

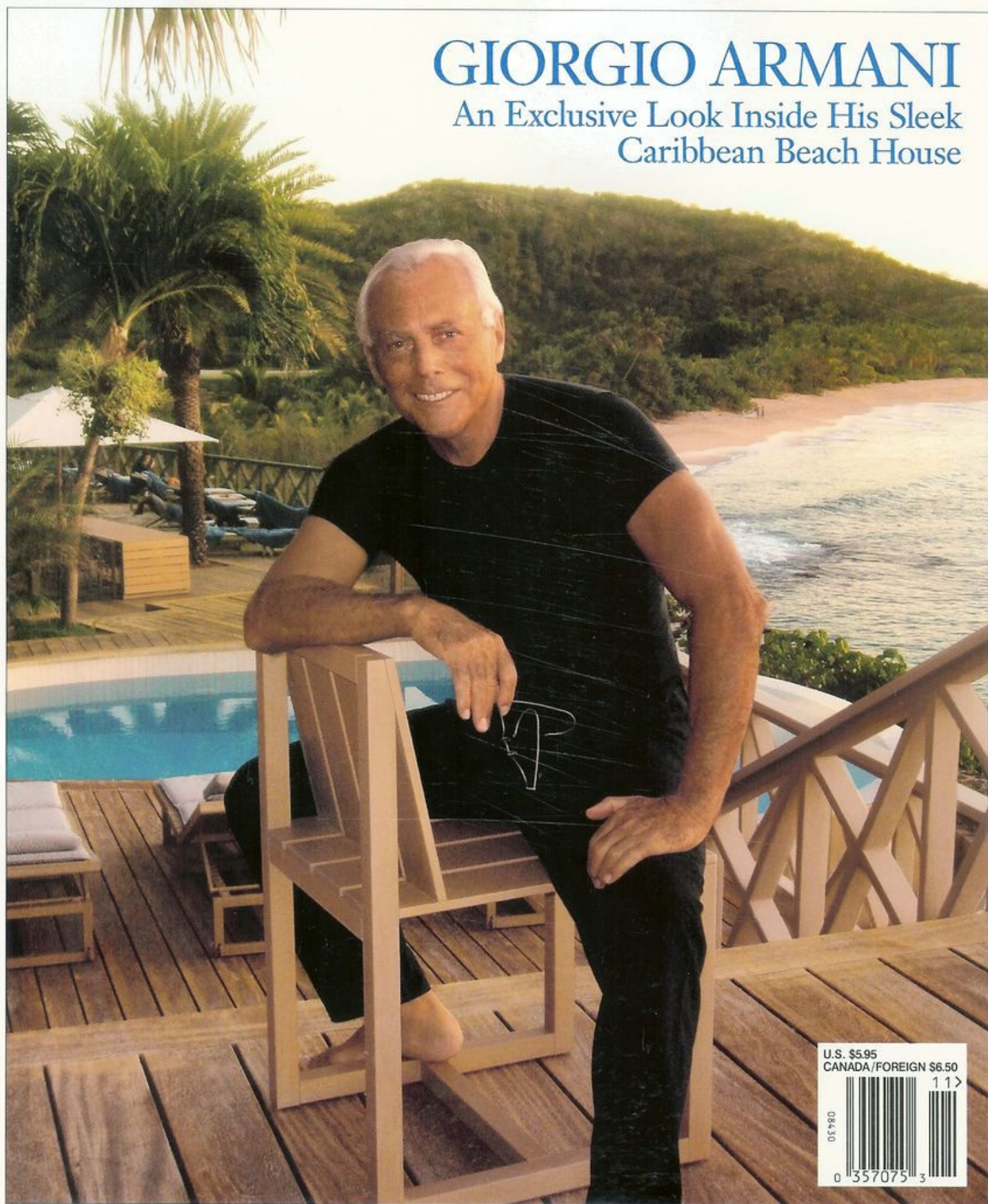
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THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

NOVEMBER 2006

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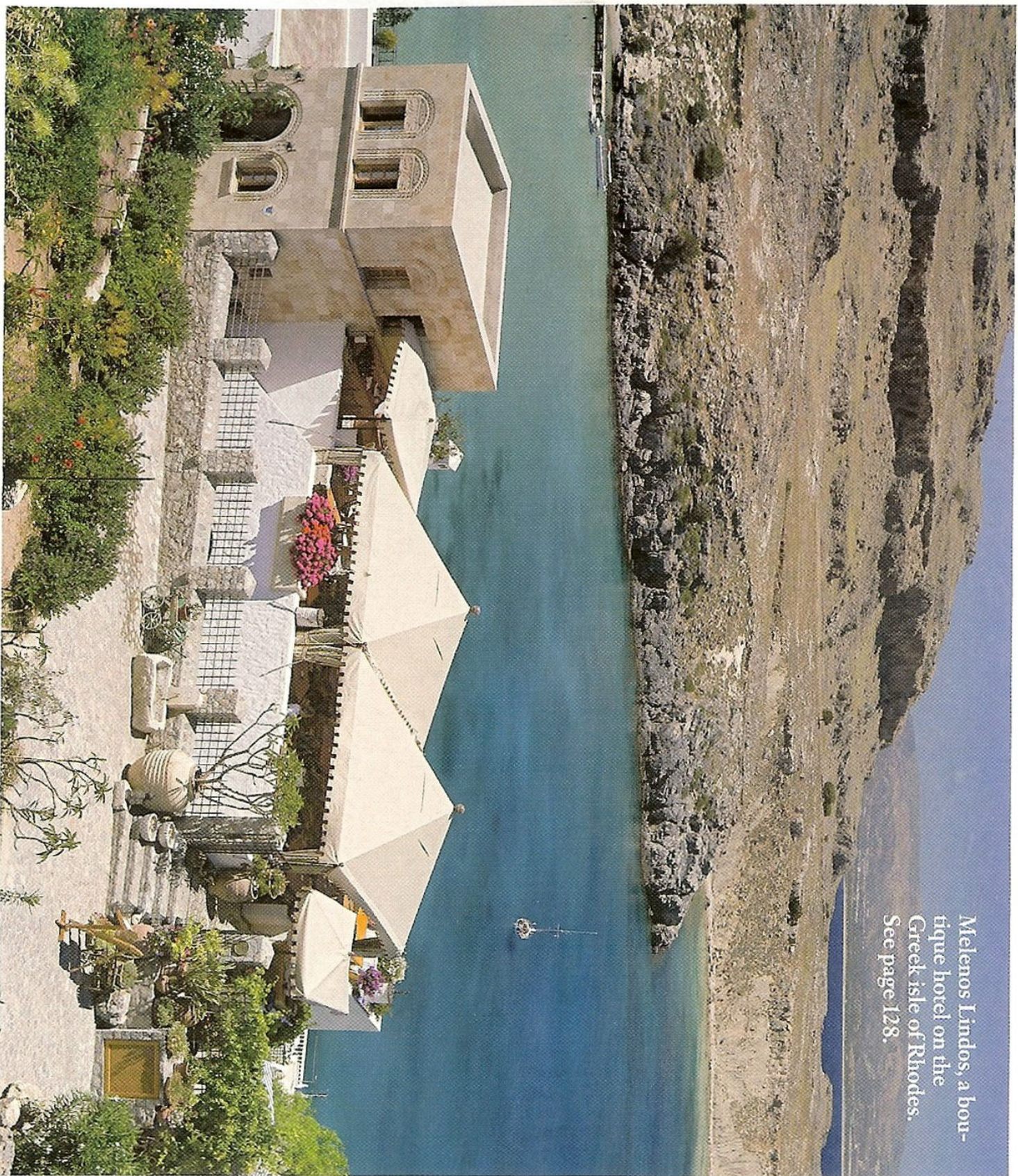


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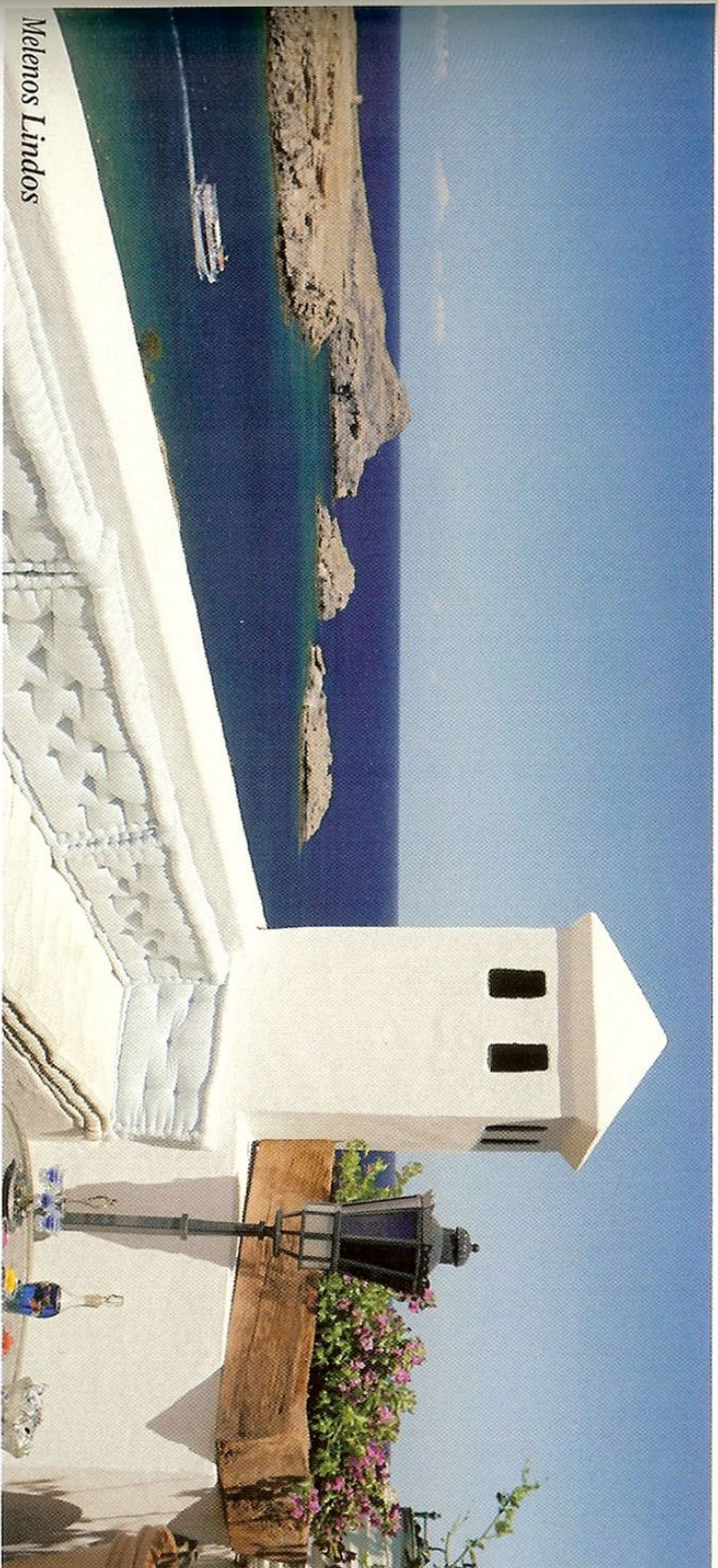
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Melenos Lindos, a boutique hotel on the Greek isle of Rhodes. See page 128.



TRAVEL: HOTELS

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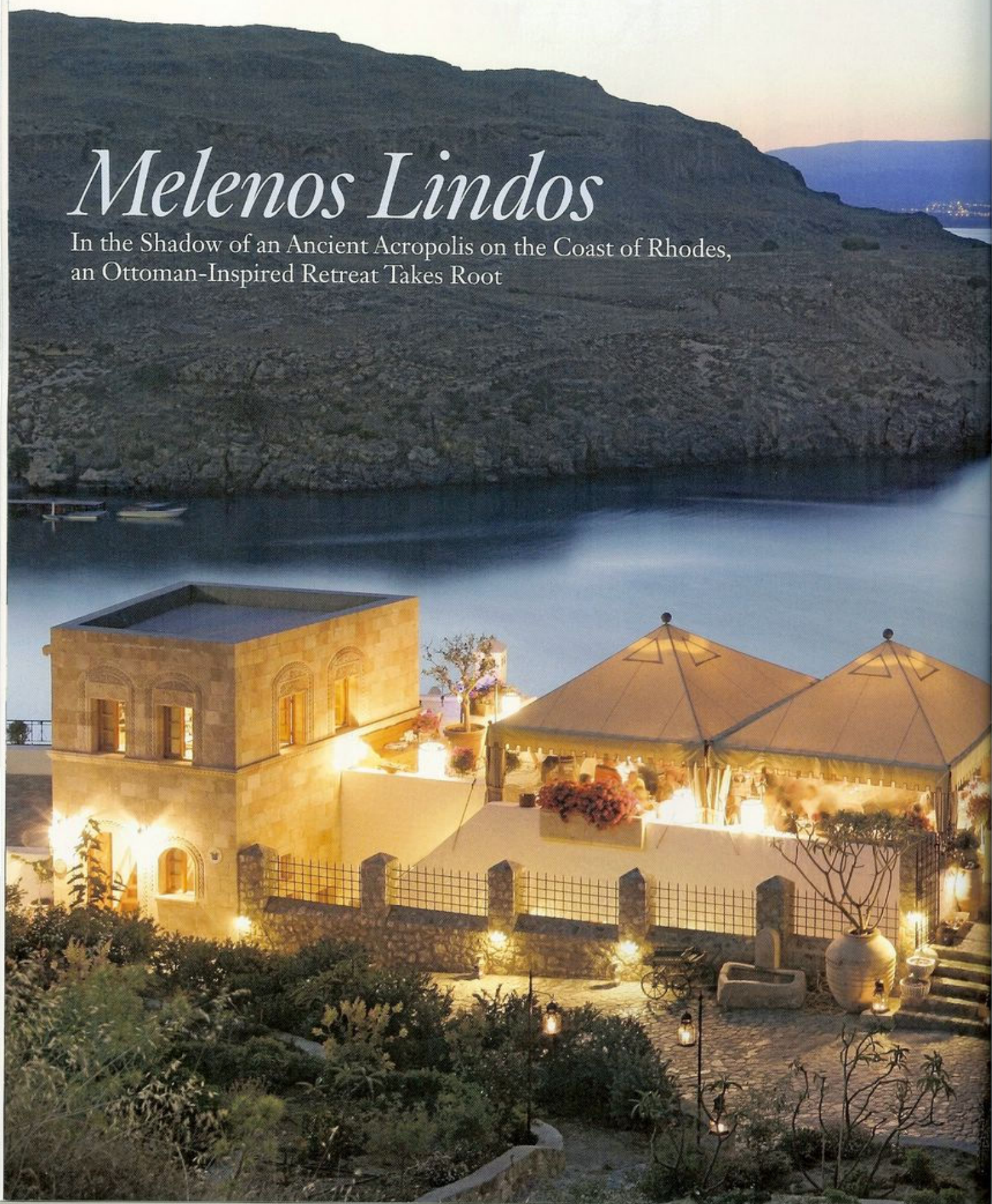


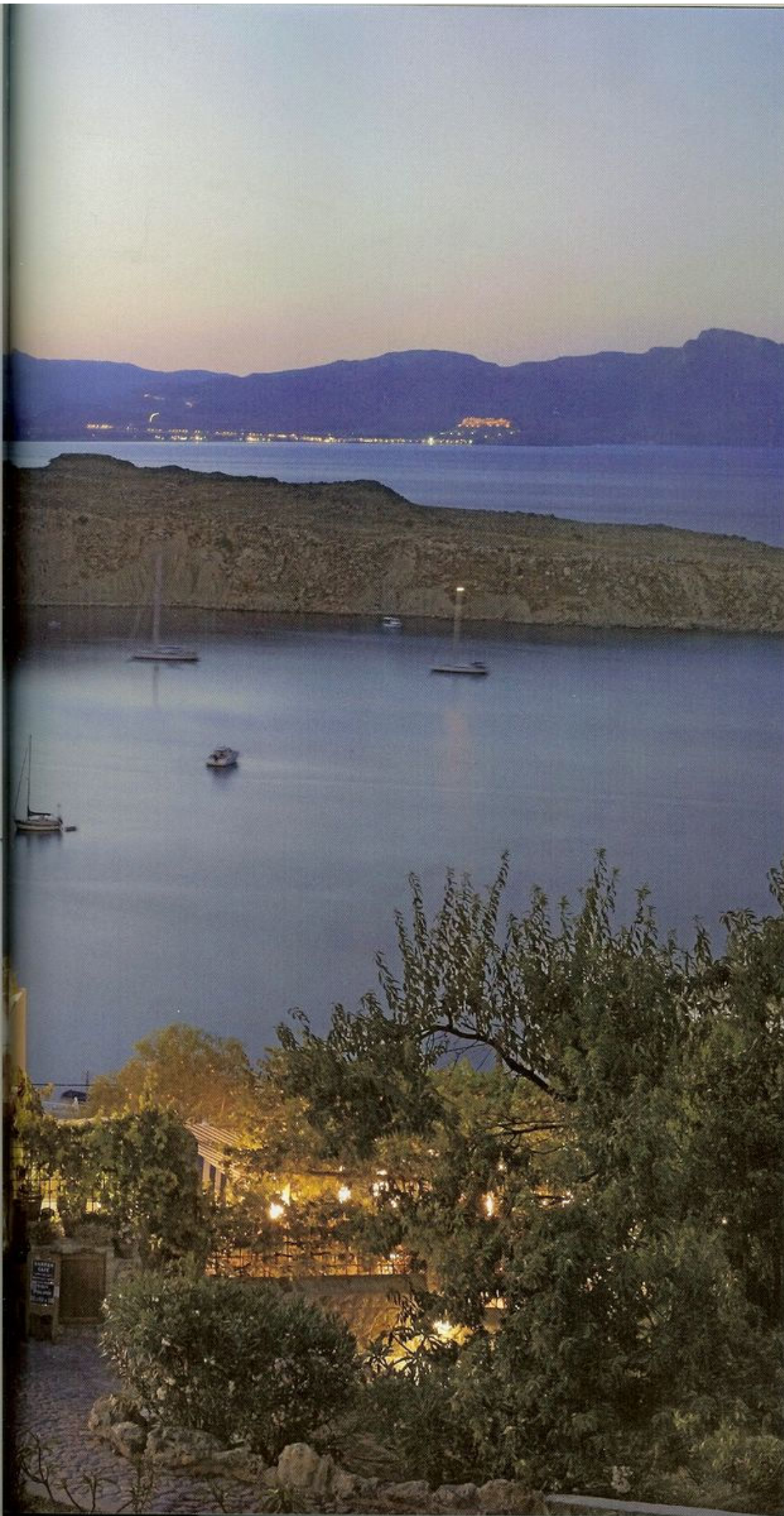
Melenos Lindos

■ GREECE

Melenos Lindos

In the Shadow of an Ancient Acropolis on the Coast of Rhodes,
an Ottoman-Inspired Retreat Takes Root





Architecture by
Anastasia Papaioanou
Interior Design by
Donald Green
Text by Christopher Hall
Photography by
Panagiotis Fotiadis

IN HIS 1953 TRAVEL MEMOIR *Reflections on a Marine Venus*, the late British novelist and poet Lawrence Durrell recalled the two years he spent on Rhodes, exploring the length and breadth of this Greek island where “the days drop as softly as fruit from trees.” In one especially vivid passage, he described a visit to the village of Lindos, a huddle of whitewashed Cubist houses clinging to a rocky slope between an imposing acropolis and a beach whose shallows “are picked out in lime-green and yellow, against the reddish, deckle-edged surfaces of stone.” With its sea-pebble-paved lanes that “rise and fall like music” and its “dazzling glitter of plaster and white-wash,” the beauty of Lindos, wrote Durrell, “is of a scrupulous Aegean order, and perfect in its kind.”

Michalis Melenos has lived virtually his entire life in this village, which Durrell thought might well be “the official beauty-spot of Rhodes.” Over the years he has seen Lindos

The Melenos Lindos hotel on the historic Greek island of Rhodes is a magical complex of terraced buildings and tented patios with striking views of Lindos harbor. Beyond the peninsula are the Aegean Sea and the Rhodian coastline.



ABOVE: The top floor is the hotel's main restaurant, which has a private dining area that seats 10. **LEFT:** In the reception area, proprietor Michalis Melenos, a longtime resident of the island, and designer Donald Green filled a ceramic Turkish pot with Greek shepherd's crooks.



change from a sleepy enclave of fishermen and weavers to a haunt of artists and celebrities, as well as a highly popular tourist destination. But with the entire village protected as a national historic landmark, its outward character has remained essentially intact. Despite the fact that nearly three million people visit Lindos each year, its spare architecture and spectacular natural setting and its lofty acropolis of ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Crusader ruins can still captivate.

Nowhere is that more evident than at the 12-suite hotel Melenos spent nearly 13 years creating on land that he inherited at the quiet, eastern edge of the village. Laid out by Rhodian architect Anastasia Papaioanou, the cluster

of buildings, jasmine-scented courtyards, citrus gardens and wisteria-shaded arbors rests on a series of terraces, which are supported by massive retaining walls built with gray-marble bedrock removed during construction. "I wanted the hotel to feel like a village within a village," says Melenos, who founded the town's tourist information center and worked there for 16 years before starting his hotel project in the early 1990s. "I wanted a place that reflected the traditions of Lindos while offering all the modern comforts."

To transform his vision into reality, Melenos turned to a friend, the Australian-born artist and designer Donald Green. "I worked very closely with Michalis," says Green,

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ABOVE: Beyond the crisp white and sandstone buildings of the hotel, designed by architect Anastasia Papaioanou, is the island's acropolis, an archaeological site dating back to the 9th century B.C. RIGHT: Vibrant embroidered textiles and ceiling paintings animate a corner of a guest room.



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who first met Melenos in the 1960s. "Our aim was to produce a sympathetic rendering of the unique architectural style and traditional materials of Lindos, from white, lime-washed surfaces and rock walls to local sandstone, richly painted wood ceilings and *chochlakia*, the black, white, pale gray and red mosaic pavements made with large, smooth pebbles from a beach just south of town."

For inspiration, Green researched the village's striking 17th-century sea captain mansions, which were built during an era when Lindos was a prosperous trading port. For the hotel, he adopted such el-

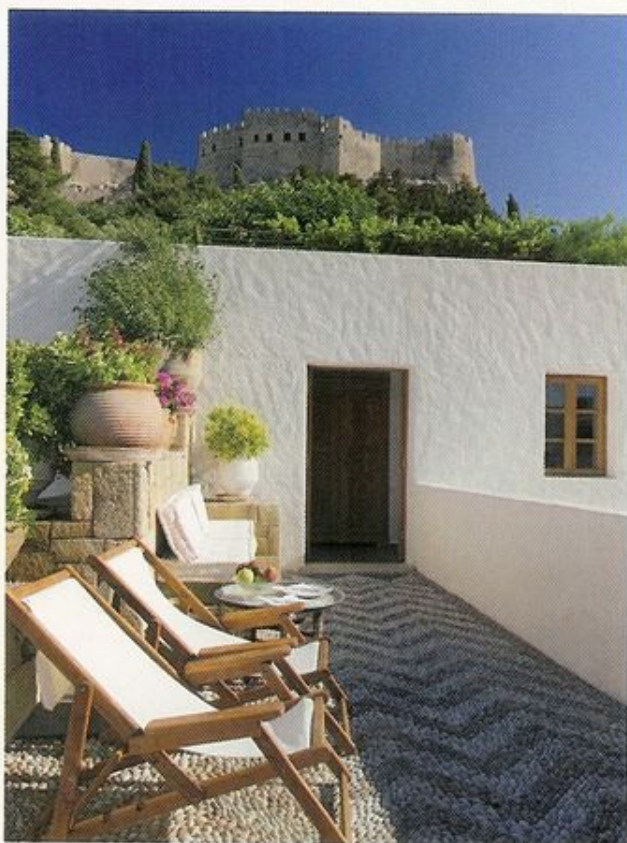
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Like all the outdoor areas, a spacious terrace shared by several guest rooms is artfully paved with a traditional Lindian *chochlakia*, or marble-pebble mosaic. The design is of Islamic origin.



ABOVE: The traditional Ottoman-style sleeping platform, balustrade and cabinet, along with the cedar detailing throughout a guest room, were handmade by a local family of carpenters. Above the bed hangs the top of an early-19th-century dowry chest. BELOW: The acropolis looms over a terrace.



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ements as lintels made of local buff and ocher sandstone engraved with Byzantine crosses and twisted-rope borders, pointed arches reflecting both Gothic and Moorish influences and carved wood sleeping platforms of Ottoman design. "There are very few craftsmen left in Lindos who can do the old-style masonry and carpentry," says Green, "and we were lucky to have them."

Green and Melenos spent 14 months painting the decorative wood ceilings, using a combination of stencils and other hand-applied details to create a profusion of floral, bird and geometric motifs. Green also produced a wealth of original, traditionally inspired designs for wrought iron fittings, wo-

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■ GREECE



ABOVE: On an upstairs ledge, a Turkish bread mold holds ceramic balls and glass beads. Melenos and Green filled the outdoor spaces with sun-loving plants, including bougainvillea and petunias.

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ven and embroidered fabrics, lights and mirrors inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and handmade Ottoman-style bath and fountain tiles in the 16th-century Iznik colors of coral, turquoise, ultramarine and black.

Most of the artifacts woven into the hotel's décor are regional, among them 19th-century Uzbek embroidered textiles, a pair of Armenian wedding helmets festooned with silver coins, Turkish *hamam* basins and massive oil vessels that now overflow with vivid magenta bougainvillea. A fair number of the objects, including Greek pressed-metal ex-votos and pine and cypress shepherd's crooks, came from Melenos's own collection. "I began collecting things as a child without exactly knowing why," he says. "After a few years I thought, I'll use all of these in a house I'll build someday. But I had no idea the house would turn out so big."

The hotel's most prominent public space is the upper terrace, which serves as an out-

door restaurant. There, under the open sky or in a tented pavilion strung with lanterns, diners gather at the end of a day spent swimming at the beach, exploring ruins or sunning on a private terrace. It's a prime spot for experiencing Lindos at sunset—that hour, according to Durrell, when "dazzling spokes of silver spread out for a moment on the blue, as if from some great lighthouse." Before you, a rocky promontory, Lindos bay and the Aegean Sea slowly recede into darkness; behind and above you, the illuminated ramparts of the acropolis glow against an inky sky. "Sunset is perhaps the most magical time in Lindos," says Melenos. "It always reminds me why I live here." □

Melenos Lindos

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