

Comparative formal analysis of artworks

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The rise of civilization follows when humankind decided to build for themselves a more stable and promising life. Cultural shifts then occurred between the Paleolithic and Sumerian periods due to the civilization of Mesopotamia, and humankind developed a polytheistic culture in which rituals and worshipping came into play. Statuettes of Worshippers (ca. 2700 B.C.) from the Square Temple at Susquehanna, Iraq, were one of the representations of the Sumerian culture. The emphasis on different body parts of the sculptures signifies a shift in culture due to the rise of civilization.

Life during the Paleolithic period was plain with meager cultural resources. Venus of Wildflower is a tiny three-dimensional female figure, approximately 4 1/4" high, created with simple sculpting tools, probably something similar to a chisel, and a piece of limestone. The sculpture displays a woman with her pair of thin forearms resting on her breasts and a huge belly hanging above her pubic triangle. The roundness of her body parts dominates the whole sculpture.

The tools and media available at that time period set a limit on the techniques of creation, leading to the rugged coarseness of this sculpture. In comparison with a normal human figure, Venus of Willendorf is exaggerating out of proportions, which seems to misrepresent women from the Paleolithic period. The title of this sculpture, Venus, may be an attempt to explain the distortion and the nakedness of her body. Venus, who is the goddess of beauty and love according to the Roman mythology, might be depicted as the goddess of fertility during the Paleolithic period.

The figure, lacking facial features which may be covered by the braided hair, leads the audiences' focuses to her enormous body parts, especially her breasts and belly. Her belly bulging out may suggest pregnancy while the conspicuous outline of her pubic triangle may represent fertility. From another point of view, Venus of Wildflower, with the fullness of her body, may also be a symbolization of desire for abundance. The intention of this relatively small sculpture might have been some kind of amulet men carried around or maybe it even acted as a motivation for men hunter to hunt for abundant amount of food.

In this sculpture, the emphasis of women's delectable body parts implies that mankind in the Paleolithic period tends to create what they desire, in the case of the way of living, as well as the culture, changed with the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia. No longer did people in Sumerian period live a hunter's life; instead, they worked to create a more stable life by farming and herding, which was an evidence of civilization. Significant inventions during the Sumerian period equipped people with improved tools and media to create sculptures with better techniques.

Apparently, the Statuettes of two worshippers have a smoother surface and texture comparing to Venus of Wildflower. The material of the statuettes was soft gypsum inlaid with shell and black limestone while Venus of Wildflower was created with limestone only. Clothing and facial features were carved onto the statuettes of the two worshippers unlike the sculpture of Venus of Wildflower. The men wear a fringe skirt with a belt while the women wear a long robe. And instead of enormous breasts and belly, these statuettes have in common outstanding, round eyes.

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This reveals a cultural meaning of the Sumerian period that gender is differentiated not by sexual body features, but by appearance and clothing. Comparing to that of the Venus of Wildflower, the statuettes have a more normal proportion, despite the size of their eyes and hands. Although these statuettes of worshippers were manufactured in a wide range of sizes, they all have a common body gesture: having a neutral facial expression and standing upright with their small hands together placed in front of their chests.

The position of the hands, along with their head slightly tilted upwards, may suggest that they are praying or begging for something from deities or any other gods and goddesses they believe in. Also, the small hands of the statuettes may imply that they have a limited ability and their huge, pitiful eyes seem to represent a desire for something in return; for instance, help from the deities to cure a disease.

These statuettes of worshippers were found in homes as votive figures probably because common people were not allowed to visit the Gujarat in that time period. Not only do these statuettes signify a civilization, they also mark the shift of culture and the development of religions and beliefs. The similarities and differences of Venus of Wildflower and the Statuettes of two reshipped from two different historical time periods display a major change in the culture along with the way of living among a group of people in a society.

Moreover, the emphasis on certain body parts can be viewed as the main symbolization of the individual sculpture. In this comparison, the breasts,

belly and pubic area of Venus of Wildflower represent fertility and abundance while the eyes and hand gesture of the Statuettes of two worshippers symbolize belief and desire for help. In general, different artworks created in different historical time periods usually reveal a major revolution or a shift in culture.