The Up-Side-Down Evidence for the Non-Determination of the Morphology of the *Draft Pistons*

Dear Tout-Fait,

click to enlarge

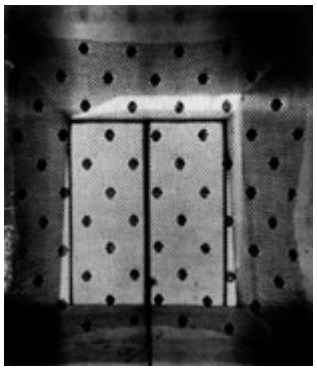


Figure 1
Marcel Duchamp,signed
version of *Draft Pistons*, 1914

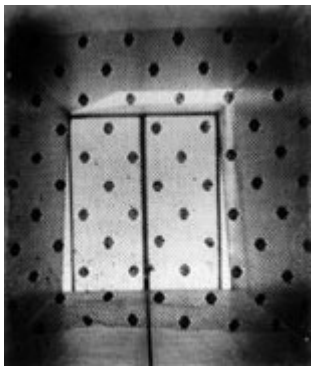


Figure 2
Marcel Duchamp,
unsigned version of
Draft Pistons, 1914

With regard to the two extant *Draft Piston* photographs which are supposed to determine the shapes of the three openings in the Milky Way, it seems to me that Duchamp’s signature and

dating of one of these photographs has authorized a certain orientation which has been accepted too uncritically.

For a long time there was, I thought, something a bit peculiar about these two photographic prints (the way they were always reproduced). They didn't read correctly. More visible in some reproductions than in others can be seen two spindly hooks attached to the gauze or netting. But – as reproduced – these hooks are at the base of the photographs.

Also, the lighting in the photographs didn't seem to be right. If, as Duchamp later recalled, these photographs were made at an open window (perhaps in May 1915 on the top floor of 23, Rue St. Hippolyte?), then the shadows and the way the natural light falls are all wrong – but not if you turn the photographs upside-down. I believe Duchamp signed and dated one of these photographs upside-down with intent, perhaps inferring that the signature doesn't necessarily orientate the work – or rather, can perhaps authorize (as in authorizations of the *Bride*) a certain dis-orientation (Discuss!).

Incidentally, as 23 Rue St. Hippolyte was still under construction when Duchamp moved there in 1913, I don't think it would be too far-fetched to presume that the enclosure directing the currents of air – within which the netting or gauze appears to be hung – is a section of ventilation or central-heating duct [see also: Linda Dalrymple Henderson,Duchamp in Context, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)].

Yours in an-artism,

Glenn Harvey
15 The Green
Mistley
Manningtree
Essex CO11 1EU
UK

Figs. 1, 2
©2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris. All rights reserved.