

LANGUAGE NOTES BY ELLEN ADAMS

THE METOPES

0.15: The metopes are introduced as a visual description initially, in terms of context, placement, and shape. 'Metope' is then fingerspelled and given a sign name, and the umbrella themes are introduced. In English, the speaker would be more likely to start with the object and its themes and zoom out to the context.

0.37: Returning to the British Museum, we learn that has metopes from the south side, and are given a visual impression of how this is placed on the Acropolis and in relation to the wider city of Athens. This communicates the information very vividly, and, while English could convey the same information, the impact is not as direct.

0.52: The BSL and English translation both explain 'deep relief', with BSL taking a more visual approach, the point made in more than one way for clarity: first 'almost in the round', close to English, then depicting the sculptures with the left hand as the background and dominant right hand as the sculptures, shown as emerging. Using these same proforms, we are told again it is not separated and fully in the round, but attached to the background.

1.07: In the comparison with the sculptural methods of the Pedimental sculptures, and we are shown what a sculpture 'in the round' looks like (Zoë using her own body to demonstrate this).

1.16: Zoë gives a visual description of the shape of a metope, including information about its size, using the space in front of her as a canvas. She then reflects on the kinds of compositions this space facilitates, namely a pair of figures in various poses. Her forearms become the figures, with clenched fists as their heads.

1.30: Again, the triglyphs are indicated visually, while the English translation indicates the same information in verbal form (arguably to less direct impact).

1.40: Zoë explains the theme of the Museum's metopes, by initially setting it up as a question ('These metopes, story, what?') then answers her own question. This is a clear way of giving information – the question indicates the point of what follows. 'Lapiths' and 'centaurs' are fingerspelled, the latter being given a sign name.

1.52: 'Story, what?' leads to an explanation of the wedding, which is delivered as a mixture of information-giving (for example, fingerspelling 'Hippodamia') and embodying the characters (for example, the centaurs drinking).

2.32: Here begins the first of the 'visual descriptions' of six metopes from the British Museum, which Zoë uses to illustrate the story (these are included in the clips). Zoë

‘becomes’ both figures of woman and man-centaur, shifting between them smoothly. Note how the English voiceover struggles to keep up with all the detail conveyed in the BSL (the English similar to an audio description).

*** All further five visual descriptions follow the same principle, with some storytelling inserted to explain the events unfolding. The contrast between the drama of the signed descriptions and the stillness of the metopes is striking. As the story gets more dramatic, a wider camera lens is needed. This reflects how the signing space becomes larger, the more informal or theatrical the signing becomes (turning into ‘visual vernacular’).