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Happy fall! I hope you are enjoying the cool days and are lounging in a comfy chair, with a good cup of coffee or tea, and perusing this new issue of the *Exhibitionist*. As to what our colleagues have been viewing recently, here is what Janet Kamien submitted about *Out in Chicago* at the Chicago History Museum.

This is a wonderful exhibit! I saw it in July while in Chicago for the Visitor Studies Conference. It's risky, good looking, interesting (whether you are a member of the LGBT {lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender} community or not), fun, and both celebratory and painful in appropriate ways. Media treatments are ubiquitous but mostly don't feel overwhelming because they are so very nicely done: video guides are short and sweet, and longer pieces are parsed in a way that makes you feel you can stay for just a bit or for the whole show.

In-house designer Dan Oliver beautifully designed it, and it was co-developed by staff member Jill Austin and UIC professor Jennifer Brier. Roger Brown and Gaylon Emerzian of Trillium Productions did all the media.

I spoke with Dan about the show—surely it must have been complicated to do and there must have been a fair amount of push-back from various quarters. In fact, though it was complicated, the institution had been doing lecture and panel programs with the LGBT community since 2004 so an exhibit seemed like an obvious next step to staff and board. Though there were a few things proposed that did not make it into the show, and some edginess around a couple of the things that did, there were few real problems about the content or the straightforward presentation. The biggest issue might have been the tension between presenting a community history and presenting more personal narratives



Introduction—you meet people from the LGBT community on video throughout the exhibit. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum.



Queers mobilize—there are also interactives and more traditional object displays. Courtesy of Chicago History Museum.

about families and individuals within the contemporary community. There was also some worry about approach: members of the LGBT advisory groups were more interested in a presentation that explored and celebrated their differences from the straight community while straight advisors preferred an emphasis on the similarity of issues between communities. In the end they managed a balance in both these areas. It's a big show for them—almost 5,000 square feet—so there was enough room to come at some of the content from more than one perspective.

Basically the show is in four parts and looks at Chicago as a crossroads for the LGBT community as it expressed itself—often in contradiction to the law—historically in dress and custom, more contemporarily in family formation and in the public sphere, and how it has mobilized—and continues to mobilize—to demand equality.

Try to see this show if you can. It will be open until March 2012.

Roula Tsapalas submitted this. My family and I traveled to Greece this summer and were fortunate to visit the new Acropolis Museum. As an architect and exhibit designer, I was especially impressed by the

integration of exhibition and architecture. The building itself follows organization principles of ancient classical architecture. Organized with a base, middle and top, the themes of ARCHEOLOGY, ART, and ARCHITECTURE are featured with conceptual clarity. The building's modern aesthetic of simple forms, metal, glass, marble, and concrete materials provides the perfect backdrop for antiquities. These antiquities are bathed in natural daylight and punctuated against a deep blue sky reminiscent of their original setting. As I walked through the exhibits, I was touched by the magical quality of Mediterranean light enveloping the Greek art.

BASE: A View into the ARCHEOLOGY

Outside the museum entrance, visitors discover views through a glass floor to active archeological excavations of ancient and Byzantine city streets. Tall columns (pilotis) are placed to protect the site, located to minimize disruption of ongoing archeological work. I was reminded that to build in Athens is a minefield, since many projects are taken over by the government when relics are discovered.

Leaving the entry level we approached a wide ramped floor leading up to the

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main exhibition hall. In ancient Greece, these sloped transitions signaled sacred spots. Along the ramp, display cases lined the walls and some were recessed into the floor. On a whim I looked up and another glass floor loomed 3 stories overhead. Silhouettes of visitors cast shadows and created a dynamic pattern with their comings and goings.

MIDDLE: A Walk Among the ART
Upon arriving at the main exhibition hall, I was struck by the spacious quality of

areas filled in with replicas. The replicas were smooth and of newer stone, making the antiquity obvious while at the same time filling in with context.

TOP: A Re-Creation of ARCHITECTURE

The Parthenon Gallery on the top floor is a rectangular glass structure situated with a view of the Parthenon beyond.

We began by entering the rectangular room at the core, the theater. After viewing the video presentation, we walked around the perimeter and made an illuminating discovery.

The video shed light on the site's historic timeline and the buildings' artistic and architectural significance. I learned that the Acropolis served generations of religious worshippers, from a temple to the gods, to a Christian church during the crusades, to a mosque during the Ottoman occupation. Each phase brought with it physical modifications such as a narthex and apse typical of Christian churches and a minaret typical of mosques. Over time, the building was damaged by fire, looting, earthquakes, and gunpowder. In addition, I learned about the stories in the sculptures from the frieze to the metopes and lastly to the pediments. I was reminded of what I learned in architecture school. Through mathematical proportion and optical illusions, the Greeks created the pinnacle of architectural perfection in the Parthenon.



View of the Acropolis Museum from the Acropolis. The glass enclosed Parthenon Gallery crowns the building. Courtesy of Roula Tsapalas.

the hall and the placement of artifacts. People were circulating 360 degrees around sculptures, getting very close to relics mounted on pedestals and without barriers. This two-story interior was filled with natural light, and light colored materials so as not to overpower the art. The simplicity of the surroundings was a contrast to the details and intricacy of the sculptures. Some were displayed in context (in pediments) with some missing

Stepping outside of the theater, we stepped into the perimeter glass donut surrounding the theatre core. There were 17 building columns on each side and eight on the ends. Between the columns were placed the metope sculptures at a height for viewing. At the short ends lay the pediments with original and replica sculptures. A continuous frieze of sculpture ran along the core wall mimicking the Parthenon's cella, or



Visitors view active archeological excavations below the museum as they await entry. Courtesy of Roula Tsapalas.

interior walls. The proportions and scale of the Parthenon were recreated here in the exhibit building with the sculptures placed lower, not in the exact context, but at a height for appreciating the scale and detail. Gaps appeared in between the original sculptures representing the Elgin marbles housed in Britain. Now that Greece has a new museum to house the marbles, their mission is to persuade Britain to reunite the antiquities.

I came away wondering how the design process evolved to create such a holistic and powerful exhibit. The content and interpretation drove the building's design from the start. Usually exhibit designers

are left to work within the building envelope with minimal input on the architecture. Usually the architect has little access to the exhibit content when designing the building. Some of this is timing and schedule. Some of this is collaboration between disciplines. In this case, Bernard Tschumi's office designed both the building and exhibition. Is this the only scenario to ensure such integration?

Thanks to Janet and Roula for their submissions this month! And remember, if you see an exhibition that others should know about, write it up and send it to me at beth@redmond-jones.com. Cheers! ✨