

9-2010

## Gifts from Athens Press Release

Bellarmino Museum of Art

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### Recommended Citation

Bellarmino Museum of Art, "Gifts from Athens Press Release" (2010). *Gifts from Athens - Ephemera*. 3.  
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**Fairfield University's Bellarmine Museum of Art Opens its First Exhibition – *Gifts From Athens* November 2**

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (Oct. 26, 2010) Fairfield University's new Bellarmine Museum of Art will open its first temporary exhibition, "Gifts from Athens: New Plaster Casts from the Acropolis Museum and Photographs by Socratis Mavrommatis" on Tuesday, Nov. 2. The exhibition will continue through Dec. 17. The museum is free and open to the public, Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and by appointment ([museum@fairfield.edu](mailto:museum@fairfield.edu)). It is located in the lower level of Bellarmine Hall on the campus of Fairfield University.

"Gifts from Athens" features eight plaster casts given to the Bellarmine Museum of Art in July 2010 by the First Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities—Acropolis Museum. Six of the casts represent sculpture from the Parthenon, including one east metope, one north metope and four examples of the famous frieze. Other casts include a diminutive *kore* (maiden), dedicated on the Acropolis in the late Archaic period, and the renowned "Sandalbinder" from the Nike Parapet. The original sculptures after which these casts were taken can be seen in the new Acropolis Museum in Athens.

Dr. Katherine Schwab, Associate Professor of Art History and Curator of the Bellarmine Museum's Plaster Cast Collection, was instrumental in making the gift of these casts a reality. Her work on the Parthenon began in the 1980s, when Dr. Schwab first developed ties to the First Ephorate and Acropolis Museum. Among her colleagues there are Dr. Alexandros Mantis and Dr. Christina Vlassopoulou, director and assistant director respectively of the First Ephorate, both of whom have traveled to Fairfield to see the University's growing cast collection on separate occasions over the course of the past decade. When they learned of plans for the new Bellarmine Museum of Art (inaugurated publicly on October 25, 2010), Drs. Mantis and Vlassopoulou expressed a desire to present the University with the eight plaster casts after works in the Acropolis Museum; works that are now central to the Bellarmine's plaster cast collection.

Famed in his native Greece for evocative, thought-provoking images of the Acropolis and the Athenian landscape, photographer Socratis Mavrommatis's remarkable exhibition on the Acropolis Restoration Project made its first appearance in North America at Fairfield University's Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery in 2004. Subsequently, Mavrommatis was instrumental in working with the Benaki Museum in Athens to create a traveling exhibition, "The Creative Photograph in Archaeology," which made its world premiere at the Walsh Art Gallery in 2007. As a result of these exhibitions at Fairfield, Mavrommatis personally presented a gift of 23 large-scale black and white photographs to the University in 2008. Eight of these photographs are on display in this exhibition, including three in the cast corridor, a further three in the cast gallery and two in the Frank and Clara Meditz Gallery. These pieces not only draw attention to subtle details from the original works that might otherwise escape critical attention, they also emphasize the dynamic nature of monuments as well as landscapes, neither of which is ever static.

Complementing these images are six drawings by Dr. Katherine Schwab, which reflect her ongoing research on the Parthenon sculptural program. Her images of east metope 2 and north metope 25, represented among the 26 grayscale scans of her metope drawings on permanent display in the Parthenon Gallery of the Acropolis Museum, reveal a tension between presence and absence within the preserved composition. As a counterpoint, Schwab's images of the human figure and horses from the frieze and pediments explore the ideal in the High Classical style embodied by the Parthenon.

Finally, "Gifts from Athens" will highlight the enduring legacy of ancient Greece in Western art and culture through representative objects in the museum's permanent collection and on loan from a private collector. Exemplary in this regard is 18<sup>th</sup>-century Neapolitan artist Paolo de' Matteis's stunning painting, *Andromeda and Perseus*, and Elie Nadelman's marble sculpture, *Ideal Head*, from ca. 1909.

*Vol. 43, No.88*

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