**Paul Wiedmer and the Fourth Dimension**

Erasmus Weddigen

 *“Non possiamo dimenticare che il tic-tac e le sfere in moto di un orologio, che l’entrata o l’uscita di uno stantuffo in un cilindro, che l’aprirsi e il chiudersi di due ruote dentate con l’apparire e lo scomparire continuo dei loro rettangoletti d’acciaio, che la furia di un volante o il turbine di un’elica, sono tutti elementi plastici e pittorici, di cui un’opera scultoria futurista deve valersi. L’aprirsi e il richiudersi di una valvola crea un ritmo altrettanto bello ma infinitamente più nuovo di quello d’una palpebra animale!”.*

*Boccioni nel manifesto La scultura futurista,del 11 aprile 1912 (tre giorni dopo la vincita di Crupelandt a Roubaix)*

The night before I sat down to write a text on Paul Wiedmer’s Cyclosna, I dreamt of a visit to the wild garden in his backyard between Burgdorf and Wynigen. There was a table with a round surface made of basalt from Bagnoregio in Lazio; not far from the enchanted valley where Paul’s little house ‘La Serpara’ lies. There in his studio grows *Cyclosna* (to be unveiled in summer 2012), a fire-spewing moon dial that seems like it might bicycle through time.

From a crystal carafe Paul poured me glistening wine from Civitella d’Agliano, something he always does when he receives guests. When I asked him about how his Etruscan moon goddess Losna-Luna was coming along and about its relation to the 4th dimension, he pointed mischievously to a shelf behind me where all sorts of objects that he had worked on were piled up. Amongst them was a large pipe-knee which had a brass-coloured shimmer but a scarred surface of cracked rust “...but it’s made of pure gold” said Paul in that laconic, ironic way he has of expressing himself. Needless to say, I was doubtful and awoke.

Without lingering on the meanings of the Artemidoros’ interpretations, I tried to find the significance of gold in my dream. Of course an artist is the sole cultural alchemist in a position to change lesser materials into works of golden worth. In sport only a fraction of athletes, cyclists for example, are capable of evoking a similar, perhaps even more tangible effect yet without leaving behind any relic of mention for mankind. Gold panning and money laundering have occasionally brought questionable success but it is only the virtual gold of the artist that can survive the corrosion and transitory nature of his craft. Paul’s life-long creative and transformative treatment of found materials, indeed the scrap of our civilization, must be what lies behind the metaphor of my dream.

I reflected, well into the early hours of the morning, whether it was necessary at all to write about a work of art. After all a mother doesn’t explain what like her children are but lets them define themselves. The golden pipe-knee reminded me of one of Christian Morgenstern’s Gallows songs, “it is not a tree, it is not a tent, it is a knee and nothing else.” For this reason artists often prefer to say that what they have made is a work and nothing else.

A pipe in itself is a means for transporting liquids downwards and airborne materials upwards, the latter not dissimilar from *The Soul’s Ascent into Paradise* by Hieronymus Bosch, in the Palazzo Ducale in Venice. However, here we encounter a kinky problem. Paul’s bent pipe prevents any straight enlightening view through it. To shed any light on it I was forced to take a less direct path, as all artists are used to do. Whereas Heidegger might call it in his logic a ‘Verstellung’ (‘shifting’ or ‘adjustment’), Einstein would need a huge gravitational pull to ‘bend’ our normal way of seeing obliquely through it. If all examinations and insights into creativity were clear and straightforward then historians, critics, journalists, curators and museum staff would be unemployed.

The lonely knee that walks with gallows humour through the world forsakes the Heideggerian pathless *Holzweg* into philosophical wilderness, if it wanders without its maker.

The artist and his work move in a sort of Möbius loop, that links back into itself. Thus one’s conceptional view of a work always comes back to its author – in a chiralic twist, referred to in mathematics as an *un-orientable diversity*. An evolving band, such as a pearl necklace or a rosary, winds itself parallel to the life of the artist in a self-engulfing loop, an *Ouroboros* (the ancient serpent biting its tail), which distorts its creator if he does not continually stretch and challenge his own creative powers. Self-devouring snakes and dragons have been symbols of eternity and rebirth since the Egyptian Book of the Dead, via Plato, for Asians and Aztecs, from the alchemists of the Middle Ages to Carl Jung’s *Archetypus*.

Perhaps I could persuade Paul to make a Möbius loop out of bent pipes, just as he has already made the most beautiful and labyrithic clews out of tangled iron from woven-together pipes.

*Cyclosna* waits, while meditations on Möbius and pipe curves has little, almost nothing to do with her, especially as her creator is more concerned with the various ways of looking at, under and around her rather than through her.

*Cyclosna* is a cyclopean steel vitrine construction that inside has been visited by a platonically stiffen Golem, a substraction of the notches and undulations, the folds and indentations of Boccioni’s *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space.* Mechanical time is funnelled from the top of the tower: the phases of the moon measured from space and put in to order in a centuries old gear mechanism are divided up into time intervals and converted by drive belts. On the inside, calibrated to moon hours, a pendulum starts up a flame-like rhythm whose beating of time would have pleased even Wilhelm Busch: “...time passes and we pass with it” between past, present and future. Only that instead of merely ticking and beating, it hisses and puffs before going out again. A self-igniter suspicious of eternity. We can come to terms with the death of the phoenix because it is relative.

There are three cubes, each one smaller than the previous one, as if mirroring the perspective of a four-dimensional hypercube. As a reference to Duchamp’s readymade, *Roue de bicyclette* (and the shadow it casts) the plinth area is crossed by the latest bicycle rims, satirizing the absurd competition of the world championships in time trial racing between 1912 and 2012. Like a hamster in its wheel the rims do not leave the paradoxical tesseract because the measured time is relative to the distance in space from A to B when viewed from the expanding zero point of the big bang. Is that clear? Or must I call upon a cycling colleague of mine who can transfigure the prologue more aphoristically?

***Cyclosna flammifera***

You are an un-being quite like mankind is,

Hypertrophic as well, an untimely antediluvian lizard

Related to the species *Dynamosaurus artifex ignis*

You arose in the carboniferous, Pangaea’s first cephalopod

And you may well find in the morning of the Neo- carboniferous

Your earthly end, when the last of the cephalomotive species,

*Homunculus sapiens* plus *sapiens*

Due to its top-heaviness breathes its last, as coal and crude oil

Have long been wasted by the *sapiens irrationalis.*

Only the invention of the bicycle gave a deadline

To the twice gifted, twice failed *homo*.

Cyclosna,

Your primeval heart that ticks the phases of the moon,

Hides an illogical female soul, yet your brain,

Mathematically calculating atomic seconds

belongs to male logic, firmly bound to destruction.

Cyclosna,

You make clear the hours of the lunar day,

The nightly moons of the lunar year;

Your gear mechanism turns like Saturn in autonomous rings.

On dragon foot you stand amidst Toledo, Babylon, Peking,

Spitting out ruin here, there luck, as was sung in the legends

From Stonehenge, Yucatan to Jaipur.

Cyclosna

After the sundial and the water clock,

The melting candle and the sandglass,

The cog driven brass-clock, now only the fire-clock

Will accompany our prostration towards hell.

The sweet ‘tin tin’ of Alighieri’s paradise vespers

Dies away in his *decimo canto*

Muted by Lucifer’s hissing.

Metaphoric Cyclosna:

In the flames of ecstatic cheer of love,

Like death and condemnation you burn, another phoenix, yourself.

The eon has been awaiting its ashes since the impulses of time

The augurs tested in diaphragms, livers and gallbladders of

Tuscan boars and bears, Latins who worshipped the moon goddess Losna,

Hellenic Leucothea, Numen of nightly-Hadish seas,

Cyclosna,

Till this day behind steel cubes barred,

Victim of curiosity, in your triple cage,

So that you do not reach out into space and time

For a consciousness like ours. In vain.

Your toothed-wheel motion would be perpetuum mobile,

If your Foucauldian pendulum encircled the axis of the world.

But clocks on towers renounce on *Sol atque Luna*.

In the iron bowels cascades of space time proceed in levels,

From the cosmic mind of your drive in four dimensions,

Over axioms of depth, from the plane to the point

Down to the monadic material of muonic chaos.

Cyclosna,

To something found between the present and something forgotten,

An engine of chance and genius in contest become

Now a talisman for all cyclists and a chronometer of the arts,

That constantly wallows in this form of movement.

Since the invention of the wheel, *homo erectus*

Has successfully spread freedom by cycling,

Quite without causing harm to the heritage of man.

So cycle on

Cyclosna!

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