



VATHY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM

SAMOS

In August 1906, the businessman Alexandros Paschalis undertook personally to finance the erection of a building to house an Archaeological Museum, Library and Archive on Samos. The foundation stone was laid at an impressive ceremony on 16-8-1909 and the building was ready in 1913. After the Second World War the Archive and Library were transferred to a different building and the Museum received its present form. The progress made by the excavations at the Heraion, however, created a pressing need for the addition of a second building, which was erected at the expense of Volkswagen and inaugurated in June 1987.

These two Museum buildings – the old and the new – house a display of treasures of priceless value, mainly from the sanctuary of Hera, which contained “the largest of all the temples of which we know”, as Herodotus notes (III, 60). The cult in the Heraion of a mother goddess who was later identified with Hera dates from at least the second half of the 2nd millennium BC. To her, pious pilgrims from the ends of the earth offered their dedications.

The old building is devoted to objects of minor art, while the new houses sculptures. All the exhibits, without exception, are impressive examples of the Ionian art that flourished on Samos, as in the other cities of Ionia, in the Archaic period. All of them exude the atmosphere of the unique Greek civilisation that achieved such grandeur and set its seal on the centuries that followed.

Old building

The **ground-floor vestibule** contains examples of Late Hellenistic-Early Roman sculpture. In the **north room 1** is displayed utilitarian pottery from Samian workshops of the Prehistoric, Geometric and Archaic periods (cups, skyphoi, oinochoai, hydrias, amphoras, cooking pots, pithoi, lamps, etc.) from a cistern and numerous wells in the sanctuary. Prominent amongst the most important finds of Prehistoric period are a *depas amphikypellon* (two-handled cup), beak-spouted jugs and an enormous pithos. This room also contains stone tools, axes, obsidian blades, rubbers, clay loomweights, bronze artefacts and tiny models of altars.

South room 2 on the ground floor is adorned by examples of every category of exhibit in the Museum: pottery, minor arts and coins from the Archaic period to Late Antiquity, dedications from Sparta, Athens, Corinth, Cyprus, and also imports from the Near East, Syria, Assyria, Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus and Phoenicia. Impressive items include oyster shells with incised decoration from Syria, a Syrian incense-burner (9th-7th c. BC), Egyptian faience amulets (8th-6th c. BC), the sacred Apis made of Egyptian blue, human figures holding animals in their arms as offerings to the great goddess, votive shields and palm branches, small models of houses dating from the 7th c. BC, an ingot in the shape of a wheel with the inscription “...Argeios dedicated me”, a reclining lion with a votive inscription in its mane: “Eumnastos of Sparta to Hera”, dating from the 6th c. BC, a bronze rhyton ending in a bull's head, with an engraved inscription: “I am the sacred (vessel), which Diagoras dedicated to Hera ... greetings o priest”, and the name “Charilaos” in its mouth, dating from the late 7th c. BC. The inscriptions HΔ and HPH painted on clay cult vessels indicate that these vases belong to Hera. The large number of iron spits, the bones from the skull of a sacrificial ox, the clay models of cakes in a baking pan, the ladle with the inscription “Hera”, and the libation bowls, all reveal details of the cult ritual and sacrifices in honour of the goddess.

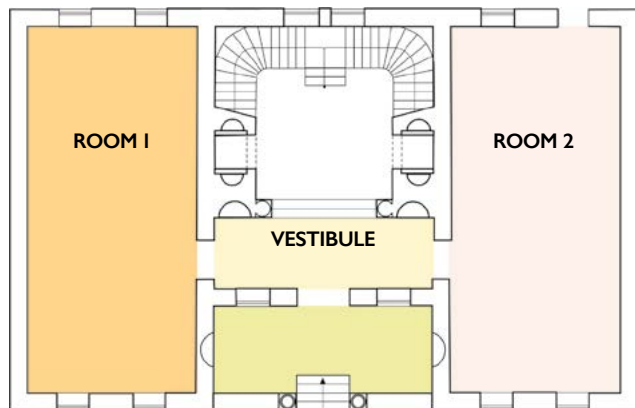
Decrees, other inscriptions and inscribed stone blocks that marked the boundary of various precincts dedicated to the gods, and a relief with a depiction of *erotidis* (cupids) offering gifts to Hera (2nd c. BC) are important exhibits in this room.

In the **first-floor vestibule** is displayed a collection unique in Greece, consisting of wooden statuettes, models of ships, small dedications, fragments of furniture, vases and vessels from the 7th-6th c. BC.

North room 3 on the first floor houses a very important collection of bronze objects dedicated to the great goddess: a large number of griffin finials that adorned the rims of huge cauldrons, cut-outs and votive shields with engraved representations, and the *prostemia* (parts of the tackle)

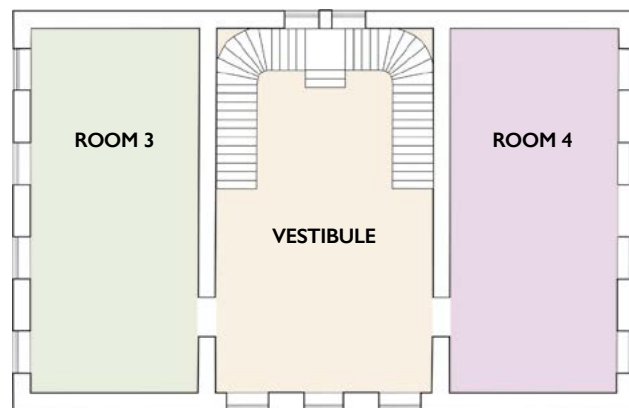
OLD BUILDING

GROUND FLOOR



OLD BUILDING

FIRST FLOOR





of horses. The forged, engraved scene of Herakles fighting the triple-bodied Geryones and his two-headed dog makes one *prosternidio* a true masterpiece of Ionian art. There is also an important collection of bronze statuettes of kouroi, korai and animals. Prominent amongst these are a kore from eastern Greece, horsemen, a kouros holding an offering, with the votive inscription ΣΜΙΚ(Ρ)ΟΣ ΗΡΗΙ ("Smikros to Hera") on the thigh, *prometopides* of horses made of bronze sheet from Syria, a large number of dedications from Egypt, dating from the 9th-6th c. BC, Assyria, Mesopotamia and the Caucasus, a tripod fragment with a relief frieze, of the 12th c. BC, bells from the Near East, and libation bowls and banquet vessels of the 7th-6th c. BC. Many of the figurines of animals, especially bulls, ponies and deer, were dedicated to the sanctuary in the late 8th c. BC, symbolised agricultural abundance and fertility, and came from Illyria, Macedonia, Rhodes, and the Peloponnese.

The **south room 4** has a display of Cypriot figurines and pottery of the Geometric and Archaic period from Samos, Corinth, Rhodes, and Asia Minor, and modelled Ionian vases of the 6th c. BC. Small faience objects from Egypt, oyster shells from Syria, and gold, glass and amber objects are some of the dedications to the goddess. The ivory dedications are unrivalled masterpieces of art: a youth executing a leap in a dance – a lyre attachment –, combs from Andalusia, a Lakonian relief with Perseus slaying Medusa, all 7th c. BC works, and a lion in a spectacular leap, from an Egyptian tomb of the 13th c. BC.

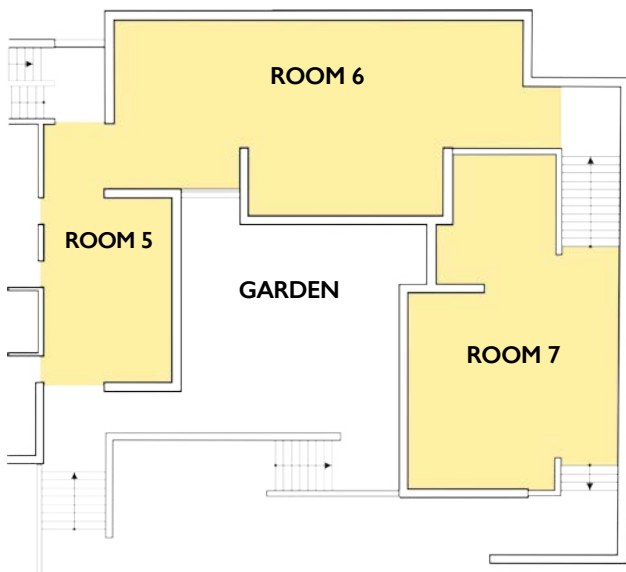
New Building - Sculpture Collection

The **vestibule** (no. 5) houses a selection of architectural members from the sanctuary. Impressive amongst them are the Archaic marble Ionic impost block and capital.

The **large room** (no. 6) contains the finest works of large-scale sculpture from the 6th c. BC. They include the group of Geneleos, dedicated to Hera, according to the inscription (560-550 BC), the famous Hera of Cheramydes (570 BC), and a series of kouroi and korai of great importance for the development of Ionian sculpture.

The **last room** (no. 7), which contains fragments of a kore with a Daidalic coiffure, made in a Naxian workshop (630 BC), is dominated by the majestic, colossal kouros of Samos (580 BC), made of local marble, which is 4.75 m high. The inscription on the thigh states that it was dedicated by Ischys: ΙΣΧΥΣ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ Ο ΡΗΣΙΟΣ. It is one of the most astonishing creations of monumental Archaic sculpture and attests to the impressive nature of the sanctuary founded in honour of the mother goddess at the Samian Heraion.

NEW BUILDING - SCULPTURE COLLECTION







VATHY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM

SAMOS



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