The Art of Ancient Rome

Grace Kindig

South Newton High School

Abstract

 I researched the different types of art, architecture, sculpture, and painting in Ancient Rome, all of which began in about 500 BC. In addition, I researched the significance of this art to the whole Ancient Roman civilization. I discovered that Rome was very inventive and creative when it came to building and painting. They used advanced techniques, such as the arch technique, for many of their buildings and monuments because it was stronger and it saved material. Rome was also the first to successfully industrialize cement. Frescoes were also very useful in this time period, as they were used as a decorative illusion to help make a room look larger than what it actually was. With all of these ideas and techniques combined, Ancient Rome was easily the most advanced civilization of their time. Their artwork had a huge impact on not only their society, but also the rest of the world.

Ancient Rome had many different kinds of art and architecture. Even though the civilization had a significant amount of diversity, the art of Rome managed to bring the society closer together. Whether it be architectural buildings, intricate sculptures, or detailed wall murals, Rome found a way to use art for the benefit of the public. The art of Ancient Rome had a significant difference in the structure of the Roman Empire.

Roman art is mainly divided into two specific periods, which are the Art of the Republic and the Art of the Roman Empire (“Art in Ancient”, n.d.). These two main divisions also have many subdivisions that further break down the different types of art. Roman art includes architecture, painting, sculpture, and lots of mosaic work. Rome is also known for metalwork, gem engraving, ivory carvings, and glass (“Art in Ancient”, n.d.). Although these are the more modern forms of art, they still played a role back in the ancient times. Even though there is a considerably large amount of Roman art, very few of the actual artist names are recorded (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015). This is because the different art forms were designed to serve the needs and enjoyment of the public rather than to express the makers of the artwork. Ancient Roman art is very similar to Ancient Greek, but the different styles and divisions of these artworks make Rome very unique in comparison to Greece.

Ancient Romans adopted many of their ideas of art from Ancient Greece. During the Battle of Corinth in 146 BC, Rome invaded Greece, which resulted in the complete and total destruction of the city of Corinth (“Art History”, 2015). After the battle, Rome discovered many unique techniques that the Greeks had regarding art and sculpture. Instead of completely throwing away these ideas, Rome decided to adopt them. The old art ideas of Ancient Greece were mixed with old Ancient Roman sculpture to create a completely new and different style of art (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015). Rome learned how to use sculptures to accurately portray different people, as well as painting intricate designs on walls to make buildings look more professional. By combining old ideas to make brand new concepts, Rome developed one of the most unique styles of art the ancient world had ever seen.

 Ancient Romans invented new materials and artistic techniques to accentuate buildings and structures. The invention of new materials, ideas, and strategies made buildings more unique and easier to construct. Romans were the first to develop the arch technique (“Art in Ancient”, n.d.). The arch allowed heavy structures to be built with rounded openings in the walls. By using this new technology, buildings and bridges were stronger, easier to create, and many building materials were saved. Even though the arch was a huge step in architecture, there was still something missing. A new, stronger material had to be invented to help maintain the stability of buildings. Ancient Rome was the very first civilization to develop a successful cement (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015). Other ancient societies had tried this idea, but they had failed due to the incorrect ingredients. In Roman cement, the ingredients were lime, mortar, and most importantly, volcanic rock (“Art in Ancient”, n.d.). These ingredients chemically bonded together to create a very durable substance that could last thousands of years (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015).

 Another famous Ancient Roman technique was the development of “frescoes”. Frescoes are paintings done rapidly in watercolor on a wall or ceiling so that the colors penetrate the plaster and become fixed as the paint continues to dry (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015). Even though this idea was halfway adopted from the Greeks, the Romans had their own way of using it. In Ancient Greece, frescoes were simply used to accentuate the walls or ceilings to add decorative pictures. In Rome, the frescoes were painted to make a certain room look larger using the illusion of depth (“Ancient Roman Art”, 2015). This new idea helped change the face of Rome and it is still very popular in today’s society.

 Throughout the history of Ancient Rome, the Roman art has changed and helped shape the society. Sculpture and portraiture was very popular during the ancient times. Portraiture is the process of making statues that resemble one particular person (“Roman Art”, 2015). Often times, these were made to resemble a famous person in the Roman civilization (Carr, 2015). Ancient Rome also had strange beliefs when it came to portraitures. They thought that having good sculpted images of people’s faces would help keep their ghost happy after they died (Carr, 2015). This belief acted as a basis for many of the different sculptures that we see in the Ancient Roman civilization. Adding thinned hair, crooked noses, and even double chins helped portraitures and other sculptures to look like the desired person (“Roman Art”, 2015). The Romans became experts at this technique, and we can see it in many of their ancient works.

 Wealthier citizens in Rome used art and sculpture to draw more attention to their homes and businesses. Frescoes added a beautiful addition to a room, but the main purpose of them as to add the illusion of depth to make a certain space look larger than what it actually was. Romans also began to use the arch technique when building large structures (“Roman Art”, 2015) . This allowed thousands of square feet of building materials to be saved, creating more resources for even more constructions (Carr, 2015). Wealthy people had the ability to build large and very impressive structures with these new techniques for additional amazement (“Roman Art”, 2015).

 Ancient Roman artwork was so detailed and ahead of its time that it significantly changed the society and the surrounding world. With the industrialization of concrete and the arch technique, Roman art was able to continue to strengthen and spread. As the Roman Empire grew, the artwork of the ancient world had a significant difference on the structure of the Roman society. The successful sculptures, paintings, and architectural achievements still stand today.

Work Cited

Ancient Roman Art and Architecture. (2015).

Retrieved October 27, 2015, from

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3753873>

Art History and Artists. (2015).

Retrieved October 27, 2015, from

<http://www.ducksters.com/history/art/ancient_roman_art.php>

Art in Ancient Rome - Crystalinks. (n.d.).

Retrieved October 27, 2015, from

<http://www.crystalinks.com/romeart.html>

Carr, K. (2015, September 1). Roman Art.

Retrieved October 27, 2015, from

<http://quatr.us/romans/art/>

Roman Art (c.500 BCE - 500 CE) Origins, History, Types, Characteristics. (2015).

Retrieved October 27, 2015, from

<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/roman-art.htm>