


THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

NEWSLETTER NO. 11

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE
REUNIFICATION OF THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

AUGUST 2010

WAITING FOR THE GREEK 'OFFER'

by Dennis Menos

It is hardly a secret: the Parthenon reunification issue has not progressed one iota during the past year. This, despite the opening in June 2009 of a spectacular new museum on the foothills of the Acropolis, which had been universally expected to serve as the catalyst for moving the issue along.

Who is responsible for the lack of progress? Certainly not the Greek financial crisis nor the recent parliamentary elections in Britain. Even if these events had not occurred, there still would not have been discernable progress.

The blame rests squarely with the British Museum. It has the power to resolve the issue, but refuses to do so, preferring instead to play a waiting game.

The British Museum is fully aware that the opening of the New Acropolis Museum, numbering two million visitors in its first year, has radically altered the Parthenon reunification issue. Calls from Britons and foreigners alike urging that the sculptures in its possession be returned to Athens are a regular occurrence. So is talk among supporters of reunification -- mostly behind the scenes -- that in the absence of movement in London, litigation may become the necessary next step for resolving the issue.

The thought of a protracted legal battle over the future of the Parthenon sculptures, with the risks that it would entail, must give the British Museum cause for anxiety. A court decision challenging its claim to the sculptures' ownership -- in fact, confirming that the British Museum is custodian of stolen property -- would not only humiliate it at home but also adversely affect its image worldwide.

These facts notwithstanding, the British Museum refuses to do what it must (i.e. return the sculptures to Greece, with no questions asked), or to take the lead in opening direct talks on this issue with the Greek government. Instead, London is playing a waiting game -- waiting, it says, for Greece to make the first move and come up with an 'offer.' Apparently not just any offer, but one that will enhance the British Museum's posture as the 'Museum of the World,' perhaps even allow it to maintain some continued interest or rights over the returned sculptures.

To this date, Greece has not made such an 'offer,' and understandably so. It wants the marbles back of course --

has said so repeatedly -- but providing the British Museum with an offer that would involve heavy Greek sacrifices in exchange for the marbles' return is an option that Greece does not have. The Parthenon sculptures are too emotional an issue for any Greek government to deal with, except with the utmost of care. So, in the absence of a solution or movement in London, it seems that Greece too is playing a waiting game, hoping that somehow, somewhere, a third party will intercede and lend a helping hand to resolve the issue.

Clearly, allowing the status quo to persist should no longer be an option. By continuing a policy of inaction and waiting for Greece to act first, the British Museum is forfeiting the opportunity and responsibility it has, for resolving one of the more important cultural issues of our age.

It is time for the British Museum, and Greece too, to abandon their present postures of 'waiting' for something to happen and to begin the process of solving the issue through direct negotiations. A solution that provides for the return to Greece of the Parthenon sculptures now in London under terms acceptable to both sides is doable. It need not cause the British Museum injury or adversely affect its standing in the world. Neither, need it offend British and Greek sensitivities on this issue. Rational people can come up with rational solutions. But first, they must begin the process of talking to each other.

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER



We are pleased to announce that journalist and public relations consultant ELENI DANIELS, president and principal of DanielsMedia, has joined the Board of our Committee and will serve as its Director of Public Relations. To her role, Eleni brings over 15 years of experience in public relations, communications, and business development.

A native of New York, Eleni is fluent in Greek, and conversant in French and Italian. She holds a BA degree from CUNY Queens College, with French studies at Laval University. Eleni began her career as journalist in 1993 at public radio station WNYE in New York. She is presently the executive producer/on-air host of “All Things Greek,” a radio show with a Hellenic scope that reaches over 13 million households in the Northeast on 91.5 FM and online. In May 2007, Eleni worked closely with the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) for their highly anticipated launch of the 4,000 sq.ft. high-tech touring exhibition entitled “Gods, Myths and Mortals: Discover Ancient Greece.” The exhibition is currently open in New York through September 2010 and has attracted over half a million visitors since its opening.

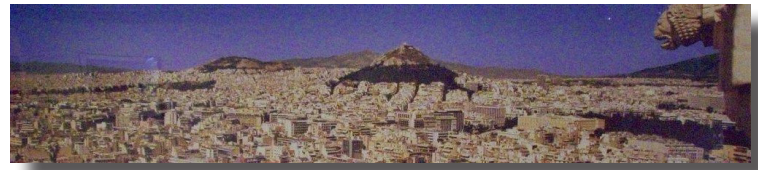
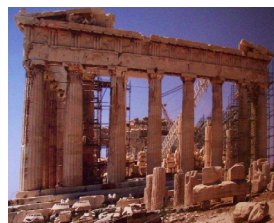
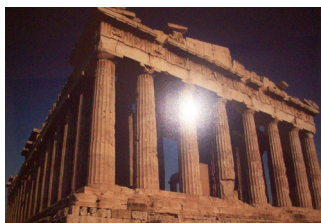
Eleni is fully committed to the goal of returning home to Athens the Parthenon Sculptures now in the British Museum and is working diligently toward an early realization of this goal. The Board and members of the American Committee wholeheartedly welcome her to our ranks.

“ALL SIDES OF THE PARTHENON” TOURING EXHIBITION OPENS IN CORAL SPRINGS, FLORIDA



We are pleased to announce that the *All Sides of the Parthenon* Touring Exhibition is now open at the Coral Springs Museum of Art in Florida, where it will remain until August 21, 2010. The exhibition will move next to the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine at St. Augustine Florida.

Commissioned by the ‘American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures’, the exhibition features more than 40 unique photographs ranging in size from 16”x20” to colossal 8’x2’ vertical panoramas, captured by Greek artist/photographer Peter C. Yalanis during a dedicated assignment in Athens in May 2007. The incredible display includes many never-before-seen images of the Parthenon and the city of Athens, taken from inside and on top the ancient temple. A sample of photos from the exhibition are provided on this page. More detailed coverage is provided in two *YouTube* videos: **The Making of ‘All Sides of the Parthenon’ an Education Exhibit**(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ds-77MolnVs>); and **Parthenon Photography Exhibit** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCHHaDjE5t0>).



Don’t miss this opportunity to see these exclusive images of the Parthenon. Make plans to view the exhibition in Florida or coming soon to a city near you. Please check our website at www.ParthenonSculpturesUSA.org for the latest information.

MY VISIT TO THE NEW ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

by Panagis Galiatsatos

It was an unusually warm day when we arrived in Athens. Six friends, all a month away of graduating from Medical School and deciding to ‘see the world’ before becoming doctors.

I had invited my friends to visit Greece during Freshman Orientation and now four years later, all of us were walking up the hill to the Acropolis. I had seen of course that sight half a dozen times before, but for my friends it was a first. Enthusiasm was evident on their faces and excitement grew as every step took us closer to the ancient hill.

As a young boy I had been told by my father of the missing Parthenon sculptures and recall being very confused about it. Why would anyone want to take a piece of ancient history back to their own land, I wondered? Even more, I found it puzzling that the British government continues to hold on to the sculptures, despite persistent calls by the people of Greece that they be returned. What purpose do the Parthenon sculptures serve England?

As I made my way through the New Acropolis Museum, I was stunned by both the beauty of the ancient art displayed and the museum structure itself. Built of steel and glass, the museum showcases over 4,000 pieces of sculptural remains from the various temples of the Acropolis. I spoke with a few staff members, asking them about the museum and, of course, the sculptures removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin. “A return of the statues now, amidst all the financial turmoil, would be huge for the Greeks and national pride,” expressed one member. Another worker felt that if the missing items were returned after 200 years of absence, then overcoming the current economic crisis might be also achievable.

The absence of the sculptures taken by Lord Elgin is very much evident in the museum. An attempt is made to fill their void by using off-white colored replicas. The replicas stand out among the ancient original sculptures. Aesthetically, it is not an attractive sight. My friends, who were informed of the missing Parthenon sculptures during our bus ride from Rafina to Athens, were as confused as I was when first being told the story by my father. It seemed obvious to them that the sculptures should be returned to Athens, especially now that they can be displayed in such a beautiful museum. One could not help but feel that the countless tourists that passed by the display of replicas felt the same way.

During my vacation, I visited also many other parts of Europe, including France and Italy. Touring the various museums on route, it became obvious that classical Greek art is highly sought after. From the Louvre to the Vatican Museum, if a museum wished to be considered elite in the world of art and history, it had to include classical Greek art. As an American of Greek heritage, I found that flattering, knowing that the accomplishments of my ancestors held relevance in today's day and age. Yet, a similar emotion is not evoked in me regarding the Parthenon sculptures that reside in London. These statues were taken and handled in a manner of disrespect to the people of Greece. Their return to Athens will not change what was done in the past; yet, it will help heal the wounds that have remained.

(Editor's note: Dr. Panagis Galiatsatos is a member of the American Committee and the lead person for a Parthenon Reunification event planned for Baltimore MD in the fall of 2010)

THE PARTHENON SCAFFOLDING COMES DOWN

The restoration work of the Parthenon begun in 1983 has finally been accomplished, and for the first time in nearly thirty years visitors to Athens will have the opportunity to view the ancient temple scaffold-free.

During the course of the restoration work, 1,852 metric tons of marble were dismantled and painstakingly put back in place again. Where pieces of marble were missing, new marble was crafted, using stone from Mount Penteli the temple's original source. The new marble stands out, being much lighter in color than the original. Rusted iron ties used in earlier restoration to hold the blocks and columns together were removed and replaced with titanium, which is highly resistant to corrosion.

In the fall, the scaffolding will be up again, this time on the western facade as the temple's restoration program continues. This phase is expected to last three years.

BRING THEM BACK!

Students from the Greek Island of Syros in front of the British Museum, demanding the return to Greece of the Parthenon Sculptures held in London.



FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

In London:

We are grateful to our British colleague, Matthew Taylor, for a bit of background information concerning Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democratic party of Great Britain and presently U.K. Deputy Prime Minister. According to the information provided (substantiated by reports in British media) **Nick Clegg** while a member of Parliament helped organize in 2002 a **Marbles in Exile Conference** in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, at which time he and others demanded the return to Athens of the Parthenon sculptures. Reportedly, Mr. Clegg berated the British Museum at the time by suggesting that keeping the marbles in London was like displaying Big Ben at the Louvre.

In Sidney:

Excerpt from a speech presented by **Ms. Virginia Judge**, New South Wells (NSW) Minister for the Arts, before the NSW Parliament, on July 1, 2010:

"...Today, I call upon the British Museum to conduct itself as a museum, a contemporary museum, and not as some colonial power clinging to a prized trophy. I do not ask the British Museum to return a vase or some statue with a missing limb. I ask the British Museum to return the Parthenon; return it to Greece so that it may be reunited with the rest of itself. It would be like having the Mona Lisa displayed in the Louvre in Paris, while her smile is displayed in the National Portrait Gallery in London. These sculptures are integral parts of the Parthenon Temple."

The Minister concluded with the words of Lord Byron:

*Dull is the eye that will not weep to see
Thy walls defaced, thy mouldering shrines removed
By British hands which it had best beloved to guard
relics, ne'er to be restored....*

WHOSE ANTIQUITIES ARE THEY ANYWAY?

The repatriation of antiquities removed from a nation under dubious or deceptive circumstances is one of the most heatedly debated issues in the world of art. The nations whose antiquities were stolen or looted, usually in the course of war and/or occupation, clearly want them back. Not surprisingly, the museums that hold them are opposed, seeking cover for their action behind bogus legal arguments.

The Rosetta Stone, the twenty-two century old stone tablet that holds the key to translating ancient hieroglyphs, is a good case in point. It is currently on display in the British Museum, where it was taken after being captured from the French during the days that Egypt was under French rule. Egypt is seeking the return of the stone, hoping to spotlight it in its new Giza museum currently under construction. The British Museum, however, does not appear anxious to

comply. It has not received an official request, it claims, for the return of the stone, but only for its loan.

Egypt is not having much luck either with the bust of Queen Nefertiti, on exhibit in Berlin's Neues Museum. The bust, Egypt claims, was removed from its territory under deceptive circumstances and should be returned. The demand has fallen on deaf ears in Berlin. The bust, claims the Neues Museum, was acquired 'legally.'

Egypt is not alone in its quest that important art icons be returned to their respective motherlands. Nigeria, China, India, Greece of course, and others have made similar claims. The great majority of the claims are directed against the British Museum. The sooner that the British Museum acknowledges that the antiquities in question do not belong in London, the sooner the issue can be removed to the back burner of history.

AMUSING VIDEO - HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Congratulations to the 'Campaign for the Return of the Parthenon Sculptures and Reunification of the Monument' (<http://www.bringthemback.org>) for producing and distributing a highly successful video spoofing Lord Elgin's 'rescue' of the Parthenon sculptures. In the video, a Greek aristocrat... Aristotle Elginiadis, has 'rescued' Big Ben to 'protect' it from London's pollution. He decides to keep the world famed clock in his estate, where a young woman is seen 'cleaning' it. Mr. Elginiadis offers to let the city of London borrow Big Ben for a few days (reminiscent of the British Museum's offer in 2009 to 'loan' the Parthenon sculptures to Greece for a period of three months). The video has been extremely successful and has been viewed by hundreds of thousands worldwide. It can be accessed in YouTube and it is titled **Bring them Back**.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT. BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Please consider becoming an ACRPS member, or renew your membership for the year 2010 by forwarding your tax-deductible gift, made payable to ACRPS, Inc. and mail to: 7850 N.W. 146th Street, Suite 501, Miami Lakes, FL 33016, Attn: Andreas Leontsinis, Treasurer. New members are welcome! Forms for joining our Committee are available at our website, www.ParthenonSculpturesUSA.org.

Volunteers are needed to take the lead in establishing Parthenon Committees in major U.S. metropolitan centers, to recruit supporters and organize events. Please contact Lefteris Karmiris, ACRPS Inc. Secretary at (301) 229-9389, or email Lefteris.Karmiris@verizon.net

GIVE TO ACRPS TODAY VIA FIRSTGIVING. HOW FAR CAN OUR APPEAL FOR 100,000 - \$ 10 OR MORE TRAVEL?

We have made it simple for you to give online, and help raise funds for ACRPS in your hometown and city! We have partnered with FirstGiving, a secure online fundraising resource, to help us spread the word about ACRPS. Your financial help is urgently needed to produce and mail publicity materials, provide for essential travel, for administrative expenses promoting our cause, and to bring the 'ALL SIDES OF THE PARTHENON' exhibit to major U.S. cities across the country.

Here is how you can help:

- Go to www.firstgiving.com/AmericanComm4theParthenon and read more
- **DONATE NOW** to the [ACRPS Fundraising Page](http://www.firstgiving.com/acrps_reunifytheparthenon) at http://www.firstgiving.com/acrps_reunifytheparthenon
- From there, click the **Get Started** button
- Select the event - **Reunify the Parthenon**
- Create your own personalized fundraising page
- Send the link out to your friends, family, colleagues - anyone you think will help you reach your goal!

The American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, Inc.(ACRPS) is the only IRS recognized Not-For-Profit organization in the United States, formed expressly to educate the American public about Greece's most acclaimed Parthenon sculptures in London and to demand their return to Athens. Contributions to ACRPS, Inc. and its membership fees are considered by the IRS as charitable contributions and are fully deductible.

A NEW WEB LOOK THIS FALL and ACRPS IS NOW ON FACEBOOK

Look for our new redesigned ACRPS website coming this fall. Also, you can now find us on FACEBOOK. Tell your family members, friends, colleagues and associates about ACRPS and its mission; connect with fellow supporters, and learn about upcoming Exhibition venues, educational presentations and special events. Go to: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/The-American-Committee-for-the-Reunification-of-the-Parthenon-Sculptures/149708308374208?ref=ts>



WE ASK LONDON, "WHY NOT?"