

In my mind: TOM MCCARTHY

Death becomes him: Tom McCarthy starts life as a novelist



The founder of a semi-fictional literary movement talks about death and the difficulties he faced in finding a publisher for his debut novel.

Before his debut novel *Remainder* was published, British artist Tom McCarthy was better known as the General Secretary of the shadowy International Necronautical Society (or INS). An artistic and literary movement, its manifesto declared their intent to delve into all matters concerning death across the worlds of literature, art, science and culture.

One INS project involved beaming a live transmission from the ICA; it was directly inspired by Jean Cocteau's 1950 classic film *Orphée*, in which the character of "Death" repeatedly recites lines of poetry over the radio waves, which his protagonist tunes into. During the transmission, the INS took news stories and transformed them into lines of spoken free, iambic and random verse.

However, conceptual art is a subterranean pursuit, and now it seems that Tom McCarthy is about to explode into the public domain with the publication of his debut novel. *Remainder* is the story of a nameless narrator who, after an unexplained accident, is left eight and a half million pounds. He then embarks on a quest to recreate and re-enact his moments of déjà vu. His experiences become increasingly surreal and violent as the novel progresses, ending with a disastrous bank robbery. It's a seamless work of fiction infused with dark humour and echoes of Heidegger, Camus and Burroughs.

After trying for three years to persuade the industry moguls to take notice, he eventually found the perfect match in maverick publishing

phenomenon Metronome Press. "Metronome has a belief in literature that is long overdue – the conglomerates, by comparison, seem to be replacing literature with lifestyle fiction." The Paris-based brainchild of Clementine Deliss and Thomas Boutoux, Metronome is the reincarnation of Olympia Press, the 1950s under-the-counter Parisian publisher that first printed William S Burroughs's controversial novel *Naked Lunch*, as well as works by Beckett, Joyce, Miller, Trocchi and Nabokov. **LEE ROURKE**

Remainder is out now. Tom McCarthy is exhibiting with Rod Dickinson in Greenwich Degree Zero, from February 22 to April 2 at Beaconsfield Gallery, Newport St, London