

Painting

The Greeks were proud of the large and colorful paintings decorating their walls, but not even one exists today. Only the paintings on their vases remain. Early vases of the Archaic period are of red clay and have black figures and decorations painted on them. The **amphora** (fig. 6-27) from Attica—a large storage jar with two handles—was signed by Exekias. He considered it one of his finest works. The inscription reads, *Exekias painted and made me*, indicating that he both formed and painted the amphora. Two events are shown on the vase.



6-27 Greek vase painters often signed their work. In the case of this piece, the same artist both made the vase and painted it. Exekias, *Black-Figured Amphora*, about 530 BC. 24" (61 cm) high. The Vatican Museum.

400 BC
Earliest known
calendar used in
Mexico

200 BC
Irrigation systems
developed in N.
America

World Cultural Timeline

400 BC
Chariot race first

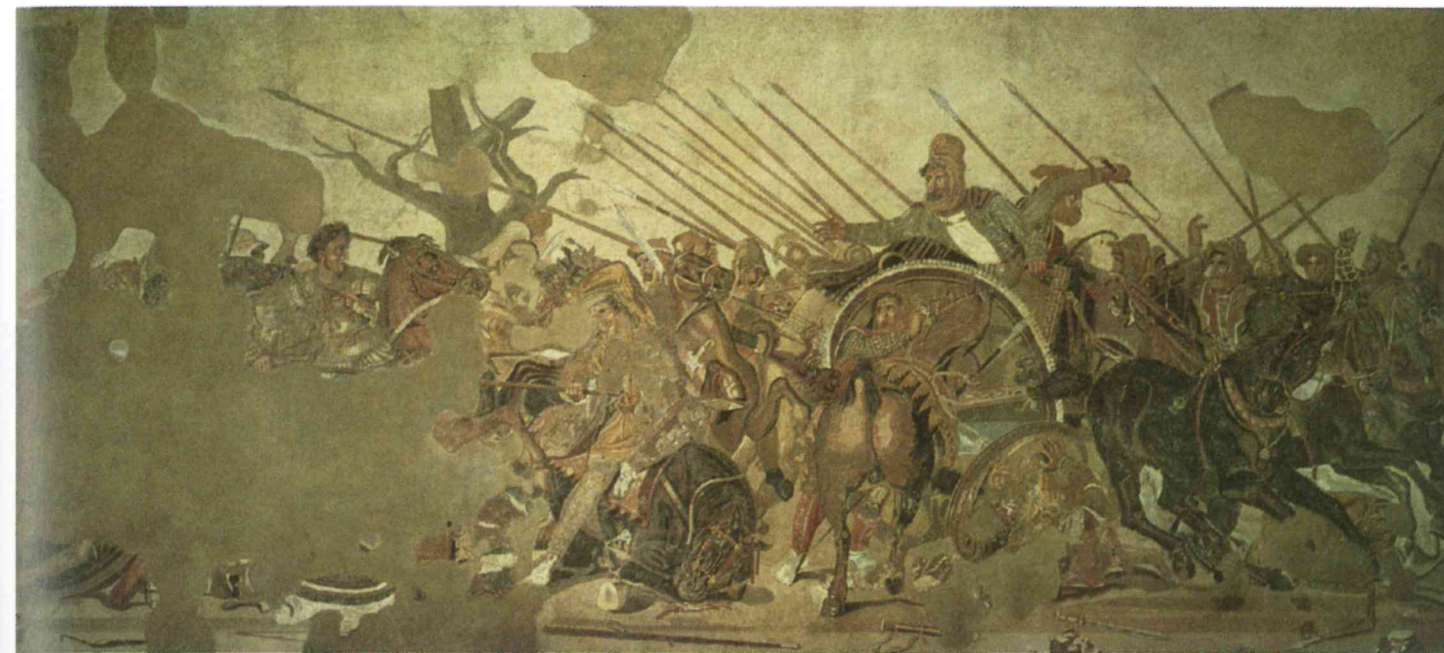
105 BC
Paper invented



6-28 Greek vase painters portrayed stories from their mythology and history. Meidias, *Red-Figured Hydria*, about 410 BC. 20 1/2" (52 cm) high. British Museum, The Hamilton Collection, London.

The one seen here shows Pollux (with the dog) and Castor (with the horse) being honored by Leda and Tyndareos. All are identified and named on the painted vase. This outstanding example of Greek vase painting represents the most refined phase of Attic black-figure ware. The figures and animals are beautifully designed, and executed with exquisite technique.

The **hydria** (fig. 6-28)—a large jug for carrying water from the community fountain—is from 410 BC. It shows a great change in technique and style. The background is now painted black and brush lines can be drawn freely on the red figures to show exacting detail and a variety of lines. A kind of perspective is shown by having some figures higher than others. Two scenes of familiar stories are painted by the



the vase. The upper register shows the rape, or carrying away, of the daughters of Leucippus. The lower register shows Heracles in the garden of the Hesperides. Traces of white, brown and gold have been added to suggest form and depth on this red-figured hydria.

The sophistication of later Greek painting is revealed in *The Battle of Issus* (fig. 6-29), a Roman mosaic of about 315 BC. Only four colors—red, yellow, white and black—are used in the mosaic. (Quite likely the original painting was painted with the same limited palette.) The

subject is the victory of Alexander the Great over Darius and the Persian army. Alexander, on the left, is partly obliterated because many of the stone tesserae are lost (fig. 6-d). Note the accurate anatomy of both horses and men. The overlapping figures, the rounded forms created by shading, the foreshortening, the complicated composition, and the marvelous detail are exciting and advanced achievements in visual presentation. Later Hellenistic painting retained the natural appearance of people and animals which characterized the Classic period, but added excitement, action and emotion.

6-29 The Romans copied many Greek statues and paintings like this one. The painting has been lost, but the mosaic survives.

The Battle of Issus, about 100 BC. Marble mosaic, length 16'9" (5 m). Roman copy of Greek painting, from Pompeii. National Museum, Naples.

Lesson 6.2 Review

- 1 How did the Greek artist create a sense of movement in the *Kritios Boy*?
- 2 Why have so few original bronze Greek statues survived?
- 3 Between the Archaic and Classical Greek periods, how did Greek artists change the way they conceived a sculpture?
- 4 How is it that we have some idea of what Greek wall painting looked like although no example has survived?
- 5 How did the sculptor show depth in the Parthenon frieze?
- 6 Compare the *Dying Gaul* to the *Charioteer of Delphi*. What are the differences between this Classical Greek statue and this Hellenistic sculpture? Which is more emotional?
- 7 What art principle is most important in the *Nike of Samothrace*?
- 8 Draw the column capitals of the three Greek orders of architecture. Which order has the heaviest look? Which order seems tallest and most slender?
- 9 During which period of Greek art was the Parthenon built?
- 10 How were Attic black-figured ware and red-figured ware different? Which style was older?