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Art on the northern Edge of the Mediterranean world

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This chapter examines the relationship between art and society in Iron Age Europe, with a focus on Celtic art. It begins by asking what constituted 'art' in this context, what was its purpose, and why did Celtic craftworkers and their patrons develop a taste for entirely new 'artistic' expressions? The art of the Hallstatt and La Tène periods, external influences on its development across Europe, and regional expressions are then analysed. Initially decorative art was essentially confined to objects of metal and stone, and most artworks belonged to the categories of personal ornaments and weaponry, bronze vessels for the consumption of alcohol, and chariot equipment. This contrasts with the more widespread use of 'art' in the contemporary Mediterranean world. In the later La Tène period, the range of decorated objects grew to include painted vases and monumental wooden sculpture.

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