

“Our aim is to create human focused environments”

WE DEVELOP OUR DESIGNS WITH EACH BUILDING HAVING ITS OWN STORY AND THE MAIN SPACE OF THIS STORY BE THE CITY. REGARDLESS OF IN WHAT SCALE WE ARE DESIGNING, WE SEE IT AS A LANDSCAPING ELEMENT, AND THINK ABOUT HOW IT WILL AFFECT THE URBAN PATTERN. URBAN AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN ARE SOME OF THE MAIN CRITERIA THAT DEVELOP THE ENVIRONMENT.

You are very focused on the design part of architecture, interior design and urban design, can you talk about a little bit of your designs and design criteria?

We opened in 1998 as an architecture office, because of economical structure and customer profile of Turkey, at first we focused generally on interior design. We met the big corporate players in the period of 2004-2005, they assigned us to do the architectural design for their investments and that process shaped our current profile. In 2006, we came out first in the project competition for Turkey's Union of Notaries Head Quarter with a team of four and that building became the milestone for us. It also became public in 2009. After our project competition for Turkey's Union of Notaries Head Quarter, Avlu 138, Rönesans' office buildings in Mecidiyeköy were our outstanding projects. Currently offices, automobile and malls are being constructed.

In 2010, a foreign firm contacted us to collaborate on the science cities in Turkey, technoparks and hospitals, we started to build up by responding positively but we separated in 2011 since the circumstances in Turkey did not cohere with the firm. In this process, we became very knowledgeable about technological development areas. As we shared this with the universities and ministries in Turkey, we started to make such master plans in 2011 and 2012. Within those, we design multi functional projects serving as units like offices, trading, residence and hotels. But the process gets too long. We can only focus on the project only after the steps such as finding investors and negotiating with them to carrying on.

We develop our designs with each building having its own story and the main space of this story be the city. Regardless of in what scale we are designing, we see it as a landscaping element, and think about how it will affect the urban pattern.

Urban and landscape design are some of the main criteria that develop the environment. When we're talking about cities, the environmental factors shape the way social culture grows. If you have a wellplanned city, the inhabitants will have more developed sociocultural lives. People are healthier, happier and more productive when the city they live in isn't a pile of problems, but a platform of solutions. Architecture is being reduced to a practice that fixes minor problems and has a narrowed spectrum of what it can mean. If a solution has not been thought through of what it might do to the city and the society, it will bring forth many more problems than it fixes later on.

Because we started our first works with interior design, we also did very detailed works in minor scales, this nourished us well when we moved on to architectural building scales. Even though we designed buildings in bigger scales, our conception of spaces were based on environments focused on human. Apart from that, we care about day light, natural air conditioning and local material use in all our designs.

Turkey has a developing building materials industry. The best supporter for the architecture industry is the material industry, that's why we prefer local materials. We choose to use local supplies with everything but more technical things, like lighting.



MURAT AKSU

SUSTAINABILITY AND ECOLOGY ARE TERMS THAT SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO EVERYBODY'S LIVES. WE CAN HAVE A CHOICE IN THE SHAPING OF OUR ENVIRONMENT ONLY IF WE DO THIS.

It's possible to use environment friendly materials nowadays, how are they recieved in the market?

I agree with what you say. It's possible to use them; but because this is a team job the investor, alongside everyone should also be sensitive to these subjects. We like to build fast in Turkey, material choices are also made to be as fast as possible. Even if the materials are very nice they're usually not received well, more economic and easily accesible materials are chosen. If the prices of the better more environment conscious product were the same as the others, than the use would be much more.

So, what are some of your favourite natural building products?

When we were doing interior design we realized how much we like the natural beauty of stone and used it in many of our projects. We were introduced to another situation when the scales and functions of our projects changed, investors started choosing products that require less maintenance and we had to use some metal based products. International investors are more into the sustainability of projects. It's like their brand motto is "we are going to make decisions with protecting the nature..." we should also be thinking about our future this way.

In our current issue's "Material & Method & Execution" article we are giving space to projects who use compressed dirt and bricks. What would you like to say about bricks?

Bricks have two uses; as a dividing or coating element. We've uses it as a dividing element for years; but in the later years the much easier to produce gas and bims blocks have been used. We think that because of it's much better counterparts, bricks are no longer used as dividers.

Kalebodur

But we use it for coating and we are fond of it. It has a warmth of its own. You can produce it in different colors which gives it much more flexibility. It's used as facade coating for it's warmth in places like England.

I think we are going to start seeing it more often soon. Also, because of the advances in it's production technology, i'm expecting changes in it's size. I think then it would be much more desirable to use. Actually we like to use all natural materials. For example; in this building we're in and a lot of other projects, we've used natural wood. We choose to use real wood flooring indoors. We love using natural materials in our projects but we also need to think about it's maintenance and fulfill our duty for the enduser, we have to keep balance.

You are using the building information modelling in your projects, you are also planning on creating a platform on the matter, can you talk about your work in these?

We were introduced to a software in the States in 2002, and it governed our attention. It was a concept design for a software that would build structures in a cyber space to make design decisions earlier and with no risk. Years later a software brand bought and expanded on this software. We bought this software around 2008-2009 and we started using it. 'Building Information Modelling' means that you can construct the building as an information model and govern every aspect of it in one space, where the producer, user and manager can make good desicions based on that model.

After some pilot projects we started using it for our bigger projects and we've seen it's many advantages. We as architects meet up with the engineers after getting some work done in projects and decide on what to do



next; but because of how fast the process is it's sometimes too late to do some things that we needed to do, this software makes sure we avoid being late on making desicions. We advise all the investors and architects to use this software.

In short, you can see the data in the model and the results in the simulation. Technology is always advancing and information is increasing. And we are always on the lookout for these advances. Our team takes seminars on green building design; because they need to be well educated to be able to use these softwares. These type of softwares provides architects with a designing platform that makes better, more profitable and more energy efficient. Energy efficiency is one of the most important things that we need to look out for, because there are always more high energy buildings being made.

You were a finalist at the Plan Awards 2015's multifunctional building competition with your Rönesans Mecidiyeköy Office project, can you talk about the projects design choices and the value it adds to it's environment?

IN URBAN RENOVATION, POSITIVE OUTCOMES LIKE HISTORICAL, SOCIOCULTURAL, ECONOMICAL PROFITS AND ANYTHING THAT IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE SHOULD ALWAYS BE STATED AND DISCUSSED. DESIGNERS SHOULD PROVIDE SOLUTIONS THAT ADD VALUE WITHOUT USING THEIR PRECISION.

We want the people to touch natural surfaces, and have designs that is mirroring of the local culture, our design criteria provides us with modern life's solutions.

Can we continue with the sustainable and ecological side of architectural design?

Architecture actually needs to have those things within its branches. In the past when there weren't terms like retail value, people discussed the functionality and longevity of structures more than anything, that's why when we go to any archeological digging site we can see the things they've done and be amazed. A more recent example is; we received a briefing on Istanbul's water pavillions, we researched how water was moved from the northwest to the city centers in the Byzantine era, and it was very impressive. This is not a part of architectural education, so these values of sustainable living should be given to students before they start their architectural education, preferably by their families; this should be something that every family cares about. Because we know green spaces to be picnic spaces, but they save our lives on many different levels. The climate that comes with the greenery is lifechanging, other than that people need a social life and being able to go to nice parks is very important.

The cities are getting very structurized which is something i don't like; we used to be nomadic people but now we came to like these concrete buildings very much, i don't understand how we can have such concrete cities with our history. You don't need to put in a lot of effort to be sustainable when building. Designers can easily achieve this and i've seen a lot of improvements in the last ten years; but i don't think this is something specially for architects, as sustainability and ecology matter to everyone...

We are always talking about urban renewal, is this well recieved in our country with the applications in place?

We state urban renewal as breaking down and rebuilding structures. Maybe that's how the media puts it but it's name is clear, urban renewal. There are a lot of useless spaces in city centers of cities like Kayseri, Bursa, İzmir and Ankara and we can see some effort being put into renewing them. But, mostly because they don't have the right team or they cant produce mutual values, they get stuck at some point in the project and the outcome is not well received. We support positively affecting and profiting renewal projects. This is possible when a mutual vision is at hand and every aspect of society is present in the realization of the projects.



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The Rönesans Projects started in the second half of 2010 and in 6 months time it grew into what it is. It exists in a highly populated and central part of Mecidiyeköy. An A-Class LEED Gold level certificate was used to shape the design. It opened and started its services in 2012.

We brought a couple different alternatives to our investor during the planning process. The surrounding useless old building stock created a negative impact on the feasibility. While designing we realised that there were few spots in a thirty thirty-five meter space that couldn't get natural lighting and ventilation, that's why we wanted to have an empty space in the building to overcome this. This was a revisit to the interior empty space we used in the 138 Yard of the Union of Notaries. In here, we designed it to be in between two arms of the office. It was first looked at as a loss of space and it was almost rejected but then they realized the added value it would bring and it was accepted. So

that's why there's a building with an interior yard / garden in Mecidiyeköy...

It became a half public space with demands from management, this provided it's users with a mutual platform to reach each other. Another thing we care deeply about is the local architecture and it's traditions that've been a part of the place for a while; bay windows and yards. We modernized the bay windows and had them on a few of the facades. Those bay windows can easily be turned into offices or conference rooms. We've provided the enduser with a lot of alternative space uses around the structure. Nobody wants to be stuck in a desk for eight to nine hours everyday. The people who work there will be able to go out to the yard or a balcony whenever they want to, or they can use the special box rooms to have all kinds of social activities.

We learned that we were to get a LEED Gold certificate three months after the building

was finished. This became a beacon of honor for us. As an architect i can say that bringing natural light and ventilation all around the building and using local materials is enough for a building to be green.

You said that you mostly used local products, which local products did you prefer?

Mostly natural wood, other than that fiberconcrete, aluminium and glass, also natural stone for flooring. The walls inside are covered with natural wood, the outer façade is made of fibreconcrete, wood, glass and metals. From what i can recall everything buy lighting is local...□

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