

MARCEL DUCHAMP

PAINTING, EVEN

24 SEPTEMBER 2014 – 5 JANUARY 2015

A key artist of the 20th century, and the inventor of the famous ready-mades (previously-produced objects chosen by the artist, transformed as little as possible and presented as works), Marcel Duchamp has often been seen as a constantly provocative iconoclast who killed painting and challenged the very nature of art. Yet he was first of all a painter, and it is in his painting that we can see the complexity and extreme consistency of his work from the very beginning. Through around 100 works brought together for the first time, the exhibition takes us from the early 1910s, when Duchamp thought of himself as a painter, to 1923, the year he stopped working on his great work – one of the century's most impenetrable and complex: *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*

("The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even"), also known as *Le Grand Verre* ("The Large Glass"). The exhibition sheds light on issues in the artist's thoughts about painting, and his sources – he drew on science, pictures, techniques and books alike. It thus illustrates the artist's interest in his own times and the changes taking place not only in art, but also in literature and the optical, mechanical, physical and occult sciences. Covering a huge range (humorous drawings, treatises on perspective, the films of Georges Méliès, the paintings of Cranach the Elder and Manet, Impressionism and Cubism), the exhibition takes us on a step-by-step journey through the development of the *Grand Verre*, which the artist left, as he put it, "definitively unfinished".

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AN EROTIC CLIMATE (Room 1)

Starting in 1910, from the first caricature drawings and nudes that rooted his work in an erotic obsession connected with the question of "looking", everything Duchamp painted moved inevitably towards the *Grand Verre*.

The prehistory of the Duchampian theme of *La Mariée* lay in Aunt Sally-type games of "Noce de Nini pattes-en-l'air" in fairground shows and licentious films on the hackneyed theme of undressing the bride. Very early on, the caricature drawings Duchamp produced in the wake of his elder brother Jacques Villon established the relationship between the image and writing – such as a caption or title – as vehicles for irony, or for questioning what is shown.

"It doesn't matter whether taste is good or bad, because it is always good for some and bad for others. Whatever the quality, it is always taste."

NUDES (Room 2)

In 1905, when he was 18, Marcel Duchamp visited the Salon d'Automne where at the same time as a retrospective devoted to Edouard Manet (who would become the "great man" for him), the scandal of the "Cage aux Fauves" (wild beast cage) erupted with the colourful works of Matisse and Derain. While his first nudes evinced an almost loose, Fauvist-style use of colour and

draughtsmanship, Duchamp rapidly stylised the drawing of his figures and placed them in an abstract, enigmatic context designed to break with any kind of formalism and naturalism, and create "antiretinal" (or "metarealist") painting.

THE APPEARANCE OF AN APPARITION (Room 3)

Seeking to imbue his painting with a different, anti-naturalistic dimension, Duchamp, running counter to his contemporaries and his Fauvist beginnings, began to explore Symbolist literature and painting, where ideas took precedence over vision. At the same time he was introduced by his circle (his friend and future radiologist, Ferdinand Tribout, and his brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon, then a houseman in the department of medical photographer Albert Londe) to extraretinal phenomena associated with radiation, the "electric halo" and the question of fluids and X-rays. Duchamp then began to surround his figures with an "aura": a sign of his desire to go beyond realism and create paintings of what was invisible.

DE-THEORISING CUBISM (Room 4)

At the end of 1911, Marcel Duchamp joined the group of Cubists who would meet at Puteaux on Sundays at the homes of his brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and discuss the scientific, technical and philosophical discoveries of the time over games of chess. In this context he produced a series of paintings, including *Jeune Homme triste dans un train* ("Sad Young Man in a Train") and *Nu descendant un escalier* ("Nude Descending a Staircase"). These syntheses of Cubism and Futurism were inspired by the chronophotographs of Marey and Muybridge, and theories on optics and the fourth dimension: "that invisible dimension" that cannot be seen "with the eyes".

Rejected for the Salon des Indépendants by his Cubist friends because of its title, which they considered provocative, the *Nu* was exhibited at the "Golden Section" Salon in October 1912, then a few months later in New York, where it was a great success. However, its repudiation gave Duchamp the impetus to move beyond Cubist aesthetics. These paintings prefigured his series of optical works and films in the Twenties.

"I believe that today, more than ever, the artist has a para-religious mission to fulfil: to keep lit the flame of an inner vision, of which the work of art seems the closest translation for the layman."

MECHANICAL MODESTY (Room 5)

The fantasy of the machine was central to the literary and artistic imagination of the early century. When he visited the Air Show at the end of 1912 with Fernand Léger and Brancusi, Duchamp went into ecstasies over the formal perfection of an aeroplane propeller. His car journey at breakneck speed from Paris to the Jura with Picabia and Apollinaire in October 1912 shored up his belief in a link between the body and mechanic. He crystallised a highly personal iconography mingling movement, eroticism and mechanics around the game of chess, which he considered "a mechanism, because it moves."

THE ORGANIC UNCONSCIOUS (VISCERAL MECHANICS) (Room 6)

Duchamp stayed in Munich during the summer of 1912, visiting a number of major European museums and marshalling his early thoughts on the *Grand Verre: La Mariée mise à nu par ses*

célibataires, même. Seeking to reinvent painting, he mingled the visceral with the mechanical, like the characters in Raymond Roussel's play *Impressions d'Afrique*. The Bavarian capital, the Mecca of the esoteric and the technical alike, the birthplace of Kandinsky's abstraction and home to fine paintings by Cranach, provided him with new sources on which to base his most accomplished paintings: *Le Passage de la Vierge à la Mariée* ("The Passage from Virgin to Bride"), and *La Mariée*. Here he deliberately explored the polysemy of the idea of the "passage" in geometrical, chemical, psychological, physiological, sexual and metaphysical terms. His technique had similarities with the glazes of Cranach's *Venuses*, foreshadowing the transparency of *Le Grand Verre*.

"I think that art is the only form of activity through which man shows himself to be a real individual. Through it alone, he can move beyond the animal stage because art opens onto regions dominated by neither time nor space."

"PRECISION PAINTING AND THE BEAUTY OF INDIFFERENCE" (Room 7)

Duchamp worked at the Sainte-Geneviève library from May 1913 until he left for America in June 1915. Here he built on his knowledge of geometry, mathematics, perspective and optics, making copious preparatory notes for the *Grand Verre*. He set the various elements of the work in place, experimenting with the materials that would be used in the work. After the *Bride*, to be placed in the upper panel, he designed the lower panel: the domain of the Bachelors, with the *Chocolate Grinder no. 1* (1913), and the *Nine Malik Moulds* (1914-1915). He adopted a dry precise objective style, like a geometrician, and re-established a symmetrical, frontal perspective, constructing a beauty of indifference. At the same time, he paradoxically introduced an element of chance and subjectivity into the object through what he calls the "Stoppages étalon" (Standard Stoppages) – a strictly personal unit of measurement – and his first ready-mades, which he defined as a meeting between an object, an inscription and a given moment.

LE GRAND VERRE (THE LARGE GLASS) (Room 8)

Duchamp produced this work in New York between 1915 and 1923. There are several replicas of it; this one comes from Stockholm.

Le Grand Verre consists of two large plates of glass standing vertically, an axis of an elevation that is simultaneously spiritual, erotic, geometrical, physical and physiological.

La Mariée – the *Bride* – is found in the upper section; the world of the bachelors in the lower section. The border between these two worlds in the centre represents, as Duchamp tells us, both "the horizon and the undone clothing of the bride." From the capillary tubes (as Duchamp calls them) the desire of the bachelors rises towards the upper part. They are associated with the *Chocolate grinder* on the right, symbolic of a repetitive onanism. In the upper section, the *Bride*, as Duchamp tells us, is a "flayed body". She is the prey of her vapours and the gases, which concentrate in the band at the top, called by Duchamp "the flesh Milky Way", and which he says is driven by three "breeze pistons".

Although in 1934 Duchamp collected together the notes that lay behind its production in what he called *La Boîte verte* (the Green Box), the work remains a mystery and gives rise to infinite possibilities for analysis: a mechanistic and cynical interpretation of the phenomenon of love; a symbolism with an alchemical source; a poetry of

"And yet I have drawn people's attention to the fact that art is a mirage. A mirage, just like the oasis that appears in the desert. It is very beautiful, until the moment when you die of thirst, obviously. But we do not die of thirst in the field of art. The mirage has substance."

suggestion, "not [of] the thing, but its effect", influenced by the thought of Stéphane Mallarmé; a libidinal economy reduced to bachelor machines; a complex and impossible project making play with multidimensional geometries, laws of perspective and scholarly references; a picture that endeavours to capture what eludes the retina; the last picture – a creative process that profoundly changes our approach to the work of art...

BIOGRAPHY

Marcel Duchamp was born in 1887, and in his paintings of the early 20th century began to experiment with most of the artistic movements of his times – Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism and Futurism – with a few incursions into satirical drawing and humour. In 1911 and 1912, he became interested in theosophy and Symbolism. Convinced that painting was "a thing of the mind," as Leonardo da Vinci put it, he began to question "retinal art": art that appealed to the eye.

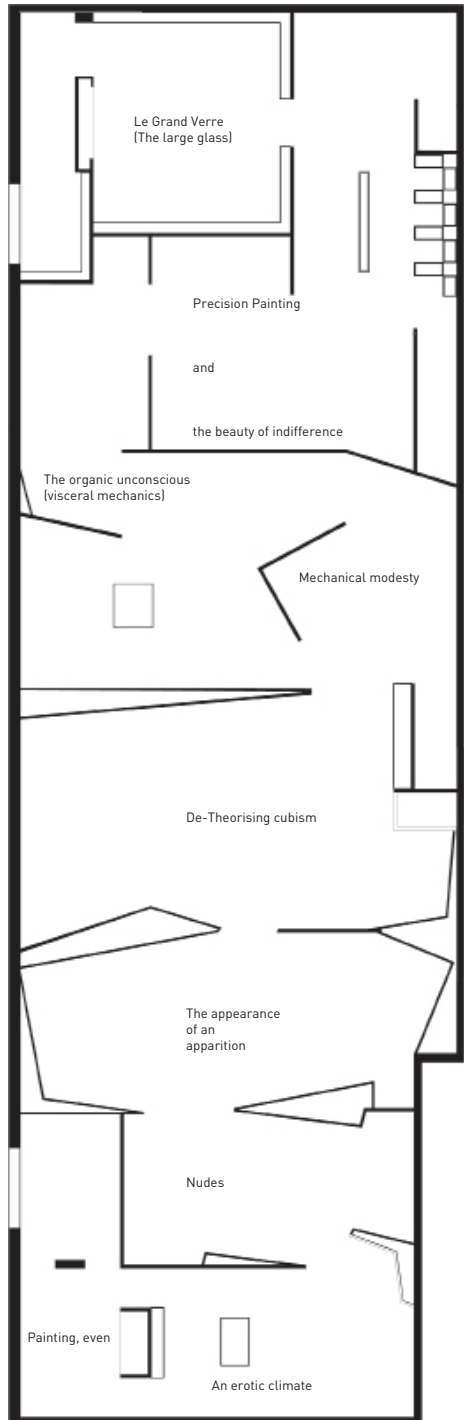
Under these auspices, he produced the first sketches of what was to be his great work, *La Mariée mise à nu par ses Célibataires, même* ("The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even"), also known as *Le Grand Verre* ("The Large Glass"), and in 1913, *Roue de bicyclette* ("Bicycle Wheel"). These were followed by a number of objects diverted from their original meaning – the bottle rack, the urinal and the spade – which he called *Ready-mades*.

In 1915, he began to divide his time between America and France, foreshadowing the Dada spirit with Francis Picabia and Man Ray. He worked on the *Grand Verre* until 1923. In the mid-Twenties, the Duchamp legend was born when he made his passion for chess his main activity.

He then turned to experimental projects making use of movement. He built machines, made a film, *Anémic cinéma* in 1925, and then his *Rotoreliefs* in 1935: works that made him a forerunner of Kinetic art.

A master in the art of wordplay, evidence of which can be found in his Notes, he became an exhibition organiser. From the Fifties onwards, he was considered a key figure in a new way of approaching art. The reproduction in 1964 of his first Ready-mades was the crowning point of his celebrity. His final work, *Étant donnés*, was only revealed after his death in 1968.

MAP



EXHIBITION

CURATOR

Cécile Debray

RESEARCH

Valérie Loth

ARCHITECT/STAGE DESIGNER

Laurence Le Bris

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Malika Noui

In media partnership with



AROUND THE EXHIBITION

GUIDED TOURS IN FRENCH

At 2.30 P.M. Every Saturday and Sunday

At 7.00 P.M. On Wednesdays 24-09, 1st, 8, 15, 22, 29-10, and 5, 12, 19, 26-11

Length: 1 hr 30 mins

TALK: "UN DIMANCHE, UNE ŒUVRE" (A SUNDAY; A WORK)

7-12, 11.30 a.m., Petite salle
Marcel Duchamp, *Peigne (Comb)*, 1916-1964

By Didier Semin, Professor of History of Art, Ensba, Paris

WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN

Saturdays 11-10; 15, 29-11; 13-12,
Sundays 12-10; 16, 30-11; 14-12:

Workshop: "Mon Marcel" ("My Marcel")

for children aged 2 to 5 with their families. 3.00-4.30 p.m.

Workshop: "La clef Duchamp" ("The Key to Duchamp")

for children aged 6 to 10 with their families
2.30-4.30 p.m.

TEACHING DOSSIER

"Marcel Duchamp.
La peinture, même 1910-1923"
["Marcel Duchamp:
Painting, even: 1910-1923"]
www.centrepompidou.fr

AUDIOGUIDE

Languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian and German.
The audioguide provides an itinerary through the exhibition "Marcel Duchamp. La peinture, même", focusing on 27 works in the collection.

You can also explore 90 works from the Museum's permanent collections, and take an introductory tour of the building's architecture.

Price: €5; reduced price: €4

On hire at the ticket office, level 0
Withdrawals on presentation of the ticket at the Espace Audioguide, level 0

FILM

DUCHAMP IN FILM

Ready-mades, performances, documents

24 September - 29 October 2014

Every Wednesday at 7.00 p.m.

Cinéma 2

Price: €6; reduced price: €4

Free for those with a "Museum Pass"

PUBLICATIONS

CATALOGUE

Marcel Duchamp, *La peinture, même*, edited by Cécile Debray
320 pp, 280 ill. €44.90.



ALBUM

Marcel Duchamp. *La peinture, même*, by Cécile Debray
60 pp, €9.90

MONOGRAPH

Marcel Duchamp, by C. Cros
96 pages, 60 ill. €12.

IPAD APPLICATION

Versions in English and French.
Available on Apple Store and Google Play
€3.49

INFORMATIONS

01 44 78 12 33

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EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

24 September 2014 to 5 January 2015
Galerie 2, level 6

Every day except Tuesdays from 11.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.

Ticket offices close at 8.00 p.m.

Late-night opening on Thursdays until 11.00 p.m.

Ticket offices close at 10.00 p.m.

PRICES

Access with the "Museum & Exhibitions" ticket

€13; reduced price €10

Valid the same day for a single entry into each area at the Museum, all exhibitions and for the View of Paris
Free for annual Pass holders and for those under 18

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(full price only)

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