

# Museum Tinguely



## Tinguely for Karola

March 12 - June 20, 2010 (prolonged until August 22, 2010)

Donation by Prof. Dr. Roland Bieber in memory of Karola Mertz-Bieber

Professor Roland Bieber's donation in memory of Karola Mertz-Bieber brings a rich addition to the collections of the Museum Tinguely with letter-drawings dating to the period 1970 to 1988. A selection of 29 works from this donation is currently on exhibit.

Karola Mertz was born in Rome on May 28, 1942. She and her two sisters were raised in Italy. After passing her school leaving certificate in Berlin, she undertook language studies and obtained her diploma as a conference interpreter. She practised this profession as a freelancer in Rome and Paris, and until 2000 at the European Parliament in Strasburg, Luxemburg and Brussels. She fell ill in 2001, and died on July 9, 2007, having fought illness with strength and dignity. She is buried in the cemetery at Arlesheim, near Basel. Roland Bieber was her second husband.

Tinguely and Karola Mertz had in common their curiosity, their fantasy, their enjoyment of life and of the linguistic links between the German and French tongues. They also shared a common awareness of boundaries and abysses. Karola Mertz and Jean Tinguely met for the first time in 1969 in Berlin. In the successive years, Jean Tinguely wrote numerous "letter-drawings" to Karola. These became rarer after he fell seriously ill in 1984. The last letter is dated 1988, three years before his death.

Tinguely adopted this special manner of communication, in which the role of the text is secondary to the effect of the image, for friends and collaborators. When asked what letter-writing –drawing meant to him, Tinguely answered: "It is contact – that is anti-isolationism – the result of transmission of thought I thinkfeel the person I'm writing to I am close to the "letter partner".

Jean Tinguely's letter-drawings are on the one hand letters with a real content (agreements, comments on exhibitions and happenings, or quite simply New Year's or Easter greetings). But, on the other hand, they are also, in their own right, drawings, collages, gouaches and images. Text and image merge to form a whole that reveals the mood of the letter writer and his relationship with its recipient. Tinguely's letters to Karola Mertz (resp. Goretzko, as she was then known) stand out in the artist's work by their fine and extremely careful execution. They reveal Tinguely's affection for Karola.