

Monuments, Monumentality and Historical Memory: The Acropolis of Athens

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Today between six and seven million tourists each year visit the Athenian Acropolis. The beauty and splendor of the Acropolis, and especially the Parthenon, have captivated people for centuries, yet never in the citadel's entire history has it looked as it does today. Denuded of soil and vegetation and devoid of any indication of living humanity, it now resembles a marble dead zone. In the process of restoring the buildings on the Acropolis to their "pristine" monumentality of the Classical era, archaeologists have created a place without time and without history. In the quest to restore the Acropolis to the way it was at the moment that matters to us today, entire eras of historical memory have been erased. Using the case of the Acropolis, this illustrated lecture investigates issues relating to how buildings become monumentalized and how the process of monumentalization shapes collective historical memory in many important and sometimes troubling ways.