

Athenian Arts in the Age of Pericles

Building Program

Pericles turned Athens into the showplace of Greece.

- huge building program;
- temples and public buildings;
- funded from the treasury belonging to the Delian League

Acropolis

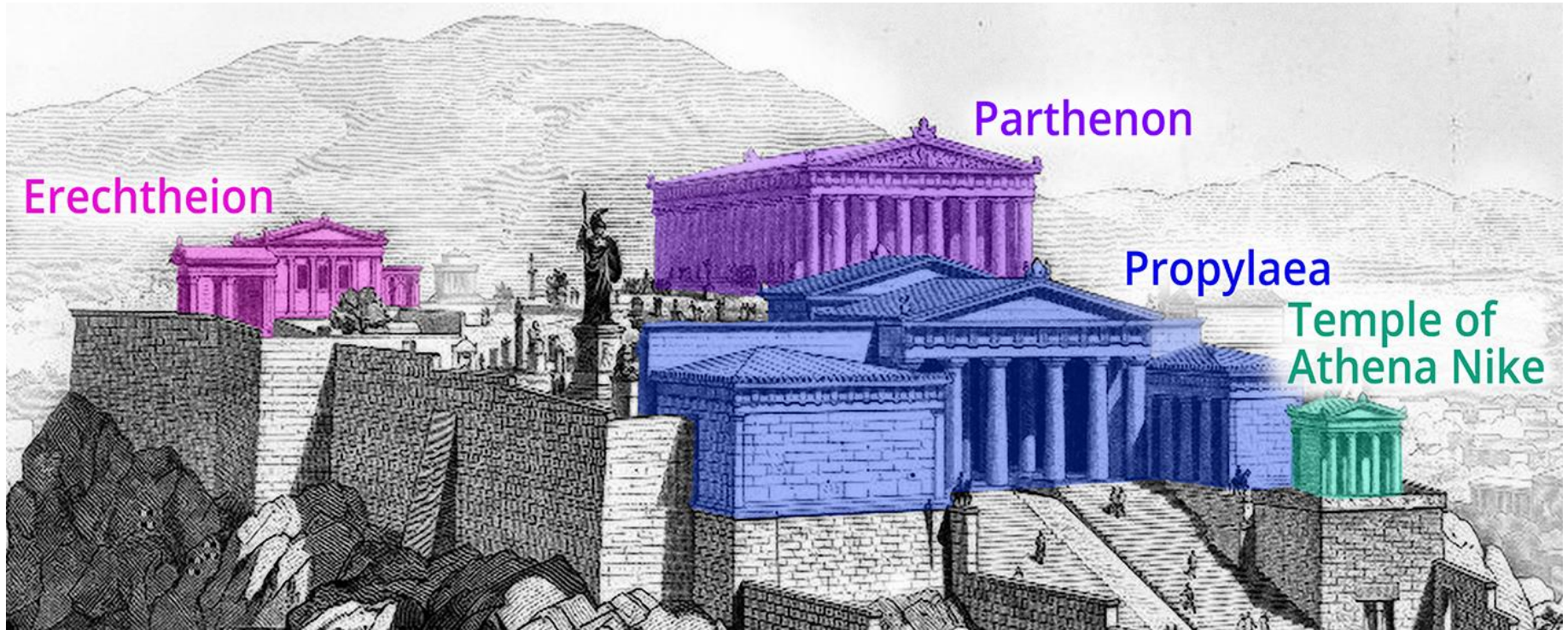
Parthenon – the epitome of Greek art and spirit;

Propylaea - ceremonial gateway – Doric style, see Portico of Caryatids;

Erechtheum – Iconic temple, housed several shrines;

Temple of Athena Nike – commemorates victory over Persians;

Design of the Acropolis



Propylaea

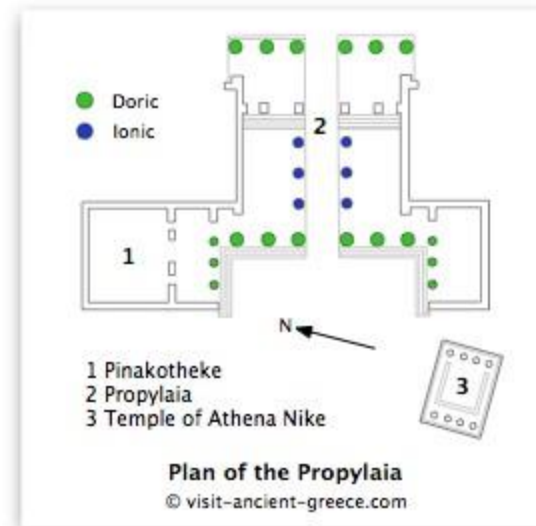
Designed as a monumental entrance to the plateau of the acropolis and the great temple to Athena;

Constructed with white Pentellic Marble;

Lies on an east-west axis;

Designed to mirror the architectural style of the nearby Parthenon;

Central porch with a six Doric column façade; corridor with 3 Ionic columns on each side followed by another six Doric columns;



Erechtheum

Built to house the ancient wooden cult statue of Athena that was to be replaced by a grander marble sculpture;

a shrine center for ancient cults;

built from Pentelic marble;

Pure white appearance and fine grain;

Ionic masterpiece; a sloping site inspired the irregular, split level design, with no continuous colonnade but four separate porticos and columns of different heights;

Column takes form of standing female figure; **caryatids**; sculpture and architecture working together;

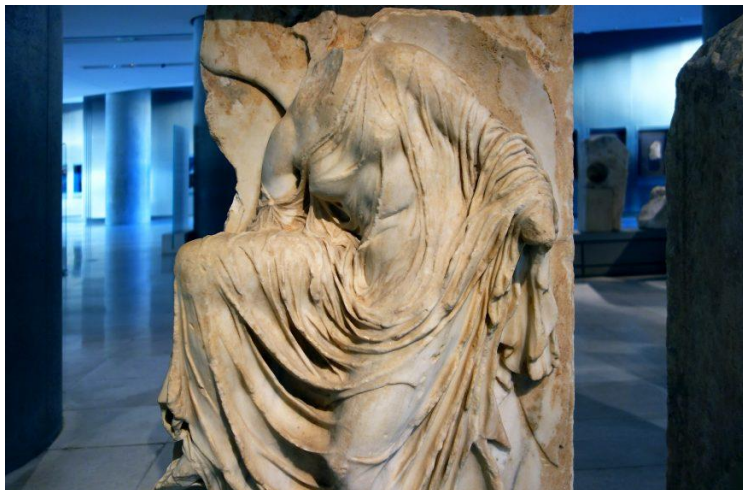


Temple of Athena Nike

Ionic style, white Pentelic marble;

Only 4 columns on each side;

Monolithic – each column made of a single block of stone;



PARTHENON

Sophisticated architectural design and construction skills; architect – Ictinus; sculptor **Phidias**, finest in ancient world;

Perfect Doric temple;

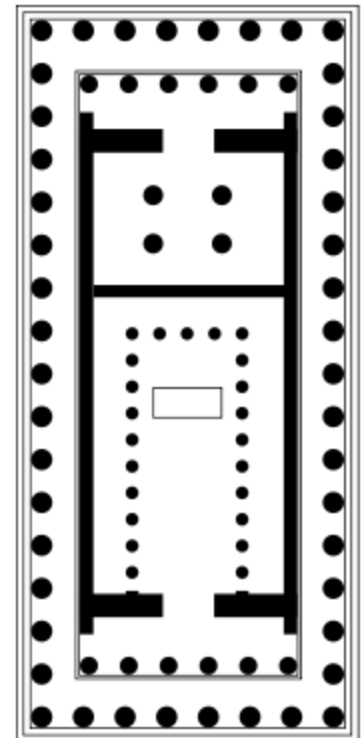
Chief monument to goddess Athena and the polis of Athens;

Housed magnificent statue of Athena by sculptor Phidias; (since destroyed);

Perfect proportions and balances of architecture and sculpture;

Epitome of Greek art

Expresses fascination with the human and the rational



Parthenon

Greeks devised a system of architectural orders defined the ideal proportions for all components of temples according to set mathematical ratios;

Parthenon: 8 columns wide; 17 columns long; equilibrium between vertical lift and horizontal load;

Slight convex curve on Greek columns to overcome optical illusion of concavity that would result if shafts were straight; **entasis**;
nothing is truly perpendicular;
everything is slightly off in order to appear straight;





Parthenon

- Hundreds of artisans, metalworkers, craftspeople, painters, woodcarvers, and thousands of unskilled laborers;
- New statue of Athena as Virgin (Partheni) made by Phidias of gold, ivory and marble; nearly 50 ft. tall;
- No true verticals or horizontals, hence no right angles;
- Precisely proportioned;
- Constructed without mortar or concrete; everywhere block fits meticulously with block;

PARTHENON cont.

Originally, 520 feet of sculpted figures
Formed a continuous marble frieze
depicting horsemen and maidens to
honor Athena;

Pediment sculptures of great beauty
represented the birth of Athena and
her victory over Poseiden for
sponsorship of Athens;

Sculpted panels in 92 metopes
showing gods struggling with various
foes;



Lord Elgin Controversy





Celebrating Human Beings and Representing the Rational in Greek Art

- In the Greek conception, the gods were **anthropomorphic**;

Greek artists portrayed the gods as human beings;

While honoring the gods, Greek artists were thereby **celebrating human beings**;

In the art of Parthenon, it is virtually impossible to distinguish the men and women from the gods and goddesses.

The Rational

- The Parthenon expresses the rational side of Greek art.

balance, restraint, proportion, serenity,
harmony, order;

It expresses the **rationality, dignity** and **promise** of man.

Drama

- tied to religious festivals of the city;
- City(polis) sponsored the production of plays;
- City required the wealthy to pay;
- Archons chose from the many submissions;
- Many highly controversial, but neither suppressed nor censored; element of freedom of speech;

Concerns of Athenian Dramatists

First artists to examine such basic questions as

- The role of the individual;
- The demands of society on the individual;
- The nature of good and evil;
- Conflict is a constant element;
- Used their poetry to portray, understand and resolve life's basic conflicts;

Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.)

Works:

**Trilogy called Oresteia, including'
Agamemnon**

Libation Beavers

Eumenides

Plot and Themes:

Betrayal, murder, reconciliation

- Agamemnon's return from Troy; murdered by wife Clytemnestra and her lover;
- Son Orestes avenges is father;
- atonement and absolution of Orestes;

appeal to reason and justice to settle hate-filled conflicts;

call for city to be characterized by harmony and grace;

**SOPHOCLES (496 B.C. –
406 B.C.)**

Antigone

Antigone: examines
relationship between individual
and the state;

Explores conflict between ties
of kinship and demands of the
polis; civil war between
brothers;

Creon refuses to bury the body
of Polynices who took up arms
against the state; Antigone
buries the body in defiance of
the command;

Divine law over law of the
state;

SOPHOCLES cont.

Oedipus the King(Rex)

Oedipus at Colonus

- Ironic story of man doomed by the gods to kill his father and marry his mother;
- Oedipus tries to avoid his fate but every action brings him closer to its fulfillment;
- When he realizes, he blinds himself and flees into exile;
- Last days of broken king at Colonus;
- patient suffering, uncomplaining piety, gods honor him for his virtue;

EURIPIDES(480-406 B.C.)

acquaintance with new ideas;
questioning attitude toward traditional
Greek religion;

Works include: Medea, Electra, Trojan
Women, Iphigenia; (19 surviving works)

Medea:

Married to Jason of Jason and the
Argonauts;
Helped him obtain the golden fleece from
her father;
Used her powers to advise and help
Jason;
Jason deserts Medea for the daughter of
Creon of Corinth;
Medea takes revenge;

- Personal conflict with the polis;
- Depths of the individual;
- new, more personal phase;
- Gods less important than the human beings;
- Human soul a place where opposing forces struggle;
- Strong passions – hatred, jealousy – conflict with reason and make a flawed character;
- Men and women bring disaster on themselves and their loved ones;

ARISTOPHANES

Comedy

Lysistrata

The Clouds

- powers of ridicule – Cleon, Socrates, Euripides;