

Kikai no mori [...Ex Machina II]

For piano and Percussion

Program Note

- I. Tinguely [after Arthur Ganson's Tinguely in Moscow]
- II. Genghis? [after Rodney Brook's Genghis]
- III. Machine with Chinese Fan [after Arthur Ganson's Machine with Chinese Fan]
- IV. Mandala Tequila [after Iván Puig's Mandalas para la vida moderna]
- V. Machine with Wishbone [after Arthur Ganson's Machine with Wishbone]
- VI. Machine with Artichoke Petal? [after Arthur Ganson's Machine with Artichoke Petal]
- VII. Things that Go... [after The way Things Go by Peter Fischli and David Weiss]

Adapted for Makoto Nakura.

Kikai no mori [...Ex Machina II] is an adaptation of "...Ex Machina", which was originally written for marimba, piano, and symphony orchestra.

I think of ...Ex Machina [II] as a sort of seven-movement circus act that reflects on a number of artworks I greatly admire, notably the kinetic sculptures of Arthur Ganson. The piece employs a menagerie of “technological” devices (in the case of my music, these are rhythmic and structurally “imperfect” mechanisms) that, while precisely engineered, also seem to be realized with a high degree of precariousness. These movements are single-minded and multifaceted; simple, yet intricate. Like the best circus acts, they also attempt to be a bit funny. But, most importantly, they try to be very dangerous!

I first heard of Jean Tinguely, the Swiss builder of dadaist mechanical sculptures, through a friend who loved Tinguely's work but was particularly amused by the fact that many of his self-destructing machines actually...failed to self-destruct. What could be more dadaistic than that?

Genghis is a wobbly, six-legged robot built in 1989 by the Australian Scientist Rodney Brooks (Director of the MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab) which, upon being switched on, doesn't vacuum one's floors or builds the newest Chevrolet. Instead, it simply “does what is in its nature”.

Mandala Tequila was inspired by the installation piece “Mandalas para la vida moderna” (“Mandalas for Modern Life”) by Mexican artist Iván Puig, where an endless mechanical mallet weaves a mantric melody when hitting a collection of Don Julio tequila bottles arranged in a circle. Thanks to a small light bulb installed on the mallet, a series of cogwheel-like shadows are projected onto the walls, creating a perpetual counterpoint of light, sound and movement.

Machine with Chinese Fan, Machine with Wishbone, Machine with Artichoke Petals and Tinguely in Moscow compelled me to reflect musically on the universe of American artist Arthur Ganson-a self-described cross between a mechanical engineer and a choreographer. Ganson's awesome machines are simple and profound, quiet and eloquent, high-tech and low-tech, finite and eternal.

Things that Go... dreams about the world of Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss, specifically their masterful film “The Way Things Go”: a sort of perpetual cycle where fire, air, gravity and corrosive liquids make it possible for mops, buckets, wood planks and old bottles to stage a carefully choreographed dance that is part chain-reaction, part acrobatic performance.

Kikai no mori [...Ex Machina II] is an homage to the work of artists who, like Italo Calvino, prefer to “... raise themselves above the weight of the world, showing that with all their gravity they have the secret of lightness...”

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