

# MARCEL DUCHAMP





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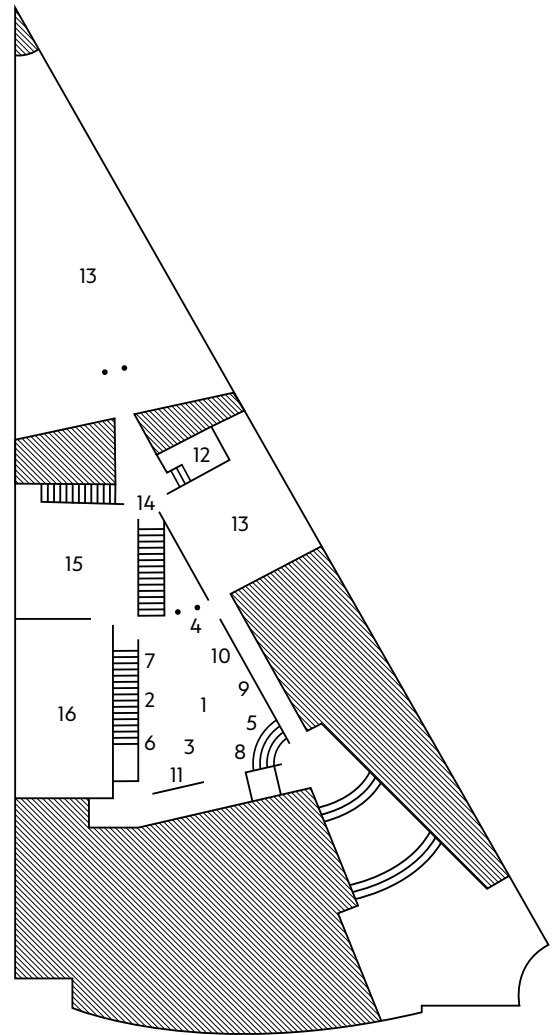
Thinking, acting, and being beyond all categories and conventions. To be apodictic and at the same time open to indifference. To make works that are not artworks but are nevertheless art. To lead discourse without dictating it. Never to repeat oneself. To be lazy instead of occupied. To be free.

The resistivity—in form and thought alike—that distinguishes the oeuvre of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) is unbroken, his questions are present: What is art? What constitutes an object? What is a subject? What unites and divides science and poetry? What defines our gender and our identity?

With persistent exactitude and welcome unpredictability, resolute anarchy, and humorous ease, Marcel Duchamp made works that, by virtue of their precision and openness, reach completion only through us, the viewers. His oeuvre thus, changes with us and with time.

Thanks to Duchamp, we know that everything can become art, and that thinking knows no boundaries.

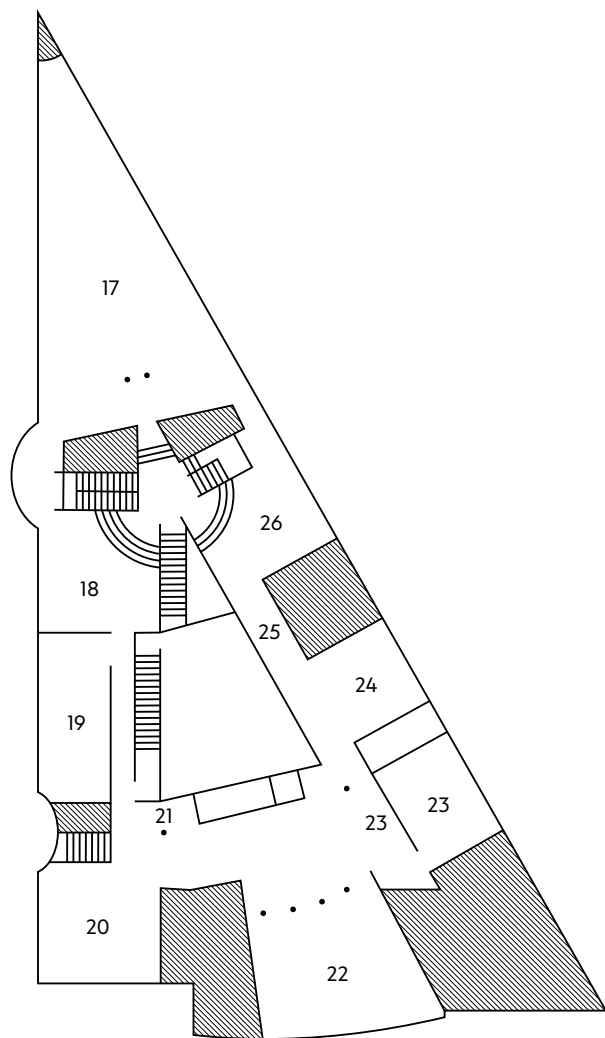
## Level 1



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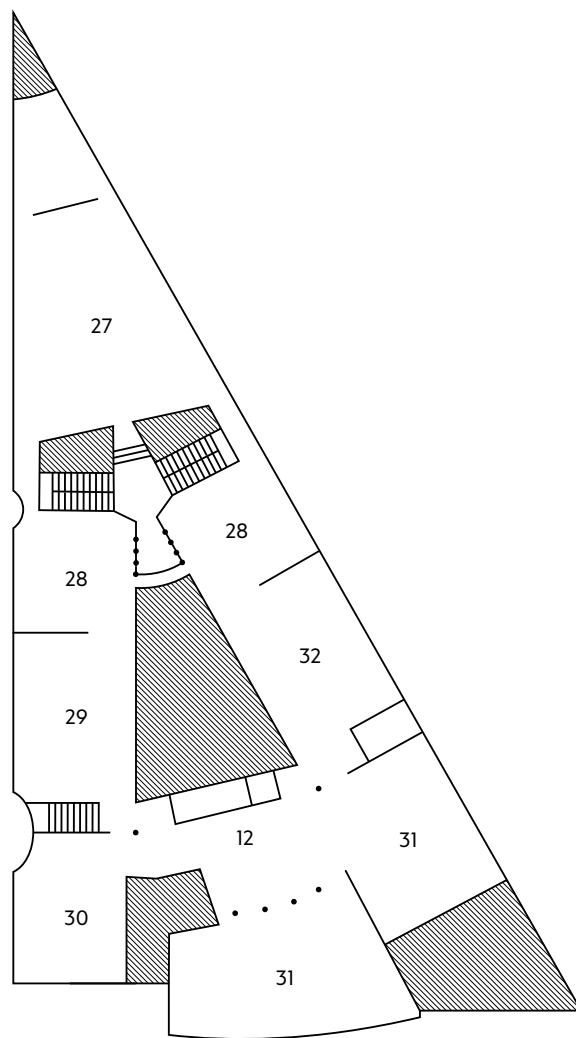
Texts on the titles that appear in boldface type can be found under the numbers indicated.

## Level 2



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## 1. Readymades

The point of departure for Marcel Duchamp's readymades is the question: "Can works be made which are not, 'of art'?" This thought is one of the reasons that his readymades still spark the interest of all different types of artists to this day. The question of whether it is possible to make music that is no longer music, for example, has repeatedly inspired the experimental investigations of sound—even after John Cage's statement that silence is also music.

The significance of the readymades thus also lies in the question as to when an artwork is no longer an artwork. Within the realm of art, the readymade should continue to play a role, because Duchamp explicitly wanted to create "works" that nonetheless distinguish themselves by indifference towards all aesthetic categories of the art world and of art production. The readymade is not to be anti-art whose only *raison d'être* is to destroy or intrude on the "artwork."

In addition to chance and original imagination, indifference is one of the key concepts of Duchamp's aesthetic deliberations and is to be understood via the word's dual meaning in German. The readymades—for example, the first one, *Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel) of 1913—were to be indifferent (in German *gleichgültig*) vis-à-vis artworks, but also aesthetically *gleich gültig* (literally "equally valid"). *Roue de bicyclette* can be regarded as paradigmatic in that it was a commonplace, industrially manufactured, everyday object devoid of any visible individual artistry.

Whilst Duchamp wanted the readymades to lack uniqueness, he did not wish them to lose their rarity. To the extent that they were to remain works, they were never to be mass-produced. At the same time, Duchamp set no store by the originality of the first exhibition readymade. It did not bother him in the least that the original exhibition objects, especially those from the years 1913 to 1919, were nearly all lost.

Duchamp placed great emphasis on closely controlling the reproduction of a readymade, by guaranteeing its authenticity with his signature—or by refusing to authorize it. It was important to him that the reproduction of a readymade never come about according to a preestablished procedure. In order to limit arbitrariness and increase the difficulty of reproducing a work, he also insisted that it be the most careful possible copy of the original.

Even if, despite thinking long and intensively about it, Duchamp never found his way to a definition of the readymade, André Breton formulated one that can also be read in Duchamp's sense: A readymade is an industrially manufactured object that attains the dignity of an artwork through being chosen by the artist.

## 2. *Roue de bicyclette* (1913/1964)

When Marcel Duchamp mounted the front wheel of a bicycle and straight fork on a white-painted kitchen stool in 1913, he had no idea what great importance art history would one day attach to the *Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel). It went down in history as the first readymade and is meanwhile also considered the first kinetic sculpture. For the artist, however, it was “simply a pleasure,” as he later recalled, “something to have in my room the way you have a fire, or a pencil sharpener, except that there was no usefulness. It was a pleasant gadget, pleasant for the movement it gave.”

Duchamp experienced that it had a wonderfully calming effect to set the wheel turning and watch how the spokes blurred, became invisible, and then reappeared as the rotation slowed down. He talked about the wheel like a matter of minor importance—and we can believe he viewed it as such, because he initially made no effort whatsoever to do anything with it apart from what he described above.

*Roue de bicyclette* derives its present-day significance from the fact that it stands for the origin of an idea: the idea of the readymade. The term “readymade” did not yet exist in 1913. When it first emerged in 1916, the status of the objects Duchamp had collected as readymades also changed retroactively.

In 1916, in a letter to his sister Suzanne, he asked her to sign *Roue de bicyclette* and *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* (Bottle Rack or Bottle Dryer or Hedgehog, 1914) in his name. This never came to pass, however, because she had meanwhile disposed of both objects. Looking back, Duchamp later said that the main purpose of the readymades was to reject any definition of art and to raise anew the question of what an artist is.

## 3. *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* (1914/1964)

Marcel Duchamp’s original *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* (Bottle Rack or Bottle Dryer or Hedgehog) is lost. He purchased it in 1914 at the Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville—a large homewares department store in the center of Paris—and took it to his studio. Back then, and in part even today, galvanized metal, ring-shaped drying racks of this kind, with five tiers of upward-pointing spikes, were a basic household item. Many French families reused their glass bottles. When the bottles were empty, they hung them on the rack to dry before taking them to the wine shop for refilling.

Duchamp, however, had no intention of drying bottles. According to a letter he wrote to his sister Suzanne in 1916, he had purchased the rack “as a ready-made sculpture.” The fact that he left it to collect dust in the corner of his studio does nothing to detract from its importance. *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* can be understood as a latency period on the way to the idea of the readymade. It differs from *Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel, 1913) in that Duchamp did nothing at all to change it. It was already a sculpture in its own right—the consummate readymade. Some time would pass, however, before he realized its full significance.

The pivotal nature of *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* for Duchamp’s idea household is evident in his copying practice. He asked Man Ray, among others, to send copies to exhibitions in the United States and Stockholm. And in 1960, Robert Rauschenberg had Duchamp sign his own bottle rack as a gesture of friendship.



#### 4. *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915/1964)

When Marcel Duchamp purchased a snow shovel in New York in 1915 and hung it from the ceiling of his studio, he had only just come up with the idea of the “readymade.” *In Advance of the Broken Arm* was therefore the first ready-made he purchased as such. At the lower edge of the shovel, he inscribed the words “In Advance of the Broken Arm (from) Marcel Duchamp 1915,” thus adding “verbal color,” as he himself put it, to the readymade. The “from” in parentheses emphasizes that a work “from” Marcel Duchamp need not necessarily have been made by him.

Snow shovels were among the first products Duchamp noticed as being typically “U.S. American.” He was as little familiar with them as he was with shovelling the snow in front of the door to one’s house—by New York standards an ordinary wintertime activity. The pleasure he took in the shovel arose from its novelty as well as the fact that, by buying it and hanging it in his studio, he had withdrawn it from the usual circulation of commercial goods. This shovel would never be used for its intended purpose, never get bent or rusty or age as a product in any way. Admitted to the realm of art as an artwork, it had become timeless.

#### 5. *Peigne* (1916/1964)

The grey steel dog or cattle comb—it is not clear what animal it was intended for—can be considered a pure ready-made following Marcel Duchamp’s conception. That is also how he saw it himself: “During forty-eight years it has kept the characteristics of a true readymade: no beauty, no ugliness, nothing particularly aesthetic about it,” he told his gallerist Arturo Schwarz. In white lettering along its narrow edge, *Peigne* (Comb) bears the inscription “3 ou 4 gouttes de hauteur n’ont rien a faire avec la sauvagerie” (“3 or 4 drops from [of] height have nothing to do with savagery”), supplemented by a precise specification of the date and time: “Feb. 17 1916 11 A.M.”

The date is easy to put in context. It adheres to the instructions for readymades the artist developed between 1911 and 1915 and repeated in 1934 in a note in *La Boîte verte* (The Green Box): “Naturally inscribe date, hour, minute, on the readymade as information.” The rest of the text, however, is enigmatic. As combs traditionally have to do with the stroking of hair—in this case the connotation is clearly animalic—it seems plausible to assume that here Duchamp was combining two of his core themes: everyday life and sexuality.

## 6. *Apolinère Enameled* (1917/1965)

For this readymade, Marcel Duchamp altered an advertising plaque for Sapolin Enamel industrial paints. To pay homage to his friend the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, he blocked out some of the large white plain capital letters of the company name and added others, so that the sign now reads “Apolinère Enameled.”

Manipulated as such, the title oscillates between English and French and can thus be read as an example of Duchamp’s wordplays with the two languages during his first stay in the United States. Spoken with English pronunciation, Apollinaire sounds like “a pole in air.” The artist signed the work on the bottom left-hand corner “[from] Marcel Duchamp 1916 1917.” On the back of the original version, he also inscribed the words “Don’t do that,” contradicting the manufacturer’s recommendation to clean the sign with a damp cloth when soiled.

Apart from playing with language, Duchamp also painted the girl’s hair reflected in the mirror over the chest of drawers. This addition has often been thought to have sexual connotations which the bedstead at the center of the image echoes.

## 7. *Fountain* (1917/1964)

To create the readymade *Fountain*—undeniably one of the twentieth century’s most influential artworks—Marcel Duchamp turned a urinal 90 degrees onto its flat back and added the signature “R. Mutt.” He intended to show it in the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists that he and others had founded in New York in 1917. Contrary to the exhibition motto “No Jury – No Prizes – No Commercial Tricks,” however, the organizers rejected the urinal. The original was lost, probably due in part to Duchamp’s disappointment over the refusal.

It was no great loss for the history of art, however, because Duchamp repeatedly made copies or had copies made in different sizes. The fact that the work *Fountain* subsequently became so influential had partly to do with its connotations, especially those of the signature “R. Mutt.” Two years before *Fountain*, the Newark Museum of Art had put three porcelain urinals on display, with the museum’s founding director, John Cotton Dana, declaring that the genius and skill that went into the decoration and perfection of familiar household objects deserved the same recognition as the genius and ability required for painting in oils.

Whereas the urinal has various glaring, albeit predominantly private, cultural associations, the pseudonym “R. Mutt” posed somewhat more of a challenge to decipher. Duchamp himself explained that the word “Mutt” had been inspired, on the one hand, by the then-popular cartoon series *Mutt and Jeff*, specifically from an episode set in a bathroom. On the other hand, he added, it was a reference to the J. L. Mott Iron Works in Trenton, New Jersey: He had purchased his urinal in the company’s New York showroom.

Of the wide range of associations “R. Mutt” can evoke, at least two can be read as plays on German words. “Mutt R.,” the inversion of “R. Mutt,” is reminiscent of the German *Mutter* (mother), a theme within Duchamp’s spectrum of interest. The same applies to the English pronunciation of “Mutt,” which sounds like the German “Matt”—a word signifying the victorious end of a chess game: *Schachmatt* (checkmate).

The signature thus introduced wordplays into the artist’s readymade series, expanding the possibilities for the works’ visual perception.

## 8. *Trébuchet* (1917/1964)

The coatrack Marcel Duchamp purchased in 1917 with the intention of screwing it to the wall is a “wordplay ready-made” par excellence. The French word *trébuchet* refers to a chess position in which the pawns and both kings are placed on the board in such a way that whoever takes the move is checkmated by the resulting zugzwang. The piece is “brought down.”

So this work is about bringing someone or something down. For the “trap,” however, there was an entirely real cause: the artist purchased the coatrack but never hung it on the wall. Instead, Duchamp left it lying on the floor—and regularly tripped over it. The constant stumbling led him to associate the rack with a readymade and nail it to the floor. The stumble a wordplay causes in the flow of reading was thus linked to the coatrack as a real obstacle to free movement in space. Fixed to the floor, the rack can “bring you down,” both physically and intellectually. What the wordplay readymade *Trébuchet* (Trap) tells us is that we should be careful in any attempt we make to arrive at a definitive interpretation of a Duchamp readymade.

## 9. *Porte-chapeaux* (1917/1964)

Hung from the ceiling by Marcel Duchamp, the hat rack is out of reach and thus no longer functional. Associations with masculinity and femininity come into play, as the *Porte-chapeaux* (Hat Rack) hints at both. The form is reminiscent of a praying mantis or spider, and the shadow it casts on the wall indeed looks like a spider. In conjunction with the fact that many female spiders devour their sexual partners after mating, this readymade takes on a female connotation.

Yet the upward-pointing spikes also possess a phallic character and lend the work a masculine aspect. Like the *Porte-chapeaux* as a whole, however, the spikes are unusable. As such, they are not a symbol of masculine virility, but closer to the reproductively inactive status of the bachelor. Duchamp’s lifelong interest in bachelors and their machines as well as their futile attempts to relate to the opposite sex, here, seem to have taken shape in a readymade. Even in a simple object, the female and the male principle are incapable of uniting.

## 10. *Fresh Widow* (1920/1964)

*Fresh Widow*, “produced” by Marcel Duchamp in 1920, is the first work he signed with the name of his female alter ego Rose Sélavy (which the following year would become *Rose Sélavy*). He formed the words “*Fresh Widow* Copyright Rose Sélavy 1920” in adhesive black paper letters on the windowsill. This was not only the first appearance of the name *Rose Sélavy*, a play on the French expression “*Eros, c’est la vie*” (“*Love, that’s life*”). Here, Duchamp also claimed intellectual property rights to something for which it is not even possible to apply for authorship in the United States. In the eyes of the law, a window is a commodity that a person can have patented (provided it meets the requirements for innovation), but not copyright protected. Duchamp’s copyright is thus a deception.

In this case, the artist did not purchase an already existing object, but commissioned a New York carpenter to make a miniature version of the window according to his specifications—a model of the kind customarily submitted along with an application to a patent office. By assigning the production of the object to a different person, he introduced a new dimension to the concept of the readymade.

The title *Fresh Widow*, on the other hand, was entirely Duchamp’s doing. He deleted the “n” from each of the two words “*French window*” and replaced the “c” with an “s.” The allusion to a type of double casement window common in Paris residences is gone in the title, but remains present in the design. In the title, the *French window* has become the “*fresh widow*,” readable as a reference to the countless young widows brought forth by the First World War, which had ended just two years earlier. The black leather window blinds protected their right to mourn unobserved. The windows—like doors, one of Duchamp’s central themes—are not transparent and thus not functional. In conjunction with the title *Fresh Widow*, the panes of glass covered in black personify mourning widows. The artist leaves the mourners their secret and does not even pretend to know what a mourning body experiences. At the same time, the word “*fresh*” sparks associations with the sexuality of young widows.

## 11. *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921/1963)

The question “*Why not sneeze Rose Sélavy?*” is already absurd enough as it is. After all, sneezing is an involuntary reflex that cannot be controlled by the locomotory system. But perhaps even more confounding for many, even today, is the association of that question with a birdcage containing 152 marble “*sugar cubes*,” a thermometer, and a cuttlefish bone.

Marcel Duchamp cut the marble cubes himself. And thus, because he had constructed more of this readymade than in previous cases, he referred to it as an “*assisted readymade*.” He also attributed it with a “*mythological effect*,” presumably in response to the perplexity he sensed among his acquaintances—among them André Breton—when confronted with this work. This effect, Duchamp added, resulted in part from the fact that, when lifting the birdcage, people were often quite startled because they had not expected “*sugar*” to be so heavy.

Yet apart from playing with the contrast between the heaviness of marble and the lightness of sugar, the artist was also concerned with the two materials’ different temperatures. In the marble, the relative warmth of sugar becomes pure coldness, which is measured by the thermometer in the cage. In other words, this readymade disrupts the expectation of sugar’s warmth and light weight and presents us with cold, excessive heaviness instead.

## 12. *Air de Paris* (1919/1964)

*Air de Paris* (Paris Air) is a glass ampoule filled with Parisian air that Marcel Duchamp gave to his friend Walter Arensberg as a kind of portable readymade souvenir. In 1919, Duchamp tasked a pharmacist with removing the original serum from the ampoule and then sealing it again after authentic Parisian air had been inserted instead. Duchamp had “Sérum Physiologique” (“Physiological Serum”) printed on the label. *Air de Paris* is undoubtedly the most fragile of all the readymades.

The additional designation of “50 cc air de Paris” (“50 cc of Paris Air”) clearly demonstrates that the work is alluding to the concept of scientific and economic measurement. It illustrates how Duchamp plays with the rules or standards connected with quantification. When *Air de Paris* appeared on a postcard in 1937, it was labeled as “Ampoule contenant 50 c.c. d’air de Paris” (“Ampoule Containing 50 c.c. of Paris Air”). This title was mathematically imprecise, bearing in mind that the ampoule used for the original version contained more than double that volume of air (125 cc). The lack of precision was Duchamp’s answer to the modern era’s fetishization of ever-smaller measurements that gave the appearance of becoming more accurate.

When Duchamp issued miniatures of this ampoule for the *Boîte-en-Valise* (Box in a Valise) in 1941, he made sure that they all held precisely 50 cubic centimeters of air. For the reproduction of *Air de Paris* in 1949, however, after the original was accidentally broken, he ensured that the original size of the ampoule was duplicated. This simultaneous acceptance and rejection of measurement standards exemplifies the principle of immutable duality that was at the heart of Duchamp’s art.

## 13. Early Works

No one ever begins at the beginning, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze once said. Usually you start somewhere in the middle, and you never end with a closing word. In the words of Marcel Duchamp: “Besides, it’s always the others who die.”

We can date the middle of Duchamp’s beginning fairly exactly: The oil painting *Paysage à Blainville* (Landscape at Blainville) of 1902, the year he turned fifteen, is one of his earliest extant works. He had been born Henri Robert Marcel Duchamp in the village of Blainville-Crevon near Rouen in Normandy on 28 July 1887. He was the fourth of seven children, of whom six lived past infancy. Not only Marcel, but also his two older brothers Gaston (known under the pseudonym Jacques Villon, 1875–1963) and Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876–1918) and his younger sister Suzanne Duchamp (1889–1963) were artists. His father Eugène Duchamp (1848–1925) was the village notary in addition to acting as a tax collector, lawyer, and financial consultant—and later mayor. The son of café owners in Auvergne, Eugène had managed to purchase the notary’s office in Blainville-Crevon with the dowry of his wife Marie Caroline Lucie Duchamp (née Nicolle, 1856–1925), whose father Emile Frédéric Nicolle (1830–1894) had made his fortune as a forwarding agent in Rouen. After succeeding in business, Emile Frédéric Nicolle devoted himself to art. His works were on display in the visual arts section of the Paris World’s Fair of 1878, and his etchings of local landscape views made him one of the most well-known artists in Rouen. Marcel Duchamp would later acknowledge his grandfather’s formative artistic influence on his own work.

Painted in the post-Impressionist style, the *Paysage à Blainville* testifies to this influence, and the rural environment—a coachman, a kneeling farmer, horses—is mirrored in Duchamp’s early works in general. Otherwise he painted or drew primarily the members of his family, for example his sister Suzanne in a seated position, and his brother Gaston, who already at this early date appears in the works’ titles as Jacques Villon.

His brother’s choice of artist’s name is indicative of one of the Duchamps’ early passions: identity-confusing plays on names. Gaston had decided on the first name of his pseudonym in 1894 in honor of Alphonse Daudet’s novel *Jack*, and the last name as a reference to the first great

anarchist of French literature, François Villon. Jacques Villon participated as an artist in the documenta I and II, and posthumously in the documenta III in Kassel. Marcel Duchamp's early works reveal nothing of his later contempt for painting as perpetual repetition ossified in stupid gestures.

## 15. Caricatures

After completing military service in October 1906, Marcel Duchamp did not return to the art school Académie Julian in Paris. Instead, he preferred to play billiards with Juan Gris in Montmartre. During this period, Duchamp viewed himself as a flaneur—a distanced observer who was obliged to work on his humor constantly. At the time, it was possible to earn a great deal of money through humorous illustrations. Even the great poet Stéphane Mallarmé made his living chiefly from amusing pieces for fashion magazines—and not from his verse that is still regarded as revolutionary today.

The 1907 drawing *Femme Cocher* (Woman Hack-Driver) is a good example of Duchamp's approach to reality in the years when he worked as an illustrator. The work shows a carriage without its driver in front of a grand hotel. This was Duchamp reacting to the introduction of female hack-drivers in Paris, but the absence of the driver in the drawing leaves open the suggestion that she might have disappeared into the hotel with her passenger.

In the spring of 1907, Duchamp succeeded in presenting *Femme Cocher* and four more drawings at the first Salon des humoristes, which was being staged by a large magazine at the Palais de Glace, a popular ice rink in Paris. Thanks to everyday scenes such as the drawings *Au Bar* (At the Bar) and *Au Palais de Glace* (At the Palais de Glace), both from 1909, he managed to make a name for himself in the humorist milieu for a short time. Yet he had already stopped living as a bohemian and flaneur—which was a prerequisite for earning that reputation—at the start of 1908.

After a boisterous and presumably extremely loud two-day Christmas celebration in 1907, the lease on Duchamp's apartment in Montmartre was terminated. At that point he left the artists' quarter and moved to Neuilly-sur-Seine, a quite peaceful suburb of Paris. His drawing *Menu de réveillon* (Christmas Eve Menu, 1907) shows a naked woman sitting astride a champagne saucer, her manner more brazen than festive. It can be construed as a proclamation of the last great celebration in Montmartre. Duchamp probably also moved to Neuilly in order to escape all the distractions of Montmartre. He was now able to concentrate entirely on his painting, which he had continued to pursue throughout his time as a caricaturist, although he was never totally satisfied with the results.

## 17. Cubism

Marcel Duchamp would later comment that what had attracted him to Cubism was the theory underpinning it and its intellectual approach. Yet he had always known that he did not merely want to interpret a theory. He explained that he understood Cubism as something that could help him to forge or find his own way. Consequently, he very much welcomed Pablo Picasso's aspiration to paint what the artist knew was there rather than painting what he could see. For Duchamp, the most innovatory aspect of Picasso and Georges Braque's development of the visual language of Cubism (in the period from 1908 to 1914 when they worked most closely together) was that an idea was being reintroduced in the image.

Even though Duchamp would later repeatedly accuse Cubism of remaining trapped in "retinal art"—a kind of art that aimed to appeal solely to the eye—the swift progression of his own Cubist phase represented something of a stepping stone to his art without painting or other forms of artistry. His first Cubist painting dating from 1911, the *Portrait de joueurs d'échecs* (Portrait of Chess Players), shows that he had understood and was able to apply Picasso and Braque's radical innovations. Flattening the visual space within the painting meant that the picture was no longer a window through which the viewer could peek, but instead represented an independent object; Duchamp mastered this technique as much as he succeeded in merging the subject of the picture with the background. But what is more notable in his portrait of the chess players is the changing perspective which presents objects in the picture from various angles. By concentrating on the heads of the chess players, Duchamp came very close to his objective of depicting the players' thought processes rather than the figures themselves.

Yet a different picture would prove more influential in his development as an artist, namely *Moulin à café* (Coffee Mill), which was painted at the end of 1911. Over the Christmas holidays, his brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon had requested a small work for his kitchen. Duchamp came up with the idea of painting a coffee mill, yet instead of depicting it in a purely matter-of-fact and objective manner, he described its mechanism: "You see the cog-wheel and you see the turning handle at the top, I also used the arrow showing the direction in which the hand turned, so you see there's already the idea of movement

in that, plus the idea of composing the machine in two parts which is the source of things that came later, in the *Large Glass*," explained Duchamp. As he later noted, it was this little picture that showed him a way of escaping traditional painting and opened "a window to something different"—to the coffee mill itself, one might say. What had been intended as no more than a gift for his brother actually ended up becoming a turning point for his art.

But before it got to that stage, in 1912, Duchamp created his Cubist masterpiece *Le Passage de la Vierge à la Mariée* (The Passage from Virgin to Bride). Like virtually all the pictures in his Cubist period he painted it by gaslight, which explains the painting's peculiarly green tint. While Duchamp sought to visualize the thought process itself with his chess players, *Le Passage de la Vierge à la Mariée* was all about change: he was trying to capture the very moment of change. But however well the painting had been executed, a canvas was no longer suitable for depicting or even just describing this momentum. In a world where phenomena such as X-rays, radioactivity, wireless telegraph, electromagnetism, the chronophotographic gun invented by physiologist Étienne-Jules Marey, as well as the first camera and the photographic studies of motion conducted by the pioneering Eadweard Muybridge had thrown doubt on long-held notions of the fundamental structure of things, it was no longer possible to use a brush, paint, and canvas to get at these "things" and life itself. It was necessary to develop new artistic processes that would find some way of connecting to the present day—all the more so given that Charles Darwin with his theory of evolution and Henri Bergson with his philosophy of life had understood life in general to be driven by chance and characterized by a continual process of change.

## 18. Hans Richter: *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947)

Dream sequence “Discs”, directed by Marcel Duchamp with music by John Cage (03:22 min)

Hans Richter’s film *Dreams That Money Can Buy* was shot on color 16-mm film with post-synchronized sound. He himself described it as “7 dreams shaped after the visions of 7 contemporary artists.” The feature film was completed in 1947 after three years’ work, at a total budget of \$25,000 (\$15,000 of which came from Peggy Guggenheim). As a vehicle for showcasing the works of Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, and Hans Richter, it featured a soundtrack by John Cage, Paul Bowles, and Darius Milhaud.

As director of the “Discs” dreams sequence, Duchamp embedded an assortment of his moving *Rotoreliefs* (*Disques optiques*) (Rotoreliefs (Optical Discs))—rotating optical discs he had created in 1935—into the action. The sequence is accompanied by music composed by John Cage for a “prepared piano.” The plot is both a critique and parody of Hollywood; after the protagonist, Joe, has secured a rental contract he has to find a way of paying the rent. When he discovers that “the eye is a camera”—in other words, gazing into his own eyes through the mirror allows him to see into his soul—he exploits this capacity and produces dreams for a series of bourgeois clients.

In Richter’s film, romantic clichés are mocked by a noir-like narrator, storefront mannequins are proffered “sterile flowers” as tokens of love, dreams are revealed within dreams, and in Man Ray’s sequence “Ruth, Roses and Revolvers” the cinemagoers are asked to imitate the actions being carried out by the characters. Although the pastiche is at times exaggerated, the film possesses some delightfully hallucinatory moments and astonishing combinations of image and sound, of which Duchamp’s rotating *Rotoreliefs* (*Disques optiques*) are the absolute highlight. The artist has integrated the rotoreliefs, which seem to be turning towards the viewer, into a cinematic version of his 1912 painting *Nu descendant un escalier, n° 2* (Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2). As in his painting, multiple duplicates of a naked woman (her breasts and genitalia were subsequently censored) are shown walking down some stairs. In the eyes of the audience, she is oscillating in time to John Cage’s piano every bit as much as the rotoreliefs.

## 20. Rotoreliefs

In 1935, Marcel Duchamp rented a stand at the Concours Lépine in Paris, a trade fair showcasing innovation that is still held in the French capital today. Located between one stand selling vegetable cutters and another for garbage compactors, he promoted his cardboard discs under the name *Rotoreliefs* (*Disques optiques*) (Rotoreliefs (Optical Discs)). When these discs were rotated on a gramophone they would create the illusion of a three-dimensional object, thanks to the patterns printed on both sides. Most of the motifs featured abstract figures, but everyday objects such as a champagne saucer or a boiled egg in an eggcup were also represented. The sets, consisting of six discs, were set in motion at the fair to generate an eye-catching, dizzying display, but they did not prove very popular among the visitors. Duchamp ultimately only sold two sets to friends and a single disc to a fairgoer. He did, however, receive an “honorable mention” in the Industrial Arts category.

Duchamp immediately admitted that his *Rotoreliefs* (*Disques optiques*) had been a commercial failure. The financial flop was exacerbated by the fact that 300 out of the 500 sets Duchamp had either produced himself or commissioned went missing during the Second World War. Yet there can be no doubt that he was serious about the venture, having submitted his invention to the Tribunal de Commerce de la Seine—a kind of patent office—in 1935.

These discs, featuring colorful lithography printed on card, illustrate Duchamp’s prolonged fascination with optical experiments, which had started in 1920 with his first optical, kinetic machine, *Rotative plaques verre* (Rotary Glass Plates). A photograph of the 1925 work *Rotative demi-sphère* (Rotary Demisphere) gives us a clue about this sustained interest. When *Rotative demi-sphère* is set in motion the circles seem to pulsate in our direction. On the copper collar that covered the object Duchamp engraved a phrase in French, the words of which were chosen on account of how they sounded together: “Rose Sélavy et moi esquivons les ecchymoses des esquimaux aux mots exquis.” (“Rose Sélavy and I escape from the bruises of Eskimos in exquisite words.”).

The visual effects of the *Rotoreliefs* (*Disques optiques*) are consistent with Duchamp’s fundamental approach of combining optical appearances with linguistic effects. In 1926, Rose Sélavy, in conjunction with Man Ray and



Marc Allegrét, transposed this technique to the short film *Anémic Cinéma*, which fluctuated between spiral images and rotating text for seven minutes.

## 22. Indifference

Marcel Duchamp's relationship to art stayed the same throughout his life in one respect: he found it utterly irrelevant whether works were labeled "good" or "bad" or "indifferent." "Bad" art was art too—and for that reason Duchamp never tired of pointing out that people should stop judging it. Appraising and categorizing art as "positive" or "negative" was a dead-end that Duchamp believed could only be avoided by developing a strategy of indifference. Yet he did not interpret indifference to mean any old lack of concern or interest, but rather an attitude that would enable him to reject categories such as "in good taste" and aesthetics.

Duchamp was alluding here to the Greek philosopher Pyrrho of Elis (c. 365–275 BCE). Pyrrho was something of an anti-Platonist who disputed Plato's theory of ideal forms and dismissed the existence of any kind of absolutes. Pyrrho did not believe it was possible to find absolute truth because, ultimately, nothing was completely true or false. Instead, he proposed that people should cultivate an attitude of "indifference" and "serenity" while avoiding judgments and firm convictions. The philosopher recommended that rather than being judgmental, we should be in a state of alertness that allows us to capture and preserve each and every fleeting moment. In short: observe, don't judge.

Duchamp took this maxim to heart in his work. Indications that he had read Pyrrho came in around 1913, when he began documenting moments of the "beauty of indifference" in his notes. Yet Duchamp's notion of indifference has nothing to do with being unconcerned by something or finding it inconsequential. When asked in 1966 if he was fed up of being labeled an iconoclast, he answered in an emphatically affable manner: "Oh no! Because I couldn't care less. The way I live doesn't depend on what others say about me. I don't owe anybody anything and nobody owes me anything." This attitude also made it easy for him to declare that his earlier statement—a painting that doesn't shock isn't worth painting—had been "a little rash."

Duchamp had relished the iconoclasm and nonconformity of Dadaism at the moment of its creation. The two editions of the Dadaist journal—*The Blind Man, No. 1: Independents' Number* (April 1917) and *The Blind Man, No. 2: P.B.T.* (May 1917)—bear witness to this. Embedded

within the New York Dada scene, the publishers Marcel Duchamp, Henri-Pierre Roché, and Beatrice Wood invited authors to write about any topic they wished. While the first edition mainly contained pieces by the artist and author Mina Loy, the second primarily addressed the rejection of Duchamp's work *Fountain* (1917/1964) by the board of the Society of Independent Artists, which Duchamp himself had helped to set up. Duchamp had anonymously submitted the urinal as a sculpture signed "R. Mutt," but it had been poorly received. Page 4 of the magazine contained a photo of the work taken by Alfred Stieglitz, while a text entitled "The Richard Mutt Case" stood on the facing page. The piece was probably written by Duchamp, but this has never been incontrovertibly proven.

It is, however, beyond doubt that Duchamp enjoyed the iconoclasm of his age, without ever making it an end in itself. He never aimed to shock people just for the sake of it. But if the shock induced them to reflect, Duchamp thought that was only right and proper—all the more so if the shock was unavoidable. In this regard, it becomes clear how Duchamp's assault on painting involved him developing a serene approach to the pictures, yet without ever becoming an anti-artist. He wanted to remain an artist within the realm of art, just one who was "without taste."

If **3 stoppages-étalon** (3 Standard Stoppages, 1913-14) can be regarded as the work most closely associated with the conscious application of chance as a creative technique, then **Pharmacie** (Pharmacy, 1914/1945) is to be viewed as the first of his picture readymades a year later. Duchamp created **Pharmacie** in the semi-darkness of twilight on a train to Rouen. Essentially, it consists of a cheap reproduction of a winter landscape to which he has added two drops of gouache. In the bottom right-hand corner, he has signed it with the words "Pharmacie. Marcel Duchamp 1914," claiming ownership through a simple signature. In 1914, Duchamp dripped paint onto three copies of this commercial print. He explained that these prints, which he had bought in an art-supply store, had been signed by an unknown artist "of the worst kind." In contrast to the Mona Lisa five years later, which Duchamp retouched by drawing a moustache and goatee on the subject (**L.H.O.O.Q.**), in this case the signature merely refers to the work's authorship.

The 1919 work **Tonsure** shows not only that Duchamp was on the hunt for fresh objects to be integrated into art, but that he was also keen to create a new or different

appearance for artists: the photograph by Man Ray shows Marcel Duchamp from the rear—complete with a pipe in his mouth and a five-pointed star shaved into the back of his head. With the star itself reminiscent of a monk's tonsure, and in conjunction with the title of the work, it is logical to conclude that Duchamp was seeking to put his masculinity to the test by moving towards the desexualized manliness of a priest. In that respect, the end to painting in Duchamp's oeuvre corresponded with an end to the virile painter and the increasing presence of Rose Sélavy, his female alter ego.

Rose Sélavy allowed indifference to feature in Duchamp's work, not as an absence of interest in gender but rather as something that makes male and female seem "in-different." And thus the 1924 work **Obligations pour la roulette de Monte Carlo** (Monte Carlo Bond) is signed twice: "Rose Sélavy" is printed bottom left in ink, while "Marcel Duchamp" is written bottom right. The work has thereby become a gender-specific readymade of indifference by Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy. The collage seeks to parody a financial document in a system for playing roulette, yet comes complete with earnest-looking articles of incorporation that Duchamp had printed on the reverse. Duchamp named himself as the administrator who wanted to devise a corporation that would break the bank in Monte Carlo. Ultimately, however, he was forced to admit that his ingenious system did not work, and he had never actually really won anything.

In terms of Duchamp's relationship with art and those who create it, Man Ray's portrait of Duchamp on the bond is of greater interest: the photograph, transposed onto a roulette wheel, shows Duchamp—doused in shaving foam that makes him resemble a faun or a devil—as a fairly ridiculous figure who has become ossified by pomp; it is also entirely in keeping with Duchamp's keen sense of irony. It is only strange that despite this ironic element in Duchamp's portrait, the work itself does not come across as ironic in the least.

## 24. Perspectives

Marcel Duchamp's series of mirrors (each titled *Miroir*, 1964) can be categorized according to the wider contexts of his oeuvre: readymades, indifferences, and questions of identity. More specifically, the mirrors can also be related to a very distinct line running through Duchamp's art and life. While the readymades are plotted on this line before an abstract or abstracting visual language, the mirrors are a result of fleeing from the ostensible truth of photography, or rather the result of a fundamental criticism of photography itself.

Today we know that photographs can lie, thanks not only to an analysis of the Nazi and Stalinist visual propaganda machines but also to the manipulated images used in advertising. Duchamp believed that his exploration of photography had to start, above all, with an investigation into its capacity to transform. Man Ray's portraits charting Duchamp's metamorphosis into Rose Sélavy testify to this. One of the ways in which photography could achieve this transformation was by replicating the subject. For that reason, June 21, 1917—the day on which Duchamp, accompanied by Beatrice Wood and Francis Picabia, took a trip to the Broadway Photo Shop in New York—marks not just a date in his life but also in his art: with his friends, Marcel Duchamp had several portraits taken sitting in front of a mirror with multiple foldout mirror sections (*Portrait multiple de Marcel Duchamp*) (Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp)). In the late nineteenth century, the camera used here in combination with a system of hinged mirrors made it possible to produce high-quality photographic portraits in large numbers. This “multigraph” technique was also employed in France in order to produce a series of portraits of criminals with only one exposure. The role of the photographic subject was thus reduced in scope and mechanized—a process that suited Duchamp in every respect. Postcards had first been introduced to Germany in the 1890s, while the United States Congress had passed laws at the turn of the twentieth century permitting photography on one side of a postcard with the other reserved for the address. This heralded the dawn of a new industry, and one in which Duchamp would become involved by producing his own postcards.

Set against this backdrop, the 1964 mirrors represent both a late but innovative form of readymades and a critique of photography. In contrast to the earlier ready-

mades, Duchamp broadened his methodology to devise a completely new concept for these signed mirrors: a ready-made that is constantly evolving and actively interacts with the surrounding space and with the viewer. The signature of the artist accompanies each view of the face reflected in the mirrors. When Duchamp wrote his name on these mirrors, he declared: “I am signing future ready-made portraits.”

Duchamp devised an entirely new genre of portraiture, a work of art that was constantly changing and held infinite possibilities. He allowed the viewer to complete it by adding their own likeness to this reflecting wall.

## 26. Chess

In a speech to a gathering of the New York State Chess Association in 1952, Marcel Duchamp explained how his personal contacts had led him to conclude that while not all artists may be chess players, every chess player is certainly an artist. In his short speech, he described chess in terms of its visual and imaginative beauty, akin to the beauty of poetry. Whereas Duchamp's words seem to communicate conciliation between chess and art, in the beginning the very opposite was true. In letters to friends in 1919, Duchamp explained that he was growing less and less interested in painting. Instead, he played chess all night and day, and nothing held his interest as much as the search for the best chess move.

In this room, we can examine the turning point in Duchamp's relationship to chess and art. We see the double portrait that Man Ray made of Marcel Duchamp and Vitaly Halberstadt in 1933. A year earlier, the two had published the book *L'Opposition et les cases conjuguées sont réconciliées* (Opposition and Sister Squares are Reconciled)—certainly a book that is less often actually read than it is mentioned. Halberstadt was an author of numerous works on chess, and in this book he and Duchamp proposed an unwieldy, rather boring theory relating to extremely rare chess endgames. Duchamp himself said that chess players would have little interest in the theory, as the problems described in the book were indeed so rare that one could even describe them as utopian. For him, this practical improbability was what made the book so humorous. Regardless of its actual applicability, the theory did hold water—only no one was interested in it. In this sense, the theory incorporated the same indifference that Duchamp was always searching for—and not only in his own life. He had always been interested in chess as a motif in his works, such as his 1943 *Chevalier d'échecs* (Chess Knight). He also designed his own chess pieces as well as his own "Pocket Chess Set" (*Échiquier de poche*) in the same year.

Duchamp's chess play is often interpreted as a form of retreat into a private sphere away from the world of art—an approach that can certainly be applied to the beginning of his intense relationship with chess. Duchamp played a great deal of chess during his early days in New York, and his game became increasingly professional after he joined the Marshall Chess Club in 1916. He would spend many

a night until three in the morning playing chess at the club building near Washington Square Park, and it was there that he came up with the idea of pursuing a professional chess career.

During his nine-month stay in Buenos Aires in 1919, Duchamp initially had no one with whom he could play, so instead he studied forty games of the great Cuban chess master José Raúl Capablanca and could virtually replay them in his sleep. It was also during this time that he carved his first original chess pieces. Whereas his search for a way of escaping reality and the world is what first led Duchamp to chess, he increasingly began to realize that it also offered him a means of developing his other side—his rational Cartesianism. "Chess is a marvelous piece of Cartesianism," Duchamp told his biographer Calvin Tomkins: "The beautiful combinations that chess players invent—you don't see them coming, but afterward there is no mystery—it's just pure logical conclusion." Attitudes are completely different among artists, of course. Most likely, Duchamp was pleased to juxtapose these competing attitudes, and, in the interest of completeness, carried out this thought to the end.

The anti-rationality Duchamp had found for his art in authors such as Alfred Jarry and Raymond Roussel was countered in his chess games with the method philosophy of René Descartes. Descartes was one of the founders of the modern sciences, and it was only once Descartes' Western rationalism had entered Duchamp's life that it could then be described as "complete." But what really drew Duchamp to chess was the fact that "its most brilliant innovations took place within [a] framework of strict and unbendable rules."

## 27. The Large Glass

*La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (Le Grand Verre)* (The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915–1923/1965), is considered one of Marcel Duchamp's principal works and is usually referred to as *Le Grand Verre* or *The Large Glass*. The glass—2.8 meters high and 1.7 meters wide—is simply too large to take in at a single glance. Duchamp worked on this piece from 1915 to 1923 while he was in New York. It consists of two vertically mounted panes of glass. The entire composition has shattered and is now sandwiched between two sheets of glass set in a metal frame. The upper panel is known as the "Bride's Domain," whereas the lower segment is dedicated to the bachelors ("Bachelors' Apparatus"). After the *Le Grand Verre* was exhibited in the Brooklyn Museum in 1926, it shattered during transport. It was painstakingly repaired and is now part of the permanent collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Duchamp authorized replicas to be made of *Le Grand Verre*. The first of these was produced in 1961 for an exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and a second was completed in 1965 for the Tate in London. When constructing the second replica seen here, the artist Richard Hamilton deliberately omitted the signs of wear it had accumulated during the fifty years since it was originally exhibited, and his version follows Duchamp's original concept. Instead of working from photographs of the original work and in order to recreate Duchamp's creative process as accurately as possible, Hamilton relied on the notes and drawings in *La Boîte verte* (The Green Box). After completing the project, Hamilton explained: "Mental effort was exerted only in the direction of detective work, deductions from signs marking a path to be followed—the creative anguish was erased from the trail." When Duchamp arrived in London in 1966 for the opening of his exhibition, he announced he would sign the reconstruction as well as Hamilton's four glass studies. He wrote on their reverse sides: "pour copie conforme" ("for faithful replica").

Hamilton was wise to concentrate on the drawings in *La Boîte verte*, for they offered him a guide to complete the work in detail. There is probably no other twentieth-century artwork that has been interpreted so many times, yet none of these interpretations has ever gained wide acceptance. A maxim postulated by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze can be useful when observing and attempting to

interpret the work: "There is no understanding, there are only various levels of humor." Deleuze, together with Félix Guattari, who coined the terms "desiring machine" and "body without organs," described *Le Grand Verre* as such a body without organs in their principal work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972). If one views a body without organs as a never-mature, never-complete body, then this can certainly be said of *Le Grand Verre*.

Duchamp insisted that *Le Grand Verre* was not a painting. In *La Boîte verte* he wrote, "Use 'delay' instead of picture or painting." Here, he was not interested in the various meanings of the word "delay," but for him the closest would be "a delay in glass as you would say a poem in prose or a spittoon in silver." *Le Grand Verre* was undoubtedly meant as a mix of verbal and visual concepts, which is why Duchamp provided the notes and designs for *Le Grand Verre* in *La Boîte verte* in 1934, eleven years after he had completed the former. The latter, a limited-edition square box bound in green suede, contains facsimile reproductions—just as torn and snipped to pieces as the originals—of ninety-four notes, drawings, and photographs. The notes were left unbound, thus allowing their relationship to the reader to be determined by chance.

Despite all its contingencies and indeterminacies, *Le Grand Verre* focuses on one theme: the machinery of desire, the sexual urge. "The bride is basically a motor," Duchamp said: She runs on "love gasoline (a secretion of the bride's sexual glands)." Without going into the details of the motor's ignition mechanism, we can say for certain that the bride occupies the top panel of the work, whereas the bachelors are to be found in the lower panel. This arrangement reflects Duchamp's clear appreciation of hierarchy: "The bride has a life-center—the bachelors have not. They live on coal or other raw material drawn not from them but from their not-them." The bachelors live an obsequious, parasitic life. They are incapable of solidarity, of forming a whole, and are bound by a strict determinism. The bride, together with her cloud-like construct, enjoys freedom of choice, whereas the bachelors can only react and obey.

Everything else about this work can be explained by Duchamp's understanding of art. He believed artists carry out only a part of the creative process, and the work only becomes a complete work of art once it has been viewed. In the end, Duchamp left it up to viewers to decide whether the bride truly had been stripped of her clothes—or not.

## 29. Gender

One of Marcel Duchamp's best-known works is based on a simple gesture. By drawing a goatee on a poor-quality reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Mona Lisa* (1503), the woman had become a man. As the artist would later recall, he also saw the *Mona Lisa* as a man from the moment of his gesture: *The Mona Lisa with moustache and goatee* in his work *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919/1958) was thus no longer a woman but a man.

If the categories of man and woman are so easy to confuse, even reverse, then there must be something not quite right about them. They must represent a visual façade more than any true meaning. Rather than deep identities, they are mere sign systems and structures derived from repetition. In his art, Duchamp would go on to examine in detail the elements we habitually draw on to form the structural categories man and woman: from the isolated beard in the work *Moustache et Barbe de L.H.O.O.Q.* (*Moustache and Beard of L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1941) to *Jaquette* (*Jacket*, 1956) to *Ciné-Sketch: Adam et Eve (Marcel Duchamp et Bronia Perlmutter)* (1924–25), a photograph by Man Ray in which Marcel Duchamp poses as Adam and Bronia Perlmutter as Eve.

Duchamp's intervention in the cheap reproduction of the famous Renaissance portrayal of ideal female beauty did not stop with the beard. He also gave the work a title he wanted understood as wordplay: *L.H.O.O.Q.* If one reads the letters in French or in any other language, astounding things happen, the artist explained. He himself provided a French interpretation: "elle a chaud au cul" ("she has a hot ass"). A rapid reading of the title as a single word in English sounds like "look"—a direct pointer to the relationship between artist and viewer that was a matter of interest to Duchamp throughout his life.

Yet we need not attach too much significance to the myriad speculations over the meaning of the letters and the *Mona Lisa* figure—they are something to be enjoyed. The choice of motif, for example, could be Duchamp's hidden greeting to his friend Guillaume Apollinaire, who had been wrongfully arrested several years earlier in connection with the theft of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre.

The situation is rather different with Duchamp's ready-made *... Pliant ... de voyage* (*Traveler's Folding Item*, 1916/1964), a cover for an Underwood typewriter. Its association with media history is also much clearer, for as the media

theorist Friedrich Kittler remarked, a typewriter marks the convergence of a profession, a machine, and the gender. The gender refers to women and the profession is that of stenographer and typist, a job that—in the United States at least—was completely performed by women in 1916, when Duchamp is thought to have produced the first version of *... Pliant ... de voyage* (of which neither an object nor a photo has survived). According to official American statistics, women comprised as much as 80.6 percent of all stenographers and typists in 1910. When the statistics were first collected in 1870, only 4.7 percent had been female. But the loss of so many young men in the American Civil War opened up new opportunities for women to work in government administration, postal services, and stenography. Although at the time it had not been particularly statistically relevant, the First World War would then trigger the ultimate explosion, and in Europe too: the typewriter not only made typing a female activity, it also heralded the development of a whole range of technology in the women's domain because they were able to operate the machinery so much more skillfully than the men who had preceded them.

Marcel Duchamp could not have failed to spot the numerous postcards depicting beautiful women seated behind typewriters, such as the series produced by the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. In that era, attractive young women were synonymous with typewriters on postcards. By the time Duchamp created a miniature version of the Underwood cover for his work *Boîte-en-Valise* (*Box in a Valise*) in 1941, in the middle of the Second World War, women had completed the takeover process of the typewriter and its operation. Legions of women, and only women, were working in army headquarters where all the strategic data was coordinated and processed.

Duchamp's illustrations of a jacket (*Jaquette*) and vest (*Gilet pour Benjamin Peret*, 1958) can be regarded as counterparts of the now-female typewriter. These items of clothing had originally been designed for men, and indeed at that time they still belonged to men as they had not yet been hijacked by Marlene Dietrich. The fact that Duchamp painted the jacket so precisely can be interpreted as a double farewell: simultaneously taking leave of masculinity and painting.

## 30. Sex

Marcel Duchamp regarded the matter of biological sex as a roleplay. Man Ray's photographs of the artist from 1924–25 clearly demonstrate that, as far as Duchamp was concerned, it was a game that began "at the beginning," with scenes showing Duchamp posing as Adam while Dada artist Bronia Perlmutter embodies Eve. Yet he believed that *white* men had in fact reached the end of the line rather than the beginning, and that the same applied to *white* male painters. It was no longer possible for the thing that constituted life, namely change, to emanate from *white* men; the act of becoming could only originate from women. Man Ray similarly documented Duchamp's metamorphosis into Rose Sélavy, transformed from a coarse drag queen to a refined lady, until ultimately Rose stood beside Marcel as an equal.

But for Duchamp, this did not yet encapsulate women. Having initially tried out the purely external step of dressing as a woman, he started looking into the issue in more detail following the First World War. André Breton, who had returned to Paris from New York, organized the exhibition *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* in the French capital in a bid to reestablish Surrealism as a major intellectual and cultural force to be reckoned with—and he invited Duchamp to be his partner and come up with a concept for the event. It is true that the exhibition they jointly presented stood no chance in the face of more recent movements such as Existentialism in Europe and Abstract Expressionism in the United States. Yet it turned out to be the last big celebration of the "revolution of the mind" envisioned by Breton, which the Surrealists had achieved by introducing a "dreamed reality" into the general and aesthetic horizon of experience.

The exhibition prompted Duchamp to launch an investigative series on partial objects of the sexes that would continue through to the 1960s. He had designed and produced the exhibition catalogue, including a limited edition. Duchamp and Enrico Donati had bought foam rubber breasts for the purpose, affixed them to the front cover, and framed them with irregularly shaped pieces of velvet. Donati later recalled that they had painted all the nipples themselves. The words "prière de toucher" on the reverse side of the book—meaning "please touch"—positively invited contact with the partial object, which certainly created something of a stir.

Quite apart from the numerous reactions to the rubber breasts on the catalogue cover, sculptural bosoms can be seen as the starting point for at least four works by Duchamp. These plaster casts are modeled on human body parts and coated in bronze and zinc. The 1950 work **Not a Shoe** is the first in the series. It raises the question of whether we would even associate a shoe with this object if it were not part of the title. It could be plenty of other things instead. But when Duchamp simply states that it is not a shoe, this is sufficient to define the way we look at it. This is Duchamp's version of the effect a language has, how words direct and determine our view of reality, as formulated during the same time by ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.

In contrast, **Feuille de vigne femelle** (Female Fig Leaf) from 1950/1951 gets to the point without resorting to a negation. This work is a life cast of a model's shaven vulva. The action of shaving must have reminded Duchamp of the scene in the photograph *Tonsure* (1919), which he had devised with Man Ray. It was doubtless for this reason that Duchamp offered Man Ray one of the two versions of **Feuille de vigne femelle** thirty-one years later.

**Objet Dard** (Dart Object), dating from 1951/1962, seems to be a mixture of a play on words (like **Not a Shoe**) and something more explicit (like **Feuille de vigne femelle**). The French title **Objet Dard** plays with the two concepts *objet d'art* (piece of art) and *dard* (dart). The word "dart" suggests male aggression, but the limp phallic form could equally be a reference to impotence. **Objet Dard** is made from a section of the mold for **Étant donnés : 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage** (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas, 1946–66) that was situated directly under the breast of the figure and held the "skin" in place. After Duchamp had completed the mold he destroyed it, and one of the shattered fragments gave him the idea of using it as a work of art. In doing so, he was reversing the biblical origin story of Eve being created from Adam's rib, fashioning instead an emphatically male symbol from a rib-like structure that he had taken from a female figure.

The 1954/1963 work **Coin de chasteté** (Wedge of Chastity) is regarded as the logical zenith of Duchamp's erotic objects. The work consists of two parts: a bronze wedge and a section of dental putty that resembles the color and texture of flesh. Just as the wedge penetrates the second element through a slit-like opening, the "wedge of chastity" is trying to avert this happening. The original

was created from plaster and dental putty in 1954, when a sixty-seven-year-old Duchamp had just married his second wife, Alexina (Teeny) Matisse. As Duchamp explained to Pierre Cabanne in 1968: “It was my wedding present to her. We still have it on my table. We usually take it with us, like a wedding ring.”

In his attempt to express the coupling of the male and female—or positive and negative—shapes, Duchamp was assisted by the dental technician Sacha Maruchess, who was more than merely his assistant: in the matter of the biological sexes, he was also responsible for the practical, mechanical moment that Duchamp translated into a kind of overproduction for his 1964 work *Bouche-évier* (Sink Stopper). As the cast of a sink stopper that Duchamp had first designed for his bathroom in Cadaqués, Spain, *Bouche-évier* was reproduced in a series of 100 medals. The International Numismatic Agency later published an edition of 300 as collector’s items known as the Marcel Duchamp Art Medal; in the art boom of the early 1960s, this was interpreted as an example of Duchamp’s ironic commercialization.

The culmination of Duchamp’s exploration, not only of the biological sexes but also of art in general, comes with his last major piece: *Étant donnés : 1° la chute d’eau, 2° le gaz d’éclairage*. After the work had been presented posthumously to the public at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in July 1969, the artist Jasper Johns described it as “the strangest work of art in any museum.” Duchamp had probably spent more than twenty years working on it, from around 1946 to 1966. It stemmed from his relationship with Maria Martins, which would prove to be his most stirring and touching encounter with a woman. As the wife of the Brazilian ambassador, she was at the heart of society in Washington’s diplomatic circles, while also active as a renowned sculptor and part of the New York art scene with her own apartment in the city. Duchamp was a frequent guest in the New York apartment, which is where he came to know and cherish her thirteen-year-old daughter Nora.

It is Nora Lobo whom we should thank for the bas-relief study for *Étant donnés : 1° la chute d’eau, 2° le gaz d’éclairage*. Until the middle of the 1970s, the work was just as unknown as the drawing from 1947 that had preceded it: *Étant donnés : Maria, la chute d’eau et le gaz d’éclairage* (Given: Maria, the Waterfall and the Illuminating Gas), which shows a realistically drawn naked woman

without a head. It was then that Pontus Hultén, the director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, first loaned the drawing as well as the bas-relief study of the same figure from Nora Lobo. The material used for the study is as interesting as the inscription on its reverse. A translucent cowskin has been painted on the inside and then mounted on plaster. Duchamp has written on the reverse: “Cette dame appartient a Maria Martins / avec toutes mes affections / Marcel Duchamp 1948-1949” (“This lady is owned by Maria Martins / with all my affection / Marcel Duchamp 1948/1949”).

Although Nora Lobo described the love affair between her mother and Duchamp as more cerebral than physical, it was Maria Martins’ headless body that lay in the center of *Étant donnés*, as can still be seen in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



## 31. Rose Sélavy

Rose Sélavy appears in Marcel Duchamp's oeuvre in photographs, as an author and co-author, as well as being credited as the creator of publications and the animated film *Anémic Cinéma* (1926). On the choice of his female alter ego, Duchamp later declared that—wanting to change his identity—he initially considered taking on a Jewish name. Himself a Catholic, the switch to a different religion alone appeared to him a significant change. When he couldn't find a Jewish name he liked, however, he hit on the idea of changing sexes—which, he concluded, was actually much easier. The fact that Rose and Rosa are also Jewish names, or elements thereof, may have been a remnant of his original idea of changing religions.

Yet, the works attributed to Rose Sélavy testify to the fact that conceiving of her simply as the artist's female alter ego does little to explain her full significance. By all means, Rose led a life of her own—that is, she was more than a mere vessel into which Duchamp planted his ideas. The story of Rose Sélavy first begins with the history of her name.

*Fresh Widow* of 1920 was the first work Duchamp signed as Rose Sélavy (the second "r" was added to the first name later on). In black adhesive paper letters, the artist formed the text "Fresh Widow Copyright Rose Selavy 1920" on the windowsill. The name Rose Sélavy is evidently an allusion to the well-known French saying "Eros, c'est la vie," which means "Love, that's life." *Fresh Widow* was the first of several works Duchamp carried out under this pseudonym, all distinguished by cleverly devised oscillations between verbal and visual wordplays. *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* (The Brawl at Austerlitz) of 1921, another small-scale window, wittily refers to the railway station Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris and the Napoleonic battle it is named after. This word-image complexity culminates in the ready-made *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* of the same year.

"Rose" had meanwhile become "Rose." The second "r" is a wonderful embodiment of an infatuation with carrying wordplays to the point of absurdity, which was the hallmark of New York Dada—a short-lived offshoot of the nihilistic European art movement—of which Rose Sélavy became the figurehead. The additional "r," however, initially appeared in that context in 1920, when she signed Francis Picabia's collage *L'Œil cacodylate* (The Cacodylic Eye). Thus, she escaped sole ownership by Marcel

Duchamp and defected to another artist. Along with Duchamp and Man Ray, Picabia was one of the active exponents of New York Dada.

And Rose would not stop with Picabia. She also signed some of Man Ray's works. This is hardly surprising; after all, the photographer was her first portraitist. *Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette* (Beautiful Breath, Veil Water) of 1921 was the first work by Duchamp in which Rose Sélavy had a face. The work consists primarily of a Rigaud-brand perfume bottle to which Duchamp and Man Ray made a number of changes that can be considered works in and of themselves. Man Ray had taken a portrait photograph of Duchamp in the clothing of Rose Sélavy, thus producing the first visual record of the artist's female alter ego. Now Rose was no longer just a name, but also had a face: the face of Duchamp as a remarkably clumsy-looking drag queen. And she was also joined by a new name: Belle Haleine. Duchamp and Man Ray also made a number of changes to the inscription on the bottle's label. The original "Eau de Violette" (Violet Water) now read "Eau de Voilette" (Veil Water). The idea of concealment had thus made its way into Belle Haleine, a process Duchamp heightened by extending the "R" for Rigaud to "RS" for Rose Sélavy.

But Rose Sélavy was not only a likeness, a filmmaker, and an author, she was also a "precision optics specialist," as Duchamp declared. The 1920 work *Rotative plaques verre* (Rotary Glass Plates) represented a kind of next step in the research into moving objects that he had begun in 1913 with *Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel). Driven by an electric motor, the rotation of the glass plates causes the spirals painted on them to appear as concave or convex surfaces, depending on the speed of the rotation. A machine was thus capable of producing opposite phenomena.

However, Rose Sélavy did not remain trapped in the role of author or expert either. Over time, she became Duchamp's equal. The title *de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy (Boîte-en-Valise)* (From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy (Box in a Valise)) brings the two names together on equal terms. He/she appear side by side and become one, complicating more than just the matters of identity and gender: the concern was no longer with man or woman but with both simultaneously.

*Boîte-en-Valise* is a kind of mixed-media assemblage containing several of Duchamp's works. The underlying idea was that of the portable museum. Rather than creat-

ing something new, the artist wanted to bring together pictures and objects he found interesting in as small a space as possible. Duchamp produced a number of valises between 1935 and 1941, also containing three-dimensional replicas of his works. Until 1966 published in series of seven (A to G), the boxes contained between sixty-nine and eighty reproductions. The color reproductions were made with a printing technique known as pochoir, which uses stencils to apply paint to black-and-white reproductions. Every pochoir image is thus unique.

At around the same time in 1935 when Duchamp was working on the boxes in the valise, Walter Benjamin published his essay "The Artwork in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Whereas Benjamin lamented the loss of the artwork's aura, Duchamp had already reconciled himself with it. In fact, he was glad that the critics of the time did not regard the printed reproductions of his works as images on a par with artworks. He considered them art precisely because, as miniaturized copies, they defied the usual conception of an artwork's singularity. And Rose Sélavy would have agreed. After all, like Duchamp, she herself had become a readymade through the box in the valise.

## 32. Chance

Chance—the unpredictable and thus incalculable—does not enjoy a good reputation in the history of Western mathematical thought. Incomprehensible by way of either probability theory or genetics, in the early twentieth century, chance became a monster above all in physics. "God doesn't play dice," was one of Albert Einstein's maxims. Marcel Duchamp, however, saw chance as an opportunity. He respected its interventions in his work and life and ultimately came to love it, as he himself said. Duchamp regarded chance as the only way of escaping the control of rationality. Chance alone is capable of expressing what is unique and unpredictable about us, he observed, thus joining the ranks of forerunners such as Stéphane Mallarmé. In his poem *Un coup de dés* (A Throw of the Dice, 1897), Mallarmé not only initiated modernism in literature, but, with his chance throw, also erected a "cathedral" in poetry. And with non-concrete words and ideas, he prepared the coincidence of concrete things that Duchamp would develop further in his work by using humorous wordplay and visual puns.

It is easy to retrace the advent of chance in Duchamp's work concept, from **3 stoppages-étalon** (3 Standard Stoppages, 1913-14)—a kind of prototypical readymade related to his composition *Erratum Musical* (Musical Misprint, 1913), which already alludes to an accidental printing error in its title—to photographic works such as *Piston de courant d'air* (Draft Pistons, 1914).

**3 stoppages-étalon** can be considered the work in which Duchamp first deliberately incorporated the concept of chance into his artistic process. When asked in 1961 which of his works was most important to him, this is the one he would name. It was in this work, he said, that he had tapped the mainspring of his future. It had provided him a means of escaping art's traditional methods of expression, thus paving the conceptual way for the readymade. A few years later, in 1964, he would add that he carried out the experiment of the **3 stoppages-étalon** to "imprison" forms obtained through "his" chance. At the same time, he explained, the fall of the three threads used for this work changed the unit of length, one meter, from a straight line to a curved line. This Duchamp understood as a way of questioning the classical definition according to which a straight line is the shortest route between two points. He thought of the **3 stoppages-étalon** explicitly

as a “pataphysical” matter. On the one hand, he was therefore lending expression to his admiration for the French writer Alfred Jarry, who had invented so-called pataphysics in the late nineteenth century, proclaiming it a “science of imaginary solutions.” On the other hand, Duchamp was also joining Jarry’s research program, the aim of which was to investigate the laws governing exceptions and to declare a universe parallel to the existing one.

Duchamp’s complex construction comprises a number of elements all kept in a wooden box:

- 1) Three threads, each one meter long, glued to Prussian blue canvas cut into three strips. The three canvas strips are mounted on three plates of glass.
- 2) Three wooden slats, each shaped along one edge to match the curves of the threads.
- 3) A black leather label with “3 stoppages-étalon / 1913-14” printed on it in gold lettering on one end of each canvas strip.

The back of each canvas strip is printed with the following information, which is visible through the glass on which the canvas is mounted: “Un mètre de fil droit, horizontal, tombé d’un mètre de haut (3 stoppages-étalon; appartenant à Marcel Duchamp) / 1913-14.” (“A straight horizontal thread one meter in length falls from a height of one meter (3 Standard Stoppages; apparently belonging to Marcel Duchamp / 1913-14.”). In other words, Duchamp included a detailed description of the production process in the artwork itself.

In this way, Duchamp sought to present the production process (whether guided by chance or not) in its own right. This can be understood as a strategic manner of proceeding that is meant to show how an idea can turn into reality in the form of a work: you take something concrete and apply non-concrete ideas to it to see what will come about as a result. In 1914, Duchamp would continue his experimentation with shifts in form brought about by chance in photographic works.

During the preparations for *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (Le Grand Verre)* (The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915-1923/1965) the artist took three photographs which he entitled *Piston de courant d’air*. To this end, he placed a square of dotted gauze in front of a window through which air was blowing. He described his experimental approach as follows: “I wanted to register the changes in the surface of the square, and use in my *Glass* the curves of the lines

distorted by the wind.” He captured the fleeting traces of the moving air in three exposures. The calculated use of random mechanisms—here, for example, the unpredictable gusts of wind—thus became a targeted conceptual method.

Duchamp used chance in a wide variety of ways. For his 1916 readymade *À bruit secret* (With Hidden Noise), for example, he would ask his friend Walter Arensberg to put a small object in the ball of twine without telling anyone what object he had chosen. “Before I finished it Arensberg put something inside the ball of twine, and never told me what it was, and I didn’t want to know,” Duchamp recalled—and to this day the identity of the object that rattles in the interior of *À bruit secret* when it is shaken has remained a secret.

Duchamp had already begun experimenting with sound before *À bruit secret*. In fact, sound and chance had made their way into his oeuvre at much the same time. *Erratum Musical*, his first musical work, is a score for three voices developed by a random method. During a New Year’s visit to his home town Rouen in 1913, he composed the vocal piece with his sisters Yvonne and Magdeleine, who were both musicians. They drew twenty-five notes out of a hat. The “lyrics” are a dictionary definition of the word *imprimer* (to print): “Faire une empreinte; marquer des traits; une figure sur une surface; imprimer un sceau sur cire.” (“To make an imprint; mark with lines; a figure on a surface; impress a seal on wax.”)

The title *Erratum Musical* can be translated as “musical misprint.” The “lyrics” and the title thus evoke a dialectical relationship between seeing and hearing. Taken from a dictionary, the “lyrics” are themselves already a readymade. In the ultimate performance of the musical, the process of listening is “visualized” in an imaginary landscape—as if the music became visible through its vocal expression. The aesthetic experience of listening to a piece of music is transformed into the experience of an abstract space. When *Erratum Musical* was first performed by the Dada artist Marguerite Buffet in 1920, the members of the audience were so indignant that they reacted with restless rustling, calls, and whistles.

Duchamp used chance as an actor to confront general certainties with the shadowy realm of incalculable uncertainties. In his work *Porte, 11 rue Larrey, Paris* of 1927, he added a further dimension. The original had been the door to his studio at 11 rue Larrey in Paris; in the work, the one

door serves two entrances. When it swings on its hinges, creaking for want of oil, it closes the entrance to one room while opening the entrance to another—thus contradicting the French proverb “Il faut qu’une porte soit ouverte ou fermée” (“A door must either be open or closed”).

Duchamp, thus, not only robbed a proverb of its clarity and ushered it into the shadowy realm of unclarity, but also raised the question of authorship to a new level: he had the door made by a carpenter according to his own specifications. Traditionally, the craftsman is thought of as the author in such cases, because they have made the object. Here, however, it was Duchamp’s ideas and plans that prompted the craftsman to make the door in the first place. In this way, Duchamp can be understood as saying that artists do not have to make their works themselves; the significance of their role lies in their thoughts and their ideas.

## Marcel Duchamp

1887

Henri Robert Marcel Duchamp is born on July 28 in Blainville-Crevon in Normandy, France, to Eugène Duchamp and Marie Caroline Lucie Duchamp (née Nicolle). He is the fourth of seven children (Gaston, Raymond, Marcel, Suzanne, Yvonne, and Magdeleine). The seventh sibling died at an early age. Alongside him, Gaston (later known as Jacques Villon), Raymond (later obtaining the surname Duchamp-Villon), and Suzanne Duchamp become artists.

1898

Learns to play chess.

1902

Executes his first known painting *Paysage à Blainville* (Landscape at Blainville).  
Draws *Bec Auer (Hanging Gas Lamp)*, which becomes a recurring theme in Duchamp's later work.

1904

Graduates from the Lycée Pierre Corneille in Rouen. Moves to Paris and studies painting at the Académie Julian.

1905

Volunteers for military service and works for a printer in Rouen.

1907

Makes caricature drawings, five of which are exhibited at the Salon des humoristes in Paris, marking Duchamp's first exhibition. His caricature drawings are later published in the satirical journals *Le Courrier Français*, *Le Rire*, and *Le Témoin*.

1909

Exhibits paintings and drawings at the Salon des Indépendants, Paris; Salon d'Automne, Paris; and Société de Peinture Moderne, Rouen.

1910

Begins lifelong friendship with artist and poet Francis Picabia.

1911

Makes drawings and paintings related to the theme of chess.  
Executes his first painting featuring machine imagery, *Moulin à café* (Coffee Mill), for Raymond Duchamp-Villon's kitchen in Puteaux.  
His only child Yvonne Serré (also known as Yo Savy or Yo Sermayer) is born. They meet for the first time fifty-five years later.

1912

Visits Munich for two months after withdrawing his painting *Nu descendant un escalier, n° 2* (Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2) from the Salon des Indépendants following disagreements with the hanging committee. During his stay, Duchamp paints *Le Passage de la Vierge à la Mariée* (The Passage from Virgin to Bride) and other important works.  
Artist and critic Walter Pach selects four works by Duchamp for inclusion in the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* (Armory Show) in New York in spring 1913.

1913

Except for a few works over the next six years, Duchamp abandons painting altogether.  
Drawings become mechanical renderings, and the work *3 stoppages-étalon* (3 Standard Stoppages) introduces chance to art.  
Works as a librarian at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris.  
Mounts a bicycle fork and wheel upside down on a wooden stool (*Roue de bicyclette* (Bicycle Wheel)), marking Duchamp's first investigations into what will later be known as readymades.  
At the Armory Show in New York, *Nu descendant un escalier, n° 2* becomes the center of attention and controversy.

1914

Completes *La Boîte de 1914* (The Box of 1914) containing reproductions of written notes and a drawing. Adds touches of color to a commercial print and calls it *Pharmacie* (Pharmacy). Purchases a bottle dryer at a Paris department store, inventing the readymade *Porte-bouteilles, ou Séchoir à Bouteilles, ou Hérisson* (Bottle Rack or Bottle Dryer or Hedgehog).

1915

First visit to New York, which lasts until 1918. Becomes part of the circle of artists and poets around Walter and Louise Arensberg. Meets the artist and photographer Man Ray. Begins work on the *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (Le Grand Verre)* (The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)). Inscribes his name and the title *In Advance of the Broken Arm* on a snow shovel.

1917

Resigns from the board of the Society of Independent Artists upon rejection of his readymade *Fountain*, a urinal submitted under the pseudonym R. Mutt. Publishes the Dada journals *The Blind Man* and *Rongwrong* with author Henri-Pierre Roché and artist Beatrice Wood.

1918

Executes his last painting *Tu m'*, a commission from the collector Katherine S. Dreier.

1919

Returns to Paris after spending nine months in Buenos Aires. Creates the readymade *L.H.O.O.Q.* by drawing a moustache and goatee onto a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. The title is a phonetic equivalent of the phrase "elle a chaud au cul" ("she has a hot ass").

1920

First appearance of the alter ego Rose (later Rose) Sélavy which Duchamp applies to several writings and works. Co-founds the Société Anonyme, Inc. with Katherine S. Dreier and Man Ray. Fabricates his first motor-driven optical machine *Rotative plaques verre* (Rotary Glass Plates).

1921

Rose Sélavy is photographed by Man Ray. Publishes the one-issue magazine *New York Dada* with Man Ray.

1923

Leaves *Le Grand Verre* (The Large Glass), which he has been working on since 1915, unfinished. Resumes his passion for chess, involving serious training and participation in major European chess tournaments over the next ten years.

1924

Creates *Obligations pour la roulette de Monte Carlo* (Monte Carlo Bond), a series of bonds intended to finance a system of making profit at the roulette table, initially planning to issue thirty bonds.

1925

On January 29, Duchamp's mother dies, followed by his father five days later. With the inheritance, Duchamp purchases several works by Francis Picabia which he puts up for auction in Paris the following year.

1926

Rose Sélavy in collaboration with Marc Allégret and Man Ray, composed of puns and optical illusions.

1927

Marries Lydie Fischer Sarazin-Levassor in June. The marriage lasts until January of the following year.

1930

Becomes a member of the committee of the French Chess Federation and its delegate to the International Chess Federation.

1932

With the chess player Vitaly Halberstadt, Duchamp publishes the book *L'Opposition et les cases conjuguées sont réconciliées* (Opposition and Sister Squares are Reconciled) on a particular endgame strategy in chess. Duchamp designs the layout and cover.

1934

Assembles ninety-four written notes and reproductions pertaining to the *Le Grand Verre*, which are published in *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (La Boîte verte)* (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)).

1935

Produces the *Rotoreliefs (Disques optiques)* (Rotoreliefs (Optical Discs)), a set of six cardboard disks with figurative and abstract motifs printed on both sides.

1937

First solo exhibition at the Arts Club of Chicago, including nine works.

Writes a weekly column on chess for the newly founded communist newspaper *Ce soir*.

Makes a glass door for the entrance of poet André Breton's gallery Gradiva in Paris (*Porte Gradiva* (Door for Gradiva)).

1938

Participates in the organization of the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* at Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris.

1941

Signs the first edition of *de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy (Boîte-en-Valise)* (From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy (Box in a Valise)), a leather suitcase containing miniatures and reproductions of Duchamp's most important works.

1942

Leaves Paris for New York permanently, the city which remains Duchamp's base until shortly before his death. Collaborates with André Breton on the exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism* at the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies, New York, and the accompanying catalogue. Exhibits the installation *Sixteen Miles of String*.

1943

Begins a love affair with the artist Maria Martins which lasts until 1950. Casts of Martins' body serve as important motifs in later works.

1944

The German artist Hans Richter begins shooting his film *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1947) which includes a sequence of Duchamp and his work *Rotoreliefs (Disques optiques)*.

1945

A special issue of the magazine *View*, published by artist and writer Charles Henri Ford, is dedicated to Duchamp.

1946

In secret, Duchamp begins working on *Étant donnés : 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas) over the next twenty years. In 1969, the work is posthumously revealed at Philadelphia Museum of Art.

1947

Prepares the exhibition *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* and its accompanying catalogue *Le Surréalisme en 1947* at Galerie Maeght, Paris, with André Breton. Duchamp presents the installation *Le Rayon Vert* (The Green Ray).

1950

Creates the first of a series of erotic objects (*Not a Shoe and Feuille de vigne femelle* (Female Fig Leaf)).

1954

Marries Alexina (Teeny) Matisse (née Sattler). The marriage lasts until Duchamp's death.

1955

Granted American citizenship.

1957

The exhibition *Three Brothers*, devoted to the Duchamp brothers, opens at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

1958

Publication of *Marchand du Sel. Écrits de Marcel Duchamp*, compiled and edited by Michel Sanouillet, Duchamp's first collection of writings.

1959

Publication of Robert Lebel's *Sur Marcel Duchamp*, the first monograph and catalogue raisonné devoted to Duchamp. The artist assists with the layout of the catalogue. In Cadaqués, Spain, Duchamp begins casting plaster from life (*With My Tongue in My Cheek*).

1963

Opening of the first retrospective exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum.

1964-1965

Under Duchamp's supervision, the gallerist Arturo Schwarz reproduces a series of readymades and the works *3 stoppages-étalon* and *Fresh Widow* in a limited edition of eight.

1965

Begins working on a series of etchings (*The Large Glass and Related Works, vol. 1*) around *Le Grand Verre*, which are to be published two years later by Arturo Schwarz.

1966

The exhibition *The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* at the Tate Gallery, London, marks Duchamp's first European retrospective.

The artist and organizer of the exhibition, Richard Hamilton creates a full-scale replica of *Le Grand Verre* for the occasion.

1967

Publication of *À l'infinitif (La Boîte blanche)* (In the Infinitive (The White Box)) a series of seventy-nine previously unpublished written notes related to the *Le Grand Verre* from 1912 to 1920.

1968

Duchamp dies in the early hours of October 2 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, after a lively evening of dining with his wife and friends.



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Susanne Pfeffer

PUBLISHER

Susanne Pfeffer

MANAGING EDITOR

Lu Pahl

PICTURE EDITOR

Leonore Schubert

TEXTS

Lukas Eide Flygare, Susanne Pfeffer,  
Cord Riechelmann

COPY EDITING

Amanda Gomez,  
Hannah Sarid de Mowbray

PROOFREADING

Lukas Eide Flygare, Amanda Gomez,  
Hannah Sarid de Mowbray

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Nicola Morris, Judith Rosenthal,  
Mark Willard

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BACK COVER

Marcel Duchamp, *Readymade  
malheureux* (Unhappy Readymade),  
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Marcel Duchamp, *Coeurs Volants*  
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Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray,  
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Marcel Duchamp as Rose Selavy,  
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Domstraße 10, 60311 Frankfurt am Main  
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