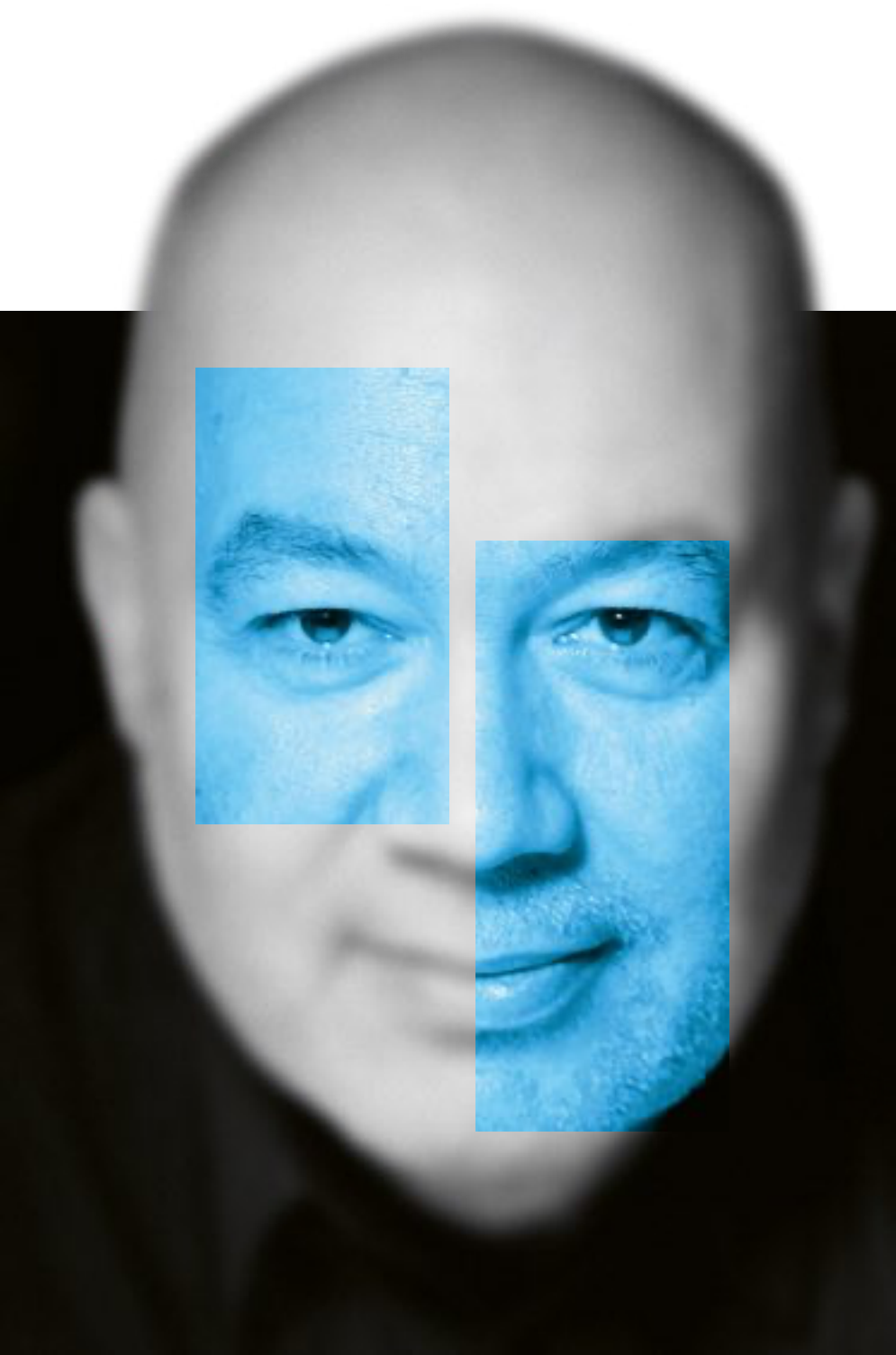


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by **E**CKEL INSPIRED

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Photo: Guido Karp

Spaces in Motion

4-21

The cover story on Asteris Kutulas and a new idea of architecture.



Photo: Peter Becker

Asteris Kutulas - The Dramaturg of Movable Space



He produced concerts and major events in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the United States, worked with Mikis Theodorakis for four decades, and developed his own form of spatial storytelling from film, music, literature and architecture.

TEXT - Thomas Brunke
PHOTOS - rights credits shown in the images

Photo: Mihalís Patsouras

The Acropolis during the Millennium Event.



On the night leading into 1 January 2000, the Acropolis stands above a darkened Athens. Then the music of Mikis Theodorakis begins. Light catches the Parthenon, traces its columns and changes the perception of the entire hill. For a moment, the ancient structure seems to detach itself from the city and move through the night. Almost 1,800 kilometres farther north, a second production begins at the same time. Mike Oldfield performs at Berlin's Victory Column. Light, music and pyrotechnic images fill the Tiergarten. Both events are among Europe's major millennium celebrations.

The man involved in both projects is Asteris Kutulas. In Berlin he is responsible for event management and production. In Athens he produces the Millennium Event for the Greek Ministry of Culture and assists lighting director Gert Hof with the artistic realization of the show broadcast worldwide.

Kutulas had spent months negotiating with the Greek government. Staging the Acropolis demanded technical expertise, political coordination and respect for one of Europe's most important monuments. Kutulas recalls a sentence Gert Hof spoke just a few weeks before the event: in a place like this, one must practise humility.

Those images from that night already contain much of what Kutulas would later develop into his own artistic method. A building becomes part of a narrative. The city forms the space. Music organizes time. The audience sees a familiar structure anew.

Years later, experiences like these gave rise to the concept of Liquid Staging, and from it to the Flexodrom: a spatial infrastructure that Kutulas now conceives as a building system for very different purposes. Culture was the starting point. Today, possible applications include sports halls, event venues, commercial spaces and, in the future, temporary educational buildings, workplaces and residential buildings.

This development leads from the Acropolis to a question facing almost every growing city today: How can buildings be erected faster, adapted to changing uses and later reused in a different location?

A biography between languages and countries

Asteris Kutulas was born in 1960 in Oradea, Romania, the son of Greek emigrants. In 1968 his family moved to the GDR. He attended the Kreuzschule in Dresden and later studied German literature and the history of philosophy in Leipzig. Languages and cultural translation therefore became part of his life at an early age.

While still a student, he worked as a translator, literary adaptor, editor and author. He translated major Greek writers into German, including Giorgos Seferis, Odysseas Elytis, Jannis Ritsos and Konstantinos Kavafis. More than 40 books in which he has been involved have since been published.

This work shaped the way he reads images and orders connections. Translation requires decisions: sound, meaning and cultural background must be reassembled in another language. Kutulas thus learned early that every medium has its own order: literature organizes thought in sentences, music unfolds in time, film works through framing and montage, while architecture directs movement and perception through plan, height, material and light.

Since the 1980s, Kutulas has lived in a world filled with literature, music, art, film, politics, history and philosophy. He says he never left that world; he merely changed medium several times.

Kutulas is an author, translator, publicist, filmmaker, dramaturg, director, music producer, event producer and conceptual artist. All these activities follow the same interest: How can a complex idea be given a form that reaches people?

Photo: Guido Karp



Four decades with Mikis Theodorakis

Kutulas began working with Mikis Theodorakis in 1980. It developed into a professional and personal relationship that lasted until the composer's death in 2021.

Kutulas organized concerts for Theodorakis around the world, produced more than 30 albums and followed him with a camera for decades. Their travels took them across Europe and to Israel, Russia, South Africa, Canada, Chile, Australia and Turkey. Around 600 hours of footage later became the film "Dance Fight Love Die - On the Road with Mikis", which premiered at the Hof International Film Festival in 2017.

For Kutulas, Theodorakis was a composer, political thinker, interlocutor and teacher. His works combined symphonic music, folk music, poetry, theatre, ballet, film and political experience. Anyone working with this music had to understand large forms while taking seriously the effect of a single melody.

Kutulas experienced how Theodorakis could fill spaces with musical motifs and reach people across language barriers. That experience returns in Liquid Staging: there the soundtrack forms the temporal construction of the entire work and holds several films and actions unfolding simultaneously within a common rhythm.

Working with Theodorakis also produced a method that combines intellectual preparation with practical realization. For Kutulas, an idea only acquires its full force when it takes on a perceptible form.

Photo: AstiMusicAchilleasGatsopoulos



Cities as a stage

From 1999, Kutulas worked as producer and manager for director and lighting architect Gert Hof. Together they realized major events on several continents, including in Berlin, Athens, Beijing, Moscow, Malta, Oman, Atlantic City, Gallipoli and Jerusalem.

In Budapest, the Chain Bridge and Parliament became part of a production marking Hungary’s millennium. In Ferropolis, Gert Hof’s light architecture combined the music of Mikis Theodorakis with gigantic open-cast mining machines to create an image of industrial history and landscape. Further projects were produced for the European Union in Malta, in Vilnius, at the Israel Festival in Jerusalem, as well as for Hugo Boss in Berlin and Aida in Hamburg.

Gert Hof created images from light, music, fire, architecture and landscape. Kutulas translated those images into a producible sequence. He had to know what structure could support an idea, how long set-up and rehearsals would take, which authorities were involved and what costs a decision would entail. His work covered production design, technology, financing, permits, logistics and the coordination of international partners.

Kutulas describes Hof’s works as “paintings in time and space”. Their shared goal was immediate: people should be amazed. In his recollections, Kutulas speaks of happy children’s eyes, in adults as well as children. For a moment, they were meant to look at a familiar place with renewed attention.

Those years sharpened his understanding of the relationship between space, operation and audience. A spectacular image emerged from thousands of precisely coordinated working steps.

What holds a large audience together

Kutulas gained another kind of experience with Apassionata: from 2011 to 2014 as Executive Producer, and then for several years as dramaturg of the international horse show.

Apassionata addressed an audience with very different expectations. Children saw animals, movement and colour. Adults followed the music, design and story. Horses, riders, dancers, light, costumes and projections all had to come together within one evening programme.

Kutulas worked on timing, emotional transitions and the connections between individual scenes. The experience showed him that artistic ambition and commercially successful operation can be developed together within a production.

That connection still shapes his work today. Kutulas thinks about a production from the audience’s experience while also understanding the demands of budgets, touring schedules, safety and reliable operation. The Flexodrom follows the same logic: a building must reach people and serve its users. At the same time, it must be financeable, approvable and capable of reliable operation over a long period.

Photo: Ralph Larmann



Photo: Ralph Larmann



Photo: Sabine Wenzel

The camera from 1989

In 1989, Kutulas bought a camera. It changed the way he perceived performances, journeys and encounters. The view through a lens selects a frame. Editing relates images to one another, compresses time, shows processes in parallel and rearranges memories.

Through film, Kutulas found his way to conceptual art and ultimately to polydimensional vision: a form of perception in which several perspectives are present at the same time.

A traditional film gives the viewer a predetermined frame. The classical stage likewise focuses the audience on a central action. Kutulas wanted to open up this order spatially. Viewers should be able to decide for themselves which image, body or action to follow. Editing in the cutting room gave rise to the idea of a montage that takes place in the audience’s mind.

Liquid Staging: film becomes spatial

In a 2016 manifesto, Kutulas describes Liquid Staging as the “spatialization of film”. Film leaves its traditional projection surface. Images appear on multiple walls, on bodies, fabrics, transparent surfaces and architectural elements. Music, light, film, dance and real action share the same space. The audience is inside the event.

This does not create an arbitrary collection of images. The director determines duration, rhythm, soundtrack and the relationship between individual elements. The audience is given freedom within a prepared dramaturgical system.

The principle reflects a present in which people deal with parallel streams of information every day: multiple windows on a screen, messages, images, music and conversations side by side. Liquid Staging transfers this experience to a physical place. The audience remains involved because it is constantly making decisions.

Four films and a fifth in the mind

With ELECTRA 21 and MEDEA 21, Kutulas developed two prototypes of polydimensional vision. In ELECTRA 21, four independent films run simultaneously on four screens. All are based on the same recording of music by Mikis Theodorakis and are precisely synchronized to the shared soundtrack. The audience stands between the projection surfaces. Each viewer chooses their own direction of view.

No one can fully take in all four films at once. Every shift of gaze creates a personal montage. From the four films distributed through the space, a fifth emerges, newly edited in the mind of each individual viewer.

ELECTRA 21 premiered at the Hof International Film Festival in 2021. Kutulas received the Hans Vogt Film Award there, which honours filmmakers for innovation, care and a distinctive use of film music. Festival director Thorsten Schaumann described the installation as a glimpse of a cinema format of tomorrow - “Cinema 2.0”.

Metropolis: a world on several levels

The METROPOLIS project expands this principle into a large spatial narrative. Fritz Lang’s 1927 film depicts a city whose social order is also spatially organized: power, gardens and privileged residents are above; deep underground, people work at the machines.

Kutulas takes up this vertical order. In his concept, upper world, underworld and catacombs become levels played simultaneously. Film, live performance, dance, music, light and architecture interlock. Berlin provides a thematic point of reference: film history, industrial spaces, electronic music and the experience of a city that has repeatedly had to reassemble itself.

A conventional stage is hardly sufficient for such a performance.



Photo: GRAFT & Asteris Kutulas

It needs several stages distributed through the space, projection surfaces, technical levels and rooms for parallel actions. The Flexodrom emerged from this requirement.

Kutulas sees it as the built form of an artistic theory developed over decades. Liquid Staging organizes gaze and emotion in space. The Flexodrom creates the infrastructure in which that organization becomes possible.

From art project to building system

The Flexodrom arose from an artistic necessity. Yet its core - a modular, adaptable and reusable infrastructure - can be transferred to many other building tasks and configured and expanded differently according to location and use.

Kutulas developed the name, the brand, the platform concept, the strategic positioning, and the creative and curatorial architecture of the system.

The technical and structural development was carried out by Alexander Strizhak and the JSA Stage Company team. Universally applicable systems from Layher form the structural basis.

The project was first presented to Layher in 2019. The partners then worked on basic drawings, construction, logistics and design. After an interruption during the pandemic and as a result of the war against Ukraine, development resumed in 2023.

The components come from an industrially proven system environment. They can be transported, assembled, supplemented and reused. The difference from the usual understanding of serial construction lies in what is repeated: the load-bearing and structural foundations are repeated. Floor plan, height, facade, interior fit-out, technical equipment and period of use are determined anew for each project.

A Flexodrom therefore does not have to look the same in every location. A sports hall requires different spans and surfaces from a commercial building. A civic hall needs a stage, foyer, sanitary areas, cloakrooms and powerful technical infrastructure. The common basis makes planning, manufacture, transport, assembly and later alteration easier.

Why cities need new building models

Many cities and municipalities are under intense time pressure today. Schools, sports halls and administrative buildings are being refurbished. Clubs need space. Housing is required faster than conventional projects can provide it. At the same time, municipal budgets are limited, and the duration of a need is often difficult to predict. A temporary school may be needed for four years. A site may be available for eight years before a permanent district is built.

Conventional construction projects respond only slowly to such time windows. Years often pass between need, financing, planning, approval and completion. The Flexodrom addresses this timing problem. A prepared system building can shorten planning and assembly processes. Reusable components and familiar structural principles simplify costing and logistics. Buildings can thus be erected closer to the actual moment of need.

The sports hall that can move on

A growing municipality urgently needs an additional sports hall. Schools, clubs and recreational sports share the few available time slots. A permanent new building is planned, but it will not be finished for several years.

For this interim period, a Flexodrom could be configured as a sports hall with the required court dimensions, room heights and safety clearances, together with changing rooms, equipment rooms, stands, technical facilities and barrier-free access.

Once the permanent hall is complete, the building could be moved to another location or converted for a new task. Parts of the structure would remain in circulation. The investment would therefore be tied more to the system than to a single plot of land.

Spaces for business and new ways of working

Companies often change their space requirements faster than buildings can be planned. Production contracts run for limited periods. Start-ups need more space at short notice after a funding round. Trades businesses look for halls while a commercial area is being developed.

A flexible building system can accommodate offices, workshops, laboratories, exhibition spaces, retail areas or light production in such situations. Storey heights, access, technical loads, deliveries and facades can be developed to suit the use. If needs change, the building can be extended, reduced or converted.

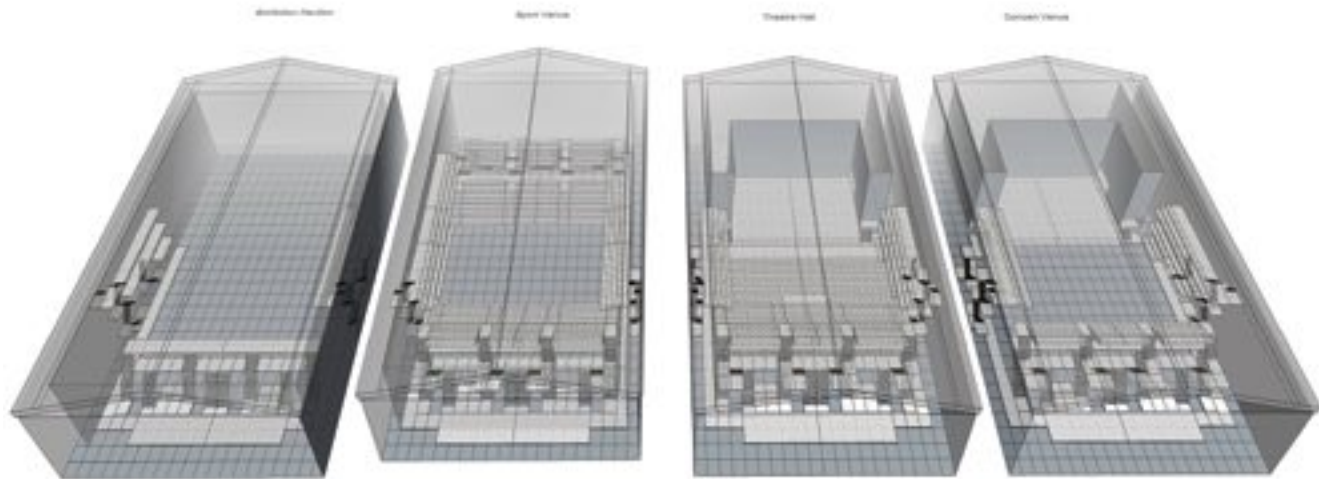


Photo: Alexander Strizhak/JSA



Photo: Alexander Strizhak/JSA

For project developers, this approach opens an additional option. A site can be used economically and publicly even during a lengthy planning phase. Business, culture, gastronomy and events could form a mixed-use location for several years. The place acquires an address before permanent development begins. Such interim uses do, however, require urban planning: routes, open spaces, deliveries, noise protection and the neighbourhood must be considered from the outset.

A building that continues to be used after its first deployment retains part of its economic value.

Standardized components simplify tendering, procurement, maintenance and replacement. Actual economic viability depends on the site, use, fit-out, rental period, approvals and the number of reuses. A system building becomes economical when its life cycle is planned from an early stage.

This is an important difference from conventional interim use. There, substantial sums are often invested in an existing building even though it will soon be demolished or completely converted. With the Flexodrom, a large part of the structure can leave the site and continue working elsewhere.

Costs arise over the entire life cycle

For a flexible building, it is not enough to look only at the initial manufacturing cost. What matters is the entire path of use. A component used at several locations spreads its manufacturing cost across different projects. A structure that can be enlarged or reduced can be operated closer to the actual space requirement.

Quality for a limited time

Temporary buildings are often associated in the public mind with tents, containers or simple makeshift solutions. The Flexodrom pursues an architectural ambition that goes beyond this.

Its external appearance can be developed for the location. Facades of wood, metal, glass, textile elements or reusable panels are conceivable. Greened areas, terraces, canopies and public ground-floor zones can integrate the building into its surroundings.

Inside, quality is determined by room height, acoustics, materials and orientation. The structure remains a means to an end: people experience the space, the facade and the use first.

Kutulas’s background in dramaturgy helps here. He looks at a space from the perspective of its users. Where does a person arrive? What do they see first? How does the space change as they move through it? How do sound and light act? These questions apply to a theatre just as much as to a sports hall, office or concert hall.

Sustainability through reuse

The Flexodrom relies on reversible construction. Components are intended to be separated, transported, inspected and reused. A building is therefore understood as a temporary assembly of components whose service life extends far beyond the first site.

This approach reduces material consumption, avoids waste and extends the service life of high-quality components. Sustainability arises from the system as a whole: material selection, transport, energy supply, duration of use and repairability.

Cities could develop their own building pools for this purpose: a municipality owns certain basic components and deploys them successively for schools, sport, events or commercial use. In this way, a single building could become municipal infrastructure.

What “market-ready” means in this context

Kutulas and his partners now see the Flexodrom as a fully conceived system prepared for the market. In 2025, JSA used the Flexodrom approach to design a two-storey hospitality building for up to 1,000 guests at the Eurovision Song Contest in Basel, including load-bearing structure, structural engineering, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and event infrastructure. The contract ultimately went to another supplier; the design nevertheless showed how the system can be developed for a specific tender.

Market readiness for a building system of this kind means that a concrete project can be developed from the idea. Every location still requires its own planning. Structural engineering, building regulations, fire protection, sound insulation, energy, operation and approvals depend on the particular use.

The most extensive experience exists in cultural and event buildings. Sport, commercial uses, and in future education and housing, extend the system and require specialist partners. The Flexodrom provides the structural and logistical basis; the final architecture arises from place, task and user.

An artist thinks like a project developer

Kutulas’s path to the Flexodrom initially seems unusual. He comes from literature, music, film and large-scale staging. He is not a classically trained architect and does not present himself as one.

His experience lies elsewhere. For decades he created spaces for highly complex tasks, coordinated artists, technicians, authorities, financiers and international partners, and worked with historic buildings, stadiums, public squares and temporary structures. He learned what consequences an artistic decision has for technology, costs and process.

This combination of dramaturgy and production shapes the Flexodrom. Its artistic origin brings a question into the system that can easily be lost in utilitarian construction: How does a person experience this space? The entrepreneurial perspective adds a second: How can this space be produced, operated, changed and reused?

A building as an ongoing process

Our idea of architecture is closely tied to permanence. A building is erected in a particular place and remains there. The Flexodrom proposes a more mobile relationship between building, site and time.

A building can be developed for one place and later leave it again. A sports hall can grow, a commercial building can gain additional floors, and an event hall can later be converted into work or educational spaces. The building becomes an ongoing process with several phases of use and possibly several addresses.

For cities, this opens a new level of planning. Permanent buildings remain necessary and shape the image of a city for generations. Alongside them, the need is growing for spaces that can respond more quickly to change: climate adaptation, demographic development, new forms of work and waves of refurbishment create tasks whose duration is difficult to determine in advance. Flexible buildings can absorb such transitions and buy the city time.

Photo: James Chryssanthos



Where the many paths converge

At first glance, Asteris Kutulas’s biography looks like a sequence of very different activities. On closer inspection, however, the development follows a comprehensible path.

Literature taught him to order meanings. Music gave him the architecture of time. The camera added perspective and montage. Gert Hof showed him how a city can become the medium of a production. Apassionata sharpened his sense of dramaturgy, audience and economic operation. ELECTRA 21 transferred montage into space. METROPOLIS demanded an architecture capable of accommodating several levels simultaneously. The Flexodrom is the built consequence of these experiences.

Its value may now extend far beyond the original cultural idea. Cities and municipalities need buildings that can be available faster, planned economically and retain value after their first use. Kutulas brings to this discussion a perspective grown from the practice of major international productions. He understands spaces as living systems: they carry people, processes, images and memories. They may change when their task changes.

A space for the next task

Perhaps the idea of the Flexodrom really does begin on that night at the Acropolis. Then, a building that had stood in one place for centuries acquired an unexpected sense of movement through light and music. The columns stayed where they were. Perception changed. Today Asteris Kutulas takes that movement further. A building can change its appearance, change its use and eventually even leave its site. The load-bearing structure remains available. The next place gives it a new task.

For an artist, that is a spatial narrative. For a city, it can be a concrete solution. To offer that solution to the market, Kutulas founded Flexodrom GmbH in July 2026.

Photo: Ralph Larmann



Photo: Sabine Wenzel

