

Beauty and proportions of the female body in the art history

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Abstract: *In the famous drawing of the man engraved in square and circle, Leonardo da Vinci created the icon image of correspondence between man and universe, based on the "divine proportion". The perfection of the universe has as its symbol the circle, and man, the small universe, enters this circle. The main research of Dürer's work over the proportions of the human body, without being a tribute to Antiquity, it is a glimpse of the fundamental principles of anatomy and, namely, that of harmonizing the parts together. A human body is beautiful, whether short or tall, because beauty is the fit of the parts, and ugly is the excessive or the deviation from the norm. Also, the Greek canon was not fixed in advance, but was creative about both anthropometry and the variety of movements. The versatility with which this canon varies from one epoch to another reveals an ever-changing feminine beauty ideal linked to the aesthetics of that moment.*

Key-words: *divine proportion; art; artistic canon; female forms; female body; beauty*

In the famous drawing of the man engraved in square and circle, Leonardo da Vinci created the icon image of correspondence between man and universe, based on the "divine proportion". The perfection of the universe has as its symbol the circle, and man, the small universe, enters this circle. No other image in the history of art is surprisingly surprising at the intention of placing man in a system of measurements and proportions that ultimately correspond to universal norms.

The study of artistic anatomy highlighted an extremely wide range of proportions and expression of anatomical forms, with particular emphasis on the specificity of feminine forms. All these differences are perhaps best reflected in the arts, sculpture, graphics and figurative painting. Egyptian art is a true discovery of the proportions systems and canons that link the human body to the notion of physical perfection and absolute beauty. The unity of conception that dominates Egyptian art makes it possible to reveal certain constants specific to the human figure. The silhouette of the human body in painting can be derived from the process of taking the image by drawing the contour of the shadow, which is reminiscent of Plinius the Elder in his "Historia naturalis", a process used by the Egyptians 6000 years before the Greeks. Naturally, the appearance of man was coded in proportions and some testimonies of Antiquity, some deductions from historians and archaeologists or direct observations attest the existence of a strict canon. This canon encodes the type of a racial population with an increased waist and limb gracility and a relatively poor showed sexuality. (Ghițescu 1979, 60-62)

Sculpture, however, is the field where the artistic and intellectual genius of the Egyptian artist is fully presented. The original character of rond-bosse sculpture is the use of the principle of constructive geometry for organizing shapes and volumes. They are architecturally volumes, sometimes up to rigidity, which distinguishes Egyptian sculpture from any other sculpture.

The hard material (limestone, granite) and the direct carving, is served to transform the anatomy into the an architectural volume that gave grandeur to the Egyptian style. The realism of the Egyptian statue, is never linked to a naturalistic copy, except for some of the portraits of the late epoch. In this age there is also a more realistic characterization of

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body, masculine and feminine types. Thus, age characters or particular morphological details, such as fat locations of the female body, begin to appear. (Ghițescu , 1979, p. 79)

The principle of constructive geometry that gave Egyptian art the decision of forms and the clarity of volumes is replaced by Mesopotamians with the principle of silhouettes searching and by the pursuit of the contours of natural forms Arabic inspired.

The archaeological discoveries in the island of Crete place Aegean civilization in the same group as the west Asia Minor civilization, with Early Elade and Cyclades. From the images of the scenery, the Anthropological types of Cretan are outlined. These were slender people with a well proportioned body. The head is prolonged, the forehead high, straight, the prominent nose, the black hair. This type is visible today in the physiognomy of the island's inhabitants and is qualified as a *protomediterranean*. The typological peculiarities of the Cretans were accentuated by fashion. (Ghițescu , 1979, p. 79)

Thus, for the courtiers of the yard, the corsage, often embroidered, almost reveals the large breasts, being very tight on the thin waist... The feminine figure had a unique individuality, namely, the big eyes that gazed lively and smartly beneath the fine eyebrows. Small lips, naughty nose and fine chin have determined the appointment of one of the feminine images as *La petite parisienne*. The movements showed temperamental beings, the whole picture showing that women had a special social role, similar to the later one, in the west of Europe.

In Greek civilization, for the first time in the history of mankind, art is conceived as perfectly linked to the realization of beauty, becomes an purpose for itself. For three hundred years (between the 8th and 5th centuries BC), Greek archaic sculpture experiences various materials and tries to move from the constructive geometry and inertia of the material block to the supple shapes of a body. Typical representation of people in large sculptures (Kuros and Kore) had a clear resemblance to Egyptian sculpture. The types of young woman, archaic Kore, with a pronounced ionian influence in the elegance of the hairstyle, ornaments and clothing, make progress towards anatomizing the curtain which, with all the wealth of material, relies on the main anatomical volumes. There is also a harmonization of the expression of the figure, expression and attitude. The rise of the corners of the mouth is completed by the rounding of the cheeks, with the apparent sharpening of the nose and the chin. (Ghițescu , 1979, p. 89)



Kore - Archaic Greek Art, source of image:
<http://arthistoryresources.net/greek-art-archaeology-2016/kore-delicata.html>

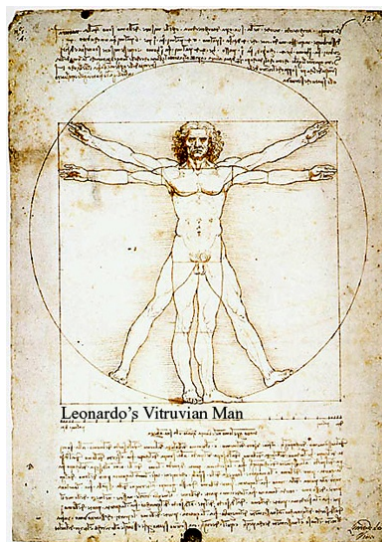
In a Galenus text, in which Polyclet is attributed to the body's alignment from one finger to another, all of the fingers with the rest of the hand, etc., has led to the reconstruction of a canon having medius finger as model. The same text allowed, however, an interpretation of the polythetian canon as an organic system in which the human figure appears made up of differentiated anatomic segments.

The Vitruvius canon, through which the experience of Antiquity was transmitted to modern times, expresses the body's dimensions as common fractions of the whole ($x = y / 4$). This is the only ancient author from which we have information on the Greek proportional system. The original character of the Greek canon is given by its aesthetic purpose.

Harmonious proportions are the origin of beauty, and the canon tends to fix it and legislate. Its main objective is not to build through a technical process but to obtain fix and regulate beauty. The Greek canon was not predetermined, but it was a true creation linked to both anthropometry and the variety of movements. The system is called organic because the anatomical units and segments are compared to the organic whole. More subtle than the Egyptian model, the difference lies in the fact that the Greek anthropometry no longer applies to artistic measures. It is known that Greek artists adapted the canon, not only to the ages, but also to the excursions brought by the movements of the body, as well as to the location of the statue in space. (Ghițescu, 1979, 96)

The analogy that Vitruvius has made between the proportions of architecture and human body has led to the interpretation of proportions as a modular system. The variation of the module's relationship resulted in a change in the appearance of the entire edifice. By showing the correspondence between the Doric column (with the 1/6 module) and the male body, and between the ionic column (with 8/1 module) and the female body, Vitruvius transposed the concept of correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, enunciated by Platon in which the harmony of life, the subtle game of proportions of the human body, was connected with the harmony of the universe.

Leonardo da Vinci, in his proportional drawing of the man engraved in square and circle, created the emblem of this correspondence, based on divine proportions. Vitruvius himself thought this way, and imagined, in two separate figures, the man enlisted in the square and in the circle. Cleverly, Leonardo united the two figures into a single emblem picture in which, moreover, man is drawn with the rigor of the anatomist. (Ghițescu, 1981, 251, 276)



Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, source of image:
<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Leonardo-Da-Vincis-Vitruvian-Man-Explained>

Concerning the harmony of the parts of the entire human body, Mihai Manescu surprised the following idea: "A painted arm will be especially pleasing when besides the credibility of his appearance, carnal and coloring attributes, he will be required as a credible member in the whole body by proportions ". And the good knowledge of the parts of the human body and its parts determined by a precise knowledge of the anatomy will help the artist in his approach of creating a harmonious body or a bold movement

It is well-known to know the tendons or muscle inserts on the bones that make up an arm. Their discretion or consistency in a drawing, painting, or relief of a sculpture gives credibility not only to that arm, but to the gesture it would describe. The direction and size of an effort will be all the more credible as the anatomically-convincing markers will look more like those noted and stored in the bench of every visitor's visual instincts. Consciously or not, attentive or less attentive, any human subject has witnessed the summit of visible gestures on and on the muscles of his peers during discrete or spectacular visual events.

Even inconsiderate, or perhaps even unnecessary, some significant details will be imprinted in the imperfect personal bank of images

And so, in front of an artwork, an attempt to figure out the gesture aspect he'd ever seen, the receiver feels and believes what he sees, because some details correspond to the benchmarks in that picture bank, in good measure, instinctive, subliminal.(Mănescu, 2008, 223)

But eventually, the artist, of all times, was a tireless seeker of the ideal of beauty. Most often, however, he embodied in the female character he imagined and realized according to his own aesthetic ideal, but also the beauty norms that dominated that era. Considered in its historical aspect, the evolution of the female canon of beauty has been seen as a wide and unequal variation over time, with spectacular revolutions and contradictory tendencies, but beyond all these considerations, for artists, the human female body has been the most important starting point in artistic compositions.

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