

Propylaia, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

The central building of the University of Athens, known as Propylaia, is one of the most emblematic landmarks of the capital city of the Greek state. The neoclassical building and its monumental precinct bring up the most acknowledged highlights of Greek national history. The halls of the building were learning, conversing and protest spots.

Its indoors and precincts have hosted a number of ritual events (statue and monument creating, anniversary celebrating etc.), while the city location has supremely favoured mobilizations, demonstrations and political gatherings.

The Propylaia building was established in 1839 and designed by the Danish architect Hans Christian Hansen (1803-1883). It was originally intended to be the venue of the newly-born University of Athens (established 1837), previously hosted at the mansion of the architect Stamatis Kleanthis, in Plaka, and currently hosting the University museum. A considerable part of the building cost was covered by donations of Greek expatriates, foreign rulers and numerous citizens.

The year 1842-43 completed the front annex of the building, the ground floor of which hosted four teaching rooms. In 1846, donations and state subsidies gave rise to the back annex and the ceremony hall, which was completed in 1851. Decorating the building commenced at the same time, with the most typical fresco being the one on the internal facade.

Baron Symeon Sinas funded the fresco design in 1861, which was assigned to the painter Carl Rahl. Expatriate Stergios Dounbas, from Wien, finally funded the fresco which was finalized in 1888. The fresco depicts Otto on the throne, surrounded by revived Disciplines in the newly-born state.

Sciences appear as female figures in the Renaissance fashion. Ancient world is narrated on the left and right of the fresco scene, commencing with Prometheus, with ancient Greek philosophers, warriors, politicians and poets following. Apostle Paul also appears and symbolizes the transition from idolatry to Christianity.

The Ceremonial Hall decoration plan includes Greek scholars who disseminated the works of the ancient world.

Την ώρα που από τη δεκαετία του 1870 οριστικοποιήθηκε η εξωτερική όψη του κτιρίου, στο εσωτερικό του υπήρξαν μια σειρά από συνεχείς μεταβολές που εξασφάλιζαν τις διαφορετικές λειτουργίες των χώρων του.

As the external part of the building was finalized in the 1870s, the internal design kept changing to meet different needs in space use. Teaching halls aside, rooms were turned into libraries, museums, laboratories, anatomy halls, chemical laboratory rooms, administrative offices etc. - even Parliament rooms.

Throughout the 20th century and up until recently, thousands of university students used the desks, and university precincts, and protested in front of the building. The building today hosts the University administration.

Improving the University precincts was a project complementary to the architectural and painting programme - statues of important modern historical figures and dead fighters' monuments were those

of Rigas Ferraios by John Kossos in 1871; of Patriach Grigorios the 5th by George Fytalis, in 1872; of Adamantios Korais by John Kossos and George Broutos in 1874; of philhellenist Gladstone by George Vitalis in 1888; of John Kapodistrias by George Bonanos In 1931; there are monuments of dead fighters in the Greek-Turkish war by George Papagiannis in 1897 and monuments of dead fighters in World War I by the same sculptor in 1919.

The University building- situated between those hosting the Greek Academy and the National Library, were built later but were designed by the Hansen Brothers in the 1840s and are known as the Athenian Trilogy. The Athenian Trilogy is an excellent sample of imposing neoclassical architecture intended to elegantly improve the city with a building complex representing the prestige and power of King Otto's dynasty. Today they are among the best known city locations, visible to both visitors and passers-by.