

Daimler Art Collection

Symposium “Duchamp as Curator”

A Symposium presented by the Daimler Art Collection
Curated by Renate Wiehager and Katharina Neuburger

April 25 / 26, 2017
Daimler Contemporary Berlin

Participants

Akiko Bernhöft, Berlin
Eva Fabbris, Milan
Elena Filipovic, Basel
Susanne M. I. Kaufmann, Stuttgart
Eva-Christina Kraus, Nuremberg
Katharina Neuburger, Muenster
Kornelia Röder / Gerhard Graulich, Schwerin
Gesine Tosin, Berlin
Renate Wiehager, Stuttgart/Berlin
Sandro Zanetti, Zurich

April 25, 2017

5:00 pm

Renate Wiehager, Head of Daimler Art Collection, Stuttgart/Berlin and Katharina Neuburger

Welcome and introduction to the program

6:00 pm

Artist Talk with Bethan Huws

For the current exhibition *On the Subject of the Ready-Made* at Daimler Contemporary Berlin, Bethan Huws has devised a location-specific project, selecting examples of artwork from the Daimler Art Collection. Bethan Huws' curatorial concept starts with Duchamp's praxis of combinatorial thinking, the inherent logic and the analytical wealth of allusions found in Duchamp's conceptual approach. She represents these aspects through the visual neighborhood of artworks from one hundred years of art history, surprisingly juxtaposed so that they provide a commentary on one another. The exhibition's title is a play-on-words on the famous dictum of Lautréamont: “As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella” (1874), which became a defining slogan of the Surrealists, and also anticipated the ready-made in linguistic form.

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6:30 – 7:00 pm

Break

7:00 pm

Elena Filipovic

“I Myself Will Exhibit Nothing”

About few things had Duchamp been so defiant, so seemingly categorical. “I myself will exhibit nothing, in accordance with my principles,” he wrote to his friend and most dedicated collector, Walter Arensberg, in 1918. At issue was whether or not the artist would show any of his own work in the Cubist exhibition that he was attempting to organize in Buenos Aires during his short stay there. In the end, the exhibition never materialized, but Duchamp’s “principles” remained in effect; directing Arensberg from afar, he instructed the collector not to loan any of his work for other exhibitions being planned in New York at the time. Later, in a 1925 letter to another one of his patrons, Jacques Doucet, Duchamp declared, “All exhibitions of painting or sculpture make me ill. And I’d rather not be involved in them.” Again he sent orders not to lend one of his pieces—a copper and metal motorized contraption titled *Rotative Demi-Sphere* (1924) then in the hands of Doucet—if requested for exhibition, because, as the artist explained, he didn’t want people to see in it “anything other than ‘optics’.” Which is to say, he didn’t want anyone to get his or her own ideas about what category of object it was. A thing’s location and mode of display, its placement in the context “of painting and sculpture,” his reticence suggested, has consequences. After all, people might just take anything shown in an exhibition to be a work “of art.” Despite his seemingly unequivocal declaration of “principles,” Duchamp went on to be actively involved in many shows, not only as an exhibiting artist but, perhaps more surprisingly, as advisor, quasi-dealer, and, very often, curator. Indeed, in various ways over the course of more than half a century, Duchamp would make the exhibition a vital component of his thinking about the work of art as such. Drawing on research recently published in *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp*, and taking a journey from Duchamp’s New York studio ca. 1917 to his final secret studio from the 1960s, and through a number of exhibitions he staged in between, this lecture will trace how the artist’s orchestration of displays in his studio informed his thinking about the exhibitions he staged outside of it. These, in turn, open up a new and different way of understanding the twentieth century’s most influential artist.

April 26, 2017

9:30 am

Renate Wiehager, Katharina Neuburger

Welcome

10:00 am

Akiko Bernhöft

“Time and Again Duchamp Knocks at the Door”

Duchamp’s Reception by John Cage and Michael Asher

“The effect for me of Duchamp’s work was to so change my way of seeing that I became in my way a Duchamp unto myself,” wrote John Cage. Like Cage, many artists

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in the 1960s felt significantly influenced by Marcel Duchamp. The talk will trace the meaning of Duchamp for the following generation of artists, exemplified by John Cage and Michael Asher. Both in Duchamp's and Cage's work not only the conscious introduction of the principle of chance plays a central role in artistic processes, but both artists also consider the found object (Duchamp) and the found sound (Cage) to be material. Michael Asher in turn comes from found situations, to shift, change or reverse institutional facts. The ready-made's discourse is significantly extended when pre-givenness turns into signifying and the line between art and non-art is further on put to the test.

11:15 am

Eva Fabbris

"The first time an artist subsumed an entire gallery in a single gesture."

Brian O'Doherty Reads Marcel Duchamp and His Surrealist Shows in Inside the White Cube and in His Other Multifaceted Activities

The versatile Brian O'Doherty – artist, critic, novelist and director of visual and media arts for the National Endowment for the Arts – is the author of the volume *Inside the White Cube*, which features four seminal articles originally published in *Artforum*. In *Context as Content*, published in November 1976, O'Doherty considers Marcel Duchamp's intervention at the 1938 Surrealist show (coal sacks hanging from the ceiling) through the critical point of view of inversion: the artist kept for himself an architectural space usually not used, upsetting the logic and physics of positioning a heavy element on the ceiling instead of on the floor. The act of upsetting the up and down of the gallery has then a symbolic, linguistic and structural value: working on space means assuming the space as an action field in its wholeness. "This inversion is the first time an artist subsumed an entire gallery in a single gesture." This text – together with other activities and homages paid by O'Doherty to Duchamp that will be examined in this talk – demonstrates a primary consciousness of what we now define as Duchamp's 'curatorial practice.'

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12:30 pm

Eva Kraus

André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, and Friedrich Kiesler in Correlation: The Surrealist Exhibition of 1947

When Marcel Duchamp and André Breton curated the Surrealist exhibition at the Paris Galerie Maeght in 1947, the subject of 'Mythe nouveau' was created; and they invited Friedrich Kiesler to transform their conceptual ideas into spatial installations. The exhibition's course was set up resembling a ceremonial path, meant to portray the stages of an initiation ceremony. The cycle of the tests to be surmounted in the face of prevalent superstitions began in the *Salle de superstition*. It was raining in the *Salle de pluie* – where exculpation was executed. Reincarnation occurred in the labyrinthine sanctuary, at a sacrificial site (*Le Dédale*). Duchamp's curatorial interventions and Kiesler's correalistic displays in relation with the narrative of the thematic rooms outdid in complexity even the much discussed exhibition strategies of the famous Surrealist exhibitions of 1938 and 1942.

———LUNCH BREAK

3:00 pm

Gesine Tosin

"Dearest Richard..."

Richard Hamilton und Marcel Duchamp

At the end of the 1940s, Richard Hamilton came across a *Boîte verte (Green Box)* – this moment marked the beginning of his life-long relationship with Marcel Duchamp and his work. When, in 1956, Hamilton began his work on the typographic English version of the notes from the *Green Box*, an intensive exchange between the two artists developed that continued even after the publication of the *Green Box* in 1960. Acting as curator for the Tate Gallery's Duchamp retrospective, Hamilton reconstructed the *Large Glass*. Hamilton's involvement with Duchamp did not only influence his own work. Indeed, the many texts he wrote on Duchamp have also had an effect on the understanding of the latter's work to this day. With his typographic version of the *Green Box*, his texts and, last but not least, his curation of the retrospective, Hamilton brought Duchamp's oeuvre to the world. A process, described by Duchamp as 'transubstantiation,' that was part of the 'creative act.'

4:15 pm

Katharina Neuburger

The First and the Second Museum of Modern Art

After Alfred H. Barr became the first director of New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1929, he adopted the exhibition concept that Katherine S. Dreier, Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp had invented at the beginning of 1920s when they founded the *Société Anonyme, Inc.: Museum of Modern Art*. In the American tradition of 'transparency' and with an openness towards potentially allowing the representation of *any* contemporary artist, these two institutions operated for a short time on the thin line between freedom and arbitrariness. Barr's exhibitions soon returned to the horizon of the

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established European modernism – his museum thus became one of historical positions. Dreier and Duchamp, on the other hand, insisted on the renunciation of any kind of restrictive movement. Thus, in the context of the *Société Anonyme*, Duchamp was able to freely develop a new form of contemporary art practice: Here, he acted as chief curator of unclassifiable art, as the *arbiter* of a radically chaotic collection, and as a genuinely contemporary artist.

5:30 pm

Sandro Zanetti

The Art of Indifference

Duchamp's Staging of Script

Already with the launch of the first ready-mades, it became clear that Duchamp understood curatorial practice as an integral part of his activities. 'Indifference' is a key term in this context. Understood literally, the term first of all means to do away with one's own aesthetic pleasure regarding objects. However, 'indifference' can also denote the various elements of artistic practice as 'without difference,' *equally valid*. 'Indifference' can furthermore be understood as a matter of moving in the in-between of things which differ from one another; that is, to not take one or another position but, rather, to work on several aspects at once. This basic attitude is key to Duchamp's curatorial practice. In the talk, it will be analyzed what roles language and especially writing play in this practice of 'indifference.'

6:45 pm

Susanne M. I. Kaufmann

The Marcel Duchamp Inventory and the Serge Stauffer Archive of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

In the context of a research project, the Marcel Duchamp inventory of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart will be scholarly processed and made accessible to the public for the first time. A comprehensive exhibition and accompanying publication is planned for 2018. The collection belongs to one of the largest and most important in the German-speaking area and includes, along with the legendary *Bottlerack*, numerous objects, drawings, graphic prints and editions, amongst them the window-object *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* and the drawing *Tamis grandeur définitive. Sieves, or Parasols*, designed by Duchamp as a study for the *Large Glass*. The holdings are supplemented by a unique archive compiled by Duchamp's companion and translator Serge Stauffer. Along with a comprehensive library, it contains source and image materials, amongst them Stauffer's compiled German translation of the artist's 'posthumous notes.' Essential to the project is the close scholarly exchange with various national and international archives and collections. The research project is supported by the Volkswagen Foundation.

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19:15 pm

Kornelia Röder und Gerhard Graulich

Duchamp-Forschungszentrum, Schwerin

In 1995 the Staatliche Museum Schwerin / Ludwigslust / Güstrow realigned its collecting activities with the acquisition of 90 works by Marcel Duchamp. The Duchamp complex served as an impetus for the formation of a collection of contemporary art. To intensify research further, in 2009 the Duchamp Research Centre was founded. To support scholarly newcomers, the Friends of the Staatliches Museum Schwerin e.V. have provided an international Duchamp research stipend. The Duchamp Research Centre edits two publication series: *Poiesis*, with contributions from renowned Duchamp experts, and *Lecture notes*, in which the research of the scholarship holders is published. In 2018, in the context of the 50th anniversary of Marcel Duchamp's death, the Staatliche Museum Schwerin will host the exhibition *Renaissance of the Modern: Duchamp, Leonardo, Beuys*, curated by the two directors of Schwerin's Duchamp Research Centre, Dr. Gerhard Graulich and Dr. Kornelia Röder.

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