Ayse Birsel was born in Turkey, and studied industrial design at Middle Eastern Technical University from 1981 to 1985. Her designs are a combination of modern ideas and system of century old practices of structure and custom. Her design perspective is to distill problems to create alternative answers. She believes being an outsider has helped her in her work because it allows her to observe from the outside without prejudice. Her thesis at Pratt, "The Water Room" won an ID award for Concepts and the Design of the Future competition in Japan. In 1995 she designed a combination bidet and toilet for Japanese manufacturer Toto. Currently she leads a small design firm in New York called Olive 1:1.