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## Art of the Hellenic and Hellenistic Periods

Both the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods offer differences in their architecture. These include the overall design, their building techniques, the location, how they are decorated, and the symbolism related to the temple itself.

The piece of architecture that is from the Hellenic period is the Parthenon. Built in 447 BCE, it was finished in 432 BCE. The massive size and beauty was meant to show the world the dominance and power of Athens. The Parthenon sits atop the acropolis in Athens, Greece. It was the town center where it was used for their government officials, teachers, and as well as religious affairs. In the center of the Parthenon was a statue of Athena Parthenos. Her statue was made of gold and ivory and stood an amazing 38 feet tall. The Parthenon was also filled with larger than life statues, more so than any other temple of its kind. The rest of the statues were built to fit with the state of Athena. One marble statue that once was in the Parthenon is the Three Goddesses. This statue depicts Hestia, Dione, and Aphrodite. It shows the three goddesses relaxing with one another. This part of the Parthenon now resides in the British Museum, in London. However, the Parthenon is more than just a show of how early humans could achieve such feats of incredible size, but it is a symbol for many as a perfect example of "Western democracy, humanism, and rationality" (UofR 1). While the Parthenon, to the naked eye, looks like an amazing feat of mathematical skill and precision where every stone is straight, it isn't. There is a slight curve to everything in the Parthenon. Yet, there is still unbelievable symmetry involved. It's seen in the Parthenon as well as in a life size statue of a man. This symmetry can be expressed mathematically as  $x=2y+1$ . An example of this is that the long side has 17 columns and the short side has 8. It's then expressed as  $17=2(8)+1$  (Gardner's 127). The layout of the Parthenon is seen with two main rooms. One housed the statue of Athena, the other most likely held a few of the many bigger than life like statues that were in the Parthenon. Around the outside of the two rooms ran the Ionic Friezes. On the shorter side ran another six supporting columns, then were the main columns that ran around the entire outside. All together that columns come to a total of 46 columns the outside, 12 inner supporting columns, 23 columns in Athena's statue room and 4 in the other small room. Combined, there are 85 columns in the Parthenon all constructed with the same mathematical formula to create the subtle curve seen in them all (Gardner's 127). As well as the Parthenon's beautiful symmetry, it is adorned with hundreds of Ionic friezes. These friezes ran top of the Parthenon under the roof, as well as inside around the ceilings much like the modern day crown moldings. The friezes are said to depict the Panathenaic Festival procession that took place every four years in the city of Athens. If this is true, this is another example of how highly the Athenians viewed themselves (Gardner's 131).

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Then, from the Hellenistic period, another great feat of ancient architecture is the Alter of Zeus in Pergamon, Turkey. It sits today, reconstructed, in Berlin. Eumenes II commissioned this massive monument in 166 BCE, but after his death, Attalus II continued to build the Alter. The Alter of Zeus is a raised platform and the main part of the building is shaped like a "U". Stairs lead up to the back base of the temple. Columns wrap around the structure with Volutes top in them. Much like the Parthenon beautiful friezes depicting many battle scenes adorn its walls. One example frieze is one where Athena is battling Alkyoneos. Each slab of marble stands 7' 6" high. This specific frieze wraps around the base of the raised platform of the entire alter. Another frieze that is on the walls of the temple is the battle between Zeus and the gods against the giants. Gardner's calls it "The most extensive representation Greek artists have ever attempted of [Zeus'] epic conflict for control of the world" (Gardner's 147). A small add on to the battle of Zeus, the Athenians wanted to show the similarities between that battle and the one between the Persians and their triumph over them as well. The finished alter was also a symbol for their victory over the Gauls in Asia Minor.

While both incredible displays of ancient architecture differ, they are still very similar. Whether it be the friezes that line its walls to the columns that hold up its roofs both show monuments that we can't even dream of constructing with out modern machines and the small details that make both the Parthenon and the Alter of Zeus what they are today.

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