



The Propylaea and its surroundings from the level of the Parthenon metopes. Photo S. Mavrommatis, June 2007

- Ch. Bouras, Theoretical principles of the interventions on the monuments of the Acropolis
M. Ioannidou, 2000-2007, The restoration of the Acropolis by the YSMA
F. Mallouchou-Tufano, E. Petropoulou, Public opinion poll about the restoration of the Acropolis monuments
D. Englezos, Protective filling of ancient monuments. The case of the Arrephorion on the Athenian Akropolis
E. Lembidaki, On the occasion of the new restoration of the temple of Athena Nike
Looking back at the history of the cult statue of Athena Nike
C. Hadziaslani, I. Kaimara, A. Leonti, The new educational museum kit "The Twelve Olympian Gods"
F. Mallouchou-Tufano, News from the Acropolis
F. Mallouchou-Tufano, The restoration of the Erechtheion: 20 years later

From Prehistoric times down to the pre-dominance of Christianity in the 4th century A.D., the Greeks, continuing with the Romans, worshipped gods and goddesses who, according to tradition, dwelled on the untrodden heights of Mt. Olympus. The religion is a complex one and it is directly connected with a vivid mythology, which had a role for the ancestral leaders of the Greeks, the heroes of a shrouded but illustrious past, and above all the places, the mountains, rivers and seas of the Greek world. These numberless tales with their various versions, the myths about the

material in the schools within the programme “Alternative Zones” of the Ministry of National Education and Religion organized then for the first time.

This is a very pleasing museum kit, the subject of which is of interest to Greeks and to foreign educators worldwide. The purpose of the kit is to give students and educators the opportunity of approaching the vast richness of ancient and modern art, to learn some of the beautiful myths of antiquity and to connect these with the sites, monuments and history of our land.

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 divided into the following categories: Mythology-History and Art. Mythology and Language, Mythology and Natural Sciences, Mythology and Contemporary Professions. Many of these proposals have already been applied by educators with whom we have had a long collaboration. The museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods” has been designed to be used in the classroom and then in a place of cultural importance, thus practically anywhere. A single work of art devoted to only a single god is enough to activate the entire educational force of this museum kit.

Information is thus given for using the museum kit in a museum, an archaeological site, an art gallery, a library or a bookstore.

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 principle epithets, characteristic features of the cult, the festivals held in his/her honour, and the main Sanctuaries and Temples dedicated to his/her name. Noted too are characteristic representations of the divinity in sculpture and vase painting and also the identifying attributes by which the god may be recognized; so too, the animals and plants that are sacred to him/her. One side of the leaflet has pictures only and it can serve as a mini-poster in the classroom. The illustrations are varied and they are representative of each one of the twelve gods and goddesses. Shown in each triptych 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 coin, a vase with mythological scenes, an architectural work and a modern work of art from the Renaissance to the present. We have chosen 101 works from 14 Greek Museums and 24 Foreign Museums in 8 different countries. An effort has been made

During the past years our museum kit has become a favorite with educators and students. It has provided the possibility of a multi-thematic approach through the teaching equipment. As a result it has been included with the new school books provided for the 3rd Elementary grade as suggested supporting material for the History-Mythology course. At the same time, the number of requests for receiving it on loan has increased in Greece and abroad for the English version. Thus, after 10 years, and thanks to the generous funding by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, we have developed the contents and form of the museum kit and we have brought out what is actually a new museum kit, on the same theme, with 500 copies in Greek and 300 in English.



The educational museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods”. Photo S. Mavrommatis, 2007

twelve immortal and most important gods, with an entire world of lesser divinities, provided themes that nourished and inspired for thousands of years both pre-Christian antiquity and, after the European Renaissance, poets, writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, in sum culture itself.

With this as our theme and focusing on the Olympian divinities shown in the Parthenon frieze, we have prepared the educational museum kit, “The Twelve Olympian Gods”. It is a subject on which we have worked for over 10 years. A first version of the museum kit appeared in 1998 in the framework of the programme “MELINA – Education and Culture”. In 2001, it was chosen by the Institute of Education to be offered as educational

to chose works of art that will show the children the many aspects of the ancient world, of ancient art and the personality of each god or goddess. Where possible, we have given preference to works that are from the Athenian Acropolis.

The following principles have determined the choice of illustrative material:

- The form of the divinity on the first page was chosen from ancient sculptural works in marble. The purpose is to emphasize the anthropomorphism of ancient Greek religion.
- The ancient sculptural works, be they statues in-the-round or reliefs, have been selected from works of various sizes and different materials.
- The vases have been chosen on the basis of the clarity with which each divinity is depicted and according to the possibility of recognizing him from his attributes.
- Moreover, to demonstrate the richness and range of ancient Greek pottery making, we have chosen black-figured, red-figured, relief-decorated vases, white ground vases, and vases of various shapes: amphorae, craters, kylikes, lekythoi, pyxides, hydriae and so on.

The architectural monuments dedicated to the gods likewise vary. We have open-air Sanctuaries in a natural setting (such as the Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Daphne), simple altars (such as that of Dionysos), sacred precincts surrounded by stoas (as at Brauron), Telesteria (such as at Sangri in Naxos) and, of course, many temples of different types, built in the Doric, Ionic or Corinthian styles.

The ancient coins of the various Greek cities, of gold, silver and bronze, have been chosen for their artistic values, and for the ease with which each divinity can be recognized from his attributes.

Each leaflet contains a picture of a more recent work of art, whose theme is drawn from ancient mythology and the gods and which show the extent to which they influenced later artists. The works comprise paintings and sculpture by both European and American artists, covering a chronological span from the early Renaissance (Sandro Botticelli, 1481) to modern times (A. Karo, 1990).

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

great artists of antiquity, that went on to be copied in various sizes and materials in later times. The students try to recognize each god and to imagine the statues in their original form.

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 book of the museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods”. Photo S. Mavrommatis, 2007

types of statues, vases, coins and so forth, as follows:

Recognizing the gods

On this card are twelve ancient marble sculptures that represent the individual gods. Some come from statues in-the-round, some from reliefs. The students try to identify each divinity and to imagine the figure without the missing fragments and damage suffered through time, but with the colours it will have had originally.

Recognizing the gods... in sculpture

Illustrated on this card are twelve works of ancient sculpture from different periods, archaic, severe style, classical, Hellenistic, classicistic, Roman. They show sculptural types, that were created by the

Recognizing the gods... on coins

Represented on one side of the card are ancient coins, two, usually different, for each god, one showing the head and the other showing, in most cases, the entire figure of the divinity.

On the other side of the card are shown coins of the 20th century and also paper money, with representations of the ancient gods. The students identify each god, and they are asked to make their own collection and to draw their own proposals for coin design.

Recognizing the gods... on stamps

On this card are stamps with scenes depicting the gods and their myths as shown by ancient statues, vases, and coins and also by more recent works of art by well-known

Greek 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. Kallimopoulos. Various myths from all over Greece lie behind the attributes or the predilection and relationship of each god for a specific animal or plant. The students are asked to identify 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 pictures in periodicals and newspapers, to clothe the figures and to add their attributes, and so forth.

4. An envelope containing a card on the subject of attributes and symbolism

Shown are 12 attributes - forms that lend themselves to multiple interpretations. The multifaceted 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 students 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 Parthenon. Information is given about the monument, and for each god an epithet and the animal and plant that are sacred to him. The students try to identify the gods and their attributes.

6. The game of recognizing the gods “Who’s Who on Mt. Olympus”

The game is based on the matching of photographs of a characteristic head, of a sculptured work, a vase, a coin, a temple, and a more recent work of art for each god. The student 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 Olympus as pro-

tagonists. In order to participate, the student 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, coin, temple or neo-classical building, or a more recent work of art or whatever else offers the possibility of being matched with the world of the ancient gods.

Special care has been devoted to the pictorial quality of the museum kit. The excellent artistic and editorial supervision of the museum kit is the work of Ina Melengoglou (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 throughout Greece and it is estimated that some 10,000 school children will have made use of them. During the same time, around 2,000 children from 40 schools through Greece used them as material on loan.

Great interest was shown in the loan of the museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods” by district schools. In order to meet the demand for this circulation on a local level, a collaborative network was organized with local institutions, to which we delivered the museum kits so that they could be lent to the district schools. Thus, for each Prefecture a museum kit was sent to the local Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, to the corresponding Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, and to Museums with organized sections of educational programmes. Likewise, for each Prefecture, our Service gave a museum kit to the Official in charge of Cultural Affairs and Artistic Competitions in both the Elementary and High Schools. These kits were distributed in the course of a special seminar held in Patras in February 2007, by invitation from the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Learning of the National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government. Many of the 100 Cultural Officials who took part in the Seminar, subsequently organized in their own Prefectures a similar presentation of “The Twelve

Olympian Gods”, informing the educators in their district about the use and availability of the kit on loan from the local institutions.

For example, in March 2007, in Thessalonike, the four Officials in charge of Cultural Affairs in the Elementary School system of the Prefecture, in collaboration with the Tellogleion Foundation for the Arts of



The cards of the museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods”. Photo S. Mavrommatis, 2007

the Aristotle University of Thessalonike, organized a seminar addressed by C. Hadziaslani 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 Acropolis.

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 National Education and Religion (four Cultural Officials of the Elementary School system and four of the High School system), from the institutions responsible at the Ministry of Culture (16th EPKA, 9th EBA, Archaeological Museum and Museum of Byzantine Culture), and from the Tellogleion Foundation of Arts and the Museum of Casts of the Archaeology Department of the Aristotle University of Thessalonike.

In the Prefecture of Pella too, the Official for Cultural Affairs in the High School system organized a similar seminar for educators.

Another such seminar has already been scheduled for September in Athens for the schools of Attica and similarly at Pyrgos for

the educators of the Prefectures of Elis, Achaia and Aitolokarnania.

A different situation applied in the Prefecture of Rhodope, where our collaboration with the educators of the Prefecture was arranged through the local 19th Ephorate of Antiquities, which had a tradition in educational 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 Olympian Gods” and its use in the Archaeological Museum of Komotini. Between October 2006 and January 2007, 600 school children, with the help of the museum kit, took part in a specially arranged educational programme in the Museum.

Officials from abroad have shown special interest in the museum kit. Museum kits have been presented to 17 Foreign Archaeological 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, Holland, Poland, Romania and Turkey. We expect the sending of museum kits to selected institutions in Greece and abroad to have been completed in December 2007.

In closing we should like to thank particularly 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”.

Cornelia Hadziaslani
Architect-Archaeologist, Head
Irini Kaïmara, Assimina Leonti
Archeologists

Department of Information and Education of the YSMA



The leaflets of the museum kit “The Twelve Olympian Gods”. Photo S. Mavrommatis, 2007



The west metopes of the Parthenon. View from the north. Photo S. Mavrommatis, June 2007



The west façade of the Parthenon with the twin mast self lifting platform for inspection and study. Photo M. Ioannidou, June 2007

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Editor:
Professor Emeritus Ch. Bouras

Editing and Production:
F. Mallouchou-Tufano, Ph.D.

Layout:
O. Simeoforidou

Photographic Supervision:
S. Mavrommatis

English Translation:
M. Caskey, Ph.D.

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The Acropolis Restoration Service
10, Polygnotou Street
GR-10 555 Athens
Tel/Fax: (30) 210-32-43-427/ 32-51-620
e-mail: protocol@ysma.culture.gr

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