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Examining “Eclectic”, “Kitch” “Neoclastic” and “Orientalist” architectural production methods on university structures

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Abstract

Postmodern architectural products that can be described as kitsch have become rapidly consumed objects because they have appealed to the whole society. As a demand stimulating, easily comprehensible, and rapidly consumable product, kitsch has gained an important place in postmodern culture and architecture. These features of kitsch have easily made it a paradoxical part of consumption culture. After the Neoclassical boom in the 18th century, architectural movements such as Eclecticism, Orientalism, and Historicism became widespread in the 19th century. Towards the end of the 20th century, these tendencies came to the fore again within the Postmodern paradigm, and new kitsch architectural structures have begun to be produced in these undertakings in accordance with the spirit of the period. Eclecticism which has become prominent again in postmodern architecture has been referred to as neo-eclecticism or eclectic populism and has been defined as a style that ‘complexity, uncertainty and contradictions’ are expressed, ‘references from history and symbolic elements are used. Together with various historical forms in the postmodern period, orientalist images have been also used. Images consisting of stylized views of the Western culture on the Orient and that are not based on an authentic eastern depiction have been used in the production of orientalist architectural form.

In recent years, eclectic, kitsch, orientalist, neoclassical forms that are independent of context and time have been frequently encountered in architectural applications in also Turkey. On one hand, elements from Turkish culture have been used and on the other hand, architectural elements from foreign cultures have been preferred. It is seen that there have been contradictions between form and meaning in educational structures built in Turkey during the period that the paradigms of the Postmodern era have been dominant. In this study, it is aimed to read and analyze the concepts of kitsch, eclecticism, neoclassicism, orientalism in the postmodern paradigm on recent university buildings and campus portals. In line with this purpose, an extensive literature research was conducted within the scope of the study; in the case study, recent university buildings and portals were analyzed in terms of postmodernism, the historical periods and architectural elements they derived were determined.

Keywords: Postmodernism, kitsch, eclecticism, neoclassicism, orientalism, university structures and portals.

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1. Introduction

Postmodern architecture is an architectural theory emerging as a reaction to Modern architecture, modern urban practices, and International Style embracing a modern aesthetic that can be characterized as detached from the public, abstract, elitist, monotonous, anonymous, and functional (Joedicke, 1980, 25–41; Jencks, 1991). The concept of postmodernism, which started to be used in fields such as philosophy, sociology, and literature in the 1960s, also found a place itself in architecture in the 1970s. Postmodernism, which was a widespread and valid architectural movement in the early 1980s, lost its prestige and began to be criticized due to its negative characteristics in the late 1980s (Güzer, 1996 7-11). The fragmented character of postmodernism has seen old and local architectures as a repertoire of forms, in contrast to modernism's desire to create holistic, universal architectural values and its attitude that rejects historical forms. It has created eclectic styles in which design codes were blended by hybridizing the elements derived from ancient Greece, Rome, and Medieval, also movements such as romanticism and neoclassicism, even modernism itself and local culture with techniques such as pastiche and collage. With the view that art and architecture consist of repetitions; an eclectic, devoid of integrity, derivative, ruleless, chaotic, and imaginary structures in which forms are used haphazardly by detaching them from their contexts and times they belong to has emerged (Jencks, 1991; Trachtenberg and Hyman, 1986; Giddens, 1998, 28; Eagleton, 1999, 9,10; Lyotard, 1994, 9; Featherstone, 1996, 28; 1995, 26). In the postmodern era where truth is reproduced, architecture has become a simulation.

After 1960, in Turkey, multi-faceted searches in architecture began, with the emergence of new political, social, cultural, and economic situations. Economic and technical problems caused worldwide postmodern trends to reach the country only after the 1980s. After that, a style developed in which historical forms have been common. On one hand, elements from Turkish culture have been used and on the other hand, architectural elements from foreign cultures have been preferred. It is seen that there are contradictions between form and meaning in educational structures built in Turkey during the period when the paradigms of the Postmodern era were dominant.

In this study, it was aimed to read and analyze the concepts of kitsch, eclecticism, Neoclassicism, and Orientalism in the postmodern paradigm on today's university structures and campus portals in Turkey. For this purpose, literature research was conducted first, and then the architectural equivalents of the concepts of kitsch, eclecticism, neoclassicism, and orientalism which appeared in earlier periods in art history, but were also accepted in postmodernism, were studied. In the case study, university structures and portals showing historical, neoclassical, Orientalist, kitsch, and eclectic characteristics were analyzed and the period and architectural elements they emulated were determined.

2. Postmodern architectural approaches: ‘Kitsch’, ‘Eclecticism’, ‘Neoclassicism’ and ‘Orientalism’

‘Kitsch’ is a modern phenomenon that began to be seen in the second half of the nineteenth century (Kulka, 2014, 26). Its today's meaning was first used in Munich in the 1870s. It expressed low artistic value paintings that artists in Schwabing produced on request for tourists (Ergüven, 2002, 65).

Nineteenth-century modernism characterized by increased mechanization, industrialization, sprawling cities, increased communication opportunities, a growing world market, and mass movements (Berman, 2010, 32); The Industrial Revolution (Tanyeli, 1990, 105), which spread from England and Belgium to all of Europe, and the Great Migration from the countryside to the city in this process were the biggest factors that led to the birth of kitsch.

With the popularization of folk art in the eighteenth century, artists reflexively tried new styles, this trend led to an increasing elitist approach towards art in the following centuries. Modern art didn't understand the problems of the public and rejected them. Aggression began to occur among the masses who were alienated from art and began not to appreciate modern art, which became increasingly abstract. The act of literacy that distinguishes high culture and popular culture ceased to be one of the factors determining class distinction, with the spread of written works during this period. However, the working class, who migrated from the provinces to the city and could not spare enough time for intellectual activities, could not benefit from the opportunities of the city, and could not learn to enjoy the urban culture. These people who could not find the pleasure they got in the countryside, in the city; demanded from society a culture where they could have fun and understood easily with their limited financial means, and laid the groundwork for kitsch that does not require the consumer to reflect on and make inferences, directly appeals to our emotions, often uses synonymously with tastelessness (Greenberg, 1939, 39).

Undoubtedly, the production of cultural products with the qualities listed above goes back over a hundred and fifty years. Arthur Koestler, quoted by Kulka, actually mentioned kitsch when describing the tastelessness of the newly formed merchant class in the *Satyricon* written by Petronius during the reign of Emperor Nero. Kulka criticizing Koestler for making anachronism and emphasized that kitsch was a modern phenomenon (Kulka, 2014, 25). Although it has been identified with general tastelessness it was stated by Calinescu that kitsch was a modern invention. He also asserted that the spread of bad taste among the masses with developing communication opportunities posed a big problem and until the modern period, it did not have enough opportunities to be included in the system and to reach a large number of consumers (Calinescu, 2010, 265).

According to both its etymological origin and various dictionary definitions, Kitsch which is originally a German word, has been widely admired by the majority of the society and has given an aesthetic impression to its consumers but can not be included in any art movement (Riout, 2016, 583). And, it has evoked derogatory meanings such as wannabe, cheap, imitative, including low aesthetic value, ridiculous, absurd, worthless, and vulgar. However, kitsch, which is considered as a product of art in the postmodern period and is marginalized and is not accepted in modern art, is a concept that is very difficult to define and needs to be analyzed aesthetically, sociologically, and culturally.

The common feature of the objects described as kitsch is directly addressing the feelings shared by the whole society; is responding to the most basic emotional needs of the masses and creating emotional pleasure with its high emotional intensity. However, not only to get emotional pleasure but also to get mental pleasure is necessary to get a real aesthetic pleasure from a piece of art. Kitsch does not allow for a critical relationship between an object and its consumer. Without imagination and creativity, it conveys effortlessly what it means to the consumer in a way that everyone can perceive. It does not tend to go beyond universal acceptances and not gives new perspectives; it is concerned with the finished product, not the underlying ideas (Kulka, 1996, 27, 87).

One of the ways to produce effortlessly comprehensible objects that appeal to emotions is to use daily products, historical materials, and images that are in the collective memory. Kitsch responds to these nostalgic expectations by reproducing familiar, known past forms, and directly expressed what it wanted to express without using abstract meanings or symbols (Kundera, 1986, 258; Broch, 1969, 73; Rapoport, 1990, 14). In kitsch objects, the form is detached from time, context and meaning. In this aspect kitsch products which the reality that it is in and the reality that it really belongs is not the same, belong to hyperreality where the real object is replaced by their models and the seemingly real models create simulations so kitsch is a synthetic art. These features of kitsch easily make it a paradoxical part of consumption culture. Kitsch products depend on the consumers

who produce them with their cultural demands to exist. The culture industry not only responds to this demand by supplying kitsch products to the market but also increases this demand with mass media. Kitsch is not formed accidentally but it is ideologically driven by the art and culture market created by the bourgeoisie and governments.

As a demand stimulating, easily comprehensible and rapidly consumable product kitsch has gained an important place in postmodern culture and architecture. Postmodern architects legitimized kitsch in architecture with their designs and theoretical writings. Robert Venturi drew attention to the possibilities of kitsch production in ‘Learning from Las Vegas’. In this period, with its public aspect, architecture which manifested itself in every aspect of our daily life and was a vast investment field in close relationship with politics enabled kitsch production. Postmodern structures that are detached from context and period and are produced in the shape of images derived from familiar, historical symbols or objects associated with their function without representational, abstract, symbolic expressions have been described as kitsch.

After the neoclassical boom in the 18th century, architectural movements that emulated the past styles such as ‘*Eclecticism*’, ‘*Orientalism*’, and ‘*Historicism*’ became widespread in the 19th century. At the end of the 20th century, these trends became popular within the Postmodern paradigm and kitsch productions were made in these styles in accordance with the spirit of the period.

‘*Eclecticism*’ is a style in which historical genres are hybridized to create new works. The word eclectic, which eclecticism derives from, refers to new systems created by the combination of elements that are not meaningful alone. It comes from the Lydian words ‘eclecticōs’ and ‘eklegein’, which means ‘to add’ in English. In fact, it is not correct to describe it as a style. Eclecticism is a form of behavior. Although in many historical periods, different materials and construction techniques were used; structures with eclectic characteristics have been produced throughout history. For architects who returned to history in the 19th century, to create designs that had never been seen before, the merging and mixing of styles inspired them and provided freedom of expression. Eclecticism, which came to the fore in postmodern architecture at the end of the 20th century, was named neoeclecticism or eclectic populism; it has been justified by theorists such as Jencks, Venturi, and Scully. It has been defined as a style in which ‘complexity, uncertainty and contradictions’ are expressed and ‘historical quotations and symbolic elements are used’. In this period when democratic and pluralistic tendencies and the appreciation of the taste of every period are accepted, producing an architecture that everyone can understand has been one of the main goals. ‘Contradictory and surprising elements have been used together, Unusual piercing of wall surfaces, voids, flying arch stones, columns carrying nothing, distortion of scale in surprising ways’ has been used as means of production and facade has been seen as a communication tool (Korcan, 1999, 68; Dostoğlu, 1985, 20).

In this period when the gathered historical elements are used as abstract geometric forms, regardless of meaning and context, contemporary production techniques and technology are used in the buildings that are expected to meet the current needs and comfort conditions; historical elements can only be used in the facade arrangement and produced with contemporary materials (Kazmaoğlu and Tanyeli, 1986, 42) Therefore, this approach can not go beyond a fake facadism. While the sarcastic humor and parodic approaches of the postmodern period has been benefiting from history, they have turned into mocking and making fun of it without concerning about respect for history, and populist consumption objects have been produced (Tanyeli, 1988, 2; Dostoğlu, 1985, 19). With all these features, postmodern eclecticism, which is quite suitable for being a consumption tool in the culture industry, has created architectural products that can be considered kitsch.

‘Postmodern neoclassicism’, which opposes the eclectic populist understanding which produces kitsch products that underestimate history, and sets out to adopt a more elitist and classicist approach rather than a populist attitude, has fallen into some contradictions like all postmodern approaches (Tanyeli, 1997, 1507). Postmodern neoclassicism, that is nostalgically sympathetic to the historicist approaches of the 18th and 19th centuries and has seen in the works of architects such as M. Graves, J. Stirling, M. Botta, A. Rossi, R. Venturi, and M. Ungers, H. Hollein, and R. Bofill has aimed to make them understandable for everyone by using metaphor, ornamentation and abstracting historical themes. In addition to classical elements such as columns, capitals, arches, and domes unique to Ancient Greece and Rome, it has used a wide spectrum of architectural forms from Ancient Egypt and Assyria to Gothic and Mannerist architecture. Postmodern neoclassicism has become kitsch within the postmodern consumption culture as objects that ‘the bourgeois with the industrial revolution and then the new types of wealthy people of capitalism that replaced by people with a deep-rooted, aristocratic background’, consume to create an elitist image separate from the poor (Frampton, 1992, 325).

The material accumulated by the transfer of cultural images of the East to Europe created a personal and social Eastern fantasy in Europe. In the 18th century, **‘Orientalism’** was born as a colonial, political, ideological, and social discipline (Said, 1995, 4). Images consisting of stylized views of the West on the east, which are not based on an authentic eastern depiction, have been used in the production of orientalist architectural forms. Domes, pointed arches, fountains, buttresses, cornice decorations, iron and tile work stained glass have been included in the architecture as ready-made consumption products. During the use of different historical forms in the postmodern period, orientalist images have been also used. Moreover, Eastern societies also used the Western orientalist perspective in architectural products to define themselves and produced products that can be described as kitsch (Bozdoğan, 1988: 38-45).

3. Examining postmodern architectural production methods on university structures

In this part of the study, as a result of the literature research conducted, it is aimed to read and analyze the concepts of kitsch, eclecticism, neoclassicism, orientalism in the postmodern paradigm on recent university buildings and campus portals. For this purpose, the university buildings and portals showing historicist, neoclassical, orientalist, kitsch, and eclectic features were analyzed in addition to the architectural period, and elements they derived were determined.

3.1. Ankara Music and Fine Arts University

Ankara Music and Fine Arts University was established on 1 July 2017 at the campus of the old İpek University with a closed area of 23600 m² and a surface area of 54462 m². While İpek University was a foundation university established in Ankara in 2011 by Koza İpek Education Health Service Aid Foundation, it was closed on 23 July 2016 with the Decree-Law on Measures Taken under the State of Emergency. The campus area, with 4 Faculties, 1 Institute, and 1 Vocational School, has been built in a postmodern neoclassical and eclectic style.

On campus-scale, a façade layout similar to the mansard-roofed Parisian Apartments locate between the Champs-Élysées Garden and Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Élysées street is reminiscent of neoclassical urbanism practices (Figure 1, 2).



Figure 1. Champs-Élysées Street



Figure 2. Campus of Ankara Music and Fine Arts University

Entrance gates inspired by classical Greek and Roman porticoes containing elements such as columns, capitals, architraves, friezes, cornices, and triangular pediments, are used in the buildings. Columns that are not load-bearing or are made of Reinforced concrete are an obvious example of formalism (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Entrance gates inspired by the classical Greek and Roman porticoes at the Ankara Music and Fine Arts University

Venetian windows used in Palladian architecture and Renaissance architecture, mass symmetry, 17th-century mansard roofs, low reliefs, French balconies, moldings and jambs, and round Roman arches used in windows, doors, and passages are detached from context and time. The buildings can easily be described as eclectic and kitsch, due to the use of contemporary technological possibilities and construction methods as well as the historical forms that have been derived (Figure 4).





Figure 4. Facades and details inspired by Venetian, French and Roman architecture at the campus of Ankara Music and Fine Arts University

3.2. Yeditepe University

Yeditepe University campus is located on an area of 125.000 m² on the outskirts of Kayışdağı on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. It was established on 26 August 2000. The architectural concept of the 26 August campus belongs to the founder of the university, Bedrettin Dalan. The 26 August campus, which is inspired by the Seljuk architecture, has structures ranging from 5 to 12 floors and four different student hotels surrounding these buildings.

It is entered through gates to the buildings inspired by the iconic portal tradition of the Seljuk architecture reaching 22 meters in height (Figure 5). These forms are detached from time and far from the proportions of the Seljuk period works from which they are gathered.



Figure 5. Buildings with portals, cones and riwaqs inspired by the Seljuk period at Yeditepe University

The shapes of the skylights used to receive natural light on the roofs of the buildings are made in the form of a dome or a cone, and again refer to the Seljuk Period. The modern materials that are used and proportion contradictions make them appear as imitations (Figure 6). However, this technique, which was proposed as a structural solution considering the cost, strength, and flexibility properties of the material in its period, is imitated with modern materials on the reinforced concrete structure.



Figure 6. Portals, oriels and domes in Yeditepe University buildings

The structure, which can be described as ‘*eclectic*’, ‘*kitsch*’, and ‘*orientalist*’ with these features, is a good example of the relationship between the management, power, and kitsch with its concept proposed by its founder.

3.3. The Rumelifeneri Campus of Koç University

The Rumelifeneri Campus of Koç University founded in 1993 by the Vehbi Koç Foundation, which was opened in 2000, consists of 60 buildings with faculty buildings, laboratories, library, dormitories, housing, sports, and social facilities in Istanbul Sarıyer on an area of 25 hectares. The complex which emulates the ‘*Traditional Turkish House*’ and the ‘*Second National Architecture*’ movement which is stylized with the characteristics such as wide eaves, moldings, and oriels is the work of the Iranian-American architects Mozhan Khadem living in Boston (Figure 7, 8).



Figure 7. Traditional Turkish House-like building facades in Koç University Rumelifeneri Campus

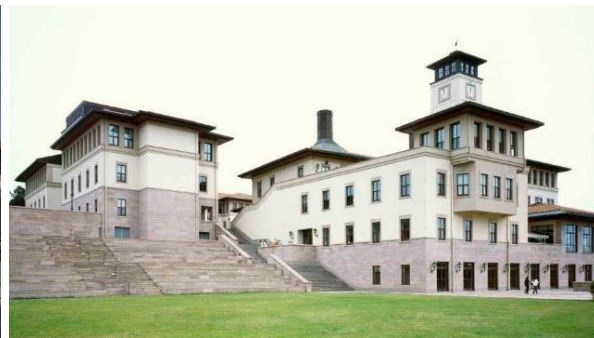




Figure 8. Buildings with windows inspired by Traditional Turkish House, oriels, eaves, buttresses, at Koç University Rumelifeneri Campus

3.4. Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University

The construction of the Faculty of Political Sciences of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, which was established on 21 July 2010, was completed in 2016 in Çubuk. Pointed arches with the tile coverings, moldings, low reliefs on them, the corner towers which differed from the facade and designed as high and protruding refer to the First Turkish National architectural style. The portals at the building’s entrance emulate Seljuk and Ottoman architecture. However, the exaggerated proportions and the modern materials used reveal a *‘kitsch’ and ‘facadist approach’* (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Buildings of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Faculty of Political Sciences

In Etlik campus named as National Will Building of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University (Figures 10), there are Rectorate, School of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Health Sciences, Sports Sciences. In this building, round arches, Bursa arches used together with modern forms and at the entrance gate the buttresses under the moldings, wide eaves referring to historical forms, sub-eaves buttresses, columns have referenced to second National Architectural period.



Figure 10. Buildings with arches, buttresses, and eaves and portals at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University

3.5. Hacı Bektaş University

Hacı Bektaş University founded on May 17, 2007, is a state university in Nevşehir. It suggests that its origin goes back to the madrasah established by Nevşehirli Damat İbrahim Pasha in the first quarter of the 18th century. Portals, windows that take up less space on the facade, terrace roofs, stone façade coverings, moldings resembling wooden beams in stone structures refer to the public Seljuk buildings with blind facades. The oriels are reminiscent of *Traditional Turkish House* (Figure 11, 12).

Historicist forms that differ from the structures and are emulated with exaggerated proportions; designings of the openings inspired by the form of hoodoos locally known as ‘fairy chimneys’ that are parts of Nevşehir's urban identity, or kitsch architectural elements on the roof referring to the caps of hoodoos creates their own hyperreality (Figure 13).



Figure 11. Facades of Hacı Bektaş University Buildings



Figure 12. Hacı Bektaş University buildings details



Figure 13. Hoodoos (fairy chimneys) in Nevşehir

In recent years, elements imitating the Seljuk portals, which are stylized in an orientalist way, have been used predominantly in most universities. Proportions they are gathered from historical form have been used by distorting in these structures that are constructed as high-rise thanks to the modern materials and facilities provided by modern technology. Postmodern *‘orientalist’, ‘neoclassical’, ‘eclectic’ and ‘kitsch’* styles can be found at university campus gates also. There are campus gates that use forms derived from local architectural symbols, or a famous historical building of the city where it is located and refers to the classical Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Neoclassical, Seljuk, Ottoman, Turkish national architectural styles and the concept of ‘Turkish house’. As some examples of these (Table 1), Ankara Music and Fine Arts University campus gate (Figure 14), which uses forms from Classical Greek, Roman, and Renaissance architecture such as column, capital,

architrave, frieze, cornice, pediment, Roman arch, and dome; Selcuk University campus gate which uses pointed arches, low reliefs, ornaments, decorations and forms imitating the Seljuk and Ottoman portal traditions (Figure 15), in addition, Kütahya Dumlupınar University campus gate which Seljuk cones are used (Figure 16); Harran University campus gate (Figure 17), which makes local quotations from Harran (Figure 18); Dicle University campus gate which is inspired by Diyarbakır city walls are *Postmodern*, *Kitsch*, *Orientalist*, *Eclectic* architectural applications (Figure19, 20).

Table 1. University entrance gates quoted by local and historical elements



Figure 14 Entrance gate of Ankara Music and Fine Arts University



Figure 15. Entrance gate of Selcuk University



Figure 16. Entrance gate of Kütahya Dumlupınar University



Figure 17. Traditional Harran houses



Figure 18. Entrance gate of Harran University



Figure 19. Entrance gate of Dicle University



Figure 20. Diyarbakir City Walls

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Postmodern architecture that emerged as a reaction to modern architecture has benefited from the history and local images. Styles belonging to various periods, regardless of the context, have been combined with techniques such as collage and pastiche thus eclectic and fragmented structures are produced. These are kitsch forms that have presented historical and cultural elements that can be understood by everyone in stylized ways so they address only emotions. With these aspects, it is deliberately guided by the bourgeoisie and administrations ideologically. These products that are consumed fast and create demand are a part of the consumption culture.

We see that there are approaches such as *'Kitsch'*, *'Eclecticism'*, *'Neoclassicism'* and *'Orientalism'*, which are among the Postmodern Architectural Production Forms in the university buildings examined within the scope of the study.

In today's architectural practices, we see that an eclectic and kitsch approach is nourished by Turkish architectural styles such as Seljuk, Ottoman, National architecture and orientalist forms

belonged to East in addition to classical, Greek, Roman renaissance, and neoclassical architectures. In recent years, the ideologically supported trend called Seljuk - Ottoman architecture is quite common, especially in public buildings and educational buildings. A hyperreality is created by using exaggerated productions in terms of proportion, scale, material; eclectic, kitsch, orientalist forms detached from context and time in these products which are fed by the iconic portal tradition of the Seljuks and fed by the national architecture and the characteristics of the Turkish house

Historical forms and local cultures are the results of tradition and wisdom accumulated over many years. They have been created by time and space-dependent variables such as materials possibilities, structural limitations, climatic conditions, and landforms in a certain period. Harvesting these forms as if simple geometric shapes which are independent of the components that compose it have been to produce fake realities and simulations. The history of architecture contains unlimited possibilities for architects to examine. When the underlying philosophy and abstract ideas are analyzed without being reduced to the forms that are noticed by everyone at first, historical forms will be very useful for contemporary architecture.

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