

2019

Ionesco, the Rhinoceros and Rome

Snapshots of the absurd

RHINOCEROS™

Established in Roma by Alda Fendi

Rome 14 april - 30 may 2019

*Radioactive contrasts of now mature
experiments to revive the absurd
and the surreal in theatre, art
and literature. An intuition
rewarded as always by the empathy
of an extraordinary public.*

Alda Fendi

*Ionesco, il Rinoceronte e Roma
is the start of a series that
will continue with Beckett and then
with the films of the surrealists.
Absurd like the piratic emphasis that
revived theatre in the post-war period,
Ionesco and his Rhinoceros are an
empathic, long-lived, sensual paradox.
With the authors of the Absurd, nothing
is as it seems.*

Raffaele Curi



The first instalment of *Istantanee dell'assurdo*, a survey in images spanning the Theatre of the Absurd and Surrealism, *Ionesco, il Rinoceronte e Roma* is an action that takes place at the rhinoceros art gallery, the building designed by Jean Nouvel for Alda Fendi. The gallery spaces are revealed through ... special tracks (real and symbolic).

A kaleidoscope of images - installations, screenings, photos, music - accompanies the visitor, a new experiment from the Fondazione Alda Fendi, which since 2001 has been promoting experimentation that goes beyond the conventional boundaries between disciplines - starting with the name of the building itself, which evokes both the classical age and the Theatre of the Absurd.

Raffaele Curi's *Rhinoceros apud Saepta* (selected by the association for Italian design [ADI] for the prestigious Compasso d'Oro award) was first installed at the Arch of Janus - from the Latin *ianus*, 'passage', illuminated, like the quadrifrons arch itself, by Oscar-winner cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and by lighting designer Francesca Storaro. Now the installation is moving from the Arch of Janus to inside the rhinoceros gallery.



The celebrated playwright Eugène Ionesco - one of the leading exponents of the Theatre of the Absurd - arrived in Rome, where he was feted with countless meetings with leading lights on the Italian cultural scene (from Palma Bucarelli to Franca Valeri and Giulietta Masina), at which he was always present.

Screened along the exhibition route is *The Rhinoceros*, directed by Tom O'Horgan, based on Ionesco's theatre piece, one of the inspirations behind the name of the building.

The work is set in a city where there is a Rhinoceritis epidemic, which turns people into rhinoceroses. A scathing critique of all forms of standardization and a condemnation of the conformism of commonplaces, it stars Gene Wilder (actor, screenwriter, director), Karen Black (*Easy Rider*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Nashville*) and the film and theatre actor Zero Mostel, showbusiness figures who were placed on the Hollywood blacklist during McCarthyism.

Amidst footage of rhinoceroses in the savannah, packages of Rinostil Rinbalsamico and music ranging from Patty Pravo to Iggy Pop and Klaus Nomi, Salvador Dali is interviewed for the RAI by Carlo Mazarella, and speaks about his theory of the sublime harmony of the logarithmic curve of the rhino horn.

The figure of the rhinoceros has always been strongly metaphorical: from classical Rome to the present day, from Suetonius to Ionesco, passing by way of innumerable references and instances of cross-pollination in the visual and performance arts, and suggesting an idea of poetry combined with force, form and unconventionality.

Rhinoceros

From the Latin *rhinoceros -ontis*, from the Greek ῥινόκερωσ, *rhinókerōs*, compound of *rhís rhinós* 'nose' and *kéras* 'horn'

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