

Perceptions of the New Acropolis Museum

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THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM, ATHENS, OPENED 20 JUNE 2009, designed by Bernard Tschumi Architects with Michael Photiadis, under the direction of Dimitrios Pandermalis.

INTRODUCTION

The new Acropolis Museum, designed by architects Bernard Tschumi and Michael Photiadis and opened to the public on 21 June 2009, with Dimitrios Pandermalis as director of the project and the museum, has been the subject of much discussion, with both agreement and disagreement from the very beginning on the site chosen and the design of the building itself (fig. 1). One goal in selecting the design for the new museum¹ was to show a balanced relation between the architecture of the building and the Acropolis monuments.² It is not my purpose here to repeat what is already well known. Nor do I propose to review the conventional arguments as to where the Acropolis marbles/Elgin sculptures should ultimately reside,³ although a basic aspect of that problem will be apparent in the observations that follow.

The main body of the exhibition in the new Acropolis Museum comprises the objects from the old museum on the Acropolis, built in 1874 and no longer adequate for housing and displaying the increasing number of finds.

Included in addition in the new museum are antiquities from the storerooms of the First Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and from earlier excavations on the rock itself and its slopes, which had been kept formerly in the National Archaeological Museum, the Epigraphical Museum, and the Numismatic Museum of Athens. Only select aspects of the exhibitions and arrangements are discussed here, as the contents of the museum and their display are already well known through picture books, guidebooks, documentary films, articles, and the Internet. I have tried, in the notes, to provide references that might enable the reader to understand some of the thought that has gone into the designing and preparation of the exhibitions.

The museum design provides ample space for large numbers of visitors. The museum is equipped with a bookstore, restaurant, and coffee shops. It also has a lecture hall with a seating capacity of 200.

CHARACTERIZATION

That a museum exhibition, wherever it may be, is not a static, unchanging matter is understood by most in the museum world. It is especially true of the new Acropolis Museum. The vivifying aspect of this particular museum

*My thanks go to the Acropolis Museum for the use of their excellent photographs and to the editors and copyeditors of the *AJA* for skillful and patient editing.

¹Vlassopoulou 2009; see also Vlassopoulou 2011.

²See Tschumi (2009, 13 July) for an illustrated description of the design, construction, problems, and purposes.

³The main discussions are to be found in Jenkins 2006 (in which Jenkins classifies Elgin as a "conserver," expressing the same opinion in an interview

by Raz on National Public Radio [Jenkins 2009]); The British Museum 2008. Similarly persuaded is Cohen 2010. See Beard (2004), who gives both sides of the picture. For support for the return of the sculpture, see Hitchens et al. 1998; St. Clair 1998; Korres 1999 (with a valuable historical account and superb architectural drawings); Cosmopoulos 2004 (with accounts by a number of scholars of their work on the Parthenon sculpture, unrelated to the question of reunification); Hitchens 2008; Holtzmann 2010.



Fig. 1. Acropolis and Acropolis Museum, aerial view from the south (N. Daniilidis; © Athens, Acropolis Museum).

is unique in nature. It is perhaps best understood in the framework of the constant change dictated by excavation and conservation that characterizes, perforce, all functioning Greek museums, given the continuous necessity for rescue work. Unlike the great collections of ancient Greek art in the European and American museums—their displays for the most part deprived of context so that themes are their resource—the emphasis in the Acropolis Museum is largely on context, from which thematic exhibitions frequently take their meaning. It is perhaps rare to have a major museum dedicated primarily to a single site, although some smaller regional museums function in the same way, and the other two site museums of the central Athenian triad, the Stoa of Attalos in the ancient Agora and the Kerameikos, should of course be borne in mind.

Beneath the building lies part of the ancient approach from the south with its history trodden into it. In terms of excavation, one of the

⁴Choremi-Spetsieri 2006. Eleftheratou (2009) gives a valuable account of the excavations beneath the museum.

⁵E.g., the stretch of city wall beneath the Divani Palace Acropolis hotel (19–25 Parthenon Street); see

most remarkable features of this museum is its instructive incorporation of the antiquities that were found beneath it, including houses, baths, shops, workshops, roadways, and alleyways,⁴ with a chronological span through much of antiquity to Byzantine times (13th century). Some of this is visible beneath the glass panels of the ramp within the museum, beginning on the ground floor. Outside, certain parts of the excavation beneath the museum site are open, and the southern approach to the ancient city through the remains of buildings that lie beneath the museum will ultimately be open to the public to explore. In the meantime, much of it is visible. It is lighted when needed, and it is particularly dramatic after sundown. The preservation of archaeological sites is another problematic, frequently discussed topic. This is the first time that a solution of this sort to the challenges of preservation and visibility has been possible. A similar approach has been followed to preserve and exhibit finds from sections of the ancient city revealed during construction of the metro tunnels; stretches of the city walls found in earlier rescue excavations have also been preserved at a number of places beneath the modern city.⁵

THE APPROACH TO THE ROCK FROM THE SOUTH

The exhibition in the Acropolis Museum as a whole is thus bound to the Acropolis rock, a factor well understood by the architects and scholars who worked on it. The objects and groups displayed in the museum are all connected with the rock and its buildings in one way or another. The visitor's eye is constantly drawn to this innate unity, beginning with the approaches to the Acropolis from the south and continuing along the south slope of the rock itself, which is echoed by the ramp within the museum. The ramp leads through finds from the shrines that bordered the climb along the actual south slope, with objects from the east and north sides of the rock as well. Among the exhibits of interest lining the ramp within the museum are finds from the Sanctuary of Asklepios on the south slope, including the impressive Telemachos Stele⁶ and the Praxias dedication of part of a woman's face with intensely vivid inlaid votive eyes; of interest, too, are dedications connected with the customs

esp. Parlama and Stampolidis 2003.

⁶Recently restored by Beschi (1982) from newly recognized fragments (scattered in various museums); see also Mantis 2000 (with a description of the restoration and full illustration).

and rites of marriage, mainly loutrophoroi, from the Sanctuary of Nympe and finds from the "House of Proklos." Two splendid terracotta Nikes predominate and seem almost to float at the south side of the ramp before the visitor reaches the finds from the Asklepieion at the other side.⁷ The various phases of the Sanctuary and Theater of Dionysos are also represented, including a first-century B.C.E. dancer. From the east slope comes a third-century B.C.E. stele inscribed with a decree of the Athenian demos in honor of Timokrite,⁸ a priestess of Aglauros; and from the north side are dedicatory inscriptions from the cave sanctuary of Apollo Hypoakraios. The exhibits reflect the chronological range of activity on the slopes of the Acropolis, beginning in Neolithic times.

The approach rises to the large poros pediment (fig. 2) representing Herakles struggling with Triton, lions devouring a bull, and the triple-bodied daimon. The visitor then continues through the display of fragmentary and colorful little archaic pediments, including the one showing the Introduction of Herakles to Olympos, through the gallery of splendid Archaic and Severe Style votive statues that once had their places near the divinities they honored on the rock, on to the sculptural remnants of the classical buildings, and ultimately up to the Parthenon itself. Since the ramp reflects the path and its ascent to the Acropolis, the actual ascent itself should be experienced. Each illuminates the other.

The incline of the ramp is such that all three levels of the display cases on the walls are easily visible well before the final stepped ascent. At the very beginning of the ramp, however, it is difficult to see in detail the vases on the top shelf because of its height. If there is any criticism to be made of this part of the exhibition, I might suggest that mirrors be added to show the hidden sides of the vases displayed, where they might be of interest.

LABELING

Labels throughout, in Greek and English, are set so as not to interfere with the objects. They are brief, and they identify rather than

interpret. Vertical panels are fuller, providing a background history and occasionally referring to theories of interpretation, a good example being the panel discussing the Archaic Neos in reference to the Gigantomachy pediment in the Archaic Gallery.

BACKGROUND COLOR AND TEXTURE

The question of background color, as well as variegation of colors and patterns, was of much interest to the ancient Greeks.⁹ Moreover, they knew well how to employ the different colors of natural stone in their architecture to produce contrast. A good example is the use of dark gray limestone for the background of the Erechtheion frieze, contrasting with the Pentelic marble of the building and setting off the frieze figures themselves, which were attached with dowels.¹⁰ A similar use of gray and white has been successfully employed as background throughout the museum, calling to mind this ancient practice. These subtle colors, ranging through the span of shades from dark to pale, allow the now white marble figures—some still with good remains of their originally decorated surfaces (notably the Peplos kore or Acr. 684) to stand out without the distraction of a totally different color, such as the blue background chosen by many museums. Notable is the background of the big archaic pediment at the top of the ramp: shades of pale to less pale gray with vertical lines suggest the fluting of columns (see fig. 2).

GALLERIES OF THE FIRST LEVEL

The galleries of the first level include archaic pediments, large (lioness devouring a small bull from another large poros pediment) and small; korai heads (including the splendid head Acr. 643) that preserve color and are displayed in climate-controlled cases along the east wall beyond the pediment at the top of the ramp; terracotta figurines; statuettes; and bronze griffin cauldron attachments. All are well lit from the windows that look out toward the Weiler building.¹¹ This is reinforced by artificial lighting. Perhaps the bronze Gorgon now placed on the wall north of the staircase facing the left

attachment of the sculptured figures.

¹¹ The building was designed by the architect W. von Weiler. A watercolor by the architect shows it as it originally was in 1836, when it served as the military hospital of Athens. It now serves as the headquarters of the First Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and is also known as the Centre for Acropolis Studies.

⁷ They were recovered from a Roman well in the course of the 1950 excavations in front of the Odeion of Herodes Atticus.

⁸ Dontas 1983.

⁹ Tiverios and Tsifakis 2002.

¹⁰ Bouras 2007; see p. 4 for a photograph of the entablature of the Erechtheion by Mavrommatis that shows the dark gray frieze blocks with holes for the



Fig. 2. Poros limestone pediment (ca. 570 B.C.E.) at top of ramp and stairway (N. Daniilidis; © Athens, Acropolis Museum).

wing of the big poros pediment should be given a more prominent position, as it is unique.¹² While in this case it might be helpful to show also the restoration drawing of the definitive publication, the inclusion in general of too much published evidence might well upset the tranquil balance of object and space that is prevalent throughout.

The large columns in the gallery, structurally necessary, could well have been a distraction. For this observer, the overwhelming beauty of the statues themselves somehow banishes the interference of the columns, which are neutralized also by their pale gray color. Statues that have become old friends lead us through the complexity of votive figures,¹³ the cuttings for their bases on the rock itself now concealed to protect them: the Moschophoros with his offering carried almost lovingly; the Peplos kore with intricate patterns on a simple garment and a quiet pose; the Rampin horseman; the “Persian” horseman;¹⁴ the Antenor kore (fig. 3), dedicated by Nearchos and now connected with both capital and upper part of the supporting pilaster; “Endoios’ Athena”; the Kallimachos dedication after Marathon, its statue supported on top and its inscription

fully legible; the Gigantomachy pediment with the attacking Athena;¹⁵ the fine bronze head of a warrior (Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 6446)¹⁶ that reminds us how much bronze work has been lost in the course of time; an especially interesting and less well-known small gilded bronze sheet representing Athena; the Kritios Boy; the Blond Boy; and the relief of the “Pensive” or “Mourning” Athena.

Leaving the gallery of Archaic and Severe Style sculpture, the visitor continues toward the west end of the building, where entrance into the full classical world is announced by a model of the Erechtheion. This is followed by the Erechtheion frieze and then by the Nike parapet figures, most mounted on a simulated *pyrgos*, or tower, with a few in separate cases along the west wall. The lighting here is extraordinarily revealing, illuminating in sharp detail the meticulously carved Erechtheion frieze figures against a deep gray ground, and the figures of the Nike parapet, mounted so that visitors can walk beside them in their course. In a special gallery across from these, the Caryatids from the Erechtheion south porch are arranged so as to emphasize the task performed by the heavy coiffure and neck of each figure, where special

¹² Touloupa 1969. The reconstruction proposed restores the Gorgon as a Mistress of Animals; see also *LIMC* 4(2):881; Schöll 2009.

¹³ Certain scholars of the old school come to mind, esp. G. Dickens and H. Payne (whose visual memory of form enabled him to make important joins among pieces far removed from one another, solving puzzles across a spatial void); scholars of another generation are their worthy successors: L. Beschi, M. Brouscari, A. Choremi-Spetsieri, G. Despoinis, A. Mantis, E. Touloupa, I. Triandi.

¹⁴ This figure is displayed with the recent additions recognized by I. Triandi, former director of the Acropolis.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that while the figures are placed on a base corresponding to the width of the pediment, the pedimental tympanon is here omitted so as to allow clear visibility of all aspects of the statues.

¹⁶ The head (ht. 0.29 m) was found in 1886 near the Propylon, originally helmeted; it dates between 480 and 470 B.C.E. (Mattusch 1988, 91–3, fig. 5.2).

strength was needed to support the entablature above. There is ample room to see all the Caryatids from all sides and, with a space of several meters, from the front as well. The view from here looks over the ramp below and out to the large poros pediment. At present, conservation projects, initiated in 2010, include laser conservation of the northwest corner Caryatid within the exhibition itself. A sign informs the visitor:

The project documents the current condition of the statues and focuses on fixing unstable segments of the marble statues, their structural restoration, removal of the corrosive factors and cleaning of layers of atmospheric pollution with the use of laser technology. The Acropolis Museum has chosen not to move the Caryatids from the Museum Galleries for these works, avoiding the risks to the exhibits entailed in an additional move, but also to provide visitors with the opportunity to observe procedures that until recently were undertaken in the conservation laboratories.

This is a clear statement of museum policy toward care and conservation of the monuments, as well as education of the public.

From the Nike parapet, the visitor goes through the north side gallery, proceeding chronologically into Late Roman times with exhibits including choregic tripod bases, a base with an *apobates* relief, various statues, and a Roman copy of a splendid portrait of Alexander the Great.¹⁷ This is followed by some fine Roman portrait heads.

THE ACROPOLIS MODELS

Models of the rock and the buildings on it are placed at various locations according to the period they represent, with prominent features clearly labeled. In themselves, they are works of art and frequently serve as gathering points and focuses for discussions among the visitors.¹⁸

LIGHTING

The lighting throughout the museum is of much interest, and, given the variation that accompanies the daily and seasonal course of the sun, both direction and quality change constantly. The overall success of the lighting is the result of much thought and experimentation during the design process and later, even before the exhibition was mounted, while

¹⁷ The original portrait was possibly by Leochares and perhaps carved when Alexander made his only visit to Athens after Chaironeia (Hadziaslani et al. 2010, 32).

¹⁸ I should note that the chronological sequence of the sculptural units throughout has been espe-



Fig. 3. The Antenor kore, Archaic Gallery (N. Daniilidis; © Athens, Acropolis Museum).

there was a small, experimental collection of sculpture and pottery displayed in the Weiler building.¹⁹ The sheer amount of glass wall space means that the natural lighting can be used to its fullest extent or reduced selectively. At the time of writing (December 2010–January 2011), translucent coverings reduced glare from the south side along the archaic statue gallery (see fig. 3). Higher up are gray mesh shades that can be pulled down to cover the entire glass wall if necessary. At the time of my most recent visit, the mesh shades covered only about a third of the total height of the glass wall in the Archaic/Severe Style sculpture gallery. Neither the translucent glass nor the mesh shades exclude the view outside, however. Even the clouds are visible. Indeed, at the beginning of the gallery along the north side, there is an excellent view out over the “city beneath the museum” and a view of the Weiler building.

cially clearly presented for the instruction of the visitor. Many visitors have made this observation. The best general instruction for pottery sequences is to be found in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

¹⁹ Choremi-Spetsieri 2006.

The need to reduce glare in the Archaic/Severe Style sculpture gallery is evident when some of the statues are viewed from the inner side, looking south toward the glass. For the inscriptions, the lighting is especially good in both the south and the north galleries of the first level. Where well preserved, the inscriptions are all clearly legible, including the decree for the construction of the Nike temple and altar by Kallikrates, Inscriptions A (427–424 B.C.E.) and B (424 B.C.E.), at the beginning of the north gallery.

In the Parthenon Gallery, the shades, at present writing, have been drawn down fully on all sides except that toward the Acropolis rock. Here, too, however, both sky and surrounding buildings are quite visible through the mesh, which allows in the amount of light desired. Selective electrical lighting picks up the details of both frieze and metopes around the four sides of the display. As a minor criticism, I should like to see reduction of the glare of the flooring in the central core on the top floor, outside the little documentary film theater and the entrance to the Parthenon exhibition.

THE PARTHENON

The clarity of thought behind the placement of the frieze, metopes, and two pediments is immediately apparent. Yet in the main exhibition, there were indeed difficulties to overcome, paramount being the limited height of the top floor itself and whether to include casts of the frieze blocks now in other museums. The frieze itself has a tale to tell, and narrative continuity and comprehensibility ultimately demanded that the entire run somehow be shown. Recent comments have interpreted this juxtaposition as an attempt to downplay the superior condition of the frieze blocks in the British Museum as part of a political ploy to regain the sculpture.²⁰ The artificial lighting, however, is used to illuminate equally all the sculpture, casts, and originals alike. The original figures of the east frieze that are in the Acropolis Museum (e.g., VI.38–42) do not greatly contrast with the casts of the rest of the east frieze held by the British Museum. The educational materials published by the Education and Information Department

of the Acropolis Museum are instructive in this case, particularly *The Parthenon Frieze*,²¹ with illustrations of all the existing frieze blocks in photographic form, filled in where needed by the J. Carrey drawings. Perhaps I need not note that the Parthenon sculpture was never designed to be viewed as a museum exhibit or any other kind of exhibit by modern definition. Whatever details of the sculpture were visible changed from sunrise into the fathomless blue of the evening light. Today, as then, viewers can see different aspects and details according to their patience. Any disadvantages there may be in this changing play of light are certainly outweighed by the fact that the visitor can inspect all the sculpture in good lighting and from close enough to appreciate the sculptural talent of the time; questions of the meaning and purpose of these architectural sculptures and their relation to the buildings from which they came require a little more devotion.

ELGIN: ENTER—EXIT

Much discussion about various aspects of the Acropolis Museum has involved the divisive Lord Elgin. In the ongoing argument as to where the Acropolis sculpture in the British Museum collection should ultimately reside, the focus has frequently been on the differences in surface preservation between the Elgin collection and the fragments that remained on the Acropolis, in situ or lying on the ground. One proposal hails Lord Elgin as an “unwitting visionary—with regard to documentation, preservation, and also display of antiquities”; he and the British Museum are credited with important roles in “ushering in a revolutionary international aesthetic change—the romantic appreciation of ruined antiquities.” Lord Elgin is thus perceived as having removed the sculptures from the Parthenon and shipped them to England so as to “save them from gratuitous destruction.”²²

Yet the activities of Elgin must be understood in historical perspective. Apart from the islands and coasts long known to thieving traders in Roman and earlier times,²³ European attention had been drawn to mainland Greece by its antiquities before Carrey made his drawings of the Parthenon sculpture in 1674 and

²⁰ Cohen 2010.

²¹ Hadziaslani and Mavrommatis 2002 (text by Hadziaslani, photography and photographic reconstruction by Mavrommatis). Instructive, too, are <http://www.ysma.gr/ysma/> and <http://www.parthenonfrieze.gr>.

²² All quotations are from Cohen 2010, 752 (who

has followed Jenkins 2006, 2009).

²³ This is exemplified by the famous bronze statues found in Piraeus in 1959 in an ancient commercial stoa. They include a late sixth-century kouros (530–520 B.C.E.), a helmeted Athena (fourth century B.C.E.), and some other sculpture now in the Piraeus Museum.

before F. Morosini's mortars hit the building in 1687. It was an interest that focused primarily on obtaining ancient objects, and it was well underway long before Elgin appeared at the Acropolis (1801–1805)²⁴ or the British Museum acquired the antiquities. It would be more accurate to see Elgin as one in a long line of those who may have loved antiquities but coveted and pillaged them, like P.O. Brøndsted, whose activities in Greece, particularly in Karthaia (Kea), are in some ways similar.²⁵ The especially destructive removal by Elgin of the northeast corner column of the Erechtheion, together with the northernmost architrave block of the east porch and crown block, can hardly come under the heading of conservation of antiquities. In the recent restoration of the building, for structural reasons and to make sense of the plan, it was necessary to add a cast of the column and to substitute and repair the damaged and missing parts of the entablature.²⁶ The sawing off of the backs of the Parthenon frieze blocks is well known, as is the terrible damage that was inflicted during the actual removal of the pedimental sculpture. Less well known, perhaps, is the removal of the wall beams and ceiling supports to get at the frieze.²⁷ Voices of the time were already being raised in concern over such acts of despoliation.²⁸ The "unwitting visionary," if there is such a thing, appears to have joined the ranks of earlier and contemporary pillagers. Elgin's activities, it is true, have dramatically accelerated earlier destruction of the Acropolis monuments, affecting the condition of many of the main exhibits now in the Acropolis museum. Much restoration and conservation of a complex nature have been necessary in modern times as a result. No need to repeat here the vicissitudes of Elgin in his adventures with the sculptures once they arrived in England. That is well known.²⁹ He was finally obliged to sell them, and they wound up in the British

²⁴ Tsigakou 1981, 15–20; see also Lambrinou 2005 (esp. 21 [with the well-known drawing by J.D. Le Roy from 1755]). Cyriacus of Ancona recognized the Parthenon as the ancient work of Pheidias rather than as the church of the Panagia in his visit to Athens in 1436, as described by Mallouchou-Tufano 1994.

²⁵ Brøndsted was in Greece from 1810 to 1813 (Papnikolaou-Christensen 2008). The ravaging of other sites by other people at various times also comes to mind—the Cyclades with J.T. Bent, Eleusis with E.D. Clark, and Mycenae's great doorway to the Tomb of Agamemnon, to name but a few.

²⁶ Mallouchou-Tufano (1998) records fully the history of the restoration of the ancient monuments of Greece in the context of the technical knowledge of the

Museum, where restoration of a sort was finally carried out, drastically removing the surfaces of the statues by mechanical and other means.

Yet strangely enough, Elgin's actions are not directly relevant to an understanding of the exhibition in the Acropolis Museum, for reasons that will be apparent below. His historical position being clear, he should now be removed entirely from the discussion. The protection of antiquities as such and in their rightful context did not begin with Elgin.³⁰

THE MEANING OF THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

Having followed as closely as possible for some 40 years the work that has been carried out on the rock, on its buildings, in the old museum, and, now, in the new Acropolis Museum, it is clear to me that the museum together with its contents cannot in any way be divorced from the rock. The exhibits stem from the rock, and they are an innate part of the rock and of the buildings standing there. This perception was in evidence even in the days of the old Acropolis Museum, well before a site for the new museum was chosen. For the objects in this museum, it is indeed a major and exceedingly important question of context.

Focused as it is on proximity to the Acropolis rock itself (see fig. 1), and given the relationship between the objects in the museum and the monuments on the height and slopes, the exhibitions in the new Acropolis Museum should be considered together with the continuing work on the Acropolis and its monuments and on the objects from those contexts. The purpose is clear. There is no "deconstruction,"³¹ either in the museum or on the rock. Nor is there total reconstruction, but rather a carefully planned conservation and revival, taking *αναστήλωση* only as far as the structural strength and preserved members will allow it to go (fig. 4).³² Always kept in mind is how much is neces-

various periods. For earlier interventions on the Erechtheion, see Mallouchou-Tufano 1998, 33–43, 116–27.

²⁷ Korres 1999.

²⁸ E.g., Lord Byron. Best known perhaps is canto 2, stanza 15 in Byron's poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812).

²⁹ The British Museum 2008.

³⁰ Mallouchou-Tufano 1998; see also Papakonstantinou 2003.

³¹ Cohen 2010; see also Vlassopoulou 2009.

³² See, most recently, *The Acropolis Restoration News* 9 (2009) with cover photograph by T. Tanoulas (architect engineer in charge of the restoration); Ioannidou 2009; see also earlier volumes, including Tanoulas 2006, 2–3, 6–8 (figs.); see also cover photograph.



Fig. 4. Acropolis. Propylaea, showing new Ionic column capitals beside central passageway and restored coffered ceiling.

sary to make the building comprehensible as an architectural form while retaining the picture of the ruin much as it was received³³—in the case of the Parthenon, after suffering fire, major alterations to satisfy changing religious demands, bombardment, hacking, sawing, theft, the daily activities of village and garrison life on the rock, the Turkish removal of wall blocks to acquire metal, and, finally (gradually from the 1960s on), an invasion of flora and soot that might well have been slower in attack had the monuments not been so ruinous already. This philosophy of carefully controlled conservation and revival has been applied equally to the buildings on the rock and to the exhibits in the Acropolis Museum. The entire exhibition is inextricably tied to the monuments and the rock in every sense, whether or not the originals could ever be placed again precisely where they once were, and whether or not their relative positions can be precisely duplicated in the museum environment; for example, the Caryatid exhibition has been turned some 90° in relation to the orientation of the south porch on the building itself, and the sculpture of the Parthenon, perforce, is not displayed at its original height.

Proximity of the museum to the rock provides easy access to the buildings where the sculpture belongs. This is an immediate connection that serves the comprehensibility of the total monument, without the interruption of a voyage to another part of the globe. Speed of association is most important. It is paramount and fully functioning in the view along the east pediment toward the north (fig. 5).

The carefully considered course of *αναστήλωση*, restoration, and conservation, as it has unfolded and developed over the course of time, has been interpreted as “prolonged neglect and inaction.”³⁴ Yet, within the framework of what was possible in each phase, efforts to preserve the monuments together with their decorative elements have been made from the first days of the establishment of the modern Greek state and the ultimate choice of Athens as its capital.³⁵ In today’s context, it is most important to understand the principles and purposes that underlie the conservation of these antiquities and determine the speed at which decisions can be made, a process that involves first recognizing and defining the actual condition of the buildings and their sculpture and then carefully researching how best to restore and

³³ See esp. Bouras 2009. The restoration of the Athena Nike temple is instructive. For earlier comments on the Acropolis restoration works and the problems

involved, see Tomlinson 1996.

³⁴ Cohen 2010, 752.

³⁵ Mallouchou-Tufano 1998.



Fig. 5. Parthenon Gallery, view along the east pediment out to the Acropolis and Parthenon, taken at night (N. Daniilidis; © Athens, Acropolis Museum).

protect them. This is a time-consuming procedure, and it has involved devising, testing, and utilizing new technologies where applicable.³⁶

The new Acropolis Museum should be viewed as part of the entire Acropolis complex in what is, in a very true sense, a unified museum area—an area that, thanks in part to the glass walls of the museum, has no real separating wall. It provides a stage for an outdoors-indoors dialogue of the parts, which, no matter where they reside, belong to an indivisible whole.

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³⁶ Bouras 1994. Also of interest are the accounts in *The Acropolis Restoration News*, published yearly in Greek and English by the Acropolis Restoration Service (YSMA) from 2001 to the present and now being entered on their website.

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