

The **Dada** movement began in Zurich, in neutral Switzerland, during the First World War and developed from 1916 to the 1920s. It can be seen as a reaction by artists to what they saw as the unprecedented horror and folly of the war. They felt it called into question every aspect, including its art, of the society capable of starting and then prolonging it. Their aim was to destroy traditional values in art and to create a new art to replace the old. As the artist Hans Arp later wrote: 'Revolted by the butchery of the 1914 World War we in Zurich devoted ourselves to the arts. While the guns rumbled in the distance, we sang, painted, made collages and wrote poems with all our might.' The founder of Dada was a writer, Hugo Ball. In 1916 he started a satirical night-club in Zurich, the Cabaret Voltaire, and a magazine which, wrote Ball, 'will bear the name 'Dada'. Dada, Dada, Dada, Dada.' This was the first of many Dada publications. Dada became an international movement and eventually formed the basis of Surrealism in Paris after the war. Leading artists associated with it include Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters. Duchamp's questioning of the fundamentals of Western art had a profound subsequent influence.

**Ready Made** is an everyday object selected and designated as art; the name was coined by the French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). Marcel Duchamp created the first ready-made, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), which consisted of a wheel mounted on a stool, as a protest against the excessive importance attached to works of art. This work was technically a "ready-made assisted," because the artist intervened by combining two objects. Duchamp subsequently made "pure ready-mades," each of which consisted of a single item, such as *Bottle Rack* (1914), and the best-known ready-made, the porcelain urinal entitled *Fountain* (1917). By selecting mass-produced, commonplace objects, Duchamp attempted to destroy the notion of the uniqueness of the art object. The result was a new, controversial definition of art as an intellectual rather than a material process.

The ready-made continued to be an influential concept in Western art for much of the 20th century. It provided a major basis for the Pop art movement of the 1950s and '60s, which took as its subject matter commonplace objects from popular culture. The intellectual emphasis of ready-mades also influenced the conceptual art movement that emerged in the 1960s, which considers the artist's idea more important than the final product.

A ready-made artwork might act in different ways according to the intention of the artist. However its impact on the beholder is related to the subversion of the common perception of an object through its mere displacement or display strategy. A tool that is presented in an empty white room loses its original function and becomes something else out of its context of use, that might become uncanny or just reveal the appeal of its mere formal qualities. Because of this ability to extract an object from its context and present it somewhere else, photography might be compared to ready-made practice.

## Marcel Duchamp

### "A propos of 'Readymades'"

In 1913 I had the happy idea to fasten a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool and watch it turn.

A few months later I bought a cheap reproduction of a winter evening landscape, which I called "Pharmacy" after adding two small dots, one red and one yellow, in the horizon.

In New York in 1915 I bought at a hardware store a snow shovel on which I wrote "In advance of the broken arm."

It was around that time that the word "Readymade" came to my mind to designate this form of manifestation. A point that I want very much to establish is that the choice of these "Readymades" was never dictated by aesthetic delectation.

The choice was based on a reaction of *visual* indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste ... in fact a complete anaesthesia.

One important characteristic was the short sentence which I occasionally inscribed on the "Readymade."

That sentence instead of describing the object like a title was meant to carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions more verbal.

Sometimes I would add a graphic detail of presentation which, in order to satisfy my craving for alliterations, would be called "Readymade aided."

At another time, wanting to expose the basic antinomy between art and "Readymades," I imagined a "Reciprocal Readymade": use a Rembrandt as an ironing board!

I realized very soon the danger of repeating indiscriminately this form of expression and decided to limit the production of "Readymades" to a small number yearly. I was aware at that time, that for the spectator even more for the artist, *art is a habit forming drug* and I wanted to protect my "Readymades" against such a *contamination*.

Another aspect of the "Readymade" is its lack of uniqueness... the replica of the "Readymade" delivering the same message, in fact nearly every one of the "Readymades" existing today is not an original in the conventional sense.

A final remark to this egomaniac's discourse:

Since the tubes of paint used by an artist are manufactured and readymade products we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are "Readymades aided" and also works of assemblage.

*Written by Marcel Duchamp in 1961*