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JUERG ALBRECHT

## Duchamp's *Fountain*: branding (as) art

### The history of a ready-made and its artistic aftermath

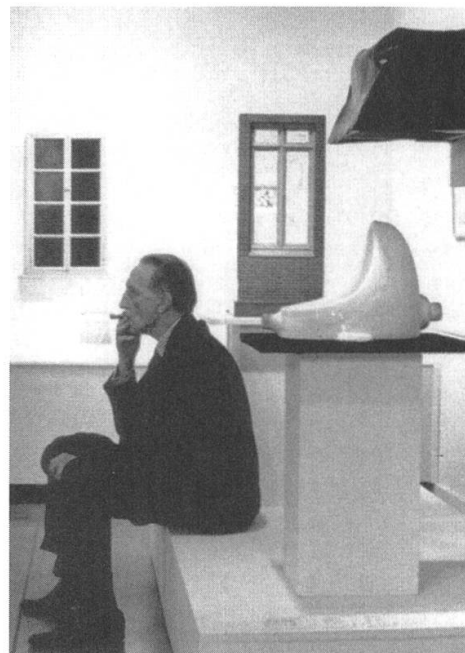
*A point which I want very much to establish is that the choice of these 'ready-mades' was never dictated by esthetic delectation. This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste...in fact a complete anesthesia. [...] Another aspect of the 'ready-made' is its lack of uniqueness...the replica of a 'ready-made' delivering the same message; in fact nearly every one of the 'ready-mades' existing today is not an original in the conventional sense.*

Marcel Duchamp, 1961<sup>1</sup>

#### Preliminary remarks

With his ready-mades, particularly *Fountain*, Duchamp probably made one of the most important contributions to the art of the twentieth century. This assessment scarcely needed the confirmation provided by a survey of 500 selected experts conducted in the run-up to the 2004 Turner Prize to determine the most important work of the twentieth century: *Fountain* was the undisputed number one choice – ahead of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*. The third to fifth places were occupied by Warhol's *Marilyn*, Picasso's *Guernica* and Matisse's *Red Studio*.<sup>2</sup>

In Duchamp's case, 'branding' goes far beyond creating a distinctive personal style – after all, with his 'invention' he succeeded in establishing a new genre that was to prove to have extremely far-reaching consequences and will remain indissolubly linked with his name in the history of art. This is not so much to do with the work of art itself, neither with its content nor its form, nor with the manifold sentiments that it may provoke in the beholder. Duchamp's significance (in artistic terms) is conceptual and (in art-historical terms) in the context of the history of criticism. The ready-made triggered a spate of commentaries from art critics and art theorists, who – conflicting as they may be – agree that Duchamp, through his very act, allowed artists and theorists to question the very validity of an entire truckload of accepted terms – original, creative act, signature, aura, etc. It is easy to see that this



1 Marcel Duchamp at his first museum exhibition, Pasadena Art Museum, 1963

has led to the expansion of the field of art and given rise to a plethora of more or less meaningful new terms since Dada and Surrealism, ranging from Pop and Concept Art, from Fluxus to Land Art and the Appropriation Art of the 1980s and 1990s, and will conquer further territories in our still young century – although perhaps no longer exclusively with reference to Duchamp.

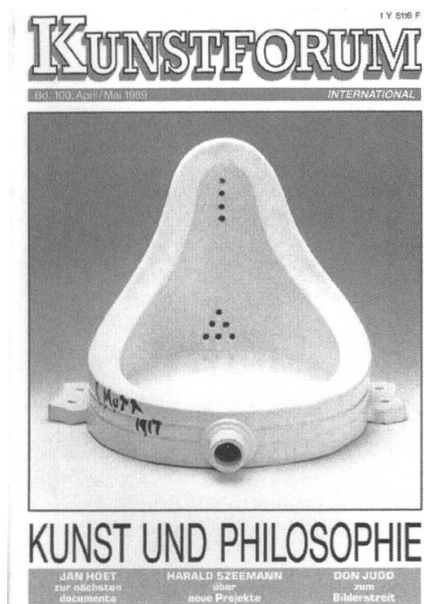
Literature on Duchamp has grown exponentially on both sides of the Atlantic since the 1960s, so much so that not even specialists can keep track of it; for this reason, only a few more recent titles of the many hundreds in existence will be mentioned here: Tomkins's classic biography,<sup>3</sup> Daniels's thoroughly researched history of criticism,<sup>4</sup> Naumann's meticulous study of the replicas,<sup>5</sup> Bonk's exemplary inventory of the *Boîte-en-valise*,<sup>6</sup> Camfield's monographic studies on *Fountain*,<sup>7</sup> Gough-Cooper's and Caumont's monumental chronological survey<sup>8</sup> as well as Naumann's and Obalk's edition of the artist's letters,<sup>9</sup> and Shipe's bibliography;<sup>10</sup> otherwise, one can stick to the 'classics': Sanouillet, Lebel, Cabanne, Schwarz, Clair, Stauffer, Zaunschirm and others; a visit to the *Tout-Fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* website is also to be highly recommended.<sup>11</sup>

The claim that a ready-made can only be provocative (as a work of art) when the banal, mass-produced everyday item (e.g. a bottle dryer) is displayed as a 'unique' *objet d'art* in an artistic context – in a gallery or a museum – may sound paradoxical. However, at least as far as the history of criticism is concerned, it is an indispensable prerequisite for the connotations it evokes. Indeed, it does raise the tricky question – dryly formulated by Naumann<sup>12</sup> – of whether or not only the specific example of a mass product selected and presented by Duchamp in a museum should be recognized as a work of art (or at least as a ready-made) – be it due to a conscious decision on the part of the artist, or to the suddenly apparent 'beauty' of the object is a matter of conjecture – or whether all the umpteen thousand identical copies that the artist left behind at the warehouse should also be considered works of art from the point at which they are exhibited as such.<sup>13</sup>

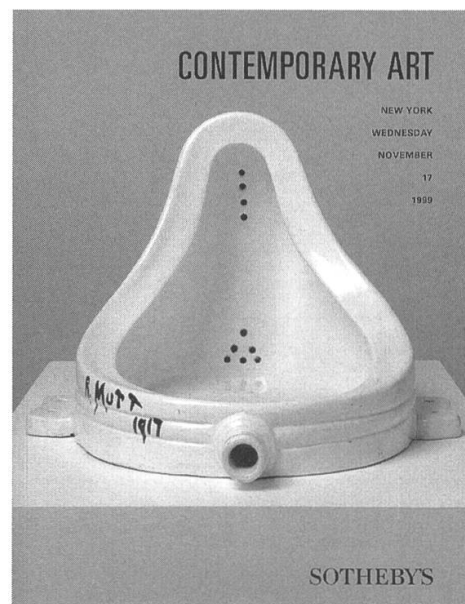
Yet it is precisely this aspect that makes it an interesting phenomenon: Duchamp initially considered his early ready-mades merely as personal gimmicks and did not exhibit them in public; only an extremely small circle of friends were in the know. Only decades later did the art world – in the more restricted sense of the clique of artists close to Duchamp and initiated art critics – learn of Duchamp's revolutionary act(ion)s and gradually make the wider public aware of them. Yet the following question remains justified: '[...] it is all the same true that we have now only the photograph of the one he originally picked, while the original is lost. So what exactly do we have? A mere copy of an act, we might think, and reasonably so.'<sup>14</sup>

In recent years, the New York artist and Duchamp expert Rhonda R. Shearer has more or less conclusively 'proven' in several essays that Duchamp's ready-mades are by no means mass products stumbled upon by the artist, but especially produced, ingenious simulations.<sup>15</sup> Just as Duchamp would have wished, a symposium conducted in 1999 by Harvard University was also unable to clarify matters. We must therefore agree with Thomas Zaunschirm: 'Any statements regarding the original ready-mades are like shadow-boxing. Researchers will have to learn to accept that the idea that was central to the art of the twentieth century, without which object art would have been inconceivable, may have been fictitious. [...] Duchamp was not so much a Dadaist bent on provocation, but a (belatedly) calculating strategist whose works were of no significance for his own time. [...] The virtual nature of his achievements remains one of the most enthralling chapters in the annals of the twentieth century, not least because his theory that it is the observers who make a work of art has proven to be impressively true.'<sup>16</sup>

Taking *Fountain*, Duchamp's most famous ready-made, as its point of departure, this 'picture story' aims to demonstrate in retrospective terms (2003–1902) the paradox of a non-existent 'original' ready-made, and to document the immense influence of this 'artistic phenomenon', which remains unsettling to this day.



2 Cover of 'Kunstforum',  
no. 100, April/May 1989



3 Cover of a Sotheby's  
auction catalogue, November 1999



### Hoax, satire, irony and deeper significance: a hagiography

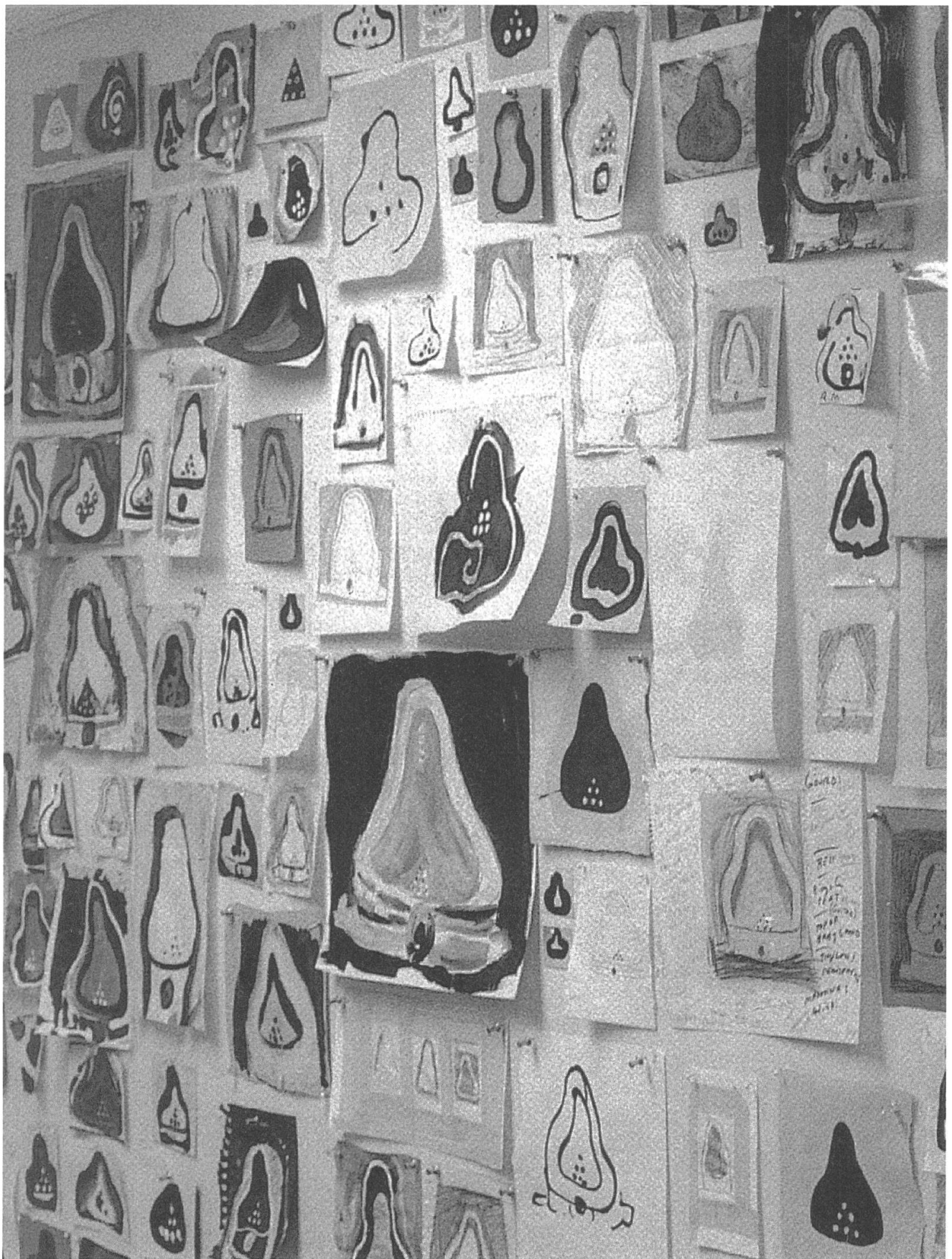


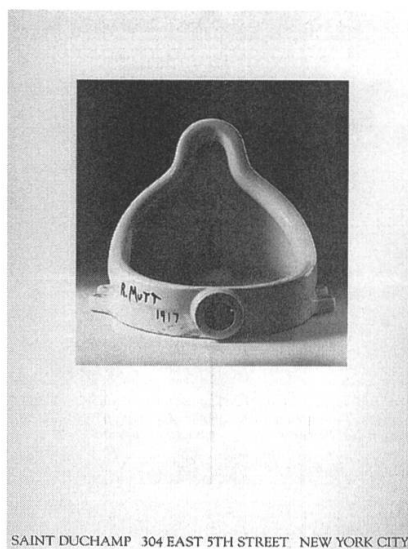
4 Shi Xinning, *Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition in China*, 2000–1, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm, Sigg Collection, Switzerland<sup>18</sup>



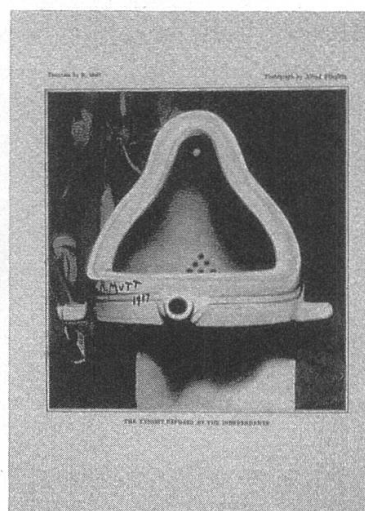
5 John M Armleder, *Don't do it! Ready-mades of the 20th century*, 1997–2000, F.S. (Furniture Sculpture), different materials, dimensions variable, DaimlerChrysler Collection, Stuttgart<sup>19</sup>

6 Mike Bidlo, *The Fountain Drawings*, 1993–8, approximately 3,500 drawings on different types of paper in various techniques, formats from approx. 9 x 13 cm to approx. 70 x 100 cm. East Village cellar studio view, Spring 1997<sup>20</sup>





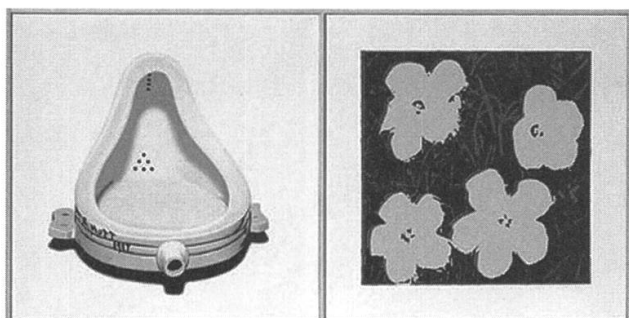
7 Mike Bidlo, *Saint Duchamp*, 1997, exhibition poster<sup>21</sup>



8 Richard Pettibone, *Refused by Independents*, 1995, oil on canvas, 30.5 x 25.4 cm, Jedermann Collection

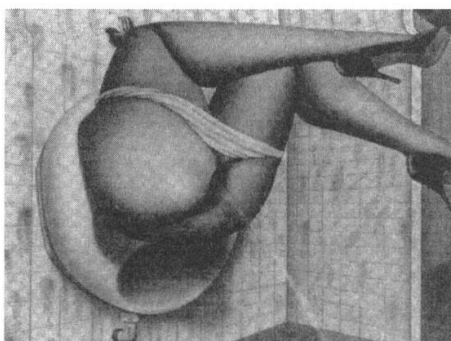
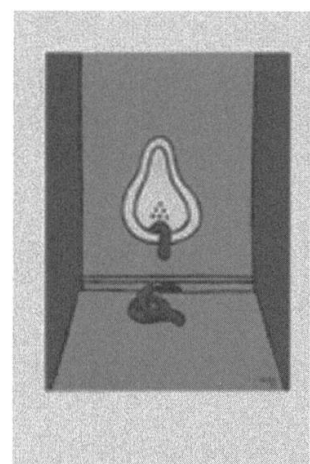


9 Lea Lublin, *Le corps amer (à-mère), l'objet perdu de M. D.*, 1995, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris<sup>22</sup>



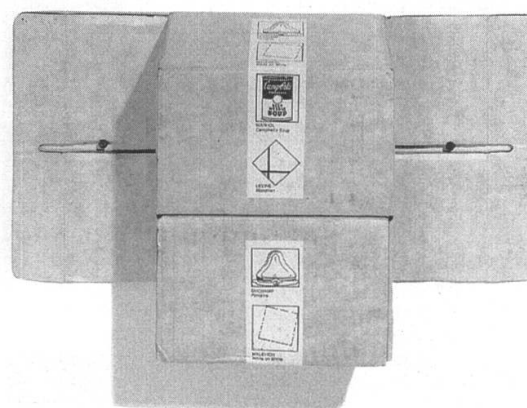
10 Richard Pettibone, *Marcel Duchamp, 'Fountain' 1964 and Andy Warhol, 'Flowers' 1964*, 2003, oil on canvas, 21,1 x 41,6 cm, courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

11 Otto Muehl, *Marcel's Nachlass*, 1994, silkscreen print, 21.6 x 15.6 cm, edition for 'Texte zur Kunst', no. 14, edition of 100 numbered copies<sup>23</sup>

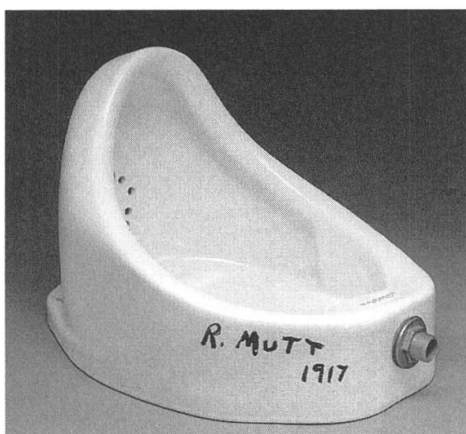


12 Yoshifumi Hayashi, *[Untitled]*, ca. 1984, pencil, dimensions and location unknown

13 Peter Nagy, *Suicide Objectified*, 1986 (first version 1983), paper photocopy mounted on cardboard box found by the artist, 23.8 x 18.4 x 11.4 cm, private collection<sup>24</sup>



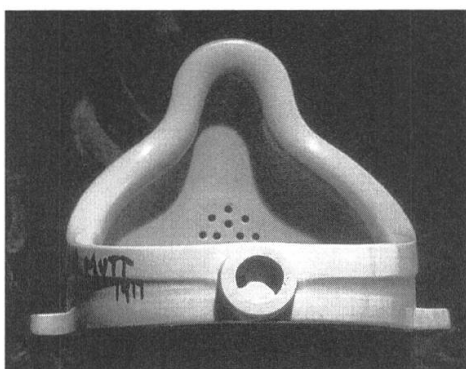




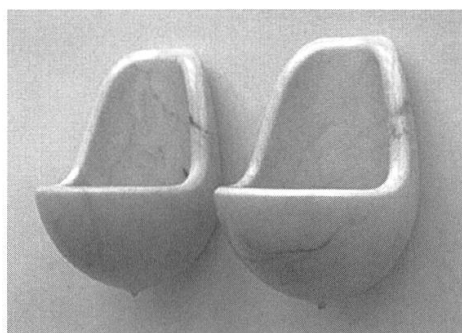
14 Mike Bidlo, *Not Duchamp (Fountain, 1917)*, 1986, porcelain, 34 x 33 x 54 cm<sup>25</sup>



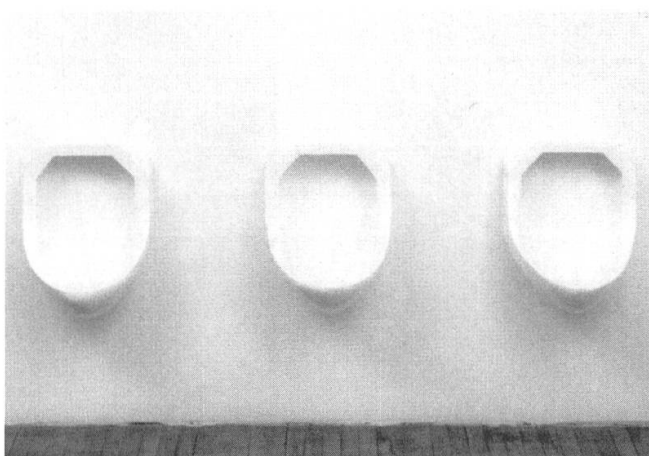
15 Sherrie Levine, *Fountain (after Duchamp)*, 1991, bronze, 48.2 x 40.6 x 35.6 cm, six casts<sup>26</sup>



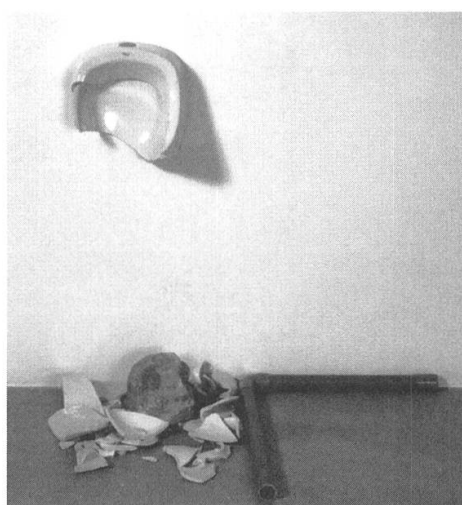
16 Sturtevant, *Duchamp Fountain*, 1973, white porcelain, acrylic paint, 32.3 x 46.5 x 43.6 cm, Jedermann Collection<sup>27</sup>



17 Emiko Kasahara, *Untitled (Double Urinal)*, 1993, marble, water, bleach, 24 x 19 x 19 cm each<sup>28</sup>



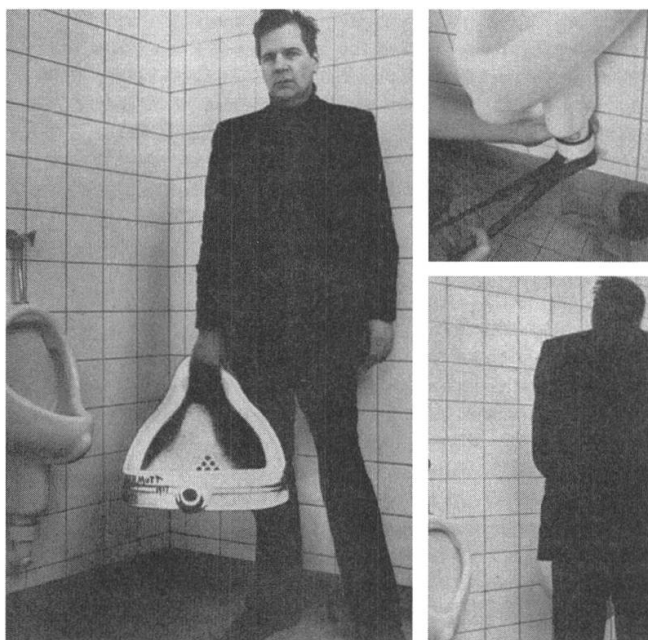
18 Robert Gober, *3 Urinals*, 1988, plaster over wire lath, semi-gloss enamel paint, 55 x 39 x 38 cm each, private collection, New York



19 Jimmie Durham, *Homage to David Hammons*, 1996, mixed media, Karel Hooft Collection



20 Jean-Jacques Lebel, *La vie légendaire de Rose Sélavy*, 1990, from an 'installation hydraulique multimedia'<sup>29</sup>



21 Jochen Hiltmann, *[Re-installation]*, 1979, simulated performance, 'documented' in photographs<sup>30</sup>



22 Hans Haacke, *Baudrichard's Ecstasy*, 1988, mixed media, 114.3 x 137.2 x 35.5 cm, property of the artist<sup>31</sup>



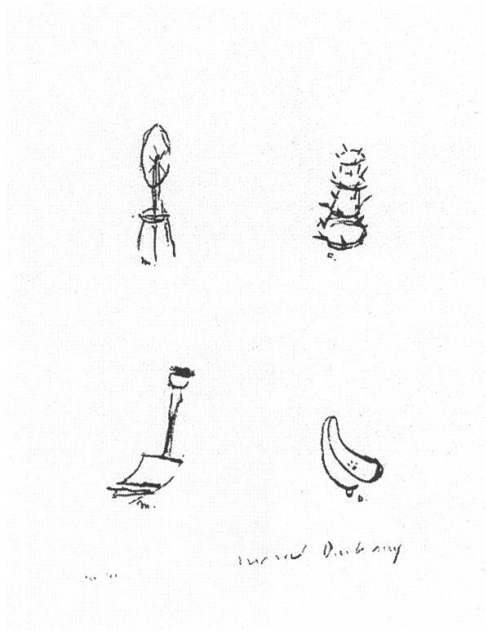
23 Serge Stauffer, *'Niéczyzny – out of order!'* 1984, photograph ('July '84 in the urinals of a public house in Krakow')<sup>32</sup>

## Interlude

*When I discovered ready-mades I thought to discourage aesthetics. In Neo-Dada they have taken my ready-mades and found aesthetic beauty in them. I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal into their faces as a challenge and now they admire them for their aesthetic beauty.*

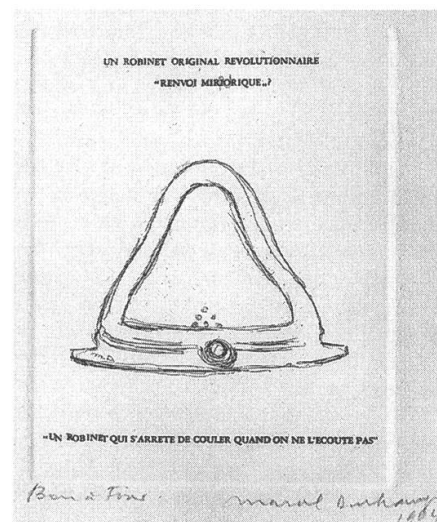
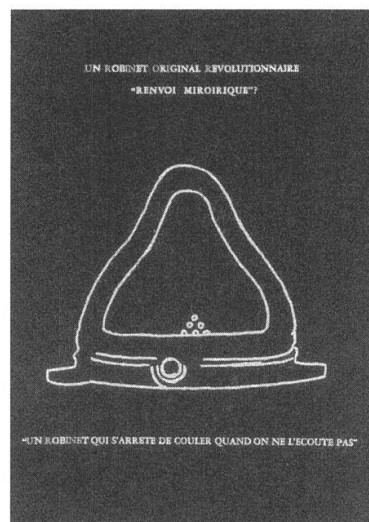
Marcel Duchamp, 1962<sup>32</sup>

## The gradual birth of an icon

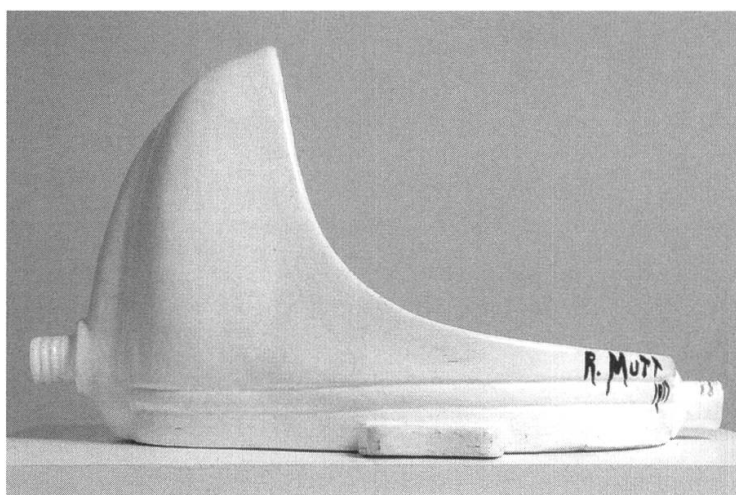
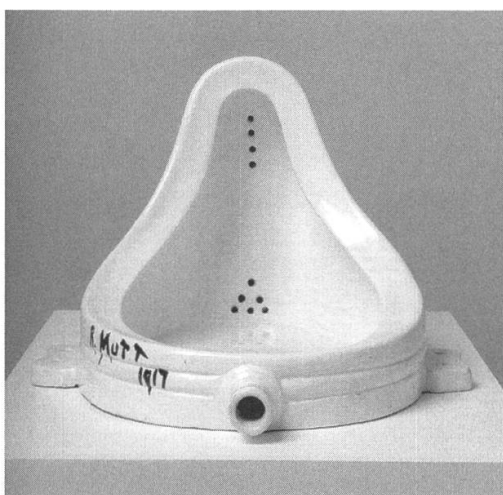


24 Marcel Duchamp, *4 Ready-mades*, 1964, lithography, 33 x 24.8 cm, edition of 100 numbered copies<sup>34</sup>

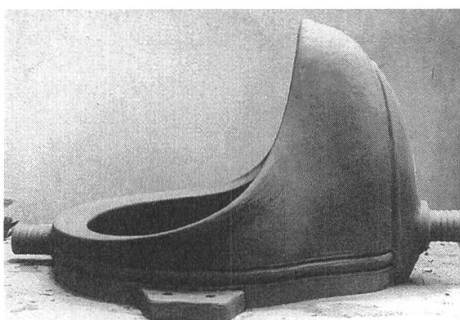
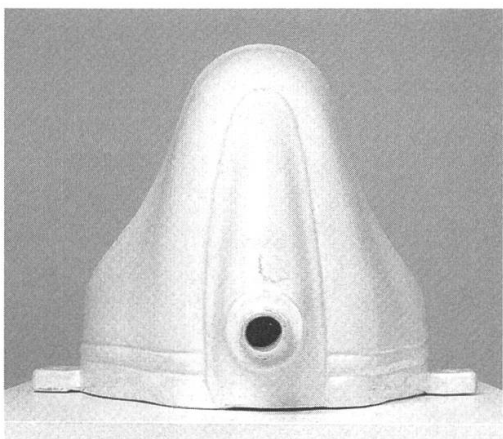
25 *Hommage à Marcel Duchamp. Ready-mades, etc. (1913–1964)*, 1964, embossed cover of the catalogue by Galleria Schwarz, Milan, Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1964<sup>35</sup>



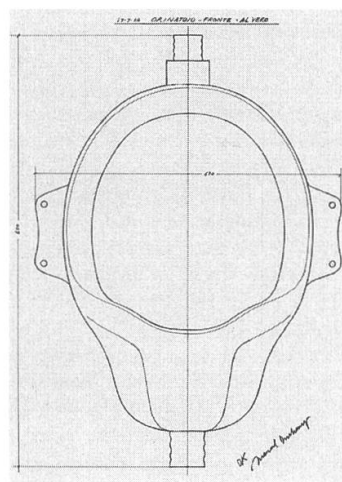
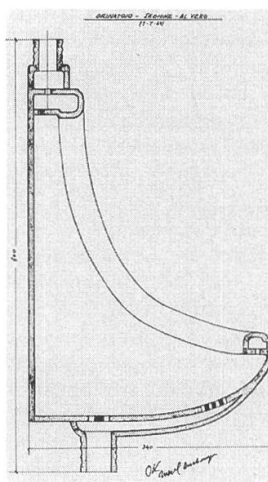
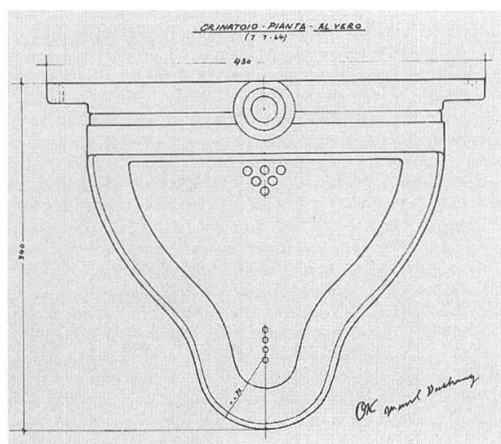
26 Marcel Duchamp, *Renvoi miroirique*, 1964, etching, 26.5 x 19.5 cm, edition of 100 numbered copies<sup>36</sup>



27 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1964, glazed cast ceramic with black paint, 35.6 x 49.1 x 62.6 cm. Inscribed 'R. MUTT 1917'; inscribed 'Marcel Duchamp' and dated '1964', etched in artist's hand 'Marcel Duchamp, 1964, ed. 5/8' and stamped 'FOUNTAIN, 1917, EDITION GALERIE SCHWARZ' on a copper plate affixed to the underside, Dimitri Daskalopoulos Collection, three views<sup>37</sup>



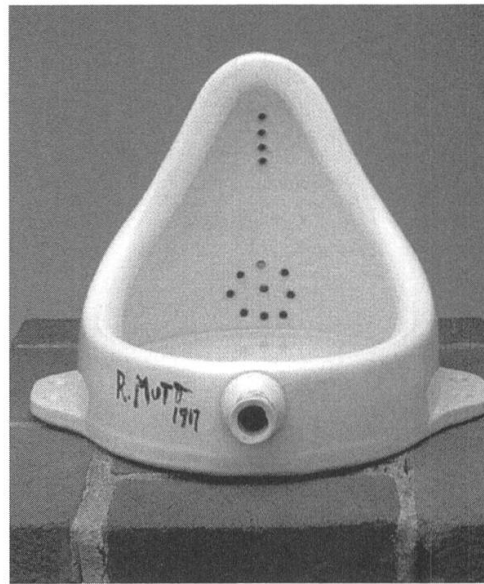
28 Profile view of the terracotta model for the Schwarz edition of *Fountain*, 1964, photograph, 17.5 x 23.5 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art



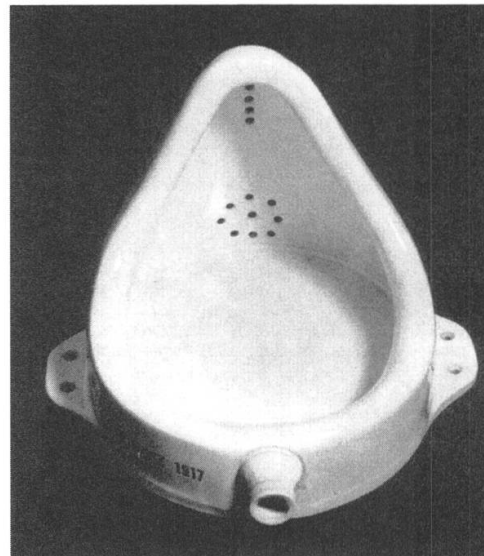
29 Construction drawings for the terracotta model for the Schwarz edition of *Fountain*, 1964, plan: 45.1 x 51.4 cm; front elevation: 68.9 x 52.6 cm; side elevation: 68.9 x 40 cm, BIGI Art Space, Kyoto



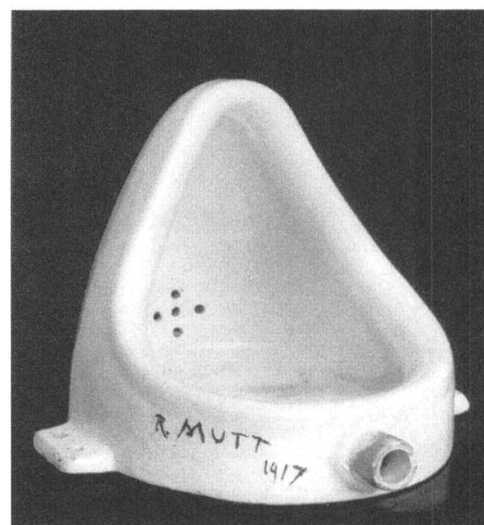
30 Ulf Linde, *Fountain*, 1963/64, replica, 33 x 42 x 52 cm, Moderna Museet, Stockholm<sup>38</sup>



31 Ulf Linde, *Fountain*, 1963, photograph<sup>39</sup>

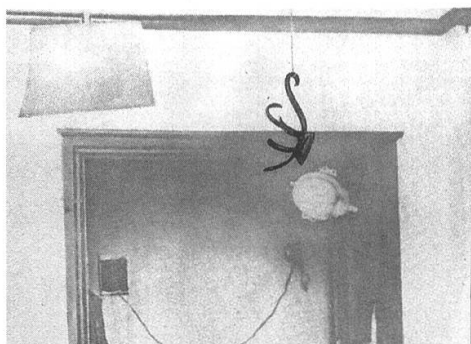


32 Sidney Janis, *Fountain*, 1950, replica, 30.5 x 38 x 45.7 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art<sup>40</sup>

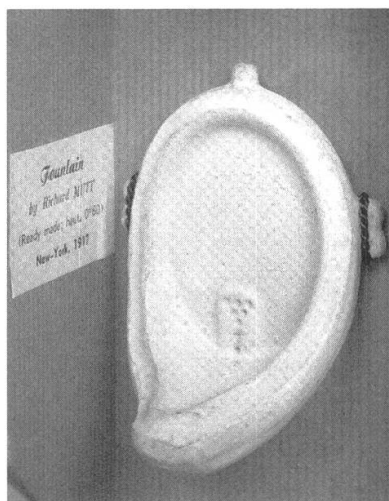




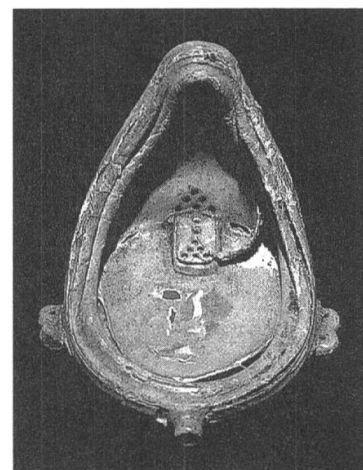
33 Marcel Duchamp, *La Boîte-en-valise*, 1940–68, box in a leather suitcase with 69 miniature reproductions of his most important works, 39 x 35 x 8 cm, edition of 300 copies<sup>41</sup>



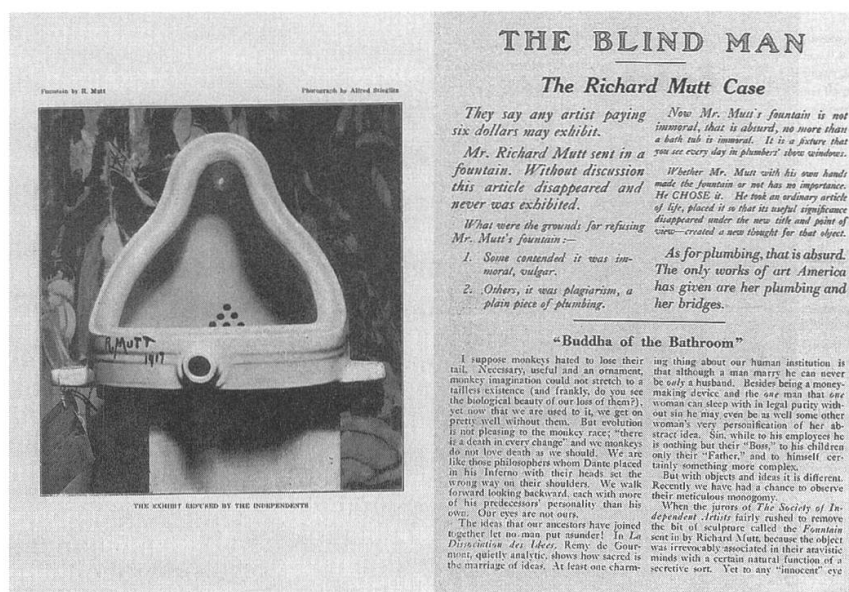
34 Marcel Duchamp, *Ready-made*, 1940, photolithography retouched in watercolour, 11.1 x 14.9 cm, edition of 300 copies<sup>42</sup>



35 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1938–58, ceramic with white porcelain glaze, approx. 7.5 x 5.5 x 4.2 cm, edition of 300 copies<sup>43</sup>



36 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1938, papier mâché, covered with paper, metal parts, varnished, approx. 4.5 x 6 x 8 cm, Tokoro Gallery, Tokyo<sup>44</sup>

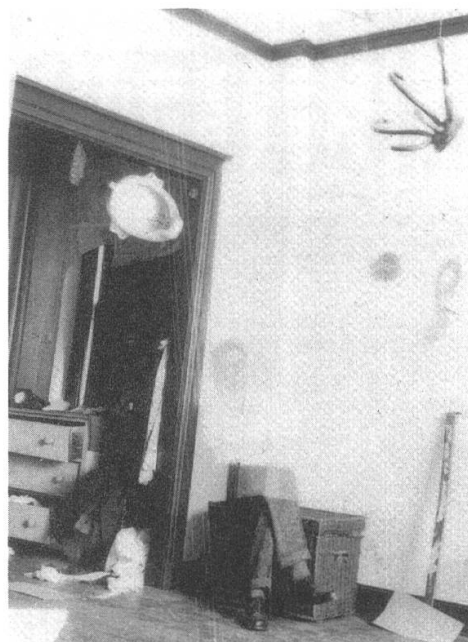


37 *Fountain*, 1917, reproduced in *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, p. 4, 28.1 x 20.5 cm

38 *The Richard Mutt Case*, unsigned editorial commentary, in *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, p. 5, 28.1 x 20.5 cm<sup>45</sup>



39 *Buddha of the Bathroom* by Louise Norton and *For Richard Mutt* by Charles Demuth, in *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, p. 5-6, 28.1 x 20.5 cm



40 Anonymous, *Duchamp in his New York studio*, 33 West 67th Street, c.1917, photograph, 6.2 x 3.8 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art<sup>46</sup>



41 Alfred Stieglitz, *Fountain*, 1917, gelatine silver print, 23.5 x 17.8 cm, private collection, France<sup>47</sup>

### Some remarks on sources

*Can one make works which are not works of 'art'?*

Marcel Duchamp, 1913<sup>48</sup>

Written sources (contemporary documents, later recollections of the artist and his contemporaries) on the pre- and early history of *Fountain* cannot be structured as any one clearly defined 'history', as they are inherently contradictory and/or are open to different interpretations. Furthermore, Duchamp's numerous later pronouncements caused more confusion than enlightenment. The following summary therefore presents what I believe to be the *most plausible* sequence of events; otherwise, I recommend sticking to the (almost) 'self-evident' sequence of pictures.

1. Around 15 January 1916, Duchamp writes in a letter to his sister: 'Here, in N.Y., I bought some objects in the same vein and I treat them as "ready-made". You know English well enough to understand the sense of "ready-made" that I give these objects. I sign them and give them an English inscription.'<sup>49</sup>
2. In April 1916, he shows his work at the 'Exhibition of Modern Art', Bourgeois Galleries, New York, including 'two ready-mades' (cat. no. 50), most probably *Trébuchet* and *Hat Rack*.<sup>50</sup>
3. 9/10 April 1917: Preview and public opening of the first exhibition of the 'American Society of Independent Artists'. Duchamp was a founding member, member of the board of directors and chairman of the hanging committee. The exhibition showed 2,125 works by 1,235 artists.<sup>51</sup>
4. Shortly before the exhibition is due to open, a certain R. Mutt from Philadelphia submits a work of art entitled *Fountain*. It is a urinal rotated by ninety degrees, signed and dated in black paint. Only in the 1960s did Duchamp claim to have bought the object in a New York showroom of J.R. Mott Iron Works: 'Mutt comes from Mott works, the name of a large sanitary equipment manufacturer. But Mott was too close so I altered it to Mutt, after the daily strip cartoon "Mutt and Jeff" which appeared at the time, and with which everyone was familiar. Thus, from the start, there was an interplay of Mutt: a fat little funny man, and Jeff: a tall, thin man... I wanted any old name. And I added Richard [French slang for moneybags]. That's not a bad name for a *pissoitière*. Get it? The opposite of poverty. But not even that much, just R. MUTT.'<sup>52</sup>
5. After a debate, the directors reject the work: in their opinion, the object was not a work of art and moreover was 'indecent'.<sup>53</sup> The decision infringes the articles of association, which state that any artist who has paid the contribution fees (\$1 entry fee and \$5 annual contribution) is entitled to exhibit two works. Duchamp and his

friend, the collector Walter Arensberg, immediately resign from their posts in protest.

6. On 11 April 1917, Duchamp writes in a letter to his sister: 'The Independents opened here with enormous success. A female friend of mine, using a male pseudonym, Richard Mutt, submitted a porcelain urinal as a sculpture. It wasn't at all indecent. No reason to refuse it. The committee decided to refuse to exhibit this thing. I handed in my resignation and it'll be a juicy piece of gossip in New York.'<sup>54</sup> It is highly probable that the 'female friend' was Louise Norton.<sup>55</sup>

7. Before 19 April 1917, Duchamp takes the object to the photographer Alfred Stieglitz's Gallery 291. Stieglitz photographs it against the background of the painting entitled *The Warriors* (1913) by Marsden Hartley, and exhibited it in his gallery for a few days. 'I wonder whether you could manage to drop in at 291 Friday sometime. I have, at the request of Roché, Covert, Miss Wood, Duchamp & Co., photographed the rejected 'Fountain'. You may find the photograph of some use – It will amuse you to see it. – The "Fountain" is here too.'<sup>56</sup> (See figs. 37 and 41).

8. April 1917: Isolated reports are published in the press about the scandal; none of them name Duchamp as the author of *Fountain*.

9. May 1917: *The Blind Man*, no. 2, is published with an unsigned editorial entitled 'The Richard Mutt Case' (see fig. 38 and note 45) and the text 'Buddha of the Bathroom' by Louise Norton, which highlights the formal qualities of the 'sculpture': 'How pleasant is its chaste simplicity of line and color!' (See figs. 37 and 41).

10. The original, which Arensberg (perhaps) acquired, must have been lost or destroyed shortly afterwards.

11. Only few people will have seen the original, either before the opening of the Independent exhibition or in Stieglitz's gallery.

12. The (meagre) publicity enjoyed by the work is thus restricted to the reproduction and the reports in *The Blind Man*.

13. The other ready-mades also attract little attention in the 1920s and 1930s. A *Bottle Rack* is exhibited at the 'Exposition Surréaliste d'Objets', at the Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris, in 1936, and reproduced at full page size in *Cahiers d'Arts* the same year (photo: Man Ray).<sup>57</sup> However, the term 'ready-made' appears to have established

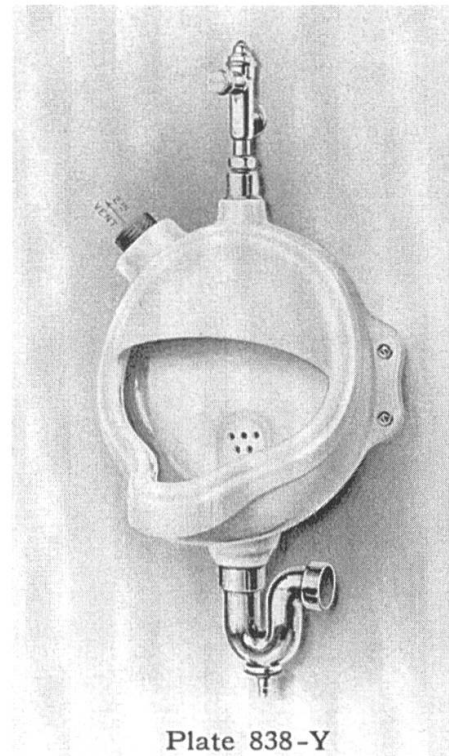


Plate 838-Y

42 J. L. Mott Iron Works, *Heavy Vitro-adamant Urinal 839-Y*, 1902, in *Marine Department Catalogue 'Y'*, vol. II, New York, 1902



itself: 'Everyday object promoted to the dignity of an objet d'art merely by the Choice of the artist.'<sup>58</sup>

14. Duchamp produces the miniature replicas for his *Boîte-en-valise* as of 1938 (see figs. 33, 35, 36).

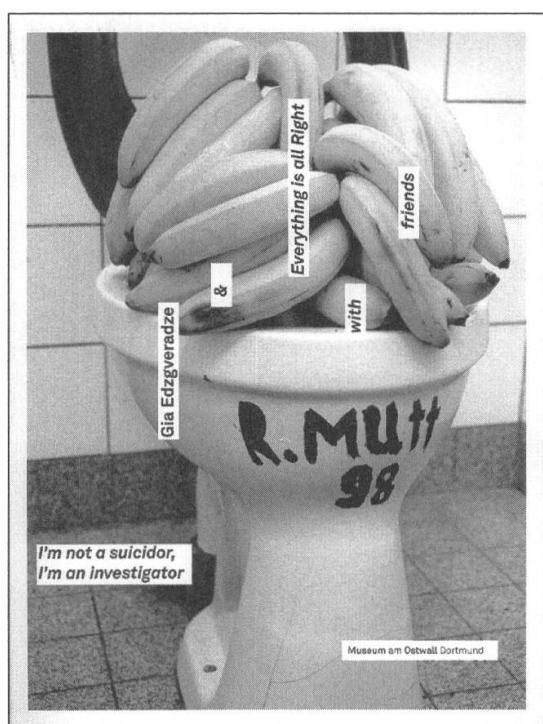
15. The photograph by Stieglitz (see figs. 37 and 41) is reprinted for the first time in *View* magazine (vol. 5, no. 1, 21.3.1945, p. 23): 28 years after the scandal! Besides numerous reproductions, the issue dedicated to Duchamp contains a lengthy article by Harriet and Sidney Janis entitled 'Marcel Duchamp: Anti-Artist', which makes the following statement concerning the ready-mades, among other things: 'Ready-mades are what the name implies, complete objects which are at hand, and which by reason of the artist's selectivity are considered by him as belonging in the realm of his own creative activity.'<sup>59</sup>

16. 1959: first monograph; 1959: first edition of writings; 1963: first solo exhibition in a museum; 1967: first extensive interview in book form.

17. 1964: edition of eight replicas of 14 ready-mades – including *Fountain* – by the Galleria Schwarz, Milan (see fig. 27).

18. 2 October 1968: Marcel Duchamp dies in his apartment in Neuilly. He is buried in the family grave in Rouen; he had the following epitaph chiselled on his grave-stone: 'Besides, it is always the others who die'.<sup>60</sup>

## Postscript I



43 Gia Edgveradze, cover of an exhibition catalogue, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund 2005–6<sup>61</sup>

## Postscript II

A 77-year-old man was arrested by police on 4 January 2006 after attacking *Fountain*, on display in the Dada exhibition at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. The suspect claimed his hammer attack was a work of performance art of which Dada artists might have approved. Pierre Pinoncelli had already vandalized the work in 1993 – urinating into the piece when it was on display at an exhibition in Nîmes. Others have committed similar acts: self-proclaimed Chinese performance artists Yuan Cai and Jian Jun Xi relieved themselves on *Fountain* when it was on display at the Tate Modern in September 2000, arguing that they were paying homage to the French master.<sup>62</sup>

- \* I would like to thank Tapan Bhattacharya and Rafaela Pichler for procuring hard-to-come-by literature, and Marcel Baumgartner and Regula Krähenbühl for their critical comments on my manuscript.
- 1 Marcel Duchamp, 'Apropos of Ready-mades', statement made at a colloquium at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 19.10.1961, in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, London, 1975, pp. 141–2.
- 2 Charlotte Higgins, 'Work of art that inspired a movement ... a urinal', *The Guardian* (2.12.2004) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/news/story/0,11711,1364123,00.html>> accessed 24.10.2005. Positions 6 to 10 are occupied by Beuys, Brancusi, Pollock, Judd and Moore. See also: Nigel Reynolds, 'Shocking' urinal better than Picasso because they say so', *news.telegraph* (2.12.2004) <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/12/02/ntrof02.xml&Sheet=/news/2004/12/02/ixhome.html>> accessed 24.10.2005, and: Séverine Gossart, 'Marcel Duchamp. Fountain', in *DADA*, exh. cat., Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2005–6 [subsequently: National Gallery of Art, Washington; Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2006], pp. 366–7.
- 3 Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp. A Biography*, New York, 1996.
- 4 Dieter Daniels, *Duchamp und die anderen. Der Modellfall einer künstlerischen Wirkungsgeschichte in der Moderne*, PhD thesis, University of Aachen, Cologne, 1992.
- 5 Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: the art of making art in the age of mechanical reproduction*, New York, 1999.
- 6 Ecke Bonk, *Marcel Duchamp. Die Grosse Schachtel. de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy. Inventar einer Edition*, Munich, 1989.
- 7 William A. Camfield, 'Marcel Duchamp's Fountain: Aesthetic Object, Icon, or Anti-Art?', in Thierry de Duve, ed., *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* [congress presentation, 1987], Cambridge, Mass., 1991, pp. 133–78; William A. Camfield, 'Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain": Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917', in Rudolf Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann, eds., *Marcel Duchamp. Artist of the Century*, Cambridge, Mass., 1987, pp. 64–94; William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain*, exh. cat., The Menil Collection, Houston, 1987–8, Houston, 1989. I refer to an older research paper of my own: "'Fountain" by R. Mutt. Marcel Duchamp zum 100. Geburtstag', *Pantheon*, XLV, 1987, pp. 160–71. This essay examines in detail the opinions of several authors concerning Duchamp's ready-mades and their consequences; the following essays were published later: Thierry de Duve, 'Kant nach Duchamp', *Kunstforum*, no. 100, April–May 1989, pp. 186–206, and Peter Bürger, 'Duchamp 1987', *Kunstforum*, no. 100, April–May 1989, pp. 207–13, repr. in Peter Bürger, *Das Altern der Moderne. Schriften zur bildenden Kunst*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 106–22. (See fig. 2).
- 8 Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, *Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy 1887–1968*, tête-bêche publication



- of: Pontus Hulten, ed., *Marcel Duchamp. Work and Life*, exh. cat., Palazzo Grassi, Venice 1993, Cambridge, Mass. 1993. The enormous list is not structured according to the usual annual chronology, but by day (e.g. 25 August) – a Dadaist prank aimed at all serious Duchamp experts!
- 9 Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affectionately, Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, Translation by Jill Taylor, Ghent and Amsterdam 2000.
  - 10 Timothy Shipe, 'Marcel Duchamp: A Selective Bibliography', in Kuenzli and Naumann 1987 (see note 7), pp. 231–65. See also the University of Iowa Libraries' 'International Online Bibliography of Dada', which features some 45,000 titles, including nearly 2,000 related to Duchamp: <<http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/dada>> accessed 7.10.2005.
  - 11 <<http://toutfait.com>> accessed 7.10.2005. The non-profit journal went online as a tri-annual publication in December 1999, and has been published perpetually since 30 March 2005.
  - 12 Naumann 1999 (see note 5), p. 19.
  - 13 Concerning the aesthetic difference between everyday objects and works of art, or the question as to the necessity of material differences, see in general: Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. A Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, particularly his examination of the institutional theory of art postulated by George Dickie, *Art and The Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*, Ithaca, 1976.
  - 14 Mary Ann Caws, 'Partiality and the Ready Maid, or Representation by Reduction', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XLII, no. 3, Spring 1984, p. 255.
  - 15 <<http://www.marcel Duchamp.org>> und <<http://www.toutfait.com>>; see also Claudia Steinberg, 'Beim Barte der Mona Lisa. Wie echt sind Duchamps Ready-mades?', *Kunstzeitung*, no. 34, June 1999, p. 1.
  - 16 Thomas Zaunschirm, 'Späte Grüße von Marcel Duchamp. Das Ready-made auf dem Prüfstand', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, no. 271, 20./21.11.1999, p. 77.
  - 17 This example, lot 19, estimated at \$1,000,000–1,500,000 was sold at the auction held at Sotheby's, New York on 17 November 1999, to the Greek collector Dimitri Daskalopoulos for

**Art or Junk?**

**\$56,715** is the value put on this urinal by the Sotheby's auctioneers.

**\$8,250** Snow shovel.

**\$22,387** is the value put on this ordinary typewriter cover by art experts.

**\$111,937**

**... Folks Are Asking a Fortune for This Stuff**

Who in their right mind would pay \$56,715 for a urinal, \$22,387 for a typewriter cover, or \$111,937 for a bicycle wheel nailed to a stool?

Those are the outrageous amounts the London auction house of Sotheby's says these wacky "artworks" are worth. They're "Dada" art, a bizarre movement that flourished in Europe during World War I.

Dada artists delighted in passing off items like these as serious works. The Dada shovel recently sold at Sotheby's for \$8,250 and the copy of the Mona Lisa defaced by a pencil mustache and beard went for \$12,210, a great deal of knowledge of 20th-century art to understand these pieces.

**\$12,210**

44 'Art or Junk?', in *The National Enquirer*, London, 4 February 1986, polemical newspaper article on the disappointing auction at Sotheby's, London, 4 December 1985

\$1,762,500 (incl. commission). One of two un-numbered examples (belonging to Arturo Schwarz) was offered for \$1,500,000–2,500,000 as lot 6 at auction by Phillips, de Pury & Luxembourg, New York, on 13 May 2002, and sold for \$1,185,000 (incl. commission). In 1964 Arturo Schwarz asked \$25,000 for the entire set of 14 ready-mades. For general information on Duchamp's market value, see: Francis M. Naumann, 'Marcel Duchamp: Money Is No Object. The Art of Defying the Art Market',

- Tout-Fait. The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, no. 5, 2003 <<http://www.toutfait.com/duchamp.jsp?postid=1501>> accessed 6.10.2005. See also fig. 44.
- 18 'There has never been a Duchamp retrospective in China, and certainly not during Mao's time. The picture of Shi Xinning is based on a photograph that shows Mao together with party officials as they visit an industrial fair.' Bernhard Fibicher, in *mahjong. Chinesische Gegenwarts-kunst aus der Sammlung Sigg*, ed. Bernhard Fibicher and Matthias Frehner, exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts, Berne, 2005; Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2006, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2005, p. 274.
  - 19 'Armleder's work as an artist is steeped in reflection on cultural criticism: he defines contemporary culture as a B-movie in which the set for one film is used for another for reasons of cost, irrespective of the shifts and omissions that this brings about in terms of content. Similar things are happening in high art. Its forms are still known and used by artists, but knowledge about their original significance and value has been lost in the course of time. But culture – according to Armleder – is by no means condemned to fall into an ultimate decline because of this: it constantly finds new uses as a B-version of itself, and these do not have to be the original ones.' Friederike Nymphius, in Renate Wiehager, ed., *Andy Warhol. Cars and business art*, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 124.
  - 20 'With his Fountains Bidlo explores certain trains of thought and continues them, thereby bringing them full circle. Duchamp had appropriated a real pissoir for fine art. Bidlo continues some ideas involved in this work, but uses drawing, one of the oldest methods of artistic expression, to develop them, bringing Fountain back to this side of the border of easily recognizable fine art over which it had crossed almost a century ago.' / 'Duchamp's gesture challenged traditional artistic values; your work, instead, challenges our concept of history, more specifically, art history, the history of twentieth century art. The impact of Duchamp's urinal depended upon an uninformed public; understanding your work, on the other hand, requires a somewhat sophisticated and informed knowledge of art history.' First quotation: Bruno Bischofberger, 'Introduction', in Mike Bidlo. *The Fountain Drawings*, exh. cat., Galerie Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich; Tony Shafrazi Gallery, New York, 1998, p. 13. Catalogue with black-and-white reproductions of 257 'Fountains' and a conversation between Arthur Danto, Francis Naumann and Mike Bidlo. Second quotation: Francis M. Naumann, *ibid.*, p. 23.
  - 21 Bidlo refers to the play on words 'Saint Duchamp' / 'sans Duchamp' [without Duchamp], *ibid.*, p. 19.
  - 22 Model for a female torso made of glass containing a porcelain urinal: 'Projection de fragments corporels phantasmés, le corps-bouteille de Rose's Lime Juice apparaît comme l'objet de substitution d'un corps à femme contenant un moule à mâle. [...] Version ultime des Vierges à l'Enfant, la mariée à l'urinoir et le grand / petit enfant à l'intérieur du Grand Moule (du Grand Verre) se retrouvent pour fusionner et mettre en scène, pour transgresser, l'interdit majeur des origines du monde.' Léa Lublin, in *fémininmasculin. Le sexe de l'art*, exh. cat., Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1995–6, p. 256. The glass object described is reproduced in Thierry de Duve, 'Und was ist mit Duchamps Enkeln?', in Andreas Eckl et al., eds., *Marcel Duchamps 'Grosses Glas'. Beiträge aus Kunstgeschichte und philosophischer Ästhetik*, Cologne, 2000, pp. 175–84, fig. 63.
  - 23 If Otto Mühl, who, as is well-known, has no reservations concerning human excrement, is alluding to Piero Manzoni's *Merda d'artista* ('Artist's Shit') of 1961 (90 signed, labelled tins), this would be a really corny 'artistic' joke.
  - 24 This assisted ready-made schematically appropriates: Warhol, *Campbell's Soup* / Levine, *Mondrian* / Duchamp, *Fontaine* [sic] / Malevitch, *White on White*.
  - 25 There are several replicas of Duchamp's *Fountain* by Bidlo.
  - 26 'I've always been interested in the fetishistic nature of the work of art. [...] Casting the urinal in high-polish makes it an incredibly hot object. [...] I liked it as an object because it's an object that has a function so closely identified with men, but the form is so feminine, so vessel-like.' 'The Anxiety of Influence – Head on. A Conversation between Sherrie Levine and Jeanne Siegel', in *Sherrie Levine*, ed. Bernhard

- Bürki, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Zurich [and other locations], 1991–2, p. 19. At the Zurich exhibition all six casts were displayed together as a single installation.
- 27 'My work has nothing to do with "appropriation", the refocusing of history, or the death of art, or the negative questioning of originality. Rather just the opposite, as it involves the power and autonomy of originality and the force and pervasiveness of art.' Sturtevant (1989), cited after: Gerd de Vries and Lena Maculan: 'Interview', in *Sturtevant. Catalogue raisonné 1964–2004. Painting Sculpture Film and Video*, ed. Lena Maculan, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2004, p. 41, note 3. Elaine Sturtevant, who as an artist deliberately suppresses her female first name, is probably the first representative of Appropriation Art, although she does not wish to be perceived as such. Since the early 1960s she has produced 'copies' of works by her contemporaries, including Stella, Johns, Oldenburg and Warhol; the latter even gave her one of his 'original' screens of *Flowers* for printing copies. Sturtevant produced her first 'Duchamps' in 1967 during the artist's lifetime. See *ibid.*, cat. nos. 311–319.
- 28 The flesh-coloured marble urinals, shaped like breasts, were shown in the artist's first solo exhibition at the Deitch Gallery in New York, 1997.
- 29 First presented at the special Biennale exhibition *Ubi Fluxus, ibi motus 1990–1962*, exh. cat., Ex Granai della Repubblica alle Zitelle (Giudecca), Venice, 1990, pp. 81–4; in another form in *fémininmasculin 1995–6* (see note 22), pp. 272–8.
- 30 'By submitting a urinal to an art exhibition, Duchamp had turned against art as an institution; however, when the act entered the lexicon of art history, it was the opposite of Duchamp's intention, so Hiltmann decided (using photo montages) "to do the opposite again and to reinstall the urinal in order to save Duchamp's intention".' Alfred M. Fischer, 'Der Künstler als mediumistisches Wesen', in *Übrigens sterben immer die anderen. Marcel Duchamp und die Avantgarde seit 1950*, exh. cat., Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 1988, p. 214.
- 31 'In the second half of the 80s, like in Europe, New York was inundated with the sayings of Chairman Baudrillard. [...] As you see, there is an ironing board supporting a urinal, both obvious references to Duchamp. The urinal is gilded. Duchamp's, of course, wasn't. And there is a fire bucket suspended from one side of the ironing board. Water from the bucket is shooting through a hose, out from the top of the urinal, and into the hole on its bottom. Then it flows back to the bucket. In the title I've contracted the names "Baudrillard" and "Richard". "Richard" refers to the "R" in Duchamp's pseudonym "R. Mutt". In French "Richard" also means "moneybags". The "ecstasy" of the title is a reference to an essay by Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication". As you see here, Baudrillard's orgasm, so to speak, amounts to nothing. It is infertile.' Hans Haacke, lecture given at the first 'La Generazione delle Immagini' congress, Milan 1994–95, [http://www.undo.net/Pinto/ Eng/fhaacke.htm](http://www.undo.net/Pinto/Eng/fhaacke.htm) accessed 15.8.2005.
- 32 'Weg zu / weg von Marcel Duchamp', contribution by Serge Stauffer, the Zurich Duchamp researcher and editor of his writings, in *Übrigens sterben immer die anderen* 1988 (see note 30), p. 15.
- 33 Marcel Duchamp, letter to Hans Richter, 10.11.1962, in Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art* [German edition 1964], New York, 1965, pp. 207–8.
- 34 For the volume of poems entitled *Il Reale Assoluto* by Arturo Schwarz, Milan, 1964.
- 35 The exhibition in Milan opened on 6 June under the title 'Omaggio a Marcel Duchamp'. As the production of the new ready-mades was not yet complete, Arturo Schwarz showed the Linde replica of *Fountain* (see also note 38).
- 36 The captions that should probably be interpreted as a hermetic play on words concerning the art-historical status of his *Fountain* read as follows: '**Un robinet original révolutionnaire**' and '**Un robinet** qui s'arrête de couler quand on ne l'écoute pas'; the letters emphasised in red (here in bold print) result in the words 'urinoir' and 'urine'.
- 37 See also fig. 2 and note 16.
- 38 Signature revised by Marcel Duchamp in June 1964 at the Milan exhibition (see note 35).
- 39 Replica produced with Duchamp's written permission on the basis of photographs by Ulf

- Linde for the Duchamp exhibition at the Buren Gallery in Stockholm, featuring the signature and year in capital letters. (See also note 35).
- 40 A urinal found by the New York gallery-owner Sidney Janis at a Paris flea market, presented as *Fountain* with Duchamp's permission at the exhibition entitled 'Challenge & Defy: Extreme Examples by XX Century Artists, French & American', New York, 1950.
- 41 For the various editions of the *Boîte-en-valise*, see Bonk 1989 (see note 6).
- 42 Duchamp used the detail of a photograph that shows him in his New York studio at 33 West 67th Street in about 1917/18. See Bonk 1989 (see note 6), pp. 234–5, cat. no. 46. The 1917 ready-made, *Hat Rack*, which has also disappeared, is emphasized with watercolour. The date of the photograph is as controversial as the question of whether the urinal hanging from the ceiling is the 'original' *Fountain*.
- 43 The 'museum label' reads as follows: 'Fountain / by Richard MUTT / (Ready made; haut. 0m60) / New-York, 1917'. Miniature replica for Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*, his famous private museum, which contains 69 miniature copies of his most important works and on which Duchamp worked from 1938. The first example was acquired by Peggy Guggenheim in January 1941; Guggenheim had it photographed by Berenice Abbott in 1942 for the catalogue of her collection entitled 'Art of this Century'. Until 1968, a total of 300 boxes were produced. For the history, content and various editions of these works, see the excellent catalogue raisonné by Bonk, 1989 (see note 6). Based on a papier mâché model made by Duchamp, the miniature *Fountain* is cast using a mould produced by a Parisian ceramicist; there are four slightly different moulds; *ibid.*, pp. 203–6, cat. no. 5.
- 44 'It is a little masterpiece of humoristic sculpture, the colour of cooked crab meat, with its tiny, so painstaking, absurd holes – a pretty object. If Walter [Arensberg, J.A.] wants it one day, so much the better – if not, who else will appreciate it?' Henri Pierre Roché, diary entry, 1942, cited after: Bonk 1989 (see note 6), p. 204. Roché bought the original from Duchamp in 1942 for \$100 and sold it in 1947 for \$300 to Maria Martins, the glamorous artist and Brazilian ambassador's wife with whom Duchamp had an affair between 1943 and 1951.
- 45 'The Richard Mutt Case / They say any artist paying six dollars may exhibit. / Mr. Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion this article disappeared and never was exhibited. / What were the grounds for refusing Mr. Mutt's fountain: – / 1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar. / 2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing. / Now Mr. Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bath tub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers' show windows. / Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object. / As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges.'
- 46 Camfield assumes (probably correctly) that this photograph must have been taken before the scandal, as not a single source mentions a hanging urinal. Camfield 1989 (see note 7), p. 22, note 19.
- 47 Stieglitz put *Fountain* on a rough wooden pedestal and photographed the object lit from above (including the submitter's label affixed with string), turned slightly to the left of the central axis, from a short distance and at eye level in front of Marsden Hartley's painting *The Warriors* (1913, The Regis Collection, Minneapolis). See the reconstructive drawing in Camfield 1989 (see note 7), p. 36.
- 48 'Peut-on faire des œuvres qui ne soient pas "d'art"?', note of 1913, in Marcel Duchamp, *A l'Infinif*, New York, 1967, cited after: Sanouillet and Peterson 1975 (see note 1), p. 74.
- 49 'Ici, à N.Y., j'ai acheté des objets dans le même goût et je les traite comme des "readymade" tu sais assez d'anglais pour comprendre le sens de "tout fait" que je donne à ces objets – Je les signe et je leur donne une inscription en anglais.' In Naumann and Obalk 2000 (see note 9), pp. 43–4.
- 50 In 1965 Duchamp reported that nobody took any notice of the ready-mades at the time; see:

- Daniels 1992 (see note 4), pp. 172–6, particularly p. 174.
- 51 Francis M. Naumann, 'The Big Show: The First Exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists', *Artforum* 17, February 1979, pp. 34–9, and April 1979, pp. 49–53.
  - 52 Interview by Otto Hahn, 1966, cited after: Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, London, 1969, p. 466. For further phonetic puns and associations ('Armut', 'rich-art-mud', 'R[oi] matt'), see Thomas Zaunschirm, *Bereites Mädchen Ready-made*, Klagenfurt, 1983, pp. 72–7.
  - 53 Diary entries and reminiscences by Beatrice Wood give a lively impression of the events at the time: see Camfield 1989 (see note 7), pp. 24–5.
  - 54 'Les Indépendants sont ouverts ici avec gros succès. Une de mes amies sous un pseudonyme masculin, Richard Mutt, avait envoyé une pissotière en porcelaine comme sculpture; Ce n'était pas du tout indécent. aucune raison pour la refuser. Le comité a décidé de refuser d'exposer cette chose. J'ai donné ma démission et c'est un potin qui aura sa valeur dans New York.' In Naumann and Obalk 2000 (see note 9), p. 47.
  - 55 Louise Norton was a friend of Duchamp's and also wrote the first text on *Fountain* (see figs. 38 and 39). It has recently been speculated that the object artist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven could also have been its creator. See Irene Gammel, *Die Dada Baroness. Das wilde Leben der Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* [American edn, 2002], Berlin, 2003, particularly pp. 125–7.
  - 56 Letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Henry McBride, 19 April 1917, cited after: Camfield 1989 (see note 7), p. 34.
  - 57 See Daniels 1992 (see note 4), pp. 186–202.
  - 58 'Objet usuel promu à la dignité d'objet d'art par le simple choix de l'artiste.' In André Breton and Paul Eluard, *Dictionnaire abrégé du Sur-réalisme*, Paris, 1938, p. 23: the entry 'READY MADE' is signed '(M.D.)'; beside it the *Bottle Dryer* is shown with the caption 'M.D.: Ready made'.
  - 59 Cited after the publication ed. Robert Motherwell, which is important for critical reception of the Dada movement and Duchamp as well as forming the theoretical basis for 'Neo-Dada', *The Dada Painters and Poets. An Anthology* [1951], second extended edition, Boston, 1981, pp. 306–15, quoted from p. 310.
  - 60 'D'AILLEURS / C'EST TOUJOURS LES AUTRES / QUI MEURENT'.
  - 61 Gia Edgveradze & Everything is all Right with friends, *I'm not a suicidor, I'm an investigator*, exh. cat., Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, 23.10.2005–15.1.2006.
  - 62 Harry Bellet, 'M. Pinoncelli et Duchamp: frappante charité', *Le Monde*, 6.1.2006 <<http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3246,36-728163,0.html>> accessed 13.1.2006; see also: *USA Today*, 6.1.2006 <[http://www.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2006-01-06-duchampfountain\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2006-01-06-duchampfountain_x.htm)> and CNN, 12.9.2000 <<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/STYLE/arts/09/12/guerilla.art.ap/>> both accessed 13.1.2006.

## Summary

With his ready-mades, particularly *Fountain*, Duchamp probably made one of the most important contributions to the art of the twentieth century. In Duchamp's case, 'branding' goes far beyond creating a distinctive personal style – after all, with his 'invention' he succeeded in establishing a new genre that was to have extremely far-reaching consequences, and will remain indissolubly linked with his name in the history of art.

The claim that a ready-made can only be provocative (as a work of art) when a banal, mass-produced everyday item is displayed as a 'unique' *objet d'art* in an artistic context – in a gallery or a museum – may sound paradoxical. However, at least as far as the history of criticism is concerned, it is an indispensable prerequisite for the connotations it evokes.

Taking *Fountain*, Duchamp's most famous ready-made, as its point of departure, this essay (together with its extensive 'picture story') aims to demonstrate in retrospective terms the paradox of a non-existent 'original' ready-made, and to document the immense influence of this 'artistic phenomenon', which remains unsettling to this day.