

The Intercultural Ancients: A Mock Exhibit Exploring the Cross-Cultural Influences in the Representation of Women in Ancient South Asian and Ancient Mediterranean

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The Intercultural Ancients: A Mock Exhibit Exploring the Cross-Cultural Influences in the Representation of Women in Ancient South Asian and Ancient Mediterranean Art

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Abstract

This project is a mock-exhibit which explores the existence the crosscultural diffusion between the early people of the Mediterranean (from the Balkan Peninsula to the Syrian coast) and South Asia (from Afghanistan to Bhutan). The components of the project are an exhibition catalog and 3D exhibition design. Although there is substantial evidence of ancient contacts between the Aegean (Balkan Peninsula, Crete, Cyclades) and the Near East (Syria, South Turkey, Eastern Iraq, Western Iran) and South Asia and the Near East, there is little scholarship in the evidence-scarce topic of communication between the Aegean and South Asia. This exhibit broaches this subject by providing the visitor with examples of art from both areas which suggest a possibility for diffusion. The artworks for this exhibition are all female figurines due to their availability and popularity in both areas being considered. There are eleven female figurines, six Mediterranean and five South Asian, split into five periods, ranging from the Neolithic Era (Pre-4000 BCE) to the Classical/Kushan Periods (200 CE). By dividing the exhibit into five time periods, the trends of communication and resulting effect on the stylistic conventions in art are more easily discernable. The exhibit begins with the Neolithic Era because it encompasses some of the earliest figurines produced in the regions and ends in 200 CE when communication between the two regions can be archaeologically proven. The catalog supports the artworks in the exhibit with sections on the foreign contact

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of each region that could have supported stylistic diffusion the gender constructions which could have influenced the female image, historical summaries of each period, and analyses of how the figures could have been influenced by the other's stylistic conventions. The exhibition design lays out visually how the topic would be presented to the public. It takes into account the atmosphere, pattern of movement, and accessibility to create an optimal experience for visitors of the exhibition. The subject was explored based on research on extant archaeological evidence, the more established stylistic diffusion of each region with the Near East, and visual analysis. Although definitive conclusions could not be made without undeniable archaeological evidence, the exhibit shows a gradual movement from each region through the Near East and into one another beginning as early as the Neolithic Era. There were two prevalent trends that become clear throughout the study of the works of art over the full period of time. Whether embraced or eschewed, there was consistently some foreign influence in every work of art. However, at the same time, these elements of foreign influence were mixed with indigenous artistic styles.

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