

THE FAÇADE OF FILOTHEI HOUSE FEATURES STACKED VOLUMES IN LAFARGE CONCRETE AND STAINED TIMBER VENEER INSETS



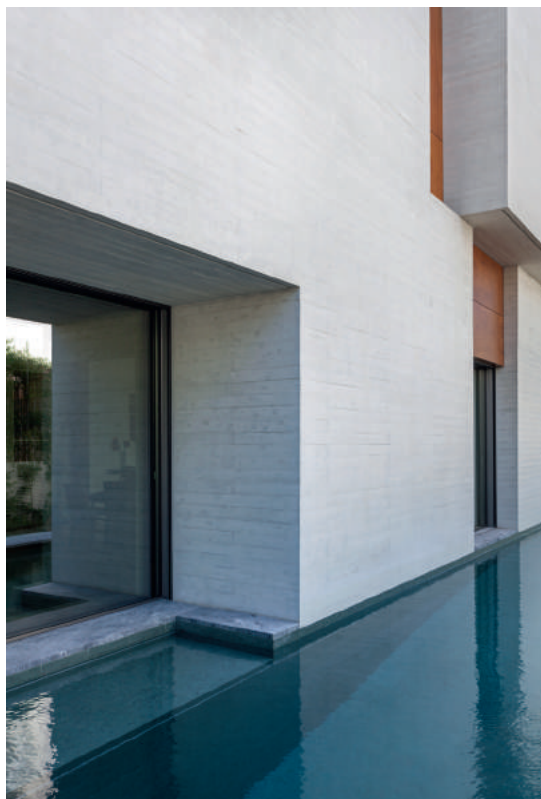
# CUBE ROUTE

A detached family home, on a tight plot in an Athens suburb, boxes clever with concrete

According to Nikolas Travasaros, founding partner of the London- and Athens-based practice Divercity, there are two ways to look at architecture. One is to approach a project with a signature style, the way, say, Frank Gehry might. The second is to interpret the underlying language of the client's brief to create an unconventional story – the weirder the better.

'You come to a new site bringing with you your memories. And you go through a process of >>





ABOVE, THE LIVING AREA'S DOUBLE-HEIGHT VOLUME IS ANCHORED BY A TOWERING BOOKSHELF FILLED WITH BOOKS AND RECORDS. ABOVE THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM IS A MEZZANINE STUDY  
LEFT, THE LIVING ROOM IS FLANKED BY A 15M-LONG POOL ACCESSED THROUGH A MARBLE-LINED PATIO

understanding what's important to the client and to you as a designer, and then try to blend all that to create a new memory for that site,' says Travasaros.

This introspective approach is articulated in a range of thoughtful and engaging residential projects, such as Psychiko House (W\*162) and, more recently, Filothei House. Located in one of Athens' swankiest suburbs, the latter is a two-and-a-half storey home, a particularly graceful expression of form and function that sits in a tight plot on a broad street lined with oleanders and low-slung mansions built in the 1960s and 1970s. Listen carefully and you can hear the quiet whisper of upper-middle-class affluence.

The façade of Filothei House is eye-catching in its silhouette of stacked volumes punctuated with recessed cut-outs, stained timber veneer insets and elevated gardens, the entirety encased in Lafarge concrete, its higher aggregate imparting a lighter, almost white hue to the surface. The material is unusual for Greece, but attention to detail is very important to the studio. Pre-construction, the team created a 4m by 3m wall to get a better idea of what the result would look like, explains Travasaros' brother Dimitris, who heads up Divercity's Athens practice and led the project (a third director, Christina Achtypi, is based in London).

Spatial planning was also critical, not least because the clients, management consultants with young children, needed the house to be multifunctional. 'They're on the road most of the week,' Dimitris says, >>



‘so they only get to enjoy the house at weekends. They like to entertain and wanted a space that could accommodate 60-70 people and yet that could become cosy and intimate when it’s just the immediate family.’

The heart of Filothei House is the double-height ground-floor living room and mezzanine office. Light streams in through sliding glass doors and draws the eye inexorably outwards to a green wall and broad overhang, both of which frame an outdoor patio lined with Cretan marble, a patch of lawn and a lap pool. Greenery punctuates the expanse of concrete while, at the entrance, water reeds sprout with bonsai restraint and rosemary scents the air. It’s a tableau of quiet design gestures that, in the evenings especially, makes it easy to imagine that you’ve just checked into some soigné country resort rather than a family home on the edge of central Athens. It is perhaps no coincidence either that Nikolas cites Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan, who practically wrote the book on bringing the outdoors in, as an influence. ‘We like his use of light and the way he creates a narrative.’

The house manages to feel like an intimate family home, yet possesses a slight ambiguity. There is a sense of possibilities. It’s a space that, with a strategic shifting of furniture or the sliding open of a partition, could become a bar, a hotel lobby, or even an art gallery. ‘The clients didn’t want a typical house of bedrooms and kitchen, nor a building that could be recognised as a house,’ says Nikolas. Mission accomplished, we say. ✪ [divercityarchitects.com](http://divercityarchitects.com)

LEFT, THE EAST-FACING WALL FEATURES A DOUBLE-HEIGHT ABACUS SCREEN THAT SHIELDS THE WORST OF THE SUMMER HEAT AND ENCASES AN INTERNAL GARDEN

BELOW, THE INTERIORS, BY DESIGNER SOFIA VANTARAKI, FEATURE MUTED HUES AND EXPANSES OF WARM TIMBER

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