

Course work on greek art

[Health & Medicine](#), [Body](#)



The Greek Canon (kanon) of naturalist sculpture is recognised as being amongst some of the earliest and best portrayals of the human form in all of art history (Janson et al. 92). On the whole, the Greek Canon demonstrates a strong understanding of the human form and presents it in an uncompromising way and without exaggeration. There are a wide range of Greek sculptures which demonstrate an evolution of the artistic understanding of the human form – most notably during the Archaic period. Early statues such as the ‘Kore’ which depicted female figures, characterised the body of younger women and were used to immortalise deities or the memory of lost relatives (AncientGreece. org). Slightly later on were the popular Kourus statues which depicted nearly-nude youths in a commemorative or votive style and were usually life size too.

(AncientGreece. org). The Greeks have produced numerous famous statues which are thought of as being among the best artistic presentations of the human form including Doryphoros the spear-thrower, and Kritios Boy – thought to be “the first beautiful nude in art” (Clark 61).

The Ancient Greeks are infamously known today for being fascinated in improving human endeavour in many different fields. The Ancient Greeks were proud warriors and competitors implying that their interest in the human form was it as a tool for physical success and so it is not too big a mystery as to why their interest in the human form was chronicled so thoroughly in their artistic presentations. Their sculptures demonstrate a keen enthusiasm for the athletic form – the figures are nearly always slim and the men are always presented as being strong, filled out figures – frequently with impressively defined muscles. This is particularly notable in

Polykleitos' (one of the most prominent artists at the time and known for his sculptures of victorious athletes (ArtsConnected. org)) Doryphoros where the figure is presented as wielding a spear and despite not being in a principally athletic position; his body is a mass of. This 'relaxed' look was created to achieve a perfectly balanced asymmetrical view of the human form known as 'contrapposto' (Janson et al. 316) which is where the subject is positioned in such a way that their muscles are in use and are highlighted as such – further compounding the image of the athletic form (ArtsConnected. org). The Doryphoros figure is deliberately positioned to better display his physical form as well the excellent artistic technique of the artist – the Doryphoros is widely considered to be the Greek's best presentation of the human form and it is surprisingly anatomically correct – his muscular structure and bone structure are carefully considered and crafted, demonstrating how well the Greek's were able to imitate the human form.

In short, the Ancient Greeks did go some way to presenting the human form at its peak – there are very few sculptures of the less-than-athletic human form, demonstrating that their Greeks were perhaps more interested in producing art that was more aesthetically pleasing than anatomically correct, in my opinion. Nevertheless, the Ancient Greeks are to be commended for their ability to produce asymmetrical sculptures of individuals who best present the human form in all its athletic glory. The Kritios Boy, for example, is an exemplary demonstration of the human form where the artist has chosen to focus on the torso – choosing to portray it anatomically correctly with the left leg moving forwards to better emphasise the muscles in use. In my opinion, the Ancient Greeks did manage to

succeed in creating near-perfect artistic presentations of the human form, albeit with a slight sense of vanity too. Their statues are beautiful works of art which depict the human form well but do little to demonstrate human warmth – they are strictly scientific depictions, designed to show the human body at its best; this is demonstrated by the statues lack of eyes, invariably: the faces are the least important parts.

References

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