

Aegean art



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Bronze Age (2800 - 1100 BC), saw the flourish of this art of civilizations mainly around the Aegean[1]. The types of figures produced are very much intriguing taking into account their marked resemblance to the modern art.

By the middle of the third millennium BC, a fairly diffused culture had developed in the Cycladic archipelago. The running spirals, ceramics decorated with zigzags and the ship motifs representing the marine activity in the region emerged in the initial phase of Cycladic Art.

The ready availability of marble provided for the sculpture of vases and idols of goddesses. Well known amongst them were kouratrophoi[2], musicians and hunter-warriors. Some were as small as a few centimeters and some were about a hundred centimeters high (about a meter).

They include various types like schematic figures, violin shaped or with a rounded lower body. Some naturalistic human figures simply showed bodies with a flat face with just the nose projecting out.

Towards the second millennium, Crete became more dominant amongst the Aegean Islands. It was situated to the south of the Cyclades. The Minoan civilization[3] became prosperous here. Many palaces were constructed during this time at Knossos, Phaistos and Malia. These palaces had been damaged at around 1700BC and had to be rebuilt.

Interest in nature can be clearly traced to the items such as special metalwork and carved stone vases. Bull and lion heads adorn some palaces. Liquids are often poured from here at the time of rituals. At the time of the first palaces (2000 - 1700BC), there was large scale production of high-quality ceramic products. A Kamares style developed. It characterized

refined wares in many forms. Geometric and natural motifs were blended in a complex manner over the dark background.

There are bronze cast figurines showing male votaries wearing loincloths and the women wearing long skirts and open bodices that quite lewdly expose their breasts. There is a more elaborate statuette of the snake goddess, typical of the Minoan faience, or highly colored earthenware. If one observes attentively, it is clearly evident in images in frescos and on vases made of a variety of materials

The royal seat was in the heart of the palace. It had a reception area which was surrounded by storage rooms, archives, living quarters and courts. In most cases, it was smaller than its Cretan counterpart, because of its open central courts.

The Mycenaean architecture had borrowed from Cretan and diverged a lot from it. The artistic styles thus developed along their own paths. With time, the decoration of ceramics became more stylized and simple. There came into focus banded zones reducing the patterned area. Nevertheless, there still remained a pictorial element about it.

The thought of " Aegean Art" is quite popular and contriving amongst many art historians because it includes a wide variety of many forms of arts and a wonderful representation of different forms of cultures which were in the same area and around the same time.

There was a good amount of trade with the contemptuous civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This however did not hinder the Aegean cultures from developing their own distinctive styles of art. The element of art in

Aegean figures has been recently been used at the 2004 Summer Olympics at Athens. The element of this art was the original idea behind the games mascots: Athina and Fivos in the opening ceremony.

Reference

Tiscali. reference encyclopedia <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/hutchinson/m0039817.html>

History of Ancient Aegean Art <http://www.all-art.org/history42.html>

Aegean Art Essays <http://www.directessays.com/viewpaper/8014.html>

[1] Aegean was an area which included the Cyclades islands, the Crete and the mainland Greece

[2] Kouratrophoi represent women with babies in their arms

[3] Minoan civilization was named after the legendary King Minos