

Tinguely's Children: Sculptors of the Post-industrial Machine Age
Arthur Ganson, Chris Vecchio, Mark Zirpel

Curated by Susan Hagen

August 24 to October 15, 2011
Hicks Art Center Gallery, Bucks County Community College
275 Swamp Road, Newtown, PA 18940-4106

Jean Tinguely's work is a gritty and delicate mélange of machine parts, found objects, sounds, and smells. His sculptural work, sometimes labeled *metamechanics*, evolved from the Dada tradition and provided a visionary and theatrical critique of industrialization – particularly his self-destructing machines, *Homage to New York* and *Study for the End of the World*.

Jean Tinguely inspired several generations of artists, including the three artists participating in *Tinguely's Children* – Arthur Ganson of Stoneham, MA, Chris Vecchio of Philadelphia, PA, and Mark Zirpel of Seattle, WA. Continuing the lineage of Tinguely (Swiss 1925-1991), each of these artists creates authentic and lyrical, sculptures about modern machine-age life. The work of each artist is informed by but transcends the machine-age nostalgia and apocalyptic visions found in pop culture manifestations like *Steam-punk* and *Robowars*. Themes of the human body and psyche, and our place in the universe, appear without irony throughout the work.

Arthur Ganson has been making kinetic sculpture since 1977. He creates ingenious sculptural machines, viewer-activated or powered by electricity, that each perform a simple task such as waving a piece of paper or dumping oil on themselves. They offer entertainment, along with the opportunity for reflection on the beauty and tragedy of repetitive activities of humans and machines. Some are elegantly poetic, while others are absurdly humorous. Ganson's work operates within an existential realm in the intersection of raw mechanics and micro-choreography. It is intended to be without meaning or “open-ended,” as he says.

Sculptor/electrical engineer Chris Vecchio creates machines and electronic devices that measure emotional states, such as love and desire, and offer an opportunity to reflect on the human-technology relationship. His naked-looking machines and hand-built meter boxes, which he describes as small shrines, are “physically, emotionally and aesthetically ergonomic.” They deliver grim or encouraging news about the state of a relationship or record obvious phenomena like loud noises. Vecchio is inspired by outdated machines and early radio designs, and his work attempts to reconnect the link between humans and the objects that sustain and surround us.

Mark Zirpel has been making machine-oriented sculpture that incorporates glass with other materials for nearly 20 years. Perhaps inspired by his earlier work as a printmaker, processes of an alchemical and transformative nature often appear in his work. Systems in nature (such as the weather and the rotation of the planets) and in human bodies (including respiration, optics and teeth grinding) are the subjects of his darkly humorous mechanical ruminations. Zirpel believes that the inevitable breakdown of kinetic work works as a metaphor for the functioning of the human body.

The exhibition presents sculptural and two-dimensional works, including preparatory sketches and schematic diagrams, by Ganson, Vecchio and Zirpel. It also features a facsimile of a graphic work by Jean Tinguely from the Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection. For more information please contact Fran Orlando or Susan Hagen at Bucks County Community College.