The Acropolis Restoration News

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The Propylaia and its surroundings from the best of the Parthenon monument. Photo S. Mavromatidis, June 2007
From Prehistoric times down to the pre-Christian era and Byzantium, our ancient gods and goddesses were enshrined in our homes and temples. Every household, every city, every region of the Greek world had its own deities, which were depicted in different ways and according to their specific characteristics. The Twelve Olympian Gods were, of course, the center of attention, but there were also many lesser deities who had their own places and roles. In the framework of the educational programme “MELINA – Education and Culture”, we have worked for over 10 years. A first educational museum kit, “The Twelve Olympian Gods” has been designed to be used in the classroom and then in a place of cultural interest. The goal is to use this kit as a tool to create an atmosphere of excitement and to encourage students to think critically and creatively about the myths and legends that have shaped our history and culture.

The museum kit comprises various booklets and games.

1. The book of the museum kit

It includes an introduction to the subject. It describes and connects the various leaflets and games. It has instructions on how to use them and suggestions for the instructor.

2. A file with twelve leaflets, one for each god

Each leaflet contains a brief description of the characteristics of each divinity, the most important myths about him/her, the names of his/her companions and children, his/her principal epithets, characteristic features of the cult, the festivals held in his/her honour, and the main Sanctuaries and Temples dedicated to his/her name.

The forms of the divinity on the first page are characteristic representations of the cult, the festivals held in his/her honour, and the main Sanctuaries and Temples dedicated to his/her name. Moreover, to demonstrate the richness of the religious life, there are characteristic representations of the various monuments dedicated to the gods and goddesses. Shown in each tripyle are the head of the god or goddess from a well-known work of ancient art and smaller pictures from a piece of sculpture, a drawing, a coin, a vase, or a mythological scene.

3. An envelope with cards

a. Thirteen myth-cards, wonderful works by the painter P. Valasakis, show scenes and myths characteristic of the gods. There is a card for each divinity, and another with all the gods together for the cover.

b. Five game-cards illustrate works of ancient and more recent art with representations of the gods, in sculpture, on vases, on coins and on postage-stamps. Each card comprises a complete educational programme. The student identifies the divinities and the myths and compares different types of status, coins, and so forth, as follows.

Recognizing the gods... on vases

On this card twelve ancient vases are shown. On each are depicted scenes with a god as protagonist. The students identify each god from his characteristic attributes or from the myths that are illustrated and they observe the shapes and types of decoration of the vases.
The Ohio State University Library
Geyser artists. The students identify each god and create a collection of their own.

c. Two cards follow, entitled “Recognizing plants and animals dedicated to the gods”, by the painter, M. Kalomipoulos. Various myths from all over Greece lie behind the attributes or the predilection and relation-
ship of each god for a specific animal or plant. The students are asked to indentify and find what is sacred to each divinity, and to pick out the corresponding myths.

d. A game-card with twelve figures-gods of different colours stimulates the children to create their own gods, to choose which colour best expresses each one, to find pic-
tures in periodicals and newspapers, to clothe the figures and to add their attrib-
utes, and so forth.

4. An envelope containing a card on the subject of attributes and symbolon.
Shown are 12 attributes - forms that lend themselves to multiple interpretations. The multi-facetted interpretations that each attribute can be given, the sequences and correlations that can be made, help the pupil to imagine and to remodel creatively the world of the ancient divinities. The stu-
dents decode them and fill the envelope with their own objects - attributes.

5. The leaflet “The Olympian Gods in the Parthenon Frieze”
A game is devoted to the “Twelve Gods” as they are depicted in the frieze of the Parthe-
non. Information is given about the monu-
ment, and for each god an epithet and the animal and plant that are sacred to him. The stu-
dents try to identify the gods and their attributes.

6. The game of recognizing the gods “Who’s Who on Mt. Olympia”
The game is based on the matching of pho-
tographs of a characteristic head, of a sculp-
tured work, a vase, a coin, a temple, and a more recent work of art for each god. The stu-
dent identifies the gods and chooses and matches the photographs of the various works.
Finally, in the museum kit the student finds also an invitation to participate in a game of finding works of art of universal cultural heritage, with the gods of Olympia as pro-
tagonists. In order to participate, the stu-
dent should send us photographs of one or
more works of art. The work can refer to one or more divinities, it can be an ancient or more recent piece of sculpture, vase, coindicenece

a. A similar presentation of “The Twelve Olympian Gods”, informing the educators in their district about the use and availabili-
ity of the kit on loan from the local institu-
tions.
For example, in March 2007, in Thessa-
lonike, the four Officials in charge of Cul-
tural Affairs in the Elementary School sys-
tem of the Prefecture, in collaboration with the Tellogeion Foundation for the Arts of

Special care has been devoted to the pictu-

eral quality of the museum kit. The excep-
tient artistic and editorial supervision of the museum kit is the work of Ira Melengko-
glou (AltSys), to whom warm thanks are due; without her, the museum kit would not have had the same quality.

Circulation of the museum kit
From December 2006 to June 2007, 320 museum kits were given to educational institutions throughou

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the Aristotle University of Thessalonike, organized a seminar addressed by C. Had-
ziasilas on the subject of the Educational Material of the Acropolis, and in particular the use of the museum kit, “The Twelve Olympian Gods” in educational practice. One hundred seventy educators from 120 schools took part in the seminar, and were given an Educational Folder on the Acrop-

The schools of the Prefecture no longer need to borrow the museum kit of “The Twelve Olympian Gods” directly from Athens. They can now receive it on loan from the institution of the Ministry of Na-
tional Education and Religion (four Cul-
tural Officials of the Elementary School system and four of the High School sys-
tem), from the institutions responsible at the Ministry of Culture (16th EPAK, 9th EBA, Archaeological Museum and Muse-

A different situation applied in the Prefec-
ture of Rhodes, where our collaboration with the educators of the Prefecture was arranged through the local 10th Ephorate of Antiquities, which had a tradition in educa-
tional programmes. The archaeologist in charge of the Educational Programmes of the museum held a special seminar for the educators of the Prefecture on the subject of the new museum kit, “The Twelve Oly-
megans” and its use in the Archaeolog-
ical Museum of Komotini. Between Octo-
ber 2006 and January 2007, 600 school children, with the help of the museum kit, took part in a specially arranged educatio-
nal programme in the Museum.

Officials from abroad have shown special interest in the museum kit. Museum kits have been presented to 17 Foreign Archae-
ological Schools in Athens. They have also been given to educators from schools abroad with whom we have worked during this period. Thus, in a first phase, museum kits have been given to 33 institutions in Australia, France, Germany, United States, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Great Britain, Hol-

In closing we should like to thank particu-
larly the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, whose generous funding completed first the museum kit “Let’s go to the Acropolis” in 2002, and now the museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods”.

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tion of the YSMA


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