



Official Report

THIRD INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUY ON REUNIFICATION OF THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES (“COLLOQUY 2015”): JULY 27-28, 2015, ATHENS, GREECE AT THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

“Unifying the Cause to Unify the Parthenon”

Colloquy 2015 was the third in a series of ongoing events designed to highlight the need for return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. With the theme *Unifying the Cause to Unify the Parthenon*, its focus was on preparation for the fourth international Colloquy in London on the 200th anniversary of the British Parliament's controversial purchase of the Parthenon Marbles from Lord Elgin.



The Colloquy series was the initiative of the **International Organising Committee – Australia – for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles (IOC-A-RPM)**, the **American Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures (ACRPS)** and the **British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles (BCRPM)**. The events have set a new standard in the international campaigning for return of the Parthenon Marbles; unifying supporters of the cause from all corners of the globe.



Michael Reppas, George Bizos & Emanuel Comino

Opening the Colloquy Mr. Michael Reppas, Esq., President of ACRPS welcomed all participants and gave a brief speech regarding the theme of the Colloquy: “Unify the Cause to Unify the Parthenon.” Mr. Reppas explained that in working with designer and logo creator, Kostas Vaxavaneris, to develop the concept, they sought to create an

image that embodied three particular ideas that he felt passionately about as related to the cause. The first was that we continue to develop and strengthen ties between all supporters of the cause in an environment that would be inclusive rather than exclusive. To that end, he reminded everyone that he extended an open invitation to every known organization in support of the cause, as well as individuals not affiliated with any particular organization, and whom he recognized as leaders. He then reported that the Colloquy had participants from over twenty countries across the world hailing from almost every continent in the world: Europe; Africa; Australia; North America and South America. "A true testament to the global support our cause has, and more proof of the desire that exists for us to work together to achieve our common goal," he said.

Mr. Reppas then introduced the Keynote Speaker **George Bizos, Esq., BCRPM**, world-renowned human rights advocate and former lawyer to Nelson Mandela. Mr. Bizos stressed the importance of friendship in resolving the issue of the Parthenon Marbles. He reminded us, "Greece has been friends with the people of the United Kingdom for centuries, through good times and bad." Quoting Aristotle he said, "Friendship seems to hold states together, and lawgivers care more for it than for justice . . . and when men are friends they have no need of justice" He went on the outline widespread and long-standing support for return of the Marbles in Britain reaching across the British establishment. He identified *Prince Charles, Robert Browning, Sir John Mortimer QC, C.M. Woodhouse, Spike Milligan, Judi Dench, Vanessa Redgrave, Sir Ian McKellen* and *Jonathan Dimbleby* as people who are or have been supporters. He observed that "For years, secure in the knowledge that our cause is just and that it carries the support of well-informed and influential members of the British establishment, those campaigning for the reunification of the marbles have believed that our goal will be achieved through political and diplomatic channels." While not ruling out litigation as a possible strategy for return Mr Bizos said, "I suggest that it is our duty to ensure that fertile ground is laid to allow litigation, if the decision to litigate is indeed taken, to have the best possible prospects of succeeding. It is my contention that careful planning and execution of such a campaign, not only in Greece, but especially in the United Kingdom, is an appropriate task to which we should commit ourselves in seeking to *Unify the Cause to Unify the Parthenon*."

Eddie O'Hara, Chairman of BCRPM highlighted the "tumultuous events of the past twelve months" which he said "have had mixed implications for our campaign. They have brought "unprecedented press coverage" and this is "the oxygen of the campaign and, sure enough, a pair of opinion polls demonstrated an increase in support" but they have highlighted "tensions within the campaign which need be resolved" and "produced reactions from the British Museum which need to be addressed", distracting us from priorities. On reactions from the British Museum he reminded the Colloquy that the museum "appears to be using the Parthenon Marbles to underpin, revamp and relaunch the concepts of cultural diplomacy and the universal museum in their justification for retaining them. I am not sure that we have yet articulated a clear and

adequate response to this. We may however be encouraged by the recent poll by the Museums Journal of its readers in which 81% voted that the response to the UNESCO mediation initiative should have been more positive." Mr. O'Hara also identified the importance of working towards a diverse response in the 2016 London Colloquy adding, that" it needs to be fully supported and properly resourced in terms of administration and funding. It need not be seen in isolation. It could be the focal point or climax of a continuous stream of diverse initiatives in the intervening period. I invite a brainstorming of ideas to this end."

Marlen Godwin from BCRPM stressed that supporters of reunification for the Parthenon Marbles are far greater than the opposition noting that while this is the case the energy of this mass of supporters "remains largely unharnessed." She added that internationally, "the lobby is huge and yet largely untapped" suggesting the need for a more effective international response.

Emanuel J Comino Chairman of IOC-A-RPM, echoing Marlen Godwin's comments, called for a new international approach to the campaign for return stressing the importance of an international response that is "transparent, democratic and welcoming of organisations that have a legitimate interest in restitution of the Parthenon Marbles." Adding detail to the need for a rejuvenated International body he suggested the idea of "a rotating chair with the vice chair always drawn from the British Committee when not chairing the international body. Such a body should be supported by a secretariat drawn from the *Hellenic Advisory Committee*." Mindful of the need for an effective international campaign he noted that, "Financial support for the secretariat could be through an affiliation fee structure." He stressed that such an international body "should always work in consultation with the *Hellenic Advisory Committee* and the *Consulting Committee of the Hellenic Ministry* to ensure the highest possible degree of consonance on the issue of the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Hellas." On basic approaches for an international campaign he made a number of suggestions saying that, it is clear the Parthenon Marbles "were illegitimately acquired. Yet, the British Museum and other supporters of Elgin's misappropriation continue to disseminate disinformation. So, we need a central repository, a clearinghouse perhaps, organised through the Hellenic Advisory Committee that can act as a type of global library of resources that convey the authentic story of the Parthenon Marbles." Mr. Comino highlighted the importance of Committees throughout the world challenging the British Museum "every time they publish false and misleading information. These challenges should not only be in the more traditional forms such as letters, newsletters and resolutions, but must make full use of mainstream media. It is also most important that effective use is made of social media and websites. Beyond this we must seek to enlist the tools of the educators, the Arts and even temperate and imaginative forms of direct action and public manifestations. Our actions must not only be reactive but also proactive in getting out the facts at every possible opportunity."

Gina Choutis Secretary of IOC-A-RPM drew on the philosophy of Pericles in an inspired paper that reminded us there is still much to learn from this remarkable leader. Ms. Choutis reminded us that the “spirit which built the Parthenon was the spirit of purpose and it started within no one other than Pericles who through his leadership and guidance transferred it to its people.” Ms. Choutis reminded us that Pericles “began with the idea of building monuments in Athens due to his concern over the number of Athenian citizens who could not benefit from the national income and so set out to create all kinds projects to provide inspiration for every art, find employment for every hand and transform the whole people into wage earners. He created the common goal to decorate Athens by Athenians and he gave each Athenian a purpose.” So in taking this campaign forward we must “Create all kinds of projects to provide inspiration for every art - use the multiple talents that people bring to this cause and also exploit the full range of tools available to us through media and the arts.”

Presentations were also made by several wonderful speakers, including the **Hon. Nikos Xydakis**, Greek Minister of Culture (Alternate), who spoke in support of the efforts of the three organizing committees.

Professor Dimitris Pandermanlis, Director of the Acropolis Museum, also gave a speech providing fascinating details about the Acropolis Museum – he was further kind enough to arrange for personal tours of the museum for all attendees.

Ms. Maria Vlazaki, Secretary General, Ministry of Culture, presented a detailed summary of the recent successes of the Ministry of Culture in protecting and repatriating Greek antiquities.

Irini Stamatoudi, Esq., Advisory Committee, Ministry Culture for the Parthenon Marbles, spoke eloquently of the recent efforts Greece has made in requesting formal mediation with England through UNESCO.

Alexis Mantheakis, Esq., Chairman of the International Parthenon Sculptures Action Committee, presented his paper to the audience members. Mr. Mantheakis pointed out to the audience that “Elgin and the British Museum have committed the gravest of cultural crimes, which is to deprive another people of the symbols of their cultural and national identity.” Mr. Mantheakis went on to state that “the character of British officialdom and the history of Britain’s attitude to foreign objects, from artifacts to whole countries that had been acquired without their foreign creators’ or owners’ consent was to never return anything unless forced to do so.” He stressed that “to ignore this fact is to ignore British diplomatic history. To hope that polite talk and quiet diplomacy will change the very character of British government as it has been for centuries now is to disregard historical reality and only goes to damage the prospects of real progress by other means. Diplomacy and politics can be forceful and effective.” He concluded by calling on the Ministry of Culture to coordinate with the international

organizations at the Colloquy to ensure that we are kept current on the disposition of the government in the cause and to allow us the opportunity to support their efforts.

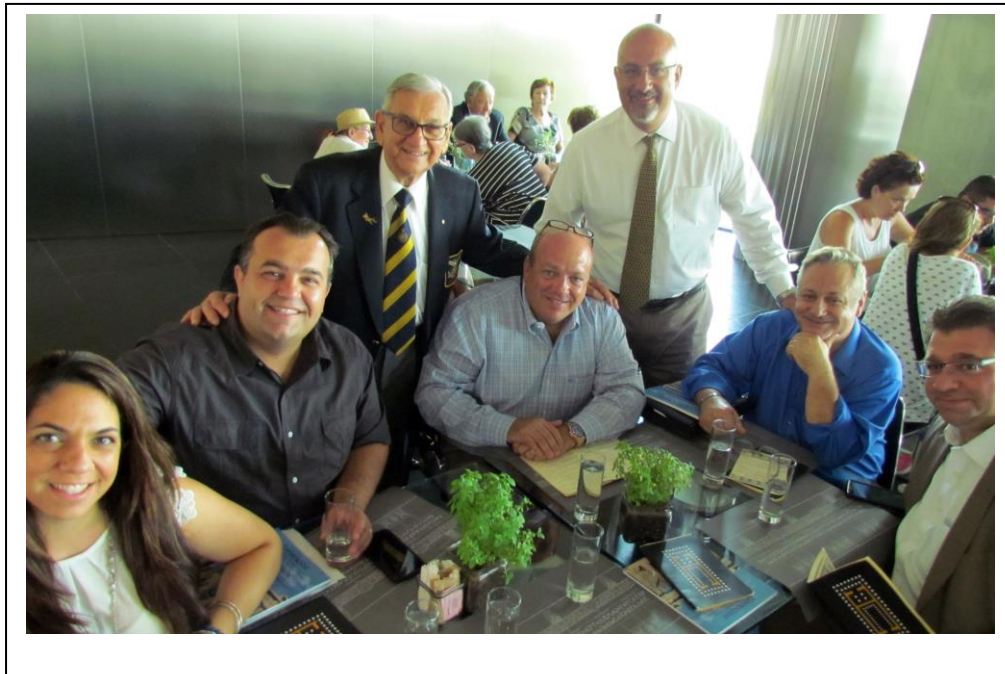
Dr. Nikolaos Chantziandreou, founder of *AcropolisofAthens.gr*, presented the paper he co-authored with **Michael Reppas, Esq, President of ACRPS**, entitled *“Piecing Together the Bigger Picture: the Value of Local Heritage – the Value of the Parthenon.”* Dr. Chantziandreou presentation explained to the attendees that “the act of reunification is, in part, justified by a desire to see the physical building, the ancient temple itself, made whole by returning those pieces removed, but,” he explained, “there is also an emotional and intangible justification for the same act. One based on moral, philosophical, and emotional reasons requiring the removed pieces to be returned to Athens, because they were created in Athens and meant to be there.” Athens, he explained, is the only place where “the real meaning of the Parthenon could be experienced and understood by viewing all the pieces together, as intended by their creators.” Dr. Chantziandreou stressed that all honest intellectuals would agree that Athens was the only place where the Parthenon and all of its sculptures would be respected. He argued that the preservation of the Local Heritage demanded that the Sculptures be returned to Athens and further that there would be a significant economic advantage to Athens if they were so returned. He concluded his presentation by rejecting “illogical claims of title and ownership by ‘universal museums’ that display the tangible heritage of people that are asking for its return,” and he left the audience with a passionately plea for their continued efforts demanding the return of the Sculptures to preserve their true meaning and to show them and the entire Parthenon, the respect that it deserves.



The first day of the Colloquy was brought to a close by **Mr. Michael Reppas, Esq., President of ACRPS**. He invited all participants to enjoy the personal tours of the Museum after lunch and further reminded and invited all participants to the personal tour of the Parthenon arranged for the following morning. Mr. Reppas also congratulated all the authors of the Colloquy's Publication, which publication he informed the attendees would be made available online. A list of the authors and the title of their papers is set forth below:

- **Emanuel John Comino AM, PSP, JP:** *“Strengthening the Campaign”*
- **Eddie O’Hara:** *“The State of the Campaign: Review and Prospects”*
- **Russell Darnley OAM:** *“Towards a Renewed International Response: a discussion paper”*
- **Dr. Nikos Chatziandreou & Michael J. Reppas II, Esq.:** *“Piecing Together the Bigger Picture: The Value of Local Heritage - the Value of the Parthenon”*
- **Prof. Dr. Celina F. Lage & Prof. Dr. Imaculada Kangussu:** *“Contribution of the academic and artistic communities to the reunification of Parthenon Sculptures”*
- **Alexis Mantheakis & David Alan Smith:** *“Unifying to Support the Hellenic Ministry of Culture’s New Parthenon Sculptures Initiative”*
- **Gina Choutzis:** *“The Spirit of the Parthenon”*
- **Anna G. Marangou:** *“Ethos, Pathos and Logos win the argument over the British Museum, Why the British Museum cannot convince!”*
- **George Vardas:** *“Negotiating for Phideas: Unifying the cause for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures”*
- **Tom Kazas & Dennis Tritaris:** *“The Day They Came Home: Unifying Purpose, Focusing Imaginations”*
- **Tom Jackson:** *“Reunification through an Internal UK Movement”*
- **Leila A. Amineddoleh, Esq.:** *“New Ways to Examine Ownership of the Elgin Marbles”*
- **Elly Symons:** *“The Power of Communication Via Twitter”*

Lunch at the Parthenon Museum



Emanuel Comino with the Americans



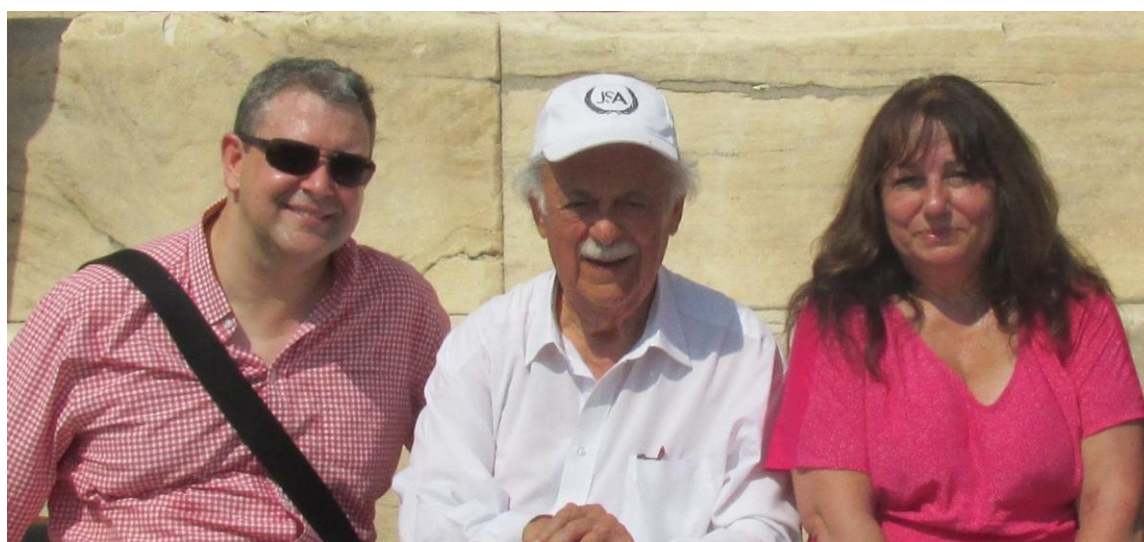
Michael Reppas with the Australians

Day two of the Colloquy began with a personal tour of the Acropolis by the senior archaeologist of the Acropolis wherein all attendees were afforded the opportunity to walk into the Parthenon.

At the Acropolis



Michael Reppas, Andreas Leontsinis & Kosta Vaxavaneris of the American Committee



Richard Moultrie, George Bizos and Marlen Godwin of the British Committee



Emanuel and Matina Comino with Russell Darnley of the Australian Committee

Following the tour and lunch, **Mr. Fabrizio Micalizzi** of the Swiss Committee, presented his paper on the need for continued cooperation amongst Committees to further the “unity” of the cause and he concluded with a passionate plea that we all work towards making the London Colloquy a success.

Mr. Dennis Tritaris thereafter presented the paper/initiation that he co-created with **Mr. Tom Kazas**, that they titled “*The Day They Came Home.*” This is an international short fiction writing competition whose theme is the day the Parthenon Sculptures, those currently held by the British Museum, are returned to Athens. We encourage everyone reading this to participate. For more information, please go to: www.thedaytheycamehome.net

The day concluded with a roundtable discussion on a wide number of issues, but which predominantly focused upon the upcoming London Colloquy in 2016.

A report on meeting Minister for Culture (Alternate) Mr Nikos Xydakis,

Athens, On Wednesday 29 July

Present:

Nikos Xydakis, Minister for Culture (Alternate)

Alexandra Theodoropoulous, Diplomatic Counsellor

Emanuel J Comino AM JP (IOC-A-RPM)¹

James Tzavaras JP (IOC-A-RPM)

Russell Darnley OAM (IOC-A-RPM)

George Bizos OMS (BCRPM)²

Richard Moultrie (Johannesburg Bar)



Left to right seating: Alexandra Theodoropoulou (Diplomatic Counsellor), George Bizos, Emanuel J. Comono, Minister Hon Nikos Xidakis and Richard Moultrie. Standing: Russell Darnley and James Tzavaras

¹ International Organising Committee – Australia – for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles

² British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles

Minister Nikos Xydakis said that the preferred style of campaign for return of the Parthenon Marbles was one that adopts a light approach in the knowledge that many people in Britain support return.

He advised that at this stage the Ministry is close to organizing a creative team to work on promotion and in particular making far more effective and widespread use of all forms of social media. He emphasized that such use of social media need be creative and employing a joyful theme, reminding us again of the history of strong and friendly relations with the people of the United Kingdom and the high levels of support for return already evident in Britain.

In this context he expressed support for the planned Colloquy 2016 to be held in London next northern summer.

Beyond social media Minister Xydakis mentioned the importance of engaging all of the arts in the campaign. One example he cited was art exhibitions with works inspired by the Parthenon. As a corollary he suggested exhibitions of works from famous people that were also inspired by Parthenon. In the spirit of a light hearted campaign he expressed interest in the Australian suggestion of T Shirts promoting return of the Marbles with a simple message in both Greek and English.

The Minister went on to say that there should also be a attention given to obtaining materials removed from the Parthenon that were held in other in other countries, in addition to the United Kingdom. He felt that this was an effective means of changing perceptions and preparing the way for the more substantive return of materials from the British Museum. He referenced the Vatican and Germany in passing as examples of centers where elements of the Parthenon were held.³

On litigation as a strategy the Minister pointed to the dangers. He did acknowledge the usefulness of continuing research into sources of evidence but only in the context of a broad campaign that creatively engaged political and diplomatic initiatives.

³ Elements of the Parthenon outside Athens and London

Paris, Musée du Louvre	One frieze slab; one metope; fragments of the frieze and metopes; a head from the pediments
Copenhagen, National Museum	Two heads from a metope in the British Museum
Würzburg, University	Head from a metope in the British Museum
Vatican Museums	Fragments of metopes, frieze and pediments
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum	Three fragments of frieze
Munich, Glyptothek	Fragments of frieze

The organizing and hosting Committees of the Colloquy series:

