



15 August 2021

To:

Sir Richard Lambert, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the British Museum  
The Trustees of the British Museum  
Dr Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum

Dear Sir Lambert and Dr Fischer,

The British Museum website states that rooms 12 to 18, the Greek galleries, including the room where the Parthenon Sculptures are displayed, are temporarily closed due to regular maintenance works. This is a quite unfortunate situation, especially as the museum closed completely from 16 December 2020 until 17 May 2021 due to the national Covid-19 lockdown. The planned reopening of the Greek rooms, postponed “until further notice”, after months of lockdown, is a deep worry.

In its edition of 11 August, The Art Newspaper article: “Is it raining again in the British Museum’s Parthenon gallery?”, also questions the inappropriate conditions in room 18 of the British Museum. The photograph taken this month, of the fan in the middle of the room, just in front of the Parthenon frieze, suggests a possible humidity problem. A dangerous condition for the sculptures. In recent years, photographs of the inappropriate climate controls in this gallery are cropping up on a regular basis, which is very disturbing and upsetting.

Might this be the time to begin to reconsider your viewpoint on the continued division of the Parthenon Sculptures? As more and more museums are joining the discussion on the just and legal acquisition of their collections, could the British Museum lead the way in finding a solution to this high-profile impasse. Your argumentation that there is a positive advantage, and public benefit, in having the sculptures divided between the Acropolis Museum and the British Museum, each telling a complementary but different story, continues to be questionable. These priceless sculptures, created by Pheidias, one of the most famous ancient Greek sculptors, were created to tell one story: the story of the acme of an ancient city-state, of the myths related to the origins of that city, of the exploits of their ancestral heroes and of the festival celebrations by the ancient Athenians in honour of their gods. In 1943, Sir Kenneth Clark and, more recently, Sir Antony Gormley, both once Trustees of the British Museum, argued in favour of Britain returning the Parthenon sculptures.

The long lasting and rightful claim by the Hellenic Government for the reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures in the Acropolis Museum continues to be supported by International Cultural Organizations and by many individuals worldwide. Let us combine all our efforts and look for new approaches to reach a breakthrough in the dispute. Let us put the “wellbeing” of the Parthenon Sculptures at the forefront of all our wishes. After all the Parthenon Sculptures were made for and constitute an intrinsic part of the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis, an emblematic building, a symbol of Western Democracy and World Cultural Heritage. There is a moral obligation to return and to reunify all the surviving Parthenon Sculptures in the Acropolis Museum with a direct visual contact to the Parthenon. Only in this way can these Sculptures maintain their mission: testimony of the great craftsmanship of the ancient sculptors in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and a reminder of the origins of Democracy.

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The Executive Board of IARPS

The 21 National Committees for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures