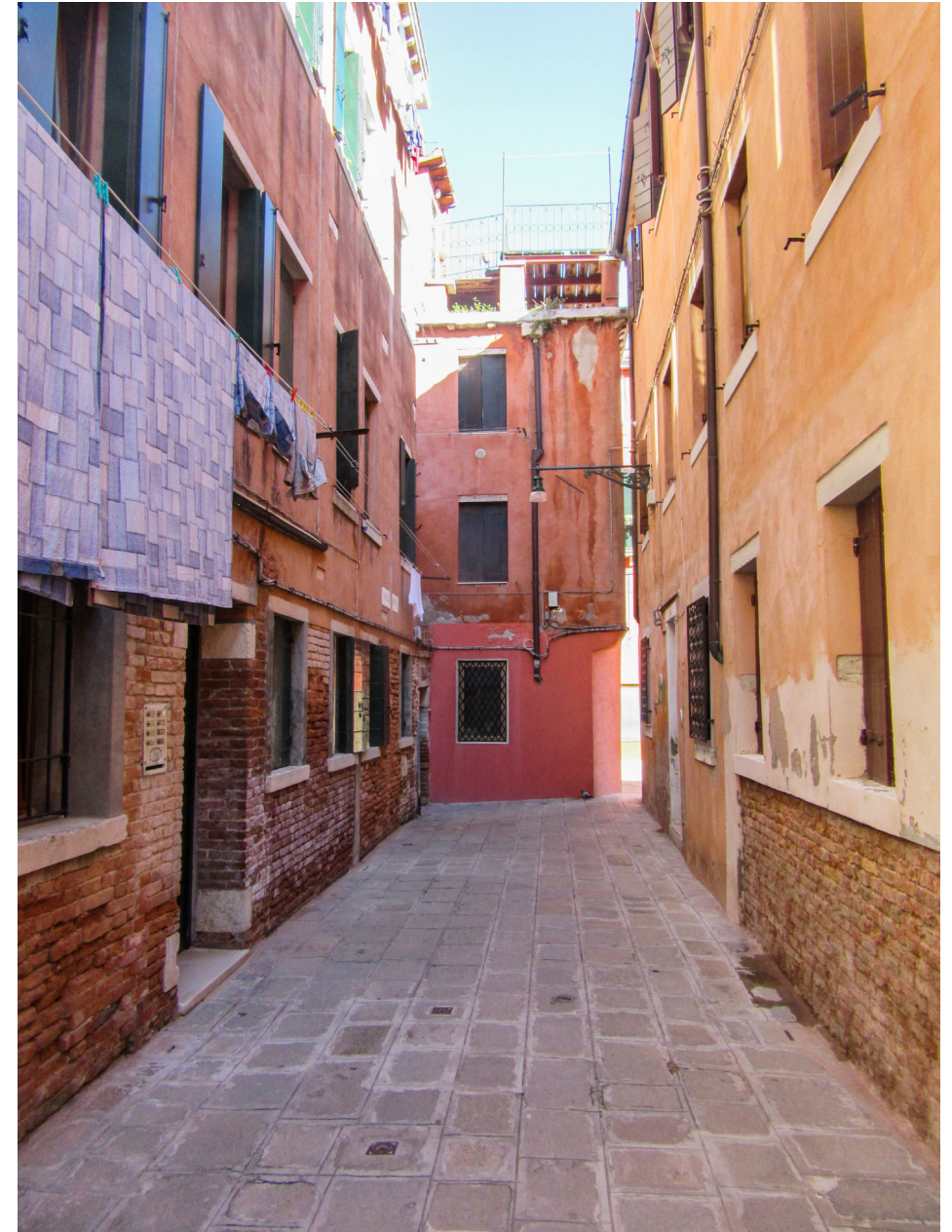


## An Interview with Hans Winkler

Yunus Tuncel

**1) As we all know, there are mixed receptions of Nietzsche's works; some are drawn, and some are repulsed. As an artist, what attracted to you to Nietzsche's works? What were the first things you heard about Nietzsche, as you grew up in post-war Germany?**

It seems that Nietzsche was a brilliant thinker and a person characterized by perceptions. He wrote and acted very unconventionally. He often moved between the trivial and the beautiful—the foolish and the good behavior, fiction and reality, lies and truth, kitsch and avant-garde” (Buddensieg). He embraces tombstones in Genoa, or in Turin, a horse. I discovered him as a conceptual artist before conceptual art was born. In my opinion, his thoughts, comments and questions about society are still timely and up to date. For example, his article on nationality: “thanks to the morbid estrangement, which has put the nationality madness among the people of Europe and still exists, owing also to the short-sighted and hasty-handed politicians, who with the help of this craze, are at present in power...”



**Above** View near Nietzsche's apartment from April 21 – June 12, 1884, where he lived with Köselitz. San Canciano, Calle Nuova 5256, Venice. *Photo by Hans Winkler.*

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**2) Nietzsche has much to say on arts and aesthetic. Many Nietzsche scholars such as Babich, Shapiro, Pothen, and Nehamas in the English-speaking world, have explored his aesthetic ideas and many artists have appropriated them. What does Nietzsche's aesthetic theory mean to you? What do you derive from it as a practicing aesthetician?**

As an artist and a citizen of the earth, I try to impart both ideas and feelings that are not based on general values and a bourgeois agreement, and I agree with Nietzsche's claim, "one must have the courage in art to love what really appeals to us, even when it's in bad taste." He has made the history new, and paved the way, which among other things, influenced surrealism, Giorgio de Chirico picks up Nietzsche's idea of a "radical emptiness" in his pictures with the aim "to cleanse the art of everything that was their content so far. Put aside every object, every idea, every thought, and symbol." ("The pathway is an artist, who adds, a slanderer.")

**3) Recently you have been interested in Nietzsche in Venice and you read Buddensieg's book on this subject. First, what attracts you to Venice? Second, what interests you in Nietzsche's relationship to Venice? What was special about Venice for Nietzsche?**

I have been visiting and working in Venice for twenty years (on a regular basis for 2-3 years). I developed and realized exhibitions/interventions from my experiences on site. For example, "un incidente in gondola" (2002): an orchestrated accident borrows the symbol of Venice - the gondola with gondoliere. After special preparations the gondola did sink in a canal. The project addresses a City flooded with tourism and continually struggling with the preservation of sinking monuments. It is showing the fragile line between reality and fantasy, between truth and manipulation. Or "Ezra Pound's Cage" (2007): A Reconstruction of the cage, where the 60-year-old poet Ezra Pound had been arrested by the American army in 1945. The cage has the same size as the cages of Guantanamo.



**Top and above** Views near Nietzsche's apartment from April 10 - June 6, 1885, Ponte Rialto, Venice. *Photos by Hans Winkler.*

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Of Venice, Nietzsche said, it is “the only place on earth I love.” Between 1880-1887, he was in Venice five times, for a total of more than six months. There, he gives himself up to “the power of seeing” and also chooses his whereabouts through his outlook. More than anything, he enjoyed the view of the island of the Dead and San Michele, during his first stay. He bows to the art of the 16th century. And the art of the past is suitable. In the painting of the lagoon city, Nietzsche “recognized that spirit that spoke to me as a brother and friend.” He omits all names and places and becomes his seldom-used self in the place of the artist:

I am Bellini

I am Tizian

I am Tintoretto

I am Veronese

During his time in Venice, he increasingly defends himself against the flood of impressions, against the overwhelming mass of works of art and—against pictorial tourism—and rather enjoyed the everyday things (good food, drink, hiking, and coffeehouse stays) or the folk songs of the Gondolieri.

**4) You are also interested in Nietzsche’s ideas on Baroque art. How do you read Nietzsche’s position on Baroque? At times, he seems to see it not as high art, or it is art that is fading, as he says in *Human, All Too Human*, Vol. 2, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, Aphorism 144. “The baroque style originates whenever great art starts to fade...”**

Due to his regular stays in Italy, he rediscovers the Baroque style and it seems that he is more concerned with the spirit of the time, in which art was concerned, above all, with illusion and reality, as well as with subversive forms of commerce. Incidentally, in the art and literature between 1600-1700, artists had developed new forms of representation with a preference for illusions and Ephemera, which should have had a big influence on modern art.

It seems that at that time artists and authors thrashed out the imaginative potential of fictitious worlds completely. “Reason was the discovery of



**Top** Near Nietzsche’s apartment at Calle del Risotto, Venice. He stayed here for three days before moving to his Ponte Rialto apartment.

**Above** View from Nietzsche’s apartment with Köselitz. *Photos by Hans Winkler.*

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the new microscopic and telescopic worlds which call into question border between the actual and fictitious increasingly.” (C.N. Nemes).

Since the 17th century, mankind developed more rapidly than ever. As the first-person Magellan circumnavigated the earth and inspired among other things a “scientific revolution” and a growing interest in the investigation of the world by which the absolute supremacy of the religious worldview got lost - got less attention. Trade was now intercontinental for the first time in history. European ships tied together lasting relationships between Europe and the markets of Eastern Asia ... and the spice trade was according to Howard Haggard, in reality, drug trafficking. The trade with opium-controlled Venice, because the lagoon city was the main center of the European trade and opium as a universal remedy (sh. Theriak) was high-estimated All over Europe.

Nietzsche wrote in “About the baroque style:”

“only the poorly-informed and arrogant will immediately have a disparaging feeling about this word. The baroque style always arises as every great artwork blooms as a natural event, when the demands in the art of classical expression have become too great.”

##### **5) On the mice library and how Nietzsche’s ideas relate to animals. Can you say a few things on this subject?**

“Hermitage- Mountain library” or “Einsiedlerbibliothek”, Brennerpass, Italy/Austria, 1997 - 2000

In 1997, on a hike along the Brenner border, p.t.t.red (Stefan Micheel and myself) found an empty mountain hut at 2100 m, which was converted later into a hermit library. For the new library 50 writers and philosophers worldwide has been addressed and asked for book recommendations. (Including Carl Amery, R. Scheldrak, Rudolph Bahro, Peter Handke, Hannes Boehringer, Martin Walser, T.C., Boyle, W.G. Sebald, Durs Gru?nbein, Fritjof

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Capra). Accessible for anyone, one could stay in the hut for an undetermined time. But in 2000 the weather repeatedly prevented the planned, annual removal of the books to Brenner and caused the premature end after four years. In the spring of 2001, transport to the valley that specifically revealed Zarathustra was included in the food chain of mice. In order to reflect this, in autumn 2013 I installed “Zarathustra” again in a model of the hut, reintroducing the book back into the natural cycle and reversing the role of mice in pharmaceutical laboratories. Here, I thought of Nietzsche’s “The animals and the moral:”

“The beginnings of righteousness, such as prudence, moderation, bravery, in short, everything we describe with the name of Socratic virtues, is animalistic: a consequence of those impulses which teach to seek food and escape enemies. Man is certainly not the crown of creation, every being is beside him on an equal level of perfection. Morality, religion, and metaphysics have put man in chains so that he has forgotten how to behave like an animal.”