

The Parthenon Marbles and the 2012 Olympics in London

The 2012 Olympic Games will be held in London. This would provide an occasion for returning the Parthenon sculptures from the British Museum to Greece, to the New Acropolis Museum in Athens.

This co-operation would have several advantages. The return of the Marbles would bring goodwill and favorable press to Britain and to the Olympics. To reciprocate this, an exhibition could be organized in London about the history of the Olympic Games, based on the Greek antiquities now exhibited in various archaeological museums in Greece.

The Olympic Games will receive worldwide publicity that is not limited to the sports events, but will also include a great number of cultural phenomena. As shown by the Tibetan independence demonstrations during the Peking 2008 torch relay, publicity cannot always be controlled but it can be redirected.

The return of the Parthenon Marbles would be an extraordinary public relations act for the London Olympics and Great Britain, as this would substantiate our ideals of great sports and of fair play in the best possible way. The Olympic Games, the history of Greece and the Parthenon sculptures are intrinsically connected. The return of the Parthenon marbles in the spring of 2012 will promote, we argue, the fair image of the forthcoming Olympic Games, too.

On the other hand, the refusal to return the Marbles might diminish the ideals that will be celebrated during the Olympic Games, being the symbol of peace and international fraternity. If the Parthenon Marbles, "the essence of Greekness" as Melina Mercouri once said, are retained in the British Museum, this would be against the wishes of numerous international organizations and even the majority of Britons.

The Olympic Games will give the British Museum an opportunity to return the Parthenon Marbles to Athens as a case *sui generis*. The details about the return of the Marbles should be discussed between Greek and British authorities.

Should the British Museum return the original Parthenon Marbles to Athens, they could in reciprocation have a permanent exhibition of high-quality copies at the Duveen Gallery. In addition, a temporary exhibition of sports-related antiquities from Greek museums with seminars and lectures at the British Museum or at other institutions in London would give Olympic visitors a unique possibility to familiarize themselves with the origins of sports history.

PETITION

THE PARTHENON MARBLES are an invaluable part of the Pan-European cultural heritage. They symbolize the common roots of European values: democracy, freedom of speech, faith in goodness, and beauty.

RESPECTED BRITISH MUSEUM AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT, In 2012, the Olympic Games will be held in London. It is our sincere hope that you will demonstrate good sportsmanship by beginning negotiations with the Greek authorities for the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Athens, to the New Acropolis Museum. This would be the fair play that has been appreciated in the stadia ever since the ancient Greek games.

RESPECTED GREEK AUTHORITIES, It is our wish that you, both open-mindedly and fruitfully, co-operate with the British authorities. In this way, you would also help make the London Olympics an event of peace and international fraternity with deep links to the origins of sports.

GREEK MUSEUMS HAVE VAST COLLECTIONS of sports-related antiquities. During the London Olympics, a temporary exhibition of their artefacts would give, with contemporaneous seminars and lectures, Olympic visitors in London a unique opportunity to familiarise themselves with the origins of sports.

DO NOT LET PREJUDICES or prior contradictions obstruct negotiations. Let the London 2012 Olympics be a basis for warm-spirited co-operation – for the benefit of all-European culture!

6 May 2009, Helsinki

Ole Norrback
President

Mika Kajava
Vice-President

Mika Rissanen
Secretary