

Gandhara Art

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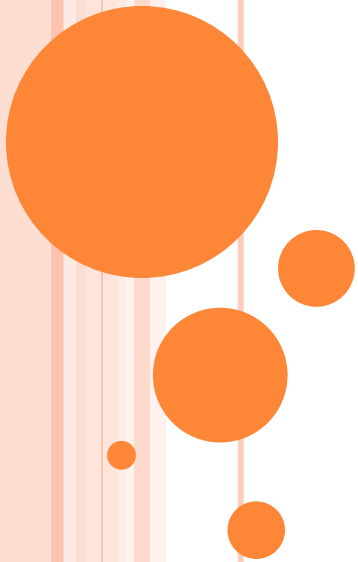
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GANDHARA ART

Gandhara art, style of Buddhist visual art that developed in what is now northwestern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE. The style, of Greco-Roman origin, seems to have flourished largely during the Kushan dynasty and was contemporaneous with an important but dissimilar school of Kushan art at Mathura (Uttar Pradesh, India).



The Gandhara region had long been a crossroads of cultural influences. During the reign of the Indian emperor Ashoka (3rd century BCE), the region became the scene of intensive Buddhist missionary activity. And in the 1st century CE, rulers of the Kushan empire, which included Gandhara, maintained contacts with Rome. In its interpretation of Buddhist legends, the Gandhara school incorporated many motifs and techniques from Classical Roman art, including vine scrolls, cherubs bearing garlands, tritons, and centaurs. The basic iconography, however, remained Indian.



- The materials used for Gandhara sculpture were green phyllite and gray-blue mica schist which in general, belong to an earlier phase, and stucco, which was used increasingly after the 3rd century CE. The sculptures were originally painted and gilded.
- Maitreya Bodhisattva Maitreya, schist from Gandhara, Pakistan, Kushan dynasty, 2nd–4th century CE; in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.(more)
- Gandhara's role in the evolution of the Buddha image has been a point of considerable disagreement among scholars. It now seems clear that the schools of Gandhara and Mathura each independently evolved its own characteristic depiction of the Buddha about the 1st century CE. The Gandhara school drew upon the anthropomorphic traditions of Roman religion and represented the Buddha with a youthful Apollo-like face, dressed in garments resembling those seen on Roman imperial statues. The Gandhara depiction of the seated Buddha was less successful. The schools of Gandhara and Mathura influenced each other, and the general trend was away from a naturalistic conception and toward a more idealized, abstract image. The Gandhara craftsmen made a lasting contribution to Buddhist art in their composition of the events of the Buddha's life into set scenes.

