

Apulu and Augustus as General Etruscan and Early Roman Empire

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The Etruscans, residing in the middle of Italy (which included Rome) during the 800-400 BCE time were seafaring people. And thus had the capability to travel to surrounding areas and observe art techniques and styles that Greece and other places had. One of the techniques unique to the Etruscans, was their development of using terracotta for statues and other artwork. That would have required hand forming clay and molds, and also some sort of kilns. This would be a new technology and allow for a much easier and faster way of producing a three dimensional figure. Their statues were painted, just as marble statues from Greece were.

The Apulu which dates to about 500 BCE was sort of at the end of the Archaic Period, same time as the Greek Kroisos. In a way, they are kind of similar. The canon of proportions is about the same. The faces and bodies look pretty stiff and the bodies are grounded. The feet are moving, and an archaic smile and facial features are not all that different. Granted, the Apulu is clothed

and much more animated, and the flow of the hair is more relaxed. The vivid movement of the arms and flowing clothes provide the most striking and dramatic difference. The god, Apulu would have originally stood at the top of the Portonnacio Temple as part of a set of four statues depicting the labors of Herakles. As Greeks believed in numerous deities, so did the Etruscans. Their temples were constructed of wood, mud, and brick rather than marble and stones of the Greeks, were shaped differently, and included multiple cellas accessed through a stairway. The belief in divinities was at their core.

Augustus as General dates from 20 BCE, around the time of the Early Empire. The pose in one sense is very similar to Apulu, with outstretched arm. At this period in Rome, emperors were typically deified upon their death. Statues always showed them with an idealized body configuration, and never aging. One possible comparison to Greek art is with the Doryphoros - almost the same proportioned pose here as well, except for the outstretched arm. While it's difficult to determine the degree of contrapposto because of the toga, the identical position and structure of the legs is startling. Romans of this era would have been familiar with the Doryphoros, because as a wealthy society, they had imported marble copies of many Greek sculptures, including a copy of Doryphoros found in Pompeii. Statues of the Roman elite would be shown in any number of poses, as characters or gods – displayed liberally in locations both indoors and outdoors for all to see. This statue shows Augustus playing the part of general and wearing a breast plate, highly ornamented with battle reliefs, arm outstretched as addressing his troops, and Cupid at his feet, confirming his godly position.

I'm worried I'm getting a foot fetish, because as I've done in the past, I magnified the images to get a closer look, and noticed a pretty big bulge on Augustus' right ankle. I don't know if that's on purpose or not, but it looked pretty strange. Out of curiosity, I did a bit of research, and found that the deformed shape of the ankle is consistent with gout. And lead poisoning (particularly from cooking pots, lead pipes that carried drinking water, and water for baths) was a common cause of gout which was rampant among the aristocracy in this Roman era. I could not find any specific evidence linking this explicitly to Augustus, but the suffering of this disease has been well documented in several sources to have affected the majority of emperors during the Early and High Empire period. (Most intriguing title: "Roman Empire's Fall is Linked with Gout and Lead Poisoning.")