

# TimeOut

## Istanbul in English

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TARLABASI. WHAT WE LOVE, WHAT  
WE'VE DISCOVERED AND WHY YOU  
SHOULD MOVE THERE NOW!**

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# The Sixth Degree

Ayşe Şahin

## Berka Çürüksu Çavuşoğlu, architect

**Trained in your field at Yıldız Technical University, you've been an architect since 2000. What led you to pursue architecture as your profession?**

I've loved to sketch and design buildings ever since I was a child. Plus, Legos were my favourite toys. My mother would give them to me knowing they'd keep me quiet for hours on end.

**Were there any architects in the family?**

No. My father and mother are both pharmacists. I don't have any relatives with any particular interest in architecture or construction, and in fact when I first expressed my thoughts about being an architect, my family was surprised.

**What continues to make the field appealing to you?**

In designing any kind of living or work space, there are certain details that shape the process of design, starting, of course, with what specific purpose the space will be used for – is it going to be a residential home, an office, a school, a theatre? And so on. Other important questions are: How many people will be using the space? Will the space be used for any hobbies? Will there be any children or perhaps elderly parents living there? Will there be a kitchen, a dining room? How many chairs will the dining room table have? A building should be used for what it was built for, with a needs list drawn up from the start, so these are the kinds of details that

need to be taken into consideration in undertaking a project.

If you're designing a building in a city like Istanbul, it's important to consider whether it's going to be in harmony with the surrounding architectural structures. By this I don't mean that you should build something similar, but that you should create something that stands out just enough and in such a way as to make the surrounding buildings look good too.

These are some of the challenges of architecture that have made it so appealing to me.

**Have you read The Fountainhead?**

Yes, I have, and I liked it. It was about a highly idealistic but ultimately successful architect who never conceded from his principles of professional and personal integrity. It's an attitude that's not so easy to maintain in the real world, because in the real world, the client's priorities take precedence over your own. The Fountainhead made the important point that architecture should be driven by aesthetics as much as by a sense of function, because architecture also is, in fact, an art. The architect in The Fountainhead achieved success on the basis of his insistence that aesthetics and function can and should be mutually inclusive to the process of architectural design.

**What are some of the major challenges and frustrations you face as an architect in Istanbul?**

The most significant challenge is that people don't always give the profession its due value. Some seem to think that being an architect is something you can simply be at will, without any training or experience in the field. Just as I am not capable of managing an investment fund, a hair stylist, say, isn't equipped to create or carry out architectural designs in a way at all comparable with a professional architect. To be a professional architect means to be able to offer an expert's architectural skill and insight at a more favourable rate than an amateur and to make more efficient use of the space in question. There is value to that – but one that

many don't seem to be aware of.

**But then there are the rewards...**

It's thrilling at the end when everything's finished, whether it's a house or a school or an office... the sense of satisfaction is indescribable, having carried out a project from its inception to the handing-over of the key and to be thanked for a job well done.

**Which project have you enjoyed working on most so far?**

I'd have to say it was the Istanbul Culinary Institute project, which is in an area of Istanbul made up of historical architecture and therefore very representative of the city. The square opposite the building is going to be designed by the famous architect, Frank Gehry. We obtained a complete list of the building's functions before we began to work on the design and chose to make it a steel construction, which isn't so common for Istanbul. The client was very knowledgeable about the functions of a culinary institute so the information exchange during the design stage was perfect. It was a very satisfying project all around for both myself and my partner, Teoman Başaran. I hope the students and the visitors enjoy it, too. I would also like to add that the Beyoğlu municipality was very sensitive to the need to choose a form of architecture that would do justice to the distinctive nature of the area, and they deserve recognition for that.

**What are your thoughts on urban design in Istanbul?**

Urban design of course is a sub-category of architecture – and something that Istanbul unfortunately lacks. I remember when I took urban design in college; my initial reaction was that the professor was off his nut and that the subject was irrelevant. But Istanbul is a city where it couldn't be more relevant. So much of construction takes place illegally and without any regard whatsoever for the politics – let alone the aesthetics – of the space the city's inhabitants share.

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