

P r e s s r e l e a s e

NDU's FAAD is increasing its effort to promote environmentally conscious design, a vital issue for today & tomorrow that unfortunately draws limited attention in Lebanon in our days. As a step in that direction, FAAD has invited Dr. Thanos N. Stasinopoulos, an architect from Greece, to launch a workshop, a lecture, and an exhibition at NDU. Mr. Walid Nader of 'Libel' sarl. has kindly supported these events.

Dr. Stasinopoulos has worked for many years on environmental architecture. He teaches at the School of Architecture of National Technical University of Athens, and he has been a visiting lecturer at the Architectural Association Graduate School of London for several years, contributing to its Environment & Energy Studies programme. He has organised several international workshops on sustainable urban design, and he has presented a number of conference papers on various environmental topics. In addition to teaching and research, Dr. Stasinopoulos has applied environmental principles in several design projects in Greece, bridging theory and practice.

Dr. Stasinopoulos was invited to cooperate with Prof. Habib Melki, Chairperson of Design Department of FAAD and with Mr. Aram Yeretizian, Instructor at FAAD, in setting up a workshop for NDU students between 22-29.1.03. The workshop focuses on a coastal section of Jouneh, between the local town hall and stadium. Four teams of 3rd year students will study the current conditions in the area and present their ideas about practical interventions that would improve the environmental aspects of outdoor spaces and the adjacent buildings.

"This exercise addresses an issue that currently draws little attention" Dr. Stasinopoulos says, and he explains: "The widespread lack of climatic considerations in contemporary building design is usually counterbalanced by costly mechanical means; but such artificial methods cannot be applied outdoors, where the only feasible way is to resort to natural forces. This 'natural' approach has been honoured by traditional builders and communities for many centuries before the era of electricity and oil."

Prof. Habib adds: *"So, in order to become familiar with the effects of climatic factors in the use of built space, the students are encouraged to explore the project area with a*

critical eye and point to existing positive & negative environmental and functional features, having in mind diurnal & seasonal variations. Following their observations, they are asked to suggest alterations and additions to augment the weak points that they have come across.”

During his staying with FAAD, Dr. Stasinopoulos will give a lecture titled “Function, Fiction, Friction –environmental crisis in architecture education.”

“The lecture is a brief depiction of the current environmental status of the planet, compared with 30 years ago” Dr. Stasinopoulos says; “such ‘time travel’ gives us a hint on the extend of changes that we should expect after 30 years. By that time our students will be using the tools we give them today, so it is very important to look at those future conditions that will shape the needs, the ideas and the priorities of the next generation. Contemporary architecture has been dealing with aesthetics & semiotics for more than 20 years, bypassing pressing problems that keep growing in absentia of architecture. It’s not a surprise that we hear more and more about an ‘identity crisis of architecture’ in a world increasingly characterised by an environmental & social crisis. So our academic duty is to seek and teach another kind of architectural attitude, one that can seriously contribute to a sustainable future.”

The lecture is scheduled for Monday, 27.1.03, at 6pm in NDU’s Friends Hall. Next to the lecture, there will be an exhibition of three projects by Dr. Stasinopoulos (two private houses and a public square in Greece), which integrate principles of environmental design in practice.

“Today’s architectural theory and practice are apart and at growing distance, although they should interact closely to each other.” Says Dr. Stasinopoulos. “The exhibited projects are examples of an effort to merge abstract principles about sustainable design etc. with the commands of practice, where intentions are diluted in the restrictions of reality. They are also meant to show that sustainable design is not fancy solar collectors, windmills or conservatories, but straightforward building design with a dash of common sense and sensitivity for the forces of Mother-Nature.”