

Wild Things

Dutch artist Theo Jansen mixes science and art to create magical moving creatures.

“Nobody was on the beach, and I was there alone with a beast.” That’s what the artist Theo Jansen told TFK recently. Don’t worry. He was safe. The creature was a *strandbeest* of his own invention. In Dutch, Jansen’s native language, *strandbeest* means “beach animal.”

Jansen has been making beach animals for more than 20 years. He uses plastic tubes, ties and fabric. The beasts look like giant dinosaur skeletons come to life. Powered by the wind, the sculptures appear to be walking. Jansen likes to test his beasts on the shores of the North Sea in the Netherlands. The beasts’ movements appear magical.

Building the Beasts

Magic has nothing to do with it. Jansen’s creatures are a form of **kinetic** sculpture. In college, Jansen studied physics. He uses his scientific knowledge to plan the construction



Stay! Theo Jansen watches his beach animal hammer itself into the sand.



Theo Jansen’s sculptures are made of plastic tubes, ties and fabric. The wind sets them in motion.



The beach can be a rough environment for any creature. Jansen wants his to be able to survive on their own. He figured out a way for the beasts to move away from the ocean when

they get too close. Jansen also found a way for the creatures to protect themselves from storms. Strong winds activate a built-in hammer. The hammer pounds a tube into the sand to anchor the beast in place.

When Jansen’s animals aren’t on the beach, they’re in science and art museums. “I didn’t try to make something beautiful,” he says. “I wanted to make things that function.” By the looks of it, he has done both.

—By Jaime Joyce

Power Word

kinetic (kih-net-ic) *adjective:* having to do with motion

Think

What animals do Theo Jansen’s sculptures remind you of?

LOEK VAN DER KUIJS (3)



To see the creatures come to life, go to timeforkids.com/beast.