

ARTWITHOUTBOUNDARIES.ART FOUNDER
WALTER L. MEYER TALKS ABOUT HIS VISIT TO
TURKEY'S UNIQUE BAKSI MUSEUM



Chatting with Hüsamettin bey.



FIELD TRIP
www.artwithoutboundaries.art



Baksı is dramatically perched on a hill overlooking a branch of the Çoruh River.



Inspired by Bauhaus architecture, Hüsamettin bey designed the Main Building to mimic the surrounding landscape.

“My father left Bayraktar, returned with gifts in his suitcase. I left, took a stroll, and returned. Out came Baksı Museum from my suitcase.”

~ Hüsamettin bey

“Hüsamettin bey” literally means Mr. Hüsamettin, a respectful way to refer to a gentleman in Turkish.



The village of Bayraktar was formerly known as Baksı, a Kyrgyz-Turkish word meaning “shaman.” So it’s no surprise that beautiful shamanic objects adorn the walls.



The tiny village of Bayraktar occupies a different world below the museum.

SHOW TIME!

The Main Building is the venue for temporary exhibitions by prominent contemporary artists. During my visit, *Gözlemevi (Observatory)* showcased the works of France-based Turkish sculptor Osman Dinç.

The building’s breathtaking interior space enhances the artwork on display.

The Main Building’s Library (Kutuphane in Turkish) is a multilingual treasure trove of art historical books.



The Conference Hall in the Main Building hosts presentations for museum visitors and locals alike, reflecting Hüsamettin bey’s lifelong goal to connect artists, academics, and the public.

IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE I FOUND SOMEWHERE

BAKSI MUSEUM ONE MAN’S (IM)POSSIBLE DREAM

“I want to salute the past, meet with the past, and bring a recommendation for future dreams from that past. Aesthetics are cyclical, not linear. So the new and old go hand in hand.” ~ Hüsamettin bey

Baksı Museum is located in a remote region of northeastern Turkey. Its founder Hüsamettin bey was born in Bayraktar in 1946. Like his father, Hüsamettin bey left his village to pursue his dreams—becoming an internationally known artist, academic, and innovative educator. But a passion burned within to give back. And to create an institution that would celebrate and elevate Anatolian material culture. Baksı Museum was born! Baksı opened its doors on July 13, 2010. Not surprisingly, this unique institution quickly started winning awards.



Twin sculptures by Hüsamettin bey seemed to say “hello.”

My comfortable bedroom, and the wonderfully decorated public space in “my” home (which I have to admit contained several other guest rooms besides mine).



My “home” had a skylight—a feature of the region’s vernacular residential architecture. In Bayraktar’s traditional houses, these rooftop openings acted as both chimney and light source, but also served as the primary “door” in order to discourage wild animals from entering.

MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME

And what a home it was! Although it receives day trippers, Baksı recognizes it’s also a “destination museum” because of its remote location. So the complex includes several buildings accommodating up to 52 guests.



Baksı’s mascot Dost, a gigantic Turkish Kangal usually tasked with protecting a shepherd’s flock from wolves, made me feel at home.

BAKSI’S HEART & SOUL

The Warehouse is home to the museum’s permanent collection. For me, it’s Baksı’s *raison d’être*. And my favorite place. Like www.artwithoutboundaries.art, it’s all about breaking down boundaries. Pieces from Hüsamettin bey’s personal collection—that most museums would show in a separate space labeled “traditional art”—are displayed side-by-side with contemporary works donated by prominent artists. It’s all art. During the 20th century, many people left the village of Bayraktar in search of better economic opportunities. Not surprisingly, the powerful themes of “origin/departure/return” find expression in works here.



Foreground: *Red Knot V*, Seyhun Topuz (2011). Background: left, Wooden posts salvaged from a 500-year-old mosque that was in the village of Yoncalı/Bayburt, not far from Baksı; right, *Untitled*, Serkan Demir (2012). Though untitled, this last piece reminds me of Islamic prayer beads or rosary.



This unassuming L-shaped stone structure is home to the Warehouse.



Being a Woman, Beril Anılantem (2008)



Hand, 2011, Hüsamettin Koçan (2011). This piece relates to the Islamic Hand of Fatima. Its carved surface reminds me of wooden blocks traditionally used to print designs on fabric in Anatolia.



Left: *Roots*, Hüsamettin Koçan (2011); Right: *Reflections from Anatolia: Water, Sense, Journeys*, Ragıp Basmazómez (2001)



Left: Although not “officially” an artwork, this arrangement of carved wooden blocks greets visitors to the Warehouse. They’re used in Anatolia to print patterns on fabric (*yazma*) that cover the traditional low tables around which people ate while sitting on the floor. A close-up of one of the wooden blocks is shown on the right. (Naturally, Hüsamettin bey is responsible for the circular design.)



Apple & Pear, Elif Süsler (2011) University art counselor Nesrin Malloy, who lived in New York City for many years, and I (a native New Yorker), embrace between girls whose hats read, “New York” and “City Girl.” In keeping with Baksı’s philosophy, a beautiful hand-woven Anatolian carpet is displayed behind us. (Nesrin made my visit to Baksı possible.)

“I wanted to create a future at Baksı for women and children.”

~ Hüsamettin bey

Contributing to the economic, social, and cultural life of the region is one of Baksı’s missions. Accordingly, space is allotted for regularly offered workshops.

Local women participate in weaving workshops that both preserve disappearing traditions, and provide skills for earning an income.



Cleaning the River with Art was one of the children workshops that used debris salvaged from the nearby Çoruh River to create art.

Our young waiter İsa (“Jesus” in English) was a talented singer and baglama musician, too! (He’s also a graphic arts student.)



All of us enjoyed three delicious meals a day prepared by the talented chef Zeyit bey, who always took my egg allergy into consideration.

WISHES DO COME TRUE!

Locals visit Huykesen Ağaç to tie their wishes to this tree hoping they’ll be granted—to find a husband, get pregnant, cure an illness, etc. (Sorry, I won’t divulge my wish!)



WINNER 2011

For more details about the Baksı Museum, visit Baksi.org