

Art found in ancient mesopotamia and egypt history essay



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The art found in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt allow for a closer, more personal perspective on the history of these great civilizations. One can find many differences in the appearance of architecture, sculpture and writing between Near Eastern civilizations with that of Egypt. However, the need to record, express, and stamp one's life and experiences is a dominating theme that occurs habitually between both worlds.

Near Eastern civilizations can be divided into three periods: Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian. Sumerian art and architecture was very adorned and intricate. Sumerians most abundant material was clay. They had to import wood, stone, and metal for different materials of art. Primarily, art was used to express religious beliefs and piety. The norm for Sumerian art was a painting or a sculpture. Enlarged, staring eyes are a signature look found most often, giving more reason to assume that these figures were depicting pious activities.

The Warka Vase, dating back to 3000 BC is a very significant sculpture for Sumerians. It is the oldest ritual vase in carved stone found in Sumer. It shows men entering the presence of their gods, more specifically, the cult goddess Inanna. Inanna was a very meaningful figure in Sumerian art. Similar to most Sumerian art, the Female Head of Inanna served as adornment or ritual equipment for the temples.

In the 18th century, Babylonia rose to power under Hammurabi. The basalt stele containing the best preserved ancient law code, The Code of Hammurabi was one of several sets of laws in the Ancient Near East. It shows the image of Babylonian god, Marduk or Shamash, with the king of

Babylon presenting himself to the god. Hammurabi believed that he was chosen by the gods to deliver the law to his people. Hammurabi's Law Code exhibits the large impression that religion had not only art and architecture, but also the pattern of leadership.

In addition to the Law Code of Hammurabi, another noteworthy work of art is the sculpture from Mari of a fertility goddess holding a vase from which water flows down her skirt. This further invokes the mastermind of Babylonian sculptors. These sculptors brilliantly depict scenes of daily life in Babylonia, expressing agricultural pursuits and crafts.

However, one of the most impressive monuments rediscovered in the ancient Near East is the Ishtar gate. It was one of the eight gates of the inner city of Babylon. It was built in about 575 BC, the eighth fortified gate in the city. The gateway was completely covered with beautifully colored glazed bricks. Its reliefs of dragons and bulls symbolized the gods Marduk and Adad. Glazed tiles of vibrant blue surrounded the brightly colored yellow and brown beasts.

Assyrian art is far more distinctive than the previous Babylonian and Sumerian works. Assyrian art depicts hunting and war making, reflecting an uneasy time. Another unique characteristic is the fact the humans are more rigid and static. On the other hand, animals are presented magnificently with great detail. A hallmark of Assyrian art would be the guardian animals, usually lions and winged beasts with bearded human heads. This signifies the almost constant state of war and conflict Assyrians were under, making it necessary to have protection and intimidate.

Near Eastern art envelopes many different situations and beliefs of the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations. The art illustrates strict reverence to the gods, the power of royalty and monuments, and the importance of battle. It is obvious that economic status and leadership penetrate the way each civilization created art, and essentially recorded their history. These themes are prolific when examining ancient Egyptian art as well.

Egypt is held accountable for some of the most well-preserved ancient art works.

The order of Egyptian art is by far its most substantial feature. Ancient Egyptian artists used vertical and horizontal reference lines in order to maintain the correct proportions in their work. This allowed for very detailed, comprehensive illustrations of political and religious occurrences. Egypt is divided into the kingdoms: Old, Middle, and New. Each Kingdom had a distinctive configuration of art that reflected current events, and the social hierarchy.

The Old Kingdom symbolizes an important phase in Egypt's political and cultural development. It was during this crucial period that Hieroglyphic writing reached a practical level of sophistication and the techniques of crafts came to a tall level of professionalism. The three pyramids at Giza represent the maximum level of achievements in the architectural field. More importantly, this shows that during the Old kingdom, a strong, centralized government was in effect allowing for such monumental accomplishments. The expression of the Great Pyramids demonstrates the

divine kingship that was in position and the awesome dominance Pharaohs had in ancient Egypt.

The Middle Kingdom was a period of revival from the previous kingdom that had slowly disintegrated. Trade and invention flourished during the Middle Kingdom. Pyramids continued to be built, however, the manner in which they were built proved to be more humble, and less ostentatious. The end of the Middle Kingdom was caused by the invasion of foreign rulers. This in-turn, created the downfall of the central government, changing Egyptian art and architecture thus far.

The New Kingdom brought forth the revival of art. Egypt was at the peak of its glory, reflecting on the art. During this period, rulers like Hatshepsut, and Akhenaton showed great interest in art, and exhibited a high esteem for architecture as well. Along with the religious reformation of Akhenaton, came a unique and peculiar depiction in art. He chose a more naturalistic and relaxed approach. This heretic Pharaoh reached the peak of artistic innovations.

The contrast between Egyptian and Mesopotamian art is found in the different materials, designs, and interpretations. Art in both worlds reflect the social, economic, and religious status of the peoples inhabiting these different lands. The comparison between Ancient Egypt and Near Eastern civilizations are evident in the way that both periods prove to be fascinating storytellers, and descriptive documenters. The need to record, express, and stamp one's life and experiences is a dominating theme that occurs habitually between both worlds.