

...and of course Henry the Horse...

Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez

- I. Genghis?
- II. Mandala Tequila
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- IV. Things that Go

Commissioned by Continuum with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, and dedicated to Joel Sachs.

The source for the title of this collection of short pieces should be obvious to any Beatles fan. “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite” —a hallucinatory electronic march with colorful characters and an aura of decadence, nostalgia and futurism— intrigued and amazed me long before I could understand what the lyrics said.

I’d like to think of the four little pieces that so far conform this collection of music for four-hand piano, clarinet and violin as proponents of some of the same qualities I like about “Mr. Kite”. My pieces, like most circus acts, employ a menagerie of “technological” devices (in the case of my music, these are rhythmic and structurally “imperfect” mechanisms) that are precisely engineered; yet precariously realized. The pieces are simple and complex at the same time, as well as a bit funny—and very dangerous...

Each piece pays homage to, and is a commentary on, a work of contemporary art.

Genghis is a wobbly, six-legged robot built in 1989 by 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 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 Artichoke takes its title from one of the awesome machines built by the American artist Arthur Ganson—a self-described cross between a mechanical engineer and a choreographer. Ganson’s 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 circus-act—Being for the Benefit of Mr. Sachs!