

# BAZAAR

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# ART

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Burcak Bingol

Crowds at Contemporary Istanbul Istanbul. It's a bubbling, rather than a bursting bubble! (Courtesy Contemporary Istanbul)



## THE ARTIST: BURCAK BINGOL

CERAMICIST, SCULPTOR, THINKER AND KEY MOVER IN THE CITY'S ARTSCAPE, BURCAK BINGOL IS ONE OF ISTANBUL'S BEST-KNOWN ARTISTS, LIVING AND WORKING IN THE CITY YET HAVING ESTABLISHED STRONG INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE WEST AND MIDDLE EAST.

**As an artist active in Istanbul, how would you describe the city's cultural landscape today? From the outside, we can see a huge amount of activity and expansion. Is this reflected in your own perception?**

I think it's not just Istanbul but the whole region is becoming culturally a very interesting place. Here, the city's cultural landscape is very active and it's not easy to follow everything anymore. And I think this interest outside of Istanbul makes Istanbul even more interesting. More and more people from the international art world come and visit if they are not moving to the city. Naturally, this creates a certain amount of synergy that ultimately leads to new potential activities. As an artist, it's nice living in it, while we have it.

**What is the situation with supporting infrastructure - education, financial opportunities, practical issues such as work spaces and exhibition venues?**

Cultural shifts are reasons for artistically prolific times. We are witnessing a transition in the country. There are a lot of things to think of, re-think, discuss and criticise and it seems like more will be necessary. In addition to that, I think curiosity in different levels plays an important role in this growth. Just like the curiosity of foreign art professionals that drag them here; curiosity of artists who are eager to dig history, politics, and identity; and curiosity of collectors who are willing to understand contemporary art better.

**What are the challenges and issues you and your peers currently face, which you feel are particularly unique to the city?**

Despite its glamour; Istanbul is not an easy city to survive as a full-time artist. Not just financially but socially as well. It is one of the professions that don't reflect on the society at large. This, naturally, cause some isolation for an artist if it's not discouragement. There is zero support on the government side. However more and more opportunities are being made possible by institutions, initiations, and galleries.

**How do you feel about the growth of events such as Contemporary Istanbul and the Biennale? Do they create tangible benefits for you and your peers?**

These are indeed becoming important events worldwide and being in them connects an artist's practices to a much wider audience. I see that they are different in nature and why each speaks to/attracts different crowds. But I think they should have little more in common in terms of the artist, visitors, and organization, to have a better-operating art world. ➔

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