

Greek, Roman and Native American arts by Rose Williams

Part I Decorative Arts

Throughout history, human beings have expressed themselves artistically to communicate with their contemporaries and with those who will come after them. Art speaks to us from Greece and Rome. It also speaks from many other cultures, and it is good to consider other voices in a broad context of classical studies.

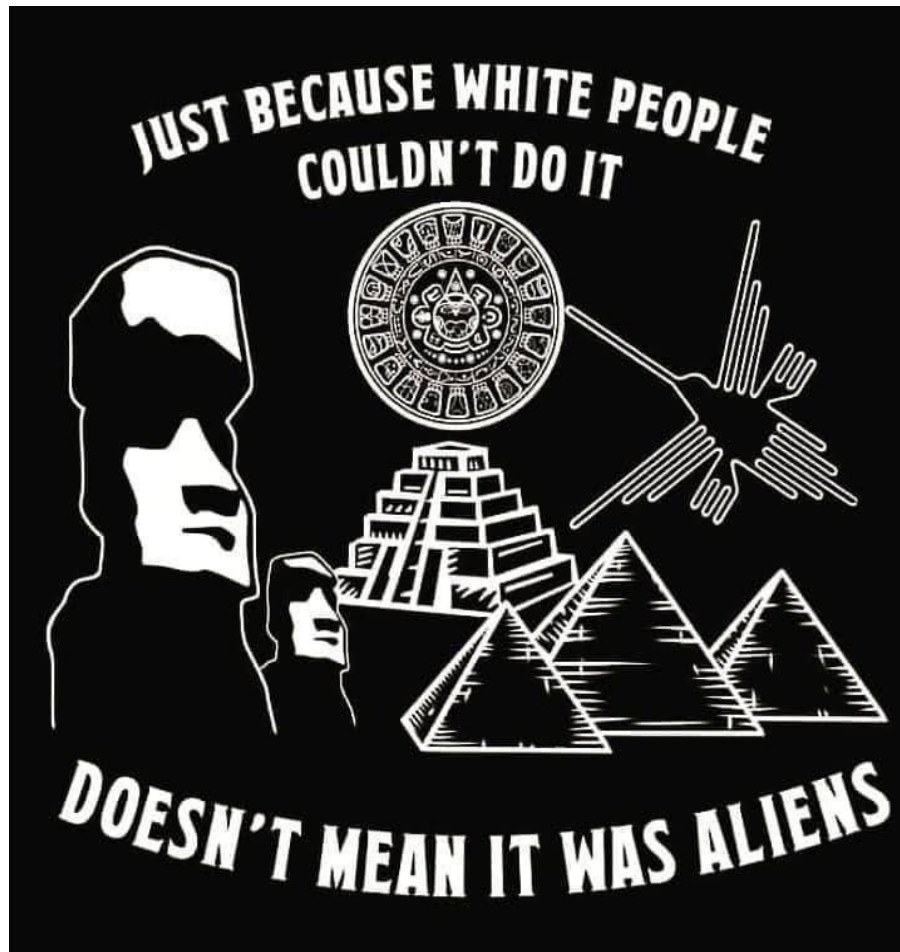
This brief presentation juxtaposes widely different cultures- taking only a brief and narrow glimpse of each in varying creative aspects.

Greeks are famed for their excellence in many artistic forms, but we shall confine ourselves to bronze sculpture and pottery.

Romans excelled in mosaic work, bas relief and fresco painting. exquisite glass, but again we will look only at bronze sculpture and pottery.

Native Americans present special challenges. "Native American" is a large canopy that is not especially descriptive. When Europeans arrived in the Western Hemisphere in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries CE, there were 500 or more indigenous nations "They were as different from each other as Italian fishermen are from Viking warriors." <http://www.frontiertexas.com/exhibits>
For artistic creations we will briefly visit only two of those nations, both located in the Southwestern United States.

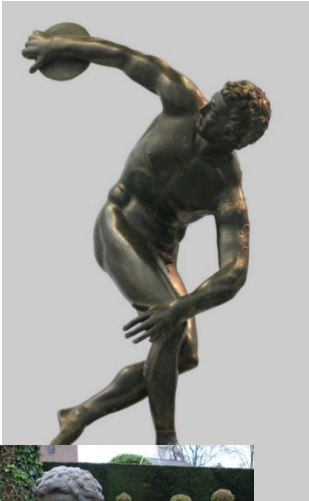
Scholars tend to stress only a few aspects of any culture they approach. Thus stereotypes of cultures and their history form easily and in many cases obscure the most important qualities of nations. Greeks, Romans, and Native American Nations had fierce and sometimes cruel warriors. They also had artists of great sensitivity and talent who, if given a chance, eternally share unique viewpoints through their arts.



This rather feisty poster makes a point

We have a largely unconscious bias that colors our thinking. We accept and applaud the inventions of Greece, Rome, the European cultures that sprang them and then crossed into the Western Hemisphere. After all, these are responsible for everything from the sewing machine to the atomic bomb. But cultures not perceived as “white” even Egyptians, must have been helped by Outer Space. I want us to look at some achievements and forgo the Outer Space idea. Human ingenuity is world-wide, and needs no outside help.

Sculpture



Bronze sculpture presents vivid impressions of people in extraordinary moments. It is often one of the most lasting artistic expressions.

. Discus Thrower, Greek

The Discobolus or Discus thrower was a bronze sculpture by Myron c. 460-450 BCE. Long lost, it was made world famous through Roman copies. The Romans with their passion for footnotes made clear its history. It is admired not only for the way it conveys movement and stability in a single pose, but also for capturing Greek ideals about proportion, harmony, rhythm and balance.



. Runner Roman

The Runners are bronze statues found in the Roman Villa of the Papyri near Herculaneum. Little background is available about them.



Sacred Rain Arrow Apache Native American

C. Sacred Rain Arrow is a bronze sculpture by the Chiricahua Apache sculptor Allan Houser [Hauzous] (1914-1994) depicting a legend heard from an older relative. During a punishing drought a young Apache warrior was carefully chosen to journey to a medicine man, a traditional spiritual leader and healer. The warrior chosen was not the most experienced but rather the one considered purest in heart. The medicine man performed his rituals and blessed the young warrior's bow and arrows. The young Apache knelt down, raised his bow toward the sky, and shot the sacred arrow containing his people's prayer for rain high into the Spirit World. <https://allanhouser.com/>

Each of the statues above depicts a young man exerting his physical prowess in an endeavor important to him

This last one is about, not from, the native cultures. The artist is keenly alive to the culture around him.



Dignity of Earth & Sky honors the women of the Sioux Nation. It is a sculpture on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River near Chamberlain, South Dakota. The 50-foot high stainless steel statue by South Dakota artist laureate Claude Lamphere depicts an indigenous woman in Plains-style dress receiving a star quilt. Norm and Eunabel McKie of Rapid City, South Dakota announced their gift of Dignity to the State of South Dakota in 2014, in honor of the 125th anniversary of South Dakota statehood. The statue was erected in September 2016.

Pottery

Pottery was important to man for thousands of years for storage. Everything from wheat to wine was stored in pottery. It remains useful for table ware and various kinds of decorative uses. Pottery is made by shaping clay on a wheel, decorating the pot, and then heating the clay in a kiln.



Geometric Vase Greek

As pottery traveled with man through his long centuries of growing and changing, it has taken many forms and designs. In early Greece, (1000 to 700 BCE) pottery was decorated with geometric designs. During various periods of Greek history, forms and decorations changed and evolved.

Terra Sigillata (Samian) Ware Roman

Roman pottery was often strictly utilitarian and undecorated. However, serving vessels or tableware used for dining were generally of more decorative and elegant appearance. Rather than being painted as was Greek pottery, it often was incised or had bas relief decorations. *Terra sigillata* ware, literally ware made of clay and impressed with designs, was made by Romans in many locations in the far-flung Roman Empire.



Geometric Vase Lucy M. Lewis Acoma Native

American



Lucy M. Lewis (ca. 1890-1992 CE) was born and raised on Sky City Mesa, Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico. There are nineteen pueblos in New Mexico, each a sovereign nation with its own government and culture. The pottery styles of each pueblo have been carefully preserved through their national history, and are being carried on by present generations.

<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/lucy-m-lewis-2919>

Thus we have taken a quick look at artistic efforts of three very different cultures. They differ in many ways, but they are all keenly alive to beauty.

Part II. Building and Construction Arts

The second section of this study involves Egypt as well as Greece and Rome in the ancient classical world, and the great nations of Peru and Mexico in the western world.

Egyptian pyramids

All three of Giza's famed pyramids and their elaborate burial complexes were built during a frenetic period of construction, roughly from 2550 to 2490 B.C. E. These pyramids were built by Pharaohs Khufu (tallest), Khafre (background), and Menkaure (front).



The three smaller pyramids in the foreground are subsidiary structures associated with Menkaure's pyramid. They resemble step pyramids seen in earlier Egyptian work, in Mesopotamia, and in the Western hemisphere. **About 500,000 tons of mortar was used in the construction of the great pyramid.** Many of the casing stones and inner chamber blocks of the Great Pyramid were fitted together with extremely high precision.

Pyramids of Chichen Itza Mexico

Built by the pre-Columbian Maya civilization sometime between the 8th and 12th centuries CE The pyramid served as a temple to the deity Kukulcan the Feathered Serpent also known as Quetzalcoatl.



The Mayan people had taken advantage of mortar on most structural projects. They used a very difficult process of limestone under great amounts of heat to create their mortar. The mortar was so widely used, the Mayans even used it for sculptures, facades, and floor layers.

Buildings without Mortar

Mycenae, Greece

Here we are examining a different architectural phenomenon. The city of Mycenae, one of the major centers of

Greek civilization, dominated much of southern Greece, Crete, the Cyclades and parts of Anatolia. The Greek historical period from about 1600 BCE to about 1100 BCE is called Mycenaean as it centered on this city **Mycenae had a wall of large, irregular stones that were laid together without mortar.** The walls of the citadel were extended over time. in the second millennium BCE.

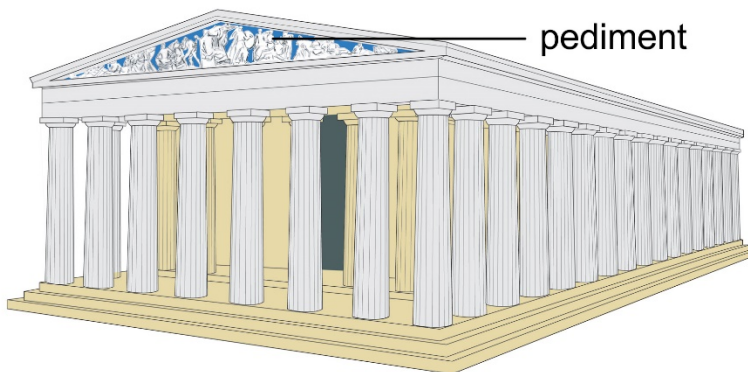


Cusco, Peru

Cusco was the capital of Tahuantinsuyu (the Inca Empire). The complex was built by the Inca in the 15th century CE, particularly under Pachacuti and successors. They built dry stone walls constructed of huge stones. **The workers carefully cut the boulders to fit them together tightly without mortar.**



Parthenon Athens built 447 – 438 BCE



The blocks were carved and trimmed by hand on-site with meticulous precision—a necessity when building without mortar. The structure is a great rectangle with triangular pediments

The Romans and the Arch

The Romans did not invent the arch. The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Greeks all used it. However, it was limited to supporting small structures, such as storerooms. For large structures they usually used the rectangle, with columns to support the roof. Romans used arches in much larger projects and in a variety of ways. They created an arch that could support huge amounts of weight. This was made possible by Roman concrete, which had a certain flexibility and was so durable that structures built of it are extant today.



Les Ferreres Aqueduct, located outside of Tarragona Spain.

Using a mixture generally based on lime and volcanic sand and mixed with sea water, the Romans created a material that in semi-liquid form could be shaped and molded, and when dried became very strong and durable. As a result, Romans were able to build massive structures, including the aqueducts, which provided water to cities. The Roman arch freed architects to explore different and larger structures, some employing arches that spring from the tops of columns.

The Segovia aqueduct in Spain, in use until a few years ago is a prime example of this.



ROMAN AQUEDUCT IN SEGOVIA



The **engineers who designed these used gravity to keep the water moving.** ... The Romans built tunnels to get water through ridges, and bridges to cross valleys. Once it reached a city, the water flowed into a main tank called a castellum.

Aqua Virgo



The **Aqua Virgo**, completed in 19 BCE by Marcus Agrippa, was one of eleven aqueducts that supplied water the city of ancient Rome. In slightly restored form, it feeds the Trevi Fountain today. At its peak the aqueduct was capable of supplying

more than 100,000 cubic meters of water per day.

The name indicates the purity and clarity of the water because it does not chalk significantly. According to legend, thirsty Roman soldiers asked a young girl for water who directed them to the springs that later supplied the aqueduct; Aqua Virgo was named after her.

Roman Bridges

Roman Bridges, like Roman aqueducts, depend upon the arch.

The **Pons Fabricius or Ponte dei quattro Capi** is the oldest bridge in Rome still operating in its original state.



Parts of aqueducts served as bridges



Pont du Gard

One of my personal favorites is the Pont du Gard (French: “Bridge of the Gard”) giant bridge-aqueduct, a notable ancient Roman engineering work constructed about 19 BC to carry water to the city of Nîmes over the Gard River in southern France. This beautiful example of the Romans’ architectural and engineering skills lies

about 32 km to the northwest of Arles. It is the world-famous Pont du Gard, which was a part of an aqueduct system supplying water to the city of Nemausus (present-day Nîmes). The source of the water was a group of freshwater springs near Ucetia (present-day Uzés). The water was carried more than 50 km through tunnels and channels along a curving route dictated by the lay of the land. At the canyon carved by the Gardon River, it was necessary to bridge the gap with an aqueduct 456 meters (1,496 feet) long and 48.8 meters (160 feet) high at its

highest point. The triple-tiered archways of the Pont du Gard were completed circa A.D. 60 and have withstood several floods which would have swept away lesser structures. It is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Aqueducts in Peru

Cumbe Mayo

Cumbemayo or **Cumbe Mayo** is an archaeological site located 20 kilometers southwest of the city of Cajamarca in Peru. Supposedly built around 1500 B.C.E, it has aqueducts, a grotto and petroglyphs. The aqueduct winds down the hills toward the city of Cajamarca, stretching out over about five miles (8.0 km) in length. The canals brought water from the high grounds to the valleys below, which was especially valuable during water scarcity. Some modest arches are visible



<https://hiddenincatours.com/the-mysterious-stone-aqueduct-of-cumbemayo-peru/>

Mayan aqueduct and water control Palanque



Otulum Aqueduct Palenque

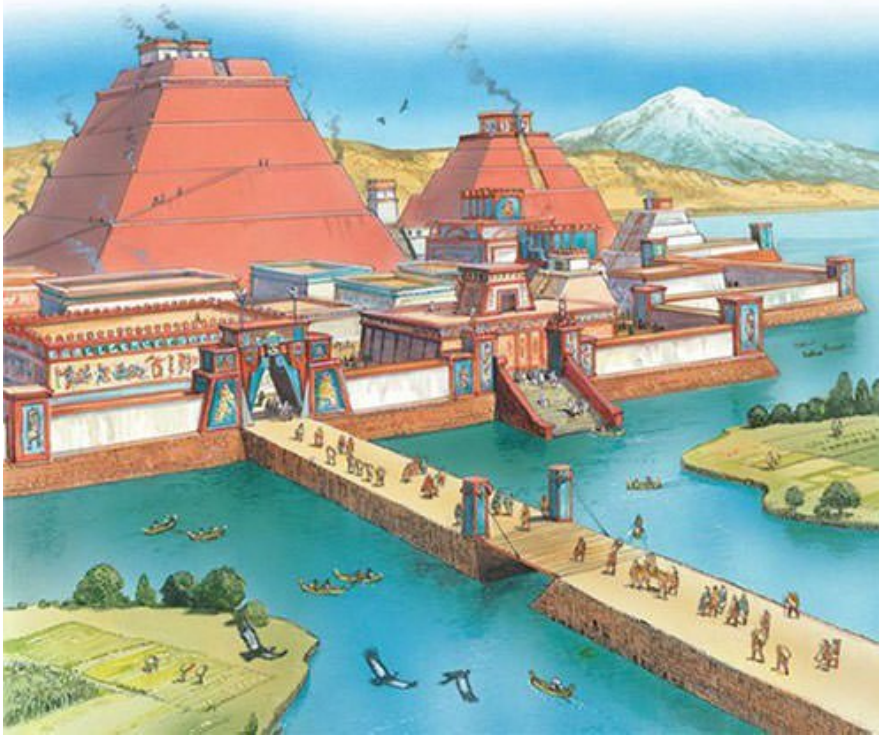


Aqueducts and reservoirs were part of the Maya civilization's water control strategies. As many of their central cities such including Tikal, Caracol, and Palenque are located in the lush tropical forest at the foothills of the Chiapas highlands of Mexico, such strategies were necessary.

Aztec city Tenochtitlan

The capital city of the vast, wealthy empire of the Aztecs was a floating metropolis known as Tenochtitlan. It was on an island in Lake Texcoco. According to the legends of the Mexica, by which name the Aztecs called themselves, their people were wandering looking for a place to build their city. Their priests told them to build where they saw an eagle devouring a snake. They eagle they spotted carrying a snake lighted on a cactus on an little island in the middle of Lake Texcoco and devoured its snake. So they built their city there. (The legend is found on the flag of Mexico.) The city was connected to the mainland by bridges and causeways leading to the north, south, and west.





The only way to enter the city was by boat or over the causeways. The causeways were interrupted by bridges that allowed canoes and other water traffic to pass freely. The bridges could be pulled away, if necessary, to protect the city. After Cortes took the city and destroyed its temples and many buildings, he kept the main city and named it Ciudad de

Mexico – the city of the Aztecs.

So we have looked a few of the artistic achievements of great civilizations. They vary in many respects, but they show world-wide human ingenuity.

Appendix

In 1519 Cortes after a 79-day siege had captured Tenochtitlan. Much of the Aztec city was destroyed, and was rebuilt by 1525. It should be noted, however, that this was not simply a brand new city. Much of the Aztec culture and layout, and of course many of the people, remained the same. To understand Mexico City history, we need to remember that one does not simply wipe out an empire. Just as the Aztec way of life had grown from the many cultures before it, so the new Ciudad de Mexico, or City of the Aztecs, even as we know it today, is still in part the ancient city of Tenochtitlan.

When Cortes died in 1547, it was well-known that he intended to found a university in Ciudad de Mexico and to leave a part of his fortune to fund it.

Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, a Spanish scholar of high reputation, travelled from Spain to Mexico in 1550 or early 1551. He taught Latin in the school which

was housed in a building belonging to Cortes' son and heir. The Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico (Real y Pontificia Universidad de México) was founded on September 21, 1551 by Royal Decree of Charles I of Spain. It is generally considered the first university officially founded in North America and the second in the Western Hemisphere, as the National University of San Marcus in Lima, Peru, was chartered in May of the same year.

Cervantes de Salazar describes the city as he knew it in 1554.

In 1519 Cortes succeeded in conquering the Aztecs, and built Mexico City in the remnants of Tenochtitlan, which he reported that he had destroyed. Cervantes de Salazar, writing a bare 30 years later, describes the new city of Cortes, but the new city does not sound like it was built from scratch in such a short time.

ZA: Tacuba (Street) which is both more famous and will lead us straight into the forum (plaza).

AL: How the view of this street gladdens the mind and refreshes the sight! How both extended (extensive) and wide as straight (it is), how much level area (it has), and so that it may not be muddy and dirty in the rainy time, all paved with stones: through its middle, that (something) which makes it even more decorative and useful to the citizens, within its own canal, open water flows so that it may delight the more.

ZA: About the homes, which it (the street) has on both sides in such order, and placed on the perpendicular, so that none deviates a fingernail (width) from the other, what do you think?

AL: All are magnificent both very elaborate and of such kind as suit the richest and most noble citizens. Each one you might call, since they are so well constructed, not a house but a fortress.

ZU: It was necessary to be done this way in the beginning, in so great a multitude of enemies, since the city could not be surrounded with walls and fortified with towers...

AL: The door facings and exterior decorations of the houses are not made of brick or some other cheap material, but from great stones skillfully placed, in which above the threshold are the insignia of the masters; also the roofs are level. But I ask, what is that building which on the right, across that a very great and wide street paved with stones, is extended and spread out so far higher and more fortified than the rest, having so many shops below?

ZA: That is a section of the palace and this is another, which looks into this other street and the tower of strength which is on the side joins them.

AL: You tell me of another city, not a palace.