

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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A machine, 23 feet long and 27 feet high, conceived and built by the Swiss-born artist Jean Tinguely so that it destroys itself when set in motion, will be shown in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art Thursday evening, March 17 from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. before an invited audience.

The machine is composed of cast-off objects including 80 bicycle wheels, parts of old motors, a piano, metal drums, an addressograph machine, a child's go-cart and enameled bathtub. Much of the material was picked up in city dumps in New Jersey. The elaborate device, newly painted white, will be powered by 15 motors controlled by 8 timers or delay relays. As the various sections are set in motion, key parts of the structure will be sawed, hammered or melted so that after 30 minutes the entire machine will collapse to the ground.

During its brief noisy life cycle, a meteorological trial balloon will be inflated and burst, colored smoke will be discharged, paintings will be made and destroyed, bottles will move across a horizontal metal trough and crash to the ground. A text of words will be shown on a revolving roll of paper and a text of meaningless symbols on another. The piano controlled by a rheostat will be played at 5 speeds by mechanical arms while a radio will be tuned to local news. The percussion noises made by metal parts hitting each other will be augmented by a sound track playing two voices: the artist explaining his work with another high shrill voice constantly correcting and improving his explanation.

Tinguely has been constructing the machine, with the help of six other people, during the past three weeks. The artist, whose "drawing" machines and sculpture of other kinds including electrically driven mobile reliefs have been widely shown in Europe, calls this spectacle "Homage to New York." It is being shown at the Museum under the auspices of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions.

A broadside published by the Museum contains brief statements on Tinguely's work by Peter Selz, Curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions; Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections; K. G. Hultén, Director of the Stockholm National Museum; Richard Huelsenbeck, Dore Ashton and Marcel Duchamp. The artist's machines and sculptures are compared to the work of the Dadaists during World I and called an ironic, witty and thoughtful comment on contemporary life and art.

Peter Selz says: "Jean Tinguely's experiments are works of art in which time, movement and gesture are demonstrated - not merely evoked....Being very much part of his time Tinguely uses machines to show movement, but he is fully aware that machines are no more permanent than life itself. Their time runs out, they destroy

more...

themselves....He has conceived and built this sculpture and is eager to witness its loss so that we may witness its choreography."

"Forty years ago Tinguely's granddadas thumbed their noses at Mona Lisa and Cézanne," Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections, writes. "Recently Tinguely himself has devised machines which shatter the placid shells of Arp's immaculate eggs, machines which at the drop of a coin scribble a moustache on the automatistic Muse of abstract expressionism, and (wipe that smile off your face) an apocalyptic far-out breakthrough which, it is said, clinks and clanks, tingles and tangles, whirrs and buzzes, grinds and creaks, whistles and pops itself into a katabolic Götterdämmerung of junk and scrap. Oh great brotherhood of Jules Verne, Paul Klee, Sandy Calder, Leonardo da Vinci, Rube Goldberg, Marcel Duchamp, Piranesi, Man Ray, Picabia, Filippo Morghen, are you with it?"

The Director of the Stockholm National Museum, K. G. Hultén, calls Tinguely's constructions, anti-machines. "They are mechanic and meta-mechanic....This kind of art accepts changes, destruction, construction and chance, that rules anyway. These machines are pure rhythm, jazz-machines."

Richard Huelsenbeck, one of the original founders of the Zurich Dada group in 1916 and leader of the Berlin Dadaists, says: "So it is senseless to ask whether or not Tinguely's machines are art. What they show in a very significant way is man's struggle for survival in a scientific world....I would call Tinguely a Meta-Dadaist because his machines not only turn traditional concepts upside down but also realize the old Dada love of movement. Tinguely is the inventor of the perpetuum mobile. I think his work is one of the great breakthroughs in modern art. It is a giant step toward la realite nouvelle."

Critic Dore Ashton points out in her comment that Tinguely's art is "An art of destructions enacted - not concealed and held captive as they are in 'ordinary' painting. An art of movement that at its very limits touches fixity - les extrêmes se touchent."

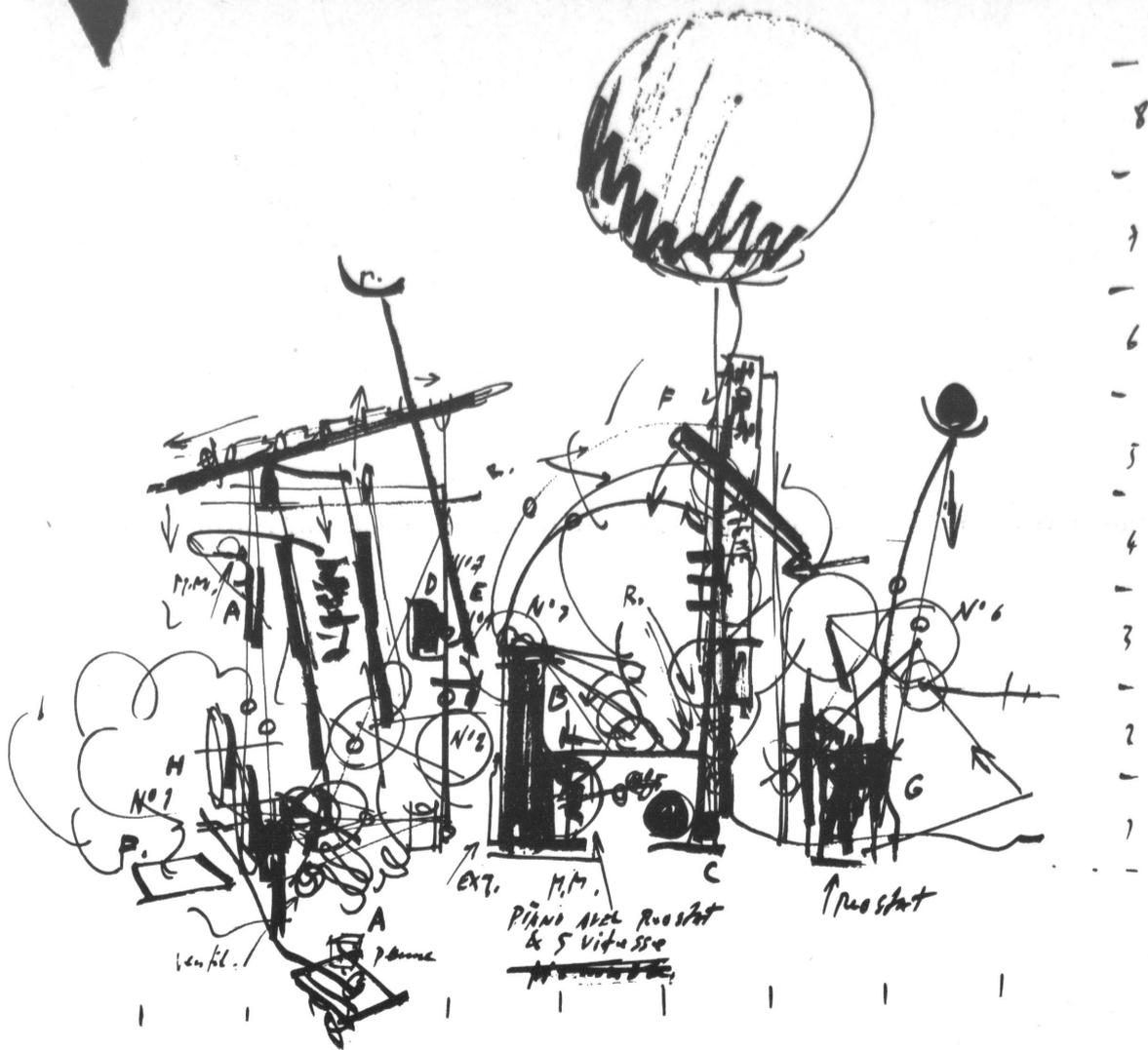
Marcel Duchamp comments on Tinguely: "Si la scie scie la scie, et si la scie qui scie la scie, est la scie que scie la scie, il y a suisscide métallique."

"If the saw saws the saw, and if the saw which saws the saw is the saw which saws the saw, there is a metallic suicide."

Jean Tinguely was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1925. He began to experiment with moving sculptures and objects in the 1940s. Last October he participated in the first Biennale de Paris with a drawing-machine activated by a gasoline motor which made 38,000 drawings. His sculpture as well as his "drawing machines" have been exhibited in London, Milan, Berne, Stockholm, Düsseldorf and New York. Hatching Egg, a motorized construction of painted metal and plywood, was included in the Museum of Modern Art's Recent Acquisitions show last December. William Kluver assisted him in building "Homage to New York."

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For additional information contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.



## HOMAGE TO NEW YORK

*A self-constructing and self-destroying work of art conceived and built by Jean Tinguely*

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART SCULPTURE GARDEN  
 MARCH 17, 1960  
 6:30-7:00 P.M.

### *Homage to New York*

We know that emotion cannot be petrified, that love cannot be bound, that life cannot be conserved and time cannot be held. Jean Tinguely's experiments are works of art in which time, movement and gesture are demonstrated—not merely evoked. Tinguely accepts the Heraclitan change inherent in life. His is a world in flux and constant self-transformation.

Being very much part of his time, Tinguely uses machines to show movement, but he is fully aware that machines are no more permanent than life itself. Their time runs out, they destroy themselves. This he demonstrates dramatically in *Homage to New York*. Here he brings the motor into an ironic situation which controverts its function. Rendered helpless, it no longer operates in its normal way. It destroys itself more quickly because it performs more intensely.

In New York Tinguely finds a maximum concentration of human life and energy, a virility which accelerates its own dissolution. He believes that the idea of a self-constructing and self-destroying mechanized sculpture would never have occurred to him in the ancient ambiance of the Mediterranean coast. Its dynamic energy as well as its final self-destruction—are they not artistic equivalents for our own culture?

He has conceived and built this sculpture and is eager to witness its loss so that we may witness its choreography.

PETER SELZ

*Tinguely ex machina*

Forty years ago Tinguely's granddads thumbed their noses at Mona Lisa and Cézanne. Recently Tinguely himself has devised machines which shatter the placid shells of Arp's immaculate eggs, machines which at the drop of a coin scribble a moustache on the automatistic Muse of abstract expressionism, and (wipe that smile off your face) an apocalyptic far-out breakthrough which, it is said, clinks and clanks, tingles and tangles, whirrs and buzzes, grinds and creaks, whistles and pops itself into a katabolic Götterdämmerung of junk and scrap. Oh great brotherhood of Jules Verne, Paul Klee, Sandy Calder, Leonardo da Vinci, Rube Goldberg, Marcel Duchamp, Piranesi, Man Ray, Picabia, Filippo Morghen, are you with it?

TINGVELY EX MACHINA  
MORITVRI TE SALVTAMVS

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

Tinguely's things are so good that maybe they are not modern art any more. In place of regularity he puts irregularity. His machines are not machines, they are anti-machines. They are mechanic and meta-mechanic. They make anarchy. These things are more free than a human being can ever hope to be. They represent a freedom that without them would not exist. They are pieces of life that have jumped out of the systems: out of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong. To try to conserve the situation that exists will make a man unhappy, because it is hopeless. This kind of art accepts changes, destruction, construction and chance, that rules anyway. These machines are pure rhythm, jazz-machines. But look out, because it is not an innocent game.

K. G. HULTEN

*Tinguely's art is:*

- An art of spectacle—without the boggling crowd these machines would no more exist than Hegel's orchid in the jungle.
- An art of artlessness and imperfections—more human than machine.
- An art of destructions enacted—not concealed and held captive as they are in "ordinary" painting.
- An art of movement that at its very limits touches fixity—*les extrêmes se touchent*.

DORE ASHTON

There are times in human history when the things men have been accustomed to doing and have long accepted as a part of the established order erupt in their faces. This is the situation right now—the universal crisis is forcing us to redefine our cultural values. We are like the man who is astonished to discover that the suit he has on does not fit him any longer. Religion, ethics, and art have all transcended themselves, especially art, which, instead of being art as we know it, has come to demonstrate man's attitude toward his basic problems. So it is senseless to ask whether or not Tinguely's machines are art. What they show in a very significant way is man's struggle for survival in a scientific world. There are two kinds of art, if we may still use the word: "classicistic" art that relies on tradition and Dada art that relies on shock for its effects. I would call Tinguely a Meta-Dadaist because his machines not only turn traditional concepts upside down but also realize the old Dada love of movement. Tinguely is the inventor of the perpetuum mobile. I think his work is one of the great breakthroughs in modern art. It is a giant step toward *la réalité nouvelle*.

RICHARD HUELSENBECK

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et si la scie qui scie la scie  
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Marcel Duchamp  
1960