

Chapter 7

Greek Art, the Olympian Ego, and the Inventors of the Modern World

In This Chapter

- ▶ Jumping the bulls with the Minoans
 - ▶ Understanding Greek sculpture
 - ▶ Interpreting Greek vase painting
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Everything that grows great also decays. But the memory of our greatness will be bequeathed to posterity forever . . . the admiration of the present and succeeding ages will be ours, since we have not left our power without witness, but have shown it by mighty proofs . . . we have forced every sea and land to be the highway of our daring, and everywhere . . . have left imperishable monuments behind us.

—Pericles (Athenian statesman, 5th century
B.C.)

Pericles was right. The world he helped create did decay. But its memory and influence have lasted for nearly 2,500 years, reaching across the ages into our day-to-day lives.

Whether you're watching a play or movie; cheering your country at the Olympics; debating an ethical question; visiting the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.; wrestling with an abstract math problem; or voting for your local mayor, your actions are rooted in Ancient Greece. The Greeks wrote the blueprint for the modern world. They invented democracy, logic, ethics, drama, the Olympics, the study of history, theoretical math, and rational inquiry (the precursor of modern science); laid the foundations of Western art; and developed architectural styles that we still mimic today.

We owe our Western heritage to all of Ancient Greece, but especially to Athens (located on the coast of the Aegean Sea), which may be the most creative city in history. (Florence, Italy, runs a close second — see Chapter 12.)

How did a tiny city-state the size of Toledo, Ohio, launch the modern world two and a half millennia ago? Read on.

The Greeks knew what they were talking about

The Greeks handed down to us a treasure trove of art and literature on government, education, drama, day-to-day life, economics, and even love. Here are just a few of their famous words:

✓ “Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states, we are rather a

pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences.” —Pericles

✓ “Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly, while bad people will find a way around the laws.” —Plato

✓ “We cannot learn without pain.” —Aristotle

✓ “The most important part of education is proper training in the nursery.” —Plato

✓ “Love is a serious mental disease.” —Plato (a diehard bachelor)

✓ “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.” —Socrates

Mingling with the Minoans: Snake Goddesses, Minotaur, and Bull Jumpers

Aegean culture (civilization around the Aegean Sea) didn't begin with the Greeks — it began with the Minoans in the late 3rd millennium B.C. The Minoans lived on the island of Crete (south of what became the Greek mainland), which is about 150 miles long and 36 miles wide (at its widest). Though they traded with the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the Minoans lived in rela-

tive isolation and developed a unique culture. Their art focused not on death and war like the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, but on life, beauty, and having fun!

The Minoans are named after the mythical King Minos who supposedly ruled Crete and owned a half-man, half-bull “pet” called the minotaur. The pet’s name is a variant of the king’s, because the minotaur was also his stepson. Minos’s wife cheated on him with a bull! (And you thought *Desperate Housewives* was salacious.) Minos penned up his monstrous stepson in a labyrinth and sacrificed young Athenian men and women to him until the mythical Athenian hero Theseus slew the beast.

Actually, the Minoans were a peaceful people. They made more tools than weapons, and their chief god was not a thunderbolt-wielding macho man like Zeus, but a sexy-looking snake-goddess. Her *cult animals* (animals associated with worship) included the dove, snake, and bull. The minotaur myth

probably evolved from the Minoans’ infamous religious sport, bull jumping, in which young men and women somersaulted off the backs of wild bulls.

The Minoans built palaces (though much less impressive than Egyptian and Mesopotamian palaces), which they decorated with elaborate murals. In fact, mural paintings were their greatest cultural achievement. *The Toreador Fresco* (circa 1500 B.C.), which features the bull-jumping event, is the most dramatic example (see Figure 7-1).

Figure 7-1:
The Minoans didn’t run with the bulls like they do in Pamplona; they somersaulted off their backs as shown in *The Toreador Fresco*



from Knossos,
Crete.

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Notice that the women vaulters (in front of and behind the bull) are white-skinned, suggesting that they spent more time indoors than the dark-skinned male jumper. Yet we see total sexual equality here for the first time in art. Man and woman are equal partners in this dangerous but playful religious sport. In fact, the women outnumber the men.

The streamlined bodies in *The Toreador Fresco* brim with exuberant life. Even the bull's S-shaped tail looks like a wisp of playful energy. The wavelike shapes of bull and jumper harmonize, suggesting that man and nature are one in Crete. The next-in-line jumper stands anxiously on her tiptoes, ready to vault off the bull's back, while an earlier jumper holds the bull's horns. (Obviously, there was some fictionalizing here!) The po-

sitions of the three jumpers suggest the sequence of actions involved in bull jumping.



Compare the graceful Minoan shapes that seem to flow like waves with the sturdy-as-a-mountain forms of Egyptian art (see Chapter 6) and Mesopotamian art (see Chapter 5). The latter two were both river-based cultures, hemmed in by deserts. The Minoans were the first civilization to be surrounded by sea. The tides of the Aegean seem to wash refreshingly through the Minoans' art and culture.

If art reflects the people who make it, the Minoans must've been a fun-loving folk. Their murals feature diving dolphins, creepy-crawly octopi, lively floral landscapes, and wavelike patterns inspired by the sea. A Minoan palace looked a bit like an indoor Sea-World. But perhaps their culture was too fun loving and easygoing to survive in a brutal world.

In about 1500 B.C., aggressive Greek tribes invaded Crete and established the first Greek culture. Gradually, the Greeks fanned out over the Peloponnesus peninsula and Aegean Islands.

But the conquered Minoans didn't disappear completely. They merged with the Greeks, creating what we call Mycenaean culture. The Mycenaens invented the colorful Greek myths that have been handed down to us and launched the Trojan War, which is recounted in the greatest epic poem ever written, *The Iliad*.

After the Trojan War, Mycenaean culture collapsed, falling to another wave of invading Greek tribes called the Dorians, who settled in Sparta and the Peloponnesus peninsula. The Ionian Greeks, who'd migrated centuries earlier, remained entrenched in Athens and surrounding Attica, where they had resided since the era of the mythical Theseus and the Minoans.

After the fall of Mycenae, several centuries of squabbling passed before Greece settled into what became classical Greece, a constellation of far-flung city-states from Asia Minor and the Greek mainland to Sicily and the Mediterranean coast of France. Although a common language and culture united the Greek states, they were often at war with each other. For about 400 years after the conquest of Mycenae, the Greeks produced no significant art; they were too busy fighting for power and wealth. In the calmer 8th century B.C., the earliest manifestations of Greek culture emerged in the visual arts and literature. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were written in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., respectively.

Greek Sculpture: Stark Symmetry to

a Delicate Balance

The Greeks absorbed the rigidity of the Egyptians, with whom they traded, and the fluid forms of the Minoans. They gradually combined the two into an idealized but naturalistic art that many people consider the greatest art of the ancient world.

Kouros to Kritios Boy

The evolution of Greek sculpture from the rigid *kouros* statues of the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. to the naturalistic *Kritios Boy* (circa 480 B.C.) correspond with a seismic political change in Athens that spread to many other city-states. *Despotism* (rule by one) was replaced by *democracy* (rule by all male citizens) in 508 B.C. *Kouros* (“youthful boy”) statues represented the old order and the aristocracy — rigid, powerful, proud. The more naturalistic *Kritios Boy* represents

democracy — relaxed, graceful, and realistic. *Kritios Boy* looked like an idealized version of the man in the streets, as opposed to a stiff superhero like *kouros*.

The Archaic period

Eventually, the Greeks put their own stamp on all cultural imports. But in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., during the Archaic period (650 B.C.–480 B.C.), Greek sculptures look like hand-me-down Egyptian tomb statues. The artists obviously spent time in Egypt or studied the imports closely.



Compare the archaic Greek statue of a *kouros* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (c. 600 B.C.) with the Egyptian statues of King Menkaura and his queen (sculpted in roughly 2515 B.C.). Almost everything about the archaic Greek statue says, “I’m Egyptian.” The *kouros* is as symmetrical and rigid as the pharaoh’s statue, though the Menkaura

sculpture is more refined. Both the *kouros* and King Menkaura have squared shoulders; straight, rigid arms and legs; and clenched fists held firmly at their sides. Both step slightly forward with the left foot. Both have pronounced, geometric kneecaps, and the same angular calves, as if they'd been shaped with an old-fashioned wood shaver. But there are differences. The *kouros* is completely naked. Pharaohs were never represented nude; in fact, only Egyptian children were routinely shown in the buff.



The female version of the archaic statue is called a *kore*, which means “maiden.” *Kores* are never nude. Only Greek men were allowed to prance around town in the altogether. Greek women usually stayed indoors to do the sewing and cooking (except in Sparta). When they went out to collect water,

for example, they wore long gowns.

The Greeks gradually shed strict Egyptian symmetry for a more subtle form of balance. The *kouros* in Figure 7-2, sculpted circa 525 B.C., 75 years after the *kouros* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see *Kouros* in the appendix), is much more realistic, though he's still stuck in the same Egyptian pose.

Notice how much more lifelike the finely modeled curves of the shoulders, arms, and thighs are than in the earlier version. The older statue looks like a stone man. The later one is nearly a flesh-and-blood athlete; he's almost ready to learn to walk.

Figure 7-2:
Although still at attention like a frozen soldier, this later *kouros*, called *Kroisos*, shows the

Greek progression toward more naturalistic sculpture (making stone look like real flesh).



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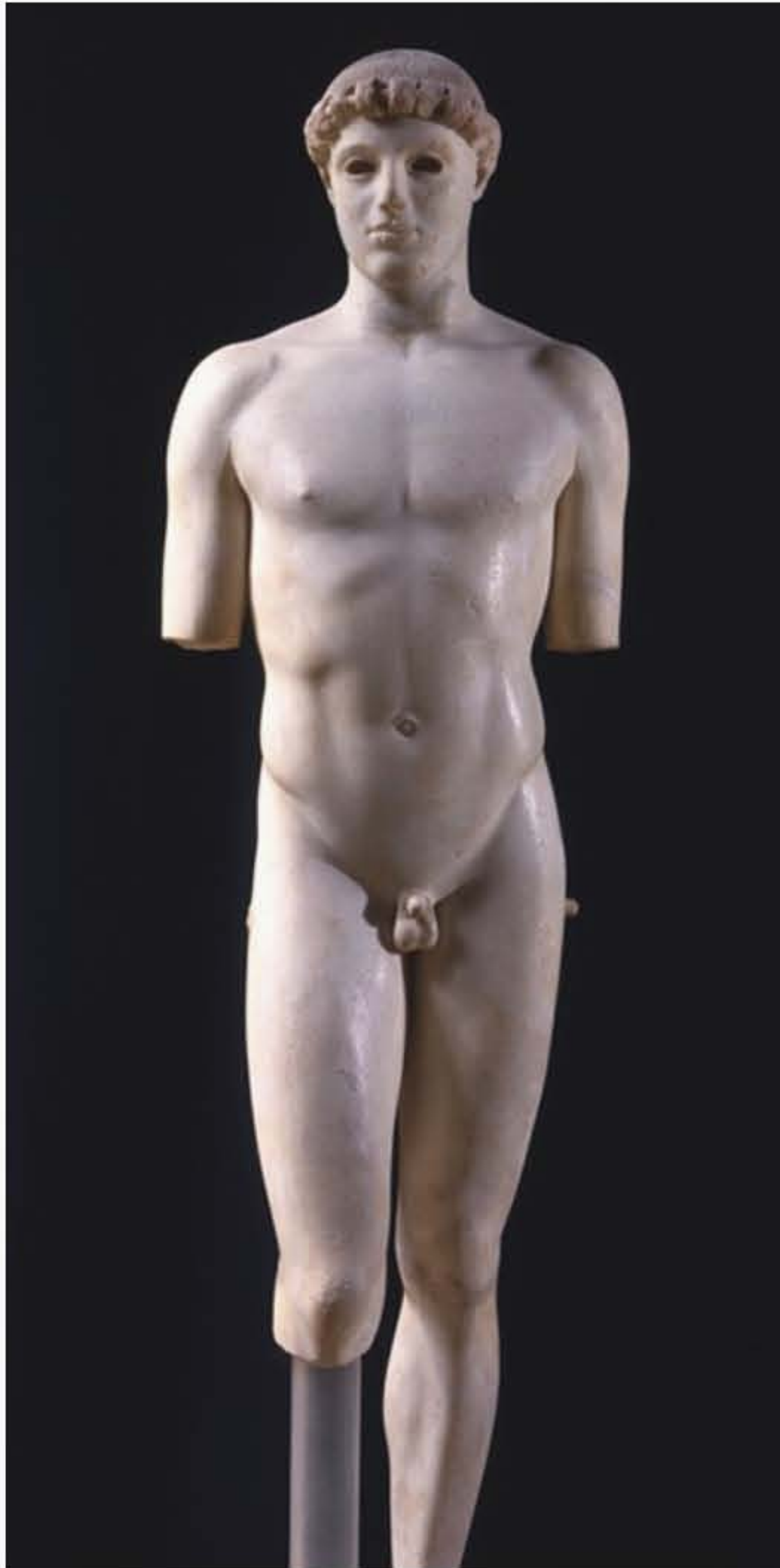
But giving statues the semblance of motion took another hundred years. First, sculptors had to learn to depict the body in a relaxed rather than rigid posture.

The Classical period

In the Classical period (480 B.C.–400 B.C.), *Kritios Boy* (named after the artist who probably sculpted him) has learned to take it easy (see Figure 7-3). The artist has redistributed his weight. The left hip is now slightly higher than the right, and *Kritios Boy's* bulk rests comfortably on his left foot instead of both feet as in the *kouros* (see the preceding section). The contours of the graceful thighs are utterly lifelike, as is the gentle swelling of the belly. The face, too, is more human than *kouros* faces; its still mask-like appearance is due to the holes where inlaid eyes used to

be.

Figure 7-3: Greek statues begin to get comfortable around 480 B.C. *Kritios Boy* is the turning point. The sculptor has learned to turn the body just enough to give him a more relaxed look.



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Notice the tension in the knees: The left is tight, the right relaxed, showing the distribution of weight. The sculptor has learned to represent a symmetrical young man's body in an asymmetrical stance. The next step was to make the statue walk, run, jump, and throw — or at least appear to!

The bronze *Charioteer* from Delphi (circa 470 B.C.; see Figure 7-4) is stiffer than *Kritios Boy*, but his upright posture would have helped him to be seen standing in a chariot atop a tall monument. The concentrated look in the charioteer's face and the elegant, naturalistic folds of his robe are characteristic of early 5th-century Greek realism, also known as the *severe style*. The statue was commis-

sioned to celebrate an athletic victory, a chariot race. Sports events were a big deal in Greece. During the Olympics, all warfare ceased so the Greeks could compete for laurel leaves instead of fighting for money and power.

The fact that the athlete was cast in bronze shows how highly the Greeks regarded sports heroes. They had godlike status, especially in their hometowns, where they were given a pension and free meals for the rest of their lives.

Figure 7-4:
The *Charioteer's* noble expression and proud posture indicate the respect that sports heroes commanded in Greek society.



John Garton

Golden Age sculptors: Polykleitos, Myron, and Phidias

The high classical style began in about 450 B.C., when Greek sculptors learned to invest statues with the appearance of motion. Myron involved the entire body of *Diskobolus* (“Disk Thrower”) in a single, compressed action. The statue appears wound up, his energy ready to burst forth. Yet his classically serene face and the faraway look in his eyes contrast with the action of his body, giving the athlete a timeless quality, as if he were throwing his discus into eternity.



Polykleitos created a feeling of balance with contrasting tensions that also suggest motion. The off-center pose that gives this relaxed-but-balanced look is called *contrapposto*. You can see

this effect in a Roman copy of Polykleitos’s *Doryphoros* (“Spear Bearer”; see Figure 7-5). The cocked left arm contrasts with the straight or engaged right leg, while the straight right arm offsets the bent left leg. The left leg seems to propel the figure forward. Opposite forces preserve the feeling of balance while imparting a sense of tension and action. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (circa 535 B.C.–475 B.C.) summed up the concept: “Opposition brings concord.”

Polykleitos wrote a book of rules of proportion called the *Canon*; it was followed by succeeding generations of Greek and Roman sculptors. He cast his original *Doryphoros* in bronze to illustrate the principles of the *Canon*. The many surviving marble copies of *Doryphoros* attest to its popularity and to the respect that Roman copyists had for the *Canon* of Polykleitos.

Figure 7-5:
 This Roman copy of Polykleitos's *Doryphoros* is at ease and tense at the same time. Almost 2,500 years after he was carved, he still has the glow of Greece's Golden Age (circa 450 B.C.–440 B.C.).



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The Greek term *canon* means “rule” or “standard.” Today, when someone speaks of the canon of art history, she’s referring to the masterpieces that “measure up” or meet a set of artistic standards, allowing them to be classed with the greatest works of all ages.

In order for Greek culture to survive, the disjointed city-states had to be able to defend themselves against outside aggressors like the Persians. In 480 B.C., the Athenians foiled a Persian invasion by outwitting their powerful enemy. Their 380-ship navy outmaneuvered and crushed a much larger Persian fleet of 1,207 ships at Salamis. This gave Athens great prestige in the Greek world and put her at the center of a defensive alliance called the Delian League. All member states contributed money to pay for the navy, which Athens controlled. Eventually, Pericles, Athens’s greatest leader, skimmed from the defense funds to give Athens a facelift, making it one of the most glorious cities of

the ancient world. This gave the city-state even more prestige, but awakened the jealousy and fear of rivals like Sparta and Corinth, and naturally angered Athens's allies. The rivalry escalated and finally erupted into the Peloponnesian War in 431 B.C. The war ended in 404 B.C. with Athens's definitive defeat. The Golden Age of Greece was over. But the age of Alexander the Great and Hellenism, which would spread Greek culture across most of the civilized world, was about to dawn.

If the proverbial "glory of Greece" rested on two men's shoulders, it would be Pericles and Phidias. Phidias was the most celebrated Greek sculptor and the overseer of the sculptural work for Pericles's building projects on the Athenian Acropolis (downtown Athens).

One of Phidias's greatest sculptures was the 40-foot-high, gold-and-ivory statue of Athena, which once stood in the Parthenon. It and most of Phidias's works are lost. His only surviving sculpture (or perhaps it's the

work of his workshop — see the following paragraph) are the friezes and pediment statues of the Parthenon, many of which are now in the British Museum. But these and the praise of ancient writers are enough to ensure the sculptor's immortality. The ancients called Phidias's works sublime and timeless.



From ancient times through the 18th century, artists often worked in workshops under a master sculptor or painter like Phidias. In such cases, the apprentice artists might do the actual carving of the master artist's design. Often, the master fine-tuned his apprentices' work.

The surviving Parthenon statues (many in fragments) have these same qualities that ancient writers described. The figures seem to be watching themselves as they participate in the action, as if they were of this world and yet beyond it, part of the Greek

heaven, Olympus. Even though the heads of the *Three Goddesses* (which is now in the British Museum) are missing, the superbly rendered fabrics (which have the wet or clingy look pioneered by Phidias) speak for them, revealing the moods, spirit, and down-to-earth sensuality of the flesh-and-blood women behind the clothes. What are the three goddesses doing? Watching the birth of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, springing full-grown from the brow of her father Zeus. The 1st-century Greek writer Plutarch, who saw the Parthenon and Phidias's work five centuries after they were executed, wrote:

There is a sort of bloom of newness upon those works of his, preserving them from the touch of time, as if they had some perennial spirit and undying vitality mingled in the composition of them.

Today, even though they are in ruins, this "vitality" endures.

Fourth-century sculpture

After the fall of Athens in 404 B.C., the city-state gradually got on its feet again, though it never rose to its former glory. Nevertheless, Greek philosophy peaked in the 4th century B.C. (Maybe Athens's defeat made all Athenians more philosophical.) Plato taught at his famous Athenian Academy from about 387 B.C. to 347 B.C., and Aristotle, his greatest student, taught at the Lyceum in Athens from 335 B.C. to 322 B.C., after educating Alexander the Great in Pella, Macedonia.

The 4th century also produced three great sculptors: Praxiteles, Skopas, and Lysippos (the private sculptor of Alexander the Great). In 4th-century sculpture, the wet look got even wetter, but the timelessness associated with Phidias and Polykleitos gave way to an everyday or down-to-earth quality.

For example, Praxiteles depicts his *Knidian Aphrodite* preparing to take a bath, while his *Hermes* (see Figure 7-6) looks fondly on the playful infant Dionysos cradled in his arm.

Figure 7-6: Praxiteles had a knack for giving statues a soft, sensual look, as you can see in this Hellenistic or Roman copy of his *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus* (circa 320 B.C.– 310 B.C.).



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Fourth-century statues also often have a down-to-earth sensuality lacking in



5th-century sculpture; compare Polykleitos's *Doryphoros* in Figure 7-5 to Praxiteles's *Hermes* in Figure 7-6.

The 4th century also produced the first free-standing female nudes. Praxiteles stripped Aphrodite, the goddess of love, to reveal all her delicate beauty and grace. Naked Aphrodite was a hit; many copies followed. Praxiteles was a master at depicting delicate curves and making marble look like soft, supple flesh. The original *Knidian Aphrodite*, like nearly all great Greek statues, has been lost and is only known through Roman imitations and writers' descriptions. Praxiteles's statue of *Hermes and the Infant Dionysos* (refer to Figure 7-6) is nearly as famous as his *Aphrodite* — and just as beautiful. The softness and classical serenity of the facial features and delicate grace of Hermes's body are hallmarks of Praxiteles's style. The *Hermes*, once believed to be an original, is now considered to be a superb copy, closer to the spirit of the original than the copy of *Knidian*

Aphrodite.

Figuring Out Greek Vase Painting

Greek vase painting progressed from the somewhat primitive Geometric style (10th through 8th centuries B.C., in which people and animals look like stick figures) to the highly realistic Early Classical style in the early 5th century B.C. Greece also had a brief flirtation with an Oriental style influenced by trade with Mesopotamia.

Cool stick figures: The geometric style

At first glance, the paintings on vases from the 10th through 8th centuries B.C. look like

the stick-figure doodlings of a child. Closer inspection reveals a complex network of geometric patterns: wraparound chains of Greek frets and *chevrons* (similar to a private's stripes), squares, dots, and squiggly lines, along with stick figures of people and animals. Geometric vases could also tell stories. The *Dipylon Krater* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art shows stick figures pulling their hair out in mourning at the funeral pyre of a Greek warrior.

In the next century, the more realistic Oriental style, which made a brief appearance, allowed for clearer visual narrative. The neck of the Oriental-style amphora (used for storing and pouring wine or olive oil) *The Blinding of Polyphemus and Gorgons* depicts a scene from *The Odyssey*, in which Odysseus and his companions burn out the eye of the one-eyed giant Cyclops (Polyphemus). Odysseus pulls off this stunt by first getting the giant drunk. The wine cup in the Cyclops's hand suggests this earlier episode.

The Mesopotamian influence is confined to the figures. Odysseus and his men look like Mesopotamians, especially the upper part of the scorpion-man in the bottom band of the *Puabi Lyre* (see Chapter 5). The animals in the middle band and the gorgons (sisters of the snake-haired Medusa) on the belly of the vase also have a Near Eastern flavor. But the Greeks added their own playful charm to the monsters. If you look closely, you can see that the bug-eyed gorgons show off their sexy left legs like can-can dancers.



The belts of interlaced wavy lines (like basket weaving) at the top, bottom, and neck are leftovers from the Geometric period.

Black-figure and red-figure techniques

The Oriental style gave way in the 6th centu-

ry B.C. to the even more realistic archaic style. Archaic-style painters employed one of two techniques, either the black-figure technique, which began in the early 7th century B.C., or the red-figure technique, which was invented around 530 B.C.



In black-figure painting, the artist first sketched his figures with a lead or charcoal stick on the red clay vase, and then filled in the figures with *slip* (a wet clay mixture). When fired, the slip turned black, and the unpainted part of the vase remained red. Details were often added with purple- or red-dyed slip, as in *Hercules Slaying the Nemean Lion with Aiolos and Athena* (see the color section), an amphora by Psiax. In this vase scene, Hercules, guarded by Athena (on the viewer's right), overcomes the Nemean Lion, one of his famous 12 labors.

Gradually, black figure was replaced by a re-

verse process known as the red-figure technique, which allowed the artist to create more detailed renderings of figures.



In the red-figure technique, the artist sketched the figures, and then incised a 3/16-inch border around them. Next he painted in details with slip (historians aren't sure how — probably with a fine-haired brush or sharp tool). Finally, he painted the background with slip (which blackened in the kiln) right up to the incised border around the figure.

Notice the fine detailed work in the *Medea Krater* (see the color section). This much detail could not have been achieved in the black-figure technique. The *Medea Krater*, which was painted about 30 years after Euripides's famous tragedy *Medea* premiered in Athens, depicts the play's climax: The witch Medea has just murdered her sons to get revenge on her unfaithful husband Jason (of *Jason and the Argonauts* fame). With sword

raised, she makes her getaway in a dragon-drawn chariot, a loan from her grandfather Helios, the god of the sun. The defeated Jason looks up helplessly at her, his weapon dangling uselessly at his side. The winged women flanking Medea, the daughters of the night, will fight for him. They are furies whose job is to avenge within-the-family murders. But they'll have a tough time getting past the sunburst of Helios.

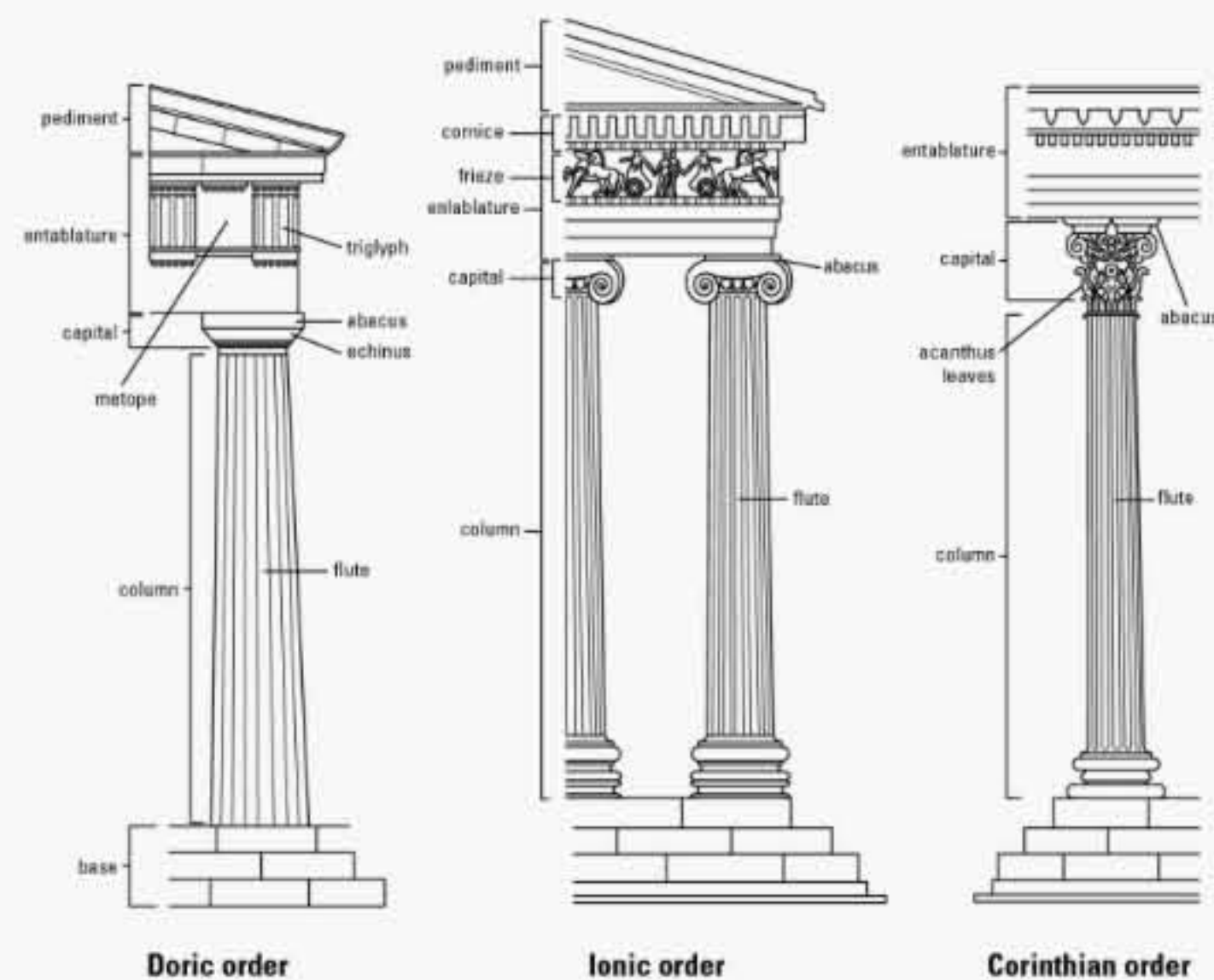
Rummaging through Ruins: Greek Architecture

Greek architectural styles are perennially popular. The Romans imitated them for centuries. Europeans imitated them from the Renaissance through the 19th century, and

19th-century Americans recycled Greek styles in home building (because they had a democratic look) in an architectural movement called Greek Revival. You can find Greek columns, cornices, and pediments in practically every corner of the United States.

The Greeks invented three *orders*, or architectural formulas: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian (see Figure 7-7). Each order is based on precise numerical relationships so that all the architectural elements in a structure harmonize; like musical notes, they must be in the same architectural key or they will seem out of tune.

Figure 7-7:
The Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders were invented by the Greeks.



as you move away from the center, seem unnatural. If you were depicting a battle between Amazons and Pygmies, the fit would be easy. You'd stick the Amazons in the center and the Pygmies in the corners. Typically, pediment battle scenes feature standing warriors in the center with leaning warriors beside them, then crouching archers, and finally dead men lying in the corners as in the Doric Temple of Aphaia in Aegina.

In the Doric order (refer to Figure 7-7) every pair of columns is topped by three *triglyphs*. A triglyph looks like a set of mini columns. A *metope* is the space between the triglyphs, on which sculptors sometimes carved reliefs. The entire horizontal section, between the columns and triangular *pediment* (which is also often carved with relief), is called the *entablature*.

Pediment reliefs are notoriously difficult to carve because the artist must fit the visual narrative inside the triangle without making the heights of the figures, which must shrink

In the Doric order, the columns stand on a three-step base. The columns themselves are fluted (refer to Figure 7-7) like all Greek columns, with 20 grooves each; the columns taper toward the top. The crown of the Doric column — the *capital* — is made of two hats: The bottom one (the *echinus*) is curved like a bowl, and the top one (the *abacus*) is rectangular. Doric temples were constructed of stone blocks, which were connected without mortar so they had to be cut perfectly to give a snug fit and elegant look.

The Parthenon (a Doric temple — see Figure

7-8) was built between 447 B.C. and 438 B.C. under Pericles, supervised by Phidias, and designed by two architects, Iktinos and Kallikrates. At 8 columns wide and 17 columns long, it is bigger than the Doric Temple of Hera in Paestum built 100 years earlier, yet the Parthenon seems lighter and more graceful. The architects managed this effect by tweaking the proportions (in other words, by breaking the rules). The legs or columns of the Parthenon are thinner than the bulky ones at Paestum. The tapering (or thinning) of the legs toward the top is more subtle. The entablature and platform are not purely rectangular; they curve upward toward the center, giving the structure a feeling of upward lift. All the *capitals* (tops of the columns) were adjusted to support this slight curving. The columns also lean imperceptibly toward the center, heightening the upward feeling. Because of this fine-tuning, the weight-bearing columns of the Parthenon don't seem to have to work as hard as those of Paestum. The Paestum temple is oppres-

sive — you can feel its weight bearing down on you. But the Parthenon uplifts you as if it had magically overcome gravity.

Figure 7-8:
The Parthenon, a Doric temple, is the architectural high point of Golden Age Athens.



Gloria Wilder

The Ionic order (refer to Figure 7-7) is more elaborate than the Doric. The main differ-

ence is that the columns are elongated, the capital (top of the column) is capped by a scroll, and the entablature features a continuous frieze or sculpted band. There are no metopes or triglyphs as in the Doric order.

The most elaborate order is the Corinthian (refer to Figure 7-7), which has slender columns capped by overlapping acanthus leaves.

Greece without Borders: Hellenism

[Alexander the Great's father] sent for Aristotle, the most learned and most celebrated philosopher of his time, and rewarded him with a munificence proportionable to and becoming the care he took to instruct his son.

—Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*

Alexander the Great (356 B.C.–323 B.C.) was Macedonian, but he learned to think and feel like a Greek from the greatest Greek of the era, Aristotle. After the death of his father in 331 B.C., Alexander became king. In the next eight years, he overran and Hellenized (made Greek-like) most of the known world, planting Greek libraries and Greek city-states in every vanquished kingdom. But when Alexander conquered, he didn't try to shut down the native culture; instead, he fused it with Greek models. He himself married, among several other women, a princess from Bactria (a country near modern-day Afghanistan) and ordered his officers to take Persian wives to unify the diverse cultures.

After his early death, Alexander's generals divided his empire three ways:

- ✓ Seleucus I Nicator ruled Persia, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia.