

**Burçak Bingöl's Interview on Cabinet of Curiosities**  
by Neylan Bağcıoğlu

Having realized three exhibitions before, two in New York and one in Ankara, Burçak Bingöl's first exhibition in Istanbul takes place at CDA-Projects Gallery, Misir Apt. between May 14 and June 14. Completing her under-graduate, graduate, Proficiency in Arts degrees while also serving as a research assistant following graduation at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Hacettepe University in Ankara, Burcak Bingol continued her studies as a guest artist at Hunter College, New York in 2006 for eight months and at Cura Bodrum in 2010 for one month.

Bingöl contributed to presentations and workshops, concerning her work, in Argentine, New York, Philadelphia and she participated in various mixed exhibitions. Completing in 2009 a program on photography at New School, New York, the artist is now preparing to continue her studies as a guest artist at ISCP where she has been accepted. In addition to the ceramic materials she has been educated on, Bingöl has utilized works on paper, photography and found objects in her previous exhibitions also and while pondering on her new exhibition a year ago, she has decided to merge all the ideas she had separately flourished into a personal manifesto.

Bingöl believes that exhibitions are merely intersections from an artist's life rather than a result. Bingöl has adopted the name and the conceptual framework of her new exhibition from the "Cabinet of Curiosities", a European tradition related to gathering and collecting. We have talked to the artist about her artistic cognition, new exhibition and her future plans.

**Neylan Bağcıoğlu:** "Cabinet of Curiosities / Nadireler Kabinesi" is the name of your new exhibition. Could you talk a little about the story of origin of the name?

**Burçak Bingöl:** "Cabinet of Curiosities" is an old European tradition related to gathering, collecting and its history extends back to the 16th Century. The name given to the chamber or cabinet where interesting objects, sea shells, stuffed animals and many more curious things are on exhibit together. And a tradition still practiced. When I first started working about this exhibition, I decided to work on ideas, materials and emotions I had gathered along different periods until then. Therefore, I am actually metaphorically using the tradition of "Cabinet of Curiosities"; not that I have sea shells in my exhibition...

**Neylan Bağcıoğlu:** "Cabinet of Curiosities" and the gathered and / or produced works you have used here are entirely related to your self. What, between the moment that you have started and now, have you learnt and have lately noticed, that you did not know before, about yourself?

**Burçak Bingöl:** This has been a very personal exhibition indeed. I think I needed to look into myself through this period of my life. Or, maybe it was a natural consequence of spontaneity. Making art urges you to confront yourself. Even as it looks from this point now, it is a challenging enough process. To begin with, an intense solitude within the questioning and decision-making phases... In this process where I was trying to get a sort of subtotal, for the first time I felt that my productions and interests which I viewed as totally independent before came together and formed a unique wholeness. What I noticed in this process was that all collectees were intimately related to each other. This of course creates a feeling of wholeness.

**N. B.:** What distinguishes your new exhibition from your previous exhibitions?

**B. B.:** This is my first solo exhibition in Istanbul. I cannot state that you could separate it very sharply from previous exhibitions. It was a very high priority for me that it was at a range of age where I begin to learn to accept what life brings along, where I feel the value of time with all her majesty and that it was more intense and more intimate.

**N. B.:** Ceramic is a material most frequently not preferred in modern art. At which point and how did you decide to work with ceramics?

**B. B.:** Actually, it's more like ceramics decided to work with me, I guess. When I had just entered an academic career process, I realized in a blink that proficiency in arts was over.

Ceramic is a very difficult material. In terms of both technique and meaning, it is exceedingly detailed and problematical. Its closed associations with both history and industry have kept it outside modernism. Therefore, we do not encounter it frequently amongst the masterpieces of art history. Thus, the very same associations, I believe, make ceramic a special material of modern art that is ready to be processed, used.

While each workshop process is a type of struggle, considering ceramics the technical and physical difficulties may reach maddening dimensions. I guess, the desire to challenge all this also started the passionate relationship with ceramics that hovers between love and hate. It will be very romantic, but earth teaches the person about patience.

**N. B.:** "Fragility" is one of the most significant aspects of ceramics. How does this fragility affect your works, how are you utilizing this situation?

**B. B.:** The fragility of this strange material resistant to fire, air, water, time is its only weak point. It looks like a human as it is. I liken to humans considering our fragilities disguised beyond our very strong stances. On the other side, this is actually what makes us human.

The fractures, cracks in ceramics are frequently encountered as defects, errors, unwanted situations. Nevertheless, this is the reality of the material, a quintessential quality of it... My willing use of fractures in ceramics is equivalent to my appreciation of its nature...

In this exhibition, fragility implicitly wanders between the works; a single table and a chair, made of ceramics, while inviting to sit also create an awkward situation with their fragilities.

**N. B.:** Part – whole relationship is one of the themes you have studied in your works. Is it something that could be likened to the individual – society relationship? That, you know, affects / changes each other and renders each other individually un-considerable?

**B. B.:** What you say is true. Parts come together within specific relationship networks to form a structure. Therefore, they are inter-dependent, they need each other. Actually, this is the method that is used in the formation of all sorts of systems. The part – whole relationship and the pattern idea I consequently reached are the most important keywords defining the exhibition. The individual and the relationship between the individuals consequently determine the structure of the society. This organic structure, too, is full of defects and faults, but these are also natural parts of the operation of the system... Honestly, this also is a field that interests me much and that I enjoy observing.

**N. B.:** In addition to your one-on-one art production, you also curate. Could you talk about this experience of yours?

**B. B.:** It is a very exciting process indeed to design projects with artists whose works you admire. Maybe it's a little selfish, but I like to be included somehow into their works. Considering exhibitions are subtotals yielding intersections rather than results, the preparation process becomes a very special experience. Sharing this experience, in contrast to personal projects, with others and to be in interaction is both illuminating and nourishing.

This actually is exactly the social and mental state of the part-whole relationship we just mentioned. And it has tremendous power for transformation.

**N. B.:** Could you talk a little about your plans after this exhibition?

**B. B.:** This, my first, year in Istanbul has been extremely intense for me. When one experiences most intensely the creative process, on the other hand, it is easier to have new ideas and develop new viewpoints. I, too, am emerging out of this process with fresh ideas. With the "Alienated to Self" series that I have been working on for some time, it seems that I will be focusing on the topic of alienation. Of course, it will take some time for these to resolve and become visible.

Meanwhile, in addition to artistic activities and fairs that my gallery CDA-Projects is involved in, I will also continue teaching that I enjoy much.