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DAS ANATOMISCHE THEATER / The Simultaneous Games of the 20th Century

I must have been seven or eight years old when I saw in my older brother's botany textbook beautiful color drawings of various plants, with their Latin names at the bottom of the page. Drawings of plants had magic for me that the actual plants did not. An ordinary burdock in the yard was not as beautiful to me as was the drawn burdock.

The old colored Italian picture cards we collected (at that time we lived in Pula, on the Adriatic Sea) were beautiful. They were black-and-white photographs that were colored by hand before printing. The colors of the sea, mountains, roofs, and sky were different than in reality, and those picture cards were something between a photograph and a painting. For me, they were more beautiful than modern picture cards.

The third thing I remember is that as a boy of nine or ten years, for the first time, I looked through binoculars, which by turning the focusing thumbwheel you can focus on a distant wildflower so that everything in front of the flower and behind it was blurry. A sharpened flower, separated from the blurred background, was much more beautiful, and exciting, than a flower observed with the naked eye, where everything was sharp.

Somehow, many years before discovering the world of art in galleries, in monographs, or in art education classes in high school, I learned that the world that is painted, drawn, or viewed through a camera lens is more beautiful and interesting than in reality.

I started drawing passionately. The ability to draw a boat, a dog, or a cow with an ordinary pencil, as if 'from my head', which was neither faithful nor anatomical, but recognizable to other people, brought me immeasurable joy in my childhood. I continued to enjoy drawing all my life.

I had many cycles in my work but I want to present you just one because I have no space to present you all of them. I have chosen *Das anatomische theater*.

It was the year 1995 when I got from my wife Radmila the book *Berliner be-gegnungen [Meetings in Berlin]*, about foreign artists who worked and lived in Berlin from 1918 to 1933.

The time of the Weimar Republic was one of my favorite periods of European

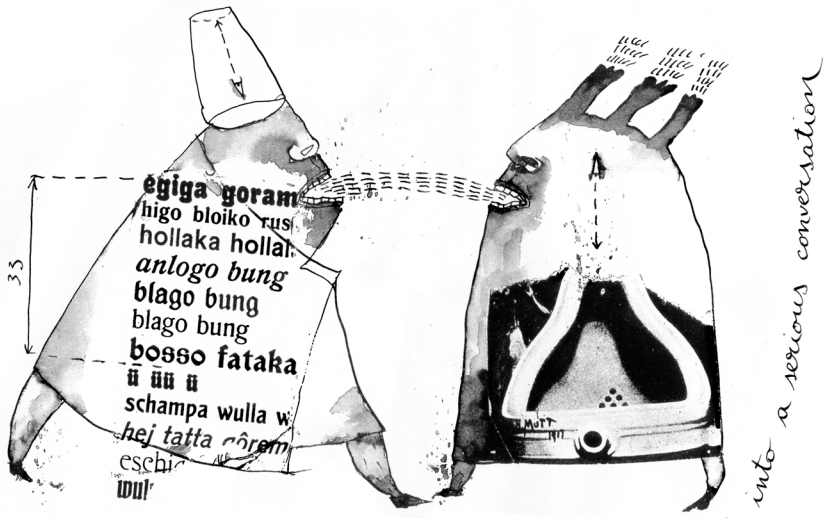
history, but after this book full of photographs, drawings, posters, documents, and newspapers of that time, I was contaminated by an amalgam of politics and art and I immediately started a new series of drawings under the title – *Das politische theater*, after the title of the book by great theatre director of the Weimar era, Erwin Piscator.

The same year I happened to be in the Swedish town of Uppsala. Strolling the streets of the oldest part of town, I suddenly found myself in front of the old Faculty of Medicine building, from the 17th Century, called Gustavianum. On the top floor was a great surprise. On the entrance door were the words engraved in glass: *Anatomiska teatern* in Swedish, and *Das anatomische theater* in German. Inside was a very narrow but high amphitheater for medical students. Two hundred of them. On the bottom was an oval wooden table with three iron legs. It was the table for dissection, where, as I learned from the text on the wall, the human bodies were dissected 350 years ago.

Being alone in this silent room, under the fascinating daylight from above, the scene looked to me as a metaphysical painting by Giorgio de Chirico. On my mind came the sentence from Lautréamont's work *Les Chants de Maldoror*: "The chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella!" I was sure if Lautréamont's dissecting table existed it must have had this oval shape. My new series *Das politische theater* has changed its title to *Das anatomische theater*. The bloodiest century in the history of human civilization deserves to be put on the dissecting table like this one.

I decided to make a sharp, satirical forensic cut through the dead body of the 20th century, with the style and spirit of Rabelais, Voltaire, Jarry, and Duchamp. With subtitle: *The Simultaneous Games of the 20th Century* after Richard Huelsenbeck's DADA MANIFESTO (*While Herr Schulze reads his paper, the Balkan Express crosses the bridge at Nisch, a pig squeals in Butcher Nuttke's cellar.*)

DAS ANATOMISCHE THEATER / The Simultaneous Games of the 20th Century is a multimedia project: graphics, book, animated CD-ROM, and website.

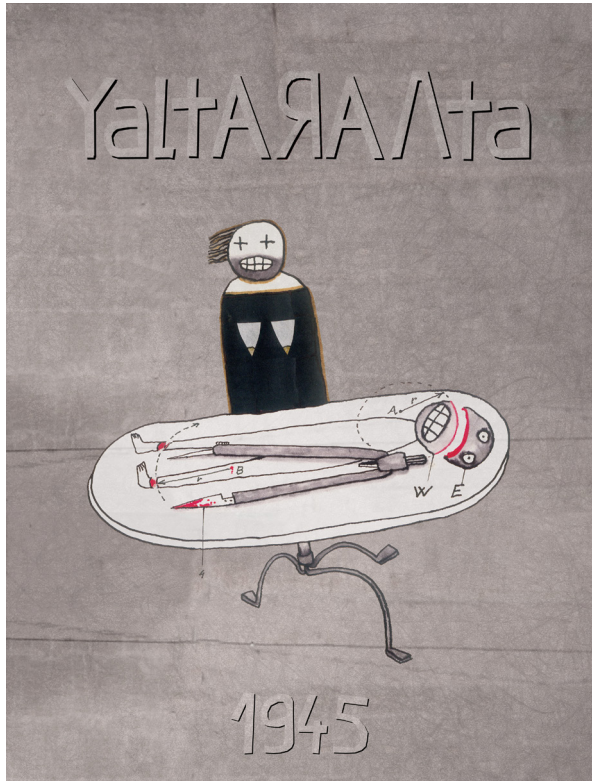


Hugo Ball and Marcel Duchamp entered into a serious conversation

1917, Zurich – New York



1939, Moscow



1945, Yalta



1961, Berlin



1968, Paris



2011, Kunsthalle (Múcsarnok) Budapest, CD-ROM, and the Book