Memnon. After killing him, Achilles stripped off Memnon's armor as an act of humiliation, and where the figures overlap in the image, the gentle folds of Eos' flowing chiton set off Memnon's nudity. His vulnerability in turn underlines his mother's desperate grief at being unable to help her son.

At the core of the image is raw emotion. Douris tenderly exposes the suffering caused by intransigent fate, and the callousness of the gods who intervene in mortal lives. In this mythological scene, Athenians may have seen a reflection of themselves during the horrors of the Persian Wars of 490–479 BCE. Indeed, an inscription brings the vase into the realm of everyday life, with the signatures of both painter and potter, as well as a dedication typical of Greek vases: "Hermogenes is beautiful."

THE CLASSICAL AGE

The beginning of the fifth century BCE brought crisis. A number of Ionian cities rebelled against their Persian overlords, and after Athens came to their support, the Persians invaded the Greek mainland, under the leadership of Darius I. At the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, a contingent of about 10,000 Athenians, with a battalion from nearby Plataea, repulsed a force of about 90,000 Persians. Ten years later, an even larger force of Persians returned under Darius' son, Xerxes I. Defeating a Spartan force at Thermopylae, they took control of Athens, burning and pillaging temples and statues. The Greeks fought them again at Salamis and Plataea in 480–479 BCE, and finally defeated them. These battles were defining moments for the Greeks, who first faced destruction in their cities, and then emerged triumphant and confident after the horrors of invasion. At least in Athens, Persian destruction of public monuments and space is visible in the archaeological record, and, for archaeologists and art historians, signals the end of the Archaic period. The period stretching from the end of the Persian Wars to the death of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BCE is known as the Classical Age. During this time, architects and sculptors alike sought visual harmony in proportional systems, and artists achieved a heightened naturalism in depicting the human form.

The struggle against the Persians tested the recently established Athenian democracy. Athens emerged from the war as the leader of the Delian League, a defensive alliance against the Persians, which quickly evolved into a political and economic empire that facilitated many architectural and artistic projects. The Classical era was when the playwrights whose names are still so familiar—Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—were penning comedies and tragedies for performance at religious festivals, and thinkers like Socrates and Plato, and then Aristotle, engaged in their philosophical quests. Perhaps the most influential political leader of the day was Perikles, who came to the forefront of Athenian public life in the mid-fifth century BCE, and played a critical role in the city's history until his death in 429 BCE. An avid patron of the arts, he focused much of his attention on beautifying the city's highest point or Akropolis.

Classical Sculpture

The Persian sack of 480 BCE left the Athenian Akropolis in ruins. Among many statues that were once dedications there and were later excavated from the debris, one kouros stands apart (fig. **5.29**). Archaeologists sometimes attribute it to the Athenian sculptor Kritios, and know it as the *Kritios Boy.* On account of its

5.29 *Kritios Boy.* ca. 480 BCE. Marble, height 46" (116.7 cm). Akropolis Museum, Athens

5.30 *Charioteer from Motya*, Sicily. ca. 450–440 BCE. Marble, height 6'3" (1.9 m). Museo Giuseppe Whitaker, Motya

findspot, they date it to shortly before the Persian attack. It differs significantly from earlier, Archaic kouroi (see figs. 5.14 and 5.15), not least because it is the first surviving statue that stands in the full sense of the word. Although the earlier figures are in an upright position—instead of reclining, sitting, kneeling, or running—their stance is really an arrested walk, with the body's weight resting evenly on both legs. This pose is nonnaturalistic and rigid. The *Kritios Boy* has one leg forward like earlier kouroi, yet an important change has occurred. The sculptor has shifted the youth's weight, creating a calculated asymmetry in the two sides of his body. The knee of the forward leg is lower than the other, the right hip is thrust down and in, and the left hip up and out. The axis of the body is not a straight vertical line, but a reversed S-curve. Taken together, these small departures from symmetry indicate that the youth's weight rests mainly on the left leg, while the right leg acts as a prop to help balance the body.

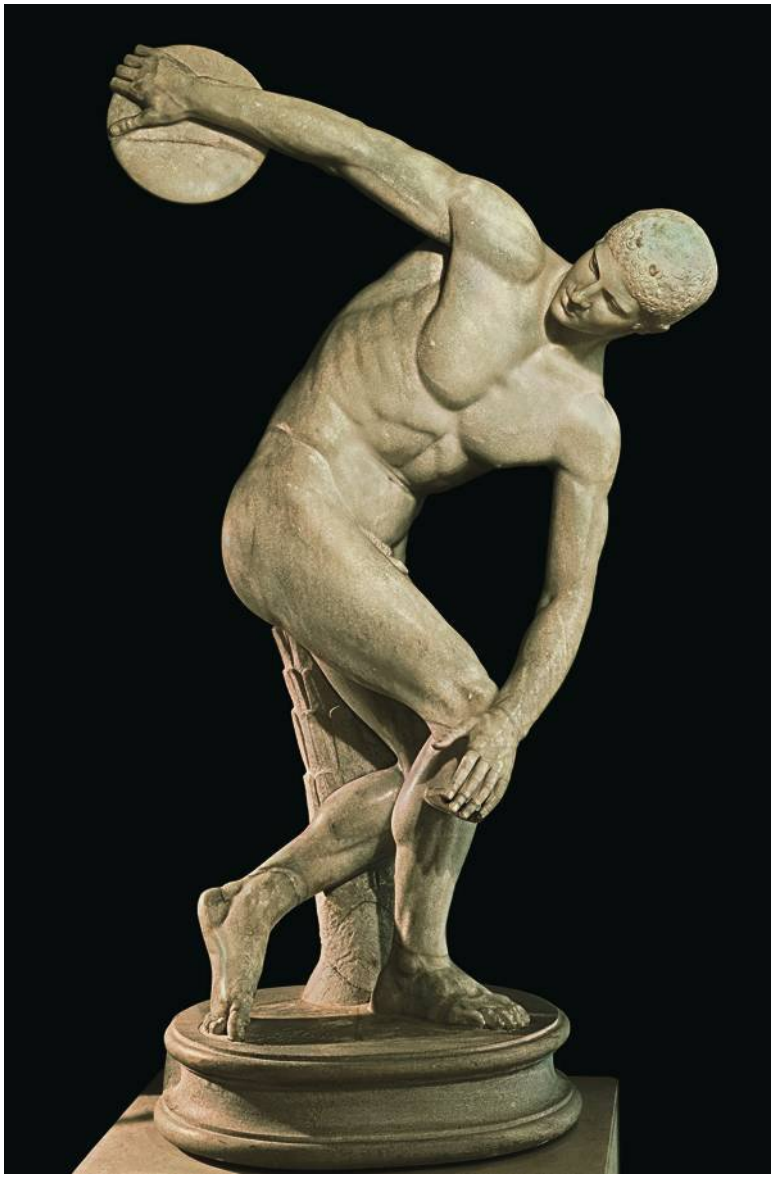
The *Kritios Boy* not only stands; he stands at ease. The artist masterfully observed the balanced asymmetry of this relaxed natural stance, which is known to ancient art historians as a **chiastic pose** (from "χ," the Greek letter *chi*), and to Renaissance art historians as **contrapposto** (Italian for "counterpoise"). The leg that carries the main weight is called the engaged leg, the other, the free leg. This simple observation led to radical results, for with it came a recognition that if one part of the body is engaged in a task, other parts respond. Bending the free knee results in a slight swiveling of the pelvis, a compensating curvature of the spine, and an adjusting tilt of the shoulders. This unified approach to the body led artists to represent movement with a new naturalism. Indeed, even though the *Kritios Boy* is at rest, his muscles suggest motion, and the sculpture has life; he seems capable of action. At the same time, the artist recognized that strict adherence to nature would not always yield the desired result. So, as in the later Parthenon (see pages 131–37), refinements are at work. The sculptor exaggerated the line of muscles over the pelvis to create a greater unity between thighs and torso, and a more fluid transition from front to back. This emphasized the sculpture's three-dimensionality, and encouraged a viewer to move around it.

The innovative movement in the musculature gives a viewer the sense, for the first time, that muscles lie beneath the surface of the marble skin, and that a skeleton articulates the whole as a real organism. A new treatment of the flesh and the marble's surface adds to this impression: The flesh has a soft sensuousness that is quite alien to earlier kouroi, and the sculptor has worked the surface of the marble to a gentle polish. Gone, also, is the Archaic smile. The face has a soft fleshiness to it, especially marked around the chin, which is characteristic of sculpture in the early Classical period. The head is turned slightly away from the front, removing the direct gaze of earlier kouroi and casting the figure into his own world of thought.

A sculpture discovered in the Graeco-Punic settlement of Motya in western Sicily exhibits a similar sensuousness (see map 5.1 and fig. **5.30**). Like the *Kritios Boy*, it represents a youth standing in a sinuous chiastic pose, his head turned from a frontal axis. The sculptor has used the fine fabric of a charioteer's tunic to "mask" the full curves of the body, revealing the flesh while simultaneously concealing it. Athletic contests were a prominent component of male life in Greece and its colonies. Greeks viewed physical prowess as a virtue, and victors in games won a measure of fame. Sculptures like this one, set up in public places, commemorated their success.

5.31 *Zeus.* ca. 460–450 BCE. Bronze, height 6'10" (1.9 m). National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Ministry of Culture Archaeological Receipts Fund. 15161

The *Kritios Boy* marks a critical point in Greek art. One of the changes it engendered was a wholehearted exploration of the representation of movement, another hallmark of early Classical sculpture. A magnificent nude bronze dating to about 460–450 BCE recovered from the sea near the Greek coast (fig. **5.31**) was probably in the cargo of a Roman vessel that sank on its voyage to Italy. At almost 7 feet tall, it depicts a spread-eagled male figure in the act of throwing—probably Zeus casting a thunderbolt, or Poseidon throwing his trident. In a single figure, the sculptor captures and contrasts vigorous action and firm stability. The result is a work of outright grandeur, expressing the god's awe-inspiring power. The piece shows off not only the artist's understanding of bodies in motion, but also an expert knowledge of the strengths of bronze, which allowed the god's arms to stretch out without support. (See *Materials and Techniques*, page 128.) Some ten years later, in about 450 BCE, a sculptor named Myron created a



5.32 *Diskobolos* (*Discus Thrower*). Roman copy after a bronze original of ca. 450 BCE by Myron. Marble, life-size. Museo delle Terme, Rome

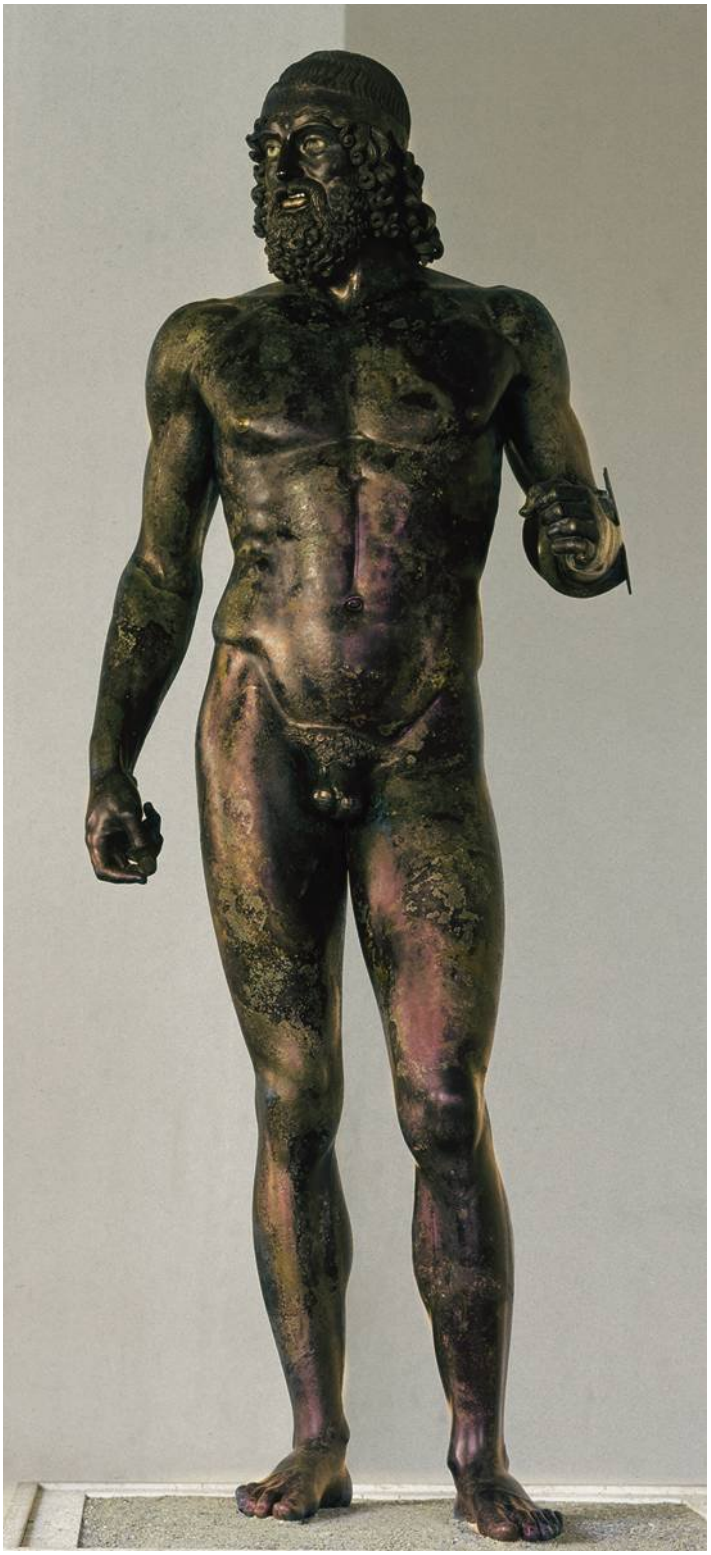
5.33 *Doryphoros* (*Spear Bearer*). Roman copy after an original of ca. 450–440 BCE by Polykleitos. Marble, height 6'6" (2 m). Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples

bronze statue of another athlete, a discus thrower, the *Diskobolos*, which earned great renown in its own time. Like most Greek sculptures in bronze, it is known to us only from Roman copies (fig. **5.32**). (See www.myartslab.com.) If the bronze Zeus suggested impending motion by portraying the moment before it occurred, Myron condensed a sequence of movements into a single pose, achieved through a violent twist of the torso that brings the arms into the same plane as the legs. The pose conveys the essence of the action by presenting the coiled figure in perfect balance.

THE *DORYPHOROS*: IDEALS OF PROPORTION AND HARMONY Within half a century of the innovations witnessed in the *Kritios Boy*, sculptors were avidly exploring the body's articulation. One of those sculptors was Polykleitos of Argos, whose most famous work, the *Doryphoros* (*Spear Bearer*) (fig.

5.33), is known to us through numerous Roman copies. In this sculpture, the chiastic pose is much more emphatic than in the *Kritios Boy*, the turn of the head more pronounced. Polykleitos seems to delight in the possibilities the pose offers, examining how the anatomy on the two sides of the body responds to it. The "working" left arm balances the engaged right leg in the forward position, and the relaxed right arm balances the free left leg. Yet, in this sculpture, Polykleitos did more than study anatomy. He explored principles of commensurability, *symmetria*, where part related to part, and all the parts to the whole: He proposed an ideal system of proportions, not just for individual elements of the body but for their relation to one another and to the body as a whole. He also addressed *rhythmos* (composition and movement). According to one ancient writer, Greeks knew this work as his *kanon* (canon, meaning "rule" or "measure"). (See www.myartslab.com.) Egyptian artists had earlier aimed to establish guidelines for depiction based on proportion. Yet for Polykleitos, the search for an ideal system of proportions was more than an artist's aid: It was rooted in a philosophical quest for illumination, and in a belief that harmony (*harmonia*)—in the universe, as in music and in all things—could be expressed in mathematical terms. Only slightly later than this sculpture, Plato would root his doctrine of ideal forms in numbers, and acknowledge that beauty was commonly based on proportion. Philosophers even referred to works of art to illustrate their theories. Moreover, beauty was more than an idle conceit for Classical Athenians; it also had a moral dimension. Pose and expression reflected character and feeling, which revealed the inner person and, with it, *arete* (excellence or virtue). Thus contemplation of harmonious proportions could be equated with the contemplation of virtue. (See *Primary Source*, page 133.)

Much of the *Doryphoros'* original appearance may have been lost in the copy-making process: Bronze and marble differ greatly in both texture and presence. Surviving Greek bronzes are extremely rare, and when a pair of over-life-size figures was found in the sea near Riace, Italy, in 1972, they created a sensation (fig. **5.34**). Their state of preservation is outstanding, and shows off to advantage the extraordinarily fine workmanship. Greek sculptors used a refined version of the lost-wax technique familiar to Near Eastern artists. The process differs radically from cutting away stone, since the technique is additive (the artist builds the clay model in the first phase of the process). Further, where marble absorbs light, a bronze surface reflects it, and this led sculptors to explore a variety of surface textures—for hair and skin, for instance. They could add different materials for details: These statues have ivory and glass-paste eyes, bronze eyelashes, and copper lips and nipples. Statue A (or *Riace Warrior A*), shown here, has silver teeth. Who these figures represented is still unknown: a pair of heroes, perhaps, or warriors. They may have formed part of a single monument. Though they strike similar poses, the men have differing body types, which has led some scholars to date them apart and attribute them to two separate sculptors. They could equally be the work of a single artist exploring the representation of character and age.



5.34 *Riace Warrior A*, found in the sea off Riace, Italy. ca. 450 BCE. Bronze, height 6'8" (2.03 m). Museo Archaeologico, Reggio Calabria, Italy

THE SCULPTURES OF THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS, OLYMPIA

The Riace bronzes may once have stood in a sanctuary, where Greeks customarily celebrated great men. There, they were in the presence of the gods, whose temples featured additional sculpture