





LOT OFFICE FOR ARCHITECTURE

Leonidas Trampoukis and Eleni Petaloti.



Splitting their time between Athens and Brooklyn, Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis's architecture and design studio is also split in two: LOT Architecture, for buildings, and Objects of Common Interest for, as the name suggests, objects.

But as Trampoukis explains, "It's all integrated." They launched their architecture practice in 2012, and the design spinoff came three or four years later. In 2021 alone, Objects of Common Interest had solo exhibitions at Queens's Noguchi Museum and the Design Museum Brussels and today, Trampoukis says, "We draw inspiration from both scales, blending them into hybrids. Sometimes a building looks like an object or an object has the organization of a building." One example: a 2019 student micro-apartment project in Thessaloniki, Greece is an arrangement of black cubic geometries on a street of "conservative '60s, '70s, and '80s architecture." Trampoukis explains that though the idea was to place an "object in the urban context," the 24-unit structure was not meant to be "a spaceship that landed and has nothing to do with the context." Rather it subtly draws inspirations from nearby typologies and historic collective housing projects, but abstracts them. "Sometimes we call it creating cohesiveness through contrast."

Their 2016 installation in New York's Flatiron Plaza also blended architecture and object, creating public space from sculptural, lighted white arches dangling with hammocks. "It kind of sparked this interest between scales," Trampoukis says. "We weren't called to do a space for gathering, we were called to do a public art piece. But we selected something that's actually usable by the people and brings people together in this informal but surprising way."

The firm's projects have ranged widely: their first built structure was a beach club in Mykonos, and they've done everything from private residences to larger-scale commissions. However the process is always much the same. "We work intuitively a lot, meaning we start with sketching and discussing. Often we envision or we build a project in our minds just by discussing with Eleni or with our team."

What unifies the various creations however is not a signature style, but rather a standpoint. "We want to keep that almost naive clarity that a concept sketch has all the way from the beginning to the end," says Trampoukis. "It's basically taking an idea and abstracting and simplifying it to the absolute essence that you can almost describe it with a single sentence." DZ



PAUL MOK

Hong Kong-born, New Yorkbased architect and artist Paul Mok's practice is one of happy accidents.

Mok's sculptural designs might have a certain sense of incompleteness or perhaps its opposite, of ruin: jagged fragments, exposed rebar, floating industrial light switches, drains to nowhere. Following his undergraduate studies in Hong Kong, he explains, "Like most designers I had a day job and had my own freelance work at night." Because of that, Mok found himself often at work zones after midnight, exploring "half-deconstructed, half-constructed sites, completely dark with debris everywhere." That in-betweenness is an enduring fascination for Mok. "It might be a subconscious opposition to all the strict geometries I have to deal with as an architect. We spend so much time making two little details join perfectly. When I do my own thing, I kind of just don't want them to join

When he moved to New York, not surprisingly he was working in more cramped quarters. "I couldn't make big things. I started making a bunch of these clay gestures. There's no purpose, but then I gradually started using them in sculptural installations." The installations have been made for brands, shops, and pop-ups such as WORM and The Canvas, frequently in collaboration with his girlfriend, jewelry designer Amanda Maldonado-Perez, and also formed the basis of his solo exhibition at Gallery Gaia.

A commitment to play guides Mok's practice.

"I got very interested in this notion of 'playing' from developmental psychology," he explains.

"In architecture training, you always have a clear goal, a clear function, a clear purpose before you even do anything. And back then I was like, What if I just start doing something without a clear purpose?" At first this began with drawings—random gestures that would reveal form as they added up. Since then, he's taken the playful approach to texts, ceramics, sculpture and installations.

Perhaps it's unsurprising then that Mok's big architecture commission—completed along with his former classmate Qiu Jiayu—was a primary school. Located on a wetland in Zhejiang, China, "Our idea was that we would shrink the classroom sizes and then use the remaining floor area to generate pockets of spaces between classrooms or outside the classrooms and have a circulation system that connects the whole school." DZ

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