Greek Art

Architecture

Parthenon, Athens, 448-432 B.C. Marble. Originally was a temple for Athena, the patron goddess of Athens. Its damaged state reflects the neglect and misuse over the centuries.

Map of Ancient Greece & eastern Mediterranean.

It is the art of the Greeks that we begin to see forms and images that we are very familiar with today in our own art and architecture. Western civilization can trace its roots to that of classical Greece and Rome.

Three Orders of Decorative Style

1. Make a sketch of each of the three Orders of Decorative Styles: (3)

Order
Archaic Period

Order
Classical period

Order
Decadent period

2. Make a sketch of the floor plan of the Parthenon. What is the shape of the structure? (2)

3. What architectural element is used to organize the space? How is the space organized? (4)
Sculpture

1) Archaic Sculpture: All sculpture was originally painted to heighten realism. Much of the archaic sculpture was used as ornament for temples. Although early Greek sculpture looks like Egyptian sculpture there are new characteristics. There were two main types of free standing figure sculpture in this period:

- **Egyptian Influence**
  1. Stiff position
  2. Block shape
  3. Poor understanding of anatomy
  4. Left foot forward
  5. Clenched fists

- **New Greek Innovations**
  1. Nude male figure
  2. Diaphragm rendered
  3. Archaic smile
  4. Negative space between legs, arms and body are cut out
  5. Anatomy attempted

Kouros, c. 620 B.C., Marble.
Kore, c. 530 B.C., Marble.

2) Classical Sculpture: First time we see a nude female since prehistoric times. She is Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and because of her size 6’8” - she is monumental stone sculpture. This figure is free-standing and shows the natural contrapposto position where the body describes an ‘S’ curve. Her weight is on one leg and her anatomy is realistic and well articulated - exhibiting the Classical Greek ideal proportions for the female figure.

- Praxitiles, **Aphrodite of Cnidus**, c. 350 B.C., 6’8”.
- Myron, **The Discobolus**, c. 450 B.C.

4. Make a sketch of the male Kouros sculpture from the Archaic period and list the five Egyptian influences and five new Greek innovations in figure sculpture. (11)

Egyptian influence
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

New Greek Innovations
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

5. What does the term contrapposto mean? (1)

6. Compare the early female Kore with the Aphrodite of Cnidus and list 1 stylistic similarity and 1 stylistic innovations that appear in Aphrodite. (2)

7. How does the shape of the Discobolus figure convey a sense of movement? (1)
**Sculpture**

*Story:* In the Laocoon group we see a Greek myth from the Trojan war. The priest Laocoon and his sons are being strangled by sea serpents sent by Poseidon (god of the sea) as punishment for warning the Trojan king against invading Greeks.

**Painting**

1) **Archaic Painting:** This example of archaic painting is a double-armed wine jar. Its shows stylized figures in horizontal registers as in Egyptian paintings. The registers are separated by bands of geometric patterns that repeat.

8. Describe how the artist uses line to convey a sense of movement in the Laocoon and his Two Sons work. (1)

9. What term is used to describe the clothing and drapery during the decadent period of Greek sculpture? (1)

10. How can Greek decadent sculpture best be described as? (1)

11. All remaining Greek paintings appear on what kind of objects? (1)

12. Make a sketch of the figures that appear on the Dipylon wine jar vase from the archaic period painting section. Describe the shape of the figures and how they are arranged on the vase. (3)

3) **Decadent Sculpture:** Once sculptors were able to make their work realistic, they needed to go beyond realism. Artists started to explore the psychological world and emotions. The work became more dramatic and exaggerated. Clothing or drapery took on a life of its own and is often described as *wet drapery.*

Laocoon and his Two Sons, 2nd B.C. - 1st A.D. Rome, 2.13 meters high.

Dipylon Vase.
Athens, 740 B.C., Terracotta.

All that remains of Greek painting appear on Greek vases; no murals exist.
Exekias, *Dionysus in a Boat*, 540 B.C.

**2) Classical Painting:** The vases done in this period use black figures. This piece was used to mix wine with water before drinking. (Dionysus was the god of wine.) There are seven bunches of grapes and seven dolphins because 7 was a lucky number. This painting illustrates the Greek myth of Dionysus who was kidnapped by sailors and taken away in a boat. He made them jump overboard and they were turned into dolphins.

Exekias, *Achilles and Ajax Playing a Board Game*. 540-530 B.C., Terracotta, 61cm.

He integrates form with psychology to convey the impression that Achilles, the younger warrior on the left, will win the game. On the right, Ajax leans farther forward than Achilles so that the level of his head is slightly lower than Achilles and he has removed his helmet. Achilles’ helmet and tall crest indicate his dominance.

13. Make a sketch of the Dionysus in a Boat vase from the Classical period and describe how the artist creates a sense of movement in the work. (2)

14. What artistic elements does the artist use to distinguish each figure on the Achilles and Ajax playing a Board Game amphora? Which figure is Achilles and which is Ajax? (2)