

Slave Girl

Date

ca. 1895

Primary Maker

Antonio Argenti

Medium

marble

Description

This Neoclassical, or new classical, style sculpture is based on one of the most popular American statues of the 19th century, Hiram Powers' *The Greek Slave* (1844), which portrays a Greek girl captured by the Turks and put up for auction in a Middle Eastern slave market. Powers based his statue on an antique statue of the Greco-Roman Goddess of Love, modestly posed to bathe. Known as the *Medici Venus*, it is a 1st century BCE Roman copy of the lost Greek original by Praxiteles from 4th-3rd century BCE. The dominant mode in art from the 18th century until the mid-19th century, Neoclassicism sought to capture the severity and ideal purity of ancient art, in rejection of earlier Baroque and Rococo mannerism. Classical work also provided subject matter, stylistic features, and compositional elements for other areas of 18th and 19th century art, such as architecture and painting. The emulation of antique forms was given great impetus by new archaeological discoveries, particularly the exploration and excavation of the buried Roman cities of Herculaneum in 1738 and Pompeii in 1748. The style was further encouraged by theorists, like J. J. Winckelmann, the renowned art historian and archeologist, who produced writings that were influential in calling for artists to imitate Greek art. He claimed that in doing so such artists would obtain idealized depictions of natural forms and their images would then attain a universal significance. "For us," he declared, "the only way to become great is by imitation of the ancients."



Dimensions

Overall: 61 x 15 5/8 x 16 in. (154.9 x 39.7 x 40.6 cm)

