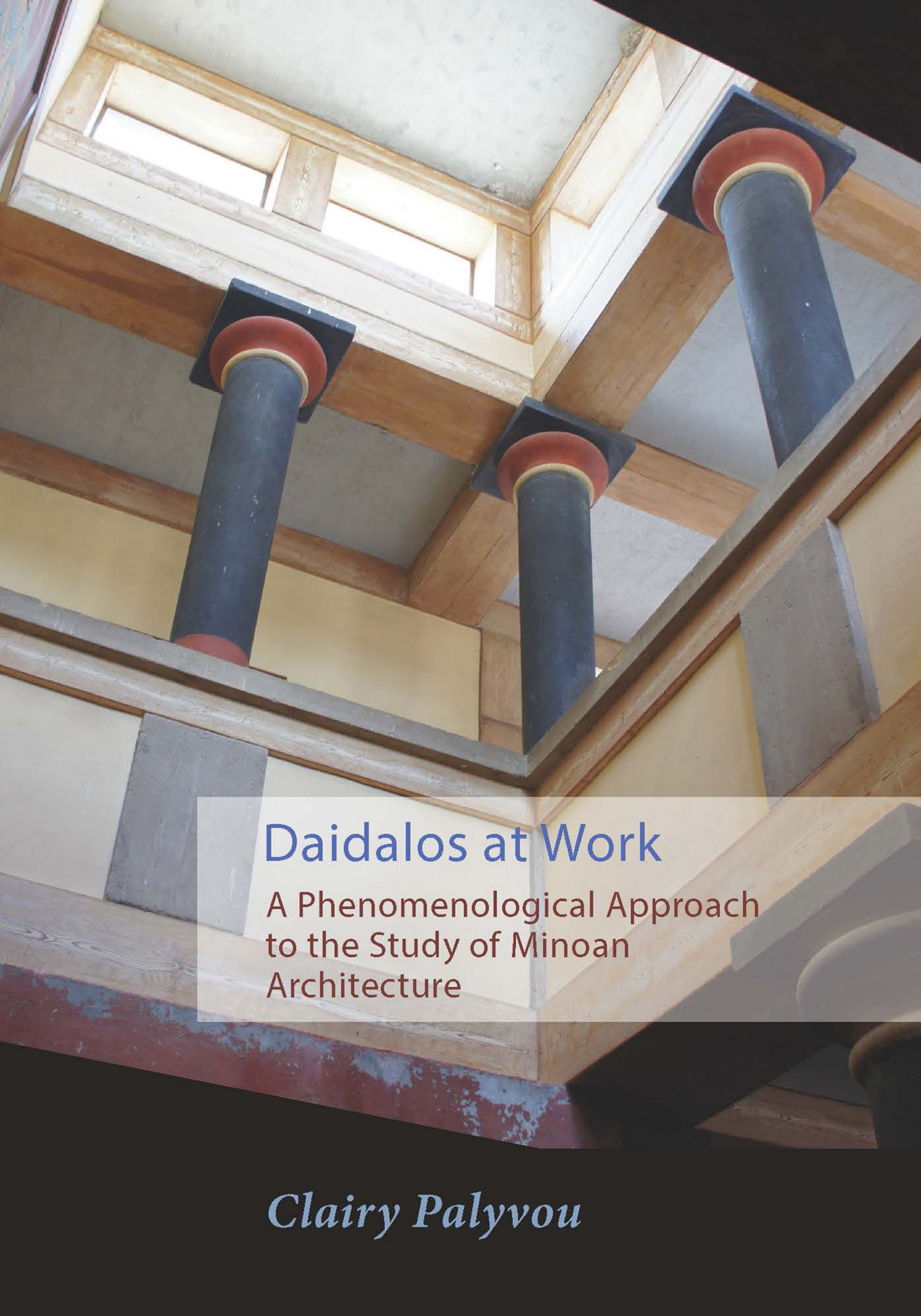


Daidalos at Work

A Phenomenological Approach to the Study of Minoan Architecture

Clairy Palyvou

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You yourself are the entrance. The doors open
effortlessly to the eye and let you in.
Others have been here before you, and left shadows behind
that fit you: head, hand, body
and hesitating foot. Only the voice urges onward,
from echo to echo and is already in the center
with its fleeting arguments. The body
stands dolefully at the beginning: too many tracks
trace away from it through the sand,
and none is decipherable.
Close your eyes and go!

Excerpt from “In the Labyrinth”
Michael Krüger (1982)

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List of Abbreviations

cm	centimeter(s)
diam.	diameter
EM	Early Minoan
EN	Early Neolithic
esp.	especially
FN	Final Neolithic
ht.	height
ha	hectare(s)
INSTAP SCEC	Institiute for Aegean Prehistory Study Center for East Crete
km	kilometer(s)
LM	Late Minoan
m	meter(s)
mm	millimeter(s)
MM	Middle Minoan
pers. comm.	personal communication
SPAB	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
w.	width

Preface and Acknowledgments

When the exit no longer concerns you, you have reached the goal. (Krüger 1982)

Architects of all times could not have found a better archetypal figure than the mythical Daidalos working in Crete for the legendary Minos. All that is related to the works of Daidalos and Minos, and all that has been exposed through archaeological excavations of Bronze Age sites on Crete, draw up the picture of a fascinating, brave new world (Figs. 1, 2). This was a world of affluence and innovation, a unique moment in the early history of architecture, created literally out of the blue sea of the Aegean. In a bizarre way, that moment seems to echo another brave new era much closer to our times, so much so that one is tempted to see the shadows of Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright in the mythical body of Daidalos.

Daidalos makes his first appearance as "an architect at work"[1] in Homer (*Il.*18.590–594), drawing on the ground a circle, the most perfect of all geometrical shapes—for some, the archetypal form of the house. With this circle he cuts and bounds a piece of land, transforming it into a locus, a place wherein Ariadne can perform her dance.[2] By the movement of her body, Ariadne bestowed on architecture the third dimension of space: the vertical. Through the making of the archetypal circle—a manifestation of the act of separation—Daidalos instigated the τέχνη (*techne*; craft/art) of architecture, only to lift it to the utmost heights of ingenuity and sophistication by creating another archetypal