

Duchamp Past and Present

Dear Reader,

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Figure 1

Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918

(The overall design of *Tout-Fait* is based on the above, Duchamp's last painting.)

For some reason, this issue is big on interviews. In our News-section, Robert Barnes, an acquaintance of Duchamp's from the 1950s, talks about him for the first time, describing his own involvement with the production of Duchamp's major work, *Étant Donnés* (1946-1966). In our Interviews-section, André Gervais unearths "Two Nuggets from the Spanish Days" while Thomas Hirschhorn, winner of the Prix Marcel Duchamp 2000, refers to Duchamp as the "most intelligent artist of his century." Sarah Skinner Kilborne translated two recently published French interviews (from 1960 and 1965) into English and Columbia undergrad Lauren Wilcox spoke to Sanford Biggers – a participant in the upcoming Whitney Biennial – about his 1999 performance "Duchamp in the Congo (Suburban Invasion)."

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Figure 2 / Figure 3

Marcel Duchamp, *Given: 1 The Waterfall* / 2.

The Illuminating Gas, 1946-1966 (outside view)

Marcel Duchamp, *Given: 1 The Waterfall* /

2. *The Illuminating Gas*, 1946-1966

(inside view)

This, of course, is just the beginning. All in all, our readers may find about three dozen contributions of interest, including Bradley Bailey's close look at Duchamp's early drawing *Encore à cet Astre*; Stephen Jay Gould's *Duchamp and September 11th*; a facsimile edition of Matta's and Katherine Dreier's brief study of Duchamp's *Glass* (1944); Glenn Harvey's take on Duchamp and Saussure; and Rhonda Roland Shearer's latest observations on the an-artist's chess poster design of 1925.

During a discussion at a recent Duchamp symposium at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, Germany, the question was raised whether Duchamp still mattered today and why it was that one should even bother to study both him and his works. Apart, of course, from Duchamp being crucial to *Tout-Fait's* *raison d'être*, one cannot help but notice that the overall recognition and appreciation of him seems to be doing very well – and is, in fact thriving among young artists, art historians, critics and pop stars alike. Just a few examples:

In the Winter issue of *Bookforum*, Barry Schwabsky, reviewing the paperback edition of Arturo Schwarz's *Complete Works*

catalogue (New York: Delano Greenidge, 1999) is of the opinion that "Duchamp's work is so deeply encoded in the fabric of contemporary art that I'm tempted to keep this book not with other art monographs, but on the ready-reference shelf next to Roget, Bartlett, and Merriam-Webster: Duchamp is to a great extent, our vocabulary." ("Coffee Table: Barry Schwabsky and Andy Grundberg on Art and Photography," Bookforum 8. 2 (Winter 2001), 42)

Bjork, the Icelandic Queen of Pop (and Matthew Barney's new lover), did not fail to mention Duchamp in a recent interview evolving around Vespertine, her new album. Proclaiming him a genius, she is mostly in awe of *Étant Donnés*: "And then he created an artwork, when he was already very old, when everyone thought he'd already be over with, and this artwork changed completely the 20th century." (Thomas Venter, "Der Look Passiert Nicht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 August 2001 [my translation])

Reviewing last year's Turner Prize – which, expectedly, went to a horrendously lame installation by Martin Creed Work No. 227: the light going on and off – Anna Somers Cocks, editor of the London-based *The Art Newspaper*, refers to Marcel Duchamp as "the patron saint" of most of the Young British Artists, scolding them, however, for not really heeding his advice. ("The Turner Prize: As Exciting as hearing old jokes retold," in: *The Art Newspaper*, January 2002, 21)

Back in the States, the promising young video-artist Paul Pfeiffer – recent recipient of the prestigious Buxbaum award – described his appreciation of Duchamp thus: "Somewhere I read a statement by Duchamp to the effect that his art was intended as a destroyer, specifically of identity. I find that really inspiring. Putting a mustache on Mona Lisa makes a pretty basic point about the fluidity of identity and the depths to which gender, race and nationality are encoded into vision. I'm interested in multiple meanings and a kind of ambiguity that frustrates any attempt to pin it down." (Linda Yablonsky,

"Making Microart that can Suggest Macrotruths," in: The New York Times, 9 December 2001, 39)

And here's what's new on the exhibition front: Beginning in March 2002, the Museum Tinguely in Basel will open its doors to the biggest Duchamp retrospective (curator: Harald Szeemann) since the 1993 Palazzo Grassi show in Venice, including a symposium organized by Basel University. And starting on February 6th, the Metropolitan Museum will be hosting Surrealism: Desire Unbound, a major show coming straight from London's Tate Modern, while another exhaustive exhibition on the same movement is scheduled by the Centre George Pompidou, Paris, for later this year. Coinciding with the publication of this issue of *Tout-Fait*, the Williams College Museum of Art is launching But is it Real? – a show running from January 26 through September 22, 2002 – exploring notions of authenticity in modern art.

Finally, the upcoming 90th Annual Conference of the College Art Association in Philadelphia (February 20-23, 2002) will devote two sessions to Duchamp: The Studio Art Open Session ("Fluxus and Duchamp") as well as the Art History Open Session ("Ready-Mades: From Duchamp to Consumer Culture").

Tout-Fait is a free and not-for-profit website and has been newly redesigned for our reader's convenience by ASRL's programming advisor Soojin Kim. With more than 100,000 visitors and a readership spanning the globe, with daily inquiries and questions coming in from university professors in Serbia, artists in Australia or public school teachers in South Africa, we're happy to be of help wherever we can.

Enjoy browsing, stay a while and spread the word.

Thomas Girst
Editor-in-Chief

PS: Since September 11th, the Art Science Research Laboratory

has been active working closely with WTC recovery workers at Ground Zero and Fresh Kills, establishing a warehouse and coordinating the shipment of much needed items on a daily basis. If you are in New York and would like to volunteer or otherwise support the cause, please visit our website at www.wtcgroundzerorelief.org.

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Figs. 1-3

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