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Translating Tradition: The New Acropolis Museum by Bernard Tschumi Architects¹

Abstract: The study explores the conceptual approach to architectural design of the *New Acropolis Museum* in Athens, designed by Bernard Tschumi Architects. The main hypothesis of the study is that the team of architects led by Bernard Tschumi bases the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum* on the concept of translation of several key elements of the traditional architecture of the Athenian Acropolis (the classical canon of architecture, the spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects, and the idea of the Acropolis architecture as processual architecture) using the language of modern architecture. Furthermore, through the procedures of de- and recomposition, fragmentation, superimposition, juxtaposition, and, finally, montage of the elements of the Acropolis architecture, Tschumi departs from the classical language of architecture, building a type of postmodern and, further, performative architecture. This is not a question of a logocentric form of translation based on mimesis, a second-hand copy in which the “original” is lost, nor a form of transgressive act, but of translation as an enfolding process of transformation during the act of transportation. In the theoretical context, the study draws on the work of Mieke Bal, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and Charles Jencks.

Keywords: the Athenian Acropolis architecture; classical canon of architecture; the *New Acropolis Museum*; translation; performative.

The New Acropolis Museum by Bernard Tschumi Architects

An architectural competition for the new museum of the Athenian Acropolis at the *Makriyianni* site² was announced in 2000, following a series of debates over its location and three unsuccessful competitions.³ The requirements of the new competition referred to: (i) an innovative approach for incorporating then the recently discovered on-site archeological excavation of the *Makriyianni* site into the Museum so that

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the ARCHTHEO'24 Theory and History of Architecture Conference (Istanbul, Turkey, 15 November 2024) and has since been considerably expanded and revised.

² This site was named after the general of the Greek Revolution, Yannis Makriyannis, who lived and owned land there. See: Myto Veikou, “Bonds and Affinities among Successional Spaces: Spatial Performativity in the New Museum of the Acropolis in Athens,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 49, 1 (2025): 99.

³ See: Dimitrios Pandermalis, “The Museum and Its Content,” in *The New Acropolis Museum*, ed. Bernard Tschumi Architects (Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2009).

the archeological remains would become an integral Museum installation; (ii) the use of natural light to create the sense of an outdoor environment keyed to the original outdoor siting of the majority of the Museum's exhibits; (iii) establishing a balanced relationship between the Museum architecture and the urban environment in which it is located and (iv) the ability of visitors to view the Parthenon on the Acropolis and the architectural sculptures in the Museum at the same time.⁴ The teams gave different answers to the competition's set requirements. After extensive analysis and exhaustive discussion, the Committee decided that the first prize would go to the proposal designed by the architectural team of French-Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, then dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in New York along with Michael Photiadis, an Athens-based architect.⁵

Bernard Tschumi and Michael Photiadis offered a conceptual solution for the new museum, which is based not only on establishing a dialogue with the urban environment, the archeological excavations of the *Makriyianni* location, and the Athenian Acropolis (in visual context) but also with the tradition of architecture, culture, and art of the Athenian Acropolis. Namely, the concept of the *New Acropolis Museum*, we could say, is based on translation of several key elements of the Athenian Acropolis architecture tradition: (i) the classical canon of the architecture; (ii) the urban/spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects, and finally (iii) the traditional idea of the Acropolis as a processual architecture, using the language of modern architecture. Translation here is not seen as mimesis, a second-hand copy in which the original is lost, nor as a form of transgressive act, but as a form of re-expression of what was the past in the language of the architecture of the present. Driving on Mieke Bal's studies of cultural analysis,⁶ we could say that translation is seen here as an elastic, enfolding process of transformation (like *folding of thought* upon which Deleuze insists) during the act of transportation. It is not a question of a logocentric, one-dimensional (from source to destination) form of translation, based on "resembling the meaning of the original"⁷ where "meaning is the endpoint of interpretation – centripetal, transhistorically stable, and transmedial"⁸, but an enfolding form of translation which mediates in both directions, transport/carry over/move the object of translation into new contexts, cross over the gaps of irreducible differences, retains something of the "original" text and enriches it with new sense and meaning.⁹ It is an elastic form of translation, elastic, because it suggests both unbreakable stability and a near-unlimited extendability.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶ See: Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide* (University of Toronto Press, 2002).

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Task of Translator," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 2007), 78.

⁸ Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities*, 69.

⁹ See: Ibid., 64–65.

Translating the classical canon of the Acropolis architecture

Namely, the architecture of the Athenian Acropolis is based on the classical canon, which, according to Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, can be summarized through three levels of formal arrangement/devices: (i) *taxis*; (ii) *genera*, and (iii) *symmetry*.¹⁰

Taxis is a prescribed arrangement of parts that produces a coherent work and whose sublevels are the regular grid and the tripartition.¹¹ The regular grid can be rectangular (where straight lines meet at right angles and where the distance between these lines is equal or unequal, in which case the change is regular) or polar (based on concentric or eccentric circles). For example, the arrangement of the columns of the Parthenon architecture is based on a regular rectangular grid, while the arrangement of the Acropolis buildings is based on an eccentric polar grid (See Figure #2). The tripartition further divides the building into three parts, usually two on the sides and one in the middle. The Propylaea, for example, consists of three parts, the central part and the two side parts. The tripartite division also divides the building into, for example, facade, plan, and section, and then each of these parts again into three parts and so on.¹² The facade of the Parthenon, for example, is divided into three parts stylobate, columns and main cornice. Each of these elements (with an exception of the Doric column¹³) is further divided into three parts: the stylobate consists of three levels, and the main cornice of three elements— architrave, frieze and cornice. “In general, *taxis*, whether in its overall grid schema or tripartition, should be seen as applied *hierarchically* from the whole to the part, one grid or tripartition schema is *embedded* in another. In fact, this hierarchical correspondence among divisions in applying *taxis* schemata from the general to the particular, from the total to the last detail, is [...] a means through which the norm of noncontradiction is respected.”¹⁴

Genera—refers to classical orders: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, etc. Doric columns in the architecture of the Acropolis appear, for example, at the Parthenon, and Ionic columns at the Erechtheum.

Finally, *symmetry*—refers to the principle of arranging the composition of elements based on two schemata: one determined by rhythm, and the other governed by architectural figures¹⁵ ((a) *overt* like: parallelism, contrast, alignment, and analogy; or (b) *subtle* figures like: aposiopesis, *abruptio*, epistrophe, oxymoron, turning the corner, feminine cadenza, *takterstickung*, and ellipse). In the architecture of the

¹⁰ See: Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, eds., *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order* (The MIT Press, 1992), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹² See: *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³ The Ionic and Corinthian columns consist of three parts: base, shaft and capital, but the Doric column consists of two parts: shaft and capital. However, the capital of the Doric column consists of three parts: abacus, echinus and neck.

¹⁴ Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

Acropolis, all buildings are essentially symmetrical in structure. In the Parthenon, for example, a symmetry based on the uniform rhythm can be found in the arrangement of columns, while a symmetry based on the peripteral logic of partitioning (a-b-a/b-c-b/a-b-a)¹⁶ can be found in the building plan.

However, the basic principle of designing a classic building was as follows: once the architectural composition is defined, when it is arranged with *taxis*, that is, when the division is established, then it is populated with architectural elements, the classical orders, for example, guided by the principle of *symmetry*.¹⁷ Therefore, symmetry spoke to how these elements should be arranged and positioned in relation to one another and to the overall structure of *taxis*.¹⁸ However, in Bernard Tschumi's architecture, we encounter a rather different approach.

Tschumi does not follow this logic in the design process, but breaks down the Acropolis architecture into parts (decomposing, for example, its structure) and then recomposes them through fragmentation, superimposition, juxtaposition, and, finally, (architectural) montage. The elements of classical architecture (tripartite division, grid, columns, and symmetry) are, in a certain sense, retained and present in the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but they are now expressed in a new way, using the language of modern architecture.

Namely, the New Acropolis Museum has five levels: one underground, the ground floor, and three above ground. The base (*Level -1*)—level below the ground—is constituted by the archeological excavations of the *Makriyianni* site. These are remains of a settlement dating from the late fifth century BC to the late twelfth century AD, whose road layout determined the orientation of the Museum at this level. They are interspersed with pilotis, carefully located to avoid damaging the ruins. The entrance to the building and the lobby (*Level 0*) have voids and, in some places, transparent glass floors (with a texture dot pattern) that reveal these ruins beneath. A glass ramp, which offers a view of these archeological excavations, extends from the entrance and leads us (along a linear path) to the building's middle volume, that is, to the first floor. This glass ramp is also the first exhibition space of the Museum, called *the Gallery of the Slopes*. In this gallery, small finds are exhibited, mainly ceramic vases, reliefs, and inscriptions attached directly to prefabricated concrete wall panels, as well as free-standing sculptures on marble bases.¹⁹ These are finds from houses, sanctuaries, and tombs of people who lived on the slopes of the Acropolis. These finds provide insight into the various activities that occurred on the Acropolis slopes.²⁰ A monumental staircase and elevator located at the end of this ground-floor level take us to the first floor.²¹ The first floor (*Level +1*) of the building is divided into two

¹⁶ See: *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ See: *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See: Pandermalis, "The Museum and Its Content," 34.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

sections by the building core and by its large central atrium: one for the exhibits from the Archaic Period (in the east and south wing) and the other for works from the Propylaea, the Sanctuary of Nike, the Erechtheum and objects dating from the classical period to the end of antiquity (in the west and north wing of this level).²² The hypostyle *Archaic Gallery* is located in the eastern and southern parts of this floor. The visit to this gallery begins in the northeast corner, from which the visitor gradually moves to the south side, where he/she encounters the richness of diverse architectural sculptures, freestanding votives, and minor objects that provide a vibrant picture of the Acropolis of the Archaic Period.²³ In this gallery, the concrete columns arranged in a regular, rectangular grid dominate the space, along with the free-standing figures scattered among the columns without following any rigid logic. From this floor, the visitor can take the stairs, escalator, or elevators to reach the second level (*Level +2*) of the Museum, which affords panoramic views of the *Archaic Gallery* and the *Gallery of the Slopes*, and then, in the same way to the third floor (*Level +3*)—*Parthenon Gallery* located parallel to the existing Parthenon of the Acropolis.²⁴ On this floor, the visitor encounters both sculptures from the Acropolis—from the Parthenon—and panoramic views of the Acropolis—the Parthenon. The installation of the Parthenon sculptures guides the visitor on a circumambulatory walk that enables a comprehensive view of their details and an awareness of the narrative behind their composition. In this gallery, we meet the chryselephantine statue of Athena, which introduces us to this gallery, and then the present and absent elements of the Frieze (located at a height between 1.5 and 2.5m from the floor) and the Parthenon metopes (located at a height of 2.5m from the floor between the stainless-steel columns). The glass facade allows natural light to pass freely between the columns and illuminate both the Frieze and the metopes. This gallery also houses the sculptures from the Parthenon pediment in the east and west wings. Going down the stairs across the second level, the visitor comes back to the first level which offers a complete and close-up view of the Caryatids of the Erechtheum, then the exhibits from the Propylaea (for example, the coffered ceiling and fragments of the Ionic capitals of the Propylaea) in the west wing, and the sculptures from the Temple of Athena Nike²⁵ in the northwest of the gallery. At this level, going from the west toward the north wing, the visitor also encounters figures from the Erechtheum frieze, as well as sculptures of the classical period, copies of classical sculptures from the Roman Imperial Era (in the central part of the north wing), and works from late antiquity and the beginning of the Byzantine Period.²⁶ Finally, the visitor crosses the *Gallery of the Slopes* once again, reaching the exit of the Museum. At this point, the exhibition program ends.

²² Ibid., 31.

²³ Ibid., 34.

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Ibid., 38–42.

²⁶ Ibid., 42.

The tripartite division, therefore, is present on a formal level, in the introduction of the three above-ground floors/levels where the *Gallery of the Slopes*, the *Archaic Gallery*, the *Parthenon Gallery* and the works from the Erechtheum, the Propylaia and the Sanctuary of Athena Nike (as well as objects dating from the classical period to the end of antiquity) are located. The tripartite division is also present in the selection of three different materials for these volumes—marble, concrete, and glass, but also in a play with the structural elements of architecture—points, lines, and surfaces, that is, columns/pilots, paths/corridors, and floor and walls. This is the play with the well-known language of Tschumi's architecture, inspired by poststructuralist ideas of architecture as a text and dominantly expressed in the *Parc de la Villette* in Paris. A rectangular grid can be seen, for example, in the facades' structure and the arrangement of columns of the Archaic or the Parthenon Gallery, while a polar grid can be noticed in the rotational movement of the third volume of the building relative to the two lower volumes. Elements of *genera*—columns are dominant in the *Archaic* and *Parthenon Gallery* as well as in the level below the ground, while *symmetry* can be seen, for example, in the regular rhythm of the facade's elements, as well as through the figure of parallelism, since the *Parthenon gallery* is positioned parallel to the existing Parthenon of the Acropolis.

In this way, elements of the classical canon (*taxis*, *genera*, and *symmetry*) and the Athenian Acropolis are present in the architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but now they are brought into a new relationship using the language of modern architecture. In other words, de- and recomposition are introduced, for example, through the placing of columns (points), the triangular pediment from the Temple of Athena (surface), and the Frieze and metopes (narrative lines) of the Parthenon through the different levels/floors of the Museum. Juxtaposition is introduced, for example, through the placement of present and absent pieces of the Frieze next to each other. Superimposition is present, for example, through the introduction of a transparent glass floor where the layers of the *Makriyianni* site are superimposed in a visual context with grid forms. Finally, fragmentation and montage²⁷ are present through the introduction of the narrative path of the Museum, filled with fragments of the Acropolis offering, at moments, for example, a close up view of the exhibits, a view from the distance, or from the space in between (in the case of the *Parthenon Gallery*—where visitors are placed in between the exhibits of the Parthenon and the Parthenon itself on the Acropolis. But what is important to note here is how these galleries/levels are connected.

Namely, if we exclude moving by elevators, Tschumi offers a conceptual solution that directs visitors from the east and south wing of the first level—the *Archaic Gallery* to the third level—the *Parthenon Gallery*, and then, from the third to the west and north wing of the first level where the elements from the Erechtheum, the Propylaia and the Temple of Athena Nike are more clearly visible (See Figure #3). What is this all about? At stake here is the evocation of re-expression of the spatial

²⁷ Tschumi was inspired by Sergei Eisenstein's film montage.

arrangement of the Acropolis objects based on the polar grid and terraced terrain on the one hand, and the introduction/re-expression of the traditional idea of the Acropolis as processional architecture on the other.

Translating the spatial arrangement of the Acropolis objects

As Bogdan Nistorović describes climbing the Acropolis: First, we come across the Propylaia, then “leaving the Propylaia, the first sight falls on the statue of Athena Promachos; it is in the foreground, and in the background, right and left are the Parthenon and the Erechtheum. After passing by the statue of Athena, the Parthenon emerges as the dominant element before us. It is not in the entrance shaft, but it is at the culmination point of the Acropolis; its first impression is over the corner, and the appearance over the corner is more vivid. [...] Moving on, the Erechtheum attracts our attention, and we see it around the corner, and our gaze is surprised by new motives: a different style, porch with the Caryatids, a new contribution to the vivid appearance.”²⁸ (Figure #1) However, what Nestorović does not mention, and what Constantinos A. Doxiadis observes, is that these objects are still arranged in a specific order, and that is (as we mentioned earlier) in a polar grid. (Figure #2)

The vivid character is also enhanced by the terraced terrain on which the objects of the Acropolis are located. Inspired by these ideas, Tschumi does not arrange the galleries in a single level, but introduces multiple levels, evoking the idea of climbing the terraced terrain of the Acropolis. This idea of climbing is closely related to the next idea of introducing a “processional path” of the Acropolis.

Translating the idea of the processional architecture of the Acropolis

In pre-Periclean and pre-Persian times, the Acropolis was the home of Athena and the other gods and heroes of Athens, and also the site where the most important festival in Athens, the Grand Panathenaia, culminated.²⁹ Hence, the importance of the architectural direction that enhanced the processional atmosphere inherent in the function of the Archaic Acropolis: its architecture, in concert with the Panathenaic procession, progressed step by step from the west, from the realm of the secular, the human, to the religious experience of divine epiphany at the east side of the temenos.³⁰

Similarly, on the classic Acropolis—the Periclean Acropolis—certain changes were made, but the tradition of processional architecture was preserved. For example, changes were introduced in the architecture of the Propylaia, which played a transitional role, leading the procession from lower ground to higher ground, from outside to inside, from profane to sacred. This transition was elegantly expressed in its broken

²⁸ Bogdan Nestorović, *Arhitektura starog veka* (Naučna knjiga, 1974), 309.

²⁹ Francis R. Rhodes, *Architecture and Meaning on the Athenian Acropolis* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

roofline and double pediments, which step up like a procession from west to east. This solution did not arise from structural requirements, but was rather the unique choice of an architect, Mnesikles, concerned with incorporating a strong visual impression of procession into his gateway, the moment of spiritual transition, that is, the moment of moving from one zone to another and climbing to the holy place of the Acropolis.³¹

This sacred procession is the basis of the design and the spirit of Tschumi's architecture of the *New Acropolis Museum*, but is now expressed in a slightly different way. It marks the transition from the western to the eastern field, from the "secular" (the archeological excavations of the *Makryianni* site) to the sacred (field of religious elements of the architecture and art of the Acropolis), also from the lower ground to the higher ground, and finally from the outside to the inside. By entering the Museum, visitors enter the "processional/sacred path", getting acquainted with the fragments of the architecture, art, and culture of the Acropolis, but also becoming participants in the procession, implementing the mission of the *New Acropolis Museum* – the mission of preserving, protecting, but also celebrating the heritage, culture, art, and architecture of the Acropolis. This symbolism becomes stronger if we recall the role and symbolism of the pillars of the ancient temples of Athens. Instead of thinking about temple architecture in terms of ratios and measurements, ground plans and elevations, labels and structural origins, the Greeks thought in terms of phalanxes (for example, troops of police officers standing or moving in close formation) and triremes (wooden Greek or Roman galleys with three rows of oars), spears and shields, ropes and pulleys, sails and masts.³² Greek temples, as stated by John Onians, "if they were like anything, they were like phalanxes, that is, rectangular formations of armed warriors"³³. Namely, what Greeks saw in temple columns were people, Greek soldiers, officers, warriors, protectors, and *vice versa*, what they saw in people were "columns", that is, "protectors of their deities".

In this context, the idea of the presence of columns in the *Archaic Gallery* arranged in a regular grid would correspond to the phalanx-like scheme, that is, troops of soldiers, officers, warriors, and the people—museum visitors could be seen as (Greek) heroes, warriors, gods and protectors, or a step further, columns of contemporary culture and democratic, non-hierarchical society (evoked by the idea of the disorderly arrangement of sculptures among the columns and the free movements of visitors of this gallery). In other words, instead of the idea of the (Greek) warrior as a column – the protector of the temple, we now encounter the idea of museum visitors (who come from different parts of the world) as columns—the guardians and protectors of not only the material but also the immaterial, intangible heritage, culture and art of the Acropolis, Athens and, in wider context, the Greek civilization.

³¹ See: *Ibid.*, 54.

³² See: John Onians, "Greek Temple and Greek Brain," in *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture*, ed. George Dodds and Robert Tavernor (The MIT press, 2022).

³³ *Ibid.*, 47–48.

Conclusion

Tschumi's work, the *New Acropolis Museum*, is an extraordinary act of preservation and protection of the heritage, culture, architecture, and art of the Acropolis, which goes beyond the concept of a museum purely as a place for preserving fragments of historical architecture and artworks. Using the language of modern architecture (de- and recomposition, fragmentation, juxtaposition, superimposition and montage), Tschumi translates the three key concepts of which the architecture of the Acropolis was based: the concept of the classical canon of architecture, the concept of the polar grid of the spatial arrangement of the object of the Acropolis and, finally, the concept of the Acropolis as a processional architecture, building *double coded* postmodern architectural work. This is not the usual *double coding* of postmodern architecture, which according to Charles Jencks is based on combination of the "language of the elite" and the "language of popular culture"³⁴, that is which speaks at least on two levels at the same time: "To architects and professional minority [on the one hand], who care about specific architectural meanings, and to the general public or local residents [on the other] who pay attention to things related to [...] traditional construction and way of life"³⁵, but about combination of two different syntax of architectural language, the one classic and the other modern. Furthermore, this combination is not based on mere juxtaposition, bricolage, quotation or pastiche, but on de- and reterritorialization, re-expression, that is translation as an elastic, enfolding form of transformation during the act of transportation. This is not a form of translation that relies on the principles of logocentrism, where the meaning is the endpoint of interpretation—centripetal, transhistorically stable and transmedial, but an elastic/enfolding form of translation that dissipates meaning, crosses over irreducible differences, keeps something of the original text and enriches it with new sense and meaning.

By translating the syntax of the classical language of architecture, Tschumi questions not only the classical approach to designing an architectural work but also the classical system of producing meaning. Classical design principles operate by fixing semantic relations before design decisions appear, thereby eliminating the interpretative gap through which meaning could emerge. Design becomes execution, not inquiry. In Tschumi's work, *a priori* semantic relations do not precede action. In other words, Tschumi's work of architecture is not a canonical object, but rather a textual machine in which the classic canon (a "national property" of Greece³⁶) is only one part of its content, that is, the production and construction of the tradition, culture, and national identity of Greece.

³⁴ See: Čarls Dženks, *Jezik postmoderne arhitekture*, trans. Olga Popović (Vuk Karadžić, 1985), 24.

³⁵ See: *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ See: Dimitris Plantzos, "Hellas Mon Amour: Revisiting Greece's National 'Sites of Trauma,'" in *Contested Antiquity. Archaeological Heritage and Social Conflict in Modern Greece and Cyprus*, ed. Esther Solomon (Indiana University Press, 2021), 58.

By translating the polar grid and the idea of processuality of the Athenian Acropolis, the *New Acropolis Museum* becomes a place of preservation not only of material but also immaterial heritage, that is, the event.

By introducing a curvilinear, one-way path (composed of ramps and stairs), which leads us from the entrance, through the *Gallery of the Slopes*, the *Archaic Gallery*, the *Parthenon Gallery*, and then the elements of the Erechtheum, the Propylaea, and the Temple of Athena Nike, this Museum evokes the architectural processuality of the Acropolis. It invites visitors to take part in a new kind of procession, one that is not directly related to a certain festival, but rather to the ideology of the Museum itself. The *New Acropolis Museum* thus becomes a place for events where visitors (by the very act of entering and moving through the Museum) take on an active role in society, becoming protectors and guardians of the culture, art, and architecture of the Acropolis. The engagement of Museum visitors is not only visceral but also intellectual, realized through requests for participation that involve thought and movement. It is up to the visitors of the Museum to connect the exposed fragments of the culture and art of the Acropolis, to create a story, a narrative about the Acropolis, even new spatial practices of the Museum,³⁷ and at the same time to take part in the modern form of the processual act of preserving, protecting and “celebrating” the Acropolis.

The *New Acropolis Museum* is thus positioned as an institution that not only serves a descriptive, representational, or polemical role. In other words, it is not only a purely descriptive, representative museum (a picture of place, a representation of a place/architecture/event outside of time) nor only a discursive museum (one that stimulates debate, criticism, polemic about the exhibited objects using reason or argument),³⁸ but also a performative museum, the one that invites visitors “to create meaning” in the very act of performance, in this case, moving through the Museum. Performativity here is realized by action (movement/presence of the visitors and mental engagement), which physically, sensory, cognitively, and experientially acts by creating an event, which is in the place of telling about “something”. Greek culture thus becomes redefined as a *living culture*, rather than a fossilized essence suitable only for traditional museums,³⁹ reflecting the new strategy of the nation and the mission of the Museum.

³⁷ One of the forms of visitor engagement is expressed through the coin-throwing play enacted in the entrance’s large opening towards the basement excavation. Visitors throw coins upon the exit, after they have visited the Museum filling up the bottoms of the circular construction. (Veikou, “Bonds and affinities among successional spaces,” 108.) As Veikou describes: “These constructions seem to be transformed into ‘reservoirs of treasure’ through which the Museum is being acknowledged and enacted as a symbolic ‘golden’ place.” (Ibid., 110.)

³⁸ The auditorium located at the entrance and lobby area of the Museum, at the “beginning of the processional path”, could correspond to the Agora, located at the slope of the Acropolis where the beginning of the processional ancient path—the Panathenaic Way started, that is to the place of debate and intellectual discussion.

³⁹ Traditional museums, “through careful selection of certain elements of the past and the elimination of others, [...] engage [visitors] in a rather unsophisticated play of historical remembering, as well as forgetting, in order to produce a viable national identity. More than constructing a nation’s sense of itself, [traditional] museums tend to construct their own viewers, be they nationals or tourists, as subjects of a logocentric, elitist, privileged discourse [...]” (Plantzos, “Hellas Mon Amour,” 58.) In their efforts to construct their visitors as subjects of their own rhetoric, museums promote a hegemonic version of national identity, constructing both the nation’s past and the nation itself as the guardian of that past. (Ibid., 58.)

By de- and reterritorialization of material and immaterial traces/elements and syntax of classical language of the Acropolis architecture, Tschumi encourages conflict over *a priori* synthesis, fragmentation over unquestionable unity, “madness” and play over careful management and production. He breaks down meanings, showing that they are never transparent but socially produced. The *New Acropolis Museum* is thus caught in the act of constantly producing meaning. Its meanings are never fixed, but always deferred, context-dependent, and produced by interpretation, or different forms of translation. In other words, it becomes a field of reading/creating meaning in the act of performing the procession, rather than the transmission of the (fixed) meaning.

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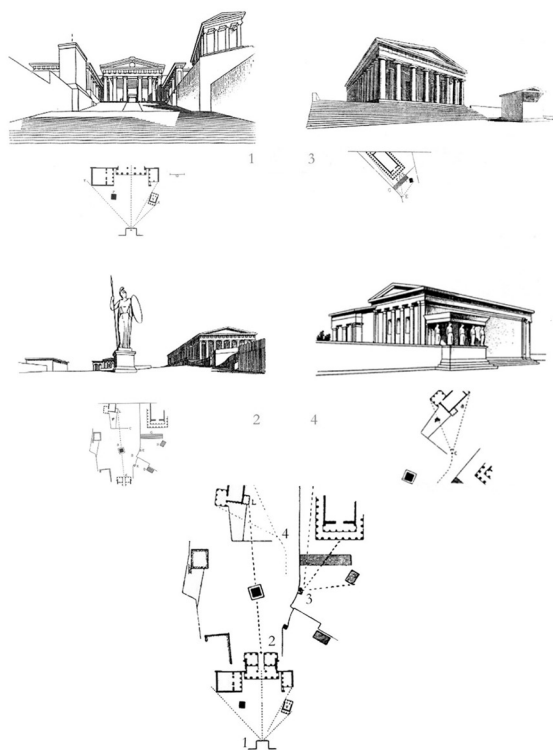
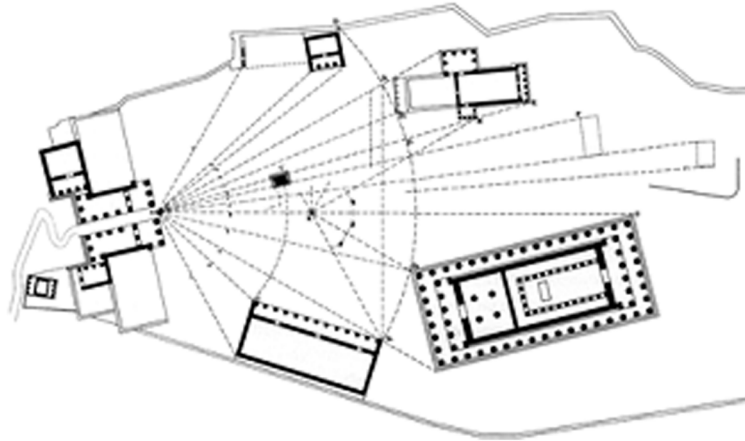
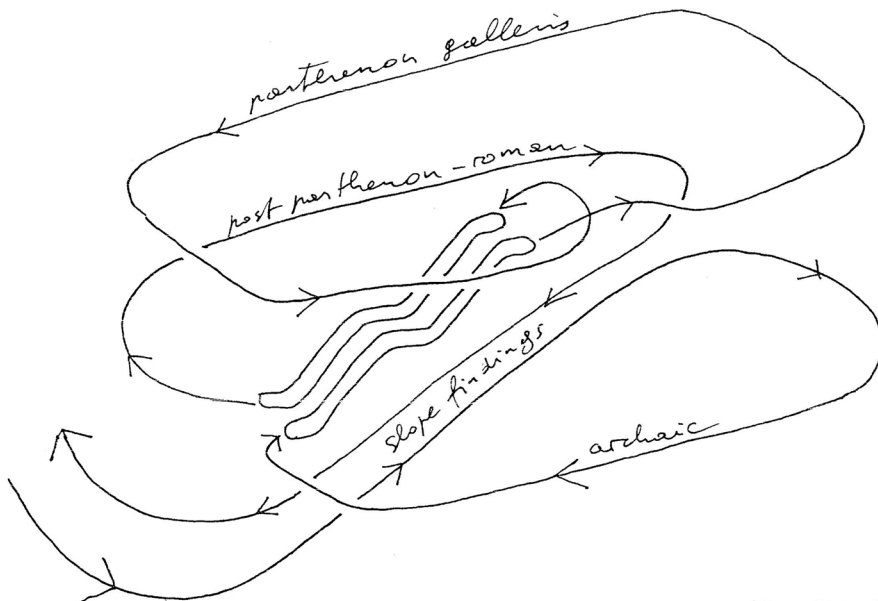


Fig. #1 Drawings of the Acropolis complex. Source of illustration: Auguste Choisy, *Histoire de l'Architecture*, Tome 1 (Gauthier–Villars, 1899), 412–18, <https://archive.org/details/bnf-bpt6k6417116t/page/412/mode/2up>; Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).



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Fig. #2 Polar grid schema applied to the Acropolis by Doxiadis. Source of illustration: Constantin A. Doxiadis, *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, trans. and ed. by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt (The MIT Press, 1972), 37. © Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



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Fig. #3 Circulation diagram of the *New Acropolis Museum* in Athens by Bernard Tschumi. Source of illustration: Bernard Tschumi, "Conceptualizing Context," in *The New Acropolis Museum*, ed. Bernard Tschumi Architects (Skira Rizzoli Publications, 2009), 83.

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