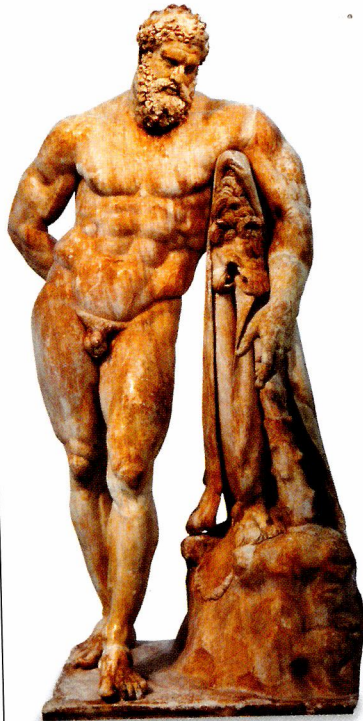


Hellenistic

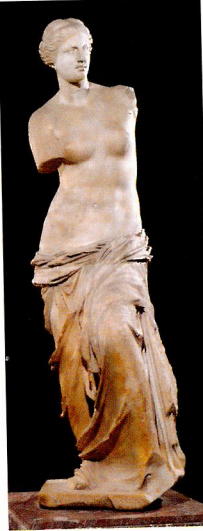
323–31 BCE

The Hellenistic era covers the period from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE to the accession of the first Roman emperor in 27 BCE. Alexander's conquests had spread Greek culture throughout Egypt and Western Asia, and the city of Alexandria in Egypt, rather than Athens, became the centre of the Hellenistic world.

Among Hellenistic sculptors there was a growing taste for figures that conveyed fiery emotions or violent movement. This could be achieved by a contorted pose or by elaborate, swirling drapery. Another change was that art was no longer dominated by state patronage. Private collectors increased dramatically, creating a demand for different styles and subjects. There was a new interest in humorous or low-life themes, such as aged drunks, comic actors, and lust-filled satyrs. Portrait sculpture also gained in popularity. Occasionally, the results were unflattering, offering a foretaste of the Romans' realistic approach. In this field, the leading figure was Lysippus, the favourite sculptor of Alexander, who apparently refused to be portrayed by any other artist.



▲ **The Farnese Hercules** *Hercules rests on his club after completing his labours. The original statue, now lost, was probably by Lysippus. 4th century BCE (copy), marble, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy*

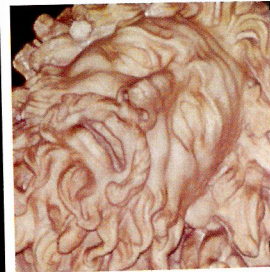


◀ **Venus de Milo** *The serene expression of this goddess is classical in style, but her twisting, spiral pose is typically Hellenistic. The statue was made from two blocks of marble, pegged together, and was once adorned with metal jewellery. c100 BCE, marble, height 204cm, Louvre, Paris, France*

▼ **Laocoön** *According to Greek legend, Laocoön and his sons were slain by serpents, after trying to warn their fellow Trojans against the Greeks' wooden horse. This statue was discovered in 1506, in a vineyard in Rome. 1st century BCE, marble, height 210cm, Vatican Museums and Galleries, Vatican City, Italy*

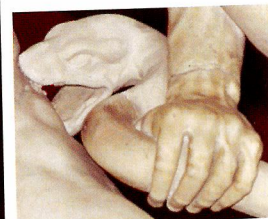


CLOSERlook



VIOLENT EMOTION

Hellenistic sculpture is noted for its emotional intensity. Laocoön's agonized expression was greatly admired when the statue was found, and proved a key influence on Michelangelo and later Baroque artists.



DRAMATIC MOVEMENT

In contrast to classical art, with its calm sense of grandeur, Hellenistic sculptors tried to give an impression of dynamic movement, shown here in Laocoön's despairing attempts to struggle free.