

Art as means of propaganda early on: the bust of nefertiti and prima porta august...

[History](#)



Roman Essay

“ The Bust of Queen Nefertiti is dated 1340 BCE and was created by the court sculptor

Thutmosis, it shows Nefertiti from the shoulders up wearing her Blue Crown(Elusiv. com).” It is made out of limestone and stucco, the height measuring up to 19 inches. Nefertiti is widely known for her beauty and versatility. “ According to David Silverman, the Nefertiti bust reflects the classical Egyptian art style, deviating from the “ eccentricities” of the Amarna art style, which was developed in Akhenaten’s reign.

The Augustus of Prima Porta was created in 20 BCE, and is thought to be a copy of a bronze statue. The statue is freestanding in a contrapposto pose. The statue is a sort of propaganda, an idealized figure meant to show off the emperor’s great power and leadership as a military conqueror.

“ Delving further into the composition of the Prima Porta statue, a distinct resemblance to Polykleitos’ Doryphoros, a Classical Greek sculpture of the fifth century B. C. E., is apparent(Khan Academy).” By Augustus’s right leg there is a cupid riding a dolphin. The dolphin became a symbol of Augustus’s naval victory over Marc Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, 31 BCE. “ The Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman Goddess of love, and Julius Caesar, the adoptive father of Augustus, claimed to have been descended from Venus and therefore Augustus shared this connection to the Gods(Khan Academy).”

The exact function of the bust is unknown, though it is theorized that the bust may be a sculptor’s modello to be used as a basis for other official

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portraits, kept in the artist's workshop(Wikipedia).” The Bust of Nefertiti made Queen Nefertiti an icon of Egypt because it portrayed her with such timeless beauty that fitted into the society's idea of ultimate beauty. “ This is one of the most breathtaking examples of Egyptian sculpture in the round and is significant for its intermingling of Amarna idealism and naturalism(Elusiv).”

The Bust of Nefertiti and Augustus of Prima Porta are similar through many points such as the fact that both works were made to convey an idealized versions of the leaders, so as to make citizens feel inferior to the Queen or Emperor. Another example is that both figures features and aspects were shaped to perfection. Both pieces sent the message that both subjects were powerful leaders, stronger and better than anyone else at the time.

The two artworks are very different in many ways as well. One is Augustus was comparing himself to Venus for her godly genius, not that he was actually a god by relation, whereas, “ Nefertiti actually represented the feminine aspect of the God Aten. She and her husband were depicted as the archetypal couple who formed a bridge between the Aten and the people(ancientegyptonline. co. uk/).”

Another difference between the statues is their style. “ Akhenaten brought about a radical change in artistic technique. He instructed the artists on how they should create reliefs and sculptures depicting his likeness. Sculptures and reliefs of Akhenaten showed him having long facial features, wide hips, and a swelling abdomen. These instructions were later applied to the appearance of the entire family. Early Amarna sculpture and art was ugly

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and strange because the artists were struggling to learn Akhenaten's new techniques, as the Amarna period flourished the early ugliness of the art was softened and in some cases became some of the most beautiful works of art ever to come out of Egypt(Elusiv. com)."

The Augustus of Prima Porta shaped the viewer's experience at the time through persuading them that Augustus was a powerful military leader and a descendant of the Gods. Through the relaxed Contrapposto pose and his arm pointing out (most likely to a crowd of people), it conveys a sense of superiority over the people. Most people of this time had never even seen Augustus, so through this public statue they saw an idealized version of him portrayed as a powerful, perfect figure.

The Bust of Nefertiti shaped the people's experience in Egypt through her perfected features which reflected the society's standard of ultimate beauty. The people revered her as a powerful warrior, wise, smart and independent even though she had a husband. Citizens of Egypt would be persuaded through how she was depicted in an idealized style. They would fear, respect, worship her.