

## **SCULPTURE OF THE GREEK CLASSICAL PERIOD (480 - 323 B.C.)**

In Classical period Athens reached its greatest political and cultural heights:

1. The full development of the democratic system of government under the Athenian statesman Pericles
2. The building of the Parthenon on the Acropolis
3. The creation of the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides and the founding of the philosophical schools of Socrates and Plato.

At the same time produced some of the most exquisite sculptures the world has ever seen characterized by movement and freedom. During the classical period the Greek artists replaced the vertical figures of the archaic period with three-dimensional figures in action.

### **WHAT ARE THE PARTHENON MARBLES?**

Parthenon was built between 447BC and 432BC, by Iktinos, Kallikrates and Pheidias.

The three sets of sculptures, the metopes, the frieze and the pediments, were created to adorn it. Of these, the metopes and the frieze were part of the structure of the Parthenon itself. They were not carved first and then put in place, high up on the Parthenon, but were carved on the sides of the Parthenon itself after it had been constructed.

The metopes were individual sculptures in high relief. There were 92 metopes, placed around the building, above the outside row of columns and showed various mythical tales.

The frieze, one long, continuous sculpture showing the procession to the temple at the Panathenaic festival, was placed above columns.

At either end of the temple were placed the pediment statues. The sculptures in the east pediment represent the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus and the sculptures in the west pediment represent the struggle between Athena and Poseidon for the land of Attica.

Not all of the Parthenon Marbles survive down to the present day. Some of them are in Athens, but most, including caryatid showed at this page, and also a column from the Erechtheion are in the British Museum. Greek government has requested the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum so that they can be reunited in one collection, in a museum at the foot of the Acropolis Hill on which the Parthenon temple stands waiting...

#### **Resources:**

Melina Mercouri Foundation- <http://www.culture.gr/4/41/411/e41101.html>

Perseus Digital Library <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

