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UCSB Conference Examines Greek Architecture - Yesterday and Today

References to "Greek Architecture" usually call to mind images of the Acropolis, Parthenon, and other examples of the country's rich classical heritage. But in modern times architecture in Greece has become a vibrant field that builds on the country's historic traditions to meet the needs of contemporary cities and towns. An international conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara this month will bring together prominent Greek architects and architectural historians to discuss trends and directions of architecture in Greece and internationally, the Greek architectural tradition, and architectural developments over the past 50 years.

Titled "Geography, Tradition and the Individual: The Case of Modern Greek Architecture," the conference is sponsored by UCSB's James and Sarah Argyropoulos Endowment in Hellenic Studies with support from the campus's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center. It will take place February 15-16 at UCSB's MultiCultural Center. It is free and open to the public.

"Greece is a country that has had various architectural traditions, including classical, post-classical, and Byzantine," said Apostolos Athanassakis, a professor of classics and the James and Sarah Argyropoulos Professor of Hellenic Studies at UCSB. "Are we now in a state of transition, with the old being incorporated into the new, or is there an effort to produce entirely modern forms? The conference will tell us about the state of Modern Greek architecture and also allow participants to hold a dialogue both with each other and with an audience that is open-minded."

Added Voula Tsouna, professor and chair of philosophy at UCSB: "There is something unique and distinctive in the ways in which different phases of Greek architecture reinterpret and express the same fundamental values. One of the main aims of the conference is to discuss, precisely, the continuous process of assimilation and reinvention of the Greek architectural tradition, which goes back 3000 years." Tsouna and Athanassakis are the conference organizers.

The keynote address will be delivered by Spyros Amourgis, president of the Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency, professor emeritus of architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and former vice president of the Hellenic Open University. His lecture, which begins at 4 p.m. on Friday, February 15, will focus on the architectural history of Athens from the early nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century.

Other conference participants include Spiro N. Pollalis, professor of design, technology and management at the Harvard University Graduate School of School; Helen Fessas-Emmanouil, professor of theatre architecture at the National University of Athens; Georgios A. Panetsos, chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Patras in Greece; Panayotis Tournikiotis, professor of architectural theory at the National Technical University of Athens; and Demetrios Issaias, associate professor of architectural design at the National Technical University of Athens.

The Argyropoulos Endowment in Hellenic Studies was established in 2001 by James and Sarah Argyropoulos to support the study and dissemination of classical and modern Greek culture at UCSB.

For information about the conference or to view the program and list of speakers, visit www.classics.ucsb.edu/lectures.php

About UC Santa Barbara

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