



Judith Leyster, Self-Portrait, 1633

AHST 2331-001 (21655)

Understanding Art

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Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45 pm

GR 2.530

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01/25/24

Women in the Art of the Classical World

Guest Speaker: Karlyn Lienhard



Barbara Kruger, Untitled, 1997

Women in the Art of the Classical World

The term "**Classical Antiquity**" refers to the period of classical civilizations (c.1500 BCE - 450 CE), centered upon the cultures of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, as well as their prototypes (Aegean and Etruscan cultures) and derivatives (eg. the effect of Greek culture on Turkey, Persia, Central Asia, India and Egypt, a process known as Hellenism; Celtic culture, Early Christian culture). Classical Antiquity is generally focused on the Mediterranean Sea.



Crete
Cyprus
Athens
Rome

Crete: The Minoan Civilization



Fig. 2.1 Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, ca 1600 BCE









1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE

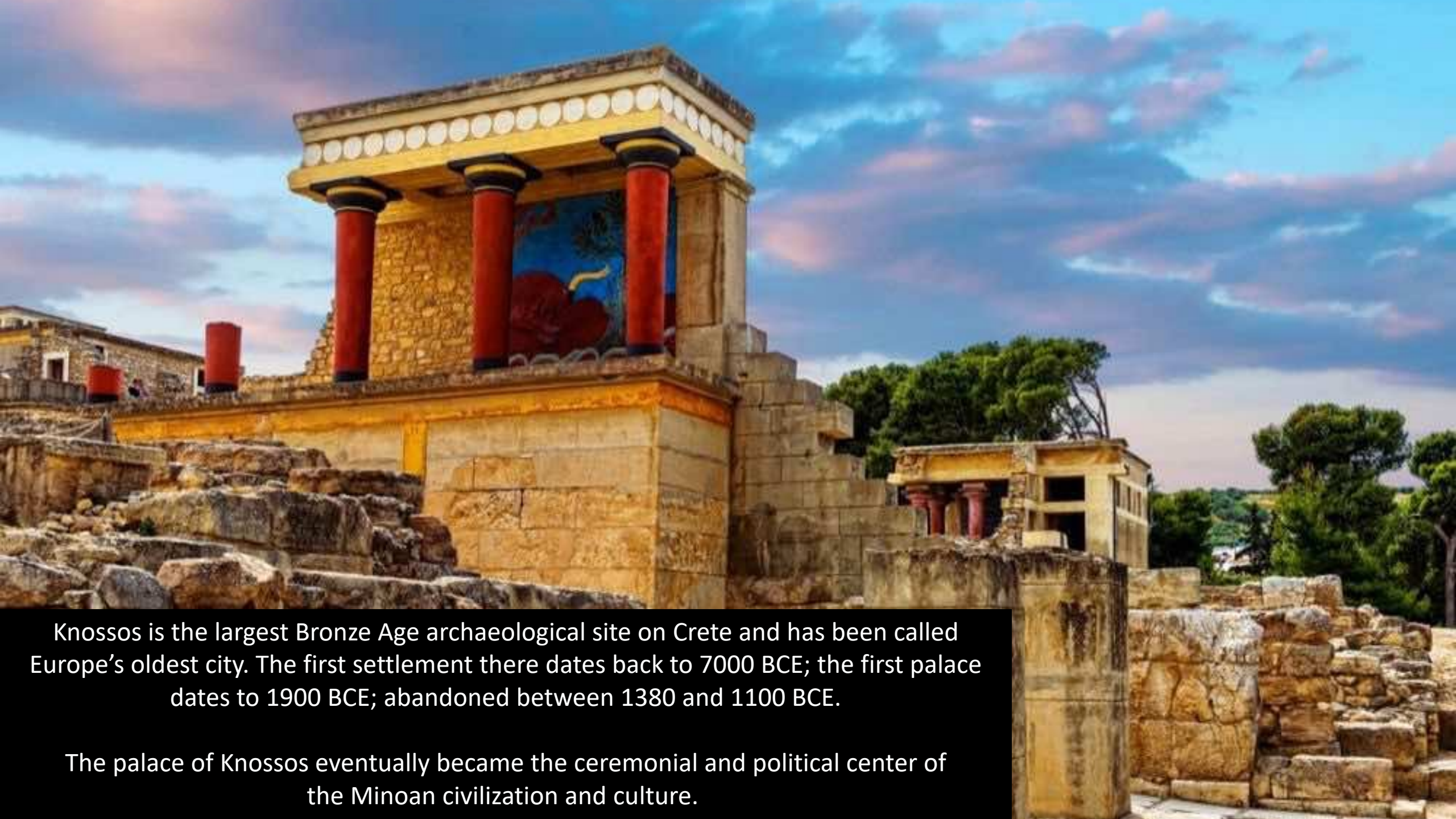


Fig. 2.1 Snake Goddess from the palace at Knossos, ca 1600 BCE

Was Crete a Matriarchy?



Objects from the temple repositories at Knossos after its discovery in 1903



Knossos is the largest Bronze Age archaeological site on Crete and has been called Europe's oldest city. The first settlement there dates back to 7000 BCE; the first palace dates to 1900 BCE; abandoned between 1380 and 1100 BCE.

The palace of Knossos eventually became the ceremonial and political center of the Minoan civilization and culture.



Knossos is the largest of the “palaces” erected by the Bronze Age Minoan civilization on Crete. Our present interactions with Knossos are the result of the work of Arthur Evans, who excavated the site beginning in 1899. His and later works revealed a highly complex civilization, of which previous material evidence was almost nonexistent.





One aspect of the palaces that is undeniable, however, is their chosen physical location. Vincent Scully has argued that the selection of Minoan palace sites and their architectural orientation were dependent on the relationship of the surrounding landscape to the “body” of the Earth Mother. All Cretan palaces were located in an enclosing valley oriented toward a conical hill and double-peaked or cleft mountain in the distance. The closer cone was perceived as the body of the Great Mother Goddess. The horns of the more distant mountain created a profile evocative of a pair of horns sacred to the goddess. Thus, locations of Cretan palaces were determined by their proximity to the center of life and the divine powers of the Earth Mother Goddess.

-- Wendy Slatkin



Bull-leaping Fresco from the Palace at Knossos at Crete, 1450 BCE. There are three individuals, two women (one at the front, one at the back), and a male youth shown balancing on the bull.









"Marine Style" flask with Octopus,
1500-1450 BCE



Minoan maiden with prayer beads





Cyprus



Kourion archaeological site, Cyprus



Fig. 2.2 Terracotta Statuette of Woman with Bird Face, 1450-1200 BCE

This figurine is typical of Cypriot coroplastic art. A coroplast was a modeler of terracotta figurines in Greek antiquity.

Kourotrophos – Greek for “child-nurturer”
Term for sculptures of women holding babies



1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE



Fig. 2.2 Terracotta Statuette of Woman with Bird Face, 1450-1200 BCE

Greece and Rome

- Public versus Private Spaces in the Polis
- Symposia
- Age differences between husband and wife contributed to further separation of sexes.
- Legal rights of women?
- Women and literacy?
- Infant girls versus infant boys
- How did girls fare in Greek culture?

Archeological evidence indicates that the Greeks practiced female infanticide and that males outnumbered females by at least two to one. This smaller proportion of females surviving infancy extends from the Greek Dark Ages (1100-800 BCE) through the classical and Hellenistic periods. By the Hellenistic era (fourth to first centuries BCE) even fewer children of either sex were raised to maturity, and a Greek girl who survived infancy was fed an inferior diet.

-- Wendy Slatkin

There was one job for women....

Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE

- What is the prothesis?

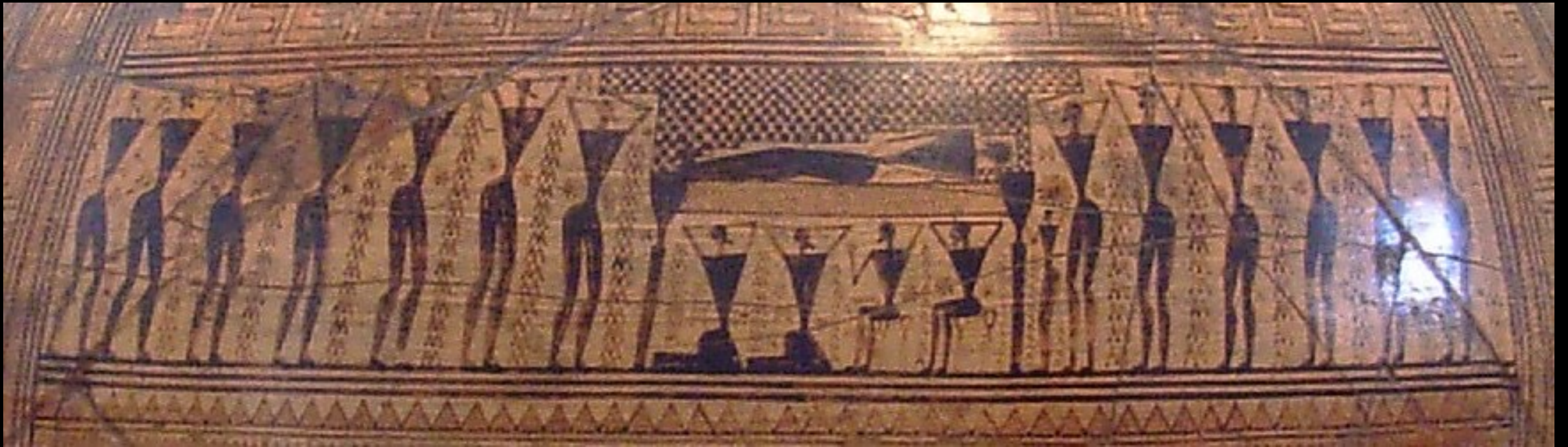


Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE





Process for Black-figure vases

- Levigation: purifying clay by letting impurities sink to the bottom
- Wedging: kneading
- Pulled on the potter's wheel
- Sections dried and joined with *slip*
- Decorated
 - With slips containing pigments from metal
 - (black glaze); purple-red; white
 - Applied with brushes
 - Fired in kilns
- In firing, the pots turned red and the painted parts black
- Three stages, to oxidize, vitrify the black slip, and reoxidize the rest of the pot



Fig. 2.3 Dipylon amphora close front, prothesis scene, ca 740 BCE

- The prothesis is the space between the handles on the vase.
- What does this scene tell us about the role of women in mourning?
- What kind of jobs did women do in relation to the dead and funerals?
- The depiction of human bodies here is rendered in the late geometric style.

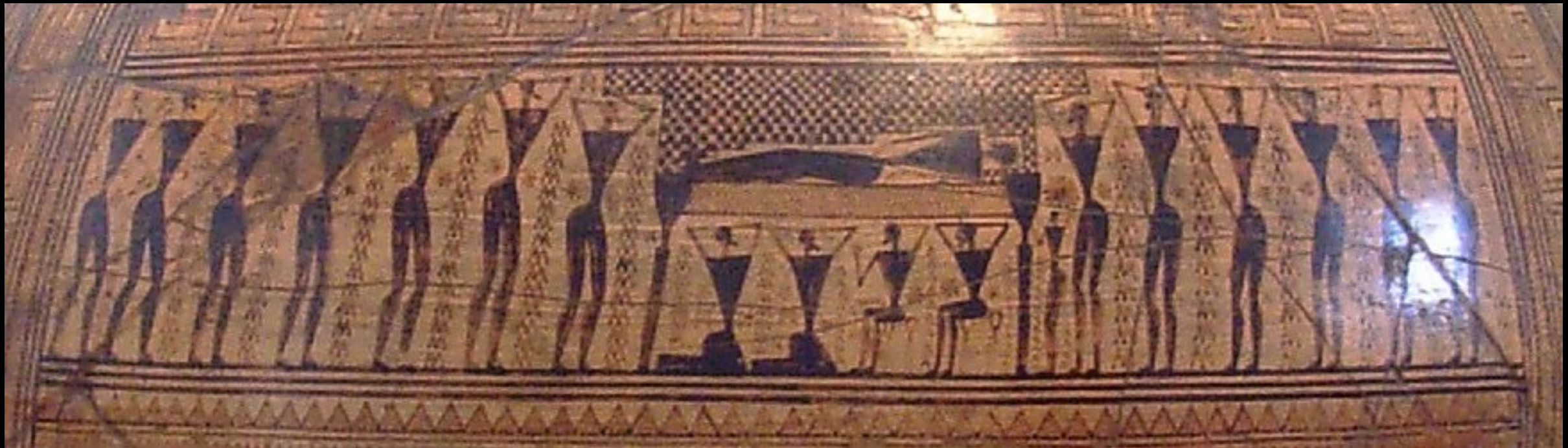
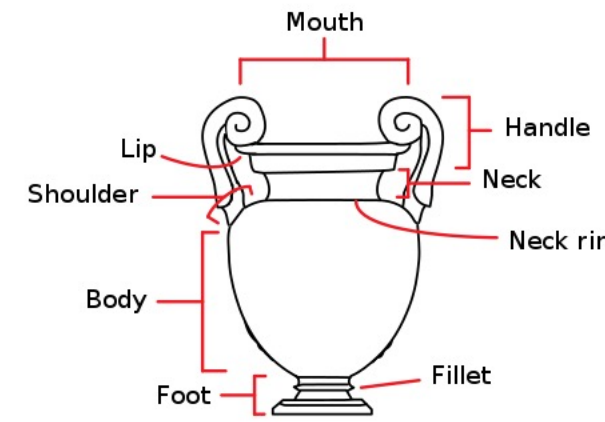


Fig. 2.4 Amasis Painter, ca 560 BCE

Black figure painting

What are the women
doing in this painted
decoration on this vase?



31.11.10

Fig. 2.4 Amasis Painter, ca 560 BCE

Women and Weaving

- What exactly are they weaving?



Amasis paints an everyday scene of women weaving
In the centre of the scene, two women work the upright loom



One woman (unseen), loads wool onto the scales, while her partner holds the scales to weigh the wool.



On the shoulder of the vase, a seated woman, perhaps a goddess, is approached by four youths and eight dancing maidens. To what does Slatkin say this scenery relates?

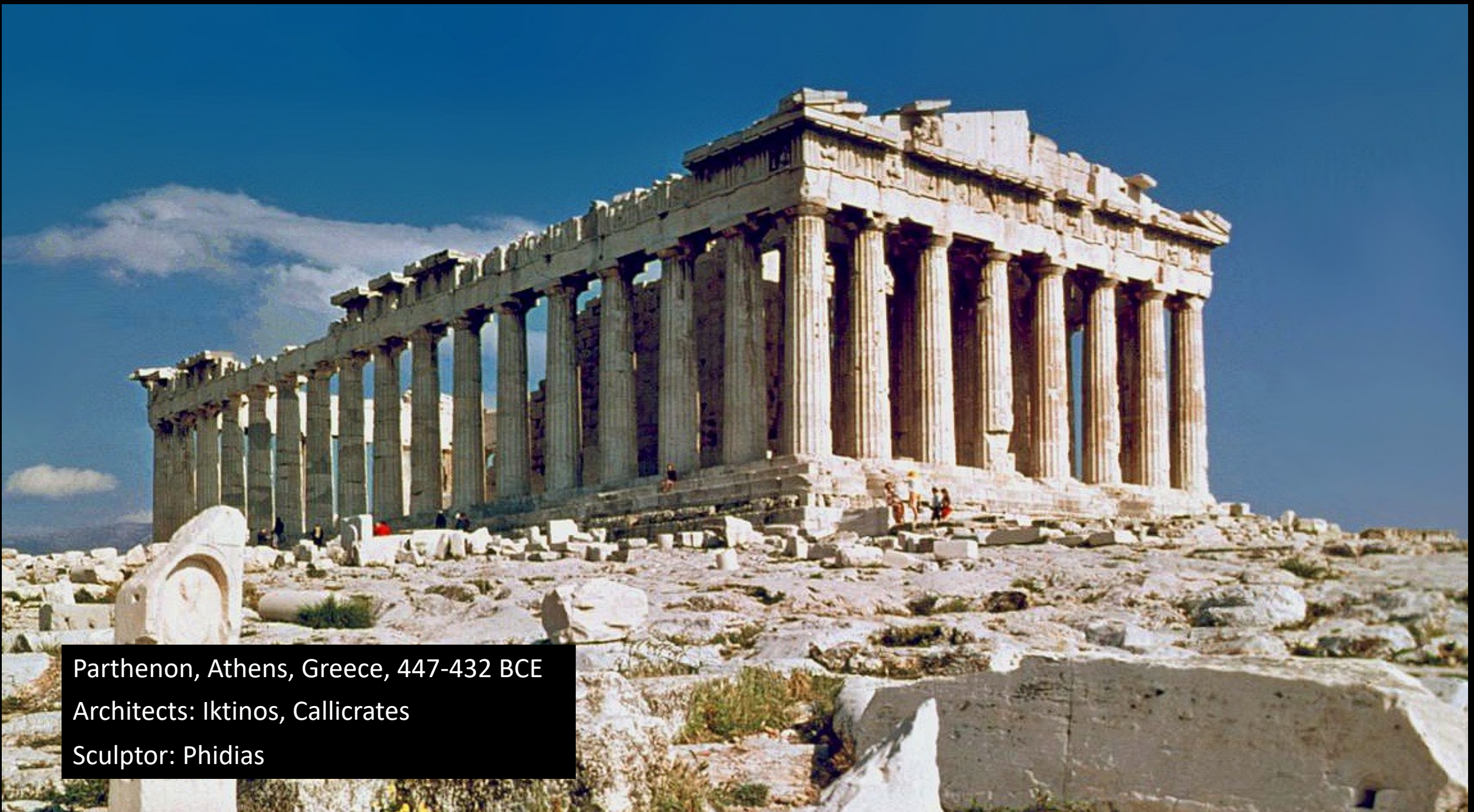


Women and the Panathenaia

- What is the Panathenaia?

Women and the Panathenaia

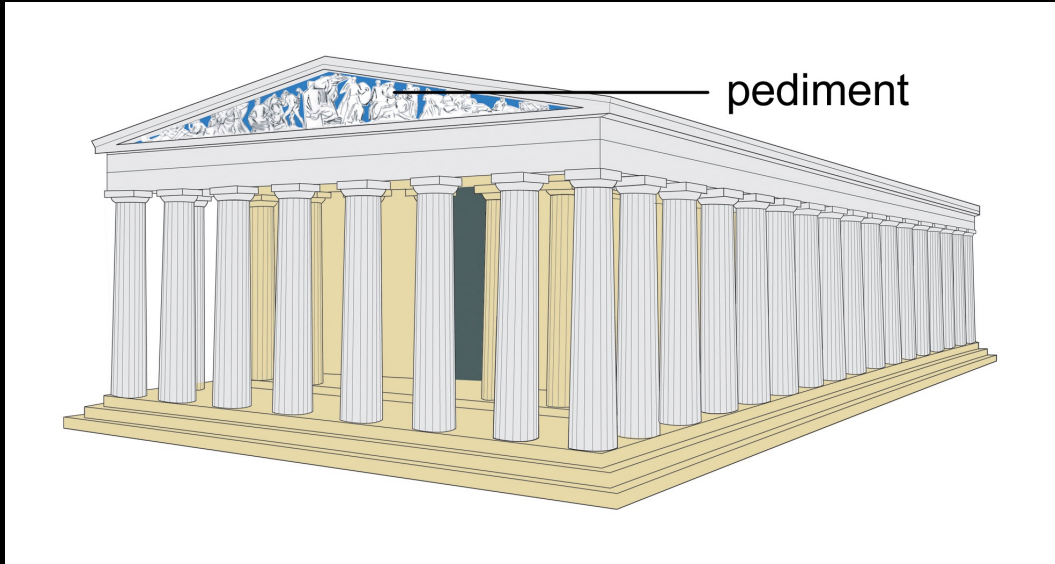
- The Panathenaia was an annual festival to honor the goddess Athena, the Goddess of War, the female counterpart of Ares, and patron goddess of Athens. Every four years a larger celebration was held called the “Greater Panathenaia.”



Parthenon, Athens, Greece, 447-432 BCE

Architects: Iktinos, Callicrates

Sculptor: Phidias



Left: Elgin Marbles, British Museum, 447-438 BCE/1801-12 British Museum

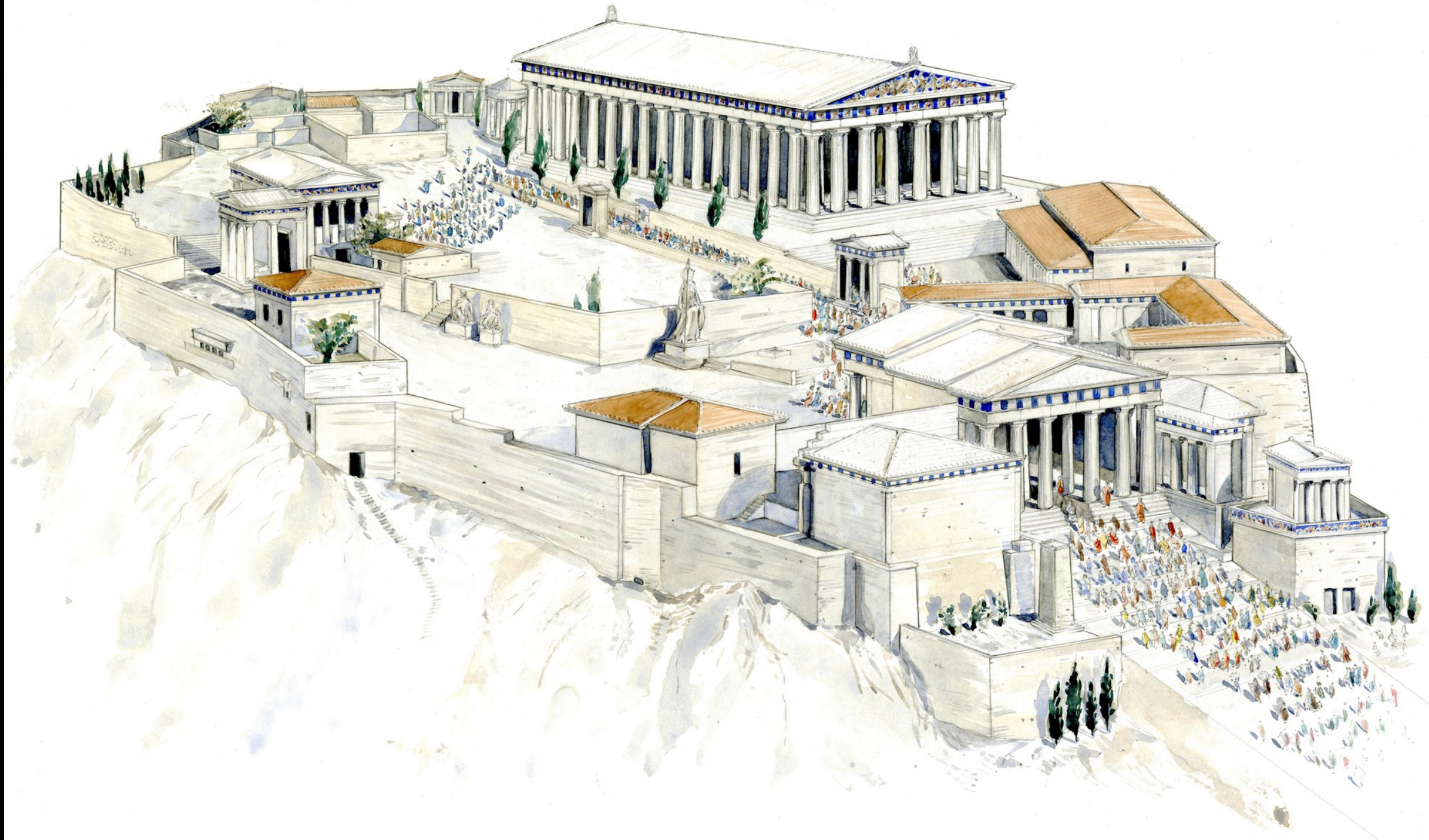


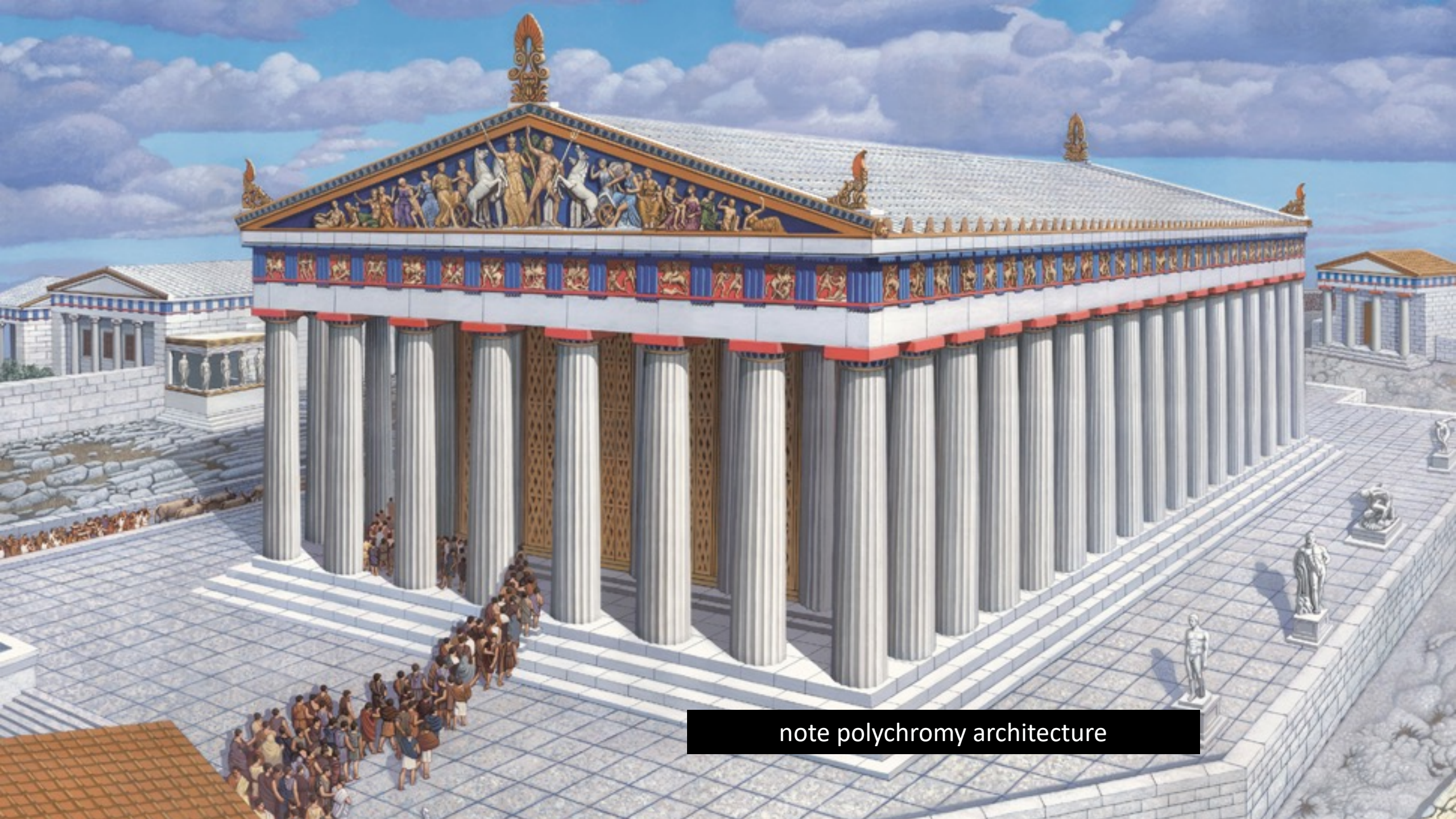
Many of the examples of images of women and evidence of women's activities from the period are from the Greek city-state of Athens. -- Wendy Slatkin

What is a city-state?



city-state: An independent self-governing urban community.
Greek term is *polis*.





note polychromy architecture



Athena Parthenos inside the center of the Parthenon, reconstruction in Nashville from 1897

The Athena Parthenos is a massive chryselephantine (gold and ivory) sculpture of the Greek goddess Athena made by Phidias and his assistants housed in the Parthenon. It was the focal point of the building.



PARTHENON AND LAKE—CENTENNIAL PARK—NASHVILLE—TENN.—5

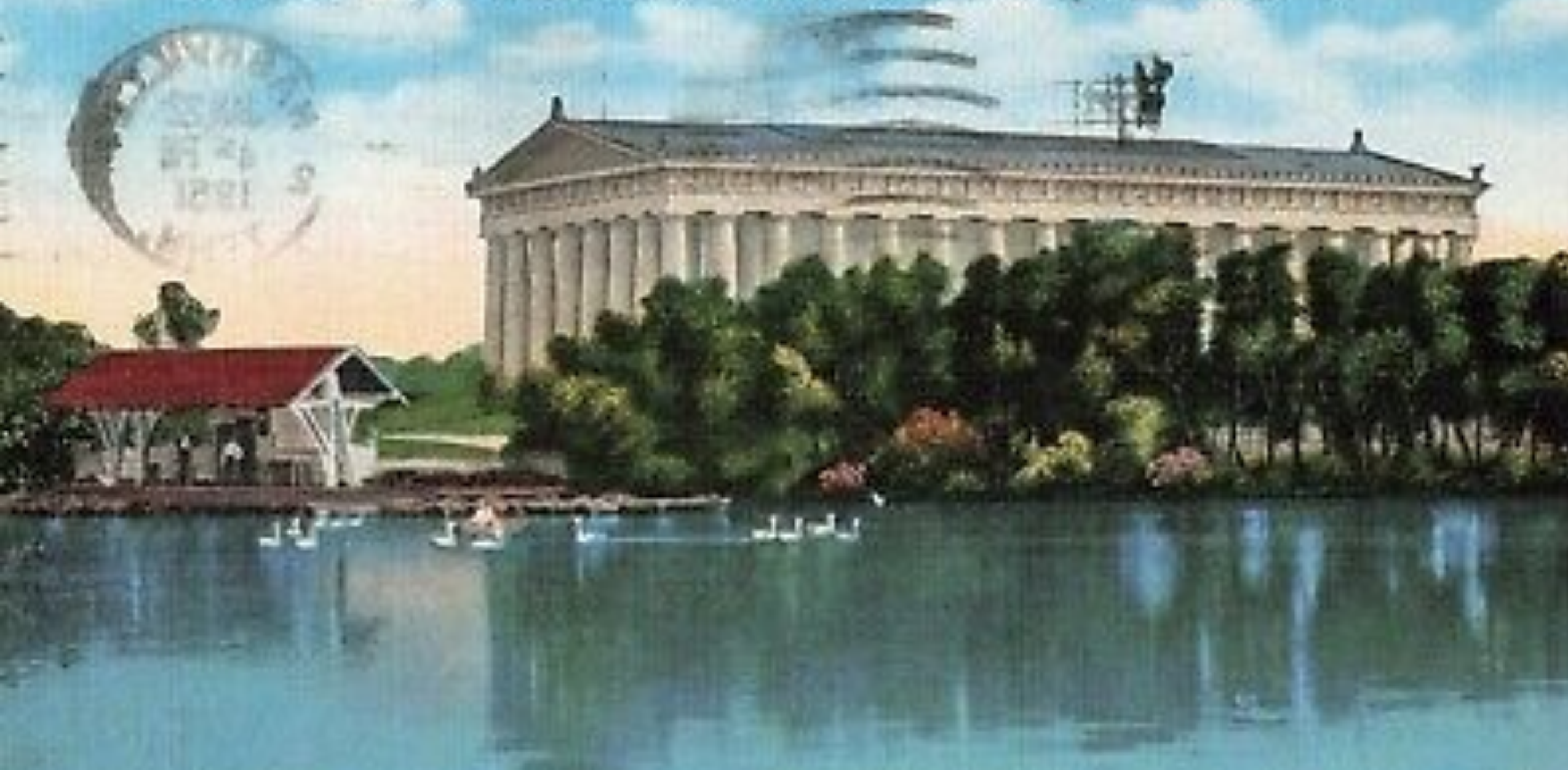




Fig. 2.5 Peplos scene from the Parthenon, East Frieze, ca. 447-438 BCE



- The “History of Sexuality” and Classical Sculpture in Athens
- The Female Nude

Sex, Sexuality, Gender pp. 26-27



Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 350-340 BCE



Kritios Boy ca 480 BCE



A well-preserved Roman period copy of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos. The original was in Bronze and cast ca 440 BCE

What does Slatkin say about sculptures like these from antiquity?



Kritios Boy ca 480 BCE



A well-preserved Roman period copy of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos. The original was in Bronze and cast ca 440 BCE

Michel Foucault is one of the most important scholars who analyzed surviving written texts to study the history of sexuality in Greek and Roman culture. Foucault identifies the relationship between adult men and adolescent boys as the location or “site” of classical Athens’s “problematizations” of sexual relations. -- Wendy Slatkin



Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 350-340 BCE

Contrapposto (Italian: “**opposite**”), in the visual arts, a sculptural scheme, originated by the ancient Greeks, in which the standing human figure is poised such that the weight rests on one leg (called the engaged leg), freeing the other leg, which is bent at the knee.

Verisimilitude A work of art, or any part of a work of art, has verisimilitude if it seems realistic. The word verisimilitude is derived from the Latin words verum and similis meaning “truth” and “similar.” A verisimilitudinous story has **details, subjects, and characters that seem similar or true to real life.**



Fig. 2.6 Praxiteles, Aphrodite of Knidos, ca 350-340 BCE



1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE



1.1 Venus of Willendorf front view, ca 28,000-25,000 BCE

Fig. 2.7 Colossal statue of Artemisia from the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, around 350 BCE

- Women Artists in Greece and Rome
- What do we know about Ancient Greek and Roman women painters?
- How do we know this information?

Pliny the Elder on Ancient Greek and Roman Painters

Women too have painters: Timarte the daughter of Mikon painted Artemis at Ephesos in a picture of very archaic style. Eirene, the daughter of the pupil of the painter Kratinos, painted a maiden at Eleusis ... Iaia of Kyzikos, who remained single all her life, worked at Rome ... both with the brush and with the cestrum on ivory. She painted chiefly portraits of women, and also a large picture of an old woman at Naples, and a portrait of herself, executed with the help of a mirror. No artist worked more rapidly than she did and her picture had such merit that they sold for higher prices than those of Sopolis and Dionysios, well-known contemporary painters.



Alcaeus (left) and Sappho. Side A of an Attic red-figure kalathos, circa 470 BC. The poet Sappho (ca 600 BCE) hailed from the island of Lesbos, whose culture incorporated a high regard for women.



Hypatia (350-415 CE) Greek NeoPlatonist philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician
She is known to have constructed plane astrolabes (an ancient handheld model of the universe) like this one from the 11th century.

What according to Slatkin is the relationship between women and the origin of painting? pp. 29-30



Left: Benjamin West, *The Origin of Painting*, 1795

This is a pen and ink drawing illustrating the story of the origin of painting, also known as 'The Dawn of Portraiture'. West depicted two entwined figures sharing a seat. The male figure on the left holds up a lamp while his female companion paints the outline of his shadow on the wall. This refers to the myth of the 'Corinthian Maid', Dibutades, who drew around her lover's shadow on a wall in order to preserve his image as a memento while he was away. This poetic explanation for the origin of painting was recounted by Pliny the Elder after a Greek myth.



Joseph Wright, *The Corinthian Maid*, 1782-1784

Painted for Josiah Wedgwood, a pioneer of pottery manufacturing in England. His pottery copied the shapes of ancient vessels as well as their decoration, borrowing motifs from ancient glass, cameos, and relief carvings.

<https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/lessons-activities/origin-myths/corinthian-maid.html>

Jean Baptiste Regnault,
Origin of Painting, 1785



Left: Joseph Benoit
Suvee, Invention of Art
of Drawing, 1793

Right: Karl Friedrich
Schinkel, Origin of
Painting, 1830





Joseph Wright, The Corinthian Maid, 1782-1784 – based on Pliny the Elder's 1st-century ideas



Bird-man and the disemboweled bison, Cave at Lascaux, France, 40,000-17,000 BCE

Rome

- Images of Women on Historical Reliefs
- Elite Women Patrons
 - Livia, wife of Augustus
 - Plancia Magna



Fig. 2.8 Family of emperor group on Ara pacis, 13-9 BCE

Ara Pacis Augustae, 13-9 BCE, originally in Rome



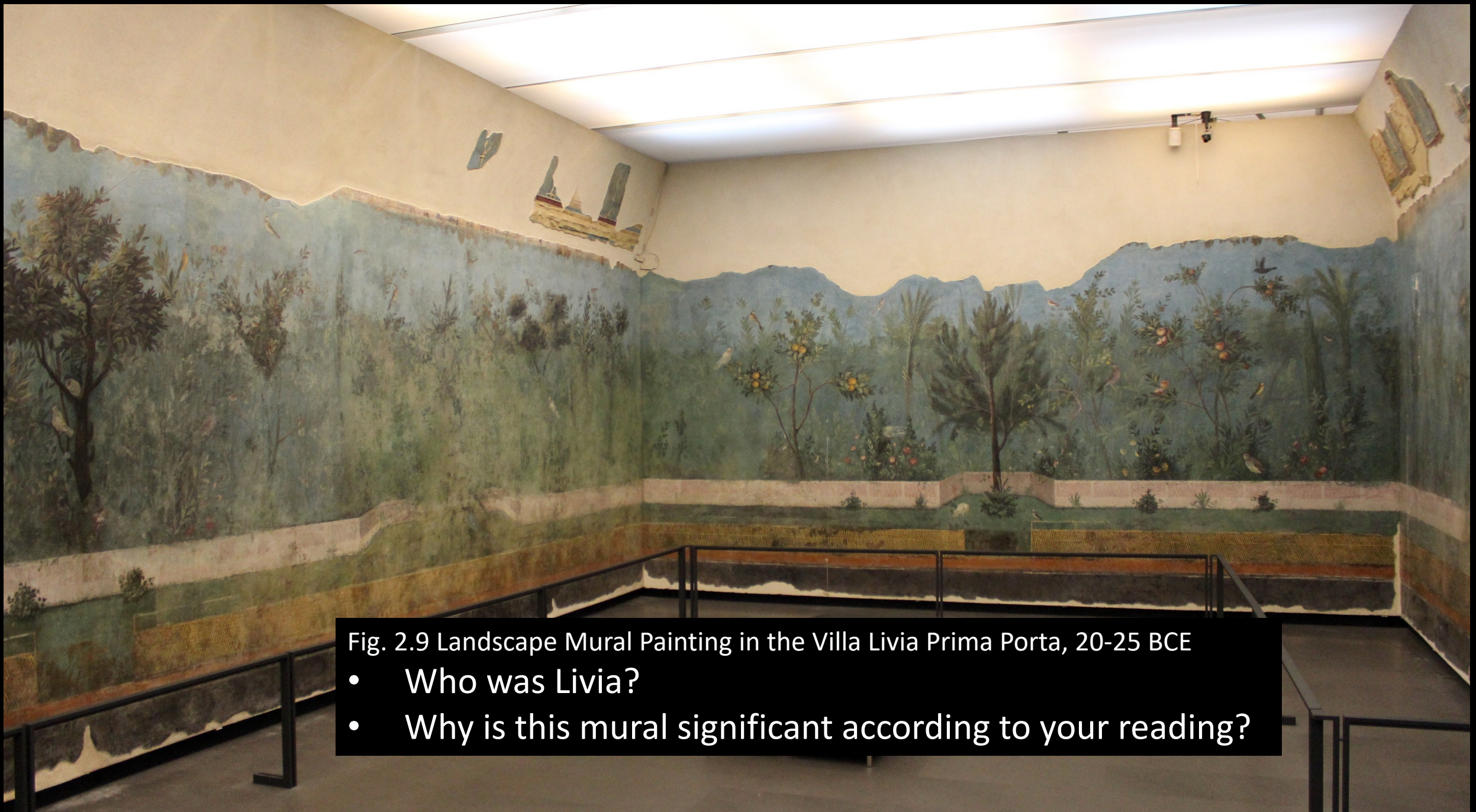
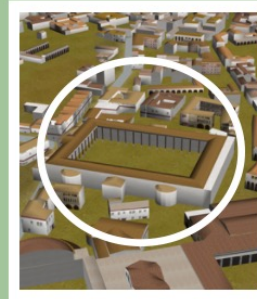
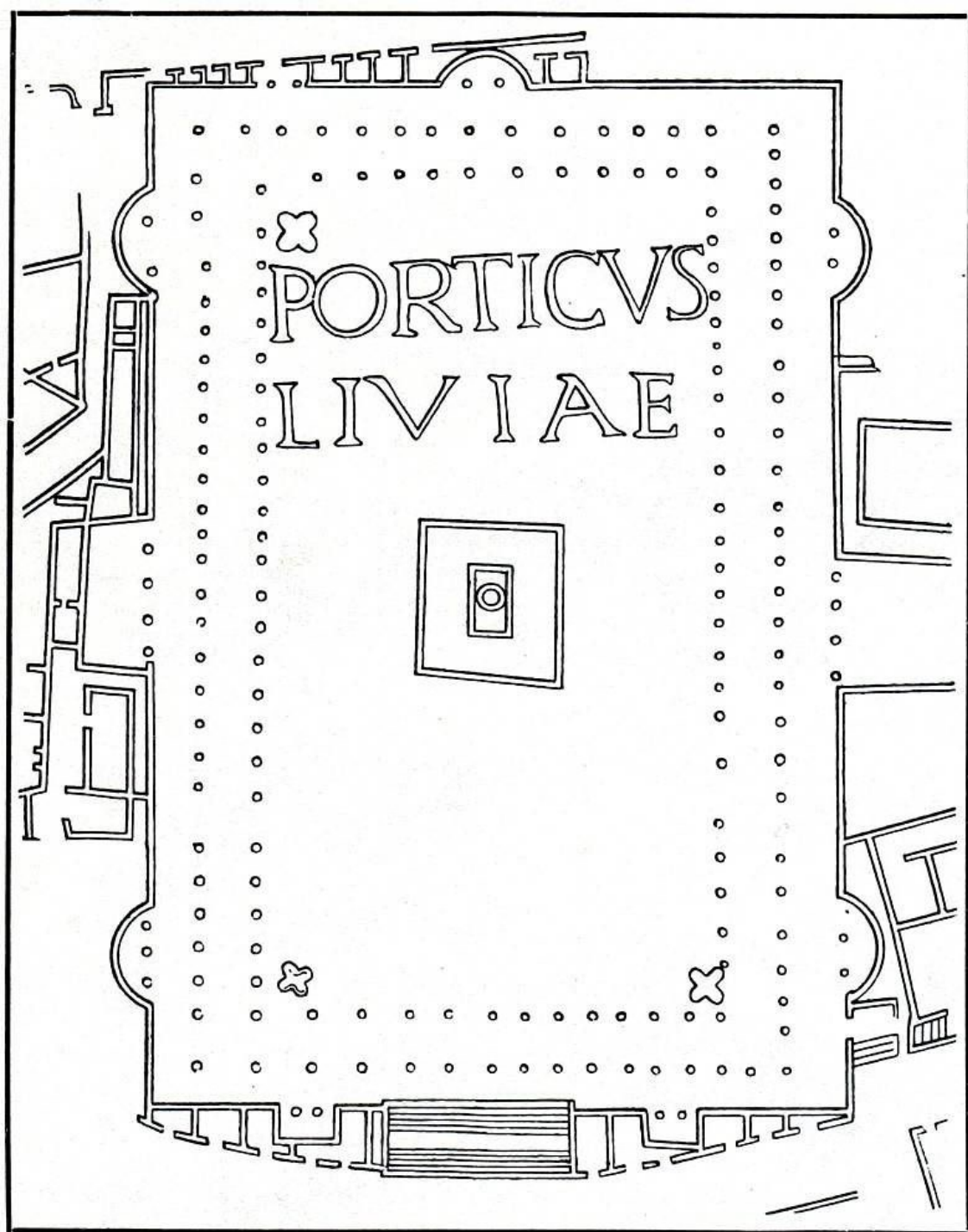
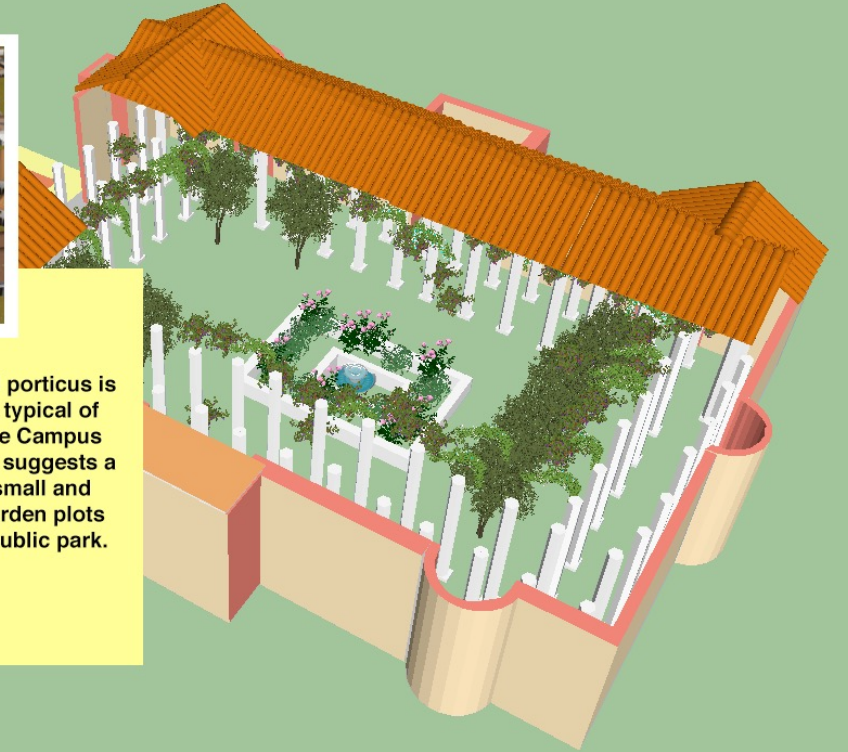


Fig. 2.9 Landscape Mural Painting in the Villa Livia Prima Porta, 20-25 BCE

- Who was Livia?
- Why is this mural significant according to your reading?



The isolated porticus is (probably) typical of those in the Campus Martius and suggests a taste for small and finished garden plots even as a public park.



The Porticus Liviae, a recreational space for the Roman people surrounded by gardens

<https://raclim.hosting.nyu.edu/gardens/public-gardens/porticus-of-livia/>

Perge City Gate Complex



Plancia Magna was a prominent woman of Perge in the Roman provinces, today modern Turkey. She lived in the the 1st and 2nd centuries.



Fig. 2.10 Funerary Monument for Sextus Maelius Stabilio, Vesinia Lucunda, and Sextus Maelius Faustus