

PATMOS, GREECE

# A Home at the End of the World

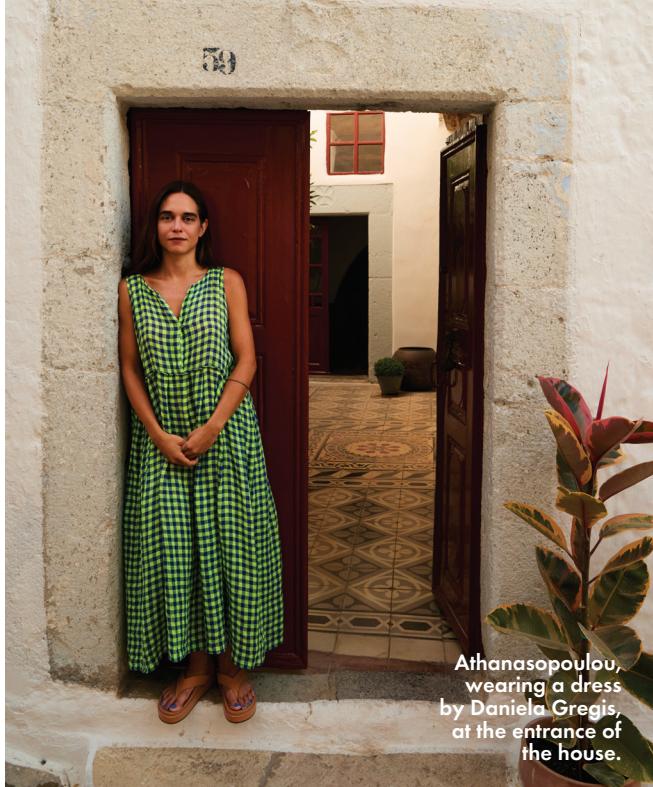
The designer Leda Athanasopoulou grew up with Patmos's religious prophecies in her ear. But it was her singular eye that spotted an abandoned 17th-century house and revealed its future.

By CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN  
Photographs by MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNIA



In the courtyard of a 17th-century home designed by Leda Athanasopoulou on the Greek island of Patmos, the custom table in reclaimed Dionysos marble is by Thomas Palaios. The neoclassical cement tile flooring was added in the 19th century.

Opposite: An original stone staircase leading from the courtyard to the first floor.



Athanasopoulou, wearing a dress by Daniela Gregis, at the entrance of the house.

**T**he novelist and all-around Greco-phile Lawrence Durrell once defined Greek islands as “places where different destinies can meet and intersect in the full isolation of time.” That might sound like a lot of literary hot air, until you visit Patmos. Less than 40 miles from the Turkish coast, Patmos is hardly a traveler’s idea of a daytrip (there’s no airport on the island, and a ferry from the mainland takes seven hours). Its most famous resident? St. John, who wrote the Book of Revelation while in exile at the end of the 1st century. And yet this seahorse-shaped Dodecanese conundrum, with its pine forests and ravishing pebble and sand beaches, has also proven a fertile stomping ground for the haute creative classes. Artist Teddy Millington-Drake, interior designer John Stefanidis, auctioneer and dealer Tobias Meyer, and patrons like Aga Khan and Prince Michael of Greece all called this island home.

Now 35-year-old Greek interior designer Leda Athanasopoulou is putting her own aesthetic mark on the island. Although “mark,” suggesting branding or vandalism, might be the wrong word. Athanasopoulou’s humble, subtly seductive design philosophy is informed by the idea of organic stewardship rather than self-imposing domination. “Many of the houses on Patmos were built by local families in the 17th century,” she says. “Maybe they were restored in the 19th century. Now it’s our turn to restore them. But the buildings remain the protagonists. We aren’t going to live forever. We’re simply continuing their history.”

Athanasopoulou grew up in Thessaloniki, spending childhood summers on Patmos in the whitewashed, Jenga-like town of Chora. Her mother, an acclaimed architect, also had a knack for interiors. Leda went away to London and Paris



for university, before studying design in Milan and a stint in New York. By her mid-twenties she was back in Greece and tackling her first solo design projects on Patmos. “I did one house and then was asked to do another by the same owners, and then I did a hotel,” she recalls. Athanasopoulou managed to juggle these Patmos projects with her growing design business in Athens. Five years ago she embarked on a Patmos design venture all her own, taking over an abandoned, ramshackle mansion in Chora that she renovated from the ground up. Named Sekiari, the five-bedroom house with a spacious rooftop terrace proved a labor of love.

In 2024 Athanasopoulou added a second property to her portfolio, acquiring an abandoned house on the south side of Chora built in the 17th century. She calls this one Ypantani, after a nearby chapel. The two-story domicile might have appeared at first a more modest renovation, but, as Athanasopoulou discovered, “there were little rooms everywhere but only one bath.” She was able to create three

separate bedrooms with adjoining baths without sacrificing the natural flow of intimate quarters.

Much of the initial work focused on conserving the house’s textures and tones. The original wood plank and cement tile floors were painstakingly refurnished, and Athanasopoulou used reclaimed Patmian terra-cotta tiles (once an island specialty) in the kitchen and bathrooms. She repurposed a slab of marble from Patmos’s stone yard as a kitchen table and the house’s antique shutters as cabinet doors. “I like introducing materials that have a sense of local history,” she says.

“The house doesn’t have a garden, and there are no prominent architectural details, as there are with some of Chora’s grand houses. Instead of that feeling like a disadvantage, it allowed me more of a chance to experiment.” Case in point: The house had been painted turquoise and brown (Patmian homes were often done in paint leftover from use on boats). Athanasopoulou updated those hues, trading brown for oxide to enhance the contrast with the green turquoise. These

In the living room, a painting of Chora, the main town on Patmos, by an unknown artist hangs over a traditional Greek sofa. Vintage Thonet chairs; 20th-century Qashqai kilim from Iran; artwork (left) by Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur.



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Far left: A 1960s Greek ceramic lamp rests on a windowsill. Plate by Eleni Vernadaki; ceramic carnations by Daphne Leon.

Left: A vintage brass tray sits on an antique trunk purchased in Athens.



A vintage dresser from an Athens flea market anchors a corner of the living room. Artwork (right) by Katerina Mourati.



In a primary bedroom, a 17th-century Flemish tapestry hangs behind a custom bed made from a pair of antique bed frames. Antique crochet coverlet from Greece.



A 1930s woven sofa and Egyptian side table in a primary bathroom. Artworks by George Moschos.



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A view of the Prophet Elias monastery, located on the highest point on Patmos, from the back terrace.