

# ANCIENT NEAR EAST

**BIG IDEA 1: Artists manipulate materials and ideas to create an aesthetic object, act, or event.**

1. **What is art and how is it made?**

Materials (Environment/Geography)

Art making techniques

Why make art? (Function)

**BIG IDEA 2: Art making is shaped by tradition and change.**

1. **Why and how does art change?**

What features/changes of a tradition do you see?

Why was the art influential?

**BIG IDEA 3: Interpretations of art are variable.**

1. **How do we describe our thinking about art?**

What are the **formal** qualities and content of the art?

What is the **context** of the art? (**context = differing interpretations**)

What **attributes** of a work can we attribute to other works of art?  
(similarities and differences?)



What is the **FUNCTION** of this art work?

Gardner's Art through the Ages: A Concise Global History

STOKSTAD, 5th Edition, Chapter 2 Pages 27 - 47

## CONTEXT

**Artistic traditions** focused on **representing royal figures and divinities** and on the function of funerary and palatial complexes. Works of art illustrate the **active exchange of ideas** and artistic styles among the Mediterranean cultures and **influences on the classical world**. The art of the **ancient Near East** (present day Iraq, Syria, Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Palastine, Jordan, Cyprus) is associated with the city-states and cultures of **Sumerian, Akkadian, Neo-Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persia**. **Artistic innovations** (development of writing, the human figure) and **conventions** (canons) provides a foundation for subsequent artistic traditions within the region and beyond. There was **constant political change** in the region because of the geography and they were **slow to construct unified communities** because of the **openness to the outside world**.

**Religion plays a significant role** in the art and architecture of the ancient Near East. **Cosmology** guided representation of deities and kings who, themselves, **assumed divine attributes**. Artists created fully developed formal sculptures of **human figures and artistic conventions** representing the human form - **a combination of profile and three-quarter view**. Important figures are set apart using a **hierarchical scale** or a division of composition into **horizontal sections or registers** which provide **early examples of historical narratives**. Architectural representations include **monumental ziggurats and monumental settings** for worship of many deities, that **proclaimed the power and authority of rulers**. Architecture was restricted by available materials. There were **no stone quarries or forests** so the use of **mud/sun baked bricks** was the technology.

## ARTWORKS

12. White Temple and its ziggurat, Uruk

14. Sumerian Votive Offerings

16. The Standard of Ur

19. Code of Hammurabi

25. Lamassu

30. The Audience Hall (apadana) at the Citadel at Persepolis

**Additional image:**

Victory Stele of Naram sin

**From Prehistoric:** Beaker with Ibex motifs  
Anthropomorphic stele



## TIMELINE/MAJOR CIVILIZATIONS

Sumerian Art: 3500-2332 BCE  
Akkadian Art: 2332-2150 BCE  
Neo-Sumerian Art: 2150-1600 BCE  
Babylonian Art: 2150-1600 BCE  
Assyrian Art: 1600-612 BCE  
Neo-Babylonian Art: 604- 559 BCE  
Persian Art: 525-330 BCE

## VOCABULARY

registers/friezes

lapiz lazuli

hierarchy of scale

votive offering

cella

stele

apadana

z axis