2018

The Propagation and Proliferation of the Greek Ideal: From Antiquity to Winckelmann

Halina Cecily Piasecki

Bard College

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018/164

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Projects Spring 2018 by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.
THE PROPAGATION AND PROLIFERATION OF THE GREEK IDEAL:  
FROM ANTIQUITY TO WINCKELMANN

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
Halina Piasecki

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2018
The Propagation and Proliferation of the Greek Ideal: From Antiquity to Winckelmann

I. Introduction

II. The Roman Idea of Greece

III. The Renaissance Idea of Greece

IV. The Neoclassical Idea of Greece

V. Conclusion
INTRODUCTION

After the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire in 1832, the excavation of antiquities accelerated, and Western European understanding of what constituted Greek art began to change. This evolution had already started in the mid-18th-century, with the British team of James “Athenian” Stuart (1713-1788), Nicholas Revett (1721-1804), and their French rival, Julien David LeRoy (1784-1803). 1 Prior to the eighteenth century opening up of Greece, artists and patrons primarily understood the appearances of Greece art through texts, such as Vitruvius (30-20 BCE) or Pliny (23-79 CE) coupled with Roman objects. 2 In spite of expanding knowledge that contradicted and complicated earlier ideas of a simple Greek perfection, the eighteenth century coalesced the idea that Greek art defined the highest achievement in representing human form, and could be understood through clearly defined principles, which both embodied and inspired ideals. This concept was most strongly advocated by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), who pronounced that, “The only way for us to become great or, if this is possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients.” 3

Winckelmann’s interpretation of ancient Greek art as some sort of pure prototype persisted well into twentieth-century Art History. Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) declares

1 The competition in the eighteenth century to publish a catalogue of monumental Greek works culminated in the rivalry between Julien David LeRoy and James “Athenian” Stuart and Nicholas Revett. LeRoy succeeded in publishing his text, Ruins of the Most Beautiful Monuments in Greece (1758), before Stuart and Revett published theirs, The Antiquities of Athens and Other Monuments of Greece (1762), Stuart and Revett: the Myth of Greece and its Afterlife, Susan Soros and David Watkin, James ”Athenian” Stuart: 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity, Yale University Press, 2006; These two texts made the antique tangible instead of legendary, and provided an accessible way to view the antique, Henry Hawley and Remy G. Sasselin, Neoclassicism: Style and Motif, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1964, 9.
2 Phyllis Bober, Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, H. Miller, 1991, 38, states that Renaissance artists studied ancient texts in translation and in their original language, and thus “developed new theoretical and conceptual contexts for visual observation.”
early in his monologue, *The Nude*, “The basis of Greek art... is fundamentally ideal. It starts from the concept of a perfect shape and only gradually feels able to modify that shape in the interests of imitation.”4 This quote perpetuates the eighteenth-century premise that the Greeks refined nature into a vision of perfection that surpassed reality. For Clark, such ideal forms go beyond physical beauty to inspire free thought and unbounded creativity. Like Winckelmann before him, Kenneth Clark defines a “Greek Ideal” as an abstraction from the natural world, which embodies and inspires a better existence. As Winckelmann writes, “The expression of such nobility of soul goes far beyond the depiction of beautiful nature. The [Greek] artist had to feel the strength of spirit in himself and then impart it to this marble... Wisdom extended its hand to art and imbued its figures with more than common souls.”5

This project explores the origin of this persistent idealized view of Greek art by looking at two previous periods where theory idealized the Classical past before studying how Winckelmann built upon or departed from these earlier theorists. As Winckelmann’s exposure to art primarily occurred in Rome, this essay analyzes the work of two other treatise writers in that city: Vitruvius from ancient Rome and Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), writing in Renaissance Rome. These authors represent two eras, Roman antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, that looked back to move forward. Three chronological chapters examine the definitions, sources, and prescriptions presented by Vitruvius, Alberti, and Winckelmann in relation to the Classical, usually understood as Greek, past, then considers the effects, if any, of the proclamations on contemporary artists’ practice, before concluding with a near-contemporary historian’s reception of the

art. As Winckelmann focuses on sculpture and somewhat on architecture, so do these chapters. Alberti’s *Della Pictura*, however, represents an exception to this rule, as it is his first treatise on art, and far more influential on contemporary practice than either his *De Re Aedificatoria* or *De Statua*, partly because *Della Pictura* was quickly translated into Italian.

Chapter One, *The Roman Idea of Greece*, focuses on *De Architectura* by Vitruvius, the only surviving ancient treatise on visual culture. This chapter defines the role of Greek mathematics, architecture, and terminology in Vitruvius’ text, before considering the treatise’s impact on art by studying the multimedia commissions of Octavian-Augustus (63 BCE-14 CE), the named audience of Vitruvius’ text. Examination of the *Temple of Apollo Palatinus* and the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (figures 2-10) reveals that the patron departed from Vitruvius by blending Italic elements and transformed Greek references (from the so-called Archaic to the Hellenistic, terms post-dating antiquity) to create a new style and visual language, which articulated the patron’s political goals far better than Vitruvius’ plea for stylistic purity.⁶ Through these specific case studies, this chapter exposes a tension between theory and practice,⁷ before concluding with a short discussion of how Pliny the Elder relates the achievements of Octavian-Augustus to the artists of Greece, thereby returning to Vitruvius’ trope, a conclusion at odds with the visual evidence.

---

⁶ Paul Zanker, *the Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* University of Michigan Press, 2002, 3, states that this new visual language pioneered by Augustus helped articulate his values and goals to a Roman public, 3.
⁷ Phyllis Bober, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 1991, 37, argues that the Renaissance artists who later study ancient texts in combination with extant artworks find a discrepancy between theory and practice, and must reconcile this for themselves.
The following chapter, *The Renaissance Idea of Greece*, begins with the Rome of Nicholas V (1447-1455) and traverses the reign of Julius II della Rovere (1503-1513), and concludes in sixteenth-century Medici Florence with Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). Under Nicholas V (1397-1455), Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) explored and explicated classical ideals through a study of Vitruvius and actual remains. The theory prescribed in his two texts *Della Pictura* and *De Re Aedificatoria* complicates Vitruvius’ simplicity and adherence to conservative Greek types in order to reflect the cultural riches of Rome. Nevertheless, he still proclaims the superiority of Classical prototypes. Nicholas V and Alberti were largely motivated by their desire to create a Christian capital equal to the Classical. Such ambitions come to fruition during the reign of Julius II. The chapter next considers the impact of Alberti’s prescriptions on two multimedia commissions, one by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) and the other by Raphael Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520). Formal analysis of the sculpture and architecture for the Julius II’s tomb (1505-1545) and Raphael’s depiction of sculpture and architecture in his *School of Athens* (1509-1511) suggests that, as in the Rome of Octavian-Augustus, actual, ancient, physical remains influenced on artists than contemporary theory (figs. 12-14). Alberti’s ideas coupled with these works suggest both a widening and a narrowing of the concept of a “Greek Ideal,” or a Classical Ideal. It is important to note that, while both texts and monuments mix ancient styles and sources, then all assume the whiteness

---


9 Each of these texts was composed in both Latin and Italian, and Alberti never specified if *Della Pictura* was first published in Italian or Latin, Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance*, Penguin Press, 2000, 71.
of classical sculpture and architecture. This incorrect interpretation has significance for the eighteenth century. The chapter concludes by analyzing how Vasari equates the works of Michelangelo and Raphael with a new articulation of the Greek Ideal, in spite of appearances.  

Finally, the third chapter, *The Neoclassical Idea of Greece*, focuses on Rome in the eighteenth century and the papacy under Benedict XIV (1740-1758). This chapter studies the theory of a Greek Ideal as presented by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), within his texts, *Reflection on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755), and the *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764), and how this theory departs from or corresponds with the earlier texts by Vitruvius and Alberti. It analyzes both Winckelmann’s belief that Greek style represents the zenith of artistic creativity within the Western tradition and how he encourages artists to imitate ancient works in order to reflect his theory of artistic perfection. Following this more general analysis, the chapter focuses on how *The History of the Art of Antiquity*, the later text, reacts to the greater cultural knowledge of the expanding world and, in sum, rejects this broader cultural definition, and maintains Greek cultural superiority. Faced with the diverse reality of true Greek antiquities, the misinterpretation of Roman copies as Greek originals prompted a retreat into a propagandistic vision of a past, perfectly proportioned, and white Ideal. As with the previous chapters, the text proceeds to study the impact of Winckelmann’s theory, specifically his description of the *Apollo Belvedere*, on contemporary works of art, specifically the painting of Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-

---

10 Giorgio Vasari, Translated by George Bull, *Lives of the Artists*, Penguin, 1971, describes Raphael in these words, “artists as outstandingly gifted as Raphael are not simply men but, if it be allowed to say so, mortal gods,” 284; and Michelangelo as “the perfect exemplar in life, work, and behavior and in every endeavor, and we would be acclaimed as divine,” 325.
1779) and the sculpture of Antonio Canova (1757-1822). Unlike the previous chapters however, analysis reveals a closer relationship between theory and practice, as the visualization for the first time seems inspired by the theory. In search of reason for this unity, the chapter goes on to study the parallels between Winckelmann’s work and later aesthetic theory, specifically the *Critique of Judgment* by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), as a possible explanation for the harmony between theory and practice in this period.

In spite of the differences in prescription and realization in these three periods, throughout the concept of a Greek Ideal, evokes Plato’s allegory of the cave, a metaphor of a reflection which inspires without being real:

Compare the effect of education and the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling…They’ve been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around… Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers… Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kinds of artifacts that project above it… Do you suppose, first of all, that these prisoners see anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows…? The prisoners would in every way believe that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts.11

The allegory muses on the role of perception in the education of the soul. The individuals in Plato’s cave cannot experience the world for themselves, rather they only see shadows cast against a wall. Knowledge, here, is fabricated by nondescript entities who control the perception of the individuals within the cave. This allegory presents a world where only a reflection of truth exists. The treatise writers discussed in this thesis cast themselves as these unnamed authoritative entities, trying to define the Ideal to their audience, analogous to the confined men within the cave. The theorists create a shadow

---

of inspiration, with only a vague relationship to its original form. Unlike Plato’s captives, however, most of the artists discussed in this project think and look for themselves, creating a practice that departs from theory.

The allegory of the cave speaks broadly to the production and propagation of the aesthetic concept of a Greek Ideal. As time progresses, societies interested in Greece become more and more distanced from Greek culture, thought, and artistic practice. The passage of time limits exposure to the scope of extant artifacts, literary works, and philosophical texts. Therefore, this project suggests the theorists adapt their perceptions of ancient Greece to their specific value systems, highlighting and embellishing aspects that best fit their cultural mentality. Ironically, the dictates become the most extreme, limiting, and abstract in the eighteenth century, when the reality (the archaeology of Greece) creeps into view. However, practice does not usually conform to the prescriptive theory. Although the idea of the Greek Ideal stems from real art, architecture, and literature, the textual adaptations produce an intellectual interpretation, often of broad and vague generalizations. The texts seem to reference texts, or a shuttered view of art (Winckelmann’s insistence that copies be originals), yet the art reflects a greater variety of sources. The objects created in the wake of the theory do not usually conform to these prescriptions, the exception being in the eighteenth century. The conclusion explores the possibility that counter-factual definition by Winckelmann and the conformity in the art by Mengs and Canova may be a reaction against the reality of Greek forms emerging through contemporary archaeology. Diverse and contradictory real Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic art questioned the dominant white perfection.
By addressing the shift in meaning of a Greek Ideal in these three periods, this project focuses on the permanence and longevity of the platonic shadow of Greece within the Western canon. This diachronic approach to analysis highlights the different understanding of ancient art over time and the consequences of these varying interpretations. The analyses of these three distinct periods address the conscious propagation and proliferation of an Ideal within the Western canon as a defining basis for art practice and art analysis which, however, from antiquity through the Enlightenment carries political and propagandistic notions of cultural identity and, perhaps, eventually racial superiority.

In addition to the primary source treatises by Vitruvius, Alberti, and Winckelmann; the historical treatises by Pliny, Vasari, and Kant; and art commissioned by Augustus, Julius II, and Cardinal Albani, among others, this project builds on the work of secondary sources, especially the many works of Rudolf Wittkower: *Idea and Image: Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (1982), *Sculpture: Processes and Principles* (1995), *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1998), and *Art and Architecture in Italy* (1999). Although Wittkower’s specific thesis is different in every text, the main concept of the many layers of Rome’s past and their subsequent influence on later Roman practice sustains each text. Wittkower’s work outlines the context and influences of prior art practice on the specific pieces and time periods he discusses, and provides detailed background within each time period. He includes notes on patronage systems, methods of art practice, and many images to aid his writing.

While Wittkower’s insights inform the entire project, other scholars contributed to individual chapters. The scholars whose research sustains Chapter One include: Paul
Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (2002), Amanda Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (2010), J.J. Pollitt, *The Impact of Greek Art on Rome* (1978), and John Boardman, *Greek Art* (1996). Paul Zanker’s work especially influences the thought of this chapter. In *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Zanker argues that Octavian-Augustus promoted a new iconographic and visual language in art and architecture to fit his social and political ambitions. Zanker defines these works as referencing Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek sources as well as Italic and Egyptian models. Through these rich commissions, Augustus articulates values of a unified empire, and uses these ideals to speak to a new moral vision for the city of Rome. Zanker outlines these ideas chronologically, by providing a detailed analysis of artwork, coinage, and architectural commissions, while comparing the content of these commissions to Augustus’ known values and ideals.

life and accomplishments in combination with a meticulous analysis of Renaissance culture to elaborate on these concepts.

Chapter Three builds on the work of many scholars including Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (2000); “Male Fantasy and Modern Sculpture,” (1992), Whitney Davis, “Queer Beauty: Winckelmann and Kant on the Vicissitudes of the Ideal,” (2013), Michael Fried, “Reading Winckelmann on Imitation,” (1986), Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Art* (1987), and David Irwin, *Neoclassicism* (2011). Above all, the work of Alex Potts: *Male Fantasy and Modern Sculpture, Flesh and the Ideal*, and his introduction to Harry Francis Mallgrave’s translation of the *History of the Art of Antiquity*, provides the necessary background for all research on Johann Winckelmann. Potts argues in his three texts that Winckelmann’s love of the antique was coupled with and complicated by his homoerotic projections onto antique statuary, which facilitated his idealized perception. Winckelmann’s *History of the Art of Antiquity* gained him acclaim as the pioneer of art-historical analysis, as he associated art practice with the rise and decline of cultures. Potts supports his argument by providing detailed accounts of Winckelmann’s life and themes through the interpretation of quotes from the author. Winckelmann’s own voice thus buttresses Potts’ enumerated points.

I thank mother and father, Laura Gratz and Jon Piasecki, for their endless support of all my many pursuits. I thank my siblings, Frank Piasecki, Stella Piasecki, and Elinor Cherin, for their love. I am so lucky and thankful to have the support of my friends through this endeavor, especially Mary Grace McNulty and Kevin Barbosa, and the encouragement of my partner, Benjamin Faller. I would like to thank the professors on
my committees, Robert Cioffi, Jay Elliot, and Garry Hagberg, for their support and their invaluable critique. I would also like to especially thank Diana Depardo Minsky, my tireless senior project advisor and friend for the endless support, advice, and effort.
CHAPTER ONE

THE ROMAN IDEA OF GREECE

During his consolidation of power and rule from 44 BCE-31 BCE, Octavian, who was granted the honorific Augustus in the year 27 BCE, combined Italic themes and motifs with Greek styles and references to establish a visual and architectural language to present his political agenda and his capital city as heir to the achievements of Greece. To understand what “Greek” references in Roman art and architecture meant in Augustan Rome, this chapter first analyzes Vitruvius’ prescription of Greek models (circa 30-20 BCE) and then studies Octavian’s Temple of Apollo Palatinus (circa 28 BCE) and finally focuses on Augustus’ Ara Pacis Augustae (circa 13-9 BCE) to see if they emulate the theoretical text. Analysis suggests that these commissions integrated a wider variety of Greek and Italic elements to communicate the Princeps’ evolving policies and his more nuanced reverence for Greek culture. The conclusion of the chapter uses Pliny’s account of Roman art (circa 77-79 CE) to assess the ancient response to such imperial commissions.

Octavian was the adopted son of Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE) and, during his tenure at the head of the Roman state, continued the plans for urban beautification and growth initiated by his adopted father. Caesar’s commissions for the renovation of the city exemplified practical ordering and expansion by building rectangular units and, in

---

12 Paul Zanker argues in The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus, University of Michigan Press, 2002, 3, that Augustus’ goal was to reinstate the old Roman values that he wished to project onto himself, and in doing this a new visual language evolved along with his political ambitions.

13 According to Filippo Coarelli in Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide, Augustus consciously chose to continue the building projects begun by his adopted father in the Forum Romanum, but was more conservative than Julius Caesar when undertaking drastic interventions with the the Forum Romanum. Augustus then commissioned more monuments as time progressed to fit his propagandistic needs, 46.
places, creating the semblance of a grid. Caesar’s *Basilica Julia* balanced the *Basilica Aemilia* in the *Forum Romanum*, while his Forum of Julius Caesar introduced a new self-contained bilaterally symmetrical plaza type.\(^\text{14}\) Caesar’s *Basilica Julia* was his first commission in the *Forum Romanum*. Its legal function projected an ideal of democratic government aimed at appealing to the people of Rome.\(^\text{15}\) Similarly, the Forum of Julius Caesar introduced the *ex novo* forum type and used a hierarchy of architectural heights and a figural sculptural program to articulate themes of dynasty and endurance. The *rostra* façade visually aligned Caesar with his patron deity Venus and encouraged a reading of Caesar’s rise as divinely inspired. Octavian emulated Caesar’s urban ambitions and messages by completing Julius Caesar’s commissions and initiating his own similar commissions. By doing so, he suggested a divinely endorsed dynasty.\(^\text{16}\)

Vitruvius, an architect and engineer who asserted that he worked for Julius Caesar, seems to have written his treatise to attract Octavian’s attention, “I have set down these instructions, complete with technical terms, so that by observing them you could teach yourself how to evaluate the works already brought into being and those yet to be. For in these pages I have laid out every set of principles for the discipline.”\(^\text{17}\) This note to the intended reader at once asserts his credentials while encouraging Octavian to use this treatise to inform his building projects. In stating that he has “laid out every set of

---


\(^{15}\) Diana Depardo-Minsky “Julius Caesar”, Roman Urbanism, Bard College, Fall 2016.


principles for the discipline,” Vitruvius advertises his expertise and presumed education on the subject. By boasting of his own knowledge of history and technique, he provides a formula rooted in tradition. Vitruvius even states that his opus is “formulated according to extensive researches,” then begins with his first chapter concerning the education of the architect.

Writing between 30-20 BCE, Vitruvius’ relationship with Greek influence is one of conservative adherence to Greek forms. Vitruvius emphasizes the need to look to Greek models to make the city of Rome equal with its own status:

For in the proper completion of their works, they [the ancient Greeks] expressed everything as it certainly was, drawn from the true customs of Nature, and they approved those things of which the explanations, when examined, can be shown to possess the ground of truth. And thus from these origins the ancient builders bequeathed us the established symmetries and proportions for each individual type of architecture.

Vitruvius here states that, through the study of previous Greek forms, Romans will better understand the organic proportions and symmetries of nature and, thereby, ground their building projects within the framework of monumental achievements of the past.

---

18 In her “Introduction” to Vitruvius’ *Ten Books of Architecture* Ingrid Rowland argues that the necessary education of the architect as represented by Vitruvius as being in accord with the liberal arts defines Vitruvius’ architectural ideal, and was not emblematic of the education of Roman architects as this time. She goes on to say that his idea of a liberal arts education stems from the Hellenistic teachings of the Sophists in the later fifth century, who developed this curriculum with the intent to serve their pupils in obtaining leadership in society. Rowland, 1999, 7.


20 Joseph Rykwert postulates in his introduction to his translation of Leon Battista Alberti’s *De Re Aedificatoria* that the main difference between Vitruvius and Alberti is that Vitruvius adheres to antiquated Greek forms over significant architectural innovations being made in his own time, while Alberti incorporates Renaissance innovations stemming from a Classical foundation. In this way, Vitruvius tell his readers how ancient buildings were built, while Alberti instructs his readers on how to use the past to design for the present. Joseph Rykwert, “Introduction,” *Vitruvius’ Ten Books of Architecture*, (1999), x.

21 Vitruvius (1999), IV.2.6.
Through study of the Greek model, Romans will portray inherently “true” forms that align with natural concepts.\textsuperscript{22} The equation of a past Ideal with nature recurs in later treatises as well.

The architectural education that Vitruvius extols hinges extensively on the study of ancient Greek structures. Vitruvius here combines an ideal of practice with the concept of reasoning and judgment:

The architect’s expertise is enhanced by many disciplines and various sorts of specialized knowledge; all the works executed using these other skills are evaluated by his seasoned judgment. This expertise is born both of practice and reasoning. Practice is the constant, repeated exercise of the hands by which the work is brought to completion in whatever medium is required for the proposed design. The reasoning however is what can demonstrate and explain the proportions of completed works skillfully and systematically.\textsuperscript{23}

This coalescence of practice and reasoning reflects, according to Vitruvius, active mental engagement with Greek method and styles. The architect attempts to persuade future patrons to commission buildings informed by proportional studies. In other words, an architect should inform new construction with knowledge of extant Greek architectural examples and ratios. Vitruvius’ emphasis on architectural education reflects the first-century Roman belief that mastery of most any discipline requires extensive study of the Greek past.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} Based on Vitruvius’ adherence to Greek forms, Rowland (1999), 5, posits that he was probably a student of the school of conservative Hellenistic Ionian architecture in Pytheos.

\textsuperscript{23} Vitruvius (1999), I.1.12.

\textsuperscript{24} Rowland, 1999, I.2.1: Throughout his treatise, Vitruvius presents his audience with countless Greek examples, from architectural terms to the successes and failures of Greek urban planning. By stressing the importance of the architect’s ability to learn from the Greek past, Vitruvius presents Greek building prowess as the apex of architectural achievement towards which all Roman architects should aspire.
When prescribing his formulae for architectural achievement, Vitruvius relies on Greek terms to inform the concepts governing construction and practice, “Architecture consists of ordering, which is called \textit{taxis} in Greek, and of design – the Greeks call this \textit{diathesis} – and shapeliness and symmetry and correctness and allocation, which is called \textit{oikonomia} in Greek.”\textsuperscript{25} Vitruvius’ adherence to Greek terminology emphasizes his semantic ideal. Similarly, Vitruvius names the Greek terms best suited to analyze architecture. He states that these concepts, \textit{taxis}, \textit{diathesis}, and \textit{oikonomia} should inform the process of architectural construction.\textsuperscript{26} Vitruvius’ emphasis on purely Greek nomenclature underlines the importance of Greek precedent to the Roman architect. By championing these terms, Vitruvius implies not only the importance of Greek architectural inventions, but also a necessary knowledge of the Greek language and ideals to pursue the discipline of architecture.

Vitruvius concludes Book I with the conditions and foundation necessary to build an ordered and structurally sound city.\textsuperscript{27} He goes on, at the beginning of Book II, to describe the successful completion of Alexandria through the adherence to principles of utility, good allocation of resources, and the well-fortified and secure nature of the city: “There [in Egypt], when Alexander had noticed a naturally secure port, a thriving marketplace, wheat fields all around Egypt, and the great usefulness of the immense river Nile, he ordered Dinocrates to lay out the city of Alexandria in his name.”\textsuperscript{28} This emphasis on the role of the river suggests a parallel with Rome’s own Tiber, implying that Alexandria represents the kind of Greek example that Roman urban planners must

\textsuperscript{25} Vitruvius (1999), I.2.1.  
\textsuperscript{26} Vitruvius (1999), I.2.1.  
\textsuperscript{27} Vitruvius (1999), II.8.10  
\textsuperscript{28} Vitruvius (1999), II.1.4.
study in order for Rome to look equal to its power. Furthermore, Vitruvius cites, other Greek exemplars, including Phrygia and Halicarnassus, to explain how cities embody ideals. 29 Vitruvius thus suggests a dialectic between Greek cities of the past and the modern ambitions for Rome. 30 In alluding the importance of Greek precedent, Vitruvius encourages direct continuity between the prior Greek paradigm and the ambitions of the city of Rome.

By establishing Greek architectural principles as the primary authority governing building practice, Vitruvius defines aesthetics as a set of foundational ideals, especially the concept of associating good design with the proportions of a perfectly formed male body:

When they discovered that for a man, one foot is one sixth of his height, they applied the ratio to this column, and whatever diameter they selected for the base of the column shaft, they carried its shaft, including the capital, to a height six times that amount. Thus the Doric column came to exhibit the proportion, soundness, and attractiveness of the male body. 31

In his references of the ideal male form as perfectly proportioned and anatomically harmonious perfection, Vitruvius implicitly encourages Roman architects to learn from the Greek past. 32 His definitions of architectural types as informed by the proportions of

---

29 Vitruvius (1999), II.8.10.
30 Rowland, 1999, 14, argues that Vitruvius enumerated the “definite achievements of his Hellenic ancestors” throughout his treatise, and that his work represents a canonical Classical framework that adheres to Greek precedent; Rowland, 1999, 3, posits that Vitruvius writes his text during a time of peace and rebirth within the city of Rome, and this calls for new building projects in Rome.
31 Vitruvius (1999), IV.1.6.
the male body later influenced the writing of both Alberti and Winckelmann, among others.

Vitruvius’ admiration for Greek precedent does not distinguish between period styles, such as the Archaic, Classical, or Hellenistic, which are in fact modern names to define the variety within Greek art. Vitruvius’ praise, on the other hand, while defining different proportional systems, makes no acknowledgement of different style: Greekness appears uniform. Octavian-Augustus commissions depart from such a monolithic understanding of Greek art. His commissions, both early and late in his career, incorporate a wide variety of very different looking Greek references. Such eclecticism allows him to reference his legitimate succession, his religious piety, and his future dynasty. Examinations of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus completed in 28 BCE, early in Octavian’s career as patron, and the Ara Pacis Augustae, dedicated in 9 BCE, a mature commission, illustrate how Octavian, later Augustus, combined various Greek styles to articulate his changing ambitions: first consolidating power and propagating his line, while always emphasizing his own piety.³³

Octavian announced his proposal for the Temple of Apollo Palatinus in 36 BCE and officially dedicated said temple in 28 BCE.³⁴ Although little remains of this temple, its foundation, and ancient textual references (including Horace and Propertius), and some ornament survive.³⁵ Excavations on the Palatine in the 1950s and 1960s confirmed

³⁴ Coarelli, 2007, 41.
³⁵ Propertius discusses the dedication of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus in his Elegies, quoted and discussed below, II.31. Horace discusses the dedication of the temple briefly in his odes, I.31.
the location of this temple, although much of the findings of this excavation remain unclear as the excavation reports were never published.\textsuperscript{36}

The temple rose adjacent to Octavian’s own private residence on the Palatine (fig. 2). Octavian commissioned this temple on a plot of earth where he saw lightning strike. The practice of erecting a sanctuary adjacent to a ruler’s imperial residence was originally a Hellenistic practice, which Octavian then adopted to draw an association between himself and his patron deity, Apollo, the god of knowledge, poetry, and proficiency in the arts.\textsuperscript{37} Excavations reveal the plan to be a standard frontal, high podium, Roman type.\textsuperscript{38} Propertius, writing in 25 BCE, describes the Temple of Apollo Palatinus vividly,

Phoebus gold colonnade was opened today by mighty Caesar; such a great sight, adorned with columns from Carthage, and between them the crowd of old Danaus’ daughters. There in the midst, the temple reared in white marble, dearer to Phoebus than his own Ortygian land. Right on the top were two chariots of the Sun, and the doors of Libyan ivory, beautifully done. One mourned the Gauls thrown from Parnassus’ peak, and the other the death, of Niobe, Tantalus’ daughter. Next the Pythian god himself was singing, in flowing robes, between his mother and his sister. He seemed to me more beautiful than the true Phoebus, lips parted in marble song to a silent lyre. And, about the altar, stood four of Myron’s cattle, carved statues of oxen, true to life.\textsuperscript{39}

Coupled with the surviving \textit{opus caementicum} podium, Propertius description signals that Octavian combined a traditional Roman temple plan and his new white Italic marble with

\textsuperscript{37} Zanker, 2002, 49.
\textsuperscript{38} Steven Zink, 2008.
\textsuperscript{39} Propertius, \textit{Elegies}, II.31.
the rich Hellenistic materials of colored marble and gold. The description of the cult statue recalls the Greek Apollo Citharus type (fig. 4). The foundations and one extant fragment of a column drum suggest a hexastyle façade with fluted Corinthian columns and a traditional pediment.40

While Propertius’ description suggests a Hellenistic superstructure on a Roman foundation, sculptural fragments suggest an Archaic Greek precedent. Terracotta reliefs in the Palatine Antiquarium, which would have been painted, show Apollo and Heracles as kouroi fighting over the Delphic tripod (fig. 3). Artist and patron therefore combined the Archaic style with the Hellenistic style, something inconsistent with Greek practice. The conscious use of an old-fashioned style relates to Octavian’s aim of distinguishing himself from Marc Antony.41

The historicizing style of Archaic Greek figural reliefs combined with Hellenistic decoration on a Roman plan defines a rich eclecticism as Octavian contended for head of the Roman state. This combination of styles helped define his values for the Roman public. The close-set spacing of the columns represents a pycnostyle temple type, which Vitruvius ascribes to the Temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Julius Caesar.42 Octavian’s use of the same temple prototype when venerating his own patron deity, Apollo, as Caesar had with his patron, Venus, places Octavian and his architectural program in direct continuity with that of his adopted father. By emulating his predecessor, Octavian asserts his legitimacy as head of the Roman state.

41 Zanker, 2002, 44, argues that the Augustus’ choice to emulate Apollo and Marc Antony’s choice to emulate Dionysus served both men and their images of themselves, and then went so far as to affect the ways each behaved in public. Each attached a specific idea of salvation to each god.
42 Zink, 2008.
To further legitimize himself within a preceding tradition, Octavian combined the attributes of the temple of his adoptive father with Hellenistic richness. The use of the Hellenistic marbles and the elegant refinement of the Corinthian order articulate both the nature of the deity he venerates and his ambition to richly adorn the capital city. The shocking and rare use of the Archaic recalls traditional religion and distinguishes Octavian from Marc Antony, rumored to be indulging in newer and exotic rites in Egypt. Octavian had travelled to Greece to advance his education and, thus, had direct experience with the many styles of Greek architecture. This eclectic styles of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus signify the willingness of Octavian (or of an architect more daring than Vitruvius) to blend a variety of Greek elements into Roman tradition to create an expansive visual language able to define Octavian’s political platform.

Octavian’s dedication of this temple came after he had quelled civil wars in Sicily and, thus, he wished to commemorate his patron deity with a glorious votive funded through his own personal fortune. In *De Architectura*, Vitruvius describes the Greek precedent of temple building to commemorate the peace brought to a city after the citizens had expelled warring tribes. Although Roman generals traditionally thanked their patron deities after victory in battle, this practice also links Octavian’s architectural commission to Greek precedents, especially since he combined so many Greek references, spanning the history of art within a temple to the most Greek of Gods. The Archaic inclusion stands out as particularly unusual and intentional. Not only does it evoke old practices and piety, but the Archaic style speaks to the ordered, rational, abstracting, and poised nature of divinity and, thus, articulates the attributes of Apollo.

---

43. Zanker, 2002, 44-46, states that while Antony associated himself with Dionysus to elaborate on his military victories, this identification ultimately backfired due to the widely-known fact that Antony lived a luxurious and brazen life, in Egypt, neglectful of Rome and its traditions.
himself. The Archaic style of the decoration and ornament within the temple echoes Octavian’s values and ideology as well.⁴⁴

Octavian’s conscious choice to ally himself with Apollo speaks to the significance of the mythic traits and character of Apollo as the embodiment of classical perfection pioneered in the Greek mode of thought. Many extant statues from ancient Greece and their later Roman copies depict Apollo as the ultimate καλός καγαθός (kalos kagathos), or ideal man.⁴⁵ The most famous of these statues, the Apollo Belevedere, represents Apollo with beautiful physical attributes in the moment of using his bow and arrow (fig. 1). Octavian’s choice to embrace Apollo as his patron deity had longstanding effects. By associating himself with Apollo, Octavian instilled within the Roman populace an appreciation for the similarities between the god and himself.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Apollonian association helped place Augustus and his values in direct contention with his political rival, Marc Antony, who had allied himself with Dionysus, the god of drunken revelry and bacchic frenzy. The cult of Dionysus was believed in antiquity to have originated in the east before Dionysus’ adoption into the Greco-Roman pantheon, thus placing Dionysus outside the revered Greco-Roman pantheon. Antony, known for his drinking habits, was living at this time in Egypt and was romantically and politically involved with

---

⁴⁴ Zanker, 2002, 49-50, addresses the attributes and virtues of Apollo that Augustus wished to articulate through the construction of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus and says that Augustus consciously chose to emulate Apollo in public by wearing the laurel wreath and using the symbol of the sphinx on his seal, which symbolized the prophecy of the sibyl and which he thought described his life and accomplishments.

⁴⁵ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Intermediate Greek English Lexicon, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2010, 397, Kalos kagathos is defined as “the beautiful and the good, the noble and the good… used later as a perfect man, a man as he should be, also applied to qualities and actions.”

⁴⁶ Zanker, 2002, 52, argues that after Augustus’ specific alignment with Apollo, over the next twenty years he chose to emphasize the god’s divine will as influencing his decisions and sharing in his military glory. He strove to represent the aspects of the god such as purity, rationality, and discipline.
Cleopatra. Through Apollo, Octavian underlined the stability and intelligence of his rule through association with the Greek divinity in a complete juxtaposition to Antony in Egypt. As Antony associated himself with an eastern divinity and took up residence with a foreign queen, Octavian grounded himself within a tradition of Greek ideals.\footnote{Zanker, 2002, 52-53, argues Augustus associated himself with Roman roots and labeled Antony as addicted to oriental luxury; David Castriota, *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, 3, argues that the ruling Roman class consciously positioned themselves and their legacy as a continuation of Greek “cultural, political, and economic ramifications.”}

If the Temple of Apollo Palatinus represents an early example of Octavian’s use of Greek references to convey meaning, Augustus’ *Ara Pacis* further exemplifies the use of Greek references to advance a Roman message of peace and prosperity under the jurisdiction of Augustus, but it replaces the Archaic with the Classical. Like the Temple of Apollo Palatinus, the *Ara Pacis* illustrates a multiplex comprehension of Greekness in opposition to Vitruvius’ uniform. In 13 BCE the Senate commissioned the *Ara Pacis* to commemorate Augustus’ success at bringing the Roman standards back to Rome from Parthia and the closing of the gates of the Temple of Janus.\footnote{Paul Zanker, *Roman Art*. Los Angeles, CA, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012, 88-91, states that the dedication of the *Ara Pacis* by the Senate represents the new golden age initiated by the reign of Augustus and that it aims to advertise the peace and prosperity of the world under Augustus’ rule.} Consecrated in 9 BCE, the *Ara Pacis* references a series of Greek styles, from the Classical through the Hellenistic. While this variety distinguishes Augustus comprehension from Vitruvius, it also shows that, in Rome, any Greek reference sufficed to recall the achievements of the Greeks.

Located in the northern *Campus Martius* on the east side of the *via Lata* (fig. 5), the Luna marble precinct walls of the *Ara Pacis Augustae* had two openings, one to the
east and one to the west. 49 The actual altar stood in the center of the precinct walls. The monument had a rectangular plan (fig. 6). The east and west walls each have steps leading up to the entrances where wide doorways directed the viewer inside the precinct.

Now reconstructed and repositioned, friezes decorate the entirety of the precinct walls, both on the exterior and the interior. The altar itself measures three meters tall (appx. 10 feet), with the podium measuring 6 x 7 meters (appx. 19.7 x 23 feet). The precinct walls are almost equal in length, with the east and west walls measuring 11 meters (appx. 36 feet) and the north and south walls at 10 meters (appx. 33 feet.) 50 On the exterior of the precinct walls, figural sculpture ornaments the top half; floral motifs decorate the lower half. The symmetrical decorative acanthus that runs around the bottom of the monument derives from Hellenistic art and emphasizes the theme of bounty. 51

Approaching the precinct from the via Lata, the visitor would first see the east wall with its central entrance. The upper half of the east wall depicts two allegories, one on the south side of Pax, the other on the north of Roma, (fig. 7). The identity of the personification in the center of the south side could also potentially represent Terra (the goddess of the land), Tellus (the goddess of the earth), or Venus Genetrix (the patron deity of the Julio-Claudian family). 52 Any of these identities could encompass and

49 Lawrence Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 415. Inside the Aurelian Walls, the road is referred to as the via Lata, but once the road exits the city it becomes the via Flaminia.


51 Castriota, 1995, 14, argues that the precedent for the stylistic acanthus in combination with representations of Roman botanical species can be found in the marble reliefs at Pergamon.

52 Coarelli, 2007, 300-301 argues that the depiction of the female allegory on the east wall represents earth or Tellus, due to the bountiful naturalistic imagery. Richardson, 1995, 288, argues this depiction represents Pax or Italia, in keeping with the Augustan program of peace for Italy. Claridge, 2010, 210-211, argues that this allegory contained a multiplicity of meaning, and could be interpreted as Pax, Tellus, and Venus Genetrix simultaneously.
reference the identities of all of the aforementioned female deities to craft a complex association for the informed viewer. The woman sits in the center of the rectangular frame with two babies on her lap. She faces north to her left or to the viewer’s right. Below the woman, wild animals and floral imagery abound: from left to right are a swan, a cow, a sheep, and a dragon. Her monumental anatomy recalls a Phidean cult statue, her placid gaze and her strong profile suggest poise. She embraces the child on her right as he reaches up to touch her breast. She gazes toward the child on her left as he looks up at her, offering a piece of fruit in his right hand. On either side, sit female personifications of water goddesses or nymphs. Both sit back, upon a swan and a dragon respectively. Each holds a billowing drapery, which covers her legs but not her torso. Both sit with one leg crossed over the other.

In antiquity this relief, as with all the sculpture on the monument, was painted. The central woman probably wore light blue and white, while the robes of the deities on either side of her were light orange for the one to her left atop a swan, and blue with a yellow accent for the dragon rider on the right. Naturalistic muted colors of pale green and sky blue colored the background and plants throughout the composition.

The allegory to the north of the eastern entrance most likely depicted Roma but has been almost entirely lost; she probably wore armor with red accents and with a helmet, shield, and spear. Allegories for honor and virtue, Honos and Virtus might have flanked her.

---

53 Research for the analysis of the color on the *Ara Pacis* was funded by the city of Rome and conducted by researchers from the Vatican Museum. The photographs of the colorized *Ara Pacis* used in this paper come from an event at the Ara Pacis Museum in January, 2017, when color was projected, as it would have been in antiquity onto the corresponding walls.

54 Coarelli, 2007, 301.
Below these panels and, indeed, all along the lower register of the wall, centralized and schematic, the acanthus plants repeat many times. All of the plants would have both been painted in green against a blue ground. Alternating white doves decorate the top of this section once more on a blue ground.

Turning the corner from the east side of the precinct walls, the ancient viewer walked parallel to two representations of processions. The south wall depicts the imperial family moving west to east (fig. 8). Although the southwest corner has been badly damaged, the procession begins here with Augustus followed by at least thirty adult figures and four children. Augustus stood, but the specifics of his pose and attributes are lost. Agrippa follows Augustus. He faces southwest, and has a recognizable portrait. He wears his toga pulled up over the back of his head as a priest. In his right hand, he holds the hand of a child. The child grips his robe and looks to the woman immediately behind Agrippa, suggesting that the child binds the two, making this woman Agrippa’s wife Julia. She is depicted as a religious Roman matron. She wears her robe over her head in an act of piety. Her calm classical face engages with the child. To the east after four other adults are three more imperial children in order of height from left to right. The next child, the shortest, thus, the youngest, holds the hand of the woman to his right. He has a round face, large ears, and almost no hair, defining a near infant. He looks up and off to the west. The next child to the right is taller and older, also dressed in a toga. He holds the drapery of the man standing to his right but looks left to the oldest child. The oldest and tallest child holds one hand at his chest and the other at his side, with a far-off

55 Richardson, 1995, 288, argues that the procession on the other side represents some of the major priesthoods in Rome, with each different man in the attire of his own priesthood. The different priests on this panel again emphasize the piety of the Augustan regime.
expression on his face. He does not hold onto an adult. Though these are more adults than children, the four children all occupy the foreground.\textsuperscript{56}

The subject and Classical style cite the Panathenaic frieze on the Parthenon.\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{Ara Pacis} procession, however, defines through inclusion of specific portraits and numerous children, both of which convert an Athenian democratic display into an imperial dynastic paradigm.\textsuperscript{58} The procession defines Augustus and Rome as a direct descendent of Periclean Athens, but also specific and new.

Walking parallel to the imperial family on the north wall are Roman priests heading towards the east (fig. 9). The northeast corner of the northern wall is badly damaged, but the remaining expanse depicts a procession of at least thirty-eight curule magistrates, lictors, and generals in traditional attire and wearing laurel wreaths. Depending upon rank, each man wears a different type of toga: the curule magistrates wore the \textit{toga praetexta}, a toga with white drapery and a sash in a purple and red tone; the traditional toga and the fasces represent the accessories of lictors, while the generals wear the red \textit{toga picta}, Individualized, but now unknown by name, the over twenty men represent the entire priesthood of Rome at the time of Augustus. By placing the priesthoods parallel the Julio-Claudians, the designer once more underlines piety. The mix of Roman verism with the portraits of Classical calm faces all on contrapposto bodies projects an image of a Rome descended from Greece.

Turning the corner from either procession, the ancient viewer encountered depictions of legends relating to the foundation of Rome: Mars, Romulus, and Remus on

\textsuperscript{56} Projection mapping reveals that the artists probably painted Augustus’ toga in dark red, while Agrippa wore a white toga with a red sash. Julia wore light blue. The women wore, in succession, red, green, and yellow.

\textsuperscript{57} Nancy and Andrew Ramage \textit{Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine}. Pearson, 2015, 94.

\textsuperscript{58} Ramage, 2015, 94.
the northwest corner, and Aeneas sacrificing on the southwest corner. The senatorial procession turned toward the badly damaged northwest corner, which probably also depicted the she-wolf with the naked twins, all shown a realistic skin tone. Carved and painted imagery depicting trees and an eagle possibly filled the composition. In the south corner of the panel the shepherd from the legend of Romulus and Remus might have stood. Across the portal, abutting the imperial family procession, the west wall depicts Aeneas in a sacrificial scene. Right of the central axis, with his back to the Julio-Claudians but facing the same direction, stands Aeneas. His head is covered and he faces two boys to his right, who wear white tunics and laurel wreaths and accompany a pig for sacrifice. One youth might represent Ascanius, Aeneas’ son. Behind the boys a temple building appears on a hill. Behind Aeneas stood a man, now badly damaged, possibly Aeneas’ father, Anchises. Dark red colored Aeneas’ toga. The naturalistic imagery would consist of blue, green, and brown tones.

By having the two processions representing present-day Rome turn the corner into the past, the designer visually linked Augustus with the roots of Roman piety (Aeneas) and might (Romulus). The pose of Aeneas reflects that of the much-damaged Augustus as both men prepare to sacrifice. Flanking the entrance, Aeneas (as with Augustus, before him in the experience of the *Ara Pacis*), instructs the Roman visitor to venerate the gods and behave according to Roman traditional values. (fig. 10) The style of the two east wall panels reflects the rest of the exterior. The interior presents a departure from these themes and meaning.

Unlike the exterior, the interior of the precinct walls has one unified subject: a permanent representation of an ephemeral shrine. A repeating pattern of *bucrania*, (bull’s
skulls) with naturalistic garlands (fruit, flowers, and leaves) represented bounty hanging from the taller posts of the fence. Circular *patera* (libation bowls) decorate the space above these garlands, most likely suspended by painted ribbons. Rectangular insets, or posts, evoking a picket fence, run around the entire interior. Palmettes cap this fence.

In the center of this precinct, the altar sits on a podium of four large steps, while three smaller steps lead up to the altar. Pairs of volutes ornament the shorter sides of the altar. Beneath these volutes are images of men leading animals to sacrifice. Sphinxes support each corner of the altar. As noted, the interior depicts, in stone and paint, the appearance of early Italic sacred shrines. By representing an ephemeral indigenous construction as permanent, marble, and naturalistic, the interior evokes the century-long process of transforming the transient Italic into a classicizing Greek language, as best known in the development of the Roman temple type.

On the *Ara Pacis*, therefore, Augustus and his artists mixed Italic elements with Classical and some Hellenistic style (the acanthus frieze) to communicate a state rooted in Italic tradition, Classical refinement, and Hellenistic wealth. Greece equals endurance and elegance. Above all, the *Ara Pacis* underlines the importance of piety in the newly renovated “Republic” under the jurisdiction of Augustus; it combines a Roman core (the ephemeral shrine) with Greek refinement (the marble and sculptural styles). The interior of the *Ara Pacis* depicts the type of sacrificial sanctuary used in Italy prior to

---

59 The *patera* motif was popular under Augustus, and was also probably used in the statue of Augustus as Priest, Zanker, 2002, 68. Coarelli, 2007, 301, also interprets these suspended objects on the interior frieze as *paterae*.

60 Zanker, 2002, 115-117 discusses the shift from real religious festivals to their depiction in stone. These reliefs recall early Italic sacrifice in sacred groves and thereby situate Augustus’ piety within a longer tradition of ritual sacrifice.


62 Ramage, 2015, 25.
Hellenization. Bucrania, however, originated as a Greek motif; the Greek βουκρανιον (boukranion) thus suggests a continuity, a link, between Roman and Greek piety.

Originally used to decorate the metopes amidst the triglyphs of Doric temples, the Romans later adapted this symbol, adding garlands and fruit to emphasize bounty and prosperity. By creating a permanent representation of a lost Italic past on the interior of this altar, Augustus preserves the indigenous at the same time as he elevates it through Greek references. This depiction of the importance of ritual and piety in Rome informs the viewer of Augustus’ commitment to religious tradition. While the Italian core combines references to the Greek world with the Roman, the exterior encloses the local in an idealized intervention that elevates contemporary Rome to equal the idealized Greek past.

Just as the interior of the Ara Pacis speaks to the piety of the Augustan regime, the exterior of the precinct represents the continuity of old traditional values with a new imperial wealth and dynastic aspiration. As noted, the south side relief portraying the imperial family echoes the Panathenaic frieze at the Parthenon. However, instead of depicting anonymous citizens, Augustus’ artists alter this composition to represent his own family. While the Athenian model represents almost only adults, the Augustan commission stresses generations, thus outlining both the importance of traditional family values as exemplified by Augustus’ own imperial descendants and the emergence of a dynasty.

---

63 Richardson, 1995, 288.
64 Coarelli, 2007, 301, discusses the blend of Greek and Roman elements on the altar to exemplify an eclectic style combining Greek with Italic elements.
65 Ramage, 2015, 91.
Along with personal familial decorum, Augustus displays the cultural connection between his family and the senatorial tradition by presenting the two processions as parallel. Through this comparison, Augustus positions his relationship to Roman citizens as a sort of familial bond akin to that within his own family. As the *pater patriae*, or father of the country, Augustus wishes to impress upon Roman citizens that he will protect and care for them as he does for his own wife and children. This visual parallel between the imperial family and the Roman governing class signifies the kinship of the greater Roman community, which extends past the imperial family and through all the territories conquered and then incorporated into the Roman Empire.

While the processions reference a Classical Greek model, the legendary and allegorical figures combine the Classical with later Greek styles. The depiction of *Roma* on the east wall reflects the personification of cities in Hellenistic art. The motif of the city as a goddess comes from the Greek τυχη (tyche) meaning luck or chance. The original meaning of the Greek term indicates the role of this deity as embodying the fate or fortune of the city. Veneration of the personification of a city stems from a popular trend in the Hellenistic age. Within the increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic makeup of Hellenistic cities, city personification served as a source of common ground or shared interest between people of different heritage, now living together. The depiction of the goddess Roma on the east wall of the altar utilizes this Hellenistic tradition to instill the same sense of a common goal within Romans arriving from distant places in the Empire.

---

66 Liddell and Scott, 2010, 825, define τυχη as “what man obtains from the gods: good fortune, luck; luck that is a thing common to all; divine providence.”
along the *via Lata*. The altar unified residents of the city with visitors arriving on the *via Flaminia* in the cult of Roma.\(^6^7\)

Roma’s partner on the east wall, the allegory of Pax, Tellus, or Terra sits amidst bountiful and naturalistic imagery. Pax here serves as a new, Roman version of the Tyche motif; Rome, as just noted, constituted the nexus of a vastly expanding empire, and, unlike the *poleis* of ancient Greece, Rome maintained absolute power over the neighboring territories under her control. Pairing Roma with Pax, Augustus linked the shared fortune of the city with the entirety of the empire. Instead of propagating only allegiance to the city, the depiction of Pax as an ideal Classical Greek goddess type speaks to the peace and prosperity throughout the Roman Empire. Augustus and his artists here coordinate the Hellenistic Tyche motif with a monumental Phidean form to craft an ideal that transcends the traditional city-state model to a pan-imperial type. This pan-imperial language relates to the shared connection between all people under the jurisdiction of Augustus and under the wider geographical umbrella of the Roman Empire.

The acanthus of the *Ara Pacis* has a complex iconographic scheme that should not be disregarded as a simple depiction of earthly bounty and abundance. The dense floral and naturalistic imagery on exterior of the *Ara Pacis* originate in Hellenistic tradition.\(^6^8\) Augustus’ choice to incorporate these Hellenistic elements suggests that he understood the power of Hellenistic wealth and sophistication. The floral motif was an international style found throughout the Empire and thus binding it together. Furthermore, the use of

\(^{6^7}\) Pieter Broucke, “Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Roman World,” *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 1994, 44, argues in *Tyche and the Fortune of Cities in the Greek and Roman World* that Tyche served as a civic deity around which people from geographically distant places within the Roman Empire could rally together.

\(^{6^8}\) Castriota, 1995, 14.
floral imagery on the exterior of the *Ara Pacis* constitutes a direct continuation of the Greek concept of metonymy in art, the representation of a divinity solely through his or her attributes.\(^6^9\) Within the iconographic program of the *Ara Pacis* itself, the floral imagery does not only represent fertility and bounty, but also invokes the presence of the gods and goddesses whose sacred attributes relate. Specifically, these floral reliefs could reference the altar of Zeus at Pergamon, located in modern Turkey.\(^7^0\) The relief sculpture on the altar of Zeus combines floral imagery, the metonymms, and images of divinities to depict the universal concord of the gods, referred to in ancient Greek as *homonia*.\(^7^1\) The *Ara Pacis* might adapt this concept of *homonoia* and its Hellenistic precedent to designate the peace under Augustus as overarching the Empire and reflecting divine harmony. The iconographic program on the *Ara Pacis* illustrates the notion that, through the *homonoia* of the gods, in combination with the *Pax Augusta*, Augustus has returned peace and prosperity to all Roman citizens. By elaborating on the meaning previously established through Greek interpretations of metonymy, Augustus and his artists used this classical vernacular, while simultaneously enhancing his own iconographic message.\(^7^2\)

The use of Greek tropes and themes defines newly-renovated Roman society as the heir to Greek culture. The composition of the *Ara Pacis* draws from indigenous ephemeral architecture, Roman portraits, Phidean figures, Hellenistic allegories and pan-

---

\(^6^9\) Castriota, 1995, 26, defines metonymy as a form of representation in which a motif associated with a figure or divinity stands for the presence of that divinity entirely. The symbol relies on the spectator’s experience with the imagery, thus allowing the motif to completely stand for the divinity.

\(^7^0\) Castriota, 1995, 14-15.

\(^7^1\) Castriota argues that the concept of *homonoia* comes from Greek works, especially the altar at Pergamon. Like many other scholars, he accepts the idea of the golden age, or *aurea aetas*, as a major theme in Augustan literature and art. The golden age consists of abundance and virtue: or abundance brought by Augustan virtue. This golden age, predicted by the Cumean Sibyl, provides harmony between both gods and men, resulting in the earth’s natural abundance, 1995, 17-21.

\(^7^2\) Castriota, 1995, 28.
Hellenic ornament to emphasize the continuity and legitimacy of Roman values within a Greek framework. By merging the Greek past with the Roman past, present, and future, the *Ara Pacis* exemplifies the new visual and iconographic language instituted by Augustus to define his rule as a new golden age standing upon that of Greece.

Therefore, the styles of the sculpture on the *Ara Pacis Augustae* defined Augustan Rome as a continuation of the virtue and achievements of the ancient Greeks, while enhancing legibility. The *Ara Pacis* was first and foremost a public monument, and the people who would have viewed it would have ranged in education and knowledge of ancient art. By using themes and motifs common throughout the classical world, Augustus ensured that his people would understand his message and his moral code. The utilization of pre-existing imagery for abundance, prosperity, and peace facilitated the Augustan viewer’s active engagement with this monument in an artistic language that they would have already understood. By adapting previously Greek themes to a Roman sensibility, Augustus acknowledged the importance of roots, yet also ushered in a new age governed by the *homonoia* of gods and men.

The architectural styles used in the building of the Temple of Apollo Palatinus and the *Ara Pacis Augustae* represent a contradiction from a range of eclectic Greek styles beginning with the Archaic and running through the Hellenistic to a reliance on the Classical. This visible shift might suggest a conscious development in Roman style to better communicate Augustus’ mission and desired image. Through the predominance of Classical motifs and tropes in the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, Augustus debuts a recognizably Roman style with a specific Classical foundation that is entirely his own. While the Temple of Apollo Palatinus represents a first attempt at an architectural and artistic
program grounded within Greek precedent, the *Ara Pacis Augustae* represents a more mature and focused commission.

The reception of the complex impact of Greek modes and forms on Roman art, such as the Temple of Apollo Palatinus and the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, appears, written by Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), before 77 BCE. As a wealthy man in the equestrian class, Pliny held many official positions throughout his lifetime,\(^7^3\) from an officer in Germany to a financial counselor in the imperial court. The *Natural History* represents the earliest encyclopedia-like text within the Classical tradition, and many parts derive from pre-existing documents written and consolidated by other authors.\(^7^4\) Roman unification of the Mediterranean represented the catalyst for such a text. Pliny believed that the Roman Empire merged many different locations and cultures, and opened up the known world for meticulous study.\(^7^5\) Pliny’s conception of as uniting the world emerges throughout his text, as he consistently refers to the primacy of Italic peoples and the impact of their achievements over time.

Pliny devotes his thirty-fifth book to the study of artistic methods, practices, and materials. Pliny discusses painting, modeling, and metalwork among others. Pliny’s opinion of contemporary art practice is colored by his belief that Roman society has declined due to excesses and luxury. In this manner, he champions earlier work and calls attention to the trivialities in Flavian work. Pliny discusses an Ideal early on in this chapter:

---

\(^7^3\) Trevor Murphy, *Pliny the Elder’s Natural History, an Empire in the Encyclopedia*, Oxford University Press, 2009, 3.
\(^7^4\) Murphy, 2009, 5.
\(^7^5\) Murphy, 2009, 5, argues that Pliny presents his findings in the *Natural History* as a consolidation of knowledge available to him through the triumph of the Roman Empire, and that Pliny characterizes his work with a sense of “Roman triumphalism.”
There is a new invention too, which we must not omit to notice. Not only do we consecrate in our libraries, in gold or silver, or at all events, in bronze, those whose immortal spirits hold converse with us in those places, but we even go so far as to reproduce the ideal of features, all remembrance of which has ceased to exist; and our regrets give existence to likenesses that have not been transmitted to us, as in the case of Homer, for example.\footnote{Pliny, \textit{The Natural History}. London, W. Heinmann, 1952, 35.2.}

Unexpectedly, Pliny bemoans the existence of or search for an Ideal, stating that in depicting an Ideal, artists create images that have never existed. This negative conception of the contemporary search for an Ideal harmonizes with Pliny’s observations on excess throughout the Roman Empire.

While Pliny admonishes artists for representing an Ideal with Greek origin, as implied by his reference to Homer, he heralds the ingenuity of Italian craftsmanship and innovation. When discussing the origin of painting, Pliny dismisses Greek claims, and instead, attributes this discovery to the Italians:

But already, in fact, had the art of painting been perfectly developed in Italy. At all events, there are extant in the temples at Ardea, at this day, paintings of greater antiquity than Rome itself; in which, in my opinion, nothing is more marvelous, than that they should have remained so long unprotected by a roof, and yet preserving their freshness.\footnote{Pliny, \textit{The Natural History}. 1952, 35.6.}

By citing an Italian masterpiece, Pliny calls attention to the innovation and primacy of the Italians over the Greeks. In this description of art, Pliny conspicuously neglects the elevation of a Greek prototype in favor of attributing artistic talent and skill to Italians. In
stating that these artistic interventions predate the foundation of Rome, Pliny emphasizes Italian legacy as an influential concept.  

Along with Italian authority in painting, Pliny goes on to describe Italian primacy within many of the other arts, specifically modeling. He speaks to this point:

He [Varro] states that the art of modeling was anciently cultivated in Italy, Etruria in particular; and that Volcanius was summoned from Veii, and entrusted by Tarquinius Priscus with making the figure of Jupiter, which he intended to consecrate in the Capitol; that this Jupiter was made of clay, and that hence arose the custom of painting it with minium.

In asserting an Italian claim to the art of modeling as well, Pliny disregards the idea of the Greek inception of the sculptural arts. Pliny quotes Varro in reference to this concept to assert the validity and longevity of his claim. Although this observation may be false, the significance of this statement sheds light on the Roman perception of artistry within Pliny’s time. Here Pliny presents contemporaneous views as in line with his own and so emphasizes Italian dexterity over Greek artistic modes. Furthermore, by referencing modeling, not carving, he seems to distinguish an Italo-Etruscan school of sculpture from the stone sculpture of Greece. Pliny’s emphasis on Italian primacy does not concur with Vitruvius’ text, in which Greek forms represent the highest mode of representation and artistic ability. In a sense then, both practice in Augustus’ commissions and critique in in Pliny’s text distance themselves from Vitruvius’ Greek Ideal, suggesting a growing confidence as the Empire stabilized.

---

78 Francesco De Angelis, “Pliny the Elder and the Identity of Roman Art,” Res, no. 53/53, Spring/Autumn, 2008, 83, argues that Pliny intentionally focuses on Italian and Roman achievements to assert the cultural primacy of Italy, and that for Pliny Italy and Rome are grouped together to form a conglomerate of a triumphant past.  

79 Pliny, 35.45.
Roman texts and art, therefore, present a dynamic and complex relationship between a Greek foundation and a new Roman sensibility informed by but somewhat resistant to the Greek paradigm. Although both Vitruvius and Augustus rely on and elevate Greek precedent, Vitruvius implies that Greek architectural practice supersedes Roman interventions in terms of style and meaning, while Augustus integrates many Greek styles and motifs with traditional Italic elements to send a new message of Roman achievement, an architecture which incorporates but elaborates on the Greek. Pliny writes in a defiant tone, emphasizing Italian primacy over Greek invention. In this way, practice (the commissions of Augustus), and reception (Pliny’s later theory), do not conform with Vitruvius’ unyielding reverence to Greek form. This discrepancy between theory, practice, and reception represents a complex dialogue informed in part by knowledge of the specifics.

The understanding of the Greek Ideal within Roman antiquity does not represent the Ideal so much as one ideal, or model, to be studied or used depending on the intent. In the tumultuous late Republic, Vitruvius advocated for a calm Greek Ideal; in the emerging Empire Augustus integrated Greek styles to convey his politics of unity; while Pliny, a confident citizen of the diverse Empire, rejected Greek to reassert Rome. As temporal and spatial distance from ancient Greece expanded, so too did the diversity of appreciation and application.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RENAISSANCE IDEA OF GREECE

The enduring but amorphous concept of an ancient ideal associated with the achievements of ancient Greece reemerged to affect the work of thinkers and artists of the Renaissance, first in Florence and then in Rome. This chapter focuses primarily on Florentine citizens who resided in the city of Rome, a site which allowed them greater access to antique artifacts. Unlike their ancient Roman predecessors, these men, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520), and Giogio Vasari (1511-1574), did not have the opportunity to travel to Greece but knew of Greek art through the texts of Vitruvius and Pliny, coupled with the fragmentary remains associated with Greece. This chapter begins by defining Leon Battista Alberti’s prescription for an ancient prototype in two treatises on visual art, *De Pictura* (1435), and *De Re Aedificatoria* (1450), then proceeds to analyze antiquities influencing his prescriptive work before discussing his impact on the Roman work of Michelangelo and Raphael. The chapter concludes with Giogio Vasari (1511-1574) and his response of Michelangelo and Raphael in relationship to an ancient Ideal.

---

81 Although Alberti has another, later, treatise concerning sculptural practice, an English translation of this work from the original Latin was not available. Rudolf Wittkower references the text of *De Statua* in his *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, Penguin Books, 1995, 82, but essentially, due to the linguistic barrier, it has not been studied in this project.
82 While *De Pictura* was published soon after its completion by the author, *De Statua* was not published until 1464, long after the work was completed. Grafton, 2000, 9.
The discovery of a manuscript of Vitruvius by Poggio Bracciolini in 1414 sets the stage for Alberti’s writings. In emulation of this Roman text, Alberti set an antique precedent on high but did not differentiate between Greek and Roman artistic and cultural achievements. Alberti’s reliance on fragmentary Roman texts (Vitruvius and Pliny) and remains actually produced a broadening of the theoretical impression of Greek art than that found in Vitruvius. Though structurally modeled on Vitruvius’ ancient text, *De Re Aedificatoria*’s content also reflects Pliny’s text, with emphasis on the antiquity of Italic styles and elements alongside Greek modes. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Roman theory, understood through the writings of Vitruvius, presented a narrow view of ancient Greece, even as Roman art celebrated a complex and multifaceted response. With knowledge now limited to Roman fragments, often mistaken as echoing Greek, Renaissance theorists (represented here by Alberti) and artists, such as Michelangelo and Raphael, created an even more idiosyncratic visualization of antiquity, which, nevertheless, was still critiqued in texts on emulating the originals.

Unlike Vitruvius, Alberti’s vision of antiquity did not strictly advance Greek types. Alberti’s writing reveres both Greek and Roman art equally as an antique Ideal.

---

84 John Onians states in his text, *Bearers of Meaning*, that Poggio Bracciolini was part of a group of Humanists who actively searched for ancient manuscripts and found Vitruvius among others, Princeton University Press, 1990, 131.
85 Richard Krautheimer stresses Alberti’s theoretical approach to art and architecture in *Early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance Art*; he argues that the basis for this theoretical approach resides in Alberti’s Humanist education, University of London Press, 1971, 265.
86 Francesco De Angelis calls attention to Pliny the Elder’s lack of distinction between Greek and Italic spheres of reference and instead coalesces these two into one geographical idea, “Pliny the Elder and the Identity of Roman Art,” *Res*, no. 53/54, Spring/Autumn, 2008, 83.
87 Moses Hadas argues in his text *Humanism: The Greek Ideal and Its Survival*, that the sensibility which Humanists shared with Greeks and Romans first and foremost took the form of studies in antiquarianism. Just as the Humanists believed that the study of the antique legitimized their own cultural projects, the ancient Greeks and Romans both concerned themselves with the shared tastes of man through time, grounding cultural projects within a framework dependent upon the universal importance of the human condition, Gloucester, MA, P. Smith, 1882, 12.
Alberti explicitly refrains from making a distinction between Greek and Roman and, instead, refers to the artists of antiquity as “ancestors” or “ancients.” Alberti’s aims to compose a paradigm for modern artists to build upon to equal or surpass their revered ancestors. Alberti, as opposed to Vitruvius, prescribes a progression, not a recession. He states, “Rather, inspired by their example, we should strive to produce our own inventions, to rival, or, if possible, to surpass the glory of theirs.” In this sense, the Albertian Ideal represents a frame of mind informed by antique practice, which provides a foundation for further inquiry and invention.

A Humanist, Alberti wrote on poetry, law, rhetoric, grammar, Classical education, and cryptography. He also produced three prescriptive artistic treatises, *De Pictura*, *De Re Aedificatoria*, and *De Statua*. the first of their kind since antiquity. He would also eventually design buildings but never practice painting and sculpture. This chapter explicates Alberti’s definition of an antique Ideal before analyzing the impact of his

---

88 Alberti begins *De Re Aedificatoria* with this note, “We shall collect, compare, and extract into our own work all the soundest and most useful advice that our learned ancestors have handed down to us in writing…” Joseph Rykwert, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, MIT Press, 1999, I.1.

89 Grafton argues that, throughout his texts, Alberti admonished against direct and complete imitation of the ancients, and, rather, that he encouraged his contemporaries to study actual artifacts to provide for a deeper understanding of the antique as it applied directly to contemporary thought and discourse, 2000, 12.


91 Grafton argues that Alberti desired to redefine the relationship between artist and patron. Instead of propagating an antique patronage system where the artist remains unknown and heels to the stylistic desires of his patron, Alberti advocates for a novel construction of the patronage system wherein the artist can master his art in his own right and with his own name through the funding of a patron, 2000, 139.

92 Grafton outlines the many professional pursuits undertaken by Alberti, among them those listed above. However, Alberti preferred to study the visual arts and record his ideas through writing, 2000, 7.
principles on the work of Michelangelo and Raphael for Julius II, who expected them to respond to and to surpass antiquity.\textsuperscript{93}

Alberti had a broad background in the study of Classical texts and utilized this foundation to inform his treatises. Born in Genoa in 1404, the illegitimate son of an exiled Florentine merchant, Leon Battista Alberti was educated in the Classics from a young age.\textsuperscript{94} He then studied law at the University of Bologna. In the early 1430s, he entered the papal curia, where he wrote in Latin for senior members of the court. During the mid 1430s, he moved to Florence with Eugenius IV, and, upon seeing his native city-state for the first time, he was impressed, and his attention turned to its art. During this time, his literary career gained acclaim within Italy and around Europe. Alberti composed his treatises on Florentine painting, first in Latin and then in Italian.\textsuperscript{95} Then, returning to Rome many times between 1434 and his death in 1472, he became one of the leading experts on ancient remains by comparing textual fragments with extant archaeological artifacts, and eventually wrote his \textit{magnum opus}, \textit{De Re Aedificatoria}, in direct rivalry with Vitruvius. Taken together, \textit{De Pictura} and \textit{De Re Aedificatoria} bring the relevance of antique thought and practice into contemporary theory.\textsuperscript{96}

In his books on painting and architecture, Alberti emphasizes the importance of studying the practice and monuments of the ancients.\textsuperscript{97} He states, “Many and various arts, which help to make the course of our life more agreeable and cheerful, were handed down to us by our ancestors, who had acquired them by much effort and care. All of them

\textsuperscript{94} Grafton emphasizes that Alberti’s study of the antique endured throughout his entire life. 2000, 6.
\textsuperscript{95} Grafton 2000, 7.
\textsuperscript{96} Rykwert, 1999, ix.
\textsuperscript{97} KRAUTHEIMER, 1971, 265.
seem to compete to one end, to be of the greatest possible use to humanity.” Alberti’s texts all encourage practitioners to integrate Classical proportion and form with the study of nature to best suit their use. For Alberti, Nature is revered as and in place of divinity. In *Della Pictura* he ascribes the production of talent to Nature, “Thus I believed, as many said, that Nature, the mistress of things, had grown old and tired. She no longer produced either geniuses or giants which in her more youthful and more glorious days she had produced so marvelously and abundantly.” In *De Re Aedificatoria*, he again references nature as a supreme divinity, “For so great is Nature’s strength that, although on occasion some huge obstacle may obstruct her, or some barrier divert her, she will always overcome and destroy any opposition or impediment.” Within his two treatises, antiquity, and nature govern all modes of artistic practice. Alberti’s art theory represents some of the earliest modern art criticism, as he challenges his readers to engage with aesthetic material and think critically about form and content. He defines antique style its potential to convey meaning:

> We shall collect, compare, and extract into our own work all the soundest and most useful advice that our learned ancestors have handed down to us in writing, and whatever we ourselves have noted in the very execution of their works. We shall go on to report things contrived by own our invention, by careful, painstaking investigation, things we consider to be of some future use.

---

100 Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, 1999, II.2.
101 Carroll Westfall argues in “Society, Beauty, and the Humanist Architect in Alberti’s De Re Aedificatoria” that Alberti’s approach within his prescriptive texts was to emphasize the memory and experience of the artist and the importance of a Humanist analysis of cultural artifacts. This technique relied on a visceral experience with the art studied in order to best inform interpretation, *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 16, 1969, 61.
102 Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, 1999, I.1
In spite of Alberti’s veneration of the Classical, he adjusts ancient ideals to a quattrocento framework. Proportion reflects divinity recurs as a supreme authority governing all modes of artistic practice, an idea also held by Pliny and Vitruvius. Mathematical ratios convey the meaning in nature. In this way, Alberti’s “Ideal” presents itself not so much as imitation of antiquity, but rather as an adoption of the same natural proportions used by the artists and architects of antiquity, and still relevant into his day.

Alberti’s earliest artistic treatise, the Latin *De Pictura* (1435) lays the foundation for his sequential texts through its emphasis on mathematics to ground the study of proportion. Alberti writes:

> Things which are proportional to each other correspond in very part, but where they are different and the parts do not correspond they are certainly not proportional. As I have said, the parts of the visual triangle are rays. These will be equal, as to number, in proportionate qualities and unequal in non-proportional, because one of the non-proportional quantities will occupy more or less rays.

---

103 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, Academy Editions, 1998, 32, argues that Alberti focuses on the translation of antique architecture into more modern and functional forms to preserve the meaning and thought established by the ancients yet Alberti adjusts this meaning to serve his functional and utilitarian purpose.

104 Wittkower analyzes how Alberti believes in the ability of antique monuments and sculpture to provoke a feeling of awe within the viewer through the use of mathematical ratios and proportions, such as the Golden Ratio, 1998, 25. He quotes Alberti here, “Just as in music, where deep voices answer higher ones, and intermediate ones are pitched between them, and they ring out in harmony, a wonderfully sonorous balance of proportions results, which increases the pleasure of the audience and captivates them; so it happens with everything else that serves to enchant and move the mind,” *De Re*, 1999, I.9.

105 The original Latin version of *De Pictura* was published in 1435, with a version translated into Italian published the following year in 1436, Grafton, 2000, 71.

106 Alberti, *De Pictura*, 1977, I.33
Alberti’s use of proportion within his treatise on painting grounds rather convoluted concepts of optics (visual rays). In his emphasis on proportion, he echoes Vitruvius’ ancient example of the ideal man, as architectural prototype. Similarly, Alberti’s mathematical concepts rely on the study of geometry and the proportions preserved through in the mathematical writings of Greek antiquity, specifically Pythagoras (570 – 495 BCE). A document containing a consolidation of Pythagoras’ principles and thought does not survive, his work is known through other ancient sources. The Pythagorean theories position numbers as a transcendent, divine entity. Alberti thus grounds his ideas on proportion within a larger paradigm of ancient Greek thought which derived from the natural world through the measurement of organic forms.

Through Pythagorean proportion, Alberti and his ancient instructors integrated nature and artistic Ideal: “I will first take from the mathematicians those things with which my subject is concerned. When they are understood, I will enlarge on the art of painting from its first principles in nature in so far as I am able.” Although Alberti here acknowledges the importance of mathematic and natural principles, he does not explicitly cite any source.

The importance of proportion and geometry in De Pictura reemerge amplified in Alberti’s treatise on architecture, De Re Aedificatoria. This work constitutes a direct

107 Rudolf Wittkower cites Plato’s adaption of these concepts in his Timaeus to illustrate the propagation of the a the mathematics of Pythagoras as a means to define the relation of man and the earth, and to establish a view of the world as inherently based upon numerical relationships, Idea and Image: Studies in the Italian Renaissance, Thames and Hudson, 1982, 111.
108 Wittkower states in his text Idea and Image that Pythagoras applied his theoretical geometric proofs to natural processes and phenomena, and from that point believed that the foundation and framework of the cosmos was built on numerical relationships in ratio and proportion, 1982, 110.
110 Krautheimer believes that Alberti thought of ancient architecture as based on organic form through nature. Alberti posited the organic evolution of architecture in ancient Greece to best assume both a utilitarian and reverent religious role, 1971, 264.
response to Vitruvius’ *Ten Books on Architecture*, rediscovered in 1414. Much like Vitruvius, Alberti divides this text into ten books. However, Alberti presents this text as a corrective:

> For I grieved that so many works of such brilliant writers had been destroyed by the hostility of time and man, and that almost the sole survivor from this vast shipwreck is Vitruvius, an author of unquestioned experience, though one whose writings have been so corrupted by time that there are many omissions and shortcomings. What he handed down was in any case not refined, and his speech such that the Latins might think he wanted to appear a Greek, while the Greeks would think that he babbled Latin. However, his very text is evidence that he wrote neither Latin nor Greek, so that as far as we are concerned he might just as well not have written at all, rather than write something we cannot understand.

In stating that Vitruvius “wrote neither Latin nor Greek,” Alberti here suggests that, through his reliance on Greek precedent and vocabulary, Vitruvius wrote a text that is incomprehensible to both Roman and Renaissance audiences. Although upon first glance this critique appears only to apply only to syntax, Alberti’s critique of Vitruvius cuts deeper to imply that Vitruvius’ syntax represents his blind adoration for Greek terminology. Alberti condemns Vitruvius for his conservative adherence to Greek forms by saying, “the Latins might think he wanted to appear a Greek.” In critiquing Vitruvius, Alberti presents his own work as a prescriptive architectural text meant to rival the work of the ancients he so reveres.

---

111 Krautheimer, 1971, 265, illustrates that although Alberti structured his treatise on architecture with the Vitruvian model in mind, Alberti elaborates upon concepts that Vitruvius only touches upon. Above all Alberti stresses the historical conception of architecture that Vitruvius mentions briefly.
112 Rywert, 1999, ix.
113 Alberti 1999, VI.1
Similarly, when referencing mathematical concepts, Alberti argues that these theoretical concepts can be improved upon through a modern study of actual ancient Roman architectural practice: “All that we have mentioned so far is derived partly from Pliny, but principally from Vitruvius. I shall now refer to information that I have been able to gather myself… by careful and diligent inspection of the works of the ancients. And, I must confess, I have learned more on my own than I have from the author of any book.” Alberti thus acknowledges the necessity to modify his literary foundation with observation of physical remains, which consequently moves his prescription away from actual Greek style, as prescribed by Vitruvius:

Ancient architects closely followed nature’s example in their desire not to appear to deviate too far from common ways of building; at the same time they took every possible care to ensure that their work would not only be appropriate to its use and structurally sound, but also delightful in appearance.

Alberti’s Ideal not as a static concept developed by the Greeks, but as an evolving paradigm that leads to the architectural interventions found in the city of Rome itself. Alberti also proposes that while sound, permanent, and beautiful architecture rests on ancient concepts, the practice of architecture is not abstract and, therefore, that modern architects have much to gain from study of surviving monuments. These antiquities, however, would be Roman and thus result in further departures from Vitruvius’ Greek bias. While Vitruvius defines a column as a necessary part of a sound temple, “Above

---

114 Alberti, 1999, III.16
115 Krautheimer, 1971, 265, argues that, instead of asserting the prominence of Greek art over Roman art, Alberti views the architectural remains found in Rome as the zenith of classical creativity and pays homage to the Greeks by alluding to the origins of this tradition.
116 Alberti, 1999, I.10
117 Krautheimer, 1971, 266, states that Alberti’s reliance on extant architectural remains positioned the history of architecture as a logical evolution concluding with his own time.
ground level, walls should be constructed underneath the columns, half again as thick as
the columns are to be, so that the lower part of the building will be more stable than the
upper parts.”\textsuperscript{118} Alberti strays from this model and defines a column as ornament.\textsuperscript{119} In
his definition, Alberti writes, “In the whole art of building the column is the principal
ornament without any doubt; it may be set in combination, to adorn a portico, wall, or
other form of opening, nor is it unbecoming when standing alone… It has grace, it
confers dignity.”\textsuperscript{120} This description represents a strictly Roman use, which, due to
Alberti’s proclamation, proliferates in the Renaissance. Similarly, Vitruvius writes
regarding the façade of an ancient house, “Those buildings that have been laid out on
ground level will be sound until old age without a doubt.”\textsuperscript{121} Alberti interprets this in a
different way, and argues, “The pediment is said to lend a work so much dignity that for
the sake of appearance not even the heavenly house of Jove was said to be without one,
although it never rained there.”\textsuperscript{122} The different definition of domestic architecture within
the writings of Vitruvius and Alberti resulted, after \textit{De Re Aedificatoria}’s publication, in
such revolutionary facades as that at the Villa Medici, Poggio a Caiano and all
subsequent houses with front porches.\textsuperscript{123} Alberti’s reliance on his own study of the
antique presents a new a path for modern theorists and practitioners to move forward

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{119} John Onians discusses Alberti’s definition of the column as ornament in \textit{Bearers of Meaning}
and states that, in describing columns as ornament, Alberti “provided a theoretical basis for
established practice, which throughout the Roman period and the Middle Ages had put the richer
orders in the positions of higher status and the simpler ones in those of less importance,” 1990,
155.
\bibitem{120} Alberti, 1999, VI.13.
\bibitem{121} Vitruvius, 2007, VI.8.1.
\bibitem{122} Alberti, 1999, VII.11.
\bibitem{123} James Ackerman, \textit{The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses}, Thames and Hudson,
1995, 79.
\end{thebibliography}
through the observation of the real versus the reliance on a shadow of an ideal. Alberti allows for compromise. He even uses Classical proportions to incorporate preexisting Gothic elements into his completion of the façade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence.\textsuperscript{124} (Fig. 11) Alberti thus presents the Classical past as an ideal foundation rather than an Ideal goal, and, in doing so, he has departed from the retrospective outlook of Vitruvius.

Although Alberti states the importance of personal investigation and interpretation on many occasions, his concept of “beauty” adheres to Classical tropes. Throughout \textit{De Re Aedificatoria}, he champions the values of harmony, rationality, and order. Alberti elaborates on these concepts in his chapter concerning ornamentation:

```
Beauty is that reasoned harmony of the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse. It is a great and holy matter; all our resources of skill and ingenuity will be taxed in achieving it; and rarely is it granted, even to Nature herself, to produce anything that is entirely complete and perfect in every respect.\textsuperscript{125}
```

In calling the composition of a beautiful object a “body,” Alberti calls to mind Vitruvius’ precedent, and, in fact, Alberti’s definition of beauty as a rational and self-contained body containing parts in harmony with each other echoes the construction of the Vitruvian Man. This configuration of beauty implicitly signals the anthropomorphic nature of architectural ideals in both Vitruvius and Alberti.

Finally, Alberti believes that modern utility should inform the building projects of the future. Through his definition of the beautiful adheres strictly to the evolution of the

\textsuperscript{124} Wittkower, 1998, 39, cites Santa Maria Novella as demonstrating Alberti’s concept of adjusting the Classical foundation to modern needs. Alberti employs Classical themes and motifs in constructing the façade of the church yet incorporates non-Classical elements within the work to indicate the value adjusting practice from antique theory.

\textsuperscript{125} Alberti, 1999, VI.2
antique construction of this Ideal, Alberti’s definition of beauty as a harmonic composition of parts to the whole allows him to superimpose a Classical framework on preexisting elements in order to convey meaning without compromising utility. Alberti’s interpretation of beauty goes on to inform his own building projects after the publishing of this treatise, as he explores a variety of façade designs in order to expand upon the possibilities of Classical precedent. Alberti does not adhere strictly to one form or style as an Ideal, rather his Ideal is a flexible, proportional, Classical framework that accommodates preexisting forms and new functions.

Although Alberti’s prescriptions broadly defined the Classical Ideal as an ancient proportional system with specific ornamental orders, artists studied and were inspired by an even greater range of antique sources. As in ancient Rome, a dichotomy between theory and practice continues, no matter how flexible the theoretical Ideal, practice often demonstrates a more complex interpretation of different influence. Therefore, Alberti’s theoretical prescriptive texts may not have explicitly informed the work of the Renaissance masters, but, rather, his Humanist approach towards an experiential relationship with extant antique cultural artifacts proved more impactful.

Possibly the most influential statue of the Renaissance and later Classical revivals is the Apollo Belvedere (c. 120-140 CE). Rediscovered in the late fifteenth century and believed to be a copy of a Greek bronze original from (c. 350-325 BCE) Julius II.

---

126 John Summerson The Classical Language of Architecture, Thames and Hudson, 2011, 34.
127 Wittkower, 1998, 49, posits that, by the end of his life Alberti has demonstrated through his varied architectural commissions many types of Classical revivals. Alberti does not believe in one interpretation of “the antique,” but rather embraces the larger framework of antique and to inform building projects with many stylistic combinations.
128 Edit Pogány-Balás The Influence of Rome’s Antique Monumental Sculptures on the Great Masters of the Renaissance, Budapest, Akademiai Kiado, 1984, 16, argues that the formal aspects of free-standing nude sculpture first and foremost influenced Renaissance artists, as opposed to an antique mode of thought or antique subject matter.
displayed the statue in the Cortile del Belvedere at the Vatican. He transferred it to his private collection to the papal collection; it became available for public viewing in the Pio-Clementino Museum in 1771.¹²⁹

The statue stands 7.3 feet high in a *contrapposto* pose with its weight balanced on his right leg by a stump. A frontal nude, designed to be viewed and displayed in the round, the *Apollo Belvedere* tilts his head to his left. His face displays symmetrical, calm features with an accentuated jawline framed by curls that snake down to his shoulders, while others are tied into a crowning bow-motif. Apollo’s neck extends while his chest and torso flex in accord with his *contrapposto* pose. The strap of a quiver of arrows stretches from his neck down to his left side and underarm. The musculature of his chest and torso twist to his right, presenting his abdomen in the center of the composition. Apollo’s right arm extends down towards his abdomen while his forearm juts forward, to his left. His right hand extends up and outwards at a right angle to his body, with all fingers now lost. His left arm extends outwards to his left; he possibly held a bow.

The accentuated muscles of the lower abdomen curve down to frame the upper portion of Apollo’s pubic area. Apollo’s thighs part in the center. He steps forward on his right leg, indicating motion and movement through space. The muscles of the right leg tense as his right calf stands straight below the thigh. His right foot turns out. His left thigh extends back, activating the space behind him and propelling his body forward. The muscle of the left thigh appears similarly to the right thigh and extends down to the left calf, pushing backward. The left calf displays a more accentuated musculature, while his foot extends further into the space behind him. His left foot abuts his supporting stump. A

snake, potentially the mythic Python, curves upward toward the god’s right hand. He wears open-toed strapped sandals.

Apollo’s cloak curls around his neck, and layers itself over his left arm. It flows outward and down to his left thigh. Deeply folded, indicating heavy fabric, the cape frames his body and emphasizes the drama of his gestures.

The tensed, poised, muscles of the Apollo Belvedere express a delicate masculine strength, serenity, and beauty.\textsuperscript{130} This depiction of beauty displays attributes that represent both male and female characteristics of beauty, a theme which speaks to the all-encompassing gender values defined within the portrayal of Apollo mythology.\textsuperscript{131} These ambiguous gender characteristics represent an ideal of masculinity that encompasses both male and female, providing for a refined and effeminate Ideal that accentuates Renaissance values of intellect and grace.\textsuperscript{132}

The artists of the Roman Renaissance patronized by Julius II focused on this statue, the gem of his collection, even though the proportions, approximately 1 to 9, depart from the prescriptions of Vitruvius and Alberti. The slender proportions and Classical calm of Apollo’s expression led the artists of the Renaissance associate this statue with neoplatonic conception of beauty. The neoplatonic school of thought equated the artistic expression of moral character with physical beauty. This concept, stems from

\textsuperscript{130} Alex Potts \textit{Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History}, Yale University Press, 2000, 118, argues that the interpretation and conception of masculine beauty that dominated thought before the end of the eighteenth century consisted of delicately beautiful male forms.

\textsuperscript{131} Alex Potts, 2000, 118, makes a connection between the delicate male sensuality prevalent within the Renaissance with the associations with Apollo, who was interpreted as delicately beautiful in adherence with his divine qualities of wisdom, music, and harmony.

\textsuperscript{132} George Mosse \textit{The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity}, Oxford University Press, 2010, 29, argues that the Renaissance interpretation of masculine beauty intellectualized the male form, and imposed the concepts of rationality, harmony, and order onto the male body.
the Greek concept of καλός καγαθός (kalos kagathos) defined in the first chapter of this thesis as exemplary moral character displayed through beautiful physical attributes.\(^{133}\)

TheIdeal of kalos kagathos informs the idealized body of the Apollo Belvedere, so that the god’s physicality and moral character compliment each other. The balanced composition expresses the values traditionally exemplified by Apollo, intellectual acumen and creative talent in correct proportion. The artwork does not emphasize triumph through physical strength but progress, (that forward step) guided by a concentrated gaze and a keen mind. Balletic grace defines an anatomy fully controlled by the intellect.

Along with the influential formal and iconographic qualities of the Apollo Belvedere, the statue of the Laocöon (c. 27 BCE – 68 CE), unearthed during the reign of Julius II, influenced his artists as much as any theoretical writing about antiquity. (fig. 12) Rediscovered in 1506 and identified by Michelangelo, the Laocöon was acquired by Pope Julius II and placed on display in the Cortile del Belvedere. The installation of the Laocöon in the Cortile del Belvedere enriched this statue’s value and meaning even though its dramatic expression departed from the Renaissance idea of Classical art.\(^{134}\)

This statue depicts the Greek myth of the Trojan priest Laocöon and his sons as snakes attack them. Different accounts of this story exist within epic tradition. Perhaps the best-preserved literary account of the Laocöon survives in Virgil’s Aeneid, when Laocöon mistrusts the Trojan horse and hurls a spear into its side.\(^{135}\) After Laocöon hurls

\(^{133}\) Wittkower, Sculpture, Processes and Principles, 101-102.
\(^{134}\) Haskell and Penny, 2016, 8-10.
his spear, snakes come out of the ocean and devour him and his sons, while the bull he was preparing to sacrifice breaks free.

The life-sized statue stands, at its highest at 6 feet 10 inches. All the figures are portrayed in the nude. The statue shows Laocoon and his sons in the midst of their deaths, as the snakes attack the subjects. Laocoon stands in the middle of the group, in a seated extreme contrapposto pose. From the frontal view of this statue, Laocoon’s head faces upwards and tilts to his right. His mouth opens with his face contorted in agony. His hair falls to his shoulders and his beard is full, indicating maturity. The priest’s arms are tensed and heavily muscular, epitomizing the physical struggle between rational man and irrational nature (the serpent). His right arm extends bent from his forearm inward. The right hand has been lost. The left arm extends down and to the viewer’s right, with the left forearm jutting down. Tensed veins define the upper arm. The left hand clutches the neck of a serpent. Laocoon’s chest faces to the right in accord with his contrapposto torsion, sculpted with a tensed muscle connecting the underarm to the chest itself. His abdomen is extremely strong, with all the muscles defined according to his motion. His abdomen twists, further accentuating his musculature. A snake bites his lower left side.

The priest sits on a pedestal, perhaps an altar, with drapery underneath. His right leg is fully supported by this pedestal, with the thigh extending forward. A snake’s body curls around his upper thigh and lower knee. His right calf extends down to the viewer’s right, with the foot positioned outward from the center of the body and balanced on the pedestal. His left leg extends out to the viewer’s right, with the muscle above the knee emphasized. A snake winds around his upper calf. The left calf extends back behind his

---

body, activating the space and propelling him forward. His heel rises off the ground, with his toes planted firmly and facing left.

   Laocöon’s son, to his right, looks up and to his left, towards his father. His hair falls back behind him and his expression is not focused. His neck extends down to his chest which is thrust forward, while a snake coils around his left arm. His left hand clutches a snake’s head that bites his right side. His entire right arm has been completely lost. His abdomen strains in towards his father, and he appears arched in pain by the snake that wraps around his knees. His left leg is positioned behind his body. His right leg and buttocks extend down in a seated pose. He touches the ground with the toes of his left foot, while his left heel rises off the ground.

   Laocöon’s son to his left leans out from the pedestal, the furthest left within the composition. His head faces to his right, and he looks at his father’s face. His expression denotes shock and pain. His hair resembles his brother’s, and his chest tilts to his left. His right arm is coiled by a snake’s body, with his shoulder jutting into the front of the space. The forearm has been lost. Drapery obscures his left arm, as his hand reaches down to clasp the snake around his left ankle. The muscles in his abdomen tense as he doubles over, accentuating his musculature. His right leg supports his stance, and, from his torso, his thigh curves down to his left. His right foot rests on the ground. The left leg pushes up from the ground, with the thigh pointing up to his left. His left calf then extends down with his toes flexed downward and forward.

   Unlike the self-contained Apollo Belvedere, the subjects within this composition influenced the artists of the Renaissance because of their representation and evocation of intense emotion. While the Apollo’s face remains calm, poised, and unaffected, the
subjects in the *Laocōon* group display the totality of experience associated with the act of torture and death. Although Apollo and Laocōon differ in their emotional states, neo-platonic ideals can be ascribed to both. The artists of the Renaissance focused on the *Laocōon* due to the artist’s demonstrated prowess at imbuing stone with a soul. The complex composition and lack of emotional decorum depart in every aspect from the Albertian Ideal of the Classical proportional balance.

Along with the neo-platonic conception of this work, the *Laocōon* proved extremely influential for the artists of the Renaissance for its accentuated muscular formal elements. Within this composition, the many poses of human anatomy express the different possibilities of representing motion. This idea of motion also fit with the neo-platonic ideals of the Renaissance artists, as the conception of the human soul in Renaissance doctrine adapts and struggles to achieve salvation. Similarly, Humanist theology teaches the experiential nature of the struggle to achieve piety.

Michelangelo and Raphael’s commissions for Julius II follow the antiquities in his collection more than any text. Formal and iconographic aspects of Michelangelo’s *Dying* and *Rebellious Slaves* (1513-1516), originally intended for the tomb of Julius II della Rovere, show the visible impact of both the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Laocōon*. these free-standing unfinished frontal male nudes elaborate on the anatomical conventions seen in both the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Laocōon*. (figs. 13 and 14)

Along with the formal anatomical elements explored by Michelangelo within these

---

137 Rudolf Wittkower, *Sculpture: Practices and Principles*, Penguin Books, 1995, 101-102, argues that the concepts within the school of neo-platonic thought directly influenced Michelangelo and his work, as Michelangelo was above all concerned with the “awareness of the gulf between spirit and matter.”


compositions, the artist has imposed his own interpretation of neo-platonic Renaissance philosophy onto these forms. In this way, Michelangelo has neglected the imposed critical theory of the Renaissance in his own practice, and instead relies on an experiential relationship with antiquity to inform his work.

The *Dying Slave* stands in *contrapposto* with his head tilted back and to his right. His eyes close and his expression evokes joyful slumber. His left arm raises with its elbow bent back so that his hand supports the weight of his head. The muscles in both of his arms are tensed. His underarm is exposed. His right arm extends down and bends at the elbow, so that his right forearm reaches across his chest. The fingers on his right hand are limp as they brush his upper chest. The youth’s torso has accentuated musculature, which seems bulky in proportion to his delicate face. His right leg extends straight down with his foot placed firmly on the ground. His left thigh curves in and his left knee juts out. His left calf pushes into his *contrapposto* pose, with his left foot pointing out to the left.

The *Rebellious Slave* also stands in *contrapposto* with his body contorted so that it projects forward with his step. His head faces straight forward while his body angles so that only his left side appears from the front of the composition. His head turns up and slightly to his left. Directly below his head the accentuated musculature of his upper back and shoulder twist towards the front. His left arm reaches behind and around his back to the left, emphasizing his pose. His chest and torso depict torsion of the frame, and he wears a loincloth. His right leg is supported by a pedestal placed in front of him. He stands on this pedestal as if it is a stair. His right knee extends forward and his calf

---

140 Wittkower, 1995, 102, argues that Michelangelo’s approach to his work cannot be separated from his conceptions of theology and philosophy, and that these two disciplines inform both the form and content of the entirety of his oeuvre.
stretches down and back, with his foot firmly planted on the pedestal. His left thigh extends down and his calf points straight down, with his right foot planted under him.

Both of these figures combine formal elements found in the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocōn. The Dying Slave echoes much of the pose of the Apollo Belvedere, with his feet placed apart in contrapposto and his abdomen as the central element of the composition, while the Rebellious Slave echoes the abdominal torsion of the Laocōn group. The contrapposto pose in both evokes the rhetorical sense of “antithesis” as the combination of two opposing ideas elucidate two different aspects of an argument.¹⁴¹ In this sense then, the use of extreme contrapposto in Michelangelo’s work articulates his neoplatonic thought in regards to the multifaceted nature of the human soul and its struggle to achieve salvation.¹⁴² The many similarities between Michelangelo’s nudes and these nudes dated from antiquity indicate that the artist meticulously studied these works and translated both their formal aspects and psychological attributes onto his own works. This reliance on antique statuary as a model asserts the value of antique practice on Michelangelo’s work over the dominant theory of the time. The proportions of this body are bulky and anti-Classical, suggesting that Michelangelo preferred to represent physical struggle as a reflection for inner turmoil. In Michelangelo’s male nudes in Rome his study of antique remains and his own imposed philosophy rather than Alberti’s prescriptions concerning the necessity balanced Pythagorean proportion to inform his idealized figures.

¹⁴¹ David Summers, “Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art,” The Art Bulletin, vol. 59, no. 3, 1977, 339, argues that the word antithesis had many translations in the Renaissance, but that the translation of contrapposto remained as the term used in defining this concept in terms of antique art. Summers defines antithesis within an artistic framework as “contorted and difficult, both displays of varietà and facilità. They [sculptures] are in such violent movement as simultaneously to display both front and rear,” 339

Michelangelo’s Julius Tomb came close to according with Albertian principles in his design of the architectural armature that contained this sculpture. There, Michelangelo used pilasters, or applied references to columns, as ornament. The controlled Classicizing architecture for his framework contained the emotional drama of his figures.

Similarly, Raphael’s *School of Athens* (1509-1511) commissioned during the tenure of Pope Julius II della Rovere illustrates how, even in the most literate of works, the experience of the physical superseded the influence of texts. The painting depicts ancient philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists prominent in the Classical tradition of Western thought. Although these men, from Socrates to Aristotle to Zoroaster, did not live in the same time period, Raphael depicts them in conversation with one another. This image exemplifies the Renaissance interpretation of the antique as a legacy and heritage thus informs its ideals.

The composition centers around two figures, Plato, in the middle but just left of the central axis, and Aristotle, just right of the central axis. Plato’s right hand points up towards the heavens. His expression is one of serious calm as he looks left at Aristotle. He wears heavy drapery, and his bare feet are exposed, with his heels lifting off the ground. This depiction emphasizes the transcendent and abstract nature of Plato’s philosophy, as he defines wisdom and truth through engagement with higher forms. Conversely, Aristotle turns his head to Plato with his right hand gesturing out towards the horizon, a reference to the natural, material world. His sandaled feet are planted firmly on the ground. As with Plato’s depiction, Aristotle’s representation speaks to his philosophy. Aristotle’s reliance on perception and the importance of the natural sciences informs his firmly grounded pose. Side by side the two march forward.
Raphael includes portraits of both himself and Michelangelo among the antique thinkers and scientists. This conscious inclusion of modern artists in the composition of a piece depicting the great minds of antiquity indicates the translation of antique ideals directly into a Renaissance context and the elevation of the artist. The depictions of Raphael and Michelangelo within this scheme emphasize that these specific artists’ have both learned from and equaled ancient precedent and practice. These inclusions, therefore, indicate the direct impact that the antique bears upon these two artists, Michelangelo under Plato and Raphael on Aristotle’s side. It also defines a range of response, as different as Plato from Aristotle. Interestingly, Raphael does not include artists and theorists of Alberti’s generation as intermediates. In keeping with Alberti’s advice, Raphael (and Michelangelo) prioritized their own interaction with the antique.

With this composition, Raphael has visualized the foundations of Western thought. Represented in the sculpture behind Plato, Raphael shows a nude Apollo with his lyre standing in an extreme contrapposto pose, while on the Aristotle side, a draped Minerva represents the domestic arts. All of these figures are contained by monumental vaulted architecture.

The depictions in the School of Athens suggest Raphael’s experiential relationship with antique texts and artifacts. While his figures have proportions closer to those suggested by Alberti, their gestures and the Apollo’s contapposto come from Raphael’s studies in the Belvedere Courtyard. Like Michelangelo’s Julius Tomb, his architecture more closely relates to Alberti but as seen through his relative Bramante’s practice at St. Peter’s.

---

Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) discusses the commissions, practice, and demeanor of both Michelangelo and Raphael in his *The Lives of the Artists*, and including the influence of the antique as seen in Rome on both artists’ work. His inclusions show that in the Renaissance, as in Rome, diversity defined the antique Ideal worthy of emulation. Unlike the Roman period, however, the initial treatise writer (Alberti) does not end in isolation with his Ideal. Through his call to prioritize experience, Alberti’s work succeeded in participating actively with his contemporaries’ engagement with an ancient Ideal.

Vasari was known in his lifetime as a painter, architect, and an author. Born at Arezzo in Tuscany, he became acquainted with Cardinal Silvio Passerini in his youth, who, in turn, introduced him to Michelangelo. Vasari studied under Andrea del Sarto, a noted Florentine painter. Vasari’s painting was popular in his own time, but no longer. In 1529 he travelled to Rome to view the work of Raphael and Michelangelo. At this time Vasari conceived of composing *The Lives of the Artists* and made many sketches to document artwork. In 1550 he published the first edition of *The Lives of the Artists*; in 1568 he released an expanded edition dedicated to Cosimo de Medici. Though *The Lives of the Artists* contains a distinct bias toward Florentine artists, it remains a priceless primary source.\(^\text{144}\)

Vasari dedicates the most attention in his *Lives of the Artists* to Michelangelo, whom Vasari worshipped. Vasari stresses the unequivocal talent of the great artist and begins his life of Michelangelo by elaborating on his exposure to Classical art in the Medici household:

At that time the custodian or keeper of all the fine antiques that Lorenzo the Magnificent had collected at great expense and kept in his garden on the Piazza di San Marco was the sculptor Bertoldo. He had been a pupil of Donatello’s, and the chief reason why Lorenzo kept him in service was because he had set his heart on establishing a school of first-rate painters and sculptors and wanted Bertoldo to teach and look after them.\footnote{Vasari, 1971, 329.}

This description of Michelangelo’s early life stresses the importance of Michelangelo’s early knowledge of the antique and its importance to achieve renown. Thus, the Medici’s choice to spare no personal expense in order to acquire materials for instruction, beautification, and enjoyment emphasizes a genuine reverence of and delight in the antique for Italian patrons.

Vasari goes on in his biography of Michelangelo to relay an anecdote representing the artist’s greatness and ability to rival antique works. He describes a commission taken by Michelangelo and its reception among his patrons:

[He] then immediately started work on another marble figure, a sleeping Cupid, life-size. When this was finished, Baldassare del Milanese showed it as a beautiful piece of work to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, who agreed with his judgment and said to Michelangelo, ‘If you were to bury it and treat it to make it seem old and then send it to Rome, I’m sure that it would pass as an antique and you would get far more for it than you would here.’\footnote{Vasari, 1971, 334.}

Even if Vasari fabricated this story, the author here has chosen to emphasize Michelangelo’s ability to equal antique statuary, even from a young age. This conscious choice by the author indicates the continued connection between a mastery of art with a
resemblance to an antique Ideal. Vasari here suggests a concept of the Ideal not as direct imitation, but doubly propensity to surpass the works of the ancients.

Vasari goes on to describe the captives, discussed above, as reference to the liberal arts. Vasari here recalls the emphasis in Vitruvius and Alberti on the Classical training of the artist. Implicitly in his life of Michelangelo, Vasari relates Michelangelo’s achievement to his education in antiquity. Like Alberti and Pliny before, Vasari does not define one Ideal but the importance of exposure.\(^{147}\)

When discussing Raphael’s life and work, Vasari does not stress an education tinged with Humanism, rather, he stresses the artist’s innate ability to examine, imitate, and surpass the style of any artist.\(^{148}\) His wording here recalls Alberti’s; he emphasizes adapting the antique for the present. Vasari describes *The School of Athens* in this way:

However, after he had been welcomed very affectionately by Pope Julius, Raphael started to paint in the Stanza della Segnatura a fresco showing the theologians reconciling Philosophy and Astrology with Theology… There, also, are Aristotle and Plato, one holding the *Timaeus* and the other with the *Ethics*; and round them in a circle is a great school of philosophers.\(^{149}\)

This painting was commissioned at the beginning of the artist’s career in Rome. Although Pope Julius assigned Raphael this specific subject matter, the content reflects Raphael’s ability to interpret his surroundings and translate his experience into contemporary art. The artist’s style reifies the significance of the continuity in the city of Rome itself between antique Roman visual language transformed for the new triumphant church of Julius II. Walking in harmony within architecture echoing the rising new St.

\(^{147}\) Vasari, 1971, 344.

\(^{148}\) Vasari, 1971, 284.

Peter’s of Raphael’s relative, Donato Bramante, Plato and Aristotle (with Apollo and Minerva represent the Classical order and rationality contained within Renaissance Rome and converted to contemporary Christianity by Raphael’s ability to experience and adapt.\footnote{Diana DePardo-Minsky, \textit{Roma in Situ}, bard College, Spring 2017.}

Raphael also painted a lunette framing the window to the right of the \textit{School of Athens} and directed towards the Cortile del Belvedere. This fresco portrays Mount Parnassus with Apollo at its summit surrounded by the Muses and Classical poets. The Cortile del Belvedere, of course, this time contained both the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} and the \textit{Laocöon}. Raphael’s Apollo recalls the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} in delicacy but the \textit{Laocöon} in pose, once more reflecting the Renaissance painters ability to convert his experience of the ancient into a modern Ideal.

Lastly, in his homage to Raphael’s death and burial, Vasari states that upon his death Raphael was laid to rest in the Pantheon. Vasari acknowledges the apt choice of location for Raphael’s burial.\footnote{Vasari, 1971, 320.} Vasari then quotes an epitaph written for Raphael by Pietro Bembo, “In memory of Raphael son of Giovanni Santi Urbino: the great painter and rival of the ancients: whose almost-breathing likenesses if thou beholdest, thou shalt straightaway see Nature and Art in League.”\footnote{Vasari, 1971, 323.} This epitaph stresses Raphael’s profound ability to rival the great artists of antiquity. In combination with his burial in the Pantheon, Raphael’s epitaph emphasizes the antique influence that bore on his life, and his achievement in equaling and surpassing both art and Albertian nature. In stating that Raphael’s work represented the combination of both nature and art, Bembo has both
acknowledged Alberti’s natural Ideal, suggesting that nature and art together fuse into one entity under the hand of Raphael.

Within his text *Lives of the Artists*, Vasari stresses the personal relationships that Michelangelo and Raphael had with the antiques in Rome and the influence of these antiques on the practice. Vasari’s biographies emphasize that the talent of these artists developed throughout their lifetimes as each artist strove to rival and equal the work of an Ideal antiquity.

As in Rome, the ancient precedent set forth by theorists and historians to inspire artists remains vague and varying. Distinct from Vitruvius, Alberti encouraged artists to rely on a more personal and experimental knowledge, which Michelangelo and Raphael exemplify in their engagement with the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Laocōon*, two examples of ancient variety unimagined by Alberti. Alberti defined an antique Ideal through a Humanist lens, as a proportional balance complete with modern functionality and adherence to natural form. He believed that a modern artist or architect could improve upon this Ideal, but always with a specific concept of antique harmony. Michelangelo and Raphael instead seem to have looked to antique statuary as the ultimate model for beauty and truth, but ordered them within an architectural frame more in keeping with Alberti. An impression of the antique Ideal within the Renaissance emerges as contained creativity, and architecture contextualizing figures. The expansive creativity proposed by Alberti, designed by Michelangelo and Raphael, and appreciated by Vasari, would be reigned in during the next period under consideration.
CHAPTER THREE
THE NEOCLASSICAL IDEA OF GREECE

As discussed in the previous chapters, the definition of a Greek art, and its role as an Ideal before the mid-eighteenth century, was poorly understood, if asserted. With the inception of the Grand Tour, cultural pilgrims from the far reaches of the Western world flocked to Rome to behold the grandeur of an antique past in person. Extant objects and monuments thus continued to exemplify the prized roots of Western culture just as they did for the Renaissance Humanists. This obsession with experiencing antiquities further accelerated with the archaeological excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, first discovered in 1748. As practical knowledge increased, a theoretical model edited it. The “Greek Ideal” as a defined concept made its debut at the beginning of the Neoclassical movement with the writings of one man, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768). This chapter analyzes the definition of the Greek Ideal set forth by Winckelmann, then explains its impact on a painting by Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779) and a sculpture by Antonio Canova (1757-1822), before studying Immanuel Kant’s reception of Winckelmann’s prescriptive theory.

---

153 The Grand Tour exemplified cultural leisure in the eighteenth century. Most Grand Tourists devoted over a year to viewing sites and art. Many Grand Tourists relied on critics and art theorists to consolidate lists of the most famous works on view, David Irwin, Neoclassicism, Phaidon Press, 2011, 17-20.

154 Irwin, 2011, 5.

155 The discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum provided evidence of Roman daily life, which renewed a fascination with the antique in all aspects of culture and life, Irwin, 2011, 37.

156 Alex Potts, Introduction to Johann Joachim Winckelmann, The History of the Art of Antiquity, Translated by Harry Francis Mallgrave, Los Angeles, CA, Getty Research Institute, 2006, 7.
As with the interpretation of Greece by Romans and antiquity in the Renaissance, studies of ancient Greece and extant archaeological objects in the eighteenth century could not be separated from the implications of the span of time that separated antiquity and contemporary analysis. Due to this separation and the greater accessibility of Roman art and architecture over ancient Greek cultural artifacts, the perception of ancient Greece remained as a reflection crafted and projected through guidebooks, if not in a cave.

Within this framework of temporal separation and spatial distance from ancient Greece, Johann Winckelmann came to his work with the desire to recover a specifically idealized past through a definition of the essence of the “true” art of the ancient Greeks. This chapter analyzes two of his texts, *Reflection on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755) and *The History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764), to ascertain his definition of the Greek Ideal and the applicability of this Ideal to the modes of thought prevalent during his own time. Winckelmann wrote in a period when aesthetic theory and taste were increasingly addressed, and, through his writing, he joined a group of scholars who desired to define standards for beauty in art and establish universal refined taste. Although this search for “universal taste” constituted the aim of Winckelmann’s writings, his writings predominantly drew on his own taste and his background in the study of Classical art. Thus, these two books, above all, aim to explain the continued relevance of antique ideals to modern society.

---

157 Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900*, Miller, 2016, 104, argue that as the exaltation of “Greek” works (all actually Roman copies) became more prevalent, so to did the knowledge within the eighteenth century of the modern distance from ancient Greece.

158 Potts, 2006, 17.

159 Haskell and Penny, 2016, 102-104, emphasize the novelty of a stylistic account of chronological achievement expressed by Winckelmann, and his preliminary attempts at establishing a finite grounds for taste.
Johann Joachim Winckelmann was a classicist, antiquarian, and, arguably, the first modern art historian because of his novel interpretation of the rise and decline of culture as an influence on artistic practice within any given period. Born in Stendal, Germany in 1717, Winckelmann’s family was poor. Nevertheless, in 1738 he entered the University of Halle. From there, in 1748, he became the secretary Count Heinrich von Bunau’s library, where he had prolonged access to a wide array of Classical texts, both Greek and Roman. During his tenure of this position, Winckelmann made several trips to view the antiquities in Dresden. In 1754 Winckelmann converted to Catholicism, and in 1755 he published *Reflection of the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* and moved to Rome. From Rome he free-lanced as an antiquarian and author, and, then, became Cardinal Alberico Archinto’s librarian in 1756. After Archinto’s death, Winckelmann worked as Cardinal Alessandro Albani’s custodian of antiquities, a position he kept until his death. In addition to this position, Winckelmann became the Prefect of Antiquities for Pope Clement XIV. In 1763 Winckelmann published the first edition of *History of the Art of Antiquity*, which received wide praise.\(^{160}\)

In his *Reflection on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, Winckelmann first asserts his belief in the transcendent nature of Greek art. This text presents a strict dichotomy between ancient and modern works; it defines Greek antiquity as the zenith of artistic creativity, with a steady decline after the Classical period in fourth century Athens.\(^{161}\) Winckelmann desires a return to such artistic originality and

---

\(^{160}\) All biography on Winckelmann from Alex Potts’ introduction to *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 2006, 6-10.

\(^{161}\) Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History*, Yale University Press, 2000, 34, argues that the evolution of art in terms of the rise and decline of culture is how Winckelmann accounted for the differences in style of Greek art
creativity, which, in his opinion cannot be accomplished by modern artists without the study of Greek works. He states early on in his text, “The only way for us to become great or, if this is possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients.” Through this statement, Winckelmann asserts a decline within artistic practice since antiquity and emphasizes the necessity of recovering an ideal past. Winckelmann writes his text to underscore the deterioration of refined taste within his own time, but also as a prescription meant to proclaim that, to make great art, a return to ancient Greek examples is imperative.

Winckelmann’s Greek Ideal is then presented as a concept visualized in the mind of the Greek artist and then transferred to stone. This notion of the Ideal as an abstract construct outside of the natural world represents a complete shift from the mode of thought pioneered by Leon Battista Alberti and the Humanists of the Renaissance, whose ideal stressed the beauty, harmony, and order of the natural world. Within this new paradigm initiated by Winckelmann, ultimate beauty and truth retain their platonic nature, as only available through abstract forms within the mind of the ancient Greek artist and Winckelmann.

(Archaic, Classicizing, Hellenistic) and how he explained that all Greek art strives to achieve the most pure and elevated form.


163 Michael Fried, “Antiquity Now: Reading Winckelmann on Imitation,” October, vol. 37, 1986, 90-92, that Winckelmann considers the beautiful work of Renaissance sculptors and painters (especially Raphael and Michelangelo) as intermediaries between ancients and moderns, and that, in imitating the beliefs of the ancients, they have surpassed the boundaries that all moderns face in trying to conceive of beauty.
Through his platonic definition of the Greek Ideal, Winckelmann stresses the importance of surpassing nature through aspiring to an ideal and, in doing so, highlights the originality and transcendent nature of his vision of the ancient Greek mentality.

Winckelmann elaborates on this concept:

In the masterpieces of Greek art, connoisseurs and imitators find not only nature at its most beautiful but also something beyond nature, namely certain ideal forms of its beauty, which, as an ancient interpreter of Plato teaches us, come from images created by the mind alone.\footnote{Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 1987, 7.}

By asserting that the forms created within the mind lie beyond the beauties of nature, Winckelmann places the agency within sculptural practice in the hands of the original ancient Greek artists.\footnote{Michael Fried, 1986, 96, argues that Winckelmann champions an art form that is static and cold.} For this reason, he believes that imitation of ancient Greek art constitutes the sole mode of refined artistic practice and that, in order to understand these ideal forms, the modern artist must mimic extant Greek works. Through reliance on ancient artistic form and thought, Winckelmann establishes the continued relevance of the study examples of Classical forms and prescribes adherence through meticulous study and imitation.

Consequently, Winckelmann’s juxtaposition of ancient and modern art practice coincides with his belief that the quality of art inherently corresponds with the cultural context within which an artist produces a work. Winckelmann exalts ancient Greek society as the epitome of creativity, beauty, and freedom, and contrasts this cultural framework with his own modern context to assert the superiority of Greek artistic ideals.
over modern artistic sensibilities. In an outlandish demonstration of this concept, Winckelmann postulates that the art of the ancient Greeks, in part, derived its superior beauty from the exceptional beauty of ancient Greek men.  

He fervently states this opinion:

Moreover, everything that was instilled and taught from birth to adulthood about the culture of their bodies and the preservation, development, and refinement of this culture through nature and art was done to enhance the natural beauty of the ancient Greeks. Thus we can say in that all probability their physical beauty excelled ours by far.  

This claim, by Winckelmann, of the remarkable physical beauty of the ancient Greeks stresses the widely held eighteenth-century belief that physical beauty showed corporeal evidence of a refined and balanced inner character. This belief echoes the ancient Greek concept of καλος καγαθος (kalos kagathos) already translated in chapter one of this project as ‘the beautiful and the good’ and meaning a totality of character based on a harmony of both physical attributes and a virtuous mindset governed by morality and self-restraint. Winckelmann’s claim that the beauty of Greek sculpture indicates a superhuman physical excellence possessed by the ancient Greeks reflects the totality of his obsession with the superiority of the Greek cultural context. In going so far as to assert the outstanding nature of the Greek bodily form, Winckelmann positions his Greek Ideal as an all-encompassing view of the harmony of mind, body, culture, society, and art only possible at this given moment in time.

\[166\] Fried, 1986, 87.
\[167\] Winckelmann, 1987, 11.
Through this assertion, one of the main paradoxes of Winckelmann’s rhetoric presents itself. If the totality of context within ancient Greece came together to formulate this Greek Ideal within artists’ achievement, the possibility of modern artists replicating this model proves impossible. Winckelmann has already established the importance of imitating Greek art but, according to his inferences concerning societal and cultural factors, this historic context in its totality can never again be repeated. Winckelmann thus urges modern artists to accomplish an unachievable goal and illuminates the main problems of advocating for a complete return to the Greek Ideal.

After defining the essential conditions necessary to the production of superior art, Winckelmann attempts to define the characteristics inherent within Greek works worthy of utmost emulation. By the end of his text, he has presented his notion of artistic excellence, its framework, and the connected mode of thought, so he then goes on to discuss specific components present within these works. To this end, Winckelmann asserts:

The general and most distinctive characteristics of the Greek masterpieces are, finally, a noble simplicity and quiet grandeur, both in posture and expression. Just as the depths of the sea always remain calm however much the surface may rage, so does the expression of the figures of the Greeks reveal a great and composed soul even in the midst of passion.\(^{171}\)

---

\(^{170}\) Potts, 2000, 145, divides Winckelmann’s concept of the Ideal is divided into the high and the beautiful, and, through this distinction, it is impossible to combine the concepts of idea and body into one form. Thus, the Ideal is a concept which encompasses for Winckelmann the idea and body through the analysis of many different examples and two different arbitrarily determined styles.

\(^{171}\) Winckelmann, 1987, 33.
Through this description of his prescription of the inherent qualities within Greek works, Winckelmann presents his readers with an exact definition and function of his Greek Ideal.¹⁷² Not only does Winckelmann venerate the Greek artist’s ability to depict an the concept of a physical, aesthetic, and moral ideal, but he also expresses, through extrapolation, the Greek artist’s ability to embody this ideal through sculptural practice.¹⁷³ Sculpture for Winckelmann is viewed in the round, there is no framing as with painting just the viewer and this anthropomorphic object engage in discussion as they view each other. Winckelmann’s text aims to inspire modern sculptural representation to represent ephemeral ideal.

Winckelmann expands these themes in his later text, The History of the Art of Antiquity. The first edition of this book, published in 1764, and although the focal point of this work consisted in the distinctions between different modes of Greek art practice, Winckelmann includes descriptions of alternate antique art in order to assert the superiority of the Greeks. Winckelmann, here, identified the art of the Greeks as the origin for Rome and the succeeding Western world and, thus, established a fixed and universal ideal of beauty that spoke to the sentiment of his own time. He believed that if modern art is grounded within a larger tradition, not only can it legacy be traced back, but it is also easier to produce beautiful works in adherence to this pre-existing formula.

¹⁷² Barbara Maria Stafford, “Beauty of the Invisible: Winckelmann and the Aesthetics of Imperceptibility,” *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1980, 65, argues that Winckelmann’s Ideal is an abstract interpretation of the beauty ascribed only to a transcendent concept of the divine, which cannot actually be seen in the natural world, 65.

¹⁷³ Alex Potts, “Male Fantasy and Modern Sculpture,” *Oxford Art Journal*, vol.15, no. 2, 1992, 38, argues that there is an unmediated experience of viewing a sculpture.
Winckelmann here the prevailing sentiment of the time and, in so doing, attempts to establish a linear progression within the sphere of Western art.\textsuperscript{174}

At its core, \textit{The History of the Art of Antiquity} advocates for a simplified and refined definition of the Greek Ideal, as beauty in its simplicity.\textsuperscript{175} At the same time, Winckelmann defines this Ideal as in opposition to the art contemporaneous with himself. Winckelmann believes that the Ideal represents values and forms fundamentally in opposition to those of the modern world.\textsuperscript{176} In this way, Winckelmann’s Ideal predicates itself on his mourning of the lost Greek past.

Winckelmann begins his treatise with a discussion of the motive and intent behind of his work, namely, the elucidation of the essential properties intrinsic to all Ideal art. In this way, Winckelmann aims to provide his readers with a finite definition of quality and, in so doing, prove the superiority of Greek style.\textsuperscript{177} To this end he argues:

\begin{quote}
However, the focus in this as well as in the other part is on the essence of art, on which the history of individual artists has little bearing. Thus, one should not seek the herein details about the latter, which have been compiled by others; by contrast, those monuments of art that can in any way serve as instructive are carefully noted.\textsuperscript{178}
\end{quote}

By stating that his text concerns “the essence of art” Winckelmann presents the definitional element within his text. This universalizing view aims to apply conditional

\begin{flushright}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{174} Alex Potts, 2006, 4. \\
\textsuperscript{175} Alex Potts, 2006, 1. \\
\textsuperscript{176} Potts, 2006, 1, argues that the main takeaway from Winckelmann’s work, so formative in the eighteenth century, culminated in the belief that there were inherent differences between ancient and modern culture. \\
\textsuperscript{177} Alex Potts, 2006, 4. \\
\textsuperscript{178} Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 2006, 71.
\end{tabular}
\end{flushright}
elements to the framework of art analysis at large and to ascribe specific signifiers to “high art” recognized primarily within Greek art. Winckelmann believes in the benefits in studying commonalities within styles instead of individual case studies and, thus, asserts the relevance of his own opinion on all previous artistic achievement.

Winckelmann proceeds to impose a linear narrative to the history of art and, thereby, calls attention to the discrepancies between ancient Greek art and modern work. He asserts:

From this simplicity of form, artists proceeded to the investigation of proportions, which taught correctness, and this gave them the confidence to venture into a large scale, whereby art attained grandeur and, finally, under the hands of the Greeks, gradually achieved the highest beauty. Once all the parts of art were united and their embellishment was sought, superfluity took hold, whereby art lost its grandeur, and finally its complete collapse occurred.179

Winckelmann’s Ideal is predicated on the concept of loss, and so juxtaposes concepts brought to the forefront of Greek art and the artistic traits of contemporary work.180 In this way Winckelmann composes a paradigm wherein the evolution of art coalesced at its zenith with the Greeks and then decayed.181 His view of history favors a linear progression within the Western canon and bemoans the subsequent loss of true artistry.

---

179 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 2006, 111.
180 Alex Potts, 2000, 65-66.
181 Winckelmann, 2006, 188, states later in this text, “Greeks in their prime were contemplative beings: they were already thinking twenty years or more before we generally begin to think for ourselves, and they exercised the mind when it was most fired up by the sprightliness of the body, whereas with us the mind is ignobly nourished until it decays.”
In addition to Winckelmann’s blatant praise of the superiority of Greek works, he also enumerates in his text the intrinsic differences between the Greeks and people from other geographical locations. To this end, he argues:

Their [the Greeks’] imagination was not exaggerated, as with the Eastern and southern peoples, and their senses, which acted through quick and sensitive nerves on a fine-woven brain, discovered instantly the various characteristics of a subject and concerned themselves chiefly with reflecting on that subject’s beauty.\(^{182}\)

Winckelmann’s assertion of Greek excellence, therefore, incorporates a negative conception of non-Greek works, and he uses the alternate examples, within this text, to contrast between the achievements of Greeks and non-Greeks.\(^{183}\)

From these imposed genealogical prejudices Winckelmann builds his theory of climate producing ideal beauty and, in doing so, introduces the concept of whiteness as perfection and reflection of God.\(^{184}\) He states, “Since white is the color that reflects the most rays of light, and thus is most easily perceived, a beautiful body will be all the more beautiful the whiter it is.” \(^{185}\) Winckelmann defines his vision of God as physically similar to Greek appearance by stating that the moderate climate of Greece produces people who look the most like their creator. He argues, “Thus, our own and the Greek concepts of beauty, which are taken from the most regular appearance, are more correct than those conceived by peoples who— to use the thought of a modern poet— are at half remove

---

182 Winckelmann, 2006, 121.
183 Alex Potts, 2000, 34, argues that Winckelmann addresses the evolution of Greek art as what sets it apart from the art of other cultures in the world, and that this distinction forms the basis for its exceptional nature.
185 Winckelmann, 2006, 195.
from the exact likeness of their Creator.”186 Thus, whiteness not only signals the
construct of beauty in aesthetic terms as quoted above, but also in physical
anthropological terms that assume the superiority of “the Greek race” over “peoples at
half remove from the exact likeness of their creator.” In constructing beauty around
imposed physical norms, Winckelmann explicitly heralds the notion of European and
white superiority.

Subsequently, Winckelmann positions the Greeks as not only the perfect image of
God, but also as the most closely exhibiting godly pursuits than any other race of people.
To this end, he argues, “The Greek artists—who viewed themselves as new creators, so
to speak, though they worked less for the mind than for the senses—sought to overcome
the hard objectivity of matter and, if it had been possible, to animate it.”187 Winckelmann
in this passage positions the finite ancient Greek goal as the origin of human history and
reconstructs a narrative within which Greeks specifically identified themselves as the
originators of the arts, culture, and the ability to animate sculptural matter.188 By
associating Greek innovation with divine attributes, Winckelmann not only positions the
Greeks as inherently superior to other races of people, but also as a conduit for divinity.

This notion of art as a divine medium extends to Winckelmann’s most influential
analysis of a single work of sculpture, namely, his description of the Apollo Belvedere.

186 Winckelmann, 2006, 194.
187 Winckelmann, 2006, 199.
188 Alex Potts1992, 38, argues that this concept is a sort of “aesthetic nirvana” between
the sculpture and the viewer, as the barriers between viewer and art object are dissolved.
Thus, the viewer can project the attributes of a person on to the sculpture he views, all
other worldly tensions surrounding the art object and the viewer are eliminated within the
viewer’s act of contemplation of the art object, 38.
For Winckelmann, the essential draw of the *Apollo Belvedere* consists in the statue’s ability to combine the appearance of delicate sensuality with powerful heroism after the god has slain the serpent Python.\(^{189}\) Winckelmann begins his dramatic analysis of the statue with this note:

> The statue of Apollo [Belvedere] is the highest ideal of art among all the works of antiquity that have escaped destruction. The artist has formed this work completely according to the ideal, and he has taken from the material world only as much as was necessary to carry out his intention and make it visible. The Apollo surpasses all images of him as much as the Apollo of Homer surpasses those portrayed by later poets.\(^{190}\)

Not only does Winckelmann explicitly name the *Apollo Belvedere* as the “highest ideal of art,” he then goes on into a lengthy flowery description of the emotions elucidated by the statue. Although Winckelmann has previously stated that he aims to define the essence of art in accord with universal judgment over individual signifiers, his assessment is personal. This statue for Winckelmann embodies the totality of the Greek Ideal within one composition. Winckelmann’s engagement with the *Apollo Belvedere* at once outlines Winckelmann’s projection of an Ideal type and his belief in the Greek artist’s ability to produce animated expressive content, transfigured from stone, that engage on an individual level.

In essence, Winckelmann’s definition of a Greek Ideal in *Reflection on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* and the expansion of this Ideal in the *History of the Art of Antiquity* establish a paradigm whereby modern artists must return to achieve future success. In his second text, Winckelmann reconstructs history to form a

---

\(^{189}\) Alex Potts, 2000, 125.

\(^{190}\) Winckelmann, 2006, 333.
linear narrative that sets the achievements of Greece apart from those of other peoples, establishes direct continuity between Greek art practice and the Western canon at large. In this manner, Winckelmann positions Rome as the heir to Greek legacy and outlines the ways in which contemporary artists can learn from the achievements of the past.  

The paintings of Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779) illustrate the influence that Winckelmann’s writing had on subsequent art. Unlike Vitruvius or Alberti’s prescriptions, Winckelmann’s were followed. Born in Aussig in Bohemia to a family of painters, Mengs travelled from Dresden to Rome in 1741. Mengs then spent much of his time studying and working in Rome, in the early 1750s, prior to his relocation there. After moving to Rome, Mengs converted to Catholicism and became the director of the Vatican school of painting in 1754. He also became a close friend of Winckelmann in 1755. Stylistically, Mengs represents the transition from the Baroque tradition in painting to the beginning of the Neoclassical.  

Mengs’ commission from Cardinal Alessandro Albani, to paint the ceiling of the Villa Albani with a fresco of Apollo and the Muses at Parnassus solidified his status as a painter of high rank. (fig. 16) Perhaps the most prominent patron at this time, Cardinal Albani was also close to Winckelmann. When commissioning this fresco by Mengs, Albani aimed to use his new Villa Suburbana, to house his vast collection of antiquities acquired through many years of active collecting. Mengs’ ceiling would contextualize his collection. Parnassus (1761) displays nude Apollo in the center of the composition,

---

191 Alex Potts, 2006, 4.
193 Wittkower *Art and Architecture in Italy, vol. III*, Yale University Press, 1999, 1, asserts the prominence of Albani as patron and his goal to “rival antiquity” in building this private home.
accompanied by the muses with their appropriate attributes.\textsuperscript{194} Mengs finished this fresco six years after meeting Winckelmann, and his design embodies Wickelmann’s Classical Ideals in both content and form.

At the center of the composition, Apollo stands \textit{contrapposto} holding a lyre in his left hand and a crown of laurel in his right. He gazes off to his left, wearing only a cloak. Under his feet flows a river, representing the font of inspiration on the mountain.\textsuperscript{195} To Apollo’s right, sits Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses. To her right in succession are Thalia, Calliope, Polhymnia, and Terpsichore. To Apollo’s left are Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, and Urania. The composition is evenly balanced, with five figures on each side of Apollo. The muses wear bright colors and practice their respective arts with glee. The background is composed of floral and pastoral imagery, with trees, bushes, and mountains receding into the horizon.

The \textit{Apollo Belvedere} heavily influenced the depiction of Apollo, who stands with the same foot forward in \textit{contrapposto} and displays similar musculature. He even faces the same direction as the Apollo Belvedere, with his drapery arranged in the same fashion. These similarities represent Mengs’ adherence to Winckelmann’s claim that the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} exemplifies Ideal style in “Greek sculpture.” This choice of Apollo for the Villa Albani also speaks to the prevalence of Apollonian Ideals in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{196} Along with the values expressed by Apollo, the reflective whiteness of the skin of Apollo and all the muses, also conforms to Winckelmann’s standards of beauty.

\textsuperscript{194} Description of attributes of Apollo and muses in succession comes from website of Hermitage Museum online, https://www.arthermitage.org/Anton-Raphael-Mengs/Parnassus.html.

\textsuperscript{195} Ovid, \textit{Metamorphoses}, Translated by Stanley Lombardo, Hackett Publishing Company, 2010, 5.304-305, speaks of Parnassus and its spring and cites the source of the spring as Pegasus’ hoof.

\textsuperscript{196} Paul Barolsky, “Winckelmann, Ovid, and the Transformation of the Apollo Belvedere,” \textit{Source: Notes in the History of Art}, vol. 33, no. 2, 2014, 2, argues that the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} above all else determines
In addition to Apollo’s likeness to the *Apollo Belvedere*, Mengs cites the *School of Athens* and *Parnassus* by Raphael. The balanced composition around a central character invokes Raphael’s designs, as do the colors worn by the muses. In this manner, it is obvious that Mengs, like Winckelmann, also draws inspiration from Raphael as a Renaissance master. Through the choice of Greco-Roman subject for the Villa Albani, Mengs emphasizes the pleasure received from immersion in the Classics and propagates Winckelmann’s assertion that great art should aim to imitate ancient objects and subjects, the very type of sculpture housed under this painted Parnassus.

Along with the work of Mengs, the sculptural practice of Antonio Canova (1757-1822) embodies Winckelmann’s influence. Canova was born in Possagno, the son of a stonecutter. In 1761 his father died, and he was sent to live with his paternal grandfather, a stonemason and owner of a quarry. In 1770 Canova apprenticed under Giuseppe Bernardi, a Venetian sculptor. From there his career took off, and he completed commissions for patrons from many countries, including the Bonapartes of France. Canova was unarguably the most famous sculptor in his own time, and he combined Classical themes in his work while reducing the complexity seen in the works of the Renaissance masters. Canova imitates Classical themes with an added degree of whimsy and charm, which can be interpreted as trivial. His works are polished to

Winckelmann’s Platonic definition of the Ideal, and that this distinction informs the subsequent history of art, as Neoclassical art relies on the idealism of the Apollo over naturalism.

---

197 Mengs represented a shift from late Baroque to early Neoclassical, a style which has sometimes been called the “florid statuesque” which is a reformed version of the Baroque and the earliest phase of Neoclassicism, Anthony Clark, *Age of Canova*, Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art, 1957, 3.

198 Canova’s inception of the Neoclassical movement in a different mode than had already be produced aimed to combine the antique Ideal with exact imitation of nature, Clark, 1957, 5-6.

199 Hawley, 1964, 131.

200 Neoclassical style attempts a greater simplification of Classical style and these works were meant to be publicly displayed in museums or outdoors. These works also intended
perfection and usually represent Classical myths or allegories.\textsuperscript{201} Canova embraces style over simplicity and exemplify profound technicality with an added level of voluptuousness.\textsuperscript{202}

Canova borrowed themes and styles from many Classical sculptures, and one of the most obvious imitations can be seen in his \textit{Perseus Triumphant}, which bears many influences of the \textit{Apollo Belvedere}. \textit{Perseus Triumphant} was commissioned by Onorato Duveyriez, and was then intended for the Bonaparte forum in Milan. The statue then switched locations again, and was displayed on the pedestal that once supported the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} after that statue was seizes in the Treaty of Tolentino.\textsuperscript{203} The statue is not on display in the Pio-Clementino, with a copy by Canova in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The statue has a similar weight and proportions as the \textit{Apollo Belvedere}, with \textit{Perseus Triumphant} in the same pose, with his left foot forward and his right foot raised, more daringly than the original, off the ground behind him. Perseus stands in a \textit{contrapposto} pose with his head facing to his left. His hair curls in a similar style to Apollo’s curls. On his head he wears the helmet of Mercury, and his left hand holds the head of Medusa. Drapery lies over his left arm, and extends down to the floor, pushed to encompass monumentality, in that they were polished to perfect and were meant to inspire feelings of awe. However, this intent to be seen in their completely finished capacity has been interpreted by later scholars and art historians as fanciful, Clark, 1957, 1.

\textsuperscript{201} Hugh Honour, \textit{Neo-Classicism}, Penguin Books, 1973, 14, addresses Canova’s polished works in \textit{Neo-Classicism}, and relays the words of nineteenth-century scholars in saying that these works were a characteristically cold and lifeless interpretation of Classical revival.

\textsuperscript{202} Clark, 1957, 7.

\textsuperscript{203} All information on \textit{Perseus Triumphant} from the Vatican Museums, http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-pio-clementino/Cortile-Ottagono/perseo-trionfante.html
his right as if by wind. His right hand grasps a sword. The positioning of both his arms mimics the pose of the *Apollo Belvedere*. Canova even goes so far as to depict Perseus wearing the same sandals as Apollo. In all, when compared side by side, the viewer can easily ascertain the influence of the former statue on the latter.

As evidenced above, Canova’s representation of Perseus mirrors the *Apollo Belvedere*. This direct influence of the Apollo speaks to the influence of Winckelmann’s work on sculptors after his time, as emphasized in his text, the Ideal and impact of the *Apollo Belvedere*. Winckelmann emphasizes the balanced beauty of the *Apollo Belvedere* more than any other single work of sculpture he discusses in the *History of the Art of Antiquity*. The works of both Mengs and Canova embody the emotion and admiration of his description.

Unlike Michelangelo and Raphael who extrapolated from the *Apollo Belvedere*, Mengs and Canova more closely copy this composition. This distinct shift from emulation to imitation directly coincides with Winckelmann’s directives, and highlights the influence of the author on the artists of his time. This one to one relationship between theorists and artists, so distinct from ancient Rome (Vitruvius) and the Renaissance (Alberti) as always reflects time, both temporal distance and contextual events. The furthest from the first “forms” of antiquity, the eighteenth century saw only a vague shadow of a projection, allowing them to fill in the contours in accordance with their own (white male) desires. Similarly, in relation to the time period, the eighteenth century saw the emergence from the soil of Greece of a new, more complex and contradictory antiquity and reacted by reinforcing their own prior conception, rather than incorporating the new.
Along with Winckelmann’s influence on art practice through his writings, he directly influences later art theory in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on aesthetics. A connection incorporating Winckelmann’s work evidences itself in the most profound treatise on aesthetics produced in the Enlightenment, in the writing of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), specifically in *Critique of Judgment*. Kant lived and worked contemporaneously with Winckelmann and published *Critique of Judgment* in 1790, twenty-six years after Winckelmann published the *History of the Art of Antiquity*. Although Kant maintains different standards of beauty, taste, and sublime nature, Kant’s section on the *Ideal of Beauty* draws on themes from Winckelmann’s definition of the Ideal.

Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* elaborates on the subjective nature of aesthetic judgment, in other words, judgment understood by one individual through the circumstances that have affected his or her personal psychology.\(^{204}\) In this way, Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* presents the study of aesthetics as an apparatus through which the individual human mind perceives aesthetic objects as inexorably tied to recognition of the self, exactly what Winckelmann had unconsciously done.

In regards to the Ideal, Kant defines this concept as the intellectualization of combined judgments of taste. Kant speaks to the intellectual nature of this concept, “Hence, the highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea… according to which he must judge every object of taste, every example of judgment by taste, and even the taste of everyone.”\(^{205}\) Although Kant disagrees with Winckelmann about many aspects within judgments of taste, the text nevertheless suggests that Kant had at least partially read

---


Winckelmann’s work.\textsuperscript{206} This definition of the Ideal as an abstract and elevated concept, or a “mere idea,” echoes Winckelmann’s thinking concerning the Ideal and its abstract nature. The Ideal in the Kantian sense aligns with a universal judgment, or an abstract conception of perfection, which represents a standard upon which all judgments of taste must then be measured. Kant however undercuts the significance of an Ideal by the use of “mere.”

Along with this definition of the Ideal, Kant elaborates on this concept by stressing both the intellectual and static natures of the Ideal. To this end, Kant argues, “It is well to remark that the beauty for which an ideal is to be sought cannot be vague beauty, but is fixed… and thus it cannot appertain to the object of a quite pure judgment in taste but to that of a judgment of taste which is in part intellectual.”\textsuperscript{207} This fixed notion of Ideal beauty exemplifies a static Ideal, which Kant here criticizes, much like the Greek Ideal Winckelmann heralds within the \textit{History of the Art of Antiquity}, in that this Ideal occurred at a specific moment in time. This static Ideal is then intellectualized to venture beyond the “quite pure judgment” and is instead a psychologized version of Ideal beauty.\textsuperscript{208} This psychology applies to Winckelmann in that it represents a conglomeration of intellectual concepts, originally drawn from material observations, and then transformed into an idealized version of these observations. Kant’s \textit{Critique of Judgment} thus critiques Winckelmann’s judgment.

\textsuperscript{206} Whitney Davis “Queer Beauty: Winckelmann and Kant on the Vicissitudes of the Ideal” \textit{Beauty Unlimited}, Indiana University Press, 2013, 109, that even if Kant has not read Winckelmann’s work in detail, like other educated authors of the time he has probably already understands Winckelmann’s concept of idealism by the time he published the \textit{Critique of Judgment}.

\textsuperscript{207} Kant, 1951, 69.

\textsuperscript{208} Davis, 2013, 109-110, posits that Kant’s Ideal transcends the natural world and liberates the viewer from the cares of the self.
Nevertheless, the sole artwork described by Kant within this section comes specifically from the Classical canon. Kant cites the Doryphorus, “It is by no means the whole archetype of beauty in the race, but only the form constituting the indispensible condition of beauty, and thus merely correctness in the [mental] presentation of the race. It is, like the celebrated ‘Doryphorus’ of Polycletus, the rule.”209 Although Kant does not specifically name the Apollo Belvedere as the essential definition of the Ideal within extant artistic tradition as Winckelmann does, his use of Classical content signifies his immersion as a man of his time, accepting the Greek nude make as an Ideal. The reference to Doryphorus as “the rule” critiques Winckelmann’s standardization of the Classical canon as a means by which subsequent artworks should be judged.210 Thus, the exaltation of Classical perfection by Winckelmann influenced aestheticians such as Kant, even if only through critique.

Lastly, Kant elaborates on the determination of the Ideal explicitly in terms of the human figure and form. Kant states briefly, “We must distinguish the normal idea of the beautiful from the ideal, which latter, on grounds already alleged, we can only expect in the human figure.”211 Here, Kant’s definition of the Ideal applies solely to the perfection of the human form, which echoes Winckelmann’s interpretation of the Greek Ideal as shown in the many “Greek” statues he discusses. Kant emphasizes the difference between the normal idea of the beautiful and the Ideal, which is not beauty to be seen in the world, but a psychologizing and intellectualizing of the human form. By specifically referring to

209 Kant, 1951, 71.
210 Davis, 2013, 111, argues that this conception of the “canon” more generally refers to the concept of “canonical idealization,” a concept which means the combination and then determined average of a series of forms.
211 Kant, 1951, 72.
the human form as the Ideal, Kant thinks within the framework conceived by Winckelmann.

Although Winckelmann does not influence the totality of Kant’s work, Kant’s discussion of the Ideal shows that he has read and responded to Winckelmann’s writings, and, thus, that Winckelmann’s paradigm of Greek superiority, contingent on abstract Ideals, had seeped into the public consciousness. The dialogue between Winckelmann’s aesthetic theory and Kant’s later aesthetic theory suggests the continuum of eighteenth century thought. Thus, the lasting impact of Winckelmann’s work affected many modes of discourse concerning the study of aesthetics, just as in Rome and the Renaissance texts often communicate with each other. The distinction between the eighteenth century and the earlier periods existed in the relationship of these texts to artists.

In conclusion, Winckelmann’s two texts discussed in this chapter illustrate his desire to return to a constructed antique mode of thought and practice, and his definition of the essential property in art, as relating to the Ideal inherently based on ancient Greek excellence. In Reflection on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture, Winckelmann juxtaposes modern sensibilities with the absence of a lost Ideal past, and desires a recovery of the values expressed within this Ideal time. He argues that this recovery will only be possible within art practice if artists imitate extant “Greek” works. He then elaborate on this concept in the History of the Art of Antiquity, by establishing Greek mental and creative supremacy through the factors of climate, freedom, and a desire to portray pure divine form. This analysis then goes on to influence the works of both Mengs and Canova, who accept Winckelmann’s definition of the Ideal and strive to imitate it in their own works, specifically through different interpretations of the Apollo
Belvedere. In this sense, theory and practice align, which differs significantly from the case studies within the two previous chapters. Whereas both Vitruvius and Alberti’s writings bear small influence on art practice within their given periods, Winckelmann’s beliefs irrevocably impact art production in the eighteenth century, culminating in the inception of the Neoclassical movement. Finally, Winckelmann’s influence extends beyond art practice and impacts later aesthetic theory, namely in the *Critique of Judgment*. In this sense, Winckelmann’s original theory directly instigates uniformity within subsequent practice and aesthetic discourse. This shift in which theory, practice, and subsequent theory all evoke the same principles, represents the propagation and proliferation of Winckelmann’s specific definition of the Greek Ideal, and its permeation into the Western canon at large at one specific moment in time, a theme throughout.
CONCLUSION

This project has explored the changing conceptions of the Greek Ideal through time, starting with Roman antiquity, moving into the Roman Renaissance, and ending with the Neoclassical definition of a Greek Ideal. In reviewing these three distinct time periods through the analyses of theory, practice, and reception, it becomes apparent that the Greek Ideal in Western culture has evolved through time while remaining somewhat fixed in conception. Greek influence on the subsequent Western world is undeniable, yet the designation of Greek artistic superiority, while rooted in such Greek texts as Thucydides when he references Pericles funeral oration, “To sum up: I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace.”212 Although this early example maintains Greek, specifically Athenian, superiority in antiquity, the later definition of a “Greek Ideal” represents a later abstraction, developed vaguely in Rome, complexly in the Renaissance, and, finally, more simply and didactically in the eighteenth century. The relationship with the Greek past evolved through time, and as time separated a real view of the Greeks from the people who studied them, Greek artifacts, or an idea of what they looked like, increasingly presented themselves as projections, similar to the shadows on the wall in Plato’s cave. Weak on cultural context and lacking any real exposure, later theorists more than artists speculated and defined Greek thought, practice, and forms to suit their own time and beliefs while always labeling the conception of the Greek as an Ideal.

In Chapter One, the conservative writings of Vitruvius advocated emulation of designs pioneered by Greek architects in order to achieve greatness in the same manner. Vitruvius recognized that the Greeks had already succeeded within the practice of architecture, and thus he encouraged patrons, specifically Octavian-Augustus, to follow this example. As evidenced by Augustus’ actual commissions, Greek influence maintained a significant role within Roman architectural and sculptural practice, yet this was not precisely initiated as an Ideal. Augustus combined different Greek period styles and motifs with traditional Italic elements to debut a new aesthetic that served in spreading his message of piety, peace, and prosperity under Roman rule. Although he utilized Greek elements to serve his program, Augustus did this to situate Roman achievement as the continuation of prior Greek culture, and suggest a triumph over Greek precedent through Roman intervention. In this way, the Greek Ideal within Roman antiquity represented a foundation from which Roman ingenuity could propel itself. Pliny understands Roman achievements, such as the Temple of Apollo Palatinus and the Ara Pacis, in a different way from Vitruvius; Pliny specifically highlights Italian innovations instead of Greek cultural achievement. Pliny’s reception seems critical of Vitruvius’ prescriptive theory but appreciative of the practice represented by Augustus’ commissions. This chapter thus articulates a complex and occasionally contradictory use of Greece by Roman theorists, artists, and critics. Closest in time Greece, and with a greater knowledge, the Romans assert Greek art as a measure, but not a clearly defined type.

In Chapter Two, Alberti’s prescriptive theory, coached in Humanist philosophy, heralds Nature as a supreme divinity, while naming antiquity as its closest rival. Within this framework, Alberti prescribes the conditions and formulae necessary for Renaissance painters and architects to elaborate on the work of the ancients he so reveres. Alberti stresses that although the ancients succeeded in their own time, modern painters and builders must incorporate modern innovation to rival antique practice, with the Ideal proportional systems found in the antique. The work of Michelangelo and Raphael, while answering Alberti’s challenge to rival antiquity, relied on personal study of physical remains of Classical Rome over Alberti’s theory of proportional harmony. Each artist used his own proximity to ancient artifacts to enhance his respective work. As with Augustus’ artists, these men did not imitate the work of the ancients but studied formal elements and translated them into their Christian Humanist context. Just like Alberti, Michelangelo and Raphael adjusted Classical elements to present a new representation of Christian iconography and ideology, but theirs are more organic and abstract, more anatomical than proportional. In his text on the lives of these artists, Vasari documents the processes and philosophies of these two men and asserts that they relied on but surpassed antique remains to inform their work. Like Alberti, Michelangelo, and Raphael, Vasari revered the antique as a foundational paradigm, yet the vagueness of antiquity as something other than an Ideal harkens back to Vitruvius. Further in time from Greece, little clear differentiation between Greek and Roman art appears in theory or practice. As in ancient Rome, Renaissance theory and practice were not yet aligned, yet a reverence for a poorly defined idea of the antique persisted.
The furthest from Classical Greece, Johann Joachim Winckelmann claims to see the clearest image. Chapter Three highlights the impact of Winckelmann’s confident writings on subsequent practice and the emerging philosophy of aesthetics. In the two texts discussed by Winckelmann, he advocates for a complete return to antique practice and argues that the only way to accomplish this is through direct imitation of existing works. He then goes on to enumerate the many factors he believes to be present in the specific cultural context of ancient Greece that provided for Greek superiority on all fronts. Through his description of the *Apollo Belvedere* among other works, Winckelmann declares Classically Greek what might not be, but so influences subsequent art practice, specifically the work of Anton Raphael Mengs and Antonio Canova. In each of their respective works, both artists imitate the work of the ancients, prescribed by Winckelmann, specifically the *Apollo Belvedere*. In this historical moment, practice and theory align to create the wide-reaching European movement of Neoclassicism. Unlike the Classicism of Rome and the Renaissance, which each proclaimed legitimacy from an idea of the past but produced original styles inspired by multiple sources experienced first-hand, Neoclassicism created more uniform work because it resulted more from a projected Ideal than a studied reality. The chapter concludes with analysis of an aesthetic text by Kant, to suggest that the parallels between the two writers not only to establish that Winckelmann’s theory was widely read, but that threatened by new knowledge that did not conform with pre-existing ideas, thinkers and practitioners withdrew into a metaphorical cave where the stories and images that told and showed themselves reinforced the Ideal they wanted to believe in.
This evolution of the Greek Ideal that ultimately culminates with the coalescence of theory and practice in the eighteenth century represents the complex set of stages of interpretation of the role of Greece in Western culture. The longevity of the idea of Greek influence on the Western tradition in art is undeniable but, it is important to understand that, at any one time, the Idea of Greece might say more about the present than about the Greeks. Contained within the temporal caves, the projection of the Greek Ideal became a reflection of the audience.

The continued, if any, impact of Greek influence on modern and contemporary art, specifically abstract art, seems worthy of future study. In analysis of abstract monumental pieces, the applicability and adaptability of an idea of the Greek Ideal would expand. Within abstract painting, the influence of the concept of beauty through proportional form, as represented in antique statuary, Renaissance Architecture, and Neoclassical painting, would recompose to reflect the complexity and contradictions and the hopes and aspirations of another period. Although most modern and contemporary practice does not strictly adhere to the West’s shadow-notion of a Greek Ideal, the interplay and disconnect between theory and practice, between an Ideal and a real, continues, raising questions about the source of all theoretical ideals. Within prescriptive ideas written in dense prose, do new eclecticisms still present a reformulation of the Greek Ideal?
Figure 1, *Apollo Bevedere*, c. 120-140 CE,
image courtesy of the author.
Figure 2, Map of Palatine Hill during reign of Augustus, Fillippo Coarelli, *Rome and Environs*, 2007, 141.
Figure 3, artist unknown, *Apollo and Herakles from Delphic Tripod at Temple of Apollo Palatinus*, (c. 28 BCE), courtesy of the Palatine
Figure 4, artist unknown, *Apollo as Citharist from Fresco at Temple of Apollo Palatinus*, (c. 28 BCE), courtesy of the Palatine
Figure 5, Map of Campus Martius during the reign of Augustus, Coarelli, 2007, 297.
Figure 6, Plan of Ara Pacis, Amanda Claridge,
Figure 7, Pax, from the *Ara Pacis*, (c. 9 BCE), image courtesy of the author.
Figure 9, G. Moretti, *North Frieze of the Ara Pacis Augustae*, Conlin (2012), 7.
Figure 10, *Aeneas from the Ara Pacis*, (c. 9 BCE), image courtesy of the author.
Figure 11, *Façade of Santa Maria Novella*, (1470), Leon Battista Alberti, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 12, *Laocōon*, (c. 27 BCE – 68 CE), image courtesy of the author.
Figure 13, *Dying Slave*, Michelangelo, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 14, *Rebellious Slave*, Michelangelo, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 15, *School of Athens*, Raphael, 1509-1511, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 16, *Parnassus*, Anton Raphael Mengs, 1761, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 17, *Perseus Triumphant*, Antonio Canova, 1801, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
Figure 18, Doryphoros, Copy of Bronze Original by Polyclitus, c. 120 AD, image courtesy of ARTSTOR.
PRIMARY SOURCES


SECONDARY SOURCES


