

## DREAMING ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ARCHITECTS: DESIGNERS/BUILDERS OF THEIR OWN “HOMES”

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### ABSTRACT

*Throughout history construction of “homes” always existed at the borders of architecture be it with or without architects. This study explores the efforts of an artisan who preferred to build his own “home”. Mustafa Hızır has deposited his architectural desires in every corner of the “home” he constructed in 33 years in Niğde. Although his efforts are not as colourful as the dreams of Antoni Gaudí or Jacques Couëlle, the architect of Happiness Homes or unorthodox architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser, the story of this artisan in dreaming and building his “home” is very interesting. “Home” means “hearth” for Hızır and he was inspired by birds' nests while building his “home”. Hızır, who has spent more than thirty years building his “home” investigating crossbill nests, has hand-crafted all the items in his “home” from furniture to chandeliers. In short, this study explores the interesting story of Mustafa Hızır's “home” and along with stories from other artisans who realised their architectural dreams in their “homes”.*

**Key words:** “Home”, Architecture without Architects, Mustafa Hızır, Nature, Crossbill

### INTRODUCTION

A “home” shows up in a sort of way a retrospective recollection in human life –calling out also can be said-, in an any section of time flow. In this time-wise encounter, the home, which undertakes a role of shelter or cover, is a place that hosts human beings' both physical and psychological relations and morals. Moreover, it is a human being's primary place, world, or his universe (Goregenli, 2013: 123). In fact, in the way expressed by Cotuksoken, who is looking for an answer for the question “What is home?” in the philosophical depth, home is the key concept/term in relationship of mankind-world-knowledge. Such that, as mankind establishes the relationship in which he is at the center of over “home”; he forms the home and the home forms him (Cotulsoken, 2009). Evaluating the sheltering/residence purposes that the house undertakes; the home is not an ordinary activity but is an instrument that fictionalizes mankind's living and form of existence and it involves all physical, social and psychological processes (Ersoy, 2002: 32). As it is seen, these definitions show us that the home has an array of

metaphorical meanings, conceptually. Even though the fictitiousness in its content is dependent on each other as tight as a thick, home fictitiousness's covered in one way as mythic theme imbedded in subconscious as well. Considering this point of view, according to Gaston Bachelard saying "They remain in our inner selves, as long as we remain in them", the "home" presents us both dispersed images and images as a whole (Bachelard, 2014). Bachelard's statements are the shortest description of both disintegration and integration in the context of internalization. Through this permeable intimacy between our houses/homes, home is our connection with the earth, and our "corner" on the world, as well. As soon as we voice this fact out, the home starts talking (Dibek, 2012). Based on this matter, the home has patrolled even among the influential texts of literature, through the innocence of home upon a process of purgation. Across the fictionalized venues in writing art, the home draws attention with a metaphorical role, whether as a house or as being independent.

In fact, the home is a symbol which contains human morals. The home's aspects of being mysterious, its hosting humankind's spiritual side inside itself, leads human kind to transform it into a sincerity place. In short, by combining life experience fact and practices with the physical value of home, which belongs to objects world, turns it into a more numinous realness of existence, the state of affairs that provides competency of house's transforming into a home is grading from physical to spiritual. At the same time, this is an internalization - and it considers our form of existence as our sheltering form, by Heidegger's saying, (Heidegger; 2008: 77). Rapaport focuses on a clearer frame. According to him, in the equation of "home=house + x", there is not an x which is added or should be added to the house. The "x" in this quotation, in fact, refers to relations between people and important order systems whose resources might be the home. Or x can be a hidden place in the landscape, a neighbourhood, a city or a country, a work system or it may not be even an environment (Rapopprt, 1995; quoted by Over, 2008: 54).

In fact, home desire which is sought to get inside the house involves the whole of state of affairs covered with blessing (peace, children, holy etc.). Even in escaping from this affirmation and wriggle, the priority is self-existence of "home". Because as Heidegger also stated, what has priority is the necessity of discerning threatening environment inside the not-like home (Bal, 2010: 48-49). When indigenized physically and psychologically, home becomes unrecognizable with changes, it turns into an asset which is not needed and stands on the bounds of disappearance, eventually the demolished "house" is placed right in the center of the despair. Such that, this wreckage in which people like Adorno, who sees impossible to build up a new house in this era, take a shelter in is a serious obstacle in the way of desiring to rebuild (Dibek, 2012). For those like Adorno, the house was way in the past yet for people like Heidegger, the "house" which would maintain its home theme was continually waiting for being rebuilt. That's why, through crucially continuing modernism debates in 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the reference guide of those who are in search of the answer of the question of what the "house" is, turned into a fictitious means is undoubtedly was Heidegger's way. In his discourse as well, the real basis, of course, should be much more than a hut

and architecture's sole function of building up shelters should be interrogated and by doing this, he would have taken the lid off about essence of the house which many people have acquaintance with. This understanding was not an only issue of a rational philosophical justification but a true questioning of which it was not an object that could be assessed by measurable criteria that obstacles "living" (Lefas, 2010).

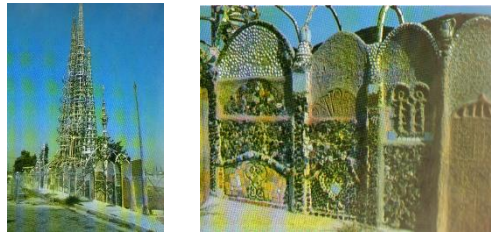
The more all the activities that modernization conducts on house and building designation has concomitantly brought unlooked-for psychological status and as idealized (topic to magazines, be stage for a movie) with objectivation desperately desired, the more the "home ideal" has become conversely unreachable, unbuildable and desired. Especially modern house symbol's covered distance in the way of objectivation in the context of house, Talu (2012: 73-109) states that, Modernist Architect Le Corbusier identifies a house as "a machine to live in" and that as a result of emphasis on functionality, the house turns out to be a complicated designation problem with various consumption images from simply being a house. After such objectivations, the "home" concept has become subject of many fields from literature to art, with fictitiousness dependent on lost house conceptualizations. Moreover, rational editing of house fact in modern architecture production, in its counter-front, in the house's internalized side, incarcerates in "home's field of existence, a mysterious place of winged life. Actually home is an intuitional understanding that may occur with internalization of a present situation, and house-home relationship is not new. According to Bachelard, this is quite ordinary as "one always dreams to return home, always dreams to get back there". Again, Bachelard draws attention to the fact that the house dependent on the past completed its mission, and the mage of future house always operates. The house of future can be more durable, more luminous and larger than all the houses of the past (Bachelard, 2014: 157). It is the reason we always encounter with people who strive for years to turn the symbol of "future house" a into home (Tulum, 2012: 20). Mustafa Hizir is one of the people who are in search of this. Over 30 years, Hizir has built a house/home for himself by inspiring from crossbill nests. "Designed as a nest", can be labelled as a reflection of modern era vernacular architecture, Hizir House's being a real home can surely be argued, because he emphasizes that he also wants to build a house similar to a turtle shell, within the bounds of his possibilities. Eventually internalization of "home" concept is one of the keys of this search, when inspiring from nature is evaluated in the way of learning from nature process, it is remarkable to use of this context in house fictitiousness, in the next part, Mustafa Hizir's productions on house-nest search similar to his influential sources will be analyzed.

### **From Dream's Doctrine to Desire's Doctrine: Learning from Nature and Alternative Searches**

In the previous part, evaluations about home image's turning into an object of desire with content of in context of nest were done. Especially, determinations about concept of nest's transforming to fictitiousness dependent on lost house conceptualization, modern home image's in the way of objectification in context of

home were completed. Considering the fact that the basic topic of study is to reveal an individual's desired or dreamed home image relationship, interwoven meanings of nest concept and home concept or disclosing the sides of homes that make it different from house as a shelter becomes more of an issue, as well. Actually, home-relatedness place in Mustafa Hizir's world and inspiring sources as iconographic model or privileged, safe home and an object of desire shows us that similar examples have been experienced many times. Through internalization of nest concept, desire of design and production have an unlimited area in architecture practices, based on especially inspiring from nature. Such that, nature has always been one of the most important sources of inspiration for artists and designers. Throughout the history, in many works of art, we encounter designs inspired by forms and structuring in nature and there are many masterpieces that take place in architecture literature. In architectural forming, architectures such as Pascal, Hausermann, Chaneac, Couelle, Cheval, Gaudi who used tendency depend on imitation of natural places have completely lead to a curvilinear aspect, as a result of proposing that there are not any right angles in the nature. This inspiration and learning process that exist in architecture can be exemplified in a wide spectrum, from huts designed like bird nests to complicated huts and curvilinear structuring (Arslan Selcuk 2009: 72). In fact, the way Mustafa Hizir is influenced by the nature and his description of fondness to curvilinear forms is not different from the aforementioned architectures and designers, at all.

On the other hand, there is a considerable amount of people who do not only learn from the nature but design their houses with new searches in terms of spatial as well. In 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture, many structures which were built with deviant materials and methods are seen. Filiz Ozer, who states that this understanding is named as *Alternative Architecture*, turning its back to classical architectural solutions, depending on individual's imagination and effort, indicates that those who indigenize this understanding especially go into product and design activity to object monotonous environment created by Modern Architecture understanding. Besides, Ozer states that Alternative Architecture practitioners divide into two groups in terms of basic attitude; first group only purposes to produce a one-time object that does not look similar to anyone else's and the other group; Alternative Architecture practitioners look for constructional production through technological perspective. Manual labour is generally preferred in such structures which expresses the owner's personal architectural style and lifestyle in terms of both design and materials selection (Ozer, 1991: 78). Examining alternative architecture and practices; one of the most striking examples of such is undoubtedly is Watts Towers in Los Angeles, produced by an amateur, Simon Rodia on his own between 1921-1954 (Picture-1).



**Picture 1.** Watts Towers, Los Angeles. Source: Ozer, 1991.

By working for 33 years, Rodia built a monument consisting of 3 towers by ornamenting the towers with sea shells, glass pieces, pebbles and ceramic pieces over thin metal pieces, which remind of Gaudi's architecture. Architect Boyce Luther Gully, one of the pioneers of the designers who use deviant methods in designing, built a chateau on his own, made by conveyor system of old rails, walls of which are made up of local Arizona stone and adobe, nearby Phoenix, Arizona (Picture-2).

Apart from architects like Bruce Goff and Alan McNown, worldwide known sculptors such as Nicolai Fechin and Hundertwasser, and painters similarly produced alternative designs (Picture-3). Besides these, even though it is different in terms of content, houseboats and those built up on concrete boat matrix located in Sausalito Cove, nearby San Francisco are among the examples of alternative search (Picture-4).

On these boat-based constructions, many different designs like Architect Chris Roberts's houses with high quality of plastics which he built in 1970s are seen (Ozer, 1991).



**Picture 2.** House in Phoenix, Arizona source: Ozer, 1991.



**Picture 3.** Houses built by Nicolai Fechin and Hundertwasser, source: Ozer, 1991.



**Picture 4.** Houses in Gulf of Sausalit, source: Ozer, 1991.

In fact, we see that house-focused experiences in alternative architecture production continues without ceasing. Surely, we should not evaluate the way the people who develop alternative ways apart from a house anatomy which is socially a framed situation and practices in this direction as an only search of home. As aforementioned it can be said that, along with a search after rejecting classical

architectural solutions, the individual's desire to actualization of his designs based on his imagination and effort have fed these searches. On the other hand, the desire to reveal the symbolic meanings of alternative designs in a place where the concept of "home" in house designs does not wind the human being and the spiritual needs are satisfied also a situation to be taken into consideration. The people chasing these dreams become happy with their desires. Currently, Simon Dale from Wales, is one of the those chasing their dreams with the constructions he built similar to hobbit houses. Dale, whose real parameter is following his dreams, states that following dreams keeps human soul alive. When Dale mentions the house he built, he answers the question of "Why did we do such a thing?" as: "Because it is fun. It is satisfying to live your life in the way you want." Yes, for Dale, who thinks desire to follow his dreams is fun, to be in contact with nature is an essential. Dale, who tries to build their houses with his family by being covered in mud, hay, dust, and soil; adopted learning from nature as a principle to himself, as a matter of fact, claimed that house form's matching with a nest-like line, which is purged from boxes, would only be possible by avoiding right angles and straight lines, by proposing that the nature is far away from quite straight (Picture-5).



**Picture 5.** Simon Dale and the constructions like hobbit houses, source: <http://www.simondale.net>, 12.03.18.

His thesis reminds the architects like Pascal, Hausermann, Chaneac, Couelle, and Gaude who proposes that there is not any right angles in the nature and considering that Mustafa Hizir's solid basis of house desire is avoiding right angle, common grounds in desires are remarkable.

### **An Incomplete Desire: Searching/ Changing/ Putting into Place/ Completing Mustafa Hizir's Home/Nest**

*"My house happened to be the reflection of what I dreamed of" ....  
Mustafa Hizir*

As an alternative architecture example, Mustafa Hizir Home in Nigde is a reflection of desired "home", instead of depending on ordinary architectural solutions. Mustafa Hizir's role in determination of one-time, in-place building and spatial practice's spontaneous development as design strategy is important. In his attempt of designing his own house, permeable decisions among skills of the subject, cognitive images, life style and opportunities, and inspiration resulting from continually reconsidering added to incompleteness, creativeness and craft skill which are not based on any kind of speculative knowledge are included. In his interview, Hizir states that he started building his house in 1976, and by expressing that transforming constantly occurred along changes in the process

since then, used an expression of “this house only exists here, around the world” which refers to this house’s being unique in the world (Personal interview, 2011).



**Picture 6.** Views from Mustafa Hizir's house, source: writer's archive, July 2011.

It is possible to track the traces of subjectivity which are sought in endless construction desire and nest state of affairs. As a retired teacher, it seems that he takes his willpower to build initially from this inner search. What guides his inner search is not art history books but his versatility. By stating that he is into plants and photography in his reportage, he shows his main design source as nature (personal interview, July 2011). He highlights his indigenized doctrine as a personal principle but not existence of interactions like Art Nouveau, in being interested in curvilinear forms.



**Picture 7.** Views from Mustafa Hizir's house, source: writer's archive, July 2011.

Mustafa Hizir expresses a kind of design manifesto with his statement as “This is a question that you have never heard of in your life, this is my own view, check all your organs, is any of them cornered? No, isn't it? Check your nose, head, ear, tiptoe, lung, stomach; all of them are round. This means that what is round in the nature attracts humans towards itself and the cornered things repel. This is my own view, my principle” (Personal interview, July 2011).

He transformed a particular data from which he sensed about his familiarity to nature and knowledge grounded on his own experiences into design idea first, then carried into effect as design practice. In order to convert his experiences that he earned from his inner world's encounter with nature, he made inferences by cognitive questioning and by doing this, he defined his own rules of reaching desired object. The conclusion that Hizir has come with experiencing nature resulted in originating a powerful design insight through incorrigible pursuit determination. Hizir who questions himself, observes, deducts, learns by searching

confects the design knowledge of Nigel Cross's knowing, thinking, and operating as a "designer". Cross (2001: 54) states that what designers know is constructed world, and the knowledge, skill, and values underlie the constructed work by advising that knowing, thinking, and operating as "designer". Mustafa Hizir contributes to constructed world's investment by indigenizing design knowledge with operating in the way of a "designer", too. In this constructed world, Mustafa Hizir still uses his own effort to build up his indigenized design knowledge. He provides not only the draft design but also the construction of images in his mind with his own methods as well.



**Picture 8.** Views from Mustafa Hizir's House,  
source: writer's archive, July 2011.

The construction methodology, he gained from nature, that Mustafa Hizir uses in transferring his curvilinear form knowledge into his house, is to obtain the material via his own workmanship, performing, and mounting to their places. For example, Hizir states that he gathered the stones he used in constructing his house from quarry site in Bor/Comlekci village by breaking the stones with a friend of his and carried until the construction site. Moreover, he completed the wood and metal work apart from stone, in his own extensive workplace (personal interview, July 2011).

There is another source that willpower feeds on which pushes Mustafa Hizir to create a nest desire. The architectural memory of the city Mustafa Hizir lives in is an important, energizer motivation in his world. For example, even though chiaroscuro in ebony door of Nigde Alaeddin Mosque enthuses him, yet he avoids forming the same. While Hizir says "what matters is to build what has not been built yet", he expresses the importance that he gives to interpretation rather than direct transfer. His statement of "... I have never seen a completed example of this iron bar. This is a three-dimensional iron bar. And I made it this way with my own ideas. I placed it inside by drilling... (personal interview, July 2011) indicates to determining design methodology in order to search for new and directly active, inessive of designing act. As a matter of fact, Hizir developed a way to himself which is indigenous to him, in order to build what has not been built. Accordingly, Hizir's method is to create solutions with formwork and on-site application. Hizir reveals how to build what has been designed by saying "after placing formwork, you place the stone and leave. What matters is formwork (personal interview, July 2011).





**Picture 9.** Views from Mustafa Hizir's house, source: writer's archive, July 2011.

In fact, Mustafa Hizir shows the same course of action from interior design to outdoor equipment. For example, his statements about construction process of fireplace in garden shows how planning and practice incorporate in constructed environment as a matter of selfdom. While he constructs his fireplace, he connects individuality of the design to application method which he explains as;

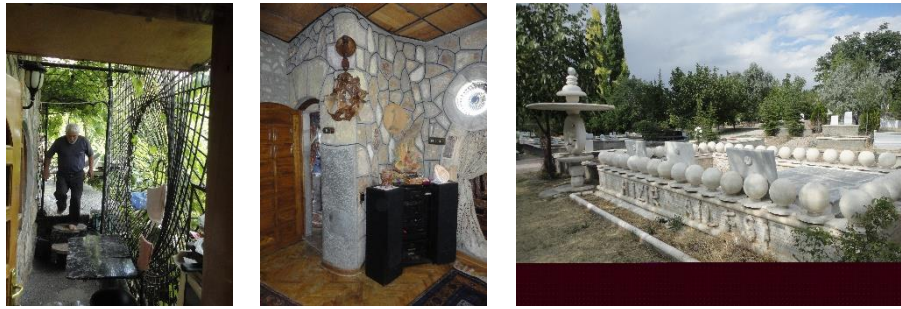
"Interior is chromium-plated sheet, foam glass, asbestos afterwards, and marble facing. First the asbestos is curved. Chromium-plated sheet is adjusted according to inner, foam glass is placed by leaving 1 cm space. Embouchure of it is levelled in order not to overflow. After that, the marble pieces of outside are cut one by one, then mounted. Base is covered in iron bars. Formwork is made and cemented. After cementing process, upper part is covered with marbles. This part is iron. It is for preventing cracking. Its duplicate is placed in upper part and put successively. Hexagonal section is formed with the marble above it (personal interview, July 2011)" As expressed by Bachelard (2014: 42), Hizir's attempt to plan and apply is like place's call for the act and imagination being put into work before performance.



**Picture 10.** Views from Mustafa Hizir's house, source: writer's archive, July 2011

The nature that Mustafa Hizir inspired while building his house up confronts us in stylistic construct of the house. Hizir who states that he has inspired from the nest of crossbill, actually reacts to becoming banalized that modern life imposes.

His statement as "I thought, while a bird makes a perfect nest for itself, there is no point in building one by one and living one under the other. I thought, a bird's making itself such a perfect nest, and rational people's building themselves such idle houses is repulsive. That is why I thought this way and I still do (personal interview, July 2011) is an important threshold towards design manifesto.



**Picture 11.** View from Mustafa Hizir's house and the graveyard he built for himself, source: writer's archive, July 2011.

It is more like an individual objection against living practices and standardized life styles which were banalized by the discourse of "A home is a machine to live in (Le Corbusier, 2012: 124)" through identification of mechanization to architecture and it has the possibility to dream and to practice. Mustafa Hizir's home, which was built upon an inspiration of crossbill, has an originality. This originality overlaps with Jules Michelet's proposal that, one should built a home with their bodies and themselves, which is quoted by Tumer (1993;314). This is such a powerful manifestation that, Mustafa Hizir also described this search for originality in his own grave's design. The idea by Adorno (2016;118) that the culture industry imposing same behavioral schemas to populations, seems invalid for Mustafa Hizir through all his desire from transforming a building design into a home and shaping his own grave.

### APPRAISEMENT AND RESULT

In his book, *Architecture of Happiness*, Alain de Botton relates the architectures' failure of building environments that attracts us with their failure to catch happiness. For Botton, who strongly voices out architectural dreams and who relates the discomfort of living environments with architectures' identity problems on their not-well-studied design approaches, "home" is the first place where those who aim to transform these dreams into action visit first. Those who aim to design a "home" with a strong desire as a result of desiring a living environment, are the ones to be considered happy for carrying their dreams into reality. In the study, story of Mustafa Hizir, who desired to build a home upon his own dreams, is discussed. The direct relation between design efforts and will for a home is also directly and especially related to Hizir's inspiration had from a crossbill's nest and his wish to learn by the nature itself. Nature, from which Hizir took his inspiration, reveals itself to us in the building's stylistic construct. In fact, Hizir, with his approach, reacts to banalization imposed by modern lifestyle and eventually, internalizing of the concept "home" leads an open path to conceptualization of the living environment.

Mustafa Hizir's home, which can be considered as an alternative architectural approach, can be assessed as a personal production by its aspect of being a reflection of desired "home" and not being built upon a banalized architectural solutions. He turned his knowledge gathered from his own personal experience

and his particular data sensed from his familiarity of nature firstly into a design idea and then into design practices. Mustafa Hizir's role on internalization of one-time, in-place produced and spontaneous environmental practice as a design strategy cannot be unseen. In Hizir's attempt to design a home for himself; flexible decisions between personal abilities, cognitive images, life style and possibilities and everlasting, continuous desire of renewing/reviewing is built upon inspiration from the nature, non-theoretical-based creativity and workmanship skills. On the other hand, he built his living environment/home by converting his personal experiences gathered by introducing his inner world to nature, into an object of desire. Hizir's conclusion has turned into a practice as a result of an everlasting, strong will to make effort through a design sense. Hizir, who learn by asking himself, observing, deducing and searching has considered all parts of his home as a design issue and spent his years for each environmental piece from his garden to indoor outfits. Hizir has followed the principle that the nature has not any right angles, like many architects such as Pascal, Hausermann, Chaneac, Couelle Cheval and Gaudi, who prefer trends related imitating natural environments in architecture. His similar feelings with masters who follow alternative architecture, living in many other geographies of the world and following the same discipline of "design for yourself" is a proof of the boundless emotional relation between those who reflect their dreams into their homes. These masters' bonds to alternative architecture seem to keep us asking the question "what is home?" and more importantly, the question of "Home or living environment?" will preoccupate our minds with such disciplines.

We thank *Mustafa Hizir* for sharing the spatial and fantastic story of his home; his object of desire with us.

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