



A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PORTRAIT WORKS ON CERAMIC SURFACES

SERAMİK YÜZEYLERDE PORTRÉ ÇALIŞMALARINA GENEL BİR BAKIŞ

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Abstract

Throughout history, the primary purpose of ceramic production has been to meet human needs. However, ceramics have also emerged as a means of expression, like developments in painting and sculpture. We frequently see portraits of important figures in ceramic works, just as we do in coins, paintings, and sculptures. While the evolution of portraiture has been conveyed throughout history, the perspectives of ceramic artists on portraiture have gained significant importance in recent times. Portraits have been used to capture an individual's inner journey, as well as to draw attention to political or war-related issues. Technological advancements have enabled technical and decorative innovations in the design process. Furthermore, artists' unique production methods, facilitated by technology, have contributed to this diversity. In addition to printing techniques, scraping, and traditional methods, numerous unique production methods are being employed. The variety of techniques used is constantly expanding, incorporating computer-aided digital applications and traditional decoration methods. Photocopy transfer, mono print, sgraffito, serigraphy, and many other techniques are among those used in these productions. The use of portraits on ceramic surfaces allows for the integration of human expressions, with a focus on conveying emotions through the portraiture. This article serves as a reference document for the works of eleven contemporary Turkish ceramic artists who interpret portraiture, aiming to contribute to the generation of new ideas and perspectives. The artists' works were analyzed through individual interviews or interpretations from their exhibition manifestos.

Keywords: Ceramics, Portraiture In Ceramics, Portraiture, Decoration In Ceramics, Contemporary Art.

Öz

Seramik, insanların ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak üzerine ortaya çıkmış, yıllar içerisinde kültürlerin gelişimi ile özgün bir anlatımı ortaya koymaktadır. Resim, heykel gibi sanatın diğer dallarındaki gelişmeler seramik sanatında da olmuştur. Önemli kişilerin para, resim “ve” heykellerde gördüğümüz portrelerini seramik eserlerde de çokça görmekteyiz. Bu çalışmada günümüze kadar gelen portre kavramı süreci aktarılırken, seramik sanatçıların bakış açıları da önemli bir yere sahiptir. Kimi zaman içsel bir yolculuk, kimi zaman da siyasi ya da savaş etkenleri ile sanatseverlerin dikkatini çekmek için portre kullanılmıştır. Teknolojinin de hızla gelişmesi ile tasarım kısmında teknik ve dekor anlamında farklılıklar sağlanmıştır. Yine teknoloji ile sanatçıların özgün üretim yöntemleri bu çeşitliliği artırmaktadır. Baskı teknikleri, kazıma ya da geleneksel yöntemlerin yanı sıra birçok özgün üretime de rastlanmaktadır. Bilgisayar ortamında hazırlanan dijital uygulamalar ve geleneksel dekor yöntemleri ile çeşitlilik günden güne artmaktadır. Fotokopi transfer, mono print, sgraffito, serigraf ve daha birçok teknik uygulama bu üretimlerin bir kısmını oluşturmaktadır. Seramik yüzeylerde portre kullanımı ile insan ifadelerinin bir bütün olması sağlanmaktadır. Portre ile duygu aktarımının ön planda olduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Bu makale ile sanatçıların seramik eserlerindeki yenilikçi bakış açıları ve uyguladıkları teknikler irdelenirken, çalışmalarında portre kullanımları ve öznel bakış açıları incelenmiştir. Sanatçıların eserleri için birebir görüşmeler yapılmış ya da sergi manifestolarındaki açıklamaları ile yorumlanması sağlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Seramik, Seramikte Portre, Portre, Seramikte Dekor, Çağdaş Sanat.



INTRODUCTION

Portrait is a realistic depiction of the human face. It can also be said that the instant appearance exists in the work of art as a painting or sculpture. Here, the artist's design and perspective create the imagination in the viewer. “Portrait is a picture of a certain person made with sculptural material, paint, graphics or patterns, and is a picture that completely reflects the character and expression of that person. Portraits are made in various sizes, including head, chest, and knee length, as well as full-length and family portraits” (Turani, 1993, p. 117). Portrait has been widely used in both western and eastern art. Although it is thought to come to the fore especially in western art, it has survived to the present day with its own rules or styles in every culture. Art historians cite the cave paintings in Lascaux, France, as the first example of portraiture. Portraits can be seen in paintings, sculptures and ceramic works, as well as on coins. In Greek art, portraits were made to represent the values and powers of society, not the characteristics of individuals. For this reason, portraits appear expressionless. In the Roman Period, portraits were produced for expression and representation purposes. The busts of rulers, wealthy people and prominent people of society were made in accordance with reality. Likewise, we can show the works created in Fayum as examples of portraits symbolizing the status differences of the society. Although these portrait examples that emerged in Egypt are not as developed as the examples in Rome, they are important works for the history of art.

John Berger says; There is another reason why portraits of Fayum are talked about today. As has been pointed out many times, this century is the century of forced and voluntary migrations. In other words, it is a century of endless separations, a century haunted by the memories of these separations. ... It's flawed because it's obviously handmade. It is more valuable because the painted look is completely focused on the life that he knows he will lose one day (Berger, 2021, p. 34). While these portrait works made on wood depict deceased people, their eyes are depicted as larger, representing immortality. Here, the artist tries to convey the reality he sees as much as possible. Of course, with the enlightenment in Western art, the development of portraiture also changed dimensions. A psychological expression can be seen in the portrait in the seventeenth century (Figure 1). With a realistic expression, it can be observed that the person is not conveyed with aesthetic concerns. When we came to the eighteenth century, idealistic-looking portrait works emerged with a concern for beauty. Unlike the seventeenth century, an attempt was made to convey the ideal sense of beauty beyond the actual appearance of the person depicted here. Baroque and Rococo periods represent the search for pure beauty.



Figure 1. *Maria Teresa of Spain*, 1652-53, Oil on canvas, 127x98,5cm, Diego Velázquez (Velázquez, 1652-53).

During the Ottoman period, with the interest of the sultans and the support of Italian painters, portraits

were made, which were a complete transition point of both eastern and western influence. The sultans who followed the European process also wanted their portraits to be permanent. The approach shown with miniature art is completely different. In miniature art, this situation is depicted with limited patterns due to stricter rules. In terms of form and form, the main thing here is to convey all stages of an event or process, rather than the portrait.

In Eastern art, there are different combinations of Central Asian portraiture with Chinese and Japanese arts. While images transform a social reflection into composition in Central Asia, more mathematical formulas emerge in Japanese and Chinese culture. Indian culture also forms part of this approach. Further east, depictions are very limited. It has a portrait structure that resembles archaic period works with the influence of its beliefs. It can be seen that it has different aesthetics and visual expressions compared to the West.



Figure 2. *Marilyn Diptych*, 1962, Acrylic on canvas, 205x144cm, Andy Warhol (Warhol, 1962).

The understanding of portraiture has changed a lot since the nineteenth century with the invention of photography. However, due to high costs, not everyone had access to portrait photography. Nowadays, with the decrease in costs, portraits have become a part of life. While portraits of important people were transferred to coins, sculptures, ceramics and canvas throughout the historical process, today all processes of life can be preserved with photography. Of course, after the 20th century, this technology became a very important tool for artists.

In the historical process of portraiture, the process is similar in ceramic works as in paintings. There are examples of portraits in palace art or folk art that describe the period and its characteristics. Although portraits of important leaders were initially transferred to ceramics, later examples limited to eastern influence were encountered with simple drawings reflecting the period.



Figure 3. Glazed Seljuk wall tile from the sultan's summer residence at Kubadabat, near Beyşehir, 1220-1236, Anonymous (Anonymous, 1220-1236).

Beyond being a useful item, ceramics are widely used today as a means of artistic expression. Ceramic surfaces are enriched by applying many different techniques. Although the ceramic bodies used are low grade and high grade, porcelain and earthenware surfaces are generally preferred.

Throughout the history of ceramics, portrait applications have been made in many works. Painting portraits of people's facial expressions and emotions with ceramics has always fascinated art lovers. The main thing here is to reflect the period, create a document and present it to the art lovers of the period. Different technologies used in contemporary arts create different effects. For this reason, the use of portraits in ceramics has gained much more meaning than an object or a utility item. Here, unlike painting, the works created with the unique effects of ceramics can be much more impressive. The artists mentioned are presented with the most original and different examples of the Contemporary Turkish Ceramics process.

Elif Aydoğdu AĞATEKİN

The artist, who left her mark as a designer in the leading companies of the ceramics industry over the years, decided to turn her career to the academic world in 2007. While working in the academic world, she transfers her knowledge and experiences to new generations. In her artistic production, she preferred to give new life to past objects, broken pieces and industrial waste. The works she created with these extraordinary materials have met with audiences at many events with their conceptual and political content, and have been presented to art lovers by being included in private and public collections as well as different museum collections. She currently serves as Professor and Head of Department at Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Department of Ceramics and Glass Design.

She produces new compositions with waste materials, just like the collage technique. In 2016, he presented his original approach to art lovers with the portraits he prepared for her personal exhibition. In the text of the artist's work; *“The waste of ceramics lies in the pieces hidden in garbage dumps, thrown away, broken, cracked, no longer valuable to anyone, broken in body but still of high quality in spirit... If all these pieces can turn into a trace of escaping from the hostage of wasted lives, one day, such cruelty will not have been lived in vain...”* (Ağatekin, Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin, 2020). statements are included. The random effect of the ceramic material was intended to convey to the audience the feeling that the portraits he used in the Gaza series could not capture the effect of any other material (Figure 4). The mastery of the Raku technique and the originality of the effect created in the portrait are presented to the viewer.



Figure 4. *All Pieces (Portraits series)*, 2016, Waste refractories and Raku, Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin (Ağatekin, Portraits, 2016).



Figure 5. *Rıdan* (Detail from *Portraits series*), 2016, Waste refractories and Raku, 20,8x14,9x6cm, Elif Aydoğdu Ağatekin (Ağatekin, *Portraits*, 2016).

Perihan Şan ASLAN

Ceramic Artist and Academician Perihan Şan Aslan also uses portrait and figurative elements to complement the portrait in her works. In these works, the artist touches on the theme of a childhood that remains distant as if it belonged to someone else. Glazed-eyed portraits of unknown children look directly at the viewer. These children, whose lives are unknown, cling tightly to *their childhood and toys, which they do not want to end*. While some live their lives in an imaginary place and time, others give the viewer the feeling of being stuck between the concepts of forgetting and remembering with an uncanny feeling (Figure 6).

The teddy bear held by *the portrait of a child with a teddy bear* (*Oyuncak Ayılı Çocuk*) used in the work is designed as a three-dimensional replica of a real teddy bear. In this way, a comment was made on the concepts of image, object, copy (imitation) and representation. The work is an arrangement consisting of two parts. The piece containing the portrait was shaped by the plaster mold casting method, the portrait was printed on the ceramic surface with the mono printing technique, and the portrait was colored with red primer. This piece was glazed with transparent glaze after bisque firing. The porcelain piece was shaped by dipping the real object into porcelain casting mud, and after bisque firing, it was glazed with a high-grade pink glaze (Şan Aslan, 2022). In her other works, internalized emotions, expressions and childhood emphasis are at the forefront (Figure 7).



Figure 6. *Oyuncak Ayılı Çocuk*, 2016, clay-porcelain, mixed technique, 1000°C and 1300°C, 60x70x25cm, Perihan Şan Aslan (Şan Aslan, *Oyuncak Ayılı Çocuk*, 2016).



Figure 7. *Unnamed*, 2016, Slipcasting, monoprint, 1000°C, gold lustre 800°C, each 30x30x3cm, Perihan Şan Aslan (Şan Aslan, *Perihan*).

Olgu Sümengen BERKER

Ceramic artist Olgu Sümengen Berker, who continues her studies in Germany, received the title of associate professor in 2017. In addition to figurative works, she carries out her work process from a different perspective in portrait applications.

While the artist produced figurative works and applied printing techniques, she started to use portraits. She wanted to experience this effect and see if the process met her wishes. During this period, instead of focusing on social issues, the artist experienced a kind of introspection and was interested in her own world and perspective. Therefore, during this period of introspection, she was most interested in her family and immediate environment (Figure 8). She started experimenting with printing techniques on flat surfaces, especially by studying portraits of her family members and close circle and made various experiments and internalized what each of them meant to her. In this process, she had to solve technical problems; first of all, she had to overhaul all the photographs she took, edit them digitally, and convert them completely to black and white. At the same time, doing the printing process with the portraits of her loved ones was enjoyable and meaningful for the artist. Again, during that period of

introspection, the artist wanted to reach things related to how she perceived her environment and the environment she was in, and she tried to do this by making new connections to portrait practices. She also edited the portraits and landscape photographs she took simultaneously. It can be said that the artist's view of the portrait forms both her view of her close circle and family, her perspective on the environment and her relationship with places as a whole.



Figure 8. *Nehir Portrait*, 2020, Stoneware plate, overglaze gold gilding, ø27cm, Olgu Sümengen Berker (Sümengen Berker, 2020).



Figure 9. *Self-portrait*, 2020, Black stoneware, overglaze gold gilding, 11,5x16,5cm (15,5x20,5cm framed), Olgu Sümengen Berker (Sümengen Berker, 2020).

Kübra BOY

Kübra Boy was born in Sakarya in 1990, got her bachelor degree in 2017 at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Department of Traditional Turkish Arts Tile Department.

The artist, whose main artistic practice is traditional tile, also applied tile motifs in her relief and sculpture works, which he produced using different materials other than tile panels. In his works, the artist examines the relationship between humans and nature. In this context, based on the fact that although different societies and civilizations have admired the unique qualities of animals for centuries, they have tried to establish hegemony over them, she uses details on her works that attribute the pain experienced to humans and enable the audience to connect and confront it. The artist continues her work in her workshop in Kadıköy.

The artist, who interprets traditional Turkish tile art from a contemporary perspective, can be defined

as a storyteller who masterfully reflects the traces of modern interaction with nature in her works, beyond a multidisciplinary production. Through the fragile material structure of the tile, Boy skillfully emphasizes not only the cultural ties but also the sensitivity of the subject he deals with. This emphasis not only provides the viewer with an aesthetic experience, but also encourages them to question the relationship between humans and nature and raise awareness of the fragility of this relationship. Aiming to leave an emotional and intellectual impact on her audience through her art, the artist carefully produces new works every day to improve her art, make new discoveries and push the limits of artistic expression.



Figure 10. *Oh, My Hearts*, 2023, Underglazed brush work, 930^{0C}, 100x80cm, Kübra Boy (Curtsey of Kübra Boy).

The self-portrait work seen in Figure 10 is a form of expression that the artist handles with emotional depth, in a period when modern man's ties with nature are gradually weakening and internal conflicts are increasing. The artist embarks on a journey of rediscovering herself, in a sense, by reflecting her own greatest fear and inner conflicts with a shamanic feeling. While the garden surrounded by barbed wire represents the complexity and introversion of the modern world, it also points to the artist's creative process and intellectual atelier. In this atelier, the artist processes her thoughts about the existential problems of modern society and their negligence towards nature. The waste cables spreading from her heart to the space embody the consumption frenzy of modern society and the damage it causes to the environment, while also becoming the expression of the artist's inner world.

Choosing tile art represents the artist's commitment to cultural heritage and her bridge to the past. It

can be said that this work, beyond being just a self-portrait, reflects the spirit of a period and a society.

Faruk ERTEKİN ve Ertuğrul GÜNGÖR

The art story of Ertuğrul Güngör and Faruk Ertekin is based on a common past and passion. The duo met during their secondary school years and while they were growing up together in Kütahya, their interest in graffiti led them to make sketches on the walls. These passions bring them together and create a strong bond between them. However, when they are caught painting a public building, this bond is jeopardized. Their families prevent them from seeing each other, and this situation continues until their high school years. During this separation period, the duo started studying at the painting department, continued their education, and gained knowledge in different disciplines such as graphics and ceramics. Reunited with their master's degree and workshops, Güngör and Ertekin decide to combine these two disciplines. This decision forms the basis of art practices and bears the traces of Kütahya. They create works that reinterpret the cultural memory of the city at the intersection of the traditional and the modern.

Artists reflect the spirit of the period they live in by blending the traditional and the contemporary in their works. The rise of contemporary art is manifested by the change in the traditional understanding of art and the fact that this change creates innovation and difference with each new movement and formation. This also shows that aesthetic perception has changed. The value of a work of art is determined not by the perception of beauty or ugliness, but by its ability to reflect the period in which it was produced.

In this context, traditional motifs in tile art serve as a safe haven for artists and offer them the opportunity to produce works in a field they know and master. However, the duo Ertuğrul Güngör and Faruk Ertekin abandon this traditional harbor and exhibit a more modern and contemporary approach in their works. For them, art is a journey of discovery shaped by the desire to transcend traditional boundaries. In this journey, tradition leaves a trace stretching back to the past, and many artists follow this trace and develop their own unique artistic languages (Figure 11).



Figure 11. *The Ocean Ensemble*, 2024, Underglazed brush work, 930^{0C}, 160x112x2,5cm (Left); *The Ocean Ensemble2*, 2024, Underglazed brush work, 930^{0C}, 160x112x2,5cm (Right), (Courtesy of Faruk Ertekin & Ertuğrul Güngör).

While the duo's works interact with traditional art motifs, they also establish a mental dialogue with the viewer through contemporary portraits. While traditional patterns create new layers of meaning and interpretation on the surface of the works, modern figures invite the viewer to an intellectual exploration that pushes the boundaries of traditional art.

Sercan FİLİZ

The artist, who has received awards in many international and national exhibitions, directs his work through his own inner journey. The process of portrait works, in which optical illusion is skillfully used, goes through the adventure of life.

The artist describes the production process as follows; *“Since my childhood, the objects around me have always reminded me of something. This association has sometimes been a game for me and sometimes a tool to discover different things. Among the dots, lines and spots that come side by side where my eyes wander, the ones that I most liken and attract my attention are human faces and portraits. The most attractive result of this search was human faces and portraits”* (Filiz, 2024).

The artist defends the view that no two of the billions of people populating the world are the same, that each face carries a unique identity, which makes human faces the most distinctive element that distinguishes them. As if *each face is a mirror that reflects the soul of its owner*, the perspective can be perceived in the artist's orientation in his works.

During the process, Filiz searches for answers to the following questions; *“So, how does this miracle happen? Two eyes, one nose, two eyebrows and one mouth... How can these simple organs, which we all have, create such infinite diversity? How do so many independent combinations come together in this small space? The answer to these questions is hidden in the mysterious language of portraits. A story waiting to be told, a world waiting to be discovered... Decoding this language is like a key to delving into the depths of the human soul”* (Filiz, 2024).

Using Raku and Naked Raku firing techniques since 2007, the artist began to discover portraits hidden in random stains resulting from firing. This discovery led the artist to write his master's thesis titled *Reducing Unglazed Ceramics with the Masking Method* and to create portraits with pictorial effects on ceramic surfaces with smoke by controlling random effects (Figure 12). In his works, the artist juxtaposes thin and thick lines in a controlled manner, taking advantage of the space and color contrast between these lines. These works, which consist of only lines when viewed closely, are perceived as portraits as they are viewed further away, creating an illusion in the mind. This situation is similar to our quest to see and perceive different things in the objects around us as children. Portraits hidden in ceramic works can be perceived more clearly when viewed with tools that relegate the human eye, such as a camera or a mobile phone camera. This illusion invites the viewer to interact with the work and makes him think about the way he looks and sees.



Figure 12. *T.R.K.N.Ş.R.Y.*, 2021, Raku firing, 30x30x3cm, Sercan Filiz (Courtesy of Sercan Filiz).

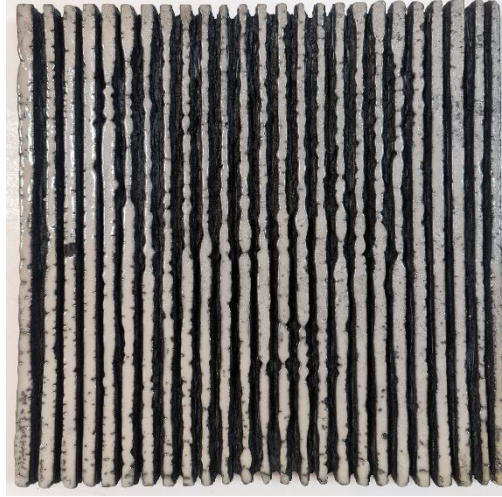


Figure 13. *ATATÜRK*, 2021, Raku firing, 30x30x3cm, Sercan Filiz (Courtesy of Sercan Filiz)



Figure 14. *M.R.L.Y.N.M.N.R.*, 2021, Raku firing, 40x40x3cm, Sercan Filiz (Courtesy of Sercan Filiz)

T. Emre Feyzoğlu

Prof. Emre Feyzoğlu, one of the representatives of ceramic art with the topics and approaches he touches on in terms of artistic production uses various portraits in his artistic works (Figure 15). He explains his portrait approach in his works as follows; “*I try to make the most personifications in my works. I try to capture different forms of expression, sometimes with figurative approaches and sometimes with spatial emphasis. In the second half of the 90s and the 2000s, I made works consisting of personifications inspired by the nature of Cappadocia. Then, I turned to more figurative forms and tried to deal with human states and self-questions in the series titled İlişikteiler and Tamamen ben’siz. In the Öz and Altın Şehrin İnsanları series, I tried to establish more ceramic-painting relationships and explain people through portraits. In the last series, I also linked our private living spaces with cities made of gold by making references to the spaces we live in, doors, windows, rooms, and secret areas of life. Especially in this series, I tried to depict Altın Şehirler and Altın İnsanlar with different luster techniques*” (Başkaya, 2023).



Figure 15. *Şehrin Altın İnsanı*, 2019, Underglaze luster and paste luster, 30x45x3cm, T. Emre Feyzoğlu (Courtesy of T. Emre Feyzoğlu).

The main purpose of the artist's portraits is to capture people's instant reactions. While doing this, he uses a look, a gesture or an expression as a tool to convey the emotion. Portraits, on the other hand, immortalize the emotion of that moment and make it permanent. The portraits the artist works on are generally selected from photographs of people around him or those who are not well known. The reason why these photographs are preferred is the strong instant expressions they contain. The artist obtains different images by filtering the portraits he has chosen in a computer environment and transfers them to both leather-hard mud and fired surfaces using the transfer technique he developed. The artist, who transfers the portrait to ceramics by applying different drawings and coloring applications on these surfaces, then carries out the first firing and then reaches the result by using firing techniques appropriate to the structure of the work. These techniques include in-glaze luster, paste luster, raku, etc., which the artist has worked on a lot. They are mostly firing applications based on a reducing environment. The unearthed ceramic portraits are achieved using different framing methods. The artist sometimes puts his work on display by using colored plaster materials and sometimes by using the frame's own mat.

Aysel GÜNEŞ

Güneş, who interprets traditional tile designs with a contemporary understanding in her works, basically uses low-grade earthenware infrastructure. She still continues her work in Izmir in the workshop she opened under her own name. In her works, she conveys the portrait with an original and contemporary interpretation by using underglaze decoration and mono print (Figure 16).



Figure 16. *Çocuk*, 2017-2018, underglaze decoration and mono print, 38x38 cm, Aysel Güneş (Güneş, 2017-2018).

The artist's approach can be interpreted as follows; the human desire to leave a mark is fed by the need to know oneself, define oneself and belong. This desire has turned into a language of expression over time, and printing techniques have developed in a wide range from cave walls to digital printing. Aysel Güneş applies the printing technique on the ceramic surface with a unique and different interpretation. In her works, she applied transfer printing and collage techniques on Seljuk and Ottoman motifs. Her works carry a feeling that invites today's people, who act with the voice of the majority and cannot feel their essence, to hear themselves. In the applied technique, decoration is made with underglaze tile paints on the bisque and the work is completed by applying mono print technique stages according to need. These application processes may vary each time depending on the impact to be reflected (Figure 17).



Figure 17. *Şahmaran*, 2017-2018, underglaze decoration and mono print, 31x31 cm, Aysel Güneş (Güneş, 2017-2018).

Güngör GÜNER

One of the important female ceramic artists trained by the Republic of Turkey is Prof. Güngör Güner is coming. It is normal to come across many different techniques in a life devoted to this art for more than fifty years. In her works, she used pouring, masking, slip scraping and photocopy transfer

methods on wet body, apart from this, she often applied brush decoration on raw glaze and underglaze brush decoration technique on first fired bodies (Figure 18-19).

She shared many memories using the mono print technique on works without bisque firing. Thus, he created his work called *Fotokopi Çağı (The Age of Photocopy)*. The artist made the following statement about this work: “In addition to the fact that people are increasingly seen as identical (their clothes, their diet, their attitudes...), it was intended to leave a document for future generations by carrying this age of photocopy on a fired clay tablet” (Güner, 2. Uluslararası Gölcük Seramik Sempozyumu, 2012).



Figure 18. *Unnamed*, 2012, Monoprint on wheelthrown pots, in various sizes, Güngör Güner (Güner, Uluslararası Gölcük Sempozyumu 2012, 2012).



Figure 19. *Self-portrait*, 2012, Monoprint on handbuilt ceramic, 28x28x3cm, Güngör Güner (Courtesy of Güngör Güner, 2013).

Leman KALAY

Experienced ceramic artist Leman Kalay has been using laser printing and monoprint techniques in her works for many years. Her approach in her works is open to interpretation as follows; she uses various visual and symbolic elements to effectively convey the concept and message of the works in ceramic

art. In this context, photographs and facial representations that the artist frequently uses in her ceramic works play an important role in deeply reflecting the original concept of the works. While photographs represent a concrete reality and a historical moment, faces are the embodiment of individual and collective emotions, experiences and stories.

From a technical perspective, laser printing method is used to transfer these visual elements to the ceramic surface. Laser printing ensures that details and nuances are transferred to the surface in high resolution and sharply without being lost, making photographs and facial representations appear more vivid and impressive (Figure 20-21).



Figure 20-21. *Minnet (details)*, 2023, Stoneware, laser-print, 1280°C, in various sizes, Leman Kalay (Courtesy of Leman Kalay).

The artist's ceramic work, in which she uses photographs of Atatürk, reflects the deep respect and gratitude felt for the founder of the Republic of Turkey. The work emphasizes the values and historical importance that Atatürk brought to the nation and symbolizes the legacy that his vision and leadership brought to us.

In the study titled *Where is Home?*, the tragic stories of refugees who had to leave their homes during the migration wave from Syria are discussed. The facial and photographic representations used in the work embody the sense of homelessness, loss and longing experienced by refugees. The power of visual elements was used to make sense of the difficulties and emotional traumas faced by immigrants (Kalay, 2023) (Figure 22).



Figure 22. *Where is Home?*, 2023, Paperclay porcelain slipware, laser-print, 60x30x27cm, 1250°C, Leman Kalay (Courtesy of Leman Kalay).

In this context, Leman Kalay's use of photographs and facial representations in her works ensures that the theme and message are presented to the audience in a more impressive and meaningful way. These elements expand the boundaries of artistic expression by increasing the depth, richness and emotional charge of the works.

Mehmet KUTLU

After his thirties, he left mechanical engineering and became acquainted with ceramic art in different workshops in Istanbul. He entered Mimar Sinan University Ceramics Department in 1994 and graduated as the top student of the Faculty of Fine Arts in 1998. He completed his master's degree at Hacettepe University Fine Arts Institute. He states that he sees himself as a researcher, as he describes it. He continues to work by combining his engineer-based education with ceramics.

He worked on the portraits of nine artists who added value to Turkish art, which he used in the *Yeni Hikayeler* (New Stories) exhibition. This work, which started with the idea that *the lives of artists and silkworms are similar*, was created from the portraits of Yaşar Kemal, Genco Erkal, Gülriz Sururi, Türkan Şoray, Zülfü Livaneli, Sezen Aksu, Fazıl Say, Ayla Algan and Ferzan Özpetek (Figure 23). Using a different technique, the artist creates new images with the knitted layers of two different works interlocked on top of each other. He says that he uses different clays colored with pigments or oxides using the screen printing technique on the porcelain body. He says that he uses colours, light, contrasts in life, magnificent forms existing in nature and the unique excitement of his childhood in his works.

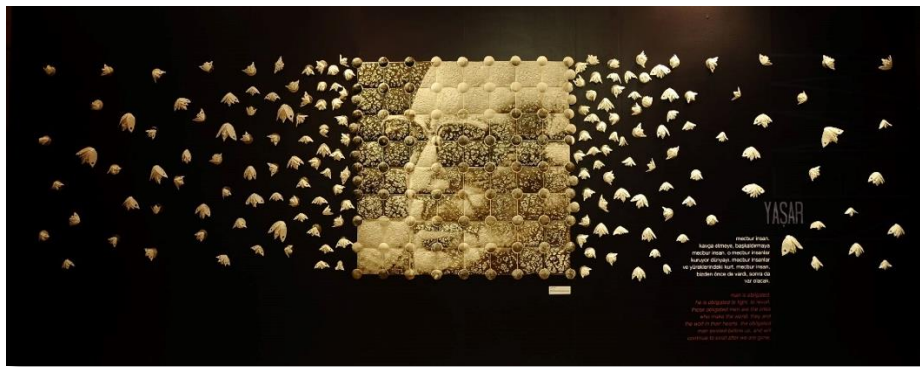


Figure 23. *Yaşar Kemal*, 2011, 220x145cm, Mehmet Kutlu (Kutlu, Mehmet Kutlu Studio, 2011)

Mehmet Kutlu experimented with adding objects such as foam, thread and wool to give a strong expression to his artistic compositions, and this experience led him to use cotton in clay. Cotton blended clay, which has all the features and advantages of paper clay, has opened new horizons for the artist with its unique textural structure. Kutlu observed that cotton blended clay has two main differences from other clays and paper clay: visual and structural differences. The fibrous structure of cotton gives clay different thicknesses. It is also possible to obtain a smooth surface. The most distinctive structural feature of cotton blended clay is that clays with different shrinkage rates can be used together. Kutlu breaks the cotton into small pieces and gradually mixes it with clay. If the mixture is used immediately after preparation, the result will be a fibrous surface. If left for a few days, a smooth surface is obtained. The ratio of this mixture depends entirely on the characteristics of the project. According to the artist, one of the most important aspects of ceramic art is the longevity of the work, or in the artist's words, its chance of survival. Therefore, it emphasizes the concept of robustness. Instead of producing three-dimensional works, he focused on works that could be mounted on walls and stated that he could apply all kinds of cooking techniques according to the work produced. He says that sometimes he makes bisque firing at 1200°C and sometimes he makes glaze firing at 1040°C. By calculating the effect of the underlying fibrous texture on the glaze, different glaze thicknesses give many different color effects. Kutlu shapes his works quickly by shaping them by hand on a plaster mold and applying pressure to absorb the moisture of the clay by the moisture of the plaster mold (FeYZođlu, 2011).

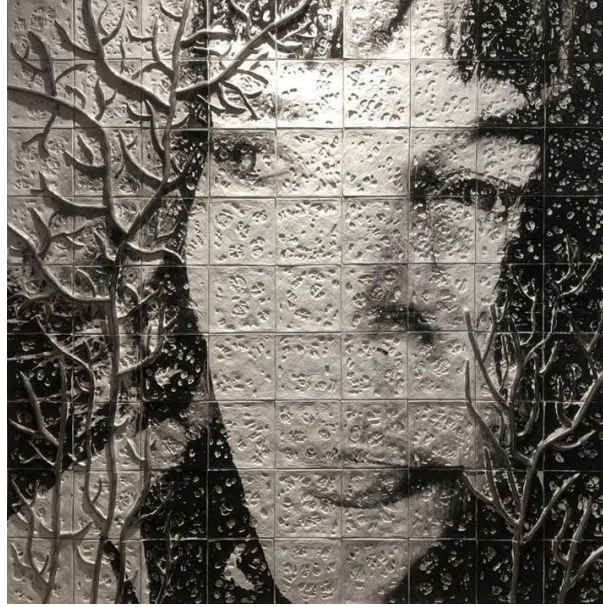


Figure 24. *Sezen Aksu*, 2011, 145x145cm, Mehmet Kutlu (Kutlu, Yeni Hikayeler, 2011).

Hakan ÖCEL

Öcel, an artist from Uşak, was born in 1991. He started his education at Uşak University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics and graduated with first place in 2014. His passion for art encouraged him to progress in this field, and in 2018, he completed the Master's Program in Ceramics, Uşak University Institute of Social Sciences. Öcel demonstrated his artistic talent even during his student years and won four awards in the field of ceramics. He currently works as a lecturer at Kocaeli University, Değirmendere Ali Özbay Vocational School, Department of Handicrafts. He continues to contribute to art not only with the works he produces, but also by transferring his knowledge and skills to new generations.

The artist creates original works by blending traditional pottery techniques with modern applications. Applying the photocopy transfer technique on forms shaped with a potter's lathe, Öcel produces new forms by combining traditional ceramic art with modern technology. He creates works that reflect his feelings, thoughts and stories through these forms.



Figure 25. *Unnamed*, 2022, Photocopy transfer on pottery, 1000 °C, earthenware, 33x32x23cm (Courtesy of Hakan Öcel).



Figure 26. *Unnamed*, 2021, Photocopy transfer on pottery, 1000 °C, earthenware, 33x32x24cm (Courtesy of Hakan Öcel)

Ceyda SIKI

The artist graduated from Eskişehir Anadolu University Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics in 2014, and from Dokuz Eylül University Ceramics and Glass Design Master's Program in 2018. In the same year, she started her Proficiency in Art education at Hacettepe University Ceramics Department and continues her education at the thesis stage. Throughout her career, she worked as Design Manager at Serano Dekor Seramik, Design Manager at Yüksel Seramik, and Designer and Product Manager at Esmaltes Turkey. At the same time, she has been working as a Lecturer at Uşak University Leather Textile and Ceramic Design Application and Research Center since May 2019.

In addition to her professional career, the artist refers to cultural heritage in her works by using symbols, patterns and colors that represent values from the past and the richness of the society she lives in. These motifs offer a unique identity and a personal story as part of a portrait designed for display. By applying the digital printing technique to ceramic surfaces, traditional and modern techniques are blended, thus adding depth to the texture of the work and providing the viewer with both a visual and emotional experience. The main purpose of the work is to explore the balance between traditional and modern and the universality of personal identity.

At the same time, the artist makes use of non-contact printing, one of the advanced technological systems, and the digital printing technique used in the ceramic industry, and completes her applications by firing at 1050 °C for 45 minutes (Figure 27).



Figure 27. *Self-portrait 1 (Left), Self-portrait 2 (Right)* 2021, Digital (Inkjet) print on Industrial Ceramic Tile, 1050 °C, (Courtesy of Ceyda Siki).

Hasan ŞAHBAZ

Hasan Şahbaz, who has an important place among Turkish ceramic artists, continues his search and production process by developing different techniques. In addition to producing innovative and original works in his work, he has many awards and represents our country abroad. There are also examples of portraits and self-portraits in the technique he developed while producing figurative abstract works in 2017-2018.

The artist, who has created a fiction by combining modular plaster pieces in recent years and produced his works by making new experiments each time within that fiction, developed his work titled Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Portrait with the technique he developed in the figurative abstract period (Figure 28-29).



Figure 28. *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Portrait (production details)*, 2019, Colored slipcasting, 33,3x25,5x5,5cm, 1200°C, Hasan Şahbaz (Courtesy of Hasan Şahbaz).

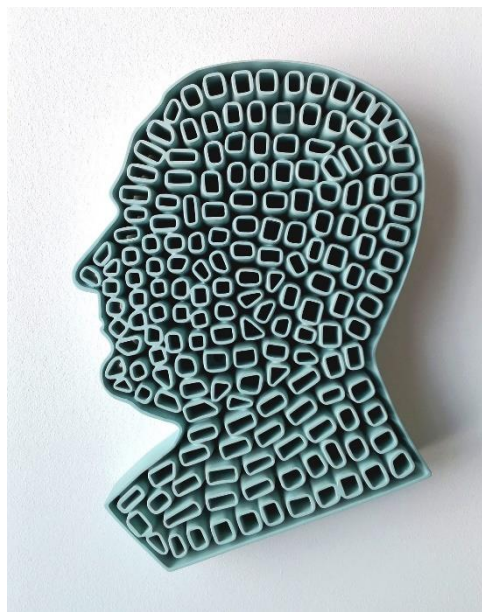


Figure 29. *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Portrait*, 2019, Colored slipcasting, 33,3x25,5x5,5cm, 1200°C, Hasan Şahbaz (Courtesy of Hasan Şahbaz).

While introducing his series, which he calls figurative abstractions, the artist states that he brings together the figure, the oldest and basic element of art, with a brand new language, and that these sculptures, which whisper a different story from every angle, invite the viewer to a mysterious discovery. According to the artist's statement, it is stated that in this series, inspired by the mysterious language of nature, plaster molds and casting technique enable horizontal forms to be presented vertically. In addition, the cellular patterns on the bodies of the sculptures offer a changing view from every angle, while the play of light and shadow is thought to create a mysterious atmosphere. Abstract forms create different meanings and stories. Stating that his portraits are designed not only to look at from the front, but also to walk around and discover a new form, a new story from every angle, the

artist encourages the viewer to actively participate while pushing the boundaries of art in his Figurative Abstractions series. While cellular patterns and dynamic structures present a different view from every angle, the variability of light and shadow creates a mysterious atmosphere. Organic forms inspired by nature come to life with plaster molds and casting technique.

Ersoy YILMAZ

Ersoy Yılmaz was born in Ankara in 1977. He graduated from Anadolu University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics in 1999. He currently works at Çankırı Karatekin University, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Department of Ceramics. Yılmaz's works consist of works called ceramic decoration, which stand out with the intense use of the underglaze technique. In this technique, the transparent glaze layer protects the dyestuff by covering it like an armor. Inspired by traditional tile art, Yılmaz adopted a pictorial style in his works that includes subtle tone transitions and watercolor-like effects.

Aiming to create as realistic an effect as possible by paying attention to brushwork, the artist reproduces popular culture elements in different and contradictory contexts in his series. These works present multi-layered narratives based on a linear understanding of time and the denial of the sense of belonging to a place/culture.



Figure 30. *Fane Dunaway*, 2016, Underglazed brushwork on traditional tile, 930°C, 60x30cm (Courtesy of Ersoy Yılmaz).



Figure 31. *Mütebessim*, 2014, Underglazed brushwork on traditional tile, 930°C, Ø40cm (Courtesy of Ersoy Yılmaz).

The artist continues this questioning by underlining that the question of what the definition and criteria of the concept of beauty are is as old as human history. In addition to various interpretations of the concept, the artist argues that the concept of beauty is close to women and continues her work within this framework. In this context, the artist has been painting especially female figures since 2010 and continues to paint these figures using underglaze techniques.

Yılmaz, who creates a body and/or face by using the difficulties of this technique such as subtle tonal transitions and creating a pastel look, was created in 2013 by Italian curator Adelinda Allegretti, in Milan, from Ornella Muti to Monica Belluci... A Tribute to Italian Beauty. He was invited to open a personal exhibition and produce works accordingly. The artist gladly accepted this offer and had the chance to focus on names such as Muti, Belluci and Cardinale through the exhibition.

The artist argues that form and content are like two sides of a sword. If there is a form (a human figure, a tree, a leaf or an abstract stain), there is definitely a corresponding content (meaning). In this regard, the identities, stances, looks and/or the space surrounding them of the artist's female figures inevitably create a meaning. However, the artist has always avoided making statements about this content dimension.

CONCLUSION

The artists included in this research were chosen because they transferred their innovative and original works to their processes in the field of portraiture, which has many examples as it is an element that has left a mark and is indispensable throughout the history of art. When different decor techniques and the expression of the portrait are used together on the ceramic surface, the emotions conveyed present the perspectives of today's works. It seems that what is intended to be conveyed in portraits in ceramics is sometimes the feelings of people who have guided life or the family members that the individual encounters in his inner journey, and sometimes the transfer of the rich visual and technical understanding offered by ceramics.

When the production methods, decorations, techniques and materials used of the ceramics included in the research are examined, it is thought that the artists who create the works will engage in very different formal searches in the future. In parallel with technological developments, visual aesthetics and diversity of expression have increased in ceramics produced using different decor techniques. Each artist's effort to create their own form of expression also reveals today's contemporary interpretation of a traditional technique.

Apart from just the transfer of a child's gaze or a loved one or an important person onto the ceramic surface, the process of formation of actual emotions, expressions and images has also been interpreted by artists. In this way, the viewer experiences the experiences of his own life and the effort to compare

and establish a connection while watching the work. The effort to understand the work enables the individual to better understand the emotions in his or her own life.

In addition, even if the artistically presented persona does not mean anything to the individual viewer, the technical visual effect ensures that the masterfully created work is unique and an aesthetic phenomenon takes place in the visual memory. It is seen that people reveal some of their own memories in their momentary glances and gestures while looking at the portraits. This shows that portraiture will remain an indispensable topic in art from past to present. It is thought that this bond between the work and the viewer will continue and very different effects will emerge with innovations.

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