

## 6.2 Greek Art

**H**UMAN BEINGS were central to the Greek culture. They gave their gods human form. The Greek ideal was to create the perfect individual. This would be accomplished by achieving a perfect balance of intellectual and physical discipline. The Greeks considered the human body beautiful, perfectly balanced and harmonious. They made it the focal point of most of their painting and sculpture.

The key concepts of proportion, balance and unity were the driving force of many of the Greeks' achievements in architecture, mathematics, science, philosophy, poetry and architecture. Everything had its ideal form.

Greek artists worked in a cultural environment that encouraged art of all types. They were free to experiment as long as they worked toward the common goal of beauty and harmony. They even signed their works.

### Key Notes

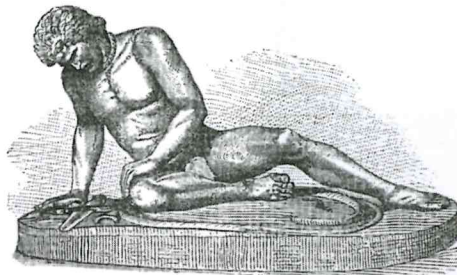
- The human being was placed at the center of Greek culture.
- The Greeks encouraged all forms of art.
- Proportion, balance and unity were key Greek ideals.
- The human body was considered beautiful and perfectly proportioned.

### Vocabulary

contrapposto  
frieze  
pediment  
architrave  
cornice  
metope  
triglyph  
entasis  
caryatids  
encaustic  
amphora  
hydria



600–480 BC  
The Archaic period



323–150 BC  
Hellenistic period

### Major Periods in Greek Art

480–323 BC  
The Classic Period



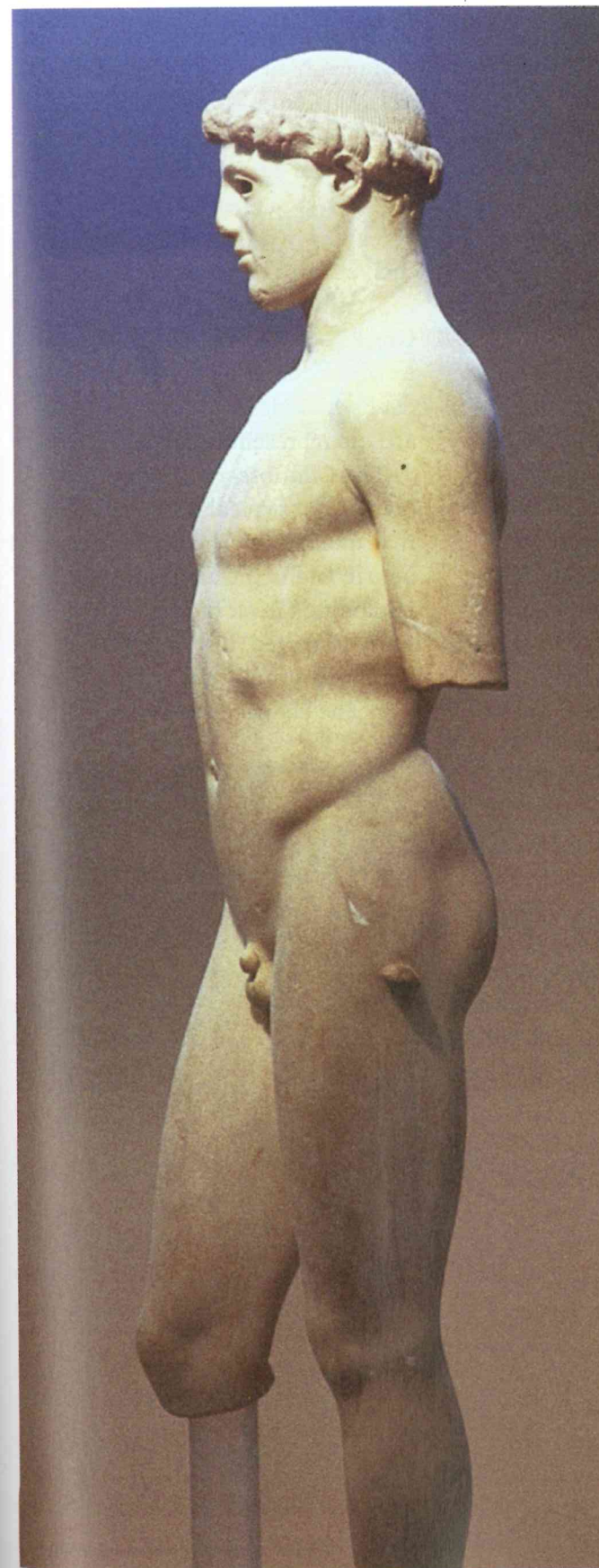
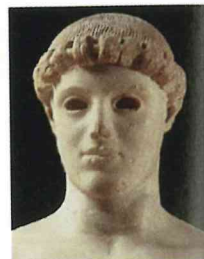
### Special Feature

#### The Kritios Boy

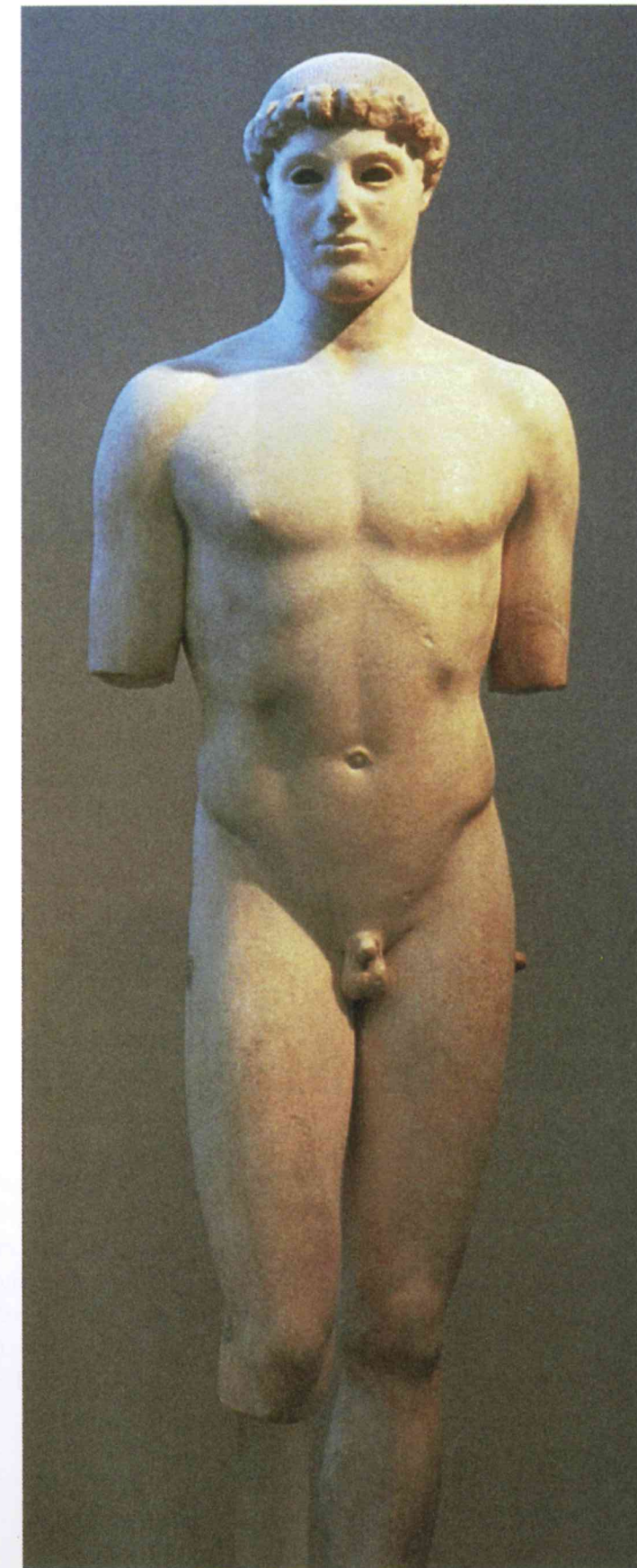
The development of Greek art is easily seen in its sculpture. Like Egyptian sculptures, early Greek figures were stylized. There is one sculpture that survives today, however, which shows us how artists began to move away from this rather restricted way of depicting the human form. The figure has been attributed to the Athenian sculptor Kritios and has come to be known as the *Kritios Boy* (figs. 6–10, 6–11). The first important point about the *Kritios Boy* is that he really stands. His back leg is not bound to a block for balance. Openings are seen between arms and side. Previously, the figure was supported by part of the original stone block. The *Kritios Boy* stands free.

Notice how the right hip drops down and inward. The knee of the forward leg is lower than that of the other leg. The weight rests mainly on the left leg. The faint S-curve of the body causes a subtle sense of movement. The artist had grasped the concept of weight shift. Thus, the *Kritios Boy* stands in a relaxed, natural stance—as we would in the same pose.

The Italian word, *contrapposto* (counterpose), is used to describe this position where the engaged leg is in the forward position. Showing a truly relaxed body was a very important discovery. For only when the Greek sculptor had mastered the relaxed body could he begin to show the body in motion. Movement existed in Greek art prior to this, but it was very mechanical and inflexible. The *Kritios Boy* gives us a



6–10 To better understand the distribution of weight represented in this figure, stand up and mimic its pose. *Kritios Boy*, about 480 BC. Marble, 34" (86 cm) high. Acropolis Museum, Athens.



6–11 This sculpture was found amid the rubble on the Acropolis. *Kritios Boy*, front view.