

MANUEL ZOIA GALLERY

Andrea Cusumano was born in 1973 in Palermo.

He qualified as a clinical psychologist at the University of Palermo, as a set designer at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in London, and earned a doctorate in Theatre, Music, and Performing Sciences at the University of Ferrara. When he was seventeen, he followed Georg Eisler's drawing and painting courses and then Hermann Nitsch's courses of action painting at the Internationale Sommerakademie of Salzburg. Between 2004 and 2017, he was Senior Lecturer of Scenography and Visual Theatre at Central Saint Martins and Goldsmiths College. He was a Researcher at Rose Bruford College and Visiting Tutor and external examiner at Central School of Speech and Drama, University of Demontfort in Leicester and at the Open University. Between 1997 and 2002, he was Assistant Professor at the ISA of Salzburg for Geoffrey Hendricks' Fluxus classes, Hermann Nitsch's action painting classes, and for Jacobo Borges's painting classes. Cusumano is a multifaceted and multidisciplinary artist. He is a painter and sculptor, a performer and director. His research and experimental work focusses on the dramaturgic potentials of space, spatial and proxemic interactions between audience and stage, using diverse media such as installation, theatre and performance. Between 1994 and 2004 he developed a site-specific installations' project called *Installazione dei Morti* (Installation of the Dead People) which focussed on the dramaturgic potential of space, functioning as a sort of frozen theatre of memory with references to the plaster moulds of Pompeii and mummies of the Capuchin Catacombs in Palermo. He did his first installation at the Kasematten of Hehensalzburg Castle in Salzburg in 1993, and later, in the church of San Nicolò Lo Gurgo, in Palermo's Vucciria district (1996), at the Italian Cultural Institute in Los Angeles (1997), Angel Orensanz Centre in New York (1998), Prinzendorf Castle (1999), Hohelohe und Kalb Galleries, at the Volpinum Museum in Vienna (2000), the wine cellars of the Hollenburg Castle, and in an empty building in Bregenz (2001), at the mining park of Gavorrano, and at the Imst hydroelectric power plant. He exhibited the last work of the installation cycle called "Does the artist fly around the world, or the world around him" at the Lethaby Gallery of Central Saint Martins in 2004 in London. He published his first dramatic poem titled *L'Aurora dopo il tramonto* in 2006 with Morra publishing house in Naples. Since 1997 he is chief conductor of Hermann Nitsch's Orgien Mysterien Theater orchestra (Vienna) for which he performed the premiere of *Zwei-Tage-Spiel* in Prinzendorf, at the Burghtheater in Vienna, at the Schauspiel in Lipsia, at the Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, at the Arsenale with the Orchestra of the Arena of Verona, at the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome, at the Havana Biennial in Cuba, at the Nitsch Museum in Lower Austria, and at the Ex-Theresa in Mexico City.

Between 1997 and 2003 he lives in Vienna where he collaborates to the creation of Hermann Nitsch's *6-Day-Play*, and exhibits at the Hohenlohe & Kalb gallery, and at the Sammlung Volpinum. In Italy he exhibits at the Cattelani Gallery in Modena. His research' focus on space and its dramaturgic potential led him to found the "ESI-European Scenography Initiative" together with Uwe Brückner, Ludwig Fromm, Frank den Oudsten, and Heiner Wilharm, among others. This experience gathered different European researchers and academics around the theme of space dramaturgy and he then presented his research at the PQ Prague Quadrennial. He approached and studied in depth the Polish author Tadeusz Kantor at the Cricoteka in Cracow and established a close collaboration with former Cricot 2 actress Mira Rychlicka. With her, he explored the possibility of translating his research about space into theatrical performances by setting up the experimental work 'Drabina Jakuba' at the Galeria Krzysztofora in 2006 in Cracow, which took inspiration from the 'The Cinnamon Shops' by Bruno Schulz. The show marked the beginning of his collaboration with Rychlicka, which resulted in two more shows: *Tumor federato d'infanzia* at the Teatro Garibaldi - The Union of European Theatres, taking inspiration from the piece *La classe morta*. They also did a third show, 'A funeral for Don Quijote', a co-production with Richard Demarco, which was staged in Cracow, Edinburgh, and London. After Mira Rychlicka died, Cusumano continued his research into a dramaturgy based on the work of Cricot 2, transmitting its teachings. In particular, he directed the Kantor Project in the European Theatre Arts course at the Rose Bruford College, and a workshop in Pontlevoy in collaboration with the Andrew Tsao and the University of Washington. He wrote the exercises for the monographic volume on Kantor published by Routledge curated by Noel Witts. In 2008 he devised a performance based on Pirandello's *I giganti della montagna* at the Case Di Lorenzo in Gibellina. The piece, titled *L'Amaro Credo del Mago Cotrone*, featured on the cover of *The Guardian* at the Festival of Edinburgh in 2009, and was then staged at the Bharat Rang Mahotsav in New Delhi, Area10 in London, and Steirische Herbst Festival in Austria. This production marked a shift in his theatre practice, which led him to write and stage the shows *Clover's Lost Petal*, *A funeral for Don Quijote*, *Petit Cheval Blanc*. His research takes him to India, and in particular to Kerala, where between the 2009 and the 2013 he is interested in tribal rites and ancient performative traditions, taught at the Kalamandalam school. From these studies will derive the project *Tragödia*, which combines influences from ancient drama and Indian performances of Theyyam, Tholpavakothu, Katakhalu and Koodiyattam. The end result of this research are the performances *Il Principe* (2014, Teatro Garibaldi-Union of the Theatre of Europe, Palermo), *La Regina* (2021, Villa Nitti, Maratea), and *Il Re* (2022, Akragas Archaeological Park, Agrigento).

Alongside his theatre and installation work, he explored the language of live art and performances with projects such as 'Praxis' (2001) at the prestigious Studio Morra in Naples, *Le Ali della Farfalla* in collaboration with Marino Formenti for the screening *Corpus: Arte in Azione* curated by Adriana Rispoli and Eugenio Viola for the 'Napoli Teatro Festival' at the MADRE in Naples, *Cunto* at the Spaculum Cealestiale Festival of the Fondazione Morra, *Action Constraint I and II* with Thibault Delferiere and Giuseppe Lomeo at Spazio Tre Navate in Palermo and at New Cross in London, *Cotronica* at Shunt Vault in London, *Terre... Forme... Terre* at Rencontre Fes in Morocco, and he collaborated in the project *Embodied Language* with Mithu Sen, curated by Eugenio Viola, at India International Centre in New Delhi. Between September 2014 and February 2019, he moved back to Palermo and was appointed as City Councillor for Culture. In that position he managed the projects *Manifesta 12*, *The Planetary Garden*, Palermo Italian Capital of Culture 2018, and he created the BAM, Biennale Arcipelago Mediterraneo. Between 2020 and 2021, he is artistic curator of the International Literature Festival of Rome, and in this capacity he curates site-specific works of Michal Rovner, MASBEDO, Marino Formenti, Tim Etchells and Virgilio Sieni at the Basilica of Maxentius and on the Palatine Hill. During the festival he staged, together with Fabrizio Arcuri and with Moni Ovadia and Eshter Elisha, a theatrical version of the *Ode Laica* for Chibok and Leah of the Nobel Prize Wole Soyinka. Since 2019 he has opened a new studio in

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Palermo and here he has started to work on a cross-disciplinary project called 'Retablo', which brought him back to two-dimensional surface and painting. It meaningfully takes its name from the Spanish tradition, which translated the dimension of the liturgical dramaturgy into large altar paintings and framed them with architectural creations in a harmonious dialogue between different artistic languages. His latest project, titled OROPOS, was presented in the form of a conferenceperformance at the international conference on surrealism From the Visual to the Visionary: Surrealist Trajectories in Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Palermo, in May 2022. His work belongs to several international private collections and the MAK-Museum fur Angewandte Kunst in Vienna, at the Museo delle Trame Mediterranee-Orestiadi Foundation in Gibellina, at the Sammlung Volpinum in Munich, the Morra collection in Naples and the Cattelani collection in Modena.

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