

# Greek Archaic

c750–480 BCE

The Archaic Period covers the early development of Greek art, from around 750 BCE until 480 BCE, when the Persians sacked Athens. In sculpture, Greek artists eagerly assimilated ideas from Egypt and the East, gradually producing their own, highly individual style. Progress was most evident in depictions of the *kouros* (nude male), and the *kore* (draped female). Most of these statues were used as grave markers, although some represented gods. In the earliest phase, the figures had stereotyped features and a rigid stance, with their arms barely leaving their sides. Over the course of this period, the poses became more relaxed, and the treatment of anatomy grew more convincing.

The Archaic Period was also the golden age of vase painting. Initially, the Corinthians dominated this field but, by the early 6th century BCE, the lead had been taken by Athens. Its artists became masters of the "black-figure" technique, highlighted in the work of Exekias, and later of the more sophisticated "red-figure" technique, which superseded it.

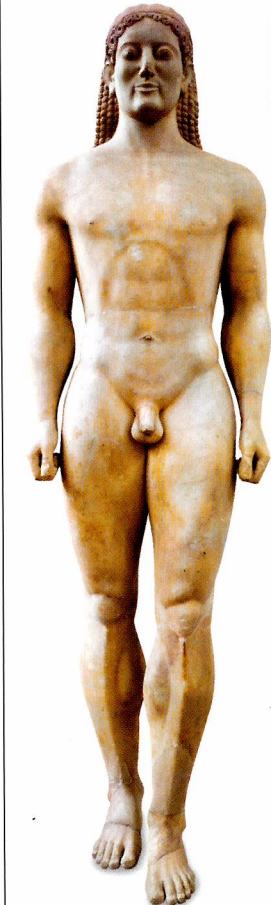


▲ **Antefix of a Gorgon's Head** Plaques of this kind were very common in early Greek architecture. They were used as ornaments to mask the end of a row of roof tiles. The designs often featured monsters, as it was thought that these would ward off evil spirits. Gorgons, with their projecting fangs, tongues, and glaring eyes, were a popular choice. c6th century BCE, terracotta, length 25cm, private collection

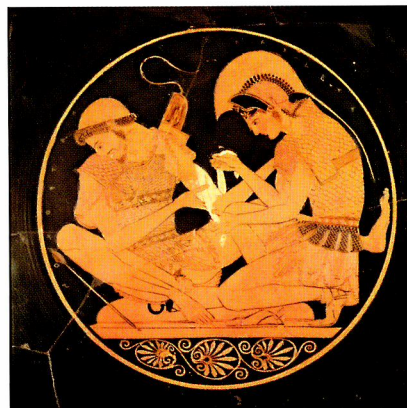


► **Achilles Slaying the Amazon Queen, Penthesilea**

This moment of high drama was painted by Exekias, the most famous exponent of the black-figure style of decoration. As he delivers the fatal blow, Achilles falls in love with his enemy. 6th century BCE, pottery, height 42cm, British Museum, London, UK



▲ **Anavysos Kouros** Named after the village where it was found, this kouros was a warrior's grave-marker. c530 BCE, marble, height 194cm, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece



◀ **Achilles Tending the Wounded Patrocles**

This red-figure scene was produced for the interior of a kylix (cup) by the Sosias Painter. He belonged to a group of vase-painters now known as the Pioneers. c500 BCE, pottery, diameter 20cm, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany