Looking Turk-ish: A Modern Identity Reframed

Northwestern University
Evanston, Illinois
May 31- June 1, 2024

Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program | Buffett Institute for Global Affairs
Northwestern University
CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION

Each year, the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program convenes a conference around a chosen theme. This year’s conference will be dedicated to the role of visual objects and technologies in the making of modern Turkish identity, and it will take place in Northwestern University’s Evanston campus on May 31- June 1, 2024.

The conference aims to engage received understandings of modern Turkish identity by reappraising the images, objects, and visual technologies that contributed—and continue to contribute—to its production. This visual archive represents a dispersed and diverse collection ranging in medium and genre, from lens-based media like photography and film, to cartoons, maps, performances, advertisements, and fashion. The purpose of the conference is to analyze this archive to reframe Turkish identity as a visual artifact indissociable from the technologies and objects that produce it.

The conference is premised on the understanding of “Turkishness” as precarious, protean, and subject to resistance (hence the “-ish” of our title). The articulation of Turkish identity is inseparable from its dialectical emergence alongside other identities such as Armenian, Arab, Kurdish, Bulgarian, Greek, and Jewish, among other religious and ethnic identities of the post-Ottoman Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. These communal identities were directly implicated in the visual formation of hegemonic Turkish identity in Turkey. For Turkish diasporas in Europe, especially after the labor migrations starting with Germany’s Gastarbeiter program in the 1960’s followed by waves of political dissidents in exile, this dialectical relationship was also embedded in the racialized and often hostile context of “host” societies. Accordingly, the conference foregrounds visual culture's unique functions in mediating ethnic and religious differences, as well as its intersections with gender, sexuality, and ability in Turkey and its various diasporic communities.

The visual production of modern Turkish identity is both a historical and ongoing process. As such, the conference takes a wide historical frame, examining technologies and objects dating from the turn of the 20th century to the present. The conference’s focus will be on Turkey, yet like “Turkishness” itself, we conceive of Turkey as a geographically and culturally flexible entity rather than a stable referent or bounded nation state. Because the visual archives of Turkish identity follow several diasporas and migrations, the conference hopes to include images and objects considered historically and geographically marginal to Turkish culture and society.
Day 1, Friday May 31

9.00 - 10.00 AM
Breakfast

10.00 – 10.15 AM
Opening Remarks
İpek Kocaömer Yosmaoğlu, Northwestern University

10.15 - 11.45 AM
Keynote
Zeynep Çelik, Columbia University

11.45 AM – 1.00 PM
Lunch

1.00 - 2.30 PM
Panel I -- Itinerant Cameras, Fixed Poses: Imperial Turk-ishness Before National Belonging
Discussant: Antawan Byrd, Northwestern University
Chair: Arif Camoğlu, New York University, Shanghai
Nora Lessersohn, Harvard University
The Women of Turkey: Ottoman Armenian Images of Turkishness in Nineteenth Century America
Thadeus Dowad, Northwestern University
Blackness & Khedivial Orientalism on the Techno-Hajj: Muhammad Sadiq’s Photographs from Mecca
Hazal Özdemir, Northwestern University/University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Undesirables in the Frame: Enemy Aliens, Expatriation and Redefining Imperial Belonging during World War I
2.30 - 2.45 PM
Coffee Break

2.45 - 4.15 PM
Panel II -- Invented Roots: Art, Architecture, and the Foundations of Republican Turk-ishness

Discussant: Bihter Esener, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor/ Northwestern University
Chair: Ann C. Gunter, Northwestern University
Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University

Inventing The Ancestors: Repurposing The Hittites for A New Turkish Identity
Muna Güvenç, Brandeis University
Architectural Modernity, Nation Building and its Fragments: The People’s House in Diyarbakır
Ceren Verbowski, York University
What Ernst Diez saw: Seeing past ideology in Turkish Art

4.15-4.30 PM
Coffee Break

4.30 - 5.15 PM
Reframing Turkishness through the Global Lens: The Visual Dialogue of Turkish Serials in Southern Europe

Discussant: Esra Çimencioğlu, Northwestern University
Miriam Berg, Northwestern University in Qatar &
Pınar Aslan, Üsküdar University, Istanbul

6.00- 8.00 PM
Dinner
Day 2, Saturday June 1

9.00 - 10.00 AM
Breakfast

10.00 - 11.30 AM
Panel III -- Turk-ish Spaces: Cities, Borders, Landscapes
Discussant: Hollyamber Kennedy, Northwestern University
Chair: Jesús Escobar, Northwestern University
İpek Türeli, McGill University

Construction and Crisis in the City
Kerem Öktem, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

The Visual Archive of Turkey’s Century: Remembering Kemalism from Different Vantage Points
Zeynep Kezer, Newcastle University

Remaking Harput: Between Deracination and Confabulation

11.30 AM-1.00 PM
Lunch

1.00 - 2.30 PM
Panel IV -- Up Against the Wall: Turk-ish Countercultures & their Aesthetics
Discussant: Özge Samancı, Northwestern University
Chair: Oya Topçuoğlu, Northwestern University
Kate Creasey, Brown University

Reframing the Coup d'État of 12 September 1980 as an Ongoing Event: A View from Diyarbakir Prison No. 5 Through the Drawings of Zehra Doğan and Zülîfkar Tak
Kenan Behzat Sharpe, Northwestern University
Hippies, Rockers, Leftists, and Peasants: Anadolu Rock and Countercultural Fashions
Britt Van Paepeghem, University of Minnesota

Registering Turkish Identities in Burhan Doğançay's 'Walls of the World' Photographic Archive
2.30 - 2.45 PM
Coffee Break

2.45 - 4.15 PM
Panel V -- How to be Turk-ish (& How to Hide Behind It): Education, Class, Race
Discussant: Kerem Öktem, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice
Chair: Özge Samancı, Northwestern University
Jülide Etem, The University of Virginia
Projecting Whiteness: Educational Films and the Erasure of Diversity in Modern Turkey
Can Dalyan, College of Charleston
Where We Learned How to Behave on the Beach: ’Military Summer Camps and Middle-Class Leisure in Turkey
İdil Özkan, Northwestern University
Performing Invisibility: Strategies of Protective Passing among Sephardic Jews in Turkey

4.15 - 4.30 PM
Coffee Break

4.30 - 5.30 PM
Evil Eyes Sea Book Conversation
Özge Samancı, Northwestern University

6.00- 9.00 PM
Party