

Disturbingly topical warning

Mario and the Magician

KOENRAAD TINEL & THOMAS MANN

Koenraad Tinel grew up in a Flemish family with pronounced Nazi sympathies. In Thomas Mann's 1930 novella 'Mario and the Magician' he found striking echoes of the atmosphere he experienced as a child. A young family goes on holiday to Italy and feels distinctly unwelcome there. The atmosphere in the seaside town of Torre di Venere is tense, and their sense of unease increases. The prospect of a conjuring show promises a welcome light-hearted distraction. But the magician turns out to be a hypnotist who takes a wicked pleasure in getting people to dance to his tune, with tragic consequences.

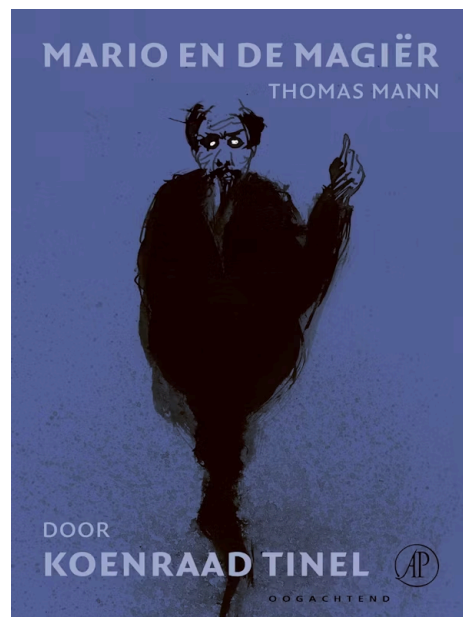
Masterly. A shadow play that seems horribly topical

DE STANDAARD

Tinel's impressive, freakish drawings give even the sunny scenes at the start of the story an ominous feel. In greyish earthy colours, almost every face becomes monstrous, with as the ultimate character the arrogant magician Cipolla. He provokes the spectators and takes advantage of their craving for humour to make them laugh with fellow villagers who are being used for his own purposes against their will. He insults the audience and fascinates everyone at the same time. Tinel makes tangible the discomfort and disquiet that are deeply embedded in Mann's story. With the masses swept up despite themselves and the manipulator smirking as he pulls the strings, 'Mario and the Magician' echoes not just the rise of fascism but the present day as well.

No less horrific than it is convincing

DE VOLKSKRANT



AUTHORS



Koenraad Tinel (b. 1934) is a draughtsman and sculptor. His drawings and his often monumental sculptures, which arise from the primal matter of mythologies, fairy tales and stories, have been exhibited many times at home and abroad. Tinel has described his experiences as the son of parents who collaborated during the Second World War as the still-burning core of his artistic calling. Photo © Sam Debaecke **Thomas Mann** (1875-1955) is widely recognized as one of Germany's most important twentieth-century writers, known for his incisive analysis of societal and cultural issues. The winner of the 1929 Nobel Prize in Literature, and an outspoken opponent of National Socialism, he fled Nazi Germany and settled in Switzerland and the US. Photo © Carl Van Vechten

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