RESPECT THE MASTER: ERDOĞAN ERSEN

(A MONOGRAPHIC CONVERSATION)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study that is interview with Erdogan Ersen on Sunday 15 June 2008, to the immortal. According to Sadi Diren, the Turkish ceramic art of the contemporary circuit, 1951-1962, a formation circuit. Nasip İyem, Mediha Akarsu, Seniye Fenmen, Belma Diren, Cemil Eren, Tüzüm Kızılcan, Atilla Galatalı, Ruzen Galatalı, Erdogan Ersen, Alev Ebüzziya, Melike Abasıyanık, Cevdet Altuğ, Müfide Çalık, Melike Sasa, Ayfer Karamani, Sabit Karamani, Cavit Bozok and Hakkı Karayiğitoglu are well-known names in this period. Erdoğan Ersen, who was born in 1931 in Istanbul, the State Academy of Fine Arts "Gallery" with Sadi Diren received training. Then completed the Department of Theatre Costume and Fashion. He studied watercolor at the academy from Kenan Temizal and Zeki Faik İzer. With the return of Sadi Diren Germany, he learned ceramics by Sadi Diren in Eczacıbaşı. He continued Eczacibaşı Art Workshop. He worked for a while with Cevdet Altuğ and Tüzüm Kızılcan in Taylan Ceramic. Next, he set up in agreement for Art Workshop with Rebii Gorbon in Gorbon Seramik. Then he is awarded with "The Golden Orange Award" "Working in The World" in Italy in 1965. He continued his profession until his retirement (1999) in Gorbon. Name until the last days, he worked watercolor paintings. He passed away on 13th November 2009.

Keywords: Erdoğan Ersen, monographic interview, contemporary Turkish ceramic art.

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USTAYA SAYGI: ERDOĞAN ERSEN (MONOGRAFİK BİR KONUŞMA)

ÖZET

Bu çalışma Erdoğan Ersen'le 15 Haziran 2008'de yapılan bir görüşmeye dayanmaktadır. Sadi Diren'e göre, 1951-1962 dönemi,Türk seramik sanatının çağdaş devresi, bir kuruluş devresidir. Nasip İyem, Mediha Akarsu, Seniye Fenmen, Belma Diren, Cemil Eren, Tüzüm Kızılcan, Atilla Galatalı, Ruzen Galatalı, Erdogan Ersen, Alev Ebüzziya, Melike Abasıyanık, Cevdet Altuğ, Müfide Çalık, Melike Sasa, Ayfer Karamani, Sabit Karamani, Cavit Bozok ve Hakkı Karayiğitoğlu bu dönemin önemli isimleridir.

1931 yılında İstanbul'da doğan Erdoğan Ersen, Sadi Diren'le birlikte Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisinde eğitim aldı. Sahne tasarımı ve moda bölümünü bitirdi. Akademide Kenan Temizal ve Zeki Faik İzer'den sulu boya dersleri aldı. Sadi Diren'in Almanya'dan dönmesiyle birlikte, Eczacıbaşı'nda seramiği öğrendi. Eczacıbaş Sanat Atölyesinde çalışmaya devam etti. Cevdet Altuğ ve Tüzüm Kızılcan'la Taylan Seramikte bir süre çalıştı. Daha sonra Gorbon Seramikte Rebii Gorbon'la çalıştı. 1965 yılında İtalya'da The Golden Orange Award", "Working in The World" ödüllerini kazandı. 1999 yılındaki emekliliğine kadar Gorbon'da çalışmaya devam etti. Ömrünün son zamanlarında sulu boya çalıştı. 13 Kasım 2009 yılında vefat etti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erdoğan Ersen, monografik söyleşi, çağdaş Türk seramik sanatı.

GÜL ERBAY ASLITÜRK: How did the modernization process of Turkish ceramic art start?

ERDOĞAN ERSEN: It started by opening up to the West in every way. Home decoration of Ottomans and the furniture used had opened up to the West. In the past the copper dishes were tin-coated, our cooking style and our kitchen were accordingly. But after the administrative Reforms, the most important feature of Yıldız Porcelain was to bring porcelain to Turkish people. There is an expression "Cumbadan rumbaya" (from bay window to rumba), by passing from wooden bedstead to armchair and couch, opening up of ceramic to the West started. Then the developments continued with the opening of Mühendishane-i Berri Hümayun (The Royal School of Military Engineering) and beginning of painting art. Then Osman Hamdi Bey Academy of Museums and Fine Arts – Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Âlisi was established. İsmail Hakkı Oygar was invited to Turkey as lecturer, who was at that time in Paris. After that a ceramics department was started in the academy but this was a non-existent ceramics department. There was only one furnace. At last Sadi Diren managed to operate the furnace in the atelier.

G.E.A.: Are you friends from the same period with Professor Sadi Diren?

E.E.: Yes.

G.E.A.: You haven't studied in the same class I guess. I think you entered another department in the State Academy of Fine Arts?

E.E.: No, I haven't studied in the same class. We took "Gallery" class together. In the first year, we studied "Gallery" and learned to draw patterns. Then you would pass to the atelier you wished. Sadi passed to the ceramics department. Then together with Nejat Diyarbakırlı, they operated that only furnace and struggled. They went to Göksu and studied lathe with Master Hasan. Namely, Sadi Diren is the one who established modern ceramics in the academy. But Rebii Gorbon and Füreya Koral are those who brought ceramics to İstanbul for the first time.

Rebii Goron is an architecture and graduate of Galatasaray High School. There is a French book "Art of Fire" written by an old priest, he reads that during his illness and then starts making ceramics. Then he makes the furnaces and glazes. He opened his first exhibition at Beyoğlu Olgunlaşma (Beyoğlu Institute). Füreya Hanım also worked on ceramics as a hobby while undergoing therapy in the sanatorium. She was a member of a family of artists. Aliye Berger, Fahrünisa Zeid, Cevat Şakir were all relatives, Hakkiye Hanım was her mother. Füreya Hanım also

brought ceramics atelier here and the first ceramics exhibition İstanbul saw was the exhibition of Füreya Hanım.

G.E.A.: Have you first encountered the exhibition of Füreya Hanım?

E.E.: Yes. We were young then. Kuzgun Acar, me and Mengü Ertel used to go to Maya Art Gallery after the academy when school finished. We used to help with the cocktails and write the invitations of guests.

G.E.A.: You also have a connection with Eczacıbaşı Art Atelier. Could you tell a little bit about that?

E.E.: I am a graduate of theatre costumes and fashion department. But Sadi Diren was in Germany for a while, and then came back. When he came back and started making ceramics at Eczacıbaşı Art Atelier, he also thought me ceramics. Eczacıbaşı established an art atelier in the factory at Kartal and on Mumhane Street, İstanbul, in a place where there used to be an old Greek Monastery. Everybody used to come here as a hobby. We used to work in Kartal which was the first art atelier. There was Master Hasan, Cevdet Altuğ, Tüzüm Kızılcan, me, Ali Ebüziya, Alev İlker, Can Değer Kurtul and Atilla Galatalı's wife Filiz Galatalı. That was the permanent staff. The ceramics of those working at Mumhane atelier used to come to Kartal, we used to bake these and return. Among these, those very curious ones like Nermin Baba and Melike Kurtiç Abasıyanık used to come to the atelier.

Meanwhile there was Bingül Başarır who started working at the atelier of Füreya Hanım. Sabit Karamani's sister also started making ceramics in America. When she passed away, the furnaces etc. everything was left. Sabit Karamani was also a very curious man. Ayfer was also a graduate of clothes-design; however the starting story of husband and wife to ceramics was like this. Ayfer Karamani continued ceramics department after graduation. They both started making mosaics, and then returned to ceramics. All the artists that I mentioned working in our art atelier were active in a way. Atilla Galatalı was the one who went big with his own effort. He was a great artist. Unfortunately he lost his speech and hearing abilities as he had meningitis during high school years. But he used to express everything very well with his writings. We also used to write while talking with him.

We then left Eczacıbaşı Art Atelier. Tüzüm Kızılcan, Cevdet Altuğ, me and Ali started working together at Taylan Ceramics at Ortaköy. During that period, tables used to be made for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey which was being newly decorated. We all made plenty of tables.

G.E.A.: Are those tables still in the Assembly now?

E.E.: No. Unfortunately they are not. For example, Grand Efes Hotel in İzmir was demolished, my huge wall was lost. Turkey is very far from these things. Unfortunately there is nothing like appreciating value. Efes Hotel in İzmir is one of the firsts in modern ceramics area. There were wall panels of me, Jale Yılmabaşar and Nasip İyem, mimosas of Ferruh Başar, and caricatures of Güngör Kabakçıoğlu. But all of them are gone, disappeared of course. They are left in the photos.

Meanwhile Rebii Gorbon brought a ceramics specialist from France. This was a ceramicist of Italian origin. At one point İlgi Adalan started working with them. Then when we didn't have anything more to do at Taylan Ceramics, Tüzüm Kızılcan went to Germany, Alev Ebuziyya went to Denmark and I came to an agreement with Rebii Gorbon and established the Art Atelier with him. Then of course I gathered the new graduates from Fine Arts Academy ceramics department. It was like a second academy for them. Besides normal dishes, artist signed ceramics started being made and everybody was producing these signing their names. Those works continued until I retired. They finished in 1999.

G.E.A.: Why did it end or why was it closed?

E.E.: Rebii Gorbon and his wife were extremely traditional but brought up with Galatasaray, Dame de Sion education under West culture. They were a proper family bringing up their children with governesses. There was never any extraordinariness in their lives. Then when the epoch changed, after Rebii Gorbon, the factory went bankrupt.

G.E.A.: What have you been doing since 1999? You have retired from there of course.

E.E.: Then of course I couldn't do as furnace was difficult. Ayfer Karaman is my friend from school. She has an atelier down Galata. But those ateliers do not satisfy me. I would like to make very big forms. I can do if I went to the atelier of Eczacıbaşı. I would like to go at the first opportunity and fulfill my longing. Apart from that, I am painting in watercolors.

G.E.A.: When did your interest start for watercolor painting?

E.E.: In the Academy years. Kenan Temizal was a professor both at our Academy and at Vienna Academy. He inspired us a lot. Then Zeki Faik İzer was our watercolor professor. But as I made ceramics later, I haven't worked for a long time.

When a toy is taken from their hands, kids find another toy, I am like that. I clung to watercolors.

G.E.A.: Did globalization affect the art of ceramics in Turkey?

E.E.: Globalization affected in a bad way unfortunately. Because an irresponsible copying started. Neither very nice Eyüp Sultan Pottery nor Menemen is there anymore. There isn't anything anymore.

G.E.A.: Events, symposiums, from time to time auctions, exhibitions are being organized. Are these sufficient with respect to quality and quantity?

E.E.: Unfortunately they are not enough.

G.E.A.: Are there adequate spaces and galleries to exhibit ceramic works?

E.E.: Unfortunately there aren't. Ceramics is the main art branch for me. I define myself as an artist. An artist might work with every material.

G.E.A.: Do galleries support ceramic artists?

E.E.: No. I would like to give you an example from Italy as I am always interested in there. Even though a gallery is small in Florence, its infrastructure is very large. For example, they have a decoration department; furthermore they make frames for paintings. They have ceramic ateliers or sculpture departments. If they have an impression to agree with an artist "that I will exhibit this in my gallery and I can sell his/her work", they let you work for a year there. They supply all your needs.

G.E.A.: Are there any buyers of ceramic art works in Turkey?

E.E.: Unfortunately there aren't. Because that infrastructure is not very advanced. I know from my exhibitions I opened before: "You have created extraordinary things, well done. But you know my house is antiques and silver. May I put these there?" or "Shall we hang these in the balcony?" But now there is a great demand for ceramics of Alev Ebüziya. The group around your age living in a minimalist decorated house gives great value in Turkey. This is something to be very proud of.

G.E.A.: Can Turkish Ceramic Art present itself well?

E.E.: First of all galleries are needed to be able to present. If you contact a good gallery, you might become a worldwide artist today in Italy, France or the United States. Otherwise it is quite hard.

G.E.A.: Is European influence dominant in the modernization of Turkish Ceramic Art?

E.E.: When talking about influence, copying them is dominant. Because influence is totally a different phenomenon. It is important to be affected by something and put your own personality on top of it and do something.

G.E.A.: Well, with the current situation of Turkish ceramic industry, are we able to produce designs that might compete with European ceramic industry?

E.E.: Very well design in Turkey is like a flash in the pan. We have a lot of Turkish artists that make very nice designs in Europe. Defne Koz is one of the newest that comes to my mind.

G.E.A.: Are we able to address domestic and foreign market as a person who has worked in the industry?

E.E.: More to the domestic market. They let Turkey work as contract manufacturer in the foreign market.

G.E.A.: Art is what its work and its message is. Can ceramic art communicate its message?

E.E.: Of course. This is an expression of inner feelings; we cannot say it definitely should be ceramics. People can express their feelings very well with paintings, sculpture, music and dance as well as ceramics.

G.E.A.: What are the feelings and thoughts you transfer to your followers?

E.E.: My daily lifestyle is my hope at that time.

G.E.A.: In which area are the ceramics produced that you find closest to you?

E.E.: In Italy. I also like Far eastern ceramics but Italian ceramics are different. Today Denmark, etc. has very nice techniques but according to my standards they are very dry.

G.E.A.: What are the materials, technical methods you prefer with your point of view to ceramics? What is your color understanding?

E.E.: First of all I am a Polaris person, I like colors a lot. But as Özdemir Asaf said white comes first. First of all, I would dream of making a white form. Color comes in the secondary plan, even though I like color. Technically high quality cooked. I love terra rosa but as earth, without being glazed. G.E.A.: It is a great honor having met you, we thank you.

E.E.: Thanks a lot. But this work will be perfect. It is obvious. You do it with a deep determination and consciously.