Abstract

Aliye Berger, who has a privileged place in The Turkish Painting Art, stayed away from the generation clash of her time and various groupings. She was an artist who had an aim to acquire a place in art community. Her privileged place in art, and her life without giving attention to social pressure has result as reflecting her own her life style to her works. She is one of the artists who acts as herself. Her artistic style is just like an action which has a fictional expression upon her own identity.

Creation is not producing extraordinary things, creating shapes and strolling around the current time. Art has no gender, nationality and race. What is important is the necessity to do something real by feeling those deeply. People whom we can call genuine artists can easily assimilate polyphony in life and with some sensibility they can spend a whole life to reflect these with some bravery. Just as Aliye Berger, her art is also fed by her life. Her actions become a part of her life and create their own symbols. Thus, her works turn into their genuine feature.

In this paper, it is aimed to understand the identity of Aliye Berger through her gravures. As a woman artist who has gone beyond her own age with an analysis through her art, it is aimed to investigate her artistic personality and extraordinary sensitivity. This study is neither a history of art nor a biography of literary agent; it is an approach with the artist’s eye Berger’s drawings. Trying to understand her through the fancy world she created, insight of beauty, a place of fiction, technical restructuring and critiques related to her art and the visual materials and by investigating her works we wanted to create a written portrait of Aliye Berger.

Keywords: Aliye Berger, print making, identity, gravure, image.
1. Introduction

Aliye Berger is the first print-making artist in Turkey. Through print-making art has gained a reproducible characteristic. It is important that art has become widespread with help the improvement of print-making in a term which many people were aware of the art and have little knowledge about significance of painting. Aliye Berger has improved a unique and original language of her own through an old and traditional technique. Berger’s ability of reflection of the sensualities in her art with her different technique makes her art controversial even today.

2. Aliye Berger and her art

Aliye Berger’s social environment and her life have contributions on formation of her art perception. In order to experience her art completely we need to accept her social environment and life style as a whole. Her perception of art cannot be thought separately from her social life. Aliye Berger was born in 1903 in Istanbul, Büyükada. In her family there are lots of artists like Fahrünnisa Zeyd, Cevat Şakir, Füreyya Koral, Nejat Devrim etc. Berger went to the French schools and also she had course on painting and playing violin. 1924 was an important year in her life. It is the first time that she met with Carl Berger who is a Hungarian violin virtuoso and shaped the rest of her life. Her love for Carl Berger and the lost of her love made her very well known artist for Turkish art history. Aliye Berger’s love continued about twenty three years and she struggled against the society in order to live her love freely. Unfortunately the struggle turned to pain and solitude after C.Berger’s passing away. In 1947, Aliye Berger went in to deep depression because of her husband’s passing away and she committed to suicide. After that she went to London to stay with her sister, Fahrünnise Zeyd. At their she learnt engraving technique in John-Buclard-Wright studio. She inscribed her loneliness and pain on to the metal plates (Koç, 2004; Erbil & Kemal, 1975).

In 1951 she opened the first personal engraving exhibition in Istanbul. This exhibition is black and white. She used one mould generally. The artist explained her utilization of black and white such as: “In my white-black engravings, I found the light. I couldn’t always find it in color. Therefore I made done with my black and white engravings.”(Berger, 1980) Carl Berger’s portraits, interior spaces, landscaping, various portraits are the concrete subjects that Aliye Berger dealt with. However, the expressions of these subjects are abstract and figurative (Fig. 1.a,b). If we observe Aliye Berger’s painting, it seems her subjects are ordinary and not unique, but the meanings behind these subjects are her painful life and solitude. In order words, the subjects in her paintings are the combination of abstract concept and her life with full of pain. Aliye Berger rebuilt her own identity through these basic landscapes and portraits. She opens a window to her inner world through her objects and the figures. Berger combines the light and shadow spiritually and creates images in a mystic, dramatic atmosphere which belong to her world. In Aliye Berger’s compositions are like spontaneous sketches made up of quickly drawn lines. She used the power of simplicity of line in her works. The technique provides her to work layer by layer. Every layer is expression of her physiological situation and distinguishes her work from a sketch. Even if she draws a model; she tries to reveal the concepts in her mind. She looks at the model but draws Carl Berger. This artistic approach makes her an expressionist and an artist who puts above her inner dynamics. In her engravings figures are expressed by decreasing the white areas with using black lines. White areas create a strong contrast, increase the level of impression and increase the power of expression emotionality. Illumination of figure, especially the lightening around Carl Berger’s figure sanctifies it. The wide shouldered figures are silhouettes those cleared from details and fades in the space (Fig.2.a).
Being warm and sincere and manage to be as herself is very important for an artist. “I made whatever I want that I was really enthusiastic to make it. I draw, scraped, engraved pressed. I made all these because I wanted to do with my whole soul. Sincerity, warmth can not be thought in neither life nor art. There is no school of sincerity. I tried to improve my talent. I also watched other artists, I learnt many things from them but all these things caused me to look at my own life and to find my own way. I did not assume that my works are my children. My works reflect me just me. They are not Aliye’s children, they are Aliye’s own” (Berger, 1980).

According to Sönmez (1995), Aliye Berger should be evaluated by focusing on her art not examining the stories around them. Sönmez (1995) told that there is two theme in Berger’s identity. The first one is about following the imagery and the second one is, dealing with combining the color and form just once for “imagery” by putting aside the technical problems of art. (p.22-24) Technique is just a tool for her and she tried to reach the limits of techniques. She used different kinds of paper such as recycled paper, sand paper or muslin and utilized their textures in her print-making process. By using different matters support and enrich the production of imagery. Therefore she brought her art to an experimental platform. She did not copy her engraving a lot, but she worked on her works and tried to make each unique artworks in an experimental way.

In 1954 Aliye Berger won an award with her oil painting called “Sunrise” (Güneşin Doğuşu) in competition arranged by Yapı Kredi Bank (Fig 3.a). This is the first oil painting work of Aliye Berger that is why it is criticized a lot. Her work is appreciated by foreign juror, as it is different work for that period of time and also it has its own style independent from the traditional academic trend of the
time. Because of Berger’s appreciation, she is isolated by other artists. So, Aliye Berger concentrated on her inner world, and did not care art community and the art market.

Aliye Berger’s paintings changed after she had won award and become more colorful than before. The competition’s subject was “Work and Process” and Aliye Berger used this subjects in her other works, after this competition (Fig 3.b).

In 1959-1972 the artist used calor and enriches the subjects with Turkish Culture and history and produced new imageries (Fig 2.b).

3. Conclusion

Living is a different concept for Aliye Berger than surviving. Solitude and pain affected her life negatively. However, these concepts had also positive contributions on Aliye Berger’s Art, she developed her works with inspiration of sadness. Loneliness and pain are not just the basic themes of her art life but also main themes of her life. She continued her art journey with sincerity and referring the life for her art in great passion and persistence until she dies. Despite the criticism of other artists and the general academic trend, she achieved to be “herself”. Berger’s identity is made up of the sensitivities of her inner world despite wandering about on the boundaries of contemporary. She rebuilt her mind with the help of her paintings and with unique language, life style and imagery world.

References