Greek Art Essay, Research Paper

﻿Greek art is a very important in the upper paleolithic period. Art objects and artifacts are

important sources of information about civilization prior to written history. The number of

artworks lost because of their impermanence can only be imagined, since many were created by

using organic materials subject to destruction by fire, flood, and decay. By comparison, objects

made from metal or stone are more likely to survive The Aegean basin was a center of artistic

activity from early times see AEGEAN CIVILIZATIONS the ravages of time and nature. They

too, however, are susceptible to deterioration and may bring to our eyes a decidedly different

appearance than they possessed originally. Among the earliest objects that have survived are

stone figures archaeologists have given the title of Venus of willendorf a small stone figure

found in Austria, dating from 20,000 B.C.. I think it is a symbolic sculpture most probably

designed to represent and call forth human fertility. In many early civilization, people associated

fecundity with the female rather than the male and chose to represent females in their ceremonial

images. The reduction of detail and the exaggeration of aspects of the human from in the

twentieth-century sculpture, in which a realistic representation of from is likewise not the artist?s

primary goal.

Because of their artistic quality, state of preservation, and antiquity, the paintings in the

Lascaux caves near Montiganac, France, are among the most important art discoveries of the

twentieth century. According to one widely accepted story, the paintings were discovered in

1941 by children playing in a field. Deep within those caves, early artists had painted humans

and animal figures and weapons, using mixtures of yellow and red ochre-natural found in iron

ore. In spite of fragile nature of material used in these paintings, the images have survived. In

places, the walls are nearly covered with stylized figures representing animals that inhabited

western Europe 15,00 years ago. It is one thing to represent an animal with proportional

accuracy, but quite another to express its nature and movement. These unnamed artists captured

the essence of the animals, by using expressive lines and subtle colors.

Because most of the record of the people of the Paleolithic period has been destroyed by

natural as well as human forces, we will never know with certainty the purposes of their art

objects. They may have been used in religious rituals related to some aspect of the hunt: they

may have express recognition of the common sprit among living things. Nevertheless, we can

safely conjecture that both the Venus of Willendorf and the cave paintings of Lascaux were

objects associated with the early religion. One thing is known: in those early millennia, art played

an important role in life.

The western world has always looked upon ancient Greece as the cradle of its cultural

development. The Greeks have always stride for perfection. In the Archaic age of Greek art,

extending from about100 B.C.., is the age in which the indigenous Greek art was slowly

developing. The second period, often called the Lyric Age and extending from 800 B.C., to the

sixth century B.C., is noted for its expressiveness and realism. This is the great age of lyric

poetry, from which the period takes its name. The Golden Age flourished in the fifth century

B.C. and went on to the fourth century B.C., is considered the high point of Greek culture.

During this era, there occurred such a development in drama, architecture, sculpture, and music

that the age is still looked upon as the source from which our own culture emerged. The

Hellenistic period of Greek culture dates from about 325 B.C. to 100B.C. and is viewed as a

period of decadent Greek art.

The importance of Greek art and architecture for the history of Western civilization can hardly

be overstated, for the Greeks established many of the most enduring themes, attitudes, and forms

of Western culture. The stories told in Greek art and literature of gods and heroes have been

retold ever since and continue to form a common ground for the art, literature, and even popular

culture of the Western world.

Greek artists were the first to establish mimesis (imitation of nature) as a guiding principle for art,

even as Greek philosophers debated the intellectual value of this approach. The repeated

depiction of the nude human figure in Greek art reflects Greek humanism a belief that “Man is

the measure of all things,” in the words of Greek philosopher Protagoras. Architecture is another

Greek legacy that the West has inherited, as Greece established many of the structural elements,

decorative motifs, and building types still used in architecture today.

Two great cultures-the MINOAN CIVILIZATION and the MYCENEAN CIVILIZATION-

developed complex and delicate art forms. After the invasion of the Dorians and other barbarians

(before 1000 B.C.), the curvilinear designs and naturalistic representations of the Mycenean age

were replaced by geometric schemes with linear patterns. The transformation is seen in late

geometric (c.900-700 B.C.) pottery. Between 700 and 600 B.C., Asian influence led to the use of

floral and arabesque patterns and monster and animal themes. Then, during the archaic period

(c.660-480 B.C.), sculpture became the principal form of artistic expression. The statues of nude

walking youths, kouroi, suggesting Egyptian prototypes but distinct in stylization and tension of

movement, e.g., Kouros (Metropolitan Mus.), date from this period. Draped female figures show

Asian influence, e.g., Hera of Samos (Louvre). The outstanding Athenian school of black-figure

vase painting led by Execias depicted mythological and contemporary scenes. A greater concern

with three-dimensional space and naturalistic detail emerged with red-figure vase painting

(c.525). Euthymides and Euphronius were early masters. The early classical period revealed new

insight into the structure of the human form (c.480-450 B.C.). e.g., the sculptures from the

temple of Zeus at Olympia, the bronze Charioteer (museum; Delphi), and the Zeus or Poseidon

(Athens, National Mus.). During the Golden Age, the height of the classical period (450-400

B.C.), Polykleitos arrived at a rational norm for the ideal figure. The magnificent sculptures from

the ACROPOLIS and its PARTHENON, thought to have been designed by PHIDIAS, exemplify

this ideal. In the late classical period (400-300 B.C.), there was more emphasis on emotion in art.

The works attributed to PRAXITELES are elegant and graceful; to SCOPAS, strongly emotional;

and to LYSIPPOS, individualized, though their sculptures largely survive as fragments or Roman

copies. The works of the painters of the period, e.g., Apollodorus and APELLES, are known only

through description. The Hellenistic period began with the conquests of Alexander the Great.

Masterpieces of the period include the Nike (Victory) of Samothrace and Aphrodite of Melos

(both: Louvre); the Pergamum Frieze (Berlin Mus.); the Roman copies of the Odyssey Landscape

(Vatican), a painting with great spatial illusionism; and the Laoco??n and his Sons (Vatican).

Despite its decline, Greek culture and art inspired Western art throughout history.

The Greeks developed a style that incorporated an idealized yet realistic approach to the

representation of the figure. Greek artists moved toward an expression based on observation of

living beings and refinement of anatomical elements. Gods and goddesses were imagined in

human form but ideal in proportion, without imperfections. The unclothed human figure in its

most perfect manifestation was admired for its harmonious beauty. The archetypical proportions

of the human body were the measure and standard of beauty for all things.

The ancient Greeks lived in a world filled with divine and semi-divine beings. Their religious

beliefs and folk traditions were expressed in human terms with gods and goddesses, demi-gods,

and heroes often conquering animals and mythical beasts. Even such an abstract idea as poetic

inspiration was given human form. Representations of all these beings are found in Greek art: in

temples or in public spaces, on everyday objects of bronze, ceramic, and precious materials.

Concepts which today are considered exclusively religious were an integral part of daily

existence.

Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, was the fertile river plain

where civilization was born and where writing first appeared. Southern Mesopotamia was under

the control of a series of kings from 3000 B.C. to the 6th century B.C. In its early history,

Mesopotamia was a collection of agricultural city-states. These later gave way to centrally

controlled empires which spread through conquest.

There were not too much around this time but little there was like this piece The mythical

Dragon of Marduk with scaly body, serpent’s head, viper’s horns, front feet of a feline, hind feet

of a bird, and a scorpion’s tail, was sacred to the god Marduk, principal deity of Babylon.

The striding dragon was a portion of the decoration of one of the gates of the city of Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar, whose name appears in the Bible as the despoiler of Jerusalem (Kings II

24:10-16, 25:8-15), ornamented the monumental entrance gate dedicated to Ishtar, the goddess of

love and war, and the processional street leading to it with scores of pacing glazed brick animals:

on the gate were alternating tiers of Marduk’s dragons and bulls of the weather god Adad; along

the street were the lions sacred to Ishtar. All of this brilliant decoration was designed to create a

ceremonial entrance for the king in religious procession on the most important day of the New

Year’s Festival.

Also this Magnificat sculpture Of all the rulers of ancient Mesopotamia, Gudea, ensi

(governor) of Lagash, emerges the most clearly across the millennia due to the survival of many

of his religious texts and statues. He ruled his city-state in southeast Iraq for twenty years,

bringing peace and prosperity at a time when the Guti, tribesmen from the northeastern

mountains, occupied the land. His inscriptions describe vast building programs of temples for his

gods. This statuette depicts the governor in worship before his gods wearing the persian-lamb fur

cap of the ensi and a shawl-like fringed robe with tassles. The serene, heavily lidded eyes and

calm pose create a powerful portrait of this pious ruler. A Sumerian cuneiform inscription on the

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Greek pots and vases were painted by skilled artists, but they were also strong and practical. They

were not treated as ornaments, but were made only for daily use. Here is a guide to help you

recognize the main shapes and styles. The protogeometric style dates from 100 to 900 BC. Look

out for circles or semi-circles on the design. Later is the style with the geometric patterns, dating

from 900-700 BC. The 6th century BC was the period of the orientalizing style, influenced by the

East. The decoration includes animals and plants. Some potters made cups in the form of animal

or human heads. From about 400 BC, the standard of pottery declined. Pots either imitated metal

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Black figure ware -black figures on a reddish background- was produced between 600 and 530

BC.

Red figure ware -red figures on a black background- dates from 530 BC. Figures painted on a

white background are found on vases dating from 500 BC.

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of pottery declined. Pots either imitated metal vases, or were fussy and over-decorated.

Amphorae were used for storing wine. They are one of the most common types of pot. A

stamnos and a pelike were also storage jars. The Greeks drank wine mixed with water, which

was served from a jug, such as an olpe or an oinochoe. Some cups were large, so that they could

be passed round all the guests at a ceremony. The handles were designed so that people lying on

couches could hold them easily. Greek women carried water in a jar, called a hydria. It was

specially designed with three handles. Kraters and volute kraters were bowls for mixing wine and

water. Oils and perfumes were kept in small bottles, like an aryballos, an alabastron and a

lekythos. Pyxis used for storing cosmetics.

The sources for ancient Greek myth are myriad. Indeed, references to myth range from those

written by contemporary Greek historians and authors; to poems composed in honor of the gods

and goddesses; to plays (comedies, tragedies, and so-called satyr plays) meant to dramatize man’s

relationships with the divine (and sometimes man’s aspirations to be divine…); to works of art

created to represent a particular deity, hero, or mythical creature. Truly, to compile a complete

list of ancient sources is far beyond the resources of most individuals. However, the alternative is

probably more useful, in that a description of the major characters of Greek myth has the

distinction of being accessible.

Greek Art and Architecture, painting sculpture, buildings, and decorative arts produced in ancient

Greece, from about 1050 BC to 31 BC. Greek civilization encompassed not only mainland

Greece but also nearby islands in the Aegean Sea, the western coast of Turkey (known as Ionia),

southern Italy and Sicily (known as Magna Graecia, or Great Greece), and by the late 300s BC,

Egypt, Syria, and other Near Eastern lands. Among its best-known monuments are stone temples,

statues of human figures, and painted vases.

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Painting, branch of the visual arts in which color, derived from any of numerous organic or

synthetic substances, is applied to various surfaces to create a representational or abstract picture

or design. This article traces the history of Western painting; for its development in other

cultures, see cross-references at the end of this article.

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ever since and continue to form a common ground for the art, literature, and even popular culture

of the Western world.Our knowledge of ancient Greek painting, especially wall and panel

painting, is limited by the small number of examples that have survived. Most of what we know

about Greek painting comes from ancient literary sources, surviving Roman copies, and a

number of Greek vases and mosaics that probably reflect some of the attributes of Greek wall

paintings.Literary sources mention only a handful of painters’ names from the Archaic period,

including Cleanthes of Corinth, Boularchos, and Cimon. For the most part scholars can only

guess at how these paintings looked, but some evidence survives in scraps of paintings by

unknown artists that decorated the walls of a temple at Isthm??a, near Corinth; in painted

terracotta metopes from Th??rmon in western Greece; and in a few wooden and clay plaques

from Corinth and Athens.

Some of the most complete surviving examples of early Greek panel painting are scenes of

banqueting and diving painted by an unknown artist for a tomb at Paestum, Italy (490?-470? BC,

Museo Archeologico, Paestum). The figures in the Paestum frescoes show skillful drawing and a

developed understanding of human anatomy. The artist has drawn eyes in profile, instead of

frontally, and included elements of landscape.

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