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## Architecture and Ceramics

Olgu SÜMENGEN BERKER<sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Asst. Prof. Dr., Çankaya University Faculty of Architecture, Department of Interior Architecture, Z-15 Yüzüncüyıl, Ankara, Türkiye

### Abstract

Most of the different art disciplines, meet each other on some intersections during the creation process. The art comes into life from the needs of human beings. Therefore the formation of these intersections are not so surprising for the art era. The aim of this paper is to set forth the association of architecture and ceramic art and interaction between them especially by means of the abstraction of contemporary ceramic artworks. Notions like inner space and outer space are mostly considered basic concepts of ceramic art. This conceptual consideration gains an importance when these concepts are viewed from the architectural perspective. Because these notions are also basic notions of architecture. While architecture transforms these notions into forms, it also creates outer spaces for the ceramic artworks. In this paper some chosen examples of ceramics are referenced from the ancient times until 20th century (when ceramic was accepted as an art discipline to express the ancient association of these two art disciplines. Then the artworks of contemporary ceramic artists are featured in terms of conceptual basis, styles, production methods and processes, and the opportunities that comes from the nature of ceramic materials. Abstracting the expressions of the contemporary ceramic artists in the architectural manner, resulted as the displaying how do these two art disciplines come together on the concept of inner and outer space.

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### 1. A Brief History of Usage of Ceramic Within the Architecture

Since the prehistoric ages until today, art has been a part of the human beings' life. Mankind created art for being a medium of self-expression or expression of nature and social life. In other words mankind used art as a medium of existence. However art is classified into various disciplines, these disciplines always had interacted, created or enclosed each other. Moreover it can be said that the borders between these disciplines nearly disappeared today. In

\* Olgu Sümengen Berker. Tel.: +905363777516.

E-mail address: [olgu@cankaya.edu.tr](mailto:olgu@cankaya.edu.tr)

this context architecture and ceramics are two art disciplines which always had interacted with each other. When this interaction is considered in the ceramic point of view, ceramic art has been participated in the process of change and development process as all other disciplines of fine arts. Ceramic has been accepted as a craft material and ceramists who produced ceramic works accepted as craftsmen for very long ages. Acceptance of ceramics as an art discipline is very recent when compared to the other art disciplines such as painting, sculpture or architecture. Because of cheapness, resistance, easy manipulation, and plastic facilities, usage of ceramic material along with the architecture is prehistoric. Ceramic has interacted with architecture for all times in many ways such as being the structure itself, coverage of the structure, decoration of spaces and surfaces, or as an artwork which takes place in the spaces of architectural structures. Ceramic mosaics from the 4000 B.C. are the earliest examples which existed in architectural buildings. Ceramic mosaics still exist in architecture even as contemporary artworks today.

Historically, the use of ceramic floor tiles goes back to the fourth millennium B.C. in the Near and Far East. The Romans introduced tile-making in Western Europe as they occupied territories. However, that art was eventually forgotten in Europe for centuries until the 12th century when Cistercian monks developed a method of making encaustic floor tiles with inlaid patterns for cathedral and church floors. But, this skill was again lost in the 16th century following the Reformation. Except for finely decorated wall tiles made in Turkey and the Middle East, and Delft tiles made in Holland in the 17th century, ceramic floor tiles were not made again in Europe until almost the mid-19th century. (Grimmer, 1996, p.2).

Other types of ceramics appeared within the architecture trace back nearly to the same ages. Tiles decoration or daily life goods or craft works also existed within the architecture since the prehistoric ages until today.

In 4000 B.C.'s with the development of civilization and establishment of states, firstly in Mesopotamia and Babylon were using the open air firing method for the ceramics which were produced as a ceremonial and everyday life goods which were dried in open air. Then they started to use the same method for firing the mud bricks dried in the sunlight. By the development of this method base overlays, houses, palaces, city walls, monumental buildings, ziggurats were built with these fired mud bricks or dried mud bricks were covered with the fired tiles or bricks (Yeltan, 2001, p.5).

Thereby existence of ceramics in architecture gained an aesthetic value depending on learning and developing new technical methods."Less porosity glazes were discovered in 2000-1000 B.C. simultaneously in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Earthenware panels with high reliefs were produced to be used as wall decoration of the palaces, sanctuaries and the tombs of Pharaohs in ancient Egypt in 1796-1704 B.C." (Yeltan, 2001, p.6). Ishtar Gate which takes place in King Nabukednazar II Palace (built between 500-600 B.C.) is one of the good examples of this kind of ceramic production.



Fig. 1. Ishtar Gate (Tor), lion panel (reconstructed, original was c 575 BC), Pergamon Museum, Berlin Germany.

Bingöl cited the usage of ceramics in architecture:

- ✓ Tiles which are used in interior spaces of the pyramids in the 3rd kingdom period of ancient Egypt and Far East Baajke Period's (1. century ) roof tiles and decorations that were made up of little statues

are the well-known examples of the ceramics which were used in architecture. Similarly ceramic tiles of Islamic architecture which were used on roof domes, iwans, on walls and corners, windows, and altars in 15th, 16th and 17th centuries also exhibits the interaction of these two art disciplines (Bingöl: 2008).

✓ "With the Industrial Revolution which took place between 1760 and 1830, significant changes occurred in the ceramic production. Machine production of bricks tiles and pipes replaced the hand-made ones." (Yeltan, 2001, p.21).

Bourgeois which came to existence as a result of Industrial Revolution afforded the economical deposition for the ceramic market. At this period ceramic production kept going on industrially instead of craft or art production. Although industrial ceramics can be the theme of another research, it can be said that designed ceramic products are also a part of architecture as supporting materials. Art-Nouveau which rejects the history and keeps going on its own way at the beginning of the 20th century affected many countries. In Spanish Architecture Antonio Gaudi's living spaces' effect was remarkable while it was accepted as a turning point in the art history. (...) Plying wavy surfaces were enriched with tile coverings ceramic forms bonded with thick layers of cement. It can be said that these were the initial examples of ceramics designed with the architectural structures (Yeltan, 2001, p.27).

Gaudi's Dragon which takes place at the entrance of the Park Güell in Barcelona, Spain is an example of his usage of ceramics on architectural surfaces (See Fig. 2). Otto Wagner's Majolica House was also one of the architectural examples for the usage of ceramics at the same period (See Fig. 3).



Fig. 2 Dragon, Park Güell, Antonio Gaudi, 1900-1914. Fig. 3. Majolica House, Otto Wagner, 1899.

## 2. Contemporary Ceramics and the Architecture

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the evolution of ceramic for being an art discipline also changed the relationship between architecture and ceramic. Thus, unique ceramic artworks which are created by contemporary artists were exhibited as a part of architecture. Every created object was made as a result of the needs of mankind. It also means that every object has a function. Existence of contemporary (ceramic) artworks in architectural spaces is now more systematic and organized with the development of internal design. The artwork that fills the spaces and relates itself to its environment is placed to that space by the architect depending on the aesthetic needs of mankind. "It is possible to mention that artwork facilitates an aesthetic satisfaction to the people. This kind of satisfaction can be defined as an artistic function. In this context an artwork meets its function by aesthetic enjoyment" (Bingöl, 2008, p.45). It is impossible to mention of a ceramic artwork that has no relation with the architectural space, if the relation between ceramic and architecture is conceptualized ideally. Because ceramic artwork which is created as a part of architecture, it is something which should be designed for that specific space, should be embedded in that space and that space should occupy a place for the artwork that both the space and the artwork becomes a united whole. "The space which also includes the structure (building) has an important role in perception of the artwork. Architecture, the art of space, is enclosed in the space by also enclosing an inner volume, has physical, cultural and artistic relations with human being during history as the artwork itself." (Bingöl, 2008, p.59). Validity and necessity of this relation for the all kinds of art is also emphasized from the architectural perspective:

✓ (...)sculpture also belongs to the art of space, at least insofar as the embracing “concavity” of space is concerned. For there scarcely is any logical reason why sculptural forms should not be understood in terms of embracing “concavity” of space, if architectural forms are. As a matter of fact they should be. Nay, they must. And the “art of color” is more than a flat surface covered by color- for nobody looks at a painting with his nose tight to the canvas, but always maintains a certain distance between the painting and his eyes. Thus, even the art of painting has its “concavity” –if you please- within which its influence vibrates (...) And the vibrations of music do not stick to the strings of the violin, but fill the surrounding space with their melody.

✓ Thus, form, whatever means of expression, always must be understood in connection with space. And this, so-called embracing “concavity” –and why not embraced “convexity” as well- is nothing else than the sphere of light, shadow and atmospheric effects within which form must be conceived, and within which form exerts its influence. (Saarinen, 1948, p. 246)

It is necessary to emphasize that ceramic is an art discipline which concerns about space-place, inside- outside concepts that are also the basic characteristics for this discipline. While these concepts are analyzed within ceramic art, it is very important to build up an artwork in architectural scale. Because those huge scales affects not only the technical details but also the aesthetic value of the artwork. Contemporary ceramic artist works with various aesthetic perceptions and techniques. Some make their own recipes of clays and glazes for that specific artwork while some work in collaboration with ceramic or brick factories and make them produce required modular material for the architectural work. Besides, there are some contemporary artists who produce ceramic artwork out of ready-made or waste ceramic products. All of these materials and techniques are designed and used according to the characteristics of the specific architectural building or space which the ceramic artwork will be placed. Of course economic or social conditions also affects the design and use of these "architectural ceramics".

The affects all of art movements can be observed on Architectural ceramics. A brief review of some examples of 20th century's contemporary artists and their architectural ceramics would be useful to visualize this affect.



Fig 4 Ulla Viotti: Domstolsbyggnad, Nyköping, Statens Konstråd, 1983 Fig.5 Jun Kaneko Rhythm, City of Council Bluffs, Iowa Mid-America Center, 2009

It is possible to mention a lot more important artists who creates contemporary architectural ceramics from all over the world and Turkey besides Nino Caruso, Ulla Viotti, Jun Kaneko, Hamiye Çolakoğlu, Füreyä Koral. Their unique work also exhibits the development of ceramic as a contemporary art discipline in architectural scale. Besides these artworks also depict the integrity of the architectural artwork and the ceramic artwork which is designed for and take place in it. As a result of the change and development that art gets through, architectural ceramics can be a proof of the disappearance of the boundaries between the art disciplines.

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