

CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY

Kal Spelletich



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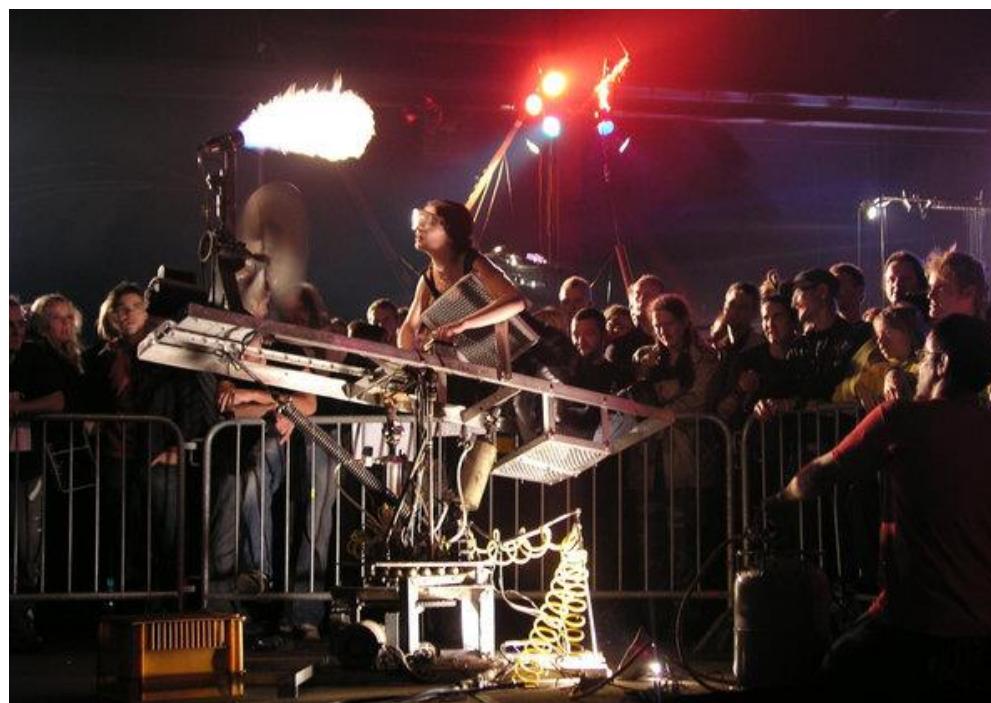
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Artists on Artists | Chris Johanson on the Apocalyptic Machines of Kal Spelletich
By Carol Kino
August 16, 2013



'Flight Simulator' (2002), one of Kal Spelletich's fire-breathing machines.

After a two-year hiatus, the skateboarder-turned-art Chris Johanson is back in a major way, with his first comprehensive museum solo show, "Within the River of Time Is My Mind," at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles (through Oct. 13) and a self-titled new monograph from Phaidon.

The Los Angeles-based artist recently visited New York to create a ceramic fountain for the Standard, East Village, with his wife, the ceramicist and textile artist Johanna Jackson. While in town, Johanson took time out to talk about one of his own favorite artists, the San Francisco-based roboticist Kal Spelletich. Formerly the artistic director of the machine-art collective Seemen, Spelletich is known for building mechanized fire-breathing creatures from welded metal and scrapped computer parts. Lately, he's been creating machines that perform spiritual gestures, like genuflecting.

Johanson included Spelletich in "Artifacts of a Life Lived By the Living (To Live)," a forthcoming show he has curated for the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles. (It opens Sept. 29.) Spelletich's "Youth Educational Spacecraft," a classroom in a spaceship he created with the artist Dana Albany, is also currently on tour, with coming stops at the Exploratorium in San Francisco and at the Burning Man festival in Black Rock, Nev.

From left: an image from Spelletich's upcoming interactive work 'With Your Head In the Clouds'; Johanson's 'Being In My Life #1,' on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los AngelesFrom left: an image from Spelletich's upcoming interactive work "With Your Head In the Clouds"; Johanson's "Being In My Life #1," on view now at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles. Here, Johanson on Spelletich:



From left: an image from Spelletich's upcoming interactive work "With Your Head In the Clouds"; Johanson's "Being In My Life #1," on view now at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles.

"I've known Kal since the early '90s in San Francisco. He was making this intense mechanical installation art and working with Survival Research Laboratories. The first thing I saw that he did was the movie "Slacker." He's the guy that has the TVs all over him, who is talking about how he doesn't go into the outside world.

"The first artwork I saw was this insane event put on with the Cacophony Society in San Francisco, which started Burning Man. It involved all these hectic machines just kind of freaking out and cruising around. People could have been harmed at any second. It was just total mayhem, with this wall of TVs being exploded, and people with bullhorns. The early stuff was so apocalyptic and so intense, and my favorite thing about it was that all the materials were recycled. It was all just Kal hanging out in his studio, figuring out new ways to make things be mechanical.

"This piece he's doing for my show is called 'With Your Head in the Clouds.' A lot of Kal's art is mechanically oriented, but this is going into different territory. There'll be video that shows people daydreaming in front of cloud-filled blue skies all over the ceiling. But it's interactive, because when people come into the space and stand in front of a sky video, they will also be projected onto the ceiling. It's just a nice thoughtful piece."