

Exhibition: Jean Tinguely. Retrospective
IVAM – Centre Julio González
10 March 2008 – 8 June 2008

Organized by: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern
Museum Tinguely, Basel

Curators: Andres Pardey and Klaus Littmann

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As a result of a collaboration agreement with Museum Tinguely, and with the sponsorship of Bancaja, the IVAM is presenting a major exhibition of the Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely, the master of kinetic art, for the first time in Spain. The show features 172 items, including sculptures, drawings, sketches and films, which admirably reflect the course followed by the artist and allow visitors to examine not only the evolution and quality of his creations but also the richness of his extensive oeuvre. The catalogue published to accompany the show contains illustrations of the works exhibited and includes essays on Tinguely and his work by the curators of the exhibition, Andres Pardey, deputy director of Museum Tinguely in Basel, and Klaus Littmann, director of Littmann Kulturprojekte.

Jean Tinguely (Freiburg, 1925) spent his childhood and adolescence in Basel, where he trained as a decorator at the Arts and Crafts School during the Second World War. There he started doing abstract painting strongly influenced by Surrealism, the Bauhaus and, above all, the work of Kurt Schwitters. After the war he moved to Zurich, and in 1952 he and his first wife, Eva Aepli, went to live in Paris. He soon made contact with the art world there, he met Brancusi and Yves Klein, and he had his first solo exhibition at Galerie Arnaud.

During that period he made his first sound relief, exhibited in the *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* in 1955. After meeting Murari in Milan he adopted the term "meta-mechanical" for his works, seeking to show that a work of art is not something fixed and definitive but rather something creative in itself, within the potentialities that it has been given. In 1959 Tinguely made his fully automatic

Méta-Matic (drawing machine), equipped with an inking arm moved by a combustion engine, which made drawings on a piece of paper which was automatically cut and delivered. *Méta-Matic No. 17* was shown in the *Biennale de Paris* and was a huge success.

In the sixties he experimented with many different trends, including junk art, new realism and kinetic art, and he explored the possibilities that art could find in the mechanical world. *Eureka* (1964), an enormous machine made for the Swiss national fair, embodied what were to become the essential characteristics of his sculpture, revealing the influence of Duchamp's readymades and presenting the provocative quality of his public manifestations, which drew on the spirit of Dada. Tinguely's machines were made from recycled objects, rejecting the cult of newness characteristic of the consumer society and the cult of progress in which the machine played an ever more important part, instead of which he stressed their more playful, useless characteristics when he incorporated them into his art. Sound also occupies an important place in the machines and assemblages conceived by Tinguely, in which there is the squeaking and creaking of pulleys and levers, the scraping of the various organs of the machine, together with real sounds, "natural" or manufactured sounds and even the human voice.

Tinguely made many of his great sculptures in collaboration with other artists, including Niki de Saint Phalle, his second wife, Bernhard Luginbühl, Yves Klein and Daniel Spoerri. In fact, the idea of artistic collaboration was essential for Tinguely, who collaborated not only in the field of sculpture but also in theatre productions and the design of exhibitions.

In the seventies and eighties he started working on monumental sculptures such as the installation *Grosse Méta Maxi-Maxi Utopia* (Great Meta Maxi-Maxi Utopia), 1987, shown in a retrospective at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. His machine sculptures were presented all over Europe: at the Tate Gallery in London, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and at the Kunsthhaus Zürich. Their success was proved by the numerous commissions for public art which he received during that period, such as the *Fontaine Igor Stravinsky* (Igor Stravinsky Fountain), made with Niki de Saint Phalle in 1983 for the square adjacent to the Centre Georges Pompidou.

After his death in 1991, his widow came to an agreement with the healthcare firm of Roche in Basel for the creation of a museum to house his work. The museum was inaugurated in 1996 in the building where Tinguely had his workshop and his home.