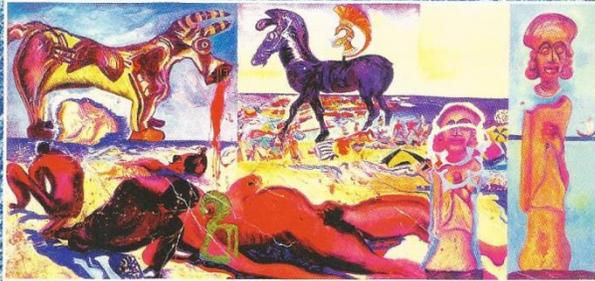


AMERICAN STUDIES IN GREECE : SERIES 1

# HELLENISM and the U.S.

CONSTRUCTIONS  
DECONSTRUCTIONS



editor Savas Patsalidis

HELLENIC ASSOCIATION of AMERICAN STUDIES

## **“WE ARE ALL GREEKS” : DECONSTRUCTING HELLENISM IN AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE**

*Henry Matthews*

In 1936 the architectural historian Thomas Tallmadge argued that the search for an indigenously American architecture in the late 19th century was "a will-o'-the wisp." He justified his condemnation of the Chicago School's innovative design and his own ardent promotion of the classics by proclaiming in Shelley's words, "We are all Greeks." This paper examines the long American infatuation with Greek architecture in the United States, but concludes that, in many ways, Americans misunderstood the object of their affection. The Greek Revival was stronger in the United States than in most countries, and virtually became the national style between 1820 and 1860. It is clear, however, that patrons and architects only took what they wanted from ancient Greece, preferring many attributes of Roman design. When the love affair stirred again in the post modern era, the deep seated need for ancient symbols was expressed, not with reserve, but with irony.