Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Bilge Karasu’s “Variations on Fear” and the Studio for Potential Architecture.

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• Abstract (300 words):
Bilge Karasu (1930-1995), one of the leading authors in contemporary Turkish fiction wrote an unparalleled experimental piece named Çeşitlemeli Korku (Variations on Fear, 1972-74) in madrigal form, originating from Renaissance music mainly composed for five human voices (i.e. soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass).

Karasu wrote the text in four columns so as to resemble a poem although it is primarily a prose. What is unique for this text is that, these separate blocks of words/durations were to be vocalized in such a choreography that, the text would sound like a prose-madrigal, orchestrated by the author himself, who was also a master in playing the piano. The original hand-drawn, extraordinary notation pages of the text is part of his book as an end piece in Kismet Büfesi (2016: 127-139, Metis: Istanbul) and was then recorded in its original form in Turkish State Radio TRT in 1970s by some reputed voice actors and by the famous composer İlhan Usmanbaş (tenor). The text is not
widely-known to the international reader; its vocal version is even lesser known. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPQvnrm_8qw&t=155s)

What made me put this experimental work on the architectural studio education agenda was the dramatic findings of Ege Berensel, a video artist and theoretician on film, of the bands of Karasu’s recordings in dump which also included his 7 paged type-written copy of Variations on Fear. At this point I not only put my and my students’ efforts to analyze the text written in four columns, but also on the notations, which were like diagrams of an electronic circuit. This double-architectural representation becomes even more intriguing when the political actuality of its content is speculated. Fear and censorship are still denominators of contemporary politics within the middle eastern geography. The outcomes of the architectural studio were based on the spatialization of an acoustic experience, fusing five vocal layers within an unorthodox space.

In this paper I will not only be dealing with the formal and experimental aspects of Karasu’s Variations on Fear, I will also be discussing the architectural variations that were created as projects within our studio in 2017, in Pomi (studio for potential architecture, a name after the oulipo) at the department of architecture.

**Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Levent Şentürk, b. 06. 07. 1974, Eskişehir, Turkey. Graduated from Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Department of Architecture (2000). His MA thesis is on the Wittgenstein House at Vienna, Kundmanngasse (2003, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, İstanbul). His PhD. dissertation is on the critique of Le Corbusier’s Modulor as a masculinist construct (2007, Yıldız Technical University, İstanbul). His works are in theory and history of architecture, philosophy, literature and art. Publications focus on titles like Le Corbusier, Jan Svankmajer, Gilles Deleuze; biopolitics, gender studies, architectural design education; the body, kitsch, oulipo, palimpsest and queer. He has published 14 books in Turkey since 1998 (from publishing houses: YKY, 6.45, Sel, Kült, Kırmızı Kedi).

(For further details on his work: https://ogu.academia.edu/LeventŞentürk)