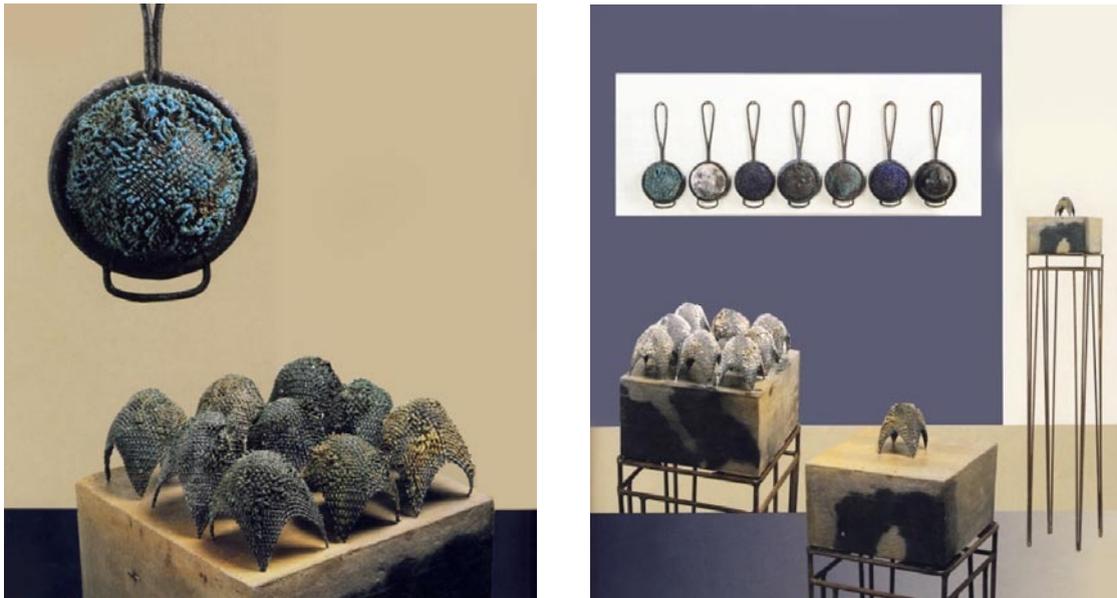


WHEN I CREATE MY WORKS

Mutlu Baskaya (Turkey)

Examining my works going backward, it may be observed that they are conceptual based works mostly comprised of the union of ceramic and mixed media. My approaches in experimental style, which start with intuitive knowledge in the process of capturing a contemporary language of expression, making use of traditional techniques, assist me in discovering the contrast and complementariness between ceramic and different materials. In my forms, from time to time, the random relationships and extraordinary unions of different materials are observed. For example, the material designed to be united with ceramic prior to firing goes into a reaction with ceramic in line with the nature of the material after firing and the form changes in the desired scale. Yet, sometimes, the acquired experience and knowledge may not be sufficient for the same form to come out of the kiln. A change beyond the designed form appears and this coincidental situation is a source of inspiration for new works.

I have never created a work influenced by a work of another artist so far during my creation process. I believe this is somewhat attributable to my being a graduate of Faculty of Fine Arts and the basic art education and philosophy courses I took when I was a student there. Therefore, I can say that I had difficulty in writing this article. Sometimes, social problems we are facing my psychological state, the people and sometimes the objects and materials around me may influence me, becoming a source of inspiration for me.



Picture 1,2 “Strainer of Thought” Mutlu Baskaya, Egyptian paste, Raku and Sagar, 2001

In my applications involving ceramic and mixed materials, I apply Egyptian paste on clay, making use of the carrier property of cage wire mesh or strainer. Hence, going beyond the traditional bead or small figurine dimension of Egyptian paste, I achieved the capability of building very large size sculptures using such wires. Materials used in the compositions in secondary degree have been used with the urge of changing the opinion and perception of the viewer for transforming

an object we use in day-to-day life which we know, into an unknown. For example, a blow torch, basin drain or tea strainer... All these have lost their functions, becoming works of art when fired and raked with Egyptian paste or clay.

Sometimes, these materials and objects may transform into symbols in my works. To explain the points which mixed media work relies upon and which fine artist's style of working I find close to mine, it would help to examine the first specimens in the history of art and the working style of that fine artist.

In the 20th century, richness based on technological potential has affected the power of imagination with art going into a close relationship with technology and inter-disciplinary boundaries have dissolved. Terms like collage, Cubist collage, assemblage, Dada, avand-garde, medium and mixed media which corresponds to mixed materials and/or mixed techniques were set forth and their meanings debated. All these movements or terms involve works of art created using techniques for different materials or different disciplines. First, Pablo Picasso and later Marcel Duchamp have proven that art can be made of any type of material with the works they produced and were able to be accepted. Marcel Duchamp is one of the artists who were part of Dadaism and at the same time, he is included in the historical avand-garde's with his questioning of the basics of Western art in his works. Dadaism has appeared in Zurich which was neutral during World War I in 1916 as a reflection of the reactions formed in fine artists against the cruelty of the war. This movement has formed the basis of surrealism in Paris after the war. Most significant Dadaist artists are Arp, Duchamp, Picabia and Schwitter. Marcel Duchamp has created a large number of mixed media works in this movement. "Mixed Media; is a term used to describe works composed of different media. The use of mixed media began around 1912 with the Cubist collages and constructions of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque and has become widespread as artists developed increasingly open attitudes to the media of art. Essentially, art can be made of anything or any combination of things. Mixed media has started in 1912 with the cubist collages of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque." [1]

According to Bernadac and Bouchet, after the firm discovery of collage allowing the use of any types of materials, first Braque and later Picasso started to produce pasted paper. They tore, pasted and brought together whatever they found like newspapers, painted papers or music partitions. Use of pasted paper on the one hand allowed them to involve color once again in their works and on the other hand, to derive a depth by bringing different surfaces on top of each other. However, after a while, Picasso was not satisfied with the flat surfaces of a painting. He wanted to conquer the real space with its volume. [2]



Picture 3 "Still Life" Picasso, Painted wood and Curtain tassel, 1914

Picture 4 "Goat" Picasso, 1950

The earliest three dimensional assemblage built by Picasso was in 1941. “Starting with 1941, sculpture once again becomes a primary field for Picasso. And there, he once again starts to make some innovations: he starts to bring together rare weird objects he collected from garbage dumps or empty fields, hence a bicycle saddle and a rusty handle bar turn into a quite live bullhead”. [3] In the goat statue made by Picasso again in 1950, a palm leaf forms the back. A swollen belly with a basket made of willow; feet of wood and scrapped iron; an iron tail; goat horns and beard from vine trucks; carton ears, breast bone from a can, tits from two ceramic jugs, a sexual organ from a metal cap folded into two; and an anus appearing by the tip of a metal pipe. All these materials are covered with plaster. Then, the goat cast in bronze”. [4]

Much before the cubist collage of Picasso, even if in a totally different concept, Edgar Degas in 1880, made a wax statue of a model who was a ballet student at Paris opera in true dimensions and put a garment made of real fabric on this statute.

He used a cream color silk for the corset, lace for the tutu, fabrics for slippers and real hair adhered to a ribbon at the same time. When Degas’s wax statute was first exhibited, his contemporaries were in a shock in the face of the unique realism of the peace. [5]

With this work, Degas went into the list of avant-gardes in history.

The works of Picasso have formed the basis of the surrealist objects used by some US artists in New York in mid-1950s, then in early 60s by a group of artists including the new realists in Paris in assemblage applications. As examples of these artists; Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely may be cited. “The term assemblage is the name given to works comprising objects created and sometimes specifically purchased by the artist, of things of totally different properties which may be utilized by the artist as a result of their scavenging and bringing together. The earliest specimen is the still life created by Picasso in 1914. The art created through collection of totally different objects is usually nurtured from the artist and sometimes specifically purchased. Their origins go back to the three dimensional cubist constructions which Picasso started to make starting from 1912. A recent specimen is his own still life made of pieces of wood glued together and painted and the skirt of a tablecloth. Picasso has continued with his assemblage trials at intervals. This is the original of the surrealist objects used intensively by young British fine artists becoming widespread in 1950s and 1960s” [6]

Niki de Saint Phalle’s concern in creating an assemblage is similar to the concerns of the contemporary ceramic fine artist in creating his works using clay and mixed materials or ceramic techniques and techniques of other disciplines collectively. Niki de Saint Phalle, with the aid of his wife Jean Tinguely, picks up surrealist objects and organizes these on top of the found game boards or found materials like game boards or wooden doors he uses as a panel. He disperses between them bags full of paint and made of hard plastic and hangs them on the walls in the empty



Picture 5 “14-year-old Little Dancer”
Edgar Degas, 1879-81

lot behind his home in Paris. Afterwards, he invites the celebrities and artists of the period like Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, asking them to shoot at such assemblages. As the shot hits the bags of paint, the paints run and the assemblage is completed. [7]

In 1963, Niki de Saint Phalle says, “like a narcotic addict, I became a shot addict”, announcing that it was the last time he made this type of an assembly. [8]



Picture 6 “Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely” preparing for assemblage
Picture 7 “Niki de Saint Phalle”



Pictures 8,9 Joint Assemblage created by “Niki de Saint Phalle and Invited Artists” Taking Shots.



Picture 10 Assemblage, “Niki de Saint Phalle”

Picture 11 “La Cathedrale Rouge” Niki de Saint Phalle, 1962, Various objects on paint, plaster, wire mesh and wood.

My own works, my style of working and Niki de Saint Phalle’s Style of Working

My works reflect my sentiments and thoughts. In general, in my forms I create making use of the capabilities of the combination of ceramic and mixed media, I think making social criticisms. As someone always choosing the artistic ceramic over the trade ceramic, the fine artists who influenced me most in terms of his approach to materials and his working style has been Niki de Saint Phalle. When I did research for my Ph.D. thesis, I had toured the retrospective exhibition of the artist in France-Nice, getting the chance to view his videos. Therefore, I have found great proximities with him in terms of our working style. He plans fantastic and exciting natural settings when creating his works. Hence, when his works are completed, they seem like natural phenomena. When creating some of my works like he does, organize and plan beforehand and I want them to have natural looks and be the forms in my imagination when they are completed. The firing techniques I use are also techniques which are open to surprise, which are fictional and supporting this type of thinking of mine. Like raku, sagar, paper kiln and wood firing. In his assemblages he completed with shots, I find great similarities between the assemblages he completed taking shots and my completing my works comprising the combination of ceramic or cage wire mesh or strainers, with raku or other firing techniques. He plans his works in advance and although he may know what color is in which bag when he shoots at the paint filled bags, there is always a surprising result awaiting him. In my works, too, there is a surprising result always awaiting me regardless of how much I control the technique in the ceramic combination of the cage wire or wire when they combine with the raku glaze after composing the fires I want to melt or not in the kiln or after reduction. My knowledge of the ceramic technique, my knowledge of the firing technique, my intuitive knowledge and my sensitivity towards other materials bring me an advantage when creating my works. Another reason why I find my working style similar to Niki de Saint Phalle is that he and I both can use free experimental approaches and like to use any type of material when creating our works. The widespread use of mixed media in plastic arts actually indicates the truth that art may be done with numerous materials or objects. In ceramics, too, which is a branch of

plastic arts, contemporary fine artists’ forcing the means of expression of ceramic reveals the reality that art may be made from the combination of ceramic and mixed materials.



Picture 12 “untitled”, Mutlu Baskaya, Egyptian paste, auxiliary material: cage wire mesh
The “untitled” elliptical form was first fired at 980 C and later emerged and glazed and refired at 1180 C. Third firing was performed at 980 degrees, applying Egyptian paste on metal cage wire mesh.



Picture 13 “Perfumed garden”, Mutlu Baskaya, 2004, Raku, auxiliary material: perfume bottle, chromium nickel wire

“Perfumed garden” is a ceramic piece formed by four casting techniques. After biscuit firing, the piece was raku glazed with perfume bottles containing bent chromium nickel wires were placed in the middle. Then, they were done raku.

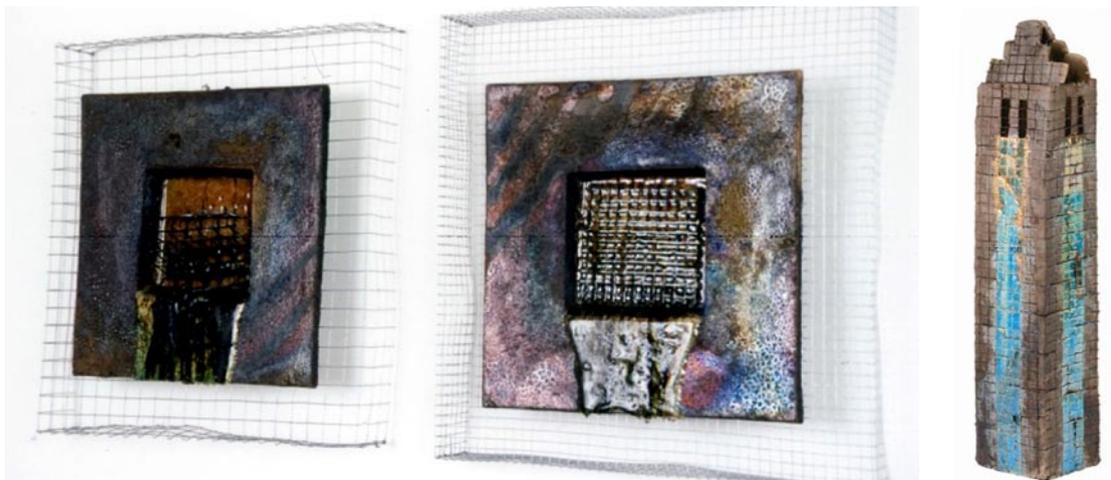


Figure 14 “Freedom” Mutlu Baskaya, 2004, Raku, auxiliary materials: Clay, cage wire mesh and glass
Figure 15 “My chimney” Mutlu Baskaya, 2004, Raku, auxiliary materials: Clay and cage wire mesh.

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PICTURE INDEX

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