

## Ceramics as the conveyance of art

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### Abstract

The concept of art has varied according to space and time perspective in each and every period and it has emerged in different forms in every culture. Artists or designers produce a wide range of forms with different materials representing the period and culture while creating their ceramics. Ceramics symbolizes a thousand-year-old endeavor as well as being considered as one of the arts. It has shed light on the history in different shapes and cultures in addition to undertaking the task of conveyance of art with original structure and formal style in the works of art. Ceramics makes identity differences thanks to background knowledge, form and decorative techniques and originality. Art is not for society's sake; it aims to relieve the tension, to satisfy pleasure, to enable people to see and hear, to use and to evaluate. Different cultures have generated new styles in their ceramics by integrating creativity into their own traditions and techniques as well as interacting with Mayan vases and pots, Greek pottery, Anatolian ceramics and tiles. Some of these impacts have been so profound in ceramics that they have been passed on from generation to generation.

This paper seeks to address to the following questions: How was ceramics used in different cultures and periods with composition features such as form, decoration, motif and figure; and how has it undertaken the task of conveyance of art by investigating what features they have.

Keywords: ceramics, art, conveyance of art, form, figure.

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## 1. Introduction

Human being has always been interested in almost everything around him from the Neolithic Age up to the current time. In time, the opportunities of the age are combined with different views, creativity and unbelievable opportunities of technology. With the time dimensions experienced, reaching the future is attempted. With differentiation in many objects, the replacement of new findings and aesthetic values has been observed. The creator or the artist gives a spirit to mud from the past to the present and creates his own style with seeking of texture on the surface and through working techniques.

Ceramics is one of the products that can resist thousands of years without being destroyed from the time it was produced. These can be used in daily routines and also take the task of art conveyance with their form decorations. Due to the fact that it is a product taking place in the life cycle of human being, it has appeared in different forms and civilizations throughout the history. It has brought about to carry the tracks of different cultures and shed light on the history. Besides of being an art conveyance, ceramics has an artistic feature with its form decorations as well. They served in many fields such as architectural elements being in the first place, religious idols and communication tablets, figures, figurines and masks.

Ceramics has a characteristic of taking an easy shape with its plastic feature and meeting the needs of humans easily and rapidly. For that reason, clay was preferred as a material in the historical process, and it found its strong expression in art with ceramics in the dimension of form and decoration, maintaining its task of art conveyance.

## 2. Ceramics at visual and intellectual expression

Human being has been able to get rid of his fears he felt for the universe within the process of development through the process of improved habits and mental thinking process. What is heard for the limitless, a contextual and sophisticated outer world events is the same. Being aware of these sophisticated events, human being tried to overcome the fear with the order and harmony in physics and metaphysics. However, he was not able to manage it. He exhibited spiritual reactions against this fear and sought for happiness. He immortalized natural scenes while conveying it through art. Rituals, magic and symbols, arts conveyed in a tangible and intangible ways that are regarded as the onset of theatre, have taken their places in historical process together with human beings (Boratav, 1998).

Ceramics art is shaped depending on different civilizations, the conditions of the age, the structure of the community in terms of the creative power of the producer while it regarding the symbols as a tool and used them in visual and intellectual expression. Symbols provide conveyance to the current time just like ceramics. The tie settled between emotional and intellectual concepts was tried to be solved through an artistic movement formed. For that reason, some objects and creatures were symbolized with some shapes determined in their inner world. Such activities as birth, death, fear, thrill, power were regarded as supernatural powers and it was through ceramics to facilitate the perception component for interpersonal communication and interaction.

These are the products of naturalistic art and have emerged in a tradition. Ceramic product has a role of being a mediator between man and object and is a document for the cultural structure of the civilization it belongs to in their periods. In order to provide a visual communication, the mediating symbols were shaped with some materials. "Classical Greek culture starting around 1000 B.C. was influenced by both Anatolia and Minoan culture. One of the characteristics of Greek ceramics is form and the other is the surface decoration method" (Cobanlı, 1996). Byzantium art also depends on Ancient Greek and Roman Art with an influence by Egyptian, Iranian and Syrian culture as well. There are some similarities between Seljuk ceramics and Byzantium ones at the same era in terms of design

and figures. It is possible to see the tracks of Seljuk art in some important works in Europe (Yesilyurt, 2001).

“With expression, which is one of the most significant characteristics of art, ideas and perceptions are visualized through art, they improve and change” (Erinc, 1995).



Figure 1. Carved Bowl, Maya



Figure 2. Minoan Dolphin Oinochoe Greek Vase

Ceramics was visualized in this sense with the purpose of conveying feelings, ideas and tastes to another one and used as a communication instrument with its plastic structure.

### 3. Art conveyance and Creativity

“Creativity is a basic skill not in artistic processes but in all walks of human life. Creativity stays as a basic component in every work completed by human being” (San, 1985). The taste and strain felt in the creation process of ceramics come to the forefront in the material used. The component of creativity bears the stories and characteristics behind the work carried out. The works carried out to be produced provide us with supervising the work through intuition and observation. The producer expresses himself in these works. As civilizations develop and improve, so do artistic seeking.

Having hosted a great many civilizations, Anatolia is of great richness in terms of ceramics art. Such civilizations as Urartu, Hittites, Phrygia, Troy, Rome, Byzantium, Seljuk and Ottoman yielded the most valuable products by creating visual images and objects. Being identified with art, these products have taken their place in museums with art conveyance.

Artistic creation and the struggle to create a new form have pushed the artist to a new seeking. While ceramics is maintaining its task of art conveyance in different types and forms, it also appears as sensual and intellectual activities. Each community has decoration specific to itself. In time, these decorations pass through a change in their forms as a result of interaction with each other. Upon encountering a decoration having an artistic value, a competent person is able to say which community it belongs to and in which period it was produced.

Ceramics has taken place in such fields as art and trade and led to the emergence of style and originality which could be considered the differences of civilizations. Upon arriving the Anatolian land, Turks had a sense of original ceramic and tile art just like other civilizations having lived in Anatolia. A new age started in these lands with regard to ceramic arts with the control of the Anatolian lands by Turks. Tile masters enriched their knowledge with new techniques. As an example, human figured tiles of Seljuk Kubad Abad are of great importance. The most striking group in terms of subject in these tiles is the depictions of the Sultan and notables sitting in Indian-style known as Turkish Sitting in foreign publications. One of the most significant criteria of ceramic and tile art is to predict to which way the application will be driven is in line with the materials used. The artist gives an opportunity to create a true and desired effect in order to predict the phenomenon created by the material. The formation of forms, texture and decoration suitable for the desired purpose could only be the outcome of a hard and qualitative research. It is of great importance that the artist should be able to make a contribution

to the problem of searching for material and applying it for his product. In the process of creating ceramics, by way of seeking in the form surface as well as the clay which is the basic material ceramics with high aesthetic values was produced. The studies carried out turned out to be a visual richness while carrying the hand shaped products to a certain level.

The forms produced are not wrapped with ordinariness and artificiality with the textures, colors and decoration types on them. On the contrary, the works formed could be seen in diverse variations through the themes made. However, the changes in social structure show that they sometimes fall short particularly of the production of the container shaped by hand in the field of ceramics.

The changes starting in the North and South in the social structure of Mesopotamia in early 4000s could be seen in archaeological data. Earthenware painted dishes shaped by hand which required a great effort disappeared and they were replaced by various types of earthenware bowls without a decoration mass produced on a slowly turning potter wheel. Bowl production in great number reflects the economic inequality occurring most likely as a result of sovereignty in agricultural and husbandry production. Bowls were used in food distribution, so the demand for them increased, affecting the production and leads to transformations in the organization of handicraft artists (Frangipane, 2003).

The artist or creator imagines his own alternative and nature rather than going against the nature in his productions. He refuses the rapid transformation of the age he lives in, the natural environment where he encounters serious problems, ambiguity, striking and scary, chaotic elements. Instead, he heads towards a different nature and universe by making his imagination free. In the object the artist produces, he recreates it with the forms and relations he perceives or imagines on his own. The fictions recreated reflect their own texture and atmosphere. In this way, various forms and figures etc. come to the fore. The motives and decorations chosen could take volume inside them. Even though the product looks like depending on the rules and disciplines created in it, it could be formed in a free flow. Something is always experienced and changes in nature. In addition, it prepares new formations. The creator takes the share he has from this natural form of life as subject, form and content. In this sense, such phenomena as enthusiasm, sadness form the topics over the products. Thought is everlasting and changeable. For that reason, while shaping, the art is not completed at the same time. However, it forms a kind of motion with the visual effect emerging. It extends the opportunities of expressions for the future and forms alternatives in this sense. The creator or the artist experiences the creative potential that he cannot prevent sometimes in folkloric, historical or sometimes in the rich variety of the socio-cultural data, and it makes the creator show his identity. Painting, ceramics or sculpture chosen as a way of expressing oneself unveils power. It is inevitable to make art in order to have an access to civilization, improve and develop in the world, and make a contribution to the formation. He will need to see the artistic works in the lands he lives, to touch them and make his life more meaningful. Art uses the freedom being a source in emerging in order to have an access to civilization and improve and also uses the power of changing time and place. It makes us possible to know the art and artist with the energy it gets. However, the artist starts to tell himself, making people think through the work he creates.

#### **4. Art conveyance and ceramics**

Art is one of the most important elements beautifying life. All round cultural environment causes a strong communication between ceramic artists and painters. Decorative and symbolic values are replaced by a new type of expression. The artifacts found in archaeological excavations show that pre-Islamic Turks exhibit various plastic examples depending on the figure in Central Asia. In particular, firstly the individual and then the artist or the creator symbolizes the mythological heroes and supernatural creatures in his intellectual and sensory world.

Man has always symbolized mythological heroes and supernatural beings in intellectual and sensual world. As the expression of feelings, ceramic pots, dead vases, have appeared as glazed tile

use both in interior and exterior front as the decorative main element in architecture. Symbols are mostly animal figures with religious content or decorative ornaments used for the purpose of decors. These kinds of samples could be seen in the glazed tile examples of Mayan ceramics, Ancient Greek vases, Faenza ceramics and Islamic architecture (Turkistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Anatolia, Egypt, Morocco, and Spain). The compositions giving a visual richness are generally hunting scenes, mythological scenes or war scenes. As for Aztec ceramics, they are the ceramics produced in the ateliers in large quantity for utilization purposes rather than artistic and elaborately ornamented with colorful motives.

Turks accepting Islam as a religion shows that they reached a certain competence in terms of technique and fictionalized composition with their relief works they applied in religious and civil structures as the component of picture is forbidden.

In other civilizations, luxurious ceramic works produced were imported from the countries Cholula and Mixtec. Luxury ceramic objects were imported from the countries of Cholula and Mixtec (Soustelle, 2006).

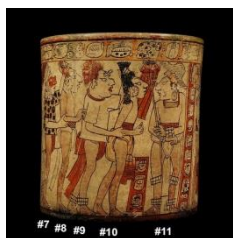


Figure 3. Mayan War Vase



Figure 4. Greek Oil Jars



Figure 5. Panathenaic Amphora

Mythological scenes, particularly Mayan Underground Epic were depicted in the classical Mayan ceramics which were used as a burial chamber. The dishes, particularly chocolate dishes were used as the final task on the graves of the dead. In the process when Western art and culture were shaped with the Greek mythology, the decorations on the ceramic plates with a high value of function in Ancient Greek and on those of the Classical Period were given special attention. For that reason, they have a different content compared to other cultures. "Thanks to the commercial relation with the East, Greek artists translated the mythos expressed in painting, sculpture and architecture into the language of art" (Gezgin, 2008). Ceramic plate has an artistic value for the Greek people. While experiencing the process of creation, the acquisitions obtained through some symbols on ceramic pots. Transforming into the work of art with the materials used in this process reproduced the taste.

Therefore, painters of vases depicted simple lines, plant decorations, gods, heroes and pictures from life on ceramic containers. These containers were made to keep wine and oil. For that reason, it is a turning point in Ancient Greek as well. The construction techniques were strengthened. "Greek artists solved the problem of depth in early 4th century" (Richter, 1984). Faenza, Italy, has a tradition dating back to centuries over ceramics (Istanbul & Faenza Municipality, 1990).

Ceramic masters from Faenza realized new and sophisticated and technical trials. In this way, they had a chance of using newest decoration elements and produced original works in tile and ceramics. The potters of this city depicted plants, animal designs or the coat of arms of important families for the history of the city as decoration element. As for Anatolia, it is so rich in terms of ceramic art and Seljuk is the richest culturally. Tile examples depending on the structural decorations in the period of Seljuk are quite original and an indicator of their competence. Surface decors are the sources particularly fictionalized on details that must be inspired.



Figure 6. Roman pottery



Figures 7., Figure 8. Byzantine Bowls

“Seljuk created a big art shaping the Turkish face for Anatolia” (Yetkin, 1972, p. 2). Seljuk period glazed tile and ceramic art have been a source for the periods following their period. Human figured glazed tiles are particularly important at the wall tile samples in Kubad Abad Palace constructed by Beysehir Lake in 1236.



Figure 9. Faenza Plate, 1529



Figure 10. Seljuk Figural Designs

The effort to reach the essence in nature, science and art started with Renaissance. And this made the free thinking and placing art on scientific bases through the achieved experiences possible in association with researches. Artists changed nature and space depending on their wishes. With the chaos they created inside them, the tension in art was turned into aesthetics. As a matter of fact science is a tool for ceramics. As an example, it is supposed that the first glaze and tiles fired in high temperature were made in China. However, in the studies and laboratory researches carried out in Japan, it was found that Ancient Seto Ceramics were first glazed ceramics. There becomes chaos at the start of each scientific study. During the effort to have a conclusion within obtaining an order, certain result could be obtained in coincidence. In the works coming from the formation of ceramics, the fact that coincidence plays a role is not ignored. In this way, the only purpose sought at art is to create effects in combination with emotions and thoughts (Boratav, 1998).

The art of ceramics shaped as a result of dynamic, modern and peculiar creativity in current time was interpreted again through original designs with an inspiration from the past. Familiar components of nature and life were used and usual images and concepts were highlighted by means of senses and innovative works were attempted to be produced. The artist conceptualized his experiences and the concepts were turned into a product through designs. Traditional forms and elements were revived through up to date comments and reached the user and buyer. In particular, the symbolized forms of different cultures were tried to be turned into new icons. These are the things stimulating the enthusiastic feelings of people. The artist or the creator follows a peculiar universal way and tries to follow a path of his roots through strong ambitions and deep stories. Fed with geographical conditions and cultural values, the artist tries to come up with new values and it gives him flexibility. The artist comes up with the solutions through individual experiences for the needs emerging in the process. And it allows getting new places for them in current modern formations.

## 5. Conclusion

The environment experienced is important for the artist. His perception of environment and turning it into a form is the reaction of him to the environment. With the interactions and reactions the artist or creator experiences, he forms his own world. He is connected to the environment he lives with a language of expression and internalizes it. In this way, he starts figural seeking by living a period when he intensifies between a natural and physical space. In this period, he produces forms through stylistic researches he conducts. The works produced are permanent and has prevailed throughout history. Human being has made customs and belief systems live in works of arts for thousands of years. Any kind of materials and technology he could use provide him a new way of expression. While shaping his acquisitions with clay, the artist creates his own personal solution. The style he forms differentiates him from other artists. With the symbols he creates, he provides an active way of learning.

Ceramics in different cultures has been an instrument of expression and maintained the task of art conveyance. For vases, pots, tiles and sculptures, various decorations, figures, symbols were used for the sake of glorifying the effectiveness in intellectual-sensual and visual language on objects and life spaces for power, taste or strain in life. Various geometric decorations, motives, figures and symbols have sometimes presented universal expressions when writing is inadequate. There has not been an absolute decoration instrument while expressing an idea or feeling. The artist consumes his creativity by trying to adapt to the changing world. When we consider the creativity, freedom and extraordinariness of the artist or the creator in artistic approaches, he will carry on making a contribution in visual and plastic art fields.

Ceramics has carried out its task of conveyance as an instrument of a communication language, an architectural element, a religious idol or in emotional and intellectual dimension. Art together with science will help us to have dreams by searching for the future as well as reflecting its own period.

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