

Detailed information

Hermann Nitsch and the Theatre

AMO Arena Museo Opera - Palazzo Forti

Via A. Forti 1, Verona (Italy)

Opening: 15th October, 7pm (entrance at Volto Due Mori 4)

Among the *side events* at Art Verona 2016, an exhibition at the Museo AMO, from the Theater Museum (Vienna) and the Villa Stuck Museum (Munich), traces the link between Hermann Nitsch, his experimentation with theatre and the history of contemporary theatre

Thanks to the cooperation between Verona City Council, Veronafiore-ArtVerona, AMO Arena Museo Opera - Palazzo Forti, Atelier Hermann Nitsch, the Vienna Nitsch Foundation, the Museo Hermann Nitsch-Archivio Laboratorio per le Arti Contemporanee di Napoli and the support of Boxart di Verona, the Italian public can enjoy an extraordinary opportunity to examine in depth the **dramatic core, the quality of staging and contextualization of Hermann Nitsch's o.m. theater (Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries) within the history of the theatre**, so as to offer a more extensive and comprehensive view of the artist's work as a whole.

The focus of the exhibition **curated by Hubert Klocker**, director of the Friedrichshof Collection (Zurndorf/Vienna), focuses on the meaning of, and necessity for, direct experience gained through participation in a dramatic event, and at the same time the fact that the individual elements of the Viennese actionist's oeuvre - especially painting and drawing, but also music and literature - are subordinate to the element of drama and performance underlying Nitsch's poetry as a whole.

"Hosting an exhibition by contemporary artist Hermann Nitsch at the Arena Museo Opera," says **Francesco Girondini**, director of the AMO Museum, "further emphasises the goal underlying this museum since its opening, namely to spread the knowledge of opera, especially the artistic activity from over a century since the Fondazione Arena came into being and, at the same time, **to open up its exhibition horizons to other related areas**, bringing exhibitions to the public by artists who have spent their lives pushing their artistic research into different, but related, forms of expression, such as music or theatre, as Hermann Nitsch has done."

The exhibition contains sketches, stills, and costumes designed by Nitsch for some of the most famous performances as director, set designer and costume designer: *Hérodiade* by Jules Massenet at the Staatsoper in Vienna (1995), Philipp Glass's *Satyagraha* at the Festspielhaus in St. Pölten (2001), and Robert Schumann's *Faust* for the Zurich Opernhaus (2007).

The event was selected by the **12th edition of Art Verona**, among its *side events*, whose **theme this year is the genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**.

Of his famous countryman, Nitsch writes: "Mozart was a master of every tone and hue of composition in a cheerful and exuberant style. He was equally skilled in expressing joy and tragedy. I love *The Marriage of Figaro* just as much as his *"Jupiter Symphony"*, and in the same way I love the *Symphony in G minor* or his *Requiem*. Mozart reaches his peak with the *Requiem*. Art, at last, has a metaphysical outcome. With his *Requiem*, Mozart manages to make a transfiguration joyful; death becomes a rebirth, a resurrection. The entire spectrum of light springs forth from a profound melancholy. One hopes that atomic war will be cancelled out in this way, from the very beginning "

Hermann Nitsch too composed a *Requiem*, upon the premature death of his second wife, Beate König. This music became the soundtrack to the Vienne composer's *Action n. 56*.

Nitsch's "**Symphony for Verona**" will be the centre of a great **concert** scheduled as part of the **Contemporary Day from 9pm on Saturday, October 15, 2016 at the Auditorium of the Palazzo della Gran Guardia (Piazza Bra, 1 - 37121 Verona), and will be performed by the Verona Philharmonic Orchestra.**

The conductor is **Andrea Cusumano**, Palermo's Councillor for Culture, and conductor at many of the artist's performances.

HERMANN NITSCH AND THEATRE

AMO Arena Museo Opera - Palazzo Forti

Via A. Forti 1, Verona (Italy) - On the occasion of the opening: entry from Volto Due Mori 4

Open to the public: 15th October, 2016 - 8th January, 2017

Opening times: Monday 2.30pm - 7.30pm/Tuesday - Sunday 9.30am to 7.30pm (ticket office closes at 6.30pm).

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Images



- 1- *Costume for Herodias*, in *Hérodiade*, by Jules Massenet, sung by Agnes Baltsa at the premiere. Production: Hermann Nitsch, 1995 ©ART for ART, Wien
- 2- Hermann Nitsch, *Manuscript*, red and blue ballpoint pen on paper, 1965 © Österreichische Ludwig Stiftung, Vienna
- 3- Hermann Nitsch, *Oedipus (Oedipus)*, 1970/2014, score on wreck, gouache, felt and lipstick; Hermann Nitsch, *Oedipus (Oedipus)*; 1990 plaster sculpture, gauze, oil paint © Sammlung Hummel, Vienna
- 4- Hermann Nitsch, *Action n.122*. Burgtheater Wien, 2005 Film: Peter Kasperak ©Film Stills: Peter Kasperak, Hubert Klocker
- 5- Hermann Nitsch, *Action 50*, 1975 Special Edition Photos Das Orgien Mysterien Theater, Verona: Archivio Conz, 1977 © Sammlung Friedrichshof, Zurndorf

Excerpt from the *Catalogue preface* by Hubert Klocker, curator of the *ExistenzFest* exhibition at Villa Stuck in Munich and director of the *Sammlung Friedrichshof, Zurndorf/Vienna*

"Hermann Nitsch has been working on the theory and implementation of the *Theatre of Orgies and Mysteries (Orgien Mysterien Theater)* since 1957. It is an epic drama, for which, in order to be fully implemented, the artist has designed a special architecture and a performance area, based on his place of work and residence, Prinzendorf Castle.

From 1963 onwards, Nitsch has presented the essential elements of his performance during a 6-day "Feast of Existence" in the form of a number of *Actions*. He has been able to adapt its open structure to a variety of spaces that have been made available to him, ranging from cellars to a Roman amphitheatre, and even the stage of the Burgtheater. With the serious work that he has undertaken since the early seventies, Nitsch has come to occupy a central position in the story of an expanded notion of art, including its multimedia developments.

In accordance with the synesthetic character of his art, the dramatic structure of the *o. m. theater* is organised around an extensive body of visual art, music and literature, in which the artist has been able to develop the motifs and the symbolism of his pictorial and material language, as well as its spatial extension, and detailed "action scores". On this foundation, an extensive theoretical work has grown where Nitsch proposes studies of the historical context and the historical and cultural development of his work in addition to the historical evidence of its reception in the field of psychological analysis and neurophysiological knowledge.

The central motif and theme of the art of Hermann Nitsch is the representation of the transcendence of the tragic – and ultimately death – through a cathartic process of awareness. This desire is also related to being born in Vienna, which has suffered every kind of political and cultural conflict throughout the twentieth century, from imperial splendour and its apocalyptic decline, to problematic cultural-political reconstruction after 1945. Born in the year of the annexation of Austria, at a time when Austria ceased to be an independent state, Nitsch experienced air strikes and the Vienna offensive, traumatic experiences that had a definite influence on his work. As an artist of the first Austrian post-war avant-garde and Viennese Actionism, he made an important and still controversial contribution not only to the process of redefinition of the role of contemporary art, but also to the many fundamental disputes and discussions on the development of an open and liberal social, cultural and political atmosphere in Austria's Second Republic.

The story of the birth of his "celebration of existence" not only runs parallel, but independently, to the performative revolution of the visual arts, but is also an integral part of it. In this context, the *o.m. theater*, in all its complexity, can only be described as a particularly dense and challenging work. Nitsch also holds an internationally influential position through his involvement in Viennese Actionism.

Starting with the first, spectacular pictorial work in the field of gestural abstraction, from 1960 on, Nitsch has developed a non-verbal event, whose first dramatic sketches were still made using language and text, which has expanded over the years into a gigantic *collage of mythology*.

From the mid sixties, his Actions received attention not only from the world of the visual arts, but at the same time as part of the experimentation and theatrical performance that was trying to extend art in a radical direction. These developments soon had an impact on stage production models in traditional theatres.

All this goes to illustrate how the language of form and aesthetics in the theory and practice of Nitsch's theatre also provided an adequate basis for theatrical productions of which he was a forerunner and that he was later invited to produce from the '90s onwards. Nitsch obtained impressive degrees of success not only as a director of works that were not his own, such as, as for example in the production of Jules Massenet's *Hérodiade* at the Vienna State Opera or Robert Schumann's *Faust* at the Zurich Opera House, but also with his experimental adaptations of the *o.m. theater* for the modern and illusionistic proscenium of the Burgtheater in Vienna. More recently, in 2011, Nitsch was director, stage manager and director of costumes in Olivier Messiaen's *St. Francis of Assisi* at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich."

Hermann Nitsch - A brief biography

The origin of Nitsch's expressive form (Vienna, 1938), playwright, composer, philosopher and visual artist, is complex, but is primarily due to an act of rebellion against the devastating silence that characterised the aftermath of World War II in Austria; almost an exhortation to Nitsch towards his gushing, cathartic explosion of creative *vis*, in an epic and ostensibly brutal form. To grasp the meaning and intensity of life - Nitsch theorised - one must be aware of the emotional extremes that mark its boundaries: from ecstatic exaltation to feral suffering.

The works of Hermann Nitsch are included in numerous collections in addition to the Mart in Rovereto, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the New York Guggenheim, the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art and the Tate Modern in London.

In 2007, the Austrian government dedicated the Hermann Nitsch Museum to the artist in Mistelbach, near his residence in Prinzendorf. In 2008 the Museo Hermann Nitsch - Archivio Laboratorio per le Arti Contemporanee, opened in Naples.

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