

TRAVELLING WITH THE BODY

III

FROM CYCLE CHAIN TO STREET CRED, FROM INDUSTRIAL PISTONS AND PLASTIC PROTOTYPES TO PRISTINE PYREX. SUCH ARE THE TRANSPOSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS EFFECTED BY BLANCHE TILDEN'S MECHANICAL JEWELS. ENERGISED BY THE ALLURING WORLD OF MACHINES, SHE OFFERS US A MEANS OF TOURING THE FUTURE, PRESENTING THE SELF THROUGH THE REALITY OF INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES. TODAY IT MAY SEEM AS IF THESE MECHANICAL MEANS OF MASS PRODUCTION, ONCE REVOLUTIONARY, ONCE REVILED, ARE THEMSELVES RENDERED OBSOLETE, SEEMINGLY ENGULFED IN A FLOOD OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES. OR IS IT THE CASE THAT THE CITY WITNESSES NEW FORMS OF PRODUCTION: WE RIDE THE STREETS WEARING 'ABSTRACT MACHINES THAT FUNCTION' AS REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY? ¹

II

DRIVING THIS PRODUCTION IS A DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND HOW MECHANICAL MOVEMENTS WORK: HOW THEY TRANSFER ENERGY TO POWER. FROM THE FIRST BICYCLE CHAIN STUDDED WITH A SINGLE GLASS RIVET SUBMITTED TO THE 1995 COHN AWARD FOR STREET JEWELLERY, THE WORK HAS EVOLVED INTO AN EXPLORATION OF THE MACHINE'S ENDLESS, TIRELESS SYSTEMS OF PRODUCTION. THE JEWELLERY EXHIBITED IS THE OUTCOME OF A YEAR'S INTERNSHIP WITH WORKSHOP 3000, A SELECTION OF 13 FROM A HUNDRED EXPERIMENTAL MODELS PRODUCED AS PART OF THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS OF DESIGN. COMPLEMENTARITY CHARACTERISES THE COMBINATION OF MECHANICS AND MATERIAL: THE ROLLERS, SCISSORS, PIVOTS AND PINCERS OF INDUSTRY ARE TRANSLATED INTO HOT GLASS RIVETS AND TITANIUM. AS ART FOR THE TRAVELLING BODY, BLANCHE TILDEN'S JEWELLERY IS AT ONCE, ENTICING IN ITS RESILIENCE, FRAGILE IN ITS TRANSLUCENCY.

I

IN THE OPINION OF THE ARTIST, THE MOST EXTRAVAGANT WORK IN THE EXHIBITION IS A 4.7 METER CHAIN: IN MY OPINION, THIS WORK IS EMBLEMATIC OF THE POLITICS OF TECHNOLOGY WHICH INFORM HER PRODUCTION. AFTER ALL, IN DI SICA'S BICYCLE THIEVES, MODERNITY'S MACHINES OF MASS PRODUCTION REPRESENT THE KEY TO SURVIVAL.

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THE CONTEMPORARY CITY (EDS.)
MICHEL FEHER AND SANFORD KWINTER,
(NEW YORK: URZONE INC 1986?), P.458