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Architecture, Art, and Memory: Tracing Ceramic Panels in Denizli

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Abstract

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This study is the first detailed record of architectural ceramic panels in Denizli, Çamlık, offering important information about how architecture and ceramic design come together. Although architectural-artistic cooperation has been thoroughly investigated in major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, research in regional contexts is scarce. This study examines the ceramic creations of Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcan and Fatma Ilgın Şekerci, evaluating their contributions through archival material, site visits, and direct interviews. Furthermore, this study questions the broader impact and prevalence of architecture-art collaborations beyond major urban centers. The research highlights the societal changes in Denizli, especially the evolving urban landscape of Çamlık, where these artistic interventions are integrated. Beyond aesthetics, these panels reflect historical and social dynamics, marking shifts in architectural discourse. By bridging modernist architectural trends with traditional motifs, these works enrich the visual identity of public and residential spaces.

Keywords: Architectural Façade; Ceramic Panels; Art and Architecture Synthesis; Design and Spatial Integration; Denizli.

1. Introduction

Public space is defined as an arena where individuals freely express themselves, engage in interactions, and collectively produce shared values. Arendt (1958) states that public space, a symbol of freedom, is linked to citizenship and democracy, even though certain groups have been historically excluded (as cited in Gürallar, 2009); Habermas conceptualizes public space as a platform where individuals construct social reality through dialogue. On the other hand, from the eighteenth century onwards, culture became a publicly debatable commodity, thereby facilitating the transformation of societal thought patterns. Physically, public spaces enable people to come together and shape their collective memory and experiences. The cultural and artistic identity of cities is formed and maintained within these spaces (Habermas, 2003). Public art, by fostering interaction between individuals and their environment, adds aesthetic and social dimensions to urban space.

Public art is grounded in the idea of accessibility, removing itself from traditional, enclosed venues and embedding itself in everyday life through installations, conceptual objects, and street performances in the postmodern era. Artists such as Richard Long have criticized the confinement of art to museums, advocating for its integration into public spaces. Many countries have adopted public art as a formal cultural policy since the 1980s, contributing to the enrichment of public spaces (Emre, 2023).

In the discourse on public art, although the relationship between the artwork and the viewer, the semantic relationship between the artwork and the space is also significant. Art has shifted from traditional exhibition spaces, whether classical exhibition spaces or the modern "white cube", to streets, squares, and eventually buildings, deepening its interaction with architecture and integrating it in many successful examples. As a result of the intensified relationship, art is no longer regarded as a decoration but rather as a constitutive component of space. In this context, the historical boundaries between the two fields have been re-evaluated, and interdisciplinary collaboration has become a powerful means of production.

Unlike previous periods and other approaches in architecture, early ideas in modern architecture excluded the work of art as mere ornament and decoration. The importance of functionality, building technologies and materials, and the simplicity of the style led to a rupture in the unity between art and architecture. From the mid-20th century onward, the relationship between architecture and art was once again interrogated, and new approaches strengthening collaborations

gained importance in the architectural environment. These approaches, which have risen and gained momentum in the West, also influenced architects and artists in Turkey, but with a unique nuance. While many of these works were shaped by the dominant movements, they also had unique historical and local contexts shaped by the socio-political and cultural conditions of the country.

Modern examples of the synthesis between architecture and art have resulted in notable and unique works. While major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir house significant works, peripheral regions also host distinctive examples. Contemporary studies have focused on documenting these examples within the major urban centers, whereas research on peripheral practices remains limited. During fieldwork in Denizli, ceramic panels were identified on the façades of seven residential buildings. Each composition exhibited variations yet also revealed stylistic similarities and differences among the panels. Interviews with the architect of the buildings revealed that these early works were created by artist and educator Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın and his student, Fatma Ilgın Şekerci.

The city of Denizli has undergone multiple cycles of demolition and reconstruction, resulting in the loss of many buildings representing their respective eras. Although the Çamlık district, where the study was conducted, has experienced a slower pace of transformation due to its status as an upper-income residential area, aging building stock and increasing urban land values raise the risk of future demolitions. Consequently, identifying and documenting these structures and their façade artworks is important.

This study aims to document the work of Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın and Fatma Ilgın Şekerci with Faruk Boyacı and to examine their contributions in this interdisciplinary context. This study contributes to the literature by tracing the local history of ceramic façade applications in Denizli, analyzing their implementation processes, and highlighting their distinctions and limitations compared to similar examples in larger cities. In this context, public artworks in Denizli were examined through fieldwork, and the collected data were analyzed to evaluate the spatial, aesthetic, and social dynamics of public art.

2. The Relationship Between Architecture and Art in Turkey

The idea of synthesizing architecture and art gained prominence as a channel for criticism of the post-Second World War architectural milieu and was debated in different ways throughout the century, materializing in different forms of collaboration. The post-war years stand out as an interregnum in which various, but inner, critical approaches emerged against the early monotonous attitude of modernism, until the postmodernist period (Goldhagen & Legault, 2000; Yavuz, 2015). Within this critical atmosphere, from the early 1950s onward, the critique of Modernism's anonymity and ordinariness gave rise to a renewed emphasis on the collaboration between architecture and art. This approach was embraced in Western countries and found acceptance in many parts of the non-Western world (Erkol, 2009).

When examining the relationship between architecture and art, it becomes evident that architectural objects and artworks intersect through various contextual frameworks. Torrent interprets the synthesis between architecture and art in four ways: first, the architectural product and the artwork, typically sculpture, share the same space; second, the architectural surface becomes a canvas; third, art is integrated to generate a specific effect, such as in stained glass applications; and fourth, which Torrent contends as most successful, the architectural and artistic elements are designed in plastic harmony, aiming at a fully integrated, mutually dependent solution (Torrent, 2010). The artistic elements are integrated during the design process, and the structure itself has a plastic effect. Hence, the components of the structure become inseparable. To illustrate this, the UNESCO Headquarters offers a notable example of this.

In the context of Turkey, the relationship between architecture and art began to be exemplified from the 1950s onwards and also became a subject of debate within architectural milieu. Çiftçi and Tulum (2021) state that according to İzgi, who is known for projects that reveal the synthesis of architecture and art, the collaboration between architecture and plastic arts takes place in three ways. First, the designer assumes the role of both architect and artist, like Le Corbusier; second, the artist and architect establish a collaboration in the design process; and third, which he characterizes as the last chance, the artist is included in the process afterwards, and he states that this method is generally adopted in Turkey (İzgi, 1999).

The synthesis of architecture and art is grounded on a number of ideas. In the West, Le Corbusier emphasized the integration of architecture and art, and in particular, in his 1944 essay *Synthèse des arts majeurs*, he highlighted the emergence of a new aesthetic sensibility emerging from their synthesis. Similarly, Sigfried Giedion, during the opening of the 6th CIAM Congress, drew attention to the aesthetic problems of architecture and questioned whether, like in previous eras, a new collaboration between art and architecture could be realized in the post-war period (Giedion, 1951; Torrent, 2010). The architecture-art synthesis, while critically addressing modernist thought, promoted buildings in which artworks were integrated components of design. This synthesis, particularly in public space, restructured the visual experience and collective perception (Torrent, 2010).

Despite the intense influence from the West, the relationship between architecture and art has gained a new dimension in non-Western countries such as Turkey (Erkol, 2009). While modern architecture was criticized for its lack of identity, art was embraced as a means of expressing national identity. The critique of architectural uniformity was addressed through the integration of artistic elements such as mosaics, murals, and textiles. Thus, modern architecture was combined with local and folkloric elements. Between 1950 and 1970, a new visual language emerged in Turkish art, characterized by references to Anatolian motifs. Artists, drawing inspiration from Halkevi exhibitions and Nationwide Tours (*Yurt Gezileri*), created a synthesis between universal modernist ideals and local cultural expressions (Yavuz, 2008). This approach was also followed by various artists such as Füreya Koral, the ceramic side tables for the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM), with the collaboration with Cevdet Altuğ, İsmail Hakkı Oygur, Seniye Fenmen Taylan, and Nasip İyem (Sevim & Yeşilmen, 2017) or Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu who created for The Marmara Hotel, the motifs he developed during the Nationwide Tours can be seen repeated (Yavuz, 2008).

The collaboration between architecture and art became a prominent mode of expression, reflecting the cultural and social dynamics of the period. Various art forms including painting, sculpture, stained glass, mosaic, and ceramics were integrated into architectural works, making artistic production more visible within public spaces. During this era, artists and architects sought to create original works by combining universal modernist approaches with elements of local identity. As had been the case historically, ceramic and mosaic panels, in addition to their structural properties, served as powerful cultural signifiers. In this period, they established an even more integral relationship with architecture, lending identity to spaces through their durability and rich chromatic possibilities.

2.1. Ceramic Mural Works on Building Façades in Turkey and Around the World

Both in the past and today, ceramics, from Portuguese azulejo to Turkish Çini, have been widely used in both façade design and interior design. Ceramic tiles and glazed bricks were used as architectural elements in ancient societies.

In the modern period, Antoni Gaudí famously incorporated ceramics into several of his iconic works, including Park Güell, Casa Batlló, and the Sagrada Família. The use of ceramics on façades was also notable during the Art Nouveau movement, which embraced ornamental forms and materials experimentation. Globally, ceramics have traditionally appeared in the form of wall claddings, decorative panels, and ornamental surface treatments.

However, beyond these traditional applications, innovative movements in the field of ceramics began to emerge since the 18th century. Artists such as Georges Braque, Joan Miró, Marc Chagall, and Pablo Picasso began producing ceramics with painterly effects from 1921 onward, blurring the boundaries between fine art and craft. In Europe, collaborative efforts between Joan Miró and Joan Gardy Artigas stand out as notable examples of the integration of artistic expression into ceramic media (Gül et al., 2014).

Since the 1950s, increasing interest in the relationship between architecture and art in Turkey has led to collaborative practices that produced significant outcomes. One of the most influential figures of this period, Füreyâ Koral, who was followed by significant artists of Turkish art, established the country's first private ceramic studio. All of the artists produced ceramic works for both interior and exterior applications across various building typologies.

In the design process of these ceramic works, key aspects of the architectural product -its function, style, color palette, lighting, circulation, and environmental context- were considered. The selection of an appropriate surface for ceramic placement is crucial for ensuring visual perception, achieving a holistic design language, and creating a unified expression. For this reason, the collaboration between the ceramic artist and architect is vital (Özçelik, 2017). During the Republican period, technical innovations were also explored in ceramic (and tile) production, including multipart mold construction, slip casting, and the use of mechanical presses (Develi, 2012).

Ceramic panels have played an important role in integrating art and architecture, especially in interior design, where they function as decorative and structural elements. Architect and ceramic artist Rebiî Gorbun was a key figure with his reproduction of traditional Turkish tile art with modern industrial design. His works have been included in important national and international projects (Yüzer and Cephaneçigil, 2021). Gorbun's practices are important examples of how ceramic art did not lose its artistic and aesthetic value while being integrated into industrial production. Between 1950 and 1970, ceramic panels became important markers of architect and artist collaborations. Another important figure, Utarî İzgi, provided numerous examples with Füreyâ Koral from his first commissions.

Buildings featuring ceramic panels were predominantly concentrated in Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. Iconic examples include Anıtkabir, the Atatürk Cultural Center, the İstanbul Textile Traders' Market, the Vakko Factory (former), Divan Hotel, Anafartalar Bazaar, and the İzmir Efes Hotel. Cultural centers, headquarters and bank buildings, hotels, opera houses, theaters, educational institutions, and airports also became sites for collaborative works by various artists, leaving a lasting impression on the collective memory. In addition, ceramic panel applications were found in more modest settings, such as the façades and entrances of buildings and in the interiors of residences, stores, patisseries, restaurants, cinemas, and offices.

These works, which represent notable examples of public art, were produced by a wide range of artists, including Füreyâ Koral, Bedri Rahmi Eyübođlu, Eren Eyübođlu, Jale Yılmazbařar, Ali Teoman Germaner, Nedim Günsür, Cevdet Altuđ, Atilla Galatalı, İlgi Adalan, Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcan, and Tankut Öktem, among others.

Kırca and Üstündađ (2020) emphasized that ceramic panel designed through architect-artist collaborations since the 1960s have, in some cases, lost their original contextual integrity due to relocation, ultimately undermining the synthesis between art and architecture. For instance, the panels from Harbiye Ziraat Bank and the Divan Hotel Patisserie were removed from their original settings and, in their new locations, failed to retain their intended unity. On the other hand, the Vakko Factory relocated the panels while maintaining their relationship with the viewer. The scale and composition of the artworks at the İzmir Efes Hotel changed as a result of the building's changing purpose. For future conservation efforts, they proposed that the original location of artworks should be documented before relocation, that panels should be dismantled without damage, and that their reinstallation must respect the artist's intended relationship between space and artwork. These steps, they argued, should be secured through legal frameworks (Kırca & Üstündađ, 2020).

This disengagement indicates a conservation problem where ceramic panels are considered independent from the structure. Even when conceived holistically by the artist and architect or added later, as İzgi described as the last chance, the lack of a conservation framework results in works of art being treated independently from architecture. While the physical preservation of artworks is undoubtedly important, relocating them during demolition or renovation processes often destroys the contextual meaning established during their design. The artwork derives significant symbolic and public value from its connection to place. So, the building and artwork must be preserved together.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a combination of literature review, field observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and archival research methods to investigate the relationship between ceramic panels, their architectural contexts, and their creators.

The research process began with systematic field visits to the Çamlık district, where the ceramic panels and their associated buildings were carefully examined. Observations focused on the spatial and visual relationships between the ceramic artworks, the building façades, and their surrounding urban environment.

3.1. Participants and Subjects

To acquire detailed information regarding the panels' origins and production processes, a semi-structured interview was conducted with Faruk Boyacı, the architect responsible for the design of the buildings. The interview was audio-recorded, later transcribed, and systematically analyzed. We identified the ceramic artists involved in the project through this conversation. Given that the study focuses on examples from Denizli, a peripheral region, scientific studies focusing on Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir were reviewed simultaneously to contextualize and highlight the similarities and differences.

Following this, unstructured interviews were carried out with the ceramic artists themselves. An informal meeting with Fatma Ilgın Şekerci provided contextual insights into her contributions. A more extensive unstructured interview was conducted with Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın, offering further understanding of the artistic and technical aspects of the ceramic panels.

Complementing the interviews, a visit was made to Kızılcın's studio, where production facilities including workbenches, kilns, molds, and pigment shelves were documented. During this studio visit, all of Kızılcın's available sketches were reviewed, and those directly related to the ceramic panels in Denizli were identified. Numerous sketches were photographed and archived for further analysis.

The ceramic panels were first analyzed in terms of their relationship to architectural structure and façade, the formal characteristics of the individual pieces composing the panels, and the overall composition, including colors and motifs. We also documented their physical properties, the durability of their ceramic surfaces, and the preservation of their vibrant colors. The artistic distinctions between the panels, created by two different artists, were also identified through this analysis.

4. Results

In Turkey, collaborations between architecture and art were mostly seen in big cities within a specific timeframe. However, in cities where this effect reached later, such as Denizli, high-quality examples were seen. In this section, buildings featuring ceramic panels -mostly constructed in Çamlık region district since the early 1990s (along with one outside the designated area) are examined.

4.1. Spatial Development of Denizli and Çamlık Avenue

The urbanization process of Denizli has been shaped by the evolution of transportation networks, industrialization, and migration dynamics from the pre-Republican era to the present day. Initially concentrated around the Kaleiçi district, settlement expanded significantly throughout the 20th century, particularly following the development of railway and highway connections. From the 1950s onward, the city experienced rapid growth driven by industrialization.

Beginning in the 1960s, urban development became more structured through planned interventions. In the following decades, the northwest axis of the city witnessed the emergence of industrial zones and informal housing areas, while the southern districts of Çamlık and Kınıklı transformed into modern residential neighborhoods preferred by upper-income groups (Yılmaz, 2024). Until the 1960s, the city's functional organization was characterized by three main axes: the transportation core around the Station Area (İstasyon Bölgesi), the economic center around Kaleiçi-Bayramyeri, and the administrative core located in the Delikliçinar district (Özcan & Akay, 2020).

Following the 1976 earthquake, both the disaster and ongoing industrial expansion triggered significant migration to the city. As new residents settled in central districts, the Çamlık area was incorporated into the city's zoning plans. Over time, the area was gradually occupied by middle-upper and upper-class populations (Avsarı & Gökmen, 2017; Savaş Yavuzçehre, 2010). Since the 1990s, Çamlık has maintained its status as a prestigious residential area for the new urban upper class. The map below shows the urban shift from Kaleiçi/Bayramyeri and Çınar toward the Çamlık district.

4.2. Ceramic Works in the Çamlık District

In the city center of Denizli, the Social Insurance Institution Office Building and Orkul (Candoğan) Park, both constructed in 1961 in the Çınar district, became significant venues of public life. Adjacent to the park stands Hacı Halil Bektaş Primary School, designed by architect Cengiz Bektaş. At the request of the architect, a mosaic panel was installed on the façade, designed collaboratively by Turan Erol, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, and Ahmet Berk. According to Bektaş, this artwork became a visual focal point, with people seated in the park turning their chairs toward the panel to contemplate the mosaic (Kaplan, 2020). Kaytan (2025) stated that the ceramic panel is registered as heritage, whereas the school building is not. This also poses a conservation problem. This mosaic panel, which underscores the uniqueness of the work in terms of its artistic quality and spatial integration, represents a rare and original example of public art within the city center.

A survey of the Çamlık district revealed six apartment buildings featuring ceramic panel applications. In addition to these, one further example designed by architect Faruk Boyacı is the Yapıt-2 Apartment, located on Kıbrıs Şehitleri Avenue in the Atalar neighborhood (Figure 1). Boyacı stated that during his visits to İzmir, he was inspired by the ceramic panels they observed in public spaces such as apartment buildings and the Salepçioğlu Business Center. As a

result, he decided to implement similar applications in his projects in Denizli (F.Boyacı, personal communication, January 21, 2025).

Following this decision, Boyacı collaborated with Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın, an artist who had produced numerous ceramic murals in İzmir, on several of his residential buildings in Denizli. In some of these buildings, Kızılcın worked in partnership with artist Fatma Ilgın Şekerci (F.Boyacı, personal communication, January 21, 2025).

According to Boyacı's account, these buildings and their ceramic panels attracted considerable local interest at the time of their construction, and even visitors from the nearby city of Uşak came to see the works. The fact that Boyacı titled his early buildings with the word yapıt (work of art) rather than conventional apartment names suggests a personal and conceptual relationship between the architect and his designs. In addition, the name of the architect is engraved on all the buildings examined. This is a good example of accessing the architect's existence as an author. To better understand the artistic depth behind these collaborations, it is essential to closely look at Kızılcın's and Şekerci's artistic backgrounds.

Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın is one of the prominent figures in ceramic art in Turkey, hailing from a family of artists based in İzmir. Kızılcın's interest in ceramics began in the 1950s after encountering the works of Füreyya Koral. He initially received foundational training at the Eczacıbaşı Ceramic Studio in Istanbul and subsequently pursued formal education at Werkkunst Schule Offenbach in Germany (Erbay, 2005).

Although his education was shaped by the Bauhaus tradition, his Mediterranean identity led him to favor warmer and more communal artistic environments (Erbay, 2005; Üzüm, 2019). Upon returning to İzmir, Kızılcın established his studio and began producing ceramic works that blended traditional Turkish art with contemporary interpretations. He drew inspiration from elements such as İznik tiles and Hittite motifs, incorporating these influences into his practice. Through works based on calligraphy and gravestone forms, he successfully bridged the gap between traditional and modern aesthetics.

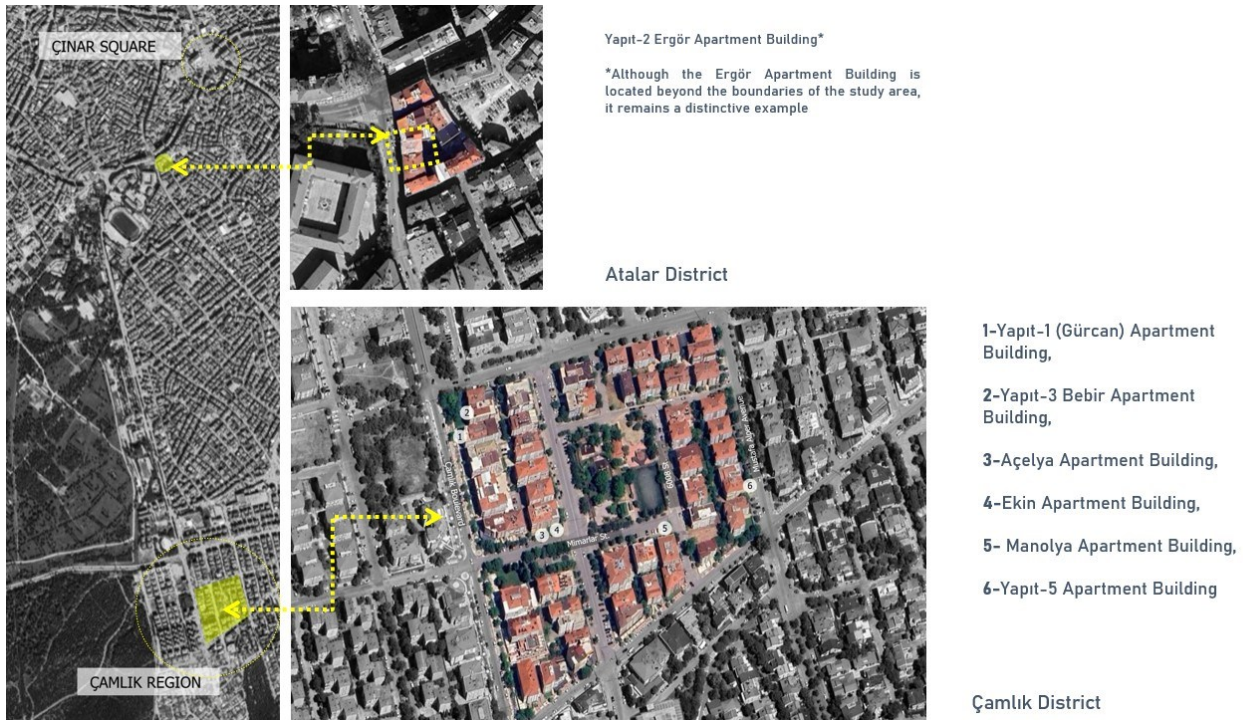


Figure 1. Locations of Ceramic Panels.

In his ceramic practice, Kızılcın explored themes such as fragility, symbolism, and the dynamism of form, harmonizing traditional techniques with a modern sensibility. Beyond his productions, he played a pioneering role in ceramic education in İzmir, mentoring young artists and contributing significantly to the cultural fabric of the city. His artistic activities extended beyond İzmir to neighboring provinces as well.

Today, Kızılcın continues to produce ceramic works at his studio in İzmir and remains active in training the next generation of artists. Following his encounter with architect Faruk Boyacı, Kızılcın expanded his practice to include both façade panels and interior ceramic works in buildings across Denizli.

Fatma Ilgın Şekerci, who started her education at Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Tile Design and Restoration, graduated from the Department of Ceramics in 1994, which she switched to in 1990. During her undergraduate education, she was mentored by the esteemed ceramic artist Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcın. Upon graduation, she worked in Kızılcın's studio, contributing to his designs and participating in collaborative ceramic wall panel projects, particularly in Denizli in cooperation with architect Faruk Boyacı. Şekerci had previously met Boyacı through his family connections, and the idea of incorporating ceramic designs into his architectural projects in Denizli evolved through mutual discussions. During this period, she invited Boyacı to Kızılcın's studio, where she facilitated their introduction. The first ceramic panels for Boyacı's buildings were created by Kızılcın. In 1997, Şekerci established her own ceramic studio, and from 1998 onward, she began independently designing and producing ceramic panels for Faruk Boyacı's architectural projects (F.Şekerci, personal communication, February 5, 2025).

Kızılcan designed the ceramic panels on the facades of the buildings Yapıt-1, Yapıt -2, Yapıt -3 and Yapıt -5, while Şekerci designed the ceramic panels on the facades of the Açelya, Manolya and Ekin buildings.

Yapıt-1 (Gürcan) Apartment Building

Located on Mustafa Alper Avenue in the Kınıklı neighborhood, Yapıt-1 (Gürcan) Apartment Building was designed by architect Faruk Boyacı in 1996. The building is a reinforced concrete structure consisting of six floors above ground level. Designed with two apartments per floor, the building features a simple and monochromatic façade. The exterior surfaces are finished with painted plaster, without the use of additional cladding materials.

A well-preserved ceramic panel by Kızılcan is prominently positioned on the central axis of the main façade. Notably, the architect's name is also inscribed within the circular ceramic panel, reflecting the architect's authorial connection to the work and underlining the personal relationship established between the architect and the artwork (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Yapıt-1 (Gürcan) building and its sketch.

The sketch seen in the images was received from artists's archive. Although the first traces of the design can be read, the final production differs from the first idea. Kızılcan stated (M. T. Kızılcan, personal communication, February 22, 2025) that in designing the panels, he aimed to create an upward visual movement from the earth to the sky (and vice versa) by transitioning from earthy tones to sky tones. To achieve this effect, he used shades of brown and blue. This approach can also be seen in other examples of him.

In the middle of the symmetrical façade, a ceramic panel that consists of various and independent pieces is placed asymmetrically. While the main units of the work are connected linearly, circular elements are placed irregularly around them, enhancing the asymmetrical effect. The randomness and non-repetitive details suggest that the piece was handcrafted rather than made using a mold.

Yapıt-3 (Bebir) Apartment Building

The Yapıt-3 (Bebir) Apartment Building was designed with a single unit per floor in 1997. A distinctive feature of the building is the ceramic panel positioned on the blind wall located between the windows along the building's left axis.

The panel follows a vertical composition, consisting of both attached and independent ceramic elements. This arrangement contributes to a dynamic visual rhythm along the façade. The pieces are characterized by soft, earthy tones interwoven with shades of blue, demonstrating a harmonious yet lively color palette. The composition consists of modular pieces created using molds. Rooster, the symbol of Denizli, and floral figures are located in the composition. Strong stylistic traces of Kızılcan's artistic language are evident in the panel's design. The size, density, and curved forms of the individual pieces collectively animate the surface, generating a sense of movement and vitality. Notably, the ceramic work remains well-preserved, maintaining its original material and artistic integrity over time. The panel not only enriches the building's otherwise restrained façade but also stands as a significant example of Kızılcan's contribution to architectural ceramics (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Yaptı-3 (Bebir) Apartment.

Açelya Apartment Building

Açelya Apartment Building was designed with a single residential unit per floor, adopting a vertical organization. The ceramic panel designed by Fatma İlgin Şekerci positioned on the blind wall produced in 1999 by YABA LTD. Şekerci states that in her works, she prioritizes that ceramics reflect the art of ceramics in the best way while adding aesthetic value to the structure and that she expresses her feelings and thoughts about life in her designs with an original, dynamic, modern style and abstract language. (F.Şekerci, personal communication, February 5, 2025).

The panel presents a unified and cohesive composition, structured vertically along the blank façade. Unlike more fragmented designs, this work appears as a singular entity, emphasizing continuity and solidity. Only two plain colors are utilized, reinforcing the minimalist aesthetic approach. The rough texture of the surface further enhances its tactile quality and visual depth. The ceramic panel remains well-preserved, maintaining its original physical and artistic qualities (Figure 4).

Ekin Apartment Building

Ekin Apartment Building was designed with a single residential unit per floor, featuring an asymmetrical façade composition that distinguishes it from more conventional examples in 2000. The well-preserved ceramic panel is designed and produced by Şekerci (Figure 5).

The panel displays a different stylistic approach and color usage. While maintaining a vertical organization, the composition features a singular color tone that distinguishes it from Kızılcan's examples and offers a distinct visual identity.

In addition to the ceramic panel, the façade integrates glass mosaic cladding which enhances the textural and chromatic richness of the building envelope.

The ceramic work by Şekerci thus reflects both a continuation and a divergence within the tradition of ceramic integration in architectural façades, demonstrating material experimentation and individual artistic expression.



Figure 4. Açelya Apartment Building.



Figure 5. Ekin Apartment Building.

Manolya Apartment Building

Manolya Apartment Building, constructed in 2000 is organized with a single residential unit per floor, presenting a predominantly symmetrical façade. Yet, a distinctive intervention comes through the ceramic panel designed by Şekerci, introducing a subtle yet impactful asymmetry into the architectural composition (Figure 6).

Positioned vertically along the blind wall, the panel features a cohesive and unified arrangement of handcrafted circular forms. While the building's main façade adheres to a rational, ordered language, Şekerci's design disrupts this regularity, creating a lively rhythmic movement that enriches the surface articulation. Through the deliberate use of asymmetry and the unique texture of hand-formed ceramics, the panel balances structural rigor with artistic spontaneity.

The panel, produced using durable techniques and materials, remains remarkably well-preserved, maintaining its visual clarity and material depth. Şekerci's contribution to Ekin Apartment exemplifies a sensitive dialogue between architectural order and crafted irregularity, reinforcing the enduring value of integrating artisanal elements within contemporary residential architecture.



Figure 6. Manolya Apartment Building.

Yapıt-5 Apartment Building

Yapıt-5 Apartment Building was designed with a single residential unit per floor, featuring an asymmetrical façade composition. The ceramic panel is strategically placed along the central axis of a symmetrical window arrangement, creating a strong visual anchor on the building's exterior.

The panel adopts a vertical composition, beginning with circular forms at its base and extending upward in a linear progression. This upward movement introduces a sense of elevation and dynamism to the façade. The artwork demonstrates strong traces of Kızılcan's characteristic style, with details and textures that closely resemble his other ceramic works. Many of the panel's elements were produced using molds, reflecting Kızılcan's approach to combining handcrafted and semi-industrial techniques.

The color palette consists predominantly of earthy tones interwoven with shades of blue, enhancing the panel's organic yet structured aesthetic. The ceramic installation remains well-preserved, retaining its original materiality and vibrant visual impact. Notably, a light fixture once installed beneath the panel, as visible in historical photographs, illuminated the ceramic work at night, making it a focal point for both residents and passersby.

Kızılcan's ceramic panel at Yapıt-5 building thus stands as a testament to his consistent artistic vocabulary while also exemplifying the integration of art and architecture in mid-to-late 20th-century Turkish residential design.



Figure 7. Yapıt-5 Apartment Building.

Yapıt-2 (Ergör) Apartment

Although Ergör Apartment is located outside the defined boundaries of the study area, it merits inclusion due to its architectural and artistic significance. Designed by Faruk Boyacı and featuring a ceramic panel by Kızılcan (Figure 8), the building exemplifies the collaborative design spirit of its time. The seven-story reinforced concrete structure contains a single apartment per floor and features an asymmetrical façade with glass mosaics were applied to the narrow surface along the solid axis as well as around the window axes. The well-preserved ceramic panel between two window axes has a vertical composition; the panel's earthy and blue tones reflect Kızılcan's characteristic palette. As in his other panels, larger, rounder ceramic pieces are placed near the base, becoming progressively slimmer and more linear as the design ascends, evoking a sense of upward motion toward the sky. This composition also highlights Kızılcan's unique artistic language, like other examples.

In total, seven ceramic panels, six located in Çamlık region and one situated outside the study area, were analyzed within the scope of this study. These valuable examples, examined in Denizli, of late 20th-century ceramic façade art in Turkey and highlight the enduring collaboration between architect and artist. The following section outlines the main conclusions drawn from this study and highlights the broader implications of the synthesis of architecture and art, in this case architecture-ceramics, in contemporary urban contexts.



Figure 8. Ergör Apartment Building.

5. Discussions

This section discusses the production processes, the stylistic features, and conservation issues of ceramic panels with particular attention to the relationship between the artist and the architectural context.

The ceramic panels examined in this study reveal a non-hierarchical and collaborative process between architect and artist. The relationship established between the architect and the artist differs significantly from a conventional employer-commissioned artist dynamic. The artist often produces a site-specific design during or following the architectural project process. Hence, these works were developed in the architectural design phase, establishing a connection within the structure. The widths and heights of the ceramic panels are determined contextually, shaped by the spatial constraints of the architectural surfaces where they are installed. Both in architectural and artistic products, the artists have demonstrated their independent style.

Six panels in Çamlık region demonstrate stylistic difference between Kızılcın and Şekerci. Since these ceramic panels are not mass-produced industrial products, their compositions are formed according to the artist's unique visual language, which remains legible in the works themselves: the shaping of forms, the selection of motifs and colors, the hierarchy and interrelation among the parts, and the production techniques. Kızılcın's compositions emphasize the flow of the composition with the transitions of colors and pieces produced by molds and hand, whereas Şekerci's works present more balanced compositions, reflecting a solid appearance even though they consist of pieces.

Kızılcın (M. T. Kızılcın, personal communication, February 22, 2025) has noted that his design aims to evoke a visual movement from the earth toward the sky, or vice versa, and accordingly, he employed a transition in color from earthy tones at the base to blue tones toward the top. In Kızılcın's compositions, the sense of flow is achieved not only through the use of color transitions but also through the shaping, scaling, and interlocking arrangement of individual ceramic pieces. This conceptual approach can be read fluently through the ceramic panel on the façade of Yapıt-3 (Bebir) Apartment. Furthermore, the individual artistic signatures of the creators are visible in the composition of the panels. Kızılcın's stylistic approach can be consistently traced across his works in Denizli. The panels of Şekerci do not seek a similar flow. In contrast, Şekerci's panels display a carefully balanced assembly of elements, reflecting her own compositional approach.

Additionally, Kızılcın established a contextual connection with the local environment by emulating Denizli's motifs, such as roosters, in his designs. The motifs in Şekerci's panels are not directly connected to the local context. Despite having been a student of Kızılcın and having worked alongside him for several years, the works of Fatma İlgin Şekerci demonstrate a distinctive personal style.

Beyond aesthetics, the production of ceramic panels involves a multi-staged technical process. The production of ceramic panels is a disciplined process involving stages of design, material selection, production techniques, firing, and installation. During the design phase, the space where the panel will be installed is analyzed to determine the most suitable materials and techniques. Biscuit firing strengthens and hardens the ceramic body, enhancing its durability, while glaze firing provides the panel with a glossy, matte, or vitreous surface appearance. Glazing can be applied through various methods depending on the desired effect.

The installation phase involves securing the panels to brick, plastered, marble, or wooden surfaces using appropriate techniques, where numbering and surface preparation play a crucial role. In the production of ceramic panels, three primary techniques are employed: hand modeling, mold shaping, and pressing. In the ceramic panels produced in Denizli, it has been observed that Şekerci predominantly worked by hand. However, as seen in other cities, some details in the panels by Kızılcan reveals the use of molds. Moreover, it has been determined that a special type of clay known as shamot containing crushed and pre-fired ceramic particles was used in the production of these panels (M. T. Kızılcan, personal communication, February 22, 2025).

Although the ceramic panels were produced and installed primarily in the early 1990s, they have maintained their quality to the present day. Several factors influence the conservation of ceramic panels: environmental conditions such as sunlight, temperature fluctuations caused by climatic changes, and rainfall, as well as structural conditions of the buildings. Additionally, the choice of materials, installation methods, and infrastructure directly affects the longevity of the panels. Furthermore, human impact is equally critical in their preservation (Karaağaç, 2024).

Upon examination, no significant deterioration, such as cracking, delamination, or breakage, was observed in the panels. There appears to be no damage resulting from material failure or improper installation, nor any structural issues related to the buildings themselves. However, risks arising from human interventions, such as renovations and urban transformation processes, remain.

Primarily, building occupants may periodically undertake renovation activities, especially on façades. During these interventions, there is a risk that panels could be damaged, removed, or covered by new façade or insulation materials. According to Boyacı (F.Boyacı, personal communication, January 21, 2025), such a risk once emerged at Yapıt-1 Apartment Building, but it was prevented through the architect's direct intervention.

As these works exist outside major cities, their position is precarious. Urban transformation projects, which are increasing in Denizli day by day, pose a risk to buildings and artworks. We can follow this especially from the demolitions in Istanbul. While current practices increasingly prioritize tracking and preserving panels during demolition, these processes have in the past resulted in the loss of numerous works. Ceramic panels at the Çamlık Wedding Hall, for instance, were not saved during impromptu renovations and demolition. Apart from these accessible examples, there is a high probability that some undocumented and unphotographed artifacts may have left the façades.

Today, the potential for buildings to undergo urban renewal raises concerns about the possible loss of these valuable ceramic works.

Although the examples in Denizli emerged later than the period of architecture-art synthesis was widely seen, they are significant in terms of their artistic and architectural quality and represent a significant collaboration between architecture and art. Although the buildings that they are attached to are private properties, these works create surfaces and open art to the public sphere. While some panels have been preserved through individual efforts and simply because of favorable conditions, none have been documented or protected. The circumstances of the built environment have the potential to transform itself at any time. The fact that these public art pieces are in the provinces means they may be forgotten and unclaimed.

6. Conclusions

This study provides the first comprehensive documentation of ceramic façade panels in a peripheral region, Denizli, offering a critical perspective on the synthesis of architecture and art. The collaborative works of architect Faruk Boyacı and ceramic artists Mehmet Tüzüm Kızılcan and Fatma İlgin Şekerci exemplify how public art can transcend decorative purposes to become an integral component of architectural identity. Unlike in big cities, the panel examples in Denizli are fewer in number and concentrated at a certain point in the city. However, despite being initiated by a single architect and created by only two artists, these panels are valuable examples of public art. The seven ceramic panels were analyzed in the context of the synthesis of architecture and art, and the ceramic panels were analyzed according to their form and style, technique, and state of preservation. In the early stages of the study, first contacting the architects and then the artists in light of the information received affected the course of the research process. Although the lack of direct access to the architectural projects of the buildings created some limitations, the interviews with Boyacı and Kızılcan, as well as the detailed examination of the sketches in Kızılcan's archive, enabled a more detailed examination of the small number of works. When examined in detail, it was determined that the works of the two artists are quite different in terms of design style. The colors and forms used in Kızılcan's ceramic panels are also observed in the examples in Denizli. Even though Şekerci is a student of Kızılcan, she adopted her unique style that was observed on her ceramic panels.

The ceramic panels examined have survived intact from the date they were made until today. The special efforts of the architect and his family contributed to this process. The panels are still at risk due to urban transformation and possible facade renovations. For the sake of architectural culture and urban memory, it is necessary to document these works and to develop a more established understanding of conservation beyond the actors.

The ceramic panels were popular with both the building's residents and the public when they were built, but only a few ceramic panels, seven of them detected, were made in Denizli. The primary reason for this situation is the shift in the dominant architectural language of the period. Additionally, the design, production, and application of ceramic panels

contribute to the overall cost of building construction, which can also be considered a factor. Another reason is that there were a limited number of competent ceramic designers in Denizli during the period when the ceramic panels were made.

Although the use of ceramic panels in architectural designs is not quite popular today, the use of ceramics can be revived in future approaches. Ceramic is an environmentally friendly material due to its origin and construction techniques. Since its primary material is clay, it is easy to recycle, and its waste costs are quite low. Today, we cannot evaluate most of the composite building materials used actively in this way. We observe that many architects and designers trying to produce environmentally sensitive spaces are returning to materials such as soil. With the introduction of generative design, artificial intelligence, and 3D printers into our lives, these collaborations have reached and will reach different dimensions. In addition to its technical advantages, the use of ceramics in architecture provides cultural continuity and encourages rethinking the synthesis of architecture and art in contemporary designs. For this reason, we foresee that we will see more collaborations between architecture and ceramic designers in the future. Such interdisciplinary studies are essential in architecture, just as they are in every other field. Architectural design is expected to have an aesthetic value with its form and style. These approaches allow works of art to be designed together with architectural products. Emphasizing and opening space for similar collaborations in architectural education will contribute to the positive transformation of the two creative fields.

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Conflict of Interests

The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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