

## General Project 25—Animated Clocks and other Mechanical Works of Art/ Thomas Kuntz

Thomas Kuntz apologizes (unnecessarily) for being “a fraud as a machinist” who uses his Sherline tools to make the parts to animate some of his works of mechanical art. We beg to differ. It is no simple task to get this many moving parts to work together. He also makes some interesting points in his e-mail:

“Sherline tools offer many possibilities to artists as well as craftsmen. To me the artist now has so many tools available (that the old masters would have killed for!) that I don't understand why more people aren't using them to create. After all, who says an artist cannot use machine tools? I'm certain Leonardo would have loved to prototype his machines on Sherlines! In Leonardo's time in Italy artists were expected to be craftsmen as well—to have “universal knowledge”. This idea has been virtually forgotten today.”



*In his younger days Thomas built plastic models--but he didn't just build the kits, he super-detailed and aged them. The first photo is an image of the model made from the newspaper photo of an old junked F9F Navy Cougar fighter. The third photo is another shot of the diorama.*

Thomas goes on to say:

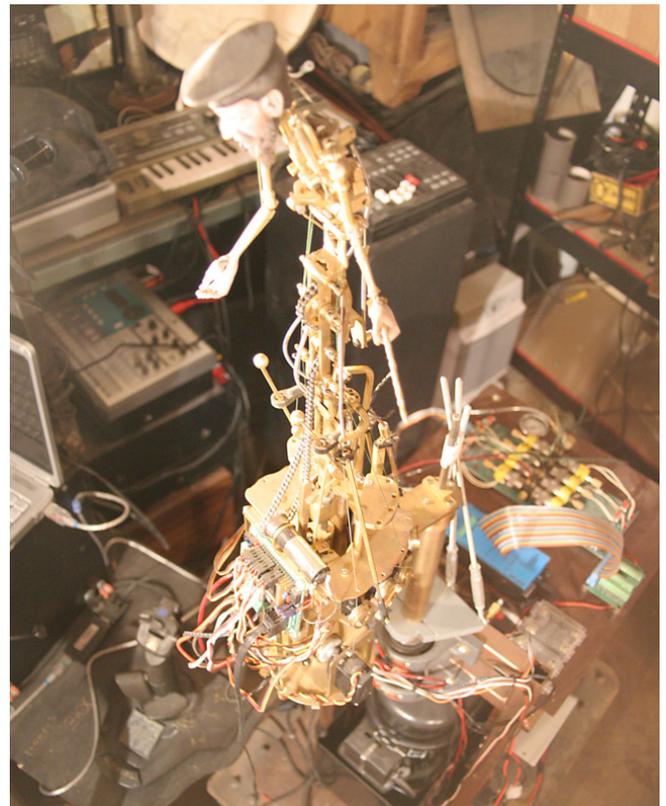
“As a kid I built a lot of plastic models. Much of it was scratchbuilding out of styrene and metal tubing because I liked to show the “guts”. At that time the world of machining seemed like something for people with really sharp math skills and lots of money. In hindsight I wish I would have started much earlier since there is so much to know. At 14 I was dragging around copies of “Scalemodeler” to the point where I would wear off the cover. Now my copy of Tabletop Machining is reminiscent of those old days—visually stimulating, not full of numbers and text only. It's my favorite machining book but it also has very interesting insights into how Sherline came to be. Yeah its worn... like a favorite pair of shoes!

About 10 years ago I was working on a Unimat and I decided to give Sherline a try, but I knew little about the line. I bought a long bed lathe and was blown away at how well that little machine performed. The Unimat went up for sale a few days later! I have bought a mill and nearly all the accessories since. On a tip from Roger Ronnie I

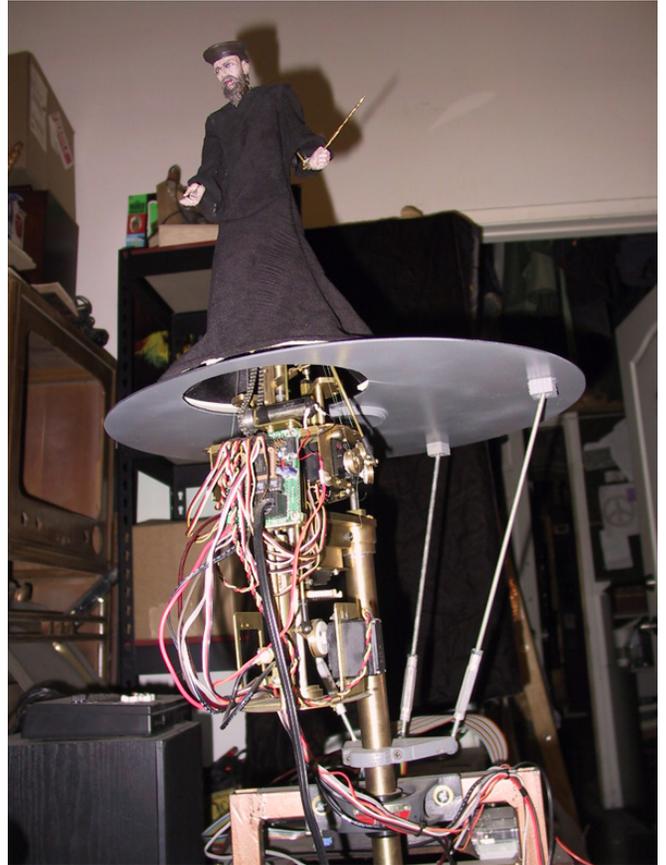
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bought my first CNC piece of equipment the rotary table. WOW! Now a confession: I'm something of a fraud as a machinist. In truth I'm a professional artist. I have no training as a machinist, and I have TERRRIBLE math skills yet I have made my living doing sculpture for over twenty years. Being mostly operational on the intuitive side of the brain I was a little intimidated about diving into machining, but since I was a child I was fascinated but automatons, clockwork and the early Disney imagineering. I was DETERMINED to learn it all. I wanted to use sculptural animation as an art medium. That is what I now do most of the time. I also manufacture miniature sculptures of famous old silent horror film stars and oddities."

Photos of the "works" of the animated alchemist show the self-taught engineering and machining skills of Thomas Kuntz. This 9-foot tall animated sculpture features many movements and interesting artistic details. The final photo shows the clothed figure with some of the mechanical and electrical components that are hidden beneath the stage.



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I've included photos of my 12" tall alchemist. He lives and performs several different shows in a fully automated 9 foot tall clock tower/laboratory inspired by the Prague Orloj. Initially it was for my own showroom, but then Nike CEO Mark Parker (an avid patron of the arts) commissioned me to build a second one. I'm about a month away from finally delivering it. These pictures are "making of" pictures I thought you might get a kick out of. There's a lot more to it, but I thought you'd like to know the majority of the work was done on Sherline equipment with some hand graver turning on old Derbyshire 10mm lathes driven by Sherline motors and using Sherline made D collets and adaptors. You have no idea how welcome those D accessories are to me, and the motor system puts the old watchmakers Hamilton AC motors to shame."

*Thomas Kuntz*

To see more of his work, visit Thomas's own web site at [www.artomic.com](http://www.artomic.com).