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### PROJECT

## Marcel Duchamp - Henri Poincaré. Relativism and Conventionalism in Art and Science

Marcel Duchamp gilt als Begründer einer künstlerischen Praxis, die dem Betrachter bei der Konstituierung von alltäglichen Objekten als Kunstwerken eine ebenso große Bedeutung beimisst wie dem Künstler selbst. Jeder Akt der Deutung von Kunst ist im Kontext einer derartigen Praxis stets eine Bestätigung beziehungsweise eine neue Behauptung bestimmter ästhetischer Konventionen. Das Projekt beinhaltet zum einen die quellenkritische Untersuchung der Frage, ob und inwieweit die relativistischen und konventionalistischen Strukturen des Duchampschen Kunstbegriffs auf die "konventionalistische" Theorie wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis des Mathematikers Henri Poincaré zurückzuführen sind und zum andern eine vergleichende Betrachtung der Auswirkungen des relativistischen und "konventionalistischen" Denkens auf die naturwissenschaftliche und die künstlerische Produktion.

### Lektüreempfehlung

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# Marcel Duchamp's "Readymades". Non-Euclidean and Four-Dimensional Geometry as the Starting Point for a New Art

The "Readymades" the French/American artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) realized in the years from 1913 to 1921 changed the modern concept of art more fundamentally in the last century than any other artistic invention. They stand at the beginning of a new pictorial artistic language, called "Object Art".

"Readymades" was the name Duchamp gave to a group of everyday objects of use whose perception he had alienated by means of dislocation and the addition of enigmatic titles. After the artists of Pop Art and Nouveau Réalisme, Concept Art and the Fluxus movement declared in the 1960s that Duchamp's "Readymades" were the historical founding works of their own artistic strivings, they increasingly became the focus of structuralistic, reception-aesthetic, linguistic, and institution-critical theories.

The constantly growing plenitude of aesthetic theories of the "Readymades" contrasts conspicuously with the lack of historical investigations of these works. Questions of their historical genesis and of the material-aesthetic, image-theoretical, philosophical, and scientific prerequisites of their invention have seldom been posed.

The standard model of historical "explanation" of the "Readymades" is that from 1913 to 1914 Duchamp, as a kind of genius "proto-Dadaist", put everyday objects of use on a pedestal at art exhibitions to protest against the elitism of an art alienated from life. In contrast to this canonical view, we should note that, with a single exception, these objects were never exhibited at the time of their creation. They existed for decades only in Duchamp's studios and were first exhibited retrospectively, with a delay of more than twenty years (without provoking any scandal).

If the "Readymades" were not originally intended for exhibition and as a provocation, what function did they have for Duchamp? What led him in 1913 to grasp things themselves as images, rather than continuing to paint images of things on canvas? In my presentation, I try to answer this question by limiting myself to the first two three-dimensional "Readymades", the "Bicycle Wheel" of 1913 and the "Bottle Rack" of 1914.

My hypothesis is that the "Readymades" were a byproduct of Duchamp's work on the large-format painting on glass, "The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even" (1912-1923), with which he tried to bring painting into accord with the spatial model of four-dimensional geometry. Duchamp's speculations about making four-dimensional hyperspace visible led him to break with painting on canvas and to the idea of regarding all three-dimensional objects as "projections" of four-dimensional entities. This opened the way to stop represent things in a flat, painterly or bodily/sculptural manner and to make real things themselves perceptible and comprehensible as representations, as images, as signs.

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