

Modernist giant wakes up from deep slumber



Sitting on the foot of Lycabettus Hill, the iconic building designed by pioneer architect and town-planner Constantinos A. Doxiadis adapts to its surroundings. Recent additions by the Divercity team are not out of proportion or character.

By Harry van Versendaal & Elis Kiss

Like a decadent, ailing giant that failed to awe, the Doxiadis Office Building for years sat neglected on the foot of Lycabettus Hill, discreetly overlooking the capital's upmarket, albeit idiosyncratic, Kolonaki neighborhood.

Originally erected between 1958 and 1972 by pioneer architect and town-planner Constantinos A. Doxiadis to house the headquarters of his consulting engineers' firm and namesake school, the building fell into neglect and disuse after Doxiadis's death in 1975.

Now, after several setbacks and delays, the emblematic, postwar, modernist structure seems to have finally acquired a new skin without losing too much of its soul. Along the way it also picked up a new name and is now known as One Athens.

Acquired by Cyclamino SA, a partnership between entrepreneurs Christos Joannou and Miltos Kambourides, in 2007, the 12,500 square meter property has been reincarnated into a sleek, cement-and-glass residential complex that is currently re-defining the capital's niche market for ultra-luxurious real estate in the city center. The redesign of the open-plan workspaces into 26 residences was masterminded by award-winning Athens and London-based Divercity architects, while construction work was undertaken by Greek builder J&P-Avax.

The transformation was not without obstacles. In 2010, renovation work was interrupted after protests by urban activist group Monumenta, which claimed that architects had tampered with Doxiadis's trademark design. Opposition was soon joined by the Architecture School of the National Technical University of Athens, the Greek Architects' Association (SADAS) and the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE).

In a compromise decision, the Culture Ministry's Central Council of Modern Monuments only granted listed status to certain elements of the building: the load-bearing structure, the facade along Stratiotikou Syndesmou Street, the spiral staircases and the central atrium – a low-energy, bioclimatic concept designed to provide ventilation and natural light at a time when building design in Athens almost exclusively catered to maximizing use of available space. Keeping with the Doxiadis legacy are the cellular concrete ceilings and the herringbone timber flooring.

Additions by the Divercity team are not out of proportion or character. The original modular grid has been transformed into a matrix made up of crystal, Aliveri marble, and translucent concrete panels – a functional, as well as playful, building material that allows light to penetrate its dense surface.

Living space at One Athens ranges from a 77 sq. m. studio to a 721 sq. m. penthouse and considerable choice in between. This includes four townhouses (ranging from 245 to 517 sq.m.), all enjoying direct access onto the Lycabettus Hill ring road as well as Stratiotikou Syndesmou Street. The building's five penthouses (ranging from 260 sq.m. to 721 sq.m.) boast rooftop terraces, swimming pools or spas and views over the Acropolis and the Lycabettus Hill. Out of the 26 flats, so far seven have been picked up by a savvy, globe-trotting Greek clientele.

The building's new residents, who are expected to start moving in early next year, will benefit from security and porter services as well as full concierge services for their entertainment and travel. The new neighbors will also be able to meet on the shared rooftop terrace (with views over the Acropolis and the Lycabettus), the ground floor's indoor swimming pool as well as the adjacent jacuzzi, steam bath and

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sauna facilities. Also available for residents is a playroom and a conference area – close to the room that once hosted Greece’s first mainframe computer, a Univac 1107, acquired by Doxiadis Associates in 1969.

All residences are equipped with a state-of-the-art smart home management system through a wall-mounted iPad control center. Flats also feature natural gas heating, a fully equipped kitchen and designer fixtures for bathrooms.

By all means an exclusive project, One Athens survived the country’s financial meltdown and the paralysis of the local real estate sector. Price tags at the former Doxiadis headquarters currently reflect the project’s 70-million-euro private investment.

In a city that has often been disrespectful to its architectural legacy, One Athens introduces a new urban vernacular.


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