Questions to the architect

**Amarylis:**

1. Do you prefer designing modern buildings or classical?
2. Could you tell us of an architectural masterpiece that you have seen?

Answers:

1. I tend to follow the current times’ ways, not these of the past. I admire historic buildings, but I believe that trying to imitate them today would be a mistake. Take as an example the old buildings at the historic centre of Corfu – almost all are very inviting to the eye, even when their appearance is not perfect, due to neglect and wear. But when you walk at the city’s recent expansion areas, filled with recent buildings that imitate past periods’ styles, you easily come to realize how uglier they are in comparison to the original ones. When I have to draw a building within a historic area, I take into consideration the surrounding constructions, but I definitely avoid to just imitate their specific formal elements or decorations.
2. Too many, belonging to very different periods. I was struck when I entered Santa Sophia in Constantinople (Istanbul), as I was equally struck by visiting Saint Ivo in Sapienza in Rome. A huge Byzantine cathedral and a tiny Baroque church, both reaching perfection. If you manage to visit the underground levels of Corfu’s Old Fortress, you’ll enter an unbelievably beautiful space. Göteborg’s modern-style Concert Hall is astonishing, as is Athens’ ancient Parthenon. There is potentially a never ending list.

**Dionysia:**

1. What is the relationship between math and architecture?
2. How much smaller are drawings than real buildings?

Answers:

1. A crucial one. Architecture combines a purely creative side, that has to do with the spatial shaping of a construction, together with a purely technical one, that comprises many different disciplines in order to guarantee the latter’s proper function. This side of any architectural project requires the use of mathematics for the calculation of structural elements, heating and cooling systems, water, electricity and ethernet nets and cabling etc.
2. Much smaller than the actual size of buildings, it wouldn’t be practically possible to draw in 1:1 ratio. We draw in various scales, from 1:200 or even smaller for general purpose plans up to 1:20 or 1:10 when it comes down to details.

**Mikaela:**

1. Is the structure of buildings in earthquake prone regions different from that of the buildings of regions where there was never an earthquake?
2. How tall can a building be?
3. Could a monument like the Parthenon be built today?

Answers:

1. Definitely. Earthquakes are dynamic phenomena, imposing very high stresses to buildings. In order to withstand earthquakes a building has to be structurally stronger and differently thought out compared to one that is situated in an earthquake free area. Foundations are calculated differently, windows are narrower, structural elements are larger than the ones used in ordinary constructions etc.
2. Very tall. Take for example Dubai’s downtown area buildings, a large number of which are almost impossibly tall. The world’s tallest building is supposedly one of them, reaching a height of over 800 metres - a challenge to physical laws. In comparison, New York’s Twin Towers were ‘only’ somewhat taller than 400 metres.
3. It certainly could, but I do not believe it should. The Parthenon was built during the Ancient World, in order to symbolize Athens’ glory during her golden years. I cannot see what sense would have such an enterprise today - other than ostentation or senseless imitation.

**Nikolas:**

1. Have you ever been involved with a very important project?
2. How big a football stadium must be?

Answers:

1. I had participated to a very small degree in tracing Naple’s subway routes, when I was working at an architectural studio in Rome during the 1980’s. After its realization, the final project proved essential for alleviating the city’s very congested surface traffic.
2. A football field has standardized dimensions, around 100 x 70 metres, but a stadium’s final volume depends upon its intended spectators capacity. Camp Nou, Barcelona’s F.C stadium, with a capacity of almost 100,000 people, is probably the largest European football stadium.

**Marios:**

1. How we can have gardens in the city? Where and from what material?
2. How do you adjust the construction of a building to the climate?

Answers:

1. If you are asking about private gardens, a recent trend expanding now in Asian and generally speaking international private city gardening, turns existing building terraces to gardens. This is not such an easy operation in old towns, due to the presence of old tiled roofs. The primary material for a garden is generally speaking earth, but the recently reemerged hydroponics allow now for completely water-based systems in order to cultivate plants in city buildings.
2. On one of the first projects I participated to as a young architect in Italy, a hotel complex in Saudi Arabia, I came to realize the need of drawing very narrow windows – because of both the very intense sunlight as well as extreme external heat during the day and cold during the night. We had to minimize the buildings’ energetic losses. When you travel to Northern Europe, you see at once how large some houses’ windows are: natural light is quite weak in intensity there, so you need to let it penetrate into the building during the daytime as much as possible. On the other hand, double- or triple pane windows preserve heating energy, so you can have the advantages of large glass surfaces without the drawbacks of energy loss. Certainly you have to take into consideration the climate conditions when you draw a building somewhere.

**Elena:**

1. How do you find the exact measurements of a plan? Is geometry helpful?

Answer:

1. Since Geometry draws and calculates flat surfaces it is very helpful to the architect. Buildings are three-dimensional, but most of the drawings used for their construction are bi-dimensional scaled representations, so geometry is always present there. You calculate the exact measures of a building in relation to the various spaces’ desired volumes and capacities, then you transfer accordingly these dimensions to the plans, adequately scaled.

**Amalia:**

1. Which was the most difficult project you had to deal with?
2. Do you believe that architecture has played an important role in civilization?
3. What degree of difficulty do you assign to the profession of the architects?

Answers:

1. The internal arrangement of my own house. I live in an old house at Corfu’s historic centre, so I had to arrange it for today’s needs and ways of life. The operation proved to be quite difficult. A couple of friends of mine that live in Rome, both architects, told me after their self-planned house renovation was finished, that they rather ought to have engaged another architect for their renovation plans – being not 100% able to understand what exactly were their own needs.
2. Definitely. Good architecture shapes public spaces of interest, both the recent and the historic ones, which reflect our own civilization. By living in a beautiful city we fulfill not only functional needs, but also cultural ones. Take for example the old centre of Corfu, a city with a very specific character and identity. When you walk in the new periphery of the same city, you have a drastically different feeling with regard to cultural values.
3. High, if one opts for good quality results.

**Spyridoula:**

1. Why did you choose to study architecture?
2. Which abilities and traits are needed in order to become an architect?
3. Except from math with what else do you think architecture is related to?

Answers

1. This is easy to answer. My father was an architect, and as I was growing up in our apartment in Athens I used to come in touch everyday with his activity, as he had transformed part of the apartment to a studio. All this architectural activity seemed very fascinating to me - the people he worked with, the drawings, the building models etc. – so I followed suit.
2. Creative abilities on one hand, just the way a sculptor or a painter creates his/her own work, and specific technical knowledge related to various fields on the other. You have to be able to create spaces that elevate the users’ mood, while on the other hand they allow for comfort and guarantee functionality.
3. As I referred to the previous answer, an architect has two sides, both very important for what concerns the quality of the final outcome. The creative, artistic part is crucial for what concerns architecture’s cultural importance – so history of art, painting and sculpture are included in the studies. Apart from this, the architect has to be able to understand mathematics and physics, characteristics and behaviour of building materials, the planning of a building’s technical parts – heating and cooling, water and electricity etc. Architecture is a particularly multi-faceted field.