



# The Visual Cultures of Classical Greece

Prof. Dimitris Plantzos

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- Introduction [1/10]
- What is “Greek” about Greek art [8/10]
- Narrativity and story-telling [15/10]
- **Nemea – Olympia – Delphi field trip [19-20/10]**
- Monumentality [22/10]
- The visual cultures of Greek pottery [29/10]
- **National Museum class [8/11; 11:00-13:00]**
- **Midterms [12/11]**
- **Acropolis Museum class [22/11; 15:00-17:00]**
- Materiality [26/11]
- Agency [3/12]
- *Mimesis* [10/12]
- Realism [17/12]

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# Iconography:

- **ICONOGRAPHY** studies the form, content and meaning of images as they appear on monuments and every type of object created by any particular cultural group
- Images may be **pictorial** (or *iconic*), that is rendering recognisable forms or compositions of a narrative nature, or **aniconic**, i.e. simple abstract shapes and patterns.



# “Style”:

- **STYLE** is the system of all particular technical and formalist elements, frequently idiosyncratic in nature, which differentiate a work of art from the works of other cultures, periods or workshops.
- In classical archaeology style is frequently used as a tool for the chronology and interpretation of the artefacts it studies.

**“*style* is any *distinctive*, and therefore *recognizable*, way in which an act is performed or an artefact made”.**

**Ernst Gombrich**

# How does one look at (Greek) art?



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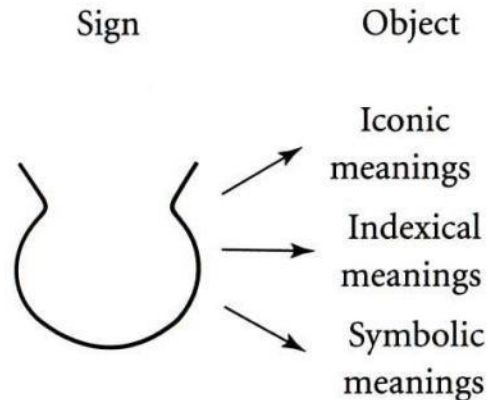
- (Greek) art is a matter of aesthetics



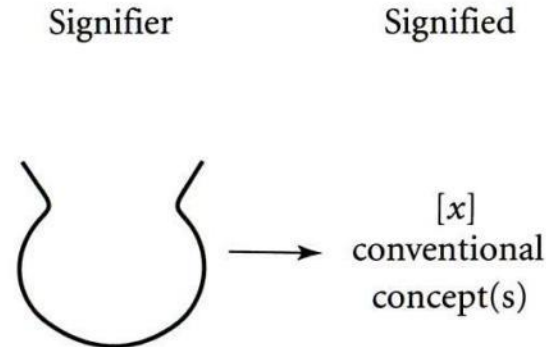
# How does one look at (Greek) art?

- (Greek) art is a matter of aesthetics
- (Greek) art is language

Peirce's model



Saussure's model



**Erwin Panofski (1892-1968): “the content of a work of art, in contrast with its subject, is what there is, but is not visible at first glance”.**



# How does one look at (Greek) art?

- (Greek) art is a matter of aesthetics
- (Greek) art is language
- (Greek) art is a social construct



# Greek art's inherent qualities:

- **Anthropocentrism:** ancient Greek art shows a primary interest in the human form and its actions. By 'human form' we mean every manifestation, real or imaginary, and every human-like figure, mortal or immortal.
- **Narrativity:** the images in ancient Greek art refer to mythical or historical events and situations in a suggestive and often abstract way.

# Greek art as social function:

- **Cultic**
- **Ritual**
- **Political**
- **Utilitarian**

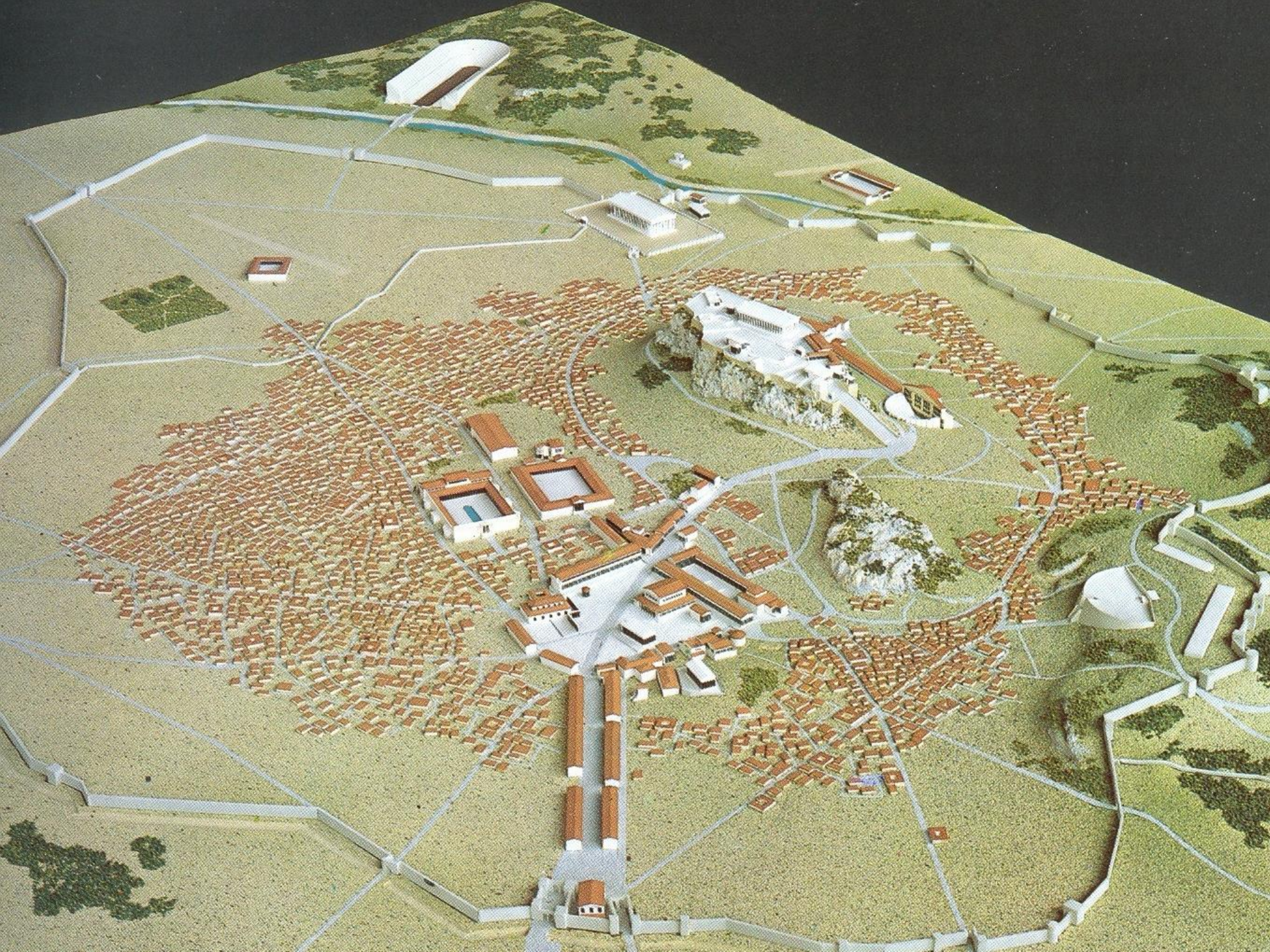




**9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE**

# The Dipylon Vases (c. 750-730 BCE)



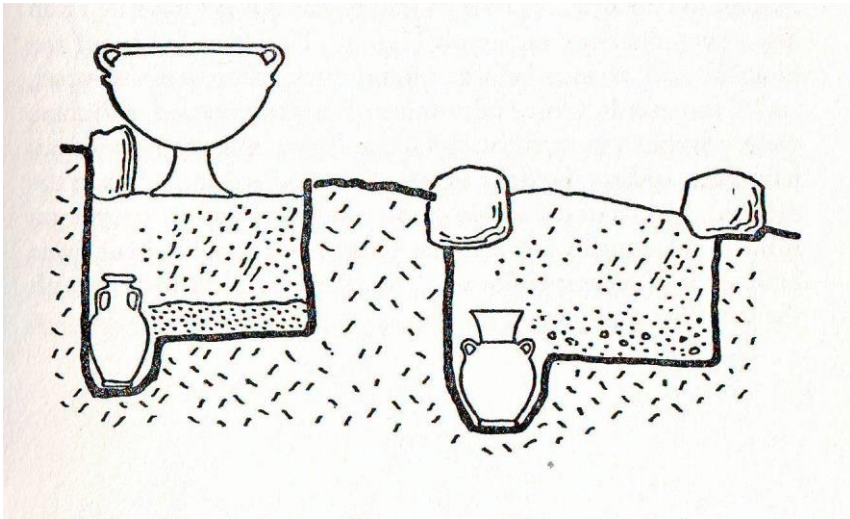


# The Dipylon Vases (c. 750-730 BCE)



*Semata* [grave markers]

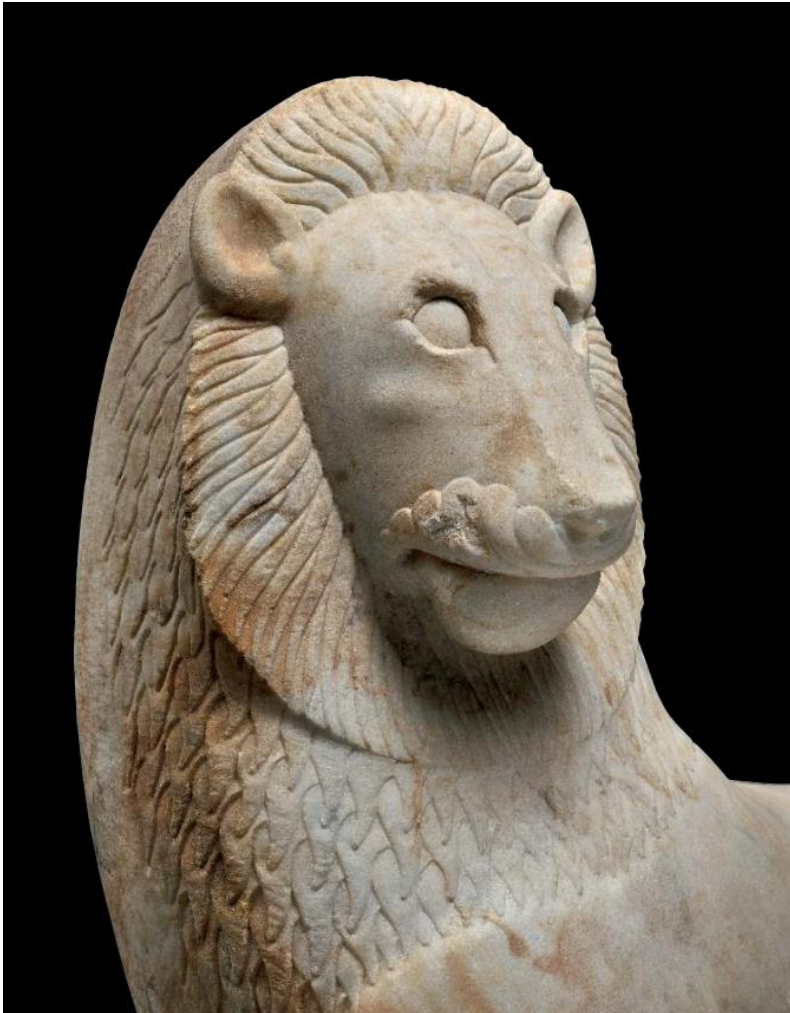
# The Dipylon Vases (c. 750-730 BCE)



*Sema* [grave marker]



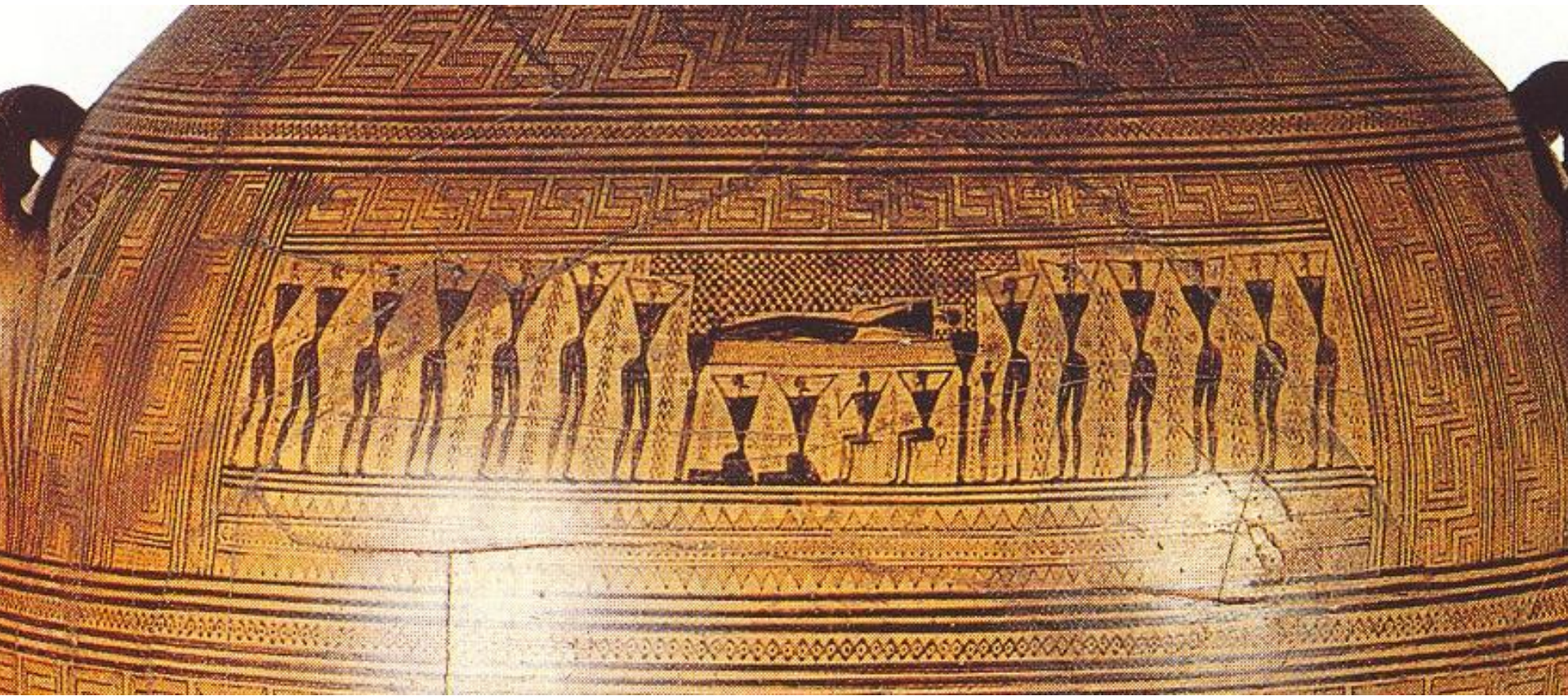
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Banou & Bournias:  
pp. 36-73



*prothesis*



*ekphora*



# *chariots*



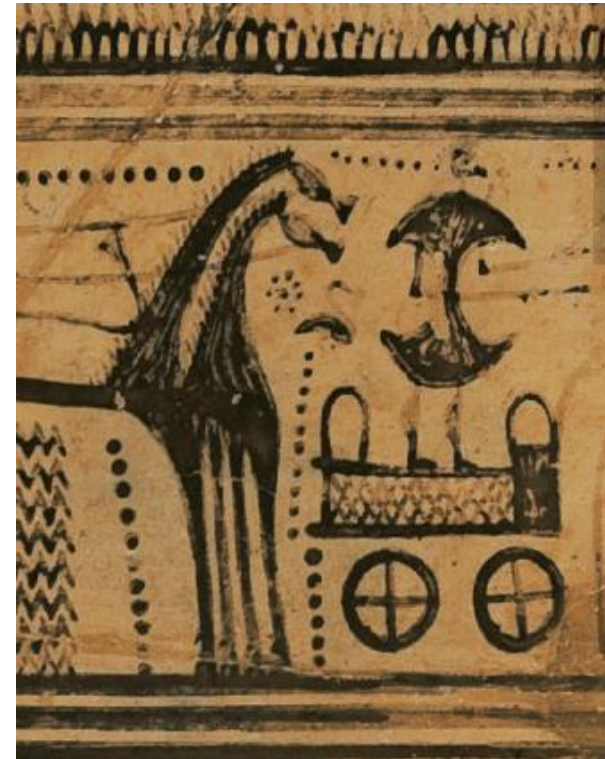
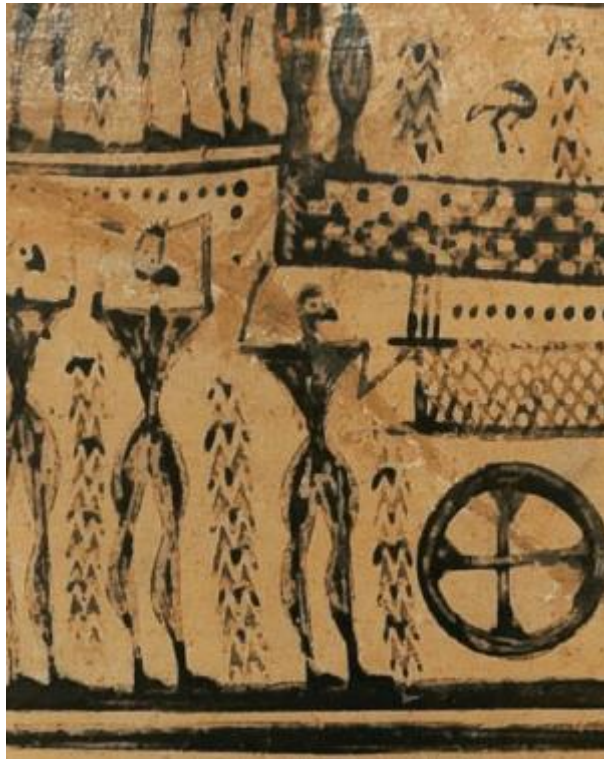
# ***battle scenes***



***ships***



# From pictures to scenes





# From pictures to scenes



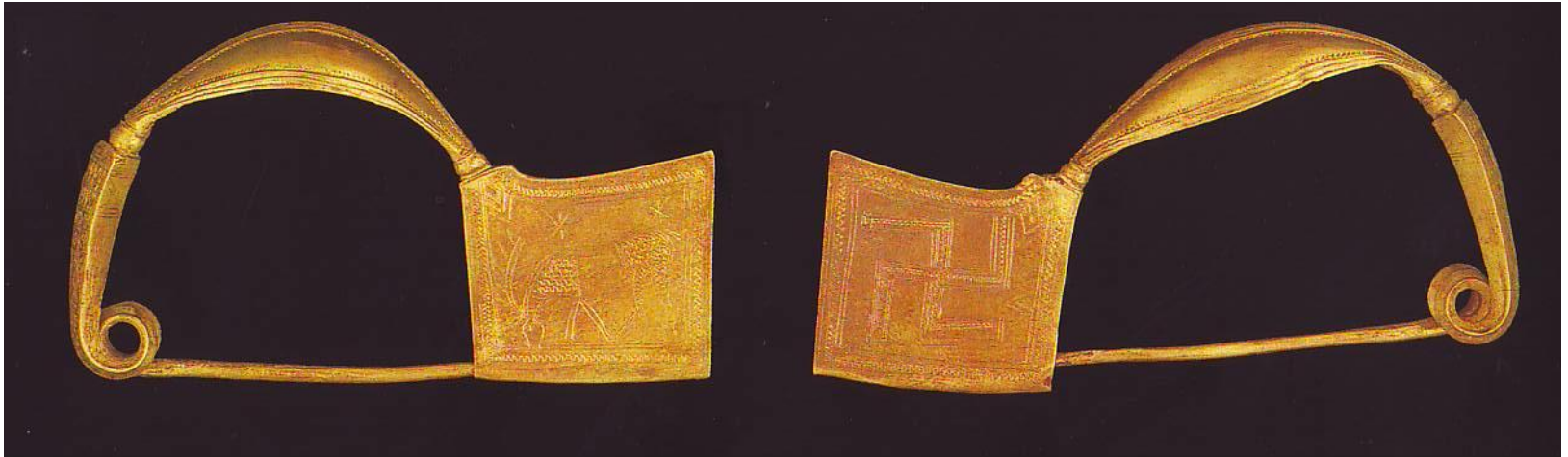
- *Scenes* are...
- *pictures* ...
- with narrative content...
- or images alluding to narratives in any way





Eleusis, Geometric cup. 8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE





**Gold brooches. 8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE**



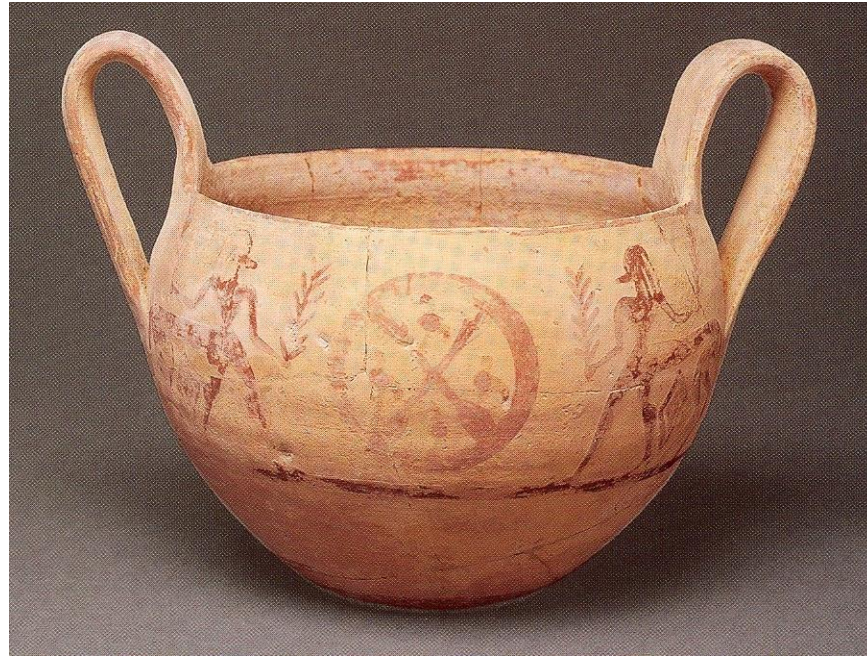
**Bronze brooch. 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c. BCE**

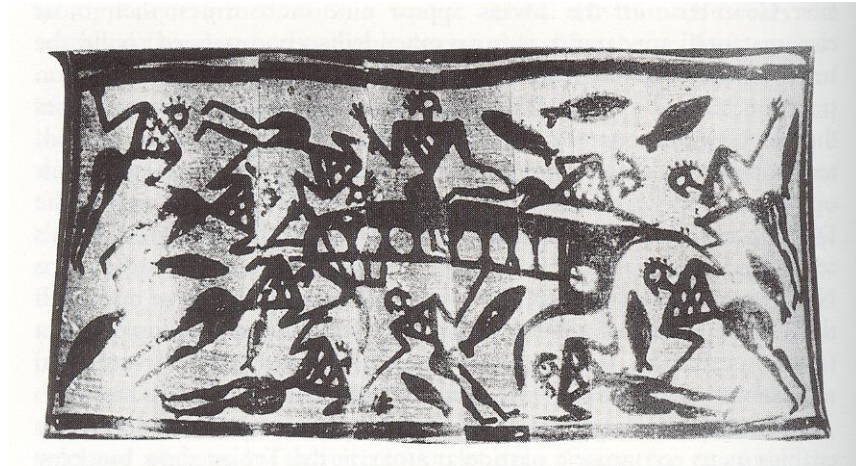




**Stone seal.**  
**8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.**



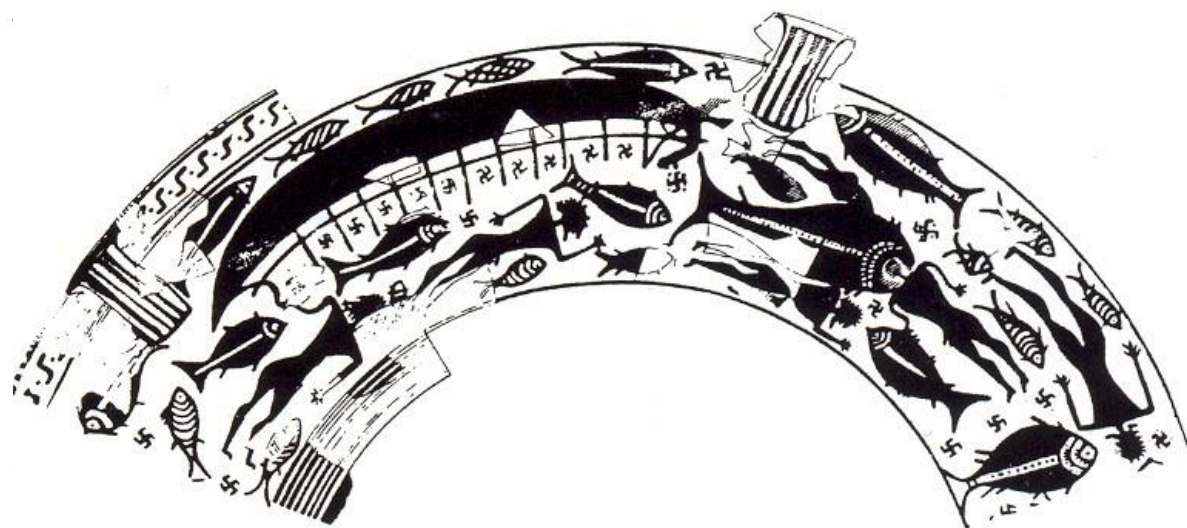
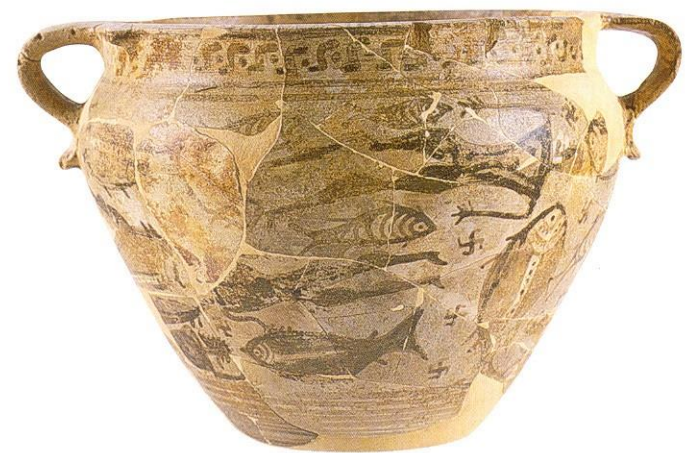




**Oenochoe.**  
**8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.**



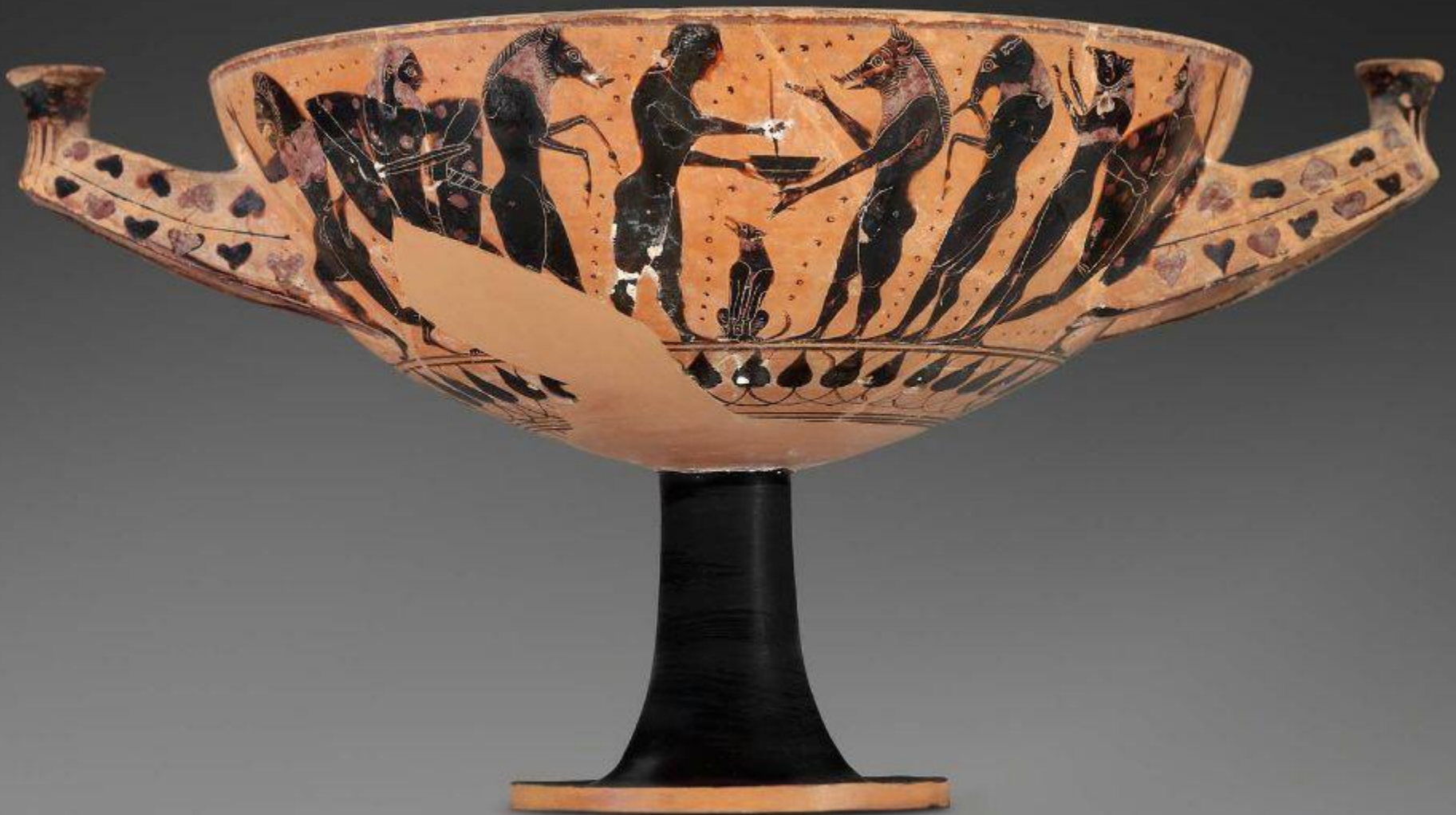
**Skyphos.**  
**8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.**







**Krater.**  
**7<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.**



**Kylix.**  
**6<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.**

# Synoptic story-telling technique:





# Monumentality

## *Reading:*

Plantzos 2016: 103-137.

Whitley 2001: 195-230.

Hurwit 1985: 179-202.

## *Survey:*

Kaltsas 2007: 175-253.