

Interview with Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal About Art

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk¹

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: Dear Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal, I am a graduate student at Atatürk University, Institute of Fine Arts, Department of Sculpture. My advisor is Prof. Dr. Mustafa Bulat. It is an honor for me to meet a valuable artist and scientist like you who have made important contributions to the field. In this interview where we will talk about your personality and your art, first of all, I would like you to introduce yourself.



Image 1. Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: I am also glad to have met you. I was born in 1943 in Istanbul. I took Painting and Art History lessons from Hikmet Kayhan at Ankara Girls' High School. Drawing lessons from Eşref Üren in Ankara between 1971-1972. Between 1973-1979, he worked as a professor at the Sculpture Department of the Istanbul State Academy of Fine Arts. Even though I chose Şadi Çalık workshop –due to the Rotation System decision they took later-I studied alternately at Hüseyin Gezer Workshop and graduated. In 1977, at the Austria-Salzburg Internationale Sommeracademie Für Bildende Kunst, I studied sculpture with the Italian sculptor Prof. Francesco Somaini. In 1982 at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux-Arts in Paris I studied morphology with Prof. François Debord and I studied independent sculpture with Etienne Martin. In 1992, in Italy-Como Corso Superiore Di Disegno, I worked pattern with Marcus Lupertz, Gerar Titus Carmel and Giuliano Collina. By working in the administrative staff along with the faculty member I retired from the

Department of Sculpture at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 2006, and I retired from the Visual Arts Department of FMV Işık University, where I have been working between 2007-2022.

I held two solo exhibitions abroad, in France-Paris-Maison Mansard and Greece-Thessaloniki-Teloglion galleries. Urart, CAM Mine Art, Ak Art and İşbank Kibele Art Gallery, including Retrospective, I opened 16 personal exhibitions in Turkey. 46th State Painting-Sculpture, Eczacıbaşı 50th Anniversary Monumental Art Competition, Sedat Simavi Visual Arts, Contemporary Art Works Placement in Open Spaces Contemporary Sculpture Competition, Ankara Art Institution Sculpture Branch Artist of the Year, Art Magazine Respect for Labor, UPSD of the Year There were evaluations such as the Artist Honor Award. I have works in Poland Lotz, Istanbul Modern, BAKSI, Istanbul and Ankara Painting and Sculpture Museums, BOZLU, Benetton Imago Mundi, Trakya University İlhan Koman, IMOGA and Eskişehir Anadolu, Kocaeli, Erzurum, Hacettepe Universities Museums and private collections. In public areas; I have works such as on top of Beşiktaş-Yıldız-Abbasağa Park, "Peace to All" Statue, Antalya-Muratpaşa Municipality Palmiye Park "Al Writing Monument", "Time in Kadıköy" in Istanbul

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Moda, "İstanbul" at the entrance of İstanbul Special Provincial Administration, Sabancı University Cultural Center "Ancestor Memorial Wall" in.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, we observe that you have a very colorful life.*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: I was born into a civil servant family. Most of my relatives were teachers. But at the same time, their hands were very handy for fine work. The kind that tricks the neighbors by putting the flowers that my grandmother's sister made with crochet in a flower pot in the house where she was a guest secretly and saying, "The flower has bloomed". My great aunt was a French language teacher, but she had a good knowledge of the arts and was supportive. My little aunt was a literature teacher. My brothers and nephews chose professions such as writing, photography, archeology. My family is such a family. Although they are inclined towards art, there is no painter or sculptor among them. I am the only one among them who chose to be an artist.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, what do you think is art? Who is the artist? What are the artist's mission and responsibilities?*



Image 2. Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: Every artist can describe art in her/his own way. For me, everything that a person does is culture, and art is a part of it. People that looking at can also describe art differently. Art is the feeling of looking at, touching and hearing a work with the accumulation of memory inevitably. What comes to our eyes, hearts, minds from that thing that has been accomplished. In other words, it is the idea, pleasure, sadness, desire, hatred, excitement that turns that thing into art. The artist, on the other hand, is the person who does this instinctively. Yes, it is a form of self-expression, but in essence, an artist is a person who sees the invisible, shows, thinks with analogy, and can create metaphors. It is not possible to become an artist in a planned way by saying that I will do this. Everyone has their own language. This language feeds on the world view. Depending on that point of view, form, theme, material, and the way it works are formed. We call art to express a shape, a feeling or a suggestion in a unique language, with form, color, sound, movement, installation. Here the art of sculpture differs from any act of making because of its material effect. However, today, production in the digital environment is also in question, even interdisciplinary or

interactive. We cannot ignore any of them. Each can be art.

I would like to take this opportunity to touch on the relationship between the artist and his work. A work that is presented to the public with the consent of the right owner is considered a public work. According to the Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works No. 5846 on Fine Arts. When you come up with something, you are the first to do it, now it is your work. In my opinion, it is necessary to forbid any changes to this work. No additions or other changes can be made in the work, in the place of the work (unless there is a public interest) or in the name of the owner of the work, without the permission of the owner of the work. Article 71 of the Law No. 5846 states that "A work, performance, phonogram or production that processes, represents, reproduces, changes, distributes, transmits to the public by means of any kind of sign, sound or image transmission, publishes or violates the law. A person who offers for sale, sells, leases or lends or otherwise disseminates, purchases for commercial purposes, imports or exports, holds or stores works that are processed or reproduced for use other than for personal use, shall be imprisoned from one year to five years, or Judicial fine will be imposed".

The work exists with its context. The artist does not do it by saying 'let me do something like this' while putting out a work. The artist has many physical and contextual concerns related to the space, such as the size of the object he puts, viewpoints, relation to other objects, height above eye level. Therefore, it is necessary to respect the work of art.



Image 3. Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal, "Herkese Barış" (Peace for Everyone), 2002, 220x1000x1000cm

So what are the artist's obligations? Let's look at it from the artist's point of view. The obligation of the artist, especially the sculptor, is not like in the cinema or in the caricature. Our obligations are slightly different. It is our obligation as much as the conscientious obligation of someone who has social concerns. Neither more nor less. The people living in this world have as many responsibilities to the world, geography and social issues. However, our output must be from our own essence. The world we are is what we are. Everything that belongs to us expresses this world, this country. You're writing an autobiographical book and you're the one you're describing, but you're not the only one. Everyone who lived in those days, in that geography, in that economy, in those conditions. This is the artist's responsibility.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Thank you dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, as one of the Republican Period artists, you have made important contributions to the field. In this context, what do you try to convey in your works?*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: It's all about my life. Yes. For me, sculpture is dealing with a theme, a situation, with concerns about space, that is, space and volume. Whatever hurts me, whatever I want to shout and share in the aforementioned date, emerges in three dimensions.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, what processes do you use to create your works? What would be your advice to our young friends in this regard?*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: I don't really want to recommend anything to anyone. To create a work, there must first be a reason. Going to the workshop like a civil servant and asking 'What should I do today?' I'm not asking myself. Something happens, I see something, I experience an event, I read. That's how the issue comes up. I work after that. I have to do a lot of research before applying. Research on the subject, the place where it will be placed (space), the memory of the place. Even if there is a gallery, answers to questions such as where does it stand, how should it stand, what size should it be? All this

needs to be investigated. After that, I decide on the material that the subject requires. Then I start drawing. Does the material to be used comply with this subject?

At the New Trends Exhibition, a friend of mine fell and hit his head on the steps because of the hard-to-see wire stretched to the ground. Luckily it was cheap. Our job should be to care about not harming people. There is a difference between the work you will put in front of a primary school and the work you will display indoors in a gallery. In an exhibition of Jeff Koons in Paris, some of the artist's works were placed in a closed volume so that children under the age of 17 could also visit the exhibition, and there was an attendant in front of him. Perceptions of all ages are not the same. This is not censorship, it is protecting them from untimely information and misinterpretations. In short, before you can be an artist, you have to be human.

When I think about what I can say to young friends, I can suggest not to chase after other artists first. It is not possible to feed on others. They must feed on their own essence. Because no one knows what they are going to tell better than themselves. While working at A. Rodin's Atelier, C. Brancusi leaves in a short time and says, 'Not even clover grows under the great plane trees'.



Image 4. Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal, "Alyazma Anıtı" (Altarpiece Monument), 2012

'Inspiration' and learning are different case here. For example, they say to Michelangelo 'Hellenistic tors has been found'. He thinks he must go and see her. He goes and sees it right away. Broken marble Belvedere torso, stripped of all its details. This sprained body part has a great inner dynamism and surface tension. The artist observes the principle he discovered in his future works. Inspiration should not be confused with following someone else. Another suggestion is not to get caught up in the trendy in order to be contemporary. "Now that trend in sculpture" is what I fear most. There is no need for our students to worry like this. It's important to be sincere. Let's take 1937 Nazi Germany, for example. There, J. Goebbels, Hitler's minister of strategy and propoganda, tries to impose his policy on society through art. He rejects abstract art, modernism, expressionism, and even collects and tears such paintings. It disbands the juries who choose them. It almost turns art into a weapon of politics. What

does it suggest? He proposes the making of statues with Aryan images², namely statues of handsome Siegfried. It organizes exhibitions under the name of German degenerate art (*Entartete Kunst*) and tries to humiliate artists who do not do what they want. He tries to stylistically lock the artist's creativity. What happened then? Now we know all those artists. All in museums. The propaganda art of that period, which we call guided art, is long gone. In other words, being human first, being respectful to the world, humanity and nature, but also being open to development is a good start for an artist candidate. I recommend not to be afraid to experiment, of course, to travel a lot, read a lot, be equipped, and keep the pulse of social life. There are positive or negative events in life that will provoke you, shake you up. You have to see them and experience them. Artists are influenced by every new material and technique they see. There is nothing wrong with this try. But I should also state that roughness may



Image 5. Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal, “Kadıköy’de Zaman” (Time in Kadıköy), 2013

arise as a result of attempting these without learning the basic principles of art.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, I have one more question. How would you view the art of sculpture from the 1980s to the 2000s in our country? What conclusion do you draw when you evaluate our day?*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: It would be more appropriate to ask this question to my art historian friends. It should be considered contextually. What is the World, possibilities, material at that time. We see the tools of visualization of art evolve. Now, digital art is easier for young people and they like it. Practices that gave little credit to mastery began to appear. Art is always in flux. Once upon a time, in the 1990s, there was a bickering between figures and abstractions. It was a pointless fight. Some artists have been troubled by this. Then the stones fell into place. Let me leave the rest to my art historian friends.

² The master race (Ger. die Herrenrasse), it is a created concept from the Scandinavian race in Nazi thought -It erupted at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It is called the Aryan Race. He asserts the idea of the Pure Race, and in the Nazi thought the Scandinavian Race lived on the plains of northern Germany in the 5th millennium BC. It is a race that is believed to have lived and described as the purest race by some racist people called Proto-Aryans.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, what would you like to say to young sculpture artists about your profession? What advice would you give them?*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: First of all, it is important to be yourself, to know yourself. As we read on the pediment of the Temple of Apollo, 'Know Yourself' So, 'What is the meaning of my existence as an artist in this world?' he should begin to question so that the young person can gain a perspective in one way or another from where no one sees it. Getting an award is not the goal, either. Art is something that we will be happy to do and enjoy. On the other hand, I always suggest researching, seeing and learning. The longer they live, the more they learn. I think that the more they get to know the world, their own country, past art movements, crafts, historical sites, geography and people, the richer they become.

Gülümser Beyaztaş Özlütürk: *Dear Prof. Dr. Hızal, thank you very much for this nice interview.*

Prof. Dr. Meriç Hızal: Talking about art with you was meaningful and nice for me too. Thank you.