

Historical exhibition analysis: an overview of the core exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus

Análise histórica expográfica: uma visão geral da exposição principal do Museu Arqueológico do Pireu

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Resumo

Este estudo consiste na análise histórica da exposição principal do Museu Arqueológico do Pireu e sua relação com a história do museu e da cidade. A exposição não mudou sua organização desde 1998, embora ao longo dos anos, tenham ocorrido algumas mudanças nas salas de exposição, como a adição de novos objetos, novos elementos ou empréstimos de peças para serem exibidas fora do país. O estudo é limitado pela disponibilidade de fontes e pelo contexto específico do Museu Arqueológico do Pireu. No entanto, o estudo tem implicações importantes para a análise e o planejamento de exposições museológicas arqueológicas, e o uso potencial do espaço do museu e do espaço urbano. Este estudo contribui para o crescente corpo de pesquisas em design de museus, sobre análise histórica de exposições, utilizando visita de estudo, bibliografia e documentos de arquivísticos para examinar exposições.

Palavras-chave

Exposição; Museus; Arqueologia; Pireu; Exposição; Museografia.

Abstract

This study focuses on the historical analysis of the core exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, and its relationship with the museum's history and the city. The core exhibition organization has remained unchanged since 1998, although some changes have occurred in the exhibit rooms over the years, such as the addition of new objects, some elements, or loaned pieces for exhibition outside the country. The study is limited by the availability of sources and the specific context of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, and the findings may not be applicable to all archaeological museums. However, the study has important implications for the analysis and design of archaeological exhibitions and the potential use of urban space. This study contributes to the growing body of museum design research on historical exhibition analysis by using a mixed-methods approach such as site visit, bibliography, and archive documents to examine exhibitions.

Keywords

Exhibition; Museums; Archaeology; Piraeus; Exposition; Museography.

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Introduction

The Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and Islands is a Regional Service of the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Religious Affairs of Greece, at the Directorate level, and is under the General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage administration. The service unity is responsible for the archaeological control within its competence and the operation of the existent archaeological museums and declared archaeological sites located in its jurisdiction³.

Besides their responsibility for managing museums, the Ephorates of Antiquities also have a broader mandate. The Regional Services have operational objectives that include scientific research, conservation, maintenance, protection, promotion, and preservation of antiquities, as well as their exhibition in museums. They are also responsible for participating in exhibitions in Greece and other countries, studying, planning, managing, and executing the maintenance, repair, restoration, promotion, and renew of monuments, archaeological sites, and their natural environment⁴.

The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus is a state-owned museum that falls under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and Islands. It is one of the largest public archaeological museums in the capital (KAPETANOPOULOU, 2019).

The museum is located in the urban area of Athens. Piraeus is not merely a port city in the Attica region. According to Grigoropoulos (2005), it is widely known as a major urbanized port of the ancient world. During the Classical period, Piraeus played a critical role in the seaborne economic, military, and cultural prominence of Athens, especially in the 5th century BC. It functioned as the basis of Athenian Naval Democracy and formed the second most important urban district from the Classical Period onwards (GRIGOROPOULOS, 2005).

Although Piraeus holds great historical significance, it currently does not have an archaeology museum that adequately reflects its importance. To overcome this deficiency, two architectural competitions were conducted in 2013 and 2014 with the aim of finding a proposal for an archaeological museum in the city.

The subject for the Architectural Competition of 2013 was the *Redesign of the existing cereal warehouse building facilities (Silo) and its surrounding open space into a Museum of Underwater Antiquities*⁵. The competition aimed to design a unique Museum of Underwater Antiquities for Greece that would also develop an urban open space in the centre of the modern harbour and connect the urban fabric with its citizens.

In 2014, the *Piraeus Cultural Coast Competition*⁶, sponsored by the Piraeus Port Authority, has as proposed the redesign of an existing building into the

3 The Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and Island's areas of jurisdiction are Piraeus, Keratsimi – Drapetsona, Korydallos, Nikaia – Agios Ioannis Rentis, Moschato and Travos, Kallithea, Nea Smyrni, Palaio, Faliro, Agios Dimitrios, Alimos, Elliniko and Argyroupoli, Glyfada, Varis, Voula – Vougliagmeni, Salaminos, Aegina, Aegistri, Poros, Hydra, Spetses, Kythera, and Troizinia – Methana. In like manner, the archaeological museums under their protection are the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, Archaeological Museum of Kolona Aigina, Archaeological Museum of Salamis, Archaeological Museum of Poros, and the Archaeological Museum of Kythera.

4 *Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic*, Article 25, Issue A' 7 / 22.01.2018.

5 2013 Architectural Competition "Redesign of the existing cereal warehouse building facilities (Silo) and its surrounding open space into a Museum of Underwater Antiquities". Available in: <<https://www.culture.gov.gr/en/service/SitePages/view.aspx?iiD=2160>> Access: 26 April 2023.

6 2014 Architectural Competition Piraeus Cultural Coast Competition. Available in: <<https://competitions.org/2014/06/piraeus-cultural-coast-competition/>> Access: 26 April 2023.

Archaeological Thematic Museum of Piraeus. The competition aimed to regenerate part of the Piraeus Port Authority (PPA) land area, transforming it into an open-air public space and park with a closed parking area underneath. Despite these attempts, the only existing archaeological museum in the city is still the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.

Here a historical analysis of the *core exhibition*⁷ of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus is presented as well as its connection with the museum's history and the city.

This study aligns with the field of *Museum Design Research*, which emerged in the early 2000s and encompasses a range of analytical investigations in exhibition creation, architectural forms, historical analysis of exhibitions, museum design methodologies, and the development of interpretive projects and design processes (MACLEOD, DODD, DUCAN, 2015).

The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus has not been updated for decades, and its core exhibition remains an intriguing subject. The purpose of this study is to emphasize the significance of analysing historical exhibitions in museum projects, leading to a greater comprehension of the institution and its collection. Such an analysis could provide valuable information that would aid in the development of new exhibition projects.

This study is the outcome of an unpublished Master Thesis, presented in July, 2021. The research was conducted through a site visit, and collaboration as a trainee during October and November of 2020, along with other sources including documents from the museum, such as bibliographic resources, institutional documents, articles from journals, and academic event reports regarding the project and the museum.

During the site visit, the museum's leaflet served as a guide for circulation and narrative interpretation. As a visitor, you have the option to either follow the visitor's leaflet or explore the museum freely without a guide instead. In this particular study, it separate description of each room is provided, followed by a general analysis of the core exhibition.

State of the Art

Marlen Mouliou (1997), in her Ph.D. research examined classical archaeological discourse and museum representations of the classical past in post-war Greece. Her study analyzes thirty-four case studies, related to National, Site, Regional, Private, and University museums, together with temporary and traveling exhibitions. The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus was not included in her research. Nonetheless, the insights provided by her research shed light on the subject matter and offer a valuable perspective that enhances our understanding of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.

George Steinhauer (1998, 2001) has published the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus history and collection, while Kapetanopoulou (2019) has presented a master's thesis⁸ studying the importance of the strategic management implementation, in which the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus was used as an

7 Core exhibition is the definition proposed by Yani Herreman (2004, p.92) for what we used to call permanent exhibitions, since they are part of a "core" concept structure, storyline, or discourse within a museum.

8 The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus: New tools to attract the public concerning the upgrade plan (master plan) of the cultural square of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and Islands" (Original in Greek).

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example to be investigated, concerning the new strategic plan applied in recent years, aiming to emphasize the role of the strategic management in public museums development.

Kapetanopoulou (2019) identified some issues regarding the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus's permanent exhibition in her master's research. She noted that the exhibition lacked various sub-thematic units and placed too much emphasis on ancient art instead, resulting in an overly academic presentation of objects. Furthermore, the thematic unit that explored the role of ancient Piraeus as a commercial, economic, and cultural center of classical Athens was limited, a problem found often in traditional museums. Another issue was the absence of sufficient interpretive information, which contributed to the exhibits' overly academic presentation and the use of scientific terminology, such as "votive," in the compressed subtitles. These factors, according to her created a distance between the exhibition and its audience, resulting in negative emotions and potentially deterring future visits.

Kapetanopoulou (2019) highlighted several issues related to the museum's communication with the public, cultural activities, and educational programs. Namely, she noted the absence of digital media as a means of direct communication with visitors, as well as a limited number of cultural activities connecting the museum with the local community. Before 2012, educational programs were only offered upon the initiatives from visiting educational institutions. However, by the time of Kapetanopoulou's research, the museum had implemented educational programs on a systematic basis, offering 11 topics: seven for primary education and four for secondary education. Additionally, seminars were organized for primary and secondary education coordinators, as well as for teachers in Piraeus. Kapetanopoulou (2019) obtained her data from the archives of the Ephorate, which showed that the total number of visitors in 2011 was 9,465, and in 2012, the number decreased to 7,003, representing a 26% decrease.

Creating a Museal Reality: The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus's origins

Mouliou's analysis model "museum and exhibition history" is a self-explanatory way to describe its purpose, which seeks to write the museum's history. According to Mouliou, every museum and exhibition has its own unique "archaeology" that chronicles its history from its implementation to the present day. Throughout their existence, museums and exhibitions aim to achieve specific goals and perform particular functions, which may remain unchanged over time or evolve to meet new needs. According to her:

Every museum and/ or exhibition has a history in a way their own 'archaeology,' that is being chronicled from the day of their establishment up to our own era. Throughout their life, they set certain aims and perform particular functions which either continue unchanging for a long time or alter according to the new needs (MOULIOU, 1997: 93).

However, writing history can be challenging, especially for museums, as highlighted by Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 09). This is due to the plurality of history, forms, funding sources, administrative arrangements, collections, and operational scales that museums can have, as well as the socio-political, cultural, or

economic conditions that shape their development. To write an effective history of a museum or exhibition, Hooper-Greenhill suggests asking questions such as “why,” “how are things different,” or “how have they changed” to better understand the historical context and evolution of these institutions.

The beginning of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus history dates back to when antiquities were first collected, in the Gymnasium school on Korai Square. There the first exhibition of the Archaeological Collection of Piraeus was organized, as Steinhauer puts in:

The core of the antiquities collection of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus consists of the funerary monuments, primarily stelae, found in situ in the ancient city's northern cemetery, which had been collected by the antiquary Ioannis Meletopoulos in his garden on Thivon Street, as well as the chance finds that surfaced during the city's construction and development projects. Conversely, the most remarkable finds uncovered during excavations carried out by the special superintendent and Lyceum director Iakovos Dragatsis on behalf of the Archaeological Society, ended up in the National Archaeological Museum. The antiquities, as was then customary in all Greek towns, were first collected in the Gymnasium school on Korai Square, where the first exhibition of the Archaeological Collection of Piraeus was organized (STEINHAEUER, 2001: 23).

In spite of this first exhibition organization – which we do not know when was first displayed – the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus was only founded in 1935, in the inter-war period, with the creation of a local public state-owned museum. However, according to Mouliou (1997: 6, quoted PETRALOS 1994: 81-102), due to the outbreak of World War II, the archaeological service was responsible for dismantling all archaeological exhibitions to secure its safety by burying the objects in the ground, concealing them in hideouts, safe deposits or caves in 1940. The museum of Piraeus was also the case, which had to be dismantled following the country's protocol.

The first museum building today functions as storage (Figure 1), and it was constructed on the ruins of a possible early Christian basilica in the state-appropriated land of the ancient Theatre of Zea (STEINHAEUER, 2001). The first and old museum is a neoclassical building declared a protected historical monument (KAPETANOPOULOU, 2019). The building is one example of the neoclassical type of museum architecture made in Greece of that time. The ancient Theatre of Zea, on the other hand, is the only ancient Theater in Piraeus, belonging to the Hellenistic Period, which still remains in the site. The other and more ancient theater in the city did not survive to the present time.

Figure 1. Archaeological Museum of Piraeus's first museum building.



Photography by the Author, 2021.

The period after the war is called by Mouliou (2008) “regeneration period”, it spans from 1948 to 1976, which was the time of intensive reorganization and maturation of the country’s archaeological museums. After the war, Greek archaeologists had to face the demand to reorganize the closed museums and produce new exhibitions in the country. The classical past as linear evolution of art prevailed as a dominant interpretative paradigm. The National Archaeological Museum became the prototype of exhibition style and philosophy in Greece during that time. Mouliou wrote:

However, by ‘destroying’ the work that past generations of Greek archaeologists had created, archaeologists in Greece were faced with a true challenge to produce new museum displays and embark on an altogether fresh museum development and re-organization in the country after the war. For example, the National Archaeological Museum, through its permanent post-war redisplay, became a prototype that fashioned a certain exhibition style and philosophy and exemplified the ‘classical museological perception’ in Greece during this era (MOULIOU, 1997:117)

The “regeneration period” after World War II and the Greek Civil War – from 1946 to 1949 –, also coincides with the reorganization of the Archaeological Service around 1960 (MOULIOU, 1997). Steinhauer and Costaki mention in different publications, the reorganization of the service. According to Costaki (2021: 463), “the twentieth century saw the reorganization of the Greek Archaeological Service, which entered a new era of more systematic work and better structured record keeping in 1960 under the General Director of Antiquities, J. Papademetriou”.

In the context of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, Steinhauer (1998) wrote that during the ’60s, the museum is the “main” museum of that Ephorate extended by a new museum building and enriched with the donation of private collections. Steinhauer wrote:

The original building was extended by the construction of the new museum, the foundations of which were laid in 1966. It is the main museum of the II Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, in which archaeological finds mainly from the area of Piraeus, Salamis, and the coast as far as Varkiza, are assembled, conserved and housed. The museum has been considerably enriched by donations from large private collections, such as the Meletopoulos-Nomidis Collection and recently the Yeroulanos Collection. (STEINHAEUER, 1998: 27)

In a later publication about the museum, Steinhauer (2001: 23) mentions the Archaeological Service's re-organization, emphasizing the museum as a "central" museum of the Ephorate. However, until that moment, unique finds have been transferred to the National Archaeological Museum. In his words:

Since 1960, when the Archaeological Service was reorganized after the tribulations of the war (see V. H. Petrakos, History of the Archaeological Service—in Greek), the Museum of Piraeus, as the central Museum of the Ephorate of Attica, collected the finds of excavations, which took place in the area encompassing the Municipality of Piraeus, the island of Salamis, and the Attica Basin (excluding the Municipality of Athens), especially Moschato, Kallithea and the coastal areas (Glyfada, Voula, Vari). However, until at least 1966, any specific items that were considered outstanding continued to be transferred to the National Archaeological Museum. (STEINHAEUER, 2001: 23)

Outstanding excavation findings in Greece were regularly transferred to the National Archaeological Museum. Then Piraeus was no exception. In the summer of 1959, the discovery of the bronze statues "during works on the drains at the corner of Vasileos Georgiou Protou and Philonos Streets, behind the Tenancies garden" (STEINHAEUER, 1998: 45) resulted in significant publicity for Piraeus' antiquities. It promoted the demand for the creation of a new and larger Museum (Figure 2). The Bronze Statues were transferred and remained in the National Archaeological Museum. To quote Steinhauer:

In the post-war period, the 1959 discovery of the great bronze statues, resulted in a great deal of publicity for Piraeus' antiquities, simultaneously bolstering the demand of the people of Piraeus for the creation of a new and larger Museum, something accomplished in 1966, through a decision of Minister of the Presidency Evangelos Savvopoulos, a Piraeus native. So too was Andreas Andrianopoulos, the Minister of Culture to whom we owe the return to Piraeus of the bronze statues, discovered in 1959, which had been transferred for conservation to the National Archaeological Museum and remained there on display. (STEINHAEUER, 2001: 23)

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Figure 2. Archaeological Museum of Piraeus today's museum building.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

This new museum⁹ (Figure 1) was completed in 1966, following a decision of the Minister of Presidency Evangelos Savvopoulos. The new museum building was inaugurated in 1981, although the transfer of the bronze statues from the National Archaeological Museum did not occur at that exact moment. According to Steinhauer (1998), they remained there until 1983 and then returned to the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, transferred by Vasilos Petrakos, where they are located presently. The new museum building is the one visited nowadays and keeps the current exhibition.

Figure 3. Diagram shows the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus's urban context.

Diagram of the AMP urban context

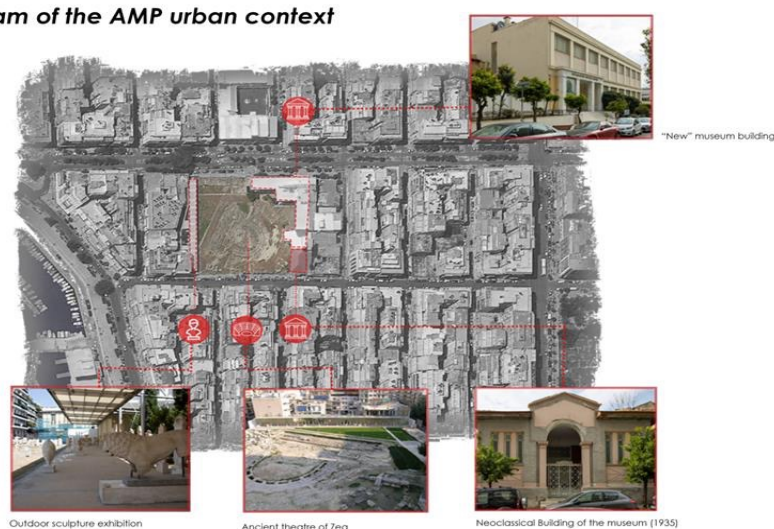


Diagram by the Author.

⁹ During the traineeship, a site visit was conducted to the building, which functions as an extension of the preexisting structure and is linked to it via room 6. The old building is serving as a museum storage and remains inaccessible to the general public.

The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus: Museum and exhibition history

The history of the exhibition organization of the museum is a multi-year gradual process, which began in June 1973. Because of lack of funds, the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus's and Museum of Poros's exhibition were delayed.

In 20th May 1998, in response to the document¹⁰ of the museum's archive, it is mentioned that the exhibition works were a gradual process of two decades, and it was not possible to find an in-depth study of the starting point, except for the installation of the bronze statues of Piraeus.

However, tasks were performed from that date and consisted of different interventions such as the organization of Room 5 (votive reliefs of the first floor) as a typical ancient sanctuary. The representation elements included for example a temple altar, votive reliefs, coming from different areas in Piraeus. The works done in 1984-1985 and the room were organized as a "temple", a faithful replica of the Sanctuary of Cybele of Moschato.

In the years 1996-1997 organization works were carried out in the vestibule of the first floor (Room 1) and the adjacent room (Room 2), and the restoration of the Monument of Kallithea (Room 8) done by the sculptor Stelios Triantis in 1997.

In November of 1998, the re-organization of the museum was finished and it opened to the public. However, in 2004 the museum was closed again for the organization of the outdoor sculpture exhibition and the air conditioning system installation and other repair works. Four years later, on April 3, 2008, the Minister of Culture, Mr. Liapis inaugurated the renovation of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus with the outdoor sculpture exhibition¹¹.

According to Kapetanopoulou (2019) the museum exhibitions are developed in the indoor museum space with an area of 1,044 sq. m, containing about a thousand items. There are also hosted in the courtyard an entire monument, the Ancient Theater of Zea, and an outdoor sculpture exhibition, which is not addressed in this study.

The indoors exhibition is divided into nine rooms occupying the ground and the first floors of the museum – room 7-9, as depicted in the leaflet, occupy the same space, existing an imaginary boundary between them – . The objects displayed in the exhibition are mostly sculptures discovered in Piraeus, Attica Coast, and other areas of Attica under the jurisdiction of the Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. The objects in the exhibition are part of the museum's collection, and all objects in the exhibition are archaeological objects of excavations of different periods and locations.

Comparing the exhibition plan available in the museum's leaflet to the plan provided by Steinhauer (1998), it is understood that the museum exhibition has not changed its "main concept" since 1998. Steinhauer wrote about the exhibition organization and path:

¹⁰ Document number: ΥΠΠΟ / APX / A2 / Φ21 / 14320/869 / 13-3-98.

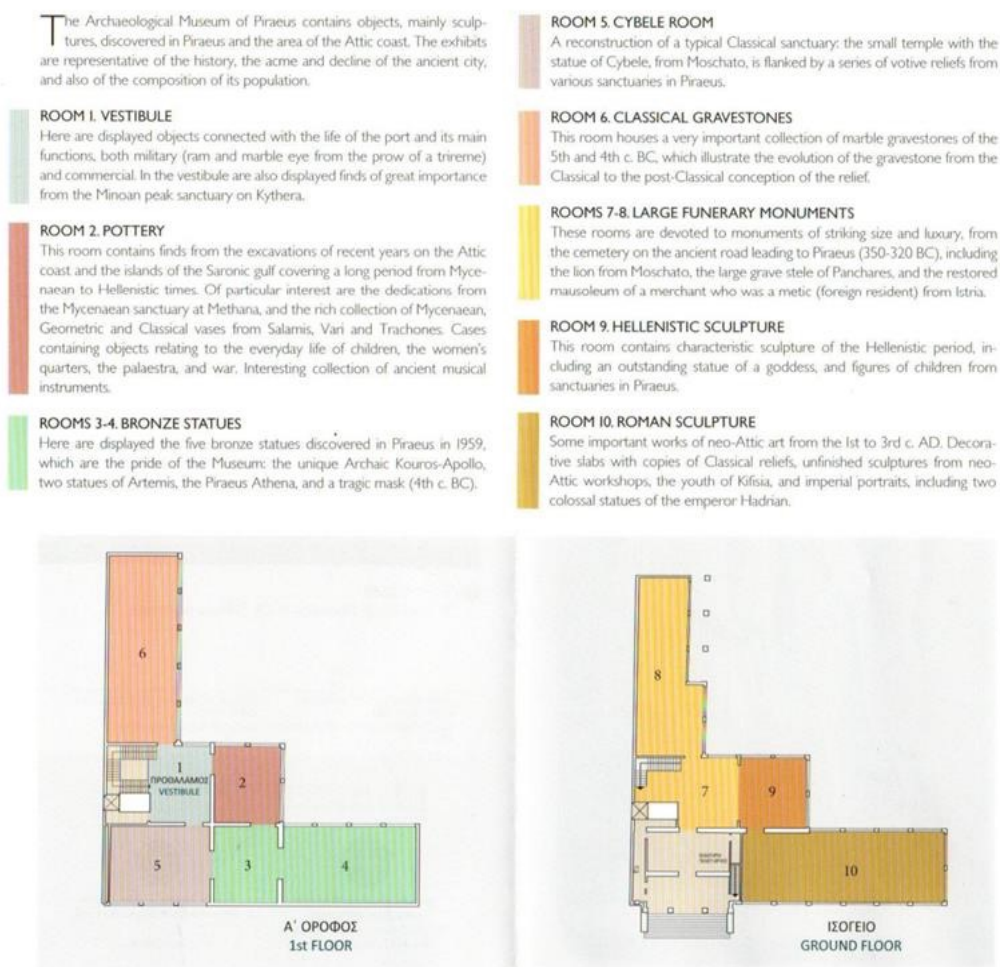
¹¹ Archaiologia.(2008).Εγκαίνια του Αρχαιολογικού Μουσείου του Πειραιά. Available in <<https://www.archaiologia.gr/blog/2008/04/06/εγκαίνια-του-αρχαιολογικού-μουσείου-2/>>

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The map displayed at the entrance, opposite the ticket office, provides information about the archaeological sites mentioned above, a tour of which form a desirable follow-up to a visit to the museum. The path to be followed in the museum rooms is indicated on the diagram opposite the entrance. The visit begins in the vestibule on the first floor, which can be reached by elevator; and continues on the ground floor. The rooms are numbered according to the subject groups and chronological sequence of the exhibits. It ends with a visit to the museum garden, in which is the little Hellenistic theatre of Zea. (STEINHAUER, 1998: 29)

Figure 4 Archaeological Museum of Piraeus Leaflet, 2020.



Even though the exhibition concept has been maintained since 1998, some changes have occurred in the exhibition rooms. The exhibition displays have changed artifacts in some events, for example, the loan¹² of some objects as the imperial statues of Hadrian and Trajan, or, in the case of later additions, as the conical sundial incorporated in room 10 – ROMAN SCULPTURES – at the ground floor, in 2013, which we shall discuss further.

¹² The Imperial statues of Hadrian and Trajan were sent to participate in the exhibition "Hadrian and Greece – Villa Adriana amid classicism and Hellenism", curated by Elena Calandra and Benedetta Adembri, in 2014, at Villa Adriana, in Tivoli, Italy.

Describing the Core Exhibition: Analysis of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus

In this part of the analysis, we are focusing on the core exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus. *Core exhibition* is the definition proposed by Yani Herreman (2004) for what we used to call permanent exhibitions, since they are part of a “core” concept structure, storyline, or discourse within a museum. The study includes data collected both during several visits to the site, and as a trainee, together with other sources. For the site visit, the museum’s leaflet was used to guide the circulation and narrative interpretation of the analysis. Visitors have two options: either following the visitor’s leaflet or making a free visit with no guidance. For the purpose of this article each room is here described in, and then a general analysis of the core exhibition follows.

Exhibition Analysis and description

Designing circulation patterns or paths in museum exhibitions is – in essence – creating a narrative structure, as Belcher (1991) noted, with the assumption that visitors tend to walk in the direction they read texts – from left to right.

In the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, the exhibition circulation is oriented by a map, which allows visitors to follow the suggested route outlined in the museum’s leaflet. The circulation within each room used to be free-flowing, but the *COVID-19* pandemic necessitated the addition of floor markings to indicate a designated circulation path within certain rooms. The circulation pattern followed in this study is illustrated in the diagram above:

Figure 5 Diagram of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus circulation pattern used in this study.

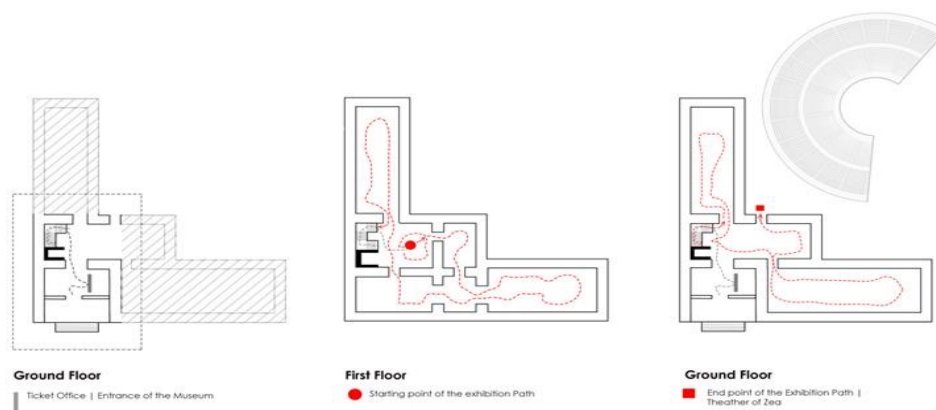


Diagram by the Author.

The visit starts in room 1, at the first floor of the museum, and it is the beginning of the core exhibition. In this room, objects are organized according to two themes: the “sanctuaries” and “the ancient city of Piraeus”. According to the museum’s leaflet: “here are displayed objects connected to the life of the port and its main functions, both military (Ram and Marble Eye from the prow of a Trireme) and commercial. In the vestibule are also displayed findings of great importance from the Minoan Peak sanctuary on Kythera” (Museum’s leaflet, figure 4). According to the museum’s archive document¹³, issued in May 1998, George Steinhauer states that rooms 1 and 2 were organized between 1996-1997.

¹³ The document from May 1998 is a response to the document number ΥΠΠΟ / APX / A2 / Φ21 / 14320/869 / 13-3-98ΥΠΠΟ/ΑΡΧ/Α2/Φ21/14320/869/13-3-98.

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Figure 6: Photography shows the display of the Bronze Ram Trireme (4th century B.C), and the marble eye from a Trireme found in Piraeus.



Photography by the Author, 2021.

Steinhauer (1998) gives some other details about the creation of these two rooms. The museum was granted the restoration of the Kalithea Monument (Located in Room 8), the redesigning of the exhibition, light study by Kirnon Choursoglou, as well as financial support by the President of the Association of the Friends of the Museum; Yannis Polychronopoulos; the Psychas Foundation; and Michalis Toubis.

According to the document¹⁴ issued in July 1998, rooms 1 and 2 cover thematic areas such as daily life, commercial and naval activity of the city port, until Hellenistic period. The document also mentioned that current circulation was mandatory in such a way, because the bronze statues of the 6th-4th BC,

¹⁴ Document: Επανεκθετικές εργασίες στο Μουσείο Πειραιά ΣΧΕΤ: Εγγραφο σας ΥΠΠΟ/ ΑΡΧ/ Α2021/12320/869/13.3.98 Εγγραφο μας αρ. 181320.5. 1998.

and the tombs of the 5th-first half of the 4th BC¹⁵ were already placed on their corresponding floor and could not be placed 'elsewhere.

Room I was organized to introduce the role of ancient Piraeus as a naval base and as a commercial port, – with the display of the metrological relief, and agoranomic inscription, related to the market control in Piraeus during the 1st century B.C. The first role is evident for exhibit objects such as the Bronze Ram Trireme (4th century B.C), and the marble eye (from a Trireme found in Piraeus). According to the same document from the museum's archive, the displays of Room I would not only serve as an introduction to the city of Piraeus, but would at the same time prepare the visitors for the next room. This explains why in Room I one can find these two themes: the sanctuaries and the ancient city co-existing in the same space, as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 7: Diagram of Room I the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus used in this study.

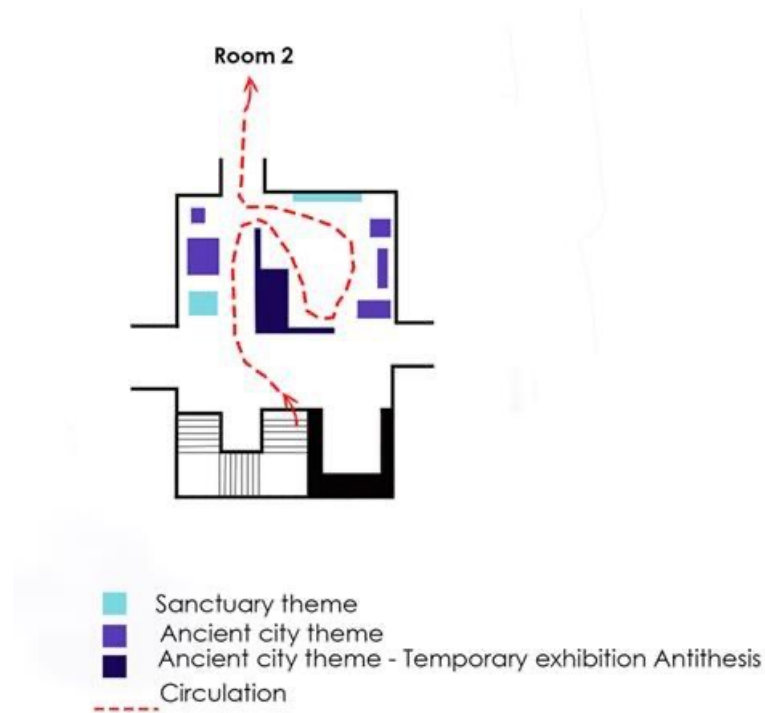


Diagram by the Author.

The sanctuary theme is approached red in two displays: a built-in showcase – wall display – and a glass display. The Wall Display exhibit includes samples of tombs of Attica, and findings from the sanctuary of Artemis Mounichia in Piraeus, the Deme sanctuary at Voula (Halai Aixnonides), as well as as other areas. Steinhauer explains:

The large wall-case opposite the staircase, which contains finds from a number of sanctuaries in Attica dating from the 8th to the 4th c. BC, serves as a prelude to the room devoted to pottery and private life and the Cybele room, opposite and to the right, respectively, of the visitor. In the left part of this case are displayed iron weapons (spearheads, swords), razors, and vessels used in sacrifices, such as cauldrons and spits for roasting the sacrificial victims; they come from the altar of Zeus on the summit of Mount Parnitha (Corinthian pottery of the 7th c. BC) (STEINHAUER, 1998: 33).

15 Room 6 is exhibiting Classical Gravestones from the 5th-first half of the 4th BC.

On the other hand, the glass display exhibits findings from the Minoan Sanctuary at Ayios Georgios, on the island of Kythera, which displays bronze figurines of male and more rarely, female adorants. According to Steinhauer:

A separate case to the right of the entrance to the pottery room is devoted exclusively to finds from the Minoan (MM III-LM I) peak sanctuary of Ayios Georgios on Kythera. This is the first such peak sanctuary to be found outside Crete (excavated by Yannis Sakellarakis in 1992-1993). The sanctuary belonged to a Minoan trading colony, long known on the site of the ancient harbour of Skandeia. There is an impressively large number of finds, most of them belonging to two types. They consist of bronze figurines of male and (more rarely) female adorants with their right hand held to their forehead, or less commonly with both hands on their breast, crossed, or touching their head. Amongst them are parts of larger figurines of high-quality art (STEINHAEUER, 1998: 34).

The glass display of the Minoan sanctuary in Kythera connects Rooms 1 and 2. According to the document¹⁶ the two showcases – wall display and glass display – used to be close to each other in the organization of 1997-1998. However, with the addition of a new showcase, in the middle of the room, as part of the Temporary Exhibition Antithesis in 2017, the glass display has been moved to the side of the bronze ram Trireme and marble eye glass display.

Figure 8: Diagram of Archaeological Museum's room 1 with the organization of 1997-1998.

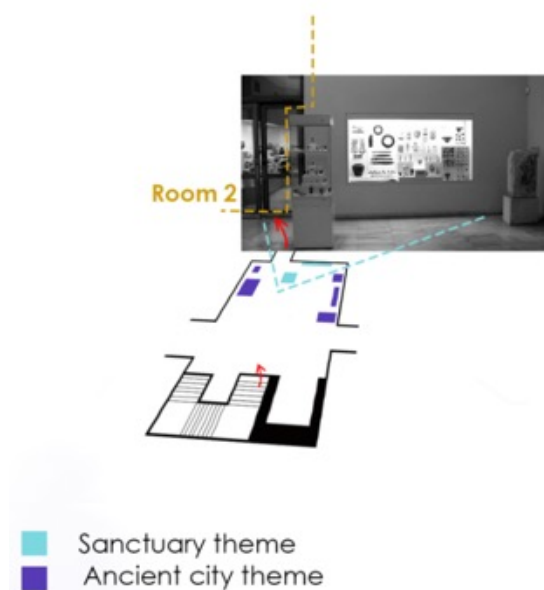


Diagram by the Author.

In the following Room 2 – POTTERY – at the first floor of the museum, we find the following description:

"[...] contains finds from the excavations of recent years on the Attic Coast and the islands of the Saronic gulf covering a long period from Mycenaen to Hellenistic times. Of particular interest are dedications from the Mycenaean Sanctuary at Methana, and the rich collection of Mycenaean Geometric and Classical vases from Salamis, Vari, and Trachones. Cases containing objects relating

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to the everyday life of children, the women's quarters, the palaestra, and war. Interesting Collection of ancient musical instruments" (MUSEUM'S LEAFLET).

There are two large wall showcases in Room 2 (Figure 9 and 10), which present two different themes and have different organization styles. On the left side of the entrance (from room 1 to room 2), the showcase is organized chronologically (Figure 9), showing the ceramics from the Mycenaean to the Hellenistic years. Steinhauer wrote:

The large showcase on the left side of the room contains a selection of pottery and small finds from Piraeus, Kallithea, Tavros, Salamis, Methana and the coastal municipalities from Glyphada to Varkiza. The display is completed by a selection of artefacts (pottery and small finds) from the Meletopoulos-Nomidis Collection and, above all, from the Yeroulanos Collection, the latter coming almost exclusively from the family estate at Trachones. The display follows chronological order. Beginning at the left of the entrance, there is a collection of characteristic pottery from Mycenaean (LH IIIA-C) tombs on Salamis (in the centre, a krater with a depiction of a chariot) (pl. 3), jewelry (necklaces) and figurines of the characteristic Mycenaean cD and '¥ types. 9 The finds in the centre of the case from the recently excavated Mycenaean (LH IIIA/B) sanctuary at Ayios Konstantinos, Methana, are of interest for their rarity, even uniqueness (STEINHAUER, 1998: 35).

Figure 9: Diagram shows the pottery showcase located on the left side of the entrance to Room 2 on the first floor of the museum.



Diagram by the Author

It is important to note that the display features a selection of artefacts, including pottery and small finds, from two donated collections: The Meletopoulos-Nomidis Collection and the Yeroulanos Collection. The exhibition does not address detailed information about the donation or the collectors. According to Pomian (1990), studying collections can help us understand the collector's taste and behavior. Collections can have social and economic dimensions attached to them, whether they are from the public or private domain.

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The opposite showcase (Figure 10) displays objects of everyday life, including sets of gifts from children's tombs and the musical instruments from the poet's tomb of Daphne. The showcase is organized in three sections: the world of children (micrographs, toys, and representations of the life of a child); the life of women; the world of man in classical Greece (weapons, gymnastic instruments, and tools);

Figure 10. Diagram shows the pottery showcase located on the right side of the entrance to Room 2 on the first floor of the museum

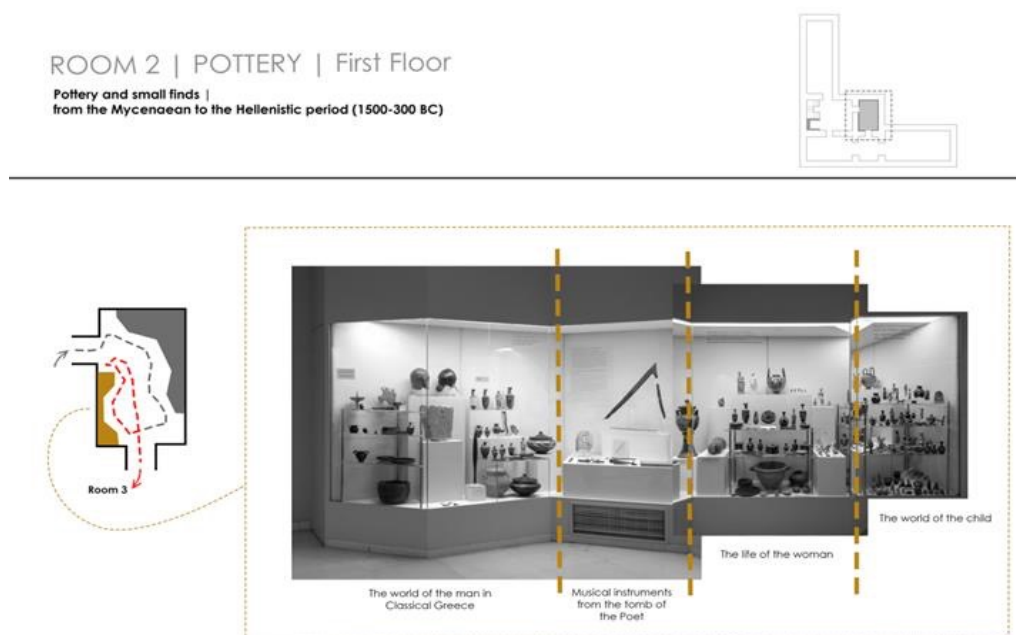


Diagram by the Author

It is important to note that, in 1979, the National Archaeological Museum opened an exhibition called *The Child of Antiquity* representing the world of children during the “International Year of the Child” proclaimed in the same year by Unesco. According to Barbara Philippaki:

The objects gathered in this exhibition are mostly clay statuettes, terracottas, small marble reliefs and small clay vases representing children, their toys and their pet animals, all selected from the rich collection of the National Museum. Most of them belong to the Hellenistic period. (PHILIPPAKI, 1979: 200)

The Child of Antiquity was one of a series of exhibitions on the private life of the ancient Greeks and was an attempt to prove to the general public that the ancient so called remote world was not so different from the children's world of yesterday, or today. It was meant to bring the ancient world to today's world, and it expressed the conviction that museums should be a part of the education and popularization of archaeology. Barbara Philippaki, about the exhibition, wrote:

The idea was to show that this remote world was not so very different from the children's world of yesterday and to some degree even of that of children today, poor and dry though it has become through technology. We have divided our material into small subject units, i.e. babies in swaddling clothes in the arms of their mother or faithful old nurse; clay feeders; toys, many toys; small vases used at the Anthesteria, a festival in honour of Dionysus, in which children took part at the age of 3, holding such a clay vase decorated with scenes from their lives, school, athletics, games; even funerary reliefs

and vases with scenes and epigrams giving an idea of how the Greeks faced the loss of a child (PHILIPPAKI, 1979: 201)

The National Archaeological Museum has had a profound influence on the presentation of archaeology within the country as mentioned by Mouliou (1997). Thus, it is reasonable to surmise that the 1997 exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus was likely inspired by the National Archaeological Museum.

Room 3 (Figure 11) is distinct from room number 2 in several aspects such as organization style, type of objects, historical period, and excavation location. Unlike room 2, which displays an object-oriented approach showcasing the “evolution” of pottery, room 3 is presented in an ancient art object-oriented organization style. This style is also followed in most rooms ensuing room 3. It is important to note that there is no connection between the objects displayed in room 3 and those in room 2.

The close relation between art history and classical archaeology was established by Winckelmann, as these two disciplines were the same and resulted in an object-oriented approach adopted by many archaeological exhibitions. It is also mentioned by Mouliou that:

During the inter-war period, the tendency was to approach classical archaeology largely as the history of ancient art whereas in the post-war period Greek archaeology has been mainly field and lab-oriented, and therefore more scientific, drawing its technical from several means provided by hard sciences (MOULIOU, 1997: 51).

Figure 11. Diagram shows Room 3 display organization, located at the first floor of the museum.

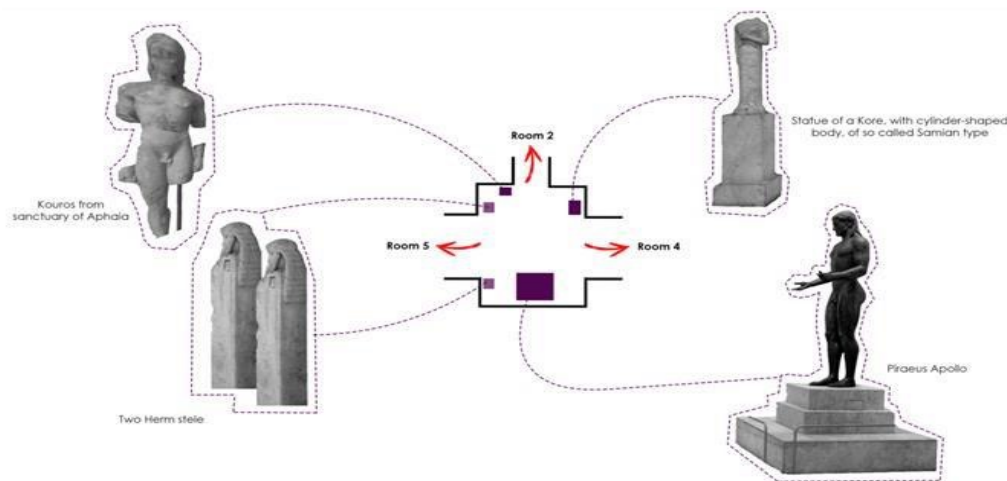


Diagram by the Author

The same subject connects the objects displayed in rooms 3 and 4. According to the description of the museum’s leaflet: “Here are displayed the five bronze statues discovered in Piraeus in 1959, which are the pride of the museum: the unique Archaic Kouros-Apollo, two statues of Artemis, the Piraeus Athena and a tragic Mask (4th c. BC)” (Museum’s leaflet, figure 4). It is known that the bronze statues are significant objects for the museum because its findings were the big impulse for the demanding the new museum building construction. These objects and other important findings used to remain at the National Archaeological Museum until 1983, returning to the museum in Piraeus when transferred by Vasilos Petrakos. Quoting Steinhauer enables to know more details about the

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discovery of the bronze statues and their return to the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus:

The four bronze statues and the tragic mask displayed in rooms 3 and 4 were discovered in the summer of 1959, together with three marble pieces (two hermaic stelai and a marble statuette of an oriental Artemis in the Cybele room), during work on the drains at the corner of Vasileos Georgiou Protou and Philonos Streets, behind the Tinaneios garden. It was evident from the way they had been placed and the position in which they were found that they had been stored in a room in the harbour, possibly in 87 BC, to prevent them from being carried off, and were then buried when the storehouse was destroyed by fire. Soon after their discovery, the bronzes were taken to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens for conservation, and remained there until 1983, when they returned to the Piraeus Museum. (STEINHAEUER, 1998: 45)

Figure 12. Diagram shows Piraeus bronze statues distributed in room 3 and 4.

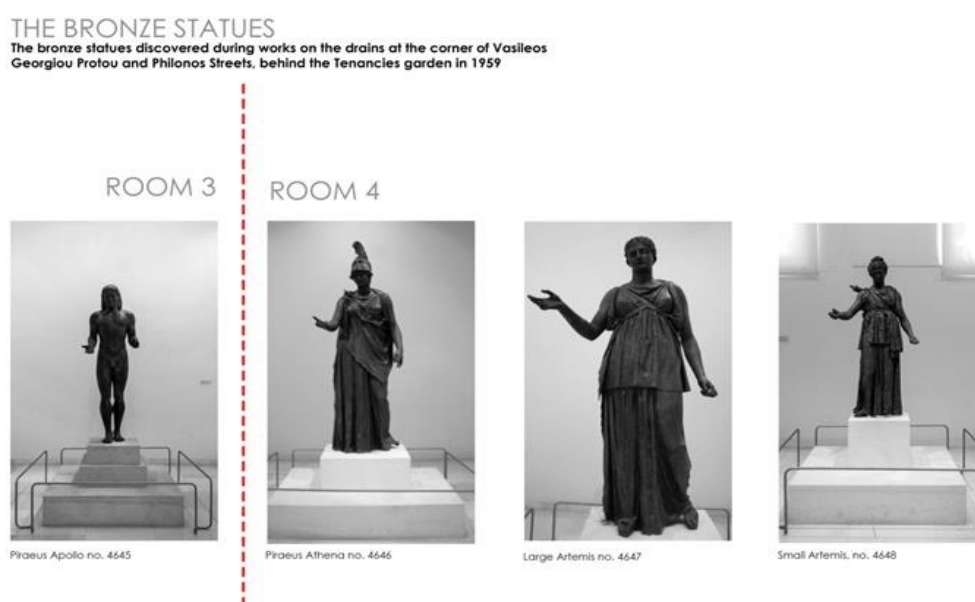


Diagram by the Author

There was an in-depth study for the installation of the bronze statues of Piraeus following the inauguration of the Museum, in 1981. According to the document¹⁷ in the museum's archive issued in July 1998, there is no approved or non-re-exposure study in the archives of the Ephorate, except for the general approval of the installation of the bronze statues on the occasion of the inauguration of the Museum in 1982.

The bronze statues are the most important pieces of the museum, those it is proud of. According to Steinhauer (1998, p: 45) "the sculptures are some of the very few - about 35 in all – large-scale bronze statues of all periods to survive anywhere in the world. The Piraeus bronzes come from the world of great art". Their location in the Room 3 and 4 is very likely to be strategic. In this way, the circulation in the museum obliges the visitors to pass by most of the rooms of the museum (only with the exception of three rooms, number 10, 8, and 6), in order to reach the bronze statues (Figure 13).

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Figure 13. The diagram illustrates the distribution of rooms that visitors pass through in order to reach the bronze statues, with the exception of three rooms (numbered 10, 8, and 6) highlighted in blue

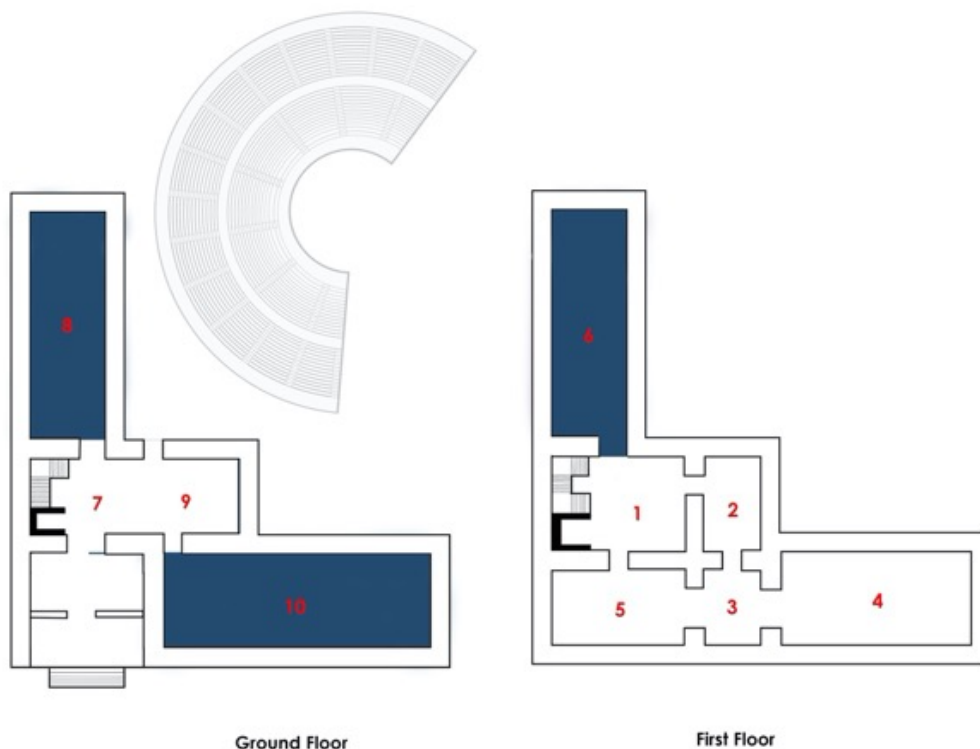


Diagram by the Author.

In Room 3 is a room is not displayed only the bronze Statue of Piraeus Apollo found in Piraeus excavation in 1959. It is exhibited also in the room two Herm stele, a copy of the archaistic Hermes Propylaeus of Alcamenes, a Statuette of a Kouros from the sanctuary of Aphaia, in Aegina, and a Statue of a Kore, with cylinder-shaped body, of so called Samian type (Figure 11). The connection between the statues in the room is that they all belong to the same archaic period, since the Statuette of a Kouros is from a sanctuary in Aegina, a small island in the Saronic Gulf, near southwest of Athens, and is part of the Attica region Greece.

Another important point to note is that the two Herm steles located next to the door between Room 3 and Room 5 – also known as the Cybele Room – serve a dual function: one as an object of Room 3 and another as part of the “scenography” of Room 5. Steinhauer (1998) mentioned that the two archaic statues were added to the exhibition in 1998, to enhance the room:

The two hermaic stelai **nos. 3858 and 3859**, dating from the 1st c. BC, which stands at the entrance to this room, were found together with the bronze statues. They are fine examples of a well-known type of stele that was used as a boundary marker for private, public (stoas, gymnasia) and sacred areas. The head reproduces the original Archaistic type of the (bearded) Hermes that was created by Alkamenes, the pupil of Pheidias. The rectangular stele with the inset male member (missing) and the horizontal beam was a kind of aniconic depiction of the deity. (STEINHAUER, 1998:57)

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Figure 14: Photography shows the two Herm steles at the entrance of Room 5.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

In room 4 – **BRONZE STATUES** – at the first floor, there are the bronze statues of the 4th c. BC, and differently from the previous room (Room 3), all objects are connected for originating from the same excavation during 1959, in Piraeus, and, besides, they have the same material (Bronze). The reunion of objects with the same material is typical museum practice since they need the same environmental conditions for their conservation. In this room, the two bronze statues of Artemis and the Piraeus Athena, a tragic Mask, and a showcase devoted to parts of the bronze sheathing of a shield decorated with a relief quadriga are exhibited. According to Steinhauer (1998), the two bronze sheathing of a shield were found together with the bronze statues, but they do not belong to the Piraeus Athena.

Figure 15. Photography of Room 4 shows the bronze statues.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

Room 5 – CYBELE ROOM – (Figure 15) at the first floor was organized as a faithful replica of the sanctuary of Cybele of Moschato. According to the museum's leaflet, "a reconstruction of a typical classical sanctuary: the small temple with the statue of Cybele, from Moschato, is flanked by a series of votive reliefs from various sanctuaries in Piraeus" (Museum's leaflet, figure 4). The tasks were performed in 1984-1985. According to Steinhauer:

The room itself has been laid out as a typical ancient sanctuary. The main elements in the reconstruction - the temple, altar, votive reliefs and perirrhanterion - come from various sanctuaries of Piraeus and the surrounding municipalities. The kernel of it consists of the small temple with the cult statue of Cybele, Mother of the Gods, no. 3851, which was found at Moschato, at the junction between Thermopylon and Xenophontos Streets, near the church of the Metamorphosis. The temple itself is still preserved in situ and the one in the museum is an exact copy. (STEINHAUER, 1998: 57)

The objects used to compose the representation of the temple included an altar, as well as votive reliefs from various areas in Piraeus.

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Figure 16. Photography shows Room 5 – Cybele Room – of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

Room 6 – CLASSICAL GRAVESTONES – is the last room visited at the first floor. It was reorganized chronologically during 1998. The following sequential rooms exhibit objects from Classical to Roman times. Room 6 and the following rooms (7, 8, 9 and 10) display in an object-oriented organization style of ancient art. According to the museum's leaflet Room 6 "houses a very important collection of marble gravestones of the 5th and 4th c. BC, which illustrate the evolution of the gravestones from the classical to post classical conception of the relief" (Museum's leaflet, figure 4). The wooden coffin, a rare find from a 4th c. BC grave at Aigaleo, previously mentioned by Steinhauer displayed in Room 1 is now here reallocated here (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Photography of Room 6 shows the wooden coffin, at the end of the room on the right side bellow the window.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

Room 7 – LARGE FUNERARY MONUMENTS – and room 9 – HELLENISTIC SCULPTURE –, at the ground floor, are the start point of the visit in reality. Before reaching Room 1 on the first floor, the visitors had already passed this “two spaces”. There is no concrete spatial differentiation between Room 7 and 9 (Figure 18), which also gives access to the Theater of Zea and the outdoor sculpture exhibition.

Figure 18. Diagram shows Room 7 and 9, used in this study.

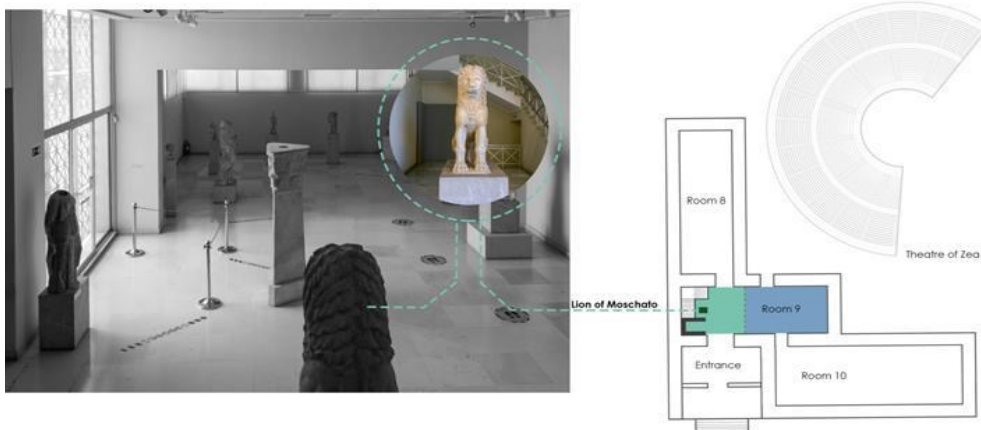


Diagram by the Author.

According to the museum's leaflet, Room 7-8 – LARGE FUNERARY MONUMENTS are devoted to monument of striking size and luxury, from the cemetery on the ancient road leading to Piraeus (350-320 BC), including the lion from Moschato, the Large grave stele of Panchares, and the restored mausoleum of a merchant who was a metec (foreign resident) from Istria. In Room 7, the object n. 2677 – The funerary lion from Moschato is displayed, a similar one from the Lion in Venice.

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In Room 8, visitors can find a large collection of Large Funerary Monuments dating back to the classical period, including the restored Mausoleum (Funerary monument M.Π.2413-2529, also called Kallithea Monument). This monument was restored in 1997 by the sculptor Stelios Triantis and belongs to a metic (foreign resident), merchant from Istria. It is a crucial exhibit in our analysis as well as in the room and stands out prominently, as shown in figure 19. Firstly, we start with the monument's label transcript below:

1) M.Π.2413-2529

Grave monument of Nikeratos and his son Polyxenos, metics from Istros on the Black Sea coast. This unique temple-like grave monument was probably influenced by the contemporary Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. An Amazonomachia frieze is on the base, above which is the grave naiskos in the ionic order. The names of the two men and a frieze (lions, bills) are on the steps of the crepidoma. The youth, flanked by his father and a servant with himation and the (missing) ustensils of the palaistra, stands in front of the back panel of Hymettian marble. The sculpture types of the youth and of the servant have clearly been influenced by the works of Lysippos. Painted architectural mouldings and traces of polychromy on the frieze are preserved. Found in Kallithea. Around 330 B.C.

Taking the M.Π.2413-2529 as an example, we see a description focused on the art piece presentation of the monument, in which the image depiction is prominent, the use of specialized vocabulary is seen as well, although findings location is included. The monument, however, carries more than artistic value.

Figure 19. Photography of Room 8, with the monument M.Π.2413-2529, also called Kallithea Monument.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

The object in question (M.Π.2413-2529 – Kallithea Monument) as *sémiophore* museum object represents the foreign population in Piraeus, and could be a crucial object in a narrative construction. It shows that the population of Piraeus had mixed origins in ancient times, and the place had an immigrant community with a variety of economic status such as nowadays. The object is also an

example, of a colossal funerary monument, reason why Demetrios of Phaleron, the regent of Athens at that time, restricted the form and size of tombstones with a second antiluxury decree, where it was permitted only small tombstones such as *columellae*, *mensae*, and *labella*. According to Shea (2021):

Because of the conspicuous consumption of colossal funerary monuments, such as the so-called Kallithea Monument (ca. 320) erected by metics from Istria on the Black Sea (modern-day Romania), a second antiluxury decree was passed in 317/16 .10 Cicero relates that Demetrios of Phaleron, when he was the regent of Athens, restricted the form and size of tombstones: only small columns (*columellae*) no taller than three cubits, tables (*mensae*) resembling altars, and small basins (*labella*) were permitted. These simple non-descript columnar monuments became the most popular new form of funerary commemoration and remained so until the Roman period, when grave stelai returned to Athens. (SHEA, 2021: 145)

As already mentioned, there is no a physical barrier between the Room 9 and 7. They share the same space. Room 9 – HELLENISTIC SCULPTURE – at the ground floor is part of the transition from the classical to Roman period, and, according to the museum’s leaflet “contains characteristic sculpture from the Hellenistic period, including outstanding statue of a goodness, and figure of children from sanctuaries in Piraeus” (Museum’s leaflet, figure 4).

Figure 20: Photography shows Room 9 of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.



Photography by the Author, 2020.

According to the description in the museum’s leaflet, Room 10 – Roman Sculptures – at the ground floor is a room with “some important works of neo-Attic art from the 1st to 3rd century A.D, decorative slabs with copies of Classical reliefs, unfinished sculptures from neo-Attic workshops from the south of Kifisia, and imperial portraits, including two colossal statues of the emperor Hadrian” (Museum’s leaflet, figure 4). In this room, concerning the objects in the display, there are plaques with identical representations in relief depicting various themes, such as scenes of Amazonomachia, funerary stele, sculptures, and statues of Roman Emperors, including Hadrian, Trajan, and Claudius. As already

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mentioned, in 1998, it was organized chronologically. The connection between these objects is based on their belonging to the same (Roman) period.

Figure 21. Photography shows Room 10 – ROMAN SCULPTURES – at the Ground Floor of the museum.

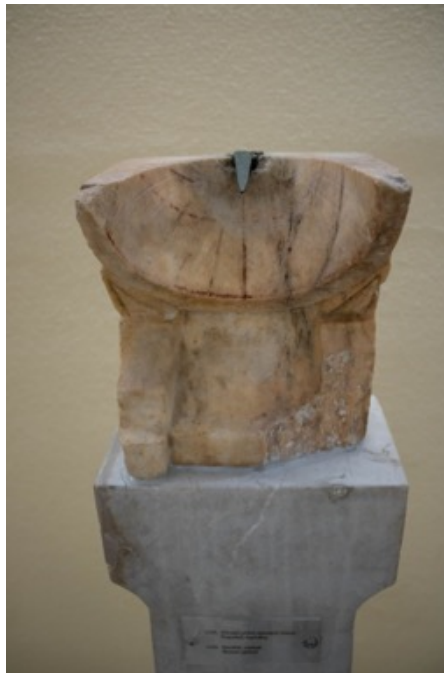


Photography by the Author, 2020.

However, there is an exception: object number 1133, a marble Conical Sundial used for measuring time. This sundial is unique among the other objects in that it was used in everyday life. The marble Conical Sundial was added to the room in September 2013, when it was moved from the warehouse and displayed for the first time¹⁸. It is only known that the object comes from the Meletopoulos Collection.

¹⁸ As informed in the blog of the Ephorates by Dora, E. (2013). ΦΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΣΚΙΑ ΜΕΤΡΟΥΝ ΤΟ ΧΡΟΝΟ Available in: <<https://efadyat.wordpress.com/2013/09/>>

Figure 22. Photography shows the object number 1133, a marble Conical Sundial located in Room 10



Photography by the Author, 2020.

As in Room I, the addition of the conical marble Sundial displayed in Room 10 changes the meaning of the object itself through the context created in the room by the objects surrounding it. In this case, we may ask: Can the marble Conical Sundial be a piece of art, an object with artistic value? What is the relation of the objects in the room (decorative slabs with copies of Classical reliefs, unfinished sculptures, and imperial portraits) to the marble Conical Sundial? Is the Conical marble Sundial displayed there only because it belongs to the same period? Despite the absence of conclusive answers to these questions, they compel us to contemplate the interdependence and contextual significance of objects within an exhibition, particularly when situated in close proximity to one another.

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Figure 23. Historical Evolution Diagram of the core exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.

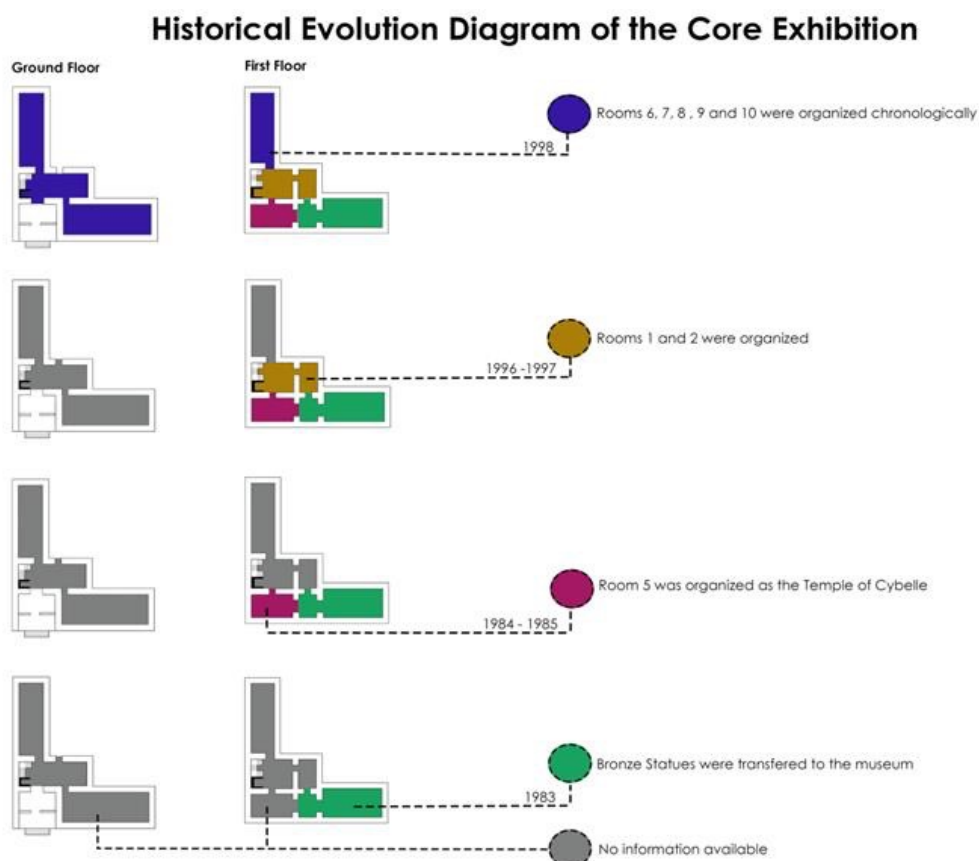


Diagram by the Author.

5.1 Remains of The *Temporary Exhibition Antithesis*

The *Temporary Exhibition Antithesis*¹⁹ took place in the museum from the 12th of December 2017 to the 31st of December 2018. Regarding the exhibition, according to Stella Chryssoulaki and Dora Evangelou:

the Antithesis exhibition lays emphasis on the significance of the connection between the city's image and its inhabitants and highlights the different identities that have co-existed in the city in the course of time. The forms of division within society with reference to wealth, the types of people's freedom and their ability or inability to participate in the various aspects of social life are the tool of an alternative narrative. The exhibition scenario makes effective use of exhibits of the permanent collection and connects them with new stories, while it also includes objects kept in the museum's store-rooms, as well as finds from the recent excavations conducted by the Ephorate. (CHRYSSOULAKI, EVANGELOU, 2021: 318)

After the 2018 exhibition ended, some elements remained in the museum. One of these was a showcase in Room I that has since become a permanent part of the core exhibition. This showcase is related to the theme of "the ancient city of Piraeus" and provides additional information on the topic. However, when the temporary exhibition was added, the display of the Minoan

¹⁹ Dora, E. (2017). ANTITHESIS – ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΗ ΕΚΘΕΣΗ ΣΤΟ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ. Available in: < <https://efadyat.wordpress.com/2017/12/>>

sanctuary in Kythera was displaced from its previous location in 1996-1997. This led to a loss of contextualization, as the sanctuary was no longer connected to the wall display and Room 2. As a result, the narration of the room became unclear and relation as planned was lost. This raises questions about why a room that focuses on Piraeus and the Attica coast would feature a display about the Minoan sanctuary in Kythera. It's also unclear how the sanctuary relates to the nearby displays of the Bronze Ram Trireme and marble eye glass.

These elements added to the exhibition over time have changed the interrelation between the objects, creating new relations to them that consequently changed its meaning, specially because spatial location is also a part of a narrative creation. This happened not only with Room 1, but also with other rooms in the museum, for example, according to Steinhauer (1998: 34) in front of the entrance to Room 1 a funerary monument was displayed, a wooden coffin – rare find from a 4th c. BC grave at Aigaleo. The object was reallocated to room 6 of the museum, with other monuments from the same period. (Figure 17)

In Room 8, the text panel from the temporary exhibition on the wall near the Kallithea monument can be identified as part of the temporary exhibition since they have the same visual identity, such as fonts, colors, and icons, as the exhibition (Figure 24). The text panel in this room discusses social inequality observed in the transformation of houses from the classical to the Hellenistic period.

Figure 24. Diagram shows inter textual elements such as the same fonts, colors, and icons as the exhibition of text panels left, from the Temporary Exhibition Antithesis.

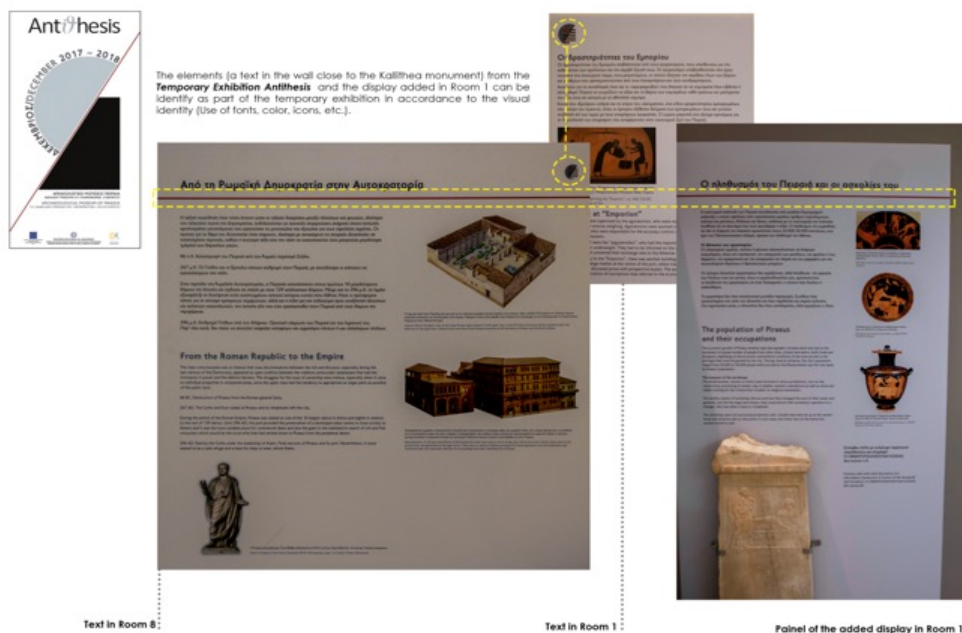


Diagram by the Author.

6. Final Considerations

Although in terms of museum management and exhibition design many advances have happened in the field, the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus does not have an independent policy or mission statement document, since it belongs to the Ephorate. The current exhibition does not reflect an updated institutional

identity. In this case, it reflects an outdated philosophy or institutional view of the museum, in which the core exhibition still carries the imprint of its last reorganization in 1998, where the museum was planned to be the main museum of the II Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, holding archaeological finds mainly from different areas, such as Piraeus, Salamis, and the coast as far as Varkiza.

This plan can be perceived in the core exhibition analyzes, where not only objects from Piraeus are exhibited but also those coming from areas of the Ephorates jurisdiction. Moreover, it is also not very clear which objects form the museum collection, since over the years, different ways of acquisitions were held, such as the objects from the different excavations held in the jurisdiction, and the donations from private collections, as the Meletopoulos-Nomidis Collection and the Yeroulanos Collection.

It is uncertain how the two showcases in room 2 are related to each other. While both showcases may relate to the ancient “daily life,” one presents an evolutionary approach to interpreting pottery, while the other focuses on the performance of social and gender roles in ancient times. Furthermore, the objects on display are unrelated to the two showcases: either they are from different excavations, time periods, or they have distinct primary functions. However, it is noticeable that these modifications, such as small object location changes, upgrades, or the elements left behind the temporary exhibition, which occurred later, demonstrate the desire for changes in the display, which are often not possible for different reasons – and difficulties that museum professionals can well understand – concerning budgets, projects, and personnel.

The museum has a vast collection of artifacts, providing countless possibilities for creating future exhibitions and narratives, which could contribute to the formation and awareness of citizens. It is also essential to highlight the lack of columellae, mensae, and labella – monuments not present in the exhibition room. Its absence reinforcing the aesthetic art view focus of these presentations. One might ask whether these objects, which may not be traditionally considered aesthetically pleasing, still have enough historical or cultural significance to warrant its inclusion in the exhibit.

The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus has an intrinsic relation to the city, given that its core collection of antiquities comprises funerary monuments found in situ in the ancient city’s northern cemetery, as well as objects unearthed during the city’s construction and refurbishing. These artifacts and monuments offer unique insight into the historical past of the city. Therefore, the museum has always considered the ancient city at its “core”, as it is both a reflection of the past as well as a legacy for the modern city’s development. The modern city of Piraeus is intertwined with the ancient one, as evidenced by the presence of the Theater in the museum’s garden. As such, the museum not only provides insight into the life and function of the ancient city, but also serves as a window into the evolution of the modern city. Considering the role of museums and highlighting the museum’s responsibility towards the urban landscape as an essential element in interpreting museums and collections, the city of Piraeus provides the original context for some of the objects in it. This creates a unique relationship between the museum and the city. Additionally, the cityscape can be a great source of inspiration for future exhibitions.

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