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## EDUCATION THROUGH A CLASSICAL MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE, THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS CASE

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A long-long time ago, the very earliest settlers of this area chose to make their homes on a rocky hill in the Attic plain, 156 m high, not far from the sea. This rocky hill was to become the first city, the Polis in Greek.

The Polis became the palace, the religious centre, the citadel, it became a small village and today a world-wide known archaeological site.

For thousands of years Athens developed step by step around the same fixed centre, the highest part of the town, in Greek the «Acron» of the Polis, the Acropolis. Although we take this for granted as a self-evident fact, in reality this development depends on the age-old selection of a site made by the first permanent settlers and kept unchanged by all future generations.

Today the Acropolis forms the focal point of Athens, we always use the «Acron of the Polis» for orientation. Using monuments for orientation is done all around Greece, since a major part of our built environment are the monuments, prehistoric, classical, byzantine and neoclassical.

The Education Department of the Acropolis was created in 1987, by the Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments in collaboration with the Acropolis Ephorate and is based on the belief that:

- 1) An intimate knowledge of the art and history of the Acropolis monuments and a familiarity with the essence of classical architecture should be the prerogative of all people today not that of a select circle of experts.
- 2) An understanding and appreciation of the Athenian Acropolis is part of the curriculum in the majority of schools worldwide and forms of course a substantial part of the history taught in schools throughout Greece.
- 3) The first step towards ensuring the respect and continuing conservation of a monument is through education that should begin at an earlier age.

These principals constitute the framework within which the Department of Information and Education of the Acropolis Restoration Service provides information seeking to effect positive changes in educational practices today and at the same time in keeping with modern international practice of informing the public about important public enterprises.

The Department consists of three persons, myself and archaeologists Eirini Kaimara and Assimina Leonti. All the services are provided free of charge.

The aim has always been to provide people of different ages and different levels of education, with the opportunity to enhance their understanding of classical civilization. Books are published, films and lectures for the general public, are held regularly. A yearly Newsletter and a web site, provide information at different levels. Flexible touring exhibitions are organised. Lectures and small symposia are always organised on the occasion of the exhibition by the hosting Institution.

The first task that the Department set itself, was to study how the area of the Acropolis could best be utilised so that the pupils' visit could be of the utmost benefit to them. The result was a series of open day programmes. I will describe shortly two programmes that I believe are of the interest for the present meeting.

«A Day on the Acropolis»: (image 1)



1.

The emphasis of this programme is on the architectural and archaeological analysis

of the ancient buildings, the construction methods, the analysis of the damage caused to the monuments over the two-and-a-half thousand years of their life, as well as, to today's conservation and restoration methodologies.

The archaeological site is organised so as to present visitors with a full perspective of the above subjects through visual, hearing and touching experiences. A number of trained volunteer students are stationed around the site with each presenting a different part of the work. These presentations are co-ordinated to provide a full description of the temples and their restoration.

You can see some workshops; pupils chiselling marble, studying the big numbers of scattered architectural members, documenting architectural members, designing coffered ceilings, initiated in the specialised devices.



2.

Another programme is «**A Day Building an Ancient Greek Temple**» (*image 2*): **pupils build little by little 'their own' ancient greek temple**. They become ancient Athenian citizens, architects, sculptors, craftsmen and through this identity they participate in both the decision-making and the building process. They select the god to be worshipped in the temple, they create the cult statue and the temples' sculptural adornment; they design the plan of the temple and make the model of it; they choose the order and produce a prototype capital; they draw the door as well as the doorframe of the temple.

These «open day» programmes and many others, holding 10-25 workshops each, form the basis of most of the programmes we organize today. Most of them have by now taken their final form as a Teacher's Seminar or as a Museum Kit and are thus available to teachers.

The interest in participating far exceeds the potential of the Department. Thus the Department very early focused its efforts to the training of teachers of every specialisation, to encourage them to take initiatives and work on their own with the children.

This collaboration takes a more specific form in the **special Seminars** that take place regularly at the Centre for the Acropolis Studies, throughout Greece and abroad as well. Some 15.000 educators have taken part in the seminars, where the Department's educational resources are presented, with data from the architecture, art and history of the classical period and its monuments, to be included in the lessons so as to enrich the course being taught.

All participants of the seminars or of the special symposia organised by the Department receive educational resources in Greek or in English.



3.

The **Educational Resources** (*image 3*) comprise educational publications, Museum Kits, Teachers' Packs, books, special itinerary booklets, films, CD-ROMs, posters and games. The Department's publications cover 20 different subjects and they have been circulated in more than 250,000 offprints in both Greek and English.

The resource material aims to help educators prepare themselves better both for the lesson at school and for the class visit to the archaeological site and the Museum.

Particular emphasis is placed on the distribution of material to educational Institutions. Every school applying receives for its library a file containing educational booklets and posters, to maintain contact of the class with the monuments.

The Department believes that the publications are of special importance because they are distributed to so many educators and students. Through the diffusion of these resources, the enormous educational potential of the Athenian Acropolis and the era it symbolises becomes available at a crucial level of education. Shortly most of them will be available at a PDF form in our web site.

Over the years it has become apparent that in order to meet the great demand for participation in the programmes, it was necessary to enlarge the **Loan Section**, which is now growing continuously and is based primarily on the Museum Kits.

The **Museum Kits** are the most composite pedagogic material we provide. They contain a diversity of relevantly designed materials that can be activated through the personal way of each teacher. The old-fashioned idea of a closed box full of gifts for the child to open is associated with modern technologies. Books, photos, CD-Rom and artefacts complement each other to provide learning and fun.

The Department's Museum Kits comprise several subjects:

*Although the themes are separate, they can comprise an assemblage through which the culture of ancient Greece can be approached in a different way. The picture of a brilliant ancient sanctuary (Museum Kit «**Let's go to the Acropolis**») where the gods are worshipped (Museum Kit «**The Twelve Olympian Gods**»), in splendid temples (Museum Kit «**A Greek Temple**») made of marble (Museum Kit «**The Art of Stone-Sculpture**») decorated by sculptures of unique artistic quality (Museum Kit «**The Parthenon Frieze**»), brings the sanctuaries to life before the eyes of the pupils. Worshippers dressed in beautiful clothes (Museum Kit «**Ancient Greek Dress**») participated in the Festivals with music everywhere (Museum Kit «**Ancient Greek Musical Instruments**»). In this way children can approach the world of antiquity with pleasure, their intellect, imagination and creativity activated. Concurrently, they can approach the contemporary extensive research programme and major technical project carried out on the Acropolis (Museum Kit «**Restoration in Action. The Athenian Acropolis Project**»).*

I will briefly describe the Museum Kits of interest to the meeting.

The Kit **Let's Go to the Acropolis** (image 4) aims to help pupils recreate and imagine the glamorous sanctuary where faithful Athenians worshiped their patron goddess during the antiquity. It consists of a 1:800 scaled model of the Acropolis Hill and the models of the monuments. Children position the temples on the model thus realizing the orientation, the use and form of each building, their comparative dimensions, their exact place and the pathways on the Hill.

The Teachers' Pack contains 4 posters with the history of the Acropolis and several booklets.

Two booklets under the common title: «*Let's Go to the Acropolis*», one for the teacher, the other for the pupil. The booklets help them to learn the history of the Rock of the Acropolis through models and reconstruction drawings.

Two booklets under the common title «*Let's Go to the Acropolis Peripatos*» Their subject is the ancient road around the Acropolis - called in antiquity the "Peripatos"- and the acquaintance with both the north and south slopes of the Acropolis Hill .

One is addressed to the teacher, the other to the pupil.

The booklet "A Day on the Acropolis with the Texts of Plutarch and Pausanias".

It contains the original texts in ancient Greek from Plutarch and Pausanias referring to the ancient monuments, their translation in English, as well as restored views of the Acropolis.

The booklet "**A Day on the Acropolis in Search of the Goddess Athena**". This



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booklet gives information concerning the statues of goddess Athena, in relation to the buildings of the Acropolis and its site. A topography lesson becomes a game by sticking stickers of the statues in the proper place, around the graphic restoration of the Rock.

### **2) The Twelve Olympian Gods** *(image 5)*

The ancient Greek gods represent universal values and symbols. Their various myths inspired and provided themes for poets, writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, in a word, for civilization.

The Kit contains a pack with twelve fliers, one for each god, a pack with cards featuring well-known myths for every god, and several games. Each god is illustrated through a statue, a temple, a vase, a coin and a work of art from Renaissance to our days.

Many games, Mythology Cards, Game Cards (recognising the Gods. in sculpture, on coins, on vases, on stamps, also plants and animals sacred to the Gods) as well as, Booklet Games like the «Who is who on Mt Olympus» integrate the above information with symbolism, myth and famous works of art from antiquity to the 20th century.

The Museum Kit booklet combines all the above together.

### **3) A Greek Temple** *(image 6)*

Greece is a country filled with ancient monuments and neoclassical buildings bearing doric, ionic and corinthian morphological elements. The Kit helps teachers and pupils enhance their understanding of ancient and neoclassical buildings. It contains the model of an ancient Greek temple, a set of sixteen rubber stamps with which the pupils can compose facades, and three columns, a doric, an ionic and a corinthian.

A specially written book describing the temples, the use and function, the typology, the morphology, the sculpted and painted decoration, and the construction methods, illustrated with lots of photographs and drawings as well as sixteen plates with ancient temples all around Greece, provide opportunities for playing and learning.

Matrixes of ionic and lesbian cymatia are included as well as a poster on the three orders.

### **4) The Art of Stone Sculpture** *(image 7)*

The Acropolis today presents a similar picture to that which it had in antiquity. Today as then, the most common sound to be heard by visitors is that of tools chiselling marble.

The Kit contains hammers, tools, a piece of marble with the tools' traces and the Teacher's Pack. The pupils observe the traces and practice their skills on given marble. Thus they realize the difficulties of working with stone and they learn to distinguish and recognize the traces of the several tools on contemporary and ancient buildings.

### **5) Restoration in Action. The Athenian Acropolis Project** *(image 8)*

A major technical project and an extensive research programme are being carried out on the Acropolis for the conservation and restoration of the monuments. The Museum Kit presents this restoration project with the help of a photographic exhibition, special books and DVD films.

Through the photographic exhibition an itinerary to the interventions at the Acropolis monuments is followed that illustrates the reasons for which intervention was necessary, the work site preparation for and the main works on the



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monuments.

The theory behind the methods used, the international ethical principles, the basic canons followed during the interventions are presented in the synoptic book *"The Works of the ESMA on the Acropolis of Athens"*. A series of 5 films on the restoration works offer the possibility to organise a film festival at school.

The educational resources of the Kit are integrated through cards with interdisciplinary links to several subjects throughout the curriculum, through professional orientation and through the arts.



#### **6)The Parthenon Frieze** (image 9)

The Parthenon Frieze illustrating the great Panathenaic procession to the Acropolis in honour of patron goddess Athena is a very low relief continuous band, 160 meters long and one meter high. It ran along the top part of the main temple, within the outer colonnade. Participants in the composition were 360 divine and human figures and more than 250 animals, most of them horses. The Frieze being the best preserved architectural sculpture, with a wonderful narrative is of special interest to our Department.

The Kit contains a small model of the Parthenon, sixteen 1:20 scaled moulds of the west frieze blocks, that can be painted, as well as a photographic reconstruction of the whole Frieze at the same scale, a mould of the head of goddess Iris, together with several books; the book "Parthenon Promenades», booklets on the Frieze, on the 12 Gods on the Frieze, and on the Panathenaic Games.

In the photographic reconstruction of the Parthenon Frieze approx. 400 photographs of all the frieze blocks preserved today have been made and combined together, a work that lasted approx. 4 years, by the photographer of the YSMA S. Mavrommatis. The next step was of course a CD-ROM which you can find in the Web ([www.ekt.gr/parthenonfrieze](http://www.ekt.gr/parthenonfrieze))

This reconstruction was positioned on a schematic model of the Parthenon designed for it in the Centre.

Every child wanted the Frieze Reconstruction, so we decided to make a game. It consists of four reconstructions of the four sides of the frieze in a scale 1:60. This game is always accompanied by the CD-Rom which offers beautiful big photographs of the frieze blocks. The pupils can position it on another model specially made for it.

The Department is providing around 200 schools per year with Museum Kits-on-loan. Thus these Museum Kits have travelled over the years to approx. 3500 schools in Greece and abroad and they have been used by some 205, 000 children. In 2001, an extensive special programme was completed, through funding by the Niarchos and by the Bodosakis Foundations, with the designing and reproduction of four Museum Kits in multiple copies that were offered to a network of selected schools and educational institutions throughout Greece and abroad. The choice was based on a specific evaluation procedure so that the material would be used by the recipients to full advantage.

So far, approx. 1110 kits have been distributed all around Greece and another 254 in 27 different countries abroad.

The Department holds **Special Symposia** on the general subject «Educators and Programmes about the Acropolis». These provide a platform for dialogue between educators with a common interest in teaching through our cultural environment. The Acropolis, because of its importance and because it has an organised Education Department, provides the impetus and incitement for educators to proceed with

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their projects and to develop their own ideas. Thus far 8 symposia have been organised (1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004). Proceedings or summaries of the reports given at the symposia are published.

Taking part in these symposia are approx. 150-200 educators and some 15-20 papers are presented each time.

The value of the meetings is evident in the multidisciplinary character of the reports. The 150 reports and proceedings comprise today an important and rich aggregate of projects related to the Acropolis that have been applied by teachers. Over the years reports on some 120 applied projects have been added to the departmental archive.

These definitive results of teaching illustrate and describe in the best possible way the process itself of teaching that has been followed each time. The interested educator is able to examine original programmes about the Acropolis and its epoch, which contain new ideas, methods and applications that have been created by colleagues with the same background, the same possibilities and the same goals. Several schools have proceeded to the manufacture of crafts with the help of all kinds of materials especially recycle material. Drawing and painting, collage, stamping and tracing have been used.

The Classical orders provoked the pupils to design a town for the future. Among other buildings a **three floor garage** (image 10) was drawn and a Night-club in the shape of an antefix.

Some pupils proceeded to the research of ancient *spolia* and also of classical forms in Neoclassical buildings, in Byzantine churches as well as in the work of famous 19th and 20th century artists.

The name «Acropolis» was written by the future designers in many ways. Some pupils produced jewellery, perfume bottles, Swatch watches. Others manufactured new board games about the temples. New Museum Kits were designed by students of architecture.

**The construction of the Acropolis monuments was recreated** (image 11).

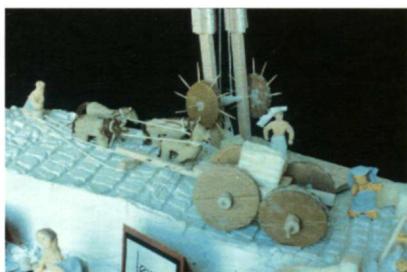
Pupils proposed new temples for new gods. Gods of Nature, of Forgetfulness, of Gymnastics were created and temples were designed, temples from younger and from older children. Big selections of columns and capitals were made, with plasticine, with soap.

Models of ancient temples were constructed from paper, from chopsticks from plaster of Paris, as well as from sugar on a big cake. Macaroni can decorate ancient doors, doors that open so that we can see the cult statue. *Metopes* for a temple illustrating the olympian Gods were proposed. Columns and tiles from the Acropolis inspired new synthesis of decorative elements and kaleidoscopic designs. Proposals for contemporary cymatia, and for new coffered ceilings, were designed most of them with stars, since they are put in the place of the sky.

In some schools several teachers collaborated resulting to bigger projects incorporating biology, geography, mathematics, physics and chemistry. Pupils manufactured pigments using ancient techniques, proceeded to experiment with acid rain which they produced and also worked on conservation techniques. In biology they studied plants and proposed new planting with corresponding myths. Morosini and the 1687 explosion have been very big success. The children wrote his diary with ink on parchment. They created photographs of the event, and they published newspapers of 1687 that gave journalistic descriptions of the events. They made a video-reportage for the 9.00 o'clock News and they interviewed the



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Director of the Acropolis, Morosini himself, a representative from the Insurance Company and several other persons.

Several schools have proceeded to work with computers creating virtual artworks. Sculptures from the pediments and parts of the Frieze were positioned in a beautiful garden but also in a seascape. The pedimental statue of Iris becomes a flying bird in the sky, the statue of Athena gets out of the Parthenon, two jockeys ride Parthenon frieze horses and the olympian gods get dressed in contemporary suits.



12.

At the same time a pupil acts the gold and ivory cult statue, the whole school acts the Panathenaic procession, the horsemen, the chariots, the hydria and tray bearers, and the senior class is very happy acting the east pediment of the Parthenon (image 12).

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Athenian Acropolis represents an architectural, artistic and cultural prototype for Western Civilization. The Education Department feels that it is necessary to find ways to activate what is surely a huge educational potential. Our goal is to make the Acropolis render the maximum in educational proceedings and programmes that can have a general application to the methods of learning about humanity through the brilliant spectrum of the Classical world.