

inert matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the esthetic scale.

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. This becomes even more obvious when posterity gives its final verdict and sometimes rehabilitates forgotten artists.



Fountain, 1917

Apropos of "Readymades"

IN 1913 I HAD THE HAPPY IDEA TO FASTEN A BICYCLE WHEEL TO A KITCHEN STOOL AND WATCH IT TURN.

A FEW MONTHS LATER I BOUGHT A CHEAP REPRODUCTION OF A WINTER EVENING LANDSCAPE, WHICH I CALLED "PHARMACY" AFTER ADDING TWO SMALL DOTS, ONE RED AND ONE YELLOW, IN THE HORIZON.

IN NEW YORK IN 1915 I BOUGHT AT A HARDWARE STORE A SNOW SHOVEL ON WHICH I WROTE "IN ADVANCE OF THE BROKEN ARM."

IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME THAT THE WORD "READYMADE" CAME TO MIND TO DESIGNATE THIS FORM OF MANIFESTATION.

A POINT WHICH I WANT VERY MUCH TO ESTABLISH IS THAT THE CHOICE OF THESE "READYMATES" WAS NEVER DICTATED BY ESTHETIC DELECTATION.

THIS CHOICE WAS BASED ON A REACTION OF VISUAL INDIFFERENCE WITH AT THE SAME TIME A TOTAL ABSENCE OF GOOD OR BAD TASTE . . . IN FACT A COMPLETE ANESTHESIA.

ONE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC WAS THE SHORT SENTENCE WHICH I OCCASIONALLY INSCRIBED ON THE "READYMADE."

THAT SENTENCE INSTEAD OF DESCRIBING THE OBJECT LIKE A TITLE WAS MEANT TO CARRY THE MIND OF THE SPECTATOR TOWARDS OTHER REGIONS MORE VERBAL.

Talk delivered by Duchamp at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Oct. 19, 1961. Published in *Art and Artists* (London), 1, no. 4. (July 1966), p. 47. The original text is in the Simon Watson Taylor collection.

SOMETIMES I WOULD ADD A GRAPHIC DETAIL OF PRESENTATION WHICH IN ORDER TO SATISFY MY CRAVING FOR ALLITERATIONS, WOULD BE CALLED "READYMADE AIDED."

AT ANOTHER TIME WANTING TO EXPOSE THE BASIC ANTINOMY BETWEEN ART AND READYMADES I IMAGINED A "RECIPROCAL READYMADE": USE A REMBRANDT AS AN IRONING BOARD!

I REALIZED VERY SOON THE DANGER OF REPEATING INDISCRIMINATELY THIS FORM OF EXPRESSION AND DECIDED TO LIMIT THE PRODUCTION OF "READYMADES" TO A SMALL NUMBER YEARLY. I WAS AWARE AT THAT TIME, THAT FOR THE SPECTATOR EVEN MORE THAN FOR THE ARTIST, ART IS A HABIT FORMING DRUG AND I WANTED TO PROTECT MY "READYMADES" AGAINST SUCH CONTAMINATION.

ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE "READYMADE" IS ITS LACK OF UNIQUENESS . . . THE REPLICA OF A "READYMADE" DELIVERING THE SAME MESSAGE; IN FACT NEARLY EVERY ONE OF THE "READYMADES" EXISTING TODAY IS NOT AN ORIGINAL IN THE CONVENTIONAL SENSE.

A FINAL REMARK TO THIS EGOMANIAC'S DISCOURSE:

SINCE THE TUBES OF PAINT USED BY THE ARTIST ARE MANUFACTURED AND READY MADE PRODUCTS WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT ALL THE PAINTINGS IN THE WORLD ARE "READYMADES AIDED" AND ALSO WORKS OF ASSEMBLAGE.

Marcel Duchamp 1961

From the Catalog *Collection of the Société Anonyme*

Alexander Archipenko Sculptor, Painter

Archipenko was among the few sculptors attracted by the Cubist creed. Even though his first sculptures were inspired by the revolutionary theories, he showed immediately his strong personality by introducing an entirely new conception of sculpture. He gave the name "Sculpto-Peintures" to reliefs generally made of plaster, carved and painted. This polychrome conception of sculpture, though not an innovation in itself, was in its results quite startling. He succeeded in expressing more than an attractive technique through his new ideas of form. Archipenko's important contribution to sculpture has been to do away with volumes. The old massive classic treatment was probably a practical consequence of the process of casting. His technique of "direct cutting" in plaster, wood and different materials made each piece an original not to be duplicated. In recent years Archipenko has turned back to a more classical technique. He will, nevertheless, always be regarded as a pioneer.

1943

Sophie Taeuber-Arp Painter, Sculptor, Designer

If one of the characteristics of modern art since Courbet has been the cult of the subconscious hand, quite a number of artists in the last thirty years have abandoned this cult and turned toward a consciously accu-

EDITED BY MICHEL SANOUILLET & ELMER PETERSON

THE ESSENTIAL WRITINGS OF
MARCEL DUCHAMP

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Preface

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DUCHAMP'S WRITINGS

It may come as a surprise to some that there is such a thing as "The Writings of Marcel Duchamp." The tendency is to think of him either as a major force in modern art or as a picturesque character who abandoned art for a lifelong game of chess. His writings constitute a relatively unknown side of his creative work.

When *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)* was published in 1934, André Breton immediately recognized its importance, calling it a major intellectual event. However it was not until 1958, in Michel Sanouillet's *Marchand du Sel* (Paris: Le Terrain Vague), that an attempt was made to collect and publish all of Duchamp's written work.

It has been fifteen years since the publication of *MDS*; Duchamp lived and continued writing for ten of those years, and during that time some of his earlier writing was published, including an important collection of notes, *A l'Infinifit (The White Box)* (New York: Cordier and Ekstrom, 1966). The editors' intent in *Salt Seller*, as we have chosen to translate the Marcel Duchamp/*Marchand du Sel* joke, is to make the original *MDS* material available in English (a revised and updated French *MDS* will be published this year in Paris by Eric Losfeld), as well as to include the rest of Duchamp's signed and published work.

THE BRIDE'S VEIL

Notes relating to his major work, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, make up a significant part of Duchamp's writings. From the summer of 1912 until 1923, the year he left his *Large Glass* "definitively uncompleted," Duchamp worked slowly and deliberately on these notes, which lift the veil of his elusive bride. Calvin Tomkins has written:

The Large Glass stands in relation to painting as *Finnegans Wake* does to literature, isolated and inimitable; it has been called everything from a masterpiece to a tremendous hoax, and to this day there are no standards by which it can be judged. Duchamp invented a new physics to explain its "laws," a new mathematics to fix the units of measurement of the new physics, and a condensed, poetic language to formulate its ideas, which he jotted down on scraps of paper as they occurred to him and stored away in a green cardboard box for future reference.¹

¹ *The Bride and the Bachelors: Five Masters of the Avant-Garde* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), p. 20.