



BURÇAK BİNGÖL

Visual artist

I have lived in Istanbul for nearly seven years. In 2011, I was planning a move from Ankara to New York. Beforehand I had to spend a couple of months in Istanbul and something told me to stay. It was an intuitive decision and I'm very happy I made it. Ankara, where I grew up, is the capital and quite formal and homogeneous in a way. Compared to Ankara, Istanbul is very unpredictable and irregular, which gives it its special character. I connect to Ankara through my own personal memories.

In Istanbul, I'm able to connect to the city through centuries of collected memory. I live in Beyoğlu district, in Taksim. I like its cosmopolitan feel and the fact it is in a constant state of transition. As an artist it is also important for me to be close to the art galleries and museums, which are mostly located in the neighbourhood. Lately history has inspired me a lot. I'm exploring the creative individuals who lived and shaped the culture before me. Their interpretations of Istanbul have strengthened my connection to the city. I'm interested in cultural identity and experimenting with materials, form and image. My works are psychological landscapes that employ memory both materially and socially through ironic juxtapositions.

Growing up in Ankara, I wasn't exposed much to Turkey's Ottoman past. Istanbul is living in different times at the same time. I'm interested in exploring the deeper meaning of localities and how knowledge shifts through time and place, especially in arts and crafts. These are very lively spheres in a country where the past is either glorified or ignored. Istanbul is still a place that has a lot of mysteries for me and I really enjoy learning about it and reflecting on what I learn in my work. Taking a ferry to the Asian side of the Bosphorus is the perfect way to relax and think.

The people of Istanbul might not look that friendly at first but if help is needed they will surprise you with how much they care. Many artists and writers have brought meaning to Istanbul but lately historian and curator Ekrem İmri's thoughts, expressed both during our occasional chats and in his writings, have inspired me. His *Everyday Life in Istanbul*, which inspired the title of my recent solo show *Mythos and Utopia*, is my favourite history of the city. The more you know about the cultural past, the better you understand the deeper social codes of the city.

Muhsin Bey by Yavuz Turgul is a 1980s film about the interaction between two characters, Muhsin Bey, a decent, principled Istanbulite and Ali Nazik, who has travelled to the city from southeast Turkey to release an album and become famous. It perfectly reflects how the city and culture changed due to the huge wave of migration.

There are many delicious dishes in Turkish cuisine. Yoghurt is a very important ingredient so I would suggest people try manti, dumplings in a yoghurt sauce. Fiecin would be a good spot to try manti and other traditional dishes.