



October 2019



Press conference:

Tuesday, 8 October 2019 | 10:30 am

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Press documents:

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Tadeusz Kantor: Où sont les neiges d'antan 9 October 2019 – 5 January 2020

With the exhibition, «Tadeusz Kantor: Où sont les neiges d'antan», Museum Tinguely presents one of Poland's most important theatre and visual artists of the 20th century with one of his expansive works for the stage. Tadeusz Kantor's (1915-1990) independent underground theatre, devoted to the reality of everyday life and often critically concerned with Poland's suppressed history, is still influential for a young generation of theatre artists today. It is seen as a model of radical, pan-disciplinary theatre experiments, as well as the abolition of the difference between stage and auditorium. Above all, Kantor exploded the boundaries of classical theatre as he stood on stage, as director, in the midst of his actors, giving instructions, intervening, and thus becoming a foreign body in the ensemble. Part of his artistic practice was the reuse of objects. Old and damaged things are his «natural» medium and the motif of death is one of the most important themes in his works.

Till the 20th of October the exhibition will be accompanied by the Virtual Reality-programme *Cricoterie* (2019), by Tale of Tales, inspired by Kantor's *Theatre of Death*.

The cricotage (Kantor's term for this short form of performance is derived from the name of his theatre) *Où sont les neiges d'antan* is the artist's first production constructed without a pre-existing text. There is only the literary allusion of the title: it cites the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis* included in *Le Grand Testament* (1461) by François Villon, a French medieval «poète maudit». The performance was based on the use of three colours: black – the colour of the trumpet and the rabbis' costumes; red – the colour of the cardinals and fire; and white – the colour of snow, the great veil and the costumes of the other characters who feature in the show, which are made out of tear-resistant paper.

The Trumpet of the Last Judgement (1979) was created in the late 1970s as the central object in the short performance *Où sont les neiges d'antan* staged by the Cricot 2 Theatre at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. The production was revived in the 1980s and shown in such cities as Paris, London, Geneva and Warsaw. Kantor continuously honed *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement* over the years. Its first version, of 1979, consisted of a trumpet covered in black cloth and mounted on a mobile tripod. In the years 1982-83 Kantor

modified the assembly, suspending the trumpet from a metal framework, nearly 3.5 metres high, which used a crank-operated system of pulleys, gears and steel wires to allow vertical movement. The artist wrote: «The machine resembles a scaffold or a gallows, and is a bit like a siege engine from Biblical times / Lots of wheels, cogs, belts, lines, and cranks set the Trumpet in motion / in a black, funereal wrapping. The Trumpet rises and slowly comes down.»

The current exhibition at Museum Tinguely presents objects and costumes from *Où sont les neiges d'antan*. They are accompanied by the screening of a rehearsal of the performance, filmed on the eve of its Polish premiere in 1984 at the Stodoła Students' Club in Warsaw by Andrzej Sapija. Drawings and sketches by Tadeusz Kantor are juxtaposed with photographic documentation: photographs from the first version of the performance, taken in Rome in 1979 by Romano Martinis, and photographs from its second version, taken in Paris in 1982 by Jacquie Bablet and Caroline Rose. In the exhibition, archive posters for the shows in Paris and London (1982), Geneva (1983) and Warsaw (1984) offer a further encounter with the work.

Playing a Jewish song, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement* opens up a dialogue surrounding the theme of the Dance of Death with Jean Tinguely's installation *Mengele-Dance of Death* (1986). The sounds of a past tragedy heard from the next room, where Tinguely's work is displayed, seem to anticipate the activation of Kantor's machine – a trumpet announcing the imminent end. Tinguely's work was made chiefly out of the remains of a burned-down farm. In Kantor's performance, one of the scenes is entitled *Our Town Is Burning*, a trumpet rendition of the hymn of the Jewish Ghetto, *Our Town Is Burning*, written by Mordechai Gebirtig in 1936, which can be heard as Kantor's performance plays on the screen. The Polish director evokes the spirit of the tragic events of the First and Second World Wars. The sound of the trumpet signals the end, but is also a sign of the coming salvation: it is this contraption that sets in motion the buckets for extinguishing the fire. During the performance the trumpet is operated by the Rabbi and his assistant, the little Rabbi. These characters revive the memory of the Jewish shtetls, which the artist knew in his childhood and youth.

Virtual Reality-animation

At Museum Tinguely, from 9 to 20 October, the exhibition is accompanied by the Virtual Reality-simulation *Cricoterie* (2019), by Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn. Visitors are invited to be the hands directing a virtual stage filled with a cast of uncanny characters and props, inspired by Kantor's *Theater of Death* and simultaneously, the audience watches as things get out of hand.

Tinguely and Kantor

Jean Tinguely and Tadeusz Kantor met around 1960 through Theodor Ahrenberg, a Swedish collector settled in Chexbres. Both artists blended their personal history with the cultural memory in their works. Tinguely and Kantor shared the same interest in process-related art and hybrid media, attempting to break down categories and boundaries between art and real life. Nevertheless, the two artists produced works that were ideologically very remote from each other. Kantor was immersed in Informel back then, and as he moved away from this trend, his interest shifted to the object; he made his first emballages in Switzerland. As he recalled, at that time there were signs from various quarters of a return to the object, which were also a protest against Informel. For example, in 1960 Tinguely, Daniel Spoerri, Yves Klein and others founded the group Les Nouveaux Réalistes. Kantor had a different view of his objects and machines, which were primarily intended to act in his performances. In the 1980s the artist began work on «enlivening» them for exhibition

purposes, creating an extraordinary collection of objects for his museum, the Cricoteka in Krakow, which is the origin of most of the items on display in the exhibition.

Cricoteka and Culturescapes Poland 2019

The guest-curated show from the Cricoteka in Krakow runs until 5 January 2020 at Museum Tinguely and is Kantor's first solo exhibition in Switzerland in more than ten years. The project is a cooperation with Culturescapes Poland. This is a Swiss cultural festival, through which the cultural landscape of another country or region is presented.

Guest Curators: Małgorzata Paluch-Cybulska, Bogdan Renczyński, Natalia Zarzecka / The Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor CRICOTEKA in Krakow

General Information:

Title: Tadeusz Kantor : Où sont les neiges d'antan

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

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

Websites: www.tinguely.ch

Social Media: @museumtinguely | #museumtinguely | #tinguely | #tadeuszkantor
| #wearetaleoftales | #cricoterie | #cricoteka | #culturescapes

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