

Classical style vs. the renaissance

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Classical Style vs.. The Renaissance One of the most influential artistic styles in western culture is the Classical Style. This term describes the art and architecture produced in Ancient Greece between the late sixth and early fourth centuries B. C. E. The harmonious order that governs almost all the aspects of Ancient Greek Civilization, including politics and philosophy, was the basis of this rich artistic period which has always had a strong influence on Western culture. Nevertheless, there have been some periods in history where the Classical influences were more prevalent.

This influence could not be more evident than in the Renaissance, which refers to the rebirth of the Classical Style. The Renaissance which spread through Europe started in Italy around 1300 C. E. And lasted through the seventeenth century. In this period, the artisans did not just copy the Greeks but also revived their principles of harmony, order, proportion, and realism. In this paper, I'm going to examine one sculpture and one building from each of these two periods to identify the similarities and differences between them.

Hermes with the young Dionysus by Praxiteles vs.. David by Michelangelo
Hermes with the young Dionysus was made by Praxiteles around 340 B. C. E. This marble statue represents Hermes, which was the messenger of the Greek Gods, holding the young Dionysus (Carnatic). This freestanding Greek statue was made during the Golden Age of the Classical Style, and it features the key characteristics of this period (realism, harmony, and proportion). Hermes appears nude leaning against a tree trunk draped with material which is wrapped around his arm.

He is leaning in a relaxed pose with most of his body positioned on the left side of the artwork. Parallaxes balances the overall composition by putting the young Dionysus on Hermes' arm which connects the figure to the supporting tree trunk on the right side. Like other sculptures from this period, Hermes with the young Dionysus is very realistic. According to Gloria Firer, author of the book *The Humanistic Tradition* "the male nude of the High Classical Age seems to fulfill Aristotle's idea of excellences as the exercise of human will dominated by reason".

Hermes' idealized body is perfectly symmetrical, and it absolutely fits into the Greek canon (set of rules for determining physical proportion). In addition, the almost tactile texture of the smooth marble exposes Hermes' well developed muscles and bones which seem to be alive and moving under his soft smooth skin. His facial features are symmetrical and proportionate, and his expression is relaxed while smiling as he looks upon the baby Dionysus. In this statue, Parallaxes reflects the Greek ideal of beauty.

The realism and perfection of the Greek statues of the Classical period were the inspiration for sculpture of the Italian Renaissance. Michelangelo created *David* between 1501 and 1504. The work is a representation of the young shepherd who slays the giant Goliath with his meager sling and who later goes on to become the king of Israel (Firer). Like *Hermes with the young Dionysus*, *David* is a freestanding, statue of a nude male, created at the peak of its period, the Renaissance. Michelangelo created this sculpture in the early sixteen century, which is considered the high Renaissance.

Similarly to Parallaxes' statue, David is very realistic, and the smooth marble shows the perfectly developed muscular structure beneath the skin.

However, unlike Hermes, David's posture is not relaxed but rigid with his muscles tense and veins protruding from the surface. He appears leery and focused on his opponent, awaiting some action that is about to happen. In addition, while Hermes' scale and proportion are realistic, David's is oversized standing 14 Ft. 5 in. High, and his head, hands, and feet are oversized and not proportionate to the rest of his body. Michelangelo deliberately violated classical proportions by making the head and hands of his figure too large for his trunk. The body of the fearless adolescent is tense and brooding, powerful rather than graceful" says Firer. Although both sculptures share common characteristics, David is different from Hermes in that Parallaxes' creation is just a celebration of beauty and perfection while Michelangelo creates beauty and also enhances human accomplishment.

Parthenon vs.. Saint Peter's Basilica The Parthenon (448-432 B. C. E.) is a Classical Greek temple that was designed by architects Ictinus and Callicrates.

It is located in Athens, Greece, and it crowns the high plateau called the Acropolis. The temple is dedicated to the city's main Goddesses, Athena, and it is surrounded by other smaller temples (Firer). Like most of the buildings from this period, the architects used the post-and-lintel system, and they did not use mortar. The Parthenon floor plan is rectangular and very simple. It only has two rooms surrounded by a colonnaded walkway. The order used for the columns is Doric, which has no base, and its capital is a simple cushion.

The Greek principles of perfection such as order, harmony, and symmetry govern the whole construction. The ideal and concern with perfection of order and balance caused the architects to use wider columns on the corners of the structure to offset the visual reduction of their size due to the bright light of the sky behind them according to Firer. In addition, the Parathion's pediment was decorated symmetrically and balanced with relief carvings of the Greek Gods featuring the king of the gods, Zeus, directly in the center.

Similar to the revival of the classical style in Renaissance sculpture, the principles of the Classical Greek architecture were the inspiration for building during the Renaissance. Saint Peter's Basilica (1506-1612 C. E.) is a catholic church constructed during the high Renaissance. Ten architects worked on its construction including Donato Bramante, who started the project, and Michelangelo, who designed of the dome (The World Book Encyclopedia). Similarly to the Parthenon, it is intended for worshipping and is located in the middle of a religious area, Vatican City.

It is dedicated to Saint Peter who is considered the first pope of the Christian Church and whose remains lay beneath the building. Saint Peter's Basilica has also some decorative features that resemble the Greek temple. The columns in the facade are inspired by the Classical Style although they are a different order, Corinthian, and above the columns there is a pediment. Crowning the facade are thirteen statues upon the balustrade, which although are not exactly the same, they mimic the ones in the Parthenon.

The figure in the center is Jesus, king of heaven, and the rest are Saint John the Baptist and eleven apostles. The major differences between the two

temples are the construction methods. Saint Peter's Basilica uses mortar, and it has stone arches inside supporting the ceiling, which are construction techniques developed by the Romans. The floor plan is a Latin cross that is inspired by the medieval cathedrals. In addition, the building is crowned with a huge dome, which is an architectural feature and innovation from the Renaissance.

Although the Renaissance architecture is more complex than the Classical, the architects included key classically styled features in their designs and the Classical ideal of proportion and order in their construction. After examining the sculpture and architecture from these two periods, it is clear that they have a direct relationship to each other. The renaissance borrowed the Classical principles of order, harmony, and proportion from the Greeks. This is clear in the comparison of the two statues. In the case of the architecture, the Renaissance took the Classical elements, but they utilized more advanced techniques.

Although the Renaissance was a brilliant period in which innovation and creativity was rich, the use of the Classical examples and the honoring of them clearly confirm their timeless and lasting influence. Works Cited Firer, Gloria. *The Humanistic Tradition Volume I*. 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2005. Print. Cambric, E. H. *The Story of Art*. 15th edition. All Saints Street, London: Phaeton Press Limited, 1999. Print *The World Book Encyclopedia*. Merchandise Mart Plaza, Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation. 1962. Print.