

CLIFF BURTT

INSTRUMENTS

WEST END
ART SPACE

Exhibition Dates: 5-26 May 2018

There's an image in a book I've had for almost 30 years called *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane*.¹ It is a rather poor monochrome photograph reproduced from an earlier book, *Pictorial history of Psychology and Psychiatry*.² The caption for the image reads simply, 'Machine constructed by a paranoiac, nineteenth century'. That's it. We can make out two dial rings, not quite concentric; behind and above a mass of intricate gearing and a drum with years marked in an elegant hand; and lashings of elegant metal fretwork. There's a mystery and beauty captured in this rude image that has been like a thorn in my psyche. I scratch at it now and then with files and scribes, hammers and torches. I like to think this activity has helped keep me sane, but to paraphrase an old maxim: just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean art isn't out to get you. I note with satisfaction that these objects were fabricated with greater economy of equipment than those of de Selby³, if not with quite the same legendary delicacy. My hope is that these instruments might reveal traces of 'the beginning of the unfinished'⁴

¹ John M. MacGregor. Princeton University Press, 1989. p. 28

² A.A. Roback & Thomas Kiernan. New York, 1969. p.53 (I have found a copy of this book, and the image therein is uncredited. If anyone can enlighten me of the whereabouts of the object depicted, please do.)

³ Bassett and Hackjaw. *Lux Mundi: A memoir of de Selby and de Selby's Life and Times*. Cited in Flan O'Brien (Brian O'Nolan), *The Third Policeman*, MacGibbon & Kee Press, 1967

⁴ *ibid.* O'Brien 1993, p. 207

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| 1 | <i>Larger folding map of the Universe (counterpoint), 2018</i>
Steel
170 x 260 x 140 cm
\$8,000 | 5 | <i>Fibonacci rationomer, 2018</i>
Steel, brass, lacquer
45 x 42 x 6 cm
\$3,500 |
| 2 | <i>Small folding map of the Universe, 2016</i>
Steel, lacquer
30 x 40 x 14 cm
\$3,500 | 6. | <i>Botanical study, 2010</i>
Steel
130 x 45 x 15 cm
\$4,500 |
| 3 | <i>Pacific somniator, 2017</i>
Steel, brass, lacquer
32 x 45 x 20 cm
\$3,500 | | |
| 4 | <i>Equilibrium (rusticated girder truss), 2018</i>
Steel, lacquer
55 x 50 x 20 cm
\$2,600 | | |