



Sculpture

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Foreword

“It is truly flesh! You would think it moulded by kisses and caresses! You almost expect, when you touch this body, to find it warm.”

- Michelangelo

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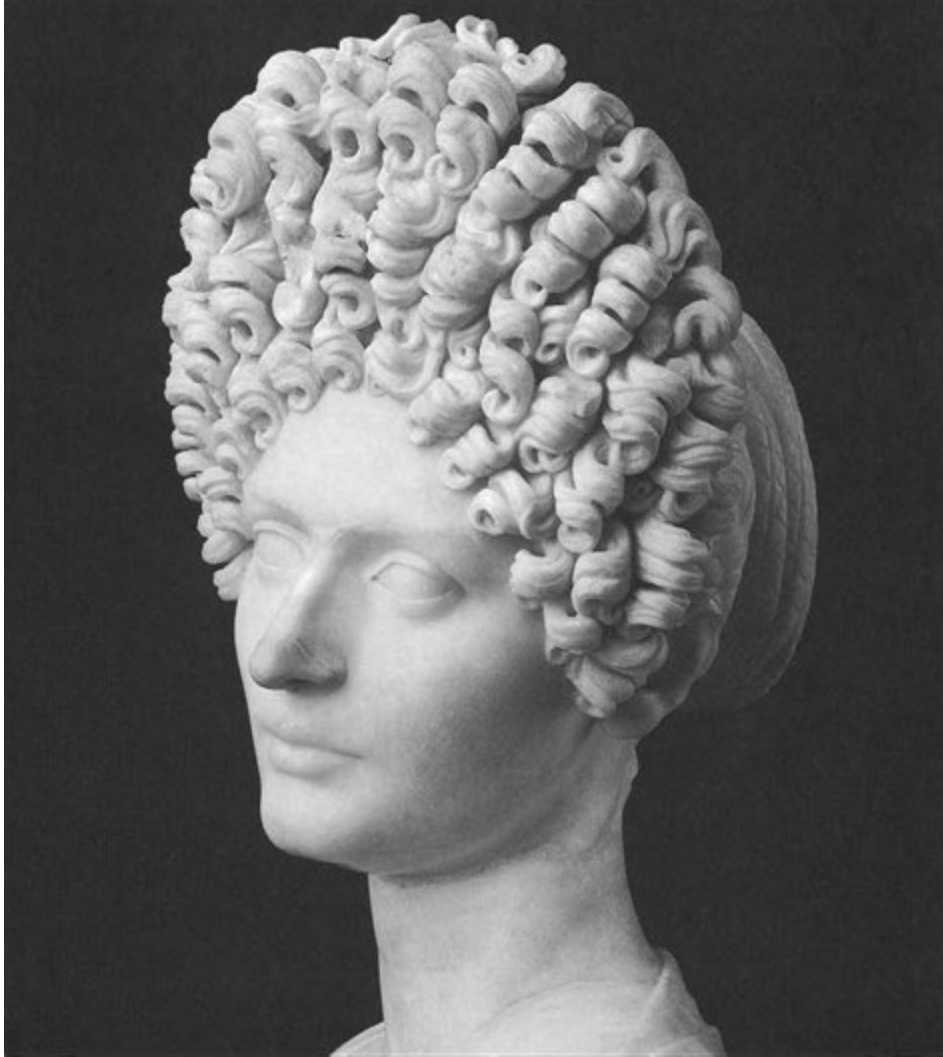
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Portrait of a Woman

marble, flavones period
Capitoline Museums, Rome

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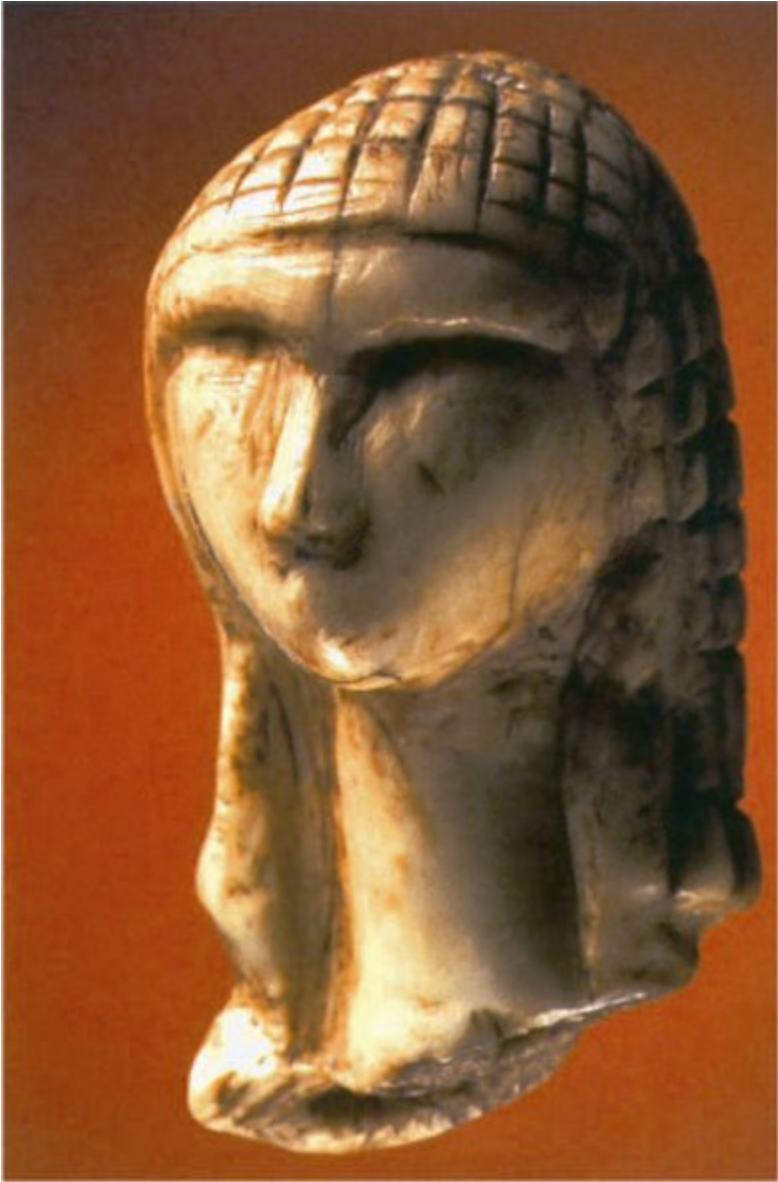


Sculpture, although it preceded painted art, was long considered to be merely the accessory and complement of the eldest of the three arts: architecture. Executed using the same materials as in architecture - wood, stone and marble - sculpture was initially seen as ornament for architecture.



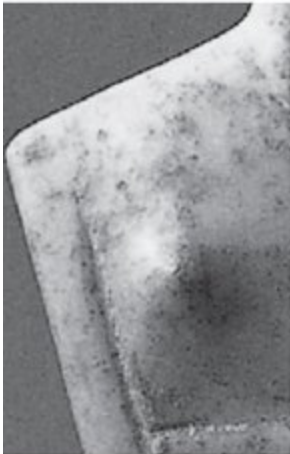
The Brassempouy Lady,
Grotte du Pape

Circa 22000 B.C.
Ivory, height 3 cm
Museum of National Antiques
Saint-Germain-en-Laye





However, little by little, sculpture soon established itself as an independent and dignified art. After having admired the universe, man started to contemplate himself. He recognised that the human body is among all forms the only one able to fully manifest the spirit and aspirations of man.

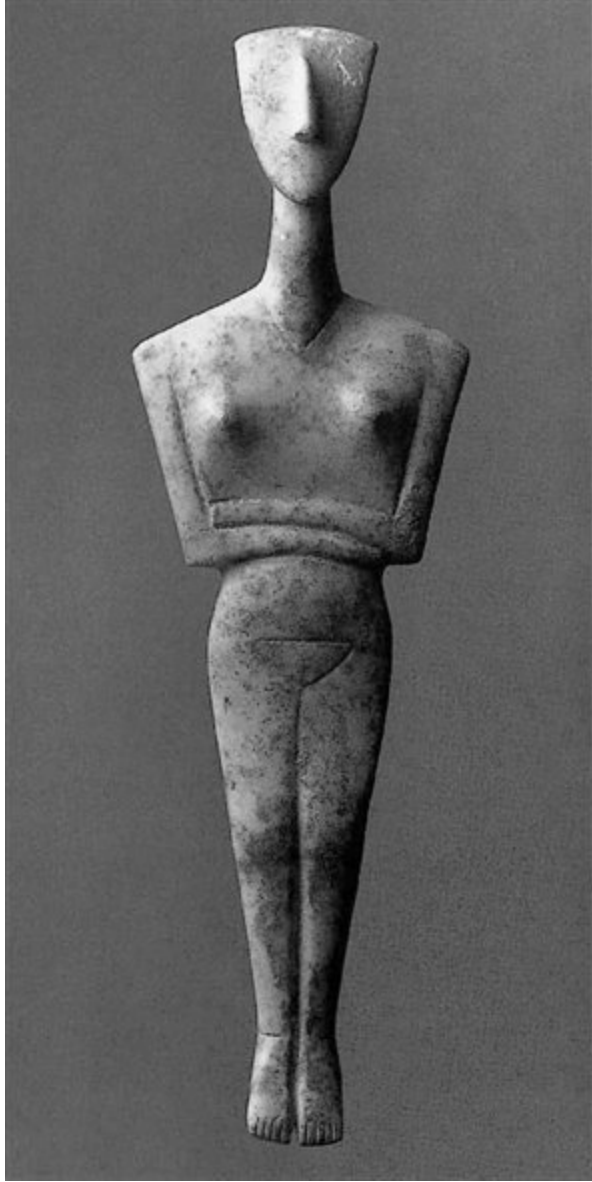


Idol

Cyclade Islands, Greece, 2700-
2400 B.C

marble

The Menil Collection, Houston





Ruled by proportion and symmetry, superior in beauty, sculptors would work hard to reinvent the perfect body. Likewise, in the slow path of progress that led painting to produce what we call a work of art, it was a long process for sculpture to detach itself from architecture and produce what we call low-relief and sculpture in the round.

Sitting Writer

ca. 2510-2460 B.C.
multicoloured stone, height 53 cm
The Louvre, Paris





It is in the depths of antique and primitive civilisation in the Nile Basin that one must search for the origins of the arts. Around the same time that the Nile settlers constructed temples and pyramids, they engraved headstones and tombstones and lined the avenues leading up to their temples with sphinxes mounted on pedestals.



Votive Statue of Gudea

Mesopotamia, ca. 2120 B.C.

Diorite, height 73.7 cm

The Louvre, Paris



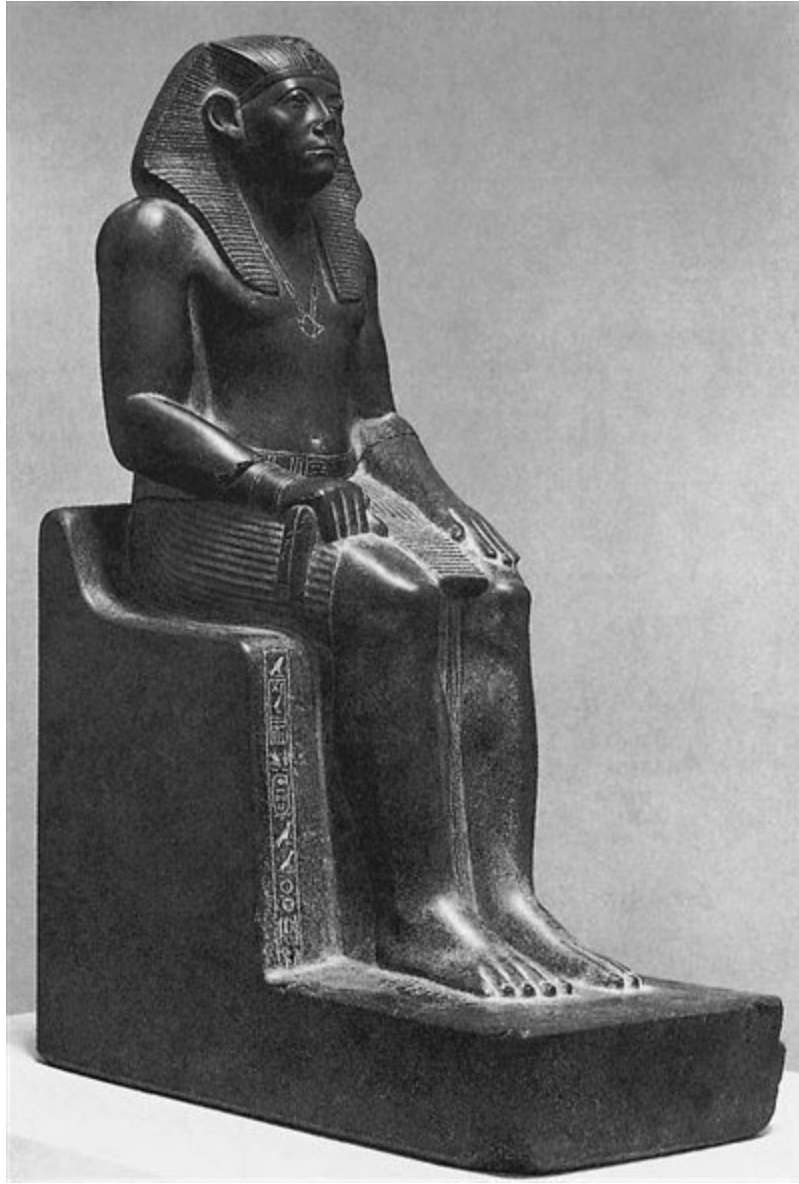


Rivals to the Egyptians, the Assyrians certainly had more influence over the Greek and the Etruscan civilisations. The oldest monuments from Greece and Etruria show evidence that they somewhat imitated ancient Assyrian art. We can witness this from Cyprus to Rhodes, from Crete to Sicily, from Athens to Corinthia.



Sesostris III

Dynasty 12, ca. 1878-1842 B.C
black granite, height 54.8 cm
The Brooklyn Museum





Etruria can be proud of an ancient primitive civilisation which was close to our own. Originated with Asian influences, it modified the Greek civilisation, then the Roman, by bringing to them the first rudiments of all arts and industries.



Akhenaten and his Family

ca. 1348-1336 B.C.

low relief of multicoloured stone,

31.1 x 38.7 cm

National Museums of Berlin





Greek sculpture

What Pliny said about painting, “de picturae imitatis inserta,” can also be said about sculpture. One can be certain that Greek art started out by imitating Oriental art. However, contrary to other ancient civilisations, the Greeks only followed lessons as a means to react against their masters.



Ibex Porter

Assyrian Empire, 8th century B.C.
alabastrite low relief,
height 2.68 m
The Louvre, Paris

