

enki

FOR
MODERN
LIVING

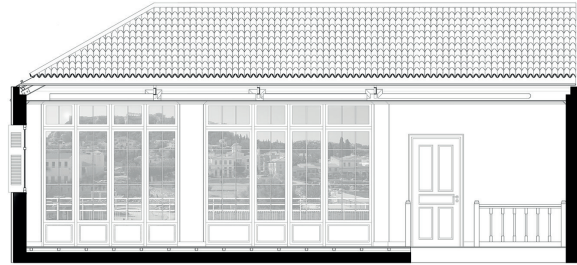
BEAUTIFUL
LIVING

THE HOME OF DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

ADVENTURE
ARCHITECTURE
ECOLOGY
FARM TO FORK
TRAVEL
DESIGN
KITCHENS
NEW TECH
& MORE

SIMPLE KITCHENS
AND SPA BATHROOMS





INTERVIEW...

a passion for the future

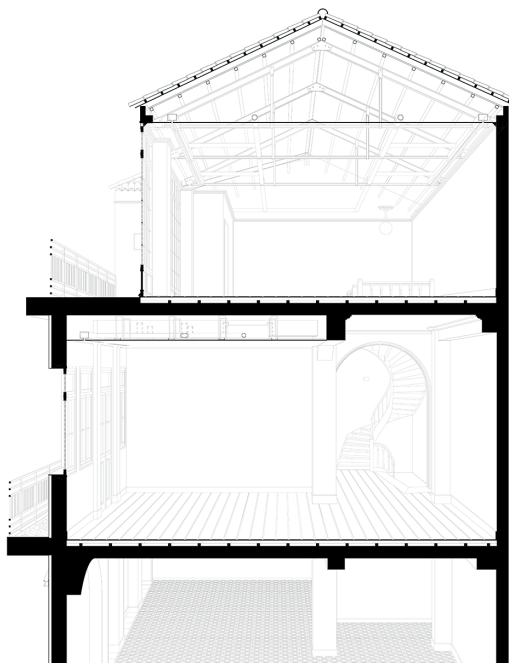
We chat to the founder of Athens-based LocalLocal, **Sofia Xanthakou**, about the next generation of architects and how modernity needs to embrace the lessons of history



When (and why!) did you fall in love with architecture? I have felt a connection to the arts and the artistic world for as long as I can remember. There's something about the marriage of methodical thinking and creative practice that architecture inhabits so well, and that's the productive sweet spot for me. Plus, growing up in Athens which is enveloped in so much artefact, makes you curious about how these things come together so intuitively. The city is a palimpsest of ancient, byzantine, ottoman, modernist architecture and this mixture was always intriguing to me.

How would you describe the style of your work? How has this evolved? I don't personally feel that LocalLocal, as a practice, dictates one specific style in our work. We aim to produce an environment that is honest to its context – geographically, materially and philosophically. Truth to materials is very important to the work we do. As a small-scale firm based in Athens, our portfolio currently spans projects across mainland and rural Greece. Local materials and craftsmanship underpins our core design philosophy. It's not surprising that our studio name is characteristically named in this way...

How do you examine the context of a project? And how does context influence your work? Context is one of the most influential factors in our work. Our research is conducted through a series of analytical processes, so we can develop a rich catalogue of a site, before taking it to tender. Much of this involves physical site visits, photographic



"THE TOOLS WE USE
SHOULD BE THE CATALYSTS
TO OUR DESIGNS AND
NOT DEFINED BY THEM"



documentation, site analysis (solar, wind, terrain), uncovering historical value, cultural factors, studying neighbouring sites and, importantly, speaking with local practices and craftsmen. Interrogation plays a key function in our creative process, and we love to find ways in connecting these processes.

What does sustainability in design mean to you?

I think sustainability in design has become a little ubiquitous. For me, I like to think more of conscious design, and how we determine our thinking into actions in between people, place and space. It can take on many forms in this way and I think we're better positioned to challenge our processes more broadly; environmentally, economically, ethically and socially. This for me would be the most appropriate way of defining sustainable design.

Is there a material palette you return to? Why is this? White is my favourite colour. It works with you. It's classic and clean, it brings up details, it changes with light, and it brightens up a space. I love working with marble. I adore its natural qualities and how it always responds to sites so effortlessly yet with total drama. I also really enjoy the versatility of terrazzo, it offers something a little different and is always fun when layering textures into our material palettes.

Your work also encompasses furniture design. Can you tell us more about this? Yes! It's a new direction at LocalLocal. Designing the Parrot Chair as an experience was very fulfilling. I really enjoyed studying and exploring the

contemplative nature of the object and allowing the product design to come together mechanically, it uses a different part of the brain. Where we often start by listening to a site's history, the Parrot Chair began with listening to an archive, and to a piece of everyday Athenian life that had quietly slipped out of use. We are also working on another exciting collaboration which we are excited about and will share more soon.

Dream brief to land on your desk?

I feel like we're in an exciting time at LocalLocal and I look forward to whatever comes next. As the practice turns five, we are definitely interested in exploring new typologies. That's energising for us. I love finding creativity in each new narrative presented to us, and being able to adapt with it.

What do you find most challenging about architecture at the moment?

Being original and staying true to what defines you creatively and practically. There is so much information and visual output out there and being able to truly harness your core principles is important. It's not only about the visual impression but more about the long term experience of a space.

What do you wish more people were talking about in design?

Time. Pace. Slowing down. The tools we use should be the catalysts to our designs and not defined by them. Good design requires trial and error, and with the addition of technology and our fast paced lives, I feel sometimes this might be incapacitating true design intent.