

THE PENINSULA

Winter 2023





Where
TRADITION
Meets
INNOVATION

Innovation, determination, and a deep connection to her cultural heritage are just three factors that have shaped Burçak Bingöl, a Turkish artist who in recent years, has made her mark in the contemporary art world. A number of her works, which explore notions of belonging, identity, and the interplay between Eastern and Western traditions, are housed in prestigious institutions and galleries around the world, including New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the MOCAM Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow. Closer to home, Bingöl's striking piece entitled 'Infinite Echo' has taken up permanent residence at The Peninsula Istanbul.



Left: Artist Burçak Bingöl. Right: Çağla Saraç, Art Curator for The Peninsula İstanbul

“I had seen Burçak’s work and I thought there was a piece that would be suitable for the hotel,” recalls Çağla Saraç, Art Curator for The Peninsula İstanbul. “But it was a temporary work of art - the one we actually commissioned is similar, but it has an extra depth and dimension to it.”

The journey of Burçak Bingöl’s large-scale commissioned work ‘Infinite Echo’ at The Peninsula İstanbul began with a meeting with Saraç prior to the beginning of the pandemic, more than three years prior to the hotel actually opening. Bingöl says that it is difficult to specify how long the work took to complete as she created it alongside many other works. “I would say a minimum of one year with stops and starts, as there were many different processes involved.”

The piece, inspired by the indigenous flora of Karaköy, including Linden and Judas trees, now hangs on the left-hand side wall on the inside of the hotel’s entrance, artfully and appropriately connecting the outside with the inside.

“When I first saw the location, I was immediately drawn to the idea of creating a piece that somehow incorporated the plants that naturally flourished around the area - I picked them, dried them, scanned them - and now they are indelibly embedded in the work,” explains Bingöl.

This meticulous process has resulted in an exquisite level of detail contained within ‘Infinite Echo’, with the plants and flowers

seamlessly transposed onto the surfaces of the traditional Ottoman-style ceramic vessels that are also central to the striking art work.

‘Infinite Echo’ is also intended to recall İstanbul’s historical garden culture through both its botanical and cultural references.

Indeed Bingöl’s inspiration was drawn from the Ottoman culture, specifically the royal court’s tradition of reciting poems and singing songs in gardens. “That was the core idea - the reason why I used the form of traditional Ottoman vessels in the work. All my projects are very different but they often feature the use of old things in a contemporary way,” she reflects.

The Ottomans’ passion for flowers and their transformation of garden enjoyment into an art form resonates deeply in Bingöl’s work, underlining the rich cultural heritage that influences her art as a whole.

The creation of ‘Infinite Echo’ was a journey that spanned a multitude of processes. In addition to the collection, drying and high-resolution scanning of the flowers and leaves in the piece, the ceramic elements were sent to the kiln of a highly skilled earthenware potter in Avanos in Cappadocia to be fired with the floral decals in place, a process which any artist working in ceramics knows, can be nerve-wracking. “He makes them, and I break them,” says Bingöl with a wry laugh.

Humour aside, the journey of creating a commissioned art piece is not over until the final, often tense installation at its







designated destination. In this case, it took five people to carry and install 'Infinite Echo' at The Peninsula Istanbul due to its weight and its fragile nature.

Throughout all of her installations, curator Saraç is always present as the figure who must maintain a calm demeanour, a quality she attributes to both age and experience. "I don't become anxious for no reason. If something breaks, then I have to solve it. I'm there every step of the way - that usually blocks bad things from happening; I need to be positive all the time," she asserts.

Bingöl's journey with ceramics has been an ongoing process of learning and growth. Her education in sculptural ceramics at Hacettepe University in Ankara shaped her approach to the medium, whilst her experiences in New York, where she worked as an intern for American Ceramics magazine and various artists, opened up new horizons. "Learning ceramics is infinite; these experiences have opened up a whole space in my mind about the expressive potential of the art form," she reflects.

In addition to being a full-time artist for the past five years, Bingöl has also been involved in teaching and curating herself, her multifaceted career adding depth to her art and reflecting her broad understanding of the art world.

"Drawing on the rich ceramic history of her homeland, Bingöl explores the continued disintegration, transformation and reconstruction of cultural traditions and identities in Türkiye, as

well as the fluid exchange of imagery, ideas, people and goods that has occurred throughout its history," notes Eda Kehale Argun, Christie's representative consultant in Istanbul. "Through her intensive process of tracing, copying and reworking materials and objects, she challenges both Eastern and Western art-making traditions."

Bingöl's love for ceramics is profound and lifelong. Their creation is a mystery, a complex medium that requires patience and respect for the unpredictable behaviour of the elements. "Ceramics are part of our daily lives, but the way in which they are made is not simple. The production process comes with a set of strict rules and methods, and you have to collaborate with the natural elements of fire, air, and water," she explains.

Bingöl's art is not just a visual feast; it's a philosophical exploration, a cultural dialogue, and an embracing of human creativity. Her works stand as a reminder that art can transcend boundaries, connect cultures, and inspire new perspectives.

In the words of the artist herself, "I don't have time to appreciate things immediately." But the world has time, and it continues to appreciate and embrace the beauty, complexity, and depth of her art. Her legacy is etched in clay, and her influence continues to echo through the corridors of contemporary art.