

Ancient Roman Art

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

The Greek Ideal in Roman Art



“Learning requires imitation and inspiration, which today are marginalized by a concept of originality that produces as its inevitable double the specter of plagiarism, a specter rooted in the fear that we might have more to learn from others than from ourselves.” –Peter Stallybrass

Q: Why did the Romans copy so many Greek sculptures, styles, and artistic ideas?

A: The ancient Romans truly admired and respected classical Greece. Thus, it is unsurprising to learn that the Romans found inspiration from Greek art...and often copied it! Today in the United States, we might be taken aback by the idea of copying from another culture, especially given that many schools and employers forbid most forms of copying (“plagiarizing”). For the Romans, though, copying the Greeks was commonplace. Furthermore, had the Romans not copied so many Greek works, the concepts of the originals might be lost forever. Imagine not having that key piece of art history. Below is one popular example in which an original *and* a copy still exist:



Aphrodite of Milos (popularly known as *Venus de Milo*) | Greek original from c. 130-100 B.C., marble

Musée du Louvre, Paris

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Venus | Roman copy from 1st-2nd Century A.D., marble

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*Now on display in...

KNIGHTS!