

PRESS
RELEASE

Basel, January 2013

Sodeli, d’Kuttlebutzer

Museum Tinguely, Basel: January, 23 – April, 14 April 2013



Basler Carnival, „Stadtindianer“, 1976 photo: Helen Sager

In time to coincide with this year’s Carnival activities the Museum Tinguely is presenting a special exhibition devoted to Basel’s traditional “Fasnacht” celebrations. The focus will be on the “Kuttlebutzer”, the highly creative non-conformist “clique” (Carnival group) in which Jean Tinguely was active for almost twenty years. From 1957 to 1999 the Kuttlebutzer exerted a formative influence on the character of the Basel Fasnacht. The exhibition will feature design drawings, props, papier mâché masks (“Larven”) and documentary material

related to the Kuttlebutzer. The exhibition will thus shed important light on the development of what is the largest annual popular festivity in the whole of Switzerland.

Graphic artists, designers, and artists always played an influential role in the group, who always spent the Fasnacht days at a distance from the customary routes. Their constant rebellion against the official Fasnacht Committee was legendary, and led to such spectacular actions as the great *Bumm* of 1974 in which the Committee was symbolically blown up with smoke and petards. This was also the first year that Jean Tinguely was involved. On this occasion he was in charge of the explosions; later he designed several Kuttlebutzer formations. Amongst Tinguely’s most important and influential creations were the *Stadtindianer* (“City Indians”, 1976), the *Atompolizei* (“Atom Police”, 1985), and the *Pleitegeier- und Phönixzug* (“Bankruptcy Vulture and Phoenix Procession”, 1988). All were artistically designed, the last mentioned in co-operation with the artist Christoph Gloor. From the very beginning it was a central Kuttlebutzer principle that every member of the group should be involved in the realization of the subject chosen. Also in the Fasnacht processions designed by graphic artists Ferdi Afflerbach, Robi Hiltbrand, Hanspeter Hort or in Max Kämpf’s famous *Geisterzug* (“Ghost Train”, 1965), all those involved were always responsible for creating their own costume and mask. This resulted in a diversity quite different from the uniformity that had long been characteristic of the traditional Carnival formations. Now it is normal practice for every “Fasnächtler” to be creatively involved. The Kuttlebutzer originally developed out of an eponymous “Schnitzelbagg” (group that sings satirical songs in Basel hostelrys at Carnival time), which regularly caused scandals in the later 1940s and 1950s with its controversial texts and originally designed “Zeedeln” (pamphlets bearing ironic verses). The singers subsequently maintained their satirical spirit in the clique, which immediately attracted attention with its feisty critical statements. In 1959 the title of the formation was “Kuttlebutzer auf dem Wege zum Ruhm” (“Kuttlebutzer on the Path to Fame”), which was a critical protest against the censoring of a Stanley Kubrick film by the Swiss federal government (under pressure from France, after the French army had taken offence at the film having shown it in a bad light). The Kuttlebutzer’s attitude of protest in defense of freedom of expression and artistic creativity became part of their general agenda and often influenced them in their choice of subjects.

Accompanying the exhibition there will take place two „Vorfasnachtsveranstaltung“ (Swiss German) at Museum Tinguely: **d’Kuttlete** - Vyyflätige Schabernagg im Däägeli-Museum

February, 2 2013 at 20h | February, 3 2013 at 19h, duration approx. 90 min, no intermission
Tickets at Museum shop, 50 CHF, no reservation.

with: Florian Volkmann, Christina Volk, Ivan Kym, Kevin Klapka, Martin Bammerlin, Pascal Kottmann, Pascal Kottmann, Stefan Uehlinger, Anna Veit, Hans Willin, André Rütti, the „ARTE Quartett“ with Beat Hofstetter, Sascha Armbruster, Andrea Formenti, Beat Kappeler and the „Ensemble Singvoll“ / under the direction of: Linda D. Loosli and Walo Niedermann, Roland Suter Daniel Buser.

Glossary

Basler Fasnacht: The Basel Carnival takes place on the three days from Monday to Wednesday following Ash Wednesday. It opens with the “Morgestraich” (beginning at 4 a.m. with the lighting turned down in Basel’s city centre) and lasts until 4 a.m. on Thursday morning, when it is concluded with the “Endstreich”. The participants wear costumes and masks known as “Larven”. The traditional music is played on drums and piccolos. Additional music is provided by the marching bands known as “Guggemuusige”.

Clique: Carnival formation made up of a “Vortrab” or vanguard, pipers (piccolo-players), drum-major (conductor) and drummers.

Comité: The Committee bears responsibility for the organization by acting as the point of contact with the local authorities, organizing the Cortège (parade) on Monday and Wednesday afternoon and the “Drummeli” (event prior to the Carnival), and selling the Fasnacht badges to visitors. The proceeds from the sale of the badges go to subsidize the cliques registered with the Committee. As it is the Carnival’s only authoritative body, it is often the butt of the participants’ jokes and mockery.

Guggemuusig: Usually a wind band with a large percussion section. These bands play popular hits and evergreens – deliberately out of tune and with lots of wrong notes.

Larve: Mask worn by participants, usually made of papier mâché.

Laterne: Large lantern belonging to a clique, painted in transparent colours and depicting the “sujet” that forms the theme of the formation in question.

Schnitzelbangg: Carnival formation (masked) that visits Carnival pubs to perform for the guests, with individuals or groups singing ballads or rhyming satirical verses.

Sujet: Motto or theme chosen by a clique for their contribution to the Carnival, usually satirical or ironic in character and relating to cultural, political or social issues.

Tambour: The crowning point of the Carnival at which the Basel Drum is played, an instrument with two skins stretched with cords over the metal or wooden frame. The drum is carried on a strap from which it hangs at an angle. It is played with two sticks.

Vortrab: Vanguard of a formation, responsible for clearing the way, distributing “Zeedel” (see below) and determining the route.

Zeedel: A pamphlet with verses related to the subject chosen by a clique. These pamphlets are distributed by the “Vortrab” (see above).

Zug: 1: A formation with respect to the costumes, masks and lantern reflecting the chosen theme. 2: The clique as a whole as it is seen on the street.

Further information on the Basel Carnival: www.fasnachts-comite.ch and www.fasnacht.ch