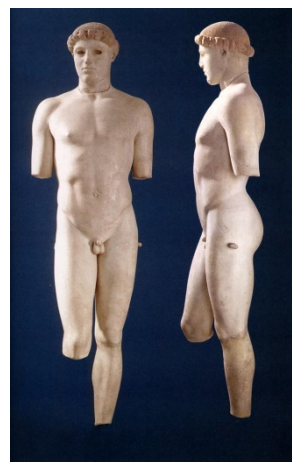


Ideals of Beauty in Greek and Modern art

In Ancient Greece, common forms of beauty were often portrayed through art, particularly sculptures. Likewise modern art, such as advertising is also another common form of beauty. Kritios Boy (Kritios, c.490 BCE, found on the Acropolis of Athens) is an example of an ideal young Greek man. He belongs to the late archaic period and shows the first signs of contrapposto amongst sculptures. His musculature shows an ephebe, with naturalistic abdominals revealing a physically fit man (1). This was beautiful to the Greeks because they formed their ideas of beauty based upon the sculptures that were produced. Unlike earlier sculptures, his muscles are becoming more defined as his muscular and skeletal structure is depicted with unforced life-like accuracy (2). He was sculpted to portray a young athlete. In ancient Greece, sports (particularly the Olympics) were a significant thing for men to participate in, so it was ideal for them to look like athletes, because only the best men were Athletes. The young man could also reinforce the pederasty relationships seen in Athens at the time (3).



There is a relationship to how beauty is portrayed in modern 21st century art. In advertising, generally wherever a young man is shown, he is strong and has particularly defined muscles (2). This idea most likely was influenced by the Greeks and ancient art of different forms as artists and sculptors began developing ideas of beauty on a basis of what others believed was beautiful, in this case the Greeks. It is more common to have a variety of judgements about young men being beautiful in modern art, as you could have a more stylish male model type man, or a strong athletic muscled man, and both can be perceived as beautiful because of modern society being more accepting, yet still incredibly critical about beauty.



The ideal forms of beauty in woman shown in art are a lot different to the ideal forms of beauty in men shown in art. The Caryatids from the Erechtheion are an example (c421 -406 BCE, South porch, Erechtheion, Acropolis of Athens). She was sculpted with curves and layers of flowing fabric (1) to depict her conservative respectable nature. Her idealism has been slightly altered, as this portrayal of her is in column form, making her figure slightly wider. However her human form is visible underneath the thin drapery (2), making her more realistic and life like. Regardless of the ideas that the Caryatids were woman who betrayed Athens in the Persian wars and were condemned to slavery, they served as a beautiful warning to others. This was how women were usually expected to dress in ancient Greece, being covered up was a common normality and dressing any other way would be absurd (2). She has curved womanly features such as a swelling of the hips and evident breasts.



However in modern art, the idealistic beauty in woman is very small and petite. Models in advertising are often very skinny (2), which like art from the ancient world does, influences modern society to force these ideals of "beauty" onto young woman. Shown here is Miranda Kerr. She is portrayed as the ideal form of beauty for young woman in the 21st century. She is very skinny and petite, and lacks the womanly curves that were once shown upon Greek statues such as the Caryatids. This is because, as it was apparent in the ancient times, these ideals of beauty were influential because that's what everyone believed.



The influences in art have been greater among men, than they have been for woman. However beauty or what is perceived as beauty in general is and always has been incredibly influential on people because that is what everyone thought. Though beauty shown through art or any other forms has changed, people's willingness to step aside from the flow of society's beliefs is still not apparent.