My interest here is in the rise of the female nude in Greek art, a topic that leads directly to the bath. This essay examines the iconography of naked women shown bathing and dressing in Greek art from their appearance in the later sixth century B.C. into the Hellenistic period, relying primarily on the evidence of vase painting. My thesis is that a major change occurs in the treatment of the theme around 430 B.C. associated with the Classical type of the kneeling bather (plate 1). I suggest that this well-known type was inspired by one of the most famous paintings of the ancient world, the lost Helen by Zeuxis of Herakleia, and that it was this painting that established the female nude as an acceptable and noble convention in Greek art well before the end of the fifth century B.C., long before Praxiteles’ celebrated Knidian Aphrodite. What I present here is the first part of this argument, the evolution of the bathing theme on Attic vases from naked girls in the sixth century and the emergence of the female nude in the guise of the kneeling bather during the last third of the fifth century B.C., leaving Zeuxis’ Helen for detailed treatment elsewhere.1

While naked females occur in many contexts on Archaic and Early Classical vases, including lovemaking, the komos (revel), the symposium, and violent mythological rapes like that of Cassandra, in these context female nakedness is secondary to other concerns. Only in the theme of bathing does the female body become the major focus. There the bath serves as a transparent pretext for showing naked women, as in French

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