

1. APHRODITE. 8th to 1st Century BC

Veiled

Greek sculptors have depicted Aphrodite naked since the middle of the 4th century BC, and this is the form in which we most often imagine her today. However, the earliest Greek depictions show the goddess clothed from head to toe, as was also the standard depiction of her pre-Eastern counterparts.¹ Aphrodite shares a score of traits with her distant predecessor, Sumerian Inanna, which the Akkadians adopted as Ishtar.² The Greeks became acquainted with Ishtar thanks to the Phoenicians dwelling on the Syrio-Palestinian coast, where they worshiped her as Astarte.

Nevertheless, we find depictions of naked women throughout the whole Mediterranean, and their epicentres where the primary stimuli originated were in Egypt and Mesopotamia. These two cultures mutually influenced one another in terms of depictions of naked women. The series of nude female statues, which begins in the second half of the 4th millennium BC, is characterized by nudity and gestures, hands lowered along the body, cupping one or both breasts, one hand pointing to the lap, where the genitals may be depicted in detail.³ At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, unmistakable innovations were made in these depictions. While in the past often grotesquely enlarged reproductive organs symbolizing the fertility of the mythical being often dominated, the new type corresponded to visual experience, aiming to please the eye and create physical arousal.⁴ In the Near East, the tradition of these seductive female nudes continued on into the first millennium BC.⁵ In the 8th century BC, we encounter their reception in Greece, but in no way can we claim with certainty that they depict Aphrodite.⁶ Furthermore, in the 7th – 6th centuries, Greek depictions of naked women rapidly disappeared.

An exception to this rule was Cyprus, where a female deity that was depicted naked had been worshiped since the second millennium BC.⁷ This deity was simply

¹ Cf. Henriette Broekema, *Inanna, Lady of Heaven and Earth. History of a Sumerian Goddess* (Leeuwarden: Elikser B. V. Uitgeverij 2014), 372-380.

² Cf. Stephanie Lynn Budin, *The Origin of Aphrodite* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2003); David T. Sugimoto (ed.), *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar, Astarte, Aphrodite* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014).

³ Cf. Peter Roger Stuart Moorey, *Idols of the People: Miniature Images of Clay in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25-35; Stephanie L. Budin, "The Nude Female in the Southern Levant. A Mixing of Syro-Mesopotamian and Egyptian Iconographies," in *Cult and Ritual on the Levantine Coast and its Impact on the Eastern Mediterranean Realm*, ed. Anne-Marie Maila Afeiche (Beyrouth: Ministère de la culture, 2015), 315-335.

⁴ See Zainab Bahrani, "The Iconography of the Nude in Mesopotamia," in *Notes in the History of Art* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 12-19; id., *Women of Babylon. Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 83-90.

⁵ See Amy Rebecca Gansel, "Images and Conceptions of Ideal Feminine Beauty in Neo-Assyrian Royal Contexts, c. 883-627 BCE," in: *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian Brown et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 391-420.

⁶ See Stephanie Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin." Zur Ikonographie und Deutung unbekleideter weiblicher Figuren in der frühgeschichtlichen Kunst* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1990).

⁷ See Danielle Leibundgut Wieland, "Tonstatuen und -statuetten der paphischen Göttin aus dem Heiligtum der Aphrodite in Alt-Paphos auf Cypern," in *Figurines de terre cuite en Méditerranée grecque et*

called the Goddess, or the Goddess of Paphos according to the place of the same name where her primary temple was located. According to ancient Greek tradition, the cult of Aphrodite came from Cyprus. According to Herodotus, the Temple of Aphrodite Ourania (i.e. the Heavenly) was in Ashkelon, Palestine. *This temple, as I learn from what I hear, is the oldest of all temples of the goddess, for the temple in Cyprus was founded from it, as the Cyprians themselves say: and the temple on Cythera was founded by Phoenicians from the same land of Syria.*⁸ Pausanias repeated Herodotus's theory in connection with Aphrodite's temple at the Athenian Agora, which proves that this opinion in the Greco-Roman world was dominant and held fast until at least the 2nd century.⁹ Contemporary scholarship also basically agrees with Herodotus's version. Cyprus thus seemed predestined to be the place where Aphrodite's visual type was created. However, she was not matched with the Goddess of Paphos until the 4th century BC and the first depictions of Aphrodite as we know them from Greece appeared there for the first time.¹⁰ In Cyprus, roots of the cult of Aphrodite stretch back at the end of the 2nd millennium BC, but in the next millennium Cypriots only passively adopted artistic stimuli from other Greek communities.

In the 8th century BC, the Greek mythological tradition began to take on the form that we know today. One of the oldest Greek written documents is the inscription in Euboean script from the third quarter of the 8th century BC on a ceramic cup produced in Rhodes but found on the Italian island of Ischia.¹¹ In this inscription, the simple ceramic drinking vessel is compared to the legendary golden chalice of the mythical King Nestor. *I am the cup of Nestor good for drinking. Whoever drinks from this cup, desire for beautifully crowned Aphrodite will seize him instantly.*¹² The inscription proves that Aphrodite was associated from the very beginning with entertainment, alcoholic intoxication and sex. The circumstances surrounding the creation of the inscription and its humorous tone point to the intimate relationship that would be typical of this deity until the end of the ancient period.

Among the Olympian gods, only Aphrodite had a name that declared her sphere of activity. The phrase "that which pertains to Aphrodite" (τα ἀφροδισια) meant sexual intercourse, the verb ἀφροδισιάζειν mean to fornicate, etc.¹³ In the first Greek literary works, Homer's epic poems Iliad and Odyssey, which are dated to the 8th century BC, there is not a single mention of Aphrodite's nakedness. Nonetheless, Helen in Homer's Iliad realized *when she marked the beautiful neck of the goddess, her lovely bosom, and in Homer's hymn to Aphrodite her tender throat and her white breast*

romaine, eds. Arthur Muller and Ergün Laflı (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Éditions du Septentrion, 2015), 589-603.

⁸ Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.105. English translation A. D. Godley.

⁹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.14.

¹⁰ Cf. Giorgos Papantoniou, "Hellenising the Cypriot Goddess: Reading the Amathousian Terracotta Figurines," in: *From Pella to Gandhara: Hybridisation and Identity in the Art and Architecture of the Hellenistic East*, ed. Anna Kouremenos et al. (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2011), 35-48.

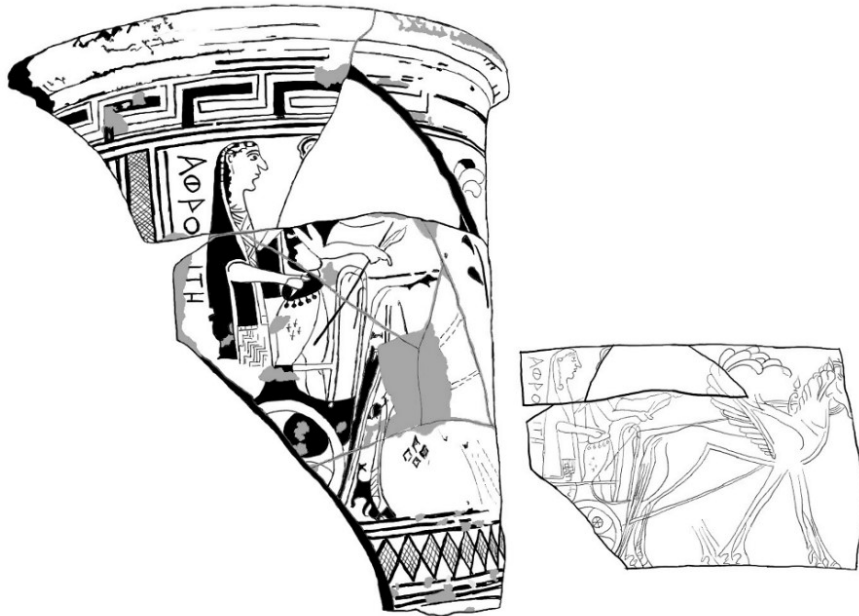
¹¹ Rhodian cup (kotyle), 740-720 BC. Ischia, Museo di Pitheculasae 166788.

¹² English translation Ch. Faraone. For Nestor's cup see Homer, *The Illiad* 11, 632-637. Cf. Matthias Steinhart, "Zwei 'Becher des Nestor' und der Zauber der Aphrodite," *Würzburger Jahrbücher* 36 (2012): 7-38.

¹³ See Barbara Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros: The Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult* (London: Routledge, 2007), chap. 4 - 7.

are also emphasized.¹⁴ Contrary to Athena and Artemis, Aphrodite was not upset in the slightest to be seen naked by someone – rather the contrary. When she was caught *in flagranti* while fornicating with Ares, Aphrodite apparently did not mind the Olympian gods watching her; the other goddesses, however, refused to look at the naked couple in bed out of shame.¹⁵

As was stressed above, Aphrodite's close link to sex was not initially expressed by her nakedness. In the fifth hymn, she is preparing for a visit to Anchises, with whom she is in love. She first bathes and anoints herself with aromatic oil, then dresses. When she comes to Anchises, the young man marvels at her dress and jewelry.¹⁶ Even the story of Aphrodite's punished infidelity with Ares ends with the goddess bathing at home, anointing herself with divine oil, and dressing.¹⁷ The repeating three-part sequence – bathing, anointment with oil and dressing – corresponded to cultic practice in Aphrodite's temples, which points to the fact that the oldest and unpreserved wooden statues of the goddess were clothed, just as in the oldest preserved depictions.



1. Aphrodite and Ares on a chariot, Naxian painting on a fragment of an amphora, mid 7th century BC.

In the 7th century BC, when Aphrodite's temples existed at least in Argos, we have evidence of the first depictions of Aphrodite with names included. The first preserved depiction of Aphrodite that includes her name is the Naxian painting on a fragment of amphora of the mid-7th century BC (1).¹⁸ Aphrodite is riding in a chariot with an armed man whose identity is not preserved in the inscription but is evidently Ares. Male-female couples on chariots at that time were depicted only in marriage

¹⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, 3.396-397, English translation Ch. Faraone. *Homeric hymn* 6.10-11, English translation M. L. West.

¹⁵ Homer, *Odyssey*, 8.324.

¹⁶ *Homeric hymn*, 5.61-5.

¹⁷ Homer, *Odyssey*, 8.365-366.

¹⁸ Cf. Gerald P. Schaus, "The Beginning of Greek Polychrome Painting," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988): 108.

scenes, and thus Aphrodite is evidently depicted on this painting as Ares's wife. The goddess is clothed and has a veil draped over her head, a common aspect of Greek women's clothing.¹⁹ Aphrodite not only wore the veil, she was also giving it away as a gift. According to Homer, Andromache, wife of the Trojan hero Hector, received the veil from Aphrodite as a gift.²⁰

In the Greek art of the 6th century BC, women are always covered in several layers of clothing both on small statuettes and monumental marble statues, which had been a part of Greek temples since the 7th century BC. These sculptures are called korai (sg. kore), as they depict young girls wearing richly decorated clothing and jewelry and thus are meant to represent erotically attractive beings; their bodies, however, are carefully covered. Sometimes they wear tiaras, but their identity was not evidently defined in an intentional manner. They were either goddesses or mortal women who resembled them. In the Greek mirror of ca. 480 BC, Aphrodite, identified by the Erotes, is depicted in the same way as the korai in long, richly draped clothing.²¹ On the slightly later Corinthian or Sicyonian mirror, she is dressed in a simple peplos, but in addition to the Erotes she is characterized by a dove, which she holds in her hand.²² The dove was the primary attribute of Aphrodite.²³ Proof of the possibility that some korai may have depicted Aphrodite can be found in examples from later centuries, in which Aphrodite appears twice, once as she was depicted from the classical epoch onward and once as an archaic kore, such as the statuette of Aphrodite Corneto, which will be discussed below (8).

The most popular tale of Aphrodite in archaic Greek art was the Judgment of Paris; a series of these depictions begins around 640 BC and on them Aphrodite is always clothed.²⁴ Aphrodite's clothedness did in no way signify a limitation to or weakening of her erotic attraction.²⁵ The opposite was true, as evidenced by the Athenian vase painting on a cup of ca. 480 BC depicting the Judgment of Paris (2). Hermes brings Athena, Hera and Aphrodite to the shepherd Paris, who plays a lyre, for him to judge which of the goddesses is the most beautiful. While Athena and Hera wear no veil, Aphrodite not only wears a chiton and himation like the other goddesses, but also has a veil over her head. Although she is less visible than the other goddesses, she is the most erotically attractive of the three. The painter expressed this with three Erotes, who are flying around her, crowning her the victor.

¹⁹ For the veil see Douglas L. Cairns, *The Meaning of the Veil in Ancient Greek Culture*, in *Women's Dress in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (London: Duckworth, 2002), 73-93.

²⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 22.470.

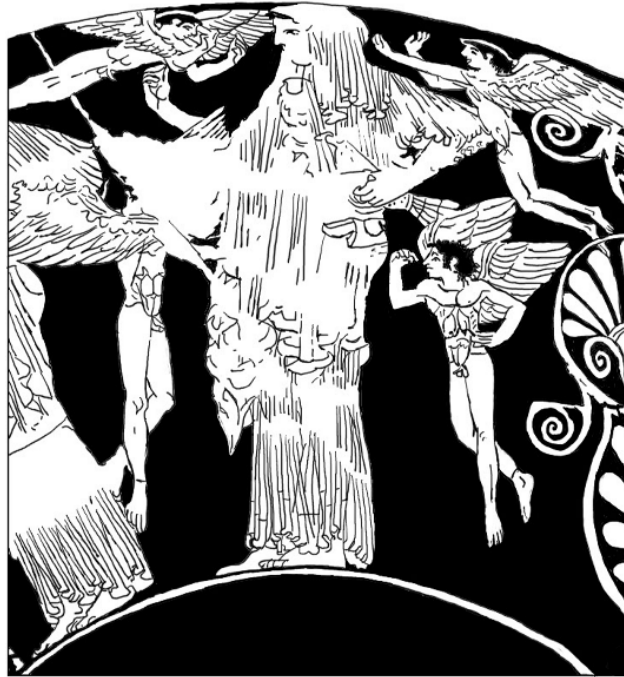
²¹ St. Petersburg, State Ermitage IP-5922.

²² Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.667.

²³ For Aphrodite and her birds see Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros* 2007, 15-19; Monica S. Cyrino, *Aphrodite* (London: Routledge, 2010), 121-122. Greek communities with a strong cult of Aphrodite such as Kythera had doves on their coins, see Karl Welz, "Die Tauben der Aphrodite," *Gazette numismatique suisse* 9, no. 34 (July 1959): 33-37.

²⁴ See Anneliese Kossatz-Deichmann, *Paridis Iudicium* in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 7 (Zürich: Artemis, 1994), 176-188; Cristian Mancilla, *Artistic and Literary Representations of the Judgement of Paris in Antiquity* (n.p: Australian National University, 2015), <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/14130>

²⁵ See Gabriella Pironti, "Du voile à la voile: réflexions sur l'Aphrodite en voyage et ses parures," in *De la théâtralité du corps aux corps des dieux dans l'Antiquité*, ed. Valérie Huet and Florence Gherchanoc (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 2014), 95.



2. The Judgement of Paris, detail of Aphrodite. Athenian painting on a cup, c. 480 BC.

The veil was one of Aphrodite's attributes until the end of Greek culture, which is evidenced by reports of statues in Aphrodite's temples. According to Pausanias, in Sparta there was a *sanctuary of Morpho* (beautiful), a surname of Aphrodite, who sits wearing a veil and with fetters on her feet.²⁶ We know what she looked like from a Roman coin.²⁷ Judging by coins from Troizen from the end of the 2nd century, the statue in the local Aphrodite temple depicted the goddess with a veil.²⁸ In Aphrodisias, there was a cult of a goddess that was later identified with Aphrodite and dated to the 7th century BC.²⁹ The sculpture in the temple there, which first originated in the 3rd century BC, was characterized by its uncommon clothing with a veil covering the head and reaching down to the ground. It wore a high polos on its head and stood in a deliberately archaizing upright position with outstretched arms. We have information on the appearance of the statue from smaller copies that Romans brought back as souvenirs from their travels to the eastern Mediterranean in the imperial epoch. The statue of Aphrodite of Aphrodisias appears on coins from the 1st century BC; on Hadrian's coin, she is depicted from the side – the star and moon crescent by her head point to the cosmic character of the goddess, and the naked Eros stands next to the

²⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 3.15.22. English translation W.H.S. Jones. Cf. Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque: Contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personnalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique* Kernos supplément, 4 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 1994), 193–216; Deborah Steiner, *Images in Mind. Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160–68.

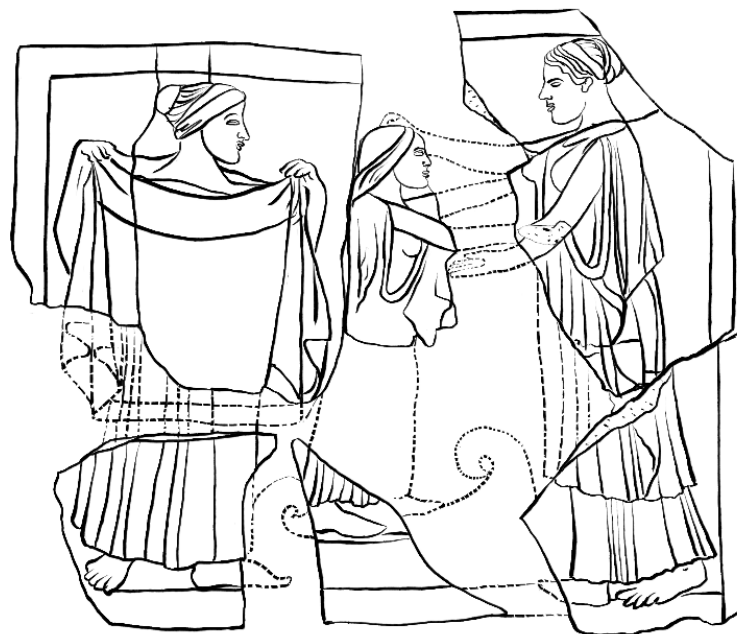
²⁷ London, The British Museum 1863,0706.41.

²⁸ Type Louvre-Naples, see Angelos Delivorrias et. al., "Aphrodite," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 2 (Zürich: Artemis, 1984), 35, no. 240.

²⁹ Cf. Lisa R. Brody, *Aphrodisias, 3. The Aphrodite of Aphrodisias*. Results of the Excavations at Aphrodisias in Caria conducted by New York University (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2007).

goddess.³⁰ Aphrodite began to be associated with the planet Venus only in late Greece, despite the fact that her Near-Eastern model had already been linked to the planet earlier.³¹

In the post-ancient artistic tradition, Aphrodite is born from sea foam naked, but in ancient times she was depicted as being born while dressed from head to toe. We find Aphrodite's birth from the sea in literary tradition from the time around 700 BC.³² However, the first depictions appear around 470 BC. In the terracotta relief from South Italian Lokroi (today Locri), the newly born Aphrodite stands on the waves, and the fact that she has just been born is indicated by her depiction in small scale, as if she were a child (3). She is welcomed by the two Horai, which according to the sixth Homeric hymn *clothed her in divine clothing*.³³ The one on the left holds an outer cloak, or himation, in order to dress the goddess. The goddess has emerged from the sea, thus coming naked into the world, and therefore needed to be dressed. The relief, however, does not depict this situation, as the goddess is already wearing a chiton and has a shawl wrapped around her head, indicating that clothedness belonged to the essence of this goddess at that time. The marble relief with the clothed Aphrodite, who is emerging from the sea, was found in Rome in 1887. It is likely a very high-quality counterfeit in the style of the period around 470 BC, the result of the cooperation between prominent experts on ancient culture and an outstanding sculptor.³⁴



3. Birth of Aphrodite, the Greek terracotta relief from Locri, around 470 BC.

³⁰ See Léon Lacroix, *Les reproductions de statues sur les monnaies grecques: La statuaire archaïque et classique* (Liège: Presses universitaires, 1949), pl. 15, 3-7.

³¹ See Wolfgang Heimpel, "A Catalogue of Near Eastern Venus Deities," *Syro Mesopotamian Studies* 4, no. 3 (December 1982): 9-22.

³² Hesiod, *Theogony*, 191-200; *Homeric hymn*, 6.3-4.

³³ *Homeric hymn* 6.6. English translation Martin L. West.

³⁴ Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano 8570. Cf. Siri Sande, "The Ludovisi Throne, the Boston Throne and the Warren Cup: Retrospective Works or Forgeries?" *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 29 no. 15 N.S. (2017): 23-51.

Why Athens?

In Athens, where most reports of the cult of Aphrodite originate and which is the source of the most important stimuli for her artistic form, veneration of Aphrodite is evidenced by the literary tradition and archeological finds starting at the beginning of the 6th century BC.³⁵ On the Athenian painting on a kantharos of ca. 480 BC found in the Acropolis, Aphrodite has been identified in the inscription.³⁶ The goddess is wearing a bracelet and is dressed in a cloak that is richly decorated in stylized flower blossoms. Next to her is Dionysus with a kantharos and a tendril of a grape vine in his hand. The whole scene evidently depicted a procession of the gods with their typical attributes; the container of wine and the grape vine characterized the god of wine and the child in Aphrodite's arms indicated her as the patron of fertility. The Athenian painting on the pinax of ca. 550 BC, which was brought into the sacred precinct as a sacrifice, was also found at the Athenian Acropolis and depicts Aphrodite with two small childlike figures.³⁷ The child on the left is identified in the inscription as Himeros (Desire), and the second child is evidently Eros. On a fragment of an Athenian vase from 575-550 BC found on the site of a Greek trading post in Egypt, Aphrodite, identified in the inscription, is also depicted with a child.³⁸ According to Hesiod, Eros and Himeros were older than Aphrodite and welcomed her after her birth from the sea.³⁹ However, in the 5th century BC, Pindaros sang the praise of Aphrodite as the *mother of Erotes*.⁴⁰

Around 500 BC, two temples of Aphrodite, the Heavenly (Ourania) and the Common (Pandemos), were built in Athens.⁴¹ People turned to Aphrodite so often that it was necessary to specify the addressee in order for their prayers to be answered as quickly and completely as possible. Aphrodite Ourania (the Divine) did not reside in the heavens, but on the earth; she was divine because she linked the earth with the heavens.⁴² Thanks to her, the heavens and earth are constantly linked and the earth continues to bear fruit, as it is watered by the heavens. Aphrodite Ourania was in no way asexual, she ensured that the girl was safely harbored to the new home and the married couple's bedroom. Another highly risky step was the transition into motherhood, which definitively determined the status of a wife. Aphrodite Pandemos (i.e. the Common), who was named as such for providing a connection between people

³⁵ Vasiliki Machaira, "Multifaceted Aphrodite. Cult and Iconography in Athens. Several Years After," in *Festschrift für Heide Froning. Studies in Honour of Heide Froning*, eds. Taner Korkut and Britta Özen-Kleine (Istanbul: E Yayınları, 2018), 241-254.

³⁶ Athens, National Archeological Museum Akr. 603.

³⁷ Athens, National Archeological Museum Akr. 2526.

³⁸ London, The British Museum 1888,0601.446.

³⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 201. Cf. Gabriella Pironti, "'Ce muthus n'est pas de moi, je le tiens de ma mère.' Cosmogonies grecques et savoir partagé," in *La mythologie de l'Antiquité à la Modernité. Appropriation – Adaptation – Détournement*, ed. Corinne Bonnet et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 45-57.

⁴⁰ Pindaros fr. 122.

⁴¹ Rachel Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Angelos Delivorrias, "The Worship of Aphrodite in Athens and Attica. Worshipping Women. Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens," eds. Nikos E. Kaltsas and Harvey Alan Shapiro (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2008), 107-113.

⁴² Aeschylus fr. 44.

within the community, which was just as risky as the transition from a virgin to a wife. Connections between people in the community required the achievement of political harmony, which could then meld the interests of the whole with the needs of its individual members. This political connection could neither be too loose in order to maintain productivity, nor too tight in order to avoid conflicts and counterproductivity. However, Aphrodite Pandemos was primarily the patroness of connection during sexual intercourse, when the physical penetration of women, i.e. those of the opposite sex who give life, took place. In the ancient Greek cult and the visual arts, Aphrodite Ourania and Pandemos held the same social and moral status, i.e. there were two aspects to one and the same goddess or, more precisely, Pandemos was an aspect of Aphrodite Ourania.⁴³

The Temple of Aphrodite Ourania stood near the main square in Athens, the Agora, at its north-west corner.⁴⁴ Here it was linked with the Panathenean road, a ceremonial communication that linked the primary Athenian gate called the Dipylon and the Acropolis, the cultic center of the city. The Temples of Aphrodite Pandemos were on the north and southwest slope of the Acropolis. In both cases, they were picturesque sites in a rocky environment with a view of the surrounding landscape. The location of the temples was one of the attributes of the Greek gods. At the peak of the Acropolis was the dominant Athena, who was the primary divine protector of the city, and the monumental cultic structures made her patronage over culture and civilization visible.⁴⁵ The Temple of Aphrodite Pandemos located on the only partially modified rocky slopes of the Acropolis emphasized the fact that this goddess ruled everything that took place in nature. They were small-scale structures which, however, housed magnificent works of sculpture.

Pausanias wrote the following on the Temple of Aphrodite Pandemos on the southwestern slope of the Acropolis: *The old statues no longer existed in my time, but those I saw were the work of no inferior artists.*⁴⁶ Proof of the temples today can be found in the foundations carved into the rock and fragments of entablature, giving us knowledge that the tympanon was only 3.17m wide. It was a shrine, or aedicule, with two columns linked by an entablature.⁴⁷ On this fragment, at the top there is a dove holding pieces of woven yarn in its beak; under it is an inscription which begins with: *This is for you, great and holy Pandemos Aphr(odite).* At the bottom in smaller lettering are the names of sacrificers, a certain Archinos and his mother, Aphrodite's priestess, which proves that men also worshiped Aphrodite Pandemos. The theme of the entablature's decoration was linked to the fact that the festival of Aphrodisia, which included dove sacrifices, was celebrated in this sacred precinct.

⁴³ See Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, "Épithètes cultuelles et interprétation philosophique. À propos d'Aphrodite Ourania et Pandèmos à Athènes," *L'Antiquité Classique* 57 (1988): 142-157; Gabriella Pironti, "Les dieux grecs entre polyvalence et spécificité: L'exemple d'Aphrodite," *Europe* 87, no. 964-965 (August-September 2009): 289-304.

⁴⁴ See Charles M. Edwards, "Aphrodite on a Ladder," *Hesperia* 53, no. 1 (January - March, 1984), 59-72.

⁴⁵ Cf. Elisabetta Pala, "Aphrodite on the Akropolis: Evidence from Attic Pottery," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite* eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill 2010) 195-216.

⁴⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.22.3, English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁴⁷ See Luigi Beschi, "Contributi di topografia ateniese," *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene* 45-46 (1968-1969): 524 fig. 9.

According to Pausanias, statues of Aphrodite and Peitho stood in the temple on the southwestern slope of the Acropolis. Aphrodite's head was identified in the fragment of the marble statue, which was found below the slope on which the goddess stood.⁴⁸ The head, probably a Roman copy of the 2nd century, was evidently part of a so-called acrolithic sculpture, the body of which was made from wood, which was typical for statues that were shielded from the rain. Despite this fact, the sculpture was evidently left outside, as its bronze eyelashes left stains on the marble of the face, meaning it was exposed to the elements. According to the carved foundations, the temple was small, but the sculpture of the sitting Aphrodite and standing Peitho were able to fit inside it. An inscription from 283/282 BC points to the sitting sculptures and contains information concerning their washing.⁴⁹ This decree also states that the temple was cleansed by the sacrifice of a dove and the hinge of the door was greased. Therefore, it must have been a small temple that could be closed.

In the 5th century BC, these sanctuaries were joined by the largest Athenian sacred precinct of Aphrodite ever, the Aphrodite of the Gardens. In it, Aphrodite Ourania was evidently worshiped, which was the most widespread and oldest form of this goddess. Greek polytheism not only contained an infinite number of gods, but each divine being also had a whole array of forms that the Greeks painstakingly differentiated, worshipping the gods in temples that had been especially created for one specific form of god. Nonetheless, the god was present in its entirety in each of these specialized temples. In other words, any of the specific divine forms may have been worshiped in the temple of any of the forms of the deity. The temple of Aphrodite of the Gardens has not yet been found – we only know that it was on the bank of the Ilisos River beyond the walls of Athens.⁵⁰ The environment for which Athenian artists created depictions of Aphrodite in the classical epoch was pleasant and intimate, which were feelings which the Greeks associated with the goddess. Her sacred precincts were parks with rich vegetation where visitors could rest. While worshipping the goddess, people were meant to be completely relaxed, which was the physical and mental state inseparably linked to Aphrodite, as this state evoked sex and the erotic. The statue of the goddess was placed in a small shrine or edicule, which was a place designated only for a small group of visitors or individuals and thus always provided a personal encounter with the goddess.

Ancient civilization was typical for its extremely intense desire to be as close as possible to the sculpture of a deity, ensuring that believers had contact with the god itself. A common element of rituals was to dress the statues of deities and bathe them regularly, which in the case of Aphrodite is evidenced by Sicyon.⁵¹ Contact with statues was extremely important for Greeks and Romans, and this was at its most intimate in the cult of Aphrodite, as statues played the largest role in her cult. Statues of the other deities were usually hidden in the shadows of the interiors of large temples. The statue of Aphrodite, however, was designated for viewing up close, in full light and in the

⁴⁸ Athens, The New Acropolis Museum EAM 177. Cf. Giorgos Dontas, "Ein verkanntes Meisterwerk im Nationalmuseum von Athen. Der Marmorkopf Γ. 177 und Überlegungen zum Stil Eupharnors," in *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann* eds. Hans-Ulrich Cain et al. (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1989), 143-50.

⁴⁹ See Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (Paris: De Boccard, 1969), 74, no. 39, line 26.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ernst Langlotz, *Aphrodite in den Garten* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1954); Ilaria Romeo "Sull' Afrodite nei giardini di Alcamene," *Xenia Antiqua* 2 (1993): 31-44.

⁵¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.10.4.

repose provided by the surrounding natural environment. However, the development of Aphrodite's depiction cannot be explained only through the nature of this goddess and the way in which she was venerated. This attitude was shared by all Greek communities, but only in Athens did a fundamental reform take place in the appearance of Aphrodite's statues. So we have to ask, why Athens?

To radically transform the cult statues, it was necessary to loosen their relationship to the deity depicted. This loosening gave the sculptors the required room for manoeuvre, but they needed new means of expression to use it. Both of these revolutionary changes are attested in Athens in the first half of the 5th century BC. Before we take a closer look at these revolutionary changes, it should be pointed out that the deities' relationship to the statues depicting them was never as strong in Greece as in other cultures. In Greece, the altar stood alone in the open air, while the statue was hidden in the temple. The statue was therefore not so closely linked to ritual activities as in a Christian cult. The form of the figure did not have an essential meaning either, as it touched upon the essence of the deity only indirectly.⁵²

Pausanias wrote the following of the statue of Aphrodite, which stood nearby the temple of Aphrodite of the Gardens: *the shape of it is square, like that of the Hermae, and the inscription declares that the Heavenly Aphrodite is the oldest of those called Fates.*⁵³ Pausanias also described an archaic statue of Aphrodite of the same type at Delos: *a small wooden image of Aphrodite, its right hand defaced by time, and with a square base instead of feet.*⁵⁴ This statue, attributed to the mythical sculptor Daidalos, was evidently not a herm, as it had hands; nonetheless, the bottom of the statue was still formed by a pillar. On a Greek marble relief of the early 4th century BC in the Vatican collections, the goddess leans on her herm resting on a pedestal; on its head, the herm wears an archaic polos, which we know from the oldest depictions of Aphrodite.⁵⁵ The Greeks imagined the gods in the form of people, but statues of the deities could have any form, which may have sometimes surprised Greeks. A tale is told of a man who lost the ability to laugh. This happened to a certain Parmeniscus of Metapontum, who therefore set off to Apollo's Oracle of Delphi. Pythia advised him in her incoherent manner to go home, telling him "mother would help." Parmeniscus returned home, but nothing changed. Once, however, he happened to find himself in Delos, where he went to have his first look at the statue of Apollo's mother, Leto. He expected to see a marvelous work, but found such an unshapely and primitive wooden statue there that it made him laugh.⁵⁶

The first proof of the fact that the statue was differentiated from the deity that the statue depicted in ancient times can be found in Aeschylus's tragedy *Oresteia*, which premiered in Athens in 458 BC. Orestes appears on the stage with the words *I now approach your house and image, goddess. Here I will keep watch and await the result of my trial.* The goddess herself appears on the stage and turns to *this stranger sitting at my image.*⁵⁷ On an Athenian amphora from around 450 BC, the goddess herself stands next to a statue of Athena, raising her hand to establish contact with Cassandra, who

⁵² Joannis Mylonopoulos, ed., *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁵³ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.19.2. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁵⁴ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.40.3. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁵⁵ Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani 9561.

⁵⁶ Athenaios, 14.2.

⁵⁷ Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 241- 242, 409 (similarly: 446). English translation Herbert Weir Smyth.

is walking towards the sculpture.⁵⁸ Goddess was not identical to the statue that depicted her, but was very familiar with it. She was permanently linked to it, so anyone who turned to the statue of goddess established contact with the goddess herself. The paradoxical state of the identity that emphasizes differentness is succinctly characterized by Jean-Pierre Vernant. In his view, statues in antiquity were created *to establish real contact with the world beyond, to actualize it, to make it present, and thereby to participate intimately in the divine; yet by the same move, it must also emphasize what is inaccessible and mysterious in divinity, its alien quality, its otherness.*⁵⁹

Around 360 BC, the Greeks' approach to statues of deities was not only succinctly described, but also cogently explained by the philosopher Plato: *we set up statues as images, and we believe that when we worship these, lifeless though they be, the living gods beyond feel great good-will towards us and gratitude.*⁶⁰ The gods are "living," but their statues are "lifeless;" nonetheless, they are things that are full-fledged representatives of the gods, as they are connected to them.⁶¹ Plato's testimony is extremely important to us, as this philosopher otherwise strictly refused the visual arts and saw the depiction of anything as insufficient and false. However, he saw the depiction of a deity as something fundamentally different from the depiction of, for example, a couch, a fact which he writes about in his famous passage on artistic imitation.⁶² It was Plotinos, however, who attempted to define how a statue of divinity specifically differs from other depictions: *I think, therefore, that those ancient sages, who sought to secure the presence of the divine beings by erection of shrines and statues, showed insight into the nature of the All; they perceived that, though this Soul is everywhere tractable, its presence will be secured all the more readily when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it, or representing it and serving like a mirror to catching an image of it.*⁶³

The Greeks abandoned the idea that a statue was a god in the first half of the 5th century BC, exactly at the time when the depiction of the gods began to develop dynamically. One element was closely linked to the other. A statue was separated from a deity without ceasing to be closely linked to it, and thus it never became a work of art as we understand it today. Thanks to the separation of the deity and statue, its form began to change, and these changes were initiated by the constant and uninterrupted connection between the deity and the statue. Each generation produced a new version of the form of Aphrodite, which embodied the same thing as the pillars, herms or archaic idols in previous centuries. Even in their new form, the statues of Aphrodite continued primarily to reference the generative power without which all life on earth would cease to exist.

⁵⁸ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College. See Fernande Hölscher, "Gods and Statues – an Approach to Archaistic Images in Fifth Century B.C.E." in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Joannis Mylanopoulos (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 116.

⁵⁹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals. Collected Essays* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 153. Cf. Richard Neer, *The Emergence of the Classical Style in Greek Sculpture* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14-19.

⁶⁰ Plato, *Laws*, 931a. English translation R. G. Bury.

⁶¹ Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, "The Agency of Greek and Roman Statues. From Homer to Constantine," *Opuscula. Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome* 6 (2013): 7–21.

⁶² Plato, *Republic*, 10.596e-597a.

⁶³ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.3.11. English translation C. MacKenna.

In order for Greek sculptors to evoke the impression of an intimate encounter via Aphrodite's statue, it was necessary to create a revolution in the visual arts. Thanks to this revolution, visual artists were given tools that allowed them to depict the goddess in a relaxed and seemingly accessible form. A fundamental element in the Athenian visual arts that took place around 480-450 BC was the effort to create a probable depiction of the human body that was meant to captivate the viewer via its impression of liveliness and self-control.⁶⁴ Artists systematically replaced conventional attitudes by dynamic compositional models which they had observed in life in order for the viewers to identify with the statues. Depictions were not only meant to capture the mind of the viewer, but also his or her senses and were designed to evoke a strong emotional impression. In the visual arts, an important role began to be played by erotic attraction, the seductiveness of the body's curves, and positions which show provocatively bowed heads and averted gazes. Statues enter into the viewer's space and demand their attention; they evoke an affectionate interest, but primarily admiration and respect, as these depictions must always embody models that were worthy of following. In the depiction of the human figure, much greater emphasis was placed on its inner life, upstanding character (ethos) and the positive feelings which its exemplary life stance provoked (pathos). For Greek civilization, in which men distinctly dominated, it was typical that the sculptors' attention was initially focused on the male form. The transformation in depicting women in monumental sculpture began slightly later, around the middle of the 5th century BC; however, artists in the following three generations reached solutions in this area that significantly impacted the following development of Western culture.

A prerequisite for the revolution in the Greek visual arts was the radical problematization of the world of phenomena. Parmenides declared that human perceptions are nothing more than false sensations, and Demokritos correctly assumed that invisible atoms are hidden behind the scenes of the visible world. If we can never know exactly what the essence is of what we see, there is not the slightest reason for us to adhere to the way in which the world was depicted by previous generations. Therefore, we are no longer bound to tradition in depicting the gods, who are by their very essence undepictable. Thus, there is no need to continue depicting Aphrodite sitting or standing stiffly – we can attempt to make a certain and important aspect of this goddess more visible. Greek philosophers and artists distanced themselves from the world of appearances but did not deny it. They realized that it was an indelible and important part of human existence, and from appearances they were able to create an all-powerful means of expression. The cultic statue of the Aphrodite started to change until it melded with the image of a woman portrayed in her private intimacy. Visitors to the temples of Aphrodite eventually saw the goddess as if they were looking into her garden and watching as she relaxed. This process culminated in the 4th century BC in statues of Aphrodite that were undressing and bathing.

⁶⁴ Cf. Andrew Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E. and the Beginning of the Classical Style," *American Journal of Archaeology* 112, no. 3-4 (July – October, 2008): 377–412, 581-615.

Unveiled and Resting

The Athenian revolution in the depiction of Aphrodite stemmed from the fact that it gave artistic form to the feeling of intimacy which the Greeks associated with this goddess. In order to do so, they used a relaxed pose and informal clothing, which each person knew from their everyday contact with female acquaintances. A radical re-evaluation of Aphrodite's statue took place, launching the process of reassessment of the form of the Greek statue in general. In this new sculptural type,⁶⁵ which was created roughly mid-5th century BC, Aphrodite is sitting in a chair with a backrest, which was typically used in Athenian households.⁶⁶ Thus, she sits in her own home in undisturbed privacy. The goddess lounges comfortably, with one hand raised and resting on the backrest. The symmetry of the older image types (4) is thoroughly displaced; the goddess looks forward but her body is turned to the side; she has one elbow behind her and one foot over the other. This perfectly thought-out position was evidently the work of a prominent artist, who used it for an important order. Experts consider it to be either Calamis the Elder, Phidias, or his pupils.



4. Aphrodite with Eros and a dove, Greek terracotta statuette from Vassallaggi (Gela), 530-520 BC.

The new sculptural type is preserved in the original fragment evidently from Aphrodite's temple on the northern slope of the Acropolis.⁶⁷ It forms an exception, as we know the majority of famous Greek statues only from their Roman versions. The problem lies in the fact that these Roman versions were not necessarily copies in today's sense, but rather free variations of them. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how closely they adhered to the lost Greek exemplars.⁶⁸ A dozen later Roman

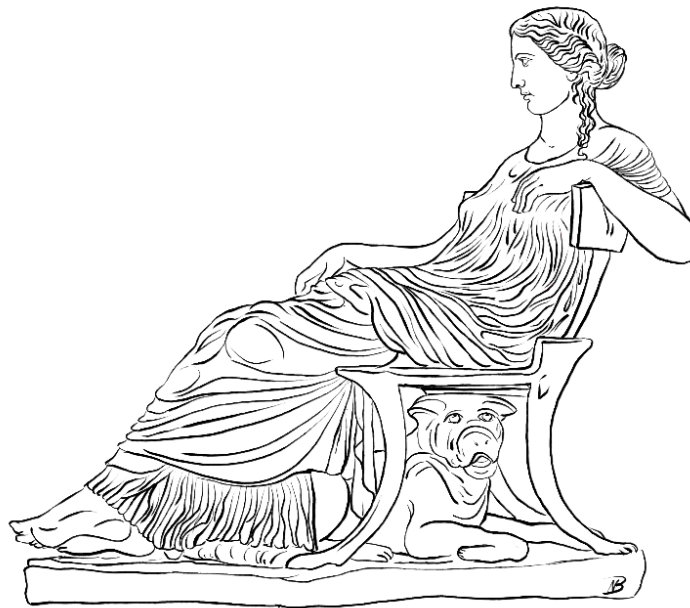
⁶⁵ Cf. Carlo Gasparri, "L'Afrodite seduta tipo Agrippina-Olympia. Sulla produzione di sculture in Atene nel V sec. a. C." *Prospettiva* 100 (October 2000): 3-8. He interprets the figure as Hygieia.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gisela M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), 33-37.

⁶⁷ Athens, Acropolis Museum 6692. Cf. Angelos Delivorrias, "Das Original der sitzenden Aphrodite-Olympias," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 93 (1978): 1-23.

⁶⁸ Cf. Miranda Marvin, *The Language of the Muses: The Dialogue Between Roman and Greek Sculpture* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008); Klaus Junker and Adrian Stähli, eds., *Original und Kopie: Formen*

versions of the sitting Aphrodite have been preserved. On four of them, a dog sits under the goddess's chair. A heavily restored statue with a Molossus dog under a chair was found in Rome's Circus of Maxentius, which proves that it was an echo of some other famous statue (5). In Roman circuses designated for chariot races, there was a long transverse wall called the spina (or spine) on which famous statues were placed. The best Roman version of this sculptural type was found in Verona,⁶⁹ and we can create an image of its head from the herm originating in Herculaneum.⁷⁰ The thick, unruly hair bound with ribbons reaching around the forehead is typical for this head. This was evidently a part of a famous Greek work, which was often copied and modified, and thus it is probable that it belonged to the type of Aphrodite resting in a chair.



5. Seated Venus from Rome, the Roman marble version of the Greek original from the 40s of the 5th century BC.

The famous depiction of Aphrodite on the eastern façade of the Parthenon in the Athenian Acropolis is closely linked to the artistic and ideological concept of the new sculptural type of the sitting Aphrodite. The central scene of the sculptural group was the birth of Athena; at the sides of the central group was the clothed Aphrodite on the right (6) and her counterpart, the reclining, naked Dionysus, the god of wine. As we have pointed out above, both deities were closely linked to one another in Greek thought. Both are depicted in their characteristic situations of sweet idleness; their figures fill the narrowing space at the sides of the triangular tympanon, which allowed the sculptor to make their backs turned away from the dramatic central scene, conspicuously ignoring it.

und Konzepte der Nachahmung in der antiken Kunst (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2008); Anna Anguissola, *Difficillima imitatio: Immagine e lessico delle copie tra Grecia e Roma* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2012).

⁶⁹ Verona, Museo Civico, cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 821.

⁷⁰ Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 6369, cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 822.



6. Phidias' workshop, reclining Aphrodite from the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, h. 123 cm, Pentelic marble, c. 432 BC.

The specific situation in which Aphrodite was depicted evoked an intimate moment of two close female friends. The goddess is lying comfortably on the lap of her female assistant, Peitho (Persuasion), in games of love. Initially she seemed to be looking into her mirror, the angle of which is apparently being modified by the sitting Peitho with her outstretched left hand. The goddess is wearing a translucent chiton that falls over her body, which is visible under it as if she were naked. The clinging drapery, which looks as if it were wet, was one of the most important innovations of Greek sculpture of the final three decades of the 5th century BC and was used widely by the sculptor.⁷¹ The effect of clothing depicted in this manner was originally much more intense, as ancient sculptures were richly colored and the creases were emphasized with black paint.⁷² This specific method of depicting drapery is characterized by its revealing of the naked body while simultaneously emphasizing the fact that it is veiled, which was an important aspect of the ideological program of Aphrodite. This made it possible to make the deity present but at the same time stress her inaccessibility. This effect was made more powerful by the chiton falling from Aphrodite's shoulder, also partially revealing her bosom. This trick became an important attribute of the new types of Aphrodite's statues, as it even more strongly disrupted the boundaries between clothing and the body hidden beneath it.

The reform of the depiction of Aphrodite in Athenian sculpture of the third quarter of the 5th century BC is characterized by the combination of the traditional (and thus expected) clothedness and the never fully fulfilled promise of unveiling. This trait predetermined the development of the depiction of the goddess in the following centuries. Proof of the fact that Athenians understood the sophisticated language of these sculptures can be found for instance in Socrates's commentary on his visit to the

⁷¹ Cf. Neer, *The Emergence*, 104-135.

⁷² For polychromy of ancient sculpture cf., for example, Vinzenz Brinkmann et al., *Bunte Götter – Golden Edition. Die Farben der Antike* (Munich: Prestel 2020).

hetaira Theodote in Xenophon's writing from the time after 371 BC.⁷³ Theodote very successfully attracted the attention of men because she knew the secret of veiling. Being veiled is an attribute of chastity, but hides within it a huge erotic potential, which Phidias and his successors used masterfully in depicting Aphrodite. Phidias's sculpture of the standing Aphrodite from the 430s BC represents also a completely new sculptural type.⁷⁴ The best echo of the lost original is considered to be a fragment of the sculpture in Berlin, the so-called Aphrodite Brazzà (7).⁷⁵



7. Aphrodite Brazzà, height 158 cm, Greek marble statue probably from Attica, ca. 430 BC.

Aphrodite was originally leaning against a small column, statuette or tree. The motif of leaning in this Aphrodite statue evoked a relaxed atmosphere, which is characteristic for lovers' games, which were her domain. The goddess's left leg is stepping forward and is lightly lifted; the vertical creases model her thigh, which creates the first plan of a sculpture dynamically extended in space. The distinctly

⁷³ Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3.11. Cf. Neer, *The Emergence*, 160-161.

⁷⁴ Cf. Claire Cullen Davison, *Phidias: The Sculptures and Ancient Sources* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2009), 29-37.

⁷⁵ See Mustafa Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler: Studien zu aufgestützten/angelehnten weiblichen Figuren der griechischen Marmorplastik* (Istanbul, Ege Yayınları, 2013), cat. no. I.

asymmetrical stance of the sculpture allowed the seductive outline of the feminine body to stand out, which was emphasized by the partially unveiled bosom. The contrapposto, i.e. the differentiation of the supporting and free leg, a vital aspect of the Athenian revolution in depicting the human figure mentioned above, was the primary means of expression of Athenian sculptors from the 470s BC on. It embodied not only a new aesthetic, but also a philosophical and ethical ideal. Man depicted in such a way evoked the impression of a randomly selected moment and distinctly contributed to the credibility of the depiction and the effect of reality. However, the fact that all asymmetries were immediately balanced was much more important; the depicted figure reacted to the difference between the free and supporting leg by lifting his shoulder over his angled hip.

Thanks to the thorough cohesion of all other asymmetries, his stance embodied harmony, which was understood as the unity of opposites. The dynamic counterpoise was a means for visualizing the unchanging order of the world and simultaneously characterized a being which had full control of its body and was completely relaxed and free. Everything done by the figure depicted in this manner is done of his own will. The counterpoise was the attribute of what the Greeks called *σωφροσύνη*, a new civic ideal, the content of which was rationality and self-control and the voluntary submission of one's interests to the needs of the community. Through contrapposto, the depicted Greek men and their gods at first glance stood out from their eastern and southern neighbors. Beginning with Aphrodite Brazzà, the depiction of a relaxed and leaning woman figure with one leg bent became one of the most widespread sculptural types in Greece. The counterpoise of a freely standing figure, which is prepared for immediate action, became a typical depiction of men; the counterpoise of a comfortably leaning and thus passive figure became typical for women.

Aphrodite Brazzà's left leg was evidently resting on a turtle, which would allow us to link this sculptural type with the report by Pausanias on Aphrodite Ourania, which Phidias created for Elis.⁷⁶ The turtle on the Berlin statue is a modern addition, but the restorer was evidently basing his work off what had been preserved under the foot while adding to the statue. The accuracy of the reconstruction of the Berlin statue and its link to Phidias's statue in Elis was supported by a fortuitous archeological find that occurred in this city.⁷⁷ A fragment of a ceramic statuette of this type was found here depicting a foot in a sandal resting on a turtle. The statuette of the figure in a chiton and himation with a foot on a turtle was also found on the site of the ancient cult of Aphrodite in Paphos, Cyprus, and therefore we can justifiably assume that it was truly a part of the original sculptural type.

What significance did the turtle have? *The meaning of the tortoise*, wrote Pausanias, *I leave to those who care to guess.*⁷⁸ Plutarch was informative: *Phidias made the Aphrodite of the Eleans with one foot on a tortoise, to typify for womankind keeping at home and keeping silence.*⁷⁹ The turtle constantly carries its shell with it, and thus never

⁷⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.25. Cf. Heide Froning, "Überlegungen zur Aphrodite Urania des Phidias in Elis," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung* 120 (2005): 285-294.

⁷⁷ Elis, Archeological Museum P 306. See Heide Froning and Nina Zimmermann-Elseify, *Die Terrakotten der antiken Stadt Elis* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 54-56, no. S5, pl. 9.

⁷⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6.25.1. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁷⁹ Plutarchos, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, 32 (*Moralia* 142d).

abandons its home, something which a woman should take as an example. In preserved literary records or findings of sacrifices in temples, however, we find no arguments for Plutarch's interpretation of Phidias's statue. In the archaic epoch, statuettes of turtles were also brought to temples, but in no case was Aphrodite the recipient.⁸⁰ Thanks to its proverbial fertility, the turtle nonetheless may be an appropriate symbol for matrimonial sexuality, which was also Aphrodite's domain. However, the turtle lives both on land and in the sea, where Aphrodite was born, and this was probably the main reason she was depicted with a turtle.⁸¹

A part of the new sculptural type of Aphrodite, which was created in the third quarter of the 5th century BC by Phidias, was the statuette of Aphrodite on a pedestal depicted next to the goddess, who is leaning on it.⁸² The oldest echo of this trait of Phidias's statue can be found in the statue from Tarquinia, known as Afrodita Corneto, which originated around 420 BC (8).⁸³



8. Aphrodite Corneto, h. 83 cm, Greek marble statue, ca. 420 BC, both arms are modern additions.

⁸⁰ See Elinor Bevan, "Ancient Deities and Tortoise-Representations in Sanctuaries," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 83 (1988), 1-6.

⁸¹ Cf. Salvatore Settis, *XEΛΩNH: Saggio sull' Afrodite Urania di Fidia* (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, 1966); Pironti, *Du voile à la voile*, 92-94.

⁸² Cf. Schoch, *Die doppelte Aphrodite*, 2009.

⁸³ See Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. No. II.

The statuette that the goddess leans upon justifies the distinct skew of the upper part of her body, and the goddess therefore looks highly relaxed. At the same time, it allowed the message of Phidias's Aphrodite to be elaborated upon. On the statuette, the goddess is depicted as standing upright; she looks straight forward and wears rich and carefully draped clothing, which is the way goddesses were depicted in the 6th century BC. She has a veil draped over her head from behind and holds the edge of it in her hand as if she was unveiling. This artistic convention, called "anacalypsis" in scholarly literature, was often associated with Aphrodite – the gesture evidently signified that the face of the woman in question was veiled.⁸⁴

Her new form, which is much closer to the appearance of visitors to the sacred precinct in which Phidias's statue was placed, is in obvious contrast with the old form of the goddess, for which symmetry and formality are characteristic. Why was Aphrodite depicted on Phidias's statue twice in two different styles? It may have been a topographical reference, as the statuette in the archaic style evoked the old statue in the temple for which Phidias's statue was destined.⁸⁵ In any case, the appearance of the statue that Phidias's Aphrodite leaned upon emphasized the novelty of this concept. Proof of this interpretation can be found in the fact that the motif appears for the first time in connection with Aphrodite; other deities were depicted in such a way only later. No other deity in monumental sculpture so radically abandoned the stiff posture emphasizing separation from mortals, which until then had characterized statues of the Olympian gods. Aphrodite now represented the exact opposite, i.e. release and spontaneity, through which the deity entered into the world of people. Probably because she represented an unprecedented novelty, Phidias's Aphrodite also emphasized a connection to traditional piety. Not only does she physically lean on the "old goddess," pointing out the uninterrupted continuity with the past, her gestures also stress devoutness. Her right hand holds the veil which is draped over her head, pointing to the fact that she is clothed.

Phidias's pupil Alcamenes was associated with the sculptural type that we know from six Roman versions, one of which is in Paris's Louvre (9).⁸⁶ The sculptor continued to innovate the statue of Aphrodite where his teacher had left off. Phidias had renewed the traditional concept of Aphrodite's statue with a distinct counterpoise, and Alcamenes's statue takes this concept to the extreme. The difference between the supporting and free leg could not be any greater, and thus the sculptor definitively abandoned the traditional vertical concept of the statue and substituted it with a dynamic diagonal. From the hips upward, the goddess is bending towards the column with a relief of a dove, which is her attribute. The closest to the creation of the assumed original by Alcamenes is the Aphrodite d'Este, the original of which was created at the end of the 5th century BC.⁸⁷ The goddess is leaning to the left onto a tree trunk and is accompanied by Eros leaning to the left, as he is leaning on his mother's left shoulder.

⁸⁴ Cf. Gaëlle Deschodt, "Images et mariage, une question de méthode: Le geste d'anacalypsis," *Mondes anciens* 1 (2011). <http://journals.openedition.org/mondesanciens/370>

⁸⁵ Cf. Hölscher, *Gods and Statues*.

⁸⁶ See Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. VI.

⁸⁷ Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum I 1192. Cf. Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. III; Maria Friedrich, "Aphrodite mit dem Eros-Knaben. Die sog. Aphrodite d'Este," in *Ansichtssache. Antike Skulpturengruppen im Raum*, ed. Jens-Arne Dickmann and Ralf von den Hoff (Freiburg: Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 2017), 89-93.

In regard to the posture, the position of Aphrodite d'Este's legs is a compromise between Aphrodite Corneto and the Parisian statue. The Parisian Venus has a deeper neckline than the Aphrodite from the Corneto collection. The chiton has slipped off her shoulder so both her neck and one of her breasts is partially revealed. This unveiled portion of the goddess's body together with her eyes is an attribute of her irresistible beauty.⁸⁸



9. "Alcamenes Aphrodite," h. 118 cm, marble The Roman marble version of the Greek original from ca. 430-420 BC.

Ancient sources concur on the fact that Alcamenes's statue stood in the precinct devoted to Aphrodite called Aphrodite of the Gardens.⁸⁹ Pausanias wrote that it was *one of the most noteworthy things in Athens*.⁹⁰ We do not, however, learn any other details from literary sources about what the statue looked like. Identification of the statues with this work is based on the assumption that statues in two smaller sanctuaries devoted to this goddess were created after this model – one was in Athens and the other in Daphne between Athens and Eleusis.⁹¹ By a fortuitous coincidence, not only a fragment of the original statue of ca. 420 BC was preserved in Daphne⁹², but also a

⁸⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, 3.396-398.

⁸⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.16; Lucian, *Imagines*, 4 and 6.

⁹⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.19.2-3, English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁹¹ See Angelos Delivorrias, "Die Kultstatue der Aphrodite von Daphni," *Antike Plastik* 8 (1968): 19-31.

⁹² Athens, National Archeological Museum 1604. Cf. Koçak, *Aphrodite am Pfeiler*, cat. no. IV.

votive relief of the beginning of the 4th century BC that reproduced it.⁹³ Pausanias mentions Aphrodite's Temple in Daphne near Eleusis only briefly – *a temple of Aphrodite, before which is a noteworthy wall of unwrought stones*.⁹⁴ This was thus a typical holy precinct of Aphrodite, which fluidly melded in with the surrounding natural framework. On the fragment of the statue from expensive Parian marble, we see a woman bent in the direction of her left arm, which she is using to lean on something. This is evidently the same sculptural type as the statue in the Louvre, but this Aphrodite's right shoulder is revealed.

Aphrodite is depicted in the same way in the votive relief, which evidently reproduces the statue in the temple in Daphne. The support of the statue was not just a purely functional element meant to ensure that the statue was stable; it was also the bearer of meaning. With her left arm, the goddess is leaning on a tree that she distinctly bends towards with one foot over the other. The tree that Aphrodite is leaning on symbolizes the irreplaceable role of this goddess in the renewal of nature. In her right hand, the goddess lifts a sacrificial bowl towards a figure standing in front of her. This figure is depicted in a smaller scale, but is on a pedestal, and is thus also a statue. The inscription accompanying the relief states that it is a votive gift to Aphrodite from the son of a certain Theagenes. The statue perhaps depicts the gift-giver, who in the form of a statue erected in the temple permanently venerates the goddess. In this case, Aphrodite would not allude to the statue, but directly to the goddess that has appeared in the temple in order to favorably accept Theagenes's prayer. A very similar relief is the one which Angelos Delivorrias constructed from fragments archived in various museums. It also depicts Aphrodite leaning in a relaxed pose on a tree, cooling herself with a fan and looking pensively forward; on her head she wears a diadem emphasizing her divine status.⁹⁵

For the Aphrodite associated with Phidias and Alcamenes, the pose in which she leans with her left arm on a support next to her and at the same time places her left leg forward is characteristic. This highly unstable posture may have carried significance. The pose in which Aphrodite is depicted is relaxed; the goddess is resting, but surely not for long, as it is an ostentatiously momentary pose preceding action. It looks like a reaction to a certain situation which has caught the goddess's attention, and thus she has frozen for a moment. As soon as the emotional constellation changes, the goddess will change her position. This realistic detail, which was evidently observed in real life, may have been inspired by literary tradition. The posture denoting a leaning stance can be understood as a consequence of divine power, which the poets had already described in the 7th century BC. In his work "Theogony," Hesiod attributes an appearance to the Charites that was so beautiful it paralyzed the limbs – *from their eyes desire, the limb-melter, trickles down when they look; and they look beautifully from under their eyebrows*.⁹⁶ Paralyzing love was primarily the work of Eros and Aphrodite. *Eros the looser of limbs stirs me, that creature irresistible, bitter-sweet, Sapho*

⁹³ Athens, National Archeological Museum 1601. Drawing: Delivorrias, *Die Kultstatue*, 24, fig. 1.

⁹⁴ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.37.7. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

⁹⁵ Roman marble relief after the Greek original from ca. 420 BC. Upper and lower fragment: Tivoli, Hadrian's Villa, central fragment: Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani. Drawing: Angelos Delivorrias, "A New Aphrodite for John," in *Greek Offerings: Essays on Greek Art in Honour of John Boardman*, ed. Olga Palagia (Oxford: Oxbow Monograph, 1997), 110.

⁹⁶ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 910-11. English translation Glenn W. Most.

complains in one of her poems.⁹⁷ An ironic epigram in a Greek anthology is based on repeating the words *relaxing* three times: *The daughter of limb-relaxing Bacchus and Limb-relaxing Aphrodite is limb-relaxing Gout.*⁹⁸ Aphrodite was not only the initiator of each relaxing amorous desire, she also experienced it for herself when she fell in love with Anchises: *smile-loving Aphrodite fell in love with him at sight, and immoderate longing seized her mind.*⁹⁹

The fundamental transformation of the depiction of Aphrodite in classical Greek art not only took place due to her being depicted in a relaxed position, but also thanks to her becoming more and more unveiled over the course of time.¹⁰⁰ This was a logical step – the new type of Aphrodite’s depiction portrayed her in her intimacy and nakedness is the most attractive aspect of female privacy. It is, however, necessary to mention that this change did not reflect the development of the attitude towards the unveiled female body in real life. From 6th century BC, the Greek visual arts depicted men exercising in the daytime in gymnasiums and undressing during evening symposiums.¹⁰¹ The Greeks were aware of their differentness and were proud of it.¹⁰² To them, it was a sign of their superiority over all other nations. Nakedness to the Greeks became a sign of their civilizational maturity, which they nonetheless used not only to demonstrate their supremacy over barbarians, but also over Greek women. Nakedness in Greece was the privilege of men, and only they were allowed to appear naked in public. Plato’s Socrates in the Republic from around 370 BC gives an example of a naked woman exercising in the gymnasium as an example of a violation of custom that was so obvious that everyone would have laughed at it. His companion agreed: *it would seem ridiculous under present conditions.*¹⁰³

While the Greeks in the 5th to 4th century BC continued to exercise and entertain themselves while naked, women were veiled so that only their faces could be seen. However, the image of life in the visual arts overlaps with reality, but is never identical to it. Nakedness in the visual arts may have evoked completely different ideas and roused different emotions than in real life. The significance of depicting the body always depended on the specific context into which it is placed, and therefore the place which the depiction holds on the proverbial scale between the negative and positive can never be categorically determined.¹⁰⁴ The approach to nakedness in the visual arts in classical Greece clearly transformed, which does not however mean that the way in which it was perceived in real life simultaneously changed in an identical manner.

The new approach to the depiction of a naked body first appeared on Athenian painted vases, on which new innovations always appeared before monumental

⁹⁷ Sapho, 5.81. English translation J. M. Edmonds.

⁹⁸ *Greek Anthology*, 11.414. English translation W. R. Paton.

⁹⁹ *Homeric hymn*, 5.56-57. English translation Martin L. West.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Nigel Spivey, *Understanding Greek sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 174-186.

¹⁰¹ See Mireille M. Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 177-182.

¹⁰² Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.6.4-6. Cf. Myles McDonnell, “The Introduction of Athletic Nudity: Thucydides, Plato, and the Vases,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 182-193.

¹⁰³ Plato, *Republic*, 5, 452b. English translation P. Shorey.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Robin Osborne, “Men Without Clothes. Heroic Nakedness and Greek Art,” *Gender & History* 9, no. 3 (November 1997), 504-528; Jeffrey M. Hurwit, “The Problem with Dexileos: Heroic and Other Nudities in Greek Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 1 (January 2007): 35-60.

sculpture. Naked athletes appear on them most often from 550 to 450 BC. At the same time, we see undressed women on the vases as well; they are, however, depicted exclusively as prostitutes offering themselves or as captives of war who have lost the right to their own bodies.¹⁰⁵ While male nakedness on Athenian vases exalts and celebrates the depicted figures, it conversely points to the lowest social classes or evokes extreme situations among the depicted women. From the 470s BC onward, naked athletes from Athenian vases gradually begin to disappear; at the same time, the status of women depicted without clothing also begins to change. Female nudity ceases to be linked to negative or deplorable figures, but on the contrary becomes an attribute of beauty without clearly defining the social status of the depicted woman. Another turning point in the perception of nakedness in the visual arts took place in the last third of the 5th century BC, when there is proof of venerable Athenian women being depicted on vases without clothing, most often in scenes linked to bathing and/or weddings.¹⁰⁶

At the same time, nakedness also began to be associated with Aphrodite. The first birth of Aphrodite on Athenian vases appears roughly in the same period as the aforementioned scenes from South Italian Lokroi roughly around 460 BC, but Aphrodite is always clothed. Around 435 BC, Phidias created a colossal statue of Zeus for his temple in Olympia, which in ancient times was considered to be one of the greatest wonders of the world. On the pedestal of this colossal statue made of gold and ivory was a depiction of the birth of Aphrodite in a golden relief. In his "Description of Greece" in the second century, Pausanias wrote: *After Hestia is Eros receiving Aphrodite as she rises from the sea, and Aphrodite is being crowned by Persuasion.*¹⁰⁷ Phidias's composition was completed at its sides by the astral deities, the personifications of the sun and moon. This allows us to understand the deities on either side of the scene of Aphrodite's birth as a sort of Olympian choir celebrating the birth of the goddess, which holds crucial significance for the prosperity of the land.¹⁰⁸ An echo of this composition may be the gilded silver Roman medallion from Galaxidi of the 1st to 3rd century, which depicts Aphrodite, identified in the inscription, emerging from the sea, which is indicated by small waves.¹⁰⁹ The goddess is turned halfway to the right, but her head is tilted back towards Amor, who is bowing down to her and lifting her out of the water with both hands. The goddess is naked, but holds cloth in her raised left hand as it swells in the wind.

The unveiling of Aphrodite in Athenian monumental sculpture progressed slowly. In addition to the sculptural type of the standing Aphrodite leaning on a support, a number of other sculptural types showing the goddess's bosom more unveiled than before appeared at the end of the 5th century BC. These types were also surely famous in the ancient period, as a whole score of versions of them from Roman

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity*, 48-49; Robin Osborne, *The Transformation of Athens: Painted Pottery and the Creation of Classical Greece* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 128-137.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Robert F. Sutton, "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather," in *Athenian Potters and Painters*, Volume II, eds. John H. Oakley and Olga Palagia (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 270-279.

¹⁰⁷ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.11.8. English translation W. H. S. Jones.

¹⁰⁸ Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 230.

¹⁰⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre Bj 15 (MNB 1290).

times have been preserved. We know one of them from the Roman Doria Pamphilj collection, and its model may have been the statue from the Temple of Aphrodite Ourania by the Agora,¹¹⁰ or from the temple in Daphne.¹¹¹ Today's form of the statue is the work of a restorer, who completed both her arms.¹¹² Just like Phidias's statue for Elis, this statue also has a differentiated supporting and free leg, lifting the right hip. The left thigh, which is pushed forwards, is emphasized by the cloak draped over it. Just like Phidias's sculpture, Aphrodite is clothed, but her breasts and a part of her abdomen are outlined beneath the thin chiton. Contrary to Phidias's statue, this goddess's hips are almost completely hidden, increasing the contrast between the unveiled and veiled portions of her body. The version of the Doria Pamphilj sculptural type is known from the original Greek statue, which was created at the end of the 5th century BC.¹¹³ The statue was found in the Athenian Agora, and may have thus originated in the Athenian Temple of Ares, where there were two statues of Aphrodite.¹¹⁴

This famous sculptural type, known as Venus Louvre-Naples (Fréjus, or Genetrix), is preserved in a number of versions (10).¹¹⁵ It was created before the end of the 5th century BC. On the statues of the Louvre-Naples type, the goddess is wearing a chiton and raising the hem of her cloak covering her back with her right hand above her shoulder while the other end is wrapped around her left hand. In her outstretched left hand, she held an attribute that is no longer preserved on any exemplar. It may have been an apple or a toiletry item. On all the new Athenian types of the standing Aphrodite, the attention of the viewer is subtly directed to the left leg, which is pronouncedly shifted forward. In the Louvre-Naples type, the goddess also bows her head towards it. The graceful thigh, which is closest to the viewer, is outlined under the tight-fitting clothing, but only a subtle portion of the skin can be seen on the foot, as the clothing reaches down below the ankles. The overflowing creases confuse the viewer, and thus the Louvre-Naples Venus seems from a distance to be completely veiled; however, after a more detailed observation, we find that the upper edge of the chiton has fallen and reveals not only the shoulder, but also the breast. The border between the clothing and the goddess's body is not only subtly shifted, but the perception of the statue has also changed fundamentally. That part of the body which is fully unveiled completely changes the significance of the draped creases of clothing covering the vast majority of the body. We never see the curves of Aphrodite's body in their full course, but we can imagine them under the folded creases of clothing based on the sections that are not clearly visible. However, it is the view of the exposed breast that first allows the viewer to imagine the goddess completely naked. This was a wholly new motif in monumental sculpture, but we can find exposed breasts for the

¹¹⁰ Angelos Delivorrias, "Problèmes de conséquence méthodologique et d'ambiguïté iconographique," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Antiquité* 103, no. 1 (1991): 136-137.

¹¹¹ Martha Weber, "Die Kultbilder der Aphrodite Urania der zweiten Hälfte des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. in Athen: Attika und das Bürgerrechtsgesetz von 451/50 v. Chr." *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 121 (2006): 197-210.

¹¹² Roma, Villa Doria Pamphilj. Cf. Raissa Calza et al., eds., *Antichità di Villa Doria Pamphilj* (Rome: De Luca editore, 1977), no. 12.

¹¹³ Parian marble, 1.83 m, Athens, Agora Museum 1882.

¹¹⁴ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.8.4.

¹¹⁵ See Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 122-151.

first time on a bronze statuette from the period around the mid-5th century BC now located in the collection at Harvard.¹¹⁶



10 (left). Naples Venus (type Louvre-Naples), Roman marble version of the Greek statue from ca. 420-400 BC.



11 (right). Venus of Arles, h. 194 cm, the Roman marble version from the end of the 1st century BC of the Greek original from the time around 365 BC.

The unveiling of Aphrodite began with the Louvre-Naples Venus, which evokes the Greek model from the end of the 5th century BC; however, the next step was not taken until a half-century later. The Venus of Arles is the main representative of the type that we know from a score of other versions, which share the fact that the whole upper half of the goddess's body is exposed (11).¹¹⁷ The statue in larger-than-life size was found in 1651 near the theatre in Arles without arms and the lower portion of the body. The statue's state today is the result of a restoration by François Girardon, which took place when the statue was given to Louis XIV and exhibited in Versailles. Girardon's attributes mutually exclude one another; the statue with completed arms holds the handle of a mirror in its right hand and an apple in its raised left hand. On the original, the goddess was likely only holding a mirror, which she gazed into. The ribbons in her hair fall down onto her shoulders and back. It is possible that the original statue was created by Praxiteles, perhaps for the Boeotian Thespieae.¹¹⁸ It is linked to

¹¹⁶ Harvard Art Museums 1960.666. Cf. George M. A. Hanfmann, "An Early Classical Aphrodite," *American Journal of Archaeology* 66, no. 3 (July 1962): 281-284.

¹¹⁷ See Brunilde S. Ridgway, "The Aphrodite of Arles," *American Journal of Archaeology* 80, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 147-154.

¹¹⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.27.5.

the later Cnidian Aphrodite in its proportions, the shape of the bracelet on the left arm and the similar posture, with head slightly bowed and tilted towards the left shoulder. The goddess also has the same hairstyle – the hair is parted in the middle and combed back so that it covers the upper part of the ears, and the locks in the back are bound in a knot. However, this concurrence can also be explained by the claim that the Venus of Arles is not a reflection of Praxiteles's work created before his statue known as the Cnidia but is, on the contrary, a later Roman variation on this famous statue.¹¹⁹

The Cnidia

The first completely naked Aphrodite and thus the first ever depiction of an unveiled female body in monumental art was created by Praxiteles around 360 BC.¹²⁰ According to Pliny, the sculptor created two Aphrodites, which he then sold simultaneously: *one of them was draped and for this reason was preferred by the people of Cos, who had an option on the sale, although he offered it at the same price as the other. This they considered to be the only decent and dignified course of action. The statue which they refused was purchased by the people of Cnidus and achieved an immeasurably greater reputation.*¹²¹ This story is likely to have been fabricated, as sculptors in ancient times created their work on commission, and thus it is unlikely that someone would have created a sculpture without already having a specific buyer for it. Nonetheless, the story of the insipience of the people of Cos and the foresight of the Cnidians is valuable proof of the development of the depiction of Aphrodite. The people of Cos refused the naked Aphrodite as *indecent* and *undignified*, and thus in Pliny's time there was still a vivid awareness of the fact that nakedness was a sensational novelty at the time of the statue's creation.

The statue was a pioneering work and the starting point of a new trend, a fact which was not forgotten. In fact, in ancient times it was considered to be the most famous work ever: *superior to anything not merely by Praxiteles, but in the whole world, is the Venus, which many people have sailed to Cnidus to see.*¹²² This manifested itself in the exceptionally large number of sculptural echoes of the work. Over three hundred versions have been preserved, fifty of which are life-size. As Roman sculptures are not exact copies of their Greek originals and have been elaborated upon, all variations of the Cnidia are more or less different from one another. The original marble statue has not been preserved, but we know its appearance from later Cnidian coins. On the coins which were minted by Emperor Caracalla in Cnidus, the Cnidia's head is seen from the profile, probably due to the fact that heads stood out better on coins when designed in this manner.¹²³ On the coin minted by Emperor Maximinus in Tarsus, the Cnidia's head is depicted in a three-quarter profile like on the marble statues.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Jean-Luc Martinez and Alain Pasquier, eds., *Praxitèle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, Paris 2007), 134-139.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Antonio Corso, *The Art of Praxiteles II. The Mature Years* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2007), 9-186; Martinez and Pasquier, *Praxitèle*, 139-146; Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 17-32; Rosemary Barrow, "The Female Body: Aphrodite of Cnidus," in *Gender, Identity and the Body in Greek and Roman Sculpture*, ed. Michael Silk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 35-48.

¹²¹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz. Cf. Stéphanie Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos* (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2013), 93-95.

¹²² Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz.

¹²³ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 407.

¹²⁴ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 408.

Praxiteles's statue depicts the goddess from the front, but she stands in a relaxed pose with one leg bent, covering her loins with her right hand. In addition, she is not looking straight ahead. Her head is tilted to the right in a three-quarter profile as if she were looking at her left hand, which holds her clothing. Under it is a vessel of water. The works closest to the depictions on the coins are two Roman statues in the Vatican museums, which have unfortunately been considerably restored. The Colonna Venus, which was given to the pope in 1783 by Filippo Giuseppe Colonna, no longer has its original hands and head (12). The head with which it is exhibited is from a different marble than the body and is too small. It evidently belonged to the same sculptural type, but was created in a smaller dimension. The so-called Standing Venus (*Venus ex balneo*), which was exhibited in the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere in the 16th century, is on the contrary exceptional among the versions of the Cnidia in that its original head is intact (13).¹²⁵ The most important characteristic of the Cnidia was the differentiation of the free and supporting leg, setting it apart from the depiction of naked goddesses in Near Eastern tradition.



12 (left). Colonna Venus, h. 204 cm, The Roman marble version of Cnidia from around 360 BC.

13 (right). Standing Venus, h. 185 cm, The Roman marble version of Cnidia from around 360 BC.

With the Colonna Venus, the vessel for water is a large hydria standing on a pedestal; with the Standing Venus, the vessel is small and has no pedestal, which corresponds to what the coins depict. On both Vatican statues, the goddess's hair is parted in the middle and combed back, which we know from Maximinus and

¹²⁵ Città del Vaticano, Museo Pio Clementino 4260. Cf. Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of the Classical Sculpture 1500-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), no. 92.

Caracalla's coins. Both Vatican statues have in common the fact that Venus is standing on her right leg, the counterbalance of which is created by the vertical creases of her cloak, which she holds near her in her outstretched left hand. Contrary to the Colonna Venus, whose clothing is static, it denotes movement in the Standing Venus. The creases do not fall downwards, obeying the laws of gravity, but bend towards the goddess, making it look as if she had just lifted the clothing upwards and was now pulling it towards herself to put it on. On the contrary, we can claim that the Colonna Venus is taking off her clothes. These differences indicate that no specific action is depicted in these statues, and they simply suggest bathing.

The temple in which the Cnidia stood is not in any way localized in preserved written sources. Judging by the coins, the statue was not on a high pedestal and those who came to bow to it may therefore have had their heads roughly at the same level as her eyes. The statue was evidently not designated for a large temple and thus we can imagine it in some smaller-sized shrine. In the 1960s, the remnants of a circular structure with a diameter of 17.3 meters with a wall surrounded by a row of columns in Corinthian style were unearthed in Cnidus.¹²⁶ The temple was interpreted as the shrine in which Praxiteles's statue was exhibited. On the eastern side of the temple, there was a stairwell leading to the entrance, which was in line with the altar in front of the building. The entrance to the temple was oriented so that the statue had a view of the sea. The existence of a circular shrine with the Cnidia is confirmed by its evocation at a scale of 1:1 that Emperor Hadrian ordered to be built in his villa in Tivoli in 125-133.¹²⁷ An exemplar of the Colonna Venus, which may have stood at the center of the cella, was found near this shrine in 1956.¹²⁸ Today the statue is in the local museum there, and a copy of it stands at the center of the partially reconstructed circular colonnade. The Dorian style in which the temple in Tivoli is built is surprising, as Vitruvius recommends the Corinthian style for temples of this goddess.¹²⁹

Pliny wrote the following of the shrine in which the Cnidia stood: *The shrine in which it stands is entirely open so as to allow the image of the goddess to be viewed from every side, and it is believed to have been made in this way with the blessing of the goddess herself. The statue is equally admirable from every angle. There is a story that a man once fell in love with it and hiding by night embraced it, and that a stain betrays this lustful act.*¹³⁰ By reading Pliny's text carefully, we realize that is likely a compilation of two texts from different epochs, as it contains a contradiction. Pliny first writes that Aphrodite's shrine was completely open, which corresponds to what archeologists call a monopteros: a colonnade which delimits a circular or right-angled space.¹³¹ Then, however, he states that someone *had hidden himself (delituisse)* inside the shrine. If the shrine had been

¹²⁶ Sophie Montel, "The Architectural Setting of the Knidian Aphrodite," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 251-268.

¹²⁷ See Giorgio Ortolani, *Il padiglione di Afrodite Cnidia a Villa Adriana: Progetto e significato* (Rome: Librerie Dedalo, 1998).

¹²⁸ Tivoli, Museo archeologico 2752.

¹²⁹ Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, 1.2.5.

¹³⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 36.6. English translation D. E. Eichholz. Cf. Adolf Heinrich Borbein, "Die griechische Statue des 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. Formanalytische Untersuchungen zur Kunst der Nachklassik," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Archäologischen Instituts* 88 (1973): 188-194; George L. Hersey, *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present* (Chicago ILL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 73-76.

¹³¹ See Montel, *The Architectural Setting*, 255.

completely open (tota aperitur), how could the worshiper of the goddess have hidden inside it? The young man in love with the Cnidia could have either stayed overnight in the completely open shrine, or he could have hidden himself in a closed shrine. Over the course of more than four centuries that divided Praxiteles from Pliny, who died in 79, the shrine was evidently renovated multiple times, which perhaps explains the contradictions in Pliny's text. Lucian wrote of a closed shrine with doors at the front and back in the 2nd century in his story of three young men who decide to visit Aphrodite's temple in Cnidus together.¹³²

Based on ancient descriptions of preserved ruins in Cnidus and Tivoli, a circular shrine with a statue at its center can certainly be considered possible. A theatron (a place for viewing or performances) is an architectonic type that we know from Greece from the beginning of the 5th century BC, when statues began to be furnished with circular pedestals, which were suitable for statues that were designed to be walked around. Statues that were conceived in order to captivate the viewer from all angles are known from the 4th century BC.¹³³ The Cnidia, however, is not one of them. As we walk around it, we do not gain anything; on the contrary, we lose something. When we look at it from the sides, we are not able to appreciate the sculptor's treatment of the naked body and the differentiation between the supporting and free leg; her action is unclear and her contours are much less attractive than when viewed from the front.

We do not assume that the Cnidia was designated to be viewed from behind, as her proportions from this angle are grotesquely deformed. As the goddess is leaning forwards in order to establish contact with the viewer, from behind her head looks disproportionately small in relation to her body. When viewed from behind, her bulky backside is dominant, an element which was surely not the sculptor's intention. Moreover, she looks rather boyish. Thus, the most impressive and coherent view of the statue is from the front. The literary motif of circumambulating the Cnidia may have been inspired by the fact that the naked Venus was also depicted from behind with her head turned to the right on coins, mirrors and gems from the end of the 1st century BC.¹³⁴

We know the story of the ardent admirer of the Cnidia not only from Pliny and Lucian's "Amores," but also from other ancient sources.¹³⁵ In ancient literature, we repeatedly encounter the motif of love for statues, but such behavior was generally considered to be rare and socially unacceptable. The anecdote was primarily intended to entertain via the folly of the protagonist, as only a complete fool could mistake a statue for a living being.¹³⁶ At the end of the 20th century, however, a debate flared up

¹³² Lucian, *Amores*, 15–16. Cf. Melissa Haynes, "Framing a View of the Unviewable: Architecture, Aphrodite, and Erotic Looking in the Lucianic Erôtes," *Helios* 40 (2013): 71 – 95.

¹³³ Cf. Borbein, *Formanalytische Untersuchungen*, 53–54.

¹³⁴ Evamaria Schmidt, "Venus," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VIII. 1. (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), 192–230.

¹³⁵ Lucian, *Imagines*, 4; Lucian, *Amores*, 15–16; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 8.11.4. Cf. Stijn Bussels, *The Animated Image: Roman Theory on Naturalism, Vividness and Divine Power* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012, 161–70; Giulia Ferrari, "Agalmatofilia. L'amore per le statue nel mondo antico. L'Afrodite di Cnido e il caso di Pigmalione," *Psicoart* 3, no. 3 (2013): 1–17.

¹³⁶ Neer, *The Emergence*, 53.

concerning the Cnidia's message, which was based on the report of her "rape."¹³⁷ Deliberations on whether this statue was sexually approachable or unapproachable, who she was looking at and who was looking at her, and who identified with her and why did not lead to clear conclusions. *The Cnidian Aphrodite*, Leonard Barkan emphasized, *is neither a god nor a human being; it is a statue. It is thus equally absurd to say that this piece of stone is a god-and-only-a-god as it is to say that this piece of stone has complex emotions going on inside its marble head.*¹³⁸ In the text below, we will view the Cnidia exclusively as a work of sculpture, which communicated with the audience of its time via its shapes and the associations that it evoked.



14. The Kaufmann head, Hellenistic head from Asia Minor marble after Cnidia from around 360 BC.

The best variation on the head of Praxiteles's Aphrodite of Cnidus is generally considered to be the fragment known as the Kaufmann Head (14). The goddess has wavy hair divided with a part in the middle and combed back. The hair is tied in a knot on the back of the neck. The only decoration in the hair is a thin ribbon wrapped twice around. The Kaufmann Head has rounded cheeks and a slightly opened mouth with full lips; the eyes are slightly shut and its expression is dreamy. The sculptor indicated Aphrodite's absent expression by placing the eye directly under the eyebrow and using a contrasting design for the eyelids; the upper eyelid has a thin, sharply cut contour and is convex while the line of the lower lid is softer and almost horizontal.

¹³⁷ See, for instance, Natalie Boymel Kampel, "Woman's Desire, Archaeology and Feminist Theory," in *KOINE: Mediterranean Studies in Honor of R. Ross Holloway*, eds. Derek Counts and Anthony Tuck (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 207-215; Jan Bažant, "The Legend of Knidia Today," *Eirene* 53 (2017): 91-99; Barrow, *The Female Body*, 35-48.

¹³⁸ Leonard Barkan, "Praxiteles' Aphrodite and the Love of Art," in *The Forms of Renaissance Thought*, eds. Leonard Barkan et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 28-29.

Aphrodite's gaze evokes the impression of someone who is standing directly before us but is preoccupied. The statue has been detached from the human world also thanks to its larger-than-life-size dimensions. The viewer stood before the statue, which was in arm's reach, but Praxiteles depicted it so that the inaccessibility of the goddess would stand out even more distinctly. At the same time, the statue looks as if it were alive, and the effect of reality was originally heightened by polychrome. Its hair was probably yellow or gilded, and the eyes, face, mouth and jewelry may have been emphasized with colors. The cloak that the goddess held in her hand was also colored, and the vessel was likely to have been painted to look like bronze. Polychrome was a highly important aspect of a statue. As Pliny stated: *Praxiteles used to say, when asked which of his own works in marble he placed highest, "The ones to which Nicias has set his hand" – so much value did he assign to his colouring of surfaces.*¹³⁹ Nicias was a very famous painter in his time.

In Athens, naked Aphrodites appear in statuettes and vase painting already in the first half of the 4th century BC¹⁴⁰ and they may have appeared there later in monumental art.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, it seems that statues of clothed Aphrodites with veils covering their heads prevailed in Athens.¹⁴² Athenian sculptor Praxiteles did not create the Cnidia for Athens, but for a Greek community with a different cultural tradition. Cnidus is located in Caria in Asia Minor, on the border between the Greek and Near Eastern world, where depictions of tempting, naked women had been common for millennia.¹⁴³ In Cnidus, Aphrodite's nakedness may have been considered something that inherently belonged to the goddess. Already in the 5th century BC, small statuettes of a naked goddess of a Near Eastern type with hands lifted up to the breasts were brought as votive gifts to the temple in which the Cnidia was later placed.¹⁴⁴ This does not however mean that small statuettes were an inspiration for Praxiteles's larger-than-life statue from a formal standpoint. This inspiration came from the monumental statues of naked and half-naked women in Egypt, which had been a source of inspiration for Greek sculptors since the mid-7th century BC.¹⁴⁵ However, most important for the further development of both ancient and world art was the fact that Praxiteles fundamentally transformed the Egyptian models.

The Cnidia differs at first glance from the Near Eastern depictions of naked goddesses in that she neither stands upright nor looks straight ahead stiffly; she is depicted in a relaxed pose with her head turned to the side. This strongly heightened the effect of reality, thanks to which the goddess could enter into the human world. Praxiteles's Aphrodite does not exist in mythical timelessness, but is placed into a wholly specific and highly intimate situation. The goddess holds clothing in her raised left hand, and under it is a hydria, a vessel for water. We see her bathing, here and

¹³⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.133. English translation H. Rackham.

¹⁴⁰ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 380.

¹⁴¹ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 398 and 473.

¹⁴² Cf. Andrew Stewart, "Hellenistic Freestanding Sculpture from the Athenian Agora, 1. Aphrodite," *Hesperia* 81, no. 2 (2012): 267–342.

¹⁴³ Andrew Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 178.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Mustafa Şahin, "Terrakotten aus Knidos: Erste Ergebnisse. Die Kulte auf den Rundtempelterrassen," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 55 (2005): 65–93, 70–72.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Nicholas Reeves, "The Birth of Venus?" in: *Joyful in Thebes. Egyptological Studies in Honor of Betsy M. Brian*, eds. Richard Jasnow and Kathlyn M. Cooney (Atlanta GA: Lockwood Press, 2015), 373–386.

now, which allows women to identify with her and men to embody someone spying on her. The bath was a traditional attribute of Aphrodite's beauty and erotic attractiveness. When Zeus sent erotic passion down on Aphrodite towards Anchises so she could experience what she caused upon others, she withdrew to her temple in Paphos, Cyprus. *There she went in, and closed the gleaming doors, and there the Graces bathed her and rubbed her with olive oil, divine oil.*¹⁴⁶ In ancient Greece, the bath was primarily associated with women and was understood there as a source of erotic attraction because it took place in privacy, behind closed doors; it was also attractive for what might ensue after a bath. Figuratively speaking, Praxiteles brought the viewer to the keyhole so he or she could look into Aphrodite's bath.

This, however, has not exhausted the topic of bathing in regard to the Cnidia. It was not only an attribute of the goddess's beauty, but also a reminder of her birth from the sea foam, in which she bathed for the first time, which had been depicted in Greek art since the 5th century BC. One of the most famous images in ancient times was the birth of Aphrodite by painter Apelles of Kos, which was created in the third quarter of the 4th century BC.¹⁴⁷ Not only was Aphrodite born from the sea, she ruled the seas as well. Thus, visitors to the temple could see the vessel, which was a part of the Cnidia, as reference to the element of water from which Aphrodite was meant to protect sailors. Pausanias noted: *For the Cnidians hold Aphrodite in very great honour and they have sanctuaries of the goddess; the oldest is to her as Doritis (Bountiful), the next in age as Acraea (Of the Height), while the newest is to the Aphrodite called Cnidian by men generally, but Euploia (Fair Voyage) by the Cnidian themselves.*¹⁴⁸ The Cnidia earned the title of Euploia due to the fact that Cnidus was a port city located on a site that was critical for ancient seafaring. The north-south line of Asia Minor's coast takes a right-angle turn here to the east, where sea navigation was dangerous and sailors needed protection more than anywhere else.

The Cnidia can be compared to a vase painting from the 5th century BC.¹⁴⁹ The woman depicted on this lekythos, a vessel for oil used in Greece after a bath, is naked, which was emphasized using an uncommon technique. The decoration has been created using so-called red-figure painting, with a black background and figures in the ochre color of a fired ceramic vessel. In this case, however, the nakedness of the woman was accentuated with a supplementary white coating. She is undoubtedly a woman, but her proportions are rather boyish. Incidentally, this is also proof of the progress that Greek artists made in the depiction of the anatomy of the female body over the course of the century that differentiates this vase painting from the Cnidia. The woman is at home, which is indicated by the objects on the floor, i.e. a box on the left and a basket of wool on the right. She was looking into a mirror, but someone has interrupted her. She continues to hold the mirror in her left hand before her, but has turned to look over her shoulder. Her right hand, which she was using to style her hair, is outstretched with the palm facing outwards. This gesture is a clear command for the intruding party to leave. The fact that she is embarrassed is indicated by her lightly

¹⁴⁶ *Homeric hymn*, 5.60-62. English translation Martin L. West.

¹⁴⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.91.

¹⁴⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.1.3. English translation W. H. S. Jones. Cf. Martin Eckert, *Die Aphrodite der Seefahrer und ihre Heiligtümer am Mittelmeer* (Münster, LIT-Verlag, 2016).

¹⁴⁹ Los Angeles, Getty Museum HS3999.

tilted head and the fact that she has not completely turned to the person arriving, allowing him to see her only from the side.

Comparison of the Cnidia to this vase painting is illuminative. The statue seems as if the sculptor has recorded a fleeting moment, but only at first glance. While the woman's gesture on the vase is unambiguous, we can interpret the Cnidia's gestures in various manners. With Praxiteles's statue, the depiction of the true shapes of the naked female body and the probable action evoked strong emotions in the viewer. This was a novelty that followed the request for an individual experience of the goddess's presence. The clothing plays an important role in the conception of the statue for the very reason that it is completely non-functional. It serves no purpose to the goddess, but the sculptor is nevertheless pointing the viewer towards it. It is an important semantic element, which gives the statue a certain dynamic; a moment earlier, the goddess was veiled and in the next moment she will be dressed, or vice versa; the viewer in any case has the unique opportunity to see the goddess naked.

The intentional ambiguity of the depicted action is similarly important, as it is one of the primary traits emphasizing her supernatural status. The Cnidia does not allow us to know exactly what she is doing. She can enter the bath or leave it; she may have turned her head to look in the direction of a suspicious sound she has heard, or may have turned to look towards the vessel of water lying next to her. She may be holding the clothing with her left hand to put it on or, on the contrary, to lay it down in order to take her bath. She may be covering her loins with her left hand, or she could be pointing to them.

The primary dynamic element of the statue is the distinct differentiation of the free and supporting leg – in the Cnidia, Praxiteles modified this contrapposto and interpreted it in a new way.¹⁵⁰ Polykleitos's "Spear Bearer / Doryphoros" from 440 BC evokes calm and serenity. The differentiation of the Cnidia's legs is more distinct and thus evokes discomposure, which excites the viewer. The goddess is moving the part of her body which is the most important for sexual activity. Praxiteles's statue does not embody self-control like Polykleitos's "Doryphoros", but rather spontaneity and erotic desire. A person is capable of recognizing from a far distance when the hip of an observed figure deviates by even few centimeters.¹⁵¹ At the beginning of his career, performances of American singer Elvis Presley were monitored by the police to determine whether or not he was moving his pelvis excessively, as his allegedly vulgar dancing while singing was seen as reason for criminal prosecution. The singer even received the nickname "Elvis the Pelvis" for his erotic movements. The Cnidia looks as if she were dancing; at the same time, her hip over her supporting leg stands out so prominently that if she were to perform as a singer in the USA in the 1950s, she would have been arrested on the spot.

Greek Aphrodite was the patroness of the erotic, the Cnidia, however, has her erotic charge fully under control; her sexuality accentuates her divinity and thus inaccessibility. While classical Greek male statues depicted in contrapposto are walking and thus have their legs apart, the Cnidia's knees on the contrary are pressed against one another so that one thigh almost crosses over the other. This detail

¹⁵⁰ Rhys Carpenter, *Greek Sculpture* (Chicago ILL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 173-74.

¹⁵¹ See Enrico Marani and Wijnand F.R.M Koch, *The Pelvis: Structure, Gender and Society* (Berlin: Springer, 2014), 298-299.

naturally places a significant limit on the erotic appeal of Praxiteles's statue, which was surely intentional. The elegance of Praxiteles's design, which the viewer immediately accepts as something wholly natural, stands out when compared to alternative versions. On the Boeotian statuette of Aphrodite from roughly the same period, her erotic nature is indicated by an unveiled body including the loins, but her divine nature is shown by the cloak that veils the rest of her body and is also draped over her head.¹⁵² The problem of depicting the naked goddess was solved in this manner, but the result is improbable and the goddess gives off a stiff impression.

The most important means of all through which Praxiteles depicted the erotically attractive but asexual goddess was the elimination of the genitals. Lucian wrote of the Cnidia: *She's a most beautiful statue of Parian marble – arrogantly smiling a little as a grin parts her lips. Draped by no garment, all her beauty is uncovered and revealed, except in so far as she unobtrusively uses one hand to hide her private parts. So great was the power of the craftsman's art that the hard unyielding marble did justice to every limb.*¹⁵³ Yet this is not true – Praxiteles deviated from the anatomy of the female body in the most important area.¹⁵⁴ The Cnidia's genitals are smooth and permanently closed, and her womb is wholly inaccessible. Praxiteles depicted the naked Aphrodite, but fundamentally changed his artistic strategy just before finishing the objective. Instead of bringing the nakedness to completion, he deviated from the form of the female body and resorted to an artistic convention. Praxiteles calls attention to the goddess's genitals by closing her thighs and covering them with a hand; despite this fact, it is as if the goddess has left on an invisible undergarment. Praxiteles's innovation caught on so firmly that half a millennium later it did not occur to Lucian to mention this anomaly. In his time, it was clearly an obvious element of the goddess of love's appearance.

An example can also be found on the Esquilin Venus, a well-preserved Roman version from the mid-1st century after a late-Hellenistic version of the Cnidia.¹⁵⁵ This statue is evidently depicting Venus as a young mother, which may be indicated by an accentuated crease in the skin as a result of pregnancy, which characterizes her as a woman who has recently given birth.¹⁵⁶ Why did the sculptor of the Esquilin Venus faithfully reproduce the anatomy of the female body including the subtle changes brought on by pregnancy with the exception of the area that is so crucial to reproduction (15)?

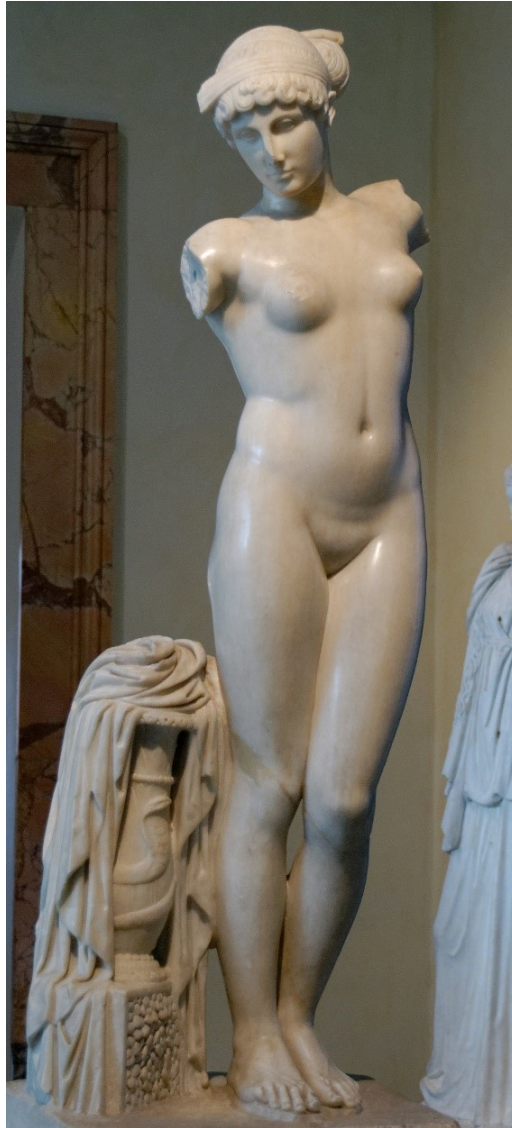
¹⁵² London, The British Museum 1867,0205.5. Cf. Chantal Courtois, "La collection Béatrix de Candolle: Terre cuites en filiation," *Genava. Revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie* 54, (2006): 227-237.

¹⁵³ Lucian, *Amores*, 13. English translation M. D. Macleod.

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Kristen Elisabeth Seaman, "Retrieving the Original Aphrodite of Knidos," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* Ser. 9, no. 15 (2004): 551-557.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Bernard Andreae, "Ist die sogenannte Venus vom Esquilin ein Körperportät der unbekleideten Kleopatra?" in *Amicitiae Gratia: tomos stē mnēmē Alkmēnēs Stauridē*, eds. Alkmini Stavridis and Diana Zapheirou (Athens: Tameio Archaologikon Porōn, 2008), 97-104.

¹⁵⁶ See Licinio Glori, *Cleopatra "Venere esquilina"* (Rome: C. Bestetti, 1955), 19-25.



15. Esquiline Venus, h. 155 cm, the Roman version from Parian marble of the late Hellenistic original.

The Cnidia's hand placed before the genitals was not necessarily a gesture of chastity, which is embodied in the title "Venus pudica," i.e. the bashful Aphrodite, which is commonly used for this sculptural type today despite being a modern name. We know nothing of the sort from ancient times.¹⁵⁷ The Cnidia is covering her loins and at the same time gesturing towards them. This gesture was used to characterize deities of sexuality with a thousand-year-long tradition, which the Greeks knew well.¹⁵⁸ We have two literary documents concerning how this gesture was interpreted in ancient Rome. Apuleius describes a sort of "strip-tease" in a story in which a girl plays Venus: *she stripped herself of all her clothes, and let down her hair. With joyous wantonness she beautifully transformed herself into the picture of Venus rising from the ocean*

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Rober Couzin, "Invented Traditions. Latin Terminology and the Writing of Art History," *Journal of Art Historiography* 19 (December 2018): 14-15.

¹⁵⁸ Cf., for instance, Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin"*, 56-59; Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101-106.

waves. For a time she even held one rosy little hand in front of her smooth-shaven pubes, purposely shadowing it, rather than modestly hiding it.¹⁵⁹

In Lucian's aforementioned story of the three young men who set off to see the Cnidia, the gesture is spoken of in a similar sense. This is the very first time in ancient literary tradition that the Cnidia's hand covering her loins is mentioned; however, it is important that she is not doing so because she is embarrassed of her nakedness. As Lucian stresses, the statue was *smiling a little* and did so *arrogantly*. Scholars long ignored this detail about the Cnidia and her following variations, despite the fact that it fundamentally influenced the depiction of the naked woman in Western artistic tradition. After the onset of Christianity in the late ancient period, it was no longer necessary for Venus to have smooth genitals, a fact which had an influence on the depiction of naked women in general. On a Byzantine pyxis of the 5th – 6th century from Egypt, Venus is depicted in exactly the way a naked woman looks.¹⁶⁰ In the Christian era, Venus ceased to be a venerated goddess; along with this, the taboo from the previous "pagan" epoch that forbade depictions of her genitals also ceased to be valid.

In post-ancient Europe, realistic depictions of the female genitalia were prevalent. Only during the Italian Renaissance were Venus's unnaturally smoothed genitals renewed. At the beginning of the 16th century, however, the genitals were still being added to drawings of ancient sculptures. This means that the drawers realized this anomaly. It was commented on for the first time by Denis Diderot in 1765.¹⁶¹ The lack of depiction of the female genitals began to be dealt with in art history by Ann-Sophie Lehmann around 2000.¹⁶² In classical archeology, Wiltrud Neumer-Pfau already pointed out this specific characteristic of ancient Greek depictions of Aphrodite in the 1980s.¹⁶³ In the heated discussion that arose concerning this topic, Zainab Bahrani wrote: *The genitals on the Hellenistic Aphrodite statues are neither under-represented nor schematically represented. They are not represented; they are denied, non-existent. They are a void where something, a part of the female anatomy, and significantly, the sexual part, should be. The vulva is not covered by clothes or obscured by any props. It is rejected as non-existent. This detail is particularly remarkable in that the Aphrodite statues represent a goddess of sexuality.*¹⁶⁴ Kristen Seaman opposed this opinion with the statement that on some statues of Venus, pubic hair or the lines of the labia are

¹⁵⁹ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 2.17. English translation J. Arthur Hanson. Cf. Jaś Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 293-295.

¹⁶⁰ Baltimore, MD, Walters Art Museum 71.64.

¹⁶¹ Denis Diderot, *Salons*, 2 eds. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 210. Cf. also Josef Kirchner, *Die Darstellung des ersten Menschenpaares in der bildenden Kunst von der ältesten Zeit bis auf unsere Tage* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1903), 85; Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 136-148.

¹⁶² See Ann-Sophie Lehmann, "Das unsichtbare Geschlecht: Zu einem abwesenden Teil des weiblichen Körpers in der bildenden Kunst," in *Körperteile: Eine kulturelle Anatomie*, eds. Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2001), 314-336.

¹⁶³ See Wiltrud Neumer-Pfau, *Studien zur Ikonographie und gesellschaftlichen Funktion hellenistischer Aphrodite-Statuen* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1982); idem, "Die nackte Liebesgöttin: Aphroditestatuen als Verkörperung des Weiblichkeitsideals in der griechisch-hellenistischen Welt," in *Approaches to Iconology*, ed. Werner Muensterberger (Leiden: Brill, 1985-1986): 205-234.

¹⁶⁴ Bahrani, *Women of Babylon*, 76.

indicated by a relief or painting and sometimes by both techniques.¹⁶⁵ The Cnidia may naturally have had a hairless pubic region, which was evidently common in Greece at the time of the statue's creation. The problem, however, had in no way been solved. If the pubic hair and vulva were discretely indicated on several versions of the Cnidia, why do we not find them on the absolute majority? Roland Smith pointed out this contradiction in 1991.¹⁶⁶

In monumental Greek art, men were depicted naked several centuries before women and their genitals were depicted quite realistically from the beginning to the end of ancient civilization, including three-dimensionally indicated pubic hair. Greek artists approached the male genitalia just like they did the nose, ears or any other protuberance on the human body. At the same time, the Greeks long before Praxiteles had depicted the female genitals including pubic hair or indication of the vulva and it offended no one. Indicated genitalia can be found for example on a depiction of Aphrodite on a Paestan lebes gamikos of the third quarter of the 4th century BC.¹⁶⁷ However, Praxiteles deviated from this practice with the Cnidia and violated the generally established convention of the Greek visual arts, which ordered that all visible anatomic features be systematically and faithfully recorded. This was not an omission or improvisation, but an important part of the characteristic of the naked Aphrodite sculptural type that the sculptor had just created.

At the beginning of the 3rd century, Philostratus the Elder expressed the following in a description of a painting depicting the statue of the goddess: *The type of the goddess is that of Aphrodite goddess of Modesty, naked and graceful, and the material is ivory, closely joined. However, the goddess is unwilling to seem painted, but she stands out as though one could take hold of her.*¹⁶⁸ She is a goddess and at the same time the work of human hands, which is sophisticatedly designed from pieces of ivory. She keeps her distance from viewers, but simultaneously urges them to lay their hands on her. She is chaste despite being naked, but indecent at the same time, although she does not show it. The depiction of Aphrodite can never be complete; each one of her statues is only the visualization of her absence and permanent inaccessibility. The myth of Anchises tells of how Aphrodite's genitals were once available to all, even mortals. This is the reason the myth was told in ancient times; Anchises, however, was the last mortal whom the goddess chose as a sexual partner. Aphrodite forced the young man to solemnly swear he would never tell anyone of it. Anchises did not keep his oath of silence and was punished for it.¹⁶⁹ Even if he had kept it, the mythical age of heroes had irreversibly come to an end. The fates of people and gods, which Aphrodite and the other Olympian gods in the mythical past had connected, were once again permanently divided. An unsurpassable chasm between the immortal and eternally-young gods on one hand and the mortal and ageing people on the other had opened and it continued to widen as time passed.

¹⁶⁵ Seaman, *Retrieving the Original Aphrodite*, 554–555; id., *An Aphrodite of Knidos and Its Copies* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), 20–22.

¹⁶⁶ See Roland R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 83.

¹⁶⁷ Paestum, museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1182.

¹⁶⁸ Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, 2.1–3. English translation A. Fairbanks.

¹⁶⁹ See Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Homeric Hymns* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 199–200.

People were conscientious of this matter; they strove towards contact with the gods, but in their own interest avoided direct contact with them, a fact which the gods were also well aware of. In the *Iliad*, Hera makes this wholly clear – the sight of the gods in their true form must be terrifying by rule.¹⁷⁰ Semele paid for this with her life while Tiresias went blind. Aeneas was punished for having sex with Aphrodite (and for his impertinence) by being struck by lightning, which permanently damaged his legs. Alcman therefore warned: *nay, mortal man may not go soaring to the heavens, nor seek to wed Aphrodite of Paphos*.¹⁷¹ Aphrodite had a different relationship with nakedness than the virgin Artemis, who had Actaion torn apart by his own dogs for happening to glimpse her undressed.¹⁷² Aphrodite would not have minded someone seeing her naked at all, but it may have had fatal consequences for the person in question. The omitted details of the private parts were a result of the depiction of naked Aphrodite or more precisely a *conditio sine qua non* of the new method of depicting the Greek goddess of love. In order for her to appear in monumental sculpture, Aphrodite's womb had to be veiled and her genitals had to be covered via artistic convention.¹⁷³ The goddess thus protected those who came to worship her, a fact told in epigrams about her.¹⁷⁴ In one epigram, the goddess herself appeared among tourists in Cnidus. *Paphian Cytherea came through the waves to Cnidus, wishing to see her own image, and having viewed it from all sides in its open shrine, she cried, "Where did Praxiteles see me naked?" Praxiteles did not look on forbidden things, but the steel carved the Paphian as Ares would have her*.¹⁷⁵

In the 4th century, the content of the epigram was retold by Ausonius, who explicitly claimed the sight of the naked goddess was a sin.¹⁷⁶ In both epigrams, the same strategy for defending the depiction of the naked goddess was used. As a mortal must not in any way see the goddess naked, the responsibility was transferred to the sculptor's chisel. Praxiteles neither saw nor did anything that was forbidden. The sculpture was created by the chisel which he held in his hand. The tool, however, was commanded by the god Ares, Aphrodite's divine lover, who was the patron of iron and all tools made from it. Only a god could see the form of Aphrodite's naked body. This explains how a sculptor was able to create a faithful representation of Aphrodite's naked body without violating the divine restriction. The authors of the epigrams borrowed this strategy from ancient sacrificial practice, during which the sacrificer was not guilty of killing the sacrificial animal; it was the knife he held in his hand that carried responsibility.¹⁷⁷

Like every fundamental innovation in artistic culture, the Cnidia did not appear in Greece merely "out of thin air." Its creation required the culmination of several

¹⁷⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 20.131.

¹⁷¹ Alcman, 1.1.16-17. English translation J.M. Edmonds.

¹⁷² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3.138-252.

¹⁷³ See, for instance, Brunilde S. Ridgway, "Some Personal Thoughts on the Knidia," in *Macellum: Culinarium archaeologica. Robert Fleischer zum 60. Geburtstag von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern*, eds. Robert Fleischer and Nicole Birkle (Mainz: Nicole Birkle 2001), 257.

¹⁷⁴ Verity Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 199-211.

¹⁷⁵ Greek Anthology, 16.161. Cf. Barkan, *Praxiteles*, 4.

¹⁷⁶ Ausonius, *Epigrammata*, 62.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Robert Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 129-130.

generations of lasting effort elicited by the growth of the cult of Aphrodite's popularity in Athens, which we have mentioned above. In the second half of the 5th century, local sculptors had to meet the exceptionally large demand for new statues. At the time, a whole series of various visual art types that abandoned the previous tradition were created for Athenian temples. The development culminated in 360 BC with Praxiteles's creation of his statue of Aphrodite, which is completely unveiled. This was to meet the need for a more intimate relationship between the viewer and the deity's statue. This is also the main characteristic of Praxiteles's Hermes and the Infant Dionysus in his arms, or the similarly conceived group sculpture of Eirene with the Infant Pluto by Cephisodotus, which was created at roughly the same time as the Cnidia. In comparison with these statues, sculptures of deities from the previous century seemed cold and inaccessible.

Both Praxiteles and Cephisodotus created much more visually attractive forms of the deity, which appeal to the sensual experience of the viewer and urge him or her to identify completely with the depicted deity, which is meant to be perceived as an indelible part of the human world. However, this in no way means the deity is more accessible to people. On the contrary, sculptors began to emphasize the fact that the deities are wholly enclosed in a world of their own, a fact which is expressed perfectly in both Cephisodotus and Praxiteles's group of sculptures. In them, all communication takes place exclusively between the depicted figures, who ignore the surrounding world.¹⁷⁸ Sculptors used a radical intensification of the effect of reality to react to the fact that a chasm between the world of people and the Olympian gods had opened up and was swiftly growing larger. At the same time, sculptors admitted to this chasm via the absence of eye contact between the depicted deity and the viewer, which emphasizes the asymmetry of their relationship.

Praxiteles created a type of depiction of the goddess which evoked the manifestation of a deity – an epiphany, the essence of which was the experience of visual and bodily presence and at the same time an equally intense feeling of absence.¹⁷⁹ The clothedness of Aphrodite's genitals became a key attribute of statues of the goddess, as it clearly demonstrated her inaccessibility. Through this convention, statues expressed what is written in Lucian's inscription on the statue of Aphrodite: *To thee, Cypris, I dedicate the beautiful image of thy form (ἄγαλμα), since I have nothing better than thy form (μορφή).*¹⁸⁰ In the epigram, the statue of the goddess is first indicated by the common word for sculptures which please a god – *agalma*. It is then given another term used for a statue, *morfe*, which relates to Aphrodite's beauty. The person giving away the statue apologizes for *having nothing better* than her external form, i.e. a statue of the goddess with smooth genitals, because no other existed in Lucian's time.

Viewed from today's perspective, one of this goddess's paradoxes is the fact that she had a beautiful and erotically attractive body which was, however, intentionally functionless. The smooth genitals, closed thighs and other artistic

¹⁷⁸ See Andrew Stewart, *Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 263-264.

¹⁷⁹ See Pascale Linant de Bellefonds and Évelyne Prioux, *Voir les mythes: Poésie hellénistique et arts figurés* (Paris: Picard, 2017), 127-131.

¹⁸⁰ *Greek Anthology*, 16.164. English translation W. R. Paton. Cf. Verity Platt, "Evasive Epiphanies in Ekphrastic Epigram," *Ramus* 31, no. 1-2 (2002): 44-46.

conventions which Praxiteles created were renewed in the 16th century with the reception of the ancient visual arts. In the modern world, Praxiteles's Aphrodite and the countless variations of her have become an attribute of a civilized lifestyle that neither shocks nor leaves us underwhelmed. No objection can be made to this; however, we must be careful not to assume the same attitude was shared by the ancient Greeks. What we must assume is that they knew very well that Aphrodite could not be depicted in the exact way she would have looked if she were a woman.

Variations of the Cnidia

The concept of Aphrodite in the Hellenistic epoch is characterized by its uninterrupted stylistic and thematic continuity with the art of the previous epoch, which took on the status of a mandatory pattern. Within this pattern, however, a fundamental transformation of meanings took place. Both trends were linked to the transformation of the political, economic and social context in which the works of art were created. The Hellenistic monarchies that arose in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East conquered by Alexander the Great meant the end of the Greek polis, but also brought about an increase in the quality of life and completely new opportunities of self-realization. The Greeks ceased to identify with their city state, and their individual fate came to the forefront. The primary patrons were Dionysus and Aphrodite, who brought delight to life.¹⁸¹ The posture of Aphrodite's statues and her gestures continue to be more distinctly targeted at the viewers with the goal of gaining control of their senses and pulling them into the depicted situation. These new goals were achieved by using allusions and quotes from famous works of art from the past, deepening the psychological characteristic, heightening the effect of reality and playfulness, and eroticizing the depiction of anatomy and themes – at the same time, all of this took place within the frame of social conventions, and decorum was always upheld.

We see these transformations in traditional visual types and their numerous forms, primarily in the Cnidia. Preserved exemplars of Praxiteles's statue vary greatly and dating them is highly difficult, as they are almost always fragments which are by vast majority later Roman variations.¹⁸² We are thus dealing with copies of copies and variations of variations. Fragments of the provably oldest variation on the Cnidia were found in the wreck of the Antikythera and likely originated in the late 2nd century BC.¹⁸³ The group sculpture depicting Aphrodite and Pan, which was found on Delos, was created around 100 BC (16).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Cf. Paul Zanker, *Eine Kunst für die Sinne: Zur Bilderwelt des Dionysos und Aphrodite* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1998).

¹⁸² See, for example, Dericksen M. Brinckerhoff, *Hellenistic Statues of Aphrodite: Studies in the History of their Development* (New York: Garland, 1978); Christine Mitchell Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek art* (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Kristen Elisabeth Seaman, *An Aphrodite of Knidos and Its Copies* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009); Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*.

¹⁸³ Peter Bol, *Die Skulpturen des Schiffsfundes von Antikythera* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1972), no. 40, 43-45.

¹⁸⁴ Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schönheit*, 113-122; S. Rebecca Martin, "Revisiting the Slipper Slapper and Other Sculpture Dedications in the Clubhouse of the Poseidoniasts of Beirut," *Journal of Greek Archaeology* 2 (2017): 253-282.



16. Aphrodite, Pan and Eros, h. 129 cm, marble group of statues from Delos, ca. 100 BC.

This sculptural group is highly valuable to us, as this Aphrodite is the oldest and clearly proven record of the reception of the Cnidia. The naked Aphrodite is covering her loins with her left hand, which Pan is attempting to pull away. The goddess has taken off the sandal from her left foot and raises it at Pan, whom Eros, flying over Aphrodite's shoulder, is holding by the horn.¹⁸⁵ In Greek art, sandal-swatting was a frequent motif in erotic scenes. The Cnidia's composition on this statue is a mirror image and has been subtly altered. The group sculpture was created from Parian marble, which was perfectly polished and designed in very high detail.

The effect of the statue's reality was heightened by its original coloration; Aphrodite had brown-red hair, her sandal was red, the stump of the tree was black and the support between Aphrodite and Pan was sky-blue. The wall near which the sculptural group stood was evidently also sky-blue, and therefore the support was not immediately visible at first glance. If we assume that the pubic hair may have been indicated with coloration, the question remains as to why it was not also designed three-dimensionally like this Aphrodite's nipples. Nipples and genitalia did not evidently belong to the same category; if this was the case, both details would have been created three-dimensionally or indicated in paint. The Delos statue group is a Greek original of exceptionally high quality; however, there is no Roman replica of it, a fact which may have been due to historical circumstances. Several decades later, in 69 BC, the island was ransacked by pirates and the sculptural group ended up in the ruins of a collapsed house, which was never rebuilt.

¹⁸⁵ Sadie Pickup, "A Slip and a Slap: Aphrodite and her Footwear," *Shoes, Slippers, and Sandals. Feet and Footwear in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Sadie Pickup and Sally Waite (London: Routledge, 2018), 229-246.



17 (left). Medici Venus, h. 135 cm, 1st century BC version of the Hellenistic original.
 18 (right). Capitoline Venus, h. 193 cm, the Roman marble version
 of the Hellenistic original.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the two most famous works inspired by the Cnidia were two very similar statues in life size known as the the Medici Venus (**17**) and Capitoline Venus (**18**).¹⁸⁶ In terms of the state of their preservation, the difference between them primarily lies in the fact that the later has its original arms intact; with the former, we must rely on the fact that the restorer carried out his work responsibly. On both statues, the goddess is covering her genitals with her left hand and her breasts with her right, gestures which had been depicted in various forms on small statuettes for millennia.¹⁸⁷ This statue type was probably created at the end of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd century BC and can be found on one hundred and fifty statues. It is also

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Andrew Stewart "A Tale of Seven Nudes: The Capitoline and Medici Aphrodites, Four Nymphs at Elean Herakleia, and an Aphrodite at Megalopolis," *Antichthon* 44 (2010): 12-32.

¹⁸⁷ We first encounter them in the 8th to 7th century BC in Greek art: Böhm, *Die "nackte Göttin,"* no. B2, pl. 20e.

found on coins, the majority of which were minted in the eastern Mediterranean in the late 2nd and early 3rd century . Next to the Capitoline Venus is a vase. Next to the Medici Venus is a dolphin. This sculptural type exists in a number of other variations, and a tree or Amor may be depicted by the goddess's leg. This would indicate the existence of a bronze original, as the crafting of marble required a support, the design of which was left up to the author of this particular sculpture.

The Capitoline goddess has a complex hairstyle, but one lock of hair has fallen onto her back, which shows that she is depicted at her toilette. This is also indicated by the vessel nearby with clothing thrown over it and a decorative hem with ornamental fringes. Next to the Capitoline Venus is a loutrophoros (a ritual vessel used for bathing) with clothing thrown over it; in some variations of this sculptural type, the loutrophoros may be replaced with a hydria (a vessel also used for bathing). The loutrophoros was an Athenian vessel used exclusively for a marriage bath and ceased to be produced around 300 BC. Two things may be deduced from this fact – firstly, the original statue was created at the end of the 4th century BC and secondly, the depicted theme was linked in some way to a marriage bath.¹⁸⁸ However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the statues with the loutrophoros were created later and the antiquated shape of the vase was meant to give it an old-fashioned atmosphere. The Medici Venus has shorter hair with a simpler hairstyle and she is looking off to the side towards her left leg with a dolphin nearby with two small Erotes playing on its back, which can also be an evocation of a bath and the birth of the goddess.¹⁸⁹ The goddess is standing on a socle with the name of the sculptor, Athenian Kleomenes, son of Apollodorus, and the type of writing corresponds to the 1st century BC.

Similarly to the Cnidia, the Capitoline Venus and the Medici Venus have their knees pressed together; their shoulders are raised and they are stooping to make the surface area of the front part of their bodies as small as possible. This can be seen as the natural reaction of a naked woman who has been surprised by someone. The gestures and posture of this type of statue of Venus are not clear; they may be covering their genitals and breasts, or pointing at them coquettishly. The gesture of the right hand is proof of this pointing, as it does not actually cover the breast. This applies mainly to the Capitoline Venus. The Medici version has its hand raised higher, thus partially covering the left breast. Comparing these two statues with the Cnidia is illuminating. The Cnidia ushered in a new era, but it was still far from a perfect depiction of the naked female body. The Cnidia gives off a somewhat awkward impression, which is due to the thickness of her waist and bulky sides. Her breasts are improbably situated and too small in comparison with her bulky body. The Capitoline and Medici Venuses have breasts that are fuller and more realistically depicted. The erotic attraction is also heightened by the softly modeled and slightly overhanging armpit area or the sharper curves dividing the abdomen from the crotch.

¹⁸⁸ Stewart, *A Tale of Seven Nudes*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Plutarch, *De sollertia animalium*, 35 (Moralia 983e-f): *Aphrodite, born of the sea, regards practically all sea creatures as sacred and related to herself and relishes the slaughter of none of them*. English translation H. Cherniss and W. C. Helmbold.



19. Venus de Milo, h. 204 cm, Greek marble version from 120-110 BC after the original from the end of the 4th century BC.

The best and most famous of the preserved statues of the naked goddess is without a doubt the Venus de Milo (19).¹⁹⁰ We are more familiar with its Latin name, but it is originally a Greek statue in larger-than-life size found in a gymnasium in Milos (or Melos) in 1822. The name of the sculptor, Alexandros of Antioch on the Meander, was carved into the pedestal of the statue. Judging by the shape of the lettering, the inscription was created around 120-110 BC. However, the pedestal remained in Milos and has now been lost, thus making it impossible to rule out the fact that it may have belonged to another statue. Aphrodite has wavy hair parted in the middle, combed back and tied in a knot. She has a partially opened and gently smiling mouth, which contrasts with her unsteady position. Her free left leg is placed forward and is sharply bent, forcing the goddess to put her right leg backwards to keep her balance. Her body is depicted in a slightly twisted manner; her clothing covers only her legs and clings to her hips thanks to the rolled-up fabric which is wrapped around them. With her right hand, she was probably holding on to the clothing and had her left hand stretched forward or was leaning on a column. A fragment of her left upper arm and hand holding an apple also belong to the statue. This was an allusion to her victory in the Judgment of Paris and possibly also to the name of the island (the Greek word for apple is *μήλο*). From a formal standpoint, the regular face points to Praxiteles' Cnidia.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. for example, Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture*, 28-34; Marianne Hamiaux, "Le type statuaire de la Vénus de Milo," *Revue archéologique* 63, no. 1 (2017): 65-84.

However, both the surface of the body, which convincingly evokes the anatomy of the female body, and the dramatic drapery with deep creases corresponds to the late Hellenistic era when the statue was created.

The Aphrodite of Milos is of great importance to us, as it gives us definite (although limited) information on the circumstances of the find, thus allowing us to at least approximately reconstruct the ideological framework in which it was perceived at the time. The donation of the Venus de Milo to the city's gymnasium was evidently a part of a contest amongst the adult members of Milos's elite.¹⁹¹ The statue was said to have stood together with other statues in an alcove, and allegedly had the following inscription, which is now lost: *Bakchios, son of Satios, assistant gymnasiarch, (dedicated) this exedra and this (?) to Hermes and Herakles.* In the context of the gymnasium, the column may have indicated the finish line in running competitions and was a traditional part of gymnasia's equipment. The final column and apple made Aphrodite the patron of athletic competitions, in which nakedness also played a role. Venus de Milo is a high-quality statue made by an excellent artist and thus must have been very expensive, which was also an important aspect of its message, as gymnasia began to take on a wholly new social status in Hellenistic cities. To a certain degree, they substituted buildings of municipal councils and other political institutions of the city state, which had lost their original meaning under the Hellenistic monarchies. The gymnasium preserved its traditional function – athletic training continued to be an important part of military preparation. Young Greeks were also given general education here and the premises of the gymnasia also served as community religious centers. In this new context, however, visits to gymnasia and their financial support allowed members of the elite to win recognition in the public life of the community. The new significance of gymnasia manifested itself in their shift from the periphery to the city center. The gymnasium in Milos was next to the theater. Gymnasia were also monumentalized through architecture and rich sculpture decorations. The symbolism of Venus de Milo based on the traditional motif of the celebration of victory in the Judgment of Paris, her decent eroticism (which was a traditional attribute of the social elite), and the sculptural style indicating a famous work from the classical epoch were connected with the education of the conservative youth of the Greek social elite in the Hellenistic epoch.

Aphrodite was depicted in a similar pose to Venus de Milo but in a different ideological context on a late-Hellenistic marble statuette found in Kos,¹⁹² which depicts the goddess as she teaches Eros how to shoot his bow, a theme also well-known in statuettes and vase painting.¹⁹³ The divine mother uses her left hand to help her son pull back the bow as he kneels on a rock. Aphrodite is either trying to hold back her son or, on the contrary, is helping him take better aim of his target; in any case, the emphasis here is on the intimate relationship between mother and son. A score of sculptural types depicting the naked Aphrodite arose in Greek Hellenistic art. In her

¹⁹¹ Rachel Meredith Kousser, "Creating the Past: The Venus de Milo and the Hellenistic Reception of Classical Greece," *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no. 2 (April 2005): 27-250.

¹⁹² Rhodos, Museum 13.621. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 632.

¹⁹³ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, 634-635; Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture*, 35-36.

time, the Venus of Syracuse, known as the Venus Landolina after archeologist Saverio Landolino who discovered it in 1804, was highly famous (20).¹⁹⁴



20. Venus of Syracuse, h. 157.5 cm, the Roman version from Parian marble of the Hellenistic original.

This statue combines the gesture of the hand in front of the breasts and genitals that we know from the Capitoline and Medici Venus, with clothing over her hips, which we know from the Venus de Milo. The goddess is holding the clothing in front of her loins, but her legs are bare as if a strong wind were blowing into the garments, causing the fabric to flutter behind the bottom half of her body. The billowing garments behind the Venus thus take on the shape of a seashell, the attribute of the goddess. In the 4th century BC, when Aphrodite began to be depicted completely naked, statuettes of the goddess may depict her kneeling in an open seashell, evoking a bath or bathing.¹⁹⁵ As we noted above, in the improvised hairstyle of the Capitoline Venus, the goddess's hair is tied at the top in a knot, and several locks fall downwards, which is linked to bathing. We already know the motif from classical Greek art of the naked Aphrodite holding her loose hair with both arms upraised.¹⁹⁶ In Hellenistic sculpture, this motif appears very often and can be associated with Apelles's painting from roughly the same period as the Cnidia. Apelles's *Aphrodite emerging from the Sea*

¹⁹⁴ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 743.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Stéphanie Huysecom-Haxhi, "Aphrodite, Coming of Age and Marriage: Contextualisation and Reconsideration of the Nude Young Women Kneeling in a Shell," in *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas* ed. Giorgos Papantoniou et al. (Leiden, Brill, 2019), 259-271.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Gaëlle Ficheux, "La chevelure d'Aphrodite et la magie amoureuse," in *L'expression des corps. Gestes, attitudes, regards dans l'iconographie antique*, ed. Lydie Bodiou (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 182-194.

was dedicated by his late lamented Majesty Augustus in the shrine of his father Caesar; it is known as the *Anadyomene*.¹⁹⁷

A Greek anthology contains the epigram of Antipater of Sidon, who died in 125 BC, where the motif is described in more detail: *Look on the work of Apelles' pencil: Cypris, just rising from the sea, her mother; how, grasping her dripping hair with her hand, she wrings the foam from wet locks.*¹⁹⁸ All preserved Roman marble statues corresponding to this type adhere to some Greek original that was famous in its time, as the goddess is always standing on her left leg with her left arm loose so that the left hand is lower than the right.¹⁹⁹ On the statue in the Vatican, Venus's clothing is wrapped around her legs and tied in a pronounced knot (21). On the statue in the Colonna Palace, there is a dolphin, which we also find on some other versions.²⁰⁰ The Venus of Benghazi, whose lower half has been cut off, gives evidence of her original placement, which was probably in some kind of water reservoir evoking the sea.²⁰¹ Individual types of depictions of Venus may have been mutually combined, and proof of this may be found in the statue from Rhodes, which depicts the kneeling goddess with an *Anadyomene*-type gesture (22).²⁰²



21 (left). Venus Anadyomene, h. 149 cm, the Roman version of the Hellenistic original.
22 (right). The crouching Venus Anadyomene, h. 49 cm, the Roman version of the Hellenistic original.

¹⁹⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.91. English translation H. Rackham.

¹⁹⁸ *Greek Anthology* 16.178, English translation W. R. Patin. Similarly *Greek Anthology* 16, 179. Cf. Platt, *Evasive Epiphanies*, 36-40.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Marianne Eileen Wardle, *Naked and Unashamed: A Study of the Aphrodite Anadyomene in the Graeco-Roman World*. PhD diss. (Durham NC: Duke University, 2010).

²⁰⁰ Roma, Palazzo Colonna 765. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 424.

²⁰¹ Philadelphia, PA, Penn Museum 69-14-1. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 677.

²⁰² Rhodes, Museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1027.

The crouching and naked Aphrodite in her bath was a very successful sculptural type (55).²⁰³ From the many preserved versions, the exemplar of highest quality is the one found in Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli.²⁰⁴ The most intact depiction of the crouching Venus can be seen in the Roman museum in Torlonia.²⁰⁵ The whole weight of her body is supported by her right leg as she keeps her balance with the other. Venus's pose looks as if the sculptor had promptly recorded a wholly random moment, which is typical for Hellenistic sculpture. The illusion of reality is heightened by the depiction of details observed from real life, e.g. the folds of the stomach and deformation of the breast with her arm pressed against it. Kunze interpreted the statue type as representing the goddess surprised during her bath, pressing her legs together, covering her loins with the outstretched fingers of her left hand and tilting her right shoulder downwards, hiding her breasts with her right arm.²⁰⁶ However, the posture was not linked exclusively to this goddess and did not always necessarily evoke a bath. We also know this type from vase painting, terracottas and gems from the 5th century BC. Thus, just like Aphrodite wringing out her hair, this is a composition with a long tradition in vase painting and statuettes.

The Aphrodite taking off her sandal is also a common iconographic type that we know from classical Greek art and was not exclusively bound to Aphrodite. The sandal was a traditional Greek erotic attribute, which for example appears in connection with Aphrodite in the sculptural group of Aphrodite with Eros mentioned above (16). The goddess taking off her footwear is depicted on a terracotta in Boston, as she is wearing a distinct diadem on her head.²⁰⁷ We know this iconographic type from almost two hundred exemplars; all of them are larger-than-life size and are mostly statuettes, gems or reliefs. The goddess's supporting leg may either be the right or left, and she may be leaning on a pillar or a ship's rudder.²⁰⁸ She may be holding a wreath or apple, and can also be accompanied by Eros. The sandal, which is a crucial object in the composition, does not have to be depicted at all. In a whole score of variations on the theme of Aphrodite, we observe a tendency towards a greater degree of relaxation, which is accompanied by the emphasis on the erotic dimension of the depiction. This is clearly visible in the relief from Delos.²⁰⁹ At its center is a reproduction of the Cnidia, with Eros standing at her right leg with a seashell and alabastron, which was an elongated vessel used in ancient times to store aromatic liquids. Eros's attributes point to a bath, the character of which is indicated by a figure on the right, where a herm and a column with a human face and erect phallus is depicted. The Venus from Pompeii in a gold "bikini" and tying her sandal is of a

²⁰³ Cf., for example, Reinhard Lullies, *Die kauernde Venus* (Munich: Filser-Verlag, 1954); Antonio Corso, "The Theme of Bathing Aphrodites in Classical Greece: Birth of an Iconographic Pattern, Development, Success," *Orbis terrarum* 12 (2014): 57-64.

²⁰⁴ Roma, Museo nazionale 108597.

²⁰⁵ Roma, Museo Torlonia 170. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 1021.

²⁰⁶ See Christian Kunze, *Zum Greifen nah. Stilphänomene in der hellenistischen Skulptur und ihre inhaltliche Interpretation* (Munich: Biering & Brinkmann, 2002), 108-125.

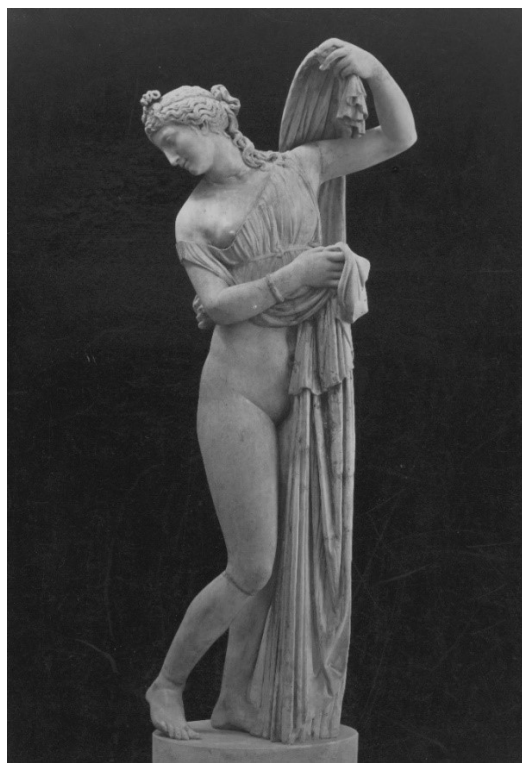
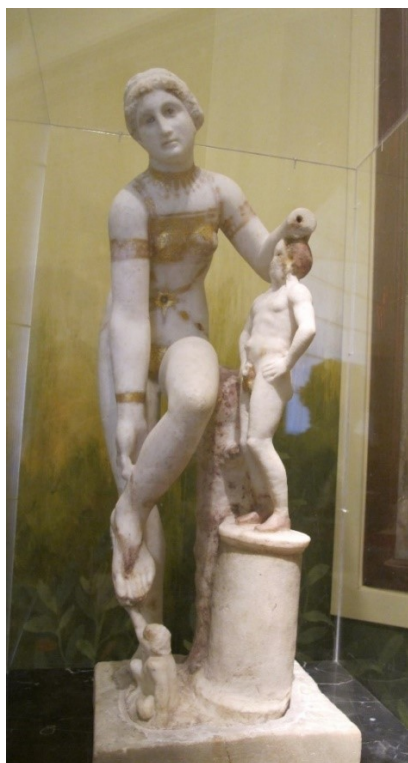
²⁰⁷ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 97.357. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 472.

²⁰⁸ Haifa, National Maritime Museum.

²⁰⁹ Delos, Archaeological Museum A 4017. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 400.

similar character. She leans on a statuette of Priapus, which also has an erect phallus, which is now missing (23).²¹⁰

Hellenistic statues of Aphrodite usually depict the goddess in her intimate privacy, where the goddess is in no way hiding her nakedness and is devoting herself completely to her toilette. One series of depictions shows Aphrodite dressing in the manner of contemporary women. She began by tying on a strophion, a form of the modern brassiere. This part of the female wardrobe held a similar function and was meant to support the breasts. The technique, however, was different. The Greeks used a narrow piece of cloth, which was tied under the breasts. This brassiere appears among the garments that were brought to Aphrodite as sacrifices.²¹¹ On all preserved depictions of Aphrodite putting on a brassiere, the goddess is depicted in the same pose and her gestures are the same, which may point to some sculptural model that was famous in its time. Aphrodite is holding the end of the brassiere's strap under her breasts; the other end is wound around her back and she is pulling the piece of fabric tight with her right hand.²¹² On the Greek terracotta statuette from Myrina from the second half of the 1st century BC she is leaning her left elbow on the herm of Pan with an erect phallus, which underlines the erotic character of the scene.²¹³ It is unnecessary to go into great detail about why this theme was depicted. Who would not want to peer into Aphrodite's bedroom and watch the most beautiful goddess as she began to dress?



23 (left). Venus tying her sandal at the column with Priapus from Pompeii, h. 125 cm, polychrome marble version from before 79 AD after the Hellenistic original from around 200 BC. 24 (right). Venus Callipyge Farnese, h. 152 cm, The Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

²¹⁰ Naples, Museo archeologico 152798, after the Hellenistic original from the time around 200 BC.

²¹¹ *Anthologia Palatina*, 5.199; 6.211.

²¹² New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 42.201.9. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 505.

²¹³ Paris, Musée du Louvre MYR 23. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 513.

An uncommon image type is known as the Aphrodite Callipyge, or literally Aphrodite of the Beautiful Buttocks (24).²¹⁴ The female figure is lifting her clothing up with both hands in order to look at her backside. The name of the statue, Callipyge, is not ancient, but it is based upon a story which Athenaeus incorporated into his work “*Deipnosophistae*” after 192. Two beautiful girls allegedly lived on a farm near Syracuse and were said to have had an argument over which one had a more beautiful behind. A rich young man who happened to walk by was chosen to decide. After both the girls had showed him this part of their bodies, he selected the older sister, whom he fell in love with on the spot. When his younger brother found out, he went to have a look at the girls and fell in love with the younger sister. The father of the brothers was left with no other choice but to marry off his sons to the poor farmer girls with the beautiful buttocks, whom since began to be called “Callipygoi”. When the girls became rich wives, they had the Temple of Aphrodite Callipyge built.²¹⁵ The statue was found in the 16th century in Rome, but its present appearance is the result of thorough reconstruction, during which the head was recreated. The erotic charge of the statue is irrefutable, but it is unclear whether it is truly a depiction of Venus. Other exemplars of this sculptural type have not been preserved and we know of none, even from coins – this means it was not a famous ancient work of art. A very similar depiction has been preserved on a relief of ca. 100 BC that depicts a dancer, probably a hetaira.²¹⁶ In one of his “*Letters of Courtesans*,” Alciphron, who lived in the 2nd century, described a competition between two hetairai over who had prettier buttocks, including the detail of one looking over her shoulder at her buttocks.²¹⁷

The vast number of statues and statuettes depicting the naked Aphrodite from the Hellenistic and Roman epoch can be divided into three groups. The first draws from the Cnidia in the fact that the naked goddess is trying to hide her nakedness or is pointing to it. The second group includes depictions in which the naked goddess is fully attending to her toilette and is in no way hiding her nakedness. In the third group, which is the least numerous, the goddess is dressing or undressing. This image type depicts the goddess using both hands to hold her cloak, which frames her naked body. The scene may be referring to the birth of the goddess, as we also find this sculptural type inserted into a seashell. On the Greek terracotta statuette from Myrina from the second half of the 1st century BC, which is signed by its author (Antistos), Aphrodite is characterized with a diadem and goose.²¹⁸ On the relief that was also produced in Asia Minor in the 1st century, the goddess is identified by the depicted altar and Eros next to her.²¹⁹ The sculptural type was also created in a luxurious marble version and an exemplar from the Hadrianic age was in larger-than-life size.²²⁰ This would point to the fact that it is an echo of another famous Hellenistic statue.

²¹⁴ Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale 6020. Cf. Carlo Gasparri, ed., *Le sculture Farnese, vol. 1: Le sculture ideali* (Milano: Electa, 2009), no. 31.

²¹⁵ Athenaios, *Deipnosophistae*, 12.554 c–e.

²¹⁶ Cos, Archeological Museum. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 767.

²¹⁷ Alciphron, 14 (Megara to Bacchis).

²¹⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre Myr 631. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 778.

²¹⁹ Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum GR 1.1959 (2294746). Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 781.

²²⁰ Sevilla, Archeological Museum 801, found in Santiponce (Italica) near Seville. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 786.

What do the adaptations and variations on the Cnidia tell us about how the statue was interpreted in later centuries? There is a clear tendency: Over the course of the centuries, the emphasis on laxness and femininity increased. An analysis of the Cnidia's copies and the numerous variations on this sculptural type confirms what we know about the reception of Aphrodite of Cnidus from later literary sources. In the Hellenistic and primarily Roman epochs, erotic attraction in depictions of Aphrodite came to the fore. At the same time, we encounter anecdotal motifs, which bring the goddess nearer to the world of those who venerate her. Moreover, Aphrodite was more and more frequently accompanied by the malevolent Eros/Amor, the initiator of sexual contact. The goddess is depicted in more active and erotically attractive poses, with her breasts more accentuated and other specifically feminine anatomic characteristics, all with the exception of the genitals. The crotch remains completely smooth until the end of the ancient period.

As was mentioned above in connection with the Cnidia, the new forms of Aphrodite were not a consequence of changes in people's attitudes towards the goddess, but of the gods towards the people. The radical intensification of the feminine element in Praxiteles's depiction of the naked Aphrodite arose due to the fact that the gods began to disappear from the view of mortals in the 4th century BC, a trend which strengthened in the Hellenistic epoch. Faith in their omnipotence was not affected by this; on the contrary, the invisibility of the gods intensified it. They were still there and omnipotent – people had only ceased to believe that they could be seen. Mortals could only admire the inaccessible gods and try to model themselves after them. The more they believed in the gods' inaccessibility and thus the undepictable nature of a deity, the more artists attempted to focus on the little that mortals had in common with them. This continued to be the only possibility to come closer to the gods. In other words, sculptors and their clients saw Aphrodite in the form of a woman before Praxiteles, while he and his successors depicted a woman in the form of a goddess.

Armed

Aside from Athens, Aphrodite was also highly venerated in Sparta (judging by the number of her temples there) and was worshiped as an armed goddess. As Plutarch wrote, when Aphrodite entered Sparta she *put aside her mirrors and ornaments and her magic girdle, and took a spear and shield, adorning herself to please Lycurgus*.²²¹ In another passage, Plutarch writes that the Spartans worshiped Aphrodite in full armor in order to denote the fact that even she embodies the virtues that war requires.²²² It should also be mentioned that while only Athena was depicted in armor elsewhere in Greece, we find weapons as an attribute of a whole score of other female deities in Sparta, where war was paramount. Combativeness was not only an "archaic" characteristic that Aphrodite "inherited" from Ishtar, but something that made up the essence of this goddess.²²³ For ancient Greeks, Aphrodite was not only the source of erotic desire and

²²¹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 317f (De Fortuna Romanorum, 4).

²²² Plutarch, *Moralia*, 239a (Instituta Laconica, 28).

²²³ Cf. Martina Seifert, ed., *Aphrodite: Herrin des Krieges, Göttin der Liebe* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2009).

procreation, but also of destruction and the fury of war – otherwise there would be no sense in the veneration of her armed statue. The question remains as to when, where and to what degree the armed Aphrodite was worshiped in Greece. There is no consensus concerning the answers to these questions in present scholarship.

Armed Aphrodite is considered to be either a phenomenon limited exclusively to Sparta and furthermore only in the early stage of her cult's development,²²⁴ or on the contrary a pan-Greek phenomenon that was not limited only to the early stage of Aphrodite's veneration.²²⁵ A fragment of text on the myth of Aphrodite was found only several years ago that presents her in a wholly different way than we had known her hitherto. In this myth, the goddess hates mankind and destroys it with deadly arrows. Her adversary is Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth, who holds mankind in her favor. The text, composed in hexameters, was made on papyrus from the 2nd to 3rd century, but may have already originated in Hellenistic Greece.²²⁶ Aphrodite sowing death was perhaps not a new motif and only exaggerated what had always been a part of the goddess. On the other hand, we know of epigrams on statues of armed Aphrodite from the 3rd century BC, the authors of which contemplated the reasons why the goddess needed weapons. Her weapons evoke disapproval and the goddess is called upon to put them down, as they do not suit her.²²⁷ However, the very existence of these epigrams proves that armed Aphrodite was nothing out of the ordinary for Greeks.²²⁸ Nevertheless, we know of Spartan armed statues only from mentions made by Pausanias.

In Homer's *Iliad*, Ares, god of war, is Aphrodite's brother; in the *Odyssey*, in which Hephaistos is Aphrodite's husband, Ares is her lover.²²⁹ According to Hesiod, Aphrodite was the wife of Ares.²³⁰ Hesiod emphasizes the unity of these contradictory deities by continuing with their offspring. Their daughter Harmonia had exactly the opposite influence than their sons Panic and Fear had, but their shared origin emphasizes their unity. These were two sides of the same coin, just like armed Aphrodite and the Aphrodite who was the source of erotic desire and procreation. The only temple in which Aphrodite and Ares were venerated together was by the city gates in Argos. According to Pausanias, there was: *a sanctuary built with two rooms, having an entrance on the west side and another on the east. At the latter is a wooden image of Aphrodite, and at the west entrance one of Ares. They say that the images are votive offerings*

²²⁴ Stephanie Budin, "Aphrodite Enoplion," in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, ed. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 79-112.

²²⁵ Gabriella Pironti, "Rethinking Aphrodite as a Goddess at Work" in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, 113-130.

²²⁶ Wolfgang Luppe, "Eine mythologische Erzählung in Hexametern (P.Oxy. LXXVII 5104)," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 58, no. 1 (2012), 5-7.

²²⁷ *Greek Anthology* 9.321.

²²⁸ *Greek Anthology* 9. 320; 16.171, 173, 174, 176, 177. Cf. Johan Flemberg, "The Transformations of the Armed Aphrodite," in *Greece and Gender*, ed. Brit Berggreen Bergen and Nanno Marinatos (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1995), 109-110.

²²⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, 5.359; *Odyssey*, 8.266-319.

²³⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 934-937. Cf. Gabriel Pironti, *Entre ciel et guerre. Figures d'Aphrodite en Grèce ancienne*. Kernos supplément, 18 (Liège: Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique, 2007); idem, *Rethinking Aphrodite*.

of Polyneices and of the Argives who joined him in the campaign to redress his wrongs.²³¹ The connection of Aphrodite to the god of war was emphasized by the legend that the statues were a shared votive gift from the participants of a military expedition. It was characteristic in that Ares was looking away from the city towards potential enemies whom he was to defend the city against. On the contrary, Aphrodite was turned around towards Argolis and the citizens of Argos, as she was intended to guard above all their harmonious married life.²³²

At the same time that statues of Aphrodite began to undress and thus stress their femininity from the classical period onward, we also see the very opposite – statues of Aphrodite with weapons, which are typical male attributes, begin to appear.²³³ Judging by the artistic style, the oldest known sculptural type may have originated around 400 BC, but it could just as likely have been a Roman creation. We know the sculptural type from four Roman exemplars, the most preserved of which is the statue from Epidauros.²³⁴ The posture and depiction of the drapery is a variation on the Louvre-Naples Venus type, but the goddess has a sheath slung over her shoulder; in her left hand she holds a spear or scepter and an apple, helmet or other attribute in her right. The military attributes are balanced by the emphasized femininity, and just like the Louvre-Naples Venus, one of the goddess's breasts is bare and her crotch is outlined under the thin chiton as if she were naked. The crotch of the goddess of Epidauros is not only defined more distinctly than the sculpture in the Louvre, it is also accentuated by the cloak, as its falling creases repeat the curve of the creases on the chiton.

The sculptural type of the entirely naked Aphrodite with a sword has been preserved in a whole score of Roman versions, the most famous of which is the statue in Florence.²³⁵ Next to the goddess is a loutrophoros, a vessel for water with her cloak thrown over it, which we also find in several other versions. Because loutrophoroi ceased to be produced around 300 BC, the origin of this sculptural type was dated to this era.²³⁶ However, similarly to the Capitoline Venus, we cannot rule out the fact that a later Roman sculptor may have used this attribute in order to give the sculpture an archaic appearance. Aphrodite is either donning the strap with an accompanying sword over her shoulder to arm herself after the bath, which is indicated by the loutrophoros, or taking off the strap in order to bathe herself. The ambiguity of the action proves that for this visual type it was not important whether Aphrodite was returning from battle or departing for it – important was the link between the goddess and war. On the Roman statue found in Cyprus the composition is only subtly

²³¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.25.1, English translation W.H.S.Jones. Cf. Ugo Fusco, "The Sanctuary of Aphrodite and Ares (Paus. 2.25.1) in the Periurban Area of Argos and Temples with a Double Cella in Greece," *Tekmeria* 13 (2016): 97-124.

²³² Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 168.

²³³ See Johan Flemberg, *Venus Armata: Studien zur bewaffneten Aphrodite in der griechisch-römischen Kunst* (Stockholm: Paul Åström, 1991); Rachel Meredith Kousser, *Sensual Power: A Warrior Aphrodite in Greek and Roman Sculpture*. Ph.D. Dissertation (New York: New York University, 2001).

²³⁴ Athens, Archeological Museum MNA 262. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 243.

²³⁵ Firenze, Accademia de Belle Arti. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 457.

²³⁶ See Andrew Stewar, "Two Notes on Greeks Bearing Arms: The Hoplites of the Chigi Jug and Gelon's Armed Aphrodite," in *Medien der Geschichte. Antikes Griechenland und Rom*, ed. Ortwin Dally et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 238-40.

changed.²³⁷ The statue was found in the so-called House of Theseus, which evidently served as a residence for the Roman governor on the island.

The statue in the Louvre, is of the same type, but is in larger-than-life size and accompanied by Amor with a helmet, it is Roman marble version from the 2nd century after the Greek bronze original from ca. 300 BC (25).²³⁸ In the 2nd to 3rd century, the backside of coins minted in Cyzicus show an echo of the naked armed Aphrodite sculptural type.²³⁹ The goddess holds a sword in her left hand, tilting her head towards it. Her right hand is raised and holds the strap that fastens the sword's sheath that is slung over her shoulder. A column with a helmet resting upon it stands next to the goddess along with a shield. The image on the coin points to the fact that this type of Aphrodite statue was venerated in Cyzicus at the time when these coins were minted. Deviations from preserved statues can be explained by the fact that this sculptural type had to be transformed to fit the circular relief on the coins.



25. Armed Venus with Amor, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

While emphasis is placed on a spear or shield in depictions of men in armor, the strap for the accompanying sheath plays an important role in depictions of armed Aphrodite. This may have been the key to understanding statues of armed Aphrodite.

²³⁷ Nea Paphos, Museum FR 67/73.

²³⁸ Paris, Musée du Louvre MA 370. Cf. Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 456.

²³⁹ Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 461.

The strap with sword slung over the shoulder can be understood as the counterpart to Aphrodite's magical belt of love, which was called "kestos himas" in Homer. Kestos himas was in a way a counterpart to Athena's aegis, and in both cases was a magical object, the effect of which characterized the given goddess's sphere of influence. The sculptural type of Aphrodite with a sword and sheath on a strap may have been a reference to the Homeric *kestos himas*, but armed Aphrodite also appears in Hellenistic art without a strap. On a gem signed by an otherwise unknown artist named Gelon, the half-naked Aphrodite is depicted with a spear resting on her shoulder as she puts a shield over her right arm (26).²⁴⁰ The gem was found in Eretria as a part of funeral paraphernalia, which also included a depiction of the Eroses, who gave the tomb its name. A similar gem was found in Amrit, Syria.²⁴¹ The unmistakable emphasis on erotism links these statues to the Cnidia.



26. Gelon, Armed Aphrodite, Greek garnet gem (intaglio) from Eretria, late 3rd century BC.

Gelon's gem is not the only record of the depiction of Aphrodite with a shield that was created in the Hellenistic epoch. The most famous sculptural type is the Capuan Venus, which was found in 1750 near a local amphitheater (27). The statue belongs to the same sculptural type as the Venus de Milo – the goddess is depicted in a similar pose and her clothing is also arranged in a similar manner. Moreover, she has a diadem and differs from the Venus de Milo in that she originally held a shield in both hands and her left foot was placed on a helmet lying on the ground. The sculptural type was known from Roman coins minted by Hadrian, Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius and Plautilla, which also depict Eros.²⁴² The original of Aphrodite of Capua is said to be created in Corinth.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ See Stewart, *Two Notes*, 227-243.

²⁴¹ Paris, De Clerq Collection, 3rd century BC. See Gisela M. A. Richter, *Engraved Gems of the Greeks and Etruscans* (London: Phaidon, 1968), 144, no. 555.

²⁴² Delivorrias, *Aphrodite*, no. 637.

²⁴³ For statue of armed Aphrodite in Corinth see Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.5.1. Corinth was utterly destroyed by Romans in 146 BC, but see Derek R. Smith, "New Evidence for the Identification



27. Capuan Venus, h. 210 cm, the Roman marble version from the beginning of the 2nd century of the Greek original from the end of the 4th century BC.

of Aphrodite on Staters of Corinth," *The Numismatic Chronicle* vol. 165 (2005): 41-43. Cf. Kousser, *Sensual Power*, Appendix 1, 233.349; Kousser, *Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture*, 19-28.

Aphrodite with a shield is traditionally interpreted as the goddess using the shield of her lover as a mirror.²⁴⁴ Aphrodite was thus meant to be celebrated as a victor who can overcome anything, even her lover and the god of war. However, there is no support for this interpretation in what we know about how Aphrodite's shield was perceived in the ancient period. In his work *Argonautica* from the 3rd century BC, Apollonius wrote the following of Jason's cloak: *Next in order had been wrought Cytherea with drooping tresses, wielding the swift shield of Ares; and from her shoulder to her left arm the fastening of her tunic was loosed beneath her breast; and opposite in the shield of bronze her image appeared clear to view as she stood.*²⁴⁵ Apollonius does not state here that Aphrodite used the shield as a mirror and thus changed the significance of the shield, which was a traditional symbol of military victory. We also have no proof of the fact that Aphrodite was opposed to war.

Pausanias saw the statue of armed Aphrodite in a temple in Sparta, which drew attention to the dual nature of the goddess.²⁴⁶ The uniqueness of the temple stemmed from the fact that it had two floors. However, the concept of placing statues on individual floors or combining them together was not surprising in any way. The goddess was viewed from two different angles, both as the patronesses of warriors (who was venerated in the lower temple with the statue of armed Aphrodite) and the patroness of the marital sex (who was venerated in the upper temple with a statue of Aphrodite the Beautiful). Aphrodite the Beautiful (Morpho) had her head concealed under a veil and her legs bound, which we know from Pausanias's description and the depiction on Roman coins minted in Sparta. There was a whole score of analogies in archaic Greece to the imprisonment or neutralization of statues of gods. The statue of Ares worshiped in Sparta was placed in chains, allegedly so he could not escape the country.²⁴⁷ Aphrodite could have had shackles on her feet for the same reason. However, the fact that both Ares and Aphrodite were venerated in Sparta in the form of fettered statues can also be interpreted by claiming that a community cannot exist without war and sexuality, but it is also necessary to prevent these elements from endangering or ultimately destroying the community.²⁴⁸

This points to the story of Aphrodite the Beautiful chained by Tyndareos that Pausanias refuted as a fabrication. Tyndareos was the father of Clytemnestra, who murdered her husband to live with her lover, and of Helen, who abandoned her husband for her lover. In order to understand this interpretation, it is important to note that it comes from the archaic epoch. This epoch gave rise to both the statue of the chained Aphrodite the Beautiful and the etiological legend that explained the shackles as Tyndareos's punishment for the goddess's corruption of his daughters. Archaic statues did not only depict the gods, but were also a form of their existence. The deities in this epoch could enter the statues, a fact which is evidenced by tales of gazing or

²⁴⁴ Cf. Sandrine Dubel, "Aphrodite se mirant au bouclier d'Arès: Transpositions homériques et jeux de matière l'épos hellénistique," in *Métamorphoses du regard ancien*, ed. Évelyne Prioux and Agnès Rouveret (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2010), 13-28.

²⁴⁵ Apollonios, *Argonautica*, 1.742-746. English translation R. C. Seaton.

²⁴⁶ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 3.15.11.

²⁴⁷ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 3.15.7.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Pirenne-Delforge, *L'Aphrodite grecque*, 207; Dietrich Boschung, "Unheimliche Statuen und ihre Bändigung," in *Leibhafte Kunst. Statuen und kulturelle Identität*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Christiane Vorster (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 281-306.

walking statues. Greeks abandoned this idea already in the 5th century BC, and therefore Pausanias refused the legend of Tyndareos, which assumed that the statue of Aphrodite was capable of action. Tyndareos neutralized Aphrodite the Beautiful's eyes and legs in her temple because sight and movement were attributes of life. Graceful movements and enchanting glances were the greatest weapons a female had at her disposal, and it was Aphrodite who granted them. Aphrodite the Beautiful was thus not only held captive by shackles on her feet – but the veil over her face perhaps also prevented her from bewitching someone with her beautiful appearance and captivating gaze.²⁴⁹ Armed Aphrodite was mortally dangerous, but Aphrodite the Beautiful was even more powerful.

²⁴⁹ Steiner, *Images in Mind*, 163.