

“THAT VERY FUNNY ARTICLE,” *POLLYPERRUQUE*, AND THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF DUCHAMP’S *FOUNTAIN*

Thomas Girst

ABSTRACT

Within half a century, the status of Duchamp’s readymades changed from iconoclastic object to iconic sculpture. This contribution focusses on two of Duchamp’s readymades, one from 1915 and thus dated at the very beginning of Duchamp’s occupation with this subject matter, while the other is dated 1967, the very last object to enter this particular category within Duchamp’s oeuvre. André Breton remarked that “future generations can do no less than make a systematic effort to go back the stream of Duchamp’s thought and carefully describe its meanderings in search of the hidden treasure which was his mind.” It is with these suggestions in mind that, after the examination of an heretofore unknown readymade from the 1910’s and his collage *Pollyperruque* from the year before he passed away, final observations will examine the 100th anniversary of Duchamp’s *Fountain* to reassess the readymade’s potential as an analog object and social media phenomenon in the digital realm.

KEYWORDS

Marcel Duchamp, readymade, *Fountain*, *Pollyperruque*

Within half a century, the status of Duchamp’s readymades changed from iconoclastic object to iconic sculpture. While publications on the readymades are ubiquitous, primary literature and historical sources oftentimes remain overlooked. Yet, it is the exploration and analysis of this material which may still yield the greatest results when attempting to grasp all facets of the multitudinous polyvalence that the readymades constitute. This contribution focuses on two of Duchamp’s readymades, one from 1915 and thus dating the very beginning of Duchamp’s occupation with this subject matter, while the other, from 1967, is the very last object to enter this particular category within Duchamp’s oeuvre. The former has escaped any scrutiny so far, whereas the latter has remained the least studied readymade in Duchamp scholarship. André Breton once remarked that “future generations can do no less than make a systematic effort to go back the stream of Duchamp’s thought and

carefully describe its meanderings in search of the hidden treasure which was his mind.”¹ It is in heeding this advice that, after the examination of a heretofore unknown readymade from the 1910’s and Duchamp’s readymade postcard collage *Pollyperruque* from the year before he passed away, the final observations will examine the 100th anniversary of Duchamp’s *Fountain* to reassess the readymade’s potential as analog object and social media phenomenon in the digital realm.

“THAT VERY FUNNY ARTICLE”

In late summer of 1918, Marcel Duchamp prepared to leave New York for Buenos Aires, at a time when he had just turned 31 years of age.² As he found out then, his status as a non-citizen in the US since 1915 did not entirely protect him from the draft. With Argentina, he had chosen a neutral country in which he could remain until after the armistice, only to return safely to France from there. He had left New York by ship together with his lover, Yvonne Chastel (1884-c.1967), and while there he taught French, worked on his studies of the *Large Glass* (1915–23) (Fig. 3.2), and played chess in a local club. It turned out that the isolation proved rather productive. He created a small work on glass, *To be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* (1918) and also designed a chess set with local craftsmen. Duchamp further explored stereoscopy and instructed his sister Suzanne (1889–1963) in Paris to create an *Unhappy Readymade* (1919) by hanging a geometry book from a balcony, thus exposing it to the wear and tear of the elements.

It bears notice that Duchamp, before bringing Yvonne Chastel with him to Buenos Aires, had repeatedly asked Ettie Stettheimer (1875–1955) to come along. Of the Stettheimer sisters—three artistically inclined socialites of considerable family wealth, all of which Duchamp taught French and all of which were in love with Duchamp—he took the most liking to Ettie (1875–1955), the youngest one, a forthright writer and philosopher, who continued to include the artist friend as a character in many of her novels. In his many affectionate letters to the Stettheimer sisters from Buenos Aires, it is in his lines to Ettie, within his correspondence of early 1919, that he discusses the concept of the readymades: “Have you heard about the ‘ready mades’? If not, ask Roché³ about them. That very funny article in the Tribune that you mention is a ‘Ready made.’ I signed it, but didn’t write it. I’m sorry I didn’t keep some other articles of the same type which you would have really enjoyed. Besides which, I have never had wavy hair (apart from when I was 5) [...]”⁴

The article that Duchamp refers to in his letter was published over three years prior in the Sunday edition of *The New York Tribune*, on September 12, 1915.⁵ The artist had arrived to the United States on June 1915 and at that time was better known there than he was in Europe, due to the *succès de scandale* his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* had caused at the Armory Show in New York two years earlier. Hence, the article in question is fittingly titled “The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us,” written by art editor and critic Henry Mc Bride (1867-1962),⁶ a great proponent of modernism whom Duchamp later befriended. In the article, the artist is described as “only 28, [he] dresses most correctly in the mode, and is quite handsome with blond, curly hair.” It is the description of the hair which makes it possible to link Henry McBride’s portrait of Duchamp to the article he describes to Ettie Stettheimer. To the artist, the article’s importance cannot be overestimated as it was the first piece on him published by a major newspaper upon his arrival in New York. *The New York Tribune* itself advertised it four days before its appearance on the front page: “Marcel Duchamps [sic] Whose ‘Nude Descending a Staircase’ held New York’s attention a season or two ago, tells in next Sunday’s Tribune why America is the place for Art’s development. Abroad standards are fixed, he says, but here we are reaching after new ideas, yearning, striving. Our skyscrapers? Why, he wants a studio in the topmost turret of the highest: It’s an intimate, crisp reflection of a very unusual young man’s ideas. Reserve next Sunday’s paper at your newsdealer’s.”

The article itself was published across the lower half of the second page of the *Sunday Tribune*. Curiously enough, it does appear without a byline mentioning its author. On the same page above, a longer piece titled “Does A Fluctuating Birth Rate Make War?” is properly attributed to the progressive British physician Havelock Ellis (1859-1939). Duchamp’s words to Stettheimer, “I signed it, but didn’t write it” is what qualifies the article to be a readymade, and indeed, the three words “By Marcel Duchamp” appear in printed lower- and upper-case letters between the introductory remarks and three columns of quotes by the artist. As early as 1911 and until he gave up on painting altogether in 1918, Duchamp had started signing the canvas with printed capital letters to disassociate himself from the handmade and the merely visual, while at the same time becoming more interested in the mechanical and in the realm of ideas. As for his readymades, the intricate game of delegation had begun in his letter from New York dated 15 January 1916 to his sister Suzanne in Paris, asking her to

sign in his stead the subsequently lost *Bottle Dryer*, which he had initially bought in 1915 and left in the studio.⁷ It was around the same time as his letter to Ettie Stettheimer that he instructed his sister from afar to create what came to be known as his *Unhappy Readymade*. And a year earlier, a professional sign painter had inscribed his name in pencil next to the hand he had painted on the artist's behalf at the center of Duchamp's large commission *Tu m'*. "I signed it but I did not write it." The game continued a few years later, when Duchamp collaborated with Henry McBride on a luxury and a regular limited edition of the latter's critical writing titled *Some French Moderns Says McBride*. Duchamp explained the journalist his wishes for the bibliographical details in their mid-1922 correspondence, including a sketch with the words "certified copyright": "On the back of the cover, I would like to put the acknowledgment you've been talking about. But can you draft it?—something like this: These articles (?) appeared in the N.Y. Sun and N.Y. Herald during the last seven years or between 1915 and 1918 Copyright 1922 Rose Sélavy. This last sentence is my signature. Rose Sélavy, in case you didn't know, was born in 1920."⁸ Rose Sélavy became Duchamp's often used female alter ego, signing for him in industrial font capital letters his semi-readymades like *Fresh Widow* (1920) (Fig. 3.11) or *Why not Sneeze* (1921).

Yet another detail of Duchamp's readymade newspaper article bears mention. In the center, between two columns to the left and to the right, a large cutout from a photograph is reproduced showing Marcel Duchamp resting on a deckchair. Duchamp had only arrived in New York a few months prior to the publication of the *New York Herald* article, on the SS *Rochambeau*, a large French transatlantic ocean liner built in 1911 and with a capacity for over 2,000 passengers. The illustration might have derived from a photograph taken on board the steamer, where deckchairs alongside the railings of a ship were a common sight, just as they are today. In a facsimile included in the "Speculations" folder, part of the edition of *À l'infinif (The White Box)* published by the New York gallery Cordier & Ekstrom in 1967, Duchamp writes of "two 'similar' objects, i.e. of different dimensions but one being the replica of the other (like 2 deckchairs [chaises 'transatlantiques'], one large and one doll size), that could be used to establish a 4-dimensional perspective—not by placing them in relative positions with respect to each other in space³ [three dimensional space] but simply by considering the optical illusions produced by the difference in their dimensions." It has been argued that the verso onto which the artist jotted down this observation is not so much

the back of a preexisting picture postcard but was rather designed by Duchamp to appear as one.⁹ The recto shows a watercolor—possibly by Duchamp himself—of three boats on a pond or a broad river, surrounded by four large trees, much shrubbery in various shades of green and a tall mountain in the background with a clouded pink sky likely around the time of sunset. (Fig. 2.1). “When turned 90 degrees [...] the three boats, seen entirely from the side as objects of similar size, but painted large or small to indicate relative distance from an observer in the inferred third dimension, become deckchairs, seen from above [...]”¹⁰ Observations such as these reveal Duchamp’s preoccupation with non-Euclidian geometry and scientific musings that allow for a much more subtle reading of his works and notes that could be seen as complex interconnected coordinates where, aside the puns, pranks, and erotic references, nothing can either be taken for granted or be taken at face value. Taking into consideration the polyvalent possibilities that defy any attempt in interpreting Marcel Duchamp’s oeuvre, we shall now turn our attention to a semi-readymade based on yet another postcard of unknown origin that was sent by the artist to the Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery in the same year that *À l’infintif* was published.

ABOUT POLLYPERRUQUE

Although Marcel Duchamp’s last readymade *Pollyperruque* (1967) (Fig. 2.2) ranks effectively as the final work of this particular category initiated with the *Roue de bicyclette* (*Bicycle Wheel*, 1913) (Fig. 5.4) and the *Porte-bouteilles* (*Bottlerack*, 1914) (Fig. 6.2)—a category important for the artist as well as for twentieth-century art—the small-format postcard collage has so far attracted little scholarly attention.¹¹ Not unlike his early readymades exhibited at two New York galleries in 1916, *Pollyperruque* received sparse media coverage when it was displayed in the *Polly Imagists* show (5 December 1967–6 January 1968) at the New York Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery half a century later.¹² Arne Ekstrom decided to stage *Poly Imagists* as the sequel to the *Mono Imagists* show a year earlier, for which the artists had been asked to focus on the same single image. “But that didn’t seem specific enough,” Ekstrom confided to a journalist in 1967. “So my imagination took a further small step and fastened on the theme of ‘Polly Imagists’—parrots, that is. I suggested that to my artists last winter, and most of them came through with an appropriate piece of work.”¹³ *Polly Imagists* showed works by Isamu Noguchi, Man Ray, Robert Indiana, Richard Lindner, and Joseph Cornell, among others. Marcel Duchamp, who had been staying in the northern Spanish coastal town of Cadaqués since July 1967, where he had

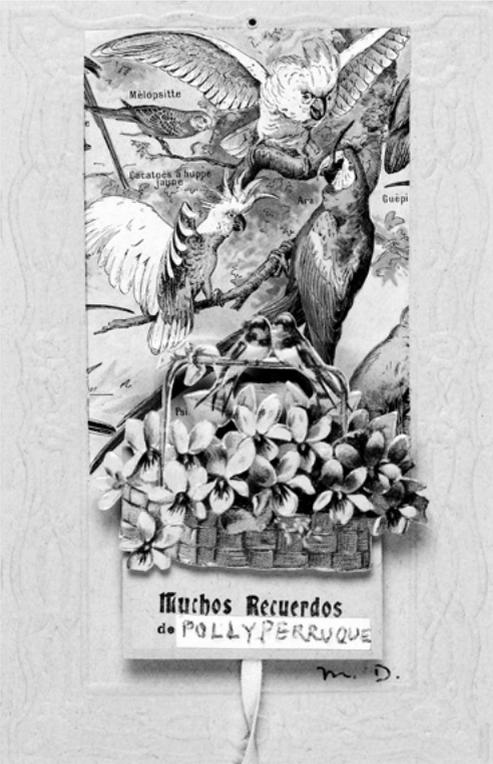
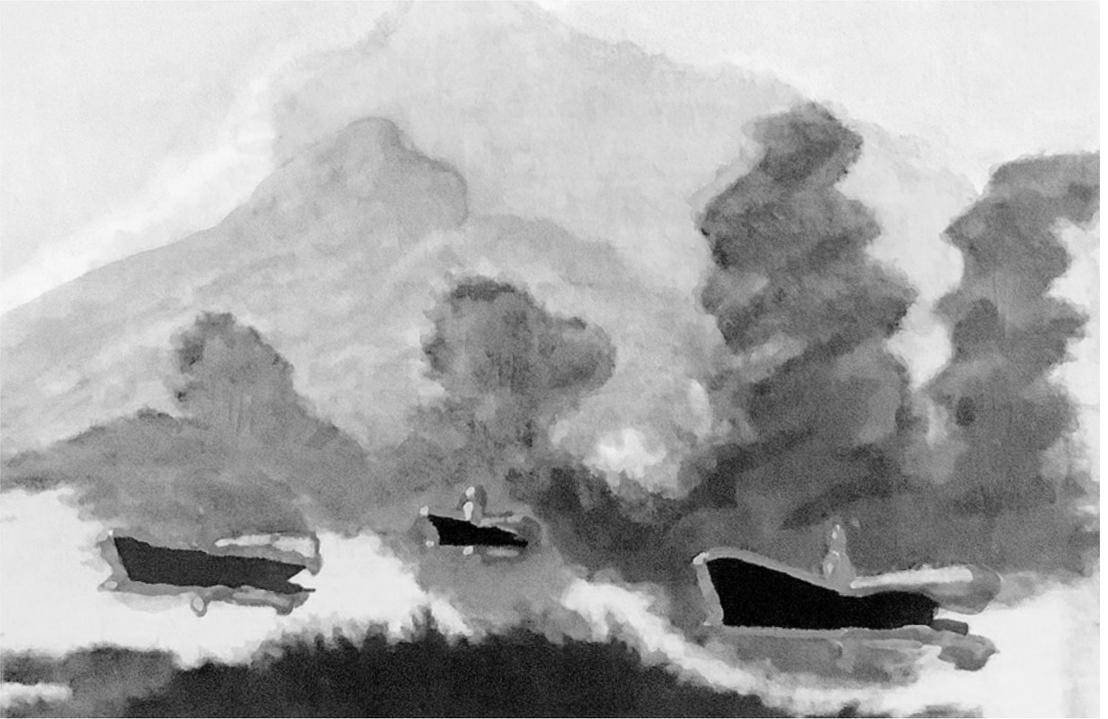


Fig. 2.1
 Marcel Duchamp, note from *À l'Infinifit* (*The White Box*),
 Cordier & Ekstrom, NY, 1967 (recto) © Artists Rights Society
 (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

Fig. 2.2
 Marcel Duchamp, *Pollyperruque*, inscribed greeting card,
 14 × 9 cm (recto), 1967. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 © Association Marcel Duchamp/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2017.

spent every summer of the preceding decade with his wife, only returned to New York in mid-October.

Sent to Ekstrom in all probability from Spain, the postcard was signed in ballpoint pen on white adhesive tape as “POLLYPERRUQUE,” after an imprint “Muchos Recuerdos / de,” and was in fact a collage. Much like his cover for the catalogue of the Paris exhibition *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, which shows a woman’s breast of rigid foam surrounded by black velvet and the request “Prière de toucher” (“Please Touch”), the white ribbon dangling at the bottom of the card invites us to pull it like a jumping jack toy (also known in French as a *polichinelle*). The postcard depicts a basket of pink violets with two swallows perched on the handle huddling together next to a pink ribbon tied in a bow. This ensemble partially obscures an illustration of various bird species stuck on by Duchamp along the postcard’s embossed border. The detail he chose shows, with some of the names legible on the collage, a budgerigar, a yellow- and a salmon-crested cockatoo, and, in the center, a macaw; on the left, the wing of a swallow, the beak of a blue tit, and the tips of the tails of a ring-necked parakeet and a wagtail can be seen; on the right—the beak of a bee-eater, the plumage of a lory, and half of the back of a tropical cock-of-the-rock. The illustration is taken from a full-page color plate of bird genera in the encyclopedic dictionary *Le Larousse pour tous*, a new edition of which has been published every year since the beginning of the twentieth century (Fig. 2.3). Duchamp is known to have particularly appreciated this publication. “He loved the format, the little illustrations on every page”¹⁴ and browsed through it again and again throughout his life. Just as Duchamp liked dictionaries more than any other books, he preferred puns to mere words. Where he distrusted language, even regarding it as “an error of humanity,”¹⁵ he resorted to humor, subversiveness and ambiguity of puns—“an infinite field of joy,”¹⁶ particularly when they were of an erotic or ribald nature.

In this respect, *Pollyperruque possibly* contains references that make this last readymade identifiable as an allusion to Duchamp’s major work *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d’eau, 2° le gaz d’éclairage...* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas ..., 1946–1966), which was only shown posthumously at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Fig. 2.4). Duchamp had been secretly working on this work for two decades until finally completing it a year before the production of his parrot collage. Via two peep-holes in a wooden door fitted in the museum wall, the installation provides a view of a naked woman lying with her legs outspread on a bed of twigs in an autumnal

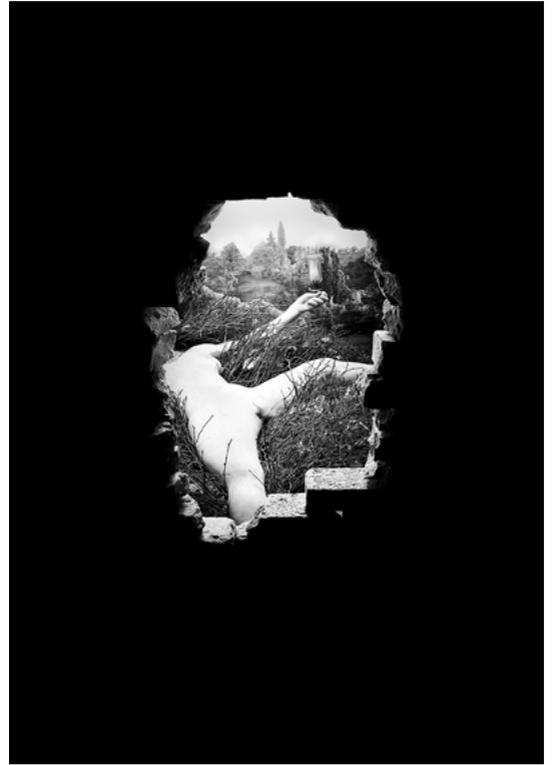


Fig. 2.3
Page from *Le Larousse pour tous* (ca. 1920s—onwards), “Oiseaux. Voir Domestiques (Animaux).”

Fig. 2.4
Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donné: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage ...* (Given: 1. *The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas ...*), 1946-1966. Mixed media assemblage, 242.6 × 177.8 × 124.5 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Cassandra Foundation, 1969. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

landscape with a splashing waterfall in the background. She holds up a gas lamp in her left hand. On the purely ‘retinal’ level, there is no obvious similarity to *Pollyperruque*—Duchamp himself had consistently opposed such form of visual interpretation from the mid-1910s onward. The basket of pink (Fr. “rose”) flowers and the two swallows in the foreground may thus refer to Duchamp’s female alter ego Rose Sélavy (“Eros, c’est la vie”) as, besides the obvious color reference, all three elements seem to be referring to an erotically laden interchange between male and female elements.¹⁷ The flowers in question are violets, termed “coquard” in French, which is not far removed from “cock art”. The swallow, for its part, is “l’hirondelle” in French, which sounds similar to “la rondelle”—among other things a vulgar term denoting the butt and also the vagina. “Panier,” finally, means both a basket and a butt.¹⁸ The bunch of pale-pink violets (Fr. “touffe de fleurs”) holds another sexual connotation in “touffe” (tuft or pubic hair), although the genitals of the nude in *Étant donnés* present themselves to the viewer as clean-shaven—known today as Brazilian waxing. If we also take the title *Pollyperruque* or *Muchos Recuerdos de Pollyperruque*, we can find numerous further allusions to *Étant donnés*. In the installation, the torso was initially modelled on artist Maria Martins, the wife of the Brazilian ambassador in New York and Duchamp’s lover from 1943 onward. Not until 1951, after Martin’s return to Buenos Aires, did Duchamp meet Alexina “Teeny” Matisse, whom he married in 1954. The nude in *Étant donnés* is an anatomical amalgam of the two women. While “Polly” refers to a parrot and “perruque” means “wig”¹⁹ in French, “poly” means “many” or “several.” And as far as the reference to the wig is concerned, the torso in *Étant donnés* was first adorned with brown hair—the color of Maria Martins’ hair—falling onto the left shoulder, before Duchamp replaced it with Teeny Duchamp’s blond instead. “Muchos Recuerdos” means “many memories”²⁰ or “many reminiscences,” which could refer equally to Maria Martins and Teeny Duchamp.

Just as in *Étant donnés*, where another dimension is exposed to the viewer behind a heavy wooden door, *Pollyperruque* also consists of a front and a background. The postcard contains a concealed bird that the artist did not want to be visible at first glance, much like the interior of *Étant donnés*. This is precisely why he attached a barrier in the foreground, a small rectangular piece of cardboard just beneath the courting swallows. Without it, the viewer would’ve been able to see the bird immediately, but now she can now only reveal it by pulling the white ribbon. Duchamp’s folded and bonded arrangement envisages that the foreground of the flower basket

and the title are to be lowered to reveal the fig parrot, “psittacule” in French, a member of the parakeet (Fr. “perruche”) family. This small parrot’s plumage is mainly green—which, like the name itself, must have delighted Duchamp, who granted this color a key function in many of his works. His small sculpture *Feuille de vigne femelle* (*Female Fig Leaf*, 1950) is a first veiled reference to *Étant donnés*. The fig parrot “psittacule” meanwhile joins a motley series of suggestive puns—of which *L.H.O.O.Q.* (Fr. “Elle a chaud au cul”—Engl. “She’s hot in the ass,” 1919), Duchamp’s readymade of a *Mona Lisa* reproduction with a penciled-on beard, is merely the best-known example (Fig. 6.1).²¹

Back again to the title, to “Polly” and “perruque,” to parrot and wig.²² Just as a wig mimics hair, so the parrot has also had a mimetic symbolic function in the arts for centuries, not unlike the ape.²³ Capable of imitating human language, it used to be regarded as a mirror and mocker of human fallibility. For *Pollyperruque*, Duchamp has placed the brightly colored Ara parrot in the center of his collage—certainly no accident considering the fact that the bird is mainly native to Brazil, Maria Martins’ country of origin. The fact that in the history of art the parrot in reference to female nudes and depictions serves above all as a substitute or allegory for the lover, is worth mentioning in this context—just as the torso in *Étant donnés* serves as a surrogate for Duchamp’s lover. In his correspondence with Martins, Duchamp refers to it repeatedly, although he comes to the conclusion that there can be no “ersatz pour l’amour,” (“substitute for love”), i.e. for “l’amour physique” (“physical love”).²⁴ Furthermore, Duchamp must have been well aware of Gustave Courbet’s *Woman with a Parrot* (1866) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 2.5); at any rate, the latter nude, with its raised hand and legs apart, is not dissimilar to one in *Étant Donnés*. In his etching *Morceaux choisis d’après Courbet* (*Selected Details after Courbet*, 1968) based on another of Courbet’s paintings, *Woman with White Stockings* (1864) at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, Duchamp adds a bird on the right, beneath the nude’s genitals (Fig. 2.6). Here a falcon (Fr. ‘faucon’) is juxtaposed with a ‘false cunt’ (Fr. ‘faux con’), a rather crude play on words familiar among Duchamp scholars.²⁵ The sublimated object of desire in art is hardly a substitute for the longed-for original—*Étant donnés* does not bring Martins back. The fact that the *faucon* from Duchamp’s etching appears reversed top left—but correctly rendered on the etching’s copper plate on the basis of the original—and thus outside the selected illustration detail from *Le Larousse pour tous*, ultimately indicates that the concealed



Fig. 2.5
 Gustave Courbet, *Woman with a Parrot*, 1866.
 Oil on canvas, 129.5 × 195.6 cm.
 New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
 H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest
 of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929.



Fig. 2.6
 Marcel Duchamp, *Morceaux choisis d'après Courbet*
 (Selected Details after Courbet From the Large Glass
 and Related Works, with Nine Etchings by Marcel Duchamp
 on the Theme of The Lovers, vol. 2 (Milan: Galleria Schwarz),
 1968. Etching and aquatint on paper, 42 × 25.5 cm.
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mme Marcel Duchamp,
 1969. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP,
 Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp.

fig parrot in *Pollyperruque* by no means marks the end of the polysemantic game of referential hide-and-seek.

As we have seen, Duchamp presents us with yet another game of hide and seek. “A little game between ‘I’ and ‘me,’”²⁶ as he himself called it, playing out within an unassuming postcard sent to a dealer friend. Hidden in plain sight, the deep connections of *Pollyperruque* to *Étant donnés* and the artist’s love affair with Maria Martins only become apparent in retrospect, as his late work and his private life were barely known when his last readymade was first presented at Cordier & Ekstrom. The same may be said of “That very funny article” from 1915, which Duchamp termed a readymade in 1918, and which managed to escape scholarship for more than a hundred years. If nothing else, both works make it obvious, in their own playful ways, that the ephemeral of the transitory is anything but transient with Duchamp.

#FOUNTAIN100

Throughout 2017, although no major exhibitions took place, several initiatives celebrated the 100th anniversary of Marcel Duchamp’s readymade urinal *Fountain* (Fig. 1.8). Among them the display of artist Sadaâne Afif’s “The Fountain Archives” at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, as well as small-scale displays at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. Symposiums, shows, and events were staged from New York and the city of Hull in Northeastern England to Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany. What was missing was the globe-spanning momentum that *Fountain* surely deserved. With the endorsement of the Association Marcel Duchamp, this author’s international efforts to commemorate the birthday of what, according to a 2004 survey of 500 art experts, was named “the most influential work of modern art,”²⁷ eventually came to fruition on Sunday, April 9, 2017.

A hundred years prior, April 9 was a Monday and marked the preview for the “First Annual Exhibition” by The Society of Independent Artists in New York. Earlier, French artist Marcel Duchamp, under the pseudonym of Richard Mutt, had sent in a urinal to test the organization whose motto for their call for entries had proclaimed “No Jury—No Prizes.” When *Fountain* was rejected, Duchamp and others resigned from the selection committee in protest. The “First Annual Exhibition” took place at New York’s Grand Central Palace, exhibiting over 2,000 art works by more than 1,000 artists presented in alphabetical order. After its first appearance, *Fountain* hung from the ceiling of Duchamp’s private studio for some time before being lost in 1918. We know

of its existence through a photograph by Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), taken in his gallery in mid-April, 1917. Later versions include small scale miniature editions created by Duchamp between 1938 and 1958 for his *Boîte-en-valise* as well as a urinal presented in the New York exhibition “Challenge and Defy” which was bought by the gallerist Sidney Janis at a Paris flea market in 1950 on behalf of the artist. Moreover, a handcrafted replica was produced for the Moderna Museet in Stockholm by Ulf Linde in 1963 and a later edition of eight was created together with Arturo Schwarz in 1964.

Stieglitz’s original photograph of the urinal was first published in May 1917, by *The Blind Man No. 2*, the last issue of the short-lived New York avant-garde magazine by Marcel Duchamp and Henri-Pierre Roché. In this issue, Louise Norton (1888-1941) contributed an enthusiastic defense of the urinal in her “Buddha of the Bathroom” essay (Fig. 1.4). In the text as well as within the unsigned editorial, “The Richard Mutt Case,” written together with artist friend Beatrice Wood (1893-1998), the decision of the “Board of Censors” is dismissed while *Fountain* is declared a “sculpture” and specifically “not immoral [...], no more than a bath tub is immoral.”²⁸ It was the artist’s choice for the object to be seen in a new context and therefore it could be considered art. In 1957, forty years after the rejection of the *Fountain*, Duchamp argued in his lecture “The Creative Act” that the readymade “is not performed by the artist alone” but that “the spectator brings the work into contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”²⁹

It was in the spirit of these words and under the header #Fountain100, that on Sunday, April 9 international museums of modern and contemporary art celebrated the 100th anniversary of Marcel Duchamp’s urinal *Fountain* by providing free entry to those that wished to honor the artist and his readymade—within their very own restrooms. Why curate a show around an art historically significant urinal? Why secure loans and produce a catalogue when urinals were already installed and in permanent use on the premises? Would not something different from an exhibition be better able to still retain some of the revolutionary thoughts and spirit of the original *Fountain*? That very day, at least 19 museums worldwide allowed access at no cost to anyone mentioning the password “Richard Mutt” to members of the entrance staff—for the duration of one hour between 3 PM and 4 PM in the afternoon. During that time, in some of those museums, a dedicated men’s room with urinals installed turned into a unisex restroom to provide space for everyone wanting to recognize the centenary

of *Fountain* with impromptu readings, homages, proclamations, and performances. All participants were welcome to organize via social media and post their results online via #Fountain100. Among the museums taking part in this global happening were the Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Serpentine Galleries, London; Tate Modern, London; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Staedel Museum, Frankfurt; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Kunsthalle Basel; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Lenbachhaus, Munich; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; Staatliches Museum Schwerin; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome. Most museums involved sent out a simultaneously released press statement a few days prior, inviting all institutions of modern and contemporary art around the world to take part in the initiative.

The museums in Stuttgart and Frankfurt held lectures from out of their toilets, whereas the Philadelphia Museum of Art hosted special performances by the Pig Iron Theatre Company across restrooms and made sure to place “R. Mutt” stickers on every urinal in the museum prior to April 9. Within a few days, #Fountain100 generated hundreds of posts on Twitter and Instagram. From random pictures of bathroom fixtures to collages and *Fountain* rings and costumes, a continuous stream of sophisticated to whimsical imagery lauded the most infamous of readymades. Tens of thousands more *liked* the celebration or actively participated via the social media feeds of the museums themselves. As an example, Tate Modern commemorated the day by introducing a new wall text dedicated to their 1964 edition of the urinal, @jamesleonard5255 wrote in response: “What I love about Duchamp is his sense of humor. Often low brow or punny, but it transports you out of the physical object and into the idea, while @hilmandiphoto simply posted “Legendary Resistance.” In addition, international newswires, leading cultural media outlets, radio, and TV globally picked up on the story—from the Times of Israel and the Huffington Post to Artsy and The Art Newspaper. Of all museums, it was the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which added most to the buzz by first signing on to the initiative through its chief curator at large, Klaus Biesenbach, only to back out again as the date drew closer and journalists inquired about the possibilities of getting into MoMA for free by whispering “R. Mutt” to the guards at a certain hour. It was not lost on the media that Duchamp the jokester could

also be honored on April 9 by pulling off some coordinated meta prank that had the potential at least to cause some disturbance between visitors queuing to get in, the museum staff, and security. What #Fountain100 did prove, however, was that an agile, globally connected community of those interested in the arts did not rely on a major exhibition to create a most appropriate, interactive, and empowering momentum for Marcel Duchamp both digitally as well as on the ground.

(The first part of “That very funny article” and *Pollyperruque*” is based on a lecture given on October 12, 2017, during The Readymade Century, a symposium at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, October 12-13, 2017. The latter part on *Pollyperruque* was also published within *Marcel Duchamp. 100 Questions. 100 Answers*, Munich: Prestel, 2018. Together with the remarks on the 2017 celebration of the 100th anniversary of *Fountain*, all of the above was initially presented on May 31, 2018, at the symposium *Duchamp's Readymades: A Reevaluation*, Aarhus University, Denmark, May 31—June 1, 2018).

- 1 André Breton, *Anthologie de l'humour noir* (Paris: 1940), 221, as quoted in Jennifer Mundy, "An Unpublished Drawing by Duchamp: Hell in Philadelphia," Tate Papers, no. 10, (Autumn 2008), accessed July 30, 2018, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/10/an-unpublished-drawing-by-duchamp-hell-in-philadelphia>.
- 2 For the following summary, see the entries on "Buenos Aires" as well as "Stettheimer Sisters," in Thomas Girst, *The Duchamp Dictionary* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 36, 37, 170, 172.
- 3 Duchamp's close life-long writer friend, Henri-Pierre Roché (1879-1959).
- 4 Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affect. Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 77. The letter is dated "circa 13 January 1919" by the editors.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 6 The authorship of Henry McBride was first asserted by Francis M. Naumann, "Walter Conrad Arensberg: Poet, Patron, and Participant in the New York Avant-Garde, 1915-20," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 76, no. 328 (Spring 1980): 13. On 24 October 1915, another major article without a byline appeared in the *Sunday New York Tribune*, "French Artists Spur on an American Art," including many quotes by Duham, Picabia, Gleizes, and others. Scholar Rudolf E. Kuenzli assumes Bessie Breuer (1893-1975), editor-in-chief of the Sunday edition, to be its author; see his remarks accompanying its reprint in Rudolf E. Kuenzli et al., eds., *Dada/Surrealism 14* (Culver City: Dillingham Press, 1985), 128-135.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 117. The letter is dated "July? 1922" by the editors.
- 9 Rhonda Roland Shearer and Stephen Jay Gould were the first ones to notice the correlation between verso and recto of the note, see: "Boats and Deckchairs," in *Tout-Fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* 1, no. 1 (December 1999), accessed August 4, 2018, <http://www.toutfait.com/boats-and-deckchairs>, and simultaneously published in *Natural History* 108, no. 10 (December 1999-January 2000): 32-44. Francis M. Naumann disputed their claim in a letter to *Tout-Fait* 1, no. 2 (May 2000), accessed August 4, 2018, http://www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_2/Letters/Naumann.html. Yet it was Serge Stauffer, already in 1981, who mentioned that Duchamp's wife Teeny—with whom he had looked at the postcard—seemed to have agreed that the watercolor was from her husband's hand; see Serge Stauffer, *Marcel Duchamp: Die Schriften* 1 (Zürich: Regenbogen, 1981), 127, footnote 119.
- 10 Shearer and Gould, "Boats and Deckchairs."
- 11 Lists of works and exhibition catalogues do not go beyond a mere listing of *Pollyperruque* and its designation as a readymade (Cordier & Ekstrom's label of 1967 also mentions the medium as "Collage & Plexiglass," as an inspection of the archive of Arne Ekstrom, NYC, by Anne Lounsbury Ekstrom on May 1, 2018 revealed; for the readymade-classification see André Gervais' "Liste des readymades de Marcel Duchamp (1913-1967)," in *Étant Donnés Marcel Duchamp*, no. 1 (1991): 122-126, in which *Pollyperruque* is named as "semi-readymade" and is listed chronologically as the last readymade; the work is not mentioned in the numerous Duchamp biographies. Exceptions in the Duchamp literature are: André Gervais, *La raie alitée d'effets: Apropos of Marcel Duchamp* (Québec: LaSalle, 1984), 114-127, fig. on the cover; Thomas Zaunschirm, *Bereites Mädchen Ready-made* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1983), 64f.; Thomas Zaunschirm, *Marcel Duchamps Unbekanntes Meisterwerk* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1986), 100f.; Carol P. James, "An Original Revolutionary Messagerie Rose, or What Became of Readymades," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991): 277-296, especially 288; Juan Antonio Ramirez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 216; Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, "Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy. 1887-1968," *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), unpaginated [entry of December 5, 1967]; Craig Adcock, "'Faucon' or 'Perroquet'? A Note on Duchamp's *Morceaux choisis d'après Courbet*," in *Tout-Fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, no. 1/1 (December 1999), accessed July 2018, <http://www.toutfait.com/faucon-or-perroqueta-note-on-duchamps-morceaux-choisis-dapras-courbet>; Michael R. Taylor, *Marcel Duchamp: Étant donnés*, exh.cat. Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), 118.
- 12 The work is neither mentioned in the exhibition's price list nor is it visible in any of the numerous views of the installation for *Polly Imagists*. Colette Roberts' "Les 'Polly-Imagists' et le sourire dadaïste," in *France-Amérique: Le Courrier des États-Unis* (12/14/1967), unpaginated, refers to *Pollyperruque*, although *Art News* only contains the following reference after the description of a work by Joseph Cornell shown in the exhibition: "It is a masterpiece, as is the work by Duchamp, which I did not see," *Art News* [author: A.B.], January 1968. All sources: Arne Ekstrom Archive, NYC.
- 13 Geoffrey T. Helman, "Parrot Show," in *The New Yorker*, 6 January 1968, 18.
- 14 Denise Hare, quoted in: Calvin Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp. A Biography*, New York: Henry Holt, 1996, 430.
- 15 Marcel Duchamp in conversation with William Seitz, published in *Vogue* in 1963, quoted here from: Gough-Cooper and Caumont, unpaginated [entry of 15 February 1963].
- 16 Marcel Duchamp in conversation with Katherine Kuh, in Katherine Kuh, "Marcel Duchamp," [1961], in *The Artist's Voice: Talk with Seventeen Modern Artists* (New York: Da Capo, 2000): 81-93.
- 17 As the originator of numerous works by Duchamp, Rose or Rose Sélavy produced among other things the semi-readymade *Why not Sneeze Rose Sélavy* in 1921 that shows 152 marble cubes, a thermometer, and a cuttlebone in a bird's cage.
- 18 For information on the sexual connotations of basket, violet, and swallows, their "isotopic connection" and on numerous other plays on words quoted in this text, I am indebted to Dr. Denis Heuring, Munich. The basket

-
- handle, incidentally, resembles the handle that in Duchamp's first major work, the *Grand Verre* (*Large Glass*, 1915–1923), is above the chocolate grinder near the bayonet—a masturbatory apparatus, according to Duchamp's notes, that aids comprehension of the reference to 'cock art' in relation to *Pollyperruque*.
- 19 Serge Stauffer draws attention to the phonetic proximity between the English pronunciation of "perruque" (Fr. for "wig") and the French word "perroquet" for parrot, see Stauffer, 235.
- 20 "Muchos recuerdos de": The genitive in Spanish in this case can be subjective or objective ("many memories of ..." = someone's memories (subjective) or memories of a place, time, person, thing (objective)). Thanks to Dr. Denis Heuring.
- 21 The initial letters of the French for fig parrot "psi" can be easily read without the bird being revealed by pulling the ribbon. What is left is "(t)tacule", which is not dissimilar to the vulgar colloquial "t'a (en)culé" ("fucked you in the ass"). Thanks again to Dr. Denis Heuring for pointing this out.
- 22 The title *Pollyperruque* can be found, albeit divided into two words, verbatim in a novel of the Canadian-British author Grant Allen dating from 1890. Muriel Ellis, the protagonist stranded on a tropical island and on a quest for a vital secret, exhorts a parrot to carry on talking: "... go on, Polly.' 'Perruque blonde / Et collet noir.'" The novel's title is *The Great Taboo* and it is not known whether it was known to Duchamp. If so, it could be interpreted as a further allusion to his major work in the context of the nexus of references in Duchamp's readymade of 1967 to *Étant donnés*.
- 23 See Thomas Zaunschirm, "Affe und Papagei—Mimesis und Sprache in der Kunst," in *Kunsthistoriker. Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Kunsthistorikerverbandes*, no. 1/4 (1984) and no. 2/1 (1985): 14–17; Hope B. Werness, *Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York/London: Continuum, 2006), 317; Richard Verdi, *The Parrot in Art. From Dürer to Elizabeth Butterworth* (London: Scala, 2007).
- 24 *ersatz*: German word used in French; Marcel Duchamp to Maria Martins, 13 May 1951 [?], see: Taylor, 420.
- 25 In 1962/63 Duchamp signed the number-plate of a Volkswagen, calling the readymade *Faux Vagin* (Engl. "false vagina"), which is close to the French pronunciation of the German automobile brand. In the etching itself, a "faucon" ("faux con") is positioned adjacent to a real 'con.'. Yet the hardly correct illustration of the falcon as an imitation of nature is always already a 'faux faucon,' just as the sex of the woman as in the sculptural replication in *Étant donnés* is a 'faux faux con.
- 26 Kuh, 83.
- 27 Louise Jury, "'Fountain' most influential piece of modern art," in *The Independent*, December 2, 2004, accessed August 4, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/fountain-most-influential-piece-of-modern-art-673625.html>.
- 28 William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Menil Collection: Houston Fine Art Press, 1989), 37f.
- 29 Anthony Hill (ed.), *Duchamp: Passim. A Marcel Duchamp Anthology* (Langhorne, PA: G+B Arts International, 1994), 87.
-