

2001 Higher Level Exam Question

This sculpture depicts the scene of Aphrodite being assisted by women, who with Arms outstretched prepared to dry her with a cloth they hold between them - The birth of Aphrodite

This is from the early classical period.

This sculpture is an excellent example of a sculpture displaying the development of the rendering of drapery. In this period, the folds instead of being schematically arranged assume more natural shapes instead of the thin chiton and short ionic himation with their multitudinous folds, the heavier peplos was favoured. From the sculpture birth of Aphrodite transparent drapery clings to the torso. The wet drapery dampened by the ocean reveals Aphrodite's breasts and thorax clearly. The attendant on her left wears the sleeves chiton showing the knees and the lines of the lower leg, while the other woman wears the peplos through which, though heavier the thigh and back leg appear vividly. These features are brilliant examples that highlight the development of the rendering of drapery. In previous periods the drapery adhered closely to the body and looked very heavy and unrealistic. The use of incised lines creates a pattern that did not show any signs of movement by folding. The numerous folding and curved nature of the fabric in this sculpture shows wonderful development in the rendering of drapery.

This sculpture is incredibly successful in achieving a group composition. We can see a great advance in the rendering of foreshortening which gives the sculpture much more depth and a 3-D effect. The three women are shown in gradually retreating depth so the arms of the three women in the scene with the birth of Aphrodite appear convincingly one behind another. Another reason for the achievement of a group composition is due to the interaction between the figures. Aphrodite seems to be engaging with one of her attendances as she has her head tilted towards her. It is clear they are all working together to help Aphrodite out of the water. For these reasons, it is my belief that the sculptor has achieved an effective group composition.