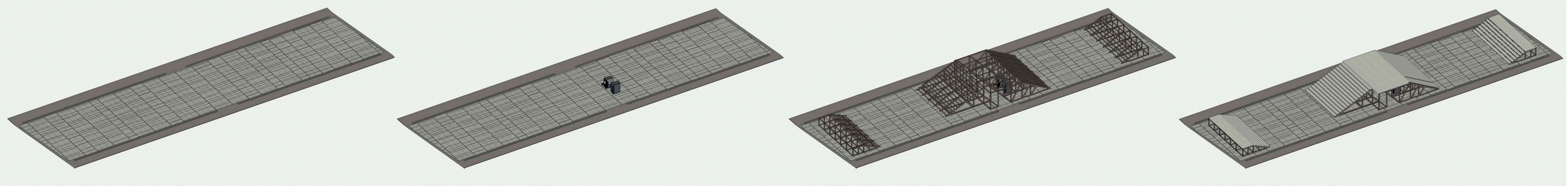


CCCO

a creative conversation

Godfried Donkor | Lone Taxidermist | Jan Fabre | Ange Ong
Summer of Love | Cevdet Erek | On Kawara | Grisha Bruskin





ÇIN

Cevdet Ere 's installation * IN*, created for the Turkish Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale, combines materially engaged spatial design and structural engineering, with a richly layered soundscape. While in Venice, Ere  enthusiastically discusses with **Ric Bower**, his love for music, his band Nekropsi and the various challenges inherent in his processes of creation.

Ric Bower: What stuff were you into in school then?

Cevdet Ere : Metal in its broadest form [*drums with fingers on edge of table*] – Sepultura’s early album *Beneath the Remains*: its energy, oh my God! Speed and thrash; death; grind! Before that though, my first tape was Michael Jackson’s *Thriller* – so that was another kind of energy... One of the best 4/4s [*finger drums Beat It on table*] – a fine example of non-ornamented drum playing... Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson; they were something together. So, these kind of energies all add to each other...

RB: But you went to architecture college!

CE: Not then, not then – we are talking bands in high school... architecture at university was later! We formed a band and I was the drummer. There was no music education at home then, I wanted a guitar but it was not possible, so I said, ‘OK, let’s buy two sticks.’ Then I was into album covers, and logos, and T-shirts, and posters... At that time it was mainly drawing rather than collage, probably because we had an amazing culture of comics in Turkey. I got to show you... how many band logos have I made? At least a hundred for our band Nekropsi alone; a new logo for each concert! It was good because we were never commercialised; we were proper losers.

RB: Sex, drugs and rock’n’roll?

CE: Not really. I think we were hard workers... and then off to examinations in the morning at the university. It’s four years normally at architecture school, but I took a break for Nekropsi. The final project before graduating, I had to take it three times. I was totally... well I was a little bit lost (like most of us are some point I suppose).

RB: No one gets a smooth ride.

CE: No, no one at all...

RB: The installation, here in Venice, looks like a life-size maquette for a dystopian, urban environment. There is no graffiti, no people, no cars... just tonnes of freshly constructed plywood structure. The space is very full, in fact.

CE: If you just leave a space empty, whatever you subsequently put in will make an impact. It’s so easy! One loudspeaker and *kbam!* But this was not what we wanted to do right here, right now.

RB: Did you generate the sounds for your installation when you got to Venice? Is it a process of gradual collection?

CE: I didn’t want to stay in my house, or in the studio in Istanbul to make sounds for Venice. I collected stuff along the way, but everything was done during the installation period – over the six weeks I have been here.

RB: Do you reference from architecture in the same way you do from music?

CE: Yes. With architecture, I’m coming from the study of particular schools – modern, traditional Ottoman, Byzantine, Greek, Balkanic, Japanese etc.

RB: There’s a strong sense of your involvement with your chosen materials of construction; to the point that, the ramps and the steps seem deliberately over-engineered.

CE: The spatial foundation of this project is a platform placed over a passage, which is reached with steps... then of course you have to have the ramps for people in wheelchairs.

RB: And the ramps bring with them their own aesthetic.

CE: Yes; I wanted to imitate the Venetian bridge ramps, and I even wanted to borrow one, but because of the safety regulations we had to have stronger ones.

RB: Are the slopes regulation?

CE: Hold on... you are running too fast! I’m going to finish telling you about the specifics of the construction first. 500 kilograms per square metre is the limit for the floor. We were told that we could only let ten

people onto the platform at the same time. I said, ‘No way, no queues to get in at this pavilion.’ So we started to work out how to distribute the weight equally. We talked to Signor Magris, who originally renovated the building – he is a structural engineer – and he worked it out according to our architectural design. That is why there are so many wooden ‘V’s in the design and it seems over-engineered.

RB: It must be interesting for you as an architect, to see all these bonkers National Pavilion buildings in the Giardini.

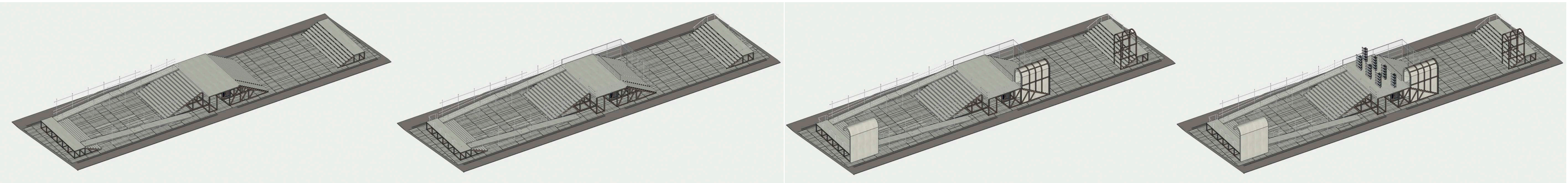
CE: That’s why I designed this structure; it’s my version of a Pavilion.

RB: But you can walk right under it, right through the space without realising it. The facade is a wooden tunnel. It’s like, ‘Here we are. You’re through. You’re gone. Where is it? What was it?’ There’s a ‘fuck you’ in there somewhere.

CE: Maybe, but construction... we gotta talk construction! The sculptural qualities of this work emerged organically, by continuously making decisions about material concerns, and the limitations imposed on us by the circumstances – which is super, super-normal for architecture, because architecture is really just lots of regulations, millions of regulations in fact. Music has regulations too, but nobody’s gonna die if I make a mistake in music.

RB: There’s something very humble about that, which is massively counter-cultural to most of what goes on in the Biennale, and in the art world in general.

CE: Forget them. I had a taste of being road crew for bands; years of





First spread:
CAD drawings for ÇİN, 2017, **Cevdet Erkek**, Pavilion of Turkey at the 57th Venice Biennale, courtesy the artist

All images from this spread on:
ÇİN, 2017, **Cevdet Erkek**, Pavilion of Turkey at the 57th Venice Biennale, installation view, courtesy the artist; photos: RMphotostudio



working in the sound studio, and at the same time, serving other artists. After architecture, I studied a Masters in Sound Design, and then started working as a research assistant; so I spent days in the studio making mics and cables for all kinds of musicians and pop stars. These were all good chances to observe artists and art in general.

RB: An amazing education.

CE: It was a good training for character. For some artists, people around them don't exist, other than those higher than them on the ladder, of course.

RB: Have you heard the aphorism: 'you should be nice to people when you're on the way up, because they are the same people you meet on your way back down'?

CE: ... Wait, wait, can we go back to construction and materials please? I've been looking at these iron tube staircases for ages – just like the stadiums, in Istanbul – and I've especially started seeing them since working on this presentation. I'm not simulating a stadium, but improvising, to have the feeling of being blocked in as you walk into a space, and then the amazing feeling of release; it's just like in music. So yeah, these are cognitive choices, but mostly lots and lots of improvisation.

RB: So, to finish on materials: you mentioned you were going to do metal, but you chose wood instead, was that because it has a different feel?

CE: No, we just didn't go for the stuff that would take four weeks to turn up, i.e. metal; we went for the stuff that would turn up in three days, and would allow us to remain within budget.

RB: The things that really struck me, reading about the project before coming to Venice were: firstly – you don't have a curator; secondly – it seemed you didn't really know what you were going to do until you turned up. Given the magnitude of the context that's really brave. I thought, for you as a musician that might be quite normal, but I can just imagine the commissioners freaking out.

CE: I tell them not to worry.

RB: When you talk about your work there's a strong sense of your inhabiting it, you're feeling for it. You're tapping [*drums table*] and you're drawing as you talk.

CE: I rely on a combination of all of these things and hopefully in good synchronisation – in good balance. But the work cannot only be executed by feeling alone. It is necessary to organise the best conditions for the feeling to manifest. That's what the road crew does – they have logic on their side – they know electricity and sound, and they know the gear to control those things.

RB: And you can see the road crew's activities in your work: the cables, the computers...

CE: That's also architectural thinking, from Brutalism to Modernism or whatever – good Modernism that is – not 'reductionism' as a style of minimalism. Brutalist architecture is not only the pornographic displaying of masculine concrete structures. They minimize the Brutalists to just like expressions of [*growls*] 'argggghh,' but no... So we have the cables to mics running outside the structure. Of course 'hiding' is a decision, but then 'not hiding' is a decision too. I hide many things as well. But in this case why hide what we are using and pretend like we're using super-hardcore technology. Ableton, this Berlin company, is amazing in how it's totally changing the popular music software landscape; and the progression of software is affecting aesthetics as well. So I'm just using this super-available software to build a 35 channel soundscape, using just these typical sound cards that everybody uses; sure, the loudspeakers are a bit different in that they are highly directional.

RB: What is it like to have tinnitus? I gather you had it really badly. I've never had it and I should have had it, as I spent half my teenage years at concerts with my head in the bass bin.

CE: You've never had it in the morning or something? [*drums on table*]

RB: No, I've never had it.

CE: The first time I had tinnitus, it was unbearable. The reason was the drumming and stage noise of course, but also I had a middle ear



infection, and to heal it they said I should avoid noise; but I didn't. It sometimes happened the morning after a concert; maybe that should have been a warning to me [laughs]. So the first time it was very depressing because you are just so fearful that: 'Oh my God, am I going to go to a forest, or a beach, or a silent place, and am I going to have this sound always?' Even though traces stayed, most of the pain and noise went away. Eventually you just get used to that, in the way us humans seem to.

I met these old professors of medicine in the university, they said, 'hey man, don't do it, blah blah blah, you're going to be deaf by 40 if you keep on drumming.' But then a few years later I went to another, more open-minded doctor, who was based in Sweden. I described the problem, he began by asking me: 'what kind of music do you play?' Wow, an ear doctor asking a young person what kind of music they liked to play... And he told me I had just one problem – I am quite sensitive to sound. Plus it appeared that my father had the same kind of tinnitus after reaching a certain age, so perhaps it's not even from the noise at all, maybe it's down to my genes. 'Just don't exacerbate it,' he

told me, 'don't rehearse drums for more than eight hours per day!' Well I thought that was ok, because I never rehearsed that long anyway!

RB: What else did you do to deal with it?

CE: Various things over the years: I found a band from the American hardcore/grindcore scene called Tinnitus, and I interviewed them for an online art magazine. I asked them if they actually had tinnitus, and what they thought about noise music. And I read about American soldiers with ear problems, who had come back from Iraq. Then I looked at the noise-making devices that are available for people who are suffering from tinnitus. It was cathartic to talk about it all.

But then suddenly, six weeks ago, whilst preparing for this show, I had a massive relapse. During a flight I had incredible pain, and some bleeding in my ears. I had continuous tinnitus more or less. It was really extreme – I thought I wouldn't be able to do this show. Perhaps that is in part why did I called the show *ÇİN* – the sound of glass being struck, and the tinnnn of tinnitus? But then I asked myself: 'why do we take



all our wounds so seriously?' We are all full of them after all. Lots of people would have tinnitus because of a bomb explosion, or some other serious trauma – not just through our noisy art form. If we can talk about our experiences though – through art, or otherwise – that helps us connect and work through them

RB: Dionysian or Apollonian, where do your allegiances lie?

CE: Dionysian is so easy, man, just one loudspeaker in a space [*drums*] and you are away. Slow, monumental Arabic dance beat [*drums*]... who wouldn't dance to that? I know how to do Dionysian... But in the realm of art, that's not my main emphasis.

RB: Your work is quite deliberate in many ways.

CE: Deliberate sure, but not without feeling.

RB: There are so many different modes of experience other than

the obvious ones: sight and sound... The experience of being inside something for instance – inside the structure – the smell of all those tonnes of plywood at close quarters.

CE: I think that's all part of it being essentially an architectural work.

RB: And the sound is, as you say, ornamentation.

CE: In this work, yes. But what the ornamentation contains, could be the subject of another entire conversation—**CCQ**.

ÇİN, Cevdet Erek, is in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 57th Venice Biennale until 26 November, 2017

*pavilionofturkey17.iksv.org
cevdeterek.com
cevdeterek.bandcamp.com*