

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum: Out of Sight, Out of Light, Out of Mind

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This paper argues that the display of the iconic Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum has been seriously compromised by the overriding desire amongst Greek politicians and heritage professionals to use the museum to reinforce their long-standing request for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. In designing a museum geared primarily to achieving the repatriation of the sculptures taken from the largest of the temples on the Athenian Acropolis, the museum's architect has ensured that these marbles were presented within sight of their former monumental home, exhibited in a manner that imitates the architectural layout of the Parthenon, while the large windows of the museum allow vast amounts of natural light to illuminate the marbles. By contrast, the five Caryatids that remain in Athens have been treated with considerably less respect for such restitutionist sensibilities. Displayed within the concrete heart of the museum, lacking views of the outside world, let alone to the Acropolis, and with limited access to direct natural light, the marble women are positioned with no consideration for their original alignment. The important functional role of the Caryatids as integral structural elements within the architecture of the Erechtheum is also poorly represented in the manner of their current museological display in Athens.

Keywords: Caryatids; Erechtheum; New Acropolis Museum; Parthenon Marbles; Lord Elgin; Bernard Tschumi

Introduction

The Caryatids are amongst the most recognisable of the Pentelic marble sculptures that were placed on the Athenian Acropolis. The decorative columns, each carved in the likeness of an over-life-size woman standing 2.31 metres (7½ feet) in height, were installed in the late fifth century BC in the south porch of the Erechtheum, the temple located near the northern edge of the hill-top (**Figures 1 and 2**). Although there were originally six of these Caryatids supporting the roof of the porch, between 1801 and 1803 one of the Pentelic marble sisters – usually designated as Caryatid #3 (or, occasionally, Kore/Maiden C) – was removed from the Erechtheum and transported to Britain on the orders of Thomas Bruce, Earl of Elgin (1766–1841). The most famous of the marble trophies that Elgin's agents stripped from the Acropolis were, of course, those sculptures that originally adorned the walls of the Parthenon, the largest of the temples constructed on the hill-top during the Periclean Golden Age of Athens. However, while the Erechtheum no longer shares the same international fame as the Parthenon, it can be argued with some justification that the smaller temple was the most important monument constructed on the Athenian Acropolis during the Classical era.¹ It was the Erechtheum that acted as home to the cult of

Athena Polias, 'Athena the Protectress', who guarded the city named in her honour. The temple also originally contained an altar dedicated to the worship of the legendary Athenian king Erechtheus, from whom the building derived its name. The Erechtheum also housed altars honouring the gods Hephaistos and Poseidon: it was, indeed, in the Erechtheum that were displayed the tokens commemorating the mythical contest in which Poseidon had attempted to gain the patronage of the city by offering the inhabitants dominion over salt-water (or, depending on the version of the myth, horses); an offer that was rejected in favour of Athena's gift of an olive tree.



Figure 1: The Erechtheum as seen from the south-west. Image: Author's collection.



Figure 2: The south porch of the Erechtheum with the six replica Caryatids as seen from the south-east. Image: Author's collection.

Such was the fame and prominent position of the marble sisters from the south porch of the Erechtheum that it was Lord Elgin's removal of Caryatid #3 – and the statue's transportation to London, purchase by the British government in 1816, and subsequent display in the British Museum – that would generate the greatest dismay amongst early-nineteenth-century travellers to the Acropolis; so much so that the loss of this one statue roused greater anger than the removal of sections of the frieze, metopes and pediment statues that Elgin had taken from the Parthenon. (For the numerous accounts concerning the loss of the Caryatid penned by visitors to Athens in the years following Elgin's activities, see Lesk 2004: 650). In recent years, the Caryatid that was removed by Elgin has also frequently been adopted as the central image of campaigns launched by the numerous Greek and international restitutionist organisations intent on bringing about the return of the marbles removed from the Athenian Acropolis by Elgin (Beresford, forthcoming). Nonetheless, despite the iconic nature of the statues that originally adorned the south porch of the Erechtheum, the official Greek repatriation request does not include any reference to the return of the missing Caryatid. When the Greek government lodged its demands before UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP) in May 1983, it was only the marbles which originally adorned the Parthenon that comprised the Greek restitution request. The demands that the Hellenic government made before the ICPRCP – which remain active to this day – have certainly never included the repatriation of the Caryatid that Elgin removed from the Erechtheum.²

The New Acropolis Museum was, to a significant extent, designed and constructed as a statement of restitutionist intent; the building was always intended to apply additional pressure on the Trustees of the British Museum, and indeed the British government, for the repatriation of the marbles that Elgin had removed from the Parthenon. In the 1989 architectural competition for the New Acropolis Museum it was therefore noted: 'the envisaged return

of the Parthenon pediment marbles (the so-called "Elgin Marbles") necessitates the creation of corresponding areas for their display.' The design programme would go on to add: 'Since the repatriation of the original Parthenon sculptures is envisaged, room must be provided to facilitate their display together with the remaining architectural members and sculptures which are found in Greece' (Hellenic Ministry of Culture 1989: 23, 49, quoted in Lending 2009: 571). It has thus been recently stated that the links made between the New Acropolis Museum and the return of the Elgin Marbles in the 1989 architectural competition had, in effect, made the design brief a 'political-legal and museum-historical manifesto in disguise' (Lending 2009: 572). The 1989 architectural competition eventually came to nothing, necessitating a fourth and final competition which resulted in Bernard Tschumi's design being declared the winner in October 2001 (Rutten 2009: 137). As the museum slowly took shape over the course of the opening decade of the twenty-first century, leading Greek politicians continued to emphasise the close relationship linking the museum to the quest to repatriate the Parthenon Marbles. Visiting the construction site in 2007, Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis would highlight that 'the reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures remains the great goal. I am confident that the new Acropolis Museum ... will add new and very strong arguments to this effort' (*Athens News Agency* 2007). The following year, the Culture Minister, Mihalis Liapis, also stressed that the building was aimed specifically at reclaiming Elgin's trophies: 'This modern, functional and safe museum will be a strong argument against those who oppose the Marbles' return' (*CBC* 2008). The desire of Greek politicians to associate themselves with the recovery of the sculptures that Elgin removed from the Parthenon is understandable given the importance of these particular marbles within the Greek political arena, and it has therefore been noted: 'All political parties, from the ultra-nationalist to the Communist, participate in the national crusade for the restitution of the sculptures. Since the affair has become a "national issue" it has been sacralized and is beyond any serious criticism ... The crusade also confers authority on the Minister for Culture, who is seen as advancing one of the most important national issues of her/his time' (Hamilakis 2007: 256–59. See also Hamilakis 1999: 310; Bounia 2012: 143; Beresford 2014: 176–77).

The restitutionist 'crusade' initiated by Mercouri at the beginning of the 1980s would turn the Parthenon Marbles into 'the *cause célèbre* amongst the cultural return cases' (Greenfield 2007: 41. See also Jenkins 2016: 3.). It also demanded that any future museum that was purpose-built to house the sculptures that remained in Greek hands also contribute to the Hellenic government's arguments for the repatriation of those marbles removed from the Parthenon by Elgin. However, because of the overriding interest in the sculptures from the temple originally dedicated to Athena Parthenos, the display of artworks and decorative architecture derived from other monuments on the hill-top would be relegated to a position of secondary importance by the architects and curatorial

staff of the New Acropolis Museum. The lack of Greek governmental interest in the repatriation of Caryatid #3 therefore appears to have led to a corresponding lack of interest in the display of the Caryatids within the museum. This paper will argue that despite the beautifully carved columns being amongst the most iconic sculptures to decorate the fifth-century Acropolis the display of these marble women within the museum has been treated as an afterthought. The manner in which the Caryatids from the Erechtheum are displayed within the New Acropolis Museum differs radically from the care and attention lavished on the sculptures that once adorned the Parthenon. Indeed, almost every element that architects, museologists and marbles restitutionists have deemed essential for the display of the Parthenon Marbles has been ignored in the presentation of the Caryatids at the New Acropolis Museum.

The Nature of Display

In 2007 the five Caryatids remaining in Athens were moved from the Old Acropolis Museum, located on the eastern end of the summit of the hill, to their current home on the first floor of the New Acropolis Museum. With the official inauguration of the new museum in June 2009, the public has been able to see the statues displayed on a low base with all five statues positioned in the Π-shaped arrangement that they had assumed when originally inserted into the south porch of the Erechtheum in the late fifth century BC (**Figures 3 and 4**).³ The president of the museum, Professor Dimitris Pandermalis, has thus stressed: 'The Caryatids are mounted in the same formation as when installed on the ancient building' (2009: 42. See also Lending 2009: 578). Nonetheless, despite their original arrangement being mimicked, the Caryatids on display in the New Acropolis Museum are presented as freestanding statues, each divorced from the others with no replica of the Erechtheum's entablature to link them together or offer visitors an immediate understanding of the Caryatids' original load-bearing role within the architecture of the ancient temple. Indeed, while it has been noted that 'the Caryatids from the Erechtheion south porch are arranged so as to emphasise the task performed



Figure 3: The five original Caryatids on display in the New Acropolis Museum. Image: Nikos Danielidis. © Acropolis Museum.



Figure 4: Rear view of the Caryatids in the central chamber of the New Acropolis Museum. Image: Nikos Danielidis. © Acropolis Museum.

by the heavy coiffure and neck of each figure, where special strength was needed to support the entablature above' (Caskey 2011: 4–5), because a replica architrave is not provided, the powerfully-built necks and elaborate hairstyles of the Caryatids are left supporting nothing more than air.

The functional role of the Caryatids as integral elements in the architecture of the Erechtheum is very much a secondary consideration in the presentation at the New Acropolis Museum. While the display of the five Caryatids in Athens provides visitors with an idea of the limited amount of space within the south porch of the Erechtheum, the statues are presented as mere artworks: the Caryatids seem to have been positioned as if in the middle of a dance or even a synchronised balancing act, with four of the five statues bearing an echinus (ἐχίνοσ) upon their heads which in turn is topped with the flat, square stone slab of an abacus (ἄβαξ) that was originally intended to support the architrave of the Erechtheum (**Figures 3 and 4**). In this respect at least, the display of the solitary Caryatid in the British Museum – in which the decorative column bears the weight of a replica architrave – makes the architectural role that the load-bearing statue originally performed when a functional part of the Erechtheum immediately clear to visitors (**Figure 5**).⁴ Indeed, our earliest reference to 'Caryatids' as architectural embellishments comes from the work of the Roman architect Vitruvius (first century BC), who would write in his *de Architectura* that 'if anyone in his work sets up, instead of columns, marble statues of long-robed women ... and places mutules and cornices above them', then such statues were to be termed Caryatids in memory of the female population of Caria (*de Architectura*, 1.1.5). According to the Vitruvian account, these women had been enslaved as punishment for their Peloponnesian city medising with the Persian king Xerxes during his failed invasion of Greece in 480/79 BC, with their fate commemorated in stone: 'And so the architects of that time designed for public buildings figures of matrons placed to carry burdens; in order that the punishment of the sin of the Cariatid women might be known to posterity and historically recorded' (*de Architectura*, 1.1.5). Many scholars reject the historical legitimacy of this Vitruvian explanation for the origins of the Caryatids.⁵ Nonetheless, the



Figure 5: Caryatid #3 on display in Room 19 of the British Museum. Image: © Trustees of the British Museum.

story clearly emphasises the architectural functionality of the ornamental statues that were originally set within the south porch of the Erechtheum. In the New Acropolis Museum, however, the manner in which the Caryatids have been presented as freestanding artworks has utterly deprived the marble women of the practical architectural function they were originally created to fulfil.

Scholars such as Neil James have also highlighted the rather cramped nature of the Caryatids' presentation in the New Acropolis Museum, arguing: 'It looks as though the caryatids are intended to be admired from the other side of the adjacent stairwell but there is no room for that there', before going on to add that their 'display is compromised by want of surrounding space' (James 2009: 1148). Such an assessment is, however, rather unfair; I have rarely experienced any lack of space in the Erechtheum display and, unless a large tour group spends an inordinate amount of time near the statues, visitors will generally find it an easy matter to inspect the Caryatids, even during the peak tourist months of the summer when the museum is at its most crowded. James's claims regarding the cramped nature of the Erechtheum display have also been challenged by Miriam Caskey who has written: 'There is ample room to see all the Caryatids from all sides and, with a space of several meters, from the front as well'

(Caskey 2011: 5). Mari Lending had also earlier pointed out that the display of the Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum allowed visitors 'to circulate around five of these columns shaped as maidens (the sixth and last one is in the British Museum), to inspect them from every angle, to admire their complicated, individually braided hair and to study each singularly designed fold in their dresses' (2009: 578). Furthermore, while James writes of the lack of space inhibiting the ability of visitors to observe the Caryatids from the adjacent stairwell on the opposite side of the central chamber of the New Acropolis Museum, he appears to have overlooked the museum's so-called 'reading lounge' which provides an ideal viewing platform for visitors eager to observe the Caryatids from the other side of the cavernous central chamber.⁶ Indeed, when I interviewed the president of the New Acropolis Museum in October 2013, Professor Pandermalis would stress the importance of the Caryatids within the museum and highlight the care he and the architects took in ensuring that the decorative columns from the Erechtheum were displayed in one of the most prominent locations in the building, offering visitors the opportunity to observe the statues from a number of different angles and locations:

For the Caryatids we wanted to have an emblematic position in the museum, so we created a special balcony, a special platform, in the centre of the museum. ... And we thought the Caryatids should be a central – the most central – exhibit in the museum. You can see the Caryatids from downstairs, from very close, [and] from the balconies on the second floor [the Museum's reading room]. So they have many viewing positions.⁷

Despite the emphasis that the president of the New Acropolis Museum has placed on the importance of the centrality of the location within the building provided for the display of the Caryatids, it is nevertheless clear that during the design stage of the museum the location and manner of display of the five statues from the south porch of the Erechtheum was very much a secondary consideration for the architect and the Greek heritage professionals tasked with bringing the museum construction project to fruition. It was instead the decision of how best to display those marbles that originally adorned the temple of Athena Parthenos that appears to have been of overriding importance when it came to designing and constructing the museum – those marbles that originated from other temples on the Acropolis (including the Erechtheum) seemingly little more than afterthoughts in the minds of the architectural designers and the Greek officials.

It has thus been noted by one of the members of Bernard Tschumi's architectural team who worked on the design of the New Acropolis Museum that the decision to locate the Parthenon sculptures in a gallery on the top floor of the museum had been taken by May or June 2001. By contrast, it was only about eight months later, in February of the following year, that it was finally decided where the Caryatids were to be located within the building (Rutten 2009: 136–140). For the architects who designed the New Acropolis Museum – following

the demands set out by Greek politicians and heritage officials that one of the principal functions of the building must be to strengthen arguments in favour of the repatriation of the sculptures sought from the British Museum – the location and manner of display of the Parthenon Marbles in the New Acropolis Museum was all-important and, as such, was decided early on in the architectural design process. In stark comparison to the focus placed on the sculptures that had once decorated the temple of Athena Parthenos, the location and presentation of the Caryatids in the museum was of no pressing importance. Indeed, during the initial design phase of the museum neither the architectural team nor the selection jury (which was presided over by Professor Pandermalis, who would subsequently become the president of the museum) appears to have been overly concerned with the whereabouts of the Caryatid display. The location for the Caryatids even remained undecided up to and even beyond the moment when the Tschumi-designed museum was selected as the architectural competition winner in September 2001, with the official announcement that the Swiss-French architect's design had been chosen coming a month later (Rutten 2009: 137). Where the Caryatids were to be displayed in the New Acropolis Museum thus remained unresolved until about five months after Tschumi's building had been chosen as the winning entry in the architectural competition and some fourteen months after the contest had first been launched (Rutten 2009: 136–140). In contrast to the politically important restitution-driven focus that rests on the marbles of the Parthenon, the lack of any similar official Greek governmental request for the return of the missing Caryatid from London appears to have relegated her five marble sisters far down the list of priorities when it came to providing them with a suitable venue of display within the New Acropolis Museum.

Lack of Visual Communication With the Acropolis

The care and attention lavished on the display afforded to the sculptures that originally adorned the Parthenon contrasts sharply with the manner in which the Caryatids are presented in the New Acropolis Museum. This is most clearly emphasised by a comparison of the features which the architects of the museum, together with Greek culture officials, have cited as crucial elements for the display of the Parthenon Marbles. Joel Rutten, an architect who worked alongside Bernard Tschumi on the design of the New Acropolis Museum, would therefore note:

The Parthenon façade is challenging because we want to maintain the maximum transparency in order to provide natural light for the sculptures and a direct view to the Acropolis as well as Athens' hills, mountains, and the distant port city of Piraeus. Standing in the gallery should feel almost like standing at the top of the Acropolis. Professor Pandermalis shares our concern that the sculptures and the Frieze be seen in the same orientation and unique Attic light as originally intended (Rutten 2009: 141).

This emphasis on direct visual contact between the sculptures of the Parthenon and the monument they originally adorned and the requirement that the marbles be presented in the same orientation as they had on the Acropolis, with the sculptures bathed in the oft-cited 'unique Attic light', are generally considered the most striking features of the New Acropolis Museum (**Figure 6**). The demand that the museum display the Parthenon Marbles in such a way as to take account of these factors draws on ideas of environmental determinism, in which the landscape and wider natural environment is indelibly linked to the construct of a 'soul' of a nation. The frequent references made by the museum's architects, curatorial staff and restitutionists to elements such as the view out over the urban landscape of Athens, or especially the quality of the Attic light streaming into the galleries of the museum, emphasise the necessity of such factors in appreciating the ancient sculptures on display. Writing of the design of the New Acropolis Museum, the Greek archaeologist Dimitris Plantzos thus noted that the building was intended to 'pay homage to environmental determinism, a celebrated offspring of German nationalism, according to which culture and climate are organically tied. Transplanted to Greece in the late nineteenth century, environmentalist theories were used to promote Greek exceptionalism as well as champion Greek emancipation from an "unnatural" modernity imposed by the West' (Plantzos 2011: 619. See also Güthenke 2008: 44–92; Lending 2009: 579–80).

The design and construction of the Parthenon Gallery to appeal directly to environmentally deterministic arguments, which favour the return of the sculptures removed by Elgin from the largest of the temples crowning the Acropolis, has been eagerly referenced by individuals and organisations lobbying for the restitution of these marbles. Although the sculptures from the Parthenon can no longer be reinserted into the monument, nonetheless, it



Figure 6: The north-east corner of the Parthenon Gallery, on the top-floor of the New Acropolis Museum, in the early evening. The marbles of the frieze, metopes and pediment statues are all aligned in the same relative positions and orientations as was the case when they were affixed to the Parthenon, while the large windows that run around all four sides of the gallery provide access to vast amounts of natural light and views across to the Acropolis and rest of Athens. Image: Nikos Danielidis. © Acropolis Museum.

can now be claimed that, were they returned to Athens, then their display on the top-floor gallery of the New Acropolis Museum would allow a visual 'reunification' of the marbles with the temple they were created to adorn. Soon after the opening of the museum in 2009, Neil James would therefore comment: 'Within sight of the Parthenon itself, the claim for restitution is made clearly' (James 2009: 1149). The British-based Greek archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis would also write: 'This museum will need to be understood primarily as a material intervention within the politics of vision. A direct visual link with the Parthenon and the Acropolis was the main argument for its current location ... The management of the gaze is the primary concern of its archaeological and museographic apparatus' (Hamilakis 2011: 626. See also Caskey 2011: 2, 9).

In stark contrast to the situation that exists on the top-floor of the New Acropolis Museum, where visitors can see the marble exhibits with their original home of the Parthenon visible through the glass-walled gallery, or panoramic views of the rest of Athens, there has been no similar requirement that the Caryatids should also be displayed in a manner that offers dramatic views across to the Acropolis. Instead, the location chosen to display the Caryatids was the windowless central chamber at the heart of the New Acropolis Museum. Hemmed in by bare walls, the Caryatids are provided with absolutely no views of the outside world and, unlike the marbles in the Parthenon Gallery, the statues from the Erechtheum instead look out into the drab, bunker-like environment of the central concrete core of the museum (**Figure 4**).

To some extent, it is understandable that Bernard Tschumi, as well as the architectural jury that awarded the museum contract to the Swiss-French architect, felt no pressing desire to present the Caryatids with panoramic views similar to those provided to the marbles of the Parthenon; after all, while the entire southern flank of the Parthenon is clearly visible from the New Acropolis Museum, by contrast, the Erechtheum is completely hidden from view on the far side of the hill-top. While it is possible to claim that the display of the marbles in the Parthenon Gallery provides a visual reunification of the decorative sculptures with the temple they originally adorned, no such argument is possible for the Caryatids and the temple in which they were originally inserted in the fifth century BC. This lack of a visual connection between the New Acropolis Museum and the Erechtheum perhaps offers a partial explanation of why the display of the Caryatids was treated as something of an afterthought by the museum's architects.

It might thus legitimately be argued that the lack of any direct visual communication between the New Acropolis Museum and the Erechtheum made it a fruitless task for the architects to even attempt to display the Caryatids within sight of the temple that they originally adorned. It should, however, be borne in mind that it was the Greek government which decreed the new museum was to be constructed on the site it now occupies, lying south-east of the Acropolis in the residential neighbourhood of Makryianni. This location was demanded of all entrants who

offered proposals for the final architectural competition run in 2001, and it was a site that certainly ensured 'the ability of visitors [to the museum] to view the Parthenon on the Acropolis and the architectural sculptures [from the temple] at the same time' (Pandermalis 2009: 26. See **Figure 6**). Yet in the earlier architectural competition staged in 1989, two other sites were put forward as potential locations for the New Acropolis Museum. Alexandros Mantis, the Head of Curators of Acropolis Antiquities, has therefore noted of this earlier architectural contest: 'Proposed as a site for erecting the museum in this competition was not just the Makrygiannis lot but also two more spaces – the area of the restaurant Dionysus and the area of the ancient neighbourhood Kolie. The 500 participants taking part – architects and architectural firms – had the option to choose the site where the museum would be built' (Mantis 2010: 466–467). If the museum had been built on either of the locations lying to the west of the Acropolis, then visitors to the galleries would have been offered views of the hill-top that would have included the western façade of the Parthenon as well as sightlines to the Propylaia and the Temple of Nike, and, if the museum were as high as that which would eventually be designed by Bernard Tschumi, then the Erechtheum would also have been visible from its upper galleries. Had the New Acropolis Museum been located immediately to the west of the Acropolis then it would also have made it considerably more convenient for visitors to transit between the museum and main entrance to the summit of the Acropolis, which winds its way up the western slope of the rocky hill.⁸

It was, therefore, possible to have constructed the New Acropolis Museum on a site in central Athens that offered views of the Erechtheum, as well as the other ancient temples standing on the hill-top, and which would potentially have allowed the Caryatids to be presented with a direct visual connection to the monument in which they had once stood as integral architectural elements. However, because Greek culture officials opted to build the museum on the Makryianni site, located to the south-east of the Acropolis, the only marbles that could be visually linked to the monument from which they came were those sculptures that originally adorned the Parthenon. It should also be noted that there was never any interest expressed by the Greek Culture Ministry in locating the New Acropolis Museum anywhere in central Athens lying to the north of the Acropolis. Had the museum been constructed in a neighbourhood like Monastiraki or parts of Plaka, areas of the Greek capital situated immediately to the north of the Acropolis, then it would have been the Erechtheum, rather than the Parthenon, that would have dominated views from the galleries of the New Acropolis Museum. However, as has already been noted, Greek politicians were anxious that the museum provide strong arguments in favour of the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles. As such, there was surely never any possibility that the New Acropolis Museum could be constructed in a location in which views of the largest of the temples on the hill-top were severely compromised or entirely absent.

Absence of Natural Light

In addition to the panoramic views provided by the glass-walled gallery specifically designed to house the sculptures of the Parthenon on the top-floor of the museum, vast amounts of daylight were also intended to stream into the room. The ability to allow the marbles from the monument to bask in this 'unique Attic light' has also frequently been cited as a key component in bolstering the case for the return of those marbles removed from the temple by Lord Elgin. When the Greek government launched its third architectural competition for the New Acropolis Museum in 1989, it was therefore made clear in the design brief that the Parthenon Marbles were to be viewed in the 'clarity of crystal-clear "Attic Light"' (quoted in Lending 2009: 579).⁹ The importance of natural light in offering visitors to the Parthenon Gallery the most 'authentic' environment in which to view the marbles from the temple would remain a crucial component of the fourth and final architectural competition for the New Acropolis Museum, staged in 2001. Although the design parameters for this last competition have never been made public, Bernard Tschumi nevertheless stressed the importance of natural light to his winning design, stating that the 'central idea [underpinning the architecture of his museum] is to allow Attic light to shine on the exhibits, as it did from the time of their creation' (quoted in Lending 2009: 580). The architect would also emphasise that 'the use of daylight is fundamental to this museum' (*Economist* 2009), while he would further note: 'Floating above these many challenges were the demands of the Attic light, at once serene and implacable, which had to be incorporated both as a defining element and an architectural material', going so far as to state that, alongside marble, concrete and glass, '[l]ight became a fourth material as well as a design requirement' (Tschumi 2009: 82, 84. See also Taylor 2004). Professor Pandermalis has also commented enthusiastically on the natural light filling his museum, noting: 'The natural light in the galleries contributes to the optimum presentation of the exhibits, revealing their surface variations and enhancing their three-dimensionally' (2009: 44). The president of the museum would later write: 'this is the Museum's most thrilling asset: The light. So much so, that I've been thinking of having it managed, of having someone keep track of the light all day long! What I mean is that I've been thinking of putting a staff member in charge of the light' (Pandermalis 2010: 485–86).

The natural light of Athens has also become a key factor in the restitutionist argument: those marbles removed by Elgin and currently displayed in the British Museum are often described as inhabiting a 'cold and dark prison', while the frequently overcast skies of London are said to offer the sculptures inadequate natural warmth and brightness, with the result that the marbles are long-ing to return to the light of Attica (Hamilakis 2007: 279). The Parthenon Gallery is therefore commonly described in such terms as 'the sun-drenched top floor' of the museum (Kimmelman 2009), while the outspoken marbles restitutionist Christopher Hitchens was also eager to draw attention to the illumination of the Parthenon Gallery, describing it as an 'impressive space,

drenched in Greek light' (2008: xv). Elena Korka, from the Department of Greek and Foreign Archaeological Institutes, Organisations and International Issues, a branch of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, has been eager to stress: 'These marbles were sculpted for the Parthenon, designed to be on the Acropolis, under the natural light of the Attica sky, not a dimly lit gallery off Tottenham Court Road' (quoted in Kanelis 2002). Recent research has questioned the claims made by many officials from the Greek Culture Ministry, as well as leading repatriation organisations, that the manner in which the natural light admitted into the Parthenon Gallery replicates the conditions in which the marbles were viewed by the Athenians of the fifth century BC, and indeed throughout the course of the subsequent twenty-four centuries (Beresford 2015). Nevertheless, the design of the top-floor gallery of the New Acropolis Museum, which allows the sculptures that originally adorned the Parthenon to be bathed in natural Attic light, has delivered a powerful new argument in support of the repatriation of the marbles removed by Elgin.

If, however, the view through the north-facing windows of the museum towards the Acropolis and the Parthenon on its summit, along with 'the sun-drenched top floor' of the Parthenon Gallery, are to be regarded as architectural triumphs and key elements in favour of the restitution of the marbles removed from the largest of the monuments on the hill-top, then the failure to provide these same elements in the display of the Caryatids would suggest that the museum's architect, and the Greek officials who approved the design of the building, did not consider the statues from the Erechtheum to be worthy of similar treatment. While the Parthenon Marbles bask in the natural light of Athens, by contrast the five Caryatids stand in the windowless concrete chamber that lies at the heart of the museum. The only natural light that the Caryatids receive in this location has first to pass through skylights in the roof of the museum, before then filtering through the thick glass flooring of the Parthenon Gallery's atrium. Only after passing through these two sets of glass can natural light reach the central chamber in which the Caryatids are displayed. Furthermore, because the glass flooring of the above gallery does not extend directly over the heads of the marble women, even this limited amount of natural illumination does not fall directly on the Caryatids; the statues are instead covered by a false ceiling positioned directly above their marble heads. Even the bare concrete walls of the central chamber do little to maximise the limited natural light that filters into the heart of the building, with the museum's architect demanding that 'the concrete had to be as unrelieved as possible, with a soft, slightly sandblasted texture that would absorb rather than reflect light' (Tschumi 2009: 85). In order for the statues from the Erechtheum to be easily discernable to visitors, they therefore have to be illuminated by spotlights, even in the middle of a bright summer's day.

The current home of the Caryatids is therefore far removed from the demands that were originally made of the display of the ancient sculptures within the New Acropolis Museum. Indeed, as the president of

the museum would make clear, when the architectural competition for the building was first announced in 2000, there were a number of clear design requirements, one of the most important of which was to allow the exhibits to be bathed in large amounts of daylight: 'The competing architectural teams submitted designs and models responding to explicit specifications. Among the directives were innovative proposals for ... the use of natural light to create the sense of an outdoor environment keyed to the original outdoor siting of the majority of the Museum's exhibits' (Pandermalis 2009: 26). As has already been seen, when it came to the marbles that originally decorated the temple of Athena Parthenos, Bernard Tschumi's winning design would adopt this approach and the sculptures displayed on the top-floor of the museum now bask in the vast amounts of natural light admitted through the glass-walls of the Parthenon Gallery. By contrast, there has been a clear failure to apply the same directive to the Caryatids. The five statues have been denied access to the natural light of Athens that would have blazed brightly on their marble bodies throughout much of the day during the long centuries in which they stood on the Acropolis supporting the south-facing porch of the Erechtheum. Instead, since taking up their positions on the centrally located balcony of the New Acropolis Museum in 2007, the Caryatids have endured the perpetual twilight of their concrete-lined home; an environment largely deprived of natural light, where the glare of artificial spotlights is required to allow visitors to properly appreciate the sculptural details of the marble women. This is certainly no setting that conjures up a 'sense of an outdoor environment keyed to the original outdoor siting'. Those behind the design of the New Acropolis Museum have attempted to put a positive spin on the manner of light that illuminates the centre of the museum; a photographic essay published by Bernard Tschumi's architectural firm thus describes the illumination of the central concrete chamber of the museum, in which '[f]iltered light animates the core of the building' (Bernard Tschumi Architects 2009: 110). Nonetheless, despite the generally more overcast conditions experienced in London, there can be little argument that the Caryatid which today stands on display in Room 19 of the British Museum, and is illuminated with the aid of a large skylight, is provided with considerably greater access to natural light than her five sisters, trapped in the shadowy concrete core of the New Acropolis Museum.

It might be argued that not every artwork or artefact exhibited in a museum can be offered access to direct natural light, and some displays must inevitably rely upon artificial illumination. However, given the central importance of the Erechtheum to the religious rituals of Classical Athens, as well as the iconic nature of the Caryatids – arguably the most recognisable of any of the sculptures from the Acropolis – the failure to display these particular statues in the 'unique Attic light' deemed so crucial to the presentation of those marbles derived from the Parthenon appears to be a misstep by the architect of the museum and the curatorial staff.

Alignment of the Marbles

The lack of consideration given to the display of the Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum when compared to the attention lavished on the marbles derived from the Parthenon is also evident in the alignment of the sculptures derived from the two different monuments. Many scholars have thus applauded the layout of the Parthenon Gallery which, as Cambridge University classicist Mary Beard has pointed out, 'is carefully aligned with the Parthenon itself, dramatically visible outside the large [north-facing] windows. ... Here, following the design brief, the sculptures – including the plaster casts in place of those unavoidably absent – are arranged as they were on the original temple – and in exactly the same alignment, as if they had been transposed some 300 metres to the south' (Beard 2010: 193. See also Eiteljorg 2010). Indeed, the entire top-floor of the New Acropolis Museum is set at a slight angle relative to the floors below, ensuring that the marbles from the Parthenon are presented to visitors in exactly the same alignment and relative positions as was the case when the sculptures were affixed to the temple.

In contrast with the care and attention provided for the sculptures on the top-floor of the museum, the Caryatids have been displayed in a different direction to that in which they were aligned when inserted in the Erechtheum. Thus, when originally on the Acropolis and bearing the weight of the architrave of the south porch, the Caryatids faced 150 degrees off north (south-south-east); by contrast, in the New Acropolis Museum the marble statues are now aligned to face 85 degrees off north (a fraction to the east of east-by-northeast).¹⁰ The Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum have therefore been positioned about 65 degrees out of their original alignment; a manner of display that would surely have been unthinkable for the sculptures of the Parthenon on the top-floor of the museum, but which is considered to be an acceptable compromise for the marble women who once decorated the Erechtheum. By locating the Caryatids in the windowless, poorly lit heart of the museum, the architects and curatorial staff of the museum have ensured that the realignment of the Caryatids goes unnoticed by the vast majority of visitors who, hemmed in by bare concrete walls, denied any views of the outside world, and certainly with no sight of the Erechtheum, find it all-but-impossible to orientate themselves with the original monument that was home to the Caryatids.¹¹

Commemorating Absence

Although the Caryatid removed by Elgin is not included amongst those marbles that the Greek government is officially requesting be repatriated to Athens, in the handful of years following the 2009 opening of the New Acropolis Museum, the display of the five ornamental columns and the empty space denoting the missing statue held in London has generated calls from a number of restitutionist organisations and individuals for the Caryatid to be returned (Beresford, forthcoming). However, in choosing to mark the missing Caryatid by leaving an empty space in the Erechtheum presentation, the curators have adopted a

method of display at variance with that used elsewhere in the New Acropolis Museum. Thus, on the floor above the Caryatids, the missing sculptures that were removed from the Parthenon and which are today on display in the British Museum or other galleries across Europe have been marked not by blank spaces but rather through the use of plaster replicas of the foreign-owned sculptures. The variation between the honey-coloured marble originals and the bone-white casts makes it abundantly clear which of the sculptures remain in Athens and which are held in overseas museums. At the opening of the New Acropolis Museum in 2009 this stark contrast between the colour and texture of the original Pentelic marbles and that of the replacement plaster casts was therefore interpreted as a curatorial ploy intended to provide a strong visual argument in favour of reunification: 'The clash between originals and copies makes a not-subtle pitch for the return of the marbles' (Kimmelman 2009. See also Beard 2010: 185). The manner in which the museum's curatorial staff chose to differentiate those Parthenon sculptures that are no longer in Athens from the original marbles that can be viewed on the top-floor of the New Acropolis Museum does, however, highlight the inconsistency in display philosophies, which vary from one part of the museum to another. In the Parthenon Gallery, the plaster casts have been inserted into the presentation to denote those marbles currently displayed in other museums; by contrast, empty spaces have been left to represent sculptures that have been completely destroyed over the course of two-and-a-half millennia. In the museum's Erechtheum presentation, rather than an empty space, which would denote the destruction of the marble figure that originally occupied the location, the gap in the display instead indicates that the Caryatid has been removed to London.

It may be the case that the variation between the New Acropolis Museum's presentation of the marbles from the Parthenon and its presentation of the Caryatids from the Erechtheum partly reflects the changing approach of Greek heritage professionals in their attempts to grapple with the thorny issue of how to display to the paying public the large number of sculptures that were removed from the Acropolis by Lord Elgin at the start of the nineteenth century and which now reside in the British Museum. In January 2002, more than four months after Tschumi's design had been selected as the winner of the New Acropolis Museum architectural competition, the Greek Culture Ministry official Elena Korka would inform a reporter from the *New York Times* that, if the sculptures removed by Elgin were not returned by the time of the opening of the new Museum, 'then a huge empty space will be left for the marbles to remind visitors of the British response' (Carassava 2002). The following year Professor Pandermalis would confirm Korka's vision that, once opened, the museum's Parthenon Gallery would contain blank spaces in place of marbles removed by Elgin. In an interview with the then president of the Organizing Committee for the New Acropolis Museum, Peter Aspden of the *Financial Times* would thus note: 'As Dimitrios Pandermalis leans over the sketches of the new museum,

he confirms to me that, if there is no restitution, there will be no replicas, no copies, no virtual-reality displays in the Parthenon hall; just a series of numbers in place of the missing pieces' (Aspden 2003). British politicians promoting the repatriation of the marbles were also quick to draw attention to the claims made by Greek archaeologists and Culture Ministry officials that, on the completion of the New Acropolis Museum, the marbles that had been removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin would be denoted by empty spaces. At the end of October 2001, the same month as the official proclamation of Tschumi's design as the winning entry in the architectural competition to design the New Acropolis Museum, the MP Eddie O'Hara (who would be chairman of the lobby group, British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles, from 2010 until his death in 2016) would present an Early Day Motion (EDM) to his fellow MPs at Westminster which stated of the Parthenon Gallery on the top-floor of the planned museum in Athens: '[T]his gallery will remain empty as long as the Parthenon Marbles are not available for display in it ... this will bring great discredit to the British Government and the British Museum in the eyes of the estimated three million visitors per annum to the Acropolis Museum from around the world' (O'Hara 2001).¹²

Despite these assertions that the Parthenon Gallery would remain half-empty as a means of embarrassing the Trustees of the British Museum and the Westminster government for their refusal to repatriate the sculptures removed from the Parthenon by Elgin, in the end the threats came to nothing. By the time the New Acropolis Museum was finally inaugurated in June 2009 (an opening date that proved to be five years later than O'Hara had claimed in his 2001 EDM) plaster casts of the marbles that had been removed from the Parthenon by Elgin – and indeed of all other sculptures from the temple that were on display in foreign museums – had been installed alongside the original marbles that had once adorned the temple of Athena Parthenos. This volte-face in museological presentation at the New Acropolis Museum was explained as an effort to make the narrative depictions carved into the marbles of the Parthenon's frieze, metopes and pediment sculptures more comprehensible to visitors. Half-a-dozen years after claiming that copies and replicas would not feature in his museum, Pandermalis (now installed as the president of the completed museum) would concede that there had been a major change in museological display in the Parthenon Gallery; rather than empty spaces denoting the marbles housed in the British Museum, this original plan had been overturned and casts of the missing sculptures would instead be placed on display alongside the original marbles that remained in Athens so that they 'would give continuity while making it quite clear how the frieze has been divided' (*Economist* 2009).

Although the inclusion of casts of those sculptures removed by Elgin was not the originally preferred method of display for the Parthenon Gallery, the plaster copies have allowed the staff at the New Acropolis Museum to make it abundantly clear that many of the original sculptures are

now on display in London. Visitors can easily differentiate the Pentelic honey-coloured marble originals in the Parthenon Gallery from the bone-white casts of the other surviving sculptures that are now held in overseas collections, the majority in the British Museum. Professor Beard has therefore noted: 'The "missing" pieces are glaringly obvious, thanks to the substitutes in white plaster' (2010: 193). Dimitris Plantzos has also stressed how 'one cannot but take the hint of the plaster casts standing in lieu of the "marbles" taken to London by Lord Elgin in the early 1800s', before going on to point out that the use of casts in the top-floor gallery is 'used to generate anti-Elgin sentiment among the visitors' (2011: 622–23).¹³

Located in the concrete inner chamber of the New Acropolis Museum, the Caryatids were clearly not included in the revised display policy that was applied to the sculptures of the Parthenon. Rather than follow the example of the Parthenon Gallery and place a cast of the Caryatid owned by the British Museum alongside her marble sisters that remained in Athens, it was decided that the statue that had been removed by Elgin was instead to be marked by an empty space in the museum display. The void left in the Erechtheum presentation therefore appears to be the only survival of the display philosophy originally intended for the marbles removed by Elgin. It is unclear if this was a result of an inadvertent failure by the staff at the New Acropolis Museum to apply the changed display philosophy to the decorative columns of the Erechtheum's south porch. Alternatively, it is possible that because of the very similar nature of each of the Caryatids – which Elgin's agent, Giovanni Battista Lusieri, had emphasised at the beginning of the nineteenth century when writing to the Scottish aristocrat to tell him that '[t]he five Caryatids are very like each other' (Lusieri letter dated 7 December 1801, quoted in Lesk 2004: 815) – it may have been considered unnecessary to place a cast of the British Museum's statue alongside her very similar looking sisters. However, curatorial staff at the New Acropolis Museum may have had other reasons for choosing to alter the display philosophy they had adopted in the Parthenon Gallery from that used in the presentation of the sculptures of the Erechtheum.

Dangers of Replication

The placement of a plaster replica of the British Museum's Caryatid amongst her five original marble sisters that reside in the New Acropolis Museum would potentially raise some difficult questions concerning the state of conservation of the Caryatids that have been left in Athens. Caryatid #3 was transferred from the Acropolis to London almost 180 years before Greek conservators finally removed the other marble statues from the south porch of the Erechtheum, replacing them with casts of artificial stone. As a result of its early relocation, the marble maiden acquired by Elgin escaped the injuries that were inflicted on the other statues over the subsequent decades. As Caryatid #3 was safely ensconced within the galleries of the British Museum, its features were spared the damage caused by shot and shell during the Greek War of Independence (1821–32). During this conflict Caryatid #4 was smashed by artillery fire during Ottoman attacks in

1826–27, the statue 'blown away during the siege, and the architrave and roof block that she supported fell down' (Lesk 2004: 646). The *peploi* of the other Caryatids were also chipped by bullets, shrapnel and splinters of stone during the Greek revolution against Ottoman rule.¹⁴

During the second half of the twentieth century the Caryatids left on the Acropolis were also subject to erosion by the pollutants pumped into the air of Athens by vehicular emissions, industrial processes and domestic activities. The airborne pollutants and acid rain would slowly but steadily eat away at all the sculptures left unprotected on the various temples of the Acropolis, including the Caryatids of the Erechtheum. The damage caused to those marbles left in the atmosphere of the Greek capital has been highlighted by the historian William St Clair:

In the 1960s, with the rapid, largely uncontrolled, industrialization of Greece, the air in the Athens basin became seriously polluted. Previously unusually moistureless, it was now humid. Recently clean and clear, it was now full of sulphur and other impurities. The days when visitors could count the columns of the Parthenon from ships at sea or from the quayside at Piraeus had gone forever. Highly acidic when previously it had been neutral, the now polluted air bit into the exposed patina of the marble, destroyed the surface detail, and continued to bite (St Clair 1998: 329).¹⁵

Writing of the erosion of the Caryatids during the twentieth century, the Head of Curators of Acropolis Antiquities, Alexandros Mantis, would note: 'These too had suffered the consequences of a long stay in outdoor conditions' (2010: 475). The damage that the toxic atmosphere of Athens was causing to the Caryatids that remained on the Acropolis had become all too clear by the early 1970s, when pollution in Athens was reaching its nadir. In 1974 the *New Scientist* would feature an article by David Cohen emphasising the damage that was being inflicted on the Erechtheum's Caryatids by the pollutants contained in both the air and precipitation of Athens in the decades that followed World War II:

The fronts of the statues are exposed to all the air pollution can offer but the rain can also get at them. Once the sulphuric acid has softened and eaten away the surface of the marble, the rain washes this debris away. So, although the air includes particles of black dirt, the fronts of the statues are relatively clean. But they have lost much of their shape. The backs of the statues are protected from the rain. The sulphur and dirt can still get at them but, because there is no rain to wash away the debris, their shape is much better preserved. You have your choice. From the front the statues are shapeless but clean: their backs are shapely but black (D. Cohen 1974: 672).

Despite the damage that was clearly being inflicted upon the Caryatids that remained within the structure of the

Erechtheum, the statues were not removed from the south porch of the temple until the end of the 1970s. As a result of the erosion caused by Athenian pollution, the Caryatid that Elgin removed to London therefore sustained rather less damage than did her five marble sisters that now reside in the New Acropolis Museum. Authorities at the British Museum have been keen to emphasise the superior state of preservation of the Caryatid in their care, with the museum's website noting: 'The British Museum's caryatid is better preserved than her sisters, which have now severely weathered' (British Museum n.d.). It is difficult to know exactly how much erosion of the Caryatids' facial features and other sculptural detail was a result of the failure of the Greek authorities to remove the statues from the toxic atmosphere of Athens before the late 1970s or how much should be attributed to the wear and tear of earlier centuries.¹⁶ There can be little doubt, however, that the Caryatids and other marbles that Elgin's agents decided to leave in Athens were badly affected by the acidic atmosphere of the Greek capital. Indeed, following the eventual removal of the original marble statues from the Erechtheum at the end of the 1970s, and their replacement in the monument's south porch with replica statues made from artificial stone, the Caryatids had to 'reside in a gas-filled box, their condition being so poor and their marble too fragile to expose to air' (King 2006: 254. For the nitrogen showcase, see Loukaki 2008: 206, n. 13). By the time the Caryatids were moved into the New Acropolis Museum in 2007, most of the conservation efforts were complete and the statues could be presented outside of their gas-filled showcase. Recent restoration work on the Caryatids has also used laser treatment to carefully remove accretions from the surface of the statues, exposing the bright white marble underneath (Acropolis Museum 2014; Alderman 2014). Nonetheless, despite two-and-a-half years of laser cleaning, it remains obvious that the facial features and other sculpted details of the Caryatids left in Athens are in a considerably worse state of preservation than that of the statue on display in the British Museum. Dorothy King has therefore referred to the 'marvelous state of preservation' of the British Museum's statue compared to her five counterparts still in Athens, 'whose features and details are nearly worn away by pollution'; King's book, *The Elgin Marbles*, also includes illustrations of the Caryatid displayed in London compared to one of her sister statues in Athens, in which the photographs, although of poor quality, nevertheless strongly support King's thesis of 'showing the deterioration in their [the Greek-owned Caryatids'] condition since 1801' (2006: 254).

King has been amongst the most outspoken opponents of the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles and might therefore be expected to emphasise the better standard of conservation provided for the Caryatid and other sculptures in the care of the British Museum in contrast to that offered to those marbles left in Athens. Nonetheless, the rather more evenhanded Professor Mary Beard has also drawn attention to the damage inflicted on those sculptures held in the Greek capital compared to those displayed in the British Museum. Following a visit to the New

Acropolis Museum soon after its inauguration in 2009, the Cambridge scholar would therefore highlight the destruction caused to the original marble of the Greek-owned sculptures by airborne pollutants and acid rain, compounding the damage sustained during the various sieges of the Acropolis during the War of Independence, as well as that caused by souvenir-hunters breaking off pieces of the marble in the years immediately before and after the foundation of the Hellenic kingdom: '[D]espite all those claims of damage done to the sculpture in the British Museum, many of the original panels seen in the glorious sunlight of the new museum do show signs of terrible erosion or defacement... it all means that the sculptures in London seem, to the naked eye, to be in much better condition' (2010: 195).¹⁷ For the art historian Beth Cohen, the contrast between the original Pentelic marble sculptures and the starkly white plaster copies on display in the Parthenon Gallery was primarily an effort by the Greek curators at the New Acropolis Museum to downplay the generally poor condition of those marbles that had been left in Athens in comparison to those taken to London (B. Cohen 2010).¹⁸ Indeed, more than half-a-dozen years after the opening of the New Acropolis Museum, the metopes of the western flank of the Parthenon (featuring the mythological battle between the Amazons and the Greeks) have still not been placed on public display; replica casts continue to occupy their positions in the Parthenon Gallery. However, unlike the bone-white plaster casts which clearly emphasise those sculptures exiled to London or other foreign cities, the replicas of those marbles already in Greek hands have been carefully coloured and textured to make it exceedingly difficult for visitors (including scholars as well as the general public) to tell them apart from the heavily eroded and defaced fifth-century Pentelic originals. Even the signs, 'Cast (temporary)', which appear next to each of these replica metopes is only offered after a description of the scene depicted, while the text on the signs (in Greek and English) is also rather small and easily overlooked. (So much so that when I enquired of one of the museum staff standing at this western end of the Parthenon Gallery if she knew when the original Pentelic panels would be placed on display, the member of staff was adamant that the metopes from the western façade were the originals, and was clearly unaware of the replicated nature of these sculptures until her attention was drawn to the easily overlooked signage.)¹⁹

The decision to leave an empty space in the Erechtheum display of the New Acropolis Museum in order to denote the missing Caryatid, rather than providing a plaster replica of the original marble as would have been the case in the Parthenon Gallery, may therefore be a tacit acknowledgement by the president and curatorial staff of the museum that the Caryatids left on the Acropolis have suffered far greater damage than the statue which Lord Elgin transported to London at the start of the nineteenth century. Insertion of a plaster cast of the British Museum's Caryatid alongside the five original marble statues risks drawing further attention to the considerably better state of preservation of the statue that currently resides in London. If we are to believe the claims of Dorothy King,

then the display of a plaster replica of the statue removed by Elgin alongside the originals left in Greece would allow visitors to the New Acropolis Museum to see how Elgin's removal of Caryatid #3 saved the statue from the defacement and damage sustained by her sisters in Athens as a result of war or erosion by atmospheric pollutants. Were visitors to the New Acropolis Museum to agree with King, and conclude that the statue in the British Museum had been provided with a considerably better level of protection from human and environmental damage than her sisters left on the Athenian Acropolis, then Elgin's removal of the Caryatid might actually be viewed in a positive light, serving to undermine the 'anti-Elgin sentiment' that some academics regard as a curatorial goal of the New Acropolis Museum. Instead, by leaving a void in the Caryatid display rather than erecting a plaster replica in place of the missing statue, museum staff have side-stepped the potentially thorny issue of offering any direct comparison of the state of preservation of Caryatid #3 against that of her five sisters. Visitors to the museum in Athens are instead merely provided with an empty space which has allowed curatorial staff at the New Acropolis Museum to emphasise the absence of Caryatid #3 while at the same time ensuring that it is impossible to make direct comparisons between the broken and eroded condition of the five statues left in Greek care with the considerably better state of preservation of the Caryatid that was spirited away by Lord Elgin.

Conclusion

The architectural, museological and political focus on the restitution of the marbles of the Parthenon not only determined the design and construction of the New Acropolis Museum, but also relegated the display of other important ancient artworks and artefacts to a secondary status within the museum. The factors deemed to be of utmost importance in reinforcing the Greek claim to the Parthenon Marbles removed by Lord Elgin – the view across to the monument they originally decorated; the ability of the sculptures to be presented in 'unique Attic light'; the display of the marbles in exactly the same alignment in which they were originally viewed when affixed to the Parthenon; a museum presentation that would afford the visitor an unrivalled appreciation of how the sculptures were displayed in relation to one another when originally on the fifth-century temple – have been heralded by Hellenic Culture Ministry officials and New Acropolis Museum staff, as well as restitution campaigners in Greece and around the world, as offering potent arguments in favour of the return of the marbles that the Scottish aristocrat removed from the Parthenon. However, when applied to the iconic Caryatids, all of these same arguments ring hollow. Rather than being presented in an airy, light-filled gallery such as exists on the top-floor of the New Acropolis Museum, the Caryatids have instead been placed on display in the concrete core of the museum, removed from all sight of the Acropolis, and certainly with no view of their original home of the Erechtheum. Trapped between bare concrete walls, the Caryatids have been denied access to direct natural light. The five marble statues have also been orientated in a different alignment to that which they assumed

when functioning as load-bearing columns supporting the architrave and roof of the Erechtheum's south porch. Rather than following the museological method of display of the Parthenon Gallery, and including a plaster replica of the statue now housed in the British Museum, it has been decided that the missing Caryatid be instead denoted by an empty space, possibly reflecting concerns about allowing direct comparisons to be made between the state of preservation of the Caryatid removed by Elgin against that of her marble sisters that remain in Athens. It is possible to partly rectify some of the problems that surround the display of the Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum; it would presumably be a relatively straightforward task to move the five statues to another location within the museum where the sculptures would have access to natural illumination and views across to the Acropolis, and which would allow for the Caryatids to be presented in an alignment matching that of their original positions in the south porch of the Erechtheum. The location in the New Acropolis Museum that fulfils all these presentational criteria would be the area on the second floor of the building in which is currently located the museum's restaurant, and it is perhaps time for the curatorial staff of the museum to consider optimising the display of the artworks and artefacts in their care and treating the needs of the Caryatids with greater attention than the desire to offer diners pretty views across to the Acropolis. However, even were the Caryatids moved to a new location within the New Acropolis Museum at some point in the future, there is little doubt that, from the design stage onwards, the position and display of these five iconic statues was relegated far below that of the sculptures which originally adorned the Parthenon. This failure to apply the same presentational philosophies to the Caryatids as was provided for the Parthenon Marbles reflects the immense political importance that the Hellenic government places on the restitution of the sculptures removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin, and the corresponding lack of official Greek interest in repatriating the missing statue that the Scottish aristocrat prised from the south porch of the Erechtheum.

Notes

- ¹ It has thus been noted that, 'despite its architectural and artistic importance, ritually the Parthenon was second to the Erechtheion. The major Panathenaic procession ended at the large altar of Athena between the Erechtheion and the Parthenon, while the luxurious peplos, the birthday gift from the city to its goddess, was a dedication to the Athena Polias (Erechtheion), not to the Athena Parthenon (Parthenon)' (Mylonopoulos 2009: 25–26).
- ² For the request placed before the ICPRCP, see UNESCO (1983: 5–6). The Greek focus on reclaiming just those sculptures that originally adorned the Parthenon was made clear in May 2000 when Theodoros Pangalos, the Hellenic Culture Minister at the time, left little doubt that the large statue was not part of those marbles his government was seeking to have repatriated to Athens: 'I wish to emphasize yet again that we

request the return, of only those sculptures removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin and that we make no general claim for the restitution of any other artefacts' (Pangalos 2000). For the list of 90 sculptures – all of which originally adorned the Parthenon – that the Hellenic government wishes to see repatriated, see Korka (2003: 8) and the website of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (2012).

³ There is some academic disagreement as to when building work began on the Erechtheum. The great German archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld argued that construction of the temple commenced as early as 435 BC (1942: 13, 32), while more recently Alexandra Lesk would promote a date of shortly after 427/6 BC (2004: 68). However, most scholars tend to place the temple's construction in the last two decades of the fifth century. For a recent overview of the various dates proposed for construction work on the temple, see Vickers (2014: 123).

⁴ It might be argued that many visitors to the New Acropolis Museum would have already been up to the summit of the nearby Acropolis and viewed the Erechtheum and the replica cement Caryatids inserted into the south porch of the temple, and thus have an understanding of the architectural role played by the statues. However, this makes the assumption that visitors will inevitably head up to the archaeological site *before* taking in the exhibits at the New Acropolis Museum very soon afterwards, when the architectural layout and load-bearing role of the Caryatids is still fresh in their minds. Even were this the case, there still seems little reason not to provide a replica architrave linking the five Caryatids on display in the museum and which would emphasise that the statues were crucial elements in maintaining the structural integrity of the Erechtheum's south porch. The addition of such a replica architrave need not detract from the artistry that went into the sculpting of the Caryatids, and visitors would still have unimpeded access to view the statues from 360 degrees – as is the case for visitors admiring Caryatid #3 in the British Museum.

⁵ See, for example, King (1998) and Lesk (2007). Vickers (2014: 121–23) offers a useful overview of the prevailing anti-Vitruvian scholarly orthodoxy, while the greater part of his article provides arguments in support of the Roman author's claims. It should also be noted that for many of the scholars who reject the Vitruvian explanation of the story behind the origins of the six Caryatids supporting the roof of the south porch of the Erechtheum, these statues would best be referred to as 'korai' (maidens). However, given the long-established and persistent application of the nomenclature 'Caryatids' to the six statues from the Erechtheum, this article continues using the terminology.

⁶ For more on the reading lounge of the New Acropolis Museum, see Pandermalis (2009: 42) and Acropolis Museum (n.d., under the sub-heading 'Reading Lounge').

⁷ Interview with Professor Pandermalis, conducted in the New Acropolis Museum, 16 October 2013.

⁸ Despite improved ease of access onto the Acropolis, and the ability to see all the principal Classical monuments on the summit of the hill-top, had either of the two westerly sites been chosen as the location for the New Acropolis Museum then the visual prominence of the Parthenon when viewed from the museum would have been greatly reduced. On the south-east Makriyanni site, which was chosen as the location on which the New Acropolis Museum was eventually constructed, visitors are provided with a dramatic view of the entire 70 metres of the long southern flank of the Parthenon, together with part of the eastern side of the temple: indeed, the Parthenon dominates the views through the north-facing windows of the museum to the exclusion of all the other monuments on the Acropolis (**Figure 6**). By contrast, had either of the two westerly sites been chosen as locations for the New Acropolis Museum, only the 31-metre western façade of the temple (and perhaps a glimpse along the southern side of the Parthenon, depending on which of the two westerly sites had been chosen) would have been visible.

⁹ For more on the importance of the Attic light to the design of the New Acropolis Museum and the wider marbles repatriation debate, see Beresford (2015).

¹⁰ These alignments were taken by the author using a pocket compass and, as such, should not be held as accurate to the nearest degree. Nonetheless, they are sufficiently precise to demonstrate the variation in alignment of the Caryatids that exists between the original positions of the statues when on the Acropolis compared with their present positions in the New Acropolis Museum.

¹¹ The alignment of the Caryatid display in the New Acropolis Museum was finalised in February 2002 when it was decided the statues would be displayed overlooking the central chamber of the museum. One of the architectural team members thus noted: 'Questions arise as to which direction they should face. We eventually decide to position them facing the ramp, as if greeting the visitor in an impressive setting' (Rutten 2009: 140).

¹² In addition to the mistaken claim that the marbles removed from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin would be represented with empty spaces in the Parthenon Gallery, O'Hara's estimates of attendance at the New Acropolis Museum also proved to be wildly inaccurate. Instead of the three million annual visitors O'Hara told British MPs that the new museum would welcome through its doors, the museum would fall well short of achieving such levels of visitation. Even during its first year of operation the New Acropolis Museum only managed to welcome slightly over two million visitors; in each of the following five years attendance only registered between 1–1.46 million, less than half the figure of annual visitors claimed by O'Hara (Beresford 2014. See also Acropolis Museum 2015 for the most recent attendance figures).

¹³ Christina Ntaflou has also written of the 'political character of the exhibition program' at the New

Acropolis Museum (2011: 103), and it is in the top-floor Parthenon Gallery where this politicisation of the sculptures from the largest of the temples on the Acropolis is most clearly manifested.

¹⁴ For a useful overview of the effects of the artillery fire on the Erechtheum during the Ottoman siege of 1826–27, see Lesk (2004: 646–49).

¹⁵ Even the late Christopher Hitchens, whose books, essays and articles argued strongly in favour of the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Athens, freely admitted that the sculptures left on the Acropolis during the last century – including the Caryatids – suffered grievously from atmospheric pollution: ‘It is unfortunately true that the city allowed itself to become very dirty and polluted in the 20th century, and as a result the remaining sculptures and statues on the Parthenon were nastily eroded by “acid rain”’ (Hitchens 2009). For more on the pollution in the atmosphere of Athens in the late twentieth century, see Beresford (2017).

¹⁶ It is probably fair to assume that Elgin’s agent, Giovanni Battista Lusieri, chose to remove Caryatid #3, rather than any of the other surviving marble sisters, because this particular statue showed the least signs of damage. It has, for example, been speculated by Mary Beard that, rather than displaying the effects of artillery fire, weathering and pollution that eroded the marbles across the Acropolis throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ‘perhaps Elgin’s agents chose these pieces because they were better preserved’ (Beard 2010, 195). As already noted, however, Lusieri had informed Elgin that one Caryatid looked much like another, possibly indicating that, at the start of the nineteenth century, the Caryatids were in a similar state of preservation.

¹⁷ Beard would, however, not rule out the possibility that Elgin’s agent, Giovanni Lusieri, removed only those sculptures which, even at the start of the nineteenth century, were in a considerably better state of preservation than were those which were left clinging to the various temples on the Acropolis (2010: 195, see above endnote).

¹⁸ Miriam Caskey, from the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, has, by contrast, argued that sculptures such as ‘[t]he original figures of the east frieze that are in the Acropolis Museum (e.g., VI.38–42) do not greatly contrast with the casts of the rest of the east frieze held by the British Museum’ (Caskey 2011: 6). Nonetheless, doubts still remain concerning the state of preservation of some of the marbles displayed in the New Acropolis Museum. Even before the opening of the museum, King would highlight that sections of the Parthenon’s frieze that had been allowed to remain attached to the temple until the early 1990s had suffered greatly from Athenian pollution and acid rain: ‘Anyone looking at it ... would be horrified at its poor state. Anyone who saw the condition of the west frieze in Athens next to the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum would immediately decide that the Marbles in London should stay there’ (2006: 306).

¹⁹ This incident occurred in December 2014, and the replica casts of the Greek-owned metopes were still on display in the Parthenon Gallery in spring of the following year. The author did contact information services at the New Acropolis Museum in March and again in April of 2016 to enquire if the original Pentelic marble metopes from the western side of the temple had finally been placed on display during the latter part of 2015 or early 2016. There was, however, no reply to the email queries.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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How to cite this article: Beresford, J M 2016 The Caryatids in the New Acropolis Museum: Out of Sight, Out of Light, Out of Mind. *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*, 14(1): 3, pp.1–16, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/jcms.130>

Submitted: 02 January 2016 **Accepted:** 28 March 2016 **Published:** 12 July 2016

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