The Statue That Started It All: The Aphrodite of Knidos

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THE STATUE THAT STARTED IT ALL: THE APHRODITE OF KNIDOS

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Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Art and Art History
San José State University

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Amereece Sterba
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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

THE STATUE THAT STARTED IT ALL: THE APHORODITE OF KNIDOS

by

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY

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THE STATUE THAT STARTED IT ALL: THE APHIRODITE OF KNIDOS
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In this thesis, I argue that The Aphrodite of Knidos statue has had a significant impact on the perception of the female nude in art throughout history because of this statue's iconic nature; it lent itself to be easily copied by artists, which has allowed artists to alter the Knidian image for cultural purposes. This thesis explores why this statue became the canon in Antiquity and continued to be replicated in subsequent eras. The first chapter examines how Praxiteles created the formula that would become the canon. By looking at Knidian and other ancient statues that take inspiration from the Knidian, I explore how the pose and style become what artists use to depict the nude standing female at different historical points. I then examine how Botticelli uses the Knidian statue's pose, form, and style to create The Birth of Venus. I explore how the culture and thinking of the time helped shape the way Botticelli formed his figure. After Botticelli, I examine the Neoclassical era with The Greek Slave by Hiram Powers. Powers used Greek thinking and techniques to create a figure with a moral and religious message dictated by his audience's culture and social norms. Laura Dumm continues challenging our modern world's cultural and social norms with A Prisoner No More. This painting takes directly from Botticelli's Venus; Dumm changes the classical Renaissance ideal figure to become a social justice figure and demands changes in the world. These works use the iconic figure, the standing female nude in the contrapposto pose. Through exploring these works, I realized that Praxiteles's canon allowed other artists to use his form to depict a standing female nude, demonstrating the cultural values at that time.
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Chapter 1 Introduction: The Canonical Knidian

In the Classical period, Praxiteles created The Aphrodite of Knidos (Figure 1), a statue that would become an image icon for depicting the standing female nude. Praxiteles’ statue has flourished since that time and has inspired many creations by artists from later periods. From Praxiteles to Laura Dumm, the image of The Aphrodite of Knidos haunts the canvases and three-dimensional forms of time. Subsequent art historical movements have adopted this particular image type; various artists used this icon and altered it to reflect their period and culture. While Praxiteles created the figure, form, and style of The Aphrodite of Knidos (Figure 1), many artists after him used this form to signify the female nude within their work. If I were an artist and wanted to create a female nude figure, I would use Praxiteles's statue as a model and adapt it to my cultural norms. Praxiteles's statue's iconic nature allows it to resonate differently from century to century and artist to artist. The artists and works this paper will explore are The Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles (Figure 1), The Birth of Venus by Botticelli (Figure 2), The Greek Slave by Hiram Powers (Figure 3), and A Prisoner No More by Laura Dumm (Figure 4). The result of these artists’ usage of the Knidian image changes how the Knidian is viewed and how the female nude image is used in art. In this thesis, I argue that The Aphrodite of Knidos statue has had a significant impact on the perception of the female nude in art throughout history; because of this statue’s iconic nature, it lent itself to be easily copied by artists, which has allowed artists to alter the Knidian image for cultural purposes.
Figure 1. Praxiteles’s *Aphrodite of Knidos* (350-340 BCE)
Figure 2. Sandro Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (1484-1486)

Figure 3. Hiram Powers’ *The Greek Slave* (1843-1860s)
Each artwork examined in this paper ties back to the Knidian in different ways. The artists who created these different works were familiar with the Knidian statue; Botticelli and Powers would have seen copies of the statue while they were in Florence or Rome. They would have also relied on their artists' training of learning the human form by copying and drawing statues from Antiquity and other eras. Beyond just being exposed to the Knidian through traveling and training, these artists appropriate the form and figuration of this statue and, through this appropriation, create a new work that demonstrates not only their culture but their moment in time. Botticelli created a work that would become just as well known as the Knidian in the modern world. He used the form and the figure to create an idealized work that fit his culture and represented a perfect, beautiful woman. Powers appropriates the Knidian form to create a work that represents an idealized figure but a figure that holds deep religious meaning. Powers believed that a work must have a moral meaning and the best way
he would demonstrate that was to use the methods of creating an idealized statue that Praxiteles perfected in Antiquity. Laura Dumm takes the image on a different path; like Powers, her work holds a deep meaning. Dumm appropriates the form and, through this, the masculine gaze to critique society and demand change. I think each of these works and each time period are important. For both Botticelli and Powers, their moments in time were ones of rediscovery of the ancient world. The ancient world profoundly influenced their societies, and both artists created a work that reflects the Knidian through the use of its form while also demonstrating the artist's distinct societal norms. Botticelli is necessary for this project because Laura Dumm appropriates this image and, through this, appropriates the Knidian. Dumm uses Botticelli’s Venus to create her critique of modern culture. She creates an image that reflects on how the Knidian was viewed and used over the centuries and how the masculine gaze has been harmful to women across time. By using Botticelli’s well-known Venus, Dumm can take a beautiful image, turn it ugly, and point out as well as challenge flaws within society. Powers's work is essential because Dumm is not nor will she be the last artist to use an image as a critique or challenge of societal practices. Both Dumm's and Powers's work hold deep meanings; they are different, but both use the Knidian as a means to embed their work with symbols to express the message they are trying to get across.

In this paper, I am engaging with a series of traditional works and histories. However, my focus is not on the traditional histories but on the element that makes the Knidian an image icon that cuts across different traditions. To do this, I am not using a traditional art historical method of discussing each work, but instead, I use a mixed methodology approach. For each image, I use several art historical methods to examine and discuss the image. I use a formalist
approach to examine the form and figure that each artist creates of the female nude and how each of these female nudes carries the exact figuration. Through looking at the lines and shapes each artist uses, I can understand that each figure is in the same contrapposto pose. The formalist method also helps compare these images to one another; it allows me to examine the similarities and differences. I am also looking at the biographies and lives of some of these artists to help me understand their artistic training and cultural norms that influenced their work. Using iconography, I am examining the different motifs each artist embeds within their image. Through iconology, I can analyze why the different motifs were added to the figure, as well as what those motifs mean for that artist's specific culture. By using semiotics, I can understand what the different signs are that the artists embed in their female nude. Semiotics allows me to analyze what each of these signs signifies, along with the deeper meanings that are signified through the use of these signs. Through the use of semiotics, iconography, and iconology, I am identifying how the artist takes up the use of the Knidian figure and how each artist changes the figure to represent their culture and era. My mixed method approach allows me to look at each of these works on many levels, and this helps me to gain a broader understanding of each work, as well as how each work is connected.

Observations inspired this project. Throughout my art history education, I kept "seeing" the exact figure: a standing female nude, arms going to cover her nudity, head turned ever so slightly away. It did not matter what art period it was; this figure kept recurring. After seeing a copy of the Knidian for the first time, I realized this was the figure. No matter what time we
are in, the Knidian is still present, apparent, and relevant to artists. This observation sparked the question: How did the Knidian become the image icon for depicting the female nude?

This image has become embedded in history through the different rediscoveries of the Classical world.¹ With each rediscovery of the Classical World, Ancient Greek thought and artistic practices were once again used with changes made to reflect the new era creating that art. Due to the familiarity of this image, it can be reinterpreted, allowing other artists to modify it for their purposes. The form and figuration of the Knidian became a way to signify female nudity through ancient techniques and patterns. A large part of the answer comes from this statue being the first monumental female nude in Western art, widely visited and reproduced. There had been female nudes half nudes before this, but this was the first life-size or larger-than-life female nude statue in Western art. Within the classical world, nudity was used up until this statue for male figures.² It was a way for artists to symbolize Greek identity; nude figures in art were men; if it was a woman, she was either a slave or courtesan.³ Praxiteles' nude female figure breaks those traditions; the nudity here does not signify a Greek man; she is love, not a slave or a courtesan, but a goddess, Aphrodite. As time progresses, this particular type of nudity becomes a way to depict not identity but an idealized concept through the use of the nude figure. In the Renaissance, nudity became a

¹ "Today, however, 'classical' is often used as shorthand to describe all of Greek and Roman Antiquity. This is because from the Renaissance into the nineteenth century, many people thought that everything Greek and Roman was exemplary – a towering cultural achievement that could only be imitated, never surpassed. Andrew F. Stewart, Classical Greece and The Birth of Western Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.
² In Ancient Greek vase paintings, female nudity signaled either athletics or rape. Which were narrative themes. Andrew F. Stewart, Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.
³ Examples of this have been seen on drinking cups in the red figure style.
way to depict an ideal figure, and with the bonus, this gives the excuse to look at a naked
body.4 This excuse to look at a naked body will continue to be used until it is challenged in
the modern world.

This paper will address how Knidian's nudity is used at different times and social
contexts to show different meanings and cultural norms.5 In Ancient Greece, this statue
broke some traditions by its larger-than-life female nudity; before this, only men were
depicted nude. It was a way to demonstrate Greek identity, to show who was Greek and who
was not.6 If a woman was naked, she was generally a courtesan, while Praxiteles’ image is
the goddess.7 Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty, and she is a powerful woman, not
a slave or a courtesan. Praxiteles's image became so deeply embedded that it did survive and
endure the Christianization of the nude female figure (the putting clothes back on her).
Starting in the Middle Ages, if a female was depicted nude, she was a figure meant to convey
shame; therefore, most women were clothed. The artists still used Praxiteles's formula; they

5 Nudity is used to express different cultural meanings within each different era. We constantly function within
a cultural context; our cultures shape how we perceive the world and give meaning to what we see. The cultural
meanings also give rise to how we perceive and look at work. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright state, "We all
perform within (and against) the conventions of cultural frameworks that include nation, religion, politics,
family, school, work, and health. These frameworks inform our taste and self-fashioning, and they give rise to
the conventions that shape how we look and where and how we appear." Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright,
6 According to Ian Jenkins and Andrew Stewart, Nudity in the classical world was common, yet it was common
for men. Jenkins says it is a sign of the moral virtue of the social male elite. It was a way for them to show their
status and prowess as a Greek Male. Female nudity was meant to signify a slave or courtesan. These female
nude works were usually in a small scale size. While male nudes were both small in size but also larger-than-
7 Examples can be seen in the marble frieze showing a young man surrounded by hetaira from the Museo
Archeologico Naxionale's collection.
adapted it and added clothes. This shame and social stigma attached to the nude would follow the idea of nudity throughout most of the subsequent years.

Another commonality the images from the late Middle Ages have with our Knidian is the figuration and pose of the body. The practice in the Middle Ages was to create narrative scenes, one after the other, to show the narrative story, for example, Eve eating the apple, causing the Expulsion from Eden. Artists use the pose of the Knidian at this moment as an expression of Eve’s understanding of her sins and shame. In the Renaissance, things changed again; the artists started to break away from narrative scene paintings and moved to painting a single-moment view. Nevertheless, looking at a naked body or the image of a naked body was still shameful. In the Renaissance, they marginally changed the formula again; they looked to mythology, added a mirror to the nude female figure, and called her Vanity, or titling the work Venus (Aphrodite). Each different art movement takes up the female nude tradition and, based on cultural and social rules regarding nudity, makes rationalizations for looking at nudity. The different cultural and social rules dictate how the Knidian figure is used at other times. The different times also perceive the Knidian differently based on their social norms. These perceived notions lead to changes in the form. These formal changes create changes in the overall perception of the female nude. I am interested in looking at the

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8 One example of this image's style and pose used on a fully clothed figure from the Middle Ages is The Virgin of Jeanne d'Evreux, 1339. One example of the half-clothed and half-nude is Susanna and the Elders in the Garden and the Trial of Susanna before the Elders, by Master of Apollo and Daphne 1500. Susanna and the Elders in the Garden show Susanna half-dressed, covering herself before the Elders. The Trail of Susanna shows her fully clothed but also in the same pose.

9 Examples of this can be seen in the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, painted by Masaccio.

10 According to John Berger and colleagues, they used Eve as an excuse for creating the nude figure in the Middle Ages. Berger et al., Ways of Seeing, 47-50.
pose and nudity of the Knidian to understand how this figure was transformed through time and what each transformation meant culturally.

This paper aims to establish how the Knidian statue is immersed in time and history. The subject matter of the Knidian is the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite. This statue is credited as the first monumental female nude in Western Art History. Although smaller terracotta, clay, and stone nude females existed before the Knidian, this statue would become the idealized depiction of the nude female. This image held a sense of power, which led it to become a popular image within the ancient world and allowed for this image to become embedded in history.11 Aphrodite would become a popular subject for subsequent artists, and these images would transform from representations of the goddess to representations of the ideal female figure.

One way it became embedded in the minds of ancient viewers. In Antiquity, this cult statue of the Goddess of Love and Desire became a famous image. This statue has a long history; Sara Ahmed stated that "history cannot simply be perceived on the surface of the object, even if how objects surface or take shape is an effect of such histories."12 We cannot simply look at this statue and only see a work from the Classical world. This statue had a "life" in that world, and due to that life, it has shaped how other people have viewed and

11 Sturken and Cartwright claim that "the power of images is derived both from the shared meanings they generate across locations and the particular meanings they hold in a given place or culture." The Knidian, as a cult statue, held a specific meaning for the ancient world; it was a statue that held power and could grant wishes. Through the rediscoveries at different times in history, this statue's power came from being viewed as an excellent work of art. Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking, 13.
experienced this statue. In other eras, this statue also had a life based on how those different
times viewed and interpreted the statue. There are stories involved that hide under "the
surface" of this statue. Due to its popularity and the image being spread far and wide across
the Roman Empire, it was well known. As the classical world was rediscovered in different
historical moments, this statue's likeness has reemerged, brought to the surface to inspire new
artists to adapt this image for their uses. This statue sat in a round temple on the Island of
Knidos, and she was a cult image of a Goddess. The history of this statue is long; she became
a popular image in late Antiquity, and she was copied and replicated numerous times. This
helped to solidify and produce the Knidian as an image icon, but beyond the popularity, this
statue became a form and style for creating art.

One fascinating thing about these copies was that they helped the Knidian become an
image icon to depict the standing female nude. Copies of this statue spread far and wide.
When artists of other times started their art studies, they were trained to depict the human
form by copying and drawing ancient statues. At various times in history, there have been
moments of rediscovery of ancient thinkers and art. These rediscoveries led to movements of
thought and art that centered around and focused on ancient works. During these moments,
artworks from Ancient Greece were favored, and artists were encouraged to copy their
techniques. Many artists used ancient mythology as subject matter for their art, along with
ancient techniques. As one looks through the depiction of the female standing nude, one sees
that she is posed in contrapposto; she may or may not be covering her genitalia, and she
generally has one leg engaged, standing tall, one leg bent about to walk. Her head turned to
different angles. Sometimes, she is half-clothed, others completely nude. The artist either
takes inspiration from the Knidian directly through copies or indirectly through another artist's work, which looks back onto the Knidian.

I start Chapter Two by examining a copy of the original statue of the Knidian (Figure 1). I need to establish what the Knidian would have looked like, how she would have functioned within her culture, and how this statue broke the traditions and became a popular image icon. I will examine her image through history by surveying the copies and their adaptations from Antiquity to establish the elements of the original that became the Praxitelean tradition. I will also look at another ancient work, *The Capitoline Venus* (Figure 5), created after the Knidian, a known adapted copy. I will examine how this statue was used to demonstrate new ideas even in Antiquity. This will allow me to set up how Praxiteles created the standing female nude canon and how this statue became an image icon for other artists to use in other historical times.
In Chapter Three, I intend to look at Botticelli's famous Venus (Figure 2) and how this Venus relates to the Knidian. I plan to examine how Botticelli's training and exposure to ancient works allowed him to adapt this statue onto a canvas. I will examine how this Venus is used to justify looking at the nude and why Botticelli would use Praxiteles's figure. I will examine how Botticelli was influenced by the popular thinkers of his time and how that translates into a work that would become an image icon in its own right.

In the Fourth Chapter, I will move into the Victorian Neoclassical era with Hiram Powers and his statue, *The Greek Slave* (Figure 3). I plan to examine how Powers’s use of Classical Greek and Renaissance thoughts on art helped him create a Neoclassical work. Powers’s
work holds moral and religious values and speaks about ethical issues of the time. Through Powers's use of the Praxitelean tradition, The Greek Slave would become a symbol of civil and cultural change. One crucial part of why Powers's work is famous is because it is a nude artwork, yet it was socially unacceptable during this time. Hiram Powers has had to create a rational reason to look and justification for looking to counter the cultural norms of the time. Powers had to make it acceptable to look at his nude figure that fit into the cultural context of his time.

In my Fifth Chapter, I will look at Laura Dumm's work A Prisoner No More (Figure 4); I will compare this work to those of Praxiteles and Botticelli. I examine Dumm's work through a semiotic, formalist, and feminist approach. I will examine how Dumm's use of Praxitelean tradition helps Dumm create a social justice artwork. Dumm does this by adapting Botticelli's Venus; Dumm's use of coving Botticelli's Venus in bruises makes ugly something beautiful to critique modern society. Through the adaptation and alteration of Botticelli's Venus, Dumm creates a new ideal work that is not focused solely on ideal beauty but is meant to challenge society's norms. One element Dumm alters is the use of the gaze, which no longer allows one to look but demonstrates that the act of looking has been an assault on women. Dumm's work deconstructs Botticelli's ideal beauty and how we use the Praxitelean tradition to convey meaning.

The question of how the Knidian became an image icon for depicting the female nude led me to find my sources in my research. There are a small number of primary sources on the Knidian. The works of Pliny, Lucian, and Hesiod are the ancient authors who write about
Aphrodite or the Knidian directly. These works are often quoted or referenced by many secondary sources. I found many secondary sources when researching ancient Greek art and the Knidian. However, a few of them were essential to my search and project, starting with Corso's book about the sculptor Praxiteles and the works he created in his mature years. This book is helpful in my understanding of who Praxiteles was as an artist and the important artworks he created. This work is helpful in my research for understanding the artist and his most famous female nude, the Knidian. I am using Corso's work to establish what Praxiteles did as an artist and the reception his work had during the classical period. I am taking Corso's understanding of Praxiteles and using that to help me establish how his techniques as a sculptor allowed him to create an image icon. Next, I found Havelock, one of the leading authors of the Knidian statue. Havelock's work focuses on how the Knidian would have appeared or had been seen in Antiquity and would have been received by ancient viewers. Havelock examines different copies and replica types that followed in the ancient world by examining their differences and similarities. My work is similar to Havelock's; we examine how the Knidian became an icon. While Havelock only looks at the Knidian as an icon of the ancient world, I am taking this image further through time to other eras. I examine how the

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use of the Knidian image is slightly altered and demonstrates a new cultural reception. I am looking at several different moments where the use of this image occurs in different media and how the context of this image has changed through different cultural and social practices. I plan to use Havelock to understand The Knidian and the copies from Antiquity. I plan to use this to compare other eras and works from different times.

Another helpful secondary source is Ian Jenkins. Jenkins’s work in both his books covers Greek sculpture and what was important in the art form. Jenkins looks at how Greeks defined creating a beautiful work of art. He also looks at the development of Greek statues, how they progressed and changed over time, and what the changes meant to the Greeks as a culture. I find Jenkins's work important to my research because of the evolution he discussed. Jenkins helps me understand Greek thought and how the ideas of the time would have applied to a work like the Knidian. Another author who helped me understand Greek art is Andrew Stewart. Stewart is another prominent author who focuses on ancient Greek statues and how these statues were viewed in Greek culture. How Greeks formulated life and their statues reflect how they organized society and thoughts. I use this work to help me understand how the Greeks would have seen and understood the Knidian and how the statue would have fit into their culture. My work differs from Jenkins and Stewart in that I am not focused on Greek art in general as they are, but I focus on one specific work genre and how that genre fits into the culture and traditions of that time. I am using both Jenkins' and

17 Stewart, Art, Desire.
Stewart's works to help me establish what traditions existed in Greek traditional art and how Praxiteles broke those traditions and created his tradition through this break.

When looking into the Renaissance, I found the works of James Turner and Frank Zollner helpful. Gualdoni's book *The History of The Nude* looks at the nude throughout art history and examines how the nude is seen in the cultures of different eras. Gualdoni starts in the ancient world with nude figures of the gods from different ancient worlds. Gualdoni spends time on the Knidian and other nude Aphrodite/Venus statues. Gualdoni examines how the Knidian was a revolutionary work that, at its creation, broke the traditional ways of carving female statues. Gualdoni moves forward to the Renaissance and how nudity directly correlates to the "rediscovery" of the classical world. This information is helpful in my research as I plan to examine the Renaissance period by examining the connection between Botticelli and the Knidian. Gualdoni examines different male and female nude figures throughout history; this is helpful in my research as I am looking for standing female nudes throughout history. My search differs as I am not looking at all the nudes, both male and female, but I am strictly looking at the standing female nude.

At the same time, Zollner wrote a biography of Botticelli and his significant works. Zollner describes Botticelli’s career, connection to the Medici family, and the training he would have received. Zollner is valuable to me because he looks at Botticelli's life and how the Venus paintings were created. I used Zollner to help me understand Botticelli's choices.

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and practices when Botticelli created his Venus figure. I am focused on how Botticelli's choices reflected his time, and he can be connected back to Praxiteles.

Turner’s work looks at how the concept of Eros or love plays out within Renaissance art, as well as the connection the Renaissance period has to that of the classical world. Turner discusses how the Knidian can be connected to works in the Renaissance and how, through their training, Renaissance artists looked back at Antiquity. The work of Alison Smith and Joy Kasson is beneficial in examining the Victorian period and Hiram Powers. Smith's work is about how the nude in artwork fit into Victorian culture and thought. This is important in understanding Hiram Powers’ work and the world it was created. At the same time, Kasson's work covers the Neoclassical art movement and focuses on Hiram Powers and how his The Greek Slave fits Victorian culture and reception. Kasson helps me understand how The Greek Slave would have fit into the culture of its time, what Powers was trying to do with his statue, and how I can connect it back to the Knidian. I use Smith and Kasson to help me set up the Victorian viewpoints but also to help me establish how Powers's use of the Praxitelean traditions allows Powers to create a culturally appropriate work.

For looking at our Modern world, I found Mark Evans and Stefen Weppelmann helpful; this book looks at all the different ways Botticelli has been used for something else in the

modern world. It is not uncommon for artists to use Botticelli's Venus as a motif in their art. Botticelli's Venus is a well-known work found on coffee cups, posters, and even in fashion designs. This book helps me understand why Dumm uses Botticelli's image. I use this work to understand why Dumm chose Botticelli's Venus and how this choice helps Dumm challenge social norms. These works helped me further my understanding of the Knidian and how its image is still used today.

The Knidian continues to inspire artists today. The image of Aphrodite is adapted and used over and over through time. "The goddess [Aphrodite] is indeed immortal, and her ability to inspire us is as strong today as it was thirty thousand years ago when our ancestors painted her on the walls of caves and sculpted her out of rock."

The quoting of Praxiteles did not stop in Antiquity; it continues today, which is why the statue is considered the canonical nude. In the Medieval period, the contrapposto pose would be used as a symbol of sin and shame. Venus or Aphrodite would become a popular subject for Renaissance artists, who looked back at Antiquity for inspiration and returned her to the symbol of idealized perfect beauty. Artists in the Neoclassical world would continue using the Aphrodite-type image to convey moral and religious messages. Artists in the modern world challenge social practices by using their artworks to demand societal change. The Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles is one of the most quoted works; it became the icon artists of any era used to represent the image of the female nude in art.

Chapter 2 Aphrodite in Antiquity: The Knidian the Start of the Canon

According to Pliny, one tale of this statue states that Praxiteles was commissioned to create a cult statue for the city of Kos (Cos); he carved two statues of the goddess, one nude and one clothed.25 Kos took the dressed goddess, while the city of Knidos took the nude (Figure 1).26 This nude statue would bring great fame to the city of Knidos; this statue would go down in history as the first Greek life-sized female nude in Western art and become an image icon for depicting the female form. Past scholars have interpreted the subject of this sculpture as the goddess getting ready or just finishing her bath.27 The viewer has discovered the goddess, and she is in the process of protecting her modesty. These interpretations stem from the scholars' social and cultural background more than the original Greek antiquity context; they reflect the views of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than the views of ancient Greece. In this chapter, I will review the evidence for how the Knidian statue would have looked and how it was received in Antiquity. What would the original statue look like, and what would her pose be? I am exploring how this statue would have looked in her temple, how she would have been seen on display, and how the viewer would have engaged with the sculpture in ancient Greece. I am also addressing the stories and legends surrounding the statue and how art historians discuss the statue. I will examine the Knidian's pose, form, and style. I propose that these elements make up the canon everyone else copies throughout history. The form is the physical statue and the features of the

figure. The style is the modeling which became the canon and allows the statue's canon to "escape time" and become the thing that is replicated so easily. Praxiteles's process and his techniques for creating this statue invented the formula for depicting the standing nude female figure by breaking the traditions of Antiquity. Praxiteles's application creates something never done or seen before using the standard methods of his time. One topic always discussed regarding the statue is that it is a nude work, that this woman is posed naked. Still, nudity has a specific meaning culturally in ancient Greece, and the Knidian breaks those traditions. Before Havelock, all these authors discussing this statue were men, and all they address is her nudity; they either only address the fact she is naked, and it creates a desire in men, or they are looking for a way to excuse her nudity. Praxiteles created this statue as a cult image to be worshiped, to grant a blessing, not to be a figure solely of lust. This statue held power; viewers should not have to excuse her nudity but understand it is an element of Aphrodite's powers as a goddess. The Knidian is the most replicated statue in history. In Antiquity alone, there were 300 known copies of this work. Nevertheless, in Antiquity, this statue inspired others to use Praxiteles's techniques and, like him, use other methods to create something new and never before seen. The Knidian inspired countless other forms and types of statues to be made, which also float through time and become canon on their own and in conjunction with the Knidian.
The Aphrodite of Knidos type (Figure 1) was carved around 350 BCE by the sculptor Praxiteles; this sculpture is of a woman standing tall and naked. To her right is a vase and the goddess's dress, which she is picking up or draping over the vase. Aphrodite stands in the contrapposto pose, which is the arrangement of the body where the body's weight is balanced and supported on one leg. The other leg is lifted, the knee bent forward away from the other, and the heel raised as if the figure is potentially stepping forward. The hips are uneven, one raised above the other, and the abdomen has an s-curve leading toward the shoulder, which, like the hips, are uneven. The arms shift to counterbalance the weight of the single foot. This pose is how Praxiteles's Aphrodite of Knidos stands; her weight is balanced on her left leg and foot, which stand straight and tall. Her right knee is bent, and her right heel is lifted. Her left hip sits higher than her right. Her right shoulder is raised higher than her left. Her left arm is down across her body, her hand about to cover her genitals. Her right arm reaches toward the vase next to her. She is holding the dress in her hand; she will either put it on or take it off. Her head is turned slightly to the right of her body, and she looks away, not forward. The goddess's hair is coiled and pinned to the top of her head. A bracelet or armband is around the goddess's right arm, above her elbow. The dress she is holding flows around the top of the vase in delicate folds of fabric. The vase is in the style of a Hydria or water jar; it sits on a small pedestal that raises the hydria higher toward the goddess's reach. It has a small round base or foot; the body is a large, long oval shape with swirling floral

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28 As the primary prototype of the Knidian, I am referencing a Roman Copy from the Vatican Museum's Collection, also known as the Belvedere Venus. This copy is believed to be the most faithful replication of the original Knidian statue. Havelock, The Aphrodite of Knidos, 26.
designs on the side. We can see the horizontal handles on both sides, just under the draping garment. The neck and lip of the vessel are under the garment, and we can make out their shape. This pose became the canon, and how the body is posed became the pattern for depicting the goddess.

The Contrapposto pose was not new when Praxiteles carved his Aphrodite; the contrapposto was used to represent life-like male nudes. Praxiteles took this form and turned it into something remarkable for his female figure. The contrapposto pose allows the statue to have a sense of self-confidence and a realistic, life-like capacity to walk off her plinth. It is a more natural pose than the static, rigid pose used by artists before the contrapposto was invented. This pose gives a sense of movement to the figure. Female nudes, before the Knidian did exist, were small in size and emphasized the reproductive qualities of the woman. Praxiteles' statue does not overtly highlight the reproductive attributes of this figure, and she does not have large exaggerated hips, a rounded belly, or large breasts. She appears more realistic, human, and carved in a proportionally realistic style. Her navel sits halfway between the top of her head and the bottom of her feet. She is divided by the mathematical proportions used by Greek artists to create perfect, beautiful, idealized human bodies. \(^{29}\) The Greeks believed that these mathematical proportions led to harmony and beauty.

Archaeology, science, and art history have proven that statues from the ancient world would have been polychromed or colored. That gold was also applied to many sculptures, and

\(^{29}\) The idea is that proportion comes from measuring out the body by using one element of the body as the basis of measurement. The harmony of proportion and beauty is achieved by making the other body parts divisible by measurements of that basis. Gualdoni, *The History*, 26.
Havelock proposes that the Knidian could easily have been polychrome and gilded.\textsuperscript{30} If so, Praxiteles adapted this technique and tradition used by classical artists to create a revolutionary work. He also made a new element and pose: the hand covering her pubic region. The position of the hand covering herself is the new component that Praxiteles added to his composition, which hid and revealed her femininity.

Through The Knidian’s style and form, this statue became the image icon depicting the female nude. Henri Focillon defines the terms "form" and "style" and how styles and forms have a universal quality.\textsuperscript{31} That style and form can be something repeatedly returned to within the creation of art. When creating the Knidian, Praxiteles invented a universal style type that has spread throughout time and history. For Focillon, form is a measure of space, and a work of art uses forms that use a technique, a method of creation, and matter and movement.\textsuperscript{32} Through the use of techniques, form is created by matter and movement. A form must have matter and movement; that matter can be the materials a work of art is made from, the techniques used to manipulate the materials to create something, the movements of the brush and paint, the movements of the chisel as it chips away to unveil the form underneath. The form also has space; through matter, form is made of space and takes up a physical area. What is the form of the Knidian? I am defining the form of the Knidian as being the statue herself. She is made of a physical solid marble. She stands and takes up a

\textsuperscript{30} Havelock, \textit{The Aphrodite of Knidos}, 13.
\textsuperscript{31} According to Focillon, in art, forms are connected, and works of art are connected through their forms, creating a metaphor for the entire universe. Henri Focillon, \textit{The World of Forms: The Life of Forms in Art} (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 33
\textsuperscript{32} Focillon, \textit{The World of Forms}, 32-33
physical area. The form is the lines and edges that allow the viewer to realize this work is that of a human figure; it is the curves of the arm, torso, head, and other body elements.

One technique that Praxiteles used was that of the mathematical concept of proportion, or more that, beauty was found in the harmony of proportions or symmetria: "… from the Greek viewpoint, [symmetria] meant the harmonious balance in the proportions of all the parts by virtue of their reciprocal proportional correspondence, which was never arbitrary; it descends from the mathematical principles from the school of Pythagoras…." Each part of the figure is a measurement of another; the head, for example, can be used as the measurement. The torso would be three lengths of the head, and you can break the head into three lengths of the nose. The harmony comes from the body being divided and measured by other parts, and that process or measurement can create a guideline that will make a natural form that resembles life. One additional technique that Praxiteles used in this statue is the contrapposto pose. Using the s-curve and proportional techniques created a more life-like figure typically used in nude male figures. Praxiteles gave his statue life and provided a sense of movement within the work.

Praxiteles was a master sculptor of marble, and he used the stone to show beautiful human figures, the Knidian being just one such figure for which he was well. Praxiteles created works like Hermes Bearing the infant Dionysus, as well as several Apollo statues. Havelock, The Aphrodite of Knidos, 41-42.

34 Praxiteles created works like Hermes Bearing the infant Dionysus, as well as several Apollo statues. Havelock, The Aphrodite of Knidos, 41-42.
head away, her foot is lifted as if moving forward, and her hand moves to cover her nudity. She is also picking up or dropping her garment. She is not standing static but carved as if caught in a moment of movement, a moment of action. She is frozen within her movements; Praxiteles's chisel actions have frozen her activity. The form of the Knidian is the physical statue, the carved marble stone carved into a human figure of a woman. However, how does the style of the Knidian play into it becoming an image icon?

Focillion states, “a style is an absolute. A style is a variable. The word ‘style’ in its generic sense indicates a special and superior quality in a work of art: the quality, the peculiarly eternal value, that allows it to escape the bondage of time. Conceived as an absolute, style is not only a model, but also something whose validity is changeless.” So what then is the style of the Knidian if the style is absolute? Her style made her so popular; it made her something that was not seen before and copied and replicated countless times from that moment. It made her an icon. The style of the Knidian (Figure 1) is, in part, the statue's rendering of the nudity. It is how this nude female figure stands. She stands in the contrapposto pose, her left bent foot lifted, stepping forward. Her weight is harmoniously balanced; her leg holds all her weight, and her body is stable; it is balanced by the arm reaching down and holding the fabric above the amphora at her side. The balance of her

35 Focillion, The World of Forms, 44-46.
36 By icon, I mean Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright's definition “…to a religious image that had sacred value. In its contemporary meaning, an icon is an image (or person) that refers to something beyond its individual components, something (or someone) that acquires symbolic significance. Icons are often perceived to represent universal concepts, emotions, and meanings.” Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking, 437.
weight allows for the figure to appear more life-like, for the movement to appear as if she is moving her foot and arm.

Praxiteles broke some Greek traditions while keeping others in his creation of the Knidian. Until now, nude female figures were generally small items, not monumental. Nudity in the monumental standard was for the male figure, that of the Gods and Heroes of myth. An element of Greek identity was situated in the depiction of nudity, and the outside world was the male domain. Nudity was common in the gymnasiums where men practiced and trained for war or the symposium. To be a nude male figure was a good thing; it showed the strength and Greekness of the figure, and it was a way to distinguish a Greek warrior from his enemies. "Greek nudity is a sign not of humiliation, but of moral virtue among the social elite of male citizens." Nudity defined the person as male, of the elite social class, or heroes and gods. Nudity was also a way to distinguish a Greek male from anyone not from the Greek-speaking world. So, the Knidian breaks this tradition. She is first and foremost a woman, but she is a Goddess and, therefore, can fall into the depiction of a god. Praxiteles used the mathematical canon of harmony with proportion to create a beautiful nude figure. A figure of the Goddess of Love and desire, nudity would not have been uncommon to her. I would argue that depicting this goddess, nude Praxiteles, was signifying that this was the goddess of desire. She derived her power from desire, and as many tales state, this statue inspired countless moments of desire in the eyes of a human man. The male nudes in Greek art represented the man as being strong and displaying strength, engaged in the act of doing a

heroic deed. Praxiteles's Aphrodite is also involved in an action, using her nude body to
arouse lust in men. In a way, she displays her strength, which is her beauty and its power to
drive men crazy with lust. By depicting the figure nude, Praxiteles signified that this was not
a typical human mortal woman but a Goddess whose power is desire.

Praxiteles invented a new way of depicting the goddess, and in doing so, he created a
unique style of depicting the female figure. Another element of her style is the pose with her
hands covering her nudity. "Praxiteles had invented this gesture and intended it to convey a
profoundly serious and complicated meaning."38 This gesture would later be termed "the
pudica," meaning modesty. However, this pose has two meanings; one of modesty, the
goddess is covering herself so as not to be seen, but in covering herself, she is pointing
directly to elements which, by not seeing, we do see. We direct our attention to her genitals,
and the fact that we cannot see them because she is covering them draws our attention. This
movement of covering enhances the erotic element of the statue. She holds within this pose a
duel, meaning that of erotic looking and, simultaneously, the opposite of its modesty. This
pudica pose will travel through time along with the contrapposto in other female nude
figures.

The nudity of The Aphrodite of Knidos has always been the main subject for discussion,
primarily by men throughout history. In Antiquity, her nudity was said to cause lust in men.
In the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, nudity was morally wrong and must be excused.
Nudity defined a person's identity and their place within Greek society: later on, it was for

38 Havelock, The Aphrodite of Knidos, 4-5.
criminals, enslaved people, or defeated enemies. In the 1800s, Winckelmann would define the drawing of the nude regarding the notions of beauty, which comes from the work's proportions; beauty was the aim of Greek artists. As time progressed, the concept of nudity would continue to change; Andrew Steward quotes Berger saying that "a naked body has to be seen as an object to become a nude…nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display…" The Aphrodite of Knidos (Figure 1) is not conscious of her nudity; it is not until the viewer beholds her that she is nude. Nakedness is revealed to the viewer only once the viewer looks upon the statue. However, simultaneously, her creation was a naked woman on display for all to see. Part of the moral issues with the statue's nudity comes from the idea that there must be an embarrassment in being seen nude, that a woman must be embarrassed to be seen naked. This embarrassment is why an excuse must be made for why this statue would have been depicted nude. The bath interpretation comes from this: the need for a reason. However, the subject matter is a goddess, and on a different level, "the nakedness of the gods [goddesses] is a magic and sacred thing," as the goddess of love and beauty. Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty, and the Knidian had every right to be nude or naked. Part of her powers as a goddess is derived from that state; she emerges nude in her origin story.

40 Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Alex Potts, History of the Art of Antiquity (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 191.
41 Stewart, Art, Desire, 25.
42 Gualdoni, The History, 19.
The male nude was commonly depicted in Greek art and culture, while females were generally always clothed. Nudity within the Greek cultural world involved the person's identity; it separated the Greek men from women, enslaved people, barabroi, and enemies. Nudity was the norm for Greek men, and it set them apart from all others because nudity was their natural state. In Antiquity, it was common for artists to depict men nude within their sculptures, as it showed their subject's physical strength, their "Greekness," their beauty, and their youth. While women were depicted clothed, even if the women were dressed in the Hellenistic period, artists used the wet drapery technique of the folds of the clothes tightly fitting and representing the entire female body as if she were in a see-through garment. Nothing was left to the imagination, and her body was all on display while being covered by cloth. According to Andrew Stewart, clothing was used to control women; it demonstrates her lack of "maleness" and other hers from Greek men. So Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos* breaks this tradition; the Knidian is nude, and she is beautiful and youthful. She is not confined and, therefore, controlled by clothing. She stands tall and robust in her nudity, almost like a heroic male nude. Being a Goddess sets her in a different realm; she is not a mortal woman, not subject to mortal laws and cultural dictates. Nudity is part of her power as the goddess of love, beauty, and desire. She needs no excuse to be nude except that she is the goddess Aphrodite, and it is a part of her nature; after all, she arose from the sea foam completely naked.

The temple the Knidian stood in was an essential place in Antiquity and important to the Knidian's look. The *Aphrodite of Knidos* was bought by the Island of Knidos off the Coast of Anatolia, now called Turkey. The citizens of the Island placed the cult statue in an open temple that faced the ocean. This statue is of Aphrodite in her Euploia “of the fair voyage” persona. Aphrodite Euploia granted safe passage for sailors who visited the Island.[^44] Some of these sailors worked on ships traveling and trading across the Mediterranean, while others visited the Island or took pilgrimages to the Island to gain blessings for future trips. The Island of Knidos was a natural stopping point because the Island is situated so that anyone traveling from Greece southeast towards Rhodes and Turkey would have to stop at Knidos. This location meant the Island had a large trade economy and was known to produce wine, vinegar, and olive oil. The Praxitelean statue was a cult image housed in a round temple facing the sea and was a treasured work of art by the Knidians. Many ancient poets and authors wrote about this statue and how she stood in the center of her rotunda temple, head turned away as the viewer approached her.

Regarding seeing the statue, her temple was the perfect place for witnessing this monumental female nude. She stood on a plinth in the center, the ocean being her view; she could look out and see the vast seas beyond her Island, the waters the sailors who visited her traveled. The spectator could walk around her plinth and view her from all angles and all sides, and nothing impeded the view of the Knidian statue. When you entered the Doric temple, you faced her as the front of her body stood before the entry. In the early 1970s, the

archeologist Iris Cornelia Love excavated the Island of Knidos and discovered the temple's remains. These findings confirmed that Hadrian’s Tivoli temple and ancient poets’ writings about the temple were confirmed. The temple was designed so that the Knidian Aphrodite was seen from all angles and sides so that nothing was hidden. She was meant to be seen. As visitors sailed into the cape and harbor, The temple of Aphrodite could be seen upon the cliffs; in some cases, it was the first thing the ships saw after the lighthouse of the city of Knidos. She was on display for the viewer to witness her naked glory.

The Knidian faced the temple entrance, although the statue's head was turned, not looking directly at the gate but away from it. The statue would have been placed on a plinth in the center of a circular Doric colonnade. An altar stone would have been located not far away from the statue. The temple to Aphrodite Euploia (now known as Knidia) was a popular tourist attraction. Sailors would go and offer her gifts for safety out at sea. Women would have been visiting this statue to be helped with fertility and love. The statue was so famous that it is said that Hadrian had the temple recreated and a replica of the goddess in his villa at Tivoli. It is also said that the King of Bithynia Nicomedes tried buying the statue from the citizens and was refused. The original statue was last seen at Lauseum in Constantinople, where Constantine remarked on her beauty. The Lauseum was destroyed in a fire, and it is believed that Knidian was destroyed with the museum.

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47 Corso, “Chapter 5 Praxiteles,” 185.
The viewer is an essential element of this statue and its nudity. When the viewer entered the temple, the statue would have faced the entrance with her head turned away. Andrew Stewart states that an "imaginary" third party would have been involved. The viewer would walk in and see the goddess while she looked toward the "third party." However, she could be turning her head away in modesty because the viewer has come upon her during a private bath. The authors from Antiquity were men, writing and looking at the statue; the beauty of this statue drove men mad with lust. Mireille Lee argues that men were not the only viewers of The Aphrodite of Knidos and that women would have gone to and recognized elements within the statue. For women, she was not a symbol of lustful glances but a sign of femininity. It was a common practice to give votive jewelry offerings to the goddess, and women would pray to the goddess for help with fertility. The legend of the two courtesans being Praxiteles' models would have been critical to the hetairai or courtesans within Greek culture; they could have seen themselves within this statue. The jewelry and garments would also allow Greek culture women to recognize themselves within this statue. The statue's hairstyle is carved into the popular hairstyle of that time and would have been worn by the women who went to visit this statue. Lee states that women were "intended to be awed by her appearance – she is a goddess after all – but also inspired to cultivate their erotic powers by means of bodily adornment." Clothing was the "tool" for controlling women in Greek

society, yet women could take power back through what clothing, hairstyle, and jewelry they wore. It may have been thought of as a way to control; conversely, it was also a way of taking back control.

This statue was a cult image in the ancient world, and people would have made pilgrimages from far and wide to visit this statue for this reason. The people of the ancient world did not see a marble statue that was a mere representation of the goddess; this was the goddess, meaning that this was the goddess on Earth. That Aphrodite could inhabit the statue, thus engaging with mortals on Earth. People traveled to engage with the goddess herself. They each brought an offering to the goddess to gain her blessing. Some sailors traveled across the Mediterranean, and they would give sacrifices or offerings to the goddess in her Euploia persona because they wanted safety on their voyages. Others were there hoping the goddess would be pleased with their gift and grant them love through marriage or a child.

Many tales surround Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos. Starting with the goddess of love and beauty's birth myth. Hesiod, one of the earliest authors to write about the goddess Aphrodite, stated "that Aphrodite was born when Uranus was castrated by Chronos, his son. Parts of the god's member were tossed into the waters of Pontus, and a white foam spread around them from the immortal flesh, and in it there grew a maiden." So, the goddess of love is born from the seafoam and is associated with water and seafoam in many myths; bathing was also a favorite activity for the goddess. Because of her water birth, this goddess is represented in her Euploia persona.

52 Homer and Hesiod, Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, 44.
It is said that the prominent legend regarding this statue is that Praxiteles carved not one goddess but two, one clothed and one nude. The city of Cos (Kos) purchased the clothed statue and placed it in their temple to Aphrodite. The Island of Knidos off the coast of Anatolia (Turkey) purchased the nude statue and put her in their temple. This temple overlooked the sea and was a popular tourist attraction for many people, most importantly sailors. It is said that Praxiteles used two different models to create his statue: Phryne, a famous courtesan, for the body, and another courtesan, Cratina, for the head; it is said they were both his mistresses as well. Another myth regarding the statue’s beauty states that a young man was so overcome with love for the masterpiece that he hid in her temple, emerged at night to make love, and left a stain on her leg. It has been claimed that the goddess is just getting out of or into her bath, that she is nude because of bathing, and that her head is turned for modesty. Christine Havelock tells us that this interpretation came down from J.J Bernoulli in 1873. Every other writer since 1873 has taken up and used this interpretation; this is how the Knidian Aphrodite is discussed: nude because she is bathing.

Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural Histories* and Lucianus of Samosatensis in *Erotes or Amores*, wrote about the Knidian statue regarding the lust she caused men to feel through her nudity and perfection. She was an idealized, perfect woman who drove men crazy with desire. Nudity has also been an "issue" within art history, sometimes conflicting with the religious and moral standards of the culture and time period. Havelock states that J.J.

53 Corso, “Chapter 5 Praxiteles,” 11
55 The writers from Antiquity were Pliny and Lucian.
Bernoulli wrote the leading interpretation of the Knidian, which is still used today.

According to Havelock, Bernoulli gave an excuse for the goddess's nudity, that she could not just be nude but had a reason. For Bernoulli, the reason for her nudity was that she was either getting into or getting out of a bath.\textsuperscript{56} The viewer has come upon the goddess at the moment of her bath, so her hand covering herself is for modesty while the other hand holds the garment to "begin" to cover herself. The vessel at her feet would have held her bathwater.

Although no classical author commented on this statue's subject matter being the goddess at her bath. Authors after Bernoulli take up the bathing interpretation when discussing the work; "the goddess of Cnidos [Knidos] is naked, but she is only half-conscious of her nakedness. Her eyes are fixed on eternity, and the actual bath is a mere accessory".\textsuperscript{57} Bernoulli did not look at the statue within its Ancient Greek context; he fit his interpretation to his cultural values.

During Iris Cornelia Love's excavations, a workshop was discovered near the Temple of Aphrodite on the Island of Knidos.\textsuperscript{58} This workshop is believed to be where some copies and replicas were carved of the statue because pieces of Parian marble have been found there. As the original was carved in parian, it makes sense that copies would also have been carved in the same material. However, copies and replicas have been found made from different marbles, clay, terracotta, and metal—coins depicting the Knidian throughout the Roman

\textsuperscript{56} Havelock, \textit{The Aphrodite of Knidos}, 22.
Empire, signifying this statue's popularity and importance. Statue copies and replicas have also been found throughout the Mediterranean and Near Eastern World. Some sculptures are similar to the Belvedere Aphrodite (Figure 1), which is believed to be the closest copy to the original, while others are slightly different. The elements of the pose, the position of the legs and arms, are switched, while the head is turned the other way. For this reason, art historians can only guess what the original looked like; the variations make it hard to know. Each variation is significant for its location or the region in which it was found; regional changes show how people thought about depicting the body. These copies have inspired more breaks with the pose. We are beginning to see nude goddesses in the contrapposto pose, which uses both arms to cover her pubic region and breasts. We also see copies reaching upward, running hands through her hair. Some are half-clothed, leaving the upper half of the torso bare while the hips, pelvis, and legs are covered with a garment. Some complete nudes with both hands covering had the garment on a vase, while others had a dolphin or Eros. Dolphins are symbols of the goddess and her water birth, while Eros was her companion and partner in inflicting love/lust on gods and mortals. Some statues show the goddess clothed, except she has pulled her dress up, revealing her backside while she looks upon it. The crouching pose is a final break with tradition; the nude goddess is no longer standing, covering herself, but crouching down. All the standing nudes are in the same pose: the deep S-curve, head turned,

59 "For in addition to conquering the Greeks, the Romans eagerly appropriated their legacy in literature and the arts...And last but not least, they collected Greek masterpieces of sculpture and painting, particularly fifth- and fourth-century ones; copied them; and wrote about them. They considered them to be authoritative, to set a standard that none, probably, could ever surpass." Stewart, *Classical Greece*, 1-2.
weight-bearing, and opposite lifted leg. This pose became the genre or canon for depicting the female figure standing and nude throughout art history.

The statue of *Aphrodite of Knidos's* style is her posture, which became an easily replicable element for other artists. *The Capitoline Venus* (Figure 5) was carved roughly in 330-310 BCE. She is modeled after the Knidian and in the Venus Pudica category of copies. This marble statue has some slight differences from the Knidian. This one is not holding the garment, but both hands cover her body. Her head is looking away, her hairstyle is different, and some locks have come loose from the updo. This statue does not have as deep of a contrapposto; her hips are more level, and one leg is not lifted as high. She is not caught in the act of moving forward but in the act of covering up. This pudica pose, as it is known, is only one style or one type of copy inspired by the Knidian statue.

According to Christine Havelock, seven types of Aphrodite statues evolved from the Knidian.60 Of the different types of copies and replicas, each class also becomes a popular or well-known statue. The *Capitoline Aphrodite* is part of the standing type with a garment on the vessel and both hands covering her. *The Venus de Medici* (Figure 6) is a standing type with a dolphin and both hands covering her naked body. At the same time, the *Aphrodite of Melos* (Figure 7) is part of the half-draped category. The *Aphrodite Kallipygos* (Figure 8), or *Aphrodite of the Fair Buttocks*, is the clothed and revealing backside type. These are all examples of statues that are famous in their own right but owe their inspiration to and can be traced back to Praxiteles and his Knidian statue.

Figure 6. Unknown *The Venus De Medici* (*Medici Venus*) (1st Century BCE)
Figure 7. Unknown *Aphrodite of Melos (Venus de Milo)* (125-150 BC)

Figure 8. Unknown *Aphrodite of Kallipygos (Aphrodite of Callipyge)* (1st-2nd Century BC)
Without Roman copies like the Belvedere Aphrodite, The Aphrodite of Knidos would be visually unknown to the modern world; we would only have classical authors' accounts of her. This statue would be lost like the works of the artist Apelles. Dickins claims, "The Cnidian [Knidian] goddess of Praxiteles was more than a statue; it was an idea.\textsuperscript{61} That idea was how to depict the female nude. The Aphrodite of Knidos was the first monumental female nude. It is important to note that this statue was not the first female nude, only the first large-scale female nude, as far as archaeology has discovered in Western art. Aphrodite is the goddess of love, beauty, and desire, and within art, she is represented as love, sex, desire, beauty, and fertility. The Aphrodite of Knidos (Figure 1) was known for her power to drive men mad with lust. A young man hid in her temple to make love to her. Praxiteles' statue is the perfect woman, the embodiment of love, beauty, and desire. Aphrodite is also one of the most popular subject matters for art and represents the female figure. While the city of Knidos is known for the nude statue of Aphrodite, we cannot forget that she had a clothed twin, which was never as popular as the Knidian. According to Havelock, the classic nude created by Praxiteles became the conventional nude, an image icon.\textsuperscript{62} The genre of depicting the female nude was born in Praxiteles' hands and has never been forgotten despite the original being destroyed in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD. After all, to quote Gualdoni: "If the subject is the female nude, it is the Knidian."\textsuperscript{63} This figure, the nude woman, became the canon that floats through history. Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos would captivate the

\textsuperscript{61} Dickins, Hellenistic Sculpture, by Guy, 84.
\textsuperscript{62} Havelock, The Aphrodite of Knidos, 84.
\textsuperscript{63} Gualdoni, The History, 107.
Romans, who made many copies and spread that image across their empire. Praxiteles created the ideal beautiful female form; this statue is the definition of beauty for the female figure, that this is the perfect woman. This is why she would become the archetype and why this figure would be quoted repeatedly by artists throughout history.
Chapter 3 Aphrodite (Venus) In The Renaissance: The Rebirth Of Venus

Western art owes a lot to ancient Greece and Rome. The genre of depicting the female nude was born in Praxiteles' hands and has never been forgotten despite the cultural changes brought on by the passing of time. "The Cnidian [Knidian] goddess of Praxiteles was more than a statue; it was an idea," that idea was how to depict the female nude.\(^{64}\) Praxiteles created the canon for the female standing nude, using the contrapasso pose and the harmony of proportion, which artists in the Renaissance used in their art.

The style of the Knidian Aphrodite did not stop with the end of the ancient world; this statue's influence continued to travel, and in the Renaissance, it became a popular model for depicting the female nude in art. During the Renaissance, the ancient world was "rediscovered" by the Humanists and focused on an education based on the works from antiquity. Artists studied the works of ancient artists and used ancient mythology for their subject matter. For example, a beautiful young woman stands tall and in the center of the canvas. She is in the contrapposto pose, nude, one hand covering her breasts, the other holding the ends of her hair to cover her genitals. Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (Figure 2) was painted in the late 15\(^{th}\) century. Botticelli created an image of a woman that would become an ideal for beauty. Botticelli chooses to depict Venus's birth, drawing partial inspiration from the hymns of Hesiod and her approach to the shores of Cyprus after she emerges from the seafoam. Hesiod narrates that the great Titan Cronos defeated his father by cutting off his genitals and casting them out to sea. From these genitals, a great foam rose.

\(^{64}\) Dickins, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, 84
and from this foam, a maiden was born. This woman was the Goddess Venus (Aphrodite), and she was carried on the sea to the shores of Cypress, where she made her home. At this moment, the goddess travels across the sea to the shores that Botticelli depicts. His goddess rides on the shell of a scallop, being blown to shore by the great wind or Zephyr, carrying the personification of Aura. At the same time, one of the Horae (hours) awaits the goddess's arrival with a rich Renaissance brocade cloak outstretched to clothe the nude Venus. This Venus has become known as an ideal image of feminine beauty.

Botticelli's work is connected to the Knidian on several levels, starting with direct inspiration. Botticelli was exposed to copies like the *The Venus de Medici*, and he used his exposure to help him create his nude figure. Botticelli copied the body posture of the Knidian for his Venus. They stand the same in the same contrapposto pose. Another connection is through Botticelli’s artist training of being taught to depict the female form from drawing copies of ancient statues; he could base his figure on the Praxiteles Tradition. The Humanist movement at the time was looking back on Antiquity; Botticelli was influenced by the Humanist thinkers and looked back on the Knidian for the modeling of his figure. Botticelli's Venus and the Knidian are about the same goddess, Aphrodite, and Venus is the same goddess of love and desire. Both are nude because of this goddess's association with water, as part of her birth story or bathing rituals. Botticelli's work would become famous for being an

65 Homer and Hesiod, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns*, 44.
idealized beautiful female nude; that idealized figure would, like the Knidian, inspire other artists discussed later in this paper.

Like the Knidian Aphrodite, this Venus is in the contrapposto pose, and the form of their bodies are similar. The weight shifting causes the s-curve in the body; one-foot lifts, causing the body's weight to be balanced on one leg. They even tilt their heads away from the direct eye contact of the viewer. I believe the differences between these two forms demonstrate the cultural differences between the times. The Knidian was a public work, on display for all to see in her temple on Knidos; it was a work people traveled to see to pray to the goddess for a blessing. It was meant to be engaged with in hopes of a favor that would be granted. The town of Knidos owned it.

In contrast, Botticelli's Venus was meant for the private viewership. Botticelli's work was meant for a private home, not a public space. One person owned it for his eyes only and anyone he invited into his home. It was not something the masses saw during the Renaissance but a choice few would have had the opportunity to look upon the painting.

Looking at Botticelli's Venus, we first see that she is nude, standing at the center of the canvas, the focus all on her. The Zephyr, Aura, and Horae focus solely on the goddess. Venus does not look directly at the viewer; she is looking away from the viewer's gaze. She stands in her shell, one foot balanced, holding all her weight, while the other foot is lifted like she is about to step off the shell onto the shore. Venus leans her weight on the solid foot. You can see the lean in her body as she shifts her weight to step forward. Her hands are trying to cover herself, one covering her breasts and the other holding her hair over her genitals; this action both covers and draws the viewer's attention. This action holds two functions; one is to
cover and conceal, and the other is to draw attention. By covering her genitals, there is an eroticism added to her stance. By concealing herself, she draws the viewers' attention to her genitals. There is the sense of "seeing" what is concealed; by knowing what is behind her hand, we "see" what is being covered, and the viewer's awareness is drawn to that location. Scholars have claimed that the Knidian pose demonstrates aidos or modesty, while others claim the act of covering herself is there to draw the viewer's attention to her reproductive capabilities. Natalie Colomina states that it was unpleasant in the Renaissance era for viewers to see a nude figure, so Botticelli adapted the Knidian’s pose and added long flowing hair for his Venus to use to help cover herself to bring modesty to the pose. Paul Barolsky claims that using her hair to conceal is a way to suggest the goddess's physical touch herself and quicken the viewer's sense of touch. It brings the idea of touching the concealed area to the forefront of the viewer's mind. Covering demonstrates something that should not be seen, yet the viewer knows it is hidden. This action is also a cultural creation for Botticelli, reflecting the beliefs of modesty and proper womanly behavior for the Renaissance.

*The Birth of Venus* is a mythological painting. These were works of art that depicted mythological themes. It is believed that Botticelli took inspiration for his work from other works, ancient artworks, ancient writers, and the writings of Humanists. During the 15th century, the Humanist movement was a prominent mode of thinking and explaining the world. The Humanist reflected on the classical world and focused on the human as the central

factor. It was a way to revive the classical world and give the upper class a moral standing based on the rhetoric of the ancient world. “Humanists and poets in the literary circles that gathered around powerful patrons constantly rewrote mythology, just as artists strove to display their powers of varieta by generating new ideas of Classical models.”

One source Botticelli took inspiration from was the Humanist Poet Poliziano. Poliziano’s poem takes its source from the works of Hesiod. Poliziano wrote *The Birth of Venus* poem, in which the goddess comes to shore on a scallop shell, blown there by the Zephyr.

The other inspiration would have come from his education and experiences. In his travels to Rome, Botticelli would have had access to Roman copies of classical statues like the Knidian and *The Venus de Medici* (Figure 6), which Botticelli would have seen through his connections to the Medici family. It is also known that Botticelli created sketches or drawings from known sculptures; however, very few of his drawings survive today. Many artists of this time used drawing to study human figures and created drawings and sketches from known sculptures as a study method to learn how to draw the human figure. "Most Renaissance viewers would have known a copy of Praxiteles's sculpture, either an ancient Roman version or a contemporary quotation of the famous pudica pose…" These statues

70 Turner, *Eros Visible*, 102
73 An example of this can be seen in the *Study of a Standing Male Figure (verso), ca 1475*. This drawing is a study of Andrea del Verrocchio’s David with the Head of Goliath sculpture. Furio Rinaldi, *Botticelli Drawings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), 146.
from antiquity were openly displayed and highly influential because of Humanist thought. According to Rose-Marie and Rainer Hagen, "The influence of Greek Classical sculpture is visible in the way the weight of the goddess rests on one leg, in the attractive curve of her hips, in her chaste gesture. The Renaissance artist has drawn her proportions in accordance with a canon of harmony and ideal beauty developed by artists such as Polyclitus and Praxiteles." The harmony of proportions was an essential idea within Classical and Renaissance art. Clark claims that "One of the few classical canons of the proportion of which we can be certain is that which, in a female nude, took the same unit of measurement for the distance between the breasts, the distance from the lower breast to the navel, and again from the navel to the division of the legs." The Humanist thinkers revived the idea that a beautiful work should follow the rules of three or the rules of proportion. In using the classical form within his Venus, Botticelli has also incorporated the rule of three and achieved a harmony of proportions. The achievement of harmony within the proportions of the human figure would have helped Botticelli's Venus be seen as an ideal beautiful figure within Humanist thought. This would have also helped please his client or the person who commissioned his works. Zöllner said most of Botticelli’s work and career were "founded on commissions from local patrons." It is not known with one hundred percent certainty who commissioned *The Birth of Venus*. However, it is believed that a member of the Medici family commissioned it,

77 Zöllner, *Sandro Botticelli*, 10.
potentially as a wedding gift." It is known that Botticelli did work for the Medici Family, and *The Birth of Venus* is in later inventory lists of the Medici estate. "Between 1470 and 1480, Botticelli became the foremost painter to the Medici Family, who had returned to Florence from exile in 1434 and who now dominated the city both politically and culturally." His connections with the Medici family would have helped Botticelli meet Poliziano and other Humanist thinkers. Botticelli’s connection with the Medici family would have also provided him access to the works in the family’s collection. One artwork that potentially became part of the inspiration or modeling process is that of *The Venus de Medici*. *The Venus de Medici* is in the classic pudica pose and is an ancient Hellenistic statue following Praxitlian tradition. This statue was on display in the private collection in the Villa Medici. According to Charles Mack, "such a composition as the Venus, with its antique theme, historical references, and many nuanced implications would have appealed to none but the most erudite of patrons—in all likelihood, someone in sympathy with the Medicean agenda and familiar with the intellectual positions the family encouraged." In all likelihood, Botticelli was not commissioned by a Medici family member but by someone with ties to the Medici family and equal social status. We know the work eventually made it to the hands of the Medici family. Charles Mack also believes Botticelli used Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci as his human model for *The Birth of Venus*. By using this woman as his model, Botticelli

78 Deimling, *Sandro Botticelli, 1445-1510*, 57-58.
79 Zöllner, *Sandro Botticelli*, 37.
80 Hagen and Hagen, *What Great Paintings Say*, 12.
could have been trying to not only gain favor with the Medici family, as Lorenzo wrote several poems about her, but Lorenzo could have also requested that she be the model.\textsuperscript{82} If the Medici family had not commissioned the work, the use of Simonetta, favored by Lorenzo, would have brought attention to Botticelli and be why the work was in later inventories. No matter who commissioned this work, it was meant to be seen in a private home, not in public. Public works at this time were those commissioned and on display, typically in a church or religious building, while private works were those commissioned and kept within the person's private home. These private works were not commissioned to be given to a church but kept for private use and display. Giorgio Vasari claims that this painting was in the "Duke Cosimo’s Villa," the Duke’s private home.\textsuperscript{83}

Botticelli created portraits of his clients and their family members. The \textit{Birth of Venus} was a different type of work altogether. Vasari said The \textit{Birth of Venus} eventually entered the Medici Families’ hands. It was displayed in a living room alongside the Primavera, another of Botticelli’s Venus paintings.\textsuperscript{84} \textit{The Birth of Venus} (Figure 2) was a secular mythological painting, and according to James Turner, secular works were “…designed for custom-made spaces that glorify the patron’s taste and ability to synthesize art.”\textsuperscript{85} These two works were seen privately. They were displayed in a private home, and because of this, they would have functioned differently. Baxandall states that artworks were designed for the client's use, a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[84] Vasari, “Botticelli,” 226.
\item[85] Turner, \textit{Eros Visible}, 79.
\end{footnotes}
contract would have been written describing what the client wanted and would pay, and preparatory drawings were created to show the final work's design. In the case of *The Birth of Venus*, Botticelli and whoever commissioned the work, whether it was a Medici family member or someone who knew them, Botticelli would have had a contract. That document would have listed what the person purchasing the work wanted in the work, and Botticelli would have then created drawings. A payment would also have been agreed upon in advance for this painting.

During the Renaissance and the Medieval period, artworks were created to be viewed publicly, commissioned, and given to churches across Europe. The works would be seen by anyone visiting the church, and it was a way to display wealth and power for the person who gifted the work and the church. The works displayed in churches reminded the viewer of Biblical stories and religious teachings. They were meant for the viewer to reflect on Christian thought to inspire devotion. Botticelli did many works that functioned in this way. He was commissioned to create many altarpiece works displayed in several churches. The first difference comes from the subject matter, and this was not a religious work showing Biblical characters and stories. This was a work showing a Mythological Goddess. According to Jill Burke, the privately viewed and displayed nude artwork in the Renaissance was meant to demonstrate the classical education of the owner. It was a way of showing others that the owner was part of the upper class. It was also a way of displaying the wealth of the client.

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87 Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 40-41
The patron would give a deposit to the artist, according to Baxandall, to pay for supplies, mainly the ingredients needed for the artist to grind pigments.89

The subject matter was also important to the person who commissioned and displayed the work. The subject matter would be used to demonstrate what the client felt was essential or held symbolic meanings that were culturally and politically significant. For Humanist thought, Venus was meant to be like a muse who stimulated creative thought and awareness, as well as the erotic becoming a subject of aesthetic thought.90 “Botticelli's paintings were informed by an intellectual circle of Renaissance humanists who believed that there were two types of Venus - one celestial (Venus Coelestis) and one earthly (Venus Vulgaris).”91 This comes from the idea of sacred and profane love. The two different types of Venus could inspire different types of love; the Celestial Venus is a pure and unearthly woman's body (Venus), which inspires divine love, while the Earthly Venus is associated with sex, procreation, and fertility. There is a belief that gazing at a beautiful body can bring about a spiritual transcendence, which is part of the Celestial Venus. Botticelli’s The Birth of Venus holds a place within this conceptual Venus. She is the divine goddess, and her nude figure should inspire the viewer to reflect on divine love. According to Frank Zöllner, Botticelli's alignment of figures is similar to scenes portraying the Baptism of Christ, where the Christ or our Venus figure stands in the center. At the same time, everyone else interacts with and toward that figure.92 At the same time, she is also a nude figure that brings up desire and

89 Baxandall, Painting and Experience, 8.
90 Turner, Eros Visible, 64
91 McCormack, Women in the Picture, 41-42.
92 Zöllner, Sandro Botticelli, 138.
arousal. Venus/Aphrodite in mythology is both the goddess of love and desire but also the goddess of marriage and childbirth. Botticelli implies this within his painting by including Myrtle, a symbol of sexual desire in his work. Female nudity was like classical thought and had a revival and transformation in the Renaissance period.

In Medieval times, nudity was not common within the artwork or encouraged. The nude Knidian form was transformed into Eve and symbolized sin and shame. The female nude changes with the Humanist thinkers; it is no longer the thing of evil, shame, or sinful behavior of Eve. Using the rule of three, the female nude becomes the ideal beautiful figure. Botticelli's use of the pudica within The Birth of Venus follows social norms. When Botticelli painted this work, the female nude was not a popular image for artists, like when Praxiteles created his Knidian. The pose of Botticelli’s Venus creates the pudica pose and provides some modesty to his nude figure. In a way, she is not entirely nude and sinful like Eve but modest and proper.

Compared to the Knidian, Botticelli's Venus had a very different use. The Knidian was meant for the public and a cult image in a temple; viewing this statue meant engaging with it. People would travel to the Island of Knidos to sacrifice to the Knidia to gain safety at sea, fertility, and marriage. Using the harmony of proportion meant that Praxiteles created an ideal, beautiful figure of art. The ancient scholars talk about the desire this statue inspired in the men who witnessed its beauty. With the Humanist movement, a revival was brought

93 Zöllner, Sandro Botticelli, 74.
about, allowing Botticelli to transform the concept created with Eve of the nude female figure as a symbol of sin and shame by taking up the Humanist rhetoric and giving the world an ideal female beautiful figure. This ideal, beautiful figure would become a well-known image. We have all seen copies of this Venus. She is a popular figure in our modern world. Botticelli returns the nude female figure to something closer to what the Knidian could have stood for in the classical world. It is no longer a figure that symbolizes shame and sin but a figure that stands for ideal beauty.

Western art does owe a lot to the ancient world, but through the use of the Praxitelean canon, Botticelli was able not only to adopt but alter the image icon to reflect the thinking of the Renaissance world. Using Humanist philosophy and studying ancient works, Botticelli created a Venus image, which, like the Knidian, would become a well-known artwork. By using the techniques passed down from Praxiteles and with Humanist philosophy telling Botticelli what the correct subject matter to depict, Botticelli's Venus was not only an ideal beautiful figure due to her proportions, but by having a mythological subject, this work was a reflection on the ancient world. This work was privately owned, not hung in a church where anyone could see it, but kept in a home where only a choice few would have had access to glorify the owner. Unlike the Knidian, Botticelli's work was not meant to be seen by all. Botticelli's work was meant to glorify and demonstrate one Man's power and influence. By using the Humanist philosophy, Botticelli was able to create an ideal beautiful figure which demonstrates the dominant thinking of his time.
Chapter 4 Aphrodite in the Neoclassical World of Hiram Powers’ *The Greek Slave*

The idea of how to depict the female nude did not stop with Praxiteles in the ancient world, and it certainly did not stop with the Renaissance world. The image icon Praxiteles created was only more firmly embedded into art practice in the Renaissance with works like Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* (Figure 2). The pose and figuration of the Knidian did not solely influence the artists of the Renaissance; this statue traveled into the Neoclassical era and inspired artists like Hiram Powers with his sculpture *The Greek Slave* (Figure 3). As we saw in the Renaissance with the Humanist thinkers, the Neoclassical era was another rediscovery of the ancient world. Antiquity would inspire the artists and thinkers in the Nineteenth century similarly as antiquity was to the people in the Renaissance. Hiram Powers would use the same methods and techniques perfected by Praxiteles and used by Botticelli, applying them to his ideal statue of a pure Christian woman. The Knidian figure and the Praxiteles Tradition allowed Powers to create an idealized religious work that, for Powers, held moral value. Powers like Botticelli would be inspired by the methods of Praxiteles, using these techniques to create his idealized female nude. Additionally, Powers, like his predecessors, adds symbols to the form to create a morally charged work meant to convey meaning to his culture. *The Greek Slave* is a marble statue carved originally in 1843. This statue takes inspiration from the Greek War of Independence that Powers read about in the papers while living in
Italy. In his letters, Powers claims that his statue is an excellent Christian woman taken by the Turks and sold in the slave markets. The statue is a young woman standing in the contrapposto pose; one leg is bent while the other bears her weight, and her head is turned to force her eyes and gaze away from the viewer. Her arms are in front of her, shackled together, and one hand covers her genitals. The other rests on a short pillar that holds her clothes. Powers would also carve many more copies between 1843-1860s. This statue and its copies traveled the Western world. Kasson claims that the "traveling exhibitions brought The Greek Slave to more than a dozen American cities and over a hundred thousand spectators." Copies also traveled to exhibitions in Europe, being seen by many spectators.

From the onset of its creation, The Greek Slave was meant to be seen; during its time, this was unusual, as women were not seen in public unclothed, and it was not proper to view such nude works. However, this statue was popular for its nudity, and Powers created a backstory that eased Victorian cultural thinking, allowing it to become the popular attraction it was. Nevertheless, Powers kept to his beliefs, not just of religious faith but of how art should be created. He felt that there was an unveiled soul waiting to be exposed to viewers and that his job was to bring forth that perfect image. He studied the Greeks and used the same principles as Praxiteles to create his Greek Slave statue.

Looking at The Greek Slave, one notices how closely she resembles Praxiteles' Knidian (Figure 1). These marble women stand in the same pose, heads turned away, hands covering

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96 Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
parts of their bodies. Powers believed there was a correct style for depicting the unveiled soul
with his sculptures. Although Powers did not think the Greek artists were good, he had strong
beliefs that their methods were not great and that he could do things much better and in a
proper religious manner. 97 Like many artists throughout the ages, Powers studied the ancient
Greek and Roman thinkers; he would have studied the works of Renaissance thinkers. As we
have already seen, the Renaissance was significantly influenced by the Humanist thinkers,
who in turn took inspiration from the ancient Greeks. Because of this education, Powers was
well aware of the Greek concept that beauty comes from the harmony of proportions. Powers
agreed with the Greeks on this concept, and the harmony of proportions was a technique he
used in most of his works. The use of proportions in the artwork would make that work
perfect, but for Powers, that harmony of proportion was a way to bring out the unveiled soul
within a work and bring forth a religious message.

Powers wanted all his works to demonstrate what he called the "Unveiled Soul"; by this,
"Powers's primary stated aim was to create sculpture with a spiritual content and meaning." 98
He wanted his works to carry a higher meaning with a moral and spiritual context. He felt
that higher moral and spiritual meanings were one thing that the works of antiquity lacked.
He wanted to emphasize human proportions and his works to have a surface texture as close
to human flesh as possible. The ideal statue for Powers paralleled ideas from antiquity, but
the soul was recognized with the physical form and could be expressed through sculpture. 99

no. 3 (September 1977): 396.
For Powers, the unveiled soul could be expressed and brought out by creating the human form in a sculpture. For Powers, the unveiled soul was an ideal statue; he also claimed to try to have the "Pure image of God" in his ideal statues.\textsuperscript{100} This process of creating an ideal image of god with the form of the human body in sculpture gives Powers' \textit{The Greek Slave} many symbols and meanings. He embedded the symbology into his work with his choice of stone; Powers chose a white marble to symbolize purity. The symbols she holds are a cross and a rosary for her faith to show she is a Christian woman. Her pose is a symbol of modesty in the way she turns away from the viewer. Using this symbology helps Powers reveal the ideal image, which held the unveiled soul for Powers.

Powers felt that a work should have a message or moral statement. That is why he wrote many letters and made many statements about \textit{The Greek Slave}. He had to create a narrative of this captured pure Christian woman being sold into slavery. His story also had another purpose: the backstory allowed Victorian audiences the excuse to look at a nude work. During this period, it was improper to look especially for women and especially in public where this work was exhibited. Powers' Christian woman was okay to be looked at because she symbolized purity and goodness. She was an icon of what it meant to be a good Christian woman. What was seen was a pure, good woman who, even though she is stripped bare, still holds to her Christian beliefs and still holds her modesty despite her situation.

Another interpretation comes from the statue’s subject matter of slavery. This statue was also carved during the Civil War in America. Many people saw an imprisoned woman, and

\textsuperscript{100} Reynolds, “The ‘Unveiled Soul,” 399.
she told the story of slavery and why it was wrong. Though this statue is a white woman sold into slavery, it resonated with the anti-slavery movement in America. This statue became part of the anti-slavery movement and was the perfect Christian woman of virtue. In Europe, she is a representation of slavery, and she became an emblem to discuss ideas regarding slavery in America.

Powers titled his work *The Greek Slave* to represent a woman for sale in the slave market. During the time that Powers created *The Greek Slave* in America, the topic of slavery was a heated one. The Civil War was looming; abolitionists were trying to eliminate slavery, and the other side was trying to keep it. Both sides of the slavery argument used Powers's statue in their logic and opinion on slavery. Those opposed used this to show others the wrongness of keeping others enslaved; they used this statue to symbolize why slavery should be abolished.  

While the ones who wanted to keep slavery in place used it as a symbol that showed women should be protected from the “lusts of the dark-skinned man” and protect the sacristy of marriage. Although it is not sure if Hiram Powers intended his work to be a symbol of abolitionist ideals, it was used as a symbol for the abolitionist movement in America; one thing his work did do was inspire other American artists to take up new themes relevant to the American public at that time. One thing that is certain about this work is

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that it caused people to talk; it was an easy source and outlet for people to discuss their views on slavery. "The sculpture was used as an example for Americans to separate race from slavery and see it as a human issue."\textsuperscript{104} Interestingly, Powers created a work of a white woman, a good Christian woman who has wrongfully been captured and enslaved. The message here is not merely that slavery is wrong but that it is wrong that this happened to a good white Christian woman. However, this is how \textit{The Greek Slave} gives viewers a double standard. The viewer can identify enslaved African Americans and white Christian women. This double lens allowed people to discuss the concept of slavery; through this method, the topic was opened up and used for different means of public activism.

Powers’s statue was meant to be seen, meant to be on display. It was placed in the Crystal Palace and other venues of spectacle on display in a place where art was seen. The original or first statue was purchased and placed in the window display of a shop in England. In America, the copies that traveled were placed in tents, galleries, windows, and other places to be displayed. The statues traveled to be displayed in different cities, and people flocked to see the display.

Like the Knidian Aphrodite, \textit{The Greek Slave} is claimed to be the first American-made nude to be exhibited, and like the Knidian, inspired countless poets to write about it. Unlike the Knidian, Power’s \textit{The Greek Slave} was meant only to be seen; she was not meant to be engaged beyond the eyes and sight. No one brought offerings to this statue, and she was not in a temple. She traveled the world, inspiring conversations and ideas regarding slavery and

\textsuperscript{104} McGuckian, “Hiram Powers’ Greek Slave,” 43.
Christian purity. She was meant only for the eyes to be seen, looked at, and displayed next to other works of art. Powers believed he could capture the soul within his work and replicate the "image of God" through his work. He believed there was a correct way to create a statue, and he could capture the soul through that creation.

Powers believed in the concept of proportion; unlike the Greeks, he did not feel it was the key to perfect beauty, but he felt it could be used to demonstrate the "unveiled soul," as he called it, within a work. Through proportion, he could demonstrate an intellectual or spiritual component, which he felt lacked in antique art for Powers.105 One thing Powers participated in, like many artists of the nineteenth century, creating works in what they called the "correct style," and by that, they meant that "the human figure could suitably represent the spirit," like the Greeks, they believed the body was the ideal figure to depict concepts in art.106 Artists in the nineteenth century admired the properties of antique sculpture and used these properties within their works. "The Christian sculptor should do just what the pagan sculptor did: convey to his contemporaries a religious or spiritual message. Indeed, the Christian sculptor had 'a nobler and purer faith to illustrate and teach thus the rewards should be richer.'"107

Hiram Powers claims he got his inspiration for this work from the news articles describing the Greek War of Independence. His inspiration goes beyond just that topic or concept. He did not just come up with the form for this statue alone. He looked to the past to create the form of his nude standing female figure. She stands in the contrapposto pose,

which we have seen in both Botticelli’s work and that of the Classical world. Powers uses the “excuse” of the Greek War of Independence to create a woman on display in the slave market stripped of her clothes to show her off better. He uses this war and woman on sale in the slave market to create a nude female statue. It is his excuse and justification for looking at and objectifying the female form. It is all right for viewers to look at this nude female because she is a Christian woman "clothed in her faith" and a victim of war.

One inspiration for Powers is that when Powers carved his statue, he was living in Florence, Italy, and "scholars have related The Greek Slave to The Venus de Medici (Figure 6) from ca. 100 BCE," which Powers would have seen while living in Italy.108 The Venus de Medici was modeled on the Knidian. "Based on the Hellenistic Medici Venus in the Uffizi, the statue depicts a beautiful young woman whose hands are bound by chains. Her robe, seemingly just removed…” Powers could have easily seen other ancient statues.109 However, according to Gerdts, the antique source for Powers "was probably the Venus of Knidos, of the late fourth century B.C. or, rather, a Roman copy of the same.110 Due to Powers being located in Italy, he would have had more access to both the Knidian statue and The Venus de Medici for his modeling of The Greek Slave.

Another inspiration for Powers was his artist training. “From the Renaissance onwards the standard training for art students was organized around three main principles: the antique, the life class, and the study of anatomy. Although other subjects such as perspective,

ornament, and history were also taught, these were nearly always subordinated to the principal area of study which was the human figure.”¹¹¹ Powers would have had to study and copy antique works before studying live models. He would have become familiar with ancient statues and forms through this training. Powers would have studied these concepts in his training to become an artist. These principles we see within *The Greek Slave*: first and foremost, she is a human figure, but better yet, she is a female nude. Her form is nearly identical to forms from antiquity. His training never left him, yet Powers added moral beliefs to his core principle training.

From its creation, Hiram Powers meant for this work to be seen and displayed. This is what happened: *The Greek Slave* (Figure 3) was displayed by Captain John Grant of Devonshire, where he placed it on display in the showroom of the Graves Company in Pall Mall. It was exhibited in the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition of 1851. It went on a road tour of America, stopping at many cities and being seen in various venues. The different display methods led to this work becoming a popular image in both culture and art.

“During the period of its greatest popularity, ideal sculpture reached a variety of audiences in diverse settings: private galleries; newly formed public exhibition spaces; entrepreneurial exhibitions, where an artist or agent charged admission for the viewing of a single work of art; and massive fairs or expositions where art objects were viewed side-by-side with machinery, agricultural products, and geological displays. Photographs and engravings can help us understand what nineteenth-century audiences saw when they viewed ideal sculpture; comments and descriptions written by contemporary observers can suggest how they interpreted what they saw.”¹¹²

The Crystal Palace was the statue's first extensive exhibition and gained the work notoriety because of the venue. "But the Crystal Palace also served as a site for international encounters between British spectators and visitors from all over the world, who – like the objects displayed – were perceived (and regarded each other) as visible representations of their particular culture, class, race and/or nation."113 Although the nudity was problematic for Victorian culture, Powers was prepared. His solution was to distribute a pamphlet that told the "story" of his work and gave reason for her nudity; that story goes that she is a Christian woman who is being sold in the slave market. The viewer is meant to sympathize with her and imagine Turkish slave drivers and their customers surrounding her. The purity of the woman on display speaks to the viewer. "Nonetheless, because of the controversial nature of the statue's nudity, some American venues had special hours for both sexes, while other times were reserved for men only. The propriety of the statue was widely disputed in both the press and pulpit."114 This also led to the work becoming a popular item; everyone flocked to see this statue.

Another place The Greek Slave was displayed was the owner's private collection.115 “The most private setting in which ideal sculpture was displayed was the home of its owner. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, many Americans had become interested in collecting art… Works of art were often on view throughout their owner's house or

115 Captain John Grant of Devonshire placed his copy on display in the Graves Company showroom. Gerdts, American Neo-Classic Sculpture, 32.
apartment, with paintings, sculptures, China, wall hangings, Japanese prints, woodcarvings, and other forms of the fine and decorative arts displayed as part of a total environment.”

Like the work of Botticelli, private ownership was meant to display the owner's wealth and culture.

One thing that Powers knew would be an issue with his work is the nudity; he created a nude female figure that he planned to display for the public. During this time in Victorian culture, nudity was not seen. Women were not seen in the home fully nude, let alone in public. "Thus, with this sculpture, Powers had constructed a narrative that justified the exposure of female nudity in the nominal depiction of an enslaved white woman, but, unlike enslaved African Americans women in the United States, who were subject to beatings, sexual exploitation and rate by white slave owners, Powers' Greek Slave reified notions of vulnerable white femininity before the presumed rapacious gaze of darker heathens." Powers also used the idea that he got the inspiration for this work from an old dream he dreamt he saw a white woman standing on a pedestal across a river in the countryside in Vermont. Powers's use of narrative and justification for his work's nudity made it a popular work and saved him from negative critique. "Art historians maintain that Powers avoided such reproach in his Greek Slave both because he justified the figure's nudity, and because he derived his subject from the Greek War of Independence, a historical rather than mythological theme." His narrative offered a story of pathos and violence; it also used the

117 Merrill, "Exhibiting Race," 328.
118 Green, "Hiram Powers’s 'Greek Slave," 31-32.
fascination with the Orient to its favor and interest in the Greek War for Independence. "The ‘Greek Slave’ pamphlet seems to answer the earlier critic's fears that the experience of viewing a female nude would lead to uncontrolled desire and unsettled decorum. Like an etiquette manual, the pamphlet describes in order to prescribe behavior: it cues its readers to behave, not as if in a place of entertainment like Barnum's museum or a theater, but as if they were in church."119 By passing around his pamphlets, which held the narrative story he created, Powers ensured that his work's context and symbols were viewed and understood. He guided his viewers' interpretations and understanding of his work through his fabricated narrative. His story not only justified the work's nudity and made it okay for the public to see such a thing, but it also ensured that the public would understand the work in the way that Powers wanted it to be understood.

*The Greek Slave* (Figure 3) holds many symbols within this marble body. One of the many apparent symbols is that of slavery. This statue was a gateway for many to discuss the topic and moral ground for slave ownership. She is also a virtuous woman. "A few symbols clothe her in the language of Victorian virtue. A cross suggests her Christianity and a locket her fidelity to one person. Her pose recalls the modest posture of the Venus de' Medici (Figure 6)."120 The chain she is bound in also holds a dual symbolism, “as a twentieth-century critic has observed, the chain presents both a symbol of her captivity and a barrier to her violation. It emphasizes and hides the secrets of the tightly-clamped legs. To a

119 Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
nineteenth-century audience, then, the chain focused on the statue’s unacknowledged sexuality.\textsuperscript{121} The symbol of purity does not come just from the cross she holds but also from the choice of stone used. Powers chose to use white marble, which "the white marble suggested to its viewers a passion lessness or ideality that contained the desires the sculpture's nudity evoked. Descriptions of the sculpture comment on the ‘pure marble,’ ‘free from blemishes.’ Virtue, innocence, and purity are also ascribed to the sculpture itself, both in terms of the fictional narrative and the observed artwork."\textsuperscript{122} The whiteness of the marble also can be seen by some as a "veil" which covers her nudity, which some proclaimed she is "naked, yet clothed with chastity."\textsuperscript{123} There is also the sentiment that nineteenth viewers felt they could "see" within this work, "Nineteenth-century viewers thought they could see not only the tangible but the spiritual body represented in a work of art."\textsuperscript{124} Powers' statue was an ideal work of art because of the symbols it held within its form. She was idealized through the symbols of purity, chastity, and spirituality, and "she also fits the prototype of perfect womanhood by being physically beautiful."\textsuperscript{125} This statue was not simply that of a woman. Powers carved her with many symbols that viewers could easily understand, giving this work many interpretations.

Shortly after The Greek Slave’s creation and display in the Crystal Palace, this statue became a popular image. "The Greek Slave catapulted Powers to instant stardom after

\textsuperscript{121} Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
\textsuperscript{122} Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
\textsuperscript{123} Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
\textsuperscript{124} Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
\textsuperscript{125} Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
100,000 visitors flocked to see it in London and the United States. In both countries, it garnered much critical acclaim for its beauty and sensuousness, markedly different from the prevailing icy neoclassical style of Canova or Thorvaldsen.”126 People would travel to see it on display, “in the 1840s, more than one hundred thousand Americans flocked to view one of the most controversial artworks of the day: Hiram Powers' white marble statue, *The Greek Slave.*”127 Powers ended up carving eight copies; one was sold to be displayed in a shop in London. "Traveling exhibitions brought *The Greek Slave* to more than a dozen American cities and over a hundred thousand spectators. Thousands more saw it in London at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851, and engravings and copies made it familiar to countless others.”128 Not only did people buy the eight copies that Powers created, but they also ordered casts and busts of the statue. One copy traveled across America and was on display in many different cities. One surviving copy is displayed in the de Young Museum of San Francisco.

Another factor in the popularity of this sculpture is how relatable it was for those who viewed the artwork. This relatability also resulted in many newspaper articles and poems expressing the sculpture’s beauty and message.129 Another factor in the popularity of this work was the concept and fascination with the Orient; many works were created depicting women in the Orient bathhouses or slave markets. "A fascination with the eastern slave market remained a feature of nineteenth-century women's Oriental travel narratives, as in

128 Kasson, “Mind in Matter.”
Sarah Haight's Letters from the Old World (1840), which described a "slave market" in Egypt full of black and white women destined for the harems.\textsuperscript{130} The political situation in America also helped with the popularity of this statue. "Although the figure's nudity helped to promote public interest in and fascination with Powers's Greek Slave, reasons for the sculpture's national acclaim stemmed also from its relation to nineteenth-century political and historical events. Examination of mid-century newspapers and journals suggests that public response to the statute was frequently associated not only with attitudes toward the Greek War of Independence but with the increasing abolitionist controversy in the United States as well."\textsuperscript{131} For many Americans, this statute incorporated the idea that freedom and equality should not be solely for Americans but for everyone worldwide.

In the nineteenth century, the concept of women as victims or captives was popular in art and culture. This was a time of upheaval and social and economic change within society. Statues like Powers raised questions about women’s place and role in society. “The men and women who viewed nineteenth-century ideal sculpture often scrutinized these marble women with an intensity forbidden in the gaze of everyday life. These representations of women sprang from and spoke to the deeply embedded assumptions about gender shared by makers, buyers, and viewers of sculpture.”\textsuperscript{132} Within these statues and their responses, we can see the ideas of nineteenth-century people regarding women, their nature, and what their roles should or should not be within society. Hiram Powers shows an idealized concept of a woman, one

\textsuperscript{130} Winterer, “The Greek Slave,” 167.
\textsuperscript{131} Green, “Hiram Powers's ‘Greek Slave,” 33-34.
\textsuperscript{132} Kasson, \textit{Marble Queens, and Captives}, 2.
that is a pure, innocent woman devoted to her faith and future husband. "Ironically, the idealization of women as fragile, protected, helpless creatures occurred at the very time when some women were beginning to work in factories, to engage in public speaking, and to campaign for an expansion of their legal and political rights. The claim that women needed male protection outside the family represented a self-serving effort to preserve male dominance in a society undergoing rapid changes; but it also reflected a deeper and more ambiguous, if unacknowledged, fear of woman's social and sexual power."\textsuperscript{133} At this time, the idealized sculptures created by Hiram Powers and other artists showed women who were submissive, passive, and vulnerable, which was not necessarily how women were in society. Many women were starting to make their own money and hold their jobs, and the reliance women once had on men as the sole breadwinner was starting to fade out, so the idealized sculptures demonstrate a world in which women are still reliant and in need. It is the male sculpture depicting a world order in which the male is the strong protector type, while the women are submissive and reliant. The idealized sculptures were a way of keeping women captive and submissive in a changing world. The captivity and submissiveness of idealized artworks helped keep men the dominant ones in society.

Idealized works were also about being able to look upon a naked woman. The gaze of the viewers of \textit{The Greek Slave} is not just about looking upon a nude female figure for pleasure but feeding a social idea that men should be the ones to be on top, while women are the weaker sex. \textit{The Greek Slave} addressed this anxiety about the body and sense of female

\textsuperscript{133} Kasson, \textit{Marble Queens, and Captives}, 3.
vulnerability. Literally imperiled by dangerous sexuality, the female subject represents a woman's body at risk."134 The nude figure created many problems for the viewer and artists regarding their discomfort when gazing upon the nude figure. For this reason, Powers worked so hard on his narrative before his statue was displayed; he knew he created a controversial image; he just needed to justify looking at a nude morally. "In order to maintain the ideality of the nude, artists were implicitly required to elevate formal values above subject matter."135 In creating his narrative, Powers made sure his work was seen through a moral lens, and even though it was an erotic image, people would not be “in trouble” or "in danger” for looking at the image, as they only saw the moral dilemma which Powers created.

There was also a difference in where the work was displayed. Powers ensured this work was in a public venue like the Crystal Palace or a private home. "Nudes displayed in family rooms and public venues were considered less risqué than those hung in gentlemen's clubs or those created specifically for private viewing."136 Another framework or viewpoint on looking at the nude in the nineteenth century came from the British Royal Academy and other institutions for teaching artists. They established a theoretical framework for viewing the nude figure. Through life classes, artists learned to draw and depict nude figures from both live models and the copying of ancient statues. "Nude male studies were more favorably received for, unlike the female nude, male bodies did not conventionally connote the erotic and were thus accorded the status of academic studies."137 While the male nude figure has

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137 Smith, *The Victorian Nude*, 62.
always been seen as the ideal image, the female nude has always held a different meaning and level of acceptance. Powers's statue is on sale in a slave market, stripped bare, so the buyer knows what he is getting. Even with the sensitive topic of nude artworks and the controversial nature of these works, "nude statues held the monopoly of fine artworks displayed at the Great Exhibition and helped generate a wider audience for the sculpted nude. Smooth and unblemished, figures like The Greek Slave and Andromeda asserted the moral virtue of the subjected woman while affirming the pure gaze of the beholder."  

Within the Victorian culture, nude figures were okay so long as they had some morality symbolized and attached to them. This caused Powers to create a narrative story for his work to prepare audiences on how they should understand the statue.

In the Nineteenth century, there was a re-emergence of antiquity; this would be called the neoclassical period or movement. Victorians looked back at the classical past to help them form viewers and opinions on their world. "Ideas of masculine prowess owed much to the Victorian view that the classical past was an era of masculine virtue, typified by the ancient cult of gymnastic exercise and pursuit of physical perfection. Whether represented at rest or in movement, it was important that the figure should reveal a healthy physique." Even within the female figures, “a code of morality soon became attached to the time-honored paradigm of the classical nude; the 'antique' proportions and waistline of renowned statues such as the Cnidian Venus equated with health and beauty." That these antique statues

138 Smith, The Victorian Nude, 84.
139 Smith, The Victorian Nude, 173.
140 Smith, The Victorian Nude, 211.
showed healthy, beautiful bodies and these bodies were the sources for artists' education in learning to depict the human figure was a crucial element in neoclassical art. It is a return to the ancient world, to the ancient thoughts on what is beautiful. When looking at the concept that the Knidian (Cnidian) was a healthy and beautiful figure, it is no wonder that Powers's sculpture reflects this ancient work. If the viewpoint were that the Knidian was beautiful, then Powers' own Venus would also be seen that way, and by adding the symbols of purity and modesty that he did, Powers took this image and created something that was not just beautiful to look at but was also morally acceptable.
Chapter 5 Aphrodite and the Modern World

The Praxitelean traditions continue to travel through time. As we have seen, Botticelli and Powers took inspiration from the Knidian. Both used the form and pose to create an idealized, beautiful female nude. Powers took the Knidian form a step further to tell a moral story with religious meaning. Using the Praxitelean style allowed Powers to embed his image with religious meanings. He is not the only artist to take up the canon for a deeper meaning. In 2018, Laura Dumm created a painting for the #MeToo Movement called *A Prisoner No More* (figure 4), inspired by Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* (Figure 2). Here, we have nearly the exact Venus figure, but this time, Dumm uses the ideal beautiful form to challenge society and its treatment of women. Here, we have a modern nude female, but unlike the other artists we have seen, this is not solely about her beauty.

Like Hiram Powers, the Praxitelean icon allows Laura Dumm to adopt the image, alter it for awareness, and demand social change. Through appropriating Botticelli’s Venus, Dumm, like Powers, creates a work full of symbols that give the idealized Botticelli Venus a deeper meaning that goes beyond her beauty. Dumm's appropriation changes the masculine gaze to present this new, original, deeper meaning. The appropriation helps Dumm to convey a message of harm that has been done and must be stopped.

This Venus is nude to show off her body, not just her body but the bruises in the shape of handprints that cover her body. She covers her breasts with one hand, a hand with a broken handcuff. The other holds her hair and covers her genitals. This is a woman using the pudica pose to cover herself for her modesty, to regain some control and dignity of her body. Her head is tilted, looking forward, and one eye is black. Despite her wounds, she stands tall.
against the accusing hands pointing at her. She is an ideal figure of beauty, but the beauty is there to gain attention toward what has been done to her. Using a figure similar to Botticelli’s ideal beauty, we can see that this is not about her beauty but her wounds and what has happened to her. Dumm uses a well-known classical beauty figure as an attention-getter, drawing the viewer's attention to the body as a canvas of violence and demanding social justice.

Dumm's Venus figure stands tall in the center of the canvas with a scallop shell behind her and the sky as her backdrop. Looking closer at this figure, we see that her background behind the shell is simple and set into thirds. The lower third is a lush green grass texture and color, and above that is an orange and yellow hue, giving off the feeling of a sunset or sunrise, that fades into pale blues, which darken into the top third of the canvas. This darker blue portion gives off the impression of a night sky. This simple background gives off the changing of time, like a sunset or rise. However, this image is far from straightforward; a bruised and beaten woman is standing before the setting sun. Dumm's Venus is very reminiscent of Botticelli's iconic figure. Dumm uses Botticelli's figure for her model, giving the image a deeper contextual meaning. This figure is standing like all our other Aphrodite types in the contrapposto pose; she stands tall, hips tilted at an angle, one leg bent, and her hands go to cover herself. Like Botticelli's Venus, her hair is long flowing and covers part of her body. Around one wrist is a handcuff with a broken chain and a knot tattoo on her forearm. Her body is covered in bruises; these marks are in the shape of handprints. Her one eye is black and slightly swollen. This figure breaks the mold slightly by looking more directly forward, toward the viewer; unlike Botticelli's Venus, who looks away from the
viewer, this Venus looks directly at the viewer. She sees the viewer looking at her and makes eye contact. All around the canvas edges are hands pointing, and each wrist is wrapped in a suit cuff. These masculine hands point at Venus as if they are scolding her for something she has done, yet she is beaten. Looking at this work, the viewer can tell there is more going on than hands pointing at a beaten woman.

Dumm's Venus is also full of many different symbols. The scallop shell was a symbol of Aphrodite and was also a symbol of hope and strength. This is one thing this figure has more than beauty; it is her strength that captures and keeps our attention. The tattoo on her arm is the symbol of the #MeToo Movement, and the tattoo is a way for women to communicate that they are not alone and that this has happened to "me too." She has a broken shackle on her wrist as if it were a bracelet, but it is not a piece of jewelry; it symbolizes the woman breaking free, gaining her freedom, and, with it, her voice. The bruises are in the shapes of hand prints, symbolizing that the pain she suffers is at the hands of another. The cufflinks on the hands surrounding her are all from masculine clothing, showing us that the unseen figures accusing her of god knows what are men, most likely the men who covered her in bruises. This beautiful woman is riddled with symbols that take her beauty and put it on the sideline of the more significant story.
This Venus, like the others we have seen, carries many cultural meanings relevant to the
time she was created.141 This image also carries the meaning that Botticelli's Venus has
created, that this image is a classical beauty. "When a painting is put to use, its meaning is
either modified or totally changed."142 Botticelli's Venus has become an icon of beauty and is
known as one of the great works of art. Dumm chose Botticelli's Venus for her politically and
culturally charged work. She uses the weight of the beautiful icon to demonstrate what has
become of women. She uses Botticelli's Venus and completely changes its meaning.

Dumm uses the gaze as a tool in her artwork. Botticelli's Venus is an attention-getter, but
it is also an image associated with the gaze for a long time. The gaze was a tool used by past
artists to help allow viewers to look upon a nude image. To objectify a woman and turn her
into an object to stare at. For millennia, the gaze has "touched" the Knidian image, which
Dumm uses to her advantage. The Knidian, like Botticelli's Venus, has also lived in the
world of objectification at the hands of the gaze. After all, many authors only talk about her
nude beauty; rarely is it discussed that this was a cult image in a temple. For many authors,
the Knidian is just a nude female figure of the goddess taking a bath. In Ancient Greece,
seeing is touching; the act of seeing was associated with the act of touching. The gaze has
been used for centuries by artists to justify not only looking but, in a sense, to touch the
female nude. Dumm's works stop and challenge that process, and the gaze is not used here to

141 Sturken and Cartwright state that "our interpretation of images depends on historical context and our cultural
knowledge-the conventions the images use to play off of, the other images they refer to, and the familiar figures
and symbols they include." Dumm's use of Botticelli's Venus provides Dumm with an image with historical
context; it is a reference to an image considered a masterpiece. Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking,
33.
142 Berger et al., Ways of Seeing, 24.
allow the viewer to look at a nude; rather, the gaze is an assault on women. It is used to
demonstrate that the act of seeing and, therefore, "touching" has caused harm to women for
years.

Dumm created this Venus in 2018, remarkably different from any other period. The
social standards and cultural understanding around nudity in the public eye have changed. It
is more socially acceptable for a nude female figure to be seen; it is in daily culture, from
advertising to films. This Venus does not need a backstory to make it socially acceptable,
unlike Hiram Powers's sculpture. This Venus was not created for private use and viewership
like Botticelli's; Dumm still owns this work. This Venus was created for a social purpose, to
point out what is wrong within society and its treatment of women. Our modern world has
undergone many changes; gender politics and feminist movements have changed the outlook
and way things are approached within art. "Yet when an image is presented as a work of art,
the way people look at it is affected by a series of learned assumptions about art.
Assumptions concerning: Beauty, truth, Genius, Civilization, Form, Status, Taste, etc."

This could not be more true than with Dumm's Venus. At first glance, most viewers will
notice that Dumm's Venus is similar to Botticelli's, an image that has become the icon of
beauty and carries the meaning of a beautiful woman or what one should look like. At a
closer look, the viewer sees the differences, and the assumptions of beauty are subverted and
changed. With a closer look, we can see the beauty of Venus, but that is only a side note to
what is happening. The beauty of this image is not the subject of the work. Dumm's use of

143 Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing*, 11.
the classical beautiful female form draws the viewer's attention to the subject of abuse, mistreatment, and victimization.

Now, Botticelli's Venus (Figure 2) can easily be seen on the walls of the Uffizi Museum in Florence, Italy. It is no longer housed on the walls of a private home; it is out in the open, waiting to be seen by thousands daily. "Art museums have the power both to remember and to forget… In the Enlightenment, armed with the conviction that recognizing beauty in art made it easier for people to recognize moral virtues, public museums focused on bringing art sanctioned by the acknowledged classical canon to a wide audience, for their ethical development and edification."144 After all, Botticelli's great work was not well known and sat hidden away, but now it is a popular attraction; it was once forgotten in time and art history but now sits as an icon and idol. It is also one work that, through its beauty, could have taught the masses about virtue. It is this concept that a virtue can be taught through art, which Dumm relies on for her message. Her Venus is not virtuous because she is beautiful; she has virtue because she stands tall against the wrong done to her. She is not idly sitting by hiding and licking her wounds. She is fighting against injustice and will not be just another victim of sexual violence.

Dumm's (Figure 4) work points out that something awful has happened to her. Unlike many nude female figures before, this is about more than just a beautiful woman to be looked at. This is not an object to be seen but a woman to be heard. According to Berger, "a naked body has to be seen as an object to become nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the

144 Evans and Weppelmann, Botticelli Reimagined, 50.
use of it as an object.) Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display."¹⁴⁵ However, in Berger's sense, Dumm's nude Venus is not an object; the nakedness is on display here, not for pleasure. Throughout the centuries, the masculine gaze has allowed the nude image to be objectified; it is this practice that Dumm challenges with her appropriation of the masculine gaze. The objectification within this work is not her body on display but the use of this body as a canvas for displaying the cruelty and injustice that has been done to countless women because of the objectification of their bodies. The way women are seen as objects and not individuals has allowed for a culture that does not see anything wrong in sexual violence and treats women as if they, by being the victims, are the ones at fault for being used as an object. One reason the #MeToo Movement started to stand against this cultural practice. However, how did this object usage start? "In the art-form of the European nude the painters and spectator-owners were usually men and the persons treated as objects, usually women."¹⁴⁶ From early on, this is what we see in art; artists, generally speaking, have been men, the great works, nude female figures painted from the viewpoint of the male artists. Helen McDonald states that:

Nakedness is the most potent visual sign that a body is available for a sexual encounter with another body. Since art stands between the artist and the spectator, it might be argued that art that represents the naked body severs the artist both as a sexual lure and as a shield against intimacy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Berger et al., Ways of Seeing, 54.
¹⁴⁶ Berger et al., Ways of Seeing, 63.
Nude works of art as a visual sign of sexual availability and sexual lure are what Dumm is trying to fight against. Dumm's appropriation of the masculine gaze, the practice of male artists creating a female nude to meet the desires of the male artist and their male audience, is what Dumm is deconstructing with her work. Dumm demonstrates that this practice of nakedness is a sign that the body on display is open for a sexual encounter has led to the modern rape culture; this is what Dumm is stating is wrong. Through the use of Botticelli's well-known Venus, Dumm's changes to the figure declare that this is not a naked body "available for a sexual encounter." However, Dumm is demonstrating that the practice of perceiving the female body as available is a problem in society. This is what Dumm is demanding must change.

The cultural history we have been handed down for centuries is that the female nude is the perfect work to paint; it is the ideal high art, and it is the ideal image to create. Usually, this nude female figure is a symbol of beauty or some other moral virtue. Women have been removed from their humanness and changed into an object to be used to demonstrate beauty or moral virtue. It is this concept that Dumm utilizes; her nude Venus is a symbol of beauty, and it uses its nudity to challenge injustices done to women.

Another area in which Dumm's Venus must contend is the changes within gender politics. Ideas about women since Botticelli's time have changed. Feminist artists challenged and changed the art world, both in how women artists are treated and the female subject matter as approached in art. "These mainly poststructuralist feminists took a different line of attack, re-deploying techniques and images from popular media as well as from modernist art
to deconstruct images that had been constructed according to the 'patriarchal' ideal."\textsuperscript{148} Dumm’s use of Botticelli is another form of this poststructuralist feminist art. She takes the patriarchal ideal image of the ideal beautiful figure and redefines not only its use but also its meaning. The patriarchal idea is that women are just objects to be used. Dumm challenges this patriarchy, the objectification of the female form, and demonstrates that this objectification has allowed women to be abused.

This leads directly to what Dumm is trying to point out with her work—that of the victimization of sexual violence and the rape culture that has developed in our modern world. We live in a world where women are made out to be the ones at fault and wrong for the sexual violence inflicted on them. They are judged and told they were asking for it or brought the act upon themselves by their choices. At the same time, the men who assaulted them are left unpunished and treated as if nothing they have done or could do is wrong. Women are not believed if they come forward and accuse a man of sexual violence; violence is justified by other men saying the woman was asking for it. This behavior in our society has led to the \#MeToo Movement. A Movement that was born to let women know they are not alone in this, they are not the only victims, and that someone will hear their voice. It is a way of sharing stories and hearing voices that, for far too long, have been silenced and shut down. It is a way of stating that some social practices are wrong and that changes must be made. This is the icon Dumm has created. She did not create an ideal, beautiful nude figure. She created

\textsuperscript{148} McDonald, \textit{Erotic Ambiguities}, 2.
a strong woman using her voice to be heard for herself and every other woman who has been silenced.

Art history is full of women who are the victims of rape; it is a classical subject matter that has become another excellent art form. There are countless paintings and sculptures in the art world full of women running from their rapists, trying to escape, or it is the scene just after the event, which is painted on canvases. Many artists during the Renaissance painted rape scenes but did not title them as such; they are given names like "Kneeling Leda" (Figure 9), a poem from the Greek myth of Zeus's rape of Leda, or titles like "Susanna and the Elders" (Figure 10), another story of a woman being violated. The galleries and halls of museums are full of many works such as this, and many of them are painted by one of the great masters and considered a great work of art. Nevertheless, we do not question the subject matter; we consider the work to be a great one because it was painted by a great master, who was generally a man. Catherine McCormack states that "while all archetypal images of women in a patriarchal society are about the invisible frameworks of power and tacit control of women, it's on the body of the maiden that the violence of this dynamic is most visible. Male artists have typically presented women's bodies to be enjoyed as spectators while the maiden herself is without agency... Moreover, it is in images of sexual encounters that this acting out of power by one body over another has become most normalized as an expression of desire. Behind the maiden is the overriding presence of male desire…"149 It is not unusual to think our modern culture is okay with the rape culture; we

149 McCormack, Women in the Picture, 165.
have been trained through art and different cultural norms that men have power and women are just their objects. Now, women and men are starting to question the normalcy of this behavior and demand it change and justice be given. The object wants to return to humanity and be seen as the individual, not the object of desire.

Figure 9. Leonardo Da Vinci’s *Study for the Kneeling Leda*. (1503-1507)
How has Aphrodite (Venus), the Goddess of Love, become caught up in all this? In our modern world, Venus is everywhere, from makeup commercials to razor blades. She is used to sell fashion and just about every product designed for women. What better way to get women to buy your product than to make them feel self-conscious and, through the use of a goddess, give women the idea that they, too, can be a goddess? The goddess of love is one we have been culturally taught through art and myth and is the ideal form of beauty. No one is more beautiful, and women should strive to be her. The Knidian Aphrodite (Figure 1) by Praxiteles started this trend; she was the first monumental female nude in Western art, an icon of beauty for her perfect proportions, and she was copied and replicated countless times. She also inspired countless artists through the ages. "The Knidian Aphrodite and her reappearance in countless spinoffs has become the irreducible icon of womanhood: that pose, with one leg straight, the other cocked at the hip to accentuate her curves is the default
pose… And it's also the pose that women learn to adopt when the camera turns its lens on them, hand on hip, body kinked to one side to showcase what they have been taught are their greatest assets.”

We have been trained to think that this is beautiful and what we should try to achieve within our lives as women and men have been trained to look for this solely.

The Knidian and Dumm's Venus have more than their pose in common. Laura Dumm demonstrates how women are mistreated and only seen as sexual objects that can be used and abused. The ancient stories about the Knidian tell only of the desire this ancient statue inspired, which fits well with what Dumm is trying to demonstrate. The tale of the stain is considered to be a record of what the Knidian looked like in her temple and how she stood. However, when examining this story more closely, it is about a young man so in love that he hid and came out at night to fulfill his sexual desire. This is a rape story; the young man made love to the statue, a nude woman; he objectified her and used her solely for his desire, without permission from her, if she even could have given it. He desecrated the cult image of the goddess, an image which was thought to be the goddess herself. The Knidian stood taking on these stories, justifying the behavior; she was so beautiful after all that the men could not help themselves. At the same time, Dumm's work is fighting against this concept. Her work is not a justification or object to be used; it is a woman standing against this behavior, demanding justice and accountability.

150 McCormack, Women in the Picture, 44.
This iconic image allows Dumm to point out many things regarding the treatment of women in modern society. However, we must also consider that Botticelli’s painting is one of the most well-known works in today’s world. Everyone has seen an image of it in one way or another. It is on t-shirts, coffee cups, wall prints, fabrics, and almost everywhere.152

"Botticelli’s style is today, perhaps the most recognizable of any early Renaissance painter. His crisply delineated female figures translate well into easily reproduced and manipulated images, and Botticelli’s inventions appear in contexts wholly alien to their original use…”153 By using one of the most known images, Dumm can grab the viewers’ attention and use it to make them think critically about what they are now seeing beyond the known image. By comparing the differences, the viewer can understand that what they see is not the icon of beauty but a victim of violence. Dumm is also not the only artist in the modern world to take up and use Botticelli; others like Cindy Sherman and Warhol have used Botticelli and his motifs within their work. Dumm uses these motifs and figures to create a cultural dialogue and distinction between what happens in our world and what is right.

Laura Dumm is a pop artist; she states that for her work, “I hope that when [people] look at it they feel a little bit of pain, a little bit maybe of the women that have gone through this have felt.”154 Dumm has also described herself as a protest painter, and there is no more considerable protest than her Venus, standing strong and tall against sexual violence while

letting other women know they are not alone in their experiences. Dumm's work is here to point out the flaws within society and fight against them. She states, "being a woman in a man's world, I decided to use Venus, the goddess of love, as the centerpiece of my painting to show how women, for centuries, have been made to feel less powerful than men, and more like property,' states the artist. She continues, 'This painting is not only about the obvious #MeToo movement to end sexual abuse, but also about ending the inequality that we as women have fought to get rid of for decades." Dumm's Venus tells the viewer a story, a tragic and yet hopeful one. It is a story of a woman who was beaten and bruised, a woman of change who can stand up for justice, who can demand equality, and who can make society think twice about cultural norms. By adopting Botticelli's Venus, Laura Dumm can use the Praxitelean tradition and modify it to open up a discussion of social injustice within society. Like Hiram Powers, Dumm uses this image icon as a vehicle for discussion, and the pose allows her to infuse her image with a deeper social meaning.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

"Sensuous, alluring, and magnetic, the goddess of love is a flirtatious, irresistible temptress whose favorite game is sweet seduction. However, she is far more than a mere sex symbol. Aesthetic harmony, refined sensuality, luxury, and elegance are of the utmost importance to her…” Aphrodite, or Venus as she is also known, has always been an inspirational goddess. In this thesis, I argued that the Knidian statue has had a significant impact on the perception of the female nude in art throughout history; because of this statue's iconic nature, it lent itself to be easily copied by artists, which has allowed artists to alter the Knidian image for cultural purposes. Artworks throughout the history of this goddess have been infused with cultural meaning. Praxiteles created the ideal beautiful female nude, and she captivated the minds of many ancient artists who copied her image to create their ideal nude. While artists in the Renaissance studied those same copies of the Knidian, they used the Praxitelean tradition to create their own idealized female nude figure, a figure meant to be beautiful. Later in the Neoclassical period, artists again studied ancient works and traditions to create an idealized female nude that went beyond just being a symbol of beauty and became a religious symbol. In our modern world, Laura Dumm's appropriation of the Praxitelean tradition and Botticelli's Venus create a work that is not an idealized beauty but demonstrates injustice to women and demands societal change. Through the use of Praxiteles's *Aphrodite of Knidos*, artists can create a female nude that stands out in time and also becomes a symbol for its time.

Her beauty and allure helped the Knidian (Figure 1) become a mighty statue that could grant the worshiper's wishes. Praxiteles's traditional methods allowed him to create the first
monumental female nude, but this statue would take on a life of its own. It would become a
destination for travelers and be one of the most well-known statues in the ancient world.

Even today, archeologists still find statue copies and coins with her image across the ancient
Roman empire. The world owes much to Praxiteles, and he created an image icon depicting
the standing female nude figure. Praxiteles made the pose by using the contrapposto on the
Knidian; by creating her naked, he changed how human and female figures were depicted.
Until that time, nudity was mainly for male figures to show identity. The coping of this statue
was not something that went away after the end of the ancient world. As time passed, this
image became how an artist created a nude standing figure, and this practice traveled on
through time. As times changed, so would the Knidian; her image would alter or be adapted
to fit other cultures and social norms.

This statue was popular in antiquity, and Praxiteles created a cult image. A statue of the
goddess Aphrodite Euploia, a goddess who could not only grant love and fertility but as
Euploia she could see to it that sailors arrived at their destination safely. She was born from
the sea foam and traveled the ocean with the help of the winds until she made it to Cypress;
her birth gave her the power to grant safety at sea to sailors, and her powers as the goddess of
love allowed her to bestow love and fertility. People in the classical world would travel far
and wide to visit her temple on the cliffs of Knidos off the coast of modern-day Turkey to
worship her. They brought her sacrifices or offerings; this was a work of art that held power
in their minds but was not just looked at; it was engaged with, people prayed to it, offered it
gifts, they hoped it would grant their wishes. The original statue is lost, but thanks to it being
such a well-copied work, we guess what the original would have looked like; we have copies
like the Belvedere Aphrodite, which we also call The Aphrodite of Knidos. Praxiteles created the ideal perfect woman, the embodiment of love, beauty, and desire—an ideal goddess who held power. Due to the Knidian's popularity, Aphrodite was a popular subject for art. Praxiteles created the formula for depicting the standing female nude when he carved the Knidian; he created the pose and style for depicting the nude female figure. Praxiteles created a genre we call the female nude. Through the methods and techniques he used, Praxiteles created what was considered by Greek thinkers as the ideal beautiful figure. His creation inspired countless ancient artists who altered the pose but kept the figure recognizable as coming from the Praxitelean tradition.

Artists from the ancient world would not be the only ones to subscribe to the Praxitelean tradition. Thanks to the Humanists and their turning back to antiquity, artists like Botticelli could use the Praxitelean tradition and his image icon to create a new work of art that would become just as well-known an image. Botticelli used his training in copying ancient statues to learn how to make the human form and used the philosophies of the Humanists to create a work in ecphrasis with Poliziano’s poem by the same name. Botticelli's The Birth of Venus (Figure 2) was not a goddess of power like the Knidian; no one worshipped her or offered her gifts. This painting could have functioned like a wedding painting, as mythological images at this time did work this way. This painting was a privately seen work, and this was not one that people traveled far and wide to see; this was not on public display in a place of worship. This painting was owned by one man, on display in his house, and only his guests would have the chance to see her. This painting was a mythological painting that took reference
from a poem that retold the story of the goddess's birth. Botticelli used the Knidian form to depict his woman, which became known as an ideal beautiful figure.

After the Renaissance, other artists would also look back on the ancient world for inspiration and training. In the Neoclassical world, artists were also taught by studying ancient works. Hiram Powers strongly believed in what a work of art should do and hold; for him, it needed to have the "unveiled soul" in it, which meant a religious and moral meaning. He believed that using ancient Greek methods of proportion, he could bring the "unveiled soul" out in an ideal work. He created works that were ideal Christian images. *The Greek Slave* (Figure 3) uses the Praxitelean traditions, the form and pose of the Knidian, to show a modest, pure Christian woman. Powers also knew that because of his culture, the prominent views and beliefs meant that nudity was not proper; it was not something a good Christian looked at. To counter these thoughts and make it acceptable for viewers, Powers created a narrative of this figure as a pure Christian woman who has been captured and is on sale in a Turkish Slave Market. He used his story and the Christian symbols he added to the Praxitelean form to make the looking at a nude suitable for his viewers. His culture dictated what was acceptable for people to do; he had to work within the rules of his culture to create an ideal image that held a moral and religious message for him.

In our modern world, we deal with social issues daily. Women face generations of objectification by men and a lack of power to fix inequality. We have developed a world that has what we call rape culture, a culture that makes the victim of rape the person who is at fault, the problem, not the person who was the aggressor in the situation the one at fault. Laura Dumm takes the Praxitelean traditions up; she looks back at Botticelli’s Venus, a well-
known image, and everyone knows this Venus. Dumm (Figure 4) takes that figure and alters it to become a social justice warrior. A member of the #Metoo Movement, a symbol demanding change within our society. Praxiteles's formula allowed Dumm to use the ideal beautiful nude female, abuse it, and ask the world if what had been done to this woman was suitable or acceptable.

What Praxiteles did was create the first monumental female nude in Western art. An image icon was created by a nude woman who would become popular through the copies of this figure in this fashion. The image would become embedded in the minds of humans. This figure's form would become how artists signify nudity to the world. Using this figure, they can also take the form and apply their cultural values or thinking to it to provide a work of art that reflects the time it was created, which can display deeper meaning beyond that of a naked woman.
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