

ART, MYTH AND POWER (II)

GREEK AND ROMAN SCULPTURE

Key concepts

- ▶ Ideal representation of the human figure
- ▶ Incorporation of mythology and literature in art
- ▶ Art as political propaganda



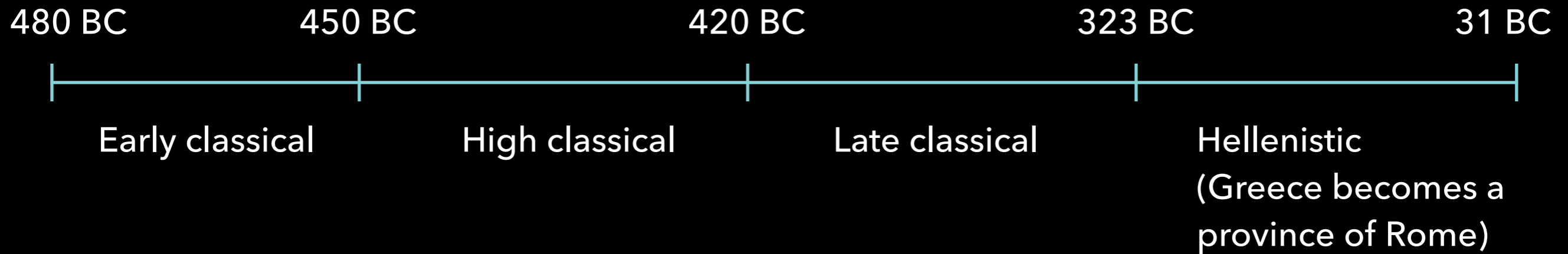
The Ancient Greek Civilisation



The ancient Greek civilisation covered a large area around the Mediterranean Sea (as seen on this map).

Map of Ancient Greece, circa 500 BC

PERIODS OF GREEK ART



PRE-CLASSICAL STATUES



Marble statue of a kouros (youth)
ca. 590-580 B.C.E.



Marble statue of a kore
ca. 550-540 B.C.E.

Kouros of Melos

Kouros of Tenea

Kouros of Anavysos

Piraeus Apollo

Kouros for Aristodikos

Kritian Boy



570-560



550



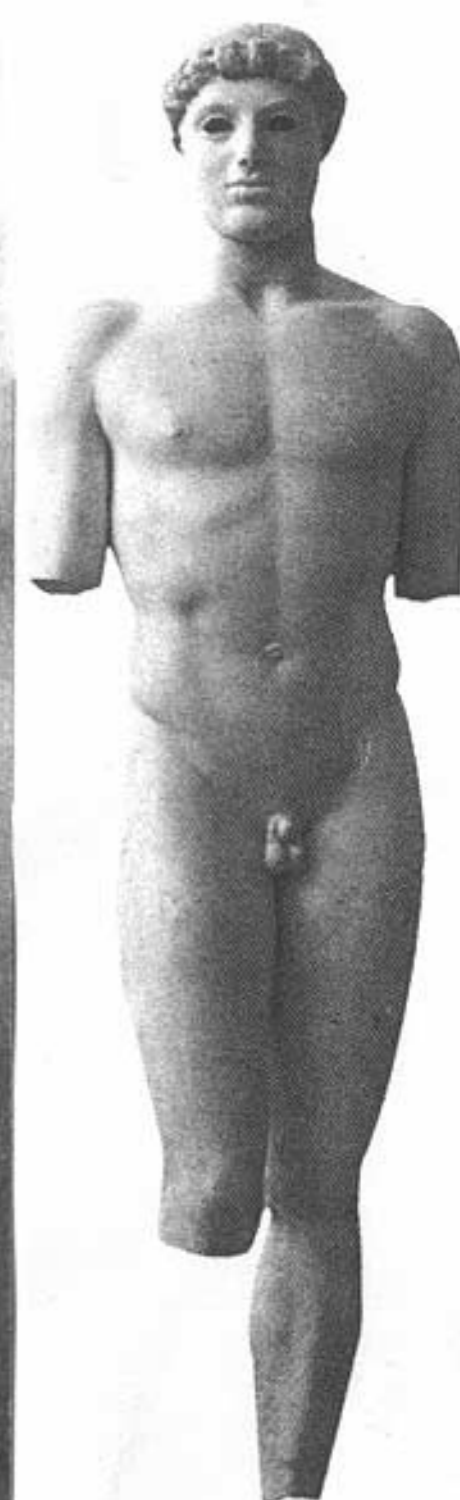
540-530



530-520



510-500



500-480

EARLY CLASSICAL PERIOD (480-450 BC)



- ▶ After defeating the Persians in 480 BCE, Greece entered a Golden Age.
- ▶ Athens was the leading city in its production of culture.
- ▶ Artists during this time used balance and perfect proportions in their work.
- ▶ **Naturalist style:** had to do with a newfound sense of self that emerged after the victory against Persians.

Kritios Boy

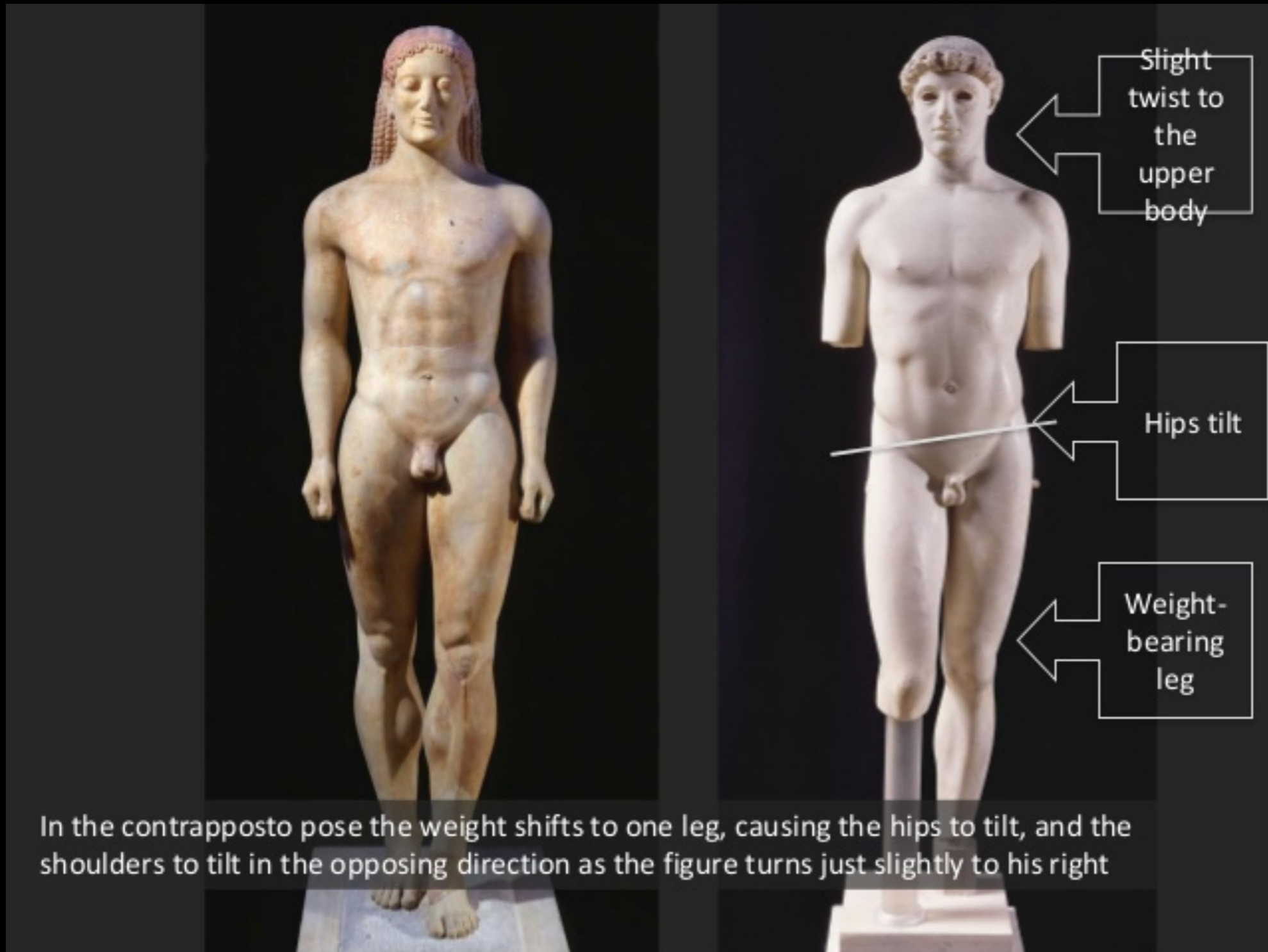
Marble

480 BC

Collection of the Acropolis Museum, Athens

Severe style: typical of early Classical Greek art; simple forms with realistic anatomy, serious expressions (no smile), no decoration





Contrapposto: posing of the human figure in which one part is turned in opposition to another part, typically with the weight of the body being thrown to one foot to create a counterbalance of the body about its central axis.

HIGH CLASSICAL PERIOD (450-420 BC)

- ▶ During this period, Greece was secured against the Persian threat. Funds that had been allocated to defence were turned to the embellishment of Athens.
- ▶ The emphasis of sculptures during this time was to depict the ideal man, shown in heroic nudity. Figures were youthful and flawless.

Canon: Aspects of a culture considered exemplary / a perfect standard to be imitated

Polykleitos

Doryphoros (Spear-Bearer) or Canon

c. 450-40 BC

Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli



The Ideal Form

Idealism: the representation of a form that is considered as the most perfect of its kind, could depart from a realistic representation true to nature

- ▶ Youthful and flawless male figures
- ▶ Value on the ideal image, individuality is not the focus- generic features with detached expressions
- ▶ Mathematical precision of idealism- proportions of every body part were perfect in relation to the whole.

Polykleitos

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LATE CLASSICAL PERIOD (420-323 BC)

- ▶ This period saw a dramatic increase of wealth in Greece, which led to several new centers for art
- ▶ This allowed artists to break from conventions established in previous periods
- ▶ There was greater individuality of emotion and expression
- ▶ Rulers were now inspired more openly by Greek mythology and divinity

Praxiteles

Hermes and the Infant Dionysos

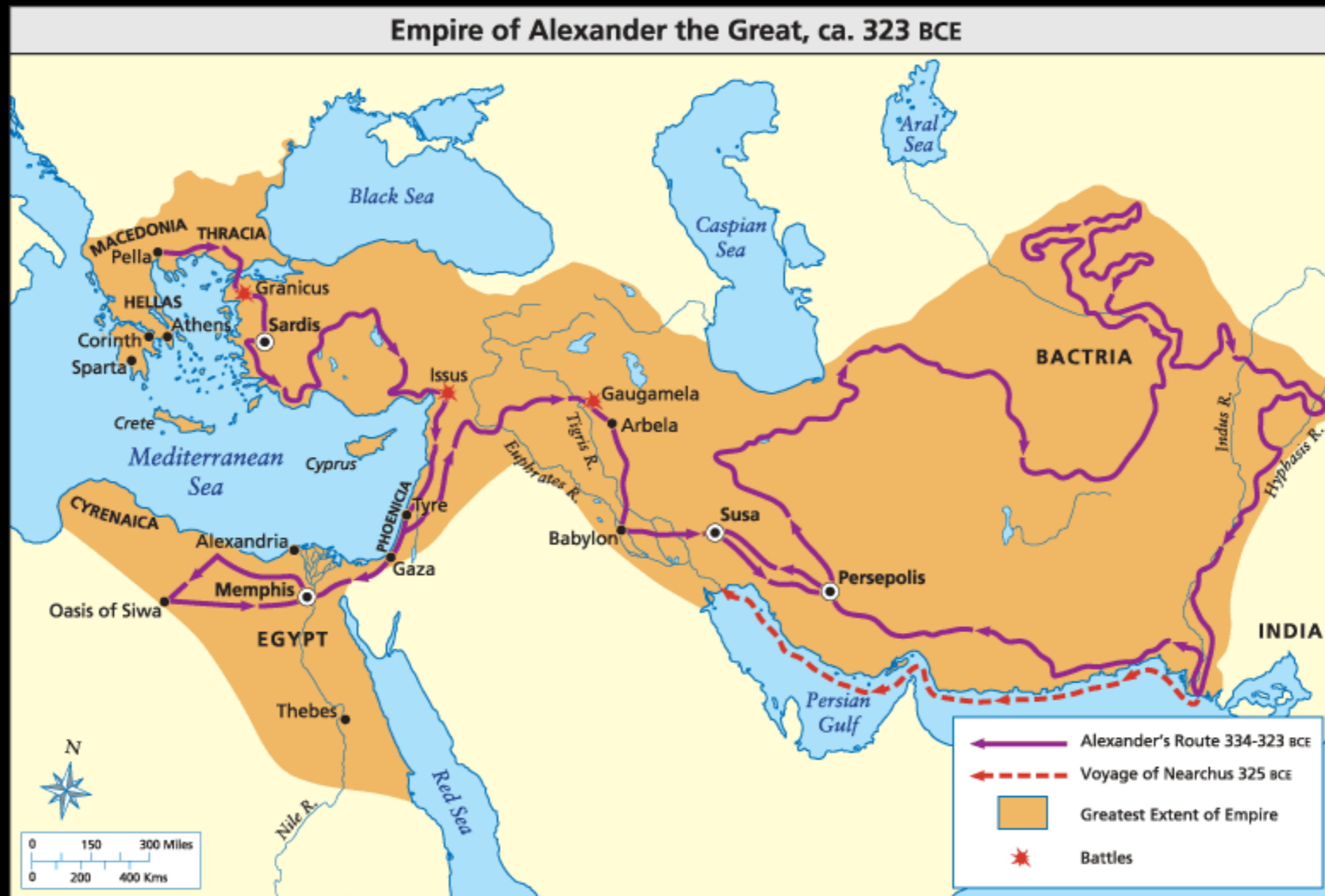
c. 340 BCE

LATE CLASSICAL PERIOD (420-323 BC)



Praxiteles
Aphrodite of Knidos
(Roman marble copy)
c. 400 BC

- ▶ Between 334 and 323 BCE, Alexander the Great had conquered vast expanses. This widespread contact with different regions introduced a number of cultural influences to Greek art. The art of the Hellenistic period, which begins after Alexander's death, was thus very diverse in subject matter and style.



Map of the Empire of Alexander the Great, circa 323 BC

HELLENISTIC (323-31 BC)

- ▶ While the Classical periods were interested in idealised figures, the Hellenistic age showed an interested in drama and emotion; more interested in engaging the viewer.



Laocoön and his sons
marble
c. 200 BC
Vatican Museums

THE ROMAN EMPIRE



Map of the Roman Empire, circa 117 AD



Roman Copies of Greek Art

- ▶ Romans were expanding their territory, they brought back a number of Greek artworks.
- ▶ Impressed by wealth, culture and beauty of Greek culture, there was now a demand among educated and wealthy Romans for Greek culture.
- ▶ To meet this demand, Greek and Roman artists began to create marble and bronze copies of Greek sculptures.

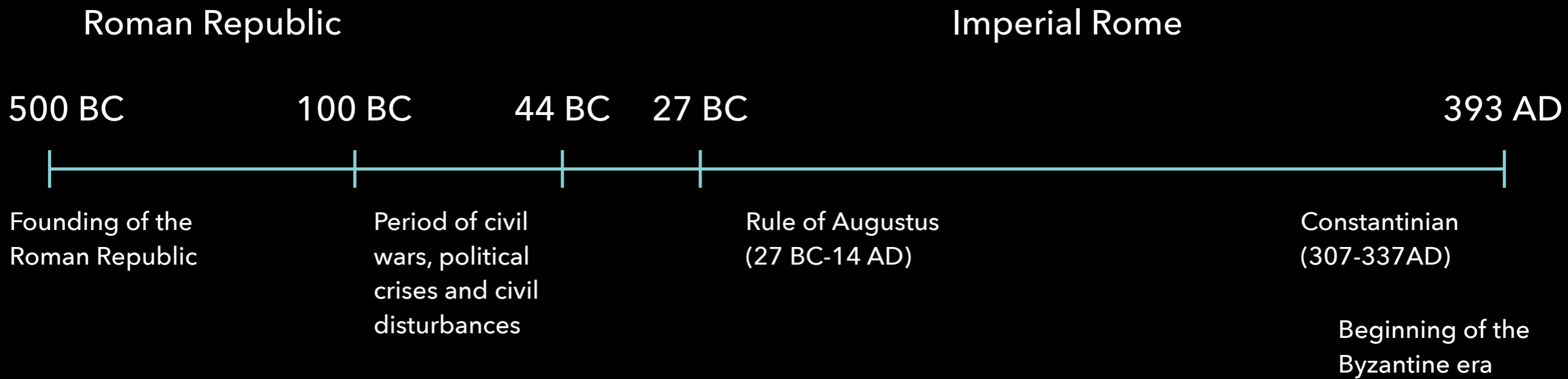
Copy of work attributed to Polykleitos
marble statue of the Diadoumenos
(youth tying a fillet around his head)
ca. A.D. 69-96



Since most ancient bronze statues have been lost or were melted down to reuse the valuable metal, Roman copies in marble and bronze often provide our primary visual evidence of masterpieces by famous Greek sculptors.

Athlete, "The Ephesian Apoxyomenos"
Bronze and copper
Greek

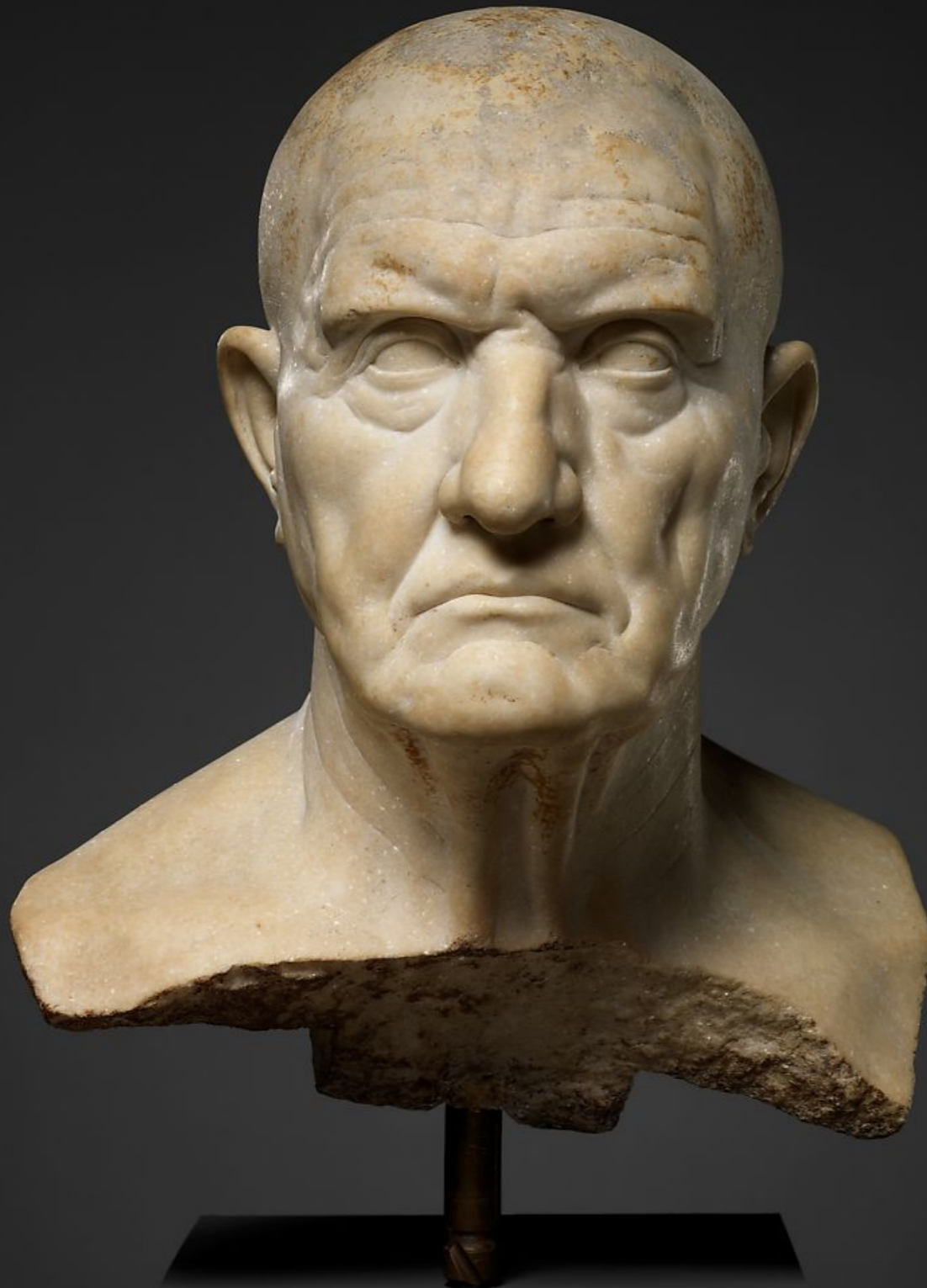
PERIODS OF ROMAN ART



ROMAN REPUBLIC

Verism: (ver = truth)

Portrait style characteristic of the Roman republic, referring to the hyper-realistic features that emphasise every flaw, creating portraits of individuals with personality and essence.



Marble bust of a man

75-50 BC

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

IMPERIAL ROME (AUGUSTAN)

- ▶ The art under Augustus was influenced by Classical Greek art of the past.
- ▶ Roman sculptors now adopted Classical elements of idealism and balanced proportions.
- ▶ The idealised portraits of the rulers could be seen as tools of political propaganda.



Augustus of Prima Porta,
1st century C.E.
(Vatican Museums)

LATE EMPIRE (CONSTANTINIAN)



Colossus of Constantine

white marble, brick, wood, gilded bronze

c. 312-315 AD

Musei Capitolini, Rome

The Myth of Whiteness in Classical Sculpture



Polychromy: The art of painting in several colours, especially for applying to pottery, sculpture and architecture



A color reconstruction of the Phrasikleia Kore, completed in 2010. Courtesy Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Idealism

Does the way ancient Greek art dramatize the body affect standards today?

Why were Ancient Greeks obsessed with idealism in the creation of sculptures?

Why did Greeks create such realistic sculptures while the Ancient Eastern Artist created more divine art?

Influences

How did Greco-Roman art reflect the political conditions of its time?

What are the influences of the different characteristics of social environment and nationality on Greco-Roman art.

Comparisons between Greek and Roman art

Although similar what were some differences in Greek and Roman art?

What was the significance of the Romans emulating Greek art?

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- ▶ **Verism:** (ver = truth): Portrait style characteristic of the Roman republic, referring to the hyper-realistic features that emphasise every flaw, creating portraits of individuals with personality and essence.