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INTRODUCTION AND ISSUES IN THE HISTORY OF GREEK ART

A History of Greek Art, First Edition. Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell.

Hellenistic period
Greek art from the time of Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) to the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus (r. 31 BCE–14 CE), generally *c.* 330–30 BCE.

The first histories of Greek art were written in the **Hellenistic period** of the third to first centuries BCE, during the last period covered in this book. By that time, Greek art and culture had spread well beyond the borders of the country of Greece today, and the Greeks themselves lived in cities from Russia and Afghanistan in the east to Spain in the west. Greek art was a common sight in Rome, whether statues expropriated from cities that the Romans had conquered or works commissioned from Greek artists by Roman patrons for their homes and villas.

The oldest extant account of the history of Greek art is a "mini-history" written by the Roman orator Cicero around 46 BCE and appearing in his history of rhetoric and orators entitled *Brutus*:

> Who, of those who pay some attention to the lesser arts, does not appreciate the fact that the statues of Kanachos were more rigid than they ought to have been if they were to imitate reality? The statues of Kalamis are also hard, although they are softer than those of Kanachos. Even the statues of Myron had not yet been brought to a satisfactory representation of reality, although at that stage you would not hesitate to say that they were beautiful. Those of Polykleitos are still more beautiful; in fact, just about perfect, as they usually seem to me. A similar systematic development exists in painting. In the art of Zeuxis, Polygnotos, and Timanthes and the others who did not make use of more than four colors, we praise their forms and their draughtsmanship. But in the art of Aëtion, Nikomachos, Protogenes, and Apelles, everything has come to a stage of perfection. (Cicero, *Brutus* 70; tr. Pollitt 1990, 223)

1.1 North frieze of the Parthenon, 442–438 BCE. 3 ft 5¾ in (1.06 m). London, British Museum. Cavalcade. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Brief though it is, this passage has the ingredients necessary for a history. Drawing from earlier Greek sources, Cicero names a series of artists in a chronological sequence, presenting us with a **relative chronology** of people and events, rather than an **absolute chronology** based on specific dates. He also tells us about the accomplishments of these artists. The first, Kanachos, created statues of the human figure in rigid postures, whereas his successors developed statues that were increasingly softer and more lifelike in appearance. This happened progressively over several generations, and Cicero singles out **Polykleitos** as nearly perfect in the way he sculpted the human form. We will see later a copy of a bronze statue called the **Doryphoros** or "Spear-Bearer" by Polykleitos **(see Figure 10.7, page 243)**, but for now we can look at a similar figure from the Parthenon frieze that can be given an absolute date between 442 and 438 BCE based on the inscribed accounts of building expenses for the Parthenon **(Figure 1.1)**. The figure standing in front of the horse touching his head with his left arm stands in a very lifelike pose with the weight to one hip and leg. The muscles and anatomy of the body are articulated accurately and precisely, making him lifelike in appearance. Furthermore, he is a graceful, athletic figure whose nudity allows us to admire his beauty. We can see how Cicero might acclaim a Polykleitan statue of the mid-fifth century BCE as both beautiful and "just about perfect."

relative chronology
the dating of a work by its relationship to other works, either before, after, or at the same time

absolute chronology
the dating of a work to a specific calendar year(s) through external evidence, or a range of years on the basis of comparison to works with known dates

Polykleitos
sculptor active in the second half of the fifth century BCE

Doryphoros
"Spear-Bearer," a bronze sculpture of *c.* 450–440 BCE by Polykleitos now found only in copies

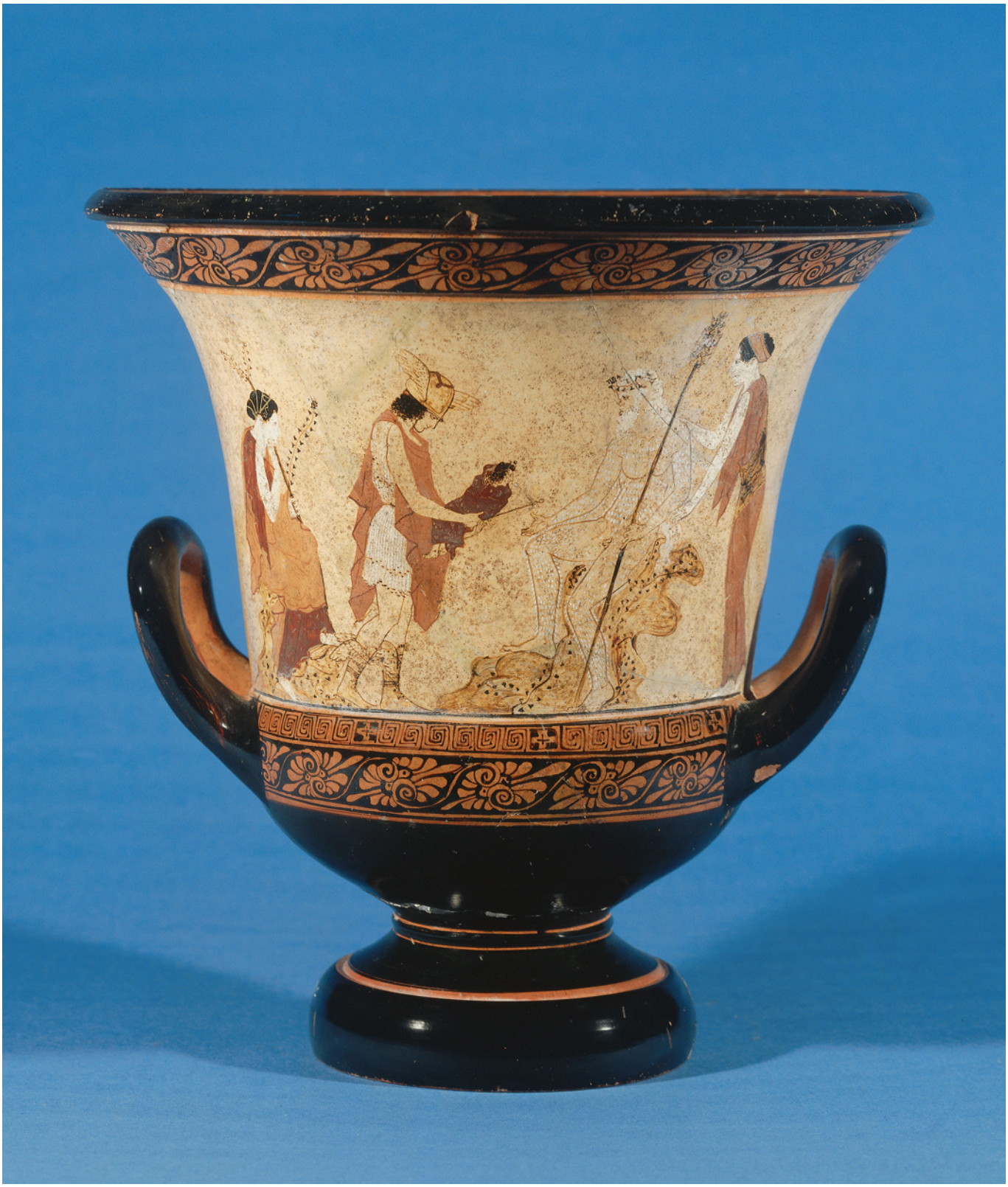
In his brief history, Cicero articulates an operating principle for Greek art, and in doing so makes his account more historical and interpretive than simply a chronicle of events and facts. He states, twice, that the purpose of art is to represent reality, and this becomes in turn a standard by which he judges the relative degree of success of the different artists. Not only do statues become more lifelike in their appearance, but they also become more beautiful, making a second criterion by which one can judge art and evaluate the achievements of different artists.

Cicero's two principles, reality and beauty, are not exclusive to Greek sculpture, and are also the standard for his comments on the history of painting. In this even briefer passage, Cicero notes that painters underwent the same type of systematic development, from four-color work that relied on drawing, to presumably a full palette of colors with shading to make two-dimensional figures seem three-dimensional. What Cicero does not tell us directly, however, is that Apelles, the epitome of perfection for painting, was an artist who lived a century after the sculptor Polykleitos, so that the history of painting had a different absolute timetable than the history of sculpture. We have little surviving mural painting from this era, but we might look at a painting done on a ceramic vase about the same time as the Parthenon frieze **(Figure 1.2)**. On the exterior of this vase, a mixing bowl or **krater**, we see Hermes bringing the infant Dionysos to Papasilenos for safekeeping from Hera, who was once again jealous over an illegitimate child fathered by Zeus. The figures are mostly in outline form with just a few added colors, and the effect is somewhat like the four colors of Polygnotos and Zeuxis mentioned by Cicero. There are some of the three-dimensional effects of perspective and shading, but on the whole, this painting would not seem to have met the standard of illusionistic "perfection" achieved by Apelles a hundred years later.

krater
large, open vessel for the mixing of wine and water

Cicero's purpose was not to write a history of Greek art for its own sake, but to use it as an example of parallels to the development of oratory, which was of greater prestige than the "lesser arts" of painting and sculpture. We have to consider that this context filters the principles and protagonists of his history. In writing about oratory, Cicero claims that it reaches its perfection with Roman orators of the first century BCE, surpassing earlier Greek rhetoricians. That Greek painting peaked later than sculpture makes the point that artistic development is not uniform and that oratory in contemporary Rome is just about perfect.

We further have to consider that the Latin terms used by Cicero might have meant something slightly different than the equivalent Greek terms would have meant in his sources. He uses the adjective *verus* and the noun *veritas* to describe the purpose of art, words that mean real and reality, as well as truthful and truth. In colloquial use, the meaning of the term with regard to art is "accurate representation of the natural appearance of a thing," so that a work of art should look like a living



1.2 Attic white-ground calyx krater attributed to the Phiale Painter, *c.* 440 BCE. 12 15/16 in (32.8 cm). Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano 559. Hermes bringing the infant Dionysos to Papasilenos. Photo: Scala/Art Resource, NY.

human being (Pollitt 1974, 138). Comparing the Parthenon frieze to an earlier work like the statues in **Figure 8.9 (page 190)**, we can readily see that the Parthenon figure is more lifelike, more "real" or "true" in appearance. For Cicero as a Roman, however, there was also a tradition of lifelike individual portraits of citizens, frequently elderly men and women with deeply lined faces and receding hairlines. These portraits are also true, but they would hardly be described as beautiful like the Parthenon figure or the Doryphoros of Polykleitos.

Unlike today's histories of Greek art, Cicero did not include any illustrations so that his readers could see what he was saying. Rather, Cicero assumes that his audience is already familiar with a number of these artists and with the general outlines of the history of **style** in Greek art. Indeed, the construct that Cicero presents of Greek art going from less lifelike (stiff) to very lifelike (real) in its representation of the human form, of the human figure being the most important subject of art in both Greece and Rome, and of Greek art of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE achieving a standard of beauty by which Roman or other art was measured, are themes that have dominated the modern histories of Greek art since the eighteenth century, when Johann Winkelmann published what is considered the first modern history of Greek art in 1764.

style
a system of renderings used to form the details of a subject or a set of forms and shapes used to fashion an object

The modern vocabulary of art history, however, has changed. If one were to describe the Parthenon figure as "**realistic**" it would be misleading for a contemporary reader. The youthful male on the frieze is perfectly proportioned and graceful; he does not look like your average, everyday twenty-year-old. We would describe him as **idealized** rather than realistic. The Terme Boxer that we shall see near the end of the book **(see Figure 14.22, page 367)** is realistic in his representation: scarred, cut, and deformed as a result of the boxing contests he has fought. Both figures fit Cicero's stated purpose of art as a representation of reality/truth, but a better modern art historical term for *verus* would be **naturalistic**, lifelike in appearance. Its opposite, the stiff figures of Kanachos, is best described by the term **abstract**, a simplified and schematic rendering of the human figure.

realistic
the representation of a subject as it is, including individual traits or imperfections

idealized, idealistic
the representation of a subject as perfect in its proportions, beauty, or form

naturalistic
the representation of a subject in art as being lifelike in its appearance

abstract
the representation of a subject in art in a simplified, reduced, or schematic form

One might wonder, then, why there should be new histories of Greek art, since it was already an old and well-known story for Cicero. One reason is that Greek art was both familiar and contemporary for Cicero and his audience; it was still being produced when he lived and we have letters from him to Atticus, a friend and agent in Athens, with instructions and comments for purchases of Greek art to be shipped to Cicero's villa in Tusculum, Italy. There the statues would adorn his library and what he called his "**gymnasia**," colonnaded gardens modeled on the sites where Greek youth received physical and philosophical education. Cicero named his two gymnasia the Academy, where Plato had taught in Athens, and the Lyceum, where Aristotle taught. Indeed, Cicero had spent time studying philosophy in Athens as a young man and wanted to replicate the atmosphere of these places at his villa. Greek art was still alive in Cicero's day, even if it had reached its peak much earlier, but for Cicero its purpose was decorative and personal, quite different from the public and purposeful role that Greek art played in its original setting.

gymnasion (pl. gymnasia)
a building associated with physical and philosophical education, usually consisting of an open area flanked by porches or colonnades

Today, Greek art lives mostly in museums and is not part of the visual fabric of daily life, making it even more remote and foreign than it was to Cicero. Our terminology and cultural standards are different from Cicero's and to learn about Greek art today requires much more remedial education about Greek life and culture. Another factor in approaching Greek art history again is that the questions of interest to art historians and archaeologists today have changed. Rather than looking for masterpieces of Greek art mentioned by Cicero and organizing collections by period, place, and subject matter, students of Greek art today are becoming more interested in the context of Greek art: who made something, who paid for it, what purpose did it serve, and what importance did it have in the lives of the ancient Greeks. We need to develop a history that can begin to address some of those questions.

AN ALTERNATIVE MINI-HISTORY OF GREEK ART

Geometric period
Greek art produced between *c.* 900 and 700 BCE

archaic period
Greek art produced between *c.* 720/700 and 480 BCE. From *archaios*, meaning "old"

classical period
Greek art produced between *c.* 480 and 330 BCE

Objects do not come with a certificate of authenticity bearing a date or place of origin. Before we can consider their art historical interest, we have to place each in time by examining and comparing its style to other objects. The shape of a work and its components, the patterns used to ornament or enhance it, and the techniques used in its creation can be distinctive criteria for defining a particular style, as can be its representation of human, animal, and vegetal subjects. As we saw in Cicero's passage, the development of representational style can be a key distinguishing feature of the history of Greek art. Very broadly speaking, Greek art of the tenth to eighth centuries BCE, the **Geometric period**, was very simple compared to contemporary Egyptian art, but by the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, the **archaic period**, Greek artists were producing statues that were comparable in technique and style. By the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the **classical period**, Greek art developed a consistently lifelike style that was distinctive in the ancient world. In the last three centuries of the millennium, the Hellenistic period, it developed new and even more expressive styles. It is the variation of style from one work to the next that provides a key for identifying its origin and time.

One needs to be cautious, however, about seeing an "evolution" of representational style from abstract to naturalistic as being smoothly progressive or inevitable. Greek art could change dramatically from one region to another, and we can find examples of Greek art in which different artistic styles are combined on the same building or even in the same work. By at least the fifth century BCE Greek artists were producing works that were deliberately older in style, imitating the works of earlier centuries in what would be called today a "retro" style. The lifelike representation of the human figure was not an artistic end in itself and we need to consider the function and context of a work to think about how its appearance might have served a purpose for the artist or the patron.

terracotta
objects made of fired clay, generally small figures, most of which are made with molds and can be painted

votive offering
an offering to a god or shrine to fulfill a vow or recognize a benefit

grave goods
artwork and other objects placed in a grave with the remains of the deceased

One might construct an alternative to Cicero's grand if short narrative of Greek art by looking at smaller and more modest works, **terracotta** figures that are mostly found in the excavation of sanctuaries where they were **votive offerings**, or in tombs where they served as **grave goods** for the deceased. Such objects fall outside of the traditional "fine arts" of sculpture, painting, and architecture and are more typically labeled "decorative arts." A small bronze figure like that dedicated by Mantiklos that we shall see in Chapter 7 **(see Figure 7.19, page 176)** would generally be placed in the category of decorative art, unlike the large bronze god that we shall see later in this chapter **(see Figure 1.7)**. For its time, however, it is a product that would have been an expensive investment in resources and skill that was worthy of recording the name of the donor/patron on it. Whereas a Greek viewer or patron would recognize the differences in value and visual appeal between a small terracotta and large marble figure, functionally they could serve the same purpose and be invested with similar value in terms of their meaning. Greek art was not made simply for its aesthetic value, but had a social, religious, and cultural purpose that guided its form and content. Accordingly, we need to use a wider definition of what is a work of art. The Greek word for art, ***techne***, is defined as art, skill, craft, or cunning of hand and encompasses the traditional fine arts as well as pottery, metalwork, and shipbuilding. The emphasis is upon the skill required to transform material into something else, whether stone into sculpture, wood into a ship, or words into a speech. For our purposes, we should consider art as an object or work that has been created through the application of skill to materials to create a work that has visual appeal and that serves a cultural or social function. In addition to architecture, painting, and sculpture, this means we shall be looking at jewelry, metalwork, painted and plain pottery, and terracottas throughout this book.

techne
the Greek term for art, meaning skill, craft, or cunning of hand

terminus
a fixed calendar date determined by documentary evidence

terminus ad quem
a calendar date at which an object was made

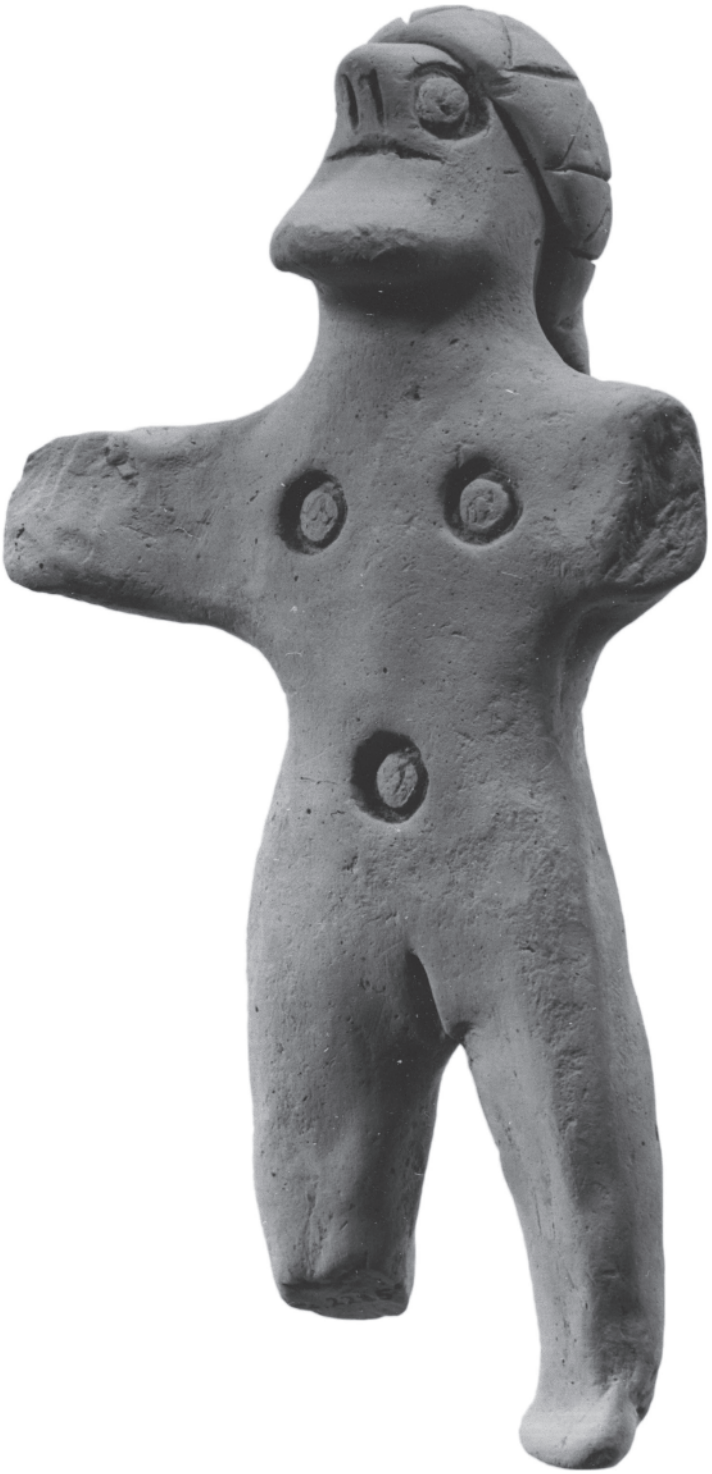
terminus ante quem
a calendar date before which an object was made

terminus post quem
a calendar date after which an object was made

We begin with a terracotta woman that was excavated at the sanctuary at Olympia **(Figure 1.3)**. This figure has been formed from clay that was then fired; the body is flat and schematic, looking

as if it were made by a cookie-cutter with blocky arms and legs. The head has been shaped more three-dimensionally with added clay that was worked by hand to make a chin, nose, and hairpiece. Afterward, the details of mouth, nostrils, hair, and genitals were made by incising the clay with a sharp tool, and the eyes, nipples, and navel by pushing a hollow reed or similar device into the clay. The figure is recognizably human but not very lifelike; it has an abstract style that reduces the components and details of the human body to simple forms. Indeed, there are many and more numerous male figures found at Olympia that differ from this "Hera-type" in only a few details like the genitals.

In order to begin to understand this artifact's place in a history of Greek art, we need to observe it closely, analyzing as we did its style – the way in which its details, features, and overall composition and form are made by the artist. The advantage of looking at works like terracotta figures and pottery is that they are mass-produced and artists use familiar techniques and features to make them, somewhat like handwriting. We presume that artifacts that are similar in style are similar in time and origin, and by comparing their archaeological contexts and layers across many sites, archaeologists can establish a relative sequence of their manufacture and designate each grouping as a period in a relative chronology, like Late Geometric I for the Hera-type figure. The relative sequence of chronological periods can sometimes be anchored to more specific calendar dates, or absolute chronology, by comparison with works for which there is external evidence, such as a date of destruction or foundation of a site or building, or the rule of a specific person like a king or tyrant. Such a chronological point is a **terminus**, or fixed point. For example, fragments of inscribed building accounts for the Acropolis allow us to place the Parthenon frieze above into a four-year period of 442–438 BCE, making this a ***terminus ad quem***, a date at which it was made. An object buried in the foundations of the Parthenon as construction fill would date sometime before the beginning of construction of the temple structure; this ***terminus ante quem*** would then be "before 448" when construction began, but how much before that date would not be certain. Finally, a work dedicated inside the Parthenon after it was dedicated in 438 would have a ***terminus post quem***, or date after which: "after 438."



1.3 Late Geometric I "Hera"-type terracotta figure from Olympia, *c.* 750–725 BCE. 6⁷⁄₁₆ in (16.4 cm). Olympia, Archaeological Museum Tc2285 (K151). Photo: Gösta Hellner, DAI-ATH-Neg. 1970/0804. All rights reserved.

The number of fixed chronological points for Greek art history, however, is very small and many works, like the Olympia terracotta, can only be dated very generally since there is no external evidence for specific dates at Olympia until much later. These figures, belonging to the Late Geometric I period, are generally dated from the second half of the eighth century by a process of comparison with dates established at other sites and a consideration of the

approximate passing of time or generations in the sequence of materials, working backward or forward from whatever termini exist.

Iliad
epic poem of Homer recounting the beginning of the tenth year of the Trojan War and the deaths of Sarpedon, Patroklos, and Hektor and the anger of Achilles. Generally dated to the later 8th cent. BCE

The terracotta is roughly contemporary with the ***Iliad*** of Homer, but this modest figure presents a different vantage point about Greek cultural and art history from Cicero's principles of lifelike, perfect beauty in the representation of the human form. What the "Hera-type" figure represents is not certain and it comes from a time when writing was only beginning to be readopted in Greek culture, leaving us with little in the way of contemporary records outside of literature. Since the terracottas and others like it are found at the sanctuary of Zeus, where there was also a cult to his wife Hera, they may represent the goddess as votive offerings. What is unusual about them if they are Hera, however, is that they are nude. Nudity, as we shall see in Chapter 4, becomes standard for representing the male figure in the eighth century, but female nudity develops much later as an artistic subject, and then is associated with Aphrodite, not Hera. Hera, as wife and queen, is shown clothed and regal in later art, where her identification is certain based on inscriptions or attributes. A nude Hera would not seem to be a logical precedent for these later representations based on religious and social continuity, leaving the identification of the figure open to question. If we look outside of Greece in the eighth century, however, we can find examples of female nudity in figures produced in the **Levant**, where fertility figures like **Astarte** were popular. The Olympia figures are far more abstract in style and less three-dimensional in their form, but perhaps there is an influence at work. These are not just idle issues about identifying subject matter, but address questions about gender, religious, social, and cultural identity that are of interest for a history of art.

Levant
the area of the eastern Mediterranean that includes present-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria

Astarte
Phoenician goddess of fertility and sex often represented as a nude figure

A second terracotta shows a more lifelike representation of the human figure **(Figure 1.4)**. This work, found in a tomb in the Kamiros cemetery on the island of Rhodes and acquired by the British Museum in 1861, has much more accurate details of anatomy and its proportions are closer to the human body. The folds and edges of the clothing are shown in a way that suggests the body underneath, and paint helps to distinguish the cloth from the exposed sections of the body. The woman is shown with one foot forward, and she pulls at her skirt to facilitate movement. She holds a small rabbit in her right arm, possibly making an offering or holding it as an attribute. The figure is stiff and closed in silhouette, and this kind of style is generally labeled archaic to distinguish it from the earlier geometric and the later classical periods. Figures like this are generally dated based on the style to the first half of the sixth century BCE, almost two centuries later than the Hera-type figure from Olympia. This style would loosely fit the description that Cicero gives for the statues of Kanachos, "more rigid than they ought to have been if they were to imitate reality." Indeed, the terracotta is probably even more rigid and rudimentary than were the statues of Kanachos.

psyche
the spirit, soul, or shade of a person

findspot
the location where an object is found, including the site, locale, and the specific deposit or context such as a grave, well, debris pile, or construction fill

assemblage
a group of objects found together in an archaeological context or deposit such as a grave

kithara
a large stringed instrument similar to a lyre, usually with a squared base and curved upright arms

Again, we can consider some questions about this modest figure. It was found in a tomb, but we have no further information about the context: what type of burial, the identity of the deceased, why it is was placed in the tomb, or whether there were other artifacts in the grave. A slender female figure with braided hair is usually considered to be a young maiden reaching her adolescence, when she takes on important public religious roles and may prepare for marriage. She is an idealized figure, well dressed, modestly posed, and acting piously, but is she meant to signify a goddess or a devotee: is the rabbit an attribute or offering? If the terracotta were from the tomb of a girl, did the deceased die before she was old enough to take on these roles, making the figure a symbol of her and her family's aspirations and feelings at her untimely loss? Is the figure meant to comfort the spirit or ***psyche*** of the deceased in the afterlife? Similar types of figures are also found in sanctuaries; was this artifact made for one purpose, or did it represent a concept that could be appropriate in different situations and could be sold to different purchasers for different purposes? Some of these questions could be answered if we knew more about its **findspot**, and we shall consider this further below, but this would require comparing the work to others to see if there is a consistent pattern in their function or distribution.

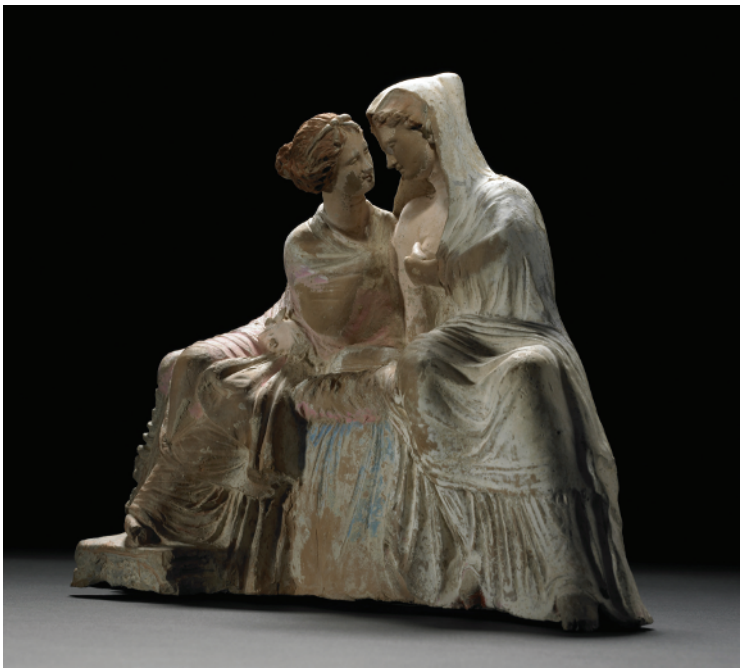
If we look at some figures dating another two centuries later, we can see that the representation of the human figure has shifted again **(Figure 1.5)**. This collection of figures was found in the tomb of a girl in the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens and can be dated to about 380–370 BCE based on stylistic comparisons and archaeological context. While smaller and much more simplified compared to the Parthenon frieze, they do show a similar understanding of the body moving and twisting in space and performing more complex actions than the archaic terracotta. The figures were originally painted with white as well as red and blue and show a more naturalistic treatment of the human form. Both these and the archaic terracottas are idealized – poised and composed in their movement and showing a perfect set of proportions and beauty, but their styles and even their ideals are quite different.

This **assemblage** is unusual for grave goods in its number of objects and the variety of deities. While they are not individualized portraits as we think of them, each figure is differentiated from the others in details of action, objects, and attributes, allowing us, for example, to identify Apollo with the ***kithara*** third from right, the goddess Cybele seated in the center, and a priestess or follower of Cybele on the far right, which has been adapted from an Aphrodite-type of figure leaning on a column by the addition of a tympanum. Other figures are more universal in subject: a dancer, a woman carrying a girl, and a woman with a bowl who might be making an offering like a priestess. As grave goods these figures function like the archaic woman from Rhodes, but the assemblage suggests that beliefs in the afterlife might be more prominent in the minds of the family and culture, and that there was some effort to distinguish this burial ritual by the number of grave goods.

One last example of our miniature survey is a terracotta with two seated women that was probably made in Myrina in present-day Turkey **(Figure 1.6)**. They are about 3 cm taller than the Apollo in the Kerameikos assemblage, and with their seated posture have a slightly larger scale. These figures are even more detailed in their rendering of the human body and the way that the cloth reacts to the movement of the body. Of particular note is that the figures are wearing double layers of garments and through the manipulation of the depth and direction of folds, the artist has been able to suggest the folds of the lower layer showing through the upper layer, especially on the left knee of the right-hand figure. The women are also shown interacting in an intimate and conversational way that mimics actual human behavior more closely. These are still idealized figures, but they are shown with more realism of behavior. Whether they are Demeter and her daughter Persephone, or a more universalizing pair of women, one might say that they are both real and beautiful, as Cicero praised the art of Polykleitos and Apelles. Curiously, however, these figures are much later than these artists, dating to the second

1.4 Terracotta woman from a grave at Kamiros cemetery, Rhodes, *c.* 600–540 BCE. 9 3/16 in (23.3 cm). London, British Museum 1861,1024.1. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

1.5 Terracotta figures from girl's tomb in Kerameikos cemetery, Athens, 380–370 BCE. Height of Apollo with Kithara: 6 15/16 in (17.6 cm). Athens, Kerameikos Museum HS.264. Photo: D-DAI-ATH-Kerameikos-Neg. 07051. All rights reserved.



1.6 Terracotta group of women (Demeter and Persephone?), 2nd cent. BCE. 8 1/16 in (20.5 cm). London 1885,0316.1. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

century BCE. Their type, generally called **Tanagra figures** after a site in Boeotia where many were made and found, represents a high point of terracotta figures in Greek art during the Hellenistic period, a period that Cicero does not include in his list of artists. However, at least in terms of detail, precision, and complexity of figural representation, the seated pair are far more engaging and interesting as a work of art and it could be argued that Hellenistic terracottas surpass those of the classical period. In some ways, these terracottas trace a somewhat different history of Greek art than Cicero and give us an opportunity to consider other issues as well.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR THIS BOOK

Beyond style, the terracottas we have discussed have raised questions about the meaning of the figures and how and why they ended up in a tomb or sanctuary. Even when we know that an artifact like the terracotta from Kamiros came from a tomb, we do not know anything about the occupant of the tomb or the other artifacts found in it, as these details were not recorded as they were in the excavation of the Kerameikos tomb. The Tanagra terracotta highlights further the importance of **provenance** for the study of Greek art. This terracotta was purchased in 1885 by the British Museum from a collector, Charles Merlin, who had served as British Consul and later as agent and inspector of the Ionian Bank in Greece and who collected and sold hundreds of works to the museum. Most of these objects appear to have been chance finds, objects found by farmers or land

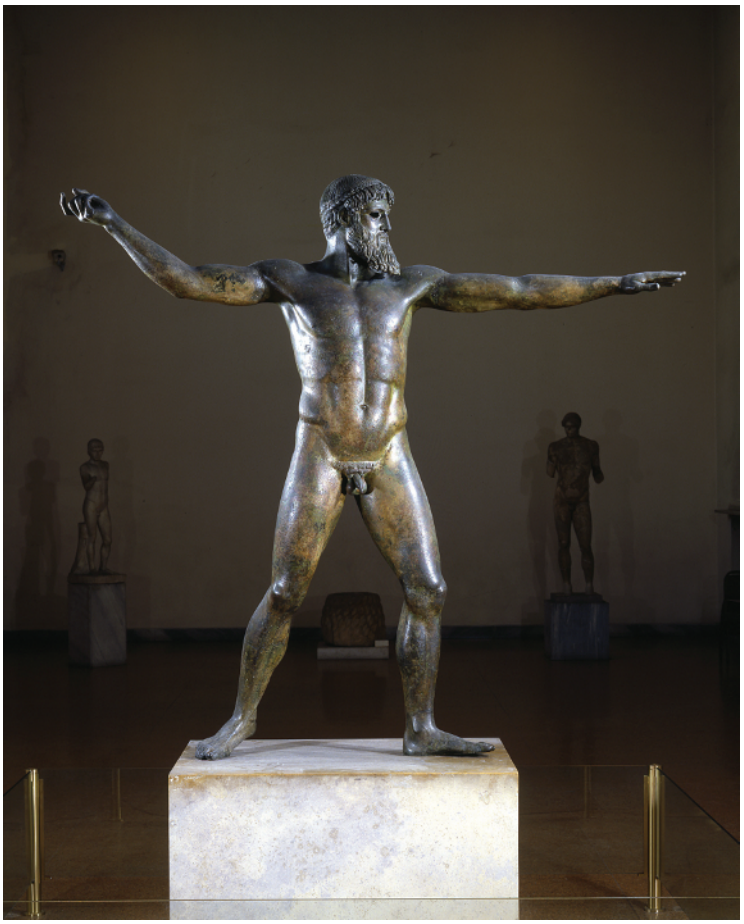
Tanagra figures
terracotta figures produced from the fourth to first centuries BCE, named after the site in Boeotia where they were first found in large quantities

owners or perhaps amateur archaeologists and then put up for sale, but some were probably dug up by opportunistic excavators simply to make money. The difficulty is that the specific context and purpose for this object, whether grave good, religious offering, or domestic decoration, is lost. Even the origin of the piece can be obscured, as the style is similar to terracottas produced in Myrina in Asia Minor in the second century, but one cannot verify that attribution, made on the basis of stylistic analysis and comparison, through external evidence.

We will consider issues of collecting and cultural patrimony later in the textbox in Chapter 10, but the destruction of archaeological context through grave-robbing and looting from archaeological sites is particularly problematic. In these cases, provenance is either missing or even falsified in order to expedite the transportation and sale of a work; less valuable or more fragmentary objects are discarded and destroyed and restorations to make the prize pieces salable can change the original fabric of the work. As time goes on and contemporary populations grow and spread, there is less chance to find undisturbed ancient sites to provide us with information about the context, and systematic looting accelerates that problem.

provenance
the history of findspot and ownership for a work of art

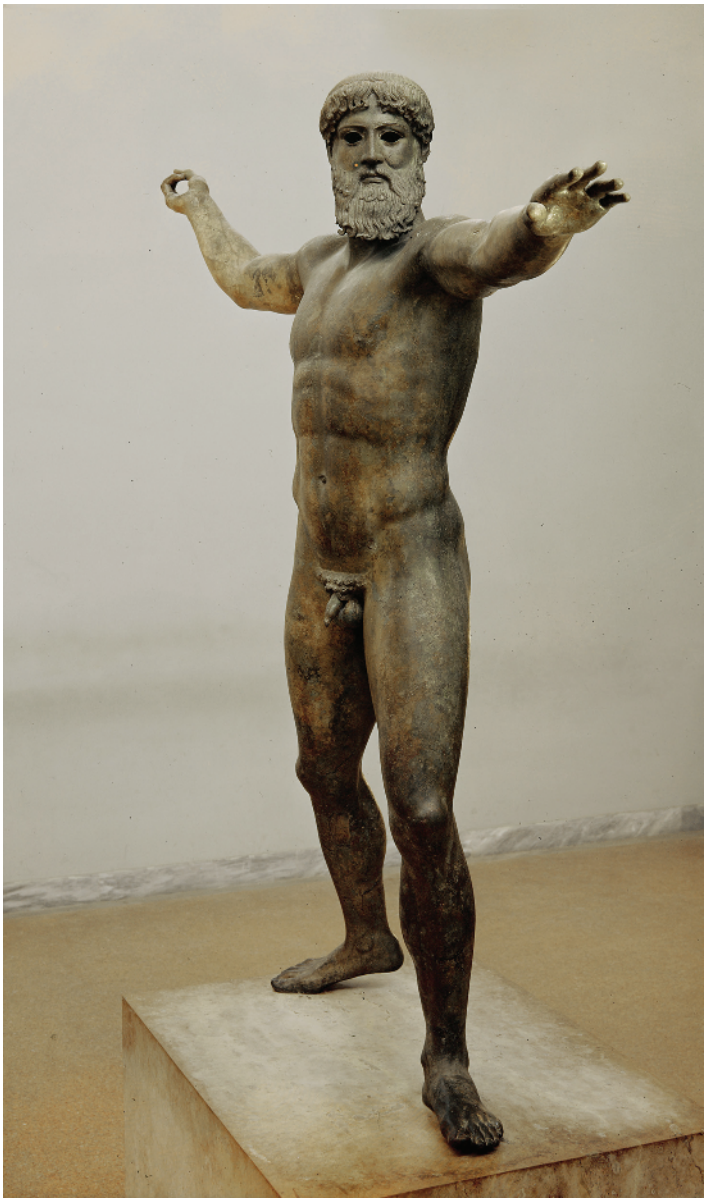
Even when there is an archaeological context for a work of art, one does not always know its origin and purpose. For example, a monumental bronze statue of a god was found in a shipwreck in the sea off Cape Artemision, on the north of the island of Euboea, in 1926–1928 **(Figure 1.7)**. The statue, dated by style to the mid-fifth century, about 460 BCE, was found with another, second-century BCE sculpture of a horse and jockey. Both statues were being taken somewhere by ship, perhaps to Rome from Greece. This means that the original context for the statue is lost, even if its archaeological context is better known, and we can only speculate about its original identity and purpose. The statue once held an implement in its right hand, meaning that we have no definitive attribute or other sign to identify the god. Most scholars today favor identifying the figure as Zeus with a thunderbolt, based on the shape and angle of the flange where the implement was once attached to the right hand.



1.7 God (Zeus?) from Cape Artemision, *c.* 460 BCE. Bronze, 6 ft 10¼ in (2.09 m). Athens, National Archaeological Museum Br. 15161. Photo: National Archaeological Museum, Athens (Kostas Xenikakis) © Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports/ Archaeological Receipts Fund.

Our ignorance of the original context, even when knowing the findspot, is of some importance in that the point of view for this work is critical for understanding how one might approach it. Entering its gallery in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens today, one sees the view in **Figure 1.7**. From this vantage point, the articulation of the anatomy and the strong pose quickly convey the power of a god aiming a weapon. This is the vantage point found in most reproductions, as it provides the clearest possible view of the body and its naturalistic rendering of anatomy and movement, and creates a striking composition for a photograph.

The figure is so lifelike in appearance that it is not immediately apparent to a visitor that his arms are too long; if one were to rotate the left arm down toward the leg, the fingertips would touch the knee rather than the lower thigh as would be normal. The lengthening of the arm enhances the drama of the figure, but it also provides a clue as to how it might have been viewed originally. Such a bronze figure would have been an important dedication in a sanctuary or public area, and so we should think about the viewer approaching the work along a prescribed path. If one were to approach



1.8 God (Zeus?) from Cape Artemision, *c.* 460 BCE. Bronze, 6 ft 10¼ in (2.09 m). Athens, National Archaeological Museum Br. 15161. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

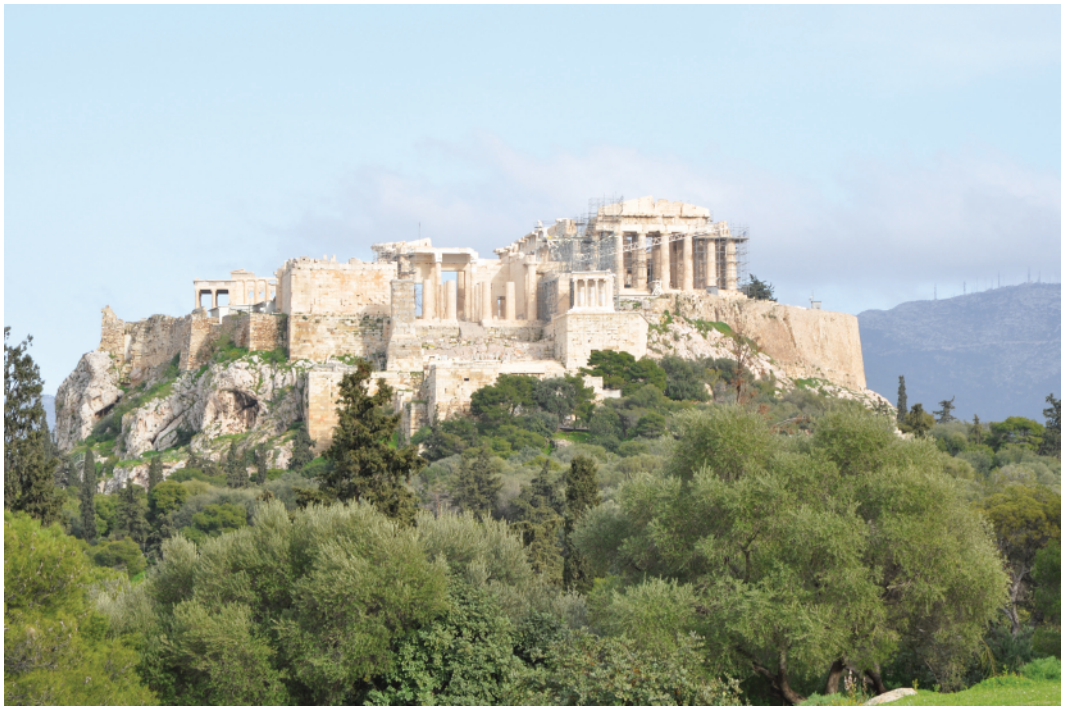
the god from the front **(Figure 1.8)**, one can see the god looking back. The weapon in the right arm would be aimed in the viewer's direction, and the extended left hand would be sighting the target in the viewer's direction too. From this vantage point, the lengthening of the arm adjusts for the foreshortened point of view and appears normally proportioned. This also changes the dynamics of viewing from the previous picture, in that the viewer is now also a target, a participant in the narrative action of the god. This view gives a dramatic vision of the power of a god and of the relationship between the human and divine missing in the other vantage point in **Figure 1.7**.

In other words, we need to consider not only the artist and patron/owner of a work of art, but also the viewer. We shall be discussing the Parthenon extensively in several chapters of this book, in part because of the lavish expenditure in its creation that made it one of the most refined and ornamented buildings in ancient Greece, and further due to its role as a symbol of Athens at its political and cultural height. In selecting a picture of the Acropolis for a book such as this, one usually sees views in which each of the buildings is as completely visible as possible. There is, however, one vantage point that brings them all together in a compact, stage-like view, as can be seen in **Figure 1.9**. In the center is the gateway to the Acropolis, the Propylaia, and just to its side the small Temple of Athena **Nike** (Victory). To the right and above is the west facade of the Parthenon, while to the left is the Erechtheion. The building to the left of the Propylaia obscures the view of the famous **caryatid** porch **(see Figure 7.8, page 164)**, but contained the first Pinakothek, or painting museum. The buildings blend together, making the picture less suitable as an illustration to discuss their design, but what is significant about this view is that it is taken from the Pynx **(see Figure 5.2, page 101)**. This open hillside to the west of the Acropolis is where the ***ekklesia***, the assembly of Athenian voters, would meet to hear speeches and vote on proposals. Standing in the Pynx in the fifth century and later was the height of citizen participation in governance, and from here the claims of Athens to cultural and political leadership became manifest in the marble buildings on the Acropolis to the east. One can imagine the appeals of politicians to the citizens, as we will discuss in Chapter 10, to look upon this and be lovers of the city. The buildings of the Acropolis are spaced so that one can see some of them from almost any part of the ancient city, but it is from the Pynx that they all come together as one ensemble as Athenians carried out some of their most important civic duties.

Nike
the goddess of victory. Also an attribute of another god or goddess who brings victory, such as Athena Nike

caryatid
a statue of a woman that serves as a support in place of a column. It is a feature of the Ionic order of architecture and can also be a support handle for a mirror

The questions that will be of interest in this book, then, will consider meaning, context, viewer, and identity. For example, not only do we want to identify the figures and stories shown in Greek art, but we also want to consider how a story is being told. How does an artist show a narrative in a picture that might be different from the literary versions of tales that we know today? How might the meaning of a picture change when it is found in a sanctuary, a grave, or a house? How were the works of art meant to affect the viewers and frame a point of view or set of beliefs?



1.9 View of the Acropolis from the Pynx (west). Left: Erechtheion; center: Propylaia and Temple of Athena Nike; right: Parthenon. Photo: author.

Some of these questions have to be answered based on the context, raising further questions that we want to ask. Who made the work of art, where, and how? Was it made for direct sale, export, or by commission? Who purchased it, and if it was transported to a new location from its place of origin, how did that happen and how did trade help to spread ideas, either to other groups of Greeks or to non-Greeks? What was the value of the art and what types of people would have owned it? How did a work of art get used in ritual, whether religious, civic, funerary, or domestic? Why might someone give or dedicate a work of art? How did a viewer interact with art long after the artist and owner had passed into history, and what value might the antiquity of a work have for the society?

In talking about people connected to the art, we also want to consider what it meant to them, recognizing that ancient society was not monolithic, but broken down in smaller, overlapping groups based on gender, age, ethnicity/language, socio-economic-political class, and geographical origin. How might a work of art like the Parthenon frieze or terracotta figures like those above have expressed the identity of the figures who made them, commissioned or owned them, or viewed them? Identity is complex, and made even more so by the long passages of time in Greek history, but the artifacts and images can tell us something about the people by and for whom Greek art was made.

As an example, let us consider a collection of cups that was found in a well that was excavated in the **Agora** in Athens **(Figure 1.10a)**. Stylistically, the cups, a shape called a **kylix (pl. kylikes)**, are designated stylistically as **red-figure** ware since the surface of the clay was painted with a black slip, leaving the silhouette of the figure the red color of the iron-rich clay found in Athens. The one cup without figural decoration is covered with only the black slip, and is called **black-glaze** ware. Looking at the rendering of the figures, a date of 500–480 BCE has been suggested for the cups; the close similarity of the details of the cups and their figural painting suggests that they were obtained from the same or closely related workshops, perhaps in two batches (Lynch 2011).

The pot in the bottom left of **Figure 1.10b** is called a pelike and was used to hold liquid such as wine; stylistically, it is about a decade older than the kylix to the right that also appears in Figure 1.10a. The other three vessels are made in the black-figure technique, in which the silhouette of the figure is painted with black slip and the clay surface is left unpainted. The top right

ekklesia
the assembly of Athenian citizens voting on civic issues requiring a quorum of 6,000

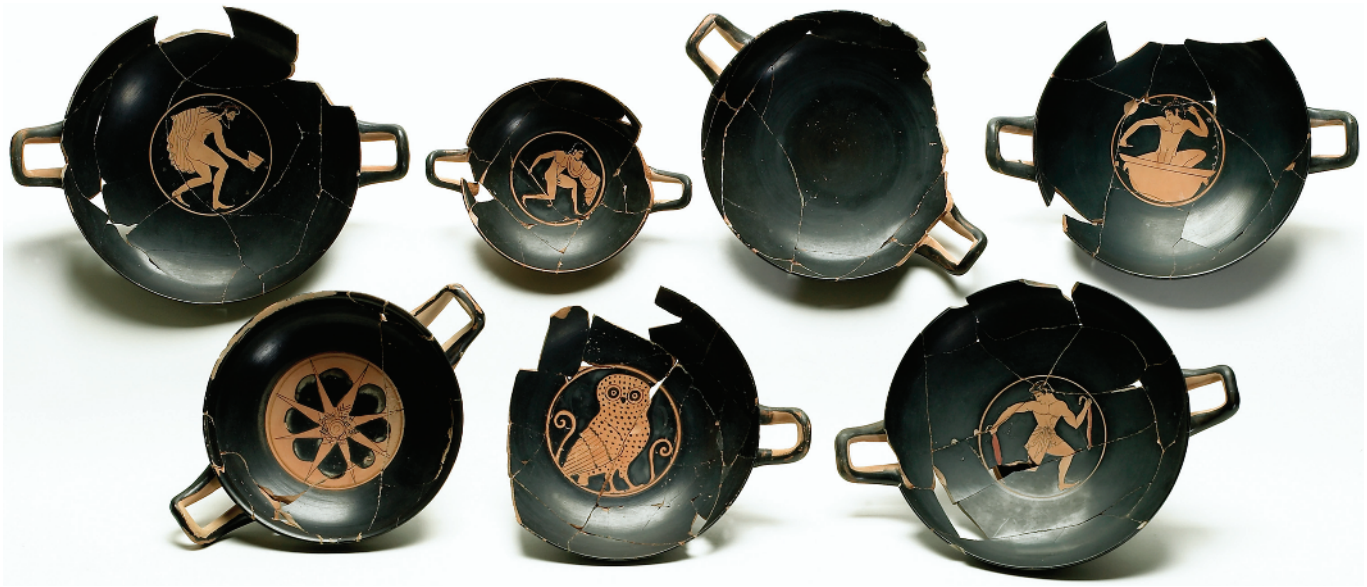
Agora
the central open area of a Greek city where markets and administrative structures were found, as well as dedications and shrines

kylix (pl. kylikes)
a drinking cup with a broad shallow bowl, usually on a stemmed foot, with two handles on the side

red-figure
a style of painted pottery in which the silhouette of the figure is left as the exposed surface of the clay and the background is painted with black slip. Anatomical and other details are drawn or painted on the red figure

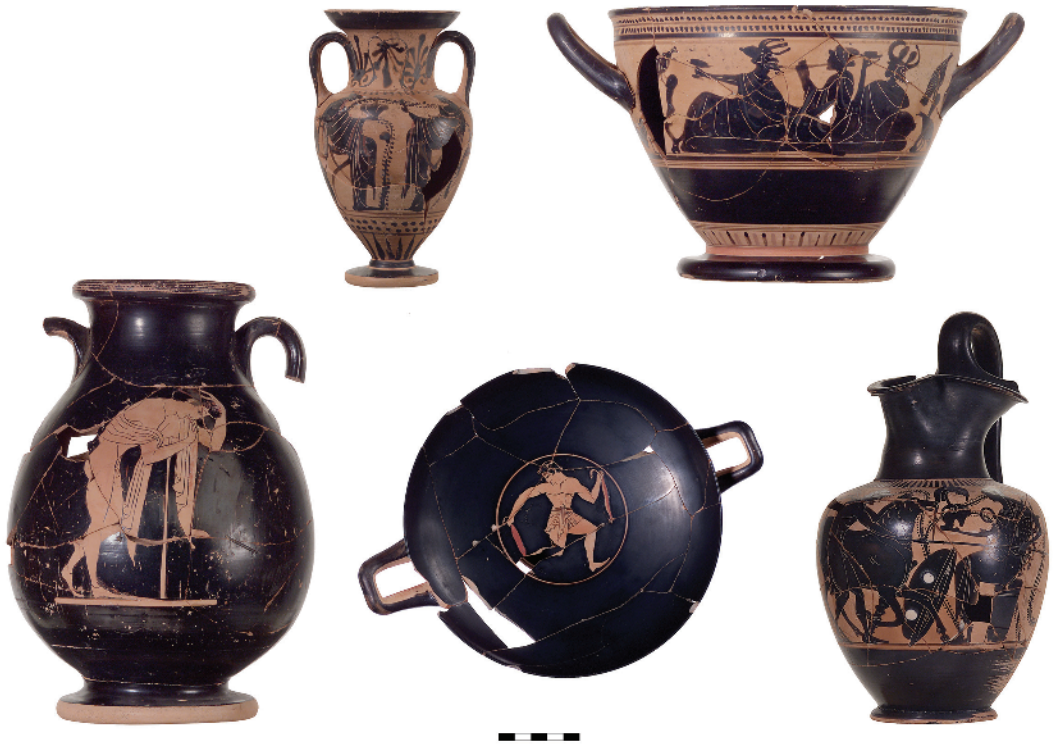
black-glaze
a style of painted pottery in which the surface is covered entirely with black slip

(a)



1.10a Attic pottery from Well J2:4 in the Agora, Athens, *c.* 525–490 BCE. Diameter of top left without handles: 7$^{9}/_{16}$ in (19.2 cm). Athens, Agora Museum. Top row: red-figure kylikes (P32420, P32411), black-glaze kylix (P32470); red-figure kylix (P32419). Bottom row: red-figure kylikes (P32421, P32422, P32417). Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

(b)



1.10b Attic pottery from Well J2:4 in the Agora, Athens, *c.* 525–490 BCE. Height of top right: 6$^{3}/_{8}$–6$^{5}/_{8}$ in (16.2–16.9 cm). Athens, Agora Museum. Top row: black-figure amphoriskos (P32416); black-figure skyphos (P32413). Bottom row: red-figure pelike (P32418); red-figure kylix (P32417); black-figure oinochoe (P32415). Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

vessel is a cup type called a **skyphos**. Holding about 3.5 liters, it is a large version of the skyphos and is a little too big to serve easily as a drinking cup. It might have served as a mixing bowl for wine and water, as the Greeks customarily drank their wine diluted. The small vase on the top left next to the skyphos is a storage container called an **amphoriskos** (a small **amphora**), and might

have held liquid such as wine. At the bottom right is a pitcher called an **oinochoe**, which would be used for pouring wine into drinking cups like the kylikes. The black-figure technique is older than red-figure, and the skyphos and oinochoe are dated 525–500 BCE, perhaps two decades earlier than the cups. Here we have all of the pottery that we would need for a **symposion**, or formal drinking party that we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, but the small size of the amphoriskos and of the skyphos as a mixing bowl might have made them more suitable for more informal and everyday drinking, perhaps using some of the other smaller and plainer drinking cups found in the same well deposit.

What is of particular interest about this assemblage is that these vessels as well as many other pots were found as fill in a household well and were put there when household debris was cleared for reconstructing the house. The house itself was destroyed as part of the sack of Athens by the Persians in 480–479 BCE, giving us a terminus ante quem for the pottery. This means that some of the pottery, like the black-figure ware, was over a generation old and was still in use at the time the house was destroyed. The kylikes were not very recent purchases, but had likely been bought a decade before the destruction. Stylistically, the cups come from related workshops, so in a sense they make a "matched" household set, even if they are not identical to each other, but the suggestion that they were bought in two or three groups at different times and perhaps from different workshops means that the concept of a matched set, or even a set of drinking ware, did not mean stylistic unity or repetition of subject matter. The kylikes may have been used for household symposia, usually associated with feast days, but there were other sturdier drinking vessels that were used for everyday or private drinking, perhaps along with the black-figure vases in **Figure 1.10B**. Thinking of it in present-day terms, the red-figure cups would be like fine china used on holidays, while the other cups were perhaps less costly and used more frequently and less formally.

The subject matter is mostly universal in nature, with only the oinochoe showing mythological figures (Herakles with the Cretan bull and Athena, one of his twelve labors). The other subject matter is best termed **Dionysiac** since it relates to wine: dancers, drinkers, musicians. The recent excavation of this material and its analysis and publication by Kathleen Lynch offer a rare glimpse at a household assemblage and bring us closer to seeing how art functioned in a Greek household. The existence of different sets of cups for different occasions shows the importance of the symposion as an activity, for which a household would invest its resources in painted pottery, making it something of the mass media of its day.

skyphos
a deep drinking cup with steep sides, a flat bottom or foot, and two handles on the side. Large versions could also be used as mixing bowls

amphoriskos
a small amphora or storage vessel

amphora (pl. amphorae)
a multi-purpose storage vessel with two handles on the side and a narrower neck above a wide shoulder or belly

oinochoe
a pitcher used for pouring wine, with one handle, a defined shoulder, and often a trefoil mouth

symposion (pl. symposia)
a formal drinking party in which men would recline on *klinai* (couches) and drink wine, converse, dance, recite poetry, or otherwise revel. Symposia usually took place after important public festivals or occasions

Dionysiac
subject matter relating to the god Dionysos, his followers of satyrs and maenads, or activities associated with his festivals or the symposion

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

If one were to have visited a Greek site like the Acropolis in Athens or the sanctuaries of Delphi and Olympia back in ancient times, one would have had a **synchronic** picture of Greek art, that is, one in which buildings and artwork of vastly different periods and centuries would be set side by side, sharing the same space and possibly even the same function of housing dedications or performing rituals. The contrast between an archaic dedication and one from the Hellenistic period would have been readily apparent, but the **diachronic** narrative of how Greek art changed over time, such as the terracotta figures that we discussed earlier, would not be obvious. For this to happen, we would want to see all of the work from one century or period placed together, and those of other periods set in their own precincts.

A history of Greek art needs both types of narratives, but the pedagogical tradition is to follow primarily a chronological or diachronic scheme, starting at the beginning and going to the end of the first century BCE when Rome and its culture become the dominant civilization of the ancient Mediterranean. Rather than look at contextual issues as digressions from this diachronic history, this book will take a different approach, dividing the chapters into those that are mostly concerned with

synchronic
things and events that exist at the same time, even if they were made at different times

diachronic
looking at things and events in chronological order

specific periods or centuries and those that focus on contextual and other issues. This second group of chapters will be synchronic, mixing works from different periods to see both continuity and change in Greek society and culture. Each set of chapters will refer to issues and illustrations in the other group.

To begin, we will survey briefly the Early and Middle Bronze Age in Chapter 2 and the Later Bronze Age in Chapter 3. This era deserves a text in its own right, but the Bronze Age was the time remembered in the *Iliad* and literally lay under the feet of later Greeks, forming their own ancient history. Chapter 4 will look at the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age and the first development of the Greek **polis** or city-state (*c.* 1125–700 BCE) and marks the start of the chronological series of chapters on Hellenic or Greek art. The next chapter, Chapter 5, however, will look at the context for Greek art: the city and civic life, the Greek house, and cemeteries, where Greek art and architecture served social and cultural roles from the Geometric period (900–700 BCE) to the Hellenistic period (*c.* 330–30 BCE). Chapter 6 will survey the seventh century BCE, sometimes called the **Orientalizing period**, and Chapter 7 will explore the Greek sanctuary and temple, which first developed its basic configuration during the seventh century. Chapter 8 will look at the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE, when many of the media and orders of Greek art were defined and refined. This is also the period when Greek art began depicting many mythological stories, and Chapter 9 will focus on visual narratives and storytelling in Greek art and how one approaches these pictures.

polis
the Greek city-state

Orientalizing period
Greek art produced from about 720/700 to 625/600 BCE

Chapters 10 and 12 look at classical art and architecture, focusing first on the fifth century BCE and then the fourth century, the periods of the great artists named by Cicero, although virtually none of their works survives today. In Chapter 11 we will look at the economics of Greek art, its production and distribution, drawing upon information that becomes available during the classical period. Chapter 13 looks at issues of identity – gender, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, class – which become particularly important as the Greek world became more multicultural from the fourth century onward. Chapter 14 looks at the Hellenistic period, bringing us to 31 BCE when Augustus defeated Antony and Cleopatra, the Ptolemaic Greek queen of Egypt, and Rome dominated the Greek and entire Mediterranean world for the next four centuries. The epilogue will consider aspects of the relationship between cultures, Greek and non-Greek, and why Greek art might still be of interest to us today.

The book is structured in such a way that one could go through the chronological chapters in order and then turn to the contextual chapters, or the reverse. Both sets of chapters have their own illustrations, but rely heavily on those from other chapters. Indeed, with a limit of just over 300 illustrations, one cannot fully illustrate every chapter independently, but I hope that turning backward or forward in the book to see an illustration (or clicking the link in an ebook edition) will help to emphasize the point that history is complex and both diachronic and synchronic at the same time. Some of the illustrations here will not be well known, and some well-known monuments, like the Delphi Charioteer to name one example, have not been included. This was necessary in keeping the balance and focus of the approach, and most of the well-known works are easily found today in scholarly resources on the web like the Beazley Archive or image databases like Artstor.

My hope is that in going to a museum or visiting a Greek site, the issues and themes raised in this book will help the present-day viewer to look at Greek art and architecture as the fabric of ancient Greek culture. Art can bridge the gaps between people created by time, language, geography, and culture; beginning to understand the complexities, contradictions, and ideals of another people, whether historical or contemporary, helps us to understand our own challenges.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT USING THIS BOOK

There are several ancient sources that are helpful in providing information and context for Greek art and architecture. The citation of ancient sources follows a standardized notation by author and/or work, then book/chapter and section/paragraph/line, such as Herodotos 2.53, which would be Book 2, Chapter 53 of his *History*. This allows consulting different editions or translations whose

pagination will vary. The best compilation of these sources in translation is Pollitt 1990, and the most important sources used in this book are:

- Cicero, *Brutus* (cited as Cicero, *Brutus*). Roman orator and politician (106–44 BCE) and author of many letters and works, including *Brutus*, a treatise on rhetoric.
- Herodotos (cited as Herodotos). Greek historian (*c.* 480–420) who wrote a *History*, an account of the wars between the Greeks and Persians.
- Homer, *Iliad* (cited as *Il.*) and *Odyssey* (cited as *Od.*). Late eighth-century poet attributed as author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, although some hold that these were by different authors.
- Pausanias (cited as Paus.). Greek doctor of the mid-second century CE who wrote *A Description of Greece*, a travel guide in ten books.
- Pliny (the Elder), *Naturalis Historia* (cited as Pliny, *N.H.*). Roman encyclopedist (23–79 CE) whose work, *Natural History*, has three chapters covering materials used in art and includes details on the history of Greek art.
- Plutarch, *Vita Perikles* (cited as Plutarch, *Vita Perikles*). Greek biographer and writer, *c.* 46–120 BCE. Author of the *Lives*, a series of biographies on notable Greek and Roman historical figures, including the life of Perikles (*Vita Perikles*).
- Thucydides (cited as Thuc.). Athenian historian (*c.* 460–400 BCE) who wrote a history of the Peloponnesian War.
- Vitruvius, *de Architectura* (cited as *De Arch.*). Roman architect active in the late first century BCE to early first century CE and author of a treatise on architecture.

The textboxes in this book focus on issues that are currently debated in the field or introduce some recent methodological or theoretical approaches developed in the literature. These are intended to open discussion on the underlying issues about what we think we know, how we might know it, or what we ought to do about something.

There are many terms specific to Greek art or art history generally in this book. These have been defined in the text at their first use, but all have been collected into the glossary at the end. Each chapter has both bibliographic citations for references in the text and suggestions for further reading. The latter are not exhaustive, but are intended as starting points for more detailed exploration or information on the topics in the chapter. The captions also include museum inventory numbers, which allow for finding further information on the work in databases or publications. Finally, all dates are BCE unless otherwise noted.

Attic
art coming from Athens, named for Attica, the name for the city of Athens and its surrounding rural areas

TEXTBOX: STYLISTIC ANALYSIS AND SIR JOHN BEAZLEY

There has been a great deal of attention given to stylistic analysis in this chapter, as it is a necessary methodological approach for suggesting a date and origin for a work of art. When confronted with thousands of examples, as is the case with mass media like terracottas and painted pottery, it is necessary to refine attributions further. If there are sufficient examples for comparison, it is possible to define detailed features to identify individual artists or workshops. Examining how commonly represented features like eyes, ears, and muscles are articulated in the same manner on different objects, like comparing the formation of specific letters on different samples of handwriting, can provide a basis for attributing the works to the same individual or group.

Sir John Beazley (1885–1970), a Professor of Archaeology at Oxford University, began to study Athenian (or **Attic**) pottery in the early twentieth century, making careful and detailed observations of how details of human anatomy were drawn and making lists of vases that he proposed were by the same painter. In the course of his career he studied

thousands of vases and published lists organized by painter. For some he could give a name to the artist based on an inscription on one or more vases in the group, such as Exekias or Euphronios. For other groupings, he chose a nickname based on a significant subject, detail, or museum location: the Foundry Painter, the Kleophrades Painter, or the Berlin Painter. He published his complete lists in two books, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (1956) and *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters* (second edition, 1963), with updates in *Paralipomena* (1971) and additional references compiled by the Beazley Archive in *Addenda* (second edition, 1989). In these lists he included the location and inventory number, subject matter, and publications that illustrated the vase, making these works indispensable references for the study of vase painting. Today, citations of vases typically include the page number and list number of a vase as a universal reference point, such as *ARV*^{2} 1017.54 (page 1017, no. 54 in the list of the Phiale Painter) for **Figure 1.2** above. In cases where there was some uncertainty about the attribution, Beazley would classify a work as "near" or "related to" the list of a named artist.

Attribution requires a degree of judgment, as the variations in details, like those of handwriting, can be considerable. Beazley's lists have held up very well over time and new works have been added to his lists. Today, the lists have been transformed into a searchable database, the Classical Art Research Centre Extensible Database (XDB) maintained by the Beazley Archive and Classical Art Research Centre at Oxford University. With Beazley's lists, it is possible not just to study style and attribution, but also to explore iconography and other approaches to Greek art among thousands of works.

One side effect of attribution is that naming a painter can also increase the appeal of an object for collectors and its value in the market. As we have noted, looting of archaeological sites for antiquities to sell is a critical problem in the study of Greek art. Beazley's work has come under some criticism in connection with the antiquities trade, but it should be noted that his lists do not focus on the best painters alone that would be of the highest interest to dealers and collectors. Beazley made lists of works that would be considered sloppy and second-rate artistically, but including even these groups in his lists gives scholars today an opportunity to consider the roles that Greek art played for many levels of ancient society, and not just the elite.

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