

The Wicked and Unfaithful Song Of Marcel Duchamp To His Queen

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Figure 1
Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride
Stripped Bare by Her
Bachelors, Even*, 1915-23

A weighted soul who believed in the purity and vitality of poetry, the poet Paul Carroll inherited from Dada and Surrealism an undisguised passion and iconoclasm. "The Wicked and Unfaithful Song of Marcel Duchamp to His Queen" of 1961 seems to resonate with a consequential reading of postmodern thought—"meaning" is literally a mere perception residing in the human mind ... perhaps nothing more, and the presence of Duchamp's posthumously revealed

Given: 1. *The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas* (1946-66), by musing on "Death" as "the only good joke." In 1979, composer John Austin conducted a vocal piece based on the very same poem. *Tout-Fait* is delighted to present the juxtaposition of text, sound, and visual images

in order to induce an enchanted experience of various dimensions in simultaneity.

– Compiled by Ya Ling Chen

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Figure 2
Marcel Duchamp, *Dust Breeding*, 1920,
from the *Green Box* of 1934



Figure 3
Marcel Duchamp, *Cemetery of Uniforms
and Liveries, No. 2*, 1914



Figure 4
Photograph of Duchamp's studio,
1916-17



Figure 5
Photograph of
Duchamp's *Unhappy Readymade* (1919) taken
by Jean Grotti or Suzanne Duchamp Grotti, 1920

A trifle pompously, your move, my love, among the mass of nerve-tissues in my cranium; and as you move you have become the last of my inconsequential ironies. At best, chess too just a question of pure chance. Films of dust girdle your body: for once

I shift you on the chess board, sweet, you will become a solution for which there never was a problem: that old itch for order which we like to hint exists in what we do. And yet, that blueprint I fashioned once for the motions of the body ended nicely in a cemetery

of empty uniforms: priest and bus-boy, butler, gendarme, undertaker, horseman—jointless. Art? A form of intimate hygiene for the ghosts we really are. More work, those wolftraps for the intellect (one must always work, sweet, to contradict one's taste)—the hanger tack-

ed upright to the floor; that urinal I signed: R. Mutt; and that geometry textbook I tied to dangle in diagonal at a corner of my porch until, buffeted by raw winds, bleached by sun & sleet, it got the facts of life; or those glass discs twirling on the phonograph

to tease the ear and eye. How predictable poor Picabia became!

And such a fool to bitch all day and thrash about and sob how slovenly God goes about his job. I'll let you sit, sweet, and move the Rook instead. Why not? Death is the only good joke.



A drawing by John Austin (1979)

The Wicked and Unfaithful Song Of Marcel Duchamp To His Queen(1979)

Composer:

John Austin

Performers:

Diane Ragains, Soprano

Robert Morgan, Oboe/English

Horn Michael Gamburg, Bassoon

NOTE: THE TEXT AND MUSIC OF "THE WICKED AND UNFAITHFUL SONG OF MARCEL DUCHAMP TO HIS QUEEN" ARE UNDER COPYRIGHT; DOWNLOADING OF THIS PERFORMANCE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

* *Special*

thanks to Maryrose Carroll and Luke Carroll for authorizing Tout-Fait to publish this poem.

Figs.1-5

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