

A few days before the presentation of *protekt* at the MoMA in New York (within the framework of the *safe-design takes on risk*-exhibition) Paul Kirps reveals *autoreverse*: five projections for five robots cleverly designed with a large dose of ingenuity, patience, and a sense of graphism approaching timelessness.



*"I am realising the dream of a little boy. At that time, I always wanted to open televisions, to see inside. This cost me some electric shocks."* The logic of recycling and the use of the "serial numbers" exploited in *autoreverse* ring a bell, right from the beginning, of many references to *protekt*, Paul Kirps' first personal project: *"For autoreverse, I initially searched for elements to recycle: sun-lamps, some old things like radios, transmitters... I collected an enormous stockpile of objects which I then photographed from every angle."* An old "Agfa repro", cameras...one distinguishes very quickly, in this variegated accumulation, many elements resulting from the traditional arsenal of the graphic designer: *"It is a pity that all this disappears, in the name of modernity. My work is fiddling about, perhaps it is a homage to these objects."*

Improbable, not always reliable, these reconstituted machines are presented in the form of short films. They are articulated, assembled, and metamorphosed according to a process which is likely to surprise, even to revolt, fanatics of 3D animation: *"The workings of numerical imagery do not interest me at all, it is very cold. For me, my work is like 'cooking', very 'DIY' in fact. Above all I try to assemble the machines to conceive a beautiful object, even before determining the sequence over all its length. The departure in animation is interesting, because one knows that the hardest part - the process of shooting, author's n.b. - is done."* The impression of movement is only the heritage of this pharaonic accumulation of individual illustrations: *"Working image by image is enthralling. One does not really need 24 images a second, which enables me to remain within the limits of the illustration. If I take two or four images and make them follow one after the other, I obtain movement; the brain fill in the missing portions. It is this type of discovery that immediately fascinated me. My first tests were collages. I assembled sewing machines with fryers and at a given moment I said to myself: it would be good to make all that move! The first step was to be able to light and to make a red lamp flicker. I was already very happy with the obtained result! Then, there was research into quality and that was perfected. When I started, in February 2004, I had lots of time to learn."* When you need one month of work per minute of animation, one is no longer within the limits of patience, that is pure self denial: *"The luxury is to spend one night on a movement, on this famous lamp which flickers. It was necessary that I make it happen, I knew that, no matter what happens, I would take the time."* In parallel, the sound preparation was quickly raised as another challenge: *"At the beginning, I wanted to delegate the sound work to a friend who is a sound engineer. Finally, I found myself doing it. I quickly learned that this is an enormous time consumer. I did not have any idea of working by tracks."* If Paul conceived this work, and in fact his sound environment *"by permanently listening to electro music"*, it is to the Viennese that he owes the title of his project: *"I looked for a title that referred to the sound environment and to the mechanics. It was in the background of a piece by Kruder & Dorfmeister that I heard 'autoreverse'. The reference to the sound is not directly imposed, but is implied. It was perfect for my project!"*

If Paul Kirps acknowledges *"to have initially been afraid to be*

*funny"*, today he is accustomed to the semi-amused, semi-dumbfounded reaction of his first time spectators. But he does not forget to specify that behind the playful side, the childbirth also involved pain: *"Every time I created one of them, it was an enormous challenge to start again with the next one. Each time it became more of a 'big strapping lad'. It started with an animation of 1.23 min...Then a second arrived... up until the fifth. I think I looked at the problem from all angles. A sixth would have probably been too much because I wanted to avoid any risk of redundancy."* In addition to this particular image-sound combination, the force of the work is also contained in its speed: frantic, epileptic... Paul Kirps: *"I saw many videos in which nothing occurred for one hour. This really annoyed me. On the contrary, I want to make fast and noisy things. So that people will re-watch them, for fear of having missed something. This is really my intention!"* Set one after the other, compacted within the same framework, these crossed experimentations gave rise to five films, which, at a duration of 1.23 min to 2.42 min, seem to obtain a strange coherence. They even reveal a tendency that almost makes the machines seem human: *"I have already been told that my objects seem to have various characters: some would be more serious, others funnier... For me, they are really machines. It is for people to judge if each one of these robots has his personality. The reaction of the public will be really another experience to live."*

Projected as a preview during the Night of the Museums, this work of a total duration of ten minutes and three seconds will then be distributed amongst its followers, thanks to a DVD pressing that comes with a packaging taking one by surprise. But this is once again not part of a marketing logic: *"Now that one works with high definition with mega surround sound, the duration of the DVD can shock in comparison with arguments of the '120 minutes' variety - 'Two DVDs for the price of one' - my approach has nothing to do with that. With only 1250 copies printed, it is a limited series to taste like candy".* When one knows his most recent works, whether it be those from the exhibition *Graphique Deluxe* or the book devoted to the Japanese photographer Izima Kaoru, one can only be surprised by this radical change of direction, and also of aesthetics: *"I had this project in my head for a very long time, even if I did not know yet that it was going to lead to this result. In my head, there are drawers which I open or close again according to current trends and developments. I do not wish to restrict myself to only one artistic direction. I am discovering a new medium. I am delighted by it and I will certainly not leave it at that but will continue. What I like in autoreverse is the mechanical, electric beauty. I spent hours looking to see if a blue cable would be better than a yellow cable. The final image owes nothing to chance. I see myself a little like a chef who starts to prepare a dish with no preconceived idea and is satisfied with the final result."*

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