

Catalogue “The machine as seen at the end of the mechanical age”, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1968

**BRUNO MUNARI by Pontus Hulten**

Image of *Mobile*, 1952

Sheet iron and clockworks, Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld

The spring, as in a clock, is the most temperamental reservoir of mechanical energy. When wound up, it has great force; when run down, it performs most erratically. The balance wheel in a clock regulates and distributes the energy in equal parts.

Munari gave back to the spring its own unregulated behavior, and by adding two more springs in the form of thin rods that goes on while the force of the spring is running down; then it has to be rewound. The motor is glorified, not heroically but poetically.

Munari had his first exhibition of “useless machines” in Milan in 1935, and in 1945 began “the creation of kinetic objects, whose make-up could be varied, driven by small clockwork motors.”<sup>1</sup> Since the early 'fifties, he has been a strong proponent of the use of technology to achieve poetic results. In 1952, the year in which he made this object, he wrote a Manifesto of Machinism that ends: “The machine must become a work art. We shall discover the art of machines!”<sup>2</sup> His ideas have probably helped inspire the optimistic, anarchic machine art that was developed in the mid-'fifties by Tinguely and others.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Munari, “Programmed Art”, *The Times Literary Supplement* (London), September 3, 1964, p. 793

<sup>2</sup> “Manifesto del Macchinismo”, *Arte Concreta*, (Turin), no. 10, 1952 – 1953, following p. 35