

Press Release

Basel, August 2011

Tinguely Day
Marking the 20th anniversary of Jeannot's death

Basel, 28.8.2011



Jean Tinguely (1925-1991), one of the most innovative and important artists of the twentieth century, died twenty years ago on 30 August 1991 in Bern. As a member of the Paris avantgarde and founder member of the *Nouveaux Réalistes* he injected revolutionary new life into "static" art from the 1950s and 60s onwards. Even after his death he has held his place as one of the most important figures in the field of kinetic art. Since 1996 the Museum Tinguely has presented a representative survey of his work over four

decades, which is constantly supplemented with temporary exhibitions on special themes. On 28 August 2011, in commemoration of this unique artist who died when he was only sixty-six years of age, the Museum Tinguely is collaborating with the insurance company Nationale Suisse on a Tinguely Day with various events and happenings taking place in the city of Basel.

On the **Tinguely Day**, the people of Basel will be offered a special programme of events taking place from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at various locations in the city. The **Museum Tinguely** is offering special guided tours and events related to the artist's œuvre in which visitors will be able to participate. The Cathy Sharp Dance Ensemble will perform at Tinguely's ***Fasnachtsbrunnen* or *Carnival Fountain***, the inauguration of which in 1977 was likewise marked by a performance by the Basel Ballet. Information about this universally loved fountain and its background will be provided on location at the Theaterplatz. There will also be a special exhibition featuring **poster art** by Jean Tinguely from a period of around thirty years on the premises of the Nationale Suisse. Nationale Suisse will also be making an important work by Tinguely from its own art collection accessible to the public: the macabre and baroque ***Cenodoxus-Isenheim Altar*** (1981), which stood next to the artist's coffin at his state funeral in 1991. One of the noisiest high points of this day of celebration will be the procession of Tinguely's mechanical monster ***Klamauk***, which was last paraded in public at the funeral procession in Fribourg. Twenty years later, it will once again pass through the streets to the loud acclamation of the assembled crowds, in a manner of which the artist himself would certainly have approved!

Jean Tinguely exerted a profound and enduring influence on the art of the mid twentieth century. Born in 1925 in Fribourg (CH), he grew up in Basel, where he first attracted attention through innovative and provocative shop window dressing. In 1952 he moved to Paris with his wife Eva Aeppli. His first works already displayed the distinctive characteristics of his entire œuvre: movement, pure chance or hazard, and the use of simple everyday materials such as sheet metal, cardboard, wire and scrap. The 1950s saw Tinguely creating such reliefs as ***Méta-Malevich*** or ***Méta-Kandinsky***, in which he paid tribute to great artists while at the same time setting static art into motion and thus opening up a new dimension for abstract art. One of Tinguely's outstanding achievements in this period came in 1959 with his drawing machines, in

which the beholder was drawn into full collaboration with the artist, being enabled by the *Méta-Matic* machines to create abstract drawings which were works of art in their own right and thus made a mockery of contemporary artistic production.

In 1960 Tinguely succeeded in making his breakthrough in the USA, achieving fame in the American art scene overnight with his legendary self-destructing *Homage to New York* in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art. This was followed by large sculptures in rusty scrap iron and the wildly shaking *Balubas* machine sculptures made of rubbish and *objets trouvés*. The various happenings of this period included the explosive *Etude pour une fin du monde*, the first version of which took place in Copenhagen in 1961 and the second in 1962 in Las Vegas. From 1960 Tinguely lived with Niki de Saint Phalle, with whom he collaborated on a number of works, including *Hon* for the Moderna Museet in Stockholm (1966), the *Stravinsky Fountain* by the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1983), and the *Tarot Garden* (1998) in Garaviccio-Capalbio (CH).

In 1977 Tinguely also left his mark upon his home town of Basel through the creation of the *Fasnachtsbrunnen* or *Carnival Fountain*. In the last decade of his life Tinguely executed large sound sculptures such as *Méta-Harmonie II* and large sculptures for retrospective exhibitions such as the *Grosse Méta Maxi-Maxi-Utopia* for the Palazzo Grassi in Venice (1987) and the *Dernière Collaboration avec Yves Klein* for Centre Georges Pompidou (1988). His *Mengele Totentanz* was a grim late work evoking war, destruction and death. In 1991 he created one last work of radiant brightness in *Luminator*, the largest of his lamp sculptures. On 30 August 1991 Jean Tinguely died at the Inselspital in Bern.

The Nationale Suisse Collection

Having collected contemporary Swiss art for over sixty years, the internationally active Swiss insurance group Nationale Suisse possesses one of the most important collections of its kind today. Focusing on painting, drawing, photography and sculpture, the collection comprises over 1500 works by 400 different artists – including the Cenodoxus-Isenheimer Altar (1991) by Jean Tinguely. Several exhibitions have been devoted to the collection, most recently in 2009 at the Franz Gertsch Museum in Burgdorf. In 2005, in cooperation with the Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, a comprehensive catalogue was published covering the works acquired between 1943 and 2000. A supplementary volume with acquisitions from 2001 to 2010 will be published early in 2012.

Museum Tinguely

The Museum Tinguely, constructed directly on the Rhine by the Tessiner architect Mario Botta, boasts the largest single collection of the works of Jean Tinguely. It was opened in 1996 as a sign of gratitude to the people of Basel on the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the company Roche, after Jean Tinguely's widow Niki de Saint Phalle had transferred over fifty machine sculptures and a large number of drawings and archival items into the Roche Jubilee Foundation established specifically for this purpose. The collection contains works from all of the artist's phases and genres. In association with temporary loans they provide the visitor with a comprehensive survey of Tinguely's creative work. The permanent collection is constantly supplemented with an ever-changing round of temporary exhibitions related to Tinguely's ideas. These have not only presented a broad range of artists ranging from such role models as Marcel Duchamp und Kurt Schwitters to contemporaries such as Arman, Niki de Saint Phalle and Yves Klein but have also been devoted to current artistic trends.

Museum Tinguely

Paul-Sacher-Anlage 1, 4002 Basel

Opening hours on 28.8.2011: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Normal opening hours: Tues – Sun 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
(closed Mondays)

Entrance: Adults CHF 15/ reduced fee CHF 10
Entrance free for children and young people up to 16
www.tinguely.ch

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Nationale Suisse

“Jean Tinguely: Exhibition Posters 1962 – 1991”

Steingraben 25, 4003 Basel

Opening hours on 28.8.2011: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Opening hours 31 Aug to 30 Sept 2011:
Wed and Fri 12 midday to 5 p.m.

No entry charges

www.nationalesuisse.com/kunstengagement

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