

Venus and the Classical Gaze: an Analysis of Provincial Depictions of the Goddess of Love

Meg Warriner - 210033911

Email: c1003391@newcastle.ac.uk - Student of Ancient History and Archaeology

Aims:

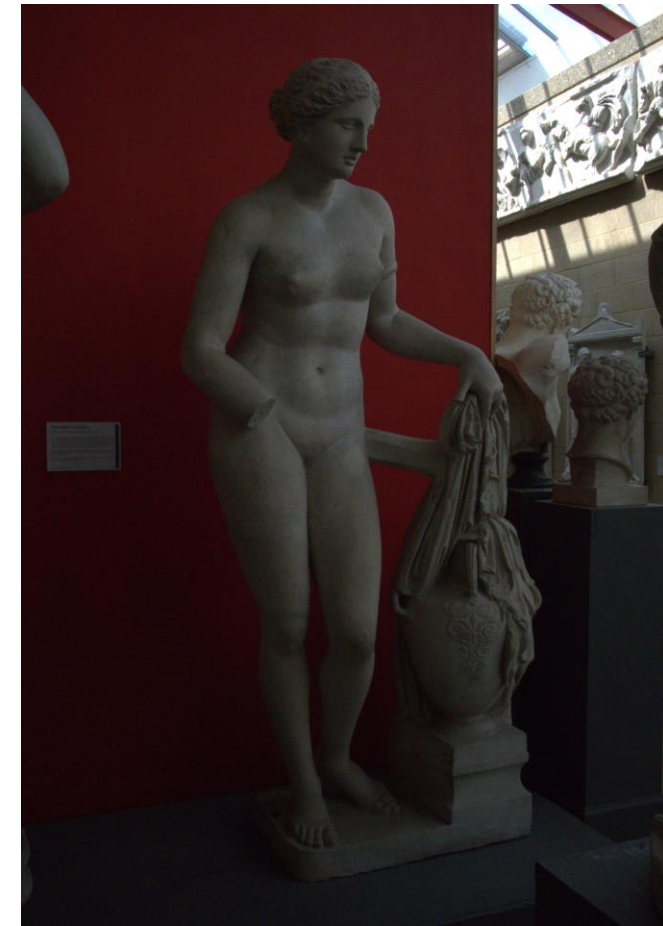
- Look at a wide range of depictions of the Goddesses from the 4th Century BC to the 5th Century AD with varying production methods
- Identify chronology of influence
- Highlight the importance of the effect of individual artistic choices in ancient art

Method:

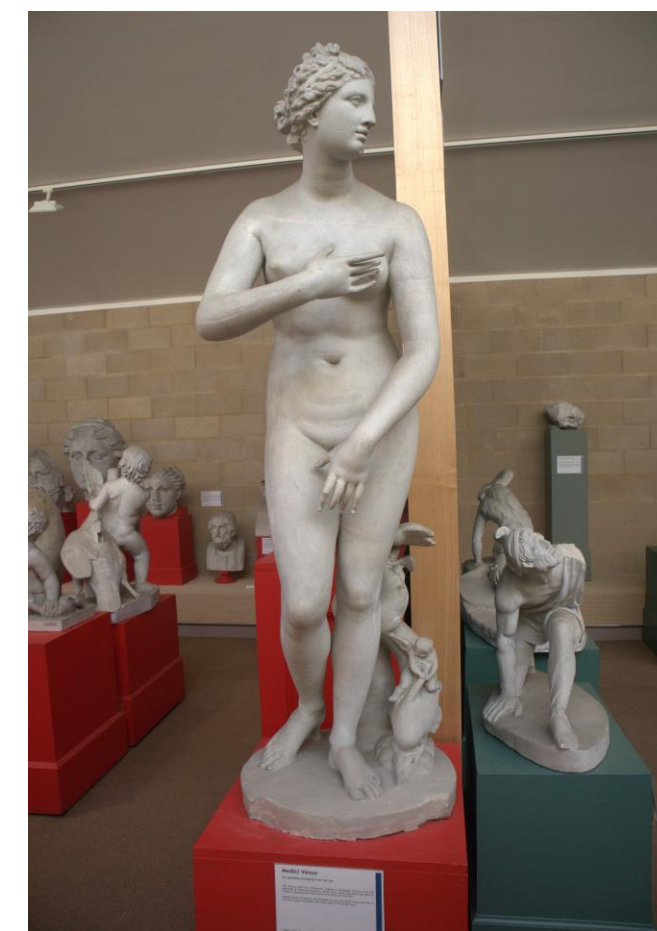
This project had a focus on the Roman Goddess Venus and her Greek counterpart Aphrodite. In order to undertake my artistic analysis, it was essential for me to visit a range of artistic depictions of these goddesses.

I used my skills in photography and sculpture to make this an interdisciplinary subject: overlapping my academic archaeological analysis with my artistic one.

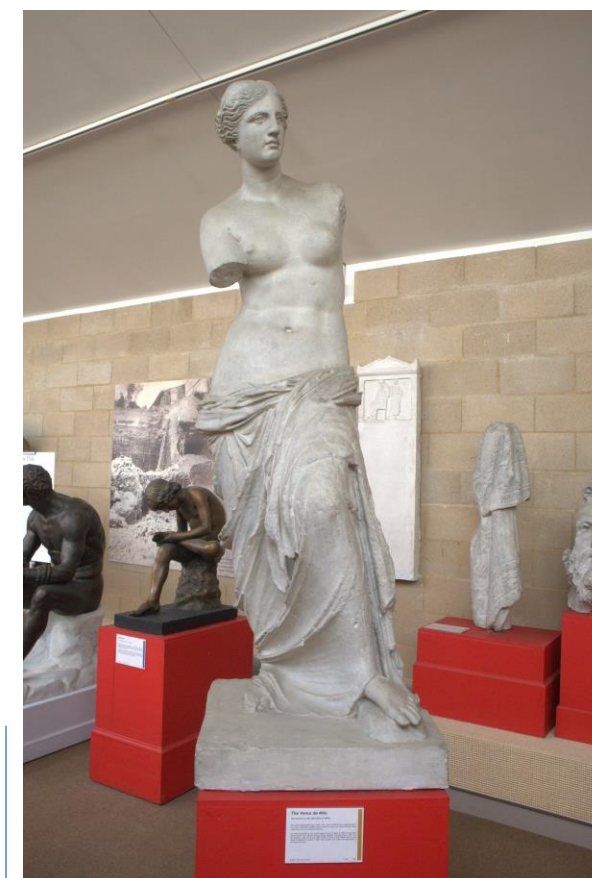
I photographed a number of figures depicting Aphrodite and Venus and analysed the chronology of influence. I then sculpted my own piece based on the artwork I visited.



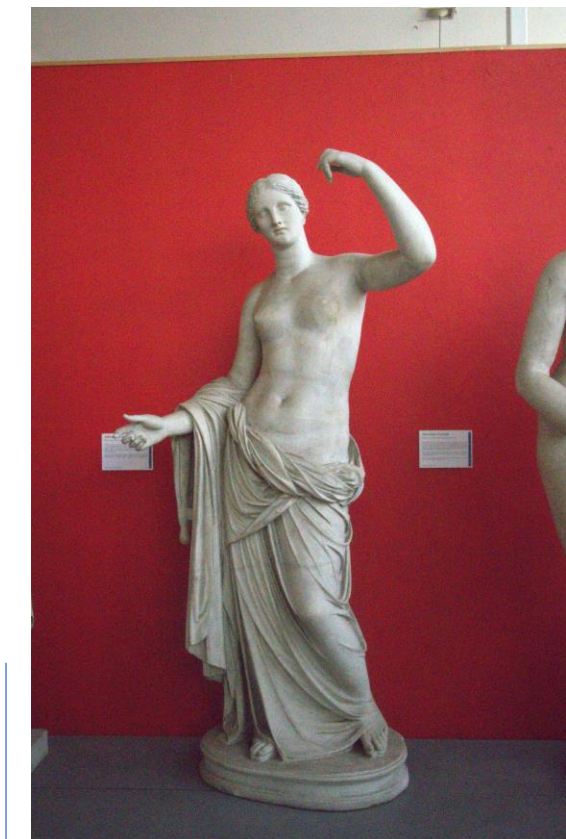
Roman Copy of Aphrodite of Knidos
Mid 4th Century BC



Medici Venus
Early 2nd/ Late 1st Century BC



Venus De Milo
1st Century BC



Aphrodite of Ostia
1st/ 2nd Century AD



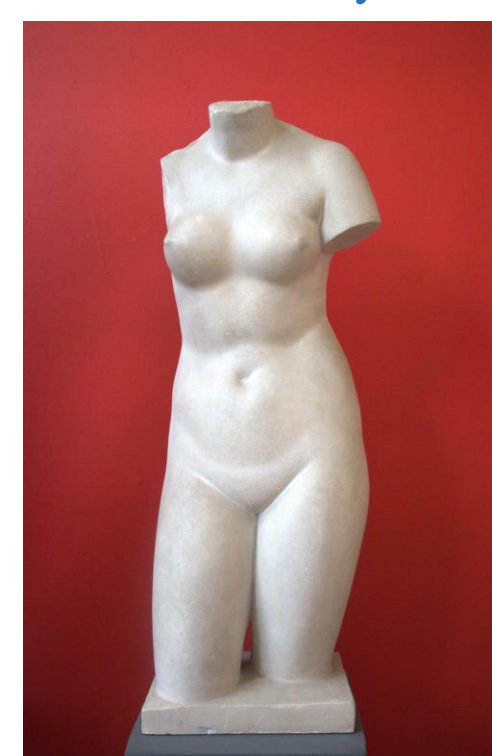
Rudston Venus Mosaic
Late 3rd Century AD



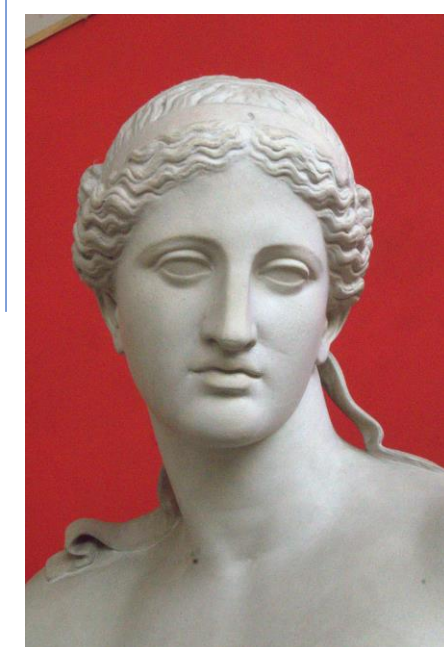
Aphrodite of Knidos

Original Greek work by Praxiteles
Created 360 BC, lost but hugely inspired later works.

Torso of Aphrodite
Mid 4th Century BC



Aphrodite of Arles
1st Century BC



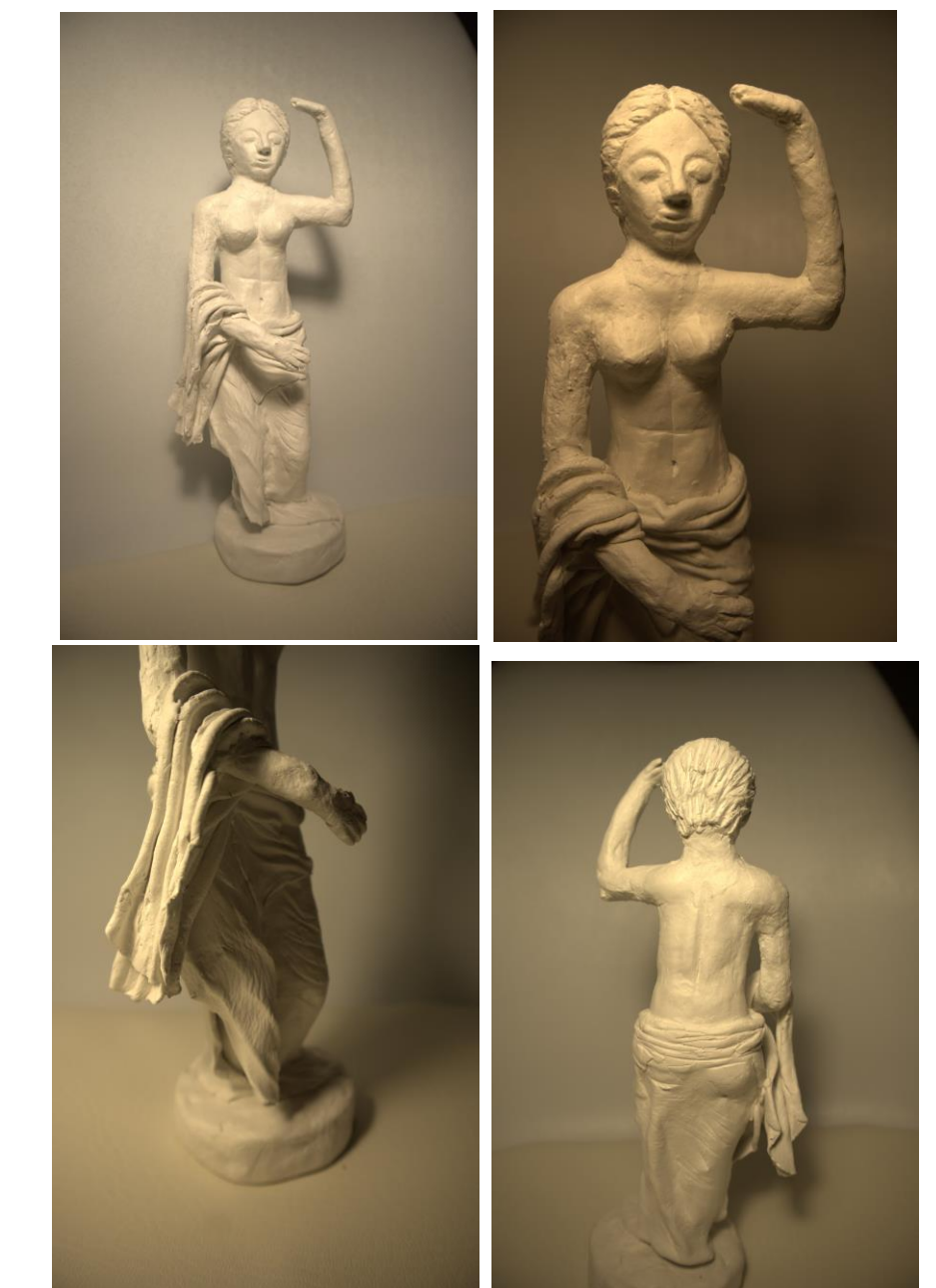
Chesters Venus Fragment 1281
43-410 AD



Chesters Venus Fragment 1280
43-410 AD



My Venus Sculpture-Project inspired by research



Findings:

My research revealed a clear Chronology of influence, emphasising how the Aphrodite of Knidos had such a vast and lasting impact on the depictions of Venus and Aphrodite right through until the modern day.

It was also interesting to note the emphasis on organic and realistic depictions of the female form to represent a deity and how this could interact with beauty standards in the modern world.

The Venus De Milo was particularly significant when considering how individual artists experiences and choices could affect their work- for example, the conch shell depicted in the Triton's hand was originally a conch shell from the origin myths of Venus but the artist was a native Briton and- having likely never seen a conch shell before- they substituted it for a torch.

I enjoyed looking at these pieces from an artistic angle, considering what may have served as inspiration for these artists. The concept of Venus as the Goddess of Love means she is always seen as strikingly beautiful- and these artists must have been inspired by the beauty in the women they saw around them. It is amazing to consider how these wonderful pieces of art act as an immortalisation of the beauty of women in the past.

My piece was influenced by the echoes of the Aphrodite of Knidos still present within the later pieces, but also by the smaller scale and portability of the later Romano British depictions.

Conclusions:

- I completed a thorough investigation of a wide range of representations of the goddesses Venus and Aphrodite, and used this to influence my own artistic piece
- Through my research, I managed to identify a key chronology of influence throughout the range of artistic depictions that I studied
- I pinpointed areas in which individual artists had significant influence on the final produced pieces, and also clearly demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary studies by combining artistic analysis with my archaeological knowledge.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my wonderful supervisor Professor James Gerrard for his help and support with this project, and also Frances McIntosh for her support with access to artefact databases, museums and photos.