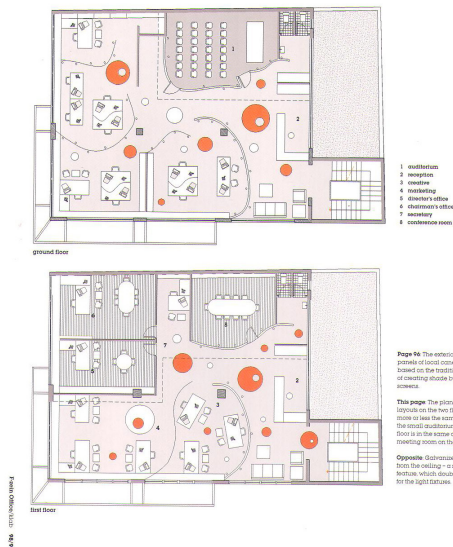


TOTAL OFFICE DESIGN

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Klab architects were commissioned to transform an existing industrial building into a modern-day office for the media agency F-zein in Athens. The tight budget prompted them to think about local and historical building methods, resulting in an original mix of traditional Greek construction techniques and low-cost materials. The design concept came to create a sense of 'transparent duality': the office is divided into non-permanent and fixed spaces so that staff feel both part of a team and supported when working autonomously.

The office floor plan shows a space dominated by curves, rather than linear structures. Along with the limited use of doors, this is intended to enhance fluidity in F-zein's daily workflow. Curved translucent screens and a grid of galvanized steel discs that cover the ceiling characterize the open-plan office area and reception. The translucent partitions can be moved around and construct microenvironments for each employee within the larger open space.

Given the economic constraints, Klab experimented with corrugated polyester rolls – cheap fibreglass mostly used to shade greenhouses – to create working units. Visually, the material sets a theatrical tone, as its semi-transparent appearance is transformed by changing light throughout the day. The substructure for these screens is made from standard steel scaffolding poles and joints and can easily be taken down and rebuilt in a variety of configurations. Likewise, the galvanized steel discs that hang from the ceiling are easily dismountable as they have only one central fixing. The discs are a dramatic lighting feature and each contains three laser-cut slots – two filled by long fluorescent light fixtures and the remaining one holds a low-energy bulb. As a result, a whimsical pattern of light appears on the ceiling, which was painted bright orange to contrast with the galvanized metal.

Klab continued to play with colour in the stairway. Here, the wall shade gets lighter the further you ascend, and translucent orange Perspex discs hang over the staircase, which ties in with the ceiling design in the main office and creates reflections and shadows on the walls.

The most experimental feature of the project was the application of panels of cones to the exterior of the existing building. The traditional Greek method of shading spaces with horizontal cones was reinterpreted by hanging the rods vertically along the building's facade to create a 'second skin' that filters the hot summer sun. The cones

F-ZEIN OFFICE

Architect: **Klab architects**
Client: **F-zein**
Location: **Athens, Greece**
Completed: **July 2008**
Size: **750 sq m (8,070 sq ft)**
Budget: **€90,000**

were sourced from a local stream that runs adjacent to the site, and the wild bamboo forms a natural context for the otherwise heavy industrial complex. Utilizing this eco-friendly feature also meant that Klab did not need to install air conditioning to keep the office cool in the heat of the Greek summer. The project shows how tight budgets can help designers rediscover local materials and traditional techniques to create a beautiful and functional office.