Rarity from 1944: A Facsimile of *Duchamp's Glass*

click to enlarge



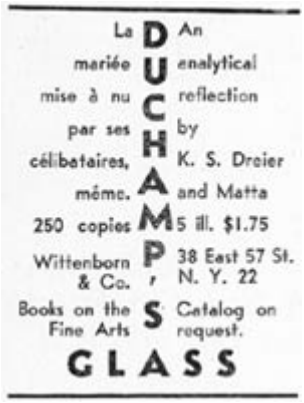
Figure 1
Marcel Duchamp,front
cover for *View*

Introduction

by Thomas Girst

On the last page of Charles Henri Ford's *View* (Fig.1) magazine of March 1945 (vol. 5, no. 1), an issue entirely dedicated to Marcel Duchamp, who designed both the front and the back cover, the attentive reader may come across an advertisement (Fig.2) placed left of Duchamp's famous double portrait (Fig.3) showing the an-artist at both 35 and the then imaginary age of 85.

click images to enlarge







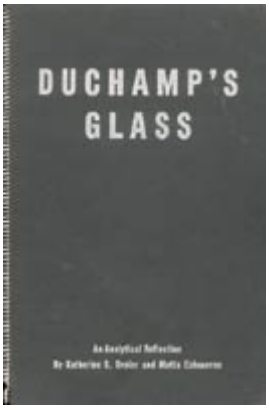


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Advertisment in *View* magazine, vol. 5, no. 1 (March 1945), p. 54 (detail)

Marcel Duchamp at the age of 35 and 85, in *View*, p. 54 (detail)

- Front cover for *Duchamp's Glass, La Marieé mise à nu par ses célibataires,*
  même: An Analytical Reflection, 1944

The small ad draws attention to the then recently published book by both the rich art patron and collector Katherine S. Dreier as well as the Chilean-born Surrealist painter Roberto Matta Echaurren: *Duchamp's Glass, La Marieé mise à nu par ses célibataires, même: An Analytical Reflection*. (Fig.4) The slim ring-bound volume distributed by Wittenborn and Company, was published in May 1944, in an edition of only 250 copies, by the Société Anonyme, Inc. / Museum of Modern Art, New York.

click to enlarge



Figure 5
Marcel Duchamp, Front cover for *Minotaure,* ser. 2, no. 6 (December 1934)



Figure 6

Marcel Duchamp,
The Bride Stripped
Bare by Her Bachelors,
Even,1915-23

Besides André Breton's essay "Phare de la Mariée" (or "Lighthouse of the Bride"), first published in French in an issue of *Minotaure*(Fig.5) in December 1934 (Paris; ser. 2, no. 6, Winter 1935, cover design: Marcel Duchamp), Dreier's and Matta's writing is only the second text and the very first monograph to discuss Duchamp's major work, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, *Even* (1915-1923) (Fig.6) at length and the very first one to appear in English on the subject matter. Breton's essay appeared in book form not until 1945, within a revised and enlarged edition of *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*(New York: Brentano's), a collection of his theoretical writings on painting. An English version did not appear until that same year, within aforementioned issue of *View* magazine and most likely translated by Charles Henri Ford himself.

Unlike Breton at the time he first wrote his essay, mostly working from an early exhibition photograph (taken when the *Large Glass* was first shown at the Brooklyn Museum's International *Exhibition of Modern Art Assembled by the Société Anonyme*, New York, November 19, 1926 – January 1, 1927; the only time it was exhibited without the cracks) as well as Duchamp's notes on his *Glass* published in the *Green Box*, (Fig.7) both Matta and Dreier had the opportunity to study the *Large Glass* in the original. Owned by Katherine Dreier and located at her home in West Redding, Connecticut, it was shipped there after its exhibition in early 1927 when it shattered into hundreds of pieces during the transport. It was repaired by Duchamp only about ten years later when he leaves Paris for New York during trip to the US in 1936. (Fig.8) The repaired *Glass* remains in Dreier's living room until 1944 until it is brought to her house in Milford.

Connecticut, where it is placed before a window between April 1946 to January 1953. In July 1957, under the supervision of Duchamp, it is permanently installed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art where it remains to this day.

click images to enlarge

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- Figure 7
- Figure 8
- Figure 9

- Marcel Duchamp, Front cover of the *Green Box* [deluxe edition],1934

- Photograph of Katherine Dreier and Duchamp at her home in West Redding, Connecticut,1936
- Marcel Duchamp, *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*, 1912

Together with Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, Katherine S. Dreier (1877-1952), herself an artist, had founded the Société Anonyme, the first museum in America devoted to modern art, a subject on which she frequently wrote. Matta (*1911) came to New York in 1939 and after stumbling upon a reproduction of Duchamp's *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* (Fig.9) became infatuated with the older artist who soon thought of Matta to be "the most profound painter of his generation."

The second paragraph of *Duchamp's Glass* reads in full: "The essential principles of human consciousness cannot be grasped until we abandon the psychological attitude of conceiving the image as a petrified thing or object; the result of emphasizing the external vision, which is rarely related to perception. *The image is not a thing. It is an act which must be completed by the spectator* [my italics]. In order to be fully conscious of the phenomenon which the image describes, we ourselves must first of all fulfill the act of dynamic perception." Here in this pamphlet, the only known collaboration between Dreier and Matta, a crucial concept of Duchamp is introduced for the very first time. Only years later, in April 1957, the artist himself would elaborate further on the importance of the onlooker during his well-known "The Creative Act," a brief talk given to the American Federation of Arts Convention in Houston. Within it, he states "the two poles of the creation of art: the artist on one hand, and on the other the spectator who later becomes the posterity." He concludes that "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."

In this context, it is interesting to note that in 1926, during the *Large Glass*'s exhibition in Brooklyn, the Surrealist dealer Julien Levy had apparently noted Duchamp's later dictum of the fusion of artist and spectator on a mere physical level, remarking upon his initial encounter with this major work: "When I first saw the large glass […] I was fascinated, not merely by the work itself,

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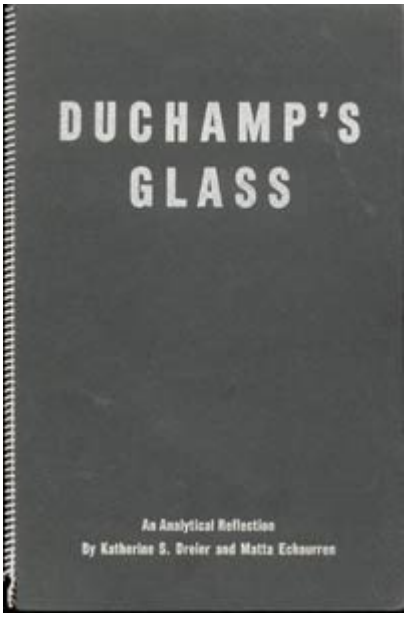


Figure 10
Roberto Matta Echaurren, *The Bachelors Twenty Years After*, 1943

but by the numerous transformations which were lent the composition by its accidental background, by the spectators who passed through the museum behind the glass I was regarding." (Julian Levy, "Duchampiana," in: *View* V, 1 (March 1945), pp. 33-34, p. 34)

Besides three photographs of the *Large Glass,* a black and white reproduction of Matta's 1943 paining *The Bachelors Twenty Years After* (Fig.10) is also included in the 16 page volume, directly incorporating the cracks within. So without further ado, feel free to browse through a scanned version of the scarce original:

Click to browse through



Figs. 1, 3, 5-7, 9

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