Year 1, Art History II Notes

Unit 1: Bhimbetka Cave paintings, India, 30,000 BC, Prehistoric

The Bhimbetka cave paintings are in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India. The complex consists of approximately 750 rock shelters spread out over an area of about six square miles. The rock shelters were discovered by archaeologist V.S. Wakankar in 1957, though local tribal communities had known about them for generations. Some of the shelters have been occupied for over 100,000 years.

The oldest paintings date back to 30,000 BC, although new paintings were still being added as late as the medieval period, making this one of the longest known sites of human habitation. Prehistoric humans at Bhimbetka used natural pigments, primarily ochre and charcoal, to create their rock paintings, employing the same materials as their European counterparts. Pigments used include red and yellow ochre, hematite, manganese oxide and charcoal. The reds were made with iron oxides (hematite), and manganese dioxide and charcoal were used for the blacks

The paintings include linear designs as well as both human and animal figures, such as gaur (a native variety of wild ox), deer such as the chital, monkeys, wild boars, stags, elephants, bison, tigers, lions, wild boar, elephants, antelopes, dogs, lizards, and crocodiles.

The cave paintings also depict scenes of human activity such as dancing, the playing of musical instruments, hunting of birds and animals, with humans depicted with bows and arrows, with later periods showing warriors on horseback, possibly from the Bronze Age. Contemporary scholars have categorized the painted animal figures in these illustrations into natural, geometric, or abstract styles based on whether they are simple outlines, partially filled-in or silhouetted figures.

The purpose of the paintings is unknown, although anthropologists hypothesize that they serve multiple functions going beyond decoration, possibly including ritual purposes, hunting magic, seasonal calendars, or early forms of communication, suggesting the development of symbolic thinking and proto-linguistic capabilities.

Unit 2: Mask of Agamemnon, 1550-1500 BC

The Mask of Agamemnon is a famous gold funeral mask discovered by German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in 1876 at the ancient Greek site of Mycenae. Despite its popular name, later scholars have concluded that the mask is not actually connected to the legendary King Agamemnon from Homer's *Iliad*.

Schliemann found the mask in Grave Circle A at Mycenae, one of several shaft graves containing rich burial goods. The mask had been placed over the face of a deceased person, following ancient burial customs, and when Schliemann uncovered it, he famously declared that he had "gazed upon the face of Agamemnon," though this turned out to be more wishful thinking than scientific conclusion.

The mask is made of hammered gold and measures about 10 inches tall. It features detailed facial characteristics including a prominent beard and moustache, large eyes with defined eyebrows, a strong nose, and stylized ears.

Archaeological evidence shows the mask dates to approximately 1550-1500 BC, during the Mycenaean civilization's early period. This places it roughly 300-400 years before the traditional date of the Trojan War (around 1200 BC), making it impossible for it to be connected to the historical figure who may have inspired Homer's Agamemnon.

The mask shows the metalworking skills of Mycenaean craftsmen and reflects the wealth and power of Mycenaean elite burials. It is one of several similar gold masks found at Mycenae, indicating this was a established burial practice for high-status individuals.

The Mask of Agamemnon is housed in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, where it remains one of the most iconic artifacts of ancient Greek civilization. While its romantic association with the legendary king persists in popular culture, scholars value it as an important example of Mycenaean art and burial practices.

Unit 3, Nefertiti bust, 1345 BC, Egyptian

The Bust of Nefertiti is one of the most famous and recognizable artworks from ancient Egypt, depicting Queen Nefertiti, the wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten who ruled during the 14th century BC. This limestone and stucco sculpture has become an iconic symbol of ancient Egyptian art and beauty.

The bust was discovered in 1912 by German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt, in the workshop of the royal sculptor Thutmose at Amarna, the capital city built by Akhenaten. The sculpture stands about 19 inches tall and is remarkably well-preserved. It shows Nefertiti wearing her distinctive tall blue crown. She has finely carved facial features, a long, elegant neck, and one notably missing left eye (likely never completed, as it was found still in a workshop and not in a palace or tomb).

The bust represents the pinnacle of ancient Egyptian sculptural achievement and illustrates the distinctive and informal Amarna art style that emerged during Akhenaten's reign. This short-lived artistic period marked a departure from traditional Egyptian art conventions.

Nefertiti lived during one of ancient Egypt's most revolutionary periods. She and Akhenaten introduced monotheistic worship of the sun god Aten, temporarily abandoning Egypt's traditional polytheistic religion. As queen, she likely wielded significant political power and may have even ruled briefly as pharaoh after Akhenaten's death, under the throne name Neferneferuaten.

Unit 4: Tutankhamen throne, 1332-1323 BC, Egyptian

The Throne of Tutankhamun is one of the most magnificent artifacts discovered in the tomb of the boy pharaoh. The throne was discovered by British archaeologist Howard Carter and his team on November 26, 1922, in the antechamber of Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor, Egypt. This discovery was part of the most famous archaeological find of the 20th century - the largely intact tomb of Tutankhamun, which had remained sealed for over 3,000 years.

The ceremonial throne is a masterpiece of Egyptian artistry, measuring approximately 3 feet high and made of wood covered with sheet gold and silver. The backrest features an scene depicting Tutankhamun and his queen Ankhesenamun; the queen is shown anointing the king with perfumed oil while sunlight streams down from the sun disk of Aten above them.

It is adorned with intricate gold leaf work and colorful glass inlays, as well as precious stones including lapis lazuli and turquoise. It has lion-shaped legs with detailed carvings. The side panels are decorated with protective symbols and hieroglyphs, and the armrests are in the form of winged serpents wearing the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt.

The decoration reveals the religious upheaval of the period. While Tutankhamun's original name was Tutankhaten (reflecting worship of the sun god Aten promoted by his predecessor Akhenaten), the throne shows elements of both the Aten cult and traditional Egyptian polytheism.

The throne was among the extraordinary treasure trove of over 5,000 artifacts found in Tutankhamen’s tomb, making it the most complete royal burial ever discovered in Egypt. The tomb’s contents included over 100 pieces of jewelry found on the mummy itself, ceremonial daggers with gold and iron blades, amulets and protective charms, multiple items of furniture such as thrones, chairs, beds, storage chests, oil lamps and torches, cosmetic containers and mirrors, board games, including senet (an ancient Egyptian game), six dismantled chariots of different types, bows, arrows, and throwing sticks, shields and protective armor, ceremonial weapons, over 100 pieces of clothing including tunics, robes, and undergarments, sandals (some never worn), gloves and caps, fine linen wrappings, numerous shabti figures (servant figurines for the afterlife), canopic jars containing the king's preserved organs, figurines of gods, jars of wine, honey, and oils, preserved meats and bread, fruits and grains, perfumes and incense, writing materials and scribal equipment, musical instruments, fans made of ostrich feathers, walking sticks and staffs. These items have provided crucial information about ancient Egyptian technology, religious beliefs, daily life, and artistic techniques. The preservation was so exceptional that even organic materials like leather, wood, and textiles survived in remarkable condition.

The tomb's contents are divided between the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Grand Egyptian Museum near the Giza pyramids. The discovery revolutionized Egyptology and continues to provide new insights into ancient Egyptian civilization, royal burial practices, and the material culture of the New Kingdom period.

Unit 5: Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Ani, 1250 BC

The Papyrus of Ani is one of the most complete and beautifully illustrated examples of ancient Egyptian funerary texts. It provides abundant insights into ancient Egyptian beliefs about death and the afterlife. The "Book of the Dead" is a modern name for what the ancient Egyptians called "The Book of Coming Forth by Day" or "The Book of Emerging Forth into the Light." It is not a single book but rather a collection of spells, prayers, and instructions compiled for a specific person, and designed to guide the deceased through the dangers of the afterlife and ensure their successful resurrection.

The Papyrus of Ani, dating to around 1275 BC during the 19th Dynasty, is one of the most complete versions of the Book of the Dead. It was created for Ani, a royal scribe and accountant of divine offerings in the Temple of Amun at Thebes. The papyrus measures about 78 feet long and contains 192 spells with stunning vignettes (illustrations).

The papyrus contains elaborate scenes and texts describing the journey through the afterlife, including:

The most famous scene, which shows Ani's heart being weighed against the feather of Ma'at (truth and justice) while the jackal-headed god Anubis operates the scales. If the heart is lighter than the feather, the deceased passes the test. The monster Ammit waits nearby to devour those who fail.

Detailed maps and descriptions of the various regions of the Duat (underworld), including dangerous passages, gates guarded by demons, and challenges the soul must overcome.

Scenes of Ani performing rituals, making offerings to various gods, and his mummy being prepared for burial, including the crucial "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony.

Interactions with major Egyptian deities including Ra, Osiris, Thoth, Horus, and others who play roles in judging and protecting the deceased.

Instructions for taking various forms in the afterlife, such as becoming a bird, lotus flower, or other creatures to navigate different realms.

Depictions of the deceased enjoying eternal life in the Field of Reeds, an idealized version of earthly existence.

As a text prepared for a middle-class official rather than royalty, it shows how funerary beliefs and practices extended beyond the pharaohs to the broader Egyptian society. The text demonstrates the remarkable consistency of Egyptian religious beliefs over thousands of years, showing how core concepts remained stable across dynasties.

The papyrus, discovered in the 19th century and now housed in the British Museum, provides crucial dating evidence and cultural context for understanding the New Kingdom period.

Unit 6: Lion Hunt of Ashurbanipal, Ninevah, 645-635 BC, Assyrian

The Lion Hunt reliefs of Ashurbanipal are among the greatest examples of ancient Assyrian art, providing insights into royal power, religious beliefs, and artistic achievement in the ancient Near East. These are a series of alabaster relief carvings that originally decorated the walls of the North Palace of King Ashurbanipal (reigned 668-627 BC) in Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire (near modern-day Mosul, Iraq). The reliefs depict elaborate royal lion hunts, showing the king as the supreme hunter demonstrating his power over nature and his divine right to rule.

The reliefs show various dramatic moments of the hunt:

The King in Action: Ashurbanipal is depicted shooting arrows at lions from his chariot, on horseback, and on foot, always portrayed as calm, powerful, and in complete control.

Dying and Wounded Lions: lions depicted in their death throes - wounded lionesses dragging themselves forward despite mortal injuries, lions roaring in pain, and the moment of death captured with extraordinary realism.

The Arena Hunt: Some scenes show lions being released from cages into an enclosed arena, indicating these were staged ceremonial hunts rather than wild encounters.

Attendants and Soldiers: Court officials, soldiers, and attendants are shown supporting the hunt, holding spare weapons, and managing the lions.

The hunts had religious significance, with the king fulfilling his role as protector of his people by defeating dangerous beasts, symbolically conquering chaos and evil. They provide invaluable evidence of Assyrian royal ideology, court ceremonies, and the role of kingship in maintaining cosmic order. The hunts weren't mere sport but ritual demonstrations of royal power.

The reliefs were discovered during the archaeological excavations of Austen Henry Layard between 1845-1851. Layard was one of the first archaeologists to systematically excavate Assyrian sites, and his work at Nineveh revealed the magnificent palaces of Assyrian kings. The reliefs were found buried under centuries of debris, abandoned after Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC by a coalition of Babylonians and Medes. The palace had been burned, which ironically helped preserve many artifacts by baking clay tablets and sealing the stone reliefs under protective layers of ash and rubble.

Most of the surviving Lion Hunt reliefs are housed in the British Museum in London, where they remain among the most popular and admired ancient artworks.

Unit 7: Fallen Warrior, Temple of Aphaia II, 510-470 BC, Greek

The Fallen Warrior sculptures from the Temple of Aphaia at Aegina represent a significant moment in the evolution of Greek sculpture, marking the crucial transition from the Archaic to the Classical period around 490-480 BC.

The figures are part of the sculptural groups from the east and west pediments of the Temple of Aphaia, which are now displayed in the Glyptothek of Munich. Recent scholarship suggests that both pediments were made around the same time in the Early Classical period, likely by two different workshops working in two different styles.

The two figures demonstrate dramatically different artistic approaches:

The West Pediment Warrior (c. 490 BC) The dying warrior on the west pediment is a prime example of Archaic sculpture. The male warrior is depicted nude, with a muscular body that shows the Greeks' understanding of the anatomy of the human body. His hair remains stylized with round, geometric curls. Apart from an arrow, the figure shows no sign of suffering, or any human emotion at all. This rigid sculpture reflects Archaic tones

The East Pediment Warrior (c. 480 BC) The second dying warrior who lay facing the east belongs to the Classical world of art, showing more naturalistic emotion and movement in his death throes. He lies in a more plausible position for an injured man, compared to the artificially cheerful, uncomfortably propped-up figure from the west pediment.

Together they show how the temple straddles the divide between the archaic and classical periods. These sculptures capture one of the most crucial artistic transitions in Western art history, where Greek artists moved from stylized, idealized forms to more naturalistic, emotionally expressive representations.

The Archaic smile is one of the most distinctive features of Greek sculpture from approximately 570-480 BC. The smile features predominately on Archaic Greek statues from about 570 to 480 BC and is characterized by the expression of a smile with a tight, upwards mouth, and a flat curve. Greek art historian John Boardman amply describes the smile as an expression of 'strained cheerfulness', suggesting it may have been an attempt to convey an idealized state of being rather than genuine emotion.

The Fallen Warrior sculptures are particularly significant because they show the moment when Greek artists began to abandon conventions like the Archaic smile in favor of more realistic emotional expression. The west pediment warrior still maintains some Archaic characteristics, while the east pediment warrior moves toward the psychological realism that would define Classical Greek art.

Unit 8: Ajax & Achilles amphora, Exekias, 540-530 BC, Greek

The Ajax and Achilles amphora is one of the most celebrated masterpieces of ancient Greek pottery, created by the master artist Exekias around 540-530 BC. This black-figure amphora is housed in the Vatican Museums and represents the pinnacle of Greek vase painting artistry.

The episode represented, not described in Homer's *Iliad*, is charged with the observer's knowledge of what is to come and the tragedy of future events, despite the apparent calm of the scene. Achilles and Ajax, identified by inscriptions are seated and playing a board game (likely a dice game called *petteia*). On either side, we see their shields. Achilles still has his helmet on, although Ajax has taken his off, suggesting a moment of relaxation between battles. Although the two of them are pictured playing, they are clearly depicted as being on duty, accompanied by their body armor and holding their spears, suggesting that they might head back into battle at any moment

Achilles is shown with his helmet still resting on his head suggesting that he has more power than Ajax. Ajax is shown with his heel slightly lifted, suggesting that he is nervous in the presence of Achilles.

Amphorae were used in vast numbers for the transport and storage of various products, both liquid and dry, but mostly for wine, and particularly for the mixing and pouring of water and wine at *symposia* (social gatherings). The high quality of Exekias's work suggests this amphora was likely owned by a wealthy Athenian and used for important social occasions.

Unit 9: Niobid calyx-krater, 460-450 BC, Greek

The Niobid Calyx Krater is one of the most important examples of ancient Greek red-figure pottery. It was created by an anonymous artist known as the Niobid Painter around 460-450 BC. The artist is named from this krater, which shows the god Apollo and his sister Artemis killing the children of Niobe, who were collectively called the Niobids.

A calyx krater is a large mixing bowl with a wide mouth and handles that curve upward like flower petals (hence "*calyx*," meaning flower cup). The ancient Greeks used it to mix wine and water. Their wine was strong, so dilution was necessary for civilized drinking at symposiums and other social gatherings.

The krater displays two different mythological scenes, one on each side:

Side B - The Massacre of the Niobids: Niobe had 14 children, seven daughters and seven sons, and had boasted that her children were more numerous than the children of Leto, mother of Apollo and his twin, Artemis (Diana in the Roman pantheon). Apollo was one of the twelve Olympians and patron of archery (among many, many other things). Apollo was said to never be without his bow and arrows, articles which he used to inflict judgment and death upon disobeying humans. In this scene Apollo and Artemis punish Niobe's boast by shooting all her children, who are depicted in various stages of death and dying across a rocky landscape.

Side A - Heroes and Athena: The other side shows various Greek heroes, possibly including Heracles, gathered with the goddess Athena.

The vessel is thought to reflect the innovative technique of the now lost mural paintings of Polygnotus. The Niobid Krater is revolutionary because it abandons the traditional single ground line used in earlier vase painting, instead showing figures arranged at different levels across a rocky landscape, attempting to create a sense of three-dimensional space.

Unit 10: Riace Bronzes, 460-420 BC, Greek

The Riace Bronzes (also known as the Riace Warriors or Bronzi di Riace) are two magnificent ancient Greek bronze statues that are among the finest examples of Classical Greek sculpture ever discovered.

The two life-size Greek bronze statues of naked, bearded warriors were discovered by Stefano Mariottini in the Mediterranean Sea just off the coast of Riace Marina, Italy, on August 16, 1972. Stefano Mariottini chanced upon the bronzes while snorkeling off the coast of Riace. He noticed an arm emerging from the sand, which at first he feared was a dead body. Within a week the bronzes were recovered by the elated Italian government.

Slightly larger than life-size, the nude male figures represent two warriors, one older than the other. The Riace bronzes are major additions to the surviving examples of ancient Greek sculpture. They belong to a transitional period from archaic Greek sculpture to the early Classical style and demonstrate several key innovations of Classical Greek art, such as the contrapposto stance (weight shifted to the back leg), the turn of the head suggesting movement rather than the static frontal pose of the kouros, and naturalistic anatomical detail.

Few original Greek bronze sculptures survive - most were melted down for their metal over the centuries. The bronzes, like the Zeus/Poseidon statue, were made by a process known as lost-wax casting:

Step 1: Creating the Core The sculptor began by creating a rough clay core in the approximate shape and size of the intended bronze sculpture. This core was typically made of clay mixed with organic materials like hair or straw to prevent cracking during firing.

Step 2: Wax Modeling Over the clay core, the artist applied a layer of beeswax, usually about 3-6mm thick. This wax layer was where all the fine artistic work occurred - the sculptor carved and modeled every detail of muscles, facial features, hair, and surface textures directly into the wax. This stage required exceptional skill since the wax work would determine the final appearance of the bronze.

Step 3: Adding Details and Channels The artist attached wax rods (called sprues) to the wax model to create channels through which molten bronze would flow into the mold and gases could escape. Additional wax runners and vents were strategically placed to ensure even distribution of metal.

Step 4: Creating the Outer Mold The entire wax-covered core was then encased in multiple layers of fine clay mixed with materials like crushed pottery or sand. The first layer was very fine to capture all surface details, followed by progressively coarser layers for strength. Metal pins or nails were often inserted through the outer mold to the inner core to prevent the core from shifting during casting.

Step 5: Melting Out the Wax The completed mold was heated in a kiln, causing the wax to melt and flow out through the channels, leaving a hollow cavity between the core and outer mold. This is the "lost-wax" step - the original wax model was permanently destroyed in the process.

Step 6: Bronze Pouring Molten bronze (an alloy of copper and tin, heated to about 1000°C/1832°F) was poured into the hollow cavity through the sprue channels. The bronze had to be poured quickly and at the right temperature to flow properly and capture all details.

Step 7: Cooling and Removal After cooling completely (which could take days for large pieces), the outer clay mold was broken away, revealing the bronze casting. The clay core was removed through openings, and the bronze sprues and runners were cut away.

Step 8: Finishing the Work The bronze surface was cleaned, polished, and refined using various tools. Details were sharpened, and different patinas could be applied through chemical treatments to achieve different colors and surface effects on the bronze.

Lost wax casting had several artistic advantages; it created hollow sculptures that were much lighter than solid bronze would be, making large works practical and economical. The wax modeling stage allowed for incredibly precise surface detailing that would be captured perfectly in the final bronze. Unlike marble carving, bronze casting could support extended limbs and dynamic poses without the need for supporting struts. Bronze was much more durable than other materials and could be repaired if damaged. However, the process required enormous skill and experience. Problems could occur during the manufacturing process, such as incomplete filling of the mold if the bronze cooled too quickly; air bubbles in the molten metal creating surface flaws; a shift between the two clay layers of the mold resulting in uneven wall thickness, or cracking of the metal during cooling.

This sophisticated process demonstrates the high level of technical knowledge and artistic skill achieved by ancient Greek craftsmen, combining metallurgy, sculpture, and engineering in ways that produced some of the finest artworks in human history.

Unit 11: Parthenon Metope, 447-438 BC, Greek

The Parthenon metopes were a series of 92 sculptural relief panels that decorated the exterior of the Parthenon temple on the Athenian Acropolis. Metopes are the square sculptural panels that alternate with triglyphs (vertical grooved panels) in the Doric frieze of Greek temples. Created between 447-438 BC as part of Pericles' ambitious building program, these metopes are some of the finest examples of Classical Greek architectural sculpture. Each Parthenon metope is approximately four feet square and was carved in high relief from Pentelic marble.

The 92 metopes were divided among the four sides of the building, each depicting different mythological battles:

South Side (32 metopes) - Centauromachy: The most famous and best-preserved series showed the battle between the Lapiths (a civilized Greek tribe) and the Centaurs. This conflict began when the half-man, half-horse Centaurs became drunk at the wedding of the Lapith king Pirithous and attempted to abduct the Lapith women, including the bride.

West Side (14 metopes) - Amazonomachy: These depicted a battle between Greeks and Amazons, the legendary warrior women from the east; it may refer to the mythical Amazon invasion of Athens that was repelled by Theseus.

East Side (14 metopes) - Gigantomachy: These showed the battle between the Olympian gods and the Giants, representing the cosmic struggle between divine order and primordial chaos.

North Side (32 metopes) - Trojan War: These depicted scenes from the Trojan War, though these are the most poorly preserved and their exact subjects are uncertain.

All four battles represent conflicts between civilized, ordered forces (Greeks, gods, heroes) and chaotic, barbaric ones (Centaurs, Amazons, Giants, Trojans). This theme resonated with Athenians who saw themselves as the defenders of Greek civilization against Persian "barbarians" following their victories in the Persian Wars (490-479 BC).

Created during the height of the Athenian Empire, these metopes served as visual propaganda, asserting Athens' role as the leader and protector of Greek civilization. They implied that just as heroes and gods had defeated barbaric forces in myth, so too had Athens defeated the Persians in reality. The Persian Wars (particularly the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis) were still fresh in Athenian memory. The metopes translated recent historical victories into timeless mythological terms, elevating Athens' military achievements to cosmic significance.

The metopes helped define what it meant to be Greek (and specifically Athenian) by contrasting Greek virtues with the perceived vices of their enemies - self-control versus excess, reason versus passion, civilization versus barbarism.

Many of the Parthenon metopes were severely damaged over the centuries, particularly during the 1687 explosion when the Parthenon was used as a gunpowder magazine. The

surviving examples are divided between the British Museum in London (as part of the Elgin Marbles) and the Acropolis Museum in Athens, where they continue to inspire and educate visitors about the artistic and cultural achievements of Classical Athens.

Unit 12: Pergamon Altar, 180-160 BC, Greek

The Pergamon Altar (also known as the Altar of Zeus) is one of the most magnificent monuments of ancient Greek art, representing the pinnacle of Hellenistic sculptural achievement. This huge altar once stood on the acropolis of Pergamon, in Turkey, dominating the entire valley below. It was built between 170 and 159 BC to give thanks to Zeus and Athena for the victory over the neighboring Galatians.

The structure was 117 ft wide and 109 ft deep; the front stairway alone was almost 66 ft wide. T Altar was not part of a temple but constructed as a monument in its own right, in which old Classical architectural elements were combined with the new Hellenistic ones.

The base was decorated with a marble frieze in high relief, measuring a massive 370 feet long and over seven feet high, which wraps around the building's entire exterior and depicts the mythological battle between the Gods of Mount Olympus and Giants (the Gigantomachy). It shows over 100 figures engaged in dynamic combat, with gods like Zeus, Athena, Apollo, and Artemis battling the earth-born Giants in spectacular detail. The Pergamon Altar represents the height of Hellenistic sculpture, demonstrating technical mastery that surpassed even Classical Greek art. The sculptors achieved unprecedented levels of dramatic expression, anatomical accuracy, and emotional intensity. The way figures spill out of their architectural boundaries was revolutionary.

The depiction of this battle symbolizes the triumph of order over chaos, a theme that resonated deeply with the Hellenistic worldview. The Gigantomachy served as a powerful metaphor for the Pergamene kingdom's victories over their "barbarian" enemies, particularly the Galatians (Celtic tribes who had invaded Asia Minor).

The altar was built during Pergamon's golden age under the Attalid dynasty, when the kingdom was one of the major powers in the eastern Mediterranean. It served as both a religious monument and a bold statement of Pergamene cultural and political ambitions. In the early 20th century, the Altar was excavated and relocated to a specially built museum, the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany.

Unit 13: Alexander and Darius Mosaic, House of the Faun, Pompeii, 1st C. BC, Roman

The Alexander Mosaic (also known as the Darius and Alexander Mosaic) is one of the most elaborate examples of ancient mosaic art ever discovered. It depicts the Battle of Issus (333 BC) between Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia, at the climactic moment of the confrontation. Alexander himself is shown to the left, riding into battle on his horse Bucephalus. His eyes are trained on those of his counterpart, Darius III. The Persian King is shown fleeing on his chariot, his forces in disarray. The scene captures the psychological drama of the encounter, contrasting Alexander's determined advance, despite being outnumbered, with Darius's moment of defeat and retreat. The battle was considered a turning point leading to the decline of Achaemenid power, and ultimately, paved the way for Alexander's conquest.

The mosaic is made of about one and a half million tiny colored tiles called tesserae, arranged in gradual curves called opus vermiculatum (also known as worm work, because they seem to replicate the slow motion of a crawling worm). The tiny tesserae are less than 4 millimeters wide each, allowing for subtle gradients of color to indicate shadow, depth, and the illusion of three-dimensionality. Scholars believe this mosaic is a Roman copy of the lost Hellenistic painting created by Philoxenus of Eretria, dating to about 315 BC. Since the original Hellenistic painting is lost, this Roman copy is a rare window into the artistic achievements of 4th-century BC Greek monumental painting, illustrating compositional techniques and artistic approaches that would otherwise be unknown.

The presence of this mosaic in a house in Pompeii demonstrates the Roman appreciation for Greek artistic achievements and their skill in adapting and preserving Greek artistic traditions, and the cultural values of the wealthy Roman elite who commissioned such elaborate decorations for their homes.

The mosaic was rediscovered in 1831 in Pompeii, Italy, and was later transported to Naples in September 1843. Measuring approximately 12 x 17 feet, it originally decorated the floor of one of the *exedras* on the north side of the peristyle of the House of the Faun in Pompeii. The mosaic is now displayed on a wall at the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, Italy.

Unit 14: Dionysiac Freize, House of the Mysteries, Pompeii, 1st C. BC, Roman

The Dionysiac Frieze from the Villa of Mysteries (Villa dei Misteri) in Pompeii is one of the most enigmatic examples of ancient Roman wall painting, dating to around 60-50 BC. The famous frescoes of the villa were first discovered in a luxurious villa outside the city walls. The frieze covers the walls of a large room (the *triclinium* or dining room) in what was likely a wealthy Roman's suburban residence.

The frieze consists of nearly life-sized figures painted against a brilliant redbackground (a color which came to be known as Pompeii red), creating a continuous narrative that wraps around the entire room. The paintings use the *trompe-l'oeil* ("trick the eye") technique, creating the illusion that the figures exist in the same space as the viewer, making the room feel like a sacred chamber where the ritual is actually taking place.

The frescoes depict an elaborate Dionysiac ritual. Scholars aren't sure of the meaning of the ritual, but most believe that it is related to secret initiation rituals that were part of the Greco-Roman tradition of the Dionysian mystery cult. A common theory is that the frescoes depict a bride being initiated into the Bacchic Mysteries in preparation for marriage. Among the figures shown are a young woman (possibly the initiate) reading from a scroll; Dionysus, the god of wine; satyrs, maenads (female followers of Dionysus), and other mythological figures, and a woman having her hair arranged, possibly representing the completion of the ritual

The Dionysiac Mysteries were secret religious rites associated with the god Dionysus (Bacchus in Roman mythology), god of wine, fertility, and celebration. These mystery religions promised spiritual transformation and rebirth through initiation ceremonies that were kept strictly secret from non-initiates. The frieze provides our most complete visual evidence of ancient mystery religion practices. Since these rituals were secret and initiates were sworn to silence, written descriptions are extremely rare, making this visual record invaluable for understanding ancient religious life.

The frescoes represent the pinnacle of Roman Second Style painting, demonstrating sophisticated techniques in creating psychological drama, spatial illusion, and narrative continuity.

Unit 15: Ara Pacis of Augustus, Rome, 9 BC, Roman

The *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Peace of Augustus) is one of the most important monuments of the early Roman Empire. It is a masterpiece of Augustan political propaganda, and part of the emperor's campaign to revitalize the city of Rome, which included the building and restoration of baths, temples, aqueducts and a forum, leading him to boast (according to the historian Suetonius), "I found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble."

This monument was commissioned in 13 BC to honor the return of Augustus to Rome after three years in Hispania and Gaul, and it was dedicated in 9 BC.

The Ara Pacis is an open-air altar for sacrifice associated with the Roman state religion and the cult of the Emperor Augustus and his family. The 10 feet tall marble altar stands on a 20 x 23 feet podium decorated with carved marble relief scenes depicting Vestal Virgins, priests & sacrificial animals.

The long friezes of the Ara Pacis (the North and South Walls) contain figures in a procession of thanksgiving to celebrate the Pax Augusta (peace created by Augustus). The scene is reminiscent of the Parthenon frieze, which showed citizens taking part in the Panathenaic Procession. These figures include Augustus himself, senators, lictors (men carrying fasces, bodyguards of magistrates), priests, women and children (generally from the imperial family, represented with recognizable portraiture), and attendants. The senators wear togas and a laurel wreath (the symbol of victory); some of the senators are carrying olive branches in their hands as an allusion to peace.

The East and West Walls feature four allegorical panels, depicting *Tellus Mater* or "Mother Earth", the Roman equivalent of the Greek Gaea, with fruit, animals, and children - all symbols of fertility and prosperity; allegories related to the mythical foundation of Rome, including Romulus and Remus, and depictions of Roma, the goddess personification of Rome.

The Ara Pacis served as Augustan propaganda, celebrating the Pax Romana (Roman Peace) that Augustus had brought to the empire and reinforcing the message that his rule had ended the civil wars and brought prosperity and stability to Rome. The inclusion of children from his family emphasized the hope of future dynastic continuity and the promise of peaceful successions.

To the north of the altar, a colossal astronomical sundial was constructed, with the dates and months of the Roman calendar marked on the ground with bronze lines. The *gnomon* (pointer to cast a shadow) was an massive Egyptian obelisk shipped from Heliopolis. On September 23, the autumnal equinox and the birth date of Augustus, the shadow of the obelisk pointed directly towards the center of the Ara Pacis. However, due to ground subsidence caused by earthquakes or floods, the sundial was inaccurate within a few decades of its construction.

The original altar was gradually buried and lost over the centuries. Fragments began to be discovered in the 16th century, but systematic excavation only began in the 20th century. The monument has been reconstructed and is now housed in the Museo dell'Ara Pacis in Rome, designed by architect Richard Meier and opened in 2006.

Unit 16: Apollo Belvedere, 2nd C. AD, Roman

The Apollo Belvedere is thought to date to the mid-2nd century AD and to be a Roman copy of an original bronze statue, created between 330 and 320 BC by the Greek sculptor Leochares. The statue portrays Apollo as an archer, possibly in the act of slaying Python, the serpent guardian of Delphi, or another mythical foe. Apollo was the god of light, music, poetry, and archery. As a youthful god and a favored son of Zeus, he was patron of young men, the civilized order of the city, and civic institutions like art and music

The figure is standing in the *contrapposto* pose pioneered by Greek sculptors and copied by artists ever since. *Contrapposto* refers to a (usually) standing position in which the figure has most of its weight on one foot so that its shoulders and arms twist off axis from the hips and legs, creating a sense of movement, weight, naturalism, and grace.

The statue was rediscovered in 1489 in the remains of an ancient Roman home on the Viminal Hill in Rome, and it was immediately appreciated as a masterpiece and showered with praise. It was moved to the Vatican in 1509 and placed in the Cortile del Belvedere, from which it derives its name. “Bel Vedere” means “beautiful view”, and the Cortile (Court or Courtyard) del Belvedere was built by Bramante for Pope Julius II to join the Vatican Palace to the Palazzo Belvedere, a summerhouse built on the high ground of the Vatican Hill to catch summer breezes in the hot summers of Rome.

The Apollo Belvedere, or Pythian Apollo, has inspired artists' anatomical learning since its rediscovery in the fifteenth century. Albrecht Dürer imitated the contrapposto pose, for example, in his 1504 engraving of Adam and Eve, demonstrating its immediate impact on Renaissance art.

The Apollo became one of the world's most celebrated art works when in 1755 it was praised by the German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) as the best known example of the perfection of the Greek aesthetic ideal.

The Apollo Belvedere recently underwent extensive restoration and was returned to public display at the Vatican Museums. A significant archaeological discovery in northern Naples in the 1950s recovered the original plaster casts of the missing left hand of the Apollo Belvedere, providing valuable information for the restoration process.

Unit 17: Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius, 2nd C. AD, Rome, Roman

This statue of Marcus Aurelius is the only known equestrian bronze statue that has survived from antiquity. It is made of bronze and stands nearly 14 feet tall. It was originally gilded, so it would have dazzled brilliantly, projecting an impression of power and god-like grandeur. It depicts the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161-180 CE) mounted on horseback in a gesture of imperial authority.

It is made of two separate pieces, the emperor and the horse. The emperor is shown larger than life-size, wearing civilian dress rather than military armor, which was unusual for imperial portraits, and possibly chosen to show him as a wise ruler rather than as a military commander. The emperor extends his hand in a gesture of *adlocutio* used by emperors when addressing their troops. Scholars have speculated that a barbarian enemy was once cowering beneath the horse's raised foreleg suing for mercy. In this case, the raised right arm, in addition to being a greeting, could also indicate the emperor's clemency.

This statue was the only one to survive from classical times because the citizens of ancient Rome mistakenly thought it was a representation of Emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor. This case of mistaken identity saved it from destruction during the later Roman Empire and the centuries after 485 AD, when pagan monuments were frequently destroyed or melted down.

For centuries it stood in the Lateran Palace in Rome, until it was transferred in 1538 to the Campidoglio, the piazza designed by Michelangelo at the top of the Capitoline Hill. In the 1980s it was moved into a climate-controlled environment inside the neighboring Capitoline Museums, and a modern copy was made to take its place in the piazza outside.

This majestic Marcus Aurelius statue would set the example for many other equestrian statues in later years. It became the prototype for countless equestrian monuments of rulers throughout European history, from medieval kings to modern political leaders.

Unit 18: Portrait of the Tetrarchs, Constantinople, 300 AD, Roman

The Portrait of the Four Tetrarchs is made of porphyry, an unusual and expensive red-purple stone from Egypt, usually reserved for imperial artworks. It depicts the four Tetrarchs (Diocletian, Maximianus, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus), embracing. The Tetrarchy was the system instituted by the Roman emperor Diocletian in 293 AD to govern the ancient Roman Empire by dividing it between two emperors, the *augusti*, and their junior colleagues and designated successors, the *caesares*. Diocletian hoped to resolve the issue of uneasy imperial succession, prevent bloody civil wars, and facilitate the management of the vast territory of the Roman Empire. The tetrarchy brought a period of relative stability, with a more efficient administration and a strengthened military, but was relatively short-lived. Still, this sculpture remains as testimony to one of Rome's most innovative attempts at governmental reform

The four figures are depicted with identical faces, childlike proportions, and angular garments. The style is far-removed from Classical Roman portraiture, such as the faces of Augustus's family members on the Ara Pacis, which are recognizable from other portraits. The similarities of the figures emphasizes their collective unity rather than their personal identities. This reflects the new political reality where imperial power was shared rather than concentrated in one individual. It demonstrates the transition from Classical to Late Antique art, showing the move away from naturalistic individual portraiture toward more symbolic, abstract representation that would characterize Byzantine and medieval art.

The sculpture is not a solid block, but two flat slabs of stone, each showing two emperors, which have been cemented into a corner of the façade of St Mark's Basilica in Venice, where the dark purple stone contrasts with the white and green marble of the basilica. The sculpture was looted from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade (1204) and brought to Venice as part of the enormous treasure the Venetians acquired from the Byzantine capital.

The sculpture's placement on St. Mark's Basilica reflects Venice's desire to present itself as the heir to both Roman and Byzantine imperial authority, using looted imperial artifacts to legitimize their own growing power.