

# [The birth of the venus versus doryphoros](https://assignbuster.com/the-birth-of-the-venus-versus-doryphoros/)

## Introduction

Artists are part and parcel of a society and they existed since ancient times. It is through their work that we are able to tell what was happening in their society at that particular time. They act as mirrors through which we can analyze a society and were are able to know of the values, religion and beliefs of that society. These artists record their observation in their works be try to capture the happenings in their work be it a book, a painting or a sculptor. Their work therefore cannot exist independent of their society's culture. Boticelli and Polykleitos are no exception. Their works are heavily influenced by what was happening during that historical period. Boticelli' the birth of the Venus' painting for example can show that they believe in a goddess. The painting of these artists have a great similarity in that it is an attempt to represent an ideal human body as it was perceived in their culture. In this essay I will try to highlight how this two of art were shaped by the culture of the artist as well as highlight the differences and the similarities between the two paintings.

The 'Birth of Venus' is a painting work of Sandro Boticelli and it is today held in Uffizi Gallery in Florence. The painting represents a nude full grown woman the goddess Venus as she emerges from the sea at the moment of birth and she arrives at the sea -shore escorted by the wind-gods. (Malaguzzi 35) Scholars have proposed many interpretation of the painting since no credible single text has been written about its content. Neoplatonic interpretation (emphasized by Ernst Gombrich) of the painting has been proposed by art historians who are specialists in Italian renaissance as the most appropriate way to interpret the painting. (Janson et al 413) The historians say the painting can be interpreted in two ways either it could represents an earthy goddess who provokes human emotions towards physical love or a holy goddess that represents define love. The most notable feature of the painting however, is that. First of all she is standing at the edge of the shell which in normal circumstance could tip over. Her elongated neck and her awkward stretch of the left arm defy any proportion rule. This cloud mean the society did not insist on proportion.

Boticelli lived during the Italian renaissance period. (Janson et al 1031) This period was concerned in reviving the classical antique style of symmetry and proportions in order to come up with ideals of beauty. During this period artists focused on the accurate representation of human body. The artists were trying to establish a visual ancestral connection to the classical period thus they used Greek stylesin their works. Their reference to Greek styles influenced the European art world especially in creating an ideal human body. This period revived the style of symmetry and propositions as their ideals of beauty. Painting of nude body especially female was an accepted notion during the ancient times. However, with the rise of Judaism and Christianity nudity was discouraged. Boticelli however did not observe this taboo and went ahead to paint a nude human body 'the birth of the Venus'. The 'Birth of Venus 'painting could therefore be seen as Boticelli rebellion against religious views. With this painting he started a revolution among artists such that since then the artists have continued to paint nude bodies. In the era that followed up to modern day times there has never been shortage of artists painting both female and male nude bodies.

Doryphoros is a sculpture by Greek called Polykleitos. It is one of the best known Greek sculptors made during the classical era of Western art. The original bronze is believed to have been made between 450-40BC. (Moon, 25)In this sculptor he depicts the harmonious and perfectly propositioned human body. The sculptor depicts a well-built male athlete with muscular features carrying a spear on the left shoulder. He is standing on the right leg while the left seem to be in motion. The Greeks were in search of an ideal human body that could depict beauty and harmony. The sculptor was thus made to fulfill this search. Due to the fact that it managed to achieve the perfection of that ideal beauty it has became the most copied statue of antiquity (Moon, 363). The ideal man had to have a perfect body and mind so as to achieve harmony and balance. To achieve this harmony symmetry and correct proportion was to be used. Therefore Polykleitos sculpture could be seen as a representation of these ideal. This sculptor captures the natural human body in rest and in motion. Due to its success in achieving these ideals it has been used as the primary image of classical Greece (). This ideal sculptor influenced the latter days like the Romans

As we discovered earlier no work of art is an independent entity rather it is influenced by the culture it represents. The classical period in Greek history was characterized by The Greeks idealized humans and that human had to show great strength. We could therefore say that this culture of strength influenced Polykleitos when he was creating the Doryphoros. First of all the sculptor has an athlete body and the muscles show great strength. The fact that he is holding a spear could be because there was were wars in Europe during this period.

Despite the fact that this artists represented different cultures we can note some similarities in their work. st. Both artists lived in the period when the Greek styles were borrowed in creating visual arts. These Greek styles idealized the human body. Thus we can say both artists were trying to create ideal human bodies that depicted beauty and achieved harmony and balance. The Greeks were more interested in mathematics and beauty (Osborne, 46) The Doryphoros successful depicts a mathematical balance. On the other hand the birth of the Venus defies the mathematical proportion suggested by the Greeks. The birth of Venus seems not taking into consideration the proportion of human body parts. The length of the neck is unnaturally long, the fall of the shoulders is quite stiff and the left arm is hinged to the body in an incredible way. This could be due to the fact the birth of Venus tries to depict beauty as divine. This divine interpretation of beauty is shown by the birth of the goddess out of a shell and is brought ashore by the wind gods.

Both works depicts a human body in its nude form. Nudity is a known tradition in western art. (Osborne, 62) This is due to its ability to show different parts of the body and their relationship to each other. Both artists used nude bodies although they are of different gender to show the beauty of human body.

An obvious difference we can point to is that the Birth of the Venus is painting and the Doryphoros is a sculptor. This is simply because of their different times which they live for whereas Boticelli lived during the renaissance Polykleitos lived during the classical period.

Beauty and how an ideal of how a human body should look like is influenced by factors related to culture like religion. Every age or era in history formed its own ideal of what a human body should look like. That ideal had to correspond to the aesthetic feelings perceived by the people of that particular period. For Example if it was long hair, soft skin, shape of the body and the like. With time these ideals have been lost and the perception of beauty is nowadays a personal matter. But we cannot deny that history has an influence on how we gauge beautiful things. History is part of human existence and thus we find ourselves judging what is beautiful on the basis of what was depicted by our forefathers. (McNeese, 25) Since we no longer have a universal ideal of beauty we have varieties. But there is one rule these varieties have to observe for them to be termed as beautiful. They have to observe harmony and perfection and they should evoke sensual and mental delight. From their works we can say that Boticelli supplied the ideal of female beauty while Polykleitos supplied that of male body. and thus The two artists have continue to influence the artists after them in that if anyone want to paint a nude body their gauge painting depending on this previous work.