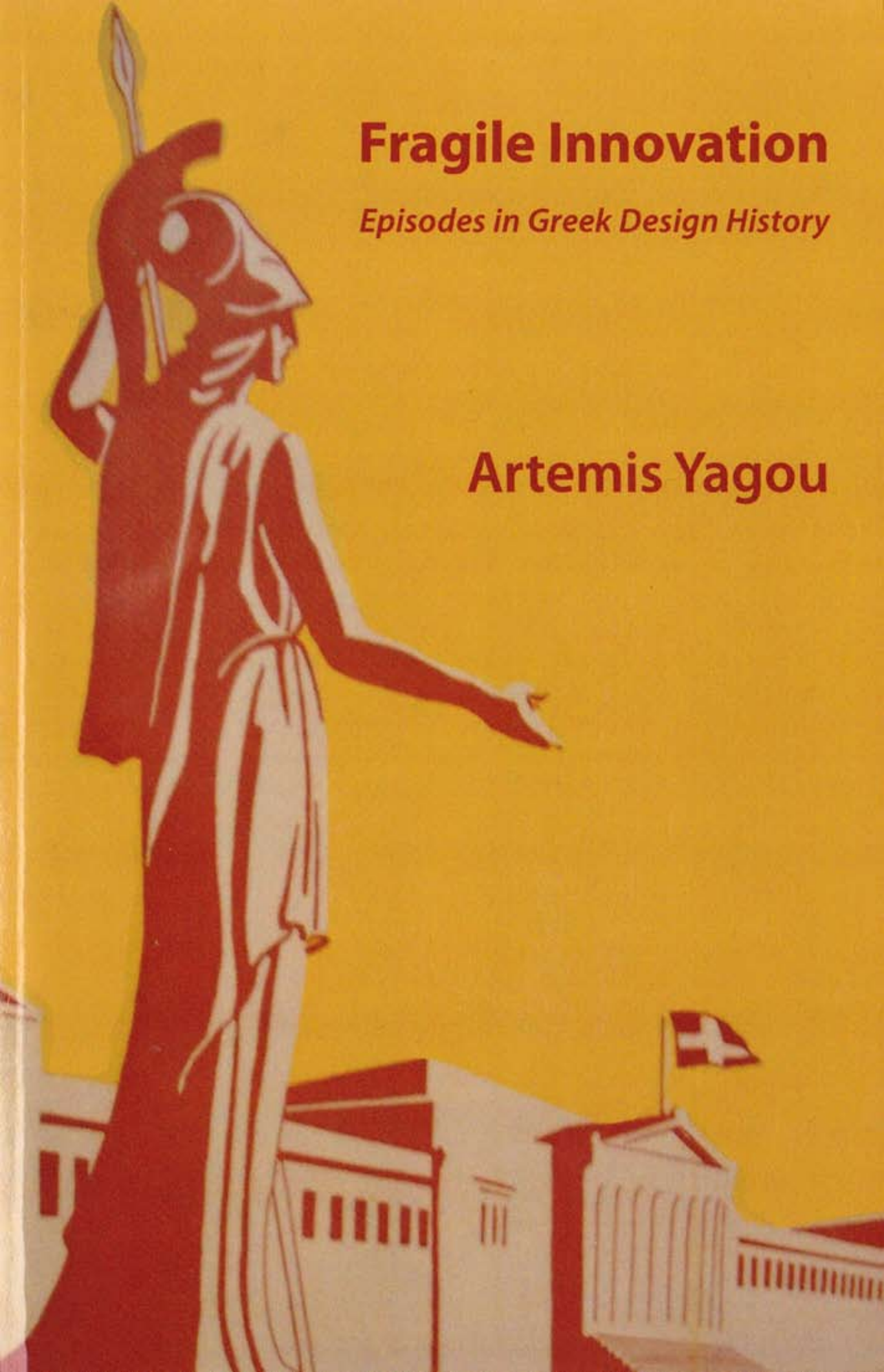


Fragile Innovation

Episodes in Greek Design History

Artemis Yagou



proach identified in this chapter. This other path, followed mostly by younger designers, is characterised by a total break with any local visual, ideological or other traditions, and by attempts to engage with an international, or even supranational design mentality.⁴⁵ This cosmopolitan trend does in many cases lead to a detached kind of design, bearing no sense of place and lacking references to local needs and particularities. Furthermore, the two opposing trends are expressed on a purely stylistic and visual level; local design discourse is underdeveloped or even naïve, at the expense of a range of complex, long-standing and unresolved issues such as design education, production infrastructure and design management, to name but a few.⁴⁶ Despite the intensity of such issues, the contemporary Greek design scene lacks a sense of community, of a shared social space where such issues could be debated and resolved.⁴⁷ It then comes as no surprise that nowadays Greek design remains non-competitive and holds a negligible place in the international market. New approaches are sought for, moving beyond the easy attractions of sleek external appearance, as well as marrying locality with wider, international relevance.

In this vein, the Athens-based design consultancy Greece is for Lovers stands out among the younger generation of designers for its idiosyncratic treatment of visual and other stereotypes of Greece. The firm's playful, ironic, even provocative take on Greek iconography expresses a more creative re-thinking and re-imagining of the past. The approach of Greece is for Lovers shows that contemporary design may not become relevant unless it moves beyond the uncritical adoration and glorification of a respected past and unless it employs user-centred strategies that are meaningful to a



Figure 7.6: Two updated classics, Hermes by Praxiteles and Aphrodite of Milos, accessorised. Candles in 100% natural beeswax, designed in 2008 by the Athens-based consultancy Greece is for Lovers.

range of modern audiences. Even so, the members of Greece is for Lovers themselves acknowledge the complexities and pitfalls of their approach. Having become well known and successful through their fresh, humorous and critical take on various clichés, they realise that sticking to this approach may hinder further creative development; they are keen to explore other directions in the near future.⁴⁸

To sum up, the survival of the ideology of national identity in relation to Greek design into the 21st century reveals the powerful and continuing stronghold this ideology has