

# **Critical Appraisal of *All Sides of the Parthenon***

**By Candice Russell**

Anyone visiting Athens, Greece for the first time cannot help but be struck by the magnificence of its most famous structure -- the 2,500-year-old Parthenon. Visiting this landmark, famous around the world, should be on every cultured person's bucket list because it is a triumph of imagination, architecture, art and history.

But now the Parthenon is undergoing a change through a massive reconstruction effort. Documenting those efforts is a photographer, Peter Yalanis of Sunrise, whose images in color and black and white comprise "All Sides of the Parthenon." The familiarity of the stark columns and stone steps may seem to belie the necessity for such an exhibition. But think again, considering the remarkable access granted Yalanis by the Greek government for six glorious picture-taking days. Tourists can only see the structure from afar, thanks to current restoration efforts.

These breathtaking pictures provide new perspectives, including wonderful close-up details of men and horses on friezes, and fresh ways of looking at the Parthenon as it relates to the city at its base. The show is also a plea for historic preservation as a civic cause of global concern and a reminder of what caring citizens can do in their own communities to strengthen visible ties with the past.

Inside a tunnel is where Yalanis shot "One of the Cannonballs," with the weapon/orb near desecrated, time-destroyed stone steps. Also an inside job is another black-and-white image, "Ascending the Stone Circular Staircase," with a small wood stick seemingly the only thing holding up part of a crumbling wall. In contrast there is an abundance of pictures in color such as "The Classical Parthenon from the Northwest Corner," a gorgeous shot with strong shadows capturing the building at its best angle and including the steps leading up to it strewn with weeds.

The hard work of restoration is shown in images like "Artisan #1 (Marble Chips)" with one man working with a hammer on one small aspect of one column. Scale is captured by Yalanis in "Looking East from Atop the Western Pediment," a panoramic shot of just how vast the task of restoring the Parthenon is.

With this beloved ruin as the centerpiece of Greece, the clever Yalanis turns his camera horizontally for "Sunset through the Doric Columns." Using the marble columns as graphic, nearly silhouetted elements, the photographer captures the solemnity of night falling. The texture of the columns is overshadowed by a bold sun in the corner shooting out the day's final rays in lovely tones of red and yellow and turning the sky peach and pale blue. Lights are on in the homes and offices in Athens down below. It is an image that captures past and present in synchronicity.