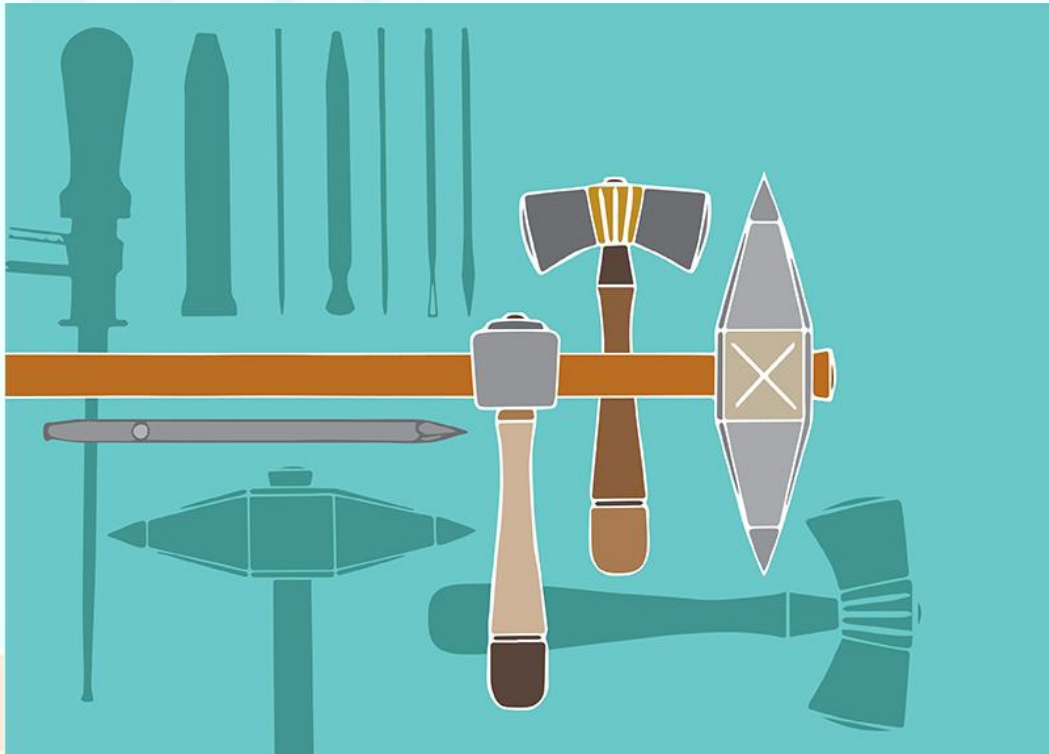




Acropolis Museum
Directorate of Collections and Exhibitions
Department of Educational Programs



Ancient sculpture: shaping stone into art

**Online educational program for students of
4th - 6th grades Elementary/Primary school**

Educational resource



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Introduction

The organization and preparation of the school's participation in an educational program delivered remotely by the archaeologists of the Acropolis Museum's Department of Educational Programs, are key factors in ensuring a successful and meaningful learning experience.

Beyond exploring digitally the Museum's galleries and introducing students to the objects on display, their history, artistic significance, and the world in which they were created, it is equally important to create the conditions that encourage students to engage with, deepen, and build upon the knowledge and experiences they gain during their visit. With this in mind, we have prepared the following educational material for you to use in the classroom both before your visit to the Museum and participation in the program, in order to help students prepare for and make the most of their learning experience, as well as after the visit, to support the further development and consolidation and enrichment of the knowledge they acquire of their knowledge.

Description of the program

You have chosen the educational program entitled '*Ancient sculpture: shaping stone into art*' which is addressed to students of **4th - 6th grades Elementary/Primary school**. Through the digital tour, students will be introduced to the world of sculpture as it unfolds in the exhibits of the Acropolis Museum, which hosts sculptures par excellence and in fact from a unique space, that of the Athenian Acropolis. These are either votives to the goddess Athena, or architectural sculptures that, in addition to their aesthetic and artistic value, also play a key structural role in the construction of monuments. Apart from their differences in terms of construction material, their dating, etc., they have an undeniable thing in common: they are products of sculpture that allow us on one hand to follow the evolution of this type of art and on the other hand to draw through these works data about the social perceptions, the economic situation, trade and so many other versions of the daily life of ancient Greeks. But what does sculpture mean? What tools did the craftsmen of antiquity use and how different do they differ from today's? What materials did they prefer, where did they get them from and how did they manage them? How did they carve these wonderful sculptures that we still see today



so many thousands of years after their construction? These are the basic questions that are posed, and we are called upon to answer through the program and introduce children to a different world.

The total duration of the program is 90 minutes and is structured as follows:

1. Program Introduction:

Before the day of the presentation, and once all the necessary arrangements for booking the online educational program have been completed, you will receive a link to join the program via the Google Meet platform. This means that you will need to have a Gmail account, which will allow you to access and connect to the platform¹. At the beginning of the program, we explore the meaning of the word “Acropolis” and discuss sculpture as a unique form of artistic expression.

2. Digital tour of the Museum:

We begin the program with a brief discussion of ancient Greek sculpture as an art form. The students then take a virtual tour of different areas of the Museum’s permanent exhibition. Through discussion and targeted, guided questions posed by the archaeologist, and with the help of visual material, they are encouraged to observe and discover details of the sculptures, explore different techniques, and trace the development of both artistic techniques and sculptural forms over time.

¹ If you do not have a Gmail account, the necessary arrangements will be made during the booking process.



Program Objectives - Museum education methods of implementation

Objectives

The students:

- to familiarize themselves with the environment of the Museum and to understand its importance as a place of learning and entertainment,
- to understand the concept of time and its value,
- through the pleasant experiential experience to get to know elements of themselves,
- to understand the value of art and to understand the toil and passion for its production,
- to activate their interest in exhibits and the art of sculpture,
- enhance their emotional intelligence and aesthetics,
- develop skills such as observation, critical thinking, creativity,

Museum education methods

❖ Discovery learning

- Directed discussion,
- Questions and answers,
- Observation and exploration of authentic ancient artifacts.



Guidelines for Using the Educational Material

The material below provides concise information on the subject explored during the educational program, as well as on the Acropolis and the Acropolis Museum. It also includes visual resources and links to additional information, should you wish to explore the topic further. An indicative bibliography is also provided for those who would like to conduct further research or expand their knowledge of the topics presented.

The purpose of the material provided is to familiarize students with the place, historical period, and subject matter of the program, while allowing them enough time to develop and engage with the idea of visiting a cultural institution. In this way, we hope to foster their interest and desire for a more meaningful encounter with the Museum and to encourage them to deepen and enrich their knowledge.

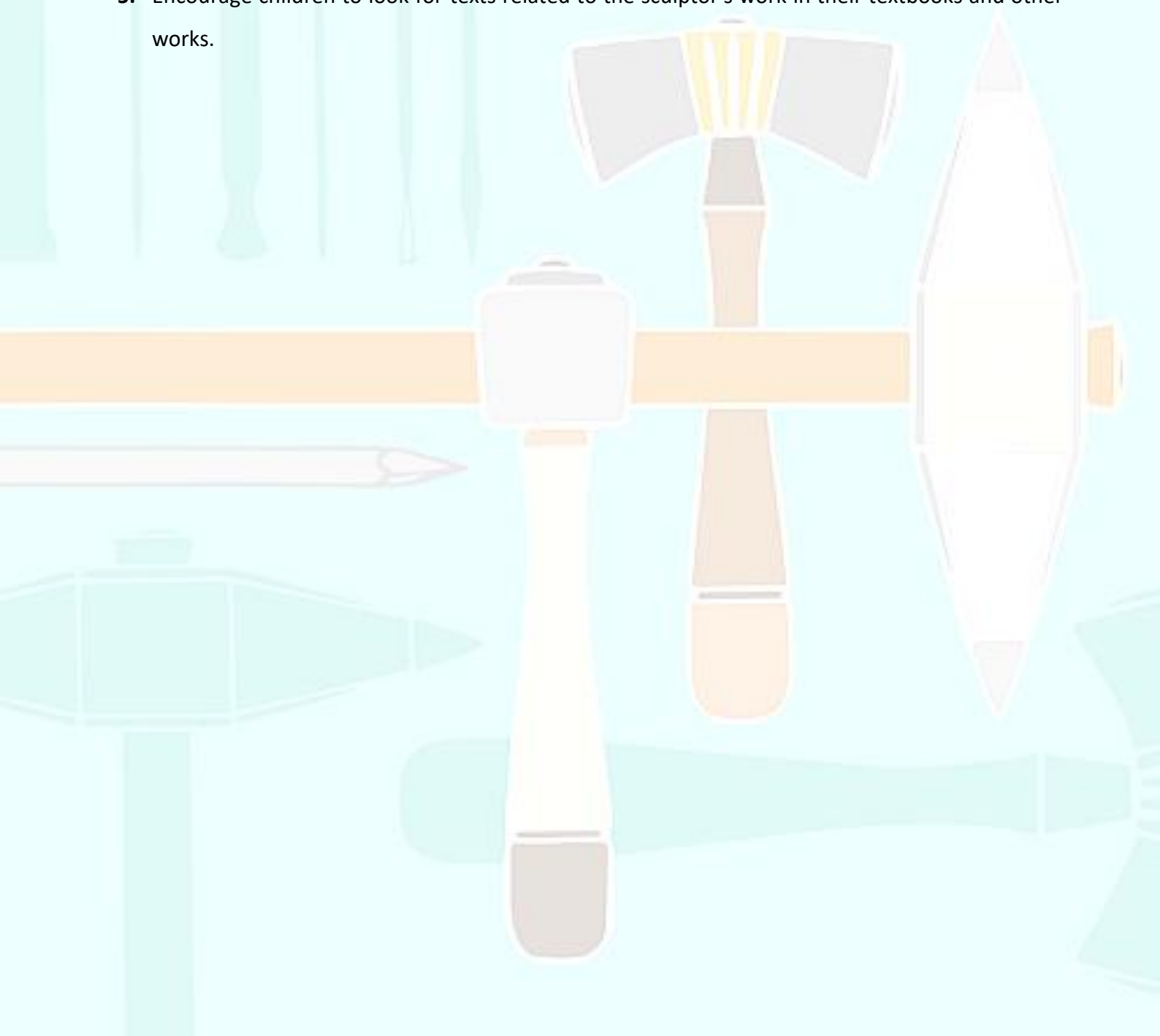
You are free to decide how best to use the material according to your students' educational needs and interests. As additional suggestions, we propose the following ways of working with the material:

1. Read the texts carefully and explore the suggested links yourself before presenting them to your students, so that you can plan how best to communicate the information in the classroom. The aim of the program is not only for students to gain knowledge about the subject, but also to engage in an enjoyable and meaningful learning experience. At the same time, we seek to contribute to the development of skills such as observation and collaboration, as well as to foster respect for cultural heritage as a record of collective memory and history. Through active participation, students become engaged participants in cultural life and heritage.
2. Watch the suggested short videos together with your students in the classroom. In this way, students gain an initial acquaintance with the Museum and its collections and, through this process of familiarization, become emotionally and intellectually engaged with the Museum and its exhibits.
3. Use the introductory text for the Acropolis Museum and the Acropolis and encourage students to search for more about the history of the Sacred Rock and the Museum on the internet or on social media with the support of an accompanying adult. In this way, they will be able to use a



medium familiar to them, new technologies, to explore beyond the boundaries of the educational process.

4. Discuss together the introductory text on sculpture in ancient Athens and the ancient sources cited as well as the similarities and differences that may exist between the past and the present regarding the subject.
5. Encourage children to look for texts related to the sculptor's work in their textbooks and other works.





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BEFORE THE SCHOOL VISIT



Information

The Acropolis

The Acropolis, meaning “the upper city,” is a low rocky hill that dominates the center of modern Athens. Its history stretches back into the depths of time. Although today it is most commonly associated with the magnificent monuments built as part of Pericles’ architectural program in the mid-5th century BCE, the sacred hill underwent many changes over the course of the centuries.



One goddess – many cults

The worship of the goddess Athena on the Acropolis was not one but several, as the goddess had many hypostases. Thus, in each era there were more than one temple and altar for her. Her two main cults were those of Athena Polias - protector of the city - which is placed on the north side of the hill and Athena Parthenos or Promachos – the warrior Athena - which is located on the south side. She was also worshipped as Athena Nike, Athena Ergani, Athena Hygeia etc.

At the beginning of its history, during the **Late Neolithic period (4000–3200 BCE)**, the inhabitants of Attica chose the summit and slopes of the hill as a place to settle. The rock provided a natural defensive position, while natural springs at its foot supplied fresh drinking water. Later, **during the Mycenaean period (1600–1100 BCE)**, a palatial complex was built on the summit of the rock for the local ruler. It included administrative buildings, residences for members of the elite, and sanctuaries dedicated to the goddess Athena. To strengthen the Acropolis’s defenses, a massive fortification wall was added around the middle of the 13th century BCE.

Around the **8th century BCE**, the Acropolis was transformed into an exclusively sacred space, with the worship of the goddess Athena becoming predominant, as evidenced by the few surviving remains of

the mudbrick temples dating to the Geometric period (1100–700 BCE).

During the **6th century BCE**, the hill began to reflect the gradual development and flourishing of Athens. New monumental stone temples were erected in place of the earlier structures, and the site became filled with votive offerings dedicated by the Athenians to their beloved goddess.

At the dawn of the **5th century BCE**, the Athenians found themselves facing the greatest army of the time: that of the Persian Empire. Immediately after their victory at the Battle of Marathon, the



Athenians began constructing a new temple dedicated to Athena in her aspect as Promachos, or Parthenos, on the site of the earlier 6th-century BCE temple. In doing so, they sought to thank the goddess for the assistance she had provided them in battle.

On the Persian disaster

[The Persians destroy the Acropolis of Athens, 480 BC \(video\)](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

Ten years later, in **480 BCE**, this unfinished temple, along with the entire Archaic Acropolis, was destroyed by the Persians when they invaded the Greek city-states for a second time. Despite the destruction of the Acropolis, the Persian Wars marked a turning point in history, transforming

Athens into the leading power of the Aegean and the Delian League. Thus, **33 years later**, under the leadership of Pericles, the Athenians embarked on the construction of new and more magnificent temples. These would not only replace the destroyed Archaic monuments, but also proclaim the greatness and power of Athenian democracy throughout the Greek world.

Great monuments such as the **Parthenon, the Erechtheion, and the Temple of Athena Nike** were constructed during the second half of the **5th century BCE**.

Other Cults on the Acropolis

In addition to Athena, other deities were worshipped on the Acropolis both on the rock and on the slopes. Some of them were Artemis Brauronia, Aphrodite, Zeus, Poseidon, Pan, Apollo, etc.

[The Acropolis caves and its findings \(video\)](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

[The sanctuaries](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

More about the temples of the classical era

[The Parthenon Gallery](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

[Athena Parthenos. The inscriptions](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

[The temple of Athena Nike](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

[The Erechtheion](#) | [Acropolis Museum](#) | [Official website](#)

The people of Athens would climb the Acropolis to take part in the great festivals held in honor of the goddess Athena and to offer her gifts. These offerings ranged from small and inexpensive objects to highly valuable ones, such as marble statues. Through these offerings, they either asked the goddess to stand by them in times of difficulty or expressed their gratitude for the help she had given them when they



called upon her.

In addition to the great sanctuaries dedicated to Athena on the Acropolis, two other important sanctuaries were established on the southern slope, among others, dedicated to different gods. These were the **Sanctuary of Asclepius**, which also served as a healing center, and the **Sanctuary and Theatre of Dionysus**, where dramatic competitions were held during the Great Dionysia.

Following the age of Pericles, the Acropolis remained the most important sanctuary of the city, continuing to be dedicated to the goddess Athena until the spread of Christianity. In the **early 6th century CE**, the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church. The eventful history of the Acropolis

On the adventures of the Parthenon

[The adventures of the Parthenon marbles in modern times \(video\) | Acropolis Museum | Official website](#)

continued in the **13th century**, when, following the Fourth Crusade, the Franks took control of Athens. They converted the Parthenon into a Catholic church and adapted the other buildings for use as palaces.

During the Ottoman rule (**1456-1833**), the Ottoman garrison was installed on the Acropolis and the Parthenon was converted into a mosque.

More about the history of the Acropolis and its monuments:

[Timeline \(interactive application\) | Acropolis Museum | Official website](#)

<https://www.acropolismuseum.kids.gr/en/video/86-a-bizarre-walk-on-the-acropolis.html>

http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2384

http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh3530.jsp?obj_id=2384

The year **1687** marked a decisive turning point in the appearance of the Acropolis rock. During the Venetian–Ottoman War, the Venetian army, led by General Morosini,



laid siege to the Acropolis. During the siege, the Venetians directed their cannons towards the Parthenon and bombarded it.

The Ottomans had stored gunpowder inside the temple, and the impact of Morosini's cannon fire proved devastating. A direct hit caused the gunpowder to explode, resulting in the catastrophic destruction of the Parthenon.

When the gunpowder exploded, most of the temple was destroyed. The Venetians managed to maintain control of Athens



for a year, after which the city and the Acropolis were recaptured by the Ottomans.

It was also during this period that the removal of parts of the Parthenon's sculptural decoration to various European countries began. Following the explosion, numerous fragments of the Parthenon's sculptures were scattered across and around the Acropolis rock, allowing Morosini's mercenaries to collect pieces of ancient sculpture and transport them to their private collections in different parts of Europe.

The removal of antiquities from the Acropolis continued over the following centuries, culminating in the forcible removal of approximately half of the surviving sculptural decoration of the Parthenon by the team of Thomas Bruce, Lord Elgin, in the **early 19th century**.

Today, the Acropolis is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its monuments are preserved and restored based on systematic research carried out by archaeologists, architects, and conservators, using appropriate materials and techniques to safeguard their preservation and enhance their cultural significance.



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The Acropolis Museum



The Acropolis Museum opened its doors to the public in the summer of **2009**. It is a thematic archaeological museum, meaning that all its collections originate from a single area: the Athenian Acropolis and its slopes.

More about the Acropolis Museum:

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/museum-history>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/museum-building>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/virtual-tour-acropolis-museum>

It replaced the old museum, which was founded on the Sacred Rock in **1865** and could no longer adequately accommodate or display the vast number of finds unearthed during the **nineteenth-century excavations** on the Acropolis, the numerous architectural sculptures that had been removed from the ancient monuments to protect them from air pollution, as well as the ever-increasing number of visitors.

The architectural design of the new building was based on the proposal by Bernard Tschumi and Michalis Fotiadis, who won the fourth architectural competition held in **2000**.



Both the choice of location and the design of the building were dictated by the need to maintain visual contact with the archaeological site of the Acropolis, located just 300 meters away; by the need to provide sufficient space for the full display of the architectural sculptures, particularly those of the Parthenon; and by the need to preserve and incorporate into the building's architecture the section of the ancient city that was uncovered at the construction site.

The exhibition spaces are arranged across three floors of the Museum, while an additional exhibition area extends across its base:

1. First exhibition area

The first exhibition area of the Museum is located on the ground floor and features finds from the slopes of the Acropolis. The floor of the gallery is made of glass, allowing visitors to view the ancient neighborhood beneath the Museum, while its upward slope evokes the ascent to the Acropolis Rock.

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/gallery-acropolis-slopes>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/multimedia/virtual-tour-gallery-acropolis-slopes>



2. Second exhibition area

The second exhibition area is located on the first floor, where visitors follow the history of the Acropolis summit in a circular route, from 1400 BC to the 7th century AD.

At the top of the staircase leading to the gallery, visitors are greeted by the sculptures of the Hekatompedon, the first monumental temple built on the Acropolis, in 566 BC.

However, the tour begins to the left of the sculptures, where display cases contain objects associated with the Acropolis's distant past.

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/early-history-acropolis>





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On the southern side of the floor is the **Archaic Acropolis Gallery**. It is a spacious, light-filled gallery where architectural sculptures and votive offerings from the Acropolis dating from the 6th and early 5th centuries BC are displayed. The natural light entering through the large glass windows and skylights in the roof creates a sense of being outdoors, evoking the open-air spaces of the Acropolis sanctuary, where the sculptures originally stood in antiquity.

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/archaic-acropolis-gallery>



On the western side of the first floor, architectural sculptures and architectural elements from monuments included in the building program initiated by Pericles for the Acropolis in the 5th century BC are displayed. These include the **Propylaia**, the monumental entrance to the Acropolis, the **Temple of Athena Nike**, and the **Erechtheion**.

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/other-monuments-periklean-building-programme>



Continuing along the northern side of the same floor, visitors can trace the history of the Acropolis from the 5th century BC to the end of antiquity through votive offerings, dedicatory bases, marble portraits, and inscriptions

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/5th-century-bc-end-antiquity>



3. Third exhibition area

Passing through the second floor, which houses recreational areas and other visitor services, visitors reach the third floor of the Museum, the third exhibition area, which has been specially designed to accommodate the sculptures of the Parthenon.



The **atrium** and the **Parthenon Gallery** follow the orientation and dimensions of the temple itself. The



sculpted blocks of the frieze have been incorporated into the exterior walls of the central core of the building, positioned in the same arrangement as they originally were on the monument, but at a lower height to allow for better viewing. The metopes are displayed in pairs between the gallery's metal columns, which correspond in number to those of the Parthenon. The figures

from the two pediments, placed on plinths on the corresponding sides of the gallery, as they were on the temple, can be viewed from all sides.

The exhibition combines the original marble sculptures with plaster casts of those housed in the British Museum and other museums abroad. The **glass façade** surrounding the gallery provides natural light and allows visitors to enjoy a direct visual connection between the sculptures and the monument from which they originate, as well as with the modern city, of which the Acropolis Museum is itself a part.



<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/parthenon-gallery>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/multimedia/virtual-tour-parthenon-gallery>

4. Fourth exhibition area

At the base of the Museum lie the remains of an ancient Athenian neighborhood brought to light by the **archaeological excavation** that preceded the construction of the Museum.





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The excavation, which was opened to the public in June 2019, offers visitors the opportunity to explore at close quarters a neighborhood that was home to human life and activity from the 4th millennium BC to the 12th century AD. Streets, houses, baths, workshops, and tombs form a complex archaeological landscape, with the best-preserved remains dating from Late Antiquity.

The visitor experience concludes at the small **“Excavation Museum”**, which opened in June 2024. Located along the southern edge of the excavation, it presents a selection of the objects left behind by the people who were born, lived, worked, and created in this corner of ancient Athens.



More about the excavation of the Acropolis Museum:

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/exhibit-halls/archaeological-excavation>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/node/25147>

<https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/node/25146>



Sculpture in antiquity

Sculpture is one of the most characteristic forms of art and one of the basic expressions of human civilization as being inextricably linked to the political, social and ideological environment of the historical period that is developing, it reflects the achievements and philosophy of man by serving purposes and visions, with the projection of specific ideals and values. For the ancients, it was a manual work with which one could create three-dimensional forms or reliefs in any material (stone, marble, metal, wood, clay, etc.). resulting in an artistic creation and the expression/communication of a specific semiotics.

The first attempt to depict the human figure, nature, weather phenomena, deities, by creating three-dimensional volumes on various materials such as clay, stone, copper, ivory, has its roots deep in time. It begins in the Neolithic period with depictions of figures based on an archetypal conception of form and evolves over time towards a more realistic or symbolic representation. Sculpture has a religious or decorative character since its works are used either as a votive offering to the gods or funerary monuments, or for the decoration of temples and sanctuaries as well as public and private spaces.

One of the historical milestones in the evolution of sculpture is the birth of monumental art, a clear influence from the East that begins in the 7th cent. BC with the Athenian Daedalus. At this time, trade routes and colonization created the conditions for the acquaintance with other cultures and the adoption of new practices. Among the most well-known types of statues of this period are the Kouroi and the Kores, male and female statues, of which the earliest are governed by specific artistic characteristics such as typology, symmetry, harmony, superficial anatomy, smile (slight smile), frontality and schematization, etc. As the years go by, sculptors move on to more familiar forms to human measures to reach classical times, the era of philosophy and the rational approach to sciences, to the idealization of the human figure that is at the center and is rendered with perfection normal, expressive, with movement and correct proportions. A little later, in the mature classical era, the figures oscillate between the figurative rendering of ethos and passion, with the latter prevailing after the experience of the Peloponnesian War. Through the rich and important collection of the Acropolis with sculptural works, tributes or architectural sculptures for the decoration of the temples, of



unparalleled aesthetic perfection and beauty, we follow all the referred stages. The sculptural compositions draw themes from nature and mythology in dimensions that varied depending on the size of the temple.

The written sources, the sculptures themselves, half-finished and unfinished sculptures in the quarries compose the picture we have today of sculpture in antiquity.

The formation of the three-dimensional work with the art of sculpture is achieved either by the abstract method on hard materials, i.e. by carving the surface until the desired result is formed, or by welding or casting. The alternation of light and shadow highlights the volumes and details of the work. Its coloring also contributes to the final image of the work.

Marble supply - quarries

The abundance of marble, in quantity and variety, in Greece makes it the dominant material for sculpture. The quality and "character" of marble varies from region to region. The marbles of Paros and Naxos are distinguished by their white color which radiates even more when lighted by the sun. However, because the marble of Naxos is coarse-grained and of lower quality than the Parian marble, the Parian marble eventually prevailed, from the middle of the 6th century onwards. Its extraction and transportation were a difficult and expensive process as the quarries of Paros were far from the sea. The quality of the marble, however, was a fact that justified the whole laborious and costly process. Especially the marble that was found in deep galleries on the slopes of the mountain had the best quality. Because people needed lighting in those areas, they had some kind of lamp, so this Parian marble was called *lychnite*. Apart from Naxos and Paros, there is also the Pentelic white marble and the marble of Hymettus which has bluish veins. Especially the Pentelic marble is chosen for the construction of classical monuments. The quarry in Penteli supplies plenty of material. The appropriate one is carefully selected according to its use and then it is extracted with know-how, technical skill and special tools (wedges, levers, etc.). After an initial processing, the material is loaded onto a carriage and transported through the *lithagogy* road, a specially paved road, from Penteli to the Acropolis. In many cases, when there was some "lack of skill" or some error in processing, the stone remained in



the quarry, with any processing that had been done until that moment, unfinished. Such cases have been identified in many quarries of antiquity.



Marble from Penteli

Marble from Paros

Marble from Paros

Marble from Naxos

Marble from Hymettus

Poros limestone

Poros limestone

Different types of marble as exhibited in the Archaic Acropolis Gallery at the Acropolis Museum

The processing of the marbles for the completion of the sculptures required the use of certain iron tools, such as a needle or chisel for the surface treatment, the drill for drilling holes and the emery for grinding the surfaces.



The tools as exhibited in the Archaic Acropolis Gallery at the Acropolis Museum

Color

Of course, we must not forget the color treatment of the sculptures since the statues did not have this minimalist white color but were colored with bright and vivid colors. The color completes the narrative character of the work, helps to highlight the volume, the details and the decoration.



Display case with pigments as exhibited in the Archaic Acropolis Gallery at the Acropolis Museum

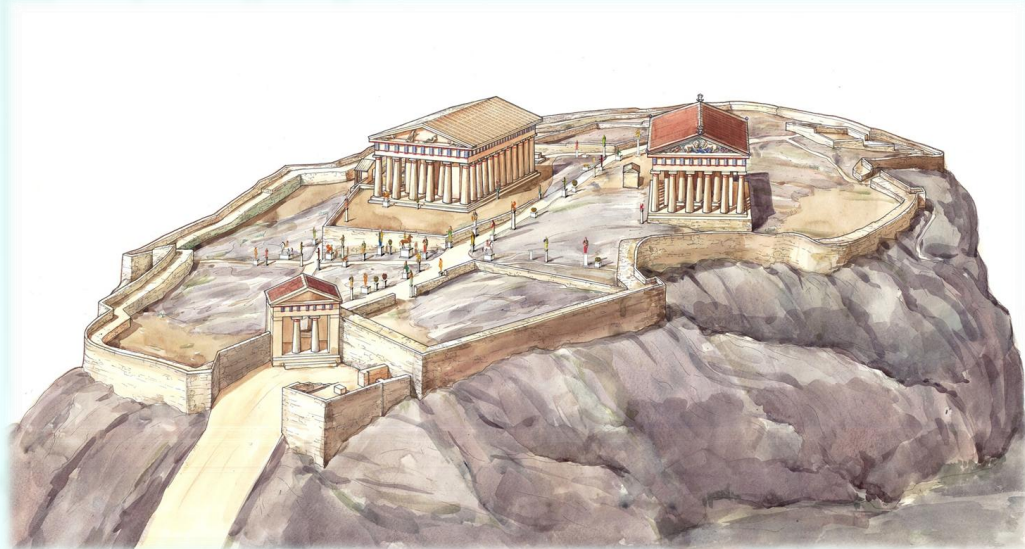
Colors were given a semiotic character by seeking for their relationship with the four elements of Cosmogony, air, fire, water and earth, or using them as a means of social characterization, so that for example white is used to convey grace and splendor, yellow the radiance of power, etc. In sculpture, the separation of elements is achieved with color, such as the layers of clothing in the Kores, but also the rendering of perspective as in the Parthenon frieze where the low relief does not give much room for the carving of individual elements. To produce pigments, mainly red, blue, green, black and yellow, a variety of minerals were used: ochre, cinnabar, miltos, malachite, hematite, etc. The colors are placed on the sculpted surface by the method of encaustic or egg tempera. The most detailed information about ancient colors is given by Pliny the Elder in his “Natural History” (Book XXXV, On Painting, Colors, and Painters), Theophrastus of Eresus in his “On Stones”, and Vitruvius in his “On Architecture”.



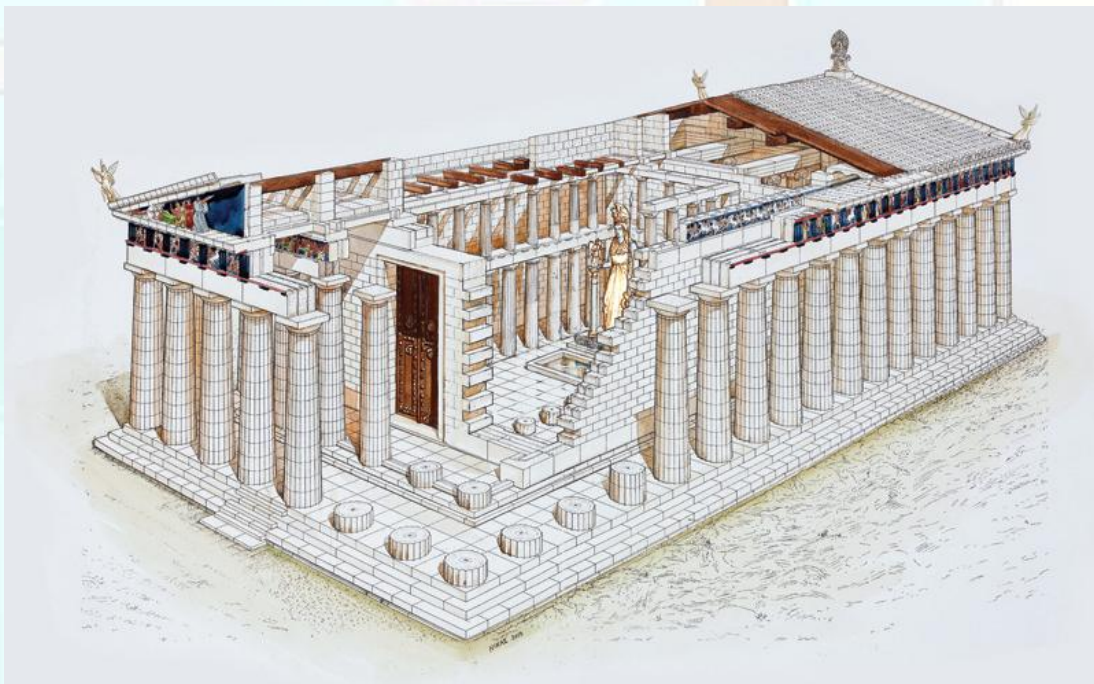


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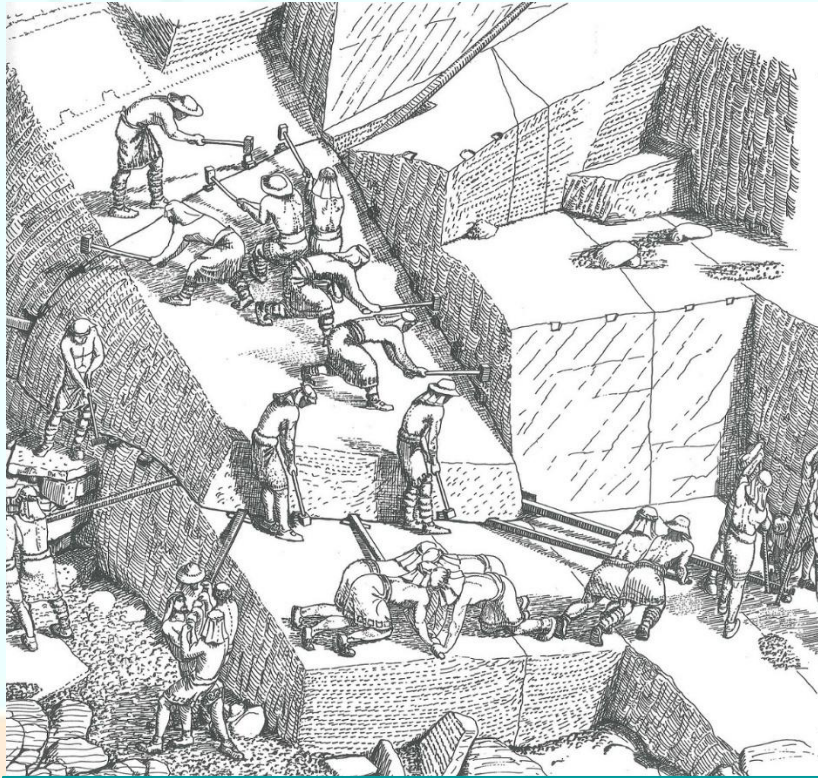
Visual Means



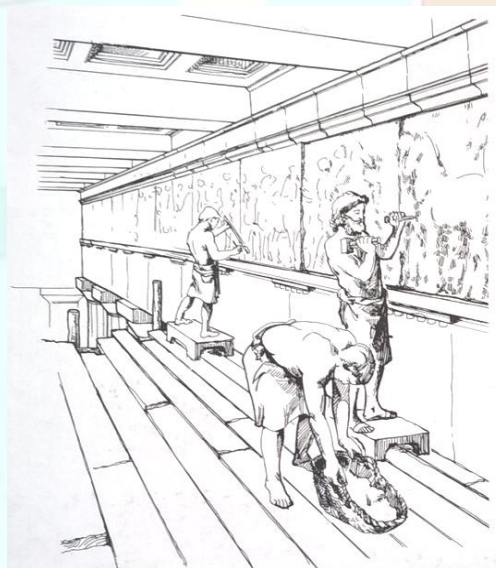
Drawing representation of an archaic Acropolis, 6th century BC (A. Nikas)



The Parthenon with its sculptural decoration (drawing by A. Nikas)



Extraction of marble from the quarry in Penteli
(drawing by M. Korres)



The carving of the frieze on the
monument (Jenkins 1994, fig. 10, 21)



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Phidias and the Parthenon frieze (L. Alma Tadema, 1868)



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AFTER THE PROGRAM



Suggested Activities

The school team's involvement in the museum educational activity after the end of the digital visit to the Museum helps to transform learning from a mental process into a living experience. At the same time, it offers a break from formal education, raising the interest of children and opening new horizons. Thus, the museum experience and participation in each educational program are completed more substantially.

After the program, you can choose to implement in the classroom some of the following activities or anything else you think would suit your group of students:

1. The class is divided into two teams and they create a **Quiz** with sculpture-related questions. Then they play against time and whichever team wins gets a prize.
2. The class is divided into two groups and they create a board game with cards – questions about sculpture in antiquity (a word-guessing game inspired by Taboo) (they also draw it visually). Then they play against time and whichever team wins gets a relevant prize.
3. A workshop where children carve clay or plasticine with a special tool creating their own sculpture, Afterwards, they could color their work.
4. Creating a digital reconstruction of an ancient sculptors' workshop. The students are divided into groups, research on the subject and gather visual material. Then they compose a digital image as they imagine a sculpture workshop.
5. Encourage children to create an advertisement for an antiquity workshop, imaginative, funny, serious, digital or not.

Note: We hope that the museum experience of school groups, as well as the communication between the Museum and the School, will extend beyond the individual visit. We would therefore be delighted if you could share with us any activities you carried out in connection with the program and in the period following your visit, as well as any thoughts, questions or concerns you may have regarding this educational resource. You can contact the Department of Educational Programs at the following email address: learning@theacropolismuseum.gr



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