

KOUROS AND KORE STATUES

Kouros and Kore (the plural form of Kouros is Kouroi, while the plural of Kore is Korai) sculptures were abundantly produced during the Archaic era (700-530 b. C.), continuing a long line of small votive statues made of bronze. Kore statues are the female equivalent of Kouros. There are several distinct differences between the two, with the most significant one being the fact that Kouros statues were almost always portrayed in the nude, while Kore were always clothed. Consequently, when studying the statues, we tend to focus on the development of anatomy in Kouros, and of the dress for the Kore along with facial expression.

Kouros, as was the case with the Kore statues, were almost always approximately life-size (some much larger), and with few exceptions were made of marble. They are depicted standing in a frontal pose with their left leg moved forward, their arms close to their bodies touching the side of their thighs, and they exhibit an almost strict symmetry as the different parts of the anatomy are depicted as simple geometric forms. In this respect, the Kouros statues have a great deal in common with Egyptian monumental sculpture, that undoubtedly influenced their development.

However, the similarities between Egyptian and Greek monumental statues are superficial. The Greek Kouroi soon after the initial stages of the early 7th century begin a refinement of form toward a definitive realism, that was possible through a society that revered the human form, and desired to understand the natural environment. It is indicative of this cultural attitude that the Kouros statues depict not deities or political leaders, but mere mortal human beings who were worthy of commemoration or of eternal service to their gods.

THE KOUROS SMILE

The characteristic "smile" of the Kouros and Kore accompanied the statues for an entire century and breathed an aura of joyous existence into the lifeless stone. While this smile might have been the result of the technical difficulty of describing the transition between cheeks and lips, it became a defining feature of the Kouros and Kore statues. The Kouros "smile" developed into a sign of progress as it slowly turned into the more austere expression of the mature statues of the late Archaic and early classical period, which relied on accuracy of form and movement to emanate their vivacity.