

# MONOCLE

A BRIEFING ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS, BUSINESS, CULTURE & DESIGN

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Autumn  
Style  
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Survey

## The ambassador will see you now — the art of modern diplomacy

Behind the scenes at the UN, embassy battles in the Pacific and Sweden's soft-power retail players, all in our **MONOCLE SPECIAL**

- A AFFAIRS** Why Istanbul is the Syrian opposition's unexpected diplomatic ally in exile
- B BUSINESS** ...
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**LET'S GO GREEK: THE NATION'S ARCHITECTS ARE IN DEMAND**

SPECIAL REPORT

**Mr Larsen**  
Come to our Arne Jacobsen-designed embassy for smørrebrød and we can put that little incident behind us.

**Mr Santos**  
We're friends with everyone and are on the hunt for new African embassies.

**Mrs Adeyemi**  
I'll speak to Abuja and see what we can do. And I have a favour to ask, too.

**Mr Cartwright**  
This, madam, is my permanent seat and I have absolutely no intention of sharing it.

**Mrs Watanabe**  
Gomenasai. I'll put it down to poor translation but I don't like what Beijing is saying.

**Mr Gruber**  
Was denken Sie, Madam secretary-general? I understand the need to stand up to Russia. But could it just not be down to us to do it?



**+1**  
Switzerland Travel Guide: From slope to city, a 32-page winter guide

**+2**  
Auckland & New Zealand Survey: A 44-page guide to the buzzing nation

**SHALL WE TALK?**

**1 UNITED NATIONS:**  
A busy week in the life of the world's talking shop

**2 SUSHI AND RUINS:**  
How Unesco creates a better world with culture (and why the US still boycotts it)

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EUR 12 (GER)  
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DKK 122

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- 01 Plane House by K-Studio
- 02 Brothers Dimitris and Konstantinos Karampatakis, founders of K-Studio
- 03 Plane House master bedroom
- 04 Side view of the house and slate wall



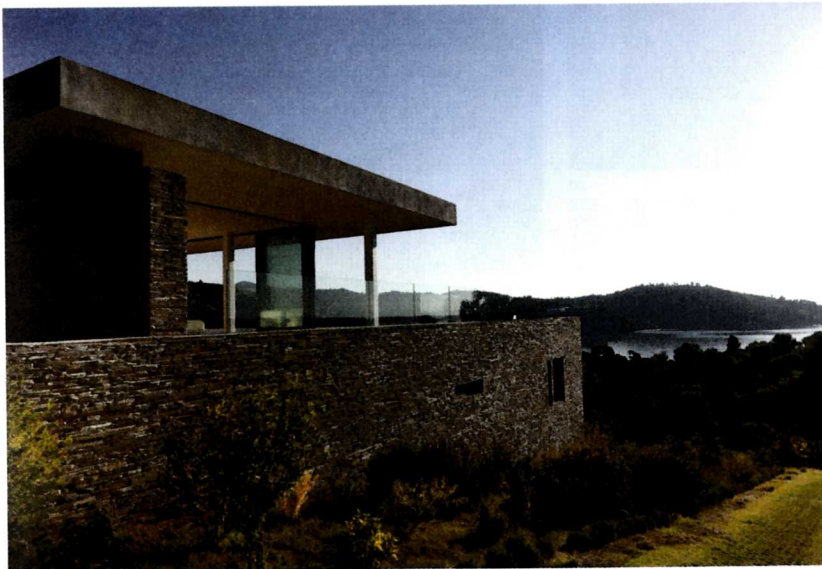
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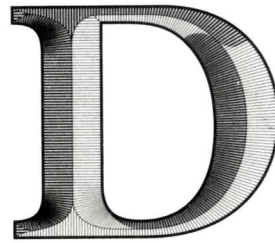


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**D**  
REPORT  
Greek new wave



## PICKING UP THE PIECES —Athens

**Preface**

An ambitious new generation of Greek architects is on the rise, demonstrating a unique approach to design. Forced by the nation's economic malaise to raise their game, they are taking their skills around the world.

WRITER  
*Alicia Kirby*

PHOTOGRAPHER  
*Petros Efstathiadis*

“Greek people are starting to feel more comfortable as the market stabilises and residential and commercial projects are picking up,” says Dimitris Karampatakis, architect and co-founder of K-Studio, over a cold shot of Mastiha at Capanna. It is one of the 11 restaurants his practice has designed in Athens over the years and, as he points out, the tide is finally turning for many of his peers as well. A new wave of architectural talent is emerging in Greece that is delivering ideas, ingenuity and patience to weather the troubled past few years. Their skills have been fine-tuned by years of aggressively competing for the few commissions available and they have recently been moving up to work on a global scale.

“The crisis shocked us. The lack of work increased competition on a national

scale and made us realise we're not just competing against a bunch of friends in Greece like the previous generation of architects but against the whole world," says Nikolas Travasaros, one of the founding partners of award-winning Divercity Architects. "The most active of my generation – that includes studios like Deca Architecture, K-Studio and Point Supreme – cottoned onto this very quickly and realised we had to try harder."

Divercity Architects has studios based in London and Athens and is currently working on projects across Europe, North Africa and South America, including a hotel and villas in Argentina's La Dolfina polo club. This generation of architects has studied and worked abroad but is driven by a fierce national pride, which is why they have all actively chosen to establish their main headquarters in Athens despite taking on numerous jobs overseas.

"For Greeks, our identity is our reference point – it's our anchor. We feel a tremendous sense of responsibility to our country," says Travasaros.



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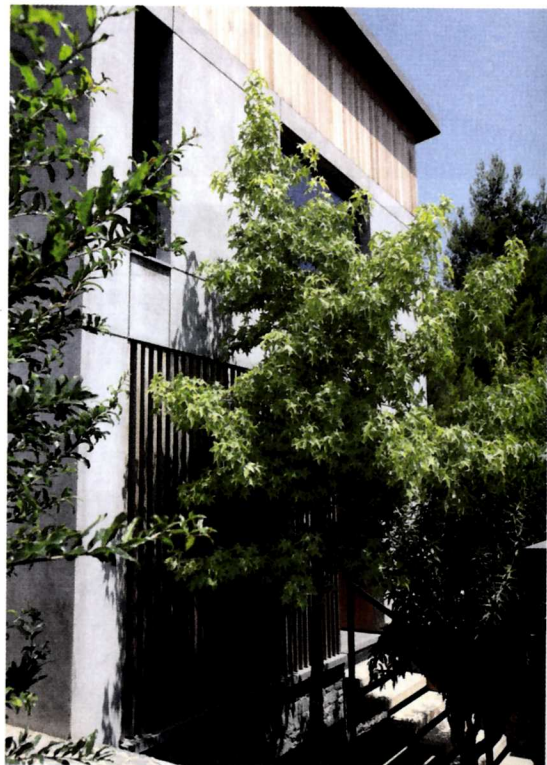
- 01 K-Studios' Konstantinos at work with a colleague
- 02 K-Studio team
- 03 Inside Woodwing Villa
- 04 Iroko decking surrounds Woodwing pool
- 05 Steel-hanging staircase
- 06 Leafy entrance
- 07 Open-air living area at Plane House with iroko deck and flooring
- 08 Plane House dining area
- 09 Nikolas Travasaros from Divercity Architects
- 10 Kinsterna Hotel & Spa, designed by Divercity



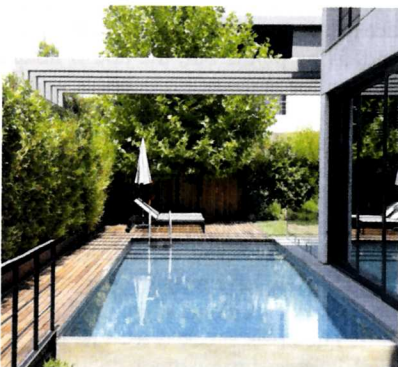
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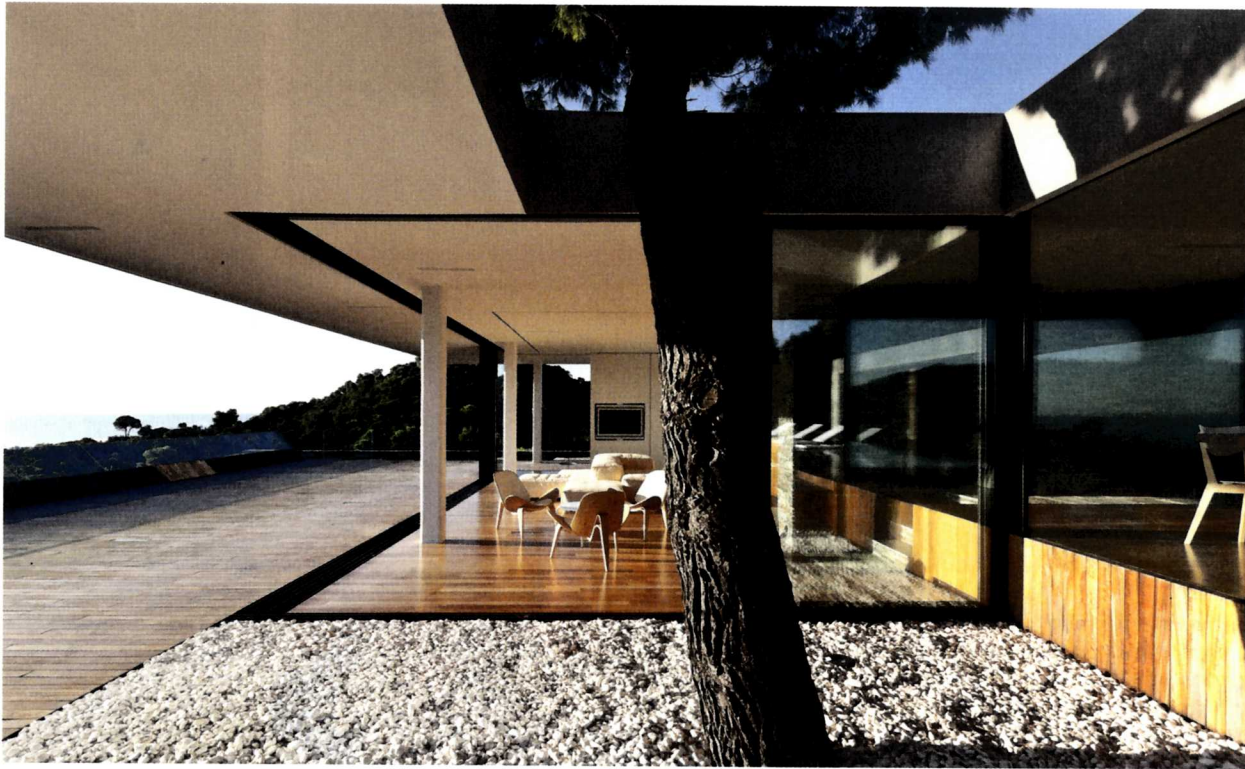
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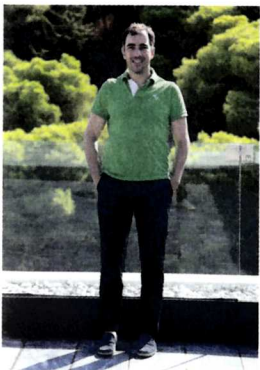
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## Iconic reinvention

Derelict for the past 10 years, the iconic headquarters of Constantinos Doxiadis, the Greek urban planner behind the masterplan of Islamabad, is finally being repurposed. The landmark building that formerly housed his office and design school will reopen this year as a luxury residence named One Athens. "This building is inscribed in the collective memory of the city. Everyone knew the building and loved it so it was key to preserve its legacy," says Nikolas Trivasaros, partner of Divercity Architects, who will restore the building. [oneathens.gr](http://oneathens.gr)



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K-Studio is a case in point. It was founded by brothers Dimitris and Konstantinos Karampatakis in 2004, who both studied at The Bartlett School of Architecture and did a stint with Will Alsop's practice in London before they returned home. Despite the challenging climate of Greece's economic crisis, the brothers felt it was a blessing in disguise when they were first starting out. "I believe Athens is a great incubator precisely because of its lack of structure and rules," says Dimitris. "Things don't have to be perfect. As a young practice you might be weak and you might not be ready but in an incubator you are allowed to grow. When you go out in the global market, however, you have to be ready. In cities like London you have to hit the ground running."

K-Studio has a hands-on approach. The firm custom designs furniture and home accessories for many of its projects. Its portfolio varies from commercial to residential, including Woodwing Villa: a flexible home that can be physically adapted to the needs of the inhabitants in different seasons. This year they completed a restaurant called Opso and upmarket juice bar Roots & Bulbs in London, where they also opened an office in July.

The Karampatakis brothers are optimistic about the future despite a lack of government support for young architects

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We are obsessed by the architecture of the Greek islands: it is so complex yet has a real primitivism

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in Greece. Even though there is a slight upturn, with the IMF predicting a modest growth of 0.6 per cent in the economy this year and 2.9 per cent next year, the road to recovery is still long. A lack of public money means that the work available in Greece is made up of privately funded residential or commercial work paid for by wealthy domestic or foreign individuals. With no public projects available it has been imperative for young firms to look overseas for work to tide them over financially.

This clique of ambitious architects is using its Greek nationality to create a unique and experimental visual identity – and no one feels a connection to Greek identity more strongly than Point Supreme. The practice is run by Konstantinos Pantazis and Marianna Rentzou, who alongside their core portfolio have dedicated the past six years to an ongoing series of personal projects that address problems in Athens. Eight of these projects were picked to be part of the Greek pavilion at the last Venice Biennale and included Square Pool: a proposal to turn a recessed public square into a public swimming pool, reclaiming a junkie-ridden area and turning it into a child-friendly space in the city. With a pool-services sponsor and the approval of the city, the project was on the cusp of happening but fell through at the last minute due to budget constraints.

Pantazis shows MONOCLE around his latest undertaking, an apartment called Nadja (each of their residential projects is named after the female owner of the property). The two floors of the flat are



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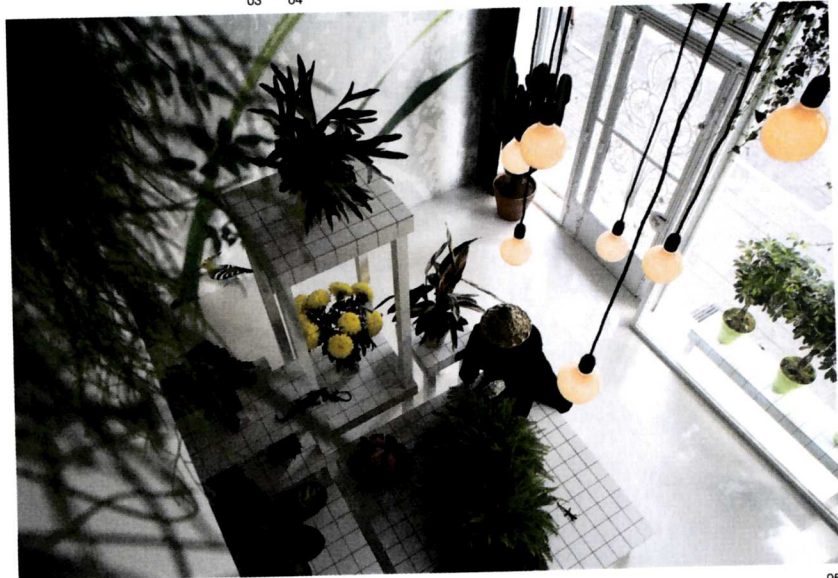
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- 01 Marianna Rentzou and Konstantinos Pantazis, Point Supreme founders
- 02 Model of Square Pool
- 03 Point Supreme sign
- 04 Inside the studio
- 05 Flower shop designed by Point Supreme
- 06 Flower-shop model
- 07 Kitchen in Nadja flat
- 08 Playful bold colours
- 09 Brightly painted stairs
- 10 Wooden poles break up different areas
- 11 Recurring patterns
- 12 Main living room



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## Greek greats

### Katerina Tsigarida

Based in Thessaloniki, Katerina Tsigarida set up her eponymous practice in 1996 and is known for the New Helexpo Gates in Thessaloniki.  
*tsigarida.gr*

### Nicos Valsamakis

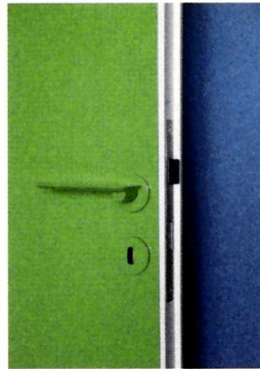
Acclaimed modernist who shaped the style of typical urban buildings in post-war Greece.  
*nicosvalsamakis.com*

### Alexandros Tombazis

In his seventies but still going strong, Tombazis is one of Greece's most prominent architects.  
*tombazis.com*



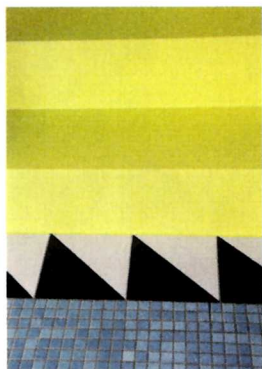
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a riot of colour. Various details are an architectural homage to the skill and craft of traditional Greek architecture, a recurring theme of their work. The pebbled bathroom floor, for example, references the landscapes of public squares in islands such as Santorini, whereas a patterned wooden border above a children's bed references traditional carvings in the houses of Chios. "We are absolute geeks of traditional Greek architecture and are obsessed by the architecture of the Greek islands; it is so complex yet has a real primitivism," says Rentzou. "It has got so much potential that we can explore."

Both Rentzou and Pantazis agree that just like other architects of their generation, this respect for Greek architecture stems from living and working abroad. They both worked at Rem Koolhaas's OMA in Rotterdam and also Jun Aoki in Tokyo. "If you live in a city your critical view is blocked by your daily habits," says Pantazis. "But because we have all studied or worked abroad, when we returned to Greece we were almost tourists and could look at its rich culture with fresh eyes."

It's a view that Alexandros Vaitzos, one of the founders of Deca Architecture, agrees with. "When people return to Greece they bring back multicultural attitudes. It's part of our culture to pick

up signals from antennas and come back. This is especially strong with architects.”

Vaitsos, who flew in from Italy late last night, props himself up with a coffee as he walks MONOCLE through his studio. The space is littered with handmade models; Vaitsos takes us upstairs to an atelier where they make intricate mock-ups of buildings and the topography around them. It is this obsessive dedication to craft and an almost anthropological approach to each project that makes Deca Architecture stand out from the rest. For Voronoi’s Corrals, a house in Milos, they personally interviewed more than 60 people to cherry pick the best stonemasons and carpenters and get an overview of the culture and living habits of the island’s inhabitants.

With a fierce sense of pride in its heritage of craftsmanship, this new generation is taking elements of Greece and putting them into a contemporary context. They have come home to Greece with a newfound pride and are hoping to make the most of the opportunities beginning to appear in the landscape here. As Pantazis walks down a dilapidated alley in the centre of Athens – a common but profound reminder of Greece’s ongoing struggles – he sums it up and says, “I think architecture in Greece has taken advantage of the crisis. It is experimental, daring and exciting.” — (M)



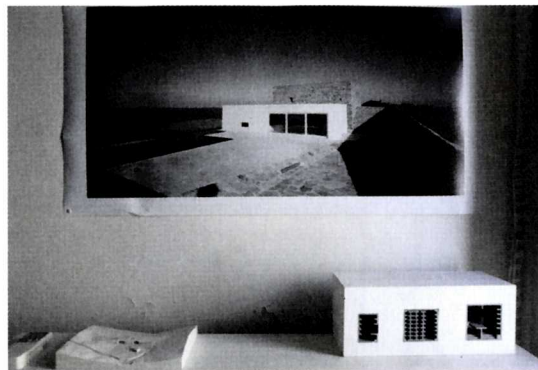
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- 01 Alexandros Vaitsos and Carlos Loperena of Deca Architecture
- 02 Recently completed building in Kolonaki
- 03 Laser-cut MDF architectural model by Deca
- 04 Projects on display in Deca's studio
- 05 Voronoi's Corrals house in Milos, made by Deca using limestone
- 06 Voronoi's Corrals blends in with the surrounding landscape
- 07 Sleek design



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