

The parthenon and the pantheon



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The Parthenon and the Pantheon are two of the most significant and magnificent artifacts of ancient western civilization. The Parthenon and the Pantheon both have aspects of ancient Greek architecture, but the Parthenon takes it further with its then-revolutionary design, and its symbolism. The Parthenon's construction began in 447 BC, and more than a decade passed before it was completed. The date of the creation of the Pantheon is not certain, however, but is estimated to be in the year 125.

The Parthenon is set atop the Acropolis of Athens, a flat-topped rock overlooking the city of Athens, and is visible for 20 miles around. It was built as a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Athena. Its name most probably comes from the Athena Parthenos, the large statue of the goddess Athena located in the eastern room. The Pantheon, on the other hand, was built as a more generic temple; its name comes from the Greek words pan (all) and theon (god). It is a "temple of all the gods". It was Pericles, a leading politician and general of Athens, who was largely responsible for initiating the construction of the Parthenon.

The architects Iktinos and Kallikrates designed the building, and the sculptor Phidias supervised its construction and was responsible for the sculptures that would decorate it. As for the Pantheon, the person responsible for the construction has been determined to be the emperor Hadrian, who was a "conservator of culture;" he installed the representations of the seven deities of the seven planets in the building, possibly as a gesture to the different beliefs of the Roman Empire's subjects.

However, there is no certainty on who the architect primarily responsible for the building's design is, although scholars believe it is probably Apollodorus of Damascus. The Parthenon is a building of the Doric style, and its design takes advantage of human flaws in perception, making it seem more perfectly symmetrical than it actually is. It was built with (apparent) symmetrical perfection through mathematical exactness in mind.

Its columns bulge slightly in the middle to offset the optical illusion of columns appearing thinner in the middle. Its floor seems to have been intentionally curved towards the center by about 6 to 10 centimeters for visual effect, and some of its rectangular dimensions exhibit the golden ratio. The Parthenon and Pantheon are often confused because of their similar facades, but while the Parthenon is a structure with largely rectangular dimensions, the Pantheon is much smoother and employs more curves.

The design of the Pantheon's portico looks strikingly similar to the Parthenon, however, showing its Greek influence. But this portico leads to the main part of the Pantheon, a cylinder half as high as it is wide, topped by a dome of the same description, with a central opening, the oculus (or the Great Eye). The base of the Parthenon measures 69.5 by 30.9 meters (228 by 101.4 feet). Its columns have a diameter of 1.9 meters (6.2 feet) and a height of 10.34 meters (34.1 feet). The Parthenon is made of marble, while the Pantheon is made primarily of concrete, although the actual composition of the concrete is still a mystery, as the Pantheon's material is remarkably strong and has withstood centuries of abuse.

The distance from the floor to the oculus of the Parthenon's dome is 43 meters (142. 5 feet), as is the diameter of the floor. The Parthenon's base measures 69. 5 meters by 30. 9 meters (228 by 101. feet), and the columns are 10. 4 meters (34. 1 feet) high. The interior of the Pantheon is thought to represent the heavens. The Emperor Hadrian, who had great interest in preserving the various cultures of the Roman Empire, installed representations of various unrelated deities of the empire's many regions. The Parthenon, in contrast, is of a much more singular nature—it was build as a temple to Athena (although there is speculation that it was used exclusively as a treasury).

The Parthenon was used as a treasury by the Delian League, the allied Greek city-states of the 5th century BC. Although the Parthenon is at first apparently a temple, the absence of any indication that there was ever an altar in it has led some scholars to believe that the Parthenon was intended as a treasury from the start. The Pantheon, on the other hand, was created during the height of the Roman Empire, where the various subject of the empire did not worship the old Roman gods.

The Pantheon has always been a temple to all the gods, where the seven deities of the seven planets are thought to represent the various religions to be found in the Roman Empire. It is now a Catholic church. Both have had a profound significance and influence in history, arts, and architecture, the Parthenon particularly for its exhibition of aesthetic perfection through mathematical exactness. Until today the Pantheon is in use as a Catholic church, but the Parthenon today remains only a relic of the ancient past.