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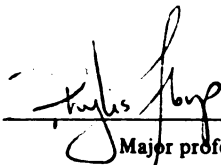
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AN EXAMINATION OF SHIFTING INTERPRETATIONS
IN THE CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ART

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CYNTHIA LEE HENTHORN

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By

Cynthia Lee Henthorn

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ABSTRACT

RESPONSES TO MARCEL DUCHAMP: AN EXAMINATION OF SHIFTING INTERPRETATIONS IN THE CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ART

By

Cynthia Lee Henthorn

The discovery of Marcel Duchamp's Etant Donnés in 1969 functions as a crossroads in the twentieth-century between two distinct trends in the historical and critical approaches to art. The responses to Duchamp in the years before and after Etant Donnés' discovery reflect not only the changing attitudes toward Duchamp's role in the twentieth-century, but also the shifting ideologies in the discipline of art history. An examination of Duchamp criticism from the mid-1940's to the late 1980's provides a means of uncovering the patterns of approaches to art and, ultimately, reveals how changes in the direction of twentieth-century art are related to changes in its critical responses.

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INTRODUCTION

The year 1969 warrants our attention in an examination of art criticism for it earmarks a phenomenal event that influenced the course of art history and the attitudes toward the ways art is approached, interpreted and perceived. This event was the discovery of Etant Donnés, the enigmatic work that occupied Marcel Duchamp's private hours for at least twenty years. Upon its completion in 1966, it sat in secret, silently waiting to burst into the historical passages of art like a well-timed phrase.

The revelation of Etant Donnés in 1969 functions as a turning point, a fulcrum in history, between two diverse directions in the historical and critical approaches to art within the twentieth-century. Criticism of Duchamp's art before and after Etant Donnés reveals the changes in attitude toward Duchamp's role in art history and, ultimately, demonstrates how the discovery of Etant Donnés in an atmosphere charged with critical inquiry, and the resulting responses, manifested a new wave in the art world's critical approaches to art.

The pursuit of such a study retrospectively examines the ideological paths followed by critics from 1945 to the present. It provides an assessment of the turning points in the critical climate of these decades and the results of these changes as they are reflected

in the critical responses to art. Since Duchamp played such a prominent role in the development of twentieth-century art and art criticism, the critical attitudes toward him are used, for the purpose of this study, as a means of uncovering the patterns of critical ideologies. His relationship to the development of these disciplines demonstrates not only the degree to which Duchamp's history is entwined with that of twentieth-century art, but also the extent to which the issues or concerns found in art are tied with those in art criticism.

Within the literature of a given era there can be found not only the attitudes toward the place of an artist in art's history, but also the attitudes toward the ways art and its history should be approached, perceived and interpreted. The pre and post-Etant Donnés eras carry their baggage of biases like any other and these can be ascertained by the manner in which representative scholars of each time regard Duchamp and his role in twentieth-century art. For the purpose of this study, these attitudes toward Duchamp, as revealed in the literature of the time, will be grouped according to a common denominator in theme or approach shared by various scholars. The critical responses found in these groups represents the ideological context of each era and ultimately provides a

contrast between the two, demonstrating the changes in attitude which resulted at the time of Etant Donnés' discovery.

RESPONSE TO DUCHAMP IN THE PRE-ETANT DONNES ERA

Since the primary reason for surveying the characteristics of the literature of these two eras is to reveal the changes in critical attitudes that are reflected by the discovery of Etant Donnés, following the literature in a general, chronological scheme becomes necessary in order to illuminate the depth of these changes.

The first body of criticism to be examined encompasses the pre-Etant Donnés literature of the mid 1940's through the 1950's. During this period, Duchamp was perceived as a member of the transplanted European avant-garde, and was awarded a place in its continuing lineage in America. During the post-war years, Duchamp began to receive a substantial amount of critical attention in this country. The majority of exhibitions and articles of the period establish his aesthetic or ideological relationship to other members of the avant-garde as scholars traced the history of the avant-garde from its origins in Europe to its new cultural home in America. Criticism reflecting this perspective tends to generalize his importance as part of the evolutionary development of twentieth-century art. This response differs from the heroic conception of Duchamp which dominated the criticism of the late 1950's and continued through the early 1960's. Under

this second section, Duchamp is perceived as a major figure in the development of twentieth-century art. His status within the avant-garde becomes augmented as scholars later identify him as the source of all major art movements in this century. Critical approaches are altered again in the mid-sixties. In this atmosphere, challenges to the old modes of perception and interpretation regarding art begin to surface. Already established as a major influence on the art of this century, and especially on the younger generation, Duchamp is turned to as an authority to support or explain an issue concerning the contemporary art scene. This final section covers the criticism written prior to the discovery of Etant Donnés upon Duchamp's death on October 2, 1968.

I. Duchamp Within The Avant-Garde Circle in America

From the mid 1940's and throughout the 1950's, scholars perceived Duchamp as a member of the European avant-garde, who, upon escaping from war-torn Europe, had been transplanted in New York. The literary documents of this time identify Duchamp with this group and part of the continuing modern tradition which found its roots in Europe, but reconvened its unfolding history in America.

Lacking the equivalent of Europe's artistic traditions, America adopted the dislocated European avant-garde and thus was able to establish a modern art identity for itself by formulating an American avant-garde based on the European presence. These documents reveal scholars' concern to examine America's European artistic lineage through the numerous retrospective articles and exhibitions.

By displaying the history of the avant-garde, these retrospectives demonstrate America's desire to see in physical terms the progression of the European avant-garde that culminated in America after WWII and established this country as the center for the subsequent development of the avant-garde. The retrospective study of the avant-garde provided America with a means of displaying its adopted cultural wealth and asserting itself as a legitimate cultural leader.

The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin of 1946 furnishes a retrospective examination of the avant-garde by documenting the European presence in America during WWII. James Johnson Sweeney, then director of the Museum of Modern Art, describes the bulletin as a "first hand" document of a "brief compilation of records and informal interviews" of "many leading artists of our time."¹ Duchamp, as a

member in this pantheon of heroes, is awarded a place in Sweeney's quintessential catalogue.

The 1945 exhibition at Yale University also demonstrates a retrospective study of Duchamp's activity as a member of the avant-garde. The attention is divided among the three Duchamp brothers. George Heard Hamilton associates the three brothers with the avant-garde by demonstrating how they break with French academic tradition. This ability to thwart established tradition is the common denominator that links the members of the avant-garde together and maintains their lineage. It is this tradition of breaking with tradition that some critics and historians define as the avant-garde:

Whosoever failed to account for Duchamp's 'readymades' could not be held accountable for an understanding of a 'fine art', the elements of which were also objects in a dimensional world. Duchamp, the 'anti-artist', had achieved a crushing victory over rational materialism. The Philistine, who in the nineteenth century had despised the work of such sensitive craftsman as Renoir and Whistler, holding it impractical and unreasonable, in the twentieth century discovered to his chagrin that practicality and reason are ever at the mercy of the selective imagination.²

Over the next decade, a number of exhibitions were mounted that placed Duchamp in the historical context of the European avant-garde. These group shows demonstrated through their historical overview, Duchamp's

place among the avant-garde by highlighting his association with Cubism, Dada and the Armory Show. For example, in 1952 the Rose Fried Gallery (New York City) sponsored a family exhibition of the three Duchamp brothers, along with their sister Suzanne.³ A second family review occurred in 1957 at the Guggenheim⁴ and in 1953 the Rose Fried Gallery sponsored an exhibition of Duchamp and Picabia that provided an historical overview of each artists' contribution to the development of the avant-garde.⁵ Lastly, an exhibition at Janis was mounted in 1959 which displayed several pieces of Duchamp "memorabilia".⁶

George Heard Hamilton, in his 1952 article "John Covert: Early American Modern", reaffirms the American interest in uncovering the ties between the New York avant-garde and its European heritage:

The recent retrospective exhibition of American abstract painting at the Museum of Modern Art served two purposes. Not only has it proved that non-representational painting has for more than a generation absorbed an impressive number of the ablest American talents, but it has also spurred inquiry into the origins of the abstract movement in this country.

Hamilton also cites various early twentieth-century American artists such as Man Ray, John Covert, Marius de Zaya and Morton Schamburg who owe a debt to Duchamp as an influential source. By highlighting these relationships between the inspired and inspirer,

Hamilton demonstrates Duchamp's encouragement of the growth of America's modern art, a role which was perceived as contributing to the continuation of the avant-garde tradition in America.

A 1952 profile of Duchamp reiterates this perception of him by tracing his participation in activities that established America as the cultural hub of the avant-garde.⁸ The article provides biographical data on Duchamp and emphasizes his involvement in the 1913 Armory Show, his formation of New York Dada with Man Ray and Picabia in 1917, and the founding of the Societe Anonyme in New York (along with Katherine Drier) in 1920. In this latter activity, he assisted in "an international art collecting and exhibiting organization devoted to 'the promotion of the study in America of the Progressive in Art'."⁹ The collection was given to the Yale University in 1949, providing the avant-garde with an even firmer anchor in America and the proliferation of modern art scholarship in that country as well.

Retrospective exhibitions and group shows of members of the avant-garde provided America with a means of displaying and examining the wealth of its European artistic heritage. In so doing, scholars were able to trace the development of the avant-garde through such members as Duchamp by exploring the

history of his contribution to the avant-garde and the continuation of it in America. This critical approach enabled scholars to determine the value of Duchamp to the avant-garde's tradition. Upon realizing this value, the opinion became unanimous that Duchamp was not only a member in this on-going tradition, but that he loomed as a major figure, influential to the course it took and the direction in which it continued.

II. Duchamp as Hero

During the late 1950's and early 1960's, the prevailing critical approach elevated Duchamp to a supreme and heroic level within the avant-garde and portrayed him as an instrumental force in the evolution of twentieth-century art. The difference between this approach in the art criticism of the late 1950's to early 1960's and that of previous decades is that Duchamp is no longer perceived solely as a member of the avant-garde, but rather he is aggrandized to the stature of its leader. His influence can be traced through all phases of twentieth-century art, therefore, it is from him that twentieth-century art evolves.

Lawrence Steefel in his 1961 review of Richard Hamilton's typographical version of the Green Box acknowledges this elevated role of Duchamp and reveals

the attitude of this era to discover just how essential Duchamp has been to the outcome of this century's art:

Duchamp, by himself, is a major artist as well as being a symbol of defiance and independence in the ambience of the avant-garde. His work involves transformations and developments of causes and ideas which are pervasive and essential elements of the modern movement...¹⁰

H. Wurdemann, in his 1963 review of Duchamp's Pasadena retrospective, confirms Steefel's perception of Duchamp's role in the avant-garde. Wurdemann promotes Duchamp as a main current in the stream of twentieth-century artistic issues and recognizes his all-pervasive influence as the "godhead" of the contemporary artists:

Though half a century has passed, the world of Duchamp still encompasses the artists of today. Like a radar...he pointed the way to the mechanized psychic and philosophical expressions of today...for many it is not Picasso but Marcel Duchamp who is the great revolutionary of twentieth-century painting and sculpture.¹¹

Under the heroizing light of Cleve Gray, Duchamp's place within the avant-garde is pushed to the forefront of all major art movements of the twentieth century:

...his achievements have been and will undoubtedly continue to be the seminal influences in this century's art. Single works, indeed single actions within one work, have already been the source of inspiration for such artists as Matta, Johns, Tinguley, Rauschenberg, the whole pop group and many, many more.¹²

Through the heroic promotion of Duchamp by critics like Gray, Steefel and Wurdemann, an image of Duchamp as the forefather of contemporary concerns becomes established. This position of esteem lends Duchamp an increasing authority within modern art history. Not only is he recognized as the leading hero of the avant-garde, but is also the hero of the younger generation and, due to his authority, becomes the hero for the next era's challenge of accepted standards in art.

III. Duchamp as Model

Critics recognized that many parallels existed between Duchamp and the art movements of the latter half of the 1960's. This prompted critics to trace the history of this "new" art back to Duchamp as its source of origin and, indeed, they found that he was. The many exhibitions of his works, which were displayed in the 1950's, allowed younger artists to examine Duchamp and assess his instrumental role in the development of the avant-garde. This activity culminated as a resurrection of Duchamp's ideas, re-interpreted through the art of the younger generation.

Duchamp's presence in America as a member of the European avant-garde and as a contributor to the establishment of America's cultural integrity awarded him a great deal of critical attention in the 1940's

and 1950's as scholars traced the origins of America's newly adopted modern art tradition.

Numerous retrospective and group exhibitions of Duchamp were mounted during this time, providing the art world with a physical document of Duchamp's artistic activities and his ties to major movements of the twentieth-century. As this type of exposure increased and his popularity grew, critics realized that Duchamp had played a seminal role in the course of twentieth-century art.

In this respect, he was perceived as a heroic leader and father figure in modern art history and was elevated to the status of godhead. This position, as well as his role as the source of inspiration for the younger artists (including Morris, Kosuth and Le Witt), awarded him an authority to which scholars of the mid-sixties turned for a standard in their examination, explanation and interpretation of dominant issues in the current art scene, such as the reductive aesthetic of the new art, its relationship to the machine, its challenge to the traditional notions of originality, perception and modern art's mythical history. Duchamp's role as a standard in art criticism ushers in the final grouping of the critical art literature of the pre-Etant Donnés era.¹³

One of the prevailing issues concerning the emerging new art movements of Minimalism and Conceptualism was their challenge to the aesthetic tradition of formal art. In so doing, this challenge also denied the use of the traditional formal tools in the interpretation of art.

Barbara Rose, in her 1965 article, "ABC Art", recognizes that there is present in the younger generation of Minimalists a pursuit which contradicts the formal character followed by the previous generation. Since it seeks a different direction, the new art, as Rose sees it, demands a different approach in the examination and explanation of its existence:

At this point I want to talk about sensibility rather than style, because the artists I'm discussing...are more related in terms of a common sensibility than in terms of a common style. Also, their attitudes, interests, experiences and stance are much like those of their contemporaries, the pop artists, although stylistically the work is not very similar...Obviously the new sensibility that preferred Newman and Johns to Willem de Kooning or his epigoni was going to produce art that was different, not only in form but in content as well, from the art that it spurned, because it rejected not only the premises, but the emotional content of abstract expressionism. I think we cannot treat the revolt of these young artists as we would that of artists of the age of the second generation, that is, artists roughly forty. For the art of that generation, the assumption that form and content are identical, the fundamental assumption of formalist criticism, seems adequate to describe the work. But in the work of the

younger people, one has the sense that form and content do not coincide, that, in fact, a bland neutral-looking form is the vehicle for a hostile, aggressive content.¹⁴

Rose looks to both Duchamp and Kasimir Malevich as the historical sources for the contemporary movement. She finds that the minimalizing quality of the new art finds its roots in Malevich and Duchamp who had achieved "the inevitability of a reductive art..."¹⁵

For Malevich...this realization forced a turning inward toward an inspirational mysticism, whereas for Duchamp...it meant a fatigue so enervating that finally the wish to paint at all was killed. [This] led both to ultimately reject and exclude from their work many of the most cherished premises of Western art in favor of an art stripped to its bare, irreducible minimum...that the art of our youngest artists resembles theirs in its severe, reduced simplicity, or in its frequent kinship to the world of things, must be taken as some sort of validation of [Malevich's] and [Duchamp's] prophetic reactions.¹⁶

Rose questions the standard formal approach to art as a method adequate to explain and examine new directions in art. Since this new art appears to have originated with Duchamp, she looks to his example as a standard to perceive and comprehend the new paths in art adopted by the younger generation of Minimalists.

Rose represents a number of scholars during this time who call into question traditional attitudes surrounding art. In her case, she focused on the reductive, rather than formal, origins of the current

art and, in so doing, challenged the use of formal critical methods to interpret non-formal art. Other scholars, such as Richard Wollheim (1965) and Richard Kuhns (1967) raise questions concerning the accepted standards of originality. They, along with Nan Rosenthal (1965),¹⁷ touch on the role of the machine in twentieth-century art and its impact on the traditional value of the precious Masterpiece.

The issue of the machine aesthetic is recognized as a significant influence on the current art. Following similar concerns, Max Kosloff (1969)¹⁸, William Camfield (1966)¹⁹ and Brydon Smith (1966)²⁰ discuss the relationship between the machine and those artists from the early twentieth-century to the late 1960's who have been effected by mass-production, kinetics, industrial textures and technology and the mass-produced object.

Richard Wollheim's 1965 article on minimal art highlights the importance the issue of originality takes in the new art of the mid-1960's through its adaptation of the mass-produced object into its aesthetic means. Wollheim's primary intent in this article is to pin down the current conception of what constitutes originality in art and to question the parameters of this definition. At the same time, he questions the artist's role as the heroic genius,

individual creator of the unique token, which is also another traditional perception challenged by the new Minimalist artists:

...There could not be a work of fine art which was of a type of which there was more than one token which...is clearly false...For this...would have such sweeping and totally objectionable consequences as that a work of art, once copied, would cease to be a work of art. It is indeed only when this sort of possibility is quite artificially blocked by, say, a quasi-empirical belief in the inimitability of genius, that this...principle could even begin to acquire plausibility...In 1917 Marcel Duchamp submitted a urinal as a contribution to an exhibition of art. To many people, such a gesture must have seemed totally at variance with their concept of art...If, however, we confine ourselves to those who found the gesture acceptable, then I want to suggest that what would have seemed quite at variance with their concept of art is that accepting the gesture committed them to rejecting in advance any of a similar kind subsequently made. Yet precisely this seems to be the consequence of our principle. By a simple action, Duchamp deprived all objects of a certain kind save one of art-quality.²¹

Wollheim turns to Duchamp as the initiator of this direction in art. Duchamp's submission of the urinal to the Salon des Independents in 1917 introduced into the world an object that was not created by the artist's hand, but rather was one of many banal, mass-produced objects placed within an art context. Duchamp becomes the example to which Wollheim turns for evidence in support of his argument. Duchamp lends a legitimacy to the new minimalism through historic precedence and, at the same time, refutes the myth of originality

surrounding the artist as autonomous creator and his cherished object of art.

Richard Kuhns, in his 1967 article "Art and Machine", also examines the accepted notions of originality as they are challenged through works of art which originate from some aspect of the machine. Kuhns reveals that the machine is our basis for an aesthetic criteria. Machine-made or machine-like objects are now common place in the world of art. Like Wollheim, Kuhns recognizes Duchamp as the innovator of this avenue of art expression:

It is widely accepted today that almost anything can become art simply through inclusion in a collection...Now we face the question, what, in this indiscriminate gathering, is art-worthy? The eighteenth century by and large did not have this problem since naturalistic imitation served to screen out such things as artifacts and 'found' objects. If our model is not nature but machine, is there not properly a place for the machine in our museums? Yet only some machines or machine-like objects deserve to get in. To what are we committed by our simple act of judgment?...The most startling argument for a new set of criteria, and hence of an altered vision, was given by Marcel Duchamp when he indignantly protested the rejection of his Fountain, a 'readymade', by the Salon des Independents, New York, in 1917...But we cannot assume that Duchamp's seriousness makes a truth: nor can we solve the many problems entangled in his shocking act by merely asserting that art is made out of thought. For the thought itself is subject to criticism and careful reflectiveness just as is the object upon which Duchamp would have us expend some thought. We can enjoy Duchamp's daring act: it was a novel

rotation which changed the direction of modern art, yet it was an act of limited creativity, for once the readymade is singled out, then anything becomes a possible art object, and acts of selection post-Duchamp cease to have the shock or interest of his.²²

Kuhns acknowledges that Duchamp's gesture was a pivotal point in twentieth-century art and the attitudes held toward art. However, he also reveals that in recognizing Duchamp as the originator of the machine-inspired art object all other like objects have the potential for becoming art, but all other like gestures become repetitions of the original. Originality in machine-inspired art died upon Duchamp's initial presentation of a pre-fabricated object as a work of art:

We can say, I think, that Duchamp is a remarkable artist because he did something that cannot be imitated, for he found art in the engineered. He was the only one who could do this and be original and all who do it after him are imitating him.²³

Kuhns' use of Duchamp's example to challenge the accepted ideas concerning originality and the place of the machine in art's history further asserts Duchamp's role as a suitable standard for exploring and clarifying contemporary issues. Kuhns' perception of Duchamp as the sole originator of a facet of twentieth-century art lends to Duchamp's image the power of persuasion for, in being the first, he is therefore a leader, one to turn to for direction and inspiration

concerning matters of the value of art and how we perceive and determine such values.

The presence of technology in art gave rise to questions concerning the role of the artist in the process of making art, which in turn effected the questioning of the accepted parameters of what determines a work of art. These challenges to the accepted ways of perceiving and comprehending the art object, its maker and its make-up were found within the new generation's art objects.

These concerns were transferred to contemporary criticism. Thus, critics attempted to reconcile these questions by uncovering the historical precedence for such maneuvers in art, resulting in the challenge, and subsequent reassessment, of the accepted historical interpretations of the heroic avant-garde in twentieth-century art and the notion of the autonomous genius outside his society. This attitude toward art's history came under attack by scholars such as Sidney Tillim, Mahinri Sharp Young (1968)²⁴ and James Burr (1966).²⁵

Sidney Tillim represents the faction of critics who focus their challenge of the accepted standards of art toward a herioicized version of modern art's history. In his 1965 article "The Mythical History of Modern Art" he criticizes the brand of art history

which interprets modern art's history as a series of heroic deeds performed by geniuses akin to Michelangelo or Leonardo. In this respect, it is not only the idea of the artist as heroic genius which comes under attack, but also the system which promotes and validates a mythical perception of art, the artist and his history.

Tillim criticizes this system by singling out certain heroes who have risen to the stature of deities through the promotion of the heroic myth. As in the previously discussed articles by Gray and Wurdemann, Duchamp was portrayed as a hero within the avant-garde due to his all-pervasive influence throughout the twentieth-century. This lent him an authoritative position in art history, resulting in the perception of him as a standard used by critics of the latter half of the 1960's to examine and explain the new aesthetic and ideological directions followed by artists of the same period. Tillim focuses on Duchamp's authoritative role to denounce the system which elevated him to such a position:

The history of modernist art is rich in flawed geniuses whose historical roles have been permitted and finally encouraged to overshadow the limitations of their art...Far more exaggerated, and as a consequence a more serious matter is the stature of Duchamp, recently the subject of both a retrospective that was acquired by a single collection and

a 'profile' in the New Yorker, which the latter climaxes the paradoxes of a career in which ambition and success are said to have had no part.²⁶

Tillim perceives Duchamp as representing one of the heroes within modern art's mythical history and uses his example to criticize the system which assigned him this rank. Tillim recognizes the interpretation of history that accommodates the belief in the myth of the artist as romantic hero and suffering genius on the outskirts of his society. This brand of art history, Tillim feels, ignores the context in which the art was made in favor of concentrating on the autonomy of the artist and his genius personality. In this respect, Tillim questions the accepted value individuality and originality play in art by demonstrating the inadequacies of the dominant method used to interpret art history. In so doing, he demythologizes the popular heroic perception by calling for an interpretation of an artist as a product and reflection of his times, rather than an isolated entity unaffected and detached from the events and ideas around him.

Throughout this tumultuous period of the mid to late sixties, Duchamp is maintained as the solid standard by which one can explore and explain the issues found in the new art of the Minimalists and Conceptualists, issues which present a challenge to

traditionally held values concerning originality and individuality in art as well as accepted brands of modern art history and the critical methods used in its interpretation.

Duchamp's elevated (or inflated) authority, derived from the image of him as the source for this direction in art, legitimized the use of his example as a means of analyzing and clarifying contemporary concerns.

This recognition of Duchamp as an authority figure was the result of earlier heroic promotions of Duchamp as the primary influence for the avant-garde art of this century. His role in the history of the avant-garde was elevated from the status of member to that of father figure in its lineage. The various retrospective exhibitions and articles of the immediate post war years allowed America to see in physical terms Duchamp's role as a member of the European avant-garde and to assess his contribution to the continuation of the avant-garde tradition in America, adding to America's new identity as a leading cultural center for modern art.

THE IMPACT OF ETANT DONNES

The discovery of Etant Donnés upon Duchamp's death in late 1968 and its public emergence early in 1969 came as a shock, not only because it had remained a secret for so long, but also because, stylistically, it was drastically different from the rest of Duchamp's works. As the "Jester of Anti-art", Duchamp was notorious for ridiculing the Western tradition of easel painting. Indifference, silence and the will to not make art were his oeuvre, including the legend he had built up around himself as an anti-artist. Therefore, when Etant Donnés was found painted in the trompe l'oeil tradition of the "old Master's", the work fiercely contradicted previously held perceptions of who and what Duchamp had been.

Furthermore, the date of the work, 1946-1966, raised other questions concerning the development of modern art in America within these years. The work challenged the then accepted lineage of modern art because it predated by more than ten years other tableaux/voyeuristic works by younger artists such as Ed Kienholz in State Hospital from 1964-66, Jasper Johns in Target with Plaster Casts from 1955, Robert Rauschenberg in Untitled Construction from 1962 and George Segal in Old Woman at a Window from 1965.²⁷

Duchamp's unavailability for questioning augmented the confusion and forced scholars to search for clues among his notes and various objects for any clarification. Thus, the discovery of this work, and the contradictions which arose from its existence, fit well into the questioning milieu of the latter half of the 1960's and prompted scholars to inquire into the artistic mysteries of Duchamp and reassess his overall contribution to twentieth-century art.

The startling revelation of Etant Donnés had upset the accepted pattern of modern art's history, as well as that of Duchamp, and since Duchamp's history by the late 1960's had become so intimately connected to the progressive development of twentieth-century art, both needed to be re-evaluated. Through Etant Donnés Duchamp shook the very foundations which had been built on his example. With this standard overturned, scholars turned in upon their own discipline to re-examine Duchamp and his role in the history of modern art.

In this 1969 publication sponsored by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Anne d'Harnoncourt and Walter Hops reveal the perplexity and uncertainty in the atmosphere at the time Etant Donnés was unveiled.

Its existence alone upsets any number of theories or speculations about Duchamp that have been current for years. Here, all at once, is evidence of a sustained period of work on something obviously important to him, carried out in privacy...The result of his underground activity is not only a revelation which suddenly brings a new coherence into the seemingly random group of small works produced during the fifties, but it also throws a new light on the total output, both visual and verbal of Duchamp's long career.²⁸

Hops and d'Harnoncourt also recognized the need "to return to the literature on Duchamp and...[his] works..."²⁹ at this crucial point in the history of art. This calls for a reassessment of Duchamp and the past interpretations of his life and his relationship to the rest of art history foreshadowed the burgeoning of written material which erupted in the 1970's and 1980's, a period that, for the purpose of this study, will be classified as the post-Etant Donnés era.

As in the pre-Etant Donnés era, critics of the post-Etant Donnés era share common threads of thought that demonstrate the introspection and reassessment taking place in the Duchamp criticism as a result of the discovery of Etant Donnés in the latter half of the 1960's when the atmosphere was charged with the challenge to accepted beliefs and traditions in art.

The concepts or issues that dominate Duchamp criticism of the 1970's and 1980's continue the challenge inherited from the 1960's by focusing on the

reassessment of the value of originality in art, the pursuit of content and meaning, the use of non-traditional media, the borrowing of Duchampian strategies and the self-critical examination of the discipline of art criticism.

I. Originality

The issue of originality comes under fire in the new wave of reexamination and reassessment in the 1970's and 1980's. In the previous era, originality had also been a topic among scholars, however, the difference between the two lies in their perception of Duchamp's role as originator of the machine aesthetic in the history of modern art.

In the pre-Etant Donnés era, Duchamp was perceived as an autonomous genius who had instigated the use of the mass-produced object in a work of art. All other artists who utilized a technology-inspired element in their work were merely copying the original idea of Duchamp. In the post-Etant Donnés era, this heroicized interpretation of Duchamp's role in the issue of originality comes under scrutiny in the reexamination of Duchamp and his place in art history.

Duchamp's readymade is perceived in the 1970's and 1980's as an implicit attack on the romantic perception

of the artist as an autonomous genius and a rebuttal against the glorification of the art product as a precious, individual object. John Elderfield in his 1974 article, "High Modern: An Introduction to Post-Pollock Painting in America", supports this reinterpretation of the readymade's role as a criticism of the sacred regard for the unique and exclusive act or product, rather than the ultimate original gesture as it was perceived by Kuhn (1967) and Wollheim (1965). Through its banal, sterile appearance, the readymade in the art context questions the value placed on the subjective, individual presence of the artist in the finished work of art:

What more invisible poet is there than Marcel Duchamp, whose 'irony of indifference' in signing an object he never made nor altered³⁰ is the very apotheosis of impersonality.

Molly Nesbit also refutes the notion of the readymade as the original anti-art gesture in her 1986 article, "Readymade Originals: The Duchamp Model". She argues that Duchamp's readymades and other machine-inspired works (such as the Large Glass) were neither purely autonomous acts, nor entirely indigenous to the twentieth-century.

She reveals that nineteenth-century French drafting schools focused on teaching the rudiments of technological design. From this source, Duchamp arrived

at his industrialized objects and imagery. His "personal style" of the indifferent and the mechanical were, thus, neither autonomous nor original. Furthermore, his machine-inspired works negated any "signature style" in the first place since they were based on the fundamental techniques of industrial design, not a subjective alteration created by the artist.

Nesbit's discovery erodes the pedestal of the divinely inspired genius on which Duchamp previously had been set by uncovering the cultural context surrounding the origins of Duchamp's readymades.

The once accepted values of artistic originality are thwarted as well by Timothy Binkley in his 1977 article, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics", where he attempts to show that aesthetic and original value need not be present in an object for it to be art:

Art in the twentieth-century has emerged as a strongly self-critical discipline. It has freed itself of aesthetic parameters and sometimes creates directly with ideas unmediated by aesthetic qualities. An artwork is a piece; and a piece need not be an aesthetic object or even an object at all.³¹

Duchamp's readymades break down the traditional definition of what constitutes a work of art by replacing aesthetic and original value with conceptual value. In other words, the profundity of the thought

behind the object overrides the value of aesthetics and originality seen in the final product. The readymades question the significance of these values by denying them:

Art need not be aesthetic. L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved makes the point graphic by duplicating the appearance of the Mona Lisa while depriving it of its aesthetic import. The two works look exactly the same but are completely different. As the risqué joke is compounded by L.H.O.O.Q. Shaved, the Mona Lisa is humiliated. Though restored to its original appearance, it is not restored to its original state. Duchamp added only the moustache and goatee, but when he removed them the sacred aura of aesthetic qualities vanished as well --- it had been a conventional artistic covering which adhered to the moustache and goatee when they were removed, like paint stuck to tape. The original image is intact, but literalized; its function in Duchamp's piece is just to denote the Mona Lisa.³²

Thierry De Duve in his 1986 article, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint", also reexamines the traditional values attached to the originality of a work of art as it is derived from the hand of the artist. De Duve points out that Duchamp's anti-art gestures are a criticism of these traditional artistic values. However, he argues that it is not the readymades that ushered in his de-personalized oeuvre, but rather his rejection of the retinal experience and process of painting that initially scorned the value placed on artistic originality.

Unlike the 1960's heroic perception of this action, De Duve refutes the myth of Duchamp as the originator of devaluing originality by attributing Duchamp's influence to the cultural context of the early twentieth-century. His study reveals that the social and economic climate of this period may have compelled Duchamp to reject the act of painting for the mechanized direction his art pursued, rejecting the idea that the artistic process is a manifestation of genius:

'Le Passage'...represents a crucial point of passage in Duchamp's life and work; one in which, I believe, he accomplished his desire to become a significant painter and, by the same token, one in which something was revealed to him about paint's loss of historical significance. If you are not a 'born painter'...then you have to labor hard toward being born as a painter. But, once you are born, once you have witnessed your own birth-to-painting, have taken revenge against uneven talent and asserted your name as a painter, why do it again? Wouldn't you repeat yourself...and indulge in a craftsmanship altogether obsolete as such? For it may well be that in industrialized society the specialized craft called painting has become useless in the face of mechanization and division of labor, as they replace the craftsman in most of his social and economic functions, and that it must be felt as impossible by whomever has the ambition to push art beyond those functions and have it carry on a meaningful tradition. The hackneyed issue of the 'death of painting' is inseparable from both the objective conditions that have made painting useless as craft and the subjective feeling that has made it impossible as tradition.

One of the ways in which authors like De Duve, Nesbit and Binkley were able to pose a new interpretation of the relationship between Duchamp's machine-inspired works and originality was to transcend the heroic facade of a work of art and focus instead on its underlying content or meaning.

Critics recognized that Duchamp's impersonal, banal, machine-inspired objects functioned as a criticism of traditionally held attitudes and values concerning art. However, as noted by De Duve and Nesbit, Duchamp was not the original genius as previous interpretations had led one to believe, but rather the cultural context of the time in which the readymades and other inspired objects had been produced influenced Duchamp's ideas for these works and motivated him in the direction he ultimately pursued throughout his career.

II. Content

In the 1970's and 1980's, content grew to be a dominant issue upon the attempt to reexamine and re-interpret Duchamp and art's history. The links between Etant Donnés and Duchamp's smattering of objects, sketches and notes became a concern of scholars and gave rise to such questions as "Where did it all come from?" and "What does it all mean?". Getting beyond

the superficial veils of romanticized interpretations to the content beneath, revealed to scholars that Duchamp, the initial insurgent of major movements of the twentieth-century, had been influenced by other sources; some philosophical, alchemical, literary, and mathematical. Furthermore, scholars found that Duchamp had been influenced by fellow artists contemporary with him.

Uncovering the meaning, subject matter and influences contained within Duchamp's oeuvre revealed, as it had in an examination of originality, that he was not an autonomous genius, thus refuting the illustrious image promoted by previous critical interpretations of the 1950's and 1960's.

This examination of the content and context of Duchamp's art resulted in a plethora of microcosmic studies involving single aspects of his art or his influences. The concern for content also led scholars to explore individual works or ideas, not previously pursued, and link these pieces to their place in the overall puzzle of Duchamp's oeuvre. Searching for underlying content and meaning also provided scholars with a means of reexamining Duchamp's connection with other artists and movements within the twentieth-century and allowed them to expand their

awareness of the overall picture of modern art history as well.

One of the works which had remained neglected by the more formal branch of art history was Duchamp's only film "Anemic-Cinema". Katrina Martin's 1975 article, "Duchamp's Anemic-Cinema", provides a background on the making of this film and attempts to explain its existence in relation to Duchamp's readymades. Anette Michelson in "'Anemic-Cinema' Reflections on an Emblematic Work", from 1973, also focuses on the relationship between Duchamp's single film and the remainder of his products.³⁴ Although he worked in this medium only once, she reveals how this film reflects Duchamp's logical progression away from easel painting by demonstrating how it harbors his interest in motion, sexuality, time and language as do many of his other objects. Her efforts to show the place of this film within Duchamp's development and the scope of his interests not only demonstrates the significance scholars were giving to content, but also exemplifies the developing interest in film as an art form during the early 1970's.

The search for content in the art of Duchamp bestowed a new importance to seemingly random sketches or less monumental objects by revealing their function as an impetus or precursor to pieces that represented

the culmination of his ideas. Lawrence Steefel in his 1976 article, "Marcel Duchamp's 'Encore a cet Astre', A New Look", made it his crusade to uncover some of the lesser known sketches and their role as a link in the chain of a developing idea. Steefel focuses on "Encore a cet Astre" and its significance to the outcome of "Nude Descending a Staircase".³⁵

Hellmut Wohl examines a letter and an accompanying drawing called "Du Tignet" in his 1977 article, "Beyond the Large Glass: Notes on a Landscape Drawing by Marcel Duchamp". This small sketch includes hills and a telegraph pole located outside of a house once visited by Duchamp. The same motif is found in a landscape sketch of the Large Glass. The backdrop for Etant Donnés also uses this landscape motif, demonstrating the intricate web of Duchamp's art in which all thoughts, gestures and products are bound.

In "Theatre of the Conceptual. Autobiography and Myth", 1973, Robert Pincus-Witten focuses on Duchamp's erotic objects which functioned as stepping stones to the end product, Etant Donnés. He explains the sexual implications behind the objects and pinpoints how and where they reappear in Etant Donnés. Pincus-Witten further emphasizes the significance of these small, once neglected, objects by placing them in the context of their influence upon the younger generation of

Conceptual artists, taking the issue of uncovering content one step further by demonstrating how Duchamp's works become the content of contemporary products.

Some scholars pursued the meaning behind Duchamp's art by examining a single facet of subject or influence found in many of his works. For example, A. Cook in 1986 explores the irony in Duchamp's works while Kermit Champa in 1974 takes a Freudian approach to interpreting Duchamp. This desire to study a facet of content led some scholars to formulate new approaches as they pursued the interpretation of meaning in specific works of art.

Jack Burnham assumes a prominent role in this intensive search for meaning in Duchamp by attempting to reveal the iconography in his works. Burnham perceives that art possesses its own system of language and poses that this language of art can be read by interpreting the series of signs and mythic structures that the artist has planted in his work. He arrives at this facet in Duchamp's content from his study of semiotics and the writings of Claude Levi-Straus on mythic structures.

Burnham devises his approach from the tools of language and philosophy. He utilizes elements which are non-formal to uncover aspects of Duchamp's art which

are also non-formal. Burnham uses the tenants of philosophy, literature, alchemy, magic and semiotics to reveal and interpret the underlying iconography found in Duchamp's work. In an interview from 1970 with Willoughby Sharp, Burnham demonstrates his interpretation of Duchamp's meaning in the Large Glass and reveals Duchamp's pursuit of allegory which may have remained unknown if the work had only been seen in a formal manner:

[Duchamp] definitely didn't follow a structural procedure which would lead people to accept it as art, but he perversely sets out to produce something which, as Levi-Strauss would say, culturalizes the cultural. In order to produce art, you have to culturalize the natural, then naturalize the culture...What Duchamp has done is to take a cultural activity, i.e., the historical myth of modern art, deduce what the structure is, and then, in a series of fantastic allegories, put into strange images the whole history of modern art. This is what the Large Glass really represents. It has a lot of machines in the lower section --- scissors, grinders, gliders, etc. That's on purpose: it represents the patriarchal elements of reason, progress, male dominance. The top of the Large Glass is the female component: intuition, love, internal consistency, art, beauty and myth itself.³⁶

Burnham's crusade to extrapolate hidden meanings in Duchamp demonstrates the intense drive to uncover content in the post-Etant Donnés era. In 1972, Burnham in "The True Readymade?", attempts to reveal the true definition of the readymade through a semiotic system

based on a cycle of the four elements --- earth, wind, fire and air --- and their relation to nature and culture. He links the readymade with this contrived cycle of semiotics and attempts to uncover the masked meanings behind Duchamp's puns in his choice of titles for the readymades.

In "The Semiotics of 'End Game' Art", 1972, Burnham believes that Duchamp was aware of the Hebrew alphabet due to semiotic evidence Burnham finds in his art that suggest ties to this branch of language. Duchamp's chess game is one such object that, for Burnham, harbors language-related content. He, therefore, proceeds to examine the metaphorical and linguistic symbols hidden in this generally neglected object.

Burnham's semiotic and allegorical interpretations of the content in Duchamp receives criticism from another prominent author during this time, Willis Domingo. In his 1972 articles "Meaning in the Art of Marcel Duchamp, Parts I & II", Domingo perceives Burnham's approach as subjective and arbitrary for he believes that Burnham forces content-based messages onto the works, rather than allowing the works to reveal their content through themselves and the words of the artist. Domingo enlists the support of Duchamp's

own perspective in order to embark on a search for content:

By transferring the locus of artistic meaning to the plane of verbal expression, Burnham has merely displaced what remains problematic in and of itself, and so he has avoided the central issue of elucidating the legitimacy of Duchamp's claim to meaning. That it is at all possible to put into a proposition the fact that the critic or art historian is 'sympathetic to the artist's work', and therefore 'understands' the nature of Duchamp's crucial move whereby the responsibility for the content of esthetic meaning is placed almost solely with the viewer and more specifically with the art historian, necessarily implies a more fundamental structure which creates in the sympathetic critic the very capability of filling in the meaning. In the end, an elucidation of this more fundamental structure will do more justice to the extraordinary significance of Duchamp's art than will the imposition of any transcendent and external systems of thought.

Furthermore, Domingo recognizes the problem which arises when something non-verbal is interpreted in verbal form. Through the recognition of this seemingly dialectical relationship between the visual and the verbal, Domingo approaches Duchamp by using the method of the artist (Duchamp) as the basis for his approach in an interpretation of content. In this respect, Domingo relies more heavily on the published ideas and attitudes of Duchamp to find meaning in his work, rather than projecting ancillary theories on to the artist.

III. Non-traditional media

In the criticism of the 1970's and 1980's, critics focused on the content behind Duchamp and revealed that he utilized a variety of non-traditional media in his work. These unorthodox forms of media may have originated from any number of disciplines not directly related to formal art including language, philosophy, alchemy, irony, poetry, mathematical concepts and film technology.

Craig Adcock reveals in his 1984 article, "Geometrical Complication in the Art of Marcel Duchamp", how Duchamp utilized mathematical concepts as a means of arriving at his own philosophy of doubt, one of the underlying theoretical structures of his art. Adcock also reveals the influence of mathematics, both in its forms and philosophies, in the Large Glass. In this respect, the abstract ideas, as well as the mathematical forms and formulae of geometry, are utilized as a means of achieving a particular aesthetic or theoretical end in art:

Major aspects of Duchamp's system involved speculations about four-dimensional visual perception. His analyses of hypothetical ways of 'seeing' fundamentally affected the 'look' of his art. He, in a sense, chose the discipline of geometry as an intellectual readymade and incorporated it into his 'accumulation of ideas'.³⁸

In "Italian Futurism and 'The Fourth Dimension'" (1981), Linda Henderson examines the nature of the fourth dimension as perceived by the artists of the early twentieth-century. She reveals how various artists of this time theorized on this facet of time and space and how these concerns were employed in the composing of their art. Duchamp's exploits in the fourth dimension, in terms of his studies in geometry, are mentioned by Henderson as well.

In the view of these critics the intangible, unorthodox media of geometrical concepts and fourth-dimensional theories are as essential an ingredient in Duchamp's oeuvre as conventional and physically tangible materials. What doesn't appear on the surface determines the outcome of a work of art just as much, if not more so at times, as what can be seen.

Another non-physical and unorthodox element found in Duchamp's art was literature. As David Antin points out in "Duchamp: The Meal and the Remainder" (1972), the words of Duchamp are just as much a viable art product as anything physically tangible. When combined with an object, words become the medium of the work of art.³⁹

Other authors demonstrate Duchamp's dependence on the literary and philosophical pursuits of various model poets, theoreticians and artists throughout

history. Ronald Johnson (1976), for example, finds that Duchamp harbored an affinity for the French poetic tradition and reveals the influence of the nihilistic writings of Jules LaForgue on his work. An examination of Walter Arensberg's activities in cryptography is undertaken by Francis Naumann (1977). He links Arensberg's hobby as an inspirational source for Duchamp by revealing the cryptographic methods of Arensberg which surface in the work and word games of Duchamp. Adcock concerns himself once again with Duchamp's use of geometrical theories in his 1984 article "Conceptualism in Henri Poincaré and Marcel Duchamp". Here, he reveals the specific mathematical and philosophical influences of Henri Poincaré that are found in Duchamp's oeuvre. These authors demonstrate how Duchamp absorbed the material of these individuals and incorporated their concepts into the vast array of unconventional media within his works.

Barbara Rose discusses the early films of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy in "Kinetic Solutions to Pictorial Problems: The Films of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy" (1971). Duchamp is mentioned as part of the retinue of artists during the early 1920's who were inspired by the mechanization of movement through film and who subsequently turned their attention to kinetic art.

Film, just as philosophy, geometry and poetry, is demonstrated here as a vehicle in the composing and constructing of a work of art. Rose's focus reveals that it is not the physical medium of film that plays this role, as would be the case in Anemic-Cinema, but rather the ideas generated from the mechanical workings of film became part of the media in other works.⁴⁰

In examining the content and meaning of his works, critics revealed that Duchamp's art objects consisted of more than just their physical appearance. In addition, they discovered that the body of his oeuvre encompassed words and phrases which were just as much a part of his art as were his more permanent, visual products. These elements of language and thought also functioned as a medium in the make-up of his tangible objects, demonstrating that the components of a final art product are not always visible in a traditional sense.

IV. Duchampian Strategies

During the late 1940's and 1950's, the critical examinations of Duchamp's contribution to the avant-garde and the retrospective exhibitions which physically displayed his part in its continuing tradition, exposed Duchamp to several members of the art world.

By the late 1950's and early 1960's, critics realized the seminal role Duchamp had played in the course of twentieth-century art and regarded him as a leader and father-figure, especially in the development of the American avant-garde. His heroic status made him an appealing source of influence to the younger generation and, by the latter half of the 1960's, critics were able to draw parallels between the new art and Duchamp, who, indeed, had provided a model for the younger generation of Minimalists and Conceptualists.

Critics noted that, although Duchamp had profoundly influenced these 1960's protégés, it was a common ideology and approach they shared, rather than a particular appearance. With the shocking discovery of Etant Donnés, Duchamp continued to intrigue younger members of the art world in the 1970's and 1980's. However, in this era, Duchamp is used less as a mentor or standard as he had been in the 1960's and more as a medium. These artists directly borrow images and phrases from Duchamp's oeuvre and use them as subject matter within the content of their works. Such quotations from the past are defined as a means for artists to reinterpret and reexamine their own discipline and its history.

Critics of the same period perceive Duchamp's presence to be visible, rather than felt as it had in

the previous decades of the twentieth-century, and refer to the direct borrowing from his oeuvre as using Duchampian Strategies.

Many of the articles written during the post-Etant Donnés era discuss the role Duchamp plays as a medium or subject in the content of art in the 1970's and 1980's. Gavin Bryars in "Notes on Marcel Duchamp's Music" of 1976 includes an interview with John Cage that reveals his relationship with Duchamp and the aspects of Duchamp that have been retained in Cage's music. In his 1971 article, "Proteus and Dusseldorf", Alastair Mackintosh examines the work by Joseph Beuys entitled "The Silences of Marcel Duchamp are Overrated" and reveals Duchamp's presence as subject in this work as well as his influence on the overall career of Beuys. Robert Pincus-Witten's article "Vito Acconci and the Conceptual Idea" (1972) covers the development of Acconci's performance art, in which his appropriations from Duchamp include the joining of Minimalist forms and Duchampian eroticisms. Joseph Masheck, in his 1976 article "On Patrick Ireland's Electrocardiographic Portrait of Marcel Duchamp", examines the piece by Patrick Ireland which developed from a cardiogram of Duchamp taken by Ireland himself. In "Decoys and Doubles: Jasper Johns and the Modernist Mind" (1976), Barbara Rose recounts Johns' detailed

study of Duchamp's notes from the Green Box and how certain Duchampian gestures and ideas play a vital role in the constructs of Johns' work.

Craig Adcock, in "Why Marcel Duchamp's Old Hat Still Address the Situation to the Nines" (1985), Seth Edenbaum, in "Parody and Privacy" (1987), and Thomas McEvelley, in "I Think Therefore I Art" (1985), and also in "Empyrrihical Thinking (and why kant can't)" (1988), examine the use of Duchampian Strategies in the art of the 1980's. These three authors criticize the direct quotation of Duchamp's work by revealing that he has been misinterpreted and misused by these younger artists. Their borrowing of his philosophy, gestures and products in their work is found to be faulty because it makes Duchamp into a style and contradicts the initial intention behind his actions.

McEvelley, in his 1988 article, provides an exemplary summation of the attitudes prevalent in these three representative authors:

Much of the current readymade work, though it may be attractive, and even intelligent in its focus, should not be regarded as Duchampian. It may look Duchampian, but to concentrate on the look is to miss the point. Duchamp's readymades function as a rejection of style; today the readymade has become a style even when it could be described as an academic style. Where the 'Fountain' shocked and the snow shovel aimed at indifference, this generation of readymades placates and pleases. His works are often involved in

language; the current versions are mainly mute form. He rejected commodification; today's objects affirm it...An accurate, receiver of the Duchampian message would, at this moment, stay as far from the look of his work as possible, since the look of his work has now become part of the rigidity of habit that it was designed to pry loose. The point of Duchamp's violation of the gallery space --- the urinal flung in their faces --- was not to establish a new style of exhibited object, but to suggest that humans can exhibit anything at all to one another, with the countless ranges of meaning and types of appreciation that this realization opens up.⁴¹

The critical evaluation of a current issue in art reflects art scholars' criticism and continual re-examination of their own discipline. Just as artists quoted and reinterpreted their past through gestures of borrowing, as in the use of Duchampian Strategies, so too did art critics reassess their field by examining the past's critical interpretation of art history.

V. The Criticism of Art History

While examining the content and influences of Duchamp, critics in the 1970's and 1980's found the heroicizing approach to his role in art history to be unsatisfactory. This critical attitude had unfolded in the charged atmosphere of the later 1960's and had encouraged scholars to reassess and reexamine Duchamp upon the discovery of Etant Donnés. Since the heroic perception of Duchamp had led critics to use his

example as a standard, historical and critical interpretations had intricately woven Duchamp's history together with that of modern art, compelling scholars to critically review the rest of the twentieth-century as well. As critics uncovered other unsatisfactory critical and historical interpretations, they found it necessary to critically review not only the entire course of art history, but the history and methods of their own discipline as well, continuing the challenges to accepted approaches and perceptions as set forth in the latter half of the 1960's.

One of the results of this critical introspection was the study of particular movements or artists that had once been neglected by the heroic interpretation of the avant-garde in art history. Frank Bowling in "Fluid Structures; Futurism and Beyond" (1971) attempts to elucidate the contributions made to art history by Italian Futurists. He asserts that the achievements of the Futurists have been overshadowed by Duchamp and their contributions, although similar to Duchamp's, have been downplayed to his example throughout history. In "Man Ray: Early Paintings 1913-1916 -Theory and Practice in the Art of Two Dimensions" (1982), Francis Naumann also attempts to make amends by criticizing the previous detrimental assessments of Man Ray's contribution to American Art. Duchamp is seen as one

of the many influences of Man Ray, rather than his sole provider, in this in-depth re-analysis of Man Ray's individual accomplishments and his participation in the development of American art.

Other scholars direct their attention toward re-examining the cultural context of particular episodes in the history of twentieth-century art. Patrick Stewart, in "The European Art Invasion: American Art and the Arensberg Circle 1914-18" (1977) studies the role of the European avant-garde in their first descent on America in the early twentieth-century, while Marina Vaizey in "The Muses Flee Hitler" (1984) focuses on the European avant-garde in America during the 1940's. Stewart and Vaizey discuss the presence of the European avant-garde in America during the first half of the twentieth-century and reveal the Europeans' impact on America and its response to their presence. Moira Roth's 1977 article "The Aesthetic of Indifference" also focuses on an objective reexamination of a turning point in America's history of modern art and the role Duchamp played at this point in time. Roth examines the era of McCarthyism and the development of the aesthetic of indifference in American art during the Red Scare. These reexaminations of the contextual history of art de-heroicize the role of the European avant-garde in America by presenting their history in a

straightforward, unromantic manner. This objective approach is achieved by calling attention to the economic, political, social and ideological atmosphere of the times, which would have shaped events in art history just as it would other facets of life.

In an article of 1981, Robert Morris re-evaluates Duchamp's influence in the development of modern art as do Brian O'Doherty in 1976 and John Tancock in 1973. These authors reexamine patterns in art history as they were influenced by Duchamp. Morris, for example, in "American Quartet" defines the origins of Modern American art as analogous to a plot of land, governed at its four corners by Pollock, Duchamp, Hopper and Cornell. These are the four who have pointed the direction of twentieth-century art and whose guideposts endure to the present. In his article entitled "Inside the White Cube: Context as Content" O'Doherty describes the history of modern art as analogous to the building of a house. Duchamp is perceived as providing the roof to this house.

John Tancock in "The Oscillating Influence of Marcel Duchamp" diagrams the pattern of his influence on the art of this century. Tancock perceives this pattern, not in the form of a diamond shape like Picasso's, which is characterized by a gradual building, peaking at the height of his career and then

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descending towards the end. Rather, he sees Duchamp's presence in this century as an expansive one, becoming more potent as his career progressed and continuing to be a major influence even within the decades preceding his death.

Brandon Taylor in "Duchamp's Art Legacy" (1980) also reevaluates art history, however, he focuses on the interpretation of it by the Conceptualists. He challenges the 1960's Conceptualists' interpretation of Duchamp as their heroic mentor, a status he acquired through their perception of him as the originator of a non-retinal form of art that paved the way for a new direction in art.

Taylor removes Duchamp from this heroic pedestal and reexamines him in light of his own historical context, rather than through the ideals of an admiring generation:

...Thus did Duchamp express the nature of his antagonism to the 'retinal' --- or the narrowly visual. The kind of retinal painting from which he was trying to escape was that of the visual interesting surface in contrast to the more valuable commodity, the visually significant image. Latter-day conceptual artists were too much bent on ritual cleansing to notice that this important distinction was there to be made... Conceptualist critics were exemplary in parading some of Duchamp's activities as having heralded totally new possibilities, and of effectively having changed the course of art in our time. For the conceptualist version of history said, in part, that while

the innovations of Cubism merely offered different artistic pronouncements in an old language, very roughly the language of easel painting, Duchamp's almost simultaneous abandonment of 'retinal' art in favor of the readymade succeeded in creating not simply new art propositions, but a totally new language...

This quest on the part of art scholars to challenge, reinterpret and reexamine the accepted beliefs in the developing course of art history led them to criticize the standards used to formulate these beliefs. David Buren in "Standpoints" (1971) and Robert O'Rorke in "Into the Twilight Zone" (1973) comment on the criteria scholars used to qualify the significance of a work of art and, thereby, determine its place in art history.

David Buren attempts to solve the question "What constitutes a work of art?" by examining Duchamp's response to qualitative value judgments in art history, while Robert O'Rorke explores this issue by criticizing those scholars who justify the presence of a work of art by its ability to fit within the parameters of a pre-determined order. O'Rorke feels that if this is the state for determining value in art, then "new" art, or art that challenges set standards, might possibly have been misjudged in the past because there exists for the "new" art no order or historical niche into which it can be placed. O'Rorke elaborates on his point

by demonstrating that Duchamp's Fountain of 1917 is exemplary of this art of the "twilight zone" because its intent was to disrupt the hierarchy of critical criteria and comment on the standards for value and taste, just as O'Rourke and Buren do in their representative articles.

Steven Goldsmith in "The Readymades of Marcel Duchamp: The Ambiguities of an Aesthetic Revolution" (1983) also criticizes the tendency to make art conform to a category. Like O'Rourke, Goldsmith turns to Duchamp for support in this attack. He discusses the impact of the readymades on the discipline of art history in terms of the disturbance their presence gives to any tidy definition or classification. He examines the role of the readymade as a paradox in the history of art and how it functions as a thorn in the side of prescribed formulas for categorization:

The attempt to define anything is by nature a conservative activity. Conceptual definitions are necessarily exclusive; they focus on particular, selected characteristics at the expense of actual uniqueness or diversity. They allow us to order our experience by grouping certain things together and leaving others out. If Marcel Duchamp presents an object that radically questions the borders of any definition of art, an object that cannot be ignored because it has been accepted in practice as art, the conservative critic seeks to enlarge the borders of theory and thus absorb the rebellion. While the peculiar, irresolvable nature of the readymade threatens to undermine this endeavor with the

assertion that everything (or, of course, nothing) is art, it also surprisingly helps to further the conventional cause. The strange paradox embodied in the readymade is that, depending on the interpretation one accords it, the object can support the extremes of both anarchist⁴³ and staunchly conservative theories of art.

In his 1975 article "Nothing but an Artist", Jindrich Chalupecky also perceives the discipline of art criticism to be potentially detrimental to art. Chalupecky finds the journalist or critic to be a danger to art because they tend to taint the public's vision of modern art. Duchamp's rejection and ultimate acceptance into the echelons of art history is viewed to be a case in point regarding art criticism's power of persuading the public's attitude toward art:

We need a criticism that would reject sensational generalization and genuinely deal with the artist, his concrete situation in concrete history and his reaction to the times in which he lives. Perhaps there is nothing to be done but abandon theories and return in art criticism to that investigation 'in situ' that Leach and his British colleagues advocate in anthropology; instead of theorizing, to return to the works themselves. For today we are witnessing an increasing tendency to escape from facts... It is no longer the censor, but rather the theorizing journalist or the theoretician who is becoming the artist's most dangerous enemy. One of the most striking examples of this tendency is the fate of Marcel Duchamp's works. As long as Dada remained a living force, Duchamp was considered a fringe phenomenon, if not an artistic clown. When Dada was allotted a dignified place in the history of art, however, Duchamp's work began to be interpreted as the result of historical forces.⁴⁴

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The burgeoning of written material executed during this era carried out its mission through a variety of approaches as presented in this thesis. However, these multiple approaches exist only as a result of the need for self-criticism, the dedication to uncovering, rediscovering and reassessing. It is only through a variety of lenses that the many facets of art history, interpretation and criticism can be thoroughly explored.

In these representative articles this multiplicity has been demonstrated by art critics who re-evaluate their own discipline by reexamining previously neglected artists and their contribution to art history, reassessing the impact of the cultural context on art and criticizing their discipline's role in determining the standards of taste and historical value in art.

In this thesis, it was revealed how Duchamp's example provided a vehicle through which the history of twentieth-century art and its criticism could be explored. As previously mentioned, Duchamp's history had become so intricately connected with that of modern art, that any reinterpretation of twentieth-century art immediately involved a reexamination of Duchamp and vice versa.

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The call for a reassessment of Duchamp's role in the twentieth-century had resulted from the discovery of Etant Donnés in the late 1960's. The questions that arose from this work's sudden appearance were related to the challenges which had already been brewing since the mid-1960's. Etant Donnés had surfaced in an atmosphere that was pre-conditioned to accept the challenge this work presented to traditional methods and interpretations of Duchamp's history as well as that of art in the twentieth-century.

The reassessment and reexamination of Duchamp that ensued in the 1970's and 1980's as a result of this combination provided scholars with a means of re-evaluating the history of art and its criticism. This attitude which embraces the use of multiple approaches as a means of self-criticism, even allows for the existence of approaches once dominant in the pre-Etant Donnés era. These former attitudes provide another means through which the discipline of art criticism can be explored. These pre-Etant Donnés attitudes present in the post-Etant Donnés era are represented by such critics as Clement Greenberg (1976)⁴⁵ and Hilton Kramer (1988).⁴⁶ In promoting their own vision of twentieth-century art history, they add to the variance of the new age, although the intent behind their interpretations is not to join with the new, but rather

to criticize it. Nonetheless, the continuation of these older attitudes in the 1970's and 1980's reflects the new era's penchant for self-criticism by the inclusion of an older, opposing approach into the matrix of methods used for critical self-examination.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated the changes in the critical approaches to art between 1945 and the present. The critical responses to Marcel Duchamp were utilized as a means to examine such changes due to the manner in which these responses echo the patterns of the general critical attitudes within these decades.

In order to effectively demonstrate the changes in the critical attitudes over time, the review of Duchamp criticism was begun in the mid 1940's. From this time, and through the 1950's, the development of America's attitude toward its new identity as a cultural leader was revealed.

American scholars of the same period were concerned with reinforcing this identity and studying its ties to the European avant-garde. Many of these members of the European branch had settled in America after the war years. Their presence here helped build a new cultural identity for America and also legitimize this status. Duchamp was immediately recognized as a member of this group and subsequently became the subject of a number of retrospective and group exhibitions.

These exhibitions provided America with an historical overview of its European heritage and enabled both artists and scholars to see the European

avant-garde's contribution to America's development as a leading center for the arts, as well as the continuation of the "modern tradition" by way of their presence in this country.

In examining the European contribution to American art, scholars were able to identify Duchamp's crucial role in the development of not only modern American art, but also twentieth-century art as a whole.

The critical responses to Duchamp during the late 1950's through the mid 1960's reveal a shift in attitude toward his place in art history. He was perceived as the forefather of many major movements of the twentieth-century and was elevated to a heroic, pre-eminent status. His participation in certain art movements and events are interpreted as acts of heroic genius and perceived as crucial to the development of twentieth-century art. His indifference, apathy, and ability to shock added to the mystique which surrounded him and augmented his legendary image.

By the latter half of the 1960's, certain "new" directions in art began to appear. The leading two, Minimalism and Conceptualism, challenged previously held beliefs regarding the role of the artist and the qualifying standards for art.

The younger artists within these two movements implicitly demanded a reevaluation of the value originality plays in art and those standards which determine its parameters. Both scholars and artists turned to Duchamp as a standard to support their arguments concerning originality. Still under a heroic light, Duchamp, as the autonomous genius in the "modern tradition", was perceived as the originator of art's challenge to originality through his oeuvre of mass-produced objects which thwarted the value placed on the preciousness of the artist's signature stroke and his unique, one-of-a-kind product.

Some scholars from the same period criticized this very system that allowed for Duchamp to become elevated to the stature of a godhead in the art world. Their intent was to reveal the fallacies of the heroic interpretation of the avant-garde as they perceived to be the case with the deification of Duchamp. The challenge these critics made to accepted attitudes and approaches demanded a new means of examining and interpreting art and initiated the break down of the dominant system of critical interpretation that had prevailed throughout the 1940's, 1950's, and early 1960's.

Within this atmosphere of controversy and conflict, Etant Donnés was discovered, upsetting a

number of preconceived ideas concerning Duchamp, as well as thwarting accepted belief in the linear progression of art history. Shrouded in secrecy for over twenty years, the work contradicted Duchamp's indifference and apathy toward the traditional easel painting techniques in which it was rendered. Secondly, it didn't appear to correspond to the work he had previously produced. Thirdly, it pre-dated other tableaux/voyeuristic works done by younger artists by at least ten years.

The "Pandora's Box" of Etant Donnés evoked the same questions regarding Duchamp that had been circulating in the latter half of the 1960's regarding the history of art and its criticism. Since Duchamp's history and the history of twentieth-century art and its issues had become so interrelated, the reexamination of one, consequently, involved that of the other.

Over the next twenty years, art scholars pursued an intense review of Duchamp and his relationship to the rest of the twentieth-century. Since he had been perceived as originating the challenge to original value in art, that issue and his role as its originator were scrutinized.

Critics revealed that the political, social, economic and cultural climate of the early twentieth-century had, indeed, compelled Duchamp to pursue a

direction that negated the values attached to traditional easel painting. Duchamp's subsequent theories and works that developed from such influences involved a technological approach that denied the uniqueness sought for in the subjective stroke of the genius/artist and his art product. Moreover, the use of technology in art criticized, not only the standards used to qualify art, but also the romanticized value affixed to the role of the artist and his one-of-a-kind object.

An examination of content enabled scholars to extrapolate a new interpretation of Duchamp's works, the questions he posed and the interrelation of all his works. Unveiling the content behind Duchamp also refuted his once accepted heroic status for it revealed the many sources influential to the development of his ideas, objects and gestures. Once neglected sketches and seemingly detached works were examined for their role in the development of his oeuvre as were his varied interests in alchemy, language, irony, sexuality, allegory and philosophy.

Searching for content in Duchamp revealed to scholar's that he had used a number of non-traditional sources as part of the mixed-media which gave form to his ideas. The use of intangible and unorthodox forms of media demonstrated that such elements are just as

integral in the outcome of a work of art as are traditional ones. Critics found that Duchamp had employed mathematical, philosophical and literary concepts as well as kinetics and cryptology within the constructs of his oeuvre.

Duchamp's status as an attractive source of inspiration for the younger artists had continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's. However, in these decades the influence of Duchamp was less implied as had been the case in the 1960's and earlier in the century.

Direct references to his motifs, gestures, words, and overall philosophy could be seen in the content of art in the 1970's and 1980's. Critics referred to using Duchamp as a medium or subject as Duchampian Strategies and perceived this form of quotation as a means for artists to reexamine and critique their own discipline and its history.

This self-criticism was a dominant feature for the discipline of art criticism as well during the 1970's and 1980's. The questioning milieu of the latter half of the 1960's launched the break-down of previously accepted critical approaches and interpretations of art and its history. During this period of ideological upheaval, Etant Donnés was discovered.

Critics recognized in Etant Donnés the call for a reexamination of these issues in modern art as well as key figures in its history (namely Duchamp) who had had an impact on its development and the criticism that followed. Their response to this work echoed the concerns for a reevaluation of art history and the methods used for its study and interpretation. Thus, critics turned in upon their own discipline in order to pursue a reassessment of art history and the role their discipline played in the course of modern art's development.

The practice of self-criticism during the 1970's and 1980's allowed for the use of various approaches in determining methods for studying art. The perception of art through multiple lenses provided scholars with a means to interpret it and its history, as well as a vehicle to effectively criticize all aspects of their discipline.

The examination of originality, content, non-traditional media, Duchampian Strategies and self-criticism constitute the means by which critics have reassessed and reexamined Duchamp and art history. These concepts are also found to be prevalent in not only Duchamp's work, but also in the art of the 1970's and 1980's. The critical responses to art and the products of this age share similar concerns in their

challenge of originality, search for content, recognition of the significance of unorthodox or intangible media and the criticism of their own discipline and its history. These issues, or concerns, exist in the art and art criticism of the 1970's and 1980's as a result of the challenge to tradition in the latter half of the 1960's and are reflected by the critical responses to such enigmatic artists as Marcel Duchamp.

END NOTES

¹James Johnson Sweeney, ed., "Eleven European Artists in America", Museum of Modern Art Bulletin 13 (1946):2.

²George Heard Hamilton, "Duchamp, Duchamp-Villon", Yale Associates Bulletin 13 (March 1945):4.

³Dore Ashton, "Duchamp Freres and Soeur at Rose Fried Gallery", Art Digest 26 (March 15, 1952):16-17.

⁴Nicolas Calas, "The Brothers Duchamp All At Once, Exhibition at The Guggenheim Museum", Art News 55 (February 1957):24-27 and 56-58.

⁵Margaret Breunning, "Pots Pranks and Paintings: Marcel Duchamp And Picabia in Joint Exhibition at Rose Fried Gallery", Art Digest 28 (December 15, 1953):14.

⁶"Exhibition at Janis", Arts 33 (May 1959):33.

⁷George Heard Hamilton, "John Covert: Early American Modern", College of Art Journal 12 (Fall 1952):37.

⁸B. Krasne, "A Marcel Duchamp Profile", Art Digest 26 (January 15, 1952):11 and 24.

⁹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰Lawrence Steefel, Jr., "Marcel Duchamp, 'The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even': A Typographical Version by Richard Hamilton of Marcel Duchamp's Green Box Review", Art Journal 21 (Fall 1961):46.

¹¹H. Wurdeman, "In Pasadena -- A Duchamp Retrospective", Art in America 51 (June 1963):142.

¹²Cleve Gray, "Retrospective for Marcel Duchamp", Art in America 53 (February 1965):104.

¹³For further study regarding these issues see: David Antin, "Art and Information, 1, Grey Paint, Robert Morris", Art News 65 (April 1966):22-4 & 56-58; Mel Bochner, "Primary Structures", Arts Magazine 40 (June 1966):32-35(M); William S. Wilson, "Hard Questions and Soft Answers", Art News 68 (November 1969):26-9 & 81-84; Gregory Battcock, ed., Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968).

¹⁴Barbara Rose, "ABC Art", Art in America 53 (October 1965):61.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Nan Rosenthal, "The Six-Day Bicycle Wheel Race: Multiple Originals", Art in America 53 (October 1965):100-105.

¹⁸Max Kozloff, "Men and Machines", Artforum 7 (February 1969):22-29.

¹⁹William A. Camfield, "The Machinist Style of Famous Picabia", Art Bulletin 48 (September-December 1966):309-322.

²⁰Brydon Smith, "Art in Motion" Canadian Art 23 (January 1966):66-69.

²¹Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art", Arts Magazine 39 (January 1965):28.

²²Richard Kuhns, "Art and Machine", Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism 25 (Spring 1967):261-262.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 262.

²⁴Mahinri Sharp Young, "Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage at The Museum of Modern Art, New York", Apollo 88 (July 1968):65-66.

²⁵James Burr, "A Jester of Anti-Art", Apollo 83 (June 1966):474-476.

²⁶ Sidney Tillim, "The Mythical History of Modern Art", Arts Magazine 39 (March 1965):46 & 48.

²⁷ Anne d'Harnoncourt, and Walter Hops, Etant Donnés: 1* la chute d'eau 2* le gaz d'éclairage: Reflections on a New Work by Marcel Duchamp (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1969); p. 51-53.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁰ John Elderfield, "High Modern: An Introduction to Post-Pollock Painting in America", Studio International 188 (July 1974):5.

³¹ Timothy Binkley, "Piece: Contra Aesthetics", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 35 (Spring 1977):265.

³² Ibid., p. 272.

³³ Thierry De Duve, "The Readymade and Tube of Paint", Artforum 24 (May 1986):111.

³⁴ "Consistent with the developments of the twentieth-century, Duchamp has recognized that an artist may no longer claim to present a static 'picture' but instead must deal with ambiguity and motion and with the perceiver as socially conditioned to see selectively, to categorize and interpret... This film was made in the 1920's... when Freud was very influential on the arts, so that while Duchamp radically allowed for the mechanics of varying perception, he was equally aware of repression and the externalization process of psychoanalysis." Anette Michelson, "Anemic Cinema Reflections on an Emblematic Work", Artforum 12 (October 1973):64-69.

³⁵"Despite a flood of explanatory and interpretive literature about Marcel Duchamp and his art which has appeared in all kinds of publications, monographs, catalogues, and periodicals in recent years...almost no examination has been made of drawings and sketches... Among these neglected works, none is more important than 'Encore a Cet Astre' of late 1911... Widely recognized as a 'first step' towards the evolution of the famous 'Nude Descending a Staircase', painted a month or so after the drawing 'Encore' was completed, the drawing itself has been disregarded as a work of art in its own right and, more surprisingly, has been persistently misread simply as an image by all previous commentators, including Duchamp himself referring in retrospect to what it presumably is 'about'." Lawrence D. Steefel, Jr., "Marcel Duchamp's 'Encore a Cet Astre': A New Look", Art Journal 36 (Fall 1976):23.

³⁶"Willoughby Sharp Interviews Jack Burnham", Arts Magazine 45 (November 1970):23.

³⁷Willis Domingo, "Meaning in the Art of Marcel Duchamp, Part I", Artforum 10 (December 1971):72-3.

³⁸Craig Adcock, "Geometrical Complication in An Art of Marcel Duchamp" Arts Magazine 58 (January 1984):105-106.

³⁹"It is an indigestible portion of his thought that perhaps connects with whole areas of indigestibility, at least for an art world that believes in the primary (and self-sufficiency) of art. It is probably more reasonable to think of all of Duchamp's pieces as 'delays', obstacles placed in the path of the mind, temporarily checking it or forcing it out of its former path and compelling it to seek some partial realization. They are 'provocations' rather than objects... The concerns with language, with transparency, with couplings, seem to hover about the ambiguous implications inherent in the ideas of human communication and knowledge. These human concerns stand outside the art world undigested and perhaps not digestible." David Antin, "Duchamp: The Meal and the Remainder", Art News 71 (October 1972):68-71.

⁴⁰Barbara Rose, "Kinetic Solutions to Pictorial Problems: The Films of Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy", Artforum 10 (September 1971):68-73.

⁴¹Thomas McEvelley, "Empyhrical Thinking (and why kant can't)", Artforum 27 (October 1988):126-127.

⁴²Brandon Taylor, "Duchamp's Art Legacy", Art and Artists 15 (June 1980):19.

⁴³Steven Goldsmith, "The Readymades of Marcel Duchamp: The Ambiguities of an Aesthetic Revolution", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 42 (Winter 1983):197.

⁴⁴Jindrich Chalupecky, "Nothing but An Artist", Studio International 189 (January 1975):31.

⁴⁵Clement Greenberg, "Seminar Six", Arts Magazine 50 (June 1976):90-93.

⁴⁶Hilton Kramer, "Notes on Art at The End of The Eighties", The World and I, December 1988, pp. 258-263.

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