

Comparing art styles, classical- focus on body versus hellenistic- focused on emo...

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In ancient Greece, two major movements of art were during the Classical and Hellenistic periods. These two periods together collectively spanned from about 480 BCE to 30 BCE. The Classical age was split into many sub-periods – such as Early Classical, High Classical, and Late Classical – whereas the Hellenistic age was simply just that. During the Classical times, sculptors finally started adding contrapposto (or weight shift) to their figures, proportions and mathematics were applied to achieve beauty in both architecture and sculpture, and sculptors also humanized deities with real world looks instead of ideal and perfect beings. During the Hellenistic age however, sculptors explored new subject and treated traditional subjects in new ways; the artists were also very interested in depicting violent movement and unrestrained emotion.

Probably one of the most distinguished sculptures from the Early Classical period is that of the Diskobolos, or Discus Thrower. This iconic statue shows off how the Greeks started exploring with the representation of movement in a sculpture during this time. The pose suggests something like that of a pendulum, with the athlete's arm extended upwards, looking as if it were just about to swing back down had this been a real person.

The times of the Late Classical art cannot be summed up without mentioning Praxiteles. The new approach to the period is evident in Praxiteles' – one of the great masters of the Late Classical period – work. Though he may not have completely rejected the favored statuary themes that still remained in his statues with their superhuman beauty, the gods and goddesses he carved still lost some of their grandeur, and took on a more humanistic

quality. Some of his best work showing this quality includes the statue of “ Aphrodite of Knidos” and “ Hermes and the infant Dionysos.”

As for the Hellenistic style, a good piece to compare to the Archaic period would be the sculpture “ Barberini Faun.” In Archaic sculptures, the statue is always smiling at the viewer, and even Classical statues seem to always be awake and alert; however, Hellenistic sculptors had a great appeal towards portraying sleep and entrance into the fantasy world of dreams – as viewed in Barberini Faun. This piece portrays nothing more than sleep the deeper you look into it; No longer are the sculptures awake and happy, but rather drunk and asleep.

Grecian art was greatly influenced by the ancient Egyptians’ artwork, especially during the Archaic period. Statues shared many similarities, but despite that, there were some important differences. The Greek sculpture of a Kouros shows this, displaying how the statue was cut from the stone, and he is in the round; There is no backing of stone as shown in some of the Egyptian artwork. There is also a sense of autonomy in the Greek sculptures whereas the Egyptians portrayed a sense of transcendent and god-like.