

The Fondazione Nicola Trussardi presents
the first major solo exhibition in Italy of work by
TINO SEHGAL
Villa Reale, Galleria d'Arte Moderna
Via Palestro 16, Milan
November 11 – December 14, 2008

From November 11 through December 14, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi is proud to present **Tino Sehgal's first major exhibition in Italy**, in the setting of Villa Reale, one of the city's most spectacular historic buildings.

Villa Reale is home to Milan's Galleria d'Arte Moderna, housing a collection of 19th- and 20th-century masterpieces by figures such as Antonio Canova, Medardo Rosso, Paul Cézanne, the futurists and many others. The history of the Villa is deeply rooted in Milan's Napoleonic period.

This sumptuous building still preserves its lavish decorations and priceless original furnishings. In the frescoed and stuccoed halls of the vast villa on Via Palestro, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi has invited British-born, German-based artist Tino Sehgal to present **a unique, extraordinary selection of his human sculptures. This exhibition brings together the most ambitious and complete overview of his oeuvre to date, including new pieces** presented alongside some of Sehgal's most celebrated works.

Tino Sehgal is one of the most radical artists to emerge in recent years. His work is an **art without objects** which only exists as a set of gestures and oral instructions carried out by trained interpreters for the entire duration of the exhibition. Sehgal's work immerses the audience in uncanny situations and intricate compositions executed by dancers, children, extras, museum guards, and art world professionals. Tino Sehgal acts like **the director of a complex role-playing game**, in which gestures and bodies are used to construct *tableaux vivants* of surreal beauty.

A visit to a Tino Sehgal exhibition is a sequence of encounters with living sculptures and people in movement, captured in hysterical poses or entwined in sensual embraces. Sehgal's pieces are choreographies that are continuously executed **for the entire duration of the show**. For his first major exhibition in Italy, Tino Sehgal auditioned more than 300 men and women of all ages, including actors, dancers, professional singers, and ordinary people with different backgrounds. About 70 people were selected to interpret his work: camouflaged among the guards and the visitors, dozens of interpreters engage the audience in a new theatre of the absurd.

In *This is New* (2003), the crude reality of everyday life invades the museum setting, enacted by one of the guards who recites the day's headlines. In *This is So Contemporary* (2005), as though possessed, other museum guards surround the public and break out into a **joyful, unsettling** dance. In *This is Propaganda* (2002), art calls its own power of communication into question: a guard of the museum starts singing a haunting, melancholic song which seems to comment upon *Il Quarto Stato* (1901) by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo, one of the most iconic painting in the history of Italian art.

Tino Sehgal's work entertains **a rich dialogue with history**, while remaining firmly rooted in contemporary social practices and preoccupations. As part of his exhibitions viewers and actors are invited to exchange views, experiences and other forms of knowledge. Installed within the stucco and the golden framed mirrors of Villa Reale, Sehgal's choreographies take on a ghostly presence but can also be read as carefully rehearsed conversation pieces of a new rococo.

In *Kiss* (2002), the bodies of two dancers roll around on the ground and re-enact poses from some of the most famous kisses in the history of art—from Antonio Canova, who happens to be featured in the Villa Reale collection, all the way to Jeff Koons. *Instead of allowing some thing to rise up to your face dancing bruce and dan and other things* (2000) is an anthology of gestures borrowed from videos by Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham which are transformed into a hypnotically slow dance. Exhibited in the same room as the painting *Magdalene* by Francesco Hayez and the prosperous *Venus* by Pompeo Marchesi, the dancer's contortions on the floor resemble a moment of bliss.

In *This Occupation* (2005) a person shares his own experience of life on the fringes of society. A comment about how time can be employed and transformed, *This Occupation* bears witness to today's hard times and sketches an empathic portrait of a fragile human being. In *Selling Out* (2002), art bares all: a dancer mimes a striptease. Presented among the scantily-clad mythological creatures, the all-too-human religious figures, and the gruff peasants of the Villa Reale collection, *Selling Out* appears as yet another story of seduction between art and its viewers. When seen at a glance, as in the rooms of the Villa Reale collection, art history appears

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first and foremost as a history of bodies moving through space. Tino Sehgal's art carries on this tradition, but instead of representing bodies and their desires, he lets us experience them in flesh and blood.

Joyful as a celebration and repetitive as a mysterious ritual, Sehgal's work is also a reflection on the value and the space assigned to art. Sehgal has chosen to forgo all documentation and reproduction of his pieces, concentrating—like an obsessive exercise in self-discipline—on **the uniqueness of art as a direct, physical experience**: His work exists as a form of oral tradition, a legend, a tale that must be passed down and can be neither photographed nor illustrated. No documentation or reproduction is allowed, in order to focus all the attention on the physical evidence of his work and on its mythical resonance. As though doubting their own existence, Tino Sehgal's choreographed situations even produce their own antibodies: in *This is Critique* (2008), a new piece shown for the first time at Villa Reale, the artist calls himself into question, stimulating an animated discussion with visitors about his own approach.

With the Tino Sehgal exhibition, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi invites the public to **explore, for the first time, the living works of art** that the German artist has installed for the historic architecture, modern art collections and luxurious decorations of Villa Reale. After the Peter Fischli & David Weiss retrospective at Palazzo Litta, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi continues its commitment to produce works of today's most interesting artists for the forgotten monuments of the city of Milan. With its initiatives, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi turns Milan into an **endless repertoire of *coups de theatre*: a nomadic museum, a moveable feast**.

SHORT BIO

Tino Sehgal (1976) lives and works in Berlin. He has emerged in just a few years as one of the most authoritative, radical voices in contemporary art, even exhibiting twice at the Venice Biennale. In 2005, Sehgal became the youngest artist ever invited to represent Germany at this event. His work has been shown in some of the world's most prominent museums, including the Tate Modern and the Tate Britain in London; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the Institute for Contemporary Art in London; the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt; the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Francisco; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; the Kunsthaus in Bregenz; the National Gallery in Toronto and the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. Pieces by Tino Sehgal have also been featured at the most prestigious art events of our times, including the Lyon Biennial, the Berlin Biennial, the Moscow Biennial, and Manifesta 4 in Frankfurt.

HARD FACTS

Artist:	TINO SEHGAL
Location:	Villa Reale, Galleria d'Arte Moderna Via Palestro 16, Milan
Dates:	November 11 – December 14, 2008 Open daily, 10 am – 8 pm Free admission
Curated by:	Massimiliano Gioni, Artistic Director Fondazione Nicola Trussardi

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SELECTED WRITINGS ABOUT THE ARTIST

A rising star on the international scene, Mr. Sehgal doesn't make objects, send out announcement cards or dispense news releases, nor does he allow his pieces to be photographed. Being there is the only way to experience his careful structures of words, time, human relations and art-world rituals.

(Roberta Smith)

Sehgal presents an alternative mode of production, one that utilizes action instead of materials. In place of objects, he exhibits ephemeral situations whose only resource is human energy. Stemming from a kind of compassionate conceptualism, his art is sustainable and transitory, but like any other works of art, it can be sold, collected, and re-presented. Herein lies its radicality. Sehgal's work is not about economics or politics, for he recognizes that art is inseparable from these spheres. Any critique he proffers, therefore, is self-critique, and any solution that arises is a solution from within, one that may subtly influence our social reality.

(Nancy Spector)

Tino Sehgal does not want to produce anything. Or at least anything that could be perceived as a conventional, physically existing work of art. He does not want to create tangible objects, nor is he interested in leaving any visible trace. His medium is immateriality, and he uses it to generate highly provisional pieces of art that challenge the traditional museological context. Even though at first glance Sehgal's work seems rather accessible, it is enormously complex, oscillating between various artistic and intellectual fields to radically question the groundwork of contemporary society. [...] Sehgal insists that his pieces are visual artworks, since they are the only way that have the power to question inherent beliefs about exhibition practices. [...] Sehgal does not want to dissolve the art system; he wants to master it.

(Jens Hoffmann)

Sehgal's aim is to create real situations that remain situations, or in other words, simultaneously fully accept their own theatricality and reject, even for the needs of documentation, the fate of becoming images or words. In this sense he has carried forward the radicalism of the avant-gardes of the 1960s and 70s. This leads him to challenge the scriptural and documentalist credo of the most significant of these avant-gardes, conceptual art, so that the artwork remains, as the conceptualists wanted, an object of discussion.

(Michel Gauthier)

Sehgal is interested in dance and song as modes of production because they resist transforming ideas into goods: this is work that leads to no product outside itself. In this way it foregoes the ideology that has dominated market theory throughout the 20th century: that of eternal economic growth. [...] There are no labels on the wall because there is beauty in an act that, like an orgasm, establishes and erases itself in the same instant. It's the notion of beauty that mathematicians have in mind when they see a simple formula that aptly describes complexity, without the help of brackets.

(Jörg Heiser)

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TINO SEHGAL

SELECTED QUOTES BY THE ARTIST

My art is primarily about making an artwork that is produced differently. An artwork has always been an object, and art follows technological developments, from cave painting to Internet art. I want to drive a wedge into this logic and use media that were technically available before any kind of technology, which means that on a purely technical level, these works would have been possible at that time too.

One could say that my work – like any work of art and any form of expression whatsoever – contains moments of both affirmation and critique. It affirms a market economy process, but it alters the (material) basis of this process, and that would be its critical aspect. What interests me, then, is how a product was produced.

It is just the classical relation of interpreting somebody else's work: those who do the work are a medium, a channel for my subjectivity, but at the same time their subjectivity also plays a part in *how* they interpret it.

My work is an experiment in how far one can get if one does not transform material for a change (like transforming a tree into a piece of paper that then serves as a certificate).

Although there are certainly visual aspects in my work, they are not in the foreground or important enough to merit being turned into two-dimensional images so I can say: look how great this composition is. I want to take care to avoid such a confusion.

My works are defined precisely by their purely action-based character, which is why it may seem rather unusual that they circulate nonetheless, when they are purchased by a collector or a museum for example, without the work being verified by a certificate or something of that kind - i.e. that there is no material object that says "this situation exists". I am interested in reminding that an action or a situation exists in itself.

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TINO SEHGAL SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

Tino Sehgal was born in London in 1976. He studied economy and danced with Xavier Le Roy and Jerome Bel. He lives and works in Berlin.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2009

Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

2008

Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland

Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden

2007

Tino Sehgal, ICA, London, England

MMK Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco, USA

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA

2006

Tino Sehgal, Kunstverein Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

Tino Sehgal, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria

A Choice of Works from the Collection by Tino Sehgal, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tino Sehgal, ICA, London, England

2005

Diese Beschäftigung, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

German Pavilion (with Thomas Scheibitz); Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

Tino Sehgal, Serralves Foundation, Porto, Portugal

Tino Sehgal, ICA, London, England

2004

Tino Sehgal, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

Kiss, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2008

Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama, Japan

Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

After Nature, New Museum, New York, USA

Museum as a medium, MARCO, Vigo, Spain

2007

Total Art Museum, Seoul, Korea

Silence. Listen to the Show, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy

Il Tempo del Postino, Manchester, England

Preis der Nationalgalerie, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Germany

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Lyon Biennial, Lyon, France
World as a Stage, Tate Modern, London, England; ICA, Boston, USA
40th Year Anniversary Show, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, USA
Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea

2006

The Future Now, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada
Von Mäusen und Menschen / Of Mice and Men, 4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany
Tate Triennial 2006. New British Art, Tate Britain, London, England
Surprise, Surprise, ICA, London, England

2005

Strictement Confidentiel. A partir de la Collection de Marc et Josée Gensollen, Centre d'Art, Vassivière, France
Collection 2005, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen K21, Düsseldorf, Germany
The Theatre of Art. Masterpieces from the Collection of the Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Villa Manin, Italy
Collection Pierre Hubert, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland
Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama, Japan
Formalism: Modern Art, Today, Kunstverein Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

2004

Ailleurs, ici, ARC/Musée d'art Moderne de la ville de Paris, Paris, France
Formalismus. Moderne Kunst, heute, Kunstverein Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany
Funky Lessons, BüroFriedrich, Berlin, Germany
LAB, Museum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, The Netherlands
Communauté, Institut d'art contemporain/Nouveau Musée, Villeurbanne, France

2003

Utopia Station Sindelfingen, Galerie der Stadt Sindelfingen, Sindelfingen, Germany
CAC, Vilnius, Lithuania
Utopia Station, Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Spectacular, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany
Kunstpreis der Böttcherstrasse in Bremen, Kunstpreis der Böttcherstrasse in Bremen, Bremen, Germany
Fuori Uso, Pescara, Italy
Adiétéromachie, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld, Germany
Open the Curtain, Kunsthalle Kiel, Kiel, Germany

2002

I promise it's Political, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
This is Propaganda, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany
Manifesta 4, Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany

2001

Do it, Museo de Arte Carillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico
A Little Bit of History Repeated, Kunst-Werke, Berlin, Germany
Tirana Biennial 1, National Gallery, Tirana, Albania
I'll Never Let You Go, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

2000

S.M.A.K., Gent, Belgium

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ROYAL VILLA (VILLA REALE)
VIA PALESTRO, MILANO

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Villa Reale is one of Milan's best-kept secrets, a little gem of a building where art history unfurls all the way from the restrained gestures of Antonio Canova's sculptures to Futurism's maelstroms of energy. With its succession of rooms and marbles on the ground floor and its sumptuous halls on the piano nobile above, the story of Villa Reale is deeply rooted in Milan's Napoleonic period, and it is now the prestigious home of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna, with a collection of 19th- and 20th-century masterpieces.

Originally known as Villa Belgiojoso, Villa Reale is one of the most outstanding examples of Neoclassical architecture in Milan. Designed by architect Leopoldo Pollack—who studied under architect Giuseppe Piermarini—it was built between 1790 and 1796 over the remains of the San Dionigi and Carcanine monasteries as a residence for Count Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, with an overall decorative scheme conceived by Enlightenment poet and intellectual Giuseppe Parini.

Upon Count Lodovico's death, the villa passed through a succession of owners, though it was always linked to distinguished names and pivotal figures in Italian history. The villa of delights—as it was then known—was home to the French general and then King of Naples Joachim Murat and his wife Caroline Bonaparte, Napoleon's sister. Named President of the Italian Republic in 1802 and crowned king in 1805, Napoleon received the villa as a gift from the Republic in 1802. He and his wife Josephine de Beauharnais also spent considerable time at Villa Reale, and famous aristocrat Paolina Borghese was a guest there in the same period. In the second half of the 19th century, Villa Reale became the residence of Austrian general Joseph Franz Radetzky.

The villa also includes a lush English garden stretching out behind the building. Designed like a small grove, it houses a rich variety of rare plants and trees and is known as the *Giardino dei Bambini*, since adults are admitted only if accompanied by children.

Inside, Villa Reale houses a significant collection of 19th-century art, including the last fresco by Andrea Appiani, whom Napoleon called "the leading painter in Italy": *Parnassus*, with the Muses gathered around the god Apollo. One of the most important works of Italian Neoclassicism, Appiani's fresco is located on the *piano nobile*, while on the ground floor, visitors can admire cartoons for the cycle of frescoes that the artist painted in the ancient sanctuary of Santa Maria presso San Celso, depicting the four Doctors of the Church and the four Evangelists.

The history of the museum at Villa Reale is inextricably tied to that of the city. As early as 1877, the municipal council began discussing the need to find a suitable home for its art collection. Built up through bequests from some of the most prominent families in Milan—Guasconi, Marchesi, Taverna, De Cristoforis—the city's collection was installed at the villa with the aim of offering an educational tool to the public, and remained there until 1903, when it was moved to Castello Sforzesco.

During the First World War, the collection was transferred to Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome to escape the barbarities of the conflict, and when it returned to Milan, it was allocated to Villa Reale, which finally became the permanent home of the Museo dell'Ottocento.

From Antonio Canova's suspended gestures to Rudolf Schadow's classical poses, the sculptures in the collection stand alongside mythological compositions by Andrea Appiani and Gaspare Landi. Aristocratic life in the 19th century is portrayed by Francesco Hayez and Giovanni Carnevali ("il Piccio") while just

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further on, Medardo Rosso turns space into a new sculptural vision. From the lofty simplicity and serene grandeur of Neoclassicism, by way of arcadian visions, bourgeois portraits, Romantic landscapes, sentimental atmospheres and complex theatrical devices, a visit to Villa Reale is a stroll through art history, but it is also a journey through Italian mannerisms, poses, and expressions: this is the land of melodrama.

The rooms of Villa Reale are also the house for one of the most important 20th-century pieces: purchased in 1921 with considerable citizen funding through a public subscription by city institutions, // *Quarto Stato* (1901) by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo, on the first floor of the villa, throws open the gates of the 20th century to usher in its new protagonist – the masses.

And from here, the passage to the turmoil of Futurism is a truly short one. The section of the villa dedicated to the collection of industrial magnate Carlo Grassi, on the second floor, preserves some of the best-known work by Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla, alongside masterpieces by Giorgio Morandi and a series of rare gems by Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin and Edouard Manet.

Like many historic buildings in the city, Villa Reale was seriously damaged in the Second World War, losing, for example, the 18th-century stables over whose foundations the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (PAC) was built. Only recently, through a complete restoration, did Villa Reale return to its original splendour, and the spaces of this ancient residence can now be visited in all their extraordinary charm.

Villa Reale is the most recent venue chosen by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi to present its nomadic museum. For each new exhibition, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi seeks out forgotten places, spectacular buildings, magical spaces in which to display works of contemporary art that are specially conceived and created for each show.

Fondazione Nicola Trussardi is an agency for the production and promotion of contemporary art, mounting large-scale exhibitions twice a year in historic locations throughout the city of Milan. Before Tino Sehgal, the Foundation has presented projects by other major international artists such as Peter Fischli & David Weiss, Pawel Althamer, Paola Pivi, Martin Creed, Anri Sala, Urs Fischer, Maurizio Cattelan, Darren Almond, and Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset.

With the aim of bringing contemporary art directly to the city, the foundation explores today's art world, but also provides a compass for navigating the urban space; after rediscovering some of Milan's most prestigious landmarks — including Palazzo Litta, Istituto dei Ciechi, Circolo Filologico Milanese, Palazzo dell'Arengario, the Old Warehouse of Porta Genova Station, Palazzo della Ragione, the Ottagono in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele — Fondazione Nicola Trussardi has now arrived at the Villa Reale in Via Palestro, one of the most prestigious buildings of the city of Milan, opened for the first time to the energies of contemporary art.

The entrance to all the exhibitions by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi is free: art belongs to everyone.

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