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The Parthenon Sculptures



Synopsis

The Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum are unrivaled examples of classical Greek art, an inspiration to artists and writers since their creation in the fifth century bce. A superb visual introduction to these wonders of antiquity, this book offers a photographic tour of the most famous of the surviving sculptures from ancient Greece, viewed within their cultural and art-historical context. Ian Jenkins offers an account of the history of the Parthenon and its architectural refinements. He introduces the sculptures as architecture--pediments, metopes, Ionic frieze--and provides an overview of their subject matter and possible meaning for the people of ancient Athens.

Accompanying photographs focus on the pediment sculptures that filled the triangular gables at each end of the temple; the metopes that crowned the architrave surmounting the outer columns; and the frieze that ran around the four sides of the building, inside the colonnade. Comparative images, showing the sculptures in full and fine detail, bring out particular features of design and help to contrast Greek ideas with those of other cultures. The book further reflects on how, over 2,500 years, the cultural identity of the Parthenon sculptures has changed. In particular, Jenkins expands on the irony of our intimate knowledge and appreciation of the sculptures--a relationship far more intense than that experienced by their ancient, intended spectators--as they have been transformed from architectural ornaments into objects of art.

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Customer Reviews

Though there remains considerable controversy surrounding the Parthenon sculptures, everyone concerned with the history of civilization should have the opportunity to see these incredible works

of art. Searching for definitions of the collection the body of work can be best described historically as the following: 'The Parthenon Sculptures or Elgin Marbles (friezes, pediment sculptures, statue and column parts, a caryatid etc) were shipped from the Parthenon and other spots in Athens to the UK by the 7th Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1799-1803. The British government acquired the collection from Lord Elgin. The Parthenon Sculptures have been on permanent public display in the British Museum since 1817. So whether they belong in the British Museum housing (incomparably beautifully in the manner in which they are displayed for the public to view) or whether they belong to Greece and should be in fact returned in full is a political question. This book compiled and written with knowledgeable commentary by Dr Ian Jenkins, Senior Curator, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum concentrates on excellent photographs of the sculptures themselves and lets the beauty of the work speak for itself. The book is a generous size (10"x10"x1") allowing the photographs to be very large, underlining detail and the play of light and shadow that likely made them seem alive in the actual Parthenon.

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