

## Greek Revival



Girls will be girls, be they human or stone. When **Katherine Schwab**, art-history professor at Fairfield University in Connecticut, first saw close-up photographs of the caryatids—the female statues on the southern porch of the Erechtheion temple on the Acropolis—she was struck by one thing above all: “how stunning the hair is.” Stacks of braids coiling about the head; heavy herringbone braids down the back, ending in corkscrew tendrils: the hairstyles of these marble maidens are sculpted marvels, equal to the statues’ delicately rippled chitons and gracefully bended knees.

Schwab notes that the hairstyles flow elegantly into the design of the porch. “The thick braids crowning the head form a visual transition to the element above, which in this case is an architectural capital supporting the roof,”

she says. But, looking at the photos, she wondered if the hairstyles extended beyond the artistic to the historical—if they were documents of how the rich young women of ancient Athens wore their hair to religious festivals. “I thought, ‘How would a sculptor know how to carve that?’” she recalls. “This can’t be purely an invention of the artist.”

To test whether real people could have worn such elabo-

rate coiffures, she asked six modern-day maidens—her students—to have their hair braided, twisted, and curled to resemble the Erechtheion statues. (The ones on the temple today are replicas. Five of the originals moved to the Acropolis Museum; the sixth is at the British Museum.)

Stylist **Milexy Torres** matched each girl to one of the statues based on the length and texture of her

hair. Torres spent seven hours braiding and curling, a process documented in a DVD released by the university. “Each of the caryatids has a completely different hairstyle,” says **Amber Nowak**, who became one of the statues in the front row of four. “They seem similar, but when you look up close, you can see.”

Once transformed, the girls posed for the camera on a lawn, in the exact arrange-

ment of the statues. It was a hot spring day, and the girls’ hair wilted within hours. But the project made a lasting impression on the students. “When you’re in Art History 101, and you’re told to look at the Venus, you never notice her hairstyle,” says **Sandra Cimino**, a 2009 graduate. “Now whenever I go to the Met and see a statue of a woman, I make a note on the hair.”

—*Jenny Brown*



The intricate hairstyles of the caryatids on the Erechtheion temple in Athens were re-created on the heads of six Fairfield University students. Caitlin Parker, Mara Giarratana Young, and Dana Westrup (top) model the results.