

FESHANE-İ ÂMİRE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE FROM THE OTTOMAN ERA TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the long-term transformation of Feshane-i Âmire from a nineteenth-century Ottoman state factory into the twenty-first-century cultural venue Artİstanbul Feshane. Adopting a qualitative, historical-interpretive case study approach, it combines archival and documentary research, historical photographs and plans, and onsite spatial observations with a critical reading of contemporary exhibition and communication materials. The study first reconstructs Feshane's role within Ottoman industrialisation, highlighting the introduction of steam technology, its function as a training ground for industrial skills and its later integration into Republican industrial policy. It then foregrounds the entry of women workers during the First World War as a turning point that reconfigured labour relations and gendered visibility in the urban public sphere. Finally, the article examines the recent adaptive reuse of the complex as a contemporary art centre, questioning how narratives of industrial modernity and women's labour are mobilised, aestheticised or silenced. The findings show that Feshane's transformation cannot be understood only as an architectural conservation process, but should be read as a layered shift from military-industrial production to cultural production. The study demonstrates that women's labour, although historically significant, remains insufficiently visible within contemporary heritage and curatorial narratives. It therefore argues that adaptive reuse strategies for industrial heritage should integrate not only material conservation, but also labour memory, gendered histories and critical interpretation.

Keywords: Feshane-i Âmire, Industrial heritage, Gendered labour, Adaptive reuse, Cultural memory.

FESHANE-İ ÂMİRE: OSMANLI DÖNEMİNDEN GÜNÜMÜZE ENDÜSTRİYEL MİRASIN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

ÖZET

Bu makale, Feshane-i Âmire'nin 19. yüzyıldaki Osmanlı Devlet Fabrikası kimliğinden 21. yüzyılda Artİstanbul Feshane adıyla işleyen bir kültür mekânına dönüşümünü uzun erimli bir perspektifle analiz etmektedir. Nitel, tarihsel-yorumsamacı bir vaka çalışması yaklaşımını benimseyen araştırma; arşiv ve belgesel incelemeyi, tarihî fotoğraflar ve planları, yerinde mekânsal gözlemleri ve güncel sergi/iletişim materyallerinin eleştirel okumasını bir araya getirmektedir. Çalışma ilk olarak Feshane'nin Osmanlı sanayileşmesi içindeki rolünü yeniden kurmakta; bu bağlamda buhar teknolojisinin devreye girişi, endüstriyel beceriler için bir eğitim/öğrenme alanı işlevi ve daha sonra Cumhuriyet dönemi sanayi politikalarına eklemlenmesini vurgulamaktadır. Ardından, I. Dünya Savaşı sırasında kadın işçilerin üretim süreçlerine dahil olmasını, emek ilişkilerini ve kentsel kamusal alandaki toplumsal cinsiyet görünürlüğünü yeniden yapılandıran bir kırılma noktası olarak öne çıkarmaktadır. Son olarak makale, yerleşkenin günümüzde çağdaş sanat merkezi olarak yeniden işlevlendirilmesini inceleyerek, endüstriyel modernite ve kadın emeğine ilişkin anlatıların nasıl dolaşıma sokulduğunu, estetikleştirildiğini ya da sessizleştirildiğini sorgulamaktadır. Bu çerçevede çalışma, Feshane'nin İstanbul'da koruma, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kültürel kimliğin kesişiminde endüstri mirasını yeniden düşünmek için kritik bir mercek sunduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bulgular, Feshane'nin dönüşümünün yalnızca mimari bir koruma süreci olarak değil, askeri-endüstriyel üretimden kültürel üretime uzanan katmanlı bir geçiş olarak okunması gerektiğini göstermektedir.

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Çalışma, tarihsel açıdan önemli olmasına karşın kadın emeğinin güncel miras ve küratöryel anlatılarda yeterince görünür olmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle endüstri mirasının yeniden işlevlendirilmesinde maddi korumanın yanı sıra emek hafızası, toplumsal cinsiyet odaklı tarihsel katmanlar ve eleştirel yorumlama stratejilerinin birlikte ele alınması gerektiği savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feshane-i Âmire, Endüstri mirası, Cinsiyete dayalı emek, Yeniden işlevlendirme, Kültürel hafıza

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Araştırma Problemi

İstanbul'daki endüstri mirası yapıları, kültürel amaçlarla yeniden işlevlendirme uygulamaları aracılığıyla giderek daha fazla yeniden kent yaşamına kazandırılmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, üretime ilişkin toplumsal tarihin, özellikle de toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamında şekillenen emek tarihinin, gerek akademik çalışmalarda gerekse güncel temsil biçimlerinde çoğu zaman parçalı biçimde ele alındığı, estetikleştirildiği ya da görünmez kılındığı görülmektedir. Feshane-i Âmire bu gerilimin belirgin örneklerinden birini oluşturmaktadır. Yapı, bir yandan Osmanlı modernleşmesinin teknik ve endüstriyel bir üretim tesisi, diğer yandan günümüzde yeniden işlevlendirilmiş bir sanat ve kültür mekânı olarak ele alınmakta; ancak maddi üretimden kültürel üretime uzanan uzun dönemli dönüşümü, bütüncül ve çok katmanlı bir anlatı içerisinde yeterince değerlendirilememektedir.

Bu nedenle çalışma, Feshane-i Âmire'yi yalnızca korunmuş bir endüstri yapısı ya da çağdaş bir kültür mekânı olarak değil; üretim biçimlerinin, emek ilişkilerinin, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin, teknolojik dönüşümün ve kültürel temsil pratiklerinin zaman içerisinde üst üste biriktiği bir endüstriyel miras alanı olarak ele almaktadır.

Araştırma Soruları

Çalışmada tanımlanan araştırma problemi üç temel araştırma sorusu üzerinden ele alınmaktadır:

- Feshane'nin işlevi, işgücü yapısı ve toplumsal anlamı 19. yüzyıldan günümüze nasıl değişmiştir?
- Kadın işçilerin üretim süreçlerine dâhil olması fabrikanın toplumsal ve simgesel rolünü hangi açılardan yeniden şekillendirmiştir?
- Feshane'nin Artİstanbul Feshane olarak yeniden işlevlendirilmesi, emek ve toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin tarihsel katmanları nasıl temsil etmekte, dönüştürmekte veya görünmez kılmaktadır?

Bu sorular aracılığıyla çalışma, Feshane'nin tarihsel gelişimini yalnızca kronolojik bir dönüşüm olarak değil, endüstriyel üretim, emek kültürü, toplumsal cinsiyet ve güncel kültürel üretim arasındaki ilişkiler üzerinden okumayı amaçlamaktadır.

Literatür İncelemesi

Makale, Feshane-i Âmire'yi birbiriyle ilişkili dört temel literatür alanının kesişiminde konumlandırmaktadır. İlk olarak, Osmanlı sanayileşmesi ve devlet fabrikaları üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, merkezi olarak yönetilen ve makineleşmeye dayalı üretimin 19. yüzyıl reformlarının önemli araçlarından biri olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu literatürde Feshane, Osmanlı Devleti'nin endüstriyel teknolojileri bünyesine aktarma, işgücünü yeniden örgütleme ve modern üretim sistemleri oluşturma girişiminin önemli örneklerinden biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, mevcut çalışmaların önemli bir bölümü kurumsal, teknik ve ekonomik süreçlere yoğunlaşmakta; fabrika yaşamının toplumsal ve mekânsal boyutları görece geri planda kalmaktadır.

İkinci literatür alanını endüstri mirası ve yeniden işlevlendirme çalışmaları oluşturmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, işlevini yitirmiş fabrikaları yalnızca ekonomik ömrünü tamamlamış yapılar olarak değil; teknolojik belleğin, kentsel kimliğin ve kolektif hafızanın taşıyıcıları olarak değerlendirmektedir. Türkiye'deki örnekler üzerinden yürütülen çalışmalar ise koruma ilkeleri, ticari baskılar, müzeleştirme ve soylulaştırma gibi süreçler arasındaki gerilimlere dikkat çekmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Feshane'nin yakın dönemde Artİstanbul Feshane'ye dönüştürülmesini eleştirel miras perspektifinden değerlendiren çalışmaların sınırlı olduğu görülmektedir.

Üçüncü olarak, toplumsal cinsiyet ve emek tarihi üzerine yapılan araştırmalar, kadınların endüstriyel üretime katılımının Osmanlı çalışma hayatı açısından önemli bir tarihsel kırılma oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında kadınların ücretli emek piyasasındaki görünürlüğünün artması, yalnızca işgücü kompozisyonunda değil, fabrika mekânının toplumsal anlamında da önemli değişimler yaratmıştır. Buna karşın kadın emeği, endüstri mirası ve yeniden işlevlendirme tartışmaları içerisinde çoğunlukla ikincil bir konu olarak ele alınmakta ve üretim mekânlarının günümüzdeki temsil biçimleriyle yeterince ilişkilendirilmemektedir.

Son olarak çalışma, endüstriyel mekânların "kültürelleştirilmesi" (culturalisation) üzerine gelişen literatürle ilişki kurmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar, eski üretim alanlarının yaratıcı kent ve kültür ekonomisi politikaları kapsamında sanat merkezlerine, müzelere ve etkinlik alanlarına dönüştürülmesini eleştirel biçimde değerlendirmektedir. Bu dönüşümlerde endüstriyel mekânların estetik ve mimari nitelikleri sıklıkla öne çıkarılırken, emek, sınıf ve üretim ilişkilerinin tarihsel izlerinin geri plana itilmesi önemli bir tartışma alanı oluşturmaktadır. Artİstanbul Feshane'nin güncel kullanımı da bu bağlamda değerlendirilmesi gereken yeni bir örnek sunmaktadır.

Bu dört literatür alanı birlikte değerlendirildiğinde belirgin bir araştırma boşluğu ortaya çıkmaktadır: Feshane-i Âmire, endüstriyel modernleşme, toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamında emek tarihi ve çağdaş kültürel yeniden kullanımın birlikte anlam ürettiği bir alan olarak sistematik biçimde incelenmemiştir.

Yöntem

Araştırmada nitel, tarihsel-yorumsamacı vaka çalışması yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Araştırma tasarımı, Feshane-i Âmire'nin farklı tarihsel dönemlerde değişen işlevlerini, toplumsal rollerini ve temsil biçimlerini izleyebilmek amacıyla üç temel veri grubunu bir araya getirmektedir. Makalenin yöntem bölümünde de bu veri setleri; tarihsel belgeler ve ikincil kaynaklar, görsel-mekânsal materyaller ve Artİstanbul Feshane'nin güncel kurumsal/sergileme materyalleri olarak tanımlanmaktadır.

İlk aşamada, Feshane'nin 19. yüzyıl ve 20. yüzyıl başlarındaki endüstriyel gelişimini ortaya koymak amacıyla arşiv ve belge araştırması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Osmanlı arşiv kayıtları, resmî raporlar, dönem gazeteleri ve ikincil tarihsel kaynaklar incelenmiş; elde edilen veriler sanayileşme, emek ilişkileri ve toplumsal cinsiyet temaları doğrultusunda değerlendirilmiştir. İkinci aşamada mekânsal ve görsel analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tarihî fotoğraflar, haritalar ve planlar; güncel mimari çizimler ve yerinde yapılan gözlemlerle karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu karşılaştırma aracılığıyla yapının mekânsal organizasyonunda ve mimari elemanlarında üretim biçimlerinin değişimine bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan dönüşümler ile günümüzdeki kültürel kullanım arasındaki ilişkiler değerlendirilmiştir. Üçüncü aşamada ise Artİstanbul Feshane'nin güncel dönemi yorumlayıcı bir okuma yoluyla ele alınmıştır. Alan ziyaretleri, sergiler, etkinlikler, kurumsal yayınlar, kataloglar ve iletişim materyalleri incelenerek yapının endüstriyel geçmişinin, emek tarihinin ve özellikle kadın emeğine ilişkin tarihsel katmanlarının güncel kültürel temsil içerisinde nasıl anlatıldığı, dönüştürüldüğü veya dışarıda bırakıldığı değerlendirilmiştir.

Bu üç araştırma bileşeninin birlikte kullanılmasıyla Feshane'nin dönüşümünün yalnızca fiziksel ve işlevsel değil; aynı zamanda toplumsal, kültürel ve temsili boyutlarıyla çok katmanlı biçimde okunması amaçlanmıştır.

Bulgular ve Sonuçlar

Araştırma bulguları, Feshane-i Âmire'nin farklı siyasal ve ekonomik dönemler boyunca İstanbul'un modernleşme sürecinin maddi bir arşivi niteliğinde olduğunu göstermektedir. Yapının önemli bir Osmanlı devlet tekstil kompleksi olarak kurulmasından teknolojik ve kurumsal yeniden yapılanmalara, Cumhuriyet dönemi sanayi politikalarına entegrasyonundan 20. yüzyıl sonundaki kentsel dönüşümlere kadar uzanan süreç, Feshane'nin sürekli değişen bir üretim ve temsil mekânı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tarihsel süreç içerisinde buhar gücüne dayalı makinelerin kullanılmaya başlanmasıyla gerçekleşen makineleşme, endüstriyel eğitim işlevinin gelişmesi ve Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e uzanan devlet-ekonomi ilişkilerindeki yeniden yapılanma başlıca kırılma noktaları olarak belirlenmiştir.

Çalışmanın en önemli bulgularından biri, Birinci Dünya Savaşı yıllarında kadın emeğinin fabrika üretimindeki görünürlüğünün belirgin biçimde artmasıdır. Savaş sırasında erkek işgücünün cepheye yönlendirilmesine bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan emek açığı, kadınların özellikle tekstil ve dikim

faaliyetlerinde daha yoğun biçimde ücretli üretim süreçlerine katılmasına neden olmuştur. Bu gelişme yalnızca işgücünün demografik yapısını değiştirmemiş; aynı zamanda kadınların ücretli işçi olarak kamusal görünürlüğünü artırmış ve fabrikanın toplumsal anlamını yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Dolayısıyla kadınların Feshane'deki üretim süreçlerine katılımı yalnızca savaş döneminin zorunlu bir işgücü çözümü olarak değil, fabrika mekânının toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri açısından yeniden tanımlanmasına yol açan tarihsel bir kırılma olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Günümüzde Feshane'nin restore edilerek Artİstanbul Feshane adıyla yeniden işlevlendirilmesi, endüstriyel üretimden kültürel üretime doğru stratejik bir dönüşüm ortaya koymaktadır. Yapının güncel kullanımında taşıyıcı sistemin güçlendirilmesi ve teknik altyapının yenilenmesi gibi çağdaş gereksinimler karşılanırken; cephe, su kanalları ve özgün yapısal sistem gibi tarihsel unsurların okunabilirliği korunmuştur. Böylece güncel müze ve sergileme standartlarına uyum sağlayan, ancak endüstriyel geçmişin fiziksel izlerini bütünüyle ortadan kaldırmayan bir "süreklilik + dönüşüm" modeli ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla birlikte çalışma, başarılı bir mimari restorasyonun tek başına endüstri mirasının bütüncül biçimde korunması anlamına gelmediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Feshane, yalnızca restore edilmiş tarihî bir yapı değil; hafıza, emek, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kültürel kimliğin sürekli olarak yeniden müzakere edildiği aktif bir miras alanıdır. Bu noktada temel sorun, fiziksel yapının ne ölçüde korunduğundan çok, yeni kültürel kullanım içerisinde hangi tarihlerin görünür kılındığı ve hangilerinin dışarıda bırakıldığıdır.

Sonuç olarak çalışma, endüstri mirasının yeniden işlevlendirilmesinin kamusal erişilebilirliği ve kültürel kullanımı artırma potansiyeline sahip olmakla birlikte, aynı zamanda seçici bir miras anlatısı üretme riski taşıdığını savunmaktadır. Özellikle kadın emeğinin Feshane'nin endüstriyel tarihinde taşıdığı önem göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu katmanın güncel küratöryel ve kültürel anlatılarda sınırlı biçimde temsil edilmesi önemli bir eksiklik olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu nedenle endüstri mirasına yönelik yeniden işlevlendirme stratejilerinin yalnızca fiziksel koruma ve yeni işlev kazandırma hedefleriyle sınırlı kalmaması; emek belleğini, toplumsal cinsiyet tarihini ve eleştirel yorumlama stratejilerini de koruma ve temsil süreçlerinin temel bileşenleri arasına dâhil etmesi gerektiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu yaklaşım, Feshane örneğini başarılı bir restorasyon vakasının ötesine taşıyarak, endüstriyel mirasın kim tarafından, hangi geçmiş üzerinden ve hangi anlatılar aracılığıyla temsil edildiğine ilişkin daha kapsamlı bir tartışma alanı açmaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Industrial buildings that emerged during the nineteenth-century Ottoman modernization were not only spaces of production, but also key stages on which ideological, economic and social transformations were performed. Among these, Feshane-i Âmire occupies a pivotal position as a state-owned factory where military clothing production became a vehicle for establishing a modern bureaucratic and industrial order. Founded in 1835 as the Melbusat-ı Askeriye Fabrikası, the complex reflects the gradual shift from artisanal to mechanised production and the reorganisation of labour under a centrally controlled industrial regime.

Over time, Feshane evolved from a mono-functional military facility into a site that registered broader transformations in the meaning and organisation of work. Women's labour was already present in and around Feshane through late nineteenth-century textile production networks; however, its more visible incorporation into factory-based industrial production intensified during the First World War, particularly after 1916. This shift reconfigured both labour relations and the symbolic meaning of the factory as a gendered industrial space (Kabadaşı, 2009; Metinsoy, 2017; van Os, 2018). In this respect, Feshane functions as a lens through which the intersection of industrialisation, state modernisation and gendered labour relations can be examined.

In the twenty-first century, the same complex has been reintroduced to the city as Artİstanbul Feshane, a cultural and contemporary art centre. This adaptive reuse raises critical questions about how industrial heritage is preserved, reinterpreted and represented in the context of globalised cultural economies. The building's transformation from a site of material production to one of cultural production invites a reconsideration of industrial heritage not only as an architectural category, but also as a medium of collective memory, identity and representation.

Accordingly, this article aims to analyse the historical and socio-cultural transformation of Feshane-i Âmire from the Ottoman period to the present, with a particular focus on its changing social roles and symbolic meanings. By combining historical documents, archival records and contemporary on-site observations, the study approaches Feshane as a case through which to discuss the relationship between industrial heritage, gender roles and cultural identity. The subsequent sections will first situate Feshane within the broader literature on Ottoman industrialisation and industrial heritage, then clarify the research problem and methodological approach, before presenting the findings of the historical and spatial analysis and discussing their implications for future uses of industrial heritage sites.

1.1. From Ottoman State Factory to Contemporary Cultural Venue

Ottoman State Factories and Industrial Modernisation

Scholarship on Ottoman industrialisation has emphasised the role of state factories as key instruments of nineteenth-century reform, particularly in the military and textile sectors. Studies on the Tanzimat period show that factories such as Feshane-i Âmire were established not only to meet the material needs of the army, but also to embody a new model of centralised, disciplined and mechanised production. Within this literature, Feshane is frequently cited as a flagship example of the Ottoman attempt to internalise industrial technologies, reorganise labour and signal participation in global industrial modernity. However, these studies often prioritise institutional and economic aspects, leaving the social and spatial dimensions of factory life relatively underexplored (Clark, 1974; Quataert, 1993; Pamuk, 2000; Küçükerman, 2021). Existing scholarship on Ottoman industrialisation has shown that state factories were not merely economic institutions, but also instruments through which military reform, technological transfer and administrative centralisation were spatially organised.

Industrial Heritage and Adaptive Reuse

A second body of literature focuses on industrial heritage and the adaptive reuse of former production sites. International debates highlight the shift from viewing obsolete factories as redundant structures to recognising them as carriers of technological memory, urban identity and cultural value. Within this framework, adaptive reuse is discussed as a strategy that can both preserve the material fabric of industrial buildings and integrate them into contemporary cultural or economic circuits. In the Turkish context, research on the transformation of docks, warehouses and factories into cultural venues points to tensions between conservation principles, commercial pressures and the risk of “museumification” or gentrification. Yet, specific analyses of Feshane’s recent conversion into Artİstanbul Feshane remain limited and are mostly confined to architectural or promotional descriptions (TICCIH, 2003; ICOMOS & TICCIH, 2011; Douet, 2012; Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019). From this perspective, adaptive reuse should not be evaluated only through functional success, but also through the degree to which it preserves material evidence, technological legibility, spatial memory and the social histories embedded in industrial sites.

Gendered Labour in Ottoman Industrial History

Scholarship on gendered labour in the late Ottoman Empire has demonstrated that women’s industrial work was shaped by household economies, wartime mobilisation, state demand for textile production and changing norms of public visibility. In the case of Feshane, gender is not an auxiliary topic but a central analytical layer, since the factory’s labour history reveals how industrial modernisation was experienced through differentiated bodies, skills and forms of visibility. Kabadayı’s study of the Imperial Fez Factory provides a direct basis for discussing gender, ethno-religious labour division and factory work in late Ottoman Istanbul, while studies on women’s mobilisation during the First World

War help explain the intensification of women's employment in military-related textile production (Kabadayı, 2009; Quataert, 1993; Metinsoy, 2017; Karakışla, 2005).

Culturalisation of Industrial Spaces

Finally, there is a growing literature on the "culturalisation" of industrial spaces, in which former production sites are rebranded as art centres, museums or event venues within creative city and cultural economy strategies. This scholarship questions how narratives of authenticity, memory and innovation are mobilised to legitimise new uses, often foregrounding aesthetics while marginalising histories of labour and class (Zukin, 1995; Smith, 1996; Evans, 2009; Pratt, 2010). In the case of Istanbul, the transformation of docks, gasworks and factories into cultural nodes has been analysed as part of broader processes of urban restructuring and image-making. However, Feshane's reintroduction as Artİstanbul Feshane is only beginning to be addressed within this discussion, and little attention has been paid to whether and how the memory of industrial production and women's labour is incorporated into its contemporary cultural programming.

Taken together, these four strands of literature provide the conceptual and historical backdrop for the present study, while also revealing a gap: Feshane-i Âmire has not yet been systematically examined as a site where industrial modernisation, gendered labour and contemporary cultural reuse intersect. This article positions itself precisely within this intersection. In this sense, cultural reuse may activate public accessibility while simultaneously producing selective narratives of memory. The critical issue is not whether an industrial building has been reused successfully, but which forms of labour, conflict, class and gender are made visible within the new cultural programme.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT: REINTERPRETING FESHANE-I ÂMIRE AS INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AND A SITE OF GENDERED LABOUR

Feshane-i Âmire is an architectural complex in which Ottoman modernisation, industrial heritage and gendered labour relations intersect. Yet existing studies tend to examine these layers separately, approaching Feshane either as a technical-industrial facility or as a regenerated cultural venue. As a result, the building's long-term social role and its transformation from material production to cultural production remain analytically fragmented. Moreover, women's labour in and around Feshane, already traceable through late Ottoman textile production networks and intensified during the First World War, has not been systematically linked to debates on industrial heritage and contemporary adaptive reuse.

Moreover, the employment of women workers at Feshane towards the end of the nineteenth century constitutes an important turning point in Ottoman labour history, yet this dimension is often mentioned only briefly and not systematically linked to discussions on industrial heritage or contemporary reuse. The current cultural function of Artİstanbul Feshane also raises questions about how the memory of

labour, especially women's labour, is represented—or silenced—in heritage narratives and exhibition practices.

Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is the lack of an integrated reading of Feshane-i Âmire that simultaneously considers its industrial, social and gendered histories together with its present-day cultural role. The article asks:

- How did Feshane's function, workforce composition and social meaning change from the nineteenth century to the present?
- In what ways did the inclusion of women workers reshape the social and symbolic role of the factory?
- How does the adaptive reuse of Feshane as Artİstanbul Feshane represent, transform or obscure these historical layers of labour and gender?

By formulating the problem in this way, the study aims to bridge the gap between industrial heritage studies, gender-focused labour history and contemporary cultural production.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH: A HISTORICAL-INTERPRETIVE CASE STUDY OF FESHANE-I ÂMIRE

This study adopts a qualitative, historical-interpretive case study approach centred on Feshane-i Âmire and its contemporary transformation into Artİstanbul Feshane. The research design is structured to trace the building's changing functions, social roles and representations across different historical periods.

The empirical corpus of the study consists of three interrelated groups of material: historical documents and secondary sources on Feshane's industrial development; visual-spatial material including historical photographs, maps, plans and on-site observations; and contemporary institutional materials such as exhibition announcements, catalogues, public communication texts and spatial displays at Artİstanbul Feshane. These materials were not treated as neutral documentation, but were analysed thematically according to three categories: industrial production, gendered labour memory and contemporary cultural representation.

First, archival and documentary research was conducted to reconstruct the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history of Feshane. Ottoman archival documents, official reports, period newspapers and secondary historical studies were reviewed to identify key moments in the factory's establishment, expansion, labour organisation and the gradual inclusion of women workers. These sources were analysed through thematic coding with a focus on industrialisation, labour relations and gender.

Second, the study incorporates spatial and visual analysis. Historical photographs, maps and plans were compared with contemporary architectural drawings and site observations. This comparison aimed to

understand how spatial configurations and architectural elements relate to changing production processes and to the current cultural programme of the building.

Third, the contemporary phase of Artİstanbul Feshane was examined through on-site visits, documentation of exhibitions and events, and the review of institutional publications, catalogues and online communication materials. This material was analysed to evaluate how the venue's industrial past, labour history and gendered dimensions are narrated, represented or omitted in current cultural practices.

By integrating archival research, spatial analysis and interpretive reading of contemporary cultural programming, the methodology seeks to provide a multilayered understanding of Feshane's transformation and to critically discuss its positioning within industrial heritage and gender-focused urban memory studies.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: ON THE THRESHOLD OF OTTOMAN INDUSTRIALISATION

Establishment Phase (1833–1839)

In 1826, with the newly established organisation of the army, military dress in the empire was changed, and in this context the decision was taken to adopt the fez. Under the conditions of the time, it was recognised that such a large number of fezzes could only be produced by establishing a very modern and large-scale industrial facility. Accordingly, initiatives were soon undertaken, and a fez factory was established in the Defterdar quarter of Eyüp, on a shoreline previously occupied by mansions, using the most advanced technologies of the period (Küçükerman, 2021).

Among its many effects, the principal significance of this factory in the history of Ottoman industry is as follows: in connection with the change in military uniform, it also modernised numerous ancillary fields of production that defined military dress. The Feshane factory paved the way for the establishment of many other factories producing military boots, belts, weapon holsters, insignia, buttons, silk cords and even underwear. In essence, Feshane-i Âmire assumed a central role within Ottoman industry (Küçükerman, 2021). At the same time, the factory also gave rise to a highly important carpet tradition known as "Feshane Carpets".

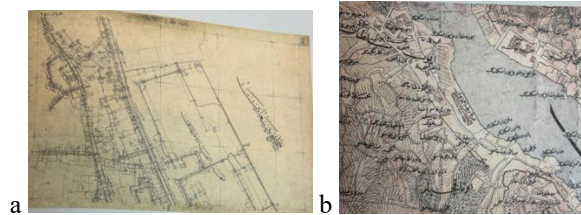


Figure 1a-b: An Ottoman-period map showing the Golden Horn and Feshane (Küçükerman, 2021).

The year 1835 is significant in four respects both for Feshane-i Âmire and for the industrialisation projects of the Ottoman period. First, the factory in Eyüp was established during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II and was substantially expanded by an imperial decree (firman) of Sultan Abdülmecid. In this respect, it was a highly significant product of the Ottoman administration's decision to pursue change. The factory was established on the "Feriye" section (waterside pavilion) of the palace of Hatice Sultan, the sister of Sultan Selim III. This indicates continuity with, and support for, the industrialisation projects initiated during the reign of Selim III. The factory was to provide a solution for the mass production of fezzes, which were in great demand (Küçükerman, 2021). According to Küçükerman (2021), it was necessary to prevent the increasing daily demand within the Ottoman lands from being met through imports. In addition to the fez, the factory would produce aba, the textile most needed for the new military uniform.

As can be understood, even though the fez was an important symbol of change, it was in fact the comprehensive transformation of clothing as a whole that made the establishment of an extensive industrial sector in the country necessary, and this process began with Feshane. At Feshane-i Âmire, large-scale fez production started first, and textile manufacturing followed thereafter.

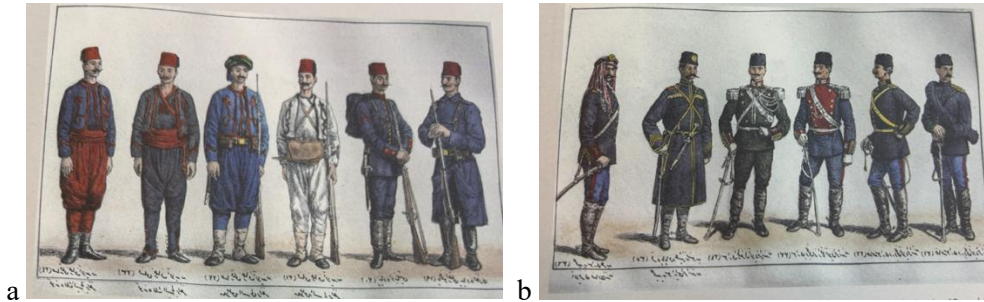


Figure 2a-b: Ottoman military uniforms in the nineteenth century (Mahmud Şevket Pasha, 1907).

Expansion and Modernisation (1840–1908)

Feshane-i Âmire, operating in Eyüp, began to play roles of a completely different kind in 1843. Between 1843 and 1851, Feshane housed spinning, weaving and finishing machines powered by steam engines imported from England, France and Belgium (Küçükerman, 2021). Steam engines, the most advanced industrial power of the period, were used in the Ottoman Empire for the first time at Feshane-i Âmire. Feshane was rapidly turning into a large-scale weaving factory. At that time, the technical knowledge required to operate a factory equipped with such delicate instruments was found primarily at the Imperial Mint (Darphane-i Âmire). The most precise machines and measuring devices were used there, and precious metals were processed; thus, a significant body of experience had accumulated in this institution. For this reason, the operation of new factories and machinery of this type was generally

overseen by the Imperial Mint. Consequently, Feshane-i Âmire in Eyüp was also brought under the management of the Imperial Mint, another state institution.

With the introduction of the steam engines and other machinery brought from Europe in 1843, Feshane-i Âmire was transformed into a comprehensive weaving factory. In a major fire in 1866, the complex was largely damaged, with the steam engine being the main element that survived. It was rebuilt on the same site in 1868 and equipped with the latest machinery (Küçükerman, 2021).

By the late nineteenth century, the complex had become not only a production facility but also an institution providing industrial education. In 1894, the Sanayi Sıbyan Mektebi (Industrial Primary School) was opened there, offering weaving classes and practical training.

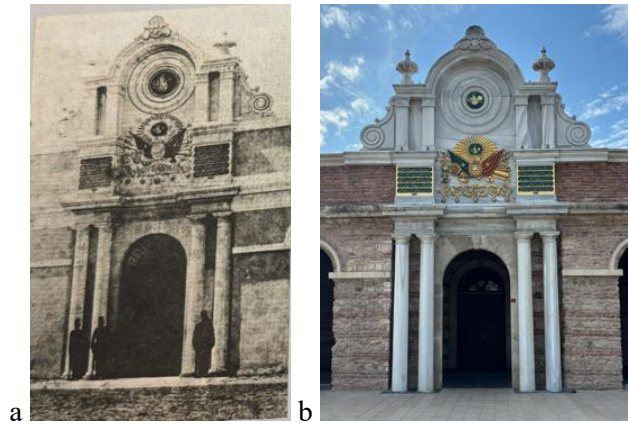


Figure 3a-b: Ottoman military uniforms in the nineteenth century (Mahmud Şevket Pasha, 1907).

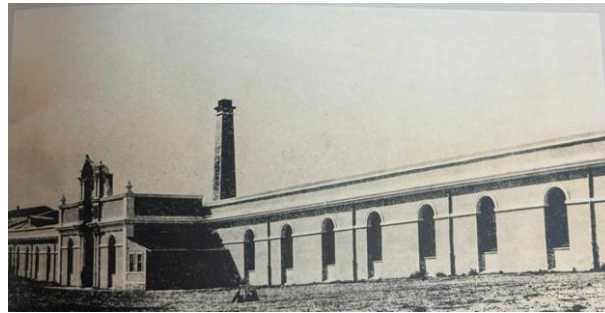


Figure 4: View of the “Feshane, Fez and Military Clothing Factory” from the Golden Horn in the 1890s (Küçükerman, 2021)



Figure 5: Main entrance section of Artİstanbul Feshane (photograph by the authors, 09.11.2025).

1914: The First World War Years and the Intensification of Women's Labour at Feshane

The First World War, which began in 1914, brought about numerous changes in the industrial structure of the Ottoman Empire. In order to increase electricity production, the company Tesisat-ı Elektriye T.A.Ş. was established. When porcelain insulators required for telegraph lines could no longer be imported, the Yıldız Porcelain Factory in the gardens of Yıldız Palace, which had been closed for years (Küçükerman, 2021), was reopened and put back into operation to produce porcelain telegraph insulators. In the same period, the results of the first "Industrial Statistics" survey ever commissioned on Ottoman industrial establishments began to be obtained.

In 1916, training programmes were launched at the Istanbul Industrial School (İstanbul Sanayi Mektebi) in areas aimed at meeting urgent needs such as electrical engineering, machinist work, driving and agricultural machinery operation. There was, in fact, a considerable need for such skilled personnel, since in the following year a large number of technicians would be required for newly established companies such as the Wireless Telegraph Station, the Şark İrtihat Cinema and Theatre Ottoman Company, and the Milli Mensucat Joint-Stock Company. In addition, according to Küçükerman (Küçükerman, 2021), the Şark İrtihat Cinema and Theatre Ottoman Joint-Stock Company was founded to work in a completely different field, and the Yerli Çimentoları Ottoman Joint-Stock Company was established to meet the demand for cement, which could no longer be imported due to the war.

To meet Istanbul's need for electricity, it had been planned that the power plant whose construction had begun in Silahtarağa would start distributing electricity in 1913. However, both the disruptions caused by the Balkan Wars and severe flood damage to the construction site led to delays. When the power plant finally began operating on 14 February 1914, electricity was first supplied to the tramway system. During the Balkan Wars, the strong horses of the Tramway Company had been requisitioned by the army, which made the rapid use of electricity indispensable. Under the contract concluded with the Şehremaneti (Municipal Administration), 600 arc lamps were to be installed for public lighting. By 1914, the total number of electricity subscribers had reached 2,055.

More specifically, wartime labour history indicates that Feshane and Hereke became important sites for the expanded employment of women from 1916 onwards. In Feshane's sewing workshop, where the factory's cloth production was processed, women constituted a substantial part of the workforce under male supervision. This evidence suggests that women's labour was not peripheral to Feshane's wartime production regime, but became embedded in the reorganisation of military textile production. Therefore, the inclusion of women workers should be read not only as a labour-market response to wartime shortages, but also as a transformation in the social meaning of factory space (Kabadayı, 2009; Metinsoy, 2017; van Os, 2018).

While the First World War (1914–1918) thus triggered profound transformations in the industrial structure of the Ottoman Empire, it also brought about major changes in the social structure, particularly in the labour market. The industrialisation and emergency production efforts outlined above prepared the ground for this transformation:

- Urgent needs: Production of critical materials for the army and civilian life accelerated. The reopening of the Yıldız Porcelain Factory to produce telegraph insulators, the establishment of the Domestic Cements Company to meet cement demand, and the speeding up of electricity production are all indicators of this urgent production agenda.
- Male labour mobilised to the front: With the declaration of mobilisation, thousands of male workers employed in industry and agriculture were sent to the front. This created serious labour shortages in both newly established and existing factories, particularly in sectors such as textiles, munitions and food production.
- Women entering industrial production: The labour gap caused by the war became the primary reason for women to enter industrial production, especially factory work, from which they had historically been excluded.
- State encouragement and meeting demand: To meet pressing production needs, the state not only tolerated but in some cases actively encouraged the use of women's labour. Women increasingly replaced men in munitions factories (such as powder mills and cartridge works) and in textile and sewing workshops (Mensucat companies).
- Economic necessity and family survival: The need to provide for families left behind by men at the front pushed women to seek paid employment. In the absence of male breadwinners, factory work became a vital economic necessity.

The beginnings of vocational training: Although the technical training initiated at the Istanbul Industrial School in 1916 was not directly aimed at women, it nonetheless represented the beginning of a shift in mentality that would, in later years, enable some women to move towards such technical fields. During the war years, however, women were generally employed in less technically demanding areas.

In this period, women began to work not only in traditional sectors (such as textiles and spinning), but also in certain branches of heavy industry. The war thus became a turning point in women's transition from the role of "housewife" to that of "waged worker", and in their increased visibility in the public sphere.

Even after the war ended, women's participation in the labour force did not disappear completely. The experience gained and the continuing economic necessities provided an important foundation for the consolidation of women's place in working life during the Republican period.

1923: Feshane's Transfer to the "General Directorate of Istanbul Factories"

In 1923, District Governor Hüsnü Bey was appointed for a second time as director of Feshane; however, in the same year he was replaced by Major Hilmi Bey, whose term as director lasted one year. In 1924, two military officers were appointed successively as factory directors at Feshane for the last time. The first of these was Major Nuri Bey, followed by Colonel Halim Bey. On 18 April 1925, Feshane lived its last day as a military factory (Küçükerman, 2021). One day later, it was transferred to the newly established Türkiye Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası (Turkish Industry and Mining Bank).

1925: Transfer of Feshane to the Industrial and Mining Bank Factories”

From the day it was founded, the Feshane Factory underwent numerous changes, and on 19 April 1925 it was transformed from a military to a civilian administration. In 1925, most of the factories that had been established and operated by the state during the Ottoman Empire were transferred to the Türkiye Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası (Turkish Industrial and Mining Bank).

This bank signalled the beginning of the state’s direct involvement in the industrialisation process of Republican Turkey (Küçükerman, 2021). The bank was to extend industrial loans to the private sector and to take over and operate state-owned factories inherited from the Ottoman period. In addition, it would become a partner in private-sector enterprises and work in the field of industry. However, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) was not in favour of the state being permanently engaged in industrial operations. For this reason, the aim was to operate the factories temporarily and then transform them into joint-stock companies.

Due to the growing problems of those years, these enterprises could not be fully converted into joint-stock companies. In 1929, however, their capital structures were separated and different forms of management were introduced for each factory. Feshane was transformed into a joint-stock company in accordance with commercial law, although all of its shares remained in the hands of the bank (Küçükerman, 2021). Meanwhile, the Hereke Factory and the Beykoz Factory were also affiliated with the bank, albeit within different organisational structures.

The bank introduced new arrangements in these establishments and renewed their technologies to a certain extent. As a result, their production capacities increased significantly, the range of products expanded, quality improved and costs were reduced. Indeed, according to the 1932 Board of Directors’ report of the Industrial and Mining Bank, sales of Feshane Factory products on the open market rose to 53% of overall sales (Toprak, 1988). However, in 1933 the Industrial and Mining Bank was abolished, and two new institutions were created in its place: the State Industrial Office (Devlet Sanayi Ofisi) and the Turkish Industrial Credit Bank (Türkiye Sanayi Kredi Bankası).

1925: The Prohibition of Wearing the Fez

The fez, which began to be used in the Ottoman Empire in 1826, was abolished roughly a century later with the promulgation of the Law on the Wearing of Hats (Şapka Giyilmesi Hakkında Kanun) in 1925.

Law No. 671: Law on the Wearing of Hats, 28 Teşrinisani [November] 1341 [1925]:

- Article 1 – Members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and officials and employees of the general and local administrations and of all institutions, are obliged to wear the hat worn by the Turkish nation. The general headgear of the people of Turkey is also the hat, and the government shall prohibit the continuation of any contrary custom.
- Article 2 – This law shall be valid [in force] from the date of its publication.
- Article 3 – This law shall be executed by the Grand National Assembly and the Council of Ministers.

1928: “Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş.” Established by the Bank

In 1928, the Industrial and Mining Bank established Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş., which leased the factory for an annual sum of 75,000 Turkish liras and began operating it. This clearly marked the beginning of a new phase. Visual documents from this period indicate that the historic factory had entered a new stage in its development.

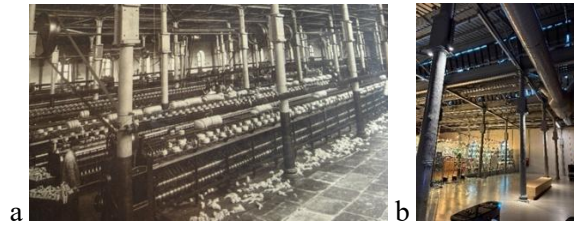


Figure 6a: View of the Spinning Department of “Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş.”, founded by the Industrial and Mining Bank in 1928 (Toros, 1928) **Fig. 6b.** Interior view of the entrance hall of Artİstanbul Feshane (photograph by the authors, 09.11.2025).

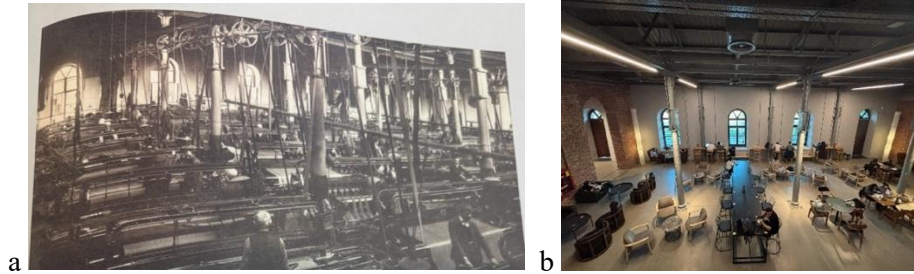


Figure 7a: View of the Weaving Department of “Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş.”, founded by the Industrial and Mining Bank in 1928 (Toros, 1928). **Fig. 7b.** Cafeteria section of Artİstanbul Feshane (photograph by the authors, 09.11.2025).

1933: Establishment of Sümerbank

In 1933, the Industrial and Mining Bank (Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası) was abolished and replaced by two separate institutions: the State Industrial Office (Devlet Sanayi Ofisi) and the Turkish Industrial Credit Bank (Türkiye Sanayi Kredi Bankası). By a law enacted on 11 July 1933 and brought into force in 1938, Sümerbank was established as a state economic enterprise. Under its founding law, specific duties and responsibilities were assigned to Sümerbank.

1938: Feshane's Operation by "United Wool Yarn and Woollen Textile Factories Inc." Established by Sümerbank

The Defterdar Factory was brought into operation in 1938 by Birleşik Yün İpliği ve Yünlü Mensucat Fabrikaları A.Ş. (United Wool Yarn and Woollen Textile Factories Inc.), a company founded by Sümerbank to bring together under a single management all wool-related units owned by the bank (Küçükerman, 2021). In the same year, Sümerbank was transformed into the "Sümerbank Yerli Mallar Pazarları Müessesesi" (Sümerbank Domestic Goods Markets Institution).

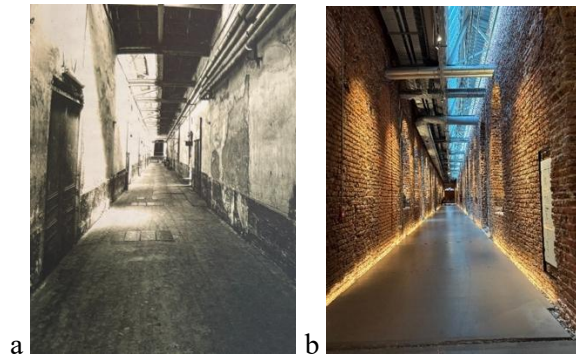


Figure 8a: View of the historical Hatice Sultan buildings of the Sümerbank Defterdar Establishment in 1986, in the days when they were being abandoned (Küçükerman, 2021). **Fig. 8b.** Corridor leading to the library, conference hall and Exhibition 2 areas in Artİstanbul Feshane (photograph by the authors, 09.11.2025).

1946: The "Sümerbank Yarn and Weaving Factories Enterprise" and Turkey's New Connections with the World

The year 1946 may be considered a new turning point in Turkish history, both politically and economically. The reason is that the transition from a single-party system to a multi-party parliamentary regime began in this period. In that year, the Democrat Party was founded and, for the first time, single-stage elections were held. In connection with this political change, the economic policies that for sixteen years had been continuously inward-looking, protectionist, closed to the outside world and based on external balance, began to be relaxed. Imports were liberalised and increased. Priority started to be given

to export-oriented markets and to investments in agriculture, mining, infrastructure and the construction sector.

In a sense, Turkey was beginning to establish new links with the world economy. Between 1947 and 1950, restrictions on foreign capital were also gradually eased. In 1950, a change of government again took place through elections. From this date onwards, governments would increasingly face the economic and social demands of large segments of the population such as workers, peasants and tradespeople. Under the impact of all these developments, the Law on the Encouragement of Foreign Capital Investments was adopted in 1951, followed in 1954 by the Law on the Encouragement of Foreign Capital and the Petroleum Law. As a result, this period witnessed rapid growth in Turkey, particularly in the agricultural sector (Boratav, 1988).

1949: Reorganisation within Sümerbank and Fire at the Factory

In 1949, in the post-war period, the excessively centralised structure of Sümerbank was changed: the Sümerbank Yarn and Weaving Factories Enterprise (Sümerbank İplik ve Dokuma Fabrikaları Müessesesi) was abolished and its duties were transferred to fourteen separate enterprises established on 1 June. In this way, the Defterdar Woollen Industry Enterprise (Defterdar Yünlü Sanayii Müessesesi) was founded.

In the same year, a fire broke out at the Defterdar Factory. In this fire, caused by an electrical short circuit, the raw material warehouses were completely destroyed. Subsequently, the factory was rebuilt and its main entrance was moved from the Defterdar–Eyüp road to the street leading to the Defterdar ferry pier.

1985: Feshane's Final Days and the Transfer of its Ready-Made Clothing Sections to the Bakırköy Factory

In Feshane, which had been renewed in 1894 in line with contemporary needs, the Sanayi Sıbyan Mektebi (Industrial Primary School) was opened; alongside weaving classes, practical training was provided and new master craftsmen were trained. With the advent of the Republican period, Feshane changed hands several times. As one of the cornerstones of Turkey's military cloth and clothing industry, the old Feshane survived in operation until 1985. In that year, it was transferred to the Istanbul Municipality.

In 1986, within the scope of the project to reorganise the surroundings of the Golden Horn (Haliç), all parts of the complex except the large weaving hall were demolished, and the ready-made clothing (konfeksiyon) section was moved to the Bakırköy Cotton Industry Enterprise (Bakırköy Pamuklu Sanayii İşletmesi) (Official Web site, Feshane-i Âmire, 2025).

5. FINDINGS

From the adoption of the fez in 1826 and the establishment of Feshane in the 1830s as a central Ottoman state factory for military textiles, the complex gradually evolved into a key node of industrial modernisation. With the introduction of steam-powered machinery in 1843, its reconstruction after the 1866 fire and the opening of the Sanayi Sıbyan Mektebi in 1894, Feshane became both a production site and a school for industrial skills. During the First World War, wider industrial restructuring and severe labour shortages opened the way for women workers to enter factory production, marking a turning point in Ottoman labour history. In the early Republican period, Feshane was transferred from military to civilian control, first to the Türkiye Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası in 1925 and then incorporated into the new institutional landscape shaped by Sümerbank and its affiliated companies, such as Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş. and Birleşik Yün İpliği ve Yünlü Mensucat Fabrikaları A.Ş. The gradual liberalisation of Turkey's economy after 1946, together with internal restructurings and a devastating fire in 1949, redefined the factory's role until its final transfer to the Istanbul Municipality in 1985 and the partial demolition and relocation of production units within the Haliç regeneration projects of 1986. Taken together, this trajectory situates Feshane at the intersection of imperial reform, Republican industrial policy, changing labour regimes and late twentieth-century urban transformation (Table 1).

Table 1. Chronological Timeline of Feshane and Related Transformations (By Authors)

Year / Date	Event / Phase	Brief Description
1826	Change in Ottoman military dress	Adoption of the fez for the new army; need for mass fez production emerges.
1833–1839	Establishment Phase of Feshane	Foundations of Feshane laid in Eyüp–Defterdar as a state factory for military clothing.
1835	Consolidation of Feshane-i Âmire	Feshane becomes a central state factory producing fezzes and related military textiles and accessories.
1843	First steam engines at Feshane-i Âmire	Steam-powered spinning, weaving and finishing machines imported from England, France and Belgium.
1843–1851	Transformation into a large weaving factory	Feshane rapidly expands as a comprehensive textile/weaving complex under state control.
1866	Major fire at Feshane	Large part of the complex destroyed; steam engine survives the fire.
1868	Reconstruction and re-equipment	Factory rebuilt on the same site and equipped with the latest machinery of the period.
1894	Opening of <i>Sanayi Sıbyan Mektebi</i>	Industrial primary school within Feshane; weaving and practical training provided, new masters trained.
1913–1914	Commissioning of Silahtarağa Power Plant	Start of electricity supply to Istanbul (including tramways), part of wider industrial and urban modernisation.

Table 1. Continued.

14 Feb 1914	Start of electricity distribution in Istanbul	Electricity begins to power tramways and public lighting; part of broader industrial infrastructure.
1914–1918	First World War and industrial restructuring	Emergency industrial production, reopening of Yıldız Porcelain Factory, cement and energy initiatives.
ca. 1914–1918	Entry of women workers into industrial production	Labour shortages push women into factories, including textile and munitions sectors; beginning of women's wage labour at scale.
1916	Technical training at İstanbul Sanayi Mektebi	Programmes in electricity, machinery, driving, agricultural machinery; supports industrial workforce needs.
1923	New administrative appointments at Feshane	Feshane directors change (Kaymakam Hüsnü Bey, then Major Hilmi Bey); transition period in early Republic.
18 Apr 1925	Last day of Feshane as a military factory	Feshane completes its role as a military factory under the army.
19 Apr 1925	Transfer from military to civilian control	Feshane is handed over to the newly established Türkiye Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası.
1925 (Law No. 671)	Prohibition of the fez (<i>Law on the Wearing of Hats</i>)	Fez banned; hat becomes official headgear of the Turkish Republic, symbolically ending fez-based production.
1928	Establishment of Feshane Mensucat T.A.Ş.	Company founded by the Industrial and Mining Bank; leases and operates the factory (75,000 TL/year).
1933	Abolition of Industrial and Mining Bank; establishment of Sümerbank	Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası dissolved; Sümerbank created as a state economic enterprise (law of 11 July 1933).
1938	United Wool Yarn and Woollen Textile Factories Inc. takes over Defterdar	Birleşik Yün İpliği ve Yünlü Mensucat Fabrikaları A.Ş. operates Defterdar Factory under Sümerbank.
1938	Transformation of Sümerbank	Sümerbank becomes Sümerbank Yerli Mallar Pazarları Müessesesi, focusing on domestic goods markets.
1946	New economic orientation and global connections	Transition to multi-party politics; relaxation of protectionism; priority to agriculture, mining, infrastructure and construction.
1949	Reorganisation within Sümerbank	Sümerbank Yarn and Weaving Factories Enterprise abolished; Defterdar Woollen Industry Enterprise founded.
1949	Fire at Defterdar Factory	Fire due to electrical short circuit destroys raw material warehouses; factory later rebuilt, entrance relocated.
1951	Law on the Encouragement of Foreign Capital Investments	Legal framework to attract foreign capital; part of Turkey's integration into global economy.
1954	Law on the Encouragement of Foreign Capital & Petroleum Law	Further liberalisation of foreign investment and regulation of petroleum sector.

Table 1. Continued.

1985	Final phase of Feshane as an industrial complex	Old Feshane, a key military textile factory, remains active until 1985; then transferred to Istanbul Municipality.
1986	Demolition and relocation of ready-made clothing sections	Within Haliç regeneration project, parts of Feshane demolished; ready-made clothing units moved to Bakırköy Cotton Industry Enterprise.

Republican Period: Silence and Loss of Function (1923–1992)

- **Hat Law and the End of Production:** With the prohibition of the fez in 1925, Feshane’s primary purpose of production disappeared, and the complex was gradually abandoned.
- **Architectural Deterioration and Conservation Problems:** Left without maintenance for a long period, the building suffered serious deterioration, largely due to the lack of policies for the protection of industrial heritage.
- **Rebirth: A Space for Culture and the Arts (1992–2023):**
 - **Fair and Event Venue:** In 1992, the building was refunctionalised by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as a fair and event centre, through which its cultural potential began to be revealed.
 - **Artİstanbul Feshane and the Restoration Process:** Through a restoration project carried out by KG Architecture between 2018 and 2023, the building was converted into a contemporary art centre and reopened in 2023 under the name “Artİstanbul Feshane”.

Periodical Naming and Functions

- 1839–1920s: Feshâne-i Âmire — a weaving factory producing fezzes for the Ottoman army.
- 1920s–1992: Out of use or assigned various other functions, but generally still referred to as “Feshane”.
- 1992–1998: Used by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality as the Museum of Contemporary Handicrafts.
- 1998–2018: Feshane Culture and Fair Centre — a public venue used for fairs, exhibitions and events.
- 2018–2023: Restoration period; not in active use during these years.
- 2023–present: Artİstanbul Feshane — refunctionalised as a centre for contemporary art and cultural events.

5.1. Artİstanbul Feshane

Artİstanbul Feshane has been transformed into a centre of contemporary art and public life through a restoration that respects its historical identity; it brings together architectural fidelity, technical

innovation and artistic diversity. Following its restoration, the building has been refunctionalised as a cultural and arts centre. The original structure has been preserved while being converted into a modern exhibition venue, library and social spaces. The structural system of the building (brick and steel units) has been retained and interpreted through adaptive reuse approaches.



Figure 9. Artİstanbul Feshane, spatial layout shown on the plan (photograph by the authors, 09.11.2025).

- The restoration process was carried out by İBB Miras (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality-Heritage). The original water channels of the building were cleaned, the steel columns and walls were reinforced, the roof trusses were repaired or renewed, and the roof was protected with a titanium covering.
- The wooden joinery and floor materials were completely renewed. These interventions enabled the building to comply with contemporary safety and comfort standards while remaining faithful to its historical fabric (Figures 10a–10b).
- A multifunctional art complex was created on an area of 8,000 square metres. Through the new layout, exhibition halls, event spaces, social areas and technical rooms were added (Figure 9).
- The former storage buildings were converted into staff and technical areas. This ensured that the complex acquired both a functional and a sustainable form of use (Figure 9).
- With the landscape design interventions, the outdoor areas were also opened up to public use. In this way, the complex has become not only an interior space but a living environment together with its surroundings (Figures 10c–10d–10e).
- Artİstanbul Feshane hosts national and international art events. Through exhibitions, performances, talks and workshops, it has evolved into a multifaceted cultural centre (Figures 10f–10h).
- In terms of artistic production and encounters between art and audiences. Rather than being treated merely as a new cultural attraction, Artİstanbul Feshane should be read as a strategic repositioning of an industrial monument within Istanbul’s contemporary cultural economy. This repositioning increases public access and cultural visibility; however, it also risks privileging

event-based representation over the deeper interpretation of industrial labour, production processes and gendered memory.

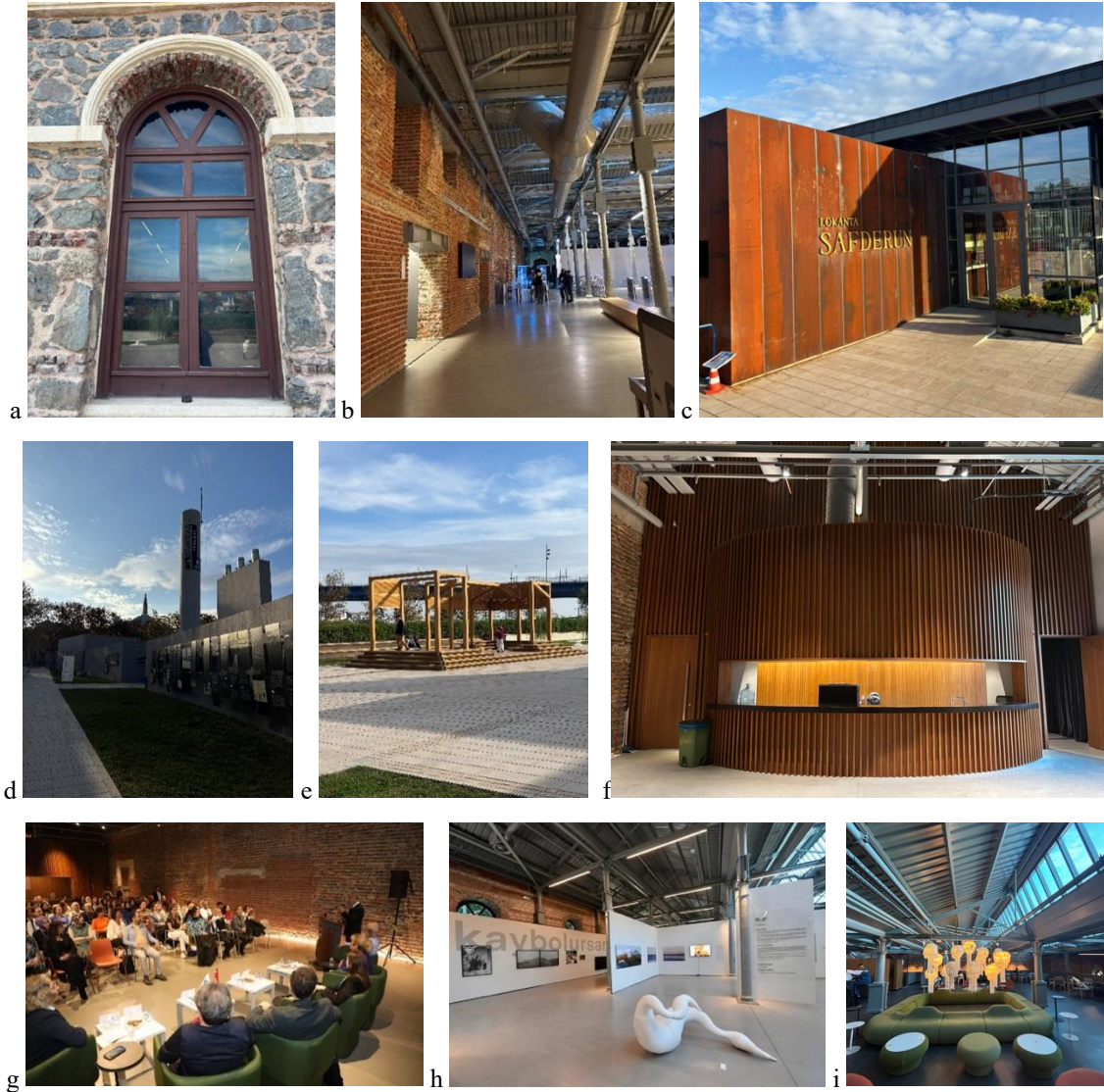


Figure 10a. Wooden Windows, **10b.** Floor material, **10c.** Public use, **10d.** Public use, **10e.** Public use, **10f.** Entrance of the Conference H., **10g.** Public use (URL-1), **10h.** Public use (URL-2) **10i.** Cafeteria-Upper floor.
(Figure 10a-b-c-d-e-f-i photograph by the authors)

Table 2. Balance of Continuity and Transformation In Artİstanbul Feshane: A Comparative Overview of Architectural, Technical, Functional and Artistic Changes After 2023 In Relation To Its Original Industrial Identity (1839).

Aspect	Preserved / Continuous Features	Transformed / Renewed Features
Architectural	Exterior façade, water channels, structural system	Roof cladding, interior spatial arrangements
Technical	Main building fabric preserved and structurally reinforced	Floor material, joinery and technical infrastructure completely renewed
Functional	Maintains its role as a public space for production and encounter	Shift from industrial production to cultural production
Artistic	Social interaction and collective experience	International contemporary art-oriented programmes

5.2. Curatorial and Communicative Representation of Industrial Memory

The review of Artİstanbul Feshane's contemporary communication materials indicates that the venue is primarily framed through restoration success, public accessibility and contemporary art programming. While these narratives contribute to the reactivation of the building, they provide limited explicit engagement with the everyday histories of industrial production, workers' experiences and women's labour. The emphasis on exhibitions, events and public use therefore produces a selective heritage narrative: the architectural shell and cultural function are made highly visible, whereas labour processes and gendered industrial memory remain less systematically interpreted. This does not diminish the significance of the adaptive reuse project; rather, it points to a curatorial opportunity to integrate archival material, worker narratives and gendered labour history into future exhibitions, educational routes and interpretive panels.

5.3. Architectural Features

- **Design:** The restoration carried out by KG Architecture preserved the building's original structural system while enabling its adaptive reuse through contemporary interventions.
- **Area:** The complex contains a generous interior space of 8,000 square metres, incorporating exhibition halls, social areas and technical units.
- **Conservation:** Historical elements such as the exterior façade, water channels and roof trusses were restored; the roof was clad in titanium and the wooden joinery was renewed.
- **Award:** In 2024, the project was shortlisted as a finalist in the "Reuse" category at the World Architecture Festival.

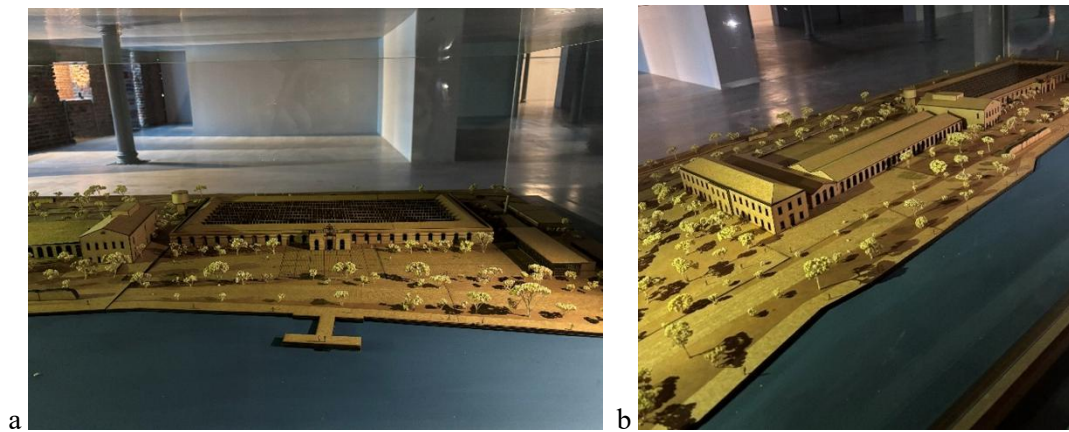


Figure 11a-b. The Model of the Feshane-i Âmire building presents a bird's-eye view of the building's original architecture and its location on the Golden Horn shoreline, at Eyüp (Defterdar Pier) (photographs by the authors).

Artİstanbul Feshane operates today as both a technically upgraded and symbolically charged cultural infrastructure. The restoration included substantial structural reinforcement of steel columns and masonry walls, alongside the renewal of floor and infrastructural systems to meet contemporary museum and safety standards, while advanced climate-control and lighting technologies were integrated to create optimal exhibition conditions. In parallel, landscape interventions opened the surrounding areas on the Golden Horn in Eyüpsultan to public use, transforming the complex and its waterfront setting into an extended urban living space. Within this renewed physical framework, Artİstanbul Feshane hosts an ambitious artistic programme, exemplified by the 2024 presentation of Tate Modern's "The Dynamic Eye: Beyond Op and Kinetic Art" collection, featuring nearly one hundred works by around sixty artists from twenty-one countries. Through such large-scale international exhibitions and an emphasis on interdisciplinary, experiential encounters with art, the venue fosters a dynamic dialogue between local and global artistic communities. At the same time, this repositioning should be read critically as a selective translation of industrial memory into contemporary cultural programming, rather than as a neutral continuation of heritage.

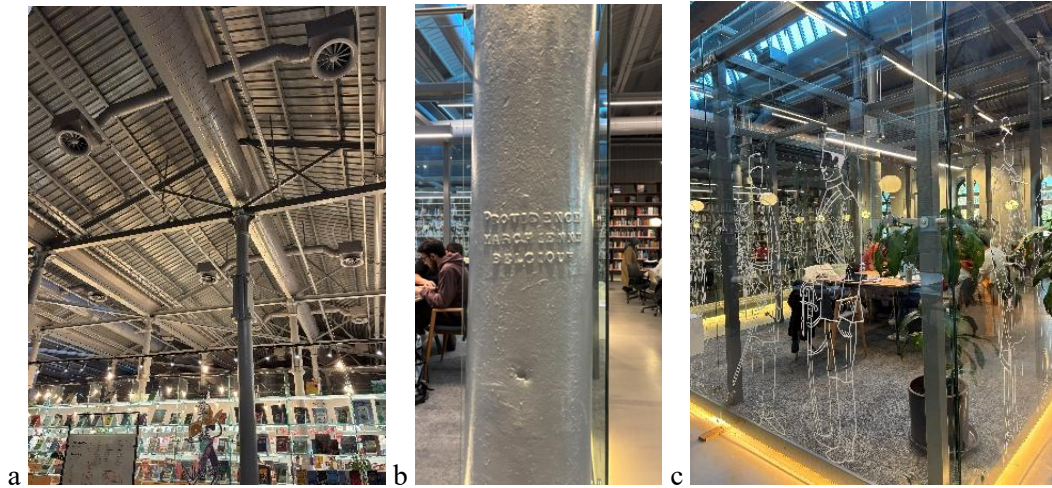


Figure 12a-b-c. Interior of Artİstanbul (photographs by the authors).

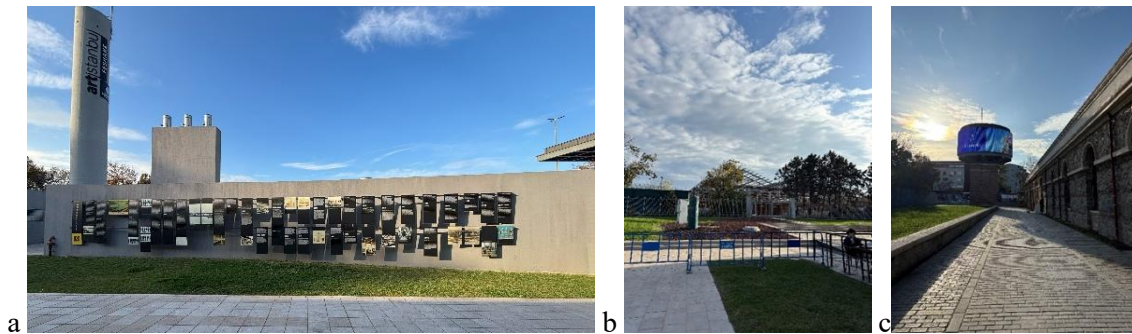


Figure 13. The Façade - Wall of Artİstanbul **13b.** Ongoing Construction of Additional Building **13c.** Water Tower (photographs by the authors).

6. DISCUSSION: Industrial Heritage, Gendered Memory and Cultural Reuse

The case of Feshane demonstrates that industrial heritage cannot be reduced to the preservation of architectural fabric alone. Its heritage value emerges from the interaction between material continuity, technological memory, labour history and contemporary cultural representation. The restoration of the complex has successfully reactivated a major industrial structure within public cultural life; however, the interpretation of its labour history remains uneven. In particular, the history of women workers reveals a critical but underrepresented dimension of the site's social memory.

This tension points to a broader issue in the adaptive reuse of industrial buildings: cultural reuse often makes the building publicly accessible while selectively translating its past into contemporary narratives. In Feshane's case, the architectural and spatial layers are visible, but the histories of production, workers and gendered labour require stronger curatorial mediation. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in reframing Feshane not only as a restored industrial monument, but as a contested field of memory in which conservation, labour history and cultural programming intersect.

7. CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, the trajectory of Feshane-i Âmire from nineteenth-century state factory to twenty-first-century cultural venue demonstrates that this complex is far more than a mute relic of Ottoman industrial modernisation. Its successive transformations reveal how industrial space has functioned as a laboratory in which notions of production, labour and identity have been continuously renegotiated. The introduction of steam technology, the reorganisation of state factories in the early Republican period, and the later cycles of nationalisation, decentralisation and eventual abandonment situate Feshane at the intersection of imperial reform, Republican industrial policy and late-twentieth-century urban restructuring. In this sense, the building operates as a material archive of modernisation processes that were at once economic, political and spatial.

A key contribution of this study has been to foreground the role of gendered labour within this long history. The incorporation of women into factory work during the First World War did not merely fill a temporary gap in the workforce; it reconfigured the social meanings attached to industrial production and enabled women to appear as waged workers in the public sphere. Reading Feshane through this lens highlights the extent to which industrial heritage also embodies contested histories of gender, work and social mobility. At the same time, the relative silence around women's labour in many heritage and promotional narratives underscores the persistent tension between celebratory accounts of industrial modernity and the more ambivalent social realities that underpinned it.

The recent conversion of the complex into Artİstanbul Feshane further complicates this picture. Architecturally and technically, the restoration combines the preservation of key structural and façade elements with substantial interventions in flooring, services, spatial organisation and environmental control, enabling the building to operate as a contemporary art infrastructure while maintaining legible links to its industrial past. Functionally and symbolically, the shift from material to cultural production positions the site as an interface between industrial heritage and contemporary artistic practices, supported by an international exhibition programme and an explicit ambition to act as a regional cultural hub. This adaptive reuse both activates and reframes the building's historical layers, translating a former site of regimented labour into a space of cultural consumption, creative production and public encounter.

These interventions can be evaluated in relation to international industrial heritage conservation principles. The Nizhny Tagil Charter and the ICOMOS–TICCIH Dublin Principles emphasise that industrial heritage should be conserved not only through the preservation of physical fabric, but also through the documentation and interpretation of machinery, production processes, spatial organisation, technical knowledge and workers' memories. In this respect, the conservation of Feshane's façade, water channels, structural system and large interior volume contributes to the legibility of its industrial character. However, the relative absence of machinery, production-line interpretation and gendered labour narratives indicates that material conservation needs to be complemented by stronger interpretive strategies (TICCIH, 2003; ICOMOS & TICCIH, 2011).

Consequently, Feshane emerges as a critical case through which to rethink industrial heritage in Turkey at the intersection of conservation, gender and cultural identity. Its transformation into Artİstanbul Feshane demonstrates that it is possible to retain structural continuity, spatial memory and public accessibility while reprogramming an industrial complex in line with contemporary cultural economies. At the same time, the case underlines the importance of interrogating which histories are made visible, which are aestheticised and which remain marginal in such processes. By bringing together industrial heritage studies, labour and gender history, and debates on cultural urbanism, this article argues that Feshane should be understood not only as a successfully restored monument, but as an active arena in which the meanings of work, memory and identity continue to be produced, negotiated and contested. The case also shows that adaptive reuse should not be equated automatically with heritage continuity. While architectural conservation and public accessibility are essential achievements, the long-term success of industrial heritage reuse depends on whether the histories of production, labour relations and gendered experience are actively interpreted rather than merely implied by the preserved architectural shell.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, although it draws on archival, documentary and secondary historical sources, it does not claim to provide an exhaustive archival inventory of Feshane's workforce. The available evidence on women workers is interpreted through selected historical sources and should be further expanded through systematic archival research, period newspapers and employment records. Second, the analysis of Artİstanbul Feshane's contemporary representation is based on accessible institutional materials, site observations and exhibition-related communication, rather than interviews with curators, visitors or former workers. Future research could therefore combine archival labour history with oral history, curatorial analysis and audience studies to produce a more comprehensive account of Feshane's industrial and gendered memory.

Future Perspectives

In future, Feshane could serve as a laboratory for more participatory and inclusive heritage practices, in which narratives of industrial labour—especially women's work—are made explicitly visible within curatorial and educational programmes. Comparative research on similar industrial heritage sites in Turkey and abroad, combined with longitudinal studies of audience profiles and uses of the space, would help to clarify how adaptive reuse can more effectively link cultural production with social memory and local communities.

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