



Press conference:

Monday, 22 June 2020 | 4-6 pm

Opening Day:

Wednesday, 24 June 2020 | 11 am-8 pm

Press images:

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Pedro Reyes. Return to Sender
24 June – 15 November 2020

For his works, Pedro Reyes (b. 1972 in Mexico City) uses architecture, sculpture, video, performance, and participation to promote collective and individual power of action in political, social, ecological, and educational situations. Having worked with weapons in the past, he is interested in addressing the systemic problems of the arms industry within a pacifist framework. In the new production to be presented at Museum Tinguely *Disarm Music Box* (2020) he has repurposed gun parts to make music boxes that perform fragments of tunes from the countries where the guns were produced. Reyes is concerned with «upcycling»-transforming an instrument of death into a musical instrument that stands for dialog and exchange. The new production will be presented for the first time and alongside with his work *Disarm (Mechanized) II* (2014) from 24 June to 15 November 2020 in Museum Tinguely.

«Pedro Reyes. Return to Sender» is the fifth in a series, in which a conversation with Jean Tinguely's *Mengele-Dance of Death* from 1986 is put on display.

The new commissioned works by Pedro Reyes

The invitation to Reyes to develop a new work for Museum Tinguely follows on from earlier work from 2012. For the work group *Disarm*, he was able to use 6,700 weapons confiscated in the Mexican drug war and transform these into musical instruments. In a first version (*Disarm*), he created instruments that could be played live by musicians who were friends of his. This was followed by the conception of an multi-part weapon-instrument ensemble *Disarm (Mechanized)*, I 2012-13 which plays percussive music pieces in a mechanized and automated way. The second of the two existing versions of *Disarm (Mechanized) II*, 2014 will enter into dialog with Tinguely's *Mengele-Dance of Death* (1986) as part of the exhibition. In the dialog between the two works presented in adjacent rooms, Tinguely's criticism of totalitarianism and Reyes' critical examination of the society-destroying exchange processes of drugs and weapons meet in a gruesome dance of death.

«Weapons are the rule of fear, and music is the rule of trust [...]»

Reyes attracted international attention in 2007 with his project *Palas por Pistolas*, for which he worked with the local authorities of Culiacán, Mexico, to exchange weapons from the local population for coupons to purchase domestic appliances and electronics, melt these weapons down, and recast them into 1,527 shovels to plant trees. Since then, these actions have continued both in the local environment and with international cultural institutions. In connection with Reyes' exhibition «Return to Sender» at Museum Tinguely, this project is being continued with the planting of a new chestnut tree directly in front of the museum entrance in November 2020.

Both projects *Palas por Pistolas* and *Disarm* emerged from the specific situation of the Mexican drug war. However, the commercialization and proliferation of weapons is a worldwide problem that Reyes addresses with his new body of work *Disarm Music Box* (2020). With these works, he criticizes the ever-increasing accumulation of weapons throughout the world from a pacifist perspective. In this newly created group of works, weapons are acquired from specific manufacturers—they can be found in almost every country in the world—and then destroyed in order to create resonating bodies from their barrels to be used in newly created music boxes. They play well-known classical music pieces from the respective manufacturer's country of origin. A musical box made with Glock pistol parts plays Mozart, Beretta barrels Vivaldi, while Reyes's weapon of choice for Swiss songwriter Mani Matter is the Carabine. Reyes is concerned with «upcycling»-transforming an instrument of death into a musical instrument that stands for dialog and exchange. He undertakes this transformation process with the conviction that the physical act is always accompanied by an idealistic one and appeals to the spiritual dimension of this quasi-alchemical operation towards the good.

Jean Tinguely and Pedro Reyes

The exhibition «Pedro Reyes. Return to Sender» is the fifth in a series, in which each exhibition focuses on one particular aspect of Tinguely's work *Mengele-Dance of Death*. Jérôme Zonder's exhibition in 2017 focused on the criticism of totalitarianism; Gauri Gill's exhibition in 2018 focused on the vanitas concept of the *memento mori* between birth and death; Lois Weinberger's exhibition in 2019 initiated a dialog revolving around the two different farmhouse biographies of the artists, relating superstition and Catholicism; and Tadeusz Kantor's *Dance of Death and Theater of Death* enabled an exchange between the two works.

Art and society

His projects take place in the research field between a socially shaped understanding of architecture, the sensual and symbolic dimension of sculpture, and a decidedly political stance that adopts a radically humanist and Marxist position. At documenta 13 in 2012, for example, he presented the work *Sanatorium*, a first-aid pavilion for lifestyle diseases, such as stress or anxiety, which offered a variety of therapies based on shamanism, cognition research, and relationship counselling in a playful yet socially binding and unifying way. He was already represented at Museum Tinguely in 2016 in the exhibition «Prière de toucher – The Touch of Art» with the work *Cuerpomático II* (2015), a toolbox that presented sensual objects of touch.

Curator of the exhibition is Roland Wetzel who worked in close collaboration with the artist. Pedro Reyes will come to Basel for an Artist talk once the current travel restrictions will have been lifted.

The publication

The brochure in the style of a Swiss Army leaflet accompanies the exhibition at Museum Tinguely and in an in-depth interview with Pedro Reyes, it explains the genesis of his new group of works and its place in the larger context of the artist's oeuvre.

General Information:

Title: Pedro Reyes. Return to Sender

Address: Museum Tinguely | Paul Sacher-Anlage 1 | 4002 Basel, Switzerland

Duration: 24 June – 15 November 2020

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday, daily 11 am-6 pm

Websites: www.tinguely.ch |

Social Media: @museumtinguely | #tinguely | #pedroreyes | #returntosender | #disarm

Event *Palas por pistolas*, planting of a new chestnut tree in front of Museum Tinguely:
November 2020.

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