The elegant Eirene, the personification of peace, stands holding the infant Ploutos, the personification of wealth. She is dressed in a traditional peplos and her hair is beautifully pulled away from her face. Eirene looks lovingly at Ploutos, as if her were her own. Ploutos, resting on her forearm, reaches for her face playfully. The known history of this statue starts in the 4th century.

This image dates back to the classical period in Greek art, a time when Greek sculpture was at its peak. The original Eirene and Ploutos, a bronze statue, was created in the 4th century B.C.E. by Kephiosodotos, father of the sculptor Praxiteles. It was originally placed in the Agora when the cult of Eirene was introduced to Athens (Heilbrunn, Timeline). Pausanias in his “Description of Greece” outlines several statues on the Acropolis. He states, “After the statues of the eponymoi come statues of gods, Amphiarauς, and Eirene(Peace) carrying the boy Plutus(Wealth).” Hesiod’s *Theogony* makes the first known reference to Eirene, telling us that she is the daughter of Zeus and Themis. Themis gave birth to the three Horea, one of whom is Eirene. The Horea are maids associated with the seasons (de Grummond). The cult of Eirene became a regular part of the Athenian religious calendar, occurring just prior to the Panathenaea ("A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities"). Not only is Eirene linked to Athens, but she also has roots in Corinth. Pindar states that along with her sisters, Dike (Order) and Eunomia (Justice), Eirene was raised in Corinth. Ancient Greece, however, is not that last time that we see Eirene.

During Augustus Caesar’s rule, the idea of peace was used as propaganda. According to Weinstock, in his article, “Pax and the Ara Pacis,” part of Augustus’ political program was “peace and prosperity.” On the Ara Pacis, there is a figure that some art historians believe to be the Pax Augustae, meaning the peace Augustus brought to Rome or interchangeably Eirene. The Ara Pacis is an altar that was commissioned by Augustus to honor and celebrate his victory in Spain and Gaul in 13 B.C.E., as well as the peace that he brought to Rome. The relief sculpture on the southeast side of the altar, Allegory of Peace, depicts three figures and several animals. Nancy Thomson de Grummond in her article, “Pax Augusta and the Horae on the Ara Pacis Augustae,” argues that the figures on the relief are that three Horea with Eirene in the center, or for the Romans, the Pax Augustae. Some art historians also identify her as Mother Earth.
Not only was the Ara Pacis a reminder of peace in Rome but Vespasian’s Templum Pacis, or Temple of Peace, was, also. The temple held many Greek sculptures, including the work of Kephiosodotos and Praxiteles. Carlos Norena likens this temple to an art museum (Norena). He believes that the temple was Vespasian’s way of associating himself with the “good emperor Augustus” (28) and an obvious attempt to mimic and relate the temple to the Ara Pacis and to Augustus himself.

The Romans had the reminder of peace from Vespasian’s Temple and Augustus’ altar in addition to several copies of Kephiosodotos’ Eirene figure. Today three Roman copies remain of the original statue of Eirene and Ploutos. The first of the three is on display at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. The statue at the Metropolitan has lost her head and her arms. No remnants of Ploutos accompany this statue. Scholars do know that she is a copy of another statue in Munich. The New York work stands 69 3/4 in. tall (Heilbrunn, Timeline) and is made of marble. It was purchased in 1906 with money from the Rogers Fund. The work was originally discovered in 1903 during excavations for a building project on the grounds of the Villa Patrizi. According to an article in the November 1906 bulletin it differs somewhat from the one in Munich:

In execution it is distinctly the finer of the two, a fact which must console us for the loss of the missing parts. The lines and the folds of the drape-ry are carved with much greater sharpness and vigor than those of the Munich statue, and these as well as the proportions give an impression of greater vitality (Robinson, 147).

Although the article specifically says that the Metropolitan work is the “finer of the two,” the Munich statue is in much better condition. She has both of her arms, her head, and Ploutos still intact. Restorations to the work included Eirene’s right arm, one figure of her left hand, and the jug. On the Ploutos figure, the head, both arms, and the left foot have been reworked (Robinson, 148). The statue of Eirene and Ploutos currently stands in the Glypotek in Munich (de Grummond, 667).

The Italian government owns the third statue of Eirene, yet another Roman copy in marble. In November 2006, this Eirene traveled from Italy to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) to be displayed until the fall of 2009. Unfortunately, this statue is missing both arms and the Ploutos figure. In Italy the detached head is displayed next to the torso, but for the first time in modern history she is on display in Boston with her head attached. The museum press release says that the statue was discovered in 1986 in a garden of a Roman villa in the territory of Palombara Sabina, about 20 miles northeast of Rome (pg.1).

As of this past fall (2008), the Metropolitan statue of Eirene and the Italian
statue were in the United States. The Italian statue will return to Italy sometime in the fall of 2009. The statue of Eirene resides in the permanent collection at the Metropolitan, and hopefully will remain there for scholars to study. To my knowledge the Munich statue has never left there. These three statues exemplify the large number of Roman copies that are in existence. They also show that no one knows how many more statues of Eirene may yet be discovered.

The idea of peace seems to relate through time as a gift. The goddess Eirene brought the gift of peace to the Greeks and to the Romans at different times in history. And now in the United States the Eirene statues hopefully will not only bring us her blessing of peace, but also help to expand our knowledge of her.

The Gift of Peace

Eirene

Ara Pacis

Templum Pacis
The Metropolitan Museum of Arts’ Eirene

Munich Eirene and Plutos

Boston Museum of Fine Arts’ Eirene
The Gift of Peace

Works Cited


