

## THE HISTORIC IDENTITY OF THE LABORATORY

The research laboratory of **Architectural Morphology and Theory of Architectural Design** merges two distinct directions that were developed through time in the school's history. They were both established since the founding of the 'Higher School of Architectural Engineers of the National Technical University of Athens' in 11/11/1917.

The first direction of the **Theory of Architectural Design** was taught by Alexandros Nikoloudis (1874-1944), who was elected as the first professor of 'Architectural Composition and Decoration' in 13/1/1918. Nikoloudis, graduated in 1905 from the *École Nationale et Spéciale des Beaux-Arts* and was a student of Julien-Azais Guadet (1834-1908) who had established the field of 'Theory of Architectural Design' in 1894. In the new school of Athens, Nikoloudis conveyed the spirit of Eclecticism, through the educational methodology of Beaux-Arts, based on Guadet's seminal book *Elements et Theorie de l' Architecture*.

The second direction of **Architectural Morphology** was also offered since the founding of the school and was taught by Anastasios Orlandos. Originally Orlandos held the chair of 'Classical, Byzantine and Medieval Architecture,' which later evolved into the chair of 'Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology.' Orlandos held this chair from 1923 until 1940, when he quit, since he was elected in the chair of 'Byzantine Archaeology' at the University of Athens. Soon though he returned back to the School of Architecture in 1943, for the new chair of 'History of Architecture'.

When Orlandos quit, the chair of 'Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology' was succeeded by P. A. Michelis (1903-1969), a graduate of the University of Dresden (1926), who held it from 12/11/1941 until his death in 11/11/1969.

A. Papageorgiou-Venetas has described Michelis views about the chair:

*"Panagiotis Michelis had a strong personality. He was the only aesthetician in Greece who specialized in architecture having published important treatises about the aesthetics of Ancient Greek and Byzantine architecture. However, he was also interested in contemporary morphology. He held the chair of Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology, the object of study of which should not be confused with the history of architecture, but rather should be identified with the theoretical teaching of aesthetic analysis of architectural forms. As an empirical exercise in the study of forms and rhythms, architectural surveys were taught, requiring high standards of design skills."*

Michelis himself writes on the reform of the Chair's object and research directions:

*"The chair of Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology still sustains the name it received during the era of Eclecticism, which meant that the forms, rhythms, and styles of the past were taught, especially those of classic and medieval architecture, in ways that architects back then were able to mold facades of buildings in a neoclassic, neo-byzantine or any other style. Yet, because we do not live in the era of Eclecticism anymore, when the revival of dead languages of the past was attempted, but in a time where we seek a contemporary language for architecture, I had to change the teaching*

*program of the chair. That's why I have reformed the whole teaching system since I took over in 1941 and I sought to teach young architects not the letter, but the spirit of forms and styles. To reveal why and how these forms came to life and what makes them artistically valid. So the analysis is no more historical, but methodological. From the surface he turned to depth with aesthetic criteria of permanent value. So the course turned into Applied Aesthetics. At the same time I didn't abandon my efforts to enlighten [the students] on the forms of Greek tradition, and particularly the classic and Byzantine styles. I also tried to explore the new morphology which emerges from new materials. Thus the cycle of methodological education for architects on form and style was completed from a theoretical point of view. Already there was the proposal to rename the chair to "Chair of Theory and Aesthetics of Architecture".*

P.A. Micheli's account from 1967 is eloquent enough regarding the essence of Architectural Morphology which, already by then, and much more so today, does not refer to inventories of forms but to architectural synthesis as morphogenesis - the shaping of architecture on the drafting board- as well as to the theory of architectural design as a distinct discipline, an applied aesthetics and criticism, a methodological and creative investigation of architectural forms.

In 1973 the Chair of Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology was re-established as 'Seminary of Architectural Morphology and Rhythmology' of the Department of Architectural Design (presidential decree 237/13-9-1973) in the School of Architecture, simultaneously with the other laboratories of the School.

The research content and the modus operandi of the laboratory in its present form as **LABORATORY of ARCHITECTURAL MORPHOLOGY AND THEORY OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN** in the Department of Architectural Design, is regulated by law 198/25-1-2021. It continues the pioneering research of P.A. Michelis by responding to today's scientific and educational requirements of the school and the trends found in the world today, by researching the form-giving process of architectural projects through two interlinked and complementary research directions which directly feed into architectural composition and the theory of architectural design.

The **first research direction** draws on architectural knowledge from the documentation, critical analysis, and interpretation of forms of architectural heritage including the morphological aesthetics of historical styles, as well as the a-historical morphogenetic processes of vernacular/traditional architecture related to cultural landscapes and the natural environment.

The **second research direction** pertains to an interdisciplinary approach of the praxis and poetics of architectural composition and design, as well as the parallel critical view to contemporary production of architectural forms, and the emerging methods, approaches and theories of architectural design.