



## THE EXPERIENCE OF "ART ZHYZHAL" CERAMIC PLEIN AIR

Kamuran Özlem SARNIÇ\*

### Abstract

This article is written to share the artistic experience of creating ceramics which occurred in a forest in Belarus. This forest is a recreation center and at the mean time it is a making pottery Plein air workshop place. If you are fond of art, especially ceramics, the International Plein Air Ceramic "Art Zhyzhal" is the ideal choice for inspiring you. The whole idea is active participation in oral presentations, demonstrations and workshops for sharing your knowledge, experience and talent. The Plein Air Ceramic "Art Zhyzhal" has been organizing since 2003. Since that time professional Belarusian and foreign artist-ceramists take part in it every year. The general motto of the Plein air is "From tradition to modernity through mastery experience". In this article the experience of the Plein air in Belarus is explained by means of the photographs and memories.

**Keywords:** Ceramics, Plein Air, Workshops, Belarus.

### Introduction

This study was carried out using participant observation method. The observation was made in 2014 by participating in the event as an invited artist. The mentioned event was the 12th activity of Plein air and the observation took place in with the 22 international ceramic artists. The observation was lasted 23 days at the pottery Plein air workshop place. Do you know there is an International Plein Air Ceramic "Art Zhyzhal" (Zhyzhal is the God of the underground fire in the Belarusian traditional folk mythology), (Anonymous, The Leaflets of the past Plein Air events 2011-2013.) Master Class, which takes place at the recreation center of the Verbka hotel complex (JSC "FanDOK"), on the Berezina River in Bobruisk, which is in the Mogilev region of The Republic of Belarus? The class is a form of international studio where genuine masterpieces are created from clay.



Figure 1: The view of the Berezina River.

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\* Assoc. Prof., Akdeniz University Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics, Antalya, Turkey.



Figure 2. The Flag of the Organization.

### The Past and the Experience

The first ceramics Plein air "Art Zhyzhal" took place in 2003. Although the venue is a hotel complex in the countryside when the symposium is held in the summer time, international participants are hosted in the art residence. "The organization has been conducted by the Culture Department of the Bobruisk executive committee, Bobruisk Art Museum and the Bobruisk branch of Belarusian Artists Union. The impressive international ceramic symposium has been held fifteen times by the leader of the Plein air, Valery Koltygin," (Anonymous, The Leaflets of the past Plein Air events 2011-2013.) who is a famous Bobruisk potter and head of the Bobruisk organization of the Belarusian Artists' Association.

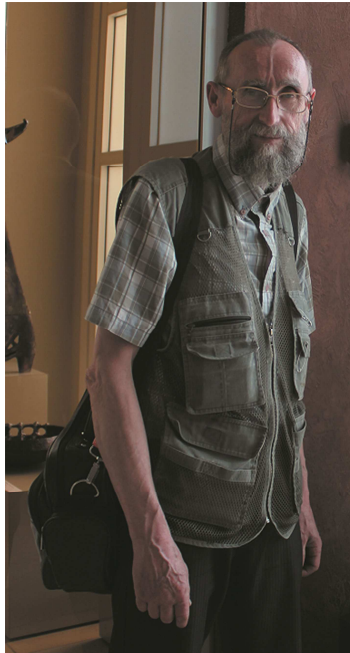


Figure 3: The Leader of the Organization Valery Koltygin.

The international workshop, where fired clay is turned into genuine pieces of art, brings together international masters thanks to Valery Koltygin's unflagging energy. This energy brings together these professionals participants on the banks of the Berezina River and the artists create unique works. The condition of the Plein air is suitable for hosting around 20 to 25 artists.



Figure 4: The Leaflets of the Plein Air.

The Plein Air “Art ZHYZHAL” is a respite from the usual daily routine of ceramists, allowing them to enter a different world of art as part of an ongoing creative process. It is an excellent opportunity to test oneself within the quivering flaming environment of ceramists. Ceramic work is poetically challenging – and includes the bitterness of abject failure and the joy of extreme success.

The participants are provided with full board as well as materials and equipment for work. They organize their working places, build ceramic furnaces; pile up their stock of firewood and make kilns all by themselves. All shaping is only done from clay and chamotte by hand and potter’s wheel.



Figure 5: Preparing the Woods for the Firing by the International Participants, 2014.

Participants of the Plein air in the works exhibit original specific methods, techniques and features in the forming of ceramic sculptural plasticity, as well as its decorative and color variety. Every year, the concept of Plein air is changed and developed by the organizers. All creative activities are conducted according to this concept. In addition, each artist gives one of his or her works to the funds of the Bobruisk Art Museum. Exemplary pottery in the spirit of the current trends, and innovative in its design and



execution, re created with the oldest, Belarusian technologies, such as manual and pottery forming, fuming and scalding in various composite combination. It can therefore be seen that The International Plein Air in ceramics "ART-ZHYZHAL" is a joint creative work completely different in age, experience, professional levels, nationality, temperament, and character personalities. It can be seen as a key to success.



Figure 6: The Firing Places of the Plein Air.

Ceramists embody their creative ideas and use successful processes at the organization through the use of various technologies. Four kilns are at the craftsmen's disposal. Three of the kilns have been used previously. In these three kilns, the artists can make obvara, raku, smoked, sagnar or oxidation firings. The fourth one is new and it is used to create fire sculptures. In this process, a figure of about 1.5 m tall is modeled on a fire chamber. It is then wrapped in a fireproof material. Flame and smoke comes from the top of the figure, making the sculpture look extremely spectacular, especially at night. Some of the former themes of the organization are: Ceramics in Civil Interiors, The Experience of Craftsmanship; The Traditional and the Contemporary, The Circles of Fire, Experience Excellence-Tradition and Modernity, Sculpture in the Interior Space, Sculptural Live Fire, Social Ecology...etc. The other facilities of the Plein air are one kitchen, one sauna (traditional Belarusian style) and swimming in the river.



**Figure 7:** The Sculpture that Built by Valery Koltygin of which Some Parts were Added by the Participants.



Figure 8: The Ceremony for the ZHYZHAL.



Figure 9: The Exhibition at the Bobruisk Art Museum.



## Conclusion

When you join The International Plein Air in Ceramics “ART-ZHYZHAL”, there are no set working hours, every artist has their own studio and it’s possible to wander freely through the compound at any time of the day and night. At the end of the Plein Air, an exhibition is held at the Bobruisk Art Museum and a ceremony is held on the river Berezina for the ceramists to give thanks to ZHYZHAL. Finally, it is so important to thank Valery Koltygin and his students and the staff of the recreation center for their hospitality and support. In addition, although the experience of “ART ZHYZHAL” is exiting and productive, it must be remembered that living in a forest conditions for nearly 25 days is not always easy.

## REFERENCES

Anonymous, The Leaflets of the past Plein Air events 2011-2013.

The records of the observation

### References of the Photographs

All the photographs of the article were taken by the author.