

Snoop-Snoop Fate

This project begins an investigation of Marcel Duchamp and his relationship to the Woolworth building as a readymade.

click to enlarge

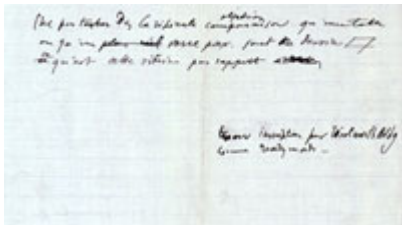


Figure 1
Marcel Duchamp,
a note from
À l'Infinitif, 1916/1967

Asked to create a project for our residency at the Woolworth building, we began to research Duchamp's relationship to the building. We found only a note (Fig. 1) referring to the Woolworth building as a possible readymade. As we continued to explore the meaning of the note, we discovered *Tout-Fait* online and contacted Rhonda Shearer. Our initial conversation with her, about what a ready-made is or could be, was so intriguing that we interviewed her to learn about her relationship to Duchamp research and what led her to her current thinking on the origin of the ready-made. The discussion led us down a rabbit hole of excitement and wonder as we explored and began to assimilate more of Duchamp's thinking, culminating in a four-part exhibition at the Woolworth building, riffing on Duchamp and the building.

Part One

We made a video (Fig. 2) in which we asked 52 artists to send us two seconds of tape. Then, using a random method, we edited together those 52 two-second pieces. For the audio track we

used Rhonda Shearer's voice from the interview we conducted. As an experimental piece, it is very successful because the audio and images are not in synch, yet the viewer moves between the two, trying to make an illustrative sequence or connection when in fact it is all random.

Part Two

click to enlarge



Figure 3
Elena Bajo

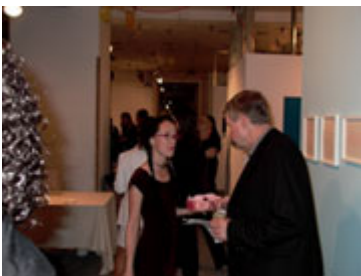


Figure 4
Jillian McDonald



Figure 5
Performance by Elena
Bajo and Jillian McDonald,
Snoop-Snoop
Fate (2004)

On one evening we hired four performance artists, including

Elena Bajo (Fig. 3) and Jillian McDonald (Fig. 4), to create prankish performances, but we also were being prankish with them. These performers were not to be identified. The task of their performance was to alter their behavior so as to present themselves as someone slightly different than who they perceive themselves to be. The result is a nearly invisible performance that encourages everyone to question what is authentic in the gestures of person-to-person communication.

Of course this proved to be impossible, so we had to work with each person to create a performance uncharacteristic of himself or herself. For example,

a transvestite performer decided to perform in a suit, as a straight man. As he performed, it was so emotionally difficult for him that after a short time he angrily left. Another artist decided his performance would be to yawn in people's faces even though he normally likes to chat people up. This performance was also too difficult for him; failing, he too left early. The two women performers did succeed (Fig. 5). One artist (Jillian McDonald) who normally gave props away to her audience—kept them instead. She walked around with a tray of chocolates talking to people and when they reached for one, she would say, "No, I'm not sharing," eliciting reactions of surprise and sometimes horror. The other woman (Elena Bajo) came disguised as a wealthy dealer and found artists, trying to schmooze her, talking in ways she's never heard!

Part Three and Four

The first two parts, the videotape and the performers, illustrate concepts related to Duchamp's work. The second two parts are the diagrams of four-dimensional space, a hanging sculpture of hyper cube titled *Terra Studiy #1* by Rhonda Roland Shearer, three watercolors on the wall (Fig. 6), and a website (Tout-Fait) for further reading. In part, this project reflects the role of math in the history of art. The diagrams and watercolors illustrate a favorite notion of Duchamp, that

he hated “retinal art” and preferred the “non-retinal beauty of grey matter.” On the wall are three watercolors by Praxis (retinal) as well as a simple explanation of a four-dimensional object that can only be seen in the mind’s eye (non-retinal). An installation view can be seen in this short video. (Fig. 7)

click to see video



- Figure 6
- Figure 7
- Installation view. Praxis, *Watercolors*, 2004(on the wall); Rhonda Roland Shearer, *Terra Study #1*, 1990(hanging sculpture)
- Video clip of the installation view,*Snoop-Snoop Fate* (2004)

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