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## Fishtail Braids and the Caryatid Hairstyling Project: Fashion Today and in Ancient Athens

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## **Fishtail Braids and the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*: Fashion Today and in Ancient Athens**

*Katherine A. Schwab and Marice Rose*

### **Abstract**

The fishtail braid, newly popular in the past five years on adult women on New York streets and the runway, also conspicuously adorns the famed Caryatids, or maidens, 430 BCE, from the Erechtheion on the Athenian Acropolis. The Caryatids have been carefully studied for their pose and clothing, but their unique hairstyles have been overlooked. Previous scholars described these ancient hairstyles simply as braided without defining the specific braids used or whether or not the hairstyle could be recreated. No one had identified the fishtail braid as the main braid down the back and as the style of some of the side braids wrapped around the heads of the Caryatids. The authors worked with a professional hairstylist and six Fairfield University student models to demonstrate that these ancient Greek arrangements of braids were not merely the creations of sculptors but could have been worn. Our project recreating the braids and their arrangements is a research method known as experimental archaeology, a way to test hypotheses related to antiquity by using methods as archaeologically accurate as possible, and striving for historically accurate results. The project's genesis began in 2007 with the exhibition *The Creative Photograph in Archaeology* at Fairfield University, in which detailed photographs of the Caryatids provided uncommon views of their hair. In 2009, Professor of Art History Katherine A. Schwab made an internationally-screened short film which provides the basis for further inquiry on technique and meaning. Coincidentally, at the same time, the fishtail braid began to be featured prominently on runways and in the fashion press. This article examines the techniques and meanings of the fishtail braid, which connect girls and women today to their counterparts in antiquity. Students who wore the braids thought about hairstyles in an entirely new way and as a compelling portal to another time and place. Ancient Athenians were no longer a vague concept but real people whose lives were played out in the surviving art.

### **Key Words**

Hair, fashion, Caryatids, Erechtheion, Acropolis, Athens, fishtail braid, experimental archaeology, art history pedagogy.

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### **1. Caryatids in Antiquity**

The fishtail braid (or herring-bone braid, so-called because the pattern of the hair sections resembles a fish skeleton), the resurgence of which the media prominently recorded on New York City streets and runways beginning in 2009,<sup>1</sup> also conspicuously adorns the Caryatids, or maidens, from the ancient temple called the Erechtheion on the Athenian Acropolis. The Caryatids have been carefully studied for their pose and clothing, but their unique and complex, multi-braided hairstyles have been overlooked.

The Erechtheion is one of three temples that formed part of the ambitious Periclean building program on the Athenian Acropolis during the second half of the fifth century BCE. Located on the north side of the Acropolis, a short distance from the Parthenon, the Erechtheion is renowned for its elegant Ionic architecture and unusual configuration. The cella, or main room inside the temple, was originally divided into smaller sections dedicated to the goddess Athena and the god Poseidon, along with other cults and shrines. After walking through the Propylaea or grand entrance to the Acropolis at the western end, the Erechtheion can be seen toward the left with its two large porches:

the north porch which is visible from many distant areas within the modern city of Athens, and the south porch famous for its beautiful female figures serving as columns. The six maidens or kore figures, commonly known as Caryatids, face directly toward the Parthenon's north flank (Image 1).



*Image 1:* Late nineteenth century photograph of the Erechtheion.  
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The maidens were carved c. 430 BCE and were simply referred to as *korai*, or maidens (kore refers to a single maiden) in inscriptions for several hundred years. Later, they became known as Caryatids because of a story related by the first-century BCE Roman author, architect, and engineer Vitruvius who wrote that they represented women from the town Karyae (Caryae) who were subjugated because of the town's betrayal of Greece during the Persian wars.<sup>2</sup> The story cannot be supported, but the name Caryatid endures and it is often used in both scholarly and tourist literature today.

Five of the Caryatids are displayed in the new Acropolis Museum (Image 2). The museum houses the original Caryatids to protect them from the elements. In 1979 the ancient sculptures, which were replaced on the Erechtheion porch with cement replicas, were placed inside a large vitrine in the old Acropolis Museum up on the Acropolis. Since 2009 these five statues have been installed in the new Acropolis Museum where visitors can walk around them for the first time. These statues are described in modern scholarship more precisely as Kore A-F. Kore C, the sixth Caryatid, was taken to London in the early nineteenth century by Lord Elgin, where it remains on view in the British Museum.<sup>3</sup>

The Caryatids' elegant and complex hairstyles, with their voluminous fishtail braids, were central to these maidens' identity and status within Athenian society. The intricacy and time-consuming nature of the styles, as the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project* (below) has shown, would have required attendants and leisure time, which many ancient Greeks could not afford. Taking into

account how clothing had the ability to show its wearer's inclusion and exclusion from social categories, it is likely that these braids reflect real hairstyles that were a mark of distinction belonging to a specific group – in this case, possibly *kanephoroi*. *Kanephoroi* were groups of virgins selected to perform the very important task in a religious festival of leading the ritual procession to the sacrifice. They were privileged girls – daughters of aristocrats, faultless in reputation, representatives of the highest echelon of Athenian society. The Classical Art Historian Linda Roccas identified the Caryatids as possible *kanephoroi* by their distinctive festival garment, the back-mantle pinned at the shoulders.<sup>4</sup> Should this identification as *kanephoroi* be correct, the very elaborately arranged braids would be a component of their festival costume, in addition to their mantles. This identification aligns with the accentuation of the Athenian aristocracy the Classical Art Historian Jenifer Neils discusses on the Parthenon frieze.<sup>5</sup>



**Image 2:** View of the Five Caryatids from the Erechtheion in the Acropolis Museum.  
© 2014, The Acropolis Museum. Photo by K.A. Schwab

The maidens' hairstyles in the religious procession linked them to a tradition of past young women who played these roles, as well as to a specific, recognisable stratum of society that participated. The expense of time and labour to create these hairstyles did not contribute directly to the economy, nor did the adolescent girls wearing the hairstyle, who while their hair was being arranged were required to stay still rather than being productive. One could interpret such conspicuous leisure by elite females as economically wasteful and therefore not contributing directly to the functioning of their society, if using the lens of the sociologist Thorstein Veblen, whose sociological theories about capitalism and the exploitative and wasteful leisure class who engage in his famous term 'conspicuous consumption' remain highly influential.<sup>6</sup> However,

although the creation of these hairstyles may not be ‘instrumental’ to the economy, the elaborate hairstyles showed not only the status of a non-labouring sector of society, they identified individuals who were also part of a community ritual that functioned to hold ancient Athenian society together. These young women were visually marked as those who will soon be married and producing new Athenian citizens, essential to furthering the society, culture, and hence economy as mothers and wives. Among women themselves, cross-culturally, there is also an important community-building aspect across social divisions in the intimacy and time it takes for women to arrange other women’s hair, and this community is another positive aspect communicated by these hairstyles.<sup>7</sup>

The Caryatids feature the only surviving ancient examples of multiple fishtails wrapped around the head and a large fishtail braid hanging down the back, further enhanced by two or three long corkscrew curls emerging behind the ear and falling onto the chest. Despite the Erechtheion’s importance as a popular pilgrim and tourist destination for ancient Greeks and Romans, the hairstyles of the Caryatids are unique within surviving ancient art.<sup>8</sup> The fishtail braid first appears in ancient Greek art by the sixth century BCE on such examples as the female *Berlin Kore* (Berlin, Pergamon Mus. inv. Sk. 1800) in a ‘reverse’ fishtail braid and the male *Archaic Discus Thrower* (Athens, National Mus. inv. no. 38) which may offer a profile view of the braid. By the early fifth century BCE we can see the braid encircling the heads of the male *Artemision Bronze* (Athens, National Mus. inv. no. x15161) identified as either Zeus or Poseidon, and *Apollo, Omphalos type* (Athens, National Mus. Inv. no. 45).<sup>9</sup> These sculptures do not feature the fishtail braids in as complex arrangements as those worn by the Caryatids. The ancient Romans copied the stone maidens; for example, caryatids were incorporated into the Emperor Augustus’ Forum and the Emperor Agrippa’s Pantheon, and the Emperor Hadrian’s versions can still be seen at his villa at Tivoli (these are possibly the originals from the Pantheon).<sup>10</sup> These Roman caryatid hairstyles, however, do not provide a precise copy of the Greek originals. The Forum and Tivoli examples replicate the back fishtail, but the sides of the hair became waves or bumps that recall braids without the precision of the Greek sculptures. The Caryatid hairstyle’s uniqueness in Greek art can be attributed to its signifying the specific religious procession and the special role played by elite young Athenian women. The Roman examples perhaps did not need to replicate this signifier because they were in different socio-cultural-historical contexts, and it was not necessary to spend the amount of time it would have taken to carve the complicated braids. Neither was the Caryatid hairstyle duplicated in European art of the early modern period, including portraits of elite women that featured complicated arrangements of braids (usually three-strand, ‘English-style’) worn on or swept up onto the head.<sup>11</sup>

The Caryatids became ever more popular, over time becoming ‘one of the primary and most familiar symbols of ancient Greek culture...continuously used as an emblem of this history, both in Greece and abroad.’<sup>12</sup> While their popularity increased, their elaborate hairstyles were not repeated in surviving Greek art; the ending of the pagan festivals associated with the hairstyles is the likeliest factor. The absence in European art outside of Greece can be attributed to lack of first-hand experience of them by non-Greeks; tourism to Greece in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was rare during the Ottoman occupation. The c. 1550 versions of the Caryatids by Bartolomeo Ammannati and Giorgio Vasari in Pope Julius III’s villa, and the sculptor Jean Goujon’s contemporaneous versions created for the musicians’ platform in the Louvre palace were loosely based on the Roman versions. They did not imitate fishtail braids wrapping around the head, and veils cover the backs of their heads where single fishtails would be. Later, the Athenian Caryatids did become known outside Greece via tourists’ drawings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> In 1820, a British visitor described the Caryatids’ hair as being ‘most frightfully arranged.’<sup>14</sup> In England, fishtail braids were called ‘Grecian braids,’ which is most likely a reference to the Caryatids owing to the greater number of images of the Caryatids available at that time and the presence of *Kore C* in the British Museum, previously taken by Lord Elgin and shipped to London.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. The Fishtail Braid in Contemporary Fashion



*Image 3:* Models for Tory Burch, New York Fashion Week, Spring 2013.  
© 2013. Photo courtesy of [www.9to5chic.com](http://www.9to5chic.com)

In recent years in the United States, the fishtail braid became high fashion in New York and Hollywood, as part of a larger trend of braided hairstyles worn by young girls, teenagers of similar ages to the late-teenage Greek maidens on the Erechtheion, and adult women.<sup>16</sup> Although braiding has long been a feature of adult African-American male and female hairstyles in the United States, with salons dedicated to them becoming especially popular among African Americans in the early 1990s, it was rarely acknowledged by mainstream media or worn by fashion models, who are predominantly white.<sup>17</sup> The fashion press reported that Spring 2009 was the season when different

types of braids began to be worn by female celebrities ‘en masse,’ in apparent imitation of styles worn by young women in downtown New York and Brooklyn. Braids were popularized on runways after Alexander Wang’s Spring/Summer 2010 Ready to Wear show in New York, where the models wore single, messy over-the-shoulder three-strand braids.<sup>18</sup> Interest in the two-strand fishtail braid – in various forms including narrow, wide, neat, messy, single, in pigtails, hanging, or wrapped around the head – grew after Doo-Ri Chung’s 2010 Fall New York Fashion Week (NYFW) show. The stylist Orlando Pita arranged the hair in two narrow fishtails gathered at the backs of the models’ heads, in a style deemed ‘elegant’ by fashion writers and inspired, according to Pita, by the collection’s classically-influenced ‘beautiful intricacies and draping.’<sup>19</sup> As a fashion trend, fishtails, including those wrapped around the head like a Caryatid, have had remarkable staying power. In 2012, the television star Dianna Agron wore two fishtails wrapped around her head to the SAG awards. In 2013, fishtail braids encircling the head also appeared in the Christian Siriano and Viktor & Rolf runway shows.<sup>20</sup> Single or double fishtail braids over the shoulder or down the back have also been regular features of runways, Hollywood parties, and award shows. In 2013, the designers Tory Burch, Naeem Khan, and Nicole Miller all showed models wearing fishtail braids (Images 3-4). After runway models and the singer Rihanna wore a single fishtail braid over the shoulder, the fishtail was prominently featured on braiding websites intended for African-American hair, with the comment that ‘everyone’ is sporting one.<sup>21</sup> Thin single and pigtail fishtail braids were featured in CALLA’s surfer-inspired Spring 2014 NYFW collection, for a bohemian effect.<sup>22</sup>



**Image 4:** Detail of model wearing fishtail for Tory Burch, New York Fashion Week, Spring 2013. © 2013. Photo courtesy of [www.9to5chic.com](http://www.9to5chic.com)

In the summer of 2014, braids were being called ‘the New Black’ in a *Vanity Fair* article about the New York hairstylist John Barrett’s Bergdorf Goodman salon’s Braid Bar, citing the fashion model Joan Smalls’ ‘to-die-for’ over-the-shoulder fishtail at the spring Metropolitan Museum of Art Gala. Celebrities continued to wear them on the Spring 2015 Cannes film festival red carpet.<sup>23</sup> No longer thought ‘girlish’ or a last-minute hairstyle, braids, just as in antiquity, have been deemed appropriate for formal occasions, and increasingly used for special events like weddings and proms.<sup>24</sup> As an *NBC News* headline proclaimed: ‘Forget Pigtails: Resurrected Braid Trend is all about Glam.’<sup>25</sup>

The popularity of the fishtail braid, in particular on New York City streets and runways (let alone US college campuses), followed the opening of the new Acropolis Museum in Athens on 20 June 2009, and the ensuing media frenzy, which led to an increased interest in the ever-popular sculptures. Currently, the Erechtheion and its Caryatids are the second-most popular tourist destination on the Acropolis after the Parthenon, even though visitors are looking at the cement copies. The display in the museum gives visitors the opportunity for the first time to see the Caryatids from all sides and therefore their hairstyles. The backs of these hairstyles, particularly the fishtail braid, are relatively well preserved (Image 2).<sup>26</sup> The original marble Caryatids, due to the new installation, are among the museum’s ‘star attractions.’<sup>27</sup> Not all stylists or wearers might be aware of these ancient Greek examples, but some are. With regard to Dianna Agron’s fishtail braid crown, the Los Angeles stylist Ian Marshall said ‘fishtail plaits are making a big comeback at the moment.... This Greek goddess style hair shows how a few simple plaits can create a really stunning look.’<sup>28</sup> As in the Victorian period, ‘Grecian’ or ‘Greek’ braids often seem to mean fishtails, but the appellation is now more fluid, ranging from imitations of Caryatid style to English braids wrapped around the head.<sup>29</sup>

Today’s trends in braiding, sometimes consciously and sometime not, connect to the world of ancient Greece nearly 2,500 years ago. The movements of our hands creating a fishtail braid are the same as those made by men and women in ancient Greece, including those who dressed the human inspirations for the Caryatids. By connecting girls and women today to these celebrated ancient masterpieces through their hairstyles, experimental archaeology makes the sculptures come alive: they can be viewed as ‘sisters’ of today’s young women.

### 3. *The Caryatid Hairstyling Project: Overall Goals and Results*

In Classical Studies experimental archaeology is increasingly used to solve questions that cannot be answered by observing or analysing available data (surviving texts, inscriptions, iconographical examples, etc.).<sup>30</sup> To our knowledge, nothing from antiquity survives to illuminate us about the technical or practical aspects of the Caryatids’ hairstyles. In modern scholarship, their hairstyles are generally noted as being made of a series of braids in a complex arrangement, but there is nothing more specific about the kinds of braids or why these maidens wore them in this particular way.<sup>31</sup> Prior to a 2009 experiment at Fairfield University, no one in the field of Classical Studies had ever attempted to recreate these specific hairstyles in a historically and archaeologically accurate way by using archival photographs and in collaboration with a professional hairstylist. The results from this exploration in experimental archaeology yielded many answers.

In 2009, the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project* was conducted by one of this article’s authors, Katherine A. Schwab, Professor of Art History at Fairfield University, in order to answer these questions: Were the hairstyles’ creative ideas generated by the sculptors or were they based on reality? How were they constructed (technically, tools, products)? How long would the styling of the braids have taken? Would the styles have been uncomfortable to wear? How much hair was required? What type of hair would be best?<sup>32</sup>

With a modest grant from the Fairfield University Faculty Research Committee, a Connecticut-based professional hairstylist named Milexy Torres was hired to recreate the six ancient Caryatid hairstyles on six student models, ages 19-22, all from the university. Ms Torres had additional background in working with complex hairstyles for productions with theatre companies,



although she had never before worked with a Classicist to re-create actual hairstyles from antiquity. Schwab compiled numerous photographs, including archival photographs in black and white that record important details, and recent colour images from the new installation. Ms Torres studied these photographs prior to the hairstyling day. Six students were selected as models for the length, thickness, and texture of their hair. The texture ranged from nearly coiled curls to slightly wavy. In each instance, Ms Torres made the decision as to which student would wear which Caryatid hairstyle on the basis of hair texture.

The styling session required approximately seven hours, one student at a time, and it was filmed for a subsequent video. The student for Kore B had the easiest hair to style, and it came together faster than the others, in only forty minutes. The other hairstyles averaged about one hour, with a few taking as much as one hour and twenty minutes. Ms Torres used hair spray and a curling iron on the slightly wavy hair, otherwise, a few bands and pins held the final version in place. In a few cases she incorporated artificial hair to complete the full set of braids or to add length: braided to wrap around the heads of Kore A and B, woven into the hairline of Kore C to match a fishtail braid visible at the front of the statue, and to complete the lower unbound hair of Kore E. Final photographs were taken outside during a heat wave on 26 April 2009 when the temperature reached 33°C. Students stood in the same formation as the original statues, with the correct spacing between each figure. The heat caused the very textured hair to curl more and to shorten, whereas the heavier straighter hair could not hold its curl during final photographs. While the heat produced some unforeseen problems, it also captured a sense of summertime in Athens when the heat can be quite strong. All the student models noted that the hairstyle was unexpectedly cool and comfortable.



**Image 5:** Samples of braids. Left: Fishtail braid made with two ‘legs.’ Middle: English braid made with three ‘legs.’ Right: Four-legged braid. © 2014. Photo courtesy of K.A. Schwab

Most of us are familiar with the English braid, which is made with three ‘legs’ (Image 5, centre). A variation on the English braid can be made with four ‘legs’ (Image 5, right). It is easy to make but looks quite complicated. In contrast, the Caryatids wear the fishtail braid, which is made with two ‘legs’ of hair (Image 5, left). Different looks are generated depending on the tension maintained during braiding and the size of the section of hair pulled around to the other side (Image 6). Smaller sections create a tightly woven look (as in Image 5, left), but larger sections can create the looser more textured appearance found in the original statues.



**Image 6:** Detail of fishtail braid worn by student model for Kore B.  
© 2009. Photo courtesy of K.A. Schwab

Results of the experiment yielded new information that we had not known before.

*Were the hairstyles based on a sculptor’s creative imagination or reality?* Yes, it is possible to recreate the hairstyles and they were indeed based on actual hairstyling practice. The discovery that the richly braided hairstyles worn by the renowned Caryatids could be replicated, which has not been attested before in the Classical scholarly literature, eliminated any lingering questions about the role of the sculptor concerning actual hairstyles worn by ancient Greek women of a certain class.

*How were the hairstyles constructed (technically, tools, products) and what kind of hair is best suited for the style?* Long waist-length, thick hair with some texture would be best for the hairstyles worn by the Caryatids. If examples in ancient Greek art are any indication, most females had hair with moderate to great texture. It is rare to find what appears to be fine, straight hair in Greek art. The hair would have been divided into sections to make braids beginning at the temples,

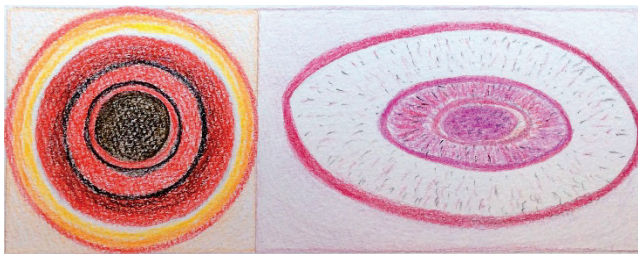
which would cross in back and then wrap around to the front, with the ends tucked under a lock of hair. The column capital above the Caryatids conceals the top of the head and these details. Locks of hair worn in corkscrew curls were formed behind the ear where the hair is more delicate and prone to curling. These long corkscrew curls would hang down in front of the shoulders. For our experiment we opted for one corkscrew curl, created with a curling iron. In antiquity, a smooth stick would have sufficed to wrap the hair while still damp after shampooing, and it would dry in a corkscrew curl. This technique to create corkscrew curls around a stick is still used in different regions around the world.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, while the hair was damp, the hair could be divided in sections with a stick dipped in perfumed olive oil. A fifth-century BCE Greek vase in Munich shows a young woman spreading perfumed oil in her hair with a long stick.<sup>34</sup> Olive oil or a mixture of olive oil and animal fat may have been the best means of shaping locks of hair to hold their curls. A similar mixture has been discovered as an application to the hair on an Egyptian mummy.<sup>35</sup> For hair with texture, the olive oil would have transmitted valuable moisture to the cortex of each hair strand.

*How long would the styling have taken?* Hair with texture and length can be styled in less than one hour. On average it takes around one hour, with more time required for heavy, less wavy hair. Today, hair of any texture can be used to create the ancient hairstyle, and hair products can assist with the overall appearance.

*Would the styles have been uncomfortable to wear?* The hairstyle is light, comfortable, and easy to wear. It is most ideal during the summer heat.

*Why this particular hairstyle from an architectural perspective?* The thick braid at the back of the strong wide neck of the Caryatid sculptures provided a good support for the head and capital directly above. After all, the Caryatids function as columns and need to support the flat roof of the south porch. Keeping in mind that the marble maidens stand at 231 cm (7.57 feet), if one were to reduce their scale to approximate the height of an average fifteen year old, the size of the braids would begin to match reality. Girls in their mid-teens would have had the greatest amount of thick long textured hair, perfectly suited for this unique hairstyle. The amount of hair required to make the historically accurate Caryatid hairstyle is substantial. A recent graduate of Fairfield University, with an unusual amount of thick long hair (a family trait as it turns out) demonstrated that it is possible to create the hairstyle.<sup>36</sup>

*What type of hair?* The *Caryatid Hairstyling Project* revealed that hair with very wavy to tightly curled texture was easiest and quickest to arrange in the ancient hairstyles. The textured hair held the braids and general shape more readily and did not need any products such as hairspray to hold it in place. All of the ancient Caryatids have textured hair, with the exception of Kore D, which has barely wavy texture. Hair has the capacity to twist into tight coils or extend in a straight line. The determining factor is the shape of the cortex inside the hair shaft. These two sections below show a round shape (left) associated with pin straight hair and an oval shape (right) associated with textured (curly) hair (Image 7).



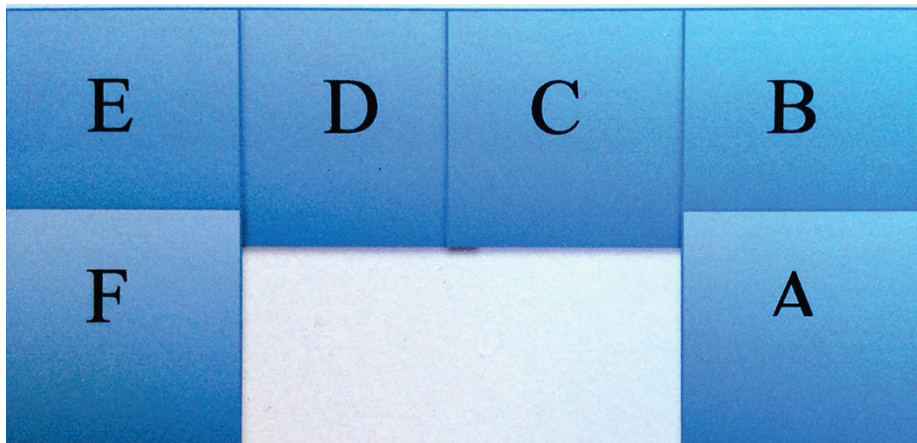
**Image 7:** Sections of the hair cortex. Left: The round section creates pin straight hair, Right: The oval section creates curly hair. © 2015. Drawing courtesy of K.A. Schwab

Examples of hair, from pin straight to strongly textured, reflect the nature of the shape of the cortex as well as the follicle itself. Pin straight hair tends to be stronger and shiny from the natural oils that easily travel the length of the hair shaft. Highly textured hair, with its many twists and turns, is more difficult to keep moisturized, and its tendency toward dryness makes it delicate (Image 8).



**Image 8:** Hair samples from pin straight at left to coiled curls at right.  
© 2013. Photos courtesy of K.A. Schwab

#### 4. The *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*: Views of Individual Models' Hair Textures, Styling Phases, and Final Outcomes



**Image 9:** Diagram of the base for the Caryatids from the south porch of the Erechtheion, as seen from inside the porch. Kore A-Kore F represent the placement of the individual figures.  
© 2015. Courtesy of K.A. Schwab

##### A. Kore A

Kore A wears a thickly-carved fishtail braid down her back, and the hair is gathered together in a series of symmetrical groupings before it is bound several inches above the ends. The ends form several thick locks carved in a wavy pattern to reflect the texture of the hair. The sculptor who carved Kore A may be the same one who worked on the hair of Kore E, for both fishtail braids are similar in design and execution. From our experiments, we concluded that the best hair texture for this Caryatid is thick with many waves. First, fishtail braids are formed near the temple on either side and wrapped around the upper part of the head. In our testing, additional hair was incorporated into this upper braid. Corkscrew curls originally emerged behind the ears before falling in front of

the shoulders, adding to the richness of the hairstyle in combination with the back-pinned mantle and belted peplos.



**Image 10:** Kore A. Black and white photo ©1970. Courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens, inv. neg. no. 70/437, photo, Goesta Hellner. Colour photos © 2014. The Acropolis Museum. Photos by K.A. Schwab



**Image 11:** Kore A, Fairfield University model S. Cimino, hair styled by M. Torres. © 2009. Photos courtesy of K.A. Schwab

## B. Kore B

Kore B has richly textured hair that is ideal for making a fishtail braid. Additional fishtail braids encircle the back of the head, forming a thickly woven texture. The maiden's central braid down the back reveals the quantity of hair necessary to produce this loosely defined two-legged braid. Her position at the corner exposed her to weathering and air pollution more than Kore A, and this has worn away more detail on the outward facing carved surfaces. In recreating this hairstyle sections were defined to begin the side braids after making the thick fishtail braid down the back. Additional hair was added to form the extensive braid wrapped around the crown of the head. The natural texture of the model's hair is ideal for this hairstyle, and the locks below the band form their own pattern. These unbound locks are almost equal in length to the fishtail braid.



**Image 12:** Kore B. Black and white photo © 1970. Courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens, inv. neg. no. 70/443, photo, Goesta Hellner. Colour photo © 2014. The Acropolis Museum. Photographed by K.A. Schwab



**Image 13:** Kore B, Fairfield University model D. Westrup, hair styled by M. Torres. © 2009. Photos courtesy of K.A. Schwab

C. Kore C

Kore C has thickly textured hair consisting of wavy segments that form an unusually wide fishtail braid down her back. Sharply defined fishtail braids wrap neatly around her head at the back, recalling a precision similar to cast bronze sculpture. The vertical braid is bound at the midpoint, with the loose locks forming a zigzag pattern. The state of preservation is very good

because it was among the sculptures removed from the Acropolis by Lord Elgin and transported to London at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The marble surface has less weathering than the other five Caryatids, and it clearly preserves a short braid pulled back at the hairline above the forehead. This special braid would later be cut as a dedication before marriage, alluding to the maiden's status. In recreating this short braid, additional hair was intertwined with the model's hair to achieve the same effect. Of the six Caryatids, Kore C appears to have the most textured hair, and this is matched to the model's hair.



**Image 14:** Kore C, Black and white image. © The Trustees of the British Museum, Acc. No. 1816.0610.18



**Image 15:** Kore C, Fairfield University model A. Nowak, hair styled by M. Torres. © a-b photos courtesy of Fairfield University, photographs, B. Angeletti. © Photos c-d courtesy of K.A. Schwab, 2009

#### D. Kore D

Kore D is the only example with slightly wavy hair, and this is conspicuous in the main fishtail braid where the locks are relatively smooth. In contrast, the hair below the band forms thick loosely curving locks, possibly styled by wrapping the locks around a stick. The texture exemplified in this maiden's hair has no parallel among the other Caryatids. Kore D's braid, noteworthy for its lack of texture above the band, was copied by a nineteenth-century sculptor who carved a new head

for Kore F. The model's thick and slightly wavy hair shows the difference between the braided section and the wavy loose locks of hair below the band.



**Image 16:** Kore D. Black and white photo. © 1970, Courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens, (inv. neg. no. 70/447, photo, Goesta Hellner. Colour photos © 2014. The Acropolis Museum. Photo by K.A. Schwab



**Image 17:** Kore D, Fairfield University model, M. Giarratana Young, hair styled by M. Torres. © 2009. Photos a-d, courtesy of K.A. Schwab

#### E. Kore E

Kore E stands at the eastern corner of the porch with her face and left side exposed to the elements and air pollution. She wears a thick fishtail braid down her back, carved in sections similar to those worn by Kore A. Braids wrap around her head, exposed at the back as two large fishtail braids overlapping one another. Her vertical braid is bound just below the midpoint. Numerous locks of very wavy hair hang below the band. The leftmost lock of hair lies flat against her back, a unique feature not found in the other Caryatids. Also, Kore E's long corkscrew curls are made of two locks, not the typical three, and of these two, one appears to be a loose corkscrew curl while the other is a zigzag pattern. Organizing the hair for this replication took considerable work, and was ideally executed thanks to a model with extremely thick and textured hair. The photographs show



early steps in the main braid leading to the completed braid, which is quite thick. Additional hair was added below the band to create the specific texture of the original.



**Image 18:** Kore E. © 1970. Black and white image. Courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens, inv. neg. no. 70/451, photo, Goesta Hellner. Colour photos © 2014, The Acropolis Museum. Photo by K.A. Schwab



**Image 19:** Kore E, Fairfield University model C. Parker, hair styled by M. Torres. © Photos a, d courtesy of Fairfield University, photographs, B. Angeletti; © 2009. Photos b, c courtesy of K.A. Schwab

#### F. Kore F

Kore F suffered from damage at different times in the history of the Acropolis. Most of her head was lost; however, some fragments have been identified and assembled to give the general appearance. Only the lower part of her fishtail braid is intact, carved directly on the back of the maiden. The locks below the band reveal a curly texture that finds parallels with Kore B and Kore C. In the nineteenth century an Italian sculptor was asked to make a new head for Kore F, and he chose to copy the fishtail braid of Kore D, the example with the least amount of texture, for the large section above the band. The relatively straight hair is distinctive and, in this case, does not match the texture of the hair below the band. In our project to recreate this maiden's hair, some inventiveness was required to suggest the appearance of the original fishtail braid, including a looser

pattern followed by a tighter braiding sequence directly above the band. Curly locks of hair below the band successfully convey the texture on the original sculpture.



**Image 20:** Kore F. Black and white photo. © 1970. Courtesy of Deutsches Archäologisches Institut-Athens, inv. neg. no. 70/458, photo, Goesta Hellner.  
Colour photos © 2014. The Acropolis Museum. Photo by K.A. Schwab



**Image 21:** Kore F, Fairfield University model S. Berger, hair styled by M. Torres.  
© 2009. Photos a-d courtesy of K.A. Schwab

## 5. Impact of the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*

Great interest has been shown in the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*. As a result of the project, girls and young women are intentionally trying to imitate Caryatids. A YouTube video demonstrating how to recreate the Caryatid hairstyle was based on the Fairfield University project as the video's director explains and has had over 15,700 views.<sup>37</sup> An article in *ARTnews* about the project has been shared over 3000 times.<sup>38</sup> Sometimes it is for wearing – the YouTube video creator and some commentators mention wearing it as a fun style. Often it is educational – the hairstyle and the process of creating it have been used as learning tools about ancient Greece and ancient Greek women by classics and art history professors and students, particularly after demonstrations by Schwab for middle and high school students, as well as for university students throughout the

Northeast.<sup>39</sup> As S. Berger, our Kore F in the video, *The Caryatid Hairstyling Project* (2009), commented, ‘it is one thing to see it and another thing to wear it.’<sup>40</sup> All of the student models discovered that their general interest in and connection to ancient Greece was transformed by the project. They thought about hairstyles in an entirely new way and as a compelling portal to another time and place. Ancient Athenians were no longer a vague concept but real people whose lives were played out in the surviving art. Younger students, such as those at The Brearley School in New York City, read Homer’s *Odyssey* in which Calypso is constantly described in terms of her beautiful braids. Learning about the Caryatids’ hairstyles and watching fellow students transformed into Caryatids by Ms Torres creates a memorable experience. Students contemplate how these elaborate coiffures, including the currently popular fishtail braid, identified a select group of young women in ancient Athens who participated in their city’s rituals and societal traditions (Image 22).<sup>41</sup>



**Image 22:** Milexy Torres and Katherine A. Schwab at The Brearley School in New York City, flanking students with their hair styled as Caryatids, April 2015. © 2015. The Brearley School. Photo by E. Antanitus

*Photographs of the Caryatid Hairstyling Project*, a temporary exhibition at the Greek Consulate General in New York City (25 February – 27 March 2015), spontaneously prompted students from The Cathedral School to braid each other’s hair into variations of the Caryatid hairstyles during their visit to the exhibition (Image 23). The same exhibition travelled to the Embassy of Greece in Washington, D.C. (30 April – 26 June 2015) where thousands of visitors viewed the photographs during the annual European Union Embassies’ Open House Festival on 9 May 2015.<sup>42</sup> The Caryatid hairstyles have opened a portal into the past, generating new interest in ancient hairstyles and the people who wore them.<sup>43</sup>



**Image 23:** Students wearing fishtail braids inspired by the exhibition, the *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*, at the Greek Consulate General in New York City. © 2015.  
Photo courtesy of the Reverend Archdeacon Panteleimon Papadopoulos

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Meredith Bryan, ‘Here Come the Braids,’ *New York Observer*, May, 26, 2009, accessed 29 May 2015. <http://observer.com/2009/05/here-come-the-braids>.

<sup>2</sup> Vitruvius, *On Architecture, Volume 1, Books 1-5*, trans. Frank Granger (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1.5.

<sup>3</sup> British Museum, GR 1816.6-10.128.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Jones Roccas, ‘The Kanephoros and Her Festival Mantle in Greek Art,’ *American Journal of Archaeology* 99, no. 4 (1995): 641-66.

<sup>5</sup> Jenifer Neils, ‘With Noblest Images on all Sides: The Ionic Frieze of the Parthenon,’ in *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. J. Neils (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 207.

<sup>6</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; Boston: Adamant Media, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> For similar examples in late antique Rome, see Marice Rose, ‘The Construction of Mistress and Female Slave Relationships in Late Antique Art,’ *Woman’s Art Journal* 29 (2008): 46-47.

<sup>8</sup> One of the maidens in the Parthenon east frieze (northern half) might be wearing a fishtail braid but it is not well enough preserved to determine if additional fishtail braids wrapped around her head and corkscrew curls emerged from behind her visible ear.

<sup>9</sup> John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), fig. 108 (Berlin Kore), fig. 117 (Discus Thrower); John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), fig. 35 (Artemision Bronze), fig. 66 (Omphalos Apollo).

<sup>10</sup> See Alexandra Lesk, ‘A Diachronic Examination of the Erechtheion and Its Reception,’ (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2004), 262-279, for discussion of Roman copies of the Erechtheion Caryatids. Other Roman examples were located in fora in Roman Corinth and Mérida, Spain.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann, eds., *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Lesk, *Diachronic Examination*, 686.

<sup>13</sup> Lesk, *Diachronic Examination*, 452-595.

<sup>14</sup> J. L. Wolfe, 1820. Cited in Lesk, *Diachronic Examination*, 863.

<sup>15</sup> ‘The Hair. Part I: Arrangement,’ *Home Book: A Domestic Encyclopædia Forming a Companion Volume to Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management* (London: Ward, Lock, and Company, 1882), 538-539.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Braid’ was the most common search term for in 2014 on the *Teen Vogue* website. Simone Oliver, ‘Braids Woven to Each Personality,’ *New York Times*, October 9, 2013, accessed 29 May 2015,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/10/fashion/Braids-Have-Become-a-Trendy-Way-to-Show-Some-Creativity-.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/10/fashion/Braids-Have-Become-a-Trendy-Way-to-Show-Some-Creativity-.html?_r=0).

<sup>17</sup> Cheikh Anta Babou, 'Migration and Cultural Change: Money, "Caste," Gender, and Social Status among Senegalese Female Hair Braiders in the United States,' *Africa Today* 55, no. 2 (2008): 8. Ironically, although African braiding salons were common in New York City, it was John Barrett's opening of a braiding bar in his Bergdorf Goodman salon in summer 2011 after seeing women in downtown New York wearing 'creative braids' (as quoted in Oliver, 'Braids Woven') that brought braids to attention of the mainstream media, as discussed below. For media paying attention to African-style braids only when white celebrities wear them, see Philip Picardi, 'The Thin Line between Fashionable and Offensive,' *Refinery29*, 8 October 2014, accessed 4 June 2015, <http://www.refinery29.com/cornrows-cultural-appropriation>. Another example is the corn rows worn by Bo Derek in the 1979 film *10* that started a trend among non-African Americans in the early 1980s.

<sup>18</sup> Bryan, 'Here Come the Braids.'

<sup>19</sup> 'Best Runway Hair: 2010,' *Elle*, accessed 29 May 2015,

<http://www.elle.com/beauty/hair/tips/g1971/best-runway-hair-fall-2010-397588/>.

<sup>20</sup> 'Five Braided Hairstyles to Rock this Season: See the Best Fall Braid Trends for 2013,' *29Secrets*, accessed 3 June 2015,

<http://www.29secrets.com/beauty/5-braided-hairstyles-rock-season>.

<sup>21</sup> 'From the Runway to the Streets: The Fishtail Braid,' *Notice Magazine*, 4 March 2013, accessed 4 June 2015, <https://noticemagazineblog.wordpress.com/tag/fishtail-braid-for-black-women>. 'Black Hair Ideas Part 2,' *Art Becomes You*, 2 March 2012, accessed 4 June 2015,

<http://artbecomesyou.com/2012/03/02/101-black-hair-ideas-part-2/>; Tiffany Barrow, 'Ten Awesome New Black Natural Hairstyles,' *Latest Hairstyles*, accessed 4 June 2015,

<http://www.latest-hairstyles.com/black/natural/natural-hairstyles.html>.

<sup>22</sup> 'Get the Look: Surfer Chic at Calla Spring 2014,' *Hello Canada*, 10 October 2013, accessed 2 June 2015,

<http://ca.hellomagazine.com/health-and-beauty/0201310112316/get-the-look-surfer-chic-at-calla-spring-2014>.

<sup>23</sup> Alyssa Reeder, 'Braids are the New Black at John Barrett,' *Vanity Fair*, August 14, 2014, accessed 4 June 2015, <http://www.vanityfair.com/style/2014/06/braids-are-the-new-black>; Jackie Fields, 'The 10 Best Cannes Braid Moments... Ever,' *People*, May 11, 2015, accessed 2 June 2015, <http://www.peoplestylewatch.com/people/stylewatch/gallery/0,,20922052,00.html?stitched#30333066>. Barrett is a hairstylist of international stature whose clientele include personalities in film, media, fashion, and society.

<sup>24</sup> Oliver, 'Braids Woven.'

<sup>25</sup> Brooke Foster, 'Forget Pigtailed: Resurrected Braid Trend All about Glam,' *NBC News*, June 27, 2011, accessed 2 June 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/forget-pigtails-resurrected-braid-trend-all-about-glam-v6958875>.

<sup>26</sup> Laser cleaning for all five Caryatids in Athens was completed in June 2014. A short video of the project was produced by the Acropolis Museum, 'Conserving the Caryatids,' YouTube video, 1:15, accessed 2 June 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwCNfQh8Woo>.

<sup>27</sup> Recent cleanings have made them even more popular. Liz Alderman, 'Acropolis Maidens Glow Anew: Caryatid Statues, Restored, are Stars at Athens Museum,' *New York Times*, July 7, 2014, accessed 29 May 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/08/arts/design/caryatid-statues-restored-are-stars-at-athens-museum.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/08/arts/design/caryatid-statues-restored-are-stars-at-athens-museum.html?_r=0).

<sup>28</sup> Yanar Alkayat, 'We Want Dianna Agron's Plaits!' *Cosmopolitan* January 31, 2012, accessed 2 June 2015,

[http://www.cosmopolitan.co.uk/beauty-hair/celebrity-hair-makeup/a14811/we\\_want\\_diannaagron\\_red\\_carpet\\_plait\\_updo\\_hair/](http://www.cosmopolitan.co.uk/beauty-hair/celebrity-hair-makeup/a14811/we_want_diannaagron_red_carpet_plait_updo_hair/).

<sup>29</sup> Styles at 2014 fall/winter London runway shows for Fendi and Dolce and Gabbana were called ‘elegant Greek goddess styles’ in the press; braids were included, but not fishtails. Laura Cochrane, ‘Braids – this season’s hair: In pictures,’ *The Guardian*, 5 September 2014, accessed 2 June 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/gallery/2014/sep/05/-sp-braids-this-seasons-hair-in-pictures>.

For the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 2009 Spring gala, celebrity stylist Louise O’Connor arranged model Coco Rocha’s hair in four braids that crisscrossed at the back, saying: ‘She had sent me a picture, she said it was Grecian, but the picture she actually sent me was, it seemed, more Renaissance, or like the Elizabethan times, a very romantic cross between curls and braids’; Bryan, ‘Here Come the Braids.’

<sup>30</sup> For overview, see Toni L. Carrell, ‘Replication and Experimental Archaeology,’ *Historical Archaeology* 26, no. 4 (1992): 4-13. For experimental archaeology with weaponry, see the work of Barry Molloy, including ‘Swords and Swordsmanship in the Aegean Bronze Age,’ *American Journal of Archaeology* 114, no. 3 (2010): 403-28. For experimental archaeology of Aegean Bronze Age cooking, see Dr Eleni Hasaki, ‘Greek Kiln Project,’ accessed 10 July 2015, <http://aiatucson.arizona.edu/greek-kiln-project>, and Janet Stephens, a professional hairdresser in Baltimore, has written an article and produced videos recreating ancient hairstyles; ‘Ancient Roman Hairdressing: on (Hair) Pins and Needles,’ *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21 (2008): 111-132; YouTube channel *Janet Stephens Channel*, accessed 5 June 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/user/jntvstp>.

<sup>31</sup> Hans Lauter, *Antike Plastik*, vol. 16, *Die Koren des Erechtheion* (Berlin: Walter H. Schuchhardt, Felix Eckstein, 1976). This volume remains the most comprehensive publication on the Caryatids. It is generously illustrated, along with comparanda such as the Augustan and Hadrianic copies of the Athenian Caryatids.

<sup>32</sup> The project webpage with additional information and bibliography is <http://www.fairfield.edu/caryatid>.

<sup>33</sup> James Stevens Cox, *Illustrated Dictionary of Hairdressing and Wigmaking* (New York: Drama Book Pub, 1984), fig. 232.

<sup>34</sup> John Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases. The Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), fig. 156.

<sup>35</sup> Jo Marchant, ‘Ancient Egyptians Used “Hair Gel”,’ *Nature*, 19 August 2011, accessed 5 June 2015, <http://www.nature.com/news/2011/110819/full/news.2011.487.html>.

<sup>36</sup> The student, and the women in her family, all have unusually thick and long hair. The student followed the general arrangement of the Caryatid hairstyle, with hair down to her hips. Due to having exceptionally thick hair, she had plenty of her own hair to create side braids wrapping around her head, in addition to the fishtail braid down her back. She did not attempt the corkscrew curls from behind her ear, but it was evident that she could have done this with her own hair.

<sup>37</sup> LaDollyVita33, ‘Ancient Greek Braid Inspired by the Parthenon’s Caryatids,’ YouTube video, 8:16, accessed 4 June 2015, <https://youtube/ZDG6uAGZDN8>. One of the comments in the blog corrected the location from the Parthenon to the Erechtheion.

<sup>38</sup> Jenny Brown, ‘Greek Revival,’ *ArtNews*, February 1, 2011, accessed 4 June 2015, <http://www.artnews.com/2011/02/01/greek-revival/>. ShareThis: 3103 and Pinterest: 2427.

<sup>39</sup> The Brearley School, The Marymount School, and The Cathedral School in New York City; and Amherst College and Case Western Reserve University, for the northeast.

<sup>40</sup> *Caryatid Hairstyling Project*, dir. Katherine A. Schwab, Fairfield, CT: Fairfield University, 2009, DVD.

<sup>41</sup> Torres, professional hairstylist for the Caryatid Hairstyling Project, has collaborated with K.A. Schwab on numerous occasions to demonstrate the Caryatid hairstyles. She includes a variation of the Caryatid hairstyle in her repertoire for bridal hairstyles she offers to clients.

<sup>42</sup> Over 3,500 visitors entered the Greek Embassy during the 2015 Open House celebration. Subsequently, *The Washington Post* featured an article by Celia Wren, accessed on 4 June 2015,

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/how-did-they-do-that-do/2015/05/20/10aa6188-fd81-11e4-833c-a2de05b6b2a4\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/how-did-they-do-that-do/2015/05/20/10aa6188-fd81-11e4-833c-a2de05b6b2a4_story.html). *The Independent* in London republished the article, which leads with a new title including a reference to Jennifer Aniston's character Rachel, famous for her hair, on the hit U.S. TV program *Friends*, accessed 4 June 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/the-rachel-haircut-of-2015-hairdos-of-the-ancient-greeks-brought-to-life-10277384.html>

<sup>43</sup> The Bellarmine Museum of Art at Fairfield University will host an exhibition, *Hair in the Classical World*, 7 October-18 December 2015, with a broader focus on ancient Greece, Cyprus, and Rome, along with a symposium on the topic on 6 November 2015, organized by the authors. For more information, visit [www.fairfield.edu/museum](http://www.fairfield.edu/museum).

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