

The temple of nike essay example

Psychology, Success



The classical Greece period spanning between the fourth and the fifth centuries is one of the most syndicated periods in Greek art. This period had an immense influence on the foundation of western civilization, therefore, influencing to a large extent, the Roman Empire. In our study for instance, the Romans continued in the worship of Nike Athena, the goddess worshiped in the Nike Athena and renamed her Victoria. Athens became a gathering place for great artisans, for they brought their works together in an area of Athens known as the Acropolis. The entrance is a giant gateway called the Propylaea. Stepping through this gateway transports one back in time when the Athenians gathered to worship their Gods and Goddesses within the walls of these magical places. The Temple of Nike, the Parthenon, the temple Erechtheum, and the Athenian theaters have become some of the most well-known architectural wonders of the world (UNESCO World Heritage Centre.). These structures have survived the test of time only to become the subject, a recent controversy. The structures themselves were not the only feats of artistic brilliance in the Acropolis, but many sculptures and statues helped bring into context the reasons these structures were built.

Even though the most famous of the statues Nike, is no longer in her entirety positioned inside the Parthenon, the influence of Nike can still be seen in the surviving art found throughout the Acropolis. Her story seems to pre-dominate the myth displayed, with the expression of the goddess Nike Athena varying among the surviving statues. In some she is portrayed with wings, which symbolize her ability to rise above human reach and protect the Athenians. In another, the one found in the Nike Athena temple; she is portrayed without wings, so as to never leave the city of Athena. Records

survive that indicate the location of the temple had been an important location for generations of Greeks, while dating its importance back to the Mycenaean era. The protruding natural rock landscape provided a natural barrier to the south, therefore, making it impregnable. The choice, therefore, of the Greeks to erect a temple in honor ‘ Athena Nike’, or Athena victory, arises from the victories the Greeks enjoyed at this site.

The Temple of Nike is full of art depicting the goddess and most notably the friezes (Bouras, et. al, 2012). The temple introduces new means of artistic expression with more free- flowing style than the carvings in other areas of the Acropolis. In examples of art in the Acropolis, the figures were very anatomically correct with an idealist sense of beauty, while they use action and movement to convey the stories of their religion. The Athena Nike temple in contrast derives her uniqueness from its loveable marrying with nature by taking on to the rocky landscape of its site.

The Temple of Nike held great religious significance to the citizens of Athens as it served as a public place for worship and shrines for their many Gods and Goddesses, specifically Nike, the god of victory. The magnificence and extravagance of the temple indicate the success the Greeks enjoyed during this period. The opulence and great expanse of the project reflects both the ingenuity as well as the economic well-being of the ancient Greece civilization. The unique architecture employed in its construction is evidence of the intellectual might that Greece held, appropriately, the famous philosophers, Plato and Socrates lived in this age.

Beard states, “ The temple is amphiprostyle, with four Ionic columns, each in front and behind the main cellar, designed by the architect Kallicrates

(Benton, et. al, 2012). While the cellar most likely would have held the statue of Athena, it now lies empty. The main frieze depicts the Battle of Plataea, and is one of the few pieces that depict a historical subject instead of a mythological one. The Temple was destroyed by Turks in 1686 but was later rebuilt on two separate occasions. The structure that is now there stands upon the remains of the old temple.”

The overall temple was 21. 3 by 43. 15 m at its foundation (Mark, 1993). additionally; it was built with the post and lintel method of construction, which allowed for a greater expression of creativity through architecture. The post and lintel method is defined as, “ Two vertical members supporting a horizontal one - this is the simplest. The vertical is also known as a column, the horizontal as a beam.” In order to compensate for weight, the stone spans had to be small. The temple was divided into a large open area followed by a pair of rooms, while cella was divided into three rows also (Mark, 1993). Different materials were used in the construction process, with most of the loads bearing supports being blue limestone, while the rest of the foundation was porous limestone. The main structure and the architectural elements were made of different materials including limestone, and Parian marble (Mark, 1993). This material was most likely chosen because for its local availability, and in large quantities. They were also very high quality construction materials appropriate for the ‘ Nike Athena’s’ temple

The temple is smaller than any of the surrounding temples, which is usually the first thing one sees upon entering the Propylaia. The Ionic style is meant to offset the strong Doric style of the Propylaia (Beard, 2003), with the

entrance supported by four monolithic Ionic columns. The west and back side also has four matching columns, which seem to bulge, part way up.

Interestingly, this was purposely done in order to compensate for the optical illusion produced by the columns that make them appear thinner in the middle when seen from the ground (Carpenter, 1929), which was a very thoughtful approach its attention to detail great.

The different metopes all depict different scenes, with some of them in high relief. Those on the east show the story of a fight between Gods and giants, those on the west show talks of the Amazons, those on the south the battle with centaurs, and those on the north side depict the Trojan War (Benton, et. al, 2012); all show the greatness of the Greek gods, while the temple chronicles their great victories.

Overall, the Temple of Nike is a feat of art and architecture truly worthy of a Goddess. However, its fate over the years was determined by the success or its lack, of the Athenian city state. Its construction, during the fifth century BC, coincides with the peak in power of the Athenian hegemony. It is the success over the Persians in this period that inspired the Greeks to extraordinary feats of architecture and art. Corresponding defeats therefore, for instance the 1687 Ottoman invasion, spelt doom on the preservation of these historical pieces. The invading power sought to destroy the identity of its subdued by replacing it with its own, art and architecture as a symbol of power, prosperity and preservation, the subduing powers either destroyed it, or carried back to their country as relics. In this light, The Nike Athena temple has suffered immense damage from attacks by invading forces. Reconstruction of the relic continues up to this date with a reconstruction

dating as recently as 1998 which was undertaken in restoration of the corroded concrete and iron bars. Despite its long history, the Greeks still value the temple of Athena, to them; it represents their heritage and history.

The Nike Athena and all the deities placed in it represented the wish of the people. They constructed these works of art both in functional and spiritual motivations. While the rocky terrain over which the Nike Athena temple lay provides natural protection, the Athenians imprinted their will on its structure and upon themselves by placing deities to protect them from their enemies and give them good fortune in life. Through art, a culture was created and preserved which continues to awe inspire up to date.

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