PART I

Further On,
Nothing . . .
Tadeusz Kantor said, "Further on, nothing!" many times in his artistic journey. Each time, however, new creative vistas would open up to him and inspire yet another transformation in his productions, paintings, and theories concerning the visual arts. As Kantor states in Lesson 1 of The Milano Lessons: "My artistic life has been a continual process of discovering things I did not know about. In this sense, it has been a process of learning. It has been like a journey during which new lands were discovered and the horizon kept receding—I kept leaving behind me the lands I had just conquered."

The following chronology and selections from Kantor’s critical writings are an attempt to indicate the versatility of his creative endeavours. The aim is to direct attention to the inter-relationship between Kantor’s life/milieu and his work as a theatre director, a visual artist, and a theoretician.

Kantor addressed historical and intellectual exigencies and constraints in his poetic essays from 1944 to 1990. My selection of Kantor’s critical writings opens with a 1988 résumé of his life as a visual artist. In it, he explains his method of work, choice of subject matter, and reasons for abandoning traditional forms of representation. More important, however, Kantor here maps out all the shifts and thresholds in his journey through the spaces of the twentieth century. The essays and manifestos that follow the résumé enhance the reader’s understanding of those “signposts,” to use Kantor’s taxonomy, and the artist’s treatment of the Autonomous Theatre, the Zero Theatre, the Informel Theatre, theatre Happenings, the Impossible Theatre, the Theatre of Death,
and the Room of Imagination, all of which are briefly touched on in the opening essay. The selection of essays and manifestos closes with the Milano Lessons, which offer a rare opportunity to observe Kantor putting together a performance; describe his attitude towards dadaism, surrealism, and constructivism; present his thinking about the artist’s function in society; and end with his look at art “before the end of the twentieth century.”

1915 Tadeusz Kantor born on April 6 in Wielopole, a small town near Kraków.

1925–33 Attends the Gymnasium in Tarnów, where he excels in the humanities and especially in Greek and Latin. Designs Stanisław Wyspiański’s *Deliverance* (Act III) and *Acropolis* (Act IV) (fragments of the plays presented to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Wyspiański’s death in 1932). Participates actively in the cultural and political life of the school. Begins to paint—his first works, influenced by the symbolists.

1933–39 Attends the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, where he studies painting and stage design. Develops an interest in constructivism and the Bauhaus.

1938 Founds a puppet theatre at the academy, the Ephemeric (Mechanic) Theatre, where he presents Maurice Maeterlinck’s *The Death of Tintagiles*.

1942 With a group of young painters, organizes the underground, experimental Independent Theatre in Kraków during the German occupation. Performances held in private homes or apartments because of German prohibition of all artistic life (under penalty of death). Directs and designs Juliusz Słowacki’s *Balladyna* with the Independent Theatre.


1945 Stages *The Return of Odysseus* as a student production at the Teatr Stary in Kraków. Begins an active career as a scene designer. Designs and directs Józef Czechowicz’s *Unworthy and Worthy* for Teatr Akademicki “Rotunda.”
1946  Designs Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (Biblioteka Jagiellońska), Zofia Nałkowska's *The Day of His Return* (Teatr Stary), and Jerzy Szaniawski's *Two Theatres* (Teatr Powszechny) in Kraków.

1947  Receives a scholarship for a one-year stay in Paris. Encounters the works of Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Max Ernst, Hans Hartung.

1948  Organizes the first postwar exhibition of modern Polish art in Pałac Sztuki in Kraków.
Appointed professor at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts.

1949  Publicly refuses to participate in official cultural life when the stringent rules of socialist realism are imposed on the arts. Professorship at the academy revoked.

1950  Begins to work with Maria Jarema, an avant-garde sculptor and painter who did scene design for Teatr Cricot (1933–38).


1952  Designs Henri Becque’s *The Vultures* (Teatr Stary) in Kraków.

1953  Designs Alain-René LeSage’s *Tircaret* (Teatr Stary) in Kraków, Alfred de Musset’s *No Trifling with Love* (Teatr Poezji) in Kraków, and Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej) in Opole.

1954  Designs George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* (Teatr Stary) in Kraków. Develops the concept of mental space.

Maria Jarema’s and Kantor’s works exhibited at the Po Prostu Gallery in Warszawa. Develops his Informel paintings.
Together with Maria Jarema, organizes Cricot 2 at the Dom Plastyków in Kraków.
Attends a theatre festival in Paris. Discovers the works
of Wols, Jean Fautrier, Georges Mathieu, and Jackson Pollock.

1956 (The end of the Stalinist period in Poland)
Designs Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure* (Teatr Ludowy) at Nowa Huta. Develops the concept of the Autonomous Theatre. Presents Stanisław Witkiewicz's *The Cuttlefish* (May 12) at Dom Plastyków in Kraków (the first postwar production of Witkiewicz's work in Poland; Jarema designs the costumes for the production; Witkiewicz provides Kantor with the texts for most of his subsequent productions). Exhibits works in Warszawa at the Po Prostu Gallery (the first exhibition of Informel Art in Poland).

1957 Designs Jerzy Zawieyski's *Masks of Maria Dominika* (Teatr Kameralny) in Warszawa and Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* (Teatr Stary) in Kraków. Designs and directs García Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* (Teatr Stary) in Kraków. Presents Kazimierz Mikulski's *Circus* (January 13) with Cricot 2 at the Krzysztofory Gallery (the production makes use of the concepts of the Happening and Emballage [from the French *emballer*: to pack, to wrap up]). Organizes a group of avant-garde painters, the Kraków Group. Exhibits his works at Kraków's Krzysztofory Gallery, which will be the headquarters of the theatre.


1959 Exhibits his works at the Galerie H. Legendre in Paris and at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf (individual shows). Participates in the exhibition "Documenta II" in Kassel and in the exhibition of modern art in Warszawa.

1960 Exhibits his works at the Saidenberg Gallery in New York and at Gallery 54 in Göteborg (individual shows). Participates in the thirtieth biennial of art in Venezia.

1961 Designs Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (Teatr Dramatyczny) in Warszawa. Develops the concept of "reversed space," a further elaboration on the concept of mental space. Presents Witkiewicz's *The Country House* (January 14) at the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków. (This first application of the theory of the Informel Theatre marks a shift in the theatre experiments of Cricot 2.)
Publishes “Is the Return of Orpheus Possible?”


Presents Witkiewicz’s *The Madman and the Nun* (June 8) at the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków. (The production is built according to the principles of the Zero Theatre.)
Organizes “A Popular Exhibit, or an Anti-Exhibit” at the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków. Participates in the exhibition of Polish art at Folkwang Museum in Essen.

1964 Creates first compositions with umbrellas attached to canvas (collage). Exhibits his works at the Alice Pauli Gallery in Lausanne (individual show). Participates in the exhibition of Polish art “Profiles IV” at the Stadtische Kunsthalle in Bochum and in the stage design exhibition in Zürich.


Organizes “The Demarcation Line” (Happening) at the Association of Art Historians (participants are painters and art historians) in Kraków. Organizes “Le Grand Emballage” (Happening) in Basel.
Exhibits his works at the Kunsthalle in Baden-Baden (individual show) and at the Galerie Handschin in Basel and


1969 Professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts revoked a second time. Works on the concept of the Impossible Theatre in Bled. (The actors become a troupe of wanderers who present each scene, all of which are based on Witkiewicz’s The Country House, in a different place: at the railway station in Bled, on a glacier in the Julian Alps, in a room in Yugoslavia, on the shore of the Adriatic, in a casino in Bled). The Water-Hen shown in Roma, Modena, Bologna. Organizes Happening “The Anatomy Lesson II” at the Foksal Gallery in Warszawa. The Country House filmed by Saarbrücken TV.


1972 *The Water-Hen* shown at the Festival of Arts and at the Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh. Produces Witkiewicz’s *The Shoemakers* at Theatre 71 de Malakoff in Paris (with French actors).

1973 Stages Witkiewicz’s *Dainty Shapes and Hairy Apes, or the Green Pill* (May 4) at the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków. (The production makes use of the concept of the Impossible Theatre.) Publishes “The Impossible Theatre” manifesto. Presents the works of Cricot 2 at the Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh. Organizes the exhibition “Everything Is Hanging by a Threat” at the Foksal Gallery in Warszawa (individual show). Receives the Scotsman prize for *Dainty Shapes and Hairy Apes*.

1974 *Dainty Shapes and Hairy Apes* shown at the International Theatre Festival in Nancy, at Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris, at Galeria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna in Roma, at Folkwang Museum in Essen, and at the Festival of Arts in Shiraz. Designs Słowacki’s *Balladyna* in Kraków (Teatr Bagatela).


1976 *The Dead Class* shown at the Festival of Arts and at the Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh, at the National
Theatre in Cardiff, and at the Riverside Studio in London. Exhibits his works (“Emballages”) at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and at Sonja Henie–Nils Onstad Art Center in Oslo (individual shows). “Twenty Years of Cricot 2” exhibition held at the Krzysztofory Gallery in Kraków.
Receives the Scotsman prize for The Dead Class.
Film versions of The Dead Class produced by Andrzej Wajda (Zespół, Poland) and Denis Baboutel (CNRS, France).

1977

The Dead Class shown at Mickery Theatre in Amsterdam, at the Galerie Ricard and Stadttheater in Nürnberg, at the International Theatre Festival in Nancy, at Festival of Art in Shiraz, at the BITEF Festival in Belgrade, at the Festival d’Automne and at Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris, at Theatre 140 in Bruxelles, at Théâtre National Populaire in Lyon, and at Carrefour International du Théâtre and at Théâtre Populaire des Flandres in Lille.
Exhibits his works (“Emballages”) at the Ricard Gallery in Nürnberg (individual show). Participates in the exhibition “Documenta 6” in Kassel and in the international art exhibition ROSC in Dublin.
Receives Medal of the City of Gdańsk and Critics’ Prize of Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (Poland) and the grand prize at the Belgrade Festival for The Dead Class.

1978

The Dead Class shown at Palazzo Pitti Teatro Rondo di Bacce in Firenze, at Centre di Ricerca per il Teatro in Milano, at the Adelaide Festival of Arts Recording Hall in Adelaide, at the Opera House in Sydney, at Theatre 11 in Zürich, at Théâtre Plain Palais in Geneva, at the IV Sesión Mundial del Teatro de las Naciones in Caracas, at Teatro Tenda and at Rassegna Internazionale di Teatro Popolare in Roma, and at the Berliner Festspiele in West Berlin.
Participates in the exhibition of Polish Art in Mannheim.
Receives the Rembrandt Prize (Basel), Critics’ Prize of Cyprian Norwid (Poland), Mayor’s Medal of the Commune di Roma, the Grand Prix, and the Puana Sujo at the festival in Caracas for The Dead Class.

1979

The Dead Class shown at LaMama in New York, at Teatro “El Galeón” in Mexico City, at Palazzo Reale in Milano, and at the Kulturhuset in Stockholm.
Creates Where Are the Snows of Yesteryear? (Cricotage) at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Roma.
Exhibits his works at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Roma

Receives Mayor’s Medal of the Commune di Milano and OBIE Award (New York) for *The Dead Class*.

The Cricoteka, the archives of the Cricot 2 Theatre, founded in Firenze and Kraków.

1980 Invited with the Cricot 2 Theatre by the city of Firenze and Teatro Regionale Toscano to work there (1980–1981). In cooperation with Italian actors, prepares *Wielopole, Wielopole*. Develops the idea of the Room of Memory.

Presents *Wielopole, Wielopole* (June 23) in Firenze. *Wielopole, Wielopole* shown at the Festival of Arts and at Moray House Theatre in Edinburgh, at the Riverside Studio in London, at the Festival d’Automne and at Théâtre Bouffe du Nord in Paris, at the Sokół Club in Kraków, at the Stodoła Club in Warszawa, and at the shipyard in Gdańsk. *The Dead Class* shown in Prato.

Receives Medal of the City of Lyon and Mayor’s Gold Medal (Firenze).

“The Idea of Theatre Cricot 2” exhibition shown at the Cricoteka in Kraków.

1981 *Wielopole, Wielopole* shown at Centro di Ricerca per il Teatro in Milano, at Teatro Limonaia in Roma, at Santa Maria in Firenze, at Théâtre de la Ville in Genova, at Teatro Regio in Parma, at Théâtre Plain Palais in Geneva, at Die Rote Fabrik in Zürich, and at the International Theatre Festival in Caracas.

1982 *The Dead Class* shown at the Toga Festival in Toga Mura, at Parco in Tokyo, and at the Riverside Studio in London.

*Wielopole, Wielopole* shown at the Festival International Cervantino in Guanajuato, at Teatro Juan Ruiz Alarcón in Mexico City, at LaMama in New York, and at Théâtre National Populaire in Lyon.

Exhibits his works at the Galerie de France (retrospective) in Paris.

Receives the OBIE Award (New York) for *Wielopole, Wielopole*.

1983 *The Dead Class* shown at Poliorama in Barcelona, at Pierluigi da Palestrina in Cagliari, at Teatro Maria Guerrero in Madrid, at the Stodoła Club in Warszawa, at the Sokół Club in Kraków, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and at Théâtre Plain Palais in Geneva. *Wielopole, Wielopole*
shown at Teatro Principal in Valencia and at Teatro Auditorium in Palma de Mallorca.


1984 The Dead Class shown at Teatro Romea in Murcia, at Teatro Pérez Galdas in Las Palmas, at Sala Municipal de Cultura in Sevilla, and at the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles. Where Are the Snows of Yesteryear? shown at the Stodoła Club in Warszawa. Wielopole, Wielopole shown at Kulturhuset in Stockholm, at Esitykset Iyväskylän Talveass in Jyväskyla, at Théâtre de Paris in Paris, and at the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles. Prepares Let the Artists Die in cooperation with Italian actors.

1985 Presents Let the Artists Die (June 2) at the Alte Giesseri Kabelmetall in Nürnberg. Let the Artists Die shown at Teatro dell’Arte in Milano, at the International Theatre Festival in Avignon, at LaMama in New York, and at the Stodoła Club in Warszawa. Introduces the Theory of Negatives, an extension of the Room of Memory. Teatr Cricot 2 produced by Andrzej Sapija (WFO, Łódź), and The Theatre of Tadeusz Kantor produced by Denis Bablet (CNRS, Paris).

Receives the French Legion of Honour.

1986 Let the Artists Die shown at the Stodoła Club in Warszawa, at Teatr im. J. Słowackiego in Kraków, at Sala Olimpia in Madrid, at Teatro Dell’Arte in Milano, at Teatro Petruzzelli in Bari, at Colosseo in Turin, at Théâtre National Populaire in Lyon, at Maison de la Culture in Grenoble, at Theatermanufaktur in West Berlin, at Theaterwinkel in Antwerp, and at Teatro Comunale in Ferrara. Prepares A Wedding Ceremony (Cricotage) with the students of Civica Scuola D’Arte Drammatica in Milano.

Writes a collection of essays and manifestos entitled The Milano Lessons.


Receives the OBIE Award (New York) for Let the Artists Die.

1987 Wielopole, Wielopole shown at Mercat de les Flors in Barce-
lona. *Let the Artists Die* shown at Teatr Polski in Wrocław, at Mercat de les Flors in Barcelona, at La Salamandre in Lille, at Metropol in Wien, at Teatro Ayala in Bilbao, at Teatro Della Compagnia in Firenze, and at Teatro Munici-
pal General San Martín in Buenos Aires. Prepares *The Ma-
chine of Love and Death* for “Documenta 8” in Kassel. *The
Machine of Love and Death* shown at Staatstheater in Kassel,
at Teatro Litta in Milano, at Teatro Ariosto in Regio Em-
lia, at Teatro Biondo in Palermo, and at Teatr Vaasa in
Vaasa.

*Let the Artists Die* produced by N. Lilenstein.

1988  *Let the Artists Die* shown at Teatro Dogana in San Mar
ino and Teatro “A” in Salerno. Presents *I Shall Never Return*
(April 23) at Teatro Studio in Milano. *I Shall Never Return*
shown at the Akademie der Künste in West Berlin, at LaMama in New York, at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, at Auditorium in Palma de Mallorca, at Théâtre Ga-
ronne in Toulouse, and at Théâtre National Populaire in Lyon.

Presents *A Very Short Lesson* (Cricotage) in Charleville.

1989  *I Shall Never Return* shown at Théâtre des Treize Vents in
Montpellier, at Théâtre Roger-Salengro in Lille, at Teatro Albeñiz in Madrid, at Mercat de les Flors in Barcelona, at Il Vascello in Roma, at Grande Auditorio in Lisboa, and at Tafelhalle in Nürnberg. *The Dead Class, Wielopole, Wielopole, Let the Artists Die,* and *I Shall Never Return* shown at the
festival of the Cricot 2 Theatre at Théâtre Chaillot in Paris. An
international symposium honouring Kantor’s con-
tribution to the world theatre, “Tadeusz Kantor, peintre, au-
teur, homme de théâtre: Ses résonances à la fin du XXe siè-
cle,” organized by the French Ministry of Culture and ANFIAC, held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Retrospective exhibit of Kantor’s works held at the Galerie
de France in Paris.

Receives Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres
(Paris).

1990  *I Shall Never Return* shown at Teatr Stary in Kraków, at the
Stodola Club in Warszawa, at Parco in Tokyo, at Teatro Capitoll in Salerno, at Teatro Petruzelli in Bari, and at Lis-
tahatio in Reykjavik. Presents *Silent Night* (Cricotage) at
Chapelle des Penitents Blancs in Avignon.
An international symposium, “Art and Freedom,” organized by the Jagiellonian University and Cricoteka in Kraków.
Exhibits his paintings, art-objects, and drawings at Galeria Spicchi dell’Est in Roma.
Cricoteka’s “Objects, the Negatives of Memory” exhibit held at BWA in Wrocław.
Receives the Pirandello Award (Palermo).
Prepares Today Is My Birthday in Toulouse and Kraków.
Dies on December 8, 1990, in Kraków.
