



CHANGING MINDS AND LIVES
MOUNT HOLYOKE EUROPEAN ALUMNAE SYMPOSIUM
ATHENS - GREECE OCTOBER 4-6, 2019

THE STORY OF THE SYMPOSIUM LOGO

Designing the logo for Mount Holyoke's European Alumnae Symposium in Greece was an interesting affair. A country as vastly rich in symbols and visual images as Greece - from her ancient days to her modern times – can offer so many choices that the task of narrowing things down to a concise and representative logo is more a process of elimination than the search for an idea. The answer came unexpectedly, in the form of a coin and the little owl who had been sitting patiently at the bottom of a pocket without my taking much notice of him – or her – before.

Of all the coinage produced by its member states, arguably none bears an image more endearing or as touchingly meaningful as the little owl of Athens that figures on the Greek one Euro coin. The diminutive creature on the coin I held in my hand expressed both the glories and lessons of the ancient world and the hopes and aspirations for the future of a modern and united Europe. It was the embodiment of change.

The little owl (*Athena noctua*) was an everyday bird that, through its intelligence and its ability to see in the dark, rose to become the symbol of the goddess Athena, patron and protectress of Athens. So plentiful were these little birds in ancient times that “an owl to Athens” implied the same redundancy as “coals to Newcastle” today. Yet this little, common bird came to represent the qualities of wisdom, knowledge, scholarship and insightfulness. What creature could be more suited to accompany Mount Holyoke alumnae along a journey of ideas in Greece?

In many ways the theme of this symposium and today's story of constant upheaval and change is the story of a little owl who has seen her nation through millennia of change, bearing its message of wisdom and informed optimism as a lesson to us all.

Anne Moses Bennett '72