

PRESS
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Zilvinas Kempinas. Slow Motion

Museum Tinguely, Basel: 5 June – 22 Sep 2013



Zilvinas Kempinas, Tube, 2008
Installation view at Galeria Leme, Sao Paulo, 2010

The works of the Lithuanian artist Zilvinas Kempinas are not only kinetic but also minimalistic. Now a resident of New York, Kempinas uses the simplest of means to create complex and atmospheric room situations of great beauty. His installations play with air and lightness – the reliefs are based on time and chance. In the large solo exhibition devoted to Kempinas at the Museum Tinguely, his work will in part be shown in rooms of its own and partly in dialogue with works by Jean on 1500 square metres.

Zilvinas Kempinas's art plays out on the 'bright side of the moon'. Gravity seems to be suspended as his palette of light penetrates and activates the materials in his installations. The journey on which his artworks take us leads us into the Here and Now, to apparatuses of perception, energy aggregates, sketches and interventions in space. What his art is made of are optically physical and simultaneously intoxicatingly aesthetic events. The means he employs are simple, everyday, and yet unconventional: videotape, fans, FL tubes, in symbiosis with space, rhythm, air, and light. The effect thus achieved is extremely complex, encompasses all senses, changes one's sense of place and perception of one's own time and movement. It is always aimed at the beholder, who himself becomes a player in a theatrical, often minimalistic environment.

Biography

Kempinas was born in Lithuania in 1969. His training fell right in the middle of the period of great political upheavals. In 1987 he began studies in painting at the State Art Institute, completing them in 1993 at the same institute, which by then was renamed the Art Academy. In 1994 he was given the opportunity to set up his first solo exhibition, "Painting from Nature", at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius. He likewise experienced success with set designs for theatre plays. In 1998 he received an award for the best set design of the theatre season in Lithuania. He earned his living as a freelance designer to an office furniture company, for which he designed layouts for exhibition spaces. At the end of 1997 he left for New York, where he studied 'combined media' from 1998 to 2002 at Hunter College. He was given his first solo exhibition in the US in 2003 at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, followed by further exhibitions, among them a solo exhibition at the Kunsthal in Vienna in 2008. In the same year, as Calder Prize winner he spent six months in Calder's atelier in Saché, France, where he prepared his contribution for the Biennale: *Tube* – a work with which he represented Lithuania in 2009.

Exhibition at Museum Tinguely

At Museum Tinguely Kempinas has been given 'carte blanche' to realize his biggest solo exhibition so far. On approximately 1500 square meters, it is spread across four exhibition floors and consists of both newly designed works and works that have already been on show elsewhere but are constantly re-created in each specific new space.

The visitor is ushered in by the work *Light Pillars* (2013), two large, eight meter-tall, freestanding cylinders. They are formed by several concentric layers of videotape, which are set in oscillating motion by fans and conceal light that shines up brightly from inside the cylinders. It is an extroverted work that demands every bit of attention, unfolding, amidst Tinguely's big mechanical sculptures in the open hall, its own, powerful dynamic. However, Kempinas's vocabulary also knows quiet contemplation, as we encounter it right alongside on about 200 square meters with the work *Parallels* (2007). Here, the videotapes hung in parallel up and down the length of the room enable the view both from above, from the gallery, and from below, in the room itself, onto this apparent 'water surface'.

One of the Museum's most attractive spatial passages, the so-called 'Barca', the open access corridor from the ground floor to the gallery floor with a strip of windows towards the Rhine, is used by Kempinas for the work *Timeline* (2013): tapes hung vertically and in parallel redirect the gaze to the outside. Whereas, when viewed frontally, the material of the tapes disappears and enables the view of the Rhine, the strip of windows apparently closes as soon as the gaze wanders into the diagonal or to the left or right. Then one experiences a rich play of refractions and reflections, which emerge on the now matt, now shining-dark surface.

On the second upper floor, which comprises four classically proportioned skylit rooms, two more works are installed across the space. *Slash*, like *Parallels*, consists of videotapes hung closely in parallel, but their effect is astonishingly different. As the tapes extend diagonally through the space, perspective spatial perception is prevented and the spatial proportions are blurred. In the final room a tape holds itself, as if by magic, in the air and dances around the walls. It is a poem of lightness and weightlessness, giving wings to our personal dreams of flying.

Kempinas stages a manifestation of energy to stun the senses in the installation *Ballroom* (2010) in the basement, where fans, colorful light bulbs, videotapes and mirror foil are united in a dense dance of the elements. It is a type of 'light space modulator', in which beholders can lose their way.

Zilvinas Kempinas is a magician of the elements who combines the natural and the artificial as an engineer and Orphic. The contrast between facture and effect is already impressive in his early work *Moon Sketch* (2005). Out of the most basic materials, a cardboard tube painted black inside, adhesive tape and a 35 mm slide frame, is created an instrument for observing the sky which, though, functions as a periscope: when it is affixed only millimeters away from a wall and facing it, the crater-pocked moon apparently emerges on the dark firmament in the pale light. In actual fact we are looking at a piece of wall of just about 10 centimetres' diameter which, with its texture, white wall paint, and the special lighting situation, enables this illusion in the first place. Nothing is hidden, everything is visible, and yet the effect leads us to a place that questions and challenges our visual habits.

Roland Wetzel, Director of Museum Tinguely, is curator of the exhibition which has been realized in close cooperation with the artist.

Book

The exhibition will be accompanied by a lavishly illustrated publication entitled "Zilvians Kempinas. Slow Motion. Edited by Christoph Merian Verlag it will be published in August with articles by Kestutis Šapoka and Karine Tissot and a preface and interview with the artist by Roland Wetzel. English edition ISBN 978-3-85616-620-5 / German edition ISBN 978-3-85616-619-9. Price at Museum's book shop: 48 CHF.

General information:

Opening hours: Thursday – Sunday 11 - 18 h (closed on Mondays)

Special Opening hours during ART Basel week (Mon-Sun) 10 - 16 June: 9 am - 7 pm

Admission prices:

Adults: CHF 15

Students, trainees, seniors, people with disabilities: CHF 10

Groups of 20 people or more CHF 10 (per person)

Children aged 16 or under: free

For further information and press images please consult our website: www.tinguely.ch/presse