

Figure 1. From the exhibition: May 2019, Oosterre-TUDELFT.

## THE METU CAMPUS DOCUMENTED V: Representing Itself May 2019, TU Delft

Ayşen SAVAŞ

1. The first exhibition entitled “METU Documented” was organized at METU Culture and Convention Centre, in 1999. For a brief summary see, Ayşen Savaş. *METU Documented*, Ankara: METU Press, June 1999.

2. This text is based on the final report submitted to the Getty Institution in January 2019. For detailed information about the “Keeping It Modern” project and its research group including Ayşen Savaş, İpek Gürsel Dino, Sezin Sarıca, Bengisu Derebaşı, Serra İnan and Şahin Akın please see: <http://kimproject.arch.metu.edu.tr/en/about-us>. See also Ayşen Savaş, İpek Gürsel Dino. “Constituting an Archive: Documentation as a Tool for the Preservation of the METU Faculty of Architecture”, *DOCOMOMO Journal*, vol. 57, 2019 (in the process of publication).

The “METU CAMPUS EXHIBITION: Representing Itself” is held in May 2019 as part of the annual TU Delft Research Week activities. The Technical University of Delft hosted the exhibition, which was accompanied with a panel discussion with the participation of an international group of historians, conservation experts, architects and graduate students. This traveling exhibition is one of the outcomes of an ongoing research project that was launched in 1999, to make a comprehensive documentation of the relatively unknown Modernist University Campus project in Ankara (1)(Figure 1). The major goal behind this exhibition is the collection of the archival material that is focusing on the establishment years of the university and the formation of its physical environment. The documentation procedures, preparation of the exhibition and the formation of the archive have been conceived and designed as analogous processes. Rather than the construction of an institution,

the idea was to initiate a process of archiving in which “archivization” is seen as a way of conservation. The end product therefore, rather than being a frozen entity, is conceived as a progressive collection, that is based on a series of representation processes. Preparation of a living archive is a “critical operation”, using the Tafurian terminology. It is a continuous interpretation process, effective even after the completion of the conservation planning procedures. Thus, the ultimate objective of this exhibition is to protect the campus and its outstanding architectural elements. “In an architectural context in which nothing is permanent and nothing is indispensable, and in a socio-political environment in which everything is possible, unconventional ways of “preservation” become essential.” (2) A new method of preservation and representation is proposed here to generate awareness for architectural and social values with two statements: “conservation by documentation” and “conservation by

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**METU CAMPUS DOCUMENTED TRAVELLING EXHIBITION**

■ **OPENING:**  
MAY 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2019  
OOSTERRE  
TU Delft  
@17:00

■ **MAY 10<sup>TH</sup> -  
MAY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2019**  
ARCHITECTURE  
CORRIDOR  
GALLERY  
TU Delft



The "METU CAMPUS DOCUMENTED EXHIBITION" is one of the outcomes of an ongoing research project that launched in 2013, to make a comprehensive documentation of relatively unknown Modernist University Campus project in Ankara. The ultimate goal of this exhibition is to protect the campus and its outstanding architectural elements. A new method of preservation and representation is proposed here to generate awareness for architectural and social values with two statements: "conservation by documentation" and "conservation by international awareness". This method gained the invaluable support of the Getty Foundation with a grant awarded in 2017 through its "Keeping It Modern" initiative and further supported by the METU Faculty of Architecture, Goethe Institute, SALT Research, DO.CO, MO.MO Berlin and the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture.



**METU CAMPUS DOCUMENTED**

- A UNIVERSITY IS A SOCIETY
- TRANSCODING THE BAUHAUS PARADIGM
- DIAMONDS IN SAHARA

**CURATED BY**  
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SALT RESEARCH

**PARTICIPANTS**  
ARCH 524 STUDENTS 2016-2019








Poster of the exhibition

international awareness". This method gained the invaluable support of the Getty Foundation with a grant awarded in 2017 through its "Keeping It Modern" initiative and further supported by the METU Faculty of Architecture, Goethe Institute, SALT Research, DO.CO, MO.MO Berlin and the TU Delft Faculty of Architecture. The METU campus exhibition is composed of three major parts: "University as a Society", "Transcending the Bauhaus Paradigm" and "Diamonds in Sahara/Museum for one hour". Each part is divided into subtitles to represent a series of themes including the grid, alley, part of the whole, distraction of a box, diagrams, house vs housing and "Keeping it Modern".

### UNIVERSITY AS A SOCIETY: DEVELOPMENT OF CAMPUS ARCHITECTURE

The formation of a 'society' was the major goal of the founders of the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey, which was established in 1956 and became a significant source of intellectual, ideological and architectural capital for its region (3). The university was designed as a total entity, a three-dimensional modern grid spread over the barren Anatolian prairie, and, in half a century, succeeded in transforming its immediate environment into an 'ideal landscape'. The METU Campus is a masterpiece of the decisions given at all architectural scales. Starting out with its location and site plan, and all consequent decisions made regarding its urban layout, infrastructural system, building mass articulations, solid-void relations and material choices, have been deemed optimal over the last 60 years. Following a competition, the campus was designed by architect couple Altuğ and Behruz Çinici, and the foundations were laid on the bare mounds in Ankara in 1963 (Figure 2). In ten years, the architects managed to create a holistic architecture by interpreting the ideals of Modernity in Turkish architectural culture. In the late 1950s the project was anticipated to become a "model" for urban planning throughout the Middle East, and today it remains as one of the most outstanding icons of Modern Architecture in the world. It is no coincidence that the first academic branch to launch an education program in the newly established university

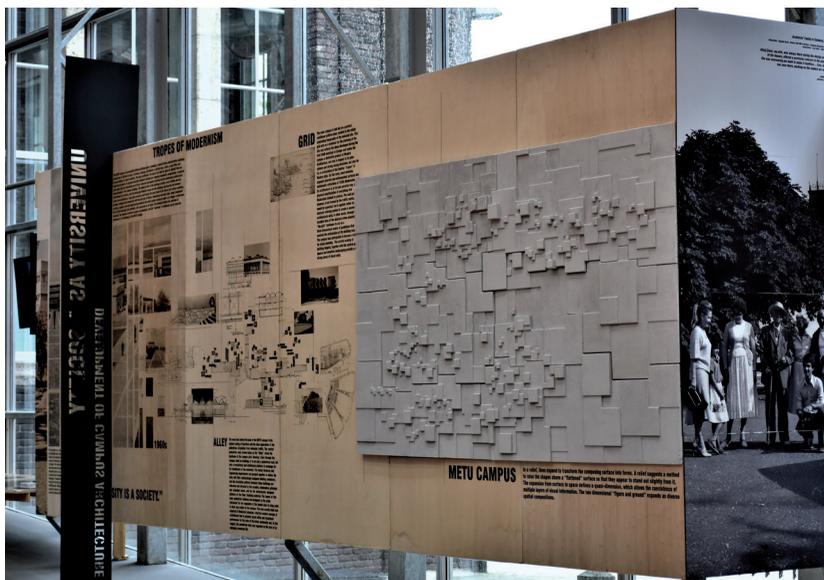


Figure 2. Çinici Architects.

Figure 3. Relief Model I: "METU Campus as an Expanded Surface".

3. Güven A. Sargin, Ayşen Savaş. "University is a Society: An Environmental History of the METU Campus", *JoA-Journal of Architecture*, v.18, n.1, 2013, pp.79-106 (re-printed in the *Journal of Architecture* first anniversary anthology in 2016).

4. Sarah Williams Goldhagen. "Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 64, no. 2, June 2005), pp. 144-167.

5. Le Courbuiser, "Grille CIAM D'Urbanisme: Mise en application de la charte d'Athenes", edited by *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, Collection de l'ASCORAL, Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1948.

and reflects the ideas developed during the first CIAM meetings in Europe. It makes the campus a distinctive product of Modern Architecture, not only in respect to its plan scheme and strong zoning decisions, but also for its re-articulation of the familiar "tropes" of Modern style (4). Its flat roofs, band windows, exposed concrete and whitewashed surfaces are emblematic reflections of 1930s Modernism, and its architecture is, in its own peculiar way, a physical manifestation of everything that Modernism claimed to profess. The said grid, however, is not formed by the traffic routes, as would be expected, but is applied rather as an abstract ordering system to create a seamless architectural unity. In other words, through the invisible lines of the abstract urban planning tool, "the grid" continues to act as a three-dimensional matrix of guidelines that controls the articulation of the building masses. The campus was anticipated to become a model for urban planning. The careful scaling of building heights, together with the central public spaces and sensitive landscaping, provide a very strong sense of visual unity. The foundation of METU, which has long been regarded as a success story, can be explored in parallel with the environmental transformation through which its architecture and landscape came forth in full accord with the purpose of taming nature in a modernist way. CIAM "Grid" is used as a guiding tool by the architects for their design decisions at every scale (5). The plan of the overall campus, landscape design, structural elements in the building and the placement of finishing elements on the wall and floor surfaces are all guided by the invisible lines of a strong grid-iron system (Figure 3). Represented in a bas-relief in the exhibition, the guidelines of this grid expand to transform the composing surface into built forms. Thus, the bas-relief suggests a method to raise the "flattened" surfaces so that they appear to stand out from the background. The expansion from surfaces to volumes defines a quasi-dimension, which allows the coexistence of multiple layers of visual information. The two dimensional "figure and ground" represents diverse spatial compositions.

was the Faculty of Architecture. The Departments of Architecture and City Planning, incorporating research institutes focusing on building construction and housing, were later established to operate as applied research platforms aimed at providing alternative urbanisms to the rapidly developing country. While METU was founded as a center for the cultivation of ideas that would eventually help the country face up to the challenges posed by the modern society on urbanism, its graduates were thought to be the decision-makers and the leaders of the "new society".

**Grid I:** The main campus is laid out on a perfect rectilinear gridiron plan, molded to the mildly undulating topography of the selected site. This grid acts as a mediator for the planning of the site

**Alley:** The main idea behind the plan of METU campus is the vigilant zoning of functions and the clear separation of the

pedestrian circulation from the vehicular traffic. This part of the exhibition focuses on the central pedestrian road, called “forum” by the architects, known today as the “Alley”, which forms the backbone of the campus plan. Running 1.5 km through the campus and lined by buildings, it is not only a pedestrian road, but also a recreational and intellectual platform of exchange for the inhabitants of the university. The department and administrative buildings are grouped together to define the alley and the circulation patterns between these buildings are indicated and directed by the arcades, colonnades, gateways and extended eaves, and by the meticulously designed patterns of the floor finishing materials. The courtyards and the mezzanine floors with skylights are the breathing spaces and natural light sources of almost all the campus buildings. The layout of this main pedestrian walkway was designed as the prime instrument for the regulation of the master plan to bring order to what was visible on the surface. This was exactly what was required of Modernist urbanism—that the modern concept of architecture had to promote social utility and functional performance for the sake of the urban community and, in this respect, the pedestrian alley was regarded as the core of an emerging communal life.

**Campus Buildings:** The METU campus accommodates different building types, including a central library, administrative buildings, amphitheaters of different scales, a museum, lodgings, dormitories, a market area, banks, a post office and various edifices for sports facilities. The main auditorium, the sports hall and the open-air football field are significant products of exposed concrete in Modern Architecture. Dynamic volumetric compositions, sculptural protrusions and the alternating use of brick, concrete and white plaster surfaces are the dominating architectural characteristics of the campus buildings. The modest scale of the cubical masses creates a very friendly physical environment for students, and the landscape elements merge into the buildings, blurring the line between nature and architecture. Large glass surfaces, particularly those in the library and the central cafeteria, provide a strong visual connection with the host city of Ankara. The

main auditorium and the Faculty of Architecture building deserve special emphasis as two building complexes that represent Modernism at its finest. The qualities of in-depth refinement and minimalism can be experienced in both the interiors and exteriors of these two edifices. Undulating red brick walls, large transparent surfaces, exposed concrete load-bearing elements and white plaster surfaces result in an elegant architecture that is functional, aesthetic and connected at all levels. The rationale behind the selection of materials, the exposed structural systems and elements, and the “valuation” of materials can be read and understood in all buildings on the METU campus.

### TRANSCODING THE BAUHAUS PARADIGM

The exhibition presents the METU Faculty of Architecture Building located in Ankara is the best product of Modern Architecture in Turkey. With its architectural elements and built-in furniture, it is represented as the material and symbolic manifestation of the Modernist approach. Not only the architectural qualities but also the curricula of the Faculty of Architecture were displayed to underline the influences of a modified Bauhaus program reflected in the studio-based education system and the functional layout of the building including material workshops, open plan space distribution, transparent courtyards, exposed concrete curtain walls, large glass surfaces, *brise-soleil* façades and flat roofs. The Faculty of Architecture presents one of the most important success stories of Modernism in Turkey. The award-winning architecture, landscaping, and the social life in the building and the urban design of the campus are the representatives of not only Modern Architecture but also the context shaped by cultural, political and economic involvements. The METU Faculty of Architecture was a brand-new school, which was established in the capital city of the young Republic to become a model for “the new modern society”. Along with the local administrative staff, first Thomas B.A. Godfrey and Marvin Sevely, later William Cox and Frederick Alois (Fritz) Janeba and the other visiting lecturers sent by UNESCO during the establishment years of the school,



**Figure 4.** Learning Laboratory: Radial Reinforced concrete beams, waffle slabs.



6. "For the Faculty of Architecture at METU-Bauhaus was a Promise", *Imaginista*, vol. 4, 2019. <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/5089/for-the-faculty-of-architecture-at-metu>

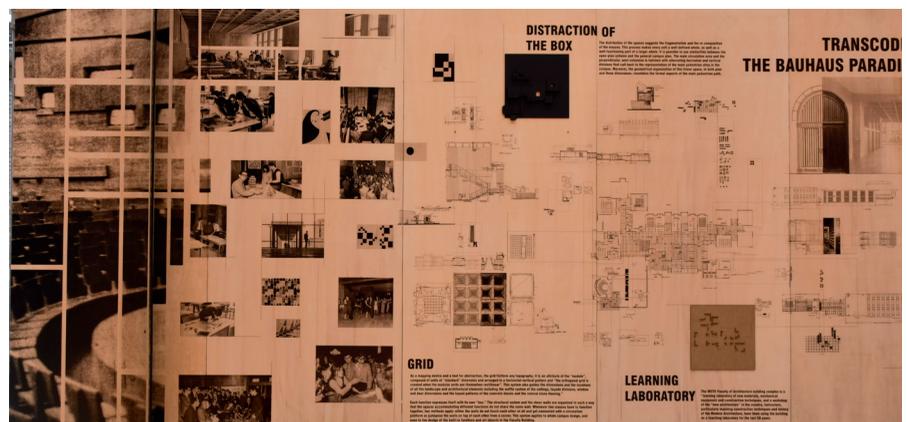
7. The second exhibition entitled "METU Documented II", was curated by Ayşen Savaş and organized with the valuable contributions of architects Hasan Okan Çetin, Emre Kuzlu and Ertüğrul Yurdakul; accompanying the book: *Anılar. Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması. 1956'dan 2006'ya ODTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi'nin 50 Yılı*, edited by Sevgi Aktüre, Sevin Osmay, Ayşen Savaş, Ankara: METU Press, 2007.

were architects trained in the tenets of Modernism. It would not be wrong to say that with the aid of these American and North European visiting architects/instructors, the Bauhaus took quite a detour to reach to the METU Faculty of Architecture (6). The METU Faculty of Architecture building complex is now a learning laboratory of new materials, mechanical equipment and construction techniques, and a workshop of the "new architecture" in the country. Instructors, particularly teaching construction techniques and history of the Modern Architecture, have been using the building as a teaching laboratory for the last 50 years (7) (Figure 4).

**Part of a Whole:** Rather than a single structure, the METU Faculty of Architecture building is interpreted as a building complex which is composed of three main structurally, functionally and administratively differentiated units: the museum (originally designed as a library), the auditorium and the main education building. This part of the exhibition focused on the fragmentation of masses that continues in the main education building to be arranged around a cross shaped circulation

axis. The architectural program of the building is distributed into physically identified volumes that are expressed with integrated cubic masses from the outside. The distribution of the spaces suggests the fragmentation and the re-composition of the masses. This process makes every unit a well-defined whole, as well as a well-functioning part of a larger whole. The METU Faculty of Architecture building complex is composed of quasi-autonomous units connected with very strong circulation and landscape elements. Each function expresses itself with a well-defined cubic unit. The same spatial complexity and formal fragmentation expands to include all the building units of the entire campus.

**Distraction of a Box:** The distribution of the spaces within the building suggests the fragmentation and the re-composition of the masses. This process makes every unit a well-defined whole, as well as a well-functioning part of a larger whole. This section of the display, mainly focuses on the similarities between the open-plan scheme and the general campus plan particularly illustrated in architectural



**Figure 5.** Distraction of a box.

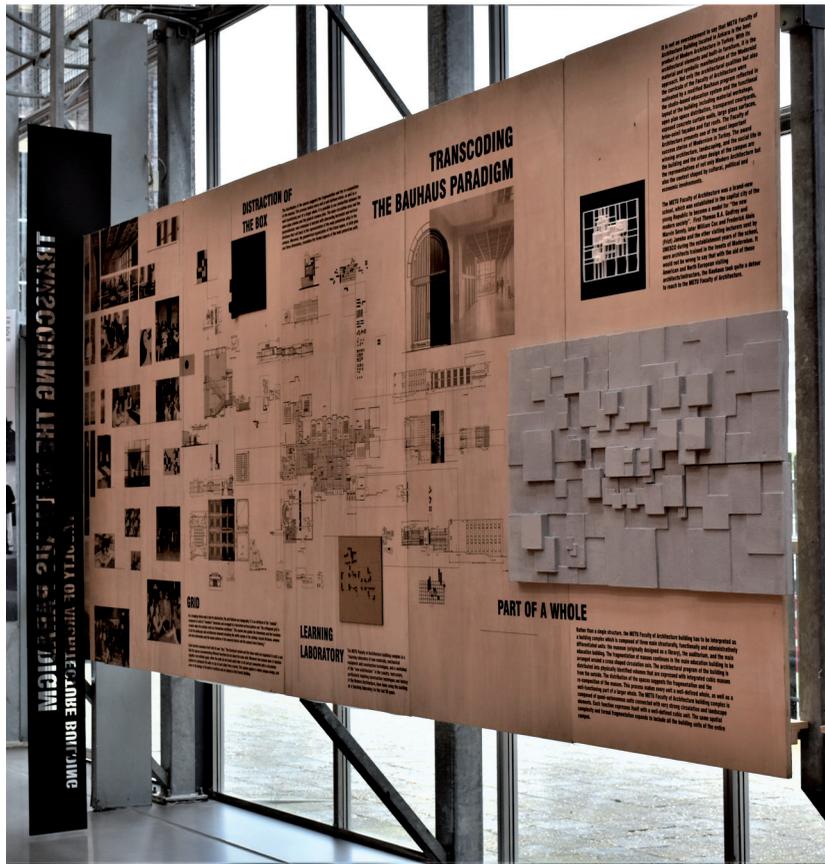


Figure 6. Relief Model II: "Part of a whole".

drawings. The main circulation area and the perpendicular, west extension is hatched with alternating horizontal and vertical divisions that call back to the representation of the main pedestrian alley in the campus. Moreover, the geometrical organization of this linear space, in both plan and three dimensions, resembles the formal aspects of the main pedestrian path. (Figure 5)

**Grid II:** As a mapping device and a tool for abstraction, the grid flattens any topography; it is an attribute of the "module", composed of units of "standard" dimension and arranged in a horizontal-vertical pattern and the orthogonal grid is created when the modular units are themselves rectilinear. This system also guides the dimensions and the locations of all the landscape and architectural elements including the waffle system of the ceilings, façade divisions, window and door dimensions and the layout patterns of the concrete blocks and the natural stone flooring. Each function expresses itself with its own "box." The structural system and the shear walls are organized in such

a way that the spaces accommodating different functions do not share the same wall. Whenever two masses must function together, two methods apply: either the walls do not touch each other at all and get connected with a circulation platform or the walls are juxtaposed on top of each other to form L shaped corners. This system applies to whole campus design, and even to the design of the built-in furniture and art objects in the Faculty Building. (Figure 6)

#### DIAMONDS IN SAHARA: METU LODGINGS DOCUMENTED

This part of the exhibition unfolds the book entitled "Diamonds in the Sahara: METU Lodgings Documented" and starts with the statement as follows: "If the Faculty of Architecture building is perceived as the peak point of the Modernism in Turkey, METU Lodgings, developed in the second half of the 1960s, can be considered as an early critique of the International Style." (8) The established demarcation between modern versus tradition, public versus private, transparent versus opaque, pitched versus flat, METU housing project is presented as a masterpiece not only because it was well designed and meticulously built, but also because the architects knew what Modern Architecture was all about, and what a "home" could not be. Maintaining flat roofs and large glass surfaces in Ankara's harsh climate, while also appreciating the existence of minimum conditions of Modernist interiors, with white plaster surfaces, glass brick separators and exposed concrete walls, would be rather difficult to appreciate for university staff coming from different nationalities, backgrounds and age groups. The inclined flat roofs, exposed brick surfaces and dark wood panels help the users to adapt to the new "style" (Figure 7).

**Diagrams:** Mimicking in genre the aesthetics of High Modernism, these diagrams are abstract representations that are used in order to map different "functions"/"zones" and their intricate relations in the campus design. In their attempt to clarify the principles of Modern Architecture, these diagrams codify space and represent movement. Widely used in the 1950s, diagrams reflected the stylistic practices of the minimal art and aimed to provide a

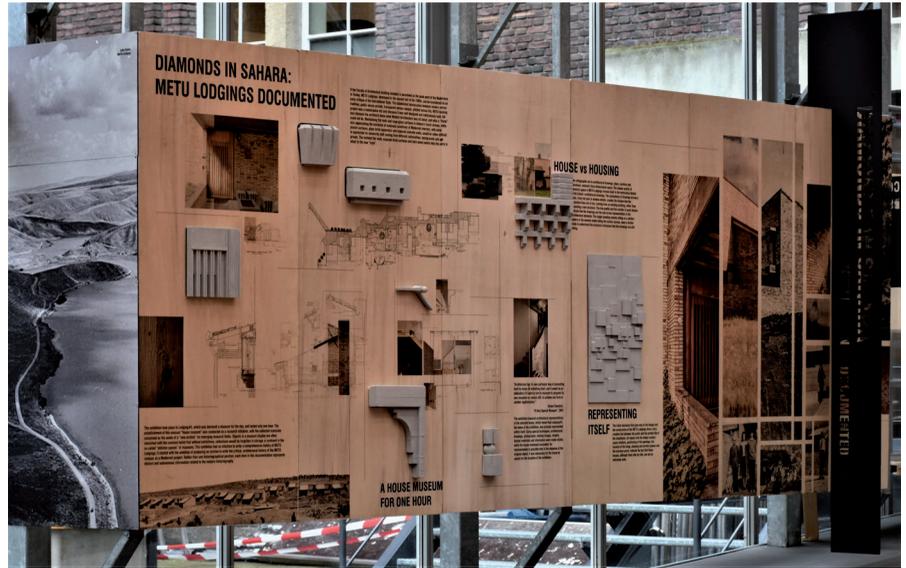


Figure 7. METU Lodgings.

nominal response to mass housing needs. (Figure 8)

**House vs Housing:** The initial decisions that gave way to the design and the construction of the METU Lodgings draw a very creative line between the public and the private life of the inhabitants. An inquiry into the indoor-outdoor space relations, positioning of the openings, the location of the living, sleeping and service spaces and the entrance porch, indicate the fact that these houses, although lined side by side, can act as individual units. (Figure 9)

Architecture in the Modern period or more specifically in the International Style was believed to be independent of both the context and the place. Yet the architecture of METU lodgings is “placed” in such a manner that its location could no longer become “anyplace”. A series of art works, built-in furniture, and murals help in the making of this building complex site specific and context bound. The orthographic

set in architectural drawings, plans, sections and elevations conceals three-dimensional space. The unique quality of domestic space in METU Lodgings reveals itself in the meticulous details of the Çinicis’ architectural drawings. The consistency of drawings at every scale, from site plan to window details, creates the illusion that the projection lines are in fact, coming from an existing building, rather than projecting a new structure. The line quality and the number of point details indicate that the drawings are the one- to- one representation of the architectural elements. The single standing column sitting on a perfect sphere or the wooden shade hiding the curtain cornice, need a further study to understand the structural intricacies that the drawings are still hiding. (Figure 10)

**A House Museum for One Hour:** The exhibition took place in Lodging#5, which was declared a museum for the day, and lasted only one hour. The establishment of this unusual “house museum” was conducted as a research initiative, with the collected materials

Figure 8. Zoning, functional layout and the maximum circulation distance.

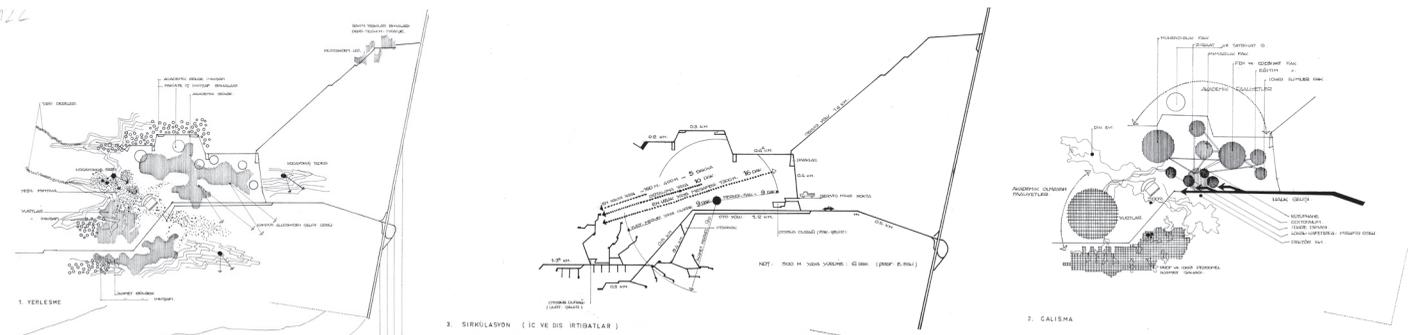




Figure 9. Relief Model III: "House vs Housing"

conceived as the seeds of a "new archive" for emerging research fields. Objects in a museum display are often cherished with the common belief that without exhibitions, collections would be forgotten in storage or be archived in the so-called "oblivion spaces" of museums. This exhibition had no intention to write a comprehensive history of METU Housing; it started with the ambition of producing an archive to write the critical, architectural history of METU Campus as a Modernist project. Rather than one historiographical position, each item in this documentation represents distinct

and autonomous information related to the modern historiography.

"Architecture has its own particular way of presenting itself to vision, of exhibiting itself; and it would be an abdication if it were to turn to museum to program its own reception or – worse still – to achieve one form or another legitimization" Hubert Damisch, "A Very Special Museum" 2001

The exhibition featured architectural representations of the selected house, which meant that Lodging#5, the home of the exhibition, was actually represented within itself. Using special

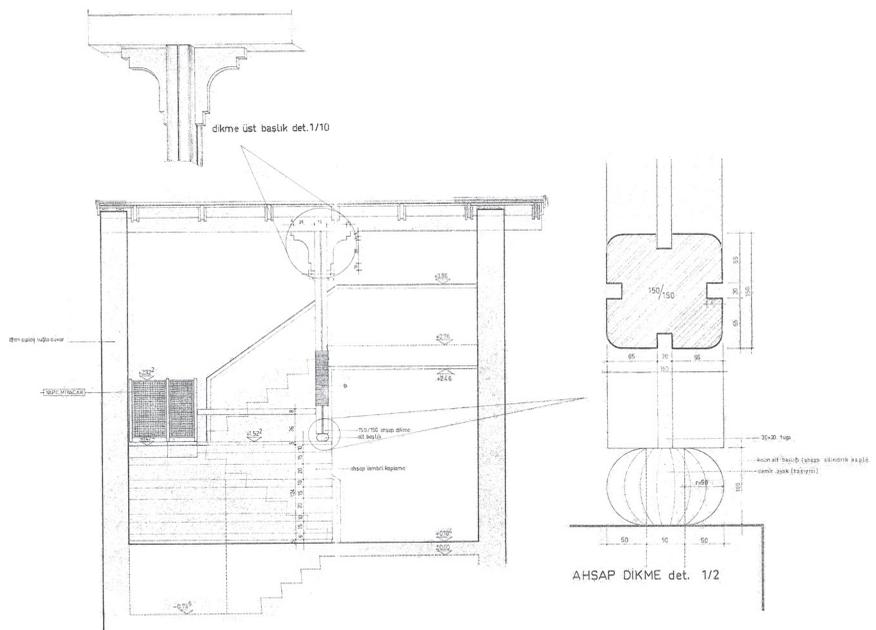


Figure 10. Detail drawings: "single standing column sitting on a perfect square".



**Figure 11.** “Museum for one day”: From METU Lodgings Documented Exhibition, 2016

techniques, architectural drawings, photographs, moving images, models, textual materials and information were made visible, while the house remained concealed. As representation is possible only in the absence of the original object, it was necessary for the house to vanish for the duration of the exhibition. (Figure 11)

**Keeping It Modern:** This part of the exhibition presents the research and planning activities that have been conducted as part of the Conservation Planning of the METU Faculty of Architecture Building. The Faculty of Architecture Building complex was originally designed as a school of architecture and still accommodates the same function. Particularly for that reason, it has been well preserved over the last 60 years; yet there are challenges. The necessity for an urgent conservation planning procedure became evident and an interdisciplinary graduate studio was established in 2013 to start a research program for the documentation of the material and cultural properties of the building. As stated in the beginning, “Conservation by Documentation” was the motto of the research group and the goal was the establishment of a comprehensive, operational archive within the Faculty building. This project gained the invaluable support of the

Getty Foundation “Keeping It Modern” grant in 2017. The grant supported the initiation of the conservation management plan to guide long-term maintenance and conservation policies developed for the METU Faculty of Architecture building. That required the thorough investigation of its physical condition and the analysis of materials, as well as the documentation of its social and cultural significance. This interdisciplinary research has been a continuous, interpretative praxis, which will be effective even after the completion of this conservation planning process. The methodology developed for the Faculty of Architecture building will form a model for similar undertakings in the other buildings in the campus and the city.

The very nature of this research required an efficient information sharing system. The interdisciplinary research group that formed the conservation planning team included architects, engineers, social scientist, conservation specialists, IT experts, chemists, archivists, administrative staff and the graduate students. The collection and management of the comprehensive and incremental information gathered during the research process required an effective medium that would provide an environment for the storage and



Figure 12. From the exhibition: HBIM-VR experience.

retrieval of the collected data. Moreover, the documentation and preservation of the historical and existing assets in conservation planning are not autonomous, single activities, but rather conditional, continuous processes. They are interpretative incessant operations, where social, cultural and material as well as semantic, geometric and topological data are collected and managed. A comprehensive and expressive 3D environment is essential for interactive data visualization that can make relevant knowledge accessible and provide insights into a rather sparse and complex data set. The final section of the exhibition was presenting the Heritage Building Information Model (HBIM) that was developed particularly to provide a medium to ensure the sustainability of this process. The purpose of the model was the documentation of the building, including the three-dimensional geometry, architectural significance, and the results of the assessment activities; data sharing between the work packages during the project; and data interoperability with the third-party analysis tools, such as structural analysis tools and energy performance simulation tools. This preservation strategy is addressing the functional, practical, physical, technical, as well as the social, environmental and the political factors that shaped and later transformed the original design ideas and construction methods. It provides owners of the building, managers, and stakeholders with better guidance on how to initiate

their assessments in a way that will enable them to go beyond raising awareness, to undertaking assessments that will lead to the implementation of practical, *in-situ* adaptation actions and decisions. The HBIM also has the potential to be used as a long-term digital medium that supports future management activities, including operations and maintenance, major renovation or analysis. This interactive and sustainable medium allows further additions, corrections, and subtractions. The simultaneous visualization of the geometry and the semantic data is useful both for assessment activities and for sharing the architectural heritage values with a wider audience. Therefore, the HBIM model can be considered as a virtual replica of the building that evolves in time. The expressive visualization of the HBIM is a critical issue in providing support to the heritage professionals during assessment processes. This virtual environment acts as an interactive medium in which users can view, visualize, edit and share the model and its elements for various purposes. (Figure 12)

As part of the conservation planning activities, this exhibition included information about several events that the team had organized in collaboration with local NGOs such as SALT Institute in Istanbul, Chamber of Architects in Ankara, and the Goethe Institute in Turkey, including symposia, exhibitions, competitions, alumni events, and oral history workshops.



Figure 13. #HugtheFaculty

All the publications including books, articles and catalogues were conducted and displayed in English to be able to reach to an international audience. The website of the project, which has been active since October 2018 and the films prepared by the graduate students in the Architecture and Different Modes of Representation- ARCH 524 course, were also in display on two screens.<sup>3</sup> Besides becoming part of the TUDelft Research Week, this project was included in the SOS Brutalism exhibition and its catalogue, entitled "SOS Brutalism. A Global Survey", in

2017. It was also part of the exhibition in the Venice Architecture Biennale - Greek Pavilion in 2018 and presented in the DO.CO.MO.MO 2019 in Berlin and KIM Workshops in London and Casablanca. Besides these exhibitions and workshops, the research team has already initiated a series of activities such as the social media project **#HugtheFaculty**, the alumni day exhibition, the "Keeping It Modern" Wall and the abovementioned website for the "Keeping it Modern" project. (Figure 13)