

# A Renovated Island Home Imbued With Personal History

For Christos Raftopoulos, a fashion photographer born in Melbourne, Australia, to Greek parents, buying and renovating unusual city properties has always been a passion. But it was the house he built on his father's native Ithaca, a small island in the Ionian Sea about two hours from Athens, that captured his heart and soul.



Mr. Raftopoulos said he loves the house but misses urban life.

“I’ve restored many homes, including a listed building in London and a neo-Classical in Athens, but this is the first place I built from scratch,” said Mr. Raftopoulos, 69, during a recent tour of the three-story home, a sand-colored structure of brick and concrete.

Now, after seven years on the island, Mr. Raftopoulos has decided to put the property on the market and return to Athens, where he owns an apartment. “It was a tough call because I’ve put so much of myself into this place,” he said, “but it’s time to move on.”

Mr. Raftopoulos bought the two-acre plot in the mid-1970s for \$30,000, eager to have a spot near his father’s native village of Kioni. But he did not start building until 2002, when he moved to the island after more than 30 years in London, New York and Paris doing fashion shoots for top magazines. “It took a long time but I finally made it here,” he said, gazing at the house’s sweeping views, which stretch to the nearby island of Lefkada and the Greek mainland beyond.

Mr. Raftopoulos’ adopted Vietnamese son, Emmanuel, also came along, leaving Paris for this island of 45 square miles and 3,000 residents. In 2007, Emmanuel, now 38, married a local woman and the couple now run a restaurant and bar in Vathy, the island’s main port.

Although he no longer works for magazines, Mr. Raftopoulos continues to photograph, paint and collect artwork. And the island home is a testimony to his tastes.

The house, which covers 340 square meters (3,660 square feet), is a veritable live-in gallery, with hardly an inch of wall space left unadorned. Photographs and paintings hang in all five bedrooms, including the housekeeper’s and a self-contained guest apartment.



(A pool house converted into a studio doubles as a sixth bedroom.) The four bathrooms are also festooned with art.

But the real centerpiece of the house is the living room, a large airy space with 4.5-meter-high (14.8-foot-high) ceilings and tall elegant windows that open onto the terrace, which Mr. Raftopoulos often uses for dinner parties. There also are two smaller open-air dining areas that he uses for less formal gatherings. The patios and walkways are adorned with designs that thematically reflect the home’s surroundings: suns, fish and boats. (Mr. Raftopoulos said he “wanted to make the house feel a bit more ethnic and take the edge off the designer look.”)

The art theme continues in the garden, which has sculptures and other pieces dotted among the cypress and olive trees and other plantings, which include mimosa, oleander shrubs, and masses of lavender and rosemary.

Nearby is the swimming pool, which measures 7 meters by 3.5 meters (23 feet by 12 feet) and, with views of the sea, offers the highest vantage point on the property.

A set of stone steps leads down through the olive trees to a small sandy bay where Mr. Raftopoulos swam dur-

ing visits to the island as a youth. The same steps lead up to the entrance gate, meeting a small dirt road opened up by construction workers to access the site.

Excavation, landscaping and construction took just over a year to complete. “I was on site overseeing the works every single day,” Mr. Raftopoulos said, noting that he ensured the house’s foundations were strong enough to withstand the earthquakes that frequently rock the region. (He added that he has “felt nothing” when tremors have occurred, most recently in 2006.)

He spent 800,000 euros (about \$1.1 million) on the construction, but the investment appears to have paid off, with local estate agents valuing the property now at 2.8 million euros (about \$3.8 million).

“The Greek islands haven’t suffered as much from the recent crisis as overdeveloped second home markets like Spain and overpriced markets like the South of France,” said Piers Williams of Ionian International, a real estate agency based on Corfu, the largest of the Ionian islands.

“Ithaca and Kefalonia are so beautiful, even by Greek island terms, that interest remains steady despite a downturn elsewhere,” Mr. Williams said, referring to a neighboring island. He put the cost of buying land on Ithaca at 150,000 euros to 250,000 euros (about \$200,000 to \$333,000) and building costs at 1,500 euros to 2,500 euros per square meter (about \$187 to \$311 per square foot).

(Ithaca is not accessible by air, but Kefalonia, a 30-minute ferry ride away, has a busy airport.)

For Mr. Raftopoulos, the charm of living on the island is still strong but he has found himself yearning for the fast pace and cultural variety of life in Athens. “I love this house and it will be difficult to leave,” he said. “But I’m a city boy.”

## 24ΩΡΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΡΑΔΙΟΦΩΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΤΑΘΜΟΣ

### 1683 AM (στα μεσαία κύματα)

Συνεχή καθημερινή ενημέρωση και ψυχαγωγία

Ο Ελληνικός Ραδιοφωνικός Σταθμός Αυστραλίας

**1683 AM** λειτουργεί

σε 24ωρη βάση, 7 ημέρες την εβδομάδα.



Ο σταθμός ξεκίνησε να λειτουργεί το Μάρτιο του 1983 και εκπέμπει τα καλύτερα προγράμματα από την Ελλάδα και την Κύπρο, ενώ παράλληλα μεταδίδει τις ειδήσεις από το εξωτερικό κάθε ώρα.

Επίσης, έχουμε τα καλύτερα τοπικά προγράμματα, όπως:

**“Κυπριακή Κοινότητα”**

**με την Έλλη Κάμπος,**

**“Greeks Today”**

**με τον Γιώργο Τσερδάνη,**

**“Κέφι και μπάλλα”**

**με τον Γιάννη Σπανέλλη,**

**“Κοινότητα και κοινοτικά”**

**και μουσικά**

**προγράμματα με εκφωνητές.**

Ο Ελληνικός Ραδιοφωνικός Σταθμός Αυστραλίας 1683 KHz AM διαφημίζει μεγάλους οργανισμούς και επιχειρήσεις, όπως την ελληνική εφημερίδα της Αυστραλίας “Ο Κόσμος”, “Λαϊκή Τράπεζα”, “Τράπεζα Κύπρου”, “Κυπριακή Κοινότητα ΝΝΟ”,

“Ελληνική Ορθόδοξη Κοινότητα Σύνδνεϋ & ΝΝΟ”,

“Vicky Mar Fashions”, “Independent and General Advertising”, “Roselands Shopping Centre” και πολλές άλλες μικρές και μεγάλες επιχειρήσεις.

Για τον καλύτερο Ελληνικό Ραδιοφωνικό Σταθμό, τα τελευταία νέα, ποιοτική μουσική και τα καλύτερα ζωντανά προγράμματα, συντονιστείτε στο Ελληνικό Ραδιοφωνικό Σταθμό Αυστραλίας 1683 KHz AM.

Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες και για τις διαφημίσεις σας,

**τηλεφωνήστε στο (02) 9750 8155**

**και fax: (02) 9750 0517.**

**Τηλέφωνα για ζωντανές εκπομπές:**

**(02) 9750 9890 και (02) 9750 0017.**

**Διεύθυνση: Unit 4 / 9 Mavis St, Revesby NSW 2212**

**e-mail: conn01@optushome.com.au**

**web: GREEK RADIO 1683**