Montage and Experience Architecture

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Abstract
Following Sergei Eisenstein's theory, this study, concentrates on montage as a technique, a special way of thinking/acting on space and a method for defining/designing today's fragmented complex architectural spatial organizations. It takes the notion of montage that mainly works in-between Cinema and Architecture, beyond as a radical Avant-garde device dominating a certain period. The study discusses role of the montage as a design input, a way of alienation through organizing special multilayered complex experiences in the designing of individual and public space by preventing easy consumption. In this context, the study analyzes and re-reads the building of the Faculty of Architecture of the Middle East Technical University as its case. It examines the building with its various contextual sequences including ones that are historical, cultural, physical, as well as the ones that are designerly and symbolic.

Keywords: montage, cinema, experience architecture, architectural theory, and design

1. INTRODUCTION:
"Order," "rhythm," "parts-whole relation", "organization", composition", "arrangement", these are the words that are used in architectural literature frequently without questioning; they were often taken as granted. On the other hand, "montage" is not that familiar to the everyday language of architecture. The reason for this becomes clear when we consider primary definitions of the word. According to the Webster's Third New Dictionary, "montage" is "the act of photographic process of combining several distinct pictures so that they often blend with or into each other to produce a composite picture which may or may not appear to be made of separate pictures"; " an artistic composition made by combining heterogeneous elements" and " a style of film editing in which contrasting shots or sequences are juxtaposed for the purpose of suggesting a total idea or impression. The origin of the word comes from French word "monter" to go up, mount, and yet the birth of concept montage clearly refers a certain artistic field: Cinema.

Sergei Eisenstein who is a pioneering figure in the discourse of montage, on the other hand, argues the opposite. In his well-known "Montage and Architecture" essay, he indicates Architecture as the precedent of the Cinema, or better of the cinematic montage (Eisenstein, 1989). He argues that similar to the experience of a spectator (in an architectural ensemble) who moves between a series of carefully disposed phenomena that he/she observed sequentially, experience of cinematic montage provides (this time) immobile spectator an imaginary path to follow.

The issue of montage and architecture influences architecture starting from the Avant guard movements of the early twentieth century. It reemerges in the interwar period then regained popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Finally, the phenomenon of montage in architecture has been reviewed under the critical designerly discourses several times after 1980s (Deriu, 2007).

Although design of experience is traditionally inherent in the knowledge of architecture (as discussed by Eisenstein), the idea of considering architecture as designed successful experiences is new. Traditionally there is an indirect link between the act of designing and the (intended/designed) experience itself. Following the Eisensteinean montage

theory, the aim of the present study on the other hand is to discuss values, implications and the benefits of a direct relation between experience and architectural design and exemplify it with a case: METU Faculty of Architecture experience.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY
Methodological and epistemological roots of the approach employed in the present paper are part of a certain line of inquiry belonging to an era starting from the dawn of the twentieth century onwards. The study mainly follows the idea that search for cinematographic features outside cinema, for this particular case in architecture, might help us to see the long been repressed experiential layer from a different/unfamiliar perspective and contributes to the progression of understanding of the discipline in this realm.

The study also argues that type of critical inquiry at stake here would serve as a base for entirely new genre of design called "experience design" (Anay, et al. 2018). Such a framework enables one to see both architecture and experience design afresh to set up new relations, and to give way to new readings and interpretations, which have been largely studied by the so-called formalist tradition (Anay, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f).

The article seeks to set the stage for such an inquiry by analyzing experiential patterns of peripatetic montage in the METU Faculty of Architecture building.

3. RE-READING THE METU FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE

3.1.A City, A Landscape, Past Views, Present, And Piranesi's Etchings To Converge…
Invention of the stereoscope was grounded onto the idea that each eyes sees different image. The main question behind this invention is that how these different images are experienced as single or unitary? Therefore, as firstly set up by Charles Wheatstone, stereoscope brings binocular vision into play as an operation of reconciling disparity, of making two distinct views appear as one (Crary,1991).

Sergei Eisenstein's remarkable study on Piranesi's etchings (1743-1765) titled "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms" (1990) starts with the description of his sunny corner room in an apartment in Potylixa – Moscow. From the eyes of a sitting spectator who sees through the two windows on either side of the corner walls, he gives a stereoscopic description of two panoramas as being converged. Then, like a collage, the convergence of two panoramas is merged onto a third view looking from the outside. To picture these three different views all of which belong to different points in time, he compares changing boundaries of the city of Moscow. Then, to operate on this imaginary collage once more, he adds a new element by indexing the Piranesi's etchings hanging on the wall. In this way, the city, the landscape, the past views, the present, and the etchings are combined together for picturing an "ecstatic transfiguration" infinitely between the windows.

### 3.2.A City, A Landscape, Past Views, Present, And Another Fragmented Composition To Converge…
Besides Piranesi's etchings, one of the most influential bases of the theory of montage is architecture. As Eisenstein underlines, montage lies at the basis of the composition of an architectural ensemble. [At the introduction part of "Montage and Architecture" in Assemblage, Yve-Alain Bois gives information about Eisenstein's essay. Bois points out that the title "Montage and Architecture" was not given by Eisenstein himself. He notes that Naum Kleiman who is the curator of the Eisenstein Museum in Moscow and editor of the director's writings was discovered this piece of writing as to be inserted in a book-length work entitled Montage written between 1937 and 1940. It was first published under the title "Montage 1938" in The Film Sense in 1942 as one of the fragments of the

Montage. Then, the first usage of the title "Montage and Architecture" appeared in the Italian edition of Eisenstein's writings in Teoria Generale del Montaggio in 1985 (Bois, 1989)].Hence, for him the relationship between cinematic montage and architecture is more than a simple analogy (Vidler, 2001, 119). In his article titled "Montage and Architecture" (1938) he conceptualizes montage as an immediate link and one of the corner stones between the two spheres. By focusing on the term "path" Anthony Vidler summarizes Eisenstein's famous exemplification as shown below:

In the article "Montage and Architecture" Eisenstein sets out this position, contrasting two "paths" of the spatial eye: the cinematic, where a spectator follows an imaginary line among series of objects, through the sight as well as in the mind-"diverse positions passing in front of an immobile spectator"- and the architectural, where "the spectator moved through a series of carefully disposed phenomena which he observed in order with his visual sense"(Vidler, 2001, 119)."

As it was summarized by Vidler, whether it is cinematic or architectural, the term "path" represents a sequential line along which conflicting fragments are juxtaposed to compose a totality. On the bases of the idea that montage links cinema and architecture in a special and essential way, and makes possible to look these critically, from now on this study will try to reflect arguments of the theory of montage on a fragmented architectural composition to see it afresh.

Fig. **1 A**. Axonometric projection shows the fragmented structure of METU
Faculty of Architecture
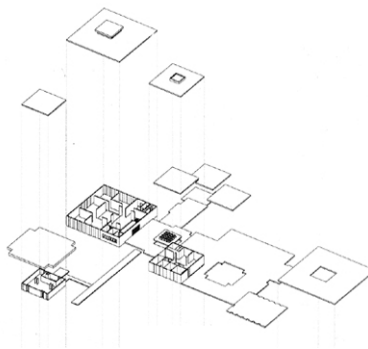
A.

Eisenstein's well-known essay "Montage and Architecture" starts with the following sentence: "In cinema the word 'path' is not used by chance" (Eisenstein, 1989, 116). Similar to Eisenstein and contrary to his title of the book *Improvisation* (1999), Behruz Çinici declares that fragmented composition of the Faculty of Architecture at the new campus of the Middle East Technical University (1963) in Ankara is intensely assembled on "a path." As a pioneer of modern education for Turkey and for the Middle East, Middle East Technical University (METU) is founded in 1956, and opened in a new campus in 1963 (METU History, 2006). For Çinici, because Faculty of Architecture is the earliest building complex and the core for the campus (Fig.1.A.) , first the faculty then the whole campus is constructed by this "ecological backbone" which is "long and thin" and "constructs inner and outer spaces while passing through them under the balance of light" (Cinici, 1988,8)."

3.3.A City

Fig. **2 B**. The main effect of the empty steppes on the capital city Ankara and the modern METU Campus

B.

If *tabula rasa* is an opportunity for the purest expression of Modernism, Ankara as the capital city can be taken as a blank slate for the realization of the modernist visions for the newly founded modern Republic of Turkey. This clean and new city with its infinite stepped landscapes is the perfect background for realization of the modernization project of the republic and an opportunity for the experiencing its rationale. From this perspective, empty steppes on which METU was built at the extension of the capital city of the modern Turkey can be interpreted as the mirrored image of the ideal modern Turkey. On this blank slate, METU is an experimental model, a microcosm representing its macrocosm as the self-contained, self-regulating, orderly universe (Fig.2 B.).

3.4. A Landscape
Dutch painting has invented the word *landscape* as "a picture representing a view of natural inland scenery" or "art of depicting such scenery" (Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary). Therefore, etymology of the word landscape presents inescapable relationship with picture or representing of a land in picture. Although there was another major shift in its connotation emphasizing landscape as a part of design, initial framework of the word has strongly affected to the later usage.

No matter how wide or narrow its area of focus, from landscapes to a furniture, grid lays out powerful ways in "depicting the scenery" for ordering and disciplining our world. As being a category of order, its position is always in between the form and content of what we know. Thus, for architecture, as a discipline dealing with both form and content, grid is always a creative device to operate on the both sides, rather than embodying a simple analogy between them. In addition to these qualities, grid serves the symbolic needs of the governments. Usage of grid under the modernist ideals is always privileged over the others. Therefore, Rosalind Krauss discusses grid as one of the myths created by modernism. In *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (1986) she argues that grid has the power of generating conflicting readings. It can both imply continuity and fragmentation (Krauss, 1996,63). Related with this paradoxical character, for Krauss grid is a modernist myth that put barrier between vision and language and resists speech by means of excluding literature, narrative, and discourse (Krauss, 1996, 50-52). On the other hand, the same barrier supports the modernist ideals of breaking up from the old to start-out from anew as *tabula rasa*.

Grid, taken as an element of architectural montage, thereby is a unique way of depicting scenery. Different from that of a mere silence that modernist grid produces, at the METU

campus it is the "ecstatic explosion" between the "path" or "long and thin ecological backbone" and the modernist "grid line" that is at stake.

Eisenstein argues that montage is "a totality composed of disconnected fragments belonging to a single sequence based on a "juxtaposition-conflict of intellectual stimuli" (Eisenstein, 1949,82). Similarly, Çinici describes how strategically he structured a path for METU to assemble the separate spatial fragments to make them a totality as well as let them free to be detached localities. Grid on the other hand represents universal forms of order and rationality based on pure equality. Spiro Kostof's depiction in his book *The City Shaped* (1991) can give us practical ways to understand this situation. In the chapter "The Grid" he states, "no better urban solution recommends itself as a standard scheme for disparate sites, or as a means for the equal distribution of land or the easy parceling and selling of real estate" (Kostof, 1991, 95). Then, besides the practical usage, he stresses the two main purposes of grid in history:

> *The first is to facilitate orderly settlement, colonization in its broader sense. This involves both the acquisition of distant territory- by the Greeks in Sicily, Spain in the New World- and the settlement of reclaimed or newly opened-up land as in the American Midwest after about 1800. The other application of grid has been as an instrument of modernization and of contrast to what existed that was not as orderly. Romans tidied up native Iberian or Germanic settlements this way…Modern Europe used grid for new quarters next to the native cities of its colonial empires…The modern movement developed its own basic grid, to serve as matrix for a revolutionary new way of planning or replanning cities in different countries and climates* (Kostof, 1991, 102).

Between the modernist synoptic order, Eisensteinian juxtaposition-conflict relationship, and the "eidetic operations" the known characters of the landscape has changed (Corner, 1999). Besides the top down strategic attitudes, there are bottom up tactical ones to support and operate this change. For the first one this study will focus on the architect of METU, and for the second one it will concentrate on the contemporary inhabitants of METU.

3.5. Past Views

> *The Faculty of Architecture, which was the first Faculty to open, originated from this background with a special law which made it possible for the best universal minds from all over the world to meet with Turkish outlook, expertise and practice in the middle of Anatolia (in Ankara), which was conceptually chosen as the center for the new modernization efforts in the Middle East and its hinterlands. It was also the place where Modern Turkish Revolution was directed in the early nineteen twenties* (Deans's Letter, 2006).

"As a pioneer of modern education" for Turkey and for the Middle East, Middle East Technical University (METU) was founded in 1956. There is no doubt that this mission powerfully shapes the identity and image of both METU and its inhabitants in the early sixties. In the eye of its founders and inhabitants, METU as a campus and a University was the emblem of the Turkish modernization project. Grounded on this perspective general views of the past can be summarized as sharing this identity and participating to it as a curious but detached observer. Süha Özkan as one of the first students of the University and the Faculty of Architecture express his feelings in the early sixties as shown below:

> *All the guests of the Turkish government, important international figures, presidents, kings all of whom were visit us. We were, in a sense, representing the modern and international qualities in education for modern Turkey. We were proud of ourselves. Faculty of Architecture is the architectural context of this modernity.*

We were studying architecture in a highly intensive atmosphere and in an extraordinary building (Ozkan, 1999, 8).

3.6. Present

The grid appears in symbolist art in the form of windows, the material presence of their panes expressed by geometrical intervention of the window's mullions. The symbolist interest in windows clearly reaches back into the nineteenth century and romanticism. But the hands of the symbolist painters and poets, this image turned in an explicitly modernist direction. For the window is experienced as simultaneously transparent and opaque (Krauss, 1996, 58).

As Rosalind Kraus described above one of the shifting point in modern grid is that it starts to operate both horizontally and vertically. As to the perspectival contemplation of space, this shift opens up a multiple ways of seeing the world and helps the liberation of modern synoptic vision.

Fig. 3 C-D: *landschaft*: ordering grid of the campus merging with the main path, dissolving into the other paths and the patterns of activity;   order of the building

E: Grid as a modernist myth, as an ordering mechanism, as horizontal and vertical, as a symbol of a modern nation, and as form of infinite windows
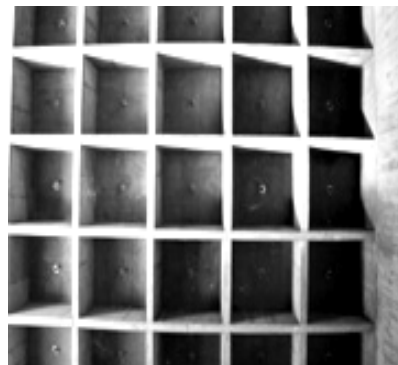
C-D.   E.

Although it is focused on the subject of vision, absolute liberation of the synoptic vision can be detected in the tone of Hubert Damisch's book *Skyline: The Narcissistic City*, In the chapter "Street Window" he states that "all discourse about the city and relations to it, as well as images or visions of it, must be subjective" (Damisch, 2001, 16). Then he continues, "it is impossible to reduce the city to an object, unless the subject envisions it." Similarly, about the subjectivity or relativity of the visual experience N. R. Hanson states that:

There is a difference between physical state and visual experience…Seeing is an experience. A retinal reaction is only a physical state - a photochemical excitation... People, not their eyes, see. Cameras, and eye-balls, are blind (Hanson, 1965).

Another layer of liberating the synoptic vision is related to its participants. Different from that of the architect's approach and the first inhabitants' of METU, for the contemporary participators liberated or synoptic contemplation by vision is not enough (Fig. 3.CDE).

In his "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes" James Corner argues that it is important to see landscape as more than a picture (Fig.4F). The term landscape has been extended

and gained another connotation, which can be described as "inhabitants of the place and their obligations to one another and the land" (Corner, 1999, 154). This means that, besides the pictorial relations between buildings and fields there are additional relations which take into consideration" patterns of occupation, activity, and space" (Corner, 1999, 154).

Fig. **4 F**: Network of Stoppages
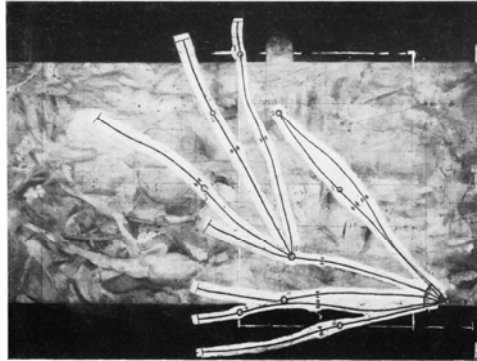
by Marcel Duchamp, 1914, (Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund)

After stressing that landscape has changed from a land which is a mere "scenery" to the land which is an "environment of a working community", Corner points out the distinction between the *landskip*: "landscape as contrivance, primarily visual and sometimes also iconic or significant" and the *landschaft*: "landscape as an occupied milieu, the effects and significance of which accrue through tactility, use, and engagement over time" (Corner, 1999,158). Behind this transformation in the connotations of the word, landscape there is a critique that can be summarized as: picture or visual image as produced by *landskip* is not enough for the contemplating the world.

3.7. Ecstatic Experience
Eisenstein in his "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms" discusses Piranesi's etchings from the point of view of the theory of montage (Eisenstein, 1990). He underlines that some forms of objects can be read infinitely. He uses a technique which he calls "the technique of explosion" to unfold this reading. Following this technique he focuses on how the basic elements of the objects abandon their roles, and expand beyond their limits. Eisenstein's reading can be explained in two stages of a single process. The first one is to capture certain structural elements of a composition and the second one is to detect how these elements are decompose themselves and enable one to see infinite ways of reading. Although METU as part of a modernization project belongs to the synoptic tradition, Çinici's emphasis on "fragmentation," "conflict" and "the path" ties it to the Eisensteinian montage. Similar to Eisenstein Yve-Alain Bois points out that, in experiencing the theory of montage "some buildings are more apt than others" (Bois, 1989, 113). Therefore, after "the path" "grid" conflict, affecting both the landscape and the building, now the study will exemplify another conflicting-juxtaposition focusing on the building complex of the Faculty of Architecture.

While giving examples from the precedents of the "ecstatic vision" which is one of the main characteristics of the montage, Eisenstein mentions two different kinds of attitude. The first attitude is "ecstasy by passion." It is a part of the tendencies of western ecstasy, which creates an effect of explosiveness by sharpening the contrast between the oppositional parts. The second one is called "ecstasy of quietism" which is a part of the eastern pantheistic quietism. The main characteristic of the quietism is trying to reconcile the opposition between the contrasting pairs to reduce the range of the difference and

bring their explosive leaps into the effect of a smooth, single flow (Eisenstein, 1990, 88-89). The uniqueness of METU Faculty of Architecture is that it includes both western active "ecstasy by passion," and eastern passive "ecstasy of quietism."

Fig. 5 GH: Penetration between the slabs and walls, between columns and beams, between light and dark, between planar and diagonal at the sought

I: Ecstatic explosion

G-H: **I.**

Eisenstein, argues that ecstatic expression coming from the conflicting pairings is shared by both attitudes, but each attitude operates on different effect (Eisenstein, 1990, 87). As it is seen from the photographs above (Fig.5. G-H-I), in the case of the "ecstasy by passion" the tension between columns and beams; slabs and columns, slab and walls, dark and light force themselves to "penetrate each other." There can be seen the effect of "everything is dynamism, whirlwind, a furious tempo drawing one into the depths and inward" as it was suggested by Eisenstein (1990, 87). At this side of the building continuity of perspective is smashed by columns, slabs, light, and beams. Instead of being in the comfort zone of the predictable/seeable continuation of a typical construction element, spectator notices other (new) architectural elements that meet the eye, and with the help of the light, the effect of the space appears twice as large as the eye would suggest.

Fig. 6 K L: Traditional wooden door, dissolution of the dark exit into the embracing sun, at the east side; twin piped fountain at the front garden, dissolution of the ground water up into the use and order of a modern man

M: Göbek taşı, dissolution of horizontal loop into the vertical light, at the sought side

K - L: **M:**

On the other hand, in the case of the "ecstasy of quietism" the effect is the result of the reconciliation of the oppositional pairs. Photographs on the above (Fig. 6. K-L-M) exemplify the reconciliation of the traditional objects symbolizing the eastern way of life and the western rationality at METU Faculty of Architecture. It is important to note that, in the "ecstasy of quietism," rather than explode and reflect absolute contrast with the other; compositional elements are constructed to express the effect of "dissolution of one into the other." Therefore, Different than that of the western passionate "explosion" at the collision of the paths of movement, here at these meeting points in METU, to use a quote from Eisenstein, "everything is serene, solemn ascent toward the enlightened heights" (Eisenstein, 1990, 87).

4. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH LINES

Fig. 7 N: Estrangement by participation

N.

By unfolding the relationship between the capital city Ankara, METU campus, and the building of the Faculty of Architecture, this study tried to picture how a modernist project is synoptically lay itself out via a silent and powerful device, and how this silence is conflictingly prevented and broken by its architect and the inhabitants in different levels. While the role of the architect is to set-up a conflicting mechanism between the silent grid and exploitive paths and start to make the known things unfamiliar for the perception, contemporary inhabitants' role, as Corner argues, are to operate on these two set-ups via participation rather that mere perception. Although the first inhabitants of METU are close to the *flaneur* or the detached observers of the modernization project of the young Republic of Turkey, the contemporary inhabitants were the "insiders" whose viewing mechanisms can be easily pervaded by the habitual. Corner points out that participation of the insiders necessitates "a deep and intimate mode of relationship not only among buildings and fields but also among patterns of occupation, activity, and space" (Corner, 1999, 154). In connection with such participation, both "synoptic" landscape of the modernist grid and Çinici's "sequential juxtapositions" are contemplated by a third layer: "scenic landscape," as it was conceptualized by Corner (1999, 154-156), which tends not only to displace the viewing subject both space and time but also to displace the objects that it contains.

For Corner, "eidetic operations" challenge the accustomed way of contemplating the world in three points: First, they point to difficulties and potentials in representation; second, they point to the limits exercised by the traditional ways; and third they suggest a need to revise, enhance, and invent forms of representational techniques that might enable us to see the known objects from afresh (Corner, 1999, 162).

As part of this framework, the paper focused on the issue of designing experiences in an architectural framework for a specific case: METU Faculty of Architecture. For the future

researches, it is desirable to broaden the study between Cinema and Architecture for two reasons. First, a lack of experiential analysis limits our knowledge of spatial design bound up with the development of the experiences. Second, it is necessary to consider experience architecture as an open-ended research field, and broaden the study to other possible consequences of the design process, in order to reach a wider theoretical and designerly frameworks about the experience design and architecture.

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