Artist

BEN DENHAM

Drawing Song, 2019, Ink on paper, plywood, linear bearings, stepper motors, electronics. Single channel video, stereo sound, 240 x 120 x 40.

Information from Ben Denham

> *I've been thinking about how materials used in automated manufacturing, such as high precision stepper motors and linear rails, might be re-imagined in visual art practice. I use these materials to explore the tension between imprecise corporeal control and the precision and repeatability that is afforded to us by robotic technologies. This tension has been brought into sharper relief in the series of works 'Drawing Song' in which I control a* ***drawing machine*** *with a stereo audio signal. The left audio channel controls the x-axis while the right channel controls the y-axis of the machine.*

Studying

Denham's practice involves the intervention of machines, typically used in manufacturing, for repetitive and precision tasks. He constructs and reprograms machines, repurposed as **drawing machines** to respond to body movement or the sound of his voice, creating a tool to explore mark making and new approaches to drawing.

- The artist is inspired by Algorithmic Art (also known as Computer-generated art or generative art) that began in the 1960's with the introduction of the first computers. Research Ernest Edmonds and Manfred Mohr who were pioneers of Algorithmic Art;

  http://www.ernestedmonds.com/www/index.htm
  https://www.emohr.com/

- Denham exhibits his drawings and **drawing machines** alongside video documentation of the creative process. To capture what the artist describes as the "performative aspect" of his practice. This can also be seen in the work of artists **Frances Alys**, whom Denham met while on a residency in Mexico. Watch '*Drawing song*' by Denham http://www.bendenham.com/drawing-song/ and compare with Alys' '*Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing*' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZedESyQEnMA . Why do you think documenting the creative process is so important to their practice?

Making

- Create a simple **drawing machine** by joining together several pens/pencils at the same time. Make a series of drawings using 2, 3, and 4 pens, until you reach maximum capacity. Then, build an artificial extension to your own arm using only found materials from around your home (such as card, bamboo sticks and garden wire etc) to hold the pens. Ask a friend to document the creative process with a mobile device.
- Design a **drawing machine** from your imagination inspired by a technological device you own**.** Annotate the design with instructions to describe how it works and can be controlled.