

# "The Dead Class"

*Umarta klasa* [*The Dead Class*], a play produced by Kantor in 1976, was called a drama séance by him during which the figures of Witkacy and Bruno Schulz, two great fascinations of Kantor, were summoned.

The performance was kept in the convention of a nightmare, in which you go back to your school days and experience the trauma associated with this period. In response to a signal given by Kantor, who is the conductor of the entire situation, a procession of figures begins – a procession of old men carrying children on their backs who are grown into a part of their bodies. According to Kantor, they were larvae of adults in which the entire memory of the childhood age was put, abandoned and forgotten due to indifference.

*The Dead Class* had its origins in *Tumor Mózgowicz* [*Tumor Brainiowicz*] by Witkiewicz. Although its text in fact almost does not appear in the play, the characters of Witkiewicz present in it are dominated by Kantor's original figures.

Kantor's fascination with Bruno Schulz had its origins in the idea of degraded reality, which was realised by Kantor in his performances although he understood it slightly differently from Schulz, for whom degraded reality meant something which was "in a state of continuous fermentation, germination, and latent life. There are no inanimate, hard, and limited objects. Everything drifts beyond its borders in order to leave them at the first opportunity". [*Cinnamon Shops*].

Kantor's degraded reality, the reality of the lowest rank, was realised in repeated, almost obsessive explorations of the theme of memory, a return to childhood and situations of the past, a return which becomes impossible. The only traces are accidental "frames of memory".

*The Dead Class* was staged in a cramped underground room in the Krzysztofory Palace in Kraków. Kantor also created productions in which actors performed in very tight spaces; for example, they were hung on hangers in a closet referred to by Kantor as the Interior of Imagination (*W małym dworku* [*Country House*], 1960).

A **real theatrical space** was one of Kantor's inventions in the first period of his work (1955–1975). It was not a space created with the use of illusion, in accordance with the stage directions of a drama. The audience were usually crowded into a small room, and these "uncomfortable" conditions of reception were staging elements.

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See:

["Children at their desk" \("The Dead Class", 1989\)](#)

["Mechanical cradle" \("The Dead Class", 1975\)](#)

["Dummy of Bedel" — image of Kazimierz Mikulski \("The Dead Class", 1975\)](#)

["Bike"/Manikin of a child on a bike" \("The Dead Class", 1975\)](#)

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