

Problems and features of temple sculpture

The Greeks built temples for display. They were meant to impress and provide great beauty for all to see. When artists were employed to sculpt features on temples there were several problems that they had to take into consideration, friezes, metopes and pediments.

One of the first problems the artists confronted were metopes. These were placed just inside the entrance. The reason for metopes being difficult for artists to make were their rectangular shape and only one caption could be used and would have to be instantly recognisable to the observer. The figures would also have to be in the right proportions. The *Herakles and the Kerkopes* metope from Temple C at Selinus is a quite successful example of a metope. The artist has managed to fill the space well. Herakles is the dominant feature of the metope standing tall and strong holding both of the Kerkopes on his shoulders. His legs are facing sideways while his body is facing forward, as is with the Kerkopes body. This pose is not very realistic but it does imply some movement in the figures. This metope includes symmetry with both the Kerkopes looking identical, focusing the viewers eye on Herakles the main character. Though the Kerkopes are looking identical to one and other. The faces of the figures do not seem very realistic especially with the Kerkopes so repetitively patterned showing how at that time the Greeks were more interested in geometry than realism. The metope is filled with diagonal lines, Herakles legs, vertical lines, the Kerkopes hanging bodies and horizontal lines, the Kerkopes leg. This metope has filled the rectangle shape, the proportions of the figures are correct and there is a recognisable scene. However the figures are not particularly lifelike which spoils the effect of the metope, if they were more realistic this would enhance the image.

Friezes were another problem for artists they ran along the outside of the temples and were a predominant feature, but were also difficult to design successfully. The difficulties with friezes were that they were long and narrow, therefore fitting the characters in and in the correct proportions was hard. Again, a scene would have to be identifiable instantly. The frieze of Siphnian Treasury, portraying the *Battle of gods and giants* is what I think to be an excellent example of a frieze. As the frieze was made out of marble finer detail could be added, this was good because the more detail the greater the realism. On the left of the frieze are the gods and a lion which pulls the golden chariot of Cybelle and on the right the giants with there three shields. The figures are all slightly bent down, thus meaning if they stood up straight they would still be in the right proportion. The artist has managed to fill the space exceptionally well, with a dead body lying vertically along the ground, also adding drama, the repeating patterns of the shields and the many men fighting. Although, in the centre of the frieze is a giant fleeing, his body is facing to the right and his head has done a 180° turn which is an implausible position. I think that the creases of Apollo and

Artemis's clothes are very cleverly done and adds to the realistic effect. Overall, I think that this frieze is magnificently represented and beautiful.

The one other main focal point that artists confronted was the pediments these faced the east and west and were where the entrances to the temples stood. The problems that the artists faced with the pediments were there unusual shape, triangular. Also, a scene had to be fitted in the correct proportion, have a consistent scale and be identifiable. In the west pediment of the Temple of Aphaia at Aegin the artist has cleverly shown *The Greeks fighting the Trojans*. This scene is in mid action with Athene standing domineeringly in the centre of the pediment. This symbolises the power of the gods, watching over the struggle. As the area slopes down to the corners the artist has got the men kneeling, falling down and dying filling the space. I think this pediment shows an amazing battle scene and is very interesting.

Generally I feel that the artists of temple sculpture managed to overcome these problems and made beautiful and very attractive historical pieces of art.