


Components of Art

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Hidden beneath the streets of Paris, Rémy Tassou's workshop is a wonderland of microchips, resistors, fuses, switches and circuit boards. The room is lined with shelves full of glass jars containing a rainbow of components arranged by size, shape and colour. There are so many that even Tassou himself is not exactly sure of what's there. At the back of the workshop are machines in various stages of demolition. Here lie

front panels, screens, casings and wires from computers; elsewhere are parts of pinball machines, rare black fuses, German video recorders and even an arm from a satellite. It is a veritable treasure trove and the result of countless hours scouring the streets for old computers and television parts and then returning to this basement studio to dismantle them and extract the most intriguing components.



This is where Tassou creates his art. It is the birthplace of his ideas and sculptures, and also his home. Living and working in the same space is essential to him—he describes it as ‘bathing in the components.’ Being constantly surrounded by them is a perpetual reminder of what he has in stock and which pieces are potentially compatible with the sculpture he is in the process of creating. This level of immersion provokes his subconscious and inspiration can come at any time of the day or night.

Constantly experimenting with different forms of creativity since his childhood, he began his artistic career making sculptures with leftovers from the Montreuil flea market. Working as a salesman in the IT industry led to his interest in computers, and evenings at home experimenting with chips and components led to the combination of two passions: art and technology. When invited to parties he would take along a bottle of microchips instead of wine, and



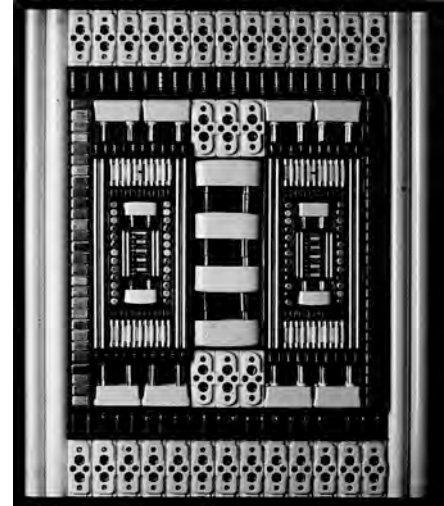
declare that the processing power in the bottle was greater than that of any computer.

The piece that marked a turning point for Tassou was a sculpture created from purely technological waste. Cybertrash gave a name to the genre for which he is now renowned. It was well-received and this reaction inspired him to continue along the same lines, always developing and improving his pieces in his quest for beauty and originality.

Among Tassou's artistic influences are Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, David Hockney and Nam June Paik. The latter is of particular interest due to his use of antique television sets and radios as sculpture material. However, Paik's finished pieces are dependent on electricity in order for them to exist as they were intended. Tassou's works are not dependent on the functionality of their components. He uses pieces that generally have a specific, purely utilitarian function and then strips them of that utility in order to draw attention to an aspect hitherto

unappreciated by the vast majority: their beauty.

Inspiration also comes from science and nature: fascinated by fractals and greatly interested in the infinitely small and large, Rémy looks to cauliflowers, snails, atoms and the solar system for structural guidance. His pieces are as organised as his workshop, with great attention to layout and detail. Many are based on fractal structures, while others reflect





his fascination with the interaction between humans and technology.

A typical day for Rémy will often involve all the stages of the artistic process: trips under cover of darkness to his secret spots where he collects his materials, dismantling the machines in the workshop, sorting the components, and discovering new patterns by arranging them on his workbench. A keen chess player, he compares his working method with game strategy: 'You have to make decisions, for example which pieces to use and which colours, and there are innumerable options, each of which takes you down a different path. You never know where each path will lead until after you've chosen it, and once you've made the choice, all the other options disappear,' he says. 'A creative person is someone who will see all the solutions to a problem. An artist is someone who will see all the solutions and choose the right one.'



The overall aim is to inspire surprise and understanding in the beholder. Surprise is essential to engage the viewer for more than just a few seconds and prompt further exploration of the piece. This must originate in the workshop; if Tassou cannot surprise himself, he loses all aesthetic feeling for the piece. He has adopted Baudelaire's declaration that 'there can be no beauty without surprise.'

The goal of understanding is more difficult. 'It is a well known fact that the public prefers recognition to knowledge,' Tassou says. He tries to help the viewers under-

stand the technological components and abstract concepts behind his work by using symmetry in the patterns and using similar materials within a single sculpture. 'If I put a cuddly toy into a Cybertrash piece, understanding would be limited.'

Rémy Tassou has found a form of artistic peace. His quest for beauty through technology gives him a balance in his life. He takes holidays from his job but never from his sculpting. 'It's just playing really. Why take a holiday from that? Holidays are for workers, and I'm a player.'

