The Romans were a race of conquerors and delighted in erecting triumphal arches. Pillars of victory were constructed on an enormous scale, depicting in relief their heroic achievements. While appreciation and love of art dominated the Greeks, it was the love of magnificence that ruled the Romans. "Greek simplicity" and "Roman grandeur" are familiar expressions in architecture. Roman ornament is less severe and, in all its motives, shows a greater wealth of detail. The Tuscan capital and the Composite capital are as familiar in Roman construction as the Ionic and the Doric in the Greek. These two Roman orders, the Composite and the Tuscan, were added to the three Greek orders, the Doric, the Ionic and the Corinthian, thus completing the five great architectural orders. The Romans rarely used the peristyle, and in their treatment of arches and superposed columns departed widely from the Greeks. Famous examples of Roman work are the triumphal Arch of Septimus Severus, the Arch of Constantine and the Arch of Titus near the Forum at Rome. The Colosseum, begun by Vespasian A. D. 72, and finished by Titus, 80, is a magnificent example of the Roman use of the Corinthian order.
Reserve, dignity and beauty, both of form and outline, characterize Greek ornament. The egg-and-dart was extensively used, also the fret, the meander, the anthemion, and the palm, bay, laurel, and acanthus leaves. The boldness and severity of this style make it especially suitable for buildings that rely upon mass and outline for their effect rather than upon ornament.

Color played an important part in Greek art. The Parthenon, with its severe Doric columns and its beautiful sculpture by Phidias, was ornamented by color in the background of the friezes, in the pediment, and in the panels of the ceiling. The Greek use of color, which was borrowed from Assyrian art, has not survived in modern classic architecture. Greek form, however, is perhaps the most vital force in handicraft of today.

With the exception of the Romanesque and the Gothic, few great styles have been entirely independent of Greek influence. In the Renaissance, in the Louis XIV., Louis XV., and Louis XVI. styles, and in our own Colonial period Greek motives occur over and over. Sometimes the classic spirit is difficult to trace; again, as in the columned portico and banded frieze the origin is unmistakable.
One of the most fruitful effects of the crusades was the awakening of interest in antique art throughout Europe. This acquaintance with the best work of the Hellenic mind checked the ascendancy of the Gothic school and made possible the growth of a new style—the Renaissance—based upon classic models. It had its inception in Italy, and many of its noblest works are found in that country. The earlier period of the Renaissance was marked by grace and spontaneity in decoration, and was executed with freedom and originality. Its decline saw the introduction of florid decoration and alien ornament, although classic details were still manifest. Broadly speaking, the Renaissance had three distinct styles: The tre-cento, quarto-cento, and cinque-cento. The tre-cento consisted of interlacing lines combined with simple tracery and conventionalized foliage. The quarto-cento blended the festoon, the garland, the band, and the cartouche with naturalistic fruit and flowers. The cinque-cento was a restoration of classic details and included the fret, the arabesque, the anthemion, the scroll, and the acanthus. The arabesque or grotesque, as it was termed from its discovery in a Roman grotto, was composed of vases, shields, masks, animal forms and flowers.