



# POWER PLAY

JOHANN VAN DER SCHIJFF

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A computer visualisation of *Missiel / Missile*

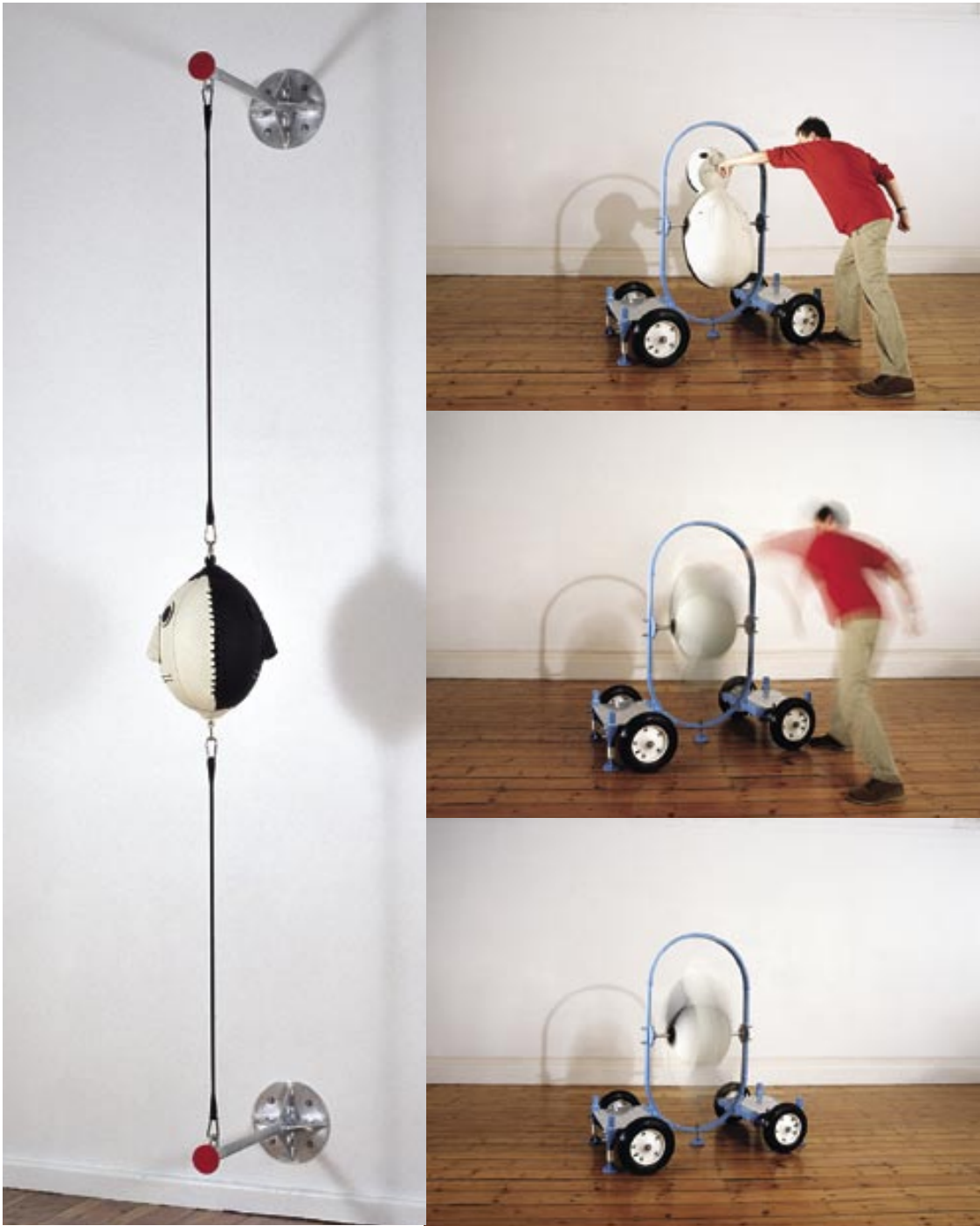


*Missiel / Missile*, 2003, galvanized and painted mild steel, chromed mild steel, stainless steel, brass, leather, rubber, 164cm wide x 185cm high x 70cm deep





Slaansak / *Punch Bag*, 2005, galvanized and painted mild steel, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, leather, rubber, 152cm wide x 160cm high x 90cm deep



*Hangbal*, 2006, aluminium, stainless steel, leather, rubber, stuffing, 59cm wide x 206cm high x 30cm deep

Slaansak / *Punch Bag* in motion



*Hemelbesem*, 2005, galvanized and painted mild steel, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, wood, bristle, plastic, rubber, 138cm wide x 272cm high x 100cm deep



*Sweep-out I*, 2006, aluminium, bristle, plastic, 171cm wide x 87cm high x 14cm deep

*Sweep-out II*, 2006, aluminium, bristle, plastic, 86cm wide x 50cm high x 14cm deep



*In Emergency – Lift Border*, 2006, 100% hand tufted wool, 330cm wide x 90cm deep





Bomb, 2006, galvanized and painted mild steel, stainless steel, brass, leather, compressed wood, epoxy coating, car paint, rubber, 141cm wide x 130cm high x 85cm deep

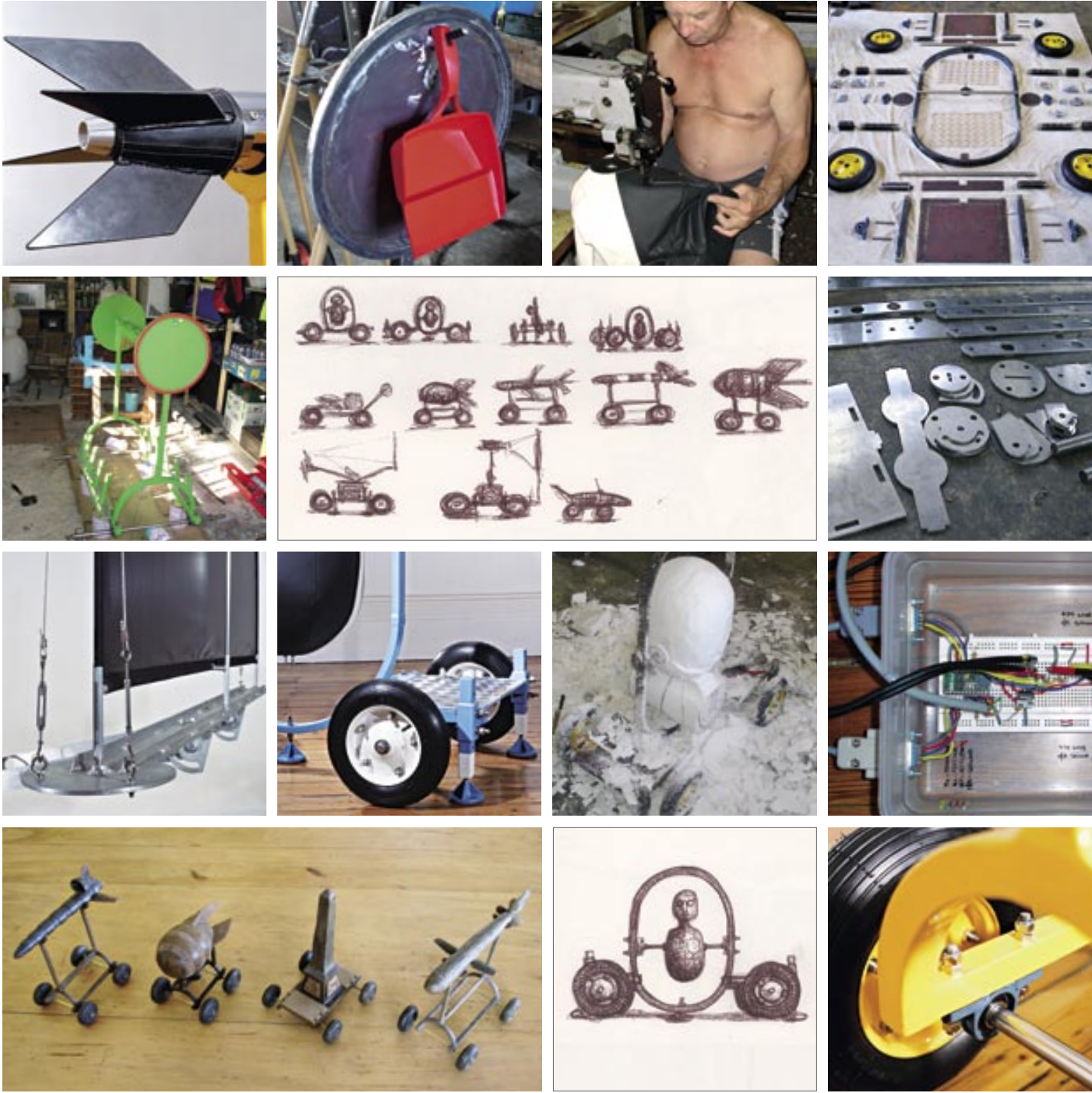




*Lazy Susan*, 2006, galvanized and painted mild steel, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, rubber, projection screen, electronic components, computer, projector, cabling, 225cm wide x 228cm high x 168cm deep



*Lazy Susan's* motion controllers picking up the viewer



Compilation of detail, works in progress and wax models of the bronze works (still at foundry at the time of going to press)





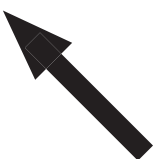
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*Peerbal*, 2006, aluminium, stainless steel, plywood, leather, stuffing, 90cm wide x 66cm high x 38cm deep



**IN EMERGENCY  
TEAR HERE**



# POWER PLAY

Gavin Younge

Van der Schijff's title is tellingly apt – his machines toy with the notion of military and manufacturing industry's power. On the one hand they mirror issues of purpose-built, highly specialised military technology, and on the other they possess an almost 18<sup>th</sup> century arcane quality, that of belt-driven potato peelers, or strange looking contrivances designed to hold a patient's head still whilst surgeons do things with hacksaws. These brightly coloured trolleys, perhaps filched from Voortrekkerhoogte (now renamed *Thaba Tshwane*), trundle missiles dull-thudding out of a future imperfect world. We thrill or chill to their ominous threat – and yet, as in the literature of comic artists, all these bombs and missiles can do is *say*, “Bang!” Herein lies the ‘play’ of the title.

This observation is not totally off-beam: the artist says that his choice of colour was pretty much driven by his recollection of objects and toys from his childhood; those cute ‘educational’ wooden building blocks, which, by all accounts have been responsible for large doses of lead poisoning on account of the paints used, presumably unwittingly by their manufacturers.

Perhaps this point does offer an entry point to an understanding of these meticulously made *barouches*. *Hemelbesem* is a sap-green carriage replete with, amazingly, several overlong-handled brooms. At once functional *and* metaphorical, the piece asks many questions of the viewer. Is there a category of cleaning and housekeeping that somehow requires such equipment? Is it a military contrivance? Translating the title from the Afrikaans gives a literary allusion – normal-sized brooms for very tall people? For this viewer, the register of meanings gleaned from the piece is less playful. The sturdy construction belies its origin in the mundane aisles of ‘cleaning aids’ and shifts attention to issues of development and underdevelopment – appropriate technology for an inappropriate world.

*Bomb*, *Missile* and *Punch bag* operate in the same disarmingly simple, direct and yet somehow coded manner. Despite the airport-apron colour scheme and the unambiguous character of the forms, both these works draw the viewer into a

dialogue with unsaid and unseen inferences. *Punch bag* with its kindergarten brashness, and barefaced simplicity invites reflection on child abuse and/or other aspects of domestic violence. I have no doubt that the contraption will withstand any onslaught: extended pods render its wheels immobile, and its smiling visage appears impervious to physical and verbal attack. Yet it is strangely useless – from a boxing gymnasium point of view – because who would ever want to embarrass themselves by striking the first blow?

*Lazy Susan* plumbs new territory for Van der Schijff. This elaborate scanner suffers from reverse erectile dysfunction – it is permanently *en garde*, ready to strike at any and all moments. The implied motion of the other works making up *Power Play* are here released from inertia, from the gravity of their portent, and allowed free rein. On sighting a ‘target’ (viewer, art lover, connoisseur, critic, passer by) *Lazy Susan* defies its adjectival condition and springs (lazily) into action. Locking on to its chosen subject, it rocks back and forth in mute and offbeat mockery of systems of access control, alarm activating motion detectors and the like. We could be back in 1985 when Terry Gilliam was using crazy robots to demonstrate the oppressive nature of contemporary bureaucracy in his film *Brazil*. Van der Schijff has mounted a projector above the fuselage and this displays a reflection of Mickey Mouse type ears in perpetual motion. This Disneyesque reference is banal, but it is also reflective of the underlying tenet of all the great man's cartoon characters as they replayed colonial expansion through innocent-seeming exploits.

Van der Schijff uses satire and artificiality to power home his message. As we watch developments in Iran and Sudan, as well as elsewhere, Van der Schijff's oblique references come into sharper focus. Behind the primary-coloured dystopia lie hints of a world at war with itself; between the saccharine and the sour, between peace and social upheaval. He leaves no answers.

Gavin Younge is a professor at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

# TOYS FOR BOYS

Virginia MacKenny

Sculptor Johan van der Schijff openly admits he has found “a legitimate career of never-ending play and tinkering”. This statement might be true for many a man and, for every one lucky enough to legitimate the urge, there are many more who wish they could and instead nurture their passion in the garage at weekends.

That it is the garage where most of this tinkering goes on is, in itself, no accident, for, ever since the wheel was accredited as the one of the earliest inventions, male energy has gone into making vehicles move and moving mountains with them. Clearly manifesting the urge to produce machines that are bigger, better, faster, tougher, more, the Americans are kings of the finned and fabulous vehicles of the 50s, the personalised off-road racers, the dragsters, the Big Foot trucks that tower over their drivers with wheels sometimes twice the size of the cabs. The man without access to resources can always satisfy his desires vicariously and nurture, perhaps a tadonanistically, the enduring romance between Man and Machine with movies, video games, magazines and models.

Recently on the TV forensic series CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) a current craze in America was featured. ‘Bots’<sup>1</sup>, or remote controlled robotic machines akin to mini tanks or lethal weapons on wheels, are set up one against another, gladiatorial fashion, in a frenzy of ‘fight ‘till the death’. In the episode the losing member of one such battle laments the demise of his machine. A female police officer, investigating a case where one of the machines was the murder weapon, attempts empathy, but her paralleling the birthing and consequent death of a child with his experience is witheringly rejected with a derisive dismissal of any possibility that, given the perfection of his creation, the two could be equivalent. Not comprehending the phallic role his ‘bot’ plays nor his recent ‘castration’ he is oblivious to the fact that his, all too human, failing might have caused his creation's destruction.

That destruction follows so closely on the heels of creation seems an irony overlooked by many a participant in the game and in the larger world beyond. Governments of the

world fund innovative research on an immense scale in support of the technology of war for their defence forces. The irony that is lost on the super powers however, is not lost on Van der Schijff and is apparent in his idiosyncratic constructions on wheels where he examines his fascination with the equipment of phallocentric power through a myriad of references.

“All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.” W.B. Yeats wrote in his poem *Easter* 1916 referring to the onset of the Irish independence movement. Conceived as an ideal it bore a bloody violence. Similarly, conceived on the glowing computer screens that bring his and other boys’ toys onto the world stage for play, Van der Schijff's gleaming rockets, strapped up with leather, bolted down with laser-cut precision plates, allude to the paradox of the coexistence of beauty and danger. Embedded in such forms lie a mix of sex and power allied to the divine with its ability to either shape the world or lay waste to it. It is probably no coincidence that such power is active in a world dominated by patriarchal religions and that the phallic form of everything from guns to rockets reflects the same penetrative instinct that lays claim to territory in the bedroom, the sports field and the battlefield.

Alert to these connections Van der Schijff's forms play across the tools of combat, fetish objects and games. His blank-eyed boxing bag, *Punch bag*, personifies Janus, the Roman god of beginnings, the past, portals and peace who is traditionally depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions suggesting not only vigilance, but impartiality. The punch bag of course gets hit whichever way the face is looking and the work highlights a double language that runs through much of the exhibition. Supported on an innocuously coloured, powder blue trolley the bag is both vulnerable to assault and a potential site of aggression and, Janus-faced, it embodies the hypocritical.

Creating works that present one face, and, only with scrutiny, reveal a second, Van de Schijff's work asks us to question our happily held preconceptions. Juxtaposing a vocabulary of bright colours, forms that seem child-like in that they are

slightly over or under sized and allusions to cartoon characters he appears to create a benign world. It is pertinent to perhaps remember that Walt Disney, the avuncular cartoonist and movie producer who projects the feel-good factor in the American dream more than most, was a latter day Janus figure. His company's apple pie exterior hides an involvement with Edgar J. Hoover and right wing politics. Having 'given up' a fellow illustrator as a communist Disney was forever after blackmailed by Hoover into a variety of unethical activities including helping to stage an anti-Vietnam war riot<sup>2</sup>.

The double nature of Disney's world is evoked in a wry articulation of military technology in *Lazy Susan*. *Lazy Susan* is a revolving sensor on a metal platform that seeks out movement, locking onto an object when she finds it. The implications of surveillance are complicated by the juxtaposition with gendered connotations of fine dining while the discomfort of being 'watched' is apparently allayed by the cartoon characterisation of this somewhat 'mickey mouse' affair with the red supporting base, yellow buttons and the mouse ears of the revolving antennae. In a world where the cheapest cellphone utilises micro-technology to give it a sophisticated array of functions *Lazy Susan*'s rudimentary sensors and stuttering movements make it so absurd it's laughable. Laughable maybe, but, perhaps, no joke. *Lazy Susan*, with its misogynist implications, is also a ship of fools with a mast and a cross beam with a projection screen for a sail. Not actually able to set out to sea, this curious construction narcissistically mirrors only its own face as it seeks to navigate its way.

Set to traverse the world with greater efficiency is *Hemelbesem*, Van der Schijff's 'standard bearer', a larger-than-life broom rack on wheels. Its serried rows of brushes all raised to the sky it would seem capable of supplying a small army of sweepers. Resembling a medieval jousting unit with the brooms as its lances, it is organised with military precision, the rack emblazoned with a shield of red and green, its heraldic emblem a red dustpan. Loosely translated the title means 'heavens' sweeper', a timely reminder perhaps of the old adage that 'cleanliness is next to godliness' and that one of the weapons of the conservative order includes keeping the sexes and their domains cleanly separate. As custom dictates pink and blue denote the genders here and the quotidian domestic action of sweeping points to a broader range of daily maintenance needed to preserve traditional principles in an increasingly

conservative world where, ironically, fanatics on both sides of the geo-political world seem to share similar values. In close proximity to *Hemelbesem*, as if waiting for its ministrations, is a red carpet. Made of pure wool it has the words "in emergency lift border" in white punched into its surface. While appearing to run counter to governments' tendencies to close borders in times of crisis this 'runner' prevaricates as do all the good government departments it represents. A punning play on the red carpet treatment provided for those in authority it also bears reference to an action that those same people in authority are often noted for – sweeping things under the carpet. As Harold Pinter, the Nobel Laureate for Literature 2005, observed in his acceptance speech where he commented on the world's inability to respond to atrocities that it deems invisible, "It never happened. Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening".

John Pilger's article in the Mail and Guardian entitled 'The Death of Freedom'<sup>3</sup> (Jan 27 – Feb 2, p. 24 – 25) notes that the official mouthpiece for news in Britain, the BBC, ignored Pinter's speech which, in a *tour de force* of connections, compares the evolution of his plays with the fictions governments' produce for public consumption. The BBC's omission is as much part of the arsenal of power that is animated by the centres of control as the weaponry that reinforces it.

Engaging artifice and inadequacy Van der Schijff's fabrication of the emblems of power combine with a naïve and child-like vocabulary that points to the regressive tendencies that those in authority often exemplify. His colourful *Bomb*, customised as a motorbike might be, is a plaything, but one that points to the veneration of the objects of our own destruction. Such objects, often beautiful, are the very things that, if toyed with, will debilitate us in the world.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>For those who interested in finding out more check out [www.battlebots.com](http://www.battlebots.com).  
<sup>2</sup>Disney thereafter employed a 'short-hair' agenda in its hiring policy to avoid confrontation with any 'hippy' elements.  
<sup>3</sup>The article chronicles injustices perpetuated on individuals concerned about democracy, free speech and fair treatment especially in the United States and Britain.

Virginia MacKenny is a senior lecturer at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

# CHOICES

Petri Leijdekkers

In Johann van der Schijff's work we find the embodiment of the natural path which fine art follows via the media. The idea directs the creative journey of choices; choices about how to make the idea visible, the working of the media and the important question of which of the media would contribute most to the communicative power of one's work. Van der Schijff chooses the traditional tools and materials of sculpture but in addition explores the possibilities of electronics and digital media.

In the first place, he is a sculptor who works in the tradition of this field. His objects evoke images of township monuments, caravans and empty buses, places which a child would seek out to hide in; far away from the threatening adult world. They look like the fantasies of a strange state, sagas of heroes on campaigns to invade a city. They also appear to be derived from the streamlined shapes of sport apparatuses, weapons, sado-masochistic installations, boxing and rowing machines and machines that determine bodily sensations. Machine and body become one, smooth shining figures like a group of sculptures in an amusement park.

Every child likes building and many of us remember having a Meccano set. Those straight disks with little holes on either side that one could screw together, from which one could make one's own robots – all this could lead to lasting fascination. In the sculptures of Johann van der Schijff this fascination re-emerges.

Van der Schijff's exam project for his postgraduate studies in Computer Graphics in Groningen in 1997 was an extensive animation film *YIELD*, which he created with the software program 3DMax. While staying in the chilly Groningen in the north of the Netherlands between 1995 and 1997, with apartheid not too distant and amidst the stories of the TRC, he

created a world of high-growing wheat where an enormous threshing-machine apparently sought to uproot the huge billboards conspicuous in their obstinate shapes among the wheat. Now and then a helicopter would fly past. The way in which Van der Schijff gave form to the movement of the flight and the turning cock-pit was impressive, it was suggestive of Orwell's *1984*, where a helicopter would hover horribly long in front of the window of an apartment.

In the film the threshing-machine eventually cleared out the whole field. Everything was taken away until only a tidy pattern was left, just as pretty as before, but naked and controlled. The combination of image and sound made the film an oppressive experience.

In his current work he transforms the same oppressiveness into humoristic patterns – into a structure of over-familiar shapes made from modern industrial materials. In doing so, his world permeates ours. Computer-based machines which are normally used for cutting out useful shapes are now creating shapes in which the lack of functionality is actually what gives it its meaning.

He prepared his projects with the software program MAYA, and made meticulously crafted models. Together they form a beautiful drawing book of possible new machines reminding us of the magical sketches of Leonardo Da Vinci. Once the machines are realized, software is added to make the apparatus alive. Very crudely it follows us, turns and zooms in. Animation once more, but now 3-dimensional and interactive, the result of a fascinating process of making choices.

Petri Leijdekkers is head of the the Frank Mohr Institute for Postgraduate Studies and Research in the Arts and emergent Media of the Hanze University Groningen,



# THINKING THINGS

Rob van Kranenburg

People, cars, bombs, streets, are all information spaces.<sup>1</sup> In his *Manifesto for Networked Objects* Julian Bleecker speaks of ‘objects that blog’, blogjects. He says “Once ‘Things’ are connected to the Internet, they can only but become enrolled as active, worldly participants by knitting together, facilitating and contributing to networks of social exchange and discourse, and rearranging the rules of occupancy and patterns of mobility within the physical world. Things will have to be taken into account as they assume the role of socially relevant actors and strong-willed agents that create social capital and reconfigure the ways in which we live within and move about physical space”.<sup>2</sup> Bruce Sterling speaks of spime: “things that are searchable, track their location, usage histories and discourse with the other things around them”.<sup>3</sup>

Ulla Maaria Mutanen is developing her *Thinglink* scheme and *Free Product Code* under her paradigmatic umbrella of a reevaluation of craft and craftsmanship as a powerful social tool in her *Draft Craft Manifesto* in which she claims that “The things that people have made themselves have magic powers. They have hidden meanings that other people can’t see.”<sup>4</sup> We are in the era of the emancipation of things. Thinking things as you walk up and down your street. Thinking things as you sip your coffee staring out into Long Street. Thinking things is an idea whose time has come. I can remember trying to bring up the subject of ‘animism’ in a deep context meeting at *Ubicomp 2002* in Goteborg, but it did not land then. It does now. It has been out sailing for a long, long time. What is remarkable is that it seems to defy local contextualization, as well as digital and network saturation. Pervasive Computing, Ubiquitous computing, Things That Think, Intelligent Information Interfaces, The Disappearing Computer, Calm Technology, Sentient Computing, are all terms for the move towards making meanings in this hybrid space – this new territory – between digital and analogue information and system architectures.

Johann van der Schijff has been developing his own way of thinking and making things in a framework of Physical Computing. The similarity between Ulla Maaria’s *Craft Manifesto* and his focus and insistence on skills and

expertise, the predominance of craft as a form of play, and the foregrounding of the act of making as a form of loving care itself, is striking. Ulla Maaria states: “7. Essential for crafting are tools, which are accessible, portable, and easy to learn. 8. Materials become important. Knowledge of what they are made of and where to get them becomes essential. 9. Recipes become important. The ability to create and distribute interesting recipes becomes valuable. 10. Learning techniques brings people together. This creates online and offline communities of practice”<sup>5</sup> In Van der Schijff’s work we become aware of this inevitable emancipation of what we invest with care, with shame and love (as Nietzsche’s last resorts) becoming dramatis personae themselves. The environment becomes the interface. And with that we are both lost and found at the same time. For where is we? Probably only in the act of swinging and punching the *Slaansak / Punch bag*. To grab that moment as an act of self, and being able to communicate that self, in short to mix material, knowledge into recipes for learning practices – and be the moment through which the process can become adopted.

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Real Rules of Innovation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Rob van Kranenburg, Noema [http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ideas/ideas\\_35.html](http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ideas/ideas_35.html)

<sup>2</sup> A Manifesto for Networked Objects — Cohabiting with Pigeons, Arphids and Aibos in the Internet of Things. Why Things Matter Julian Bleecker, Ph.D. Research Fellow, Annenberg Center for Communication julian [at] techkwondo [dot] com

<sup>3</sup> When Blobjects rule the earth, Bruce Sterling, <http://www.boingboing.net/images/blobjects.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Draft Craft Manifesto, Ulla Maaria Mutanen, [http://ullamaaria.typepad.com/hobbyprincess/2005/03/draft\\_craft\\_man.html](http://ullamaaria.typepad.com/hobbyprincess/2005/03/draft_craft_man.html)

<sup>5</sup> Draft Craft Manifesto

Rob van Kranenburg is a teacher and innovation consultant involved with negociability strategies of new technologies, predominantly *ubicomp* and *rfid* (radio frequency identification), the relationship between the formal and informal in cultural and economic policy, and the requirements for a sustainable cultural economy. For the past two years he has been working part time at Virtual Platform, Dutch policy and network organization for e-culture, as interim director and programme manager. He teaches theory at Post St Joost and EMMA (Ma Interaction Design) at the HKU, Hilversum, and Medialab Amsterdam.

# IRON TRIANGLE

Johann van der Schijff

*Power Play* consists of the body of work I have been working on over the past three years, consolidating during my recent sabbatical. Examining power relationships in society, the body of work takes as point of departure a line in Lev Manovich’s book *The Language of New Media*: “as the pioneer of interactive filmmaking Graham Weinbren argues, in relation to interactive media, making a choice involves a moral responsibility”.<sup>1</sup>

What I am consequently aiming at in this exhibition is for the viewer to be forced into a position of choice in their engagement with the work. Making use of formal sculptural and new media devices, scale is of great importance. This is especially relevant to the major works as it relates to human size i.e. a punch bag hanging on lubricated bearings encourage the viewer to thump it; and the broomsticks are placed at a height and angle which invite the viewer to pick them up and sweep the floor. The workmanship and finishes are meticulous, and are aimed to emulate and appeal in the same way as objects in designer-lifestyle shops or motorcar display floors.

The level of skill attained in these sculptures is important in the reading of the work. The implementation of the work has been facilitated by computer-aided design and manufacturing techniques. These techniques have their roots in the ‘military-industrial complex’ as labelled by Dwight Eisenhower. The architect and driving force behind this structure was Vannevar Bush who convinced Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940 to give him funding and political support to create a new kind of collaborative relationship between the military, industry, and academic researchers. Also labelled the ‘iron triangle’, this self-perpetuating association had a decisive role in the history of new media, funding and shaping many root projects. According to Paul Edwards, “it would be almost impossible to overstate the long-term effects of this enormous undertaking on American science and engineering. The vast interdisciplinary effort profoundly restructured scientific research communities. It solidified the trend to science-based industries — already entrenched in the interwar years – but

it added the new ingredient of massive government funding and military direction”.<sup>2</sup>

Playfulness, revulsion, machismo, adolescence, brutality, humour, sadomasochism and desirability are some of the terms used when responding to and trying to describe the shifts of meaning inherent in the work. This vibrant play of interpretation, never fixed and constantly changing, is intentional and used as a device to challenge the viewer on their reaction to the objects. The time, effort and expertise it takes to make these seemingly futile objects might steer towards the obsessive and absurd, but is not dissimilar to the endeavour of engineering high-tech yachts or military hardware. In much the same way as digital photography and digital printing have been liberated in recent years, so computer-aided design and manufacturing processes have become available to artists. A superb example of how computerized techniques and supply chain management used, in for example car manufacturing, have impacted on contemporary art production, is Takashi Murakami’s ‘Hiropon Factory’. With an allusion to Warhol’s Factory, the Hiropon Factory is an art production workshop, involving a number of young artists making use of 3D software and digital drawing in the production of Murakami’s artwork. This has been extended to posters, postcards, T-shirts, and other merchandising, utilising the world wide web for marketing and distribution purposes.<sup>3</sup>

Similar to Murakami’s generation of Japanese artists whose childhood and youth were marked by consumerism and the growing influence of the media, rather than being influenced by *manga* and *anime* (although *Heidi*, a Japanese production with Afrikaans voice-over had a lasting impact...), my iconography was informed by the bright colours of township sculptures, Zulu beading and Xhosa fabrics. In addition to the obvious connection to wooden children’s toys, a direct lineage can be traced to the tractors, lorries and aeroplanes made from discarded Coke and Nugget tins combined with blue wire on my uncle’s farm in Ventersdorp, and the bright enamel paint applied by hand to my sculptures.

It has been a long passage since my previous solo show nearly nine years ago, and I have worked in animation and postproduction, interactive multimedia, and been occupied in setting up new media courses (in the interim). I find it impossible to classify the work as falling into either the new media or the sculpture camp. Computer technology entirely underlies the design, production and manufacturing processes of these works.

As I started mastering these processes I became aware of an emerging area of development. As Danny Rozin, a faculty member at the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University and interactive artist explains: “it is quite obvious that in the future the act of computation will not be confined to be computers but will occur in many physical objects. This idea of combining digital computation and physical objects is often referred to as ‘physical computing’. By definition, this new field comprises two very different disciplines. Computation, with its origins in mathematics, is a very pure, theoretical and liberated form without many constraints and limitations. Creators of computational media are restricted mainly by their imagination and skill, and can expect their creations to work forever. The physical part of physical computing, on the other hand, is an area governed by limitations, the laws of physics, cost, wear and tear, and unpredictability of the real world. The people working in physical computing also come from these two disciplines. They either started off creating software but saw the advantages of adding physicality to their work to achieve a more intuitive and easy way for people to interact with it; or they began by creating objects but recognized the benefits of adding a level of logic and computation to their creations.”<sup>4</sup> *Lazy Susan* falls into the latter camp as a marriage of sculpture and new media elements i.e. 3D animation, interactivity (using sonar input devices which in turn influence

animation streaming and the physical rotation of parts) as well as computer aided design and manufacturing techniques (using design and animation files to cut pieces of metal using computer driven laser, lathe, flame and water jet cutting techniques). The aim of the piece is to operate as a crude scanning device: as the viewer enters the field covered by the rotating top section the animation projected onto the screen will track the viewer with the top physical section following to ‘lock’ onto the viewer. Instead of being looked at, the artwork will instead ‘look back’ at the viewer for a second or two before it continues to scan for new targets. Conceptually it relates to Foucault’s ‘Panoptican’ principle where society starts to police itself, while paradoxically the artwork has a playful interaction with the audience. A chronological progression from Lego, Meccano, the break-off plastic parts of model aeroplanes to the component parts and exploratory inclusion of electronics of the sculptures I am currently making seems to imply that I have managed a legitimate career of never-ending play and tinkering.

**References:**

- <sup>1</sup> Manovich, L. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. The MIT Press, p. 44.
- <sup>2</sup> Wardrip-Fruin, N. (ed) 2003. *The New Media Reader*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. The MIT Press, pp. 35-36.
- <sup>3</sup> Brehm, M. (ed) 2002. *The Japanese experience - Inevitable*. Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany. Hatje Cantz Verlag, pp. 10 & 54.
- <sup>4</sup> Maeda, J. 2004. *Creative Code*. London, Thames & Hudson, p. 174.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Middlesex: Penguin Books

**Credit notice:**

The shape of the bomb was inspired by spotlights in the entrance hall and boardroom of *DELAPSE - broadcast design / motion graphics*, where I used to work as computer animator during 1997-8. The spotlight design was by David Tait and Tasos of *Readymade* ([www.readymade.co.za](http://www.readymade.co.za)).

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife and best friend Nicky Stubbs to whom this exhibition is dedicated. Without her proofreading endless funding proposals, listening to my continuous talking about art, and looking after our two small children every weekend for the last two and a half years, this exhibition would simply not have been realised. I would also like to thank Sophia Mateboho Lecheko and Zodwa Matikhane for nurturing our children during the day while we are at work.

I would like to acknowledge funding from the University of Cape Town (UCT) Research committee, specifically towards computer and electronic equipment as well as printing costs towards the exhibition catalogue. I am especially grateful for the six months sabbatical I was granted in order to pull the show together. The environment for research and experimentation as well as the infrastructure provided by the university creates the space to make work that would just not be possible to realise in this country outside the international connected structure it provides. In this regard I would like to acknowledge funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF), specifically towards research surrounding vector and 3D animation, computer aided design and manufacturing, Physical Computing, as well as allowing me to attend the Designing Interactive Systems (DIS) conference in Boston, USA in 2004.

One of the pleasures in making art is the people with whom I come into contact: from all walks of life and from all parts of the city, South Africa and indeed the world. There is a long list of people who were involved in some way or another to make this exhibition possible and I would like to thank them for the specific contributions they have made: all my colleagues at the Michaelis School of Fine Art for the intellectual rigour they demand and for the inspiration and support I get from them and the students on a daily basis; Pippa Skotnes particularly for encouraging me to work towards a show and for opening the exhibition; Carine Zaayman in the new media section for

carrying a lot of the teaching burden while I focused on the show; David Brown for the sharing of his studio space in Salt River and for being my sculptor mentor; Stuart Bird for being my sculptor assistant for the past three years; Ralph Borland for introducing me to physical computing, the programming and conceptualising of *Lazy Susan*; Daan de Beer from *Y&E Services* for the electronics; Pat and Rory O’Conner and the rest of the staff at *Welding Services* for the computer aided manufacturing and aluminium welding; Hennie Henrico from *Leathercraft* for the leather work; Lionel Trollip from *L.T. Customs* for the spray painting; Peter Simons and Walter Brabetz from *Albert Carpets* for the manufacturing of the carpet; Andre Stead and the rest of the staff from *Bronze Age* for the bronze casting; my brother Ockert van der Schijff for sourcing and bringing equipment from the USA; Geoff Grundlingh for taking the photographs; Virginia MacKenny, Gavin Younge, Petri Leijdekkers and Rob van Kranenburg for their catalogue articles; Gerhard Greyvensteyn and Ansie Kampher for proofreading and for the media list; Biebie and Chris van der Merwe for the translation from Dutch; Fritha Langerman for proofreading and editing the catalogue; Gary Marsden on advice on programming and interactivity; Nathaniel Stern for advice on MAX/MSP/JITTER software; Ingrid Willis for all the admin work; Moeneeb Dalwai for all the Mac and general computer problem solving; Charlie van Rooyen and Martin Adams for helping me carrying sculptures; Roy Macgregor for the lighting during the photo shoot; Charles Maggs my master student, for sharing my ideas; my family and friends for bearing with me and lastly Suzette and Brendon Bell-Roberts, Michelle Schaaf and Camille Naudé from the Bell-Roberts Gallery. If I have left someone out I apologise...

Finally to everybody that came to see, criticize and BUY the work, thank you!

Johann van der Schijff, Cape Town, April 2006.



# RÉSUMÉ

Johann van der Schijff is currently lecturer in New Media at the Michaelis School of Fine Art where he is involved with implementing and teaching new media as part of the undergraduate fine art programme. He is also the course convenor of the MFA in New Media at the Institute for Film and New Media.

Previously he was involved with setting up the Multimedia programme at Technikon Witwatersrand. Before entering the academic world he worked as creative director at Shift Interactive Communications and as computer animator at Delapse and Haptics in Johannesburg.

He holds a MFA (New Media) Academie Minerva, Hanze University for Professional Education, Groningen, The Netherlands, MFA (Sculpture) University of Cape Town, and a BAFA University of Pretoria. He was born and grew up in Pretoria where he matriculated from Afrikaans Hoër Seunskool. His sculptural/new media works have been exhibited nationally and internationally. Johann is married to Nicky with two young children, Sophia and Tom.

- 2005

• Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK), curated group exhibition, Oudshoorn, 25 March – 2 April
- 2004

• The 2nd Spier Outdoor Sculpture Biennial, Spier estate, Stellenbosch, 15th January – 15th March
- 2003

• Picnic, a group show for summer lightly curated by Andrew Lamprecht, Bell-Roberts Gallery, Cape Town, 8 – 29 November

• YDEsire, The 4th Softserve Art Party, The Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town, 22nd February

- 2000

• YIELD - group installation as part of URBAN FUTURES exhibition, Civic Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg

• UNPLUGGED – group exhibition, Market Theatre Gallery, Johannesburg
- 1997

• THE VIRTUAL HARVESTER - public presentation, SIGGRAPH 97 Art & Design Sketches, Los Angeles, USA

• YIELD – solo installation, Ziegler Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands
- 1996

• Groundswell – contemporary South African art exhibition, The Mermaid Theatre Gallery, London, UK
- 1995

• Radio South Africa: radio’s by artists – group exhibition, Kunsthal, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

• Johannesburg Biennale – fringe exhibition, Johannesburg
- 1994

• Transport Show – group exhibition, Everard Read Contemporary Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

• An Electronic Laager – solo exhibition, Master of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, Cape Town
- 1991

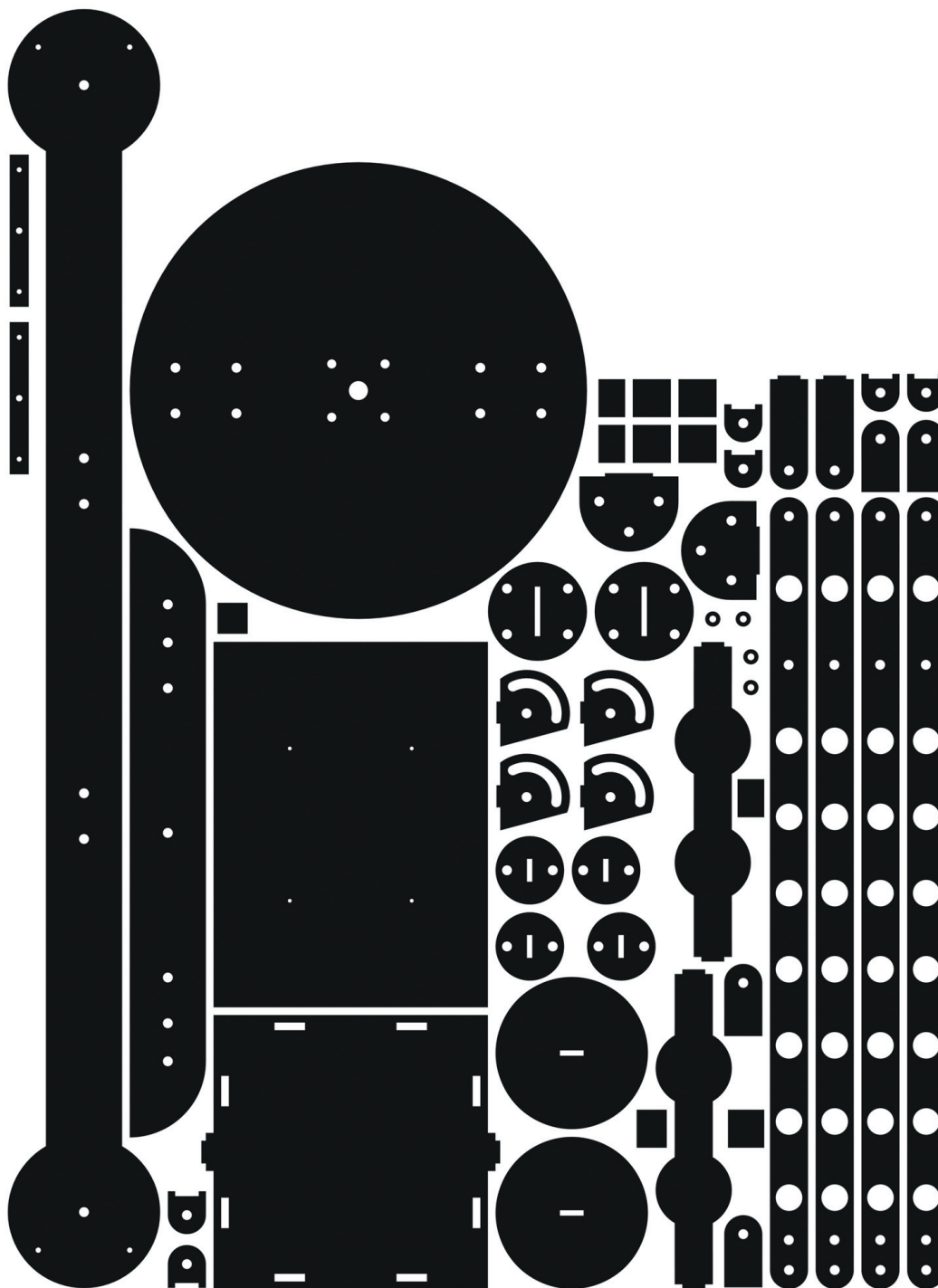
• Volkskas Atelier Award competition – finalists, Johannesburg
- 1988

• New Signatures – competition, overall winner 1988, Pretoria

For an extensive CV please refer to [www.johannvds.com](http://www.johannvds.com)

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The computer file of parts that were cut from a sheet of aluminium using computer aided manufacturing techniques. These aluminium parts were used to assemble the rotating top part of Lazy Susan.