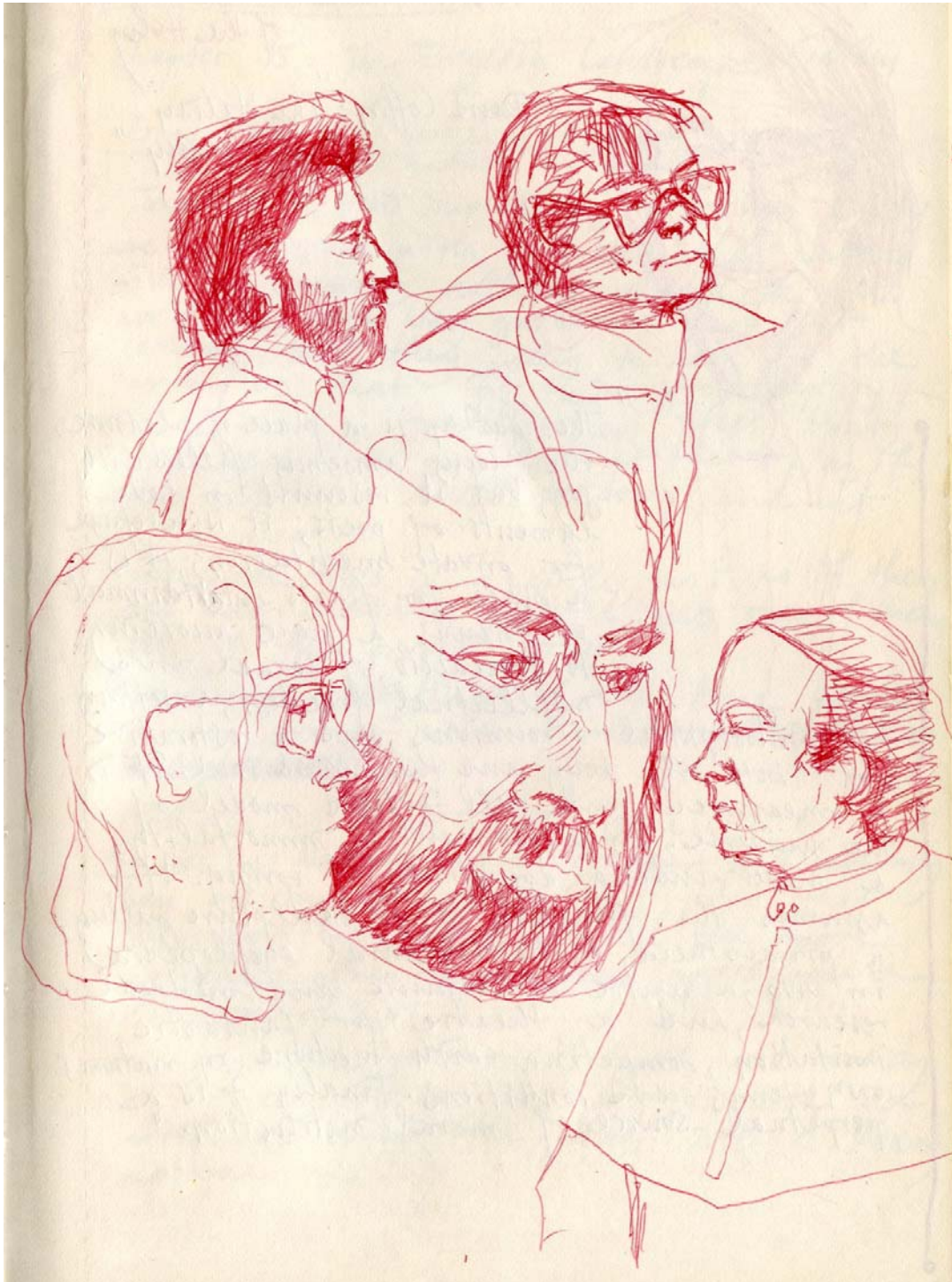


## **“The Cultural Significance of Architecture: A conference in Memory of Dalibor Vesely”**

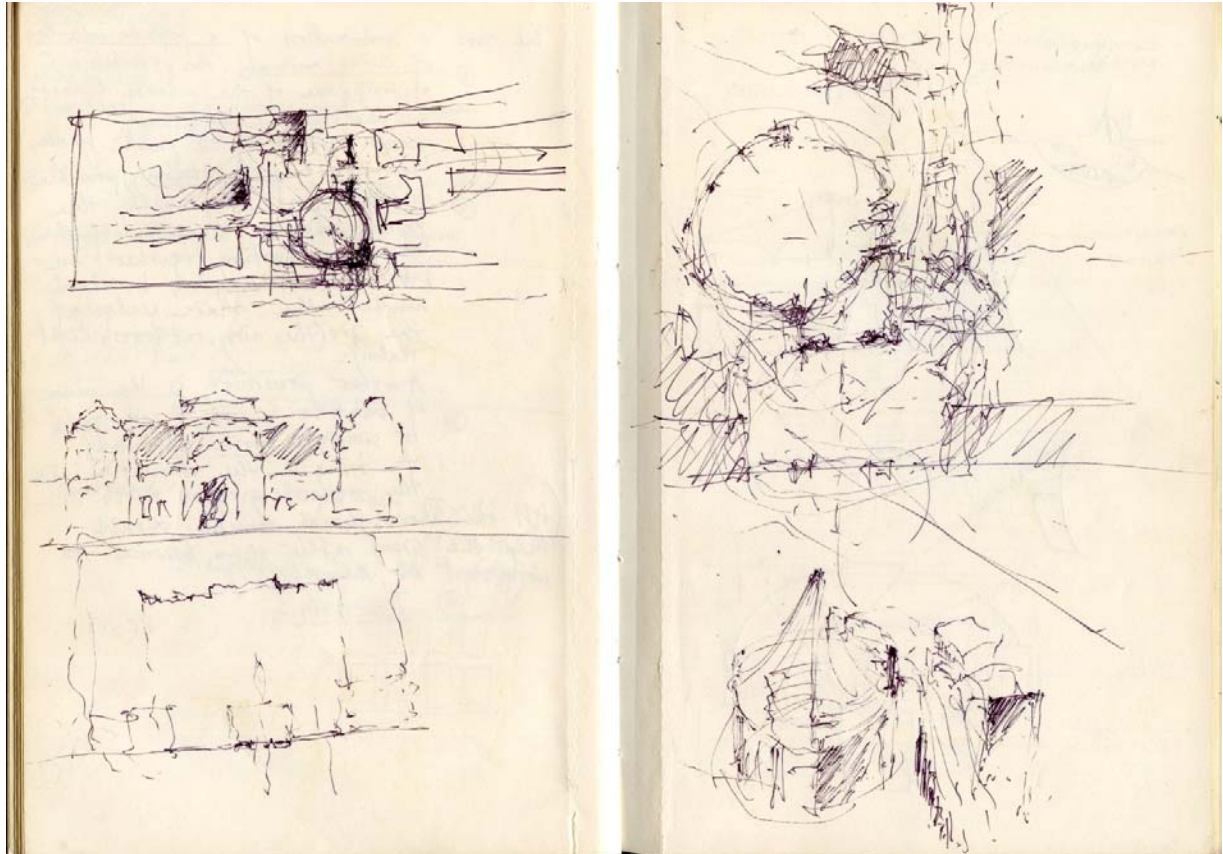
**Session 2: Design and the European City – chair: Peter Carl**



KK's sketch of Dalibor, Mohsen, Frosso, etc (1979)

**a. The AA Diploma Unit 1 (1979 – 1981)**

I am one of the **AA Daliborians**. The unit, Dalibor and Mohsen taught, consisted mostly of Iranians and Greeks. We happily reenacted the Persian Wars and discussed politics in the AA bar, the place where all great things happened in those days.

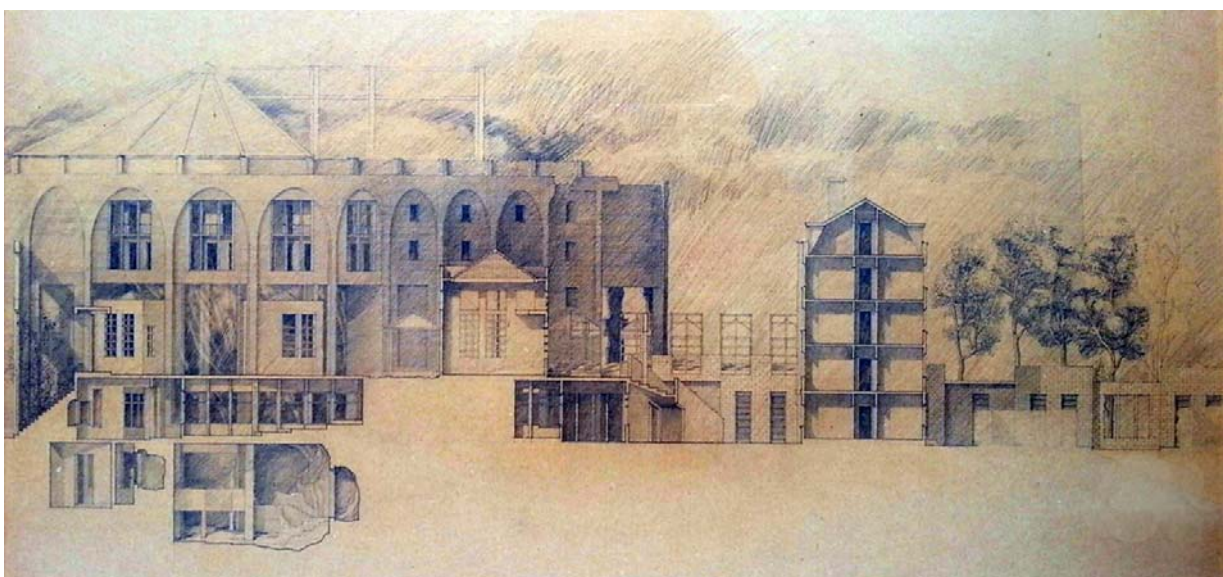
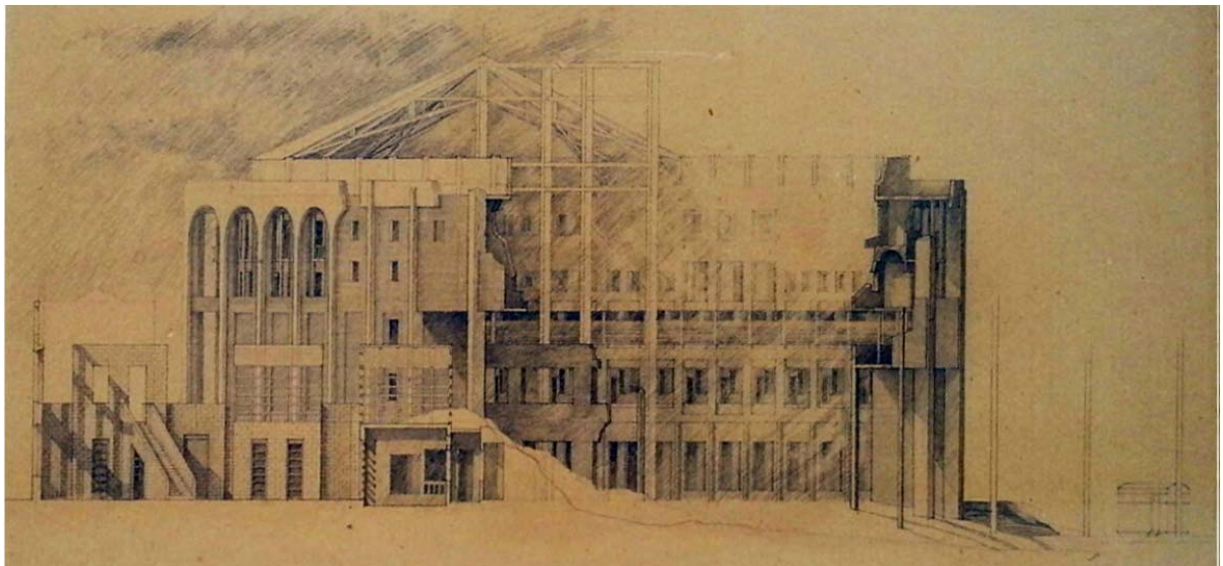
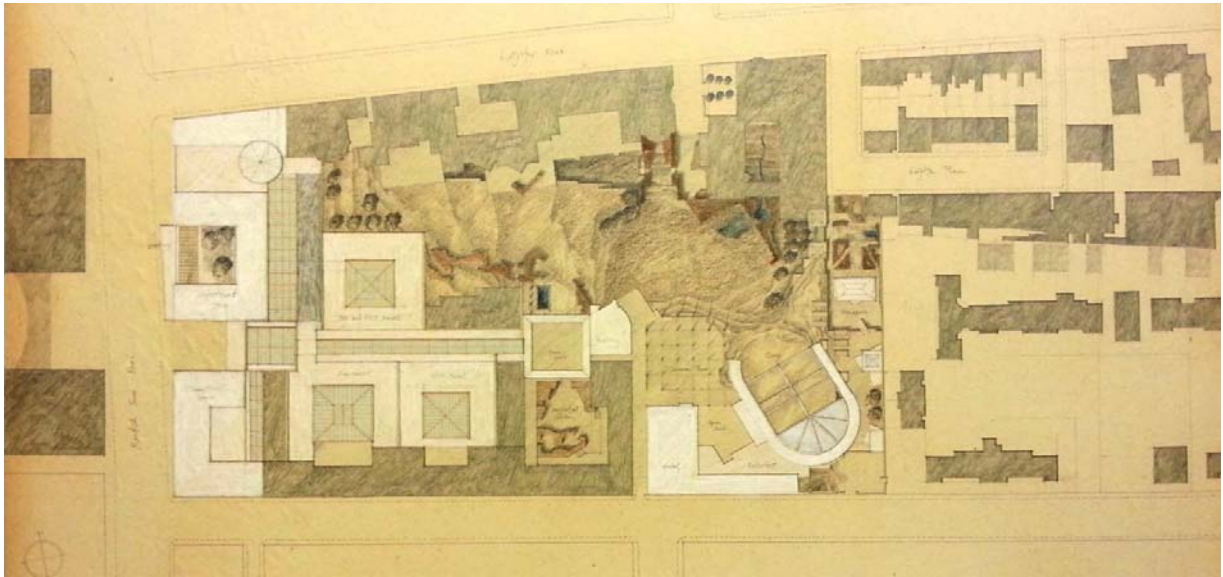


DV's sketches during a tutorial about the Circus from KK's sketchbook (1981)

We worked separately and as a group. Together, in the first stage of each project, we always tried to understand the conditions and possibilities of a particular urban transformation studying not only the architectural but also the broader cultural issues. In the second stage the defined territory would be divided into a series of smaller areas serving as a ground for individual projects. In the last stage the individual programme would be re-integrated within the context of the common territory. The result was not a masterplan. It was rather an outline of a possible reconciliation of different requirements (conditions) which could not be resolved at one scale.

*DV: I believe that today only a consistent and passionate exploration of culturally relevant possibilities can make any contribution to the reality and relevance of design. 1984*





KK's project "The Pleasure Garden, the Circus & the Menagerie" (1980-81)

**b. Building on D.V.'s teaching legacy: the Athens Studio (1994 – 1996, 2013 – today)**

Today, when big urban projects happen in the city, they fall under 3 categories : a. morphology justifies conservative plans (i.e. reconstruction of Berlin), b. former industrial zones turn into new mixed use neighborhoods (Paris), c. data shapes design. In all cases, it is Programme versus Site. When Programme turns into Site, projects like Koolhaas' emerge. When Site turns into Programme, the Landscape Architects "win". Finally, when the result is a "draw", we have the Neo Classical School.

In order to attempt to study the city in a different way, every winter I run **THE ATHENS STUDIO**, an architectural design studio , for undergraduate and graduate students. It is organized in collaboration with the School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts of the University of Western Australia (UWA) and the Leicester School of Architecture, and it is taught together with Professor Nigel Westbrook of UWA and with the support of the Dean of de Montfort , Dr Raymond Queck, both old Daliborians.

The participating students work exhaustively in Athens for six weeks to produce projects normally done in a semester, while visiting archaeological sites all over Greece. The goal is to set out as cartographers to explore a complex entity, the city and to transcend the shallowness of a tourist perception, in order to extract a personal narrative. This is projected to become a "visualization". They have to demonstrate this in a "fragment", that must encapsulate its qualities with a materiality that can be experienced. We call it "Urbanism of Negotiation". According to the students, this project is a completely new way of designing, to which they have never been exposed before.

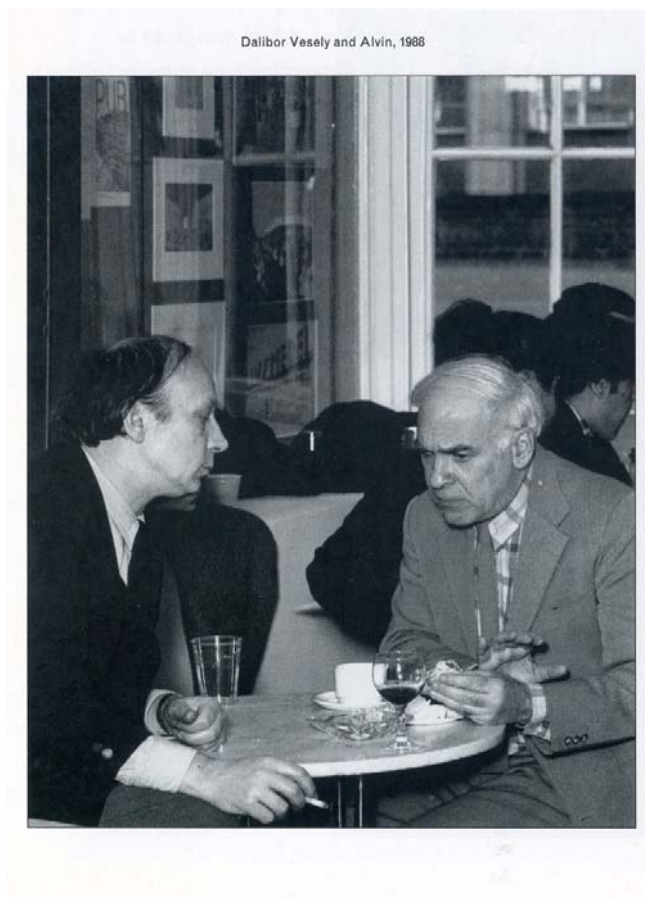
(see example in separate PDF file of student project by Tobias Beale)



Tobias Beale's student project Gerani + Water (Athens Studio 2013)



c. Building on D.V's thematic legacy



When I returned to Athens at the end of 1988, both Dalibor and Alvin urged me to 'deal with' the city, an advice that I have always followed. The culmination of a series of competitions, that I participated into, was winning in 2003, with 3SK architects where I was a partner, the International Competition for the conversion of the old **FIX** brewery building into the National Museum of Contemporary Art.

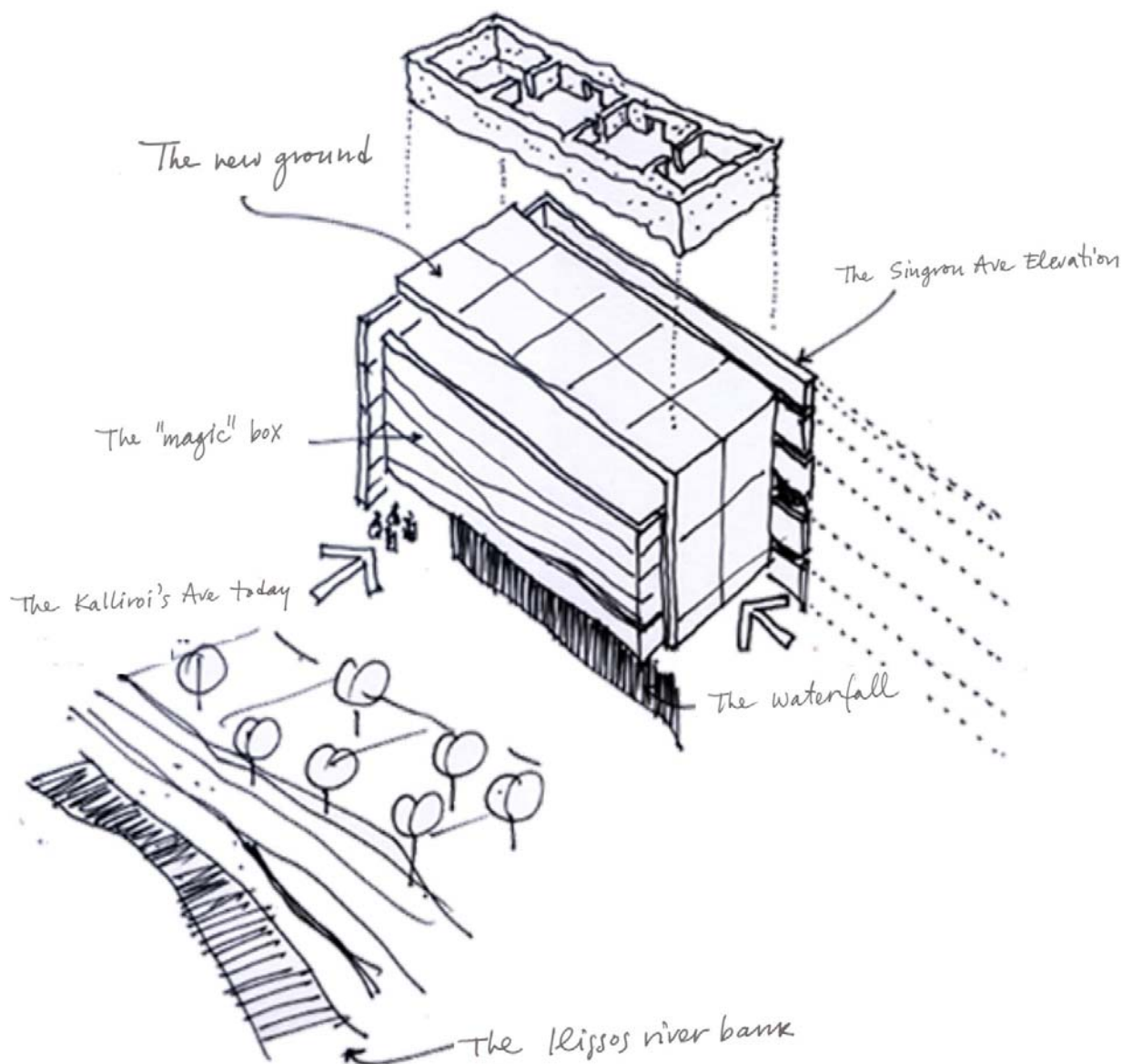


The FIX Brewery building by Zenetos in its surroundings (Athens 1960)



The proposal for the conversion of the FIX Building into the National Museum of Contemporary Art  
(Competition Entry 2003)

The new façade, which completes the listed facades designed by Zenetos, a modernist Greek architect in the '60's, reveals the ancient Athenian topography. The building was built on the bank of river Ilissos because the water source is a vital element in producing beer. The river was covered over and forgotten a long time ago.



Concept Sketch (Competition Entry 2003)





The New Façade as built on the street covering the river (2014)

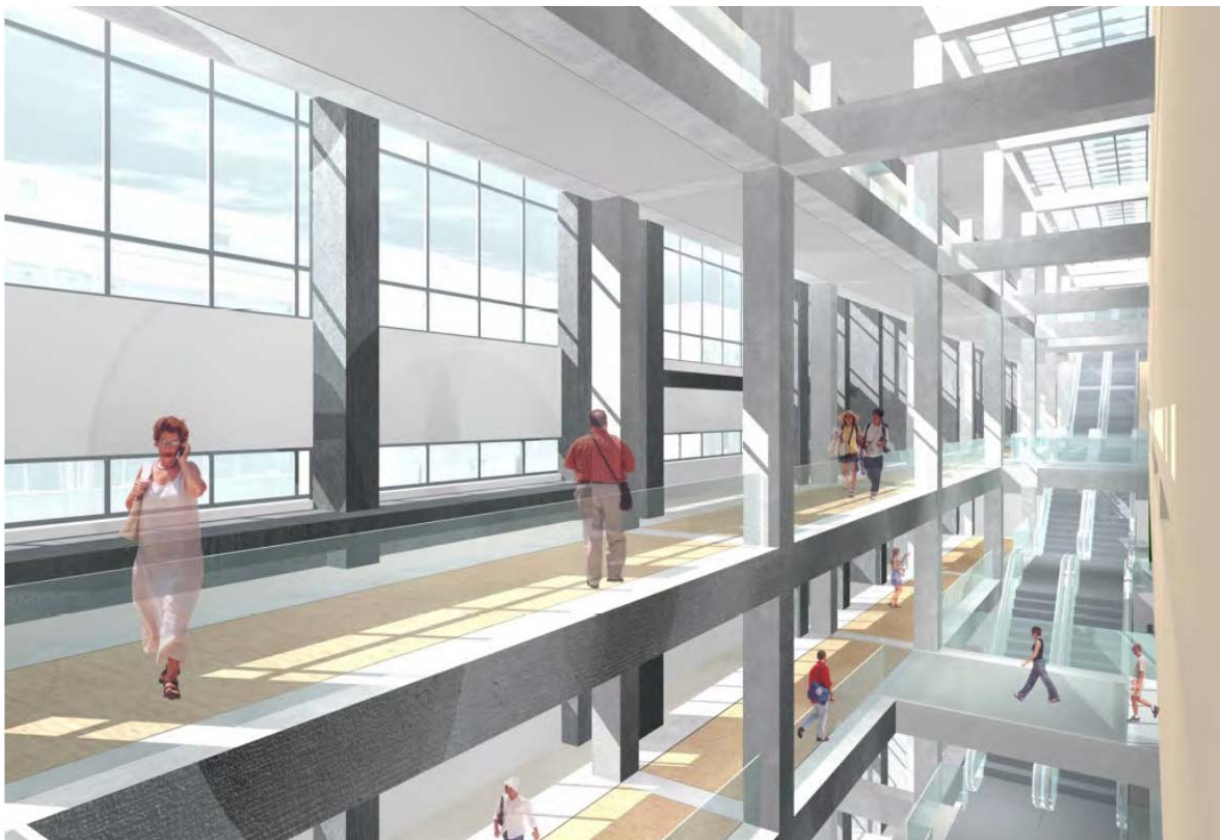
The new façade consists of a rough stone wall evocative of a geological cut suspended 5m above ground, concealing the museum's permanent collection. An exposed concrete wall, marked with vertical grooves like a barcode of the initials of the building where water dribbles, slides underneath it. Inside the museum, the Zenetos façade is treated like a vertical piece of archaeology, to be experienced in a void through which the public ascends to all levels. The new museum helps restore the city's forgotten history and topography.





The listed Zenetos Façade as restored after the conversion (2014)

Inside the museum, the Zenetos façade is treated like a vertical piece of archaeology, to be experienced in a void through which the public ascends to all levels. The new museum helps restore the city's forgotten history and topography.



(Although the building was finished two years ago, for political reasons it has not opened for the public yet).

Kalliope Kontozoglou

