

Amina Kobenova

## Artist and Machinery: Wilf Lunn

### **Bio and Introduction:**



Imagine a bicycle. Fortunately, this two wheeled mechanical object does not have to be that big – a British artist and inventor Wilf Lunn has shown that in the world of large mechanical vehicles there is space for miniature bicycles. Lunn was born in 1942 in England to deaf parents and was greatly influenced by that in his artistic career – first as a lip-reading teacher, then TV presenter and lastly prop maker and inventor<sup>1</sup>.

Image Credits: Wilf in a VISION ON show. [http://wilflunn.com/wilf\\_lunn.htm#](http://wilflunn.com/wilf_lunn.htm#)

### **Art and Inventions:**

Lunn's most famous art works – the miniature bicycles – came after his reflections during the "Post Holocaust Pedomanumotive Power". He describes it as a happy accident, followed by a successful bank exhibition of his work: "Someone said 'Nobody's put a bike in a bottle!' A month later, I'D DONE IT...My cycle exhibition at the bank was a great success and led to two more<sup>2</sup>...".

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<sup>1</sup> Wilf Lunn. About: [http://wilflunn.com/wilf\\_lunn.htm#](http://wilflunn.com/wilf_lunn.htm#)

<sup>2</sup> Wilf Lunn. Bicycles: <http://wilflunn.com/cycles.htm#>

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While most of his bike models are surrealistic in size and design, Lunn emphasizes different mechanical elements that are present in every model: a top tube, down tube, seat tube, seat stay, and a chain stay.

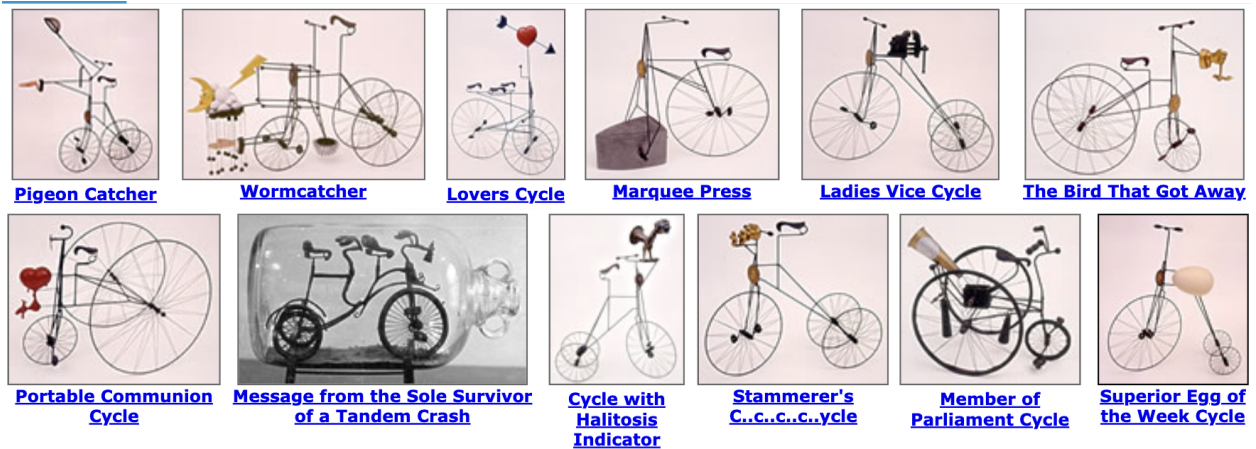


Image Credits: "Cycles". <http://wilflunn.com/cycles.htm#>

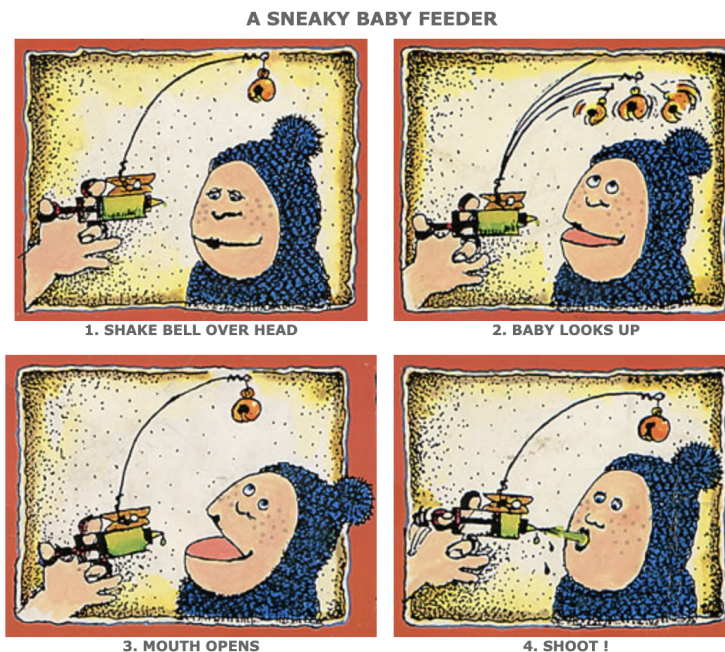
One of his recent exhibits at the Ansdell Gallery in London got a review from a famous British graphic artist Richard Walker:

*"Ideas given surrealistic form can so easily be inert, vulgar, or pretentiously overwrought in both the psychological and physical senses. The exact opposite is the case here. Wilfred Lunn...has found a perfect vehicle (pun intended) for his ideas about the daunting fact of existence. His little pedal cycles (averaging between one and two feet high) integrate two qualities exactly fulfilling their creator's*

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*intention - a sense of cool mechanical precision, and a wise, sly, sentient "biological" rightness, inevitability<sup>3</sup>.*

One of the most peculiar Lunn's works to me is "A Sneaky Baby Feeder". While there is no official documentation of it available online, there is an image from which we can presume certain elements of the machine: a piston food mechanism with a clothespin attached to a toy-string:



part of the [www.wilflunn.com](http://www.wilflunn.com) website

### **Mentioned Machines' History:**

Wilf Lunn's use of piston and bicycle machines inspired me to talk more about the history of these two mechanisms. Piston machines are widely used in the industrial world, for example, in coffee-making.

<sup>3</sup> Wilf Lunn. Bicycles Arts Review: [http://wilflunn.com/cycles/arts\\_review.htm](http://wilflunn.com/cycles/arts_review.htm)

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"Also known as a reciprocating engine, the chief hallmark of these engines that they translate pressure into rotational motion. This rotational motion – in other words, movement about a physical or conceptual axis – can be converted into translational and other forms of motion with ease, as with the tires of your car rolling you and the rest of the vehicle suspended above them down the road<sup>4</sup>".

In Lunn's artwork, the piston mechanism is much less complex. It uses its easiest form – the syringe with baby food – that is "poured" into the baby's mouth from releasing pressure as another string-toy mechanism distracts them.

When it comes to his bicycle models, the inspiration came from the classical bike mechanism models. According to Brown University's annual Bicycle History conference, "the history of the bicycle is so fraught with unknowns and confusion<sup>5</sup>". The first-ever model created by Karl von Drais and was called the "running machine" (Brown University Archives). It used frames and wheels, but lacked the chain and pedals. The modern bicycle models use that, in addition to some cranks, chain set or crank set, and crank arms. There are also electric bicycles that use electric motors and batteries to run the vehicle.

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<sup>4</sup> History of the Piston. Sciencing: <https://sciencing.com/history-piston-engine-5038824.html>

<sup>5</sup> History of the Bicycle. Brown University Archives:  
[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/courses/13things/7083.html](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/13things/7083.html)

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**Conclusion:**

Wilf Lunn's artworks have been inspired by many classical mechanisms such as pistons and cranks. The majority of those, however, carry entertaining and artistic value as he has been performing in various British TV series for children and about inventions.