



machina

kinetic jewellery and sculpture by sean o'connell

17 september – 13 november 2005

object gallery project space

417 bourke street surry hills



my ideas mostly come when i'm driving, and i get very excited. they mutate and multiply in a frenzied fashion because they drink too much coffee and eat too much chocolate. the ideas eventually relax and resolve themselves into simpler, more fundamental forms while i am staring out over the ocean or making dinner or whenever my thoughts are free to wander. lots of time is spent thinking through how to make them. they take a while to fully cook.

the concepts are never conscious - when i try to push it intellectually it gets ugly real quick. but it does seem that there are some common underlying themes, two important ones being about machines, and, order and chaos. machines are inspiring - simple creatures, their purpose inbuilt, their will strong - i am always jealous of their unflagging faith in direction, their singularity of focus. as for the flux between order and chaos, it is the ultimate archetype of every struggle - the constant cycling between the two extremes intrigues me - it is so basic that it makes sense of everything at a fundamental level.

the making itself is bliss, it stops my frantic brain and lets all my feelings and ideas settle into place. sometimes dodgy, sometimes precise, sometimes knowing how to go about it, but mostly not. the process is all-important - from idea, to material, construction method to outcome, an integral process ties it all together and moves the expression towards a sense of purity.

after the initial idea i ponder how the fuck to make the usually ridiculous design - a prototype is almost always made, sussing the proportions and any obvious problem points. that done, the real work begins. i have a theory that the more i work directly with the piece, the more i imbue it with an essence, and luckily all my designs are quite labour-intensive.

i am always amazed at how well the finished pieces turn out - after many repeated dodgy solderings, mid-flight design corrections and 180° turns, after being thrown across the room by my monstrous pink polishing machine, and generally abused by an ill-educated hand, they still turn out beautifully! how is this?





but why metal? it could be the vibrant hum of a molten glob of gold on a red-hot charcoal block, or the slippery depths of a high polish on silver, it could be the salty smell of steel somewhere between sex and an underground railroad, or a spiral peel of metal as it curls mesmerisingly off a lathe tool, it could be the righteous will of a stainless steel bar as it is forged with a hammer, or even the submissive obedience of a soft strip of copper that wears the scars of its making for all to see.... there are so many beautiful aspects to metal, and so many beautiful metals that bring their own character to the making.

i think i love the resistance of the material most of all - i get the feeling whenever i work a piece of metal that there is a force within resisting my hammer-blows and file-strokes - a wilful reluctance to be formed, that requires a cunning and perseverance to work around, but also sensitivity and a willingness to cooperate with.

because the act of making is so innately personal, efforts to understand its intents are bound to multiply and conflict with one's own views and ideas, ending up with a headache. in terms of the real reasons *why*, there is a favourite quote of mine that thoroughly confuses the basis for making, and does so in a way that is far more eloquent than any excuse I can come up with.

There is the story of the American in the train who saw another American carrying a basket of unusual shape. His curiosity mastered him, and he leant across and said: "Say, stranger, what you got in that bag?" The other, lantern-jawed and taciturn, replied: "Mongoose". The first man was rather baffled, as he had never heard of a mongoose. After a pause he pursued, at the risk of a rebuff: "But say, what is a Mongoose?" "Mongoose eats snakes", replied the other. This was another poser, but he pursued; "What in hell do you want a Mongoose for?" "Well, you see", said the second man (in a confidential whisper) "my brother sees snakes". The first man was more puzzled than ever; but after a long think, he continued rather pathetically; "But say, them ain't real snakes". "Sure", said the man with the basket, "but this Mongoose ain't real either".

-A. Crowley.





articulated chains: *jorgumander chain*, stainless steel;
shiny pink chain, stainless steel, acrylic; *minitami chain*,
375 gold, stainless steel.



moving ball jewellery left to right: *ball ring*, 750 gold, stainless steel; *monsta ball ring*, 375 gold, stainless steel; *ball bracelet*, stainless steel, remanium®.



spring jewellery left to right: *snap-trap armband*, stainless steel, remanium®, tantalum; *pyrmont spring ring*, 375 and 750 golds.





moving gear jewellery: *supa gearing*, 750 gold, tantalum, stainless steel; *gearing*, 375 red gold, stainless steel.



orbit is about unpredictability and chaos in the regular rhythms of life. stainless steel balls of various sizes are dragged across the larger dome, with a variation forming in the pattern of their clustering. the piece is powered by a motor that twists two magnets around several axes, and the magnets, moving just under the large dome, drag the balls across a spiral path, dropping them back onto the plinth after each cycle. the balls eventually magnetize and sometimes totter around on top of each other like little seussian atoms.

orbit, stainless steel bearing balls, stainless steel, mild steel, geared motor, bevel gears, chains, sprockets, magnets, brass, cooling fan, mdf, hdf, marine enamel, toughened glass case. large dome 350mm diameter.





mercury sync looks at the interaction between two steady rhythmic systems slightly out of sync. the desire to come together and the realisation of that togetherness, which ebbs and flows through the natural patterns of the individual. yet within this out-of-sync-ness develops a new rhythm of two, incorporating the idiosyncrasies of each. the movement of the two stainless steel discs ripple the surface of the mercury pool, each disc moving in a set rhythm, but at constantly changing synchronicity. the piece is controlled through two irregular wheels running at separate speeds, both with pivot arms that ride on them, pulling down the discs and rippling the mercury.

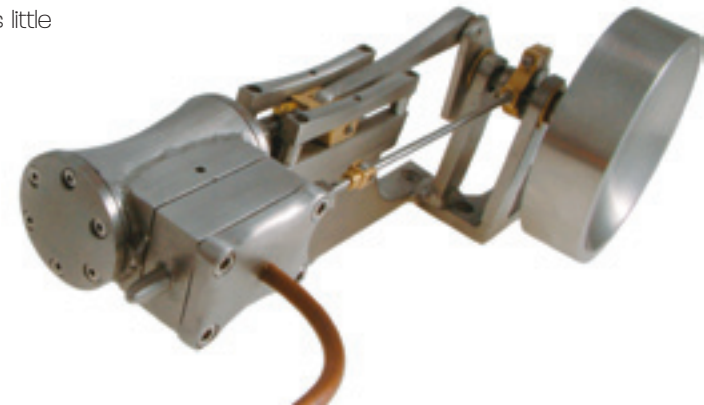
mercury sync, mercury, stainless steel, mild steel, perspex, brass, bearings, o-rings, chains, sprockets, geared motor, cooling fan, marine enamel, toughened glass case. mercury pool 300 x 150mm.





alpaca somnoscope is for those late nights when the wind is blowing across the hills and the sky is bright and your brain just won't stop and all you want to do is *go!* so instead, you light the spirit burner and warm the boiler which powers the little steam engine, and watch the shadow of the alpaca jumping the fence on your bedroom wall, moo-ing as he jumps, and counting, counting, slowly relaxing, gradually falling into soothing, restful slumber.... powered by an air compressor during gallery installation, the small stainless steel steam engine chuffs away, turning pulleys and small gears that jump the alpaca over the fenced grassy hills, his little legs pumping as he goes.

alpaca somnoscope, stainless steel, copper, brass, silver, pastel pigments, moo-can, toughened glass case, air compressor, pressure gauges.



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