

# ZEN COLLECTION

*The Garden of Silence: Void, Time and Contemplation in Corten Steel*

CATALOGUE ESSAY

# Zen Collection

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Zen thought proposes not so much to explain the world as to see it directly. To look attentively at the weight of a stone, the line of raked gravel, the void between two forms, is the way by which the mind returns to itself. The sculptures İlker Yardımcı has gathered under the title Zen Collection invite this kind of looking: placed in the open air, in gardens, among gravel grounds and calm water surfaces, the works are not merely objects set into a space but focal points that make the silence of that space visible.

The forms in the collection rest on a geometry that is simple yet deep: spheres opening out of a closed surface, rounded masses resting within a shell, interlocking arc segments, ribbons curling back on themselves, a sphere carrying a square void at its centre, lanterns through whose perforated lattice light seeps, and slender, sinuous vertical forms rising towards the sky. Each carries a moment of opening rather than of completion. The interval that Japanese aesthetics calls "ma" becomes here the very essence of the sculpture: surfaces that are cut, parted or pierced turn the void not into a lack in the form but into its breath.

In the Zen garden, the relationship between stone and gravel is a balance between what is and what is not. Raked lines evoke the movement of water, stones recall mountains and islands, and the empty space that remains is where the mind rests. Yardımcı's sculptures join this order in harmony. The rhythmic rings of the gravel echo the circular contours of the works, calm water surfaces multiply the reflections of the spheres and arcs, and plants such as bamboo and pine form a natural frame around the shapes. The sculpture does not govern the garden; it takes part in it.

Corten steel is the material of this harmony. The layer of rust that forms on its surface over time both protects and transforms the work; the sculpture acquires a skin that lives with rain, sun and the seasons. Bearing the tones of earth, dry leaves and autumn, this surface forms a natural kinship with stone, wood and plants. The wabi-sabi sensibility values not what is flawless and unchanging, but a beauty that accepts the trace of time and deepens as it ages. Corten steel is a concrete expression of that acceptance: it does not deny transience but inscribes it on its surface, while its robust structure endures as a long-lived presence. Change and permanence are reconciled in a single body.

Light, too, is part of this space of contemplation. At sunset the warm tones of the rust turn crimson, and at night the light seeping from within the perforated spheres illuminates its surroundings like a silent lantern. The sculpture shows a different face at every hour of the day; it asks of the viewer not haste, but patience and attention.

Zen Collection ties Yardımcı's geometric language to a way of life, to the principle of simplicity, silence and attention to the present moment. Whether in the middle of a garden or at the threshold of a building, these sculptures call the viewer to pause, to look and to hear the void. This harmony between form, material and place transforms the sculpture from an object into a space of contemplation.



001

# Poetic Accumulation

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 03 2026



002

## Intimus Nexus

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 04 2026



003



## Intimus Nexus

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 05 2026



004

## Genetic Movement

Corten steel



005



## Intimus Nexus

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 07 2026



006

# Lyrical Whirl

Corten steel



007



## Untitled

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 09 2026



008



## Untitled

Corten steel

İLKER YARDIMCI · ZEN COLLECTION · 10 2026



009

## Lyrical Whirl

Corten steel



010

## Poetic Movement

Corten steel



011

## Intimus Nexus

Corten steel



012

## Mundus Silens

Corten steel



013

## Untitled

Corten steel



014

## Confusion of Prism

Corten steel

THE ARTIST

# Prof. Dr. İlker Yardımcı

Prof. Dr. İlker Yardımcı is a sculptor, designer and academic whose practice centres on sculpture for public space. A graduate of the Department of Sculpture at Dokuz Eylül University's Faculty of Fine Arts, he completed his master's degree (2007) and his Proficiency in Art (2011) at the same university's Institute of Fine Arts. He is a professor in the Department of Sculpture at Düzce University's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, where he teaches sculpture in the urban environment, digital sculpture and computer-aided sculpture design.

"Confusion of Prism", selected for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and "Lyrical Message", one of 15 international sculptures selected for the Olympic Park of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, are among the works that define the artist's position in international public art. His works stand in squares, parks and collections in Türkiye, China, the USA, Ukraine, Argentina, Taiwan, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic. Exhibitions include the International Beijing Art Biennale (2012, 2017), the Lih Pao Biennial (Taiwan, 2014) and the Esch-sur-Alzette European Capital of Culture Sculpture Exhibition (Luxembourg, 2022). In 2024 he received the Excellent Award at the Wuhu Sculpture Thematic Exhibition "Carving the Renowned City of Jiangdong · Shaping Wuhu of the Era", organised by the China Sculpture Institute and the Wuhu Municipal People's Government.

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Images are digital visualisations of public-space proposals.

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