

The *Trashures* Project

The pieces in my *Trashures* Project series are created and then “abandoned” in public places like parks, street corners, and vacant lots. I photo-document each piece, both immediately and long

after it is abandoned, and post a detailed web page showing the pieces and their interactions with passersby. Often, fate collaborates with me:

the pieces have been left untouched for days, relocated, destroyed, and even “collected” by random individuals. I began the project in May, 2002, and have abandoned 26 pieces since then.

The *Trashures* are an experiment in the contextual placement of art objects in the everyday world. The project aims to bring aesthetic experience out of the socially codified and emotionally neutralized spaces of galleries, museums, and public art spaces. The *Trashures* realize Art as an experience that is directly presented to anyone and everyone who walks by. The pieces are intended to confound passersby as to their meaning and possible purpose. Each person who passes must choose between trash and treasure, meaning and nothingness. The *Trashures* aim to make people stop for a moment and re-address existence. They seek a re-mystification of life, one person at a time.

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Figure 1
Photograph of Duchamp
before the chess board,
by Catala Roca, 1968



Figure 2
Marcel Duchamp,
Fountain, 1917/64

I began the *Trashesures* as an attempt to find alternatives to the standard modes of artistic exhibition. I have always been frustrated by the manner in which Art is presented: as a luxury item, elite intellectual fodder, or a historic relic. I first began leaving artworks in the world as an absurdist gesture. Then, I realized that their interaction with people was interesting and perhaps profound. Although I continue to pursue standard modes of exhibition for my work, the *Trashesures* as become a continuous side-project. Internet pages from the series have been featured on a number of websites, and even reviewed on an art criticism site. I feel that if I were able to increase the scope and magnitude of this project,

its overall cultural effects would grow exponentially.

For me the *Trashesures* is an attempt to take the Duchampian "Readymades aided"—and invert the final destination and the cultural expectation of assemblages, by returning these found object back into the larger cultural ocean of the everyday world. I see the *Trashesures* as an attempt to extrapolate the found object assemblage beyond the safe confines of the gallery or art space. I feel that the mere act of removing the filter of "Art" context creates an experience more in the spirit of Duchamp's "Gnosticism".

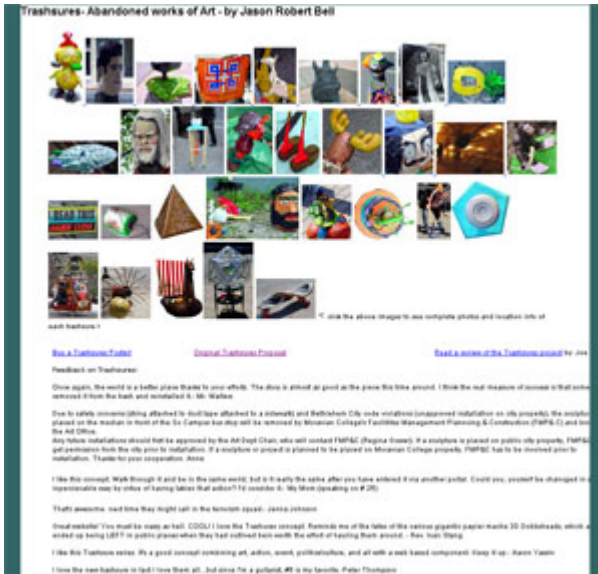
Conceptual Art has become a coda of style removed from its original goals of breaking down the scrim between art and life, matter and thought. Duchamp's work has always represented an "end" in itself to me, as opposed to a "means", something that makes the very practice of art making absurd.

For too long I would see him with a smirk on his face sitting in that big blue chair smoking his cigar with his Max Ernst Chess set in the foreground (**Fig. 1**), basically saying "it's your move, kid" not

just to me but to all artist. For me the goal is to move outside of aesthetics, meaning, and content, to produce works that are beyond understanding, the place of these object outside of the art space, often times just a few meters from a gallery, forces people to engage with them, the double take, the stopped moment of confusion.

The *Trashesures* are the bastard grandchildren of the *Fountain* (**Fig. 2**), they are "Art", but instead of being tasteful set in a 'White cube,' they are 'Abandoned' left to fend for themselves, in a world where everything has become "collectable", where junk is outlaw. At its most base application the *Trashesures* are "pranks", the joke is on any one that walks by. So here is my move, Duchamp teaches us to question everything, including questioning everything, Duchamp taught me that the artist is the serpent in the Garden.

click images to enlarge



Jason Robert Bell, *Trashures* Project Web Site, 2002~

Jason Robert Bell
<http://www.tetragrammatron.com>

Figs. 1, 2

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