

GLASS BUILDINGS, A PAST PERFECT TREND IN ATHENS, GREECE

From rural to urban, and from marble to glass, the history of the contemporary city of Athens has been vigorous, exciting and sometimes contradictory. While the last marbles of the Acropolis are looking at Athens from above, few other things have managed to distinguish themselves from the cityscape. The tall glass building, known as the Tower of Athens, by architect Ioannis Vikelas, is regarded as the second most recognizable structure in the city, after the Parthenon.



Reflecting the sky and exposing their interiors, glass buildings provoked and inspired city dwellers during the 1950s and 60s. Modern Architecture granted buildings the mirror facade and took glass materials to a new construction frontier.



Many glass building can be found in the city of Athens, fortifying its position towards the modern aesthetics. Most of them constructed during the late 60s and 70s showing the social advancement and economic growth of the city at that time. Since the highly criticized work of Vikelas, only a few glass buildings have been spotted out as landmarks or of architectural value. Among them the Fix Brewery, by T.Zenetos, the first glass offices building at Kapnikarea, by N.Valsamakis and the AVAX headquarters, by A.Tombazis. The above constituted the forerunners of the new architectural trend but “failed to be established as design models” A.Tobazis mentioned.

Approaching present time, architectural styles changed and overlapped. The glass that once inspired awe is considered a controversial aesthetic, and often met with distrust and disgust. New build criteria emerge from new economic circumstances like the recent global energy crisis. The energy optimization and the significance of sustainability started the circle of green design and energy efficient design, even though bioclimatic architecture had already been a well-known concept. Energy consumption became of major importance putting aside other factors, and competing with architectural designs.



The Greek climate seems forbidding for glass architecture. Plenty of sunshine and high temperatures could turn these buildings to greenhouses. Was it the sunny weather of Athens that diminished the glass buildings, or was it something else that went completely wrong from the beginning?

Highly dependent on technology to create habitable environments, the majority of glass buildings in Athens lack the appropriate architectural planning. The modern material added as a decorative exterior surface to buildings, and the novelty elements of the design were lost. Glass buildings' transparency and openness are principles of design that bring harmony with the surrounding urban environment; seeking ways to bring closer and not isolate urban life. On the contrary, glass skin on concrete buildings fails to achieve new architectural feats, and creates alienating mirror masks and energy over consuming glass cages.



Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/glass-buildings-a-past-perfect-trend-in-athens-greece/>