

Antonin Artaud & Theatre of Cruelty

Basic information on Antonin Artaud:

- Antoine Christina Joseph Artaud was his full name, but he was more commonly known as Antonin.
- French
- Born on the 4th of September, 1896
- Passed away on the 4th of March, 1948 (age 51)
- playwright, actor, poet and theatre director.
- Had a talent for avant-garde theatre



Influences:

- Greek ancestry **
- Balinese dance performed at the Paris Colonial Exposition (1931)
- Tarahumaran people
- Peyote
- Supernatural

Interesting Facts:

- Antonin's mother gave birth to 9 children, however only he and one sister survived infancy.
- When he was 4 he had a severe case of meningitis – this gave him 'a nervous irritable temperament throughout his adolescence.'
- Also suffered from 'neuralgia, severe bouts of clinical depression and stammering.'
- Conscripted into the French Army (1916)
- Parents were natives of Smyrna, modern-day Izmir **
- Mountjoy Prison (1937)

^^ Antonin Artaud >>

Publications & Plays:

- '**Correspondance avec Jacques Rivière**, was Artaud's first major publication.'
- Wrote the scenario for the first serialist film, **The Seashell and the Clergyman (1928)**
- Jet de Sang
- 'First Manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty' (1931)
- 'The Theatre and Its Double' (1938) was his best work



Tarahumaran People:

- Native American people of northwestern Mexico

Peyote:

- Plant
- Native North Americans are likely to have used peyote, often for spiritual purposes



Theatre of Cruelty:

- Believed that theatre should symbolise reality and affect the audience as much as possible.
- Used multiple bizarre and disturbing forms of lighting, sound and other performance elements.
- (He admired Eastern theatre because of the codified, highly ritualized and precise physicality of Balinese dance performance, and advocated what he called a "Theatre of cruelty").
- When Artaud said 'cruelty' he meant not exactly sadism, or inflicting pain but a physical and violent determination to shatter the false reality.
- All theatre is physical expression in space.
- Physically effect the audience
- Wanted audiences to not think of theatre as an 'escape from the world', but the realisation of their worst nightmares and fears.
- Provoking conditions that would force people to react instinctively, as he believed it was hidden beneath the 'civilised social veneer, masking all human behaviour.'
- Strong, dark imagery
- Irrational impulses could be stimulated by suffering/pain
- Every aspect should be employed to increase a sense of danger, disorientation and violence from the audience.
- Honest, truth and cruelty
- Confrontation

<http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/staffhome/siryan/academy/theatres/theatre%20of%20cruelty.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonin_Artaud

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