black-figure painting: In early Greek pottery, the black-figure technique is the silhouetting of dark figures against a light background of natural, reddish clay, with linear details incised through the silhouettes.

canon: A canon is a rule. For example, the ancient Greeks considered beauty to be a matter of “correct” proportion and sought a canon of proportion, for the human figure and for buildings.

cella: The cella is the chamber at the center of an ancient temple; in a classical temple, the room (Greek, naos) in which the cult statue usually stood.

concrete: Concrete is a building material invented by the Romans and consisting of various proportions of lime mortar, volcanic sand, water, and small stones.

contrapposto: Contrapposto is the disposition of the human figure in which one part is turned in opposition to another part (usually hips and legs one way, shoulders and chest another), creating a counter positioning of the body about its central axis. Sometimes called “weight shift” because the weight of the body tends to be thrown to one foot, creating tension on one side and relaxation on the other.

encaustic: Encaustic is a painting technique in which pigment is mixed with wax and applied to the surface while hot.

fresco: A fresco is a painting on lime plaster, either dry (dry fresco or fresco secco) or wet (true or buon fresco). In the latter method, the pigments are mixed with water and become chemically bound to the freshly laid lime plaster.

frieze: A frieze is the part of the entablature between the architrave and the cornice; also, any sculptured or painted band in a building.

lost-wax process (cire perdue): The lost wax process is a bronze casting method in which a figure is modeled in wax and covered with clay; the whole is fired, melting away the wax and hardening the clay, which then becomes a mold for molten metal.

portico: A portico is a roofed colonnade; also an entrance porch.

red-figure painting: In later Greek pottery, the silhouetting of red figures against a black background, with painted linear details is known as red-figure. It is the reverse of black-figure painting.