

Another series of works created in the 1990s were 'utopian machines', like the strange device entitled ***Point de visée pour un tracé (Aiming Point for a Line)*** (1996). This machine symbolises both the mechanism of feeling and the wheels of memory. The link with Leonardo Da Vinci's is obvious. Among other things, the Italian master made pedometers to measure distance, anemometers to measure speed, and hydrometers to measure humidity in the air. Pierre Courtois has always been openly fascinated by Leonardo's scientific inventions. Point de visée pour un tracé was exhibited in the Verviers museum, on the theme of the wool industry for which the region was famous but which was dismantled in the 1990s. The artist's strange machine celebrated the 'culture of the thread'; including the spinning wheel, the loom, the tapestry, etc. The mechanical device rested on three wheels, its horizontal axis supporting a string which unwound through a complex play of pulleys. This utopian machine unwound a long cord trace, weaving a metaphorical 'Verviers meridian'. The resemblance between this fantastic machinery and medieval war engines is striking: ballista, trebuchet, crossbow, etc. All of Pierre Courtois' machines are, in his own words, 'launch pads'. But there is nothing to conquer other than perhaps our gaze. Like our lives, these machines are hanging by a thread.

**Olivier Duquenne, 2012**

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