

## ANCIENT GREEK SCULPTURE

Ancient Greek Sculpture achievements has marked a milestone in the history of human representation because of their **powerful realism** and their sophisticated elegance.

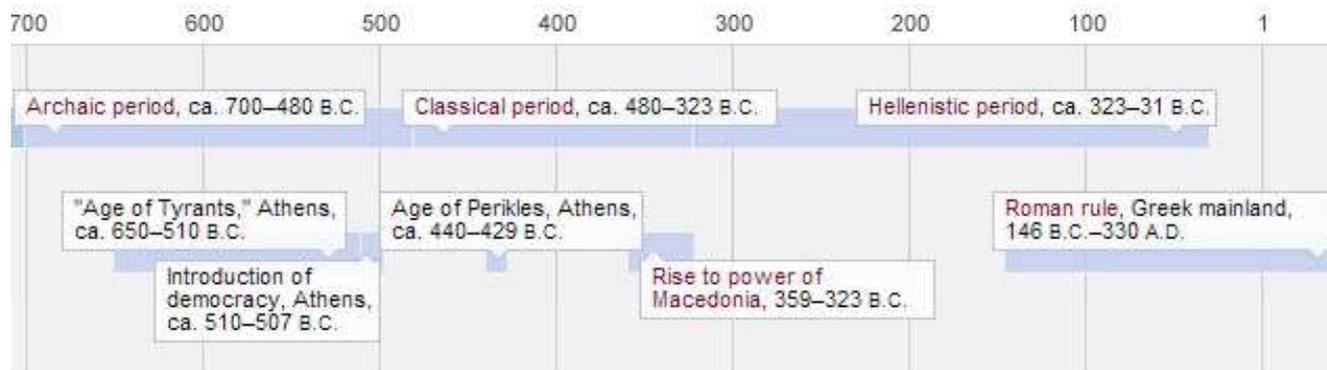
Greeks achievements mirrored the new role of the human being in society: men and Gods shared the beauty of athletes' fit bodies.

Artists improved their imitational skills, **sculptures became freestanding**, well-proportioned and realistic in the representation of anatomy and movement.

The use of white marble allowed sculptors to easily carve the muscles and to render the luminance of flesh. The technique of **bronze casting** let the figures assume any position the sculptors invented.

For the sake of realism, Greeks used to color their statues and to add silver or copper plated details to the bronzes.

Unluckily most of the bronze statues made by ancient Greek artists got lost because of the material and we know them through ancient Roman copies.



SOURCE: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/?period=04&region=eusb>

## Archaic period (600 B.C. – 480 B.C.)

Early Greek sculptors were mainly focused on the representation of young human bodies (**kuros,-oi = boy-s and kore,-ai= girls**) to be set up in front of the temples as offering for the Gods.



Menkure and Khamerernebtj  
4th Dynasty 2548-2530 B.C.  
Greywacke, 139.5 cm high  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Kuros, 600-590 a.c.  
Naxian marble, 194.6 × 51.6 × 63.2 cm  
Metropolitan Museum New York

Freestanding sculpture is indeed a big novelty compared to Egyptian art. Now sculptures are totally free from the marble block and became able to stand up on their leg, stronger enough to support the weight of the whole body in balance without any support on the back. Such actual size figures still look a bit stiff because of their position, but eventually the viewer can turn around them and look at them from many different points of view.



Statue of a kouros (youth), ca. 590–580 B.C.,  
naxian marble, h. without plinth 193 cm

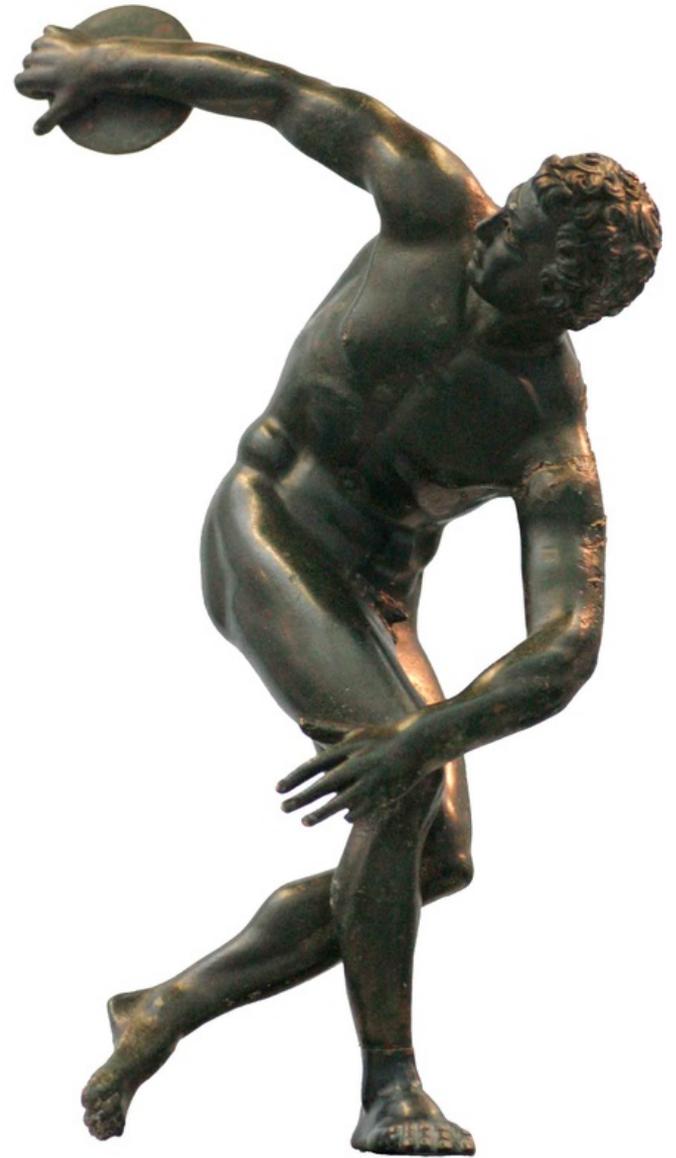
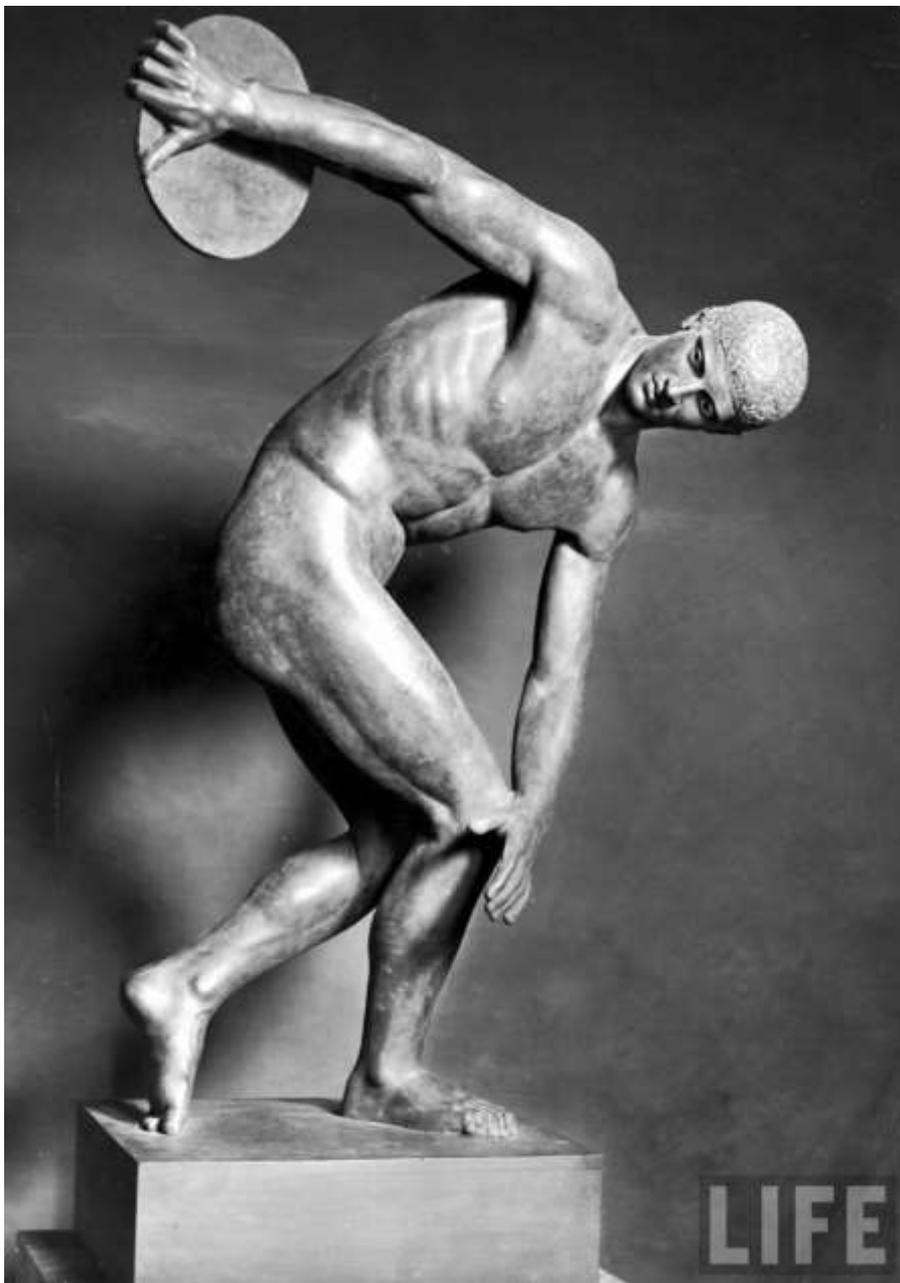


Kritios Boy, 480 BC, Acropolis Museum, Athens

## **Classical period** (5th century BC)

The *Kritian boy* (Acropolis Museum, Athens) marks the most realistic lifelike achievement of ancient Greek sculpture. The transition connecting body and torso are perfectly smooth to make the body vibrant and the imitation of reality perfect.

Artist like **Polycletus** (c.450–c.420 B.C.) and **Myron** (c. 480-440 BC), who made the famous *Discobolus*, endow their artworks with a calm potential movement, able to convey power in stillness without aiming for the expression of emotion. Marble was replaced by casted bronze to free the sculptors from any structural problem and give them the possibility to create figures in any position.



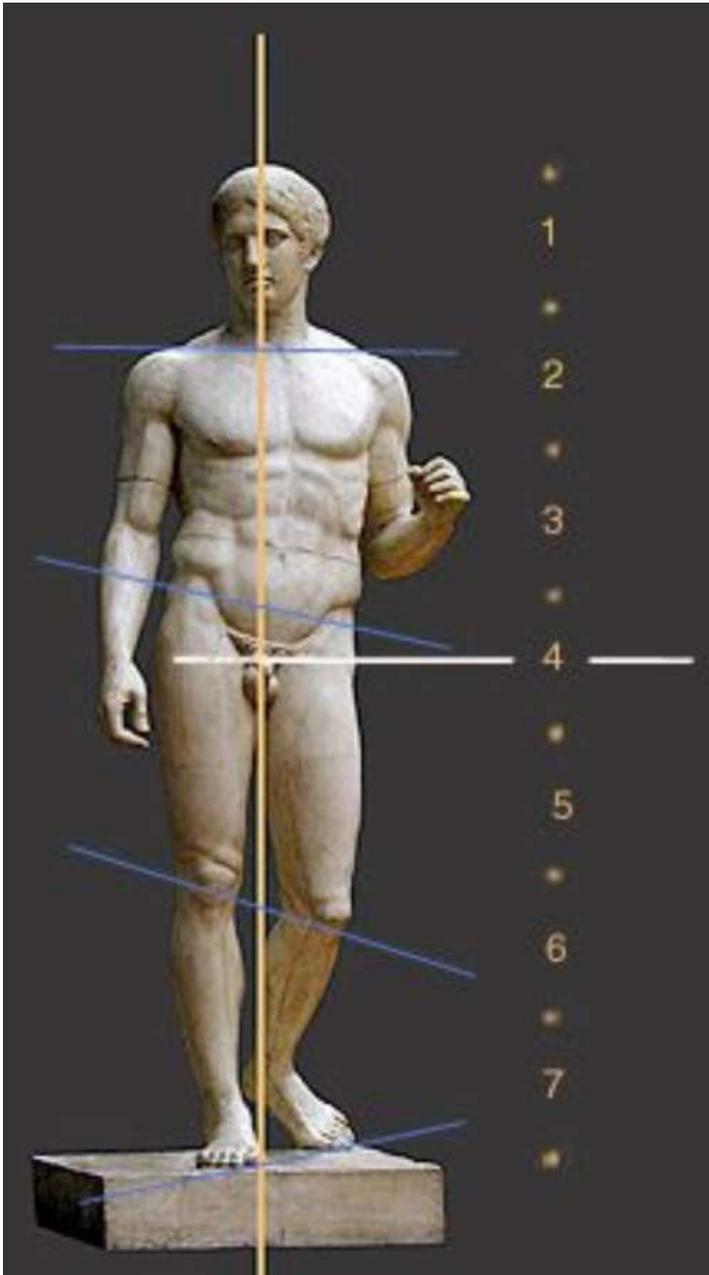
Myron, Diskobolus , (roman copies after the original bronze), 450-460 B.C.



*Artemision Bronze* (Zeus or Poseidon), 460 BC, National Archaeological Museum of Athens



Roman period copy of the *Doryphoros* of Polykleitos , marble, 2 m high, Archeological Museum, Naples.





## **Hellenistic period** (4th century BC – 0)

When the mere imitation of reality became boring, Greek artists followed the human instinct to go further and find new forms. During the Hellenistic period exaggeration and distortion let the artists create something more human than human expressing even violently movement and, through movement, emotion.

High polished volumes common to classic sculptures are marked by deeply carved lines suggesting agitated draperies like those of the *Nike* in Louvre Museum, Paris or the *Laocoon*.



*Nike (Winged Victory) of Samothrace, c. 220-190 BC, parian marble, height 328 cm, Paris, Louvre*



*Artemision Jockey*, 140 BC, Archeological Museum, Athens



*Laocöon, Roman copy after original bronze, 200 BC,  
Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican, Rome*