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Creator: Kiko Itasaka

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Description

A new Acropolis Museum opens in Athens in 2009, with a space reserved for the Elgin Marbles, taken from the Parthenon 200 years ago, then sold to the British Museum, which refuses to return them.

Keywords


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The Elgin Marbles: Can "World Art" Be Claimed or Owned?

KIKO ITASAKA reporting:

In the ancient city of Athens, next to the two and a half century old Parthenon Temple, a building for the 21st century, the new Acropolis Museum. The two hundred million dollar building represents 30 years of construction and 200 years of controversy. It’s a labor of love and of rage. There may be 4,000 Parthenon antiquities on display, but the main attraction, the marble frieze that once adorned the temple, is missing.

We want the Parthenon sculptures back, this woman says, they’re being held illegally.

The marbles were taken by Lord Elgin more than 200 years ago and then sold to the British Museum. Known as the Elgin Marbles, they’re a major draw for this legendary institution. The Greeks claim the marbles were stolen and demand their return.

President KAROLOS PAPOULIAS (Greece): To us Greeks it is our identity, our pride. The whole world can see the most important marbles of the Parthenon are missing. The wounds of the monument must be healed.

ITASAKA: But the British Museum refuses outright. They argue that they have protected and preserved these treasures and displayed them for millions of visitors from all over the world.

HANNAH BOLTON (British Museum): They are objects of world art and as such I don’t think there is no problem in terms of them being divided between two different museums.

ITASAKA: The British Museum is in a difficult position. If they ever return the Elgin Marbles they might be asked to give back Egyptian mummies, Chinese buddhas and other antiquities from all around the world. At the Acropolis Museum the third floor has a space set aside for the Elgin Marbles. After 200 years of waiting, the Greeks say it’s time for their national treasures to come home. Kiko Itasaka, NBC News, London.