

SCULPTURE

The art and sculpture of Ancient Egypt were a major influence on early Archaic Greek works. However, by the Classical Period in the fifth century BCE, the Greeks had developed an important and radical artistic skill of their own.

Sculpture A is an example of Egyptian Sculpture

Sculpture B is an example of early Archaic Greek sculpture

Sculpture C is an example of the later Classical period of Greek sculpture

Impressive as they were on their own, buildings like the Parthenon would not have been quite so magnificent without the statues and carvings created to decorate them. Greek sculptors were among the finest the world has ever known.

The Greeks were particularly adept at sculpting the human form. Sculptors carefully studied what people looked like, not only while they were still but also while they were moving. The sculptors then tried to re-create what they had observed, paying particular attention to how the subject's muscles looked. In most cases, the result was a statue that looks as if it could come to life. For example, look at the statue of the discus thrower pictured on the previous page. The athlete depicted in the statue looks as though he is in the process of launching his discus into the air.

While the Greeks wanted statues to look lifelike and active, they did not necessarily want them to look realistic. Greek sculptors were not interested in depicting people as they really looked. Instead, they chose to portray their subjects as physically perfect, without any blemishes or imperfections. As a result, Greek statues almost all depict figures of great beauty and grace.

Though we know a great deal about ancient Greek sculpture, very few original works remain. Much of what we do know about Greek sculpture is based on copies of Greek statues made by the Romans a few hundred years later. Roman artists made many copies of what they considered to be the greatest Greek statues, including the discus thrower shown in this chapter. Many of these copies survived even after the original statues were destroyed.

Source: "Golden Age of Athens," Susan Ramirez, et al., World History: Human Legacy, Holt (adapted)