

# News in Conservation



The e-paper from the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

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## Acropolis Museum and CSI Sittingbourne joint winners of the 2012 IIC Keck Award



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Giorgos Vitsaropoulos

Conservation works on the Caryatids - the Kore from the south porch of the Erechtheion temple

LONDON – The 2012 IIC Keck Award was awarded jointly to the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece, in collaboration with the Institute of Electronic Structure & Laser at the Foundation for Research and Technology in Crete (IESL-FORTH) and to Anglo-Saxon CSI: Sittingbourne in Kent in the United Kingdom. IIC's Council recognised that both institutions had, from their respective situations, made a positive contribution to public awareness of the practice and beneficial results of heritage conservation.

**The Acropolis Museum** won the award for the conservation and restoration of the Caryatids with the use of laser technology, in collaboration with the **Institute of Electronic Structure & Laser at the Foundation for Research and Technology in Crete (IESL-FORTH)**. The award recognised the Acropolis Museum's successful approach in providing visitors with the opportunity to observe procedures that until recently were undertaken in the conservation laboratories, away from the public view.

### From Students to Emerging Professionals –

The winners of the Student Poster Award at the 2012 IIC Vienna Congress talk of their experience

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The Caryatids are sculpted female figures serving as an architectural support in place of traditional columns or pillars, in this case supporting the roof of the south porch of the 'Erechtheion'. Originally a set of six, one of the Caryatids is now in the British Museum. Threatened by environmental pollution, the remaining sculptures were moved to the old Acropolis Museum in 1979 and again in 2007 when they were transferred to the new Acropolis Museum.

The conservation project started in December 2010, and included documentation, condition assessment, fixing of unstable fragments, structural restoration, removal of corrosive factors and cleaning of black crust and soot deposits by means of laser technology.

The surface cleaning was achieved by means of a custom made and innovative laser system developed by IESL-FORTH in Heraklion, Crete. The laser is capable of operating at two wavelengths simultaneously (Infrared at 1064nm and Ultraviolet at 355nm) and is able to remove thick pollution accumulations in a controlled and safe way for both the object and the operator. The combination of the two wavelengths ensures that no discoloration or damaging phenomena occur on the original substrate, while revealing its unique surface.

The conservation process was conducted in a purpose-built laboratory temporarily housed in a specifically designed platform that "embraces" and isolates one sculpture at a time. This platform is moved to different heights, so that conservators obtain optimum access along the surface of the Kore.

Complying with strict health and safety regulations, protective curtains shielding the laser beam used in the conservation process surround the work area. Visitors can follow the work carried out behind the protective curtains via a camera connected to a monitor outside the laboratory platform. When conservators are not working, a recording of this process is displayed on the monitor. Since December 2010, more than 2 million visitors have been able to follow the work of the conservators.

For further information about the project including a video of the conservation work, please visit:

<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr>

<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/content/conserving-caryatids>

<http://www.iesl.forth.gr/research/project.aspx?id=131>

[http://www.forth.gr/index\\_main.php?l=e&c=20&i=288](http://www.forth.gr/index_main.php?l=e&c=20&i=288)



© Acropolis Museum. Photo Giorgos Vitsaropoulos  
Visitors watching a video showing conservators cleaning the Caryatids with advanced laser technology

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The International Institute  
for Conservation of Historic and  
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3, Birdcage Walk, London,  
SW1H 3JJ, UK  
Telephone +44 (0)20 7799 5500  
Fax +44 (0)20 7799 4961  
[www.iiconservation.org](http://www.iiconservation.org)  
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Editor  
**Barbara Borghese**  
[news@iiconservation.org](mailto:news@iiconservation.org)

Advertising  
**Graham Voce**  
[iic@iiconservation.org](mailto:iic@iiconservation.org)

Format | Production Design  
**Barbara Borghese**

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