An intimate space: Yaha Kemal Museum

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• In this paper, we aimed to express the design approach to design a museum in an intimate space for the great poet, Yahya Kemal of Turkey.

• To understand the design principles of the project, it is thought better to start from Yahya Kemal and sources of his poetry.

• Thus, the concepts of Yahya kemal’s poetic world and his memory palace must be understood by looking to his poetry. Light, reflection, words, sound, identity, memory, architecture, space, time and infinity are the fundamentals of his poetry. Museum space is intended to be built on these words and their connotations in his memory palace.
Yahya Kemal

• Yahya Kemal was born in Skopje on 2 December 1884. As a young child, he experienced the tradition of madrasah.

• In the following years, he met with the schools of newly born republic and completed his education in Paris.

• After returning to Istanbul in 1912, Yahya Kemal taught history and literature in different levels of educational system.

• Until the last period of his life, he worked as an embassy in various countries.

• He died in a room of Park Hotel in İstanbul in 1958.
Yahya Kemal was a poet and a philosopher. During his life he witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Republic of Turkey.
• The life of Yahya Kemal has began in a city with traditional, Skopje, continued in Istanbul, Paris and in various cities throughout the world that were overwhelmingly modern.

• Although Yahya Kemal cannot be defined as a flaneur like Baudelaire, the approach of Baudelaire to the traditional spaces of the city can be traced in Yahya Kemal’s poetry as well.
Museum of Yahya Kemal
A Critical Overview; Status of the Current Museum

- Used as Yahya Kemal museum, Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa Madrasah, Ottoman elementary school has some of Yahya Kemal’s personal belongings that his brother donated to the museum.

- His books that have been published by Istanbul Fetih Society, and some of his personal belongings are exhibited.
Museum of Yahya Kemal
A Critical Overview; Status of the Current Museum

• Remains of Yahya Kemal are exhibited in a single volumed space of the school. The architectural plan of the space does not make the comfortable circulation possible.

• This unique nature of the space requires a careful analysis and design. The space is suitable for displaying only a few and small items.
Re-designing the current museum of Yahya Kemal which is not sufficient to express the world of him, one must go back into sources of Yahya Kemal’s poetry.
Light

• Light is one of the concepts that Yahya Kemal uses frequently. In his poetry, light has several meanings as love, death, homeland and music. He grasped love as light.

• In Yahya Kemal’s art of poetry, light is an element that reveals the internal face of existence with its references to the modern painting, to historical notions and to the tradition that has been conceptualized with phenomenon. That is to say, light is a symbol of transcendental universe.
Reflection

- A major element of Yahya Kemal’s poetry is the reflection that constantly builds on other concepts. These reflections can either gain new meanings by overlapping political, nationalist elements, or put references to different times and places.

- In traditional poetry, mirror as a symbol which is not departed from its sufistic meaning, based on the belief that entire universe is a reflection of Allah. Yahya Kemal has inspired of Divan poetry.
Words

- Preserving the integrity of form and meaning, Yahya Kemal believed that the poetry should be understood as a whole. Therefore, the concept of ‘spiritually deep harmony’, as he defined, lies on the basis of his poems.

- What is described as the ‘spiritually deep harmony’ is the rhythm of the poem, built by words. Therefore, words are fundamentals of the poet.
Sound and Breath

- As featured in the poetry of Yahya Kemal, sense of hearing is depicted as one of fundamentals. He prays for the power of creating a sound.

- In the structure of divan poetry, sound is an advanced form of expression and the most important thing to be able to feel it, is to experience it with all layers of insights. **Yahya Kemal seems to have intended to continue using verbal attitude of traditional Divan poetry with elements of rhythm and harmony.**
Identity and Memory

- According to Yahya Kemal, a healthy nation must have a memory like a human being. In this respect, he rejects three dimensional form of time as now, past and future.

- Yahya Kemal seems to have perceived history as a whole and have taken the history as a reflection of the cultural plane at which history, time and space are all intertwined with each other. For this reason, the time does not proceed in linear form but indicates transitivity in the memory of Yahya Kemal.
Infinity

- The infinity is another concept frequently used in Yahya Kemal’s poetry. By using the words sea, sky and horizon, Yahya Kemal builds a basic emotion that offers a way out from a chaotic environment of that time.
Space, Time and Architecture

- In Yahya Kemal’s memory palace, the architecture is a problem of a historical time which goes beyond being an object-oriented reality.

- Due to the third dimension, it is an artistic production that can be seen, perceived and contribute to the subconscious intensely.
Yahya Kemal Museum Design Proposal
with the sources of his poetry

- The relationship that Yahya Kemal builds between his poetry and his imaginative space can be understood in Bachelard’s ‘Poetics of Space’.

- To understand, feel and love a work, one must flow towards to a point where everything finds its source.

- As a known symbol of Divan poetry, moth’s circling around the light is an action to reference existence.

- Yahya Kemal has found the fact of existence with the concept of light.
• In this respect, the action of circumambulation is the basic notion of museum space.
• The interior museum space is intended to be designed with the concepts of words, time, space, architecture, reflection.

• The Stone wall of the Madrasa is a representation of the time and the words are the representation of Yahya Kemal’s connection to the concepts of the space and the time. These concepts are intended to intertwine to each other.
Yahya Kemal Museum Design Proposal
with the sources of his poetry

Relationship of words and wall.
Yahya Kemal Museum Design Proposal
with the sources of his poetry

• These concepts are intended to intertwine to each other with another concept of the poet, reflection.

• According to the metaphor of mirror, things are the shadows of each other, Although they reflect the same image.

• With the metaphor of mirror, entire universe is a symbol of transcendent being that reflects the definite forms as shadows.
• Placed in the middle of the space, mirrors redefine the boundaries of the space and a surreal illusion will be generated.

• Thus, Yahya Kemal will remain as a permanent point on the infinite variability on the hall of reflections. Besides, each subject in the place may be a part of this unique combination of cultural structure and Yahya Kemal’s words.

• As seen on the installation called ‘passing reflection’, fragmented moments and images can appear on the mirrors. The idea of using fragmented mirrors enables reconstructing the picture of observer within the space.

Installation named ‘Passing Reflection’ by James Seawright in Logan Airport, Boston.
In the world of Yahya Kemal, dome is a place where the entire nation and entire creation come together and become one. From another point of view, dome is the physical form of getting in relationship with infinity.
Yahya Kemal Museum Design Proposal
with the sources of his poetry

- Using high-resolution projection systems which designed to be placed on the ceiling, a representation of the sky can be symbolically generated.
In referance to the culture of sensation, holographic technology is located in the museum to bring the poet, the poem and observer together into an experience and to enjoy the poems of Yahya Kemal through the hologram image.
Yahya Kemal Museum Design Proposal

• Using the projection systems that placed in the window bays visual materials will be exhibited about Yahya Kemal’s life and work.

• In addition to eliminating the issues which rise because of using a little single-volumed place as a museum space, the projection system also helps creating a multifunctional museum space that relies on the technological experience.
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