

Simon Starling

Red, Green, Blue, Loom Music

January 20 – March 5 2016

Red, Green, Blue, Loom Music evolved from Simon Starling's on-going engagement with the history of design and manufacture in Turin. It began with a speculative visit to Antica Fabbrica Passamanerie Massia Vittorio 1843, a family run company, housed in a light-filled, early 20th century former Bakelite factory in nearby Pianezza. The company produces high quality woven fabrics, brocades and decorative trimmings on looms dating back to the 1780s. Many of the looms are still automated using the once revolutionary late 18th century technology of Jacquard punch cards.

This extraordinary factory immediately connected with Simon Starling's ongoing interest in the history of image making technologies and more specifically with the history of early computing, which the artist previously evoked in the work *D1-Z1 (22,686,575:1)*, 2009, a 35mm film installation concerned with Conrad Zuse's 1930s computer, the Z1, that was programmed using punched 35mm film stock. Conrad Zuse's mechanical computer was built almost 100 years after the British mathematician and engineer Charles Babbage visited Turin to present his plans to build a far more complex computer – the Analytical Engine – to the Society of Italian Philosophers. In 1840, on his way to Turin, Babbage made a stop in Croix-Rousse, Lyon, to witness the production of a woven silk portrait of the punch card's inventor, Joseph-Marie Jacquard (1752-1834) – a process fittingly involving 24,000 punch cards. This "silken engraving" was later presented to Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia and Piedmont, as a gift to his wife, Maria Theresa and can now be found in the collections of the Palazzo Reale.

Simon Starling's interest in the company was further compounded by the discovery that perched on a somewhat bizarrely located baby-grand piano in the factory's showroom, was a piece of handwritten sheet music entitled *La Macchina Tessile (The Loom)*, composed by the musician Rinaldo Bellucci in response to the factory's enchanting machines. Once this piece of music had been recorded, it was translated into a visual 'score' using a readily available piece of sound visualization software that transforms the music into simple bands of colour according to the frequency (Hz) and intensity (dB) of the notes. This visual account of the music was then formulated as a chain of cardboard Jacquard punch cards – the 'data' with which to produce a woven rendering of this computer generated visualization in red, green and blue threads.

This process of translation from musical score to woven textile was in turn filmed – the looms becoming the central characters in an unfolding, automated drama. At Galleria Franco Noero the

resulting short film is projected using a 3 beam video projector that 'weaves' red, green and blue light together into a colour image and in so doing both mimics the weaving process recorded in the film and in turn evokes the history of early colour photography, the first example of which was 'performed' in front of a captivated audience in 1861 using 3 magic lanterns with red, green and blue filters – its subject, a woven piece of tartan fabric.

Working with the pianola's foremost concert performer and diehard enthusiast, Rex Lawson, a 1920s Weber 'Duo-Art' pianola or player piano has been adapted to accompany a section of the film. Translated from the 'found' musical score into a perforated pianola paper roll (a close relative of punch card technology) and performed at intervals by the unmanned instrument, Rinaldo Bellucci's affectionate ode to the looms fills the gallery's former industrial architecture with a pulsating interpretation of the sound of the mesmerizing looms.

In addition to the pianola-accompanied film 'performed' in the main space, Simon Starling will present two related works. The first of these takes the form of 4 equivalent manifestations, or translations, of Rinaldo Bellucci's music; a handwritten score, a chain of punch cards for the woven visualisation, the woven visualisation itself and Rex Lawson's musical arrangement for pianola on a paper roll. Picking up on the story of Charles Babbage's proto-digital voyage of discovery to Turin via Lyon in 1840, the final work in the exhibition uses a contemporary descendent of Jacquard's technology, a high-tech, computer operated loom, to produce a woven facsimile of a digital photographic image of two pages from Babbage's autobiography, *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher*. These now woven pages contain a lyrical, at times slapstick, account of Babbage's 1840 meeting with Carlo Alberto and the presentation of the 'silken engraving' of Jacquard

Simon Starling (Epsom, 1967) lives and work in Copenhagen. The winner of the Turner Prize in 2005, his work has been shown in solo exhibitions at public and private institutions, including CAC, Malaga (2010), Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima (2011), Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2011), Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Wien (2012), Tate Britain, London (2013), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2014), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal (2015), Casa Luis Barragan, Mexico City (2015). He has also taken part in many festivals, including the 50th Venice Biennale (2003), 26th Bienal de São Paulo (2004), Biennale de Lyon, 8th Sharjah Biennial (2007), 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). Forthcoming solo shows in 2016 include Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham and Common Guild, Glasgow.

Franco Noero Gallery - Via Mottalciata 10b, Torino Italy

Monday 3 pm – 7 pm; tues-friday 11 am – 7 pm; Saturday 3 pm – 7 pm

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