

Hellenistic art

[Science](#), [Archaeology](#)



Section/# Hellenistic Art Question A unique component of Hellenistic art is that it employed a type of universality that was flavored with elements of the multi-cultural influences that were a very real part of life as a result of Alexander the Great's conquests. Due to the rapid expansion of empire, art during the time was made to realign itself with the realities of a vastly larger territory and diverse populace. This is not to say that a type of artistic multiculturalism pervaded and diminished traditional Greek influence from the arts; quite the opposite is true. Of special interest is the way that art was presented within the 5 smaller kingdoms that resulted after the death of Alexander.

Each of these generals co-opted the art of the time to display the unique influences that their particular kingdoms engendered. However, the unifying mark that united these differing pieces is the gigantism and baroque nature that the art oftentimes entails. This gigantism and overly ornate style was likely born out of the desire to loudly proclaim the glory of the Greek empire. However, this was taken to such an unbelievable extreme that the art lost a great deal of its appeal and became overtly tacky. As a result, gone was the era of the muted and reserved art forms of the classical era. They are replaced instead by the bold and bombastic art of the Hellenistic period.

Question 2)

As previously stated, the art form of the Hellenistic period was anything but restrained. Rather than showing the ideals of human and godly actions/virtues, Hellenistic art focused on the very extreme. As such, Hellenistic art chose to depict characters and situations that which could only be defined as frenetic (Streek 28). As such the art oftentimes showed

individuals in the throes of mortal combat, characters prostrating themselves in various poses, defeated warriors downing poison, men overcome by fear, the loss of honor in death, and many other such expressive/explosive emotions. In this way details such as the forcefulness of the action or circumstances and the violence of the movements associated with these are amplified.

Interestingly, although the same can be said for the mosaics other art forms, the pottery and other earthen ware remained largely unchanged and muted. One could reasonably expect that this was the result of the fact that the artists were attempting to extol the highest degrees of grandeur in the public displays of Hellenistic art; whereas the more muted domestic settings required art forms that did not necessarily need to be so bold and overbearing. Moreover, the Hellenistic period saw a rapid decline in the art form of painted vases. People opted instead for simplistic black or white vases with little if any decoration (Oakley 603) Again, this helps to express a divergence of art away from the personal sphere and into the public sphere as art became an increasingly important aspect of power projection for the respective kingdoms and perhaps a less important facet of everyday Greek life.

Works Cited

Oakley, John H. "Greek Vase Painting." *American Journal Of Archaeology* 113. 4 (2009): 599-627. Academic Search Complete. Web. 5 Oct. 2012.

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