

An investigation on the ground floor uses of 19th-century apartments in Istanbul within the scope of re-functioning: the case of Beyoğlu

Investigação sobre os usos de pisos térreos de apartamentos do século XIX em Istambul no âmbito da reutilização: o caso de Beyoğlu

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Abstract

The transformation of Istanbul's Beyoğlu region began with the 19th-century Westernization movements, resulting in the emergence of apartment buildings as a new architectural style. These buildings significantly influenced urban life, particularly due to the commercial and social activities taking place on their ground floors. However, over time, unconscious interventions and commercial concerns have caused the original qualities of these ground floors to be lost and damage to the historical texture. In this context, this study aims to analyse the ground floor usage of re-functioned buildings in Beyoğlu, focusing on the Botter Apartment and Baudouy Apartment, and evaluating the effects of interventions on the architectural integrity and historical texture. The study reveals that ground floors not only impact the urban fabric but also serve as an interface between historical buildings and public life, emphasizing the significance of preserving the originality and character of architectural heritage.

Resumo

A transformação da região de Beyoğlu, em Istambul, começou com os movimentos de ocidentalização do século XIX, surgindo edifícios com apartamentos, como um novo estilo arquitetónico. Esses edifícios influenciaram significativamente a vida urbana, particularmente devido às atividades comerciais e sociais que ocorriam nos seus pisos térreos. No entanto, com o tempo, intervenções inconscientes e preocupações comerciais fizeram com que as qualidades originais desses pisos térreos fossem perdidas e causassem danos à textura histórica. Neste contexto, tem-se como objetivo analisar a utilização do rés-do-chão de edifícios reabilitados em Beyoğlu, com foco no *Botter Apartment* e no *Baudouy Apartment*, e avaliar os efeitos das intervenções na integridade arquitetónica e na textura histórica. O estudo revela que os rés-do-chão não só têm impacto no tecido urbano, como também servem de interface entre os edifícios históricos e a vida pública, enfatizando a importância de preservar a originalidade e o carácter do património arquitetónico.

KEYWORDS

Re-functioning
Heritage
Apartment
Ground floor
Beyoğlu
Istanbul

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Reabilitação
Património
Apartamento
Rés-do-chão
Beyoğlu
Istambul

Introduction

The refunctioning of architectural heritage is an increasingly popular approach to urban development that involves repurposing existing buildings to meet modern needs while preserving their historical and cultural significance. Reuse, refunctioning, or adaptive reuse implies a change of function of a building whose previous use is now obsolete and therefore is changed to accommodate a new function, with new occupiers with different needs and priorities [1]. Refunctioning of architectural heritage seeks to reach a balance between the conservation of buildings and the need to meet contemporary demands [2]. This approach has been widely adopted in many cities around the world as a way to address the challenges of urbanization, sustainability, and cultural preservation. According to Venice Charter Article 1, the concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development, or a historic event [3]. Therefore, the interventions carried out on a historical building influence its surrounding environment, including the cultural and historical context in which it exists.

The Beyoğlu–Pera region, which is considered within the framework of the study, stands out with its architectural heritage predominantly consisting of nineteenth-century apartment buildings in Istanbul. These structures, influenced by European architectural styles, were originally built to accommodate the increasing foreign population in the Ottoman Empire. They introduced a new residential typology characterized by distinctive massing, common circulation areas, and a design approach that encouraged interaction with the city's social life, thus contributing to a unique urban fabric. Generally, these buildings had five or six floors, with the ground floors mostly used for commercial purposes such as cafes, shops and restaurants. This multifunctional approach played an important role in shaping the social and economic life of the area, as it provided a space for people to gather, socialize, and do business.

Beyoğlu – once a reflection of the bourgeois lifestyle and social patterns of its era – has undergone a significant transformation driven by shifting social, cultural, and economic conditions over time. This change has also manifested itself in daily life and the urban fabric of the area. During this process, some of the apartment buildings have been preserved, some have been demolished and disappeared, and some continued to be used with new functions. The repurposed buildings have generally been transformed into multifunctional programs, including boutique hotels, art galleries, offices, restaurants, and cafes. However, on the ground floors, where commercial functions have been retained, the interventions have yielded controversial results in terms of their impact on architectural integrity. In some cases, alterations – including the removal of original interior details, the installation of oversized storefronts, and the addition of inconsistent elements with the façade – have disrupted the historical character and identity of these structures. These changes not only damage the historic qualities of the buildings but also pose a serious threat to the cultural heritage of the region. On the other hand, there are also buildings that have been designed with a more comprehensive approach, ensuring that their ground floors remain an integral part of the urban space by incorporating various functions. These buildings enhance community interaction and contribute to the lively atmosphere of the area, making them vital to the city's character and historical background.

In this context, this study aims to analyse the use of ground floors in the re-functioned buildings of Beyoğlu, focusing on Botter Apartment and Baudouy Apartment, and to evaluate the effects of the interventions on structural integrity and historical fabric. These buildings were selected for their representative qualities within the nineteenth-century Beyoğlu apartment typology and their reflection of European architectural influences in the late Ottoman period. Both buildings have undergone adaptive reuse, yet exhibit differing degrees of preservation of their original features, enabling a comparative analysis of distinct intervention strategies. In addition, the buildings' location on Istiklal Avenue (formerly Rue de

Pera), a significant social and commercial axis in Beyoğlu, provides a valuable perspective for examining the impact of ground floor transformations on urban life. By focusing on two emblematic cases in Beyoğlu, this article highlights the importance of preserving the authenticity and character of the architectural heritage by revealing that ground floors not only affect the urban fabric, but also function as an interface between historical heritage and public life.

Transformation of Beyoğlu – Pera – region

Nineteenth century to the early republican period

The Pera region, today called Beyoğlu, has created a unique place in Istanbul with the lifestyle brought by its ethnic and cultural structure throughout history [4]. In the nineteenth century, Beyoğlu went through a significant transformation as it became a major cultural, commercial, and entertainment centre of Istanbul [5]. While the old city retained a more traditional structure in terms of buildings and social institutions, the Galata-Pera region faced a remarkable change and growth [6]. This development of the area was mainly due to the growth of foreign communities, including Levantines, Greeks, and Armenians, who settled in the area and established their own institutions and businesses. Pera was also known as an "aristocratic" settlement, with a new way of life that was shaped by the influence of these groups, including notable figures from embassies in the region [7]. Their contributions were pivotal in shaping the distinctive elite culture of the area, influencing its development and evolution over time.

Pera, which was shaped by the tastes of the newly emerging bourgeoisie, was quite different from the old city not only in social terms but also in terms of architecture and therefore physical space [5]. The buildings on and around Grande Rue de Pera (today's Istiklal Avenue) were reflecting a general picture of the values, fashions, and social patterns introduced to the Ottoman capital following the Tanzimat (1839) reforms [8]. The street was not only a centre of commerce and leisure but also a vibrant reflection of the diverse population it served. Along La Grande Rue de Pera, there were different types of buildings representing the modern face of the city, such as embassies, theatres, and hotels [9]. In addition, Rue de Pera had famous shopping arcades such as European Arcade, Hazzopulo Arcade, Alhambra Arcade [7]. The ornamented façades, high ceilings, and grand entrances of these structures were reflecting the neoclassical and eclectic styles that were prevalent in Europe at the time (Figure 1). Also, these buildings shaped the identical architectural composition, which has been one of the important signs of the area's visual qualities [10].

The nineteenth-century also brought new changes to domestic culture in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, apartment buildings, whose spatial organization differed notably from the traditional Ottoman culture of living, came to be seen as symbols of modern life. One of the defining characteristics of residential space in the Ottoman Empire was its protective nature, designed to isolate family life from the outside world and ensure privacy. The door of the house opening to the street was symbolizing the boundary between the outside world and the inside world [12]. For this reason, the Ottoman urban fabric maintained a clear spatial separation between residential areas and commercial activity zones. In contrast, the new apartment buildings in the Pera district integrated residential and commercial functions within the same structure, thereby linking domestic life directly to the public space. On the ground floors of these buildings, the *bonmarchés*, whose commercial activities were based on imported products, displayed foreign-labelled consumer goods in their shop windows. This new form of family life and urban living, embodied at the apartment scale, developed as part of everyday life shaped by the forces of modernization [12]. In the Ottoman Empire, such a combination of residential and commercial uses was not common prior to that time except in buildings constructed by non-Muslim communities. With the 1839 Tanzimat Edict and urban reforms, this new typology began to spread widely in the city [9].



Figure 1. Grand Rue de Pera (today's Istiklal Avenue) at the end of the nineteenth century [11].

The development of the Pera continued under the influence of non-Muslim groups in the late Ottoman period, and this situation shaped the unique architectural character of the region. Then, with the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, a new era began that brought substantial political and administrative changes in the country. The designation of Ankara as the new capital shifted the focus of construction and investment activities away from Istanbul. Therefore, in this period Istanbul lost its former dominance and priority. However, Beyoğlu retained its importance as one of the Istanbul's principal socio-cultural and commercial centres according to other areas. In particular, the Istiklal Avenue represented the “European” face of the young Republic, which aimed to “modernize” through Westernization [13].

Mid-century: from decay to revitalization

Once the cosmopolitan centre of Istanbul, characterized by its vibrant mix of European and Ottoman influences, Beyoğlu experienced a period of decline in the mid-twentieth century. The area lost its privileged status and suffered a significant erosion of its distinctive identity. The embassies moved to Ankara, Turkish replaced French as the language of commerce, the names of streets, businesses, and institutions were changed, and most of the Christian and Jewish population left the area [14]. Furthermore, the start of re-modernization attempts with insufficient planning projects after World War II gave rise to dramatic changes. The urban landscape underwent substantial alterations as a result of the development efforts undertaken during the 1955-1960s, reshaping the architectural and social fabric of the city [7]. The city's historical centres lost much of their importance, and residents moved to the prestigious districts developing in the north and to the new suburbs on the Asian side [15]. This situation led to significant declines in property prices, high vacancy rates, and widespread abandonment in Beyoğlu [16]. Moreover, the Istiklal Avenue – previously called Grande Rue de Pera – was open to vehicle traffic during this period, causing additional challenges. The presence of heavy

traffic increased air pollution and noise, which negatively affected the pedestrian experience and the commercial viability of the area (Figure 2). These factors accelerated the destruction of the area's historic urban fabric and further diminished its status as a socio-cultural and commercial hub. As a result, abandoned buildings, the deterioration of the historic building stock, and socio-cultural degradation have led to the area's loss of its former appeal. All these factors highlighted the need for the area to be revitalized in order to regain its former attraction.

Socio-spatial reconstruction of the area

By the mid-1980s, Beyoğlu had largely lost its urban appeal due to its inability to respond to changing spatial and social dynamics. Economic shifts and changing demographics led to the abandonment of many historic buildings and the emergence of urban decay in the district. Additionally, significant transformations in consumption patterns resulted in new spatial and functional demands within the retail sector. While the need for commercial spaces with flexible usage possibilities increased, the region's narrow parcel structure and height restrictions proved insufficient to meet the demands [19]. As a result, these challenges triggered a series of strategic interventions aimed at addressing Beyoğlu's spatial and functional deficiencies and revitalising its urban fabric.

The 1990s stand out as a period of radical transformation in the physical environment and functional structure of the region. The demolition of nineteenth-century housing stock between 1986 and 1988 resulted in the opening of Tarlabaşı Boulevard, which formed a parallel axis to Istiklal Avenue and began to serve as an alternative route for vehicle traffic [15, 19]. This development was a vital infrastructure move that paved the way for Istiklal Avenue to be closed to vehicle traffic and pedestrianised. Indeed, with the closure of Istiklal Avenue to vehicle traffic in 1990, the avenue gained the identity of a pedestrian axis where public life was revitalised. Later that year, the reopening of the Taksim–Tünel tram line was also an important initiative to revitalize the historical identity of the region. In 1993, after many attempts, the area was declared an urban preserved area [7]. All these developments not only reshaped Istiklal Avenue but also revitalized the surrounding neighbourhoods, establishing it as a vibrant hub for commerce, leisure, and community events in Istanbul (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Istiklal Avenue open to vehicle traffic: a) a festival in 1973 [17]; b) in front of Emek Cinema, 1980s (Ali Öz Archive) [18].



Figure 3. Istiklal Avenue: a) before the pedestrianization (Kemali Söylemezoğlu Archive) [20]; b) after the pedestrianization (Photo: Murat Germen, 2000) [21].

A hybrid urban space: Beyoğlu in the 2000s

The spatial and socio-cultural transformation of Beyoğlu underwent another significant turning point at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This transformation was driven by a combination of urban policies, legal reforms, and socio-economic developments that collectively reshaped the district's fabric and dynamics. In this period, there were two fundamental developments that profoundly influenced this process. The first was the new legal arrangements that facilitated property ownership by foreign nationals, opening the district to a broader investor base. The second was the enactment of the "Renewal and Re-use of Deteriorated Historic Building Stock" in 2005, which granted local authorities greater power to intervene in and regenerate decaying historical neighbourhoods. This legislation provided a legal framework for urban renewal in areas where market forces alone were insufficient or too slow to drive transformation [15]. As a result of these developments, both domestic and international capital played a decisive role in reshaping the area and Istiklal Avenue and its near surrounding rapidly evolved into a multi-functional centre characterized by a concentration of hotels, restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues. This process had particularly dramatic consequences on ground-floors, where commercial functions became increasingly dominant. The radical changes on plan layouts, additional facade coverings and big storefront signs damaged the architectural integrity and character of the buildings. Although the area historically served similar functions, a clear separation has emerged between the intensely commercialized ground floors and the relatively less altered upper levels. This dichotomy has led to disruptions in the visual and spatial continuity of the street.

With capital reclaiming control over the axis, Istiklal Avenue – together with its side streets and surrounding neighbourhoods – has become a prominent showcase where Istanbul's gentrification process can be intensely observed and experienced [13]. This transformation has deeply affected the spatial and cultural character of the district; amid the ever-expanding presence of chain stores, restaurants, hotels and the historic fabric struggling to survive has rendered Istiklal a hybrid urban space (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Istiklal Avenue as a hybrid urban space (former Grand Rue de Pera): *a*) current building fabric along the axis; *b*) commercial ground floors and upper levels; *c*) façade diversity and mixed-use character along the avenue (2024).

Materials and methods

Beyoğlu – Pera region, examined within the framework of this study, has long been one of the city's most significant socio-cultural and commercial areas due to its ground-floor relations stemming from its history. Although this situation continues today, the preservation problems in the historical texture of the region have caused a pronounced loss of identity. Moreover, the new design approaches towards ground floors – often conceived independently of the original architectural character – have created an eclectic situation on the façades, further weakening the architectural and historical continuity of the area. These approaches have highlighted the necessity of design decisions that prioritize the harmonious integration of historical preservation and contemporary development in the region.

According to this, the research focuses on the Botter Apartment and Baudouy Apartment located on Istiklal Avenue, which is an important historical axis of Beyoğlu district. Constructed in the late nineteenth century as mixed-use, these buildings originally housed commercial functions on the ground floors and residential spaces on the upper floors. Over time, both structures have undergone functional transformations and alterations – particularly on their ground floors. Today, through adaptive reuse strategies, they have been reintegrated into the urban fabric with new functions and redefined ground-floor relationships.

The study first outlines the historical evolutions of the Botter Apartment and the Baudouy Apartment within the framework of the urban and architectural transformation of the Beyoğlu-Pera district. In this context, archival sources, historical photographs, and literature on the district's development were consulted. Subsequently, historical maps were compared with current satellite maps to identify changes in parcel patterns and to reveal the evolving spatial relationships of the buildings with their immediate surroundings. To examine the nature of the transformations, former ground-floor plans and façade photographs were compared with their current conditions, providing a general review of the interventions. Then, these data were compiled into tables and visuals, enabling a comparative reading of the spatial configuration and façade articulation of the buildings across different periods.

Results of the study

The findings of this research are presented through two detailed case studies that exemplify different adaptive reuse approaches within the historical context of Beyoğlu-Pera. Both buildings – Botter Apartment and Baudouy Apartment – are located on Istiklal Avenue and share a common origin as mixed-use buildings built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, combining commercial ground floors with residential upper floors. Despite this common typology, the buildings have undergone distinct transformation processes shaped by functional requirements, design approaches, and conservation priorities. The following sections examine each case in detail, exploring their historical background, architectural characteristics, interventions over time, and current roles in the urban fabric.

Botter Apartment: from fashion house to cultural hub

The Botter Apartment was designed by Raimondo D'Aronco on La Grande Rue de Pera (today's Istiklal Avenue) in 1900-1901. The building is regarded as the first example of Art Nouveau architecture in Istanbul. The Botter Apartment derives its name from Jean Botter, a prominent couturier who served as the personal tailor to Sultan Abdülhamid II. The building, which was constructed on a narrow and long parcel and has a street frontage, housed both residential and commercial functions (Figure 5). The concept of combining the two functions is rooted in the European tradition [9]. Built with the advanced construction techniques of its time, the structure features a cast iron frame, brick infill walls, and a stone-clad façade [22]. All these features make the building one of the leading examples of modern architecture of the period.

The Botter Apartment is a seven-story building, encompassing the basement, ground floor, and first floor, which functioned as a fashion house, with the remaining four floors serving as the family's residence. The high-ceilinged ground floor and mezzanine were specifically designed for sales, displays, and workshops. A notable interior feature was the symmetrically positioned curvilinear staircases leading to the mezzanine floor, which provided an elevated platform for fashion shows. The walls were covered with mirrors and textiles, and the windows opening to the light well were decorated with stained glass [22]. Botter's private study area was on the first floor, opening onto a distinct curvilinear balcony that contributed to the façade's architectural uniqueness. The façade of the building was covered with ornaments and embellishments that reflected the most delicate examples of the Art Nouveau style of the period. On the ground level, the prominent fashion house entrance occupied much of the frontage, while a narrower entrance on the right provided access to the residential part. With all these features, the building was one of the notable apartment buildings on Istiklal Avenue.

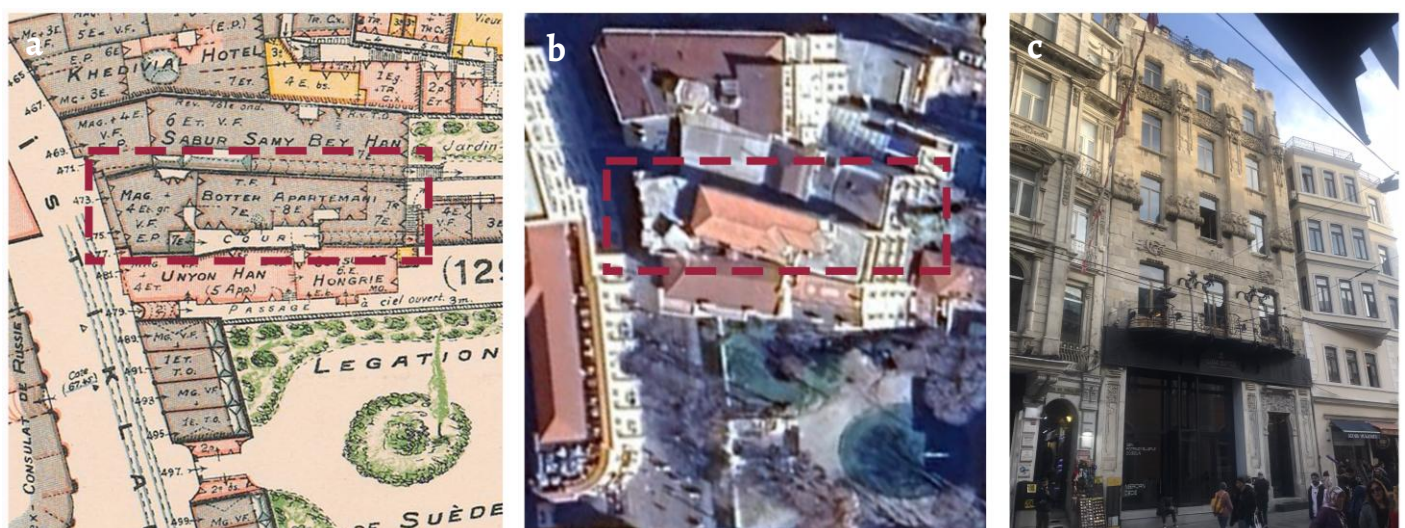


Figure 5. Botter Apartment: a) location on Pervititch map, 1932 (generated by the author from a Pervititch map no.50 accessed via Salt Research Archive) [23]; b) the building and its surroundings in the Google Earth image; c) existing situation of the building, 2024.

“In an era when snobbery was widespread, memoirs of certain authors note that even strolling in front of the Botter Apartment – pretending to have just stepped out – was considered fashionable” [22]. Historical sources indicate that Botter designed garments for many years to the members of the Ottoman court and aristocracy. However, with the decline in interest in the fashion house due to the Balkan Wars and the First World War, the Botter family sold the apartment and moved to Paris [24]. This process was an important breaking point in the history of Botter Apartment. The new owners of the building started to rent the other floors for various commercial purposes, leading to the deterioration of the original features of the building. In 1960, the ground and mezzanine floors were leased to a bank, resulting in significant damage to the façade and interior due to alterations made to accommodate the bank’s functional requirements. The removal of the original curvilinear staircases, once central to fashion shows, represented a significant loss for the building’s architectural identity [25].

Table 1. Interior changes in the Botter Apartment’s ground and mezzanine floors.

Original ground floor plan by Raimondo D’Aronco [26]	Restoration project (2013) ground floor plan [27]	New interventions in 2023

- 1- The staircase located at the back corner of the building that no longer exists today;
- 2- The trace of the new mezzanine floor which is a part of the exhibition area, and the new steel spiral staircase;
- 3- The curvilinear stairs leading to the old mezzanine floor in the original plan, which were demolished by a bank in the 1960s. This part, located near the entrance, now serves as part of the exhibition space.

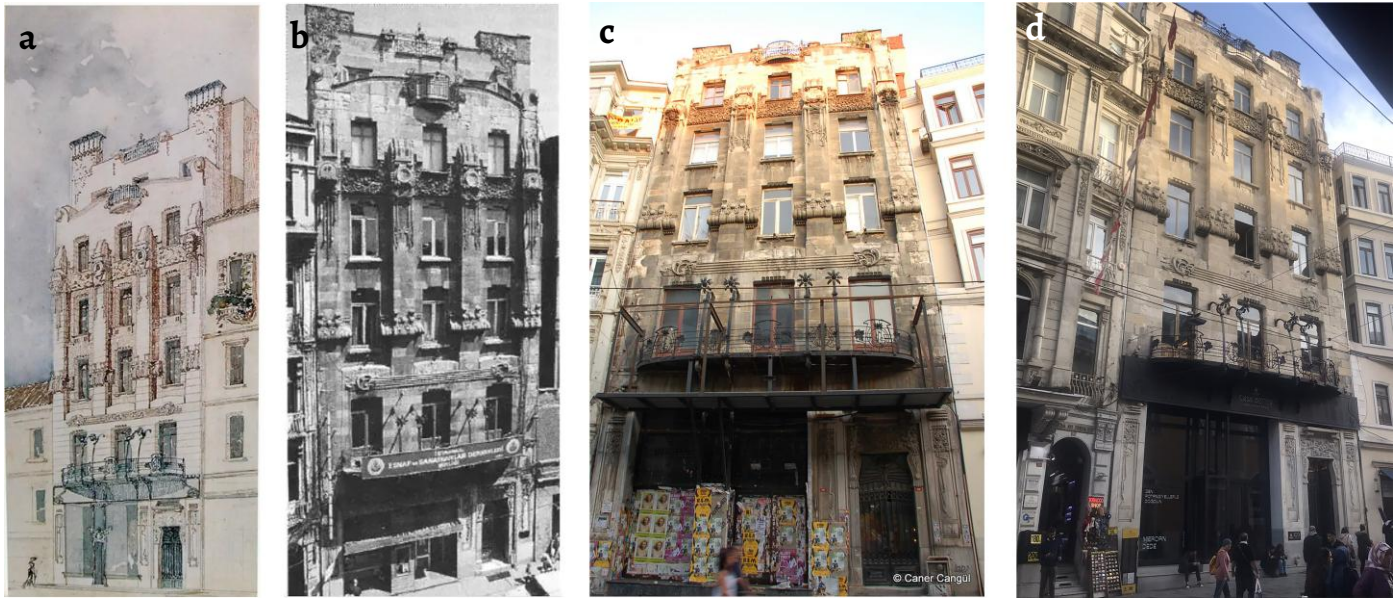


Figure 6. Façade changes of the Botter Apartment: *a)* the fashion house and the facade details (by Raimondo D'Aronco) [9]; *b)* the characteristic balcony was covered by a large sign (unknown date) [22]; *c)* the building has fallen into disrepair (by Caner Cangül, 2008) [28]; *d)* after the restoration process (2024).

For decades, the Botter Apartment accommodated several commercial and residential users. However, due to neglect and structural deterioration over time, it was abandoned. Later, the building's restoration was completed by IBB Miras (IMM Heritage) and reopened in 2023 as the *Casa Botter Art and Design Centre*. Within the adaptive reuse framework, the ground floor and mezzanine – once the main spaces of Botter's fashion house – were transformed into exhibition halls (Table 1). The expansive storefront façade on the ground floor was preserved, reinforcing the visual and spatial dialogue between the interior and the Istiklal Avenue. This allowed passersby to see the activities inside, while also ensuring that visitors inside remained visually connected to the flow of urban life outside. The mezzanine floor, set back further than in the original plan, was connected to the ground floor with a circular steel staircase. The first floor, which was previously the office of Botter, was designed as a common working space open to public use. In addition, the metal balcony, one of the characteristic elements of the building, was restored to its original state and reopened for use. In general, the design approach was not only about preserving the original qualities of these spaces but also strategically integrating the building with the city and citizens.

Considering the watercolour sketch of the façade made by Raimondo D'Aronco, it can be stated that the restoration work was carried out as faithfully as possible to the original situation (Figure 6). In particular, the deteriorations that occurred on the façade due to the use of the ground floor for different functions over time were repaired, and the original Art Nouveau decorations and motifs of the building were brought to the fore again. Restoration works are still ongoing on the other floors of the building. After the process is completed, it is planned to include different activity areas such as a screening centre, documentary film archive centre, conference hall, design workshops and artist offices on the other floors [27].

Baudouy Apartment: from mixed-use heritage to modern museum

Baudouy Apartment was built in 1907 on Istiklal Avenue by a French merchant named Joseph Baudouy. The architect of the building remains unknown. Today, it occupies one of the most vibrant locations along Istiklal Avenue, adjacent to the Deva and Perukâr cul-de-sacs and in close proximity to the Odakule Business Centre (Figure 7). Originally designed as a typical Beyoğlu apartment – with the ground floor designated for commercial functions and the upper floors for residential use – the building comprises five standard floors and a terrace, in addition to the basement and ground floor. The functional separation between the commercial ground

floor and the residential upper floors is also legible from the articulation of the façade. The building was officially registered as a protected monument in 2005.

The building was later acquired by Türkiye İş Bank and with some structural interventions, the ground and first floors served as the Beyoğlu Branch between 1953 and 2016 [30-31]. A 1954 issue of *Arkitekt* – a leading architectural magazine of the period – confirms the building's adaptation into a bank, with the basement, ground, and first floors allocated to banking functions. According to the new planning, the entrance, bank customer hall and managers were located on the ground floor; passive services were located on the upper floor; and the safe deposit box office, treasury and employee services, heating and ventilation were located in the basement. In the building, which was constructed using a combination of reinforced concrete and masonry techniques, the necessary alterations were made possible only through the incorporation of steel supports and beams [32]. From this information it can be deduced that, with the change in function, the building differs significantly from its original layout. In 2008, the Board of Directors of İş Bank decided to transform the building into a museum where the 'İşbank Art Works Collection' would be exhibited. Following a bureaucratic process, the design and construction works started in 2015 were completed in 2023, and the İşbank Painting and Sculpture Museum was opened [31].

In the re-functioning project developed by Teğet Architecture, it was aimed to utilise the potential of different layers of the historical process of the building. Accordingly, the building was organised to meet the technical needs of the contemporary museum while trying to preserve its spatial characteristics, atmosphere, materials, and patina. In this context, the room system along the façade in the original plan of the building was preserved as a shell, while a new multifunctional and technologically equipped core was inserted at the centre (Figure 8). According to this, the services and small spaces in the core area were removed, and only the stairs and the elevator, which were the characteristic elements of the building, were preserved. Structurally, the concrete core also acts as a reinforcement, ensuring the stability and conservation of the protected sections of the building [31]. Moreover, during the simultaneous demolition, preservation, and construction of different parts of the building, hand-carved wall details concealed beneath seven layers of paint were revealed, exposing traces of historical craftsmanship. These details mediate between the restored historical elements and the newly introduced architectural components [31].

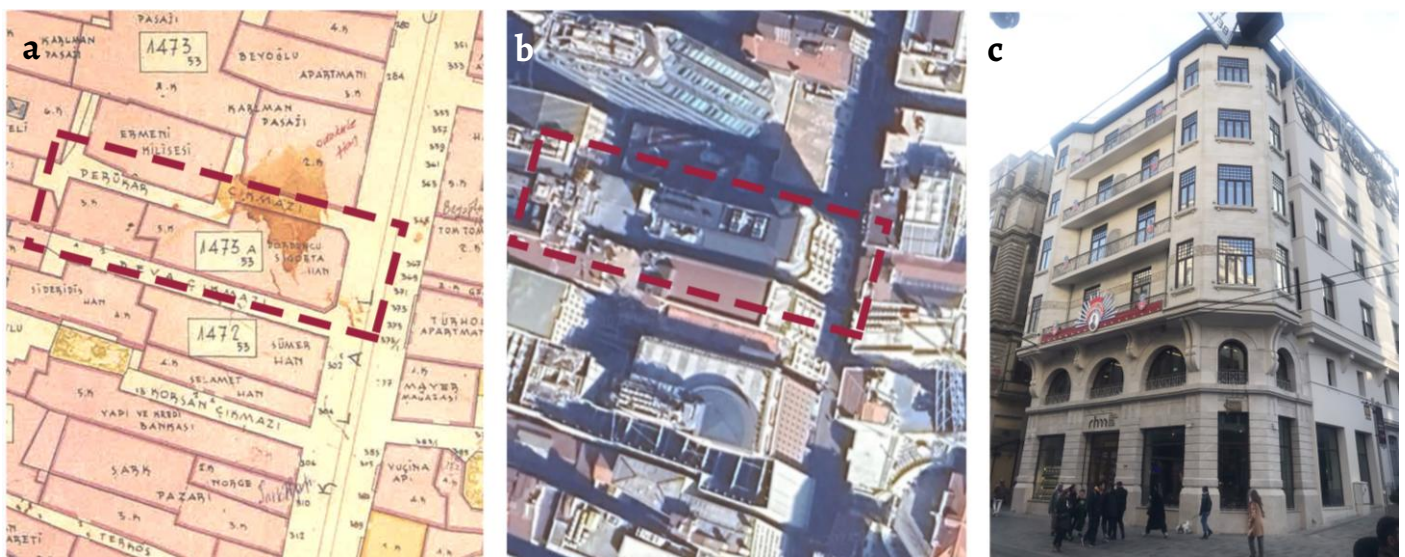


Figure 7. Baudouy Apartment: a) location on Suat Nirven map, 1950 (generated by the author from the Suat Nirven map accessed via Salt Research Archive) [29]; b) the building and its surroundings in the Google Earth image; c) existing situation of the building (2024).

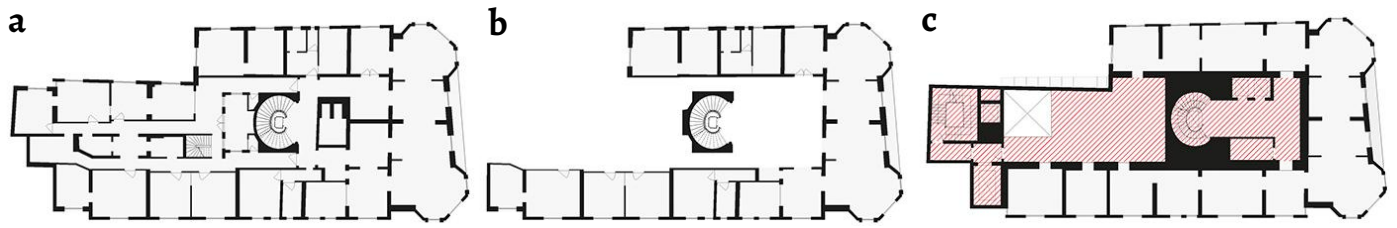


Figure 8. Adaptive reuse strategy of the museum: *a)* existing situation of the plan layout; *b)* protected shell and the staircase of the old building; *c)* new technical core addition (red area) [31].

In the new functional arrangement, the ground floor houses a museum shop, bookstore, cafe, multi-purpose hall, and foyer; the first floor accommodates administrative offices; the second to fifth floors serve as exhibition spaces; and the sixth floor operates as a restaurant. In the new ground floor design, the entrance to the building was positioned on the same axis with the circular historical staircase, and the linear staircase of the bank seen in the old photographs was removed (Table 2). The cafe and bookstore on the ground floor define a new spatiality that allows capturing different views from the street. Therefore, it is possible to say that the ground floor, which was previously used as a store and a bank, has now established a new dialogue with Istiklal Avenue by its socio-cultural functions. In this context, beyond its primary role as a museum, the building actively engages with the public realm through multiple functions, a concept also reflected in the architect's words:

İstiklal's new museum will be a structure completely equipped with cultural and artistic functions, extending across the ground floor and opening onto Odakule Square with its bookstore, art library, multipurpose hall, workshops, and exhibition floors. Beyond being its architect, I am also excited as a follower of arts and culture [33].

Table 2. Interior changes in the Baudouy Apartment ground floor.

Ground floor plan of the bank, 1954 [32]	Photos of the bank [32]	Museum ground floor plan, 2023 [31]	Photos of interventions
<p>1- The area approximately occupied by today's bookstore, cloakroom, and restroom areas. The bank's linear staircase also no longer exists;</p> <p>2- The area where the teller counters were located;</p> <p>3- The former waiting hall, where the entrance is located today.</p>		<p>1- Protected staircase in the core part of the building (the upper level photo was used as the old staircase is visible there);</p> <p>2- The new bookstore area;</p> <p>3- The current cafe area, formerly used as workspaces of the bank.</p>	

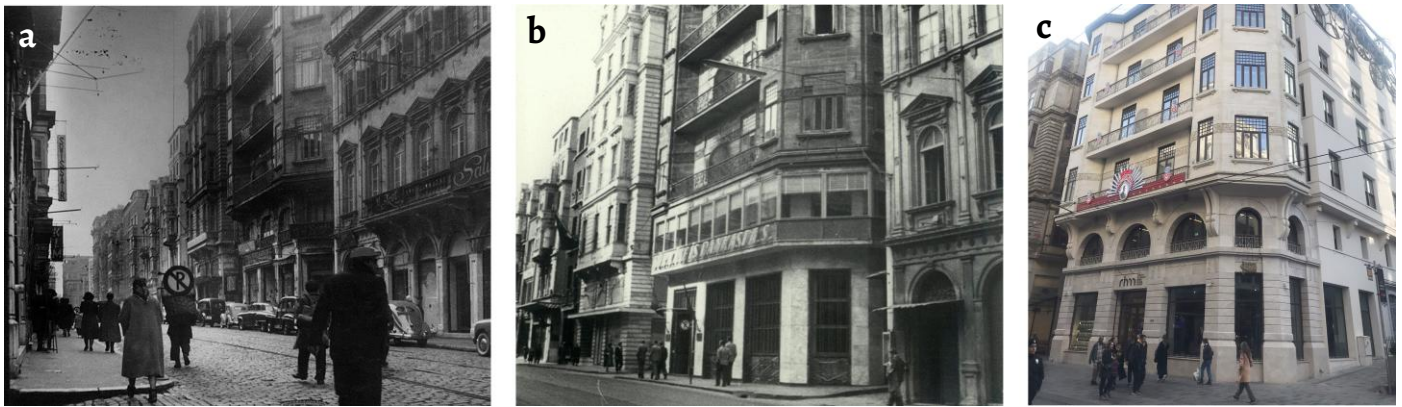


Figure 9. Façade changes of the Baudouy Apartment: *a)* old situation of the façade (unknown date) [31]; *b)* the original façade details were covered by the bank's cladding and name sign (after 1950s) [31]; *c)* İşbank Painting Sculpture Museum façade (2024).

A comparison with the 1950s facade reveals that the arched windows were covered with additional cladding elements and the large sign of the bank (Figure 9). With the restoration, the deteriorated facade was reconstructed according to its original form and the remaining materials, ornaments and patina were preserved. Furthermore, the relocation of the main entrance to align with the staircase–elevator axis created a symmetry in both the façade and the interior organisation. Today, with the recent interventions, the façade has regained much of its original texture and architectural expression.

Conclusion

Adaptive reuse is a vital strategy in the conservation of architectural heritage, enabling buildings to retain their cultural and historical significance while accommodating contemporary needs. This approach plays a crucial role especially in the historic city centres, where the preservation practises are essential for maintaining the area's unique fabric and sense of place. The Beyoğlu-Pera region, which is the focus of this study, has been an important location in Istanbul with its architectural character and urban environment shaped by its multi layered past. In particular, the Istiklal Avenue, the vibrant axis of this region, has always been the focus of attention with its commercial and socio-cultural life. However, over time, the changes in the economic and social structure influenced the region and new consumption habits, tastes and living styles brought about new spatial requirements. Due to new commercial concerns, buildings have been refunctioned with different needs by ignoring their architectural and historical values. Especially, the interventions made on the ground floors, where daily activities take place, have led to structural integrity problems and loss of identity.

The refunctioning practices of Botter Apartment and Baudouy Apartment, examined in this study, were found to be important samples in preserving the historical qualities of the buildings, as well as their ground floor relations and participation in public life. Both buildings, originally designed as mixed-use structures with commercial functions on the ground floors and residential functions on the upper floors, have undergone re-functioning to align with the changing needs of the period. In this process, in addition to the preservation of the architectural characteristics of the buildings, ground floors were designed strategically in order to establish a renewed relationship with the Istiklal Avenue. A comparative analysis of the interventions applied to the buildings revealed that the Botter Apartment preserved its original spatial configuration to a greater extent due to the limited structural intervention resulting from its new flexible programme. On the other hand, the Baudouy Apartment underwent more extensive interior changes due to the technical requirements related to its adaptation to a museum function. In terms of ground floor relationships, both buildings exhibit an open engagement with the street level. In the Botter Apartment, this is achieved through a strong

visual and spatial dialogue between the façade and the exhibition space, while in the Baudouy Apartment, the ground floor has been allocated to socially oriented functions such as a café, bookstore, and multi-purpose spaces, fostering active interaction with the public realm. Overall, both buildings stand out as significant examples, distinguished by their architectural integrity and spatial programs, when compared to other repurposed buildings in the area.

In conclusion, a holistic design approach in the refunctioning of historical buildings is important in terms of preserving architectural integrity and strengthening continuity in the urban fabric. The case studies highlight the importance of context-oriented approaches in adaptive reuse, not only in preserving architectural heritage but also in fostering a dynamic and sustainable urban environment. As this approach continues to develop, adaptive reuse will remain an important conservation strategy that shapes the cultural and social fabric of historic cities and contributes to their transmission to the future.

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