

Colossus of Rhodes to be rebuilt as giant light sculpture

Details from The Colossus of Rhodes, an 18th century engraving by George Balthasar Probst, from the Stapleton Collection. Photograph: Bridgeman Art Library



It may not straddle the port as its predecessor once did, but in terms of sheer luminosity and eye-catching height the new Colossus of Rhodes will not disappoint. Nor will it fall short of the symbolism that once imbued the ancient monument.

Twenty-three centuries after craftsmen carved the legendary statue that has inspired legions of painters, poets, playwrights and politicians, a new world wonder, built in the spirit of the original Colossus, is about to be born on the Aegean island. After decades of dashed hopes, the people of Rhodes will fulfil a long-held dream to revive one of the world's seven ancient wonders - thanks to the promise of international funding and the East German artist Gert Hof.

"It will be a unique architectural creation," said the island's mayor, Hatzis Hatziefthimiou, presenting what is likely to become one of the 21st century's largest artistic projects in Dubai last week.

"We want to make it a work of global appeal and significance."

Like the original, erected in homage to the sun god Helios by the master sculptor Chares of Lindos, the new Colossus will adorn an outer pier in the harbour area of Rhodes, and be visible to passing ships. And like its ancient namesake, the modern-day wonder will be dedicated to celebrating peace and built, at least in part, out of melted-down weapons from around the world.

But unlike the ancient Colossus, which stood 34 metres high before an earthquake toppled it in 226BC, the groundbreaking work of art is slated to be much taller and bigger. And unlike previous reconstruction efforts, officials say the Cologne-based design team is determined to avoid recreating a replica.

In the past, new Colossus aficionados have persistently run up against the objections of Greece's powerful lobby of archaeologists.

A proposal to recreate the legendary statue in the run-up to the 2004 Athens Olympics whipped up such controversy that opponents claimed its glitzy, we're-bigger-than-you overtones were not only offensive but defiled rather than boosted the country's cultural heritage.

"Monumental works can't be copied for the simple reason that they risk becoming caricatures," insisted Hatziefthimiou.

Instead, in the spirit of the 21st century the new Colossus has been conceived as a highly innovative light sculpture, a

work of art that will allow visitors to physically inspect it by day as well as enjoy - through light shows - a variety of stories it will "tell" by night.

"We are talking about a highly, highly innovative light sculpture, one that will stand between 60 and 100 metres tall so that people can physically enter it," said Dr Dimitris Koutoulas, who is heading the project in Greece.

"Although we are still at the drawing board stage, Gert Hof's plan is to make it the world's largest light installation, a structure that has never before been seen in any place of the world."

The statue is also expected to cost up to €200m according to yesterday's Vima newspaper. But, in another first that has also been welcomed by the people of Rhodes, international organisations led by the World Trade Centre Association, a network of exporters who promote peace through trade, have weighed in with financial help.

"The new Colossus has been the dream of Rhodians for many years," said Yannis Hadzimarkos, president of the Dodecanese Islands' Chamber of Commerce which is also supporting the project. "It will be a marvellous opportunity for the economy of the region even if it is naive to think it will be easy."

ND senses shift on Vatopedi

Questions about reliability of witness could take pressure off government as probe enters crucial phase

New Democracy is hoping that the investigation into the Vatopedi property exchange is turning in its favor after the reliability of one witness, who claimed the scandal was linked to Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, was called into doubt. The reaction of several ministers yesterday suggested that the government feels the tide may be turning on a scandal that has dogged the ruling conservatives for the last few months. "It is not possible and is not proper for political powers to uncover false witnesses, who are also linked to underworld figures, who directly attack the prime minister and the government," said Interior Minister Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

He was commenting on the testimony of lawyer Tania Sotiropoulou, who represented the owners of land involved in the deal. Sotiropoulou was called by the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) to answer questions



before a parliamentary committee last week. She claimed that Thessaloniki's conservative Prefect Panayiotis Psomiadis told her that Karamanlis ordered the land swap between the state and the Vatopedi Monastery. Psomiadis denies ever making these claims and a secretly filmed video first aired on Friday appears to show Sotiropoulou's husband Michalis Koukovinos asking a developer for property in return for him not revealing details about the land swaps. MPs on the investigative panel are due to see the full 13 minutes of the video today but ND already feels

that it has weakened the case against the government, as it indicates underhanded methods were being used to try to incriminate the conservatives.

PASOK issued a statement accusing ND of trying to fool people by emphasizing the testimony of one witness when more than 60 have been questioned so far. The parliamentary probe is entering a crucial phase as Vatopedi head monk Ephraim is due to face questioning next week along with Psomiadis and the wife of former Merchant Marine Minister Giorgos Voulgarakis, Katerina Peleki.

Six new border points between Bulgaria, Greece to open by 2012

Six new border points between Bulgaria and Greece are scheduled to be opened by 2012, Bulgarian Deputy Regional Development Minister Dimcho Mihalevski said in Greece, as quoted by Bulgarian National Radio and website mediapool.bg. Mihalevski is currently on a visit to Bulgaria's southern neighbour, where he is discussing policies on construction and rehabilitation of roads leading to the existent and future border points on the Bulgarian-Greek border.

Bulgaria's ambitions are to open two of the border points - near Ivailovgrad and Zlatograd - as of the summer of 2009, Mihalevski said. The road from Ivailovgrad to the Greek town of Kyprinos is almost finished and is expected to be ready by end-March 2009, he said.

Regarding the road from Zlatograd to the Greek town of Thermes, Bulgaria has completed a new 4km section and about a kilometre is left to the border point, which is also scheduled to be completed within the first three months of 2009, Mihalevski said.

The roads from Kurdjali to Makaza and from Roudozem to Xanthi, where other border points will be erected, are currently being worked on. There is a ready work project for the Smolyan-Gorna Arda-Paranisti road. The border point projects will help open the Bulgarian-Greek border and encourage the economic and cultural development of the Sea of Marmara and Rhodope mountains transborder region, Mihalevski said.

Currently there are only three working border points on the 500km-long border between the two countries: at Koulata-Promahon, Ilinden-Exohi and Novo selo-Ormeninon.

Over the next weeks, Bulgaria's National Road Infrastructure Agency will announce a competition for the construction of two lots of the Strouma highway - Dolna Dikanya-Doupnitsa and Koulata-Sandanski, Mihalevski added.