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## Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel



A look at the CDN's permanent exhibition

In 2021, the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel (CDN) celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–90). The centenary programme, featuring exhibitions and events, proved popular with audiences and the media. The CDN successfully highlighted the lesser-known facets of the writer and painter. In 2021, the museum also opened up private areas of Dürrenmatt's former home to the public, such as his study, and added a podcast and video series to its offering.

Painter and writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt would have turned 100 in 2021. To mark this event, the CDN opened a new permanent exhibition featuring an open storage area and offered a broad programme of events, which was well received by the public. The aim of the centenary programme was to convey the complementarity of Dürrenmatt's visual works and his literary oeuvre through exhibitions, events and publications.

In view of the centenary, the CDN already carried out major renovation work in 2020 in order to integrate previously inaccessible private areas of Dürrenmatt's home – his study, his studio (now a room used for cultural outreach) and his library – into the museum. The opening of the study was such a hit with the public that CDN has kept it open to visitors on Saturdays. In addition, in the outside area, his swimming pool was converted into an open-air stage for events.

### Outreach

The CDN's goal is not only to showcase as many of Dürrenmatt's works as possible, but also to convey the artistic diversity of his work. The updated permanent exhibition, which opened in March 2021 entitled *Friedrich Dürrenmatt – Writer and painter* focuses on the dialogue between his literary and visual works. An open storage area, which combines exhibition space with a storage area, was integrated into the museum. The new hanging not only allows more works to be exhibited, but also allows the various techniques that Dürrenmatt used to be presented. The new permanent exhibition looks at the interplay between text and image and provides a lot of additional information about his works thanks to new interactive installations. All these elements make Dürrenmatt's oeuvre accessible to a wider public.

The CDN also put on two special exhibitions to mark the centenary in 2021: *Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Switzerland – Fictions and metaphors* and *Friedrich Dürrenmatt and the world*. The first looked at how Dürrenmatt viewed, wrote about and depicted Switzerland in his writing, artworks and lectures, while the second traced his travels around the globe.

Numerous events were held to mark the centenary in 2021, with creative artists from various sectors invited to take inspiration from Dürrenmatt's work. The play *Pour Václav Havel* by Omar Porras was a highlight of the centenary programme. The director presented his adaptation of Dürrenmatt's 1990 speech in the writer and painter's study. All seven performances were sold out.

In September 2021, the open-air stage on the site of the former swimming pool was inaugurated with performances of Dürrenmatt's play *Le Procès pour l'ombre de l'âne* in a stage production by Guy Delafontaine. In addition to the six performances for the public, special events were also held for schools, which were attended by over 700 students.

The artist Maurice Mboa illustrated *Die Virusepidemie in Südafrika* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt. This resulted in an exhibition and a publication, which was produced by the Université populaire africaine (UPAF) in Geneva in collaboration with the CDN.

Olivia Pedrolì composed *Mathilde*, a musical adaptation of a story by Dürrenmatt, which was exhibited in the CDN as an audiovisual installation and performed as part of a concert.



From the permanent exhibition at the CDN



From the exhibition *Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Switzerland – Fictions and metaphors*

Meanwhile, dancers and choreographers Filbert Tologo and Ivan Larson Ndengue were inspired by Dürrenmatt's *Minotaurus* to create a performance, which they staged in collaboration with the Association Danse Neuchâtel.

In the autumn of 2021, the Association de soutien du Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel, the Botanic Garden, the BelErmitage local association and the CDN organised an event to celebrate the opening of the new walking trail and the publication of the guidebook *Spaziergänge in Neuchâtel – Auf den Spuren Friedrich Dürrenmatts* (*Walks in Neuchâtel – in the footsteps of Friedrich Dürrenmatt*).

To mark the centenary, the CDN also released the three-volume bilingual publication *Wege und Umwege mit Friedrich Dürrenmatt – Das bildnerische und literarische Werk im Dialog* (edited by Madeleine Betschart and Pierre Bühler) in association with the publishers Steidl und Diogenes. This publication offers a comprehensive overview of Dürrenmatt's work and extraordinary expressive power for the first time.

In addition, in 2021 the CDN launched a podcast and video series on Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

The new cultural outreach centre offers workshops in German, French or both for primary schools and lower and upper secondary schools. In the workshops, students study a selection of Dürrenmatt's works. They can discover his pictures, illustrations and texts, and then tell their own stories using words and images.

## User services

The CDN welcomed 13,221 visitors in 2021. Considering the coronavirus restrictions, this figure is very encouraging as the museum was closed entirely until 2 March 2021, capacity limits had to be put in place for the CDN and its events throughout the year under review, and in some cases access to the public had to be restricted using other measures.

In 2021, the CDN ran 13 events and four stage productions with a total of 32 performances, several of which were sold out. There was also high demand for guided tours (167) and school workshops (48).

## Networking

The centenary was an opportunity to step up cooperation with a range of different partners. Particularly worthy of mention are the theatres TPR and Passage, the Jardins musicaux and the University of Neuchâtel. The collaboration with international partners, such as the Istituto Svizzero di Roma in honour of Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Leonardo Sciascia will be pursued in 2022.

In addition to the partnerships mentioned, the centenary also gave rise to various international collaborative projects with societies, universities, embassies, consulates and other institutions. For example, the Swiss General Consulate in Barcelona staged a three-day series of exhibitions in collaboration with the CDN, as well as a panel discussion, a series of films and various talks.



From the exhibition on Maurice Mboa: illustrations to accompany *Die Virusepidemie in Südafrika* (text by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, 1989)



The former swimming pool is now used as a venue for events.



*Wege und Umwege mit Friedrich Dürrenmatt – Das bildnerische und literarische Werk im Dialog*, 2021