

## Chapter 19

# Transition of Natural Forms into Ceramics and the Evaluation of a Group of Ceramic Works from the Semiotical Perspective

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### INTRODUCTION

Nature is an efficient resource with which the human kind is fed both spiritually and physically. Each and every creature in nature has been used by humankind by being modified in line with the requirements. It has been known that nature has been a prevailing source of inspiration for the artist. Structures (objects) of nature take yet another twist by being moved away from their context, through the merging of ideas and feelings of the artist. For instance, while rocks are carved to seek shelter, stones are turned into doors, walls, walkways by being added up or used to break or grind things at times. These examples vary in life, in different areas of usage according to requirements.

In painter Eugène Delacroix's words, 'Nature is a vast dictionary'. Artist chooses the words she/he wants from this dictionary and including his/her feelings, re-adds them to nature (Şişman, 2006: 44). The artist is primarily and mainly fed by nature. Artist produces an art work by interpreting everything he/she sees, hears and feels. Thus, artistic signs start showing themselves and these signs might sometimes become independent from their artist while sometimes they might not.

That visuality which takes place in many fields, brings forward the issue of reading, understanding and reinterpreting a pile of visual elements. Interpretation is primarily related to the issue of "meaning". At present, meaning is generated with the "observed" rather than the told and read parallel to this visuality process (Alp, 2011: 163). Rifat, who states that signs are perceived in sciences related to language, such as all kinds of forms, objects, facts that are able to replace the thing it represents by representing something else than itself; expresses that semantics analyzes the meanings of the signs and symbol is the sign that leans on the reconciliation among human beings. Besides, the author indicates that the process which analyzes the relations between the signs and their users (in other words, the producers and interpreters) is called pragmatics (1998: 113-120). There has to be a receiver for something to be a sign. Every whole that has a signifier and signified is a sign and this sign is determined through the meaning that is intended to be assigned.

Barthes thought that semiotics is an adventure that started in 1953's and it would revive social criticism and Sartre, Brecht, Saussure would also share this idea. Barthes studied society's beginning to see the meanings, stereotypes that they created themselves as natural meanings and the process of its description. According to him, semiotics is based on linguistics from the aspect of its practical concepts and is the science of all the signs (Barthes, 1979: XIX). Barthes also states that the signified is

neither a design nor a real object. He stresses that the signified is what the user of the sign comprehends from it, thus by reaching an absolute functional definition, he states that semiotic signified is explicable through linguistic signifiers (1979: 35).

Semiotics produces and interprets several meanings by analysing many disciplines. The signifier is a tool. The signifier is an intermediary for the signified to be comprehended. If the signifier is not in the position of object, it is more exaggerated than the original. The signified is a formal design and it occurs in mind.

Signs are usually defined as all kinds of forms, objects, facts etc. which represent something else than themselves and thus are able to replace what they represent (Rifat, 2009: 11). The duty of semiotics is to reach the solution by interrelating the message intended to be given to the audience rather than the exact meaning of the vision. The “signifier” which is a physical object and the “signified” which is the mental process are related to each other. This relation is about the creation of the signified in physical world by the signifier.

Kagan emphasizes that artistic form has to deal with two duties which are different from each other, yet dialectically related to each other and transmitting the artistic content by embodying it thus art has a communicative function as well as having the characteristics of signifier (Kagan, 1993: 293).

In this research, the natural stones and pieces of rock that have been collected from nature, have been interpreted by using ceramic material. The stones and rocks have been slip casted and casting has been made with casting slip. Each casting has been created with inspiration from real stones. By this way, they have been moved away from their context of real stone forms and turned into art pieces. When evaluated from the aspect of artistic process, the visual image and the image that is perceived by the receiver differ. Thus, semiotical evaluation begins. While artists are creating their artworks, they transmit their own feelings and what they have in their minds. Artists create their artworks by taking this relationship of form-content or signifier-signified into consideration both in the context of aesthetics and semiotics.

### **TRANSITION OF NATURAL FORMS INTO CERAMICS AND THEIR EVALUATION FROM THE SEMIOTICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Everything that exists in nature has a form, however these forms do not have a meaning, humans assign meanings to them.

According to Allen and Unwin (transl. Fischer, 1990: 13) the act of working aims to make the materials in nature (...) convenient for human desires; this is necessary to enable the material exchange between human and nature.

Semiotically, any natural form like a mountain, a river can appear as a sign. However, we cannot say that the signifier of this sign (its form) directly refers to a specific, constant signified. For instance, while Erciyes Mountain seems magnificent for some people, it is depressing for a person who lost an acquaintance there. It is totally related to the receiver; nevertheless, the meaning changes artistically. Forms are being assigned meanings by designers-artists in all branches of art. If we state it semiotically, signifier directly refers to a signified. The signifier and the signified are dependent to each other.

In 1937, Pablo Picasso, who witnessed the death of many people as a result of the bombing of Guernica town by warplanes during the Spanish Civil War, created an art piece called Guernica. This art piece, which is important in art world, comes out with

signs that are created by the specific expression of Cubism. This painting directly evokes tristful feelings and incidents like pain, war, pessimism. The sign of the painting and the parts of this sign, directly refers to a signifier.

For a sign to come out, there have to be relations and parts among the elements. This ensures the formation of the sequence. The semantical sequence that is formed by the producer might differ from the semantical sequence that is formed by the viewer. However, as the aim of the artist is to express his/her own concern, they must not be defferent from each other. If the sequence changes, the meaning changes as well.

A visual sign is a sign that will have the characteristic which will make it meaningful even though the object it refers does not exist. It physically resembles to the object it represents. As the visual sign directly represents the thing it refers, it is in a similarity relation with the object whose existence it refers (URL 1).

Eloquence in arts, in other words, the artist's verbalizing his/her feelings and ideas in artistic images, is a general and absolute element of artistic creation and none of the art styles can be thought separately from it. Because of their characteristics, aesthetic signs are less conventional compared to logical signs. Aesthetic sign wriggles out of any kinds of conciliation at some point and the meaning defragments in figimage. This term which consists of figure and image, has several different meanings. One of them is to define something that is not there visually, animate or the form that is animated this way. This is a kind of signification or sign (URL 2).

In this research, the evaluation of ceramic works in the semiotical perspective is discussed. The signs used in work I and II, have been turned into artistic signs by creating new meanings outside the meanings that are used in colluquial speech. In the sculpting process, the main form is the stone and the rocks, however, even if the signs of stones and rocks are clear, as artistic signs, the core meaning and the meanings intended to be assigned by the artist are different from linguistic signs from the aspect of signifier, signified. The meanings and feelings in the shown (mental) part of the research, indicate a different paradigm with the material used (signifier). In this context, the relationship of signifier and signified is intended to be defined. Prior to the signifier, the artist has focused on the signified. Form has been designed on the signified and the one to be signified. The artworks have been created being inspired by stones and pieces of rocks that have been collected from different parts of Turkey and that have different geographic characteristics.

When stone is formed by the artist, it both has a form and a style. The style is the signifier. Thus, as it is an artistic practice, this sign is a specific signifier.

Stylistics is the discipline that analyzes the narrational characteristics of an art piece from several aspects (URL 3).

The core contains the characteristics from choosing a subject to meaning. Even if the artist works on the same subject, he/she gets different results. Aristoteles, was the first to suggest the relationship of core and form in arts and took the form as arts' main element and core, which is not purified enough to reflect the absolute reality, as the assisting element. He stated that the basis of reality is form (Şişman, 2006: 185). For instance, the meaning assigned following the sculpting of a stone in a shore, a river, on a mountain and what the feeling in this meaning makes people think and feel, is the core. For the signifieds to reach a physical state, clay, glaze and several other materials have been used in the designs. From this perspective, as in all other artworks, the ceramic artworks' coming out as signs is only possible through material and that

material's being sculpted by an artist. While materials like clay, glaze, raw materials, kiln can be counted when the sign is viewed from the physical perspective; it is the object that is made by using those materials when it is evaluated from the perspective of object. The signs of a ceramic artwork are; all the physical-abstract forms and narration. With the linguistic elements like, the areas where ceramic artworks are shown, a critique about the artwork, if there is, the title given to the artwork, manifesto as other structures, become a part of it. Especially in these kinds of artworks, the title of the artwork is prominently important in the generation of the meaning of the sign.

Ulutaş and Çevik emphasize that, to be able to interpret the signs, we need language and the words accompany the signs in human mind while interpreting the signs; thus, linguistics is not subsidiary to semiotics but vice versa (2015: 28).

The art pieces that take place in this research have been created by the person who creates the sign. The owner of the art piece who designed the signified, which is intended to be potentially perceived, is also the one who does the semiotical analysis of the art piece.

According to Deleuze, artistic signs might be different from the linguistic signs as art does not generate a composition which consists of meaningful words in a syntactic order, its content is not linguistic but intellectual (Sauvagnargues, 2010: 31).

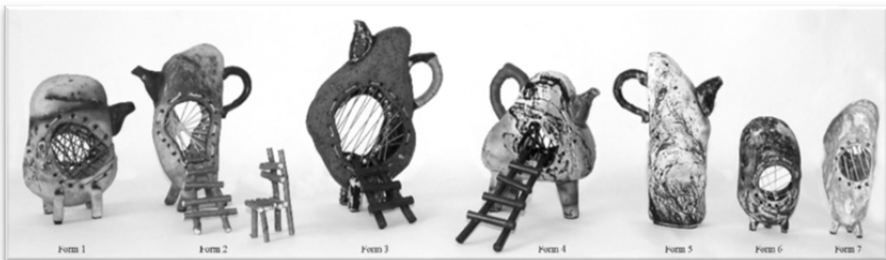
According to Saussure (transl. Cevizci, 2010: 733), prior to the linguistic theory, the language view which has its origins in Ancient Greece was arguing that words primarily function as names or tags for things in the World. Humans were using language to name or tag the objects and Saussure focused directly on signs by evaluating the words from the perspective of linguistic sign. The first aspect of linguistic sign is based on a material basis and it corresponds to a concept; while the second aspect of it is based on idea and corresponds to a concept. Accordingly, each linguistic sign can be seen as a sound or a sign of a sound that intertwine with a concept. Saussure calls one of these concepts which is the physical sound or the sign of the sound, signifier and the related sound, the signified.

As in Saussure's linguistic sign definition, the names of the art pieces in this research have also been linguistically evaluated.

In the art pieces below, each material used and each form sculpted have been analysed from the perspective of linguistics.

### **Piece I**

Name of the Art Piece : The village of stone teapot  
Technique : Moulding, mixed technique firing (saggar and glaze), 1050 C  
Size : 100x20x30 cm  
Year : 2017  
Place of exhibit : 2. Gaia International Art Biennial 2017, Portugal



<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFIER</b>	<b>SIGNIFIED</b>
The art piece (The village of stone teapot-name of the piece)	Redesigning of ceramic teapot forms that consist of 7 pieces.	The living spaces that come out of stone-like teapot form, in other words, that each form represents a home is the signified.
Ceramic Form 1	The the spout form of the teapot	While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.
	The form with a natural effect, stone-like form, the texture which are created by saggar firing	Saggar creates natural effects on ceramic surface as it is a natural firing without glaze. This is a reference to the old one, the previous lives and the primitive. Naturality, the transformation of nature.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Green and red strings	Green stands for nature, red stands for dynamism. That the strings pass through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form with a certain rhythm, represents meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The string also functions as curtain and represents the transition between traditional life and modernity.

<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFIER</b>	<b>SIGNIFIED</b>
Ceramic Form 2	The form with a spout and a handle	While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.
	The form with a natural effect, the stone-like form, the texture which are created by saggar firing	Saggar creates natural effects on ceramic surface as it is a natural firing without glaze. This is a reference to the old one, the previous lives and the primitive. Naturality, the transformation of nature.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Yellow string	That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form, represents meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The string also

		functions as curtain and represents the transition between traditional life and modernity.
	Stairs and chair made of tree branches	While the stairs and chair are interpreted as concept of status, loneliness, concern of position-status, reaching the peak, falling from the peak; chair emphasizes the act of sitting, taking a rest, the concepts of prop, support. Stairs contain the expressions of way, step, transition, connection, hope, pain. The usage of tree branch emphasizes naturality and primitivity by using an object from nature and also describes the need of human beings to nature.

<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFIER</b>	<b>SIGNIFIED</b>
Ceramic Form 3	The form with a spout and a handle	While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.
	Glaze fired, stone-like form	Unnatural effects have been obtained on the ceramic surface through glaze firing method. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology; it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Green string	Green stands for nature. That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form with a certain rhythm, refers to meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The string also functions as curtain and represents the transition between traditional life and modernity.
	Stairs	As well as being interpreted as concept of status, loneliness, concern of position-status, reaching the peak, falling from the peak; stairs contain the expressions of way, step, transition, connection, hope, pain. The usage of tree branch emphasizes naturality and primitivity as an object from nature and also describes the need of human beings to nature.

<b>SIGN</b>	<b>SIGNIFIER</b>	<b>SIGNIFIED</b>
Ceramic Form 4	The form with a spout and a handle	While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.
	Glaze fired, stone-	Unnatural effects have been obtained on the ceramic

	like form	surface through glaze firing method. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology; it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Red string	Red stands for dynamism. That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form with a certain rhythm, refers to meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The string also functions as curtain and represents the transition between traditional life and modernity.
	Stairs made of tree branches	As well as being interpreted as concept of status, loneliness, concern of position-status, reaching the peak, falling from the peak; stairs contain the expressions of way, step, transition, connection, hope, pain. The usage of tree branch emphasizes naturalness and primitivity as an object from nature and also describes the need of human beings to nature.

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Ceramic Form 5	The form with a spout and a handle	While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.
	Glaze fired, stone-like form	Unnatural effects have been obtained on the ceramic surface through glaze firing method. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology, it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality.
Ceramic Form 6	Glaze fired, stone-like form	Unnatural effects have been obtained on the ceramic surface through glaze firing method. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology, it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Yellow string	Yellow curtain at home, traditional life. That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form refers to meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The transition between traditional life, which is emphasized by the string, and modernity has been reflected.

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Ceramic Form 7	Glaze fired, stone-like form	Unnatural effects have been obtained on the ceramic surface through glaze firing method. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology; it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Blue string	Blue stands for freedom. That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form with a certain rhythm, refers to meanings like forbidden, hidden, closed, secret. The string also functions as curtain and represents the transition between traditional life and modernity as well.

The art piece that is analyzed under Piece I, is an installation as a whole. Each piece becomes a part of the whole by representing the whole meaning that is intended to be reached as well as having different meanings. Through the name of the piece “The Village of Stone Teapot”, traditionality has been emphasized in the meaning of the piece. The art piece has taken its inspiration from stone and formed with ceramic material, abstracted teapot forms have been designed and completeness is provided by using alternative materials (string, stairs and chair made of tree branches). Each form represents a living space, in other words each form has been designed to be a ceramic house in the form of a stone and from the aspect of meaning, human life (as well as traditional and modern life) has been referred to. These stone shaped forms carry the symbols (handle, spout parts) of teapots that are a part of traditional culture.

### **Piece II**

Name of the Piece : Overflows From Border  
 Technique : Slip casting, 1050 C, Mixed media  
 Size : 5,5x34x30 cm  
 Year : 2017  
 Place of exhibit : Air Distance Group Exhibition, Kayseri/Turkey





SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
The art piece (Overflows from border-name of the piece)	The ceramic teapot that consists of three integrated forms that are organized in a frame	The words overflows from border, which are included in the name of the piece, refer to the the meaning of reaching freedom from a bordered area.

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Ceramic Form	Materials that are made through ceramic firing; string, white frame, stone shaped ceramics, spout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living space, home, borders, restrictions, freedom, crossing the borders, tea, stone, teapot.</li> <li>• In this piece, which refers to the traditional and the modern life, the wooden frame is the border and this border is divided, crossed by the stone shaped ceramic forms which have been arranged to overflow the frame. While usually a painting, a picture is traditionally fit into the frame; this piece steps out of the traditional line.</li> <li>• There are borders in maps. A garden is bordered by fences, the countries we live in have borders. There are barricades that are set by the opposite side in wars, in protests. All the living beings are in borders. As well as being the living space of an individual; home is his/her border from the outer world. The relation between the ceramic form and the frame is a reference to this fact.</li> <li>• The forms that have been reinterpreted with ceramic material with the inspiration of natural stones, reflect that nature changes over time and it is moved away from its core by being changed by human beings. The idea is being supported by the meaning given through the transformation of the stones into ceramic and reflecting the traditional and the modernity through the spout attached to the form.</li> <li>• While the strings that are used in the form are reflecting secret lives, they also refer to traditionality-traditional way of life. The wide holes (hollows) that have been applied in some of the forms refer to being transparent, however, the strings are making it difficult for this transparency or honesty to come out. The hollow is the loneliness that is caused by individuality in modern life as well. The teapot form, which is abstracted by stone's being moved away from its context, is a reference to traditional and modern life by the usage of spout which is one of the symbols of teapot, a part of traditional culture</li> </ul>

SIGN	SIGNIFIER	SIGNIFIED
Framed Form	Form with a spout	The spout, which is located in the middle of the three interrelated forms, symbolizes the teapot. While the brewing-up, the act of drinking tea, the tea culture, the sense of warmth, the tea fields are represented through the teapot form itself; modernity is emphasized through the design and forming of the spout of the teapot form with a modernist approach.

	Glaze fired, stone-like form	Through glaze firing, a design that is unnatural but fundamentally natural has been created on the ceramic surface. As well as symbolizing the modern world, modernity, technology; it reflects the people who seem to be charming but can never get rid of artificiality. This stone is formed by being collected from the shores of Turkey. The emotional tie of the artist to the story of this stone, which is formed through moulding, is important from the aspect of the art piece to gain meaning.
	Hollow	The hollow in the middle of the form represents the transparent lives as well as emphasizing the loneliness that is created by individualisation in modern lives.
	Strings	If the forms which are attached to each other are thought as home, the strings that are used in the middle are the curtains. That the string passes through the hole (hollow) in the middle of the form with a certain rhythm, refers to meanings like forbidden, hidden. The transition between traditional life, which is emphasized by the string, and modernity is reflected.
	Frame	The white color of the frame symbolizes simplicity. That the stone shaped ceramic form is located to overflow the frame, symbolizes crossing the borders, getting away from the stereotypes. That the ceramic forms are located to overflow the borders in this piece, symbolizes the connection between the fact of being obliged to live in the borders and the ceramic form and the frame.

## CONCLUSION

With an emphasis in line with Mewlana's following words; "No matter how much you explain, you can only explain as much as the listener can understand.", the signs of the person who produces the art piece and the viewer of that art piece differ. According to this, the signs will be different from each other as what the artist explains will not always be in line with what the viewer understands and interprets.

Piece I and II are artistic practices that are based on teapot form. The adventure of tea, teapot, taking each of them as a house with the warmth of the teapot, the warmth and peace that come out of the home have been narrated. Besides, inspired by natural textures and by using alternative materials, practices with modern approach have been created. Traditionality, modernity, experiences have been emphasized. The ceramic pieces in the images, have been created apart from the daily linguistic paradigms. This article can be read as a manifesto. As these pieces directly belong to the artist, the signifier has been evaluated as signified. The natural objects that are moved away from their contexts, started to gain a new and different meaning. The modernist structures change. An art piece is not separate from meaning and feeling. The meaning is important for the feeling to transform. Guiding the feelings and ideas of the viewer, will gain a new point of view in the meaningful and formwise analysing and seeing of this piece by the future ceramicists.

Semiotics is being used for interpreting or explaining the meaning of various art branches. At the same time, the artists are actually in semiotics from the moment they create an image and turn it into a form, even if they do not make an analysis during each

production period. The significance of this research is that an artist's evaluating her three dimensional art piece from the semiotical perspective and expressing it.

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