

# **MEN RESEMBLE THE PLACE THEY LIVE**

**“...men resemble the place they live  
resemble the water, the soil of that place  
resemble the fish swimming in its water  
the flower pushing its soil  
the smoky proclivity of the mountains and hills...”  
(Edip Cansever, 1974)  
Feyza Ozgundogdu (Turkey)**

I think that the interaction men have with clay bears a secret childish indulgence and impulse towards playing. To me, the experience of playing with clay, building, changing and breaking and reshaping it gives the person the spellbinding taste of discovery. This experience of playing gives the kid that plays with wet clay to his heart's content a taste of discovering and this taste stays with him until his demise. With slime layer that sticks to the fingers and with damp plastic material that gets squashed within the palm, the ‘games’ are played. Be the result a shapeless mass on a table or be it a magnificent statue, the fundamental lies on the same feeling.

I suppose the architectural construction feeds from the experience of creating a game as well. S.E. Rasmussen relates the relationship of man with architectural to his desire of protection and to his necessity of a place that solely belongs to him, which are easily visible in this childhood, in his book Experiencing Architecture: “Man’s relation to implement can be broadly described thus: children begin by playing with blocks, balls and other things which they can grasp in their hands. As time goes on they demand better and better tools. At a certain stage most children have the desire to build some sort of shelter. It may be a real cave dug into a bank, or a primitive hut of rough boards. But often it is no more than a secret nook hidden among bushes, or a tent made with a rug draped over two chairs. This “cave game” can be varied in a thousand ways but common to them all is the enclosing of space for the child’s own use... Man alone forms dwellings which vary according to requirements, climate and cultural pattern. The child’s play is continued in the grown-up’s creation”.

The impulse of sheltering and protection drives men towards creating a special space that belongs solely to him and is a biological and physiological necessity. Games like the kid hiding into a box or a cabinet, creating a unique place by placing the haphazard objects in his environment side by side and putting them on top of one another are what come out of his instinct towards sheltering and protection. Architectural structure is ultimately an area of technique and ability which came to be in the wake of this necessity. For me, the architectural structure is one of a kind game that I played in my childhood and reminds of a world filled with endless possibilities. Placing the objects side by side, one atop another, opening windows, doors, creating connections, placing something within them... creating worlds. No matter the material; creating a fiction with wet sand in beach, with stones, twigs and leaves in garden, with antique objects or boxes at home, with covers and pencils has become a huge enjoyment. Now that I play the same games with my child, I can observe the limitless possibilities being created once again.

After meeting with the art of ceramics, for me these two games became one. Ultimately ceramic was an art of creating a space... and constructing involved the ceramic techniques’ own rules. After

comprehending this, I became aware that I was trying to put forth ‘architectural fictions’. Within this concept, looking at my environment, architectural places and all kinds of construction outputs in terms of regulating the space, measuring the masses became a muse for me in designing ceramic pieces of work.

Lynch talks about creating the image as this: “Environmental images are the result of a bilateral process between the observer and his environment. The environment presents a set of differentiations and relations and the observer picks, regulates and construes what he sees - with great gentleness and in the light of his goals. While the image created as such limits and emphasizes what it sees, it gets tested against the strained conceptual information within the frame of a perpetually interactive process. Thus, the image of a certain fact is perceivable by different observers in different ways.” Sometimes my dream world reconstructs the shadow reflecting from the window of my house to a wall, the style the buildings are situated in a street I have seen for the first time, the open volume of a building being demolished I have seen while driving, a wooden bridge in a village in North Anatolian, the blue skyscraper in Shanghai, the house pueblo in Mexico or adobe city walls of Hattusa of 16 millenniums before. The walls become shaped with clay and my inner space becomes filled with my realities” (Özgündogdu, 2010).

I live in a coast line situated to the north of Turkey. When I first came to this region approximately 15 years ago, I consciously started to use the structures I came across in the research journey I made to towns and villages where the most characteristic examples of the traditional architecture still exists as my point of origin. I chose this as my subject for my master’s degree. As I picked this regional architectonic, one of those ethnographic values which are about to be loss to us, I wanted add to the context a new approach with artistic sensitivity. I had carried their wooden architectural characteristics of most unique properties to my ceramic works of art and had reported this interpretation. Though later on I only studied on technological topics in my doctoral research and applications, I noticed that in these artistic works that I created, the souls of these structures found their most profound places in my ceramics. When I evaluate my works in my individual exhibition in 2014 generally in terms of design, I see that this architectural perspective and interpretation style starting from 15 years ago changed and thrived until today.

Eastern Black Sea Architecture is the work of the socio-cultural society different from the various residential areas of Turkey, the work of the tectonics insofar as the different nature conditions permit and the work of sense of lodgment. Thus the Eastern Black Sea is probably the most characteristic region of the Anatolian Architecture in terms of unique findings, solutions and gained success in the wooden-based tectonics. It is a region of numerous interlinked valleys, steep slopes, high and arduous peaks with their shadows blackening the sky, forests covering each and every corner, waters bellowing at the feet of valleys, smothering and humid weather, rich plant cover, every color and styles of color green. Thus the main building material of the region is timber.

Kuban says: “We, who are aware of the magnificent possibilities of the contemporary technology, are shocked at with how little material all the big structures and with how primitive methods they were built until the 19th century. Another thing as shocking as that is the morphologies achieved with these possibilities.” The diversity of morphologies achieved with the timbers used in the traditional architecture in the Black Sea region is remarkable and literally gives them the stamp ‘a work of art’.

If I were to make a self-assessment of how the geological structure of this region, that said how its traditional architecture finds itself in my ceramic pieces of work, I can say that certain characteristics are main molders. Wooden-framed wall textures, mounting-dismantling aspects of the structures, serender (hórreo) which is a specific type of storehouse, high and arduous peaks,

bridges and see.

My studies are mostly simple prisms. For me, this is the simplest shape of an architectural form. Thus the surfaces of prism structures are the areas that give me the opportunity of analyzing the structure of wall systems. Wooden framed walls of the traditional Black Sea architecture are signified as the relief atop the surfaces of my ceramic works. Building walls are constructed with stiles and girders, and the spaces are filled either with stones or with wood. I prefer composing the wooden packed walls as collages in the surfaces of my works. I take pieces from certain areas of the wooden walls and sometimes create windows in the middle of the rhythmic stiles and sometimes place small boxes in their areas filled with stones. “Niche filling” (stone filling) is the most sophisticated construction technique in the Eastern Black Sea. Apart from it being the structural wall of stone and wood, it also brings to the table a new texture and color aesthetic, a certain sense of modulation and insertion technique, these are very hard to find somewhere else” (Sözen, Eruzun). Together with the partly blackened color effect of wood, these buildings may just be continuing the liveliness of the tree as a part of the nature. Thus in my most studies I try to make the red-brown color characteristic of wood appear as a natural stain.

In the traditional Black Sea architecture, systems that were created with placing the timbers of various thicknesses or rougher los horizontally atop one another are used especially in high uplands where the summer time is spent. In this system, there is no secondary carrier element, wood is both the carrier and the protector against exterior factors just as in the stone or brick loadbearing wall construction. While constructing masonry buildings, nails are mainly not needed thanks to these practical solutions. With this simple plan, the structures gain the ability of being dismantled from somewhere and be remounted at somewhere else. We use the verb install instead of build and the verb dismantle instead of demolish. I am of the idea that this process has a similar side to the game fiction I mentioned above. Thereby in most of my works, the pieces are mobile. Cubes and prismatic structures are installed, dismantled and are reinstallable. Thus a changing composition can be mentioned in these. I prefer regulating the units over and over again based on the need for accommodation or for aesthetics from a different angle.

Serender (Hórreo) has a different importance in terms of construction and aesthetic and with its unique look, is one of the indicators of Eastern Black Sea Architecture. Closed economy of the region forces the usage of serender possessing a cool and natural air conditioning so that the products produced once a year would be preserved until their consumption. Thus in the coastal regions where the raindrop rates are high, there are more serender. Serender has a simple plan, enclosing storage part built atop the feet where the product is preserved and the arbor part stationed at one point around the structure or surrounding it completely. Within its residential composition, serender resembles a small house with its roof, arbor and its plan. But with its solid geometry rising on top of the posts, the examples with which the master builder shows off his talent are perceived as a ‘unique form’ within the general texture. This unique model takes place as a special motif along with architectural harmony in my work; a cubic structure standing atop simple feet. Because I rather have its interior be shown, placing a small window and looking into it would be my choice. Here you enter a small chamber. Sometimes a family welcomes you, sometimes the light oozing out of the window if no one is home.

This geographical area is where the mountains and hills with peaks and steep slopes take place. Therefore houses are built on top of these steep slopes. When you look above to take a look at the houses, you cannot help but ask yourself: How did they go up there and build houses? The people of this region adapted themselves to the harsh geographical conditions and shaped their each and every production and life style accordingly. They are powerful and determined. In my prismatic structures where I tried to capture this feeling, I tried to make use of the sense of height. Because the porcelain structure becomes deformed in the firing, these prisms are ever so little

inclined towards a direction. This supports the sense of steep slopes reachable by climbing that I wanted to capture. Also, I prefer using the static view of the architectural texture collages or stone filling walls in the surfaces.

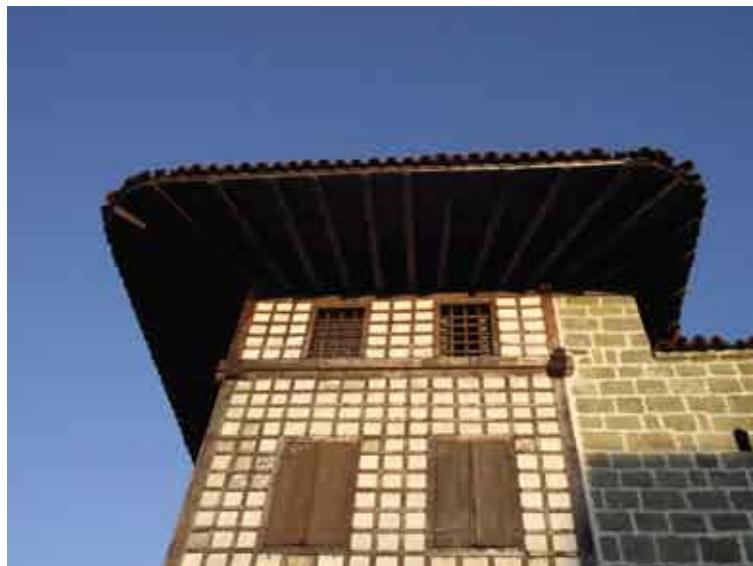
There is an adjective we use for the people of Black Sea: "Hirçin" (Meaning ill-tempered). With the Prussian blue color of Black Sea, with its ups and downs, it is unpredictable. Be it summer or winter, it is as if it is singing a ballad of freedom with its wavy sea noise. Especially when the ill-tempered waves hit the shores in winters, the rocks act as though they give in against its power. In summer, this sea is actually calm despite the ever so blowing wind and you fade away to the sky in this tempered sea surface. Suddenly it starts to temper and shocks everyone. The ballads of this region always mention this sea, but mostly through complaint. Black Sea participates in my works with its color and waves. In my porcelain works cobalt is the color of the sea. So that its voice would be heard somewhere between the architectural texture collages, I prefer using the waves. Some of my works are portrayed with temper. Light beams of the sun are signified as white lines in curl. In some other ones, the waves get tempered in the surface of the Prussian blue sea.

In my own work, with my own way of interpreting, I try to represent the data that I had found by following the trail of the ancient ruins of a time where the nature was the one to be harmonized



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