The Greek Kouros in the Metropolitan Museum of Art
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THE GREEK KOUROS IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

[PLATES IV, V.]

WHENEVER our store of Greek sculpture is enriched by a new example of major importance, the new-comer naturally arouses great interest. The question immediately arises whether it conforms with what is already known of the Greek sculpture of that period or whether it reveals new features. In either case it becomes the object of keen discussion, for we are almost as eager to test the soundness of the edifice we have tentatively set up as to enlarge it.

The newly-acquired archaic marble statue in New York (Pls. IV, V) is such an important new-comer. Under the circumstances I have gladly accepted the invitation of the Editorial Committee of this *Journal* to present a short note on the statue pending its more detailed publication in *Metropolitan Museum Studies* and Brunn-Bruckmann-Arndt, *Denkmäler*.[1]

The significance of the New York statue lies in the fact that it is the best preserved and so the most representative example of the earliest 'Apollo' figures—or kouroi as we now preferably call them—of Greece. That is, it stands at the beginning of the long line of development which began about 600 B.C. and culminated about a century and a half later in the Apollo of Olympia. Its only important contemporaries are the famous colossal figures from Sounion,[2] one extensively restored, the other a mere torso, and the Dipylon statue,[3] of which only the head and one hand have survived. The preservation of the New York statue, on the other hand, is astonishingly good. Though broken in several pieces, the fractures (at the waist and knees, above the ankles, above the wrists, at the left elbow, above the right elbow, and at the left thumb) neatly join, with only a few slivers missing at the joints—which have been restored in plaster and coloured. Besides these there are only a few small pieces missing (see illustrations). At the back of the legs is a hard incrustation, not thick enough to obscure the modelling. The warm reddish tone of the surface is due to the earth in which it was buried and which has not been entirely removed.

The statue [4] may be described as a slim, long-haired youth standing in a strictly frontal pose with arms hanging down along the sides and the

[1] A preliminary publication appeared in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, 1932, pp. 218 ff.

[2] Rhomaios, *Antike Denkmäler*, IV, pls. 47–56, pp. 91 ff.

[3] Buschor, in *AM.* LII, 1927, pp. 205 ff., and LV, 1930, pp. 163 ff.

[4] The marble is white and large-grained, evidently Island. The height of the figure without the plinth is 6 ft. 4 in. (1·93 m.); that of the head 12 in. (30·5 cm.). The plinth was already embedded in the modern rectangular base when the statue arrived at the Museum, but from a photograph taken previously the height of the plinth can be computed to be about 2⅜ in. (6 cm.). Its form is irregular, roughly following the contours of the feet.

left leg a little advanced in the manner characteristic of the Greek kouroi. He is nude, but wears a necklace,[5] tied in front with a reef knot (only partly preserved). His hair is encircled by a fillet, also tied with a reef knot, the ends hanging loosely down; at the bottom of each tress is a narrow band.[6]

The figure as a whole is four-sided, directly derived from the block of marble from which it was carved. On the surface of this cubic form anatomical details are indicated by grooves and ridges delicately carved with a fine sense of the composition as a whole. The proportions of the figure display many obvious deviations from nature. The head is too large for the body, the neck is too long, the thighs are too short, the first phalanges of the hands too long. The anatomy is only partially understood. The ideal of the art of the time was evidently not realism as we understand it, but a simplified conception of the human figure, a solid harmonious structure, in which essentials were emphasised and generalised into beautiful patterns.

To visualise the statue in its original state we must supply in our imagination the colour with which the surface was painted and of which only a few traces of red remain—on the necklace, the fillet, the narrow bands at the bottom of the tresses, a circle round the nipple of the left breast, the insides of the nostrils.[7] The hair was doubtless black, brown, blue, or yellow; the skin perhaps a deep flesh tint; the eyes were also painted, for though no actual colour is preserved we can still distinguish the differentiation of the iris and pupil. This colour scheme must have greatly enlivened the effect.

For proof of authenticity it is interesting to record that on examination under (segregated) ultra-violet rays [8] a considerable amount of 'penetration' was revealed; that is, the elements had changed the marble from the surface into the body of the stone to a depth of more than $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch, making this area appear—when exposed by a modern fracture—as a whitish band, in striking contrast to the purple core. Moreover, ancient fractures (after careful cleaning) appeared whitish under the ultra-violet rays, the modern fractures purple (except for the band of penetration), the difference being due to the action of time and the fact that marble long exposed to the elements fluoresces under the rays, whereas marble not so exposed does not.

Though the provenance of our statue has not been disclosed,[9] its resemblance to the Sounion and Dipylon figures suggests an Attic origin—though this is, of course, not a clue to the finding-place, since the statue may have been exported in antiquity. The Sounion and Dipylon figures

[5] For other instances of male figures with necklaces cf. the Dipylon head, the bronze statuette from Delphi (*Fouilles de Delphes*, V, pl. 4), and a torso in Markopoulo (Buschor in *AM.* LII, 1927, p. 208).

[6] Similar bands appear in the Sounion and Delphi youths.

[7] The cutting of the left nostril is entirely preserved; that of the right nostril is mostly gone, except for a small portion at which point are traces of red.

[8] The examination was made at the Metropolitan Museum by James J. Rorimer, associate curator of the department of Decorative Arts and author of *Ultra-Violet Rays and their Use in the Examination of Works of Art.*

[9] The statue is evidently not the one claimed to have been unearthed in Attica by two Greek peasants in the spring of 1932, for it already was in New York in October 1931.

have been dated about 600 B.C.,[10] and this must be the approximate date also of the New York statue. It was the time when Athens was at the beginning of her career of expansion, when her merchants were first engaging in trade overseas, when Solon introduced his epoch-making reforms. Our statue, with its quiet strength and refinement, is a revelation of the advanced culture of Athens at this early period.

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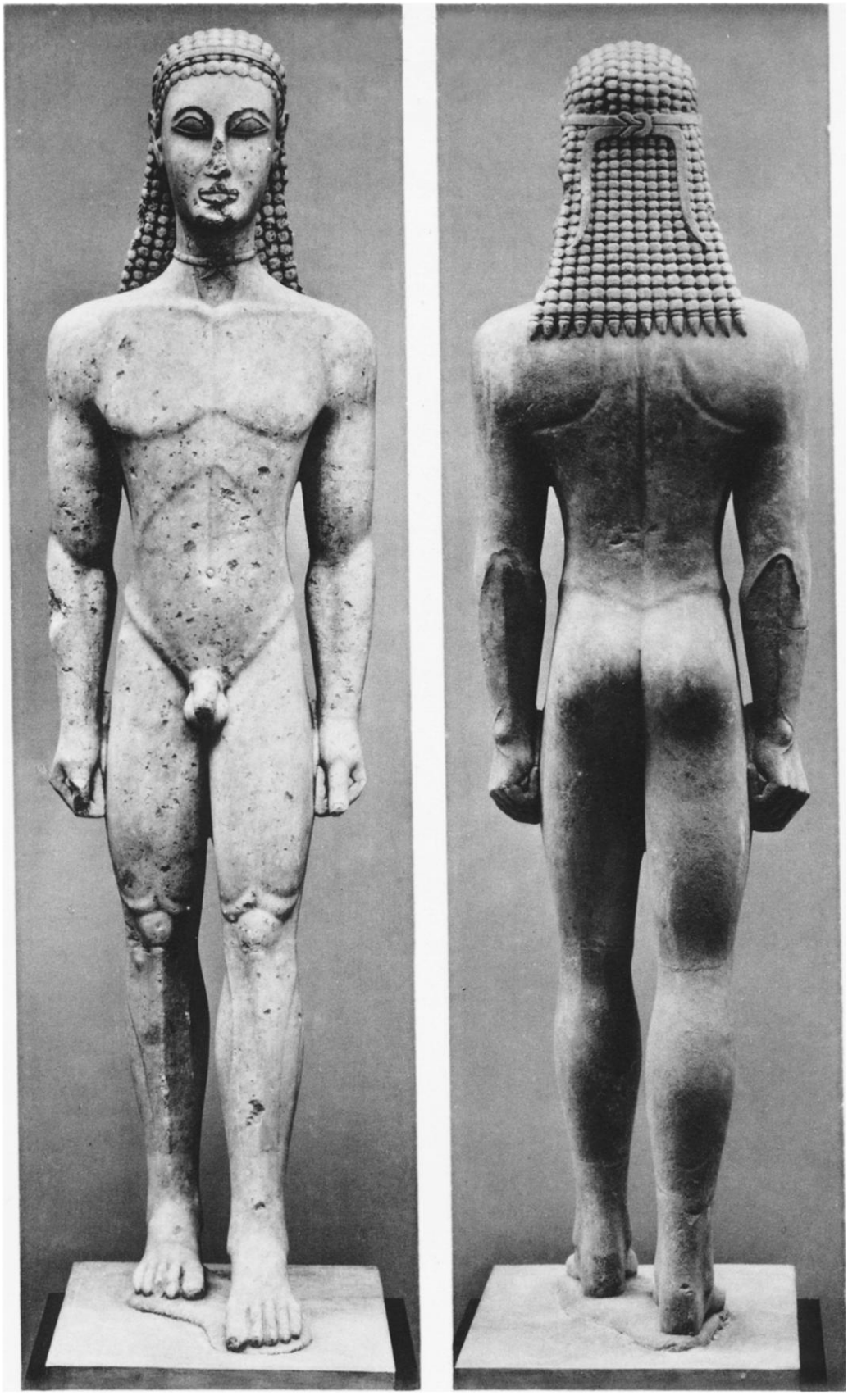
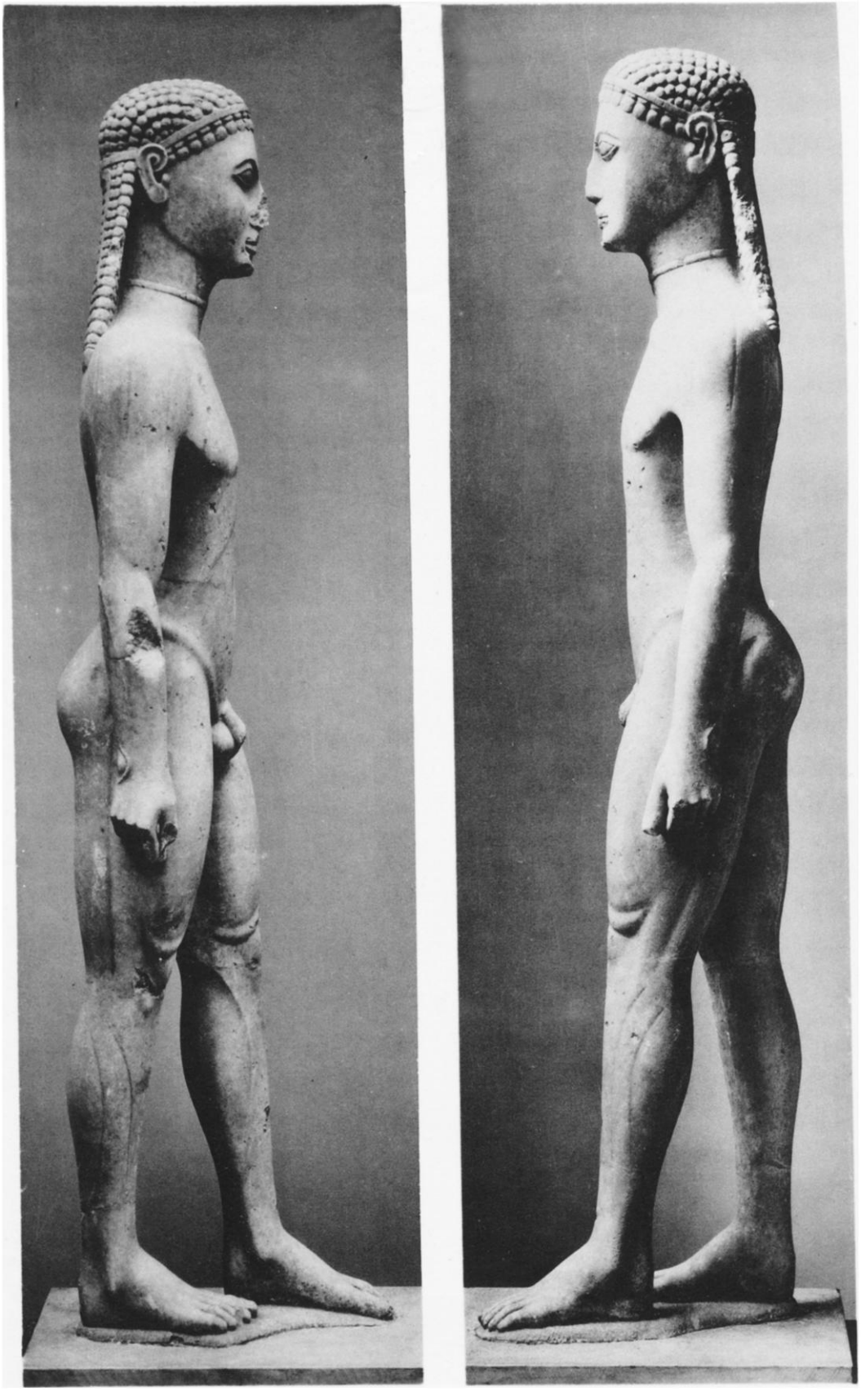
[10] Cf. Buschor in *AM.* LII, 1927, pp. 211 f. The dating is based on the progressive development of Greek sculpture between 650 and 550 B.C. and on relations with vase paintings.



MARBLE STATUE IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK.



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