Don't Believe
What You Read:
Marcel Duchamp
and the
American Press

4

LECTURE NOTES **NO.**

Lecture notes No. 4

Don’t Believe What You Read:
Marcel Duchamp and the American Press

Dr. Sarah Archino

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My time in Schwerin was always a joy, in no small part thanks to the warm welcome of Anne Leibold and Mechthild Bening, along with the fascinating and spirited conversations with the heads of the Duchamp Research Center, Kornelia Röder and Gerhard Graulich. My scholarship has greatly benefited from your insights and thoughtfulness. I have also been fortunate to work alongside Christina May and Katharina Uhl. Special thanks are due to Kerstin Krautwig; without her assistance, this project could never have been completed.

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Dr. Sarah Archino

Don’t Believe What You Read:
Marcel Duchamp and the American Press

Sarah Archino was the recipient of the third Duchamp Fellowship in 2014 for her original research project *Don’t Believe What You Read: Marcel Duchamp and the American Press*. On January 22, 2015, she presented the results of her year-long research in Schwerin.

This book represents a new installment of Lecture Notes, a series dedicated to presenting current research on Duchamp by next-generation academics.

With the support of Hamburg entrepreneur Brigitte Feldtmann and the association Freunde des Staatlichen Museum Schwerin e.V., between 2011 and 2017 the Marcel Duchamp Research Center in Schwerin awarded five scholarships for research on the work of Marcel Duchamp. The sixth scholarship, awarded in 2023, was financed for the first time by the Staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Kunstsammlungen Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (State Palaces, Gardens and Art Collections of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). The Friends’ Association, however, will continue to sponsor travel and accommodation costs.

Sarah Archino received her doctorate from the City University of New York for her thesis *Reframing the Narrative of Dada in New York, 1910–1926*, where she examined the development of American Dadaist aesthetics. The anarchic way of working that is attributed to the New York Dadaists is something she also discovered in Duchamp’s work, especially in his interventions in magazines, on their covers, and on book jackets. It was from this that she developed her research project for Schwerin.

When Duchamp’s painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* caused a sensation at the New York Armory Show in 1913, the artist was not present. No other artwork in the exhibition received as many mentions in the press, none was so strongly celebrated, criticized, or attacked. No other artwork prompted so many

cartoons or vilifications either. Most of the ridicule had subsided by the time Duchamp arrived in New York in 1915 but the artist still maintained a kind of "celebrity status" (Archino), which he cannily exploited to his advantage. From day one, he harnessed the American media for his purposes and beat them at their own game—he was an expert in chess after all.

Like few others, Duchamp understood how to appropriate the conventions of established genres, such as newspaper reporting, or the strategies of advertising, only to then subvert their standard function with a stroke of genius that would turn the medium to ends of his own. This was a transmutation that a viewer would only notice on closer examination. The boundaries between fact and fiction dissolved or became blurry.

For her research, Sarah Archino consulted art magazines and newspapers from the 1910s and 1920s. Generally characterized by their high value as sources of information, these sources were also very popular. In his newspaper interventions, Duchamp does not take the role of an author but operates with a seemingly invisible hand. Making use of our faith in the printed word, he carefully planned his first real appearance in the New York press. In a fascinating manner, Sarah Archino takes us on a journey into a world of bewilderment, manipulation, and enigma. Duchamp succeeds in building on the fame of *Nude Descending a Staircase* and in presenting himself as a mysterious and elusive provocateur. The combination of strategic networking in New York society and the targeted manipulation of the press quickly allows Duchamp to establish himself in influential circles and captivate the right collectors and opinion leaders.

Archino demonstrates how cleverly Duchamp used the press and critics for his own purposes with the example of one of his most famous readymades, *Fountain*. Rejected by the Society of Independent Artists for a planned exhibition, Duchamp gives it to Alfred Stieglitz, who takes a photograph of it and displays it in his gallery 291. There it receives only a single viewer: the critic Henry McBride. To this day, Steglitz's photo remains the only proof of the original work.

Duchamp makes the work accessible to a wider audience by featuring it in his magazine *The Blind Man*, but without appearing as the author. His goal was not to attract a mass audience but to make his works known to key individuals.

Duchamp repeatedly plays with the expectations of the audience and the press. He tests the press and challenges them: on the opening night of the Independent Artists exhibition in New York, which had no curators or jury and accepted every artist who paid the fee, the critic Henry McBride asked him what the most outstanding works were. Duchamp names two little-known, only semi-professionally trained artists. Due solely to their mention in McBride's article, they are sold at exorbitant prices—even though McBride is critical of their works. It's with this simple trick that Duchamp exposes the mechanisms and interaction between the press and the art market. All you can say to that is: Don't Believe What You Read.

Kornelia Röder

Don't Believe What You Read: Marcel Duchamp and the American Press

Marcel Duchamp's relationship with the American press began before his arrival, originating with the sensational coverage of the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art (better known as the Armory Show).[1] This first large-scale exhibition of modernist art in America presented a chronological development of 19th- and early 20th-century painting and sculpture. Four of Duchamp's recent paintings were displayed in the so-called "Chamber of Horrors," as the Cubist room was labeled in the press.[2] His *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* was the focal point for a flood of derisive press coverage, ensuring that two years later, Duchamp's arrival would immediately remind the reading public of his infamous history and his reputation as a provocateur; he remained the "Nude-Descending-a-Staircase-Man" to an eager press corps **(Fig. 1)**.[3] Over the next seven years, through interviews and publications, Duchamp created a body of work that straddled the border between mainstream media and artistic interventions. I suggest that Duchamp adopted the printed page as a medium to appropriate the conventions of established genres in a manner that subverted their usual function, a strategy perhaps best framed as parafictional.

Harvard scholar Carrie Lambert-Beatty has used the term parafiction to describe art which is fictive but "has one foot in the field of the real," interacting with the world in ways that seem legitimate.[4] Discussing contemporary artists

[1] The classic reference for the Armory Show is Milton Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988). Brown's study has been augmented by texts celebrating the 100th anniversary of the exhibition, including Gail Stavitsky, *The New Spirit: American Art in the Armory Show, 1913* (Montclair: Montclair Art Museum, 2013) and *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*, Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt, eds. (New York: New-York Historical Society, 2013). See also Laurette E. McCarthy, *Walter Pach (1883–1958): The Armory Show and the Untold Story of Modern Art in America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2011).

[2] In addition to texts on the Armory Show, scholarship that addresses Duchamp's participation includes Francis Naumann, *New York Dada: 1915–23* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994) and Katharina Neuburger, *Marcel Duchamp: New York und das Readymade 1912–1917*, the first volume of this Lecture Notes series.

[3] "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us," *New York Tribune*, 12 September 1915.

[4] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (Summer 2009): 54.

who blur the line between fact and fiction as an artistic strategy, Lambert-Beatty admits "of course, Marcel Duchamp lurks behind all of these examples."[5] We can understand this statement in reference to many possible aspects of Duchamp's career, including his plays with identity, his exhibition strategies, and his readymades, but it can also describe his media interventions, a relatively understudied genre. Duchamp's wordplay and linguistic experiments have justifiably been the subject of much scholarship, but there is wealth to be mined from this subgenre of publications from the 1910s and early 1920s. Contemporary to the development of his readymades, it is notable that Duchamp himself did not publicly author any of the work here under consideration, instead acting as a subject, composer, or invisible hand. Without calling attention to his role, Duchamp's media persona played with the public's expectation of this infamous "iconoclast" and orchestrated a body of published work through the words of others.

Parafiction is more than farce, it undermines the audience's trust of seemingly-factual spaces.[6] Duchamp exploits our faith in the printed word. Drawing together his interviews, publications, and related print interventions, a pattern emerges that reveals strategic disruption hidden behind plausible language. Once recognized as ironic, these publications, which appear in a range of plausibly real venues, critique and question the nature of artistic production while calling attention to the sensationalism of art exhibitions and the complicity of the press. The early 20th century was a rich moment for art publications. Some, like *Camera Work* or *291*, set out to be art journals and distanced themselves from the commercial press; these were printed lavishly and carefully augmented with photographic plates and hand-colored prints. Others, like Man Ray's *Ridgefield Gazook* were deliberately crude, cheaply reproduced, and considered nearly disposable. We cannot characterize Duchamp's press so neatly. In matters of style and syntax, his published work drew more from the popular media

[5] Lambert-Beatty, 57.

[6] In Lambert-Beatty's words, "parafictional strategies are oriented less toward the disappearance of the real than toward the pragmatics of trust." Lambert-Beatty, 54.

than from traditional art writing, yet it remains the product of an artist. This body of work hovers in the liminal space between artwork and "real" work. This is different from canonical Dada periodicals, as it represents a deliberate and meaningful strategy of falsification under the guise of conventional media. Moreso, unlike conventional art writing, which presumably exists to illuminate the intentions of an artist or artwork for its reader, Duchamp destabilizes this authorial voice.

Duchamp's Introduction to the American Press

The 1913 Armory Show was calculated to showcase modern art to the general public. To best fulfill their proselytizing mission, the organizers harnessed the power of the media, both in advertising the show and reporting upon it. As organizer Walt Kuhn noted, "the aim has been to make this the biggest of big shows, sensationalized by the biggest of big advertising,"[7] and the show's logo was plastered on posters and campaign buttons throughout the cities on its tour **(Fig. 2)**. This was a deliberate strategy, as Kuhn remarked elsewhere: "We are taking hold of this thing in a rather modern way, which we trust will aid in bringing the people into the building."[8] The press proudly noted its own role in the success of the Armory Show, with endless reviews and commentaries which encouraged the record attendance in New York, Chicago, and Boston.

While prolific, the critical reception of modern art in the Armory Show was often skeptical. In one of the most cited reviews of the Armory Show, the conservative Academic Kenyon Cox doubted the sincerity of the moderns, claiming that "these men have seized upon the modern engine of publicity and are making insanity pay."[9] While certainly not the first time that an artist had been

[7] Archives of American Art. Records of Walt Kuhn, 1911–1914 (REELS D72-D73). Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1962–1979. Quoted in "Marketing Modern Art in America: From the Armory Show to the Department Store," *University of Virginia*, available at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~museum/armory/marketing.html.

[8] Walter Pach, quoted in Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, 78.

[9] Kenyon Cox, "The New Art," reprinted in *Documents of the 1913 Armory Show: The Electrifying Moment of Modern Art's American Debut* (Tuscon: Hol Art Books, 2009), 21.

accused of charlatanism, Cox's attention to the media's role in this alleged hoax foreshadows the potential vulnerability of the press to malevolent or opportunist manipulation.

Within the flood of press coverage, Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* bore most of the public's ire towards modern art, becoming the basis for poetry competitions, puzzles, and endless cartoons which played with the indecipherable nude and its provocative title (which Duchamp had written directly on the surface of the painting). Indeed, beyond the pictorial complexity of the work, the title provoked a great deal of commentary, as its literal presence seemed to defy viewers to locate the eponymous nude amid the work's fractured and monochromatic facets. Unable – or unwilling – to find this titular nude, many reviewers wrote mockingly of the nude and of the artist's intentions. The *New York Times* went so far as to claim that the painting was a new version of Hans Christian Andersen's emperor, concluding that:

> M. Duchamp, if he be not what his countrymen call a 'fool to tie,' knows perfectly well that there is no picture at all – no nude, no staircase, no anything. Hence must he be having in his heart much fun with the Wise Ones who, some praising and some denouncing his work, have insisted that there is something in it, good or bad, and gravely have explained or interpreted the artist's meaning and intention.[10]

Like Kenyon Cox, this reviewer assumes that the work is a hoax, a test for the viewing public who have failed to see the machinations of the snickering artist.

When Duchamp arrived in America in June 1915, this direct skepticism had dissipated, but his fame (or, perhaps, infamy) remained intact. Despite his claim to Walter Pach that "I do not go to New York, I leave Paris," Duchamp publicly embraced his new home and celebrity status.[11] And, like Walt Kuhn, who met him at the pier when he arrived in New York, Duchamp masterfully

[10] "Topics of the Times: Innocence as an Art Critic," *New York Times*, 1 March 1913, 14.

[11] Marcel Duchamp, letter to Walter Pach, 27 April [1915], Walter Pach papers, Archives of American Art. Also quoted in Francis Naumann, "*Amicalement, Marcel:* Fourteen Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Walter Pach," *Archives of American Art Journal* 29, nos. 3–4 (1989): 40.

harnessed the media. Although he had emigrated during the summer, Duchamp waited until September to meet with the eager press; that month he was featured in *Vanity Fair*, the *New-York Tribune, Arts & Decoration*, and *The Boston Evening Transcript* – a media blitz.[12] Francis Naumann has hypothesized that Duchamp waited until he had gained a better mastery of English before granting his first interviews, suggesting that he understood how important the press was to his career and image.[13] In waiting until the autumn, Duchamp also timed his debut with the opening of the art season after the summer holidays.

From the first photographs released to the press, Duchamp carefully combined elements of publicity and playfulness to confound the public's expectations. Although every article identified him – often in the first sentences – as the painter of the *Nude*, he refused to capitalize on his infamy. Duchamp disdainfully referred to the Cubists as "monkeys following the motions of the leader"[14] and told Alfred Kreymborg, "I am interested in what there is to do, not in what I have done."[15] Instead, he made broad and delighted claims about his new home, lamenting to one reporter: "If only America would realize that the art of Europe is finished – dead – and that America is the country of the art of the future."[16] The portrayals of Duchamp toyed with his reputation: his utter respectability borders parody when juxtaposed with the tone of the coverage. Duchamp's lounging photograph in the *Tribune* conveyed a relaxed attitude, while his *Vanity Fair* portrait further undercut expectations of the rebellious artist **(Figs. 3, 4)**.[17] Dressed and groomed impeccably, staring seriously and

[12] "A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions by Marcel Duchamp, Iconoclast," *Arts and Decoration* 5 (September 1915): 427; "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us"; Alfred Kreymborg, "Why Marcel Duchamps [sic] Calls Hash a Picture," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 18 September 1915, 12; "Marcel Duchamp Visits New York," *Vanity Fair* 5 (September 1915): 57. In the coming months, Duchamp was also profiled in *Current Opinion, Literary Digest* and in an additional article in the *New York Tribune*.

[13] Francis Naumann begins his treatment of Duchamp in *New York Dada* with an analysis of the photographs published alongside his first American interviews, arguing that they were carefully crafted. See Francis Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23*, 34–37.

[14] "A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions by Marcel Duchamp, Iconoclast," 427.

[15] Kreymborg, "Why Marcel Duchamps [sic] Calls Hash a Picture," 12.

[16] "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us."

[17] "Marcel Duchamp Visits New York," *Vanity Fair* 5 (September 1915): 57

steadily into the camera, Duchamp presented himself as a sober and rational young man. The guise was successful: as another reporter described, Duchamp was "a figure that would seem American even among Americans."[18]

The *New-York Tribune* featured a photograph of the artist relaxing in a deckchair, a setting which seems to suggest that the interview was conducted immediately upon his arrival on the S.S. Rochambeau – or even while in transit. After a brief introduction, possibly written by *Tribune* editor Bessie Breuer, Duchamp commandeers the column with a monologic reflection on the marvels of America.[19] Duchamp's interview feels misleadingly casual with beautifully-crafted sound bites (*avant la lettre*), optimized for reproduction and quotation. He employs the language and tone of an advertisement in claims such as: "The American woman is the most intelligent woman in the world today – the only one that always knows what she wants and therefore always gets it."[20] A printed byline appears, pronouncing that the text was "by Marcel Duchamp," however Duchamp would later explain "Have you heard about the 'ready mades'? … That very funny article in the *Tribune* that you mention is a 'readymade.' I signed it, but didn't write it."[21] This tantalizing claim connects this earliest American press coverage with the concurrent development of his readymades; it also suggests that Duchamp found the press to be a manipulable format for artistic experimentation and was deliberately playing with authorship and authenticity.

[18] "A Complete Reversal of Art Opinions by Marcel Duchamp, Iconoclast," 427.
[19] It is intriguing that Duchamp would later use Bessie Breuer's name in his letter to Francis Picabia where he requested a Dada authorization from Tristan Tzara. See Marcel Duchamp, letter to Francis Picabia, n.d., Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet.
[20] "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us."
[21] Quoted in Thomas Girst, "'That Very Funny Article,' Pollyperruque and the 100th Anniversary of Duchamp's Fountain," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 57–58 (2019): 49. The letter appears in Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affect. Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 77, where they date it to "circa 13 January 1919."

Readymades and *The Blind Man*

Indeed, while maintaining this unassuming public face, Duchamp was preparing to launch a radically iconoclastic campaign. The following spring, in 1916, he began exhibiting his readymades, showing *Pharmacy* at Montross Gallery and two unidentified readymades, possibly *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, and either *Traveler's Folding Item* or *Hat Rack*, at the Bourgeois Galleries[22] That we cannot identify these works is telling about their exhibition and reception. Duchamp later explained "my ready mades [sic] were exhibited in the umbrella stand at the gallery's entrance" and recalled that there was no indication that these "sculptures" were part of the show.[23]

We know that Duchamp's readymades were installed in his studio; they appear in a series of photographs taken by his friend and collaborator Henri-Pierre Roché and are mentioned in a contemporary article by Nixola Greeley-Smith.[24] The reporter follows the basic conventions of Duchamp's post-Armory fame: alluding to the *Nude* as "that famous picture, which looked more like a shanty on the English Coast after a Zeppelin had shelled it than like any woman you or I or M. Duchamp ever saw." Quoting Duchamp's studio-mate and future brother-in-law, Jean Crotti, Greeley-Smith points out "a huge, shiny shovel suspended from the ceiling" before explaining that it "quite evidently had never been used. I do not think either M. Crotti or M. Duchamp would consider it interesting from the standpoint of use." Through his press interlocutor, Duchamp quietly asserted what would become revolutionary: the definition of an artwork through the elimination of its use value.

The readymade's more public reception came in a roundabout fashion, when *Fountain* emerged at the convergence of the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists and Duchamp's first publication, the two issues of *The Blind Man* **(Fig. 5)**. The Society of Independent Artists was founded to

[22] The Bourgeois exhibition is discussed in Francis Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–1923*, 228.
[23] Marcel Duchamp, response to questionnaire, published in *Marcel Duchamp: Letters to Marcel Jean* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1987), 72.
[24] Nixola Greeley-Smith, "Cubist Depicts Love in Brass and Glass: 'More Art in Rubbers Than in Pretty Girl!'" *The Evening World*, 4 April 1916, 3.

encourage experimentation and foster new discoveries by a coalition of American and European artists including Duchamp.[25] With its proclamation "No Jury – No Prizes," it promised to show the public a democratic array of professional and amateur artists. By paying a small amount of money, any entrant could secure a place in the show.[26]

This policy drew swift criticism from the press and the public, who feared the result would be mediocre at best. Ultimately, the exhibition of 1917, which included 2125 works by 1235 artists, included scores of contributors who would not have met with the approval of any jury, but whose presence testified to the democratic spirit of the organization.[27] As the head of the hanging committee, Duchamp devised a system that further confounded this disorder. Eliminating the ordering of groups based on style, technique, or favor, the works were arranged alphabetically. To avoid prejudice, it was suggested that a letter be selected randomly as the starting point; the letter "R" was chosen.[28]

Duchamp's own entry, *Fountain*, a commonplace urinal, submitted under the pseudonym Richard Mutt, was rejected by the board of directors and never exhibited.[29] When the show opened in April, the existence of *Fountain* was known only to the conspirators, the directors, Alfred Stieglitz, and a select few sympathizers. There are varying accounts of how Mr. Mutt's urinal was received and rejected; its ultimate fate is unknown as the object disappeared.

[25] Clark S. Marlor, *The Society of Independent Artists: The Exhibition Record, 1917–1944* (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1984), 3.

[26] In its founding constitution, Article II, section 3 clearly stated that: "Any artist, whether a citizen of the United States or of any foreign country, may become a member of the Society upon filing an application therefore, paying the initiation fee and the annual dues of a member, and exhibiting at the exhibition in the year that he joins." Cited by Marlor, *The Society of Independent Artists*, 81.

[27] Figures quoted in Thierry de Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case," in *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

[28] Francis Naumann has written most extensively on the Society of Independent Artists' exhibition of 1917 in two articles, "The Big Show: The First Exhibition of the Society of Independents, Part I," *Artforum* 17, no. 6 (February 1979): 34–39; and "The Big Show: The First Exhibition of the Society of Independents, Part II," *Artforum* 17, no. 8 (April 1979): 49–53.

[29] For the most comprehensive treatment of Duchamp's *Fountain*, see William Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain* (Houston: Houston Fine Art Press, 1989).

We do know, however, that on April 19th, the *Fountain* was safely housed at Stieglitz's 291 gallery, where he invited the critic Henry McBride (a friend to the avant-garde, and, with Duchamp, a frequent guest at the salon hosted by Florine Stettheimer and her sisters) to see both the object and his photograph of it.[30] Only with its publication in the second issue of *The Blind Man* did the *Fountain* become truly public.

Before we turn to this more famous, second issue, however, we must consider the first issue of *The Blind Man*, edited by Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, and Beatrice Wood **(Fig. 6)**. In an interview with James Johnson Sweeney, Duchamp later explained that he wanted to create a "nonartistic journal," contrasting the project with the aesthetic programming of contemporary little magazines.[31] Rather than an artwork, *The Blind Man* was positioned as a guidebook and published to coincide with the opening of the Society of Independent Artists' inaugural exhibition. In its pages, his co-editor Roché explained, "The Blind Man will be the link between the pictures and the public – and even between the painters themselves."[32] The pamphlet intended to put the viewer in the proper mindset to visit the exhibition, a sort of mental guide rather than the authoritative voice expected in a traditional catalogue, yet even this unstructured goal was undermined within its pages.

The title of *The Blind Man* is our first clue that our guidebook might not be entirely helpful, although the meaning is ambiguous. Perhaps it meant to amplify the juryless exhibition, or the fear that the show would be overwhelmed by untalented amateurs; it might also have referred to the public's need to rely on their own judgment as they moved through the exhibition or the simple refusal to entertain unconventional art – either by the elitist insider or general public.

[30] Alfred Stieglitz, letter to Henry McBride, 19 April 1917, Henry McBride papers, Archives of American Art.

[31] Marcel Duchamp, interview by James Johnson Sweeney, in "A Conversation with Marcel Duchamp … [1955]." Excerpts from this interview were printed in Michel Sanouillet, *Marchand du sel: écrits de Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Le Terrain vague, 1958). The phrase "nonartistic journal" is taken from an account of this interview in Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Delano Greenridge Editions, 2000), 585–86.

[32] Henri-Pierre Roché, "The Blind Man," *The Blind Man* 1 (April 1917): 4.

The cover illustration by the commercial cartoonist Alfred Frueh pessimistically forecasts the latter, depicting the typical middle-class urbanite, mustachioed with hat and cane, as a blind man being led by his guide dog. The dog walks with his nose to the ground, the man walks with his nose upturned. Neither looks at the art, where a framed female nude thumbs her nose at the procession.

The primary text, written by Roché, cast the Independents show as part of an American process of cultural development. Organized into a series of numbered articles in the manner of a manifesto or a political constitution, it began: "The Blind Man celebrates to-day the birth of the Independence of Art in America."[33] Quoting from the official exhibition program, Roché continued, explaining the juryless system and broad range of artworks was "full of surprises and dangers." The text encouraged the reader to form their own judgments about the show, rather than guiding an appreciation. In that vein, "Article Five" hoped that "New York, far ahead in so many ways, yet indifferent to art in the making, is going to learn to think for itself, and no longer accept, mechanically, the art reputations made abroad." Roché concluded, "Russia needed a political revolution. America needs an artistic one." To encourage this open-mindedness, *The Blind Man* proposed a series of questions designed to prompt independent thinking in the reader. These included the expected: "Which is the work you prefer in the Exhibition? And why? The one you most dislike? The funniest? The most absurd?" Meanwhile it also challenged readers to guess "the highest price paid for a single picture" or to write "a dream story of less than one hundred words." Additional texts by Beatrice Wood and Mina Loy played along, not providing commentary on the art but rather relaying a series of dreams and lamenting how the public would never come to a consensus about the merits of the exhibited work.[34]

[33] Roché, "The Blind Man," 4.

[34] Beatrice Wood, "Why I Come to the Independents," "Work of a Picture Hanger," and "Dream of a Picture Hanger" and Mina Loy, "In … Formation," *The Blind Man* 1 (April 1917): 6–7.

How then does *The Blind Man* function as a guidebook? What use is the blind escort who asks irrelevant questions, confuses, and misleads? Instead, *The Blind Man* only assumes the form, printed and distributed for the exhibition under the guise of aiding visitors while it simultaneously discredits this process. It dwells in the realm of parafiction, creating a false guide which participates in the sensationalism of the contemporary press. It also devalues expertise or judgment by deflecting back to the uninformed reader. The editors disguised their identities, further complicating the reality and reliability of this unofficial guide. The back cover printed the notice: "In preparation P · E · T," identifying the editors under aliases.[35] Duchamp, easily the most well-established artist of the group, is notably absent from its pages.

If the first issue of *The Blind Man* toyed with the format of an exhibition guidebook, the second issue replaced the exhibition as the site of artwork, serving as the only public venue for Duchamp's *Fountain* **(Fig. 7)**. The first issue had promised that "the second number of *The Blind Man* will appear as soon as YOU have sent sufficient material for it," but it was ultimately Duchamp who provided the impetus.[36] We might question whether this had been his intention all along – anticipating the rejection of *Fountain* (by a board of directors who remained blind to its merits) and preparing *The Blind Man* as its site of exhibition. Among its pages are impassioned defenses of the object from both aesthetic and theoretical points of view. Once more, Duchamp operates behind the

[35] Scholars have deciphered P and T to represent Henri-Pierre Roché's initial and his nickname for Duchamp, Totor – short for Victor – see Henri-Pierre Roché, *Victor: Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, 1977). The "E" has proved more difficult to decipher, but might have been an attempt to preserve the reputation of Wood, or perhaps to keep her parents from learning of her involvement. Most likely, the "E" creates an alias for Wood, whose first major acting role was that of Eglantine in a production of *Les Deux Sourds* in December 1916. Wood was well received by critics and acted for two years in the theater, under the stage name "Mademoiselle Patricia." Wood's theater career is discussed in Garth Clark, *Gilded Vessel: The Lustrous Art and Life of Beatrice Wood* (Madison, WI: Guild Publishing, 2001), 72.

[36] General information on *The Blind Man* 2 can be found in Dawn Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978); Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp/Fountain*; and Andreas Bern, *New York Dada Magazines, 1915–1921* (Siegen: Forschungsschwerpunkt Massenmedien und Kommunikation an der Universität, 1986).

scenes, with no credit, he assembled contributions from sympathetic colleagues to create the context for its display.

Thierry de Duve points out that Duchamp's *Fountain*, an unexhibited object, became a work of art through the strategies of public relations and marketing, but the tone of *The Blind Man* often becomes hyperbolic, perhaps encouraging the reader to view this defense with some skepticism.[37] This is complicated by Stieglitz's carefully aestheticized photograph, lit to highlight the contrasting textures of the porcelain surface and its provisional and roughly-hewn wooden base, which served as the only trace of the original object **(Fig. 8)**. Its sincerity makes the protest appear entirely plausible and forms an essential component of the *Fountain*'s success in this issue. The *Fountain*, labeled as not an artwork by the board of directors, is recast as an art object, but the transformation is entirely superficial – it is window dressing and presentation.[38]

Much has been written on the issue's defense of *Fountain*, but following those now-canonical texts, the issue continued with more general debate on the function and validity of modern art. The next two-page spread was headed by a pair of poems written by Walter Arensberg: "Axiom" and "Theorem." Terms from mathematics, they refer to two types of knowledge; together they juxtapose truth and assumption. An axiom is a statement which is accepted as truth, but which cannot be proved; it is a proposition alleged to be logical and thus considered accurate.[39] This poem was accompanied by a "Letter from a Mother" that declared "people without refinement, cubists, futurists,

[37] De Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case."

[38] Stieglitz also contributed a second work to this issue of *The Blind Man*, a letter to the editor which spoke directly to the suspicions raised by Richard Mutt's very name, which immediately suggested to some that the submission was a practical joke. In his letter, Stieglitz suggested that the Society eliminate all names from the following exhibition, only to reveal them on the last day of the show.

[39] The Oxford English Dictionary defines an axiom as "a self-evident proposition, requiring no formal demonstration to prove its truth, but received and assented to as soon as mentioned" and "a proposition (whether true or false)." In contrast, a theorem is defined as a statement "not self-evident (thus distinguished from an axiom), but demonstrable by argument." Second edition, 1989; online version, December 2022. Available at https://www-oed-com.libproxy.furman.edu/view/Entry/14045?redirectedFrom=axiom (accessed February 14, 2023). Earlier version first published in New English Dictionary, 1885.

are not artists. For Art is noble. And they are distorted." Although the letter plausibly represented a common and conservative position, it was a fabricated protest contributed anonymously by Beatrice Wood.[40] It is a parafictive axiom, a statement intuitively accepted but which cannot be conclusively confirmed; indeed, it could never be confirmed, as it was a fiction. Alternatively, a theorem is a statement which can be proven through a logical series of steps, one that operates through the scientific principles of hypothesis and conclusion. This poem was accompanied by Joseph Stella's *Coney Island*, which appeared as the result of this scientific approach to modern art, arguably the result of a logical process of determination, not the sort of distorted madness which was feared by the hysterical "Mother."

One other painting from the Independent Artists' exhibition was reproduced in *The Blind Man*: Eilshemius's *Supplication* illustrated an interview conducted with the artist by Mina Loy **(Fig. 9)**.[41] Without facetiously admiring the style of his painting (the title of the interview is, after all, "No Comment!") Loy celebrated his work as truly independent, describing Eilshemius's work as "outside of every academic or unacademic school, untouched by theory or 'ism' … the unique art form that has never been exploited by a dealer, never been in fashion!"[42] This had been the fear and the promise of the Independents. *Supplication*, with its Rubenesque nude and mythological undertones, was a typical subject for the painter, who is estimated to have painted as many as one thousand female nudes during his career.[43] Writing later, Duchamp noted that Eilshemius "developed a conception entirely devoid of the teachings of any of the art schools of the moment. He was a true individualist, as artists of our times should be, who never joined any group."[44]

[46] The identity of "A Mother," is revealed in Ades, Dada and Surrealism Reviewed, 38.

[41] De Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case" identifies Loy as the author of this essay, although it is argued that Duchamp was an important influence in its writing.

[42] Mina Loy, "Pas De Commentaires! Louis M. Eilshemius," *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 11.

[43] Paul J. Karlstrom, "Eilshemius Redux," in Steven Harvey, *Louis Michel Eilshemius: An Independent Spirit* (New York: National Academy of Design, 2001), 41.

[44] Marcel Duchamp, "Louis Eilshemius," in *Collection of the Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art 1920* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1950), 154–55.

Tulip Hysteria

To *The Blind Man*, Eilshemius represented a culmination of the Independents show. Meanwhile, Duchamp embraced his own absence and promoted it in the mainstream media. Given his central role in the show's planning, there had been speculation in the weeks leading up to the exhibition about what this known provocateur would contribute. Even if *Fountain* had been accepted, however, its connection to Duchamp was not public. It was notably in the first press notice about the suppression of Mutt's *Fountain* that Duchamp revealed he was withdrawing his planned contribution, *Tulip Hysteria Co-ordinating* "in retaliation."[45] As no work by this title is listed in the exhibition catalogue, nor has it ever been catalogued among Duchamp's oeuvre, it most likely never existed.[46] Like the pseudonym Richard Mutt, the naming was suspicious, but tempered by its appearance in a plausibly factual forum. This title immediately calls to mind the speculative tulip craze of Holland during the 17th century, speaking to both the illogical exorbitant prices attached to tulip bulbs and the sudden collapse of this market. A conceptual gambit rather than an actual painting, the title alone serves as a calculated commentary on the exhibition and a hint to Duchamp's next move.

The juryless format of the exhibition had encouraged speculation about what unknown genius would be introduced to the public. In an interview with art critic Henry McBride on the exhibition's opening night, Duchamp declared two paintings to be outstanding: *The Claire Twins* by Dorothy Rice and *Rose-Marie Calling (Supplication)* by Louis Eilshemius **(Fig. 10)**.[47] Neither artist was completely unknown, but neither work could be considered masterful by any conventional or avant-garde standards. They were not quite amateurs,

[45] Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–1923*, 183.

[46] André Gervais has written about the non-existence of this work and the implications of its provocative title. "Sur et autour d'un titre (peut-être apocryphe) de Marcel Duchamp: *Tulip Hysteria Co-ordinating*," *Moebius: écritures/littérature* no. 38, 1988, 93–103.

[47] The choices were announced in Henry McBride, "News and Comment: Opening of the Independents," *The New York Sun*, 15 April 1917. The episode is recounted in Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–1923*, 183.

nor trained artists. Both paintings were crudely executed and revealed the limited formal training of their makers and a dependence on Old Master tropes.

The portrait of the *Claire Twins*, had, by virtue of the artist's last name, been one of the first paintings encountered by visitors to the exhibition and had received considerable attention by the press, which mostly declared the work grotesque.[48] Now lost, the painting featured the twins, posed side-by-side in a three-quarter length portrait; their obese forms filled the six-foot-long canvas. The result suggested a familiarity with Velázquez, however their crude and larger-than-life execution rendered them ridiculous. Although Rice had studied briefly with William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri, she later described how

> I decided that the only way I could ever learn was to teach myself. I took a room at home and commenced to paint. I didn't bother with models, anatomy, or precedent: when I got to a part of the subject I couldn't guess, such as hands or knees, I worked in a dress or a chair. I specialized in the exotic, fully robed. I developed a style. And then I decided to have an exhibition.[49]

Similarly, Louis Michel Eilshemius existed on the margins of the art world. He had trained at the Art Students League and the Académie Julian and twice shown his Corot-inspired landscapes at the National Academy of Design, yet by the time of the Independent Artists' exhibition, he was working without a dealer or a gallery.[50] Beginning in 1911, he had abandoned his landscapes in favor of a visionary technique of landscape-nudes which he referred to as "soul painting."[51] *Supplication* was a prime example of this genre.

[48] The location of Rice's painting is described in Naumann, "The Big Show: The First Exhibition of the Society of Independents, Part I," 35.

[49] Rice's artistic training is discussed in her autobiography, Dorothy Rice Sims, *Curiouser and Curiouser: A Book in the Jugular Vein* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), 79–81.

[50] Marcel Duchamp, "Louis Eilshemius," in *Collection of the Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art 1920* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1950), 154–55; and De Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case," 201.

[51] The relationship between Eilshemius and Duchamp has often been characterized as a cruel joke perpetrated by the French artist: for example, De Duve argues that "Eilshemius's rehabilitation was the exclusive and cruel work of Marcel Duchamp" (De Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case," 202), yet Duchamp consistently promoted Eilshemius over the following decades.

Importantly, both artists had a public profile which preceded the exhibition: both were relentless self-promoters and attention-seekers. By 1917, Eilshemius was known throughout the artistic community in New York, although it was mostly for the repeated letters he sent to various newspapers, lambasting the public for failing to recognize his genius. This rampant self-promotion included his self-appointment as "Maharajah" or the "Mahatma, the Supreme Spirit of Spheres."[52] Rice is a less familiar figure today but was relatively notorious during the 1910s for her daredevil activities. She was that archetypical American woman, as described by Duchamp in his first New York interview as one who "knows what she wants and therefore always gets it."[53] Born to an upper-class family (her father, Isaac Rice, was the publisher of *Forum* magazine and a chess expert),[54] Dorothy Rice had been the first woman in New York to ride a motorcycle.[55] In 1916, she garnered further attention when she became one of the few women aviators, making not only the newspapers but the newsreels.[56] Her exploits were well documented, as she later recalled: "Whenever I felt in need of a special life, I'd speed up a bit, get picked up by the cops, wisecrack the judge, and make the first page of every yellow sheet in town."[57] Duchamp's selection of Rice and Eilshemius may have been more about their commercial zeal and promotional genius than any talent displayed upon the canvas.

At the time of Duchamp's selection, the critic Henry McBride accused him of being influenced by the exorbitant prices fixed by these artists, $5,000 and

[52] Harvey, *Louis Michel Eilshemius: An Independent Spirit*; and Paul J. Karlstrom, *Louis Michel Eilshemius* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1978) examine how the artist represented himself.
[53] "The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us."
[54] While no direct record of Duchamp's involvement with the Rice Chess Club could be found, the organization was well-known during the period. As his daughter later recalled, her father "financed about every chess venture and chess player that needed it. … he was a chess patron." Rice Sims, *Curiouser and Curiouser*, 61. Alfred Kreymborg, a friend of Duchamp's from the Arensberg Salon, recalled several occasions where he played at the Rice Chess Club during the early years of the 20th century in his autobiography, *Troubadour* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925).
[55] Frank Lirbey Valiant, "Motor Cycling Fad Strikes Fair Sex," *New York Times*, 15 January 1911: C5.
[56] Rice Sims, 105–07.
[57] Rice Sims, 8.

$6,000 respectively. It remains rather likely that it amused Duchamp to judge fine art based upon the prices demanded.[58] Considering Duchamp's fascination with American advertisement and public relations, McBride was likely partially correct: the audacity to ask such prices for the paintings reflected a self-promotion strategy which Duchamp would have understood to be fully American. That the works being sold were not the product of established artists only made the gesture more daring. Duchamp used McBride's popular column to champion these two artists, using the reputation of the newspaper and his interviewer to disguise his iconoclasm. For readers of *The New York Sun*, this operated as an authentic recommendation, despite McBride's mild skepticism.

The opening of the Society of Independent Artists' exhibition came four days after the official American declaration of war against Germany. The 1917 Espionage Age passed on June 15th and the anarchist Emma Goldman was arrested on June 16th, sending a clear message to radicals in New York.[59] The intervention and subsequent political shift in the United States brought about a nearly complete suspension of avant-garde activity in New York and the scattering of its participants. Duchamp left the United States for a sojourn in South America and his next publications would not appear until the 1920s.

[58] Henry McBride, "News and Comment," *The New York Sun*, 15 April 1917.
[59] This chronology was noted in Jay Bochner, *An American Lens: Scenes from Alfred Stieglitz's New York Secession* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 182–83.

Marketing and the Avant-Garde

The new decade saw the resurgence of avant-garde activity in New York, as artists and gallerists returned to the city and began reestablishing themselves. One new organization, the Société Anonyme, was founded in 1920 by Duchamp, along with Man Ray and Katherine Dreier (who had previously served on the board of directors of the Society of Independent Artists).[60] This experimental exhibition group sought to teach the public how to approach modernist art; they did not operate a commercial gallery, only supporting their activities through donations, memberships, and admission fees. This created a noncommercial space that avoided potential conflicts of interest between their educational mission and the market value of the artwork they showed.

To promote an early exhibition by the Société Anonyme, featuring the work of the sculptor Alexander Archipenko, Duchamp created an advertisement for the "Archie Pen Co." This full-page design, which was published in the mainstream art publication *The Arts* in the February–March 1921 issue posed as an advertisement for one product (a nonexistent pen) while doubling as an advertisement for another (the real exhibition) **(Fig. 11)**.[61] Repurposing one of Archipenko's sculptures, Duchamp added a nib and composed text which echoed the hype and salesmanship of its real commercial counterparts.[62] Duchamp played into the machine aesthetic of Archipenko's work, exaggerating the pen's mechanization of intellectual labor to absurd extremes. "It thinks for you," the text declared. Promising to "draw automatically a line of accurate length," the pen was proclaimed a favorite among architects and draftsmen.

[60] John Angeline, "Reassessing Modernism: Katherine S. Dreier and the Société Anonyme" (Ph.D. Diss., Graduate Center, CUNY, 1999). In his dissertation, Angeline defended Dreier's reputation as an unwitting accomplice to Duchamp's maneuvers, writing that "her reputation for being antagonistic to Dada or incapable of appreciating its projects is undeserved." The relationship between Duchamp and Dreier is also discussed in Eleanor S. Apter, "Regimes of Coincidence: Katherine S. Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Dada," in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1998).

[61] The episode is discussed in Ruth Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," *Arts Magazine* 51 (May 1977): 22.

[62] Contemporary advertising practices are detailed in Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

Despite numerous factors which should have marked the piece as parody – including the language clearly being hyperbolic, there being a lengthy review of the sculptor's work in the same issue, and an editor-required disclaimer which appeared at the bottom of the page – Duchamp later claimed that the Archie Pen was so successful in marketing its benefits that one man fell victim to the prank and wrote to request further information.[63]

While the Archie Pen Co. advertisement was circulated to a broad art public, at the same moment, Duchamp was editing the first and only issue of *New York Dada*. Often used as evidence of a late-breaking and feeble Dada movement in America, in the context of Duchamp's parafictional strategy, *New York Dada* might be best considered as a masquerade of European Dada as it began to coalesce under the leadership of Tristan Tzara **(Fig. 12)**.[64] Coming at a moment when European Dada was increasingly gaining the befuddled attention of the American press, this publication was the only time the avant-garde in New York referred to itself as Dada; it is worth considering that this was intended as a critique of Dada rather than its adoption. After all, Duchamp's co-editor, Man Ray, chided Tzara just a few months later, in June 1921: "Dada cannot live in New York. All New York is dada and will not tolerate a rival."[65] From its cover model, the public debut of Duchamp's alter-ego, Rrose Sélavy (who is not what she appears to be), to phony press coverage of a Dadaist evening where Joseph Stella and Marsden Hartley would participate in a debutante boxing match, it seems highly possible that *New York Dada* was never intended to signal an allegiance to Dadaism, but to lampoon it.

[63] Two letters of inquiry are in the Société Anonyme archives, from C. F. Boswell, 20 April 1921, and Alma Warr, 16 March 1921. They are discussed in David Joselit, "The Artist Readymade: Marcel Duchamp and the Société Anonyme"; and in Jennifer Gross, *The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 35.

[64] This is not to say this reading undoes previous scholarship on *New York Dada* – indeed, as David Hopkins and Emily Hage have demonstrated, the issue revolves around the central thesis of marketing, selling, and commercialization with the added critique of Tzara as participating in these consumerist behaviors in the pursuit of his *Dadaglobe* project.

[65] Francis Naumann discusses the dating of this letter, including the incorrect date in his book, in "A Scholar's Nightmare: A Mistake in the Literature that Cannot be Erased," http://www.francisnaumann.com/PUBLICATIONS/A%20Scholar%27s%20Nightmare.pdf, accessed 2 February 2023. The letter is from Man Ray to Tristan Tzara, n.d., Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

Previous studies of *New York Dada* have accepted the publication as sincere, but misguided, in the perceived need for the blessing of Zurich Dada ringleader Tristan Tzara. When we read Tzara's "Eye-Cover Art-Cover Corset-Cover Authorization," however, we see that he primarily markets Dada and promotes his new venture, *Dadaglobe*.[66] This anthology would have brought together an international roster of Dada artists and, with an ambitious planned print run of 10,000, would have served as a definitive text on the movement. When we consider Duchamp's contemporary characterization of Tzara as a "traveling salesman" and his later assertions that distanced the New York avant-garde from its European counterparts, *New York Dada* seems less than sincere.[67]

A parafictional lens also allows us to connect other components of *New York Dada*, beginning with the Rube Goldberg cartoon that Francis Naumann once lightheartedly contended could be interpreted as a mapped trajectory of Dada – having made its way through western Europe to arrive in New York with its force diminished **(Fig. 13)**.[68] This reading holds, but is complicated when we reconsider the target of destruction. We trace the inane construction of a contorted mechanism, one that circles the rounds of tottering old men and appears to take aim at a guileless boy. But are we meant to believe this mechanism will work? Or is it destined to blow up in the shooter's face or careen out of control?

Interpretation aside, the choice to reproduce a cartoon by Rube Goldberg, who had no prior connection to Duchamp's circles in New York, is provocative. At the time, Goldberg was the world's most financially successful cartoonist, made rich by the syndication of his work in papers across the country.[69] That we

[66] Tzara titled it "Cache-Oeil Cache-Art Cache-Corset/Authorisation." Duchamp translated it into English. The *Dadaglobe* project has been compiled and published in *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, edited by Adrian Sudhalter (Zurich: Kunsthaus Zurich and Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG, 2016).

[67] Marcel Duchamp, quoted in Alfred Kreymborg, "Dada and the Dadas," *Shadowland* 7 (1922). Looking back on this time, Duchamp later reflected "it was parallel if you wish, but not directly influenced. It wasn't Dada, but it was in the same spirit, without however, being in the Zurich spirit." See Marcel Duchamp in Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 56.

[68] Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–1923*, 203.

[69] Goldberg was earning more than $1000 a week in 1915; the following year he married the daughter of the owner of the White Rose supermarket chain. See Stephen Becker, *Comic Art in America: A Social History of the Funnies, the Political Cartoons, Magazine Humor, Sporting Cartoons, and Animated Cartoons* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 96; by 1920, Goldberg's annual income was $185,000. See also P. C. Marzio, *Rube Goldberg: His Life and Work* (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 94.

have no record of intersection between Goldberg and either Duchamp or Man Ray – plus the fact that this cartoon does not appear in the Goldberg archives – has led to some quiet speculation by Goldberg authority Maynard Frank Wolfe and Francis Naumann that it is not authentic.[70] If the drawing is a forgery, then why have our editors gone to this trouble? Could it be that the association with Goldberg (who is credited in a typed byline, not a signature) evoked commercial art and profitable circulation through established networks of mass culture? Whether we believe this to be an autograph work or not, the attribution to Goldberg, coupled with the image itself, mocks the sort of international Dada franchise lurking within Tzara's *Dadaglobe* plans.

Adjacent to this cartoon, in an echo of reports about Dada events in Paris, *New York Dada* chronicled an evening which was most definitely untrue. The "pug-debs" (abbreviated from pugilistic debutantes) Joseph Stella and Marsden Hartley were to be introduced to society as part of the "grand socking cotillion." In this coming-out party at Madison Square Garden, "everybody who is who will be who-er than ever" as the men, wearing boxing gloves, jeweled slippers, and silk tights, would climb into a "Renaissance period [ring] with natural wood splinters" as "flocks of butterflies would be released from their cages." In its spectacle and hyperbole, the text mocks and defangs the kind of Dada evenings which were increasingly receiving attention in the American press.

Goldberg was earning more than $1000 a week in 1915; the following year he married the daughter of the owner of the White Rose supermarket chain. See Stephen Becker, *Comic Art in America: A Social History of the Funnies, the Political Cartoons, Magazine Humor, Sporting Cartoons, and Animated Cartoons* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 96; by 1920, Goldberg's annual income was $185,000. See also P. C. Marzio, *Rube Goldberg: His Life and Work* (New York, Harper & Row, 1973), 94.

[70] In conversation, Francis Naumann has suggested that this cartoon might not have been the work of Goldberg, but rather a forgery of the artist's recognizable style, based on his discussions with the leading authority on Goldberg, Maynard Frank Wolfe. Intriguingly, Wolfe only referred briefly to the cartoon, stating "Boob McNutt frame (right) was exhibited (but not by Rube) at the landmark show of the Dada artists in the United States in 1921. Such Dada legends as Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Man Ray also shared Rube's interest in technology and satire." In *Rube Goldberg: Inventions!* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 33. My thanks to Francis Naumann for sharing this insight with me.

On the front page, the label New York Dada is repeated over and over, chanting the name ad infinitum. The red ink sears into the page, creating a sense of brand identity – New York Dada is literally being branded. Against this field is centered the picture of New York Dada's spokesmodel, Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy. Of the many ways to analyze this assisted readymade as an object and as a persona, in this context it complicates the processes of naming, bringing into question the sort of claim to identity that is so insistently underscored by the repeated words "New York Dada." Furthermore, in assessing this particular depiction of Rrose, she does not appear in a straightforward portrait, but representing a consumer good with her picture pasted on a bottle of perfume. *Belle Haleine: Eau de Voilette* was created by Man Ray and Duchamp in the spring of 1921; its publication on the cover of *New York Dada* was its public debut.[71] The alluring image of Rrose sends up the stereotypical marketing tropes used in cosmetics; Duchamp becomes a mysterious seductress and the face of a brand. But why here? We might consider how, in 1922, the poet Alfred Kremborg would quote Duchamp characterizing Tzara as the "traveling salesman" of Dada, saying "the publicity campaign would stagger the mightiest American drummer. Heinz's 57 Varieties, Smith Brothers' Cough Drops, Carter's Little Liver Pills, the Ingersoll Watch – these and our other countless familiars might learn much from Dada."[72] What Man Ray later called Tzara's "mock authorization," might not have been a joke played on New York, but a parafictional strategy of critique that created a faux-Dada publication with Tzara as the target of its mockery.[73] Positioned alongside blatantly false reports of Dadaesque activities in New York, the public debut of Duchamp's alter-ego creates something that resembles a Dada publication and appears to create a friendly reception for Tzara, only to undermine and expose the hypocrisy of marketing an iconoclastic Dada brand.

[71] Francis Naumann, "Christie's Lot Description: Lot 37/Sale 1209," last modified 25 February 2009, www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5157362, accessed 2 February 2023.
[72] Alfred Kreymborg, "Dada and the Dadas," *Shadowland* 7 (1922).
[73] Man Ray described the essay as such in his autobiography, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 108.

In Tzara's own words, his authorization had warned the reader: "Be on your guard, and realize that a truly dada product is a different thing than a label."[74]

Double Ventriloquism

It was Rrose, not Duchamp, who claimed the copyright for the last project I wish to examine here, the 1922 publication *Some French Moderns Say McBride* **(Fig. 14)**. Published by the Société Anonyme, the book was a compilation of essays written by the critic for the *New York Sun*. The unusual format of the book, printed in increasingly large type and set in an office binder complete with index tabs, was described by Duchamp as "in the fashion of these alphabets in offices in dustproof files."[75] While this structure has been the focus of some scholarly analysis, little has been said about the choice of essays reprinted within.[76] Using McBride's words and crediting Rrose with their arrangement created a double distance from Duchamp that was furthered by the volume's deliberate destabilization of authorial voice.

The text began by reprinting an essay on Cézanne, in which McBride had originally reviewed Vollard's text on the artist and analyzed the hostile reaction to such innovation. Printed in very small type, the Cézanne review fills nearly two pages with text that requires close-up reading. This was followed by a review of Matisse that expounds the impossibility of explaining art. "When a picture can be explained, it's already en route for the garret."[77] That theme sur-

[74] Tristan Tzara, "Authorization," *New York Dada*: n.p.
[75] Marcel Duchamp to Henry McBride, undated letter. Papers of Henry McBride, Yale Collection of American Literature, New Haven. Francis Naumann estimates the letter was written in June 2022 in *New York Dada*, 229.
[76] The project is included in Ann Temkin, Marcel Duchamp, and Rrose Sélavy, "Of or By," *Grand Street* 58 (Autumn 1996) which studied the dual authorship of works by Duchamp and Sélavy. It is also discussed in Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–1923*, also briefly discusses the project and quotes Marcel Duchamp, letter to Henry McBride. The letter is undated but Naumann estimates it to June 1922; see Henry McBride papers, Archives of American Art.
[77] Henry McBride, "Matisse" in Marcel Duchamp, *Some French Moderns Say McBride* (New York: Société Anonyme, Inc., 1922), n.p.

faces throughout the project, as Duchamp reprints moments of McBride's reticence or uncertainty. Reviews of Rodin and Cubism pointed to the evolutionary nature of taste, arguing that "the public for 'modern art' grows every day." This sets up a central question – how does one form an independent appreciation for art and what is the role of the art critic in that development?

The next passage, an essay on Gauguin's letters, appears in slightly larger type. McBride's undated account of a missed appointment with Picasso was printed in an even larger font, which continued to grow in size as he recounted an exchange over Picabia's work. Speaking with a young gallery assistant, McBride defended Picabia's work as "daring" to use the shapes of the modern world.[79] When the young man quickly acquiesced, McBride concluded: "He had yielded to my opinion precisely as he had previously yielded to the arguments of his unprogressive family. It really is one of the most difficult things in the world to induce people to think for themselves on the subject of art." Rather than feeling accomplished in converting another appreciator of modern art, McBride laments his assistant's susceptibility, allowing his own views to be reshaped by allegedly-informed, outside opinions. The following essay on Van Gogh, which was printed even larger, positioned the artist as a "stumbling block, even to those who in the snobbish wish to be up to date swallow any strange dish that is set before them."[80] Essays on Redon and Marie Laurencin continued to grow even larger, the text eventually becoming so large that it becomes difficult to follow the train of thought. The final essay, which discussed the dressmaking of Poiret, was printed so large that not even three words can be printed on any single line **(Fig. 15)**. The essay rises to a typographical crescendo as it explains that one must "acquit Paul Poiret of any deliberate intention to acquire oceans of free advertisement" from the interested mass media, before immediately returning to the original, miniscule type to conclude with the dangers of such overexposure.

[78] Henry McBride, "Rodin," in idem.
[79] Henry McBride, "Picabia," in idem.
[80] Henry McBride, "Van Gogh," in idem.

Duchamp was solely responsible for the selection of the specific reviews to be reprinted and their arrangement, using McBride's words to repeatedly emphasize the difficulties of discussing art. Throughout the anthology, the critic continually undermines his own authority. For example, on Dufy's paintings at the Carroll Gardens, he wrote: "Aren't they charming? And do you know why? I don't. That is, I know why, but I'm not going to tell. … But I mustn't help you. You must learn to think for yourselves."[81]

Assembled from text originally published in the mainstream media (but not written by him), Duchamp blurs the lines of authorship and authority. The format, which combines these printed excerpts in the manner of an indexed scrapbook, claims a generic reportorial distance that belies the careful arrangement of its components. As he had done in ventriloquizing and manipulating the genres of press interviews, guidebooks and exhibition catalogues, advertising, and Dada little magazines, Duchamp assumed the structure and language of legitimate publications only to interrogate and ultimately dismantle their conventions and authorial position. The strategy depended on Duchamp's ability to create plausible substitutions while embedding clues that could point the reader to identify the duplicity and insincerity. Removing himself from these projects, he created a distance that complicated our attempts to decipher their meanings. The public trust in the validity of the printed page was perfectly suited for his strategies of confusion and misdirection. These publications did not fulfill their implied intentions but were performative pieces of art injected into non-artistic discourses. They operated in the parafictional liminal space between real work and the work of art.

[81] Henry McBride, "In the Museum: Dufy, Signac, Cross, Segonzac, Gleizes, Villon, Duchamps [sic]," in idem.

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Editor
Kerstin Krautwig, Kornelia Röder
Duchamp Research Center, Schwerin

Text
Sarah Archino

Editing
Kerstin Krautwig

Copyediting English
Gegensatz Translation Collective,
Tabea Magyar, Claire Schmartz

Graphic Design
Johanna Neuburger, www.logografisch.de

Staatliche Schlösser, Gärten und Kunstsammlungen Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Duchamp Forschungszentrum
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