

Professional scientific sessions for art, architecture and urban planning Thursday evenings

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Title: Iranian Interior Management Over Time. 1- Modernity.

Series of Sessions dedicated to the Iranian Interior Architecture Development process.

1-Modernity. 2-Rationalism. 3-Mass Construction. 4-Avidity

Roundtable Members: Mrs. N. Kateb, Mr. Mohseni, Mr. A. Jalili and Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi.

At the beginning of the 146th session Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi welcoming the participants, presented the members of the roundtable and the content of the program. Mr. Mahmoudi posed a general question regarding the evolution of architecture during the last century, beginning approximately from World War I and on the other side the foundation of Iranian Fine Arts faculty. He asked if the roundtable members agreed with the mentioned dating. He invited Mrs. Kateb to express herself regarding the question.

Mrs. Kateb asserted that the introduction of modernity in Iran is considered the penetration of western architecture, expressed in the construction of buildings like Shams-ol-Emareh and Sardar. Before the foundation of the Faculty of Fine Arts, during the Pahlavi the first era (1930-1940), many students completed their studies in architecture in Russia and started their professional activity in Iran. Regarding this assertion Mr. Mahmoudi intervened saying that during the mentioned period social changes and evolutions occurred in Iran, inviting Mr. Mohseni to express himself.

Mr. Mohseni explained that in his opinion what happened during the mentioned era is the continuation of the process of industrialization occurred during the last two centuries in the European continent, that is a beginning of the process of modernization in Iran.

Mr. Mahmoudi addressing his question to Mr. Jalili wanted to know if the process of introduction and modernization of interior design in Iran occurs in the faculty of Fine Arts parallel to the course of architecture, or they follow separate paths?

Answering to the question, Mr. Jalili explained that the process of modernization is continuous and we can't fix it to a precise period. The process of modernization reflects the spirit of the era, where other social-political huge changes occur, like French or Russian revolution. In his opinion what happens in Iran with the Qajar era, is a tendency of modernization in the Iranian society, inspired and copied from the western society.

Mr. Mahmoudi wanted to know if the changes that occurred in Qajar era, inspired or copied from the west that can be considered as a positive movement, from the lifestyle to the external aspects of the city (like the construction of Shams-ol-Emareh, as the highest building in Tehran), has been reflected in the interior design and furniture of the buildings?

The first speaker to answer to this question was Mrs. Kateb. Talking about the Iranian architecture before and during the Qajar and Pahlavi era, she asserted that in the Iranian architecture under the influence of Islam, except the mosques that have external decorations, the inside of the buildings are decorated, but in the external parts we see almost nothing. What during the Pahlavi has been done wasn't the negation of Qajar era as rival, but an attempt to revitalize the historical-architectural heritage of Iranian empire, introducing elements of the Iranian architecture in the structure of the city that had a new ruling dynasty (the Pahlavi). In her opinion during the Pahlavi era the buildings giving the impression of a western inspiration, at the same time reflect and successfully propose Iranian architectural elements. Talking about the interior design and furniture, Mrs. Kateb asserted that in this case, because the inspiration and dictating source was the ruling society, many items have been just transferred from the west without creating the conditions for a local production, also because the Iranian society has been influenced for centuries from the Islamic lifestyle.

Talking about Qajar, Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic era , Mr. Mahmoudi asserted, talking about the entrance of Tehran University as an example, he believes that in many cases the new ruling force didn't always refused whatever came from the defeated ruling force, trying to maintain the valuable elements that had been created before.

Pointing on one of the elements of Shams-ol-Emareh that is the watch installed on the facade of the building, Mrs. Kateb believes that it was a sign to positively transform an important habit in the Iranian society. She didn't also agree that the during Pahlavi first era they have tried to cancel the traces of Qajar era. During the Pahlavi era many many buildings from different eras have been fortunately saved from destruction.

Continuing the speech related to what happened during the Pahlavi first era and after in Iranian architecture, Mr. Mohseni asserted that in his opinion what happened in the interior design and furniture in the buildings, was the exact continuation of the external essence of the buildings. So buildings that were designed by the new generation of architects, not only was inspired by the western and Iranian ancient heritage, but also by the use of new concepts and materials related to interior design, decoration and furniture. Of course the group of architects that were educated in West, were familiar with the modern movement in arts and architecture concepts and philosophy, that transformed the western society in its approaches. At the same time architects like Markov, Abgar, Vartan... that operated in Iran even though were inspired by wester culture and architecture, but their production reflects the local spirit of the Iranian society, creating a harmony between the external and internal sides of the buildings.

Posing another related question Mr. Mahmoudi wanted to know if the interior furniture was in harmony with the concepts of interior design?

To answer to this question was Mr. Jalili. First of all he agreed that during the Pahlavi first era, the changes in the society occurred in a non violent way and the aim in architecture was a return

to the roots. Talking about cases like the Meuseum of Iran Bastan, designed and realized by A. Godard, or Sa'd Abad palace, or the Abghine museum, Mr. Jalili was by the idea that in all these works like others realized in the same period, architecture, interior design and furniture have been realized in a parallel way, completing each other and this is the reason that we can feel the harmony between the different components of a building, that reflect the complete personality of the architect and the group that has worked with.

Mr. Mahmoudi wanted to know if the interior design and furniture that partially have been introduced from west somehow have been adapted to the local taste and necessities?

Mrs. Kateb was the first to answer to this question, saying that the phenomenon is not new and not specific of the Iranian society. In other parts like Iran, the new introduction have been gradually adapted to the local conditions adding or taking away that could be more or less desirable and compatible with the culture and identity of the Iranians. What is happening during the last decades is that the new generation of architects don't consider the entirety complex of an architectural project, focusing just on the external and visible part of the building , creating a lack of continuity that we can see in buildings that have been realized during the discussed period.

Mr. Mohseni was the next speaker to express his opinion. In his opinion the components of the interior design and furniture are part of a global production that reflect the culture and identity of the employer and who is realizing the requests. What is important is to get inspiration from products that are produced elsewhere, adapting them to the local necessities and culture.

As a conclusive question Mr. Mahmoudi asked Mr. Jalili to explain how the modern movement in Iran has experienced it's saturation, passing to the era of rationalism? Answering to the question, Mr. Jalili expressed the idea that the group of Iranians that studied in west and foreigners that for different reasons came to Iran brought a new wind of modernity and concepts in Iran, but at the same time the spirit of the Iranian society created the conditions for the limited adaptation and transformation of the imported cultural (material or spiritual) products.

Mrs. Kateb that was the last speaker to answer to this question focused on a general concept. She asserted that the reason of the success of modern movement in Iran was because the first steps and products that they have created were premeditated and balanced, considering all the aspects that the architectural product had to be inspired by or influence the future productions. This is the reason that often they can be used as a material of presentation or inspiration for new generations of architects.

At the end of the session the speakers thanked Mr. Mahmoudi for organizing such session, in order to give the opportunity to have a glance to our cultural -architectural heritage.