

***DADA* COMES TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**MoMA Installation Is a Dynamic Multimedia Display of Over 400 Works by Nearly 50 Artists from the Influential Avant-Garde Movement**

***Dada***

**June 18–September 11, 2006**

**The Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Gallery, sixth floor**

**NEW YORK, June 13, 2006—*Dada***, on view at The Museum of Modern Art from June 18 to September 11, 2006, is the first major museum exhibition in the United States to focus exclusively on Dada, one of the most influential avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Responding to the disasters of World War I and to an emerging modern media and machine culture, Dada artists led a creative revolution that both boldly embraced and caustically criticized modernity itself. Pursuing innovative strategies of art making that included abstraction, chance procedures, collage, photomontage, readymades, performances, and media pranks, the Dadaists created an abiding legacy for the century to come. The exhibition features over 400 works in a dynamic multimedia display that includes films, paintings, photographs, printed matter, sound recordings, and objects. Among the nearly 50 artists represented are Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, Hans Richter, Kurt Schwitters, Sophie Taeuber, and Tristan Tzara.

This exhibition surveys the many forms of Dada artistic production as developed in Berlin, Cologne, Hannover, New York, Paris, and Zurich, the six principal cities where Dada took hold between 1916 and 1924. It presents an expansive view of Dada, including Zurich's experiments in radical abstraction, New York's irreverent readymades and machine portraits, Berlin's scathing political montages, Cologne's hallucinatory imagery, Paris's relentless critiques of painterly traditions, and Kurt Schwitters's carefully composed recyclings of society's detritus in Hannover.

*Dada* had its U.S. premiere at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., from February 19 to May 14, 2006. A variation of the exhibition was shown in Paris at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, from October 5, 2005, to January 9, 2006. MoMA is the final venue for this exhibition. *Dada* is organized by Leah Dickerman, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington; and Laurent Le Bon, Curator, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art, New York. It is coordinated at MoMA by Anne Umland, Curator, and Adrian Sudhalter, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Says Ms. Umland, “The Dada movement’s outrageous provocations have prompted many to define it as ‘anti-art’—a term the Dadaists themselves used. This exhibition argues, however, that Dada’s shock tactics were meant less as a wholesale disavowal of art than a complete and radical rethinking of its definitions and rules. Dada held at its core a profound ethical stance against contemporary social and political conditions. Its oppositional strategies—the exploitation of nontraditional artistic materials, mining of mass media, destruction of language, exploration of the unconscious, and cutting and pasting of photomontage—irrevocably altered perceptions of what qualifies as art, in ways that continue to be powerfully resonant today.”

## **Installation**

The *Dada* exhibition at MoMA is structured around a series of six porous, interconnected spaces, respectively devoted to the six principal cities where Dada was developed and defined. There are two different entrances to the *Dada* exhibition at MoMA; visitors who enter on the left begin in New York, and those who enter on the right begin in Zurich. These options reflect the Dada movement’s dual points of origin in two geographically disparate, but similarly neutral, cities at the beginning of World War I. Within the exhibition space—designed by Jerome Neuner, Director, Exhibition Design and Production, The Museum of Modern Art—emphatic diagonals, overlapping planes, and expansive vistas emphasize the themes of movement, travel, and dispersal that pervade Dada, a defiantly international movement and the first to self-consciously position itself as an expansive network spanning countries and continents. The exhibition’s structure is deliberately nonlinear; it is intended to exploit the constant, productive tension between containment within cities and dissemination between cities, as Dada artists, ideas, words, images, and strategies circulated.

Films and sound poems are integrated into the exhibition gallery spaces. Films such as Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926), Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923), and Hans Richter's *Rhythmus 21* (1921), *Rhythmus 23* (1923-1925) and *Filmstudie* (1926) are presented in relation to the artists' works in other mediums, as are sound poems by Raoul Hausmann, Kurt Schwitters, and Tristan Tzara. A black box theater in the Paris section features Fernand Léger's *Ballet mécanique* (1924) and René Clair's *Entr'acte* (1924), accompanied by their original musical scores.

## **Cities**

**Berlin:** In the capital of a defeated Germany plagued by food shortages and street fighting, Dada took on an overtly political tone. The work of the Berlin Dadaists reflected their disgust with German nationalism. Targeting the mass media culture that flourished in the postwar years, members of Berlin’s Club Dada used fragments of the illustrated press and other printed matter as the material of art, pioneering the new medium of photomontage, exemplified by Raoul Hausmann's *Elasticum* (1920) and Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada*

through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany (1919–20). In Höch's large-scale work, the German words for "anti-Dada movement" are pasted on top of images of the recently deposed Wilhelm II, Weimar government leaders, generals, and an unemployment office. The photomontage also contains images of modern women—actresses, dancers, athletes, and poets—as well as a map highlighting the European countries that intended to give women the right to vote. A rare group of collages by Johannes Baader are seen for the first time in the United States in this exhibition.

**Cologne:** In British-occupied Cologne, Max Ernst, Johannes Baargeld, and Angelika and Heinrich Hoerle founded a small Dada group that carefully skirted the censors. Cologne Dada's distinctive protest against order, tradition, and hierarchy took shape in this environment, and the shattered postwar psyche became a major theme. Ernst merged images from a microscopic universe with machine diagrams to create a fantastic biotechnological world, exemplified in *The Gramineous Bicycle Garnished with Bells the Dappled Fire Damps and the Echinoderms Bending the Spine to Look for Caresses* (c. 1921). In Baargeld's *Typical Vertical Mess as Depiction of the Dada Baargeld* (1920), the artist irreverently juxtaposed a reproduction of the Venus de Milo with a photograph of his own face, creating a contradictory self-portrait that simultaneously transgresses gender distinctions and alludes to the amputated bodies of soldiers returning from the war. In addition to Ernst's achievements during the Dada years, the works of lesser-known artists such as Baargeld and Heinrich Hoerle are also highlighted.

**Hannover:** Denied membership in Berlin's Club Dada by Richard Huelsenbeck for being insufficiently political, Kurt Schwitters created an alternate form of Dada that he called "Merz." The name "Merz" was taken from a fragment of an advertisement for the *Kommerz- und Privatbank* (commercial and private bank) that appeared in one of his first assemblages. Schwitters created assemblages and collages from things that were often overlooked—bus tickets, packaging, and other tossed-off scraps of modern life—incorporating them in works such as *Mz 317. Lenox* (1921) and *Merz Pictures 32 A. The Cherry Picture* (1921). In *Cherry Picture*, with its accumulation of printed material and found objects on the surface of the picture plane, Schwitters created an innovative form of relief sculpture. At MoMA, this work will be shown with three other works of an ambitiously large scale which are rare in the artist's oeuvre. While Merz was essentially a one-man movement, Schwitters also collaborated with artists such as Raoul Hausmann, Theo van Doesburg, Hans Arp, and El Lissitzky.

**New York:** The arrival of Jean Crotti, Marcel Duchamp, and Francis Picabia from Europe in 1915 created a core for the future New York Dada group. In New York, geographically distant from the war, Dadaists focused on the machines and products that symbolized a new industrial economy. Industrial manufacturing was seen as the antithesis of traditional fine art and thus a perfect weapon for Dada. Duchamp introduced the readymade, everyday manufactured goods labeled as works of art such as *Fountain* (1917), a urinal, and *In Advance of a Broken Arm*

(1964, fourth version after lost original), a snow shovel; Man Ray used airbrushing, a precise form of spray painting employed for commercial art; and Picabia ironically elevated mechanical drawing, the dry and impersonal visual language of industry, to the status of fine art. One of Duchamp's most important works on glass, *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour* (1918), is unique to MoMA's presentation of *Dada*.

**Paris:** Dada's arrival in Paris in early 1920 brought together many Dadaists who had been active elsewhere, including Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Tristan Tzara. They quickly made an impact with a flurry of performances, exhibitions, publications, and press commentary that became known as the "Dada season." Cultivating spectacle and scandal, Paris Dadaists created a counterpoint to the *rappelle à l'ordre*—a return to traditional cultural values and resurgent nationalism embraced by avant-garde and conservative artists alike in the immediate postwar period. Picabia's travels made him an important conduit for ideas, and upon his return to Paris, he created some of his most provocative work, such as *The Cacodylic Eye* (1921), a canvas signed and decorated by his fellow artists. He also provoked a series of scandals by submitting deliberately provocative, suggestively titled works such as *Parade Amoureuse* (1917)—unique to MoMA's presentation of *Dada*—to various Parisian exhibitions and salons.

**Zurich:** The neutral wartime refuge of Zurich was home to an expatriate community of individuals, including Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, and Tristan Tzara. In 1916, Ball established the legendary Cabaret Voltaire, the avant-garde nightclub that served as a training ground for the founding members of Dada. Linked by their despair over cultural values that they believed led to World War I, the Dadaists founded a movement that took as its point of departure innovations of the prewar avant-garde. The Zurich Dadaists' embrace of primitivism is seen in Marcel Janco's masks of 1919, which were used in the Dadaists performances. Radical experimentation with abstraction is seen in Hans Arp's *Untitled (Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance)* (1916–17), and Sophie Taeuber's Dada Heads. These heads are forms of turned wood resembling the dummies of haberdashers and hairdressers, which she painted with highly stylized angular and curvilinear patterns. Only four of Taeuber's Heads survive, and these will be shown together at MoMA. Also included is an installation of the marionettes that Taeuber made for a 1918 puppet adaptation of an eighteenth-century play by Carlo Gozzi called *The King Stag*.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The exhibition is made possible by The Dana Foundation and by Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron. Major support is provided by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The Museum acknowledges generous funding from the Sue & Edgar Wachenheim Foundation and additional assistance from Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland. The accompanying educational programs are made possible by BNP Paribas.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

The exhibition catalogue for the United States venues is published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with D.A.P. (Distributed Art Publishers, Inc.), and includes essays by Leah Dickerman, Brigid Doherty, Dorothea Dietrich, Sabine T. Kriebel, Janine Mileaf, Michael R. Taylor, and Matthew S. Witkovsky. Paper: \$40.00. Cloth: \$65.00. Available in the MoMA stores and online at [www.momastore.org](http://www.momastore.org).

The publication *Looking at Dada*, written by Sarah Ganz Blythe and Edward D. Powers, examines artworks featured in the Dada exhibition and is intended as an accessible introduction to Dada and its times. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. \$14.95. Available in the MoMA stores and online at [www.momastore.org](http://www.momastore.org).

*Dada in the Collection*, a MoMA publication coedited by Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter, features the Museum's extensive holdings of Dada works and will be released in 2007.

**PROGRAMS:**

*The Thought is Made in the Mouth: Dada Sound Poetry and Manifestos* will be held on Wednesday, June 21 at 6:00 p.m. in Titus Theater 2. Poets LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs, Bob Holman, and Pierre Joris perform original poetry and manifestos created by such Dada artists as Hugo Ball, Kurt Schwitters, and Tristan Tzara.

*Mind Reels: Dada Films with Musical Accompaniment* will be presented on Wednesday, July 19, 6:00 p.m. in Titus Theater 2. This evening features musicians Martin Marks and Charles Shadle as they provide live accompaniment for silent Dada films, including René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte* (1924) and Man Ray's *Emak Bakia* (1926). George Antheil's score accompanies Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924).

The Wooster Group will premiere a new Dada-inspired performance on September 6, 7, and 9, at 9:00 p.m. in The Agnes Gund Garden Lobby.

*Representing Dada* is a daylong symposium on Saturday, September 9, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., that will feature international scholars and curators considering the issues involved in representing Dada through texts, images, and objects, with a particular focus on the semantics of display.

For more information, see separate press release or visit [www.moma.org/thinkmodern](http://www.moma.org/thinkmodern).

**FILM PROGRAM:**

Ten silent films made by Dada artists including Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, and Hans Richter, will be presented in Titus Theater 1 on Saturday, June 24, 3:00 p.m.; Sunday, June 25, 1:00 p.m.; and Friday, June 30, 7:00 p.m.; and in Titus Theater 2 on Sunday, August 13, 4:30 p.m. and Monday, September 4, 6:00 p.m. *Dada on Film* is organized by Anne Morra, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Media. See separate press release for more information.

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