



Clear transformation

ATHENS (GR) — At the top of the Kolonaki neighbourhood, towards the last row of buildings at the foot of Mount Lycabettus, the view of Athens is breathtaking. This is where Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, the inspired Greek urbanist, decided to build his School of Design and Graduate School of Ekistics in the late 1950s.

With the schools' closing around the mid-1980s, the buildings were left to deteriorate. Only in 2008 did private investors finally acquire the abandoned lot, assigning Divercity architectural studio to implement plans for their renovation and transformation into 26 luxurious residences.

The modernist building, which occupies an entire plot of land, was developed around a central courtyard. Four rectangular volumes, erected at different levels because of the site's sharp inclination, form its perimeter. Yet the light concrete structure and the buildings' massive openings give it a sense of lightness. The transparency they provide permit an uninterrupted view towards both the city and the hill from almost every floor.

The design team was required to retain the complex's morphology, structure, and some of the main interior features. Greek architectural associations had lobbied to declare it a listed building, fearing interventions that would drastically alter its style. For Divercity, the original grid became the 'pixel' canvas for an interplay of three distinct and

carefully selected materials: grey marble, concrete panels, and glass. By matching these accordingly to interior functions, they kept the sense of transparency and upgraded the aesthetic result.

As Modernist buildings age and decay, many European cities are challenged to take a stand regarding the fate of this heritage. For some, their indisputable allure is motivation enough. In this case, not only is the investors' intention to create a new sense of urban community met, the design team also succeeded in securing a formidable regeneration of this iconic architectural landmark for Athenians, who can gaze towards the magnificent view through new glass screens. (OLGA IOANNOU)

Info www.divercityarchitects.com



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Parkveien
in Oslo by
KIMA
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and Infill

HOUSE HUNTING 1

Nordic guarantee

Jannie Vinke and Marcel van der Lubbe (ANA Architects) journey through Europe in a caravan, looking for fresh answers to the question of what added value architects can contribute to the challenge of the future. Along the way, they speak with residents, clients, city officials, investors, builders, and architects. In this multi-part series, they report their findings. The first instalment is on Scandinavia.

In the context of strong economies, housing quality is certainly not a matter of course. Everyone involved is looking for ways to achieve good quality. In Scandinavia, architects must also compete for a position that enables them to deliver their own added value in housing projects.

The housing programme in Scandinavian cities, both now and in the future, is focused on the realization of small, affordable residences in the city. Precisely because of the incredible economic performance in the Nordic countries, cities like Stockholm and Oslo are growing rapidly. Stockholm's population has increased by 8000 people per year over the last five years. For Oslo, a growth of more

than 10,000 per year is expected in the coming years. Tremendous pressure on land in the city has emerged as a result, and the price of housing has shot up. Qualitative construction, especially for lower income and larger households, threatens to be unaffordable. This predicament is also being signalled by residents of the large Scandinavian cities.

In Denmark, clients are indicating that architects actually do have added value in this case, because quality at an affordable price requires creative solutions on all levels. In Sweden, the situation is different because the housing industry is dominated by four large construction companies. To counterbalance this, architectural offices such as White demand a greater role and more responsibility, to achieve architectural excellence and typological diversity. For example, they take the responsibility and risk for project realization. In Norway, some architects have become developers for this very reason. The developer Infill, for instance, was formed this way. The municipality of Stockholm, meanwhile, is successfully experimenting with new selection procedures in order to ensure that the housing market, which is driven by market forces and the building industry, still guarantees quality and diversity. (JANNIE VINKE AND MARCEL VAN DER LUBBE)

Info www.anagoeseurope.eu, www.white.se, www.infill.no



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