

The great athena

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Mohammed Hani English 1010 Chery Flanigan August, 6th, The Great Athena

The Great Athena is a gold leafed statue in Nashville, Parthenon in Tennessee. This statue has been described as the true, unique and significant center piece in Nashville. The Athena is a statue of the ancient Goddess, Athena of Greece. The building where the statue is built is designed and constructed as an exact replica of the Greek Athena and Parthenon, the original structures in Athens. The Athena which stands 41 feet and 10 inches in height is approximately 12 tons heavy. Alan LeQuire was the sculptor behind the design and construction of the Great Athena. LeQuire found out that the original sculptor, Pheidias, built the Athena on with curved ivory on a wooden framework. The ivory acted as the gold wardrobe and skin for the original Athena. After sufficient research, LeQuire began to reconstruct the Athena.

LeQuire began by first creating small clay models of the statue. From these models as starting points, the sculptor spent more than three years in enlarging the statue. This also involved the casting process which led to the building of the full Athena of Parthenon. The artist assembled the Great Athena by casting gymnasium cement in the Parthenon. The assembly involved casting of many moulds that enlarged the statue while giving it its beautiful look. In order to ensure that the statue had sufficient support, LeQuire attached each of the sections of the Athena into an armature made of steel. There are several different materials which were used in the surface materials of the statues. The most obvious of these is gold, which can be seen on Athena's tunic, helmet, shield, and spear. However, the other elements used in the statue were ivory and silver. The sculptor put a Sphinx

likeness in the center of the statue's helmet to make it more appealing. The statue was constructed and made upright with griffins on both sides of its helmet.

The head of the statue is one of the pieces of the work which is made of ivory, with a long, golden tunic that goes down to the Athena's feet. Most of the elements of the statue, in addition to supplying it with physical beauty and attractiveness, were designed in order to have symbolic references to Athena's role as a goddess. For example, the spear is held on the hand of the Athena which is symbolic of war. In the other hand, the Athena holds the statue of victory to signify successful engagement in a war. The shield in the feet of the Athena is symbolic of protection from the serpent which is near the shield. It is argued that the serpent was meant to represent Erichthonius. The quality and character that is expressed by the Athena is owed to the imagery that the sculptor brought about through the coins and miniature sculptures which are combined into one whole. This makes the Athena to seem like being engraved on numerous gems and therefore making it more unique and attractive.

Improvements were made to the statue in 2002 to make it even more impressive and imposing. Some of these improvements included detailing the shield with the embossed images of several people and a face in the center which looks slightly like the Sun. These images on the shield look like the types of people which are found on many Classical Greek sculptures and wall paintings. LeQuin worked with a master gilder to enhanced details on the statue's wardrobe, by gilding its tunic to make it look more like the original statue than it already did. The features which are visible on the

statue's face were also touched up during this time. One of the most interesting details about the statue is actually the surroundings it is presented in, which is made up to look like the Greek Parthenon. The Great Athena was made more unique with the horizontal elements of its architecture which arch towards the center. Moreover, all of the columns around the statue, which again look just like Classical Greek columns at the Parthenon ruins, have a slight forward incline, which draws the viewers attention to the statue and also makes it seem to loom even larger than it already is. The diagonal incline of its corner columns also makes the statue unique. More significantly is the Parthenon's interior which is divided into the East and West rooms. The East room acts to house the Athena while the West room is the housing of the Athena's treasure. The similarity with the Greece Parthenon, the Nashville Parthenon also symbolically faces the East. However, the assembly of the Athena was achieved on a wooden core. This core was surrounded by plates of bronze. The original Athena was a significant part of the treasury of Greece in Athens. This is because of the numerous removable plates of gold that covered the plates of bronze. These were designed and included as a representation of wealth of the Athens. It is notable that there is a slight forward incline of the Athena's head. This makes the observer reflect on the sculptor's intention of spreading the weight of the statue evenly. This is further disclosed by the fact that the left knee of the Athena is a little bent as compared to the right knee. This makes the weight of the Athena to be directed to the right side. The most appealing part of the Athena though is the intertwined tails of the serpents with the breastplate of the statue being full of hair trails. Nonetheless, the actual

position of the spear is not clear. Some argue that the spear is supported by one of the serpents while others reflect that it is the right arm of the Athena which is supportive. The expression on Athena's face, highlighted by her rich red lips and her blue, serious eyes, is one which makes the viewer have a hard time to guess what Athena is thinking, but which does lend her a serious air and one of gravity. All these unique features represent the ability of the sculptor in creating mystery within the Athena which makes the audience to be engaged in thoughts and reflections on the meanings of each and every detail.

Works Cited

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