wall paintings became more popular. The change in favored medium also changed the types of imagery; wall paintings more heavily favor narrative scenes and cycles instead of standard single images.
- During this period landscapes and settings began to emerge in two-dimensional art. Furthermore, a new method of depicting the body, with softer modeling and shading was used. Robes and drapery are still schematically rendered, but the figures now have mass and tangible bodies.

Key Terms

- **Ottoman**: Of the Islamic empire of Turkey.

Late Byzantine Art

The period of Late Byzantium saw the decline of the Byzantine Empire during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries. Although the capital city of Constantinople and the empire as a whole prospered as a connection between east and west traders, Byzantium continually dealt with threats from the Ottoman Turks to the east and the Latin Empire to the west.

During the Fourth Crusades, the Crusaders attacked Constantinople, took the city under siege in 1203, and eventually overcame its defenses to sack the city in 1204. Constantinople became the capital city of the Latin Empire, one of the new kingdoms of a divided Byzantium, until the Byzantines retook it in 1261.

Once more, Constantinople became a prosperous Byzantine city until falling to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The sack of Constantinople in 1204 marks the starting point of Late Byzantine Art, which lasted until the fifteenth century and spread beyond the borders of Byzantium.



The division of the Byzantine Empire: The division of the Byzantine Empire after its sacking in 1204 by the French and Italian armies during the Fourth Crusades.

Art during this period began to change from the standards and styles seen in the Early and Middle periods of Byzantium rule. A renewed interest in landscapes and earthly settings arose in mosaics, frescoes, and psalters . This development eventually led to the

demise of the gold background.

The settings are often simple, perhaps a hill or a chair at first, and are often pastoral. Architecture began to be depicted more often, which renewed the use of perspective . At first buildings were rendered slightly skewed, but eventually artists refined the combination of material (mosaic and painting) with architecture and perspective .



Christ Healing a Paralytic : A mosaic in Caphernaum from the cycle of the Life of Christ. It is located in the outer narthex of Chora Church, Constantinople, circa 1310–20.

Chora Church

Mosaic work was still popular in the Late Byzantine period, but frescoes and the depiction of narrative cycles began to increase in popularity to become the primary decoration in churches. This transition is seen in the Chora Church, which was initially decorated in mosaic, with the final wing decorated with wall paintings. The shift in media changed the subjects depicted.

Mosaics of single scenes and figures were replaced in favor of frescoed narrative cycles and biblical stories. The rendering of the figures also began to change. Artists now relied less on sharp, schematic folds and patterns and instead use softer, more subtle modeling and shading. While sharp folds in the drapery can still be found in images from this period, these folds are rendered in similar, not complimentary, colors and shades. Furthermore the bodies appear to have mass and weight. The figures no longer float or hover on their toes but stand on their feet. This allows for the addition of movement and energy in the painted figures and an overall increase of drama and emotion.



Frescoed interior of the Paracclesion Fresco : Scenes from the lives of the Virgin Mary and Christ. Chora Church, Constantinople, c. 1310–20.

Pammakaristos Church

Although sculpture and column design are largely absent from discussions of Late Byzantine art, some notable fourteenth-century examples can be found in the Pammakaristos Church in Constantinople. Although the church was converted to a mosque in the

fifteenth century, and all representations of humans and animals were either destroyed or covered, at least two fragments of a column capital depicting the busts of apostles in high relief survives in the collection.

While the heads of the men are somewhat large in proportion to their bodies, their bodies have assumed more naturalistic positions than their predecessors. They direct their gazes to either subtle or sharp angles. The two hands that are visible hold books, possibly the Gospels, to their chests. In sum, their poses anticipate the return to classicism that would define the Renaissance in the West.



Column capital decorated with busts of apostles: Their poses anticipate the return to classicism that would define the Renaissance in the West.

The Chora Church in Constantinople

The Chora Church is decorated with iconic murals and mosaics from the fourteenth century that represent the Late Byzantine artistic styles.

Learning Objectives

Describe the ways in which the Chora Church in Constantinople represents Late Byzantine artistic styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Chora Church's architecture, mosaics , and frescoes are exceptional examples of Late Byzantine artistic developments and style . The church that stands today consists of two narthices, a parecclesion , and a mortuary chapel.
- The mosaics demonstrate the new weightiness and smoothness that is seen in Late Byzantine art. As is seen of the Koimesis Mosaic, the bodies are more modeled, delicately shaded, and have mass —the figures appear to stand on the ground instead of float.
- Frescoed wall painting is the primary means of decoration in the paracclesion. The program of images relate to Christ and the Virgin Mary by depicting scenes from their lives, their ancestors, and themes of salvation, which culminate in scenes from the Last Judgment.
- The apse fresco of the Anastasis depicts Christ redeeming Old Testament souls from Hell. The scene is full of energy and is centered on Christ who grabs the wrists of Adam and Eve. The figures are depicted with grace and a smooth modeling of mass and drapery.
- Throughout the mosaics and frescoes, Christ is depicted as a bearded (mature and wise) savior and ruler. This evolution from clean-shaven youth to bearded adult coincides with Christianity's evolution from illegal religion to state religion.

Key Terms

- **dado**: The lower portion of an interior wall that is decorated differently from the upper portion.
- **koimesis**: Also known as the Dormition of the Virgin, this is a depiction of the Virgin Mary in her last sleep, at death, before ascending into Heaven.

- **mandorla**: An almond-shaped cloud or radiance that surrounds sacred figures, such as Christ or the Virgin Mary, in traditional Christian art.
- **parecclesion**: A side chapel found in Byzantine architecture.
- **narthex**: A western vestibule leading to the nave in some (especially Orthodox) Christian churches.

The Chora Church

The Chora Church's full name is the Church of the Holy Savior in Chora. The church was first built in Constantinople during the early fifth century. Its name references its location outside the city's fourth-century walls. Even when the walls were expanded in the early fifth century by Theodosius II, the church maintained its name.

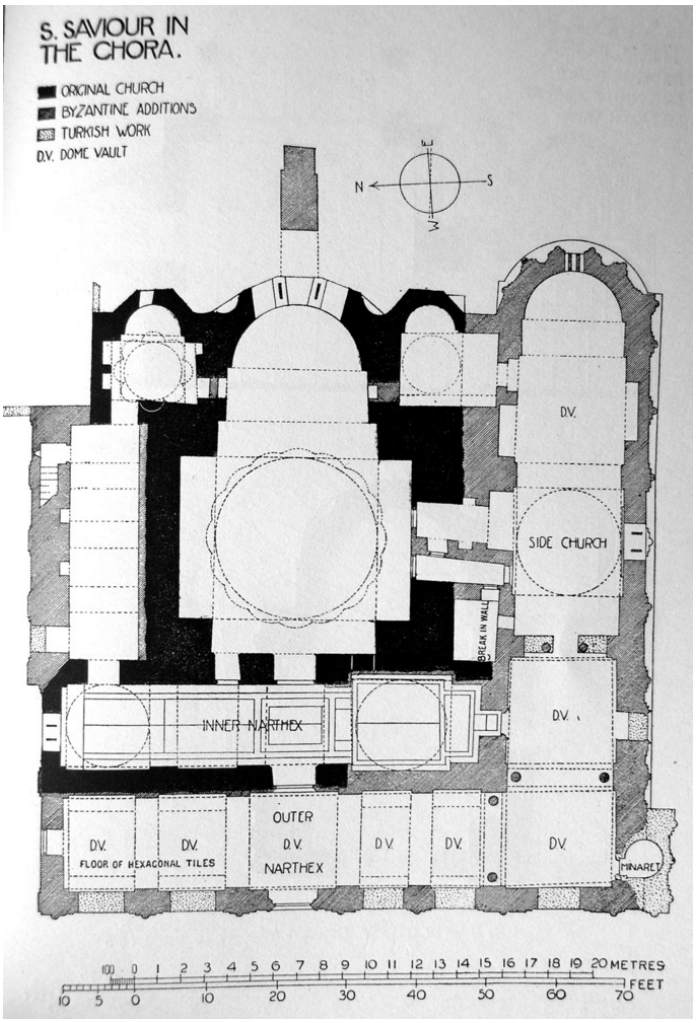
Inside the church is a set of frescoes and mosaics that survived the church's conversion into a mosque in the sixteenth century when its Christian imagery was plastered over. In 1948 the church became a museum after undergoing extensive restoration to uncover and restore its fourteenth-century decoration. It is now known as the Kariye Museum or Kariye Camii.

Architecture

The Chora Church that stands today is the result of its third stage of construction. This building and the interior decoration were completed between 1315 and 1321 under the Byzantine statesman Theodore Metochites. Metochites' additions and reconstruction in the fourteenth century enlarged the ground plan from the original small, symmetrical church into a large, asymmetrical square that consists of three main areas:

1. An inner and outer narthex or entrance hall.
2. The naos or main chapel.
3. The side chapel, known as the parecclesion. The parecclesion serves as a mortuary chapel and held eight tombs that were added after the area was initially decorated.

There are six domes in the church, three over the naos (one over the main space and two over smaller chapels), two in the inner narthex, and one in the side chapel. The domes are pumpkin-shaped, with concave bands radiating from their centers, and richly decorated with frescoes and mosaics that depict images of Christ and the Virgin at the center, with angels or ancestors surrounding them in the bands.



Ground plan of the Chora Church: Additions and reconstruction in the fourteenth century enlarged the ground plan from the original small, symmetrical church into a large, asymmetrical square that consists of three main areas.

Mosaics

Mosaics extensively decorate the narthices of the Chora Church. The artists first decorated the church in the naos and then completed the work in the inner and outer narthices, which results in differences in the mosaics' execution as the style progressed to show more liveliness and subtlety.

The surviving mosaics in the naos depict the Virgin and Child and the Dormition of the Virgin, a koimesis scene depicting the Virgin after death before she ascends to Heaven. This scene, located above the west door, depicts the Virgin in blue lying on a sarcophagus draped in purple and gold. Christ, in gold, stands behind the Virgin surrounded by a mandorla and holds an infant, representing the Virgin's soul. The figures in the scene all have a certain weightiness that helps to ground them, adding an element of naturalism .



Koimesis mosaic: The figures in the scene all have a certain weightiness that helps to ground them, adding an element of naturalism.

The mosaics found in the narthices of the Chora Church also depict scenes of the lives of the Virgin and Christ, while other scenes depict Old Testament stories that prefigure the Salvation. In the outer narthex, above the doorway to the inner narthex is a mosaic depicting Christ as the Pantocrator , the ruler or judge of all, in the center of a dome. The mosaic depicts a stern-faced Christ against a gold backdrop holding the gospels in one hand while gesturing with the other. An inscription in the mosaic reads, “Jesus Christ, Land of the Living.”



South dome of the inner narthex: This mosaic depicts Christ Pantocrator surrounded by his ancestors.

In another important scene above the entrance to the naos, Christ Enthroned is depicted receiving the donor of the church. The scene follows the Byzantine convention of depicting an architectural donation with an image of Christ in the center and the donor kneeling beside him, holding a model of his donation.

Here, Christ sits on a throne in a position similar to the Pantocrater, holding a book of gospels while his other hand gestures. The donor Theodore Metochites, wearing the clothing of his office, kneels on Christ’s right. He offers Christ a representation of the Chora Church in his hands. An inscription gives his titles.



Dedication mosaic: The scene follows the Byzantine convention of depicting an architectural donation with an image of Christ in the center and the donor kneeling beside him, holding a model of his donation.

Frescoes

The walls and ceilings of the parecclesion are decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin, and themes of salvation befitting for a mortuary chapel. Like the mosaics, the scenes are painted in the upper levels of the building. The lower levels are reserved for painted images of saints and prophets and a decorative dado that mimics marble revetment .

The entirety of the parecclesion is covered in fresco scenes and painted images, creating an overwhelming sense of splendor and glory that ultimately brings the viewer to the final scenes of salvation and judgment.



Virgin and Child with Angels: A fresco in a dome in the parecclesion that depicts the Virgin and Child with Angels.

Anastasis

The most important of these frescoes is the Anastasis, a representation of the Last Judgment, in the apse of the eastern bay . This image depicts Christ in Hell, saving the souls of the Old Testament. Christ stands in the center grasping the wrists of Adam and Eve, whom he raises from their sarcophagi. Saints, prophets, martyrs and other righteous souls, including John the Baptist, King David, and King Solomon, from the Old Testament stand on either side of Christ. Christ, standing over a bound Satan, wears a white robe and is framed by a white and light blue mandorla.



Anastasis: This image depicts Christ in Hell, saving the souls of the Old Testament. Christ stands in the center grasping the wrists of Adam and Eve, whom he raises from their sarcophagi.

The image is the culmination of the parecclesion's fresco cycle and one of the most impressive Late Byzantine paintings. Christ stands in an active, chiastic position. His arms reach out to Adam and Eve and his feet are positioned on uneven ground, providing the sensation of imbalance as he retrieves righteous souls.

The figures themselves are rendered in a softer, subtler mode. The harsh, jagged drapery has softened slightly with fluid and delineated folds. The expression of Christ and the others are dignified and stern. The Old Testament figures on either side gesture towards the scene, signaling the future of the faithful, as they wait for Christ to bring them into Heaven.

Changing Representations of Christ

The depictions of Christ in the Chora Church differ greatly from those of the third and fourth centuries. Recalling Early Christian art, Christ often appears clean shaven and youthful, sometimes cast as the Good Shepherd who tends and rescues his flock from danger. At a time when Christianity was illegal, Christians would have found such imagery of a protector reassuring.

By the fourteenth century, when Theodore Metochites funded the interior decoration, Christianity was no longer a fledgling faith; it was a state religion in which even the emperor recognized Christ as the ultimate authority. The images of Christ in the frescoes and mosaics of the Chora Church depict an authoritative, bearded man who occupies the role of both savior and judge. As an archetypal symbol of authority and wisdom through the ages, the beard would have been a logical choice for the face of the most supreme leader.

Icon Painting in Byzantine Russia

Andrei Rublev is considered the foremost fifteenth century Russian icon painter and the master behind the Old Testament Trinity.

Learning Objectives

Explain the evolution of Russian icon painting from the tenth century to the modern era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The tradition of Russian icon production began when the Kievian Rus' converted to Orthodox Christianity in the tenth century. As time passed, the technique took on uniquely Russian attributes.
- Russian icon artists saw themselves as servants of God who transcribed the Gospels in visual form . Since they did not seek individual glory they did not sign their work, so the names of most Russian icon artists are unknown to Western scholars.

- The painted icons of Andrei Rublev, who worked in the fifteenth century, are considered to be the pinnacle of Russian icon painting, demonstrating the combination of Byzantine and Russian styles .
- The Old Testament Trinity that depicts the three angels hosted by Abraham and Sarah as described in Genesis 18, is an icon that is ascribed solely to Rublev's hand. The icon is painted with brilliant colors and a delicate hand to depict subtle lines , modeling, and humanity in the scene.
- Exposure to Western styles and the dawn of the modern age changed the appearance of icons and the media in which they were produced: subject matter assumed a more realistic appearance by the seventeenth century and, by the early twentieth century, the mechanized printing press sparked the popularity of paper icons.

Key Terms

- **tempera**: A painting medium with either a casein or egg-yolk binder.
- **prefiguration**: A vague advance representation or suggestion of something.

Russian Icons

In 988 CE, the Slavic confederation known as Kievan Rus' (a precursor to present-day Russia) adopted Orthodox Christianity as its official religion. Shortly thereafter, those living within its borders began producing icons. As a general rule, these icons strictly followed the traditional models and formulas of Byzantine art.

Nevertheless, as time passed, Russian artists widened the vocabulary of types and styles far beyond anything found elsewhere in the Orthodox world. Like Byzantine icons, Russian icons were usually small-scale paintings on wood. However, some icons produced for churches and monasteries were, at times, much larger. Russian artists also used alternative media, such as copper, for their work.



Feodorovskaya icon: Russian artists also used alternative media, such as copper, for their work.

Russians sometimes speak of an icon as having been written because, in the Russian language, the same word means both to paint and to write. Icons are considered to be visual versions of the Gospels, and therefore, careful attention is paid to ensure that each Gospel is faithfully and accurately conveyed.

Because of these strict standards, artists saw themselves as God's servants and did not strive for individual glory, as would become the norm in the West. For this reason, they did not sign their creations, and very few artists' names are known to scholars outside of Russia. Andrei Rublev is one rare example.

Andrei Rublev

Russian icon painters flourished throughout the Byzantine period. Russian icons were known for their strict adhesion to Byzantine-style painting including the use of patterns, strong lines, and contrasting colors. Most Byzantine Russian icons were painted in egg tempera on wood panels. Gold leaf was often used for halos and background colors and bronze , silver, and tin were also used to embellish the icons.

The work of Andrei Rublev, a Russian icon painter in the fifteenth century, is considered to be the pinnacle of Byzantine Russian icon painting. Not much is known about his life. He was born in the 1360s and died in either 1427 or 1430.

What is known about Rublev comes from monastic chronicles, which account for his work as a painter and do not discuss his life. He is believed to have lived at the Trinity-St. Serguis Lavra, a monastery outside of Moscow in the town of Sergiyev Posad. Rublev is first recorded to have painted icons and frescos for the Cathedral of the Annunciation in Moscow in 1405.

He worked at the Cathedral of the Annunciation under Theopanes the Greek, a Byzantine master, who moved to Russia and is believed to have been Rublev's teacher. Rublev also often worked with Daniil Cherni, another monastic artist. The two painted icons for the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir in 1408 and the Church of the Trinity in the Trinity-St.Sergius Lavra monastery from 1425-1427.

The Old Testament Trinity

The icon known as the Old Testament Trinity (1411–1427) is the only work to be attributed solely to Rublev's hand. It is considered to represent the brilliance of his work and the greatest achievement of Byzantine Russian icons. The egg tempera icon was made for the Church of the Trinity in the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra and stands just less than five feet tall and is nearly four feet wide.



Old Testament Trinity: This is the only work to be attributed solely to Rublev's hand. It is considered to represent the brilliance of his work and the greatest achievement of Byzantine Russian icons.

The icon depicts three angels around a table and is an illustration of Genesis 18, the Hospitality of Abraham, in which Abraham and his wife Sarah host three angels at their table. The scene focuses on the three angels and is full of symbolism that focuses on the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the prefiguration of salvation.

The image today is poorly preserved, but it demonstrates Rublev's style and skill. The three angels sit around a table with a single chalice. The figures are delicately rendered. Their faces and hands are shaded to create volume , and their expressions are calm and serene. Each angel has a halo and wings, and holds a thin scepter.

Despite having nearly identical faces, their vividly painted garments help to distinguish them. Their garments are painted in rich, saturated colors. Each angel wears a robe in brilliant blue coupled with a second color including a orange, a deep red, and a green.

The linearity of the robes highlights Byzantine methods of modeling that are based on the use of solid lines and complimentary colors to create contrasting folds and replicate the body's mass and height.

While the figures appear weighty and naturalistic, the scenery and landscape around them are non-naturalistic. The table and chairs are painted in a skewed perspective and a small architectural detail in the upper left of the panel and a central tree create the basis of the setting.

Into the Modern Era

Until the seventeenth century, innovation was largely absent from icon production in Russia. When Roman Catholic and Protestant styles from Western Europe triggered new developments, the result was a split in the Russian Orthodox Church. The traditionalists —the persecuted Old Ritualists or Old Believers—continued the traditional stylization of icons, while the State Church modified its practice.

While some artists continued to produce figures in the traditional stylized manner, others opted for a mixture of Russian stylization and Western European realism very much like that of Catholic religious art of the time. The Westernization of Russian icons likely escalated under the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, whose cultural revolution brought Western values and the Enlightenment to Russia.

Tradition and the new style converge in an icon of Saint Nicolas and the Venerable Gerasimus of Boldino holding the much venerated Theotokos of Kazan. The Theotokos of Kazan was an icon of the highest stature within the Russian Orthodox Church. According to legend, it was acquired from Constantinople, lost in 1438, and miraculously recovered in pristine state in 1579. The icon was stolen and likely destroyed in 1904.

In the icon of Nicolas and Geasimus, the two saints, the icon, and the background are realistically rendered. The divine light source in the center causes naturalistic shadows to fall on the the hands of the two saints and the sides of their faces. Color and visual texture also mimic the natural world, while the tiles floor betrays a sense of realistic one-point perspective. Earth tones dominate the picture plane , pointing to possible Dutch Baroque (Protestant) influence.



Icon of Saint Nicolas and Gerasimus of Boldino holding the Theotokos of Kazan: Unlike traditional icons, this example from the seventeenth century or later displays the influence of Western Protestant art, such as the paintings of the Dutch Baroque tradition.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, icon painting in Russia went into a great decline with the arrival of machine lithography on paper and tin. This new technology could produce icons in great quantity and much more cheaply than the workshops of painters. Today, Russian Orthodox worshippers purchase much larger numbers of paper icons than the more expensive painted panels.

Painting in the Late Byzantine Empire

As Late Byzantine painting became more naturalistic—bodies gained mass and figures portrayed humanity with emotion and movement—and these developments and traditions continued into the Post-Byzantine age.

Learning Objectives

Describe the form and content of icons and murals found in Late Byzantine painting and its immediate successors

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Painters in the Late Byzantine period painted scenes with a new sense of naturalism by portraying figures with mass and naturalistic bodies under their clothing; drapery became a garment through which the body was rendered. Landscapes and settings were used more often, and figures were given increased movement and emotion to lend them an additional level of humanity.
- The Ohrid Icons are a series of icons produced in Constantinople that were later moved to Ohrid Macedonia. The Annunciation from one of the icons is a delicately painted scene filled with emotion and tension.
- The Crucifixion scene painted behind the altar of the Katholikon of the Monastery of the Virgin at Studenica is Serbia is another scene that depicts figures in the Byzantine style —they are infused with emotion and humanity, represented through their figure's expressions and the sway of Christ's body.
- During this time the iconostasis was fully developed and became a popular method of dividing the nave from the altar in Byzantine churches, especially in Russia. This screen was often large and covered in icons of saints and Christ in the general pattern of a Deesis .
- Even as the Byzantine Empire lost territory, its artistic traditions continued, most notably in the Cretan School. In this final phase of Byzantine art, figures and illusionistic space continued to assume greater degrees of naturalism, while the gold background remained in most icons.

Key Terms

- **Katholikon**: The major temple or church building of a monastery or diocese in an Eastern Orthodox Church.
- **iconostasis**: A wall of icons between the sanctuary and the nave in an Eastern Orthodox church.
- **Deesis**: An iconic representation, common in the Byzantine period, of Christ enthroned, Christ Pantocrator, surrounded by the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, often in supplication.

Late Byzantine Painting

The paintings in the Church of Christ in Chora are representative of the style of painting produced in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Large murals were painted over expanses of architecture.

Many icons at this time were panels painted on both sides. Icons were painted this way since they were used in processions, and therefore seen from two directions. In churches, they were often displayed in special stands to allow for the viewing of both sides. Even after the Byzantine shrank and eventually fell, its artistic traditions continued in many former territories. The most famous example is the Cretan School.

Iconostasis

During the Late Byzantine period the iconostasis was fully developed. It was a screen or wall that stood in the nave, separating the space from the sanctuary and altar of the church. This wall was covered in icons and usually had three doors that allowed access into the sanctuary and viewing of the altar.

Icons were placed on the iconostasis following a general guideline that included the presence of a Deesis, Christ enthroned surrounded by John the Baptist and the Theotokos. Other icons included images of angels, saints, Old Testament prophets, the Apostles, and the patron saints of the church and city. The presence of the icons and the iconostasis was not to separate but to provide a bridge or a connection between the earthly and heavenly realms.



Iconostasis of the Church of the Annunciation: Designed by Theophanes the Greek, the wall is covered in icons and its doors allow access into the sanctuary and a view of the altar.

Ohrid Icons

The Ohrid Icons (early fourteenth century) were produced in Constantinople and were later moved to Ohrid in Macedonia. One icon depicts the Virgin Mary on one side and the Annunciation on the other side. The Annunciation portrays the Virgin Mary seated on a throne as the angel Gabriel approaches her to deliver the news of her conception of the son of God.

The background is typically Byzantine: gold leaf background that mimics the golden backgrounds of mosaics . The architecture is rendered in a later Byzantine style. The buildings are painted with an attempt at perspective that is more skewed than correct but that still provides a suggestion of space.

This was also seen in the Theotokos of the Hagia Sophia, but in this case the architecture provides more of a place setting, as in the landscape of the Lamentation from Nerezi. The figures themselves are rendered with Byzantine faces—small mouths and long, narrow noses. The faces, hands, and feet are carefully shaded and modeled.

The clothing is also follows the Byzantine style with dramatic, deep folds and a schematic patterning that renders the body underneath. The bodies, however, differ from their earlier Byzantine predecessors. They have weight and appear to exist underneath their clothing.



Annunciation: This icon portrays the Virgin Mary seated on a throne as the angel Gabriel approaches her to deliver the news of her conception of the son of God.

The scene also takes cues from Late Byzantine styles, since it is dramatically depicted. The Virgin's rigid pose and single gesture signify her unease at the angel's approach. Gabriel, meanwhile, appears to have just landed. He strides forward, with an arm outstretched. He places his weight completely on his left foot, while he prepares to plant his right foot on the ground .

We are witness to the moment of his arrival. The momentum of his arrival is further emphasized by the placement of his wings. One wing has settled down onto his back while the other reaches upwards to balance his flight. The movement and emotion in the scene can be related to the Anastasias scene of the Chora Church. Both images have a single, central figure full of motion that provides energy to the different scenes depicted.

Monastery of the Virgin at Studenica, Serbia

The Serbian Monastery of the Virgin was built in the twelfth century outside the city of Kraljevo. While the monastery's churches do not appear from the outside to follow Byzantine architectural styles, the interior painting of the Katholikon, the Church of the Virgin, is painted in the Late Byzantine manner.

The Crucifixion, painted on the western wall overlooking the altar, represents the mastery of Serbian art and the development and spread of the Late Byzantine style from the center of Byzantium in Constantinople. The figures are less elongated than their earlier counterparts, and the background is painted in a brilliant blue with golden stars.

The central image of Christ on the cross is surrounded by mourners, including his mother. The figures in this calm scene have mass. While the Virgin Mary still appears to be a mass of robes, her drapery is more subtly rendered. The bodies of the other figures are more easily denoted by the modeling of their robes. The drapery is still reliant on deep folds, but the folds are no longer contorted and are less schematic. While less dramatic and more serene, there is an underlying emotion of sadness that is subtly depicted by the sway of Christ's body.



Crucifixion: This is painted behind the altar of the Katholikon of the monastery of the Virgin at Studenica.

The Cretan School

Over the course of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, the Byzantine Empire lost much of its territory. However, its artistic traditions continued for centuries in areas such as Crete.

Established, in the fifteenth century, the Cretan School is known for its distinct style of icon painting that was influenced by both Western and Eastern traditions. Even before the fall of Constantinople, the leading Byzantine artists were leaving the capital to settle in Crete. This migration continued in the following years and reached its peak after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The early icons produced by the Cretan School follow many of the earlier Byzantine traditions. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the styles of Italian and Northern Renaissance artists grew in popularity, the rendering of the human body and illusionistic space became increasingly realistic.

However, many icons retained the traditional gold backgrounds. The influence of the Renaissance, in which the notion of the artistic genius arose, can also be seen in the increasing attachment of artists' names to their creations.

In the following examples by El Greco (1541–1614) and Emmanuel Tzanes (1610–1690), we can see the transition from the Late Byzantine style (in which the contours of the body were acknowledged beneath the drapery and attempts at realistic perspective were still evolving) to the Post-Byzantine style, which depicts a realistic recession of space and dynamic bodily poses.



El Greco's Dormition of the Virgin: The Late Byzantine realism in the rendering of the body is evident here, as the mourners assume a variety of poses. The solemn facial expressions and body language reflect the somber mood of the final sleep of the Virgin Mary.



Emmanuel Tzanes' St. Mark the Evangelist: In this icon, St. Mark assumes a dynamic pose, including the dramatic head turn, which would become a common attribute in images of the inspired artist over the course of the next few centuries. Tzanes's stylized rendering of the lion can be explained by his never having seen one in nature or in visual culture.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 10: Islamic Art

10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art

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10.1: Introduction to Islamic Art

Islamic Art

Islamic art encompasses visual arts produced from the seventh century onwards by culturally Islamic populations.

Learning Objectives

Identify the influences and the specific attributes of Islamic art

Try It

Key Points

- Islamic art is not art of a specific religion, time, place, or of a single medium . Instead it spans some 1400 years, covers many lands and populations, and includes a range of artistic fields including architecture, calligraphy , painting, glass, ceramics , and textiles, among others.
- Islamic religious art differs from Christian religious art in that it is non-figural because many Muslims believe that the depiction of the human form is idolatry , and thereby a sin against God, forbidden in the Qur'an. Calligraphy and architectural elements are given important religious significance in Islamic art.
- Islamic art developed from many sources: Roman, early Christian art, and Byzantine styles ; Sassanian art of pre-Islamic Persia; Central Asian styles brought by various nomadic incursions, and Chinese influences appear on Islamic painting, pottery , and textiles.

Key Terms

- **Qu'ran**: The central religious text of Islam, which Muslims believe to be the verbatim word of God (Arabic: Allah). It is widely regarded as the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language.
- **arabesque**: A repetitive, stylized pattern based on a geometrical floral or vegetal design.
- **idolatry**: The worship of idols.
- **monotheistic**: Believing in a single god, deity, spirit, etc., especially for an organized religion, faith, or creed.

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a book considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Allah) and the teachings of Muhammad , who is considered to be the last prophet of God. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim.

Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75–90%),[7] or Shia (10–20%). Its essential religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are basic concepts and obligatory acts of worship, and the following of Islamic law, which touches on every aspect of life and society. The five pillars are:

1. Shahadah (belief or confession of faith)
2. Salat (worship in the form of prayer)
3. Sawm Ramadan (fasting during the month of Ramadan)
4. Zakat (alms or charitable giving)
5. Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime)

Islamic Art

Islamic art encompasses the visual arts produced from the seventh century onward by both Muslims and non-Muslims who lived within the territory that was inhabited by, or ruled by, culturally Islamic populations. It is thus a very difficult art to define because it spans some 1400 years, covering many lands and populations. This art is also not of a specific religion, time, place, or single medium. Instead Islamic art covers a range of artistic fields including architecture, calligraphy, painting, glass, ceramics, and textiles, among others.

Islamic art is not restricted to religious art, but instead includes all of the art of the rich and varied cultures of Islamic societies. It frequently includes secular elements and elements that are forbidden by some Islamic theologians. Islamic religious art differs greatly from Christian religious art traditions.

Because figural representations are generally considered to be forbidden in Islam, the word takes on religious meaning in art as seen in the tradition of calligraphic inscriptions. Calligraphy and the decoration of manuscript Qu'rans is an important aspect of Islamic art as the word takes on religious and artistic significance.

Islamic architecture, such as mosques and palatial gardens of paradise, are also embedded with religious significance. While examples of Islamic figurative painting do exist, and may cover religious scenes, these examples are typically from secular contexts, such as the walls of palaces or illuminated books of poetry.

Other religious art, such as glass mosque lamps, Girih tiles, woodwork, and carpets usually demonstrate the same style and motifs as contemporary secular art, although they exhibit more prominent religious inscriptions.



A calligraphic panel by Mustafa Râkim (late 18th–early 19th century) : Islamic art has focused on the depiction of patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than on figures, because it is feared by many Muslims that the depiction of the human form is idolatry. The panel reads: "God, there is no god but He, the Lord of His prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Lord of all that has been created."

Islamic art was influenced by Greek, Roman, early Christian, and Byzantine art styles, as well as the Sassanian art of pre-Islamic Persia. Central Asian styles were brought in with various nomadic incursions; and Chinese influences had a formative effect on Islamic painting, pottery, and textiles.

Themes of Islamic Art

There are repeating elements in Islamic art, such as the use of stylized , geometrical floral or vegetal designs in a repetition known as the arabesque . The arabesque in Islamic art is often used to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible and infinite nature of God. Some scholars believe that mistakes in repetitions may be intentionally introduced as a show of humility by artists who believe only God can produce perfection.



Arabesque inlays at the Mughal Agra Fort, India: Geometrical designs in repetition, know as Arabesque, are used in Islamic art to symbolize the transcendent, indivisible, and infinite nature of God.

Typically, though not entirely, Islamic art has focused on the depiction of patterns and Arabic calligraphy, rather than human or animal figures, because it is believed by many Muslims that the depiction of the human form is idolatry and thereby a sin against God that is forbidden in the Qur'an.

However, depictions of the human form and animals can be found in all eras of Islamic secular art. Depictions of the human form in art intended for the purpose of worship is considered idolatry and is forbidden in Islamic law, known as Sharia law.

Islamic Architecture

Islamic architecture encompasses a wide range of styles and the principal example is the mosque.

Learning Objectives

Describe the development of mosques, and their different features during different periods and dynasties

Try It

Key Points

- A specifically recognizable Islamic architectural style emerged soon after Muhammad's time that incorporated Roman building traditions with the addition of localized adaptations of the former Sassanid and Byzantine models.
- The Islamic mosque has historically been both a place of prayer and a community meeting space . The early mosques are believed to be inspired by Muhammad's home in Medina, which was the first mosque.

Key Terms

- **mosque**: A place of worship for Muslims, corresponding to a church or synagogue in other religions, often having at least one minaret. In Arabic: masjid.
- **mihrab**: A semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque, that indicates the qibla (direction of Mecca), and into which the imam prays.
- **minaret**: The tall slender tower of an Islamic mosque, from which the muezzin recites the adhan (call to prayer).

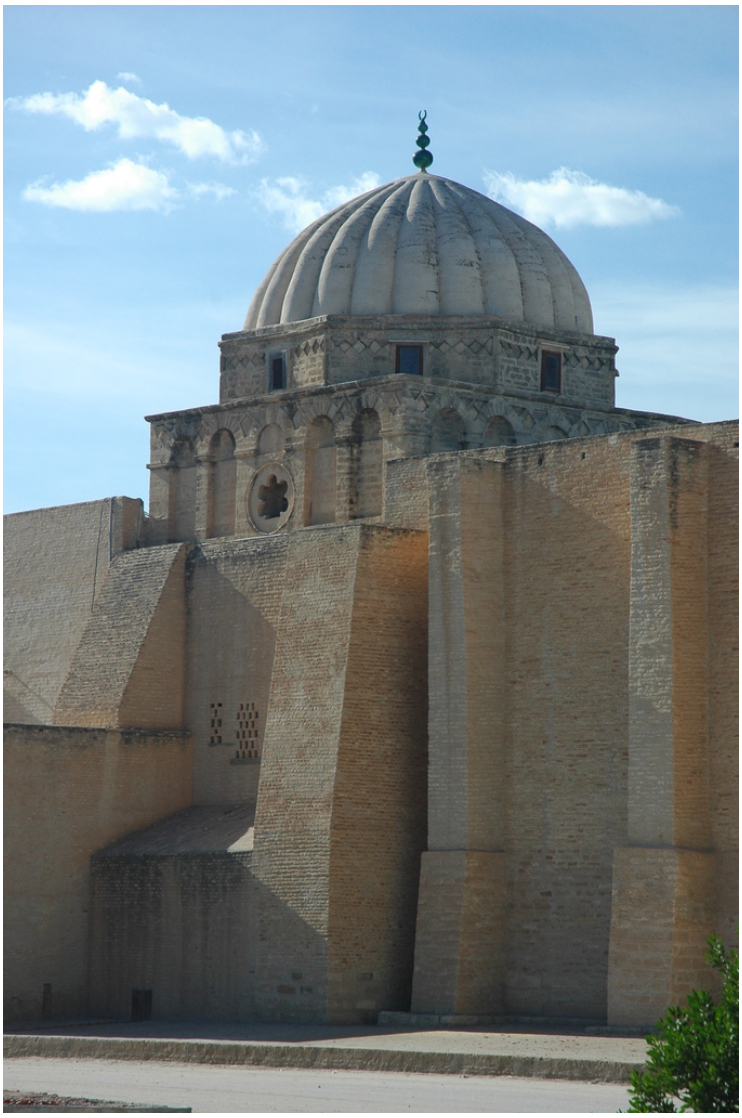
Islamic Architecture

Islamic architecture encompasses a wide range of both secular and religious styles. The principal Islamic architectural example is the mosque. A specifically recognizable Islamic architectural style emerged soon after Muhammad's time that incorporated Roman building traditions with the addition of localized adaptations of the former Sassanid and Byzantine models.

Early Mosques

The Islamic mosque has historically been both a place of prayer and a community meeting space. The early mosques are believed to be inspired by Muhammad's home in Medina, which was the first mosque.

The Great Mosque of Kairouan (in Tunisia) is one of the best preserved and most significant examples of early great mosques. Founded in 670, it contains all of the architectural features that distinguish early mosques: a minaret , a large courtyard surrounded by porticos , and a hypostyle prayer hall.



Dome of the mihrab (9th century) in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, also known as the Mosque of Uqba, in Kairouan, Tunisia: This is considered to be the ancestor of all the mosques in the western Islamic world.

Ottoman Mosques

Ottoman mosques and other architecture first emerged in the cities of Bursa and Edirne in the 14th and 15th centuries, developing from earlier Seljuk Turk architecture, with additional influences from Byzantine, Persian, and Islamic Mamluk traditions.

Sultan Mehmed II would later fuse European traditions in his rebuilding programs at Istanbul in the 19th century. Byzantine styles as seen in the Hagia Sophia served as particularly important models for Ottoman mosques, such as the mosque constructed by Sinan.

Building reached its peak in the 16th century when Ottoman architects mastered the technique of building vast inner spaces surmounted by seemingly weightless yet incredibly massive domes , and achieved perfect harmony between inner and outer spaces, as well as articulated light and shadow.

They incorporated vaults , domes, square dome plans, slender corner minarets, and columns into their mosques, which became sanctuaries of transcendently aesthetic and technical balance, as may be observed in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey.



The Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey: The Blue Mosque represents the culmination of Ottoman construction with its numerous domes, slender minarets and overall harmony.

Architecture flourished in the Safavid Dynasty , attaining a high point with the building program of Shah Abbas in Isfahan, which included numerous gardens, palaces (such as Ali Qapu), an immense bazaar, and a large imperial mosque. Isfahan, the capital of both the Seljuk and Safavid dynasties, bears the most prominent samples of the Safavid architecture, such as the the Imperial Mosque, which was constructed in the years after Shah Abbas I permanently moved the capital there in 1598.



Imperial Mosque, Isfahan, Iran: Isfahan, the capital of both the Seljuk and Safavid dynasties, bears the most prominent samples of the Safavid architecture.

Islamic Glass Making

Glassmaking was the most important Islamic luxury art of the early Middle Ages.

Learning Objectives

Describe the art of Islamic glass

Try It

Key Points

- Between the 8th and early 11th centuries, the emphasis in luxury glass was on effects achieved by manipulating the surface of the glass, initially by incising into the glass on a wheel, and later by cutting away the background to leave a design in relief .
- Lustre painting uses techniques similar to lustreware in pottery and dates back to the 8th century in Egypt; it became widespread in the 12th century.

Key Terms

- **luxury arts**: Highly decorative goods made of precious materials for the wealthy classes.
- **glassmaking**: The craft or industry of producing glass.

Islamic Glass

For most of the Middle Ages , Islamic luxury glass was the most sophisticated in Eurasia , exported to both Europe and China. Islam took over much of the traditional glass-producing territory of Sassanian and Ancient Roman glass. Since figurative decoration played a small part in pre-Islamic glass, the change in style was not abrupt—except that the whole area initially formed a political whole, and, for example, Persian innovations were now almost immediately taken up in Egypt.

For this reason it is often impossible to distinguish between the various centers of production (of which Egypt, Syria, and Persia were the most important), except by scientific analysis of the material, which itself has difficulties. From various documentary references, glassmaking and glass-trading seems to have been a specialty of the Jewish minority.

Between the 8th and early 11th centuries, the emphasis in luxury glass was on effects achieved by manipulating the surface of the glass, initially by incising into the glass on a wheel, and later by cutting away the background to leave a design in relief. The very massive Hedwig glasses, only found in Europe, but normally considered Islamic (or possibly from Muslim craftsmen in Norman Sicily), are an example of this, though they are puzzlingly late in date.

These and other glass pieces probably represented cheaper versions of vessels of carved rock crystal (clear quartz)—themselves influenced by earlier glass vessels—and there is some evidence that at this period glass and hard-stone cutting were regarded as the same craft. From the 12th century, the glass industry in Persia and Mesopotamia declined, and the main production of luxury glass shifted to Egypt and Syria. Throughout this period, local centers made simpler wares, such as Hebron glass in Palestine.



The Luck of Edenhall : This is a 13th-century Syrian beaker, in England since the Middle Ages. For most of the Middle Ages, Islamic glass was the most sophisticated in Eurasia, exported to both Europe and China.

Lustre painting

Lustre painting, by techniques similar to lustreware in pottery, dates back to the 8th century in Egypt, and involves the application of metallic pigments during the glass-making process. Another technique used by artisans was decoration with threads of glass of a different color, worked into the main surface, and sometimes manipulated by combing and other effects.

Gilded, painted, and enameled glass were added to the repertoire, as were shapes and motifs borrowed from other media , such as pottery and metalwork . Some of the finest work was in mosque lamps donated by a ruler or wealthy man.

As decoration grew more elaborate, the quality of the basic glass decreased, and it often exhibited bubbles and a brownish-yellow tinge. Aleppo ceased to be a major center after the Mongol invasion of 1260, and Timur appears to have ended the Syrian glass industry around 1400 by carrying off the skilled workers to Samarkand. By about 1500, the Venetians were receiving large orders for mosque lamps.

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the Mongol invasion of 1260, and Timur appears to have ended the Syrian industry around 1400 by carrying off the skilled workers to Samarkand. By about 1500, the Venetians were receiving large orders for mosque lamps.



Mosque lamp : Produced in Egypt, c. 1360.

Islamic Calligraphy

Calligraphic design was omnipresent in Islamic art in the Middle Ages, and is seen in all types of art including architecture and the decorative arts.

Learning Objectives

Explain the purpose and characteristics of Islamic calligraphy

Try It

Key Points

- In a religion where figural representations are considered an act of idolatry , it is no surprise that the word and its artistic representation became an important aspect in Islamic art.
- The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy is Kufic script .
- Besides Quranic verses, other inscriptions include verses of poetry, and inscriptions recording ownership or donation.

Key Terms

- **Kufic script**: The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy, noted for its angular form.
- **calligraphy**: The art of writing letters and words with decorative strokes.

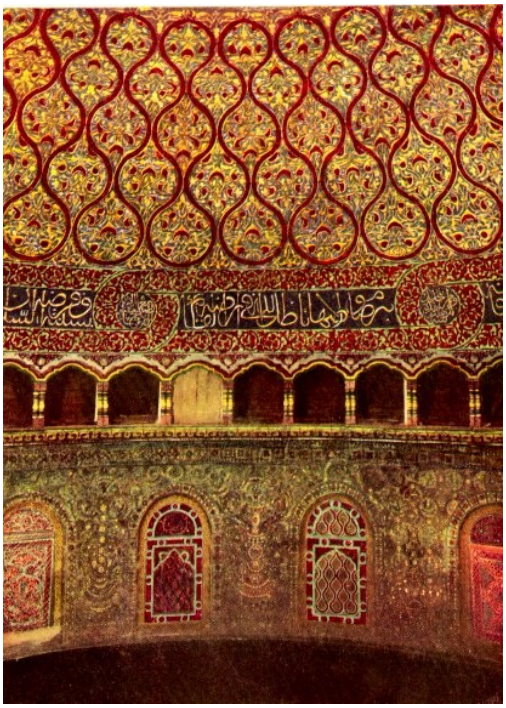
In a religion where figural representations are considered an act of idolatry, it is no surprise that the word and its artistic representation became an important aspect in Islamic art. The most important religious text in Islam is the Quran, which is believed to be the word of God. There are many examples of calligraphy and calligraphic inscriptions pertaining to verses from the Quran in Islamic arts.



9th century Quran: This early Quran demonstrates the Kufic script, noted for its angular form and as the earliest form of Arabic calligraphy .

The earliest form of Arabic calligraphy is Kufic script, which is noted for its angular form. Arabic is read from right to left and only the consonants are written. The black ink in the image above from a 9th century Quran marks the consonants for the reader. The red dots that are visible on the page note the vowels.

However, calligraphic design is not limited to the book in Islamic art. Calligraphy is found in several different types of art, such as architecture. The interior of the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem, circa 691), for example, features calligraphic inscriptions of verses from the Quran as well as from additional sources. As in Europe in the Middle Ages , religious exhortations such as Quranic verses may be included in secular objects, especially coins, tiles, and metalwork .



Interior view of the Dome of the Rock : The interior of The Dome of the Rock features many calligraphic inscriptions, from both the Quran and other sources; it demonstrates the importance of calligraphy in Islamic art and its use in several different media.

Calligraphic inscriptions were not exclusive to the Quran, but also included verses of poetry or recorded ownership or donation. Calligraphers were highly regarded in Islam, which reinforces the importance of the word and its religious and artistic significance.

Islamic Book Painting

Manuscript painting in the late medieval Islamic world reached its height in Persia, Syria, Iraq, and the Ottoman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the origin and development of Islamic manuscript painting

Try It

Key Points

- The art of the Persian book was born under the Ilkhanid dynasty and encouraged by the patronage of aristocrats for large illuminated manuscripts .
- Islamic manuscript painting witnessed its first golden age in the 13th century when it was influenced by the Byzantine visual vocabulary and combined with Mongol facial types from 12th-century book frontispieces.
- Under the rule of the Safavids in Iran (1501 to 1786), the art of manuscript illumination achieves new heights, in particular in the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, an immense copy of Ferdowsi's epic poem that contains more than 250 paintings.
- The medieval Islamic texts called Maqamat were some of the earliest coffee-table books and among the first Islamic art to mirror daily life.
- Masterpieces of Ottoman manuscript illustration include the two books of festivals, one from the end of the 16th century and the other from the era of Sultan Murad III.

Key Terms

- **Mongols**: An umbrella term for a large group of Mongolic and Turkic tribes united under the rule of Genghis Khan in the 13th century.
- **illuminated manuscripts**: A book in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.
- **miniature**: An illustration in an ancient or medieval illuminated manuscript.
- **muraqqa**: An album in book form containing Islamic miniature paintings and specimens of Islamic calligraphy, normally from several different sources, and perhaps other matter.
- **Maqamat**: The plural for Maqāma, an Arabic literary genre of rhymed prose with intervals of poetry that often ruminates on spiritual topics.

Islamic Book Painting

Book painting in the late medieval Islamic world reached its height in Persia, Syria, Iraq, and the Ottoman Empire . The art form blossomed across the different regions and was inspired by a range of cultural reference points.

The evolution of book painting first began in the 13th century, when the Mongols, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, swept through the Islamic world. Upon the death of Genghis Khan, his empire was divided among his sons and dynasties formed: the Yuan in China, the Ilkhanids in Iran, and the Golden Horde in northern Iran and southern Russia.

The Ilkhanids

The Ilkhanids were a rich civilization that developed under the little khans in Iran. Architectural activity intensified as the Mongols became sedentary yet retained traces of their nomadic origins, such as the north–south orientation of buildings. Persian, Islamic, and East Asian traditions melded together during this period and a process of Iranization took place, in which construction according to previously established types, such as the Iranian-plan mosques , was resumed.

The art of the Persian book was born under the Ilkhanid dynasty and encouraged by the patronage of aristocrats for large illuminated manuscripts, such as the Jami' al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani. Islamic book painting witnessed its first golden age in the 13th century, mostly within Syria and Iraq.

Miniatures

The tradition of the Persian miniature (a small painting on paper) developed during this period, and it strongly influenced the Ottoman miniature of Turkey and the Mughal miniature in India. Because illuminated manuscripts were an art of the court, and not

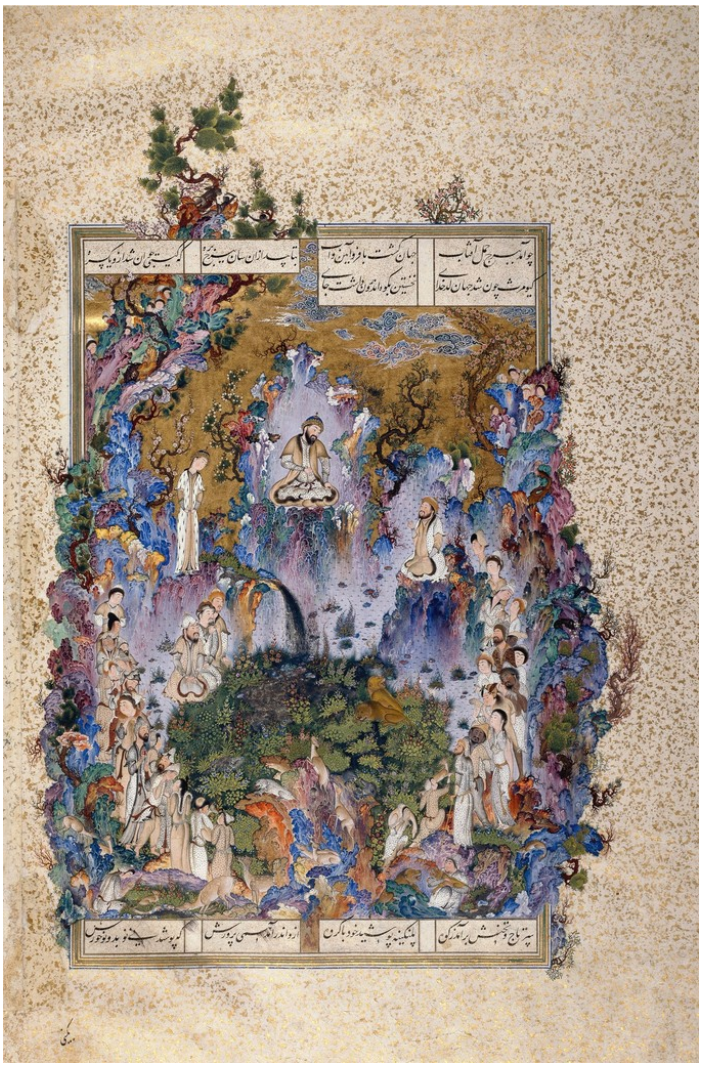
seen in public, constraints on the depiction of the human figure were much more relaxed and the human form is represented with frequency within this medium.

Influence from the Byzantine visual vocabulary (blue and gold coloring, angelic and victorious motifs, symbology of drapery) was combined with Mongol facial types seen in 12th-century book frontispieces. Chinese influences in Islamic book painting include the early adoption of the vertical format natural to a book. Motifs such as peonies, clouds, dragons, and phoenixes were adapted from China as well, and incorporated into manuscript illumination.



Mongol soldiers, in Jami al-tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani: The Jāmi al-tawārīkh is a work of literature and history, produced by the Mongol Ilkhanate in Persia. The breadth of the work has caused it to be called the first world history and its lavish illustrations and calligraphy required the efforts of hundreds of scribes and artists.

The largest commissions of illustrated books were usually classics of Persian poetry, such as the Shahnameh. Under the rule of the Safavids in Iran (1501 to 1786), the art of manuscript illumination achieved new heights. The most noteworthy example of this is the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, an immense copy of Ferdowsi's epic poem that contains more than 250 paintings.



The Court of Gayumars, from the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp: Illuminated manuscripts of the Shahnameh were often commissioned by royal patrons.

Maqamat and Albums

The medieval Islamic texts called Maqamat that were copied and illustrated by Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, were some of the earliest coffee-table books. They were among the first texts in Islamic art to hold a mirror to daily life, portraying humorous stories and showing little adherence to prior pictorial traditions.

In the 17th century a new type of painting developed based around the album (muraqqa). The albums were the creations of connoisseurs who bound together single sheets of paintings, drawings, or calligraphy by various artists; they were sometimes excised from earlier books and other times created as independent works.

The paintings of Reza Abbasi figure largely in this new form of book art. The form depicts one or two larger figures, typically idealized beauties in a garden setting, and often use the grisaille techniques previously used for background border paintings .

Mughal and Ottoman Manuscripts

The Mughals and Ottomans both produced lavish manuscripts of more recent history with the autobiographies of the Mughal emperors and purely military chronicles of Turkish conquests. Portraits of rulers developed in the 16th century, and later in Persia, where they became very popular.

Mughal portraits, normally in profile, are very finely drawn in a realist style , while the best Ottoman ones are vigorously stylized . Album miniatures typically featured picnic scenes, portraits of individuals, or (in India especially) animals, or idealized youthful beauties of either sex.

Masterpieces of Ottoman manuscript illustration include the two books of festivals, one from the end of the 16th century and the other from the era of Sultan Murad III. These books contain numerous illustrations and exhibit a strong Safavid influence, perhaps inspired by books captured in the course of the Ottoman–Safavid wars of the 16th century.

Islamic Ceramics

Islamic art has notable achievements in ceramics that reached heights unmatched by other cultures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how developments such as tin-opacified glazing and stonepaste ceramics made Islamic ceramics some of the most advanced of its time

Try It

Key Points

- The first Islamic opaque glazes date to around the 8th century, and another significant contribution was the development of stonepaste ceramics in 9th century Iraq.
- Lusterwares with iridescent colors were either invented or considerably developed in Persia and Syria from the 9th century onward.
- The techniques, shapes, and decorative motifs of Chinese ceramics were admired and emulated by Islamic potters, especially after the Mongol and Timurid invasions.
- The Hispano–Moresque style emerged in the 8th century, with more refined production happening later, presumably by Muslim potters working in areas reconquered by Christian kingdoms.

Key Terms

- **Hispano–Moresque style**: A style of Islamic pottery created in Al-Andaluz, or Muslim Spain, which continued to be produced under Christian rule in styles that blended Islamic and European elements.
- **lusterware**: A type of pottery or porcelain having an iridescent metallic glaze.
- **glaze**: The vitreous coating of pottery or porcelain, or a transparent or semi-transparent layer of paint.
- **ceramics**: Inorganic, nonmetallic solids created by the action of heat and their subsequent cooling. Most common ceramics are crystalline and the earliest uses of ceramics were in pottery.

Islamic Ceramics

Islamic art has notable achievements in ceramics, both in pottery and tiles for buildings, which reached heights unmatched by other cultures . Early pottery had usually been unglazed, but a tin-opacified glazing technique was developed by Islamic potters. The first Islamic opaque glazes can be found as blue-painted ware in Basra, dating to around the 8th century.

Another significant contribution was the development of stonepaste ceramics, originating from 9th century Iraq. The first industrial complex for glass and pottery production was built in Ar-Raqqah, Syria, in the 8th century. Other centers for innovative pottery in the Islamic world included Fustat (from 975 to 1075), Damascus (from 1100 to around 1600), and Tabriz (from 1470 to 1550).

Lusterware

Lusterware is a type of pottery or porcelain that has an iridescent metallic glaze. Luster first began as a painting technique in glassmaking , which was then translated to pottery in Mesopotamia in the 9th century.



10th century dish: Islamic art has very notable achievements in ceramics, both in pottery and tiles for walls, which reached heights unmatched by other cultures. This dish is from East Persia or Central Asia.

The techniques, shapes, and decorative motifs of Chinese ceramics were admired and emulated by Islamic potters, especially after the Mongol and Timurid invasions. Until the Early Modern period, Western ceramics had little influence, but Islamic pottery was highly sought after in Europe, and was often copied.

An example of this is the albarello, a type of earthenware jar originally designed to hold apothecary ointments and dry drugs. The development of this type of pharmacy jar had its roots in the Islamic Middle East. Hispano–Moresque examples were exported to Italy, inspiring the earliest Italian examples, from 15th century Florence.

Hispano–Moresque Style

The Hispano–Moresque style emerged in Al-Andaluz, or Muslim Spain, in the 8th century, under Egyptian influence. More refined production happened much later, presumably by Muslim potters who worked in the areas reconquered by the Christian kingdoms.

The Hispano–Moresque style mixed Islamic and European elements in its designs and was exported to neighboring European countries. The style introduced two ceramic techniques to Europe:

1. Glazing with an opaque white tin-glaze.
2. Painting in metallic lusters.

Ottoman Iznik pottery produced most of the finest ceramics of the 16th century—tiles and large vessels boldly decorated with floral motifs that were influenced by Chinese Yuan and Ming ceramics. These were still in earthenware, since porcelain was not made in Islamic countries until modern times.

The medieval Islamic world also painted pottery with animal and human imagery . Examples are found throughout the medieval Islamic world, particularly in Persia and Egypt.

Islamic Textiles

The most important textile produced in the Medieval and Early Modern Islamic Empires was the carpet.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the making and designs of Islamic textiles

Try It

Key Points

- The production and trade of textiles pre-dates Islam , and had long been important to Middle Eastern cultures and cities, many of which flourished due to the Silk Road .

- When the Islamic dynasties formed and grew more powerful they gained control over textile production in the region, which was arguably the most important craft of the era.

Key Terms

- **textile arts**: The production of arts and crafts that use plant, animal, or synthetic fibers to create objects.

Islam and the Textile Arts

The textile arts refer to the production of arts and crafts that use plant, animal, or synthetic fibers to create objects. These objects can be for everyday use, or they can be decorative and luxury items. The production and trade of textiles pre-dates Islam, and had long been important to Middle Eastern cultures and cities, many of which flourished due to the Silk Road.

When the Islamic dynasties formed and grew more powerful they gained control over textile production in the region, which was arguably the most important craft of the era. The most important textile produced in Medieval and Early Modern Islamic Empires was the carpet.

The Ottoman Empire and Carpet Production

The art of carpet weaving was particularly important in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman state was founded by Turkish tribes in northwestern Anatolia in 1299 and became an empire in 1453 after the momentous conquest of Constantinople.

Stretching across Asia, Europe, and Africa, the Empire was vast and long lived, lasting until 1922 when the monarchy was abolished in Turkey. Within the Ottoman Empire, carpets were immensely valued as decorative furnishings and for their practical value . They were used not just on floors but also as wall and door hangings, where they provided additional insulation.

These intricately knotted carpets were made of silk, or a combination of silk and cotton, and were often rich in religious and other symbolism. Hereke silk carpets, which were made in the coastal town of Hereke, were the most valued of the Ottoman carpets because of their fine weave. The Hereke carpets were typically used to furnish royal palaces.



Carpet and interior of the Harem room in Topkapi Palace, Istanbul: The Ottoman Turks were famed for the quality of their finely woven and intricately knotted silk carpets.

Persian Carpets

The Iranian Safavid Empire (1501–1786) is distinguished from the Mughal and Ottoman dynasties by the Shia faith of its shahs, which was the majority Islamic denomination in Persia. Safavid art is contributed to several aesthetic traditions, particularly to the textile arts.

In the sixteenth century, carpet weaving evolved from a nomadic and peasant craft to a well-executed industry that used specialized design and manufacturing techniques on quality fibers such as silk. The carpets of Ardabil, for example, were commissioned to commemorate the Safavid dynasty and are now considered to be the best examples of classical Persian weaving, particularly for their use of graphical perspective.

Textiles became a large export, and Persian weaving became one of the most popular imported goods of Europe. Islamic carpets were a luxury item in Europe and there are several examples of European Renaissance paintings that document the presence of Islamic textiles in European homes during that time.



The Ardabil Carpet, Persia, 1540: The Ardabil Carpet is the finest example of 16th century Persian carpet production.

Indonesian Batik

Islamic textile production, however, was not limited to the carpet. Royal factories were founded for the purpose of textile production that also included cloth and garments.

The development and refinement of Indonesian batik cloth was closely linked to Islam. The Islamic prohibition on certain images encouraged batik design to become more abstract and intricate. Realistic depictions of animals and humans are rare on traditional batik, but serpents, puppet-shaped humans, and the Garuda of pre-Islamic mythology are all commonplace.

Although its existence in Indonesia pre-dates Islam, batik reached its high point in the royal Muslim courts, such as Mataram and Yogyakarta, whose Muslim rulers encouraged and patronized batik production. Today, batik has undergone a revival, and cloths are used for other purposes besides wearing, such as wrapping the Quran.



Javanese court batik: The development and refinement of Indonesian batik cloth was closely linked to Islam.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 11: Native-American Art Before 1300 CE

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11.1: The New World

The New World

Indigenous visual arts traditions in the Americas span thousands of years, representing cultures from Mesoamerica to the Arctic.

Learning Objectives

Gain an appreciation for the breadth and diversity of indigenous peoples and cultures of the Americas

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The New World refers to the western hemisphere, especially the Americas, after the European “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century. The indigenous peoples of the Americas are the pre-Columbian (before European contact) inhabitants of North America, Mesoamerica , and South America as well as Greenland.
- Scientists believe that the most recent migration of humans from Eurasia to the Americas took place around 12,000 years ago via a land bridge that connected the two continents.
- Indigenous populations across the Americas created monumental architecture, large-scale cities, chiefdoms, states, and empires.
- Indigenous Americans also created pottery, paintings, jewelry, weaving and textiles, sculptures , basketry, carvings, beadwork, and other objects that comprise a major category in world art history.

Key Terms

- **Mesoamerica**: A region and cultural area in the Americas, extending approximately from central Mexico to Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica, where pre-Columbian societies flourished before the Spanish colonization of the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries.
- **pre-Columbian**: The inhabitants, societies, and culture of the Americas prior to European contact, colonization, and influence; literally “pre-(Christopher)Columbus.”
- **Paleo-Indians**: The first people to inhabit the Americas from Eurasia more than 11,000 years ago.
- **New World**: The term used by Europeans to describe the western hemisphere, specifically the Americas, during the “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century.
- **indigenous peoples**: People defined in international or national legislation as having a set of specific rights based on their historical ties to a particular territory, and their cultural or historical distinctiveness from other populations that are often politically dominant.

The New World refers to the western hemisphere, especially the Americas, which was almost entirely unknown to Europeans before the “age of discovery” beginning in the early 16th century. The Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was one of the earliest and most well-known of these European explorers; the first of his four famous voyages from Spain to the Americas began in 1492.



Sebastian Munster's Map of the New World, first published in 1540: A colorful map of what the German cartographer, Munster, and his contemporaries believed the Americas looked like during the European "age of discovery."

The indigenous peoples of the Americas are the pre-Columbian inhabitants of North America, Mesoamerica, and South America as well as Greenland. There are almost as many terms for indigenous people in the Americas as there are geographic regions. For example, "pueblos indígenas" is a common term in Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. "Aborigen" is used in Argentina; "Amerindian" is used in Guyana. Indigenous peoples are commonly known in Canada as Aboriginal peoples, which includes First Nations, Inuit , and Métis peoples. Indigenous peoples of the United States are commonly known as Native Americans or American Indians, and Alaskan Natives.

Scientists believe that migrations of humans from Eurasia (the combined continental landmass of Europe and Asia) to the Americas first took place via Beringia, a land bridge which formerly connected the two continents across what is now the Bering Strait. The most recent migration probably took place around 12,000 years ago, but the earliest period remains somewhat of a mystery. These early Paleo-Indians soon spread throughout the continent, diversifying into many hundreds of culturally distinct nations and tribes. According to the oral histories of many indigenous peoples of the Americas, they have been living there since their genesis, represented in a wide range of traditional creation stories.

Indigenous Cultures

While some indigenous peoples of the Americas were traditionally hunter-gatherers — and many, especially in Amazonia, still are — many groups practiced aquaculture and agriculture. The impact of their agricultural endowment to the world is a testament to their time and work in reshaping and cultivating the flora indigenous to the Americas. While some societies depended heavily on agriculture, others practiced a mix of farming, hunting, and gathering. In some regions, the indigenous peoples created monumental architecture, large-scale cities, chiefdoms (with hierarchies based on kinship), states, and empires. Many parts of the Americas are still populated by indigenous Americans, and some countries have sizable populations, including Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Greenland, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru.

At least a thousand different indigenous languages are spoken in the Americas. Some, such as Quechua languages, Aymara, Guaraní, Mayan languages, and Nahuatl, count their speakers in millions. Many indigenous people also maintain aspects of their traditional cultural practices, including religion, social organization, and subsistence economies. Some indigenous peoples still live in relative isolation from Western society.

Cultural practices in the Americas seem to have been shared mostly within geographical zones where unrelated peoples adopted similar technologies and social organizations. An example of such a cultural area is Mesoamerica, where millennia of coexistence and shared development among the peoples of the region produced a fairly homogeneous culture with complex agricultural and social patterns. Another well-known example is the North American plains where until the 19th century, Native American groups such as Blackfoot, Crow,and Sioux existed as nomadic hunter-gatherers (primarily buffalo hunting).

Indigenous visual arts traditions in the Americas span thousands of years, representing cultures from Mesoamerica to the Arctic. Visual arts by indigenous peoples of the Americas comprise a major category in world art history. Their contributions include pottery, paintings, jewelry, weavings and textiles, sculptures, basketry, carvings, and beadwork. Much of this artwork provides insight into the values , beliefs, and ceremonial rituals of early cultures of the Americas. In the following chapter, we will examine in detail the artworks of indigenous groups throughout North and South America prior to 1300.



Mayan Funerary Urn: Ceramics such as this urn provide insight into the values, beliefs, and ceremonial rituals of early cultures of the Americas.

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11.2: Mesoamerica

Cultures of Mesoamerica

Mesoamerica was dominated by three cultures in the Pre-Classical (up to 200 CE) to Post-Classical periods (circa 1580 CE): the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec.

Learning Objectives

Identify distinctive trends and materials in each of these civilization's art production

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Olmec people are known for extraordinarily detailed jade figurines and colossal heads of rulers made of basalt.
- Mayan culture achieved an advanced system of hieroglyphic writing, a sophisticated calendar, and a productive system of art patronage .
- The Mayan civilization rose very quickly. Although much of its art was lost to the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century, many stone and wood sculptures
  that attest to the Mayan's distinctive religious beliefs still survive.

Key Terms

- **stelae**: Upright stone slabs or columns typically bearing a commemorative inscription or relief design, often serving as gravestones. (singular: stela)
- **jade**: An ornamental rock with green and blue properties.
- **Mesoamerica**: A pre-Columbian cultural region extending from the southern part of Mexico to an area that comprises some parts of the countries of Central America.
- **hieroglyphic**: A type of writing consisting of hieroglyphs, a largely pictorial character of the Ancient Egyptian writing system.

Mesoamerica is a region in the Americas that extends from central Mexico to northern Costa Rica. Three cultures dominated the pre-Columbian history of Mesoamerica: the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec civilizations.

Olmec Culture

The Olmec civilization, which flourished from 1200–400 BCE, defines the Pre- Classical period; the Olmecs are generally considered the forerunner of all Mesoamerica cultures including the Maya and Aztecs. Primarily centered in the modern states of Tabasco and Veracruz in the Gulf of Mexico, the Olmec people are known for creating an abundance of small and extraordinarily detailed jade figurines. The figurines typically exhibit complex shapes such as human figures, human-animal composites of deities and gods, and animals like cats and birds. Although we don't know the specific purpose of these jade objects, their presence in some Olmec graves suggests they served a religious purpose in addition to being signs of wealth and goods for trade.



Olmec jade figurine: Small holes were drilled around the edges so that this figurine could be worn on the body with twine.

The Olmec are also known for building massive stone sculptures, many of which were discovered at La Venta in the modern Mexican state of Tabasco. Made from basalt rock from the Tuxtla mountains to the north, the Olmec used this rock to create altars, stelae , and colossal heads. Each head is rendered as a distinct individual and is thought to resemble an Olmec ruler. Each ruler's personality is represented in the distinct headdresses that adorn the sculptures' heads.



Olmec Colossal Head: Heads made from basalt boulders weighed anywhere between 6 and 50 tons.

Mayan Culture

Mayan culture peaked during the Classical period (ca. 200–900 CE) and featured complex organization of large agricultural communities ruled by monarchs. They built imposing pyramids , temples, palaces, and administrative structures in densely populated cities in southern Mesoamerica. The Maya had the most advanced hieroglyphic writing in Mesoamerica and the most sophisticated calendrical system. In Mayan culture, we also see one of the earliest systems of art patronage. Kings and queens employed full-time artists in their courts, many of whom signed their work. It's thus unsurprising that the most common motifs in Mayan art are mortal rulers and supernatural beings.



Mayan relief sculpture from Palenque, Mexico: The Mayans were among the most advanced cultures of Mesoamerica. Most of their art represents of mortal rulers or mythic deities.

In Palenque, Mexico (a prominent Mayan city in the Classical period), the ruler Lord Pakal commissioned a grouping of large structures that stand on high ground in the middle of the town. One of those buildings, the Temple of the Inscriptions, is a nine-level pyramid that is 75 feet high. The layers of the structure probably reflect the Mayan belief that the underworld had nine levels. Inscriptions line the back wall of the temple, giving the building its name.



Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque, Mexico: The Temple is one of four structures commissioned by the Maya ruler Lord Pakal.

Aztec Culture

Mayan civilization was in decline by the time of the Spanish Conquest in the early 16th century, and by then the Aztecs controlled much of Mexico. The rise of the Aztec was quick. Once a migratory people, they arrived in the Basin of Mexico in the 13th century where they eventually settled on an island in Lake Texcoco; they called their new home Tenochtitlan. In only a few centuries, the Aztecs aggressively expanded their territory and transformed Tenochtitlan into a capital so grand that the Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes remarked on its beauty en route to invade the city in November 1519.

Metalwork was a particular skill of the Aztecs. Unfortunately, very few examples of their characteristic small gold and silver objects survive. When the Spanish arrived, most were melted down for currency. Stone sculpture and wood figurines fared much better during the Conquest. Aztec sculpture, most of which took the form of human figures carved from stone and wood, were not religious idols as one might suspect. Instead of containing the spirit of a deity, monumental sculptures were made to “feed” the deities with blood and precious objects in order to keep the gods, who resided elsewhere in the temples, happy. These sculptures are the source of stories told by Spanish conquistadors of huge statues splattered with blood and encrusted with jewels and gold.



15th century CE vase representing Tlaloc, the Aztec god of rain, storms and agriculture : The vase is from the glittering Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan.

Colossal Heads of the Olmec

The Olmec culture of the Gulf Coast of Mexico produced the first major Mesoamerican art and is particularly known for the creation of colossal stone heads.

Learning Objectives

Describe the colossal stone heads made by the Olmecs

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Olmec built large cities with ceremonial centers. They also made small sculptures and figurines from many types of material. Using huge basalt boulders transported from mountains in another region, the Olmec produced at least 17 sculptures of human heads.
- The monuments are thought to represent Olmec rulers because of their distinct facial features and adornments.
- The heads date from between 1500 and 400 BCE.
- The only example of a colossal head found in a region outside the Olmec's domain is at Takalik Abaj in Guatemala.

Key Terms

- **Olmec**: Ancient pre-Columbian people living in the tropical lowlands of south-central Mexico, in roughly the modern-day states of Veracruz and Tabasco.
- **earspools**: Cylindrical earrings that pierce the earlobe.
- **Preclassic period**: Also known as the Formative period, dating roughly from as early as 1500 BCE to about 400 BCE.

The First Major Mesoamerican Art

The art of the Olmec, which emerged during the preclassic period along the Gulf of Mexico, was the first major Mesoamerican art. Across the swampy coastal areas of the modern Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco, the Olmec constructed ceremonial centers

on raised earth mounds. These centers were filled with objects made from materials including jade , clay, basalt, and greenstone. Most of these objects were figurines or sculptures that resembled both human and animal subjects.



Fish Vessel, 12th–9th century BCE: Olmec art frequently featured animal as well as human subjects.

While Olmec figurines are found abundantly in sites throughout the Formative period, monumental works of basalt sculpture, including colossal heads, altars, and seated figures are the most recognizable feature of this culture . The huge basalt rocks for the large sculptures were quarried at distant sites and transported to Olmec centers such as San Lorenzo and La Venta. The colossal heads range in height from 5 to 12 feet and portray adult males wearing close-fitting caps with chin straps and large, round earspools . The fleshy faces have almond-shaped eyes, flat, broad noses, thick, protruding lips, and downturned mouths. Each face has a distinct personality, suggesting that they represent specific individuals.



Olmec Head No. 3 from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan 1200-900 BCE.: Olmec colossal heads are believed to be depictions of powerful rulers.

These massive basalt boulders were transported from the Sierra de los Tuxtlas Mountains of Veracruz. When originally displayed in Olmec centers, the heads were arranged in lines or groups; however, the method used to transport the stone to these sites remains unclear. Given the enormous weight of the stones and the manpower required to transport them over large distances, it is probable that the colossal portraits represent powerful Olmec rulers.

The discovery of a colossal head at Tres Zapotes in the nineteenth century spurred the first archaeological investigations of Olmec culture by Matthew Stirling in 1938. Seventeen confirmed examples are traced to four sites within the Olmec heartland on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Most colossal heads were sculpted from spherical boulders, but two from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were recarved from massive stone thrones. An additional monument at Takalik Abaj in Guatemala is a throne that may have been carved from a colossal head. This is the only known example from outside the Olmec heartland.

Dating the monuments remains difficult because of the movement of many from their original contexts prior to archaeological investigation. Most have been dated to the Early Preclassic (or Formative) period (1500–1000 BCE) with some to the Middle Preclassic (1000–400 BCE) period. The smallest weighs six tons, while the largest is estimated to weigh 40 to 50 tons, although it was abandoned and left unfinished close to the source of its stone.

Teotihuacan

At its height, Teotihuacan was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of 200,000. It was a primary center of commerce and manufacturing.

Learning Objectives

Understand the importance of Teotihuacan as a religious, commercial, and art historical center

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The name Teotihuacan means Gathering Place of the Gods.

Key Terms

- **taludtablero**: A design characteristic of Mayan architecture at Teotihuacan in which a sloping talud at the base of a building supports a wall-like tablero, where ornamental painting and sculpture are usually placed.

Located some 30 miles northeast of present-day Mexico City, Teotihuacan experienced a period of rapid growth early in the first millennium CE. By 200 CE, it emerged as a significant center of commerce and manufacturing, the first large city-state in the Americas. At its height between 350 and 650 CE, Teotihuacan covered nearly nine miles and had a population of about 200,000, making it one of the largest cities in the world. One reason for its dominance was its control of the market for high-quality obsidian. This volcanic stone, made into tools and vessels , was traded for luxury items such as the green feathers of the quetzal bird, used for priestly headdresses, and the spotted fur of the jaguar, used for ceremonial garments.



Ceremonial center of the city of Teotihuacan, Mexico, Teotihuacan culture, c. 350-650 CE.: View from the Pyramid of the Moon down the Avenue of the Dead to the Ciudadela and the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. The Pyramid of the Sun is at the middle left. The avenue is over a mile long.

The people of Teotihuacan worshipped deities that were recognizably similar to those worshipped by later Mesoamerican people, including the Aztecs, who dominated central Mexico at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Among these are the Rain or Storm God (god of fertility, war, and sacrifice), known to the Aztecs as Tlaloc, and the Feathered Serpent, known to the Maya as Kukulcan and to the Aztecs as Quetzalcoatl.

Teotihuacan's principal monuments include the Pyramid of the Sun, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the Ciudadela (Spanish for fortified city center), a vast sunken plaza surrounded by temple platforms. The city's principal religious and political center, the Ciudadela could accommodate an assembly of more than 60,000 people. Its focal point was the pyramidal Temple of the Feathered Serpent. This seven-tiered structure exhibits the taludtablero construction that is a hallmark of the Teotihuacan architectural style . The sloping base, or *talud*, of each platform supports a vertical *tablero*, or entablature , which is surrounded by frame and filled with sculptural decoration . The Temple of the Feathered Serpent was enlarged several times, and as was characteristic of Mesoamerican pyramids, each enlargement completely enclosed the previous structure like the layers of an onion. Archaeological excavation of this temple's earlier-phase tableros and a stairway balustrade have revealed painted heads of the Feathered Serpent, the goggle-eyed Rain or Storm God, and reliefs of aquatic shells and snails. The flat, angular, abstract style, typical of Teotihuacan art, is in marked contrast to the curvilinear style of Olmec art.



Temple of the Feathered Serpent, the Ciudadela.: Detail of pyramid, showing the alternating *talud* base and vertical *tablero* (left).

The Decline

Sometime in the middle of the seventh century disaster struck Teotihuacan. The ceremonial center burned and the city went into a permanent decline. Nevertheless, its influence continued as other centers throughout Mesoamerica and as far south as the highlands of Guatemala borrowed and transformed its imagery over the next several centuries. The site was never entirely abandoned as it remained a legendary pilgrimage center. The much later Aztec people (c. 1300-1525 CE) revered the site as the place where they believed the gods created the sun and the moon. In fact, the name "Teotihuacan" is actually an Aztec word meaning "Gathering Place of the Gods."

Art of the Maya

Mayan art includes a wide variety of objects, commissioned by rulers, that depict scenes of both elite and everyday society.

Learning Objectives

Identify the key features of Mayan art from the Classic Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Maya blue was a distinctive color preserved for centuries due to its unique chemical composition; unfortunately, the technique involved in producing it has been lost.
- The Maya carved stone portraits of their rulers as memorials.
- There is an especially strong tradition of painting and sculpture in Mayan culture . Often sculpture was painted with distinctive dyes and techniques characteristic of the Maya.
- Much Mayan art was commissioned by rulers to accompany them to the Underworld.

Key Terms

- **Stele**: As stone slab placed vertically and decorated with inscriptions or reliefs. Used as a grave marker or memorial.
- **Maya blue**: A unique bright azure pigment manufactured by cultures of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, such as the Maya and Aztec. Made from a combination of a particular kind of clay, indigo, and vegetable dye.

Mayan Portraiture

Strong cultural influences stemming from the Olmec tradition and Teotihuacan contributed to the development of the Mayan city center and the culture's Classic artistic tradition. The most sacred and majestic buildings of Mayan cities were built in enclosed, centrally located precincts. The Maya held dramatic rituals within these highly sculptured and painted environments. For example, the grand pyramids of Copan and Tikal are among the most imposing buildings the Maya erected; each contains sculpted portraits that glorified the city's rulers.

Stele H in the Great Plaza at Copan represents one of the city's foremost leaders, 18-Rabbit, who reigned from 695-738 CE. During the ruler's long reign, Copan reached its greatest physical extent and breadth of political influence. On Stele H, 18-Rabbit wears an elaborate headdress and ornamented kilt and sandals. He holds across his chest a double-headed serpent bar, symbol of the sky and of his absolute power. His features, although idealized, have the quality of a portrait likeness. The Mayan elite, like the Egyptian pharaohs, tended to have themselves portrayed as eternally youthful. The dense, deeply carved ornamental details that frame the face and figure stand almost clear of the main stone block and wrap around the sides of the stele. The stele was originally painted, with remnants of red paint visible on many stelae and buildings in Copan.



Stele H portraying the ruler 18-Rabbit. Great Plaza at Copan, Honduras. Made of stone, 11′ 9″ high. : Although a powerful ruler, 18-Rabbit eventually was captured and beheaded by a rival king.

Clay Sculpture

Many small clay figures from the Classic Mayan period remain in existence. These free-standing objects illustrate aspects of everyday Mayan life. As a group, they are remarkably life-like, carefully descriptive, and even comic at times. They represent a wider range of human types and activities than commonly depicted on Mayan stelae. Ball players, women weaving, older men, dwarves, supernatural beings, and amorous couples, as well as elaborately attired rulers and warriors, comprise one of the largest groups of surviving Mayan art. Many of the hollow figurines are also whistles. They were made in ceramic workshops and painted with *Maya Blue*, a dye unique to Mayan and Aztec artists. Small clay figures found in burial sites were made to accompany the Mayan dead on their inevitable voyage to the Underworld.



Ballplayer, Maya, from Jaina Island, Mexico, 700-900CE. Painted clay, 6.25″ high: Maya Blue is a pigment that has proven virtually indestructible, unlike other dyes and paints that have largely disappeared over time.

Painted Vases

The Maya painted vivid narrative scenes on the surfaces of cylindrical vases. A typical vase design depicts a palace scene where an enthroned Mayan ruler sits surrounded by courtiers and attendants. The figures wear simple loincloths, turbans of wrapped cloth and feathers, and black body paint. These painted vases may have been used as drinking and food vessels for noble Maya, but their final destination was the tomb, where they accompanied the deceased to the Underworld. They likely were commissioned by the deceased before his death or by his survivors, and were occasionally sent from distant sites as funerary offerings .



Detail of Enthroned Maya lord and courtiers, cylinder vase, from Motul de San Jose region, Guatemala, c. 672-830 CE : Ceramic with red, rose, orange, white, and black on cream, 8″ high.

Architecture of the Maya

The Maya had complex architectural programs. They built imposing pyramids, temples, palaces, and administrative structures in densely populated cities.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristic style and functional elements of Maya architecture in the Classic and Postclassic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Maya grouped large architectural structures at the centers of major cities.
- Pyramids and temples were used for religious purposes and built by rulers as memorials to themselves.
- Administrative structures such as the Palace demonstrate the sophistication of Maya architecture and technology.
- Maya architecture is ornate and elaborate, incorporating bas- relief , sculpture , and painted murals on the interiors and exteriors of structures.
- The Mesoamerican ball game was a central part of ancient Mesoamerican cultural, religious, and political life.

- The cities of Palenque and Chichen Itza, both in Mexico, contain iconic examples of Mayan architecture from the Classical and Postclassical periods.

Key Terms

- **roof comb**: In a Mayan building, a masonry wall along the apex of a roof built above the level of the roof proper. Roof combs support the highly decorated false facades that rise above the height of the building at the front.
- **mansard roof**: A roof with four sloping sides that become steeper halfway down.
- **aqueduct**: An artificial channel for conveying water, typically in the form of a bridge supported by tall columns across a valley.
- **bas-relief**: A kind of sculpture in which shapes are carved so that they are only slightly higher than the flat background.
- **balustrades**: A kind of low wall placed at the sides of staircases, bridges, etc., made of a row of short posts topped by a long rail.

The Mayan civilization emerged during the late Preclassic period (250 BCE-250 CE), reached its peak in the southern lowlands of Guatemala during the Classic period (250-900 CE), and shifted to northern Yucatan during the Postclassic period (900-1521 CE).

Architecture in Palenque

In Palenque, Mexico, a prominent city of the Classic period, the major buildings are grouped on high ground . The central group of structures includes the Palace (possibly an administrative and ceremonial center as well as a residential structure), the Temple of the Inscriptions, and two other temples. Most of the structures in the complex were commissioned by a powerful ruler, Lord Pakal, who reigned from 615 to 638 CE, and his two sons, who succeeded him.



Palace (right) and Temple of the Inscriptions, tomb-pyramid of Lord Pakal (left) : Palenque, Mexico. Mayan culture, late 7th century.

Temple of the Inscriptions

The Temple of the Inscriptions is a nine-level pyramid that rises to a height of about 75 feet. The consecutive layers probably reflect the belief, current among the Aztec and Maya at the time of the Spanish conquest, that the underworld had nine levels. Priests would climb the steep stone staircase on the exterior to reach the temple on top, which recalls the kind of pole-and-thatch houses the Maya still build in parts of the Yucatan today. The roof of the temple was topped with a crest known as a roof comb , and its facade still retains much of its stucco sculpture. Inscriptions line the back wall of the outer chamber, giving the temple its name.



Temple of the Inscriptions (tomb pyramid of Lord Pakal) : Palenque, Mexico, 7th century

The Palace

Across from the Temple of Inscriptions is the Palace, a complex of several adjacent buildings and courtyards built on a wide artificial terrace. The Palace was used by the Mayan aristocracy for bureaucratic functions, entertainment, and ritual ceremonies .

Numerous sculptures and bas-relief carvings within the Palace have been conserved. The Palace's most unusual and recognizable feature is the four-story tower known as the Observation Tower. Like many other buildings at the site, the Observation Tower exhibits a mansard roof . The Palace was equipped with numerous large baths and saunas which were supplied with fresh water by an intricate water system. An aqueduct constructed of great stone blocks with a six-foot-high vault diverts the Otulum River to flow underneath the main plaza.



The Palace's Observation Tower with mansard roof : Palenque, Mexico, late Classic period

Architecture in Chichen Itza

As the focus of Maya civilization shifted northward in the Postclassic period, a northern Maya group called the Itza rose to prominence. Their principal center, Chichen Itza, (Yucatan State) Mexico, which means "at the mouth of the well of the Itza," flourished from the 9th to 13th centuries CE, eventually covering about six square miles.

El Castillo

One of Chichen Itza's most conspicuous structures is El Castillo (Spanish for the castle), a massive nine-level pyramid in the center of a large plaza with a stairway on each side leading to a square temple on the pyramid's summit. At the spring and fall equinoxes, the setting sun casts an undulating, serpent-like shadow on the stairways, forming bodies for the serpent heads carved at the base of the balustrades .



El Castillo (the Castle) : Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico. 9th-13th century.

The Great Ball Court

The Great Ball Court northwest of the Castillo is the largest and best preserved court for playing the Mesoamerican ball game, an important sport with ritual associations played by Mesoamericans since 1400 BCE. The parallel platforms flanking the main playing area are each 312 feet long. The walls of these platforms stand 26 feet high. Rings carved with intertwined feathered serpents are set high at the top of each wall at the center. At the base of the interior walls are slanted benches with sculpted panels of teams of ball players. In one panel, one of the players has been decapitated; the wound spews streams of blood in the form of wriggling snakes.

At one end of the Great Ball Court is the North Temple, also known as the Temple of the Bearded Man (Templo del Hombre Barbado). This small masonry building has detailed bas-relief carving on the inner walls, including a center figure with decorative carvings that resemble facial hair. Built into the east wall are the Temples of the Jaguar. The Upper Temple of the Jaguar overlooks the ball court and has an entrance guarded by two large columns carved in the familiar feathered serpent motif . At the entrance to the Lower Temple of the Jaguar is another Jaguar throne similar to the one in the inner temple of El Castillo.



The Great Ball Court, Chichen Itza, Mexico Late Classic period, 551′ x 230′: The modern version of the Mesoamerican ball game is called Ulama and is similar to racquetball.

Ceramics of the Veracruz

Ceramic figurines are a hallmark of Classic Veracruz art. The Veracruz people produced a variety of small clay figures in multiple areas around the modern state of Veracruz, Mexico.

Learning Objectives

Describe characteristics of ceramic figurines from two parts of Veracruz known for ceramic production in the Classic and Late Classic periods

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Classic Veracruz culture produced ceramic figurines in multiple distinctive styles and depicting many types of people.
- There are strong stylistic differences between ceramic figures from the cities of Remojadas and Nopiloa.

- The highly ritualized Mesoamerican ball game was of crucial importance to the Veracruz culture and was represented in their art.
- Smiling figures from Remojadas called Sonrientes are the most recognizable ceramic figures produced by the Veracruz people.

Key Terms

- **Mesoamerican ballgame**: A sport with ritual associations played since 1,400 BC by the pre-Columbian peoples of Ancient Mesoamerica. The sport had different versions in different places during the millennia, and a more modern version of the game, ulama, is still played in a few places by the indigenous population.
- **Sonrientes**: A type of ceramic figurine produced by the Veracruz culture. Literally translates to “smiling” in Spanish.
- **appliqués**: In the context of ceramics, adding low-relief clay forms to hard surfaces for embellishment.

The modern state of Veracruz lies along the Mexican Gulf Coast, north of the Maya lowlands and east of the highlands of central Mexico. Culturally diverse and environmentally rich, the people of Veracruz took part in dynamic interchanges between three regions that over the centuries included trade, warfare, and migration. During the middle centuries of the first millennium, the artistically gifted Veracruzanos created inventive ceramic sculpture in diverse yet related styles.

Until the early 1950s, Classic Veracruz ceramics were few, little understood, and generally without provenance (known history). Since then, the recovery of thousands of figurines and pottery pieces from sites such as Remojadas and Nopiloa (some initially found by looters), has expanded our understanding and filled many museum shelves. Artist and art historian Miguel Covarrubias described Classic Veracruz ceramics as “powerful and expressive, endowed with a charm and sensibility unprecedented in other, more formal cultures.”

Figurines from Remojadas and Nopiloa

Remojadas-style figurines, perhaps the most easily recognizable from this culture, are usually hand-modeled and often adorned with *appliqués* . Of particular note are the *Sonrientes* (Smiling) Figurines, with triangular-shaped heads and outstretched arms. Figurines from Nopiloa are often molded and usually less ornate, without appliqués. The Sonrientes figure from Remojadas (below) provides scholars with an example of the clothing worn in ancient times, such as the loincloth and headdress. The flattened forehead on this smiling figure may represent the practice of intentional cranial deformation or may simply reflect an artistic convention. Many American cultures considered a flattened forehead desirable and used a variety of techniques to flatten the skulls of infants while they were still pliable.



Smiling Figure, Late Classic Period, 7th-8th century, Remojadas, Veracruz, Mexico, 45.5cm high: Made of brown clay with white pigment. The figure contains both hand-modeled and mold-made elements.

Another smiling figure from the Remojadas region is a hollow ceramic sculpture representing an individual celebrating with music and dance. This bare-chested figure with open mouth and filed teeth stands energetically with legs spread and arms lifted as if caught in mid-motion. He wears a woven cap with geometric patterns, an elaborate skirt, circular earrings, a beaded necklace, and a bracelet. His face and body contain patterns evocative of body paint, including slight lines emanating from his lower eyelids and onto his cheeks. This sculpture evokes a festive dance or ritual accompanied by the rhythmic reverberation of the hand-held rattle and celebratory sound escaping from the figure’s open mouth.



Smiling Figure, Late Classic Period, 7th–8th century : Remojadas, Veracruz, Mexico, 45 cm high

In contrast to Smiling Figures from Remojadas, the mold-made ceramic figure from Nopiloa below depicts a bearded, mustachioed male wearing a ballgame yoke around his waist to protect him from the hard, solid rubber ball used in play. There are cylindrical ear ornaments in his ears and beneath his arm, a baton-like object perhaps related to the local incarnation of the game. The rules and manner in which the Mesoamerican ballgame was played varied among contemporary sites and evolved through time. Surviving evidence suggests human sacrifice was a frequent outcome, but the game may also have been played for other purposes such as sport. The people of ancient Veracruz interacted with people from other Mesoamerican cultures, and this Nopiloa figure displays motifs commonly found in Mayan art. Knotted ties like those around this player's wrist and neck connote captured prisoners in Mayan pictorial language. A motif similar to the Maya mat, a symbol of rulership, appears on the flanged headdress of the ballplayer. Like Mayan figurines of this type, the body of this figure is a whistle, a musical instrument used in ritual and ceremony .



Ball Player Figurine, 7th–10th century, Nopiloa, Veracruz, Mexico, 27 cm. high.: Nopiloa, Veracruz, Mexico. 27 centimeters high.

Codices of the Mixtec

Mixtec culture had a unique and complex writing system that used characters and pictures to represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds. They made codices to document important historical events in their society.

Learning Objectives

Understand the uses and structure of Mixtec codices

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Mixtec codices were made of deerskin and folded in an accordion pattern. Only eight Mixtec codices survive.
- Mixtec codices allow us to trace Mixtec history from 1550 CE back to 940 CE, deeper in time than any other Mesoamerican culture except the Maya.
- Codices represented historical events on both a micro and macro scale for Mixtec nobility.

Key Terms

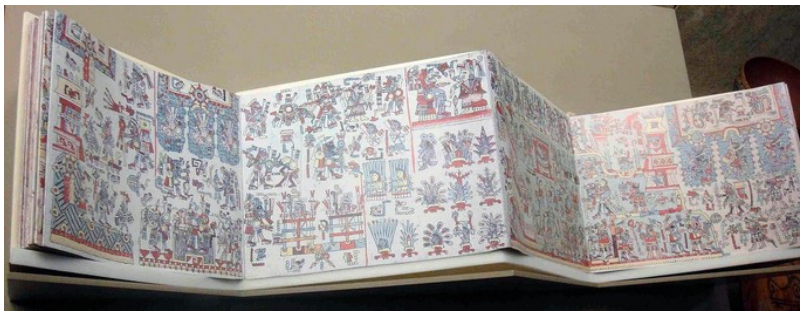
- **codices**: Books constructed of sheets of paper, vellum, papyrus, or similar materials, with hand-written contents. Codex: singular
- **logographic**: Type of written language in which the characters/pictures used represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds.
- **Mixtec**: A Mesoamerican people who lived in southern Mexico before the rise of the Aztecs.

About the Mixtec

The Mixtecs were one of the most influential ethnic groups to emerge in Mesoamerica during the Post-Classic period. Never a united nation, the Mixtecs waged war and forged alliances among themselves as well as with other peoples in their vicinity. They also produced beautiful manuscripts and metal work and influenced the international artistic style used from Central Mexico to Yucatan.

During the Classic period, the Mixtecs lived in hilltop settlements of northwestern Oaxaca, a fact reflected in their name in their own language, Ñuudzahui, meaning “People of the Rain.” During the Post-Classic period, the Mixtecs slowly moved into adjacent valleys and then into the great Valley of Oaxaca. This time of expansion is recorded in a large number of deerskin manuscripts called *codices*, only eight of which have survived. Nevertheless, these manuscripts allow us to trace Mixtec history from 1550 CE back to 940 CE, deeper in time than any other Mesoamerican culture except the Maya.

Mixtec Codices



Mixtec Codex Zouche-Nuttall: Mixtec codices were made of deerskin and folded like an accordion.

Mixtec codices represent a type of writing classified as *logographic* , meaning the characters and pictures used represent complete words and ideas instead of syllables or sounds. In Mixtec, the relationships among pictorial elements denote the meaning of the text, whereas in other Mesoamerican writing the pictorial representations are not incorporated into the text. Common topics found in the codices are biographies of rulers and other influential figures, records of elite family trees, mythologies, and accounts of ceremonies .



A Warrior Scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall:

The above detail from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall depicts a group of warriors conquering a town (an event noted by the warriors' drawn weapons and the arrow piercing the hill). Above each participant's head is a glyph, or pictograph , with a dot. The glyphs below the warriors are calendrical day signs. They are also, however, the names of Mixtec nobles; among this group, a person's name was often his or her birthday.

Pre-Columbian Mixtec are mainly concerned with histories. They record events such as royal births, wars and battles, royal marriages, forging of alliances, pilgrimages , and death of rulers. In addition to the calendrical signs used for dating events and naming individuals, the Mixtecs used a combination of conventionalized pictures and glyphs to illustrate the type and nature of the event. One example is the wedding scene, usually shown as two individuals of opposite sex facing each other and sitting on jaguar-pelt chairs, as illustrated by a scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall which records the marriage of the legendary Mixtec King 8 Deer "Tiger Claw" of Tilantongo to Lady 12 Snake in 1051 CE.



A Marriage Scene from the Codex Zouche-Nuttall:

This arrangement of the bride and groom is a purely pictorial convention, with no connection to the language. This means that no idiom or phrase in the Mixtec language that describing two people sitting face-to-face is a metaphor for marriage. However, the cup of chocolate held by Lady 12 Snake may represent the expression *ynodzehua*, which means "dowry" in Mixtec, where the root *dzehua* means "chocolate." Chocolate or cacao was one of the most expensive and luxurious products in Mesoamerica, and cacao beans were used as currency. It is no surprise the word for dowry would be based on chocolate.

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11.3: South America

Ceramics in Early South America

The ceramic objects of the Paracas, Nazca, and Moche communities of Peru vary in artistic forms and were important cultural artifacts. Like the Tiwanaku and Waki people of Bolivia and their contemporaries, the Wari people of Peru produced pottery that was multifaceted in both aesthetics and utility.

Learning Objectives

Compare the aesthetic style, technique, and function of ceramics made by the Paracas, Nazcu, Moche, Tiwanaku, Waki, and Wari cultures

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Paracas culture (from 800 to 100 BCE) immediately preceded and heavily influenced the Nazca culture.
- The art of the Paracas culture has mainly been preserved in tombs and on mummies .
- The Nazca, like all Pre-Columbian societies in South America including the Inca , had no writing system, in contrast to the contemporary Maya of Mesoamerica . The iconography or symbols on their ceramics served as a means of communication.
- As in other cultures, Moche ceramics were probably used for educational purposes and communication.
- The Moche culture used mold technology to replicate ceramic forms .
- Irrigation and the passage of fluids in the human body are important themes in Moche culture and artwork.
- The realistic detail in Moche ceramics may have helped them serve as didactic models.
- The Tiwanaku state was an important precursor to the Inca Empire.
- Small decorative objects that held ritual religious meaning were used to spread the influence of the capital city of Tiwanaku to surrounding communities.
- The Tiwanaku and Wari cultures must have interacted, given the similarities in the artifacts of each culture, but whether their relationship was amicable or antagonistic is unknown.

Key Terms

- **slip painting**: A type of pottery decoration in which a liquid mixture of clay and/or other materials suspended in water is applied to wet clay before it is fired in a kiln.
- **Huacas**: In Quechua, a Native American language of South America, a huaca or waqa is an object that represents something revered, typically a monument of some kind. The term huaca can refer to natural locations, such as immense rocks.
- **Middle Horizon**: Cultural period of Peru and the Andean region lasting from 600 to 1000 CE.
- **resin painting**: A type of pottery decoration in which ceramics are painted after they are fired in a kiln with a sticky organic substance exuded by trees and other plants.
- **Wari**: A Middle Horizon civilization that flourished in the south-central Andes and coastal area of modern-day Peru, from about 500 to 1000 CE.
- **kero**: A type of wooden drinking vessel produced by the Incas and earlier Andean cultures.
- **phytomorphic**: Having the attributes of a plant.
- **Moche**: A civilization that flourished in northern Peru from about 100 to 800 AD, particularly noted for their elaborately painted ceramics, gold work, monumental constructions (huacas), and irrigation systems.
- **Andean**: Of or pertaining to the Andes mountains in South America.

Paracas and Nazca Cultures

The Paracas culture was an important Andean society between approximately 800 and 100 BCE, with an extensive knowledge of irrigation and water management. It developed in the Paracas Peninsula in the Ica Region of Peru.

The Nazca culture flourished from 100 to 800 CE beside the dry southern coast of Peru in the river valleys of the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage and the Ica Valley. Heavily influenced by the preceding Paracas culture, the Nazca produced an array of beautiful crafts and technologies such as ceramics, textiles, and geoglyphs (most commonly known as the Nazca lines).

Paracas Ceramics

Many ceramics of the Paracas have been found in tombs, particularly in the Paracas Cavernas. These are shaft tombs set into the top of Cerro Colorado, each containing multiple burial sites. The associated ceramics include incised polychrome (the surface has been incised with a sharp tool and painted multiple colors), “negative” resist decoration (pottery is covered in material, then painted and uncovered to reveal a pattern of negative and positive space), and other techniques of the Paracas tradition.

Nazca Ceramics

The Nazca culture is characterized by its beautiful polychrome pottery, painted with at least 15 distinct colors. The shift from post-fire resin painting to pre-fire slip painting marked the end of Paracas- style pottery and the beginning of Nazca-style pottery. Archaeologists have excavated highly valued polychrome pottery among all classes of Nazca society, illustrating that it was not just the elite that had access to these pieces.

The Nazca pottery sequence has been divided into nine phases, progressing from realistic subject matter such as fruits, plants, people, and animals to motifs that included abstract elements as part of the design and geometric iconography. The Nazca, like all Pre-Columbian societies in South America including the Inca, had no writing system, in contrast to the contemporary Maya of Mesoamerica. The iconography or symbols on their ceramics served as a means of communication.

Moche Ceramics

From 100 to 800 CE, Moche civilization flourished in northern Peru with its capital, Huacas del Sol y de la Luna, located near present-day Trujillo.



Huaca del Sol: Huaca del Sol, “Temple of the Sun,” was the Mochica political capital.

Traditional North Coast Peruvian ceramic art uses a limited palette , relying primarily on red and white, fine line painting, fully modeled clay, naturalistic figures, and stirrup spouts (in which the stirrup handle forms part of the spout, which emanates from the top of the stirrup). Moche ceramics created between 150 and 800 AD epitomize this style. These realistic pots have been found not only in major North Coast archaeological sites, such as Huaca de la luna, Huaca del Sol, and Sipan, but at small villages and unrecorded burial sites as well.

The realistic detail in Moche ceramics may have helped them serve as didactic models. Older generations could pass down general knowledge about reciprocity and embodiment to younger generations through such portrayals. Important social activities are documented in Moche pottery, including war, sex, metalwork , and weaving. Moche ceramics vary widely in shape and theme and are not generally uniform, although the use of mold technology did enable for mass production.



Erotic Moche Pot: This piece is an example of the didactic role of ceramics in Moche culture.

Because irrigation was the source of wealth and foundation of the empire, Moche culture emphasized the importance of circulation and flow. Expanding upon this, the Moche focused on the passage of fluids in their artwork, particularly life fluids through vulnerable human orifices.

The coloration of Moche pottery is often simple and follows the Peruvian tradition with yellowish cream and rich red used almost exclusively on elite pieces and with white and black used rarely. Their adobe buildings have been mostly destroyed by looters and natural forces over the last 1300 years, but the huacas that remain show that their murals featured vibrant colors.

Tiwanaku and Waki Cultures

Tiwanaku is an important Pre-Columbian archaeological site in western Bolivia, South America. Tiwanaku is recognized by Andean scholars as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire, flourishing as the ritual and administrative capital of a major state power for approximately 500 years.



The “Gate of the Sun”: This site was the spiritual and political center of the Tiwanaku culture.

The city and its inhabitants left no written history, and the modern locals know little about the ancient city and its activities. An archaeologically based theory asserts that around 400 CE, Tiwanaku went from a locally dominant force to a predatory state. Tiwanaku expanded its reaches into the Yungas and brought its culture and way of life to many other cultures in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. However, Tiwanaku was not exclusively a violent culture. To expand its reach, Tiwanaku used politics to create colonies, negotiate trade agreements (which made the other cultures rather dependent), and establish state cults. Many others were drawn into the Tiwanaku empire due to religious beliefs.

Ceramics & Textiles

Tiwanaku ceramics and textiles were composed of bright colors and stepped patterns. An important ceramic artifact is the kero , a drinking cup that was ritually smashed after ceremonies and placed in burials. Tapestries and tunics provide examples of textiles found at Tiwanaku.

These decorative objects typically depicted herders, effigies , trophy heads, sacrificial victims, and felines. Religion and influence from the main site to the satellite centers were spread through small portable objects that held ritual religious meaning. They were created in wood, engraved bone, and cloth and depicted puma and jaguar effigies, incense burners, carved wooden hallucinogenic snuff tablets, and human portrait vessels .

The Wari

Throughout their imperial reign, the Tiwanaku shared domination of the Middle Horizon with the Wari, whose culture rose and fell around the same time and was centered 500 miles north in the southern highlands of Peru. It is unknown whether the relationship between the two empires was cooperative or antagonistic. Definite interaction between the two is proved by their shared iconography in art. Significant elements of both styles (the split eye, trophy heads, and staff-bearing profile figures, for example) seem to have been derived from the earlier Pukara culture in the northern Titicaca Basin.



Wari earthenware pot with painted design, 650-800 CE (Middle Horizon): The Wari shared much in common aesthetically with the Tiwanaku.

Textiles in Early South America

The intricate, complex textiles of the Paracas and Nazca cultures were often associated with a burial ritual.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the distinguishing characteristics of textiles in pre-Colombian Andean society

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Both the Nazca and preceding Paracas culture created intricate textiles, most likely produced by women using a backstrap loom .
- Like the two cultures' ceramics , many of their textiles were associated with burial rituals .
- Because of the dry climate in southern Peru, many Nazca and Paracas textiles have been well-preserved.
- The so-called "Paracas Textile" tells modern scholars a great deal about the inhabitants of ancient Peru. For instance, they traded extensively with people who lived well outside their territory.

Key Terms

- **Andean**: Of or pertaining to the Andes mountains in South America.
- **backstrap loom**: A simple loom with roots in ancient civilizations, consisting of two sticks or bars between which the warps are stretched. One bar is attached to a fixed object, and the other to the weaver through a strap around the back.

Textiles of Andean Cultures

The Paracas culture was an important Andean society between approximately 800 and 100 BCE, with an extensive knowledge of irrigation and water management. It developed in the Paracas Peninsula in the Ica Region of Peru.

Many ceramics and textiles of the Paracas have been found in tombs, particularly in the Paracas Cavernas. These shaft tombs, set into the top of Cerro Colorado, each contain multiple burial sites. The associated ceramics include incised polychrome, "negative" resist decoration, and other wares of the Paracas tradition. The associated textiles include many complex weave structures and elaborate plaiting and knotting techniques.

The later Nazca people also produced technically complex textiles. The Nazca flourished from 100 to 800 CE beside the dry southern coast of Peru in the river valleys of the Rio Grande de Nazca and the Ica Valley. Heavily influenced by the preceding Paracas culture, the Nazca produced an array of beautiful crafts and technologies such as ceramics, textiles, and geoglyphs (most commonly known as the Nazca lines).



Woman weaving a textile using a backstrap loom:

Nazca textiles were most likely woven from spun cotton and wool by women at habitation sites. The textiles would have been made using a backstrap loom, similar to the way textiles are made in the region today. Textiles were woven with the common motifs before these appeared on painted pottery. The dry desert has preserved the textiles of both the Nazca and Paracas cultures, which comprise most of what is known about early textiles in the region. Shawls, dresses, tunics , belts, and bags have been found through excavations at Cahuachi and elsewhere. Many textiles associated with the Nazca culture are garments that were included with grave goods found at burial sites.

Mummy Bundles on the Paracas Peninsula

One of the most extraordinary masterpieces of Andean textiles is a nearly 2,000-year-old cloth from the South Coast of Peru. Despite its small size (about two by five feet), it contains a vast amount of information about the people who lived in ancient Peru, and despite its great age and delicacy, its colors are brilliant and tiny details amazingly intact. The arid environment of southern

Peru along the Pacific shore allows organic material buried in the sand to remain well-preserved for hundreds or even thousands of years.



Nasca, *Mantle ("The Paracas Textile")* : 100-300 C.E., cotton, camelid fiber, 58-1/4 x 24-1/2 inches / 148 x 62.2 cm, found south coast, Paracas, Peru (Brooklyn Museum)

In the ancient cemeteries on the Paracas Peninsula, the dead were wrapped into "mummy bundles" with layers of cloth and clothing. The largest and richest mummy bundles contained hundreds of brightly embroidered textiles, feathered costumes, and fine jewelry, interspersed with food offerings such as beans. Early reports claimed that this cloth came from the Paracas peninsula, so it was called "THE Paracas textile," to mark its excellence and uniqueness. Currently, scholars have revised this provenance and now attribute the cloth to the Nasca culture.



Detail of border figure on The Paracas Textile:

Like other very fine cloths, the Paracas Textile is finished so carefully on both sides that it is almost impossible to distinguish which is the correct side. Although the central cloth and its framing border are created by different techniques, both display perfect reversibility—except for three border figures. These three appear in back view on one side of the cloth, thereby designating a "front" and "back" to the textile.

Architecture in Early South America

Chavín de Huántar and Tiwanaku were important ceremonial centers in pre-Inca South America.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the multiple functions of architecture in early South America

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- During its heyday, Chavín de Huántar was used as a religious center for ceremonies and events or consultation with an oracle.
- The temple at Chavín de Huántar is a massive flat-topped pyramid surrounded by lower platforms, along with a U-shaped plaza with a sunken circular court in the center.
- Tiwanaku is recognized as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire.

- Archaeologists still struggle to understand how the megaliths used to construct Tiwanaku were transported to the site.

Key Terms

- **Chavin**: A civilization that developed in the northern Andean highlands of Peru from 900 to 200 BCE. Their influence extended to other civilizations along the coast.
- **megalith**: A gigantic stone, often weighing several tons.
- **trilithon**: A megalithic post-and-lintel structure.

Chavín de Huántar and Tiwanaku were important ceremonial centers in pre-Inca South America.

Chavín de Huántar

Chavín de Huántar is an archaeological site containing ruins and artifacts , constructed circa 1200 BCE and occupied until around 400-500 BCE by the Chavín, a major pre-Inca culture . The site is located 160 miles north of Lima, Peru at an elevation of 10,000 feet, on the edge of the Conchucos Valley.



The site of Chavín de Huántar: Chavín de Huántar was of both geographical and religious significance to the Chavín.

Occupation at Chavín de Huántar has been carbon dated to at least 3000 BCE, with ceremonial activity occurring primarily toward the end of the second millennium and through the middle of the first millennium BCE. While the fairly large population was based on an agricultural economy, the city's location at the headwaters of the Marañn River, between the coast and the jungle, made it ideal for the dissemination and collection of both ideas and material goods. This archaeological site has revealed a great deal about the Chavín culture. The transformation of the center into a valley-dominating monument had a complex effect. Chavín de Huántar became a pan-regional place of importance. People used it to gather, attend and participate in rituals , and consult with oracles.

Findings at Chavín de Huántar indicate that social instability and upheaval began between 500 and 300 BCE, at the same time the larger Chavín civilization began to decline. Large ceremonial sites were abandoned, some unfinished, and were replaced by villages and agricultural land.

The temple at Chavín de Huántar was the religious center of the Chavín people and the capital of the Chavín culture. This massive flat-topped pyramid is surrounded by lower platforms and located in a U-shaped plaza with a sunken circular court in the center. The inside of the temple walls are decorated with sculptures and carvings. Chavín de Huántar was constructed over many stages, starting prior to 1200 BCE, with most major construction over by 750 BCE. The site continued as a ceremonial center until around 500 BCE.



The Circular Plaza at Chavín de Huantar: The Circular Plaza Terrace was built up around the Circular Plaza in order to make the 21-meter diameter plaza artificially sunken.

Tiwanaku

Tiwanaku is an important Pre-Columbian archaeological site in western Bolivia. It is recognized by Andean scholars as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire, flourishing as the ritual and administrative capital of a major state power for approximately 500 years.

The city and its inhabitants left no written history, and the modern locals know little about the ancient city and its activities. However, the site might have been inhabited as early as 1500 BCE. An archaeological theory asserts that around 400 CE, Tiwanaku went from a locally dominant force to a predatory state. It expanded its reaches into the Yungas and brought its culture and way of life to many cultures in Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. However, Tiwanaku was not exclusively a violent culture. To expand its reach, Tiwanaku used politics to create colonies, negotiate trade agreements (which made the other cultures rather dependent), and establish state cults. Many were drawn into the Tiwanaku empire by their religious beliefs.

Architecture

Tiwanaku monumental architecture is characterized by megaliths of exceptional workmanship. The main architectural appeal of the site comes from the carved images and designs on carved doorways and megalithic constructions such as the Gate of the Sun. Tiwanaku's architecture and skill in stone-cutting reveals a knowledge of descriptive geometry.

The Gate of the Sun is a trilithon that stands nearly 10 feet tall and 13 feet wide. Its weight is estimated at approximately 10 tons. Although there have been various modern interpretations of its mysterious inscriptions, the carvings that decorate the gate are believed to possess astronomical significance and may have served a calendrical purpose.



The Gate of the Sun: This site was the spiritual and political center of the Tiwanaku culture.

The Gate of the Sun shares its location with the Kalasasaya, a temple in a megalithic courtyard more than 300 feet long. Since the late 20th century, researchers have theorized that this was not the gateway's original location. The walls are covered with tenon heads of many styles , suggesting that the structure was reused for different purposes over time. What stands today is not the

original configuration of the megaliths that comprise the Kalasasaya. Scholars believe it was originally constructed in a similar fashion as Stonehenge, with its stones spaced evenly apart and standing vertically.



Walls around the temple Kalasasaya at Tiwanaku: The Kalasasaya temple at Tiwanaku was used as a ceremonial center.

The quarries from which the stone blocks used in the construction of structures at Tiwanaku came lie at significant distances from this site, which has led scholars to speculate on how they could have been moved. One theory is that giant andesite stones weighing more than 40 tons were transported some 90 kilometers across Lake Titicaca on reed boats and then laboriously dragged another 10 kilometers to the city.

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11.4: North America

The Southwest

Southwestern indigenous cultures have produced a variety of architectural, artisanal, and ritual art forms for centuries.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Anasazi, Hopi, Navajo, and Hohokam cultures of the American Southwest

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Anasazi, the ancestors of Pueblo Native American tribes, produced decorative pottery for storage purposes.
- Chaco Canyon in New Mexico (c. 10th century) is one of the most impressive early examples of Southwestern Native American architecture.
- The Navajo emigrated from Northern Canada to the Southwest sometime after 1000 CE. The sand paintings and weavings for which this culture is renowned are gender-specific. Men created sand paintings while women created weavings.
- Mastery of acid etching allowed the Hohokam culture to create lasting designs in bone, shell, and stone.

Key Terms

- **Anasazi**: A Native American people who once lived in cliff dwellings in Utah and Colorado.
- **Pueblo**: Modern and ancient communities of Native Americans in the Southwestern United States of America.
- **xeriscaping**: Landscaping and gardening that reduces or eliminates the need for supplemental water from irrigation.
- **Navajo**: Currently the largest Native American tribe in North America.

The Anasazi (1000 BCE–700 CE) are the ancestors of today's Pueblo tribes. Their culture formed in the American southwest after the cultivation of corn was introduced from Mexico around 1200 BCE. Additionally, the Navajo and Apache emigrated from Northern Canada to the Southwest sometime after 1000 CE. People of this region developed an agrarian lifestyle, cultivating food, storage gourds, and cotton with irrigation or xeriscaping techniques. They lived in sedentary towns, so pottery used to store water and grain was ubiquitous . For hundreds of years, the Anasazi created utilitarian grayware and black-on-white pottery as well as orange and red ceramics . Turquoise, jet, and spiny oyster shell were traditionally used by Ancestral Pueblo for jewelry and sophisticated inlay .

Anasazi Architecture

Southwest architecture includes cliff dwellings (multi-story settlements carved from living rock), pit houses, and adobe and sandstone pueblos. One of the most elaborate and largest ancient settlements is Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, which includes 15 major complexes of sandstone and timber connected by a network of roads. The largest of these settlements, Pueblo Bonito, contains over 800 rooms .



Pueblo Bonito: The impressive Pueblo Bonito was built by the Ancestral Puebloans as one of several settlements at Chaco Canyon.

Hopi Culture

The Hopi culture emerged in the Southwest in the fourteenth century. Hopi communities created ceramic jars, dough bowls, and food bowls of different sizes for daily use, as well as more elaborate ceremonial mugs, jugs, ladles, seed jars and vessels for ritual use. These were usually finished with polished surfaces and decorated with black painted designs.

Among Hopi ritual art is the kachina figure. This instructs young girls and new brides about katsinas or katsinam, the immortal beings that bring rain, control aspects of the natural world and society, and act as messengers between humans and the spirit world.



Hopi Kachina Figure: The Kachina figure originated in the 18th century as a flat object with an almost indistinguishable shape that suggested a head and contained minimal body paint. By the late 19th century, it assumed a more realistic appearance.

Navajo Culture

Art in the Navajo culture is traditionally gender-based. Men, seen as static in nature, create sand paintings for healing rituals. Because the pattern must be precise if the infirm person is to be cured, men were believed to be better suited for this work. Because sand paintings must be destroyed at the end of the ritual, tradition dictates that the designs not be photographed or otherwise documented. Women, on the other hand, were seen as more dynamic in nature and thus better suited for the creation of woven fabrics, such as blankets and rugs, whose patterns do not have to be exact. Unlike sand paintings, blankets and rugs are made to be long-lasting and therefore may be photographed.



Probably Bayeta-style Blanket with Terrace and Stepped Design: Navajo, 1870-80.

Hohokam Culture

Around 200 CE, the Hohokam culture developed in Arizona as the ancestors of the Tohono O'odham and Akimel O'odham or Pima tribes. The Hohokam are credited as the first culture to master acid etching. Artisans produced jewelry from shell, stone, bone, and carved stone figures. Pottery and textile production also flourished.



Hohokam Etched Shell: This shell was produced by the Hohokam culture of the Southwest.

Inuit Art

Inuit art is produced by the people of the Arctic, or Inuit people, who were previously known as Eskimos.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between the Pre-Dorset, Dorset, Ipiutak, and Thule cultures of North America

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Around 4000 BCE, nomads known as the Pre-Dorset or the Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt) crossed over the Bering Strait from Siberia into Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland. The Dorset culture became culturally distinct around 600 BCE.
- Walrus and narwhal ivory was historically the preferred material for carving sculptures, utensils, tools, and weapons among Pre-Dorset and Dorset artisans.
- The Dorset and Ipiutak communities that inhabited Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland were displaced by the Thule population around 1000 CE.
- The Thule carved small, delicate versions of non- utilitarian crafts and ceremonial objects that were easily transportable. They also constructed homes from bones harvested from bowhead whales and other materials.

Key Terms

- **shaman**: A holy person believed to mediate between the physical world and the spirit world.
- **Nomad**: A member of a group of people who have no fixed home and move seasonally in search of food, water, and grazing.

- **Thule**: The ancestors of the Canadian Inuit.
- **Inuit**: Any of several Aboriginal peoples of coastal Arctic Canada, Alaska, and Greenland.

Inuit art refers to artwork produced by the people of the Arctic, or Inuit people, previously known as Eskimos. Inuit culture begins with the Pre-Dorset cultures as far back as 4000 BCE and spans through the present day.

Pre-Dorset and Dorset Cultures

Around 4000 BCE, nomads known as the Pre-Dorset or the Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt) crossed over the Bering Strait from Siberia into Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, and Newfoundland. Very little remains of this culture, and only a few preserved artifacts carved in ivory could be considered works of art.

The Dorset culture, which became culturally distinct around 600 BCE, produced a significant amount of figurative art using walrus ivory, bone, caribou antler, and on rare occasions, stone. Ivory from walruses and narwhals was the preferred material for carving utensils, tools, and weapons among Pre-Dorset and Dorset artisans. Subjects included birds, bears, walruses, seals, and human figures, as well as remarkably small masks. These items had a magical or religious significance, and were either worn as amulets to ward off evil spirits or used in shamanic rituals .



Carving of a polar bear: Dorset culture. Ivory. Alamek site, Iglulik, Canada.

Archaeology has been critical to knowledge of the Dorset people, who were essentially extinct by 1500 due to difficulty adapting to the Medieval Warming Period.

Ipiutak Culture

The Ipiutak culture represents a classical period of Inuit development. The culture arose between 100 and 200 BCE and collapsed around 800 CE. The artwork is extremely elaborate, incorporating geometric, animal, and anthropomorphic designs.



Ipiutak archaeological site at Point Hope in northwest Alaska: The Ipiutak culture arose c. 100–200 BCE and collapsed around 800 CE.

An Ipiutak archaeological site at Point Hope, Alaska, is renowned for its mortuary offerings , notably mask-like creations. One Point Hope Ipiutak mask represents a human face with a gaping mouth and blowfly larvae issuing from its nostrils, a symbol rife with shamanistic implications. The mask, which belonged to a child, contains a stylized mouth and eyebrows and a naturalistic nose, as if it had been modeled upon an actual face. Two pointed objects likely covered the eyes.



Child's Funerary Mask: Ipiutak. Point Hope, Alaska.

Thule Culture

Around 1000 CE, the people of the Thule culture, ancestors of today's Inuit, migrated from northern Alaska and either displaced or slaughtered the earlier Dorset inhabitants. By the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the Thule occupied an area currently inhabited by the Central Inuit, and by the fifteenth century, the Thule had fully replaced the Dorset culture. Contact with Europeans began in the 16th century and intensified in the 18th century. Compounded by the already disruptive effects of the "Little Ice Age" (1650–1850), the Thule communities broke apart, and the people became known as the Eskimos, and later as the Inuit.

Thule art had a definite Alaskan influence and included utilitarian objects such as combs, buttons, needle cases, cooking pots, ornate spears, and harpoons. The graphic decorations were purely ornamental, bearing no religious significance.

All Thule objects were made by hand from natural materials, including stone, bone, ivory, antler, and animal hides. Nomadic people carried tools necessary for daily living and could take very little else with them. Non-utilitarian objects were also carved in miniature so that they could be carried or worn, such as dance masks, amulets, fetish figures, and intricate combs and figures used to objectify their mythology and oral history.

The Classic Thule tradition (1100-1400) relied on the bowhead whale for survival since this species swims slowly and sleeps near the surface of the water. Bowhead whales served many purposes for the Thule people, including meat for food, blubber for oil (used in cooking, heating, and providing light), and bones for building structures and making tools. A Thule site in Resolute Bay , Nunavut, contains an example of a home with a whalebone frame.



An Ancient Thule Home Framed with Whalebone: Resolute Bay, Nunavut, Canada.

Woodlands in the East

Eastern Woodland cultures are known for their production of a variety of art forms, from pottery to substantial earthen mounds for burial.

Learning Objectives

Distinguish between the early, middle, and late Woodland periods of North America.

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Woodland Period is divided into early, middle, and late periods , and consisted of cultures that relied mostly on hunting and gathering for subsistence.
- Pottery, stone carving and engraved shells are examples of the artwork of the shellfish-subsisting communities of the Early Woodland Period.
- The Middle Woodland Period from 200 to 500 CE is known for its jewelry and sculpture.
- The Late Woodland Period is traditionally framed as the decline for these hunter-gatherer communities, though many indigenous communities maintained similar lifestyles for several centuries.
- The agrarian Mississippian Culture emerged in the Southeast following the Late Woodland Period and is known for creating elaborate mounds, as well as ceramic innovation and work with shells and copper.
- Cahokia, a Mississippian site that extended from eastern Missouri to southern Illinois, is best known for its complex mound structure and the only copper workshop of the Woodland cultures.

Key Terms

- **mound builder**: Any of several Native American people who constructed large mounds for ceremonial or burial purposes.
- **long-nosed god maskette**: Small shield-shaped face with a squared-off forehead, circular eyes, and large nose.
- **anneal**: A technique that involves heating material until it glows, then slowly allowing to cool to room temperature in still air.
- **Mississippian**: A mound-building, agrarian Native American culture that flourished in what is now the Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States from approximately 800 to 1500 CE.
- **Southeastern Ceremonial Complex**: The name given to the regional stylistic similarity of artifacts, iconography, ceremonies, and mythology of the Mississippian culture that coincided with their adoption of maize agriculture and chiefdom-level complex social organization from 1200 to 1650 CE.

The Eastern Woodlands cultures inhabited the regions of North America east of the Mississippi River since at least 2500 BCE.

Contact and trade were common among the many regionally distinct Woodlands cultures. They shared the practice of burying their dead in earthen mounds, which preserved many cultural artifacts . Burial mounds in North America are part of an archetypal tradition that includes the pyramids of ancient Egypt. These structures begin on the ground and extend upward toward the sky, acting as a connection between the earthly plane and the spiritual plane. Because of this trait, the cultures are collectively known as the Mound Builders.



Grave Creek Mound: This mound located in modern Moundsville, West Virginia was built by the Adena culture.

Early Woodland Period

Clay for pottery was typically mixed with non-clay additives such as crushed rock or limestone . Traditional jars were conical, with rounded shoulders, slightly constricted necks, and flaring rims. Pottery was most often decorated with a variety of linear or paddle stamps that created dentate (tooth-like) impressions, wavy line impressions, checked surfaces, or fabric-impressed surfaces. Some pots were incised with geometric patterns or more rarely, pictorial imagery such as faces. Pots were coiled and paddled entirely by hand without the use of fast rotation such as a pottery wheel. Some were slipped or brushed with red ochre .



Harrington vessel: Ceramic vessel uncovered on Bussell Island, at the mouth of the Little Tennessee River in Loudon County, Tennessee. This pot belonged to the "Round Grave" culture, which corresponds roughly to the Late Archaic (c. 3000-1000 BCE) and Woodland periods. The pot's diameter is approximately six inches.

Ceramics made by the Deptford culture (800 BCE-700 CE), inhabitants of the southern East Coast and Gulf Coast, are the earliest evidence of an artistic tradition in this region. The Adena culture is another well-known example. They carved stone tablets with zoomorphic designs, created pottery, and fashioned costumes from animal hides and antlers for ceremonial rituals . Shellfish was a mainstay of their diet, and engraved shells have been found in their burial mounds.

Middle Woodland Period

The Middle Woodland Period was dominated by cultures of the Hopewell tradition (200 to 500 BCE). Their artwork encompassed a wide variety of jewelry and sculpture in stone, wood, and even human bone. Mound City, located on Ohio Highway 104, is a group of 23 earthen mounds constructed by the Hopewell culture. Each mound within the group covered the remains of a charnel house. After the Hopewell people cremated the dead, they burned the charnel house and constructed a mound over the remains. They also placed artifacts such as copper figures, mica, projectile points, shells, and pipes in the mounds.



Hopewell Art: This unique Hopewell sculpture was carved from Mica between 200 BCE and 500 CE.

Late Woodland Period

The Late Woodland Period (500 to 1000 CE) saw a decline in trade and in the size of settlements, and the creation of art likewise declined. During this period, the nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle gradually gave way to an agrarian way of life.

The Mississippian culture flourished in what is now the Midwestern, Eastern, and Southeastern United States from approximately 800 to 1500 CE (following the Late Woodland Period). After adopting maize agriculture, the Mississippian culture became fully agrarian, as opposed to hunting and gathering supplemented by part-time agriculture practiced by preceding woodland cultures. They built larger and more complex platform mounds than those of their predecessors, and finished and developed more advanced ceramic techniques, commonly using ground mussel shell as a tempering agent. Many were involved with the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC), a pan-regional and pan-linguistic religious and trade network. Most known information about the SECC is derived from examination of the elaborate artworks left behind by its participants, including pottery, shell gorgets and cups, stone statuary, copper plates such as the Wulfing cache , and long-nosed god maskettes .



Ceramic of Underwater Panther: This Mississippian culture ceramic effigy jug was found at Rose Mound in Cross County, Arkansas, and dates from 1400-1600.

Perhaps the most famous mound-building site from this period is Cahokia, which straddles the Mississippi River between the St. Louis, Missouri area and East St. Louis, Illinois. Cahokia was the largest and most influential urban settlement of the Mississippian culture and developed advanced societies across much of what is now the central and southeastern United States, beginning more than 1000 years before European contact. Cahokia's population at its peak in the thirteenth century was approximately 40,000.

Monks Mound is the largest structure and central focus of the city: a massive platform mound with four terraces, 10 stories tall, and the largest human-made earthen mound north of Mexico. The mound was built higher and wider over the course of several centuries through as many as ten separate construction episodes, and the terraces and apron were added.



Monks Mound: The concrete staircase is modern, but it is built along the approximate course of the original wooden stairs. Collinsville, IL.

While many Woodland cultures produced copper sculptures, Cahokia was the only Mississippian location to contain a copper workshop. The area contains the remains of three tree stumps thought to have been used to hold anvil stones. Analysis of copper found during excavations showed that it had been annealed. Artisans produced religious items, such as long-nosed god maskettes, ceremonial earrings with a symbolic shape thought to have been used in fictive kinship rituals.



Mississippian Culture repoussé copper plates: Three examples of Mississippian culture avian themed repoussé copper plates. The right-hand figure is one of the Spiro plates from Spiro Mounds in Oklahoma. The left-hand figure is Wulfing plate A, one of Wulfing cache from Malden, Missouri. The middle plate is Rogan plate 1, from Etowah Mounds in Georgia. Examples of this type of artwork have been found as artifacts in many states throughout the Midwest and Southeast.

By the time of European contact, the Mississippian societies were already experiencing severe social stress . With the social upsets and diseases introduced by Europeans, many of the societies collapsed and ceased to practice a Mississippian lifestyle, with the exception the Natchez people. Other tribes descended from Mississippian cultures include the Caddo, Choctaw, Muskogee Creek, Wichita, and many others.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 12: Early Medieval Europe

12.1: The Early Middle Ages
12.2: The Vikings
12.3: The Carolingians
12.4: The Ottonians

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12.1: The Early Middle Ages

The Early Middle Ages

The Early Middle Ages began with the fall of the Roman Empire and ended in the early 11th century; its art encompasses vast and divergent forms of media.

Learning Objectives

Identify the major periods and styles into which European art of the Early Middle Ages is classified, and artistic elements common to all of them

Key Takeaways

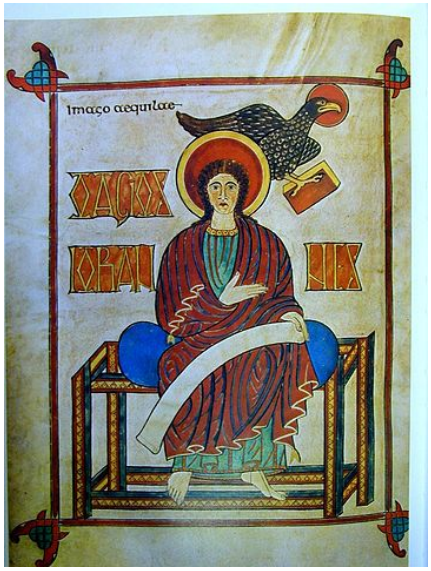
Key Points

- “Medieval art” applies to various media , including sculpture, illuminated manuscripts , tapestries , stained glass, metalwork , and mosaics .
- Early medieval art in Europe is an amalgamation of the artistic heritage of the Roman Empire, the early Christian church, and the “barbarian” artistic culture of Northern Europe.
- Despite the wide range of media, the use of valuable and precious materials is a constant in medieval art. Many artworks feature the lavish use of gold, jewels, expensive pigments , and other precious goods.
- A rise in illiteracy during the Early Middle Ages resulted in the need for art to convey complex narratives and symbolism . As a result, art became more stylized , losing the classical naturalism of Graeco-Roman times, for much of the Middle Ages.
- Few large stone buildings were constructed between the Constantinian basilicas of the fourth and eighth centuries. By the late eighth century, the Carolingian Empire revived the basilica form of architecture.

The Middle Ages of the European world covers approximately 1,000 years of art history in Europe, and at times extended into the Middle East and North Africa. The Early Middle Ages is generally dated from the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 CE) to approximately 1000, which marks the beginning of the Romanesque period. It includes major art movements and periods, national and regional art, genres , and revivals. Art historians attempt to classify medieval art into major periods and styles with some difficulty, as medieval regions frequently featured distinct artistic styles such as Anglo-Saxon or Norse . However, a generally accepted scheme includes Early Christian art, Migration Period art, Byzantine art, Insular art , Carolingian art, Ottonian art, Romanesque art , and Gothic art, as well as many other periods within these central aesthetic styles.

Population decline, relocations to the countryside, invasion, and migration began in Late Antiquity and continued in the Early Middle Ages. The large-scale movements of the Migration Period, including various Germanic peoples, formed new kingdoms in what remained of the Western Roman Empire. In the West, most kingdoms incorporated the few extant Roman institutions. Monasteries were founded as campaigns to Christianize pagan Europe continued. The Franks, under the Carolingian dynasty , briefly established the Carolingian Empire during the later eighth and early ninth century. It covered much of Western Europe but later succumbed to the pressures of internal civil wars combined with external invasions—Vikings from the north, Hungarians from the east, and Saracens from the south.

As literacy declined and printed material became available only to monks and nuns who copied illuminated manuscripts, art became the primary method of communicating narratives (usually of a Biblical nature) to the masses . Conveying complex stories took precedence over producing naturalistic imagery , leading to a shift toward stylized and abstracted figures for most of the Early Middle Ages. Abstraction and stylization also appeared in imagery accessible only to select communities, such as monks in remote monasteries like the complex at Lindisfarne off the coast of Northumberland, England.



John the Evangelist page from the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (c. 635 CE): As is common in early medieval art, the figures in this page appear flat and stylized. The bench on which John sits does not recede realistically into the space behind him. Modeling is kept to a minimum, and the clothing that John wears does not acknowledge the body beneath.

Early medieval art exists in many media. The works that remain in large numbers include sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, metalwork, and mosaics, all of which have had a higher survival rate than fresco wall-paintings and works in precious metals or textiles such as tapestries. In the early medieval period, the decorative arts, including metalwork, ivory carving, and embroidery using precious metals, were probably more highly valued than paintings or sculptures. Metal and inlaid objects, such as armor and royal regalia (crowns, scepters, and the like) rank among the best-known early medieval works that survive to this day.



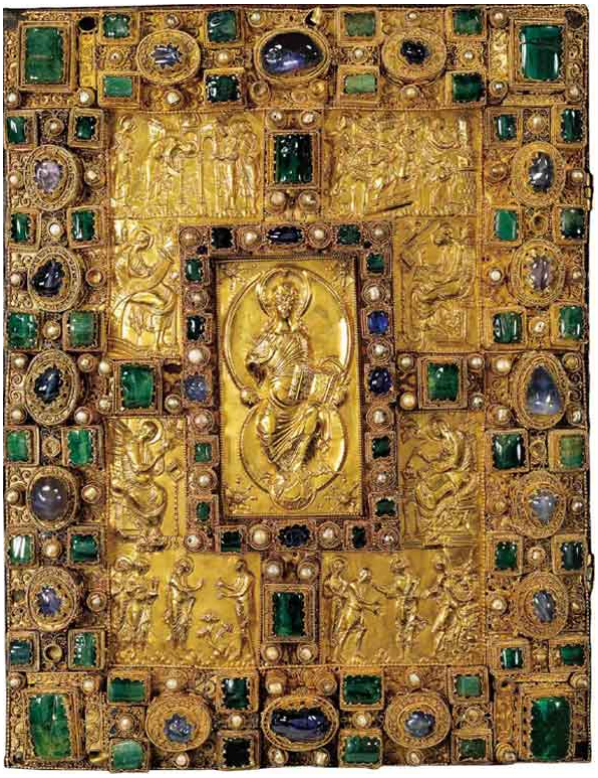
Visigoth votive crown (before 672 CE).: Detail of a votive crown from Visigothic Spain. Gold and precious stones. Part of the Treasure of Guarrazar.

Early medieval art in Europe grew out of the artistic heritage of the Roman Empire and the iconographic traditions of the early Christian church. These sources were mixed with the vigorous “Barbarian” artistic culture of Northern Europe to produce a remarkable artistic legacy. The history of medieval art can be seen as an ongoing interplay between the elements of classical, early Christian, and “barbarian” art. Apart from the formal aspects of classicism, there was a continuous tradition of realistic depiction that survived in Byzantine art of Eastern Europe throughout the period. In the West realistic presentation appears intermittently, combining and sometimes competing with new expressionist possibilities. These expressionistic styles developed both in Western Europe and in the Northern aesthetic of energetic decorative elements.

Monks and monasteries had a deep effect on the religious and political life of the Early Middle Ages, in various cases acting as land trusts for powerful families, centers of propaganda and royal support in newly conquered regions, and bases for missions and

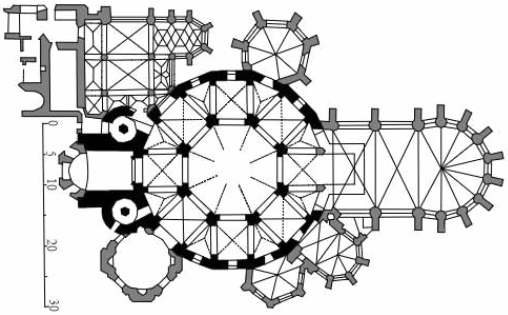
proselytizing. They were the main and sometimes only regional outposts of education and literacy. Many of the surviving manuscripts of the Latin classics were copied in monasteries in the Early Middle Ages. Monks were also the authors of new works, including history, theology, and other subjects written by authors such as Bede (died 735), a native of northern England who wrote in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.

The use of valuable materials is a constant in medieval art. Most illuminated manuscripts of the Early Middle Ages had lavish book covers decked with precious metal, ivory, and jewels. One of the best examples of precious metalwork in medieval art is the jeweled cover of the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram* (c. 870). The *Codex*, whose origin is unknown, is decorated with gems and gold relief . Gold was also used to create sacred objects for churches and palaces, as a solid background for mosaics, and applied as gold leaf to miniatures in manuscripts and panel paintings. Named after Emmeram of Regensburg and lavishly illuminated, the *Codex* is an important example of Carolingian art, as well of one of very few surviving treasure bindings of the late ninth century.



Cover of the *Codex Aureus*: Gold and gem-encrusted cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram*, 870. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14000.

Few large stone buildings were constructed between the Constantinian basilicas of the fourth and eighth centuries, although many smaller ones were built during the sixth and seventh centuries. By the early eighth century, the Merovingian dynasty revived the basilica form of architecture. One feature of the basilica is the use of a transept , the “arms” of a cross-shaped building that are perpendicular to the long nave . Other new features of religious architecture include the crossing tower and a monumental entrance to the church, usually at the west end of the building.



Charlemagne’s Palatine Chapel at Aachen (consecrated 805 CE).: The Palatine Chapel is an example of Charlemegne’s attempt to revive the values of the Roman Empire under the banner of Christianity. While the plan predates the cruciform basilica, it revives the classical round arch and heavy stone masonry as well as the east-facing apse of Late Antiquity.

Architecture under the Merovingians

Merovingian architecture emerged under the Merovingian Frankish dynasty and reflected a fusion of Western and Eurasian influences.

Learning Objectives

Describe some basic elements of Merovingian architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Merovingian architecture often continued the Roman basilica tradition, but also adopted influences from as far away as Syria and Armenia.
- Many Merovingian churches no longer exist. One surviving church is Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains at Metz, originally built as a Roman gymnasium in the late fourth century and reappropriated into a church in the mid-eighth century.
- Some small Merovingian structures remain, especially baptisteries, which were spared rebuilding in later centuries.
- The Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal shape and a covered cupola on pillars . On the other hand, St. Jean at Poitiers is very different from the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, as it has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses .
- Although mostly reconstructed, the interior of the baptistery of Saint-Sauveur reveals the influence of Roman architecture on Merovingian architects.

Key Terms

- **the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus**: A structure that highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture.
- **the basilica of Saint Martin at Tours**: One of the most famous examples of Merovingian church architecture, built at the beginning of the dynasty's reign.
- **Merovingian dynasty**: A Frankish family who ruled parts of present-day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of Germany from the mid-fifth century to the mid-eighth century.

Merovingian architecture developed under the Merovingian dynasty , a Frankish family who ruled parts of present-day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and parts of Germany from the mid-fifth century to the mid-eighth century. The advent of the Merovingian dynasty in Gaul led to important changes in architecture.

The unification of the Frankish kingdom under Clovis I (465–511) and his successors corresponded with the need for new churches. Merovingian architecture often continued the Roman basilica tradition, but also adopted influences from as far away as Syria and Armenia. In the East, most structures were in timber , but stone was more common for significant buildings in the West and in the southern areas that later fell under Merovingian rule.

Many Merovingian churches no longer exist. One famous example is the basilica of Saint Martin at Tours, at the beginning of Merovingian rule and at the time on the edge of Frankish territory. According to scholars, the church had 120 marble columns , towers at the east end, and several mosaics . A feature of the basilica of Saint-Martin that became a hallmark of Frankish church architecture was the sarcophagus or reliquary of the saint, raised to be visible and sited axially behind the altar, sometimes in the apse. There are no Roman precedents for this Frankish innovation. A number of other buildings now lost, including the Merovingian foundations of Saint-Denis, St. Gereonin Cologne, and the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, are described as similarly ornate.

One surviving church is Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains at Metz. The building was originally built in 380 CE as a gymnasium (a European type of school) for a Roman spa complex. In the seventh century, the structure was converted into a church, becoming the chapel of a Benedictine convent. The structure bears common hallmarks of a Roman basilica, including the round arches and tripartite division into nave (center) and aisles (left and right of the nave), a division visible from the exterior of the building. Apparently missing, however, is the apse.



Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains: This church in Metz, France bears common hallmarks of a Roman basilica, including the round arches and tripartite division into nave (center) and aisles (left and right of the nave), a division visible from the exterior of the building.

Other major churches have been rebuilt, usually more than once. However, some small Merovingian structures remain, especially baptisteries, which were spared rebuilding in later centuries. For instance, the Baptistery at Saint-Leonce of Fréjus, highlights the influence of Syrian technique on Merovingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal shape and covered cupola on pillars.



Baptistery at Saint-Léonce of Fréjus: The Baptistery at the cathedral at Saint-Léonce of Fréjus reflects the Syrian and Armenian influences on early Merovingian architecture (demonstrated by the cupola on pillars).

By contrast , St. Jean at Poitiers has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses. The original building has probably had a number of alterations but preserves traces of Merovingian influence in its marble capitals .



Baptistry of Saint-Jean of Poitiers: The Baptistry of St. Jean at Poitiers (sixth century) has the form of a rectangle flanked by three apses. The original building has probably undergone a number of alterations but preserves in its decoration (marble capitals) a strong Merovingian character.

The baptistery of Saint-Sauveur at Aix-en-Provence was built at the beginning of the sixth century, at about the same time as similar baptisteries in Fréjus Cathedral and Riez Cathedral in Provence, in Albenga, Liguria, and in Djémila, Algeria. Only the octagonal baptismal pool and the lower part of the walls remain from that period. The other walls, Corinthian columns, arcade , and dome were rebuilt in the Renaissance . A viewing hole in the floor reveals the bases of the porticoes of the Roman forum under the baptistery.



Baptistery of Saint-Sauveur : Although mostly reconstructed, the interior of the baptistery reveals the influence of Roman architecture on Merovingian architects.

By the seventh century, Merovingian craftsmen were brought to England for their glass-making skills, and Merovingian stonemasons were used to build English churches, suggesting that the culture's ornamental arts were highly regarded by neighboring peoples.

Anglo-Saxon and Irish Art

Celtic and Anglo-Saxon art display similar aesthetic qualities and media, including architecture and metalwork.

Learning Objectives

Compare elements of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Anglo-Saxon art emerged when the Anglo-Saxons migrated from the continent in the fifth century and ended in 1066 with the Norman Conquest. Anglo-Saxon art, which favored brightness and color, survives mostly in architecture and metalwork .
- The Sutton Hoo burial site contains the best known examples of Anglo-Saxon metalwork, showing the masterful craftsmanship of items such as armor and ornamental objects.
- The architectural character of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical buildings range from influence from Celtic and Early Christian styles . Later Anglo-Saxon architecture is characterized by pilasters , blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular-headed openings.
- Celtic art is ornamental, avoiding straight lines , only occasionally using symmetry , and often involving complex symbolism . Celtic art has used a variety of styles and as shown influences from other cultures in knotwork, spirals, key patterns, lettering, and human figures.
- With the arrival of Christianity, Celtic art was influenced by both Mediterranean and Germanic traditions, creating the Insular style. The interlace patterns that are typical of Celtic art were in fact introduced to Insular art from the Mediterranean and Migration artistic traditions.

Key Terms

- **Insular Art**: Art produced in the post-Roman history of the British Isles, also known as Hiberno-Saxon art. The term derives from the Latin term for island. Britain and Ireland shared a common style that differed from that of the rest of Europe in this period.

Anglo-Saxon art emerged when the Anglo-Saxons migrated from the continent in the fifth century and ended in 1066 with the Norman Conquest. Anglo-Saxon art, which favored brightness and color, survives mostly in architecture and metalwork.

Anglo-Saxon Metalwork

Anglo-Saxon metalwork consisted of Germanic-style jewelry and armor, which was commonly placed in burials. After the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity in the seventh century, the fusion of Germanic Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and Early Christian techniques created the Hiberno-Saxon style (or Insular art) in the form of sculpted crosses and liturgical metalwork. Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration.

Anglo-Saxon metalwork initially used the Germanic Animal Style decoration that would be expected from recent immigrants, but gradually developed a distinctive Anglo-Saxon character. For instance, round disk brooches were preferred for the grandest Anglo-Saxon pieces, over continental styles of fibulae and Romano-British penannular brooches. Decoration included cloisonné (“cellwork”) in gold and garnet for high-status pieces. Despite a considerable number of other finds, the discovery of the ship burial at Sutton Hoo transformed the history of Anglo-Saxon art, showing a level of sophistication and quality that was wholly unexpected at this date. Among the most famous finds from Sutton Hoo are a helmet and an ornamental purse lid.



Sutton Hoo helmet (reconstruction): The Sutton Hoo helmet features an iron skull of a single vaulted shell and has a full face mask, a solid neck guard, and deep cheekpieces. These features suggest an English origin for the basic structure of the helmet. Although outwardly similar to the Swedish examples, the Sutton Hoo helmet is a product of better craftsmanship. This reconstruction in the Royal Armouries shows the intricate jeweled inlay, repoussé reliefs, and abstract designs that once adorned the original.



Sutton Hoo Purse Lid: This ornamental purse lid covered a lost leather pouch, hung from a waist belt. The forms on the top row feature interlace typical of Insular art, while the bottom row features stylized humans and mythical animals either devouring or being devoured.

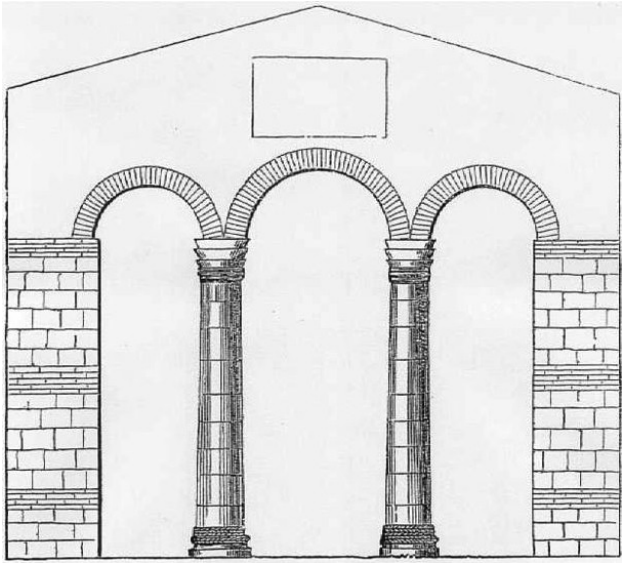
Anglo-Saxon Architecture

Anglo-Saxon secular buildings in Britain were generally simple, constructed mainly using timber with thatch for roofing. No universally accepted example survives aboveground. There are, however, many remains of Anglo-Saxon church architecture. At least fifty churches of Anglo-Saxon origin display the culture's major architectural features, although in some cases these aspects are small and significantly altered. The round-tower church and tower-nave church are distinctive Anglo-Saxon types. All surviving churches, except one timber church, are built of stone or brick, and in some cases show evidence of reused Roman work.



Fobbing Parish Church, section of outer wall.: Blocked Anglo-Saxon round-arched window at Fobbing Parish Church. Also visible is the textured stone work of the outer wall.

The architectural character of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical buildings range from influence from Celtic and Early Christian styles. Later Anglo-Saxon architecture is characterized by pilasters, blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular-headed openings. In the final decades of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom a more general Romanesque style was introduced from the Continent, as in the additions to Westminster Abbey made from 1050 onwards.



Anglo-Saxon church at Reculver: Triple arch opening separating the nave and apse in the seventh-century church at Reculver, Kent (now destroyed). This reconstruction shows the blank arcading that was common in Anglo-Saxon architecture.

Celtic Art

“Celtic art” refers to the art of people who spoke Celtic languages in Europe and those with uncertain language but cultural and stylistic similarities with Celtic speakers. Typically, Celtic art is ornamental, avoiding straight lines, only occasionally using symmetry, and often involving complex symbolism. Celtic art has used a variety of styles and has shown influences from other cultures in knotwork, spirals, key patterns, lettering, and human figures.

Around 500 BCE, the La Tène style appeared rather suddenly, coinciding with some kind of societal upheaval that involved a shift of the major centers to the northwest. La Tène was especially prominent in northern France and western Germany, but over the next three centuries the style spread as far as Ireland, Italy, and modern Hungary. Early La Tène style adapted ornamental motifs from foreign cultures, including Scythian, Greek, and Etruscan arts. La Tène is a highly stylized curvilinear art based mainly on classical vegetable and foliage motifs such as leafy palmette forms, vines, tendrils, and lotus flowers together with spirals, S-scrolls, lyre , and trumpet shapes. It remains uncertain whether some of the most notable objects found from the La Tène period were made in Ireland or elsewhere (as far away as Egypt in some cases). But in Scotland and the western parts of Britain, versions of the La Tène style remained in use until it became an important component of the Insular style that developed to meet the needs of newly Christian populations.

Celtic art in the medieval period was produced by the people of Ireland and parts of Britain over the course of 700 years. With the arrival of Christianity, Celtic art was influenced by both Mediterranean and Germanic traditions, primarily through Irish contact with Anglo-Saxons, which resulted in the Insular style. The interlace patterns that are regarded as typical of Celtic art were in fact introduced from the Mediterranean and Migration Period artistic traditions. Specific examples of Celtic Insular art include the Tara Brooch and the Ardagh Chalice.



Tara Brooch, front view: Created in about 700 CE, the seven-inch long pseudo-penannular brooch is composed primarily of silver gilt and embellished with intricate abstract decoration including interlace on both the front and back.



The Ardagh Chalice: The Ardagh Chalice reflects the interlace styles introduced into the Celtic Insular Art form from the Mediterranean.

Catholic Celtic sculpture began to flourish in the form of the large stone crosses that held biblical scenes in carved relief . This art form reached its apex in the early 10th century, with Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice and the Ahenny High Cross.



Ahenny High Cross (700-800 CE): Ahenny High Cross, Ireland, one of the primary examples of Celtic sculpture.

Illustrated Books in the Early Middle Ages

Insular art is often characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decorations in illuminated manuscripts.

Learning Objectives

Describe the history and characteristics of illuminated manuscripts in Insular art

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- An illuminated manuscript features text supplemented by elaborate decoration. The term is mostly used to refer to any decorated or illustrated manuscript from the Western tradition. Illuminated manuscripts were written on vellum , and some feature the use of precious metals and pigments that were imported to northern Europe.
- Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration spread boldly across illuminated manuscripts. Insular manuscripts sometimes take a whole page for a single initial or the first few words at beginnings of gospels.
- *TheBook of Kells* is considered a masterwork of Western calligraphy , with its illustrations and ornamentation surpassing that of other Insular Gospel books in complexity. The Kells manuscript's decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling Insular motifs .
- Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts, such as the *StockholmCodexAureus*, combine Insular art with Italian styles such as classicism.
- Mozarabic art refers to art of Mozarabs, Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus who adopted Arab customs without converting to Islam during the Islamic invasion of the Iberian peninsula. It features a combination of (Hispano) Visigothic, and Islamic art styles, as in the Beatus manuscripts , which combine Insular art illumination forms with Arabic-influenced geometric designs.

Key Terms

- **parchment**: A material made from the polished skin of a calf, sheep, goat or other animal, used as writing paper.

- **Mozarabic**: Art of Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus, the Muslim-conquered territories, after the Arab invasion of the Iberian Peninsula (711 CE) to the end of the 11th century. These people adopted some Arab customs without converting to Islam, preserving their religion and some ecclesiastical and judicial autonomy.
- **Book of Kells**: An illuminated manuscript in Latin containing the four Gospels of the New Testament together with various prefatory texts and tables. It was created by Celtic monks circa 800 or slightly earlier.
- **Insular Art**: Art produced in the post-Roman history of the British Isles, also known as Hiberno-Saxon art. The term derives from the Latin term for island. Britain and Ireland shared a common style that differed from that of the rest of Europe.
- **illuminated manuscript**: A book in which the text is supplemented by decoration, such as initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.

Background

An illuminated manuscript contains text supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations. In the strict definition of the term, an illuminated manuscript indicates only those manuscripts decorated with gold or silver. However, the term is now used to refer to any decorated manuscript from the Western tradition. The earliest surviving substantive illuminated manuscripts are from the period 400 to 600 CE and were initially produced in Italy and the Eastern Roman Empire. The significance of these works lies not only in their inherent art historical value , but also in the maintenance of literacy offered by non-illuminated texts as well. Had it not been for the monastic scribes of Late Antiquity who produced both illuminated and non-illuminated manuscripts, most literature of ancient Greece and Rome would have perished in Europe.

The majority of surviving illuminated manuscripts are from the Middle Ages , and hence most are of a religious nature. Illuminated manuscripts were written on the best quality of parchment , called vellum. By the sixteenth century, the introduction of printing and paper rapidly led to the decline of illumination, although illuminated manuscripts continued to be produced in much smaller numbers for the very wealthy. Early medieval illuminated manuscripts are the best examples of medieval painting, and indeed, for many areas and time periods, they are the only surviving examples of pre-Renaissance painting.

Insular Art in Illustrated Books

Deriving from the Latin word for island (*insula*), Insular art is characterized by detailed geometric designs, interlace, and stylized animal decoration spread boldly across illuminated manuscripts. Insular manuscripts sometimes take a whole page for a single initial or the first few words at beginnings of gospels. The technique of allowing decoration the right to roam was later influential on Romanesque and Gothic art. From the seventh through ninth centuries, Celtic missionaries traveled to Britain and brought the Irish tradition of manuscript illumination, which came into contact with Anglo-Saxon metalworking. New techniques employed were filigree and chip-carving, while new motifs included interlace patterns and animal ornamentation.

The *Book of Kells* (Irish: Leabhar Cheanannais), created by Celtic monks in 800, is an illustrated manuscript considered the pinnacle of Insular art. Also known as the *Book of Columba*, *The Book of Kells* is considered a masterwork of Western calligraphy, with its illustrations and ornamentation surpassing that of other Insular Gospel books in extravagance and complexity. *The Book of Kells*‘s decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling motifs typical of Insular art. Figures of humans, animals, and mythical beasts, together with Celtic knots and interlacing patterns in vibrant colors, enliven the manuscript’s pages. Many of these minor decorative elements are imbued with Christian symbolism . The manuscript comprises 340 folios made of high-quality vellum and unprecedentedly elaborate ornamentation including 10 full-page illustrations and text pages vibrant with decorated initials and interlinear miniatures. These mark the furthest extension of the anti- classical and energetic qualities of Insular art.



Book of Kells: Folio 27v: Folio 27v contains the symbols of the Four Evangelists (clockwise from top left): a man (Matthew), a lion (Mark), an eagle (John), and an ox (Luke). The Evangelists are placed in a grid and enclosed in an arcade, as is common in the Mediterranean tradition. However, notice the elaborate geometric and stylized ornamentation in the arcade that highlights the Insular aesthetic.

The Insular majuscule script of the text itself in the *Book of Kells* appears to be the work of at least three different scribes. The lettering is in iron gall ink with colors derived from a wide range of substances, many of which were imported from distant lands. The text is accompanied by many full-page miniatures, while smaller painted decorations appear throughout the text in unprecedented quantities. The decoration of the book is famous for combining intricate detail with bold and energetic compositions . The illustrations feature a broad range of colors, most often purple, lilac, red, pink, green, and yellow. As typical with Insular work, there was neither gold nor silver leaf in the manuscript. However, the pigments for the illustrations, which included red and yellow ochre , green copper pigment (sometimes called verdigris), indigo , and lapis lazuli , were very costly and precious. They were imported from the Mediterranean region and, in the case of the lapis lazuli, from northeast Afghanistan.

The decoration of the first eight pages of the canon tables is heavily influenced by early Gospel Books from the Mediterranean, where it was traditional to enclose the tables within an arcade . Although influenced by this Mediterranean tradition, the Kells manuscript presents this motif in an Insular spirit, where the arcades are not seen as architectural elements but rather become stylized geometric patterns with Insular ornamentation. Further, the complicated knot work and interweaving found in the Kells manuscript echo the metalwork and stone carving works that characterized the artistic legacy of the Insular period.



The Book of Kells: This example from the manuscript (folio 292r) shows the lavishly decorated section that opens the Gospel of John.

Anglo-Saxon illuminated manuscripts form a significant part of Insular art and reflect a combination of influences from the Celtic styles that arose when the Anglo-Saxons encountered Irish missionary activity. A different mixture is seen in the opening from the *StockholmCodex Aureus*, where the evangelist portrait reflects an adaptation of classical Italian style, while the text page is mainly in Insular style, especially the first line with its vigorous Celtic spirals and interlace. This is one of the so-called "Tiberius Group" of manuscripts with influence from the Italian style. It is the last English manuscript in which trumpet spiral patterns are found.

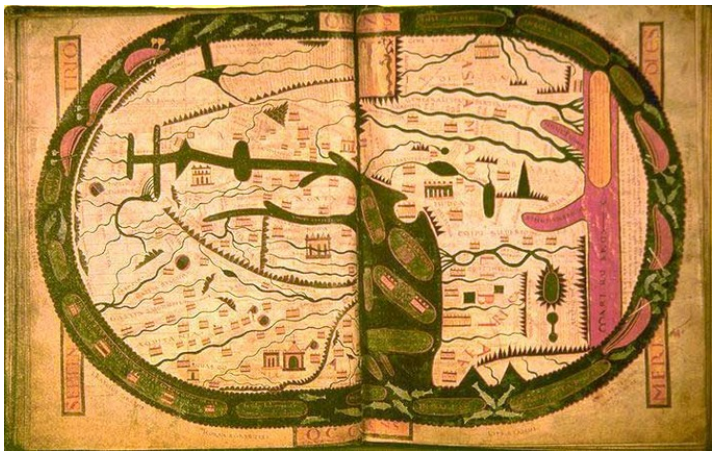


The Stockholm Codex Aureus: The evangelist portrait from the Stockholm Codex Aureus, one of the "Tiberius Group," that shows the Insular style and classicizing continental styles that combined and competed in early Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.

The Beatus Manuscripts

The *Commentary on the Apocalypse* was originally a Mozabaric eighth-century work by the Spanish monk and theologian Beatus of Liébana. Often referred to simply as the *Beatus*, it is used today to reference any of the extant manuscript copies of this work, especially any of the 26 illuminated copies that have survived. The historical significance of the *Commentary* is even more pronounced since it included a world map, offering a rare insight into the geographical understanding of the post-Roman world.

Considered together, the Beatus codices are among the most important Spanish and Mozarabic medieval manuscripts and have been the subject of extensive scholarly and antiquarian inquiry.



Beatus World Map: The world map from the Saint-Sever Beatus, measuring 37 x 57 cm. This was painted c. 1050 as an illustration to Beatus's work at the Abbey of Saint-Sever in Aquitaine, on the order of Gregori de Montaner, Abbot from 1028 to 1072.

Though Beatus might have written these commentaries as a response to Adoptionism in the Hispania of the late 700s, many scholars believe that the book's popularity in monasteries stemmed from the Arabic-Islamic conquest of the Iberian peninsula, which some Iberian Christians took as a sign of the Antichrist. Not all of the Beatus manuscripts are complete, and some exist only in fragmentary form. However, the surviving manuscripts are lavishly decorated in the Mozarabic, Romanesque, or Gothic style of illumination.

Mozarabic art refers to art of Mozarabs, Iberian Christians living in Al-Andalus who adopted Arab customs without converting to Islam during the Islamic invasion of the Iberian peninsula (from the eighth through the 11th centuries). Mozarabic art features a combination of (Hispano) Visigothic and Islamic art styles, as in the Beatus manuscripts, which combine Insular art illumination forms with Arabic-influenced geometric designs.



Beatus of Liébana. *Judgement of Babylon.*: From *Beatus Apocalypse.* Depicts Babylon on fire using Insular art illumination forms, influenced by Arabic geometric designs.

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12.2: The Vikings

Norse Ships in the Early European Middle Ages

The Oseberg ship was discovered in a burial mound in Norway and is one of the finest artistic and archaeological finds from the Viking Age.

Learning Objectives

Identify the important artifacts found in the burial mound of the Oseberg ship

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Vikings used their great ships to invade European coasts, harbors, and river settlements on a seasonal basis. These ships were not only vessels used for war and trade but also the primary means of artistic expression. The Oseberg burial mound contained numerous grave goods and the remains of two female human skeletons. The ship's interment into its burial mound dates from 834 CE, but parts of the ship date from around 800 CE, and scholars believe that ship itself is older.
- The bow and stern of the ship are elaborately decorated with complex woodcarvings in the characteristic "gripping beast" style , also known as the Oseberg style.
- The Oseberg burial contains agricultural and household tools as well as a series of textiles included woolen garments, imported silks, and narrow tapestries . The Oseberg burial is one of the few sources of Viking age textiles, and the wooden cart is the only complete Viking age cart found so far.

Key Terms

- **Oseberg Ship**: A well-preserved Viking vessel discovered in a large burial mound in Norway.

Of Scandinavian descent, Norsemen are often called Vikings after their trading locations on the Norwegian shoreline. Known as pre-Christian traders and pirates, Vikings used their great ships to invade European coasts, harbors, and river settlements on a seasonal basis. They created fast and seaworthy longships that served not only as warring and trading vessels, but also as media for artistic expression and individual design.

The great ships of the Vikings contain some of the major artworks left from this time. For instance, the Oseberg Bow demonstrates the Norse mastery of decorative wood carving and intricate inlay of metal. Likewise, the ship head post—representing a roaring beast—is five inches high with complicated surface ornamentation in the form of interwoven animals that twist and turn.



Osberg Ship Head Post: Animal head post found in the Oseberg ship. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo, Norway. The exact function of the head post is unknown.

Other examples of artistic design on Norse ships include the “King” or “Chieftain” vessels designated for the wealthier classes. Chieftain ships were distinguishable by the design of the bow of their vessel with designs such as bulls, dolphins, gold lions, drakes spewing fire out of their nose, human beings cast in gold and silver, and other unidentifiable animals cast in bronze metal. Typically, the sides of these vessels were decorated using bright colors and wood-carvings.

A Ship Burial

The Oseberg ship (Norwegian: Osebergskipet) is a well-preserved Viking ship discovered in a large burial mound at the Oseberg farm near Tønsberg in Vestfold County, Norway. This ship is widely celebrated as one of the finest artistic and archaeological finds to have survived the Viking Age.



The Oseberg Ship: The Oseberg ship (Viking Ship Museum, Norway)

The Oseberg burial mound contained numerous grave goods and the remains of two female human skeletons. The ship's interment into its burial mound dates from 834 CE, but parts of the ship date from around 800 CE, and scholars believe that ship itself is older. The bow and stern of the ship are elaborately decorated with complex woodcarvings in the characteristic "gripping beast" style, also known as the Oseberg style. This style's primary features are the paws that grip the borders around it, neighboring beasts, or parts of its own body. Although the Osberg style distinguishes early Viking art from previous trends, it is no longer generally accepted as an independent style. Although seaworthy, the ship is relatively frail. It is thought to have been used only for coastal voyages.



Oseberg Ship: This detail from the Oseberg ship demonstrates the elaborate woodcarving designs used as ornamentation on the bow and front of the ship.

The skeletons of two women were found in the Oseberg burial mound. One may have been sacrificed to accompany the other in death. Regardless, the opulence of the burial rite and the grave goods suggests that this was a burial of very high status. For instance, one woman wore a very fine red wool dress of fabric woven in a lozenge twill pattern (a luxury commodity) and a fine white linen veil in a gauze weave. The other wore a plainer blue wool dress with a wool veil, showing some stratification in their social status. Neither woman wore anything entirely made of silk, although small silk strips were appliqued onto a tunic worn under the red dress.

The grave had been disturbed in antiquity and many precious metals that were initially buried with Oseberg ship went missing. Nevertheless, many everyday items and artifacts were found during the early 20th-century excavations of the site. These included four elaborately decorated sleighs, a four-wheel wooden cart, bedposts, wooden chests, and other richly decorated items. For instance, the so-called “Buddha bucket” is a well-known object from the Oseberg site that features a brass and cloisonné enamel ornament of a bucket (pail) handle in the shape of a figure sitting with crossed legs. The bucket itself is made from yew wood held together with brass strips, and the handle is attached to two anthropomorphic figures often compared to depictions of the Buddha in lotus posture (although any connection to Buddhism is uncertain). Archaeologists also found more mundane items, such as agricultural and household tools, and a series of textiles that included woolen garments, imported silks, and narrow tapestries. The Oseberg burial is one of the few sources of Viking-age textiles, and the wooden cart is the only complete Viking-age cart found so far.



"Buddha Bucket": The so-called "Buddha bucket" (Buddha-bøtte), brass and cloisonné enamel ornament of a bucket (pail) handle in the shape of a figure sitting with crossed legs.

Jelling Stones

The Jelling Stones are visual records of the transitional period between Norse paganism and the process of Christianization in Denmark.

Learning Objectives

Examine the function and symbolism of the Runic Stones in Jelling

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Jelling Stones are strongly identified with the creation of Denmark as a nation-state, and both feature one of the earliest records of the name "Danmark."
- The larger stone, known as Harald's stone, is often cited as Denmark's baptismal certificate (*dåbsattest*), containing a depiction of Christ and an inscription celebrating the conversion of the Danes to Christianity.
- The runic inscriptions on the Jelling stones are the best-known in Denmark.
- Originally the stones were brightly painted in polychromatic palettes . The tendency to paint runestones appears throughout Scandinavia.
- The styles in which humans, animals, and abstract interlace designs appear on Harald's Stone bear striking similarity with popular styles in illuminated manuscripts and decorative arts in the British Isles. Contact between the cultures resulted in these parallels.

Key Terms

- **The Jelling Stones**: Massive carved runestones from the 10th century found at the town of Jelling in Denmark.

The Jelling Stones are massive carved runestones from the 10th century, named for the town of Jelling in Denmark. Prior to the 10th century, stone carving was extremely rare or non-existent in most parts of Scandanavia. Subsequently, and likely influenced by the spread of Christianity, the use of carved stone for permanent memorials became prevalent.

The older of the two Jelling Stones is attributed to King Gorm the Old, thought to have been raised in memory of his wife Thyra. King Gorm's son Harald Bluetooth raised the larger of the two stones in memory of his parents, in celebration of his conquest of Denmark and Norway, and to document his conversion of the Danes to Christianity. Art historians consider the runic inscriptions on the Jelling stones the best-known in Denmark.



Jelling Stones: The Jelling Stones are massive carved runestones from the 10th century, named for the town of Jelling in Denmark. Here they are seen protected behind glass.

Scholars have long considered the Jelling Stones visual records of the transitional period between the indigenous Norse paganism and the victory of Christianization in Denmark. The larger stone, known as Harald's stone, is often cited as Denmark's baptismal certificate (*dåbsattest*), containing a depiction of Christ and an inscription celebrating the conversion of the Danes to Christianity. The Jelling Stones are also strongly identified with the creation of Denmark as a nation-state, and both stones offer the earliest examples of the name *Danmark* (in the form of *tanmaurk* on the large ston, and *tanmarkar* on the small stone).

The runestone of Gorm, the older and smaller of the Jelling Stones, has an inscription that reads: "King Gormr made this monument in memory of Thyrvé, his wife, Denmark's adornment." The larger runestone of Harald Bluetooth is engraved on one side with an inscription that reads: "King Harald ordered this monument made in memory of Gormr, his father, and in memory of Thyrvé, his mother. That Harald who won for himself all of Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian." Harald's stone has a figure of Jesus Christ on one side and on another side a serpent wrapped around a lion. The depiction of Christ standing in the shape of a cross and entangled in what appear to be branches is of note. One scholar suggested that this imagery was used to indicate that Christ had replaced the Norse pagan god Odin, who in one myth hung for nine nights in the tree Yggdrasill.



Harald's Stone: Carving of Christ: The figure of Christ on Harald's runestone. One scholar has suggested that this imagery was used to indicate that Christ had replaced the Norse pagan god Odin, who in one myth hung for nine nights in the tree Yggdrasill.



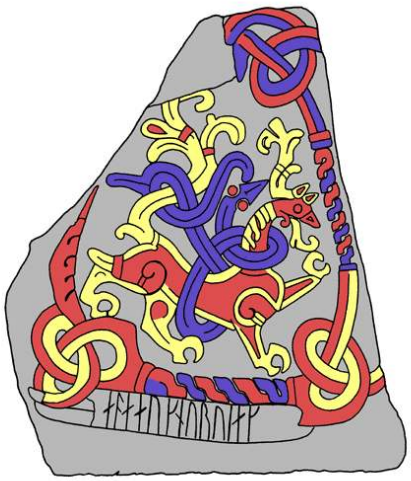
Harald's Stone: Inscription: This Jelling Stone, with its depiction of Christ and celebration of the Conversion of the Danes, is widely regarded as Denmark's "baptismal certificate."

Remnants of red pigment show that the Jelling Stones were once brightly painted. This practice was apparently widespread across Scandinavia, with runestones at locations such as Strängnäs Cathedral (Sweden) and Oppland (Norway) bearing similar hues . Replicas made from plaster casts in the twentieth century recreate the stones' polychromatic appearances.



Replica of Harald’s Stone: This plaster-cast replica gives us an idea of the original polychromatic appearance of the Jelling Stones. National Museum of Denmark

The reliefs on Harald’s Stone bear a striking resemblance to the styles of humans, animals, and abstract patterns that appear in illuminated manuscripts and on decorative arts in the British Isles of the Early Middle Ages . This common thread is a result of contact between the cultures through migration and invasion.



Animal relief on Harald’s Stone: The drawing of this stone depicts a colorful, stylized animal that bears a striking resemblance to similar forms found in the British Isles, such as in the hoard found at Sutton Hoo.

Norse Timber Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Archaeological finds of political and religious architecture suggest a significant mastery of woodworking and engineering in Viking culture.

Learning Objectives

Identify the different kinds of timber structures created by the Vikings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Viking long houses were typically inhabited by elite members of society. They were load-bearing structures with steeply pitched roofs that resembled inverted boats.
- A stave church is a medieval wooden church with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. This building technique is named after load-bearing posts.
- The churches are commonly divided into two categories: the first without free-standing posts and a single nave is often referred to as Type A, and the other with a raised roof and free-standing internal posts is termed Type B.
- The stave churches owe their longevity to architectural innovations that protected these large, complex wooden structures against water rot, precipitation, and extreme temperatures. Most important was the introduction of massive sills underneath the staves (posts) to prevent them from rotting.
- Archaeological excavations have shown that stave churches descend from palisade constructions and later churches with earth-bound posts. Similar palisade constructions have been found in buildings of the Viking era.

Key Terms

- **triforium**: A shallow arched gallery within the thickness of an inner wall, above the nave of a church or cathedral.
- **sill**: A horizontal member bearing the upright portion of a frame.
- **long house**: A structure typically consisting of one large room, intended to house the elite members of society.
- **Stave Church**: A medieval wooden structure with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. This building technique is named after wood-bearing posts.
- **timber**: A heavy wooden beam, generally a whole log that has been squared off and used to provide heavy support for something such as a roof. Historically also used in the plural, as in ship's timbers.
- **palisade**: A fence or wall made from wooden stakes or tree trunks, used as a defensive structure or enclosure.

Background

Timber architecture is used to describe a period of medieval art in which two distinctive wood building traditions converged in Norwegian architecture. One was the practice of building with horizontal logs notched at the corners, a technique likely imported east of Scandinavia. The other influence was the stave building tradition, which possibly evolved from improvements on the prehistoric long houses that had roof-bearing posts dug into the ground .

Although scant evidence exists of actual buildings from the earliest permanent structures, the discovery of Viking ships (i.e. the Oseberg) and stave churches suggest a significant mastery of woodworking and engineering in Viking culture . Not counting the 28 remaining stave churches, at least 250 wooden houses predating the Black Death of 1350 are preserved more or less intact in Norway. Most of these are long houses, some with added stave-built galleries or porches. As political power in Norway was consolidated and had to contend with external threats, larger and more durable structures including fortresses, bridges, and ultimately churches and manors were built with stone and masonry.

Long Houses

Very little archaeological evidence of actual buildings from the earliest permanent structures in the Viking era have survived. However, in the Lofoten archipelago in Northern Norway, a Viking chieftain's holding has been reconstructed at the Lofotr Viking Museum. In 1983, archaeologists uncovered the Chieftain House at Borg, a large Viking-era building likely established around the year 500 CE. Excavations later in the 1980s revealed the largest building ever to be found from the Viking period in Norway. The foundation of the Chieftain House at Borg measured 272 feet long and 30 feet high. After the excavation ended, the remains of what had once been the long house remained visible.



Viking Long House: Reconstructed long house in the Viking Museum in Borg, Vestvågøy/Lofoten, Norway.

Also known as mead halls, long houses typically housed the high-ranking members of Viking society, particularly royalty and aristocracy. From around the year 500 up until the Christianization of Scandinavia (by the thirteenth century), these large halls were vital parts of the political center. They were later superseded by medieval banquet halls.
Typically load-bearing with post-and-lintel entrances, long houses had sharply pitched roofs that bore a curve similar to that of a ship. In fact, the roofs of many reconstructed long houses resemble inverted boats placed atop the exterior walls. This shape was likely due to the climate, as pitched roofs allow snow to fall to the ground without causing collapse.

Stave Churches

The most commonly cited examples of timber architecture are the Norwegian stave churches. Until the beginning of the 19th century, as many as 150 stave churches still existed. Many were destroyed as part of a religious movement that favored simple, puritan lines , and today only 28 remain (although a large number were documented with measured drawings before they were demolished).

A stave church is a medieval wooden church with post-and-beam construction related to timber framing. The wall frames are filled with vertical planks. The load-bearing posts (*stafr* in Old Norse , *stav* in Norwegian) lend their name to this building technique. The stave churches owe their longevity to architectural innovations that protected these large, complex wooden structures against water rot, precipitation, wind, and extreme temperatures. Most important was the introduction of massive sills underneath the staves (posts) to prevent them from rotting. Over the two centuries of stave church construction, this building type evolved to an advanced art and science.



Stave Church: Example of a Norwegian wooden stave church: Stave church in Lom.

Forms of Church Construction

Archaeological excavations have shown that stave churches descend from palisade constructions and later churches with earth-bound posts. Similar palisade constructions are known from the buildings of the Viking era. Logs were split in two halves, rammed into the ground, and given a roof. This was a simple form of construction but very strong. The wall could last for decades if set in gravel—even centuries. Remains of these buildings are found over much of Europe and are commonly grouped into two categories. Type A had no free-standing posts and a single nave as seen in the Renli Stave Church.



Type A: Reinli Stave Church: Reinli stave church with the old pillory and a single nave: Sør-Aurdal.

Type B had a raised roof and free-standing internal posts as in the Lomen Stave Church.



Type B Lomen Stave Church Interior: Interior from Lomen stave church depicting a raised roof and cross braces between upper and lower string beams and posts. Intermediate posts have been omitted.

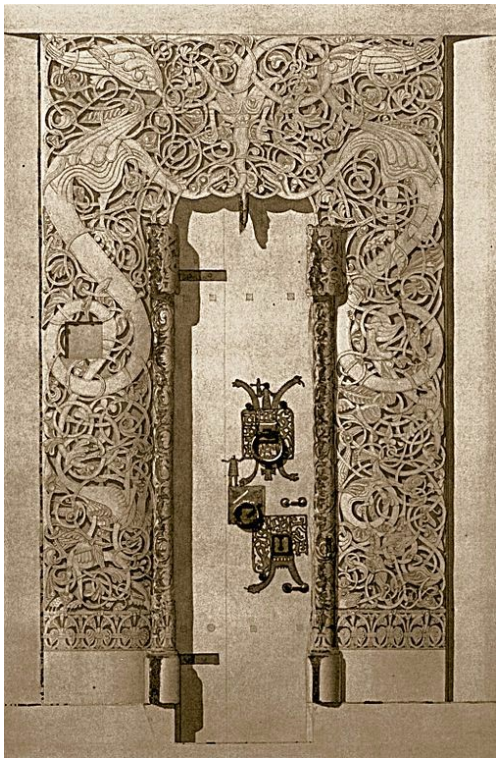
Type B churches were often further divided into two subgroups. The Kaupanger group had a complete arcade row of posts and intermediate posts along the sides and details that mimic stone capitals . These churches gave an impression of a basilica . The other subgroup was the Borgund group. These churches had cross braces joining upper and lower string beams and posts that formed a very rigid interconnection, resembling the triforium of stone basilicas. Many stave churches had or still have outer galleries running around the entire perimeter, loosely connected to the plank walls. They probably served to protect the church from the harsh climate.

After the Protestant Reformation , no stave churches were built. Instead, new churches were composed of stone or horizontal log buildings with notched corners. Most old stave churches disappeared because of redundancy, neglect, deterioration, or because they were too small to accommodate larger congregations and too impractical according to new architectural standards.

Ornamentation of Stave Churches

Even though the wooden churches had structural differences, they give a recognizable general impression. Facade difference may conceal common floor plans, while apparently similar buildings might have significant structural differences. Certain basic principles were common to all church types.

Basic geometric figures, simple numbers, just a few length units, simple ratios, and perhaps proportions were among the theoretical aids all builders inherited. The specialist knew a particular type of building so well that he could systematize its elements in a slightly different way from previous designs, thus carrying developments a stage further. Ornamentation included intricate interlace patterns, stylized human figures, and mythological animals.



Hedal stave church portal: Drawing by G. A. Bull of the main portal in Hedalen stave church (c. 1853), depicting the intricate ornamentation.

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12.3: The Carolingians

Carolingian Painting in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian artwork consists of frescoes and mosaics that reached a pinnacle of production under the reign of Charlemagne.

Learning Objectives

Describe Carolingian mosaics and paintings

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian art comes from the Frankish Empire from about 780 to 900 CE, during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs. This period is popularly known as the Carolingian Renaissance .
- Carolingian paintings show an attempt to conform to Charlemagne's desire to revive the Roman Empire under a Christian banner.
- Some fragmentary frescoes have survived, allowing art historians to theoretically conceptualize Carolingian painting. Examples of surviving fragments include those at the Abbey of Saint John at Müstair and Saint Benedikt at Mals.
- Mosaics , created by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, pigments , and other materials, were created in Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel. Examples of well-preserved surviving frescoes can be found at Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen and Germigny-des-Prés.

Key Terms

- **mosaic**: A piece of artwork created by placing colored squares (usually tiles) in a pattern so as to create a picture.
- **fresco**: A technique of mural painting executed upon freshly laid lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the pigment and as the plaster sets, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall.

Background

Carolingian art comes from the Frankish Empire from about 780 to 900 CE, during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate heirs. This period is popularly known as the Carolingian Renaissance. The art was produced by and for the court circle and a group of important monasteries under imperial patronage .

Surviving examples of painting from this era consist mainly of frescoes and mosaics produced in present-day France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, northern Italy, and the Low Countries. These sites have allowed art historians to theoretically conceptualize Carolingian paintings. Paintings show an attempt to conform to Charlemagne's desire to revive the Roman Empire under a Christian banner. The figures in the frescoes, although relatively flat and posed in a stylized manner, display a degree of modeling and an acknowledgement of the body beneath the clothing. Their facial expressions and body language imply a sense of interaction, although few stand in profile and none turn their backs to the viewer . Surviving frescoes show a greater degree of modeling, a variety of poses, and a relatively naturalistic rendering of draperies and acknowledgement of the bodies beneath. Outside the elite circle that produced these works, however, the quality of visual art was much lower.

Frescoes

Various forms of Carolingian painting include frescoes, which reached a pinnacle of production under the reign of Charlemagne. A villa that featured the oratory of the Palatine Chapel belonged to Bishop Theodulf of Orléans, a key associate of Charlemagne. It was destroyed later in the century, but contained multiple Carolignian frescos of the Seven Liberal Arts, the Four Seasons, and the *Mappa Mundi* (Map of the World). Art historians have found numerous other Carolingian frescoes in churches and palaces that have since been nearly completely lost.

The Abbey of Saint John at Müstair, Switzerland is the site of exceptionally well-preserved Carolingian art. The original church has several significant early medieval frescoes from around 800 CE. The paintings are organized in five rows that stretch from the southern wall across the west wall to the northern wall. The top row features scenes from the life of King David of the Old Testament. The next three rows show scenes from the youth, life, and Passion of Christ. The bottom row contains scenes from the

crucifixion of Saint Andreas. On the western wall the rows are tied together with an image of the Last Judgment. The palette consists of a limited range of colors including ochre , red, and brown.



Fragments of Carolingian-era frescoes (early ninth century), St. John at Müstair: Art historian Dr. Bernd Schälicke examines the Carolingian frescoes on the north wall of the Benedictine Monastery Church of St. John at Müstair.

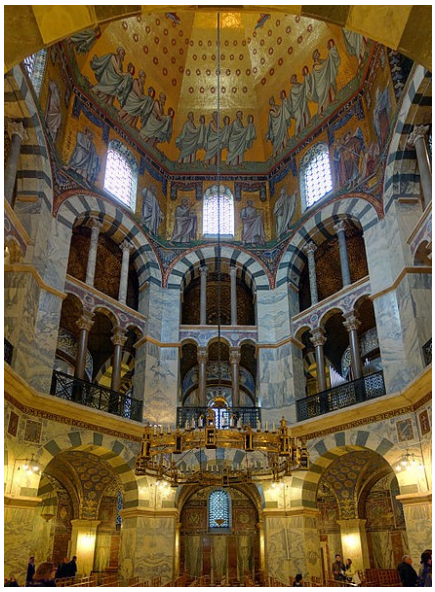
The frescoes at Saint Benedikt at Mals, Italy are contemporary with those at neighboring Saint John at Müstair. They belong to a limited set of surviving frescoes of the Carolingian period. The frescoes are mostly distributed in three niches in the altar wall, showing Jesus Christ flanked by pope Gregory the Great and Saint Stephen. On the walls separating the niches are donor portraits below a troop of 12 angels, and scenes showing Gregory writing his *Dialogi* and disputing with Paulus Diaconus (Paul the Deacon) alongside scenes showing Paul of Tarsus and a fragment of a scene from the life of Saint Benedict.



Saint Gregory Disputing with Paulus Diaconus (c. 825).: Church of St. Benedict, Mals, Italy.

Mosaics

Mosaics were created by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, pigments, and other materials. The mosaics were created in Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen, whose interior remains adorned with arch-to-dome mosaics. Like the Byzantine mosaics that influenced their design, those that adorn Charlemagne's chapel feature floral motifs and classicized figures in various poses against largely gold backgrounds.



Palatine Chapel at Aachen, interior view: The surviving mosaics begin above eye level at the piers or arches and span upward into the dome.

The most famous mosaic in Charlemagne's chapel showed an enthroned Christ worshiped by the Evangelist's symbols and the 24 elders of the Apocalypse. This mosaic no longer survives, but a restored one remains in the apse of the oratory at Germigny-des-Prés (806), discovered in 1820 under a coat of plaster and depicting the Ark of the Covenant adored by angels.



Ark of the Covenant, Germigny-des-Prés (c. 806): Restoration of the original that once adorned the Palatine Chapel. The subject seems drawn from illuminated Jewish bibles and relates to the *Libri Carolini*, possibly written by Theodulf, where the Ark is cited as divine approval of sacred images.

Carolingian Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian architecture is characterized by its attempts to emulate late Roman classicism, early Christian, and Byzantine styles.

Learning Objectives

Locate Carolingian architecture as it relates to pre-Romanesque, Roman classicist, Late Antique, early Christian, and Byzantine styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian churches are generally basilican like the Early Christian churches of Rome , and commonly incorporated westworks .
- The gatehouse of the monastery at Lorsch, built around 800 CE in Germany, exemplifies classical inspiration for Carolingian architecture built as a triple-arched hall dominating the gateway. The arched façade is interspersed with attached Roman- style classical columns and pilasters above.
- Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen combines the styles of the Western Roman and Byzantine Empires with contemporary innovations to create a unique Carolingian architectural style.
- The exterior of a westwork consists of multiple stories between two towers, while the interior includes an entrance vestibule, a chapel, and a series of galleries overlooking the nave . The westwork of the Corvey Abbey is one of the few intact surviving examples from the Carolingian period.

Key Terms

- **spolia**: The repurposing of building stone for new construction or the reuse of decorative sculpture on new monuments.
- **westwork**: The main entrance of a church, named for its (usually) west-facing orientation.
- **Carolingian architecture**: A style of northern European pre-Romanesque architecture belonging to the period of the late eighth and ninth centuries. It was a conscious attempt to emulate Roman architecture and thus borrowed heavily from early Christian and Byzantine architecture. However, innovations make this a distinct style all its own.

Carolingian architecture is the style of northern European pre-Romanesque architecture belonging to the Carolingian Renaissance . During the eighth and ninth centuries, the Carolingian dynasty (named for Charlemagne) dominated western Europe politically, culturally, and economically.

Carolingian architecture is characterized by its conscious attempts to emulate Roman classicism and Late Antique architecture. The Carolingians thus borrowed heavily from early Christian and Byzantine architectural styles, although they added their own innovations and aesthetic style. The result was a fusion of divergent cultural aesthetic qualities.

The gatehouse of Lorsch Abbey, built around 800 CE in Germany, exemplifies classical inspiration for Carolingian architecture, built as a triple-arched hall dominating the gateway, with the arcaded façade interspersed with engaged Corinthian columns and pilasters above. In addition to the engaged columns and arcades , the apse-like structures on either side of the gatehouse recall the ancient Roman basilicas , which were the sites of important government events.



Lorsch Abbey: Lorsch Abbey (800 CE) demonstrates the Roman classical inspiration the Carolingians took for their architecture, with a triple arch hallway dominating the gateway and interspersed with engaged classical columns.

By contrast , the Palatine Chapel in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), with its sixteen-sided ambulatory and overhead gallery, was inspired by the Byzantine-style octagonal church of San Vitale in Ravenna. The chapel makes use of ancient spolia , conceivably from Ravenna, as well as newly carved materials. The bronze decoration is of extraordinarily high quality, especially the doors with lion heads and the interior railings with Corinthian order columns and acanthus scrolls. Like San Vitale, the Palatine Chapel is a centrally-planned church whose dome serves as its focal point. However, at Aachen, the barrel and groin vaults and octagonal

cloister vault in the dome reflect late Roman practices rather than the Byzantine techniques employed at San Vitale. Its round arches and massive supporting piers draw from Western Roman influence. A multicolored marble veneer creates a sumptuous interior. A monumental western entrance complex called the westwork is also drawn from Byzantine architecture.



Palatine Chapel in Aachen, interior view: The Palatine Chapel in Aachen (792-805) demonstrates the Byzantine influence on Carolingian architecture, evidenced by its octagonal style.

Carolingian churches are generally basilican like the Early Christian churches of Rome, and commonly incorporated westworks, arguably the precedent for the western façades of later medieval cathedrals . A westwork (German: *westwerk*) is a monumental west-facing entrance section of a medieval church. This exterior consists of multiple stories between two towers, while the interior includes an entrance vestibule, a chapel, and a series of galleries overlooking the nave. The westwork first originated in the ancient churches of Syria.

The westwork of Corvey Abbey (873-885), Germany, is the oldest surviving example. Like the gate house from Lorsch Abbey, the westwork of Corvey consists of a symmetrical arcade of three round arches at the base . This arcaded pattern repeats in the windows on the second and third stories. The heavy masonry throughout the façade recalls the massive appearance of the interior of the Palatine Chapel. On the upper stories of the center and towers of the westwork, a range of modified classical columns divide and accent the windows, also round arches.



Corvey Abbey: The westwork is the only surviving architectural component of the original Carolingian monastery.

Carolingian Illustrated Books in the Early European Middle Ages

The most common surviving works of the Carolingian era are illuminated manuscripts, which further developed the Insular book style.

Learning Objectives

Identify the major Carolingian manuscripts, the workshops and schools they were created in, and the traditions they drew from

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Carolingian manuscripts were likely produced largely by clerics in a few workshops around the Carolingian Empire. Each of these workshops developed its own style based on the artists and influences of that location and time. Among the most influential centers of production were the Court Schools of Charlemagne and Charles the Bald, as well as the Touronian and Rheimsian Schools.
- As the earliest producer of Carolingian manuscripts, the Court School of Charlemagne initiated a revival of Roman classicism yet maintained Migration Period art (Merovingian and Insular) traditions in their linear presentation, with no concern for volume and spatial relationships.
- The *Drogo Sacramentary* introduced the historiated initial to manuscript illumination. It became standard in manuscripts for the remainder of the Middle Ages .
- The *Utrecht Psalter* was perhaps the most important of all Carolingian manuscripts because of its innovative and naturalistic figurine line drawings. These became the most influential innovation of Carolingian art.
- The *Ebbo Gospels* introduced expressive and energetic lines that were unprecedented in illumination and influenced the art form for decades.

Key Terms

- **historiated**: Decorated with designs representing scenes from the text.
- **illuminated manuscripts**: A book in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. In the most strict definition of the term, this refers to books decorated with gold or silver, but in both common usage and modern scholarship, the term is now used to refer to any decorated or illustrated book from the Western traditions.

Illuminated manuscripts are the most common surviving works of the Carolingian era. This includes a number of luxury manuscripts, mostly Gospel books. They are decorated with a relatively small number of full-page miniatures , often including evangelist portraits and lavish canon tables drawn from Insular art in Britain and Ireland. Carolingian narrative images and cycles are rare but do exist. They tend to be mostly of the Old Testament, while New Testament scenes are typically found on the ivory reliefs on the covers.

Early Carolingian Manuscripts

Carolingian illustrators adopted the oversized, heavily decorated initials of Insular art and developed the historiated decorated initial to produce small narrative scenes. These were seen for the first time toward the end of the period, most notably in the *Drogo Sacramentary* (850-855). The historiated initial, a harmonious union of classical lettering with narrative scenes, had influence into the Romanesque period.



Drogo Sacramentary: Drogo Sacramentary (c. 850) depicts a historiated initial “C” which contains the Ascension of Christ. The text is in gold ink.

Carolingian luxury manuscripts were given treasure binding, rich covers with jewels set in gold and carved ivory panels. As in Insular art, these were prestige objects kept in the church or treasury . By contrast , working manuscripts featured a few decorated initial and pen drawings and were kept in libraries. One exception is the *Utrecht Psalter*, a heavily illustrated library version of the Psalms done in pen and wash and almost certainly copied from a much earlier manuscript. This was perhaps the most important of all Carolingian manuscripts for its innovative and naturalistic figure line drawings that became the most influential innovation of Carolinian art.



Ultrecht Psalter: From the Utrecht Psalter, ninth century. Naturalistic and energetic figurine line drawings were entirely new and became the most influential innovation of Carolinian art in later periods.

Carolingian Manuscript Workshops

Carolingian manuscripts are presumed to have been produced largely or entirely by clerics in a few workshops around the Carolingian Empire. Each of these workshops practiced its own style that developed based on the artists and influences of that particular location and time. The earliest workshop was the Court School of Charlemagne, then the Rheimsian workshop (which became the most influential of the Carolingian period), the Touronian style, the Drogo style, and the Court School of Charles II (the Bald).

The Court School of Charlemagne

The Court School of Charlemagne (also known as the Ada School) produced the earliest manuscripts, including the *Godescalc Evangelistary* (781–783), the *Lorsch Gospels* (778–820,), the *Ada Gospels*, the *Soissons Gospels*, the *Harley Golden Gospels* (800-820), and the *Vienna Coronation Gospels*. The Court School manuscripts were ornate and elaborate, reminiscent of sixth-century ivories and mosaics from Ravenna, Italy. The Court School of Charlemagne initiated a revival of Roman classicism, yet

maintained Migration-Period artistic (Merovingian and Insular) traditions in their linear presentation, with no concern for volume and spatial relationships.



Lorsch Gospels: Ivory book cover with carvings. The Lorsch Gospels reflect its origin in the Court School of Charlemagne with its Late Antiquity Imperial scenes adapted to a Christian theme.

The Rheims School

In the early ninth century, Archbishop Ebbo of Rheims assembled clerical artists and transformed Carolingian art. The expressive animations of the Rheims School would have influence on northern medieval art for centuries to follow, far into the Romanesque period. One example was the Gospel *Book of Ebbo* (816–835), painted with swift, fresh, vibrant brush strokes that evoked an inspiration and energy unknown in classical Mediterranean forms. This emotionalism was new to Carolingian art. Figures in the *Ebbo Gospels* are represented in nervous, agitated poses. The illustration uses an energetic, streaky style with swift brush strokes. The style directly influenced manuscript illumination for decades, as seen in the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram*. The evangelist portrait of Matthew in the *Ebbo Gospels* is similar to the illustration of the psalmist in the first psalm of the *Utrecht Psalter*.



Saint Matthew, from the *Ebbo Gospels* (816-835): Portrait of Matthew, depicting him sitting and writing in the foreground. The wavy lines that form the details on Matthew's clothing and the diagonal lines adding detail to the background and foreground are examples of the energetic subject matter in the *Ebbo Gospels*.

Other books associated with the Rheims school include the *Utrecht Psalter* and the *Bern Physiologus* (825-850), the earliest Latin edition of the Christian allegorical text on animals. Many of its miniatures are set unframed into the text block, which was a characteristic of Late-Antique manuscripts. For this reason, it is believed to be a copy of a fifth-century manuscript. This is one of the oldest extant illustrated copies of the *Physiologus*.



Bern Physiologus, Folio 12v (825-850).: Image of the text and drawings from the *Bern Physiologus*, showing the miniatures drawn unframed into the text block. This is typical of late Antique manuscripts, leading scholars to believe that it is a copy of a fifth-century original.

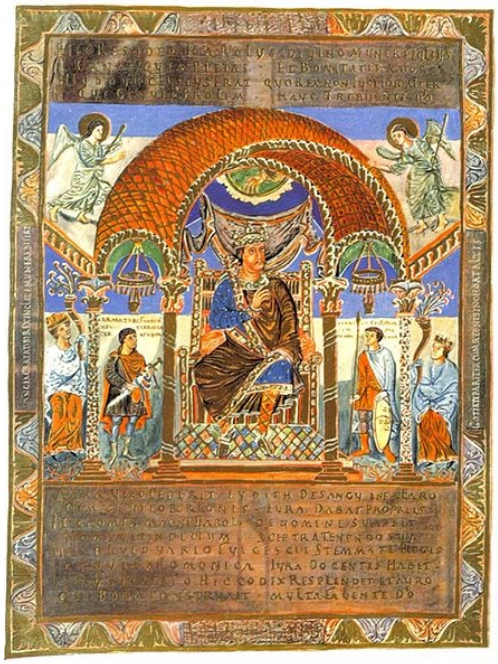
St. Martin of Tours

Another style developed at the monastery of St. Martin of Tours in which large Bibles were illustrated based on late Antique Bible illustrations. Three large Touronian Bibles were created. One of the best examples was the *Vivian Bible* (c. 846), commissioned by Count Vivien, the lay abbot of St. Martin of Tours, and presented to Charles the Bald. The Tours School was cut short by the invasion of the Normans in 853, but its style had already left a permanent mark on other centers in the Carolingian Empire.

Charles the Bald Court School

Charles the Bald established a Court School that fused Touronian, Rhemsian, and Charlemagne Court School styles. Several manuscripts are attributed to this institution, and the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram* (870) was the last and most spectacular. The school's location at the time is unknown as its previous base at St Martin's Abbey in Tours was destroyed in 853, but it had

probably moved to the Basilica of St. Denis outside Paris by the time of the production of the *Codex*. Seven full-page miniatures show the four evangelists, Charles the Bald enthroned, the Adoration of the Lamb, and a Christ in Majesty.



Charles the Bald, from the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram (c. 870): Depiction of Charles the Bald enthroned, surrounded by angels and saints. The Hand of God reaches down from beneath the red canopy, hovering over the emperor's head.

Carolingian Metalwork in the Early European Middle Ages

Carolingian metalworkers primarily worked with gold, ivory, gems, and other precious materials.

Learning Objectives

List the prominent examples of metalwork during the Carolingian era

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Metalwork subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings. Those with more hieratic images were derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.
- Important Carolingian examples of metalwork came out of Charles the Bald's "Palace School" workshop.
- Carolingian-era metalwork produced large statues cast entirely in gold that would influence the development of monumental , elaborate sculptures and altars made from precious materials in northern European medieval art.

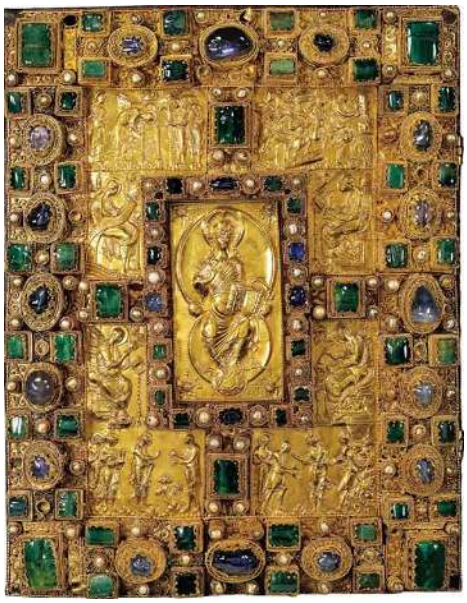
Key Terms

- **Metalwork**: The process of working with metal to create individual parts, assemblies, or large-scale structures. The term covers a wide range, from large ships and bridges to precise engine parts and delicate jewelry, and a corresponding range of skills, processes, and tools.

Carolingian-era metalworkers primarily worked with gold, gems, ivory , and other precious materials. For instance, luxury Carolingian manuscripts were given treasure bindings and elaborately ornate covers in precious metals set with jewels around central carved ivory panels. Metalwork subjects were often narrative religious scenes in vertical sections, largely derived from Late Antique paintings and carvings. Those with more hieratic images, such as the front and back covers of the Lorsch Gospels, were derived from consular diptychs and other imperial art.

Charles the Bald's Palace School Workshop

Important Carolingian examples of metalwork came out of Charles the Bald's Palace School workshop, and include the cover of the Lindau Gospels, the cover of the *CodexAureus of St. Emmeram*, and the *Arnulf Ciborium*. All three of these works feature fine relief figures in repoussé gold. Another work associated with the Palace School is the frame of an antique serpentine dish, now located in the Louvre.



Cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram* (870): Gold and gem-encrusted cover of the *Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram*, 870. Produced by the Carolingian Palace School.

Under Charlemagne, there was a revival of large-scale bronze casting in imitation of Roman designs, although metalwork in gold continued to develop. For example, the Aachen chapel's figure of Christ in gold (now lost) was the first-known work of this type and became a crucial inspiring feature of northern European medieval art. Another one of the finest examples of Carolingian metalwork is the *Golden Altar* (824–859), also known as the *Paliotto*, in the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan (since damaged by World War II bombings). The altar's four sides are decorated with images in gold and silver repoussé framed by borders of filigree, precious stones, and enamel .

An Imperial Portrait

Charlemagne's personal appearance is known from a good description by a personal associate Einhard, whose biography of the emperor describes him as tall and well-built with a round head and wide eyes. This written portrait is confirmed by contemporary depictions of the emperor, his exhumed body, and sculptures believed to depict his likeness. One possibility is a bronze equestrian statuette once housed in Aachen Cathedral. Typical of sculpture in the round produced during the Carolingian period, the statuette is small, approximately eight inches high. The rider is depicted with a mustache, an open crown on his head, and a riding cloak fastened with a fibula. Like the architecture and painting of the time, this sculpture reflects Charlemagne's desire to recreate the Roman Empire, as it bears similarities with a large-scale bronze equestrian portrait of Marcus Aurelius from the second century. Similar to the ancient Roman emperor, the mounted Carolingian ruler wears a calm expression as he rides without holding the reins. Rather, he holds a sword (now lost) in his right hand and an imperial orb in his left. Unlike its ancient predecessor, the horse does not pounce on a missing enemy but calmly prances, reflecting the stateliness of the rider.



Equestrian Statuette of a Carolingian Ruler, Possibly Charlemagne (c. 870): Statuette of Charlemagne (?) mounted on a horse holding a sword on marble base. 8 inches high. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Several gold reliquaries, including one in the form of a portrait bust of Charlemagne, were produced under later dynasties, especially after his canonization in the 12th century.

The Wolf's Door

Bronze also features in many decorative elements in Carolingian westwork of Aachen Cathedral. Known as the Wolf's Door, the main entrance consists of heavy bronze leaves. Each leaf is divided into eight rectangles—a number that had religious symbolism in Christianity, as a symbol of Sunday, the day of the Resurrection. These boxes were framed by decorative strips, which are made of egg-shaped decorations. The egg was considered a symbol of life and fertility from antiquity. In Christian belief it was imbued with the even wider symbolism of Eternal Life. The door-rings in the shape of lions' heads are wreathed by 24 stylized acanthus scrolls—again to be understood at the deepest level through numerology. The Wolf's Door's imitation of the shape of the ancient Roman temple door signifies Charlemagne's claim to have established a New Rome in Aachen with the Palatine Chapel as the distinctive monumental building.

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12.4: The Ottonians

Ottonian Painting in the Early European Middle Ages

The Ottonian Renaissance (951-1024) was a period of cultural and artistic achievement inspired by the revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

Learning Objectives

Describe the painting of the Ottonian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. This coincided with a period of significant church reform.
- Ottonian art reflects the Ottonians' desire to confirm a holy Roman imperial lineage connecting them with the Roman emperors and their Carolingian predecessors. It fuses traditions and influences from late Roman, Byzantine , and Carolingian art.
- Ottonian ruler portraits are usually found in illuminated manuscripts and include motifs commonly found in ancient Roman iconography . Unlike classical art, however, these portraits lack a sense of naturalism , relying instead on iconography and hierarchical scale.
- Very few examples of wall painting from the Ottonian period survive. Those that have are in very poor condition or have been restored several times, often making it difficult or impossible to discover their correct dates of production.

Key Terms

- **iconography**: The branch of art history that deals with the symbolic value of an artwork's subject matter and content.
- **imperium**: The right to command the force of the state; sovereignty.

Sculpture and Painting

Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians (named after their first King Otto I the Great) seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. Ottonian rule was accompanied by renewed faith in the idea of *imperium* (Latin, roughly translated as "power to command"), referring to the sovereignty of state over individual). This coincided with a period of significant church reform. Both combined to create the Ottonian Renaissance (circa 951-1024), a period of heightened cultural and artistic fervor and achievement.

The Ottonian Dynasty desired to confirm a sacred Roman imperial lineage that connected them to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity such as Theodoric and Justinian and to their Carolingian predecessors, particularly Charlemagne. Ottonian art reflected this desire, fusing traditions and influences from late Roman, Byzantine, and Carolingian art.
The style is generally grand and heavy, sometimes to excess, and initially less sophisticated than the Carolingian equivalents. Additionally, the Ottonian style exhibits no direct influence from Byzantine art and less understanding of its classical models. Surviving paintings from this period exist predominantly in illustrations from illuminated manuscripts and a small number of mural and fresco fragments. In fact, illuminated manuscripts are the best source of painted imperial portraiture from the Ottonian Renaissance.

Ruler Portraits

Ottonian ruler portraits usually combine ancient Roman elements with contemporary (medieval) ones. Portraits are most frequently found in the dedicatory prefaces of illuminated manuscripts. Ottonian art eschews naturalism for a more abstract style, focusing on symbolism to convey deeply philosophical and theological concepts.

A portrait of Otto II enthroned depicts the emperor wearing a bejeweled crown in lieu of a laurel wreath and a large disc bearing the cross in place of an imperial orb. However, his upright posture and general pose with one raised hand somewhat recalls the *Colossusof Constantine*, which sat in the Basilica Nova in the fourth century. Likewise, his attire slightly resembles a Roman toga, a sartorial mainstay among emperors and senators of ancient times. In a departure from classical art, however, Otto and the figures

who flank him appear flat. Further, their scale is hierarchical, which organizes size in relation to importance. Otto is the largest of the five figures depicted. Lastly, the architectural space that surrounds the emperor fails to convey a sense of naturalistic recession into space.



Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*. *Otto II Enthroned* (c. 985).: Ottonian art was created to confirm a direct Holy and Imperial lineage as a source of legitimized power linked from Constantine and Justinian.

Wall Paintings

Although it is clear from records that many churches were decorated with extensive wall painting, surviving examples are extremely rare, usually fragmentary, and in poor condition. As a result, their dates of production are uncertain, especially since many have been restored. Most surviving examples are clustered in south Germany, although there are also important examples from northern Italy. There is a record of bishop Gebhard of Constance hiring lay artists for a now-vanished cycle at his newly founded Petershausen Abbey (983). Laymen may have dominated the art of wall painting, perhaps basing their designs on monastic illuminations. The artists seem to have been nomadic, regularly moving throughout Europe.

The church of St. George at Oberzell on Reichenau Island has the best-known surviving example of wall paintings. However, much of the original work has been lost, and the remaining paintings to the sides of the nave have suffered from time and restoration. The largest scenes show the miracles of Christ in a style that shows both specific Byzantine elements and similarity with Reichenau manuscripts such as the *Munich Gospels of Otto III*. They are therefore usually dated around 980–1000. Indeed, the paintings are one of the foundations of the case for Reichenau Abbey as a major center of manuscript painting.



Jesus and the Gadarene Swine (tenth century): Nave fresco in St George, Oberzell, Reichenau Island.

Ottonian Architecture in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian architecture flourished in the 10th and 11th centuries and drew inspiration from Carolingian and Byzantine architecture.

Learning Objectives

Compare and contrast Ottonian architecture with its Carolingian predecessor

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Ottonian architecture first developed during the reign of Otto the Great (936-975) and lasted until the mid-11th century. Surviving examples of this style of architecture are found in Germany and Belgium.
- Ottonian architecture was inspired by Carolingian and Byzantine architecture and foreshadows Romanesque architecture in some features, including alternating columns and piers in regular patterns.
- Ottonian religious architecture diverges from the model of the central-plan church, drawing inspiration instead from the longitudinally oriented Roman basilica .
- The Ottonians adopted the Carolingian double-ended variation on the Roman basilica, featuring apses at both ends of the nave rather than just one. Churches make generous use of the round arch , have flat ceilings, and display the Ottonian appreciation of mathematical harmony by using modular planning.

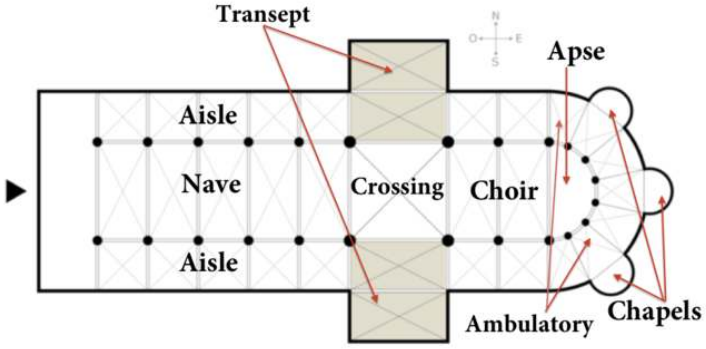
Key Terms

- **crypt**: A stone chamber beneath the floor of a church or other building.
- **crossing**: The junction of the four arms of a cruciform church.
- **ambulatory**: The processional around the east end of a cathedral or large church and behind the high altar.
- **apse**: A semicircular projection from a building, especially the rounded east end of a church that contains the altar.
- **capital**: The uppermost part of a column.
- **nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.

Originally a ducal family from Saxony, the Ottonians (named after their first king Otto I the Great) seized power after the collapse of Carolingian rule in Europe and re-established the Holy Roman Empire. Ottonian architecture first developed during the reign of Otto the Great (936 – 975 CE) and lasted until the mid-11th century. Surviving examples of this style of architecture are found today in Germany and Belgium.

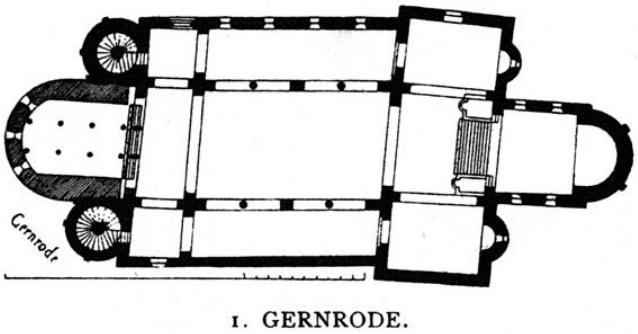
Ottonian architecture chiefly drew its inspiration from Carolingian and Byzantine architecture and represents the absorption of classical Mediterranean and Christian architectural forms with Germanic styles. Some features foreshadow the development of Romanesque architecture, which emerged in the mid-11th century. Its balance and harmony are a remarkable reflection of the high regard in which the Ottonians held the mathematical sciences. This is evident in the modular planning, which bases the measurements of each component of the interior on a single square unit multiplied or divided accordingly.

Barring a few examples influenced by the octagonal Palatine Chapel built by Charlemagne in Aachen, Ottonian religious architecture tends to diverge from the model of the central-plan church, drawing inspiration instead from the Roman (Western) basilica. This typically consisted of a long central nave with an aisle at each side and an apse at one end. When adopted by early Christians, the basilica plan assumed a transept perpendicular to the nave, forming a cruciform shape to commemorate the Crucifixion.



Plan of a typical Western basilican church: The arrow at the left marks the entrance to the church. Main seating for worshipers is located in the nave, while the aisles were originally used to accommodate large crowds on feast days. As churches began collecting relics (housed in the chapels) that attracted pilgrims, churches added the ambulatory. This connects the aisles to the chapels behind the choir, where clergy members perform their rituals.

The Ottonians adopted the Carolingian double-ended variation on the Roman basilica, featuring apses at the east and west ends of the church rather than just the east. Most Ottonian churches make generous use of the round arch, have flat ceilings, and insert massive rectangular piers between columns in regular patterns, as seen in St. Cyriakus at Gernrode and St. Michael's at Hildesheim.



1. GERNRODE.

Plan of St. Cyriakus at Gernrode: This plan shows the apse at both the west and east ends of the church, with a single transept dividing the nave from the east apse. The black circles and rectangles between the nave and each aisle mark the alternating columns (circles) and piers (rectangles).

One of the finest surviving examples of Ottonian architecture is St. Cyriakus Church (960-965) in Gernrode, Germany. The central body of the church has a nave with two aisles flanked by two towers, characteristic of Carolingian architecture . However, it also displays novelties anticipating Romanesque architecture, including the alternation of pillars and columns (a common feature in later Saxon churches), semi-blind arcades in galleries on the nave, and column capitals decorated with stylized acanthus leaves and human heads.



Church of St. Cyriakus, Gernrode, exterior: St. Cyriakus is one of the few surviving examples of Ottonian architecture and combines Carolingian elements with innovations that anticipated Romanesque architecture.



St. Cyriakus, interior : The painted ceilings were added during the 19th-century renovation, which also lined most of the walls with cut stone panels. The original Ottonian walls featured rough quarry stone masonry.

St. Michael's at Hildesheim (1010-1031) is one of the most important Ottonian churches, a double-choir basilica with two transepts and a square tower at each crossing . This layout can be seen from the exterior of the building. The west choir is emphasized by an ambulatory and a crypt . Adhering to the Ottonian appreciation for mathematics, the ground plan of the building follows a geometric concept in which the square of the transept crossing in the ground plan constitutes the key measuring unit for the entire church. The square units are defined by the alternation of columns and piers. Unlike St. Cyriakus, St. Michael's lacks a second-story gallery. However, ample light enters through a row of clerestory windows placed above the arcades dividing the name from the aisles.



St. Michael's Church at Hildesheim (1010-1031).: Unlike the Romanesque churches that would follow, Ottonian churches like St. Michael's had two apses (visible at the right and left ends of this photograph) and two transepts that divided each apse from the central nave area.



St. Michael's at Hildesheim, interior facing east.: Major differences between St. Michael's and St. Cyriakus are the clerestory windows in place of galleries and one pier placed after each pair of columns. The round arches at the east end of the divide the nave from the crossing and the crossing from the apse.

Ottonian Metalwork in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian metalwork ranged from jewel-encrusted objects of precious metals to large-scale bronze reliefs of stylized yet dramatic figures.

Learning Objectives

Discuss how Ottonian metalwork distinguished itself from Carolingian metalwork

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Ottonians were renowned for their metalwork in precious and non-precious materials.
- Jeweled processional crosses embellished with portraits and engravings are some of the finest examples of Ottonian art and sculpture.

- The cover of the *CodexAureus of Echternach* consists of an ivory plaque surrounded by gold repoussé reliefs produced in the elegant elongated style typical in Ottonian art.
- Ottonian metalwork use subject matter and iconography to refer to deep theological and philosophical concepts, as seen in the *Bernward Doors* and *Bernward Column* .

Key Terms

- **iconography**: Pertaining to the symbolic value of the subject matter or content of an artwork.

The Ottonians were renowned for their metalwork, producing bejeweled book covers and massive bronze church doors with relief carvings depicting biblical scenes, a process so complex that it would not be repeated until the Renaissance . Fine, small-scale metal sculpture flourished and exquisite book covers made of ivory and embellished with gems, enamels , crystals, and cameos were produced during this period.

The Cross of Lothair

Many of the finest examples of the *crux gemmata* (jeweled cross) date from Ottonian rule. These wooden crosses were encased in carved gold and silver and encrusted with jewels and engraved gems. Arguably the finest of these Ottonian jeweled crosses is the *Cross of Lothair*, dating from around 1,000 and housed in the Aachen Cathedral . The cross takes its name from the large engraved green rock crystal seal near its base , which bears the portrait and name of the Carolingian ruler Lothair II, King of Lotharingia (835-869). The cross was actually commissioned over a century later for Otto III, the Holy Roman Emperor . The cross bears a cameo of the great Roman emperor Augustus Caesar on one side and an engraving of the crucifixion of Jesus on the other. The cross thus represents both church and state in keeping with the Ottonian agenda, and connects the Ottonian emperors to the original Roman emperors.



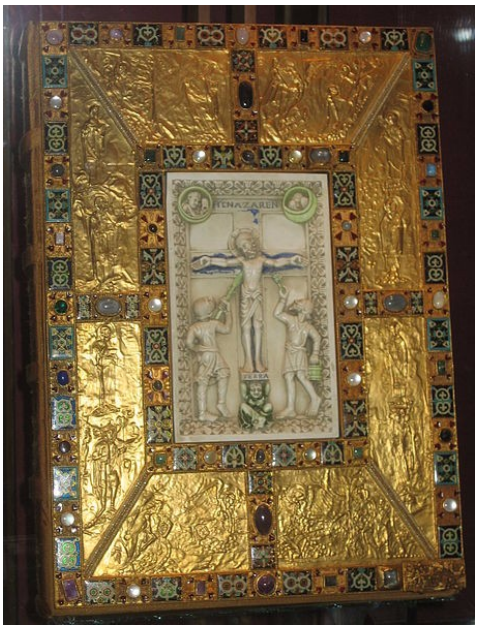
The Cross of Lothair (c. 1000): An example of the prestigious metalwork of the time. The front shows a cameo of the emperor Augustus.

The cross also depicts the Hand of God holding a wreath containing a dove representing the Holy Spirit in the crucifixion scene. This is the earliest-known appearance of the dove motif and the introduction of the entire Trinity into the crucifixion, iconography that has been repeated for centuries.

The *Codex Aureus of Echternach*

Ottonian relief figures from treasure bindings and cast sculptures are often more stylized yet more dramatic than their restrained Carolingian counterparts. The cover of the *Codex Aureus of Echternach* (1030-1050) dates from about 50 years before the manuscript. The metalwork is attributed to the Trier workshop set up by Egbert, Archbishop of Trier. It centers on an ivory plaque showing the Crucifixion. Surrounding the ivory plaque are panels with figures in repoussé gold relief. The style of the metal reliefs differ significantly from the central plaque. These panels are set in a framework with larger elements made up of alternating units of gold filigree set with gems and cloisonné enamel with stylized plant motifs. Thinner gold bands set with small pearls run along

the diagonal axes, further separating the relief images into compartments and creating an “X” that may stand for “Christ.” The figures are produced in an elegant elongated style that contrasts strongly with the forceful and slightly squat figures of the ivory.



Codex Aureus of Echternach (c. 980s): Front cover of the Codex.

Bronze Sculptures in Hildesheim

Ottonian metalwork also includes objects produced from non-precious metals. The most famous of these is the pair of church doors, the *Bernward Doors*, commissioned by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim. They contain biblical scenes from the Gospels and the Book of Genesis in bronze relief, each cast in a single piece. These powerfully simple compositions convey their meanings by emphatic gestures, a hallmark of the Ottonian style.



Bernward Doors, St. Mary's Cathedral at Hildesheim (c. 1015): These bronze doors bear relief sculptures depicting the history of humanity from Adam to Christ.

The figures on the *Bernward Doors* feature a progressive style of relief, leaning out from the background instead of extending a uniform distance. A particularly apt example of this is the figure of Mary with the baby Jesus in the depiction of the Adoration of the Magi. While her lower body is still in low relief, her upper body and Christ project out further and her head and shoulders are cast in the round . This unusual style was used for artistic reasons, not because of technical limitations.

Another striking Ottonian metal sculpture from is the *Bernward Column* (c. 1000), named for the same patron as the *Bernward Doors*. Produced for St. Michael's Cathedral in Hildesheim, the column depicts images from the life of Jesus arranged in a helix similar to Trajan's Column. Just as Roman victory columns depict the military deeds of the Emperor in an upward spiraling frieze , the *Bernward Column* depicts the peaceful deeds of Christ from his baptism at the Jordan to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.



Bernward Column (c. 1000): Bernward had this victory column cast from bronze in conscious imitation of Trajan's column and the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome.

The column is significant for the vitality of the figural relief, which is unusual for its time. The relief complements the *Bernward Doors*. Both artworks reflect Bernward's efforts to put his seat in the position of northern Rome in the context of the Ottonian Dynasty's renewed Christian Roman Empire. They also emphasize Christ as a model of just and godly kingship for the rulers. For this reason, the execution of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas is given a great deal of space .

Ottonian Illustrated Books in the Early European Middle Ages

Ottonian monasteries produced lavish illuminated manuscripts under the sponsorship of emperors, bishops, and other wealthy patrons.

Learning Objectives

Describe the purpose and style of illustrated books in the Ottonian Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The illuminated manuscript is one in which text is supplemented by ornamentation in the form of colored initials, decorative borders, and miniature illustrations, sometimes executed with the addition of gold and silver leaf.
- Ottonian illuminated manuscripts were used for display and most commonly consisted of liturgical books , including psalters , gospel books, and huge complete Bibles.
- Manuscripts sometimes included a dedication portrait commemorating the book's creation, in which the patron is usually depicted presenting the book to the chosen saint. Colored initials, borders, and marginalia also contain miniature portraits and other decorative emblems and motifs .

- Much Ottonian art reflected the dynasty's desire to establish a visual link to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity and their Carolingian predecessors.
- The *Registrum Gregorii*, the *CodexEgberti*, and the *Pericopes of Henry II* are among the most important illuminated manuscripts of the Ottonian Renaissance .

Key Terms

- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **lectionary**: A book or listing that contains a collection of scripture readings appointed for Christian or Judaic worship on a given day or occasion.
- **liturgical book**: A book published by the authority of a church containing the text and directions for the liturgy or customary public worship of its official religious services.
- **scriptorium**: A room in a monastery set aside for the copying, writing, or illuminating of manuscripts and records.

The Ottonian Renaissance (circa 951 – 1024 BCE) coincided with a period of reform and growth in the church, providing an impetus for the production of religious art .

The Illuminated Manuscript

One of the most important art forms of the period was the illuminated manuscript, one in which the text is supplemented by ornamentation in the form of colored initials, decorative borders, and miniature illustrations, sometimes with the addition of gold and silver leaf. Ottonian monasteries produced some of the most magnificent medieval illuminated manuscripts, working with the best equipment and talent under the direct sponsorship of emperors, bishops, and other wealthy patrons.

The manuscripts produced by Ottonian scriptoria (monastic centers for copying texts) provide invaluable documentation of contemporary, religious, and political customs as well as the stylistic preferences of the period. The most richly illuminated manuscripts were used for display and were most liturgical books, including psalters, gospel books, and large, complete Bibles. These lavish manuscripts sometimes include a dedication portrait commemorating the book's creation in which the patron is usually depicted presenting the book to the chosen saint. Colored initials, borders, and marginalia also contain miniature portraits and other decorative emblems and motifs. Illuminated manuscripts were enclosed in ornate metal book covers decorated with gems and ivory carvings.

Presentation Portraits

Following late Carolingian styles , presentation portraits of the patrons of manuscripts are very prominent in Ottonian art. Much Ottonian art reflected the dynasty's desire to establish a visual link to the Christian rulers of Late Antiquity such as Theodoric and Justinian as well as to their Carolingian predecessors, particularly Charlemagne. For example, Ottonian ruler portraits typically include elements with a long imperial history as iconography , such as province personifications, or representatives of the military and the Church flanking the emperor.



Master of the Reichenau School. *Munich Gospels of Otto III* (c. 1000): Depiction of Roma, Gallia, Germania, and Sclavinia paying homage to Otto III, from the *Munich Gospels of Otto III*, one of the Liuthar Group.

Famous Artists and Scriptoria

Among the greatest artists of the Ottonian period was the anonymous Master of the *Registrum Gregorii*, who worked chiefly in Trier in the 970s to 980s. He derived his title from the miniatures in the *Registrum Gregorii* (a collection of letters by Pope Gregory

the Great) and the *Codex Egberti*, a famous gospel lectionary manuscript, both for Archbishop Egbert of Trier (circa 950-993). However, most of the 51 images in the *Codex Egberti*, which represented events in the life of Christ, were made by two monks in the Benedictine monastery on the island of Reichenau on Lake Constance. Reichenau housed a scriptorium and artists' workshop that was one of the largest and most influential in Europe during the late 10th and early 11th centuries. It became famous for its style of gospel illustration in liturgical books. Other famous scriptoria of the Ottonian age were found at the monasteries of Corvey, Hildesheim, and Regensburg, and the cathedral cities of Trier and Cologne.



Codex Egberti: The dedicatory page of the Codex Egberti. The portrait is done in purple and gold and says "Egbertus" on top.

The *Pericopes of Henry II* (1002-1012) is a luxurious medieval illuminated manuscript made for Henry II, the last Ottonian Holy Roman Emperor . The manuscript is a product of the Liuthar Circle of illuminators, who worked in the monastery at Reichenau. The style of the Liuthar Group departs further from classical traditions. Its figures are flattened, stylized , and have exaggerated gestures. Backgrounds are often composed of bands of color with a symbolic rather than naturalistic rationale. As with depictions of Otto II and Otto III, figures' scale is relative to importance, not based on reality. For example, the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* depicts the angel as the largest and thus most important figure, followed by humans and animals, as was the commonly accepted belief in Christendom at the time. Manuscripts from the Liuthar Group introduced the gold background to Western illumination, a characteristic that would remain common until the Italian Renaissance.



Master of the Reichenau School. *Annunciation to the Shepherds*: *Annunciation to the Shepherds* from the *Pericopes of Henry II*, Liuthar Group of the Reichenau School.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 13: Romanesque Art

13.1: The Romanesque Period
13.2: Romanesque Architecture
13.3: Romanesque Sculpture
13.4: Other Romanesque Arts
13.5: Normandy and England

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13.1: The Romanesque Period

The Romanesque Period

Romanesque art was affected by shifting political powers following the Carolingian period and mobility during the Crusades.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the economics and politics of the Romanesque Period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy in 1066 led to the construction of castles and churches to reinforce the Norman presence. Several significant churches built at this time were founded as seats of temporal and religious power or places of coronation and burial.
- The Crusades (1095–1270) brought about extensive migration and resultant spread of ideas and trade skills.
- The continual movement of people, rulers, nobles, bishops, abbots, craftsmen and peasants was an important factor in creating homogenous building methods and a recognizable Romanesque style , despite regional differences.
- The period saw Europe grow steadily more prosperous, and art of the highest quality was no longer confined to the royal court and a small circle of monasteries. Lay artists became increasingly valuable, and this category included most masons, goldsmiths, and painters by the end of the period.

Key Terms

- **lay**: Not belonging to the clergy, but associated with them.
- **Crusade**: One of a series of ostensibly religious campaigns by Christian forces from the 11th to the 13th century, mostly to capture the Holy Land from the Muslims who occupied it.
- **feudalism**: A social system based on personal ownership of resources and fealty between a suzerain (lord) and a vassal (subject). Defining characteristics are direct ownership of resources, personal loyalty, and a hierarchical social structure reinforced by religion.

The Source of Inspiration

Romanesque architecture was the first distinctive style to spread across Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Despite the misconception of 19th century art historians that Romanesque architecture was a continuation of Roman styles, Roman brick and stone building techniques were lost in most parts of Europe. In the northern countries Roman style and methods were only adopted for official buildings, and in Scandinavia they were unknown. The exception was several great Constantinian basilicas that continued to stand in Rome as an inspiration to later builders. However, these did not inspire the Emperor Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Germany, built around the year AD 800. Instead, the greatest building of the Dark Ages in Europe was the artistic child of the octagonal Byzantine Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, built in the sixth century.

A New European Empire

Charlemagne was crowned by the Pope in St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Day in 800 CE, with an aim of reestablishing the old Roman Empire. Charlemagne's political successors continued to rule much of Europe, leading to the gradual emergence of the separate political states that were eventually welded into nations by allegiance or defeat. In the process, the Kingdom of Germany gave rise to the Holy Roman Empire. The invasion of England by William Duke of Normandy, in 1066 saw the building of castles and churches that reinforced the Norman presence. Several significant churches built at this time were founded by rulers as seats of temporal and religious power or as places of coronation and burial. These include the Abbaye-Saint-Denis and Westminster Abbey (where little of the Norman church now remains).

The remaining architectural structures of the Roman Empire were falling into decay and much of its technology was lost. At the same time, however, the building of masonry domes and carving of decorative architectural details continued unabated, though the style had greatly evolved since the fall of Rome in the enduring Byzantine Empire. The domed churches of Constantinople and Eastern Europe had a substantial influence on the architecture of certain towns, particularly through trade and the Crusades. The

most notable example is St Mark's Basilica, Venice , but there are many lesser known examples such as the church of Saint Front, Périgueux and Angoulême Cathedral .

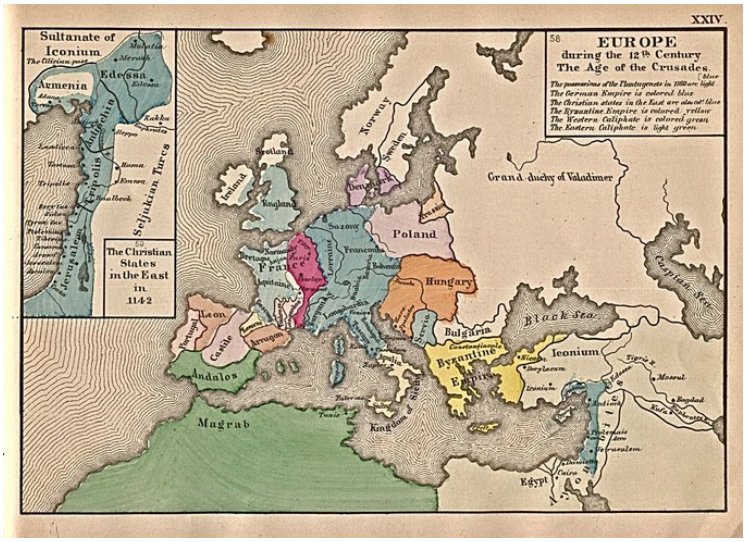


Church of Saint Front, Perigueux, France: Image of the domed church, an example of the Eastern European influence.

Feudalism and Warfare

Much of Europe was affected by feudalism, in which peasants held tenure from local rulers over the land they farmed in exchange for military service. As a result, they could be called on for local spats as well as to follow their lord across Europe to the Crusades.

The Crusades (1095–1270) brought about substantial migration and resultant spread of ideas and trade skills, particularly the building of fortifications and the metalworking for the provision of arms, which was also applied to the fitting and decoration of buildings. The continual movement of people, rulers, nobles, bishops, abbots, craftsmen, and peasants was an important factor in creating homogeneous building methods and a recognizable Romanesque style, despite regional differences.



Map of Europe, 1142: Europe, 1142, Age of the Crusades.

Life became less secure after the Carolingian period, resulting in castles built at strategic points. Many were constructed as strongholds of the Normans, descendants of the Vikings who invaded northern France in 911. Political struggles also resulted in the fortification of towns by rebuilding and strengthening walls that remained from the Roman period. One of the most notable surviving fortifications is that of the city of Carcassonne. The enclosure of towns resulted in a style of tall, narrow townhouse with limited living space . These often surrounded communal courtyards, as at San Gimignano in Tuscany.



San Gimignano, Italy: Image of San Gimignano, famous for its medieval architecture, unique in the preservation of about a dozen of its tall, narrow tower houses.

Growing Prosperity

As Europe grew steadily more prosperous during this period, art of the highest quality was no longer confined to the royal court and a small circle of monasteries as in the Carolingian and Ottonian periods. Monasteries remained important, especially those of the new Cistercian , Cluniac , and Carthusian orders that spread across Europe. City churches, including those on pilgrimage routes and many in small towns and villages, were elaborately decorated. Indeed, these have often survived when cathedrals and city churches have been rebuilt, while Romanesque royal palaces have not. The lay artist, Nicholas of Verdun, became a valued figure known across the continent. Most masons and goldsmiths were now lay professionals rather than monastic clergy, and lay painters like Master Hugo were the majority by the end of the period. The iconography of their church work was likely determined in consultation with clerical advisers.

Romanesque Art

Romanesque art refers to the art of Europe from the late 10th century to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate Romanesque architecture, sculpture, and painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Romanesque style was the first to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe and thus the first pan-European style since Imperial Roman Architecture.
- Combining features of Roman and Byzantine buildings and other local traditions, Romanesque architecture exhibits massive quality, thick walls, round arches , sturdy piers , groin vaults , large towers, and symmetrical plans.
- The art of the period was characterized by a vigorous style in both painting and sculpture.
- Colors, which we can now see in their original brightness only in stained glass and well-preserved manuscripts, tended to be very striking.
- The tympanums of important church portals were carved with monumental schemes, often depicting iconography from Byzantine painting.

Key Terms

- **groin vault**: The intersection at right angles of two barrel vaults.
- **tympanum**: A triangular space between the sides of a pediment; the space within an arch and above a lintel or a subordinate arch, spanning the opening below the arch.
- **pier**: In architecture, an upright support for a structure or superstructure such as an arch or bridge.

Romanesque art refers to the art of Europe from the late 10th century to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region. The term “Romanesque” was invented by 19th century art historians to refer specifically to architecture of the time period, which retained many basic features of Roman architectural style—most notably semi-circular arches—but retained distinctive regional characteristics. In Southern France, Spain, and Italy, there was architectural continuity with the Late Antique period, but the Romanesque style was the first style to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe and thus the first pan-European style since Imperial Roman Architecture. Romanesque art was also influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting, and by the anti-classical energy of the decoration of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style.

Architecture

Combining features of Roman and Byzantine buildings along with other local traditions, Romanesque architecture is distinguished by massive quality, thick walls, round arches, sturdy piers, groin vaults, large towers, and decorative arcades . Each building has clearly defined forms and a symmetrical plan, resulting in a much simpler appearance than the Gothic buildings that would follow. The style can be identified across Europe, despite regional characteristics and materials.



Maria Laach Abbey, Germany: This abbey, founded in 1093, is an example of Romanesque architecture.

Painting

Aside from architecture, the art of the period was characterized by a vigorous style in both painting and sculpture. In churches, painting continued to follow Byzantine iconographic models. Christ in Majesty, the Last Judgement and scenes from the Life of Christ remained among the most common depictions. In illuminated manuscripts , the most lavishly decorated examples of the period included bibles or psalters . As new scenes were depicted, more originality developed. They used intensely saturated primary colors , which now exist in their original brightness only in stained glass and well-preserved manuscripts. Stained glass first came to wide use during this period, although there are few surviving examples.

Pictorial compositions usually had little depth as they were limited to the narrow spaces of historiated initials, column capitals , and church tympanums. The tension between a tight frame and a composition that sometimes escapes its designated space is a recurrent theme in Romanesque art. Figures often varied in size in relation to their importance, and landscape backgrounds were absent or closer to abstract decorations than realism , as in the trees in the “Morgan Leaf.” Human forms were often elongated and contorted to fit the shape provided and at times appeared to be floating in space. These figures focused on linear details with emphasis on drapery folds and hair.



The “Morgan Leaf. “: The “Morgan Leaf,”detached from the illuminated Winchester Bible of 1160-75. Scenes from the life of David, depicted in the Romanesque style with figures in various sizes according to importance and abstract landscape backgrounds.

Sculpture

Sculpture also exhibited a vigorous style, evident in the carved capitals of columns, which often depicted complete scenes consisting of several figures. Precious objects sculpted in metal, enamel , and ivory , such as reliquaries , also had high status in this period. While the large wooden crucifix and statues of the enthroned Madonna were German innovations at the start of the period, the high relief carvings of architectural elements are most evocative of this style.

In a significant innovation, the tympanums of important church portals were carved with monumental schemes, again depicting Christ in Majesty or the Last Judgement but treated with more freedom than in painted versions. These portal sculptures were meant to both intimidate and educate the viewer . As there were no equivalent Byzantine models, Romanesque sculptors felt free to expand in their treatment of tympanums.



The portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac: This image shows the carvings on the tympanums of the portal of Saint-Pierre, Moissac Abbey, Moissac, France.

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13.2: Romanesque Architecture

First Romanesque Architecture

The First Romanesque style developed in the Catalan territory and demonstrated a lower level of expertise than the later Romanesque style.

Learning Objectives

Differentiate between First Romanesque and Romanesque styles of architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The First Romanesque style developed in the north of Italy, parts of France, and the Iberian Peninsula during the 10th and 11th centuries.
- Abott Oliba of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll served as an important supporter of the First Romanesque style.
- The term “First Romanesque” was coined by architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch.
- First Romanesque, also known as Lombard Romanesque, is characterized by thick walls, lack of sculpture, and the presence of rhythmic ornamental arches known as Lombard bands .
- In contrast to the refinement of the later Romanesque style, First Romanesque architecture employed rubble walls, smaller windows, and unvaulted roofs.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **First Romanesque**: The name given by Josep Puig i Cadafalch to refer to the Romanesque art developed in Catalonia since the late 10th century.
- **Lombard band**: A decorative blind arcade, usually exterior, often used during the Romanesque and Gothic periods of architecture.

Development of First Romanesque Architecture

Romanesque architecture is divided into two periods: the “First Romanesque” style and the “Romanesque” style. The First Romanesque style developed in the north of Italy, parts of France, and the Iberian Peninsula in the 10th century prior to the later influence of the Abbey of Cluny. The style is attributed to architectural activity by groups of Lombard teachers and stonemasons working in the Catalan territory during the first quarter of the 11th century. Abott Oliba of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll served as a particularly influential impeller, diffuser, and sponsor of the First Romanesque style.

To avoid the term Pre-Romanesque, which is often used with a much broader meaning to refer to early Medieval and early Christian art (and in Spain may also refer to the Visigothic, Asturias, Mozarabic, and Repoblación art forms) Puig i Cadafalch preferred to use the term “First Romanesque.”

Characteristics

The First Romanesque style, also known as Lombard Romanesque style, is characterized by thick walls, lack of sculpture, and the presence of rhythmic ornamental arches known as Lombard bands. The difference between the First Romanesque and later Romanesque styles is a matter of the expertise with which the buildings were constructed. First Romanesque employed rubble walls, smaller windows, and unvaulted roofs, while the Romanesque style is distinguished by a more refined style and increased use of the vault and dressed stone. For example, Abott Oliba ordered an extension to the Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll in 1032 mirroring the First Romanesque characteristics of two frontal towers, a cruise with seven apses , and Lombard ornamentation of blind arches and vertical strips.



Ripoll Monastery: The Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll is a Benedictine monastery built in the First Romanesque style, located in the town of Ripoll in Catalonia, Spain. Although much of the present church includes 19th century rebuilding, the sculptured portico is a renowned work of Romanesque art.

Cistercian Architecture

The Cistercians are a Roman Catholic order whose monasteries and churches reflect one of the most beautiful styles of medieval architecture.

Learning Objectives

Relate Cistercian architecture to the rational principles upon which it is based

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Architecturally speaking, the Cistercian monasteries and churches are counted among the most beautiful relics of the Middle Ages due to their pure style .
- Cistercian architecture embodied the ideals of the order and in theory was utilitarian and without superfluous ornament .
- The Cisterian order, however, was receptive to the technical improvements of Gothic principles of construction and played an important role in the spread of these techniques across Europe.
- Cistercian construction involved vast amounts of quarried stone and employed the best stone cutters.

Key Terms

- **Gothic**: Of or relating to the architectural style favored in western Europe in the 12th to 16th centuries.
- **Romanesque**: Refers to the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **Cistercian**: A member of a monastic order related to the Benedictines, who hold a vow of silence.

The Cistercians are a Roman Catholic religious order of enclosed monks and nuns. This order was founded by a group of Benedictine monks from the Molesme monastery in 1098, with the goal of more closely following the Rule of Saint Benedict.

Characteristics of Cistercian Architecture

Cistercian architecture is considered one of the most beautiful styles of medieval architecture and has made an important contribution to European civilization . Because of the pure style of the Cistercian monasteries and churches, they are counted among the most beautiful relics of the Middle Ages. Cistercian institutions were primarily constructed in Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles during the Middle Ages, although later abbeys were also constructed in Renaissance and Baroque styles. The Cistercian abbeys of Fontenay in France, Fountains in England, Alcobaça in Portugal, Poblet in Spain, and Maulbronn in Germany are today recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Fountains Abbey: The abbeys of 12th century England were stark and undecorated – a dramatic contrast with the elaborate churches of the wealthier Benedictine houses – yet to quote Warren Hollister, “even now the simple beauty of Cistercian ruins such as Fountains and Rievaulx, set in the wilderness of Yorkshire, is deeply moving”.

Theological Principles

Cistercian architecture was based on rational principles. In the mid-12th century, the prominent Benedictine Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis united elements of Norman architecture with elements of Burgundinian architecture (including rib vaults and pointed arches , respectively), creating the new style of Gothic architecture . This new “architecture of light” was intended to raise the observer “from the material to the immaterial;”it was, according to the 20th century French historian Georges Duby, a “monument of app lied theology.” Cistercian architecture expressed a different aesthetic and theology while learning from the Benedictine’s advances. St. Bernard saw church decoration as a distraction from piety and favored austerity in the construction of monasteries, the order itself was receptive to the technical improvements of Gothic principles of construction and played an important role in its spread across Europe.

This new Cistercian architecture embodied the ideals of the order, and in theory it was utilitarian and without superfluous ornament. The same rational, integrated scheme was used across Europe to meet the largely homogeneous needs of the order. Various buildings, including the chapter-house to the east and the dormitories above, were grouped around a cloister and sometimes linked to the transept of the church itself by a night stair. Cistercian churches were typically built on a cruciform layout, with a short presbytery to meet the liturgical needs of the brethren, small chapels in the transepts for private prayer , and an aisle-edged nave divided roughly in the middle by a screen to separate the monks from the lay brothers.



Santa Maria Arabona: Abbey church of Santa Maria Arabona, Italy.

Engineering and Construction

Cistercian buildings were made of smooth, pale stone where possible. Columns , pillars , and windows fell at the same base level, and plastering was extremely simple or nonexistent. The sanctuary kept to a proportion of 1:2 at both elevation and floor levels. To maintain the appearance of ecclesiastical buildings, Cistercian sites were constructed in a pure, rational style, lending to their beauty and simplicity. The building projects of the Church in the High Middle Ages showed an ambition for the colossal , requiring vast amounts of quarried stone. This was also true of the Cistercian projects. Foigny Abbey was 98 meters (322 ft) long; Vaucelles Abbey was 132 metres (433 ft) long. Even the most humble monastic buildings were constructed entirely of stone. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Cistercian barns consisted of a stone exterior divided into nave and aisles either by wooden posts or by stone piers .

The Cistercians recruited the best stone cutters. As early as 1133, St. Bernard hired workers to help the monks erect new buildings at Clairvaux. The oldest recorded example of architectural tracing, Byland Abbey in Yorkshire, dates to the 12th century. Tracings were architectural drawings incised and painted in stone to a depth of 2–3 mm, showing architectural detail to scale.



Acey Abbey, France: The “architecture of light” of Acey Abbey represents the pure style of Cistercian architecture, intended for the utilitarian purposes of liturgical celebration.

Characteristics of Romanesque Architecture

While Romanesque architecture tends to possess certain key features, these often vary in appearance and building material from region to region.

Learning Objectives

Identify the defining characteristics and variations of Romanesque architecture found throughout Europe

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Variations in Romanesque architecture can be noted in earlier styles compared later styles; differences in building materials and local inspirations also led to variations across regions.
- Romanesque architecture varies in appearance of walls, piers , arches and openings, arcades , columns , vaults , and roofs and in the materials used to create these features.
- A characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture, both ecclesiastic and domestic, is the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings separated by a pillar or colonette and often set within a larger arch.
- Columns were often used in Romanesque architecture, but varied in building material and decorative style. The alternation of piers and columns was found in both churches and castles.
- The majority of buildings have wooden roofs consisting of a simple truss , tie beam, or king post form . Vaults of stone or brick took on several different forms and showed marked development during the period, evolving into the pointed, ribbed arch characteristic of Gothic architecture .

Key Terms

- **capital**: The uppermost part of a column.
- **blind arcade**: A series of arches often used in Romanesque and Gothic buildings with no actual openings and no load-bearing function, simply serving as a decorative element.
- **ocular window**: A circular opening without tracery, found in many Italian churches.
- **vault**: An arched structure of masonry forming a ceiling or canopy.
- **Piers**: In architecture, an upright support for a structure or superstructure such as an arch or bridge.

Variations in Romanesque Architecture

The general impression given by both ecclesiastical and secular Romanesque architecture is that of massive solidity and strength. Romanesque architecture relies upon its walls, or sections of walls called *piers*, to bear the load of the structure, rather than using arches, columns, vaults, and other systems to manage the weight. As a result, the walls are massive, giving the impression of sturdy solidity. Romanesque design is also characterized by the presence of arches and openings, arcades, columns, vaults, and roofs. In spite of the general existence of these items, Romanesque architecture varies in how these characteristics are presented. For example, walls may be made of different materials or arches and openings may vary in shape. Later examples of Romanesque architecture may also possess features that earlier forms do not.

Walls

The building material used in Romanesque architecture varies across Europe depending on local stone and building traditions. In Italy, Poland, much of Germany, and parts of the Netherlands, brick was customary. Other areas saw extensive use of limestone , granite, and flint . The building stone was often used in small, irregular pieces bedded in thick mortar. Smooth ashlar masonry was not a distinguishing feature of the style in the earlier part of the period, but occurred where easily worked limestone was available.

Arches and Openings

A characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture, both ecclesiastic and domestic, is the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings separated by a pillar or *colonette* and often set within a larger arch. Ocular windows are common in Italy, particularly in the facade gable , and are also seen in Germany. Later Romanesque churches may have wheel windows or rose windows with plate tracery . In a few Romanesque buildings , such as Autun Cathedral in France and Monreale Cathedral in Sicily, pointed arches have been used extensively.



Abbey Church of St. James, Lebeny, Hungary (1208): Characteristics of Romanesque architecture include the ocular window and the pairing of two arched windows or arcade openings within a larger arch, both open here at the Abbey Church of St. James.

Arcades

The arcade of a cloister typically consists of a single stage (story), while the arcade that divides the nave and aisles in a church typically has two stages, with a third stage of window openings known as the clerestory rising above. Arcades on a large scale generally fulfills a structural purpose, but they are also used decoratively on a smaller scale both internally and externally. External arcades are frequently called “blind arcades,” with only a wall or a narrow passage behind them.



Collegiate Church of Nivelles: The Collegiate Church of Nivelles, Belgium uses fine shafts of Belgian marble to define alternating blind openings and windows. Upper windows are similarly separated into two openings by colonettes.



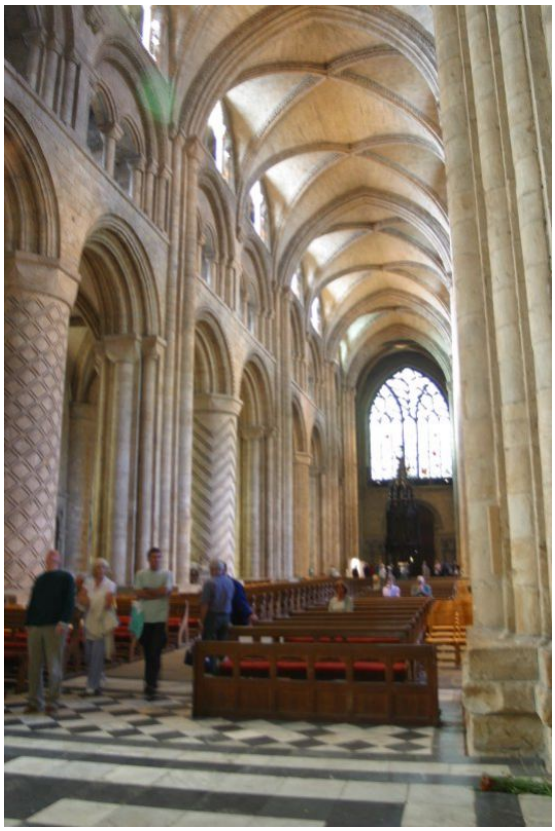
Notre Dame du Puy: The facade of Notre Dame du Puy, le Puy en Velay, France, has a more complex arrangement of diversified arches: doors of varying widths, blind arcading, windows, and open arcades.

Piers

Although basically rectangular, piers can often be highly complex, with half-segments of large hollow-core columns on the inner surface supporting the arch and a clustered group of smaller shafts leading into the moldings of the arch. Piers that occur at the intersection of two large arches, such as those under the crossing of the nave and transept , are commonly cruciform in shape, each with its own supporting rectangular pier perpendicular to the other.

Columns

Columns were often used in Romanesque architecture, but varied in building material and decorative style. In Italy, a great number of antique Roman columns were salvaged and reused in the interiors and on the porticos of churches. In most parts of Europe, Romanesque columns were massive, supporting thick upper walls with small windows and sometimes heavy vaults. Where massive columns were called for, such as those at Durham Cathedral, they were constructed of ashlar masonry with a hollow core was filled with rubble. These huge untapered columns were sometimes ornamented with incised decorations.



Durham Cathedral, England: Durham Cathedral has decorated masonry columns alternating with piers of clustered shafts supporting the earliest example of pointed high ribs.

A common characteristic of Romanesque buildings, found in both churches and in the arcades that separate large interior spaces of castles, is the alternation of piers and columns. The most simple form is a column between each adjoining pier. Sometimes the columns are in multiples of two or three. Often the arrangement is made more complex by the complexity of the piers themselves, so that the alternation was not of piers and columns but rather of piers of entirely different forms.

The foliate Corinthian style provided the inspiration for many Romanesque capitals , and the accuracy with which they were carved depended on the availability of original models. Capitals in Italian churches, such as Pisa Cathedral or church of Sant'Alessandro in Lucca and southern France, are much closer to the Classical form and style than those in England.



Corinthian style capitals: Capital of Corinthian form with anthropomorphised details, Pisa Campanile

Vaults and Roofs

The majority of buildings have wooden roofs in a simple truss, tie beam, or king post form. Trussed rafter roofs are sometimes lined with wooden ceilings in three sections like those that survive at Ely and Peterborough cathedrals in England. In churches, typically the aisles are vaulted but the nave is roofed with timber , as is the case at both Peterborough and Ely. In Italy, open wooden roofs were common, tie beams frequently occurred in conjunction with vaults, and the timbers were often decorated, as at San Miniato al Monte, Florence.

Vaults of stone or brick took on several different forms and showed marked development during the period, evolving into the pointed, ribbed arch characteristic of Gothic architecture.

Architecture of the Holy Roman Empire

Architecture from the Holy Roman Empire spans from the Romanesque to the Classic eras.

Learning Objectives

Compare the characteristics of Romanesque architecture to pre-Romanesque and later styles

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Holy Roman Empire existed from 962 to 1806 and at its peak included territories of the Kingdoms of Germany, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy.
- Pre- Romanesque architecture is thought to have originated with the Carolingian Renaissance in the late 8th century.
- The Romanesque period (10th – early 13th century) is characterized by semi-circular arches , robust appearance, small paired windows, and groin vaults .
- Gothic architecture such as the Cologne Cathedral flourished during the high and late medieval periods.

- Renaissance architecture (early 15th – early 17th centuries) flourished in parts of Europe with a conscious revival and development of ancient Greek and Roman thought and culture .
- Baroque architecture began in the early 17th century in Italy and arrived in Germany after the Thirty Years War. The interaction of architecture, painting, and sculpture is an essential feature of Baroque architecture.
- Classicism arrived in Germany in the second half of the 18th century, just prior to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire.

Key Terms

- **Ottonian Renaissance**: A minor renaissance that accompanied the reigns of the first three emperors of the Saxon Dynasty, all named Otto: Otto I (936–973), Otto II (973–983), and Otto III (983–1002).
- **Rococo**: An 18th-century artistic movement and style which affected several aspects of the arts, including painting, sculpture, architecture, interior design, decoration, literature, music, and theater; also referred to as Late Baroque.

Background: The Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman Empire was a varying complex of lands that existed from 962 to 1806 in Central Europe. The empire's territory lay predominantly in Central Europe and at its peak included territories of the Kingdoms of Germany, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy. For much of its history, the Empire consisted of hundreds of smaller sub-units, principalities, duchies, counties, Free Imperial Cities, and other domains.

Architecture of the Holy Roman Empire

Pre-Romanesque

The Pre-Romanesque period in Western European art is often dated from the Carolingian Renaissance in the late 8th century to the beginning of the 11th century. German buildings from this period include Lorsch Abbey , which combines elements of the Roman triumphal arch (including arch-shaped passageways and half- columns) with the vernacular Teutonic heritage (including baseless triangles of the blind arcade and polychromatic masonry). One of the most important churches in this style is the Abbey Church of St. Michael's, constructed between 1001 and 1031 as the chapel of the Benedictine monastery. It was built in the so-called Ottonic (Early-Romanesque) style during the Ottonian Renaissance .

Romanesque

The Romanesque period (10th – early 13th century) is characterized by semi-circular arches, robust structures, small paired windows, and groin vaults. Many churches in Germany date from this time, including the twelve Romanesque churches of Cologne. The most significant Romanesque building in Germany is Speyer Cathedral, built in stages from about 1030. In the 11th century, it was the largest building in the Christian world and an architectural symbol of the power of the Salian dynasty , four German Kings who ruled from 1024–1125. Other important examples of Romanesque styles include the cathedrals of Worms and Mainz, Limburg Cathedral (in the Rhenish Romanesque style), Maulbronn Abbey (an example of Cistercian architecture), and the famous castle of Wartburg, which was later expanded in the Gothic style.



Speyer Cathedral (image by Alfred Hutter): Speyer Cathedral was built during the Romanesque era and is an example of Romanesque architecture; in the 11th century, it was the largest building in the Christian world and an architectural symbol of the power of the Salian dynasty.

Gothic

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval periods, evolving from Romanesque architecture. Freiburg Cathedral is noted for its 116-meter tower, which is nearly square at the base with a dodecagonal star gallery at the center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered with a spire above. Cologne Cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world after Milan Cathedral. Construction began in 1248 and took until 1880 to complete—an intermittent period of more than 600 years. Because of its enormous twin spires, it also has the largest façade of any church in the world, and its choir boasts the largest height to width ratio of any Medieval church.



Cologne Cathedral: Cologne Cathedral is—after Milan Cathedral—the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, built over a process of 600 years.

Brick Gothic is a specific style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea without natural rock resources. The buildings are mainly built from bricks. Cities such as Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and Greifswald are shaped by this regional style; key examples include
Stralsund City Hall and St. Nicholas Church.

The dwellings of this period were mainly timber-framed buildings still seen in Goslar and Quedlinburg, the latter of which has one of the oldest half-timbered houses in Germany. The method of construction, used extensively for town houses of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, lasted into the 20th century for rural buildings.

Renaissance

Renaissance architecture (early 15th – early 17th centuries) flourished in different parts of Europe with the conscious revival and development of ancient Greek and Roman thought and culture. As in other areas of Europe, Renaissance architecture in the Holy Roman Empire placed emphasis on symmetry , proportion, geometry, and the regularity of parts as demonstrated in the architecture of classical antiquity , particularly ancient Roman architecture. Orderly arrangement of columns, pilasters , and lintels and the use of semicircular arches, hemispherical domes , niches, and aedicules replaced the complex proportional systems and irregular profiles of medieval buildings. The earliest example of Renaissance architecture in Germany is the Fugger chapel in St. Anne's Church, Augsburg; other works include St. Michael in Munich, Heidelberg Castle, Augsburg City Hall, and castles and manors throughout Wester, Thuringia, and Saxony.

Baroque

Baroque architecture began in the early 17th century in Italy and arrived in Germany after the Thirty Years War. The interaction of architecture, painting, and sculpture is an essential feature of Baroque architecture, which integrated new fashions to express the triumph of the Catholic Church and was characterized by new explorations of form , light and shadow and dramatic intensity . Zwinger Palace in Dresden illustrated the architecture of absolutism, which always put the ruler at the center thus increasing the spatial composition; for example, a magnificent staircase leading to the figure. In Rococo , the late phase of Baroque, decoration

became even more abundant and used brighter colors. Other examples of Baroque church architecture include the Basilica of the Vierzehnheiligen in Upper Franconia and the rebuilt Frauenkirche in Dresden.



Die Frauenkirche in Dresden: The rebuilt Frauenkirche in Dresden was created by George Bähr between 1722 and 1743, and is an example of Baroque architecture in Germany.

Classicism

Classicism arrived in Germany in the second half of the 18th century. It drew inspiration from the classical architecture of antiquity and was a reaction against the Baroque style in both architecture and landscape design. The most important architect of this style in Germany was Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Schinkel's style, in his most productive period, is defined by its appeal to Greek rather than Imperial Roman architecture; his most famous buildings are found in and around Berlin.

Romanesque Architecture: The Church of Saint-Lazare

The Autun Cathedral, or the Cathedral of Saint-Lazare, is a Roman Catholic cathedral and a national monument in Autun, France.

Learning Objectives

Describe the architecture and sculpture of the Church of Saint-Lazare

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Famous for its Cluniac inspiration and Romanesque sculptures by Gislebertus , The Cathedral of Saint-Lazare epitomizes Romanesque art and architecture in Burgundy.
- Due to the veneration of relics in this period, the Bishop of Autun ordered the creation of a larger cathedral to house the relics and accommodate the influx of pilgrims into Autun.
- The column capitals and main façade of the church are embellished with realistic sculptures carved by Gislebertus; the artwork was designed to teach the masses about Christian ethics with dramatic scenes of heaven and hell.
- The cathedral has a ground plan in the form of a Latin cross, with an aisled nave , a plain transept , and a three-stage choir with a semicircular end.

- Many of the historiated capitals that adorn the columns within Saint-Lazare were carved by Gislebertus and include representations of biblical scenes.
- In the Last Judgement, Gislebertus successfully integrated the modern view of heaven and hell and created a sculpture to act as a visual educational device for illiterate individuals.

Key Terms

- **Cluniac**: Of or related to the Benedictine order at Cluny, Saône-et-Loire, France.
- **transept**: The transversal part of a church, perpendicular to the greatest length and between the nave and choir.
- **Gislebertus**: A French Romanesque sculptor, whose decoration (about 1120-1135) of the Cathedral of Saint Lazare at Autun, France—consisting of numerous doorways, tympanums, and capitals—represents some of the most original work of the period.
- **archivolt**: An ornamental molding or band following the curve on the underside of an arch.
- **triforium**: The gallery of arches above the side-aisle vaulting in the nave of a church.

The Autun Cathedral, or the Cathedral of Saint-Lazare, is a Roman Catholic cathedral and national monument in Autun, France. Famous for its Cluniac inspiration and Romanesque sculptures by Gislebertus, it epitomizes Romanesque art and architecture in Burgundy.

Due to the veneration of relics in this period, the Bishop of Autun ordered the creation of a larger cathedral to house these relics and accommodate the influx of pilgrims into Autun. The column capitals and main façade of the church are embellished with realistic sculptures carved by Gislebertus, and the artwork is a means of teaching the masses about Christian ethics with dramatic scenes of heaven and hell. Work on the cathedral began around 1120 and advanced rapidly; the building was consecrated in 1130. The designs were the work of the bishop Etienne de Bâgé, who was particularly influenced by the Cluniac abbey of Paray-le-Monial.



Autun Cathedral, ca. 1120-46: Exterior of Autun Cathedral, which stands in the highest and best fortified corner of the town, and through external modifications that have been applied to the building, the appearance has been much altered by the addition of a Gothic tower, a spire and side chapels in the 15th century.

Design Elements

The interior of the cathedral has a nave and two aisles divided by massive columns with longitudinal carvings punctuated with decorated Romanesque capitals. The plan of the cathedral has a narthex or antechamber of two bays topped by two towers, followed by a seven-bay nave flanked by side aisles and a transept with the tower-surmounting cross. The nave elevation is composed of three levels: grand arcade , triforium , and clerestory , each marked by a cornice . The three-story elevation of Saint-Lazare was made possible by the use of pointed arches for the nave. Each nave bay is separated at the vault by a transverse rib . Each transept projects to the width of two nave bays and the west entrance has a narthex which screens the main portal .

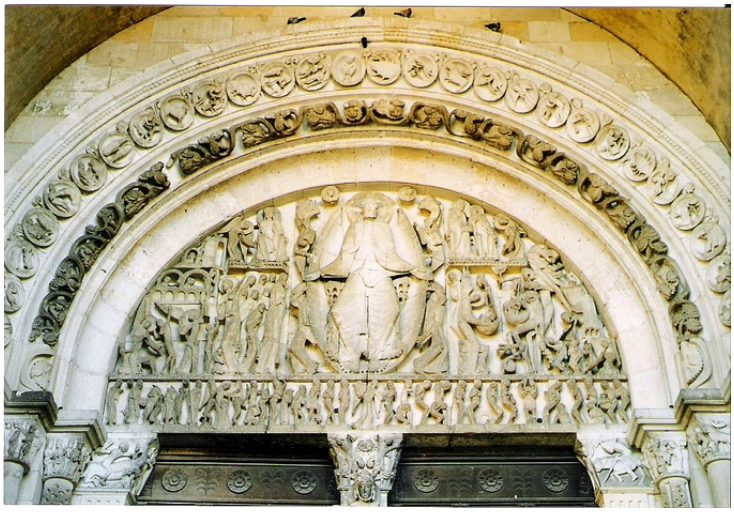
Capital Sculptures

The cathedral of St. Lazare has a ground plan in the form of a Latin cross, with an aisled nave, a plain transept, and a three-stage choir with a semicircular end. Many of the historiated capitals that adorn the columns in Saint-Lazare were carved by Gislebertus. What makes Saint-Lazare a masterpiece of Romanesque art is the quality of Gislebertus' sculptures. These stone-carved scenes from the Bible appear on dozens of capitals in the nave and chancel. Specifically, Gislebertus created used the tendrils of the actual Corinthian capital to create an architectural frame for the narrative to develop. These portal capitals are carved with biblical and traditional scenes.

The West Tympanum

The West façade of Saint-Lazare contains the tympanum (1130–1135), signed *Gislebertus hoc fecit* (meaning "Gislebertus made this") within the portico . It is ranked among the masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture in France. The sheer size of the tympanum

required support by double lintels and middle column to further bolster the sculpture. The left side of the tympanum displays the rise to the heavenly kingdom, and on the right is a portrayal of demons in hell with an angel and a devil weighing the souls on a balance. Zodiac signs surround the arch vault, with Christ in the center portrayed as a serene figure. Christ is placed in perfect symmetrical position with a balanced composition of elongated figures. Jesus is flanked by his mother, the Virgin Mary, and his apostles cast as penitents and observers of the last judgment. St. Peter guards the gate to heaven and looks on as resurrected individuals attempt to squeeze in with the assistance of the angels.



Last Judgement: Last Judgement by Gislebertus in the west tympanum.

In the Last Judgement, Gislebertus successfully integrated the modern view of heaven and hell and created a sculpture to act as a visual educational device for individuals who were illiterate. The tympanum inspired terror in believers who viewed the detailed high relief sculpture . Indeed, the bottom of the tympanum underneath the weighing of the souls has an inscription which states, “May this terror terrify those whom earthly error binds for the horror of the images here in this manner truly depicts what will be.” The tympanum is framed by two archivolts: the inner has carved foliage, while the outer consists of magnificently detailed medallions representing the four seasons, zodiacs, and labors of the months.

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13.3: Romanesque Sculpture

Romanesque Sculpture

Sculpture from the Romanesque period saw advances in metalwork, enamels, and figurative friezes and scenes found in architecture.

Learning Objectives

Examine the characteristics of Romanesque sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romanesque art is the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- Sophisticated precious objects in metalwork , ivories , and enamels held high status in the Romanesque period.
- Many spectacular shrines made to hold relics have survived, such as the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral by Nicholas of Verdun.
- Large reliquaries and altar frontals were built around a wooden frame, but smaller caskets were made entirely of metal and enamel. A few secular pieces such as mirror cases, jewelry, and clasps have also survived.
- During the 11th and 12th centuries, figurative sculpture was revived as architectural reliefs became a hallmark of the later Romanesque period. Figurative sculpture was based largely on manuscript illumination and small-scale sculpture in ivory and metal.
- Most Romanesque sculpture is pictorial and biblical in subject. A great variety of themes are found on building capitals , including scenes of Creation and the Fall of Man, the life of Christ, and the Old Testament.

Key Terms

- **portal**: An opening in a wall of a building, gate, or fortification, especially a grand entrance to an important structure.
- **enamel**: A material made by fusing powdered glass to a substrate by firing, usually between 750 and 850 °C (1,380 and 1,560 °F); the powder melts, flows, and then hardens to a smooth, durable vitreous coating on metal, glass, or ceramics.
- **tympanum**: In architecture, the semi-circular or triangular decorative wall surface over an entrance, bounded by a lintel and arch and often containing sculpture or other imagery or ornaments.

Background: Romanesque Art

Romanesque art is the art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region. The preceding period is known as the Pre-Romanesque period. The term was invented by 19th-century art historians specifically to refer to Romanesque architecture, which retained many features of Roman architectural style (notably round-headed arches , barrel vaults , apses , and acanthus-leaf decoration) while also developing distinctive characteristics. Southern France, Spain, and Italy showed architectural continuity with the Late Antique, but the Romanesque style was the first to spread across the whole of Catholic Europe from Sicily to Scandinavia. Romanesque art was also greatly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting, and by the anti-classical energy of the decoration of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style.

Romanesque Sculpture

Metalwork, Enamels, and Ivories

Precious objects in metalwork, ivories, and enamels held high status in the Romanesque period. The creators of these objects are more well-known than contemporary painters, illuminators, and architect-masons. Metalwork, including decoration in enamel, became very sophisticated. Many spectacular shrines made to hold relics have survived, of which the best known is the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral by Nicholas of Verdun (circa 1180–1225). The bronze Gloucester candlestick is a superb example of metal casting , with intricate and energetic qualities that draw on manuscript painting. The Stavelot Triptych and Reliquary of St. Maurus are other examples of Mosan enamelwork. Large reliquaries and altar frontals were built around a wooden

frame, but smaller caskets were made entirely of metal and enamel. A few secular pieces such as mirror cases, jewelry, and clasps have also survived, but these no doubt under-represent the amount of fine metalwork owned by the nobility.



The Gloucester candlestick, early 12th century: The bronze Gloucester candlestick is a superb example of metal casting, with intricate and energetic qualities that draw on manuscript painting.

Architectural Sculpture

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the tradition of carving large works in stone and sculpting figures in bronze died out, as it did for religious reasons in the Byzantine world. Some life-size sculpture was done in stucco or plaster, but surviving examples are rare. The best-known surviving sculpture of Proto-Romanesque Europe is the life-size wooden crucifix commissioned by Archbishop Gero of Cologne in about 960–65, apparently the prototype of a popular form . Beginning in the 12th centure, these were set up on a beam below the chancel arch, known in English as a rood, and flanked by figures of the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, figurative sculpture was revived as architectural reliefs became a hallmark of the late Romanesque period. Figurative sculpture was based largely on manuscript illumination and small-scale sculpture in ivory and metal. The extensive friezes sculpted on Armenian and Syriac churches were another likely influence. These sources together produced a distinct style that can be recognized across Europe, although the most spectacular sculptural projects are concentrated in South-Western France, Northern Spain, and Italy.

Images in metalwork were frequently embossed . The resulting surface had two main planes with incised details. This treatment was adapted to stone carving and is often seen in the tympanum above the portal , where the imagery of Christ in Majesty with the symbols of the Four Evangelists is drawn directly from the gilt covers of medieval gospel books. This style of doorway occurs in many places and continued into the Gothic period.

Most Romanesque sculpture is pictorial and biblical in subject. A great variety of themes are found on building capitals, including scenes of Creation and the Fall of Man, the life of Christ, and Old Testament depictions of his Death and Resurrection, such as Jonah and the Whale and Daniel in the lions' den. Many Nativity scenes occur, most frequently the Three Kings. Some Romanesque churches feature an extensive sculptural scheme which covers the area surrounding the portal and sometimes much of the facade. The sculptural schemes were designed to convey the message that Christian believers should recognize wrongdoing, repent, and be redeemed. The Last Judgement reminds the believer to repent, while the carved or painted Crucifix, displayed prominently within the church, reminds the sinner of redemption.



Vézelay Abbey, Burgundy, France: The tympanum of Vézelay Abbey in Burgundy, completed in the 1130s, has a great deal of decorative spiral detail in the draperies.

Romanesque Sculpture: Majestat Batlló

The Batlló Majesty is one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculptures from the 12th century.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the triumphant symbolism and Romanesque characteristics of the Batlló Majesty.

Key Takeaways

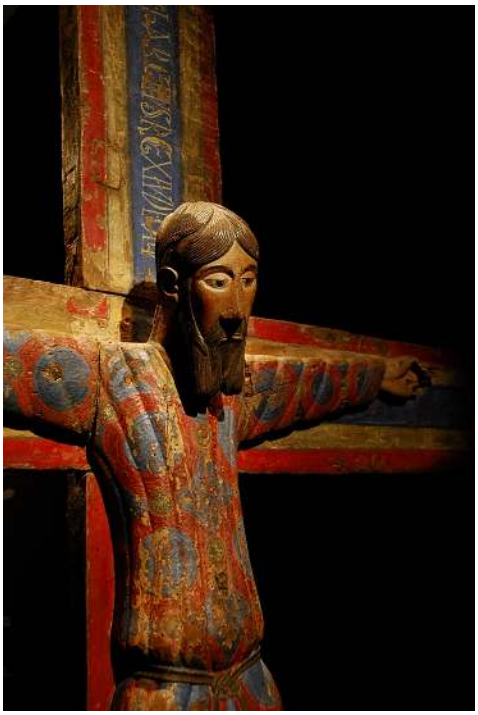
Key Points

- Carved wooden images were a fundamental element in churches as objects of worship. One of the most elaborate types in Catalonia was the Christ in Majesty: images of Christ on the Cross that symbolize his triumph over death.
- The most outstanding of these is the Majestat Batlló, also one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculptures.
- One of the striking features of the Majestat Batlló compared to Catalan sculptures is the well-conserved polychromy .
- The frontal geometric composition of Christ's tunic decorated in circles and floral motifs is reminiscent of the refined Byzantine and Hispano-Moorish fabrics held in high esteem in the Christian West during this time. The chronology of the Majestat Batlló is difficult to date; the inscription on the cross and the painting could be placed in the 11th century, although other authors date it back to the 12th century.

Key Terms

- **polychromy**: The practice of combining different colors, especially brilliant ones, in an artistic way.
- **abacus**: The uppermost portion of the capital of a column, immediately under the architrave.
- **iconographic**: Of or pertaining to a religious icon.

The Majestat Batlló, or Batlló Majesty, is a 12th century Romanesque polychrome wood carving now held in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona, Catalonia. Carved wooden images were a fundamental element in churches as objects of worship, and one of the most elaborate motifs was the *Christ in Majesty:* images of Christ on the Cross that symbolize his triumph over death. The most outstanding of these is the Majestat Batlló, also one of the finest and best-preserved examples of Catalan sculpture.



Majestat Batlló : The Majestat Batlló is a 12th century Romanesque wooden crucifix, now in the National Art Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona. It is one of the most elaborate examples in Catalonia of an image of Christ on the Cross symbolizing his triumph over death.

Symbolism and Description

The Majestat Batlló is a large wooden crucifix that presents Christ bearing his suffering with noble stoicism and triumph. He is wearing a *colobium*, or a long, sleeveless tunic. Although the corners of his mouth turn slightly downward, Christ's open eyes and unfurrowed brow create the impression of a self-possessed impassivity. A Latin inscription above his head reads, "JHS NAZARENUS REX IUDEORUM" ("Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews"), as in biblical accounts (Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, John 19:19).

One of the striking features of the Batlló Majesty compared to Catalan sculpture is the well-conserved polychromy. Christ's *colobium*, in imitation of rich oriental silk, is decorated with blue floral designs surrounded by circular red frames embellished with dots and circles. A thin belt with an elaborate interlace knot pulls the tunic in above Christ's hips, making the fabric above it swell out slightly and curving the path of its flat, wide vertical folds. Such robes are linked with royal and priestly functions and conveyed a message of strength to the audience. They can be seen as a visualization of the Apocalyptic Christ from the Book of Revelation.

The frontal geometric composition of the tunic decorated in circles and floral motifs is reminiscent of the refined Byzantine and Hispano-Moorish fabrics held in high esteem in the Christian West during this time. The great reference for this type was the Volto Santo in Lucca (Tuscany, Italy), regarded as having miraculous origins and as the object of pilgrimage and extraordinary devotion from the end of the 11th century. The iconographic tradition of Jesus in a *colobium* dates to 586 CE in a manuscript of the Syriac Gospels called the Rabbula Gospels, written by the monk Rabbula somewhere in Mesopotamia . The tradition of depicting Christ in such costume was likely brought to Catalonia by artisans from Pisa, who arrived in 1114 to help Ramon Berenguer III, Count of Barcelona, in his conquest of the Balearic Islands.

Chronology

The Majestat Batlló is difficult to date, but the inscription on the cross and the painting could be placed in the 11th century. However, other authors date it back to the 12th century based on the painting's similarity to others from the area of Ripoll, mid-12th century. The tunic is analogous to an Islamic motif of the cloister of the abbey of Saint-Pierre de Moissac, which seems to prove the spread of this style during the Romanesque period.

Romanesque Sculpture: Mary as the Throne of Wisdom

Mary as the Throne of Wisdom was a popular biblical theme represented throughout Romanesque sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Compare the various depictions of Mary seated on the Throne of Wisdom

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Images of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom are especially prevalent in Roman Catholic art.
- When the Virgin is depicted in *sedes sapientiae* (“Throne of Wisdom”) icons and sculptural representations, she is seated on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap.
- This concept of Mary likens her to the Throne of Solomon, referring to her status as a vessel of the incarnation carrying the Holy Child. The *sedes sapientiae* icon also appeared in Romanesque illuminated manuscripts , frescoes , mosaics , and seals.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **iconography**: The branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images.

Background

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the epithet “the Seat of Wisdom” or “Throne of Wisdom” is one of many devotional titles for the Mother of God. The phrase was coined in the 11th and 12th centuries by Peter Damiani and Guibert de Nogent and likens Mary to the Throne of Solomon, referring to her status as a vessel carrying the Holy Child. As the phrase associates the Blessed Virgin with glory and teaching, Madonnas in this tradition are especially popular in Catholic imagery .



Mary as the Throne of Wisdom: Madonna as Seat of Wisdom, 1199, inscribed as by Presbyter Martinus, from the Camaldolese abbey in Borgo San Sepolcro near Arezzo, Italy.

Cultural History

In Christian iconography , s*edes sapientiae* (“The Throne of Wisdom”) is an icon of the Mother of God in majesty. When the Virgin is depicted in *sedes sapientiae* icons and sculptural representations, she is seated on a throne with the Christ Child on her lap.

This type of Madonna image was a variant of the Byzantine *Hodegetria* type, in which the Virgin Mary is depicted holding the child Jesus at her side while pointing to him as the source of salvation for mankind. It appeared in a wide range of sculptural and painted images in Western Europe, especially near 1200 CE. In these representations, structural elements of the throne invariably appear, even if only handholds and front legs. The Virgin’s feet often rest on a low stool. Later Gothic sculptures are more explicitly identifiable with the Throne of Solomon, where “two lions stood, one at each hand. And twelve little lions stood upon the six steps on the one side and on the other” (I Kings 10, 19-20).



Aechen Cathedral, 11th Century: The cloisonné enamel donor plaque with the donor's portrait and the enthroned Madonna, on the processional Cross of Mathilde, Ottonian, early 11th century (Aachen Cathedral)

In addition to Romanesque sculpture, the *sedes sapientiae* icon appeared in illuminated manuscripts, frescoes, mosaics, and seals of the time. The icon possesses emblematic verbal components: the Virgin as the Throne of Wisdom is a trope of Damiani or Guibert de Nogent, based on the typological interpretation of the passage in the Books of Kings that describes the throne of Solomon (I Kings 10: 18–20, repeated at II Chronicles 9: 17–19). This motif was frequently used in Early Netherlandish painting in works like the Lucca Madonna by Jan van Eyck.

Romanesque Sculpture: Tomb of Rudolf of Swabia

The tomb of Rudolf of Swabia is a prime example of Romanesque sculpture.

Learning Objectives

Describe the expressive Romanesque artistry on the tomb of Rudolf of Swabia

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Rudolf of Rheinfelden was the alternative king, or antiking, for the politically oriented anti-Henry German aristocrats. He died during the Great Saxon Rebellion in the late 11th century.
- Rudolf's tomb sculpture reflects the Romanesque love of inventive surface patterns and an expressive approach to the human body, using elongation, unnatural poses, and emphatic gestures to convey states of mind.

- The intricate metalwork on Rudolf's tomb is also indicative of Romanesque sculpture.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.

Rudolf of Rheinfelden (1025 – 1080) was Duke of Swabia (1057–1079) and German Antiking (1077–1080). He was the son of Count Kuno of Rheinfelden and eventually became the alternative king, or antiking, for the politically oriented anti-Henry German aristocrats. This rebellion became known as the Great Saxon Revolt. He died as a result of battle wounds as his faction met and defeated Henry's in the Battle of Elster.

Tomb of Rudolf of Rheinfelden

Rudolf of Rheinfelden's tomb, located at the cathedral of Merseburg, is a fine example of Romanesque sculpture. Sculpture of this era is marked by a love of inventive surface patterns and an expressive approach to the human body, using elongation, unnatural poses, and emphatic gestures to convey states of mind. Rudolf's tomb reflects these characteristics. The sculpture of his body is elongated and lies with a scepter in one hand and an orb in the other, symbolic of the royal title he claimed but never held in life. He is depicted in royal garments and a crown.

The material used to construct the tomb also reflects the high status of metalwork in Romanesque sculpture. Indeed, precious metal objects, enamel work, and ivory carried a much higher significance than paintings during this time. Metalwork and enamel decoration became especially sophisticated during the 10th and 11th centuries. Rudolf of Rheinfelden's tomb reflects this aesthetic with its bronze relief of Rudolf's body encased inside of a raised border edge. An inscription is also etched into the border, demonstrating the skill involved in the tomb's construction.



Tomb of Rudolf of Swabia: The tomb of Rudolf of Swabia is exemplary of Romanesque sculpture.

Romanesque Sculpture: Reiner of Huy

Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor to whom the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church is attributed.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Reiner of Huy's masterpiece, the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church in Belgium

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor thought to be the creator of the famous baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church.
- Nothing is known of Reiner's life other than that he was mentioned in an 1125 document as a goldsmith, but a 14th century chronicle mentions him as the artist of the font.
- Reiner of Huy's status as the creator of the font and the Mosan origin of the font have been questioned.
- The font is a major masterpiece of Mosan art, remarkable for the classicism of its style . The five scenes can be read in chronological sequence and include depictions of John the Baptist, the Baptism of Christ, St. Peter baptizing Cornelius the Centurion, and St. John baptizing Craton.
- The only other work generally agreed to be by the same master as the font is a small bronze crucifix figure now located in Schnütgen Museum, Cologne.

Key Terms

- **lost-wax casting**: The process by which a duplicate metal sculpture (often silver, gold, brass, or bronze) is cast from an original sculpture.
- **font**: A receptacle in a church for holy water, especially one used in baptism.
- **Mosan**: A regional style of art from the valley of the Meuse in present-day Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Although in a broader sense the term applies to art from this region from all periods, it generally refers to Romanesque art, with architecture, stone carving, metalwork, enameling, and manuscript illumination reaching its peak from the 11th through 13th centuries.

Overview: Reiner of Huy

Reiner of Huy was a 12th century metalworker and sculptor to whom many masterpieces of Mosan art, including the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church in Liege, Belgium, are attributed. The Meuse River valley in modern Belgium and France, roughly comprising the Diocese of Liège, was the leading 12th century center of Romanesque metalwork , which at the time was still the most prestigious art medium . Nothing is known of Rainer's life other a mention in an 1125 document as a goldsmith; however, a 14th century chronicle mentions him as the artist of the font. He may have died around 1150. Although Reiner of Huy is traditionally accepted to be the creator of the font, this attribution and the Mosan origin of the font, have been questioned.

Baptismal Font at St. Bartholomew's Church

The font is a major masterpiece of Mosan art, remarkable for the classicism of its style. The basin is 91 centimeters (36 inches) across at the top, tapering slightly toward the base , and described as brass or bronze. It was made using the lost-wax casting technique with the basin cast in a single piece. The size was not necessarily exceptional, as both church bells and cauldrons for large households were probably comparable sizes. Some church doors cast in a single piece, though flat, were much larger.

The font sat on 12 oxen (two of which are now missing) that emerged from a stone plinth, a reference to the "molten sea… on twelve oxen" cast in bronze for Solomon's temple. The five scenes shown, identified by Latin inscriptions (*tituli*) on the rim above and in the image field, can be read in chronological sequence. They include two scenes of John the Baptist, the Baptism of Christ, St. Peter baptizing Cornelius the Centurion, and St. John the Evangelist baptizing the philosopher Craton.



Baptismal Font at St. Bartholomew's Church: Reiner of Huy, a 12th century metalworker and sculptor, is generally attributed with creating the baptismal font at St. Bartholomew's Church.

Possible Other Works

The only other work generally agreed to be by the same master as the font is a small bronze crucifix figure now located in Schnütgen Museum, Cologne. Another crucifix in Brussels is probably from the same mold but with extra chasing. Others in Brussels and Dublin may have come from the same workshop, as they have many similarities to the Cologne bronze crucifix.

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13.4: Other Romanesque Arts

Romanesque Illustrated Books

Many books of worship produced during the Romanesque period were characterized by illuminated manuscript.

Learning Objectives

Identify the most well-known examples of illuminated bibles and psalters during the Romanesque period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- A number of regional schools of art converged during the early Romanesque period and influenced the production of illuminated manuscripts and illustrated books.
- The “Channel school” of England and Northern France was heavily influenced by late Anglo-Saxon art, whereas the style in southern France depended more on Iberian influence. In Germany and the Low Countries, Ottonian styles continued to develop; these styles, along with Byzantine schools, in turn influenced Italy.
- Romanesque illumination typically focused on the Bible, prefacing each book by a large historiated initial, and the Psalter , where major initials were similarly illuminated.
- St. Alban’s Psalter is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque art book production.
- Other notable books of worship that depict Romanesque art include the Fécamp Bible, Winchester Bible, and Hunterian Psalter.

Key Terms

- **psalter**: The Book of Psalms, often applied to a book containing the Psalms separately printed.
- **historiated**: Illuminated with decorative designs that represent parts of the following text.
- **illuminated manuscript**: A book in which the text is supplemented by decoration, such as initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations.

Illuminated Manuscripts in the Romanesque Period

A number of regional schools of art converged during the early Romanesque period and influenced the production of illuminated manuscripts and illustrated books. The “Channel school” of England and Northern France was heavily influenced by late Anglo-Saxon art, whereas the style in southern France depended more on Iberian influence. In Germany and the Low Countries, Ottonian styles continued to develop; these styles, along with Byzantine schools, in turn influenced Italy. By the 12th century reciprocal influences had developed among all these schools, although a degree of regional distinctiveness remained.

Romanesque illumination and illustrated books focused on the Bible, with each book prefaced by a large historiated initial, and the Psalter, where major initials were similarly illuminated. In both cases, more lavish examples contained cycles of scenes in fully-illuminated pages, sometimes with several scenes per page. The Bibles in particular often featured large pages and might be bound into more than one volume . Well-known examples of manuscripts from this era include the St. Alban’s Psalter, Hunterian Psalter, Winchester Bible (the “Morgan Leaf”), Fécamp Bible, Stavelot Bible, and Parc Abbey Bible.

By the end of the period, commercial artist and scribe workshops were significant and illumination (and books in general) became more widely available to both lay people and clergy.

Well-Known Works of Art

St. Alban’s Psalter

St. Alban’s Psalter, also known as the Albani Psalter or the Psalter of Christina of Markyate, is an English illuminated manuscript and one of several psalters created at or for St Alban’s Abbey in the 12th century. It is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque book production, featuring unprecedented lavishness of decoration, with over 40 full-page miniatures and contains a number of iconographic innovations that endured throughout the Middle Ages .



St. Alban’s Psalter: A scene depicting Mary Magdalene announcing news of the risen Christ. St. Alban’s Psalter is widely considered one of the most important examples of English Romanesque book production.

Hunterian Psalter

Also known as the York Psalter, the Hunterian Psalter is an illuminated manuscript produced in England around 1170 and considered a striking example of the Romanesque style. The book opens with an illustrated calendar, and each month begins with the historiated letters “KL”, an abbreviation for kalenda (i.e. the first day of the month). Next is 13 pages of prefactory full-page miniatures with two scenes to a page: three pages of Old Testament scenes, six pages of scenes from the Life of Christ (though further pages are perhaps missing), and unusually for this date, three pages from the Life of the Virgin, including a Death of the Virgin with a funeral procession and an Assumption.



Hunterian Psalter: Depiction of the astrological sign Gemini, featuring the twins Castor and Pollux. The Hunterian Psalter was produced in England around 1170 and is considered a striking example of this Romanesque style.

These are the earliest English miniatures to have gold-leaf backgrounds incised with patterns of lines and dots. After these pages come two full-page miniatures of David playing his harp and a “Beatus” initial for the start of Psalm 1 (“Beatus vir”). All the psalms have a large illuminated initial, often historiated, and each verse starts with an enlarged gold initial. The start of the 10 traditional divisions of the text have especially large initials, typical for this style.

Winchester Bible

The Winchester Bible is a Romanesque illuminated manuscript produced in Winchester between 1160 and 1175. With folios measuring 583 x 396 mm (23 x 16 inches), it is the largest surviving 12th-century English Bible.



Winchester Bible: A scene depicting God addressing Jeremiah. During the Romanesque period, the focus of major illumination in the West moved from the Gospel Book to the Psalter and the Bible, and the Winchester manuscript is one of the most lavish examples.

During the Romanesque period, the focus of major illumination in the West moved from the Gospel Book to the Psalter and the Bible, and the Winchester manuscript is one of the most lavish examples. The artwork is incomplete; many illuminations were left unfinished and others were deliberately removed. The illuminations appear in varying stages of completion, ranging from rough outlines and inked drawings to unpainted gilded images and figures complete in all but the final details. In all, 48 of the major historiated initials that begin each book stand complete.

Fécamp Bible

The Fécamp Bible is an illuminated Latin Bible produced in Paris during the third quarter of the 13th century. Each book of the Bible and the major sections of Psalms are introduced by a large historiated initial in colors and gold, with the exception of the books of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Haggai. In all, there are 79 extant historiated initials. The beginnings of the prologues have large zoomorphic and foliate initials. The beginning of each chapter is marked by a small initial in red with blue-pen flourishes or in blue with red-pen flourishes.



A page from the Fécamp Bible: The Fécamp Bible is an illuminated Latin Bible produced in Paris during the late 13th century. This page showcases the striking blue and red flourishes.

Romanesque Painting and Stained Glass

Painting from the Romanesque era consisted of elaborate mural decorations and exquisite stained glass.

Learning Objectives

Give examples of Romanesque painting and art in France and Spain

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Romanesque painting was greatly influenced by Byzantine art and by the anti-classical energy of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements forged a highly innovative and coherent style in painting and stained glass.
- The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of Romanesque architecture lent themselves to elaborate wall paintings and mural decoration.
- One of the most intact painting schemes still in existence is at the Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France, where the long barrel vault of the nave is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament.
- The oldest-known fragments of medieval pictorial stained glass appear to date from the 10th century; the figures, though stiff and formalized, demonstrate considerable proficiency in design, indicating that their maker was well-accustomed to the medium .
- Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style, so much glasswork from the first part of the 13th century can be considered essentially Romanesque.
- Large figures from the Strasbourg Cathedral created in about 1200 are of especially fine quality. Other exceptional stained glass examples can be found at Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, made around 1220.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque art**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **iconoclasm**: The destruction of religious icons and other images or monuments for religious or political motives.

Romanesque painting and other art forms were greatly influenced by Byzantine art and the anti-classical energy of the Insular art of the British Isles. From these elements was forged a highly innovative and coherent style in illumination, painting, and stained glass.

Wall Paintings

The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of the architecture of the Romanesque period lent themselves to elaborate wall paintings and mural decorations. Unfortunately, many of these early wall paintings have been destroyed by dampness, and in some cases the walls have been replastered and painted over. In England, France, and the Netherlands, such pictures were systematically destroyed or whitewashed in bouts of iconoclasm during the Reformation . In Denmark and elsewhere, many have since been restored. In Catalonia (Spain), there was a national campaign to save such murals in the early 20th century by transferring them to safekeeping in Barcelona, resulting in the spectacular collection at the National Art Museum of Catalonia. In other countries, Romanesque wall paintings have suffered from war, neglect, and changing fashion.

A classic scheme for the painted decoration of a church was derived from earlier examples, often in mosaic . At its focal point in the semi-dome of the apse , it commonly presented either Christ in Majesty or Christ the Redeemer enthroned within a mandorla and framed by the four winged beasts, symbols of the Four Evangelists. These iconographic images compared directly with examples from the gilt covers or illuminations of Gospel Books of the period. If the Virgin Mary was the patron saint of the church, she might replace Christ in the apse. On the apse walls below were saints and apostles, often including narrative scenes. On the sanctuary arch were figures of apostles, prophets, or the 24 elders of the Apocalypse, looking toward a bust of Christ or his symbol the Lamb at the top of the arch. The north wall of the nave often contained narrative scenes from the Old Testament while the south wall was dedicated to scenes from the New Testament. On the rear west wall was a Last Judgement with an enthroned and judging Christ at the top.



The Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Maji: Master of Pedret, The Virgin and Child in Majesty and the Adoration of the Magi, apse fresco, Spain, c. 1100, now The Cloisters.

One of the most intact schemes still in existence is at Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France. The long barrel vault of the nave provides an excellent surface for fresco and is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament, showing the Creation, the Fall of Man, and other stories. The paintings include a lively depiction of Noah's Ark, complete with a fearsome figurehead and numerous windows through which can be seen Noah and his family on the upper deck, birds on the middle deck, and pairs of animals on the lower deck. Another scene shows the swamping of Pharaoh's army by the Red Sea. The scheme extends to other parts of the church, with the martyrdom of the local saints shown in the crypt and the Apocalypse shown in the narthex . The range of colors is limited to light blue-green, yellow ochre , reddish brown, and black. Similar paintings exist in Serbia, Spain, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere in France.



San Isidoro at León, Spain: The painted crypt of San Isidoro at León, Spain

Stained Glass

The oldest-known fragments of medieval pictorial stained glass appear to date from the 10th century. The earliest intact figures include five prophet windows at Augsburg dating from the late 11th century. The figures, though stiff and formalized, demonstrate considerable proficiency in design, both pictorially and in the functional use of the glass, indicating that their maker was well-accustomed to the medium.

Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style, so much glasswork from the first part of the 13th century is essentially Romanesque. Large figures from the Strasbourg Cathedral, created in about 1200, are of especially fine quality. Some of these have been removed to museums for protection and better viewing. Other exceptional stained glass examples can be found at Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, made around 1220. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous "Tree of Jesse" window of Chartres Cathedral, dates from the 13th century. Glass was both expensive and fairly adaptable in that it could be added to or rearranged, and it was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style.



Romanesque Stained Glass: Stained glass, the Prophet Daniel from Augsburg Cathedral, late 11th century.

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13.5: Normandy and England

Norman Architecture

Norman architecture is a style of Romanesque architecture developed by the Normans in lands under their dominion during the 11th and 12th centuries.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the influence of Normandy and Norman architecture in France and England

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe. Romanesque styles originated in Normandy and became widespread in northwestern Europe, particularly in England.
- The Normans were among the most traveled peoples of Europe and were thus exposed to a wide variety of cultural influences, including those from the Near East, which were incorporated in their art and architecture.
- They elaborated on the Early Christian basilica plan, making it longitudinal with side aisles, an apse , and a western facade with two towers.
- The Church of Saint-Pierre in Normandy is a prime example of Norman architecture.
- England was influential in the development of Norman architecture and has the largest number of surviving examples.

Key Terms

- **keeps**: Towers in a castle.
- **motte**: An earthen mound forming the site of a castle, camp, or fortification; often accompanied by an enclosed courtyard, or bailey, surrounded by a protective ditch and palisade.
- **Romanesque**: The art of Europe from approximately 1000 CE to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.

Norman architecture is a style of Romanesque architecture developed by the Normans in the lands under their dominion during the 11th and 12th centuries. The Normans were descended from Norse raiders and pirates from Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, who in the 10th and 11th centuries gave their name to Normandy, a region in France. The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe. In particular, the term “Norman architecture” is traditionally used to refer to English Romanesque architecture. The Normans introduced large numbers of castles and fortifications, including keeps , monasteries, abbeys , churches, and cathedrals . These structures were constructed in a style characterized by Romanesque rounded arches (particularly over windows and doorways) and massive proportions compared to other regional variations of the style.

Origins

Romanesque styles originated in Normandy and became widespread in northwestern Europe, particularly in England. Indeed, England was influential in the development of Romanesque architecture and has the largest number of surviving examples. At roughly the same time, the Norman dynasty ruled in Sicily, producing a distinctive variation that incorporated Byzantine and Saracen influence. This style of Norman architecture is known alternatively as Sicilian Romanesque.

Characteristics and Examples

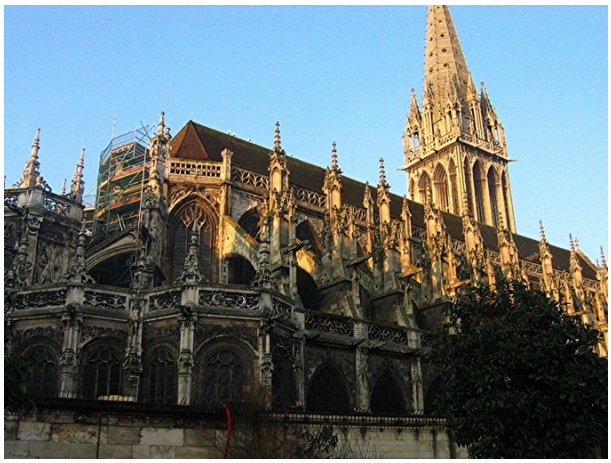
Architecture in Normandy

Norman invaders arrived at the mouth of the river Seine in 911. Over the next century, Norman barons built timber castles on earthen mounds, beginning the development of motte -and-bailey castles; they also produced great stone churches in the Romanesque style of the Franks. By 950 they were building stone keeps. The Normans were among the most traveled peoples of Europe and thus exposed to a wide variety of cultural influences, including those from the Near East, some of which were incorporated into their art and architecture. They elaborated on the Early Christian basilica plan, making it longitudinal with side aisles, an apse, and a western facade with two towers. This elaboration can be seen in the Abbey of Saint-Étienne at Caen, begun in 1063, which formed a model for the larger English cathedrals whose construction began twenty years later.



The Abbey of Saint-Étienne : The Abbey of Saint-Étienne is a former Benedictine monastery in the French city of Caen, Normandy, dedicated to Saint Stephen. It was founded in 1063 by William the Conqueror and is one of the most important Romanesque buildings in Normandy.

The Church of Saint-Pierre is another prime example of Norman architecture. This Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint Peter is situated on the Place Saint Pierre in the center of Caen in Normandy. The construction of the present building took place between the early 13th and 16th centuries. The spire was destroyed in 1944 and has since been rebuilt. The eastern apse of the church was built by Hector Sohier between 1518 and 1545. The interior choir and the exterior apse display an architecture that embodies the transition from Gothic to Renaissance . Balustrades of Gothic letters, which read as part of the *Magnificat*, run along the top. Its west portal , the decoration of the tower spire, and the stained glass are among the features which make it one of the finest churches of the Rouen diocese.



Church of St. Pierre: The Church of St. Pierre is a good example of Norman architecture.

Norman Architecture in England

In England, Norman nobles and bishops had influence even before the Norman Conquest of 1066, and Norman influences affected late Anglo-Saxon architecture. Edward the Confessor was raised in Normandy, and in 1042 he brought masons to work on Westminster Abbey, the first Romanesque building in England. In 1051 he brought in Norman knights who built motte (raised earthwork) castles as a defense against the Welsh. Following the Norman invasion of England, Normans rapidly constructed more motte-and-bailey castles, and in a burst of building activity constructed churches, abbeys, and more elaborate fortifications such as Norman stone keeps.

The buildings show massive proportions in simple geometries. The masonry is decorated only with small bands of sculpture, perhaps used as blind arcading. Restrained decoration is seen in concentrated spaces of capitals and round doorways and in the tympanum under an arch. The Norman arch is round, in contrast to the pointed Gothic arch. Norman moldings are carved or incised with geometric ornament , such as chevron patterns (frequently termed “zig-zag moldings”) around arches. The cruciform churches often have deep chancels and a square crossing tower, which has remained a feature of English ecclesiastical architecture. Hundreds of parish churches were built, and the great English cathedrals were founded during a period from about 1083.



Guiting Power, Gloucestershire: A Norman arch with zig-zag mouldings above the church doorway at Guiting Power, Gloucestershire.

After a fire damaged Canterbury Cathedral in 1174, Norman masons introduced the new Gothic architecture . Around 1191, Wells Cathedral and Lincoln Cathedral brought in the English Gothic style, and Norman architecture became an increasingly modest style seen only in provincial buildings.

Norman Painting

Norman painting, like other Romanesque painting of its time, is best demonstrated by illuminated manuscripts, wall paintings, and stained glass.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the illuminated manuscripts and wall paintings in Normandy and England during the Romanesque period

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural, and military impact on medieval Europe, spreading from France south to Italy and north into England after the Norman invasion of England in 1066.
- In the visual arts, the Normans did not have the rich and distinctive traditions of the cultures they conquered. However, in the early 11th century, the dukes began a program of church reform and encouraged the patronizing of artistic and intellectual pursuits.
- The chief monasteries taking part in this “renaissance” of Norman art and scholarship helped facilitate a brief golden age of illustrated manuscripts from roughly 1090-1110.
- Wall paintings were a significant form of Norman art in Normandy and England, though few exist today.
- Another significant Norman art form is stained glass; most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century.
- Norman Romanesque embroidery is best known from the Bayeux Tapestry , an embroidered cloth nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England.

Key Terms

- **iconoclasm**: The belief in, participation in, or sanction of the destruction of religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually with religious or political motives.
- **quatrefoil**: A symmetrical shape which forms the overall outline of four partially overlapping circles of the same diameter.
- **historiated**: Illuminated with decorative designs that represent parts of the following text.

Background: The Normans

The Normans descended from Norse raiders from Denmark, Iceland, and Norway who in the 10th and 11th centuries gave their name to Normandy, a region in northern France. The distinct cultural and ethnic identity of the Normans emerged in the first half of the 10th century and continued to evolve over the succeeding centuries. The Norman dynasty had a major political, cultural and

military impact on medieval Europe. Norman cultural and military influence spread from France south to Italy and north into England after the Norman invasion of England in 1066.

Manuscript Illumination

In the visual arts, the Normans did not have the rich and distinctive traditions of the cultures they conquered. However, in the early 11th century, the dukes began a program of church reform, encouraging the Cluniac reform of monasteries and patronizing intellectual pursuits, especially the proliferation of scriptoria and the compilation of lost illuminated manuscripts . The chief monasteries taking part in this “renaissance” of Norman art and scholarship were Mont-Saint-Michel, Fécamp, Jumièges, Bec, Saint-Ouen, Saint-Evroul, and Saint-Wandrille. These centers were in contact with the Winchester school, which channeled a pure Carolingian artistic tradition to Normandy. From roughly 1090-1110, Normandy experienced a brief golden age of illustrated manuscripts; however, the major scriptoria of Normandy ceased to function after the midpoint of the 12th century.

An illuminated manuscript is a manuscript in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia), and miniature illustrations. Romanesque illuminations focused on the Bible and the Psalter . Each book of the Bible was prefaced by a large historiated initial; major initials were similarly illuminated in the Psalter. In both cases, more lavish examples had cycles of scenes in fully illuminated pages, sometimes with several scenes per page in compartments. The Bibles, in particular, often had very large pages and were sometimes bound into more than one volume .



Illuminated Manuscript, The Three Magi from the St. Albans Psalter, Norman English, 12th century.: The typical foci of Romanesque illumination, such as this one pictured, were the Bible and the Psalter.

Wall Painting

The large wall surfaces and plain, curving vaults of the Romanesque period lent themselves well to mural decoration in Normandy and other Norman lands. Unfortunately, many of these early wall paintings have been destroyed by dampness over the years, or the walls themselves have been re-plastered and painted over. In Normandy, such pictures were systematically destroyed or whitewashed in bouts of iconoclasm during the Reformation .

A classic scheme for the painted decoration of a church had, as its focal point in the semi-dome of the apse , Christ in Majesty or Christ the Redeemer enthroned within a mandorla and framed by the four winged beasts (symbols of the Four Evangelists). If the

Virgin Mary was the dedicatee of the church, she might replace Christ here. On the apse walls below were saints and apostles, often including narrative scenes. On the sanctuary arch were figures of apostles, prophets, or the 24 “elders of the Apocalypse”, looking in towards a bust of Christ or his symbol, the Lamb, at the top of the arch. The north wall of the nave contained narrative scenes from the Old Testament, while the south wall contained scenes from the New Testament. On the rear west wall was a Last Judgment with an enthroned and judging Christ at the top.

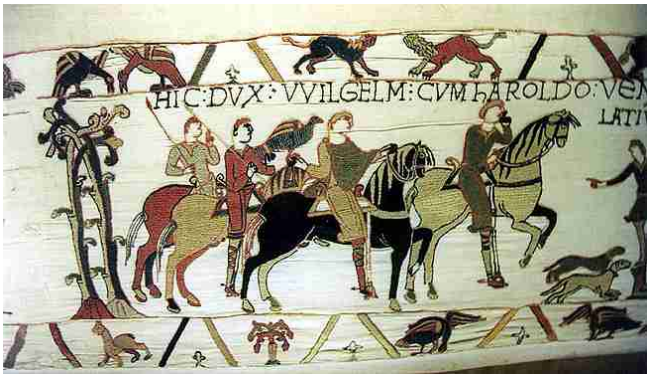
One of the most intact schemes in existence is at Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe in France. The long barrel vault of the nave provides an excellent surface for fresco and is decorated with scenes of the Old Testament. One of these shows a lively depiction of Noah’s Ark, complete with a fearsome figurehead and numerous windows through which Noah and his family can be seen on the upper deck, birds on the middle deck, and pairs of animals on the lower deck. Another scene shows the swamping of Pharaoh’s army by the Red Sea. The scene extends to other parts of the church, with the martyrdom of the local saints shown in the crypt, the Apocalypse in the narthex , and Christ in Majesty. The range of colors is limited to light blue-green, yellow ochre , reddish brown, and black.

Stained Glass

Another significant Norman art form is stained glass. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Few large windows remain intact from the 12th century. One is the Crucifixion of Poitiers, a remarkable composition which rises through three stages: the lowest a quatrefoil depicting the Martyrdom of St Peter, the largest central stage dominated by the crucifixion, and the upper stage depicting the Ascension of Christ in a mandorla. The figure of the crucified Christ already shows hints of the Gothic curve. Many detached fragments of these windows are in museums, and a window at Twycross Church in England is made up of important French panels rescued from the French Revolution . Glass was both expensive and fairly flexible in that era (in that it could be added to or rearranged) and was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style .

Other Visual Arts

Many works of art have survived from this time period, mostly as church vestments . Norman Romanesque embroidery is best known from the Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered cloth nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England. Images in the cloth include depictions of William, Duke of Normandy, the coronation and death of the English King Harold, the Battle of Hastings, and even Halley’s Comet.



Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy and Harold, Earl of Wessex, later King of England, and culminating in the Battle of Hastings.

Norman Stained Glass

Stained glass was a significant art form from the Norman empire throughout both France and Norman-controlled England.

Learning Objectives

Describe the characteristics of Norman stained glass

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- At Le Mans, Saint-Denis, and Chartres Cathedrals in France as well as Canterbury Cathedral in England, a number of panels of the 12th century Norman empire have survived.
- Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, however, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Far fewer large windows remain intact from the 12th century.
- Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Chartres Cathedral is the extent to which architectural structure has been adapted to meet the needs of stained glass.
- At Chartres, nearly all 176 windows were filled with equally dense stained glass, creating a relatively dark but richly colored interior in which the light filtering through the myriad narrative and symbolic windows was the main source of illumination.
- Though the architecture of Le Mans Cathedral features many French Gothic elements, it is notable for its rich collection of Romanesque stained glass.

Key Terms

- **lancet**: In architecture, a narrow, tall opening with a pointed arch.

Stained glass was a significant art form from the Norman empire throughout both France and Norman-controlled England. At Le Mans, Saint-Denis, and Chartres Cathedrals in France as well as Canterbury Cathedral in England, a number of panels of the 12th century have survived. Most of the magnificent stained glass of France, however, including the famous windows of Chartres, dates from the 13th century. Far fewer large windows remain intact from the 12th century.

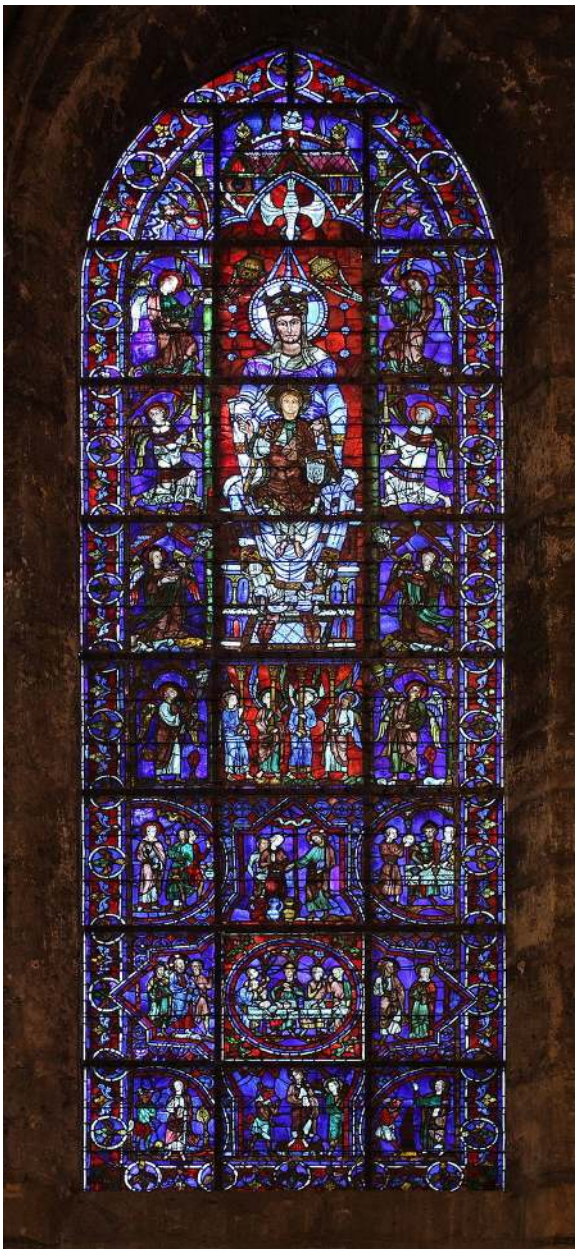
Glass craftsmen were slower than architects to change their style , and much Norman stained glass from the first part of the 13th century can be considered Romanesque. Especially fine are large figures from around the year 1200 from Strasbourg Cathedral and Saint Kunibert's Church in Cologne, both in France. Glass was both expensive and fairly flexible (in that it could be added to or rearranged) and was often reused when churches were rebuilt in the Gothic style.

Famous Examples

Chartres Cathedral

Chartres Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, is a medieval Catholic cathedral of the Latin Church located in Chartres, France. The current cathedral was mostly constructed between 1194 and 1250. The cathedral is in an exceptional state of preservation , and the majority of the original stained glass windows survive intact. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Chartres Cathedral is the extent to which its architectural structure has been adapted to meet the needs of stained glass. The use of three-part elevation with external buttressing allowed for far larger windows than did earlier designs, particularly at the clerestory level. Most cathedrals of the period had a mixture of windows containing plain or grisaille glass and windows containing dense stained glass panels; the brightness of the former tended to diminish the impact and legibility of the latter. At Chartres, nearly all 176 windows were filled with equally dense stained glass, creating a relatively dark but richly colored interior in which the light filtering through the myriad narrative and symbolic windows was the main source of illumination.

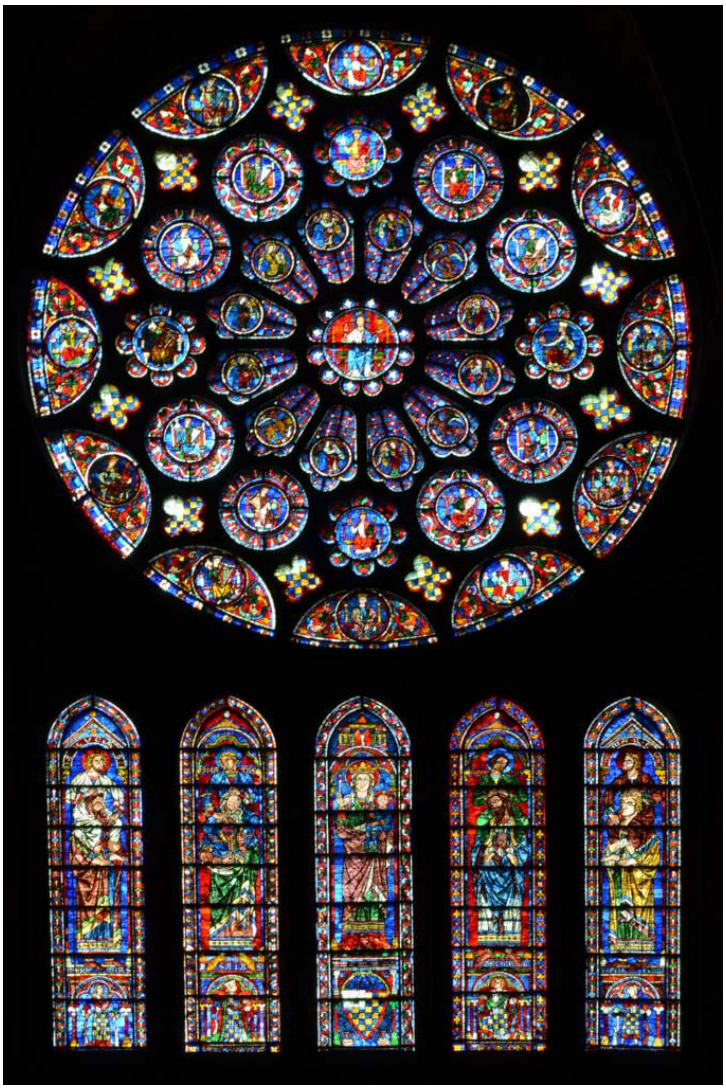
The majority of the windows now visible at Chartres were made and installed between 1205 and 1240; however, four lancets preserve panels of Romanesque glass from the 12th century that survived the fire of 1195. Perhaps the most famous 12th-century window at Chartres is the so-called *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière*, found in the first bay of the choir after the south transept . This window is actually a composite; the upper part, showing the Virgin and child surrounded by adoring angels, dates from around 1180 and was probably positioned at the center of the apse in the earlier building. The Virgin is depicted wearing a blue robe and sitting in a frontal pose on a throne, with the Christ Child seated on her lap raising his hand in blessing. This composition , known as the Sedes sapientia ("Throne of Wisdom"), is based on the famous cult figure kept in the crypt . The lower part of the window showing scenes from the Infancy of Christ dates from the main glazing campaign around 1225.



Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière, Chartres Cathedral, France (c.1180 and 1225) : *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière* is perhaps the most famous window in Chartres, depicting the Virgin Mary as the throne of wisdom.

Each bay of the aisles and the choir ambulatory contains a large lancet window roughly 8.1 meters high by 2.2 meters wide. The windows were made between 1205 and 1235 and depict stories from the Old and New Testament and the Lives of the Saints as well as typological cycles and symbolic images such as the signs of the zodiac and labors of the months. Most windows are made up of 25–30 individual panels showing distinct episodes within the narrative; only *Notre-Dame de la Belle-Verrière* includes a larger image made up of multiple panels.

Because of their greater distance from the viewer , the windows in the clerestory generally adopt simpler, bolder designs. Most feature the standing figure of a saint or Apostle in the upper two-thirds, often with one or two simplified narrative scenes in the lower part. Unlike the lower windows in the nave arcades and the ambulatory that consist of one simple lancet per bay, the clerestory windows are each made up of a pair of lancets with a plate-traceried rose window above. The nave and transept clerestory windows mainly depict saints and Old Testament prophets. Those in the choir depict the kings of France and Castille and members of the local nobility in the straight bays, while the windows in the apse hemicycle show those Old Testament prophets who foresaw the virgin birth, flanking scenes of the Annunciation, Visitation, and Nativity in the axial window. The cathedral also has three large rose windows: the western rose, the north transept rose, and the south transept rose.



South transept rose window, c.1221-30: The Cathedral at Chartres contains three rose windows from the 13th century, including this south transept rose window.

Le Mans Cathedral

Le Mans Cathedral is a Catholic cathedral situated in Le Mans, France. Its construction dated from the 6th through the 14th century, and though the cathedral itself features many French Gothic elements, it has a notable collection of Romanesque stained glass.

The nave at Le Mans retains around 20 stained glass windows from Bishop Guillaume's mid-12th century rebuilding, though all but one have been moved from their original locations. All were extensively restored in the 19th century. The great western window, depicting scenes from the Life of St Julian of Le Mans, dates from around 1155. The Ascension window toward the western end of the south aisle of the nave has been dated to 1120, making it one of the oldest extant stained glass windows in France.

Unlike the earlier Romanesque windows, the 13th-century glazing program in the upper parts of the choir is largely intact. It presents a diverse range of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the Lives of Saints, and various miracles of the Virgin. These windows are notable for their variety of artistic styles and their lack of coherent program (there is no obvious pattern in the distribution of subjects, and some episodes, such as the story of Theophilus or the miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges, are repeated in different windows). The windows in the radiating chapels have fared less well over time, and most of the surviving panels have been reassembled out of context in the axial chapel.



Le Mans Cathedral: View of the north elevation of the choir from the south aisle, showing the triforium and clerestory windows.

Other Notable Examples

The Basilica of Saint Denis (also known as Basilique Saint-Denis) is a large medieval abbey church in the city of Saint-Denis, now a northern suburb of Paris. The basilica retains stained glass of many periods, most notably from the Romanesque era.

At Canterbury Cathedral in England, Norman stained glass images include a figure of Adam digging and another of his son Seth from a series of Ancestors of Christ. Adam represents a naturalistic and lively portrayal, while in the figure of Seth, the robes have been used to great decorative effect, similar to the best stone carving of the period.

The Crucifixion of Poitiers is a stained glass image dating from the 12th century in a Roman Catholic cathedral in Poitiers, France. This remarkable composition rises through three stages: the lowest stage contains a quatrefoil depicting the Martyrdom of St. Peter; the largest central stage is dominated by the crucifixion of St. Peter; and the upper stage shows the Ascension of Christ in a mandorla . The figure of the crucified Christ already shows hints of the Gothic curve.

The Bayeux Tapestry

The nearly 230-foot long Bayeux tapestry is the best-known example of Romanesque embroidery.

Learning Objectives

Explain the importance of the Bayeux tapestry

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Bayeux tapestry depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England, including scenes of William, Duke of Normandy; the coronation and death of the English King Harold; the Battle of Hastings; and even Halley's Comet.
- The tapestry was likely commissioned by Bishop Odo, the half-brother to Duke William of Normandy, and made in England—not Bayeux—in the 1070s.
- The designs on the Bayeux tapestry are embroidered rather than woven, which means it's not technically a tapestry.
- The tapestry is the final and best known work of Anglo-Saxon art. Though it was made after the Norman Conquest of England, historians accept that it was created in an Anglo-Saxon tradition.
- The tapestry's central zone contains most of the action; events take place in a long series of scenes separated by highly stylized trees and surrounded by a decorative border.

Key Terms

- **tituli**: The labels or captions naming figures or subjects in art, commonly added in classical and medieval art and still conventional in Eastern Orthodox icons.

Overview and History

The Bayeux tapestry is the best-known example of Romanesque architecture. This embroidered cloth is nearly 70 meters (230 feet) long and 50 centimeters (20 inches) tall and depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England. Images in the cloth include depictions of William, Duke of Normandy; the coronation and death of the English King Harold; the Battle of Hastings; and even Halley's Comet.

The tapestry consists of some 50 scenes with Latin tituli , or inscriptions, embroidered on linen with colored woolen yarns. It was likely commissioned by Bishop Odo, the half-brother to Duke William of Normandy, and made in England—not Bayeux—in the 1070s. The hanging was rediscovered in 1729 by scholars at a time when it was being displayed annually in Bayeux Cathedral . The tapestry is now exhibited at the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux in Bayeux, Normandy, France.

Design

The designs on the Bayeux tapestry are embroidered rather than woven, so it's not technically considered a tapestry. The tapestry can be seen as the final and best known work of Anglo-Saxon art, and though it was made after the Norman Conquest of England, historians accept that it was created firmly in Anglo-Saxon tradition. Such tapestries adorned both churches and wealthy houses in England, though the Bayeux tapestry is exceptionally large.

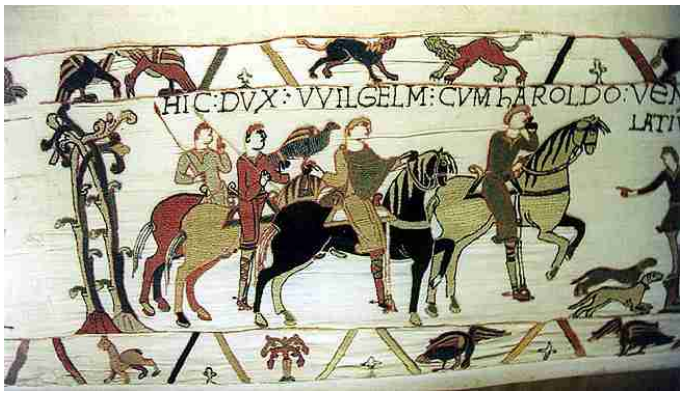
The tapestry is embroidered in crewel (wool yarn) on a tabby-woven linen ground using two methods of stitching: outline or stem stitch for lettering and the outlines of figures and couching or laid work for figure interior. Nine linen panels between 14 and 3 meters in length were embroidered and sewn together, and the joins disguised with subsequent embroidery. The design involves a broad central zone with narrow decorative borders top and bottom. Later generations patched the hanging in numerous places, and some of the embroidery (especially in the final scene) has been reworked.



Bayeux tapestry: Detail of stem stitching and laid work.

The main yarn colors are terracotta or russet, blue-green, dull gold, olive green, and blue, with small amounts of dark blue, black, and sage green. Later repairs are worked in light yellow, orange, and light greens. The tapestry's central zone contains most of the action, which sometimes overflows into the borders either for dramatic effect or to allow extra space for depictions. Events are each depicted in a long series of scenes separated by stylized trees. The trees are not placed consistently, however, and the greatest scene shift (between Harold's audience with Edward after his return to England and Edward's burial scene) is not marked.

The tituli are normally located in the central zone but occasionally use the top border. The borders are otherwise decorated with birds, beasts, and fish, as well as scenes from fables, agriculture, and hunting. These don't necessarily complement the action in the central panels. The picture of Halley's Comet, which appears in the upper border (scene 32), is the first known depiction of this comet.



Bayeux Tapestry: The Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—nearly 230 feet long, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England.

The Opus Anglicanum

Opus Anglicanum, Latin for "the English work," refers to the elaborate needlework produced in England during the Middle Ages.

Learning Objectives

Define the *Opus Anglicanum* and describe its motifs and uses

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- England gained a reputation for needlework as early as the pre-Norman conquest during the Anglo-Saxon period; however, it was in the 13th and 14th centuries that the *Opus Anglicanum* really flourished.
- Embroidered pieces were used in religious and secular settings on vestments , clothing for the wealthy, and heraldic tapestries .
- The work combined silk and gold or silver-gilt threads worked on linen and later velvet. The motifs followed the era's trends in other art forms , such as illuminated manuscripts and architecture.
- *Opus Anglicanum* consisted primarily of popular luxury that spread across Europe. However, as the 14th century progressed, demand for luxury goods decreased as funds were redirected towards military expenditures.
- Few pieces have survived due to the delicate nature of the work; some were re-purposed as they aged and others were even buried with their owners.

Key Terms

- **guild**: A group of tradespeople made up of merchants, craftspeople, or artisans, particularly in the Middle Ages.
- **vestments**: Liturgical garments and articles associated primarily with the Christian religion, especially among the Eastern Orthodox, Catholics (Latin Rite and others), Anglicans, and Lutherans.

Opus Anglicanum, Latin for "the English work," refers to the elaborate needlework produced in England during the the middle ages. Embroidered pieces were used in religious and secular settings on vestments, clothing for the wealthy, and heraldic tapestries. England gained a reputation for needlework as early as the Anglo-Saxon period prior to the Norman conquest; however, it was in the 13th and 14th centuries that the *Opus Anglicanum* really flourished.

Style

This work combined silk and gold or silver-gilt threads worked on linen and later velvet. The motifs used in needlework followed the trends in other art forms of the time, such as illuminated manuscripts and architecture; some motifs included the use of scrolls, spirals, and foliage. Embroidered pieces also depicted figures of kings and saints as well as the Gothic arches popular in European architecture.

Craftsmen

London was the primary center of production for *Opus Anglicanum*. While often associated with certain convents, a professional group of male craftsmen produced a great deal of the work. The Worshipful Company of Broderers was a craft guild incorporated in 1561 to represent these workers. There is some evidence that the group first incorporated as early as 1515, but those records were lost.

Use

Opus Anglicanum consisted primarily of popular luxury items that spread across Europe. Pope Martin IV, for example, ordered custom pieces after admiring the vestments of English Priests. As the 14th century progressed, however, demand for luxury goods decreased as funds were redirected toward military expenditures. As a result, the style of the work was scaled back, and much of the richness and storytelling of these pieces was lost. The needlework was relegated to small applique pieces that could be added to clothing or tapestries.

Few pieces have survived due to the delicate nature of the work. Some were repurposed as they aged and others were buried with their owners. One surviving piece is a cope, or a type of vestment, owned by the Butler-Bowdon family. Thought to have been made in 1330-1350, the Butler-Bowdon Cope is an example of a piece that was cut up for reuse, as it was reconstructed in the 19th century.



Butler-Bowden Cope: This picture is one of the few examples of Opus Anglicanum that has survived. It was reconstructed in the 19th century.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 14: Gothic Art

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14.2: Gothic Architecture
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14.1: Introduction to Gothic Art

Gothic Art

Gothic art developed after the Romanesque, in the 12th century. The style continued to be used well into the 16th century in some parts of Europe, while giving way to the Renaissance style earlier in some regions.

Learning Objective

Describe the economic and political reasons that led to the development of the Gothic style

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- An increased population of cities in France, as well as a strengthened French monarch, contributes to the development of the Gothic style.
- The most expressive medium for the Gothic style is architecture, specifically, Cathedrals.
- While the Gothic style was developed in Northern France, it spread throughout Europe where different regional styles were adopted.

Key Term

- **Book of Hours**: A common type of illuminated manuscript that was created for personal devotion and contained a collection of texts, prayers, and psalms.

Gothic art developed after the Romanesque, in the 12th century. The style continued to be used well into the 16th century in some parts of Europe, while giving way to the Renaissance style earlier in other regions. The style was developed in Northern France due to socioeconomic, political, and theological reasons.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, people fled cities as they were no longer safe. The Romanesque era saw many people living in the countryside of France while cities remained largely abandoned. During this time period, the French monarchy was weak and feudal landowners exerted a large amount of
regional power. In the 12th century, the French royalty strengthened their power, their titles, and their landholdings, which led to more centralized government. Additionally, due to advancements in
agriculture, population and trade increased. These changes brought people back to the cities, which is where we find the most expressive medium for the Gothic style—cathedrals.

Gothic Architecture

Gothic architecture is unique in that we can pinpoint the exact place, the exact moment, and the exact person who developed it. Around 1137, Abbot Suger began re-building the Abbey Church of St. Denis. In his re-designs, which he wrote about extensively, we can see elements of what would become Gothic architecture, including the use of symmetry in design and ratios.

Ratios became essential to French Gothic cathedrals because they expressed the perfection of the universe created by God. This is where we also see stained glass emerge in Gothic architecture. Abbot Suger adopted the idea that light equates to God. He wrote that he placed pictures in the glass to replace wall paintings and talked about them as educational devices. The windows were instructional in theology during the Gothic era, and the light itself was a metaphor for the presence of God.

Cathedrals served as religious centers and they were important for local economies. Pilgrims would travel throughout Europe to see relics, which would bring an influx of travelers and money to cities with Cathedrals.



Ambulatory at St. Denis: We can see the Gothic style emerge at St. Denis in Abbot Suger's re-designs.

While the Gothic style was developed in Northern France, it spread throughout Europe where different regional styles were adopted. In England, for example, cathedrals became longer than they were tall and architects in Italy typically did not incorporate stained glass windows in the manner that the French did.

Gothic Painting

Illuminated manuscripts provide excellent examples of Gothic painting. A prayer book, known as the book of hours, became increasingly popular during the Gothic age and was treated as a luxury item. The Hours of Mary of Burgundy, produced in Flanders c. 1477, contains a miniature showing Mary of Burgundy in devotion with a wonderful depiction of a French Gothic Cathedral behind her.



Miniature from The Hours of Mary of Burgundy: This piece contains a miniature showing Mary of Burgundy in devotion with a wonderful depiction of a French Gothic Cathedral behind her.

Sculpture & Metalwork

Sculpture during the Gothic era really sheds light on the knowledge of artists working during this time period. Some historians believed that artists and artisans during the Gothic era had “forgotten” how to create realistic works of art, or art influenced by the classical age. However, a viewer only needs to look at the work of Nicolas of Verdun to see that artists could and did work in a classical style during the Gothic era. Additionally, sculpture produced in Germany during the Gothic era is especially noted for its lifelikeness.



Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral: The metalwork by Nicolas of Verdun demonstrates his knowledge and understanding of classical elements in art.

Gothic Cathedrals

French Gothic cathedrals are characterized by lighter construction, large windows, pointed arches, and their impressive height.

Learning Objective

Evaluate the structure and symbolism of the French Gothic cathedral

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- French Gothic cathedrals were characterized by lighter construction and large windows.
- The pointed arch was the defining architectural feature of Gothic construction.
- Height is enhanced by both the architectural features and the decoration of the building.
- All design elements of Gothic cathedrals are intended to pay homage to and bring attention to the Glory of God.
- The western entrance to the Cathedral is typically the primary point of entry and therefore the most elaborate facade.
- Stained glass adds a dimension of color to the light within the building, as well as providing a medium for figurative and narrative art.

Key Terms

- **Ogival**: Having the curved, pointed shape of a Gothic pointed arch, or a rib of a Gothic vault.
- **Lancet Arch**: A sharp pointed arch used in doors and windows, etc.
- **Gothic Architecture**: A style of architecture that flourished during the high and late medieval period; it evolved from Romanesque architecture and was succeeded by Renaissance architecture.
- **Jamb**: The vertical components that form the sides of a door frame, window frame, or fireplace, or other opening in a wall.
- **Blind Arcade**: A series of arches, often used in Romanesque and Gothic buildings, that has no actual openings and has no load-bearing function, and that is applied to the surface of a wall as a decorative element.
- **Nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.

The Gothic cathedral represented the universe in microcosm, and each architectural concept, including the height and perfect ratios of the structure, were intended to convey a theological message: the great glory of God and his creation of a perfect universe. The building becomes a microcosm in two ways. First, the mathematical and geometrical nature of the construction is an image of the orderly universe, in which an underlying rationality and logic can be perceived. Second, the statues, sculptural decoration, stained glass, and murals incorporate the essence of creation in depictions of events from the Old and New Testaments.

Most Gothic churches have the Latin cross (or “cruciform”) plan, with a long nave making the body of the church. This nave is flanked on either side by aisles, a transverse arm called the transept, and, beyond it, an extension referred to as the choir.

One of the defining characteristics of Gothic architecture is the pointed or ogival arch. Arches of this type were used in the Near East in pre-Islamic as well as Islamic architecture before they were structurally employed in Gothic architecture. They are thought to have been the inspiration for their use in France at the Autun Cathedral, which is otherwise stylistically Romanesque. The way in which the pointed arch was drafted and utilized developed throughout the Gothic period, and four popular styles emerged: the Lancet arch, the Equilateral arch, the Flamboyant arch, and the Depressed arch.



Autun Cathedral, ca. 1120-46: Exterior of Autun Cathedral, showcasing the pointed arches of the Gothic style on an otherwise Romanesque building.

The Gothic vault, unlike the semi-circular vault of Roman and Romanesque buildings, can be used to roof rectangular and irregularly shaped plans such as trapezoids. This enabled architects to raise vaults much higher than was possible in Romanesque architecture. While the use of the pointed arch gave a greater flexibility to architectural form, it also gave Gothic architecture a very different and more vertical visual characteristic than Romanesque architecture.

In Gothic architecture the pointed arch is used in every location where a vaulted shape is called for, both structurally and decoratively. Gothic openings such as doorways, windows, arcades, and galleries have pointed arches. Rows of pointed arches upon delicate shafts form a typical wall decoration known as a blind arcade. Niches with pointed arches that contain statuary are a major external feature. The pointed arch lent itself to elaborate intersecting shapes, which developed complex Gothic tracery within window spaces and formed the structural support of the large windows that are characteristic of the style.



Cross-ribbed vault, Bonne-Espérance Abbey, Vellereille-les-Brayeux, Belgium, ca, 13th century: Ogival, or pointed arches, increased in popularity in the Gothic period.

The façade of a large church or cathedral, often referred to as the West Front, is generally designed to create a powerful impression on the approaching worshiper. In the arch of the door (the tympanum) is often a significant sculpture representing scenes from Christian Theology, most frequently *Christ in Majesty and Judgment Day*. If there is a central door jamb or a tremeau, then it frequently bears a statue of the *Madonna and Child.*

The West Front of a French cathedral, along with many English, Spanish, and German cathedrals, generally has two towers, which, particularly in France, express an enormous diversity of form and decoration. A characteristic of French Gothic church architecture is its height, both absolute and in proportion to its width, the verticality suggests an aspiration to Heaven. As the Gothic Age progressed in France, the different towns and cities may have been in competition with one another to create the tallest Cathedral. Architects also closely guarded the ratios they used in their architectural plans.



Interior of Cologne Cathedral: The verticality demonstrated in this image is a definitive feature of Gothic architecture.

Another one of the most distinctive characteristics of Gothic architecture is the expansive area of windows and the large size of the many individual windows. The increase in the use of large windows during the Gothic period is directly related to the use of the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, and the flying buttress. All of these architectural features absorbed the weight of the structure, which had rested on the walls in Romanesque architecture. Since the walls had less weight to support, thanks to these innovations, architects were able to pierce the walls of the structures with windows without risking the structural soundness of the cathedral.

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14.2: Gothic Architecture

Gothic Architecture: The Abbey Church of Saint Denis

The Abbey Church of Saint Denis is known as the first Gothic structure and was developed in the 12th century by Abbot Suger.

Learning Objectives

Illustrate a timeline of the creation of the Abbey Church of Saint Denis

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Abbey Church of Saint Denis provided an architectural model for cathedrals and abbeys of northern France, England, and other European countries.
- In the 12th century, Abbot Suger rebuilt portions of the church using innovative structural and decorative features that were drawn from a number of sources, resulting in the first truly Gothic building.
- The two architects who worked under Abbot Suger's direction remain uncredited, identified only by their unique stylistic contributions.

Key Terms

- **Abbey Church of Saint Denis**: The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis is a large medieval abbey church in the commune of Saint Denis, renowned for its Gothic architecture.
- **Rayonnant Gothic**: The period of French Gothic architecture between c. 1240 and 1350, characterized by a shift in focus away from the High Gothic mode of great scale toward a greater concern for two dimensional surfaces and the repetition of decorative motifs at different scales.
- **ambulatory**: The round walkway encircling the altar in many cathedrals.
- **Romanesque**: European architecture containing both Roman and Byzantine elements; sometimes applied to the debased style of the later Roman Empire, but especially to the more developed architecture prevailing from the 8th to the 12th centuries.

The Abbey Church of Saint Denis, also known as the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis, is a large medieval abbey church in the commune of Saint Denis, now a northern suburb of Paris. This site originated as a Gallo-Roman cemetery in late Roman times. Around 475 CE, St. Genevieve established a church at this site. In the 7th century, this structure was replaced by a much grander construction, on the orders of Dagobert I, King of the Franks.

The Basilica of Saint Denis is an architectural landmark, the first major structure of which a substantial part was designed and built in the Gothic style . Both stylistically and structurally, it heralded the change from Romanesque architecture to Gothic architecture . Before the term "Gothic" came into common use, it was known as the "French Style."

Saint Denis is a patron saint of France and, according to legend, was the first Bishop of Paris. Legend says that he was decapitated on the Hill of Montmartre and subsequently carried his head to the site of the current church, indicating where he wanted to be buried.



Saint Denis, from the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris: Saint Denis was martyred in connection with the Decian persecution of Christians, shortly after CE 250.

Dagobert I refounded the church as the Abbey of Saint Denis, a Benedictine monastery. Dagobert also commissioned a new shrine to house the saint's remains; it was created by his chief counselor, Eligius, a goldsmith by training.



Tomb of Dagobert I: Dagobert's tomb was improved during the 13th century at the Basilica of Saint Denis.

Abbot Suger

Abbot Suger (circa 1081-1151), Abbot of Saint Denis from 1122 and a friend and confidant of French kings, had been given the abbey as an oblate at the age of 10 and began work around 1135 on rebuilding and enlarging it.

Suger was the patron of the rebuilding of Saint Denis, but not the architect, as was often assumed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In fact it appears that two distinct architects, or master masons, were involved in the 12th century changes. Both remain anonymous, but their work can be distinguished stylistically. The first, who was responsible for the initial work at the western end, favored conventional Romanesque capitals and molding profiles with rich and individualized detailing. His successor, who completed the western facade and upper stories of the narthex before going on to build the new choir , displayed a more restrained approach to decorative effects, relying on a simple repertoire of motifs , which may have proved more suitable for the lighter Gothic style that he helped to create.

Suger's western extension was completed in 1140 and the three new chapels in the narthex were consecrated on June 9th of that year. On completion of the west front, Abbot Suger moved on to the reconstruction of the eastern end. He wanted a choir (chancel) that would be suffused with light. To achieve his aims, Suger's masons drew on the new elements that had evolved or been introduced to Romanesque architecture: the pointed arch , the ribbed vault , the ambulatory with radiating chapels, the clustered

columns supporting ribs springing in different directions, and the flying buttresses , which enabled the insertion of large clerestory windows. This was the first time that these features had all been brought together. The new structure was finished and dedicated on June 11th of 1144, in the presence of the King.



Abbey Church of Saint Denis: This is the west facade of the Basilica of Saint Denis, showcasing the distinct features of Romanesque architecture.

Thus, the Abbey of Saint Denis became the prototype for further building in the royal domain of northern France. Through the rule of the Angevin dynasty , the style was introduced to England and spread throughout France, the Low Countries, Germany, Spain, northern Italy, and Sicily.

The dark Romanesque nave , with its thick walls and small window openings, was rebuilt using the latest techniques, in what is now known as Gothic. This new style, which differed from Suger's earlier works as much as they had differed from their Romanesque precursors , reduced the wall area to an absolute minimum. Solid masonry was replaced with vast window openings filled with brilliant stained glass and interrupted only by the most slender of bar tracery—not only in the clerestory but also, perhaps for the first time, in the normally dark triforium level. The upper facades of the two much-enlarged transepts were filled with two spectacular rose windows . As with Suger's earlier rebuilding work, the identity of the architect or master mason is unknown.

The abbey is often referred to as the "royal necropolis of France" as it is the site where the kings of France and their families were buried for centuries. All but three of the monarchs of France from the 10th century until 1789 have their remains here. The effigies of many of the kings and queens are on their tombs, but during the French Revolution , those tombs were opened and the bodies were moved to mass graves.

Gothic Architecture: La Saint-Chapelle

Louis IX's patronage of the arts drove much innovation in Gothic art and architecture, exemplified by his commission of La Saint-Chappelle, an example of Rayonnant Gothic architecture.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the innovations in Gothic art and architecture seen in La Saint-Chappelle

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Louis IX established the Gothic chapel Sainte-Chapelle to house his collection of Christian relics in the mid-13th century.
- Louis IX's artistic and architectural patronage was both innovative and highly influential among European royalty.
- Louis IX was made a saint in 1297, and remains the only French monarch to have been canonized.
- Sainte-Chapelle epitomized the Rayonnant Gothic style of architecture.

Key Terms

- **Rayonnant Gothic**: The period of French Gothic architecture between c. 1240 and 1350, characterized by a shift in focus away from the High Gothic mode of great scale and height toward a greater concern for two dimensional surfaces and the repetition of decorative motifs at different scales. Rayonnant structures tend to be smaller than High Gothic Cathedrals. This style is also known as Court Style.
- **Sainte-Chapelle**: A chapel in the courtyard of the royal palace on the Île de la Cité, built to house Louis IX's collection of Holy relics.

Louis IX ruled during the so-called "golden century of Saint Louis," when the Kingdom of France was at its height of power in Europe, both politically and economically. The king of France was regarded as a *primus inter pares* among the kings and rulers of the continent. He commanded the largest army, and ruled the largest and most wealthy kingdom of Europe, which was the European center of arts and intellectual thought (La Sorbonne) at the time. The prestige and respect for King Louis IX resulted more from his benevolent personality than from his military domination. For his contemporaries, he was the quintessential example of the Christian prince, and embodied the whole of Christendom in his person. The King was later recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church.



Bust of St. Louis, ca. 1300 from the church of Mainneville, Eure, France: Louis IX, or Saint Louis, was a revered leader and strong patron of the arts during the Gothic period.

The style of Louis' court radiated throughout Europe through the purchase of art objects from Parisian masters for export and by the marriage of the King's daughters and female relatives to foreign husbands. Louis' personal chapel, La Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, was copied more than once by his descendants elsewhere.



Sainte-Chapelle, ceiling of the lower chapel: Saint Louis' Sainte-Chapelle epitomizes the Rayonnant Gothic style as was King Louis IX's personal chapel.

La Sainte-Chapelle (The Holy Chapel) is one of the only surviving buildings of the Capetian royal palace on the Île de la Cité in the heart of Paris, France. It was commissioned by King Louis IX of France to house his collection of relics of the passion, including the Crown of Thorns—one of the most important relics in medieval Christendom. Begun some time after 1239 and consecrated on April 26, 1248, the Sainte-Chapelle is considered among the highest achievements of the Rayonnant period of Gothic architecture . Although damaged during the French revolution and heavily restored in the 19th century, it retains one of the most extensive *in-situ* collections (collections that are still in their original positions) of 13th century stained glass anywhere in the world. The glass depicts stories from the Old Testament and focuses heavily on the depictions of biblical kings, both good and bad. Scholars believe the inclusion of "bad" kings, along with the good, were meant as a lesson for the royal viewer to learn from both good and bad examples of rulership.

La Sainte-Chapelle is a prime example of the phase of Gothic architectural style called "Rayonnant Gothic," also known as Court Style, and is marked by its sense of weightlessness and strong vertical emphasis. Rayonnant structures tend to be smaller than the High Gothic Cathedrals that came before them. La Sainte-Chapelle stands squarely upon a lower chapel, which served as parish church for all the inhabitants of the palace, which was the seat of government. However, the chapel proper was a private royal chapel and scholars have noted how the structure almost looks like metalwork , as if the chapel itself is a reliquary .

English Gothic Architecture

English Gothic architecture (c. 1180–1520) is defined by pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses, large windows, and spires.

Learning Objectives

Define the characteristics and particular styles of English Gothic architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Gothic style originated in France with the choir of the Basilique Saint-Denis, built by Abbot Suger and dedicated in June 1144.
- The lancet , a pointed arch , was the most crucial development of the Early Gothic period (c. 1180–1250), resulting in graceful buildings with thinner walls and more light.
- While French Gothic Cathedrals were built to be increasingly tall, English Gothic Cathedrals tended to emphasize the length of the building rather than the height.
- The Decorated Gothic Period (c. 1250–1350) is subdivided into the earlier Geometric Period and later Curvilinear Period, differentiated by styles of window tracery .
- Known for emphasizing vertical lines , the austerity of the Perpendicular Gothic Period was a response to the pandemic Black Death , which emerged in England in 1348.

Key Terms

- **Decorated Gothic Period**: A name given specifically to a division of English Gothic architecture, which was broken into two periods: the Geometric style (1250–1290) and the Curvilinear style (1290–1350).
- **choir**: The part of a church where the singing group assembles for song.
- **Early English Gothic Period** :A period in the late 12th century, characterized by pointed arches, that superseded the Romanesque style.

Gothic architecture flourished in England from approximately 1180 to 1520. This style is defined by pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses , large windows, and spires . The Gothic style was first developed in France, where the various elements had first been used together within a single building at the choir of the Basilique Saint-Denis north of Paris, built by Abbot Suger and dedicated in June 1144. The English adopted the Gothic style, however, they adapted it to their own regional preferences. While French Gothic Cathedrals were built to be increasingly tall, English Gothic Cathedrals tended to emphasize the length of the building rather than the height.



Wells Cathedral, Somerset, England: This Cathedral showcases characteristics of Gothic architecture with the pointed arches, vaulted roofs, buttresses, large windows, and spires, but emphasizes the length of the building, rather than the height.

Many of the largest and finest works of English architecture, notably the medieval cathedrals of England, are largely built in the Gothic style. The earliest large-scale applications of Gothic architecture in England are at Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey . Castles, palaces, great houses, universities, parish churches, and many smaller unpretentious secular buildings, including almshouses and trade halls, were also built in this style.

Early English Gothic Period

The Early English Gothic period lasted from the late 12th century until midway through the 13th century, according to most modern scholars. By 1175, the Gothic style had been firmly established in England with the completion of the Choir at Canterbury Cathedral by William of Sens.

The most significant characteristic development of the Early English period was the pointed arch known as the *lancet*. Compared with the rounded Romanesque style, the pointed arch of the Early English Gothic is aesthetically more elegant and is more efficient at distributing the weight of stonework, making it possible to span higher and wider gaps using narrower columns . It also allows for much greater variation in proportions.

Using the pointed arch, walls could become less massive and window openings could be larger and grouped more closely together, so architects could achieve more open, airy, and graceful buildings. At its purest, the style was simple and austere, emphasizing the height of the building, as if aspiring heavenward. In the late 12th century the Early English Gothic style superseded the Romanesque style, and during the late 13th century it developed into the Decorated Gothic style, which lasted until the mid 14th century.

Decorated Gothic Period

The Decorated period in architecture is traditionally broken into two periods: the Geometric style (1250–1290) and the Curvilinear style (1290–1350). Decorated architecture is characterized by its window tracery, which are elaborate patterns that fill the top portions of windows. The tracery style was geometric at first, and flowing in the later period during the 14th century. Vaulting also became more elaborate, with the use of increasing numbers of ribs , initially for structural and later for aesthetic reasons.

Examples of the Decorated style can be found in many British churches and cathedrals. Principal examples are the east ends of Lincoln Cathedral and of Carlisle Cathedral and the west fronts of York Minster and of Lichfield Cathedral.



York Minster Cathedral: The west front of York Minster Cathedral is a fine example of Decorated architecture, in particular the elaborate tracery on the main window. This period saw detailed carving reach its peak, with elaborately carved windows and capitals, often with floral patterns.

Perpendicular Gothic Period

The Perpendicular Gothic period is the third historical division of English Gothic architecture, and is characterized by an emphasis on vertical lines. The Perpendicular style began under the royal architects William Ramsey and John Sponlee, and lasted into the mid 16th century.

The Perpendicular style grew out of the shadow of the Black Death, a disease that killed approximately half of England's population in 18 months between June 1348 and December 1349 and returned in 1361–62 to kill another fifth of the population. This epidemic dramatically impacted every aspect of society, including arts and culture , and designers moved away from the flamboyance and jubilation present in the Decorated style. Architects were also responding to labor shortages resulting from the plague, and therefore relied on less elaborate designs.

Perpendicular linearity is particularly obvious in the design of windows, which became immense, allowing greater scope for stained glass craftsmen. Some of the finest features of this period are the magnificent timber roofs: hammerbeam roofs, such as those of Westminster Hall (1395), Christ Church Hall, Oxford, and Crosby Hall, appeared for the first time. Gothic architecture continued to flourish in England for 100 years after the precepts of Renaissance architecture were formalized in Florence in the early 15th century.



Gloucester Cathedral: The Gloucester Cathedral exemplifies the Perpendicular Gothic Period. The interior conveys an impression of a “cage” of stone and glass, typical of the period. The walls and windows are sharper and less flamboyant than those of the earlier style.

German Gothic Architecture

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval period in the Holy Roman Empire, from approximately 1140–1400.

Learning Objectives

Summarize the principal features of German Gothic architecture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Gothic style first developed in France. Territories that constitute modern day Germany adopted the French Gothic and developed regional distinctions to this style.
- Brick Gothic is a style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea without natural rock resources where the buildings are built, more or less, using only bricks.
- Hall churches are another distinctively German adaptation to the French Gothic style.

Key Terms

- **nave**: The middle or body of a church, extending from the transepts to the principal entrances.
- **Middle Ages**: The period of time in Europe between the decline of the Roman Empire and the revival of letters (the Renaissance) or, according to Henry Hallam, the period beginning with the sixth and ending with the fifteenth century.
- **spire**: A tapering structure built on a roof or tower, especially as one of the central architectural features of a church or cathedral roof.

Gothic architecture flourished during the high and late medieval period in the Holy Roman Empire, from approximately 1140–1400. The Gothic style first developed in France. Territories that constitute modern day Germany adopted the French Gothic and developed regional distinctions to this style.

German Gothic architecture is notable for its enormous towers and spires . Sometimes they were so big that they were left unfinished until modern times. The spires are quite different than English spires because they are made of lacy “openwork.” There are also many hallenkirke (or hall churches), which have no clerestorey windows. The nave and the aisles are about the same height.

Freiburg Cathedral was built in three stages, the first beginning in 1120 under the Dukes of Zahringen, the second beginning in 1210, and the third in 1230. Of the original building, only the foundations still exist. It is particularly notable for its 116-meter

tower, which is nearly square at the base , and the dodecagonal star gallery at its center. Above this gallery, the tower is octagonal and tapered, with the spire at the top. It is the only Gothic church tower in Germany completed in the Middle Ages (1330) that survived the November 1944 bombing raids that destroyed all of the houses on the west and north side of the market.



Freiburg Cathedral: View of the Freiburg Cathedral in Germany

Cologne Cathedral is, after Milan Cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world. Construction began in 1248 and took, with interruptions, until 1880 to complete—a period of over 600 years. It is 144.5 metres long, 86.5 m wide, and its two towers are 157 m tall. Because of its enormous twin spires, it also has the largest façade of any church in the world. The choir of the cathedral, measured between the piers , also holds the distinction of having the largest height to width ratio of any Medieval church.



Cologne Cathedral: The Cologne Cathedral is an example of German Gothic architecture.

The building of Gothic churches was accompanied by the construction of guild houses and town halls by the rising bourgeoisie. Examples are the Gothic Town Hall (13th century) at Stralsund, Bremen Town Hall (1410), and the (reconstructed) city hall of Munster (originally from 1350).

The dwellings of this period were mainly timber-framed buildings, as can still be seen in Goslar and Quedlinburg. Quedlinburg has one of the oldest half-timbered houses in Germany. The method of construction, used extensively for town houses of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, lasted into the twentieth century for rural buildings.

Brick Gothic

Brick Gothic (Backsteingotik) is a specific style of Gothic architecture common in Northern Europe, especially in Northern Germany and the regions around the Baltic Sea that lack natural rock resources. The structures are built, more or less, using only bricks. Stralsund City Hall and St. Nicholas Church are examples of this style. Cities such as Lubeck, Rostock, Wismar, Stralsund, and Greifswald are shaped by this regional style. St. Mary's in Lübeck, built between 1200 and 1350, was a model for many North German churches.

Hall Churches

Hall churches are another example of German Gothic architecture that is distinct from French Gothic. In hall churches, the aisles and nave are almost the same height and the stained glass windows are typically the full height of the walls, allowing in maximum light and space .



Munich Frauenkirche, Bavaria: Hall churches are a distinctively German interpretation of the Gothic style.

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14.3: Gothic Sculpture

Gothic Sculpture

Gothic art existed as monumental religious sculpture in churches, such as in the Cologne Cathedral, and as small, portable sculptures.

Learning Objectives

Explain how the art of the Cologne Cathedral embodies Gothic sculpture

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The most renowned work of art in the Cologne Cathedral is the Shrine of the Three Kings, an elaborately carved reliquary traditionally believed to hold the remains of the Three Magi or Three Wise Men.
- The Gero-Kreuz, a large crucifix carved in oak with traces of paint and gilding is the oldest large crucifix north of the Alps.
- Aside from monumental sculpture, smaller, portable sculptural pieces were also popular during the Gothic period in some urban centers, taking the form of small reliefs in ivory , bone, and wood and covering both religious and secular subjects.

Key Terms

- **gilt**: A thin layer of gold or other metal; gilding.
- **sacristy**: A room in a church where sacred vessels, books, vestments, etc. are kept. Sometimes also used by clergy to prepare for worship or for meetings.
- **polyptych**: A work consisting of multiple painted or carved panels joined together, often with hinges.

Gothic art was a style that developed concurrently with Gothic architecture during the mid-12th century. Primary media in the Gothic period included sculpture, panel painting, stained glass fresco , and illuminated manuscripts . The earliest Gothic art existed as monumental sculpture on the walls of cathedrals and abbeys . Elaborate sculpture was used extensively to decorate the facades of these buildings.

Cologne Cathedral

The Cologne Cathedral is a renowned monument to German Gothic architecture as well as a World Heritage Site home to numerous works of art and decorative sculpture. Its exterior serves as a stunning example of German Gothic architecture, while its interior houses numerous examples of gothic sculpture and artwork.



Cologne Cathedral: The Cologne Cathedral is an example of German Gothic architecture.

One of the important works in the cathedral is the High Altar, installed in 1322. It is constructed out of black marble, with a solid slab 15 feet long forming the top. The front and sides are overlaid with white marble, nine inches into which figure are set, with the Coronation of the Virgin at the centre.

The most renowned work of art in the cathedral is the Shrine of the Three Kings. It was commissioned by Philip von Heinsberg, archbishop of Cologne from 1167 to 1191, and created by Nicholas of Verdun. It is traditionally believed to hold the remains of the Three Magi or Three Wise Men, whose relics were acquired at the conquest of Milan in 1164. The shrine takes the form of a large reliquary in the shape of a basilican church, made of bronze and silver. It is gilded and ornamented with architectonic details, figurative sculpture, enamels, and gemstones. The entire outside of the shrine is covered with an elaborate decorative overlay. There are 74 high relief figures in silver gilt in all, not counting smaller additional figures in the background decoration. On the sides, images of the prophets decorate the lower sections, while images of the apostles and evangelists decorate the upper part. On one end, there are (across the bottom, from left to right) images of the Adoration of the Magi, Mary enthroned with the infant Jesus, and the baptism of Christ. Above, one may see Christ enthroned at the Last Judgment. The opposite end shows scenes of the Passion: the scourging of Christ (lower left), and his crucifixion (lower left), with the resurrected Christ above. The figures, with their fully modeled bodies and wet drapery , demonstrate how sculptors in the Gothic period were familiar with classical references and were able to employ them in their works.



Shrine of the Three Kings: The Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne Cathedral is said to house the remains of the Three Magi and serves as an example of German Gothic sculpture.

Near the sacristy is the Gero-Kreuz, a large crucifix carved in oak with restored paint and gilding. It is the oldest large crucifix north of the Alps, as well as the oldest known free standing Northern sculpture of the medieval period.



The Gero-Kreuz: The Gero-Kreuz is the oldest large sculpture of the crucified Christ north of the Alps and is located in the Cologne Cathedral.

Portable Sculpture

Aside from monumental sculpture, smaller, portable sculptural pieces were also popular during the Gothic period. Small carvings, made generally for the lay market, became a considerable industry in urban centers. Gothic sculptures independent of architectural ornament were primarily created as devotional objects for the home or intended as donations for local churches. Nevertheless, small reliefs in ivory, bone, and wood covered both religious, as well as secular subjects, and were for church and domestic use. Such sculptures were often the work of urban artisans. The most typical subject for three dimensional small statues is the Virgin Mary alone or with child. Additional objects typical of the time included small devotional polyptychs, single figures, especially of the Virgin Mary, mirror-cases, combs, and elaborate caskets with scenes from romances.

Italian Gothic Sculpture: The Pisano Family

Nicola Pisano and his son Giovanni developed a Proto-Renaissance style of sculpture in Italy combining classical Roman and Gothic styles.

Learning Objectives

Describe the Proto-Renaissance style of sculpture developed by the Pisano family

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The Pisano family's relief sculptures drew heavily from carved Roman sarcophagi and were characterized by sophisticated and crowded compositions and a sympathetic handling of nudity.
- Nicola Pisano was born between 1220 and 1225. He was active in Tuscany and trained in the local workshops of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II.
- Nicola Pisano's most famous work is the pulpit at the Pisa Baptistery, which synthesizes Classical and French Gothic styles and depicts scenes from the life of Christ. The inspiration for the structure probably came from the triumphal Arch of Constantine in Rome .
- Giovanni Pisano was born in Pisa around 1250 and trained as a sculptor in his father's workshop. He worked alongside his father on the pulpit in the Siena Cathedral and the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia.
- Giovanni's early style was almost indistinguishable from his father's but developed further after Nicola's death. It was more French Gothic than Classical in style and characterized by bold naturalism and animated figures.
- Giovanni's greatest work is a pulpit at the Cathedral of Pisa, which depicts nine dramatic scenes from the New Testament carved in white marble with a chiaroscuro effect, and a naturalistic carving of a naked Hercules .

Key Terms

- **pulpit**: A raised platform in a church, usually enclosed, where the minister or preacher stands to conduct the sermon.
- **sarcophagus**: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.

Nicola Pisano (ca. 1220–1284) and his son Giovanni Pisano (ca. 1250–1315) were Italian sculptors during the Gothic age who developed a Classical-influenced style of sculpture known as Proto-Renaissance. Their relief sculptures drew heavily from the carved Roman sarcophagus and were characterized by sophisticated and crowded compositions and a sympathetic handling of nudity. They are sometimes considered to be the first modern sculptors.

The specifics of Nicola Pisano's origins are uncertain. He was born between 1220 and 1225 in the southern Italian region of Apulia and trained in the local workshops of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. He moved to Tuscany around 1245 and was active in the cities of Lucca, Pisa, Siena, Pistoia, and Perugia. His most famous work is the pulpit of the Pisa baptistery, which is a masterful synthesis of the French Gothic style and Classical style. Made of white Carrara marble, the pulpit depicts scenes from the life of Jesus Christ in a Classical style. The figures wear tunics in a Roman fashion, and his representation of the Madonna is reminiscent of the regal bearing of goddesses in late Roman sculpture. The inspiration for the pulpit probably came from the triumphal arches in Rome. Nicola Pisano had seen the arches on his travels, particularly the Arch of Constantine, which has many features the pulpit imitates, including figures standing on top of columns and an attic storey with sculpted scenes.



Detail of the pulpit at Pisa Baptistery: Pulpit (detail): the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Adoration of the Magi. The trefoil arches supporting the pulpit show French Gothic influence.

Other well-known projects undertaken by Nicola Pisano include a marble pulpit for the Siena Cathedral, a commission he received after making his name in Pisa, and the Fontana Maggiore or Great Fountain at Perugia, which he worked on alongside his son Giovanni.



Fontana Maggiore, Perugia: Nicola and Giovanni Pisano worked side by side on the Fontana Maggiore at Perugia. On the twenty-five sides of the basin are sculptures representing prophets and saints, the labors of the months, the signs of the zodiac, scenes from Genesis, and events from Roman history.

Nicola's son, Giovanni Pisano, was born in Pisa around 1250 and trained as a sculptor in his father's workshop. He worked alongside his father on the pulpit in the Siena Cathedral and the *Fontana Maggiore* in Perugia. His earliest works imitated his father's style, and it is difficult to separate the contributions of the two sculptors. However, after his Nicola's death, Giovanni's style grew more distinct. While it continued to incorporate Classical influences, it was more French Gothic in style and characterized by a bold, dramatic animation that had been missing in Nicola's serene sculptural style.

Giovanni was the chief architect of the Siena Cathedral between 1287 and 1296. He also worked on statues decorating the exterior of the Pisa Baptistery, the facade of the church of San Paolo a Ripa d'Arno (St. Paul on the Bank of the Arno) at Pisa, and a monument commissioned by the emperor Henry VII, commemorating his wife Margaret of Brabant.

Giovanni's greatest work is arguably a pulpit at the Cathedral of Pisa sculpted between 1302 and 1310. The pulpit incorporates a dramatic depiction of nine scenes from the New Testament carved in white marble with a chiaroscuro effect and a naturalistic carving of a nude Hercules. The figure of *Prudence* in the pulpit is thought to have been an inspiration for the Tuscan painter Masaccio in his *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*.



Pulpit of Pisa Cathedral: The pulpit at the Pisa Cathedral shows Giovanni Pisano's distinct preference for a bold, animated style.

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14.4: Gothic Painting

Italian Gothic Painting

Italian Gothic painting developed a distinctively western character and flourished from the second half of the 13th century onward.

Learning Objectives

Explain Cimabue's and Duccio's break from Italo-Byzantine style into the Italian Gothic style of painting

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic style of painting happened quite slowly in Italy because Italy was strongly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting.
- The initial changes to the Byzantine-inspired Romanesque style were quite small, marked merely by an increase in Gothic ornamental detailing rather than a dramatic difference in the style of figures and compositions .
- Cimabue of Florence and Duccio of Siena were trained in the Byzantine style but were the first great Italian painters to break away from the Italo-Byzantine art form . They were pioneers in the move towards naturalism and depicted figures with more lifelike proportions, expressions, and shading.
- Giotto's style represented a clear break with the Byzantine tradition, making use of foreshortening , chiaroscuro techniques, and depicting highly expressive figures.
- During the 14th century, Tuscan painting was predominantly accomplished in the International Gothic style, characterized by a formalized sweetness and grace, elegance, and richness of detail, and an idealized quality.

Key Terms

- **Romanesque**: Refers to the art of Europe from approximately 1000 AD to the rise of the Gothic style in the 13th century or later, depending on region.
- **chiaroscuro**: An artistic technique popularized during the Renaissance, referring to the use of exaggerated light contrasts in order to create the illusion of volume.
- **Foreshortening**: A technique for creating the appearance that the object of a drawing is extending into space by shortening the lines with which that object is drawn.

The transition from the Romanesque to the Gothic style of painting happened quite slowly in Italy, several decades after it had first taken hold in France. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade , the influx of Byzantine paintings and mosaics increased greatly. This was partly the reason that Italy was strongly influenced by Byzantine art, especially in painting.

The initial changes to the Byzantine-inspired Romanesque style were quite small, marked merely by an increase in Gothic ornamental detailing rather than a dramatic difference in the style of figures and compositions. Italian Gothic painting began to flourish in its own right around the second half of the 13th century with the contributions of Cimabue of Florence (ca. 1240–c a. 1302) and Duccio of Siena (ca. 1255–60–ca. 1318–19), and developed an even more strongly realistic character under Giotto (1266–1337).

Cimabue and Duccio were trained in the Byzantine style, but they were the first great Italian painters to start breaking away from the Italo-Byzantine art form. In a period when scenes and forms were still relatively flat and stylized , Cimabue was a pioneer in the move towards naturalism in Italian painting. His figures were depicted with more lifelike proportions and shading, as evident in the Crucifixion scene for the church of Santa Croce in Florence (1287-88), which demonstrates delicately shaded draperies and the chiaroscuro technique. His *Maestà di Santa Trinita*, a Madonna and Child painting commissioned by the church of Santa Trinita in Florence between 1290 and 1300, makes use of perspective in portraying Mary's three-dimensional throne, and depicts the figures with sweeter and more natural expressions than typical in the somber Romanesque style.



Crucifixion of Santa Croce (Tempera on Wood): The figure of Christ slumps heavily to one side and is clad in delicate, folded drapery in Cimabue's Crucifixion.

Much like Cimabue, Duccio of Siena painted in the Byzantine style but made his own personal contributions in the Gothic style in the linearity, the rich but delicate detail, and the warm and refined colors of his work. He was also one of the first Italian painters to place figures in architectural settings. Over time, he achieved greater naturalism and softness in his work and made use of foreshortening and chiaroscuro techniques. His characters are surprisingly expressive and human, interacting tenderly with each other. Duccio is considered the founder of the Sienese Gothic school of painting.



Maestà del Duomo di Siena (Tempera and Gold on Wood): The Maestà of the Siena Cathedral is a painted altarpiece composed of many individual paintings. It was commissioned in 1308 by the city of Siena and is widely regarded as Duccio's masterpiece.

Both Cimabue and Duccio were probably influenced by Giotto in their later years. Giotto was renowned for his distinctively western style, basing his compositions not on a Byzantine tradition but, rather, on his observation of life. His figures were solidly three-dimensional, had discernible anatomy, and were clothed with garments that appear to have weight and structure. His greatest contribution to Italian Gothic art was his intense depiction of a range of emotions, which his contemporaries began to emulate enthusiastically. While painting in the Gothic style, he is considered the herald of the Renaissance .

During the 14th century, Tuscan painting was predominantly accomplished in the International Gothic style, which was prevalent throughout Western Europe at the time. In its fully developed form, it is best seen in the work of Simone Martini of Siena (1284–1344) and Gentile da Fabriano (1370–1427), whose paintings are characterized by a formalized sweetness and grace, an elegance and richness of detail, and an idealized quality that was missing in Giotto's stark work. The tempera altarpieces of Fra Angelico bridge the gap between the International Gothic and Renaissance styles of painting, making use of Gothic elaboration, gold leaf , and brilliant color.

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14.5: Gothic Metalwork

Gothic Metalwork and Ivory Carvings

In France, metal and ivory pieces took on a diminutive but ornate characteristic, and required great skill to create.

Learning Objectives

Evaluate metal and ivory art work in late medieval France

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Metalworkers and sculptors working in ivory made an impact on the the art, architecture, craft, and interior design world of France during the period. While that work was often more diminutive, metal and ivory art was still quite striking.
- In France the dominant trend was towards the ornate, especially decorative pieces used as components in doors. These included door knockers, locks, and even hinges with elaborate adornment.
- Paris was a center of production for ivory sculptures of various forms . In addition to various small figures and talismans, there was a fashion for narrative panels in groups of two or three (diptychs and tryptychs), or multi-panel polytychs.

Key Terms

- **diptych**: A picture or series of pictures painted on two tablets, usually connected by hinges.
- **talisman**: A magical object worn for protection against ill will or the supernatural, or to confer the wearer with a boon such as good luck, good health, or power(s).

France is credited with exporting the Gothic style of architecture during this period. Compared to Gothic architecture , which was better known for its large dramatic features such as flying buttresses and elaborate stained glass, metal and ivory art work was often more diminutive—but it was still quite striking. Metalworkers and sculptors working in ivory made an impact on the the art, architecture, craft, and interior design world of France during the period.

Metalwork

Iron work during the Gothic period took on various styles and trends, from large rough wrought-iron works to more delicate items. In France the dominant trend was towards the ornate, especially decorative pieces used as components in doors. These included door knockers, locks, and even hinges with elaborate adornment. These works required high levels of skill and craftsmanship.

The door to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris is a key example. Notre Dame is one of the first buildings to use a flying buttress, which became characteristic of Gothic architecture. It is also well known for its sculptures, stained glass, and gargoyles. But the door of the cathedral is, in and of itself, a work of art, particularly when one takes into account the limited smithing techniques of the time.



Notre Dame de Paris—Door knocker: The elaborate door knocker is just one of the details worked into the door of the Notre Dame Cathedral.



Norte Dame de Paris—Door: The elaborate decoration of the door to Notre Dame Cathedral is a strong example of the ornate metalwork of this period.

Ivory

Ivory became available once again in Europe in the Middle Ages and created a trend for ivory sculptures of various forms. In addition to small figures and talismans, there was a fashion for narrative panels in groups of two or three (diptychs and tryptychs), or multi-panel polytychs. Paris became a center for the creation of these works. Additionally, their popularity spread beyond church art, and these pieces could be found in homes and used for decorative furnishing. These works were considered luxury items; ivory work could often be found on the backs of hairbrushes, mirrors, and other luxury items. The works often portrayed scenes of romance and love rather than the religious scenes more typical of Gothic art.



Siege of the Castle of Love—Mirror: This mirror casing is an example of the ornate ivory work that became part of everyday objects in the Middle Ages.

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14.6: Italy in the Gothic Period

Italian Painting: 1200–1400

In the early Renaissance, painters began to embrace naturalistic styles, creating images with attention to form and space.

Learning Objectives

Identify the prominent artists and styles in Italy during the Early Renaissance

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- The *Florentine School of Painting* is characterized by the naturalism in painting in Florence that started to emerge in the 13th century.
- The period between 1200 and 1400 in Italy provides an important bridge in Art History between the Medieval period and Byzantine and Gothic styles , and the Early Modern period and Renaissance styles.
- Painters began to embrace the more naturalistic styles. Harkening back to classical figures, they created images portraying strong emotion and that paid attention to relationships between figures. Their painting expressed a type of realism not present in Byzantine styles.

Key Terms

- **tempera**: A method of painting where the artist mixes pigment with water and a binder, usually egg.
- **Renaissance**: The 14th century revival of classical art, architecture, literature, and learning that originated in Italy and spread throughout Europe over the following two centuries.

The *Florentine School of Painting* is characterized by the naturalism in art that started to emerge in Florence in the 13th century. This set the stage for what would become the great period of Florentine art in later centuries that would include the work of great artists such as Michelangelo, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Donatello, and Lippi.

However, art in Florence and northern Italy during the period between 1200 and 1400 was still in transition; it was a bridge in Art History between the Medieval period and Byzantine and Gothic styles, and the Early Modern period and Renaissance styles. Sometimes referred to as the proto-Renaissance period, art and architecture in northern Italy provided important hints at the trends that would take hold over the next centuries in the rest of Europe.

City states and duchies such as Pisa, Milan, Lucca, and Florence were the main homes of these developments. In spite of the many challenges during the period, such as the ongoing ravages of the Black Plague, these city states experienced periods of politically stability and economic growth, which provided a good foundation for new experimentation in art.

In Florence, leading families prospered under the economic growth promoted through trade. Each of these leading families vied for power, but also for cultural prominence, and became great patrons of the arts (the Medici family being the prime example).

At the same time, there were great changes occurring in art both in terms of styles and philosophies. One important change was a focus on the individual in religious practices, which also translated into a greater naturalistic and humanist focus in art.

Florence

Painters in this city wholeheartedly embraced naturalist styles. Harkening back to classical figures, they created images with attention to portraying strong emotions and relationships between figures—painting that expressed a type of realism not present in Byzantine styles.

One painter who demonstrated the shift that was occurring in Florentine painting during this time is Cimabue (c.1240-1302). In his *Maesta* the viewer may observe elements of both the earlier Byzantine style of painting, as well as the emerging Renaissance style. The work retains the gold background that was familiar in Byzantine icons , and his figures are rendered in a Byzantine style. However, Cimabue made efforts to create space in this work, which would become an important aspect in Renaissance art. His angels surrounding the Virgin and Child overlap one another to indicate space and Cimabue paid great attention to the Virgin's throne to create a realistic depiction of space as well.



Cimabue, *Maesta*, c.12801285. : Cimabue's artwork reflects the changes that were occurring in Florentine painting during this period, by demonstrating both the older Byzantine style as well as the emerging Renaissance style.

Artists were able to work in Florence at least in part due to the influential art guilds , including the painters' guild Arte dei Medici e Spezeiali. These guilds also became important patrons of the arts, and took over the maintenance and improvements of religious buildings.

Siena

The Sienese School of painting was more conservative than painting in Florence, but nonetheless important, flourishing between the 1200s and 1400s. Some of the important painters from this period included Duccio and his pupils Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini, and Matteo di Giovanni.

Duccio di Buoninsegna is one of the best known Siena painters of the time. His work was often ornate with the use of gold leaf and jewels, demonstrating how Siena was focused on the physical materiality of work. His work in egg tempera also used brighter colors, rounded out features in faces and hands, and played with light and dark colors to highlight the figures under the drapery creating natural form , which was very unlike Byzantine figures but important to emerging Renaissance artists.

Duccio's work was considered quite emotional, with a renewed focus on storytelling through the interactions of figures in the images and the selection of strong interpretations of biblical stories. The altarpiece Maestà (1308–1310) is one of his great works. Composed of multiple paintings and commissioned by the city of Sienna, the piece depicts the life of the Virgin Mary and Christ. The Virgin's knee juts out toward the viewer as Duccio has created a realistic sense of form–an essential element of the emerging

Renaissance style. While his work retains the gold background and gold halos so important in Byzantine art (and to Sienese patrons), this art acts as a bridge between the late Medieval era and Early Renaissance.



Duccio, *Maestà*, 1308–1311: Duccio's work demonstrates the emerging Renaissance style, as seen in the developed form of the figures, as well as the older Byzantine styles and the Sienese preference for materiality with the use of gold.

Italian Painting: Giotto

Giotto was one of the most revered painters of his time and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.

Learning Objectives

Describe Giotto's use of naturalism, storytelling, and perspective in his work

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- Giotto di Bondone was born during the late 1200s in the Florence region of Italy. He would go on to become one of the most revered painters of his time and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.
- The Arena Chapel frescoes in Padua, which depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, are some of Giotto's best known masterpieces.
- Scholars debate which works should be attributed to Giotto and which works should be attributed to his assistants or other artists working in his style .
- Giotto's distinct contribution to the history of art was a return to a style that directly references the natural world; his paintings aimed to capture the realism of the human form .

Key Terms

- **fresco**: The technique of applying pigment, mixed with water, to wet plaster. As the pigment and plaster dry they fuse together and the painting physically becomes a part of the wall.

Giotto di Bondone was born during the late 1200s in the Florence region of Italy. He would go on to become one of the most revered painters of his time, and an important bridge between the medieval and renaissance periods.

The Arena Chapel frescoes were commissioned by the patron Enrico Scrovegni and depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. They are Giotto's best known masterpieces.



Kiss of Judas: One of the most dramatic scenes from Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes depicts the moment Judas betrays Christ by identifying him to Roman soldiers.

Scholars debate over which works should be attributed to Giotto and which works should be attributed to assistants or other artists. For example, Giotto appears to have apprenticed with the Florentine painter Cimabue in Rome and may have been responsible for portions of the Chapel at Assisi. However, there is no documentation to confirm his work in Assisi.

Giotto's distinct contribution to the history of art was a return to a style that directly references the natural world, a style that had not been emphasized by Medieval or Byzantine painters. While Medieval and Byzantine styles favored flat, elongated figures and a lack of natural perspective Giotto returned painting to a style that aimed to capture the naturalism of the human form.

Another strength of Giotto's work was his storytelling ability. He was skilled at selecting strong interpretations of Biblical stories and at drawing viewers to the most visually and spiritually rich aspects of the story. This focus on relationships between figures, as well as a renewed interest in perspective and life drawing, are some of the aspects that would become prominent in Renaissance painting.

Italian Architecture 1200-1400

The Gothic style was the leading architectural style in Italy during this time period. However, Italian architects interpreted Gothic architecture differently than they did in France, resulting in a few key regional differences.

Learning Objectives

Discuss the architecture of Florence, Italy, during the Middle Ages and the architecture of the Florence Cathedral

Key Takeaways

Key Points

- While the French Gothic style gained popularity in many parts of Europe, the Gothic style was interpreted differently in Italy.
- Gothic buildings in cities such as Florence lack the stained glass that characterizes French Gothic structures and as a whole they lack the emphasized verticality of French Gothic Cathedrals .
- The Florence Cathedral is an example of the Gothic style in Italy.

Key Terms

- **lancet**: A tall, narrow archway with a pointed arch at its top.
- **flying buttress**: A buttress that stands apart from the structure that it supports, and is connected to it by an arch (flyer).

Florence: Architecture and Metalwork

Gothic architecture was developed in France and was characterized by lancet , or pointed, archways used for both windows and doorways. These allowed for both thinner walls and larger windows. The stained glass windows that seemed to replace walls altogether are the hallmark of French Gothic architecture. Other characteristics of the Gothic style include the increased use of flying buttresses to support walls, and a shift towards more slender and ornate columns , and vaulted ceilings.

While the French Gothic style gained popularity in many parts of Europe, the Gothic style was interpreted differently in Italy. Gothic buildings in cities such as Florence lack the stained glass that characterizes French Gothic structures and as a whole they lack the emphasized verticality of French Gothic Cathedrals.

Florence Cathedral

The Florence Cathedral is a great example of the Gothic style in Italy. Begun in 1296, the Cathedral is built in the Gothic style as Renaissance architecture had yet to be developed.



Florence Cathedral, begun 1296: The Cathedral is pictured lit up at night, showcasing its Gothic style and large dome.

As the exterior view of the Cathedral demonstrates, Italian Gothic structures did not incorporate the stained glass windows, which had become so essential to French Gothic structures. The interior of the Cathedral, including the groin vaults and pointed arches , demonstrates the Gothic elements of its architecture quite clearly.



Florence Cathedral, Interior view, begun 1296: In the interior of the Cathedral, you can see the Gothic elements, such as the groin vaults and pointed arches.

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