

Munire Kirmaci (IAED 2001)

Munire Kirmaci (IAED 2001) is a product designer living in Manhattan and working currently at Chelsea Atelier (a NY-based architectural firm) in Union Square. A native of Mersin, she then moved at age 9 to Ankara and attended Ankara Koleji before coming to Bilkent. Afterward, she did some freelance, one year at RIT, and then transferred to Pratt Institute to finish her masters degree. One of Munire's most recent projects was a design of broken vases that went live at the Guggenheim as part of a current exhibition called Haunted, which is on display through 6 September. The Guggenheim approached her and said they loved the vases, so she made 50 of them for the museum, and plans to do more work for them in the future. Here are her thoughts on how and what she designs.



Q: How did you get into the field of product design versus other types of design? What's the first product you ever created?

A: My first product was a furniture piece at a product design class at Bilkent. We were given an assignment to design a furniture piece that would meet one of our needs. I designed a box within a box, which was a cube but had bunch of compartments in it to keep and hide my personal items such as letters, photos, souvenirs, etc. I had liked the concept but not what came out at the very end from the shop. It was my first time of working in a different scale other than designing an interior of a room. So, zooming in was something I had not experienced before. I have to admit I hated the project but accept the fact that it really triggered me in pursuing different scales and materials.



Q: Some of your products have tended to be kitchen table items, like chopsticks or salt and pepper shakers. What drew you to these types of tools?

A: I think it must be how much I love cooking and how interested I am in the tabletop products. I use them a lot and that triggers me to visualize them differently. I question how Mimi (my nickname!) would visualize them not in a better way but in a more intriguing way, with a whimsicality attached to it.

Q: Your work has a tendency to combine two-in-one, such as a walking cane that is shared by two people, or chopsticks that nest inside each other. What inspires you to combine?

A: Combining things creates a different challenge. I like to push myself and challenge myself to combine functions and meanings around practicality. Another reason is because there is always a duality in our lives at every point where we are asked to choose one. I think I like to ignore that and accept it as one.

Q: You have also designed furniture. Share with us non-designers a little of what goes into creating, for example, a sofa or a bookcase.

A: Yes I did when I was freelancing for others. Only the scale makes it different from other product designs. I definitely use my own experiences with a sofa, bookcase, chair, etc. First, I think about what problems I encounter with them and what are the lacking parts I've encountered. Then I observe and document (photographing everything) the typical surroundings of the furniture item I'm trying to design. After that, I do the initial sketching, then the mock-ups, then the 1:1 scale. Finally, I do the corrections (dimensions, tweaking forms, color decisions, etc).



Q: What is the meaning of the broken vases? What are they meant to convey? Do others works of yours have these themes of brokenness or cracked perfection?

A: The objective was to design a product that will remind us of love and how love requires great care at all times when handled. I chose a simple vase form made out of porcelain, knowing it would be a great material to work with in terms of fragility and breakability when handled. Then I chose to integrate different marks or cuts and place them on different locations on the form to imitate scars and wounds that would suggest the fragility of love and be taken as a reminder of the theme 'Love with Care'.



Only my vases carry the theme of brokenness, not my other works.

Q: How much does one "wounded vase" cost at the Guggenheim?

A: For museum members, one costs \$45, and the regular price is \$50.



Q: Describe your current project or piece.



Salt & Pepper in One

A: I am now designing a set for my salt and pepper shaker which includes a sugar dispenser and a tray. I am in the process of prototyping at this moment.

Q: One of your skill areas is in "color"—can you tell us a few principles you've learned about color in relation to product design?

A: Color is one of the essentials in the creating process. Sometimes it is the color that makes a product sell, with the correct color choice to make it recognized by the users. One has to consider the original concept of the product, then the demographics of the buyers you're targeting, then the scale of the product. You ask yourself what color will make it pop out, or make it look less impressive or dull. You don't decide the color at the last phase of the

The Latest From Bilumni

Newest Dergi Sent Out

The summer issue of the Dergi will be mailed to North America the first week of August. [Let us know](#) if you didn't receive yours!

Christmas Raffle Winner

Receives Tulumba.com \$100 Giftcard

Congratulations Simal Ince (CS '95)! She is the raffle winner and has won a \$100 Tulumba giftcard. Thanks everyone who participated and don't forget the next raffle!

Bilumni Launches U.K. Program

Bilkent's North American Alumni Program will be expanding to the United Kingdom this fall. More info coming soon on our alumni living in the land of the Brits!



Your Comments

Let us know what you think.

[Leave a comment!](#)

design process. You have to start designing the product from every aspect as a whole right from the earliest brainstorming.

Q: The art/design world, especially in NY, has been typified in some films as brutal. Is it hard to survive in the fierce competition of New York talent?

A: NYC is a challenging place to be and to live as a designer for sure. You have to be ready mentally for the harshness and not take anything personally in any part of the competition. Just make things happen without doubting yourself. But those films that represent the brutal experience of the NYC art & design scene had the same impact on me. Despite that I am still here and have been here for nearly eight years and probably will be here for quite awhile.



Q: What advice would you give to a young designer trying to succeed, either in Turkey or the US?

A: First, they should be patient with their ambition and their future plans, and not rush anything at all. Then, participate in shows either with a prototype or without. It is understandable if you cannot find the money for prototypes and the booths at these shows but at least you can try to save money to attend them and meet the manufacturers and designers. The international design weeks and fairs that take place around the world are great for building a network for yourself.

