Art and Life Interaction

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During the Paleolithic period, human beings heavily relied on the environment for their survival. It is vital to note that humans had not embraced the practice of agriculture and animal domestication and men had to engage in hunting and gathering food. This sums up the Paleolithic period as a food gathering age. In the Neolithic period, humankind went past the ordinary identification of humans and animals in the natural environment to the embodiment of humans and animals. The Neolithic period came after 20,000 years and was characterized by the establishment of permanent settlements, the adoption of agriculture, and the domestication of animals. The adoption of agriculture and animal domestication boosted food security for human beings, and many groups transformed their lives from hunters to herders, others became farmers, and others settled in towns. In the Neolithic period, there was an extensive focus on human themes and concerns, as illustrated in figure 1-5, where the sculptor did not bring out facial features in the carvings. Obviously, there was no objective to emphasize the naturalness in the shape and proportion, but only a curved mass of the curly hair. On the other hand, figure 1-15, Ain Ghazal, includes human nose and eyes, and its proportion is highly realistic with more paint details compared to the Nude Woman. Accordingly, the textbook presents the view that coherent narratives dominated paintings, and artists aimed at illustrating human figures a combination of both profile and frontal views. Thus, Neolithic art is deemed a key representation of human themes and concerns. The naturalness of the stone led to the unusual shaping of the Nude Woman into a ball-like shape unlike other Paleolithic stone women. It highlights the significance of the capacity to bear children during that time. The absence of facial features in the image exemplifies the artist’s intent to represent the overall female gender instead of a particular woman. The prehistoric artworks in the Paleolithic period captured the main theme of survival
because of the difficulties experienced by hunters during this period. However, Ain Ghazal entails facial features and a massive height of 3.5 feet, and this makes me guess that it was to be buried with the dead in ritual practices.

The emergence of the Mesopotamian era witnessed an enormous advance in art and architecture. Notably, large cities were built under the auspices of great civilizations of the Euphrates and Tigris River, which also utilized the fertile land between the rivers to enhance agriculture. The revolution of farming techniques and irrigation methods meant that people dedicate less effort to agriculture hence getting time to focus on other areas such as art and architecture. A tremendous improvement in building materials was evident as structures were commonly built using mud bricks. Sumerians took advantage of the improved materials and constructed large city-states near the Euphrates and Tigris River. The mud bricks that were made from mixing clay and drying under the sun were an enormous improvement over the stone materials that had been widely used in the previous era. The most important aspect to note here is that the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers played an instrumental role in the advancement of architecture and art during this era.

The presence of water also played a crucial role in the emergence of the Egyptian civilization. The Nile River offered multipurpose services including transportation and irrigation hence ensuring that stone blocks for making buildings and monuments were effectively ferried to their required destinations. It is vital to note that some of the most notable monuments would not have been built in cases where there could have been difficulties transporting stones to their destinations. For instance, stone obelisks are common materials on most Egyptian temples. The Aswan area served as a crucial quarrying area for these stones before their transportation by
barge down the Nile River. The availability of an easy transportation channel on the Nile River ensured that materials were made locally available by shipping from other regions.

Water trade that involved the transfer of materials such as marble and stone between islands played a vital role in influencing the pre-historic Aegean civilization. The Cycladic civilization utilized these materials to make significant geometric statues, such as the Male lyre player from Kreos, Greece.

The knowledge relating to art and architecture disappeared immediately after the Mycean civilization collapsed. Nevertheless, continuous interactions through trade with other civilizations rekindled this knowledge as new and influences emanated from the Near East period. Again, the statues available signified an improvement from the succeeding period as they were more realistic.

Another crucial group of people was Etruscans, who are described as sea-faring people whose lives were greatly influenced by their involvement in trade with the Greeks and the Near East. Their temples came into place after the Greek style and exhibited enormous differences from those in Greece. Despite being made from wood, unfluted, and having bases, the Etruscan (Tuscan) columns boasted of some elements that resembled the Greek Doric columns. Nevertheless, there was a rule requiring wider spacing of Etruscan columns compared to the Greek columns because of the light nature of the superstructures they supported. The Portonaccio temple serves as a superb example of a temple influenced by Greek architecture.

The Roman culture immediately spread in the Italian Peninsula immediately after the collapse of the Etruscan empire. Greeks and Etruscans were at the center-stage of influencing Roman architecture. Additionally, the Roman Empire’s control of the Mediterranean Sea meant that Rome controlled the entire trading affairs in the region. The key noticeable difference in the
form of architecture was the fact that Greeks utilized marble and wood while embraced concrete as the standard material for structure construction. The Colosseum, which is the largest amphitheater in the globe with a capacity of 50,000 spectators, is an outstanding example of a Roman structure that was built using concrete.

Due to the continuous movement of Romans to the east, religion began to influence the Late Antiquity art and architecture. The theme of religion was conspicuously expressed in most paintings and sculptures hence emphasizing the life of Jesus Christ. Massive destruction of temples with Roman gods was prevalent as others were converted into Christian Churches. However, most of the sculptures resembled the Roman culture but had a great emphasis on Christianity. The widespread adoption of the use of mosaics was a tremendous innovation as they were highly used in Roman villas both in the eastern and western halves of the empire depicting the status of noble families and highlighting themes on religion. The life of Jesus Christ was also brought out through the mosaic decorations in churches all over the place. It is important to underscore the fact that this technique emerged from Near East and was moved across the Mediterranean Sea before becoming an excellent part of art and architecture in the Late Antiquity.