

Interlude - Artistic Revolution #1

Greek Art

From childhood, you're familiar with the Egyptian "style"

It's:

- non-naturalistic
- based on religion
- analytic, representing from memory, as it were unfeeling in large part
- dominated by parts, not perhaps the whole the head, the feet, etc.
- static and conflicting
(always left) foot forward, no hint of movement



Micerinus and his Queen, Egyptian, ~1345 B.C.



Funerary Scene, Egyptian, ~1450 B.C.
Greek Art

The judgement at death:

Horus, sky god, always a head of falcon

Anubis, god of funerals, always head of jackal

Here, the heart is being weighed

Formulaic

The most influence, is that of Egypt

- a civilization of ~2000 years
- remarkable that the “style”, which is distinctive, was so consistent for so long

Art had a function and was tied to even the hieroglyphic writing

- The function was religious in nature
 - related to preserving what’s recognizable for the deceased
- Often followed strict formulae
 - The representation of people incorporated the features which are most apparent
 - It is not a rendering, but the result of analysis
 - Prized was an artist’s ability to imitate past formulae
 - innovation was not prized
- Certainly what you think of brings an image of stiffness and even rigidity

Notice what’s going on here with this door.

- Everything that is important about a figure is included
 - a facial profile, but eyes from the front
 - the instep of a foot (both are left here)
 - square shoulders



Portrait of Hesire, Egyptian, ~2770 B.C. a wooden door

But, not always...

Some Egyptian sculpture can be quite delicate and beautiful

- flattering and only the bare essentials
- Certainly paintings from nature are clearly recognizable and correct



Tree of Life, Egyptian, ~2500 B.C.



Geese, Egyptian, ~2500 B.C.
Greek Art



Portrait of Head, Egyptian, ~2500 B.C. limestone

There was a respect for nature and these depictions are to remind the deceased of pleasurable times

- **Look here: almost a paradoxical relationship**
 - the humans are symbolic...the king larger than the others according to rank, the odd posture
 - while the birds and the hunting cat are naturalistic
- **The formulae persist**

Mg., man's coloration is always darker than woman's



Fowling Scene, Egyptian, ~1450 B.C. limestone

Akhenaton

There was an attempt at change by Akhenaton and his wife, Nefertiti - Eighteenth Dynasty

- The old gods were eliminated
- A naturalness was introduced
a scene of domesticity
nearly one of relaxation



Nefertiti, Egyptian,
~1345 B.C.



Akhenaton and Nefertiti and children, Egyptian,
~1345 B.C.

The boy king, Tutankhamun returned to the old ways, old gods, old art

- erased any evidence of Akhenaton
- ~1000B.C., Egypt was overrun by Persians and dominated eventually by a rigid priest caste

Our heritage

Certainly, Greek...but they inherited from

- Egypt, Minoans in Crete, and Mycenaens on their own peninsula

The Minoans' had a sophisticated civilization and some art survives - possibly speaking a form of Greek
Especially intriguing is the Palace at Knossos and the fact that they disappeared!

An infatuation with the Bull, indeed a images of bull-fighting, or rather bull-dancing survives in many forms

Movement seems to be a common feature of Minoan Art

Un-stiff

- A relatively delicate approach to representing humans...unlike that of the Egyptians

The gesture is almost modern.



Blue Ladies, Minoan, ~1600B.C.?



Bull leaping, Minoan, ~1500B.C.?

The influence of Egypt on Greece is indirect

Egypt and Crete clearly traded

- Crete and near east - Assyria and Crete and Mycenae, the direct forefathers

This was a somewhat feisty culture

Colorful, builders of impressive multi-story houses

Warlike, marauders

On one pillaging trip, they lay siege to the city of Troy, said to be over the stolen princess, Helen

- ~1200 BC, raiders from the north invaded

These were the wars of Homer

complete defeat...and a dark ages that lasted for ~450 years on the Greek mainland



plaster head, Mycenaean, ~1345 B.C.

Greek Art



Orpheus fresco, Mycenaean, ~1300-125 B.C.



Mask of Agamemnon, Mycenaean, ~1500 B.C.

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