

Le Jeudi 27 octobre 1960,
 Les nouveaux réalistes ont
 pris conscience de leur
 singularité collective.
 Nouveau Réalisme = nouvelles
 approches perceptives du
 réel.

Yves Klein
 MATTEO
 SPONTINI
 Hains
 Restany
 Arman
 Tinguely
 Hains
 Dufrène
 Villeglé

The signatures on the first manifesto of the Nouveaux Réalistes, 1960.

about its artistic vocation, if there were not still as many people who believed in the eternal immanence of pseudo-noble genres and painting in particular.

At the more essential stage of total affective expression and the exteriorization of the individual creator, and through the naturally baroque appearances of certain experiences, we make our way towards a neo-realism of pure sensitivity. Therein lies at the least one of the paths for the future. With Yves Klein and Tinguely, Hains and Arman, Dufrène and Villeglé, some very diverse premises have been stated in Paris. The ferment is fertile, as yet unpredictable in its total consequences, and certainly iconoclastic (due to the icons themselves and the stupidity of their worshippers).

Here we are up to our necks in the bath of direct expressivity and at forty degrees above dada zero, without any aggression complex, without typical polemic desire, without other justifying urges except for our realism. And that works, positively. If man succeeds in reintegrating himself into the real, he identifies the real with his own transcendence, which is emotion, sentiment, and finally, poetry.

Forty Degrees Above Dada (1961)

Dada is a farce, a legend, a state of mind, a myth. An ill-bred myth whose underground survival and capricious demonstrations upset everyone. André Breton had thought at first to dispose of Dada by attaching it to Surrealism. But the anti-art explosive was short

* Pierre Restany, excerpts from "À quarante degrés au-dessus de dada" (Paris, May 1961), in *Le nouveau réalisme* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1978), 281-85. Translation by Martha Nichols.

lived. The myth of the entire *no* lived clandestinely between the wars in order to become, as of 1945, with Michel Tapié the guarantee of an "art autre." Thanks to the change of absolute aesthetic negativity into a methodological doubt, it was finally possible to incarnate new signs. A necessary and sufficient blank slate, the *dada zero* constituted the phenomenological reference of abstract lyricism: it was the big break with tradition, whereby broke the muddy wave of formulas and styles, from the "informel" to "nuagisme." Contrary to general expectations, the *dada* myth survived Tachism's excesses very well; easel painting marked the occasion, causing the last remaining illusions regarding the monopoly of traditional means of expression to disappear, in painting as in sculpture. . . .

We are witnessing today a general phenomenon of depletion and sclerosis of all established vocabularies: uselessly repeated stylistics and redhibitory [i.e., latent academisms (Fr. *redhibitories*)] with increasingly rare exceptions. Certain individual approaches confront—fortunately—this vital deficiency of classical methods and tend, regardless of their scope, to define the normative bases of a new expressivity. . . .

The Neo-Realists consider the world a painting, the large, fundamental work from which they appropriate fragments of universal significance. They allow us to see the real in diverse aspects of its expressive totality. And through these specific images the entire sociological reality, the common good of human activity, the large republic of our social exchanges, of our commerce in society is summoned to appear.

In the current context, Marcel Duchamp's ready-made (and also Camille Bryen's functioning objects) take on new meaning. They translate the right of direct expression belonging to an entire organic sector of modern activity, that of the city, the street, the factory, mass production. This artistic baptism of the ordinary object nevertheless constitutes par excellence the "dada act." After the *no* and the *zero*, here is a third position of the myth: Marcel Duchamp's anti-art gesture assumes positivity. The *dada* mind identifies with a mode of appropriation of the modern world's exterior reality. The ready-made is no longer the climax of negativity or of polemics, but the basic element of a new expressive repertory.

Such is Neo-Realism: a rather direct fashion of getting our feet back on the ground, but at forty degrees above the *dada zero*, and on the very level where man, if he succeeds in reintegrating himself with the real, identifies the real with his own transcendence which is emotion, sentiment, and finally, poetry.