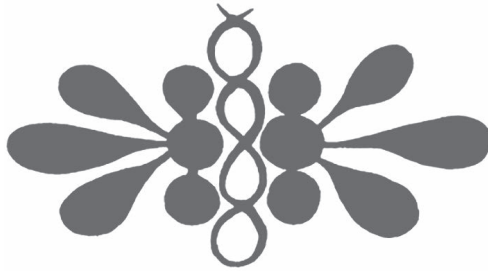


PART V

Forms of Art in Antiquity



NAVIGATION

■ KEY TERMS

Study the following words prior to reading the text.

Pottery: Related words

pottery: ceramics

ceramic: made of clay and permanently hardened by heat

cast: mold, mould, matrix

crockery: earthenware

furnace: kiln

glazed: coated with a glaze ≠ unglazed

shard: a piece of broken ceramic, metal, glass, or rock, typically having sharp edges

fragment: chip, piece, segment, shard

ceramic - ceramicist - clay - jar - pot - potsherd - potter - potter's wheel

■ READING

Forms of Art. Pottery in Antiquity

Forms of art developed in different parts of the Greek world, and, as in any age, some artists worked in more innovative styles than others. Strong local traditions and the requirements of local cults enable historians to locate the origins even of works of art found far from their place of origin. Greek art of various kinds was widely exported. The whole period saw a generally steady increase in prosperity and trading links within the Greek world and with neighbouring cultures.

The survival rate of Greek art differs starkly between media. We have huge quantities of pottery and coins, much stone sculpture, though even more Roman copies, and a few large bronze sculptures.

The famous and distinctive style of Greek vase-painting with figures depicted with strong outlines, with thin lines within the outlines, reached its peak from about 600 to 350 BC, and divides into the two main styles, almost reversals of each other, of black-figure and red-figure painting, the other colour forming the background in each case. Other colours were very limited, normally to small areas of white and larger ones of a different purplish-red. Conventionally, most pottery vessels were made for everyday use, not for display.

In earlier periods, even small Greek cities produced pottery for their own locale. These varied widely in style and standards. Distinctive pottery that ranks as art was produced on some of the Aegean islands, in Crete, and in the wealthy Greek colonies of southern Italy and Sicily. By the later Archaic and early Classical period, however, the two great commercial powers, Corinth and Athens, came to dominate. Their pottery was exported all over the Greek world, driving out the local varieties. Pots from Corinth and Athens are found as far afield as Spain and Ukraine, and are so common in Italy that they were first collected in the 18th century as “Etruscan vases”. By the 5th century BC, pottery had become an industry, and pottery painting ceased to be an important art form.

The range of colours, which could be used on pots, was restricted by the technology of firing: black, white, red, and yellow were the most common. In the three earlier periods, the pots were left their natural light colour, and were decorated with slip that turned black in the kiln.

Greek pottery is frequently signed, sometimes by the potter or the master of the pottery, but only occasionally by the painter. Hundreds of painters are, however, identifiable by their artistic personalities: where their signatures have not survived they are named for their subject choices, as “the Achilles Painter”, by the potter they worked for, such as the Late Archaic “Kleophrades Painter”, or even by their modern locations, such as the Late Archaic “Berlin Painter”.

TASKS

Task 1. True or False?

1. Some artists worked in more original styles than others. T / F
2. Works of art, even if discovered far from their place of origin, were recognized by historians thanks to that place’s local traditions. T / F
3. Low-quality pottery was produced in Crete and some of the Aegean islands. T / F
4. Various local varieties of pottery eventually drove out Corinthian and Athenian pottery. T / F
5. Greek pottery was rarely signed by the painter. T / F

Task 2. *Make at least five (5) sentences, using any of the following words.*

discovery; potter; vase paintings; foundations; lay; improve;
develop; varieties; colour; groundbreaking; acceptance;
artistic; stratum; later

Task 3. *Team Work or Individual Work.*

- *Fieldwork.* You are an archaeologist, working in the field. What do you need to pay attention to?
- *Work in the laboratory.* What do you do in the lab after collecting the artifacts?
- 'Publish or perish'. Do you think it is important for an archaeologist to record the excavation and publish the results of his/her work?

Task 4. *Fill in the blanks to form the complete words.*

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Pala __ ol __ __ __ ic | 6. Suc __ es __ i __ n |
| 2. Fos __ __ l | 7. Ev __ l __ ti __ n |
| 3. Fi __ __ d | 8. P __ ve |
| 4. Tech __ i __ __ e | 9. Geol __ __ i __ __ l |
| 5. Found __ __ __ on | 10. Dis __ o __ e __ y |

Task 5. *Food for thought.*

John Keats was an English Romantic poet. In one of his poems, “*Ode on a Grecian Urn*” (May 1819), he addresses an ancient Greek vase with reflective admiration. Below is the last stanza of John Keats’s Ode. Reflect on the poem’s verses in *bold* letters: “Thou, silent form! and all ye need to know”: What do you think they mean?

‘O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, **a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,**
‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.’

thou: you (old English; poetic or religious word, addressed to one person) - **doth:** does (old English; third person singular form of the verb: ‘do’) - **waste:** wither, fade - **shalt:** shall - **say’st:** say (obsolete, ‘sayest’) - **ye:** you (old English; poetic or religious word, addressed to more than one person) - **brede:** (archaic) braid; embroidery; something braided or entwined.



Picture: *Ancient Greek Pottery Amphora.*

(By: Gary Todd. Creative Commons CC0 1.0 - Universal Public Domain Dedication).