

## Preserving Modern Architectural Heritage in the Context of the Zeki Sayar House on Büyükkada

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### Abstract

Büyükkada, known for its Ottoman-era palaces and pavilions, became a prominent summer destination for Istanbul's affluent citizens by the late 19th century. Over time, the original characteristics of these houses have deteriorated, underscoring the need for preservation. This study examines how the original design of Zeki Sayar's house meets contemporary usage needs, focusing on the preservation of both its function and form in terms of the facade and interior. Qualitative methods are utilized herein, including literature reviews, site observations, oral history, and user experience analysis. The primary objectives are to highlight the importance of preserving the original functions of period houses, assess the applicability of original design in modern contexts, and propose conservation strategies for modern architectural heritage in Büyükkada, particularly regarding the Zeki Sayar House. The preservation and functional continuity of this house serve as a model for maintaining modern architectural heritage in residential buildings.

**Keywords:** Modern architectural heritage, Büyükkada, architectural preservation, Zeki Sayar House.

## Modern Mimari Mirasın Korunması Bağlamında Büyükkada Zeki Sayar Evi

### Öz

Büyükkada, Osmanlı döneminde saraylar ve köşklere tanınırken, 19. yüzyılın sonlarında zengin İstanbulluların yazlık mekânı haline gelmiştir. 20. yüzyılda modern mimarlık mirasıyla zenginleşen ada, Art Nouveau ve Art Deco gibi stilleri yansıtan, geniş bahçelerle çevrili konutlara ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Bu yapıların özgün özelliklerinin kaybolması, korunmalarını zorunlu kılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, ünlü mimar Zeki Sayar'ın evinin özgün tasarımının günümüz ihtiyaçlarına nasıl adapte olduğu incelenmiştir. Araştırma, literatür taraması, gözlemler ve kullanıcı deneyimi analizi gibi nitel yöntemlerle desteklenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, özgün işlevlerin korunmasının ve modern mimarinin sürekliliğinin sağlanmasının önemli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Zeki Sayar Evi, modern mimarlık mirasının korunmasına dair bir model olarak değerlendirilebilecek örnek bir yapıdır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Modern mimari miras, Büyükkada, mimari koruma, Zeki Sayar Evi.

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## **1. Introduction**

Modern architecture emerged as a response to historical trends triggered by the developments of the Industrial Revolution, evolving based on the requirements of the age, building technology, and artistic understanding, and it began to spread in the first half of the 20th century (Hasol, 2010: 327). According to Batur (2006), the introduction of modernity in Turkish architecture dates back to the Westernization efforts of the Ottoman Empire. However, the active emergence of modern architecture in Türkiye began in the 1930s, during the Republican era.

One of the most significant sources on the subject of Republican-era architecture and modern architectural heritage in Türkiye is the *Arkitekt* journal, which began publication in 1931. At the time of its launch, it was the only journal dedicated to the architecture profession, featuring not only publications on modern architecture but also studies on urbanism and architectural history (Omay Polat, 2008: 58). One of the founding members of *Arkitekt*, architect Zeki Sayar, is considered one of the key figures in the production of modern architectural heritage in Türkiye. He served as the president of the Turkish Architects' Society from 1934 to 1948 and became synonymous with the concept of modern architectural heritage. Sayar's own house, which he built for himself on Büyükaada Island in 1963, remains an example of early modern architecture. It continues to function as a residence for the same family to this day, serving as a preserved period building.

Given the challenges associated with defining, preserving, and utilizing modern architectural buildings, documenting and examining the preservation status of the Zeki Sayar House—a building that has largely maintained its original characteristics—are of great importance. The research question that underpins this study arises from the difficulties in maintaining the original function of modern architecture houses or, in cases where their original function is preserved, the negative effects of changes made to meet contemporary comfort standards. This study aims to highlight the significance of preserving the original function, demonstrate the applicability of modern architectural design principles and usage approaches in the present day, and offer preservation recommendations by examining modern residential buildings in Büyükaada, focusing on the Zeki Sayar House. In this context, the study analyzes the architectural influences in Sayar's design, assessing the preservation status of the building with respect to its facade and interior spaces.

### **1.1. Purpose and Scope**

It is necessary to determine whether the original function of residential buildings, defined as modern architectural heritage, has been maintained or whether the alterations made to meet contemporary comfort standards have negatively impacted these buildings. To investigate the hypothesis that such buildings, evaluated as cultural heritage, can adapt to contemporary needs while preserving their original design, the house of the prominent architect Zeki Sayar is examined. This study analyzes how various factors of the era are reflected in the house, which was designed by Sayar himself and is preserved in its original form. Additionally, the conservation status of the facade and interior of the building has been evaluated.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Modern architectural buildings that were produced in the mid-20th century are now widely recognized as remnants of cultural heritage, which require significant preservation. Unlike earlier periods that emphasized weight, protection, and durability, modern architecture reflects transparency, openness, lightness, and temporality. These buildings were designed not as icons or monuments, but rather to respond to the needs of the masses and the ordinary, focusing on functionality and meeting the demands of society (Henket, 1998: 23).

In the context of Turkish architecture, the representation of this modernization process is defined by the interplay of “national” and “modernist” approaches, shaping the practice of architecture through their reactive relationship (Omay Polat, 2008: 57). After World War I, the newly established Republic of Türkiye focused on modernization. Initially, however, modernization was not a movement that emerged organically from the public's needs or desires; rather, it was a state-driven initiative that sought to enforce a change in lifestyle as part of its policy (Aslanoğlu, 1980; Balamir & Asatekin, 1991;

Aslanoğlu, 2009). As a result of these efforts, modern architecture began to develop, and during this period, the efforts to establish national identity were notably intertwined with the innovative ideas brought by modernism. Key characteristics of modern architecture included an emphasis on functionality, technological innovations, a departure from traditional architectural forms, and increased use of contemporary materials, such as reinforced concrete and steel, as well as geometric layouts and open-plan designs.

The modernization process in Türkiye not only affected public buildings but also had a significant impact on residential architecture, creating a distinct design perception. The modern architecture movement was described by Bozdoğan (2001) as a “carrier of civilization not only in public spaces but even in the most private areas,” influencing the emergence of a new housing model. In the 1940s, this model evolved into a residential concept that defined individual living spaces and incorporated a unique architectural understanding suited to the social and economic building of society at the time.

From the 1950s onwards, with the transition to a multi-party system and the rise in industrialization, the housing market diversified, and residential buildings constructed in the modern architectural style became widespread. During this period, wide windows, open-plan layouts, and overall designs that focused on functionality became prominent features in reinforced concrete buildings. These areas mostly planned and designed based on the “garden city” and “new city” typologies by the renowned architects of the era, have become major examples of today’s modern architectural heritage (Baturayoğlu Yöney & Salman, 2010).

The present study began with a preliminary investigation; a literature review and on-site investigations were conducted to select a case study. Several factors were crucial in selecting the Zeki Sayar House for this case study: the current users are related to the original occupants, minimal spatial and formal alterations, designed by a representative architect of the era, and its role in preserving architectural and cultural continuity.

Qualitative research methods were employed herein. In addition to the literature review, the research involved on-site observations, oral history interviews, and an analysis of user experiences to gather findings related to the study’s scope. The first phase involved a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the subject, which provided a theoretical foundation and contextual background for the study. The literature review and archival research played a critical role in identifying knowledge gaps and framing the research questions. The study then proceeded with systematic on-site observations and analysis. This phase involved visiting the site and collecting empirical data.

Next, oral history interviews were conducted with users and individuals who had direct experience or knowledge related to the site. These interviews provided personal accounts and first-hand perspectives. Detailed notes and recordings were taken during these interviews, ensuring consistency and reliability through a building approach. Oral interviews were essential for capturing subjective experiences and historical contexts that were not recorded or clarified in previous reports. Additionally, user experiences were collected through surveys and focus groups. This holistic approach allowed for the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and practical experiences in the research findings. The methodology employed in this study is systematically presented in Figure 1.

Overall, the integration of these qualitative research methods enabled a comprehensive investigation of both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the research topic.



Figure 1. Research methodology outline (Created by the authors, 2023)

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The current condition of the Zeki Sayar House, its evolution, and user experiences constitute the fundamental components of the findings. As outlined in the conceptual framework, the preservation of modern architectural heritage relies not only on maintaining the originality of design but also on facilitating the continuity of function and user interaction. To this end, the identity and works of Zeki Sayar, a significant designer of the period, are discussed alongside the concept of modern architecture. From the examination of the building, its architectural features and state of preservation have been analyzed.

#### 3.1. Modern Architectural Heritage in Büyükada

The acceptance of modern architecture as part of cultural heritage was first addressed by preservation theorists in the 1970s. The preservation of buildings produced in the 20th century, particularly those arising from modernist architecture, as a necessary part of heritage, has sparked significant debate. Confusion surrounding the use of “modern/modernist” has also played a role in these discussions. According to Heynen (1999), the term “modern” is defined as “the opposite of the past” and is associated with a lifestyle imposed by the socio-economic modernization process, which significantly affects daily habits and living conditions, thus reflecting the “present” or “contemporary” environment. This widely accepted definition has made it more challenging to associate preservation with modernity. The question of whether the existing preservation theory, criteria, and practices are valid or need to be renewed in the context of modern architectural heritage has become a central issue. One of the key theorists of the period, Mörsch, criticized this approach by stating, “The preservationists’ focus on recent history comes later than historians’ inclusion of a period into the past” (Mörsch, 1990: 4). In particular, the early modern buildings have been challenging to regard as cultural heritage worth preserving, although efforts have been made to assign historical value to these buildings through publications introducing the Modern Movement. For instance, Petzet (2004) emphasized that a preservation theory based on innovation value and aesthetics could be developed for the conservation of modern architecture (Omay Polat, 2008: 20). Additionally, when defining the scope of modern architectural heritage, Sharp used the term “products that do not rely on historical references, decoration, or ornamentation, but rather on function, technique, or spatial conditions,” to describe modern design principles (Sharp, 2000: 12; Omay Polat, 2008: 22).

The intense theoretical arguments of the 1980s were reflected in institutional buildings, legal regulations, and practical efforts in the 1990s (Omay Polat, 2008: 21). Since the 1990s, numerous international organizations, such as UNESCO, DOCOMOMO, ICOMOS, the Council of Europe, and

mAAN, have been working on the documentation and preservation of modern heritage under the umbrella of 20th-century heritage (Omay Polat & Can, 2008: 181). Particularly, DOCOMOMO has supported rapid development not only in architectural preservation but also in a broader field of architectural culture (Salman et al., 2013: 54). DOCOMOMO established and published the criteria for the preservation of modern architectural heritage in 1993. The specific value related to these buildings was defined and divided into two categories: primary criteria and complementary criteria. The primary criteria included technological value, social value, and artistic and aesthetic value, whereas the complementary criteria defined aspects such as canonicity and referential value, as a historical monument. Today, DOCOMOMO has become a leading organization in the discussion, preservation, and conservation of modern architecture (Eldek, 2014: 30).

The period and scope of modern heritage varies according to these international organizations. For example, the Council of Europe refers to “20th-century heritage,” but the UNESCO World Heritage Center defines it as “modern heritage,” covering the 19th and 20th centuries, and the UNESCO ICOMOS ISC20C defines it as “20th-century and industrial heritage,” with broader temporal definitions. DOCOMOMO, however, defines the “modern architectural heritage” period as ranging from 1920 to 1975 (Baturayoğlu Yöney, 2016: 62).

In Büyükada, buildings constructed from the 1930s onward serve as representatives of the “modern architectural heritage” period. These buildings, which contribute to the layered urban fabric of the island alongside earlier buildings, continue to exist today as part of Büyükada’s natural and cultural heritage.

Büyükada is the largest island in the Princes’ Islands group in Istanbul and bears traces of many periods within its layered urban fabric. While precise information about its early settlement is difficult to ascertain, there are indications of its use during ancient times (Özbayoğlu, 2006; Gezen, 2021: 29). Especially during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, the island’s strategic location attracted various civilizations. The architectural transformation and development of Büyükada became particularly evident during the Ottoman period. Some of the palaces, mansions, and recreational buildings built on the island still survive and have been restored for tourism purposes. By the late 19th century, Büyükada became a place where wealthy families from Istanbul built summer residences with various architectural styles. These large and magnificent homes, particularly those built by Greek, Armenian, and Levantine families, determined the architectural character of the island (Kabaoğlu, 2012: 17; Erdenen, 1962; Kazgan, 1991; Millas, 2013; Gezen, 2021: 21-40).

The residential settlements in Büyükada are formed around two main roads, which played a significant role in shaping the two primary districts on the island, namely the Nizam and Maden neighborhoods, which are situated on the slopes of the island’s two hills (Kabaoğlu, 2012: 17). The final form of the organic fabric contains main arteries, side streets, and dead-end streets that terminate in forest gardens (Köseoğlu, 2013: 60). Nizam Mahallesi was developed in the mid-19th century. The neighborhood is characterized by independent mansions surrounded by gardens. In contrast, Maden Mahallesi was developed with a dense settlement pattern during the Republican period, consisting of mansions and associated houses.

After World War I and the establishment of the Republic, Büyükada lost a significant portion of its non-Muslim population, and it remained relatively inactive until the 1930s. By the 1940s, Büyükada began to be recognized as a holiday destination, attracting investors and becoming a social center. The islands, particularly after the war, saw a surge in construction activity, coinciding with the popularization of beach usage (Kahya, 2006: 143). The first planning efforts began in 1949 and were enacted in 1958–59 (Altan Ergut & Erkmen, 2011: 24-25). Notable recreational areas on the island include Yörük Ali and Nizam beaches, Lunapark, Viranbağ Country Coffeehouses, and the Kızılçam forests.

The residential buildings on Büyükada were generally designed to make the best use of the island’s natural beauty and sea views. These buildings are typically large houses surrounded by extensive gardens and featuring expansive terraces. Along with their details and designs, these buildings are preserved today as part of Istanbul’s and Türkiye’s modernity process, representing today’s cultural

heritage and local identity. According to Akay (2020), the modern architectural heritage houses in Büyükada, although influenced by movements such as Art Nouveau and Neo-Baroque, stand out because of a colonial architectural style known as Levantine (Akay, 2020: 30). Sunalp (2020) categorizes these buildings into three main themes: Art Deco, Art Deco-Bauhaus synthesis, and the vernacular interpretations of the 1940s and 1950s (Sunalp, 2020: 43).

A significant milestone occurred in 1984 when the entire Adalar district was declared a “Natural and Urban Sit Area.” This helped to prevent, at least partially, destructive or harmful interventions (Gezen, 2021: 47). As of 2023, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has registered 163 properties within the cultural inventory of Büyükada, spanning both the pre-Republican and modern heritage periods. These buildings are categorized as casinos, beaches, hospitals, cafes, police stations, mosques, hotels, cinemas, and residences (Imm Cologne, 2023).

The “Architectural Heritage and Quality Preservation and Continuation Notes” workshop held in 2018 included a session titled “Documentation of Modern Architectural Heritage in the Islands (Preservation and Registration),” which marked a detailed starting point for identifying these buildings. The final report of the workshop presented the modern architectural products that have been registered and those recommended for registration (Şentürer, 2018: 1). Additionally, the DOCOMOMO International Working Group has been establishing an international registry system for modern architectural heritage using the MoMove database (Aşık & Omay, 2020: 67).

### **3.2. Büyükada Housing from 1940 to 1970**

The development of modern housing in Türkiye is a dynamic process that has evolved in parallel with societal and economic changes over time. Batur (1998) describes the characteristics of modern housing in Türkiye between 1923 and 1932, noting that floor plans were organized within geometric shapes, such as squares or rectangles, without adhering to a fixed framework. These shapes were arranged freely, depending on the features and functions of the enclosed spaces. Circular spatial plans became prevalent, with outward circular movement reflected in the design of dining rooms, living rooms, and later in staircases. Initially, housing plans consisted of rooms without distinct features, but by 1931-1933, they began to transform into layouts with specific, measured, and defined spaces. The house's layout developed around a spacious central hall (sofa), which served more than just as a circulation area. Service areas were grouped together in a single unit, although connecting these areas with other parts of the house presented challenges. Horizontal bands and corner windows became more widespread, while eaves and roof coverings were replaced by terrace roofs. Additionally, reinforced concrete frameworks and flooring gained popularity, and plaster applied using the German technique gradually replaced cladding (Batur, 1998).

In the first half of the 1930s, public buildings were prominent, while in the second half, there was a notable increase in the construction of cubic villas and apartment buildings. With the 1930s, architects began to gain recognition for their architectural works, and residential architecture became one of the key areas of production. Among these architects, Zeki Sayar, particularly with his works around the Istanbul region, made a significant impact during this period.

Between 1940 and 1970, Büyükada emerged as a significant social center, favored as a summer retreat by Istanbul's wealthy citizens and intellectuals. During this period, social life on the island was concentrated in various venues, creating an environment rich in cultural and social interaction. Clubs and associations, restaurants, gardens of summer residences, and beaches formed the activity routes for both the island's residents and the visitors arriving during the summer months.

Following the Republican era, the traditional wooden and masonry fabric of the Princes' Islands began to be replaced by reinforced concrete buildings, reflecting stylistic diversity. The residential buildings on the islands from this period are important examples of both the social and architectural developments of the time. The rapidly growing population of Istanbul and the urbanization process, particularly among the wealthy classes, increased the demand for summer residences, and the Princes' Islands, particularly Büyükada, met this need. Summer residences, primarily built for the affluent Istanbulites, began to emerge on Büyükada Island.

During this period, Büyükada's residential architecture became an experimental field, where new approaches were introduced from the 1940s onward. Eclectic residences shaped by traditional elements coexisted with buildings reflecting the Art Deco and modernist styles, creating a distinctive residential texture on the island. These buildings and their surrounding environments can even be considered an open-air museum (Aşık & Omay, 2020: 66).

In the 1940s, traditional elements were still partially incorporated into architectural designs, but starting in the 1950s, more simplified massing was adopted. Following the fashion and aesthetic sensibilities of the time, concrete construction techniques were used alongside wood, a material appropriate for the period's characteristics. Art Deco buildings featuring three-dimensional elements, such as horizontal and vertical strips, and geometric ornamentation on facades were observed alongside modernist buildings with clean lines. Additionally, buildings combining both styles were common (Sunalp, 2015). Bay windows and large eaves continued to be used in these buildings. As a reflection of the outward orientation of summer living and changing lifestyles, spacious balconies and terraces became a notable feature of this architectural tradition (Aşık & Omay, 2020: 66).

The facades of the buildings constructed during this period featured a minimalist and simple design, avoiding ornamentation and decoration, with rectangular openings. Large terraces encouraged outdoor living, and gardens were designed as spaces for rest and social interaction. Inside the homes, open-plan living spaces and bedrooms located on different floors were typical. These residences on Büyükada, built as summer homes, are also significant representations of the island's rich social and cultural history. While these houses reflected their owners' social status and wealth, they also bear traces of Istanbul's urban transformation and modernization processes.

In summary, between 1940 and 1970, the residences on Büyükada Island are important examples of heritage that reflect the architectural, social, and cultural characteristics of the period. These residences are currently preserved and continue to hold significance as elements that constitute the island's historical fabric and identity. The Zeki Sayar House, which is discussed in this study, is one such example, representing the characteristics of modern architectural heritage residences constructed during this period.

### **3.3. Zeki Sayar as a Modern Era Designer**

Born in Istanbul in 1905, Zeki Sayar began his architectural education in 1923 at the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi in Istanbul (now Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University), and he graduated in 1928, the same time the institution's name changed. During his education, he developed a strong interest in the principles of modern architecture and functional design. After his graduation, Sayar played an active role in the architectural scene in Türkiye, contributing to many significant projects and making notable contributions to the modernization process of the early Republican period. In addition to his architectural practice, Sayar also became well known for his efforts in educational reforms and the development of architectural institutions (Bozdoğan, 2012: 210).

Zeki Sayar played a pivotal role in the development of modern architecture in Türkiye, and he significantly contributed to the Mimar magazine (later known as *Arkitekt*), which was a crucial source of knowledge in the field of architecture during the early Republican era. The magazine is considered one of the key sources documenting the history of architecture in Türkiye and the development of modern architecture. Sayar played an important role in the 50-year publishing history of the magazine, contributing numerous articles and essays that illuminated the architectural world.

The modern architectural ideology of the period encompassing Sayar's career existed more as a professional ideology, rather than being widely approved by the public. Tanyeli (1989) highlighted two functions of architectural ideology for members of the profession; one is to guide action, and the other is to allow for interpretation and evaluation. Zeki Sayar, as an active architect in multiple areas, such as design, implementation, discourse, organization, and institutionalization, embodied both functions, representing the architectural profession and the era as an important figure (Kıran, 2017: 61).

Among Sayar's designs, the buildings of the Faculty of Literature and Law at Istanbul University stand out as early examples of modernist architecture in the early Republican period. Additionally, the

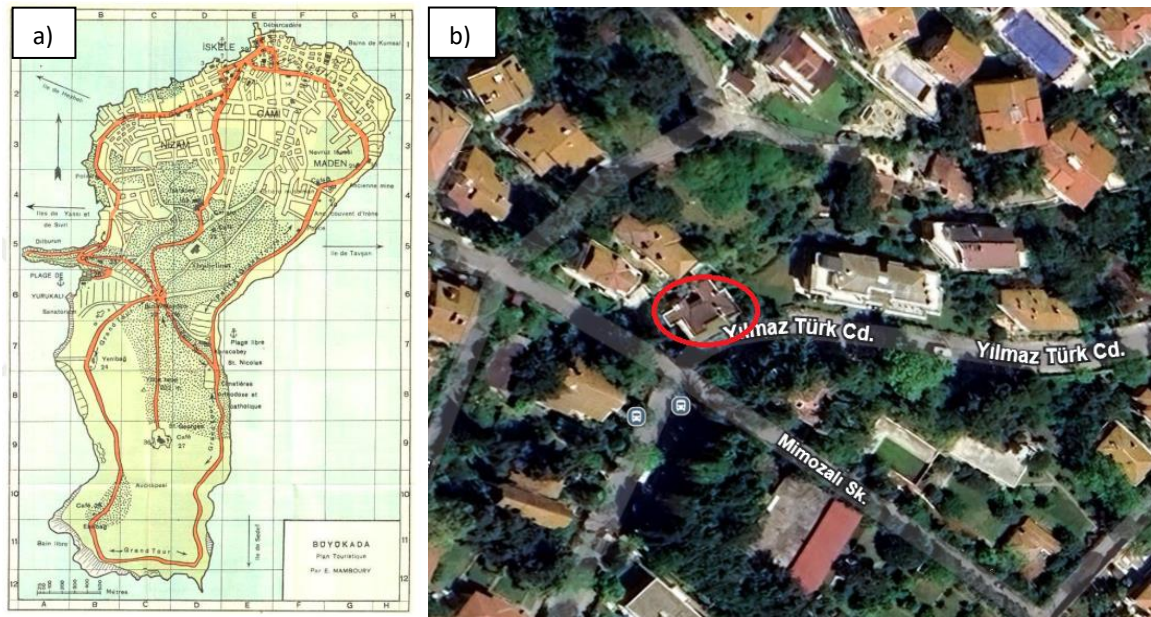


renovation projects at Sirkeci Railway Station played an important role in the modernization of transportation buildings. Sayar's residential projects, such as the Sayar Apartment, reflect the contemporary housing approach of the period, whereas cultural buildings like the Istanbul State Conservatory showcase a functional understanding of architecture in the fields of education and arts. His impact on the modernization of educational institutions and widespread architectural practices further solidified his lasting influence in the field.

The Zeki Sayar House on Büyükada Island, discussed in the following section, is an important example of modern architecture from the period, designed by the architect for his personal residence.

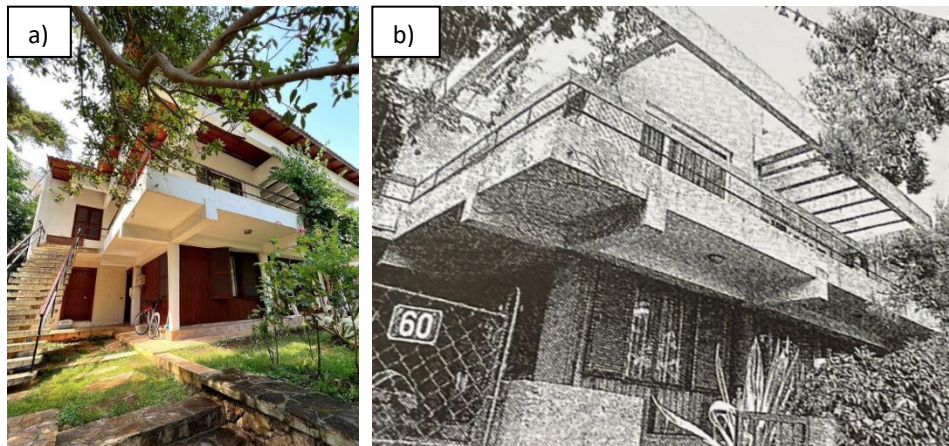
### 3.4. Architectural Features of the Zeki Sayar House

Located at 62 Yilmaztürk Street in the Maden Neighbourhood of Büyükada (Figure 2), the house is positioned at the intersection of two streets and has been designed to engage with the urban space by embracing the street. This design approach strengthens the building's relationship with the surrounding landscape and offers a unique positioning within its environmental context.



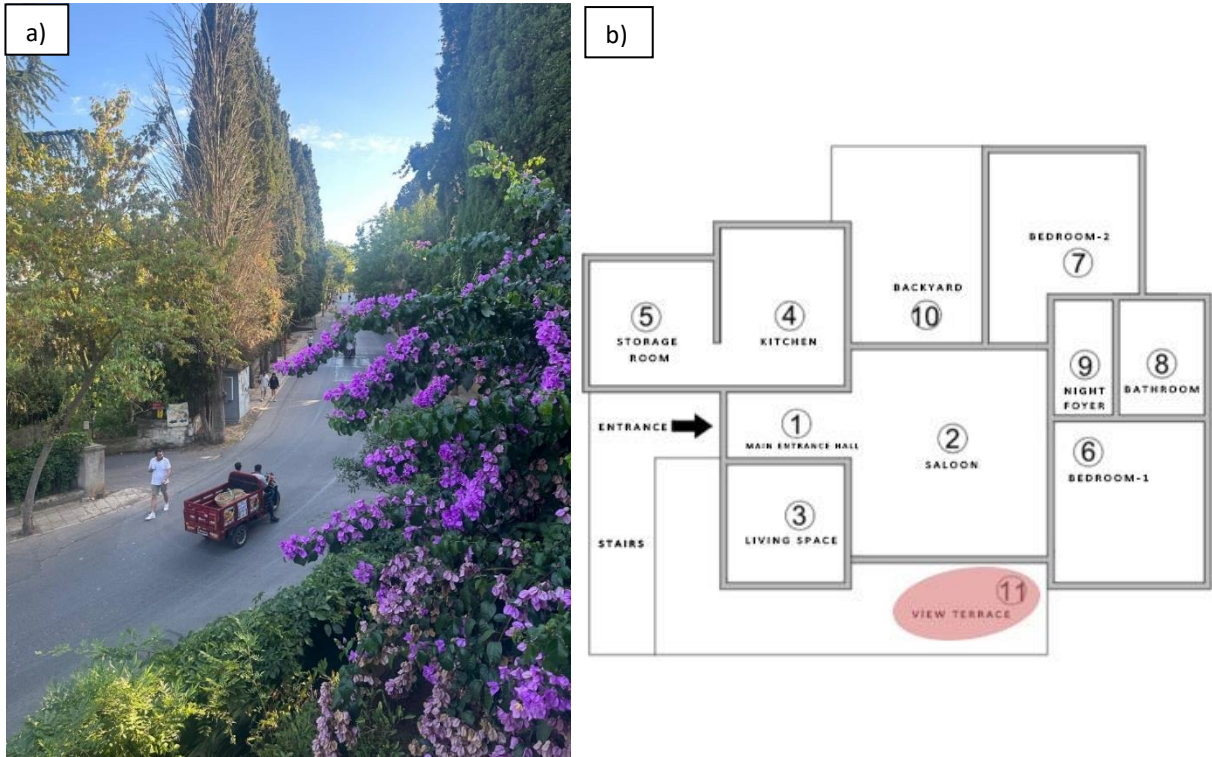
**Figure 2.** a. Study area shown on the map of Büyükada (Kabaoğlu, 2012), b. an aerial view of the Zeki Sayar House (Google Earth, 2025)

The building was constructed by Zeki Sayar in 1963 as a summer house for himself and his family. Notable as an early example of modern Turkish architecture, the building is significant for reflecting both Sayar's architectural approach and the stylistic trends of its time (Figures 3, 4).



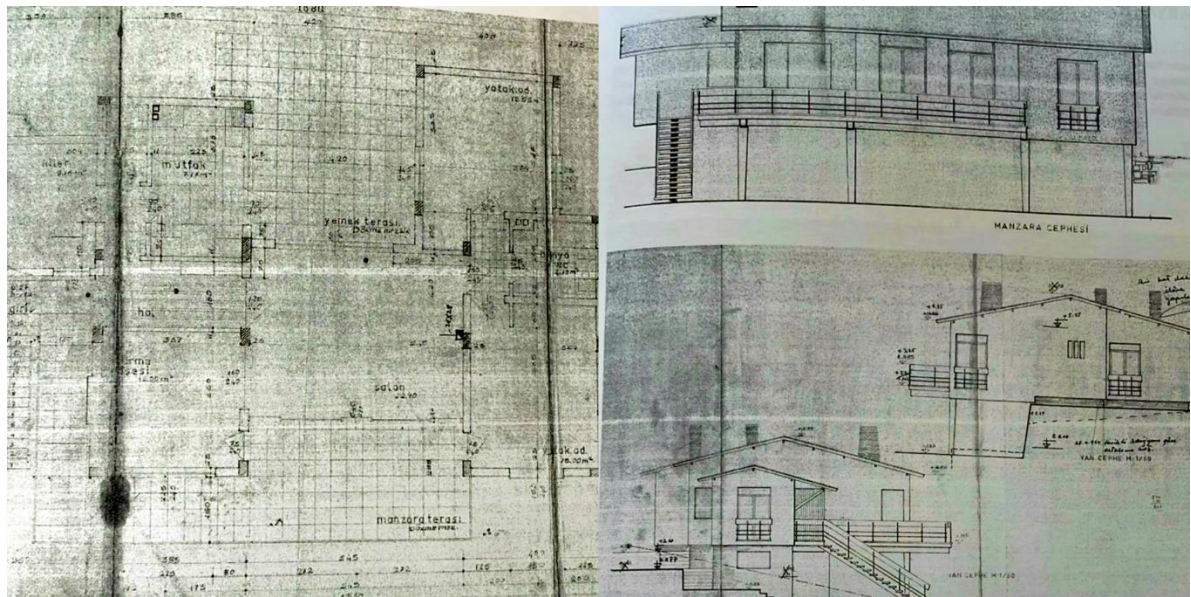
**Figure 3.** Front facade of the Zeki Sayar House, a. current condition, b. original condition (Cengizkan, İnan & Cengizkan, 2017)





**Figure 4.** a. A photograph of the street taken from the landscape terrace No. 11 of the Zeki Sayar House, b. the location of the landscape terrace in the original design layout of the building (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)

The building, designed with a focus on both functionality and aesthetics, applies the modern architectural principles of the period. It features a simple and geometric facade. Characteristic elements of modern architecture, such as straight lines and light-coloured materials, are used. Furthermore, large windows and balconies, intended to maximize the use of natural light, ensure that the space remains bright and airy (Figures 5, 6).



**Figure 5.** Original floor plan and elevation drawings of the Zeki Sayar House (Cengizkan, İnan, & Cengizkan, 2017)

The interior layout prioritizes functional planning, developed to meet the needs of the users. The open-plan concept creates spacious and organized living areas, making the use of space more flexible. The

furniture arrangement and interior design are planned to meet the requirements of modern living, combining both aesthetics and functionality. The materials, along with the color palette, are intended to enrich the atmosphere of the interior space and positively affect the user experience. Thus, the building offers an environment that enhances the quality of life, going beyond the provision of a physical space.

#### *Architectural Mass Characteristics*

Considering the facade designs of modern buildings in the region, large glass panels or windows have been used to ensure that natural light illuminates the interior. Glass surfaces not only strengthen the connection between the interior and the external world but also emphasize the principles of transparency and openness in the building. The large glass surfaces used in the Zeki Sayar House soften the transition between the interior and exterior spaces, contributing to the creation of a spacious and airy atmosphere in the living areas (Figure 6). This design supports the human-centered approach of modern architecture.



**Figure 6.** General view of the Zeki Sayar House (The Author's Personal Archive, 2024).

Since the 1950s, simpler and more streamlined volumes began to be used in Büyükada. As seen in the Zeki Sayar House, modern buildings are generally characterized by clean lines and minimal detailing. In the Zeki Sayar House, the facades prominently feature simple and rectangular geometric forms that exemplify key elements of modern architectural heritage. The clean lines and minimalist emphasis of modernism are evident in this building, making it a true representative of modern architectural legacy.

The use of simple, flat forms on the facade, supported by neutral colors and natural materials, emphasizes a straightforward and comprehensible approach to the building's design. The modular elements provide a regular and systematic appearance to the facade, aligning with the principles of order and consistency inherent in modern architecture.

The two-story building operates independently on each floor. A characteristic staircase, located directly across from the garden gate, draws attention as it provides access to the upper floor (Figures 3, 8). Additionally, the beams are notably visible in the design (Figure 7).





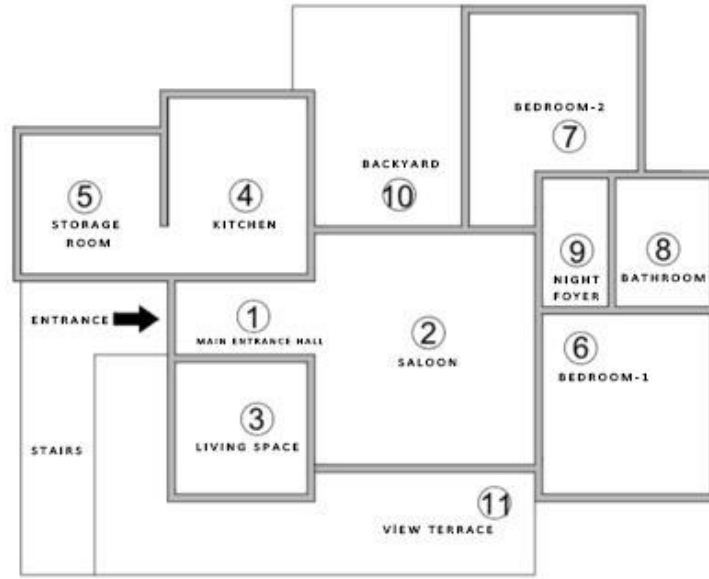
**Figure 7.** Beams observed from the exterior of the Zeki Sayar House (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)



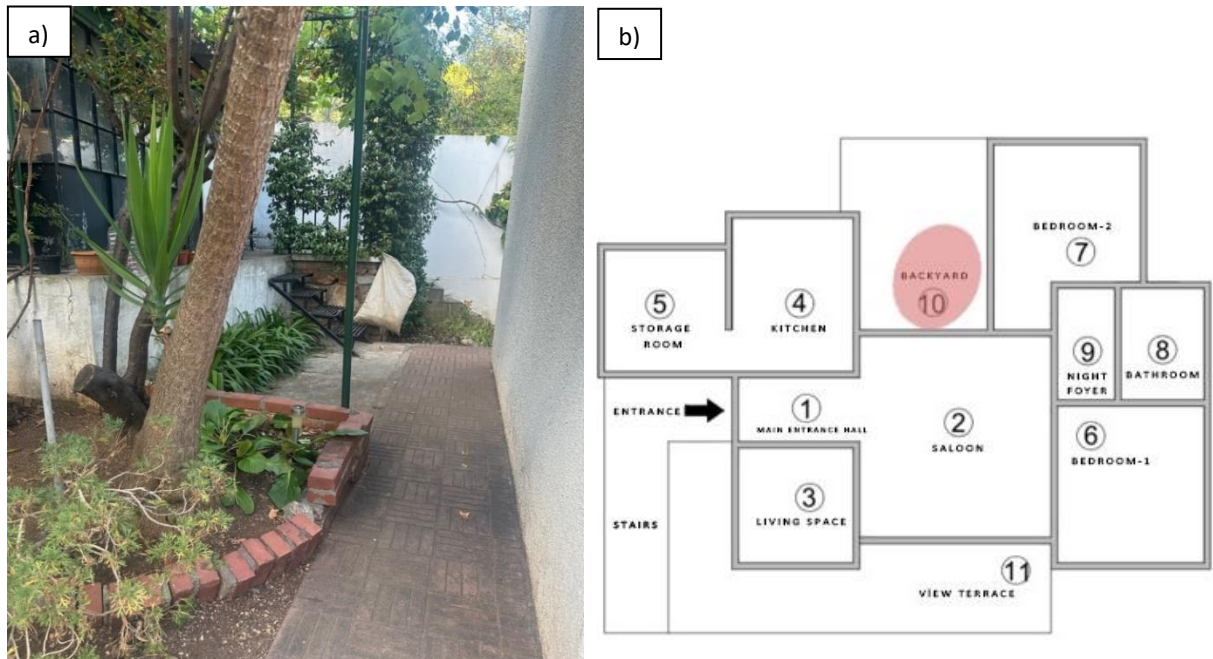
**Figure 8.** Staircase details of the Zeki Sayar House (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)

### *Spatial Configuration*

The Zeki Sayar House is designed as two independent floors, arranged in an open-plan layout, which is observed in many residential examples of modern architecture in Büyükada. The ground-floor apartment is accessed from the garden level. As the ground floor is used by the occupants for storage purposes, no surveys or images have been taken of this space. However, the ground floor follows a similar layout to that of the upper floor. Access to the upper floor is provided by a staircase (Figure 8) directly visible from the main garden gate. The upper floor includes a living area, kitchen, bedrooms, and a large balcony. From the kitchen, there is a passage leading to the rear upper garden (Figure 9), which functions as a dining area.



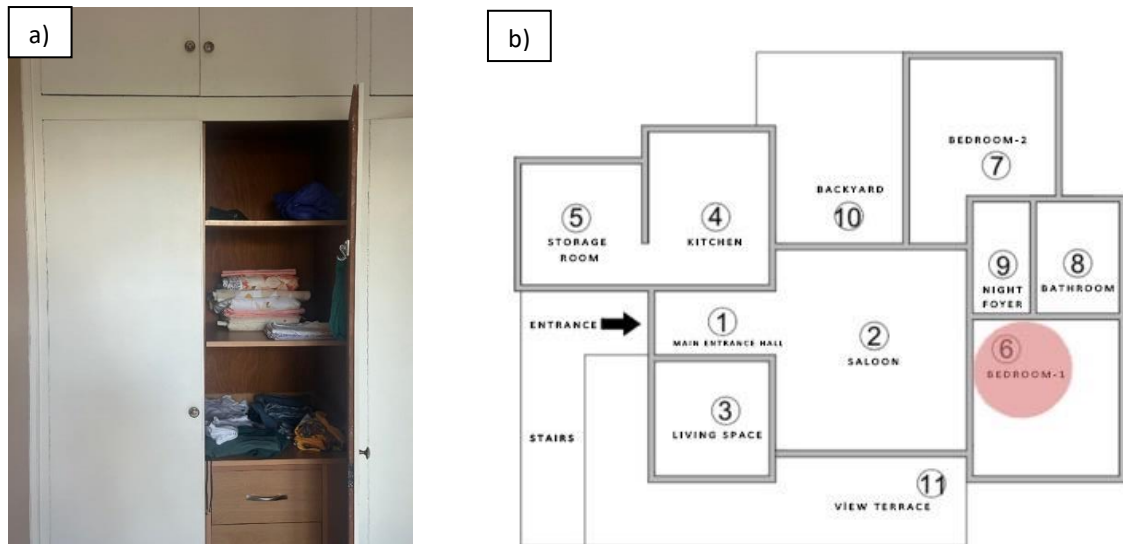
**Figure 9.** First-floor plan of the Zeki Sayar House from the original design period (created by the author based on original drawings)



**Figure 10.** a. Zeki Sayar House, Space 10 (rear upper garden) b. the position of the rear garden in the original floor plan (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)

The living space has been designed to make extensive use of the facade facing the street. A separate hallway has been created for the bedrooms (the night hallway is indicated as Space 9 in Figure 10), providing access to the private areas. A bathroom is positioned at the center of the bedrooms (shown as Space 8 in Figure 11). In the symmetrically arranged bedrooms, fixed wardrobes stand out as a notable feature.





**Figure 11.** a. Zeki Sayar House, Space 6 (bedroom number 1 with fixed furniture), b. and the position of the bedroom in the original floor plan (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)

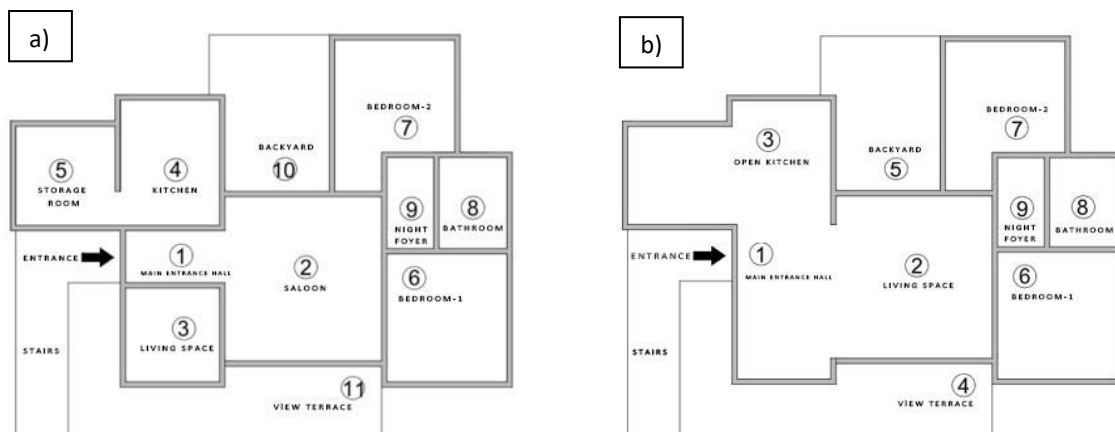
### 3.5. Preservation Status of the Zeki Sayar House

#### *Architectural Mass Changes*

The roof of the building was originally designed as a terrace roof. However, the upper part of the terrace roof has been completely covered. Apart from the roof change, no other mass changes have been observed in the building.

#### *Spatial Transformations*

Given that the Zeki Sayar House is still an active residence (currently occupied by Zeki Sayar's daughter, Eren Sayar), it has undergone several user-adaptive changes in its interior (Figure 12a). In the kitchen area, a wall has been added, deviating from the original layout. The original seating corner has been opened up by removing the walls, thus integrating it with the living room and creating a living space that fully benefits from the view (Figure 12b). Despite this alteration in the common areas, no spatial modifications have been made in the bedrooms. Immovable furniture, such as built-in wardrobes, commonly found in modern-period homes, is still in active use. Regarding furniture, there are no remaining examples from the original furnishings of the house, except for the built-in wardrobes located in the bedrooms, which date back to the time of construction.



**Figure 12.** a. Original floor plan of the Zeki Sayar House, b. the floor plan in 2023 (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)



### *Material Changes*

Changes have been made to the interior flooring and wall materials, and repairs have been carried out in wet areas. The external flooring material, which starts from the exterior and continues on the balcony and rear upper garden, has been preserved in its original form. In addition, the flooring material used on the staircase and the iron railing are completely original (Figures 8, 13). Conversely, on the lower level, the original material has been replaced over time by a modern ceramic covering because the original material deformed and became difficult for the user to clean.



**Figure 13.** The external flooring material preserved in its original form (The Author's Personal Archive, 2023)

From the original drawings of the Zeki Sayar House, its current condition, and the information provided by the users, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The original massing characteristics of the building have been entirely preserved, except for the roof.
- The ground floor is used in its original form, although it is regarded as a storage area, and the flooring material has been altered.
- On the upper floor, the bedrooms have been preserved in their original state, but all other spaces have been merged into a communal living area by removing partition walls.
- Wet areas have undergone a complete renovation.
- There have been no spatial changes to the stairs or terrace, and the original materials have been maintained.
- The garden/outdoor spaces have retained their original characteristics, with only partial alterations to the flooring materials.
- Fixed furniture has been partially preserved.

Compared with other modern architectural heritage residences on Büyükada Island, the relatively fewer interior modifications and the complete preservation of the massing characteristics, aside from the roof, demonstrate that the building has largely retained its original integrity.

### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The Princes' Islands are considered areas of special significance both as cultural landscapes and in terms of the historical urban landscape concept, with a multi-dimensional scope and architectural building (Aşık & Omay, 2020: 69). Among these islands, Büyükada is the largest island and holds a prominent position owing to its layered historical building, enriched with modern architectural

heritage products. As outlined in the conceptual framework developed within the scope of this study, modern architectural heritage bears trace not only of historical and cultural accumulation but also of technological and aesthetic innovations. The preservation of this heritage is necessary to ensure the sustainability of a legacy that can inspire future generations, as well as elucidate past cultures. However, the discussions surrounding the preservation of modern heritage stem from the fact that these buildings are relatively new and continue to embody innovation. Given that modern buildings exist in the collective memory because of their innovations, their aging represents a challenge to their modern identity. Although general decisions made in the conservation of modern heritage are accepted as the basic approach to preservation, solutions specific to individual buildings are developed in conservation practices, requiring varying technical details, interventions, and adjustments (Güner, 2010: 9). These solutions developed for individual buildings are framed under a broader evaluation system based on general criteria.

In evaluation systems for modern heritage, generally accepted criteria include intrinsic value (construction, designer, age, originality, and history), extrinsic value (social, political, economic, and cultural value), and use value (whether the building is economically marketable). Accordingly, for a work to be considered cultural heritage, it must meet one or more of these criteria (Madran & Özgönül, 2005: 30). Several evaluation systems have been developed by various institutions, such as DOCOMOMO, which focuses on criteria for the preservation of modern architectural heritage. Based on assessments of the Zeki Sayar House, the building possesses cultural heritage characteristics in terms of its construction, designer, age, originality, historical significance, cultural/social value, and use value.

From the research conducted within the scope of this study, the Zeki Sayar House is a useful example of balancing conservation and use, among the modern-period residences in Büyükdada. The building continues to exist as a form of modern architectural heritage that retains its original function and is actively used by the same family. The absence of significant changes to its massing characteristics, aside from the roof, suggests that the architectural integrity of the building has been maintained in harmony with both the collective memory and the environment. Since its construction, interior adjustments and partial material replacements have been made in response to changes in the users' needs. Such transformations are deemed inevitable for a building that has been in use for over 70 years.

In buildings that continue to serve their function, the preservation of modern approaches is crucial in carrying the original identities of the buildings into the future. In this context, interior transformations must be kept to a minimal level, massing and facade characteristics must be preserved, and appropriate materials and color choices must be made during maintenance and restoration.

The preservation of the building's original features holds critical importance not only as an architectural responsibility but also for the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations. In this framework, the preservation and functionality of the Zeki Sayar House serve as a model for the coexistence of both aesthetic and functional elements of modern architecture. Evaluated within the historical and cultural context of architectural design, the house is unique for its original architectural forms and material usage, thereby maintaining the cultural identity. The development of strategies for the preservation of architectural heritage plays a vital role in contributing to the historical and cultural value of buildings, which ultimately aids in building a sustainable future. In this regard, the preservation of heritage buildings involves both the need to preserve the past and the creation of living spaces that are in harmony with present-day needs. Thus, architectural heritage can be viewed as a component of societal identity and as an essential resource for cultural sustainability. Examples like the Zeki Sayar House may help guide the development of strategies for preserving modern architectural heritage. This building demonstrates how local and national identity elements can be integrated into architectural design and its evolution. Moreover, this site demonstrates the possibility of preserving both the past and the present by striking a balance between the functional requirements and aesthetic value of the building.

In conclusion, the preservation of modern architectural heritage reflects the effort to not only preserve traces of the past but also create sustainable living spaces that are compatible with contemporary and future needs. In this context, buildings like the Zeki Sayar House represent spaces where aesthetics and functionality come together, serving as examples for the strategic preservation of cultural heritage.

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### Author Contribution and Conflict of Interest Declaration Information

Both authors contributed equally to the article. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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