

Ancient Greece Religion, Architecture, Sculpture, & Theater



Greek Religion

- Religion was intertwined with private and public affairs throughout Greek culture.
- The main categories of Greek deities were the Olympian deities, who were said to live on Mount Olympus, and the older chthonian deities.

The Gods of Mount Olympus

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Zeus | Chief deity |
| 2. Hera | Mother goddess, wife of Zeus |
| 3. Poseidon | Ruler of the seas |
| 4. Hades | Ruler of the underworld |
| 5. Hestia | Protector of the hearth |
| 6. Apollo | God of wisdom and prophesy... |
| 7. Artemis | Virgin goddess of the hunt |
| 8. Ares | God of war and violence |
| 9. Aphrodite | Goddess of love and beauty |
| 10. Hephaestus | Patron of craftspeople |
| 11. Athena | Goddess of heroic endeavors... |
| 12. Hermes | God of merchants and thieves |
| 13. Dionysus | God of wine... |



Artist's rendition of the statue of Zeus at the Temple of Zeus, in Olympia. The statue was made by the sculptor Phidias, c. 432 BC.



The birth of Athena.

The Fates are the three goddesses who were the Greek incarnations of destiny.



Clotho - spins the thread of life.

Lachesis - determines the length of the thread.

Atropos - cuts the thread of life.

The Greeks believed that creativity itself was a divine gift from the muses.

Calliope	Epic poetry	Writing tablet
Clio	History	Scrolls
Erato	Love poetry	Cithara (like a lyre)
Euterpe	Song and poetry	Aulos (like a flute)
Melpomene	Tragedy	Tragic mask
Thalia	Comedy	Comic mask
Polyhymnia	Hymns	Veil
Terpsichore	Dance	Lyre
Urania	Astronomy	Globe & compass

Clio, Thalia, Erato, Euterpe, Polyhymnia



Calliope, Terpsichore, Urania, Melpomene

Chthonian Deities

- Sounds like *thonian*; “of the earth.”
- Derived from ancient earth and harvest deities, Chthonian cults grew in influence as the power of the *demos* increased.
- The cults were only open to members who swore to keep silent; mystery cults from the Greek word *mystos*, “keeping silent.”
- The most famous of these was the Eleusinian Mystery, which was dedicated to Demeter and Persephone.

Demeter and Persephone

- Demeter was the goddess responsible for the harvest. She was the mother of Persephone, who was abducted by Hades.
- This led to a myth which explained the change in seasons.
- This is an example of an etiological myth, a myth intended to explain the origins of observed phenomena.

Dionysus

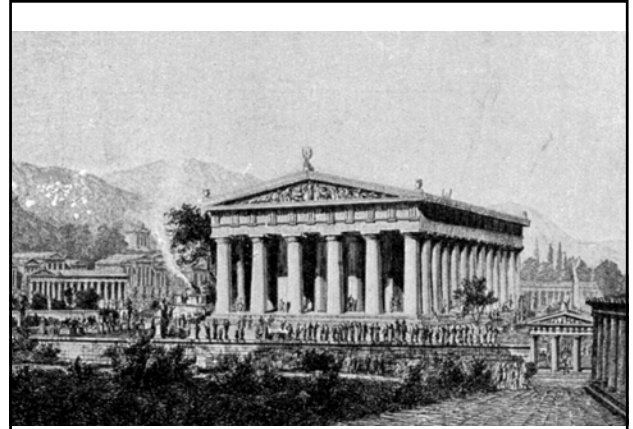
- God of wine, ecstasy, and intoxication.
- Represented the irrational, emotional, and uncontrolled aspects of human nature, in contrast to the rationality of Apollo.
- In Athens, wild rituals in the honor of Dionysus eventually evolved into the civic festival known as the Dionysia.



Apollo: God of music, archery, prophesy, reason, justice, and order.



The west pediment of the Temple of Zeus depicted the Centauroomachy, the fight at the wedding of Peirithoos between the Lapiths and the centaurs, who had violated *xenia*, the sacred rules of hospitality that support the social norms. Apollo stood in the centre, flanked by Peirithoos and Theseus. The Lapiths have been taken to represent the civilized Olympian order of the Greeks themselves, while the Centaurs represent primitive nature of chthonic beings. The frieze also reminded fifth-century Greeks of their victory over the Persians.

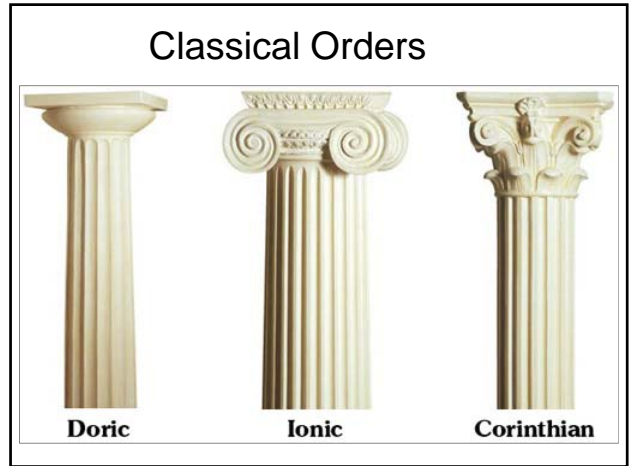


Artist's depiction of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.



Greek Architecture

Paestum,
Italy

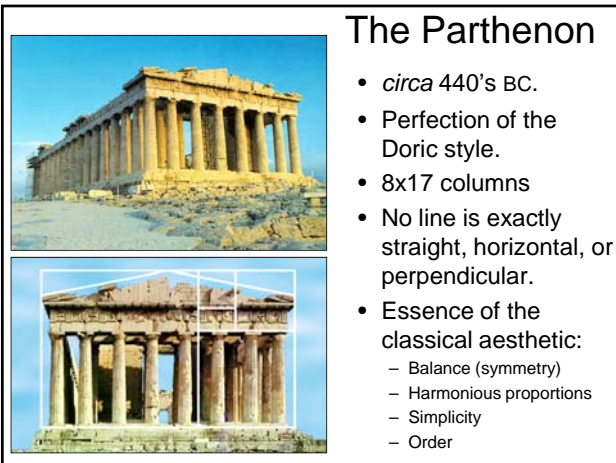


Classical Orders

Doric

Ionic

Corinthian

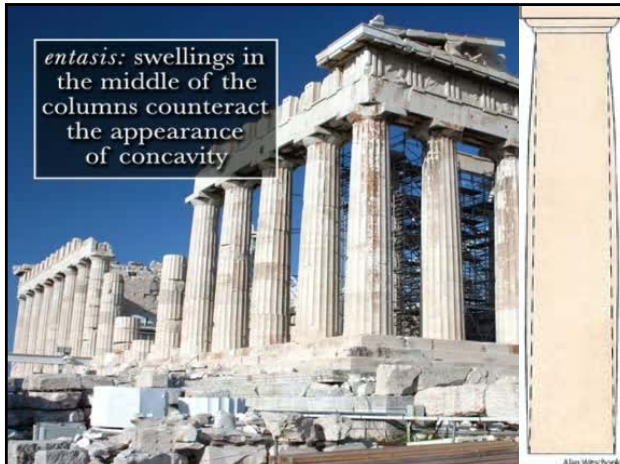
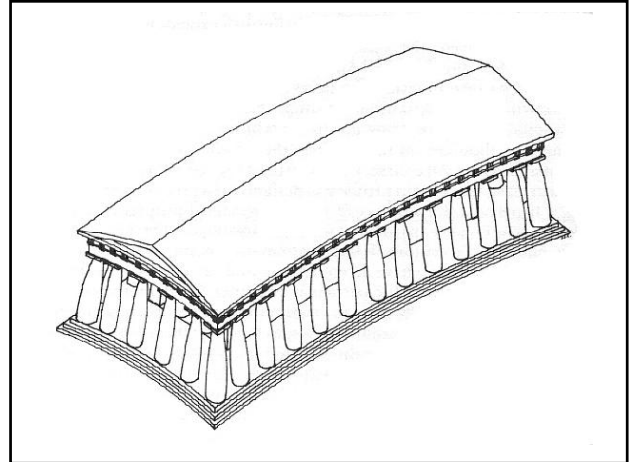
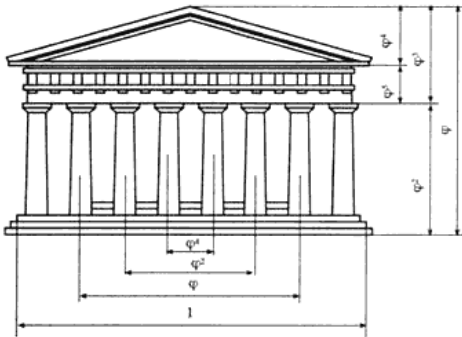


The Parthenon

- circa 440's BC.
- Perfection of the Doric style.
- 8x17 columns
- No line is exactly straight, horizontal, or perpendicular.
- Essence of the classical aesthetic:
 - Balance (symmetry)
 - Harmonious proportions
 - Simplicity
 - Order

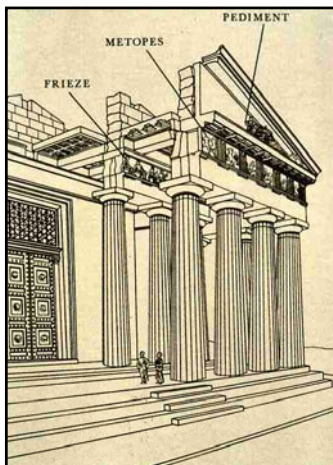


Harmonious Proportions



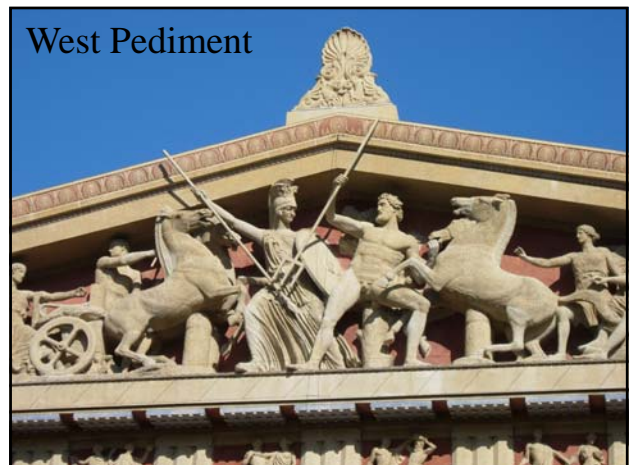
Athena

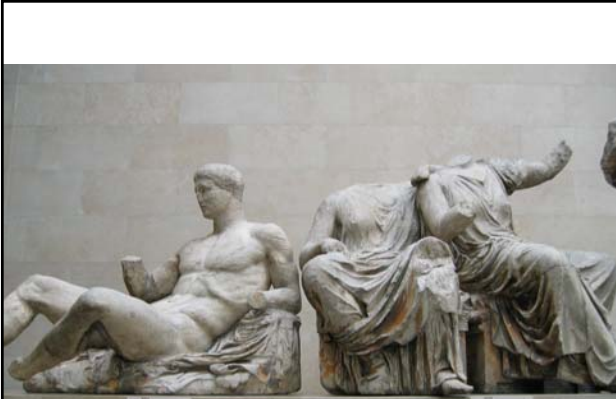
- Athena is the goddess of wisdom, peace, warfare, strategy, handicrafts and reason, shrewd companion of heroes and the goddess of heroic endeavor.
- She is the virgin patron of Athens, which built the Parthenon to worship her.



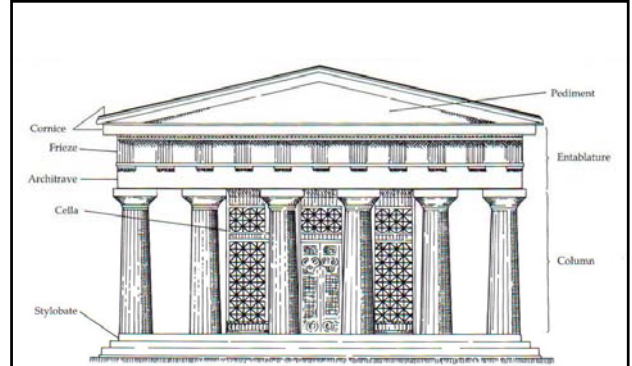
Sculptures on the Parthenon
Pediments
Metopes
Frieze

West Pediment

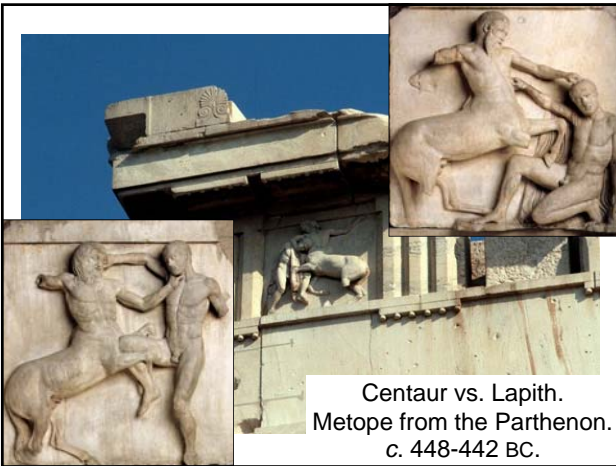




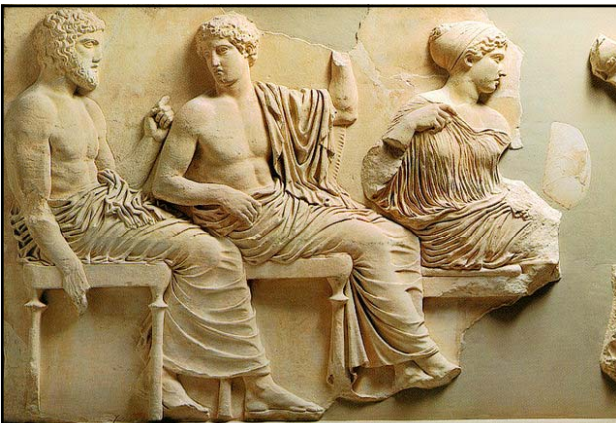
Dionysus watching the sunrise.



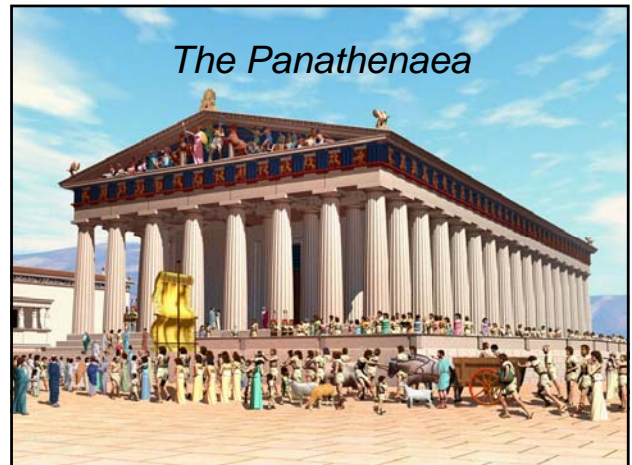
Post-Beam-Triangle construction



Centaur vs. Lapith.
Metope from the Parthenon.
c. 448-442 BC.

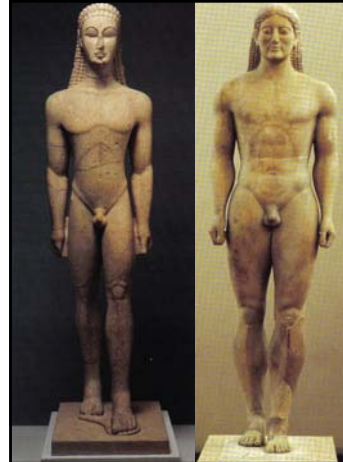


Poseidon, Apollo, and Artemis. c. 448-442 BC.



Greek Sculpture

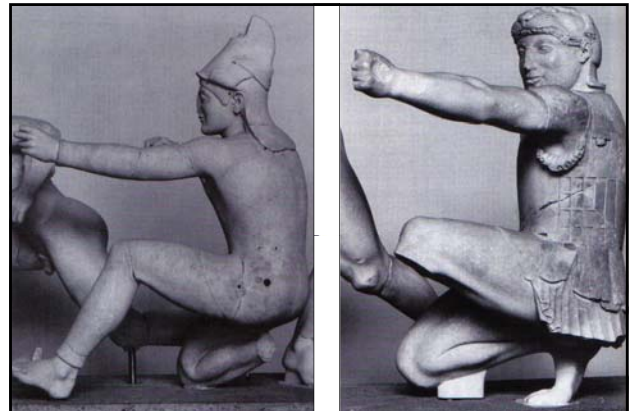
- During the Archaic period, sculptors sought to imitate and idealize the human form.
- During the Hellenic period, sculptors did this to perfection, but they also made their art much more naturalistic.
- Greeks forged a canon (a set of rules) of idealized human proportions.
- They also developed a repertoire of postures, gestures, and subjects that have become embedded in Western art.



New York Kouros compared to the Ptoon Kouros.



Auxerre Kore compared to the Peplos Kore.



Two sculptures from the West and East ends of the Temple of Aphaia, 15 years apart. Paris (500 BC) and Heracles (485 BC).



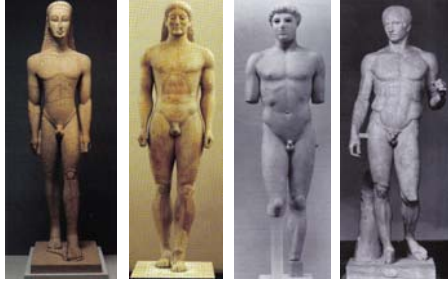
Kritios Boy

- Severe style – dignified nobility.
- Beautifully rendered muscles and sense of inner life.
- *Contrapposto* stance, freer and more relaxed.
- c. 480 BC.



Doryphoros

- High Classical style
- Ordered proportions
- Controlled musculature
- Relaxed *contrapposto*
- c. 440 BC.



600 BC 530 BC 480 BC 440 BC

A note about Greek artists.

- Those who practiced the visual arts, including sculpture, were held in low regard in ancient Greece; they were viewed as manual laborers.
- Plutarch said “we admire the work of art but despise the maker of it.”
- Phidias and Praxiteles are exceptions to this rule. Unfortunately, no verifiably original examples of their artwork exist.

Hermes with the Infant Dionysus

- c. 345 BC.
- Attributed to Praxiteles, perhaps the most renowned sculptor of Ancient Greece.
- The Praxitelean curve
- Intense gaze and delicate features lead to a new wave of more sensual portrayals of the human figure.



Hellenistic Sculpture: Sculptors during the Hellenistic period tailored their work to the more melodramatic (less restrained) aesthetic of the time.



The Dying Gaul



Laocoön and His Sons



The Winged Victory of Samothrace,
c. 220-190 BC.



Aphrodite of Milos, better known as the Venus de Milo, is an ancient Greek statue and one of the most famous works of ancient Greek sculpture. Created at some time between 130 and 100 BCE, it is believed to depict Aphrodite (Venus to the Romans) the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

Greek Theater: Tragedy & Comedy



The Dionysia

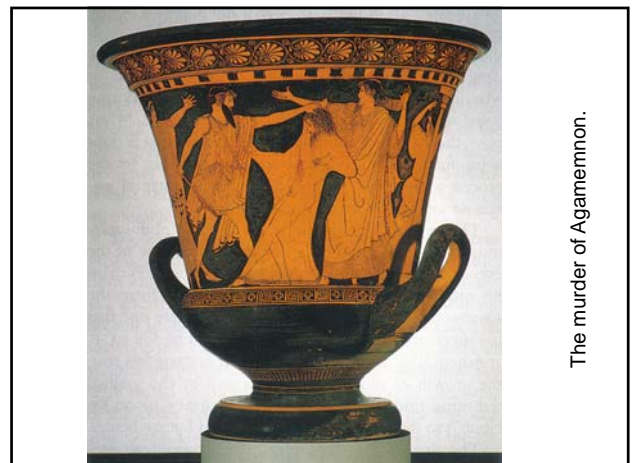
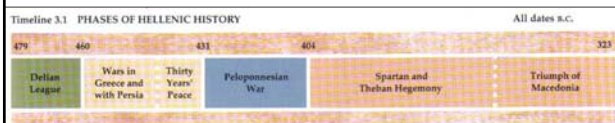
- The Dionysia was the second largest religious festival in Athens. (The Panathenaea was the largest.)
- The central event of the Dionysia was the drama competition between playwrights.
- Originally, each playwright offered three serious tragedies (often in trilogy format) and one comedy.

Greek Theater: Tragedy

- Tragedies were based on myths that the audience would have been very familiar with.
- Plots dealt with fundamental human issues with no easy solutions. The heroes served as warnings, not models.
- Aristotle argued in *Poetics* that the proper effect of tragedy is *catharsis* - the purging of the harmful emotions: pity and fear.
- The tragedy of Greek tragedy: only the works of three playwrights survive.

Aeschylus (525-456 BC)

- Optimistic philosophy / themes
- *Orestia* Trilogy (458 BC)
 - *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, *The Eumenides*
 - Represents the evolution of civilization through reason and order.



The murder of Agamemnon.



Orestes, Electra and Hermes in front of Agamemnon's tomb.



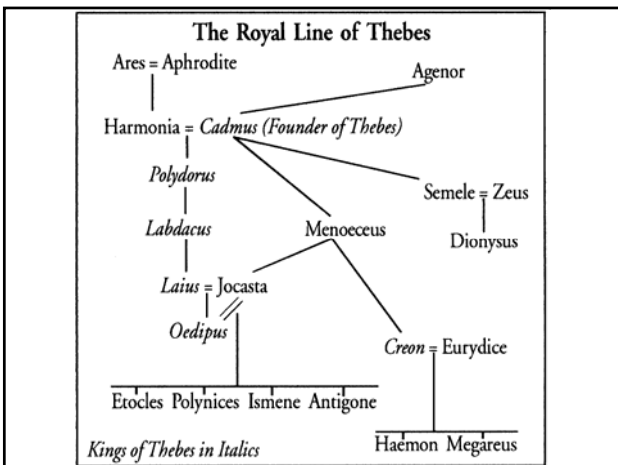
Orestes pursued by the Erinyes (Furies).



The trial of Orestes.

Sophocles (496-406 BC)

- In *Oedipus the King* (429 BC, a.k.a. *Oedipus Rex*), King Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother, then blinds himself when he learns the truth.
- In *Antigone* (442 BC), Sophocles explores whether human or divine law should take precedence and he gives equally powerful arguments to the play's opposing characters.



Antigone recovering Polyneices' body.

Greek Theater: Political Commentary

- Originally Greek tragedy dealt with new treatments of well-known myths.
- But it also came to be used by some as a tool to reflect upon contemporary society.
- *The Trojan Women*, by Euripides, is commentary on the Athenian capture of the Aegean island of Melos and the subsequent slaughter and subjugation of its populace by the Athenians earlier that year (415 BC).

The Trojan Women, by Euripides



Greek Theater: Comedy

- Playwrights invented their own plots and focused on contemporary matters.
- Refused to take anyone or anything seriously. Parodied and satirized contemporary people and events.
- Could only happen in an open democracy?



Aristophanes (450-385 BC)

- He used satire to entertain as well as to provide political criticism.
- In *Lysistrata* (411 BC), the title character convinces the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands as a means of forcing the men to end the Peloponnesian War.
- Aristophanes pointed out the absurdity of Athens' engagement in the Peloponnesian War...seven years before Athens lost.
- After the war, free speech was curtailed and the great creative age of Greek theater was over.

Satire and Parody

- What is the difference between satire and parody?
- A satire tends to *invent* a fictitious situation for the purpose of ridiculing someone or some idea.
- A parody *imitates* an existing work — often in an absurd way, such as by exaggerating its characteristics — in order to make fun of it and point out its flaws.

Practice Questions

- Why did Greek sculpture improve so quickly?
- What was the role of theater in Athens?
 - Religion, Competition, Universal themes, Political and social commentary/criticism
- What are some examples of satire and parody that are found in Thai culture?