

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.
- ✓ Ptolemy I Soter governed Egypt.
- ✓ Antigonus I Monophthalmus con-

trolled Macedonia and Greece.

All these regions eventually fell to the new power rising on the Italian peninsula, the Romans. The last holdout was Egypt, which collapsed in 31 B.C. when Queen Cleopatra took her own life after Augustus Caesar defeated her and Marc Antony in the Battle of Actium. The Hellenistic period died with Cleopatra.

The greatest achievements of Hellenistic culture were in sculpture. Hellenistic sculptors replaced the serene beauty of classical sculpture with powerful emotionalism and sometimes brutal realism. The *Nike of Samothrace* (see Figure 7-9), a Hellenistic victory statue, looks like she's just landed with her Air Jordans on the prow of a ship, the wind still gusting in her wings and gown. You can feel victory in the folds of her garment and uplifted wings. Also the sculptor has learned to create art that charges the atmosphere around it. Instead of being self-contained, the statue radiates energy beyond itself into

the surrounding space.

Hellenistic sculptors also probed the depths of human suffering for the first time in the history of art. The agony of death was never before so vividly portrayed as it is in *The Dying Trumpeter*, carved in the 3rd century B.C. in Pergamon (in modern-day Turkey), and in *Laocoön and His Sons* (see Figure 7-10), a Hellenistic sculpture from Rhodes. *The Dying Trumpeter* is a moving depiction of an enemy Celt warrior wounded in a battle with the Greeks who colonized Asia Minor. The statue is carved in a way that enables the viewer to feel the death pains that the man faces with quiet dignity.

Figure 7-9: *Nike of Samothrace* is often attributed to Pythokritos, the great sculptor of the Greek island

of Rhodes
(2nd century
B.C.).



John Garton

Figure 7-10:
*Laocoön and His
Sons* may have
been carved

by three
sculptors from
the Greek is-
land of
Rhodes —
Agesander,
Athenodoros,
and Polydoros
— all highly
skilled copy-
ists.



Scala / Art Resource, NY

Laocoön and His Sons captures the mythical life-and-death struggle between a father, his boys, and two vicious sea serpents. (Laocoön was punished by the goddess Athena for trying to expose the Trojan Horse as a fraud to the Trojans who viewed it as a gift and sign

that the Greeks had quit their siege of Troy. Actually the horse concealed a bevy of Greek kings waiting to pounce on the Trojans when they dragged the giant wooden horse into their unsuspecting city.) This 1st-century B.C. statue was discovered in 1506 in the ruins of the Emperor Nero's famed "Golden House" in Rome.

Part of the intense expressiveness you see in *The Dying Trumpeter* and *Laocoön and His Sons* was no doubt due to the assimilation of so many foreign cultures, and part of it to a new worldview. The self-confidence of classical Greece had proved to be self-delusion. Life was gritty and unpredictable, not serene, changeless, and other-worldly.

But the serene beauty of Greek classicism didn't fade away completely. The *Venus de Milo* (or *Venus of Melos*), shown in Figure 7-11, is a throwback to 4th-century Athens. With her unflappable calm, she could have been sculpted by Praxiteles. The fact that her clothes seem to be slipping off enhances the

goddess's potent sexuality. Yet her musing gaze takes the viewer beyond her sensuality to a place of mystery.

Figure 7-11:
Venus de Milo is one of the most celebrated Hellenistic statues.
