

Wallpaper*

APRIL 2006

*INTERNATIONAL DESIGN INTERIORS LIFESTYLE

UK £3.90
US \$8.75
AUSTRIA € 9.00
AUSTRALIA \$ 8.95
BELGIUM € 7.70
CANADA \$ 10.95
DENMARK DKK 73.75
FRANCE € 7.70
GERMANY € 9.50
HOLLAND € 7.70
ITALY € 8.50
SPAIN € 7.70
SWEDEN SEK 69.00
SWITZERLAND CHF 15.70

AOL Keyword: Wallpaper Magazine
0.4 >
9 771364 447046



INTERIORS
SPECIAL

HIGH FIVE

New design ideas
from Paris and Köln
Hunting down the
world's best des res
Why Greek modernism
is no myth
PLUS a 92-page guide
to World Cup Germany
(for nobs not yobs)



NEWSPAPER

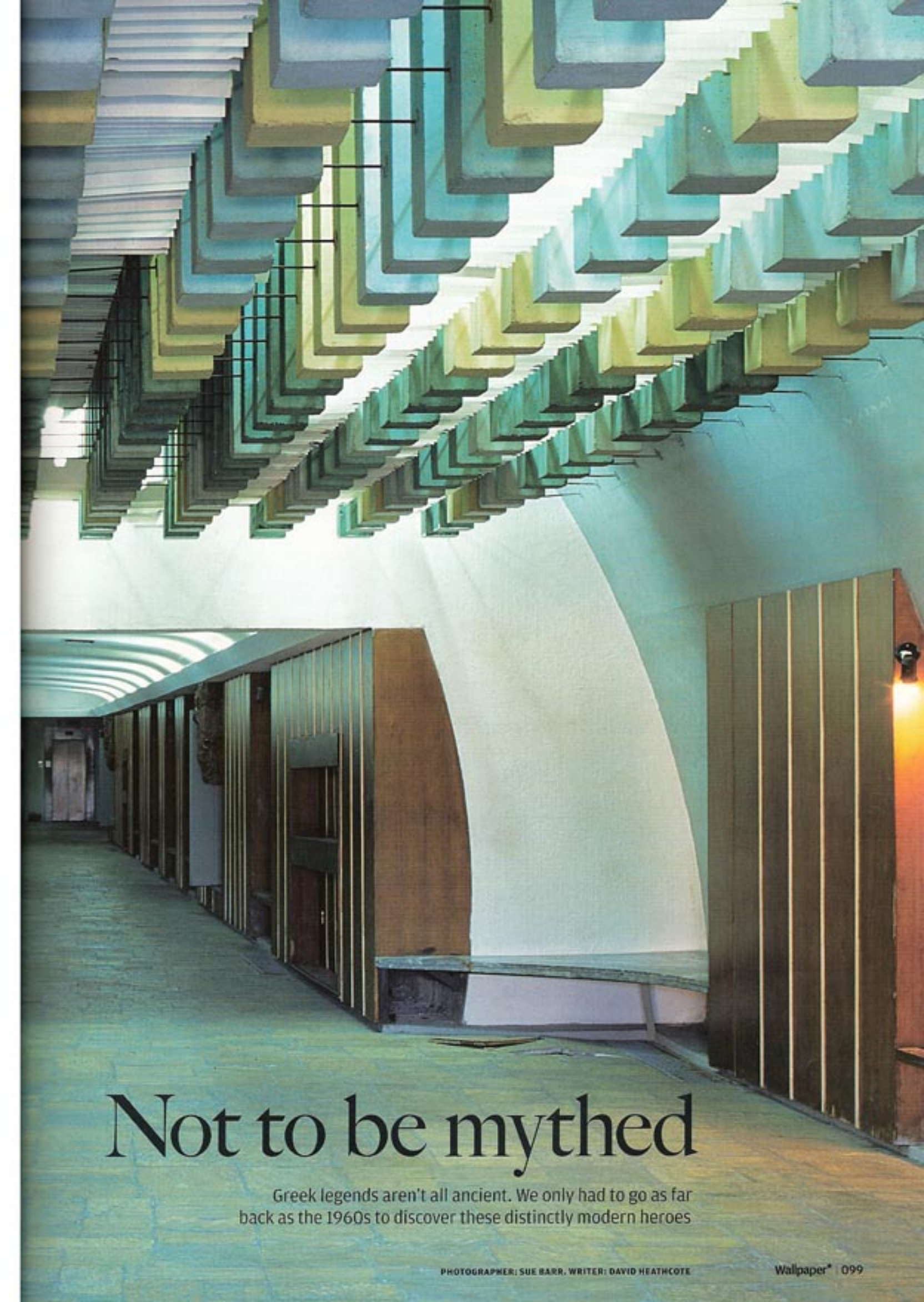
ARCHITOUR

TUNNEL VISION

The entrance tunnel to the Nafplia Palace Hotel, in Nafplion.

The hotel, by Thymio Papayannis Associates, was begun in 1968 and finished in 1980





Not to be mythed

Greek legends aren't all ancient. We only had to go as far back as the 1960s to discover these distinctly modern heroes



AGE
 open-plan living
 below, dining
 at architect
 Valsamakis's
 in Philothei,
 were inspired
 Richard Neutra's
 Mann Desert
 in Palm Springs



heyday of Greek modernism came
 in the late 1950s and the end of the
 as a rampant economy, a more confident
 and a new generation of architects with
 a sense of purpose led to a glorious
 dance in public and private architecture.
 Athens Hilton, built between 1958 and
 was, as local architect Eleni Fessas-
 bouli put it, the first visual manifestation
 euphoria. A triumphal hello to the jet
 set hotel cost \$15 million at a time when
 money really meant something, and was
 a statement of Greek confidence, standing,
 like an outpost of the old, Rat-Pack era
 in Athens, with a commanding view
 of the Acropolis from many rooms.
 The hotel was a collaboration between Greek
 and American architects and artists. The interiors
 were handled by the Americans, with the
 placement of the artworks in the public spaces.



The exterior was the work of Greeks, who
 embraced the American idiom of two large slabs:
 one horizontal, defining the site, the other
 vertical, dominating the area around.
 The massing of the forms was very American,
 particularly the curved accommodation tower
 that focused every balconied room on the
 Acropolis, but the surfaces were equally Greek.
 The façade of the Hilton that faces Kolonaki
 and Lycabettus is blank stone except for a vast
 archaic/modern hieroglyph of Athenian
 symbolism incised into its surface, designed by
 Yiannis Moralis and executed by René Travlou.
 Below, and appearing to support it, is a porte-
 cochère that paraphrases temple architecture,
 while the ground-floor plinth extends either side
 behind a classically rhythmmed brise-soleil.

The success of the Hilton project emboldened
 other Greek architects to express themselves and
 their vision of a transplanted American »

**ACROPOLIS NOW**

Left, the Athens Hilton, built in 1963 by Vassiliadis, Vourekas and Staikos, with its Acropolis-facing balconies

Below, the giant hieroglyphs by Yiannis Moralis on the hotel's otherwise blank vertical façade



modernism without relying on American help or expertise. Nicos Valsamakis was already vice-president of the Greek Architectural Association and helping dictate a modern agenda when he began work on his own house at Philothei in 1961. At that time, the steep hillside site had a commanding view, of which Valsamakis took full advantage, using the type of design first seen in American resort houses, such as Richard Neutra's Kaufmann Desert House in Palm Springs (1946). Valsamakis reduced the house to its spatial essentials; he created a large, open-plan living space, with a fireplace dividing the dining and lounge areas and the whole having views across a swimming pool. To one side, the master bedroom has access to a discreet garden. The adjacent bathroom, replete with marble and with a sunken, pink American bath, has full-height sliding windows onto a lush courtyard.

It wasn't only architects who recognised the appropriateness of western American houses to the Attic lifestyle. A breed of enlightened new industrialists also bought into the Californication

Greek modernists

The country's architectural pioneers

PROKOPIOS VASSILIADIS, EMMANUEL VOUREKAS AND SPIROS STAIKOS (ATHENS HILTON, 1959-1963)

Leading architects of the 1950s and 1960s, Vassiliadis and Vourekas also designed, with Perikles Sakellarios, the Astir beach resort, and the Asteria dance hall and restaurant, in Glyfada (1955-1958). It was the first modern bathing resort built in post-war Greece.

THYMIO PAPAYANNIS ASSOCIATES (NAFPLIA PALACE HOTEL, BEGUN 1968)

Papayannis has been very active in the design of office buildings, athletic facilities and tourist resorts in Greece and the Middle East. His practice's most famous works include the Peace and Friendship Indoor Stadium in Piraeus in 1985 and the regeneration of the Athens waterfront at Faleron Bay for the Olympic Games in 2004, including building the beach volleyball, taekwondo and boxing facilities. »

of Athens. Achilles Svolos employed a neophyte architect, untainted by the mistakes of Greece's past, to build his luxurious American-modern bungalow, with its veranda, garden and pool. The house was furnished with pieces made by the Greek-based Saridis company, which were a bizarre but successful mix of American comfort and the neo-Hellenic aesthetic, typified by something like Robjohn-Gibbins' ancient Greek-inspired 'Klismos' chair. This cultural bipolarity was increasingly reflected in subsequent Greek architecture. Just as America offered forms that suited the Greek climate and lifestyle, so some Greek architects sought to interpret modernism as something that might also offer some continuity with Greek culture.

The late Perikles Sakellarios was of the older generation of Greek modernists and one of the first to see the links between brutalist modernism and the long tradition of austere architectural asceticism of the Greek vernacular. A native of Corfu, he built his house in an inaccessible cove on the north-east of the »



NEAT RETREATS

Left, the 1965 Svolos house by Alexandros Tombazis mixed American comfort with a neo-Hellenic aesthetic

Below, Perikles Sakellarios's remote 1963 house in Corfu combined traditional Greek austerity and brutalist modernism

island. Constructed in nine months between 1962 and 1963, the house owes more to Le Corbu than to Corfu. Certainly, its simplicity would have appealed to the Swiss architect. There was no electricity or piped water and, because of its remoteness, all the building materials had to be carried to the site.

By the late 1960s, Greek architecture had found a language of its own that expressed the continuities and aspirations of Greek culture – a sort of luxurious roughness – that could work with both new and old buildings. From 1966, the abandoned Byzantine-Venetian city of Monemvasia was gradually reclaimed by architects Alexandros and Charis Kalligas using primitivist modern interiors. But arguably the best representation of this new synthesis is the Nafplia Palace Hotel (www.nafplionhotels.gr) by Papayannis, Benehoutou, Arvanitidou and Xanatalou. Begun in 1968, but not finished until 1980, and beautifully modified recently, the hotel, in Nafplion, the Athenian Hamptons, is sited on a low promontory overlooking the



Greek modernists

**NICOS VALSAMAKIS
(HOUSE AT PHILOTHEI, 1961)**

A pioneer of modernism in post-war Greece and still in practice, he is known for Miesian pavilions, including his recent House at Kilada in the Peloponnese, the Lanaras Residence at Anavyssos, Attica (1961), and his holiday house at Porto Rafti, near Athens (1967).

**ALEXANDROS TOMBAZIS
(SVOLOS HOUSE IN KIFISSIA, AROUND 1970)**

A successful commercial architect, as well as a ground-breaker in ecologically sensitive architecture. His Church of Our Lady of Fátima in Fátima, Portugal, is under construction.

**PERIKLES SAKELLARIOS
(HOUSE AT PALEOKASTRITSA, CORFU, 1963)**

A pre-war modernist, he later experimented with brutalism and the synthesis of traditional Greek vernacular architecture and modernism. Projects include Ayios Georgios Chapel, Kavouri, Attica (1949-1950).

Venetian harbour, the site of classical Argos, and the sharply rolling hills of the Peloponnese. The hotel combines a brutalism and primitivism with conspicuous materials and technical luxuries to create an environment that makes you feel both Blofeld and Bond. Fantastically, the hotel's pedestrian entrance is via a long, steel- and glass-doored tunnel that has been blasted through the rock. Inside, the public spaces combine familiar comfort, like a check-in-style cocktail bar, huge abstract artworks by Gazepis and acres of polished marble and recessed gold downlights.

The bedrooms are scarcely less lush, with acres of marble in the kind of bathrooms that are out for intrigue. And this is perhaps the particular skill of the Greeks – to combine the coarse and the luxurious to create a sense of imminent drama. ★

Further reading includes: *Essays on Neohellenic Architecture*, by Eleni Fessas-Emmanouil (Eleni Fessas-Emmanouil); *Landscapes of Modernism: Greek Architecture 1960s and 1990s*, by Yannis Aesopos and Yorgos Simeoforidis (Metropolis Pro