

Hellenistic Greece

Hellenistic Key Points:

- The turmoil of the Greek culture is indicated in their artwork.
 - Artists look to the individual real people (not the idealized gods).
- Melodramatic **pathos**
 - Individual emotion to elicit a response from the viewer (not the severe nonemotion of Classical period).
 - Wants an emotional response, not a rational one.
 - Typical subject matter is a tragic figure.
- More movement and negative space to enhance the emotional impact.

Hellenistic Greece 323-30 BCE

- Begins with the death of Alexander the Great.
- Ends with the defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony of Egypt by Augustus (Roman).
- **International culture** of Hellenistic world is united by the Greek language.
- No more city-states; a more cosmopolitan world.

Winged Victory of Samothrace.

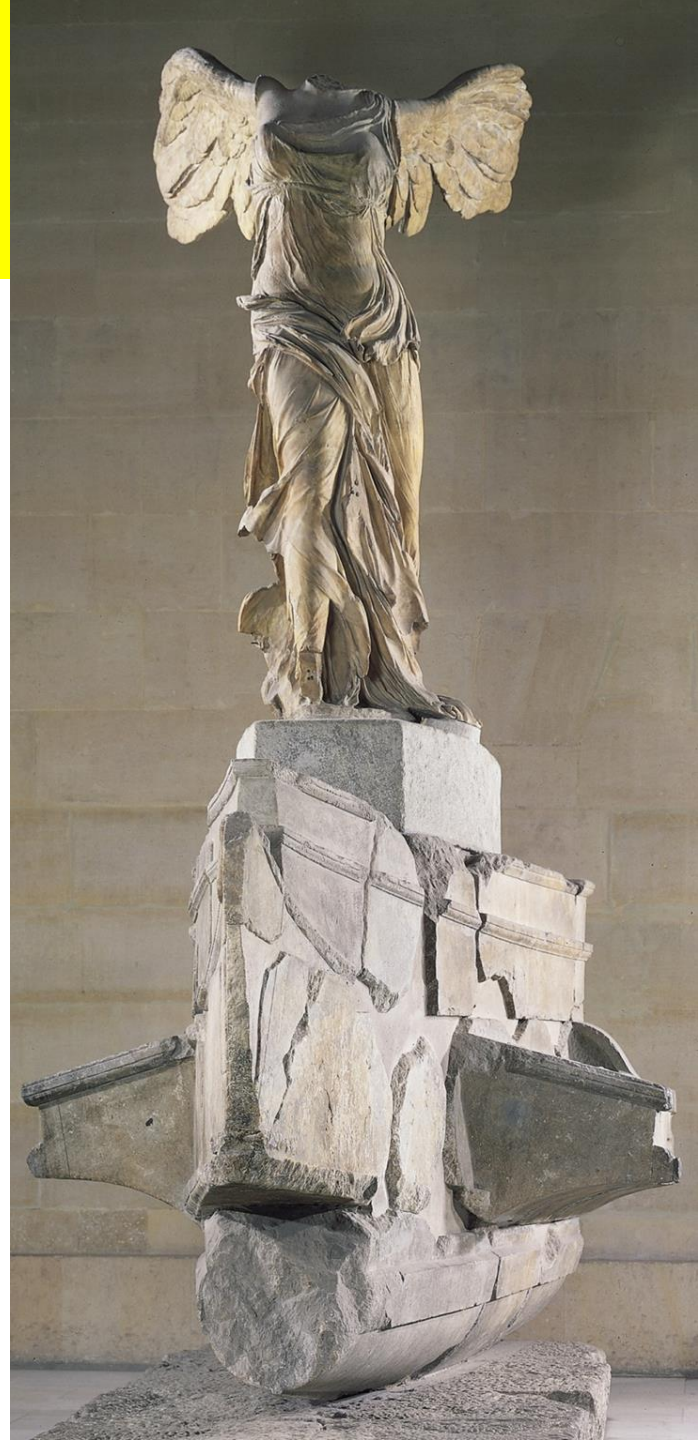
Hellenistic Greek. C. 190 BCE. Marble.

Content

- Wings spread as Nike lands on prow of a Greek warship.
- She is placing a wreath on the naval victor.

Function

- Meant to honor the goddess Nike and a naval battle victory.



Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Hellenistic Greek. C. 190 BCE. Marble.

Visual

- Forward **dynamic movement** of body balanced by the backward thrust of the wings.
- **Textures** add interest and contrast.
- **Value contrast.**
- Nude female body is revealed by the transparency of the wet drapery.
- Wind appears to whip the drapery, making the negative space in front and behind important.
- The highly theatrical presentation, combined with the goddess's monumentality, wide wingspan, and the vigor of her forward-thrusting body, reinforces the reality of the scene.



Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Hellenistic Greek. C. 190 BCE. Marble.

Context

- Placed in a rock niche that had been dug into a hill; it overlooked the theater of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods.
- Was once part of a fountain on the island of Samothrace in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods.
 - On the second tier of fountain.
 - First tier was just boulders
 - Gave the impression of rushing waters hitting the ship.
 - Grey marble was used for the prow of the ship.
 - The offering of a statue of Nike perched on a ship was a religious act in honor of the gods.
- Water would have been splashing up on her to add theatrical drama and effect.
- Art and nature combined to add to the success of the sculpture.
- Rejects the Polykleitan idea of ideal proportions and self-containment.
- Goes back to the depiction of gods and goddesses of Classical era.
- Is a rare example of a Hellenistic original (rather than a Roman copy).



Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon.

Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Hellenistic Greek. c. 175 BCE. Marble



Content

- Frieze depicts the victory of King Attalos I over the Gauls, *presented in mythological disguise*.
- Ionic colonnade
- 400 ft long frieze

Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon.

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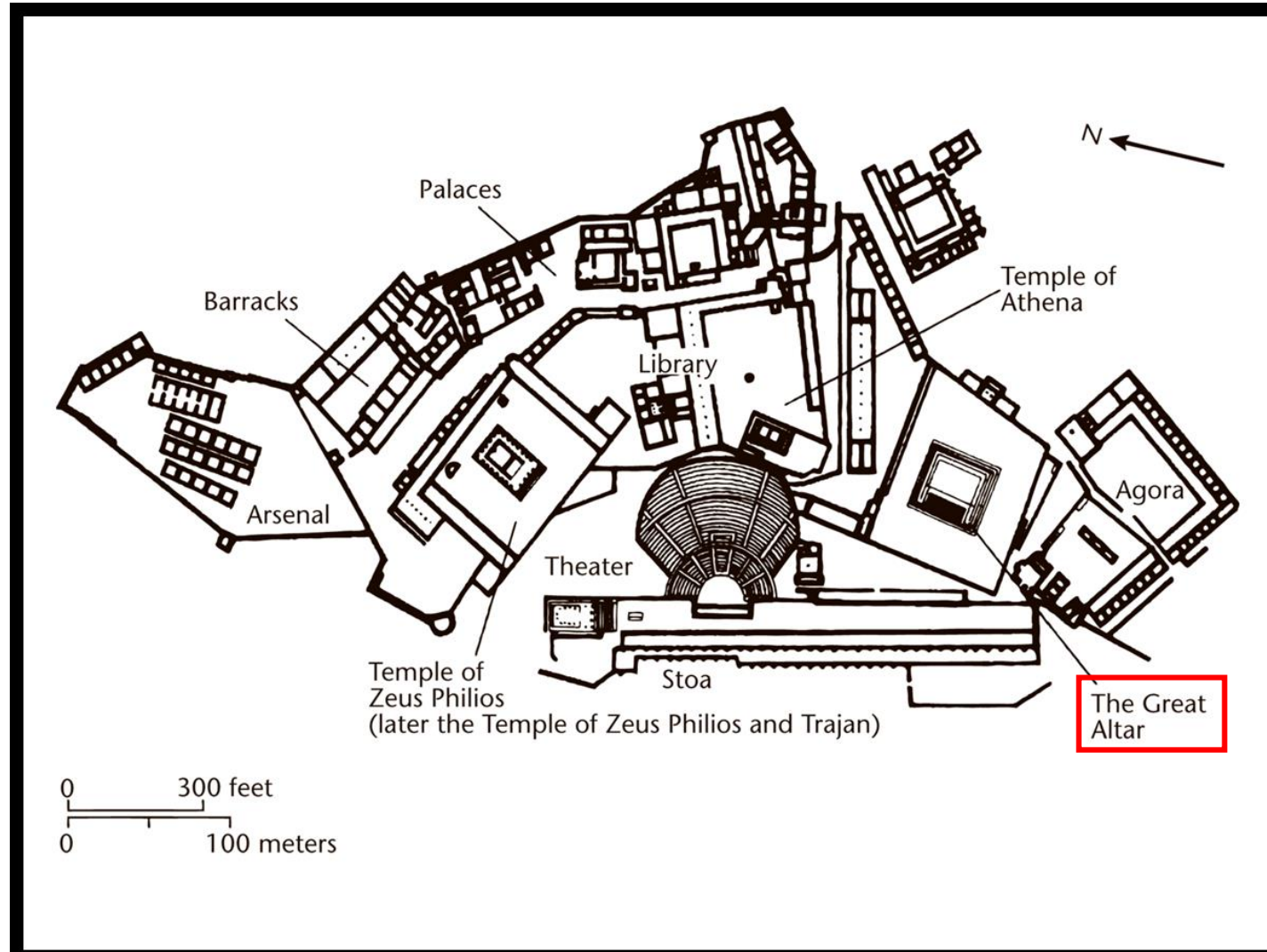
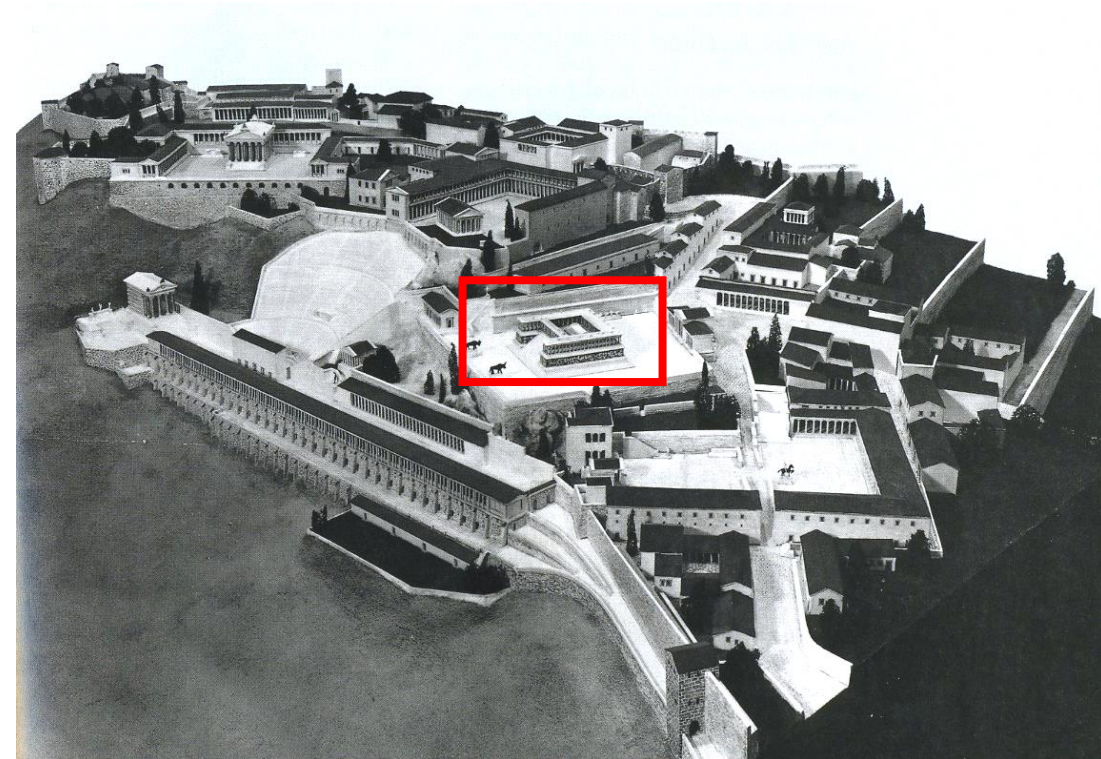
CONTEXT

- Building styles don't change much, just the exterior décor.
- Recalls the stoa in the Agora.
- Most extensive representation of this subject (battle for control of the world) in Greek history.
- Pergamon was meant to be an Athens in the East.
- So the *Altar of Zeus* was the Parthenon of the Pergamenes.

Plan of the Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon. Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Hellenistic Greek. c. 175 BCE. Marble (architecture and sculpture).

CONTEXT:

Altar is on a constructed terrace.



Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon



Function – Multiple Interpretations

1. The King of Pergamon (Eumenes II) wanted to compare his city with that of 5th century BCE Athens. So, Athena is a dominant figure displayed in the frieze's depiction of the **gigantomachy**.
2. Eumenes II is using the story of the battle between gods and giants to refer to the victorious campaign over the Gauls carried out by the earlier Attalos I. The barbaric nature of the gods, with their long bushy hair and reptilian bodies, embody what the Greeks considered to be an uncivilized race.
3. The battle was a warning to the diverse population of Pergamon itself. The king suggests that Pergamon is ruled by the elite gods and any attempt at rebellion will be crushed. The giants are seen at eye level experiencing great pain because of their actions.
4. To generally honor civilization over barbarism.

Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon



FORM

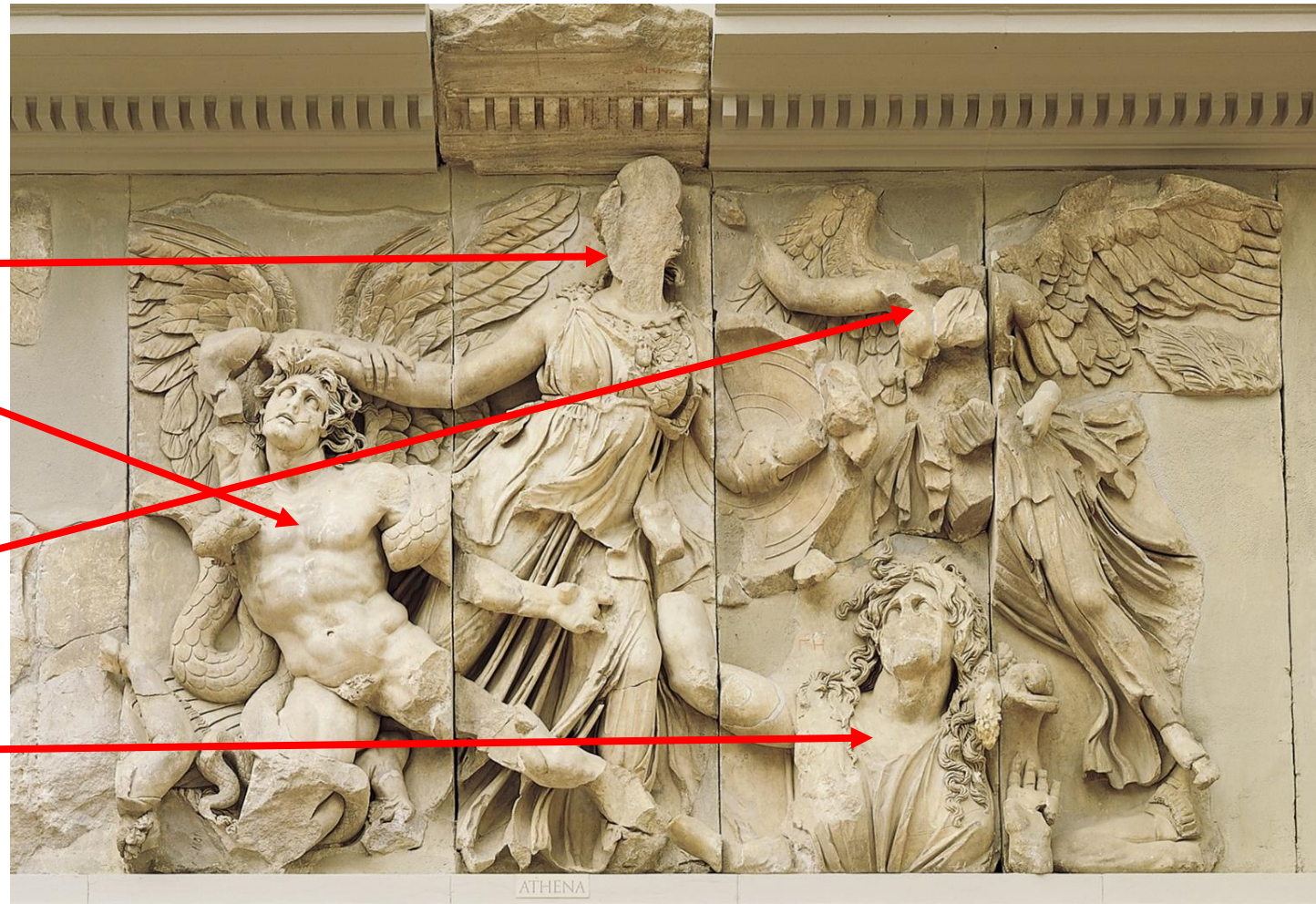
- On raised platform
- Lavishly decorated
- Frieze showing battle between Olympian gods and giants
- Swirling drapery
- Tense musculature
- Writhing bodies that are larger than life
- Contrast of lights and darks



Detail of Athena from the Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon (present-day Turkey). Hellenistic Greek. c. 175 BCE. Marble (architecture and sculpture).

Content

- Frieze depicts the **gigantomachy**
 - Gods vs. Giants (the Titans)
- Athena is grabbing Alkyoneos by the hair to make him honor Zeus; removing him from the Earth also separates him from his source of power.
- Nike flies in to crown her
- Gaia (the Earth goddess and mother of the Titans), raises her arm in grief for her son.
- Captures a single moment in time.



Detail of Athena from the Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon



Context

- **Athena here purposefully resembles the Athena on the pediment of the Parthenon**
 - Gigantomachy also depicted on the shield of Athena Parthenos
- Wanted to make a visual and contextual connection with the legendary Athenians who were victorious over the Persians
- Style is referred to as **Baroque** (extravagantly ornate, florid, and convoluted in character or style)
 - The decorative exterior is reflective of the international cultural influences
- The Pergamese Athena is unique in its emotional intensity

Detail of Athena from the Great Altar of Zeus and Athena at Pergamon.

(present-day Turkey). Hellenistic Greek. c. 175 BCE.
Marble (architecture and sculpture).



Form/Visual Characteristics

- Athena is calm in victory; opponents are in disarray.
- Athena and Nike are in classical proportions, whereas the Titans are reptilian, writing, and contorted.
- Deep carving creates **value contrasts** to emphasize the drama.
- Violent movement.
- Emotional intensity.
- Swirling draperies.
- Vivid depictions.
- Dramatic high relief figures spill out onto the stairs, appearing to come out at the viewer.

Seated boxer.

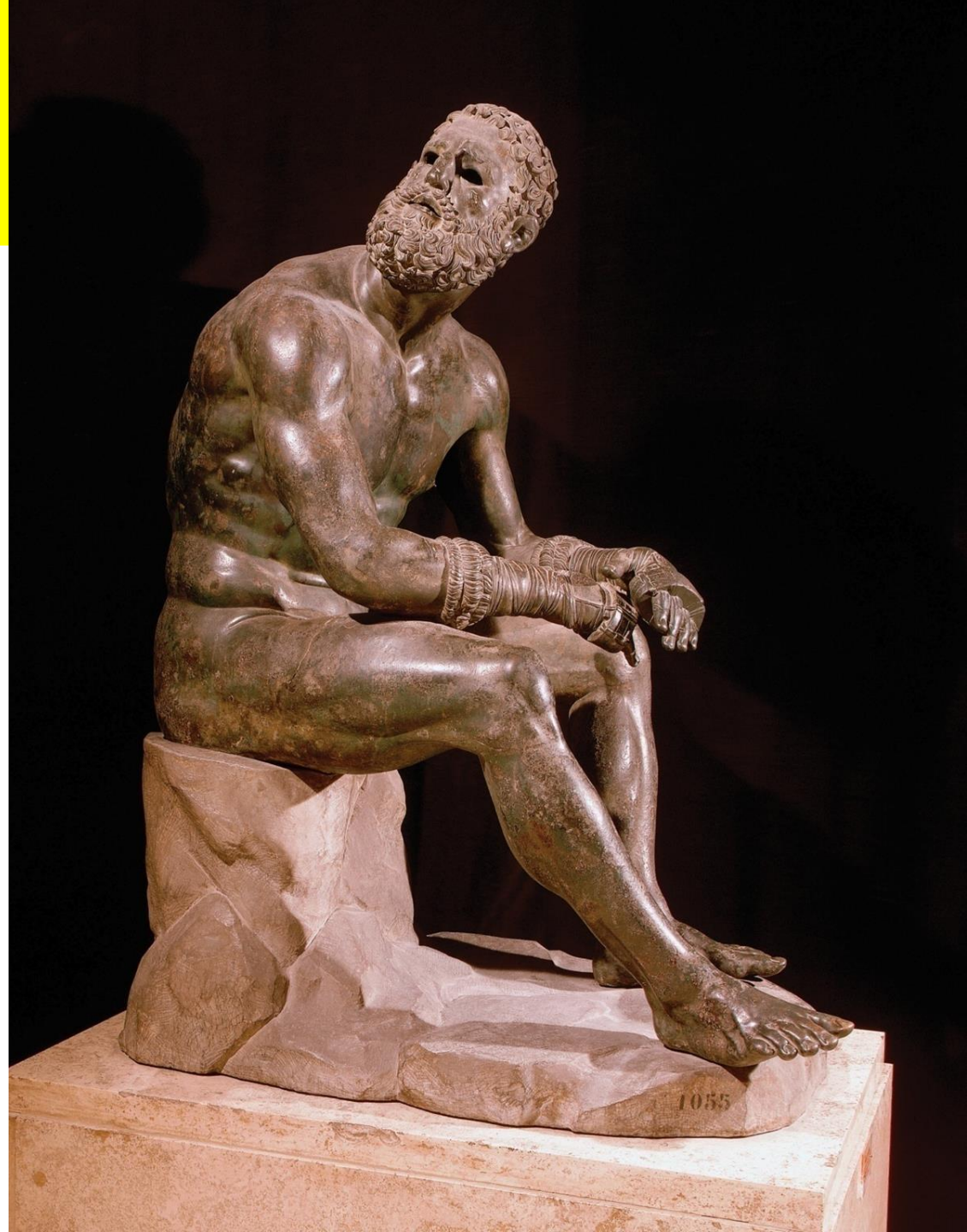
Hellenistic Greek. c. 100 BCE. Bronze

CONTENT

- Defeated, older athlete.
- Represented just after a match.
- Shows him battered and bruised.
- Nude except for the boxing gloves,

VISUAL

- Hollow cast by means of the indirect lost wax method.
 - Made in several different sections that were then welded together.
- **Inlaid copper** creates “blood” from his wounds; some “blood” drips onto his leg and arm.
- The “bruise” under the right eye, is cast with a different alloy to give it a darker color.



Seated boxer.

Hellenistic Greek. c. 100 BCE. Bronze

CONTEXT

- Shift in subject matter demonstrates the Hellenistic love of **pathos, which:**
 - Appeals to the **emotions.**
 - Evokes sympathy from the viewer.
 - **Pathos** moves the viewer to respond emotionally rather than rationally.
- The statue was displayed for many years in the Rotunda of the Baths of Diocletian (Roman) together with another great Hellenistic bronze of a heroic standing nude man.
- Rare example of an original Greek bronze.

FUNCTION

- Toes are worn = may have been a good luck charm to athletes.
- To evoke emotion in the audience.



