



adhoc

The Art of Peter Huby

Issue 01: The Prineas House





Linda and I had bought 4 acres of steep olive terraces overlooking the Bay of Messinia in 2003. We began building this structure in 2005 and it continues to evolve.

Having returned to the UK for a year in order to sell our house, fulfil work obligations, etc, we came back to Greece in 2004. For the first few weeks we lived in a tent whilst working on a modest wooden house. By the time the autumn thunderstorms arrived, the roof was on, and we were able to sleep in a dry space, while we added walls and a bathroom. I built a workshop next to the site of the big structure during that first year.

The two lower stories of the big house are made from reinforced concrete and concrete blocks with some brick infill. The upper domes have a double skin made from wire mesh, plastered over with a mixture of sand, cement and fibreglass strands. The two skins enclose a welded steel frame and insulation.

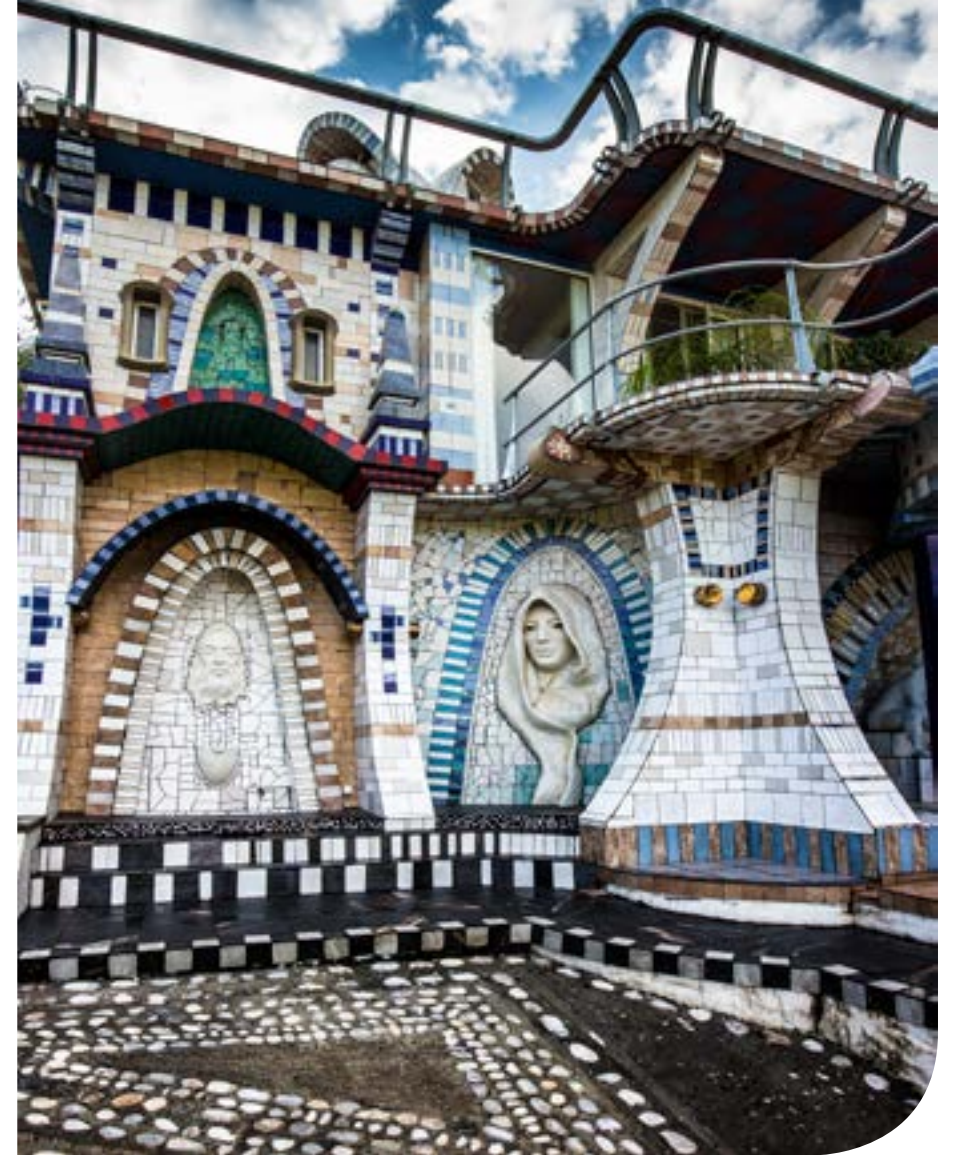
This circular structure was added quite late. It's a sort of fountain cum pool for sitting in, though we almost never sit in it.

The informing structural motif in the building is the catenary arch. A catenary curve is achieved by suspending a fine chain between two fixed points, a kind of parabola. This curve can be made steep or shallow, but the mathematics remains the same.



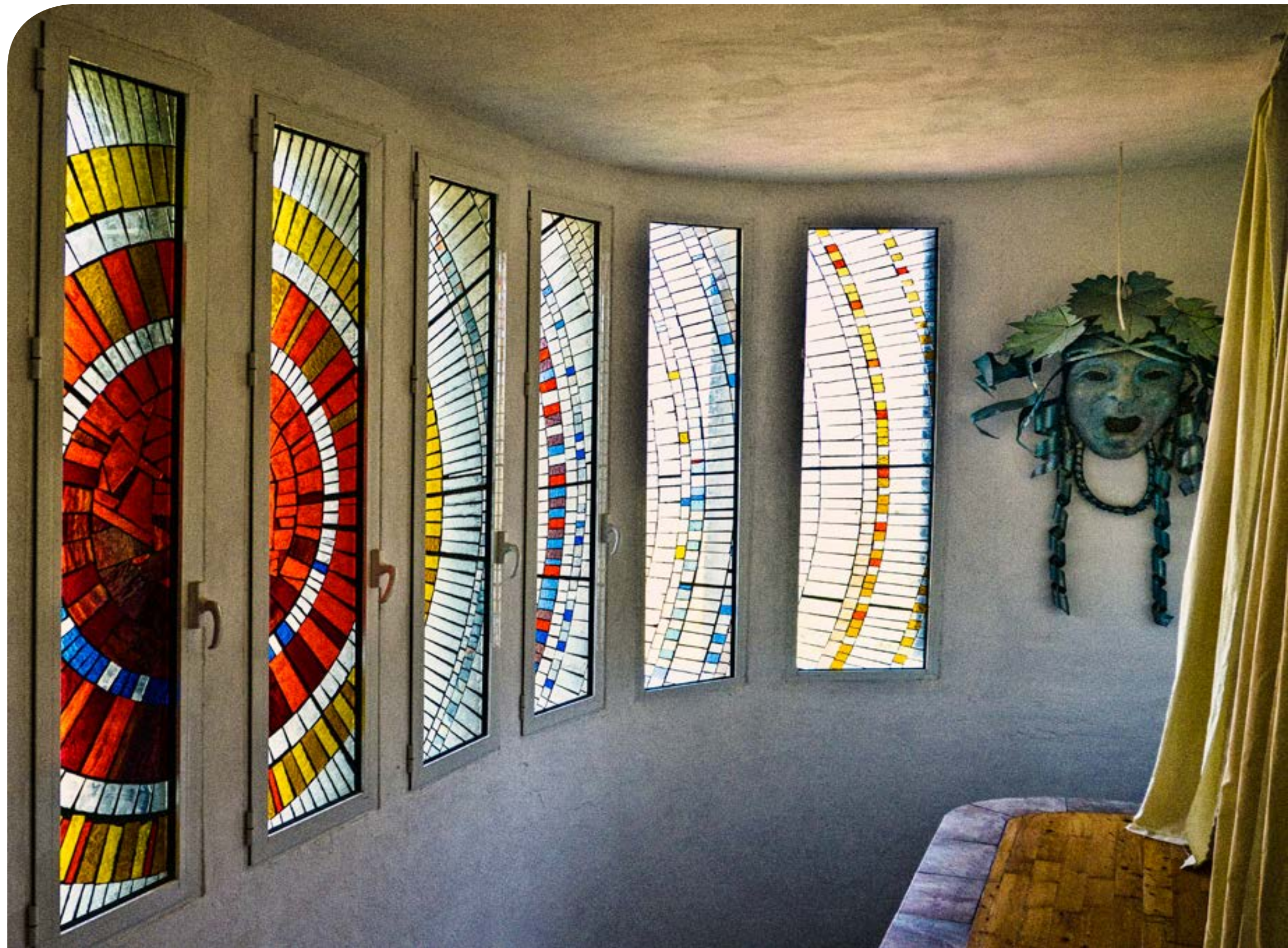


The upper balcony is partly occupied by these domes which house a bedroom, workroom and bathroom. Having in the past, spent time in yurts – circular Mongolian tents – we had become convinced of the virtues of circular spaces. These domes are light in construction and strong. Greece is very earthquake prone, and having experienced a number of significant quakes, we arrived at this arrangement.





The coloured glass windows were achieved very simply. The technique is not unlike applying ceramic tiles. The coloured glass shapes are applied to a sheet of plate glass, cut to the size of the window frame, using clear silicone adhesive. The gaps are then filled with a mixture of black grout and PVA. The window frames were the only parts of the structure which we didn't contrive ourselves, though we have had help of all kinds from friends and family.







I read that the German visionary artist, Friedrich Hundertwasser, claimed that the straight line is a crime. Whilst we don't feel quite so strongly, there is certainly something about the curve, the arch, which seems more natural, more human. The building was never planned in any conventional way. It seems to have evolved in an intuitive way, within the limits of the practical.







Many of the external surfaces of the building are covered by tiles or tile mosaic. This is partly accounted for by the fact that for some years we had a steady supply of free broken tiles from a local tile merchant. Frosts are very rare here so there is no problem with using ceramic tiles on external surfaces.





Peter Huby worked as a teacher in the north of England for 26 years. He also directed festivals and community theatre. He and his wife Linda have lived in Greece for the past 11 years. He has made a number of independent films and published 3 novels.