

**THE IRON GENIE** <http://www.anitachowdry.com/iron-genie/>

Contact: Anita Chowdry [anitachowdry@talktalk.net](mailto:anitachowdry@talktalk.net) Tel: (+44) 0203 556 7075

**Anita Chowdry's handcrafted steel harmonograph is a contemporary expression of our material, technological and ideological history.**

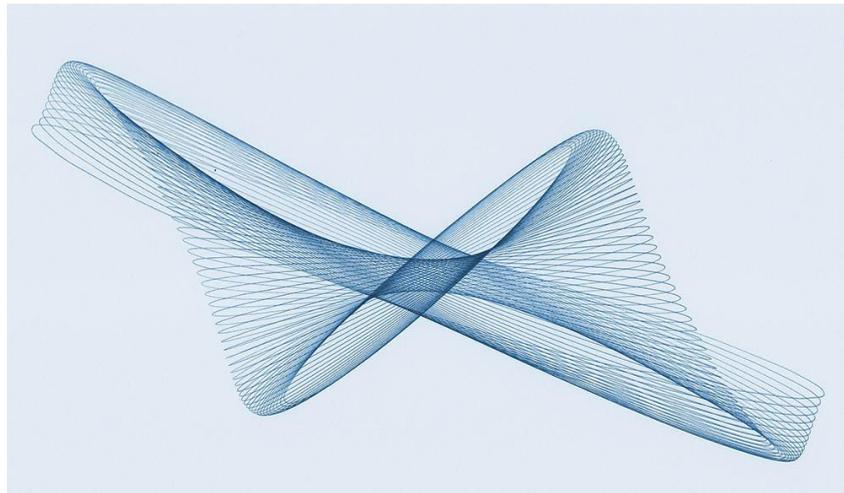
The harmonograph sculpture is an interactive kinetic drawing mechanism based on pendulum movements. The drawings that it is designed to create are expressions of the frequencies at which the pendulums move, and can be equated to sound frequencies – hence the name 'Harmonograph'. The original idea was invented in the 1840s, and became a popular parlour diversion as the century progressed.



*The Iron Genie at the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford, June – Sept. 2014*

The structure is a contemporary celebration of the material culture and mechanical ingenuity of Victorian industrialization. Entirely handcrafted on-site in Central Saint Martin's metal workshops from mild steel and solid brass, the design reflects the regeneration of the local industrial area of King's Cross, with particular reference to the iron structures of St. Pancras station.

As digital technology has opened our eyes wider, broken down boundaries and enabled us to see and visualize things that were unimaginable only a few decades ago, there is a resurgence of interest in the ingenious mechanical contraptions that portended our digital age, and in the processes of handcraftsmanship and engagement with materials. The solid corporality of analogue machines, the perceivable workings of their kinetic energy, and their direct invitation to experience their science through hands-on interaction brings us back in touch with our humanity.



Engaging in a creative examination of our evolution empowers us to shape our future, not only in terms of science and technology, but also in the sense of understanding our notions of aesthetics and form. There is something mesmerising about watching the harmonograph drawings develop without the intervention of the artist's hand, because there is a sense of logic, inevitability and familiarity in the forms it produces.



Aesthetics and their relationships with mathematics and natural form have been analyzed throughout the history of the visual and decorative arts. The etched zinc plates on the tabletop of the harmonograph are a reference to some of the underlying natural geometries that shape our aesthetic sensibilities – the images include a harmonograph drawing, a digital flame fractal and direct impressions of actual plants. Prints were taken from these plates before their installation into the fabric of the sculpture, using Prussian blue ink as a reference to the old 'blueprints' of technical drawing used for engineering and architecture.

### **About Anita Chowdry**

Anita Chowdry is a visual artist and polymath with a London based practice. Her work is about Art and Science, relating to concepts from mathematics, geometry and natural structure. She is interested in the history and evolution of science and technology, and its origins in natural philosophy and empirical experimentation. In her practice she is passionate about good craftsmanship, and in and engaging with materials and processes.