

The Museum of Modern Art

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TINGUELY'S LA VITTORIA DOCUMENTED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

LA VITTORIA, an enormous self-destructing construction created by Jean Tinguely in 1970 is documented in an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art from July 4 through September 1, 1975. This "Victory" monument was exposed in front of Milan's Duomo ten years after Tinguely's famous Hommage à New York created and destroyed itself to the accompaniment of fire engine sirens in the Museum's Sculpture Garden.

The current exhibition, directed by Riva Castleman, Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books, is taken from a portfolio containing embellished reproductions of preparatory drawings for La Vittoria, photographs of the event, and etchings and lithographs. The artist's addition of colored inks, decals, rubber stamps and feathers to the drawings amusingly augments the erotic fantasy of his structure.

The original construction was erected as part of a three-day celebration of the tenth anniversary of "Le Nouveau Realisme," an artistic movement with which Tinguely was associated. The unveiling of Tinguely's work was the major event on the closing night of the celebration, described by critic Pierre Restany as "an ephemeral monument to fecundity." Eight thousand people watched as a brass band played, an orator delivered a nonsensical political harangue, and the large purple curtain fell away from the scaffolding, revealing Tinguely's secret sculpture. As Riva Castleman describes it, "Gold covered the entire structure; the lower parts were dotted with gilded plastic fruit.... The crowd began to roar as smoke emerged from the top, and amidst fusillades of rockets the monument La Vittoria began to release its mechanical energies in the form of fireworks and consuming fire. A silver-clothed assistant regulated the

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machine's activity so that within half an hour the work was literally finished."

Born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1925, Jean Tinguely first began to experiment with moving sculptures and objects in the 1940s. He is well known for his various types of machines: productive, like Meta-matic No. 8 (1958), which made drawings; self-destructive, like the "Victory" monument; and machines which consume their own output, like Rotozaza No. 1 (1967), which gobbled up rubber balls thrown to it by spectators.

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