

“Our view will be set out in law, that such monuments are almost always best explained and contextualised,” said Robert Jenrick, the UK’s communities secretary, in January in relation to new laws announced to safeguard historic monuments across England. For want of any deeper thoughts by the secretary of state, we at the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles are inclined to go along with this latest directive. If only because the presence of those Marbles on view in Room 18 of the British Museum are neither properly explained nor contextualised.

Viewpoints other than the museum’s ought to be fully presented to the curious visitor; that is the correct impartiality that a great institution ought to adhere to. The lack of explanation means that tourists are gravely deceived into thinking that ancient Athens’s greatest works have every right to be sitting in Bloomsbury. They don’t, and the public ought to be told.

To address this imbalance, our committee, peopled with eminent Classicists, would happily work with the new curator at the British Museum, Isobel MacDonald, whose appointment was reported in *The Art Newspaper* (“Collection curator joins British Museum”, February 2021, p9). An explanatory pamphlet should be available to visitors to the Duveen Gallery so that they can begin to form their own opinions about the presence of Greece’s cultural patrimony stranded on British plinths.

We think it is both fair and vital that the full story of these stellar carvings in the British Museum’s huge collection of world treasures is properly told. They are, and have been for well over a century, of prime importance to the people of the Hellenic Republic of Greece.

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Published in *The Art Newspaper*, March 2021