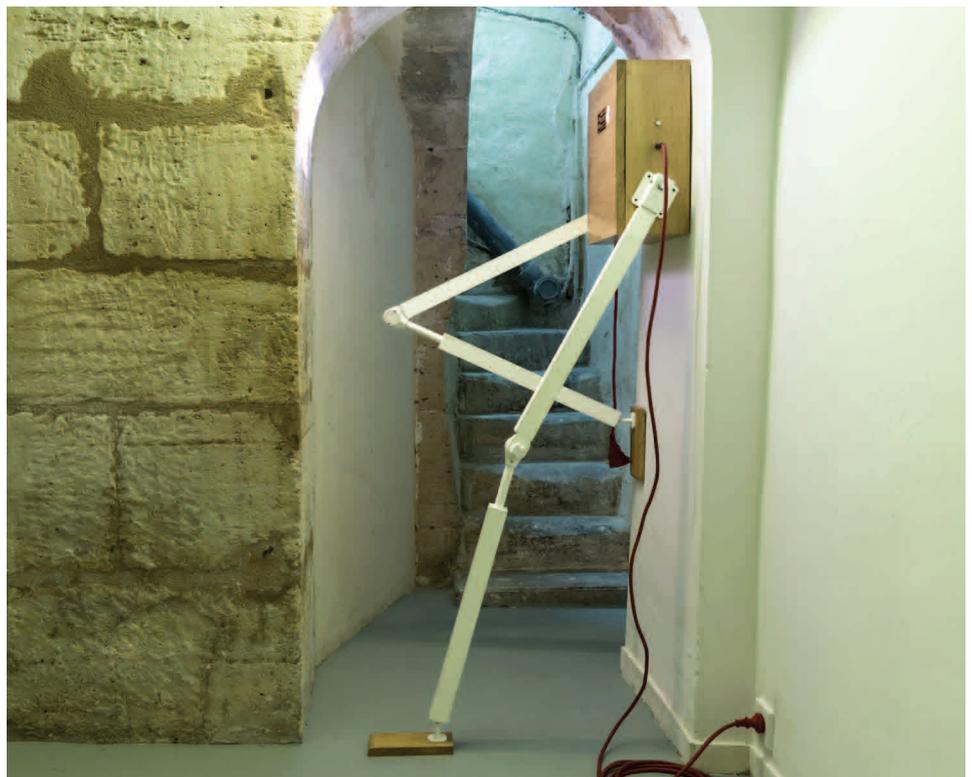


**Texte de Radoslav Ištok  
sur le travail de Brieg Huon  
GENERATOR #4**

*Brieg Huon,*  
Rado Ištok, avril 2018



Brieg Huon, *5 minutes avant la vengeance des objets*, 2018, Arondit, Paris.  
Production GENERATOR, 40mcube/EESAB/Self Signal.  
Crédit photo : Salim Santa Lucia.

The work of Brieg Huon revolves around the relationship between people and everyday objects. Questions of manufacturing, use and care in relation to things that surround us take in Huon's practice various shapes at the intersection of fine art and graphic design, two fields in which he has back-ground and which both address content, form, as well as uselessness and use respectively. Encountering at an early age sculptural works of Pop Art, which paid homage to banal objects by monumentalising them in terms of material and scale, as well as the environment of a carpenter's workshop, Huon's work is built on the tension between the crafted and the mass produced, art and design, and the high and low as introduced by Pop Art in general. His artistic language is however more restrained yet often with a tongue-in-cheek element, such as in *BH* (2015), a light sign appropriating a look of a mass produced commercial object which is in fact a unique work produced by the artist, carrying his initials in a logotype taken from a photograph of a concrete mixer, blurring the boundaries between a unique personal identity and a corporate visual identity.

Similarly, *Lack (12 kilos)* (2015) is a replica of IKEA's bestseller coffee table that can be found at home, and perhaps more often hastily furnished generic spaces, all over the world. Unlike the 'mass-produced original', this 'unique replica' is executed in noble and natural material of solid wood, amounting to the weight of twelve kilos revealed in the subtitle. Fascination with the practices of craft but also appropriation, forgery and theft as a highly skilful misconduct is recurrent in Huon's work, such as in the model of a fictive house of Stephen Blumberg, a man known as the Book Bandit, convicted in 1990 for stealing over 23.000 rare and valuable books from various libraries and museums in the USA. A keen interest in books and graphic design manifests itself in another strand of Huon's work, such as *113 Names of Artists Corrected by Word* (2015), which shares its logic with *Lack (12 kilos)* by reproducing the 'machine aesthetics' in terms of misspellings created by Word autocorrect, and subsequently executing this aesthetics in an analogue and laborious process of letterpress printing. While many artists of the post-digital age share a nostalgia for the analog media and processes through found archival photographs or second-hand antique furniture, Huon balances the nostalgia with a sense of humour which nevertheless betrays a romantic longing for objects made with care to last for life or even to be passed on next generations.

*Lapsteel* (2017), which combines the artist's passion for carpentry as well as music, takes its name from lap steel guitar, a music instrument which originates in Hawaii and became popular mainly through country and folk music. Due to the fact that the instrument's frequency is the same as the one of human voice, the instrument is played in the intervals between the singer's parts so that the two complement each other. This dynamic is close to Huon's interests in the relation between the foreground and background as understood in graphic design but also other disciplines, which allows for a new and more respectful understanding of various support structures which enhance the elements in the foreground. At the same time, the strings attached to the table, again in shape of an IKEA table, as well as amplifying the whole instrument, give the otherwise mundane table a voice. The rhetoric question in the title of the influential essay by philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), in which she offered an analysis of colonial mechanisms through giving voice and silencing, unexpectedly resonates with Huon's work in his linking of voice to agency. The category of the subaltern is in his work however replaced by the non-human, almost as if advocating for the agency and rights of objects against the human cruelty, such as

in his work *Five Minutes before the Revenge of the Objects* (2018). Given a voice or vision, the objects of everyday use, otherwise denied their agency by humans, are in part emancipated by the artist. Huon's relation to everyday objects is almost animistic in the sense of paying respect to 'things' as living beings with their own dignity, as well as recognising the affective relationship humans build with objects, including the sorrow after lost items and joy of rescuing second-hand items.

Two other works animated by sound are *Waiting Sculptures* and *Mechanical Language* (both 2018). Wooden boxes playing music in *Waiting Sculptures* are not so much speakers as crafted objects themselves in dialogue with the music played, in this case instrumental music by American rock and roll music duo Santo & Johnny, some of whose instrumental music has been used as 'background music' in commercials, television programs, and movies. Similarly, in *Waiting Sculptures* their music enlivens the otherwise silent acoustic environment of the gallery. *Mechanical Language* moves in its form closer to the interface between a sound system speaker and a sculpture, while the relation between the object and the music played is again that of mutual support rather than subordination. The song played is *The Entertainer* (1902) by the African-American composer and pianist Scott Joplin (1868-1917), which since the 1910s appeared on the market as piano rolls for player pianos, mechanical pianos operated via pre-programmed music recorded on perforated paper rolls. What we listen to in *Mechanical Language* is thus not the song itself but its various interpretations recorded by different pianists for the piano rolls appreciated often more for the master pianist than the composer himself. The relation between the foreground and the background, as mentioned before, is thus not only a formal relation but also a relation between the things in the spotlight and those merely registered. Placing background music in the centre of an art work can thus be read not only as a playful gesture of a designer prank, but also as a gesture of exposure of the relationship between foreground and background as not only one of hierarchy but rather of a mutual codependency.

In Huon's latest work *Five Minutes before the Revenge of the Objects* (2018) we encounter a model of a vaguely anthropomorphic robot who shares with us its visions in a projection on the wall. In part answering the question in the title of Philip K. Dick's cult science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), we see into the robot's mind through a five minute YouTube video. The video, titled *DESTROYED THE ENTIRE HOUSE! Breaking everything inside of someone's house!*, shows a young man systematically, and at first almost timidly, rather than in an amok, destroying the contents of an abandoned house. What is striking is perhaps not the act of destruction itself but the detachment with which it takes place, almost as a game or a performance—just for fun, as we get to know in the beginning of the video. One could argue that the source of this detachment is caused not just by the absence of a relation between the person and the environment, but also by a lack of relation to the kind of labour which produced the objects. The character in the video hence in a way personifies the relationship of the Western society to 'stuff'. The 'crime scene' (referring to Huon's edition *Pièces à conviction*, 2013) of *Five Minutes before the Revenge of the Objects* itself could be seen as a junk-space in the way by Rem Koolhaas described it in his essay-manifesto *Junkspace* (2002). While space-junk is a term for the debris left by the humans in the universe, junk-space is for Koolhaas what people leave on the planet, a pitiful byproduct and a farce of modernisation. Paradoxically, today—in affluent societies flooded with cheaply produced objects and devices with inbuilt obsolescence—it is the sphere of art,

beside exclusive luxury design, which continues a respectful relationship to crafting and hand-made objects made to last. While Huon's work is not expressly political, the questions it raises about the human relations to objects, including their production, consumption and destruction, are some of the same that nowadays move the political landscape of the Western world whose economy is based on the international division of labour, resulting in the crisis of the working class in Europe and the USA. The apocalyptic revenge of the objects is thus perhaps really just five minutes away, turning the whole world into an 'anger room'.