

Reminiscences and Revivals

Reimagining the public square in Istanbul under coups d'état

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While Istanbul has been presented in both popular literature and marketing discourses as a bridge and a meeting point between East and West, after the Gezi upheavals beginning in May 2013, emphasis was put on Istanbul's dual character as an urban space. In line with the political events of the time, the city was considered as an arena in which Islam would conflict with secularism, or that different ethnic groups and social layers would not cooperate but struggle in search of identity.

Whether considered as products of hegemonic political relations or simply places to stroll around, during these manifestations urban spaces turned into arenas triggering the remembrance of past societal meanings and codes. Paradoxically though, despite the changes undergone since its erosion caused by successive demolitions, it emerged that for some Taksim Square, one of Istanbul's pivotal urban places, was no longer an undefined square illustrating the worn-out idea held by architects and city planners that it is an unplanned, leftover space. Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to focus on the semantic values of monuments, and the meaning which public spaces and main arteries acquired in the minds of the city's inhabitants, after the political events that occurred between the years 1950–80, mainly comparing three monuments in Taksim Square and the twenty sculptures put up in the city for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Republic.

These years, framed by three military coups, were experienced as traumatic years. On the one hand the city underwent drastic changes, and on the other there were labour movements organised for instance by the Revolutionary Workers' Union (DISK), as well as upheavals of opposing factions in universities and boycotts, in addition to the effects of the oil crisis on the market economy. After focusing on Taksim to underline the different meanings which the concept of the public space acquired in time, this chapter will discuss monuments and sculptures as representatives of the clash between authorities, whether political or educational.

Also, some of the different implications of the concept of modernism or modernisms in the history of art in Turkey will be presented. Mainly because in academia, Turkish architectural history writing was focused on political and ideological discourses, the city has hardly been associated with modernism and modernity until recent writings and surveys. Or in other words, in line with such an approach, the city was left in the shade of the Republican capital city Ankara, and moreover, it appeared as its antithesis. Coupled with the style called Westernisa-

tion, and emptied from its European counterpart which was grounded in a radical rethinking of the discipline of architecture in the context of profound historical, social, and technological transformations as Bozdoğan suggests, the notion of “modern architecture” has been evaluated as the bearer of the Republican project.¹ In the early narrations, what is meant by modernism is the top-to-bottom and state-sponsored projects of Turkish modernisation, mostly charged with positive aspects of progression.

Another misinterpretation is related to the style called Westernisation. Starting from the 18th century onwards Westernisation, suggesting the aspiration for a European lifestyle, is closely related to Istanbul and is loaded with pejorative connotations. In the narratives handed down by art history, Westernisation went hand in hand with modernism and modernity, although this style was associated with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. What was meant between the lines was an imported kind of modernism. According to the architectural historian Doğan Kuban for instance, Istanbul is neither the West of the Industrial Revolution nor the West of the Enlightenment but the West of the Islamic world, and that is why the city of Istanbul and its social texture is inhabited with intertwining complexities.² Citing Uğur Tanyeli’s book entitled *Istanbul, 1900–2000: Konutu ve Modernleşmeyi Metropolden Okumak* dated 2004, Bozdoğan and Akcan believe that the historian is an important precedent in dismantling the Eurocentric meta-narratives.³ The same change concerning the detailing of the project of modernity occurs in the writing of art history too. Therefore, instead of proposing a new set of principles and canons, throughout the chapter we will try to decipher the kind of modernisms proper to the design of edifices and sculptures defined as entities and products of common memory and identity, and try to see whether Istanbul offered some specificities.

Taksim: From inclusive public spaces to spaces of fragmented discourses

The differences between the *meydan* and the defined enclosure that is the square have to be explained in order to understand the evasive character of the public space, the public sphere as the impalpable traits lately attributed to modernism. Each writer has his own interpretation of the notion known as urban or public space, placing it in different time intervals. For Doğan Kuban, the concept of an inner city square seen in the Western world from the Greek agora onwards did not exist in Ottoman-Turkish urban history, and social life took place around the mosque situated next to forums which were remnants of the Byzantine city.⁴ The

¹ Bozdoğan, Sibel. “The Predicament of Modernism in Turkish Architectural Culture: An Overview”, In *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Resat Kasaba, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997, 135.

² Kuban, Doğan. *Istanbul Yazıları*, [Essays on Istanbul], ed. Doğan Kuban, (Istanbul: Yapı Endüstri Merkezi Pub., 1998), 224.

³ Tanyeli, in taking issue with writing the history of modern Turkish architecture primarily from the official and canonic examples of early Republican Ankara, argues that there is a lesser-known Turkish modernism for which we must turn to the metropolitan experience of Istanbul (Bozdoğan, Sibel and Akcan., Esra. *Turkey, Modern Architectures in History*, (London: Reaktion, 2012), 298).

⁴ Kuban, Doğan. “Meydanlar”, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi [Istanbul Encyclopedia]*, 1994, vol. 5, 432 and Güngören, Elâ. “The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)”, *Cities’ Identities Through Architecture and Arts: First International Conference on Cities’ Identity Through*

lack of the planned square in the sense we understand today, not integrated with a religious compound, lasted until the end of the 19th century.⁵ According to these analyses, public urban spaces were large open areas situated around mosques and *külliyes*. The same is true for the characteristic of the *meydan*, which is a secular space in contrast to holy spaces and which, as opposed to the notion of control reflected in squares, is about flow of both people and space; yet, this flexibility is also what makes the *meydan* so changeable.⁶ The public space is also defined in the context of Prost's responses to the notion of *espaces libres – serbest sahalar* or *kamusal mekân* in Turkish referring to more than squares, promenades, kinder gardens and entertainment spaces. The terminology covers both the public sphere and public space.⁷

Bordered by the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (1946–69, 1977), which became an icon of secular architecture, the Gezi esplanade (1940–44), the Intercontinental Hotel (1973) and the *maksems* (1732), Taksim and its urban space is today open to many interpretations. Taksim derives its name from the *maksems*, or the old Ottoman word for the waterways, leading to the square. On the one hand, its urban spaces were evaluated as having a binary character in reference to Henri Lefebvre's recognition of the duality of the modern city. Considering that the struggles in the 1960s and 70s had made their imprint on it, it would become synonymous with socialist ideology and the labour movement.⁸ On the other, as the contemporary Swiss architect Peter Zumthor described the public space from a phenomenological approach, it exemplified a shift from the universalist aims of left-wing politics to the fragmented discourses on the politics of identity.⁹

The bipolar interpretations of the modernity of Taksim Square and the Republic's ideology, spread itself to the polemics concerning monuments too. This view can best be exemplified by the discussions having been raised around Giulio Mongeri's and Pietro Canonica's collaborative design, the Republic edifice (1925–28) in Taksim.¹⁰ This fountain-monument which would be installed in Bayezid Square, was in time labelled as an example for the First Nationalist Style.¹¹ Execu-

Architecture and Arts, 2018, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London, 540.

⁵ Kuban, Doğan. *Istanbul Yazıları*, [Essays on Istanbul], ed. Doğan Kuban, (İstanbul: Yapı Endüstri Merkezi Pub., 1998), 157; Göktaş, Cavhar. *Istanbul'da Çağdaş Kent Heykeli Uygulamaları*, unpublished *Master's thesis*. (MSU: İstanbul, 1998), 108.

⁶ Baykan, Ayşegül and Hatuka, Tali. "Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space: Taksim Square, 1 May 1977, İstanbul", *Planning Perspectives*, (vol. 25, no. 1, Routledge), 52.

⁷ Bilsel, Cânâ. "Espaces Libres: Parks, Promenades, Public Squares...", in *From The Imperial Capital To The Republican Modern City: Henri Prost's Planning of Istanbul (1936–51)*, ed. Cânâ Bilsel and Pierre Pinon, (İstanbul: Mas, 2010), 337–348; Akpınar, İpek. "Remapping İstanbul: Taksim after Gezi", *The Case of Beyoğlu, İstanbul Dimensions of Urban Re-development*, *Technische Universität Berlin*, (January 2014): 34.

⁸ Gül, Murat, Dee, John and Cünük, Cahide Nur. "İstanbul's Taksim Square and Gezi Park: the Place of Protest and the Ideology of Place", *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 38(1) (2014), 69.

⁹ Baykan and Hatuka, "Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space", 49–68; Zumthor, *Architektur Denken, Dritte Erweiterte Auflage*. Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel, 2010, 12.

¹⁰ For a historical reading of Taksim see Yıldırım, Birge and Erdem, Arzu. "Taksim Meydanı'nın Cumhuriyet'in Kamusal Alanı Olarak İnşası", *tasarım+kuram*, vol. 11(19), (2015), 100–101; Born in İstanbul, Mongeri (1875–1953) was an Italian Levantine architect who had completed his architectural education at the Academy of Brera in Milan, whereas Canonica (1869–1959) had been trained as a sculptor at the Albertina Academy of Torino. Mongeri had come back to İstanbul in 1900 to work as a freelance architect until 1930.

¹¹ The term generally refers to the main orientation of late Ottoman Turkish architecture between 1908 and 1931. Because the style had revivalist features, it was further considered with the Second Nationalist Style (1940–50) to be at the origin of Post-Modernist tendencies by Turkish scholars. Nowadays in parallel to the rehabilitation of Eclecticism based mainly on the recognition of its creativeness thus

ted in Italy with the help of Ali Hadi Bara (1906–71) and the first Turkish female sculptor, Sabiha Ziya Bengütaş (1904–92), it portrayed the awakening of a nation in the midst of war and peace. After its completion, political and professional arguments based mainly on nation-state discourses around its destruction, its transportation or its transformation were debated by architects of the time.

Monuments in the Ottoman city and iconoclasm

Although the public urban space was a major concern in the reshaping of former Byzantine squares and the construction of mosques, nevertheless the use of sculptures within the square is said to be a missing feature especially compared to Rome.¹² As Istanbul was the former Constantinopolis, the capital city of the Eastern Roman Empire, historical studies concerning the shaping of its outdoor spaces or the types of its buildings up to its administrative organization are narrated in comparison to Rome,¹³ as Constantine had allegedly rebuilt the city in the image of a New Rome. Yeşilkaya, in line with the narratives developed around East / West, Islamic / secular and traditional / modern dualities, posits that apart from monumental architectural constructions and ‘urban armatures’,¹⁴ the Ottoman traditional urban space did not have monuments before modernisation.¹⁵ In fact, the concept of modernisation and Westernisation went hand in hand with the concept of modernity in these narratives, as already explained above. Whereas Kuban places Westernisation around the reign of Mahmud I (1730–54), for Çelik the years 1838–1908 were more significant.¹⁶

From the 18th century onwards, the fountain as an elemental component of the Ottoman city and its surrounding is accepted as a ‘public space’.¹⁷ Moreover ‘column-fountains’, located in the courtyards of the mosques or placed on piers, are evaluated as having been designed as monument-sculptures. Within the ideology of mirroring European cities, they were conceived as edifices replacing the four sided and façaded square fountains.¹⁸ Examples are multiple public foun-

authenticity, this tendency is considered as an example for early modernism, namely by Batur for instance (Batur, Afife. “Türkiye Mimarlığında Modernite Kavramı Üzerine”, *Mimarlık*, no. 329, (May–June 2006), 50–53).

¹² Also see Güngören. “The Changing Image of Istanbul Through its Monuments (1923–1973)”, 540.

¹³ On this subject the reader may consult Kuban, Doğan. *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 527–547.

¹⁴ Mårtelius notes that this expression is a concept describing the role of monumental public structures he borrows from William L. MacDonald (1986) Mårtelius, Johan. “The Süleymaniye Complex as the Centre of the World”, *ITU/z*, no. 2 (July 2015), 50.

¹⁵ Yeşilkaya, Nuran. “Osmanlı’da ve Cumhuriyet’te Anıt-heykeller ve Kentsel Mekân”, *sanatdünyamız*. no. 82 (Fall 2002), 147 and Güngören. “The Changing Image of Istanbul Through its Monuments (1923–1973)”, 541.

¹⁶ Kuban. *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 432; Çelik, Zeynep. 19. *Yüzyılda Osmanlı Başkenti: Değişen İstanbul*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1998), 32; It should also be noted that whereas Kuban and Çelik assumed that reforms concerning the rationalization of roads, the making of squares summed up under the general heading of Westernisation had begun with the Tanzimat (1839), Yerasimos advanced that the lack of a systematic urban organization was the consequence of a diversity in the application of decrees dating back to 1696 for example more than their nonexistence. For further reading see Yerasimos, Stefanos. “Tanzimat’ın Kent Reformları Üzerine”. In *Modernleşme Sürecinde Osmanlı Kentleri*, ed. Paul Dumont and François Georgeon, (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), 1–18.

¹⁷ For example for Kuban. *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 157 and for Akpınar, “Remapping Istanbul: Taksim after Gezi”. The Case of Beyoğlu, Istanbul Dimensions of Urban Re-development”, *Technische Universität Berlin*, (January 2014), 35.

¹⁸ Pilehvarian, Nuran. Urfalıoğlu, Nur. and Yazıcıoğlu, Lütfi. *Çeşmeler*, (İstanbul: YEM, 2000), 29. Taktak, Yusuf. “Türk Resminde Mimari”, *Yeni Boyut Plastik Sanatlar dergisi*, (February 1984): 17.

tains which were moved from one place to another with the advent of modernist precepts. Such is the case for example with the Abdülhamit Han fountain (1901) by the Italian architect Raimondo d'Aronco (1857–1932), which was removed from its original place during the Menderes demolitions (1956–60) in Tophane. While the appearance of the sculpture as an independent feature within the urban context covers the period from Baroque to the 19th century, the appearance of fountains as isolated monumental sculptures and the focal point of a square in Istanbul start with the modernisation of the Ottoman Empire.

The lack of figurative sculpture is related to the practices and beliefs of Islam, but also of extrapolations out of the Koran through its misinterpretation. To illustrate people's reaction towards sculptures, Pelvanoğlu mentions the removal of the sculptures portraying Pagan gods such as Artemis, Apollon and Heracles which Sadrazam Ibrahim Paşa brought from Budapest on his return from Hungary in the 16th. century.¹⁹ However, it should also be noted that iconoclastic attitudes had been experienced during the Byzantine Empire in the 8th and 9th centuries, when icons became the object of an officially encouraged cult, often implying a superstitious belief in their animation, resulting in their official prohibition in 730 under Leo III.²⁰

Whatever the various reasons for the intolerance to sculptures seen under Ottoman rule, when in 1951 sculptures representing Kemal Atatürk were vandalized and demolished, the Turkish National Parliament prepared an act protecting the leader's image, and therefore his memory. A Democrat Party deputy in Izmir, the famous intellectual Halide Edip Adivar (1884–1964), protested that this act would reduce the leader's position to that of an idol, and fossilize his revolution. It would mean the death of democracy.²¹

Modernisms in art

The fact that the main feature of the history of plastic arts was a multitude of modernisms, had been emphasized by the art historian Semra Germaner. In her words, a discussion on modern art in Turkey cannot speak of a continuity of artistic or intellectual movements and related progress as seen in the West, but rather of artists and groups, propelled by innovations in France and Germany at the turn of the 20th century, which succeeded in attaining unique interpretations.²² Within this context, the art of sculpture had undergone such an evolution that it was no longer possible to detect and decipher its evolution in traditional or modernist lines.

¹⁹ Pelvanoğlu, Burcu. "Anıttan Çağdaş Alan Uygulamalarına Kamusal Alanda Heykel", Accessed 22.01.2017: www.sanalmuze.org/sergiler/view.php?type=1&artid=569.

²⁰ Anonymous. "Byzantine Empire", In *Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia*, vol. 3, (University of Chicago, 1978), 558. It should further be underlined that whereas the extent to which the Iconoclast emperors like Leo III destroyed Christian images is debated, these images featuring in churches rather than public places, the emperor is attested to have destroyed Pagan statuary in public places.

²¹ Yazıcı, Duygu. "Tanımadığımız Halide Edib", *Cumhuriyet Dergi*, No. 806, September 2, 2001, 3–7. This legal code protects the leader's tomb as well. In case of disobedience, the offender faces imprisonment as a penalty. Criticized by the EU during negotiations with Turkey since it was evaluated as an obstacle to freedom of expression, the code is still valid today.

²² Germaner, Semra. "Türk Sanatının Modernleşme Süreci: 1950–1990", In *Modern ve Ötesi: 1950–2000*, (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi 178, 2008), 1.

The monument stripped from its ideological character and turning into an aesthetic entity had a starting point, and for Pelvanoğlu the seminal date was 1973,²³ while Göktaş situated it around the 1960s²⁴ with the construction of the Manifaturacılar Retail Center (1959). The complex is considered as one of the earliest shopping malls and an example of ‘mat urbanism.’ The 1970s were years in which the art of sculpture witnessed mainly two lines of development; a more traditional rhetoric was pursued in monument design whereas sculpture design was more modern. In parallel while referring to war memorials, Özel points out to the fact that until recently Turkish sculptors made radical differentiations between ‘monuments’ and ‘sculptures’. Although the art of sculpture became open to abstract, modernist and international styles after the 1950s, monuments have always projected a ‘national’ value, and thereby were designed according to descriptive and figurative principles.²⁵

Together with Turkey’s transition into the multi-party political arena in the 1950s, new stimuli arose in the fine arts with the formation of the group called the Turkish Grup Espas in 1955. This artistic formation differed from the French Groupe Espace (founded in 1949), because of its different conceptions when it came to the spatial qualities of works of art as their coming together in an exhibition.²⁶ Although Çalıkoğlu proposes that the Turkish Grup Espas held a broader perspective, promoting involvement in all spheres of everyday life from objects to living spaces²⁷, in order to be able to make a neutral statement on the matter, one should examine the evolution of the Groupe Espace and study the reasons lying behind its dissolution and its discordances with the Groupe Mesure.²⁸

Concerning architecture and the efforts to break monotony, Turkish Modernism sought originality in the ‘integration of plastic arts’. Whereas hotels and cultural centres were by their nature more likely to include works of art as a way of expressing local or national distinctness, the integration of architecture with the plastic arts appears to have been widely embraced in the 1950s and 60s to add aesthetic quality and a certain degree of civic-mindedness to otherwise utilitarian or commercial modern buildings, from hospitals to shopping centres.²⁹

On the one hand the city was ready to accept new international artistic trends, while on the other it still respected and kept alive its traditional values and

²³ Pelvanoğlu, Burcu. “Anıttan Çağdaş Alan Uygulamalarına Kamusal Alanda Heykel”.

²⁴ Göktaş. *İstanbul’da Çağdaş Kent Heykeli Uygulamaları*, 25.

²⁵ Özel, Kerem Mehmet. “An Evaluation of the Design of Turkish War Memorials in the Context of Architecture-Sculpture Relationship”, *14th International Congress of Turkish Art*, ed. Frédéric Hitzel, (Paris: Collège de France, 2013), 557.

²⁶ Apart from Ali Hadi Bara the group was composed by İlhan Koman (1921–86) and the architect-urban planner Tarık Carım (1923–99) and lasted till 1959. Carım was educated in Paris, had worked in Jean Prouvé’s office and entered the Academy of Fine Arts to become an instructor in the City Planning Department in Istanbul. For further reading on the Turkish Groupe Espace and the Kare Metal see Yavuz, Ezgi. “Designing the Unity: Türk Grup Espas and Architecture in Postwar Turkey”, In *METU JFA*, vol. (32:2) (2015/2), 117–132. Also see Güngören. “The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)”, 541.

²⁷ Çalıkoğlu, Levent. *Ali Hadi Bara.*, trans. Ahu Antmen, (Istanbul: AXA Oyak Sanat Galerisi, 2000), 25.

²⁸ For a further reading see Wiesinger, Véronique. “La Synthèse des Arts et le Groupe Espace”. In *Abstractions En France Et En Italie 1945–75 Autour De Jean Leppien*, edited by Musées de Strasbourg et Réunion de Musées Nationaux, (Paris: Musées de Strasbourg, 1999), 116–135 and for the discordances between the French Groupe Espace and the Groupe Mesure see D’Orgeval, Domitille. “Groupe Espace-Groupe Mesure, une Histoire de la Synthèse des Arts dans La France des Années 1950 et 1960”. In *L’Esthétique Constructiviste de 1951 à 1970*, (Paris: Galerie Drouart, 2010), 12–45.

²⁹ Bozdoğan, Sibel and Akcan, Esra. *Turkey, Modern Architectures In History*, (London: Reaktion, 2012), 131.

historical memory. In a way, the general cultural atmosphere and organization of its urban spaces was symbolic of the bipolarity of the Cold War years. For example, Herbert Read's visit to Istanbul in 1954, the year the Chamber of Architects was founded and two years after Turkey's admission to NATO, is cited as an important instance in artistic development by the abstract painter Adnan Çoker (b. 1927) who traces the crucial moments in the history of sculpture mentioning Koman's collapsible mobile shop, which he designed on his return from Paris in 1955.³⁰ Çoker also attracts attention to the influential exhibition where Norbert Kricke's iron sculptures were shown in the Istanbul Şehir Galerisi, bringing answers to the young Acar's quests on the matter.³¹

Sculpture as an arena for political and ethical debates

Whereas in the second half of the 70s installation artists were influenced by Pop Art and Minimalism, exhibitions called Yeni Eğilimler (New Tendencies) were organized under the Istanbul Art Festivities. In 1972 a commission called the Board for the Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Turkish Republic, headed by the mayor of Istanbul, was convened to set up fifty monuments in the city as part of a broader project in cities all over Turkey. However, out of these fifty, only twenty could be erected, mainly because of financial problems.³²

The edifices were to be installed jointly by the Municipality, the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts and the State School of Applied Fine Arts. The only prerequisite was that the sculptors did not have to treat historical subjects but rather their work had to represent Turkish art and their own personality. Whereas some had figurative features like Nusret Suman's (1905–78) concrete sculpture, *Mimar Sinan*, placed next to the Municipal Building (1953) in Sarıçhane labelled as in a postwar International Style, the majority were abstract art designs (fig. 1). In fact, 1955 had been evaluated as a turning point in Turkish sculpture in its direction towards abstraction.³³



Fig. 1. Hüseyin Anka Özkan's 'Soyut: Yankı' (Abstract: Echo), Gümüşsuyu Park, 1973. Photo by the author.

³⁰ Çoker, Adnan. "Soyut Heykel", *Yeni Boyut Plastik Sanatlar Dergisi*, 1982, 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³² On this occasion in 1973 a Committee of Fine Arts was founded. As it could only cover half of the expenses, the financial support of the County Celebration Committees was needed for its decision to become reality. Because the County Committees had chosen to allocate funds for ornamentation and lighting elements, the number of sculptures was limited to twenty. And even for these sculptures, some sculptors had to spend money from their own pockets (Antmen, Ahu. "The Body In Turkish Culture And The 'Beautiful Istanbul' Event", *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.8, no.30 (Autumn 2009), 369.)

³³ See Müridoğlu, Zühtü. "50 Yılda Türk Heykeli", *Akademi*, no. 8 (1974), 133.

For the first time, a political leader such as Atatürk was not chosen as subject matter. For instance, Duyar's cast concrete *Güzel İstanbul* (Beautiful Istanbul, 1974) portrayed the city as a reclining naked woman.³⁴ Symbols such as the pomegranate were used to illustrate the city's legends. According to a rumour, because the nude woman in Karaköy pointed her head towards brothels, the Ministry of the Interior decided that it disgracefully represented Turkish mothers, and that the artistic value judgement of the Turkish people could not yet accept such a sculpture, and so it remained in place for only nine days and was then exiled to an obscure corner of the garden of Yıldız Palace.

Meanwhile, the country's political agenda totally changed with the Cyprus operations in July 1974. Along with Necmettin Erbakan, the fundamentalist Islamist deputy prime minister of the coalition party MSP and the Ministry of the Interior who objected to the sculpture, the president of the School of Fine Arts Feridun Akozan declared that it had been made without the knowledge of the Academy. And according to the newspaper *Sabah* dated 21 March 1974, it was thus not recognized as a product of major art.³⁵ Therefore the sculpture turned into an arena where political and moral ideologies collided as illustrated by Akozan's 'ethical' rejection. The same Akozan was held responsible by the critique and historian Ünsal for the legitimization of the demolition of ancient buildings under prime minister Menderes, namely because of his controversial article on the legislations of the preservation of historic buildings entitled *İstanbul'un İmarı ve Eski Eser Kaybı* printed in 1977 by the Academy.³⁶ The conservative character the school supported was to come out later, especially in the way Basic Design courses (1969–82) had been abolished, after the successive deaths of its founders and appliers.³⁷

Within the spirit of 1968, in 1969 the Basic Art Education Department was established with the aim of reforming art education. In fact, the course had been apprehended as a challenge to the school's traditional gallery system. Accordingly, after the military coup in 1980 and with the advent of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) in 1982, it was removed from the curriculum along with the abolition of the Basic Art Education Department it was affiliated to. As a result, the instructors in majority of Turkish Leftist tendency, were forced to resign from the university. And despite the early death of the painter Altan Gürman (1935–76) in 1976, one of its founders, the course turned out to be formative for a generation

³⁴ Like Ali Teoman Germaner (1934–2018) and Kuzgun Acar (1928–76), Gürdal Duyar (1935–2004) had been Belling's (1886–1972), Bara's and Müridoğlu's student at the Fine Arts in İstanbul. He was commissioned to make sculptures by Beşiktaş Municipality in the 90s, and he executed the bust of the poet Gunnar Ekelöf (1907–68) standing in the gardens of the Swedish Consulate in Beyoğlu, İstanbul circa 1993. In collaboration with Duyar, the architect Erkal Güngören (1934–2002) had designed a curved iron plate on which the relief was mounted. For further debates on the monuments see Antmen. "The Body In Turkish Culture", 366–375.

³⁵ 5 Harfliler. "Ah, Güzel İstanbul!" November 06, 2013, www.5harfliler.com/ah-guzel-istanbul (accessed 12 January 2017) and Antmen. "The Body In Turkish Culture", 370; Trained as an architect, Feridun Akozan (1914–2007) worked in the Academy, from 1941 until his retirement in 1983.

³⁶ Altunyıldız, Nur. "The Architectural Heritage of İstanbul and the Ideology of Preservation", In *History and Ideology: Architectural of the "Lands of Rum"*, Muqarnas, Vol. 24, (2007), Brill. 303. Behçet Ünsal (1912–2006) had taught architectural history in the Academy in 1954–82, where he studied architecture in 1928–33.

³⁷ On this subject see Ardaman, Emel. and Güngören, Elâ. "İDGSA'da Temel Sanat Eğitimi Ortak Atölye Deneyimi ve Mimarlık Eğitimi", *mimar.ist* 19, no. 41, (September 2011), 24–30.; Germaner, Ali. "İDGSA Reform Çalışmaları Kapsamında Yeralan Temel Sanat Eğitimi Dersi ve Uygulandığı On Yıllık Süre (1970–1981) Üzerine", In *Bauhaus: Modernleşmenin Tasarımı*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), 341–346.; Köksal, Aykut. *Anlamın Sınırı* (İstanbul: Mas Matbaacılık A. Ş., 2009), 139–140.

of conceptualists (fig. 2). By coincidence, 1976 was the very year Albers passed away too.



Fig. 2 Altan Gürman's 'Montaj 5' (Montage 5), 1967. Photo by the author.

Belling's student Kâmil Sonad was the creator of yet another classical beaux-arts style sculpture, in the form of a naked woman called *Nü*, installed in the Gülhane Park next to Topkapı Palace. Contrary to Duyar's daring expressive sculpture, Sonad proposed a well-balanced placid figure. Although it is no longer standing in its original place because it was removed in 1984 during the rearrangement of the park, it must have been accepted and considered as fulfilling the canons of the authorities which the Fine Arts still represented at the time.

In fact it was not only Duyar's sculpture that became a place where political and moral ideologies collided, the Süngü/Kasatura monument and Ismail Hakkı Öcal's sculpture, *Abstract* (1975) commissioned by the Intercontinental Hotel (1977) were themselves symbolic of the opposing, conflicting and antagonistic yet intersecting political and artistic views of the time as riots enveloped Taksim on May Day 1977.³⁸ The bayonet-like edifice was placed on the square in remem-

³⁸ The demonstration was organised by the Revolutionary Confederation of Labour Unions. From the aspect of the politics of place, celebrations on 1 May extended beyond Taksim's geographical boundaries. Going back in history, mass demonstrations celebrating 1 May as Labour Day were allowed between 1910 and 1912 under Ottoman rule, and in 1921–1923 and 1976–1978 during the Republic (Baykan. and Hatuka. "Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space", 58).

branch of the military coup of 27 May 1960 and was dismantled by another military régime in 1980 (fig. 3).³⁹



Fig. 3. The figurative kasatura or bayonet-like edifice on the foreground with AKM (1956–69, 1977) behind, Taksim. Hayati Tabanlıoğlu Digital Archives, Istanbul, 1977. © SALT research.

Although Öcal's sculpture had no connection whatsoever with the workers' march nor was it commissioned by local governments, it was associated by ordinary people with the killings in 1977 known as the bloody May 1st. Every year, people lay carnations in remembrance of the massacre during which thirty-four people were shot and many more injured. The street where hundreds of people fled in panic, Kazancıoğlu, is parallel to the street where the abstract sculpture stands today. The installation was chosen from among 450 propositions and its connection to social and political upheavals was only coincidental, as the reason behind its creation was only ornamental. It was planned to embellish the hotel, similar to Koman's sculpture (1968), which now stands in front of the Divan Hotel.

Another installation, a three-piece vertical statue representing music, dance and drama, was designed by consultant Johannes Dinnebier for the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (fig. 4). He was responsible for lighting fixtures, the design of the façade and the lighting of the stairs in the lobby of the cultural compound. This edifice was synchronic and representative of current international artistic trends, as it was a smaller version of a three-piece sculpture, he had previously designed for the Cultural Centre in Wolfsburg by the renowned Finnish modernist architect Alvar Aalto (1898–1976). Because of its disproportionate relation to the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, it never achieved the effect of balance it was expected to fulfil.⁴⁰

³⁹ "Taksim'deki Süngü Heykeli Niçin Dikilmişti?", *Dünya Bülteni*, accessed: 08.11.2017. [www.dunyabulteni.net/haber/195224/taksimdeki-sungu-heykeli-nicin-dikilmisti-/](http://www.dunyabulteni.net/haber/195224/taksimdeki-sungu-heykeli-nicin-dikilmisti/)

⁴⁰ In an interview Dinnebier (b. 1927) explains how the vertical statue came to being: "A large statue I designed for the front of the façade was too expensive, so it could not be made. We could not find the materials in Turkey. Later Hayati tried his luck with a three-piece sculpture I had designed. It was 18 m. high and made from rustproof metal. However due to the lack of funds, the sculpture was made too short and too small to be used in front of the façade", accessed: 10.11.2017, soundcloud.com/saltonline/johannes-dinnebier-eng.



Fig. 4. The edifice by Dinnebier symbolizing music, dance and drama (right) in front of the AKM (left). Hayati Tabanlıoğlu Digital Archives, Istanbul, 1977, © SALT research; Courtesy of İsmail Hakkı Aksu.

Art in the service of people and the issue of social realism

The student upheavals in France, which started in 1966 and culminated in May 1968, also had repercussions in Turkish universities. Utarit Izgi⁴¹, is known to be among the professors to have prepared the second reform (1969) in the Beaux-Arts' history in the aftermath of its occupation for four to five weeks by students. He was the Head of the Department of Architecture when leftist students started boycotts in June. These boycotts ended peacefully without the intervention of the police, after they earned the right to be active participants within the Student Re-

⁴¹ An architect and studio instructor at the School of Fine Arts in Istanbul, Izgi (1920–2003) was especially remembered by his saying 'Saint Sophie über alles' among his students (Güngören, Elâ. "Bauhaus'un 100. Yılında İDGSA'da Temel Tasar[ım]ın Zihinsel Haritaları", *mimar.ist* 19, no. 65, (May 2019/2), 76).

presentative Board and the Administrative Committees among other requirements. These students were in the majority of the Marxist tendency. At the same time, students in Middle East Technical University in Ankara protested against the American capitalist system.

Some themes which conditioned the arts and architecture in general in the 1970s were nationalism/internationalism, the search for a national culture and for folkloric traditions and revolutionist art serving the people of the street. In this decade within the framework of socialist art, the *l'art pour tout le monde* stance was sought, its interpretation changing from one artist to another. The period also saw the timid appearance of what would later be called conceptual art.

In the frame of the implementation of sculptures to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Republic, Muzaffer Ertoran (1922–2007) was among artists who worked along this socialist stand. He designed a figurative work called *İşçi* (The Worker) in Tophane, installed near the housing building for the Institution for Providing Jobs and Employees (İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu) upon Vedat Nedim Tör's and Mustafa Aslıer's proposition. For him, workers who had gone to Germany had started to have their share in the improvement of the Turkish economy.⁴² Attacked by fascists at the end of the 1970s, the statue embodied a worker holding a sledgehammer. Next to his widely spaced feet was also placed a wheel. It had been executed in a particular style echoing the Soviet workers' cult in the 1930s, recalling the art of monumental propaganda. Repeating a certain conventional approach to intentionally portray the ideals of Communism, it was hence the only statue among the propositions taking on a stylistically monumental character, as Ahıska demonstrates.⁴³ After two successive incidents in 2010 and in 2011, the sculpture resurfaced in the collective memory, before its complete removal in 2012 by the Beyoğlu Municipality.⁴⁴ It might be considered as an example, to illustrate the fact that identity politics in the 1970s were largely built upon a critique of Capitalism and class structure.

Made out of wrought iron, Kuzgun Acar's assemblage *Soyut Heykel* (Abstract Sculpture, 1973) was placed in Gülhane Park (fig. 5). In a retrospective on Acar, we read that in line with the principles of the *functional sculpture* which he pursued from 1967 onwards, he had aimed his work "to interact with the user in a natural environment so that they would approach and hang their belongings on the structure, and eventually realize that it was a sculpture which would become an integral part of their purposes and their life".⁴⁵ It disappeared after being dismantled by the Directorate of Parks and Gardens in 1975. Acar was convinced that gravestones were the first monuments of Islam and that abstraction had reached its peak over a period of 600 years.⁴⁶

⁴² Göktaş. *İstanbul'da Çağdaş Kent Heykeli Uygulamaları*, 51.

⁴³ Ahıska, Meltem. "Monsters that Remember: Tracing the Story of the Workers' Monument in Tophane, Istanbul". *Electronic Journal of Redthread*, no. 3, (2011), 16.

⁴⁴ According to Ahıska, on the night of 15 March 2010, in collaboration with the Yeni Sinemacılar and Hazzavuzu art group, the artist collective called Hafriyat organized an art event that aimed to 'steal' the Worker, to create awareness about its presence. Thus it was aimed to document the responses from the public and state institutions, as well as all forms of related news, documents and information. However, the residents of Tophane, noticing that there was some activity around the monument, stopped the artists and claimed back their broken monument. So that albeit a 'failure', the art event enjoyed media coverage, bringing back its image. The other incident was prime minister Erdoğan's speech on the Humanity Monument in Kars which had repercussions on the Worker (ibid. 5–6).

⁴⁵ Ural, Murat. "Kuzgun Acar, Bir Heykeltraş Bir Öncü", In *Kuzgun Acar Restrospektifi*, (İstanbul: Milli Reasürans Sanat Galerisi, 1997), 13.

⁴⁶ ibid., 15.

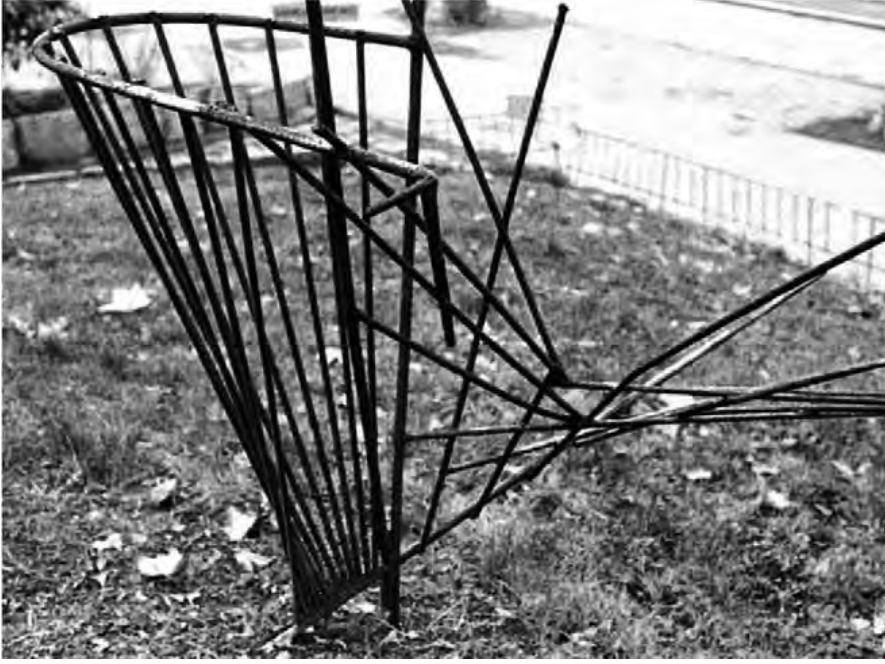


Fig. 5. Kuzgun Acar's 'Soyut Heykel' (Abstract Sculpture), 'the functional sculpture' in interaction with the beholder. Güllhane Park, 1973, wrought iron. Giray, 2009, 4; Courtesy of Kıymet Giray.

Another sculpture again named *Soyut Heykel* (Abstract Sculpture) was conceived by Ali Teoman Germaner⁴⁷ and installed in Bebek (fig. 6). This well-proportioned sculpture, made out of a concrete inner structure covered with copper and wood, had been executed at the scale of children because it was installed in a children's playground. In an interview, Germaner stated, "I don't like when people shout at each other while talking, and it is the same with the sculpture. People come here to rest and get into contact with my sculpture. It should not look down at them".⁴⁸ He underlined that his work aimed at avoiding the imposing proportions of the classical ideological edifices representing the hegemonic character of the political power in place.⁴⁹ For him, modernity lay in the fact that there was a mission for the Republic to invest in future generations. "We had to become modern, not to fall behind" stated Germaner who further stressed that there was also the common effort to search for our roots and identity, in his case the Mesopotamian or the Hittite cultures.

The search for roots manifested itself in the vertical tombstone which Zühtü Müridoğlu (1906–92) called *Dayanışma* or Solidarity, made out of concrete and installed in Fındıklı Park. The sculpture was a column, with a height of 4 m. and spiral abstract calligraphic reliefs on its main body, referring to the former Byzantine capital's urban components such as obelisks, as well as the Ottoman tomb-

⁴⁷ Ali Teoman Germaner (1934–2018) better known as Aloş, distinguished monuments from sculptures and had been known to be the first sculptor to question the traditional concept of the monument with the Fatih monument which won the first prize in 1972 but was never executed (Antmen, "The Body In Turkish Culture", 128–129). This monumental arrangement had a circular configuration similar to Stonehenge.

⁴⁸ Göktaş, *Istanbul'da Çağdaş Kent Heykeli Uygulamaları*, 40.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 39. Also see Güngören. "The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)", 543–544.

stone tradition in line with his faith in his nation's creativeness⁵⁰ and his known admiration for tombstones in Ahlat.



Fig. 6. Sculpture by Ali Teoman Germaner called 'Soyut' (Abstract), Bebek Park, 1973. Photo by the author.

Like Müridođlu and Germaner, Ferit Özşen (b. 1943) had searched for connections with the city thanks to his work called *Yağmur* (Rain) placed at the entrance of Bebek. Taking his place among a younger generation of sculptors, Özşen later reproduced İlhan Koman's famous sculpture *Akdeniz* (The Mediterranean, 1978–80) for the Turkish Expo Pavilion in Hannover in 2000, and he restored it in April 2017. Along with Füsün Onur (b. 1938) he made a fresh entry to Istanbul's artistic milieu.⁵¹

Füsün Onur is a key figure in understanding the change in the influence of the 'West' on the arts. Although her later production is labelled as 'local' because she is seen as an artist who reflects Istanbul on her work, the West was no more France, but the USA. Prior to the foundation of the Art Definition Group in 1977, Altan Gürman and Füsün Onur grounded their artistic productions on the critique of modern painting and sculpture and thus constitute the emergence of conceptualist tendencies.⁵² Selected by the commission of the Board for the Celebration of the

⁵⁰ See his article on the roots of abstraction Müridođlu, Zühtü. "50 Yılda Türk Heykeli", 133 and Güngören. "The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)", 543.

⁵¹ As Duyar, Onur had been Ali Hadi Bara's student at the Academy from 1956 to 1960. She extended her artistic education in the USA, in Maryland Institute College of Art, from 1963 to 1967.

⁵² Erdemci, Fulya. "Breaking the Spell, Re-routing". In *Modern ve Ötesi: 1950–2000*, (Istanbul: Bilgi

50th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Turkish Republic, Onur designed an abstract geometric construction called *Isimsiz* (Untitled, 1973). Carried out in aluminum, with a height of 3 m., it was installed in Fındıklı Park. The minimalist installation consisted of five narrow frame-shapes, serried according to size and connected on one side to make a continuous crossbeam.⁵³ This piece embodied the concept of the door, of the passage from one place to the other. More than the virtual representation of the door itself, it invited the beholder from being a passive receptor, to participate in the reconstruction of the space which evolved around it, allowing him/her to pass through the installation.

Synchronically the Istanbul Association of Sculptors organized a counter-exhibition at the Taksim Art Gallery in June of the same year entitled “Nude”, in which many artists participated in protest against the restriction of the freedom of art which, there at least, had reached the level of a public debate.⁵⁴ Despite receiving the abovementioned official commission, Onur took part in this counter-exhibition. She produced a small object having Pop-Art features, protesting the scandal concerning Duyar’s *Güzel İstanbul* mentioned above. While describing Onur’s answer, Brehm points to the fact that the object consisted of a naked pin-up doll, a western sex symbol, found in the rear window of thousands of cars in Istanbul. The doll highlighting the discrepancy between the official moral directives and reality, reflected Onur’s way of working with social reality.⁵⁵ This statuette made out of wood, glass and mirror is considered as the first feminist reaction in art history in Turkey.⁵⁶ As such for the first time in the 1970s, the problem of womanhood had been expressed in a way which was intermingled with Marxist sociologist ideology. Moreover her answer to the abomination concerning Duyar’s contribution is a direct reflection of the turn towards politically connoted problems of identity, in the arts in the 1970s.

Conclusions

In the 1960s, there was a radical shift from classical academic figurative representations in favor of abstract tendencies in sculpture. Although the 1970s witnessed examples of installation art in the hands of conceptual artists such as Daniel Buren, Joseph Beuys or Matta Clark taking art into the streets, apart from artists mentioned above and some exceptions, sculptures implemented in Istanbul were not spatial enough and could not relate organically to their surroundings as they could not free themselves from their pedestals. Thus, they never attained the characteristics of land or installation art. Nevertheless, it should also be stressed that in Turkey, in the 1970s trends such as conceptual, minimalist and feminist art started to make their appearance. These years were also marked by the opening of the first commercial galleries in Istanbul, enabling to establish ties with the international art world.

According to Erdemci it is not coincidental that figurative/representational art, due to its predisposition to narrative, was more readily connected to the ideological

Üniversitesi 178, 2008), 261.

⁵³ Brehm, Margrit. *For Careful Eyes*, (Istanbul: Mas Matbaacılık A. Ş., 2007), 50.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁶ Berksoy, Funda. *Heykelde Beden İmgeleri, Türkiye’de Toplumsal Dönüşüm ve Sanat (1923–2007)*, İstanbul: MSGSÜ, 2012, 81.

apparatus, and more easily understood or accepted by the masses. In this respect, abstract art has played a significant role in detaching art from the ideological discourse in Turkey; thus, making it autonomous.⁵⁷ Although this observation has some truth in it, the appropriation of the sculpture by the citizen is strongly connected with its political and thus social significance regardless of its creator's method or style. The meanings and codes the user or the individual attributes to a sculpture do not necessarily coincide with what critics desire the public or the individual to experience and sometimes they are independent of the fact that a sculpture is figurative or abstract. Furthermore, to assume that the crowds, the masses or people in a space are merely bodies of people gathered in a certain space, is to reify and de-historicize them through giving a static essence to their mere being.⁵⁸

Most of the design of monuments and parks had to be interrupted and although creative projects were prepared by way of competitions, only a few saw daylight and survived. But at large, the official monument ceded its place to a more reachable kind of design and subjects in line with the free will of the artists.⁵⁹ Concerning sculptures implemented within the city, the architect had a minimal role in their creation and implementation, or no role at all as compared to, for example, the monument to the Republic assigned to Canonica and Mongeri in Taksim.

Although scarcely visible in the physical world or in outdoor designs, the cooperation between artists, architects and engineers had its reflection in discussions such as the subject of monumentality/scale relations or the architectural space in painting. Along with interdisciplinarity, parallels between architecture, painting, and sculpture concerning the scale or the spatial dynamics of the painting were drawn, namely in Çoker's work.⁶⁰

Abstraction in sculpture and painting – geometric abstraction and abstract expressionism – was experimented on, and as sculptors and architects designed monuments together outside Istanbul, the monument gained abstract features and came close to what Krauss defined as land art,⁶¹ though never fully attaining it. In Istanbul, this was seldom the case. Instead, the sculpture and modernism's introvert self-reference made its appearance so much felt that the city became the scene for a kind of a museumification, to borrow the term from Akpınar,⁶² although today's city exhibits socially a more segregate and secluded character compared to the 1970s, as can be exemplified by Koman's sculpture *Akdeniz* (fig. 7). The sculpture was moved twice before its final placement under the shelter of the newly rehabilitated Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Merkezi (2017) by Teğet after it was attacked in 2014 by a group protesting Israel's politics in Gaza, and was thus ready to become an object for commodification. According to one of its designers Kütükçüoğlu, the rehabilitated building was planned in response to the Atatürk

⁵⁷ Erdemci, "Breaking the Spell, Re-routing". In *Modern ve Ötesi: 1950–2000*, 257.

⁵⁸ Baykan and Hatuka. "Politics and Culture in the Making of Public Space", 56.

⁵⁹ Güngören. "The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)", 544.

⁶⁰ See Güngören's interview with Çoker on the spatial qualities of his paintings (Güngören, Erkal. "Adnan Çoker'le Resimleri Üzerine Söyleşi." *Çevre-Mimarlık ve Görsel Sanatlar Dergisi* (July–August 1979): 91–93); Taktak analyzing the architectural aspect in Çoker's paintings had concluded that the painter worked on Ottoman and Seldjukid architecture attaining "architecture-framing-monumentality and symmetrical tension" (Taktak, "Türk Resminde Mimari", 17).

⁶¹ Krauss, "Mekâna Yayılan Heykel", *Sanat dünyamız*, vol. 82, (2002), YKY, 105.

⁶² Akpınar mentions the concept while thinking of the Taksim of Erdoğan in 2006, in her words researchers who depict Istanbul as a "show city" enclosed by a consumption culture believe that the integrity of the city is slowly being fragmented. An 'islandisation' as well as a 'museumification' is occurring, and the process excludes certain social classes (Akpınar, "Remapping Istanbul: Taksim after Gezi", 33).

Kültür Merkezi (AKM), the destruction of which has caused fierce political debates lately. The placement of Koman's sculpture *Akdeniz* in the new building in Galatasaray might be considered as an homage to Koman, as the building itself is an answer to the AKM endangered because of its emptying by the authorities. Whatever the attitudes of the attackers, the endeavour to encapsulate works of art intended for the public can be evaluated as another way of creating otherness among the people of the same nation, even more so considering Koman's thoughts underlying the main design criteria shaping one of his masterpieces.



Fig. 7 İlhan Koman's 'Akdeniz' (the Mediterranean) under the shelter of YKKSM (2017), Galatasaray. Photo by the author.

In short, if placelessness is a kind of modernism as Krauss advances concerning land art, it can be argued that the displacement/migration of edifices from place to place within the city in late modern Istanbul can be considered as a spontaneous or unintentional, or better a coincidental kind of modernism.⁶³ This probably has to do with the characteristics of our era. As Akay put it: “We live in an era of multiple and different modernities; we problematise and debate it as such”.⁶⁴ So, instead of late or post-modernism, belated and fragmented modernisms were the outcomes of the years between 1950 and 1980, concerning arrangements of the public domain.⁶⁵

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⁶³ See Güngören. “The Changing Image of Istanbul Through Its Monuments (1923–1973)”, 544.

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⁶⁵ I would like to express my gratitude to Olof Heilo for his invaluable help, especially for his advices on Byzantine history and namely for the information in footnote no. 20.

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