

LYSIPPOS AND A NEW CANON

Curated by Anna Mattedi

- The great Late Classical sculptor Lysippos, was so renowned that Alexander the Great selected him to create his official portrait;
- Lysippos introduced a new canon of proportions: the body were more **slender** than those of Polykleitos, the **heads 1/8** the height of the body;



Alexander the Great. Copy after a statue by Lysippos, ca. 330 BC. Glyptotek Munich

- The new proportions may be seen in one of Lysippos' s most famous works, a bronze statue of an apoxyomenos (an athlete scraping oil from his body after exercising), known from Roman copies in marble

APOXYOMENOS, LYSIPPOS



Lysippos, Scraper. Roman marble copy after a bronze original of 330 BC. Vatican Museums, Rome.

- A nervous energy runs through the Apoxyomenos that one seeks in vain in the balanced form of the Doryphoros;
- The strigil (scraper) is about to reach the end of the right arm, and at any moment the athlete will switch it to the other hand so that he can scrape his left arm;
- At the same time he will shift his weight and reverse the position of his legs;
- Lysippos also began to break down the dominance of the frontal view and encouraged the observer to look at his athlete from multiple angles;

- Because Lysippos represented the Apoxyomenos with his right arm boldly thrust forward, the figure breaks out of the rectangular box that defined the boundaries of earlier statues;
- To comprehend the action, the observer must move to the side and view Lysippos' s work at a three-quarter angle or in full profile;

THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

- The Peloponnesian War disrupted the glory of Classical Greece;
- Alexander the Great's conquest of the Near East and Egypt ushered in a new cultural age that historians call *Hellenistic*;
- The cultural centers of the Hellenistic period were the court cities of the Greek kings (Antioch in Syria, Alexandria in Egypt, Pergamon in Asia Minor)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- An international culture united the Hellenistic world and its language was Greek;
- Hellenistic kings became enormously rich on the spoils of the East, priding themselves of their libraries, art collections, scientific enterprises;
- The world of the small city-state passed away, as did the power and prestige of its center, Athens;
- A cosmopolitan civilization replaced it.



Nike alighting on a warship (Nike of Samothrace), from Samothrace, Greece, ca 190 BC. Marble. Louvre, Paris.

NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE

- One of the masterpieces of the Hellenistic style, set up in the Sanctuary of the Greek Gods on the island of Samothrace;
- The Nike has just alighted (posarsi) on the prow of a Greek warship: her missing right arm was once raised high to crown the naval victor;
- Her wings still beat and the wind sweeps her drapery; her himation bunches in thick folds around her right leg, and her chiton is pulled tightly across her abdomen and left leg;

- The statue's setting amplified its theatrical effect;
- The Hellenistic sculptors rejected the Polykleitan conception of a statue as an ideally proportioned, self-contained entity on a pedestal;
- The Hellenistic statues interact with their environment and appears as living, breathing and intensely emotive human presences.



Old market woman, ca 150-100 BC.
Marble. Metropolitan Museum of
Art, New York

OLD MARKET WOMAN



Old drunk woman. Copy of an original of late 3rd century BC. Glyptothek, Munich.

DRUNKEN OLD WOMAN

- The realistic bent (inclinazione) of much of Hellenistic sculpture, the opposite to the Classical period's idealism, is evident above all in a series of statues of old men and women from the lowest rungs (piolo) of the social order;
- Shepherds, fishermen, and drunken beggars (mendicanti) are common;
- One of the finest preserved statues of this type depicts a haggard old woman bringing a basket of fruits and vegetables to sell in the market

- Her face is wrinkled, her body bent with age and her spirit broken by a lifetime of poverty;
- She carries on because she must, not because she derives any pleasure from life;
- Interest in social realism is absent in earlier Greek statuary

Statues of the aged and the ugly are the opposites of the images of the young and the beautiful that dominated Greek art until the Hellenistic age;

The Hellenistic world was a cosmopolitan place with a growing number of foreigners;

Greek art reflects this different social climate with a variety of physical types;

- The Roman general Flaminius defeated the Macedonian army and declared the old poleis of Classical Greece as free once again;
- They never regained their former glory;
- Greece became a Roman province;
- Athens retained some of its earlier prestige as a center of culture and learning, but politically Athens was just another city in the Roman Empire

ROME IN GREECE

- Greek artists continued to be in great demand, both to furnish the Romans with an endless number of copies of Classical and Hellenistic masterpieces and to create new statue à la grecque for Roman patrons;

- On such work is the famous group of the Trojan priest Laocoon and his sons, which was unearthed in Rome in 1506 in the presence of the great Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo;
- The marble group was found in the remains of the palace of the emperor Titus;
- Pliny attributed the statue to three sculptors: Athanadoros, Hagesandros and Polydoros of Rhodes;

LAOCOON'S AGONY

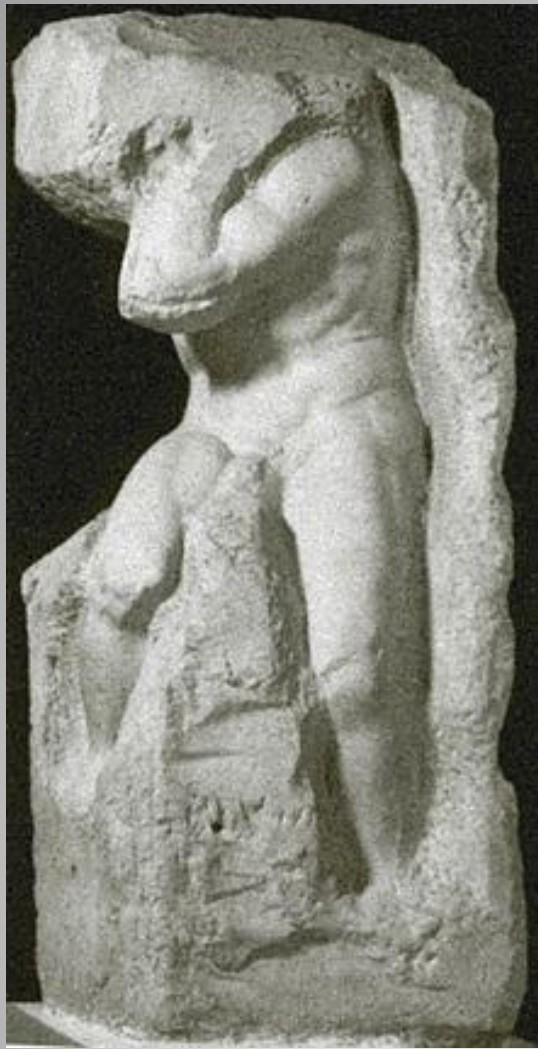


Athanadoros, Hegesandros
and Polydoros of Rhodes,
Laocöon and his sons, early
first century. Marble, Vatican
Museums, Rome

- Vergil vividly described the strangling (strangolamento) of Laocoon and his two sons by sea serpents while sacrificing at an altar;
- The gods who favored the Greeks in the war against Troy had sent the snakes to punish Laocoon, who had tried to warn his compatriots about the danger of bringing the Greeks' wooden horse within the walls of their city;

- Laocoon suffered in terrible agony and the torment of the priest and his sons is communicated in a spectacular fashion in the marble group;
- The three Trojans whrite in pain as they struggle to free themselves from the deathgrip of the serpents;
- One bites into Laocoon's left hip as the priest lets out a ferocious cry





The Atlas, 1530-34, Accademia Gallery, Florence



The awakening slave, 1520-23, Accademia Gallery, Florence

MICHELANGELO: THE PRISONERS

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