

The chronicle of an athenian building on the Filopappou peripheral road

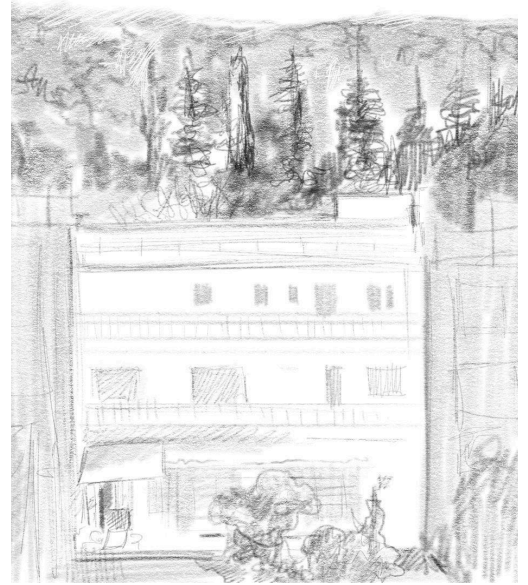
*Four floors - A passage through history
and a transition into the athenian light*



Sketches and text: Eleni Fountoulaki

Around 1960. Below the hill of Filopappos, amidst the sounds of birds, the jingling of goat bells, and the occasional flight of seagulls arriving from Piraeus on their scouting rounds above the balconies, stands a building that rises majestically, overlooking the Attic landscape. From its balconies, one can rest their gaze upon Ymittos, the clusters of trees in the first cemetery, all the way to Aegina and the faint mountains of the Peloponnese. At that time, the road that would later separate Panaitolikos Street - *the peripheral road connecting three of Athens' most beautiful urban corners, Thiseio, Ano Petralona, and Koukaki, extending to Makrygianni and the Acropolis*, did not yet exist.

In the dominant original building, the ground floor, which faces the neoclassical buildings of Filopappou street, had a backyard on its rear side - an open space that naturally separated the hill from the house. This yard featured a fountain, built by the owning family, and a chicken coop. However, with the new urban planning of the area, the peripheral road was constructed, passing through that space. As a result, the yard was built over and enclosed, creating a new ground floor while the old one was officially designated as a basement; though in reality, nothing about it suggests such a classification. Its 160 square meters and the abundant natural light streaming through the



Below the hill of Filopappos, stands a building that rises majestically, overlooking the Attic landscape.

large glass wall along the façade illuminates the open-plan space. A long wooden bench runs along the length of the room, facing the front courtyard, inviting one to sit.

A little further inside, a piano stands in front of the bedrooms, where wall-mounted structures intricately shape the lighting, enhancing the architectural design of the space. The small, lush courtyard looks up to the blue sky, where the tiled rooftops with their antefixes - the

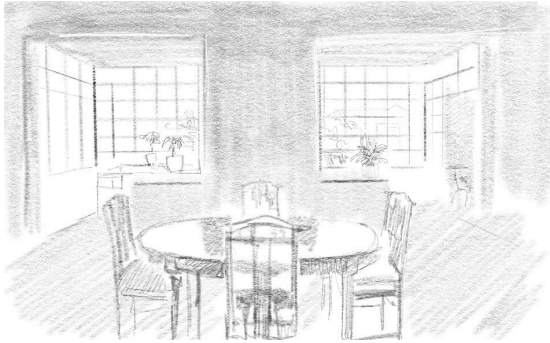
terracotta ornaments, from the few remaining neoclassical houses of the neighborhood subtly peek through.



You ascend a wide wooden staircase and enter the ground floor. Whether from there, or through a second independent entrance from the main road, you pass through a threshold, a metal door, and find yourself in a space bathed in light, experiencing a sense of joy. The first thing you encounter is the closed, architectural projection at the farthest point of the house,

made of glass that spans the full height and length of the wall, forming a frame for the changing light, its play on the surrounding houses and the slopes of Ymittos, the distant sea, almost creating a metaphysical connection between the dweller and the "outside." The entire main space was designed in such a way

that it feels as if it was made specifically to frame this expanse of sky within its vastness. If you wish to feel the Sublime, there it is; gazing at the Attic basin.



For this experience, you are prepared just beforehand by the openings on either side of the central column of the house—an expansive, unified space that is intuitively divided into two smaller areas. Here, the living room is set upon a raised wooden platform, while a round table nearby welcomes both formal and informal gatherings. On the opposite wall, an elongated, rectangular opening

hints at the bedroom beyond. From there, you step out onto the veranda, evoking the essence of Athenian balconies etched in engravings, revealing an urban landscape from another era, where the brown-tiled rooftops leave the view unobstructed toward the Attic sky.



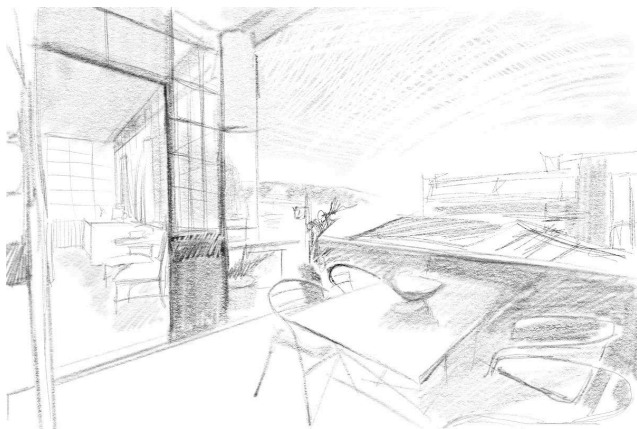
Now, through the glass panels and windows with their metal grid and bold industrial design, one can take in the full natural richness of the peri-urban grove—pines, cypresses, shrubs, and winding paths—where, in this *post-pastoral* landscape, locals engage daily in outdoor sports and rambles. In this very location, the “quarries” of the hill once stood, where, decades ago, stone was extracted to build the fences of the surrounding houses and the retaining walls

that would later support the sloping terrain. Even today, one can trace the characteristic off-white stone - sometimes tinged with pink, at other times yellow, in the neighboring houses, a quiet testament to its origins.

The story of the house

When the building was first inhabited, it was initially used to house the stills of small-scale industry for the production of ouzo - a traditional Greek alcoholic beverage made from distilled grapes or grain - as its industrial-style concrete structure and wooden floors made of American pine, known for their mechanical strength, were the perfect space for such endeavors.

The character of the area at the time was balanced between neoclassical buildings, the two-floors structures of Athenian



modernism - which can still be admired today - apartment buildings of interwar period, and both large and small-scale industries, as well as the FIX brewery, the first large-scale brewery in Greece. The owner of the house, who has lived there since childhood, witnessed the gradual transformation of the property... Two more floors were added to accommodate the family, while the two lower levels, once used for industrial purposes, were transformed to

house the professional activities of an art collector and conservator. The imposing strongroom still remains, like a grand crypt, where prominent works of the time - and beyond, were said to be stored, including, allegedly, a Rembrandt for a brief period. Exhibitions, various artistic events, gatherings, and discussions characterized the atmosphere of the building during that time.

The addition of two new floors

A few more years passed, and we find ourselves around 1974. You enter the first floor, either directly from the street through the independent entrance or from the ground floor. As you ascend the marble staircase, you move closer to the Greek light, a light that softens the shapes. Entering through an oak door, the

floor is adorned with Tinos marble, with greenish-black and gray veining that gives way to the mosaic patterns in the house, a characteristic example of the architecture of that decade, where the gaze is lost in the small cobblestone designs, forming fragmented images.

The kitchen, with green cabinets and a marble sink, is sunlit, standing tall with a view. One can imagine themselves sitting

There, one can imagine themselves sitting and gazing at the urban landscape.

there, gazing at the urban landscape and the golden hues of the sea, as the breeze fills the space. A long balcony stretches across the kitchen and reaches the bedrooms with their wooden floors, designed in herringbone technique. On the back side, you can see

Ikonion and Sembo with their crane bridges, fortresses of the industrial zone of the western suburbs, while further away, higher up on the hill, the Filopappos monument stands. You're so close, and from such a height, it feels like you're beneath the pines, right in the middle of the hill.



In the end, you move to the top floor, which is divided into two sections, each with its own personality. On one side, a small studio apartment offers a view from its balcony of the small park at the first cemetery, the "Theatro Vrahon" (Theater of the Rocks) a little further away, the public reservoir, and the hill of Kallithea. Two cypress trees to the right briefly interrupt the line of sight and compete with the tower of Piraeus. Occasionally, the sails of boats in Faliro can be seen in the distance...

In the second and larger section, all the spaces are surrendered to the light, and although they are divided, they can easily be transformed into a single space to accommodate all sorts of activities, as the floor plan is a square-shaped rectangle, where you pass from one room to another, creating a sense of intimacy, regardless of the room's vastness.

Closing the door behind you, you ascend a metal spiral staircase that leads you to the rooftop. Just before, a tiny room functions as a storage space, painted in dark blue with wooden paneling, resembling a small ship's lookout. The rooftop of the building brings you closer to the rugged rock formations, where, like a

painted landscape of Maleas, the colors shift depending on the light. The light is sometimes blinding, sometimes soft and contemplative, completing the experience for the occupant as it is gradually revealed through each unique level of the house.

