



## The New Acropolis Museum is open

“ **The British response to the opening of the New Acropolis Museum was un-British. In fact it's embarrassing**

Andrew George MP - Chair, Marbles Reunited



For those who attended, the official opening ceremonies passed off with the smooth efficiency that characterised the Athens Olympics of 2004.

In terms of official representation however this was hardly Britain's finest hour: with the high-level presence from China, from the EU and many individual European countries and from UNESCO. The absences of the Director of the British Museum and the Chairman of Trustees, the Prime Minister, the responsible Minister and indeed the Head of State were noted. This did not give rise to much surprise or resentment: the Museum, at least, had sent representatives and the British Ambassador was there.

In the debate over the London sculptures from the Parthenon, it has been clear to many British people for some years what would be the right action to take. The difference now is that the New Acropolis Museum makes the rightness of that response so obvious and so natural - as a result, the Board of Trustees and the Director of the British Museum are faced with a difficult choice between two stark alternatives: either to act with courage and decisiveness, swallow their pride and begin talking to the Greek representatives as equals; or to lay up decades of stress and embarrassment for their successors.

Visit [www.theacropolismuseum.gr](http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr) to find out more about the new museum. ■



# Who said what about the new museum

**‘It’s time to heal the wounds of the monument with the return of the marbles which belong to it’**

Karolos Papoulias, President of Greece

**‘To recognise British ownership would be tantamount to accepting that what Elgin did was right’**

Antonis Samaras, Minister of Culture for Greece

**‘In London they tell a story of Greek classical culture, in the world cultures, in ancient civilisations at large’**

Ian Jenkins, British Museum

**‘The problem is not legal. It’s ethical and cultural’**

Professor Dimitris Pandermalis, President of the Organisation for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum

**‘The New Acropolis Museum creates a natural thirst to see the actual re-assembly completed’**

Christopher Hitchens, journalist and writer

**‘The British Museum should, with generosity and grace, hand back the marbles’**

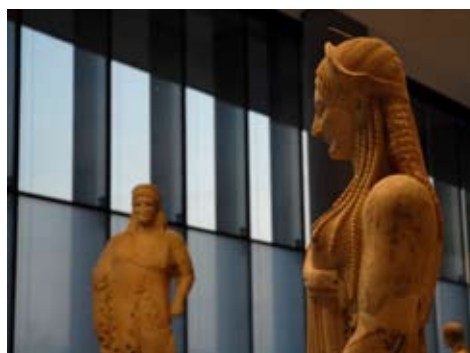
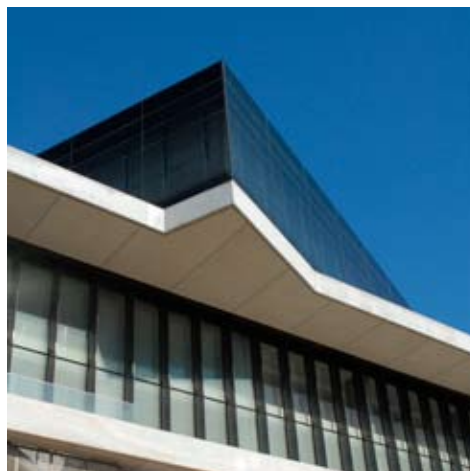
Rowan Moore, Evening Standard

**‘What could present more of a challenge than designing a major new building to stand at the foot of the Acropolis, revered as one of the great architectural achievements of Western civilization?’**

Christine Pirovolakis, Wall Street Journal

**‘The British Museum has not argued that there was nowhere for the sculptures to be seen in Athens’**

Hannah Bolton, Head of Press and Marketing British Museum



The Parthenon Marbles:  
Significant dates

**1801** Greece was under Ottoman rule and Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Constantinople, begins transporting the Parthenon sculptures from the Acropolis to Britain. The collection amassed by Elgin eventually included 247 feet of the original 524 ft Parthenon frieze plus 17 figures from the east and west pediments, as well as 15 metope panels.

**1816** Lord Elgin faced bankruptcy and British Parliament purchases the Marbles from Lord Elgin for £35,000. The following year, the sculptures are put on permanent display at the British Museum, where they remain to this day.

**1833** The first recorded request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles is made by Greece to Britain.

**1938** Art dealer Lord Joseph Duveen funded a new gallery to display the Marbles. The sculptures were subjected to a notorious and controversial cleaning that damaged their surface. The new gallery was completed in 1938, but because of delays caused by World War II, the sculptures were not displayed there until 1962.

The Duveen Gallery remains the home of over 100 pieces from the Parthenon today.

**1981** Former actress Melina Mercouri is appointed as Greece’s minister of culture. Mercouri spearhead an international effort to lobby the British government for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. This passionate campaign defined her eight years in office and kick started today’s global interest in the issue of reunification.

**September 2003** Ground is finally broken on the site of the New Acropolis Museum. The new building designed by Swiss-born architect Bernard Tschumi, is intended to strengthen efforts to secure the return of the Marbles.

**June 20 2009** Official inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum, which features a third floor exhibit intended to one day house the surviving pieces of the Parthenon Marbles.

# Students protest at the British Museum



Forty five secondary school students and five teachers from the 2nd General Lyceum in Argostoli (Kefalonia), visited London in order to stage a peaceful protest for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures to Athens at the British Museum on Sunday 03 May 2009. This protest was supported by Marbles Reunited.

Marbles Reunited is a British campaigning organisation and Friends of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles.

The Parthenon Sculptures, removed from the Parthenon in Athens between 1801-1812, were subsequently bought by the British Government in 1816 and placed in the British Museum's Duveen Gallery, where they have remained.

The first recorded request for their return was made by Greece in 1833. The British Museum has long argued why these sculptures should remain in London. One such argument was that Greece had nowhere to display the sculptures.

The New Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss architect, Bernard Tschumi at a cost of around 130 million Euros, officially opened on 20 June 2009. It holds around 4,000 artefacts and has an exhibition space of 14,000 square metres.

At present the British Museum's policy remains the same, that the Parthenon Marbles

the largest collection of Parthenon sculptures outside of Greece, will remain in London. Greece has however received fragments from Heidelberg, Palermo and the Vatican.

Yannis Kosmatos from the Second Lyceum of Argostoli, Kefalonia commented "Our primary goal has been to sensitise students and the community, as well as voice our protest

**These unique sculptures were created to tell a story and they are best displayed together in Athens**

against the displacement of the marbles. We have divided the students into two groups, one considering the art, history and literary references to the marbles, the other the various efforts made to bring back the monuments.

"The protest we staged at the British Museum on Sunday 03 May, 2009 was heartfelt with some students holding banners, others playing Greek music while some performed traditional Greek dances. These unique sculptures were created to tell a story and they are best displayed together in Athens. We hope that the Director of the British Museum will see the merit of rejoining what has been divided unjustly for two centuries." ■

British Museum 'huge breakthrough', a propaganda stunt according to the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles

The announcement of a "huge breakthrough" by the British Museum, with the discovery of blue paint on some figures from the Parthenon Marbles, looks uncommonly like a propaganda stunt, timed to divert attention from the opening of the New Acropolis Museum in Athens.

For generations it has been common knowledge among art historians and archaeologists that the Parthenon and its sculptures would originally have been decorated. Lawrence Alma-Tadema's painting of 1868 — Pheidias and the Parthenon Frieze— depicts the sculptor showing Athenian citizens around his team's handiwork high up on the scaffold.

By the mid-nineteenth century, a lively debate was raging in British scholarly circles over the question of polychromy, the colouring of sculpture.

What is more, ordinary viewers can still see, with their own eyes, traces of it (in this case, dark green) surviving on the drapery in at least one of the original slabs, from the West Frieze of the Parthenon, which is in the new museum in Athens.

Today, even virtual reality reconstructions of the Parthenon use nineteenth-century sources such as Benoit Luvion's Cross-Section of the Parthenon of 1879-81 as their guide to the use of colour on the Parthenon. These late nineteenth-century sources were themselves drawing on much earlier research by architects such as Jacques-Ignace Hittorff (1792-1867) and Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) which had established beyond doubt that Greek temples and sculptures were coloured.

Professor Anthony Snodgrass, Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles commented "it hardly needs 'a new imaging technique' to tell us what we can see for ourselves."

No doubt the British Museum's sculptures also once preserved some of their colour - that is, until Lord Duveen's drastic 'cleaning' operation of 1937-1938, which was designed deliberately to erase any trace of patina or colour.

"By all means let the debates over the proper care of the Parthenon Marbles continue - but on a grown-up level, please" concludes Professor Anthony Snodgrass.

Professor Anthony Snodgrass is a Fellow of the British Academy and Professor Emeritus of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge. [www.parthenonuk.com](http://www.parthenonuk.com)



# Marbles Reunited hits the London streets

Marbles Reunited has embarked on its first advertising campaign and rolled out the first livered London taxi. Starting May 2009, this will be travelling across London for 12 months. The outside of the taxi shows fragmented parts of the Parthenon Sculptures here in London. The inside flip seats and receipts briefly explain why the Marbles should be Reunited and the web address is there for those that want to find out more about Marbles Reunited and the campaign.



We will be delighted to receive photos from anyone who spots the taxi on the streets of London; particularly if the person getting out of it is a curator at the British Museum or an official from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. If you or your business would like to help us to sponsor additional taxis in the future, please email us to find out more ■

International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures

[www.parthenoninternational.org](http://www.parthenoninternational.org)

The day before the official inauguration of the New Acropolis Museum, the IARPS held a meeting in Athens, attended by representatives from sixteen of their seventeen member organisations.

Decisions were taken relating to the internal running of the organisation that will in future allow it to react more rapidly and raise its profile. As part of an expanded five person executive, Matthew Taylor from Marbles Reunited was elected as treasurer, alongside members from Australia, Cyprus, Switzerland and the USA.

The IARPS hope to organise a worldwide Parthenon Day on June 20th every year to draw awareness to the issue. Other plans include the creation of an international online petition and publication of brochures for distribution at the New Acropolis Museum.

The IARPS heard about other restitution organisations in Chile, France and the Ukraine that they hope will become members, along with other countries that have yet to set up organisations. Members were also encouraged to create honorary boards of invited high profile members such as celebrities and political figures who support the issue.

A media declaration was prepared, which was made public in a press conference following the meeting. A copy of this will soon be available for viewing on the website of the IARPS.

## How you can help our campaign

If you would like to support us, please consider becoming a member of our campaign. Membership of Marbles Reunited is open to anyone, the only pre-requisites are that you must be over eighteen years old & support the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece.

Thousands of postcards are available, just drop us an email to [campaign@marblesreunited.org](mailto:campaign@marblesreunited.org) and we will send you up to ten to distribute to all those you know that support the return. All you and your fellow supporters need to do, is fill in the back with your message and post it to the British Museum.

Marbles Reunited is entirely funded through voluntary donations. Please get in touch if you would like to contribute, have skills to offer, or have other suggestions. ■



## Marbles Reunited website updated



Marbles Reunited are adding to & expanding their website. In addition to the much acclaimed front page graphics illustrating the fragmentation of the Parthenon Sculptures between London and Athens, new pages giving more detailed information about reasons for return, the campaign and its current events are now being added. It will also soon be possible to register as a campaign member online rather than printing and posting the form. We are gradually adding our previous newsletters and other items of information to expand our web based presence and let people understand more about what we do and why they should support us.

Have a look at our updated web site at [www.marblesreunited.org.uk](http://www.marblesreunited.org.uk) ■

## Newsletter sponsors

This issue of *Marbles Reunited News* was kindly sponsored by the Macedonian Society of Great Britain [www.macedonia.org.uk](http://www.macedonia.org.uk)

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