

# British Repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles

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## Introduction

Since 1983, Greece has requested the return of 17 figures, 15 metopes, and 247 feet of the frieze, all from the Parthenon. The history of the Parthenon plays a vital role in the current location of the Marbles. Half of the marbles are housed in the British Museum. The other half of the marbles reside in Athens, Greece at the Acropolis Museum. The repatriation of the marbles is a complex issue that is approached differently by curators, art historians, and archeologists.

## Key Findings

The Parthenon Marbles, also known as the “Elgin Marbles,” were removed from the façade of the ancient temple between 1801 and 1805 at the command of Thomas Bruce, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin. Upon their arrival to England, the marbles became the centerpiece of the Earl’s private collection. In 1816, the marbles became part of the British Museum’s permanent collection. As of 2024, the curatorial staff of the British Museum has made no effort to provide information within the physical galleries on the ongoing controversy that surrounds the marbles.

## Conclusions

Repatriation is a nuanced issue for museums, and academics, alike. The marbles are not the only antiquity in the British Museum’s collection subject to scrutiny. Minimally, the museum should provide adequate and educational literature on the status of the repatriation request and Earl’s questionable acquisition of the marbles.

## Bibliography

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- 2 Frieze of the Parthenon. Athens, 438-432 BC.
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- 4 Bruce, Thomas. *Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Earl of Elgin’s Museum*. London: Printed for private circulation, 1815.
- 5 Cuno, James, ed. *Whose Culture? : The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

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