

new CERAMICS

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31 Years full of art... SIBEL SEVIM

Öznur YILDIRIM

She is an academic at Anadolu University, Faculty of Fine Arts, and Department of Ceramics. She is both an academic and an artist.

Throughout her 31 year artistic life, she has had numerous publications, seminars, exhibitions, awards, certificates and a

limitations, and you have existed in a lot of activities during this production process. The experienced you have had, the environment, the surrounding area, your social status are quite effective elements.

How did you start producing ceramics and why did you choose ceramics?

- It is a good question. In fact, I have had ceramics in my life for as long as I can remember. When you ask this question to our generation of ceramists, you get the same answer. They all say that they met ceramics when they started to play with mud on the street. So did I. We made ovens, we called them "kum baba", we made little loaves, meat balls and we tried to bake them with brushwood. Of course, almost all of them cracked since they were not dried and we got upset in our childish world. Now I think how lucky we were. Now, far from playing with mud, children are not even able to touch the sand, they are contented with playing with artificial play dough. New technologies and computers are so much in the centre of their lives that they live with computers. They all have mobiles in their hands and they live the world in these. Therefore, far from playing on the street, they don't even talk to each other and they cannot communicate.

Then we realize that a troubled generation has grown. I am very sorry about this situation.

When I answer about when ceramics became a part of my life, ceramics has been included into my life with my "cicik". I was born in Trilye, Bursa. Trilye is a place where there are a lot of olive trees. Under these trees, I found pieces of ceramics

book, which she called a heritage for the new generation ceramists; she is still a modest educator, though.

She is a person who is sometimes like a compassionate mother, an intimate friend, who thinks of her students more than herself, who always has projects in mind and is an extraordinary person. She is a ceramic artist who lives ceramics, made ceramics her playmate and cannot live without ceramics ...

She is one of the people who teaches much more important things than ceramics, from whom I learned much more important things in my life. As a person who learnt a lot from her, I want to share a pleasant conversation about art and life.

Maybe it is a classic question, but who is S. Sibel Sevim? What is ceramics' place in S. Sibel Sevim's life and why ceramics?

- Who am I? Everybody asks himself/herself this question. I can say that as a ceramic artist, 31 years of art life means a lot to a person. It is a serious phase in a person's life, in fact. I have been with ceramics for 31 years. When one loves one's job, the time is not enough, one wants to produce as one always has done. Art is such a thing. You produce as you always have, you go beyond yourself in what you produce and you go higher as you go beyond your own



above - **Decorated plates**, Prof. S. Sibel Sevim

below - **My Humans**, Prof. S. Sibel Sevim



whose ornaments were gone and colour was faded while collecting olives when I was a kid. While everybody was collecting olives, I was collecting these pieces and I called them "cicik". Of course, at these times toys were limited, you, as a kid, create your own toys and alternatives so your creative ability improves. I always reflected my dreams and emotions by forming these ciciks in this world I created myself. They always had the first place among my toys. After years, I realized that I produced my ciciks when I had started to deal with ceramics. They were so important to me and made such important marks in my mind that I have just been able to understand now. These memories that carry me back to past have always been inspiration for me.

What do you think about the relationship between art and technology?

- When we analyse the history of humanity, art has always been a way of expression since humans have existed. Humans probably used art as a means of communication in the ancient times. They reflected their emotions, thoughts or wishes by drawing simplified figures. For example: to express the types or existence of the animals in the surrounding environment, they drew animal figures or hunting scenes on the walls of caves. Did they have technology back then? Of course not, but human beings have always told their lives through drawings and pictures. Technology been developed as time passes and we have taken the advantage of it as it has become a part of our lives. However, it is necessary to set the limits carefully.

In this context, what is technology's role while producing your works? Do you think the art of ceramics changed its course through technological developments?

- I can say, not just technology but the age itself has a role in changing course of the art of ceramics. Technological developments are used in the art of ceramics as it is used in all the other branches of art. This process occurs under my domination without being a captive of technology. Otherwise, I can design the patterns on the computer, print them and produce them, very smooth and shapely products can be produced. If you pay careful attention to what I am saying, I am saying "products". I cannot call them works, since they are produced on the computers in an emotionless way. This is not to say we produce with our hands, and by using simple tools like primitive people. Of course we use technology that the age requires; however, we should know where to stop by balancing it. Is not life a balance, like nature, where there is a hidden balance?

Speaking of your works, you have a book called Ceramics Decorations and Application Techniques which is published in Turkey. What is decoration in the field of ceramics for you?

- To publish a book about my discipline made me



top Ceramic Park working area
middle Amphitheatre
bottom Detail of Amphitheatre



top left **Entrance to the Ceramic Park**
top right **Assist. Prof. Cemalettin Sevim's sculpture** photo by Öznur Yıldırım
middle **Pots from the waste closets**
bottom **Assist. Prof. Mustafa Agatekin's mosaic and glass sculpture**
photo by Öznur Yıldırım

so happy. Every academic, especially artist academics like me, should leave written works behind because there are not many works about the field of art. You live this process, it passes, but you should hand it down to the next generations through essays or scientific books. Decoration have a big place in the art of ceramics for me. I even say in my lectures that decoration has the final word in ceramics. That means, either in the ceramics industry or in the art of ceramics, there are a lot of applications performed by technological methods or hand made decorations for works or products. Some times, even if the texture or glaze of the product is perfect, you cannot conclude the decoration as you like or it is liked, that means it does not matter whether the glaze or texture is of good quality. It may have the reverse situation, you can correct the defects of the glaze or the texture by decorating with ornaments, which means the ornament has the final word.

Eskisehir Contemporary Ceramics Open Air Museum – this is your new project. Could you please tell us about this project?

- This project makes me both happy and proud. We have been carrying an important project with a huge team that consists of very young people with big hearts. Elif Agatekin and Duygu Kahraman are the two pioneer members of this team. I should express clearly that Eskisehir Contemporary Ceramics Open Air Museum project has the characteristic of a cultural inheritance. Eskisehir as a region has an important place in terms of the art of ceramics from past to present. Under these circumstances, all the waste of the ceramics factories and china workshops in the region is collected; applications were carried out on an 18,000 m² field. Contemporary interpretations of traditional patterns inspired by cultures that lived in Anatolia were used in the construction of a 1,500 seat amphitheatre, which is the focus of the project. Additionally, there is a contemporary museum of art, whose design is again constructed by waste in the project and it includes a gallery-museum, a ceramics workshop and a cafeteria. This contemporary museum is the first in our country. Souvenirs are going to be produced in the ceramics workshop and the souvenir problem of the city is going to be solved. Also, there are park roads, statues, seating areas, lighting equipment, etc., which were done

right Ceramic Museum

below Prof. S. Sibel Sevim
with her sculpture

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by waste ceramics in this place. One of the most important features of the park is that all the applications and works are done by using waste ceramics. In short, I am trying to describe that Eskişehir Contemporary Ceramics Open Air Museum is unique in our country; there are a few similar examples in the world, just in terms of the technique used. This project is a cultural heritage which is transmitted to the rising generations. We produce this Ceramics Park by thinking of it as a big painting. All the details of inner and outer places are thought and designed carefully as they are the parts of this painting. The project has a big tourist potential. To present such an original cultural work peculiar to the city to foreign and domestic tourists is going to revive the region. When I sometimes travel abroad, when I see the important works of art, I cannot help asking how they were able to produce these works with the technology of that period. For example, how were the pyramids in Egypt, the big Buddha in China, Gaudi's Park Güell, Sagrada Familia produced? I try to understand how the artists built these works by trying to empathize with their souls, and I am impressed very much. We do not need to go so far, let's take a look at Mimar Sinan's works in our country. Was the technology developed back then that they produced such excellent works? By the way, there is an important and unmissable detail. They internalized what they were doing and reflected their spirits so that they produced such masterpieces. Why can't we achieve such a thing with all these technological developments? I and my teammates achieve a very important assignment with this project. At this point, the belief and support of Odunpazarı Municipality should be mentioned. Although you produce very creative projects, if you do not get the necessary support, you lose motivation and cannot display the necessary performance. In addition, the sustainability of the project is very important, and I think this project is going to be a lively ceramics park. My friends in our country and in the world are going to come here and produce sculptures, teach courses, interview about art, there are going to be concerts, theatrical performances and various shows in the amphitheatre and most importantly we are going to have the chance to produce here. Consequently, it is going to be a lively park.

What are your inspirations while doing these?

- Ancient cultures have a big impact on me. I use ancient cultures as my theme. As our country, the land that we live on hosted cultures such as Hittite, Phrygian, Lydian, Urartian, Byzantine and Ottoman throughout history. When I analyse these civilizations, they all contain wealth within themselves, and ancient life experiences have always aroused curiosity in me. I think that I lived in that time by losing myself in the unknown. All these life experiences are existing realities and compose our culture as a nation. I think we need to protect this culture and these realities as artists. Throughout my 31 years of art life, I have used different techniques for the works I produced. However, I always have references to the past and "cicikler" in this context.

Sibel Sevim was born in 1964. She received her Bachelor's degree in Ceramics from Anadolu University, Fine Arts Faculty in 1989, MA degree in Ceramics from Anadolu University Social Sciences Institute in 1991, Doctorate degree in Ceramics from same Institute in 1994. She became Professor in 2005.

She has participated in many ceramic organizations nationally and internationally, e.g. in Holland, England, Lithuania, Tunisia, Germany, Italy, Cuba, Latvia, Austria, Korea, Spain, Moldova, Estonia, Japan, Mexico, Brazil and USA. She has presented many lectures and presented national and international articles about ceramics. She has had 13 solo exhibitions and 110 group exhibition, and many interviews are about her.

Sibel Sevim has published two books about ceramic decoration techniques. Her articles and papers have been published in national and international magazines and books. She has received awards in five ceramics competitions and also her works are in various public and private collections. Recently, she has worked as Director of the Graduate School of Fine Arts at Anadolu University, Fine Arts Faculty Eskişehir-Turkey.

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