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AP Art History

Ms. Eckel

Ancient Art of the Americas

*How does the representation of the human figure in a work of art express a culture's values? Select two works of art to analyze in your response. Be sure to include one work from beyond the European tradition.*

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| *http://cache1.asset-cache.net/gc/108219821-maya-carving-gettyimages.jpg?v=1&c=IWSAsset&k=2&d=%2BxNPk6XMLhrQhdcH4mY3E%2Fquc6e85hTDplSIpvHsN0I%3D* | http://i.gyazo.com/df858699d488f837f8d2de561988d04e.png |

The first work of art given above is a Mayan carving, circa 600 A.D., carved by an unknown artist or artist(s). The representation of faces in the carving—and no further anatomy—is an interesting artistic choice. This style of art developed into a cultural theme for the Maya; of all body parts, they appeared to find the form of the head and the face the most critical aspect—the gateway to the soul, as one might say today—and thus developed much of their culture and art around the human head (humans were often beheaded, for instance, in their sacrificial rituals).

Meanwhile, the wooden status from Delphi, Greece, is the second work of art shown above, and emphasizes the torso and limbs over the face—the head is completely missing, in fact, from the statue, having never been carved in the first place. While the Mayas were obsessed with facial expression and the form of the head, the Greeks were much more interested in developing art to depict bodies in motion. Many Greek sculptures thus revolve around physical activities and athletes—it is no surprise that the Olympics started in Greece.

Examining art from around the world—and from different traditions—can give art historians key insights into what each culture valued. While the Maya were fascinated by facial expression and the structure of the human head, the Greeks were obsessed with movement and various positions they could depict the human body in through art.