Katerina Volioti, "Entry on: Icarus Tells Stories about Statues in the National Archaeological Museum [Ο Ίκαρος αφηγείται ιστορίες για αγάλματα στο Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο (Ο Íkaros afigeítai istoríes gia agálmata sto Ethnikó Archaiologikó Mouseío)] by Kalliope Kyrdi, Evi Pini", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Dorota Mackenzie. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/312. Entry version as of November 11, 2026.

Kalliope Kyrdi , Evi Pini

Icarus Tells Stories about Statues in the National Archaeological Museum [Ο Ίκαρος αφηγείται ιστορίες για αγάλματα στο Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο (Ο Íkaros afigeítai istoríes gia agálmata sto Ethnikó Archaiologikó Mouseío)]

Greece (2008)

TAGS: Alexander the Great Aphrodite Apollo Artemis Athena Athens Aulos Croesus Cycladic Culture Daedalus Delphi Dodona Egypt Greece in the Roman Era Hera Hermes Icarus Iris Kerameikos Kore / Korai Kouros / Kouroi Labyrinth Leto Marathon Marsyas Minoan Civilization Minos Olympia Pan Paris (Trojan Prince) Persians Poseidon Sounion Sparta Syrinx Zeus



Courtesy of the Publisher. Retrieved from epbooks.gr (accessed: July 5, 2022).

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Target Audience	Children (6+)
Author of the Entry	Katerina Volioti, University of Roehampton, Katerina.Volioti@roehampton.ac.uk
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Dorota Mackenzie, University of Warsaw, dorota.mackenzie@gmail.com

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Creators



Kalliope Kyrdi (Author)

Kalliope Kyrdi studied Law and Pedagogy at the University of Athens, and has worked in primary school education. Kyrdi has been responsible for cultural matters in the 1st Directorate of Primary Education, Athens, since 2007.

Source:

Profile at the epbooks.gr (accessed: June 27, 2018).

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Evi Pini (Author)

Athens-born Evi Pini studied Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Pini has been working for the Greek Ministry of Culture since 1990, specialising in children's educational programmes.

Sources:

Information about the Author, see here (accessed: June 26, 2018).

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Additional information

Summary

A talking animal, a duck called Icarus, takes us through the galleries with sculpture at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Icarus shows us statues of males, females, and animals (as we notice also on the front cover), prompting us to pay attention to their style, meaning, and material.

The value of experiential learning is emphasised in the introduction (page 3), so that teachers and parents can prepare for the museum visit. Throughout the book, Evi Pini and Kalliopi Kyrdi address both children and adults.

The book's first part (pages 4 to 7) offers a chronological narrative about the development of sculpture from Palaeolithic to Hellenistic times. In searching for origins, there is, of course, a mention of Daedalus, who is described as *the first great sculptor of ancient Greece*.

In the second part (pages 8 to 21) the focus is, understandably, on verifiable rather than mythological knowledge. Children are made to think logically about the findspots, identities, display contexts, functions, and materials of statues. The contextual information offered includes a commentary on the etymology of key words such as "agalma" (statue). We read also about "the mythical artisan" Daedalus, the labyrinth at Knossos, king Minos, and Icarus' fall to the sea. The myth here appears to explain why the duck, our museum guide, is called Icarus. We learn on page 21, however, that the duck forms part of a Hellenistic statue of a boy.

Diverse types of sculpture are shown, including freestanding specimens, relief sculptures, and sculpted groups. Both major and minor divine entities are mentioned, such as Apollo and Marsyas (page 19). The salience of music is emphasised. We read that Hermes, Athena, and Pan invented the lyre, the *aulos*, and the *syrinx* respectively.

The sculpted representations of humans covered in the book are varied, and they include elites, warriors, and athletes. Images of males are discussed before those of females. We encounter the Sounion Kouros and the Artemision Bronze before the Phrasikleia Kore and the

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Grave Stele of Hegeso. Of particular relevance to young readers must be the three Hellenistic works showing children, two of which are widely known: the Jockey of Artemision and the Little Refugee. The third piece is a statue of a boy who squeezes a duck as he leans against a pillar.* The duck is Icarus, our guide, and the boy is Icarus' friend. The tour closes with Icarus going back to his friend, and asking children to come back to the museum another day to learn more stories about statues. We have a return to reality and the present, leaving behind what the ancients believed and what the antiquities represented.

In the third section of the book (pages 22 to 29), Icarus invites children to try a set of interactive exercises either at school or at home. Through these exercises, children will revisit what was covered in the book and, more importantly, think creatively about daily life in the past. At the very end of the book (pages 30–32), we have answers to the questions in the book, a bibliography, which includes textbooks by prominent Oxford art-historian John Boardman, and further details about all illustrations.

* See namuseum.gr(accessed: July 27, 2018).

Analysis

Understandably for a book about sculpture, there is a mention of Daedalus. What we learn about Daedalus is prefaced with the statement "According to tradition". On the one hand, we form the impression that Daedalus was an imaginary personality, even though we do not have any explicit reference to mythology. On the other hand, we may think that Daedalus was a historical figure, alongside other real persons, such as the Archaic sculptor Antinor who is known from his signature (page 6).

Any distinction between the real and the imaginary may not be necessary for children's learning. Adult readers, however, can deduce that the narrative about sculpture is becoming more and more credible with time. Historical facts and names of individuals, of ethnic groups, and of places – the Persians, the war between Athens and Sparta, and Alexander and his successors – are given for the Archaic,

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Classical, and Hellenistic periods. By contrast, Daedalus'' story fills an apparent gap of knowledge about what happened in earlier times, long before history. We read, moreover, that Hellenistic sculptors were inspired by mythology but also by daily life, nature, and events in their lifetime (page 7). Apparently, there was a move away from myth and towards objective thinking as time progressed. Readers are left with two frames of reference for Icarus, the duck: the mythological one accounts for the duck's name and the artistic one explains the duck's existence more concretely in time and space.

A subtle layer of modern gender stereotypes and traditional social values is apparent in the discussion of Phrasikleia and her epigram. Phrasikleia is said not to have enjoyed life, since she died unmarried and childless.

The illustrators show an ancient relief with athletes in the form of comics (page 26). Any seriousness associated with ancient art is watered down here. Learning becomes fun and aligned with modern popular culture.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Alexander the Great Aphrodite Apollo Artemis Athena Athens Aulos Croesus Cycladic Culture Daedalus Delphi Dodona Egypt Greece in the Roman Era Hera Hermes Icarus Iris Kerameikos Kore / Korai Kouros / Kouroi Labyrinth Leto Marathon Marsyas Minoan Civilization Minos Olympia Pan Paris (Trojan Prince) Persians Poseidon Sounion Sparta Syrinx Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Gender expectations/construction Heritage History Knowledge Learning
Further Reading	Information about the book at epbooks.gr, published October 5, 2008 (accessed: July 27, 2018).

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Addenda	The book forms part of a series of 6 Short Museum Guides that appeared in print from 2008 to 2010.

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