

Marisa De Castro , Myrto Delivoria

At the Museum [Στο μουσείο]

Greece (2007)

TAGS: [Archaeologists](#) [Conservators](#) [Greek art](#) [Museums](#) [Statues](#) [Vases](#)



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General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	At the Museum [Στο μουσείο]
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	Greece
<i>Original Language</i>	Greek
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2007
<i>ISBN</i>	978-960-484-002-1
<i>Genre</i>	Instructional and educational work, Picture books
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (target reader: 5+)
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Creators



Marisa De Castro , b. 1953 (Author)

Marisa De Castro was born in Athens and was educated at the Sorbonne, Paris. De Castro, who has worked as a primary-school teacher, has written a large number of children's books, mostly about art history and archaeology.

Sources:

[Profile](#) at the epbooks.gr (accessed: July 3, 2018).

[Profile](#) at the metaixmio.gr (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton,
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Myrto Delivoria , b. 1974 (Illustrator)

Myrto Delivoria is an award-winning professional illustrator of children's books.

Source:

[Profile](#) at the epbooks.gr (accessed: June 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton,

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Additional information

Translation De Castro, Marisa, *At the museum*. Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2009, 40 pp. From a series that is entitled "First Readers". Published in English in 2009 (translated from Greek by Daphne Bonanos).

Summary The purpose of this book is to introduce young children to a museum environment. The book starts with a drawing of a museum, recognisable as the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, which is compared, and with good reason, to a treasure house. In the book's opening pages, we form an impression that a museum is as much about a massive building (with giant stairs and big glass door) as about antiquities (statues and vases) and a plethora of vibrant visitors of different ethnic backgrounds and age groups.

There is a sense of a community of museum visitors, as teachers and high-school children, who are older than the readers of this picture book, wait to enter the museum. The community's sentiments, possibly of apprehension for their journey of discovery and exploration once inside the museum, culminate with the phrase "Everyone loves the museum!", and this communicates messages about a shared experience for all museum visitors.

Having predisposed the reader positively, De Castro embarks, from page 12 onwards, on a presentation of key antiquities from Greek and foreign museums. We see, for example, 'The Charioteer' (Ἡνίοχος in Greek) from the Archaeological Museum of Delphi, 'Hermes of Praxiteles' from the Archaeological Museum of Olympia, and a magnificently-painted black-figured cup by Exekias from the Staatliche Antikensammlungen in Munich. The latter, which shows Dionysos' mythical journey in a sea of dolphin-pirates, is, arguably, the most-discussed Greek vase in scholarship*. De Castro does not name these well-known pieces of ancient art.

A boy in stripy clothes, whom we first saw on the Corinthian *alabastron* in the book's front cover, narrates the story of viewing iconic images from antiquity. The boy comments on the relative size of different statues. There appears to be a fleeting reference to mythology, as the boy compares the huge marble statues to "giants in fairy tales". More importantly perhaps, and in accord with the



author's focus on people-object interactions, the boy talks to the statues as if they were his friends. The boy admits that there can be no running and playing, no touching, and no loud talking. Here, De Castro provides instructions for appropriate behaviour in a museum, to be welcomed by teachers and others who lead young children to museums.

When the boy enters "a big room full of pottery", he comments on pots' material (clay), shape, size, affordances for holding liquids, and decoration. We read about diverse gold, bronze, and iron artefacts, and we see a wreath and a helmet, which potentially allude to kings and warriors in children's literature.

The book's narrative closes with a museum guard asking the young boy whether he enjoyed the museum visit, and the boy answering in the affirmative and promising to come back "to explore the past" further.

The final section is entitled "Play and learn". Some activities take the form of questions and answers. Children are encouraged to talk to the statue called 'The little Refugee', and to fill in details about its age, material, and dress. The statue was brought to Athens by Greek refugees from Asia Minor in 1922**. Other activities involve drawing and putting together fragments of three vases.

* Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich, Inventory Number: 8729 (2044). See, for example, Fellmann, 2004: 13-19, pl. 2.1-2. Fellmann, Bernhard. *CVA Germany 77, Munich 13. Attisch-schwarzfigurige Augenschalen* (Munich: Beck, 2004).

** National Archaeological Museum, Athens, [Inventory Number: 3485](#) (accessed: August 3, 2018).

Analysis

The author and illustrator here reproduce the experience of open and crowded spaces inside and outside highly-frequented museums, providing context for the consumption of "ancient works of art." The book offers a story about people-object interactions, and not a



catalogue of museum artefacts. An experiential approach to children's learning in Greek museums is much praised in contemporary scholarship*. De Castro's commendable attention to the materiality of ancient pieces of art is in tune with recent theoretical approaches in social anthropology**. The author prompts children's curiosity about archaeological practice, including excavation and photography of valuable finds, which are called, unsurprisingly, "treasures".

The illustrations by Myrto Delivoria are fun and have a multi-ethnic flair. On the front cover, a young boy in stripy T-shirt and shorts, perhaps reminiscent of football-playing and summer holidays, adorns a Corinthian Archaic *alabastron*, replacing the animals and monsters that customarily take centre stage in the decoration of such *alabaster****. Delivoria does a superb job to illustrate artefacts, such as pottery, that date to different periods. Neolithic, Geometric, Archaic, and Classical ceramic wares are all shown. The visual narrative for young readers is varied. The depiction of puzzle pieces is a particularly inventive way to guide children through archaeologists' and curators' restoration and conservation of "wonderful things" in a museum. 'The little Refugee' shows a hooded young boy holding a dog. The pet looks more like a teddy bear in the illustration. The image is appealing for two main reasons. Firstly, children can identify easily with the "sweet aesthetics" of Hellenistic art****. Secondly, the image is topical in 2017—some eight years after this book appeared in print—because of the current refugee crisis. Thousands of children, mostly from war-stricken middle-eastern lands, cross the rough seas of the Aegean to find refuge in Greece before continuing their journey to northern Europe.

The English (by translator Daphne Bonanos) is easy to follow and includes popular phrases such as "wow!" and "It's great fun!"

* See, for example, Kalogianni, Aimilia and Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou, Argyroula, "Παιχνίδια στο Μουσείο. Εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα της ΙΓ ΕΠΚΑ κατά τη διετία 2006 2008," *Το Αρχαιολογικό Έργο στην Θεσσαλία και Στερεά Ελλάδα* 3 (2009): 531-539.

** See, for example, Miller, Daniel (ed), *Materiality*. London: Duke University Press, 2005.



*** For Corinthian *alabastra*, see, for example, getty.edu (accessed: August 3, 2018).

**** See Zanker, Graham, *Modes of viewing in Hellenistic poetry and art*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Archaeologists](#) [Conservators](#) [Greek art](#) [Museums](#) [Statues](#) [Vases](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Child](#), [Children](#) [Heritage](#) [History](#) [Knowledge](#) [Learning](#) [Treasure-hunting](#)

Further Reading

[Information](#) about the book at epbooks.gr, published 30 June 2009 (accessed: August 3, 2018).

Addenda

The book first appeared in Greek in 2007. At present, the Greek version appears to be out of stock. Not translated in additional languages.

