

Hannah Weinberger  
PRESS



The Changing Times: Cedvet Erik and Hannah Weinberger  
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# The Changing Times: Cevdet Ereğ and Hannah Weinberger

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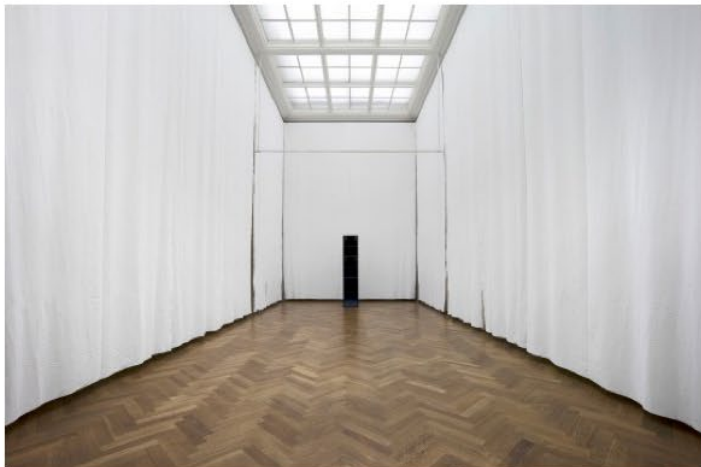
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Cevdet Ereğ, *Week*, 2012, 7 oak wood floor grids from the skylight hall. Installation view, Kunsthalle Basel. Photograph: Serge Hasenböhler. Courtesy the artist

Walking through the galleries of the Kunsthalle Basel recently, I felt strangely as if I were crossing the dateline. There were two exhibitions, which at first glance seem so similar that one could think of them as one landscape. But with attention, they proved distinct, if not contradictory – one territory, two different times. I never thought I would say this, but I sensed a decisive generational shift. What follows is a first attempt to wrap my mind around it.

In the sky-lit upstairs space lives the work of Cevdet Ereğ, an Istanbul native whose complex background is belied by the ethereal simplicity of his installation (he is a visual artist with degrees in architecture, sound engineering and design, and plays in a band, Nekropsi). A single speaker on a stand emits beats that reiterate the structure of the working week: five regular and two distinct strokes. The speaker is surrounded by a white curtain wall, which creates an inner chamber in the main gallery and enriches the measured sound; some space is left between curtain and the gallery walls. This work, and the exhibition, are titled *Week* (2012). The nature of *Week*'s beats varies somewhat as a computer-generated voice at times iterates 'Mon-day, Tues-day, Wednes-day, Thurs-day, Fri-day, Satur-day, Sun-day' and at others simply 'tik-day, tik-day, tik-day, tik-day, tik-day, tok-day, tok-day'. Yet, if the quality of the beats changes, the 5-2 rhythm (of work-days and leisure-days) remains. Ereğ successfully casts the week as Western modernity's most commanding temporal sculpture – one can argue that the day, the month, even the year follow the cycles of heavenly bodies, of seasons, of nature and all that jazz; but there is nothing natural about the week, and one senses this artificiality in Ereğ's beats, which are delivered deliberately and slowly – slower than the natural breath it seems, working against his or her natural pace – so that they seem to pull a person back.



Cevdet Ereğ, *Week*, 2012, Mono 3 min, Installation view, Kunsthalle Basel. Photograph:

Serge Hasenböhler. Courtesy the artist

The pervasive power of this artificial construct is made palpable via several echoes of the 5-2 rhythm by other means, most notably in an installation (also titled *Week*, 2012) using wooden floor grids, of the kind normally found abutting gallery walls to help regulate heating and humidity. Stepping outside the white curtain at the rear of the gallery, one sees seven of these hung on the far wall, with five facing one way and two facing the other. They hang like pictures, or like a graphic score, rhyming architectural/inhabited space and pictorial/imaginary space with the rhythm of the working week.<sup>1</sup> In thus using the available materials of the gallery, the artist proves to be an expert drummer: he does not skip a beat.

But, despite the exhibition's deep immersion into the week's rhythms by several means, questions remain about the totality of this temporal structure. One is posed by the artist himself in a work, installed in an adjacent room and titled *Day* (2012). Here an LED panel has been programmed to represent – in heavenly blue light – the changing length of daylight per day for the duration of the exhibition. The information is taken from a Muslim prayer calendar and therefore indicates each day as the time between the first and last prayers: between *Fajr* (morning), which is the time just before the sunrise when light is first visible, and *Maghrib* (evening), which is the time soon after sunset that lasts until the twilight disappears. This irregular temporal frame, based as it is on the changing movement of heavenly bodies, might be read as the 'natural' antidote to 'man-made' time. Still religion's alignment with perceptions of nature troubles any clear nature/culture binary, as do questions about Ereğ's intention of this pairing. Shall we hope and pray for some transcendence of man-made clock time in the naturally governed space of prayer? Or is that very hope, formed as a prayer, another kind of clock, which subsumes the irregular rhythms of nature into a powerful societal construct? *Day* is as beautiful as it is sinister: the material (the horizontal LED screen) hints towards something all too human, such as stock-market listings – i.e. sites of split-second fortunes and ciphers of lives lived in several time zones at once.<sup>[2]</sup> This is Ereğ's gift: he puts in place a kind of associative machine that allows the most minimal of signals to reverberate with civilisation-defining conundrums.



Cevdet Ereğ, *Day*, 2012, LED Display, Installation View, Kunsthalle Basel. Photograph: Serge Hasenböhler. Courtesy the artist

The press release for Ereğ's exhibition mentions the nightclub – 'such as the notorious Weekend club in Berlin' – as a spatial inspiration, and another LED work, which spells out the exhibition title to the street (from a window between the two floors), is in part designed to make the Kunsthalle feel like a kind of club. But I am somewhat unconvinced by this metaphor for Ereğ's exhibition. Perhaps because, to a certain extent, Hannah Weinberger's installation in the downstairs galleries of the Kunsthalle, seems to fulfil this transformation of the white cube into a nightclub more – well – naturally.

I must admit that, upon entering, the physical features of the exhibition did not impress me, except perhaps with their sparseness – the prominence of high-end speakers, three to five per otherwise bare room, each group playing a harmonious composition of a somewhat (but not decisively) different genre. The sweet and mellow atmosphere did not disturb, or disturbed only in its refusal to disturb, as the work upstairs had (and as does much contemporary art worth its salt).

Accustomed to encountering art as a challenge, a shattered mirror, something to decode, I was left empty-handed and, learning that Weinberger hails from Basel, I grimly attributed this perceived neutrality to her Swiss extraction. But I did not leave, and remained wandering around to see what more there was, going as far as to obey the exhibition's playfully didactic title, *When You Leave, Walk Out Backwards, So I'll Think You're Walking In*. In reverse, the mercurial soundscape of the galleries, with the view of speakers revealed only after their music was heard, acquired a certain cinematic sensibility, so that I began to wonder about our very contemporary state of 'livin' in a movie'. This is a sense that I also associate with going to clubs, where music and strangers seem to move in slightly slow motion. Weinberger's offers a scenario with camera direction in the form of a title, where the person becomes both camera and actor. (Try walking backwards without feeling like you are *not* a camera!) As people arrived and noodled about, they seemed to sense their complex role in this living movie-cum-exhibition.<sup>[3]</sup>

Weinberger is interested in subtle shifts of atmosphere – being born into the post-medium condition, she seems in search of an extra dimension. To date, her work has usually arrived in the form of musical performance, adding an extra layer to other works in group exhibitions. This being her first solo show, it was interesting to consider her choice to stop worrying and embrace the gallery, not as the big-bad white cube waiting for deconstruction, but as a place of possibility and hopeful gathering of the peoples. In the essay, which accompanies this debut, the following set of observations stands out:





Hannah Weinberger, *When You Leave, Walk Out Backwards, So I'll Think You're Walking In*, 2012, 4x KH elements in quadrophonic constellation, Installation View, Kunsthalle Basel. Photograph: Gunnar Meier. Courtesy the artist

The artist's open-ended way of working challenges the role hierarchical processes play in contemporary art, and shifts the focus to the importance and presence of collective creativity in our time. [...] As a representative of the generation that has unlimited access to information and media, Weinberger situates her work in the production sector of music and sound performance. The availability of affordable technology puts the production – and instantaneous distribution – of high-quality music or film within everyone's reach. Consequently, the hierarchy of artistic production and distribution is transformed, as a single person can access all channels necessary to present a work to a mass audience. Online platforms such as YouTube are only one part of the machinery that enables the new generation to foster the distribution of film and music productions. The majority rules, and its 'clicks' alert major corporations to promote certain titles via their distribution networks. The discovery and selection of artistic work is therefore no longer only in the hands of a small number of individuals or of talent scouts. A pre-produced album compilation loses its importance, since the playlist changes constantly. Music becomes a data stream of noises. New pieces of music received from friends via email complement purchased tracks, as do personally composed tracks and those downloaded from the internet.

The text's author is Fabian Schoeneich, who, like Weinberger, is a member of the generation otherwise known as 'digital-natives'. And (now that I'm no longer the baby on the block and look at this generation as removed from the earlier one to which I belong – born in the 1970s – which is native to nothing except perhaps myriad forms of alienation) it is interesting to note how he avoids circumscribing her work under the umbrella of relational aesthetics, all the while espousing the associated rhetoric of conviviality, collectivity and technologically-driven shifts in the hierarchies of production. For all the assertions of togetherness, the rhetoric of relational aesthetics retained the modernist focus on alienation. Artists like Hannah Weinberger do not see alienation as something insurmountable and they certainly do not seem to see technology as a screen preventing true communion and presence. It is as if the lack of 'presentness and grace' that Michael Fried detected in Minimal art and its spawns is no longer an issue.



Hannah Weinberger, *When You Leave, Walk Out Backwards, So I'll Think You're Walking In*, 2012, 3x Ultrasound audiobeams, Installation View, Kunsthalle Basel. Photograph: Gunnar Meier. Courtesy the artist

'When You Leave, Walk Out Backwards, So I'll Think You're Walking In': in short, *When you and I meet...* This appears to be the operative syntax of the new generation. It hints at a shared hopefulness for a better time yet to come. Or perhaps it announces that this time is already with us, but only in part and only for some. After all, it is difficult to maintain membership in both clubs: the one where people gather to cultivate a shared fantasy as if they were on a movie set so seamlessly embedded into life that cameras are no longer necessary; and the one which seeks pleasure in clearly understanding that week-in-week-out humanity keeps to the beat of a far more dismal drum.

#### Footnotes

1. Look closely at the 2 reversed pieces, and you will see that there are precisely 7 prongs holding the floor grids together - this is the kind of uncanny detail that every deconstructionist prays for! ↑
2. If you are trading on the New York Stock Exchange, for example, and not living in Eastern Time, your day begins and ends at weird hours and you are probably hoping to make it big fast so you can retire and realize that dream sold to so many soldiers of the stock exchange: 'every day a Sunday'. ↑
3. This was a press preview so I can only imagine the effect was somewhat magnified at the public opening. ↑