

Daily Details of Modernist Thresholds

A Speculation: What if Modernist Details Settled
in Üsküdar/İstanbul?

modernist detaylar
eşikler

mimari antropoloji
spekülatif çizim

**modernist details
thresholds**

**architectural anthropology
speculative drawing**

Bu çizim-metin, tasarım nesnelere olarak binalarla değil, yaşamın çok duyulu çevresinin izlerini taşıyan mekânın aktörlerini görünür kılmak için, neredeyse hiçbir zaman bu aktörlerin okunabildiği, kirlenmiş bir imge ile aklımızda beliremeyen ikonik modern mimarlık eserlerinin detaylarına yönelir. Modernist detayların farklı bir kültürel ve fiziksel bağlama taşınmasıyla kurgulanan sıradan bir günün detaylarına ilişkin bu spekülasyonda, sıklıkla yaşamdan kopuk bir mimarlığın başat teknikleri olarak görülen ortografik temsil sistemlerinden oluşan bir çizim-metin üretimine başvurulur. Mimari detayların maddesel gerçekliğinin katılığı yaşam ile aşınırken, temsil tekniklerinin alışlagelmiş tanımlılığı "ya şöyle olsaydı" sorusunun kışkırtıcılığında anlatsal bir spekülasyonda bulanıklaşır.

The work is a speculation on the impact of transposing modernist details into different cultural and physical contexts on an ordinary day. Orthographic systems of representation are often regarded as techniques that detach architecture from life. The rigidity of architectural details is however eroded when it comes in contact with life. This drawing-text therefore turns to the details of iconic works of modern architecture, works that almost never appear in our minds with the "contaminated" image through which such actors might be legible. The conventional fixity of representational techniques is unsettled within a narrative speculation provoked by the question "what if...", in order to render visible the actors of space that carry the traces of life's multisensory environment.

Kılınç, Melek¹

¹ Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Department of Architecture, İstanbul, Türkiye.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5763-1004>
melek.kilinc@msgsu.edu.tr

Citation: Kılınç, M. (2025). "Daily Details of Modernist Thresholds", UOU scientific journal #10, 136-141.

ISSN: 2697-1518. <https://doi.org/10.14198/UOU.2025.10.14>
This document is under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0)

Article Received: 28/08/2025
Received in revised form: 14/10/2025
Accepted: 12/11/2025



This text-drawing speculates on the details of an ordinary day. Set in a fictional apartment building on a hillside overlooking the Bosphorus in Üsküdar, one of Istanbul's old neighborhoods, the work provides a glimpse into the residents' daily lives through detailed drawings. The apartment appears only through these fragments, detail drawings that shift between scales.

The text-drawing turns to the details of iconic works of modern architecture, works that hardly ever appear in our minds marked by any trace of use. It does so in order to speculate on an architecture not centered on buildings as design objects, but instead one that values the traces of daily routines of dwelling. An architecture that considers how space is lived, and beyond that, how space and matter themselves are inhabited and aged by life; microbes, molds, etc.

The fictional apartment worked with in this study is a collage-building assembled from the detail drawings of iconic modern architectural works. These were produced either as fixed projections of constructive reality or, published in architectural magazines. All were ignoring traces of life, engaging neither with any distortions in translation from drawing to building, nor with the reality of buildings being marked by life. This work brings this collage of details of modernist architecture that ignore, conceal, or hide the traces of life, in direct contact with the familiar traces of daily dwelling routines. In a sense it brings down to earth the exalted, sanctified images of modernism.

Undoubtedly, these details that belong to Loos, Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, and Mies, did not experience the smooth, unmarked life that had been anticipated. These frozen, idealized, or fixed projections, make contact with the worn, marked, and vitalized; humans, plants, insects, cats and dogs, as well as rain, snow, mud, wind, and sun. Perhaps they could not live exactly as predicted even for a single moment. The presented text-drawings do not

trace these real lives of the details, but surround these idealized details with the routines, seasons, and lives of animals and insects familiar to us. The work opens the details to speculation, revealing the imaginative and provocative nature of the "what if..." question.

Interestingly, when approached in this way, detail drawings begin to amplify their witnessing of the lives of different living beings they have encountered. As we descend from the scale of the human to smaller scales, the visibility of life in small nooks increases. A window detail designed to block the wind, the track of a sliding window so it may be opened for the view, or the curve of a windowsill to divert water, all become dwelling spaces for spiders, mold, and other living creatures. A crack becomes a path for ants, the gap between paving stones turns into a garden for clover, a windowsill becomes a table for doves, etc.

Dorrian speaks of how while solidifying the architectural object, architectural representation traditions, continuously produce effects of alienation (Dorrian, 2005, 62). Even when assumed to be predictable they lead to unforeseeable outcomes. In detail drawings representational techniques are often employed in the search for precision and clarity. Plans, sections, elevations, axonometric projections all present idealized promises whilst situated within everyday unpredictable life details and a narrative structure. The drawings presented here aim to create a medium conducive to thinking beyond the material reality of the building, toward the simultaneous existence of human and more-than-human actors. The work asks can the representation of these encounters beyond the predicted lives of the material environment, this making visible of the actors that constitute the multisensory surroundings of life, provide a discursive space for speculative intervention? Can architectural representation become a productive site for anthropological inquiry when incorporating traces of life? By

bringing together human and more-than-human inhabitants, can this generate a research field suitable for the speculative intervention in life-worlds? In Ingold's terms, might this form an architectural anthropology, which approaches the environment as a living and intervention-ready medium?

This study enlists modernist drawings for this purpose. What if they were part of architectural anthropology...

WORKS CITED

FORD, Edward R. *The Details of Modern Architecture - Volume 2: 1928-1988*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003.

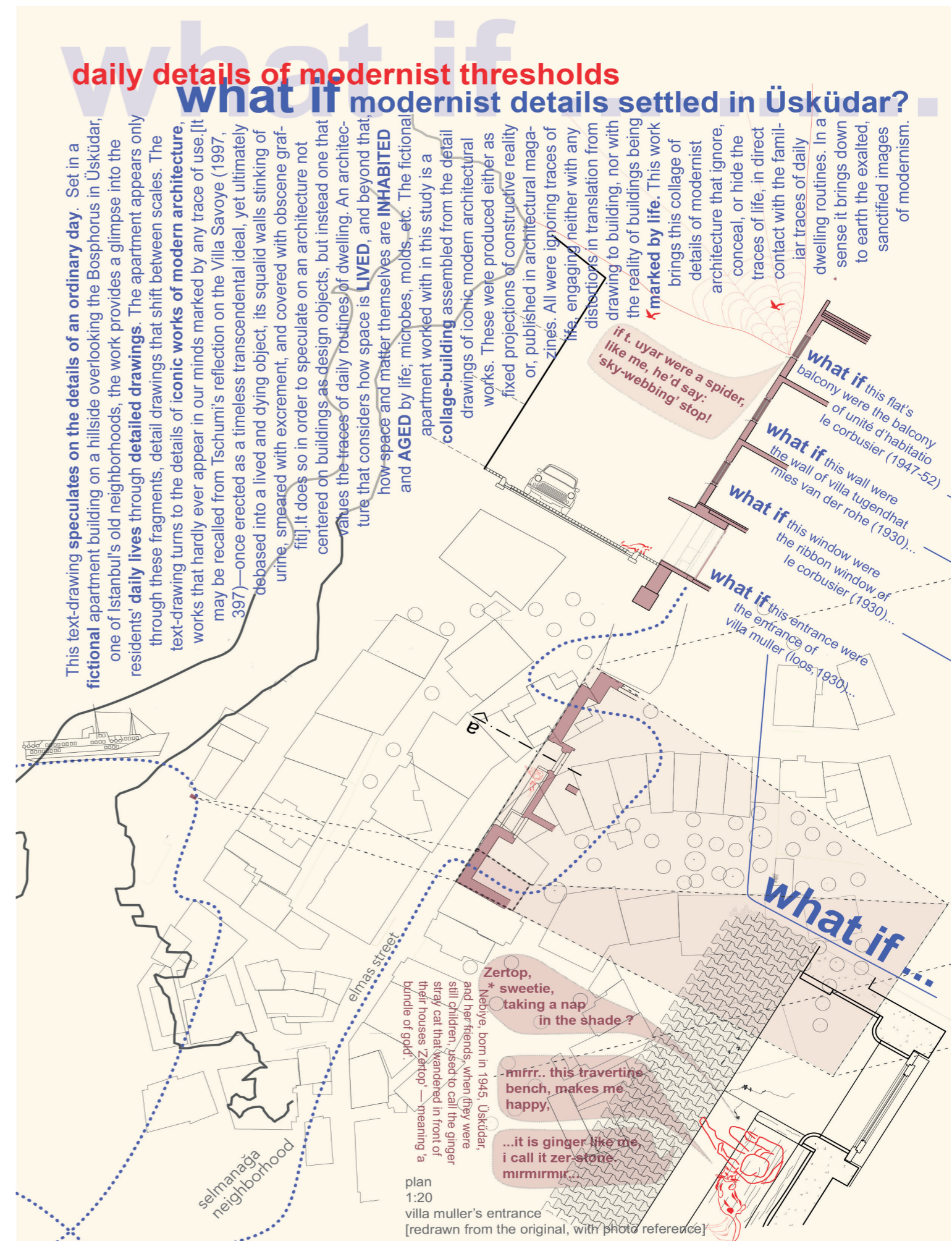
INGOLD, Tim. Foreword. In: STENDER, Claus B.; HAGEN, Aiana L. (Eds.). *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022, pp. xiii-xvii. ISBN 9780367896388.

DORRIAN, Mark. Architecture's Cartographic Turn. In: POUSIN, Frédéric (Ed.). *Figures de la Ville et Construction des Savoirs: Architecture, Urbanisme, Géographie*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005, pp. 61-72. ISBN 9782271062932.

TSCHUMI, Bernard. Architecture and Transgression. In: HAYS, Michael (Ed.). *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture 1973-1984*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. ISBN 9781568981529.

NOTES

1. Tschumi (1997, p. 397) noted the futility of the modernist ideal to break away from traces of life. His reflection on the Villa Savoye (1997, 397)—once erected as a timeless transcendental ideal, yet ultimately debased into a lived and dying object, its squalid walls stinking of urine, smeared with excrement, and covered with obscene graffiti.



Undoubtedly, these details that belong to Loos, Jeanneret, and Mies, did not experience the smooth, unmarked life that had been anticipated. These **frozen, idealized**, or **fixed** projections, unmarked life animals and insects familiar to us. Perhaps revealing the imaginative and provocative nature of the details, **amplify their witnessing of the lives of REAL LIVES** of the details, encountered. As we descend from the scale of the human to smaller scales, the **visibility of life in small nooks** increases. A window detail designed to block the wind, the track of a sliding window so it may become dwelling spaces for spiders, mold, and other living creatures. A crack becomes a path for ants, the gap between paving stones turns into a garden doves, etc.

What if ...

1 Corroded and bird-soiled metal window sill
 2 Dust-accumulated window track
 3 Spider web-covered metal window profile
 4 Bird-blind double glass
 5 Bird-scratched window handle

Even when assumed to be predictable they employed in the search for precision and clarity. Plans, sections, elevations, axonometric projections all present **idealized promises whilst situated within everyday unpredictable details and a narrative structure.** The drawings presented here aim to create a medium conducive to thinking **beyond the material reality of the building, toward the simultaneous existence of human and more than human actors.**

Yes, curtain!... west-facing façade, perfect for Bosphorus sunsets! perfect for boiling!

nom nomm... when the ribbon window's open... say goodbye to peace tiny spider!

peck peck! we, the lovebirds, are here!

tired of hiding under the windowsill... winter's cozy, but "tebdil-i mekânda terahlık vardır" *

they're away on holiday, so I'm here at my sayfiye. * my-seaside-view home...

plan 1:5 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's double-glazed sliding window, manufactured by Sutter & Koller in Basel [redrawn from the original drawing (FLC29855, © FLC)]

in an english cartoon, you could say it like: "change your place, ease your mind." * istanbülites would spend summers at the sayfiye, coastal retreats from the city

how white solidifying the architectural object, architectural representation produce effects, alienation (Dorrian, 2005, 62).

Dorran speaks of how white solidifying the architectural object, architectural representation produce effects, alienation (Dorrian, 2005, 62).

Even when assumed to be predictable they employed in the search for precision and clarity. Plans, sections, elevations, axonometric projections all present idealized promises whilst situated within everyday unpredictable details and a narrative structure. The drawings presented here aim to create a medium conducive to thinking beyond the material reality of the building, toward the simultaneous existence of human and more than human actors.

mirr... my zer-stone bed

The work can be seen as a representation of the environment, predicted lives beyond the that constitute the **multisensory surroundings intervention?** Can architectural representation become a productive site for **anthropological inquiry**? By bringing together human and more-than-human inhabitants, can this generate a **research field suitable for the speculative intervention in life-worlds?**

In Ingold's terms, might this form an **architectural anthropology** which approaches the environment as a living and intervention-ready medium? This study enlists modernist drawings for this purpose.

What if they were part of architectural anthropology?

not my fault! never have I time to say! the steady northeastern wind of Istanbul

neighborhood will mean the downstairs windy day!

zertop! no! it's not a travel balloon!

What a big fat lei!

cc section 1:5 marble wall

1 probable spider residency or a frame for the Bosphorus rain-brewed mold colony
 2 rain-brewed mold colony
 3 cracked tiles with darkened grout lines
 4 a cozy corner for starlings residency
 5 felt-approved window height [redrawn from Edward R. Ford, 2003, MIT Press]

dd section 1:5 marble wall

1 time-carved and footstep-polished marble wall
 2 worn, corroded metal rail
 3 cut and torn linoleum
 4 time-carved plaster

section 1:5 double-glazed sliding window, manufactured by Sutter & Koller in Basel

Works cited

FORD, Edward R. The Details of Modern Architecture — Volume 2: 1928–1988. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003.

INGOLD, Tim. Foreword. In: STENDER, Claus B.; HAGEN, Alana L. (Eds.). Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space. London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022, pp. xiii–xvii. ISBN 9780367896388.

DORRIAN, Mark. Architecture's Cartographic Turn. In: POUSSIN, Frédéric (Ed.). Figures de la Ville et Construction des Savoirs: Architecture, Urbanisme, Géographie. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005, pp. 61–72. ISBN 9782271062932.

TSCHUMI, Bernard. Architecture and Transgression. In: HAYS, Michael (Ed.). Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture 1973–1984. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998. ISBN 9781568981529.