

Amy Nuytkens

At the base of the intersecting stairways in Crouse College, stands a 9 foot-tall plaster replica of *The Winged Victory of Samothrace*, one of the masterpieces of Hellenistic sculpture. This Winged Goddess of Victory is also known as the Goddess Victoria to the Romans and the Goddess Nike to the Greeks. Why was she put there? What is her story, you ask?

Upon its completion, Crouse College was the third building on campus and stood as the highest structure in Syracuse. It was the first College of Fine Arts in the United States and is now home to the College of Visual and Performing Arts and the Setnor School of Music. Back in the day, when travel to Europe was more difficult and rare, the College of Fine Arts would procure copies of famous pieces of art so students could study them. This copy of Victoria/Nike was unveiled on May 27, 1905, a gift from a student group. There are many other copies of it all over the world.

The original statue of *The Winged Victory of Samothrace* was discovered and excavated in 1863 on Samothrace, a small Greek island in the northwest Aegean Sea, by Charles Champoiseau. He was French Vice-Consul to Turkey at the time and an amateur archaeologist. It was immediately taken to the Louvre Museum where it has been on display ever since, undergoing extensive restoration and cleaning in 2013. The monument is believed to be a gift dedicated by the Rhodians in honor of one of two known naval victories in the early second century BC. The gray Lartos marble used for the base of the ship and the Parian marble used for the statue identifies it as being from Rhodes. At an impressive 9 feet tall, the dramatic statue of Nike standing on the prow of a ship, braced against the wind with wings outstretched had been placed in a rock niche dug into the side of a hill overlooking the theater of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods. It is thought that there was a pool of water below it so it looked as though the ship was floating. It was monumental and dramatic.

Nike can first be found featured in works of art from the Archaic period or sixth century BC onwards through the Hellenistic period. The Archaic period is defined as the time after Greece's Dark Ages and before its Classical period. The Hellenistic period, a time of Greek cultural dominance, is defined as the time between the death of Alexander the Great and the rise of the Roman Empire.

So who is Nike?

Nike is an athletic apparel company. Yes, and it is a good name for an athletic wear company because Nike is the goddess of strength, speed, and victory. The logo of Nike shoes is not "a check mark" but rather a modern rendering of a wing. She would fly with great speed around the battle fields rewarding worthy victors with glory and fame, symbolized by the wreath of laurel leaves. She is often portrayed in other statues and paintings with her arm outstretched holding a wreath or palm branch.

The Winged Nike is the Rolls Royce hood ornament, called the Sprit of Ecstasy. True. Who doesn't want victory, that is, who doesn't want to achieve the level of owning a Rolls Royce! It is all about desire. I find it rather interesting that Victory should be a woman, as opposed to a

man, since we are talking about war and battles. It makes sense, however, when you realize that winning or victory is the greatest desire – it is pure ecstasy. The ancient Greeks were obsessed with the sweet fruits of Victory in war, love and athletics. The Goddess Victory/Nike with her robes nearly see-through, blowing against the shape of her body, is an object of desire. Rolls Royce is branded as a classic object of desire, as is Honda motorcycle by the way.

Actually, Nike is one of the four children of Styx and Titan Pallus. She had three brothers Zelus (zeal/rivalry), Bia (force) and Cratos (strength/supremacy). Styx for brought her children to stand by Zeus in the great Titan war, and he rewarded her by turning her into the famous river Styx of the underworld. Zeus gave Nike a golden chariot and she became his official charioteer. Nike is not featured in many mythological stories, but the goddess Athena of Wisdom and War is often shown holding her in her hand.

Nike is one of the most commonly portrayed figures on ancient coins, and she continues to be evoked in modern times in more than just Nike shoes and Rolls Royce hood ornaments. In 1928, Giuseppe Cassioli redesigned the Olympic medals to portray Nike on the reverse side holding a palm frond in her right hand and a winner's laurel crown in her left. The first FIFA World Cup trophy also featured a figure of Nike holding a vessel called Victoria. Many popular names have also originated from Nike such as Nicholas, Nicola, Nicole, Nikka, and Nils.

The Winged Victory of Samothrace, Nike, is a masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture and one of the most important pieces in the Louvre. It is no wonder that the majestic replica standing in Crouse College was one of the first pieces of art purchased for students to study. The Goddess Nike's personification of victory is one that people relate to even today because we all strive to win. It is interesting that Nike and Rolls Royce are companies that have leveraged extremely strong brand identity using Winged Victory, even though the ancient symbolism is lost on many customers today. No one at Syracuse University should be able to get away with not knowing who she is! Standing at the base of the stairs in Crouse College and gazing up at her imposing, beautiful figure with those magnificent, powerful wings can only give a boost to your spirit.

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