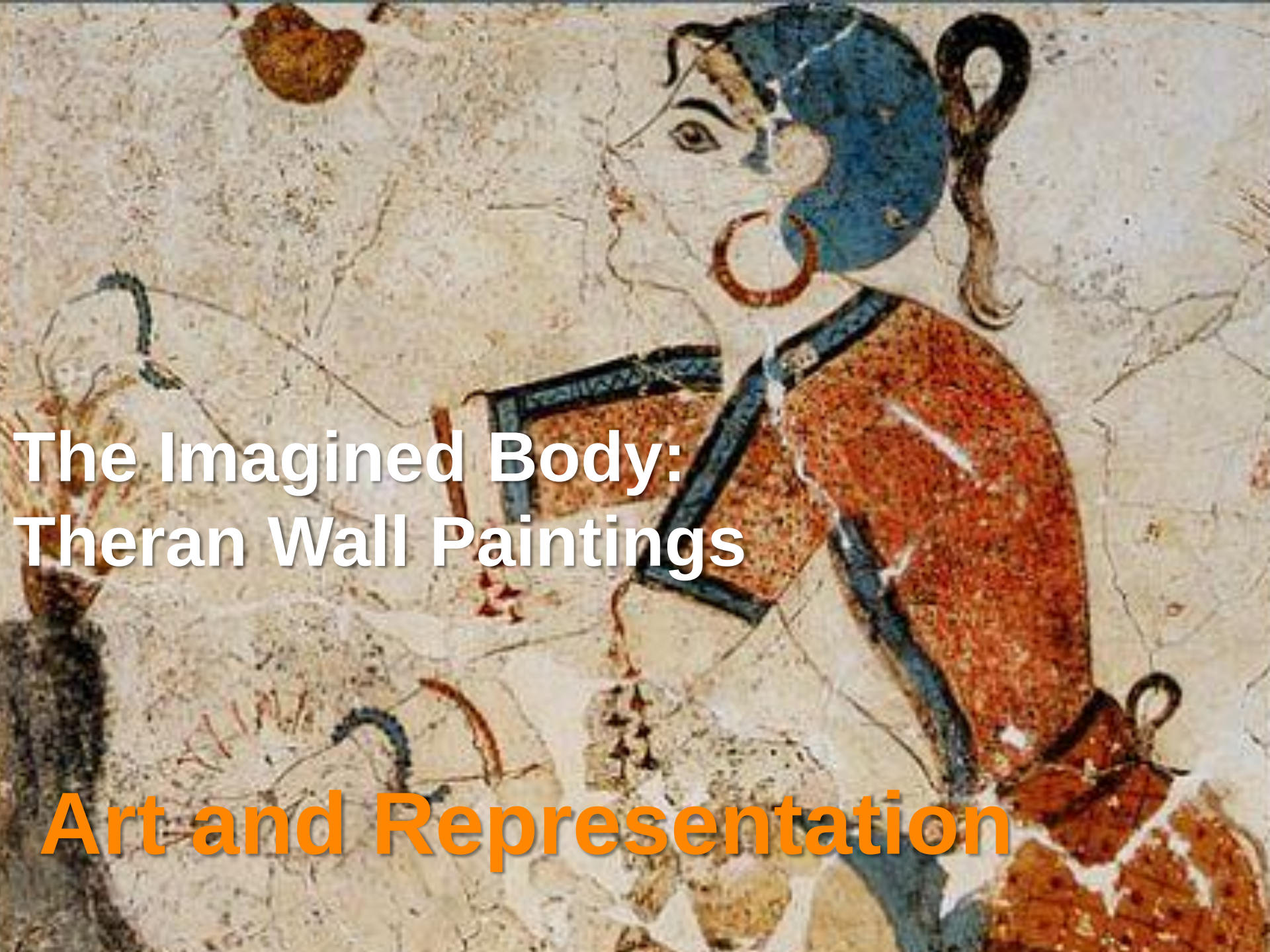


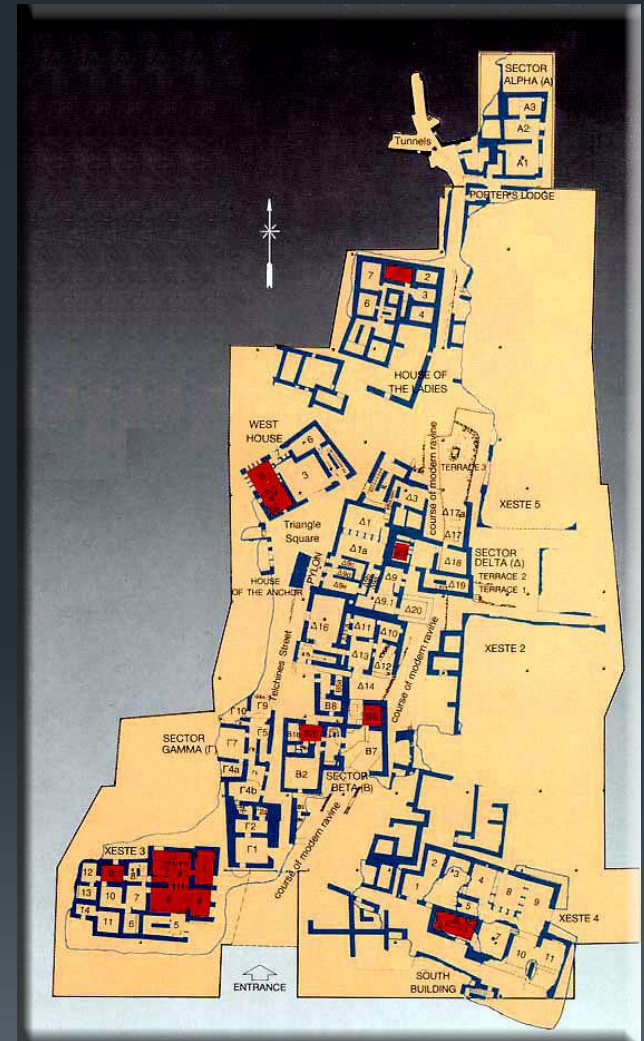
A fragment of an ancient Theran wall painting. It depicts a woman with a large, rounded blue head, a large red circular earring, and a red dress with a dark blue border. She is shown in profile, looking to the left. The background is a light, textured surface with some cracks and other faint markings.

The Imagined Body: Theran Wall Paintings

Art and Representation

Wall Paintings from Thera

- Akrotiri LB I: best preserved of wall paintings
 - Eruption c.1627 BC
- Some in situ on walls
- Others restored from small fragments
- Know their location & how they were displayed in the town



Wall Paintings: Human Form

- Four key buildings
 - Sector Beta
 - West House
 - House of the Ladies
 - Xeste 3
- Xeste 3 in particular has been focus of discussion:
 - Interpretations reflect the classical perspectives of the scholars
 - Also inherent biases of Minoan/Aegean archaeology



Techniques

- Lime plaster:
 - Mixture of fresco & secco techniques
- Use of mineral pigments
- Mix of life-size & miniature paintings
- Very naturalistic style
- Some sense of perspective



Saffron gatherer, Xeste 3

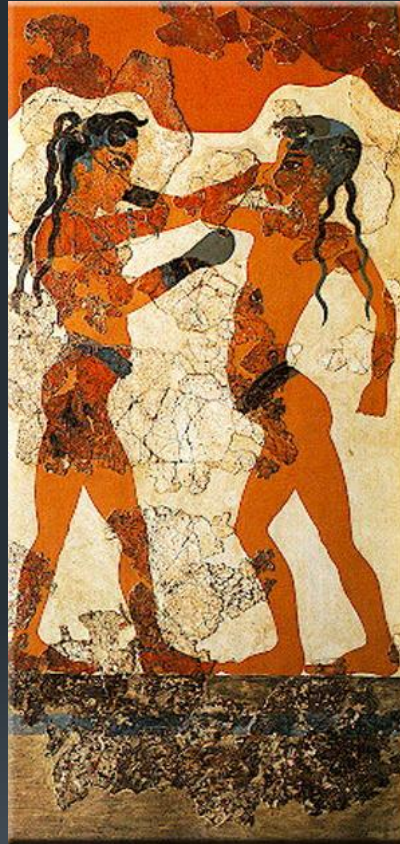


Ship procession

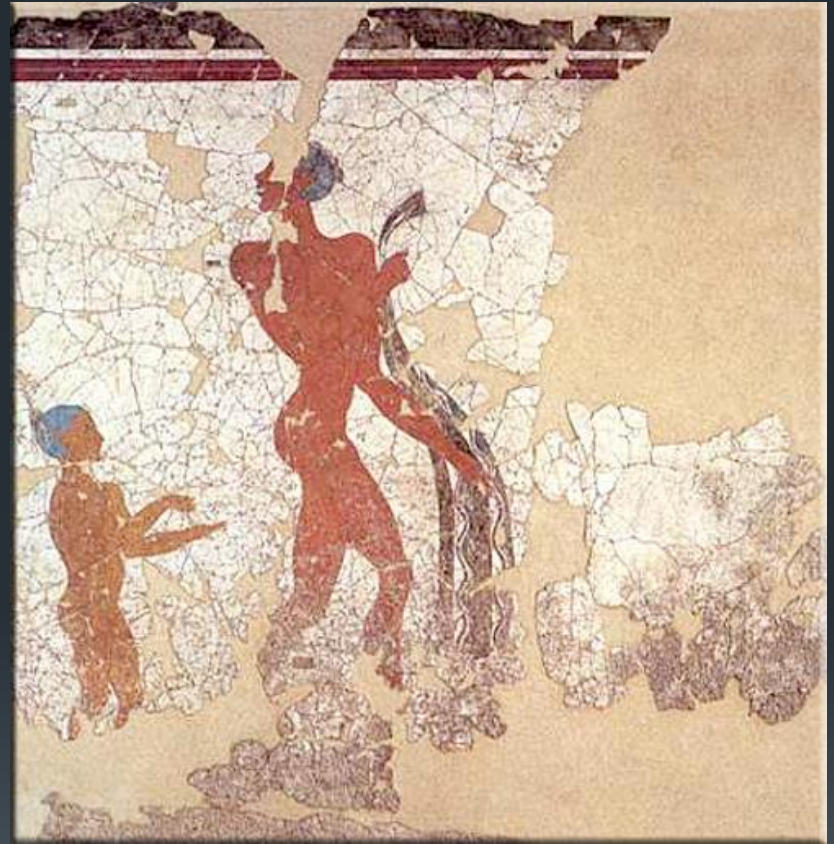
Representations of the Male Form



Fisherman, West House



Boxers, Beta



Bathing scene, Xeste 3

Representation of the Female Form



House of the Ladies'



West House



Xeste 3

Influence of Egyptian Art

- Colour palette
- Position of body:
 - Face & lower body in profile
 - Torso more or less frontal (male figures)
- Female figures fully in profile
- Some sense of perspective
- Movement/flow



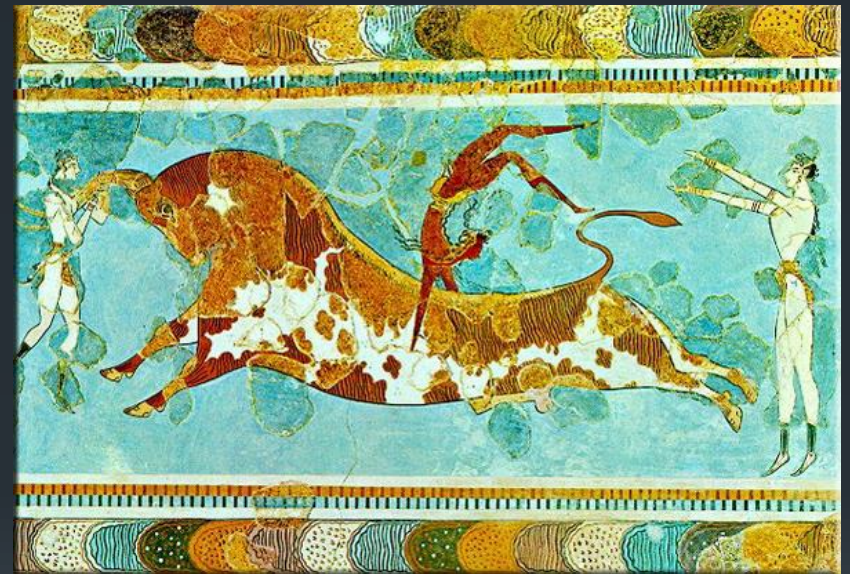
Fisherman



House of the Ladies

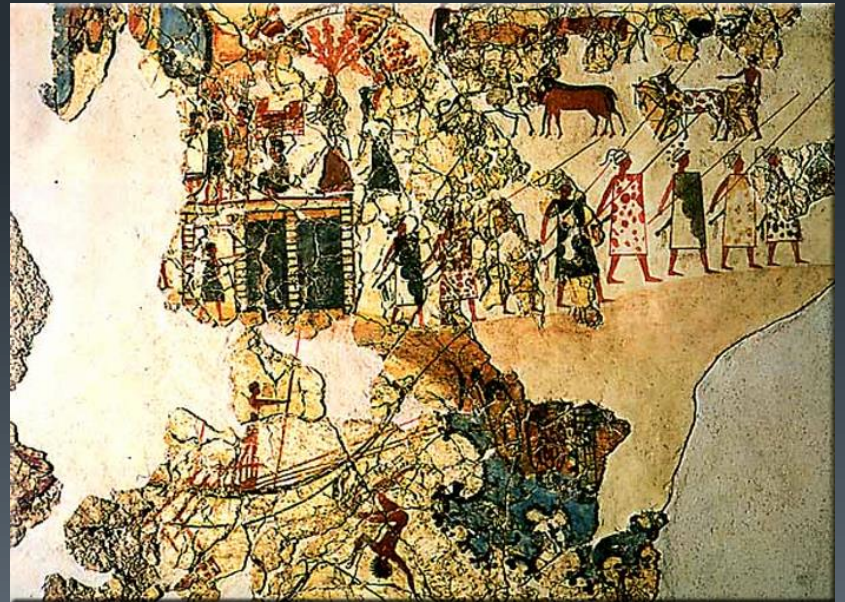
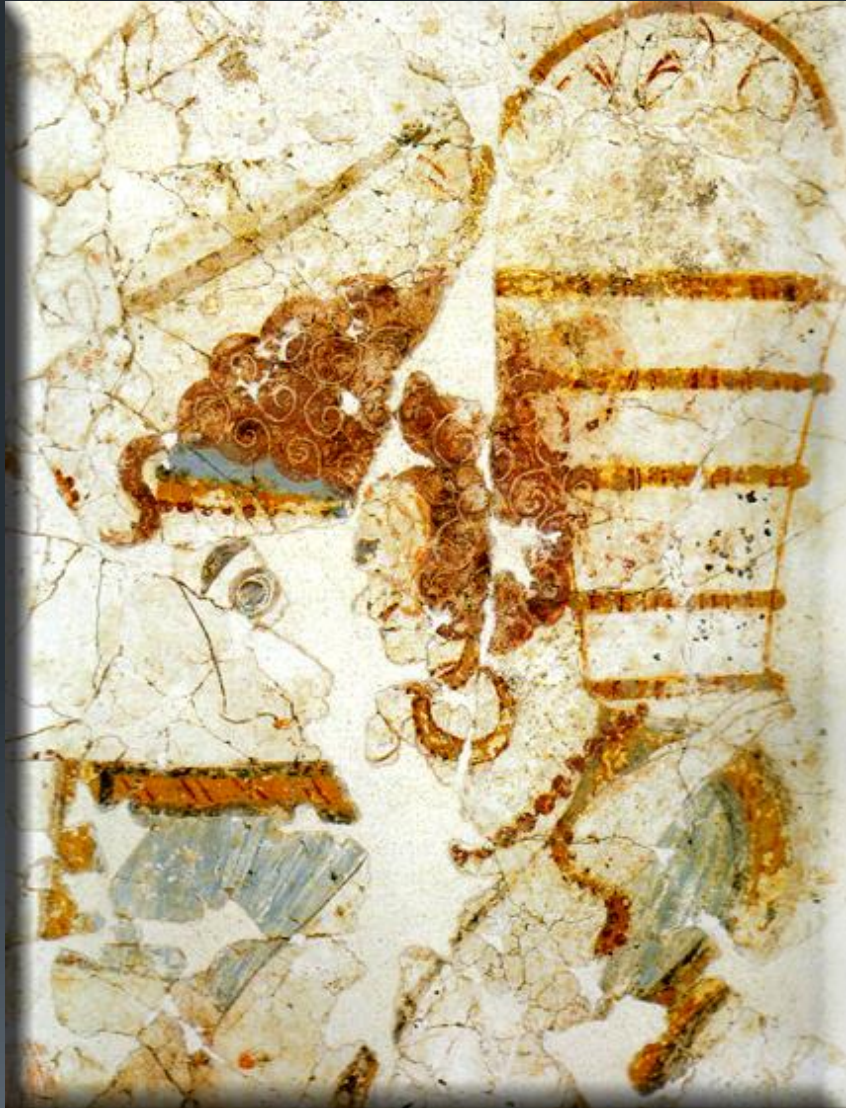
Representing Gender

- Colour template debated
- Alberti (2002) notes the similarities in body form of bull-leapers indicative of a “Knossian template” for both sexes:
 - Hourglass shape of broad shoulders, slim waist & rounded hips
- Details of hair, costume, & activity layered onto this
- Body is a concept (schemata) rather than visual impression



Toreador painting, Knossos

Different Scales



Naturalism vs. Realism

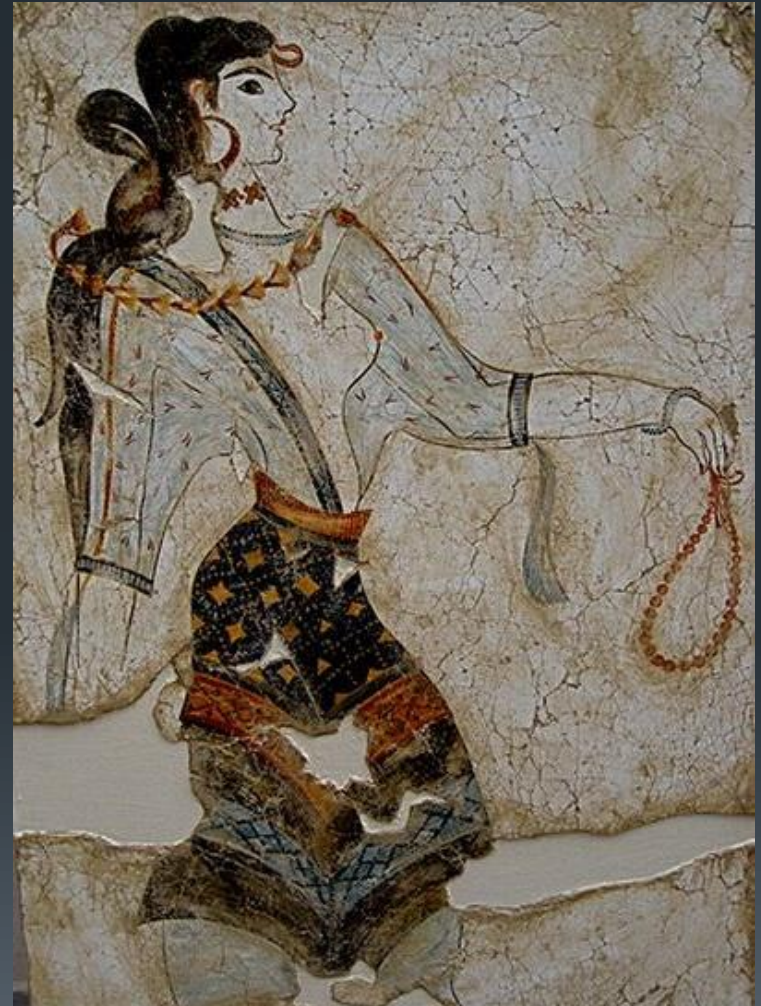
- Appear very naturalistic
- “What is unusual in Minoan [& Thera] painting is its sense of animation & living movement, its spontaneity and delight in nature, which sets it apart from the contemporary art of Egypt or Mesopotamia” (Immerwahr 1990, 41)
- Rendering of the human form is fluid & less angular than Egyptian figures



Saffron gatherer

Naturalism vs. Realism

- An “intuitive feeling for how the parts of anatomy go together” (Immerwahr 1990, 41)
- But not anatomically accurate/realistic:
 - Representation of hands & feet
 - Position of torso and upper body



Girl offering beads

Painting the Body

- Guralnick (2000) proposed a modular grid of 19 squares (similar to the Egyptian 18-square grid)
 - “each figure has a unique set of proportions” (Guralnick 2000, 185)
 - Individuality of each figure
- Characteristic curves & outlines
 - Curves are repeated, sometimes within the same figure, & occasionally in different figures belonging to the same fresco composition
 - Theran artists may have used a set of large & small fixed curves to create the sinuous lines of the painted figures

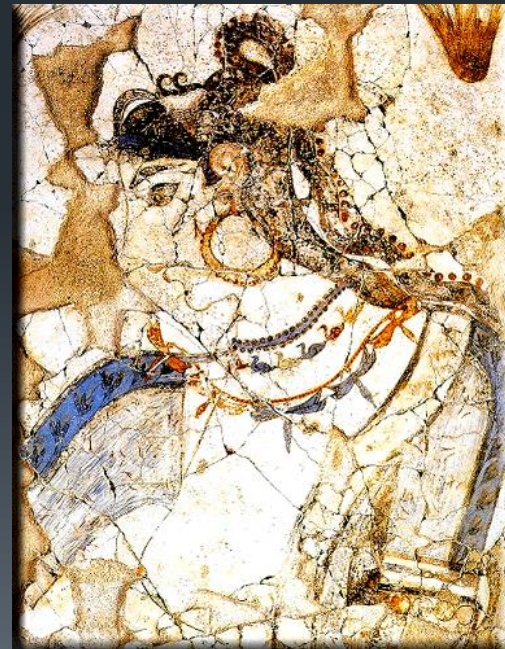
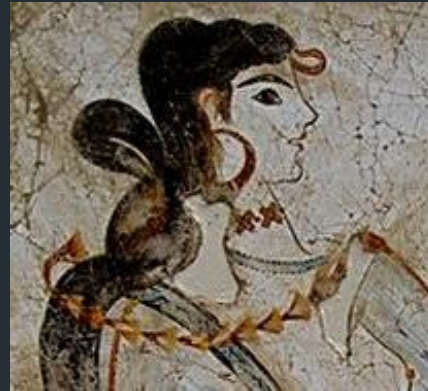
Hairstyle as an Indicator of Age

- Six age stages evident. Primarily with hairstyles:
 - Younger children: shaved heads with 2 locks of hair
 - Longer (flowing) locks approaching adolescence
 - Shaven heads growing out, some longer locks of hair & wear a headband; double chin



Hairstyle as an Indicator of Age

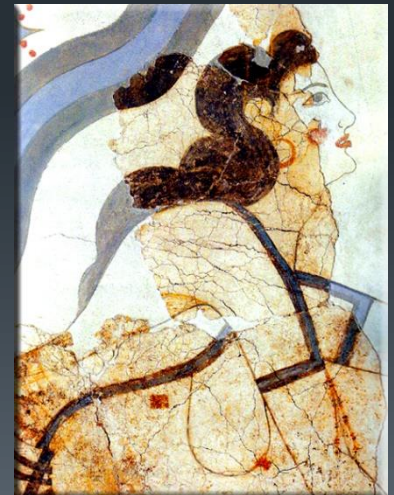
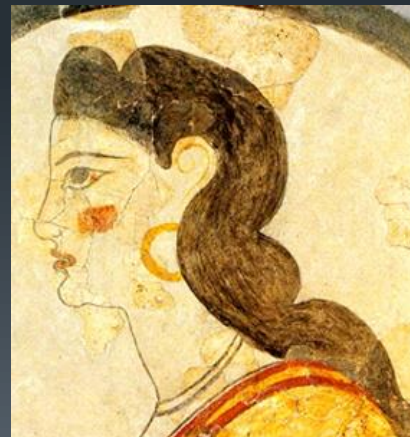
- Approaching maturity:
 - Young women with luxuriant hair, bound up with elaborate cloths. Back lock of early childhood bound in loop at nape of neck
 - “nubile at the height of their beauty” (Davis 1986, 402)
- Goddess depicted with similar style hair: “insignia of her function in relation to youth” (Davis 1986, 402)



Hairstyle as an Indicator of Age

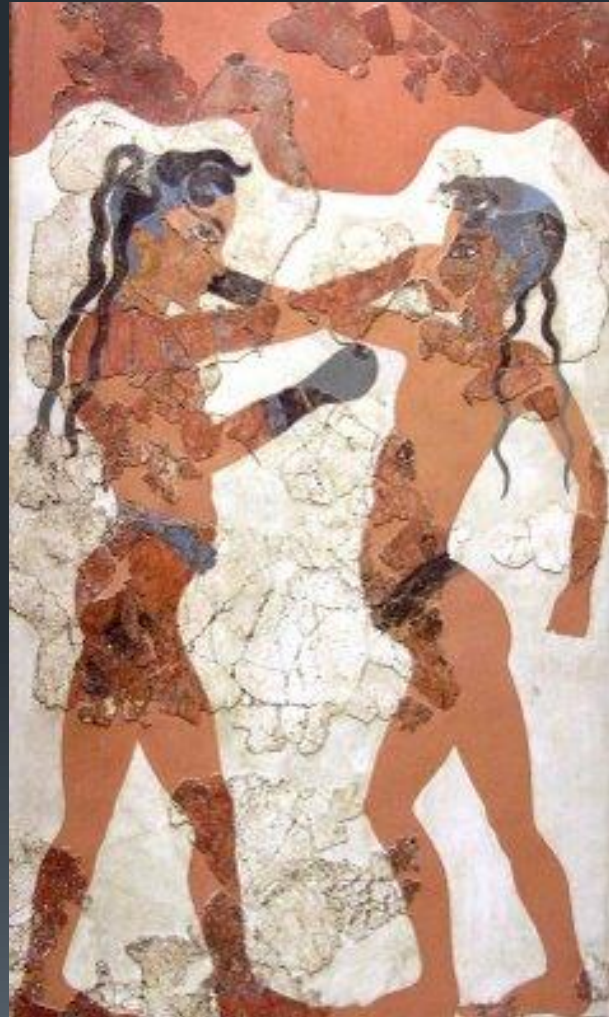
- Maturity:

- Long hair bound up in cloths, larger, full breasts, blue in eye is missing, drawn at larger scale
- Advanced age indicated by red in eye, pendulous breast



Boys Will Be Boys...

- Unique representations of childhood & adolescence:
 - the first time in the history of art ... that the anatomy of children's bodies has been observed & rendered with such mastery" (Marinatos 1971, 21)
- Chapin: distinct phases in construction of male childhood



Boxers, Beta

Boys Will be Boys

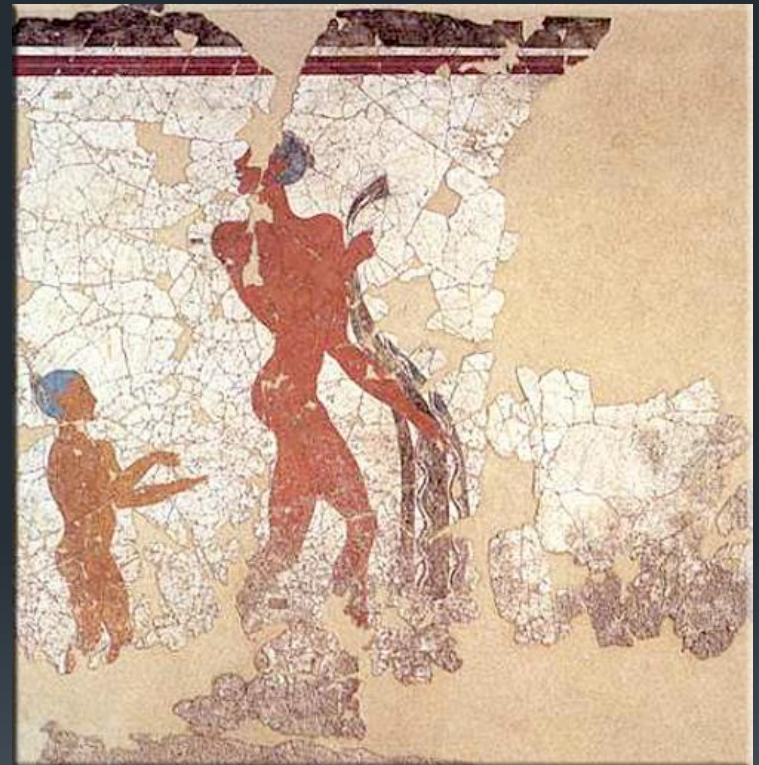
- Iconography of age & male gender culturally:
 - Skin colour
 - Hairstyle
 - Nudity or clothing
 - Activity



Fisherman, West House

Physiological Evidence

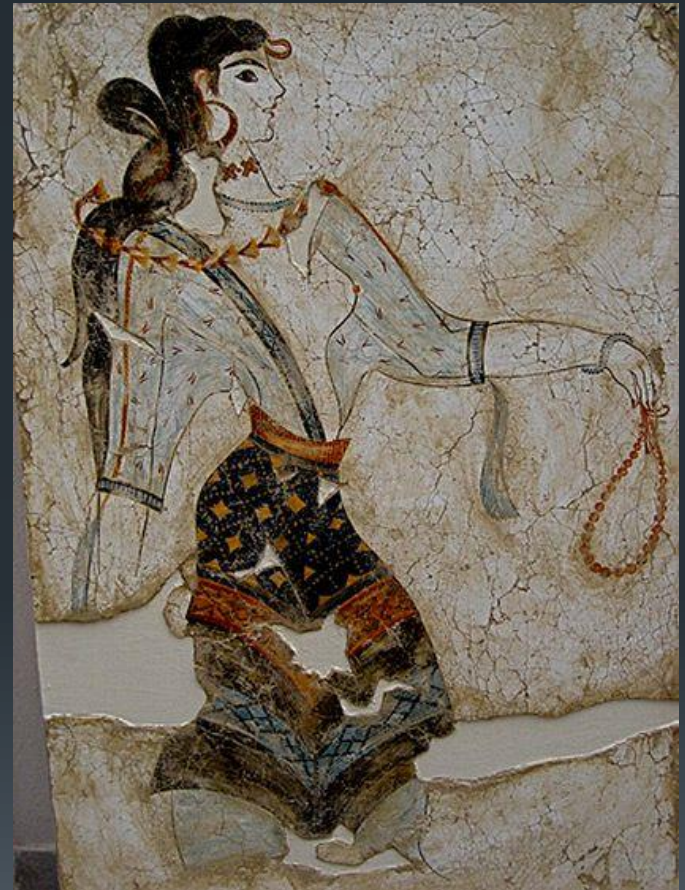
- Relative proportions of body size of child:
 - Large & rounded head
 - Rounded belly with soft, undeveloped musculature
 - Torso, from shoulder to the bottom of buttocks is approximately same length as legs
 - About 60 percent of height of the (adult) Clothbearer
- Around 5 years of age?



Xeste 3

Crocus Costumes

- Importance of clothing for communicating identities, status etc.
- Saffron crocus decoration is central to decoration of women's clothing in Xeste 3
- Imagery associated with saffron gathering, offerings to goddess & female rites of passage



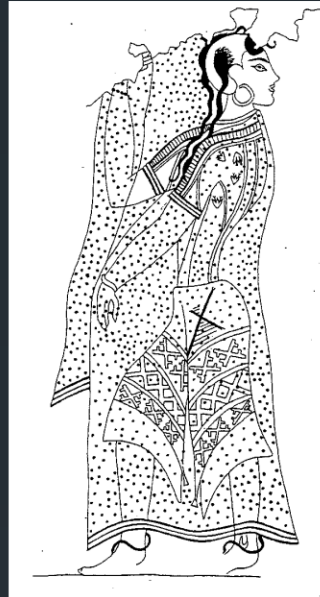
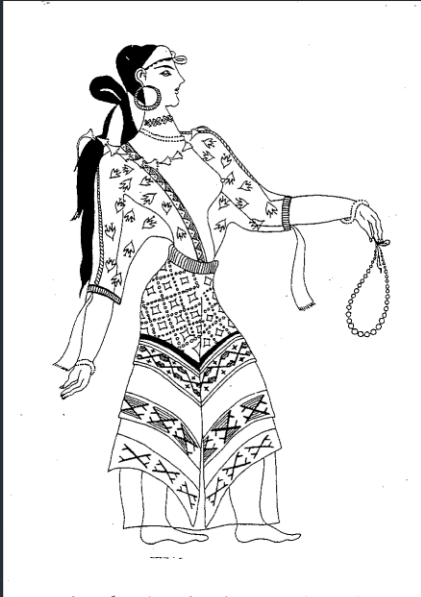
Clothing in the Theraan Frescoes

- Several scholars have highlighted the importance of details of clothing
 - Specifically focusing on female dress
- Analyses relate to evidence from Minoan Crete
- Clothing: indicator of identities, gender, status, activity



House of the Ladies

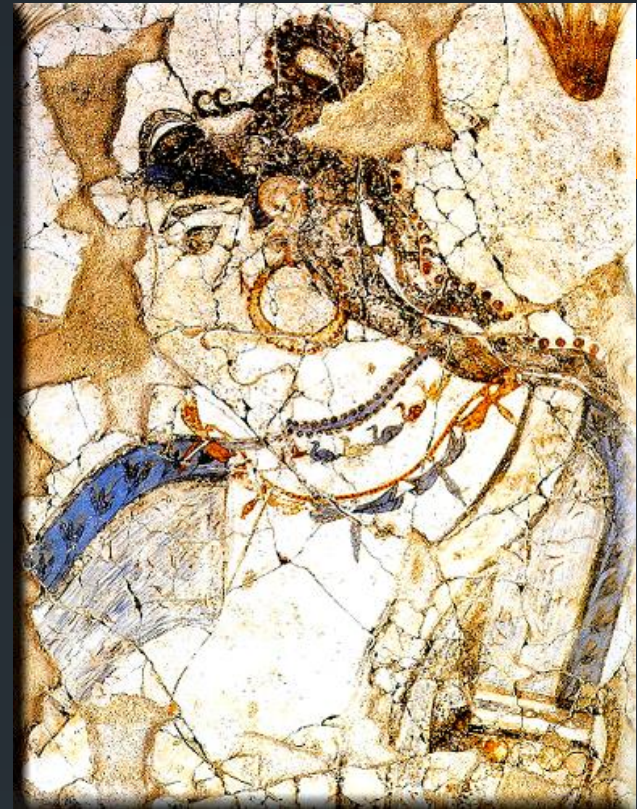
Crocus Costumes



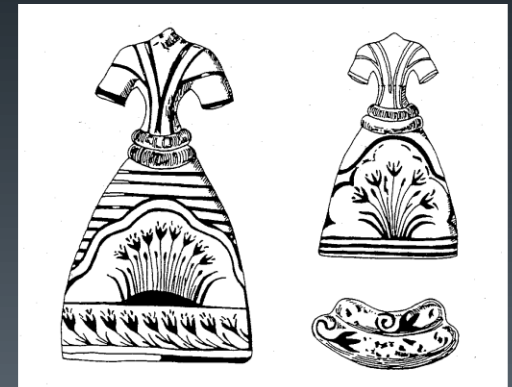
- Xeste 3: five women with details of crocus on clothing (including the goddess)
- Saffron crocus central to composition & intrinsically gendered

Goddess

- Goddess close links with saffron & young women:
 - Rehak suggests link to Artemis
- Extrapolates link to the deposits from Knossos: & faience clothing with details of crocus flowers
- Situates the goddess-crocus-female assemblage within a Theran-Knossian social milieu



Goddess, Xeste 3



Temple Repository

Summary

- Very detailed depictions of the human body
- Influences from Knossos and Egyptian world evident
- Naturalistic rather than realistic
- Allows us to engage with discussions of gender and age identities
- Much discussion has focused on the clothing of women & also attempts to interpret iconography in light of later Greek beliefs