

MARTIN KERSELS
Orchestra for Idiots
18 February - 2 April 2005
Opening Thursday February 17th 2005

A majority of Martin Kersels' works takes into account a dimension of sound.

Besides the differences of nature or volume, be it acoustic or electronic, direct or amplified, from one or the other part of the axis which distinguishes Music from Noise, the sound intervenes in this work as a specific modality important to point out when looking back on Kersels' first artistic activity: Performance.

From his actions taken up until the early nineties, whether alone or with the group SHRIMPS (Weba Garretson, Ryan Hill and Steven Nagler), Martin Kersels has preserved, also with a strong sense of comic relief, a privileged relationship to "Performing Art".

On the end, all of Martin Kersels' works - photographs, films, videos, installations and objects - present through action or organization gestured performances like Falling, Spinning, Tossing, Accidents, Chain reactions, etc.

The sound dimension in Kersel's work is always exploited through the aesthetics of performance. One has to understand these manifestations of sound or music as the extreme opposite of what ornamental, decorative, ambient functions or soundtracks (very popular in Contemporary Art) can propose.

Here (in Kersels' work), sound participates with action, being whether the result of a gesture or of a machine.

Used as a conductor, sound is obtained through simple mechanisms whose effects vary depending on the context.

For example, in *Circle Amplification (Orange)* (1996), a magnet placed behind a sheet of paper and fixed on a rotating structure outlines with iron filings a circle, which appears on the other side of the sheet. The sound of the circle being traced is captivated by a microphone and diffused through an amplifier and a loud speaker from the Orange brand.

Brown Sound Kit (1994) is a machine, which produces a sound frequency so low that it is intended and calculated to make the visitor loose control of their intestines.

In *Twist* (1993), an electric motor slowly wraps up over 10 000 rubber bands, which are attached to a prosthetic leg: once achieved maximum tension, the leg starts frenetically kicking the wall.

The objects presented by Martin Kersels in his new solo show "Orchestra for Idiots" always follow this very same aesthetics: the relationship between sound and material, the (ludicrous) tensions between organic and mechanic. Nevertheless, one needs to distinguish these objects from others, since they are sculptures which have integrated the dimension of performance, making them function as an equal to instruments (composite and unforeseen, made of the assemblage of heterogeneous elements). To help those objects accomplish their instrumental potential, a "live concert" will be given the night of the opening of the exhibition. This is why a stage will be installed in the gallery space, and the public, playing with those mediator-objects, will therefore become part of the "Orchestra for Idiots".

Christophe Kihm