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Bernard Tschumi Architects
New Acropolis Museum

Athens, Greece



Photo: Bernard Tschumi Architects
View from the Acropolis

Located in Athens's historic area of Makryianni, the New Acropolis Museum stands less than 1,000 feet southeast of the Parthenon, at the entrance of a network of pedestrian walkways that link the key archaeological sites and monuments of the Acropolis. This location was carefully selected to enable a dialogue between the Museum's exhibition spaces and the Acropolis buildings.

Features



Photo: Nikos Daniilidis



Photo: Christian Richters

Architects Statement:

"The challenges of designing the New Acropolis Museum began with the responsibility of housing the most dramatic sculptures of Greek antiquity. This collection of objects shaped the program even before a site was chosen. The building's polemical location added further layers of responsibility to the design. Located at the foot of the Acropolis, the site confronted us with sensitive archeological excavations, with the presence of the contemporary city and its street grid and with the Parthenon itself, one of the most influential buildings in Western civilization. Combined with a hot climate in an earthquake region, these conditions moved us to design a simple and precise museum with the mathematical and conceptual clarity of ancient Greece."

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Photo: Christian Richters



Photo: Christian Richters

We first articulated the building into a base, middle and top, which are designed around the specific needs of each part of the program. The base of the museum floats on pilotis over the existing archeological excavations, protecting and consecrating the site with a network of columns placed in careful negotiation with experts so as not to disturb the sensitive work. This level contains the entrance lobby as well as temporary exhibition spaces, an auditorium, and all support facilities.



Photo: Christian Richters



Photo: Peter Mauss/[Esto](#)

A glass ramp overlooking the archeological excavations leads to the galleries in the middle, in the form of a spectacular double-height room supported by tall columns. This level accommodates displays from the Archaic period to the Roman Empire.



Photo: Christian Richters



Photo: Christian Richters

The top, which is made up of the rectangular Parthenon Gallery arranged around an indoor court, rotates gently to orient the marbles of the Frieze exactly as they were at the Parthenon centuries ago. Its transparent enclosure provides ideal light for sculpture in direct view to and from the Acropolis using the most contemporary glass technology to protect the gallery against excessive heat and light. This new setting will offer an unprecedented context for understanding the accomplishments of the Acropolis complex. One of the goals of the top gallery is to reunite the Parthenon Frieze, currently dispersed in several world museums.



Photo: Peter Mauss/[Esto](#)
The Parthenon Gallery



Photo: Nikos Daniilidis
Parthenon Gallery, displaying portions of the Parthenon Frieze.

The conditions animating exhibition spaces revolve around natural light. Not only does the daylight in Athens differ from light in London, Berlin, or New York; light for the exhibition of sculpture differs from the light involved in displaying paintings or drawings. The new museum could be described as an environment of ambient natural light, concerned with the presentation of sculptural objects within it, whose display changes throughout the course of the day.



Photo: Peter Mauss/[Esto](#)
Statues from the Porch of the Caryatids welcome visitors.

A circulation route narrates a rich spatial experience from the city street into the historical world of the different periods of archeological inquiry. The visitor's route through the museum

forms a clear three-dimensional loop, affording an architectural and historical promenade that extends from the archeological excavations, visible through a glass floor in the entrance gallery, to the Parthenon Frieze in a gallery with views over the city, and back down through the Roman period. Movement in and through time is an important aspect of architecture, and of this museum in particular. With more than 10,000 visitors expected daily, the movement sequence through the museum artifacts is designed to be of the utmost clarity.

Materials have been selected for simplicity and sobriety: glass, concrete, and marble are the materials of choice. Perfectly transparent glass gently filters the light through a silkscreen-shading process. Concrete (both precast and cast-in-place) provides the main building structure and is the background for most of the artwork. Marble marks the floor: black for circulation, light beige for the galleries. Construction has progressed according to exacting standards so that the building will age gracefully, despite the heavy traffic of an international travel destination.”
Bernard Tschumi

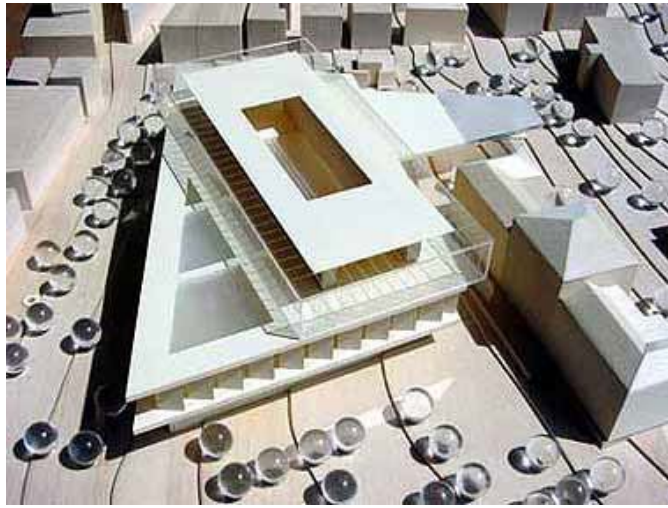
Besides a 200-seat auditorium the Museum contains a café overlooking the archeological excavation, a museum store, and a museum restaurant, with a public terrace commanding views of the Acropolis.

During pre-construction, archaeologists discovered the remains of an ancient Athenian city, excavating over 43,000 square feet. These remains have been preserved and integrated into the Museum design and are an important part of the visitor experience.

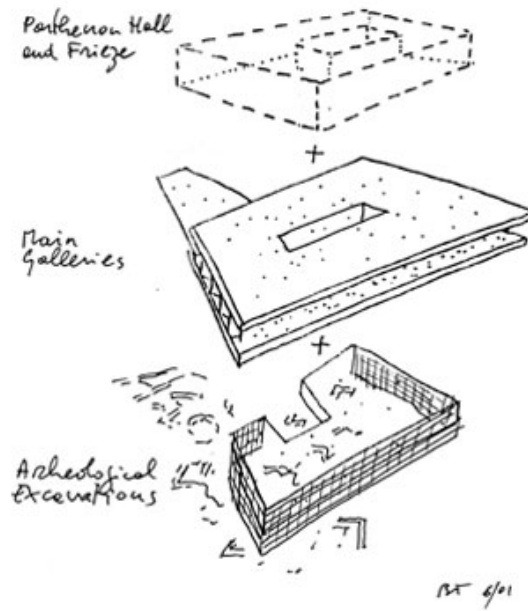
The Parthenon Marbles, a series of seventeen marble sculptures and a 525-foot-long frieze depicting the gods and heroes of classical Athens, were removed from the Acropolis two centuries ago and are now on display in the British Museum. The Greeks hope the erection of the Acropolis Museum will help win back the artefacts. The Marbles have been held in the British Museum since 1811.



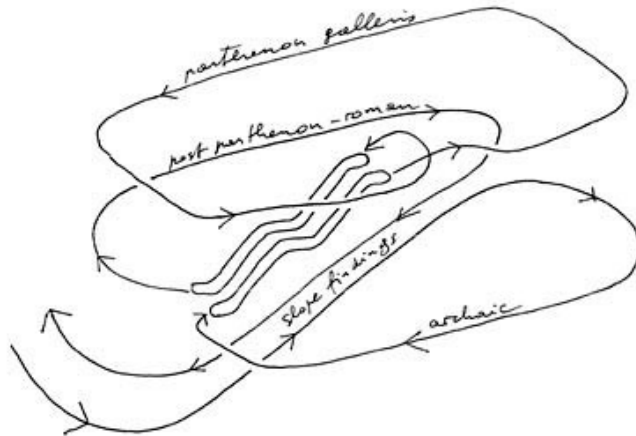
Drawing courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Site Plan



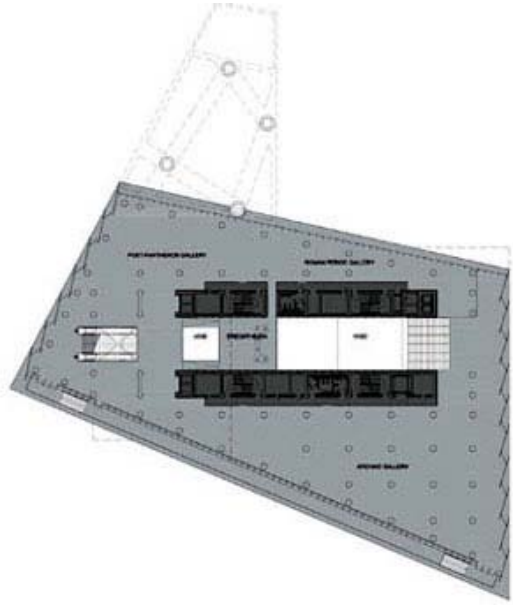
Model photo courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Model



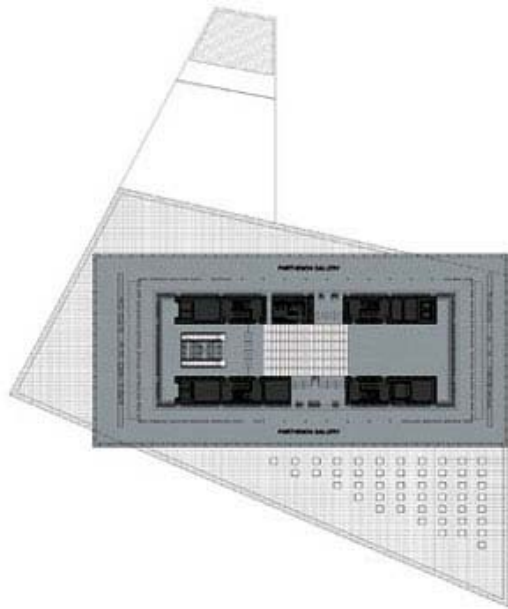
Sketch courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Exploded Axonometric



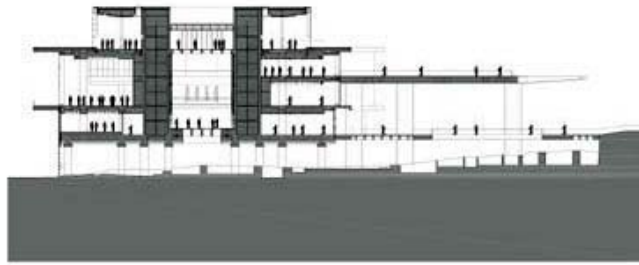
Sketch courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Circulation



Drawing courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Plan Level 1



Drawing courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Plan Level 3



Drawing courtesy Bernard Tschumi Architects
Transversal Section

The historic masterpieces were displayed in total for the first time when the Museum celebrated its official opening on June 20, 2009.

Total area: 21,000 square meters (226,000 square feet)
Exhibition space: 14,000 square meters
Landscaped green space: 7,000 square meters

Client:

[The Organization for the Construction of the New Acropolis Museum](#)

Architects: [Bernard Tschumi Architects](#)

Lead Designer: Bernard Tschumi

Project Architect: Joel Rutten

Project Team:

Adam Dayem

Aristotelis Dimitrakopoulos,

Jane Kim

Eva Sopeoglou

Kim Starr

Anne Save de Beaurecueil

Jonathan Chace

Robert Holton

Valentin Bontjes van Beek

Liz Kim

Daniel Holguin

Kriti Siderakis

Michaela Metcalfe

Justin Moore

Joel Aviles

Georgia Papadavid

Allis Chee

Thomas Goodwill

Véronique Descharrières

Christina Devizzi

Associate Architect: ARSY Ltd.

Principal: Michael Photiadis

Project Team:

George Criparacos

Nikos Bakalbassis

Phillipos Photiadis

Structure: ADK and Arup

Mechanical and Electrical: MMB Study Group S.A. & Arup

Civil: Michanniki Geostatiki and Arup

Lighting: Arup

General Contractor: Aktor

Photographed by [Christian Richters](#)

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July 13, 2009

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