

DESIGNING THE UNITY: TÜRK GRUP ESPAS AND ARCHITECTURE IN POSTWAR TURKEY

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1. Also, Abstract Art studio was Koman's another facility that he founded together with Sadi Öziş, Şadi Çalık and Mübin Orhon. (Özsezgin, 2005, 15)

INTRODUCTION

The art and architecture milieu of the mid-20th century not only raised debates on collaboration but also spurred attempts to solidify this ideal. The prevailing tone surrounding these collective works was that the arts should be made an integral part of life, and those who had come together with such aims in mind testified to the necessity of an *a priori* approach to the collaborative works. As a result, the objectives and the "collective purpose" of these initiatives meshed with the impulse of the current art and architecture fields (Villanueva, 2010, 53). The most important initiative to be established in Turkey along these lines was the *Türk Grup Espas* (Turkish Group Espace) – an artistic association that embarked on the idea of total design through team spirit. Simultaneously, an extension of this group emerged named *Kare Metal* (Square Metal), which was very much related with the discourse and the practices of *Türk Grup Espas*. *Kare Metal* could even be considered as an area of the materialization of the ideals of *Türk Grup Espas*, albeit only partially. In this regard, one cannot speak about *Türk Grup Espas* without mentioning also *Kare Metal* when attempting to understand the ideals and the approach of the group members to the issue of collaboration.

TOWARDS AN IDEAL UNITY

The founders of *Kare Metal*, artist İlhan Koman, artist Şadi Çalık, artist Sadi Öziş and Mazhar Süleymangil, had begun producing their very first works in 1953, but did not adopt the name *Kare Metal* until 1955 when they opened their studio in Şişli, İstanbul (1). *Türk Grup Espas*, which was affiliated with *Group Espace* that had formed earlier in Paris, was founded by artist Hadi Bara, İlhan Koman and architect-urban planner Tarık Carım in 1953, who were joined later by Sadi Öziş. The group announced their official foundation with a manifesto published in 1955.

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2. After the completion of the Anıtkabir architectural competition, a new commission was assigned to select the artworks, which would reflect historical scenes from Atatürk's life and national past (Morkoç, 2011). Based on Decree no 3/15461 dated 8/8/1952, a competition was organized to select these artworks.

3. "1950'de figürasyonu bırakarak 'abstraction géométrique' anlayışında çalışmaya başladım. Bu denemeler sonunda, Mimar Tarık Carım ve İlhan Koman'la, uluslararası bir sosyetenin 'Türk Grup Espace'ı kuruldu" (Toprak, 1963, 301).

4. In fact, the first instructors of this studio were İlhan Koman, Şadi Çalık and Sadi Öziş, whom were the founders of *Kare Metal* later.

The first line of investigation of the factors that triggered the formation of these groups begins with the question of why these two groups were founded by these specific artists, and not by other leading figures interested in collaboration at the time. Within the network, İlhan Koman and Sadi Öziş were friends from the Academy and went to Paris at the same time to continue their education. While they attended different schools in Paris, they had the opportunity to work in the same studio. Hadi Bara had taught İlhan Koman in the modeling studio of the Academy, and was also in Paris at the same time, where the three had the chance to work together in the same studio.

These artists worked alongside each other in a noteworthy project, for the design of the reliefs of *Anıtkabir*, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. İlhan Koman, Hadi Bara and artist Zühtü Müritoğlu formed a team to produce artworks for *Anıtkabir* (2), and Şadi Çalık and Sadi Öziş also were also part of this team during the production phase (Kazancıgil and Öziş, 1987, 19). In 1951, İlhan Koman and Tarık Carım met while fulfilling their military service at a school in Kağıthane, where they found their thoughts related to art to be quite similar. This has been confirmed by Tarık Carım, who describes his attitude to art to be close the abstract form, and cites a strong influence from Le Corbusier (Uçuk, 1996, 61). Later, Koman introduced Hadi Bara to Tarık Carım, who found they had similar perspectives.

While working in Paris from 1947–1951, İlhan Koman contemplated the volume and mass of abstract sculpture, and from 1951–1958, he employed the use of space in his works with metal, adhering to strict geometric concepts (Bara, 1960, 154) (**Figure 1**). Bara's artistic approach, on the other hand, is said to have begun to change in 1949 during his second visit to Paris, when his art began to take on the abstract tendencies of Europe. It was after that time that he began to concentrate on abstract compositions and started working with iron plates (Üstünipek, 1999, 22) (**Figure 2**). Hadi Bara clarifies his position as follows:

"... in 1950 I abandoned the figurative approach and started to work on 'abstraction géométrique'. At the end of these experiments, we founded a branch of an international society, 'Türk Grup Espas', with architect Tarık Carım and İlhan Koman". (Toprak, 1963, 301) (3)

From this statement it can be seen that Bara traces directly the foundation of the group in line with the new plastic vision. From 1950 onwards, education in the Sculpture Department of the Academy underwent a transformation after Hadi Bara and Zühtü Müritoğlu started working there as studio instructors. They aspired to contribute to the design of space in an active manner by examining space in terms of form and function (Akyürek, 1999, 54). This was important in the sense that it constituted a fertile ground for their considerations. This change at the Academy was further reflected in Rudolf Belling's opening speech for the 1951–1952 academic year, in which he spoke about the collaboration of sculpture and architecture (Gezer, 1984, 325).

During the tenure of Nijat Sirel as the head of the Academy (1952–1959), the establishment of a metal studio (1953) was a notable achievement, emerging as a place for the crystallization and nurturing of a new vision. *Kare Metal* was founded as an extension of this studio, and the very first products, metal sculpture and metal furniture, were produced at this place (Çalikoğlu, 2000a, 40) (4). Sadi Öziş claims that it was their intention to create objects that were at the same time works of art and furniture

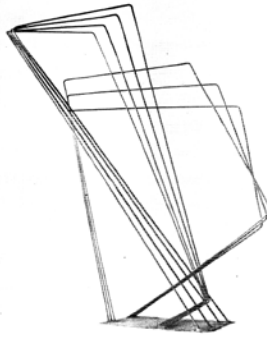


Figure 1. Sculpture, İlhan Koman. (Arel, 1956)

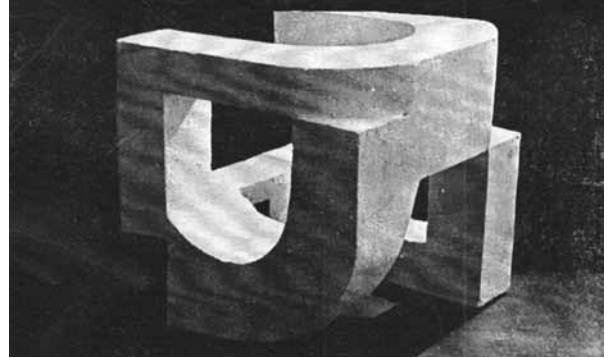


Figure 2. Sculpture, Hadi Bara. Müritoğlu, 1956.



Figure 3. Chair, Sadi Öziş and İlhan Koman. (Jakobsen et al. 1955.)

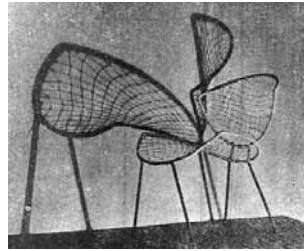


Figure 4. Chair, Sadi Öziş and İlhan Koman. (Bara, 1957)



Figure 5. Pylon, İlhan Koman, 1957-58. Salt Research Archives, code: TUIPAB045

(Küçükerman, 1995, 140), and they managed to attract the attention of a decoration firm, *Moderno*, which was owned by architect Fazıl Aysu and decorator Baki Atar, both Academy-rooted individuals. They started mass production with the help of *Moderno*, and after gaining financial support from Mazhar Süleymangil, they moved to a larger place in Şişli, which became the birthplace of *Kare Metal* (5). This initiative emerged at a time when metal furniture was becoming popular among designers around the world (Küçükerman, 1995, 140) (Figure 3, Figure 4), and they continued to work collectively until 1958, when İlhan Koman received a request from Utarit İzgi to work on the Turkish Pavilion for the Brussels Expo. After the construction of the work entitled "Pylon", Koman moved to Stockholm, where he resided until his death (Uçuk, 1996, 158) (Figure 5).

In parallel to the establishment of *Kare Metal*, *Türk Grup Espas* also entered the scene, but was more engaged with the unity of architecture and the arts. The date of its foundation and the common members of the two groups indicates that its manifestation was also related to the metal studio, with the main difference between the two being the inclusion of an architect in *Türk Grup Espas*. The year in which *Kare Metal* was founded, 1955, saw also the publication of the manifesto of *Türk Grup Espas* (Figure 6). But before that, the assembling of the group members started with Hadi Bara's project, a waterside house in Kandilli. The desire for collaborative work was clear in this project (6), with Tarık Carım drawing the plans of the building, Koman producing the metal works for the door and window frames and Sadi Öziş supplying the paintings (Uçuk, 1996, 160). The idea of a collaborative approach is confirmed in Tarık Carım's statement that Bara was looking for a project in which to apply his artistic approach (Uçuk, 1996, 160).

After this collaborative effort, those involved articulated their concerns and objectives in a manifesto on the issue of synthesis with the plastic arts. According to Sadi Öziş, this process started through the efforts of Hadi Bara and Tarık Carım. In fact, Tarık Carım is also known to have worked for many years in France. He primarily worked with Jean Prouve, who

5. The name *Kare Metal* refers to four members of the group, İlhan Koman, Sadi Öziş, Şadi Çalık and Mazhar Süleymangil. Also for additional information see: (Özkaraman Şen, 2015).

6. Tarık Carım: "Arsada daha Osmanlı devrinde yanmış ve ünlü bir İngiliz ailesine ait olmuş zamanında "Hicton" sarayı adını taşıyan bir yalının enkazı üzerine dökülmüş bir betonarme döşeme bulunuyordu, sahibinin miras olarak kalan arsada başlatıp bitiremediği bir yapı... arsaya Hadi Bey, İlhan ve ben gittik. Mevcut yapıdan istifade eden krokilerimi gerek Hadi Bey'in gerek İlhan'ın beğenmesi üzerine daha kesin bir proje yaptım, sonra maketini beraber hazırladık. Eski, bir Rum manastırının kalıntılarını da kıymetlendiriyorduk; Hadi Bey'in atölyesine tarihi bir kemer vasıtası ile giriliyordu" (Uçuk, 1996, 61).



Figure 6. The manifesto of Türk Grup Espas. (Bara, 1955a)



Figure 7. Jean Prouvé written as a member of Group Espace. L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1951 (37)

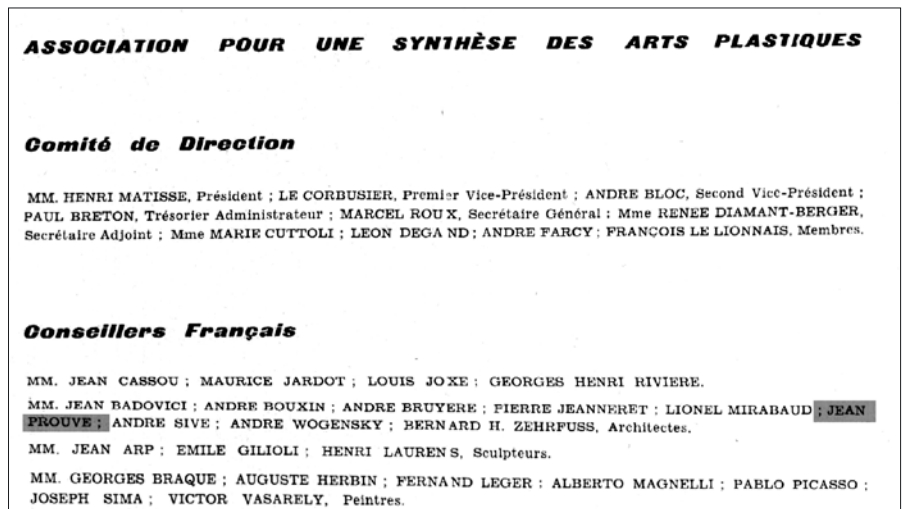


Figure 8. Jean Prouvé written as a member of Association pour une Synthèse des Arts Plastiques. L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1949 (27)

also participated in *Group Espace* (Figure 7-8). Eventually, they got Andre Bloc's attention, who was at the time trying to find new proponents of his idea (Uçuk, 1996, 158). *Türk Grup Espas* presented their assertion in Paris, which was then read and accepted at one of the *Group Espace* meetings.



Figure 9. The declaration of Türk Grup Espas in L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui. L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1955 (58)



Figure 10. The images from Biot Exhibition. L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1954 (55)

(Karabuda, 1987, 5) (Figure 9). Under the title “The Synthesis of Plastic Arts”, their manifesto described how this issue had been viewed up until that period (Bara, 1955a, 21). Giving credit to *Group Espace*, the article approached the synthesis theme in a critical framework, specifically those took part in Biot and Caracas (7). (Figure 10)

The manifesto mapped out the objectives, scopes and critical overtones of synthesis, stating that it is more than merely an act of placing artworks in a space. The main intention is to recognize the essence of synthesis as working on the spatial production in unity from the very beginning. The simultaneous contribution of both disciplines is desired in spatial treatments. Synthesis starts with architecture and, in the end, it appears in the architectural piece. It is a merging of the ideas and visions of the architect, painter and sculptor in one plastic entity (Bara, 1955a, 24). The manifesto put forward an utopist view, portraying a comprehensive structure in the way that advocates a total plastic work that is designed through the implementation of both plastic and functional concerns. The elements that express this synthesis are not merely paintings, sculptures or architecture, as the main target, in fact, is to draw boundaries within time and space. In this way, this absolute plastic work that forms a space corresponds with the definition of urbanism, when thought of in this larger scale (Bara, 1955a, 24).

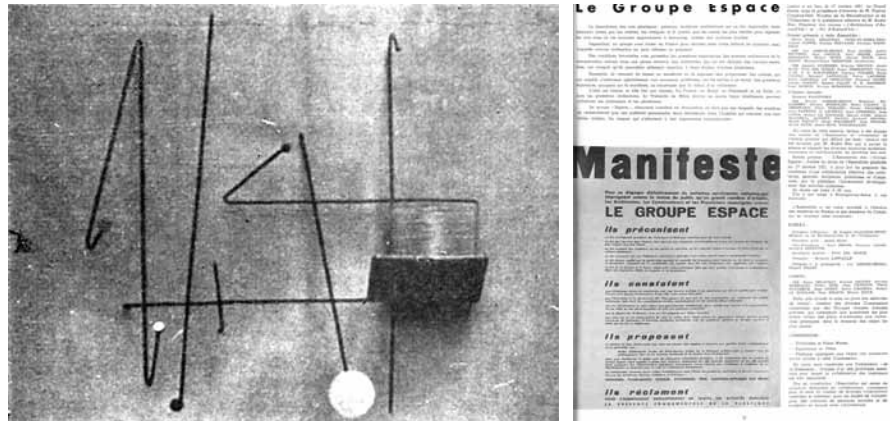
Türk Grup Espas held a broader perspective, promoting interference in all spheres of everyday life, from objects to living spaces (Çalikoğlu, 2000b, 25). Koman describes this different point of view as “the core of the environmental concern”, which he accepts as an essential subject of the day. This problem, according to him, was an argument for the construction of the living environment together with all plastic arts (Karabuda, 1987, 5). (Figure 11); and this wider perspective on the synthesis of plastic arts was recognized by the Parisian *Group Espace* and became a part of the discussion on the artworks of the UNESCO building (8). The argument of *Türk Grup Espas* was a synopsis of what the Paris branch wanted to verbalize, or even better, to achieve in the case of the UNESCO building. Seemingly, they ascribed a role of justification of the manifesto as an important component of this very recent debate, which shows simultaneously the actuality of the spheres of both Turkish art and architecture. Through this manifesto, the

7. They indicated one of Group Espaces exhibition that was held in Biot and the University Campus at Caracas. Their first exhibition in Biot, held on the 13th of July 1954, witnessed the artworks of several prominent figures such as Sonia Delaunay, Andre Bloc, Vasarely, Fernand Leger and Jean Arp. The point underlined by this exhibition is the possibility of integration of the arts into both architecture and life (Anonymous, 1954, 4).

8. Henry Moore: sculpture, Joan Miro: ceramic walls, Jean Arp: relief, Alexander Calder: sculpture, Isamu Nohuchi: sculpture garden, Pablo Picasso: mural. For detailed information see: (Pearson, 2010).

Figure 11. Functional sculpture, Port-Manto, İhan Koman. (Arkitekt 1955)

Figure 12. The manifesto of *Group Espace*. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1951 (37)



9. It is important to state that by the term 'synthesis' the groups portray an ideal association, which is depended on equality between fields during the creation process. But regarding the concrete projects, the term 'collaboration', used in this text, expresses mainly a planned act. This means architect is in the role of a decision maker and leads the team in its various dialogues featuring discussions about material, type or proposals for the artwork. But, as long as this attempt is integrated in the design process from the conception at least in the mind of the architect and culminated in a product of an interaction between the architect and the artist, it can be said that it had the implication of responding to this type of a concern. For a detailed discussion of this categorization see: (Yavuz, 2015).

10. For instance, the images of artworks of Harvard University, Graduate Centre (*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1951); the images of artworks of Caracas University, Venezuela (*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1954; the special issue of Mexican Architecture and Artworks of Mexico University (*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1955).

11. Some parts from their manifesto: They propose: "The establishment of close links between those who can be called to compete in major contemporary tasks and in particular to: Urban studies, studies of architectural plastic..." "The following tasks [...] should include each of architects, painters, sculptors and visual artists." "to familiarize the public with the necessary plastic innovations, it is desirable that the Group Espace artists are called upon to lend their support, especially during festivals, visual exhibitions..." They claim: "For the harmonious development of all human activities the fundamental presence of the plastic." (*Le Groupe Espace*, 1951)

Paris group criticized the method of integration of artworks, especially in the case of the new UNESCO headquarters, highlighting the importance of collaboration from the earliest stages, and designing the structures with the complete cooperation of architects and artists. They voiced their concerns and criticisms of the artworks that had been ordered for the UNESCO building, which, they claimed, were not integrated into the architecture (*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1955, 9). Indeed, for the execution of these artworks, there was Committee of Art Advisers (CAA). The artists were subjected to some restrictions, being asked to produce a modern types of work that would be attuned with the formalist approach and political context of the institution's architecture (Pearson, 2010, 255). They had the chance to examine the plans or models of the project, but were able to become involved in the process only after the design period. The so-called dialogue with the architect was limited to conversations about the artwork, including its type, material and so forth. However, these works were designated for pre-determined locations, which turned the process into an attempt to adapt their work to an existing design. Understandably, the Paris branch had some anxieties about the process, and raised criticisms of its inadequate participatory approach. In the end, the project did not develop within the 'synthesis' defined by both groups, although it did involve some collaborative approach and dialogue between the architect and artists, although limited (9).

Being a vocal instrument of the *Group Espace*, the journal *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* is known to be followed by architects in Turkey (10), and news of the meetings, reports and exhibitions of *Group Espace* gained importance in inspiring or enlightening architects in the country, with their first announcement in the journal being in 1951 (11) (Figure 12). Indeed, the main goal of the group was based on the ideal that imposes a social responsibility on the artist and encourages the arts to permeate the public sphere. By virtue of this aspiration, their efforts would culminate in designing life together with art, which means designing not only space, but also other components of life.

In accordance with its objectives, the initiative organized a number of exhibitions, and *Türk Grup Espas* invited to one particular event – the First International Construction Material and Building Equipment Exhibition, held at Saint-Cloud Park in Paris in 1955. The announcement of the exhibition revealed the event would include a demonstration of the technical advancements in the field of construction, as well as a presentation of ideas uniting the plastic vision and practices of the day

(Bara, 1955b, 79). As a result of some financial problems related to the transportation of artworks from Marseille to Paris, *Türk Grup Espas* was unable to attend the exhibition, although photographs of the works produced by the Turkish group for the exhibition were published in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (Uçuk, 1996, 158; Bara, 1955b, 79). It is known that Tarık Carım represented the group at the event, being in Paris on personal business at the time (Uçuk, 1996, 62). In one of his writings, Hadi Bara spoke about the exhibition, mentioning in particular Schöffer's Spatiodynamique tower, which had attracted the most attention (Bara, 1955b, 79). During this exhibition, the firm Knoll International voiced an interest in the metal furniture produced by the group members, and organized a meeting in Paris to which Hadi Bara and Sadi Öziş were invited. They offered an opportunity for them to go to the United States, although this would not come to fruition, once again due to financial problems (Küçükerman, 1995, 141).

Bozdoğan defines the formation and the principles of *Türk Grup Espas* as "important steps towards modernization in parallel to the developments in the West" (Germaner, 2007, 12). In mid-century Turkey, resources were scarce, especially in the supply industry, and this compelled the artists to look for other solutions or even to create in order to accomplish their designs (Küçükerman, 1995, 141). This period has been defined as a new era for the artists in Turkey, among whom a new consciousness, defined as the beginning of the search for a unique identity for their art, was rising (Berk, 1973, 80). The spirit of collaborative works and the approach to a new plastic vision appeared to overlap in the art scene of the day.

AN AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ARCHITECTURAL REALM

Mid-century modernism, which has been described as an "interregnum" between modernism and postmodernism, put forward a different rhetoric and new practices at the beginning of the 20th century (Goldhagen, 2000, 309), when a tendency towards creating a unity of arts and architecture also emerged. It was only after the Second World War that an acceleration was witnessed in the practical aspects of production, expanding beyond the intellectual milieu, and this led to the debut of concrete instances of such unity in different geographies.

This particular period can be recognized as a turning point with the introduction of new patterns and new typologies into design activities, which were actually a result of current demands. In addition, new debates came to the agenda in which critical judgments were made about urgent issues such as social housing and urban planning as part of reconstruction projects. When describing this atmosphere, Goldhagen (2000, 318) claims that this mid-century modernism was not monophonic, but was rather pluralist in its criticism and suggested solutions, which she defines as a "pluralizing modernism". This would appear in various forms in practice, such as either using steel and glass structures, and expressing concrete and brick materials with a brutalist approach (Goldhagen, 2000, 310). Goldhagen (2000, 318, 321) states that in the postwar period, the concepts discussed among modernist architects and critics centered on "the relationship of mass culture and new urban trends to democratic freedom, community and individual identity, and place," when they tried to, in her own words, "reconceptualize the modern."

12. In fact, it is important to note that this consideration was not peculiar to particular circles. Similar performances can be noticed in other geographies as well, such that Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico produced several remarkable instances that incorporated unity of arts and architecture.

Although there was a partial commitment to the fundamental benchmarks of modernism, this period witnessed a critical stance on modernism, when the search was on for an adaptable solution to the needs of the postwar era. Having social concerns and new adaptabilities to address the new social demands, this new approach was defined as socially embedded modernism. This was defined by Goldhagen as a “situated modernism” (2000, 306), while Geert Bekaert referred to it as “an inevitable expression of the universal and its embedding in social reality and everyday life” (Heynen, 2002, 385).

Facing an “internal critique”, postwar architecture began to question “the deficiencies intrinsic to modernism’s founding principles” with reference to the contextual considerations of locality and public meaning (Goldhagen and Legault, 2000, 12). This was the standpoint on postwar architecture at an international level, and while it is apparent that the architecture of postwar Turkey experienced similar concerns and formations, taking a parallel stance (12), it is considered remarkable that the country at this time grappled with this issue both in the intellectual arena and in practical stage.

It makes sense that this kind of a relationship would be nurtured in an atmosphere in which attempts were being made to “reconceptualize the modern”. In the postwar years, Turkish architecture took a new turn that quickly became the prevailing mindset. With this new trajectory, which started as a rapprochement to international modernist aesthetics, Turkish architects and artists began making their own interpretations of modernism, incorporating into it a critical approach. At a time, when Turkish architecture confronted with a query, the issue of collaboration, by this means, was structured within a frame of a relatively theoretical ground.

During the 1960s, representatives of Turkish architecture, related to their criticism of modernism, began to discuss the phenomenon of publicity of art, designing in a collective spirit and the creation of humanist spaces, mirroring many of the topics being covered in debates in the west. However, one particular subject gained prominence in the Turkish art and architectural context – the local and the universal dichotomy. In this form of mediation, collaboration with the plastic arts would stand as a reasonable solution to the concerns of locality and rapprochement with the public. Addressing the desire for the creation of humanist spaces, such a collaboration would be the quintessential response to satisfying the aesthetic needs of the users, and was propounded by the two groups. In other words, this act covered the concerns of both the art and architectural worlds, but most importantly for architecture, it served as a means of presentation of their own modernisms, as the prevailing pursuit of the architectural realm. Even though the art milieu seemed to adopt an abstract language, they on the whole produced artworks that included local references in the search to combine the local and the universal.

Turan Erol claims that during those years, the controversy between the national and regional approaches and the universal common stance was the subject of much debate in the art world (Berk, 1973, 80). At this point, the influence of abstract art is highlighted as being linked directly with the collaboration of the arts and architecture. The increasing effect of abstract art in the technologically advanced world of the postwar years was responsible for the blurring of the borders, and took into account both universal and traditional characteristics (Gezer, 1973, 24).

In 1955, as *Türk Grup Espas* was arriving on the scene, the intensity of articles about the connection between art and architecture was reaching a peak in Turkey in the pages of the *Arkitekt* architectural journal. There is little doubt that this was a consequence of the formation of the group and its goal to disseminating the ideas of the artists who had established it, publicizing their names and works of art. This put *Arkitekt* in the position of an advertisement medium. The important thing to emphasize here, however, is that *Arkitekt* was an architecture journal rather than an art magazine, which is an attribute that it shared with *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. In one way or another, the *Espace* groups of both France and Turkey had a similar goal, using these architectural publications to convey their ideals to the public in a better way.

Türk Grup Espas remained active for four years, and it is crucial to touch upon the statements made between 1955 and 1959 addressing their endeavors and discourses. Throughout the life of the group, the writings of its members promoting collaboration led to other narrations and ponderings, and this brainstorming approach compelled other architects, artists and critics to consider the subject of collaboration, its necessity and its mechanism, thus nurturing the discursive side of issue.

Regarding the collaborative approaches of *Türk Grup Espas*, some articles promoted this vision, making firm statements about the need for such an initiative. Ercüment Kalmık sought to describe the collaborative approach and its operational phases, focusing in his articles on the intermingling of different disciplines. This, he argued, would culminate in a "collective purpose" to create spaces that would satisfy the public (Kalmık, 1956, 4). Furthermore, Nuri İyem, in his article "Resim ve heykel mimari ile işbirliği yapabilir mi?" (Can painting and sculpture collaborate with architecture?), announced his desire to live in a collectively designed city, which was in line with the aims of *Türk Grup Espas*, and mentioned in particular the integration of artworks into living spaces (İyem, 1957, 1). Nuri İyem's commentaries during the lifespan of *Türk Grup Espas* compelled the reader to consider a built environment, which may also be interpreted as a tone of promotion.

In the same year, Ragon (1957) made an evocative declaration on the urban view. In contrast to İyem (1957), he held a critical opinion of artists, who he blamed for the disconnection among the plastic arts. Ragon portrayed the current situation as being nowhere near a synthesis (Ragon, 1957, 137), and argued that the act of synthesis was not something new. When speaking about artworks in museums, he focused on the idea of the permanency of artworks, and suggested sculptors should renounce their present position and start taking notice of new materials, as this would allow them make an active contribution to cities. He also came up with a formula for designing as a team from the very beginning (Ragon, 1957, 138).

Related with the publications and particular texts, it is important to remember that *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, which featured many projects and articles covering the subject of 'synthesis', particularly in the special 1945 issue on art and architecture, was followed by many Turkish architects of the time. In Turkey, there was a sharp increase during the 1960s in the number of architectural journals, which also advocated and consolidated the increasing number of criticisms and discussions on the current practices within the architectural realm. Also, this shows the availability of the architectural context for questioning and disseminating of the issue of 'collaboration' within this particular period.

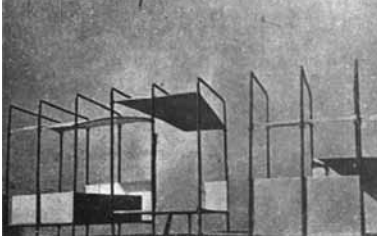


Figure 13. The sketch of Portable Shops, İlhan Koman. (Bara, 1955a)

Alongside the constructive effect of the publications, another factor that nurtured the relationship between art and architecture was education and related activities, especially the Academy of Fine Arts, where the atmosphere and activities nurtured a personal relationship between the two. It is impossible to underestimate the role of the Academy in providing a fertile ground for the physical closeness and the interaction that emerged between artists and architects. The notion of being established within the intellectual atmosphere of the Academy made this group both approachable and real for the architectural milieu. This could be seen as a vital opportunity for the formation and materialization of the idea, while their experiences abroad enhanced and transformed their visions and boundaries for these individuals. It is known that many artists, as a result, had the opportunity to meet important figures in Europe, such as Andre Lhote and Fernand Leger, who often dealt with the issue of collaboration.

Although no large-scale project was realized with the involvement of all group members, Çalikoğlu (2000b, 25) argues that the works of *Kare Metal* contributed to *Türk Grup Espas*. Indeed, the metal studio of the Academy, and later, *Kare Metal*, stand as spheres of implementation of the ideals of *Türk Grup Espas*. This was recognized by *Arkitekt* with a feature in one issue focusing on the synthesis of plastic arts, presenting examples from the works of *Kare Metal*. The article underlined that a parallelism exists between the explorations of different art media, permitting the accomplishment of a real synthesis, meaning that an artist should be familiar with other fields and their methods of production. This was the preferred technique of many renowned figures of the day, such as Arne Jacobsen, Fernand Leger and İlhan Koman. Of these, Jacobsen's endeavor to create furniture and Leger's productions that were both functional and plastic can be put forward as remarkable examples of the argument. *Portatif Dükkanlar* (portable shops), an unrealized project of İlhan Koman, was also cited in the text, emphasizing its aspirations towards a synthesis of the plastic arts, (Figure 13), while Koman and Sadi Öziş's creations using metal or plastic tubes were also mentioned. These basic materials were combined to achieve with both aesthetic and functional aims. It was highlighted in the article that cohesion with architectural space should be maintained, and none of these aforementioned works sacrificed their plasticity for the sake of function (Jacosen, et al., 1955, 152).

On the dichotomy of aesthetics and function, Zeynep Yasa Yaman argues that this kind of approach also brings the phenomenon of space-time to the scope of architecture and sculpture (Yasa Yaman, 2011, 83), while Kalmık (1963, 19) states that the notion of time in sculpture can only be achieved through architecture, in that it introduces different perspectives. Yılmaz (2007, 38) suggests that these artists used flat surfaces or slender components, akin to two-dimensional forms, to generate a sense of depth, following a method that assigned an important role to the space. The artwork employs this space, either behind or inside it, as a necessary component of its very own entirety, while the surfaces incorporate the concept of time by allowing circulation around the structure. Speaking on this new perception of sculpture at the time, Şar (1956, 11) said that the creation of depth within a work of art aims at the formation of virtual volumes. In such a rhythmic composition, achieved by way of currently popular materials, "the essence appears to be dematerialized inside the air and light" (13).

13. "...öz havanın ışığın içinde madde olmaktan çıkıyor..." (Şar, 1956).

Apart from the supporting statements that were penned while the group was still active, the expectation for collaboration never ceased. In the following decade, similar articles were written that encouraged spatial vision, and attempts were made to clarify the social purpose of this issue. One article in particular sought to reveal how synthesis is connected with the social utility of art creation in the final stage, in that the main goal of the arts is to attain “the natural condition” in which reconciliation is achieved between the painting and the wall. To do this, a painting should be abstract and not figurative in composition. When a painting and a wall come together in harmony, it culminates in social utility, and this can be referred to as a synthesis of the arts (L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui, 1963, 22-3).

Despite its solid arguments and enthusiastic approach, *Türk Grup Espas* was short lived, and because of this short lifespan, and other problems that were mostly financial, they could not wholly solidify their ideals. Nevertheless, they seemed to make an important contribution in an intellectual sense to the milieu of Turkish art and architecture, stressing that the main intention was more than the mere employment of artworks. The achievements of the group in terms of its theoretical approach, rather than its solid realizations and its efforts to merge function and art over the theme of utility, albeit not culminated in a collaboration with architecture, could be read in an alternative way. Another interpretation could be that Turkish architecture and art milieu did not remain outside the contemporary developments abroad, and that they actually produced for this contemporary international circle. Viewed from this perspective, the group could be considered as having stimulated the notion of design via collaboration in both the architecture and art realms in Turkey.

The contribution that the group made to the architectural realm was entrenched in the essence of their assertion of an absolute unity, which was referred to as the synthesis. Their argument was seemingly the same with the one asserted in the west, although it had some diverging points in detail. In the projection of their ideas onto architecture, however, the accent was on the issue of collaboration, along with its processes and the fundamentals of team work, rather than the theme of the synthesis. In other words, the concept of synthesis was slightly deviated in terms of its definition and coverage. In Turkey, the ideal course of action was one of the leading topics of debate, according to which artists and architects emphasized the process, and hence, worked in collaboration. To this end, the Turkish art and architecture milieu established a platform for discussion on the operational side of this approach that included synchronized works and team spirit. The prevailing tone was on the position of the architect in the collaboration, being compared at the time to an orchestra conductor, however *Türk Grup Espas* did not base its argument on this postulation, and the architect was not portrayed as a deterministic character in such a unity.

Traces of this concern were seen not only in the architectural milieu but also in the comments of Bedri Rahmi Eyüpoğlu, who put forward his own ideas and expectations, and elaborated upon the *modus operandi* of such a collaboration that he begins by talking about the “recipe” given by the architect (Eyüpoğlu, 1956, 3) (14). It is somewhat striking that although he spoke about collaboration between the arts and architecture even in the years of activity of *Türk Grup Espas*, he did not refer to the group at all in his writings, and did not participate in the initiative. That said, Eyüpoğlu was involved in several projects that could be regarded as collaborations,

14. For other articles of the artist related with collaboration see: (Eyüpoğlu, 1943; 1952; 1953; 1954; 1956c; 1986).

including the well-known mosaic wall of the 1958 Brussels World Fair Turkish Pavilion, which has been accepted as an important example that was really close to the theme of synthesis.

The different interpretations and perceptions of the issue in the architectural realm may indicate that a search was underway for the applicability of this ideal. By renouncing some components, reducing existing limits or narrowing the boundaries of its definition, attempts were made to find a route that was more definite and could be put into practice. In any case, this group cannot be claimed as the only triggering factor in the burgeoning of collaborative works, and it can be said that architecture was seeking a similar participatory route to overcome its own crisis.

As mentioned earlier, modernism was subjected to questioning and reassessment by Turkish architects who aspired to create a new formulation of the “modern” that would be adaptable to their own context, which can be regarded as a “situated modernism”. With the increase in social consciousness among the Turkish intelligentsia, especially during the 1960s, the embedding of modernism into everyday life, for the benefit of social welfare, became an issue in spatial treatment. My argument is that in this kind of mediation, collaboration with the plastic arts offered a reasonable solution to the concerns of locality and rapprochement with the public. In this regard, attempts to localize the “modern” can be considered evidence of an intention to do more than merely imitate the west.

In this regard, the tendency towards “collaboration” was a natural product of this peculiar context. Especially during the years of existence of *Türk Grup Espas* (1955-1958), it can be said that both the manifestations of the group and other critical texts dealing with their arguments and practices set the trajectory and the mindset of the architectural milieu, and it is no coincidence that it was in the peak years of the group that the Brussels pavilion project was designed and realized. This project came to be regarded as the leading example of its kind, and as an achievement that brought the approach to its pinnacle, marking a turning point after its realization. The presumable role of İlhan Koman in the project as a member of the group, his accumulations about the issue and his personal relations between these figures and the architects are factors that cannot be denied. In fact, this project represents the closest example of their assertion of synthesis, and served as a showcase of their manifestations to a limited extent. In this respect, it can certainly be regarded as an important leap in the concept of “collaboration”. That said, despite the involvement of İlhan Koman in the project, whether directly or indirectly, it is somewhat ironic that it also paved the way for the end of the initiative, since Koman made a sudden decision to move to Stockholm while already in abroad (in Belgium) constructing his work *in situ*.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of *Türk Grup Espas* brought about a change in the relationship between the arts and architecture in the postwar period, and the constructive statements of the group members on the enhanced meaning of collaborative work can be regarded having made an important contribution to the international circle. This can be taken as evidence of the fact that Turkey was not merely imitating the west but was rather an active participant in the process. The metal works of those involved in *Kare Metal*, considered as being ahead of their time, confirms the uniqueness

15. Indeed, Şadi Çalık organized an exhibition titled "Minimumizm" in 1957 but it did not draw interest. Later, in 1964, the Minimal Art had emerged in the USA. This notion is said to support the argument that, Turkish artists were not just imitating or importing the works or ideas from the West but they also had a pioneer role in some senses, which also reminds Koman's works related with mathematical inventions (Çalık, 2004, 8).

of the collaborative initiatives, beyond an imitation of western practices (15). Giving credence to their rather theoretical presence, their vision and critical overtones on the operational side of synthesis might provide an accumulation for the realized works in architecture. Their approach to designing space in active terms – that is, investigating the space in terms of both its formal and functional aspects – can be considered as the introduction of a novel spatial treatment to the architectural milieu that stimulated "collaboration" with the arts. In fact, the establishment of the group coincided with a period in which architecture was attempting to avoid the critical aspects of modernism.

Their course of action culminated in the integration of the arts into architecture by means of "collaboration", as a result of the considerations of both sides converging at common points, the notion of publicity, and the local and the universal dichotomy. It can thus be argued that the group, whether intentionally or unintentionally, played a role in changing the trajectory of the Turkish architectural milieu, and in doing so, encouraged the active positioning of Turkish architecture within the international arena and even indirectly partook in their very contribution and production for this realm.

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BİRLİK/TELİĞİ TASARLAMAK: TÜRK GRUP ESPAS VE TÜRKİYE'DE İKİNCİ DÜNYA SAVAŞI SONRASI MİMARLIK

Türk Grup Espas Türkiye'de sanat ve mimarlık birlikteliğini ve işbirliğini destekleyen önemli bir girişim olmuştur. 1955'te üç sanatçı ve bir mimar ile kurulan grup, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönemde öne çıkan kolektif algı ile üretimi benimsemiştir. Türkiye'de sanat ve mimarlık işbirliğinin en somut örneği olan *Türk Grup Espas*, sentez düşüncesi üzerine oluşturduğu söylemini ifade etmiş, konunun kapsamını ve mantığını ele alan kendi tanımını da oluşturmuştur. Bu anlamda grup, sanat ve mimarlık için ideal bir birlikteliğin portresini çizmiştir. Yazı, bu sanatsal girişimin oluşumunu, önemini ve Türk mimarlık ortamına katkısını incelemektedir. Konuya mimarlık açısından yaklaşarak, temelde grubun Türk mimarlığındaki yeri ve anlamı üzerine odaklanılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, oluşumun ana hedeflerini incelemekte ve planlanan amaçları için nasıl bir ilişki ağı ve uygulama biçimi önerdiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Grubun mimarlık ve güzel sanatlar arasındaki kopukluğu aşma çabası, dönemin mimarlık ve sanat ortamının konularından olan toplumsal yararlılık ve modern olanı içselleştirme arayışları bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma bu girişimi, dönemin modernist yaklaşımlarıyla aynı doğrultuda ve Batıda gelişen bu ortama önemli bir katkı ya da etkin bir katılım şeklinde değerlendirilebilecek bir çaba olarak yorumlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak metin, bu takım çalışmasının niyetlerini ve amaçlarını tanımlamaya, bunların ne anlamda gerçekleştiğini ve mimarlık ortamında ne tür bir farkındalığı canlandırdığını ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır.

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