

Acropolis Museum

The year that passed

The year that passed (June 2021 - June 2022) was extremely important for the Acropolis Museum, as the Museum continued its operation uninterruptedly throughout the year, taking into account, naturally, the constraints created by the relevant health protocols. Despite any difficulties, and given that the Museum depends exclusively on its own resources, the number of its visitors - Greeks and foreigners – that reached almost 1 million, is indicative of the love and dedication of the general public towards the Museum. The election of Professor Nikolaos Chr. Stampolidis as the first General Director of the Museum early June 2021 from an International Committee was also important, who took over his duties in September of the same year. A person with knowledge, spirit and vision, who continues the highly successful work of the Museum and expands its activities.

Regarding the major issue of the return and reunification of the architectural sculptures of the Parthenon, the great success came on 29 September 2021 at the 22nd session of the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin. For the first time in 37 years of continuous propositions of the Committee towards Britain, a Decision was taken which, in addition to the legal, right and ethical aspect of the Greek request; it also recognizes its transnational/ intergovernmental character. This decision, which was accompanied by direct actions of the Greek Prime Minister to his British counterpart and proceeded to the United Nations in December of the same year, was decisive. In January 2022, the renowned “Fagan fragment” from the A. Salinas Museum in Palermo returns in the form of a deposit to the Acropolis Museum and is placed in a special showcase, waiting for its final repositioning in the east frieze of the Parthenon. And indeed, in less than five months, on 29/30 May 2022, the “Fagan fragment” is returned to the Acropolis Museum by Decree of the Sicilian Authorities and its export certification by the Italian Ministry of Culture, and on 4 June 2022 it is reunited forever where it belongs. The Fagan fragment is the first fragment of a Parthenon sculpture that returns from state to state in the Acropolis Museum and is reunited, setting the example of the road that both the British Museum and the British Parliament can and should follow for the final return of the Parthenon sculptures.

In the scientific sector, the Museum published an upgraded version of the online application www.parthenonfrieze.gr, with photographs and descriptions of all the frieze blocks preserved today in the Acropolis Museum and abroad. The upgrade of the application was developed thanks to the fruitful collaboration of the Museum, the Acropolis Restoration Service and the National Center for Documentation & Electronic Content.

Other than the events taking place every year, the Museum opened up to society and the younger generations with a series of activities, such as the gallery talks “Hidden stories of diaspora”, “Saturday in the Museum with 20+1 masterpieces” and “Marathon-Salamis. In traces of myth and history”. The Museum opened its doors to special groups with the program for refugees “A museum open to all”, while it created the new family pamphlet “The Parthenon Sculptures. 6 short stories of separation”. At the same time, the Museum renewed its educational programs, offering schools nine thematic options and an online tour.

The Museum offered different experiences to its visitors, with dance performances in the exhibition areas in collaboration with the Greek National Opera and its participation in the 1st Sacred Music Festival, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Museum organized in collaboration with the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis Foundation the unique event in the Parthenon Gallery "The expatriate goddesses of the Parthenon", with a presentation of ancient poetry and music, composed by Lena Platonos and performed by Maria Farantouri. Finally, the Museum started a new collaboration with the Municipality of the City of Athens, with its participation in the "This is Athens City Festival", where it organized two great evenings of wine tasting and jazz at the restaurant terrace, and also a gallery talk about the Museum exhibits related to ancient diet.

On the day of its birthday, 20 June 2022, the Acropolis Museum starts the new exhibition program "Των Αθήνηθεν ἀθλων. Panathenaic amphorae from Toronto, Canada back to their birthplace", with two exquisite vessels from the Royal Ontario Museum. This is a cultural exchange taking place simultaneously with the presentation "From Athens to Toronto: A Greek Masterpiece Revealed" at the Royal Ontario Museum where the Acropolis Kore 670 is on display from March 2022.

The presentation of the two amphorae took place in a ceremony in the emblematic Parthenon Gallery, presence of the Minister of Culture and Sports, Mrs. Lina Mendoni, the Secretary General of Culture, Mr. George Didaskalou, the Ambassador of Canada, Mr. Marc Allen, the Acropolis Museum President of the Board of Directors, Prof. Dimitris Pandermalis, the General Director of the Acropolis Museum, Prof. Nikos Stampolidis and the Curator of Greek, Etruscan, Roman & Byzantine Collections of the Royal Ontario Museum, Mr. Paul Denis.