

## From Antiquity to Modernity

Hülya VURNAL İKİZGÜL\*

It is not possible to mention my art without mentioning important exhibitions which have made possible the transition from antique mosaics to contemporary mosaics in Turkey. This is important in the name of determining where I stand in the historical progression. The important exhibitions opened during these time periods have elevated the art of mosaic from the antique value to contemporary merit. These exhibitions have been an obstacle to the death of this significant art and have formed the background that made it possible to continue into contemporary works of art while standing firmly on the past.

How does something which belongs in the past go on to the future? With the exception of the mosaics and frescoes which reflect the restrained and religious level of the middle ages, the issue of the resolution of the subjects of architecture and art in their entirety was in the beginning, fragmented and in a state of confusion in the western countries and Turkey. In the end, the developmental process was realized with the Bauhaus School. This school, founded in 1919 and aiming to join fine arts and architecture, re-opened the doors to mosaic, which gives pictures an extended life.

During the initial periods of the republic in Turkey, with the orders of Atatürk the government's sensitivity to art was increased. Historical works were first restored during this period and the first archeological digs were made. This way, the many valuable mosaics which were brought to light influenced a great many artists. By way of these artists, the art of mosaic could get out of the frame of antiquity and began to be respected once again by people who valued this art. While wall pictures were not thought of during this period, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu emerges during this time. His pioneering during this time and the ground he set up for us artists is significant.

The first Ravenna mosaic exhibition, which was prepared by the Italian Culture Board and our Ministry of Education, was opened in 1961 in Hagia Irene. The mosaics in Istanbul were destroyed by design breaker "Iconoclasts". Because opposition to depiction didn't affect Italy all the mosaic designs from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. were saved. This first exhibition of Ravenna mosaics brought the East Roman "Byzantine" Empire's western golden age to the door of our 1960 artists. Staying faithful to the rules of antique works, one copy was made of each work by the Ravenna students. In 1971 in the Picture Sculpture Museum the modern mosaic exhibition was opened this time again by the Italians. These modernized works which were made with the influence of the antique works have enriched the thoughts and imaginations of our artists on this subject. This exhibition which was the foundation of contemporary mosaic picture art, has displayed the mastery of mosaic technique, the artist working in a creative manner.

In 1956, Eren and Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu made two giant mosaic panels for the Etibank Executive building in Ankara. They displayed these panels in the Maya Art Gallery in Istanbul. Although these panels were presented to the viewer before assembly, they are important for being the first mosaic exhibition by a Turkish artist after the mosaic exhibitions we mentioned before. After these exhibitions, the artists of that period got the opportunity to make mosaic panels in architecture between the years 1956-1970. Our artists re-handled the art of mosaic by giving old techniques new forms. Entering the contemporary architecture, they proved the necessity of the complementary nature of the building and work of art by way of colorful mosaic paintings which were put on dead walls.

After 1956, we come across a personal mosaic exhibition opened in 1992 in the Hagia Sophia by Hülya Vurnal İkizgül (me). In this exhibition, there were mosaic pictures and mosaic sculptures of big dimensions. These were totally detached from architecture. With these works, which were not made for a work of architecture, the art of mosaic proclaimed its individuality and independence. This destroyed the taboo "the art of mosaic is a whole with architecture". Being detached from architecture and having big dimensions, these works of art, some of which had

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\* Mosaic Artist Hülya Vurnal İkizgül. E-mail: [www.hulyaikizgul.com](http://www.hulyaikizgul.com) [mozaik@hulyaikizgul.com](mailto:mozaik@hulyaikizgul.com)



Figure 1  
Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu. Detail from  
the mosaic panel for which the artist  
was awarded gold medal in Brussels.

Figure 2  
Four Seasons Hotel 1996.  
Hülya Vurnal İkizgül.

Figure 3  
Marseille İstre Archeology  
Museum in France. Hülya Vurnal  
İkizgül's mosaic exhibition 1994.

Figure 4  
Vakko Art Gallery.  
Vitali Hakko Collection. Hülya  
Vurnal İkizgül 1996.





Figure 5  
Topkapi Museum Darphane-i Amire.  
Sculpture 190cm. Hülya Vurnal  
İkizgül's mosaic exhibition 2002.

moving parts despite their heavy weight surprised people. This exhibition which not only had artistic value but also an important place in the historical process was also displayed for one and a half month period in the Istre Archeological Museum in Marseille in 1994 by special invitation from the French government. After this exhibition, there have been many exhibitions in many museums and galleries. The exhibition has pioneered many artists.

The art of mosaic has been considered very important in archeology and art history. Nonetheless, it is a less preferred branch of art due to the thought that it can't catch up with the speed of today's modern art. This is due to the fact that there exists a conceptual confusion. Art? Craft? Usually the value of art is known; nevertheless there exists worry of craft. However, creativity makes itself obvious in the choice of the materials. Every artist chooses the material which is closest to his or her artistic creativity and constructs his or her work of art. The importance of the manual skill in the use of the material and the technical knowledge should be acknowledged without raising concerns about craft.

A mosaic artist is impatiently toils to reach his or her goal by using small and large stones. It is not easy for him or her to get the same dynamic effect of the color or stain obtained with the stroke of a brush and paint. This required level of patience can only be formed by discipline and a love of art. I chose the material which was most suitable for my design within today's possible variety of artistic expression. I believe that the material I have chosen is very special. With their natural colors, the sea and mountain stones that I have used have found their places in my work of art. Every single piece of stone that has formed my work of art has found its place by way of specific accumulated knowledge, chance occurrences of lines and stains have not been allowed to exist. They have become the self of the emotions and thoughts loaded on them. For the art of mosaic to keep pace with today's art and catch up with its speed, its difficult technique should be made more practical and it should be detached from architecture and enter the art galleries as an individual art. I believe that only in this way can it obtain the place it deserves in Contemporary Art.

In Turkish picture art Mosaic is a branch of art which has been perceived very superficially and which has been unable to escape from its historical context. For centuries and even today it has existed in connection with architecture. To take the art of mosaic which has never been thought of being separate from architecture, modernize it, and bring it to the art galleries in accordance with the needs of the epoch was something which was not heard of in Turkey, even though it has been done in the rest of the world. I took the mosaic picture art and undressed it of its classical technique. Then, I dressed it up with new techniques which would help it adapt to today's modern art. Despite its difficult technique



Figure 6  
G-Art Art Gallery. Hülya Vurnal  
İkizgül mosaic exhibition 2007.





Figure 7  
Istanbul Modern Art Gallery.  
Hülya Vurnal İkizgül's mosaic  
exhibition 2008.



Figure 8  
Hülya Vurnal İkizgül's  
Art Workshop.

and structure I made it more practical and introduced it to modern art galleries. What I have accomplished is to make it gain independence within the freedom of my artistic method.

Thinking that he gave the picture an extended life Bedri Rahmi applied mosaic technique and picture to architecture. On the other hand, I with the thought that the mosaic technique is a picture technique, am an artist who has defended that the mosaic technique should exit architecture and keep pace with today's plastic arts. In the 1960's Bedri Rahmi had pioneered a first with his artistic manner in line with the conditions of his period. As necessitated by the conditions of today's period I pioneered a first. Continuously changing conditions of times and the necessities they bring shape an artist's creativity in this way.

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