

Manggha Museum of Japanese  
Art and Technology

REPORT  
ON ACTIVITIES

20 12

SPRAWOZDANIE  
Z DZIAŁALNOŚCI

Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej  
Manggha



### *Umschwenne*

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### *Release*

Das Release ist ein Mechanismus, der die Bewegung des Gießers und des Zugschneiders steuert. Es besteht aus einem Pleuel, das über ein System von Pleueln und Pleueln mit dem Gießers und dem Zugschneider verbunden ist. Das Release steuert die Bewegung des Gießers und des Zugschneiders über ein System von Pleueln und Pleueln.

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Andrzej Jajszczyk

Piotr Bożyk. *Kinetyki*

Piotr Bożyk. *Kinetics*

The exhibition of Piotr Bożyk's kinetic sculptures at the Manggha Museum was a truly rare occasion. The choice of the venue was justified by certain associations with Japan, to be found in the sophisticated technique, in the traditionally Japanese material – wood, and in the music which had a certain quality about it that brought that country to mind.

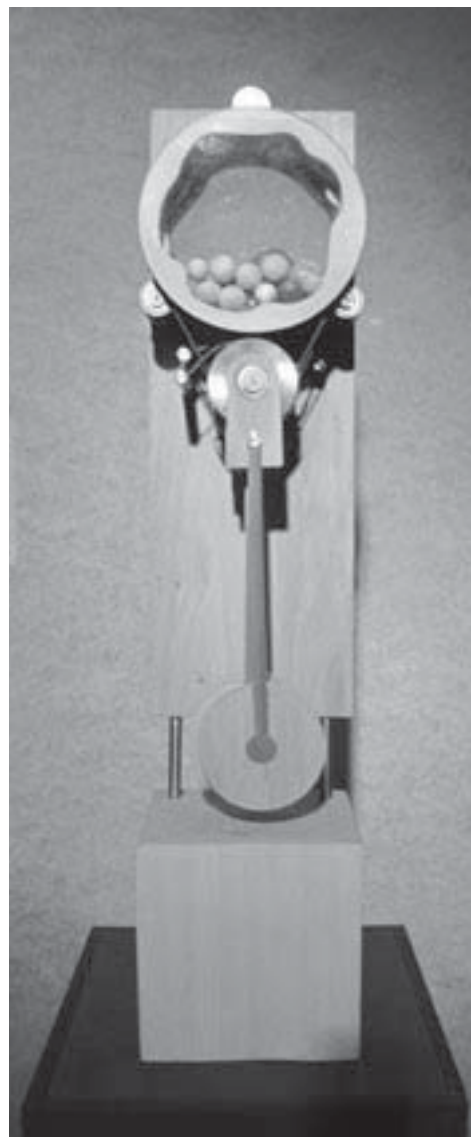
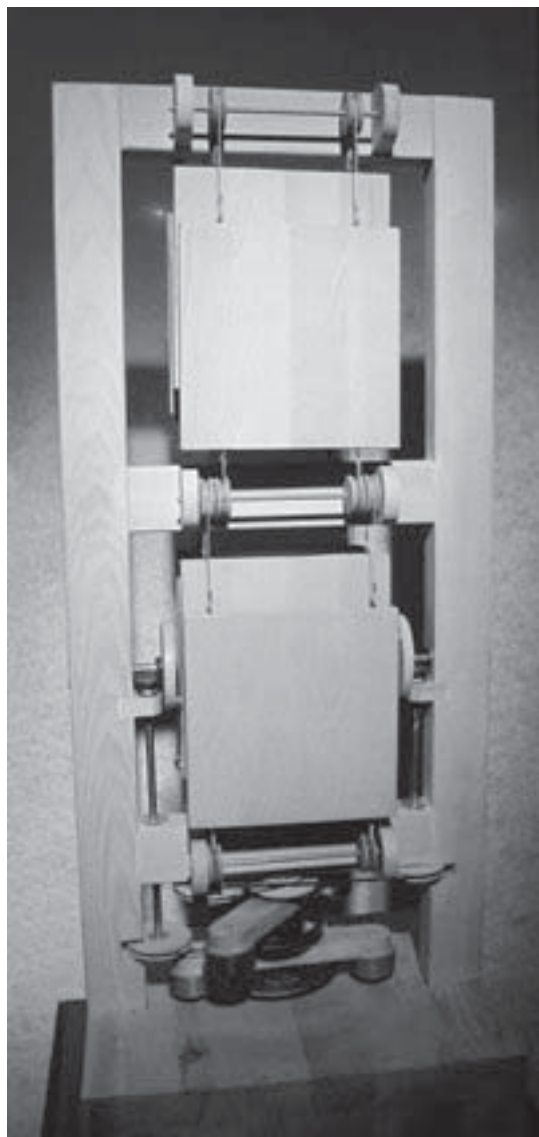
Piotr Bożyk was born in 1944. In 1969, he graduated from the Faculty of Industrial Design at Krakow's Academy of Fine Art, where he is a professor now. His family had artistic traditions: his father, Eugeniusz Bożyk, was a painter and stage designer, and his mother, Helena Papée-Bożyk, a painter and stained-glass panel designer. Piotr's brother, Jerzy Bożyk, is a composer, musician and singer, very popular on Krakow's jazz scene.

The exhibition was accompanied by music specially composed for the event. Despite my Japanese associations that they evoked, the set of music pieces dedicated to specific exhibits, jointly entitled *E-Motions*, were composed by the Polish-Finish married couple Agnieszka Waligórska-Siren and Pekka Siren, who specialise in collecting sounds from various places all over the world and transforming them into electronic music.

The exhibition was opened by the director of the Manggha Museum, Bogna Dziechciaruk-Maj, together with Piotr Bożyk. The opening was attended by a great crowd, and was conducted in a nice, friendly atmosphere.

The sculptures are indeed unusual – both visually and considered as little wonders of mechanics. The artist not only allows touching them but actually encourages viewers to play with them and set them in motion. However, looking at the delicate mechanisms I can't help feeling some apprehension, wondering how long they would last in conformation with the often indelicate hands of the public. But now everyone is running among the kinetic wonders, playing with them like children. Actually, the artist promised the directors of Manggha that, if necessary, he would repair any damaged sculptures. Indeed, I should be using a video camera instead of a photographic one in order to record the motions of the various works, but then I would have a problem writing this account. And I don't feel like meddling with multimedia presentations, at least not yet.

The sculptures are very personal – they reference the artist's memories and feelings. As he wrote in the invitation to the exhibition: 'I start with a very general idea of a mechanical assemblage, a vision of the programme of movements connected with an intense experience, an enchantment,



a reciprocated look, a beautiful gesture, the start of yearning, a sudden memory from childhood, a metaphor for a chain of strange interdependencies.' He also talked about it when presenting his works on the opening day.

In the sculpture entitled *Fate*, stirring the pendulum causes the blending of balls of various colours in a cylindrical transparent container: their final position is determined by random accident, as does the fate of people to a large extent. The work *Meeting* is composed of two independent systems forming a mirror-like symmetry. Upon stirring the pendulums, the elements of both parts try to meet. When they succeed now and then, they raise their base together.

The exhibition also features photographs of kinetic sculptures, taken by Magdalena Bożyk, Piotr Bożyk's daughter of multiple talents. Another member of this artistic dynasty is a singer, ethnologist and producer. Together with her uncle Jerzy, she recently released an album, *Drive*, which she also produced. In 2005, she graduated from the Jagiellonian University with a degree in

ethnology and anthropology, and also the Władysław Żeleński 2<sup>nd</sup>-degree Music School in Krakow, the same year.

Kinetic, i.e. moving, sculptures are nothing new in art. They are generally believed to have been pioneered by Marcel Duchamp, who exhibited a bicycle wheel turning in an upturned fork in his Paris studio in 1913. But the works of Piotr Bożyk strongly resemble much more ancient machines – those in Leonardo da Vinci's sketchbook.

Kinetic sculptures come in a great variety these days, differing for example by the type of propulsion used: it can be the viewers' muscle power, as is the case with Piotr Bożyk's works, but other artists use for example wind power or electric motors.

The mechanism of *Tremor* is extremely complicated. The energy of the moving pendulums accumulates gradually in the various elements of the structure, and then gives a strong tremor to the whole sculpture, surprising the viewers.

The sculpture *Wind* combines two types of propulsion. As in other structures designed by Piotr Bożyk, the viewers are the main source of power required to initiate motion. In this case, they move a gravitational mechanism which drives a large centrally-positioned propeller. The resulting gust moves small lightweight air turbines fastened to the moving arms of the sculpture. The whole moves delicately and unpredictably; the motion is modifiable by changing the locations of the little turbines.

Wind-powered kinetic sculptures are quite popular. What springs to mind immediately is the gently-moving suspended structure made of coloured aluminium by Alexander Calder, which I saw in a separate room of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. The 1976 work was originally to be made of steel but it soon turned out that it would be too heavy to produce the intended effect. The success of Calder's carefully-balanced structure is evidenced by their presence, for example, in the concourse of New York's JFK Airport and in the leading galleries and museums all over the world.

While the sculptures by Bożyk and Calder are permanently 'anchored' at one location, the works of the Dutch artist Theo Jansen (b. 1948) can traverse considerable distances, just moved by the wind. His *Beach Beast (Strandbeest)* is utterly extraordinary. Propelled by wind, a sizeable 'creature' made of lightweight plastics runs along the beach just like a living thing. It is worth taking a look at, and can be viewed on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcR7U2tuNoY>.

It comes as no surprise that this wonder of art and engineering has been used in a BMW commercial. In it, Jensen utters the telling words: 'The walls between art and engineering exist only in our minds.' Being an engineer myself, I can only endorse this statement. The use of artists' ideas in commercials is nothing unusual, actually. A great video advertising Honda cars, in which the movement of one of the elements of the car initiates a cascade of movements of its other components, seems based, in my opinion, on the video presentation *Der Lauf der Dinge* (The Way Things Go) by the two Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss, which I and Basia could view for the first time at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

However, as opposed to Jensen's 'monsters', Piotr Bożyk's sculptures have a human scale, are usually friendly and tempt the viewer to touch and activate them, for example *Tree of Knowledge*, whose arms are full of mechanisms attracting the viewer. But as become the Tree of Knowledge, something disconcerting lurks in its arms.

In the work *Release*, a pendulum adds growing tension, with visible effort, to a climbing system which, once it reaches its maximum height, releases its pent-up energy and falls down.

*The Everyday* utilises nine transparent drums full of balls, resembling the one in the sculpture titled *Fate*. Here, too, the randomly-moving balls symbolise the diversity and uniqueness of specific days.

*Enchantment* is a particularly important work. The artist says it was made after a lengthy break in his work on the series of kinetics, under the influence of his 'enchantment with a certain beautiful glance'. It also illustrates perfectly a distinguishing characteristic of the works shown in the exhibition. It is neither a soulless machine in which motion would be the only and ultimate purpose nor a mere demonstration devised to show off engineering skills, but rather an expression of the artist's feelings and impressions. It is art entirely connected with man.

This is excellently illustrated by the work titled *Desire*. A text placed next to it explains the artist's idea: 'Turning the crank causes the gradual „climbing” of the system of levers (a spider-like implement) towards the quivering balls on the top. The extreme upper position does not allow a direct contact between the two systems: one has to go back to the lower position and repeat the hopeless attempt.'

A human dimension is also imparted to Piotr Bożyk's sculptures by the fact that they are propelled with the power of human hands; what's more, those are the hands of the viewers, who make contact with the work of art in this way.

But of course it would be farfetched to expect all contemporary artists to refrain from utilising the achievements of technology, including electric motors, which are so useful in setting sculptures in motion. I remember how much I enjoyed two talking faces shown at the 2011 Venice Biennale – the work of Nathaniel Mellors, titled *Hippy Dialectics (Ourhouse)*. Exposed in the rear of the moving heads, the mechanisms produced very naturalistic facial movements and expressions, and even moved their lips in sync with the words heard from the loudspeakers.

An entirely different scale characterises the huge moving sculpture by the Spanish artist Manuel Berrocal Ortiz, titled *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, which we saw outside the main building of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. Six elements which move alternately closer together and further apart form the giant torso of an athlete.

Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle created a very colourful set of kinetic sculptures jointly called the Stravinsky Fountain, standing near the Centre Pompidou, where water plays a major role in addition to conventional mechanisms.

I adore the undulating kinetic sculptures by the California-based American artist and structural designer Reuben Margolin. Some can be viewed on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dehXioMIKg0>.

The exhibition of Piotr Bożyk's work, combined with the illustrative music, afforded us a lot of enjoyment. One has to admit that sculpture is not generally a forte of Polish contemporary art. All the more reason to be happy that we had an opportunity to see something that fused artistic expression with engineering effort so successfully. This, of course, was no accident – Piotr Bożyk is a well-known industrial designer.

A nice catalogue was issued for the exhibition, including a CD with *E-Motions*, the music of Agnieszka Waligórska-Siren and Pekka Siren.