The Spirit of the Greeks in Australian Cities

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Abstract

Many migrant groups have contributed to Australian places. The Greek story is one of many successful legacies of migration to Australia across a number of generations. It is a valuable contribution to the vision of Australia as a demonstrably successful multicultural place at a time when current anxieties about migration and cultural difference are being expressed.

There are three intriguing reflections of Greece in Australia; first there are the places that tell the story of the experience of migration, namely occupying a 'space-in-between' two cultures, second there is an accident in the history of urban planning when the great 20th century planner, Doxiades, was in Brisbane, and third, there is a flowering of the Greek spirit in a number of leading planners and designers who are children of Greek migrants.

Greek migration has made a significant contribution to Australia in many ways, including the early 19th century beginnings, to the inter-war years when Greek migrants established milk-bars and fish and chip shops in country towns, to the 1950s-1960s 'building of a nation' through hard work in factories, steel mills, and the wharves. The experience of migration and the ways Greek migrants sought to make Australia feel more familiar resulted in places that were hybrids between ways of life in Greece and new lives in Australia. Greek churches, Greek clubs, restaurants, milk-bars, houses and gardens are all ubiquitous, although fast disappearing, elements in Australian towns.

The influence of Doxiades is less easily discerned. It is a little known part of Australian planning history. He was sent to Brisbane to recover his health, which was seriously affected by his major role in the Greek Resistance and the rebuilding of Greece immediately after WWII. Brisbane in the 1950s was a sleepy retreat where Doxiades, an Athenian patrician, recovered his well-being by growing tomatoes in a market garden area of rich volcanic soils. During this healing and contemplative activity, he developed his concept of EKESTIS as the way to rebuild cities in the 20th century.

The flowering of the Greek spirit in the second generation is fascinating to unravel. What is this spirit in contemporary planning and design in Australian cities? It is manifest in a number of ways, first as disciplined logic and discriminating skepticism derived from the heritage of Greek philosophy, exemplified by the design work of Alec Tzannes and Sophia Anapliotis, second as a visceral relationship between landscape, materials, and built form, exemplified by the work of Nonda Katsalidis, and third as a mystical and order-disturbing response derived from the Byzantine and exemplified by the work of Paul Katsieris.

In this work of Australian-Greek designers, we can also see a doubling of cultures where the sense of being Australian intersects with Greek heritage. A close look at the work of Paul Pholeros shows the oscillation between a deep commitment to Indigenous Australia and a particular respect for the knowledge embedded in the building process, characteristic of a number of Greek designers in Athens in the 1950s such as Pikionis, Konstantinidis and Zenetos.

It is fitting to celebrate the cultural pluralism in Australian planners and designers because within our cities and designed landscape there lies a priceless cultural concept of interweaving and hybridity which will yield rich understanding if explored.

I would like to propose that the spirit of the Greeks is present Australian Cities. I do not mean the replication of neo-classical forms in many 19th century Australian public buildings, although this is certainly evident. Instead I am suggesting that there is another spirit of the Greeks that is relatively recent, namely from 1950s to the present. There are places that Greek migrants have created as part of their migration experience but also in order to make the unfamiliar Australian environment feel more familiar, more like Greece. Churches, restaurants, milkbars, houses and gardens are all ubiquitous although fast-disappearing elements in Australian towns and cities.

There is also something else, much harder to pin down, but an equally intriguing contribution to Australian places, namely the flowering of a Greek spirit in the design work of contemporary Australian designers who are the second generation in Australia – the children of Greek migrants.

I am suggesting that there is a fusion of cultural and environmental influences that occurs in the migration experience and just as Bernard Colenbrander (1999:33), a Curator at the NAi, comments about contemporary Athens,

> *There might slumber in this city and landscape a priceless cultural concept, an as yet undiscovered intellectual programme, which needs only to be unwrapped* ….

So too, we might find a priceless cultural concept here in Australian cities that lies in that 'thirdspace' or 'space-in-between' our understanding of Australian architecture and urban landscapes and the cultural pluralism within our designers.

A Simple Reading of Migration

During the 1990s I explored a simple reading of migration, namely how the experience of migration was inscribed in the landscape of the host country. I worked with a number of migrant groups, in particular a group of Greek migrants who came to Australia in the early 1950s. It became clear the driving need to make Australian cities and towns feel more like Greece was evident in the changes they made to their houses, the way they established productive gardens, building places for spiritual worship, finding hidden spaces for men's clubs, and establishing their shops, restaurants and theatres.

Greek house in Marrickville, Sydney, 1993

Greek men's club, Marrickville, 1993

There was also a strong pioneering spirit which embraced the challenges in a new country. As a result, in this perceived land of opportunity, new places were created – the ubiquitous Greek Milk-bar and later a new form of Greek club that included women and children.

However this simple reading is based on a form of ethnic stereotyping where the migrants are presumed, in the main, to have come from poor rural villages and were cut off from the 20th century urban discourse.

I was first alerted to this misconception when Greg, who migrated from a rural village in the Peloponnesus in the early 1950s and worked in factories in Sydney, commented about his

response when he first arrived in Australia and saw the small dark brick houses, especially those built in the 1940s, '*How can people live in those houses which were so dark and depressing? Coming from Greece, I was used to white houses, straight lines, not fussy – why all these decorations? This seemed a bit anachronistic you know. The Greeks were young people; they wanted fresh, new, plain, open.*'(Armstrong, 1993:32)

Later he commented that Greek heritage was a gift to Australian culture and that the Greeks of the 1950s created a cosmopolitan atmosphere and that by the 1970s places like Fitzroy in Melbourne and Marrickville in Sydney were imbued with '*The Spirit of the Greeks*.' (Armstrong,1993).

What is this spirit? Without question it embodies the extraordinary influence on Western thought derived from Greek philosophy. There is also the primacy of landscape and the particular relationship between landscape and built form which so inspired some of the leaders of the Modern Movement in architecture in the 1930s and architectural theorists in the 1970s-80s concerned with regionalism and sense of place.

Similarly the Greek spirit is embedded in the everyday life and landscape derived from Greek cities, particularly from the 1920s to 1950s when most Greek migrants came to Australia?

Greece in the 1920-30s

To begin in the 1920s-30s, it is important to recognise that Greece had not engaged in the 19th century industrial project. Apart from a few major cities, it was largely rural and maritime. Vernacular architecture was characteristic of rural and island villages, whereas in Athens and Pireaus, 1930s aerial views show a relatively consistent urban form of 2-3 storey houses, plus larger public buildings, many constructed in the late 19th century in neo-classical forms. It was the landscape that dominated the urban form in the cities and villages, carrying great symbolic value and meaning.

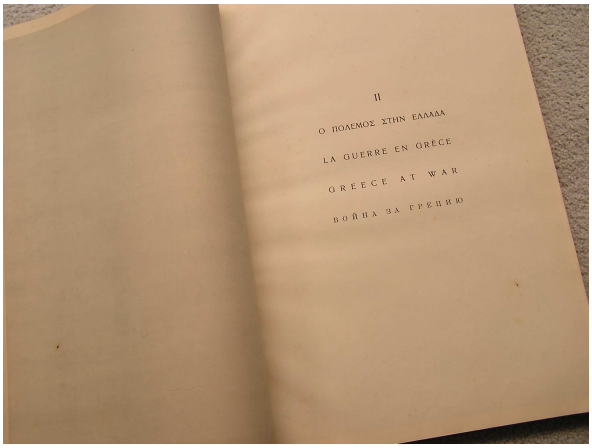
Athens skyline 1960s

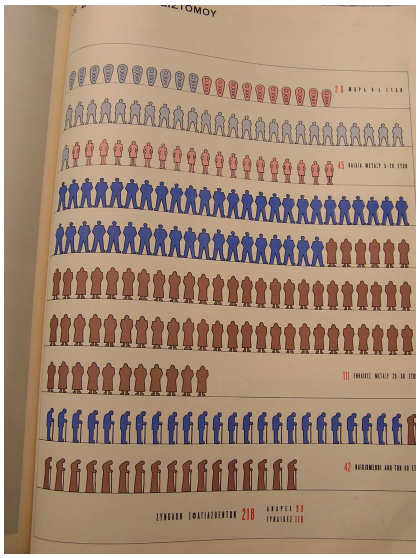
Although Greek architects were aware of the Modern movement and CIAM, in the cities in the 1920s-30s, new building tended to follow neo-classical forms. From 1870-1923 numerous public and private buildings were built in Athens and provincial towns *'…with established simplicity of Greek neo-classicism and romanticism'*.

It was during this time that a small number of migrants, mostly from rural villages came to Australia, settling in Australian country towns.

Greece in 1940s

Greece was at war during the entire 1940s, both World War II and the ensuing Civil War which ended in 1955. The country was ravaged during WWII by the occupying troops from Italy, Bulgaria and Germany. The Resistance movement was very strong, convincingly documented by Constantine Doxiades in the book he prepared during the War in order to encourage the UN that Greece was a worthy recipient of Marshall Plan money. In the main, little avant-garde architectural or landscape discourse occurred until the mid 1950s at the end of the Civil War.





Doxiades report to the UN Marshal Plan showing Greek suffering during WWII

Nevertheless, a form of 'private urbanisation' did develop in the form of 'polykatoikia' apartments. They were endlessly repeated throughout Athens to such an extent that Yannis Aesopos (1999:38) considers '*the contemporary city is the polykatoikia'*. These were built by small to medium contractors and as Aesopos (1999:38) states

> *The polykatoikia, though initially designed as housing, was actually a multi-programmatic urban unit – used as an office, a store, a cinema, a storage area, a restaurant, a supermarket, a bar, a car repair shop – a mass housing programme*.'

Polykatoikia

Image taken from Aesopos & Simeoforidis (1999) Landscapes of Modernisation.

The Greek Spring – 1955-1967

Despite the ubiquity of the polykatoikia, some outstanding houses, tourist resorts and landscape designs were undertaken from the mid 1950s to mid 1960s, a period known as 'The Greek Spring'.

There is general agreement that the Greek natural landscape was central to new designs. During the 1960s, the landscape was relatively undisturbed by urban structures and as such it carried high aesthetic value.

There are three key architectural figures associated with the Greek Spring, Dimitris Pikionis, Aris Konstantinidis, and Takis ch Zenetos.

Promenade to Philopappas Hill by Dimitris Pikionis 1951-57

By 1955, Dimitris Pikionis, an artist/architect exploring Modernism in the 1930s, had a devoted following of architects interested in neo-vernacular houses. His major work, however, was a landscape project which he undertook between 1951 and 1957, a promenade set on the Philopappas Hill near the Acropolis. This finely crafted work, laid out by the artist himself, is like a giant mosaic of randomly dressed stone which undulates over the site. Kenneth Frampton (1999:12) states that in this work '*two strands of poetic speculation weave back and forth, both literally and metaphorically*.'

Aris Konstantinidis was more engaged with the Modern project than Pikionis. He was most interested in the reinforced concrete frame, however he considered that architecture must be bound to 'place', both physically and culturally. Most of his works, predominantly housing developments, were located in semi- urban areas where he sought to connect with place and nature through careful siting of his buildings using artisan building techniques in conjunction with modern materials, exemplified by his Xenia Hotel on Mykonos

Xenia Hotel, Mykonos by Aris Konstantinidis
from Aesopos & Simeoforidis (1999) Landscapes of Modernisation.

Helen Fessas-Emmanouil (1999:21), a historian of Modern Greek architecture, considers that the work of Konstantinidis is a significant contribution to Greek architecture of the 20th century. She argues that central to his philosophy was the way in which he could reconcile the radical spirit of modernism with the ethos of centuries of tradition at the hands of unknown craftsmen.

Takis ch.Zenetos was not as explicit about place as a cultural phenomenon; rather he was interested in how he could explore topography to generate new forms. He saw the landscape as having a '*hidden intelligence'* which could nevertheless be manipulated and treated as architecture. He pursued the seamless integration of the interior and exterior as a romantic engagement with landscape while maintaining a continuing fascination with new urban forms and the liberating force of new technologies.

Takis ch.Zenetos House, Kavouri, Athens 1964-7
Aesopos & Simeoforidis (1999),58-9

This was the Athens and Greek countryside that migrants left in order to start a new life in Australia in the 1950s -60s when, as Colenbrander notes, poor conditions and political oppression led to a diaspora of Greek talent. Australia has been the recipient of Greek people with innate talent and ingenuity.

Urban Planning

It is interesting to note that in the 'lost spring' of the 1960s, there were as many innovative town planning projects as there were interesting buildings.

Helen Fessas-Emmanouil (1999:20) points out this was a time '*when Greece made a dynamic entry on the world-scene with two internationally-recognised architects and town planners: Constantine Doxiades (1913-1975) and Georges Candilis (1913-1995).*' She goes on to comment that '*these utterly different personalities had their roots in the great Greek diaspora and in their life and work, represent many of the traditional virtues and vices of the modern Greek nation: genius, daring, mental agility, a clear, independent and open mind, adaptability, stamina, humanitarianism – but also impatience, excess, superficiality and populism*.'

Doxiades is particularly interesting as he had come to Australia in 1951, partly in response to the Australian government's call for tenders for prefabricated housing (an issue he had explored during the war) and partly as enforced rest. He and his family resided in Brisbane from 1951 until 1953. He responded to this enforced isolation by the healing act of gardening, growing tomatoes in the rich volcanic soil in a market garden area. During this period he wrote his book on Ekestis and on his return to Athens, he built his house and practice which became the internationally known School of Ekestis.

Doxiades office building Athens

Doxiades House in Brisbane

Oscillation

For the rest of the 20th century, Greek architecture has oscillated between a desire to keep pace with the international avant-garde and an endeavour to spring autonomously from its own soil (Tournikiotis,1999:28). Aesopos(1999:37) claims that post war Greek architecture has been based on an undeclared belief that it has a noble heritage and therefore architects need to be cautious about Western approaches, reserved and discriminating about large scale works, resist critical and discursive approaches associated with Post-Modernism, but rather valorize the master- builder apprentice, that is '*architecture as a form of knowledge developed and completed through the building process (techne*).'

Thus designers have been caught in a number of binaries – ancient or modern, built form or landscape, vernacular materials or high tech construction, primacy of place and scale or freedom from place and scale.

Aesopos summarises this as oscillating between '*the Greek and the Euro-American, the traditional and the modern, empirical intuition and Western rationalism, continuity and rupture*.' This continued oscillation between different binaries or dichotomies continues into the present.

So how does all of this translate to Australia? It is interesting to reflect how the heritage from Greece created similar binary tensions in young Australian born and Australian educated architects who are practicing in Australia today. It is also interesting to note that few Greek-Australians have chosen landscape architecture as a career in contrast to the large number of architects with Greek background.

In suggesting that there has been a 'flowering of a Greek spirit' in the second generation of migrants to Australia, it is worth noting that certain accidents of history are associated with this story. The Military Dictatorship brought an end to the Greek Spring in 1967, a year before the momentous events in Paris in 1968. The student uprisings in Paris were a response to the deep criticisms by the *Situationalists Internationale* of the Modern Movement in architecture and its resulting displacement of inner city working communities.

In Australia, there were similar revolutionary feelings about a range of issues. But it was not until the late 1990s that Post-Structuralism provided deeper ways of understanding migration.

> *…and reasoning. Between cultures there remains a realm of speculation. Neither is susceptible to explanation in terms of the other; and if they have been chosen for special uses, the bicultural experience becomes entangled with personal expression. When they are not interchangeable in experience neither culture can be completely habitable. The first-generation Australian may lack a sense of identity though rich in culture. At some stage of the child's growing up the duality becomes a matter of conscious awareness and the young adult experiences his or her separation from both cultures. In other words, there is a third culture, which is indefinable.* Nikos Papastergiades *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000).

A Deeper Reading of Migration

Nikos Papastergiades has written eloquently on *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000). If we are to understand the contemporary Spirit of the Greeks in Australia we need to engage with this turbulence. Papastergiades(2000:11) questions the focus on migration as having a beginning and end, rather he suggests it is an '*interminable process'* and I argue that this is evident as inter-culturalism and place. I see the traces of cultural difference coming through in the place-making of the second generation of migrants in intriguing ways so that thirdspace or the space-in-between continues.

Papastergiades (2000:11), like me, talks of the transformative effect of the journey. The journey and the figure of the stranger for many cultural theorists is a metaphor for modernity. The modern metropolitan figure is the migrant. The metaphor is richly explored by contemporary artists such as Imants Tillers. As the art critic, Mary Eagles (1990:6), says about the Latvian-Australian artist, Imants Tillers,

> *Tillers' art reflects the multi-culturalism of a good many Australians. The artist's Australianness incorporates his Latvian origins. In his dual cultures he is properly Australian. And appropriately he paints the overlays and gaps. …Those who possess*

> *more than one culture from childhood find them to be parallel. … Unhampered by epistemology, naturally practical, these children pocket what is useful, employing the language and gestures of their family culture for intimacy, and those of the adopted culture for social manipulation*

Globalization and the 'deterritorialization of culture' pose new questions for migration and 'place'. Papastergiades (2000:105) suggests that although '*representations of place and the constitution of social identity were central to conventional theories of culture'*, however '*what is obscured by this perspective are the porous boundaries between groups, the diffuse notions of identity'*. He argues for the recognition of flows between cultures and groups.

Papastergiades (2000:111) argues for '*the doubling of cultures'* and states *' the slippage and non-correspondence between cultural codes does not suggest that the process of exchange is undermined by difference, but rather that the remainder of a difference stimulates a reach towards unexpected horizons'*.

His comments about the '*dynamism within displacement'* are richly borne out by the media, literature and artists. But it is his question (2000:121) '*How can traditions mutate in order to be meaningful across generations which are separated not only in a temporal perspective but also in vastly different relationships to place?*' that is most challenging.

Some Australian Stories.

If Papastergiades' question is to be explored, a number of other questions emerge.
How have the inter-cultural threads continued?
How does one distinguish between what is a Greek cultural connection and what is an Australian response?
Is there a distinctive contribution to Australian cities in the second generation?
Is this the same for all the children of Greek migrants or are there cultural differences from city to city, say Sydney and Melbourne?

Perhaps a way to start is to compare and contrast Greekness and Australianness in contemporary design. From the various writings about contemporary Greek design, I have distilled ten aspects of Greekness. These are

- Profound relationship with **landscape**
- subtle and rigorous **planning ability** (external large scale)
- importance of **materials and tectonics**
- organisation of **volumes** (internal) and external eg Greek Village
- **reconciling** modernism with ethos of tradition
- maintaining thousands of years of history as a **sense of continuity**
- noble heritage , therefore **discriminating about styles**
- valorising the **knowledge within the building process**
- **empirical intuition**
- importance of **philosophy and logic**.

It is clear that these approaches to design are constrained and considered: that they are heavily weighed down by being true to a great heritage. In the New World and in Australia in particular, the

release of such Old World constraints seems to be quite evident in the approach to design, although the power of landscape is equally strong.

Contemporary Australian architecture has similarly been defined by ten themes. Landscape design themes have not been articulated as comprehensively, but many apply to contemporary design projects. These are

- The touristic and **scenographic**
- The persistent **tectonic**
- The **indigenous** as a new category
- The deliberate **artifice**
- The problematised **landscape**
- The densely **urbane**
- The positive **negation**
- The process as **experiment**
- The ghost of the **social**
- The **new verandah** (reference to a past).

Goad, Philip (2001) New Directions in Australian Architecture. Balmain, Sydney: Pesaro Publishing.

These themes imply a sense of dynamism and experimentation, freedom from constraints, and willful challenges to logic. Perhaps the only links are in the relationship to landscape and tectonics. If we then look at Australian designers with Greek heritage, is it possible to discern a '*doubling of cultures'* that can be located in the '*slippage and non-correspondence of cultural codes that stimulates a reach towards unexpected horizons"*? Can we find Papastergiades' '*dynamism within displacement"*?

I could explore this by contrasting two cities – Sydney and Melbourne – but it may be more interesting to look at these issues in terms of **time**. So I will start with Alec Tzannes and Nonda Katsalidis, both in their early 50s, having grown up in Australia and educated as architects at Australian universities. I will then look at two younger designers, both emerging from the Greek diasporic culture of displacement in Melbourne, however with different constraints due to gender. Paul Katsieris and Sophia Anapliotis.

To begin with Alec Tzannes:

Alec, a child of a migrant family from the island of Kythera, is a leading Australian architect. He grew up in an attractive middle-class area of inner Sydney, Centennial Park, attending Sydney

Boys High School where due to his high academic achievements, his family expected him to study medicine or law. Alec, however, loved art and wanted to study architecture. He completed his secondary schooling in a period of intense student unrest in the Western world, influenced by student activities in Paris in 1968. At Sydney Boys' High School, Alec was aware that the students felt they were '*creating a new world. It was the theme in every young person's life.'* Alec states that he, however, had ' *a healthy amount of cynicism*' about all of this and so stayed on the edge of these activities.

Sydney U in 1970s

Life classes for architecture students 1970s

When he began studying Architecture in 1970 at Sydney University, it was similarly a hotbed of revolutionary activities. The revolutionary atmosphere was particularly potent because a new Professor had been appointed who swept out the old focus on the Bauhaus and traditional precedents, replacing it with philosophy, psychology, and scientific approaches to design. In this changed atmosphere students tended to cluster into three groups, those interested in theatre associated with the Architecture Review (led by Graham Bond), those interested in architecture as a new science, and those interested in art (associated with the Tin Sheds which was a working artist/gallery space for practicing artists next to the Architecture School). Alec joined the Art Group.

The other major change was the introduction of new tutors, mostly younger architects such as Glen Murcutt and Rick LePlastrier, who brought a new sensitivity to designing in the Australian landscape and the Sydney Mediterranean climate. Alec found it very stimulating but he was *bewildered as a student – there was revolution in the air – but I didn't understand what it was about. But because of my interest in art, I knew that I needed to be involved in the avant-garde.'* (AT.Feb.02). I would argue that this is part of his Greek heritage, namely a healthy skepticism about events, styles and clichés.

At this time, Alec formed a strong friendship with Imants Tillers, both exhibiting their art work in The Watters Gallery. Alec was deeply influenced by the Land Artists, Richard Serra, Smithson and Richard Long. But he felt he was not an artist because he became increasingly aware of a fundamental difference in the way he worked compared with Imants Tillers, whom Alec felt was a 'real' artist. It appeared to Alec that Imants could operate creatively without a design brief. But Alec always needed the brief, in other words a problem to solve. Subsequently they have worked together collaboratively on major projects such the Federation Monument in Centennial Park and Overflow Park at Homebush.

By the end of Alec's third year, he was feeling disenchanted with the anarchic atmosphere at Sydney University and decided to travel. The cheapest ticket he could get took him to Copenhagen where he came in contact with his great love of architecture again. After a year of travelling, he decided to return with a single-minded focus on completing his architecture degree.

By his final year, he was fed up with designing fine houses. He wanted to work on big buildings and address public domain issues. Despite this, his final project was a house, simply because he had been selected as a student representative for a conference in Moscow and needed to complete his final project quickly. This project was a design for a house for his parent's property on Kythera. This had special significance for Alec, as when he was ten years old he joined his father in Kythera for a year, living in his father's original family home, without electricity and very much a Greek village house of the 1960s. He remembers hunting birds with his father and it was during this time that he developed a deep affinity with landscape.

Post-graduate Studies at Columbia U & Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, NYC.
After graduation before doing post-graduate studies overseas, he worked with Public Works documenting Technical Colleges. This enabled him to save money but he also enjoyed the thoroughness and recognized the value of menial work, something that another Greek-Australian architect, Paul Pholeros, also values. However Peter Johnson kept a watchful brief over Alec, introducing him to Aldo Giurgola's concepts about architecture as civic design. As a result Alec undertook the Masters Degree in Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia University, a course developed by Aldo Giurgola.

Alec describes his first semester at Columbia as intense skill-building. In the 2nd semester, the work focused on a design-led studio with real clients. Alec's client was the Office of the Mayor of New York City. His brief was to redesign the Civic Centre, focusing on the City Hall precinct. He did a suite of 24 drawings, including a design for a high-rise building, and a full model of Lower Manhattan

Alec rapidly realized that the other place to be was the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies on West 40th Street. This was a hotbed of architectural iconoclasm at the time. Alec considered it to be in its prime and their journal 'Oppositions' '*was the pulse of the world at that time, in my opinion*.' Alec enrolled in the Diploma of Architecture for two semesters. The teachers were extremely significant. Rem Koolhaas gave a series of lectures which later became 'Delirious New York'. Robert Stern was debating Peter Eisenman, each delivering their specific versions of postmodernism. Aldo Rossi, Frank Gehry and Michael Graves were all there Zaha Hadid was just starting. Alec commented '*in 1977-78 you had, in the design studios, this whole thing about white architecture was as dead as a doornail. There was a definite revolution. All the Deconstruction thing was actually happening. It was later that it became a popular movement'* (AT.May.02).

For Alec, The Institute was '*what Columbia lacked. Columbia was wonderfully disciplined and tough, conservative and thorough – a really good course and I really appreciated it. You went there and you just had piles of work. I just remember the Business school alone – the exams you had to do finding out residual land values and all those sort of things – a consummate professional thing'*. He contrasts this with the Institute which was '*totally ideologically challenging, of history, of ideas, design-oriented people'* (AT.May.02).

This situation was ideal for Alec as both of his architectural interests were being challenged – his desire for rigour based on solid facts and his intellectual interest in exploring new ideas. Alec states *'I loved it. I could not get enough of it. The foreign students were so motivated. It was such a breathtaking experience'* (AT.May.02).

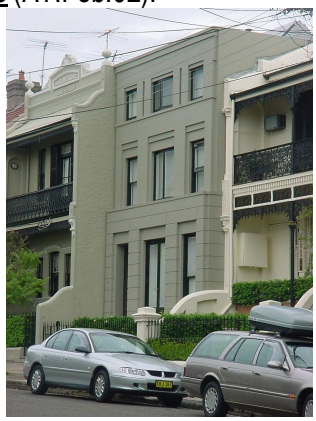
In Australian architectural circles, those who sought post-graduate experiences more commonly went to the AA (Architectural Institute) in London. Alec commented that although he visited London while in New York, and had friends at the AA, he was amazed that they showed so little interest in the architectural and fine art history surrounding them. He felt that the London approach to design was more internalized. He observed '*you had to be something from within…I would have freaked out in London. I would not have coped with that waste of time.*' He reflects *'I found myself wondering what would have happened if I went that way and I found myself feeling really grateful that someone taught me skills*.' He added '*I know great things come out of the AA, but I just loved being in an environment where I have deadlines and all that sort of thing. … If I don't have a brief, I would just go to sleep'* (AT.May.02).

It could be argued that this skepticism about styles and his intolerance of introspective activities related to architecture is in accord with the ten points about contemporary Greek approaches to architecture. But how is this background evident in his current work.

Houses

Since 1983, Alec has done over sixty houses. Alec states that '*I think houses are the backbone of the city. I think the character of cities is formed out of ordinary buildings*.' When asked if this is related to a Greek sensibility about urban form, he stated '*Oh definitely. It is the sense of community…. Poor people have a public community. They resource community amenities. This whole sense of community delivers them their lifestyle. Whereas rich people* [such as his clients] *privatise. They retreat from community'* which acts against the public domain.

His concern for ordinary buildings comes through in the numerous houses he has done in Paddington over the years which collectively knit the urban fabric together while also responding to the topography. He states '*we want to produce a drawing of the Paddington Hill. It is actually a series of streets that run through and connect all the topography and we have fifteen or more buildings right through it now and they are all integrated with the topography and street structure in ways that are not obvious until it is pointed out*.' He states '*This is the Greek idea of the village*'(AT.Feb.02).


house in Paddington, Sydney

Context is always a paramount concern for Alec. He speaks of a building containing low-cost apartments in Elizabeth Street, near Central Railway which particularly pleases him. He feels the warmth and legibility added to the street, including turning a nearby 'cold' Harry Seidler building into something more legible.

The concern for context may be attributable to Alec's education at Columbia University, but it is difficult to discount the long tradition about landscape and context evident in both traditional and modern Greek architecture and Alec's desire to deal with the public domain even as a student. These expressions come through again and again as Alec explains his work, whether he is describing individual houses or public domain projects such as Homebush Ferry Terminal, Overflow Park, or Federation Drive.

PUBLIC DOMAIN WORK

Federation Drive

The Federation Monument, Federation Drive and Square are challenging and controversial projects. Alec feels that these projects embody the Greek idea of the method of 'doing architecture', namely observing the principles of '*topography, axis, monument and tectonics*' (AT.May.02).

Federation Drive, Moore Park and Federation Pavilion, Centennial Park

The monument was designed in 1987 in collaboration with two Latvian designers, Wally Barda as landscape architect and Imants Tillers as artist. Fifteen years later, Alec won the design competition for Federation Drive & Square.

Alec's commitment to rigorous methods meant that he researched the original layout intended for the Grand Drive, *'…the major features are the huge fig trees and the axis made of three rows of trees…In the* [Alec's] *concept, there is a square formed out of trees and this is the major idea, although it is not obvious yet because the trees need to develop*' (AT.May.02).

So in classic terms (not necessarily Greek) the landscape as axiality forms the principle spatial concept, whereas the landscape as context (more of a Greek concept) involves reinforcing, conserving, and restoring the three avenues. He said that to reinforce the tree character '*we followed exactly that arrangement, which is not symmetrical. We placed the columns exactly in the alignment of the trees and also the way the branches are made, we followed that form.'* The manner in which this was achieved revealed the commitment to the art of tectonics. (AT.May.02).

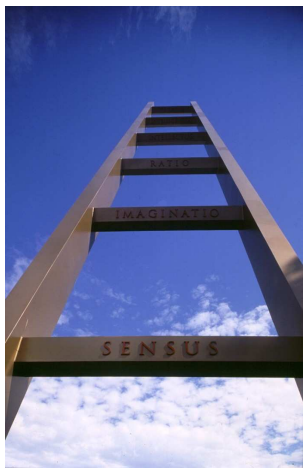
Monumentality is paradoxical in Federation Drive & Square. Alec comments the Square ' *is monumental in scale because of the monumental trees around and the massive scaled elements*

surrounding, such as Anzac Parade and Cleveland Street. It needed to be something that took your eye into that scale.' The paradox occurs when one approaches it from the East. Alec says '*when you come the other way it is so well integrated, you can't even see it. So that is the deceit. Also the Square is empty – very severe – because with the amount of noise going on, there is no way you can calm this. The best way to calm it is like a river to a delta – just to let it spread out. Instead one needs to capture that moment when you pass under the awning and enter this beautiful dappled chiaroscuro. So the visual change is dramatized and in a sense the aural change is similarly dramatized*' (AT.May.02).

Overflow Park

Overflow Park at the Olympic site posed a very different set of problems. The Greek presence was there in an obvious way, because the park was to accommodate the Olympic cauldron and all the significance that this has to Greek culture. But for Alec, it was not the connection to Greece but rather the desire to capture the moment when an Aboriginal Australian lit the Olympic flame and unified a nation that was his main focus.

In contrast to the monumentality of Federation Square, this park, a collaborative design between Alec (with Jonathan Evans and Peter John Cantrill from his studio), Imants Tillers and a new partner, Craig Burton, dealt with '*topography, axis, monument and tectonics*' in an intriguing and subtle way.



, Overflow Park Reworked cauldron Imants Tillers ladder

Alec saw the issue of topography, namely how to overcome inaccessible level changes in order to connect the park with the main Olympic Boulevard, as the first problem to be solved, accordingly Alec and his team – for this was a highly collaborative project - changed all the levels. It was only after addressing this problem was he prepared to engage with the brief, which was to place the cauldron which had held the Olympic flame in a symbolic and commemorative position. Until the topography was addressed, the cauldron was '*sort of an artefact which was dumped on the place*.'

For Alec, the relocation of the cauldron was where architecture came in, as not only did the cauldron need the right location, its form was to be reworked in order to commemorate a particularly significant moment in Australian history. This was a different conception of monument to that in Federation Drive. Alec felt that for him when an Aboriginal athlete lit the flame, there was

a hidden message. He states *at a time when only the Governor-General had showed leadership in those areas to recreate that moment – the real meaning of that moment – was what mattered to me' (*AT.Feb.02).

The next element of Alec's Greek idea of doing architecture, tectonics, came through in his attempt to dematerialise the cauldron. Alec felt that the cauldron was *'a kitsch object sitting 160M above the ground in the sky'*. By relocating it on the ground in a left over space and calling it a monument was '*trite*' (AT.Feb.02).

The final element of Alec's Greek idea of 'doing architecture', axis, was revealed in this design as both axis and monument. The axis related to Imants Tiller's work which was a ladder, symbolising among other things, the diaspora. Alec stated *'by setting up a relationship with an artefact which was iconoclastic to other things around it, namely artefacts without a great deal of embodied meaning such as the light poles, the stadium, etc…*' he was able to take relatively trite brief and through the axis created by Imants' sculpture give the cauldron some sort of legibility. Alec argues that *'Imants created this sort of thing that makes a point of difference because although it has an obvious image to it[a ladder] it is not easy to understand. Why is it there? It sets up a dialogue that I like. There is an axis between two crazy artefacts – one difficult to digest, the other a little more straightforward …I think the core idea of the park is a dialogue between art and architecture – a monument to art* (AT.Feb.02).

MELBOURNE - THE CULTURE OF A PLACE

Alec is highly articulate and urbane in his discussions about the influences on his work, but how do we untangle – make visible- the complex influences on someone like Nonda Katsalidis who avoids any contact with journalists and theorists? Instead he leaves us outside his extraordinary buildings wondering what the strange and powerful influences have been.

Nonda Katsalidis

He is known as 'a silent, artistic type' (Age) who refuses to do interviews, but maybe he does not need to speak for himself as there is a wealth of commentators who speak for him, often projecting allusions to a Greekness onto his work.

Philip Goad considers that Nonda is one of the pre-eminent designers of highrise apartments in Melbourne and that this has been achieved through an extraordinary collection of buildings in the inner suburbs and central city. Goad says Nonda has introduced '*style, sophistication and individuality to medium-density buildings in Melbourne*' (Age)

Selected Katsalidis buildings in Melbourne

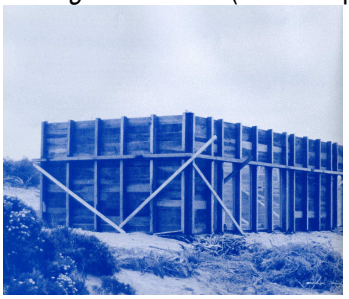
Neville Quarry considers his influence to be so strong that although he began by being outside the mainstream, designers are now trying to catch up with him. He has created a new benchmark. Neville considers him to be courageous in that he produces different results for every project and never repeats his own clichés (Age). Neville Quarry also speaks of the '*poetic intensity'* in Nonda's work (AA nov/dec 1992.p34)

Ian Moore describes his work as '*pure geometry and precise detailing'*. He states '*Katsalidis has produced a work of architecture that incorporates abstract formal qualities associated with the intellectual concerns of modern architecture'* and that '*These concerns are fused with a regional/vernacular tradition of crude timber buildings from the Australian bush'*. He goes on to say '*The association with the vernacular buildings in not sentimental but a celebration of the tectonic qualities which result from the simple but expressive constructional system adopted*.' I would argue that this is a continuity of the architectural concerns of the Greek Spring. (moore, 1992, Interior Architecture p112).

Nonda's work, however, is not without controversy. The former Mayor of Port Phillip, Dick Gross, considers Nonda to be a '*flawed genius'*. While he considers Nonda's St Leonard flats in St Kilda to be Nonda in his genius mode, he outraged by the scale of Nonda's large apartment blocks on Port Melbourne's foreshore.(Age)

Perhaps the last words on Nonda's contribution to Melbourne should be from Leon van Schaik who lives in one of Nonda's buildings. Leon van Schaik considers that Nonda has contributed a strong '*visceral architecture'* to Melbourne; an architecture which is not rational, nor central to the modern project but to be '*wilfully of the earth'*. Van Schaik maintains that Katsalidis architectural philosophy is a synthesis of the pragmatic and the poetic. It is a direct experience of architecture, rather than any theoretical tendencies that occupy his attention. His city towers '*engage in a discourse of essences via the continuing poetic of the experiences through the senses: how we interact with light, texture, density, volume and space'*. Van Schaik considers that his architecture elevates buildability to constructive art where the poetic can be traced to pragmatic origins, namely as the architectural solution to specific structural and construction problems.(Across the Board, 1993 Arch NZ July/Aug pp10-11)

It is interesting that many of these architectural critics make reference to Nonda's Greek origins and his migrant experience, fuelled by the design of his Beach House which van Schaik considers to be *'the original migrant's crate'*. (1993 NZ p10)



Beach House

Speaking for Himself

Nonda, himself, declares his preference for tectonic sources outside architecture. He is concerned for the 'essentials' of tectonic expression and it is here that that the rigour of his design process becomes apparent. He considers that '*the importance of tectonic issues is unchanged regardless of project size [although] tectonic principles may become submerged by a welter of other design considerations in larger more complex projects.*'(1993 NZ p10)

Occupying the Thirdspace

Although these architectural critics make reference to a Greek sensibility in his work – I think Nonda and the 2 other Melbourne Greek designers I will describe, occupy a thirdspace which in some ways is more intriguing than Alec who had a privileged up-bringing and was able to make more dispassionate intellectual connections about his Greek heritage.

Nonda, Paul Katsieris and Sophia Anapliotis were all children growing up in inner city Melbourne migrant communities, living over grocery shops, or milkbars. They all experienced the complex dualism of being marginalised by mainstream Australians for their difference but constantly reminded within their homes of the noble and ancient heritage of a great culture that they carried.

Nonda came to Australia when he was five years old, when his parents were fleeing the economic chaos of post war Greece to settle in Fitzroy. Nonda attended the local Fitzroy Primary School. He is reticent to talk about his migrant experiences as a child other than to suggest migrant kids with funny names tended not to get on very well (Age). I have not been able to find out about his school years or why he studied architecture, but we gain a hint of empathy and comfort about the area he grew up in when he comments *'I like slums. I like the feel of older parts of town with their rundown buildings and junk. It is picturesque. … Parts of it are changing and parts of it are dying and the parts that are dying create opportunities for other people to do something interesting*'. (Age)

European Urbanity

Dimity Reed considers Nonda to be the most urban person she knows. She says she once tried to persuade him to buy a house in Acland Street, St Kilda and he was appalled that someone would live that far from the city. For him, Brunswick St is the outer limit. (Age). Dimity considers Nonda fully understands the urbanity of the city and his work makes a significant contribution to city life with cafes, restaurants and galleries. She says '*He has a very strong European sense that cities are made by people living in them'*(Age). But I suspect that despite his lifestyle in these elegant

and dramatic apartments hovering over the city, it is not a Manhattan urbanity. It is more layered and intriguing. Nonda says '*I am a very contextual person. I like working with situations I grew up in such as doing renovations in Carlton and Fitzroy. I know what it is to work with constraints*.' (Age) This is particularly evident in the Thomas Residence in Little Latrobe St, where he created a single family dwelling out of a former motor bike workshop, by placing a drum within the original walls, making no attempt to hide the new work (Monument 12 (1996) 'Postcode 3000' pp76-79.)

Synthesis of the Pragmatic and the Poetic

Nonda's architectural philosophy is a considered synthesis of the pragmatic and the poetic. He suggests he was drawn to architecture by its expressive possibilities and its capacity to speak evocatively across time and cultures. His is a direct experience of architecture rather than any theoretical tendencies (1993 Across the board:Arch NZ, July/Aug pp10-11). For whatever reasons, Nonda studied architecture at Melbourne University, graduating in 1976, a similar time to Alec and although he partially completed an Arts degree, he moved away from the intellectual abstractions of architecture to become a builder. His first job was with a construction company working on industrial and commercial buildings. Haig Beck considers he developed his rigour by designing carparks for uncompromising no-nonsense clients. From 1979 to 1982 he operated a construction management group, specialising in high quality housing developments and conversions of historic buildings. In 1983 he changed from construction oriented activities and moved back to mainstream architecture, encouraged by his growing reputation as a designer. Since then, he has won numerous awards for his work ranging from his beach shack to galleries through to highrise apartments.

Leon van Schaik claims that '*Emboldened by his engagement with construction, he has forged a career as an architect/developer of high quality housing'*. Nonda says '*I am only a commercial architect. I give materials substance. That is what I am good at, isn't it?'* (LvS 1998 AA Vol 1,87(5) Sept/Oct pp50-55)

His Greek Spirit?

But how does his work contribute the spirit of the Greeks to Australian cities? Nonda hints at a restless spirit. He says '*I had come from somewhere else so it was easy to think of myself as going somewhere else*.' In the 1970s he intended to get out of Australia but it suddenly became a good place to live. He comments *'People talk as if the migrants introduced these things, but it was the Aussies who did not have a strong cultural connection who embraced them*'. (Age)

It is clear that he shares similar concerns with **tectonics** with Alec but his contribution to the city is embodied within each of his buildings rather than wider landscape concerns. Again this may be a Melbourne response. Nonda's CBD buildings are a collection of elements capable of cohering within the CBD grid. His **engagement with landscape** is possibly as an eagle. He says '*The instinct of the eagle to nest high explains the skyward urge that leads to my building houses on the top of city buildings'*. Here he can find '*splendid isolation and respite' engaging with 'long vistas to the distant horizon'. 'The physical territory may have shrunk to a patch on the top of a city building but the spirit has had its boundaries extended to the horizon beyond*.' (Katsalidis , 1993 Fin de Siecle? 38 South Publication. P75)

The Beach Shack as Thirdspace

Although not a city building, Nonda's beach shack reveals an intriguing mix of Greek approaches to design; the primacy of landscape, the importance of materials and tectonics, valorising the knowledge within the building process, empirical intuition and the importance of logic.

And yet Nonda sees the beach house as distinctly Australian. He says '*It is a very tough, very primal house, designed for extreme coastal conditions, fundamentally an Australian house, a long box*.' He adds '*I did not know where to start or where I was going to finish. It grew up with images of sheep sheds, industrial buildings*. He continues '*It came out of nowhere… There is this little piece that captures all those things about Australian architecture and landscape, culture and a sense of place. It is very much an Australian and a southern climate coastal town*.' (Sunday Age , April 22, 2001, p4). This, I would argue, is the Thirdspace 'the space-in-between'.

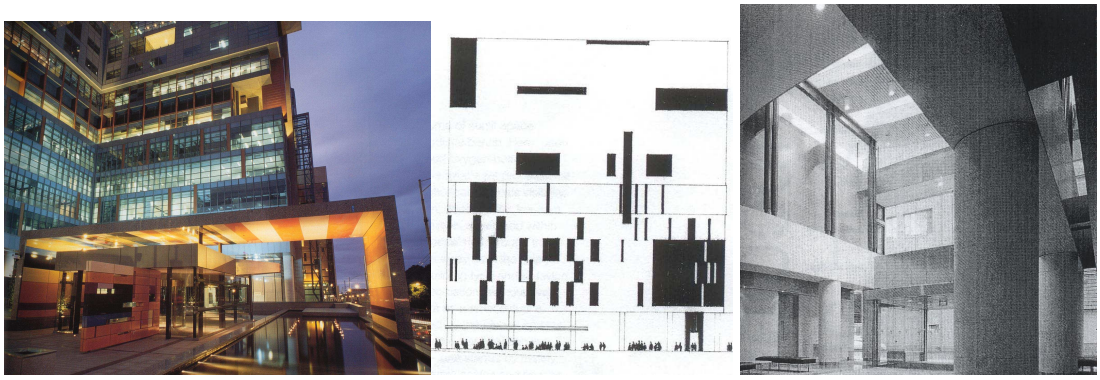
TWO YOUNGER MELBOURNE GREEK-AUSTRALIAN DESIGNERS

Paul Katsieris.

In contrast to Nonda, Greek connections with Paul are made quite explicit in his writings about his work. Paul says that he has probably explored his Greek origins in his architecture because within a few years of graduating he was lucky enough to win the Greek-Australian Presidential Award, the only architect to win it.

This involved going to Greece to undertake research which in Paul's case was explore the influences which were present in the 'Wog Houses' of Melbourne – the brick veneer that his father loved – the three arches, 2 storey, the statuary etc. He wanted to compare them with the stone houses in the villages of the Peloponnesus where his father had come from. Paul felt the Wog house exemplified the first generation Greek and Italian migrants, where having worked in factories for 20-30years, made money, they were then building their dream homes. Paul observes '*It is fascinating what they select – they are kind of mnemonic structures*.' He feels that they reflect a romantic reconciliation – desire for the old country to which one can't return because one's life is now in Australia. Paul feels this is only a 'first generation thing'.

Unlike Alec and Nonda, Paul delights in 'exploratory language in architecture.' He argues that '*Language is the means to an end whereby the outcome of intellectual deliberation may exist not only on the page … but in space as a concrete physical form*.' (Arch Vict July/Aug 2001 p13). His interest in language and architecture reflects the time during which he studies when Post-Structuralism was strongly influencing the architectural discourse. He has translated this literally in his Commonwealth Law Courts building where he has laid a fine tracing of words over glazed portions of the façade. He says '*words are present as a metaphor for the law that is also ever present, though not always visible*.' (Arch Vict July/Aug 2001 p14).



Commonwealth Law Courts, Melbourne

Public Buildings

Paul is passionate about the role of public buildings in our cities. He sees his Greek heritage as central to this passion, but in an intriguing Thirdspace way where he includes the ubiquitous Australian-Greek milkbar as a significant public building.

At a more esoteric level, he has sought to fuse the concept of Entasis, associated with the Doric column, with the 20th century Modernist curtain wall. He has a particular approach to Entasis which he sees as '*static forms exhibiting tension. Straining. Movement about to be. A curtain wall poise between static and plastic aesthetic states*.' (Arch Vict July/Aug 2001 p14). He says that he tries to capture the ancient idea of enstatis so that he can make his buildings appear alive (1July02)

But added to the classical Greek concepts of design, he adds another Thirdspace dimension, the concept of weaving into his façade designs his mother's tapestries and his father's colour cards which his father used as a house painter in Melbourne.

He sees this as a way to add to the curtain wall – the public façade of his public buildings – *' a series of rhythms and counter rhythms, alignments and misalignment*s' which he considers as a way to draw the viewer '*deeper into the world of surface dilations, expansions, contractions…*' the mesmeric sense of the interior of a Byzantine church.(1st July 02)

The Byzantine

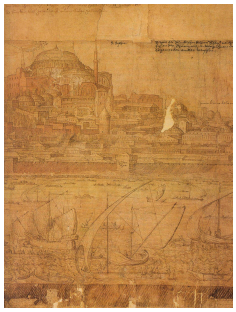
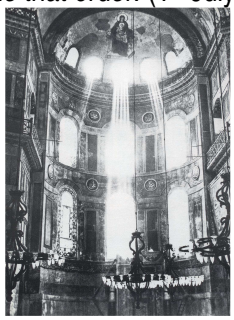
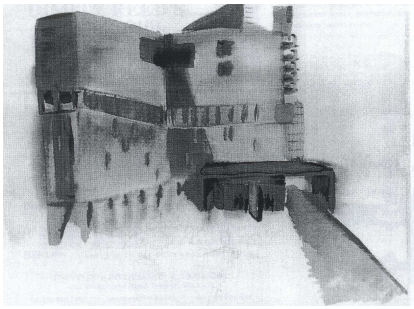
Paul's interest in the Byzantine came about unintentionally. When he took up his scholarship to study the antiquities in Greece, he found he became bored with the classical orders and instead was drawn to the Byzantine with all its complexity and disturbing qualities. For Paul, the Byzantine is an architecture *'that is very strange, highly painterly, and emotional and psychological – highly ATECTONIC – it is about the dissolution of mass.'* (1st July 02) He explains this by describing his experience in a Byzantine church –

> *' the whole interior was tattooed with frescoes. They were not there to reinforce the building and they worked against the interior of the building. I noticed the orthodox service uses the idea of the fresco and the sort of dissolving form to bring about a trance like state. I found myself in services where, because the orthodox service involves standing for a long time, you get tired as the liturgy and chanting goes on. At one point there is this huge chandelier of candles and the monks have big sticks which they use to move the*

chandelier backwards and forwards – the chanting is going on and the incense -. All of a sudden, as you are looking at these gloomy frescoes, you have an out of body experience. You feel quite disoriented and you have the feeling that something has flipped open. You are not quite sure what is inside and what is outside…Boundaries disappear and the tectonic quality is nowhere to be seen.

He goes on to contrast this with Australian architecture. *'Glen Murcutt says he wants to touch the ground lightly, Byzantine architecture does exactly the opposite. It digs into the earth. It touches the earth incredibly heavily. It rips into the earth and grows up out of it.*

My work has flavours and essences of this – not specifically. I like to set up an order and do things that destabilize that order. (1st July 02)

For Paul, the contribution to the public space of the city is as much within the building as it is outside. He considers Melbourne to be a very underground city, in the form of underground bars, bistros, clubs; places that one needs to know about in order to find them. This inner public sphere is also evident in St Vincent's Hospital and the Law Courts.

In the hospital, he sees his simple column and beam organisation as an attempt to '*sythesise ideas of heraldry, procession, stance, strength, warmth, and uplift.*' (Monument, no 3, 1996, p12) In the Law Courts, the main gallery stretches a city block. Paul hopes that the '*gallery suggest an agreeable grandeur and poise'* in which one can witness the work of the courts where '*public coming and going, the administrators in their offices are all open to the urban realm.*' (Monument, (3) 1996, p14)

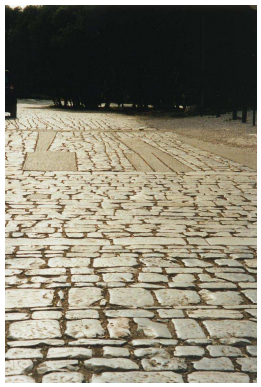
It is interesting that the design concept for the1970s High Court in Canberra was also developed by a Greek-Australian architect, the late Kris Kringas. Kris, the son of a migrant family from the Peloponnesus , had grown up in a country town where his father developed a milkbar, The Rose Marie, as a much loved public building.

What is it in their migrant background, that these two Australian designers share?

Paul's Background

Paul's father and mother arrived in Australia in 1963. His father describes the experience of being out at sea, even before seeing land, when the sounds of Greek guitars and singing would come across the water from Port Melbourne where all the relatives and friends had gathered to meet the incoming ship from Greece. Nonda's buildings will provide a different experience.

From a life as a shepherd, then farmer the Peloponnesus in Greece, Paul's father became a house painter in Melbourne working on the new project houses filling the suburbs . Paul described how as a young boy, from 10-13, he would go to the construction sites with his father, assisting with the preparation work. He was fascinated with the construction work but mostly he was fascinated by his father's colour cards. He says '*I loved the serial thing – like a small piece of information that was slightly different to the previous piece of information but there was an order to it – but even though there was an order, there was also great variety in that system.*' (1st July 02) He says he keeps relating it to Pikionis' pathway.



Pikionis pathway

Colour cards in Commonwealth Law Courts

When Paul talks about Pikionis, one can hear the various architectural theorists' descriptions of Nonda's work. Paul says

> *I got to know a little about Pikionis later work and it started to move me. It was more than interesting. It was like someone put their hands in your guts – it was quite visceral. I found his work moving, sentimental, shattering, sublime. For me it was not a tourist experience. I found it quite confronting and I didn't understand why. So I began to study the Byzantine more closely, in particular the philosophy of the 1400s.* (1st July 02)

In 1982, Paul started his architectural studies at Melbourne University. Like Sophia, whom I am yet to describe, Paul continued to develop his interest in the media while studying architecture. It is possible that the proliferation of Post-Modern thinking encouraged both Paul and Sophia to sustain parallel interests, unlike the essentially Modernist single focus on architecture characteristic of Alec and Nonda's experience.

Paul did not find his architectural course very inspiring, however was completely involved in The Architecture Review, so much so that during his year out he chose to go on tour with the Review. When he returned to complete his 4th and 5th years, he continued his performing career as a stand-up comic in Melbourne Clubs. Also he found his architectural studies became more interesting because Haig Beck joined the staff introducing many of the new philosophical explorations going on at the AA. He was introduced to Derrida whom he found to be impenetrable but in retrospect invaluable because he was introduced to a new form of rigorous thought. He felt that the introduction to such complexity of thought enabled him to explore the Byzantine in a much deeper way than being merely history.

Greekness

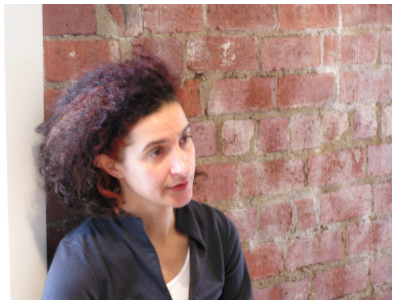
But to come back to one of the early comments of the way Paul embeds his Greekness in his designs, namely the concept of entosis and the concept of the body in ancient Greek sculpture, Paul is intrigued with the idea of impending movement in a static object – a sense of aliveness that lies deep within the form.

This is in contrast to Sophia Anapliotis who is equally interested in the body, but in the sense of how limited we are in seeing our own bodies – the full 360degrees of ourselves and the penetration through the skin.

Sophia Anapliotis.

Sophia is the last of the Greek-Australian designers being considered here and her story brings in the gender issues associated with the turbulence of migration. Sophia has not only grown up in two cultures, she has also had to reconcile her lack of freedom as a young Greek girl with the apparently unrestricted lives of Australian girls.

Sophia is one of our rising stars. She started working with Bates Smart and was instrumental in linking Peter Davidson, when he was one of the 5 short-listed for the Federation Square design competition, with the practice of Bates Smart. She was asked to work with Peter in London on the final award winning design. Since then she has worked with H2O Architects working on a number of projects including the SES Headquarters. Much of this work has been characterised by her use of colour as a spatially defining device.



Sophia

SES Headquarters Melbourne

Sophia is intensely engaged in her design work, exploring a certain kind of logic where she sets up dialectic structures to reveal to herself, her design ideas. She is interested in being on the margin – on the edge - and pushing the limit of that state within her design process. She is also very interested in the concept of skin – but not just as a surface but also as a membrane through which she passes, backward and forwards, using abstract techniques during her design process.

She is also interested in skin in a Lacanian sense as a mirror of identity and therefore limited.

Sophia exemplifies Papastergiades' proposition the there is 'dynamism within displacement' and ' *slippage and non-correspondence between cultural codes does not suggest that the process of exchange is undermined by difference, but rather that the remainder of a difference stimulates a reach towards unexpected horizons'*.

Her interest in these issues as an adult designer reflects what she considers to be her Greek heritage of a certain kind of logic, evident to her from her earliest school days, when she constantly questioned to herself 'yes, but how do we really know?'. For Sophia it was never enough to be told these are the rule and this is how it is. She always had a desire to get behind, below, beyond the surface.

Childhood

Sophia had a similar childhood to Paul. Her parents also came from the Peloponnesus, and she grew up in an inner Melbourne suburb in a large extended Greek family until her parents moved to a country town, when she began high school.

She went to a Catholic Girls' School and had no idea what she wanted to do as a career. Her real love from a very early age was photography, but it was drummed into her that this was not a career. She realised that she had skills in graphics and technical drawing, so she thought she would become a draftsperson. She also thought it might be boring.

At school she was always searching for the sense of things – the logic in maths, the faith in religion, the principles in physics. Because she was driven to go beyond the rhetoric, she needed teachers who really understood what they were talking about. In her later years at school she had a very good psychology teacher, who challenged her decision to go into drafting – a service profession – and said why not architecture? This interested Sophia, but she was well aware that architecture was not the passion that photography was.

She studied at RMIT but during her 1st three years, she was in a constant state of indecision about whether this was what she wanted to do. By the end of her 3rd year she decided to leave and earn some money in order to go to Greece. She took on 2 jobs, working in an architectural office in the day and waitressing at night. She also began to learn Italian in preparation for her trip when she came across a course being taught at the CAE on the Philosophy of Modern Thought. She loved this course. It provided her with ways to understand all the questions she had been asking – not answers, but ways to look at questions. This was when she became interested in dialectic structures as ways to explore problems.

Because things started to make more sense, she deferred her travel and went back to study architecture part-time while continuing to work in architectural offices. By the end of 4th year, she commenced travelling, first going to Greece and then through Italy to London. She was away for two years, finally returning in 1993 to complete her degree.

By this stage she had become deeply interest in film and architecture and so in her last years at RMIT she decide to combine her love of photography with her architecture. In doing this, she found she could develop some of the ideas she was exposed to in her course on Modern Thought, in particular using dialectic structures. She explains that for her dialectics meant

> '*There was always something existing that you need to acknowledge before you can introduce something new into the art….whatever you introduce – it doesn't come without impacting something that existed before it.*'(2nd July02)

It was accidental but fortuitous that she had a Greek tutor, Jim Yamouridis, running her studio. On reflection later, she realised he was the ideal tutor for her as she found he thought the same way

that she did, which she felt was a Greek way. She describes this as not being prescriptive or didactic, nor theory driven. She says '*he was always prodding the students to search for meaning in what they did. His approach was quite intuitive and visceral and less dressed up in theory*.' (2nd July 02)

Sophia's graduating project deserves close study as it reveals so much about how her development as a migrant woman is embedded in her work in a highly abstract way. Paul knows he is drawing from the Byzantine when he designs, whereas Sophia explores her duality existentially. She says

> *The one thing I have appreciated about my heritage is that kind of history of strong philosophers who had such a huge impact on Western civilization. That to me has been really significant – a positive experience.*
>
> *Whereas the day to day realities of being a migrant's daughter is a strong gender limitation and then also having to live with this duality all the time and that is where I see the link in my interest in the dialectical structure.. You are having to be a certain way and kind of experience things with your parents and family and also having a very different kind of experience with peers and how you socialize. So that kind of schism I was really aware of right from the beginning.*
>
> *From the middle of my degree onward, my work was trying to come to terms with this kind of experience – always being on the margin – it explains why I latched onto the dialectical experience to make sense of this* ((27th September 03).

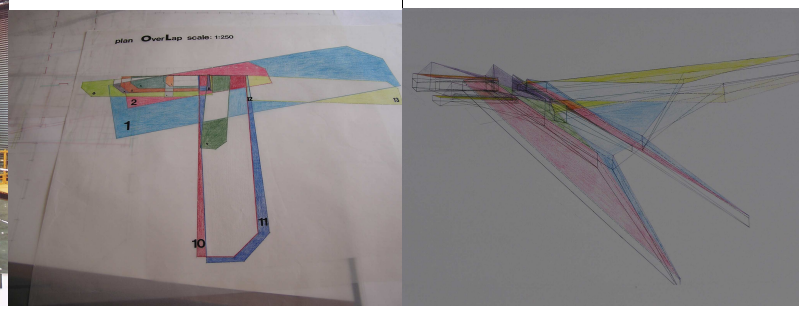
Sophia's graduating project began as a gallery for photography that explored the self-referential nature of the journey. She began by doing a photomontage of her body exploring the physical limits of how one can one can photograph oneself and the areas that remain unseen. She then did a number of studies of the skin of the ngv, before she realized that this was not providing her with the questions she wanted to explore.

Sophia's photomontage

She then switched to a site in the docks – a place which is outside the laws of Australia – a marginal place associated with an international codes – a customs building which held confiscated goods. But in her project she penetrated the skin and worked only from the inside. In dialectic terms this set up the anti-thesis to the gallery – it was a space holding banal objects that were not to be seen.

Having set up the dialectic, she then explored the proposition by using a 360^0 panorama of photographs taken from one position only and then mapping information, in particular the photographic distortions. These distortions were the key to a new form of space.

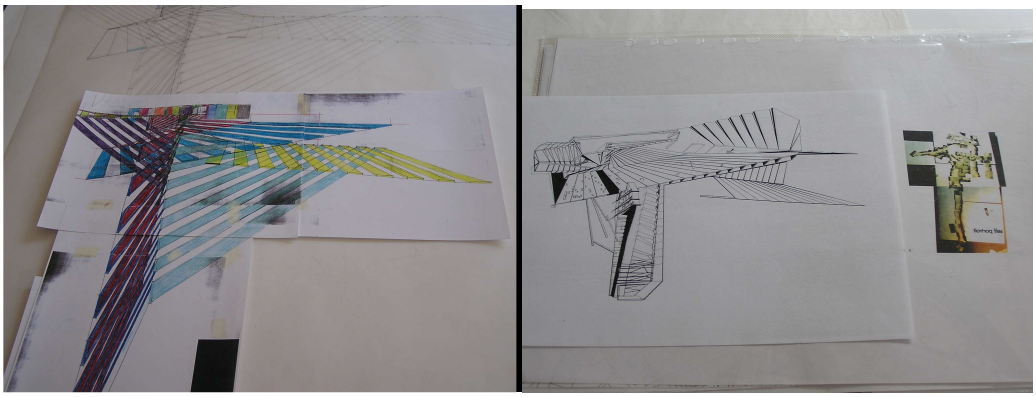
Customs shed photos



Sophia's drawings

She generated a huge amount of information simply by the geometric mapping from that one spot where she took the photographs. She then embarked on a process of scaling this down and editing it, using colour as part of her organising system.

She had no idea where the process was leading, all she knew was that it would tell her in an existential way as much as she could know about the space as defined by the photograph and the limits of her body. She stayed in this marginal space – pushing marginality and indeterminacy – for as long as she could until she realised that she had to make a building. When she completed it she was amazed to see that it fitted on the site, because she had worked entirely from the inside. Her supervisor, Sand Helsel, looked at the plan and immediately saw the link with Sophia's photo-collage of her body, something that Sophia has not referred to since she entered the customs building.



Sophia considers this project to be the second step in her journey as a designer, the first being the course on Modern Thought. In her day to day practice as an architect, she is aware that she is more confident in her intuitive responses to design as a result of the major work although she does not make explicit connections in the way Paul does. Perhaps her responses are more visceral and akin to Nonda. But unlike nonda, she is deeply engaged in the ideas intellectually and intends to return to this work through a master's study, possibly working with someone like Elizabeth Grosz.

So where does this leave us in understanding the spirit of the Greeks in Australian cities?
Sophia's work raises many questions about what are the Greek influences, what are gender issues, what are the ambient influences of RMIT and the Melbourne design culture? Bur she knows that her final project was an exploration of herself, of identity and of logic – a particular type of logic which relates to her Greekness.

All of the designers I have described have had similar experiences to other Australian architects in terms of growing up in Australia and studying design in Australian universities, but their work is quite different to those architects. Alec Tzannes' work does not look like many contemporary Sydney designers. Nonda and Paul's work is different to the Melbourne designers and Sophia is clearly going to take design into a new realm.

But it is in the way each of these designers think and conceptualise that is truly fascinating and I suspect that this is the Greekness that they bring to our cities.

Nevertheless, the Melbourne Greek designers exhibit a sense of dynamism in their 'doubling of cultures' that perhaps this 'slippage and non-correspondence of cultural codes has stimulated a reach towards unexpected horizons'

Are we witnessing Papastergiades' 'dynamism within displacement' and can we echo Bernard Colenbrader, the curator at the NAi? Does there slumber in our cities and landscapes a priceless cultural concept, an as yet undiscovered intellectual programme which needs only to be unwrapped?

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