

Lecture Notes

Syllabus 3/7/05 – DADA



- **01 & 02_Ball Reciting Karawane – 1916 – Hugo Ball**

DADA

- Dada performance at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich (Cabaret Voltair 1st center of Dada)
- **What is Dada?**
- “Dada is the revolt of nonbelievers against disbelief “ – Jean Arp
- “Dada is the longing for belief” - qualifying statement spoken by Jean Arp. Not true of all Dada artists.
- Dada a movement started in 1918 in Zurich after WWI developed quickly across Europe and U.S.
- **Revolting against :**
 - Against naturalism, museum art
 - Against Futurism, cubism
 - Against machine age and modern technology
 - WWI contributed to the largest scale destruction in history with tanks, machine guns, chemical warfare, aerial bombs
 - WWI a supreme disillusionment
 - Against religion and democracy – neither helped prevent destruction of war
- **Believed in:**
 - What’s left : the absurd, the illogical, unreasonable, the flip side of everything from the enlightenment to WWI



- **03_Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance – 1916-17**

– Jean Arp

DADA

- Arp dropped torn paper randomly and stuck it down



- **04_Fleur Marteau – 1916 – Jean Arp**

DADA

- Fleur Marteau = “Flower Hammer”
- Dropped strings and objects, traced, painted, shapes cut out, shapes arranged randomly together, entitle flower hammer
- Drawing on chance, accidental, irrational process rather than a plan that’s well thought out and conceived and logical
- Dada led directly into Surrealism



- **05_ Dada Head – 1920 – Sophie Tauber-Arp**

DADA

- Weird sculpture, reminiscent of Constructivists but made and painted as serious, deliberate nonsense



- **06_Portrait of Jean Arp – Sophie Tauber-Arp**

DADA

- NOT IN BOOK but an interesting color slide to see



- **07_The Spirit of Our Time – 1919 – Raoul Hausmann**

BERLIN DADA

- Hausmann was 1 of the leaders along with George Grosz and John Heartfield of Dada group in Berlin
- More politically serious tone in Berlin
 - Weimar Republic was provisional, very weak govt put in place by victorious Allied forces who defeated imperialist German govt in WWI. Post WWI found Germany in unstable economic state.
 - Sculpture all about numbers, quantifying, science stuck on “dummy” who is vacant. About “efficiency” attached to a thing that cannot possibly accomplish it. Absurdity.



- **08 & 09_Merzbau in Hanover – 1924-33 – Kurt**

Schwitters

BERLIN DADA

- At first not allowed to exhibit with Berlin Dada c/o he still maintained connections with other artists in Germ and Paris more interested in art for art's sake. Berlin Dada wanted to turn their back completely on traditional modern art establishment c/o none of it had done anything useful as far as they were concerned, and so Berlin Dada shunned him for the first few years.
- “Merz” = word Schwitzerz developed to describe all his work. Everything was a “Merz” something or other.
- Merzbild = Merz picture
- Merzbau – Merz house
- Comes from “com-merce” bank. Pulled “merz” out of middle. Liked it as nonsense word, sounds very much like “merde” in French = “shit”.
- Merz = deliberate trash – true trash – assembled
- Took over his entire house and he moved out. Nazis destroyed it.
- After this Berlin Dada decided he was ok to allow in group.



- **10_Picture with Light Center – 1919 - Kurt Schwitters**

• **BERLIN DADA**

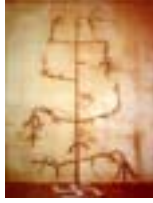
- Merz-bild = Merz picture
- Arranged trash – found stuff – painted and actually looks beautiful in some way
- Separates him from other dada berlin artists because it does have a certain beauty



- **11_Cut With The Kitchen Knife – 1919 – Hannah Hoch**
- **BERLIN DADA**
 - Photomontage (collage of photographic images). Hoch’s work focuses more often on themes having to do with women
 - After WWI - propaganda campaign in Germany under Weimar govt to get women out into work force and acknowledge women’s participation in supporting govt: promoting “New German Woman” who works professionally and can do anything that men can do.
 - Hannah Hoch was one of the New German Women, working as German photojournalist originally but given mickey mouse assignments by employer.
 - When she became Dada artist she drew upon her photography experience
 - Berlin Dada claimed to invent the technique of photomontage
 - Photos were real material from life
 - Cut out and put together in Cubist kind of way but different because Cubists did it to get shapes, colors and new arrangements. Dada did it to convey new meanings, partly satirical, partly serious.
 - Images in picture:
 - Anti-dada people
 - Govt. Weimar regime leaders
 - Dancer in middle with head on spear = Kathe Kollwitz, expressionist German printmaker (role model for Hoch).



- **12_Adolf the Superman: Swallowing Gold and Spouting Trash – 1932 – John Heartfield**
- **BERLIN DADA**
 - Name actually Helmut Hertzfeld and in protest against German politics he anglicized name
 - Neitzche! Superman = Ubermensch (Overman). Adolf Hitler twisted Neitzche to equate pure Aryans as superior race, cleansed and purified.



- **13_Little German Christmas Tree – 1934 – John Heartfield**

BERLIN DADA

Photomontage

- Words: “O Christmas Tree in German Soil How Crooked Are Your Branches”
- Photomontage: he cut together different photographic images and then photographed the collage
- The Berlin Dada artists credited themselves with developing the art of photomontage

NEW OBJECTIVITY = die neuesachlichkeit - objectivity with a productive purpose. It was a way of using satire and conventions of expressionist art and dada techniques to directly critique the condition of society. New objectivity artists are closely associated with Berlin Dada artists.

- **ART IS IN DANGER** written by Grosz and Helmut Heartfelt's brother. They participated in the first few Berlin Dada exhibitions.
- New Objectivity artists Grosz, Dix and Beckman were not separate distinct from Dada, they were just more deliberately expressionistic. While Dada relies on randomness, chance, accident, parody, humor the New Objectivity is linked via its satire, but it's more directed and deliberate expressionism. Think of New Objectivity as the 2nd generation of expressionist artists in the 20th century.



- **14_Dedication to Oskar Panizza – 1917-18 – George Grosz**

THE NEW OBJECTIVITY

- Panizza was German, father was Italian. Wrote satirical plays that in late 19th cent. Pointedly criticized the establishment in Germany – the aristocracy and the church – in a bawdy, racy, taboo subject matter. Publicly censored in Germany and put in prison, plays shut down, bank accounts confiscated. Became symbol of free speech and right to speak out against govt authority.
- Chose Anglicized first name as statement against German culture
- This image reminiscent of Kirschner's Red Tower (use of cubism, distorted perspective to give claustrophobic, uneasy disquieting, chaotic sense. Also reminiscent of Ensor's Entry of Christ into Brussels – carnivalesque red and green chaotic scene.
- Grosz is drawing upon all sources above using geometric fracturing of pictorial space, distorted perspective, heightened expressionistic colors. Showing the world gone out of order with multiple perspectives. Crowded. Tilted picture plane. Hideous images. Impotent priests. Church and govt. are powerless and all has gone mad.



- **15 Pillars of Society – 1926 – George Grosz - NOT IN BOOK**

THE NEW OBJECTIVITY

- Magistrates, military people, judges are “pillars of society” shown unable to control or prevent chaos and madness in society.
- Judge is chasing after a nun
- Front – Nazi party official with open head and phantom soldiers coming out of his head
- Upside down teacup may be parody on Nazi storm trooper helmet
- L – newsman/journalist – the press with quill pen holding newspapers
- German govt. Weimar official with steaming pile of crap
- Weimar govt. deliberately a weak system set up during reconstruction post WWI up to keep Germany from rising up and trying to take over the world. Many artists and Germans were disillusioned by inability to combat economic chaos etc.



- **16 Dr. Meyer Hermann – 1926 – Otto Dix**

THE NEW OBJECTIVITY

- Dix’s satirical caricature of Dr. Meyer Hermann, a specialist physician (laryngology) called upon by govt. to inspect people for fitness to join the military.
- Shown here as imposing, dopey looking guy with medical instruments. Threatening and evil looking.



- **17 The Trench – 1943 – Otto Dix**

THE NEW OBJECTIVITY

- Dix witnessed as a young man too young to fight in WWI the atrocities in his homeland. Did series of etchings in 1920s about the horrible effects of World war I.
- Painting used random and chance techniques explored by Dada artists:
 - Decalcomania – ink blot like images from two pages pulled apart
 - Frottage - rubbing canvas or paper on top of a textured surface
- Gnarled, mutilated, decaying sense of corpses and skeletons in the trench
- Dix an outspoken pacifist, critical of govt. Work condemned and confiscated, called degenerate.



- **18_Departure – 1932-5 – Max Beckman**
THE NEW OBJECTIVITY
 - Beckman grew up in rural Germany. Enlisted in WWI. Describes walking in field seeing chaotic war, and in the middle he saw the sky and he was transported above it all in the midst of chaos. Like the middle of this triptych.
 - This is most famous triptych, a standard religious Western format. Beckman had specific iconography in mind, but also wanted people to interpret these images in their own way.
 - Allegory of the triumphal voyage of the modern spirit thru and beyond the agony of the modern world
 - Right side = frustration, indecision, self torture; lantern = trying to find your way in the darkness; you can never free yourself from the past; you must carry the corpse of your mistakes & failures while life plays the drum
 - Left side = sadistic mutilation, and torture of others; rise of dictatorship driving artists underground.
 - Center = King with mother and child = hope. Positive, hopeful promise of human spirit. Mother is Queen carrying greatest treasure - Freedom as a child in her lap. Freedom is the thing that matters – it is the departure and a new start.
 - Primitive style – sense of medieval woodblock print / folk art

- **New York DADA:** Duchamp was French, but came to U.S. in 1912 and his work best exemplifies the New York Dada artists.
 - Duchamp worked with “readymades” = the found object (like cubists, constructivists) but Dada artists used differently through **APPROPRIATION**: taking everyday objects and using them totally out of context and into art context.
 - Became involved with group of Artists in NY called The Independents
 - Independents reacted against 1913 Armory show as too European predominant, and wanted to mount exhibition showcasing American artists



- **19-B_Bicycle Wheel – 1913 – DuChamp**
NEW YORK DADA
 - First example of Appropriation (see above definition) – wooden stool and bicycle wheel.



20_ & 21_ Fountain – 1917 – Duchamp

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NEW YORK DADA

- Fountain another example – maybe most famous - of Appropriation – a urinal signed with a pseudonym and dated. Not initially accepted to big juried show by Society of Independents but decision appealed and shown but in a back back room. Bottle Rack WAS accepted.
- Why rejected?
 - Controversial, obscene
 - Signed R. Mutt – pun on R. Mott Co., major US manufacturer of plumbing fixtures
 - Turned on its side thus abstracting it and giving it an artistic name with metaphorical, poetic significance. Not a literal title (fountain instead of urinal)
 - Did it as a challenge to the question of what is art and who determines what is art



22_ Bottle Rack - 1914 – Duchamp

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NEW YORK DADA

- Why accepted to show?
 - Non-offensive; also literal in its aspect of display – he did nothing to change it



23_ Tu'M – 1918 – Duchamp

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NEW YORK DADA

- Personal pun created for Catherine Dreier, Duchamp's greatest patron and personal friend.
- Now in Phila. Museum of Art (best collection of Duchamp in the world, courtesy of Dreier's estate)
- This mixed media work functions as Duchamp's autobiography/self portrait of his previous works:
 - Bicycle wheel
 - Squares held on by bolt painted trompe l'oeil
 - Hand points to work of painted representation of an experimental piece he was working on
 - Shadow of hat rack refers to a readymade he used in one of his paintings

- Bottle brush (actual real brush). Tear in canvas is trompe l'oeil with real safety pins.
- Shadow of cork screw.



- **24_L.H.O.O.Q. – 1919 – Duchamp**
NEW YORK DADA

- At bottom is white border cut off on this Post card are letters LHOOQ
- LHOOQ = pronounced Elle a chaud au coup = she has a hot ass
- Moustache and beard = playful androgeny reference.
- Duchamp a real punster. He dressed in drag as persona “Rose Selavy”
 - Rose = pronounce double R = EROS
 - Selavy – c’est la vie
 - Sex that’s life!



- **25_ & 26_The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors – 1915-23 – Duchamp**
NEW YORK DADA

- Started 1915
- Panes of glass with complex iconography depicting unconsummated mating ritual
- Bride top L made of of plumbing parts. Spoofing, satirical notion of woman, mechanized parts with plumbing
- Bachelors – 9 bachelors connected to chocolate grinder – pun on ‘grinding your chocolate’, a euphemism for masturbation. Poor guys can’t get to the bride so are relegated to endlessly grinding their chocolate.
- Actual dust is used in the Bride’s cloud. Cloud is “sperm glass”
- Broke glass moving it to Catherine Dreier’s house. “At last, it’s finished” c/o the breaks provide conduits that finally allow the bachelors to get to the bride and lets the sperm gas out

At the end of Duchamp’s life he said he was no longer making art and devoting his time to playing chess. Specified in his will that no one would enter his studio until 20 yrs after his death. When entering (1990?), they discovered he had actually been working on a complex, major piece with wooden doors and a peephole viewing a diorama with mutilated woman in a fairyland looking landscape with waterfall and gas light.



- **27_Dust Breeding – 1926 - May Ray**
NEW YORK DADA
 - Photo by Man Ray of dust on glass from The Bride Stripped Bare



- **28_Rayograph – 1924 – Man Ray (not in book)**
NEW YORK DADA
 - Fits with Dada – c/o random and chance qualities and looks toward surrealism which came directly out of Dada (Breton, Ernst interested in Dada and then founded surrealism).
 - Putting objects on photosensitive paper at the same time Moholy Nagy was doing it and calling it a photogram.



- **29_Gift – 1921 – Man Ray**
NEW YORK DADA
 - Transition to surrealism.
 - When Surrealists got together and came up with a cohesive ideas/method, they developed stuff like automatism (suspending conscious mind and drawing to see what happens).
 - With Gift, it's the chance encounter etc. juxtaposing irrational stuff
 - Made in the spirit of Duchamp's readymades, but with black humor subverting the iron's normal utilitarian function by attaching 14 tacks to its surface – transforms it into alien and threatening object.
 - Gift for avant garde French composer, Erik Satie
 - Surrealist Motto: a line from 19th century epic poem by Isadore Ducasse's "Chansons du Maladror": **“as beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.”**

