

CYCLADIC ART

The ancient Cycladic culture flourished in the islands of the Aegean Sea from c. 3300 to 1100 BCE. Along with the Minoan civilization Mycenaean Greece, the Cycladic people are counted among the three major Aegean cultures. Cycladic art therefore comprises one of the three main branches of Aegean art.



The best known type of artwork that has survived is the marble figurine, most commonly a single full-length female figure with arms folded across the front. The type is known to archaeologists as a "FAF" for "folded-arm figure(ine)". Apart from a sharply-defined nose, the faces are a smooth blank, although there is evidence on some that they were originally painted. Considerable numbers of these are known, though unfortunately most were removed illicitly from their unrecorded archaeological context, which seems usually to be a burial.

Neither the term "idols" or "figurines" is exactly accurate: the former term suggests a religious function which is by no means agreed on by experts, and the latter does not properly apply to the largest figures, which are nearly life size.

These marble figures are seen scattered around the Aegean, suggesting that they were popular amongst the people of Crete and mainland Greece. Perhaps the most famous of these figures are musicians: one a harp-player the other a pipe-player. Dating to approximately 2500 BCE, these musicians are sometimes considered "the earliest extant musicians from the Aegean."



Violin-shaped Grotta-Pelos figurines

Early Cycladic I (ECI)

The **Grotta-Pelos** culture is the period that marks the beginning of the so-called Cycladic culture and spans the Neolithic period (ca. 3300 BC), continuing in the Bronze Age to about 2700 BC. The term was named after the sites of Grotta and Pelos on the Cycladic islands of Naxos and Milos respectively.

Plastiras type (naturalistic)

The Plastiras type is an early example of Cycladic figurines, named after the cemetery on Paros where they were found. The figures retain the violin-like shape, stance, and folded arm arrangement of their predecessors but differ in notable ways. The Plastiras type is the most naturalistic type of Cycladic figurine, marked by exaggerated proportions. An ovoid head with carved facial features, including ears, sits atop an elongated neck that typically takes up a full third of the figure's total height.



The legs were carved separately for their entire length, often resulting in breakages. On female figures the pubic area is demarcated by an incision and the breasts are modelled. Representations of males differ in structure, but not remarkably, possessing narrower hips and carved representations of the male sexual organs. The figures are typically small in size, usually no larger than thirty centimetres, and are not able to stand on their own, as the feet are pointed. Surviving figurines have been carved from marble, but it is suggested by some that they may also have been carved from wood.



Louros type (schematic and naturalistic)

The Louros type is from the Early Cycladic I phase of the Bronze Age. Combining the naturalistic and schematic approaches of earlier figure styles, the Louros type have featureless faces, a long neck, and a simple body with attenuated shoulders that tend to extend past the hips in width. The legs are shaped carefully but are carved to separation no further than the knees or mid-calves. Though breasts are not indicated, figures of this type are still suggestive of the female form and tend to bear evidence of a carved pubic triangle.

Kapsala variety

Kapsala figures differ from the common Spedos type in that the arms are held much lower in the right-below-left folded configuration and the faces lack sculpted features other than the nose and occasionally ears. Kapsala figures show a tendency of slenderness, especially in the legs, which are much longer and lack the powerful musculature suggested in earlier forms of the sculptures. The shoulders and hips are much narrower as well, and the figures themselves are very small in size, rarely larger than 30cm in length. Evidence suggests that paint was regularly used to demarcate features such as the eyes and pubic triangle, rather than carving them directly. One characteristic of note of the Kapsala variety is that some figures seem to suggest pregnancy, featuring bulging stomachs with lines drawn across the abdomen. Like other figures of the Early Cycladic II period, the most defining feature of the Kapsala variety is their folded-arm position.



Spedos variety

The Spedos type, named after an Early Cycladic cemetery on Naxos, is the most common of Cycladic figurine types. It has the widest distribution within the Cyclades as well as elsewhere, and the greatest longevity. The group as a whole includes figurines ranging in height from miniature examples of 8 cm to monumental sculptures of 1.5 m. With the exception of a statue of a male figure, now in the Museum of Cycladic Art Collection, all known works of the Spedos variety are female figures. Spedos figurines are typically slender elongated female forms with folded arms. They are characterized by U-shaped heads and a deeply incised cleft between the legs.

Dokathismata variety

With characteristics that are developed from the earlier Spedos variety, the Dokathismata figures feature broad, angular shoulders and a straight profile. Dokathismata figures are considered the most stylized of the folded-arm figures, with a long, elegant shape that displays a strong sense of geometry that is especially evident in the head, which features an almost triangular shape. These figures were somewhat conservatively built compared to earlier varieties, with a shallow leg cleft and connected feet. Despite this, the figures were actually quite fragile and prone to breakage. The return of an incised pubic triangle is also noted in the Dokathismata variety of figures.



Chalandriani variety

The Chalandriani variety is named for the cemetery on the island of Syros on which they were found, these figures are somewhat similar in style and mannerism to the Dokathismata variety that preceded them. Chalandriani figures, however, feature a more truncated shape in which the arms are very close to the pubic triangle and the leg cleft is only indicated by a shallow groove.

One feature of note with the Chalandriani variety is that the strict right-below-left configuration found in previous figures seemed to have relaxed, as some sculptures have reversed arms or even abandonment of the folded position for one or both arms.

The reclining position of previous figures is also challenged, as the feet are not always inclined and the legs are somewhat rigid. The shoulders were expanded even further from the Dokathismata variety and were quite susceptible to damage as the upper arms and shoulders are also the thinnest point of the sculpture. The head is triangular or shield-shaped with few facial features other than a prominent nose, connected to the body by a pyramidal-shaped neck. Like figures of the Dokathismata variety, some Chalandriani figures appear to be presented as pregnant. The defining feature of these figures is their bold and exaggerated indication of the shoulders and upper arms.

Koumasa variety

Koumasa figurines, from the Early Minoan II cemetery at Koumasa on Crete, are very small and flat. The folded-arm figures typically have short legs and broad shoulders, and were prone to breakage given their delicate build.



Modigliani

Brancusi

Cycladic

In the 20th century many modern artists were influenced by Cycladic art.

ETRUSCAN ART

Etruscan art was produced by the Etruscan civilisation in central Italy between the 10th and 1st centuries BC. From around 750 BC it was heavily influenced by Greek art, which was imported by the Etruscans, but always retained distinct characteristics. Particularly strong in this tradition were figurative sculpture in terracotta (especially life-size on sarcophagi or temples), wall-painting and metalworking especially in bronze. Jewellery and engraved gems of high quality were produced.

Etruscan sculpture in cast bronze was famous and widely exported, but relatively few large examples have survived (the material was too valuable, and recycled later). In contrast to terracotta and bronze, there was relatively little Etruscan sculpture in stone, despite the Etruscans controlling fine sources of marble, including Carrara marble, which seems not to have been exploited until the Romans.

Etruscan art is usually divided into a number of periods:

900 to 700 BC – **Villanovan** period. Already the emphasis on funerary art is evident. Impasto pottery with geometric decoration, or shaped as hut urns. Bronze objects, mostly small except for vessels, were decorated by moulding or by incised lines. Small statuettes were mostly handles or other fittings for vessels.



Bronze Harness Trapping in the Shape of a Horse; Villanovan, 9th–8th century BC



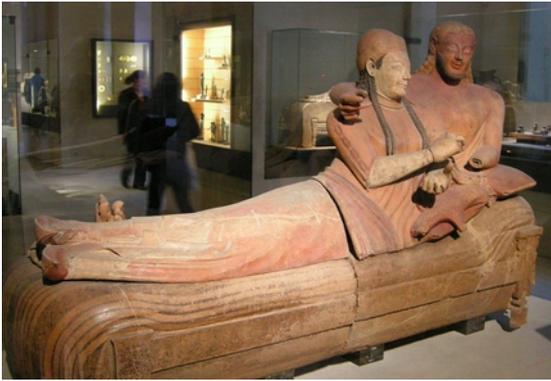
A 6th century B.C. Etruscan boar vessel, ceramic

700–575 BC – **Orientalising period**. Foreign trade with established Mediterranean civilizations interested in the metal ores of Etruria and other products from further north led to imports of foreign art, especially that of Ancient Greece, and some Greek artists immigrated. Decoration adopted a Greek, and Near Eastern vocabulary with palmettes and other motifs, and the foreign lion was a popular animal to depict. The Etruscan upper class grew wealthy and began to fill their large tombs with grave goods.

During this period there arose in ancient Greek art ornamental motifs and an interest in animals and monsters that continued to be depicted for centuries, and that also spread to Roman and Etruscan art. Monumental and figurative sculpture in this style may be called **Daedalic**, after Daedalus, who was according to legend the founder of Greek sculpture. The period is characterized by a shift from the prevailing Geometric style to a style with Eastern-inspired motifs. This new style reflected a period of increased cultural interchange in the Aegean world.



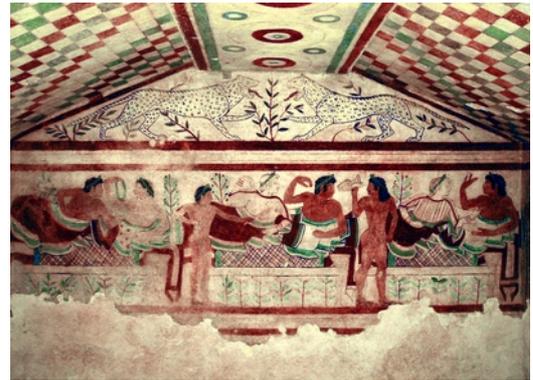
Water jar with Herakles and the Hydra, c. 525 BC



Sarcophagus of the Spouses, Cerveteri, 520BC

Paintings in fresco begin to be found in tombs (which the Greeks had stopped making centuries before), and were perhaps made for some other buildings. The Persian conquest of Ionia in 546 saw a significant influx of Greek artist refugees, especially in Southern Etruria. Other earlier developments continued, and the period produced much of the finest and most distinctive Etruscan art.

575–480 BC – **Archaic** period. Greek influence grew to the exclusion of other Mediterranean cultures, despite the two cultures coming into conflict as their respective zones of expansion met each other. The period saw the emergence of the Etruscan temple, with its elaborate and brightly painted terracotta decorations, and other larger buildings. Figurative art, including human figures and narrative scenes, grew more prominent. The Etruscans enthusiastically adopted stories from Greek mythology.



Confronted leopards above a banqueting scene in the Tomb of the Leopards, c. 480–450 BC

The **Tomb of the Leopards** is an Etruscan burial chamber so called for the confronted Leopards painted above a banquet scene. The tomb is located within the Necropolis of Monterozzi and dates to around 480–450 BC. The painting is one of the best-preserved murals of Tarquinia, and is known for "its lively colouring, and its animated depictions rich with gestures



480–300 BC – **Classical** period. The Etruscans had now peaked in economic and political terms, and the volume of art produced reduced somewhat in the 5th century, with prosperity shifting from the coastal cities to the interior, especially the Po valley. In the 4th century there was some revival and previous trends continued to develop without major innovations, except for the arrival from Greece of red figure vase painting, and an increase in production of sculpture, such as sarcophagi carved in stone rather than modelled in terracotta. Bronzes from Vulci were exported widely within Etruria and beyond. The Romans were now picking off the Etruscan cities one by one, with Veii being conquered around 396.

Young rider crowned by a winged Nike (Victory), by Sisyphus Painter, circa 420 BC

The **Chimera of Arezzo** is regarded as the best example of ancient Etruscan artwork, described as "one of the most arresting of all animal sculptures and the supreme masterpiece of Etruscan bronze-casting." Made entirely of bronze and measuring 78.5 cm high with a length of 129 cm. The statue was originally part of a larger sculptural group representing a fight between a Chimera and the Greek hero Bellerophon. This sculpture was likely created as a votive offering to the Etruscan god Tinia.



Chimera of Arezzo

According to Greek mythology the Chimera or "she-goat" was a monstrous, fire-breathing hybrid creature of Lycia in Asia Minor, created by the binding of multiple animal parts to create a singular unnatural creature.



300–50 BC – **Hellenistic** or late phase. Over this period the remaining Etruscan cities were all gradually absorbed into Roman culture, and, especially around the 1st century BC, the extent to which art and architecture should be described as Etruscan or Roman is often difficult to judge. Distinctive Etruscan types of object gradually ceased to be made, with the last painted vases appearing early in the period, and large painted tombs ending in the 2nd century. Styles continued to follow broad Greek trends, with increasing sophistication and classical realism often accompanied by a loss of energy and character. Bronze statues, now increasingly large, were sometimes replicas of Greek models. The large, Greek temple pediment groups of sculptures were introduced, but in terracotta.

Arringatore or 'Orator'. 1st century BC. Arezzo

Gallery:

The **Apollo of Veii** is a life-size painted terracotta Etruscan statue of Apollo, designed to be placed at the highest part of a temple. It was discovered in the Portonaccio sanctuary of ancient Veii, in what is now central Italy, and dates from c. 510 - 500 BC. It was created in the so-called "international" Ionic or late-archaic Etruscan style.

The statue was probably made by Vulca, the only Etruscan artist known by name, and is dressed in a tunic and short cloak, advancing towards the left with the right arm outstretched and bent (the statue's left arm is towards the ground and may have held a bow).

Together with the statue of Heracles, it formed a group representing one of the labours of the hero before his apotheosis made him one of the divinities of Olympus. The myth narrates the contention between the god and the hero for the possession of the doe with the golden horns.



This **Bronze Cista Handle**, denoting *Sleep and Death Carrying off the Slain Sarpedon* (400–380 BC), displays a vigorous primitivism. A **cista** is a box or basket used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Etruscans and Romans for various practical and mystical purposes.

Alabaster Urn. Etruscan artwork from Volterra, 2nd century BC depicting Menelaus and Meriones lifting Patroclus' corpse on a cart while Odysseus looks on.

