

Program Script for Berrin Yildiz and Murat Sarikaya (Aired on 3 January 2010)

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Location: Nevsehir

Perhaps you’ve never thought about it before, but the term ‘museum’ has quite a negative meaning in Turkish

Everything ‘old’- furniture, people- are considered to belong to a ‘museum’.

For many, visiting a museum – considered to be cold and boring- is the last option in their mind.

However not intentional, in Turkish, the term museum hints at being somewhere unattractive and outdated.

In a country where the term ‘museum’ has such a negative association, it’s quite interesting for one to start a Project to establish one.

Yet towns and cities – perhaps even meanings- can change with the contributions of

Cappadocia has a heavenly beauty and looks as if it has just escaped from a fairy tale.

Chimney rocks seem to have been sprinkled out of the sky, leaving us in awe of nature and her lack of boundaries.

While Urgup, Goreme and Uchisar (small towns in the Cappadocia region) are host to these fairy tale landscapes,

therein lies a small place in the centre of these three towns which is both part of and apart from this fairytale world.

Ortahisar is a small residential area **only 10 minutes from Urgup and Goreme.**

Yet these magical chimneys have mainly been used for cool-air storage.

Rather than appreciate them for their natural beauty, they have been considered only for their functionality...

Interview with the mayor of Ortahisar:

Of course the cool air storage is important for the people living here.

In these rock formations, people take advantage of the space and cool air to store citrus fruits like lemons, oranges, grapefruits that have been brought from the Mediterranean.

Tourism has been explored only recently. One may wonder why it took so long for them to realize the potential of tourism for economic development in Ortahisar.

And now, the cool air that once came from the rock formations are now warming in the presence of a new museum.

As the clouds covering the landscape of this small town start to disburse, it makes way for the sun to warm Ortahisar.

Many years ago, as professionals working in the technology sector, Berrin Yildiz and Murat Sarikaya visited Cappadocia as tourists.

They just wanted some time away to relax, and change the scenery. But that trip was to be a major turning point in their lives.

Interview with Murat Sarikaya:

Our company in Ankara was very successful and had major accounts. But **in 2002** we decided to move to a smaller place.

So we decided to buy a small house in Ortahisar. Then we rented the current building from

Actually this region in its entirety is like an open air museum. Yet still, tourists

are curious to learn about the culture, traditions and livelihoods of the people who inhabited this region.

So we decided that an Ethnographic museum to portray the culture and lifestyle would be a good idea.

Although tourists would come to see the natural beauty of Ortahisar, there was still no hotel here.

In our discussions with the locals of Ortahisar, they asked them whether they thought investment in tourism would be a good idea, but no one really thought it was feasible.

Of course it was not easy for Murat Sarikaya and Berrin Yildiz to bring this dream to life.

First they slowly liquidated their business in Ankara. Then they rented an old building from the Municipality and started making their plans to restore it.

Their objective was to open an Ethnography museum to display the culture and traditions of the region for tourists.

They started their journey with the hopes and dreams that their project would work out.

Interview with Murat Sarikaya:

We didn’t mention the museum at first; in fact, our original plan was not to open a museum!

We originally planned on opening a shopping centre and thought we could start renting out the stores one by one.

And in the meantime, small tokens of the region (statues and such) were continuing to be produced.

But people just did not believe that anything more could be possible.

They were shocked that we were spending money to restore old government buildings;

The building underwent extensive restoration.

After finishing the restoration, it was time for Murat Sarikaya and Berrin Yildiz to start creating the Ethnographic museum.

The visited each village to collect information on Anatolian lifestyle, and an artist helped them create the life-like statues.

Interview with Murat Sarikaya:

After writing the scenarios to reenact the rituals and livelihoods, we started to make a list of artifacts.

We started purchasing the artifacts for display and we realized that the statues would be needed to display them.

And this is when things started to get very expensive.

We were nearing the end of the Project and needed more funds for the statues- so we sold one of our cars!

Coincidentally, we met Çınar Azizoğlu, a Hacettepe University graduate, who listened to our project and came to see the artifacts and the museum space.

Yet inspite of our insistently asking how much it would cost to make the statues

he said “you have put your hearts into doing something like this. You have taken serious financial risks.

So I will do whatever I can to contribute. Don’t pay me, let’s just do this together and make it happen!” It was amazing.

Cappadocia’s first and only, and Turkey’s 125th private museum opened at the end of 2004 with everyone’s self sacrificing efforts.

Interview with Berrin Yildiz (she is giving a tour of the Museum):

Here we can see how the Cappadocia region’s rocks developed, the bridged architecture and the different types of rocks from the region.

On this side, there is an agriculture room. Anatolia and Cappadocia’s agriculture lifestyle and tools used in agriculture are displayed here.

Here we see clay and copper pots that were used to make bread in the Cappadocian

And here, we have a tandoor, a bread tandoor and bread trays. Here are stones that we use when making yoghurt. The local name is Tuluk.

Here the process of making grape molasses is explained. Grapes and molasses are one of the most important food sources in this region.

And here in this room is woven art, explaining how silk is made, how they are colored and transformed into rugs.

Next is the bath section where the Turkish bath is displayed. They explain the traditional Turkish bath and the materials used here.

The next section is the street section. You will see an old street with a water well and peddler. There is a woman washing laundry on the other side, and there is an old barber. Explaining how in the old days barbers used to carry their cabins on their backs and offered their services on the street, going from door to door.

Here is a very old sitting room, very simple and furnished with functional furnishing, a room with a table on the floor with food in a single pot which displays their dining culture.

Here we see the “asking the hand of a girl” ceremony. There is an interesting ritual in this town. If the woman’s family accepts the man’s marriage proposal, they are presented with a handmade woven sock which means we approve the marriage proposal.

This tradition still continues in some ways. The next room is the henna room. The oldest woman in the village prepares the henna ritual for the bride to be.

Then after some singing, dancing and entertainment the night ends. Next is the bride’s room.

Here is a bride waiting to show her face. And here are the articles in the bride’s room.

When the bride’s room is being prepared, they place a baby’s cradle for the first five days, indicating that the family wants to have children.

In the next room we see a special place, where the visitors can take pictures. Here the visitors get their pictures taken.

Interview with an English tourist:

The different lifestyles to what Western people are used to, the lifestyle at the villages had is pretty interesting.

The life they lived was in some ways basic but still similar in some respects to a lot of the European countries.

We have been travelling for 10 days; we have seen a lot of different places but it is a lovely museum and it captures a lot of the essence of Turkey

Interview with Berrin Yildiz:

It was hard because Ortahisar was taken out of the tourism destination list. Just before we opened the museum, the historic Ortahisar fortress was closed to visitors.

But now the restorations of the fortress are continuing, and soon it will be open to visitors again.

At that time, along with the fortress closing, it had been taken out completely from the program. But after the museum opened, we put in a lot of effort to bring this destination back to the tour operators’ itineraries.

Honestly it wasn’t easy, be it attending fairs, be it speaking one on one to Turkey’s agencies that bring foreign tourists.

We tried to promote our museum via telephone and visits. Some had learned of the opening of the museum in the papers and news.

We continued this for about two years and during that period had successfully promoted the museum.

Until now, **since 2004, about 80 thousand visitors have come** to the museum.

Things were finally starting to change in Ortahisar...

The light of this museum started to radiate the streets of Ortahisar. The first place that was affected by this light was the little coffee shop below the museum.

Even if the museum only looks like a hook for attracting tourists to Ortahisar, certainly in time, it’s artistic contribution will be appreciated.

Interview with a resident of Ortahisar:

The Museum had a very good impact on Ortahisar. We needed a place like this. Thanks to Murat, it has brought activity and has been a good source of income for Ortahisar.

Interview with another resident of Ortahisar:

Interviewer: What changed after the museum opened in Ortahisar?

Man: The location of the museum was originally the location of Ortahisar's first hotel. It was in terrible condition but Murat restored it...

And now, it is beautiful. Tourists that come here come to the court yard and shop and interact with our locals. With his restoration projects, Murat is creating lovely spaces.

Today the **entrance to the museum is 3.5 US dollars**. The residents of Ortahisar pay almost nothing. **Murat Sarikaya and Berrin Yildiz spent approximately 200.000 US dollars** on the museum and have not yet broken even.

But their objective was not to make money. Instead of climbing the ladder of success ladder in Ankara, they preferred to ride the colorful balloons of their dreams and pursue those instead.

Interview with Berrin Yildiz:

It was a dream for us because we love Cappadocia. Yet we were upset that Cappadocia did not have enough promotion,

and there was no place to display the richness of this culture. This is how that dream came to life. We too are surprised at times to see that our dream really has come to life.

Because we went through rough times. We did it without getting any support from anywhere. In fact, we even accommodated the Queen of Spain.

Having such an honorable person here after all our grueling and hard work made it a very special for us.

And in **April of 2009, our museum was elected as Turkey's Social Entrepreneurship Project of 2009 by "Turkey's Woman Entrepreneur Competition"** which is organized by GarantiBank and Economist magazine with contributions from the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey (KAGİDER)

Now have recognition and people know about this place. And we're very happy with its impact. There are more visitors, whether from Cappadocia or prestigious honorable members of other countries

They taste our delicious traditional food in the restaurant and this makes us really happy.

Berrin Yildiz and Murat Sarikaya set off on a journey as two daydreaming friends. They continued to pursue their dream of opening a private museum in Turkey.

They left behind a large company in the big city and invested in a huge art investment in a small town in Cappadocia.

By opening a private museum, they not only made a difference in their own lives but in the lives of people they had never met...

Just imagine going to a town you don’t even know. And like Berrin Yildiz, **setting up a museum. And each year 50 thousand people come to visit.**

This is a great success. You don’t need a Project to rescue all of Turkey or save the world. What matters is what you do for the community in which you live.