

The Wrestling of the Gods

Architecture, sound and ancient myth: The Turkish artist Cevdet Erek interprets the Pergamon altar in the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin

BY BRIGITTE WERNEBURG

The art installation in the Hamburger Bahnhof turns it's back on the visitors, showing a black wall consisting of open rectangular boxes, with a few white and purple-coloured, self contained elements in between them. These are actually loudspeakers and subwoofers as will become clear when approaching the piece.

But in this moment it isn't perceivable, only when coming closer to the buzzing, humming, and rhythmically throbbing construction, one has to discover a - actually unfindable - loudspeaker on the right wall. Because the sound is coming from the wall, right?!

That is actually the case, it is just that it is being swung back from that wall with the actual source coming from the 34 white loudspeakers that Cevdet Erek build into his architectural structure.

This artist and musician (he is the drummer in the experimental rock band Nekropsi) from Istanbul responded with this work to the invitation from the Freunde guter Musik Berlin association, as a contribution to the 20 year

The Istanbul artist and musician - he is the drummer of the experimental rock band Nekroposi - thus follows the invitation of the Freunde guter Musik Berlin association to develop and perform a contribution to the 20th anniversary of their series of events "Musical works by visual artists", which was launched together with the Nationalgalerie.

Erek's stupendous idea: with "Bergama Stereo", he reconstructs Pergamon altar in the Hamburger Bahnhof on another scale, which is [currently not accessible due to renovations](#).

The heat of the battle fills the air

He translates the gigantomachia in a gigantic music system, and that is where it really

becomes interesting. Through his 34 Funktion-One speakers, each of which emits its own sound composition, Cevdet Erek freely projects the sculpted struggles between the gods of Olympus and the giants of the underworld depicted on the frieze.

The damp of the battle fills the air, muted by the 'Davul', a two-sided cylindrical drum that organizes the rhythms. At least as insistent as Peter Weiss' his portrayal of the gigantomachia in his novel 'Aesthetics of Resistance'.

This sound composition not only guides visitors through the space of the large hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof, but also takes them a lot further throughout space and time. Back to the place where 200 BCE. where the altar was once firmly established, as the ancient Greek "stereos": anchored to the city of Pergamon, present-day Turkish Bergama. It guides them to the Berlin of the German Empire and its culturally masked imperial desire for self-assertion.

However, it also leads to the question of the altars and temples on which and in which we sacrifice today, as one could think of the Berlin techno-club Berghain, which is also famous for its Funktion-One loudspeakers. Last but not least, the sound composition leads the visitors back to the Hamburger Bahnhof in self-reflexion, as its architecturally identical, but mirror-inverted form is Erek's Pergamon altar.

Architecture is the starting point for the career of the in 1974-born artist, who only began studying sound engineering at Istanbul Technical University after graduating from Mimar Sinan University, where he earned his doctorate in 2011.

It is indeed the sound seems to be the dominant component of Erek's installation. With their precisely set tone and rhythmic tracks and the murmuring voices of which one might think they whispered phrases from Peter Weiss: "that works like those that come from Pergamon, would have to be reinterpreted time and again until a reversal was won and the earth-born from darkness and slavery awoke and showed themselves in their true appearance. "

Until the 8th of March 2020 at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

For full performance program:

<https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/cevdet-erek-bergama-stereo.html>

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