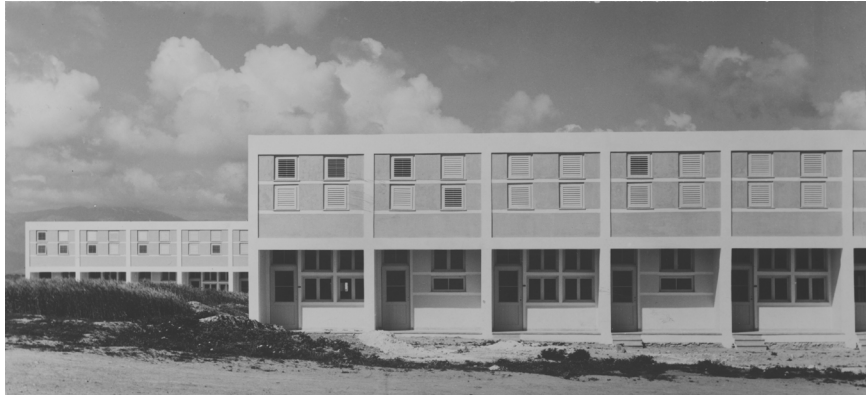


The Constant Typologist

The Notion of Type in the Work of Aris Konstantinidis

Platon Issaias, Alexandra Vougia



Aris Konstantinidis, Low-Income Housing, Irakleio, 1955-1957.
From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 70. Courtesy of
Dimitris Konstantinidis.

I. THE INTRICACIES OF WRITING ABOUT KONSTANTINIDIS

Although Modern Greek architecture is often only marginal in the canonical narrations of twentieth-century architectural history, the work of Aris Konstantinidis (1913–1993) holds a special place there. He formed a complementary duo together with Dimitris Pikionis (1887–1968), which has defined the dominant perspective through which a foreign gaze understands and categorizes Greek architectural discourse, culture, and production. This perspective touches upon what many consider an unsettling and unresolved relation between modernity and tradition, or what may be called a “third way” and a possible departure from this very dilemma, forming the myth of “critical regionalism.”⁰¹

Equally important for us is the fact that these two figures, and the rhetoric that surrounds their built work and writing, both locally and internationally, have formed a conceptual framework of references that is almost impossible to avoid as a practicing architect, a historian, or an academic operating in and from Greece, even today. This evidently includes us as well. Nevertheless, if in the past the work of Pikionis and Konstantinidis had been used to define a material and theoretical culture in which the notions of identity, modernity, and tradition have been played out in the dipole between craft and abstraction, today, the dominant revisionist history of their work follows this schema: an homage simultaneously to the glory of “regional,” “critical,” and “peripheral” Modernity and to the nostalgic genealogies of the twentieth century.

Simultaneously, Pikionis’s and Konstantinidis’s work seems to remain unscathed by political criticism. Most writings on their work avoid contending with the political implications of their architecture as such

⁰¹ The definition of “critical regionalism” has been presented and articulated firstly by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefavre in their essay “The Grid and the Pathway: An Introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis,” *Architecture in Greece* 15 (1981): 164–178. Kenneth Frampton further expanded the notion in his essay “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six points for an architecture of resistance” in Hal Foster ed., *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press), 16–30. Today, many have revisited this concept, most notably Stylianos (Stelios) Giamarellos. See, for example, Stylianos Giamarellos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture: Critical Regionalism before Globalisation* (London: UCL Press, 2022).

and beyond.⁰² Therefore, they transcend political lines and camps, being emblematic protagonists of a commonplace belief about the definition of Modern Greek identity, and the role of architecture within it. Their work—designed, built and written—has been equally instrumentalized by right- and left-wing architects, artists, theorists, citizens, and politicians alike. Serious misunderstandings and misinterpretations have occurred. In fact, from our point of view, the most emblematic is one originally initiated by Konstantinidis himself. For the opening sentence of his influential text “Vessels of Life,”⁰³ Konstantinidis uses a quote, which he attributes to a highly problematic intellectual, Periklis Giannopoulos, without further referencing and removing it from its textual, but most importantly, conceptual context:⁰⁴ “Life in Greece is outdoors” (“*O bios en Elladi einai ypaithrios*”). This quote, originally published in a 1904 text by Giannopoulos about Greek theatre, has been reproduced thousands of times, almost always without a reference note, apart from Konstantinidis’s own text.⁰⁵ Its proliferation is not only evident in Greek architecture or art literature, but also in political and philosophical texts, newspapers, magazines, brochures, and advertisements.⁰⁶ Gradually, a part of a longer passage of a complex, heated, opinionated, and archaic text, written by a late, neo-romantic, Greek nationalist, a character who we could easily classify as a proto-fascist, becomes a banal aphorism. “Life in Greece is outdoors” gets popularized and still today is used to justify abysmally divergent architectural and spatial gestures that seek their purifying legitimization through their reference to Aris Konstantinidis.

II. TRUTH, COMMON, PRINCIPAL

Our interest in Konstantinidis’s work, which has initiated this short essay, comes from a series of studies and observations about him as a designer, writer, and public intellectual. Contrary to widespread readings on his work and personality, we are particularly interested in his ideological and political thought, as well as the profound systematization of his practice by the architect himself, often disguised behind a highly emotional and polemic rhetoric. As well-narrated by Stelios Giamarelos,⁰⁷ Konstantinidis developed, orchestrated, and imposed, locally and internationally, a particular reading of himself and his practice, while directing interest in his work mostly to his private commissions that consist almost exclusively of private residences. Giamarelos writes specifically about Konstantinidis’s Weekend House in Anavyssos (1962–1964), calling it his “landmark work”

02 In the case of Aris Konstantinidis, on whom our interest is focused, the work of the architect has been referenced and interpreted by architects and architectural theorists that stem from entirely different political backgrounds and generations, such as Suzana Antonakakis, Tasos Biris, Helen Fessas-Emmanouil, Andreas Giakoumakatos, Zisis Kotionis, Amalia Kotsaki, Leonidas Koutsoumpos, et al. Indicatively, the work of Aris Konstantinidis has been recently studied and discussed again as recent as 2019 in a one-day symposium organised by the Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy as a part of a series of events called “Persons of Honor.” We think that this underlines precisely the universal character under which the work of Konstantinidis is generally received.

03 Aris Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life—The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter.” The article, initially, self-published, can now be found in: Aris Konstantinidis, *Gia tin Architektoniki* (Athens: Agra, 1987 and Athens: Crete University Press, 2001), 232–266.

04 Periklis Giannopoulos (1869–1910) was writer, translator, and novelist. He was a polemic of Western thought and cultural influence in Greece. During his lifetime, but also in the 1930s and beyond, his ideas became popularised among intellectuals and artists of early Modernism. Many of his writings have been recently republished and his life extensively studied. See for example: Takis Theodoropoulos, *Emeis, oi Eksofrenikoteroi ton Palavon tis Gis* (Athens: Metehmio, 2022). In the field of architecture, the influence of Giannopoulos, especially his writings on the Greek landscape, has been closely tracked by Dimitris Philippidis. See Dimitris Philippidis, *Neoelliniki Architektoniki* (Athens: Melissa, 1984). For entries on Giannopoulos, see page 442.

05 “To Ellinikon Theatron. Neon Theatron” *Asty* 28.8 (1.9.1904). Reproduced in *Ta Nea Grammata* 1–3 (1938): 173.

06 The phrase has been used with exactness by Suzana Antonakakis in “Poetry and Discourse” [Poiisi kai Logos], in *Aris Konstantinidis*, ed. Vaiou, Dina (Athens: Idryma tis Voulis ton Ellinon [The Hellenic Parliament Foundation], 2019), 77, and has been slightly, but consciously, paraphrased by Tasis Papaioannou, in “*O bios en Elladi einai hmi-ypaithrios*”, presentation at the Conference “*Legitimization of semi-outdoor spaces*” (Athens, 18.5.2009). Beyond architecture, the phrase has been adopted in academic papers and magazine articles on topics as diverse as tourism, Athenian nightlife, criticism of building regulations, etc. Indicatively see: Pantelis Boukalas, “Assumptions” (“*Ypothesis*”), *Kathimerini* (19.07.2009). Dimitris Politakis, “We are all tourists in this world” (“*Oloi tourists eimaste se touto ton kosmaki/*”), *Lifo* 526 (05.07.2017), 14.

07 Stylianos Giamarelos, “The Art of Building Reception: Aris Konstantinidis behind the Global Published Life of his Weekend House in Anavyssos (1962–2014),” *Architectural Histories* 2(1) (2014), 1–19.

that continues to emanate “a timeless, transcendental aura.”⁰⁸

This notion of timelessness allowed Konstantinidis to construct a genealogical thread and expand his views on fundamental concepts that serve the definition of (his) “true architecture” (*alithini architektonik*), such as “man” (*Anthropos*), “landscape” (*topio*), “land” (*edafos*), “physical world” (*fisikos kosmos*), and “locality” (*topiakos choros*),⁰⁹ which we could trace to the profound influence exerted to him by German and Greek nineteenth century Idealism and Romanticism. As Konstantinidis declared, his closest, and *only*, true intellectual affiliation was with the Greek poet Dionysios Solomos,¹⁰ while, in his texts, he often quotes Nietzsche, Goethe, and Schopenhauer. The most crucial concept, which according to Konstantinidis defined not only his entire practice, but also his existential and cosmological framework of reference, his *ethos*, comes from the third draft “Fragment One” of one of Solomos’s most important works, the epic and unfinished poem *The Free Besieged* (1828–1851), inspired by the third siege (1825–26) of the city of Mesolongi in central Greece during the War of Independence (1821–1829): “*Me logismo kai m’oneiro*”).¹¹ This one is a complicated phrase, not only to translate, but also to decode both within Solomos’s poem and Konstantinidis’s work. If “*oneiro*” signifies “dream,” “*logismos*” means “mind, logic, rationale, and calculation.” We then suggest the following translation: “With reason and with dream.”¹²

We are risking a Hegelian slip.

Konstantinidis seems obsessed with this quote, which attributes to Solomos’s *Thoughts* (*Stohasmoi*), and he often manipulates it, adding a second and a third phrase: “*gia mian alithini ousia*” (meaning, “for a true essence”) or “*gia to koino kai to kyrio*” (meaning “for the common and the principal”). Hence from Solomos, Konstantinidis begins to construct the main glossary for his architecture: “true,” “common,” “principal.”¹³ Investigating Solomos’s *Thoughts*—a peculiar text written in Italian as a series of fragmentary notes, a piece of work that remained unpublished until after the poet’s death—we could trace this interpretation to a series of passages, especially notes four, fourteen and fifteen, in which Solomos discusses the concepts of “Common” (*Koino*), “Principal” (*Kyrio*), “True” (*Alithino*), “Beautiful” (*Oraio*), and “Spirit” (*Pnevma*).¹⁴ Konstantinidis is preoccupied with these concepts, in his attempt to define and present his practice as a “true architecture” that is born and fits in Greece, its heritage, culture, and landscape. But as we argue, it is the notions of “type” and “rule” that helped him develop it further.

08 Ibid.

09 These concepts appear, again and again, in multiple of Konstantinidis’s texts, more notably, however, in: Aris Konstantinidis, *Stoixeia Autognosias—Gia mian Alithini Architektoniki* (Athens: self-published, 1975); Aris Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life—The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter” (this article, initially, self-published, can now be found in: Aris Konstantinidis, *Gia tin Architektoniki* (Athens: Agra, 1987 and Athens: Crete University Press, 2001), 232–266); Aris Konstantinidis, “A Few Words,” in *Projects and Buildings*, 258–273.

10 Aris Konstantinidis, *I Koilia tou Architektona* (Athens: Geniki Etaireia Kataskevov, 1991), 16.

11 Dionysios Solomos, *The Free Besieged and Other Poems*, ed. Peter Mackridge (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2015).

12 The translation here is provided by the authors.

13 See, among others:

Aris Konstantinidis, *Stoixeia Autognosias—Gia mian Alithini Architektoniki* (Athens: self-published, 1975).

Aris Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life—The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter”. The article, initially, self-published, can now be found in: Aris Konstantinidis, *Gia tin Architektoniki* Athens: Agra, 1987 and Athens: Crete University Press, 2001), 232–266.

Konstantinos An. Themelis, *O Logos tou Archimastora: mia Sunomilia me ton Ari Konstantinidi* (Athens: Indiktos, 2000).

14 For Solomos’s *Thoughts*, see: Dionysios Solomos, *Stohasmoi*, ed. M. Peri, trans. St. Alexiou (Athens: Stigma, 1999); Dionysios Solomos, *Stohasmoi stous Eleftherous Poliorkimenous* ed. and trans. G. Veloudis (Athens: Periplous, 1997). Solomos’s *Stohasmoi*, which can be translated as *Thoughts*, have been extensively studied by Iakovos Polylys (1825–1896), with his work serving as the basis of all later publications and editions. For the enumeration of Solomos’s concepts, see: *Stohasmoi stous Eleftherous Poliorkimenous*, 313–319.



Aris Konstantinidis. Country Residence, Eleusis, Attica. 1938.
From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 12. Courtesy of
Dimitris Konstantinidis.

Although on multiple occasions Konstantinidis complains about his interactions with private clients, who he often profoundly resented,¹⁵ we argue that there are a number of private houses—like the Weekend House in Anavyssos (1962–1964), the Weekend House in Sykia (1951), the One-Family House in Athens (1961), his houses in Spetses (1963, 1966–67) (one of which belongs to him), and the two houses in Aegina, the first built for the painter Yannis Moralis between 1974 and 1978 and the second for Konstantinidis’s own sister, completed in 1975—which offered him the opportunity to control not only the construction but, most importantly, the way they function as conceptual devices for the understanding of his overall work. These private residences indicated and summarized his own theses about the use of materials, structural systems and, essentially, the desired relation between landscape and architectural object: the house as a place of dwelling, an object where cultural, material, and structural continuity is traceable, a space defined by Konstantinidis as a “vessel of life.”¹⁶



Aris Konstantinidis. Weekend House, Sykia. 1951.
From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 41. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

15 A detailed account on Konstantinidis’s interactions with his clients can be found in: Nikos Magouliotis, “Scary Architects and Scared Clients: A Portrait of Aris Konstantinidis,” *San Rocco* 5: “Scary Architects” (2012): 157–164.

16 Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life,” 1972.

However, in this text we are also interested in the complementary part of his practice: his work for the public sector. As Nikos Magouliotis has rightly pointed out, “most of what he was hired to design was in fact commissioned by the state or a state-run agency.”¹⁷ If anything, it seems that Konstantinidis was a devoted public sector worker. As he mentions in his “Autobiographical Note,” during his lifetime he worked in the following institutions and roles: the City Planning Department of Athens (1936–37, 1939–40), the Ministry of Public Works (1942–1953), the Low-income Housing Department—OEK (1955–57), as Supervisor of Design Section of the Technical Department of the Greek Tourist Organization—EOT (1957–1967), and as Special Advisor on matters concerning architecture and the protection of the environment of the Greek Tourist Organization—EOT (1975–78).¹⁸



Aris Konstantinidis. Low-Income Housing, Nea Philadelphia, Athens. 1955–1957. From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 65. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis. .

The math above indicates that from the age of twenty-three, when he returns to Athens after his graduation from the School of Architecture of Munich (1931–36), and until his retirement at the age of sixty-five in 1978, Konstantinidis had worked for the Greek State and several of its organizations for twenty-nine out of forty-two years. Importantly, the interruptions coincide with his mandatory military service before and during the early years of the Second World War and his dismissal from state-run agencies by the Military Junta. That is an impressive record for someone who seemed to dislike working for the public sector, to say the least. As himself had noted, “I had not found it pleasurable working for the Government, not being interested in having a career there, since all I wanted was to build.”¹⁹

But was building his only concern and occupation?

¹⁷ Magouliotis, “Scary Architects and Scared Clients: A Portrait of Aris Konstantinidis,” 158.

¹⁸ Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings*, 274–276.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

III. BUILDING AND WRITING

Admittedly, my job is to build and not to write. Nevertheless, I have been writing ever since I started building [...] Consequently, I feel like saying that I write because I build.²⁰

Indeed, Konstantinidis did build, but he also wrote a lot. As we again learn from his “Autobiographical Note,”²¹ but also from studying his complete works and the publication by the Hellenic Parliament Foundation,²² he had published nine books up until his monograph in 1981, followed by another ten until the end of his life in 1993. It is fascinating that in the last decade of his life following his retirement and monograph, a period that constitutes his most prolific period as a writer, he didn’t design or build anything; it seems he had no commissions at all. In addition, and throughout his life, he published multiple articles, not only locally and in Greek, but also in the English and the German press, such as the magazines *Architectural Design*, *Detail*, *Bauen und Wohnen*, and *Baumeister*.²³ We believe that he made a commendable effort to translate in English texts that he himself considered formative and critical for the understanding of his work and ethos. These are the hugely important text in his monograph, titled “A Few Words,” the equally significant self-published book *Elements of Self-Knowledge—Towards a True Architecture*, and the article “Vessels of Life—The Problem for a True Greek Architecture,” another self-publication that followed a complaint and an open letter to the Greek architectural magazine *Architecture in Greece*.²⁴

As he had argued, Konstantinidis considered the task of writing complementary to his work as an architect. Expressing himself through writing was for him interdependent with the act of building. It is crucial to highlight here that he doesn’t talk about “drawing” or “designing,” but about “building.” The architecture project for Konstantinidis is one that is tested and only becomes true when completed and built. “You learn Architecture through building,” he mentions on several occasions.²⁵ He continues that “You might have whatever the hell you want on your mind, but when you get to the construction site, you begin seeing things that you hadn’t previously grasped.”²⁶ Somehow, he redefines the architectural profession in two seemingly opposite directions: he is both the writer/intellectual but also the arch-builder. For a romantic idealist like himself, the practice of building is one that transforms earth and soil into man-made structures, through an act of “pure creative impetus,” as Konstantinos An. Themelis put it in his brilliant introduction to the publication *The Word of the Master Builder (O Logos you Archimastora)*.²⁷ The act of writing is an act of confirmation, or as Konstantinidis underlines, writing is “putting to an additional test my possible abilities as an architect and verifying in word what in practice has come out correct and true.”²⁸

Crucially, writing follows building—it is never the opposite. “Consequently, I feel like saying that I write because I build; as if I were not able to say something in words, written or spoken, unless I had uttered it previously in a construction. So, first I construct what I intend to say and afterwards I rebuild it in words. For this reason, then, what I have written

20 Ibid., 258.

21 Ibid., 274–286.

22 Dina Vaiou, ed., *Aris Konstantinidis* (Athens: Idryma tis Voulis ton Ellinon [The Hellenic Parliament Foundation], 2019).

23 Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings*, 284–286.

24 Konstantinidis, “A Few Words”, in *Projects and Buildings*., 258–273. Aris Konstantinidis, *Stoixeia Autognosias - Gia mian Alithini Architektoniki* (Athens: self-published, 1975). Aris Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life—The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter.” This article, initially, self-published, can now be found in: Aris Konstantinidis, *Gia tin Architektoniki* (Athens: Agra, 1987 and Athens: Crete University Press, 2001), 232–266.

25 See, for example, Themelis, *O Logos tou Archimastora: mia Sunomilia me ton Ari*, 60.

26 Ibid., 60.

27 Ibid., 11.

28 Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings*, 258.

has always been in accordance with what I have built: one and the same world. It is a bad thing to speak and act differently; a bad thing to write and build differently.”²⁹

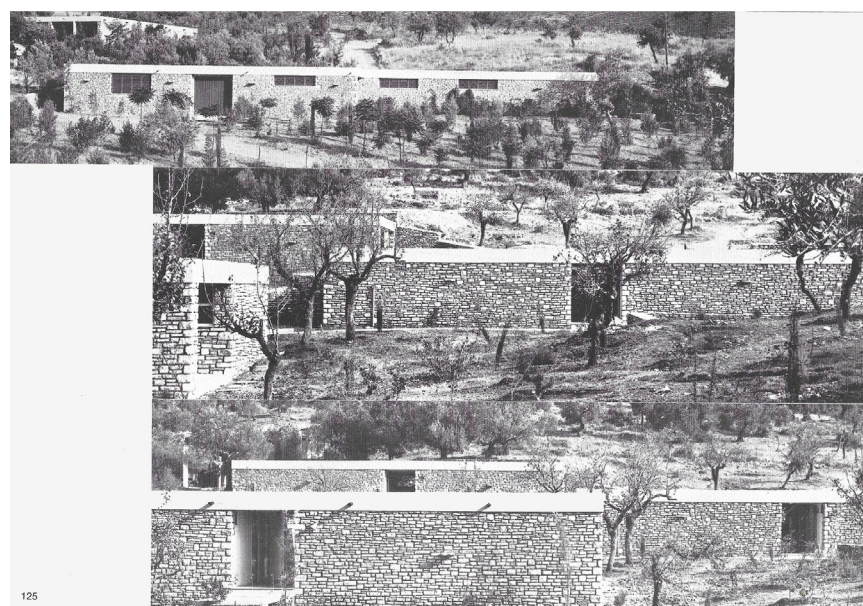
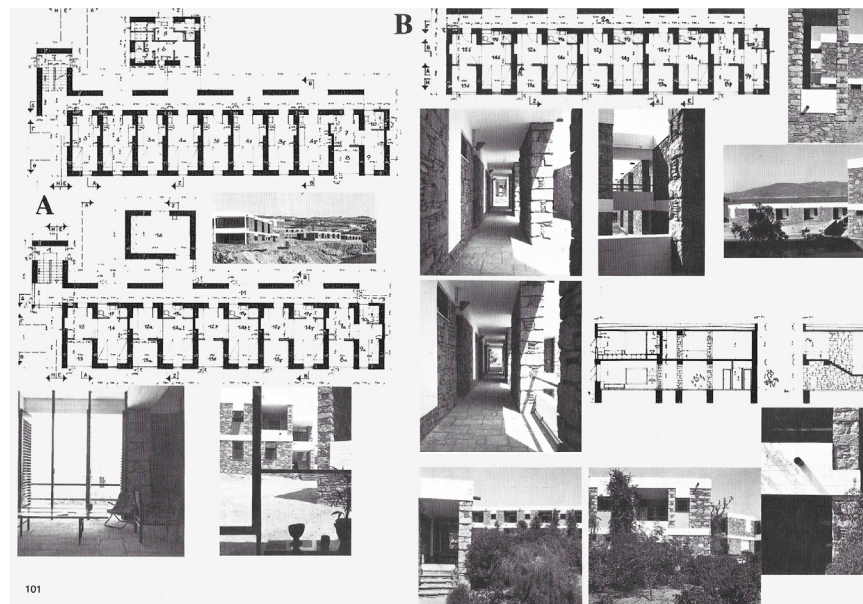
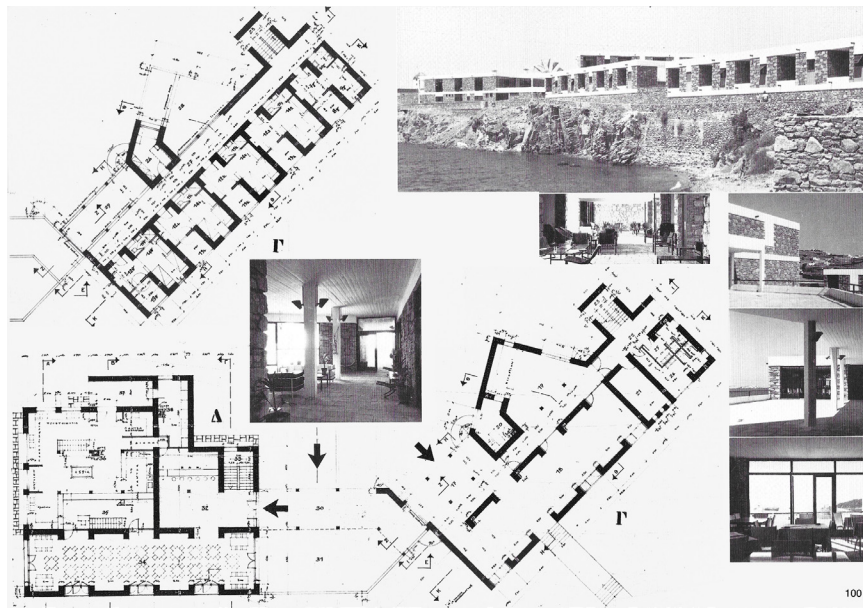
IV. PROJECTS, BUILDINGS, TYPES

We build up our argument through a close reading of the book *Aris Konstantinidis: Projects and Buildings* (1981). In our point of view, this is the most important testimony for Konstantinidis’s work. The book includes ninety-seven plus one works—built and unbuilt—starting with his first building, a Country Residence in Eleusis, an island on the outskirts of Athens, completed in 1938. The last work presented in the book is an unbuilt project for a Studio-Residence in Aegina, drawn in 1978. There is an interim chapter, which we will further elaborate below that includes his typological templates, construction details, and designs of objects, such as furniture, lamps, and sculptures. Finally, the project that completes the presentation of his oeuvre is a rather unusual one: the tomb of the Greek poet Georgios Seferis at the First Cemetery of Athens, completed in 1972.



Aris Konstantinidis. Country Residence, Eleusis, Attica. 1938.
From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 12. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

Crucially, the presentation of each work, whether *project* or *building*, does not include any written description. It seems that Konstantinidis felt that only two texts were critical in framing his architectural work: the overarching text with the title “A Few Words” that sums up and establishes the affinities between all *projects* and *buildings* and a personal account of his life called “Autobiographical Note.” Finally, there is a sixteen-page section of colored photographs, taken by Konstantinidis himself, incredibly fragmented, since they present his buildings in various levels of detail without an evident intention. Most of these photographs have become legendary for the history of Modern Greek Architecture, and for good reason.



Aris Konstantinidis. Pages from the Book. *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 100–101, 125. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

The book follows a consistent methodology. Each *project* or *building* is presented through three different elements: mostly technical black and white architectural drawings, black and white photographs of either the built work or of the very few physical models of the unbuilt projects, and finally, three-dimensional visualizations. These collages or paintings, also black and white, consist of perspectival views of exterior facades and are mostly present in his “commercial” projects, offices and apartment buildings, of which he built only one, the Apartment Building in Philothei (1971–73). Surprisingly, all this material is gathered in the pages of the book in an almost unstructured manner. The publication could seem almost unedited or unfinished as there is no evident, consistent narrative per project. Apart from the title of the work, always indicating the place and the date, there are no other captions. Most drawings have no scale, or adjacent plans collide in different drawings, while they are occasionally incredibly small and packed on the page to the extent of becoming unreadable. Some are even cut, seemingly continuing outside the page borders. There are some drawings that have letters or numbers, indicating programmatic distribution, but the legends are again missing. It is also noticeable that the photographs—*his own* photographs—are always the dominant element. They are inserted once more in a fragmented manner, and they are often so closely laid out that their outlines become blurred, and their contents almost merge and spill into each other. It is possible that in this way, Konstantinidis intended to construct new compositions and open interpretations of his built work, which any linear narrative, whether textual or visual, would only restrict.

We believe that there is a latent argument behind this apparent mess, firstly evident through this esoteric, photography-based synthesis. This is to suggest that the singular project becomes relevant only when perceived in relation to the whole, and it is relative to the scales in which it operates. But these scales are only fragments: details, units, passages, thresholds, technical elements, and structural systems. The architect curates and presents each work in order to demonstrate a unity on his idea of a “true” architecture, which is based on a system of thinking and developing each work as part of an absolute canon, type, and rule. This codification and introduction of a logical narrative is the responsibility of the architect, who, after building and finding the truth, now writes about it.

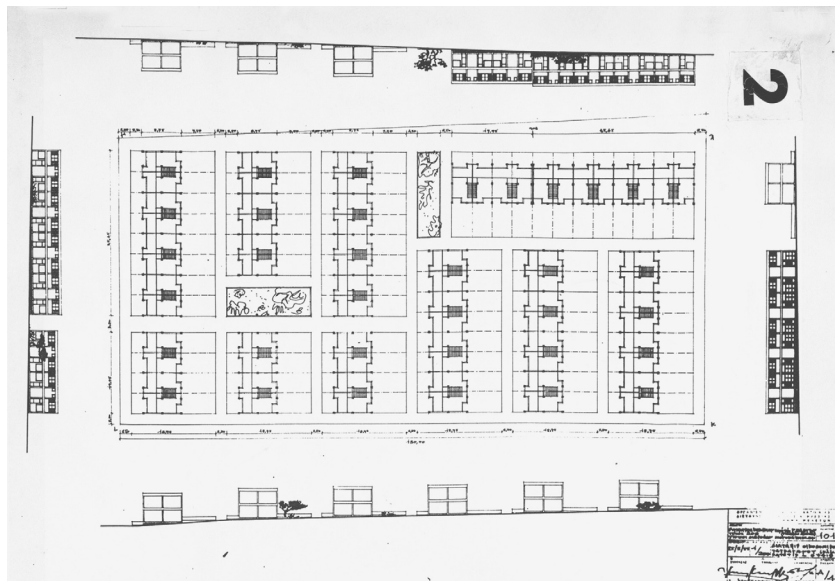
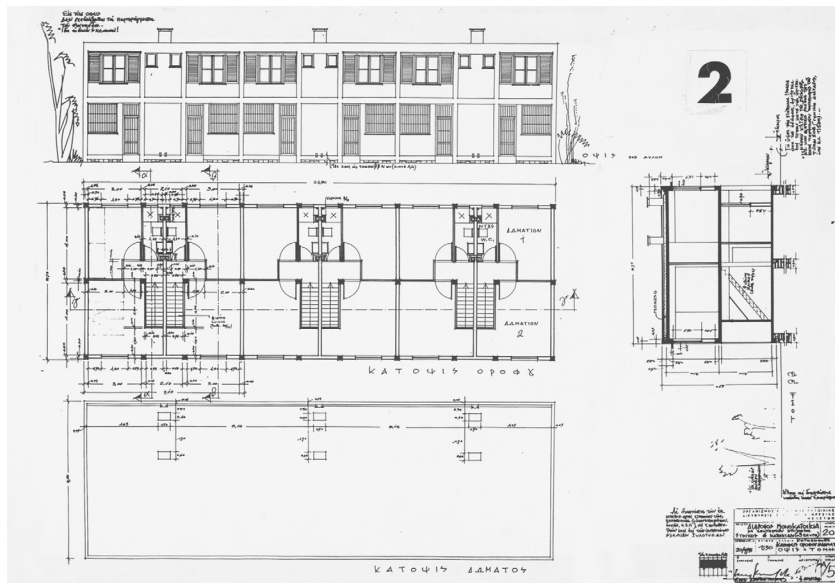
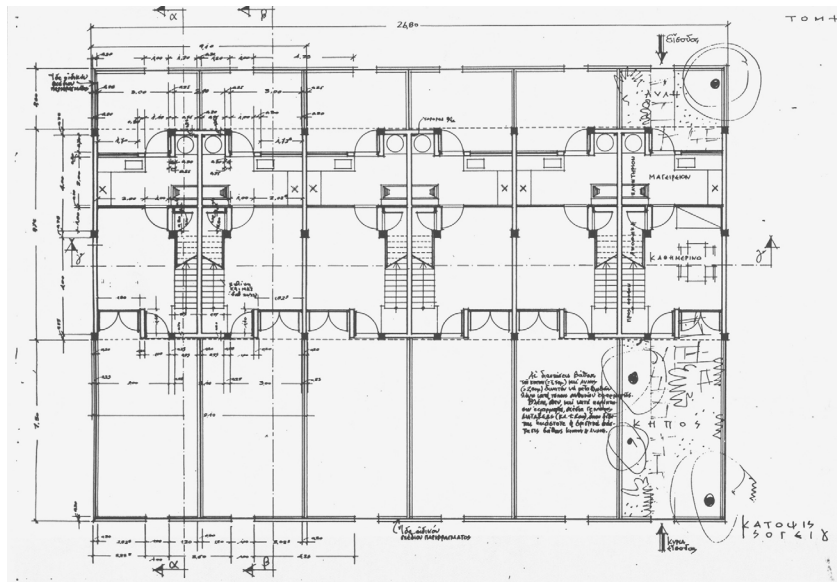
V. TYPOLOGICAL AFFINITIES

This is, briefly, how I got the strength and the enthusiasm to always build in the same spirit, under the same structural and sculptural perspectives, always with the same conviction and love. So, eventually, what was true in my work was shown to be nothing else but that which can be repeated and recreated, as if reborn: a typical layout and a typical construction. I somehow discovered, all by myself, that searching for perfection and genuine truths leads to a type or a rule.³⁰

The path to “true” architecture then comes, for Konstantinidis, from the discovery of an ideal type or a rule. And his book *Projects and Buildings* recounts, through a mostly visual narrative, precisely this: how he himself “somehow discovered” these transhistorical, true values in architecture that allow for his work to be reborn every time, re-forming the “same spirit.” And Konstantinidis continues: “in other words, it leads to construction which, having one and the same essence though not one and the same form, are like brothers to each other. And brothers they are, but each with their own personality and stature and inspiration. One stands here and the other one there, both alike and different—according to the instance that gave birth to each, depending on the sun and the land that gave them life.”³¹

30 Aris Konstantinidis, “A Few Words,” in *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 259.

31 Ibid.



Aris Konstantinidis. Low-Income Housing, Nea Philadelphia, Athens. Two-story housing module (top to bottom) First Floor Plan; Second Floor and Rooftop Plans, Garden Elevation and Cross-section; and General Plan Layout. 1955–1957. From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 66. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

The esoteric visual synthesis of the publication, therefore, attests to this. All of the individual projects and buildings constitute these fragments as the elements that, following the general rule and the overarching canon, continuously develop architectural forms with affinities. And within all this material, Konstantinidis inserts some evident preludes to what we could call “typological thinking.”³² In the work of Konstantinidis, the typological argument can appear in different scales of architectural production: from the systematization of architectural elements and their adjustment to various projects, up to the studies on the clustering of accommodation units.

The canon, therefore, can generate threads of kinship on different levels of architectural design.³³ In *Projects and Buildings* this can be traced in his meticulous typological studies of low-income masonry houses, dated to 1955,³⁴ or the multiple typological variations on school complexes in 1963, which all remain unbuilt.³⁵ For us, however, things get really interesting in his chapter on “Construction Details,”³⁶ where we clearly see his insistence on the systematization of specific architectural elements that reappear, again and again, in his low-income housing prototypes and the Xenia hotel or motel buildings. Namely, the public commissions allowed him to deeply occupy himself with issues of standardization, abstraction, and typological classification. This systematization is crucial for many reasons. Apart from the economics of construction, we argue that it serves a pedagogical dimension. Konstantinidis teaches his co-workers, his fellow architects and engineers, and his collaborators and builders in the construction process and sites. He is indeed the arch-builder.

Metal balcony systems, initially designed for low-income housing in Athens and Piraeus, reappear in a slightly different form in his balconies for the Xenia Motels in Larissa and Igoumenitsa. Similarly, the window system with external louvers that first appears in the Weekend House in Sykia is further developed and adjusted for the design of the low-income housing in Iraklio and the Hotel Xenia in Mykonos. Likewise, the same process can be traced to the varying sliding sunscreen doors that form signature elements of the facades in several of his Xenia projects.

Secondly, the same level of systematization is apparent in the typological studies of bedroom units and the unit clustering for the Xenia buildings. The chapter includes the “Standardized Bedroom in Xenia Hotels,”³⁷ a typical accommodation unit that has reached its “ideal spirit” and can be then applied in several of his buildings in Kalambaka (1960), Paliouri (1962), Poros (1964), and both Xenia Hotels in Olympia (1963 and 1966). The standardized unit is then used to show how the idea of standardization can function on another scale of the buildings—on the layout of the bedroom wings shown again in the above projects.

32 Leonidas Koutsoumpos, in his essay “Ordering in the work of Aris Konstantinidis” (I Diataksi sto Ergo tou Ari Konstantinidi discussed, from a similar lens, the idea of order in the spatial organisation and the construction of houses by Konstantinidis. However, we argue that this is not a result of a compositional method, but a complex process that attests to a thorough knowledge of the history of typological reasoning in western architecture. See, Leonidas Koutsoumpos, “I Diataksi sto Ergo tou Ari Konstantinidi, in *Aris Konstantinidis*, ed. Dina Vaiou (Athens: Idryma tis Voulis ton Ellinon [The Hellenic Parliament Foundation], 2019), 153–173.

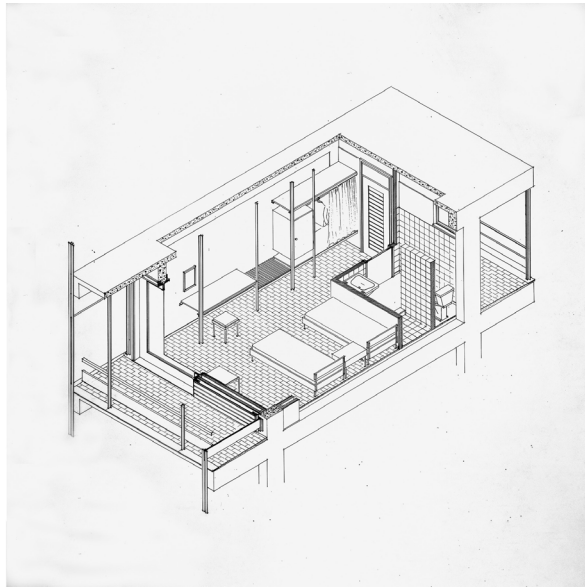
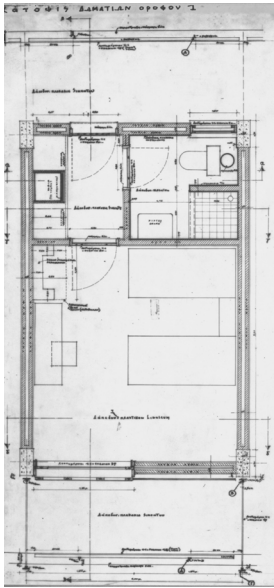
33 This issue of kinship in the work of Konstantinidis has been discussed briefly by Suzana Antonakaki. Suzana Antonakaki, “Poetry and Discourse” (Poiisi kai Logos in *Aris Konstantinidis*, ed. Dina Vaiou (Athens: Idryma tis Voulis ton Ellinon [The Hellenic Parliament Foundation], 2019), 69–100.

34 Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings*, 64.

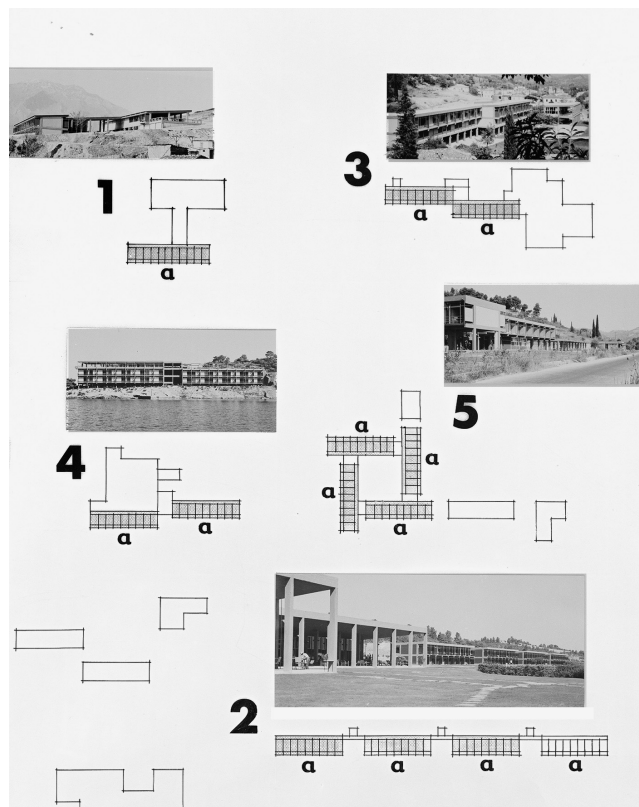
35 *Ibid.*, 148–151.

36 *Ibid.*, 208–227.

37 *Ibid.*, 219.

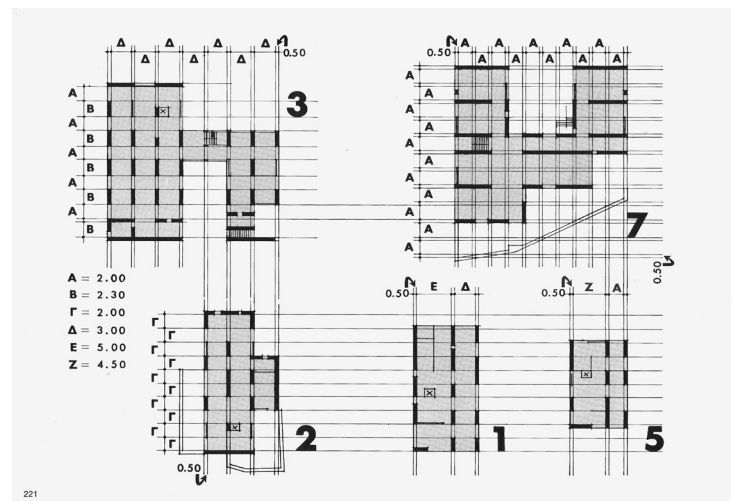
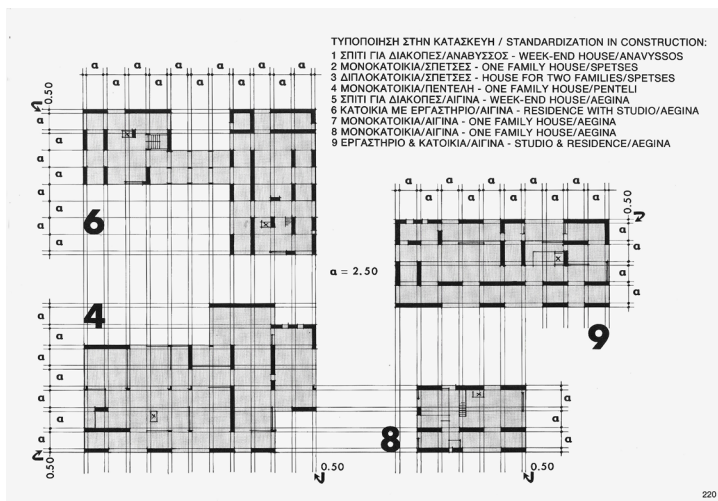


From left to right: Aris Konstantinidis. Standardized Bedroom in Xenia Hotels. Typical Plan, Axonometric, Interior. From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 218-219. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.



Aris Konstantinidis. Standardized Bedroom Wings in Xenia Hotels: 1.Kalambaka, 2.Paliouri, 3.Olympia 1, 4.Poros, 5.Olympia 2. From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 218-219. Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

We find ourselves, however, more curious to read the final pages of this chapter, the one that Konstantinidis himself titled “Standardization in Construction,”³⁸ in which we openly see the typological affinities between nine of his housing buildings and three public ones. On the one hand, the standardization of housing projects is evidently based on construction principles. All nine examples of weekend or summer houses are built with 50cm heavy, stone, load-bearing walls that give several directions in the overall composition, providing a particular rhythm in the relation between the void and the solid elements. This rhythmic sequence results in the characteristic elevations of Konstantinidis’s houses—and a discreet indication of the privacy levels of each space in the house. We need to stress, at this point, that these construction principles, based on the load-bearing masonry walls, have served Konstantinidis’s “vernacular” argument. However, it is our belief that it is this system of load bearing walls that allowed Konstantinidis to study and construct the space of the house as an environmental and typological problem, along with, of course, the formal values that these could encompass as well. We ultimately see in these nine examples that, beginning with his Weekend House in Anavyssos, a very specific structural canon dictates the generation of each house. The basic load-bearing masonry wall, of very specific dimensions ($A=2.00$ m, $B=2.30$ m, $\Gamma=2.00$ m, $\Delta=3.00$ m, $E=5.00$ m, $Z=4.50$ m, and $a=2.50$ m), is the generator of very specific spaces that refer to the “ideal beginning,” i.e. the archetype. In Konstantinidis houses, rooms have no hierarchy, and it is impossible to distinguish between the enclosed and covered outdoor spaces that are equally if not more important. Life in (Konstantinidis’s) Greece is outdoors.



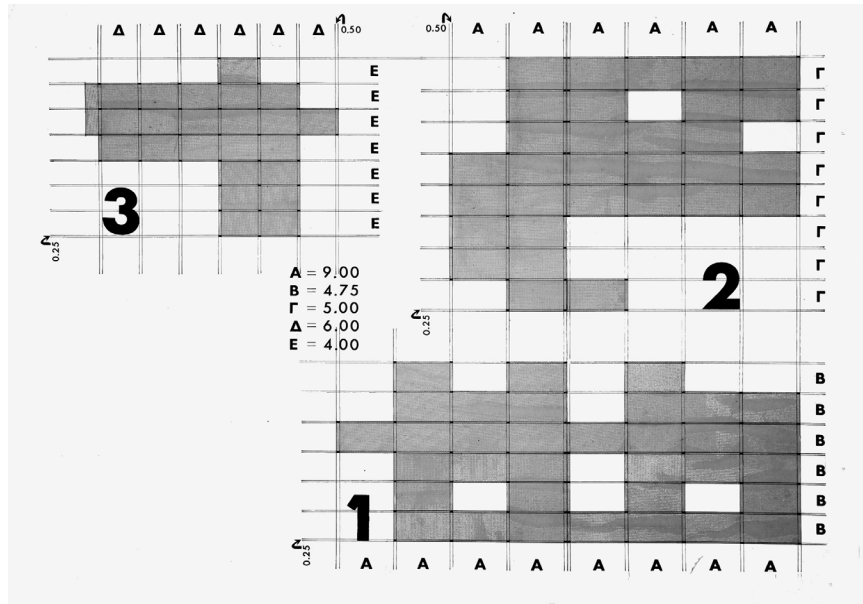
Aris Konstantinidis. Standardisation in Construction [Masonry System].

From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 220-221.

Courtesy of Dimitris Konstantinidis.

On the other hand, Konstantinidis attempts a shift in scale. The second spread of “Standardization in Construction” refers to a larger scale of the two Archeological Museums (in Giannena and Komotini) and a Restaurant/Coffee house (in Giannena). With this template, Konstantinidis introduces a different set of construction principles: an orthogonal grid of concrete pillars sized 0.25 cm x 0.50 cm. Another system of dimensions is introduced, adjusted to the larger scale and different needs of these public infrastructures ($A=9.00$ m, $B=4.75$ m, $\Gamma=5.00$ m, $\Delta=6.00$ m, $E=4.00$ m).

The diagrammatic plans of these buildings show an alternative approach to designs of this scale. If in the Xenia touristic complexes, the unit is the guest room and the bedroom wing—just an “α” in the typological and organizational plans presented in the book—the museum as a type requires a different treatment. The concrete system, enlarged, intentionally blurs circulation corridors with exhibition halls without introducing the enfilade template of the houses, allowing for greater versatility and typological variations.



Aris Konstantinidis. Standardisation in Construction [Concrete System].
From Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects and Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), 222. Courtesy of
Dimitris Konstantinidis.

This comparative, abstract method is not new for Konstantinidis. Almost a decade earlier than his *Projects and Buildings*, he wrote one of his more studied and referenced texts: “Vessels for Life: or the Problem of a Genuine Greek Architecture” (1972).³⁹ As the title of the article reveals, the text is an account of his search for “genuine” architecture in Greece. Very similar to Laugier’s *Essai*,⁴⁰ Konstantinidis’s article argues for the primary function of architecture, that is, of shelter. The article includes fifteen original photographs and fourteen sketches of “primitive sheds” from all over Greece: from the refugee settlements of Kaisariani in Athens, to covered jetties, sheepfolds, and vegetable stands in Korinth or Perama. Konstantinidis seems to praise vernacular knowledge of architecture. Apart from these “primitive huts,” the text also includes twenty-three plates of black and white plans of courtyard houses and non-domestic typologies—agoras, palaces, temples, and colleges—from all over the world: Ancient Egypt, contemporary Athens, ancient Athens, ancient Priene, Beijing, Delos, Tirinth, ancient Rome, Cambridge, Knossos, India, Assos, and Bangkok. The plates and the text conclude with a comparative study of the selected temples: the Parthenon, Hera’s Temple in Samos, a Buddhist Temple in Bangkok, the cathedral in Amiens, Reims, and Bourges, and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Again, as we see here, Konstantinidis operates within the realm of a systematic pedagogical project, organized by typological reasoning. The methodology and the development of his argu-

39 Konstantinidis, “Vessels of Life/The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter.”

40 Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l’Architecture* (Paris, 1753).

ment has an obvious similarity to Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand's *Recueil*.⁴¹ Much like Durand's systematic approach of abstract typological classifications, Konstantinidis uses these plans to demonstrate the transhistorical elements of a "true" architecture and how the latter can be instructed.

These twenty-three examples are presented in two different groupings. In the first, Konstantinidis's aim is to unveil "how much, in every place and every era, true architecture responds to climatic conditions and adjusts to the landscape, in enclosed, and open, and semi-open (transitional) spaces."⁴² In the second group, he aims to demonstrate "how much each architecture, in all places and all eras, builds primarily frames to support roofs."⁴³ From our point of view, Konstantinidis is preoccupied with two fundamental questions, which have defined his entire architecture: the total dissolution and disruption of the spatial hierarchies between indoor and outdoor spaces and the evolution of structural systems—frames, or *skeletons*, as he calls them in Greek.

This is exactly the way he presents the rule and the canon in his typological diagrams in *Projects and Buildings*.

But, as he has been constantly reminding us, measurement, reason, and calculation, are not enough—to dream is also essential. "With reason and with dream," as Solomos instructed Konstantinidis. This generous aphorism is, in our point of view, the quintessential essence of typological thinking in general, since it implies a trust in repetition, in abstraction, as well as in transformation. The latter requires testing and imagination. These qualities are the ones that make Konstantinidis's architecture not just an exceptional achievement but also transformative and valuable for us today. This dialectic presence in his work reminds us of another key figure: Oswald Mathias Ungers. Writing in a different context, but perhaps with very similar concerns, he underlined that:

architecture means not only to invent but to discover, to reinterpret familiar concepts over and over again. [...] In this process typological thinking is both a prerequisite and method. [...] The formal language of architecture is a rational, intellectual one, a language of reason. Emotions and fantasy are controlled by ratio, which in turn stimulates the imagination. The dialectical process between these two polarities—reason and emotion, ratio and imagination, idea and reality—is inherent in the creative act and results in the continual development of ideas, concepts, spaces, elements, and forms. It involves the idea of abstraction, the recognition of the object in its elementary form, and appearance in its clearest Gestalt.⁴⁴

For Ungers the process of writing was essential, while his texts mostly addressed the pedagogy of the architectural field. However, he was also active as a public thinker, operating locally but also internationally. In a very similar manner, Aris Konstantinidis wrote a lot and constructed the figure of a present and bold intellectual. Ultimately, however, what we are trying to convey here is that, independently of his often misunderstood political connotations or philosophical and political references to his work, Konstantinidis operated as a definite political designer: his work, especially in relation to the typological studies and the structural organization of his public works, indicates someone with profound care for public architecture, and especially, for programs that are provisional for that care. "For the common," then, "and the [architectural] principal."

41 Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, *Recueil et Parallèle des Édifices de tout Genre Anciens et Modernes—Remarquables par leur Beauté, leur Grandeur, ou par leur Singularité, et Dessinés sur une même Echelle*, (Paris: Imprimerie de Gillé fils, 1800).

42 Konstantinidis, "Vessels of Life/The Problem for a True Greek Architecture and an Open Letter," 261.

43 *Ibid.*, 262.

44 O. M. Ungers, "Aphorism on Architecture," in *Oswald Mathias Ungers: Works and Projects 1991–1998*, Giovanni Crespi, ed., op. cit., p. 9, as quoted in: Jacoby, Sam. "Oswald Mathias Ungers: Dialectical Principles of Design," *The Journal of Architecture* 23, (7–8) (2018): 1230–1258.

AUTHORS

Alexandra Vougia (she/her, Thessaloniki, 1983) is an architect, researcher, and educator and is co-founder of Fatura Collaborative. She teaches history and theory of architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Platon Issaias (he/him, Athens, 1984) is an architect, researcher, and educator and is co-founder of Fatura Collaborative. He teaches architecture and urban design at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Architectural Association.