

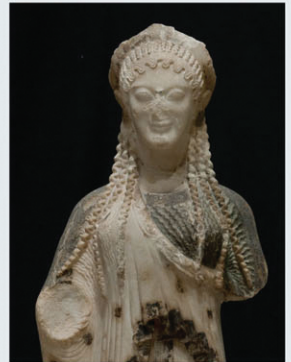
Archaic Colors



In the Archaic Gallery, observant visitors will discover color; red on the dressed hair of the *Peplos Kore*, dark blue on the hair and beard of the Three-Bodied Daimon, green on the chiton of the Chios *Kore*, and dark brown on the eyebrows and eyes of *Kore* 684. They cannot, however, imagine that the grayish meander on *Kore* 680 was originally blue, nor guess that the amazing dark meander on the central fold of the chiton of *Kore* 594 was originally red and blue, and that the beautiful dark rosette ornament on the chiton of *Kore* 682 was bright blue. Moreover, the *Peplos Kore*'s hair was once brown, not red, and the chiton of the Chios *Kore* a blue that over time changed to green.

For the next twelve months, the Acropolis Museum wants to conduct research on its unique collection of archaic statues, which retain their colors to a small or large degree, and to open a very extensive discussion with the public and various experts on color, its technical issues, its detection using new technologies, its experimental use on marble surfaces, its digital reconstruction, its meaning, as well as the archaic period's aesthetic perception of color. So far, scientific research into the color found on ancient sculpture has made great progress and reached surprising conclusions that to a large degree refute the stereotypical assumptions regarding ancient sculpture. It turns out that color, far from being just a simple decorative element, added to the sculpture's aesthetic quality.

The Pythagoreans held that the four basic colors of the ancients, white, black, red, and ochre were associated with the four primary elements of the cosmogony: air, water, fire, and earth. Empedocles developed the same theory in great detail, maintaining in the *Optics* that colors were perceived by the eye through appropriate receptors that received the "particles" that colors emit. Finally, Diogenes of Apollonia, defined diseases by using the basic colors to divide people into color categories, i.e., red, the yellow-red of a flame, black, and white. For ancient Greeks and their society, color constituted a way to characterize various attributes. The blond hair of the gods projected their power; the brown skin of warriors and athletes was a sign of virtue and valor, while the white skin of the korai expressed the grace and radiance of youth.



The Museum's initiative on Archaic Colors is based on very careful observation, on spectroscopic analysis, on special photography sessions, on efforts to reproduce the colors of antiquity and then to apply them on Parian marble, and naturally, on searching through written sources for valuable information on the pigments.

The statues' crisp, saturated colors, on bright garments and tender bodies, combined with the rich jewelry, frequently made of metal, and elaborately curled hair created a singular aesthetic pleasure, making the archaic statues "wonderful to behold" for the people of the period.

