Multimedia Library Collection: Art & Graphics

Chirping Machine

Gruber, Marcus

Since the appearance of modern humans some 250,000 years ago, our species has substantially altered the Earth. In the Pleistocene, Homo sapiens was a successful hunter and managed to hunt several species to extinction. In the post-Ice Age Holocene, farming, animal husbandry, trade, and increasing mobility enabled humans to become a major force in the Earth's system. The spread of industry and technology since the eighteenth century is affecting ever larger areas of the planet, and continue to unfold in new and ever-changing ways. Instead of living in biomes, or natural habitats, today we are living in "anthromes," human-made cultural landscapes that are characterized by intensive agriculture, buildings, and exploitation of natural resources. We are even able to artificially recreate nature, such as a machine that can imitate the movement and sound of birds. We have to decide what role we will allow nature to play and the degree to which we will shape it in the future.



Chirping machine by Bontemps, Inv.-Nr: 33769
Markus Gruber

Drawn by Markus Gruber, 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

The chirping machine

Text and images by Marcus Gruber
www.marcus-gruber.com
University of the Arts (UdK), Berlin



Chirping machine, Paris, around 1900
"Could you explain to me why they killed Rudi, then stuffed him and put him in a box?"

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

Art & Graphics Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
Chirping Machine
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6661
Print date: 08 November 2026 09:25:23



"Maybe for the same reasons they are cutting down the forests, then planting their own trees."

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

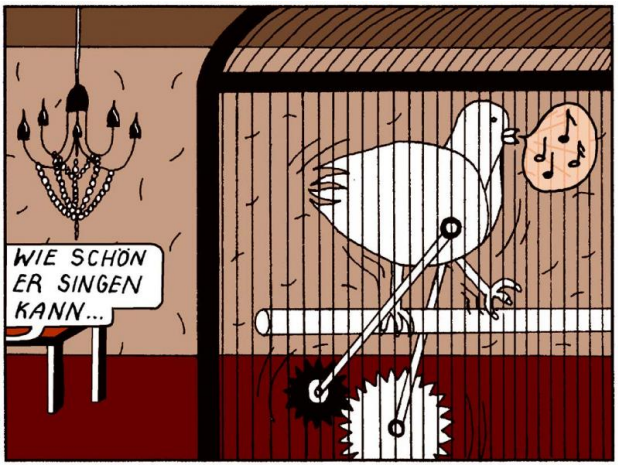
Art & Graphics Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
Chirping Machine
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6661
Print date: 08 November 2026 09:25:23



"Is this the new chirping machine made by Bontemps?"
"Yes, it is all the rage in Paris!"

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

Art & Graphics Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
Chirping Machine
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6661
Print date: 08 November 2026 09:25:23



"How beautifully he can sing..."

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

Art & Graphics Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
Chirping Machine
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6661
Print date: 08 November 2026 09:25:23



"That sounds totally fake! Let's show the ladies how it is supposed to sound!"

Drawn by Markus Gruber, 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .



Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .



"Ugh! Look at those disgusting birds!"
"I'll take care of them!"

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .



"Go away!"
"I don't understand the world anymore ..."

Drawn by *Markus Gruber* , 2014. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

Artist's comment

Prior to my work on Bonetemps' Chirping machine I had only read Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale about the nightingale. I didn't know that a machine in which mechanical stuffed birds could be made to sing like real birds actually existed. This bird symbolizes a social paradox—we prefer to imitate rather than protect it.

How to cite

Gruber, Marcus. "Chirping Machine." Environment & Society Portal, Multimedia Library, 2014. http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6661/.

The comic also appears in Alexandra Hamann, Reinhold Leinfelder, Helmuth Trischler, and Henning Wagenbreth, eds., *Anthropozän – 30 Meilensteine auf dem Weg in ein neues Erdzeitalter. Eine Comic-Anthologie* (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 2014).

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License .

Further readings:

- Sources and Literature for the Anthropocene Milestone Comics

Related links:

- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Special exhibition at the Deutsches Museum http://www.deutsches-museum.de/en/exhibitions/special-exhibitions/archive/2015/anthropocene/
- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Virtual exhibition on the Environment & Society Portal https://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6354
- Comic-Anthology, Deutsches Museum Website http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/entdecken/comics/

Websites linked in this text:

- http://www.marcus-gruber.com

Websites linked in image captions:

- http://www.deutsches-museum.de/ausstellungen/musikinstrumente/objekte/zwitscherautomat-1/