

A Contemporary Translation of an Island Vernacular



TWO RESIDENCES IN FIRA

Kapsimalis Architects
Santorini, Greece

Santorini is well known for the rectangular white-washed houses built into the caves of the island's hilly, volcanic landscape. For these two vacation homes in Fira, the main village in Santorini, Kapsimalis Architects developed a "contemporary translation" of the island's traditions. The site's existing property was converted into two residences, preserving as much of the original structure as possible. What had been the principal residence became the first home, with a wedge-shaped courtyard accommodating a pool and an exterior staircase leading to a small balcony. The second home was formed from the three caves that had previously been used for storage, with a hammam installed in the largest cave and the courtyard that includes a pool in a vaulted space beneath a staircase, an area for sunbathing, and views of the island's volcano from the terrace. From the cobbled street, the houses look largely the same, retaining a typical

whitewashed, rectangular form that ensures the courtyards remain private. For both, the courtyards are considered the central heart and have been intended as a point of transition.

In response to the crisp geometry and airiness of the first house, the architects used local flagstones—*maltezoplaka*—and a type of clay plaster filled with small rocks. The clean, contemporary take on a traditional way of life continues in the wooden furniture, produced by local craftspeople. For the second house, the architects emphasized the primitive atmosphere created by the smooth, curving surfaces of the caves. The cement mortar on the floor and the refractory mortar on the walls are a similar color, creating a sense of continuity between the surfaces, and the furniture has either been built into the structure or has shiny, reflective finishes that play with the muted quality of light in the cave.

