

I. THE PARTHENON (447-432 B.C.E.)

Historical and background information

1. The dominant temple on the Akropolis in Athens, rebuilt after the Persian invasion. In the past, it was believed that the Parthenon was built under the leadership of Perikles (c. 495-429 B.C.E.), a *strategos*, one of ten generals in the Athenian army. Today, we see the situation as more complicated, with many more individuals involved. Committees oversaw building projects—a democratic process.
2. Dedicated to Athena Parthenos, the virgin/warrior goddess.
3. Designed by Iktinus and Kallikrates; built of marble, of exceptional size: c. 225' x 100', column height 34'. Sculptural decoration supervised by Phidias.
4. Function of the building: political, religious, symbolic, visual; its subsequent history and modern status as a "classical masterpiece."
5. Structure: post and lintel (beam) construction; interior and exterior space; effects of light and shade; masonry technique.
6. The concept of the Orders
 - a. Doric (on the exterior): base, stylobate; column, fluted shaft, capital, echinus, abacus; entablature, architrave, frieze (triglyphs and metopes), cornice, pediment.
 - b. Ionic (on the interior): column, base, slender, fluted shaft, volute capital; frieze (continuous).
7. Optical refinements: taper and entasis of column shafts, inclination and displacement of columns, horizontal curvature of stylobate.
8. Sculptural program
 - a. Originally polychromed.
 - b. Outer frieze: Theme of history of ancient and mythological warfare. War between gods and giants on east, Greeks and Amazons on west, Sack of Troy on north. Focus on south metopes: Lapiths (Greeks) versus Centaurs.
 - c. Inner frieze: Panathenaic (all-Athenian) Procession; location, technique (low, or bas-relief), narrative flow.
 - d. Pediments: sculpture in the round.
 - i. East pediment: Birth of Athena—Helios (sun), Demeter, Persephone, Selene (moon); problems of figure identification; differences in style.
 - ii. West pediment: Contest between Athena and Poseidon—river god and anthropomorphism; civic meaning of sculptural program.
 - e. Statue of Athena Parthenos in the naos; made of gold and ivory (chryselephantine).
 - f. Figural style
 - i. classicism and idealism
 - ii. contrapposto

- iii. Polykleitos and the “canon of proportions”
 - iv. *Doryphoros*, Roman copy after Greek mid-5th century original, marble, 6.5’, Museo Nazionale, Naples.
- 9. Comparisons
 - a. Architectural
 - i. Temple of Hera I in Paestum, c. 540 B.C.E.
 - ii. Parthenon in Nashville, Tenn., built in 1895 for Centennial Exhibition.
 - b. Sculptural
 - i. *Kouros*, c. 590-580 B.C.E. (Naxian marble, 76”, MMA, acc. no. 32.11.1)
 - ii. *Kore of Chios*, c. 510 B.C.E. (marble, 21 ½”, National Archaeological Museum, Athens)
 - iii. *Ranefer*, Egyptian, V Dynasty, c. 2300 B.C.E. (Cairo Museum)
- 10. Art, architecture and literature: style and values in Periklean Athens.

Local museum resources

The new Greek and Roman galleries (including the Leon Levy and Shelby White Court) at the MMA.

Readings and web resources

Primary Source Reader

Thucydides, “Funeral Oration of Pericles”

Plutarch, “Life of Pericles”

Pliny, selections from *Natural History*

Readings on Butler Reserve

J.J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge, 1972), especially chapter 3: “The World Under Control,” and chapter 4: “The World Beyond Control”

V.J. Bruno, ed. *The Parthenon* (New York, 1974)

J.K. Davies, *Democracy and Classical Greece*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1993)

Other readings

Frank Brommer, *The Sculptures of the Parthenon* (London, 1979—Avery Reserves

Michael Greenhalgh and Henri Zerner, excerpts on “What is Classicism?” and “Classicism as Power.” In *Critical Perspectives on Art History*, eds. John C. McEnroe and Deborah F. Pokinski (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2002), 30-36 (available as .pdf)

Selected articles on controversy over “Elgin” marbles in British Museum (available as .pdf)

Web resources

QuickTime VR 360 degree views of the Parthenon, diagram of the Classical Orders, and ground plan and elevation available from Parthenon page on Art Humanities website.

Parthenon 360 at http://www.learn.columbia.edu/acropolis_360

Exploration of the Parthenon Frieze at

<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/parthenon/flash/main.htm>

Animated Glossary at http://www.mcah.columbia.edu/parth_gloss/