In Untimely Matter, J. Gill Harris suggests that linear accounts of early modern materiality tend to “other” technologies of the past. But this weirding denies both our present day enchantment by technologies and the persistence of technologies of enchantment. Instead, he proposes an untimely, polytemporal continuum. Encountering objects as manifestations of “palimpsested time”, a multiple layering of past-present-future, allows things to “chafe against the sovereignty of the moment-state” […] to “cross temporal borders”.

Assembled together, a bestiary of Lauschmann’s works, each operating according to its own logic, is both animated and frozen, overclocked and underclocked. His automata invoke premodern forms of carpentry that, rather than simplifying, clarifying or ordering the world, generate more static, feedback and noise, yet more stuff to meditate upon, experience through and perform with. These works generate their own magic circle, drawing other things into their dynamic polytemporal rhythms, making matter full of future possibilities for supersessions, conjunctions and explosions.

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Screening curated by Julia Barbour, Filipe Caiero, Adam Castle, Harry Maberly and Hong Anh Nguyen.

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www.eamif.com
A compendium of dazzling mechanical, cerebral and decorative skills interweaving people, found objects, photography, video, audio, online and interactive tools, computer generated imagery, motors, kinetics, sensors and micro processors, Torsten Lauschmann's work reverberates with the premodern condition of the arts as techne. In the sense that it enables a type of agency more common before the invention of 'The Modern System of the Arts'; his work is decidedly nonmodern.1 Lauschmann bestows the status of 'tool' upon many of his materials, imparting them with their own, very visible, acumen. He entwines “sophisticated modes of communication among nonhumans, the strange agency of physical systems at far-from-equilibrium states, and the animation of objects by video technologies— an animation whose effects are not fully captured by the idea of ‘commodity fetishism’.”

It's helpful, instead, to think of Lauschmann's tool-materials as technologies of enchantment: “The power of art objects stems from the technical processes they objectively embody: the technology of enchantment is founded on the enchantment of technology.”2 40 household tools and appliances perform a phased musical score by sequentially turning on and off (Piecework Orchestra, 2007).4 A global flash mob of 350,000 people simultaneously jump up in the air in an effort to ‘stop global warming, extend daytime hours and create a more homogenous climate.’ (World Jump Day, 2006). While the persons and things animated here by Lauschmann are decidedly, deliberately, ordinary, by imploring them to behave in extraordinary ways he is able to make them appear to have uncanny powers. As a result, these performances seem to have been “produced by magical means”.5 Herein lies the hold they have over us, the enchantment of technology. The invocation of ‘magical means’ is heightened by Lauschmann's assiduous use of vibrant tool-materials that physically embody heterogeneous temporalities.

“This model of time is a kind of transtme, and thus, is moving across, cutting back, toward and forward simultaneously. But this is also transtme to the extent that it is out of sync and out of joint.” 4

A cross section cut through Lauschmann's works discloses a polytemporality in which now-and-then are intertwined, wherein duration draws attention to how we experience time through our relations with things. Many of the works gyrate on a loop, the duration of which might be embodied, equally, as 'seasonal' (birth, fall, death, rebirth) and as evanescent (the never-to-be-repeated). The opening titles of a range of movies from emphatically different genres and periods are briskly spliced together to form an anxious, meandering melodrama without dénouement (Skipping over damaged areas, 2010). The glitchy mechanics of the digital versatile disk ensnare us in an immortal coil that endlessly folds back upon itself. Ten desk lamps take it in turns to illuminate a small pile of rubble (Lifelike, 2008), a relay flashing in perpetuity. A pianola suddenly springs to life, is lit by a spotlight and plays a discordant tune. Snow falls upon its keys. The light fades (The Coy Lover, 2011). A streaming video of a mid-19th century derby is frozen in an infinite loop - that dreaded spinning wheel-of-death - never quite managing to load, never revealing anything of its past or future (Before the Revolution, 2011). The horses are jammed in defiant pose, all four legs outstretched, the longue durée of the painted image making its last stand against the short-termism of high shutter speed photography. In each case, different invocations of time; deep and momentary, linear and circular; fleeting and perpetual, pile up on top of each other.

4 Techne was distinctly domestic in the ancient world.