

## THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS

The Acropolis of Athens is the best known Acropolis (high city, The "Sacred Rock") in the world. The Acropolis was formally proclaimed as the pre-eminent monument on the European Cultural Heritage list of monuments on March 26, 2007. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987. The Acropolis is a flat-topped rock which rises 150 m (512 ft) above sea level in the city of Athens (see Figures 2, 3 & 4). During the Bronze Age, a Mycenaean palace must have stood on top of the hill. The compound was surrounded by a thick Cyclopean circuit wall, consisting of two parapets built with large stone blocks. Most of the major temples in the Acropolis were rebuilt under the leadership of Pericles during the Golden Age of Athens (460–430 BC). Phidias, a great Athenian sculptor, and Ictinus and Callicrates, two famous architects, were responsible for the reconstruction. During the 5th century BC, the Acropolis gained its final shape (see Figure 1). The entrance to the Acropolis was a monumental gateway called the Propylaea. To the south of the entrance is the tiny Temple of Athena Nike. At the centre of the Acropolis is the Parthenon or Temple of Athena Parthenos (Athena the Virgin). East of the entrance and north of the Parthenon is the temple known as the Erechtheum.

THE PROPYLAEA (see Figure 8 bottom)

In 437 BC Mnesicles started building the Propylaea (see Figure 8 bottom) monumental gates with columns of Penteli marble. These colonnades were almost finished in the year 432 BC and had two wings, the northern one serving as picture gallery. At the same time, south of the propylaea, commenced the building of the small Ionic Temple of Athena Nike (see Figures 7 & 8 bottom right). The temple was finished in the time of Nicias' peace, between 421 to 415 BC. Behind the Propylaea, Phidias' gigantic bronze statue of Athena Promachos, built between 450 BC and 448 BC, dominated. The total height of the statue was 9 m. The goddess held a lance whose gilt tip could be seen as a reflection by crews on ships rounding Cape Sounion .

THE ERECHTHEUM (see Figure 6)

This temple was built between 421 to 407 BC. Its architect may have been Mnesicles. Some have suggested that it may have been built in honour of the legendary king Erechtheus. It is believed to have been a replacement for an older temple destroyed by the Persians around 480 BC. The Erechtheum was associated with some of the most ancient and holy relics of the Athenians.

THE CARYATIDS (see Figure 5)

On the South side of the Erechtheum, there is the famous "Porch of the Maidens", with six draped female figures the CARYATIDS (see Figure 5) as supporting columns. One of the Caryatids was removed by Elgin and was later sold to the British Museum (along with the pedimental and frieze sculpture taken from the Parthenon). Athenian legend had it that at night the remaining five Caryatids could be heard wailing for their lost sister. Nowadays the five original Caryatids are displayed in helium-filled glass cases in the Acropolis Museum and are replaced *in situ* by exact replicas.

THE PARTHENON (see Figures 9, 10, 11 & 12)

The Parthenon is a temple of the Greek goddess Athena built in the 5th century BC. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece. Its decorative sculptures are considered one of the high points of Greek art. The Parthenon is regarded as an

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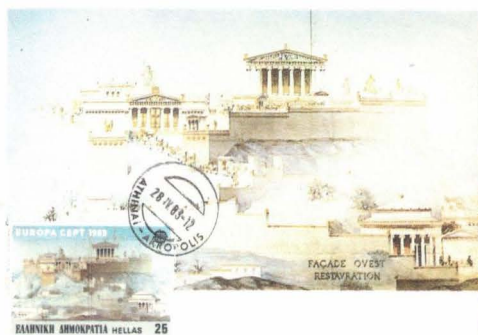
### Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 1) THE ACROPOLIS - REPRESENTATION BY M. LAMBERT. Issue: Apr. 28, 1983. For: Europa issue 1983. Cancel: First Day, Athens- Acropolis.

(Figure 2) THE ACROPOLIS - VIEW FROM THE WEST, ca. 440 B.C. Issue: Mar. 18, 2003. For: Personal Stamp issue. Cancel: Aug. 12, 2004, Athens, special mention: 'ATHENS 2004 - OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY', concordant illustration (triple).

(Figure 3) THE ACROPOLIS - VIEW FROM SOUTH-WEST, ca. 440 B.C. Issue: Feb. 15, 1961. For: Landscapes and monument - Tourist issue. Cancel: First Day, Athens.

(Figure 4) THE ACROPOLIS - VIEW FROM SOUTH-EAST, ca. 440 B.C. Issue: Apr. 1, 1927. For: Landscapes issue. Cancel: Jan. 26, 1932, Athens.





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Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 5) THE CARYATIDS, ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: Oct. 20, 1977 For: Protection of the environment. Cancel: Oct. 21, Athens.

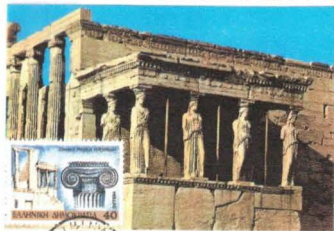
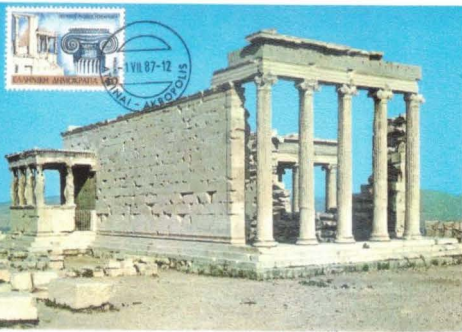
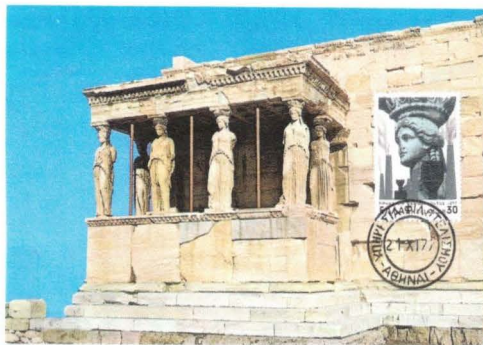
(Figure 6) THE ERECHTHEION WITH IONIC COLUMNS, ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: July 1, 1987. For: Ancient Architecture - Column Capitals. Cancel: First Day, Athens- Acropolis

(Figure 7) THE TEMPLE OF NIKE APTEROS (WITH IONIC COLUMNS), ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: Aug. 3, 1940. For: 40th anniv. of Youth Organization. Cancel: Aug. 4, 1940, Athens.

(Figure 8) THE CARYATIDS -PROPYLEA WITH THE TEMPLE OF NIKE APTEROS (WITH IONIC COLUMNS), ca. 440 B.C. Issue: July 1, 1987. For: Ancient Architecture - Column Capitals. Cancel: First Day, Athens- Acropolis



## THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS

Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 9) THE PARTHENON - VIEW FROM NORTH-WEST, ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: 2004. For: Athens 2004 Olympics. Cancel: Dec. 12, 2005, Athens, special mention: 'TORINO 2006 - OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY', concordant illustration (triple).

(Figure 10) THE PARTHENON - VIEW OF WESTERN FACE - THE FRIEZE IS BEHIND

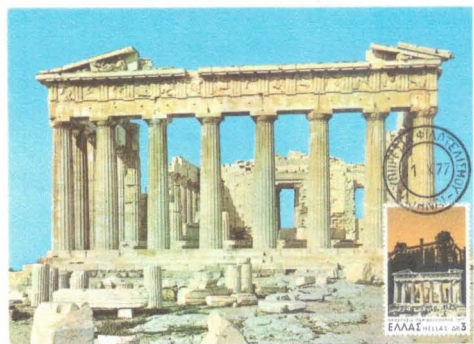
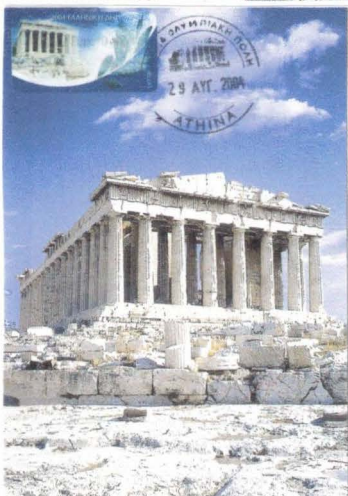
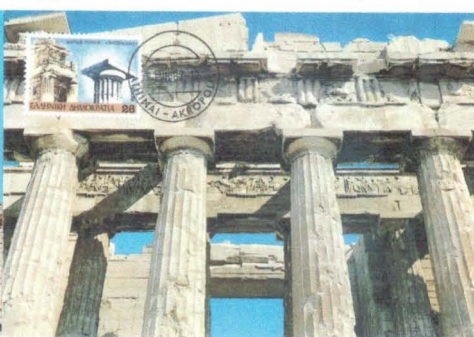
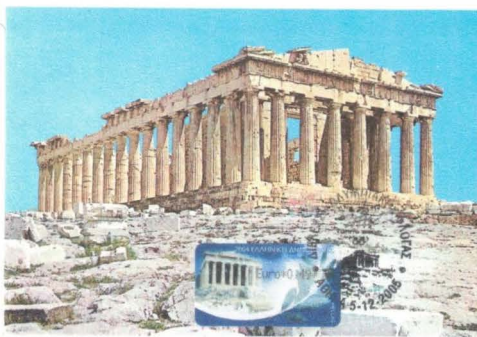
THE COLONNADE, ca. 440 B.C. Issue: July 1, 1987. For: Ancient Architecture - Column Capitals. Cancel: First Day, Athens- Acropolis

(Figure 11) THE PARTHENON - VIEW OF EASTERN FACE, ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: Oct. 20, 1977 For: Protection of the environment. Cancel: Oct. 31, Athens.

(Figure 12) THE PARTHENON - VIEW FROM WEST, ca. 440 B.C.

Issue: 2004. For: Athens 2004 Olympics. Cancel: Aug. 29, 2004, Athens, special mention: 'ATHENS OLYMPIC CITY', concordant illustration (triple).





## THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS (Continued)

### **THE PARTHENON (Continued)** (see Figures 9, 10, 11 & 12)

enduring symbol of ancient Greece and of Athenian democracy, and is one of the world's greatest cultural monuments. The Parthenon, wrote J. Norwich, '*Enjoys the reputation of being the most perfect Doric temple ever built. Even in antiquity, its architectural refinements were legendary, especially the subtle correspondence between the curvature of the stylobate, the taper of the naos walls and the entasis of the columns.*' The *stylobate* is the platform on which the columns stand. It curves upwards slightly for optical reasons. *Entasis* refers to the slight tapering of the columns as they rise, to counter the optical effect of looking up at the temple. The effect of these subtle curves is to make the temple appear more symmetrical. The dimensions of the base of the Parthenon are 69.5 x 30.9 m. (228.0 x 101.4 ft). The Cella (the inner chamber of a temple) was 29.8 m. long by 19.2 m. wide (97.8 x 63ft), with internal Doric colonnades in two tiers, to support the roof. On the exterior, the Doric columns measure 1.9 m. (6.2 ft) in diameter and are 10.4 m. (34.1 ft) high. The Parthenon had 46 outer and 19 inner pillars in total. The roof was covered with large overlapping marble tiles. The Parthenon, housed the chryselephantine statue of *Athena Parthenos* sculpted by Pheidias. The richness of the Parthenon's Frieze and Metope decoration is in agreement with the function of the temple as a treasury.

### **WEST PEDIMENT**

The west pediment faced the Propylaia and depicted the mythical contest between Athena and Poseidon for the honor of becoming the city's patron. Athena and Poseidon appear at the center of the composition with the goddess holding the olive tree and the god of the sea raising his trident. At their flanks they are framed by two groups of horses pulling chariots, while a crowd of legendary personalities from Athenian mythology fills the space out to the acute corners of the pediment. The work on the pediments lasted from 438 to 432 BC and the sculptures of the Parthenon pediments are some of the finest examples of classical Greek art. The figures are sculpted in natural movement with bodies full of vital energy. ILISSOS (see Figure 13) is a reclining figure from the left corner of the West Pediment of Parthenon representing the River God Ilissos. Now at the British Museum.

### **EAST PEDIMENT**

The East pediment narrates the Birth of Athena in full armor from the head of her father, Zeus. The sculptural arrangement depicts the moment of Athena's birth. Unfortunately, the center pieces of the pediment were destroyed, so all reconstructions are subject to speculation. The main Olympian gods must have stood around Zeus and Athena watching the wondrous event. DIONYSUSS (see Figure 14) This statue comes from the left corner of the East Pediment of Parthenon, is that of Dionysos the God of wine and joy, leaning against a rock. HESTIA, DIONE & APHRODITE (see Figure 16) This composition comes from the right side of the East Pediment of Parthenon depicting the birth of Athena. The soft, fluid folds of Aphrodite's tunic, as she leans back against her mother Dione, emphasizes the relaxed mood of this superb composition. HORSE OF SELENE (see Figure 15) This is superb statue from the right corner of the East Pediment of Parthenon, is that of the Head of a Horse of Selene's Chariot. These three statues are also at the British Museum.

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### Clockwise from Left:

#### THE SO CALLED 'ELGIN MARBLES'

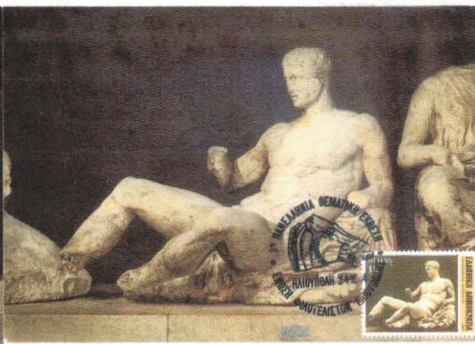
Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 19th century, having stripped down the monuments of the Acropolis from 1801 - 1804 brought back to London one whole Caryatid from the Erechtheion, huge pedimental Figures, Friezes, Metopes and parts of columns from the Parthenon representing over half of all the surviving sculptures from the monuments. These were sold to the British Government in 1816 and have been since kept at the British Museum. The claim that Elgin received written authorization to remove them is in dispute. Early this Summer the new Acropolis Museum was inaugurated in Athens. This new museum is located at the foot of the rock of the Acropolis, it was build specifically to re-unite all the Acropolis marbles. It covers an area of about 23,000 sqm. The Greek government re-issued demands regarding the subject of the Parthenon Marbles' restoration to Greece from the United Kingdom.

(Figure 13) ILISSOS by Phidias, ca. 438-432 B.C. (British Museum, London)

(Figure 14) DIONYSUS by Phidias, ca. 438-432 B.C. (British Museum, London)

(Figure 15) HORSE OF SELENE by Phidias, ca. 438-432 B.C. (British Museum)

(Figure 16) HESTIA, DIONE & APHRODITE by Phidias, ca. 438-432 B.C. (British Museum, London). For all 4 Maximum Cards: Issue: Mar. 15, 1984. For: Parthenon Marbles' return. Cancel: Apr. 2, 1984, Ilioupolis, special illustration and mention: '3rd PANHELLENIC THEMATIC EXHIBITION'.





## THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS (Continued)

### THE METOPES

The Metope sculptures date to the years 446-440 BC. Their design is attributed to the sculptor Kalamis. The Metopes of the East side of the Parthenon, above the main entrance, depict the Gigantomachy (mythical battles between the Olympian gods and the Giants). The Metopes of the West end show Amazonomachy (mythical battle of the Athenians against the Amazons). The Metopes of the South side show the Centauromachy (battle of the Lapiths aided by Theseus against the half-man, half-horse Centaurs). On the North side the Metopes subject seems to be the sack of Troy. Several of the 92 Metopes still remain on the building, some of them are at the Acropolis Museum, 15 are at British Museum in London and 1 at the Louvre in Paris. LAPITH AND CENTAUR (see Figure 17) Metope from the South side of Parthenon. Above the outer colonnade on the exterior of the Parthenon. This Metope depicts the triumph of a Lapith over a wounded Centaur. Detail from the Combat of Lapiths and Athenians against the Centaurs, who disrupted the marriage of the king of the Lapiths. This is one of the decorations removed by Elgin and is now at the British Museum.

### THE FRIEZE

The most characteristic feature in the architecture and decoration of the Parthenon is the Inner Ionic Frieze running around the walls of the Cella (the inner chamber of a temple) for 160m. Carved in bas-relief, the Frieze was carved in situ and it is dated in 442-438 BC. It depicts an idealized version of the Panathenaic procession from the Dipylon Gate in the Kerameikos to the Acropolis. In this procession held every year, with a special procession taking place every four years, Athenians were participating to honour the goddess Athena offering sacrifices and a new peplos (dress woven by selected noble Athenian girls). The Panathenaic procession, is represented with 350 people and 125 horses, in a rhythmic, uninterrupted flow. It starts on the West side of the Inner Frieze. It then moves in double file, one on the North side, the other on the South side to meet on the East Front. YOUNG HORSEMEN (see Figure 18) From the West side of the Inner Ionic Frieze of the Parthenon. *Young Riders on galloping horses*, detail from the Panathenaic procession. YOUNG PITCHER-BEARERS 'HIDROPHOROI' (see Figure 19) A group of men carrying jars of water, perhaps for sacrificial gifts; from the North side of the Frieze. HEROES (see Figure 20) From the East side of the Frieze. Calm and dignified *Heroes*, deep in conversation. On the East side the procession ends, by the giving up of the embroidered robe to clothe Athena, under the benevolent eyes of the assembled Olympian Gods and Heroes. GODDESS ARTEMIS (see Figures 21 & 24) From the East side of the Frieze *Artemis* is seated with fellow Olympian Gods, awaiting the procession of the Panathenaic festival. GODS POSEIDON, APOLLO & ARTEMIS (see Figures 22 & 23) From the East side of the Frieze. *Poseidon, Apollo and Artemis* are seated with their fellow Olympians, awaiting the procession of the Panathenaic festival, which occupies most of the 160 meter long frieze, in honor of Athena. All these bas-reliefs, - with the exception of the 'HIDROPHOROI' - were removed by Elgin from the Inner Frieze of the Parthenon and are now at the British Museum in London.

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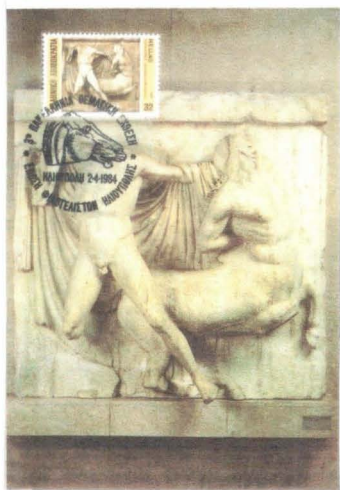
Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 17) LAPITH AND CENTAUR by Phidias, ca. 447-442 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: Mar. 15, 1984. For:Parthenon Marbles' return. Cancel: Apr. 2, 1984, Ilioupolis, special illustr. and mention: '3rd PANHELLENIC THEMATIC EXHIBITION'.

(Figure 18) YOUNG HORSEMEN by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: Mar. 15, 1984. For:Parthenon Marbles' return. Cancel: Apr. 2, 1984, Ilioupolis, special illustr. and mention: '3rd PANHELLENIC THEMATIC EXHIBITION'.

(Figure 19) 'HYDRIAPHOROI' YOUNG PITCHER-BEARERS by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. (Acropolis Museum, Athens). Issue: Jan. 3, 1959. For:Ancient Greek 'Art. (re-issue with new values). Cancel: Nov. 13, 1961, Athens

(Figure 20) HEROES by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. (British Museum, London) Issue: Mar. 15, 1984. For:Parthenon Marbles' return. Cancel: Apr. 2, 1984, Ilioupolis, special illustr. and mention: '3rd PANHELLENIC THEMATIC EXHIBITION'.





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### Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 21) GODDESS ARTEMIS by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: Mar. 24, 2004. For: Greetings- Personal Stamp. Cancel: Mar. 31, 2004, Athens, special illustr. & mention: 'ARRIVAL OF OLYMPIC FLAME'.

(Figure 22) GODS POSEIDON, APOLLO & ARTEMIS by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: Mar. 18, 2003. For: Greetings- Personal Stamp. Cancel: 6. V. 2009, Acropolis

(Figure 23) GODS POSEIDON, APOLLO & ARTEMIS by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: 7. IV. 2006. For: Greek Museums. Cancel: First Day, Athens, special mention: 'GREEK MUSEUMS'.

(Figure 24) GODDESS ARTEMIS by Phidias, ca. 440 B.C. British Museum, London. Issue: Mar. 12., 2007. For: Greetings- Personal Stamp. Cancel: First Day, Athens, special mention: 'PERSONAL STAMP'.

